



Universiteit Utrecht

Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions
International Symposium
28-29 April 2012
University of Utrecht



European Research Council



The here and the hereafter in Islamic traditions

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Introduction

This symposium is the first in a series of events in the framework of *The here and the hereafter in Islamic traditions* (HHIT), a four-year research project on Islamic eschatology, funded by a Starting Grant of the European Research Council (2011-14).

The aim of this project is to assess the extent to which Islamic traditions favour or reject a view of human existence as directed toward the otherworld, and thereby to write a fuller, more nuanced history of the Muslim paradise and hell than currently exists. Researchers in this project consider a variety of intellectual traditions, not just the ‘high tradition’ of Islamic theology and jurisprudence, but also mystical, philosophical, artistic and ‘popular’ expressions, thereby avoiding a monolithic, essentialising account of Islam’s attitude toward the hereafter.

Speakers at *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions* are invited to reflect on the theoretical import of the concept of “hell” for Islamic Studies: how researchers on Islam have previously studied the Muslim hell and why, and what methodologies of studying it seem possible and fruitful today. The symposium aims are threefold: to put hell on the map of Islamic Studies, where it has been curiously absent; to “locate” it within several Islamic cultural traditions, including the Qur’an and Qu’ranic exegesis, theology (both Sunnī and non-Sunnī traditions), literature, modernist thought, and the arts; and to consider hell’s importance in Islam more generally speaking.

<http://www.uu.nl/impact/hhit/>

Programme

Saturday 28 April 2012:

9.00 – 9.20	REGISTRATION
9.20 – 9.30	WELCOME: Marcel Sarot & Christian Lange

Panel 1: Early modern and modern repercussions

Chair: Nico Landman

9.30 – 9.50	Patrick Franke (Bamberg University) <i>Are the parents of the Prophet in hell? A debate of early modern Islam</i>
9.50 – 10.10	Remke Kruk (Leiden University) <i>The presentation of hell in modern pious tracts and pamphlets</i>
10.10 – 10.30	Richard van Leeuwen (University of Amsterdam) <i>Fictional discourse and religious controversy: Jamīl Sidqī al-Zahāwī's Thawra fī al-jahīm</i>
10.30 – 11.00	Q&A
11.00 – 11.30	COFFEE BREAK

Panel 2: Hell in the Qur'ān

Chair: Roberto Tottoli

11.30 – 11.50	Tommaso Tesei (University of Rome "Sapienza"-INALCO) <i>The Qur'anic netherworld in light of some eschatological and cosmological concepts from Late Antiquity</i>
11.50 – 12.10	Simon O'Meara (Utrecht University) <i>The infernalization of the jinn</i>
12.10 – 12.30	Christian Lange (Utrecht University) <i>Revisiting hell's angels in the Qur'ān</i>
12.30 – 13.00	Q&A
13.00 – 14.30	LUNCH at conference venue

Panel 3: The growth of the Muslim Hell

Chair: Remke Kruk

14.30 – 14.50	Christopher Melchert (Oxford University) <i>Hell in early Islamic renunciant literature</i>
14.50 – 15.10	Wim Raven (Marburg University) <i>Hell in the Muslim popular imagination: the anonymous Kitāb al-‘Azama</i>
15.10 – 15.30	Frederick Colby (University of Oregon) <i>Hell in the Bakrī mi‘rāj narratives, 13th to 15th centuries CE</i>
15.30 – 16.00	Q&A
16.00 – 16.30	COFFEE BREAK

17.45 – 19.00	BOAT TOUR
19.00	DINNER for speakers and invited guests at restaurant “Aal”

Sunday 29 April 2012

Panel 4: Hell and Islamic theological diversity 1

Chair: Christian Lange

9.30 – 9.50	Feras Hamza (American University in Dubai) <i>Temporary Hellfire and the formation of early Sunnism</i>
9.50 – 10.10	Mohammad Khalil (Michigan State University) <i>What is the Purpose and Duration of the Qur’ānic Hell? Revisiting Ibn Taymiyya’s Case for Universalism</i>
10.10 – 10.30	Jon Hoover (University of Nottingham) <i>God’s wise purpose in everlasting chastisement: Ibn al-Wazīr’s (d. 840/1436) critique of Ibn Taymiyya on the duration of hell-fire</i>
10.30 – 11.00	Q&A
11.00 – 11.30	COFFEE BREAK

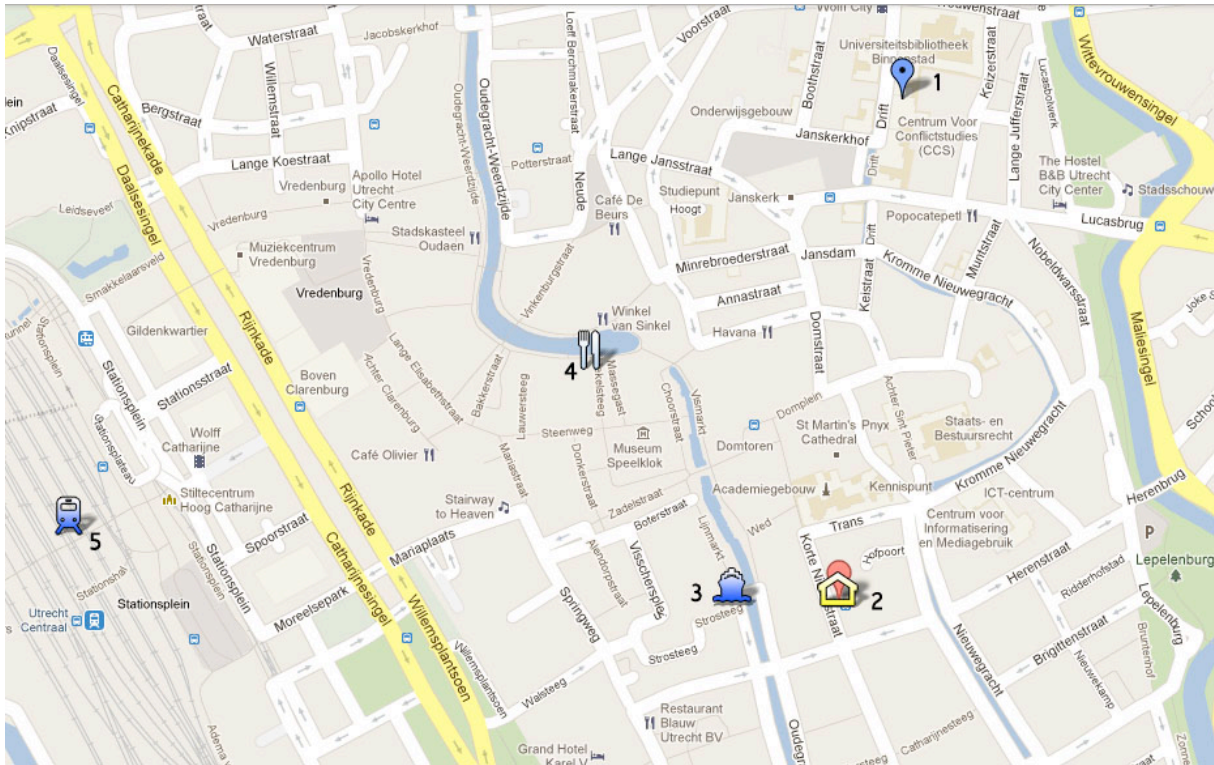
Panel 5: Hell and Islamic theological diversity 2

Chair: Simon O'Meara

11.30 – 11.50	Daniel de Smet (CNRS-Paris) <i>Isma'ili-Shi'i visions on hell: from the 'spiritual' torment of the Fāṭimids to the Ṭayyibī Rock of Sijjīn</i>
11.50 – 12.10	Roberto Tottoli (Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale") <i>The Morisco hell: significance and relevance of the Aljamiado traditions and literature for the Muslim eschatology</i>
12.10 – 12.30	Christiane Gruber (University of Michigan) <i>The visual rhetoric of hell in Safavid illustrated texts, ca. 1550-1600</i>
12.30 – 13.00	Q&A
13.00 – 13.20	CONCLUDING REMARKS

13.30 – 14.30	LUNCH at the Court Hotel
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Locations and general info



1. Sweelinckzaal, Drift 21
2. Court Hotel, Korte Nieuwstraat 14
3. Meeting point canal trip, Oudegracht 175
4. Restaurant Aal, Oudegracht aan de Werf 159
5. Utrecht Central Station

All locations for the conference are within walking distance in the city centre. The conference is held in the “Sweelinckzaal”, Drift 21.

Rooms have been booked for you at the Court Hotel Utrecht (Korte Nieuwstraat 14), a 7-10 min. stroll from the conference venue. See <http://www.courthotel.nl/>.

Saturday afternoon we will meet at Oudegracht 175 for a small round trip through the historical city centre by canal boat. The boat will drop us off at restaurant Aal (Oudegracht aan de Werf 159), where we will have dinner.

The festivities of the Netherlands’ most popular holiday, the Koninginnedag (“Queen’s Day”), begin on Sunday 29 April around 6pm. From that time onward, the city centre Utrecht will be flooded with tourists. Trains on 30 April will run at a different schedule and will be full. Just prepare yourselves. Otherwise, the Koninginnedag is a lot of fun, if you intend to stay for it.

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Abstracts

Day 1 (Saturday, 28 April 2012)

Panel 1 (9:30-11am): Early modern and modern repercussions

Are the parents of the Prophet in Hell? A debate in early modern Islam Patrick Franke (Bamberg University)

According to Islamic tradition it was already in his early childhood that the Prophet became a complete orphan. His father died before or shortly after his birth, his mother's death occurred when he was six. Since both of them had breathed their last before their son started his prophetic call it could be assumed that they had died as unbelievers and therefore were destined for Hell. This assumption got some backing by the canonical hadith according to which the Prophet himself had alleged his father to be in Hell. Muslims of later centuries, however, felt increasingly uncomfortable with the idea that the parents of the Prophet could be among the residents of Hell. The inclusion of their "having died as unbelievers" as a tenet into the Ḥanafī creed *al-Fiqh al-akbar* II (9th-10th centuries) shows that already at that time the point had become somehow controversial. At the end of the 10th century, a hadith obviously intended to "rescue" the Prophet's parents from Hell was circulated. It purported that the Prophet had raised his parents from the dead in order that they might become Muslims posthumously. Whereas most of the Sunni scholars until the 12th century discarded this hadith as a forgery and stressed its contradiction to explicit Qur'anic passages, the attitude of the later scholars towards it became more positive. They were still aware of its being forged, but held that its content reflects a reality since God has the power to effectuate such miracles.

The discussion on the Prophet's parents reached its peak in the early modern period, when several Sunni scholars composed monographs on the issue. Most of them took pains to prove the status of the Prophet's parents as believers, the most fervent advocate of this position being as-Suyūṭī (d. 1505). In the course of the 16th century this opinion became majoritarian also within the Ḥanafī madhhab. The Meccan scholar 'Alī al-Qārī (d. 1605), who at the end of the century composed a treatise in defense of the former Ḥanafī position contained in *al-Fiqh al-akbar* II, had to realize that with this attempt he was completely isolated within his madhhab. Several colleagues wrote refutations against him and blamed him of having uttered abhorrent things by affirming the Prophet's parents' abode in Hell. In most of the later manuscripts and modern text editions of *al-Fiqh al-akbar* II, the contentious tenet on the Prophet's parents has been eliminated altogether. This shows how untenable the old doctrine on the Prophet's parents had become even in the Ḥanafī madhhab in the early modern period.

The paper gives a preliminary overview of the chronological development of the debate on the Prophet's parents and deals with its interrelations with the dogmatic history of Islam.

The presentation of Hell in modern pious tracts and pamphlets Remke Kruk (Leiden University)

Briefly: if one is an ordinary pious Muslim these days, sometimes a recent convert, what is one's idea of Hell? Which issues are connected to it? Which authorities define the view of Hell for these Muslims?

Sermons and internet sites are sources of information on this topic, and also the religious books and tracts that are widely available in Muslim bookshops all over the world,

not only shops devoted specifically to religious matters, but also general bookshops and street stalls. Much of the material available there can also be obtained through the Internet.

The present paper is based on material obtained from bookshops. Over the past fifteen years I have visited such bookshops in Cairo, The Netherlands, New York (Brooklyn), Paris and Sydney, and found the material on offer highly consistent. For the present purpose I have focused on religious books, tracts and pamphlets that I collected in Cairo during yearly visits, New York (Brooklyn; 2008 and 2010), and Paris (2007-2012).

These books are part of the flood of religious tracts that engulfed book fairs and bookshops in the Muslim world since 1990. They were part of the rising tide of orthodoxy, propelled by Wahhâbî funds and propaganda. In general, they deal with the question how to be a good Muslim in religious belief and behaviour. Threats and promises as to what awaited in the hereafter, *takhwîf and targhîb*, formed a substantial part of the literature on offer. This concerned the whole range of eschatology: the approaching Day of Judgment; the Signs of the Hour, whether and how these signs can be observed in our time and age; the punishment in the grave; Paradise and Hell. In short, *ukhrâwîyât*. Usually these books had frightening pictures on the cover, crudely executed in bright colours. They were remarkably cheap.

As to the contents: the books were often quickly and haphazardly put together with indiscriminate use of material from older sources. This phenomenon has been analyzed by Tottoli regarding books on the Dajjâl (Tottoli, Roberto. 2002. "Hadîths and traditions in some recent books upon the Dajjâl (Antichrist)." In: *Oriente Moderno XXI (LXXXII)*, 1, 2002, 55-75) and by myself regarding Gog and Magog ("Gog and Magog in modern garb" In: A.A. Seyed Gohrab, F.C.W. Doufekar-Aerts, S. McGlinn (eds.), *Gog and Magog; The Clans of Chaos in World Literature*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers. 2007. 53-67).

Tottoli drew attention to the lack of formal religious training that is often noticeable in the authors. It is all part of the "democratization" of religious knowledge: just about anybody can produce a book like this, copy pasting from digitally available hadîth collections and other sources, just as anybody can set himself up as an internet imam these days

In the course of visits to Cairo during the past two years I noticed a decline in the numbers of books on these topics that are on offer. Focusing on visits in April 2011 and March 2012, during which I took account of street stalls and bookshops in downtown Cairo, Zamalek, Bulaq, and the Azhar area, I noticed a visible decline of *takhwîf* literature. The literature on offer now predominantly is about encouraging piety, explaining proper religious belief and how to live according orthodox rules. Looking for material on the hereafter, Hell in particular, I found only one book: a fat and comprehensive volume by Maḥmûd al-Maṣri, a sheikh whose orthodox intransigency is well in evidence on the Internet, notably on YouTube. The back cover of this book presents other publications of the same publisher, and aptly illustrates my point: none of these books deal with eschatology. In this respect, I was struck by the difference with the many Belleville bookshops I visited in Paris in January 2012: there, still quite a lot of *ukhrâwîyât* material was available, both in Arabic and in French translation.

My current analysis, by its very nature defective and incomplete, is based on the material that I collected from these various places. Trying to analyze the main trends discernable, I focused on the following questions:

Do the books that I found all have more the same orthodox approach?

Yes, they exclusively belong to the sphere of modern Sunni orthodoxy, with often noticeable Wahhâbî overtones. This is of course to be expected given the locations from which they were collected.

Are they new editions and translations of classical texts or also newly composed works?

