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*Nouvelles
Chroniques
du manuscrit
au Yémen*



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(Ancienne série 40)

Juillet 2025
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Éditorial

Un nouveau numéro se clôt.

Alya Karamah (Chercheur associé, Orient-Institut Beirut) nous offre une première monographie sur le « Coran sulayhide », dont l'histoire est riche de plusieurs vies, au v^e/xi^e s. Les indices textuels et matériels y sont minutieusement scrutés. C'est la seconde fois seulement que nous publions sur des corans dans la revue, chaque fois en rapport avec le Yémen.

Au cœur des débats qui entourent la question des réservoirs et des facteurs de propagation des épidémies, Philip Slavin (University of Stirling, Scotland) rassemble les indices concourant à faire de la ville d'Ibb un épiscentre des vagues de peste d'environ 839/1436 à 965/1558, au terme d'un travail pluridisciplinaire. La peste a été vue comme un fossoyeur essentiel de la dynastie rasoulide alors déclinante, un facteur ayant pesé sur la durée de la dynastie suivante, les Tahirides, sur d'autres ensuite. L'enquête de Slavin interroge la capacité des sources arabes à documenter le sujet. C'est la première fois qu'un article de la revue traite des épidémies et Ibb est, pour la première fois aussi dans nos annales, au centre d'une étude.

Enfin, nous avons souhaité rendre accessible à davantage de lecteurs yéménites, en le traduisant en arabe, l'article sur le manuscrit de Tarīm, Hadramaout, « Note sur *Masā'il fi-mā bayna al-Yahūd wa-Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī* (ms Tarīm n° 1853). Encore sur al-Biṣṭāmī et les moines : hagiographie morale ou apologétique ? », publié dans le numéro précédent, les *nCmY* 20/39. C'est Mohammed Tawaf, membre de notre Comité éditorial qui s'en est chargé. Abdullah Yahya Al Surayhi, correspondant de la revue à Abu Dhabi, a bien voulu en relire la première version.

Les *nCmY* souhaitent remercier chaleureusement Melis Taner, Université de Bursa, Turquie, pour son concours efficace dans l'accomplissement de ce numéro 21/40 des *nCmY*. La seconde mise en ligne du numéro spécial 4, « Yémen – péninsule Arabique. Histoires de Sciences et de Techniques/Yemen – Arabian Peninsula. The history and histories of Sciences and Techniques », est imminente.

Anne Regourd

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Actualités

(jusqu'à juin 2025)

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Comment citer les Actualités ?/How to refer to the News?

Avec date/With date

CmY 18 (Juil. 2014), Actualités, <26 avril 2014>

CmY, Nouvelles séries/New Series 19 (Janv. 2015), Actualités, <Décembre 2014>, p. 25.

nCmY 10/29 (Janv. 2020), Actualités, <14 décembre 2019>, p. 22.

Sans date/Without date

CmY 18 (Juil. 2014), Actualités, <Oman. Activités de l'Organisation des Archives Nationales du Sultanat d'Oman>

CmY, Nouvelles séries/New Series 19 (Janv. 2015), Actualités, <Nouvelle série « Studies on Ibadism and Oman »>, p. 39.

nCmY 10/29 (Janv. 2020), Actualités, <*Fahāris Tāğ al-'arūs*>, p. 22.

N.d.l.R.

NCMY

Erratum

Dans l'article de Serge (Serguey) Alexeyevitch Frantsouzoff (Frantsuzov) (Institut des Manuscrits Orientaux, St Pétersbourg), « Les superstitions et les rites de sortilège en Arabie méridionale du vii^e/xiii^e au ix^e/xv^e siècle (Abyan, le Ḥaḍramawt/Hadramaout, al-Šiḥr, Zafār/Dhofar) », *nCmY* 20/39, janvier 2025, p. 95-114, une coquille s'est glissée dans le titre, en p. 95 : il faut lire « du vii^e/xiii^e » – et non « du v^e/xiii^e ». Dans le résumé en français, il convient de remplacer « du vi^e/xiii^e au viii^e/xv^e s. » par « du vii^e/xiii^e au ix^e/xv^e s. » ainsi que, dans le résumé en anglais, corriger dans la version anglaise du titre « 5th/13th » par « 7th/13th » et, dans le corps du résumé, « 6th/13th–8th/15th century » par « 7th/13th–9th/15th century ».

Page alumni

Les lecteurs voudront bien trouver les biographies courtes de Hassan F. Ansari (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), Anne K. Bang (University of Bergen, Norvège), Marco di Bella (Indépendant, Conservation/restauration manuscrits arabes), Deborah Freeman-Fahid (FRAS, Assistant Conservateur, Dir. de publication, The al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Koweït), David G. Hirsch (Advisor for Library Services, Mohammed bin Rashid Library, Dubai), Samer Traboulsi (University of Asheville, North Carolina), membres sortants du comité de lecture et des correspondants des *nCmY*.

[Nouvelles Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen » Alumni](#)

YÉMEN

2008. Al-Ghumari, Ahmad Yahya – ‘Abd al-Malek Muhammad al-Maqhafi, ‘Abdu Husayn Salah, ‘Abd al-Tawwab al-Mashriqi, ‘Ali Dayf Allah al-Sanabani, *Catalogue partiel de la bibliothèque des Waqfs de la Grande mosquée – Dhamar*, ed. Anne Regourd, index Constantin Philonenko, Sanaa, Centre français d’archéologie et de sciences sociales de Sanaa (CEFAS), 183 p.

Le *Catalogue de la bibliothèque des Waqfs de la Grande Mosquée de Dhamār* constitue une contribution majeure à la documentation et à la valorisation du patrimoine manuscrit yéménite. Publié en version bilingue (arabe-français) pour ses parties introductives, il met à disposition des chercheurs, bibliothécaires et historiens un corpus rigoureux de notices descriptives en arabe portant sur 140 manuscrits issus de l’une des plus anciennes bibliothèques de Waqfs du pays.

Ce travail s’inscrit dans une initiative nationale portée par l’Organisation générale des Antiquités, des Musées et des Manuscrits du Yémen (OGAMM), visant à inventorier le patrimoine manuscrit, à le conserver et à en faciliter l’accès. Le catalogage a été réalisé entre le 25 et le 30 octobre 2000 par ‘Abdu Husayn Yahya Salah et ‘Abd al-Tawwab Ahmad al-Mashriqi (OGAMM), avec le soutien précieux de ‘Ali Dayf Allah al-Sanabani (directeur général du district de Dhamar, OGAMM). L’ensemble du projet a été mené par une équipe yéménite.

Les fiches manuscrites ont été réalisées sous l’égide de l’OGAMM, sous la direction d’Ahmed al-Ghumari. Lorsque Anne Regourd s’est aperçue que ce travail n’avait pas été publié, elle a proposé à Ahmed al-Ghumari ainsi qu’au directeur du Centre français d’archéologie et de science sociales (CEFAS), Jean Lambert, d’en faire un catalogue et de le faire publier par le CEFAS. C’est ainsi qu’a débuté une seconde phase de travail, cette fois-ci en vue de la publication. Des index ont également été ajoutés.

La bibliothèque de Dhamār se distingue par la richesse et l’ancienneté de son fonds, hérité en grande partie de la Madrasa al-Šamsiyya, haut lieu d’enseignement zaydite fondé au x^e/xvi^e s., ainsi que d’autres institutions religieuses régionales. Ce fonds constitue un miroir fidèle de la vie intellectuelle zaydite et les dynamiques de transmission manuscrite au Yémen.

Le contenu du catalogue témoigne de cette diversité. S’y trouvent :

- des ouvrages de *fiqh* et *uṣūl al-fiqh* : plus de 50 % des manuscrits, dont plusieurs copies rares ou non attribuées,
- des ouvrages de hadith : 18 titres fondamentaux,
- des ouvrages servant à l’étude du Coran (*tafsīr*), notamment le *Kaššāf* de Zamaḥṣārī et *Durr al-manthūr* de Suyūṭī,
- des œuvres de théologie, soufisme, histoire, biographie, littérature (*adab*), sciences occultes et astronomie.

Certaines copies remontent aux ^{viii}/_{xiv}^e s. et ^{xiv}/_{xv}^e s., témoignant d'une haute valeur patrimoniale.

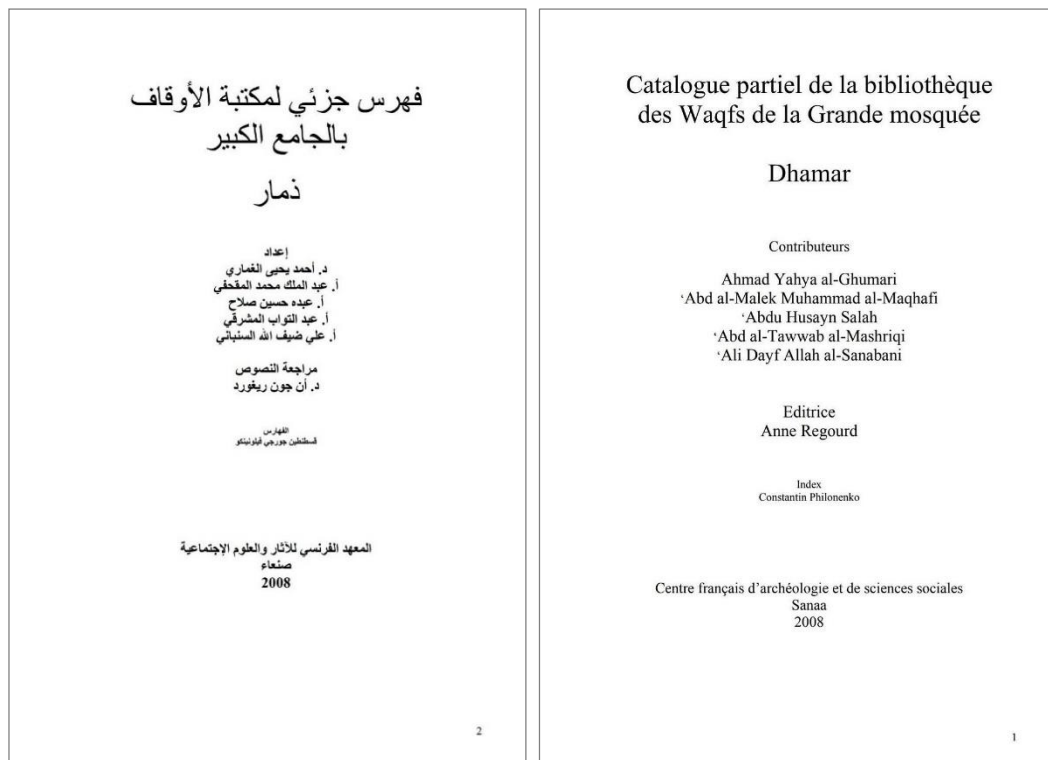
En raison de son caractère exceptionnel, l'un de leurs manuscrits – celui attribué à Māšā'Allāh, a suscité une publication (Anne Regourd, « Eighteenth-Century Identified Copies of Māšā'Allāh's *Kitāb Qiyām al-Ḥulafā'* from Yemen: Text Edition and Contextualization », *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 15, 2020, p. 270-291 ; voir également *nCmY* 12/31 (janvier 2021), « Eighteenth-Century Identified Copies of Māšā'Allāh's *Kitāb Qiyām al-Ḥulafā'* from Yemen: Text Edition and Contextualization », p. 30).

Chaque fiche descriptive de manuscrit (format A4) contient des informations d'identification (dont *incipit* et *excipit*), des données sur la copie (date, type d'écriture, diacritiques, vocalisation), ainsi qu'une description matérielle (nombre de folios, dimensions, nombre de lignes par page, reliure). Une section « remarques » (*mulāḥazāt*) mentionne les scribes, le rubricage, les encres utilisées, le contenu des *marginalia* (textes, notes de propriété, *waqf*) et, parfois, l'état physique du manuscrit.

Par sa rigueur, ses parties introductives bilingues français-arabe et son accessibilité en ligne, ce catalogue constitue un modèle de coopération entre institutions yéménites et chercheurs étrangers pour la sauvegarde d'un patrimoine en péril. Il est aussi un outil indispensable pour les études sur l'histoire intellectuelle, religieuse et juridique du Yémen. Afin d'en faciliter la consultation, huit index spécialisés créés par Constantin Philonenko ont été ajoutés : index des titres des manuscrits, des auteurs, des sujets, des scribes (copistes), des dates de copie et des personnes autres que les auteurs et les scribes.

Enfin, ce volume marque une étape essentielle dans la constitution d'une série de catalogues des bibliothèques de waqfs du Yémen, succédant à celui de la Grande Mosquée de Sanaa, Aḥmad 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ruqayḥī, 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Ḥibšī, 'Alī Wahhāb al-Ānīsī, *Fihris makḥṭūṭāt maktabat al-Ġāmi' al-kabīr bi-Ṣan'ā'*, Sanaa, Wizārat al-awqāf wa-al-iršād, 1404/1984, 4 vol., 2090 p., et annonçant la publication intégrale des fonds des autres bibliothèques de waqfs du Yémen, dont le catalogage est en cours.

[RegourdA_catalogue_dhamar.pdf](#)



2009. Samer Traboulsi, “The Ottoman Conquest of Yemen: The Isma’ili Perspective”, in: Jane Hathaway (ed.), *The Arab Lands in the Ottoman Era*, Minneapolis, Center for Early Modern Studies, University of Minnesota, pp. 41–60.

Relying mainly on two manuscripts, the article details the Ismaili response to the Ottoman conquest of Yemen in the early 16th century. The first of the manuscripts is *Ibrat al-labīb* by Ġābir b. Fahd al-Makramī,¹ a history of Yemen from an Ismaili perspective, the second manuscript is *Qarāṭīs al-Yaman*,² a collection of letters between Ismaili religious leaders in India and Yemen. Samer Traboulsi relies on a manuscript copy of *Ibrat al-labīb* that is in his own private collection³ and he gives additional information on the two works, briefly diving into their context and content.

¹ Nothing much is known about al-Makramī, other than that he presumably was the brother of Muḥammad b. al-Makramī (d. 1042/1633).

² *Qarāṭīs al-Yaman*, Tübingen University Library, MS Ma VI 330.

³ For a later and more comprehensive treatment of *Ibrat al-labīb*, including an edited version of the text, see: Samer Traboulsi, “Sources for the History of the Ṭayyibī Ismā’īlī Da’wa in Yemen and Its Relocation to India”, in: Anne Regourd (invited guest), « Manuscrits en transit : le cas du Yémen/Manuscripts in transit. The case of the Yemen », *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 5/2–3, 2014, pp. 246–274. See *CmY*, New Series 0/19, Jan. 2015, Actualités, <2014, novembre. « Manuscrits en transit : le cas du Yémen/Manuscripts in transit. The case of the Yemen », *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 5/2–3, IV+396 p.+2 cartes. ISSN : 1878-4631, p. 9.

Due to their persecution at the hands of the Zaydi Imams, Ismailis threw their support behind the Ottomans and strived under their more tolerant rule. At the same time, however, the influence of Indian Ismailism grew, which exacerbated internal divisions within the Yemeni Ismaili community. As the leader of the community, Dā'ī 'Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan died in 946/1539, he appointed Nağm al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Sulaymān from Sidpur as his successor and as Dā'ī Yūsuf died in 974/1566, the leadership went to an Indian *dā'ī* who continued to reside in India. The article thus gives a good introduction to the political situation in the beginning of the Ottoman conquest of Yemen yet does not detail what happened to the Ismaili community after the 1560s.

2018. Gregor Schwarb, "Opposing the theological doctrine of the Qāsimī state in 11th/17th century Yemen: a Shāfi'ī khat addict from Ṣan'ā' allegedly writing under the pseudonym of a Kurdish savant from Damascus", *Yemeni Books and Manuscripts around the World* 1, New York, Humanities Commons, pp. 1–7.

This translation of a brief passage of *Bahğat al-zaman fī tāriḥ al-Yaman*, a history of the early Qāsimī state by Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim (d. after 1100/1687), is related to Schwarb's research into *Kitāb al-Nibrās* and the network of related texts, one of which is *Bahğat al-zaman* itself. *Kitāb al-Nibrās li-kašf al-iltibās al-wāqī' fī al-asās li-'aqā'id qawm sammū anfushum bi-al-Akyās*, a refutation of a seminal religious work by the founder of the Qāsimī dynasty, Imam al-Mansūr bi-llāh al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad (d. 1029/1620), by Damascene scholar 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Abī 'Abd Allāh al-Ganğ(aw)ī, was found in the possessions of 'Abd al-Ḥādī al-Quway'ī a Šāfi'ī book collector and scholar residing in Sanaa after he had died in 1068/1658. The translated passage describes al-Quway'ī as a passionate intellectual and bibliophile, who frequently chewed khat, also in order to mitigate his libido, as is described as common practice for people living alone. The passage then briefly goes into the content of *Kitāb al-Nibrās*, before claiming that after the book had come to light a Damascene scholar arrived, who held similar ideas to the book, yet claimed that *Kitāb al-Nibrās* was not known in Damascus, leading the al-Qāsim to suggest that al-Quway'ī might have been the real author. Schwarb bases his translation on three reproductions of the same text⁴ and gives ample additional bibliographical material on topics related to the subject.

⁴ Amat al-Ġafūr 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Alī al-Amīr (ed.), *Al-awḍā' al-siyāsiyya fī al-Yaman fī al-nisf al-tānī min al-qarn al-ḥādī 'ašar al-ḥiğrī, al-sābi' 'ašar al-milādī, 1054–1099 H/1644–1688 M, ma' taḥqīq* Bahğat al-zaman fī tāriḥ al-Yaman *li-al-mu'arriḥ Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad*, Sanaa, Mu'assasat al-Imām Zayd b. 'Alī al-ṭaqāfiyya, 2008; the holograph of the passage is reproduced in *Al-awḍā' al-siyāsiyya* and 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibši, *Yawmiyyāt Ṣan'ā' fī al-qarn al-ḥādī 'ašar, 1046–1099 H*, Abu Dhabi, al-Mağma' al-ṭaqāfi, 1996.

2019. Mansour Ali Mohammad Almaswari, Redhwan Qasem Ghaleb Rashed & Farhana Khan, “Sufism and Its literary Contributions in Yemen: Ahmad Ibn Alwan a Model”, *Canadian Social Sciences* 15/12, pp. 19–27.

After giving a brief introduction to the genesis of Sufism in general and its trajectory in Yemen, the article dives into the life of Aḥmad b. ‘Alwān (600/1203–665/1266), his literary and intellectual oeuvre and introduces his main work *Al-tawḥīd al-a‘zam*. The article then discusses two aspects of Ibn ‘Alwān’s thinking, his stance on the Sufi ceremony *samā‘* and his approach to the proper relationship between a Sufi master and his disciple, in more detail. In general and especially with regards to the two topics just mentioned, the article relies on one secondary source, namely Muhammad Ali Aziz’s *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam: Theology and Sufism in Yemen*.⁵ Also in light of the heavily partisan language of the article—disparaging forms of Sufism the authors deem to be straying too far from Islam scriptural sources, its poor English and bad copyediting, it might be more fruitful to consult the cited secondary literature—as little as it is—than the article itself.

2019. Oliver Kahl, “Two Tamil Words in Arabic Garb”, *Arabica* 66/1–2, pp. 171–173.

This is a short contribution which is part of the section “Notes et documents” of *Arabica*. The author explores two Tamil botanical words, *mwrh* and *kmāšyr*, which occur in medieval Arabic pharmaceutical books, and found that these words appeared in some of the Arabic texts with some confusion about their meaning. One of the books is *Al-mu‘tamad fī al-adwīya al-mufrada* by the Yemeni Rasūlid Sultan al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf (r. 647/1250–694/1295) edited by Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā (Bayrūt, Dār al-ma‘rifa, 1402/1982) (see: Anna Kaetz (Reynolds Finley Historical Library, The University of Alabama at Birmingham) & Anne Regourd (CNRS; dir. Nouvelles Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen), « Middle East Medical Collection », Encart *nCmY* 20/39, Jan. 2025, pp. 85–89). The findings suggest that the pharmaceutical knowledge was transferred to the Arab world.

https://brill.com/view/journals/arab/66/1-2/article-p171_6.xml

2021. Aḥmad Maḥmūd al-Salāmī, *Tilfīzyūn ‘Adan : min al-tā’sīs ilā qanāt al-tāniyya 1964-1990*, Aden, Maṭābi‘ al-adīb, 244 p.

L’auteur est un journaliste, homme de médias et réalisateur de vidéos courtes. En plus de ses travaux dans le domaine audiovisuel, il a publié de très nombreux articles politiques, récits et chroniques portant sur l’art, la culture et la société yéménite.

« Télévision Aden : de la fondation à la deuxième chaîne (1964-1990) » est une chronique historique et documentaire de l’une des premières chaînes télévisées dans le monde arabe et y propose un récit détaillé de l’évolution de la télévision à Aden entre 1964 et

⁵ Muhammad Ali Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam: Theology and Sufism in Yemen: The Legacy of Ahmed Ibn Alwan*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2011.

1990, de sa création sous le régime colonial britannique à son développement après l'indépendance du Sud-Yémen jusqu'à la réunification du Yémen en 1990.

Le projet est né à l'occasion du cinquantenaire de la création de la chaîne, lorsque l'auteur, Aḥmad Maḥmūd al-Salāmī, fut chargé par la direction de la Télévision Aden de rédiger une contribution sur les phases de création et d'évolution de la chaîne, de 1964 jusqu'à l'unification du Yémen en 1990. Une autre personne devait couvrir la période allant de la réunification jusqu'en 2014. Cependant, le contexte politique instable – notamment la guerre de 2015 à Aden, déclenchée par l'offensive des Houthis – a provoqué des retards dans l'impression de l'ouvrage ainsi que l'annulation de la cérémonie commémorative prévue.

De ce fait, l'auteur a décidé de revoir et d'enrichir ce qui avait déjà été rédigé, constatant la pauvreté du contenu initial. Il a élargi sa recherche en y ajoutant des documents d'archives, cartes, photos, témoignages d'acteurs-clés, ainsi qu'une analyse détaillée de plus de 26 années de diffusion télévisuelle. Le résultat est un ouvrage riche, à la fois historique et personnel, qui rend hommage au rôle pionnier de la Télévision Aden dans le paysage médiatique yéménite et arabe.

L'ouvrage se compose d'une présentation, de cinq chapitres et quatre annexes :

Le premier chapitre présente les origines et les étapes liminaires de la fondation de la Télévision Aden. Il se compose de cinq sections principales. La première revient sur le contexte historique et institutionnel ayant permis la création de la chaîne. La deuxième section décrit le lancement officiel du service télévisé, le 11 septembre 1964, considéré comme un événement marquant dans la ville d'Aden. La troisième partie met en lumière la structuration technique de la chaîne à travers cinq petites unités de base, formées de techniciens et de réalisateurs. Ensuite, une section est consacrée à la réaction enthousiaste des téléspectateurs face aux films et séries diffusés. Enfin, la dernière section évoque les caméras du studio, leur technologie à l'époque, et les défis techniques rencontrés lors des premières diffusions.

Le deuxième chapitre explore en profondeur les contenus diffusés par la Télévision Aden ainsi que leur évolution au fil des années. Il est structuré en six sections principales, couvrant les divers aspects de la programmation. Tout d'abord, il présente les programmes et la grille de diffusion en exposant l'organisation des plages horaires et la diversité des formats proposés. Ensuite, il met en lumière les émissions locales emblématiques, particulièrement appréciées par le public. Le chapitre aborde également les procédures d'acquisition de films arabes égyptiens, qui constituaient un pilier essentiel de la programmation. Une autre section est consacrée aux séries étrangères et dessins animés populaires, ayant marqué l'imaginaire collectif de toute une génération. Le chapitre traite aussi de l'expérience pionnière de l'enseignement télévisé, à travers le programme éducatif « Télévision scolaire » (School TV). Enfin, il se conclut par une présentation des premiers pas du théâtre télévisé et de la production dramatique, reflétant l'engagement culturel profond de la chaîne.

Le troisième chapitre examine les transformations majeures qu'a connues la Télévision Aden à la suite de l'indépendance du Yémen du Sud en 1967. Il est structuré en six sections. La première traite du changement d'identité de la chaîne après l'indépendance,

mettant en lumière son nouveau rôle en tant qu'outil de communication politique au service du pouvoir révolutionnaire. La deuxième section porte sur l'introduction du magnétoscope (vidéo noir et blanc), qui marque une avancée technique significative dans l'enregistrement et la diffusion des programmes. La troisième section présente la création de la bibliothèque audiovisuelle, destinée à conserver les archives télévisuelles, bien qu'une partie ait été perdue avec le temps. La quatrième aborde la question de la censure télévisuelle, qui visait à encadrer les contenus en fonction des orientations idéologiques du régime. Ensuite, la cinquième section revient sur le premier reportage télévisé en direct réalisé à l'extérieur, une étape importante dans le développement du journalisme audiovisuel local. Enfin, la sixième section explore les débuts de la formation et de la professionnalisation du personnel, un chantier essentiel pour accompagner l'évolution technologique et organisationnelle de la chaîne.

Le quatrième chapitre est consacré au développement des infrastructures et de la diffusion au sein de la Télévision Aden. Il est structuré en six sections. La première décrit le bâtiment administratif central appelé « al-Bino », qui abritait le siège du ministère de l'Information, de la radio et de la télévision. La deuxième section présente le projet de construction d'une nouvelle station de diffusion, initialement en noir et blanc, pour répondre à l'augmentation des besoins techniques. La troisième partie aborde le « basculement vers la couleur », considéré comme l'une des étapes les plus importantes dans l'évolution technique de la chaîne. La quatrième section est dédiée à la structuration du service des actualités, devenu progressivement plus professionnel et régulier. La cinquième revient sur le développement des programmes sportifs et la diffusion des matchs en direct, qui ont rencontré un large succès populaire. Enfin, la sixième section retrace l'extension du réseau de transmission télévisée, qui a permis d'élargir la couverture géographique et d'atteindre de nouveaux publics.

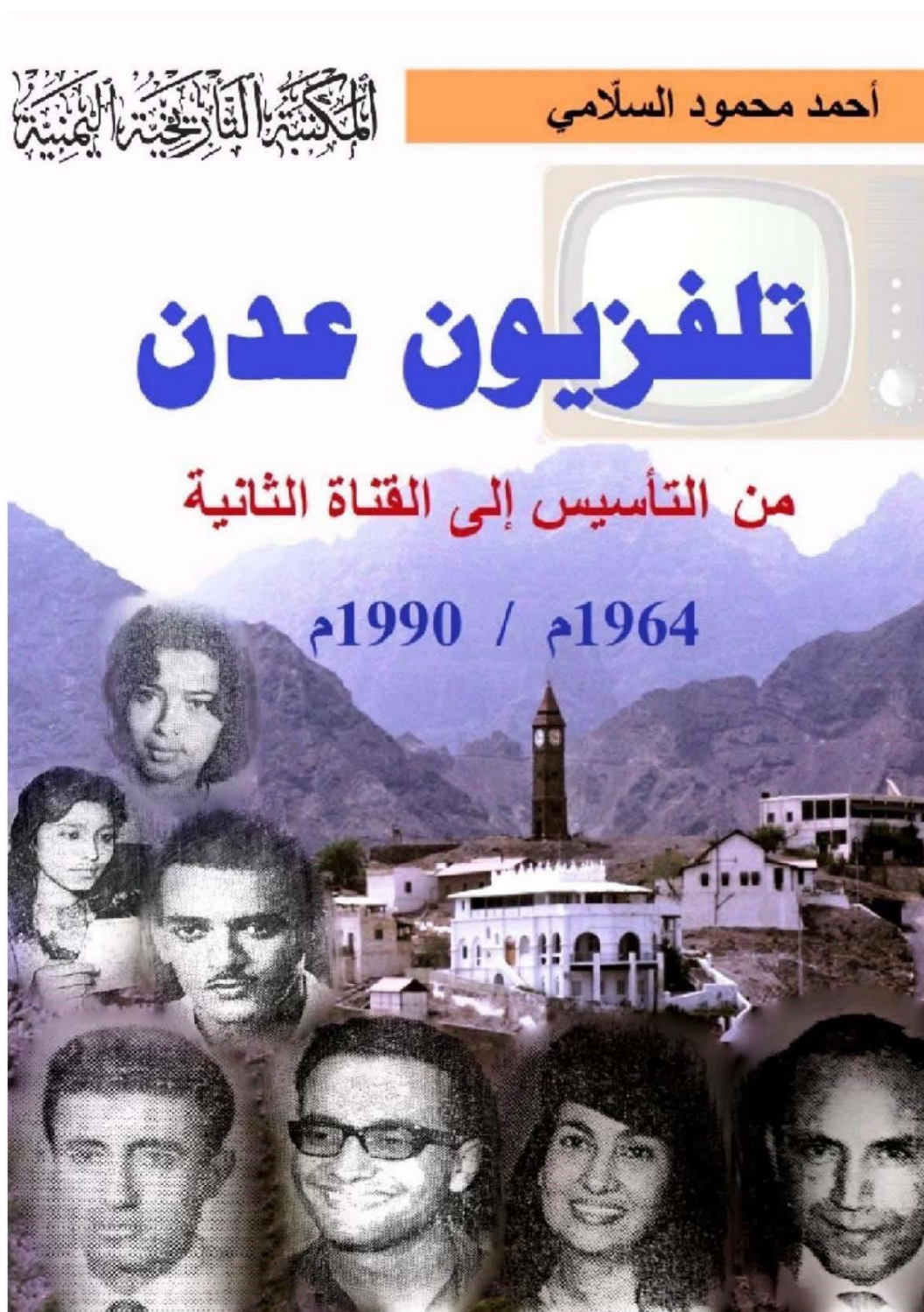
Le cinquième chapitre traite des aspects administratifs et organisationnels de la Télévision Aden. Il se divise en six sections. La première revient sur le modèle de gestion conjointe entre la radio et la télévision. La deuxième section est consacrée au service des publicités commerciales. La troisième section retrace l'historique des directeurs successifs de la télévision. La quatrième élargit la perspective en présentant les directeurs généraux et présidents de l'autorité de la radio et de la télévision en lien avec les grandes évolutions institutionnelles. La cinquième section dresse un tableau des ministres de l'Information, de la Culture et de l'Orientation nationale. Enfin, la sixième section revient sur les premiers liens de coopération entre la Télévision Aden et celle de Sanaa, marquant ainsi les prémices d'une coordination médiatique avant l'unification du pays. Dans sa conclusion, l'auteur souligne que ce travail s'appuie sur les informations disponibles, qui, bien que parfois incomplètes, sont riches en contenu. Il ne prétend pas être exhaustif ou définitif, mais plutôt complémentaire de ce qui a déjà été publié, notamment par des personnalités reconnues de la radio d'Aden, telle que la journaliste et écrivaine Fawzia Omar, active depuis 1965.

Malgré la rareté des sources et la difficulté d'obtenir des informations précises, la conviction que la persévérance et la détermination sont essentielles pour mener à bien ce projet ne l'a jamais quittée. Car l'entreprise n'était pas sans difficultés : outre le manque

de documents et de données, une certaine réticence était manifestée de la part de certains organismes à fournir les informations nécessaires. L'accès à des archives de journaux et de magazines anciens, qui contiennent des informations précieuses, s'est également avéré compliqué. Au total, l'auteur s'appuie sur un ensemble varié de ressources, combinant documents écrits, témoignages oraux et publications médiatiques. Parmi les sources écrites principales figurent des documents officiels et des archives, tels que les rapports administratifs internes de la Télévision Aden, les décisions émises par le Conseil fédéral du Sud arabe, ainsi que des copies de rapports émanant de commissions techniques et éducatives, notamment celles liées au projet de télévision scolaire. S'y ajoutent une série de témoignages oraux, recueillis au fil d'entretiens menés avec plu-

sieurs figures du monde médiatique et politique à Aden. Parmi elles, on peut citer : 'Alawī 'Alī al-Yāfi'i, Sa'īd Maḥfūẓ Ġabal, Aḥmad 'Abd Allāh Fadaq, Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh 'Umar, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qawī (ancien ministre de l'Information), 'Abd al-Raḥmān Thābit, ainsi que d'autres anciens responsables et techniciens ayant activement parti-

Le livre s'achève sur des annexes particulièrement riches, comprenant une sélection de documents officiels tels que des décisions administratives et des correspondances, un album photographique couvrant les différentes époques de 1964 à 1990, une liste du personnel de la télévision en 1977, ainsi que plusieurs articles rédigés par l'auteur sur la radio, la télévision et les questions culturelles.



16 mars 2024. « Découverte d'un manuscrit coranique vieux de cinq siècles au Yémen »

L'IQNA, l'Agence Internationale de Presse Coranique, rapporte l'annonce faite par Bilal al-Tayeb, chercheur en histoire et journaliste yéménite, de la découverte d'un manuscrit historique vieux de cinq siècles, au Yémen. Il s'agit d'un Coran, découvert dans la bibliothèque de la mosquée « Tayeb » dans le village d'al-Ma'in, région de Taz. Selon al-Tayeb, la date de production du *muṣḥaf* pourrait remonter à la construction de la mosquée, soit au milieu du x^e/xvi^e s., au début de la première présence ottomane au Yémen. Selon un document ancien, la mosquée a été construite en 956/1549 grâce à des dons, par Amreza b. Nusuh, le premier dirigeant ottoman du Yémen. Aucune précision n'est donnée sur le lieu de conservation actuel de ce *muṣḥaf*.

<https://iqna.ir/fr/news/3487922/d%C3%A9couverte-d%E2%80%99un-manuscrit-coranique-vieux-de-cinq-si%C3%A8cles-au-y%C3%A9men>

Octobre 2023. Ammat al-Malik Ismā'īl Qāsim al-Tawr, *Al-bunn al-yamanī fi al-tārīḥ al-ḥadīth wa-al-mu'āṣir (1538-1962) : dirāsat tārīḥiyya wa-waṭā'iḳiyya*, Sanaa, Dār al-kutub al-waṭaniyya, 2023, 216 p. [1^{re} éd.].

Ce travail est signé par Ammat al-Malik Ismā'īl Qāsim al-Tawr, spécialiste reconnue de l'histoire du Yémen moderne, Professeur à l'Université de Sanaa, auteur de plusieurs études sur l'Imamat qāsimite, la présence ottomane et les dynamiques économiques régionales.

Cet ouvrage ne constitue pas une première dans le champ des études consacrées au café yéménite. Il s'inscrit dans le prolongement d'une série de recherches antérieures, dont plusieurs travaux de référence qui ont abordé, selon des angles complémentaires, la culture, le commerce et la portée politique de ce produit emblématique, souvent qualifié d'or vert du Yémen. Parmi eux, on peut citer :

- 'Abbās Fāḍil Sa'dī, *Al-bunn fi al-Yaman : dirāsa ḡuḡrāfiyya*, 1992, 144 p.
- Arwā Aḥmad 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥiṭṭābī, *Tiḡārat al-bunn al-Yamanī : dirāsa tārīḥiyya (xi^e/xvii^e-xii^e/xix^e s., 2004.*
- Hānī Zāmil 'Abd Allāh Muḥannā, « Tiḡārat al-bunn al-yamanī : dirāsa fi al-'alāqa bayna al-ṣu'ūn al-tiḡāriyya wa-al-siyāsa fi al-Yaman (85/1450-1337/1918) », *Maḡallat Ġāmi'at Mālik 'Abd al-'Azīz : al-ādāb wa-al-'ulūm al-insāniyya* 11, 2001, p. 55.
- Ammat al-Malik Ismā'īl Qāsim al-Tawr, *Al-'Uṭmāniyyūn wa-tiḡārat al-bunn al-yamanī atnā' al-ḥukm al-'uṭmānī al-tānī (1872-1918)*, 2023, vol. 16, p. 185.
- Amīn 'Abduḥ Sufyān al-Ḥakīmī, *Zirā'at wa-intāḡ al-bunn fi al-Yaman = Coffee cultivation and production in Yemen*, Sanaa, Participatory foundation for research and dissemination, 2012, 137 p.
- Sa'īd b. 'Alī 'Abd Allāh al-Šahrānī, « Tiḡārat al-bunn al-'arabī min al-qarn al-sādis 'aṣar ilā al-tāsi' 'aṣar al-milādī », *Maḡallat al-Ādāb, Kulliyat al-Ādāb, Ġāmi'a Ḍamār* 12, 2024, p. 109-126.

Le commerce du café yéménite jouissait d'une renommée mondiale aux xviii^e, xix^e s., et jusqu'au début du xx^e s., en raison de la large diffusion de sa culture dans les régions et

montagnes du Yémen. Le pays s'était fait connaître à l'échelle internationale par le biais de ce commerce, suscitant l'engouement des états et des grandes compagnies pour l'achat du café yéménite. Cela a conduit à une abondance d'écrits historiques sur ce qui fut surnommé « l'or vert », ainsi que sur sa commercialisation et sa notoriété parmi les nations du monde.

Soucieuse de mettre en valeur l'importance historique du café, l'auteur souligne combien les Yéménites y sont attachés, au-delà des bénéfices économiques qu'il a apportés en contribuant à l'amélioration du niveau de vie des producteurs et des commerçants. Et ce, en dépit des fluctuations politiques, climatiques et de la concurrence internationale qui a parfois entraîné sa raréfaction ou l'arrêt de sa culture et de son exportation. Le café n'en demeure pas moins un produit de grande valeur et la consommation de cette boisson reste une pratique sociale vivace ainsi qu'un héritage historique transmis de génération en génération à travers les différentes phases de l'histoire moderne et contemporaine du Yémen, la période traitée dans le livre.

L'étude historique et documentaire est fondée sur des sources variées. L'histoire de la culture du café, ses aspects économiques et ses impacts régionaux et internationaux sont abordés à partir d'archives historiques et de sources contemporaines. Le livre se compose d'une introduction et de six chapitres, chacun couvrant une phase historique ou politique marquante du commerce du café :

L'introduction examine l'importance historique et géographique des régions d'al-Muḥā (al-Mokha) et d'al-Ḥudayda. À partir de l'analyse des données historiques, elle retrace les étapes de la prospérité du port d'al-Muḥā et du commerce du café à travers cette zone stratégique, en lien avec les mutations politiques et économiques qu'a connues la région. Elle montre également l'essor du port d'al-Ḥudayda, devenu un centre commercial majeur, attirant l'attention des puissances internationales. L'auteur souligne enfin la nécessité d'une étude approfondie sur l'origine du café, sa diffusion mondiale, l'engouement suscité par sa consommation et la spécificité aromatique du café yéménite.

Le premier chapitre est consacré au café dans les récits de voyageurs. Il propose une lecture historique de l'importance du café dans ces récits. Leurs témoignages ont permis de faire connaître l'arbre du café, ses circuits de commerce, ses zones de culture et les usages sociaux qui lui sont associés. Ils décrivent aussi les dynamiques économiques et les efforts des autorités locales et étrangères pour contrôler ce commerce lucratif.

Le commerce du café durant la première domination ottomane (1538-1635) (chap. 2) analyse la politique de l'Empire ottoman visant à contrôler les ports du Yémen et à organiser la filière du café. À cette époque, la consommation de ce breuvage se répand largement dans le monde islamique (Ḥiğāz, Afrique du Nord, Levant, Asie mineure), incitant les Ottomans à renforcer leur présence autour des zones productrices, en particulier dans le port d'al-Muḥā', devenu l'un des plus grands centres de commerce maritime de la mer Rouge.

L'intérêt de l'État qāsimite pour la culture et le commerce du café (chap. 3) examine la politique agricole des imams qāsimites après le départ des Ottomans. Ces souverains

encouragèrent activement la culture du café comme source de richesse nationale et organisèrent son commerce via différents ports et circuits, dans le but d'assurer l'autosuffisance économique de l'État tout en renforçant son autonomie financière.

La concurrence européenne sur le commerce du café (xviii^e-xix^es.) (chap. 4) explore la montée en puissance de certains pays européens (britanniques, hollandais, français) dans la mer Rouge et le golfe d'Aden, et leur volonté de s'approprier les circuits d'exportation du café yéménite. Les méthodes employées incluent des alliances locales, des contournements de la fiscalité ottomane, la création de nouvelles routes commerciales, ainsi que la culture du café dans les colonies pour concurrencer le Yémen sur le marché mondial.

Le chapitre 5, le café durant la seconde domination ottomane (1872-1918), voit les Ottomans rétablir leur domination sur le Yémen et mettre en place une réglementation stricte du commerce du café à travers lois, taxes et institutions. Les ports d'al-Muḥa', puis d'al-Ḥudayda, deviennent des centres d'exportation vitaux. Les revenus du café servent notamment à financer les écoles ottomanes (*al-madāris al-rašīdiyya*). Les autorités ottomanes imposèrent ainsi des taxes sur le commerce du café afin de créer ces écoles, à al-Ḥudayda et à Sanaa, et d'en organiser le budget à partir de ces recettes. Néanmoins, le commerce souffre de la contrebande, de la concurrence britannique (depuis Aden), puis du chaos engendré par la Première Guerre mondiale (blocus, bombardements), qui précipite le déclin du secteur caféier.

Pour son dernier chapitre, sur le commerce du café sous l'Imam Yaḥyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn (1904-1948) et son fils l'Imam Aḥmad Ḥamīd al-Dīn (1948-1962), l'auteur s'appuie sur une documentation historique et archivistique en vue d'analyser la situation du commerce du café au cours de la première moitié du xx^e s., durant les règnes consécutifs de ces deux imams, jusqu'à la veille de la Révolution républicaine. L'étude retrace les transformations politiques, économiques et sociales ayant affecté le commerce du café à l'issue de la domination ottomane et au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale. Elle met en lumière la manière dont les dirigeants de l'Imamat tentèrent de préserver cette ressource nationale malgré l'instabilité politique, l'isolement international et les défis structurels internes. Le chapitre décrit en détail : la structure du marché du café durant cette période, la cartographie des zones de production (voir ci-dessous), les noms des marchands actifs dans le commerce et les routes commerciales empruntées pour l'exportation.

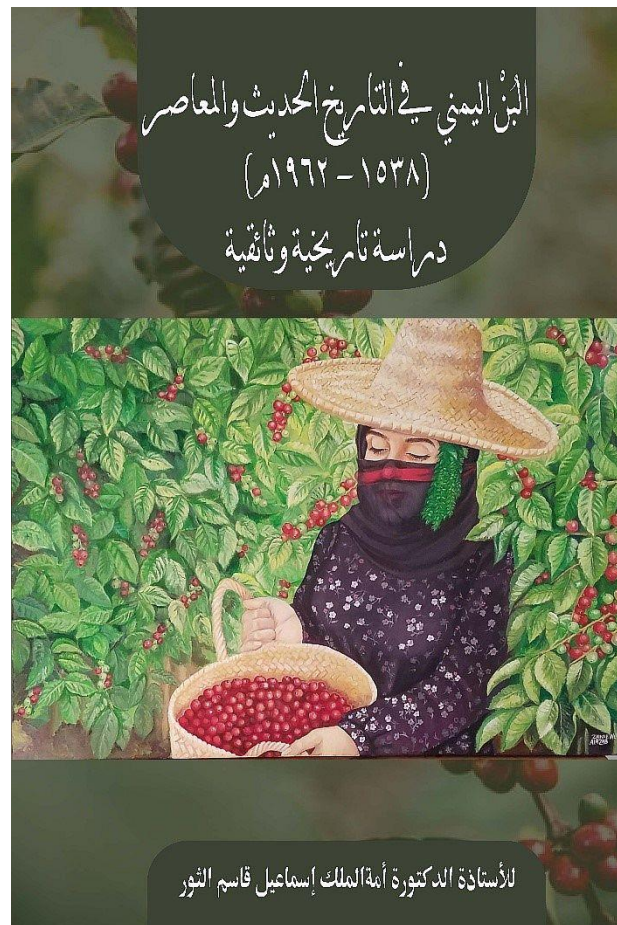
L'ouvrage se clôt par une réflexion sur la place actuelle du café dans l'économie et le patrimoine yéménites. Il insiste sur l'urgence de revaloriser cette culture ancestrale, qui constitue à la fois un marqueur d'identité et un potentiel économique. Si le secteur est confronté à de nombreux défis (dégradation climatique, infrastructures insuffisantes, mutation des habitudes agricoles), il recèle également des opportunités concrètes grâce aux circuits du commerce équitable, à l'exportation directe par les producteurs et aux initiatives de labellisation patrimoniale (telles que l'inscription à l'UNESCO ou les indications géographiques protégées).

