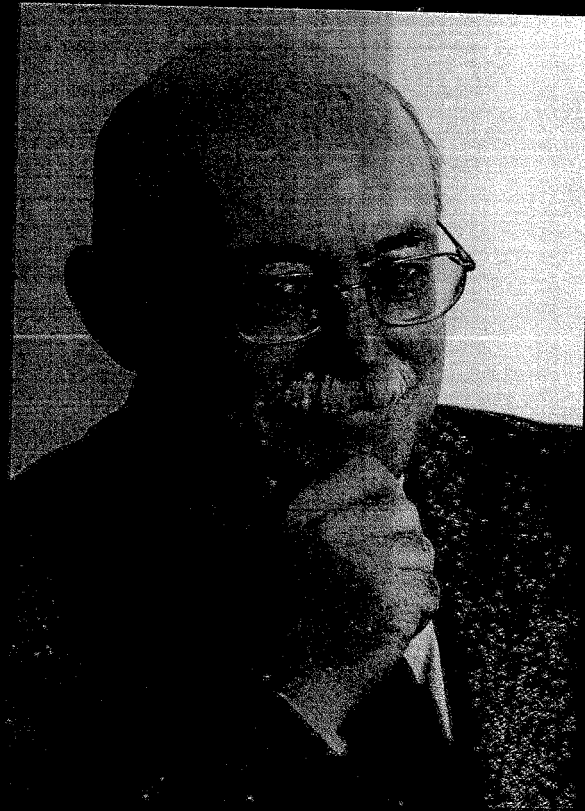


# *Islamica*

*Studies in Memory of Holger Preisler  
(1943–2006)*

*Edited by Andreas Christmann and  
Jan-Peter Hartung*



JOURNAL OF  
*Semitic Studies*  
*Supplement 26*

# OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.  
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,  
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Athens Auckland Bangkok Bogotá Buenos Aires Cape Town  
Chennai Dar es Salaam Delhi Florence Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi  
Kolkata Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai Nairobi  
Paris São Paulo Shanghai Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto Warsaw

with associated companies in Berlin Ibadan

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press  
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United Kingdom  
by Oxford University Press, Oxford

© The University of Manchester, 2009

The moral rights of the author have been asserted  
Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,  
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,  
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate  
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction  
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Journals  
Division, Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover  
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

A catalogue for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data  
(Data available)

ISSN 0022-4480  
ISBN 978-0-19-958997-5

Subscription information for the *Journal of Semitic Studies* is available at the journal website:  
[jss.oupjournals.org](http://jss.oupjournals.org)

Printed in Great Britain by Bell & Bain Ltd, Glasgow

## Table of Contents

### Introduction

Introduction by the Editors	1
<b>Gerhard Hoffmann</b>	
On Some Unpublished Commentaries and Translations by Holger Preißler	9
<b>Regina Karashouli</b>	
Holger Preißler as a Translator of Arabic Literature	27
Bibliography Holger Preißler	41
Contributors	49

### Part I

<b>Verena Klemm</b>	
Obvious and Obscure Contexts: The Leipzig Manuscript of the <i>Kitāb al-zīna</i> by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/934)	55
<b>Renate Jacobi</b>	
Al-Sakhāwī's Grandfather — Life of a Mamluk Merchant	69
<b>Werner Ende</b>	
A Wahhābī Inventory of Dangerous Books	89
<b>Dagmar Glas</b>	
Reorganizing and Disseminating Knowledge during the Nahḍa: Bustānī's <i>Encyclopédie arabe</i> Revisited	101
<b>Peter Heine</b>	
All that Intoxicates ... Ibn Taymiyya and the Taboo on Wine	119
<b>Rudolph Peters</b>	
<i>Sharī'a</i> and 'Natural Justice': The Implementation of Islamic Criminal Law in British India and Colonial Nigeria	127

**Hans-Georg Ebert**

Personal Status Laws in the Arab States: Traditions and Innovations 151

**Henner Fürtig**Iran's Sisyphean Labour — Thirty Years of Spreading  
'Islam's Revolutionary Message' 171**Stephan Conermann**For the Love of God? Jihadism as Global Terrorism: September 11 as the  
(Preliminary) End of a Rationally Comprehensible Path 191**Konstanze Gemeinhardt-Buschhardt**

Female Religious Culture – Muslim Women Activists in Egypt 211

**Jan-Peter Hartung**Religious Education in Transition: The Moral and Academic Training of  
Mawlānā Sayyid Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī 231**Andreas Christmann**Reconciling Sufism with Theology: Abū 'l-Wafā al-Taftāzānī and the  
Construct of 'al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī' in Modern Egypt 257**Part II**Holger Preißler: Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse in Südarabien in mittelsabäischer  
Zeit (1. Jh. v. u. Z. – 4. Jh. u. Z.). Philologisch-historische Untersuchungen  
altsüdarabischer Inschriften. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Leipzig 1980, 294 pp.**Gerhard Hoffmann**

Introduction 285

**Holger Preißler**Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse in Südarabien in mittelsabäischer Zeit  
(1. Jh. v. u. Z. – 4. Jh. u. Z.) 291

© Cover Picture: Universitätsarchiv Leipzig (UAL)

**Introduction**

Andreas Christmann and Jan-Peter Hartung

Where the academic achievements of a scholar revolve around only one or two themes, those who pay *homage* are in a relatively comfortable position. In the case of Holger Preißler, however, this is rather difficult to achieve, at least from a superficial perspective. Preißler's publications cover a vast span of Muslim history and tackle a diverse range of topics from a multitude of scholarly disciplines. This diversity which, again to the uninformed eye, may appear inconsistent or peculiar, is however a reflection of an exciting life that saw many unexpected twists and turns. Holger Preißler's biography provides a vivid example of the winding paths that a Semitist-cum-Islamicist had to travel under the conditions of 'real-existing socialism' in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), as well as in the face of the challenges that emerged with the fall of the 'Iron Curtain' and German reunification in 1990.

