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Yahy b. 'Abdallh

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# SOME LIGHTS ON AN EARLY ZAYDITE MANUSCRIPT: AKHBĀR FAKHKH WA-KHABAR YAHYĀ B. 'ABDALLĀH

### Maher Jarrar, Beirut

Among the recently catalogued manuscripts of the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin, there appeared a volume containing various works and epistles all of which belong to the Zaydite historiographical literature. The scribe of the entire volume is the celebrated Zaydite scholar Humayd b. Ahmad al Muhallī (d. 652/1254)¹. Professor G. Schoeler, who described this volume in his catalogue², kindly drew my attention to it in November 1991. Upon studying it more closely³, I became convinced of the importance of its content, especially the section entitled "Akhbār Fakhkh wa-khābar Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh" (fols. 154b-184a) by Ahmad b. Sahl al-Rāzī, who was still alive in the first quarter of the fourth/tenth century⁴.

This work under discussion was one of the sources of al-Muhallī's al-Hadā'iq al-wardiyya. al-Muhallī never gives his chains of transmitters, and although he occasionally mentions his sources such as the Maqātil al-Tāli-biyyīn of Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī (d. 356/967) and al-Ifāda of al-Nātiq bil-Haqq (d. 424/1032)<sup>5</sup>, he never mentions this work.

In preparing the edition I compared it with the *Maqātil* and the *Ifāda*. It became obvious, that 1) Abū l-Faraj and al-Nāṭiq bil-Ḥaqq did not know this work; and 2) that both Abū l-Faraj and the author of this work, who belongs to the preceeding generation, have a common source; 3) and that even al-Muḥallī did not make use of all its material. The second step was to compare the material contained in this work with that of early historians like al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī, al-Mas' ūdī, Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābī and with Imāmī sources, especially *al-Irshād* of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd and *al-Kāfī* 

- 1 Cf. R. Strothmann, in: Der Islam 1/1910/361-362; A.F. al-Sayyid, Masādir 127f.
- Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland. Arabische Handschriften, Teil II., no. 322, 323, 106-108.
- My thanks go to the following: Dr. H.-D. Feistel, the director of the *Orient Abteilung* at the Berlin *Staatsbibliothek*, Dr. H. Kurio of the above mentioned library and to the director of the *Bayrische Staatsbibliothek* in Munich for their friendliness and help. I would like to thank, too, Dr. J. Strauß (Freiburg i.Br.) who read the final version of this article.
- 4 Cf. p. 275f. below.
- 5 Cf. A.F. al-Sayyid, Masādir 91f.

of al-Kūlaynī. At this stage I was certain of the originality of this book, which not only preserves unique information going back to early Zaydite transmitters and narrators, but moreover sheds new light on the material already available in other sources.

In the present article I am not going to deal with all the questions involved, but will rather limit my presentation to the content of this manuscript. A critical edition and a study are already in preparation and are due to appear in Beirut.<sup>5a</sup>

The text of Ahmad b. Sahl al-Rāzī is divided into three parts:

- 1. Part one (fols. 154a-160a) deals with the accounts leading to the battle of Fakhkh (154a-155b), the events of the battle (155b-159a) and its aftermath (159a-160a). The author follows up the lot of some 'Alides who took part in these events. The material of this first part goes back to eight sources<sup>6</sup>:
- 1.1. al-Ḥasan b. 'Abdalwāḥid al-Kūfī. He is quoted three times and the bulk of the main report is given on his account. His isnād reads: Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm' > Bakr b. Ṣāliḥ al-Rāzī<sup>8</sup> > 'Abdallāh b. Muhammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Muhammad b. 'Alī
- It has come to my attention recently that another manuscript of the same work (copied in 1305/1887) exists at the library of the great mosque in San'ā', cf. Fihrist makhtūtat al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr-San'ā' 4/1731, no. 2347 (ed. A. 'A. al-Ruqayhī and 'A. a.-Husayn. San'ā' 1404/1984).
- In this short article I am going to treat the *isnāds* only cursorily. Due to the lack of Zaydite biographical works it is difficult to identify the early Zaydite transmitters. I have ordered the *Matla' al-budūr* of Ibn Abī l-Rijāl from the Ambrosiana library but I was told that the library is under repair now. I therefore tried to make use of the work of R. Traini, *Sources Bibliographiques des Zaidites, alif-hā'*.
- He is likely to be identified with al-Hamdānī, who was like his father in charge of the province of Hamdān apparently as a deputy of the Zaydite Imams. He was there at the time of al-Qāsim (presumably al-Rassī d. 246/860). One of the reports taken from him goes back to 279/892. He appears in the *Maqātil* once as Muhammad b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm and once as 'Alī b. Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm (cf. p. 404, 443; (ed. Najaf) 270, 296) and even the sources were not sure of the order of the name (cf. Najāshī, *Rijāl* 242f.; Ardabīlī, *Jāmi* 1/596, 2/150).
- A client of Dabba, he is said to have transmitted from the seventh Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim (d. 183/799). The Imami scholars regard him as untrustworthy (cf. Najāshī, Rijāl 79; Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/127; Ibn Shahrāshūb, Ma'ālim 24, no. 142; Prozorov, Arabskaia Istoricheskaia 69, 103, 143). Some of his reports are varified in Bihār al-anwār 13/392, 14/132, 460, 17/88, 18/409.

- b. 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far b. Abī Tālib. The name of this Ja'farī as it appears here is difficult to identify but we find in the Shiite sources two possibly identical names:
- 1.1.1. 'Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm b. Muhammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far b. Abī Tālib who is the author of two books, one of which is directly connected to the topic of our book "K. khurūj sāhib Fakhkh wa-maqtalih". The other one deals with the revolt of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya "K. Khurūj Muhammad b. 'Abdallāh wa-maqtalih". The main transmitter from him is Bakr b. Sālih to whom these books were later attributed 10. In our case Bakr b. Sālih is also the main transmitter. Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī mentions in his Maqātil two reports dealing with the battle of Fakhkh, on the authority of 'Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī. His isnāds, too, go back to Muhammad b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm Bakr b. Sālih 'Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī<sup>11</sup>.
- 1.1.2. 'Umar b. Shabba (d. 263/876)<sup>12</sup> is quoted six times in *Maqātil al-Tālibiyyīn*<sup>13</sup> giving reports on the authority of Ibrāhīm b. Muhammad b. 'Abdallāh Ibn Abī l-Kirām al-Ja'farī<sup>14</sup>. Ibn Shabba introduces these reports with the formulae: *haddathanī*, *haddathanā* and *akhbaranī*. It is unlikely that Ibn Shabba could have heard directly from him<sup>15</sup>. Obviouslly, he is taking his material from a written source which is not known to us<sup>16</sup>. All these reports deal with the revolt of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya
- 9 Najāshī, Rijāl 149f.; Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/464; Āghā Buzurg, Dharī'a 7/150f., no. 817, 818. Majlisī quotes in Bihār al-anwār (48/160f., his source is Ikmāl al-dīn) a report on the battle of Fakhkh going back to 'Abdallāh b. al-Hakam al-Armanī > 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far b. Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī. This Armanī is mentioned in the sources as the main transmitter from 'Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ja'farī.
- This could indicate that he was the main  $r\bar{a}w\bar{i}$  who put the written notes of his master in the form of a book and transmitted them further.
- Maqātil 404, 443; (ed. Najaf) 270, 296. In both cases Abū l-Faraj is deriving his material from 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. Muhammad al-'Alawī, who wrote two books on the same subject as 'Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm b. Muhammad al-Ja'farī: "Akhbār sāhib Fakhkh" and "Akhbār Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh b. al-Hasan" (cf. Najāshī, Rijāl 186; Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/544; Āghā Buzurg, Dharī a 1/337 (1760), 1/354 (1864); S. Günther, Quellenuntersuchungen 141-144).
- 12 Cf. 1.3. below.
- 13 Maqātil 206, 255, 270, 334f., 345, 348, cf., too, 343 and 406 both referring to the report given on p. 334f.; (ed. Najaf) 143, 177, 187, 226, 233, 235 and 232, 270; S. Günther, Op. Cit. 221.
- 14 Cf. Najāshī, Rijāl 16; Ibn Dāwūd, Rijāl 13 (11); Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/17, 28, 32; Dāwūdī, 'Umda 45f.
- 15 I could not find this chain, either in the newly edited Akhbār al-Madīna of 'Umar b. Shabba or in other sources available to me.
- 16 Cf. on the sources of Ibn Shabba regarding the revolt of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, T. Nagel, in: *Der Islam* 46/1970/227-262.