En complément de l'analyse historique, l'ouvrage comprend une série d'annexes précieuses qui viennent enrichir le contenu scientifique et illustratif, parmi lesquelles figure un tableau de la production annuelle de café au Yémen entre 1922 et 1957. L'ouvrage contient également plusieurs photographies historiques et clichés documentaires, dont le portrait du chef de la révolution du café au Yémen, l'ingénieur 'Abd al-Malik al-Tawr, une photographie ancienne du port d'al-Muḥā, une vue des terrasses agricoles et des plantations de café dans les montagnes du Ḥarāz, notamment dans le village d'al-Ḥuṭayb, et des scènes de tri et de préparation du café dans le centre d'al-'Imādī, dans le village d'al-Ḥuṭayb.

L'auteur a exploité un ensemble important de documents officiels et de registres, dont :

1. au Centre national des archives (CNA) – Sanaa (Yémen)
 - des copies de documents ottomans numérisés portant des numéros de référence des archives ottomanes. Sans être exhaustif :
 - BE0/2/750/5623
 - Y.E.PS 33-86/3259
 - BE01325/99420
 - DH.MKT/3/1180/41
 - BE04381/1603291
 - BE0399/1330
 - MvL/10/765/690
 - Ras-Ya/22-7/1307
 - des dossiers constitués de documents relatifs au café :
 - Dossier n° 3, réf. 5/59
 - Dossier n° 3A, réf. 4-5/5
 - Dossier n° 3B, réf. 4-2/5
 - Dossier n° 2, réf. 4-2/5
 - Dossier réf. 4-2/8h
 - Document ottoman n° 1751/ya-plu22
 - des registres fiscaux et agricoles :
 - Registre de l'impôt foncier sur les caféiers (1341/1922-1347/1928)
 - Registre des arriérés de redevance agricole (1379/1959)
 - Registre des revenus du commerce du café (1341/1922-1344/1925)
 - Registre des recettes fiscales sur le café (jusqu'en 1347/1928)
2. aux Archives ottomanes – Istanbul (Turquie) – en fait des documents issus des Archives ottomanes d'Istanbul, dont une copie numérisée est conservée au CNA (cités avec la cote, mais sans l'unité archivistique), classés dans les séries suivantes :
 - A.MKT/5/228/15
 - DH.MKT/2185/105
 - BEO/4381/160329

- DH.MKT/2241/2
 - BEO/2138/50329
 - BEO/2007/50524
 - DH.MKT/471/63
 - BEO/1322/99091
 - DH.MKT/192/1311
 - SD/2262/7.2
 - BEO/1337/212.2r
3. des extraits de document issus de H. Yıldırım Ağanoğlu, Sebahattin Bayram & Mümin Yıldıztaş, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Yemen* [Al-Yaman fî al-‘ahd al-‘uṭmānî], Istanbul, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2008 :
- Y.PRK.uM/53/125
 - Y.MTV/35/284
 - Y.MTV/28/35
 - Y.PRK.MYD/42/21
4. aux archives consulaires françaises à Aden :
- CD d’archives diplomatiques couvrant la période 1842–1848, conservé au Centre national des archives de Sanaa.



1444/2023. Šams al-Dīn Abī al-Ḥasan Muwaffaq al-Dīn ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan b. Abī Bakr b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥazraġī al-Anṣārī al-Zabīdī, *Al-ʿasġad al-masbūk wa-al-zabarġad al-maḥkūk fī-man walā al-Yaman min al-salaṭīn wa-al-mulūk*, taḥqīq ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Ḥibšī, Le Caire, Dār al-wifaq al-ḥadīṭa li-al-dirāsāt wa-al-našr, 810 p.

Šams al-Dīn Abī al-Ḥasan Muwaffaq al-Dīn ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan b. Abī Bakr b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥazraġī al-Anṣārī al-Zabīdī est un historien, homme de lettres et érudit yéménite. Il serait né après l'an 730/1330, selon la biographie ancienne que lui consacre al-Burayhī (813/1410-904/1498) dans *Ṭabaqāt Šulaḥāʾ al-Yaman*. Originaire de Zabīd, ville qui lui valut sa *nisba* d' « al-Zabīdī », il y vécut et y mourut en 812/1409. Il est unanimement reconnu comme l'un des plus grands historiens du Yémen, notamment pour ses contributions fondamentales à l'étude de l'histoire de la dynastie rasūlide. Son œuvre historique se distingue par une organisation méthodique (chronologique, biographique, dynastique) et par une connaissance approfondie des sources locales.

Cette édition du texte intitulé *Al-ʿasġad al-masbūk wa-al-zabarġad al-maḥkūk fī-man walā al-Yaman min al-salaṭīn wa-al-mulūk*, œuvre de Šams al-Dīn al-Ḥazraġī, ne contient en réalité que les quatrième (« fī dīkr faḍāʾil al-Yaman wa-mā warada fihā min al-aḥbār al-mudawwina ») et cinquième (« fī dīkr Zabīd wa-umarāʾihā wa-mulūkiḥā wa-wuzarāʾihā ») parties. Il convient de rappeler que le même ouvrage a fait l'objet d'une

édition récente par Muqbil al-Tāmm ‘Āmir al-Aḥmadī, publiée en 2020. La version d'al-Ḥibṣī comprend notamment la quatrième partie de la deuxième section du texte, qui porte sur le Yémen, « Fī dīkr al-Yaman wa-min muluk Ṣan‘ā’ wa-‘Aden wa-mā yata‘alliq bi-dalika ». La cinquième partie, la dernière du manuscrit, présente dans les deux éditions, a pour sujet Zabīd, ses émirs, ses rois et ses vizirs⁶.

L'analyse des chapitres de l'ouvrage *Al-‘asğad al-masbūk* permet de reconstituer une structure globale en plusieurs parties, couvrant une large fresque du monde islamique et yéménite :

- Première partie : consacrée à l'histoire générale de l'islam, elle comprend la biographie du Prophète Muhammad, celle des califes bien guidés (*al-ḥulafā’ al-rāšidūn*), des imams mahdiyyūn, ainsi que des dynasties omeyyade et abbasside.
- Deuxième partie : traitant des souverains d'Égypte, du Bilād al-Šām (Levant), de Kairouan, d'al-Andalus, du Maghreb et de l'Afrique du Nord, elle constitue une vaste chronique du pouvoir islamique hors de la péninsule Arabique.
- Troisième partie : d'après les sources, la troisième partie d'*Al-‘asğad al-masbūk* est manquante à l'origine et aucun texte ne nous en est parvenu. Suivant la structure générale de l'ouvrage et l'objet des sections conservées, cette partie aurait dû traiter de l'histoire du Yémen avant la période exposée dans la section suivante ou bien compléter les informations relatives aux régions islamiques présentées dans la deuxième partie.
- Quatrième partie : intitulée « Fī dīkr al-Yaman wa-man malaka Ṣan‘ā’ wa-‘Adan », cette section est souvent identifiée comme l'ouvrage *Al-lifāya wa-al-i‘lām fī man walā al-Yaman wa-sakana-hā min mulūk al-Islām*. Elle constitue une histoire politique du Yémen, centrée sur les souverains de Sanaa, Aden et des autres régions yéménites.
- Cinquième partie : consacrée à la ville de Zabīd, elle présente une chronique détaillée de ses émirs, rois et vizirs, soulignant le rôle central de cette ville dans l'histoire administrative et intellectuelle du Yémen.
- Sixième partie : elle correspond à l'œuvre connue sous le titre *Al-‘uqūd al-lu’lu’iyya fī tāriḥ al-dawla al-rasūliyya*, qui constitue une monographie historique sur la dynastie rasoulide, l'une des plus importantes de l'histoire médiévale du Yémen.

On trouve plusieurs copies manuscrites d'*Al-‘asğad al-masbūk*, conservées sous différents noms et dans diverses bibliothèques. Parmi les principales copies recensées, se trouve le manuscrit n° 3863, Bibliothèque nationale d'Égypte, daté de 1187/1773, 196 feuillets, dont une reproduction est conservée à l'Institut des manuscrits arabes sous le

⁶ Voir nCmY 17/36 (Juillet 2023), Actualités, <2020. *Al-‘asğad al-masbūk wa-al-zabarğad al-maḥkūk fī tāriḥ dawlat al-Islām wa-ṭabaqāt al-mulūk [al-qism al-tānī, al-bāb al-rābi’ fī dīkr al-Yaman wa-min muluk Ṣan‘ā’ wa-‘Adan, al-bāb al-ḥāmis fī dīkr Zabīd wa-umarā’ihā wa-mulūkihā wa-wuzarā’ihā], wa-bi-daylihi, Muḥtaṣar al-Šihāb al-Muḥalabī al-musammā bi-(al-Kifāya wa-al-i‘lām fī-man walā al-Yaman fī al-Islām), tā’līf al-Imām al-Nassāba Abī al-Ḥasan Muwaḥḥaq al-Dīn ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ḥazrağī al-Naqqāš al-Zabīdī al-mutawwaḥḥi sannat 812 H. ; taḥqīq al-Duktūr Muqbil al-Tāmm ‘Āmir al-Aḥmadī, Sanaa >, p. 14-).*

n° 736. On trouve également un manuscrit d'*Al-asfīyya*, enregistré sous le n° 18, 422 feuillets, copié lui aussi à l'Institut sous le n° 1136. Une troisième copie, conservée à la Bibliothèque municipale d'Alexandrie sous le n° 1265 et datée de 1014/1605, 300 feuillets ; elle est également reproduite à l'Institut des manuscrits arabes sous le n° 736. Une quatrième copie est conservée à la bibliothèque de la Grande Mosquée de Sanaa, ainsi qu'une reproduction, à l'Institut du manuscrit, sous le n° 2189. La cinquième copie, issue de la bibliothèque du Ḥaram de La Mecque, porte également le n° 2189. Enfin, une sixième copie est répertoriée à la bibliothèque al-Maḥmūdiyya de la ville de Médine sous le n° 55.

ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Ḥibṣī indique clairement dans son édition que l'ensemble des ouvrages attribués à al-Ḥazraḡī ont été initialement composés pour le Roi al-Ašraf (Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl b. al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAlī al-Rasūlī (m. 830/1427), comme le confirment plusieurs manuscrits. Lorsque l'auteur a réuni ces deux textes, *Al-ʿasḡad al-masbūk* et *Al-ʿuqūd al-luʿluʿiyya*, ils étaient tous deux dédiés au roi mentionné. Après la mort d'al-Ašraf, al-Ḥazraḡī entreprit une révision des deux ouvrages et les fusionna en un seul volume, qui circula par la suite sous différents titres : *Al-ʿasḡad al-masbūk*, *Al-kifāya wa-al-ʿilām*, ou encore *Al-ʿuqūd al-luʿluʿiyya*. La coexistence de plusieurs dénominations dans les manuscrits contribua à une certaine ambiguïté sur le titre exact de l'œuvre, bien que son contenu demeure, lui, cohérent et unifié. Lorsqu'il réalisa son édition à Riyad, al-Ḥibṣī découvrit en 1429/2008 un manuscrit portant le titre *Al-ʿuqūd al-luʿluʿiyya*. Mais l'examen du texte lui permit de conclure qu'il s'agissait en réalité de la même œuvre qu'*Al-ʿasḡad al-masbūk*, confirmant ainsi l'unicité du texte malgré la diversité de ses titres à travers la tradition manuscrite.

Pour l'établissement du texte, l'éditeur s'est appuyé sur deux manuscrits complémentaires, chacun comblant les lacunes de l'autre.

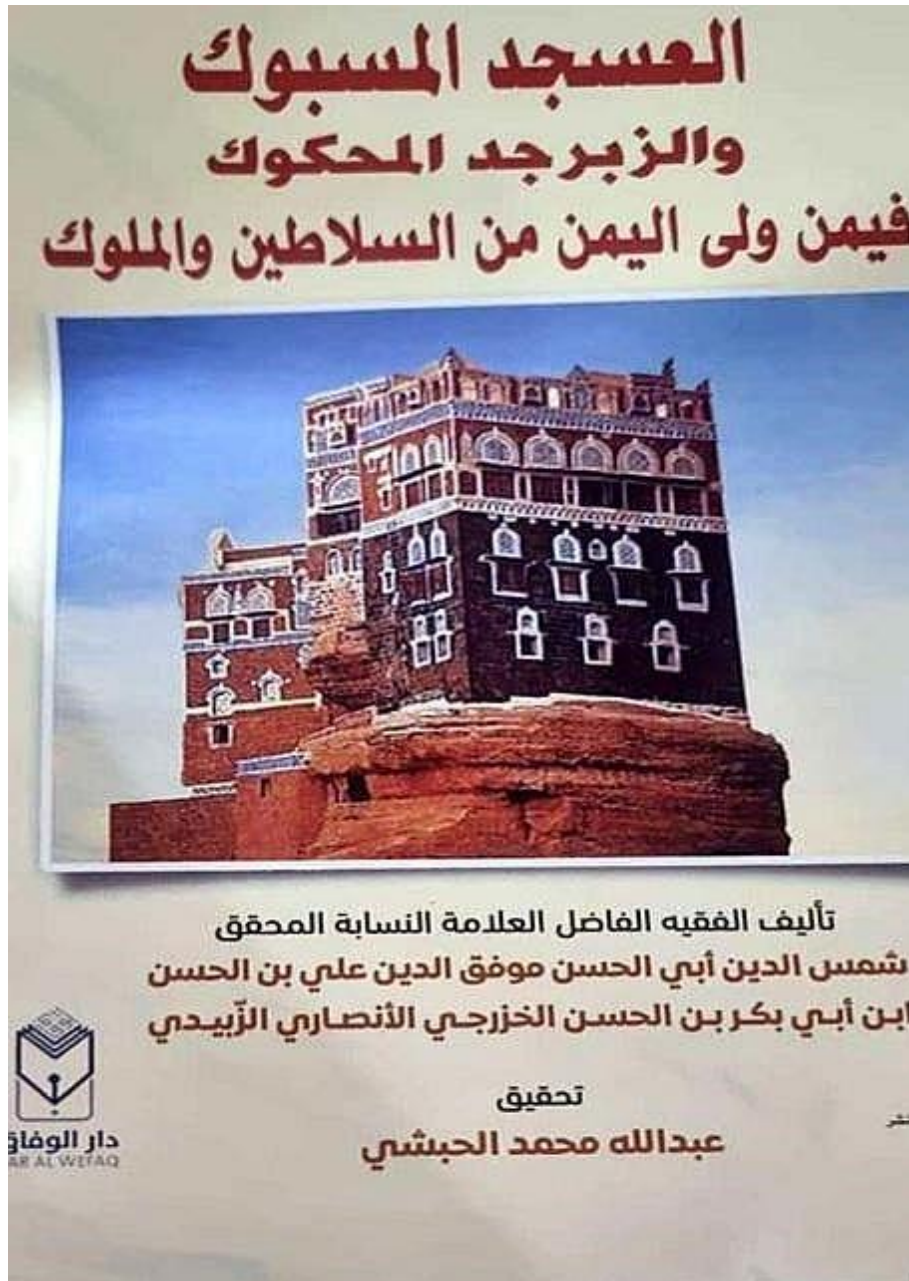
- Premier manuscrit : il s'agit d'une belle copie de bibliothèque, soigneusement préparée par son copiste, qui y a consigné l'ensemble des informations historiques disponibles jusqu'à l'année 803/1401, correspondant à la date du décès de l'auteur. Ce manuscrit, daté de 1102/1691, s'étend sur 521 feuillets. Il a servi de base à la copie du manuscrit publiée en facsimilé par le Ministère de l'Information et de la Culture de la République du Yémen, à Sanaa, en 1401/1981.
- Deuxième manuscrit : conservé dans les collections privées de ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿUbaykān, Ambassadeur d'Arabie saoudite durant le règne de l'Imām Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn, cet exemplaire porte le titre *Al-ʿuqūd al-luʿluʿiyya*. Il a été copié en 1082/1671 par le savant ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Ḥibṣī et authentifié par son propriétaire, Šaraf al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Šāmī, érudit yéménite.

Cette version très soignée du manuscrit 2, relue et corrigée par son possesseur, présente peu d'erreurs textuelles. Elle s'est révélée précieuse pour corriger et compléter l'édition critique, d'autant que l'un des copistes était originaire de la région même où se déroulent les événements rapportés. Ce manuscrit compte 1.089 feuillets.

L'édition d'al-Ḥibṣī se compose d'une introduction, du texte édité et de deux sections principales correspondant aux quatrième et cinquièmes parties du corpus historique. La quatrième partie, intitulée *Fī dīkr faḍāʾil al-Yaman wa-mā warada fī-hā min al-aḥbār*

al-mudawwana (Sur les mérites du Yémen et les récits qui y sont rapportés dans les sources écrites), comprend dix chapitres relatifs à l'histoire politique des principales villes yéménites et de leurs souverains. La cinquième partie, intitulée *Fī dīkr Zabīd wa-umarā'ihā wa-mulūkihā wa-wuzarā'ihā* (Sur Zabīd, ses émirs, ses rois et ses vizirs), constitue une monographie consacrée à cette ville majeure de l'histoire du Yémen.

Cette édition se termine par quatre index : un index biographique, géographique et tribal, des termes historiques et techniques, enfin un index des poèmes.



2023. *Tārīḥunā alladī lam naktubhu : Nuṣūṣ al-Briṭāniyyīn ḥawla al-Ġanūb al-‘arabī*, trad. Mas‘ūd Sa‘īd ‘Amšūš, Ḥaḍramawt, Ittiḥād udabā’ wa-kuttāb al-Ġanūb, 165 p. [1^{er} éd.]. N° de dépôt, Autorité générale du livre à Hadramout : 341/2023.

Le livre que nous avons entre les mains est un florilège de textes prélevés dans les œuvres de divers auteurs et hommes politiques britanniques, réunis et traduits en arabe par Mas‘ūd Sa‘īd ‘Amšūš. Son objectif est de documenter les dix dernières années de la présence britannique dans le Sud arabe. Alors même que les historiens yéménites ont produit de nombreux travaux sur l’histoire ancienne et moderne, la période 1959-1967 – dernière décennie de l’occupation britannique – demeure mal documentée et largement méconnue. De nombreux événements de cette phase cruciale restent flous ou absents du récit national ; la plupart des Yéménites ignorent encore les détails du retrait total de la Grande-Bretagne de l’ensemble des régions du Sud, y compris celles qui n’avaient jamais intégré la Fédération du Sud arabe. Ce retrait eut lieu le 29 novembre 1967, avec la remise du pouvoir au Front national le lendemain de l’indépendance, sans cérémonie officielle ni transition formelle.

En 2006, Peter Hinchcliffe (ancien conseiller britannique à al-Ḍālī⁷), John Ducker (ancien conseiller à al-Mukallā) & Maria Holt publièrent *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat from Aden* (London, I.B. Tauris). Cherchant à combler les lacunes documentaires, ‘Amšūš en a traduit le quatrième chapitre, qui relate en détail les événements survenus dans les protectorats orientaux d’Aden durant les dix dernières années de la présence britannique.

En 2016, Dick Eberlie, ancien secrétaire particulier de Richard Turnbull (1909-1998) à Aden, publia *Aden: The Curtain Falls: the Memoirs of Dick Eberlie. 1965 to 1967*, Partie 4, éd. Richard F. Eberlie, 2016, 196 p. S’appuyant sur ses rapports, sa correspondance et notes quotidiens, il dresse un panorama du système politique de la Fédération du Sud arabe ainsi que des protectorats occidentaux et orientaux. ‘Amšūš reprend un résumé et la traduction du troisième chapitre, dans lequel Eberlie partage ses impressions sur diverses personnalités rencontrées à Aden et dans les protectorats.

Parmi les travaux consacrés à la « stratégie de sortie humiliante » mise en œuvre le 29 novembre 1967, figure également le mémoire du commandant Stephen Andrew Campbell (2014), dont ‘Amšūš a traduit l’introduction. Campbell y analyse l’absence d’un service de renseignement efficace comme un facteur déterminant de l’échec britannique. L’auteur inclut également une synthèse fondée sur les mémoires de Richard Turnbull, offrant un examen critique de l’effondrement de l’appareil administratif britannique dans le Sud arabe.

Enfin, l’ouvrage présente un résumé de la carrière de James Nash, responsable politique à al-Ḥuṣn et Mukayrās (1954-1965), puis officier militaire à al-Ḍālī⁷, suivi de son poème « Aden » (1993), qui exprime son profond attachement à la terre du Sud.

⁷ Al-Ḍālī⁷ est un Gouvernorat du Yémen situé dans le Sud du pays. Il a été colonisé par les Britanniques entre 1886 et 1967.

Mas'ūd Sa'īd 'Amšūš ne présente pas ces textes comme des récits objectifs, mais comme des points de vue propres à leurs auteurs britanniques. Souvent – mais pas toujours – hostiles, ces points de vue choquèrent et choqueront probablement encore les lecteurs. Malgré le ton ouvertement paternaliste ou condescendant de certains passages, l'auteur insiste sur la nécessité de les lire et de les comprendre : ces documents constituent des sources essentielles pour saisir les décisions, les tensions internes et les erreurs stratégiques qui ont conduit à l'effondrement du projet colonial britannique au Sud arabe. S'ils peuvent encore susciter des réactions vives, ils offrent aussi des enseignements utiles pour un travail mémoriel lucide et constructif. Ils invitent à repenser les voies permettant de retrouver dignité et souveraineté dans un monde postcolonial encore profondément marqué par les héritages du passé.

L'ouvrage se compose des sections suivantes :

- introduction : mise en contexte critique par Mas'ūd Sa'īd 'Amšūš, soulignant le manque de documentation sur la période 1959-1967 dans l'historiographie sud-arabe et la nécessité de revisiter cette époque à travers les archives et témoignages britanniques.
- Dick Eberlie et son livre *Aden, la chute du rideau* : cette section introduit l'auteur, son parcours, ainsi que ses œuvres majeures, notamment *Aden: The Curtain 1914*.
- les protectorats occidentaux d'Aden par Dick Eberlie.
- les protectorats orientaux d'Aden par Dick Eberlie.
- les dernières années de la présence britannique dans les protectorats orientaux d'Aden.
- Richard Turnbull et l'effondrement de l'administration britannique dans le Sud arabe.
- le retrait pacifique des forces britanniques et le projet de formation d'un gouvernement après l'indépendance, sous la plume de Humphrey Trevelyan⁸.
- les dernières années de la présence britannique dans le Sud arabe selon James Nash, suivies de son poème « Aden ».
- La stratégie du retrait humiliant du Sud arabe, par Stephen Campbell.

⁸ Humphrey Trevelyan (1905-1985), diplomate et auteur britannique, a achevé quarante années de service public en tant que dernier Haut-Commissaire à Aden, où il a supervisé le retrait britannique de ce qui fut le Protectorat d'Aden, devenu par la suite le Yémen du Sud.



2023. Baṣār b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Wuṣābī, *Yāqūtāt al-Yaman Umm al-Dardāʾ al-Wuṣābiyya, zawġat al-ṣaḥābī al-ġalīl Abī al-Dardāʾ raḍīya Allāh ʿanhu : maṣdar bi-nuḥda ʿan bilād Wuṣāb*, Damas, Nūr Ḥawrān li-al-dirāsāt wa-al-naṣr wa-al-turāt, 136 p. [1^{re} éd.]. ISBN : 978-9933-687-92-2.

L'auteur, Baṣār b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Wuṣābī, est un chercheur indépendant originaire de la région montagneuse de Wuṣāb au Yémen. Spécialisé dans l'histoire intellectuelle islamique et dans la mise en valeur de figures marginalisées, il s'intéresse, dans cette œuvre au titre explicite, « La Perle du Yémen, Umm al-Dardāʾ al-Wuṣābiyya, épouse du noble compagnon Abū al-Dardāʾ (que Dieu l'agrée) : une source accompagnée d'une notice sur la région de Wuṣāb », à une savante du i^{er}/viii^e s., souvent ignorée ou confondue avec d'autres femmes portant le même nom. Elle s'inscrit dans une volonté de réhabilitation de la mémoire féminine savante dans l'islam primitif et dans une logique de revendication culturelle et régionale, en attribuant à cette figure prestigieuse une origine wuṣābite.

Umm al-Dardā' aussi appelée al-Ṣuġrā al-Dimašqiyya ou Umm al-Dardā' la Jeune, est une juriste du vii^e s. à Damas et à Jérusalem. Elle ne doit pas être confondue avec Umm al-Dardā', épouse du compagnon Abū al-Dardā'. Ce livre est donc porté par une double motivation : d'une part, réhabiliter la figure d'Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuġrā, connue sous le nom de Huġayma bint Ḥuyyiya, qui a grandi auprès de son mari Abū al-Dardā' et s'est illustrée par ses enseignements à Damas au vii^e/xiii^e s. ; et d'autre part, établir de manière rigoureuse son origine yéménite, en particulier sa relation avec la région de Wuṣāb. L'auteur entend ainsi combler un vide historiographique et corriger une confusion fréquente entre deux femmes : Umm al-Dardā' al-Kubrā, de son vrai nom Ḥayra bint Abī Ḥadrad al-Aslamī, qui a fait partie des compagnons du Prophète, est connue pour son rôle actif dans la transmission du savoir religieux durant la première génération de l'islam. Elle a acquis son savoir aussi bien du Prophète que de son époux, Abū al-Dardā' 'Uwaymir al-Anṣārī, compagnon du Prophète. Tandis qu'Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuġrā, nommée Huġayma al-Wuṣābiyya, *tābi'īyya* (génération post-prophétique), fut sa disciple et l'épouse d'Abū al-Dardā'. Elle reste active après la mort de ce dernier, puis meurt après l'an 81/700, durant la période omeyyade (661-750), avant que son influence ne se poursuive jusqu'à l'époque d'al-Andalus (756-1031).

L'ouvrage se compose d'une introduction, de cinq chapitres et d'une conclusion.

L'introduction consiste en une mise en contexte méthodologique et historique, justifiant le projet et la nécessité de revisiter la biographie d'Umm al-Dardā' à travers le prisme de son ancrage régional.

Le chapitre 1 est consacré à une brève notice sur la région d'origine de la biographiée, Wuṣāb, située au Yémen, sa culture islamique et sa tradition savante. Ce chapitre vise à contextualiser l'ancrage géographique de la figure étudiée, en montrant l'importance historique et religieuse de cette région dans l'histoire islamique.

Le chapitre 2, intitulé « Umm al-Dardā' al-Wuṣābiyya », se compose de six sections. La première est consacrée à son nom et à son surnom, en examinant les variantes mentionnées dans les sources, les arguments philologiques ainsi que les implications de sa dénomination. La deuxième section traite de son origine et de son rattachement tribal ou géographique. La troisième explore ses liens de parenté avec ses proches parents par le sang. La quatrième section examine ses relations avec ses *mawālī* (affranchis). La cinquième s'intéresse à ses lieux de résidence et aux éventuels déplacements qu'elle a effectués. Enfin, la sixième section est consacrée aux distinctions entre elle et Umm al-Dardā' al-Kubrā, afin d'éviter toute confusion entre ces deux figures.

Le chapitre 3, intitulé « une présentation sur Abū al-Dardā' », propose un aperçu général de cette figure marquante de l'islam primitif.

Le chapitre 4, « Rapporté d'Umm al-Dardā' – Paroles et comportements », met en lumière ses qualités spirituelles, morales et intellectuelles, à travers ses actes, ses paroles et ses enseignements. Il souligne sa piété, sa sagesse, son amour du savoir, ainsi que son influence durable dans la tradition islamique.

Le chapitre 5 est intitulé « Ce qu'ils ont dit d'elle ». Il rassemble plusieurs témoignages élogieux de grands savants – parmi les traditionnistes, historiens et littéraires – ayant exprimé leur admiration pour Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuġrā al-Wuṣābiyya. Parmi ces voix

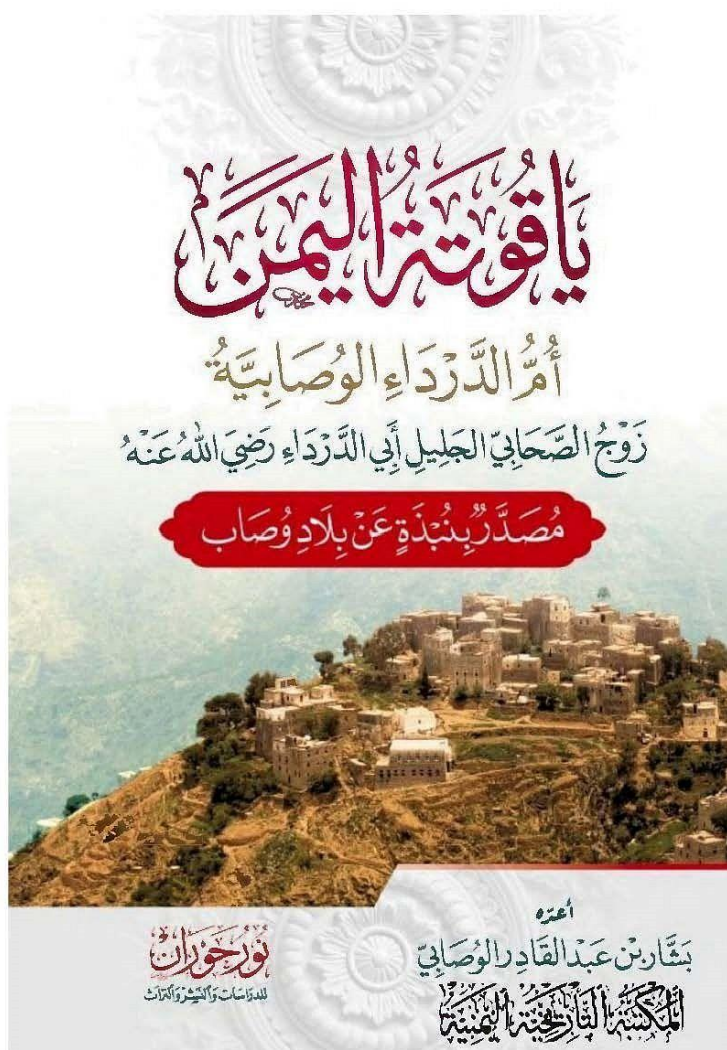
éminentes, figurent : ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Ġāḥiẓ (m. 255/869), Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Buḥārī (m. 256/870), Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Mubarrad (m. 285/898), Yaḥyā b. Šaraf al-Nawawī (m. 676/1277). Ces auteurs ont chacun, à leur manière, souligné son érudition, sa piété et la place qu’elle occupait parmi les savants de son époque.

Dans la conclusion, l’auteur exprime que l’achèvement de ce travail marque la fin d’un parcours exigeant, jalonné de réflexions profondes, d’efforts soutenus et de remises en question enrichissantes. Il clôt l’étude reconnaissant du chemin parcouru et de la richesse intellectuelle et humaine que cette recherche lui a apportée.

L’auteur s’est appuyé sur de nombreuses sources historiques pour la rédaction de cet ouvrage, parmi lesquelles figurent :

- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥubayšī al-Wuṣābī, *Tārīḥ Wuṣāb al-musammā* Al-i‘tibār fī al-tawārīḥ wa-al-ātār
- Abī Sa‘d ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr al-Tamīmī al-Sam‘ānī, *Al-ansāb*
- Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥaḡar al-‘Asqalānī, *Taqrīb al-tahdīb*
- Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Ḥusayn al-Zabīdī, *Tağ al-‘arūs min ḡawāḥir* al-Qāmūs
- Šihāb al-Dīn Abī ‘Abd Allāh Yāqūt b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘ğam al-buldān*
- Abī Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Ya‘qūb al-Hamdānī, *Šifat Ġāzirat al-Arab*
- ‘Alī ‘Abd Allāh Šālīḥ al-Wuṣābī, Muḥālaf Wuṣāb min muntaṣaf al-qarn al-sādis ḥattā al-qarn al-tāsi‘ al-ḥiğrī
- ‘Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Mu‘ğam qabā’il al-‘Arab al-qadīma wa-al-ḥadīṭa*
- Aḥmad Ġābir ‘Afīf (éd.), *Al-mawsū‘a al-yamanīyya*
- Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Zabāra, *Nubalā’ al-Yaman bi-al-qarn al-tānī ‘ašar li-al-ḥiğra : wa-huwa al-qism al-tānī min aqṣām* Našr al-‘arf li-nubalā’ al-Yaman ba‘da al-alf ilā sanat 1375 ḥiğriyya
- Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīḥ Dimašq*
- Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Dimašqī al-Šālīḥī, *Ṭabaqāt ‘Ulamā’ al-ḥadīṭ*
- Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. Sa‘īd b. Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *Ġumhūrat ansāb al-Arab*
- ‘Izz al-Dīn Abī al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Aṭīr, *Al-lubāb fī tahdīb al-ansāb*

Cependant, il est regrettable que l’auteur n’ait pas précisé la nature exacte de ces références : s’agit-il d’éditions imprimées ou de manuscrits ? L’auteur, la date de publication, le lieu d’édition, ainsi que l’institution qui les conserve (le cas échéant) ne sont pas mentionnés – les additions sont de notre part. Ce manque d’informations bibliographiques complètes limite la traçabilité des sources et constitue un obstacle pour les lecteurs souhaitant approfondir certaines références, entraînés par l’élan que suscite la nouveauté du sujet.



2024. Mohamed al-Fatimi, “Traditional knowledge of wild plants on traditional tools, materials, products and economic practices in southern Yemen”, *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 20/62, pp. 1–30.

Over the last decades, traditional Yemeni knowledge of wild plants and the possibilities of their use have declined sharply due to urbanization and the general availability of pre-fabricated goods. This knowledge is therefore in danger of being lost, while, as the author argues, at the same time potentially useful given Yemen’s current dire situation. As the title makes abundantly clear, the article deals with traditional knowledge of wild plants on tools, materials, products and economic practices, which, according to the author, is compared to the undervalued fields of medical and nutritional use of plants an even more severely understudied subject.

Based on field research and interviews between 2000 and 2005, the article lays out 73 wild plants, their use and the frequency with which they were mentioned by his interlocutors and groups them in nine categories, corresponding to their usefulness in fields such as traditional handicraft, agriculture and health care. Additionally, the article relies on extensive secondary literature, which makes use of manuscripts and other original sources such as Daniel Martin Varisco's article "Indigenous Plant Protection Methods in Yemen".⁹ The article is therefore useful not only with regards to its description of the use of plants but also as starting point for those seeking to gain an overview of the existing academic literature on the subject.

2024. Ashwak Hauter, "The Reparative Work of the Imagination: Yemen, 'Afiya, and Politics of the Umma", *American Journal of Islam and Society* 41/2, pp. 118–144.

In this article, Ashwak Hauter discussed how young Yemeni artists reference certain emotive aspects of Yemeni history and culture as well as traditions based in Islam deemed exemplary for an idealized Yemeni society in order to ground themselves and their communities in increasingly uncertain political situations. The concept that the author uses to describe this envisaged state of wellbeing is *'āfiya*, the Islamic understanding of the interrelatedness of psychological, physical and spiritual wellbeing and its connection to factors such as belief, community and tradition.

He shows how Yemeni artists, such as filmmaker Yūsuf turn to depictions of mundane social life and communal activities, trust, cooperation and problem solving to invoke the ethical norms underlying Yemen's social fabric or Eman found herself in bureaucratic limbo in India. Together with her collaborator Alfiya, who, born and raised in the Netherlands, cannot visit her ancestral homeland due to the current conflict, she turned to painting as a sort of therapy. One of the two described painting for example, features Himyaritic script, pictures of women and other symbols associated with Yemen to depict and manifest their own Yemeniness and the importance of Yemeni women. The article gives a very interesting glimpse into contemporary Yemeni art production—including a brief mentioning of Huthi attempts to suppress the movement, yet could have profited from more examples and background information to gain a grasp of the size and development of the described phenomenon.

⁹ Daniel Martin Varisco, "Indigenous Plant Protection Methods in Yemen", *GeoJournal* 37/1, 1995, pp. 27–38.

2024. Thomas Kuehn, “Nobody is leaving! Ottoman officials, their families and the struggle over Ottoman imperial sovereignty in Yemen after the Mudros Armistice, 1918–1924”, *Contemporary Levant* 9/2, pp. 155–168.

The article main argument is that Yemen’s trajectory from being part of the Ottoman Empire to becoming a sovereign state was far less straight forward than academic literature hitherto assumed. Relying strongly on memoirs, such as the one of İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar*,¹⁰ and government correspondence¹¹ the article makes the point that until the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Ottoman officials in Yemen, with full support of Imam Yaḥyā, sought to uphold the idea of the persistence of the Ottoman Empire and Yemen’s position within it. Similar to other parts of the former Empire, which wanted protection from Western domination, the Imam was quite content to be ruler of Yemen within a wider empire, protecting him from the encroachment of the Idrīsī state from the north. In their effort to undermine the aspirations to uphold the framework of the Ottoman Empire, the British on their part hindered Ottoman officials and the families from moving between Yemen and Turkey; thus nobody was leaving as the article’s title suggests. Only after 1923 did the Imam embark on establishing a sovereign state. In countering traditional wisdom of a clear break between Ottoman and Imamic rule, Kuehn convincingly reminds the reader that the reality not only is far less clear-cut than conveniently assumed, but also that right from the advent of his rule, the Imam, who later appointed his son as his successor and turned the imamate into a kingdom, was an incredibly pragmatic leader.

2024. Kazuo Morimoto, “Ibn ‘Inaba’s Oeuvre”, in: Laura Bottini & Cristiana Baldazzi (eds), *Il mondo musulmano: Religione, storia, letteratura. Studi in memoria di Biancamaria Scarcia Amoretti*, Rome, Istituto per l’Oriente C.A. Nallino, pp. 173–202.

This article establishes the oeuvre of Ibn ‘Inaba (d. 828/1424) from Iraq, arguably the most widely known expert on the genealogy of *sayyids* and *ṣarīfs* across the centuries and explores the reliability of his works. Comparing incipits, explicits and writing styles, the author clarifies that some texts claimed to be his works are not his works. For example, *Risāla fī uṣūl ṣaḡarat al-sādat Āl Abī ‘Alawī* is attributed to him by ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥibšī and its manuscript kept in the past at al-Ḥusaynī Library in Tarīm is now to be found at al-Aḥqāf Manuscript Library in the same city. As relevant catalogs do not include an entry of the manuscript, the author thinks that this manuscript might not be by Ibn ‘Inaba. For this, the author refers to *Fihris al-maḥṭūṭāt al-yamaniyya li-maktabat al-*

¹⁰ İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar*, Ankara, Bilgi Yayınevi, 1985, vol. 1.

¹¹ With regards to government correspondence, Kuehn relies on records in archives such as the Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi, the India Office Records and a book *Milli Mücadele Dönemi’nde Yemen-Türkiye İlişkileri: İmam Yahya-Mustafa Kemal Paşa Yazışmaları* by Mim Kemal Öke & Lütfullah Karaman, İstanbul, Arba Yayınları, 2017.

ahqāf bi-muḥāfazat Ḥaḍramawt by al-‘Aydārūs and ‘Abd al-Qādir (Qom & Tehran, Maktabat al-2009) and its index *Index de Fihris al-maḥṭūṭāt al-yamaniyya li-maktabat al-ahqāf bi-muḥāfazat Ḥaḍramawt*, edited by nCmY.

http://www.cdmy.org/docs/idx/index_Al-Aydarus_Fihris_Maktabat_al_Ahqaf_2009.pdf

<https://ipocan.it/index.php/en/publications-of-the-istituto-per-l-orientale-c-a-nallino>

2024. Anne Regourd, « Le sang du ventouseur (Yémen) », dans : Aminata Kane & Moussa Samba (dir.), « Les savoirs endogènes en question », numéro thématique, *Revue sénégalaise des sciences de l'information (RSSI)*, nouvelle série 1/1, p. 30-57.

Il s'agit de la première étude sur l'évolution d'un sous-groupe de statut au Yémen, celui des praticiens de la ventouse scarifiée (*hiḡāma*), s'appuyant sur un terrain effectué principalement à Sanaa (1999 et 2000) avec des comparaisons dans les environs (Wādī Ḥamḍān (1998), Ḥamḍān) mais aussi en Tihāma (Bayt al-Faqīh et Zabīd (2000, 2004), al-Ḥayt (2004)), à un moment de mobilité géographique et professionnelle, des changements mis en lumière par des diagrammes de lignées de ventouseurs. L'étude prend donc place après celle de Martha Mundy, *Domestic government: kinship, community, and polity in North Yemen*, Londres/New York, J.B. Tauris, 1995, incluant les puissants bouchers du Wadi Dahr. L'analyse est organisée autour du sang, sang médical et thérapeutique, sang social et finalement sang magique avec la question de savoir ce qu'on fait du sang après extraction du corps. L'étude aborde de nombreux sujets, tels le corps souffrant et le corps esthétique. S'appuyant principalement sur une étude de terrain, l'auteur porte l'attention sur le calendrier de la ventouse purgative et signale un passage du *Kitāb al-mandal al-sulaymānī* (ms Sanaa 2774, Dār al-Maḥṭūṭāt, Sanaa) portant sur l'attraction d'une tribu de djinn pour cette nourriture. Le sang dont on délivre le corps est en effet considéré comme corrompu (*fāsīd*) et sa manipulation par les ventouseurs ajoute au regard social une interrogation sur leurs pouvoirs.

En péninsule Arabique, où elle était pratiquée au temps du Prophète Muḥammad et où d'éventuels apports extérieurs ont été assimilés en fonction du contexte, la pratique de la ventouse scarifiée entre dans la catégorie des savoirs endogènes. Elle est aussi connue en Afrique subsaharienne. Il est à espérer que ce premier travail suscitera dans un proche avenir d'autres études qui apporteront des éléments comparatifs et permettront d'élaborer davantage. Dans l'immédiat, Blaise Parfait Kofi Aplogan (Docteur en anthropologie sociale et ethnologie, Institut des Mondes Africains/Institut Jean Nicod (IMAF/IJN)), spécialiste de l'Ifa en pays yoruba – Golfe du Bénin, a souhaité réagir à cet article.

Commentaire de B. P. Kofi Aplogan

Sur le plan général, B. P. Kofi Aplogan souligne l'articulation réussie entre les dimensions historiques, sociales et symboliques de la pratique des ventouses au Yémen, mettant en lumière les dynamiques de transmission, de stratification et de transformation qui caractérisent cette profession. L'étude révèle en effet comment une technique médicale ancienne devient un miroir des rapports entre savoir, corps et hiérarchie sociale.

- Les techniques du corps (Mauss) – L’analyse montre que la pose des ventouses ne relève pas d’un simple geste technique, mais d’un savoir-faire incorporé, transmis dans des cadres d’apprentissage familiaux ou d’observation directe. Elle illustre de manière exemplaire ce que Mauss qualifie de *techniques du corps*, où le geste médical, ici traditionnel, s’inscrit dans un ensemble de représentations sociales et morales. La posture du praticien, la maîtrise du geste et la gestion du sang confèrent au ventouseur une compétence reconnue, mais aussi une position ambivalente au sein de la société.
- Une histoire de la chirurgie et des pratiques médicales – Il est fascinant de constater comment une technique aussi ancienne a traversé les siècles, en intégrant des savoirs savants issus de la médecine grecque et arabe tout en conservant des formes locales d’interprétation. L’évocation d’une modernisation partielle de la profession – à travers la médicalisation du geste, l’obtention de diplômes ou l’inscription dans un cadre « clinique » – souligne ces moments charnières où les logiques de la biomédecine et de la médecine traditionnelle s’articulent. Ces recompositions révèlent non seulement des mutations professionnelles, mais aussi une redéfinition du rapport au corps, entre efficacité thérapeutique et légitimation symbolique.
- Valorisation des prestations esthétiques et médicales selon la perception du corps – L’opposition entre contextes rural et urbain, la transformation du statut social du ventouseur et la possible requalification du métier par la « clinique » moderne traduisent la manière dont la perception du corps détermine la reconnaissance des savoirs médicaux. Le rapport au sang – substance impure, mais vecteur de guérison – met en évidence une tension entre purification et danger, entre savoir et pouvoir. Cette ambivalence confère au praticien une autorité spécifique, tout en le maintenant à la marge. La persistance de l’endogamie professionnelle et des croyances liées au sang témoignent de la continuité des représentations collectives, même dans un contexte de mutation sociale rapide.