\*\*\*

Holger Preißler was born on 27 October 1943 in Altmittweida (Saxony, Germany) as the only child of an army officer, serving with the mountain troops, who was killed in a battle in the Austrian Steiermark days before the end of the Second World War. Holger Preißler was raised by his mother, grandmother and stepfather in Birkenwerder and later Oranienburg (near Berlin), where he went to school until he completed his A-levels in 1962.

From a very early age Holger Preißler was fascinated by foreign languages — and learnt Russian, English, French, Latin, Greek, Italian, Arabic and even Esperanto — and very soon he began to translate anthologies of short stories, poems and novellas from these languages into German — something that he practised all his life and whose regular undertaking he regarded as similar to the 'daily finger exercises of solo pianists'.<sup>1</sup> His great role model at this time was the French philologist Jean-François Champollion (d. 1832), and it was the French polyglot's influence that made him decide to study Egyptology at the University of Leipzig. However, in the GDR higher education practice at the time meant that students were not allowed to matriculate every year into the more 'exotic' disciplines such as Egyptology. Thus, when Holger

<sup>1</sup> Antje Preißler, *Erinnerungen an meinen Mann* (unpublished), 1.

To  
Professor Witkam  
from  
Verena Klemm  
۲۵ فروردین  
Leipzig February 14th, 2010

Obvious and Obscure Contexts: The Leipzig Manuscript of the  
*Kitāb al-zīna* by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/934)

Verena Klemm

Abstract

This article takes as its starting point an old manuscript of the *Kitāb al-zīna* (*The Book of Ornaments*), by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī from Rayy in Northern Iran, an accomplished author who emerged during the rise of the Ismāʿīlī movement. This manuscript, held at the library of the University of Leipzig, was copied only 220 years after the death of the author in the district of Rayy where he was active as head of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* (mission). Thus one can confidently assume a high degree of authenticity of the text. Abū Ḥātim's book, an encyclopedia of religious and other terms, contains a heresiographical section that is extremely valuable, since it documents the religious diversity and divergences in the Islamic world during the author's lifetime. Against the backdrop of Abū Ḥātim's clandestine activities against the 'Abbāsid political and religious elites, this article analyses parts of the work whose addressees were ideological opponents of the Ismāʿīlīs. However, allusions and subtexts in the heresiology skilfully reveal Ismāʿīlī religious truths.

The Leipzig University Library is home to one of the most important and largest collections of Oriental manuscripts in Germany.<sup>1</sup> The collection dates back to at least the seventeenth century and contains around 3,200 Oriental manuscripts, most of them Islamic (ca. 1,700). Acquisitions continued into the twentieth century. The most recent reference work covering the old holdings is over one hundred years old, the catalogue compiled by Carl Vollers in 1906.<sup>2</sup> What this catalogue does not cover are some 200 Islamic manuscripts, predominantly Arabic, acquired after this date. The German Research Foundation has only recently approved a pilot project to be

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Roper, *World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts* (4 vols, London 1992–4), vol. 1, 349: 'This is probably one of the best manuscript collections in Germany.' See also the overview given by Gisela Müller, 'Orientalische Handschriften', in Dietmar Debes (ed.), *Zimelien. Bücherschätze der Universitäts-Bibliothek Leipzig* (Leipzig 1988), 39–176. For the hitherto mainly unknown history of the collection see Boris Liebrecht, *Arabische, persische und türkische Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig. Geschichte ihrer Sammlung und Erschließung von den Anfängen bis Carl Vollers* (Leipzig 2008), 91–111.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Vollers, *Katalog der islamischen, christlich-orientalischen, jüdischen und samaritanischen Handschriften der Universitäts-Bibliothek zu Leipzig* (Leipzig 1906, reprint Osnabrück 1975).

undertaken by the Oriental Institute and the University Library. The aim is a historical and codicological study as well as the electronic presentation of a group of these manuscripts acquired in 1995 in Amman.<sup>3</sup> The acquisition of these manuscripts from a private collector is ultimately thanks to the efforts of Holger Preißler. As an expert of the Leipzig holdings, he was requested by the University Library to assess the manuscripts listed in the purchase offer. He was the first to classify the manuscripts in literary-historical terms and in doing so realized that the fifty-five manuscripts, which comprised the purchase offer, contained unique original documents. Moreover, he was able to determine that the collection represented a valuable cross-section of nearly all the traditional Islamic fields of knowledge. Hence, the foundation for the subsequent manuscript project was established, and just days after his death it was presented to the public at the University of Leipzig with a lecture introducing an exceptionally spectacular piece in the collection. I would like to dedicate this article about that particular manuscript to the memory of Holger Preißler.