Both. Classical texts that are found in various editions, excerpts and translations include Ibn Kathîr, *Akhbâr al-janna wa-n-nâr*; Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalî, *Takhwîf min*

an-Nâr; Ibn abî d-Dunya, *Sifat an-nâr*; Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalânî and as-Suyûtî, *Al-isrâ’ wa-l-mîrâj*.

As to newly composed books: these usually consist of bits and pieces from older sources, predominantly Qur’an and Hadîth. Sometimes the quotations are simply arranged according to subject, and in other cases provided with comments of the “author” of the book. These comments not unexpectedly always emphasize the orthodox point of view.

The arrangement usually follows the same pattern, with chapters devoted to the various aspects of Hell, the main points being: Hell’s createdness; its dimensions; its inhabitants; punishments; food, clothing and bedding of the inhabitants; question of the eternity of Hell and its punishments. Occasionally other topics come up: the question of *shafâ’a*; the location of Hell and Paradise.

Choice of material

On the basis of the covers the first impression may be that these books predominantly aim at frightening the simple believer by emphasizing the horrors of Hell that await the sinners, and do not bother about complicated theological issues. The most important of such issues, however, gets ample attention. This is the question of the createdness and eternity of Hell and Paradise and the question whether Hell and Paradise are already in existence (the issues treated in B. Abrahamov’s article “The Creation and Duration of Hell and Paradise in Islamic Theology”, *Der Islam* 79 (2002), 1, 87-102) Most of the authors pay ample attention to these points, stating that Paradise and Hell are created and exist in the present, and will continue in all in eternity. Some (the more sophisticated) authors go as far as explaining that this was a point of conflict with the “Mu‘tazilites and Jabrites”.

An example: al-Shimemeri, dr. ‘Abdullah ‘Abdurrahman. *Descriptions of Hell from The Qur’ân and Hadeeth*. Jeddah: Abu l-Qasim Publishing House. N.d. 106 pp. This book contains Qur’ân verses and *hadîth* about various aspects of Hell, with short comments, without reference to other theological sources. For instance p. 77, about the duration of residence in Hell and its punishments: Hûd, 11: 106-107, which speaks of *khâlidîna*. “In the aforementioned verse, dwelling in Hell is subject to two conditions: 1. The period of endurance of the heavens and the earth. 2. The will of Allah. Some scholars allege accordingly that the penalties referred to are not eternal because the heavens and the earth as we see them are not eternal, and thus the punishments for the deeds of a life that is transitory should not be eternal. However, the majority of Muslim scholars reject this view, asserting that the heavens and the earth referred to here are not those of the present creation; but rather, they are others that will be eternal. The Qur’ân explains (Ibrâhîm, 14: 48, “The day that the earth will be replaced by another earth and also the heavens”...)” (etc.)

In none of the books I found a reference to current theological debates on the matter. The authorities quoted are almost exclusively classical authorities, with the occasional exception of al-Albânî. Noteworthy is that the *hadîth* material used is not always consistent in its views on the matter of eternity and createdness, a fact that either escaped the authors/compilers or was considered too complicated for further comment.

An issue that gets attention in only a minority of the books is the question of the location of Hell and Paradise. Two examples:

Al-Achqar, dr. Omar Souleiman *Le Paradis et l’enfer (Al-janna wa-n-nâr)*. Traduit par Cheikh Gueye. Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House. Édition française 1e éd. 2007. Ch. 3: caractéristiques de l’Enfer. 1: L’emplacement de l’enfer. He cites various opinions: according to some, Hell is located in the earth, according to others in the heavens. The author approvingly quotes al-Suyûtî to the effect that one should not make any statements on this matter.

Jumaylî, as-Sayyid. *Adhâb an-nâr*. Beirut: Dâr al-Bihâr. 1993. 261 pp. 37-40 *fi dhikr makân an-Nâr*: a collection of *hadîth* about the location of Hell. “In the seventh earth”; “under seven layered

seas”; “surrounding the world, and Paradise is behind it”; “in the sky (*samâ*)”; “the sea is Jahannam”; “the sea is a layer of Jahannam”. This latter tradition is connected to the words *wa-l-baḥr al-masjûr* (*Tûr*, 52: 6), explained in the *ḥadīth* (from Ka’b, a more elaborate version from Wahb ibn Munabbih) as: the sea is ignited and becomes Jahannam. Often quoted, also in other books, here on the authority of ‘Alī b. abī Ṭâlib, are traditions stating that the sun, the moon and the stars are thrown into the sea and ignite it, and so it becomes Jahannam.

General picture that arises: in line with earlier views developed on this type of literature. All this material consists of quick compilation, summarizing or translation of material from Qur’ân, *ḥadīth* and some well known commentaries. Theological literature of a higher intellectual level is not consulted.

Fictional discourse and religious controversy:

Jamīl Sidqī al-Zahāwī’s *Thawra fī al-jahīm*

Richard van Leeuwen (University of Amsterdam)

In recent years we have witnessed several instances of clashes between religious authorities and literary authors. Although it would seem that religious and literary discourses belong to separate domains, they still overlap in certain fields: both are interested in the moral integrity of society, but whereas literature seeks to explore and possibly challenge moral categories and boundaries, religion tends to fix them referring to sacred models and doctrines. Part of the controversies may derive from different perceptions of the nature of texts: literary authors will be inclined to stress the ambivalence and poly-interpretability of texts, while religious authorities are interested rather in stabilizing and fixing interpretations. If we say that religion and literature are related to distinctive interpretive communities, with their own criteria, institutions, and interests, the question arises whether it is possible at all to subject fictional literary texts to a moral-religious evaluation. Does the fictional nature of literature exclude them from religious judgement? Apparently religious authorities are of another opinion.

In this paper a text will be discussed which was the cause of a fierce religious controversy and which qualified the author as a heretic during his life and beyond: the long poem *Thawra fī al-Jahīm* (‘Revolution in hell’), published in 1931 by the Iraqi poet Jamīl Sidqī al-Zahāwī. The poem describes how after his death the poet is interrogated by the angels Munkar and Nakīr. During the interrogation the poet is forced to confess that he sometimes has his doubts in matters of religion and he is subsequently transported to hell, where he joins a select company of prominent philosophers, literati and scientists. The inhabitants discuss their predicament and in the end decide to revolt. Using newly invented weapons they break out of hell and invade paradise. At the end of the poem the poet awakes: the whole adventure turns out to have been a bad dream.

By situating the poem in hell, the poet aims to depict a confrontation between the moral/ doctrinal matrix of religion with the moral and intellectual experiences of man. Whereas the first attempts to impose a monolithic, but abstract, system of prescriptions and beliefs, connected with an effective means of punishment, the latter is related to the rational abilities of the human mind, which are insufficient to grasp all irrational doctrines of the Faith. Moreover, the poet reproaches God for having created him with all his deficiencies, which prevented him from fully understanding the doctrines, and of even having sent a devil to exploit these deficiencies and seduce him to unbelief. God has virtually deprived him of the possibility to freely choose between piety and sin, but still insists on punishing sinners when they succumb to the temptations of Satan.

It is no coincidence that in *Thawra fī al-Jahīm* hell is filled with philosophers and scientists. These are the people who would have deserved God’s mercy for their efforts to

discover the truth, but instead they are punished for their rationalism and scepticism. This reflects al-Zahâwî's opinion that modern science will rescue society from obscurantism and stagnancy, and thereby from fatalism and repression, in the end replacing religion as the dominant system of knowledge. In the poem al-Zahâwî even equates God with 'ether', a substance representing the fundamental force of the universe. However, when he calls upon 'Ether' to help him, there is no response.

Al-Zahâwî uses various strategies to lay bare the contradictions between the 'poetic' and the religious world-views. First, he argues that the prescriptions do not relate to actual virtues in real life; second, he exposes the contradiction between God's omnipotence and his failure to save man from false beliefs and punishment; third, he tries to relativize the process of interpretation, stating that the Holy Book may be true, but interpretations may be wrong. These considerations do not appeal to the two angels, of course, who refuse to relinquish the integrity of the Faith as a coherent system of doctrines.

An important strategy adopted by al-Zahâwî is the use of dialogue in his poem. A dialogue is by definition an open and contingent form of communication, provoking direct responses and counter-responses on the basis of arguments. Thus dialogues are typically a means to question and even subvert fixed ideas and doctrinal systems, and a narrative device to draw the discourse into the domain of literature, forcing the other to deconstruct his fixed views and open them up to different views. Needless to say, Munkar and Nakîr refuse to leave their monologic domain, emphasizing the consistence of the religious discursive system and its punitive instruments.

By fictionalizing the poem as a dream and by using the device of dialogue, al-Zahâwî juxtaposes the poetic and religious world-views, defining his own work as being outside the realm of religious discourse, and exposing the absence of a dialogic potential in religious discourse. Still, at a certain point the truth-claims of religion are opposed to al-Zahâwî's claim that poetry, too, has a measure of truth in it and represents a moral value. In contrast to religious truth, however, the poetic truth is part of a dialogue, an open world-view and a vision of ethics that can be understood by man. Does the poetic truth, in *Thawra fî al-Jahîm*, really replace the religious truth? It is significant that in his dialogue with the two angels, the poet accepts the existence of God. It is significant, too, that God not only allows the revolt in hell to take place, refraining from intervention, but also survives the incident. His throne is shaken, but it remains intact, as is, apparently, his authority. This indicates a complex vision of God, and if he is likened to 'ether' by the poet, this should probably not be seen as a denial of His existence, but rather, paradoxically, as an abstract, mystical concept of the divine. Apparently, with his poem al-Zahâwî does not intend to destroy God or the Faith, but rather to create a space for posing questions and discussing moral dilemmas, through the strategy of fictionalization and using the discursive liberties of literature.

Panel 2 (11:30-1pm): Hell in the Qur'ân

The Qur'ānic Netherworld in Light of Some Eschatological and Cosmological Concepts from Late Antiquity

Tommaso Tesei (University of Rome "Sapienza"-INALCO)

Eschatological expectations doubtlessly represent a central point of Qur'ānic theology. The belief that at the end of time God will raise the dead, judge their deeds and redistribute rewards and punishments, represents one of the doctrines the Qur'ān most often exhorts its audience to accept. As in the case of many religious texts from Late Antiquity, the Qur'ānic theological agenda constantly deals with the fate of humanity after the resurrection and Judgement. However, differently from most of these works, Qur'ānic eschatology is little

concerned with the moment which separates death from the final events. In fact, the Qur'ān is very elusive on the question of the interim fate of the dead and contains few references which may be taken as addressing this theological problem. As it often happens, what is not found in the Qur'ān does occur in Qur'ānic exegesis. However, for a methodological choice, the present paper will have little concern with the *mufasssirūns'* views about the destiny of the dead while waiting for the final Judgement. I will, rather, investigate the Qur'ānic imagery of the interim state in light of some eschatological and cosmological concepts from Late Antiquity. In fact, my aim is not to analyse how the Qur'ān was received after being recognized as Muslim scripture, but rather, to study it in relation to the cultural context in which it was originally recited. To refer to the interim abode of the dead I will adopt the definition of Netherworld, in order to distinguish it from Hell, which connotes the place of final punishment.

[1] The *locus classicus* for the question of the Qur'ānic Netherworld is at vv. 99-100 of *sūrat al-mu'minūn*, which state: "Till, when death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord, return me; haply I shall do righteousness in that I forsook.' Nay, it is but a word he speaks; and there; behind them, is a barrier until the day that they shall be raised up". Muslim *mufasssirūn* considerably speculated on the meaning of these two verses, and particularly on the term *barzakh*, that describes the barrier said to stand behind the dead until the day of resurrection. On the basis of Qur'ānic evidence only, one may infer that the Qur'ān conceives the place beyond the *barzakh* as a kind of detention where the dead reside until the day of resurrection. Moreover, the case of the sinner praying to God to return in order to act righteously (cf. Q 32:12) suggests that the Qur'ān considers the souls of the dead to be already recognized in the Netherworld as sinners or righteous. In other words, it seems that in Qur'ānic eschatology the dead pass through a sort of preliminary judgement, which precedes the Final Judgement.

The scenario described in Q 23:99-100 follows the Late Antique imagery of the Netherworld in its broad outlines, and parallels most of the descriptions of the interim abode of the dead by Greek and Latin authors such as Tertullian (*De Anima*, 55-58), Hippolytus (*Ad Grecos*, 1), and Cyprian (*Ep.* 55:20), as well as by their Syriac contemporaries Aphrahat (*Dem.* 8:22; 22:17, 24; cf 6:6), Ephrem (*Nis. Hymns*, 38, 43:14; *Hymns on Par.*, 8:11, 10:14; *Letter to Polibius*, 4, 19), Narsai (*Hom XXXIX*) and Jacob of Sarug (*Letter to Stephen Bar Sudaili*). The closest relationship between Q 23:99-100 and the Late Antique imagery of the Netherworld is to be sought in the idea expressed at v. 100 about the impossibility of returning from the realm of death to remedy the sins committed during one's lifetime. We find a parallelism to this idea in the apocalyptic work known as *4 Ezra*, probably composed during 1st c. CE. According to its anonymous author(s), until the day of Judgement the souls of sinners are condemned to be subject to seven different torments. Among these, the second listed is particularly interesting for this study since it is concerned with sinners' consciousness of their inability to return to act righteously (VII, 80-82). Here we can glimpse a similarity with the sinner of the Qur'ān who is not allowed to go back to the world of the living to remedy his sins. A quite similar concept occurs in a famous parable found in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 16:19-31), in which the post-mortem destinies of a rich and a poor man are presented as reversing their terrestrial conditions. In fact, while the rich will await the final Judgement in torment, the poor man will sit at the side of Abraham, near a source of fresh water (cf. *1 Enoch*, 22). At the end of the parable, the rich begs Abraham to send the poor to warn his family, so that they will not also come into that place of torment. However, Abraham rejects the supplication saying that if his family does not believe even the prophets then they will not believe the dead (Lk 16:27-31). The dynamic described in the Lukan parable seems to be recalled by the Qur'ānic passage discussed here: in both cases a sinner asks to return to the world, or that another dead returns in his place, in order to act righteously or to prevent another from acting impiously. In both cases the request is denied. The parallel is still more close when considering a homily that Narsai wrote around the story found in the parable. In fact, the Syriac poet adds the following words to Abraham's negative answer to send the poor back to the rich's family: "

A strong barrier (*syg rb'*) rises in front of the faces of the dead * and none among them can break it because of its solidity. * Insurmountable is the bulwark (*šwr'*) which death built up in front of the faces of the dead, * why do you ask for something whose accomplishment is impossible to be allowed?"

It might be observed that the term *šūrā*, “bulwark”, that Narsai uses in this passage, also occurs in another allusion to the Lukan parable found in an hymn by Ephrem. In fact, Ephrem describes the barrier beyond which sinners are confined as a “bulwark of water” (*šwr' d-my*; *Nis. Hymns*, 10:12). Narsai’s reference to a barrier that prevents the dead from returning to the world marks a quite precise correspondence with the Qur’ānic *barzakh*. Of course, with this I do not mean that Narsai’s homily represents a source for the Qur’ānic passage, but rather, in its brief discussion on the interim state the Qur’ān follows some theological trends widespread during Late Antiquity. From this perspective, it might be observed that the Lukan parable seems to be alluded to in another Qur’ānic passage. In fact, the unfulfilled request of being granted water (Lk 16:24-26), that the rich addresses to the poor, seems to be recalled in Q 7:50 that describes a similar situation, in which sinners ask the righteous in vain for water. Moreover, the *ḥijāb* that in this same Qur’ānic passage is said to lie between the sinners and the righteous can be compared to the great chasm that Abraham says to separate the rich from the poor (Lk 16:27). The Lukan parable exercised a lasting influence on the Christian imagery of the Netherworld and it is quoted by almost every Late Antique author who wrote about the afterlife. Thus, it would not be surprising if, as many texts from Late Antiquity, the Qur’ān also included some elements of the parable in the elaboration of its eschatological discussion.