En somme, cette étude offre une contribution précieuse à la compréhension des relations entre médecine, symbolique du corps et transformations sociales. Elle invite également à une réflexion comparative sur la place des savoirs endogènes dans des sociétés où les frontières entre tradition et modernité restent en constante négociation.

2024. Max Stern, “Rabbi Shalem Shabazi–Greatest Poet of Yemen”, *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 14/11, pp. 955–960.

The short article discusses the life of and legends around Shalem Shabazi (998 or 997/1619–1098 or 1099/1720¹²) an itinerant Jewish poet and miracle worker. The fact that the article does not back up its claim that Shabazi was the greatest poet of Yemen, its culturalist assertion that to truly appreciate his lyrical qualities like Yemen’s population

¹² The article itself gives the year 1680 as is year of death, more often, however, it is given as 1720, which would make him an exceptional 101 years old at the time of his death.

had obviously done, one had to have a more refined taste than European peasant with their folk songs and the fact that the whole article only relies on two secondary sources, make the conclusion the most interesting part of the text. This especially in light of the fact that neither of the two sources—judging from their titles, one a biography,¹³ the other a compendiums of songs of the Yemeni Jews¹⁴—can be found in online databases. In the conclusion the author recounts how, during his stays in Jerusalem, in what must have been the 1970s, Jews from Yemen used to recite and sing his work at every suitable occasion (voir Tom Fogel, “Jewish Magic in 17th century Yemen. A preliminary examination of Shalom (Sālim) al-Šabazī’s amulet book”, *nCmY*, Special Issue 4, 2025, pp. 107–124, et l’entrée ci-dessous).

Juillet 2025. Anne Regourd (éd.), *Nouvelles Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen*, numéro spécial/Special Issue 4, « Yémen – péninsule Arabique. Histoires de Sciences et de Techniques/Yemen – Arabian Peninsula. The history and histories of Sciences and Techniques », mise en ligne 1/Installment 1.

Il s’agit de la première mise en ligne de ce numéro spécial des *nCmY* consacré aux sciences et techniques. Il rassemble les contributions de :

- Zsuzsanna Csorba (Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies (Piliscsaba, Hungary)), « A Travel Regimen from the Rasulid Yemen. Arabic Text, English Translation, and Commentary », p. 1-52 ;
- Giovanni Canova (University of Naples « L’Orientale »), « Three Studies on Bees and Honey. Traditional Beekeeping in Yemen and Oman », p. 53-106 ;
- Tom Fogel (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), « Jewish Magic in 17th century Yemen. A preliminary examination of Shalom (Sālim) al-Šabazī’s amulet book », p. 107-124.

Ces contributions touchent à des disciplines variées – médecine de voyage, apiculture et margie – et s’étendent de la période rasoulide à l’époque contemporaine. Elles sont principalement tournées vers le Yémen, mais incluent aussi Oman. Une seconde mise en ligne aura lieu cet automne.

[cmyhs04.pdf](#)

¹³ Given in the article as: R. S. Chozeh, *The life of Rabbi Shalem Shabazi*, Jerusalem, Yosef Hasid, 1973.

¹⁴ Given in the article as: M. B. Z. Yitzhak, *The Diwan Deluxe Edition: Songs of the Yemenite Jews*, Netanya, Association For Society and Culture, 1992.

2025. Ahad Lutf Al-Awadhi & Alwi Dahlan Ritonga, "The Role of Social Entrepreneurs in Transforming Yemen's Agricultural Landscape", *Journal of Peasants' Rights* 3/2, pp. 91–100.

The authors discuss how social entrepreneurs are transforming the Yemeni agricultural sector, addressing economic challenges, environmental degradation, and social vulnerability due to conflict. While the political situation in Yemen has been unstable, organic farming has emerged in Yemen, agricultural cooperatives such as Rassef has been an important platform for Yemeni farmers to collectively increase their capacity, and new agricultural technology has been introduced by foundations such as Barq. In terms of the scope of *nCmY*, the Rassef agricultural cooperative represents an important legacy of agricultural practices in the Rasūlid Yemen recorded in the agricultural Yemeni text *Milḥ al-milāḥa* by the Rasūlid Sultan al-Malik al-Ašraf (r. 694/1295–696/1296) analyzed in "The Milḥ al-Malāḥa of al-Malik al-Ashraf 'Umar (d. 696/1296): Situating the Ur-Text of the Rasulid Agricultural Corpus", *CmY* 9 (2010), by Daniel Martin Varisco. Further, this cooperative is able to refer to the so-called *A Royal Crop Register* (*Faṣl fī ma'rifat al-matānīm wa-al-asiqā fī al-Yaman al-mahrūsa*), which is among the Rasūlid documents in *The Manuscript of al-Malik al-Afḍal* edited by D. M. Varisco & G. Rex Smith (Warminster, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1998), and which is translated into English in "A Royal Crop Register from Rasulid Yemen", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* (*JESHO*) 34/1 (1991), pp. 1–22, by D. M. Varisco (references given by the author were not complete, so they have been reconstructed for the reader).

<https://doi.org/10.32734/jpr.v3i2.19086>

1446/2025. *Asīr fī al-watā'iq al-ʿutmāniyya : al-tarğama min al-ḥiraf al-tānī ilā al-ʿarabī. Vol. 1 : 1300-1320/1882-1902 ; vol. 2 : 1321-1327/1903-1920*, tarğam wa-iʿdād Ġaytān b. ʿAlī b. Ġiryis, Rašād ʿAbd Allāh al-Šahrī, Anʿam Muḥammad al-Kabbāšī, Abḥā, Dār diwān al-ʿArab li-al-našr wa-al-tawzīʿ, respectivement 606 p., 550 p. [1^{re} éd.]. ISBN : 978-977-971-000-6.

« *Asīr* dans les documents ottomans (1300-1327/1882-1920) » se compose de deux volumes réunissant un total de plusieurs centaines de documents ottomans traduits en arabe. Les auteurs se sont attachés à restituer leur contenu de manière fidèle, sans ajout ni interprétation critique, se limitant à leur traduction, leur mise en page et leur publication, dans le but de les mettre à la disposition des chercheurs, étudiants de master et de doctorat, ainsi que des lecteurs intéressés par l'histoire des régions.

La région du *ʿAsīr*, sujet principal de cet ouvrage, est une dénomination moderne regroupant les zones de Tihāma et Sarāt. Cette région représente une grande partie de la géographie méridionale de la péninsule Arabique, située entre le Yémen et le Grand Ḥiğāz.

L'Empire ottoman a commencé à établir un contact direct avec le Ḥiğāz et le Yémen à partir des x^e/xvi^e-xii^e/xvii^e s., mais aucune influence claire n'est visible dans les régions de Sarāt et de Tihāma, qui s'étendent du Sud de La Mecque et d'al-Ṭāʾif jusqu'aux régions de Ġazān et de Nağrān. Dans les années 1880, l'Empire ottoman chercha à étendre son

contrôle militaire et administratif sur les régions de Sarāt et de Tihāma. La ville d'Abhā devint alors le siège principal de l'administration du Sarāt et de la Tihāma, couvrant un t

territoire allant des régions de Zahrān, Ġāmid, Dawqa et al-Qunfudā au nord, jusqu'à Ġāzān et Qaḥṭān du Sud. Cette entité administrative fut officiellement appelée « Mutaṣarrifiyya du 'Asīr ». Cette autorité ottomane nouvelle régna sur la région pendant environ un demi-siècle (1288/1871-1337/1918). La Mutaṣarrifiyya du 'Asīr, basée à Abhā, dépendait administrativement, militairement et financièrement du vilayet (*wilāya*), du Yémen conformément à l'organisation provinciale établie par les autorités ottomanes. Plus de quinze gouverneurs se succédèrent à la tête de cette Mutaṣarrifiyya. Durant cette période, l'ensemble des régions du Sarāt et de Tihāma furent le théâtre de conflits et de guerres multiples et variées. L'État ottoman, avec l'appui de ses deux vilayets voisins, le Ḥiğāz et le Yémen, eut à affronter des périodes extrêmement difficiles, tant sur le plan humain que matériel, dans sa tentative de consolider son autorité sur la Mutaṣarrifiyya du 'Asīr. Malgré tous les efforts déployés, il ne parvint pas à atteindre pleinement les

Les manuscrits, documents, correspondances et registres ottomans représentent parmi les sources primaires les plus importantes et les plus précieuses pour documenter l'histoire de la péninsule Arabique à partir du xiii^e/xix^e s. jusqu'aux premières décennies du xiv^e/xx^e s. Ils ont donné lieu à d'abondantes recherches – ouvrages et thèses universitaires tant arabes qu'étrangères, publiés au cours des dernières 90 années (1355/1936-1445/2024). Les principales sources à notre disposition sont constituées par des carnets de voyage, des archives et des manuscrites. Or les archives ottomanes (Beşbakanlık), situées à Istanbul, conservent des milliers de documents, registres et sources écrites en ottoman, dont la majorité n'a pas encore été étudiée, ni exploitée et mérite d'être traduite en arabe, analysée, vérifiée et traitée selon une méthodologie scientifique et documentaire.

Ce recueil comprend 424 documents ottomans sélectionnés parmi près de 7.000 disponibles. Les auteurs les ont traduits en arabe sans y apporter d'annotations, d'études critiques ou d'interprétations approfondies. Ci-dessous, en est donné un aperçu général, suivant leur classification par numéro de documents d'archive, leurs thèmes principaux, les sources utilisées, assorti de quelques remarques sur leurs apports, avantages et limites. Il convient de noter que toutes les années mentionnées dans le titre de l'ouvrage ne sont pas forcément représentées par des documents traduits ou publiés. Par exemple, les années 1300/1882-1302/1884 ne comprennent aucun document disponible dans les archives consultées. Et le nombre de documents disponibles varie considérablement d'une année à l'autre : certaines années ne sont représentées que par quelques documents.

Les documents ottomans traduits varient en longueur : la plupart tiennent sur une seule page, tandis que d'autres couvrent plusieurs feuillets. Chaque document porte son numéro d'archive original tel qu'il apparaît dans les Archives ottomanes à Istanbul. Lors de la traduction, les auteurs ont inscrit ce numéro dans l'angle supérieur droit de la première page traduite. Ils ont en outre attribué à l'ensemble des documents ottomans (en arabe et en turc-ottoman) un numéro séquentiel propre allant de 1 à 424. Le premier

volume couvre les années 1300/1882-1320/1902 et contient 231 documents. Le second volume s'étend de 1321/1903-1327/1909 et contient 193 documents.

La plupart des documents traduits comporte mention du lieu ou de l'autorité officielle émettrice ou au contraire du destinataire, généralement indiquée soit en début soit en fin de document. Le nom du responsable ou de l'institution concernée est également souvent donné, qu'il s'agisse d'un individu ou d'une administration.

En termes philologiques, les auteurs se sont contentés d'une révision linguistique et stylistique du texte arabe des documents, s'assurant de corriger certains noms propres – géographiques et personnels – tels qu'ils apparaissent dans les documents originaux.

La majorité de ces documents a un lien direct avec la région du Sarāt et de la Tihāma (Mutaşarrifiyya du 'Asīr) pour la période indiquée dans le titre de l'ouvrage. D'autres documents contiennent des informations en relation avec les vilayets du Yémen et du Ḥiğāz ou avec le centre impérial ottoman à Istanbul, ainsi qu'avec divers endroits situés sur les continents africain, asiatique et européen.

Ci-dessous, un ensemble de points généraux portant sur les thèmes abordés par ces documents :

- la majorité des documents sont de nature gouvernementale. Ils ont été émis par des institutions officielles de l'État ottoman, tels : le Sultan ottoman (Calife), le Grand vizir, ainsi que de plusieurs ministères, dont le ministère de la Guerre, des Finances, de l'Intérieur, du Commerce et des Travaux publics, mais aussi par des responsables militaires ou civils de rang secondaire au sein de l'administration impériale, notamment : les Wulāt (Gouverneurs), les Mutaşarrifin (dirigeant d'une province), Caïmacan (le représentant de l'État dans le district) au Yémen et au Ḥiğāz et de la Mutaşarrifiyya du 'Asīr, ainsi que de fonctionnaires divers.
- les Ottomans ont tenté d'étendre leur autorité sur les régions du Sarāt et de Tihāma (Mutaşarrifiyya du 'Asīr), en les rattachant au Yémen. Pour y parvenir, ils ont déployé d'importants efforts militaires, administratifs et financiers, coordonnés depuis la capitale impériale, Istanbul, en lien avec les provinces du Yémen et du Ḥiğāz, dans le but de prendre le contrôle de la région. Cependant, ils se sont heurtés à une forte résistance tribale, à une géographie difficile et au rejet de l'autorité centrale par les populations locales. Incapables d'assurer la sécurité ou de faire face aux catastrophes naturelles – telles que la sécheresse et les maladies touchant les populations, le bétail et les cultures, l'administration ottomane contribua à la dégradation économique et sociale de la région, provoquant des révoltes et une rupture avec le pouvoir central.
- les documents ottomans révèlent de nombreuses correspondances entre les autorités d'Istanbul, du Yémen, du Ḥiğāz et les commandants militaires en 'Asīr, portant principalement sur des problèmes logistiques et financiers (nourriture, armes, salaires, pénuries). Malgré l'intensité de ces échanges, les réponses étaient souvent lentes et peu efficaces. Une confusion persistait également concernant le statut administratif de la Mutaşarrifiyya du 'Asīr, parfois rattachée au Yémen, par-

fois considérée comme autonome, ce qui affaiblissait son intégration administrative. Les plaintes répétées des responsables locaux restèrent sans réponse satisfaisante jusqu'au désengagement de la province du Yémen entre 1908 et 1909.

- la région de la Mutaṣarrifiyya du 'Asīr était marquée par une instabilité politique et militaire persistante, contrairement au Ḥiğāz. Des insurrections tribales fréquentes opposaient les Ottomans aux tribus locales dans les régions de la Tihāma, du Sarāt, de Ġāmid, Dawqa, Zahrān, al-'Araḍiyyāt, al-Muḥwā'a et al-Qunfuḍa. Malgré de nombreux échanges entre les autorités ottomanes, l'Empire restait constamment mobilisé pour réprimer ces révoltes par l'envoi de troupes, de vivres et d'équipements. Certaines campagnes connurent un succès limité, beaucoup échouèrent entraînant de lourdes pertes humaines et matérielles.
- de nombreux documents montrent que l'attention de l'Empire ottoman était principalement centrée sur les aspects militaires, logistiques et politiques, tandis que les populations locales du Ḥiğāz, du Yémen et du 'Asīr ne bénéficiaient d'aucune véritable protection sociale, ni d'un soutien moral ou matériel organisé.
- les communications terrestres et maritimes entre les institutions de l'Empire ottoman, à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de la péninsule Arabique, et la Mutaṣarrifiyya du 'Asīr représentaient l'un des plus grands obstacles auxquels les Ottomans étaient confrontés. En effet, contrairement au Ḥiğāz et au Yémen, 'Asīr ne disposait d'aucune liaison télégraphique avec les autres régions.
- durant la période étudiée, les autorités ottomanes de la Mutaṣarrifiyya du 'Asīr, en particulier les Mutaṣarrifis, n'ont pas toujours servi efficacement l'Empire ni traité équitablement la population locale. Certains se sont rendus coupables d'abus et de répression, suscitant de nombreuses plaintes et provoquant des troubles dans plusieurs régions, notamment à Istanbul, au Yémen, au Ḥiğāz et en 'Asīr. D'autres souffraient d'un manque de compétence et de discernement dans leur gestion. Les documents officiels font état de plaintes, d'enquêtes et de procédures administratives à leur encontre.
- certains documents révèlent que l'Empire ottoman a été confronté à de nombreux défis, en partie liés aux actions hostiles de puissances européennes en mer Rouge. Celles-ci entretenaient des contacts avec des forces hostiles à l'Empire et facilitaient le trafic d'armes modernes vers les régions de Tihāma et de Sarāt. Des tribus de la Mutaṣarrifiyya du 'Asīr et d'autres zones auraient ainsi reçu des armes européennes pour combattre les Ottomans. L'émergence de l'Émir Idrīsī à Ṣabyā, ses alliances et l'extension de son influence dans la Sarāt ont constitué un autre défi majeur pour l'Empire.
- des documents épars contiennent de nombreuses informations, telles que :
 - des signes de rébellion et de désobéissance apparus chez certains soldats ottomans en 'Asīr, en raison des difficultés rencontrées, du manque de ravitaillement, ainsi que de l'absence de soins et de soutien adéquat pour poursuivre la guerre contre les populations locales.
 - la présence de certains notables, individus ou tribus ayant coopéré et soutenu les Ottomans, répondant à divers objectifs. Simultanément, plusieurs

groupes et tribus étaient en conflit permanent avec les armées de l'État depuis la prise de contrôle des terres du 'Asīr jusqu'à leur retrait.

- certains courriers et plaintes envoyés par des citoyens ordinaires ou par certains fonctionnaires ottomans étaient adressés au Sultan, au Grand Vizir, au Commandement général de l'armée ou encore aux ministères de l'Intérieur, des Finances et à d'autres qu'il faudrait identifier un à un. Les plaignants y exposaient les injustices ou souffrances qu'ils avaient subies et réclamaient une solution à leur situation.
- dans les domaines administratifs, militaires, financiers, sanitaires, éducatifs entre autres, l'Empire ottoman était relativement moderne et développé. Certains documents témoignent de cette vie moderne que les Ottomans ont introduite dans la péninsule Arabique. Une partie de ces avancées a atteint les institutions étatiques au Yémen, au Ḥiğāz, en 'Asīr et dans d'autres régions. Cependant, si l'on examine les effets de cette modernisation en Tihāma et Sarāt, on constate qu'ils furent limités et peu marquants. La ville d'Abhā, ainsi que quelques autres centres (Caīmacamat-s) de la région du 'Asīr, figurent parmi les zones ayant le plus bénéficié des progrès.



2025. Tamon Baba, “Crossing the Sea: A Judge and a Great Eunuch of the Yemeni Rasūlids during the Fourteenth Century”, in: Hideaki Suzuki (ed.), *Civilization of Mobilities: In-between “Free” and “Unfree”*, Tokyo, Shibunkaku, pp. 233–258. [In Japanese]

The article discusses how a “free” judge and an “unfree” great eunuch crossed the sea from Northeast Africa to Yemen and lived in Rasūlid Yemen. They both served the Rasūlid Sultan al-Malik al-Muğāhid (r. 1321–1363) in Yemen at the same time and reached high positions, while the former moved to Yemen freely and the other might have been moved forcibly as he was a castrated slave. Although the two did not have the same Islamic legal status and their mobilities were symmetrical, they lived as hard as possible rather than just following their legal and social situation. The author reconstructs their lives from the Rasūlid sources such as a chronicle *Al-‘uqūd al-lu’lu’iyya* by al-Ḥazraḡī (d. 812/1409) edited by Muḥammad Basyūnī ‘Asal (Cairo, Maṭba‘at al-Hilāl, 1914) and a biographical work *Kitāb al-‘atāyā* by al-Malik al-Afḡal (r. 1363–1377), a son of the above mentioned Sultan al-Malik al-Muğāhid, edited by ‘Abd al-Wāḡid ‘Abd Allāh Aḡmad al-Ḥāmīrī (Sanaa, Iṣḡārāt wizārat al-ṭaqāfa wa-al-siyāḡa, 2004).

<https://www.shibunkaku.co.jp/publishing/list/9784784220816/>

2025. Faozi Al-Goidi, “The Sea vs. the Desert: Rahmah ibn Jabir and the Dialectic of Piracy and Maritime Influence”, *Al-Muntaqa* 8/1, pp. 40–62.

As Great Britain expanded its influence to India, its interest in the Gulf increased as well as it was vital for regional maritime trade. Actions inimical to British maritime interests were strategically labelled as piracy. One figure described thusly as pirate by the British was Raḡmat b. Ġābir (c. 1173/1760–1242/1826). By controlling trade routes, collecting taxes and tributes from passing ships in the Gulf he was able to establish what Faozi Al-Goidi calls a “maritime sheikhdōm”, a sphere of influence on the sea, with his flagship as floating, mobile capital. Despite exercising influence primarily at sea, he established himself in the coastal centers of Ḥūr Ḥassān, Dammam as well as Būshehr and entered in alliances with local rulers, most importantly the Wahhabis and, as they lost ground to the Egyptian forces of Muḥammad ‘Alī, changed his allegiance to the latter. Both powers used him to extend their influence beyond the lands they ruled and it is therefore not wonder that Naḡdī sources on Ibn Ġābir differ sharply from the disparaging British accounts. Rather than as an atrocious criminal, Naḡdī historian Uṭmān b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Biṣr (1210/1795–1290/1873) in his *‘Unwān al-maḡd fi tāriḡ Naḡd*¹⁵, the main historic source in Arabic the author uses, depicted him as valiant and devout fighter for the cause of Islam.

Whereas this is clearly also a heavily biased account, it points to a wider truth, namely that—as the article argues—Ibn Ġābir was not a mere pirate, but a leader vying for resources and influence comparable to his land-based counterparts. This is doubtless an interesting idea, however, the article gives literally no indication of the inner workings

¹⁵ Uṭmān b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Biṣr, *‘Unwān al-maḡd fi tāriḡ Naḡd*, Riyadh, Dār Malik ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, 1982.

of Ibn ʿĠābir’s “shaykhdom” and the sources of his authority within it. Was he leader of a viable political entity that, despite being destroyed in 1826 at the hands of the Al Ḥalifa, could have survived for generations or was he for example the leader of an entirely male group of brigands without handed down social structure allowing for generational renewal and the keeping of order by means beyond mere force and fear. The article also makes frequent use of archival material, as is indicated by the style and content of the reference, yet unfortunately does not specify the archive the material was drawn from. Nevertheless, the article encourages to rethink Eurocentric, or worse colonial, categories and labels and to look for a more emic perspective.

Available on: <https://almuntaga.dohainstitute.org/en/issue018/Pages/art05.aspx>

2025. Ekaterina Pukhovaia becomes Curator of Middle Eastern Manuscripts and Rare Books at Leiden University

Up to a hundred would-be graduate students apply each year to the Near Eastern Studies Department at Princeton, but financial constraints mean that their chances of success are about one in twenty. Among the applicants who took this chance in 2015 was a Russian student at Moscow State University, Ekaterina Pukhovaia. Moscow State, unlike Harvard or Yale, was *terra incognita* for the Department, but Ekaterina had made a trip to Paris, where she briefly worked with a French scholar who spoke highly of her. On the strength of that it was decided that it might be worth investing some scarce faculty time in interviewing her, so a Skype interview was scheduled (this was in the pre-Zoom era). Those who interviewed her couldn’t help being impressed by the fact that she spoke fluent English despite never having lived in an English-speaking country, and when it came to matters of scholarship she conveyed a definite impression that she knew what she was talking about. Separately the Department’s Arabic teachers interviewed her to assess her Arabic, and reported favorably. To make a long story short, the Department voted to include her among the five or six applicants to whom it was in a position to offer admission that year. When Ekaterina arrived in the Department that fall, the first thing she did was to inform the then Director of Graduate Studies that she had decided that in the West she was going to be Kate.

Kate then embarked on the usual graduate student career, taking a variety of courses and learning Turkish and Ottoman. It quickly became apparent that the Department had not made a mistake in admitting her. In due course her interests came to focus on the Yemen in the early modern period, and in particular on the interactions of Zaydis and Ottomans in the construction and demolition of states. While a significant amount of relevant source material has been published in recent years, her project required extensive use of books that were still in manuscript on the Yemeni side, and of archival documents on the Ottoman side. She accordingly spent a year working at the Ambrosiana in Milan and in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul. The reports of her work that she sent back to her advisers in Princeton displayed an ever-deepening immersion in the hand-written. What emerged in due course was a dissertation—and prospective book—that sheds a flood of light on the nature and evolution of politics in the early modern Yemen.

After completing her dissertation in 2021, Kate went on to postdocs in Jerusalem and Leiden, followed in 2023 by an assistant professorship at the University of Utrecht. Then, in 2025, she was appointed to the historic role of Curator of Middle Eastern Manuscripts and Rare Books at Leiden University. She is not, of course, the first scholar with a particular expertise in Yemeni manuscripts to occupy such a role at Leiden: a century ago Cornelis van Arendonk combined it with a major contribution to the study of a much earlier phase in the history of the Zaydi polity in the Yemen. His book was published in Dutch in 1919; Kate's, to be entitled *Between sultans and imams*, is eagerly awaited, and will mercifully be published in English.

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[10.1163/24682470-12340007](https://doi.org/10.1163/24682470-12340007)

"The Lords of Kawkaban and the Transformation of the State in Early Modern Yemen (15th–17th Centuries)", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 66, 2023, pp. 289–317. Open access,
<https://doi.org/10.1163/15685209-12341596>

"Sayyids, Tribal Kinship, and the Imamate in Zaydi Yemen under Imam Yahya Sharaf al-Din (d. 965/1558)", *Medieval Encounters* 29, 2023, pp. 442–463. Open access,
<https://doi.org/10.1163/15700674-12340173>

2025. Mohamed Saleh Al-Haj & Lily Filson, "Architectural Icons and Intellectual Beacons: Ibb City's Islamic Schools and Omar's Mosque—A Great Loss to the Islamic Heritage", in: Sayed Hemeda, *Safeguarding the World Culture Heritage: Advances and New Perspectives*. On line.

The authors have been exploring the heritage in Ibb. This article clarifies the current status of the Omar Mosque and School in Ibb built by caliph 'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), and that of some other Islamic schools. While most of the data is collected from the architectural observations of the buildings by the authors, the English translation of the travelogue by Carsten Niebuhr (1733–1815) (*Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East*, translated by Robert Heron, Edinburgh, R. Morison & Son, 1792) is referred to to explore the status of the schools during the eighteenth century.

The article "Ibb's Grand Mosque: Heritage at Risk in Yemen's Hinterland" by the same authors is consulted in the previous *nCmY* (*nCmY* 19/38 (Juil. 2024), *Actualités*, pp. 11–12).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1006959>

2025. Orçun Ünal, “A New Chuvash–Common Turkic Cognate and its Relation to Tocharian: Evidence for Zetacism in Turkic”, *Orientalia Suecana* 74, pp. 45–55.

This article proposes a new cognate relationship between Chuvash *věre-* ‘to boil’ and Common Turkic **özä-* ‘to suffer’. *The King’s Dictionary: The Rasūlid Hexaglot. Fourteenth Century Vocabularies in Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Greek, Armenian and Mongol* (Leiden, Brill, ser. “Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 8: Uralic & Central Asian Studies”, 4, 2000) edited and published by Peter B. Golden & Tibor Halasi-Kun, the Yemeni Rasūlid dictionary, includes the word *özilmäk*, corresponding to Arabic *al-‘inā* ‘pains, trouble, toil, hardship, difficulty, distress’ and could support the discussion.

<https://doi.org/10.33063/os.v74.647>

2025. Alexander Weissenburger, “Yemen’s Islamists and the War in Gaza: The interplay of ideology, context, and strategy”, *Mediterranean Politics* 30/2, pp. 439–448.

The article discusses the reactions of four Yemeni Islamist movements, Yemen’s wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islah party, the Salafi al-Rashad party, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Houthi movement also known as Ansar Allah. It is argued that the reaction of these actors was and is not merely determined by their ideology, political context, including the expectations of allies and followers, as well as the practical means to act upon one’s contentions. Whereas Islah and al-Rashad both claim to stand with the Palestinian people, they connect the war to the crisis in Yemen likening their main enemy, the Huthi movement to Israel. AQAP on the other hand calls for all Jews, Britons and US citizens to be killed. Unlike the Huthi movement, however, AQAP was too weak to act upon this stance. Despite also perpetuating anti-Semitic tropes, the Huthis on their part take a somewhat more moderate stance in ideological terms, legitimizing their active involvement in the war in terms of the need to help the Palestinian people, not in the light of a religious battle. The article, however, goes beyond this explanation given by the movement itself and asserts that there were also domestic and international political factors and alliances that influenced the movement’s decisions. The article is strongly based on primary sources such as the transcriptions of numerous speeches of the Huthi movement’s leader, ‘Abd al-Malik al-Ḥūṭī (b. 1447/1979),¹⁶ and gives a brief yet concise overview of the different positions the four movements in question take as well as the likely rationale behind them, whereas the Huthi movement, due to its prominence in the Gaza war, receives by far the most attention.

¹⁶ See for example the transcript published in one of the movement’s newspapers: ‘Abd al-Malik al-Ḥūṭī, “Qaṣafnā al-‘adwū bi-akṭar min alf ṣārūḥ wa-ṭā’ira masīra wa-istahadafnā 193 safīna ḥilāl ‘ām min (Ṭufān al-Aqsā)”, *Al-masīra* 1992, 7 October 2024.

ARABIE

2025. Esra Atmaca, “The Cover of the Holy Building, the Symbol of Politics: The Historical Power Rivalry over the Kiswa of the Ka’ba”, *Religions* 16/3, 358, 22 p.

This article discusses how the *kiswa* of the Ka’ba became a religious and political symbol in the relations between Muslim rulers, such as the Abbāsids, Mamlūks, Rasūlids and Ottomans. The renewal of the *kiswa* has been recognized as an expression of the efforts of the states representing the authority as servants to the Islamic *umma* and a reflection of leadership claims, authority, and political rivalries. This is why the Muslim rulers sometimes disagreed with each other over the sending and covering of the *kiswa*.

While the author analyzes the competition over the *kiswa* between Egyptian Mamlūks and Yemeni Rasūlids, the sources are not Yemeni texts but Egyptian and Meccan texts such as *Šifā’ al-ġarām* by al-Fāṣī (d. 832/1429) (Beirut, Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 2000 (there is no indication of its editor)), *Ġāyat al-marām* by Ibn Fahd (d. 922/1517) edited by Fahīm Muḥammad Šaltūt (Mecca, Ġāmi‘at Umm al-qurā, 1986) and *Itḥāf al-warā* by Ibn Fahd edited by Fahīm Muḥammad Šaltūt (Mecca, Ġāmi‘at Umm al-qurā, 1983-1990).

<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030358>

<https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/16/3/358>

GOLFE / PÉNINSULE ARABIQUE

2025. Amna Abdulla Sadiq, “The Drought Years: The Forgotten Economic Transformations in Gulf History”, *Al-Muntaqa* 8/1, pp. 28–39.

The article discusses the context, impact and causes of British austerity politics in the Gulf in the 1940s. With the advent of the Second World War, the British merchant fleet was placed under the purview of the Ministry of Shipping, which in addition with submarine warfare of the Axis powers and a lack of stockpiled resources led to severe shortages. Even before the war, the pearl export had declined sharply which only helped to exacerbate the ensuing economic crisis. In order to prevent the Gulf rulers aligning themselves with the Axis powers, the British government strengthened its grip on the region. In addition, the government tasked its regional political residents with monitoring the economic situation in order to be able to alleviate the crisis. As the local economic dynamics were poorly understood and the pre-war economic shifts not factored in, the measures were inadequate and in fact exacerbated the dire situation. By 1942 famine was spreading in the region. After the war, the region did not regain self-sufficiency and remained reliant on imports, which in turn fastened its transformation to today’s oil based rentier economies. While not dealing with Yemen directly, the article details a very interesting aspect of the whole region’s history, which due to Yemen’s connectedness to the Indian Ocean World is still of great import for research on Yemen. Relying strongly on British diplomatic archival material and Arabic sources on the Gulf

region's economy such as 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥulayfī's *al-Ġawṣ 'alā al-lu'lu' fī Qaṭar*¹⁷ or Mūza al-Ġābir's *al-Taṭawwur al-iqtisādī wa-al-iġtimā'ī fī Qaṭar*,¹⁸ the article also goes beyond the often heavy reliance on secondary sources in historical writing on the Gulf region.

almuntaqa.dohainstitute.org/en/issue018/Pages/art04.aspx

KOWEIT

2025. Fahad Ahmad Bishara, "The Sailing Scribe: Mansur al-Khariji and the Oceanic Worlds of the Gulf", *Al-Muntaqa* 8/1, pp. 15–27.

To explore the intellectual labour that facilitated movement and circulation in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, the article analyzes a navigational guidebook *Al-qawā'id wa al-mayl wa al-natiġa fī 'ilm al-biḥār* by a Kuwaiti *nāḥūdā* (dhow captain) Maṣṣūr b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥārīgī (1879–1954). He sailed the Indian Ocean over 40 years and noted his knowledge on navigation including the movements of the sun, the stars, the wind and the water itself, together with latitude and longitude. This text also includes legal and financial information related to dhow voyages such as how to share the profit. Thinking, reading, and writing history oceanically, instead of from the land, Fahad Ahmad Bishara emphasizes that the "circulation" was not just about goods or people, but about the full range of social, political, and cultural behaviours entangled in the movement of goods, people, and capital around a far-flung arena.

Fahad Ahmad Bishara is a well-known scholar for his book *A Sea of Debt: Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian Ocean, 1780–1950* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017) (*nCmY* 6/25 (Janv. 2018), Actualités, pp. 33–34).

<https://almuntaqa.dohainstitute.org/en/issue018/Pages/art03.aspx>

MER ROUGE / OCÉAN INDIEN

2025. Parappu Kadavath Matra Abdul Jaleel, "Sacred immigrants and travelling rituals: Malabar in the Sufi cosmopolis of the Indian Ocean", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3, pp. 1–20.

The author has been analyzing a Muslim community in Malabar, focusing on its relationship with Ḥaḍramawt. This article traces how the Yemeni-origin Sufi order of *ṭarīqat* 'Alawiyya and its ritual litany of al-Ḥaddād, with chants and prayers for the Prophet and

¹⁷ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥulayfī, *Al-Ġawṣ 'alā al-lu'lu' fī Qaṭar*, Qatar, Qatar Publishing, 2012.

¹⁸ Mūza al-Ġābir, *Al-taṭawwur al-iqtisādī wa-al-iġtimā'ī fī Qaṭar 1930–1973*, Beirut, Arab Institute for Research & Publishing, 2020.

his descendants especially from Ḥaḍramawt, became part of everyday Muslim devotional practices in Malabar through immigrant networks of Ḥaḍramī *sayyids*. To explore how ‘Alawī immigrants could bring the Yemeni Sufi order into Malabar and how ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥaddād (d. 1720), the eponymous figure for Rātīb al-Ḥaddād, the ritual litany of ‘Alawī Yemeni order, lived, *Kanz al-barāhīn* by an ‘Alawī immigrant Muḥammad b. Ġifrī (d. 1222/1808) (Ponnani, Ma‘ūnat al-islām Arabic College, after 1864) and *Šams al-ḡahīra fī nasab ahl al-bayt* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Mašhūr (d. 1320/1902) (Jeddah, n.d.) were consulted.

The author contributed an article, “Hadrami Archives of Malabar: Two Manuscript Collections in Calicut, Southwest India”, to the *nCmY* (*nCmY* 17/36 (Juil. 2023), pp. 70–151). The article “Arab Immigrants under Hindu Kings in Malabar: Ethical Pluralities of ‘Naturalisation’ in Islam” by the same author is consulted in the *nCmY* (*nCmY* 10/29 (Janv. 2020), Actualités, pp. 21–22).

[doi:10.1017/S1356186324000221](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186324000221)

OMAN

2020. Daniel Filipe Ferreira da Costa, *The Wavering Power: The Portuguese hold on the Arabian coast of Oman 1622–1650*, Master’s Thesis, Lisbon, Nova University.

The author explores the pivotal characteristics and events of the Portuguese presence in the Arabian coast of Oman, from the loss of Hormuz to the fall of Muscat in 1650. To understand how the Portuguese elites and officials acted throughout the period, military operations, political decisions, commercial activities and financial aspects are well analyzed. The discussion is based on Portuguese sources such as *Assentos do Conselho de Estado* of the Estado da Índia’s councils held at Goa from 1618 to 1658, published in 1955, and *Portugal in the Sea of Oman: Religion and Politics*, the newly published corpus (Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, 2015–2018). Because native Arabic or Persian sources for the period are scarce, such European documents are valuable sources for research of the Indian Ocean rim.

<https://run.unl.pt/handle/10362/118903>

2018. Abdulrahman al-Salimi & Michael Janse in collaboration with Pedro Pinto & Helmut Siempmann, *Portugal in the Sea of Oman Religion and Politics: Research on Documents* 17, Hildesheim, Zürich & New York, Georg Olms Verlag. ISBN: 978-3-487-15318-6.

This volume is the index of vols 1–16 of the series entitled *Portugal in the Sea of Oman Religion and Politics* which has 1,500 documents on over 8,000 pages. This series is a 16-volume facsimile edition of the Portuguese manuscript documents from the 16th to 18th centuries held in the archives in Lisbon at the Torre do Tombo and the Biblioteca Nacional which relate to Oman. The series is the outcome of an initiative begun by the

Omani Ministry for Foundations and Religious Affairs in 2004 and provides transcriptions of the Portuguese manuscripts with English and Arabic translations. The series consists of Corpus 1. Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (1514–1697) (vols 1–10) published in 2015 and Corpus 2. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (1507–1783) (vols 11–16) published in 2018.

The present volume has a glossary in English and Arabic, a bibliography, a selected list of places in Portuguese, English, and Arabic with latitude and longitude, including several Yemeni places such as Aden, Ra's Fartak, Kamarān, and Mocha, two overview maps, an erratum, and an analytical index including administrative terms and person names. Thus, the present volume is helpful for exploring the series.

REVUE DE PRESSE / PRESS REVIEW

An overview of the political orientation of the Yemeni newspapers¹⁹:

Newspapers linked to the Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council Rashad Muhammad Al-Alimi, based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and Aden:

- *26 September News* (<https://www.26sepnews.net/>)
- *Aden al-ġad* (<https://www.adengad.net/>)
- *Al-mašhad al-yamanī* (<https://www.almashhadnews.com/>)
- *Ḥabar News Agency* (<https://www.khabaragency.net/>)
- *Al-mašdar Online* (<https://almasdaronline.com/>)

Newspapers affiliated to the Southern Transitional Council (STC), based in Aden:

- *Al-ayyām* (<https://www.alayyam.info/>)

Newspapers affiliated to the Houthi *de facto* Government, based in Sanaa:

- *Sabā Net* (<https://www.saba.ye/ar>)
- *Al-tawra* (<https://althawrah.ye/>)²⁰

February 1, 2025, *Al-mašdar Online* – Loan of 80 Yemeni artifacts to the United States extended for an additional two years

Yemeni Minister of Information, Culture, and Tourism, Mu‘ammar al-Iryānī, signed an agreement to extend the loan of 80 Yemeni artifacts for an additional two years. Al-Iryānī signed the extension during an official visit to the National Museum of Asian Art at the Smithsonian Institution in the United States. Al-Iryānī was accompanied by the

¹⁹ Sami Lagati, “Revue de presse,” *Nouvelles Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen* 16/35, January 2023, p. 70.

²⁰ Afrah Nasser, “The Yemen War, Media, and Propaganda,” Atlantic Council, May 3, 2017, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-yemen-war-media-and-propaganda/>

Yemeni Ambassador to Washington, Muḥammed al-Ḥaḍramī, and a US State Department official. He was received by the museum's director, Dr. Chase Robinson, and a number of experts in the field of cultural heritage.²¹

March 4, 2025, *Habar News Agency* – Houthis close a historic mosque in Ibb and confiscate its contents amid fears it will be converted into a residence and military barracks

The Houthis closed the historic al-Ṣabbān mosque, also known as the al-Fārūq 'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb mosque, in the old city of Ibb, and confiscated its contents without providing any clear justification. Local sources and activists confirmed that the Houthis prevented residents of the area from performing prayers in the mosque, after storming it and confiscating its possessions. This sparked public outrage, especially with the advent of the holy month of Ramadan, during which the mosque witnesses a large turnout for prayers. Residents expressed their fears that Houthis, who sell manuscripts, could exploit the mosque's contents.²²

March 27, 2025, *Al-maṣḍar Online* – Houthi militias storm the home of historian 'Arafāt 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Ḥaḍramī in Zabīd and take him to an unknown location

Local sources told *Al-maṣḍar Online* that Houthi militia members stormed the home of researcher and historian 'Arafāt 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Ḥaḍramī²³, director of the Manuscripts Office in Zabīd, and forcibly took him to an unknown location. Al-Ḥaḍramī had previously been kidnapped by the Houthi militia in August 2018 before releasing him, but re-arrested him in march without revealing the reasons.²⁴ Al-Ḥaḍramī is considered one of the most prominent researchers in documenting and preserving historical manuscripts, making him an authority on the history of the city of Zabīd, which is listed on the World Heritage List.²⁵

²¹ "تمديد إغارة 80 قطعة أثرية يمنية للولايات المتحدة لمدة عامين إضافيين" *Al-maṣḍar Online*, February 1, 2025, <https://almasdaronline.com/articles/310487>.

²² "مليشيا الحوثي تغلق مسجداً أثرياً في إب وتصادر محتوياته وسط مخاوف من تحويله سكناً وثكنة عسكرية" *Habar News Agency*, March 4, 2025, <https://www.khabaragency.net/news227807.html>.

²³ Al-Ḥaḍramī was part of a team under the direction of Anne Regourd that catalogued manuscript libraries in Zabīd, see: *Catalogue cumulé des manuscrits de bibliothèques privées de Zabīd. 1. La bibliothèque de 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hadhrami*, fasc. 1, فهرس مكتبات المخطوطات الخاصة في زبيد, Sanaa, CEFAS, FSD, 2006; *Catalogue cumulé des manuscrits de bibliothèques privées de Zabīd. 1. La bibliothèque de 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hadhrami*, fasc. 2, فهرس مكتبات المخطوطات الخاصة في زبيد, Sanaa, CEFAS, FSD, 2009; *Catalogue cumulé des manuscrits de bibliothèques privées de Zabīd. 1. La bibliothèque de 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hadhrami*, fasc. 1, Les papiers filigranés, فهرس مكتبات المخطوطات الخاصة في زبيد, Sanaa, CEFAS, FSD, 2008.

²⁴ See: 'Actualités,' *Nouvelles Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen* 7/26, July 2018, p. 6.

²⁵ "الحديدة.. مليشيا الحوثي تقتحم منزل المؤرخ عرفات الحضرمي بزبيد وتقتاده إلى جهة مجهولة" *Al-maṣḍar Online*, March 27, 2025, <https://almasdaronline.com/articles/313967>.

April 23, 2025, *Al-tawra* – Conclusion of a training course in the field of conservation and restoration of archaeological manuscripts

A training course on the conservation and restoration of ancient manuscripts was concluded at the House of Manuscripts. The course was organized by the Manuscripts and Library Sector of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, with support from the Heritage and Cultural Development Fund.

The month-long course aimed to provide 15 students from the Department of Archaeology and Tourism at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Sanaa University with expertise and skills in the conservation, restoration, binding, and covering of ancient manuscripts, and how to protect them from damage.