The manuscript with the call number *ms. or. 377* contains a large section of the *Kitāb al-zīna* (*The Book of Ornaments*) by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, the Ismāʿīlī author from Rayy.<sup>4</sup> The book is an encyclopedia of religious and other terms, with the author providing explanations of and commentary on their etymology and meaning. Furthermore, the work contains a heresiological section with the names and identities of the religious groups and sects active in al-Rāzī's time.<sup>5</sup> This section of the work is extremely valuable, for it documents the religious diversity and divergence in the Islamic world of the third century. Al-Rāzī was a contemporary of the well-known Shīʿī *firaq* authors al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhī (d. after 300/912) and Saʿd b.

ʿAbdallāh al-Ashʿarī al-Qummī (d. 301/914)<sup>6</sup> and there is an obvious intertextual relationship between their works.<sup>7</sup>

What is initially so striking about the Leipzig manuscript is the following colophon:

The transcription was completed by Aḥmad Ibn Saʿd al-Baihaqī on 14 Rabīʿ al-awwal 544 [July 27, 1149 CE] in the village of Jayyān [?] in the administrative district [*rustaq*] of Rayy.

This means that the work was transcribed exactly 222 years (on the Islamic calendar) after the author's death in the immediate vicinity of where he lived and worked in northern Iran. From this we may confidently assume a high degree of authenticity. Moreover, our Leipzig manuscript is a genuinely spectacular testimony to Ismāʿīlī literary history, since neither of the other two available editions featuring parts of the *Kitāb al-zīna* can be traced back to such an old manuscript.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it appears to be the oldest Ismāʿīlī manuscript ever found.<sup>9</sup>

6 These Iranians are the authors of the oldest preserved Imāmite-Shīʿī heresiographies. See Wilferd Madlung, 'Häresiographie', in Helmut Gärtje (ed.), *Grundriß der Arabischen Philologie. Band II: Literaturwissenschaft* (Wiesbaden 1987), 374–8. See also p. 63 of the present article.

7 ʿAbbās al-Hamdānī, cited in Abū Ḥātim Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān al-Rāzī (Ḥusain b. Fayḍallāh al-Hamdānī, ed.), *Kitāb al-zīna fi'l kalimāt al-islāmiyya al-ʿarabiyya* (Ṣanʿāʾ 1410/1994), Introduction, 26f; Madlung, *Häresiographie*, 375f. For further details see below, note 45.

8 The *Kitāb al-zīna* consists of two major parts (see al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, 45f). The first part and the beginning of the second part of the *Kitāb al-zīna* were edited by Ḥusayn al-Hamdānī (Ṣanʿāʾ 1410/1994). The edition of the heresiology (contained in the second part of the *Kitāb al-zīna*) was undertaken by ʿAbdallāh al-Samarraʿī as *al-Ghulūw wa'l-firaq al-ghāliya fi'l-ḥadāra al-islāmiyya* (Baghdad no date), 225–347. For their editions, both al-Hamdānī and al-Samarraʿī used a manuscript from the Iraqi Museum (*al-Mathaf al-ʿIrāqī*) in Baghdad (No. 1306) which they cautiously attributed to the sixth century CE, too; however the manuscript has no colophon: al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, Introduction, 38f; al-Samarraʿī, *al-Ghulūw*, Introduction, 244. As al-Hamdānī writes in his Introduction, the Baghdad manuscript consists of large segments of the two parts of the work, but is incomplete at the beginning and at the end. Thus it begins with al-Rāzī's comment on *al-naḥw* (al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, 89) after — according to al-Hamdānī — around 20 lost pages of the first part, and ends with *al-ʿāʾif wa'l-qāʾif wa'l-zājir* towards the end of the second part (and thus not integrated in the editions of al-Hamdānī and Samarraʿī). Al-Hamdānī still uses several other, far more recent manuscripts. The manuscript of the Leipzig University Library contains the end of the first part and segments of the second part of the *Kitāb al-zīna*. A list of the topics composed by the author can be found at the beginning of the work (al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, 67f). Our manuscript begins exactly where Hamdānī's ends (i.e. after the entry *bāb al-qiyāma*). It incorporates the complete heresiology edited by al-Samarraʿī (i.e. from the entries *Aṣḥāb al-madhāʾib wa'l-ahwāʾ* until *Aṣḥāb al-raǰʾa*), followed by the entries *al-nabi* until *al-qusūsiyyin wa'l-rahbān* (see al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, 68).

9 In view of its significance and value for Ismāʿīlī Studies, Ismail K. Poonawala's *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature* (Malibu, CA 1977) urgently needs to be updated. For the collection of the Institute of Ismaili Studies that, since its foundation in 1977, has continuously acquired private and public

3 www.islamic-manuscripts.net (accessed March 4, 2009). The project was concluded in August 2008. On the basis of the databank, which was set up during this project and which consists of three languages, a new segment of the manuscript collection will now be digitalized and researched, namely, the entirely preserved private library of the Damascene al-Rifāʿī family: www.refaiya.uni-leipzig.de (accessed March 4, 2009). For the Rifāʿīyya library see Detlof Döring, 'Der Erwerb der Refaiya-Handschriften durch die sächsische Regierung im Jahre 1853', in Wolfgang Reuschel (ed.), 'Orientalische Philologie und Arabische Linguistik', *Asien—Afrika—Lateinamerika*, special issue 2 (1990), 19–23 and Liebrecht, *Handschriften*.

