Zaydī Theology in Yemen

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Abstract

This chapter reviews Zaydī theology in Yemen, from the period before and after the unification of the Yemeni and the Caspian imamates to theologians from the ninth/fifteenth century. It traces the foundation of the Zaydī imamate in the northern highlands of Yemen by Imam al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq, and how the Yemeni Zaydīs developed a canon of doctrinal writings of the Imams which remained authoritative over the coming centuries. It considers the role played by Ja‘far b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Salām al-Buḥlūlī in the intellectual development of Yemen’s theological landscape, as well as the legacy of al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās with respect to Bahshamite theology in the country. It also examines the continuity of Bahshamite theology from the seventh/thirteenth century and concludes with a discussion of the emergence of growing opposition among the Zaydīs of Yemen against Mu‘tazilism in general and the theological views of the Bahshamiyya in particular.

Keywords

Zaydī theology, Yemen, Ja‘far b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Salām al-Buḥlūlī, al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās, Bahshamite theology, Mu‘tazilism, Imam al-Manṣūr bi-llāh, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, ‘Abd Allāh b. Zayd al-‘Ansī

For most of its history, Zaydī theology was heavily influenced by Mu‘tazilite doctrines.¹ Yemen is the only region with a significant Zaydī community until the present day. It is therefore in the country’s historical libraries that thousands of Mu‘tazilite manuscripts have survived. These collections include both texts that were lost in majoritarian Sunni lands as well as many other theological works written by members of the Zaydī community themselves. This chapter provides a survey of theological trends and movements from the beginnings of the Zaydī imamate in Yemen over its political unification with the Caspian Zaydiyya down to theologians from the ninth/fifteenth century. Theologians in Yemen were inclined towards various sub-schools of Mu‘tazilism from as early as the beginnings of the country’s imamate; its impact became even more important when intellectual exchanges with their Caspian co-religionists (a tradition discussed in Chapter 10) increased during the sixth/twelfth century. Yet there was

¹When preparing this chapter, Jan Thiele received funding from the Gerda Henkel Foundation’s M4HUMAN programme. Hassan Ansari wishes to thank the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, NJ, which hosted him as a member during the preparation of this chapter.

always a lively theological trend that was sceptical about or even completely rejected the adoption of Mu‘tazilism and stressed the independent nature of Zaydī doctrines.

I Zaydī Theology before and after the Unification of the Yemeni and the Caspian Imamates

Since the foundation of the Zaydī imamate in the northern mountainous highlands of Yemen by Imam al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq (d. 298/911), the Zaydīs of Yemen developed a canon of doctrinal writings of the imams which remained authoritative over the coming centuries. First and foremost among these was a collection (*majmū‘*) of epistles by Imam al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 246/860) which is preserved in numerous collective manuscripts, among them an early copy that may possibly be dated to the fourth/tenth century (Madelung 1965: 96 n. 1). While al-Qāsim advocated in his authentic writings human free will and the absolute otherness of God from His creation he was clearly not influenced by Mu‘tazilism but rather informed by *kalām* debates among his Christian contemporaries whom he encountered while residing in Egypt—W. Madelung has shown the striking structural resemblances between al-Qāsim and Theodore Abū Qurra (Madelung 1965, 1989, 1991a).² However, later on a number of epistles were ascribed to al-Qāsim which were clearly written at a stage when the Zaydīs were already under the influence of Mu‘tazilite thought. These are included in the majority of collective manuscripts of al-Qāsim’s epistles that circulated in Yemen. The literary and doctrinal legacy of al-Qāsim as it was perceived by the Yemeni Zaydīs was therefore somewhat different from the authentic al-Qāsim.³ The collection of writings of his son Muḥammad (d. 284/897–8) also became part of the canon (Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim, *Majmū‘*). As was the case with his father, al-Qāsim, Muḥammad’s thought shows affinities with cognate Mu‘tazilite doctrines but he can certainly not be described to have endorsed Mu‘tazilite thought.⁴ Al-Qāsim’s grandson, Yahyā b. al-Ḥusayn, the later Imam al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq (d. 298/911) and founder of the Zaydī imamate in Yemen, is reported to have studied during his sojourn in Northern Iran with Abū l-Qāsim al-Ka‘bī al-Balkhī (d. 319/931) (Jundārī, *Tarājim*, 41; Zaryāb 1994:

²As a result, al-Qāsim’s doctrinal views differed from those of the prominent representatives of the early Kūfan Zaydiyya, esp. Aḥmad b. ‘Isā b. Zayd (d. 247/861), his companion Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr al-Murādī (alive in 252/866), and the latter’s younger contemporary al-Ḥasan b. Yahyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Zayd; for example, the earlier Zaydīs were proponents of divine determinism. See Madelung 1965: 80–5; Madelung 1989; Ansari 2011.

³W. Madelung has distinguished in detail the authentic from the unauthentic works of al-Qāsim (Madelung 1965: 97ff.). B. Abrahamov, by contrast, considers most of the works that were classified by Madelung as inauthentic as authentic and concludes that the latter endorsed at a later stage of his life Mu‘tazilite thinking (Abrahamov 1987, 1990, 1996). For a critical discussion of his conclusions see Madelung 1989; 1991b—at some stage the Zaydīs of Yemen, following the Kufan tradition, also added a collection allegedly containing the doctrinal writings of Imam Zayd b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (b. 75/694–5; d. 122/740) (Zayd b. ‘Alī, *Majmū‘*). These are evidently not authentic and rather originate partly with the early Kūfan Zaydiyya and partly with the Yemeni Zaydiyya who claimed that Zayd b. ‘Alī’s theological thought agreed with the views of the Mu‘tazila (Madelung 2002).

⁴A thorough investigation of his writings, as well as the writings of the Zaydī Imams of Yemen of the fourth/tenth to sixth/twelfth century, is still a major desideratum. Moreover, the authenticity of the writings included in the respective *majmū‘* collections still needs to be established.

151)—if true, he was in fact the first Zaydī Imam to study with a representative of the Mu‘tazila. As a result, his doctrinal thought was deeply influenced by the theological views of the Mu‘tazilite school of Baghdad, although al-Hādī refrained from expressly stating his agreement with their doctrines or even identifying himself with the Mu‘tazila (Madelung 1965: 164–7; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān 2003a). His literary legacy was likewise transmitted among the Zaydīs of Yemen in a popular *majmū‘* of epistles (al-Hādī ilā l-ḥaqq, *Majmū‘a fākhira*; *Majmū‘*). Among the Yemeni Zaydīs of later centuries, the teachings of al-Hādī and his grandfather al-Qāsim were largely identified with each other. Canonical status was also accorded to the writings of al-Hādī’s sons Muḥammad al-Murtaḍā li-Dīn Allāh (d. 310/922) (al-Murtaḍā li-Dīn Allāh, *Majmū‘*) and Imam Aḥmad al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (301/913–322/934) (Madelung 1965: 169–74, 191–3; Madelung 1985; 1990).