and his brother Ibrāhīm. It is probable that this Ibrāhīm b. Muhammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Abī l-Kirām al-Ja'farī is the father of the above mentioned Ja'farī who appears in our manuscript and whom we identified with the person mentioned by al-Najāshī, especially because Ibn Abī l-Kirām<sup>17</sup> is the common link in the genealogical line of the three of them, i.e. 'Abdallāh b. Muhammad al-Ja'farī (ms. fol. 154a), 'Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Ja'farī (Najāshī, Rijāl 149f.) and Ibrāhīm b. Muhammad al-Jaf'arī (Najāshī, Rijāl 16) and furthermore because the above mentioned Ja'farī wrote a book on Khurūj Muhammad b. 'Abdallāh wa-maqtaluh. The Shiite sources suggest that as early as the fourth/tenth century the genealogists were not any more sure about the identity of the Tālibiyyīn and were mixing them together (no wonder because most of them and their descendants had identical names)<sup>18</sup>. It is not possible to give a final word on the identity of these authors given the lack of sources dealing with Zaydite historiography which have come down to us.

Al-Hasan b. 'Abdalwāḥid (1.1.), the main source of Ahmad b. Sahl, appears five times in *Maqātil al-Tālibiyyīn*, i.e. in *isnāds* of accounts dealing with the revolts of Zayd b. 'Alī, al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother Ibrāhīm and once in a short report on Fakhkh<sup>19</sup>. In four of these *isnāds* he is the second transmitter in the chain. Abū l-Faraj transmits from him through two authorities: 'Alī b. Ahmad b. Hātim and 'Alī b. al-'Abbās al-Muqāni'ī<sup>20</sup>. In the fifth report he appears as the third member of the *isnād*: Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Sa'īd<sup>21</sup> > Muḥammad<sup>22</sup> b. Mansūr al-Murādī al-Hasan b. 'Abdalwāḥid. al-Murādī, a Kufan, is one of the well known and highly estimated Zaydite scholars, who died in 290/903<sup>23</sup>. In our manuscript al-Murādī appears, like al-Hasan b. 'Abdalwāḥid, as a direct

- 17 Ibn Abī l-Kirām was on the side of the 'Abbasids during the revolt of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and is said to be the one who brought his head to Egypt, though other reports mention that it was the head of Ibrāhīm b. 'Abdallāh, the brother of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (cf. Maqātil 275, 350; (ed. Najaf) 191, 236; Ibn 'Asākir, Ta'rīkh 6/21; Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 2/143; Dāwūdī, 'Umda 45).
- 18 In our case cf. al-Abtahī, *Tahdhīb* 303-306 and the sources mentioned in fn. 9.
- 19 Maqātil 132, 354, 388, 436, 524; (ed. Najaf) 96, 240, 261, 290, 343.
- 20 Cf. S. Günther, Op. Cit. 136ff. (al-Hasan b. 'Abdalwāhid is not mentioned here), and 139f; cf., too, Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/588.
- 21 Abū l-'Abbās b. 'Uqda, d. 333/944, GAS 1/182; R. Traini, Sources biographiques, no. 167; S. Günther, Op. Cit. 127ff.
- He appears once in our manuscript and twice in *Maqātil* (ed. Najaf) 270, 365 as Ḥamdān b. Mansūr, cf. Schoeler, *Op. Cit.* 382.
- 23 al-Jandārī, Tarājim 36; R. Strothmann, in: Der Islam 13/1923/6; W. Madelung, Der Imam al-Qāsim 80ff, 95; GAS 1/563; S. Günther, Op. Cit. 202-204.