[2] Alongside Q 23:99-100, the term *barzakh* occurs in two other Qur’ānic passages (25:53, 55:19), where it designates a barrier between the two cosmic seas of sweet and salt water. Related to this cosmological notion of *barzakh* is that of *ḥijr mahjūr*, “ban forbidden”. In fact, v. 53 of *sūrat al-naǧm* indicates the “ban forbidden” to divide in turn – as the *barzakh* – the two cosmic seas. Moreover vv. 21-22 of the same *sūra* state that “ban forbidden!” are the words the angels say while barring the sinners the way to Paradise. Therefore, as well as the *barzakh*, the *ḥijr mahjūr* seems to have the twofold function of cosmological and eschatological partition. It might be observed that while the two seas are said to be separated by these partitions, the Qur’ān states that they also meet somewhere. This place is called *majma’ al-baḥrayn*, the “junction of the two seas”, and it is where the well known episode of the encounter between Moses and the Servant of God takes place (Q 18:60-65). As I have argued in a recent work, the notion of *majma’ al-baḥrayn* indicates the place where the mountain of Paradise was thought to be located. Therefore, it seems that the zones related to the two cosmic seas occupy a central place within the Qur’ānic “eschatological cosmology”. But where should these two seas be located within the Qur’ānic image of the shape of the Universe? The Qur’ān cryptic descriptions about the two seas generated diverse explanations by Muslim commentators, most of which are not totally plausible. Heidi Toelle and Angelika Neuwirth convincingly argue that the Qur’ānic sweet and salt oceans should be taken as describing the two bodies of water which, in the Biblical cosmological imagery, were retained to be located above and below the firmament (cf. Gen. 1:6-8). This view can be strengthened by quoting a passage of a homily by Narsai, who in his poetic description about the creation of the firmament states: “Oh balance which divided the great water cistern and gathered it *in two seas (tryn ymmyn)*, in the heaven and in the deep” (*Hom. On Creation*, 1:54). Therefore, the *barzakh* should be retained as a barrier marking the border between the terrestrial and celestial seas and thus imagined as located at the edges of the world, where in Late Antique cosmological imagery, heaven and Earth, and the respective terrestrial and celestial oceans, were thought to intersect. Actually, it is important to remark that such location coincides with the place where the realm of death is located in the important intertestamentary work known as *1 Enoch* (17:5-6; cf. 22), and in the

Jewish and Christian apocalypses of Paul (31) of Zephaniah (4:3) and of Abraham (rec. A 11:1-4; rec. B 10:1-11:10). In fact, the protagonists of these works are said to be led to the places where souls rest before Judgement, which are found at the edges of the world near the point where heaven and Earth meet.

The Qur'ānic scenario about the *barzakh* and the two seas it divides appears to be consistent with this cosmology of the Netherworld. As in the above apocalypses, the Qur'ān seems to refer to a place located at the edges of the world, near the intersection between the terrestrial and celestial oceans, that is between heaven and Earth, where the post-mortem abode of the dead is located. Furthermore, it is worth focusing on the possible particular relation of the place beyond the *barzakh* and the cosmic body of salt water found below the firmament. This terrestrial sea is easily identifiable with the ocean that, according to Biblical cosmology, surrounds and underlies the Earth. In fact, in another homily Narsai addresses it by its Biblical name of Tehom תהוֹם *thwm'*; *Hom. On Creation*, 3:325). It is important to observe that in several passages of the OT, Tehom is related to the Netherworld (e.g., Jon. 2:6; Ez. 26:19). The Book of Job clearly describes Sheol, the realm of death, as lying beneath the subterranean ocean upon which the Earth disk floats (26:5; 38:16-17). In the Book of Psalms, Tehom is described as the abyss from which the dead can be raised by God (71:20; cf. Wis. Sol. 16:13), an idea repeated in more vivid terms in an hymn found among the scrolls of Qumrān (1Qh^a XI). The concept linking the terrestrial ocean to the Netherworld is still more striking when examining the Greek term ἄβυσσος, that the LXX uses to translate the Hebrew *tehôm*, and that in the NT came to designate the interim abode of the dead (Rev. 9:1, 20:1, 3). In Romans 10:6-7, Paul sets the descent into the abyss in opposition to the ascent to heaven (cf. Ps. 107:26). It might be observed that the Peshitta translates Paul's words εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον, "into the abyss", as *laṭhūmā da-šyūl*, literally: "in the Tehom [i.e. the abyss] of Sheol". The adding of the words *da-šyūl*, "of Sheol", clearly points out that according to the Peshitta, the abyss Paul refers to is doubtlessly connected to the Sheol, the realm of death. Therefore, in light of these observations, it is extremely meaningful that in the Qur'ān the *barzakh* lying behind the dead until their resurrection also represents the border for the terrestrial ocean, which in Biblical literature is constantly associated with the realm of death.

To summarize, it seems that the few Qur'ānic allusions to the interim state of the dead are consistent with the Late Antique imagery about the Netherworld, from both eschatological and cosmological perspectives. At the same time, the Qur'ān totally opposes the theological trends of Late Antique eschatology, where the discussion about the Netherworld occupies a central place. On the contrary, the Qur'ān demonstrates little interest in the question of the moment separating death from the final events, and concentrates most of its eschatological discourse around the places of final reward or punishment, Paradise and Hell. How to explain the Qur'ān's counter-current tendencies on this point? The answer to this question is probably to be sought in the historical context in which it was first recited, and thus in the theological expectations that it was intended to fulfil. Sources contemporaneous to the very same period assumed for the predication of Muḥammad demonstrate a widespread proliferation of apocalyptic sentiments among the population of the Middle East, as a consequence of the bloody conflict between the Byzantine and the Sassanid empires. Western scholars have suggested that Muḥammad was convinced that the end of the world was very close. According to Paul Casanova, this was the reason for the Prophet's failure to designate a successor. Such views appear to be quite speculative, because of the uncertain historical value of the reports in the traditional biography of Muḥammad. However, in light of the above traced historical context, it seems plausible that the audience to which the Qur'ān was first recited had a particular interest in eschatology and the final events. In this case, it would not be surprising if the Qur'ān had more interest in elaborating an eschatological discourse centred around the places of final reward or punishment than to discuss the brief lapse of time which was thought to separate the dead from their resurrection and judgement.

The Islamic Infernalization of the Jinn

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The aim of this paper is to outline how autochthonous spirits and demons were infernalized by the Qur'an and Hadith as a part of the Islamicization of central Arabia. The method to achieve this should be straightforward, namely, compare and contrast the nature of the spirits and demons before and after the coming of Islam. However, as is well known, almost all our knowledge concerning the pre-Islamic period comes from Muslim authors; the authenticity and date of so-called "pre-Islamic" Arabic poetry are not beyond doubt; and even situating the Prophet's career in central Arabia, as Islamic tradition asserts, is nowadays a scholarly decision, not an inevitability. In view of these difficulties, this paper proposes to consider only the representation of the autochthonous spirits and demons of central Arabia before and after the establishment of Islam, without asking if this representation is a record of an historical reality. That is to say, the texts referred to in this paper are effectively treated as literature. These texts come from the Qur'an and Hadith and standard Western works, such as Wellhausen's *Reste arabischen Heidentums*. As indicated by the paper's title, the argument is that the establishment of Islam was coterminous with a reconfigured hierarchy of spiritual entities, the lowest rank of which were the spirits and demons, who were put in, or became associated with, hell.

In her *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* article, "Geography," Angelika Neuwirth discerns and compares the space of the world as portrayed in pre-Islamic poetry to that portrayed in the Qur'an. She remarks that in the poetry, "the relation of man to space appears to be tense. The pagan poet or more precisely his persona, the Bedouin hero, has to re-conquer space over and over again in order to meet the ideals of *muruwwa* and thus fulfill his role as an exemplary member of tribal society." By way of contrast, Neuwirth finds that in the Qur'an the human is "relieved of this burden. Moving in an urban space he orients himself to ethical values that are symbolically mirrored in the urban structures themselves. The frequent descriptions of deserted space as a marker of loneliness, of the search for meaning and never ending questions which figure so prominently in pagan poetry, also resound in the many allusions to deserted space in the Qur'ān. But in the Qur'ān all the questions are answered. The desolate places are historical sites, evoked through the reports of events. They are presented as places replete with meaning, assuring the listeners of a divinely endorsed order, in which not capricious fate or cyclically occurring constraints dominate, but one in which an equilibrium of human action and welfare is achieved." As Neuwirth reads the Qur'an, this qur'anically re-coded space of the Hijaz is now inherently meaningful space.

For the reason given above regarding the difficulties inherent to accepting pre-Islamic poetry as authentic, Neuwirth's comments regarding pre-Islamic versus qur'anic world space are potentially problematic. But when these comments are taken in representational, not historical terms – in other words, when they are taken read as referring to the literary representation of two different worlds, not to any putative historical reality regarding these same worlds – they point to a reality phenomenon that is borne out in at least one other area of qur'anically informed, early Islamic representation. This area concerns the autochthonous Arabian spirits and demons, the jinn, and their subtle, spatial translation from amoral, sublunary, possibly subterranean beings to predominantly subterranean, commonly immoral, infernalized associates of Iblīs.

In his critical, highly detailed review of the state of academic knowledge concerning the pre-Islamic jinn, published in 1981, Joseph Henninger presents a long summary of their nature, haunts, and wiles. This summary includes the following passage: "The *jinn*'s abode is the desert, especially certain little-known areas that are difficult to reach, also old ruins,

graveyards and generally all places of decay and filth, such as latrines. Spirits live in the earth, and whoever cultivates wasteland, digs a well or foundations for a building etc. will disturb the spirits and may incur their wrath. *Jinn* are not 'evil' spirits in the moralistic sense, but are morally neutral. They are helpful or harmful according to whim, depending on whether they are friendly or hostile to a person, and this is why people are reluctant to have any dealings with them. One never knows how they will react."

From this quoted passage, nothing merits additional comment with regard to the argument of this paper, viz. the Islamic infernalization of the jinn, with the exception of two of the statements. The first of these is the assertion of the morally neutral status of the pre-Islamic jinn; this will be important to recall when their status shifts to immoral, or commonly immoral, in the Islamic period. The second is the assertion that the pre-Islamic jinn "live in the earth." Premised upon the research of Julius Wellhausen, the pioneer of "jinn studies"; W. Robertson Smith, who refers extensively to Wellhausen; and Jacques Ryckmans, who refers to both, at first glance this assertion sits awkwardly with the idea that the pre-Islamic jinn's abode is the desert, as also asserted by Henninger in his summary just cited. It fits well with how the jinn are represented for the Islamic period, namely, as *ahl al-ard*, denizens of the earth par excellence; but its inclusion by Henninger as a characteristic of the pre-Islamic jinn, too, supposedly desert dwellers, is revealing. This is because, amongst the different academic theories proposed regarding the origins and development of belief in the jinn in pre-Islamic Arabia, there is a likelihood that this belief originates as a sedentary, not a nomadic phenomenon, i.e. that it is related to land cultivation: the jinn were believed to exist where cultivated ground stopped. Henninger, for example, holds this theory, and he is perhaps the most informed specialist in "jinn studies," if only because he comes near the end of the line of specialists in the subject. As Henninger well knows, this and any theory concerning the pre-Islamic jinn cannot be proved; but he finds it telling that for the modern period anthropological evidence suggests nomadic bedouin fear jinn much less than sedentary tribes.

Adhering to this theory allows Henninger to agree cautiously to two other related theories. The first is that the pre-Islamic jinn have, to some degree, a chthonic, subterranean nature, something that is generally attributed to the Islamic-period jinn alone, as will be discussed in more detail later. The second theory is the etymology and history of the word "jinn" proposed by W.F. Albright. For Albright, the jinn were probably introduced into Arabic folklore in the late pre-Islamic period. He writes: "I have pointed out elsewhere, utilizing suggestions of Nöldeke and Lidzbarski, that the word is neither Arabic nor Ethiopic, but a slight modification of Aramaic *genē*, 'hidden,' plural *genēn*, 'hidden things,' and emphatic plural *genayyā*, which appears as the name of a class of deities in inscriptions from the third century A.D. at Dura and in the Jebel esh-Shā'r, northwest of Palmyra. The passage from Aramaic *ganyā* or *genyā*, feminine *genithā*, 'demon,' to Arabic *jinnīy(un)*, *jinnīyat(un)* offers no difficulty whatever when one remembers that Aram. *genā* and Arab. *janna* are synonymous and that a slight morphological adaption would therefore be normal. The occult figures of depotented pagan deities with which the imagination of the Christian Aramaeans peopled the underworld, the darkness of night, ruined temples and sacred fountains, were organized by Arab imagination into the jinn of the Arabian Nights."

Although it is scarcely credible that the tribes of central Arabia had no concept of, and/or word for, spirits and demons prior to the introduction of this allegedly Aramaic term in the early centuries of Christianity, for Henninger Albright's theory "is undoubtedly correct in its core assumptions." A review of the Qur'an's representation of the jinn offers a way of considering it further, because there is resistance to it. For example, the Arabist Giorgio Levi della Vida considers there to be no link between the Aramaic *genā* and the Arabic *janna*, and additionally considers that the two words refer to two different types of spirit: the first to chthonic ones, the second to open air ones.

If the Qur'an could be shown to be referring to chthonic beings in its use of the word "jinn," then this would indicate that the chthonic nature of the pre-Islamic jinn had been correctly inferred by Henninger and others, and add weight to Albright's theory concerning the jinn's Christian origins. At the very least, if Henninger's inference is wrong, it would show that in the jinn's transformation from overground to underground dwellers, they had been re-spatialized, as per Neuwirth's theory discussed above. And if Henninger's inference is correct, that would suggest the existence in the pre-Islamic period of the location in which a number of qur'anic concepts of hell were to find a home, namely, the underworld; for although it is not possible to assert definitively that the qur'anic hell is below ground, so ambiguous is the qur'anic evidence, there are a number of verses that indicate the Qur'an considers it to be subterranean. Proceeding on the evidence of those particular verses, it is straightforward to show that the Qur'an considers the jinn to be chthonic beings. For not only does the Qur'an state that the jinn are made from "smokeless fire" (*mārij min nār*, 55:15), fire being the predominant qur'anic term for hell (*al-nār*); but in another verse it specifies that the fire of which they are made is the "samūm", the scorching wind of hell (15:27).

According to these two qur'anic verses, then, the jinn have hellish associations and belong to the underworld; and even though not all the jinn are destined for damnation come Judgement Day, many are, e.g. 26:94-5 and 11:119. In contrast to their morally neutral, pre-qur'anic representation, in the jinn's association with hell and their common destiny of damnation lies their Islamic moralization.