With Imam al-Manṣūr bi-llāh al-Qāsim b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Iyānī (b. between 310/922 and 340/951, d. 393/1003) (Madelung 1965: 194–8; al-Wajīh 1999: 773–5 no. 833), a great-grandson of al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm’s son Muḥammad, the doctrinal development of the Zaydiyya entered a new phase. Unlike earlier Imams, al-Qāsim al-‘Iyānī addresses in his writings philosophical notions and issues belonging to the so-called subtleties of *kalām* (al-Qāsim al-‘Iyānī, *Majmū‘*), and the same applies to his son, al-Mahdī li-Dīn Allāh al-Ḥusayn (d. 404/1013), who wrote a book on the nature of beings, *Kitāb al-Ṭabā‘i* (al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim al-‘Iyānī, *Majmū‘*; on him, see Madelung 1965: 198–200; al-Wajīh 1999: 384–8 no. 385). Other than this, both Imams remained by and large faithful to the doctrines of al-Hādī ilā l-ḥaqq. The works of both Imams were referred to by the adherents of a theological doctrine that evolved among the Zaydīs of Yemen during the fifth/eleventh century who otherwise took the teachings of the early Imams as their starting point.⁵

A major role in formulating and systematizing this new tradition was played by Muṭarrif b. Shihāb b. ‘Āmir b. ‘Abbād al-Shihābī (d. after 459/1067). It was after him that this strand was retrospectively labelled as the ‘Muṭarrifiyya’. Muṭarrif b. Shihāb also founded the first *hijra* (‘abode of emigration’), in the village of Sanā‘, south of Ṣan‘ā’ (Madelung 1991a). *Hijras* were a characteristic institution of the Muṭarrifi community that considerably helped them to spread and establish their teaching over wide parts of the country. While the adherents of this doctrine claimed to cling fervently to the theological teachings of al-Hādī and the latter’s sons Muḥammad and Aḥmad, they actually developed a cosmology and natural philosophy of their own. Most renowned among their doctrines was their view that God had created the world out of three or four elements, viz. water, air, winds, and fire. Changes in the world result, as they claim, from the interaction of these constituents of the physical world—in other words from a natural causality—rather than God’s directly acting upon it (Madelung 1965:

⁵Again, the authenticity of the various epistles still needs to be verified in detail. Since none of their writings has been studied in any detail, it cannot be ruled out at present that some epistles were later on ascribed to one of the Imams by later adherents of the Muṭarrifiyya. After al-Ḥusayn was killed in Ṣafar 404/September 1013, his followers believed in his imminent return as the Mahdī—the adherents of this belief later became known as the Ḥusayniyya. As a result, his successors refrained from using the title of Imam for themselves but rather called themselves amīrs—viz. his oldest brother Ja‘far b. al-Qāsim al-‘Iyānī (d. 450/1059) as well as his sons al-Sharīf al-Fāḍil al-Qāsim (d. 468/1075) and Dhū l-Sharafayn Muḥammad (d. 477/1084) (al-Raba‘ī, *Sira*; Madelung 1977). The followers of the Ḥusayniyya also developed their own peculiar doctrinal views which were later criticized by the Zaydīs. Cf., for example, al-Raba‘ī, *Sira*, 345–65.

202f.; 1975; 1991a; Ansari 2006).

During the reign of Imam Abū Ṭālib *al-akhīr* Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Mu'ayyad bi-llāh Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hārūnī (d. 520/1126) (al-Wajīh 1999: 1088f. no. 1163) the Yemeni and the Caspian Zaydīs were eventually unified for the first time in history under a common political and religious leadership. After many years of quasi-isolation, the change of the politico-religious framework exposed the Yemeni Zaydīs to new theological influences. In order to strengthen the authority of the Imam in both communities, the intellectual gap between them was supposed to be bridged by a harmonization of their respective scholarly traditions. Unlike their Yemeni co-religionists, the Zaydīs of Rayy and Northern Iran had embraced Bahshamite theology as early as the fourth/tenth century (see Chapter 10). The Bahshamiyya was a branch of Basran Mu'tazilism named after Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (d. 321/933), a towering figure of Muslim theology, who had, in many respects, redefined the doctrinal foundations of the school. Bahshamite theology experienced a flowering in Rayy and in the Caspian region under the reign of the Būyids, who made the city of Rayy the centre of the Bahshamiyya's chief theologians. This also affected the Zaydīs intelligence in the region: many scholars were attracted by the study circles of such eminent thinkers as 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadānī (d. 415/1025) or al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad Ibn Mattawayh.

Some information about the doctrinal developments among their Iranian co-religionists may have reached Yemen as early as during the time of the Imam al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Nāṣir b. al-Ḥusayn al-Daylamī, who hailed from the Caspian region and arrived in al-Bawn in Yemen in 430/1039, that is one year after claiming the Zaydī imamate in 429/1038 (Madelung 1965: 203, 205; Madelung 1980; Mohaqqueq 2008). Abū l-Faṭḥ engaged in combats with the local descendants of al-Hādī and with Ja'far b. al-Qāsim al-'Iyānī, the leader of the Ḥusayniyya. He also waged war on the Ismā'īlī al-Ṣulayḥī who killed Abū l-Faṭḥ in 444/1052–3. Reportedly, Abū l-Faṭḥ wrote a refutation of the local Zaydī doctrines, *al-Risāla al-mubhija fī l-radd 'alā l-firqa al-ḍālla al-mutalajlija* (lost⁶) which may have been the first refutation of what was later to be called 'Muṭarrifiyya', suggesting that it was already at this time that the political conflict had doctrinal dimensions as well.

The attempts to introduce the Caspian intellectual tradition into Yemen and to establish it among local scholars gradually increased under Imam al-Mutawakkil 'alā llāh Aḥmad b. Sulaymān (r. 532–66/1137–70) (for his biography, see al-Thaqafī, *Sīra*). During his reign, the dissemination of Bahshamite *kalām* by travelling scholars significantly grew and Yemeni students in theology undertook extended visits to the Caspian region. Al-Mutawakkil himself studied with several of these scholars, the most illustrious theologian of whom was Zayd b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Bayhaqī (d. c.545/1150–1). Al-Bayhaqī had studied with the Mu'tazilite theologian Abū Sa'd al-Muḥassin b. Muḥammad b. Kirāma (or: Karrāma) al-Bayhaqī al-Barawqanī ('al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī', d. 494/1101; on him, see Chapter 9, Section III) and might consequently have contributed to the transmission of al-Jishumī's writings and their high popularity in Yemen. During his first years in Yemen, al-Bayhaqī taught at the heavily symbolic al-Hādī Mosque in Ṣa'da, which houses the tombs of the

⁶According to Mohaqqueq 2008: 758, a manuscript of the tract is preserved in a manuscript of the State Library Berlin, 'Ahlwardt, no. 4950'. This information, which is wrong, is based on a misunderstanding of Ahlwardt 1887–99: iv. 331.

founder of the Yemeni imamate and of several of his successors. He then relocated his teaching activities southwards and settled in the Muṭarrifiyya's oldest *hijra* Sanā'—a choice that was certainly well considered (Madelung 1965: 210–12; Schwarb 2011: 268–70). Al-Bayhaqī succeeded to convince a number of students of the superiority of Bahshamite doctrines over Muṭarrifi theology. Credibility for the imported doctrinal notions was provided by the authority they received through the Imams of Northern Iran, the Buṭḥānī brothers al-Mu'ayyad bi-llāh Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hārūnī (d. 411/1020) and al-Nāṭiq bi-l-Ḥaqq Abū Ṭālib Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 424/1033) who both espoused Bahshamite *kalām* and whose writings became available in Yemen during this period. This development ushered in an unprecedented 'mu'tazilization' of the Zaydīs of Yemen. The impact of Mu'tazilite *kalām* is already visible in the doctrinal works of Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā llāh, e.g. in his comprehensive *Ḥaqqā'iq al-ma'rifa fī 'ilm al-kalām* (al-Mutawakkil 'alā llāh, Ḥaqqā'iq). In its structure, the book resembles the *maǧāmī'* of the earlier Imams; yet in doctrine, al-Mutawakkil endorses as a rule the positions of the Mu'tazila, siding at times with the Bahshamiyya and at times with the School of Baghdad (Ansari 2011: 195–211; for similar observations for his works on legal theory, see Ansari and Schmidtke 2013a: 101 n. 37).