authority of Ahmad b. Sahl al-Rāzī, mainly transmitting directly from the Zaydite Imam al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 246/860). The fact that al-Murādī, in the *isnād* of Abū l-Faraj, relates directly from al-Hasan b. 'Abdalwāhid suggests that Hasan was a little younger than him.

1.2. 'Īsā b. Mihrān. The author relates one report from him concerning the allegiance pledge of al-Husayn al-Fakhkhī with the *isnād* 'Īsā b. Mihrān Muhammad b. Marwān<sup>24</sup> > Artāt b. Habīb<sup>25</sup>. 'Īsā, known as Abū Mūsā al-Musta' tif, is the author of several books<sup>26</sup>. The Sunnite sources accuse him of being a *Rāfidite* for his writing a book cursing the companions of Muhammad<sup>27</sup>. Abū l-Faraj gives four reports where 'Īsā is the second chain in the *isnād*<sup>28</sup>.

Artāt b. Habīb, to whom this report goes back, is a Kufan who is supposed to have transmitted from Ja'far al-Sādiq<sup>29</sup>. He appears another time in  $Maq\bar{a}til$  al- $T\bar{a}libiyy\bar{i}n^{30}$  relating from Ibrāhīm b. Abī Yahyā, the famous traditionist who was a  $d\bar{a}\bar{\imath}$  of Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh<sup>31</sup>. Our manuscript mentions a certain Habīb b. Artāt among Yahyā's  $du'\bar{a}t^{32}$ ; most likely we have to do here with a scribe's error which is to be emended in Artāt b. Habīb.

- 1.3. 'Umar b. Shabba (d. 263/876). The author transmits from him, directly, three times in this part quoting al-Madā'inī ('Alī b. Muḥammad, d. 235/850<sup>33</sup>). It is difficult to establish from which of Ibn Shabba's books this material originates. It is neither found in the edited part of his *Akhbār*
- 24 I have not been able to identify him yet.
- The same report is given by Abū l-Faraj on the account of al-Hasan b. Muhammad al-Muzanī, Muhammad b. Marwān, Artāt b. Habīb (Maqātil 449f.; (ed. Najaf) 301).
- 26 Ibn Dāwūd, Rijāl 269; al-Tūsī, Fihrist 142; Najāshī, Rijāl 210f; Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/654; Prozorov, Arabskaia Istoricheskaia 129f. and index 223.
- 27 al-Khatīb, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* 11/167 (5866); Sam'ānī, *Ansāb* 11/239; Dhahabī, *Mīzān* 3/324 (6613). al-Khatīb mentions that he is one of the sources of al-Ṭabarī, but I could not find any report by al-Tabarī going back to him.
- 28 Maqātil 69, 78, 561; (ed. Najaf) 47, 51, 368; See other reports in: Majlisī, Bihār 15/7; 16/143.
- 29 He is the author of a book, cf. Najāshī, Rijāl 78; Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/78.
- 30 251; (ed. Najaf) 174; cf., too, Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh* 5/34.
- 31 See below (2.1.) and fn. 48 and 49.
- 32 Fol. 168a. He is mentioned neither in K. al-Maṣābīh of Abū l-'Abbās al-Hasanī, nor in al-Hadā'iq al-wardiyya by Muhallī; cf. W. Madelung, Akhbār 55f., 175.
- 33 GAS 1/314f; G. Rotter, in: Oriens 23-24/1974/103-133; S. Günther, Op. Cit. 147f. al-Madā'inī has a book entitled Kitāb man qutila min al-Tālibiyyīn.

al-Madīna, by al-Tabarī. Abū l-Faraj mentions Ibn Shabba in a collective isnād dealing with the battle of Fakhkh, whereby it is difficult to separate his wording from that of the other authorities<sup>34</sup>.