‘Alī al-Yāfī, Minister of Culture and Tourism, pointed out that the Ministry has signed five agreements with several relevant authorities to preserve and restore manuscripts, urging Dār al-maḥṭūṭāt, the House of Manuscripts to speed up the implementation of these agreements to achieve their goals of restoring and preserving numerous important and rare manuscripts.²⁶

May 1, 2025, *Al-maṣḍar Online* – Discontent after the Yemeni embassy in the United States relinquished Hebrew manuscripts

The Rashad Muhammad al-Alimi government has relinquished the US Customs exemption of Yemeni Hebrew manuscripts from import restrictions on archaeological and ethnological materials from Yemen. This move has angered researchers, as it paves the way for further looting and smuggling. The relinquishment followed a ceremony held at the Yemeni Embassy in Washington, where the United States returned a number of Yemeni artifacts in implementation of an agreement between the two countries that imposes restrictions on the import of Yemeni archaeological and ethnological materials.²⁷

May 16, 2025, *Al-ayyām* – The Aden Centre for Historical Studies launches a digital archive of old newspapers

The Aden Centre for Historical Studies launched the “Digital Archive of Old Pre-Independence Newspapers and Magazines” project²⁸ at an event held at the center’s headquarters. The event was attended by a number of academics and researchers, led by the Center’s Deputy Director, Muḥammed Ġʿafar b. Šayḥ Abū Bakr, and a committee of the Southern Transitional Council. The project involved photographing 46 newspapers, comprising 7,612 issues containing 46,233 pages, which were collected into 71 volumes.²⁹

²⁶ “اختتام دورة تدريبية في مجال صيانة وترميم المخطوطات الأثرية,” *Al-tawra*, April 23, 2025, <https://althawrah.ye/archives/976781>.

²⁷ “استياء بعد تنازل سفارة اليمن في أمريكا عن مخطوطات باللغة العبرية,” *Al-maṣḍar Online*, May 1, 2025, <https://almasdaronline.com/articles/316308>.

²⁸ Link to the archive: <https://aden.center/magazines>.

²⁹ “مركز عدن للدراسات التاريخية يدشن الأرشيف الرقمي للصحف القديمة,” *Al-ayyām*, May 16, 2025,

June 23, 2025, *Al-tawra* – The Antiquities Authority delivers 75 manuscripts to the House of Manuscripts

Hay'at al-āṭār, the General Authority for Antiquities and Museums handed over 75 manuscripts to the House of Manuscripts, including 27 manuscripts seized by security authorities and 48 manuscripts from the National Museum. Some of these manuscripts were for sale. This step comes within the framework of the General Secretariat of Dār al-maḥṭūṭāt, the House of Manuscripts' efforts to gather these rare holdings in a single location equipped with the necessary expertise and capabilities to handle them.³⁰

July 6, 2025, *Al-ayyām* – A citizen hands over a rare artifact to the Museums Authority in Sanaa

Hay'at al-āṭār, the General Authority for Antiquities and Museums, affiliated with the Sanaa government, received an important and unique artifact from a citizen. The artifact is of Sabaeen origin, and has come from the city of Mā'rib. It represents the head of a Sabaeen king and its made of pure marble, says the newspaper. It will be displayed in the National Museum in Sanaa.³¹

July 16, 2025, *Al-ayyām* – A rare Yemeni cylinder seal is unveiled at an exhibition and auction in the US

Yemeni archaeologist 'Abd Allāh Muḥsin revealed that a rare Yemeni octagonal cylindrical seal is included in an archaeological exhibition in the United States. In a Facebook post, Muḥsin³² stated that the seal is made of electrum and bears eight lines of Ancient South Arabian inscriptions, consisting of four to five letters per line. The seal dates back to the first century BC. According to Muḥsin, the seal may provide the first evidence of ancient Yemenis' use of electrum alloys. He confirmed that the seal is part of a private collection in New York City, acquired by Fortuna Fine Arts Ltd, and was sold at an auction on March 1, 2023, in the United States. Its authenticity is being verified.³³

<https://www.alayyam.info/news/A7UHYUJD-TZN59Y-C674>.

³⁰ "هيئة الآثار تسلم 75 مخطوطة لدار المخطوطات" *Al-tawra*, June 23, 2025,

<https://althawrah.ye/archives/999743>.

³¹ "مواطن يسلم قطعة أثرية نادرة لهيئة المتاحف بصنعاء" *Al-ayyām*, July 6, 2025,

<https://www.alayyam.info/news/A9V8QJ6W-SA26WF-0849>.

³² Facebook page 'Abd Allāh Muḥsin: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100019690814645>

³³ "الكشف عن ختم أسطواني من آثار اليمن النادرة في معرض ومزاد بأمريكا" *Al-ayyām*, July 16, 2025,

<https://www.alayyam.info/news/AA9OBCPD-P8XDLI-8B3A>.

Articles

INSIGHTS INTO THE 'SULAYHID QUR'AN': MANUSCRIPT CIRCULATION, POLITICAL POWER AND QUEEN ARWĀ'S ROLE

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Abstract

This is the story of a manuscript that journeyed across places and centuries, carrying with it countless tales waiting to be told.

Résumé

Voici l'histoire d'un manuscrit qui a voyagé à travers lieux et siècles, portant avec lui d'innombrables récits à raconter.

الخلاصة

هذه قصة مخطوطة تنقلت بين أماكن وعصور، حاملةً معها حكايات لا تُحصى تنتظر أن تُروى.

Keywords

Sulayhid Dynasty — Fatimid Cairo — Queen Arwā al-Ṣulayḥī — Qur'an Manuscripts — Codicology — Manuscript Circulation — Gift Exchange

Mots clés

Dynastie sulayhide — Le Caire fatimide — Reine Arwā al-Ṣulayḥī — manuscrits coraniques — codicologie — circulation des manuscrits — échanges de dons

الكلمات الرئيسية

الدولة الصليحية — القاهرة الفاطمية — الملكة أروى الصليحي — المخطوطات القرآنية — علم دراسة المخطوطات (الكوديكولوجيا) — تداول المخطوطات — تبادل الهدايا

I. Introduction

The manuscript under study here is known in modern literature as the 'Sulayhid Qur'an'. Despite its significance, it has not been the subject of comprehensive scholarly study

and only folios from it have been published.¹ Originally copied in two volumes, it is housed in the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum in Istanbul (inv. no. 431A and 431B), with later Ottoman covers. This essay offers a preliminary investigation into its production, proposes a hypothesis regarding its place of copying, explores its afterlife—particularly its circulation and gifting, along with the meanings these practices may convey. Due to the museum's restrictive access policy, this study is based on a limited set of observations and can only begin to uncover the complex history of this significant manuscript.

II. The Qur'an's production

The Qur'an is known in modern literature as the 'Sulayhid' Qur'an because the name of the Sulayhid ruler appears in two places in the manuscript. In one of its frontispieces in the first volume (fols 4v–5r), in the small roundels within intersecting hexagons, the first inscription reads [Fig. 1]:

مما امر به الأجل الأوحـد أمير الأمراء عمدة الخلافة شرف المعالي تاج الدولة سيف الإمام المظفر في الدين
نظام المؤمنين أبو الحسن علي ابن محمد ابن علي الصليحي خلد الله ملكه وأنصره وأهله الصديقين.
لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله علي ولي الله صلى الله عليها المنة لله القدر لله العظمة لله الملك لله العز
لله
عبدالله ووليه معد اي تميم الامام المستنصر بالله امير المؤمنين صلوة الله عليه

This inscription, which has been previously misread, tells us that the manuscript was ordered (*amara bihi*) by the Sulayhid ruler 'Alī b. Muḥammad for the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir (r. 427/1036–486/1094). The second inscription is on the double-page right after the above-mentioned (fols 5v–6r), inscribed within the intersection of the central rectangle and the circle [Fig. 2]:

للأجل الأوحـد أمير الأمراء عمدة الخلافة شرف المعالي تاج الدولة سيف الإمام المظفر في الدين نظام
المؤمنين أبي الحسن علي ابن محمد ابن علي الصليحي
خلد الله ملكه

While the first inscription records that the Qur'an was ordered by 'Alī al-Ṣulayhī to al-Mustanṣir, the second informs us that it belongs to 'Alī al-Ṣulayhī (*li-al-...*).

'Alī b. Muḥammad, who rose to power in Yemen in 439/1047, adhered to the Isma'ili faith, built ties with the Fatimids and ruled for two decades on their behalf before his murder in 459/1066. He was given the title of *ʿumdat al-ḥilāfa* (support of the Caliphate),

¹ I am currently preparing an article on the manuscript's codicological and art historical aspects. Folios from the 'Sulayhid Qur'an' were published in, for instance: D.S. Rice, *The Unique Ibn al-Bawwāb Manuscript*, 1955, plate XVI; Y. Tabbaa, "The Transformation of Arabic Writing: Part 1", 1991, p. 134; A. George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 2010, pp. 141–143; S. Şahin, *The 1400th Anniversary of the Qur'an: Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art Qur'an Collection*, 2010, pp. 210–211; and M. Farhad & S. Rettig, *The Art of the Qur'an: Treasures from the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts*, 2016, pp. 166–171.

that appears in both inscriptions, by al-Mustanşir in a letter dated 456/1064. This letter is part of the well-known *al-siġillat al-mustanşiriyya* sent from Egypt to Yemen, and is one of the major textual sources that survives today to inform of the relationship between the Fatimid Caliph and the Sulayhids.² Thus, the title *‘umdat al-ḥilāfa* suggests a date that cannot be earlier than 456/1064. But, interestingly, on the last double-page of the second volume (fols 301v–302r), an inscription appears in the bands at the top and bottom and complicates the story [Fig. 3]:

هذا المصحف الأربع كتبه الحسين بن عبد الله حامداً شاكراً الله ومصلياً على رسول الله وعلى اهل بيته
الطيبين

The colophon states the name of its copyist, Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd Allāh, and that it was copied in 417 [1026], curiously almost 40 years earlier than the frontispieces. It also mentions that it was copied following a division of four (*arbāʿ*). Indeed, the beginning of each of the four quarters is marked visually by outlining the script with cloud cartouches and framing the text block with two bands at the top and bottom [Fig. 4].

The size of the manuscript, 34 × 21 cm, is a bit larger than A4; the quality and size of its chrysography (the earliest known to us in a Qur’an copied post-Kufic tradition); and the meticulously applied illumination leave no doubt that it was a valuable manuscript and confirms the high status of its patron. Originally, the two volumes must have had a total of roughly 600 folios (volume 1 has now 281 folios and volume 2 has 302 folios). With 9 lines to the page, vocalized in red (with *šadda*, *sukūn*, *hamza*, *madda* marked in blue and green (now oxidized)), with orthoepic signs in blue, the manuscript could have been comfortably read at arm length and even farther away. Doubtless a display copy that was surely made to project luxury and prestige.

When compared to contemporaneous Qur’ans such as the one copied in Baghdad in 391/1000 by the famous calligrapher Ibn al-Bawwāb (d. 413/1022), and a small corpus of seven Qur’ans copied in the first decades of the 5th/11th century in Ghaznavid Nishapur, our Sulayhid Qur’an was similarly copied by a confident and skilled calligrapher who was trained in the new proportioned Qur’anic scripts called Round Style (RS).³ However, while Ibn al-Bawwāb’s RS script inclines towards *nash* and the Ghaznavid RS scripts towards *muḥaqqaq* characteristics, our calligrapher’s script seems to incline more towards *tulut*.⁴ This inclination may have been a local scribal preference, different

² The title of *‘Umdat al-ḥilāfa* appears at the end of a letter sent by al-Mustanşir to ‘Alī al-Ṣulayḥī in response to the requests of the latter. S.M. Stern, *Fātimid Decrees: Original Documents from the Fātimid Chancery*, 1964, no. 2; Ḥ. Al-Hamdānī, “The Letters of Al-Mustanşir bi’llāh”, 1974, p. 312; and ‘Abd al-M. Māġid, *Al-siġillat al-mustanşiriyya*, 1954, pp. 38–39.

³ Before their adoption for copying the Qur’an, these types of scripts, generally called *nash*, were used in non-Qur’anic contexts but once they were adopted into the Qur’anic realm, they took a different aesthetic path of stylisation. For the group of Ghaznavid Nishapuri Qur’an see A. Karamé, “Les manuscrits coraniques de Nishapur au début du V^e/XI^e siècle”, 2024; for Ibn al-Bawwāb’s Qur’an see D.S. Rice, *The Unique Ibn al-Bawwāb Manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library*, 1955.

⁴ This is a period where the scripts are difficult to identify because they haven’t yet gained their full independent characteristics that appear in the later Mamluk and Ottoman’s period’s codified scripts and that

from the Baghdadi and the Nishapuri. Similarly, the illumination employed in the Sulayhid Qur'an also suggests a different school from the Baghdadi and the Nishapuri.⁵ While in all the full-page illuminations appear to be constructed on the basis of intersecting geometric shapes resulting in additional geometric forms, in the Qur'an under discussion here the frontispiece designs appear to be more archaic, rooted in the horizontal design of Kufic frontispieces and following the same colour palette of gold, brown and blue.⁶ Furthermore, in comparison to later Qur'ans, the Sulayhid Qur'an appears to be the predecessor of Ayyubid, Mamluk and Rasulid Qur'ans.⁷ Hence, our Qur'an represents a scribal tradition and a school of illumination that differs from the Baghdadi/Nishapuri one and that can be placed as the predecessor of the later Cairene Ayyubid, Rasulid and Mamluk Qur'an production. The Sulayhid Qur'an was, therefore and most likely, copied in Cairo (or at least in the Cairene tradition).

Such a Qur'an could have taken up to years to complete, in phases, and because the verse markers differ from one section to another, and the script as well (detected specifically in the shape of letter *wāw* which appears differently in the two volumes), one can imagine that it may have been copied by more than one copyist and that it involved more than one illuminator. Interestingly, pages were left empty at the beginning and end of each of its two volumes, to which a chessboard like pattern was added at some point to block any possible future insertions on the pages [Fig. 5]. It was not uncommon during this period to leave empty pages at the beginning and end of the Qur'an suggesting that such manuscripts were completed before it was known in whose library they will end or perhaps to whom they will be gifted.⁸ They must have been es-

became known as *al-aqlām al-sitta* or the 'Six Pens'. In this period Qur'anic scripts mixed between the characteristics of what later became known as *tulut*, *nash* or *muḥaqqaq*. A. Karamah, "Ghaznavid Imperial Qur'an Manuscripts: The Shaping of a Local Style", 2023, p. 28.

⁵ On the Nishapuri Qur'anic illumination, see A. Karamah, "Les manuscrits coraniques de Nishapur au début du v^e/xi^e siècle", 2024, pp. 226–227.

⁶ As in, for example, the frontispiece of a Kufic Qur'an now at the Chester Beatty Library (Is. 1411), it has two central circles intersected by quarter circles at the four corners that are filled with a chessboard-like pattern, a design if adapted to a vertical format would resemble the design on fol. 4r of our Sulayhid Qur'an. For this Qur'an see E. Wright, *Islam: Faith, Art, Culture. Manuscripts of the Chester Beatty Library*, 2009, p. 103 (fig. 66).

⁷ For instance, the famous Mamluk sultan Baybars Qur'an is copied in a script that inclines towards *tulut*, like the Sulayhid Qur'an, it employs the same system and colour coding for noting the vowels, and the illumination is similar specifically in the framing of the text with a projected vignette at the end and beginning of new sections. For examples of Mamluk Qur'ans see N. Abou-Khatwa, "Calligraphers, Illuminators and Patrons: Mamluk Qur'an Manuscripts from 1341–1412 AD In Light of the Collection of the National Library of Egypt", 2017; For Ayyubid Qur'ans see D. James, "Qur'ans and Calligraphers of the Ayyubids and Zangids", 2009; and for Rasulid Qur'ans see A. Regourd, "Note sur le marché des corans Rasulides : Catalogue", 2019.

⁸ For instance, the Qur'an datable to the 4th/10th century at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha (no. 328.2001); and another datable to the 6th/12th century in the Topkapı Palace Library (EH 42). Both are unpublished.

pecially in demand in Cairo which was known to have been a centre of Qur'an production, where a number of people came together to produce books of the highest quality.⁹ Furthermore, we know from Qadi Ibn al-Zubayr, who lived in Cairo between 444/1052 and 463/1071 and who was an employee at the court of al-Mustanşir, that the treasure of the Fatimids had manuscripts in gold outlined (*mukahhal*) with lapis lazuli and that the book chambers in the palace included 2,400 Qur'ans copied in *rab'a*, a division of four *ağzā* (sections) written in *mansūb* (well-proportioned) calligraphy of the highest beauty and illuminated with gold and silver and other paints, exactly like our Qur'an.¹⁰ The Sulayhid Qur'an was therefore most certainly part of a larger market that catered for the wealthy elite and urban bourgeoisie just like that of rock crystals, among other luxury goods.¹¹ It was copied during the reign of the Caliph al-Zāhir (411/1021–427/1035), and survives with two inscriptions: one that states it was ordered by 'Alī al-Şulayhī to al-Mustanşir and another claiming it belongs to 'Alī al-Şulayhī.

III. The Qur'an between Cairo and Yemen

The co-existence of the two inscriptions in the Qur'an is puzzling, especially that they could not have been inserted before 456/1064 (the date of al-Mustanşir's letter offering the title *'umdat al-ḥilāfa* to the Sulayhid ruler) while the authentic colophon mentions the completion of copying in 417/1026. But I would like to propose a hypothesis: The Qur'an, which was copied in Cairo in 417/1026, was bought there some 40 years later on behalf of 'Alī al-Şulayhī, to be gifted to al-Mustanşir to thank him for the *'umdat al-ḥilāfa* title that he had given him, as expressed in the first inscription (fols 4v–5r). It would not be the first gift from the Sulayhid ruler to the Fatimid Caliph, there was at least one before it in 454/1062.¹² As for the second inscription, it is probable that the Qur'an was then regifted by al-Mustanşir to 'Alī al-Şulayhī after the dedication was added to it by tampering its original frontispiece (fols 5v–6r), I would say perhaps even sent to Yemen with the letter dated 456/1064 in which the former assures the latter that he will receive divine support to assist him in the *da'wa* of Yemen against the internal rebels, and to thank him for gaining control over the entirety of Yemen offering him the title *'umdat al-ḥilāfa*.

⁹ As the Mamluk historian al-Maqrīzī described it, there were two book quarters in Fatimid Cairo. Al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441), *Al-mawā'iz wa-al-i'tibār bi-dīkr al-ḥiṭaṭ wa-al-āṭār*, vol. 3, pp. 177 & 185. And he also mentions *ḥān al-warrāqa* that has a *ṭāḥūn* (mill), *ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁰ G. Al-Qaddūmi, *The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 1996, p. 23 (pphs 83 & 382). For the description of Qur'ans in the book chambers of the palace see *ibid.*, p. 24 (pph 13).

¹¹ For rock crystal production in Cairo see A. Contadini, "The Cutting Edge: Problems of History, Identification and Technique of Fatimid Rock Crystals", 1999. Similarly, a market for metalwork existed in 7th/13th century Jazira and Syria, see R. Kanaan, "Patron and Craftsmen of the Freer Mosul Ewer of 1232", 2012; and another for the production of Maqamāt al-Ḥarīrī manuscripts, see R. Hillenbrand, "The Schefer Hariri. A Study in Islamic Frontispiece Design", 2007, p. 132.

¹² An elaborate recorded gift consisting of many gold and silver items, weapons, painted fabrics, musk, ambergris, camphor and aloes-wood, as it was described in *Uyūn al-aḥbār* by the Ismaili historian Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn. I. 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468), *Uyūn al-aḥbār*, 2002, p. 86.

It was not uncommon for al-Mustanşir to send a gift with his letters, as was the case with the one dated 458/1066 in which the Imam expressed his condolences to al-Şulayhī whose son had died and sent with it robes of honor.¹³ The Qur'an could have also been sent later with one of the many recorded missions to Yemen, or when the Qadi of Yemen Lamak b. Mālik al-Ḥammādī, who was originally sent by 'Alī al-Şulayhī in 454/1062 to Cairo on the head of a diplomatic delegation, had sent large numbers of books on Isma'ili literature from Cairo to Yemen, or even later when al-Mustanşir sent books with the Qadi as he had mentioned in one of his letters to Asma', 'Alī al-Şulayhī's wife.¹⁴ An act of regifting that aimed at acknowledging the Sulayhid ruler's allegiance and offering him *baraka* (blessing) and support.¹⁵ To re-gift the exact Qur'an al-Şulayhī had gifted him earlier meant to assert the extension of the Fatimid power and wealth at the heart of Yemen as much as it was a *baraka* (blessing) bestowed on him from the Caliph.

If the hypothesis that our Qur'an was gifted in Cairo to the Caliph then re-sent as a gift to the Sulayhid ruler is correct, a question remains unanswered: when were the chessboard like patterns added on the originally empty pages? Surely, they were added at the same time as the two double page frontispieces were inserted with the exact same pattern and ink that appears nowhere else in the manuscript [Figs. 6 and 7]. Being the closest in design to the Kufic tradition, and the closest illuminated double-page spread to the text, fols 5v–6r [Fig. 2] were most likely the original frontispiece but not with the original inscription. If one looks carefully, the bright blue at the centre of the pages and pink floral scrolls could not have been part of the original design, these pages have been altered. The preceding frontispiece [Fig. 1] is the one that holds the original inscription, the one that was added decades after the Qur'an was copied but not before 456/1064, the date on the letter offering the title *umdat al-ḥilafa* to al-Şulayhī. Farthest away from the Qur'anic text and sandwiching an empty double-page with the same pattern (fols 1v–2r and 3v–4r [Figs 6 and 7]) were likely added in Yemen.

The frontispieces in question evoke the domes and coffered ceilings typically found in Yemeni mosque architecture. More specifically, the similarities between the woodwork of the ceiling of the Great Mosque of Sanaa and our Qur'an's illumination are striking [Fig. 8].¹⁶ Another comparison worth highlighting is with the square coffers bearing interlaced eight-pointed stars present in the mosque ceilings in the converted

¹³ I. 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468), *Uyūn al-aḥbār*, 2002, pp. 102–104.

¹⁴ 'Abd al-M. Mağid, *Al-siğillat al-mustanşiriyya*, 1954, pp. 180–200; and V. Klem, *Memoirs of a Mission*, 2003, p. 102.

¹⁵ The act of regifting is a common practice in Islamic history. See, for instance, G. Al-Qaddūmi, *The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 1996, p. 66.

¹⁶ For more parallels see R.B. Lewock, G.R. Smith, R.B. Serjeant & P. Costa, "The Architectural History and Description of Şan'a' Mosques: The Great Mosque", 1983, pp. 338–342; and R. Ravagnan, M. Merlo & C. Muradore, "Chronological Development of the Decorative Schemes", 2022, pp. 125–127.

palace of Dū al-Ġibla [Fig. 9].¹⁷ These similarities with Yemeni ceilings and the fact that one of the inscriptions states that the Qur’an belonged to ‘Alī al-Ṣulayhī, suggests that the Qur’an was sent to Yemen as an act of re-gifting by al-Mustanṣir and it may be then when the two frontispieces were added. But who could have added these frontispieces and why?

After the murder of ‘Alī al-Ṣulayhī in 459/1066, his son Aḥmad al-Mukarram (d. 477/1084) took over. And when Aḥmad was hit by facial paralysis, his mother Asmā’ *bint* Ṣihāb, and the wife of ‘Alī al-Ṣulayhī (to whom al-Mustanṣir sent letters) stepped in to help with managing the affairs of a crumbling state. But Asmā’ died soon after in 466/1074. Arwā, the wife of ‘Alī al-Ṣulayhī who had been raised by Asmā’ at the court, was appointed by decrees sent from Cairo as the highest religious figure in Yemen, asking people to obey her, as her son was still young. This was a strategic move by the Fatimids who were concerned with maintaining political power against the threats of civil war. Supported by the Fatimids, Queen Arwā was, theologically, in essence a male in an envelope of a woman.¹⁸ According to the Ismaili historian Idrīs ‘Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468), she was offered spiritual authority, a rank inferior only to the Imam.¹⁹ She was known as *al-malika al-sayyida al-ḥurra*, described with striking beauty, noted for her courage, integrity, piety, her strong voice, and many poems were written about her. She was administratively independent, acted in a self-confident manner, strengthening ties with Fatimid Egypt, yet sometimes going against the Caliph’s wishes.²⁰ She even separated the leadership of the *da‘wa* from the state by appointing the Dā‘ī al-Du‘ayb b. Mūsā al-Wādī‘ī to lead the *da‘wa*. An educated woman of intelligence, Queen Arwā was an independent and strong woman.²¹ She stayed in power as her two sons died, ruled for 40 years a dynasty that witnessed its heydays under her rule, with a flourishing intellectual and religious culture. One of her first acts was to transfer the seat of the Sulayhid state from Sanaa to Dū al-Ġibla. She built a new palace in 457/1065 there and transformed the old palace, Dār al-‘Izz, into a great mosque in 481/1088 where she was eventually buried. She was ninety years old when she died in 532/1138, and with her the dynasty ended.

¹⁷ And an additional comparison can be made with the commonly repeated shapes and interlacing patterns of octagons, hexagons, and stars in the restored coffered ceiling of the mosque of al-Abbās in Ḥawlān near Sanaa, which was originally built in 519/1126 by Mūsā b. Muḥammad al-Quṭbī (it was restored in 1996 but nevertheless it followed the original carved ceiling structure). B. Finster, “An Outline of the History of Islamic Religious Architecture in Yemen”, 1992, p. 125.

¹⁸ S. Traboulsi, “The Queen was Actually a Man”, 2003, p. 105.

¹⁹ For a discussion on Arwā’s religious authority see D. Cortese & S. Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam*, 2006, pp. 136–140.

²⁰ She refused, for instance, to marry, disobeying al-Mustanṣir’s order. See D. Cortese & S. Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids*, 2006, pp. 131–132.

²¹ The historian and poet ‘Umāra al-Yamanī informs us of her education and knowledge of the Qur’an. Al-Yamanī (d. 515/1121), *Tārīḥ al-Yaman*, 1976, p. 137.

If our Qur'an had been indeed sent to Yemen, I could not think of anyone else who could have restored the manuscript, inserting in it the splendid eclectic frontispieces. She restored the Great Mosque of Sanaa—expanded, restored and decorated it (*wassa'athu ṣaḥaḥat 'amārathu wa-zayyanathu*). She even ordered the adding of the names of the imams from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib down to al-Mustanṣir in Kufic script.²² Originally an Umayyad mosque used by 'Alī al-Ṣulayhī, she rebuilt its eastern wing with a new ceiling and restored the ceilings of the western and northern parts of the building. She would have been certainly aware of the famous gifted and re-gifted Qur'an that must have been kept either in the mosque or in the library of the royal family. As part of her plan to restore symbolic monuments, building a palace and claiming her rule as an independent woman, she must have also felt the need to add her touch to the Qur'an and embrace its history. Affirming her lineage, alluding to her restoration plan as part of her contributions to the cultural landscape of Yemen in which she had commissioned monuments, baths, bridges mosques in addition to other urban projects, the queen strengthened the link between the Qur'an manuscript, religious architecture and her leadership position. Her addition of these pages and her most probable restoration of the Qur'an reflected symbolically her ties to Fatimid Cairo. Encouraged by al-Mustanṣir himself in one of his letters to her, Queen Arwā's political and religious affiliations to the Fatimids was clear in the ways in which she built her own palace and how she transformed the Great mosque in which the Mihrab and its decoration echoed Fatimid elements.²³ Reflecting the ceiling above it, these frontispieces were also an invitation to be drawn into the beauty of the building in which the manuscript was used and recited, an object that performed in the space of the mosque especially that it was a display copy blessed by the Fatimid Caliph, legitimising the Sulayhid rule, and most likely deployed on special occasions to be recited from or seen.

IV. Modern circulation & Conclusions

If my proposed hypothesis is correct and the Qur'an was indeed in Yemen, when was it brought to Istanbul? One of the Ottoman endowment registers (*evkaf defteri*) at the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum includes a list of newly arrived objects and manuscripts to the Museum in the early twentieth century. This register indicates that the two volumes were transferred from the tomb of Sultan Murad I (r. 763/1362–791/1389) in Bursa on 28 December 1913.²⁴ The Qur'an was therefore in Bursa, the first capital of the Ottoman Empire and could have moved there after the Ottoman conquest of Yemen

²² I. 'Imād al-Dīn, *Uyūn al-Aḥbār*, 2002, pp. 304–305.

²³ The composition, inscription band and specifically the use of floriated Kufic in the Mihrab are comparable to the style of Fatimid Mihrabs as Ruba Kanaan had pointed out to me, and I thank her for the photographs she had generously shared with me from her trip to Yemen more than a decade ago. On the surviving mihrabs in Yemen and their relation to Cairo, see B. Finster, "The Arraf Mosque in Dhu al-Jibla", 2021, pp. 24–25. Also note that the bands framing the frontispieces of our Qur'an resemble the decorated beams around ceilings of this mosque and others in Yemen.

²⁴ S. Kutluay (ed.), *100 Yıl Önce 100 Yıl Sonra*, 2014, p. 160, no. 25.

(944/1537), perhaps even when the Great Mosque of Sanaa was renovated by the Ottomans, but it is difficult to be certain. However, what is certain, is that from the two volumes at the Turkish and Islamic Art museum in Istanbul, two folios have been pulled out from Sura 7 which falls just at the beginning of the second quarter of the Qur'an: one is now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and one is in the Minneapolis Institute of Art.²⁵ Not much is known about the modern circulation of these orphaned folios except that the former's provenance is from the collection of Mehmet Ağa Oğlu, a professor of Islamic art history at the University of Michigan who studied in Istanbul in the 1920s, and the latter came from a private collector of Asian art named Katherine Kittedge McMillan, a bequest of Margaret McMillan Webber in memory of her own mother. Unsurprisingly, in both U.S. collections the acquired folios were inaccurately attributed to the 6th/12th or 7th /13th century, Western Iran or Northern Iraq, since their exquisite script and illumination stand out from the Qur'an corpus of the period and can be mistakenly identified as later productions. It is very difficult to identify how or when these folios were taken out of the original manuscript, but it was common practice that pages got pulled out when manuscripts were restored and rebound, probably in our case when after its transfer from Bursa to the Museum of Islamic Endowments in Istanbul in 1913. The story of our manuscript does not stop here. It was exhibited in Washington DC in "The Art of the Qur'an: Treasures from the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul", held at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery between October 2016 and February 2017 and curated by Massumeh Farhad & Simon Rettig. An afterlife that attests, indeed, to the mobility of manuscripts between cities from the medieval period until today.

The importance of the Sulayhid Qur'an lies in what it reveals: stories of connections and belonging across the Red Sea linking Yemen to Cairo, and colliding the worlds of architecture and manuscripts. It is an important testimony that survives from a short-lived dynasty in Yemen today from which women rose to positions of political prominence. It is a case of survival that reminds us of a historically diverse and cosmopolitan region, that is currently being erased. It is a religious story of propagating the *da'wa* in Yemen through the physical manifestation of the words of God, but a political one too, led by legitimacy through commissioning art and gifting it. It may be the only identified evidence of Fatimid Qur'anic production and a testimony of a survival that casts doubt on the idea of library destruction that has been narrated with the fall of empires.²⁶

²⁵ The folio at the Metropolitan Museum of Art has the following accession number: 40.164.4 a/b and can be seen here: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/453977>; the folio at the Minneapolis Institute of Art has the following accession number: 51.37.15 and can be seen here: <https://collections.artsimia.org/art/1190/page-from-the-koran-iran>

²⁶ On the subject of the paradigm of library destruction in the medieval world see the remarks of K. Hirschler, *The Written Word*, 2012, pp. 130–132.

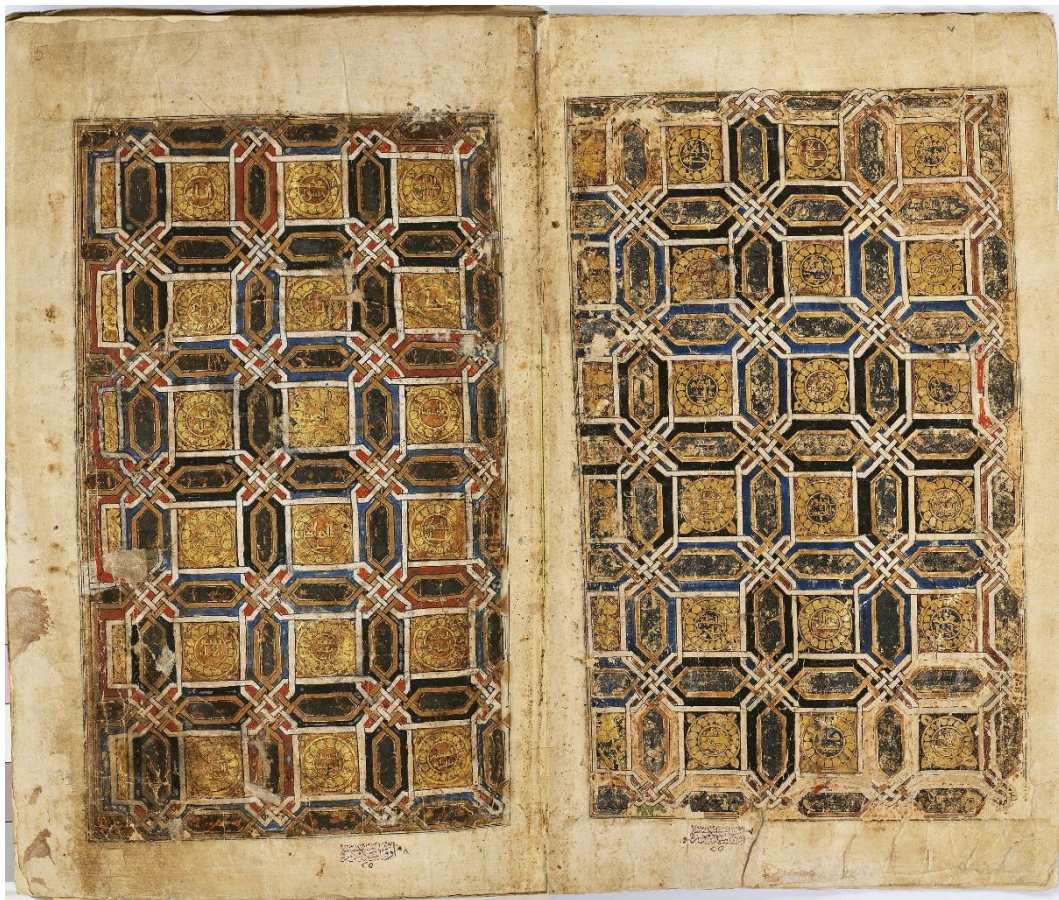


Fig. 1. The 'Sulayhid Qur'an' © Turkish and Islamic Art Museum (TIEM), 431A, fols 4v–5r, 34 × 21 cm.



Fig. 2. The 'Sulayhid Qur'an' © Turkish and Islamic Art Museum (TIEM), 431A, fols 5v–6r, 34 × 21 cm.



Fig. 3. The 'Sulayhid Qur'an' © Turkish and Islamic Art Museum (TIEM), 431B, fols 301v-302r, 34 × 21 cm.



Fig. 4. The 'Sulayhid Qur'an' © Turkish and Islamic Art Museum (TIEM), 431A, fols 140v, 34 × 21 cm.



Fig. 5. The 'Sulayhid Qur'an' © Turkish and Islamic Art Museum (TIEM), 431B, fols 1v–2r, 34 × 21 cm.



Fig. 6. The 'Sulayhid Qur'an' © Turkish and Islamic Art Museum (TIEM), 431A, fols 1v, 34 × 21 cm.



Fig. 7. The 'Sulayhid Qur'an' © Turkish and Islamic Art Museum (TIEM), 431A, fols 4r, 34 × 21 cm.



Fig. 8. Ceiling in the Great Mosque of Sanaa, 524/1130. Photo courtesy of Ruba Kanan.



Fig. 9. Ceiling in Dū al-Ğibla mosque (Queen Arwā's mosque), early 6th/12th century.
Photo courtesy of Ruba Kanan.

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JINN IN THE MOUNTAINS: ECOLOGY, CLIMATE AND PLAGUE RESERVOIR IN THE YEMENI HIGHLANDS, C.839/1436–965/1558¹

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Abstract

The present article looks at plague outbreaks in Yemen in the period of c.839/1436–965/1558. Based on both textual sources and palaeo-environmental evidence, it focuses in particular on the region of Ibb, which appears to have hosted a natural plague reservoir, out of which plague waves were radiating, and the environmental factors that contributed to the maintenance of the same reservoir. The article links the findings to wider ongoing debates in the fields of plague history and Yemeni history.

Résumé

Un djinn dans les montagnes : écologie, climat et réservoir d'épidémie sur les hauts-plateaux yéménites, ca. 839/1436-965/1558

Le présent article a pour objet les épidémies de peste au Yémen durant la période allant d'environ 839/1436 à 965/1558. S'appuyant à la fois sur des sources textuelles et des données paléo-environnementales, il se concentre en particulier sur la région d'Ibb, qui semble avoir abrité un réservoir naturel de peste, point de départ de vagues épidémiques. L'étude analyse également les facteurs environnementaux ayant contribué au maintien de ce réservoir. Elle met en relation ces résultats avec les débats plus larges, en cours dans les domaines de l'histoire de la peste et du Yémen.

الخلاصة

الجن في الجبال: علم البيئة والمناخ وانتشار الطاعون في المرتفعات اليمنية، من نحو 839 هـ/1436 م إلى 965 هـ/1558 م تقريباً

تناول هذه الورقة البحثية تفشي الطاعون في اليمن خلال الفترة ما بين حوالي 839 هـ/1436 م و 965 هـ/1558 م. وبالاعتماد على كل من المصادر النصية والأدلة البيئية القديمة، تركز بشكل خاص على منطقة إب، التي يبدو أنها كانت مستودعاً طبيعياً للطاعون، ومنه تنبعث موجا الوباء. كما تبحث الدراسة في العوامل البيئية التي ساهمت في الحفاظ على هذا المستودع وترتبط أيضاً بين هذه النتائج والنقاشات الأوسع الجارية في مجالي تاريخ الطاعون وتاريخ اليمن.

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Keywords

plague — plague reservoirs — Ibb region — environmental history — climate — soil — Rasūlid dynasty — Ṭahirid dynasty — Zaydi Imamate — interdisciplinary approach

Mots clés

peste — réservoirs de peste — région d'Ibb — histoire environnementale — climat — sol — dynastie rasoulide — dynastie ṭahiride — imamat zaydite — approche interdisciplinaire

الكلمات الرئيسية

الطاعون — مواطن انتشار الطاعون — منطقة إب — التاريخ البيئي — المناخ — التربة — الدولة الرسولية — الدولة الطاهرية — الإمامة الزيدية — منهج متعدد التخصصات

I. Introduction

Few fields are as contentious and producing as many controversies as plague history. Although this field has always been characterised by hotly debated topics, the situation became particularly glaring in the last fifteen or so years, thanks to (1) the emergence and advance of aDNA evidence of past plague outbreaks, and (2) increasing awareness of the global nature of plague history, and particularly with the Second Plague Pandemic.² Some old questions—including, the clinical nature and the spatio-temporal origins of the Black Death, as well as the existence of European plague reservoir(s)—have been resolved.³ Other questions remain, for now, debated. One of these questions is the geographic origins of the recurrent post-Black Death waves: were these being reimported from the 'East', or did they originate in local reservoirs, including those in Europe—or, indeed, both?

The question of the geographic origins of the post-Black Death waves is intimately connected to a related question about the geographic locations of plague reservoirs, out of which recurrent plague waves of the Second Plague Pandemic have been radiating. Reservoirs (or foci) can be defined as an ecological niches, in which pathogens of infectious diseases (including plague) are being maintained (on different chronological scales, ranging from a few years up to hundreds and potentially thousands of years) in several biotic and abiotic factors—soil (and possibly amoeba), insects (vectors) and wild rodents (hosts), before spilling over to secondary hosts, such as commensal rodents, humans and their livestock. The causes of these spillover events are complex and still insufficiently understood, but, as argued later in the article, short-term weather

² By the 'Second Pandemic', I mean here a series of recurrent plague waves, on both the global and regional scales, commencing with the Black Death (1338–1353) and continuing into the 1840s.

³ K.I. Bos et al., "A Draft Genome", 2011; M.A. Spyrou et al., "The Source of the Black Death", 2022; Ph. Slavin, "Out of the West", 2021; C. Parker et al., "14th Century *Yersinia Pestis* Genomes", 2023.

changes/climatic shocks can be one paramount factor.⁴ The idea of plague reservoirs (or foci) had been central in different branches of plague studies (both historical and biological) ever since the pioneering works of Daniil (Danylo) Kirillovich Zabolotnyi (1866–1929), Ricardo Jorge (1858–1939), Wu Lien-teh (1879–1960) and Georgii Platonovich Kalina (1902–1990).⁵ The geographic origins of the plague reservoir associated with the Black Death (the first wave of the Second Plague Pandemic) was one of the most hotly debated topics in plague historiography, until a recent interdisciplinary study by Maria A. Spyrou and her colleagues settled the controversy.⁶ On the basis of a DNA analysis of three precisely dated specimens from a late-medieval East Syriac (Nestorian) cemetery at Kara-Djigach in the Chüy Valley, northern Kyrgyzstan (about 11 km to the south-east of the capital Bishkek), associated with a 1338–1339 outbreak in the region, the same study firmly placed the origins of the Black Death in the Tian Shan region of Central Asia.⁷

As far as the post-Black Death era is concerned, some scientists argue that the recurrent waves would be reintroduced from Asia.⁸ Conversely, some scholars hypothesised about the existence of ‘domestic’ reservoirs in different parts of Europe—including southern Russia,⁹ the Caucasus-Volga region,¹⁰ Moldova-Wallachia,¹¹ South-West Balkans,¹² the Peloponnese,¹³ Spain (in the context of the First Plague Pandemic from c.541

⁴ On plague reservoirs and their ecology, see various chapters in R. Yang & A. Anisimov (eds), *Yersinia Pestis: Retrospective and Perspective*, 2016 and B.B. Atshabar, N.Chr. Stenseth & J.M. Fair, *Plague: The Ecology of Natural Foci*, 2024.

⁵ D.K. Zabolotnyi, *Chuma* (Pestis Bubonica), 1907; R. Jorge, *Les faunes régionales des rongeurs et des puces dans leurs rapports avec la peste : résultats de l'enquête du comité permanent de l'Office International d'Hygiène Publique, 1924-1927*, 1928; L.-t. Wu, *A Treatise on Pneumonic Plague*, 1926; G.P. Kalina, *Chuma v Srednei Azii*, 1936.

⁶ For the long-lasting controversy on the origins of the Black Death, see M.A. Spyrou et al., “The Source of the Black Death in Fourteenth-Century Central Eurasia”, 2022, SI 1, and Ph. Slavin, “Plague, Demography and Society in Late-Medieval Europe”, 2025.

⁷ M.A. Spyrou et al., “The Source of the Black Death in Fourteenth-Century Central Eurasia”, 2022.

⁸ B. Schmid et al., “Climate-Driven Introduction of the Black Death”, 2015; B. Bramanti et al., “Assessing the Origins of the European Plagues Following the Black Death”, 2021.

⁹ N.P. Mironov, “The Past Existence of Natural Foci of Plague”, 1958; V.N. Fyodorov, “The Question of the Existence of Natural Foci of Plague”, 1960; N.I. Kalabukhov, “The Structures and Changes of the Natural Foci of Plague”, 1961; M. Suponitskii & N. Suponitskaya, *Ocherki Istorii Chumy*, 2006, vol. 1, p. 87; J.T. Alexander, *Bubonic Plague in Early Modern Russia*, 1980, p. 13; T.F. Khaydarov, *Epokha ‘Chernoï Smerti’ v Zolotoi Orde*, 2018, pp. 84, 162, 214.

¹⁰ M.H. Green, “The Four Black Deaths”, 2020, pp. 1610 and 1620; N. Fancy & M.H. Green, “Plague and the Fall of Baghdad (1258)”, 2021, pp. 175–176.

¹¹ D. Panzac, *La Peste dans l'empire Ottoman, 1700-1850*, 1985, p. 116.

¹² D. Panzac, *La Peste dans l'empire Ottoman, 1700-1850*, 1985, pp. 109–116.