Among al-Bayhaqī's successors was Ja'far b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Salām al-Buhlūlī (d. 573/1177–8), who should play an important role in the future intellectual development of Yemen's theological landscape. Ja'far b. Aḥmad came from an influential Ismā'īlī family of judges. Before he attended al-Bayhaqī's lectures, he had followed Muṭarrifi teachings. The fact that he eventually migrated to the opposing camp and approved al-Mutawakkil's imamate was officially acknowledged: in 545/1150–1 he was appointed judge (*qāḍī*) of Ṣan'a', and still in the same year he was selected to accompany his teacher on his travels in order to seek further instruction outside Yemen. Shortly after their departure, al-Bayhaqī died still on Yemeni soil, and so Ja'far b. Aḥmad continued his travel alone. He spent about eight years at several centres of learning in Iraq and Northern Iran. When he eventually sojourned in Rayy, he studied with Aḥmad b. Abī l-Ḥasan al-Kanī (d. c. 570/1165–6), al-Bayhaqī's former student, and he is known to have likewise been taught by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Farrāzādhī, one of the members of the renowned Farrāzādhī family in this town. Ja'far b. Aḥmad also spent some time in Kufa and in Mecca, where he studied with the eminent Zaydī scholar Abū l-Ḥasan 'Ulayy b. 'Isā b. Ḥamza b. Wāḥḥās al-Sulaymānī (d. 556/1161–2) (on him, see Lane 2006: 26–9, 48–53, 251).

Upon his return to Yemen, Ja'far b. Aḥmad brought along many Mu'tazilite works—many of which were later on copied for the library of Imām al-Manṣūr bi-llāh 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥamza (on him see Section II)—and he settled again in Hijrat Sanā' and established his *madrasa* next to the village's Muṭarrifi *madrasa*. His teachings laid the basis for the emergence of a new generation of scholars. This new theological movement was given the label of '*al-mukhtari'a*'. The description was derived from the notion of *ikhtirā'*, a term that refers to the idea that God spontaneously creates accidents (*a'rāḍ*, sing. *'arāḍ*). Following the Bahshamite theory, Ja'far b. Aḥmad and his followers believed accidents to be the grounds of such changing qualities of bodies as motion and rest, colours, or their annihilation. For them, God's omnipotence necessarily implies that He is able to create *ex nihilo* such accidents. This position consequently contradicted the Muṭarrifi doctrine that events and changes in the

created world are the result of a natural causality inherent to bodies.

In public disputations and in his writings Ja‘far b. Aḥmad not only attacked his Muṭarrifi detractors but also the Sunnis of Yemen. A number of polemical tracts from his pen have survived in manuscript form. In addition, he was the author of a doctrinal summa, titled *Kitāb Mishkāṭ al-miṣbāḥ wa-ḥayāt al-arwāḥ* (Sobieroj 2007: 285f. no. 133) and of some shorter theological manuals, in which he embraces Bahshamite doctrines. However, his subscription of their teaching explicitly excluded their theory of imamate. Ja‘far therefore wrote a refutation of Ibn Mattawayh’s chapter on the imamate contained in *al-Majmū‘ fī l-Muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*. Ja‘far b. Aḥmad survived Imam al-Mutawakkil and still experienced the beginning of the vacancy of the Zaydī imamate—a period that lasted about twenty-seven years. Ja‘far died in 573/1177–8 and was buried in Hijrat Sanā‘ (Madelung 1965: 212–16; Zayd 1997; al-Wajīh 1999: 278–82 no. 257; Schwarb 2011: 270–3).

It was one of Ja‘far b. Aḥmad’s students, al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās (b. 546/1152, d. 584/1188), who then gave a lasting intellectual impetus to the Yemeni appropriation of Bahshamite theology. Still during his teacher’s lifetime, al-Raṣṣās started writing his first works on theology and legal theory. Following his teacher’s death, he succeeded Qāḍī Ja‘far as the new head of the school and continued the latter’s teaching activities in Hijrat Sanā‘. Al-Raṣṣās further wrote extensively on theological topics, putting much emphasis on the so-called subtle questions (*daqā’iq* or *laṭā’if*). He also was most probably motivated by his desire to disprove the teachings of the Muṭarrifiyya. Although al-Raṣṣās rarely mentions his detractors and their doctrines explicitly, this scenario is quite likely: it was precisely the subtle questions related to natural philosophy over which both schools were deeply divided. The deeper reason behind their fierce opposition was that the conceptual construct of God and His relation to the created world was built upon these very questions. Therefore, the denial of such fundamental assumption pulled the rug out from under the whole theological system. It is therefore not surprising that both schools quarrelled so harshly about rather detailed issues whilst agreeing at the same time on such central principles as that of free will or the denial of anthropomorphism.

Al-Raṣṣās’s doctrines in theology and natural philosophy fully stand in the tradition of Bahshamite teaching and, at the same time, set some new tones. With regard to the basic concepts of ontology, his ideas and thoughts about ‘things’ or ‘entities’ (*ashyā’, dhawāt*) follow the axioms of earlier representatives of the school. He adopts their definition of ‘things’ as that which can become objects of knowledge and of predication. The generic term of ‘things’ encompasses God, atoms (*jawāhir*)—i.e. indivisible particles of which created bodies are made up—and accidents (*a‘rāḍ*). In this context, it is of some historical importance that al-Raṣṣās refuted a passage from Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s (d. 536/1141) *Tuhfat al-mutakallimīn fī l-radd ‘alā l-falāsifa*. In his treatise, al-Raṣṣās argues against Ibn al-Malāḥimī that predications about the very nature of things (such as ‘the atom is an atom’) are not identical with describing them as existing. Al-Raṣṣās’s defence of the classical Bahshamite distinction between existence and that which things are in themselves is one of the oldest testimonies to the Yemenite reception of the school founded by Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044) (Ansari 2007).

Al-Raṣṣās does not add anything substantial to the Bahshamite theories of atoms

and accidents. These topics had already been comprehensively covered in fundamental works by theologians of the fifth/eleventh century. Among these works are al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad Ibn Mattawayh's extensive *Kitāb al-Tadhkira fī aḥkām al-jawāhir wa-l-a'rāḍ*. Al-Raṣṣāṣ was familiar with this text and used it as a reference in several of his works.