In his history of this battle Abū l-Faraj mentions reports going back to al-Madā'inī<sup>35</sup> but he relates them on the authority of Ahmad b. al-Ḥārith al-Kharrāz<sup>36</sup> and they do not occur in our manuscript.

- 1.4. Ahmad b. Hamza al-Rāzī. I still could not identify him. He transmitted once from Ahmad b. Rāshid Saʻīd b. Khuthaym al-Kūfī, and once from Hārūn al-Washshā'. Ahmad b. Rāshid (in some sources Rushd, Rashīd or Rushayd)<sup>37</sup>, a Zaydite, is the main transmitter from his uncle Saʻīd b. Khuthaym (in some sources Khaytham) Abī Maʻmar al-Hilālī<sup>38</sup>, who was one of the *duʻāt* of Zayd b. 'Alī and took part in his revolt as well as in the revolts of Ibrāhīm b. 'Abdallāh and al-Husayn al-Fakhkhī. He is supposed to have transmitted from Asbagh b. Nubāta<sup>39</sup>, a companion of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib. The Sunnite sources speak positively of him and Ahmad b. Hanbal transmitted from him<sup>40</sup>. Abū l-Faraj gives ten reports on his account<sup>41</sup> dealing with the three Zaydite revolts already mentioned.
- 1.5. Hārūn al-Washshā' is still unidentified<sup>42</sup>.
- 1.6. Muhammad b. Mansūr al-Murādī (already mentioned in 1.1.2.).
- 34 Maqātil 442; (ed. Najaf) 295; cf., too, 459; (ed. Najaf) 308.
- 35 Magātil 456, 457, 459; (ed. Najaf) 305, 306, 307.
- 36 D. 258 Or 259/871 or 872, GAS 1/518f.; Prozorov, Arabskaia Istoricheskaia 116ff.
- 37 Cf. Ibn Abī Hātim, al-Jarh wal-ta'dīl 2/51 (Rushd); Mizzī, Tahdhīb 10/413 (Rushd); Majlisī, Bihār 18/1f. (Rushayd).
- D. between 180/796 and 190/805, Ibn Dāwūd, Rijāl 456; Najāshī, Rijāl 128; Ardabīlī, Jām' 1/359f.; Mizzī, Tahdhīb 10/413-416; Dhahabī, Mīzān 2/133 (3162); C. van Arendonk, Opkomst 284f., 291; W. Madelung, Der Imam al-Qāsim 72. In Maqātil 152 (ed. Najaf) 111 his nephew Ahmad calls him Ibn Abī 1-Hādiya al-'Abdī.
- 39 Barqī, Rijāl 50; Najāshī, Rijāl 6; Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/106f.
- 40 When Ibn Ma'īn was reminded that Ibn Khuthaym was a Shiite and a Qadarite, he answered: "Shī'ī thiqa wa-qadarī thiqa".
- 41 S. Günther, Op. Cit. 215f.
- 42 It may be far-fetched to identify him with Abū Bishr Hārūn b. Hātim al-Kūfī al-Bazzāz (d. 249/868, Bazzāz has the same meaning as Washshā'), a Zaydite who is one of the sources of Abū l-'Abbās Ibn 'Uqda (Mīzān 4/282 (9152); GAS 1/316). In another isnād in our manuscript, Hārūn al-Washashā' transmits from 'Abdal'azīz b. Yahyā al-Kinānī, most probably the traditionist who died in 240/860 (cf. 3.7. below).