4 Format 13.5/17 cm, 350 folios. The manuscript was restored by the Leipzig University Library in 2006. When it was acquired in 1996 only the leather spine remained of its former binding. Since the cover was missing, the first and last folios have been unprotected and were in very poor condition as a result. The binding was partly destroyed. Due to its beautiful and clear writing (with red lemmata), the manuscript is easy to read.

5 For a detailed structuring of the work see Ḥusayn al-Hamdānī, "Kitāb az-Zīnat" of Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *XXI. Actes du Congrès International des Orientalistes* (Paris 1948), 291–4, here 292f.

In this article I would like to highlight some obvious and obscure contexts of this manuscript and begin by focusing on the author.

### The Author of the *Kitāb al-zīna*

Little is known about Abū Ḥātim Ibn Ḥamdān al-Rāzī's origins. Presumably he was of Persian descent, although possibly he was Arab or North African.<sup>10</sup> He was mainly active in the northern Iranian city of Rayy — to which the *nisba* al-Rāzī also refers — and, towards the end of his life, the province of Ṭabaristān, south of the Caspian Sea. The exact year of his birth is unknown, but it would seem that it was around 260/873–4. There is evidence that al-Rāzī was politically active as head of the Ismaili mission in Rayy from 300/912–13 until his death in 322/933–4. Prior to and during this political activity he came to prominence as the author of the *Kitāb al-zīna* and other important religious and philosophical works of early Ismā'īliyya and as a disputant in various learned circles in Rayy and Baghdad.<sup>11</sup>

The unknowns and uncertainties about al-Rāzī's life are reflected in the diverse array of affiliations ascribed to him. The Baghdad bookseller Ibn al-Nadīm (died at the beginning of the fifth century/eleventh century), for instance, characterized him as a former dualist (*thanawī*) who became a materialist (*dahrī*), then a heretic (*thumma*

---

collections of Ismā'īlī manuscripts from all over the world (including recently the famous collection of 'Abbās Hamdānī, the son of the above mentioned editor of the *Kitāb al-zīna*, Ḥusayn al-Hamdānī), see Adam Gacek, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies* (vol. 1, London 1984); Delia Cortese, *Ismaili and Other Arabic Manuscripts: A Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies* (London 2000) and *Arabic Ismaili Manuscripts: The Zāhid 'Alī Collection in the Library of the Institute of Ismaili Studies* (London 2003). See also [www.iis.ac.uk/view\\_article.asp?ContentID=104728](http://www.iis.ac.uk/view_article.asp?ContentID=104728) (accessed March 4, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> There are several Persian and even Arab *nisbas* attributed to al-Rāzī and it has so far proven impossible to establish his descent with any certainty. Most probably he is of Persian descent and he is said to be a native of Bashāwūy (Pashāpūya), but elsewhere he is also called al-Warsanānī, in relation to a village in the district of Bashāwūy (Samuel Miklos Stern, 'The Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurāsān and Transoxania', *BSOAS* 23 (1960), 56–90, here 61, including note 1; idem, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, (Leiden 1960–2004), vol. 1, 125, s.v. 'Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī' and al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, Introduction, 29.) Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. Riḍā al-Tajaddud, (Tehran 1350sh/1971), calls him — as the fifth leader of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in Rayy — Abū Ḥātim al-Warsanī (239), then — as author of the *Kitāb al-zīna* — Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (240).

<sup>11</sup> For known biographical details see Stern, *Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries*, 61–7 and passim; Heinz Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdi. Der Aufstieg der Fatimiden (875–973)* (Munich 1991), 258f and al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, Introduction, 29f.

*tadhhabdhaba/tazanddaqā*) and a sceptic (*wā ḥaṣala 'alā 'l-shakk*).<sup>12</sup> Other authors have characterized him variously as an Imāmite/Twelver Shī'ī, a Sunnī, a Shāfi'ī,<sup>13</sup> a Ḥadīth scholar<sup>14</sup> and a Bāṭinī.<sup>15</sup> The early Fāṭimids, who were sent a transcription of the *Kitāb al-zīna* during the reign of Caliph al-Qā'im, claimed him posthumously as 'one of our best *dā'īs*' (missionaries).<sup>16</sup>

But all of these different attributions are not merely misunderstandings and errors by later authors. Instead, they are the expression of an identity that oscillated between openness, secrecy and dissimulation. In this way al-Rāzī moved in several religio-political and learned networks, stretching from North Africa, Iran and Iraq, through to Transoxiana.

