1975). Additional efforts were made to cata-
logue the holdings of the public and private
libraries of Yemen. In 1978 a comprehensive
catalogue of the holdings of the Maktaba
al-Gharbiyya was published (al-'Isawi et al.
1978), and in 1984 a four-volume catalogue
of the holdings of the Maktaba al-Shariqyya
replaced the earlier handlist of 1962 (al-
Ruqayhi 1984). Increasingly, the vast hold-
ings of the sofar mostly unexplored private
libraries in Sa'da, Sana'a and other histori-
cal centres of Zaydiism in Yemen were cata-
logued and partly digitized. Mention should
be made of the one-volume catalogue by
'Abd Allah Muhammad al-Hibshi (al-Hibshi
1994) and of the two-volumes catalogue by
'Abd al-Salam al-Wajih (al-Wajih 2002) pro-
viding bibliographical data of 3,190 codices
with over 5,000 separate titles from libraries
in Shabah, Sana'a, Hajja, Amran, Dhamaq,
Sa'da, Ta'izz and Ibb (the publication of
Volumes Three and Four of the catalogue,
based on a survey of an additional forty li-
Libraries since 2000, has been announced for
some time). At present, the Mu'assasat al-
Imam Zayd b. 'Ali al-shaqiqiya (IZWAC) is
the most active NGO dedicated to pre-
serving the heritage of the Zaydi commu-
nity through the publication of manuscript
catalogues and critical editions as well as
through the digitization of manuscripts
(http://www.izwac.org/). In addition, other
cultural foundations and institutions are ac-
tive in Yemen, such as Markaz al-diraskat wa-
l-buhuth al-yamaniy (http://www.ycys.org/),
Markaz Badr al-timi wa-l-acqafi (http://
www.facebook.com/markizbadr/v-infor/
markizbadr/ or Markaz al-turath wa-l-
buhuth al-yamaniy (http://yemenhr.com/).
Apart from the two Egyptian expeditions,
other countries also contributed to preserve
the Yemeni, particularly Zaydi, manuscript
holdings. In the 1980s, an expedition from
Kuwait microfilmed selected manuscripts
in Sana'a (al-Shanti 1988). In addition to this,
Iranian scholars and institutions have been
active for several years cataloguing and dig-
itzing Yemeni Zaydi manuscripts (Waldhar
1999; see also Hasan Ansari's numerous
blogs on Yemeni MSS at http://ansari.kate-
ban.com/). A new catalogue of the holdings
of the Maktaba al-Gharbiyya was published
by the Ayat Allah al-'Uzzam Mar'ashi Library
in Qum, in cooperation with the Markaz
al-wataniq wa-l-tahrkh al-dhimarisi of the
Iranian Foreign Ministry (al-'Isawi et al.
2005), and microfilm copies of practi-
cally the entire holdings of the Maktaba al-
Gharbiyya are preserved in various Iranian
libraries (al-Mashriqi et al. 2003). During
the 1970s and 1980s, the German Foreign
Ministry has funded a large-scale project to
train Yemenis in the evaluation and conser-
vation of manuscripts, specifically in view
of the precious early Qur'anic fragments that
were discovered in 1972 during renovations
of the roof of the Great Mosque in Sana'a
and subsequently restored and microfilmed
(Boehm-Oligh/Pain 1999; Dreiholz 2003).
In 2000, the French Centre for Archeology
and Social Sciences in Sana'a launched the
Zabid Programme under the directorship
of Anne Regourd with the aim to safeguard
the estimated 3,500 manuscripts from the
private libraries of religious scholars in Za-
bid by cataloguing and digitizing the manu-
scripts and by their conservation and physi-
cal restoration (Regourd 2002, 2006, 2008,
THE YEMEN MANUSCRIPT DIGITIZATION PROJECT

Major contributions to the scientific exploration of the Mu'tazilite manuscripts in the public and private libraries of Yemen were made by the members of the "Mu'tazilite Manuscripts Project Group" that was founded in 2003 (http://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/izma/forschung/laufend/mu'tazil/index.html), an international group of some fifteen scholars, setting out to collect, record and prepare critical editions of all unpublished material of Mu'tazilite provenance. Funded by a variety of foundations, the project has held three international workshops in Istanbul and published more than fifteen critical editions and facsimiles mostly on the basis of Yemeni manuscripts, along with numerous monographs and edited volumes (Adanig/ Schmidtke/Meareh 2007). They are currently working towards the completion of A Handbook of Mu'tazilite Works and Manuscripts, with the intent to catalogue all extant Mu'tazilite manuscripts (Schwarz 2006, forthcoming). Since the very beginning of the activities of the "Mu'tazilite Manuscripts Project Group", its members have established close contacts with the various cultural institutions in Yemen, obtained numerous digitized manuscripts through them and repeatedly visited the Maktab al-Shafi'iyah of the Great Mosque in Sana'a, photographing some of the most significant Mu'tazilite manuscripts of the library. The efforts of the "Mu'tazilite Manuscripts Project Group" have been merged since 2008 with the Research Project "Rediscovering Theological Rationalism in the Medieval World of Islam", which is funded by the European Research Council and hosted by Freie Universität Berlin (http://www.forschung/laufend/teological-rationalism-in-the-medieval-world-of-islam/index.html; http://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/izma/forschung/laufend/theological_rationalism/index.html).

In 2009, the German Foreign Office in cooperation with Freie Universität Berlin launched the ambitious project "Preserving Yemen's Cultural Heritage: The Yemen Manuscript Digitization Project" with the ultimate aim of digitizing the holdings of most so far unexplored private libraries in Sana'a and its vicinity over the next five years. The project is run by the IZfAAC in collaboration with the Freie Universität Berlin ("The Mu'tazilite Manuscripts Project" and "ERC Project: Rediscovering Theological Rationalism in the Medieval World of Islam"). Digital images and metadata, created in Sana'a, will be housed both at the IZfAAC and Freie Universität Berlin and will be available to researchers working in either Sana'a or Berlin on Yemeni intellectual history. In addition to this, the Yemen Manuscript Digitization Initiative (YMDI) was launched in 2010, a collective of research librarians and leading scholars of classical Islam, Middle Eastern history, and Arabic Literature under the direction of David Hollenberg (University of Oregon). Its mission is to preserve the Arabic manuscripts in the private libraries of Yemen.
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