Later generations of Zaydī theologians attached great importance to al-Raṣṣāṣ's treatise on 'effectors' (*Kitāb al-Mu'aththirāt*) (Thiele 2011). This concise text has survived in an important number of manuscripts, dating up to the middle of the eleventh/seventeenth century. Al-Raṣṣāṣ wrote this work in an attempt to formulate a comprehensive theory of causation. He possibly relied on al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī's earlier, in some respects inconsistent thoughts about this matter (Ansari 2011: 313–28; Thiele 2012). In the framework of Bahshamite teaching, al-Raṣṣāṣ develops a taxonomy of what is labelled 'effectors' (*mu'aththirāt*) and 'analogous phenomena' (*mā yajrī majrā l-mu'aththir*). He furthermore seeks to theoretically explain why some of these 'effectors' are necessarily and others contingently effective.

Another work, entitled *Kayfiyyat kashf al-aḥkām wa-l-ṣifāt 'an khaṣā'is al-muqtaḍiyāt wa-l-mu'aththirāt*, offers rare insight into the historical development of the Bahshamite teaching on attributes. In this text, al-Raṣṣāṣ elaborates his approach to the so-called 'theory of states', that is the theory introduced by Abū Ḥāshim al-Jubbā'ī (see Chapter 22). In addition to exploring the *ṣifāt*, i.e. that which is usually translated from the Arabic as 'attributes', al-Raṣṣāṣ opens his analysis to broader considerations on the concept of *aḥkām*—a term which might be rendered as 'characteristics', but actually denotes an ontological category distinct from the 'attributes'. Earlier Bahshamite theologians already made a conceptual distinction between *ṣifa* and *ḥukm*. However, their understanding of the latter remains, to some extent, vague. It was only with Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's revision of the Mu'tazilite theory of attributes that the term *ḥukm* was eventually used in a more formal sense (Schmidtke 1991: 174–7). It seems that al-Raṣṣāṣ's usage of the term was shaped from this angle, since he adopts a definition of *ḥukm* that is only known from the writings of Ibn al-Malāḥimī. According to this understanding, the distinction between *ṣifāt* (or *aḥwāl* which is used as a synonym) and *aḥkām* is an epistemological one: in order to gain knowledge about things, we have to consider *two* objects qualified by the same *ḥukm*, whereas a *ṣifa* can only specify *one* object.

The *Kayfiyya* is divided into chapters devoted to four categories of *ṣifāt* and three categories of *aḥkām*. This classification is made in an introductory chapter according to the manner or modality (*kayfiyya*) by which properties of things become actual (*ṭhabata*). As is expressed in the title of the book, one of the author's main interests consists in the question what each category of properties reveals about the very nature of its object of qualification. This particular approach can be seen as a corollary of the Bahshamite theory that things are known by virtue of their properties. The purpose of al-Raṣṣāṣ's raising this question consequently derived from a central theological problem: if we describe God and His creatures by univocal properties, how then can His absolute transcendence be preserved (Thiele 2013a: 131–200)?

Al-Raṣṣāṣ wrote a number of additional works on *laṭīf al-kalām* that have as yet not been found in manuscript form and appear to be lost. Only some self-quotations provide selective insight into their content and reveal that he discussed the nature of

attributes, accidents, and of ‘things’ (*dhawāt*) in general (Thiele 2010: 549; Thiele 2013a: 37–9).

Prompted by their opponents’ focus on doctrinal issues, the Muṭarrifīs in turn countered the attack: they claimed that they were faithful followers of the teachings of the early Imams and argued that it was in fact the adoption of Basran Mu‘tazilism that constitutes a deviation from the truth and as such an illegitimate innovation. Moreover, with the new arrival of Mu‘tazilite works, the Muṭarrifīs apparently used increasingly the doctrines of the Baghdādī Mu‘tazilites to refine their own *kalām* in their intellectual conflict against their opponents. These could be gleaned from the *Maqālāt* of Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka‘bī (d. 319/931) as well as the *K. al-Masā’il fī l-khilāf bayn al-Baṣriyyīn wa-l-Baghdādīyyīn* of Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī, a systematic comparison between the doctrines of the adherents of the two Mu‘tazilite schools (Ansari and Schmidtke 2010). The influence of the Baghdādī doctrines among the representatives of the Muṭarrifiyya during this period is evident, for example, in the *K. al-Burhān al-rā’iq* by the Muṭarrifī theologian Sulaymān b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Muḥallī who flourished during the second half of the sixth/twelfth century (Madelung 1975). As such the conflict took on the dynamics of the old opposition between the Baghdādīs and the Basrans. However, whereas the conflict between the two Mu‘tazilite systems remained a purely theological one, the confrontation between the different Zaydī groups of Yemen eventually led to an open war between the two. There are some indications that the Muṭarrifī theologians also made use of the doctrines of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and his followers who in many ways had departed from the theology of the Bahshamites. The few Muṭarrifī theological texts that were written during the sixth/twelfth century testify to the development of the Muṭarrifī doctrine at the time (‘Abd al-‘Āṭī 2002; Ansari 2001).

II The Continuity of Bahshamite Theology from the Seventh/Thirteenth Century Onwards

When al-Raṣṣās died in 584/1188 the religious and political leadership of the Zaydī community was still vacant. It was only in 593/1197 that al-Raṣṣās’s former student ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥamza (d. 614/1217) rose as Imam al-Manṣūr bi-llāh. It was under his reign that the Bahshamite strand irrevocably overcame its ideological detractors: the Imam, who himself left a number of important theological works, led a merciless war against the Muṭarrifiyya. Their persecution and the destruction of their *hijras* under his reign eventually led to the extinction of the sect.⁷ Numerous of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥamza’s doctrinal writings are refutations of the Muṭarrifiyya (as well as justifications of the Imam’s merciless persecution of their followers for which he faced severe criticism). Other than that he composed *Sharḥ al-Risāla al-nāṣiḥa bi-l-adilla al-wāḍiḥa*, a detailed theological compendium (with particular focus on the concept of the imamate) in which

⁷The principal historical source for al-Manṣūr’s fight against the Muṭarrifiyya is the *sīra* of the Imam by his chief secretary Abū Firas b. Di‘tham. Vols. ii and iii have been published as Ibn Di‘tham, *Sīra*. Another copy of vol. ii that was not consulted by the editor is preserved as MS Vatican ar. 1061; cf. Levi Della Vida 1935: i. 131. H. Ansari has identified copies of vols. i and iv of the *sīra* that previously had been presumed lost; see Ansari 2013.

he endorses Bahshamite theological notions. In its overall structure, however, the book resembles that of the writings of the earlier Imams rather than theological summae by professional theologians (e.g. by his teacher al-Raṣṣāṣ) and it is replete with quotations from the writings of the Zaydī Imams, a characteristic that also ensured the work's lasting popularity among the Zaydī community. Al-Manṣūr's *Kitāb al-Shāfi* is a refutation directed against the Ash'arites of Yemen, focusing specifically on the notion of the imamate. Moreover, it is noteworthy that al-Manṣūr is one of the first Zaydī authors of Yemen to cite Sunnī traditions supporting the cause of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the *ahl al-bayt* in his battle against the Shāfi'is in Yemen who were polemicizing against Shi'ism (Ansari and Schmidtke 2013a; Ansari and Schmidtke 2013b). Doctrinal issues are also discussed in his *al-Iqd al-thamīn*, a book that is directed against the Imāmiyya (Jarrar 2012), as well as in his numerous responsa (see al-Wajīh 1999: 578–86, no. 592; al-Manṣūr bi-llāh, *Majmū'*).