¹³ P. Topping, *The Minnesota Messenia Expedition*, 1972, p. 73.

until the later 8th century),¹⁴ the Mediterranean region in general,¹⁵ around Marseille in Provence,¹⁶ the Swiss Alps,¹⁷ and England.¹⁸ More recently, it has been established, on the basis of both textual sources and aDNA evidence, that the *pestis secunda* wave of 1356–1366 (the second wave of the Second Plague Pandemic), following the Black Death wave, had indeed originated in a South-Central German reservoir (possibly in southern Hesse).¹⁹ In addition, it has been argued, on the basis of written sources, that there may have been a plague reservoir(s) in southern Germany in the late-medieval/early modern period.²⁰

Outside of Europe, the topic of plague reservoirs has not attracted nearly as much attention—with a few exceptions. In his work on plague in 18th- and early 19th-century Ottoman Empire, in the context of the end of the Second Plague Pandemic, Daniel Panzac suggested, based on textual evidence that around that time, that plague reservoirs were found in Kurdistan, ‘Asīr (the southern part of today’s Saudi Arabia, on the Yemeni border; this focus will be discussed at a greater length later in this article), Anatolia, the Istanbul region and Egypt.²¹ Similarly, in 2021, Ole Jørgen Benedictow hypothesised, based on the putative existence of a plague reservoir(s) in Western Arabia in the 19th—and 20th—century, that the so-called First Plague Pandemic, commencing with the Justinianic Plague in 541, may have originated in a focus stretching all the way from Yanbu (in today’s Saudi Arabia) to northern Yemeni highlands.²²

The present article contributes to this field by arguing that the Yemeni highlands (potentially, the Ibb region) had been hosting an active reservoir for some 125 years, since its initial ‘seeding’ in the 1430s (most probably in 1436) until at least the later 16th century. It reconstructs, on the basis of textual evidence, the main spatio-temporal contours of recurrent waves radiating out of that reservoir, as well as its approximate longevity. The chronology of plague outbreaks appears to have been conditioned by short- and medium-term climatic shifts in the 15th and 16th centuries, creating ecological conditions that would either facilitate or restrain plague activity. The impact of climatic and

¹⁴ K. Harper, *The Fate of Rome*, 2017, p. 240.

¹⁵ K. Harper, “The First Plague Pandemic in Italy”, 2023, p. 372.

¹⁶ N. Varlık, “Rethinking the History of Plague in the Time of Covid-19”, 2020, p. 288.

¹⁷ A.G. Carmichael, “Plague Persistence in Western Europe”, 2014.

¹⁸ R.S. Gottfried, *The Black Death*, 1983, pp. 126–138; J.L. Bolton, “Looking for *Yersinia Pestis*”, 2013, pp. 33–34; K. Pribyl, *Farming, Famine and Plague*, 2017, pp. 213–223; P. Slack, *The Impact of the Plague in Tudor and Stuart England*, 1985, pp. 13–14, 68, 133, 147, 238. For a hypothesis about a reservoir in East Anglia during the Third Plague Pandemic in the early 12th century, see J. Black & D. Black, “Plague in East Suffolk, 1906–1918”, 2000; B. Bramanti et al., “The Third Plague Pandemic in Europe”, 2019.

¹⁹ Ph. Slavin, “Out of the West”, 2021 (see also the ensuing debate: M.H. Green, “Out of the East (or North or South)”, 2022; Ph. Slavin, “Reply: Out of the West—and Neither East, nor North, or South”, 2022; C. Parker et al., “14th Century *Yersinia Pestis* Genomes”.

²⁰ M. Keller et al., “A Refined Phylochronology of the Second Plague Pandemic in Western Eurasia”, 2023.

²¹ D. Panzac, *La Peste dans l’empire Ottoman, 1700–1850*, 1985, pp. 105–133.

²² O.J. Benedictow, *The Complete History of the Black Death*, 2021, p. 114.

ecological factors on plague activity is yet another big issue that has been preoccupying historians and scientists alike for some time now.²³

The present article is relying largely on two types of evidence, with each of these may be divided into several sub-categories. The first type of evidence consists of 9th–11th/15th–17th century chroniclers (such as Ibn al-Ahdal, Ibn al-Daybaʿ, al-Ḥazraḡī, Bā Maḥrama, Šanbal Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh, the anonymous compiler of the *Taʿrīḥ al-Dawla al-Rasūliyya*, Yahyā b. al-Ḥusayn, ʿIsā b. Luṭfallāh and Bā Faqīh), biographers (such as al-Šawkānī, and al-Zuḥayf) and philosophers (rabbis Hoter ben Shlomo and Zechariah ha-Rofeh, both writing in Judeo-Arabic), whose information is supplemented by some Mamluk-era Egyptian historians (most notably al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī). The second type includes non-textual sources, consisting of palaeo-climatic record (deriving from a stalagmite cave in northern Oman, indicating Winter-Spring precipitation levels) and aDNA evidence from a single sequenced genome associated with a 1969 outbreak in Yemen. By conjoining the textual and non-textual sources (complementing each other), the article takes up an inherently interdisciplinary approach, which is the only way to study complex phenomena related to plague history.

II. The 837/1433–1434–841/1437–1438 plague outbreak

Different authors, while describing the same outbreak, used different terminology: some spoke specifically about *ṭāʿūn* (plague), while others designated the disaster with more general terms—*wabāʿ* (epidemic, pestilence), *mawt* (mortality) and *fanāʿ* (destruction).²⁴ Plague terminology in Classical Arabic has been a subject of some scholarly attention and debate.²⁵ In most cases, *ṭāʿūn* may be interpreted as specifically plague, as long as it is known, on the basis of historical sources, that plague pandemic was indeed circulating in or around the spatio-temporal context, in which a given source talking about *ṭāʿūn* was being written. The 1433/1434–1437/1438 outbreak occurred in a much wider context of a plague wave devastating all over the Middle East in 1429–1430 (and

²³ K.D. Pang, “Fourteenth-Century Climatic and Hydrologic Extremes”, 1991, p. 171; K. Kausrud et al., “Modeling the Epidemiological History of Plague in Central Asia”, 2010, p. 112; B. Schmid et al., “Climate-Driven Introduction of the Black Death”, 2015; B.M.S. Campbell, *The Great Transition*, 2016, pp. 228–230; K. Pribyl, *Farming, Famine and Plague*, 2017, pp. 213–223; M.H. Green, “Climate and Disease in Medieval Eurasia”, 2018; H. Fell et al., “Volcanism and Global Plague Pandemics”, 2020; J. Lutterbacher et al., “Past Pandemics and Climate Variability across the Mediterranean”, 2020; Ph. Slavin, “The Birth of the Black Death”, 2023 (esp. pp. 314–320).

²⁴ Al-Daybaʿ (d. 944/1537), *Al-faḍl al-mazīd*, 1983, pp. 111, 123; al-Šawkānī (d. 1250/1834), *Al-badr al-ṭālīʿ bi-maḥāsin*, 1929–1930, vol. 1, p. 58 (*ṭāʿūn*); al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), *Kitāb al-sulūk*, 1934–1973, vol. 4.2, p. 974; Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), *Inbāʿ al-ḡumr*, 1969–1972, p. 347 (*wabāʿ*); Anonymous (d. around 840/1436), *Chronicle of the Rasulid Dynasty*, 1976, pp. 183–184 and *Taʿrīḥ al-dawla al-Rasūliyya*, pp. 302–303; Ben Shelomo, Ḥoter (d. around 885/5240/1480), *Philosophic Questions and Answers*, 1989, pp. 389–390 (*fanāʿ*); Zekharyah Ha-Rofe (d. 9th/15th century), *Midrash ha-Ḥefetz*, 1990, vol. 1, pp. 310–311 (*mawt*).

²⁵ M.W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, 1977, pp. 315–319; L.I. Conrad, “Tāʿūn and Wabāʿ”, 1982; N. Fancy & M.H. Green, “Plague and the Fall of Baghdad (1258)”, 2021; J. Brack, M. Biran & R. Amitai, “Plague and the Mongol Conquest of Baghdad (1258)?”, 2024, p. 394.

seemingly spreading from Egypt to Ethiopia in the early 1430s), with Mamluk sources in Syriac and Egypt providing very detailed descriptions of *ṭāʿūn* outbreaks and spread, as well as their clinical symptoms matching plague. By contrast, *wabāʾ*, *mawt*, *fanāʾ* and cognate generic terms, while meaning infectious diseases in general, may also mean plague in particular, in some specific contexts. In theory, there are two ways to ascertain whether these generic terms mean actually plague or some other disease. One way is to see if chroniclers provided clinical signs (as Mamluk historians often did; alas, Rasūlid chroniclers did not) and if they did, to check if these matching plague symptoms. The other method is to check terminology of the same outbreak in other sources, to see if other authors designated the same outbreak as *ṭāʿūn*. In the context of the 1433/1434–1437/1438 outbreak, the fact that the latter appears to have been associated with the same wave that passed through Egypt in 1429–1430 (and described by Mamluk historians as *ṭāʿūn* with clinical symptoms matching plague), and the fact that some Rasūlid chroniclers labelled it as *ṭāʿūn*, helps us establishing, at least with some degree of certainty, that the outbreak in question was indeed caused by plague.

Was the 1433/1434–1437/1438 outbreak the first to reach Yemen during the Second Plague Pandemic? It is uncertain if the Black Death (1338–1353)—that is, the first wave of the Second Plague Pandemic—ever made it to Yemen. It is possible that a ‘severe mortality’ (*mawt ʿaẓīm*) outbreak reported in Yemen in general and Taʿizz in particular in Spring-Autumn 752/1351, may have been associated with the Black Death, spreading there from South-Western Arabia, where it had been documented two years earlier, during the *ḥaġġ* of 749/February–March 1349.²⁶ After the 1351 outbreak, however, there is no textual indication of any plague outbreak in Yemen until the 1430s.²⁷ During the 1430s wave, there seem to have been two introductions, both from Ethiopia. During the first introduction, the disease crossed into the Zabīd region, possibly via the Dahlak archipelago, at some point in 837/18 August 1433–7 August 1434.²⁸ The second introduction was imported into Aden in early 839/July–August 1435, this time from the port of Berbera on the Somali coast.²⁹ The spatio-temporal origins of the same wave, its journey through Egypt, Ethiopia and the Somali coast into Yemen, will be dealt with elsewhere.³⁰

Once at Aden, it was only a matter of time before plague would spread northwards into the Yemeni highlands. The spatio-temporal contours of its spread can be summarised as follows. In early 1436, plague started moving northwards into Lahġ and Abyan.³¹

²⁶ Al-Ḥazrāġī (d. 812/1410), *The Pearl Strings*, 1906–1918, vol. 2, p. 74; M.W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, 1977, p. 63; O.J. Benedictow, *The Complete History of the Black Death*, 2021, p. 173.

²⁷ This observation derives from a systematic reading of the chronicles listed and analysed throughout the present article.

²⁸ Ibn al-Daybaʿ (d. 944/1537), *Al-faḍl al-mazīd*, 1983, p. 111; *ibid.*, *Historia Iemanae*, 1828, p. 178; B.E. Croken, “Zabīd under the Rasūlids of Yemen, 626–858AH/1229–1454AD”, 1990, pp. 199–200.

²⁹ Al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), *Kitāb al-sulūk*, 1934–1973, vol. 4.2., p. 974; É. Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande*, 2010, pp. 670–671; M.-L. Derat, “Du Lexique aux talismans”, 2018, p. 8.

³⁰ I am dealing with the topic in a separate forthcoming study.

³¹ Ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 1090 or 1099/1679 or 1688), *Ġāyat al-amānī*, 1968, vol. 2, p. 572.

In ramadan 839/late March-April 1436, the disease arrived in Mikhlāf al-Maʿāfir and Taʿizz, before spreading further northwards into Ġibla and Ibb in the course of later spring. Thereafter, the pandemic would spread quickly into Baʿdān, Zafār, Dāmār, al-Ḥaql, arriving in Sanaa in late 839/around mid-June 1436, and, most likely, in July or August in Haḡḡa and Ṣaʿda.³² According to al-Maqrīzī, while in the cities of Sanaa and Ṣaʿda and their respective hinterlands, the plague killed allegedly 80,000 people.³³ Obviously, we have to be cautious about such figures as being deliberately exaggerated by chroniclers, to create as dramatic narratives as possible. As Ibn al-Ahdal, himself an eyewitness of the pandemic, stated, the plague continued spreading from that region into the highlands of Jabal Milhān and Jabal Ḥarāz, and their surroundings, staying there until it subsiding in 841/July 1437–June 1438.³⁴ According to Hoter ben Shlomo and Zechariah ha-Rofeh, two Jewish philosophers, the plague remained in some cities for two years (that is, into 841/1437–1438), with many local residents fleeing to the ‘north’, not to be ever heard again.³⁵ This may possibly imply that the disease may have spread further north along the highlands into the territories of today’s south-western Saudia, or that the plague refugees feared to return to their homes, because of the ongoing plague—and indeed its recurrent outbreak eight years later.

To most people, plague was undoubtedly a novel disease, even though some local elders may still remember the 752/1351 outbreak (if indeed caused by plague), whose horrors had been narrated to them by their older relatives. It is likely that at least some would associate the plague origins with the malevolence of jinn—as was indeed suggested by Egyptian scholar Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī in his influential treatise *Badl al-Māʾūn fī Faḍl al-Ṭāʾūn* (Offering Aid on the Merits of the Plague), composed between 1416 and 1429.³⁶

III. Plague focalisation in the Ibb region: some environmental context

It was during its arrival in the Ibb region in later Spring 1436 that plague must have focalised in the region. That the subsequent outbreaks originated in the local reservoir, rather than was imported from outside, may be inferred from several textual references. When the plague (*ṭāʾūn*) broke out next in late 848/February-March 1445, it was reported to have been ravaging particularly in Ibb and the mountains around, where it claimed

³² Anonymous (d. around 840/1436), *Chronicle of the Rasulid Dynasty*, 1976, pp. 183–184 and *Taʾrīḥ al-dawla al-Rasūliyya*, pp. 302–303; al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), *Kitāb al-sulūk*, 1934–1973, vol. 4.2, pp. 974, 976, 1013 and vol. 3, p. 1114; Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), *Inbāʾ al-ḡumr*, 1969–1972, p. 347; Ben Shelomo, Ḥoṭer (d. around 885/5240/1480), *Philosophic Questions and Answers*, 1989, pp. 389–390; al-Ḥazrāḡī (d. 812/1410), *Al-ʿuqūd al-luʾluʾiyya*, 2009, pp. 302–303; ʿAbd al-Wasīʿ b. Yaḥyā al-Wasīʿī, *Taʾrīḥ al-Yaman*, 1947, pp. 44–45; Ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 1090 or 1099/1679 or 1688), *Ġāyat al-amānī*, 1968, vol. 2, p. 572.

³³ Al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), *Kitāb al-sulūk*, 1934–1973, vol. 4.2, p. 1013.

³⁴ Ibn al-Ahdal, *Tuhfat al-zaman*, 2004, vol. 2, p. 536.

³⁵ Ḥ. Ben Shelomo (d. around 885/5240/1480), *Philosophic Questions and Answers*, 1989, pp. 389–390.

³⁶ Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Merits of the Plague*, 2023. On the association of plague with jinn, see J.K. Stearns, *Infectious Ideas*, 2011, pp. 87–89, 133–135, 149–152, 156.

countless lives.³⁷ No other regions or cities were mentioned in conjunction with the same outbreak, and it is possible that it was restricted to Ibb and surrounding regions. According to Bā Faqīh, the plague wave of 933/1526–1527–934/1527–1528 (mentioned by several chroniclers), too, had commenced in Ibb at some point in late 1526 or early 1527.³⁸

In order to appreciate how and possibly why plague got focalised in the highlands—and likely in the Ibb region—in Spring 1436, it is first necessary to consider a wider environmental context of that region. Recent research has stressed the impact of environmental factors on plague activity.³⁹ In particular, it has been argued that environmental shifts in the region(s) around a natural plague reservoir are of paramount importance in enabling or disabling plague activity in the original hosts (wild rodents) and their ectoparasites, and, by extension, the disease's spillover to humans.⁴⁰ When considering environmental factors, it is important, on the most basic level, to take into account the following layers, biotic and abiotic alike: (1) landscape (topography, altitude); (2) biomass; (3) soil; (4) fauna; (5) climate and weather (precipitation and temperature levels). To be more specific, it is essential to consider the interaction between bacteria, wild hosts (rodents) and vectors (their ectoparasites) on the one hand and their wider eco-climatic contexts, on the other.

A. Ibb region landscape and climate

Of all Yemini territories under the Rasūlid rule, the Ibb region was situated at the highest altitude: on average over 2,200 metres above sea level, with some parts peaking at over 3,000 metres. This is significant, for the following reasons. Of all currently known active plague reservoirs, about 40–45 per cent are situated in highlands, at an altitude of 1,000 metres above sea level and higher.⁴¹ Thus, at the Tian-Shan ranges of central and northern Kyrgyzstan, plague reservoirs overlap geographically with the meadow-steppe of montane, subalpine, and alpine altitudinal zones (at 2,300 to 3,500 metres above sea level), with about 90 percent of the reservoir territories situated at 3,000 metres or higher above sea level.⁴² Similarly, most of the plague reservoir range of the Qinghai—Tibet Plateau is situated at an altitude of 3,200–3,500 metres above sea level.⁴³ Likewise,

³⁷ Al-Dayba' (d. 944/1537), *Kitāb qur'at al-uyūn*, 1971–1977, vol. 2, p. 141; B.E. Croken, "Zabīd under the Rasūlids of Yemen, 626–858AH/1229–1454AD", 1990, p. 200.

³⁸ Bā Faqīh (d. early 10th/16th century), *Ta'riḥ al-Šiḥr wa-aḥbār al-qarn al-āšir*, 1999, pp. 183–184; Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 217; R.B. Serjeant, "The Post-Medieval and Modern History of Ṣan'ā' and the Yemen, ca. 953–1382/1515–1962", 1983, p. 69; Ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 1090 or 1099/1679 or 1688), *Ġāyat al-amānī*, 1968, pp. 669–670.

³⁹ See above, n. 23.

⁴⁰ Ph. Slavin, "The Birth of the Black Death", 2023, pp. 314–320.

⁴¹ Calculated from V.M. Dubyanskiy & A.B. Yeszhanov. "Chapter 5. Ecology of *Yersinia Pestis* and the Epidemiology of Plague", 2016.

⁴² D.I. Bibikov, *Surki i Chuma v Gorakh Srednei Azii*, 1965, pp. 145–147; Ph. Slavin, "The Birth of the Black Death", 2023, pp. 307–308.

⁴³ X. Yuan et al., "Spatiotemporal Variations of Plague Risk in the Tibetan Plateau from 1954–2016", 2022.

Central Caucasian reservoirs of southern Russia are located in the subalpine and alpine altitudinal zones (at elevations of 2,000–2,700 metres above sea level).⁴⁴ Many more examples—across Asia, Africa and South America—can be cited.⁴⁵

The proclivity of plague reservoirs to thrive on high elevations has to do, first and foremost, with a positive correlation between altitude and precipitation levels. As the highest region in all of Yemen, Ibb boasts also the highest annual precipitation levels, standing at about 900 mm, with some parts potentially reaching 1,500 mm.⁴⁶ High precipitation levels imply diverse and high-quality vegetation, vitally important for the growth and expansion of local rodent populations. Likewise, cool and damp weather is essential for good hatching and survival rates of fleas.⁴⁷

The green space of the Ibb region is maintained not only by wet and humid conditions of the highlands, but also by the presence of multiple streams and groundwater sub-basins, both vital for agricultural irrigation and wild flora growth.⁴⁸ As far as qāt cultivation is concerned (which had been introduced into Yemen in the early 14th century), it requires twice to thrice as much water as grains, and hence, it is hardly surprising that qāt farms tend to be situated near streams and other water sources.⁴⁹ But in addition to their many benefits to local agriculture, streams and groundwater sources also tend to attract wild rodents—for several reasons. Firstly, any water-rich environment is by definition an attractive habitat for any mammal. Secondly, it provides ample grassland resources. Thirdly, water sources are associated with grain fields and storages, attracting rodents. Finally, local vegetation around water streams creates shady environment sheltering rodents.

B. Ibb region vegetation

Because of abundant rainfall and relatively thick vegetation coverage, the Ibb region, together with surrounding regions, was called by medieval Yemeni authors “Green Yemen” (*al-Yaman al-ḥaḍrāʾ*),⁵⁰ and “Green Province” (*ḥayz al-aḥḍar*).⁵¹ Today, the Ibb

⁴⁴ V.M. Dubyanskii, V.M. Mezentsev & U.M. Ashibokov. “Prostranstvennoye Raspredeleniye Epizooticheskikh Proyavlenii Chumy”, 2024.

⁴⁵ For instance, upland and highland reservoirs of Uganda and Tanzania: G.H.E. Hopkins, *Report on Rats, Fleas and Plague in Uganda*, 1949; A.S. Msangi, “Observations on the Endemicity of Plague in Tanzania”, 1968, pp. 20–62 and 166; M. Ziwa et al., “Plague in Tanzania”, 2014; and highland foci of Ecuador: A.A. Moll & Sh.B. O’Leary, “Plague in the Americas”, 1940; and *idem*, “Plague in the Americas”, 1941.

⁴⁶ M.O. Arnous et al., “Groundwater Potentiality Mapping of Tertiary Volcanic Aquifer in Ibb Basin”, 2020.

⁴⁷ Ph. Slavin, “Birth of the Black Death”, 2023, pp. 307–308.

⁴⁸ Y. Alwathaf et al., “Assessing and Addressing Groundwater Depletion in Yemen’s Ibb Sub-Basins”, 2025.

⁴⁹ D.M. Varisco, “On the Meaning of Chewing”, 1986; M. McCracken, “The Impact of the Water Footprint of Qat on Yemen’s Water Resources”, 2012; M.A. Zahran et al., “Qat Farms in Yemen”, 2014.

⁵⁰ Al-Hamdānī (d. 333–334/945–946), *Ṣifāt ḡazīrat al-ʿArab*, 1884, p. 51.

⁵¹ *The Manuscript of al-Malik al-Afḍal al-ʿAbbās*, 1989, p. 14; Ibn al-Muḡāwir (d. 691/1292), *Ṣifāt Bilād al-Yaman wa-Makkah*, 1951–1954, vol. 1, pp. 155–156.

region is still being referred to as the “fertile” or “green province” (*al-liwā’ al-ḥaḍrā’*).⁵² The vegetation landscape of the Ibb province, made of arable land, pasturage and arboreal landscape (shrubland and open woodland), was and still is the densest one in all of Yemen. Back in the Rasūlid era, just as today, local *qabā’il* (tribal farmers) practiced terrace agriculture—a method whereby flat surface is cut into hills or mountains to provide crop cultivation areas. Here, they would achieve several harvests a year, with wheat, sorghum, and legumes being the main cultivable crops.⁵³ Pasturage included several types of grass, most notably *Themeda triandra* and *Microchloa*, providing grass fodder for cattle and sheep.⁵⁴

Today, shrubland and open woodland is a home to several tree species, including dwarf *Juniperus Cichorium*, *Acacia Asak* and *Ziziphus*.⁵⁵ It is likely that around 1430, Ibb shrubland and woodland landscapes were denser than they are today, as the Yemeni highlands appear to have undergone a process of deforestation in the early modern period. Ibn al-Muḡāwir, travelling through the Yemeni highlands in the early 13th century, described the impenetrable and dense landscape of evergreen and deciduous trees, including *Trichilia emetica*, tamarind and acacia, providing the rest of the country with timber.⁵⁶ More than 300 years earlier, Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī (d. 895), noted in his botanical compendium *Kitāb al-nabāt* several other trees, such as cashew and walnut trees growing in the mountains and wadis of Yemen.⁵⁷ These descriptions are radically different from those of C. Niebuhr, a German explorer, who traversed in the Yemenite highlands in June–July 1763, and marvelled at the shortage of trees in the region, although admitting the existence of shrubs and other types of vegetation.⁵⁸ Qāt trees (*Catha edulis*) were cultivated most certainly on a much more modest scale than today. But in addition to shrubs and trees, arboreal landscapes were also a home to grassy vegetation.

⁵² <https://yemenlg.org/governorates/ibb/#:~:text=The%20governorate%20of%20Ibb%20is,divided%20into%2020%20administrative%20districts> (last accessed July 2025).

⁵³ This information can be gleaned from several late 13th- and 14th-century agricultural treatises (for instance, al-Malik al-Aṣraf ‘Umar b. Yūsuf (d. 696/1296), *Medieval Agriculture and Islamic Science*; al-Malik al-Aḡḡal al-‘Abbās (d. 778/1377), *Buḡyat al-fallāḡhīn*), and a 1372 royal crop tax register (D.M. Varisco, “A Royal Crop Register from Rasūlid Yemen”, 1991). See also, N.A. al-Shamrookh, *The Commerce and Trade of the Rasūlids in the Yemen*, 1996, pp. 108–111, 139–140.

⁵⁴ P. Scholte, A.W. Al Khuleidi & J.J. Kessler, *The Vegetation of the Republic of Yemen*, 1991 and A.W. Al Khuleidi, J.J. Kessler & P.T. Scholte, *Vegetation Map of Yemen Republic*, 1990.

⁵⁵ P. Scholte, A.W. Al Khuleidi & J.J. Kessler, *The Vegetation of the Republic of Yemen*, 1991 and A.W. Al Khuleidi, J.J. Kessler & P.T. Scholte, *Vegetation Map of Yemen Republic*, 1990.

⁵⁶ Ibn al-Muḡāwir (d. 691/1292), *A Traveller in Thirteenth-Century Arabia*, 2008, pp. 89–90.

⁵⁷ C.A. Yff Breslin, “Abu Hanifah al-Dinawari’s Book of Plants”, 1986, pp. 95, 118.

⁵⁸ C. Niebuhr (d. 1815), *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East*, 1792, vol. 2, pp. 57, 350–362, 365.

All three types of ‘green’ landscape—arable, pastoral and arboreal—would provide attractive habitats for rodents and their ectoparasites. Arable fields and grain storages, documented in Rasūlid sources,⁵⁹ would attract rodents to migrate closer to human habitats, in search of food resources—in particular in dry years, marked by grassland shortage. Generally speaking, however, wild rodents would keep distance from human habitats, thriving in colonies in grassy landscapes of pastures, shrubs and open woodland.

C. Ibb region soil

The ability of plague bacteria to survive in soil and a possible impact of soil components on the maintenance of natural plague reservoirs have been discussed in literature time and again. Some studies argued that soil salinity may play a role in reservoir maintenance, thanks, *inter alia*, to *Yersinia pestis*’ capability to coexist and replicate once ingested by soil amoebae on the one hand, and to develop halo-tolerance, on the other.⁶⁰ One other study correlated plague reservoirs in the US with soil salinity and aridity.⁶¹ Nils Christian Stenseth and his colleagues’ 2022 study has found that plague reservoirs of modern-day China and North America are situated in regions characterised by certain composition of soil texture: in particular, by higher concentration of cadmium (Cd), copper (Cu), iron (Fe), magnesium (Mg), sodium (Na), antimony (Sb), and uranium (U), as well as higher soil pH (that is, more alkaline rather than acidic soils). By contrast, soils with higher concentrations of calcium (Ca), cerium (Ce), molybdenum (Mo), and yttrium (Y), as well as lower soil pH (more acidic rather than alkaline) have a lower probability of sustaining such reservoirs. The same study argued that the share of clay is another possible factor positively correlated with the proclivity of soil to host a plague reservoir.⁶²

Soils in the Ibb region, formed during the Tertiary period, have been classified as ‘Yemen volcanic’. In terms of its soil texture, the Maytam area around Ibb city is dominated by slightly gravelly loam to gravelly loamy sand soils, while surrounding countryside terraces are characterised by sandy loam and silt loam soils.⁶³ Loamy soils have low clay content (less than 20 per cent in the case of sandy loam and less than 27 per cent

⁵⁹ N.A. al-Shamrookh, *The Commerce and Trade of the Rasulids in the Yemen*, 1996, pp. 108, 111–112.

⁶⁰ S. Ayyadurai et al., “Long-Term Persistence of Virulent *Yersinia Pestis* in Soil”, 2008; R. Eisen et al., “Persistence of *Yersinia Pestis* in Soil under Natural Conditions”, 2008; M. Malek et al., “*Yersinia Pestis* Halo-tolerance Illuminates Plague Reservoirs”, 2017; J. Benavides Montaña V. Vadyvaloo, “*Yersinia Pestis* Resists Predation by *Acanthamoeba Castellani*”, 2017; D. Markman et al., “*Yersinia Pestis* Survival and Replication in Potential Ameba Reservoir”, 2018; R. Barbieri et al., “Soil Salinity and Aridity Specify Plague Foci in the United States of America”, 2020.

⁶¹ R. Barbieri et al., “Soil Salinity and Aridity Specify Plague Foci in the United States of America”, 2020.

⁶² N.Chr. Stenseth et al., “No Evidence for Persistent Natural Plague Reservoirs in Historical and Modern Europe”, 2022. See also M. Kosoy & D. Biggins, “Plague and Trace Metals in Natural Systems”, 2022.

⁶³ E. al Sabahi & A. Mayas, “Soil Characteristics and Classification at Maytm Area in the City of Ibb”, 2015; D. Pietsch & L. Mabit, “Terrace Soils in the Yemen Highlands”, 2012.

in the case of silt loam), while sandy soils are often acidic by nature. Furthermore, Ibb region soils are marked by low salinity, compared with other highland regions.⁶⁴ Lastly, Yemeni highland soils (as sampled in the Wadi al-Ġidār River region of Ibb) are characterised by low concentrations of magnesium and sodium and high concentrations of calcium.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, there is currently no comprehensive surveys of either additional chemical components of Ibb soils, or chemical components of other highland regions' soils, and this fact prevents us from conducting a more fined-tuned discussion of a possible impact of local soils on the local reservoir. But even with incomplete data, we may infer, in theory, that the soils of the Yemeni highlands in general, and that of Ibb in particular, lack some essential soil factors to maintain a long-term telluric plague reservoir.

Although the 2022 study by Stenseth et al. argued that the above soil chemicals are essential elements for maintaining long-term plague reservoirs, it also suggested that short- and medium-term reservoirs are capable of being maintained without these.⁶⁶ As will be shown below, the 1526–1528 plague outbreak was the last one described to have commenced specifically in the Ibb reservoir, while the 1557–1558 one was the last one documented as *ṭā'ūn* (meaning specifically 'plague'). The subsequent epidemic outbreaks appear to have been associated with different infectious diseases, rather than plague—implying that the Ibb reservoir may have either died out or went into a (potentially long-term) 'dormant' phase at some point after 1558. It could thus be precisely the result of local soils' inability to maintain the reservoir over longer term.

D. Ibb region rodents

The only wild rodent, potentially capable of carrying plague, to have been reported in the Ibb region is *Praomys fumatus* (Rock rat/African meadow rat).⁶⁷ The association of the same rodent with plague has been documented in Tanzania.⁶⁸ It should be noted, however, that a systematic survey of all wild rodents in Yemen is yet to be undertaken, and hence, it is possible that there may be additional plague-carrying sylvatic rodents thriving in the same region. It is equally possible that today's faunal landscape of Ibb does not reflect the situation back in the 15th and 16th centuries. Thus, some rodents currently documented in adjacent highland regions may have also thrived in Ibb back then.

It may be instructive, then, to consider wild rodents currently thriving in Lahġ, Ta'izz, al-Dali', al-Hudayda, Rayma, Ḍamār, al-Bayḍa' and Sanaa. This expands the list of wild rodents considerably, to include *Acomys cahirinus* (Cairo spiny mouse/Northeast

⁶⁴ D. Pietsch & L. Mabit, "Terrace Soils in the Yemen Highlands", 2012, pp. 56–58.

⁶⁵ D. Pietsch & L. Mabit, "Terrace Soils in the Yemen Highlands", 2012, p. 54.

⁶⁶ N.Chr. Stenseth et al., "No Evidence for Persistent Natural Plague Reservoirs in Historical and Modern Europe", 2022.

⁶⁷ M.K. Mensoor, *The Mammals of Yemen*, 2023, pp. 56–57.

⁶⁸ A. Mahmoudi et al., "Plague Reservoir Species throughout the World", 2021, SI.

African spiny mouse), *Acomys dimidiatus* (Eastern spiny mouse), *Arvicanthis niloticus* (African grass rat), *Gerbillus chessmani* (Cheesman's gerbil), *Gerbillus famulus* (Black-tufted gerbil), *Gerbillus henleyi* (Pygmy gerbil), *Gerbillus nanus/ amoenus* (Balochistan gerbil), *Gerbillus poecilops* (Large Aden gerbil), and *Meriones (Parameriones) rex* (King jird). To these we should also add *Mus musculus* (House mouse) and *Rattus rattus* (Black rat), being both sylvatic and commensal rodents in the context of the Yemeni highlands.⁶⁹ Of these, *Acomys cahirinus*, *Arvicanthis niloticus*, *Gerbillus nanus/amoenus*, *Mus musculus* and *Rattus rattus* are known to be plague carriers, acting as 'primary' hosts maintaining local plague reservoirs, as the evidence from 20th-century Egypt and East Africa shows.⁷⁰ Although no attempts have been made to conduct a systematic study of zooarchaeological remains of rodents in Yemen, there is evidence of the presence of black rats in the territories of today's United Arab Emirates and Oman, from the 3d century BCE on.⁷¹ We may also add *Lepus Capensis* (Cape hare), thriving all over Yemen, as another potential plague carrier,⁷² but given that non-rodent mammals constitute 'secondary' plague hosts (that is, animals that do not maintain natural plague reservoirs and receive plague from 'primary' plague hosts—rodents maintaining these reservoirs), their role in spreading the disease (if at all) must be limited.

So far, the only attempt to appreciate the role of rodents in plague outbreaks in Yemen has been made by Mahmoud Bahmanyar, an epidemic scientist at the Pasteur Institute of Iran (Tehran), in his 1972 publication dealing with the May-June 1969 plague outbreak in the Ḥawlān district of the Sanaa Governorate. During the outbreak, Bahmanyar and his colleagues trapped and caught six rodent species around two infected villages in the district—one rodent of the *gerbillus* sub-species, one *Mus musculus*, one *Rattus rattus*, one *Meriones rex* and two *Dipodillus* rodents. Their contaminated spleen, liver and blood cultures were collected and sent to Tehran, but no *Yersinia pestis* could be detected at the Institute lab.⁷³ In any event, as will be argued below, the 1969 genome is associated with a different (and a much later) *Yersinia pestis* branch than those linked to the 15th- and 16th-century outbreaks.

⁶⁹ C.C. Sanborn & H. Hoogstraal, "Some Mammals of Yemen and Their Ectoparasites", 1952; M.K. Mensoor, *Mammals of Yemen*, 2023, pp. 52–71.

⁷⁰ A. Mahmoudi et al., "Plague Reservoir Species throughout the World", 2021, SI; G.F. Petrie et al., "A Report on Plague Investigations in Egypt", 1924; A.G. Hussein, "Changes in the Epidemiology of Plague in Egypt, 1899–1951", 1955; G.H.E. Hopkins, *Report on Rats, Fleas and Plague in Uganda*, 1949; J. Borchert et al., "Invasive Rats and Bubonic Plague in Northwest Uganda", 2007; R. Enscoe et al., "The Changing Triad of Plague", 2020.

⁷¹ H. Yu et al., "Palaeogenomic Analysis of Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*) Reveals Multiple European Introductions Associated with Human Economic History", 2022, Fig. 2 and Supplementary Data 2.1.

⁷² M.K. Mensoor, *The Mammals of Yemen*, 2023, pp. 71–72; A. Mahmoudi et al., "Plague Reservoir Species throughout the World", 2021, SI.

⁷³ M. Bahmanyar, "Human Plague Episode in the District of Khawlan, Yemen", 1972.

IV. Post-1430s Plague Outbreaks in Yemen

A systematic survey of historical sources from the late Rasūlid, Ṭāhirid and Zaydi periods allows a tentative reconstruction of subsequent outbreaks of epidemics, some of which were most certainly caused by plague. One challenge to disentangle plague waves from non-plague outbreaks is the fact that unlike Mamluk and Ottoman sources, rich in details regarding the spatio-temporal origins and clinical symptoms of epidemic outbreaks, Yemeni sources tend to be fairly laconic and lacking appropriate detail. Nevertheless, such exercise, based on a methodology outlined earlier in the article and reiterated in the following paragraphs, is still worthwhile.

Taken together, the available textual evidence from western Yemen (that is, to the west of Ḥaḍramawt) and the Ottoman Empire document 17 epidemic outbreaks between the years 848/1445 and 1222–1223/1807–1808, and regular outbreaks between 1815 and 1969.⁷⁴ Of these outbreaks, only six were described as *ṭāʿūn* and, as such, may be identified, with high certainty, as plague.⁷⁵ In describing the severity of the 1526–1528 plague, Bā Faqīh stated that no such harsh outbreak had been seen in Yemen in a hundred years, most likely referring to the 1433/1434–1437/1438 outbreak.⁷⁶ According to ʿIsā b. Luṭfallāh, the plague of 1532–1533 was less severe than the 1526–1528 one, as well as

⁷⁴ The 1445 outbreak: al-Daybaʿ (d. 944/1537), *Kitāb qurraṭ al-ʿuyūn*, 1971–1977, vol. 2, p. 141; B.E. Croken, “Zabid under the Rasūlids of Yemen, 626–858AH/1229–1454AD”, 1990, p. 200; the 1501 outbreak: Bā Ma-khrama (d. 947/1540), *Political History of the Yemen at the Beginning of the 16th Century*, 1960, pp. 2, 93; the 1512–1513 outbreak: A. Šanbal (d. 920/1514), *Tārīḥ Ḥaḍramawt*, 1994, p. 253; the 1523 outbreak: Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 211 and Ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 1090 or 1099/1679 or 1688), *Ġāyat al-amānī*, 1968, vol. 2, p. 665; the 1526–1528 outbreak: Bā Faqīh (d. early 10th/16th century), *Tārīḥ al-Šiḥr wa-aḥbār al-qarn al-ʿāšir*, 1999, pp. 183–184; Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 217; R.B. Serjeant, “The Post-Medieval and Modern History of Šanʿāʾ and the Yemen, ca. 953–1382/1515–1962”, 1983, p. 69; Ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 1090 or 1099/1679 or 1688), *Ġāyat al-amānī*, 1968, vol. 2, pp. 669–670; the 1532 outbreak: Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 232; the 1545–1546 outbreak: Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 267; the 1557–1558 outbreak: *Ġāyat al-amānī*, 1968, vol. 2, p. 717; J.R. Blackburn, “The Ottoman Penetration of Yemen”, 1980, p. 85; the 1575 outbreak: Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 302; the 1615 outbreak: Bā Faqīh (d. early 10th/16th century), *Tārīḥ al-Šiḥr wa-aḥbār al-qarn al-ʿāšir*, 1999, pp. 183–184; *Ġāyat al-amānī*, 1968, vol. 2, pp. 805–806; the 1620 outbreak: Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 500; the 1628–1630 outbreak: al-Ġurmūzī (d. mid-11th/17th century), *Al-ġawhara al-munīra*, 2008, vol. 2, p. 632; A.S. Tritton, “The Rise of the Imams of Sanaa”, 1918, vol. 1, p. 173; the 1635 outbreak: *ibid.*, pp. 183–184; the 1656 outbreak: T. Klarić, “Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der qāsimidischen Dynastie (11./17. Jh.)”, 2007, p. 312; the 1687 outbreak: *ibid.*, p. 228; the 1762–1763 outbreak: al-Bahkalī (d. 1224/1809), *Imams, notables et bédouins du Yémen au XVIII^e siècle*, 1992, p. 165; the 1807–1808 outbreak: Y. Kapach, “Qorot Israel ba-Teyman’ le-Rabbi Hayim Habshush”, 1958, p. 251. The 1815 outbreak and the subsequent ones are described in R.B. Serjeant, “The Post-Medieval and Modern History of Šanʿāʾ and the Yemen, ca. 953–1382/1515–1962”, 1983, pp. 90–91; W.J. Simpson, *A Treatise on Plague*, 1905, p. 38; N. Radcliffe, *Papers Relating to the Modern History and Recent Progress of Levantine Plague*, 1879, pp. 3–17; ʿA. b. Y. Qorakh (d. 1371/5713/1952), *Saʿarat Teyman*, 1993, p. 27; M. Bahmanyar, “Human Plague Episode in the Distict of Khawlan, Yemen”, 1972, p. 123.

⁷⁵ The 1445, 1523, 1526/1527–1528, 1532–1533, 1545–1546 and 1557–1558 ones.

⁷⁶ Bā Faqīh (d. early 10th/16th century), *Tārīḥ al-Šiḥr wa-aḥbār al-qarn al-ʿāšir*, 1999, pp. 183–184.

swift in passing and quick in causing death, implying, again, that the two sequential outbreaks were probably caused by plague.⁷⁷

Some other outbreaks, such as the 1575–1576 and 1620 ones, were designated as *wabāʾ*, which although may indicate, in some instances, plague, is a general term for ‘epidemic’—as mentioned above. The 1575–1576 outbreak was associated with famine.⁷⁸ Likewise, the 1620 outbreak was associated with an ongoing famine in eastern Yemeni regions, and thus may have been caused by some famine-associated disease, rather than plague.⁷⁹ Some other outbreaks were designated with terms that were not typical for plague, including *al-asqām* and *maradʾ ʿām* (literally, ‘disease’ and ‘widespread illness’), in the case of the 1615 outbreak. The only clinical symptom described in conjunction with the same outbreak was fever.⁸⁰ Although fever is indeed one of plague symptoms, the lack of additional clinical signs, as well as untypical terminology throws some doubts on the potential association of the 1615 outbreak with plague. Hence, it is uncertain if epidemic outbreaks after 1557–1558 were indeed associated with plague.

Information about the geographic origins of the post-1430s plague waves is also important. Of all the aforementioned outbreaks, only the 1445 and the 1526/1527–1528 are said to have originated in the Ibb region. The 1445 outbreak appears to have been confined to Ibb and the surrounding mountains, with no other regions or cities mentioned in conjunction with the same outbreak. According to Bā Faqīh, the plague wave of 933–934/1526–1527–1527–1528, too, had commenced in Ibb at some point in late 1526 or early 1527, and spread into Ġibla, and then into Taʿizz and its districts, where it wiped out a vast number of people and left villages deserted. In early šaʿbān of 933 (May 1527), it reached Sanaa and its surrounding areas, where 500 daily funeral processions and 1,700 burials were conducted during the peak period.⁸¹

As far as other outbreaks are concerned, no geographic origins are specified by authors—with the exception of the 1615 and 1620 outbreaks. The 1615 outbreak, manifesting as fever, was said to have originated in al-Ġawf, from where it started spreading in ġumādā al-ūlā 1024/June 1615 into al-Ḥašāša, Nihm, Ḥawlān, ʿAmrān, Ġabal ʿIyyāl Yazīd, al-Ḥasahb, ʿIyyāl ʿAbd Allāh, Daybān, al-Sarr, al-Raḥba, Šuʿūb, Sanaa, and then into al-Rawḍa, al-Ġarrāf and Wadi Ḥahr.⁸² The 1620 outbreak originated in eastern Yemen in the context of an ongoing famine, before spreading into Sanaa, Kawkabān, then into al-Ḥayma, Šahār, and Ġabal.⁸³ All this strengthens the impression that we cannot, at this point, identify the 1615 and 1620 outbreaks—or indeed any post-1558 one with plague,

⁷⁷ Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 232.

⁷⁸ Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 242.

⁷⁹ Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 500.

⁸⁰ Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 482; Ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 1090 or 1099/1679 or 1688), *Ġāyat al-amānī*, 1968, vol. 2, pp. 805–806.

⁸¹ Bā Faqīh (d. early 10th/16th century), *Taʾrīḥ al-Šiḥr wa-aḥbār al-qarn al-ʿāšir*, 1999, pp. 183–184.

⁸² Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 482.

⁸³ Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 500.

and hence, we should not consider al-Ġawf or eastern Yemen as additional possible plague reservoirs.