This negative, moralizing portrayal of the jinn continues with the verses recounting the jinn's thwarted attempts to "steal" from heaven (15:16). In keeping with Neuwirth's discernment of a qur'anically reconfigured spatial order, in these verses the jinn are represented as no longer able to occupy the superior position that was theirs before. No more can they sit unobstructed at the borders of heaven, eavesdropping on the secrets of the "high assembly" (37:8), but are violently repelled back to earth (e.g. 72:9); one of the reasons being the need to defend the Qur'an as a divine, not demonic revelation (26:210).

Lastly, in this account of the qur'anic moralization of the jinn, is Iblīs, the Devil, and his relationship to the jinn. As with so many other matters, the Qur'an is ambiguous on the nature of the Iblīs, in one versing stating that he is "from among the jinn" (18:50) and then in another verse implying that he is an angel (20:116). Muslim exegetes have argued to and fro regarding which of these two positions is the correct one; but Andrew Rippin in his recent entry on the Iblīs for the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* tends *logically* towards the former position, and on that view, the jinn are tainted by association as immoral.

REMAINING THEMES: The hybridization of hell and the jinn; and the demonization of hell.

Revisiting Hell's Angels in the Qur'ān

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In this paper I survey Qur'ānic passages that mention (or appear to mention) the helpers of eschatological punishment. My aims in doing this are threefold. One, I want to shed some light on the meaning of certain Qur'ānic terms and expressions used to describe the minions of hell. Two, I wish to suggest that Qur'ānic verses about God's helpers in hell fall into three different thematic clusters. Three, I seek to explore (a) whether these three clusters of images and ideas show a development in the Qur'ānic picture of hell and (b) whether this development can be fitted into a (Nöldekeian) chronological reading of the Qur'ān.

I proceed by examining intra-Qur'ānic references, parallelisms and topoi. I also consider pre-Islamic poetry, keeping in mind that the authenticity of this poetry is regularly disputed, and the Judeo-Christian literature of Late Antiquity. In passing, I also touch on revisionist theories that propose different readings of the *rasm* of certain seemingly obscure Qur'ānic terms and verses.

Cluster one: Hell's minions as demonic hosts of the infernal banquet

96:15 No indeed! If he does not desist, We shall seize him by the forelock,

96:16 A lying, sinful forelock.

96:17 Let him call his host

96:18 – We shall call on the *zabāniya*.

96:19 No! Do not obey him! Prostrate and draw near!

After establishing that these verses relate to an eschatological setting, I discuss the meaning of the word *zabāniya*. A considerable amount of ink has been spilled over this question. Three derivations are revisited and rejected here (Lüling: *zabāniya* < *rabbāniya* [“High Angels”]; West: *zabāniya* < Pers. *z-bā-n-h* [“blaze, tongue of fire”]; Andrae: *zabāniya* > Syr. *shabbāya* [“ductores”]). I favour a fourth explanation (first suggested by H. Grimme?): that the cryptic name *zabāniya* refers to a class of Arabian demons, or jinn. A (potentially) important piece of evidence for this view comes in a poem by al-Khansā' (contemp. of the Prophet?) lamenting the passing of her late brother Mu'āwiya, killed in battle with Murra:

He was pertinacious and prudent [?] when warfare was about to break out /
when war made ready [lit. tucked up her skirt from her shank], flaring up,
and [he was] a leader of horses that resemble others, as if they were /
(female) demons (*si'lāt*), and eagles on which are *zabāniya*.

The link with the *si'lāt* and the fact that the *zabāniya* here are represented as riding on eagles suggests they are among the jinn. Another consideration in favour of this theory is introduced by Paret: the singular form of the word, he says, might be *zabāni* (with a short *kasra* under the *nūn*). The word would then be modeled on the indeclinable *fa'āli* pattern, which often denotes animal names, such as *qathāmi* (“a female hyaena”). A *zabāni* would then be an animal or demon that is named by its characteristic action, i.e. pushing back (√ z-b-n). A good translation for the word *zabāniya*, then, would seem to be “pushbacks” (or “pushbackers”). Also intra-Qur'ānic evidence points in this direction: the *zabāniya* are the chthonic counterparts to the *hūr al-'īn*. The representation of the latter (I'm following Horovitz and Wendell here) derives from the milieu of pre-Islamic Arab banqueting; if the *zabāniya* are the houris' opposites (they tell the inhabitants of hell to “taste” [*dhūqū*] the bitter fruit of *zaqqūm*, the subterranean tree of hell), they would also seem to originate in an Arabian context.

Cluster two: Hell's minions as "keepers" (khazana) of jahannam, the monster of hell

This second cluster centres on verses that represent hell as a monster, and the minions of hell as its caretakers, who are then referred to as *khazana*. The idea that hell is a monster that guardian angels lead by chains is part of the post-Qur'anic repertoire of eschatological ideas in Islam, but it is arguably already found in the Qur'an (50:30, 25:11-12, 67:7). Note, however, that in 39:71 and 39:73, the *khazana* do not "keep" the hell-monster, but the gates of hell (and of paradise):

39:71: Those who rejected the Truth will be led to hell (*jahannam*) in their throngs.

When they arrive, its gates (*abwābuhā*) will open and its [their?] keepers (*khazanatuhā*) will say to them, 'Were you not sent your own messengers...'

39:73: Those were mindful of their Lord will be led in throngs to the Garden. When they arrive, they will find its gates wide open, and its keepers will say...

The idea that hell is a monster that talks has a rich Judeo-Christian genealogy: In 1 Enoch, a text written around the turn of the millennium, hell is said to have a "mouth" with which is "swallows" the sinners (56:8). In 3 Baruch (1st-3rd c. CE), hell is the "belly" of a "dragon" (4:5, 5:3). In Q50:30 (*jahannam* asks God, "Is there more?"), one also hears echoes of the Babylonian Talmud, where "the lord of hell" asks God daily for more food and drink. (Is it even conceivable that the word *ḥuṭama* in sura 104, which in Ibn Mas'ūd's *muṣḥaf* was written as *ḥāṭima*, also refers to hell as a monster? Paret translates as "Vielfraß", Engl. "glutton".) According to 2 Enoch, hell "weeps" (40:12), and in a hymn of Ephrem, hell "groans" over the sinners. The Questions of Bartholomew (2nd-6th c.) describes "angels that keep hell"; 660 of them hold the monster "Beliar" by "fiery chains". Jewish apocalyptic literature is also ripe with angels that function as the gatekeepers of hell: 2 Enoch (late 1st c. AD) states: "And I saw the key-holders and the guards of the gates of hell..." (41:1). The Qur'an uses the word *khazana* to refer to both: the keepers of the hell-monster, and the keepers of hell's gates.

Cluster three: Hell's minions as angels inside hell

The third cluster of ideas that I see in the Qur'an is where the punishers in hell are explicitly identified as angels (*malā'ik*). A key verse here is the (extremely long) verse 74:31, which follows (the very short) verse 74:30 ("over it are nineteen"). 74:31 is commonly considered a Medinan insertion into sura 74:

74:31: We have appointed only angels to be masters of the Fire,
and We have appointed their number
simply as an affliction for those who are ungrateful,
that those who have been given the Scripture may have certainty,
and that those who believe may have greater belief... *al-āya*.

This insertion shows a developing (?) awareness in the Qur'an that the fearsome forces of the underworld are the same forces that the Judeo-Christian tradition of late antiquity refers to as angels. These angels are not only the "keepers" of hell and of hell's gates, standing at hell's periphery, while the demonic pushbackers carry out the dirty work inside, but they are now moved into hell itself and are merged with the pushbackers as hell's punisher angels. While the pushbackers previously address the inhabitants of hell with *dhūqū*, this is now done by "angels": "angels beat them and say to them 'Taste!'" (8:50).

The 3rd-century Apocalypse of Paul and the 2nd-century Apocalypse of Peter give us the greatest number of precedents for this third cluster of ideas about hell's angels in the

Qur'ān. The both explicitly speak about the “angels of torment” that are operative in hell. E.g., Apocalypse of Paul: “I saw there a man being tortured by Tartaruchian angels having in their hands an iron instrument with three hooks.” Cf. Q22:21-2: “There are hooked iron rods for them should they try to escape, and [it is said to them:] ‘Taste!’”.

Apoc of Paul: “I saw the heavens open, and Michael the archangel descending from heaven, and with him was the whole army of angels, and they came to those who were placed in punishment, and seeing him, again weeping, they cried out and said, ‘Have pity on us!... We now see the judgement and acknowledge the Son of God!...’ Michael answered and said: ‘Hear Michael speaking!... you have consumed in vanity the time in which you ought to have repented.’”

Compare this to Qur'ān 43:77-78:

43:77 They proclaim, ‘Oh *m-(alif)-l-k*,
let your Lord be finished with us.’
He replies, ‘You [p] will linger.
43:78 We brought you the truth,
but most of you were averse to the truth.’

In 43:77, should we simply read *yā malak*, “oh angel!”? This would make sense if we imagine a situation in which the realization that the punishers in hell were angels, not jinn, had just begun to dawn on the audience of the Qur'ān. If indeed the Qur'ān gradually comes to “discover” angels as the agents of eschatological punishment, perhaps those verses that talk about the angel of death also belong in the third cluster. This concerns the two verses in which the angels of death are mentioned (32:11 and 4:97).

Conclusion

If one puts the three clusters the contours of which I've traced here into a Nöldekian chronological grid, the picture that emerges more or less confirms this chronology (see the diagram on the next page). Compare this to the development of Qur'ānic ideas about female beings in paradise. In the chronology proposed by scholars working in the tradition of Nöldeke (Horowitz et al.), the second Meccan period sees the gradual disappearance of the houris, who are last mentioned in 44:54. At the same time, from the second Meccan period, the earthly wives of believers are explicitly included among the inhabitants of paradise (43:70); in the Medinan period, they become “purified spouses” (*azwāj muṭahhara*, 2:25, 3:15, 4:57), clearly different from the houris who, as heavenly beings, are not in need of ritual cleansing. In the third Meccan period (13:23, 40:8), the “righteous” fathers and the children of the believers are brought in to complement the promise that families will enter paradise intact. The family-oriented picture that thus emerges also corresponds to the fact that after the middle Meccan period the Qur'ān offers no more descriptions of wine banquets in paradise.

The *zabāniya*, hell's counterpart of the heavenly catering staff, seem to have undergone a similar crisis of identity in the second and third Meccan periods, in which the Qur'ān also experiments with notions of hell as a monster controlled by *khazana*. The minions of hell reappear triumphantly, as angels, in the Medinan period.

	zabāniya	khazana	hell as monster	hell's angels
Early Meccan	96:18 [#1, zabāniya] 74:30 [#2, "nineteen"] 88:5 [#35, drink scalding water] 78:24 [#34, 'taste'] 56:52-56: [#41, zaqqūm's 'hospitality'] 55:41 [#43, 'seizing by feet and forelock']		104:4 [#6, ḥuṭama (?)] ↓ (?)	
Middle Meccan	44:43-50 [#6, eat zaqqūm, 'taste'] 38:57 [#12, 'let them taste']	67:8 [#16, of hell as monster]	50:30 [#7, dialogue w/God] 67:7 [#16, shahīq] 25:12 [#19, taghayyuz wa-zafir]	43:77 [#14, yā m-(alif)-l-k]
Late Meccan		39:71 [#11, of hell's gates, cf. 39:73]		32:11 [#1, angel of death]
Medinan	22:22 [#17, scalding water, 'taste!']			74:31 [Medinan insertion] 8:50 [#5, 'angels' say 'taste'] 4:97 [#10, angels of death] 66:6 [#19, 'harsh, severe angels']

Locating Hell in Early Renunciant Literature

Christopher Melchert (University of Oxford)

As al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) is supposed to have said, ‘The believer is sad in the morning and sad in the evening’—sad over his sins of the past and the judgement to come. Unsurprisingly, then, the renunciants of the first three Islamic centuries often contemplated hell. For example, the Damascene Saʿīd ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 168/784-5?) always wept at the ritual prayer, explaining that hell was always prepresented to him. They looked for reminders of hell in the world. For example, it is said that the Yemeni Ṭāwūs (d. 106/724-5?) would sometimes walk through the market on his way to the mosque. If he saw heads roasting there, he could not sleep that night. Nevertheless, contemplation of death apparently comes up a little more often in the literature of their sayings than of hell, and elaborations on Qurʾanic descriptions of hell are a little more common in collections of hadith. The theme evidently illustrates how much renunciant concerns pervaded all of Islamic religious culture in the early centuries.

Various things in the world were taken as salutary reminders of Hell. Ibn Masʿūd (d. 32/652-3?) melted some silver in the treasury, then sent a message to the people of the mosque, saying ‘Whoever wishes to look at *muhl*, let him look at this.’ Sometimes Hell was represented not merely by reminders but by fragments of itself. The Prophet said, ‘The fire of the sons of Adam that is used for fire is a seventieth of the fire of Gehenna.’ Extreme weather also comes directly from Hell. The Prophet said, ‘The Fire complained to God that part of it was consuming another, so God allowed it to exhale twice, so that the severest heat and cold are from it.’ One could apparently tell where the Fire was, if not directly see it, by looking at the ocean. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) said, ‘The sea is hell’s cover (*al-baḥr ṭabaq al-nār*).’ This is apparently the background to reports that it was weakened by water, perhaps on the way to our world. The Prophet said, ‘This fire of yours is a 70th part of Gehenna. The fire was struck twice by the sea. If not for that, God would have made it of no use to anyone.’

Heroes of piety found their routines interrupted by the recollection of Hell. Ibn ʿUmar (d. 40s/661-71) would pause to pray (*yadʿū*) when he recited in the course of his ritual prayer a verse that mentioned Hell. ʿĀmir ibn ʿAbd (al-)Qays (d. ca. 55/674-5) told a woman, ‘My daughter, Gehenna does not allow your father to sleep.’ Shaddād ibn Aws (d. ca. 60/679-80) on his bed was like a grain of wheat on a frying pan, saying ‘O God, Hellfire has prevented me from sleeping’; then he would get up for ritual prayer. The most common explanation for weeping is regret for past sins, but Hell is also directly mentioned. The Kufan Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (d. 96/714?), on being found weeping, explained that he was uncertain whether the angel of death would announce he was heading for Paradise or the Fire. Weeping on his deathbed, he said, ‘How could I not weep when I await a messenger bearing news (*yubashshirunī*) of either this or that?’ In a long comment on Q. 25:63, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) says that the believers weep from fear (*khawf*) of the Fire. ‘By God, that by which they have sought the Garden does not seem great in their souls. The fear of the Fire has made them weep.’ ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd (Basran, fl. early 2nd/8th cent.) explained that he wept from fear of the Fire.

Some renunciants were remembered for seeking out reminders of Hell. Harim ibn Ḥayyān (Basran Follower, d. after 26/647) and Ḥumamah, a Companion, would go by day to the perfume market and pray to God for Paradise, then go to the smiths and pray for refuge from Hellfire before parting. As an official, Harim had a fire lit so that when his own people came to him, they found it between him and them and could not approach. He explained, ‘You wish to throw me into a fire greater than it—in the fire of Gehenna’ (by their expecting special treatment). The Companion Ibn Masʿūd (d. Medina, 32/652-3?) fell down on seeing some

smiths blowing the bellows and wept at the sight of a hot iron. The Companion Abū al-Dardā' (d. 32/652-3?) would blow on the fire under the pot until the tears flowed. Al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays (*mukhadram*, d. 67/686-7?) would put a lamp near him, then put his finger on it, saying 'Feel, O Aḥnaf! What carried you to doing such-and-such today?' The Yemeni Ṭāwūs (d. 106/724-5?), would sometimes walk through the market on his way to the mosque. If he saw heads roasting there, he would be unable to sleep that night.