### The Ismā'īlī Movement

Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī was just one of the renowned figures who emerged during the rise of the Ismā'īlī movement, a religio-political faction whose roots go back to the Gnostic period of the Proto-Shī'a in Iraq. In early Islam, Gnosticism possessed not only a religious but also a political importance. It was particularly popular amongst those opposing the established Arab Sunnī Caliphate, such as the Shī'īs from Mesopotamia and Iran, where Gnosticism as a religion of Late Antiquity had its cultural roots. Here a syncretistic form of Gnosticism developed that merged key Shī'ī Islamic elements with Gnostic myths and conceptions of the world.<sup>17</sup>

The greatest and historically most influential of these movements was the Ismā'īliyya. In Islamic times, the leaders of the movement were active in secret associations and clandestine 'cells' which they founded throughout the Islamic world, working towards undermining Sunnī authority and rule, and aiming at a revolutionary overthrow. This was to be ushered in by the emergence of a redeemer (*mahdī*), in accordance with the teaching of the old, so-called pure Ismā'īl, the Shī'ī pretender Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, and result in the founding of a 'Kingdom of Truth'. In establishing this Kingdom, the Sunnī usurpers were to be overthrown and all the

<sup>12</sup> See Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 239. See also Stern, *Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries*, 83.

<sup>13</sup> See al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, Introduction, 25, according to Murtaḍā b. al-Dā'ī al-Ḥasanī al-Rāzī et al.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, 32, according to Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī.

<sup>15</sup> See Stern, *Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries*, 83, according to 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī.

<sup>16</sup> See Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdi*, 258, according to Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn.

<sup>17</sup> See Heinz Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismā'īliyya* (Wiesbaden 1978); idem, *Die islamische Gnosis* (Zurich/Munich 1982).

Islamic laws annulled. During al-Rāzī's lifetime, the Ismaili movement was able to emerge from its clandestine existence and operate openly on the political stage, in particular in the west and south of the 'Abbāsīd Empire. In response to this boldness, 'Abbāsīd soldiers and ideological authorities pursued the Ismailis, who were not only targeted as heretics but also — and quite correctly — as dangerous enemies of the established Islamic Sunnī order. At the turn of the fourth/tenth century, lines of conflict had opened between 'Abbāsīds and Ismā'īlī in the south and west.

Shortly before this happened, the Ismā'īlīs had split into two wings: the Qarmaṭians and the Fāṭimids. Both independently propagated the dawn of the apocalypse, with each presenting a *mahdī*. To realize their political goals, the Qarmaṭians had won over the Bedouins of Bahrain, whilst the ascending Fāṭimids gained the military support of the Berbers from the High Atlas.

From 310/923 onwards, the Qarmaṭians penetrated repeatedly into the heart of the 'Abbāsīd Empire from their base in Bahrain. They plundered the cities of Basra and Kufa and advanced towards Baghdad. Bloody assaults took place against caravans of pilgrims along the road to Mecca. In 315/928, the Qarmaṭians penetrated into Mecca itself during the pilgrimage season, where they massacred pilgrims, derided the proclamations of the Qur'ān and plundered the treasures and votive gifts from the Ka'ba. The black stone was broken out of the Ka'ba and carried off to Qarmaṭian territory. Further to the west, in North Africa, the establishment and rapid expansion of the Fāṭimid dynasty from 297/909 onwards caused the 'Abbāsīds enormous problems; only a few decades later in 358/969, this Fāṭimid Empire would extend from its centre in Cairo over the Ḥijāz to the Palestinian and Syrian Levant and its hinterland.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas Sunnīs and Ismā'īlīs were locked in political and ideological animosity, during al-Rāzī's lifetime affiliations were still in flux within the Shī'a, so that there were no continuous or definitive factions and groupings. But it would seem that al-Rāzī was a Qarmaṭian for the longest period in his life,<sup>19</sup> and so a representative of the *pure* Ismā'īlī teachings of the original community, which preached — in a rebellious spirit of impending promise — the return of their messiah Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, the grandson of the Shī'ī Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. Indeed, it is very likely that, in the face of the horrific orgies of violence taking place as part of the uprising instigated by the Qarmaṭian Bedouins, al-Rāzī, like many other intellectual Qarmaṭians, switched

allegiance to the first Fāṭimid caliphs. While not regarding the Fāṭimid as their religious leaders, they saw in them strong political leaders.

### Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī in Rayy

In the context of these events, the old Iranian city of Rayy<sup>20</sup> was the centre of the widespread network in which the *dā'ī* al-Rāzī was active. Named Rhagae in the empire of Alexander the Great, the place was an extremely significant juncture for important long-distance routes linking Iraq and Transoxania, the Caspian Sea and southern Iran. The majority of the population was Persian, but Arabs also lived in the city. Strategically important, Rayy was controlled by caliph-governors for a long period. In al-Rāzī's lifetime, the fragmenting of the 'Abbāsīd Empire resulted in political confrontation. In AH 289 the city was annexed by Sāmānids, a feudal Persian family who had established itself as a dynasty in Bukhara (204–395/819–1005).<sup>21</sup> Over the next four decades Rayy was a bone of contention between the 'Abbāsīds, Sāmānids, local rulers and Daylamī condottieri, who exploited the break-up of the 'Abbāsīd Empire to establish short-lived principalities in northern Iran secured with private armies.<sup>22</sup> For decades the city was almost continually the target of sieges, overthrows and conquests.