At the turn and during the first decades of the seventh/thirteenth century, a number of other theologians who had studied with al-Raṣṣāṣ gained some scholarly prominence. Among them was Muḥyī l-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Walīd al-Qurashī al-Anf (d. 623/1226), author of *al-Jawāb al-ḥāsim bi-ḥall shubah al-Mughnī*, a critical response to 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadānī's account of the imamate in his voluminous *Kitāb al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-'adl*. Apart from being a scholar in his own right, Muḥammad Ibn al-Walīd also belonged to the staff of professional scribes who were instrumental in the establishment of al-Manṣūr bi-llāh's library in his residential town Ṣafār. The foundation of this library can be regarded as the culmination of the endeavour to transmit as many books as possible from Northern Iran to Yemen. Many of the texts copied for al-Manṣūr bi-llāh's library have survived as unique manuscripts (Ansari and Schmidtke 2010).

Another of al-Raṣṣāṣ's students, Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh al-Khurāshī (d. after 610/1214), wrote a commentary on his teacher's *al-Taḥṣīl fī l-tawḥīd wa-l-ta'dīl*, a short theological compendium. The third volume of this commentary has been preserved in manuscript form and shows al-Khurāshī's remarkably close familiarity with the works of Ibn al-Malāḥimī (al-Khurāshī, *Taḥṣīl*; Ansari and Thiele 2015). Al-Khurāshī's text is only the first in the chronology of several commentaries on the *Kitāb al-Taḥṣīl* that were written within a period of thirty years after al-Raṣṣāṣ's death. Consequently, it appears that the *Kitāb al-Taḥṣīl* was a popular work among this generation of theologians. The commentaries on al-Raṣṣāṣ's theological manual include one in several volumes by Ḥusayn b. Musallam al-Tihāmī, who studied with al-Raṣṣāṣ's own student Abū l-Qāsim b. Shabīb al-Tihāmī. Ḥusayn b. Musallam al-Tihāmī's text appears to be partially preserved and is related in its structure and content to the third and shortest commentary on the *Kitāb al-Taḥṣīl* by al-Raṣṣāṣ' son Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣāṣ (d. 621/1224) (Thiele in press).

Aḥmad al-Raṣṣāṣ's historically most influential work was a brief introduction to the fundamentals of Bahshamite doctrines. This text, entitled *Miṣbāḥ al-'ulūm fī ma'rifa al-ḥayy al-qayyūm* (also known as *al-Thalāthūn mas'ala*), was widely read among the Zaydīs of Yemen and still serves as a textbook in contemporary circles of religious learning. In addition, *Miṣbāḥ al-'ulūm* was subject to several commentaries, one of them being *al-Iḍāḥ li-fawā'id al-Miṣbāḥ* by his student Ḥumayd b. Aḥmad al-Muḥallī *al-shahīd* (killed in 652/1254) (Ansari and Schmidtke 2011: 196 no. 50). Ḥumayd al-

Muḥallī had studied with ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥamza, Ibn al-Walīd and Zayd b. Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī, who coming from Iran arrived in Yemen in 610/1213–14, and he is primarily known as the author of the biographical work *al-Ḥadā’iq al-wardiyya*. That he was also a well-versed theologian is shown by his comprehensive works on *kalām*, viz. his *‘Uyūn al-mustarshidīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, a theological summa in four parts in which the author comments upon a credal work by al-Manṣūr bi-llāh (al-Wajīh 1999: 408), and his *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tafṣīl al-nafaḥāt al-miskiyya* (Ansari and Schmidtke 2011: 197f. no. 60). The latter work is not a conventional *summa* but rather encompasses all major aspect of the subtleties of theology. The first part of the work discusses logical and epistemological questions. The second and longest chapter then deals with the definition of ‘things’ or ‘entities’ (*dhawāt*), followed by a comprehensive exposition of the basic constituents of the world, namely atoms (*jawāhir*) and accidents (*a‘rāḍ*). The last part finally addresses the topic of ‘attributes’ (*ṣifāt*) and ‘characteristics’ (*alḥkām*). Ḥumayd’s work highlights how centrally theologians of this time were concerned with the field of *latīf al-kalām*.

Ḥumayd al-Muḥallī resided in Misliṭ, located in Banū Qays, where he taught along with other prominent scholars of his time. The village’s *madrasa* had built up a considerable reputation as a centre of learning, and so the later Imam al-Mahdī li-Dīn Allāh Abū Ṭayr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad b. al-Qāsim (d. 656/1285) studied there theology and legal theory, as is reported in his biography (*sīra*) which contains a detailed chapter on his formation (Ansari and Schmidtke 2011). A further centre of theological teaching was the *madrasa al-manṣūriyya* in Ḥūth, Aḥmad’s next station. Although the detailed report about Aḥmad’s studies are only a snapshot of the Zaydīs’ educational culture during the first half of the seventh/thirteenth century, they allow us to catch a glimpse of the time’s intellectual milieu and the texts that were considered as fundamental in the scholarly instruction in the science of *kalām*. Alongside the writings by such leading (Sunnī-Mu‘tazilite) authorities as Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī, Ibn Mattawayh, or Ibn al-Malāḥimī, many Yemeni-Bahshamite authors are prominently represented in the curriculum: the textbooks include several writings by al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās, Ḥusayn b. Musallam al-Tihāmī’s commentary on al-Raṣṣās’ *al-Taḥṣīl* or Ḥumayd al-Muḥallī’s *al-Kawākib al-durriyya* (Ansari and Schmidtke 2011). Another influential theologian during this period was al-Ḥusayn b. Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 662/1263–4), author of *Yanābi‘ al-naṣīḥa fī uṣūl al-dīn*, a theological summa with Bahshamite tendencies which again resembles in structure and its reliance on the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* the doctrinal works of al-Manṣūr bi-llāh. Al-Ḥusayn also wrote a concise credal work, titled *al-Iqd al-thamīn fī ma‘rifat rabb al-‘ālamīn*, which enjoyed immense popularity over the centuries. From his pen we also have numerous refutations directed against the Muṭarifiyya (al-Wajīh 1999: 390–3 no. 388). Similar tendencies can be found in *Qawā‘id ‘aqā’id Āl Muḥammad* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Daylamī (d. 711/1311–12) who wrote about the same time.

Over the course of several centuries, we can identify several important scholarly families that brought forth a number of prominent theologians: alongside the descendants of al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās, a number of members of Ḥumayd al-Muḥallī’s family were reputed theologians and authors. One of them was the *shahīd*’s grandson al-Qāsim b. Aḥmad al-Muḥallī, who lived in the first half of the eighth/fourteenth century. The dictation of his critical remarks on, and corrections to, al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās’s

Kayfiyya, that is the latter's treatise on the Bahshamite theory of attributes, is recorded in manuscript form (Thiele 2013b). Al-Qāsim's main work in theology is, however, *al-Ghurar wa-l-hujūl*, an important supercommentary on Mānkḏīm Shashḏīw's (d. c.425/1034) *Ta'liq Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*. This text is a wealthy source on earlier Zaydī and non-Zaydī theologians and is in several respects fairly independent from the *Ta'liq*. Al-Qāsim al-Muḥallī takes greater interest in the topics of the preliminaries and the section on God's unity (*tawḥīd*): both parts comprise more than the half of the whole text and consequently occupy a significantly larger portion than in Mānkḏīm's work. In specific questions, al-Qāsim was apparently influenced by the teachings of al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣāṣ: he applies the same taxonomy to the 'effectors' (*mu'aththirāt*) and also follows al-Raṣṣāṣ's conceptual distinction between 'attributes' (*ṣifāt*) and 'characteristics' (*aḥkām*) (Gimaret 1979: 63–5; al-Wajīh 1999: 765f.; Thiele 2013a: 75, 134).