Renunciator literature more often quotes not preachers but experimenters in contemplating Hell for themselves. For example, Yazīd ibn Abān (Basran *qāṣṣ*, d. bef. 120/737-8), made himself thirsty in the Basran heat for forty years. He said to his companions, 'Come, let us weep over cold water' (presumably contemplating the torment of Hell). Sa'īd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (Damascene, d. 168/784-5?) always wept at prayer, explaining that hell was always represented to him then.

Al-Muḥāsibī (Basran, d. Baghdad? 243/857-8) is the most famous theorist of renunciation. In *Kitāb al-Tawahhum*, he calls for imagining death, being called to assembly at the Last Judgement, and the torment of the unbelievers, among other things, although these terrors are balanced by an equally long section on the attractions of Paradise. 'Imagine your passing over the bridge in severity of terror and weakness of body, even if you should have fainted, being unforgiven, without knowing whether your foot had slipped from the path.' It must be conceded, however, that contemplation of death comes up more often than of Hell. Content analysis shows that renunciator literature is highly miscellaneous. Analysis of several collections shows that Hell, while far from being the principal thing renunciators talked about (or at least that collectors of renunciator sayings put down), was something they thought about as often as almost anything else. Qur'anic glosses seem to be unusually prominent in these sections on Hell. It would be a mistake to generalize about greater interest in Hell in the tradition of *adab*, though. Abū 'Ubayd (d. 224/838-9?), *al-Khuṭab wa-al-mawā'iz*, comprises 145 items from prophets, early scriptures, and the last prophet's Companions. Just one mentions Hell: 'I have not seen the like of Hell, the one fleeing which is asleep, nor the like of Paradise, the one seeking which is asleep.'

Hell in Muslim popular imagination: the anonymous *K. al-'Azama*

Wim Raven (Marburg University)

My paper merely intends to point to a rather unknown text. 'My' *K. al-'Azama* is *not* the one described by A. Heinen, nor the one edited by Mubārakfūrī. It is an anonymous description in Arabic of the Cosmos, Hell and Paradise, in several manuscripts heavily enriched with related stuff. A vulgar text without boundaries. (Original text: I hid an upload of Abu Deeb's edition of it here: <http://tinyurl.com/d2rcf6f> for two weeks, and I will refer to it here below.) Before we go into 'Azama's description of Hell, it is good to see the built up of the cosmos. (Abu Deeb 77-99) I summarize, starting from below: God created an atmosphere, above it a sea, above it an earth of iron, then again an atmosphere, above it an earth of led above it another sea, then again an earth from silver, then another sea. But soon the picture becomes more confused. Billions of cities, seas and mountains follow each other. It is impossible to get a real picture, firstly because the text is a mess, secondly because these worlds are multi-dimensional; they are beyond our imagination. (In so far the text is highly successful!) The difficulty is that the cities and the gardens are not always standing on earth, but sometimes in the air or even in a sea, as islands. There is at least one dimension more than humans can handle. It is interesting to note, that many of these worlds are inhabited by strange species: animal-like creatures, rather than jinns or angels. We are not alone. All these beings have their own Prophets and Sharias and Paradises and Hells! Where in this structure is our earth, where is mankind? This question is often asked, but not really answered. The whole layer cake is glazed by an earth of

crystal. On top of that is Hell, our Hell, which is also multilayered. Above that is Paradise and finally comes the Throne of God.

Similar material, but less extravagant, occurs in al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*: the chapter on Creation (transl. W.M. Brinner, Leiden 2002, 19ff.) and the Bulūqiyā story (*ibid.*, 593–604). Focusing on ‘our’ Hell, I found at least four texts about it in the ‘*Azama*’.

1. **‘Geographical’: enumeration of the seven layers of Hell**, (Abu Deeb p. 99).

In al-Kisāʾī’s *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* there is an almost identical list of the layers (there called gates). (Arabic text + Dutch transl.: <http://tinyurl.com/cqzuabf>; English transl. by W.M. Thackston Jr., *Tales of the Prophets* etc., Chicago 1997, 18–19.)

2. A **‘geographical’ description of Hell**, Abu Deeb p. 100–115. Just a quote, to get the taste:

For Hell He made seven gates, to which he put four pillars, for which he made seven heads, each of which has seven faces, each with seven mouths, each of which has seven tongues and seven molars and teeth; every tooth has a length of a 1.000.000.000.000 years, a year being 4.000 months; a month being 4.000 days; a day being 4.000 hours, and one hour lasts as long as seventy of our years. There is no tree there that was not written upon. On every tree the name of the target person is written, and there is no scorpion, no snake, no guard (*zabānī*) and no iron hook that does not have the name of the target person written upon it.

Follows an endless summing up of valleys, islands, seas, atmospheres, all full of unpleasant creatures, seas of fire, everything of incredible size, in ‘structure’ analogous to the cosmos. They are also inhabited by various kinds of *zabāniya* with various torture instruments. The short piece by al-Kisāʾī mentioned above is closely related.

Here, e.g. 104–106, we also find the ‘geographication’ of certain rare quranic words. These are turned into place names, they are given locations and described as such. *al-ḥuzn* (12:84) is a wadi, *khusr* (103:2) is a spot, *ghayyan* (19:59) a mountain, *saqar* is a wadi here (in text 1 it was a layer). In the middle of Hell there is a mountain named *Jāmiʿ al-Qurubāt* (9:99), etcetera. I guess this was originally an independent text.

Moreover in this part the vicissitudes of the denizens of these places are linked with quranic verses, including —once more—the attempt to have the guards intermediate with Mālik for mitigation (40:49).

3. A **long catalogue of sinners** and the punishments administered to them (Abu Deeb 115–125). They all begin with: *thumma yuʿtā bi*)... One example:

Then some other people were brought, whose skins were cut and stripped off and then put back, and so on incessantly. And a herald cried out with regard to them, “These are the ones who had bad relations with their neighbours.”

The pieces are without any introduction or framework, and perhaps not belonging to the original core of ‘*Azama*’.

The original motif must be Persian. The Pahlavi text *Arda Viraf* has some 80 of such descriptions (ch. 19ff). That text is late Sassanian, but since Hell was a Persian invention, it must have had predecessors. An example:

Then I saw the soul of a man, both whose eyes were scooped out, and his tongue cut away; and he remained suspended, in hell, by one leg; his body also was ever raked with

the two brazen prongs of a fork; and an iron spike was driven into his head [or heart]. And I asked thus: 'What man is this? and what sin was committed by him?' Srosh the pious, and Adar the angel, said thus: 'This is the soul of that wicked man whose justice, in the world, was false; and he took bribes, and made false decisions.' [Ch. 79. Translation of the whole text: <http://www.avesta.org/pahlavi/viraf.html>]

Similar texts, albeit not in such quantity, occur in the *Apocalypse of Paul* (± 200–300 AD?), ch. 34ff. (online: <http://tinyurl.com/bptvwqx>) and *Greek Apocalypse of Ezra* 4:9–12, 22–24; 5:1–6. The genre is also represented in Muḥammad's Ascension story: Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, [*Sīra*], ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen 1858–60, 269; transl. A Guillaume 185.

All these texts share the same basic pattern: a person journeying through the other world questioning the angel(?) guiding him. The traveller recounts: 'I saw [people being tormented] ..., then I asked: Who are ...? ... and the angel said: 'These are' But in the 'Azama, the narrative setting is rudimentary: the traveller is lacking and we find an anonymous herald instead of the guiding angel. In Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews*, the text about the ascension of Moses, whose original text is not at my disposal yet, it is the question that is omitted. (But Ginzberg may have simplified the structure.) 'Then Nasargiel said to Moses: "Come and see" ...' etc.: http://philologos.org/__eb-lotj/vol2/fourc.htm#3 .

4. Two **different** pages about **the sinners' vicissitudes in Hell** (Abu Deeb 126–7). They ask the guard Mālik for mitigation, but to little avail. The gates cannot be opened, and instead of a cool drink there is only *ḥamīm*. But their yearning for coldness is fulfilled after 100 years: they are brought to *zamharīr*, a hell of blizzards and icebergs. After 100 years, they return to the Fire, which is hotter than before, and so on.

The focus here is quranic. The text freely elaborates on 43:77 (dialogue with Mālik), 40:49 (prayer for mitigation once more) and 76:13 (*zamharīr*) and is enriched with a goodly measure of sadism. The Persian 'hot hell' and 'cold hell' are nicely integrated!

Hell in the Bakrī *mi'rāj* narratives, 13th to 15th centuries CE

Frederick Colby (University of Oregon)

By examining select late medieval accounts of Muḥammad's "night journey" (*isrā'*) and "ascension" (*mi'rāj*), I hope to illustrate that while Muslim traditionists and medieval eschatologists may frequently have placed the entrance to Hell in a terrestrial site, locating Hell "in the lower part of the [earthly] globe" (Lange, "Hell" in *El*³) or across a series of seven "lower earths," one finds in the *isrā'* / *mi'rāj* narratives that the entrance to Hell and even Hell itself increasingly can be found in an otherworldly site up in the heavens. Muḥammad's "tour of Hell" during his ascension becomes a common feature in the narratives ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās by al-Bakrī (fl. 9th century CE?) and other medieval narrators who are more concerned with telling the "complete" story and less concerned with preserving the chains of transmission of discrete *aḥādīth*. Such tours become deferred until later and later in the ascension narratives as one traces their development and expansion in the middle periods of Islamic history. This paper demonstrates that at the height of the development of the non-canonical but very widespread Ibn 'Abbās ascension narratives of the 11th–15th centuries CE, the beginning of the tour of Hell and even Hell itself comes to be placed at one of two primary positions in the accounts of Muḥammad's journey: in the fifth heaven on the one hand, and in the seventh heaven or beyond, after his audience with God, on the other.

One of the earliest extant ascension reports that includes a detailed account of Muḥammad's tour of hell and locates it in the upper realms comes in the *Tafsīr* of the Nishapuri exegete and *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* author al-Tha'labī (d. 1035). In his account of

Muḥammad's ascent to the first heaven, al-Tha'labī reports of Muḥammad's meeting with the angel Mālik, who is here explicitly named and given the title Khāzin al-Nār. Drawing on narremes from a variety of early sources, not the least of which is Ibn Hishām's recension of the *Sīra*, al-Tha'labī describes how Mālik uncovers hellfire for Muḥammad to view from the first heaven. Unlike in other early reports, however, al-Tha'labī's account includes a description of the Prophet's tour of Hell, and this after his audience with God and his tour of the Garden. At the end of Muḥammad's tour of Hell, al-Tha'labī quotes the Prophet as saying, "After [Gabriel] brought me out of the Fire, we passed out of the heavens, descending from heaven to heaven until we came to Moses." This final detail clarifies that for al-Tha'labī, Muḥammad's tour of Hell (as opposed to his initial vision of the Fire) took place somewhere in the upper realms near the end of his journey, presumably near or beyond the Lote Tree in the seventh heaven.

Al-Tha'labī's narrative and a few other earlier reports help to set the backdrop for the *mi'rāj* sources that form the central focus of this paper, namely the Muslim ascension accounts that circulate independent of canonical ḥadīth collections in the middle centuries of Islamic history, almost invariably attributed to Muḥammad's young companion Ibn 'Abbās, and fairly frequently cited with reference to their transmission by an enigmatic figure called Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bakrī. I have dealt elsewhere with the history and development of what I have called the Ibn 'Abbās ascension discourse. For our purposes here, it is sufficient to note that different variations on this discourse circulated widely in the middle periods of Islamic history, as a survey of some of these key texts in this paper will illustrate. One of the peculiarities of these Ibn 'Abbās ascension narratives can be seen in their increasingly more extensive and detailed tours of Hellfire, tours that in each particular version of the tale tend to begin in one of two main points of the story: (1) in the midst of Muḥammad's visit to the fifth heaven; (2) near the very end of Muḥammad's heavenly journey, after his audience with God.

The earliest extant *mi'rāj* account containing the fifth heaven tour of Hell was composed in Persian, most likely in the 13th century, and now is housed in Istanbul as MS. Ayasofya 3441 (dated 1286 CE). Christiane Gruber has recently published an excellent edition and translation of this important manuscript. The fifth heaven siting of the tour of Hell repeats numerous times in later Arabic texts in this genre, including Istanbul MS Ayasofya 867 (dated 1481 CE) which I have translated elsewhere; Cairo MS. Tārikh Taymūr 738/8=Paris MS. BnF Arabe 1931 (n.d.); and other later and/or undated manuscripts. This variation of the Ibn 'Abbās *mi'rāj* gained prominence in later centuries because of its appearance in popular modern Arabic printed editions.

One of the earliest extant independent examples of an Ibn 'Abbās ascension narrative that locates the tour of Hell in the 6th or 7th heaven or beyond appears in Persian in a work by an anonymous Shī'ī scholar, apparently composed around the twelfth century CE, according to its contemporary editor. This published text was brought to my attention this winter by Christian Lange (with my thanks), and I have not had a chance to examine the manuscript on which the printed edition is based. Nevertheless, the pattern of the tour of Hell taking place in the 7th heaven and/or after Muḥammad's audience with God can also be seen in a series of later texts from the medieval period, including Istanbul MS. Amcazade 95/2 (dated ca. 1280), whose short tour of Hell narrative I include in this study. In addition, such a location for the tour of Hell near the end of the narrative appears in texts of diverse provenance, including the famous *Liber Scale Machometi* translated from Arabic into Latin and Castilian in the 13th century in the Spanish court of El Sabio, found in several MSS., e.g. Oxford Bodlean Library MS. Laudensis Misc. 537 (published by Besson and Brossard-Dandré in parallel Latin and French); multiple MSS. of Arabic ascension works by the Anatolian scholar Mūsā al-Iznikī (d.1429); and the gloriously illuminated Timurid Chaghatay *Mi'rājnāma*, now housed in Paris as MS. BnF Sup Turc 190, initially published by Séguy and recently appearing in an improved edition with a more full text and a detailed study of the accompanying images by Gruber.

By examining the locations of Muḥammad’s “tours of Hell” in a series of these medieval ascension accounts, this essay describes the emergence in the later mi‘rāj texts of two major patterns, locating the tour of Hell in the fifth or in the seventh (or perhaps even higher) heavens. It attempts to offer some provisional theories as to why such patterns emerged in these late medieval accounts of Muḥammad’s otherworldly journey. It finally explores potential explanations for why this trope became such a prominent feature of the later Ibn ‘Abbās ascension narratives, suggesting that it may have had something to do with how Muslims in the middle periods increasingly called on and adapted this discourse for use as an exhortative and didactic tool.