However, the disputed city was also a place of learning. According to the geographer Istakhrī, it was the most vital centre in the Mashriq after Baghdad. While the majority of the population was obviously drawn towards the Imāmite Shī'īs, Ḥadīth scholars, Shāfī'ī and Ḥanafī jurists and famous scientists were also active in the city.<sup>23</sup> Since the early period of the Ismā'īliyya, roughly since the mid third/ninth century, Rayy was also one of the most important and active centres of their subversive and anti-'Abbāsīd propaganda in northern Iran,<sup>24</sup> which aimed at converting members of ruling elites in particular.<sup>25</sup> Al-Rāzī was the fifth of the successively active Ismā'īlī missionaries there, taking office around the year 300/912–

20 Vladimir Minorsky and Clifford E. Bosworth, s.v. 'Ar-Rayy', *Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition* (12 vols, Leiden 1962–2004), vol. 8, 471–3.

21 Clifford E. Bosworth, s.v. 'Sāmānids', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 8, 1025–9.

22 Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdī*, 258f; Stern, *Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries*, 62–4.

23 Yāqūt al-Rūmī, s.v. 'Rayy', *Mu'jam al-buldān* (6 vols, Beirut 1397/1977), vol. 3, 116–22.

24 Stern, *Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries*; Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdī*, 30–3.

25 Stern, *Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries*, 81.

18 See Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdī*, 225–36 (Qarmaṭian uprisings).

19 See *ibid.*, 169.

13.<sup>26</sup> From there he advised and guided the clandestine Ismā'īlī communities in the highlands of Daylam, in the coastal plains south of the Caspian Sea (Gīlān and Ṭabāristān) and in the mountains (al-Jibāl) down to Isfahan.<sup>27</sup> He also maintained ties with leaders of other Ismā'īlī cells in Iran, Transoxania and today's Afghanistan. He entered into debate with one of them, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī, head of the *da'wa* in north Afghanistan and Bukhara, in his book *Kitāb al-iṣlāḥ* (*Book of the Correction*) a response to al-Nasafī's *Kitāb al-maḥṣūl* (*Book of the Yield*). Al-Nasafī (his Arab *nisba* relates to the town Nakhshāb in Transoxania where he was born) and his colleague Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī belonged to the first generation of the Ismā'īlī theologian-philosophers who elaborated complex metaphysical systems of thought combined with Neoplatonic emanational cosmology.<sup>28</sup> As a missionary, al-Nasafī would become very successful later in his career, when he converted the Sāmānid governor Naṣr II b. Aḥmad (ruled 301–31/914–43).<sup>29</sup>

The Neoplatonic concepts and speculations of Ismā'īlī philosophy in Iran were attractive for Sunnī and Shī'ī (Imāmite) intellectuals who, from the third/ninth century onwards, adapted and discussed the Platonic, Aristotelian, and the thought of Late Antiquity available in Arabic translation.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Abū Ḥātim engaged in philosophical debates with the famous philosopher-physician Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, known as Rhazes in the Occident.<sup>31</sup> As a linguist, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī presumably also travelled to Baghdad for talks with the grammarian and philologist Abū 'I-'Abbās al-Tha'lab (d. 291/903–4), which was nothing less than a journey into the lion's den for an Ismā'īlī.<sup>32</sup> There are also indications of a stay in North Africa before the establishment of the Fāṭimid Caliphate (297/875).<sup>33</sup>

As we can see, al-Rāzī's known political and scholarly activities were diverse and took place in different supra-regional circles and networks. *Taqiyya*, dissimulation, the act of consciously hiding one's true religious-political affiliations, was a key survival strategy for him in some of these circles. In the process, the boundary

between the public sphere and what was intentionally obscured or concealed shifted repeatedly, depending on the respective political situation. For instance, under 'Abbāsīd and Sāmānid rule, the *da'wa* operated underground and the Ismā'īlī works written by al-Rāzī circulated exclusively in supra-regional Ismā'īlī circles and remained unknown to Sunnīs and Imāmite Shī'īs. But from 307/919 the mission could be run openly, as Abū Ḥātim succeeded in winning the support of the Emir of Rayy, Aḥmad b. 'Alī (307–11/919–24), a usurper who became his benefactor.<sup>34</sup> The innovative Neoplatonic Ismā'īlī philosophy could now publicly compete with other intellectual currents. The aforementioned philosophical debates between Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī and Rhazes were probably held at the court of this ruler in front of a large public audience. After the downfall of the Emir a few years later, al-Rāzī was able to gain the confidence of the conqueror of the city, Asfār b. Shīrawāh (Shirōye), a condottiere from Daylam who had extended his rule south-westwards and taken Rayy. Now the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* was in the ascendancy in the region. Even after al-Rāzī's patron was removed in 318/930 by another Daylamī military leader, Mardāwīj, it seemed for a time that he, too, would benefit the Ismā'īlī *dā'wa*. Side by side with this ruler, who is alleged to have even undertaken military preparations to bring about the downfall of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate,<sup>35</sup> Abū Ḥātim extended the reach of the Ismā'īlī mission in Ṭabāristān at the expense of the Zaydiyya movement.<sup>36</sup> But then the Ismā'īlīs fell out of Daylamī's favour and he proceeded to have them and their families killed throughout his dominion.<sup>37</sup> Al-Rāzī fled to Muflīh, a military governor well disposed towards him in Azerbaijan, where he died in 322/934.<sup>38</sup> The dangers facing the Ismā'īlīs in Iran and Turkistān continued to grow in the following decades. Only ten years after al-Rāzī's death, his aforementioned colleague from Bukhara, al-Nasafī, a once welcomed and esteemed scholar at the Sāmānid court, was executed,<sup>39</sup>

26 See *ibid.*, 57.

27 See Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdi*, 258 (map, 31).

28 See Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis. Traditions of a Muslim Community* (Edinburgh 1998), 84.

29 See *ibid.*, 43.

30 See Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdi*, 262–5.

31 See *ibid.*, 258f. Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī writes about this dispute in his book *A'lām al-nubūwa* (*The Signs of Prophecy*), where citations of Abū Bakr al-Rāzī are preserved. See Kraus in note 34 below.