Although in most instances, epidemic outbreaks were reported as originating and spreading in inland regions of western Yemen, rather than local ports (thus, implying local origins, rather than outside introduction), there were three instances, when contagion appears to have been imported from outside. In 1501, 1628–1630 and 1635, outbreaks were reported only in Zabīd, possibly imported there from Abyssinia, which may have housed its own plague reservoir(s). Indeed, there were epidemics in different parts of Ethiopia in 1497, 1626–1627 and 1634–1635, and these could, in theory, introduced into Zabīd a few years after their initial outbreaks.⁸⁴ But then again, it is uncertain if these three outbreaks—both in the case of Yemen and Ethiopia—were even caused by plague.

Apart from two epidemic outbreaks—the one in 853/1449 (described as *mawt*), and the other one in 918/1512–1513 (described as *waʿk*, namely ‘disease’)—there do not seem to be additional references to infectious diseases in Ḥaḍramawt.⁸⁵ But even then, there is no evidence that either of these two outbreaks was either linked with any of the recurrent epidemic waves in western Yemen, or even caused by plague at all.

V. A Medium-Term Perseverance of the Ibb Reservoir?

Taken together, textual sources indicate two important points regarding the chronology of the putative reservoir in the Ibb region. Firstly, there would have been a gap of some 80 years between the 1445 and 1523 outbreaks. Secondly, plague activity in Yemen, radiating out of the same reservoir, continued for at least 125 years, between the initial introduction in the course of the 1433/1434–1437/1438 wave and the 1557–1558 outbreak (while the later epidemic outbreaks cannot, at this point, be associated with plague).

There are three possible explanations to the absence of textual sources indicating plague outbreaks between 1445 and 1523. Firstly, outbreaks occurring during this period might have remained undocumented. Indeed, in contrast with the Rasūlid era (ending in 1454), the Ṭāhirid dynasty (1454–1517) produced very few historical works and thus some events between the Ṭāhirid takeover in 1454 and the restoration of the Zaydi imamate in 1517–1518 remain largely unreported. Moreover, unlike Mamluk historiography, Yemeni historical texts tended to be relatively simple and laconic in describing both contemporary and historical events, prioritising political and military affairs, rather than environmental phenomena and public health. Secondly, such outbreaks might have been documented, but these hypothetical texts did not reach us (we have, after all, to account for the sad reality of past and present conflicts in Yemen resulting,

⁸⁴ For references, see n. 105 below.

⁸⁵ A. Šanbal (d. 920/1514), *Taʾrīḥ Ḥaḍramawt*, 1994, pp. 181 and 253.

inter alia, in the destruction of the country's cultural heritage, including manuscripts).⁸⁶ Thirdly, the gap in the documentation may reflect a real absence of outbreaks during the period. Plague may have gone 'dormant' in its reservoir, potentially causing sporadic and endemic outbreaks in rodents, without spilling over to humans.

There are some historical examples of plague reservoirs being dormant for some time, between two periods of activity. For instance, there was a 72-year gap between the two outbreaks of 1929 and 2001 in the Enbekshy-Kazak district of the Almaty region (Kazakhstan), associated with the Taukum desert focus.⁸⁷ Similarly, no plague outbreaks were reported in the Atyrau district of West Kazakhstan, in conjunction with the Trans-Ural steppe focus, between 1925 and 1986.⁸⁸ Likewise, there was a break of 53 years between the 1950 and 2003 outbreaks in the Oran region of Algeria, linked to two plague foci in the Tessala uplands.⁸⁹ Most relevantly for our purpose, there was a 45-year pause in human plague activity in the 'Asir region (the southwestern region of today's Saudi Arabia, close to the Yemeni border, some 550 km to the north-west of Ibb), between 1906 and 1951.⁹⁰ 'Asir was a home to an extensive plague reservoir radiating a series of waves between 1815 and 1969.⁹¹

Some scholars connect these dormant periods, whereby plague bacteria remain enzootic in rodents, without causing epizootic outbreaks and crossing over to humans, to short-term climatic shifts and weather anomalies. Thus, it has been suggested that medium-term oscillations between cooling and warming spells in Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asia (1940–2020) had a potential influence on local plague reservoirs' activity, with some reservoirs becoming active during warm periods and, conversely, temporarily inactive during cold spells.⁹² Likewise, there appears to be a correlation between precipitation levels and plague activity.⁹³

⁸⁶ See, for instance: A. Regourd & D. Hollenberg, "Manuscript Destruction and Looting in Yemen", 2016; L. Khalidi, "The Destruction of Yemen and Its Cultural Heritage", 2017; J. Emtseva, "Destruction and Looting of Cultural Property in Yemen's Civil War", 2021; <https://www.getty.edu/publications/cultural-heritage-mass-atrocities/part-2/13-schmidtke/>

⁸⁷ 'Focus 29' according to the Soviet plague foci classification. N.V. Popov et al., "Vliyanie Sovremennogo Izmeneniya Klimata na Sostoyaniye Prirodnykh Ochagov Chumy Rossii i Drugikh Stran SNG", 2013.

⁸⁸ 'Focus 17' according to the Soviet plague foci classification. V.V. Kutyrev & A. Yu. Popova, *Kadastr Epidemicheskikh i Epizooticheskikh Proyavlenii Chumy na Territorii Rossiskoi Federatsii i Stran Blizhnego Zarubezh'ya s 1876 po 2016 gg.*, 2016, pp. 52–53.

⁸⁹ E. Bertherat et al., "Plague Reappearance in Algeria after 50 Years, 2003", 2007.

⁹⁰ R. Pollitzer, *Plague*, Geneva, 1954, p. 29.

⁹¹ M. Bahmanyar, "Human Plague Episode in the District of Khawlan, Yemen", 1972.

⁹² N.V. Popov et al., "Vliyanie Sovremennogo Izmeneniya Klimata na Sostoyaniye Prirodnykh Ochagov Chumy Rossii i Drugikh Stran SNG", 2013.

⁹³ On the most basic level, wet years are beneficent for vegetation growth, which, in turn, facilitate higher population densities in both rodent colonies (hosts) and provide optimal conditions for the hatching, survival, and, consequently, population growth of ectoparasites (vectors). The higher the densities in both vectors and hosts, the more intense plague activity tends to be. By contrast, in dry years, depressing the population levels and densities in both rodents and their ectoparasites, plague activity tends to be weak

What does it all mean for 9th/15th- and 10th/16th-century Yemen? Although Yemeni chroniclers would report some weather events, they would do so only occasionally and invariably in the context of short-term weather anomalies. Thus, Rasūlid chroniclers reported heavy rains in 1386–1387, 1391, 1394–1395, 1397, 1400, 1421, 1433–1434.⁹⁴ In theory, these may be supplemented with weather references for Hejaz, documenting torrential downpours were chronicled in 1388–1389, 1392, 1400, 1421–1422, 1424, 1428, 1434.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, there is no palaeoclimatic data from either Yemen or Hejaz that could be used to fill the gap. The closest indicators we have are, in theory, the annual measurements of the Nilometre, recorded by Mamluk historians, and the stalagmite record from Hoti cave in northern Oman.

The Rhoda Island Nilometre of Old Cairo recorded annual June–October floods, in both short- and long-term trends. In theory, it does not appear as a reliable indicator of annual precipitation levels in the Yemeni highlands, not the least because of the distance of some 2,200 km between the Old Cairo and the putative Ibb reservoir. However, all the aforementioned wet years mentioned in the Yemen highlands and Hejaz – with the exception of 1424 and 1434 (with no Nilometre data available for the latter) – are also recorded as the years of high Nile plenitude.⁹⁶ It is important to bear in mind that summer monsoons would commence with annual flooding of the Blue Nile and Atbara River in the Ethiopian highlands and result in the rise of the Egyptian Nile, during the annual flooding commencing in early June, peaking in late September and receding again in mid-October,⁹⁷ thus making the two regions—the Ethiopian highlands and Egypt—climatically inter-connected. The synchronicity between the Nilometre measurements and the Yemeni and Hejazi rainfall references, however, appears to reflect the climatic inter-connectedness between the Ethiopian and Yemeni highlands. Both are elevated regions facing the Red Sea, benefiting from orographic rainfall (moist air rising and cooling over the highlands) in the summer due to seasonal monsoonal winds.

Unfortunately, there are many glaring gaps in the annual Nilometre measurements between 1470 and 1698 (only 42 observations between 1470 and 1698, with none

or dormant. One possible outcome of a sudden shift from wet to dry conditions is a bacterial spillover from sylvatic rodents (the primary host) to humans (the secondary host), mediated by starving fleas looking for new sources of bloodmeal. Ph. Slavin, “The Birth of the Black Death”, 2023, p. 315.

⁹⁴ The Yemeni data has been listed in B.E. Croken, “Zabīd under the Rasūlids of Yemen, 626–858AH/1229–1454AD”, 1990, pp. 182–204 and N.A. al-Shamrookh, *The Commerce and Trade of the Rasulids in the Yemen*, 1996, pp. 117–126.

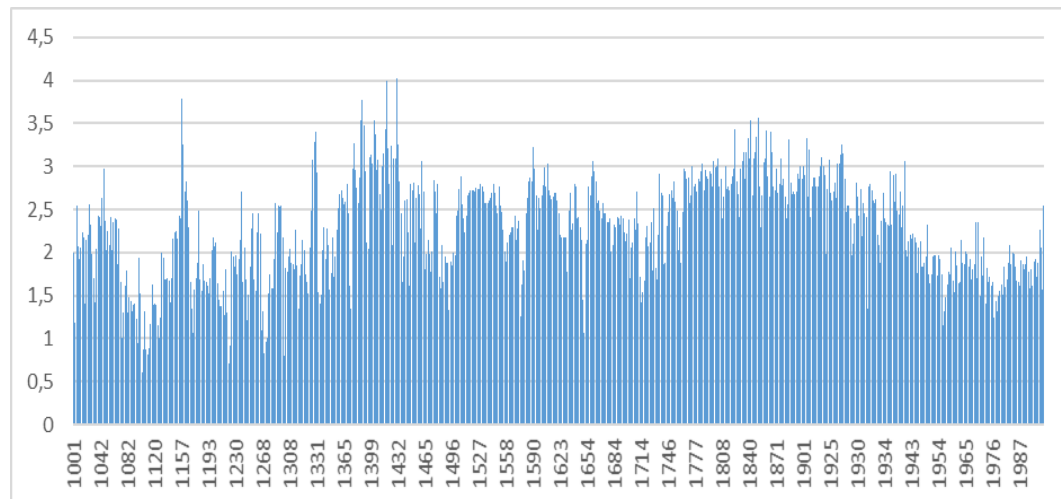
⁹⁵ A very helpful database of climatic and environmental events for the Levant and Hejaz is the *Grotzfeld Data Set—Coded Environmental, Climatological and Societal data for the Near and Middle East from AD 801 to 1821* (S. Vogt et al., eds.), 2016. Available at <https://freidok.uni-freiburg.de/data/11544> (last accessed July 2025).

⁹⁶ W. Popper, *The Cairo Nilometer*, 1951.

⁹⁷ S. Borsch, “Nile Floods and the Irrigation System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt”, 2000, pp. 131–132.

recorded between 1470 and 1572).⁹⁸ Hence, we have to turn to the second published dataset: the stalagmite record from Hoti cave in northern Oman reflecting Winter-Spring precipitation levels [Figs 1–2]. It is important to note that in the context of the Arabian Peninsula, rainfall across northern Oman and much of the Peninsula primarily originates in Mediterranean frontal systems, while summer monsoon (SM) precipitation is largely confined to the Yemeni highlands and southern regions of Oman.⁹⁹ Hence, the Hoti cave record may, at first glance, not be considered as a palaeoclimatic proxy reflecting the situation in the Yemeni Highlands. However, when juxtaposing the annual Nilometre values and Hoti cave stalagmite measurements for the periods where both records are available, we cannot help but recognise a degree of harmony between the two [Figs 1–3]. Thus, the dry spells of the later 11th and 13th centuries, as well as the wet spell of the later 14th and early 15th centuries are clearly standing out in both series. It is unclear what forces of Nature account for the synchronicity between two distinct climatic regimes, but we may infer that the Hoti Cave stalagmite record may serve as an indirect proxy for climatic trends in the Yemeni Highlands.

As the Figs 1–2 indicate, the period c.1376 until c.1433 was characterised by remarkably wet spells—in fact, those were the wettest years on record for the period 1001–2000. The period c.1376–1433 was followed by a transitional phase of c.1434–1463, marked by year-to-year instability and overall decreasing precipitation levels. The following period of c.1464–1502 was an excessively dry one, only to be followed by a wet phase of c.1503–1553. The next phase of c.1554–1581 was drier than the previous one with the 1570s standing out as a particularly dry decade. The period c.1581–1709 was, with some exceptions, characterised by wet weather, while the years 1710–1762 were marked by a high degree of year-to-year instability.



⁹⁸ W. Popper, *The Cairo Nilometer*, 1951, and O. Toussoun, *Mémoire sur l'histoire du Nil*, 1925, t. 2, pp. 394–404.

⁹⁹ D. Fleitmann et al., “Holocene Forcing of the Indian Monsoon Recorded in a Stalagmite from Southern Oman”, 2003.

Fig. 1. Winter-spring precipitation levels deriving from Hoti Cave (northern Oman) stalagmite record (in inverted $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ (oxygen) values), 1001–2000.

Source: D. Fleitmann et al., “Droughts and Societal Change”, 2022, SI.

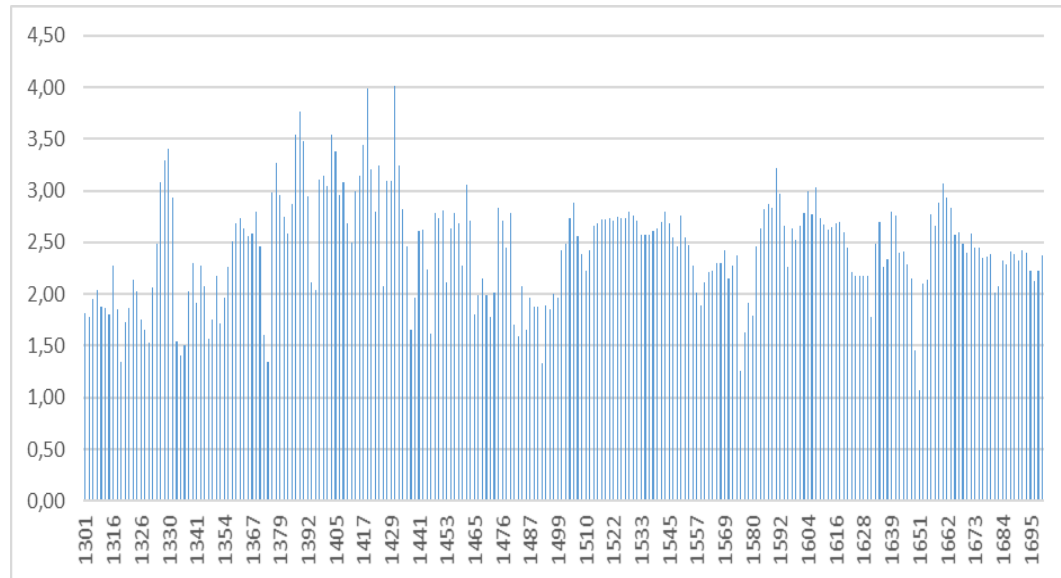


Fig. 2. Winter-spring precipitation levels deriving from Hoti Cave (northern Oman) stalagmite record (in inverted $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ (oxygen) values), 1301–1700.

Source: D. Fleitmann et al., “Droughts and Societal Change”, 2022, SI.

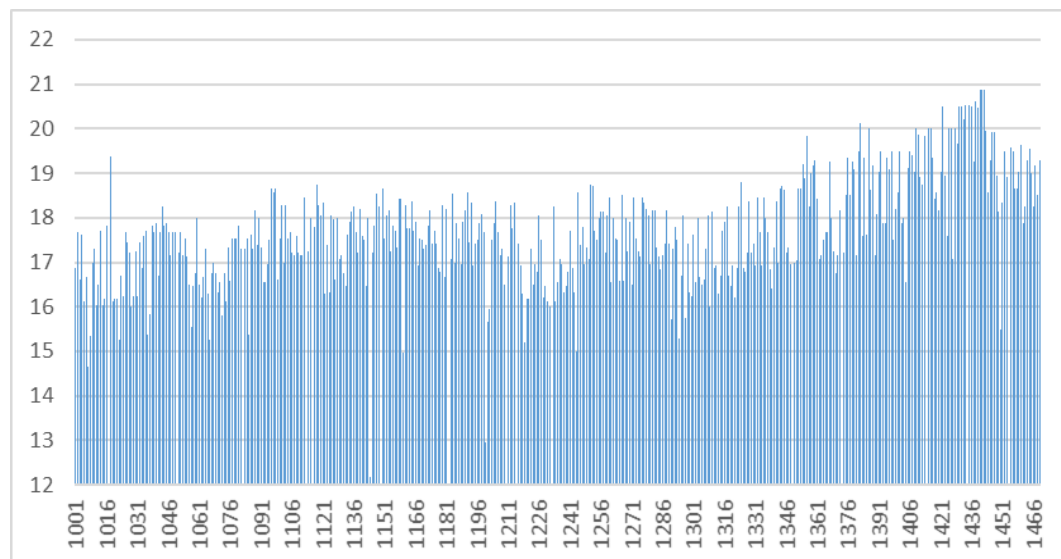


Fig. 3. Annual Nile flooding levels, 1001–1469 (in pre-Ottoman-style cubits; max=24). Source: W. Popper, *The Cairo Nilometer*, 1951. I am indebted to Prof. Stuart Borsch for supplying me with a tabulated version of this data.

The focalisation of plague in the Ibb region in or around 1436 occurred after seven wettest decades on record for the period c.1001–2000 (c.1376–1433) [Figs 1–2]. This undoubtedly had some implications for local ecologies of south-western Arabia in general and the Ibb region in particular. One likely impact was the expansion of both woodland

and pasture vegetation in the Yemeni highlands. Grassland abundance, coupled with rainy weather, would, in turn, have facilitated the growth and increasing densities of sylvatic rodent populations, and their ectoparasites—thus, providing ideal conditions for plague activity.

By contrast, the unstable period of c.1434–1463 and the excessively dry phase of c.1464–1502 would provide anything but the same favourable conditions as those in the preceding period c.1376–1433. Local chroniclers report locust invasions (associated with drought) in 835/1431–1432, šaʿbān 860/July 1456, and ġumādā al-tāniya 911/November 1505¹⁰⁰, excessive drought (in Ḥaḍramawt) in 905/1499–1500,¹⁰¹ and extensive fires in 902/1496–1497 and 907/1501–1502.¹⁰² It is, hence, possible that the dry weather of these decades depressed vegetation growth, together with rodent and ectoparasite population densities, and thus precluded any suitable conditions for intense plague activity.

The wet period of c.1503–1553 would potentially reverse the situation and create, once more, favourable conditions for plague activity, and eventual spill-over and outbreaks in humans. It is possible that it may have required a decade or two to allow sufficient vegetation growth to enable considerable rodent and ectoparasite population growth, and hence, it was not until 1523 that we hear about the next plague outbreak radiating out of the local reservoir (again, the 1501 epidemic was imported into Zabīd, where it seems to have been restricted to the city and its region; and it is unknown if the same outbreak was caused by plague).

As suggested above, it is uncertain if the post-1557–1558 epidemic outbreaks were associated with plague. If these were indeed caused by different diseases, then it is possible that the disappearance of plague may have been linked to the renewed period of drier years between c.1554 and c.1581, with the excessively dry decade of the 1570s. In other words, it is possible that the putative plague reservoir may have died out in the context of the dry years. Even if we are to assume that the post-1557–1558 outbreaks, or at least some of them, were caused by plague, then the same outbreaks may have originated in a different reservoir—outside of the Ibb region, as hinted by the chroniclers describing the 1615 and 1620 outbreaks.¹⁰³ In other words, there are some clear hints that the Ibb reservoir may have declined and disappeared in the later 16th century—after the 1557–1558 outbreak.

Another possible factor in the decline of the putative Ibb reservoir could be deforestation. As we have seen, there are some clear hints that in the Rasūlid era, the Yemeni highlands were much more forested than a few centuries later, as reflected in vastly different descriptions of Ibn al-Muġāwir, travelling through the Yemeni highlands in the

¹⁰⁰ Grotzfeld Data Set, 2016, pp. 287 and 420 and N.A. al-Shamrookh, *The Commerce and Trade of the Rasulids in the Yemen*, 1996, p. 122.

¹⁰¹ A. Šanbal (d. 920/1514), *Taʿrīḥ Ḥaḍramawt*, 1994, pp. 217–218.

¹⁰² Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, pp. 171 and 178.

¹⁰³ Bā Faqīh (d. early 10th/16th century), *Taʿrīḥ al-Šiḥr al-qarn al-ʿāšir*, 1999, pp. 183–184; Ibn Luṭfallāh (d. 1048/1638), *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 2003, p. 500.

early 13th century and depicting dense landscape of evergreen and deciduous trees, and those of C. Niebuhr, travelling through the region in 1763, and marvelling at the shortage of trees in the region. The dwindling of woodland space may have had some far-reaching consequences for rodent colonies. Deprived of sylvatic vegetation and shade, local rodents would be struggling to maintain high population densities, essential also for high densities of insects and plague bacteria, and hence, for plague activity. Currently, no scholarly attempt to study deforestation history of the Yemeni highlands has been made, but there is some important work on the same process in the Solomonian Empire of Ethiopia, between the 16th and 19th centuries.¹⁰⁴ Intriguingly, the plague situation in Ethiopia appears to mirror, to a large degree, that of Yemen. After some 200 years of plague activity between c.1431 and 1635, possibly in conjunction with a local reservoir(s), plague seems to have disappeared from Ethiopia altogether.¹⁰⁵ Again, one cannot help but wonder if the sudden end of plague activity in Ethiopia may be, in some way, related to the shrinkage in vegetation biomass, which, in turn, may have reduced the population of local rodents and their insects and thus created unfavourable conditions for plague activity.¹⁰⁶

This brings us to the second point raised at the beginning of the present section: the longevity of the putative Ibb reservoir. Plague scientists distinguish between short-, medium- and long-term reservoirs, although clear chronological definition for each type is still lacking.¹⁰⁷ Roughly speaking, short-term reservoir can be understood as a temporary focus (thriving in nature or human communities), in which plague can be maintained for a short time: say, for one or two outbreaks. Medium-term reservoir survives for decades or a couple of centuries, radiating plague waves and eventually dying out. Long-term reservoir is a permanent focus, persisting for centuries, potentially millennia, and, owing to its ecological uniqueness, capable of maintaining plague without dying out. The best example of the latter is marmot-maintained *Yersinia pestis* foci in the Tian Shan region of Central Asia, whose historical activity can be documented since the beginnings of the Second Pandemic in the late 1330s, but most likely it goes back to much

¹⁰⁴ R.K.P. Pankhurst, "The History of Deforestation and Afforestation in Ethiopia Prior to World War I", 1995.

¹⁰⁵ The outbreaks of epidemic diseases that appear to be associated with plague were documented in c.1431–1435, at some point between c.1454–1468, in 1490, 1497, 1508, c.1520, 1535–1537, 1563–1564, 1567–1568, possibly in 1579, in 1603, possibly in 1611, in 1618–1619, 1626–1627, and 1634–1635. See M.-L. Derat, "Du Lexique aux talismans", 2018, pp. 5–9; R.K.P. Pankhurst, "The History of Famine and Pestilence in Ethiopia Prior to the Founding of Gondär", 1972; al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), *Kitāb al-sulūk*, 1934–1973, vol. 4.2, p. 974; O. Raineri, "L'inno Mariano Etiopico Bese'et Anti (Beata Sei) del Sebhata Fequr (Celebrazione del Diletto)", 1986, p. 426; *Atti di Habta Maryam (†1497) e di Iyasu (†1508)*, 1990, p. 494; *Some Records of Ethiopia, 1593–1646*, 1957, p. 231; *Histoire de la conquête de l'Abyssinie (XVI^e siècle) par Chihâb ed-din Ahmed Ben 'Abd el Qâder*, 1897, p. 449; *Ottoman Explorations of the Nile*, 2018, p. 329; *Rerum Æthiopicarum Scriptores Occidentales Inediti a Saeculo XVI ad XIX*, 1903–1917, vol. 1, pp. 123, 137, 158, 364–365 and vol. 7, pp. 313, 341–342. See also, G. Chouin, "Reflections on Plague in African History (14th–19th c.)", 2018.

¹⁰⁶ This point will be dealt with at a greater length in a forthcoming study by the author.

¹⁰⁷ N.Chr. Stenseth, "Chapter 6. The Ecology of Plague", 2024, pp. 123 and 131–132.

earlier periods—potentially all the way to the earliest known cases of *Yersinia pestis* infection in Late Neolithic Eurasia: some 5,000 years before present.¹⁰⁸ If the above reconstruction regarding the longevity of the putative Ibb reservoir is not too removed from reality and it indeed existed for only 125–150 or so years, then it would fall into the category of a medium-term reservoir. One possibility for its eventual dying-out is the environmental shifts of the late 16th century: dry spells and possibly deforestation. But it could also do something about the ecological incompatibility of the Ibb region to maintain a long-term reservoir—in contrast with other global regions, including the Tian Shan. One possibility is that local wild rodents, surveyed above, do not have the same biological properties as marmots to maintain plague activity for longer periods. One important condition for the maintenance of *Yersinia pestis* reservoir, in a medium- or long run, is an equilibrium between genetically susceptible and genetically immune rodents.¹⁰⁹ Could it be that local rodents did not attain that balance and hence, could not maintain the reservoir for any longer than about 125–150 years?

Soil properties could be yet another crucial factor. The Yemeni highlands are characterised by volcanic soil, which can be sub-divided into slightly gravelly loam to gravelly loamy sand soils around the city of Ibb, and sandy loam and silt loam soils on the surrounding countryside. These soils are marked by low salinity and low clay content, and thus are not, at least the theory, the best fit for maintaining plague reservoirs. Chemical components may be another meaningful factor, as certain elements (cadmium, copper, iron, magnesium, sodium, antimony, and uranium, as well as higher pH) appear to provide favourable conditions for long-term plague reservoirs.¹¹⁰ As we have argued above, the soil of the Yemeni highlands in general, and that of Ibb in particular, lacks, at least in theory, some of these essential factors to maintain a telluric plague reservoir.

Although the nature of the epidemic diseases ravaging Yemen between 1575–1576 and 1807–1808 cannot, at this point, be determined, the outbreaks documented in the ‘Asīr province between 1815 and 1969 (appearing, on average, every six years between 1815 and 1906) and often spreading southwards into the Yemeni highlands, were certainly caused by plague.¹¹¹ ‘Asīr province lay at the heart of the pilgrimage route connecting Yemen to Mecca, and traversed each year by faithful Muslims from all over the Indian Ocean region during the *ḥaǧǧ*. The issue of plague spread—as well as that of other infectious diseases—by *ḥaǧǧ* pilgrims was a serious concern to the Ottoman authorities in the later 19th and early 20th century, and there is plenty of documentary evidence

¹⁰⁸ Ph. Slavin & F. Sebbane, “Emergence and Spread of Ancestral *Yersinia Pestis* in Late-Neolithic and Bronze-Age Eurasia, ca. 5,000 to 1,500 Y.B.P”, 2022.

¹⁰⁹ P. Nilsson et al., “Polygenic Plague Resistance in the Great Gerbil Uncovered by Population Sequencing”, 2022.

¹¹⁰ N.Christian Stenseth et al., “No Evidence for Persistent Natural Plague Reservoirs in Historical and Modern Europe”, 2022.

¹¹¹ The outbreaks were reported in 1815–1816, 1826, 1830–1832, 1836–1837, 1844, 1853–1854, 1858–1859, 1868, 1874, 1879–1880, 1887, 1889, 1891, 1893–1900, 1906 and 1951. For references, see n. 74 above.

pointing out to such a concern.¹¹² We do not know, at this point, when the ‘Asīr reservoir was seeded. Nor do we know about a possible connection between the ‘Asīr and the Ibb reservoirs. In theory, there are two possibilities. One is that ‘Asīr reservoir was seeded as the result of the northbound migration of the putative Ibb reservoir, together with local plague-carrying rodent colonies—at some point between 1558 and 1815. The other, and a more plausible possibility is that plague focalisation in the ‘Asīr region was an independent event occurring at some point after the demise of the Ibb reservoir—all the more that the 1815–1816 outbreak was believed to have been introduced by the Egyptian army, rather than originated locally.¹¹³

VI. The need for aDNA evidence

Any further conclusions about a possible relationship between the two reservoirs (or a lack of such), are compounded by the virtual lack of aDNA/DNA evidence. As of Summer 2025, there is only one sequenced genome from Yemen, associated with the 1969 outbreak in al-Maddah in the Ḥawlān region, possibly originating in the ‘Asīr reservoir.¹¹⁴ Phylogenetically, the genome in question belongs to Branch 1.ANT2 (itself a descendant of Branch 1B originating, most likely, in South-Central Germany during the Black Death outbreak in 1349, subsequently causing the so-called *pestis secunda* of 1356–1366 and disappearing from Europe hereafter).¹¹⁵ Branch 1.ANT2 itself emerged at some point between 1770 and 1918 (median date: 1854), namely centuries after our period, around the Great Lakes of East Africa, and it appears that its strains may have crossed the Red Sea into Oman in 1899 and then into Yemen in the following year.¹¹⁶ Given the chronology of the emergence of 1.ANT2 (median date: 1854) and its spread into southern Arabia (1899–1900), it is clear that the putative Ibb reservoir and its recurrent waves were associated with a different (and more ancient) *Yersinia pestis* branch(es) and strains, which had preceded 1.ANT2. Because of the lack of aDNA evidence, however, their phylogenetic lineages and positions cannot, at this point, be determined. All the same, we can establish, on the basis of the 1969 genome’s phylogeny and the textual evidence discussed above, that the putative Ibb reservoir and the ‘Asīr focus were associated with a different *Yersinia pestis* branch(es) each, with the Ibb focus being a home to some ancient branch(es), while the ‘Asīr one hosting 1.ANT2 strains. Of course, there is always the possibility that the Ibb reservoir housed some unknown ancestral 1.ANT branch. It has been estimated that the 1.ANT lineage had branched off from Branch 1B perhaps in the

¹¹² M. Low, “Empire and the Hajj”, 2008; *idem*, *Imperial Mecca*, 2020.

¹¹³ W.J. Simpson, *A Treatise on Plague*, 1905, p. 38; N. Radcliffe, *Papers Relating to the Modern History and Recent Progress of Levantine Plague*, 1879, pp. 3–17.

¹¹⁴ The outbreak is described in M. Bahmanyar, “Human Plague Episode in the District of Khawlan, Yemen”, 1972.

¹¹⁵ On the early history of Branch 1B, see Ph. Slavin, “Out of the West”, 2021.

¹¹⁶ G. Mas Fiol et al., “Global Evolutionary Patterns of *Yersinia Pestis* and Its Spread into Africa”, 2024. These chronological brackets, based probability computations, are estimated with BEAST (Bayesian Evolutionary Analysis Sampling Trees)—a cross-platform program used to perform molecular dating.

15th century (at some point between 1344 and 1537, with 1431 being the median date)—long before the emergence of 1.ANT3 (the earliest *known* 1.ANT clade) between 1471 and 1712 (median date: 1591).¹¹⁷ But there is an equal possibility that the reservoir in question hosted an altogether different (and hitherto unknown) *Yersinia pestis* branch(es). With no aDNA from the region, however, this question cannot be resolved.

That the two reservoirs are thought to have hosted two different *Yersinia pestis* branches does not mean that strains of additional lineages did not circulate within the respective reservoirs. There is enough evidence of reservoirs hosting multiple branches' strains. Thus, the Sarydhaz and Aksai highland foci of the Tian Shan (foci 31 and 33 according to the Soviet-era classification), are currently homes to, respectively, four and three different *Yersinia pestis* lineages.¹¹⁸ As noted, the 1815–1816 plague outbreak initiating a series of waves radiating out of the 'Asir reservoir, was possibly associated with their introduction by the Egyptian army, rather than with a local source. Again, we do not know the phylogeny of the strains associated with the same outbreak. Conversely, 1.ANT2 strains (to which the 1969 isolate belonged), seem to have arrived into Yemen in 1900 from the Great Lakes region of East Africa and hence, were most certainly associated with a different phylogenetic branch from that introduced in 1815–1816. Hence, it is possible that the 'Asir reservoir may, at some point, have hosted strains belonging to two or potentially three different phylogenetic branches (in case there was a point in time, when the same reservoir hosted the Ibb-originated strains, the strains linked to the 1815–1816 introduction and 1.ANT2 strains associated with the 1900 introduction from East Africa—all belonging to a different phylogenetic branch each). In any event, any scenario remains a pure conjecture in the absence of aDNA evidence.

VII. Conclusions

This article contributes to several ongoing debates in plague history by presenting textual evidence for a historical plague reservoir in the Yemeni highlands, most likely in the Ibb region. This finding integrates Yemen into the global landscape of plague reservoirs associated with the Second Plague Pandemic. The reservoir likely emerged in the 1430s (probably in 1436) and remained active until at least the late 1550s. Following an outbreak in 1445, there was an apparent lull in activity until 1523, which may have been due to a prolonged dry climate (c.1464–1502) that suppressed vegetation, host and vector populations, and thus plague transmission. The wetter period of c.1503–1553 may have reversed these conditions, enabling renewed plague activity. Environmental change, particularly deforestation, may have also influenced the reservoir's dynamics. Although the extent and timing of deforestation remain unclear, its potential impact highlights how ecological factors can enable or suppress plague activity. Textual sources suggest the putative Ibb reservoir was active for roughly 125 years, possibly ceasing in or shortly

¹¹⁷ G. Mas Fiol et al., "Global Evolutionary Patterns of *Yersinia Pestis* and Its Spread into Africa", 2024.

¹¹⁸ G. Eroshenko et al., "*Yersinia Pestis* Strains of Ancient Phylogenetic Branch o.ANT Are Widely Spread in the High-Mountain Plague Foci of Kyrgyzstan", 2017.

after the late 1550s, with subsequent epidemic outbreaks being caused by other diseases. The idea that the reservoir shifted north to the ‘Asīr region is unlikely, as the earliest known outbreak there was introduced externally in 1815.

The disappearance of the Yemeni reservoir may have been driven by renewed droughts (1554–1581) and ongoing deforestation, both reducing the ecological support for plague hosts. Additionally, local soil characteristics may have played a role. Volcanic, acidic soils in the region lack the chemical and physical properties typically associated with long-term plague reservoirs. Although data is incomplete, the existing evidence suggests Yemeni soils may not support a stable, telluric plague reservoir. This underlines the importance of soil conditions as a key, though often overlooked, factor in the ecology of plague.

The present study is placed within a wider and growing historiographical field of global plague history, which deviates from the traditional and outdated Eurocentric perspective by integrating Asian and African regions into the history, evolution and ecology of *Yersinia pestis*—and particularly during the Second Plague Pandemic. In recent years, scholarly debates related to the origins of the Black Death have placed Central Asia at the forefront of this new historiography.¹¹⁹ By contrast, other regions are yet to receive their deserved attention—and the Red Sea region is by no means an exception: apart from a few works on epidemics in earlier Solomonic Ethiopia, there are, at present, no additional studies.¹²⁰ This is notwithstanding a rich corpus of textual sources, as demonstrated in the present article. Although both Yemen and Ethiopia can be considered as the ‘periphery’ of the ‘quasi-globalised’ ‘Old World’, they were nevertheless integrated into it, via trade, travel, migration and other means of exchange, one of which was the transmission of pathogens.

The association between plague outbreaks in Yemen and Ethiopia, something that the present article only lightly hints upon, is only one of many topics that the present article could not have dealt with, because of its limited scope. There are indeed some additional important questions to be raised and tackled. Some of these are related to the putative Ibb reservoir and its associated plague activity. Thus, were plague waves radiating out of this reservoir limited to the Yemeni highlands, or did they spread elsewhere—for instance, further north into the Arabian desert, or further east into the Ḥaḍramawt region (although the available evidence suggests that the disease may not have spread there), and beyond? What was the impact of plague outbreaks on local communities—demographically, economically and socially? How did they cope with the ongoing crises? What were the long-term consequences of plague outbreaks on economic decline and ensuing economic backwardness of Yemen? The latter is particularly

¹¹⁹ M.H. Green, “The Four Black Deaths”, 2020; M.A. Spyrou et al., “The Source of the Black Death”, 2022; Ph. Slavin, “The Birth of the Black Death”, 2023; Ph. Slavin, “A Rise and Fall of a Chaghadaid Community”, 2023; Ph. Slavin, “From the Tian Shan to Crimea”, 2023.

¹²⁰ R.K.P. Pankhurst, “The History of Famine and Pestilence in Ethiopia”, 1972; *idem*, *The History of Famine and Epidemics in Ethiopia Prior to the Twentieth Century*, 1985; M.-L. Derat, “Du Lexique aux talismans”, 2018.

important question, tied to the ongoing debates regarding the impact of plague on long-term economic decline in late-medieval and early modern Middle East, with Yemen—the ‘periphery’ of the Islamic world—being entirely left out of the same debate. Including Yemen into this analytical and conceptual framework will offer much valuable contribution to the ongoing debates about the roots, nature, and chronology of the so-called ‘Great Divergence’ between the ‘West’ and the ‘Rest’.¹²¹

More specifically, the seeding and perseverance of the plague reservoir invites, almost instinctively, the question of the possible impact of plague outbreaks on the end of the Rasūlid dynasty in 1454. Rasūlid era was particularly—perhaps the single most—prosperous period in the history of Islamic Yemen, and much of its prosperity came from its commercial fortunes and networks, spreading across the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. For some historians, plague outbreaks were a paramount factor disrupting international trade of Yemen and sealing the fate of the declining Rasūlid dynasty.¹²² The same reasoning should be applied to the Rasūlids’ successor, the Ṭahirid dynasty (1454–1517) and to the Zaydi Imamate in the 10th/16th century and beyond. Did plague contribute to the short life of the Ṭahirids? Did it play a role in destabilising and weakening the Zaydi Imamate in the subsequent periods? Obviously, blaming it all on plague would mean a biologically deterministic and unilateral approach, but given the geographic pervasiveness of some plague waves within Yemen (like the 1433/1434–1437/1438 one, spreading all over the western part of the country), and the regularity of its outbreaks in the 10th/16th century, it is difficult to imagine that it merely passed by without leaving any impact on local communities, their demography and socio-economic conditions, and regional networks.

Unlike Mamluk historiographers, such as al-Maqrīzī, the chroniclers of the Rasūlid and subsequent eras tended to leave comparatively laconic descriptions, often omitting environmental events, such as weather extremes and natural disasters. As a result, there are very few references to precipitation—something that potentially hinders our understanding of the focalisation of *Yersinia pestis* in the highlands and its subsequent activity. The article attempted to rectify this shortcoming by utilising palaeo-climatic data: the stalagmite record from the Hoti cave in Oman, used here as a proxy for annual fluctuations in precipitation levels in neighbouring Yemen, is supplemented by annual Nilometer readings. Although there was a good degree of secular trend synchronicity between the two series, they can only be used as very indirect proxy data to infer the situation in the Yemeni highlands—in total absence of comparable palaeo-climatic data from there. Generating a new long-term palaeo-climatic series deriving from a dendrochronological record of the Yemeni highlands would be a crucial step not only towards improving our understanding of plague history of that region, but also in

¹²¹ The literature on this topic is too vast to be cited here. For the Middle East’s lagging behind, in this context, see T. Kuran, *The Long Divergence*, 2011; J. Rubin, *Rulers, Religion, and Riches*, 2017. On Middle Eastern agricultural and economic crises and decline in the aftermath of the Black Death, see E. Ashtor, “The Economic Decline of the Middle East During the Later Middle Ages”, 1981.

¹²² É. Vallet, *L’arabie Marchande*, 2010, pp. 670–671.

opening the door to future explorations of the environmental history of the pre-modern Red Sea region: something that has not yet been done.

Similarly, there is currently no aDNA from the Yemeni highlands, or indeed anywhere in the Red Sea region—apart from the 1969 genome from the Ḥawlān district of the Sanaa Governorate, which, although mentioned in the current article, is of no help to infer the evolutionary history of *Yersinia pestis* focalised in the putative Ibb reservoir. Again, in the ideal world, retrieving aDNA from one of local contexts would be immensely beneficial not only for exploring plague history in the Yemeni highlands, but also for understanding the history of global evolution and dissemination of *Yersinia pestis* strains during the Second Plague Pandemic. Importantly, the local environmental conditions of the Yemeni highlands are better suited for a decent aDNA preservation than other hotter and excessively arid or humid parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

The practical side of the proposed scientific vision does not, unfortunately, square up with the sad political and military reality dominating Yemen in the recent decades—and particularly since the outbreak of the Civil War (2014-present). The looting and destruction of national treasures has already been noted above. In addition, the ongoing conflicts hinder archaeological excavations and other types of fieldwork and heritage preservation—and not the least international collaboration between Yemeni scholars and their western partners.¹²³ This is a trivial, yet sad reminder that armed conflicts tend to have much negative impact on scientific progress, as they impede the creation and proliferation of new data and knowledge. Hence, some of the questions raised in the article—and in particular, related to the eco-climatic and palaeo-genetic aspects of plague history in Yemen—may remain unanswered in the current political and military climate. We can only (perhaps naively) hope that the situation will change in the future and one day interdisciplinary teams of historians, archaeologists, palaeo-climatologists and aDNA scientists will join hands and engage in collaborative research projects to advance our currently limited knowledge of this subject to entirely new heights. If anything, this article is also a reminder that the only way to investigate complex environmental phenomena such as plague reservoirs is to undertake inherently an interdisciplinary approach, integrating different types of evidence and methodologies.

¹²³ L. Meskell & B. Isakhan, “Unesco, World Heritage and the Gridlock over Yemen”, 2020; M. Cozzolino & R. Loreto, “Back to the Ḥawlān: A Geoarchaeological Remote Sensing Analysis of the Yemeni Highland Bronze Age”, 2025.

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ملاحظة حول مسائل فيما بين اليهود وأبي يزيد البسطامي (مخطوطة تريم رقم 1853).
مرة أخرى عن البسطامي والرهبان : سيرة حياة أخلاقية أم دفاعية ؟¹

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(المركز الوطني للبحث العلمي : مديرة حوليات مخطوطات اليمن الجديدة)

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الخلاصة

ملاحظة حول مسائل فيما بين اليهود وأبي يزيد البسطامي (مخطوط تريم رقم 1853). مرة أخرى عن البسطامي والرهبان :
سيرة حياة أخلاقية أم دفاعية ؟
تهدف هذه الملاحظة إلى دراسة مدى الانسجام بين عنوان مخطوطة رقم 1853 المحفوظة في مكتبة الأحقاف بتريم،
حزرموت، ومحتواها، مع التطرق إلى مسألة مكانة النص الذي تضمنه في سياق هذه المنطقة.

Résumé

Note sur *Masā'il fī mā bayna al-Yahūd wa-Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī* (ms Tarīm 1853). Encore sur al-Bisṭāmī et les moines : hagiographie morale ou apologétique ?

Cette note a modestement pour objectif d'examiner la concordance entre le titre et le contenu du manuscrit n° 1853 de la Bibliothèque al-Aḥqāf, Tarīm, Hadramaout, et de rebondir sur la question du statut du texte qu'il renferme dans ce contexte régional.

Abstract

A note on *Masā'il fī mā bayna al-Yahūd wa-Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī* (ms Tarīm 1853). More on al-Bisṭāmī and the monks: moral hagiography or apologetic?