Day 2 (Sunday, 29 April 2012)

Panel 4 (9:30-11am): Hell and Islamic theological diversity 1

Temporary Hellfire and the formation of early Sunnism

Feras Q. Hamza (American University in Dubai)

This paper is concerned with the development of the (eschatological) concept of temporary Hell in early Islam.¹ Almost all of the Classical Sunni creeds contain one or two articles of faith that affirm the eventual salvation of a group of people who have been in Hell. These individuals are mostly identified as the Muslim grave sinners (*ahl al-kabā’ir*), though in certain versions they are ambiguously identified as ‘the monotheists’ (*muwahiddūn*). The salvation of these individuals, as it is described in the creeds, is tied to, and comes as a result of, the Prophet’s eschatological intercession (*shafā’a*); but at other times, the deliverance is simply on account of God’s mercy.² An Ash‘arite formulation of this tenet runs as follows: ‘They, the people of the sunna and ḥadīth, believe that by reason of the intercession of God’s Messenger, God will bring out a group of monotheists from Hell, according to what has been related from the Messenger of God’.³ Another is the following Maliki article: ‘Through the intercession of the Prophet for the grave sinners of his community, God takes him [the grave sinner] out of Hell’.⁴

The concept of a purgative Hell-fire was, apparently, a modification of the Quran’s otherwise explicit depictions of an eternal and unrelenting Hell-fire for sinners -- the counterpart to the paradisaic Garden of the righteous. This well-known binary opposition in the Quran’s recurring descriptions of the two post-mortem abodes seems to allow for no third eschatological alternative. Indeed it is the eternality of both abodes that is intended to reinforce, for the believer, the starkness of the contrast and effects the rhetorical impact of one of the Quran’s central themes. But by allowing for a purgative punishment in the Fire, and thus ultimately the salvation, of the grave sinners of the Muslim community in the Hereafter, the concept vindicated the legitimacy of their membership of this same community in this world: all professing Muslims, whether sinful or not, gravely so or otherwise, would eventually gain admission into Paradise. The elaboration of this concept and its consolidation within

¹ This paper reproduces narratives used in one part of a larger monograph currently being prepared by the author (for Brill’s Islamic History and Civilization series) under the title, *To Hell and Back: the Prophet’s intercession and the making of temporary Hellfire in Sunni Orthodoxy* (forthcoming).

² This is true of the Hanbali creeds (for which, see Laoust, *Profession*; Watt, *Creeds* 30-1); but also of the creeds of Ibn Māja and Tirmidhī (see Watt, *Creeds* 36; Wensinck, *Creed* 125), of the Hanafis (Wensinck, *Creed*, 188), of the Ash‘aris (Watt, *Creeds* 44, 50, 53, 78, 88), of the Malikis (Watt, *Creeds* 70) and of the Maturidis (Watt, *Creeds* 82).

³ Watt, *Creed* 44.

⁴ Watt, *Creed* 70.

mainstream Sunni orthodoxy was, overtly, a Sunni project, an anti-sectarian impulse that sought to neutralise a long-standing and for a while intractable early Muslim controversy, first precipitated by the Kharijite schism, over the status of sinning believers.⁵ More importantly, I would argue, is that the controversy over temporary hell-fire provides us with a glimpse (barely) into a time when traditionalism (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*) became the driving force of broader Sunnism. At this pre-classical Sunni stage, the advocates of the authority of *ḥadīth* (one group of proto-Sunnis) were able to win over other groups (of proto-Sunnis), borderline *jamā'īs*, such as some early Murji'ites, who preferred a literalist reading of the Qur'anic eschatology (eternal abodes) and soft traditionalists (semi-scripturalists?), who had not completely bought into the mass of *ḥadīth* material, but who were ultimately overwhelmed by the deluge of Prophetic *ḥadīths* circulating in the early 2nd/8th century at a time when Prophetic authority — in its textual, rhetorical and symbolic sense — was growing, ultimately to become the criterion for the vindication and articulation of mainstream orthodoxy.

The development of this concept of temporary Hell-fire should be of interest to the historian not only because it emerged gradually over time, that is, at the end of a bitter debate about the status of sinning Muslims (sc. Muslim grave sinners),⁶ nor indeed because it was not obviously a Quranic idea,⁷ but because it also reflected something fundamental about the consolidation of a distinct Muslim worldview, that which would become the majority tradition, and, concomitantly, the crystallisation of a distinct Sunni religious identity. The idea of a temporary hell-fire punishment for Muslim grave sinners came to circulate in various *ḥadīths* from about the 2nd/8th century and what may be termed the proto-Sunnis,⁸ that is, the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* of the 2nd-3rd/8th-9th centuries gradually incorporated such *ḥadīths* into their exegeses of specific Quranic verses, thereby legitimating the concept until it was finally established in the creeds of the classical period. The fact that they went about legitimating this idea in Tafsīr, for one, is in itself revealing, suggesting as it does that for Sunni traditionalists the commentarial genre was the discipline par excellence for negotiating and delineating orthodox ideas and, in effect, for creating what for them was orthodoxy itself. And yet, for Sunnism the concept of a temporary Hell-fire punishment was just one of several doctrinal developments that could be seen as indicative of a distinct Sunni religious outlook, what may be termed an anti-sectarian, *jamā'ī* religious impulse.⁹ Be that as it may, the idea of temporary Hell-fire was not easily absorbed by the mainstream tradition and it was only after a period of debate and controversy (mainly prompted by various rationalist and scripturalist interpretations of the Quran) that the doctrine won acceptance. When it did so, it was because it had become associated with another very important early Muslim idea: the Prophet's

⁵ On the question of sinning believers and the significance of the controversy for early Islamic sectaries, see Crone and Zimmerman, Salim.

⁶ An obvious analogy would be the development of the idea of Purgatory in medieval Christianity and its establishment as dogma (see Le Goff, Purgatoire).

⁷ Though, of course, the proponents of this concept of temporary Hell eventually legitimated the idea precisely because they were able to tie to certain exegeses of Quranic verses, as we shall see here. ⁸ On proto-Sunnism, see Zaman, Religion.

⁸ On proto-Sunnism, see Zaman, Religion.

⁹ There are numerous such 'typically Sunni' positions beginning with Shāfi'ī's 4-source juristic theory where the two earliest legal approaches (one Hanafi, and broadly rationalist, and one traditionalist represented by the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*) were to some extent reconciled, even though the latter was prioritised. The 'victory of Sunnism', as perceived by Sunnis themselves, was also effected by the neutralising of the *qadar* debate (between proponents of free will and predestinarians) through the famous Ash'arite doctrine of *kasb*. There was also the settling, albeit uncomfortably, of the question of God's attributes by means of the *bi-lā kayf* position adopted by Hanbali traditionalism as a middle-way approach between 'Mu'tazili metaphors' and the mild (but popular) anthropomorphic conceptions of God that circulated in numerous *ḥadīths*. Mawārdī, arguably, did the same for Sunnism on the question of the caliphate, as did Ghazālī on the status of Sufism.

intercession (*shafā'a*) for his community on the Day of Judgement.¹⁰

At the time of Muqātil (c. 133/750) the idea of Muslim sinners getting out of Hell was already around, but it is difficult to say how widely accepted the idea was, even among traditionalists. By the time of 'Abd al-Razzāq (c. 184/800), however, the idea was an important element of traditionalist exegesis, even as it was facing opposition from non-traditionalist circles. The *ḥadīths* in the *Muṣannaf* are efforts to iron out that opposition. At the same time, we see the intrusion of traditions which focus on the Prophet's eschatological intercession (*shafā'a*). This intercession, however, had originally emerged separately from temporary Hell¹¹ and by 184/800, as the evidence of the *Muṣannaf* suggests, it functioned in various ways: in order to protect the Muslim community from Hell; or so that God would forgive the sins of the Muslim community (such *ḥadīth* probably came into circulation after the civil wars, when the community had become increasingly schismatic). However, even by 184/800 it was still not explicitly associated with Muslim sinners exiting from Hell and the proponents of *ḥadīth* were still at pains to establish exegetical authority for the concept of a temporary Hell-fire. It is in response to the resistance with which their effort met that eventually the Prophet's *shafā'a* would be used to confirm the eventuality that Muslim sinners will ultimately escape eternal Hell. The emergence, and subsequent transformation, of the very *jahannamiyyūn* tradition testifies to that development. The *Muṣannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 212/827) established that a 'people' would exit from Hell. By al-Bukhārī's time (d. 257/870) these 'people' had become identified as *jahannamiyyūn*.¹² By the time Ibn Māja (d. 273/886) and al-Tirmidhī (d. 285/898) had put together their *ḥadīth* collections, however, this 'Muslim purgatory' had found an authoritative articulation: *la-yakhrujanna qawmun min ummatī min al-nār bi-shafā'atī yusammawn jahannamiyyīn*, 'Verily a group from my community shall exit from the Hell-fire thanks to my intercession and they shall be known as the 'people of jahannam'.¹³

What is the Purpose and Duration of the Qur'anic Hell? Revisiting Ibn Taymiyya's Case for Universalism Mohammad Hassan Khalil (Michigan State University)

Shortly before he passed away, the traditionalist Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) authored a work now commonly called *Fana' al-Nar* (The Annihilation of the Fire). In it he argues that hell will one day cease to exist and that all of its inhabitants—having been purified and rectified through chastisement—will proceed to the Garden to spend the rest of eternity in the blissful presence of God. The problem with this claim, however, is that it was and still is widely considered scripturally baseless and a violation of the consensus (*ijma'*) of the Muslim community. It is even more radical than the mystic Ibn al-'Arabi's claim that hell will transform into a quasi-paradisiacal abode of everlasting contentment. The going view in the eighth/fourteenth century, as today, is that while sinning believers may be redeemed after spending some time in hell, unbelievers will never be relieved of the painful torments of the Fire. According to Ibn Taymiyya, however, hints of the temporality of hell appear in the Qur'an itself, and the eventual salvation of all people was explicitly foretold by the Prophet's

¹⁰ The question of the Prophet's *shafā'a* was also fiercely contested by early Muslims, but there is ample evidence to suggest that unlike temporary hell, the doctrine of the Prophet's eschatological intercession was a very early idea (it is recorded on the Dome of the Rock's interior mosaics). The debate (between Mu'tazilis and traditionalists) was over the definition of this privilege of intercession in terms of who the recipients of this act would be. This theme is also significant for the development of a Sunni religious identity and I deal with it in the above-mentioned monograph.

¹¹ The Prophet as intercessor seems to be a much older idea (cf. the Dome of the Rock's inner mosaic inscriptions). I devote a much longer section to the development of *shafā'a* in my forthcoming monograph.

¹² Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'riqāq', no. 6559 and 'tawḥīd', no. 7450.

¹³ Ibn Māja, *Sunan* 2, 1443f., no. 4315; Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 2, 99 (line 15).

companion ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab and other companions, at least according to reports documented in the (no longer extant) Qur’anic commentary of the 3rd/9th century exegete ‘Abd ibn Hamid. If Ibn Taymiyya’s claims are accurate, this would mean that over time the great majority of Muslim theologians lost sight of the “true” purgatorial nature and purpose of hell for any number of reasons.

In the present paper, I shall go beyond discussing Ibn Taymiyya’s case for universalism (as others have already done) and assess his universalist reading of the Qur’an. Although hardly irrefutable, I maintain that Ibn Taymiyya’s arguments in the *Fana’* are compelling enough to warrant consideration, not just by theologians (those who have already sided with Ibn Taymiyya include Rashid Rida, Mahmud Shaltut, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi), but by historians as well.

Revisiting Ibn Taymiyya’s Scriptural Case for Universalism

Ibn Taymiyya holds that there are at least four Qur’anic passages that explicitly affirm the everlasting nature of heaven: 1. “[Heaven’s] produce is permanent (*akluhā dā’im*)” (13:35); 2. Our provisions for you [in heaven] will never end (*mā lahu min nafād*)” (38:54); 3. “[Heaven’s provisions are] neither limited, nor forbidden (*lā maqtū’a wa lā mamnū’a*)” (56:33); and 4. “[Paradise will be] a gift, uninterrupted (*‘atā’an ghayr majdhūdh*)” (11:108). As for hell, Ibn Taymiyya avers that the Qur’an never explicitly indicates that it is similarly “uninterrupted.” Although we find in the Qur’an a refutation of the claim made by some Jews that they may only be punished in hell for a “a few days” (2:80-81), all that can be ascertained about the damned is that they will remain in hell for “ages” (78:23). The latter passage (78:23), incidentally, is one of three passages that Ibn Taymiyya cites as evidence for a temporal hell. As he explains, the term “ages” is finite and limits the duration of chastisement for the transgressors who rejected true faith. The other two passages that Ibn Taymiyya cites as evidence for hell’s temporality—passages invoked by predecessors who also affirmed the temporality of hell—are 6:128 and 11:106-108, both of which state that the damned will remain in hell “unless [God] wills otherwise.” Whereas heaven is an “uninterrupted” gift, God “does as He pleases” with regard to hell (Q. 11:107-108).

Ibn Taymiyya would have no doubt dismissed the common claim that because the Qur’an employs the terms *khālidīna* (from the root *kh-l-d*) and *abadan* (from the root ‘-b-d) when describing the fate of the damned in hell, damnation must be everlasting. Thus, *khālidīna fihā abadan* (72:23) need not mean “they will remain in [hell] forever.” According to Ibn Taymiyyah’s disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1250), these terms are known to connote extended yet ultimately finite periods of time. This means the various passages that foretell damnation are somehow qualified: “such people will have nothing in the hereafter but the Fire” (11:16)—until they are rectified; “they will have no share in the hereafter” (2:200)—until they are rectified; and so on.

Rereading the Qur’an

The three passages that Ibn Taymiyya invokes to argue for universalism are all traditionally classified as “Meccan.” There are in fact a few other Meccan passages that Ibn Taymiyya might have invoked to support his case for universalism but for whatever reason did not. Perhaps the most significant is Q. 7:40, which states that “those who rejected” the message arrogantly “will not enter the Garden until the camel [*al-jamal*] passes through the eye of the needle.” The qualification (“until the camel passes through the eye of the needle”) might be interpreted as a sign of hope. A comparable and widely recognized statement appears in the Gospels: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom

of God” (Revised Standard Version, Mark 10:25).¹⁴ Many Christian scholars take this to mean that the rich will encounter additional hurdles on the road to glory, not that they will be barred from the kingdom of God. As we read in the clarification two verses later, “all things are possible with God” (Mark 10:27).

I submit that the descriptions of hell in passages classified as “Meccan” are ambiguous enough to allow the listener/reader to arrive at the conclusion that Gehenna—taken here to be a synonym for hell rather than a name for its highest level—might not be everlasting. (Although the term *abadan* does appear once in reference to hell in the Meccan suras [in 72:23], we may have good scriptural reason after all to accept Ibn al-Qayyim’s interpretation of this term.) As for the depictions of hell in suras classified as “Medinan,” these do not necessarily discredit Ibn Taymiyya’s universalist reading of the Qur’an but they certainly appear to be less accommodating.