32 See *Kitāb al-zīna*, (al-Hamdānī, ed.), Introduction, 24; 29.

33 See *ibid.*, 29.

34 See Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdi*, 258; Stern, *Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries*, 65, including note 4: under Mardāwīj (according to Paul Kraus, 'Raziana', in Rémi Brague [ed.], *Alchimie, Ketzeri, Apokryphen im frühen Islam. Gesammelte Aufsätze* [Hildesheim/Zurich/New York 1994], 220–99, here 291–3), relativized on 66.

35 See *ibid.*, 66, according to al-Šūlī.

36 See *ibid.*, 64.

37 See *ibid.*, 66, according to al-Maqrīzī.

38 See Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdi*, 258; Stern, *Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries*, 67.

39 See Stern, *Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries*, 80. For more details on al-Nasafī see Halm, *Das Reich des*

the successor of the two perished *da'wa* leaders, Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, probably suffered the same fate.<sup>40</sup>

### • The *Kitāb al-zīna*

Al-Rāzī himself explains his title, *Kitāb al-zīna*, in his Introduction, stating that knowledge of the included terms is not only essential for jurists (*fuqahā*) and literati (*udabā'*) but constitute brilliant ornaments (*zīna 'aẓīma*) for men of religion who comprise the virtues of manhood and chivalry (*murūwa*). The book encompasses expressions used by legal scholars (*'ulamā'*), linguists, and men of tradition, as well as famous poets who use the unfamiliar terms from the Qur'ān (*gharīb al-qur'ān*) and from the Ḥadīth (*gharīb al-ḥadīth*) in their poems. Furthermore, it contains names, duties and rare expressions mentioned in the *sharī'a* and the Sunna (*sunan*).<sup>41</sup>

The work, thus dedicated to a broad range of scholars and literati, follows in the tradition of the 'deductive' or 'etymological school' (*al-madrasa al-ishṭiqāqīyya*) that developed and flourished in Abū Ḥātim's time and enjoyed a boom with Ibn Fāris' dictionary *Maqabīs al-luḡha* at the end of the fourth/eleventh century.<sup>42</sup> The method of the Arab linguists and lexicographers (such as the famous Abū Bakr b. Durayd, who was a contemporary of Abū Ḥātim and died in 321/933), who were members of the school, consisted in the derivation of a term (or a *nomen personalis* or *locis*) from the basic meaning of an Arabic root (e.g. *Iblīs* from *ablasa*, 'he despaired' and *jannat 'adan* — paradise — from *'adana bi'l-makān*, 'he remained, stayed, dwelt in a place'). Terms or names, whether Arabic or non-Arabic, and their various morphemes, and even homonyms (e.g. *al-'ayn* - 'eye' and 'fountain') were thus derived from a single, often ancient and forgotten meaning to which they still have an etymological and semantic/essential connection.<sup>43</sup>

In the *Kitāb al-zīna* over 400 terms and names from the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth and Islamic law are explained, covering such topics as: the world, the hereafter, creation, spirit, the soul, fate, angels, demons and the devil. But the book also includes the

names of non-Islamic religious groups such as Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and Sabaeans, as well as dealing with political and social organizational forms like city, country, province, people and clan and listing the names of important Arab cities. The book was particularly well-known between the sixth and ninth centuries of the Islamic calendar and was used and quoted as a source by scores of authors, for example by the grammarian Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Baṭalyūsī (d. 521/1127), by the author of the geographical dictionary *Kitāb al-buldān*, Yāqūt al-Rūmī al-Hamawī (d. 626/1229), by the versatile religious scholar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (d. 911/1505) and others.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, the *Kitāb al-zīna* contains, as mentioned before, a heresiology section, which gives the names, origins and teachings of contemporary Islamic 'sects and religious groups' of the Sunna, Khārījīyya, Shī'a, and the so-called *ghulāt*, the Shī'ī 'exaggerators', who deified their imams and believed in the transmigration of the soul.

Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī presumably compiled the book before the year 300/912–13, while he was still concealing his subversive Ismā'īlī intentions and contacts wherever possible. Accordingly, the work is quite clearly *not* addressing the circle of known Ismā'īlī thinkers; his addressees, as he mentions in the Introduction of the *Kitāb al-zīna* were rather men of letters and scholars active in both religious and secular areas of knowledge. As mentioned above, al-Rāzī was also a member of these circles, where his Ismā'īlī identity was unknown.

Thus the work is characterized by dissimulation of actual belief coupled with simulation of a seemingly Sunnī affiliation so the book could move inconspicuously in the 'politically correct' Sunnī tradition. However, if one reads more closely, then expressions of the author's veiled religious identity become discernible. Although many of the addressees were ideological opponents of the Ismā'īlī, allusions and subtexts in the heresiology section skilfully reveal Ismā'īlī religious truths.