Less than a century later, we see the rise of what might be called an encyclopedic attempt to canonize the teachings in theology and jurisprudence. Imam al-Mahḏī li-Dīn Allāh Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Murtaḏā (d. 840/1436–7) wrote several works that became standard texts in Zaydī curricula and, in addition, attracted much attention from later commentators. His major work is *al-Baḥr al-zakḥkhār al-jāmi' li-madhāhib 'ulamā' al-anṣār*, a multi-volume encyclopedia of *fiqh*. The first introductory part of the work contains several textual units devoted to doctrine, viz. *Kitāb al-Qalā'id fi taṣḥīḥ al-'aqā'id*; *Kitāb Riyāḏat al-afḥām fi 'ilm al-kalām* and *Mi'yār al-'uqūl fi 'ilm al-uṣūl*. These were later supplemented by Ibn al-Murtaḏā's own commentaries (al-Kamālī 1991: 105ff.; al-Wajīh 1999: 206–13 no. 199; van Ess 2011: ii. 986–95; Zysow 2012). Ibn al-Murtaḏā's doctrinal works are largely based on al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī's *Kitāb 'Uyūn al-masā'il* and his autocommentary, *Sharḥ al-'Uyūn*, respectively. With regard to some subtle questions, Ibn al-Murtaḏā modifies al-Jishumī's positions according to the revisions suggested by al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣāṣ (Thiele 2011: 82f.; Schwarb 2015).

One of the most prolific theologians of the following generation was 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bukurī (d. 882/1478) (al-Wajīh 1999: 709–10 no. 760; Schwarb 2015: *passim*). He authored a very popular commentary on al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣāṣ's treatise on causation, which was read down to the eleventh/seventeenth century (Thiele 2011: 10f.). Numerous copies of the text with extensive glosses provide us with further details on the ongoing theological tradition of Bahshamite teaching in Yemen. They also reveal some details on treatises that were transmitted and read by scholars in theology: from these bits of texts, we can distil a list of quoted works by such theologians as al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣāṣ (namely his *Kayfiyya*), Ḥumayd al-Muḥallī (*al-Kawākib al-durriyya*), al-Qāsim b. Aḥmad al-Muḥallī (*al-Ghurar wa-l-hujūl*), Ibn al-Murtaḏā (*al-Baḥr al-zakḥkhār*), and, as the most important non-Zaydī authority, Ibn Mattawayh with many references to his *Tadhkira*.

III Counter-reactions

While the theological trend of al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣāṣ and his adherents continued to set the tone during the seventh/thirteenth century, growing opposition emerged among the Zaydīs of Yemen against Mu'tazilism in general and the theological views of the

Bahshamiyya in particular. The most outspoken opponent of Mu‘tazilite *kalām* was Nūr al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Ḥumaydān b. al-Qāsim b. Yaḥyā b. Ḥumaydān (d. mid-seventh/thirteenth century), who sought to weaken its influence on Zaydī theology and to emphasize the latter’s independence. For this purpose, he took recourse to the *maǧāmi‘* literature of the earlier Imams (Madelung 1965: 218ff.; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān 2003b; Ansari 2012: 179–94; see also Section I). Moreover, the Zaydīs of Yemen were also introduced during this period to the teachings of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, a former student of ‘Abd al-Jabbār. Abū l-Ḥusayn, who had also been trained in medicine and philosophy, had criticized the principles of the Bahshamiyya in an attempt to correct some of their concepts and arguments in order to defend Mu‘tazilite notions more effectively against objections of their opponents. While there is no indication that Ja‘far b. Aḥmad had known any of Abū l-Ḥusayn’s works, his student Sulaymān b. Nāṣir al-Suḥāmī (d. after 600/1203–4), who had also studied with Imam al-Mutawakkil ‘alā llāh, wrote a *Mukhtaṣar al-Mu‘tamad*, a summary of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s *Kitāb al-Mu‘tamad fī uṣūl al-fiqh* on legal theory.⁸ The numerous manuscript copies of Yemeni provenance of Abū l-Ḥusayn’s *Mu‘tamad* also indicate that it was widely read among Zaydī scholars (Ansari and Schmidtke 2013a). This is not the case with Abū l-Ḥusayn’s theological works. Al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās’s student and follower of al-Manṣūr bi-llāh, Abū l-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusayn b. Shabīb at-Tihāmī (d. after 600/1203–4), is reported to have defended some specific views of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī against the Bahshamiyya (Madelung 1965: 222). There is no indication that Abū l-Ḥusayn’s most comprehensive *kalām* work, *Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla*, ever reached Yemen. Yet, although no manuscript has surfaced so far of Abū l-Ḥusayn’s other important work, *Kitāb Ghurar al-adilla*, there is some indication that this text may have been accessible to Zaydī scholars in Yemen and Mecca. Ibn al-Walīd reports that al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās wrote a refutation (*radd*) of the ‘*Kitāb al-Madkhal ilā Ghurar al-adilla li-l-Shaykh Abī l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī naqḍan shāfiyan kāfiyan*’ which is not known to be extant. Since al-Raṣṣās was apparently concerned with the section of the imamate in particular, it is likely that ‘*Kitāb al-Madkhal ilā Ghurar al-adilla*’ was the title under which Abu l-Ḥusayn’s *Kitāb al-Ghurar* (or perhaps only a section) was known among the Zaydīs of Yemen (Ansari 2010: 50). Moreover, the seventh/thirteenth-century Yemeni author ‘Abd Allāh b. Zayd al-‘Ansī quotes from the *Ghurar* in his *al-Maḥajja* (Schmidtke 2013), and the above-mentioned Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Daylamī explicitly refers to the *Madkhal al-Ghurar* on numerous occasions throughout his *Qawā‘id ‘aqā‘id Āl Muḥammad*.