God’s wise purpose in everlasting chastisement: Ibn al-Wazīr’s (d. 840/1436) critique of Ibn Taymiyya on the duration of Hell-Fire

Jon Hoover (University of Nottingham)

My paper will examine an early 15th century critique of Ibn Taymiyya’s views on the duration of Hell-Fire. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) argued on both textual and rational grounds that chastisement of even unbelievers and polytheists in Hell-Fire will eventually come to an end. This went against the mainstream Sunnī consensus of the day that unbelievers would spend eternity in Hell. Ibn Taymiyya’s disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) extended his teacher’s arguments in three of his major works, which precipitated a vigorous refutation by the Shāfi‘ī Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī and then later a critique from the Yemeni traditionalist Ibn al-Wazīr (d. 840/1436) who is the focus of this study. Ibn al-Wazīr presents the most reflective critique of Ibn Taymiyya’s arguments that I know of from the 14th and 15th centuries. The paper will first outline Ibn Taymiyya’s argumentation for the limited duration of the Fire, its reception by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and its refutation by Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī. I will then introduce Ibn al-Wazīr and examine his views on Ibn Taymiyya’s arguments. This will show that, although Ibn al-Wazīr shares important theological commonalities with Ibn Taymiyya, he cannot go all the way with the Ḥanbalī theologian. He evades the therapeutic rationale of Ibn Taymiyya’s argumentation and affirms instead that God chastises unbelievers forever for wise purposes that only God knows. To the best of my knowledge, no aspect of Ibn al-Wazīr’s theology has received serious consideration in a European language. This paper will thus constitute an initial foray into what is in fact a fairly large theological corpus.

Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī

Ibn Taymiyya’s last treatise before his death in 728/1328 responded to a question from Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya about the duration of the Fire. This treatise, which I call *Fanā’ al-nār*, makes several arguments for the limited chastisement of unbelievers in the Fire. I will highlight five that became bones of contention in later discussions. First are two textual arguments. One is Ibn Taymiyya’s citation of a tradition attributed to ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, “Even if the People of the Fire stayed in the Fire like the amount of sand of ‘Alīj, they would have, despite that, a day in which they would come out.” That is to say, those in the Fire will eventually leave, even if only after a very long time. Ibn Taymiyya explains that this tradition clarifies the Qur’ānic statement that unbelievers in Hell will be “staying in it for long stretches of time” (*lābithīna fīha aḥqāban*) (Q. 78:23). A second textual argument is based on the Qur’ānic verse, “As for those

¹⁴ Some scholars hold that “camel” in Q. 7:40 and Mark 10:25 should be rendered “rope” in both cases.

who are unhappy, they will be in the Fire, sighing and groaning, abiding therein (*khālidīn fīha*), as long as the Heavens and the Earth endure, except as your Lord wills” (Q. 11:106-107). The key term here is *khālid*, which the mainstream Sunnī tradition took to mean ‘everlasting’ or ‘eternal’ in an absolute sense, especially as it appears frequently in the Qur’ān without the qualifications, “as long as the Heavens and the Earth endure, except as your Lord wills.” For Ibn Taymiyya, however, the presence of these qualifications indicates that *khālid* need not mean ‘forever’ absolutely.

In a third argument in *Fanā’ al-nār*, perhaps the most pivotal, Ibn Taymiyya rejects any claim that the Muslim community has reached a consensus on the eternity of Hell-Fire for unbelievers. The early Muslims, the Salaf, were not of one mind on this issue, and any alleged consensus of later scholars is of no account because it is too difficult to verify on principle. Here we see Ibn Taymiyya’s Salafī reformism clearly in evidence as he sidesteps the authority of the reigning doctrinal paradigms of his time.

The last two arguments in *Fanā’ al-nār* that I wish to highlight are theological. First, Ibn Taymiyya draws on hadith reports indicating that God’s mercy will overcome God’s wrath to reason that God’s mercy precludes chastising unbelievers forever. Second, as a firm defender of rationality and wise purpose in God’s actions, Ibn Taymiyya argues that God could have no good reason for chastising anyone forever. Rather, the purpose of chastisement is therapeutic. It is to purify and cleanse from sins.

We have no evidence that Ibn Taymiyya’s reasoning generated any interest until his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya copied portions of *Fanā’ al-nār* into a lengthy discussion of the duration of the Fire in *Ḥādī al-arwāḥ*. So far as we can tell, Ibn al-Qayyim wrote this book in 1345. Ibn al-Qayyim also took up question of the duration of Hell-Fire soon thereafter in his *Shifā’ al-‘alīl* and his *Al-Ṣawā’iq al-mursala*. In these three works, Ibn al-Qayyim develops the therapeutic rationale for chastising unbelievers much more fully than did his teacher, but in the first two he ultimately leaves the final destiny of unbelievers to God’s will. In the third, however, he clearly affirms that chastisement of unbelievers in the Fire will come to an end.

In 1348, the Shāfi’ī chief judge in Damascus, Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī wrote a refutation of Ibn Taymiyya’s *Fanā’ al-nār*. Ibn al-Qayyim and al-Subkī had come into conflict on a number of other matters at the same time, and it seems obvious enough that al-Subkī’s real aim in refuting Ibn Taymiyya was to stop Ibn al-Qayyim from arguing against eternal fire for unbelievers. Al-Subkī’s strategy seems to have worked, as we have no evidence that Ibn al-Qayyim speculated further about the matter. Instead, he briefly affirms in a very late work that unbelievers will suffer eternal punishment.

Al-Subkī’s refutation does not engage Ibn Taymiyya’s theological arguments seriously, and his decisive appeal is to scholarly consensus. A consensus has been reached that unbelievers will spend eternity in the Fire, and denying this is unbelief (*kufr*). Al-Subkī is careful to say that he is not accusing anyone of being an unbeliever, and Ibn Taymiyya is never mentioned explicitly in the treatise. Nonetheless, it is that error on this doctrine constitutes dangerously incorrect Islamic belief. Al-Subkī also does not accept Ibn Taymiyya’s interpretations of the key Qur’anic texts, and he marshals a large body of Qur’anic evidence to show that unbelievers will abide in Hell-Fire eternally.

Ibn al-Wazīr

This brings us to Ibn al-Wazīr, and his critique of Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn al-Wazīr was trained as a Zaydī scholar in Yemen, and he learned the Mu’tazilī theology espoused by the Zaydīs of the time. Eventually, however, Ibn al-Wazīr accepted the full authority of the Sunnī books of Ḥadīth, and he abandoned Mu’tazilī doctrines for those held by traditionalist Sunnīs. This is readily apparent, for example, in Ibn al-Wazīr’s rejection of the Zaydī/Mu’tazilī views that humans create their own acts and that the unrepentant Muslim bad sinner (*fāsiq*) is an

unbeliever who will spend eternity in the Fire. Along with the Sunnī mainstream, Ibn al-Wazīr maintains that monotheists with the least grain of belief in their hearts will eventually enter the Garden of Paradise, even if they must first spend time in the Fire for their sins. Ibn al-Wazīr appears to identify with the Shāfiʿī legal school, which was the most prominent Sunnī school in Yemen. He speaks of the Meccan Shāfiʿī scholar Saʿd b. ʿAlī al-Zanjānī (d. 471/1078-9) as “one of our colleagues” (*min aṣḥābinā*). Despite this possible affiliation with the Shāfiʿīs, Ibn al-Wazīr is known to be a *mujtahid*, and he is commonly viewed as a precursor to the nineteenth century Yemeni reformer and *mujtahid* al-Shawkānī. Al-Shawkānī calls Ibn al-Wazīr a *mujtahid muṭlaq* in his biography of his predecessor (p. 81), and he takes the biography as an opportunity to launch a diatribe against *taqlīd*. Ibn al-Wazīr wrote extensively on the practice of *ijtihād* as well, and this bears further investigation. In theological method, Ibn al-Wazīr is traditionalist. He denounces the rationalist methodology of Kalām, and he most commonly argues his doctrinal positions from extensively quotations to the Qurʾān and the Sunnī Hadith collections. However, he retains a place for reason in a fashion similar to that of Ibn Taymiyya’s Salafī traditionalism. Like Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Wazīr appeals to a Qurʾānic rationality that trumps the complexities of Kalām.

Ibn al-Wazīr treats Ibn Taymiyya’s view on the duration of the Fire in two of his extant writings. The first is his large theological work—9 volumes in the printed edition—written in 808/1405-6 and entitled *Al-ʿAwāṣim wa al-qawāṣim fī al-dhabb ʿan sunnat Abī al-Qāsim* (The Protectors and Destroyers in Defense of the Sunna of Abī al-Qāsim [the Prophet Muḥammad]). Ibn al-Wazīr wrote this work in response to a treatise by his Zaydī teacher ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Abī al-Qāsim attacking him for deviation from Zaydism. The second work *Īthār al-Ḥaqq ʿalā al-Khalq* (Preferring the Real over Creatures) was written in 837/1433-4 and exceeds 450 pages in the 1318/1900 edition. Both works discuss theological method and the full range of theological doctrines, from proof for the existence of God to the Imāmate.

In both *ʿAwāṣim* and *Īthār al-Ḥaqq*, Ibn al-Wazīr tells us that Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim wrote on duration of unbelievers’ chastisement and that al-Dhahabī wrote a refutation of Ibn Taymiyya. Commenting on Ibn al-Wazīr’s remark more than 300 years later, the Yemenī traditionalist Muḥammad Ismāʿīl al-Amīr al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 1182/1768-9) observes that he could not find the aforementioned treatise by al-Dhahabī. I do not know of any either, and perhaps Ibn al-Wazīr confused al-Dhahabī with Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī. In any case, Ibn al-Wazīr says that he had made criticisms of both Ibn Taymiyya and al-Dhahabī, and that he had written more fully on this topic earlier. Ibn al-Wazīr is not clear as to how many works he had devoted to this, if even more than one, but he does state that he dealt with it in a *qaṣīda* of more than 1200 lines entitled *Al-Ijāda fī al-irāda* (The Excellent Expression on the Will). Fifty-two lines of this *qaṣīda* are given in *Īthār al-Ḥaqq* and 12 lines in *ʿAwāṣim*, but the full poem is not known to be extant. The lines of the *qaṣīda* copied into these later texts present Ibn al-Wazīr’s views on the duration of chastisement in highly compressed form.

Ibn al-Wazīr raises the perpetuity of chastisement (*dawām al-ʿadhāb*) as a problem of evil challenging the rationality of God’s acts in both *ʿAwāṣim* and *Īthār al-Ḥaqq*. Ibn al-Wazīr affirms wise purpose (*ḥikma*) in God’s deeds, and he contrasts his position, on the one hand, with the ‘extreme Ashʿarīs’ (*ghulāt al-ashʿariyya*) who deny purpose in God’s will to evade the problem of evil and to exalt His power and might, and, on the other hand, with the ‘extreme Muʿtazilīs’ who compromise God’s power. Ibn Wazīr’s position is basically that of Ibn Taymiyya, as well as more moderate Ashʿarīs such as al-Ghazālī—upholding both God’s power and God’s wisdom—but he accuses Ibn Taymiyya and his followers of too easily rejecting perpetual chastisement on the basis of exceptions in Qurʾānic verses such as, “As for those who are unhappy, they will be in the Fire, sighing and groaning, abiding (eternally) therein (*khālidīn fīha*), as long as the Heavens and the Earth endure, except as your Lord wills” (Q. 11:106-107, see also Q. 6:128, *ʿAwāṣim* 6:365). Ibn al-Wazīr charges Ibn Taymiyya with using these exceptions to specify or particularize (*takḥṣīs*) the generality (*ʿumūm*) of the many Qurʾānic

affirmations of eternal chastisement for unbelievers. Rather, in Ibn al-Wazīr's view, the Sunnī position is to affirm the eternity of chastisement of unbelievers and God's wise purpose in this, but to acknowledge that this wise purpose is among the ambiguous affirmations (*mutashābihāt*) of which only God knows the interpretation (*ta'wīl*).

Ibn al-Wazīr ventures reasons or wise purposes for God's creation of evils, especially evils in this life. These constitute tests, punishments for unbelievers, instigations to thanksgiving, and the like. However, Ibn al-Wazīr does not admit the possibility that God could have therapeutic reasons for punishing unbelievers in Hell-Fire, and this is what appears to divide him most fundamentally from Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn Taymiyya makes the argument that God could have no wise purpose in keeping unbelievers in Hell-Fire forever because in fact God's wise purpose is to purify them.

Although further study is required, it appears that Ibn al-Wazīr gives the upper hand to a logic of retribution for unbelievers over Ibn Taymiyya's therapeutic rationale. Ibn al-Wazīr does not censure Ibn Taymiyya with the strong appeal to consensus found in al-Subkī, nor does he call Ibn Taymiyya's view unbelief. However, he does note a consensus that absolute pardon of unbelievers is not permissible out of regard for the rights of prophets and messengers (*Īthār al-Ḥaqq*, 245). To Ibn al-Wazīr's mind, absolute pardon of unbelievers would too radically cheapen their rejection of God's conveyers of warning and revelation.

Panel 5 (11:30am-1pm): Hell and Islamic theological diversity 2

**Ismaili-Shi'i visions of hell:
from the “spiritual” torment of the Fatimids to the Ṭayyibī Rock of Sijjīn**
Daniel De Smet (CNRS, Paris)

In his *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya* and other polemical works, al-Ghazālī time and again claims that the Ismailis — whose doctrine he presents as a blend of *zandaqa* and *falsafa* — follow the heretical teachings of the philosophers, as they deny bodily resurrection and defend a purely spiritual conception of Paradise and Hell. Although al-Ghazālī's diatribes against Ismailism have to be taken with care, he seems to be right on this particular issue. Eschatology, as it is commonly understood in Islam, is rejected by the Ismailis partly for the same reasons it was not accepted by the majority of the Muslim philosophers. Nevertheless, as there is no doctrinal unity in Ismailism but a wide range of conflicting movements, the conception of Hell seems not to be uniform. I will illustrate this on the basis of a few examples taken from two distinct traditions : (1) Carmathian and Fatimid Ismailism (10th – 11th centuries, Persia and Egypt) ; (2) Ṭayyibī Ismailism (from the 12th century onward, in Yemen).

Carmathian and Fatimid Ismailism

1. The Qur'ān was “created” by the Prophet from a non-verbal “inspiration” (*ta'yīd*) he received from the intelligible world. His task was to translate this inspiration into the language of his people (Arabic) and in accordance with their intellectual level (which was very low, as it was addressed to illiterate Bedouins). Hence, he was compelled to use images and symbols accessible to their understanding. The Qur'ānic descriptions of Paradise and Hell are purely symbolic. Taken in their literal sense (*ẓāhir*) they are absurd and contrary to reason. They have however an inner, esoteric meaning (*bāṭin*) which has to be discovered by *ta'wīl* under the guidance of the Imam. The absolute norm of every esoteric interpretation is that it must be in accordance with reason (*'aql*) (Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-Maṣābiḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma*).
2. Bodily resurrection is contrary to reason (cf. Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī's arguments proving its impossibility in *Kashf al-mahjūb*; even God cannot do what is impossible). In consequence, there

is no bodily life in the Hereafter: reward and punishment are purely spiritual. All authors stress that the final Resurrection (*qiyāma*) will be a spiritual event.

3. Paradise and felicity are linked with knowledge; Hell and torment with ignorance. Hence, for the majority of the Muslims who — by rejecting the *da'wa* of the Imam — follow a religion they do not understand and are subjugated to rituals and legal prescriptions of which they ignore the real meaning, Hell starts here on earth. During their earthly life, Hell is the *zāhir* of the Shari'a without *bāṭin* (al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-Yanābī*).

4. After its separation from the body, Paradise means for the purified and blessed soul a return to the intelligible world, either by joining the Universal Soul from which it is a parcel (*juz'*) fallen into matter (al-Sijistānī), or by entering into conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the Active Intellect, the tenth of the cosmic Intellects (al-Kirmānī). Hell means for the wicked souls — those whose rational faculty remained in a state of potentiality, as they did not accept the instruction (*ta'līm*) of the Imam — to be forbidden from entering the intelligible world.