¹ هذه المقالة هي ترجمة لمقالة أصدرت في حوليات مخطوطات اليمن الجديدة، عدد 39/20، يناير 2025، تحت عنوان
« Note sur *Masā'il fī mā bayna al-Yahūd wa-Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī* (ms Tarīm n° 1853). Encore sur al-Bisṭāmī et les moines : hagiographie morale ou apologétique ? », Anne Regourd (CNRS ; Dir. Nouvelles Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen) avec la collaboration de Mohammed Tawaf (Responsable des archives à l'École nationale des chartes-PSL ; Membre du Centre Jean Mabillon, École des chartes - PSL),
ومحمد طواف ترجمها إلى اللغة العربية.

This note's modest aim is to examine the concordance between the title and the content of manuscript no. 1853 in the al-Aḥqāf Library, Tarīm, Hadramaut, and to return to the question of the status of the text it contains in this regional context.

الكلمات المفتاحية

مكتبة الأحقاف، تريم (حضر موت، اليمن) — البسطامي — يهود حضر موت — القرنين الثامن عشر والتاسع عشر — المناقب — حياة القديسين — الدفاعات

Mots clés

Bibliothèque al-Aḥqāf, Tarīm (Hadramaout, Yémen) — al-Biṣṭāmī (m. 261/874 ou 234/857) — Juifs du Hadramaout — xviii^e-xix^e s. — vie des saints — apologétique

Keywords

Library al-Aḥqāf, Tarīm (Hadramawt, Yemen) — al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 261/874 or 234/857) — Jewish in Hadramawt — 18th-19th century — life of saints — apologetic

أولاً. مقدمة

تحتفظ مكتبة الأحقاف الغنية في تريم (حضر موت، اليمن) بمخطوط نُسخَت في الربع الأخير من القرن التاسع عشر، وعنوانها مسائل فيما بين اليهود وأبي يزيد البسطامي، وهو عنوان يثير للاهتمام بالنظر إلى وجوده في هذا المكان². تنتمي هذه المخطوطة إلى مجموعة حضرية خاصة أهديت إلى مكتبة الأحقاف عند تأسيسها عام 1972، مما يشير إلى وجود سابقة لها في المحافظة³. بالنسبة لهذه الفترة المتأخرة من القرن التاسع عشر، في الواقع فإن المصادر العربية شحيحة جدًا، وكذلك الأبحاث المتعلقة بالمجتمعات اليهودية في وادي حضر موت، والتي كانت بالفعل أقل عددًا من تلك الموجودة في المرتفعات الزيدية. كانتا موجودتين في بداية العصر

² نتقدم بجزيل الشكر إلى مكتبة الأحقاف، ولا سيما لأمينها العام، حسن عمر الهادي، على إتاحتها لنا الوصول إلى المخطوطة رقم 1853، والساح لنا بنشر صورة عنها في نهاية هذه المداخلة. ولولا مساعدة موظفي المكتبة وعزيمتهم، لما كنا قادرين على توضيح محتوى هذا النص. كما قدم الشكر لفكتور باليخا دي بوسستينزا (Victor Pallejà de Bustinza) (الجامعة المفتوحة لكاتالونيا)، مارك واغنر وجان (Mark Wagner) (قسم اللغات العالمية، الأدبيات والثقافات، جامعة ولاية لويزيانا) وجان فرانسوا فو (Jean-François Faii) (أستاذ فخري، جامعة سنجور، الإسكندرية) لما قدموه من إرشادات بالغة الأهمية في إنجاز هذه الدراسة.

³ للاطلاع على عرض عن مكتبة الأحقاف، انظر، من بين مراجع أخرى إلى :

N. van den Boogert, Nico van den, « The manuscript library of Tarīm in Wādī Ḥaḍramawt », 1994 ;

A. Regourd, « Maktabat al-Aḥqāf, Tarīm : son histoire », ينشر قادمًا.

الإسلامي، وقد تطورت تقاليدهما بالتوازي مع الجاؤونية في بابل (gaonat de Babylone)⁴، ولكن بشكل مستقل. يتسم التاريخ القانوني والاجتماعي لهذه المجتمعات بالصراعات وعدم الاستقرار وفترات التوازن⁵. أما بالنسبة لأبي يزيد طيفور بن عيسى بن شروسان البسطامي (المتوفى سنة 261 هـ/874 م أو 234 هـ/857 م)، أحد أعظم أسماء بدايات التصوف الفارسي، وكان يُلقب بـ «سلطان العارفين»، فقد عُرف بزهده واستقراره في موطنه؛ حيث لم يكن يغادر مدينته بسطام، الواقعة في منطقة قومس (ديلم)، إلا للضرورة⁶.

تُعَدُّ هذه المعطيات القليلة كفيلاً بإثارة الاهتمام والرغبة في الاطلاع على هذه المخطوطة الموجودة في تريم، على أمل العثور على نص جديد وجوهري يساهم في فهم التاريخ المعاصر لليهود حضرموت، ويمثل الهدف المتواضع من هذه المداخلة في محاولة توضيح العلاقة الممكنة بين عنوان المخطوطة ومحتواها، والسعي إلى إعادة طرح مسألة وضعية النص الذي تحتويه.

ثانياً. عرض نص مخطوط تريم

أ. معلومات عن المخطوط

⁴ تبدو المجتمعات اليهودية الأكبر مقيمة في حبان «منذ القرن التاسع، استقر يهود حضرموت بشكل رئيسي في مدينة حبان (محافظة شبوة) وفي القرن الخامس عشر، تبرّع مؤسس سلالة آل الواحدى بقطعة أرض في حبان لوزيره سليمان الحكيم، الذي كان سبباً في تأسيس الوجود اليهودي في هذه المدينة. وقد انقسمت جماعة يهود حبان إلى خمس عائلات: "معطوف، ميفيعي، سباح، حلت، وعدني"». J.-F. Faiü, *Les Juifs de la Péninsule arabique. V^e-XV^e siècles*, 2008. ولمزيد من المعلومات عن حبان في أوائل القرن العشرين، يُنظر إلى: R. Ahroni, *The Jews of the British crown colony of Aden. History, Culture, and Ethnic Relations*, 1994، ص. 210-291.

وقد أورد أيضاً دليل الرحالة يوسف هاليفي (Joseph Halévi) (1827-1917) وإدوارد غلاس (Eduard Glaser) (1855-1908)، الذي رافقه حاييم حبشوش (Hayyim Ḥabshūsh) (1833-1899) في رحلته عام 1870، وسجل تفاصيلها في نص نُشر لاحقاً (لترجمة الفرنسية، 1995) (Hayyim Ḥabshūsh, *Yémen*).

⁵ مثال على مدينة بيحان، التي تقع اليوم في محافظة شبوة (جنوب اليمن)، في القرن الثالث عشر (فترة الدولة الرسولية في عدن)، وفي القرنين الخامس عشر والسادس عشر، يُنظر إلى:

S. A. Frantsouzoff, «Иудеи у власти в средневековом Южном Йемене и их конфликт с мусульманским обществом».

[اليهود في السلطة في اليمن الجنوبي في العصور الوسطى وصراعهم مع المجتمع المسلم]، 2020.

؛ ص. 166ب-167ب، H. Ritter, «Abū Yazīd (Bayazīd) Ṭayfūr b. ʿIsā b. Surūṣān al-Biṣṭāmī», *ET*, 1960.

خير الدين الزركلي، «أبو يزيد البسطامي»، 1990، المجلد 3، ص. 235. للاطلاع على مساهمة أحدث، انظر: M. 'Abdu-r-Rabb, «Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī: his life and doctrines», 1970، 125-46، ص.

محفظة في تريم (حضر موت، اليمن)، في مكتبة الأحقاف، تحت رقم 1853 (رمز المجموعة : مجموعة الحزم، رقم 34 ؛ رمز الفهرس 1928⁷، و. 314-أ.326، 11-13 سطر/صفحة)، وقد قام بنسخه أحمد بن عمر بن سعيد سعيود، يوم الاثنين 28 رجب 1292 هـ/29 أغسطس 1875 م (و. 326). يحتوي على قصة يواجه فيها أبو يزيد البسطامي رهبان أحد الأديرة.

ب. ملخص مفصل لنص مخطوط تريم⁸

صفحة العنوان (و. 314.أ)

1. الوحي والمهمة (و. 314.ب-315.أ)

في أحد الأيام، يتلقى أبو يزيد البسطامي وحيًا روحياً يحثه على الذهاب إلى دير سمعان⁹ لحضور احتفال ديني يجمع العديد من الرهبان. على الرغم من تردده الأولي وخوفه من أن يكون هذا الإلهام إغواءً، يطيع الأمر الإلهي بعد تلقي تأكيد في المنام ؛ يرتدي ملابس الرهبان، بما في ذلك الزنار، ويذهب إلى دير سمعان.

2. اكتشاف وجود أبي يزيد (و. 315.أ-315.ب)

خلال الاحتفال، أحس كبير الرهبان بوجود رجل مسلم بينهم، الأمر الذي جعله يعجز عن الكلام، وأعلن أنّ رجلاً محمدياً حضر لاختبارهم. وأمام الجمع المستثار وضع المتسلل أمام خيار منهجي : سيخضعونه لأسئلة للتأكد من معارفه الدينية، فإذا أجاب إجابة صحيحة اتبعه الرهبان، وإلا فسيقتل.

3. الأسئلة اللاهوتية (و. 316.ب-323.ب)

يبدأ الرهبان حوارًا مع أبي يزيد، طارحًا سلسلة من الأسئلة المعقدة حول جوانب مختلفة من العقيدة الدينية، بما في ذلك علم الكونيات والنصوص المقدسة والشخصيات الدينية والظواهر الطبيعية، هذه

⁷ عبد الله حسين محمد العيدروس، عبد القادر صالح شهاب، عبد الرحمن السقاف، فهرس المخطوطات اليمنية لمكتبة الأحقاف بمحافظة حضرموت - الجمهورية اليمنية، 2009، المجلد الثاني، ص. 829 ؛ تامون بابا، سامي لغاتي، وأن ريغورد، فهرس المخطوطات اليمنية لمكتبة الأحقاف بمحافظة حضرموت - الجمهورية اليمنية، 2022، ص. 554.

⁸ ملخص بواسطة محمد طواف.

⁹ يوجد في مصر دير مخصص للقديس سمعان، ويعدّ من أهم المعالم الدينية في العصر المسيحي. ويقع هذا الدير على قمة هضبة، مقابل جزيرة إلفنتين، غرب مقابر النوامر، وعلى بعد نحو كيلومترين من الضفة الغربية لنهر النيل. ومع ذلك، هناك دير آخر يُعرف بدير القديس سمعان العمودي، ويُعرف أيضاً باسم قلعة سمعان، وهو دير مسيحي قديم يقع على بعد ثلاثين كيلومتراً شمال غرب مدينة حلب في شمال سوريا، ولم يتبقّ منه اليوم سوى بعض الآثار، ويعدّ هذا الدير رمزاً لصراع المسيحيين الأوائل ضد الوثنية واليهودية، وسعيهم لتحويل النفوس إلى الإيمان الجديد. ويمثل دير سمعان، بوصفه رمزاً للدفاع العقائدي المسيحي، تلك الفترة من النشاط التبشيري، ويبدو أنه ينسجم أكثر مع مضمون النص. علاوة على ذلك، تذكر بعض الروايات مرور البطل بالقسطنطينية، كما سيتضح أدناه من خلال المخطوطات الموجودة في المكتبة الوطنية الفرنسية (BnF).

الأسئلة مصممة لتقييم عمق الفهم الديني لأبي يزيد، يطرح الرهبان الأسئلة واحدًا تلو الآخر. ثم يكرر أبو يزيد سؤال الرهبان ويقدم إجابته. يتم تقديم كل سؤال وإجابته بـ « وأما »، وأحيانًا تُميز كتابتها. بما أننا نلخص هنا نص مخطوط تريم، تقدم إجابة أبي يزيد مباشرة بعد سؤال الرهبان¹⁰. ومن هنا تأتي القفزات بين الأوراق بين الأسئلة والإجابات، ونودُّ أن نُشيرَ إلى أنَّ الآياتِ القرآنيةَ الواردةَ في هذا الملخص هي نفسها التي كُتبت في مخطوط تريم.

الرهبان : أخبرني عن الواحد الذي ليس له ثاني ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : إنه الله، الواحد، القدير. (و. 317.ب)
الرهبان : ومن هما الاثنان اللذان ليس لهما ثالث ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : هما الليل والنهار، لأن الله يقول: « وجعلنا الليل والنهار ايتين »¹¹. (و. 317.ب)
الرهبان : ومن هم الثلاثة الذين ليس لهم رابع ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : هم العرش والكرسي والقلم. (و. 317.ب-318.أ)
الرهبان : ومن هم الأربعة الذين ليس لهم خامس ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : هي الكتب المنزلة: التوراة والإنجيل والزبور والقرآن. (و. 318.ب)
الرهبان : ومن هم الخمسة الذين ليس لهم سادس ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : هي الصلوات الخمس المفروضة على كل مسلم ومسلمة. (و. 318.أ)
الرهبان : ومن هم الستة الذين ليس لهم سابع ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : هم الستة التي ذكرها الله في آيته: « ولقد خلقنا السموات والأرض وما بينهما في ستة أيام »¹². (و. 318.أ)
الرهبان : ومن هم السبعة الذين ليس لهم ثامن ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : هي السماوات السبع، لأن الله يقول: « الذي خلق سبع سموات طباقاً »¹³. (و. 318.أ-318.ب)
الرهبان : ومن هم الثمانية الذين ليس لهم تاسع ؟ (و. 318.ب)¹⁴

¹⁰ يشير نص إلى (كبيرهم) أي (كبير الرهبان)، إلا أنه تم استخدام الرهبان فقط بشكل متكرر، وفق المخطوطة الأصلية، علماً بأنه المراد به هو كبير الرهبان.

¹¹ القرآن، 17، « الإسراء »، آية 11-12.

¹² القرآن، 50، « ق »، آية 37-38.

¹³ القرآن، 67، « الملك »، آية 2-3.

¹⁴ في المخطوط، يقوم أبو يزيد بإعادة ذكر السؤال، لأنه لا يظهر في الموضع الذي يفترض أن يكون فيه، في و. 316.ب، ومن هنا تم نقله هنا إلى و. 318.أ. ولكن في موضعه الأصلي، في و. 316.أ، عند نهاية السطر الخامس، تشير علامة صح إلى وجود فراغ أو نقص. وقد وُضعت هذه العلامة على سطر الكتابة وبمسافة محسوبة عن الكلمات التي تسبقها وتليها، وهي من عمل الناسخ.

أبو يزيد : هم حملة العرش ، لأن الله يقول : « ويحمل عرش ربك فوقهم يومئذ ثمانية »¹⁵. (و. 318.ب)
 الرهبان : ومن هم التسعة الذين ليس لهم عاشر ؟ (و. 316.ب)
 أبو يزيد : هم التسعة رهط المفسدين في الأرض ، لأن الله يقول : « في المدينة تسعة رهط يفسدون في الأرض ولا يصلحون »¹⁶. (و. 318.ب)
 الرهبان : ومن هم العشرة الذين ليس لهم حادي عشر ؟ (و. 316.ب)
 أبو يزيد : هي فروض مكة المفروضة على الحاج وهي أيام الصيام ، كما ذكر في الآية : « فصيام ثلاثة أيام في الحج وسبعة اذا [اذا] رجعت تلك عشرة كامله »¹⁷. (و. 318.ب-319.أ)
 الرهبان : ومن هم الأحد عشر الذين ليس لهم ثاني عشر ؟ (و. 316.ب)
 أبو يزيد : هم إخوة يوسف عليه السلام. (و. 319.أ)
 الرهبان : ومن هم الاثنا عشر الذين ليس لهم ثالث عشر ؟ (و. 316.ب)
 أبو يزيد : هو عدد الشهور. (و. 319.أ)
 الرهبان : ومن هم الثلاثة عشر ؟ (و. 316.ب)
 أبو يزيد : هي رؤيا يوسف عليه السلام ، لأن الله يقول : « اني رايت احد عشر كوكباً والشمس والقمر رايتهم لي ساجدين »¹⁸. (و. 319.أ)
 الرهبان : ومن هم الأربعة عشر الذين تحدثوا مع رب العالمين ؟¹⁹ (و. 316.ب)
 أبو يزيد : هي السماوات السبع والأراضي السبع ، لأن الله يقول : « قال لها وللارض اتيا طوعاً او كرهاً قالت اتينا طائعين »²⁰. (و. 320.أ)
 الرهبان : أي قوم كذبوا ودخلوا الجنة ، وأي قوم قالوا الحق ودخلوا النار ؟ (و. 316.ب)
 أبو يزيد : الذين كذبوا ودخلوا الجنة هم إخوة يوسف ، لأن الله يقول : « وجاؤا على قميصه بدم كذب »²¹. (و. 319.أ) أما الذين قالوا الحق ودخلوا النار ، فهم اليهود والنصارى ، لأن الله يقول : « وقالت اليهود ليست النصارى على شيء وقالت النصارى ليست اليهود على فهم [على شيء] »²². (و. 319.أ-319.ب)

¹⁵ القرآن ، 69 ، « الحاقة » ، آية 16-17.

¹⁶ القرآن ، 27 ، « النمل » ، آية 47-48.

¹⁷ القرآن ، 2 ، « البقرة » ، آية 195-196.

¹⁸ القرآن ، 12 ، « يوسف » ، آية 3-4.

¹⁹ لقد طُرح هذا السؤال بالفعل أعلاه ، في و. 316.أ ، بعد السؤال المتعلق بـ«الثلاثة عشر» ، إلا أن جواب أبي يزيد لا يوجد في موضعه المقرر ، بل وُضع في و. 320.أ في المخطوط.

²⁰ القرآن ، 41 ، « فصلت » ، آية 10-11.

²¹ القرآن ، 12 ، « يوسف » ، آية 17-18.

²² القرآن ، 2 ، « البقرة » ، آية 112-113.

الرهبان : أين يستقر الروح في الجسد ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : إنها بين أذنيك، في موضع الوجه. (و. 319.ب)
الرهبان : ما هي « الذاريات ذروا » ؟²³ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : « الذاريات ذروا » هي الرياح الأربعة. (و. 319.ب)
الرهبان : وما هي « فالحاملات وقرا »²⁴ ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : « الحاملات وقرا » هي السحب. (و. 319.ب)
الرهبان : وما هي « الجاريات يسرا »²⁵ ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : « الجاريات يسرا » هي السفن التي تجري في البحر. (و. 319.ب)
الرهبان : وما هي « المقسمات أمرا »²⁶ ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : « المقسمات أمرا » هم الملائكة الذين يوزعون الأرزاق بين الناس في ليلة النصف من شعبان.
(و. 319.ب-320.أ)
الرهبان : ما الذي يتنفس بلا روح ؟ (و. 316.ب)²⁷
أبو يزيد : إنه الفجر. (و. 320.أ)
الرهبان : ما هو القبر الذي مشى مع صاحبه ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : القبر الذي مشى مع صاحبه هو قبر أيوب (يونس)²⁸ عليه السلام. (و. 320.ب)
الرهبان : ما هو الماء الذي لم ينزل من السماء ولم ينبع من الأرض ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : فهو الماء الذي بعثته بلقيس إلى سليمان عليه السلام في قارورة وكان من عَرَقِ الخيل. (و. 320.أ-320.ب)
الرهبان : أخبرني عن الأربعة الذين ليسوا من الجن ولا من الإنس ولا من الملائكة ولا من أب ولا من رحم أم ؟ (و. 316.ب)
أبو يزيد : فهي 1. كبش إسماعيل، 2. ناقة صالح، 3. آدم، و4. وحواء (و. 320.ب).
الرهبان : وأخبرنا عن شيء خلقه الله ثم أنكره ؟ (و. 320.ب)²⁹

²³ القرآن، 51، « الذاريات »، آية 1.

²⁴ القرآن، 51، « الذاريات »، آية 1-2.

²⁵ القرآن، 51، « الذاريات »، آية 2-3.

²⁶ القرآن، 51، « الذاريات »، آية 3-4.

²⁷ يقع الجواب بعد السؤال والجواب التاليين، وذلك أيضًا في و. 320.أ.

²⁸ قد شُطِب النص، وكُتِبَت كلمة « أيوب » فوقه.

²⁹ هذا السؤال لا يرد ضمن سلسلة أسئلة الرهبان الأكبر، ولكنه يظهر هنا، مما يجعل السؤال والجواب معًا مثبتين في و. 320.ب.

أبو يزيد : صوت الحمار ، لأن الله يقول : « ان انكر الاصوات لصوت الحمير »³⁰. (و. 320. ب)
 الرهبان : وماذا عن أول دم سُفِكَ على الأرض ؟ (و. 316. ب)
 أبو يزيد : إنه دم هايل عندما قتله قابيل. (و. 320. ب)
 الرهبان : ومن شيء خلقه الله واستعظمه ؟ (و. 316. ب)
 أبو يزيد : إنه كيد النساء ، لأن الله يقول : « ان كيدكن عظيم »³¹. (و. 321. أ)
 الرهبان : وماذا عن شيء أوله عود وآخره لوح ؟³² (و. 321. أ)
 أبو يزيد : إنها عصا موسى ، لأن الله يقول : « وما تلك بيمينك يا موسى »³³. (و. 321. أ)
 الرهبان : وماذا عن أفضل النساء ؟ (و. 316. ب)
 أبو يزيد : هن خديجة وعائشة وآسية ومريم ابنة عمران. (و. 321. أ)
 الرهبان : وماذا عن أفضل الأنهار (البحار) ؟ (و. 316. ب)
 أبو يزيد : هي سيحون (آمو داريا) وجيحون (سير داريا) والفرات ونيل مصر. (و. 321. أ)
 الرهبان : ماذا عن أفضل الجبال ؟ (و. 316. ب)
 أبو يزيد : إنه جبل سيناء³⁴. (و. 321. أ)
 الرهبان : وماذا عن أفضل الماشية ؟ (و. 316. ب)
 أبو يزيد : إنه الحصان. (و. 321. ب)
 الرهبان : وماذا عن أفضل الشهور ؟ (و. 316. ب)
 أبو يزيد : أفضل الشهور هو شهر رمضان. (و. 321. ب)
 الرهبان : وماذا عن أفضل الليالي ؟ (و. 316. ب)
 أبو يزيد : إنها ليلة القدر. (و. 321. ب)
 الرهبان : وماذا عن الطامة ؟ (و. 316. ب)
 أبو يزيد : إنه يوم القيامة. (و. 321. ب)
 الرهبان : وماذا عن شجرة لها اثنا عشر فرعاً ، وكل فرع له ثلاثون ورقة ، وكل ورقة تحمل خمس زهرات ، اثنتان منها في الشمس وثلاث في الظل ؟ (و. 316. ب)
 أبو يزيد : الشجرة هي السنة ، والفروع هي الشهور ، والأوراق هي الأيام ، والزهرات الخمس هي الصلوات الخمس اليومية. (و. 321. ب)

³⁰ القرآن ، 31 ، « لقمان » ، آية 18-19.

³¹ القرآن ، 12 ، « يوسف » ، آية 27-28.

³² هذا السؤال لا يرد ضمن سلسلة أسئلة الرهبان ، ولكنه يرد هنا ، مما يجعل السؤال والجواب معاً مثبتيين في و. 321. أ.

³³ القرآن ، 20 ، « طه » ، آية 16-17.

³⁴ في المخطوط : « الصُّور » ، ولعلّ الصواب « الطُّور ».

- الرهبان : وإذا سألتك عن شيء حج إلى بيت الله الحرام بدون روح ولا يخضع لأي التزام ؟ (و. 316.ب)³⁵
[...]
- الرهبان : كم نبياً خلق الله، وكَم منهم كانوا رسلاً، وكَم منهم لم يكونوا كذلك ؟ (و. 316.ب-317.أ)
[...]
- الرهبان : وماذا عن أربعة أشياء مختلفة في طعمها ولونها، رغم أنها تشترك في نفس الأصل ؟ (و. 317.أ)
[...]
- الرهبان : ما هو النقيير والفتيل والقطمير ؟ (و. 317.أ)
[...]
- الرهبان : وماذا عن السبد واللبد والطم والرم ؟ (و. 317.أ)
[...]
- الرهبان : أخبرنا ماذا يقول الكلب عندما ينبح ؟ (و. 317.أ)
[...]
- الرهبان : وماذا يقول الحمار عندما ينهق ؟ (و. 317.أ)
[...]
- الرهبان : وماذا يقول الثور عندما يخور ؟ (و. 317.أ)
[...]
- الرهبان : وماذا يقول الحصان عندما يصهل ؟ (و. 317.أ)
[...]
- الرهبان : وماذا يقول الجمل في هديره ؟ (و. 317.أ)
أبو يزيد : يقول : « حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ » . (و. 323.أ)
الرهبان : وماذا يقول الطاووس عندما يصيح ؟ (و. 317.أ)
[...]³⁶
- الرهبان : وماذا يقول الدراج في غنائه الصباحي ؟ (و. 317.أ)
[...]
- الرهبان : وماذا يقول البلبل في غنائه ؟ (و. 317.أ)
أبو يزيد : البلبل يصيح قائلاً : « فسيحان الله حين تمسون وحين تصبحون » . (و. 323.أ)

³⁵ في مخطوط تريم، لا نجد أجوبة أبي يزيد عن هذا السؤال، ولا عن الأسئلة الثمانية التي تليه، غير أنَّ هناك ورقة بيضاء، هي و. 322.أ، كان يمكن أن ترد فيها تلك الأجوبة. ولهذا السبب أحقنا الأسئلة بالرمز : [...].

³⁶ لهذا السؤال والذي يليه، لا تتوافر كذلك أجوبة أبي يزيد. ومن المحتمل أن يكون ترتيب الأسئلة قد تغير في الأجوبة، بحيث كان يمكن أن ترد في الورقة التي تركت بيضاء، وفي هذه الحال نكون بإزاء ما وُصف في الحاشية رقم 28. ولذلك أثبتنا من جديد الرمز : [...].

الرهبان : وماذا تقول الضفدة في تسبيحها ؟ (و. 317أ)
 أبو يزيد : تقول الضفدة : « سبحان المعبود في البراري والقفار، سبحان الملك الجبار ! ». (و. 323أ)
 الرهبان : وماذا يقول الناقوس عندما يقرع ؟ (و. 317أ)
 أبو يزيد : يقرع الناقوس قائلاً : « سبحان الله حقاً حقاً، يا ابن آدم، انظر إلى هذه الحياة، من الشرق إلى الغرب، لن ترى أحداً يبقى فيها إلى الأبد ! ». (و. 323أ)
 الرهبان : أخبرنا عن قوم أوحى الله إليهم، وليسوا من الجن ولا من الإنس ولا من الملائكة ؟ (و. 317ب)

أبو يزيد : إنه النحل، كما ذكر في الآية : « ووحى ربك إلى النحل »³⁷. (و. 323ب)
 الرهبان : أخبرنا أين يكون الليل عندما يأتي النهار وأين يكون النهار عندما يأتي الليل ؟ (و. 317أ-317ب)

أبو يزيد : فأنهم يكونون في غامض علم الله تعالى³⁸. (و. 323ب)
 باختصار، يجيب أبو يزيد على كل سؤال بدقة، مظهراً معرفة عميقة ليس فقط بتعاليم الإسلام ولكن أيضاً بالعناصر المشتركة مع التقاليد الدينية الأخرى، مثل المسيحية واليهودية. على سبيل المثال، يشرح أن « الواحد الذي ليس له ثاني » هو « الله »، وأن « الاثنين اللذين ليس لهما ثالث » هما الليل والنهار، وأن « الأربعة الذين ليس لهم خامس » هي الكتب المنزلة (التوراة والإنجيل والزبور والقرآن).

4. سؤال أبي يزيد إلى الرهبان (و. 323أ-325ب)
 بعد أن أجاب أبو يزيد عن جميع الأسئلة، قلب الموقف وسأل الجمع قائلاً : « قولوا لي، ما مفاتيح الجنة والسموات ؟ ». فصمت الرهبان والكهنة، عاجزين عن الجواب. فقال أبو يزيد : « لقد سألتوني مسائل كثيرة فأجبتكم عنها، وها أنا أسألكم سؤالاً واحداً فلم تجيبوني عنها، أعجزتم عنها ؟ » فقالوا : « نعم ». ثم التفتوا إلى كبيرهم وقالوا : « أو عجزت عن ذلك ؟ ». فقال : « ما عجزت، ولاكن [ولكن] أخاف أن لا توافقوني ». فقالوا له : « بل نوافقك، فأنت كبيرنا، ومهما قلت لنا سمعناك ووقفناك عليه ». حينئذ قال : « مفاتيح الجنة والسموات لا إله إلا الله، محمد رسول الله ».

5. اعتناق الكهنة للإسلام (و. 324ب-324أ)
 عقب هذه الشهادة الصادرة عن الرهبان نفسه، اعتنق جميع الرهبان والكهنة الحاضرين الإسلام.
 6. الخاتمة الروحية (و. 324أ-325ب)

سمع أبو يزيد صوتاً في باطنه يقول له : لما قبلت زُتار طاعةً للأمر الإلهي، قُطِعَ في مقابله خمسمائة زُتار بأيدي هؤلاء الكهنة الذين أسلموا. وهذا رمز للأثر الروحي لطاعته وقوة الحق الإلهي الذي جسده. فقد كانوا كقاراً في ظلمات الجهل، فأنقذهم الله تعالى من الردي بنور الهدى، وكان ذلك ببركة النبي محمد.

³⁷ القرآن، 16، « النحل »، آية 67-68.

³⁸ السطر 6 : تكررت عبارة « فإنهم ».

ثم قال أبو يزيد : « فانظروا الى كلمة الإخلاص ، ما أعظم بركتها وما انجح حركتها فرطبوا السنتكم بها لتنالوا بركة إحسانها وتظفروا بجلاوة أمثلتها ، وتدخلوا حرم أمانها فإنها حصن منيع ودرع رفيع ، وقد قال الله تعالى في الحديث القدسي : "أكثرُوا من قول لا إله إلا الله فإنه حصني ، فَمَنْ قَالَهَا دَخَلَ حِصْنِي ، وَمَنْ دَخَلَ حِصْنِي أَمِنَ عَذَابِي"³⁹. وقال بعض الصحابة : "من قال لا إله إلا الله مخلصاً من قلبه ومدها غفر الله تعالى له أربعة آلاف ذنب. فإن لم يكن عليه ذلك يغفر من ذنوب أهله وجيرانه". وقال ابن عباس رضي الله عنه "الليل والنهار أربعة وعشرون ساعة وحروف لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله أربعة وعشرون حرفاً فمن قال لا إله إلا الله محمد الرسول الله كفر الله بكل حرف ذنوب ساعة فلا يبقى عليها ذنب"⁴⁰. ثم قال : "انظروا يا إخواني كيف خص الله هذه الأمة بهذه الرحمة صح فاجعلوا بتكرارها شغلكم تفوزون برضوان ربكم" .»

7. التفسير

تسلط الحجة التي عرضها أبو يزيد الضوء على تفوق الحقيقة الإسلامية، كما يتجلى ذلك من إسلام الرهبان الكبير وجميع الرهبان والكهنة بعد مواجعتهم لحكمة ومعرفة أبي يزيد. كما تعكس هذه الحجة الإيمان بالهداية الإلهية وأهمية الخضوع للأوامر الروحية، حتى وإن بدت غير مألوفة أو محيرة. وقد ختم الناسخ، أحمد بن عمر بن سعيد سعيود، بما يعبر عن تواضعه وتقواه، طالباً المغفرة لذنوبه وداعياً بالخير للمجتمع المسلم (و. 325. ب-326. أ).

ثالثاً. تحديد النص

في ثلاثينيات القرن العشرين، تحدث كارل بروكلمان (Carl Brockelmann) عن الأسطورة المتأخرة التي زينت حياة الزاهد أبي يزيد بشكل كبير، وكذلك عن مخطوط كتاب مسائل الرهبان الذي نُسب إليه⁴¹ (Āṣāfiyya I, 388, 152). في عام 1938، واستناداً إلى إشعار بروكلمان، حصل آرثر جون أربري (Arthur John Arberry) على نسخة من⁴² Āṣāfiyya I, 388, 152، وأثبت ليس فقط أن النص مطابق

³⁹ الشيخ الصدوق، معاني الأخبار، 1361 هـ/1942 م، ص. 370-371؛ الشيخ الصدوق، عيون أخبار الرضا، بدون تاريخ، ص. 313-314؛ الشيخ الصدوق، التوحيد، بدون تاريخ، ص. 24-25. وقد ورد هذا الحديث أيضاً في: الشيخ الطوسي، الأمالي، 1417 هـ/1997 م، المجلد 2، ص. 201؛ محمد بن الحسن بن علي بن الحسين الحر العاملي، الجواهر السنية، 1104 هـ/1693 م، ص. 147، 156، 158، 222، و262.

⁴⁰ خير الدين بن عبد العزيز المالباري الشافعي، إرشاد العباد إلى سبيل الرشاد، 2018، المجلد 1، ص. 340.

⁴¹ GAL, S. 1, 353 ; Nachtrag, 954 ; ص.

⁴² A. J. Arberry, « A Bistāmī legend », 1938 :

« بفضل كرم الدكتور ستابلتون، حصلت على نسخة من مخطوطة حيدر أباد (الموصوفة في المجلد الأول، ص. 388، من فهرس الآصفية)، وهذه النسخة محفوظة الآن في مكتبة مكتب الهند، تحت الرقم التسلسلي 4585 .»

لنص الموجود في مخطوط برلين، أرقام الفهرس 9057-438، بل وأيضاً أنه يشبه نص مخطوط المكتبة الوطنية الفرنسية 1913 Arabe BnF (و. 195-196أ، بمجموع 69 سطراً بخط متراس، مفصل أدناه). في الملخص القصير الذي قدّمه، تتطابق عناصر السرد مع تلك الموجودة في مخطوط تريم. في عام 1960، في نهاية ملاحظته ضمن EI^2 ، أشار هيلموت ريتير (Helmut Ritter) إلى القصة ووصفها بأنها أسطورة: «أسطورة متأخرة تجعل منه (البسطامي) يحل الألفاز التي وُضعت أمامه في دير مسيحي، مما يؤدي إلى اعتناق جميع رهبان الدير الإسلام بالكامل»⁴⁴. وقد استشهد ريتير بعمل عبد الرحمن بدوي حيث نُشرت هذه القصة⁴⁵، وكذلك بدراسة أرييري (Arberry). وأخيراً أضاف ريتير أنها موجودة باللغة التركية في المخطوطات ايوب محرشاه سلطان (Eyyüb Mihrşāh Sultān)، أرقام 202 و443، وفي الفاتح (Fātiḥ) برقم 5334، وكذلك بالعربية في الفاتح برقم 5381.

اعتماداً على المخطوطات، يظهر نص القصة إما بشكل منفصل أو متبوعاً بنصوص أخرى بعنوان مكتوب. ويُعثر عليها، على سبيل المثال، تحت اسم كتاب *مسائل الرهبان* أو « قصة أبو (هكذا) يزيد البسطامي مع راهب النصرى »⁴⁶، على سبيل المثال لا الحصر. تحتفظ المكتبة الوطنية الفرنسية وحدها بخمسة مخطوطات منها، تعود إلى نهاية القرن السادس عشر وحتى الثلث الأخير من القرن الثامن عشر، وُجمعت تحت العنوان العام « قصة أبو (هكذا) يزيد البسطامي وما وقع مع الرهبان » (المخطوطات Arabe 1913، 2009، 2811، 3118، 3662). في المخطوطة بالعربية 1913، التي استشهد بها أرييري ونشرها بدوي، تظهر القصة في فصل بعنوان « قصة أبا يزيد البسطامي مع الراهب »، وقد نُسخ، مثل نصوص أخرى، بعد جزء من قصص الأنبياء المنسوب إلى الكيسائي، بعنوان كتاب نفائس العرائس. ووفقاً لحد المتن (الكولوفون)، أتم المخطوط في مكة المكرمة يوم الثلاثاء⁴⁷ 29 جماد أول 1004 هـ/ 30 يناير 1596 م على يد درويش ابن زين العابدين (213.ب). إنه جزء من مجموعة جيلبرت غولمين (Gilbert Gaulmin) (1585-1665)، التي استحوذت عليها المكتبة عام 1667.

في المخطوطة 2009 Arabe، يردُّ هذا السرد (القرن الثامن عشر ؟) بعد نص يتعلق بمجاذبة (معجزة) انشقاق القمر إلى نصفين على يد النبي محمد، لاختبار صدق نبوته، لكنه يبدأ بصفحة عنوان منفصلة

⁴³ Wetzstein II 1782-6, مخطوطة « Hikāyat Abū (sic) Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī » ; W. Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss der arabischen Handschriften*, 8, ص. 49أب، رقم 9057 ؛ و. 82-91 ؛ و. 92 صافي.

(اقتنى في سوريا عام 1862 م)

⁴⁴ H. Ritter, « Abū Yazīd (Bayazīd) Ṭayfūr b. ʿĪsā b. Surūṣān al-Biṣṭāmī », *EI*², 1960, ص. 167 ب.

⁴⁵ عبد الرحمن بدوي، *شطحات الصوفية*، المجلد الأول، أبو يزيد البسطامي، 1949، ص. 173-176.

⁴⁶ *GAL S 1, 353* .ص.

⁴⁷ هناك خطأ في ملاحظات فاجدا (Vajda)، حيث ذكر اليوم 27 بدلاً من 29،

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8452672m/f526.item.zoom>

تقول : « هذا قصة أبوا (كذا) يزيد البسطامي طيفور بن عيسى وما وقع له مع الرهبان على التمام والكمال والحمد لله رب العالمين » (و. 41أ-54ب، 13 سطرًا لكل صفحة). ثم يواصل الناسخ بقصة أخرى. حيث يلتقي البسطامي هذه المرة براهب في القسطنطينية (ص. 42أ، على الأرجح القسطنطينية، إسطنبول)، ومنها يتوجهان إلى دير سمعان.

في المخطوطة 2811 Arabe، يظهر سردنا بعد رسالتين في الطب البيطري (الخاص بالخيول)، الأولى قائمة على ممارسات قنبر خادم الإمام علي بن أبي طالب⁴⁸، وقد كُتبت على ورقة جديدة بعنوان « حكاية عن أبي يزيد البسطامي » (ص. 100أ-112أ، 11 سطرًا في كل صفحة). ثم تتبعها ورقتان عن بركة الأساء، وورقة واحدة تتناول فائدة في استخدام الكحل لعيني الخيل. أما عن القصة، فيُدعى الزاهد مباشرةً إلى دير سمعان، لذلك يظل التمهيد للقاء مع الرهبان قصيراً وبحسب فاجدا (Vajda)، فإن المخطوطة تعود إلى القرن السابع عشر.

يُشكّل نصّنا جزءاً من سلسلة من القصص المتتالية في المخطوطة 3118 Arabe ؛ لذلك يُقدّم بكل بساطة بعبارة « غيرها » مكتوبة باللون الأحمر وموضوعة في الوسط. أما نهاية القصة، فقد جرى تمييزها كنص مستقل، حيث وُضع السطر الأخير في الوسط، بينما ترك باقي الورق فارغاً (ص. 33أ-35أ، 58 سطرًا بخطٍ دقيق). في هذه المرة، يمزّ البسطامي عبر القسطنطينية قبل أن يصل إلى دير غير مُحدّد بالتفصيل. وقد أُرّخ فاجدا (Vajda) المخطوطة بين 1028 هـ/1619 م-1045 هـ/1635 م بالاعتداد، من جهة، على تاريخ مُضمّن (الجدول الزمني) في قصيدة، ومن جهة أخرى، على علامة قارئ⁴⁹. وقد جُلِبَت هذه المخطوطة إلى فرنسا على يد بول لوكاس (Paul Lucas) (1664-1737) في سنة 1718 م.

تشمل المخطوطة 3662 Arabe مجموعة من الروايات والقصص. يبدأ نصّنا فيها على ورقة جديدة ويحمل بمثابة « عنوان » : « وهذه حكاية أبا يزيد البسطامي رحمه الله تعالى ورضي عنه »، مكتوبة باللون الأحمر بخطٍ مقلّد للكوفي. ثم يتابع الناسخ بذكر قصة أخرى في الثلث الثاني من الورقة نفسها (ص. 83أ-86أ، 25 سطرًا في ص.، ثم 26 سطرًا في كل صفحة، و9 أسطر في ص. 86أ). يتوجّه أبو يزيد مباشرةً إلى دير سمعان بعد تلقّيه الأمر الإلهي. وهي مخطوطة مغربية، مؤرّخة بسنة 1190 هـ/1776 م (ص. 234أ). وفي ظهر الورقة الأخيرة (و. 234ب)، وُجدت علامة ملكية جاء فيها : « الحمد لله صاحبه الحاج محمد بن الحلاج حميدة الصبح (?) بيت المال أواخر صافر (كذا) سنة 1190 »⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ انظر ملاحظة G. Vajda, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8470424s/f104.item.zoom>

⁴⁹ ملاحظة G. Vajda, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8470424s/f677.item.zoom>

⁵⁰ وقد لاحظ ج. فاجدا (G. Vajda) هذه العلامة المؤرّخة بالسنة نفسها (1190 هـ/1776 م)، غير أنه لم يحدّد موضعها في المخطوطة. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8458430f/f38.item.zoom>

فيما يخص المخطوط قنسسشتاين Wetzstein II 1782-6 في برلين، بعنوان « حكاية أبو (كذا) يزيد البسطامي »، فقد قارنهُ أرييري (Arberry) بنجاح مع نسخة 388,152 *Āṣāfiyya I* (انظر أعلاه). ويشكل هذا النص جزءاً من مجموعة تضم عدّة مخطوطات مختلفة. يظهر سرد القصة مباشرة بعد نص آخر هو قصة الحجاج مع الصبيّ الليثي ابن زين العابدين (الأوراق 1.82-91.ب : و. 82.أ تتضمن الأسطر الستة الأخيرة، ثم 13 سطراً في كل صفحة، ومع بداية الورقة 1.87.أ يحدث تغيير في اليد الناسخ، فيصبح 11 سطراً في الصفحة). في هذه النسخة، يتوجّه أبو يزيد البسطامي مباشرةً إلى دير سمعان⁵¹.

في المجلد، تشترك هذه النصوص، بما في ذلك نص مخطوط تريم، في نفس الإطار الذي يذهب الزاهد البسطامي، أحد الأساء الكبيرة في بدايات التصوف الفارسي وأشهر المتصوفة المسلمين في الفناء، وهو يتوجه إلى الرهبان أو الكهنة المسيحيين ويتمكن من أداخلهم في الإسلام إما بالبرهان أو الانبهار المعرفي، غير أن هذه الروايات تتضمن بعض الفوارق، متفاوتة الأهمية، وقد أشير إلى بعضها أنفاً⁵². ومن دون مؤلف معلوم، فإن النص أعيد تداوله على الأقل منذ نهاية القرن السادس عشر وحتى نهاية القرن التاسع عشر. ومن حيث مصيره النصي وما ينطوي عليه من اختلافات، فإنه يثير الإشكالات نفسها المتعلقة بنسبه التأليف كما في قصص الأنبياء للكسائي أو في رواية عنتره، والتي تعكس مخطوطاتها التي بين أيدينا، وفقاً لأحدث الدراسات، أولاً التقليد الشعبي السردى للإسلام الوسيط، ومن ثم تثير الإشكالات نفسها المتعلقة بتثيبت تأليفه في الزمان والمكان⁵³. وبالتالي، تدعو هذه الملاحظات إلى التعامل بحذر مع مفردتي « نسخة » و « ناسخ ».

رابعاً. النص والسياق

يتم أرييري على دراسة الأصل النصي للرواية، مع افتراض أنّها أخذت من تجميع متأخر نسبياً لمناقب البسطامي. ويشير إلى أنّ مثل هذا العمل موجود بالفارسية، مستنداً إلى حاجي خليفة ولويس ماسينيون

⁵¹ تحتوي مجموعة قنسسشتاين (Wetzstein) في برلين على نسخة أخرى من قصتنا، تحمل الرقم 201-4b، في الأوراق 36-40. وقد أشار إليها فيلهم أهلفارت (W. Ahlwardt) في فهرسه *Verzeichniss der arabischen Handschriften*، الجزء الثامن، ص. 49، تحت رقم الفهرسة 9058.