The principal sources through which the Zaydīs of Yemen became acquainted with Abū l-Ḥusayn’s doctrines were the writings of Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Malāḥimī al-Khwārazmī (d. 536/1141), and the *Kitāb al-Kāmil fī uṣūl al-dīn* by one Abū l-Ma‘ālī Ṣā‘id b. Aḥmad al-‘Ujālī al-Uṣūlī—possibly a student of Ibn al-Malāḥimī. The latter was a contemporary and associate of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) and the chief representative of Abū l-Ḥusayn’s thought a century after his death (Ansari and Schmidtke forthcoming b). Several partial copies of his *al-Mu‘tamad fī uṣūl al-*

⁸ Al-Suḥāmī also wrote *Shams shari‘at al-islām fī fiqh ahl al-bayt ‘alayhim al-salām*, containing two brief introductory sections on *uṣūl al-dīn* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, while the majority of the work is devoted to *fiqh*. A manuscript of vol. i of this work, transcribed by ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥamza b. Muḥammad b. Ṣabra al-Aslamī and dated Jumādā II 682/August-September 1283, is preserved in the library of Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Qāsim al-Ḥuthī. cf. al-Wajīh 1999: 470f.

dīn are preserved in the libraries of Yemen, and the Maktabat al-awqāf of the Great Mosque in Ṣan‘ā’ also holds three copies of his *Kitāb al-Fā’iq fī uṣūl al-dīn*, an abridged version of his *Mu‘tamad*, among them one copy that is dated 630/1232-3. There is documentary evidence that Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās al-Ḥafīd taught Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s *Mu‘tamad*, and his grandfather’s student Sulaymān b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Khurāshī regularly refers to and quotes from Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s *al-Fā’iq* and his *al-Mu‘tamad* in his *al-Taḥṣīl li-jumal al-Taḥṣīl* (Ansari and Thiele 2015). Al-Khurāshī’s contemporary Ibn al-Walīd wrote (in Ramaḍān 608/February–March 1212) a refutation of the section on the imamate in Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s *al-Fā’iq*, entitled *al-Jawāb al-nāfiq al-ṣādiq bi-ḥall shubah kitāb al-Fā’iq* (Ansari 2009). Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn fī l-radd ‘alā l-falāsifa* was likewise known to Yemeni scholars of the sixth/twelfth century. Al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās wrote a refutation of the criticism that had been launched by Ibn al-Malāḥimī against the philosophers’ view that the existence (*wujūd*) of created beings is supplemental to their essence (*māhiyya*), *al-Barāhīn al-zāhira al-jaliyya ‘alā anna l-wujūd zā’id ‘alā l-māhiyya*, quoting extensively from Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s *Tuḥfa* (Ansari 2007). The collection of the Maktabat al-awqāf of the Great Mosque in Ṣan‘ā’ contains a manuscript of the *Kitāb al-Kāmil* by the above mentioned Ṣā‘id b. Aḥmad. This work systematically compares the teachings of the Bahshamiyya with those of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. The manuscript suggests that the *Kitāb al-Kāmil* was one of the earliest sources for the Zaydīs of Yemen for Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s doctrinal views. The colophon states that it was collated with a *Vorlage* transcribed from a copy of Saḍīd al-Dīn ‘Amr b. Jamīl [Jumayl], a teacher of the Imam al-Manṣūr bi-llāh.⁹ Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Wazīr (d. 840/1436) also quotes extensively from the *Kitāb al-Kāmil*, although indirectly via the *Kitāb al-Mujtabā fī uṣūl al-dīn* of the Khwārazmian Ḥanafī scholar Najm al-Dīn Mukhtār b. Maḥmūd al-Zāhidī al-Ghazmīnī (d. 658/1260) (Ansari and Schmidtke forthcoming b).

A leading figure of seventh/thirteenth-century Zaydī scholarship in Yemen was the *mutakallim* and legal scholar Ḥusām al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Zayd b. Aḥmad b. Abī l-Khayr al-‘Ansī (b. 593/1196–7, d. Sha‘bān 667/April 1268), a prolific author in a variety of fields. According to the later biographical tradition, he has 105 titles to his credit (Ansari and Schmidtke, forthcoming a). To judge from the number of extant manuscripts, his most popular work was *al-Irshād ilā najāt al-‘ibād*, a work with Ṣūfī tendencies, which al-‘Ansī completed in Rabī‘ II 632/January 1235. His magnum opus was the *Kitāb al-Maḥajja al-bayḍā’ fī uṣūl al-dīn*, a comprehensive theological summa he completed on 14 Rabī‘ II 641/1 October 1243. The *Kitāb al-Maḥajja* consists of eight parts (*aqṣām*, sg. *qism*), a division that is characteristic for most of al-‘Ansī’s theological works: (i) divine unicity (*tawḥīd*); (ii) justice (*‘adl*); (iii) prophecy (*nubuwwa*); (iv) revealed legislation (*sharā’i’*); (v) imamate; (vi) commanding what is good and prohibiting what is reprehensible (*al-amr bi-l-ma‘rūf wa-l-nahy ‘an al-munkar*); (vii) promise and threat (*al-wa‘d wa-l-wa‘‘id*); (viii) attributes and characteristics (*al-as mā’ wa-l-aḥkām*).

⁹The work has been partly edited on the basis of a second copy of the text, MS Leiden OR 487, by E. Elshahed (al-Shahīd) (Elshahed 1983). Cf. the critical review by W. Madelung in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48 (1985) 128–9. Al-Shahīd has meanwhile published a full edition of the text (*‘Najrānī, Kāmil*), again on the basis of the Leiden manuscript only. As is the case with Elshahed 1983, his introduction and edition is marred with glaring errors and misidentifications, including the author’s *nisba* ‘al-Najrānī’. See our Ansari and Schmidtke forthcoming b).

Al-‘Ansī was a severe critic of al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās and his followers in both doctrinal and political questions. As had been the case with Sayyid Ḥumaydān, al-‘Ansī attempted to strengthen the influence of the doctrines of the earlier Imams, particularly those of al-Ḥādī, while reducing at the same time the influence of the Bahshamiyya. However, al-‘Ansī did not share Ḥumaydān’s critical attitude towards Mu‘tazilite *kalām* in general. Al-‘Ansī was familiar with a wide spectrum of Mu‘tazilite *kalām* literature: in addition to the theological writings of the earlier Imams al-Qāsim and al-Ḥādī, al-‘Ansī was well acquainted with the theological literature of the Bahshamiyya and more specifically with texts written by students and companions of ‘Abd al-Jabbār. He explicitly refers to the *Kitāb al-Muḥīṭ* of ‘Abd al-Jabbār—no doubt referring to the paraphrastic commentary on the work by al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad Ibn Mattawayh, *al-Majmū‘ fi l-Muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*—and he regularly mentions the views of Abū Rashīd al-Nisābūrī, Ibn Mattawayh, and al-Nāfiq bi-l-Ḥaqq. Moreover, al-‘Ansī was also familiar with the theological writings of Ibn al-Malāḥimī. Throughout the *Maḥajja*, the views of Abū l-Ḥusayn and Ibn al-Malāḥimī are regularly cited and discussed, and it seems that al-‘Ansī gleaned the relevant information primarily from Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s *K. al-Mu‘tamad*. As mentioned above, al-‘Ansī also quotes repeatedly from Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s *K. Ghurar al-adilla* throughout the *Maḥajja* although it remains unclear whether or not he had the work at his disposal or was quoting from an intermediate source (Schmidtke 2013). In many respects, al-‘Ansī preferred the views of Abū l-Ḥusayn and Ibn al-Malāḥimī which, in his view, were often closer to the doctrines of the earlier Zaydī Imams than those of the Bahshamiyya and which he largely identified with those of the School of Baghdad. His approach towards their doctrinal thought is nevertheless critical, and al-‘Ansī follows their views only as long as they fit his overall agenda of formulating a theology that remains faithful to the teachings of the Imams (Ansari and Schmidtke forthcoming a: chapter 3).