5. However, the soul's liberation from any material substrate will only be possible with the advent of the seventh *nāṭiq*, the *qā'im* who will close the cycle of Muḥammad, abrogate Islam and reveal the esoteric meaning (*bāṭin*) of all previous revelations. In the meantime, souls must continuously be reborn in new bodies, whose perfection is in accordance with the degree of purification attained by them during their previous lives (al-Sijistānī, who nevertheless rejects reincarnation into animals). Or, according to al-Kirmānī who does not accept transmigration, all the souls have to wait for the Resurrection in the *barzakh*, a place situated just below the tenth sphere, at the border of the intelligible world. In this material substrate, the blessed souls have a foretaste of the joys of Paradise and the wicked ones of the torments of Hell.

6. At the "Great Resurrection" (*al-qiyāma al-kubrā*) the integral *bāṭin* will be revealed by the *qā'im* to all souls. Those who are already purified will be completely illuminated and able to rejoin their homeland in the intelligible world. Those who have rejected the *bāṭin* during their earthly life, learn at this very moment what they have missed: they *know* now, but their knowledge is useless for them, as they are forbidden to enter the intelligible world. They remain at its gates for ever, shrouded in obscurity, but conscious of what they are deprived of. This is Hell according to Fatimid Ismailism.

Ṭayyibī Ismailism

Ṭayyibī authors (starting with al-Ḥāmidī's *Kanz al-walad*) adopted most of these doctrines from their Fatimid predecessors. But they integrated it into a kind of cosmic myth that bears a lot of similarities with Manicheism. The generation of the sensible world is the result of a rebellion in the intelligible world (Corbin's "drama in heaven") which provoked the fall of parcels of light (souls) into the obscurity of matter. The demiurge (the tenth Intellect) created out of this matter the stars, the planets and the sublunary world as a kind of "machine" in order to liberate as much light as possible. Numerous cycles of Prophets and Imams are necessary to help the human souls out of their material prison.

1. Paradise and Hell start here on earth. The souls which are illuminated by the instruction of the Imam, although unable to subsist without a body, are reincarnated in a pure and noble human form. When a cycle is closed with the advent of a *qā'im* — there are numerous *qā'ims* according to Ṭayyibī doctrine! — all the souls liberated during this cycle are aspirated by "divine magnetism" through the "column of light" and gather in a "temple of light" in the intelligible world. This is Paradise for them. At the other hand, the souls of those who refuse to follow the Imams, are reincarnated in animal bodies (called *barzakh*) of increasing impurity: apes, dogs, pigs, snakes, worms, scorpions. In these bodies they suffer the torments of Hell.

2. As the cycles succeed each other in time, more light is liberated from matter: not only human souls, but also parcels of light imprisoned in plants, animals and even minerals. When the last cycle will be closed (360,000 years after the creation of the sensible world), all the light

that could be saved will have been returned to the intelligible world. At that moment, the “temple of light” will be completed. Inversely, what could not be saved — the “waste” of creation, including the wicked souls — and matter itself will be compressed in an extremely compact mass. This “rock” is identified with the Hell of Sijjīn, according to a certain interpretation of Qur’ān (S. 83 : 7-9).

The Morisco hell: significance and relevance of the Aljamiado traditions and literature for Muslim eschatology

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Aljamiado literature is a specific and defined corpus of literature. It is the literature of the Muslims and then crypto-Muslims living in the Iberian Peninsula between the end of the emirate of Granada in 1492 and the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1608. There are differing lines of inquiry and of approach to the theme of Aljamiado and Morisco literature and traditions. Most of the work on the topic has been carried out by Romanists and people working on the Spanish language on one side, or on the question of the social, cultural and religious conditions of the Moriscos in the Iberian peninsula on the other. The aim of the first approach was (and still is) to know the specific conditions of Iberian vernacular languages and their specific signs (e.g. Aragonese) in these texts. The second approach has usually resulted in the conclusion that the contents of this literature were highly influenced by the harsh conditions of a Muslim minority coming to its end, thus preserving a religious and literary knowledge in which the Muslim contents were somehow marked by loss and near dissolution.

My starting point and perspective is different, that is, I deal with this corpus of literature from the point of view of the Islamicist in order to shed light on what was circulating in 15th/16th-century Muslim Spanish communities, having as reference the Islamic Arabic literature as a whole. In doing so, I seek to uncover the peculiarities of this literature and its traditions, both in terms of linguistic rendition and of contents. In order to accomplish this, I examine one specific theme as it appears throughout all Aljamiado literature, that is, the description of hell as it emerges in the Aljamiado eschatological narratives.

Eschatology and hell in Aljamiado

In the corpus of Aljamiado texts, consisting in over more than 200 manuscripts, there are a number of works that preserve eschatological narratives or traditions. In fact, eschatology and descriptions of hell and its punishments have been recognized by researchers as one of about ten major topics attested in this literature. Eschatological traditions and reports are in particular attested in the Aljamiado and Morisco versions of the Qur’an; exegetical explanations can also be found in some miscellaneous texts and in a number of literary works. In particular, along with some scanty quotations in almost every text, major description and mention of hell are attested in the various versions of the story of Muhammad’s ascension, of the story of Jesus and the skull, of the story of the *doncela Carcayona*, of the translations of the *Tanbīh al-ghāfilīn* by Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, of the versions of the colloquy of Moses with God and in narratives titled *The Day of the Resurrection (yawm al-qiyama)*. Though being mostly direct and faithful translations from Arabic, the various versions of these narratives display a number of significant features from which the specific peculiarities of the Aljamiado literature on hell emerge.

Language

A number of obvious questions concern the language and linguistic usage connected to eschatology. The terminology related to paradise and hell in particular displays the strongest signs of Arabic and Islamic calques. So it is always *aljanna*, *jahannam* and *fuego* and never *paraiso* or *infierno*. This is evident also from the Qur'anic translations and in particular from the only complete Morisco version of the holy text (in Latin characters, ms. Toledo 235). Sometimes one finds glosses and the use the more common *jahannam* and *fuego* in substitution of the so-called other Qur'anic names of hell (such as *al-jahīm*, *lazā* etc.), which in later literature are considered the names of the doors or layers of hell. The same also happens in versions of the *Tanbīh al-ghāfilīn* by Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī. The Aljamiado Spanish versions are in general faithful in rendering/reproducing (?) the Arabic terms to denote and describe hell. The first impression - but this is a provisional impression still awaiting further inquiry -, is that the linguistic rendition is quite conservative and also in the exegetical passages there is nothing peculiar to be connected to a specific [linguistic?] situation or milieu.

Narratives and their Muslim Arabic sources

The narratives including significant descriptions of hell are the versions of Muhammad's ascension, the story of Jesus and the skull, the story of the *doncela Carcayona*, the versions of the colloquy of Moses with God, and the long narratives on the Day of the Resurrection. So far I have only been able to deepen analysis of the versions of Muhammad's ascension and of the story of Jesus and the skull - narratives which have been discussed in some recent studies or that I know better since I carried out some research on the Arabic versions. In particular the Aljamiado versions appear quite similar to the late medieval Arabic versions preserved in manuscripts and in miscellaneous collections all over the Muslim world. They look like one version among the others, even though they are preserved in Spanish and not in Arabic. I have the impression that they are closer to the Arabic versions than those attested in other languages (e.g. Eastern African ones) and thus most probably almost all faithful translations of Arabic versions. The description of hell in this case is close to the Arabic versions and no specific concern emerges from this. In relation for instance to the categories of the damned, specific differences emerge neither in the versions of Muhammad's ascension nor in those of the story of Jesus and the skull. In general they appear similar to the later Arabic popular versions, but Aljamiado texts clearly do not indulge too much in narrative enlargements. In fact, though the description of hell in these narratives is in line with medieval Muslim narratives, they do not add anything specific and above all are never as long as the longest Arabic versions. This must be confirmed by further research on the other texts.

The textual evidence

Given the overall characteristics of the narratives some other questions arise when we consider the textual consistence. The situation differs from narrative to narrative but it can be stated provisionally that these stories are preserved mostly in collections of miscellaneous texts, appearing in five to ten attestations preserving two or three textual differing versions. An identical version can be preserved in more testimonies clearly related and copied or dictated one from the other. This appears significant since, as regards for instance the versions of Muhammad's ascension and the story of Jesus and the skull, the late medieval mechanisms of proliferation of narratives and versions tended to bring single elaborations into circulation which only in rare cases display direct textual relation (see for instance the versions by Ibn 'Abbās or al-Bakrī of Muhammad's ascension and those of the story of Jesus and the skull dealt with in previous studies). The fact that in the Aljamiado texts there are no more than two or three versions that are then attested in a rather large number of copies with specific textual relation could be relevant for how we understand the processes of the circulation of Muslim

literature in the Morisco environment. It is highly probable that versions circulating in Arabic versions entered into Muslim Spain but due to the growing difficulties, rather than introducing new versions and texts, the first renditions into Spanish of these circulating versions were copied or dictated directly. This would explain the highly conservative attitude of the Arabic texts and the fact that, even though more than one text may be attested, there are not many versions for each narrative, unlike how it appears more often in the Arabic homologous versions. Most probably after one moment in the 16th century, no new Arabic texts entered the corpus of Morisco literature or in any case less and less Arabic versions circulated so that it became necessary, for education and spread of the Muslim culture, to copy what was at disposition. If there is some influence of the Morisco situation and condition on their literature, it thus results not in a supposed “degeneration” of loss of Muslim references, but rather in its inner and textual conservatism in relation to coeval Muslim literature.

Conclusion

If this situation is confirmed by further analysis, a number of points, relevant to Aljamiado studies and to the history of Muslim eschatological literature could be drawn: 1) Aljamiado literature is conservative in relation to Muslim Arabic literature as regards translated terminology and contents; 2) amongst popular late extended versions, Aljamiado literature chooses relatively shorter ones, to fit them into miscellaneous collections including many texts; 3) the relevance of Aljamiado literature for the knowledge of the narratives on hell circulating in the Muslim community in the 15th and 16th centuries.

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The Visual Rhetoric of Hell in Safavid Illustrated Texts, ca. 1550-1600 Christiane Gruber (University of Michigan)

“Had everyone accepted the love of ‘Ali, then God would not have created Hellfire.”
-- *Hadith Qudsi* cited by Shah Tahmasp in his Autobiography¹⁵

The scholarly study of Islamic eschatological thought has tended to focus on textual sources that describe the signs of the hour, last judgment, heaven and hell, along with its inhabitants and denizens, angels and demons. Without a doubt, narrative vignettes, elaborate tales, and theological debates offer a wide variety of interpretable and thus debatable views of the eschaton within Islamic imagination from the beginnings of Islam to the present day.

During the early modern period, however, a number of texts became supplemented by pictorial images depicting hell. Within Persian cultural spheres, and most especially during the second half of the so-called “Safavid century” (sixteenth century), a number of innovative paintings were developed by artists working in Iran. Propelled by a distinct Shi‘i-Sufi worldview tinted by millenarian anticipation, such paintings offered powerful visual signs to convey abstract eschatological imaginations, which themselves were conceived of essentially as “signs” (*isharat*) and “visions” (*ru‘yat*). By harnessing the open-ended meanings of the visual sign, Safavid images of hell naturalize and further embed supercessionary discourses at the height of sectarian contention between the Shi‘i Safavids and the Sunni Ottomans. As such, they stake a politico-religious position while simultaneously offering a projection of what lies ahead via a symbolic encoding of motifs readable to a culturally conversant Safavid viewership.

In order to explore the power of visual imagery in conveying particular notions of hell at this time, a selection of Persian paintings will be explored in detail. These include large-scale paintings depicting the last judgment, heaven, and hell as included in lavishly illustrated

¹⁵ Shah Tahmasp, *Tazkira-i Shah Tahmasb*, ed. Amir Allah Safari (Tehran: Intisharat-i Sharq, 1984), 51.

manuscripts, including two books of divinations (*falnamas*) produced during the 1550s for Shah Tahmasp (r. 1525-76) as well as an illustrated biography (*tazkira*) of Shaykh Safi al-Din dated 990/1582. While the first group of paintings is intended to function as a form of prognostication or “seeing an augury” (*fal didan*) in the future, the painting in the *tazkira* depicts hell in past time and according to the typological pattern of the dream vision (*khwab*). As such, Safavid paintings of hell produced between ca. 1550-1600 reveal the extent to which visual signs of the future could function as signs, visions, dreams, and omens all at the same time.

In Shah Tahmasp’s two illustrated *falnamas*, scenes of the last judgment and hell provide an elaborate “re-presentation” of eschatological events according to an overtly Shi’i perspective. While sinners turn black and transform into animals while being tormented by demons, snake, and scorpions, the Prophet Muhammad intercedes on their behalf to secure salvation in the afterlife. However, the prerogative of prophetic intercession (*shafa’a*) is shared if not usurped, as Imam ‘Ali—bearing a golden aureole and facial veil, the two special attributes of Muhammad—takes center stage in the gathering of souls and weighing of deeds. While ‘Ali’s salvific and miraculous powers are iconographically emphasized, the Prophet Muhammad is relegated to the status of mere observer, his prophecy (*nubuwwa*) commuted by the imam’s vicegerency (*wilaya*). However, the visual narrative does not halt there: above the two intercessors is a vision of heaven, in which sit the radiant silhouettes (*ashbah*) of Fatima and the imams as they look down upon the scene. Without linguistic mediation, the image’s central Shi’i message becomes quickly self-evident by presenting a visual discourse that essentially engages the paradox of the pictorial—namely, visualizing the “realm of the unseen” (*ilm al-ghayb*) as putatively observable reality.

The Safavid discourse on hell is taken in yet another direction within a complex painting included in an illustrated *tazkira* of Shaykh Safi al-Din, which remains unstudied to the present day. The manuscript, dated 990/1582, was produced during the reign of Shah Tahmasp’s son, Muhammad Khudabanda (r. 1578-87). At this time, the Ottomans launched major offensives against the Safavids, seizing large swathes of Iranian territory (including the major city of Tabriz). Infused by millenarian anticipation, militarism, and sectarian zeal, the unique image of hell in the *tazkira* is laced in apocalyptical, ascension, and dream vision imagery, couching ‘Ali as the new Muhammad, as he, along with *shaykhs* Safi al-Din and his mentor Zahid, intercedes on behalf of sinners under the protection of the banner of praise upheld by legions of angels. In this particular instance, hell is projected backward—not forward—in order to visually argue for the charisma and authority of the Safavid polity at a time of increased battling over a new (and righteous) world order at the approaching millennial mark.

Safavid images of hell made ca. 1550-1600 provide enhanced sectarian visions of the last judgment and hell, revealing how painterly practices were deeply entangled with Shi’i-Sufi, millenarian, and apocalyptic worldviews, royal and popular practices of divination, and Safavid claims to authority and intercession at a moment of great religio-political divide between the Safavids and Ottomans. Transcending verbal exegesis, such “battling” images engage in a culturally encoded system of visual signage in order to explain and interpret hell’s meanings, themselves willfully enclaved and open-ended all at the same time. By investigating these images and their functions as illustrative signs, visions, and auguries, this presentation aims to highlight how the *visual* imagination of otherworldly realms has been deemed particularly useful in envisaging and reifying an otherwise abstract concept within early modern Islamic eschatological traditions.



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