⁵² للأسف، لم نتمكن من الاطلاع على عمل محمد عبد الرحيم الذي يتناول هذا السرد، محمد عبد الرحيم، أبو يزيد البسطامي وقصته مع راهب دير سمعان، 1407 هـ/1987 م.

⁵³ « ولهذا السبب تختلف المخطوطات، التي يرجع أقدمها إلى أوائل القرن السابع الهجري/الثالث عشر الميلادي، اختلافاً كبيراً في الحجم والمحتوى بل وحتى في ترتيب القصص ». عبر الإنترنت T. Nagel, « al-Kisā'i », EI.

(Louis Massignon) وعوفي، وإلى أن القدماء لم يذكروه: « من اللافت أن الحكاية لا تظهر في أي من المصادر المبكرة، ولا حتى عند عطار »⁵⁴.

هناك فرضية أخرى مثيرة للاهتمام تربط روايتنا بالملفوظات، أي أقوال المشايخ أو الأولياء الصوفية التي جُمعت على يد التلميذ، وهو نوع أدبي بلغ ذروته في القرن الرابع عشر، في الوقت نفسه الذي بلغت فيه الثقافة الهندية-الفارسية في شبه القارة الهند⁵⁵. إذا كان البسطامي قد عبّر عن نفسه، فلا يُعرف له أي مؤلف. وفي الواقع، في القرن الرابع عشر دُون أمير حسن سيجزي تعاليم مرشده الروحي، الشيخ الششتي الشهير نظام الدين أولياء (ت. 1325)، وهو على قيد الحياة وتحت إشرافه، في كتابه (فوائد الفؤاد)، مؤسسًا بذلك السير الصوفية (الهغوغرافيا). وقد لاحظ سونيل كومار (Sunil Kumar) بحق أن نجاح النص جاء نتيجة الديناميكية التي أضافها مؤلفه إلى هذا النوع الأدبي: فبينما كانت تعاليم البير (pīr) تُسجل سابقاً على شكل مناجات (مونولوجات) طويلة ومملة إلى حد ما، اختار السجزي تقديمها على شكل حوارات حيوية بين المعلم ومُريد⁵⁶.

ولكن لأي غرض؟ إننا نتعامل مع النسخ/إصدارات متأخرة لنص حيّ، لا يتقيد بحرفه بل يمثل نموذجًا لجنس أدبي قائم. فعلى الرغم من الاختلافات النصية، يظل البناء السردى منتظمًا وفق تسلسل مألوف: حوار، ثم امتحان – عبر الألغاز هنا – وأخيرًا نصر حاسم. وقد عُرف هذا النوع الأدبي في العالم العثماني لإظهار تفوق الإسلام وكذلك المسيحية، حسب السياق⁵⁷. ومع ذلك، في الغالب كان المشايخ الصوفيون يثبتون تفوقهم عبر كثرة التحولات الدينية (اعتناق الإسلام) والمعجزات. إن البسطامي يُعد أسطورة غير تاريخية، مما يدل دلالة على الدور العابر للأديان للصوفيين الذين انغمسوا في معجزات التحويل في المناطق الحدودية أو مناطق الاختلاط الديني المكتشف⁵⁸.

⁵⁴ « يُذكر مثل هذا العمل باللغة الفارسية على يد الحاج خليفة، المجلد السادس، ص. 152، رقم 13022. انظر ماسينيون (Massignon)، المرجع نفسه، نفس الموضوع [L. Massignon, *Essai sur les origines*, p. 245] ويُشار إلى مقامات الشيخ بايزيدي البسطامي على يد عوفي في كتابه *جوامع الحكايات*، انظر: Muḥammad Nizāmu 'd-Din, *Introduction ...*, A. J. Arberry, « A Bisṭāmī legend », 1938, p. 91, n. 1, « p. 144, 224 ».

⁵⁵ S. Digby, « The Sufi shāikh as a source of authority in Mediaeval India », 1986, 70 ; A. Steinfels, « His Master's Voice: The Genre of *Malfūzāt* in South Asian Sufism », 2004.

⁵⁶ M. Gaborieau, *Un autre islam. Inde, Pakistan, Bangladesh*, 2007, p. 124 ; C. Lefèvre, « Le livre en acte à la cour moghole : le cas des littératures historique et religieuse d'après le *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī* (1608-1611) », 2014, 315. ص.

⁵⁷ انظر على سبيل المثال : W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans*, 2000، الجزء 1، ص. 240 إلخ.

⁵⁸ حول كيفية تأسيس سلطة السلاطة الغامضة للشيخوخ من أصول چشت (انظر أعلاه ولادة الملفوظات)، في أفغانستان الحالية، وممارستها في منطقة شاسعة أسلمت حديثاً (سهل الغانج وفتوحات سلاطين دلهي)، انظر: S. Digby, « The ».

فما شأن مخطوطة تريم إذن ؟ في سياق إنتاجها، هل صيغت لأداء دور اعتذاري/دفاعي عن العقيدة، أم أن قيمتها الأخلاقية والوعظية قُدمت لتكون مجالاً لتأمل القراء ؟

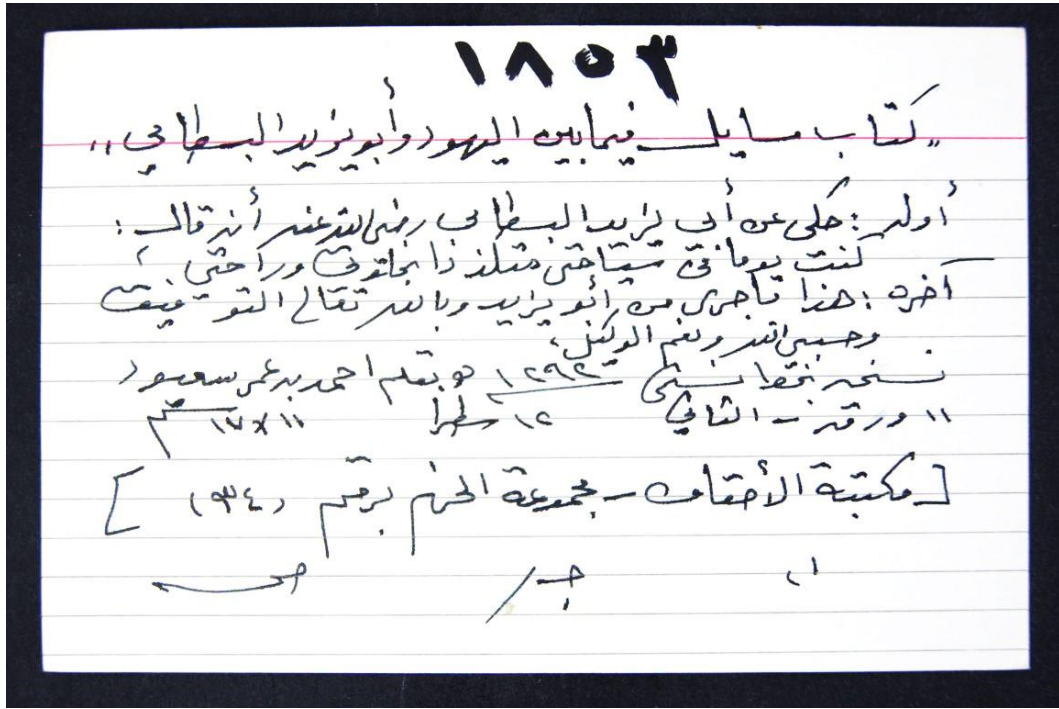
خامساً. مخطوطة تريم 1853 في سياقها : الفرضيات والاستنتاجات

في هذه المخطوطة، تأتي الإشارة الأولى، والوحيدة، إلى نقاش قد يجمع بين اليهود والمسلمون من خلال اليد التي كتبت العنوان، والتي لا يبدو أنها تختلف عن اليد المسؤولة عن النص نفسه. بعد ذلك، لا يمكن استبعاد أن المجموعة الكاملة، المكونة من العنوان والنص، قد تكون مأخوذة عن مخطوطة أخرى كانت بحوزة أحمد بن عمر بن سعيد سعيود. على سبيل المثال، و. 322أ-322ب فارغة، والتعقيب في أسفل 321ب لا تترك مجالاً للشك في وجود فراغ أو قفزة. وبحسب ترقيم الصفحات بالقلم الرصاص، الموجود في الزاوية العليا اليسرى ويبدأ من 314، كان من المفترض أن تكون مخطوطة تريم جزءاً من مجموعة مخطوطات مجمعة تحت غلاف واحد. وقد رأينا أنه، وفقاً لفهرس مكتبة الأحقاف المشار إليه سابقاً، أنها كانت تابعة لمكتبة خاصة باسم «مجموعة الحزم»، وكانت تحمل الرقم 34. وهناك مخطوطة أخرى تحمل نفس الرقم ضمن مجموعة الحزم، وتظهر في الفهرس المطبوع برقم 1927، وهو الرقم الذي يسبق مخطوطتنا، تحت اسم مجموعة أوراد وأحزاب⁵⁹. لكن المعلومات الواردة في الفهرس غير كافية للتأكد على ما إذا كانت قد سبقت أو تبعت نصنا، إذ أنه بالرغم من تطابق أبعاد المخطوطتين (17 × 11 سم)، إلا أن عدد الأوراق الكلي لمخطوطة 1927 فقط هو المعطى، وهو 153 ورقة. وبحسب بطاقة المخطوطة في مكتبة الأحقاف، التي أنشئت عند أول جرد، فإن مخطوطتنا هي الرقم 134 ضمن مجموعة الحزم [الصورة 1]. لا توجد مخطوطة أخرى لهذا السرد في مكتبة الأحقاف، التي تضم أكثر من عشرين مجموعة تاريخية من حضرموت. فيما يخص تداول النصوص، وبالنسبة لقصتنا، يجدر بالذكر بأن مخطوطة المكتبة الفرنسية Arabe رقم 193 تشير إلى مكة المكرمة

Sufi shaikh as a source of authority in Mediaeval India », 1986, p. 70, 74. أما الجوانب السابقة الأخرى لشخصية البسطامي التي نشأت عن بناء الأجيال الصوفية اللاحقة والطبقات، وكذلك في مطلع القرن السادس/الثاني عشر، فانظر : A. Keeler, *Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī and discussions about intoxicated Sufism*, 2021. ونحن خارج نطاق النقاش حول التأثير المباشر للفكر الهندي على البسطامي، على سبيل المثال : R. A. Nicholson, « A Historical Enquiry concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism », 1906, p. 324sq. الجدل والتعليق عليه : M. 'Abdu-r-Rabb, « Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī: his life and doctrines », 1970, chap. VI.

⁵⁹ عبد الله حسين محمد العيدروس، عبد القادر بن صالح بن شهاب، وعبد الرحمن السقاف، فهرس المخطوطات اليمنية لمكتبة الأحقاف بمحافظة حضرموت، الجمهورية اليمنية، 2009، ج. 2، ص. 829. T. Baba, S. Lagati & A. Regourd, 2022، ص. 557.

بتاريخ 1004 هـ/1596 م في حرد المتن (الكولوفون) الخاص بها، وسيكون من المثير جدًا متابعة استكشاف المكتبات في الهند.



الصورة 1. بطاقة جرد مكتوبة بخط اليد من المخطوطة 1853، مكتبة الأحقاف، تريم (حضر موت).

في النسخ المختلفة للنص التي اطلعنا عليها، تُوصف الزنار كقطعة اللباس المميز للربان المسيحيين⁶⁰ على سبيل المثال، تريم، 1853، ص. 315؛ المكتبة الوطنية الفرنسية، 1913 Arabe، ص. 195؛ المكتبة الوطنية الفرنسية، 2009 Arabe، ص. 43؛ المكتبة الوطنية الفرنسية، 2811 Arabe (ص. 100 ب، «ولكن البس زي الربان وأشد من أجلنا الزنار»)؛ المكتبة الوطنية الفرنسية، 3118 Arabe (ص. 33 ب)؛ المكتبة الوطنية الفرنسية 3662 Arabe (ص. 83 أ)؛ برلين Wetzstein II 1782-6 (ص. 82 ب). أما في اليمن، يشير مصطلح زنار أو زنة يشير إلى الظفائر التي يرتديها اليهود، والتي قد تُذكر بشكل الحزام؛ وبالتالي فهي علامة مميزة⁶¹. علاوة على ذلك، يورد موشي بيامنتا (Moshe

⁶⁰ الزنار كان يرتديه سابقًا الزرادشتيون، المحوس.

الجزء 2، 1997، M. Piamenta, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*, 2017. N. Roth, «Vêtements», 205. A. Verskin, *A vision of Yemen. The Travels of a European Orientalist and His Native Guide. A Translation of Hayyim Habshush's Travelogue*, 2018, 240. ص. 128 والخاصة 3، ص. 205. «A narrow-sleeved waistcoat».

(Piamenta) في قاموسه التاريخي للعربية اليمنية ما بعد الكلاسيكية أن راهب، جمعها رهبان، يعني « الملتزم الصارم بالشريعة الموسوية والأحكام الحاخامية، اليهودي التقى »⁶². وقد يشكل هذا مؤشراً على أن مخطوطة تريم، وربما أيضاً التقليد المرتبط بهذه النسخة، نشأت في الأرض اليمنية. وبالتالي، بدل أن تكون خطأ من « الناسخ »، قد يكون الأمر مجرد نقل أو تحويل في هذا السياق الحضري المتأخر، وبصرف النظر عن اليهود، فإن الديانة الأخرى، على أقصى تقدير، توجد فعلياً على طول السواحل، من حين لآخر، وبالطبع في عدن، الميناء العالمي، والمناطق الداخلية التي كانت تحت السيطرة الأنجلو-هندية آنذاك. ومع ذلك، يظل حضرموت أرضاً تزدهر فيها الطرق الصوفية منذ قرون. أما المكتبة الخاصة التي يشير إليها فهرس مكتبة الأحقاف بوصفها مصدر مخطوطنا فهي « مَجْمُوعَةُ الْحَزْم »؛ والحزم هي إحدى القرى التابعة إدارياً لمديرية شبام في محافظة حضرموت. وجزء من المخطوطات التي أودعت في مكتبة الأحقاف جاء من أسرة آل العيدروس في الحزم⁶³. وبالإجمال، نجد أن ما لا يقل عن خمسة عشر مؤلفاً يمينياً من أصل 52 مؤلفاً مشاركاً في مجموعة الحزم⁶⁴؛ ومع ذلك، فإن هذه المجموعة منفتحة على الخارج، إذ تضم أعمالاً لعدد من كبار أعلام الستة والتصوف، مثل السيوطي (ت. 911 هـ/1505 م)، أو أبو حامد الغزالي (ت. 505 هـ/1111 م) الذي يُقال إنه مرّ بترميم، فضلاً عن الأدب مثل الحريري البصري (ت. 516 هـ/1122 م)، مما يليق أن يوجد في مكتبة عالم أو شيخ. وفي المراجعة التي أجراها أنس باقيفيتش خاليدوف (Baqievich Khalidov)

⁶² تحت مدخل « رهب »، M. Piamenta, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*, الجزء 1، 1990، ص. 190أ.

⁶³ نقل إلينا هذه المعلومات حسن عمر الهادي. وفي مقال نُشر بالروسية سنة 1979، يذكر أنس باقيفيتش خاليدوف (Anas Baqievich Khalidov) مكتبتين لعائلة العيدروس في الحزم، « (1) المكتبة الخاصة لعيدروس بن أحمد بن عمر بن حسين العيدروس - ثلاثة خزانات كتب تحتوي على مخطوطات (حوالي 100 مجلد ؟). (2) المكتبة الخاصة لحسن بن أحمد العيدروس ؛ أكثر من 100 مجلد من المخطوطات والوثائق الاقتصادية »،

يوليو، « A. B. Khalidov, « Arabic manuscript collections in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen »، ترجمة إلى العربية، (2018)، ص 65.

حول الطريقة العيدروسية،

E. Peskes, « Der Heilige und die Dimensionen seiner Macht. Abū Bakr al-ʿAidārūs (gest. 1509) und die Saiyid-Şūfis von Ḥaḍramaut », 1995، نسخة، *Al-ʿAydarūs und Seine Erben*, 2005.

حول الطريقة العلوية، محمد بن حسين بن عبد الله الحبشي، *العقود اللؤلؤية*، 1910.
⁶⁴ نحن نتحدث هنا عن عدد المؤلفين الذين أمكن تحديدهم في فهرس المكتبة. ذلك أن عدداً من المخطوطات الواردة ضمن مجموعة الحزم قد أدرجت في الفهرس دون أن يذكر اسم مؤلفها.

حول مخطوطات اليمن الجنوبي، والتي نُشرت أول مرة سنة 1979، بلغ مجموع المخطوطات التي أحصاها 112 مخطوطاً، من بينها 32 عملاً يحمل في عنوانه لفظ مناقب⁶⁵.

في منتصف القرن السابع/الثالث عشر الهجري، تشكل تقليد، حللته إنغسينغ هو (Engseng Ho)، في سياق المذهب الأكبري وأبو مدين شعيب، شيخ صوفي من تلمسان، مما ترك أثراً عميقاً على الصوفية الحضرمية. تقوم فكرة الشيخ الذي يجمع بين المعرفة والعمل، وينخرط في العالمين الديني والدنيوي، كأساس نظري لتقليد الالتزام الاجتماعي. ويشكل السادة الحضارم العلويون، أحفاد النبي، نواة هذا التقليد. ولا يكون توجيههم متباعداً عن المجتمع ككل. أما الجد البارز للسادة الصوفيين العلويين، المعروف باسم الفقيه الأول، الذي برز منذ عام 1255 م، ونبت العنف واستخدام السلاح، حيث كسر سيفه بركبته. وتؤسس هذه الفعلية تقليد السادة الصوفيين السلميين، الذي أصبح عنصراً رئيسياً في تعريف السادة لأنفسهم كحكام مستقلين للسلام بين القبائل المسلحة⁶⁶:

« إلى جانب نبذ السادة الحضارم للأسلحة، عزز الخطاب العالمي قدرتهم على التنقل في مشهد تعاني من الصراعات القبلية، إذ أنهم لم يشكلوا تهديداً لأحد. ولذلك، لم يكن استقرارهم في تريم بمثابة حبس، بل كان بداية لوسيلة جديدة من التنقل. وحمل هذا النمط من التنقل معه مفاهيم محددة للأولوية في الأمور القانونية والروحية والأنساب، والتي جمعها الفقيه الأول. »⁶⁷

في هذا السياق، يحملون معهم بديلاً عن العالم القبلي. تقليد فرض نفسه على المدى الطويل⁶⁸. وفي فترة الصراعات العثمانية – البرتغالية في النصف الأول من القرن السادس عشر، ومع طموحات التوسع للإمام الزيدي شرف الدين يحيى (ت. 965 هـ/1555 م)⁶⁹، يظل التصوف، المنتشر في المناطق السنية باليمن، مركزاً حول مشايخ ذوي كاريزما وقد خلصت دراسة أجراها ألكسندر كتيش (Alexandre Knysh) حول شاعرين صوفيين، توفي أحدهما سنة 1525-1526 م، والآخر الحضرمي سنة 1546-

⁶⁵ A. B. Khalidov, « Arabic manuscript collections in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen », يوليو 2018.

⁶⁶ E. Ho, *The Graves of Tarim. Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, 2006, 43-41. ص. (تكوين) ص. 202.

⁶⁷ E. Ho, *The Graves of Tarim. Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, 2006, 42. ص.

⁶⁸ E. Ho, *The Graves of Tarim. Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, 2006, 2. لوحة 206-.

باستثناء حالة واحدة، يغطي ذلك الفترة الممتدة من القرن الثاني عشر حتى القرن الثامن عشر، 207.

⁶⁹ فيما بعد، حاول الإمام القاسمي المتوكل إخضاع حضرموت خلال النصف الأول من القرن السابع عشر، وقد أدى تدخله العسكري ابتداءً من سنة 1069 هـ/1659 م إلى دخول المنطقة بالقوة. وقد ترتب على ذلك فرض التعليم الزيدي في تريم، إضافة إلى حظر استعمال البياراء والدف في الطقوس الصوفية (حضرة) المرتبطة بسيد عبد الرحمن السقاف. انظر:

ص. B. Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam. The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, 2003, 41-40.

1547 م، إلى أن السلطة أنها تنبذهم، أو أنهم، كعلماء وشعبيين، يظلون حذرين بعيداً عن الأهداف الدنيوية سواء كانت سياسية أو مهنية أو اجتماعية، مُلهمين بذلك رؤية وثقافة بديلة عن الروح الحربية للنخبة الحاكمة⁷⁰. وبالتالي، نحن بعيدون عن المناخ الهندي، وبعيدون عن الدفاع عن الحدود، ويبدو صعباً البت في مكانه أو مضمون نص مخطوطة تريم في غياب معلومات إضافية عن نشأتها كمجموعة مكونة من عنوان وسرد البسطامي.

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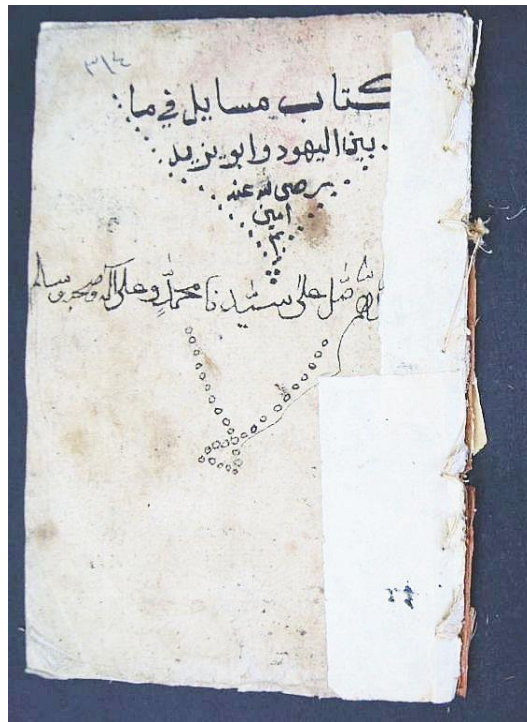
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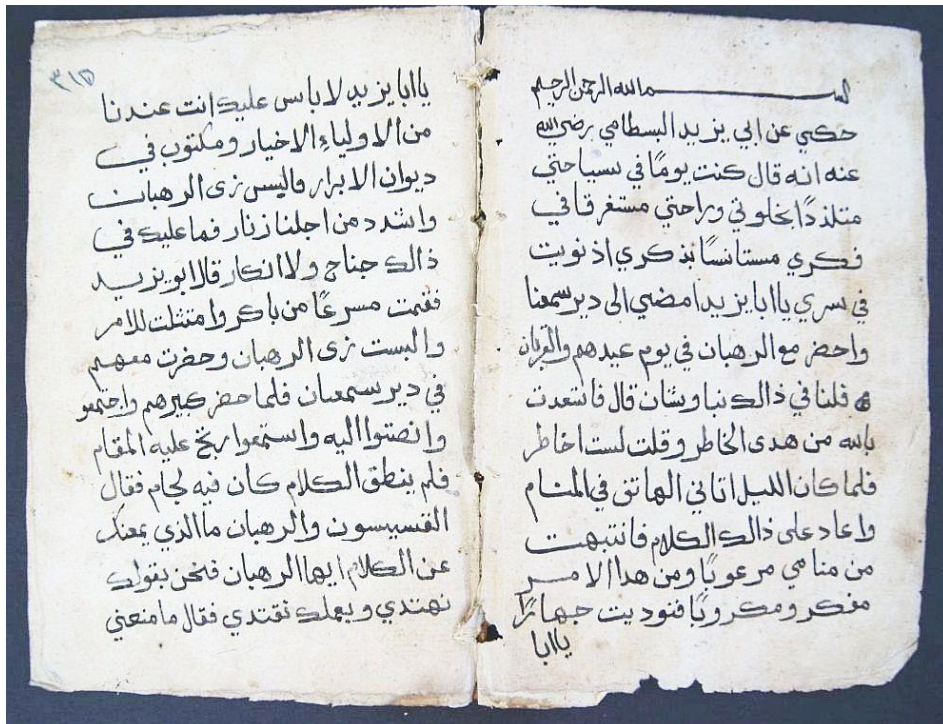
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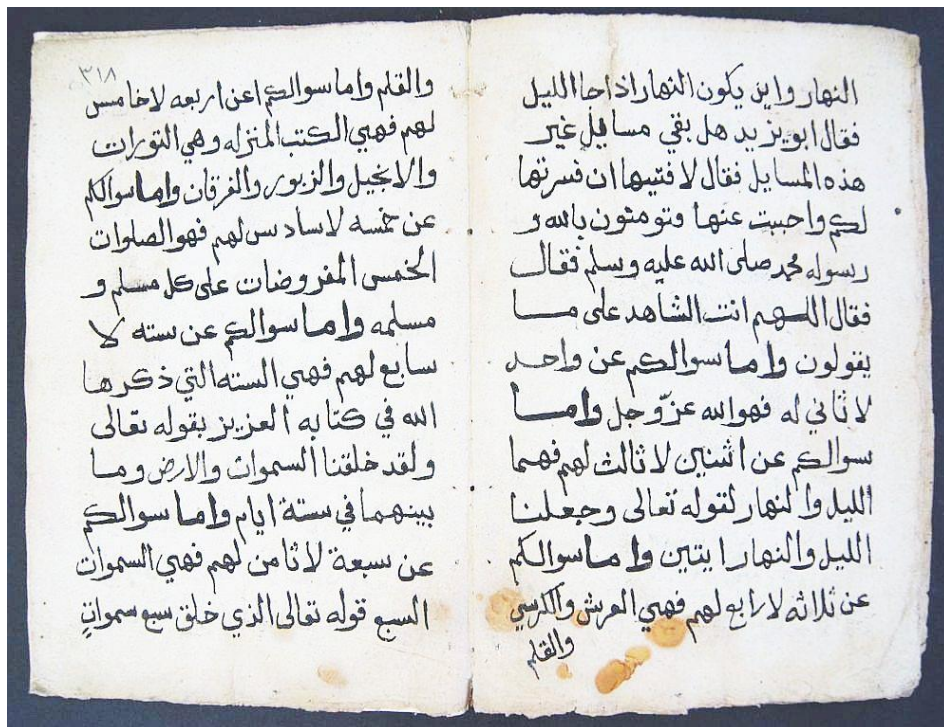
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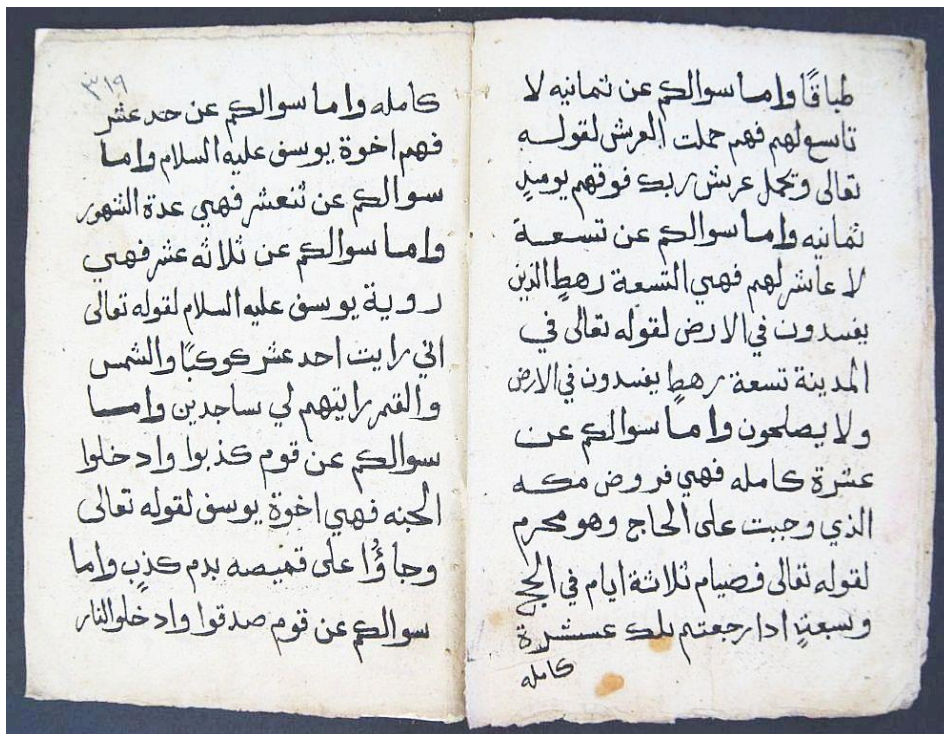
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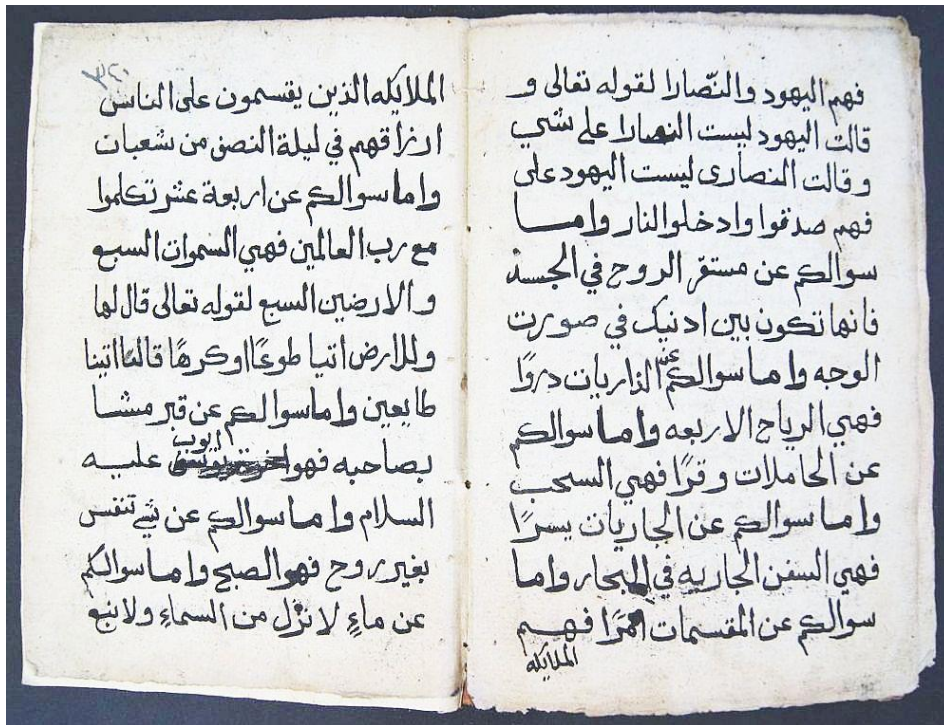
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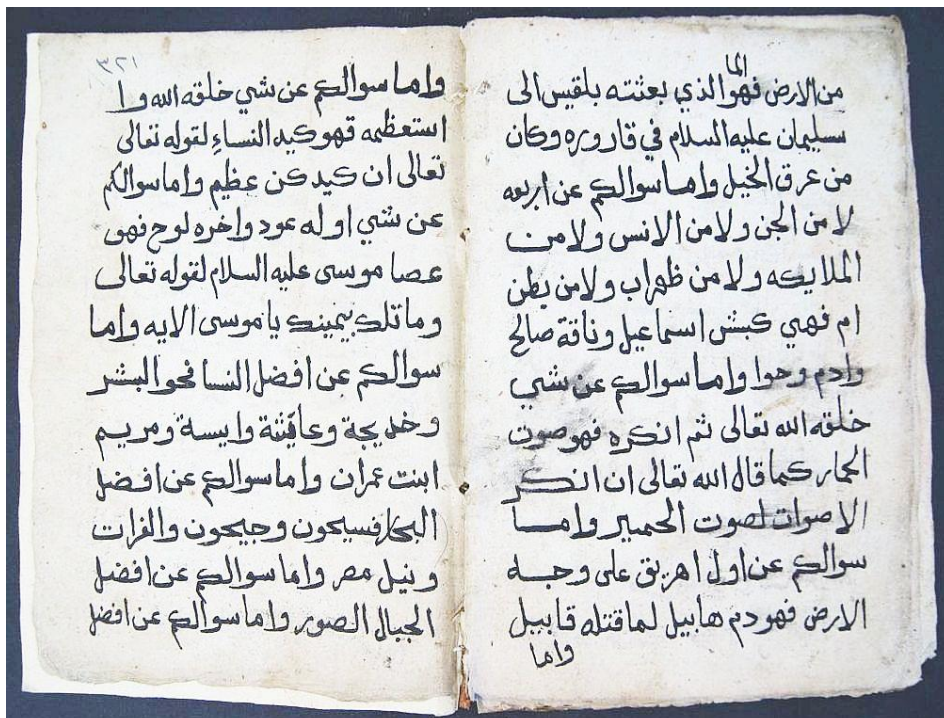
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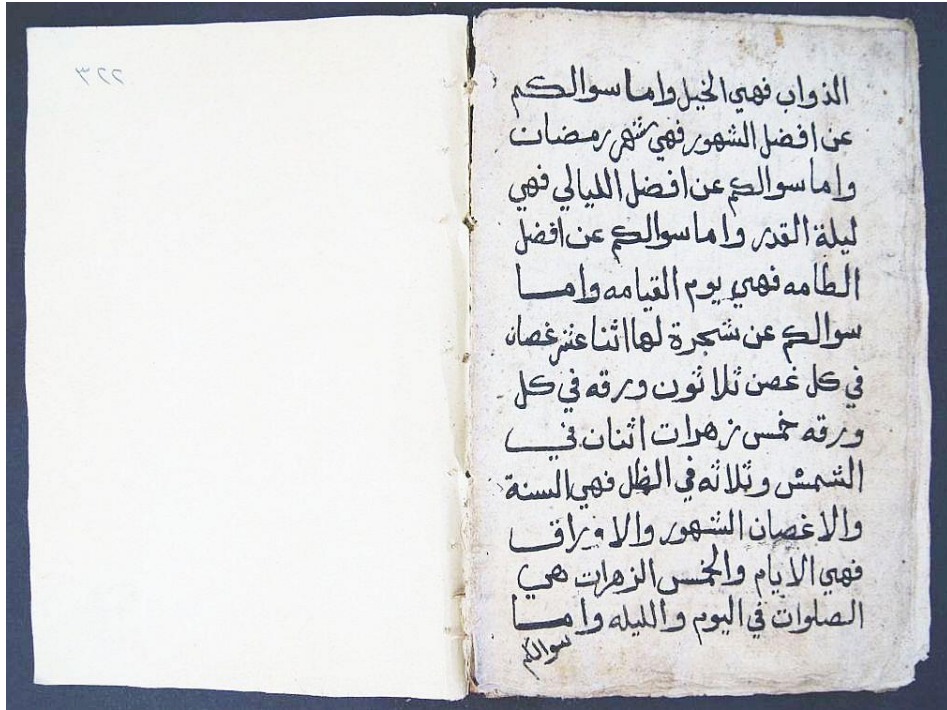
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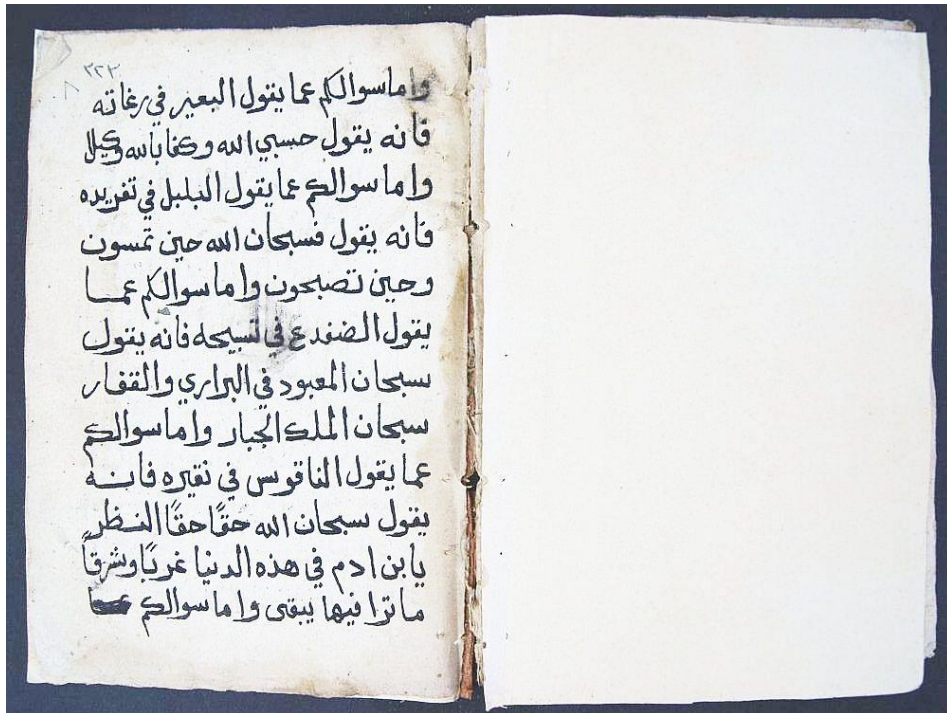
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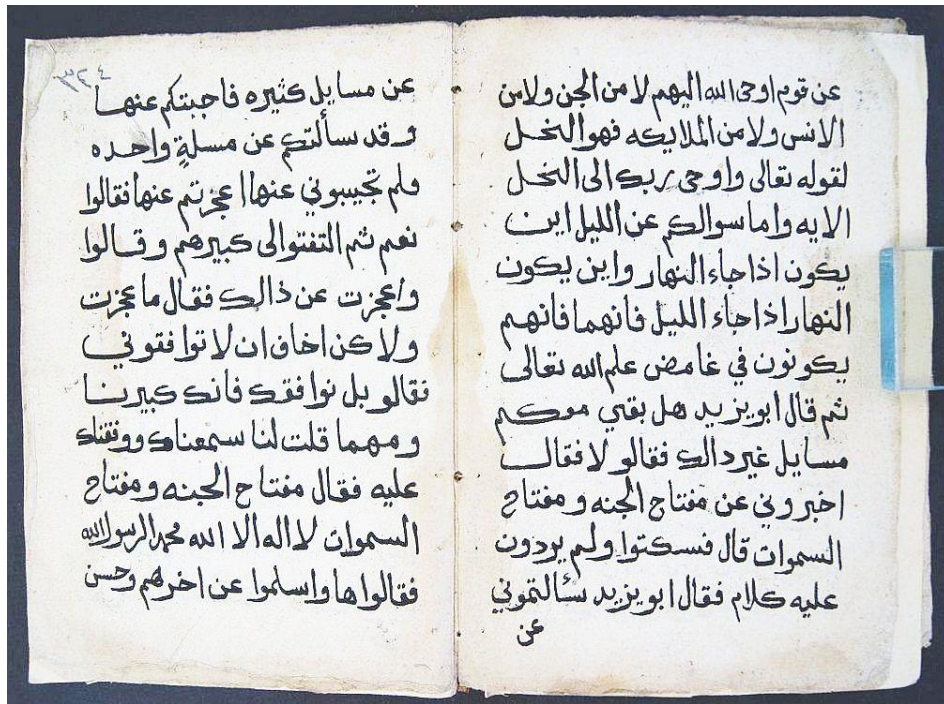
الصورة 9. مسائل فيما بين اليهود وأبي يزيد البسطامي، مخطوطة مكتبة الأحقاف، تريم، حضرموت، رقم 1853، و. 320-321.



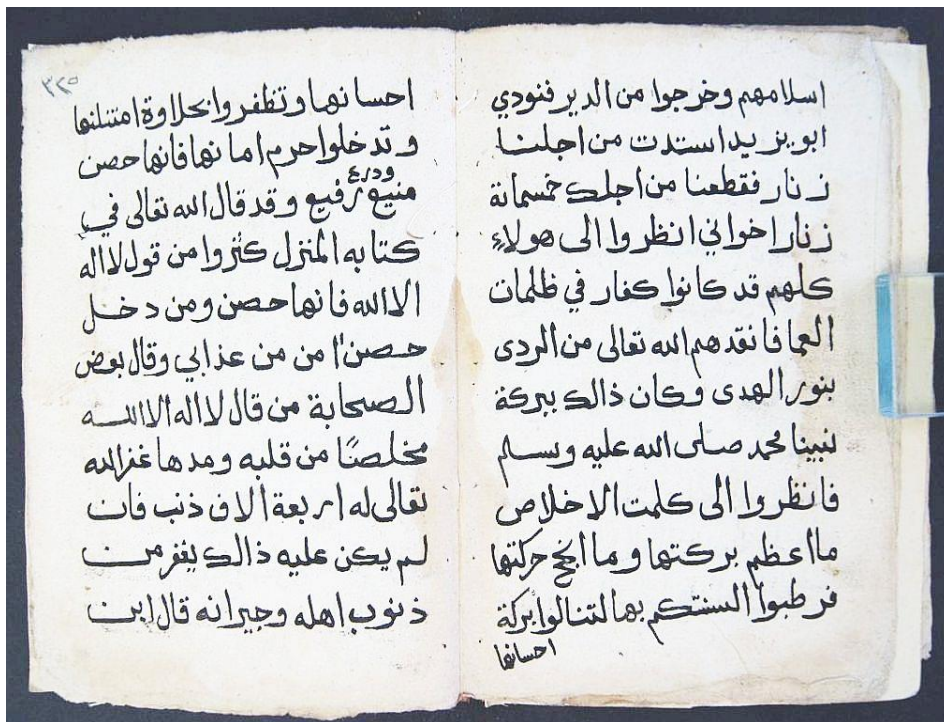
الصورة 10. مسائل فيما بين اليهود وأبي يزيد البسطامي، مخطوطة مكتبة الأحقاف، تريم، حضرموت، رقم 1853، و. 321ب-322.



الصورة 11. مسائل فيما بين اليهود وأبي يزيد البسطامي، مخطوطة مكتبة الأحقاف، تريم، حضرموت، رقم 1853، و. 322ب-323.



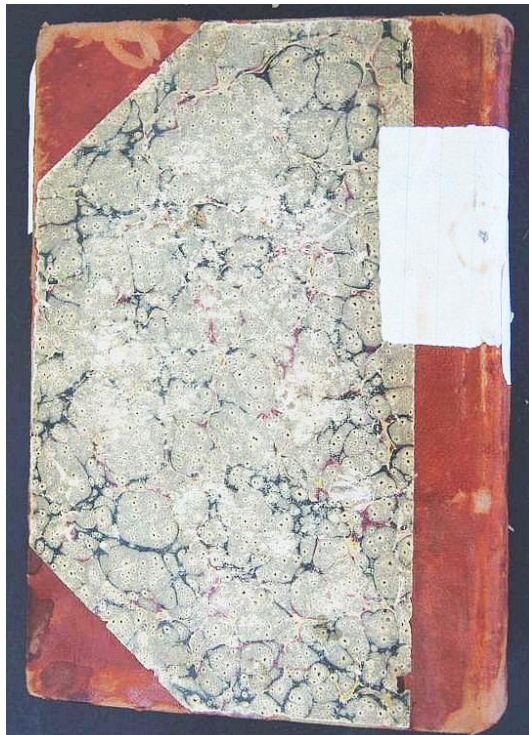
الصورة 12. مسائل فيما بين اليهود وأبي يزيد البسطامي، مخطوطة مكتبة الأحقاف، تريم، حضرموت، رقم 1853، و. 323ب-324أ.



الصورة 13. مسائل فيما بين اليهود وأبي يزيد البسطامي، مخطوطة مكتبة الأحقاف، تريم، حضرموت، رقم 1853، و. 324ب-325أ.



الصورة 14. مسائل فيما بين اليهود وأبي يزيد البسطامي، مخطوطة مكتبة الأحقاف، تريم، حضرموت، رقم 1853، و. 325-326.



الصورة 15. مسائل فيما بين اليهود وأبي يزيد البسطامي، مخطوطة مكتبة الأحقاف، تريم، حضرموت، رقم 1853، الغلاف.