The Islamic heresiology is, after all, a genre that grew out of a religious polemic that extended back to the second/eighth century and reached its peak in the third and fourth centuries of the Islamic calendar.<sup>45</sup> As is common in the genre, rebuttal and

40 See Stern, *Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries*, 81; Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdi*, 336f; Daftary, *A Short History*, 84f. Like Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī and al-Nasafī, al-Sijistānī belonged to the Iranian 'philosophical Ismā'īliyya'. He is the author of the *Kitāb al-yanābi* ('Book of the Wellsprings') and other writings that discuss the Neoplatonic Ismā'īlī cosmology.

41 See al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, 67.

42 See *ibid.*, Introduction, 13.

43 See *ibid.*, 12f, 22–4.

44 See *ibid.*, 28f.

45 See Madelung, *Häresiographie*, 374; Wilferd Madelung, 'Das Imamāt in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre', *Der Islam* 37 (1961), 43–135, here 50 and Wilferd Madelung, 'Bemerkungen zur imamitischen Firaq-Literatur', *Der Islam* 43 (1967), 37–52, here 37f. The so far oldest known heresiography is the *Kitāb ikhtilāf al-nās fī l-imāma* (*Peoples' Dissent in Respect of the Imamate*), written by the Kufian Imāmīte Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179/795) in the late second/eighth century. This work has been

apologetics appear to be the goal and purpose of the heresiological section in the *Kitāb al-zīna*, and thus extreme caution was imperative for the dissimulating Ismā'īlī author. Al-Rāzī thus initially underpins the legitimacy of the Sunna with ample references to the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, appearing to profess to the Sunna. Nevertheless, the Sunnīs, who he calls pejoratively 'the devotees of Mu'āwiya' at another place in the book,<sup>46</sup> are presented as those who are genuinely the fallen and entangled in dispute.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, the Shī'a are presented as *one* large current, namely the party of 'Alī, which he proves for example by employing the term 'shī'a' always in the singular and never in the plural.<sup>48</sup>

He proceeds with even greater tactical skill in the section on the 'Ismā'īliyya' (*al-Ismā'īliyya*), where he discusses the legitimacy of the male successors of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.<sup>49</sup> After the death of this imam, followers gathered around each of his sons, causing a far-reaching schism in the Shī'a, which was the origin for the separation of the Ismā'īliyya from the Imāmite Shī'a. In his commentaries on the various pretenders, al-Rāzī does not shy away from contradicting and criticizing. Only one line, namely that which traces the Ismā'īlī imām succession up to the *mahdī* Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Ja'far, is spared commentary and thus critique by the author. At the end of the section he writes, as if he wants to arouse the fascination and curiosity of his addressees, 'and they have other arguments, including some which they show and some which they hide ... Many people support this teaching and they are becoming more every day.'<sup>50</sup>

---

preserved in the heresiographies of Abū Ḥātim's Imāmite contemporaries Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (*Kitāb firaq al-Shī'a - The Religious Groups/Sects of the Shī'a*) and Sa'd b. 'Abdallāh al-Qummī (*Kitāb al-maqālāt wa'l-firaq - The Book of the Doctrines and Religious Groups/Sects*). According to Madclung's analysis Qummī's work is a slightly supplemented and updated version of the *Kitāb firaq al-Shī'a*. Probably this book, that was written before the year 286/899 — the year of the Qarmaṭian uprising in Bahrain — was one of the sources of the *Kitāb al-zīna* (Tamima Bayhou-Daou, 'The Second-Century Šī'ite Ḡulāt: Were they really Gnostic?', *JALS* 5 [2003–4], 13–61, here 13, and Madclung, *Häresiographie*, 375f). However, al-Hamdānī maintains, without going into detail, an opposite influence (al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, Introduction, 26f). A source-critical analysis regarding this and other open questions concerning the heresiographical influences in and of the *Kitāb al-zīna* is left to future research.

46 See al-Samarrā'ī, *al-Ghulūw*, 262.

47 See *ibid.*, 252ff, particularly 255.

48 See *ibid.*, 259–62, particularly 262.

49 See *ibid.*, 287–9.

50 See *ibid.*, 289.

## Conclusion

Due to the time and place of its origin, the Leipzig manuscript is very close to al-Rāzī, to his life and the events of the age. It is notable that it contains small but not unimportant differences to another old manuscript of the *Kitāb al-zīna* which, at the time the Leipzig manuscript was acquired, was preserved in the National Museum in Baghdad.<sup>51</sup> In contrast to this manuscript, the Leipzig manuscript includes Shī'ī eulogies to religious authorities. From this we may conclude that the work continued to be passed on in Shī'ī and perhaps even secret Ismaili circles in Rayy after al-Rāzī's flight and death. What is certain is that it was well hidden, for unlike most of the city's inhabitants and their possessions, it survived the destruction wreaked by the Mongols in 617/1220.

The Leipzig manuscript can thus be identified as an authentic and fascinating work from the very same sphere of secrecy to which Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī himself belonged two hundred years before.

---

51 Used by Ḥusayn al-Hamdānī and 'Abdallāh al-Samarrā'ī, see note 8 above.