At a later stage of his life, al-‘Ansī composed the *Kitāb al-Tamyīz*, a refutation of the Muṭarrifiyya which consists of three parts—a first introduction divided into the same eight fields of theology as the *Maḥajja*: divine unicity, justice, prophecy and revealed laws, imamate, commanding what is good and prohibiting what is reprehensible, promise and threat, attributes and characteristics. For each domain, al-‘Ansī first presents the beliefs of the ‘*ahl al-islām*’, followed by those of the Muṭarrifiyya which he then refutes. A second introduction, by far the most extensive portion of the text, contains a detailed refutation of the Muṭarrifiyya arranged in eighty questions (*ma‘ārif*, sing. *ma‘rifa*). The work is concluded by a *khātima* in which the author explains his own theological positions. This third section of the text constitutes a theological *summa* in its own right and has the same structure of eight parts (*aqṣām*, sing. *qism*) as the *Maḥajja*. The work represents an important cornerstone in the development of his thought: while the theological doctrine in the *khātima* of this work fully corresponds to what he maintained in his *Maḥajja*, he now refrains from pointing out his agreement with either the Baghdādīs and/or Abū l-Ḥusayn and Ibn al-Malāḥimī (these two are only mentioned at one single occasion throughout the entire *khātima*). Instead, he strongly and repeatedly insists on his agreement with the theological views of Imams al-Qāsim and al-Ḥādī, while his opposition against the Basran and, more specifically, Bahshamite doctrine remains outspoken in this work (Ansari and Schmidtke forthcoming a: chapters 3 and 5 no. 28, for an edition of the text, see chapter 6 Text 6).

Al-‘Ansī’s doctrinal outlook also manifested itself in a conflict with the Banū Raṣṣās, particularly Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Raṣṣās *al-Ḥafīd* who, like his ancestors, was a staunch supporter of the Bahshamiyya. Apart from occasional critical remarks against al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣās throughout the *al-Maḥajja*, the later biographical tradition reports that al-‘Ansī’s conflict with the *Ḥafīd* focused on the issue of whether or not the grave offender (*fāsiq*) holds an intermediary position (*al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn*) between the believer and the unbeliever—while Aḥmad al-Raṣṣās supported the Mu‘tazilite doctrine of the intermediary position, it was completely rejected by al-‘Ansī. While the relevant part of his *Maḥajja* (the issue would have been addressed within Part Eight on *al-asmā’ wa-l-aḥkām*) is not preserved, al-‘Ansī discusses the issue in his brief tract *Mā’ al-yaqīn*. Here, he states that the grave offender (*al-fāsiq*) is an unbeliever by ingratitude (*kāfir al-ni‘ma*) (MS Glaser 123/3, ff. 235a–b; edition in Ansari and Schmidtke forthcoming a: Chapter 6 Text 3). Consequently, al-‘Ansī opted for the traditional Zaydī doctrinal notion that had been favoured by al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (Madelung 1965: 60ff., 121ff., 164ff.). According to Aḥmad b. Šāliḥ b. Muḥammad b. Abī l-Rijāl (d. 1092/1690), the author of the bibliographical encyclopedia *Maṭla‘ al-budūr* (Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭla‘*, i. 421; iii. 364 no. 957), the conflict gradually escalated. Al-‘Ansī corresponded on the issue with ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā al-Fuḍaylī and subsequently wrote a tract against the doctrine of the intermediate position. Aḥmad al-Raṣṣās then intervened and composed a refutation of this tract, entitled *Manāḥij al-inṣāf al-‘aṣima ‘an shabb nār al-khilāf* to which he later added a *Muqaddimat al-manāḥij*. None of these writings has been preserved (Ansari and Schmidtke forthcoming a: Chapter 3).

Over the following generations, the tendency to prefer the doctrines of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and Ibn al-Malāḥimī to those of the Bahshamiyya continued and even increased among the Zaydīs of Yemen, and the conflict between the two groups seems to have become harsher. For example, al-‘Ansī’s student Yaḥyā b. Maṣṣūr b. al-‘Affī is specifically reported to have adopted the entire theological system of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (al-Shahārī, *Ṭabaqāt*, iii. 1263–4 no. 800). Moreover, Yaḥyā disputed and corresponded with some ‘‘ulamā’ al-zāhir’ who followed the doctrines of Abū Ḥāshim with the specific aim to defend the views of the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) and of Abū l-Ḥusayn (Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭla‘*, iv. 515). ‘Alī b. al-Murtaḍā b. al-Mufaḍḍal (b. 704/1304–5, d. 784/1382–3) was another renowned adherent of the doctrines of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī who wrote a *qaṣīda* in support of the latter. According to the later biographical tradition, he also corresponded and disputed with a number of scholars maintaining the views of Abū l-Ḥusayn and Ibn al-Malāḥimī whereas his opponents are described as Bahshamites, as was the case with Aḥmad b. Šalāḥ b. al-Ḥādī b. Ibrāhīm b. Tāj al-Dīn (Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭla‘*, iii. 351). ‘Alī also disputed and subsequently corresponded with the jurist Ibrāhīm al-‘Arārī (d. c.794/1391–2) (Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭla‘*, iii. 351; i. 159 no. 36; cf. also al-Wajīh 1999: 722f. no. 778). The latter so staunchly supported the Bahshamiyya that he is reported to have stated that Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī and his son Abū Ḥāshim are preferable to Imams al-Qāsim and al-Ḥādī (Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭla‘*, iii. 351). Word about this conflict spread and other scholars got involved writing refutations of Ibrāhīm al-‘Arārī’s unacceptable statement (Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭla‘*, iii. 352), namely Imam al-Mahdī ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Maṣṣūr b. al-Mufaḍḍal (b. 705/1305–6, d. 773/1371–2) (*al-Namraqa al-wuṣṭā fī l-radd ‘alā munkir al-muṣṭafā*), Imam al-Wāthiq bi-llāh (d.

802/1400) (*al-Naṣr al-‘azīz ‘alā ṣāḥib al-tajwīz*), and ‘Alī b. al-Murtaḍā’s sister, Ṣafīyat b. al-Murtaḍā (*al-Jawāb al-wajīz ‘alā ṣāḥib al-tajwīz*), all supporting the doctrinal views of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. The evolution of the conflict between the two strands supports the assumption that the positive appreciation of the doctrinal views of Abū l-Ḥusayn as against those of the School of Basra and, more specifically, the Bahshamiyya was founded mostly on their identification as being closer to, or perhaps even identical with, the traditional theology of the earlier Zaydī Imams (Ansari and Schmidtke forthcoming a: Chapter 4).

In this context, the case of Imam al-Mu’ayyad bi-llāh Yaḥyā b. Ḥamza al-Naḳawī al-Mūsawī (b. 669/1270, d. 749/1348–9) rather seems to be an exception: in his encyclopedic *Kitāb al-Shāmil fī uṣūl al-dīn* (or: *bi-ḥaqq’iq al-adilla al-‘aqliyya wa-uṣūl al-masā’il al-dīniyya*), written in 711–12/1311–12, he adopted virtually the entire doctrinal system of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. Moreover, he was the first to study in depth Sunnī-Ash‘arite works. Throughout his *Shāmil*, he regularly refers to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209)—for the latter, he explicitly cites from his *Nihāyat al-‘uqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*—whose positions he refutes. The popularity of his writings is indicated by the numerous extant manuscript copies as well as the fact that most of his theological works have been published (Schmidtke forthcoming).

Both traditions, the Bahshamite strand as well as the more conservative strand whose representatives sought to cling closely to the teachings of the Imams, continued over the centuries up until the modern period (Schwarb 2012).

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