- 1.7. Muhammad b. al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī, the son of the Zaydite Imam<sup>43</sup>. The author relates from him directly twice.
- 1.8. Sulaymān b. Mūsā. The author transmits from him one report on the authority of his father Mūsā who relates from his relatives (mashā'ikh ahl baitih). This Sulaymān b. Mūsā is most probably the son of Mūsā b. 'Abdallāh b. Mūsā al-Jūn who was killed in 256/869 during the reign of al-Muhtadī <sup>44</sup>. Sulaymān outlived his father but did not have any male descendants<sup>45</sup>.
- 2. Part two (fols. 160a-166b) starts with a report following up the narration on the flight of Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh and his brother Idrīs to Abyssinia after the defeat of Fakhkh. This chapter is mainly devoted to the story of Idrīs, his flight to Egypt and his career in North Africa. The reports of this part originate from three different sources:
- 2.1. Idrīs's flight to Egypt is given according to a certain Hārūn (most probably al-Washshā' mentioned in part one 1.5.). The author mentions that it is likely that this Hārūn was one of the du'āt of Yaḥyā b. 'Abdallāh. On his authority, Aḥmad b. Sahl, gives the text of the letter which Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Abī Yaḥyā wrote on behalf of Yaḥyā b. 'Abdallāh to Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥadramī in Egypt. Ibn Abī Yaḥyā (d. 184/800), a Madinan, was a client (mawlā) of the tribe Aslam, and Ibn al-Murtadā puts him in the fifth generation of the Mu'tazila<sup>46</sup>. He was one of the teachers of al-Shāfi'ī <sup>47</sup> but was not held in any esteem among the Sunnite sources which accused him of having been a Qadarite<sup>48</sup>. Though the later twelver
- 43 W. Madelung, Der Imam al-Qāsim 98f., 121ff., and index, p. 266.
- 44 Ibn Tabātiba, Muntaqila 170 (He gives 255/868 as his death date); Maqātil 678; (ed. Najaf) 425f; K. Öhrnberg, The Offspring, table 32, 33, 40.
- 45 Dāwūdī, 'Umda 102; K. Öhrnberg, The Offspring, table 40.
- 46 Tabaqāt 134; Qalā'id 54.
- 47 The Zaydite sources claim that al-Shāfi'ī was a supporter of Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh and one of his du'āt (al-Jandārī, Tarājim 33) and that he had studied with him when Yahyā was hiding himself in Yemen during the time when al-Shāfi'ī held the post of a judge there (see 3.2. below); on al-Shāfi'ī's (trip(s) to Yemen, cf. J. Schacht, in: Studia Orientalia Ioanni Pedersen 320; W. al-Qādī, in: Arabian Studies in Honour of Mahmoud Ghul 127-141. al-Shāfi'ī's relation to the Zaydites still needs more attention.
- 48 Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqāt 5/314; Fasawī, al-Ma'rifa 3/33, 55, 132; Abū l-Shaykh, Tabaqāt 1/395f.; Abū Nu'aym, Tabaqāt 1/171; Mizzī, Tahdhīb 2/184-191; Dhahabī, Siyar 8/450-454; J. van Ess, Zwischen Hadīth und Theologie 120.

Shiites adopted him since he was an expert on the traditions of both the fifth Imam al-Bāqir and the sixth Imam al-Sādiq<sup>49</sup>, he rather seems to have been a Zaydite, a follower of Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh<sup>50</sup>. The Zaydite sources quote him (on the account of Artāt b. Habīb 1.2. above) preferring al-Nafs al-Zakiyya to Ja'far al-Sādiq<sup>51</sup>. The letter which Ibn Abī Yahyā wrote on behalf of Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh appears in al-Muhallī's Hadā'iq<sup>52</sup>, though he neither gives the reason of its writing nor does he mention his source.

- 2.2. al-Madā'inī (cf. above 1.3.). He is mentioned once continuing the report given in part one. Most probably the author is relying here on Ibn Shabba. Curiously enough the *mawlā* of Idrīs who is supposed to have accompanied Idrīs to Egypt and to have had played a decisive role in Idrīs's career in North Africa and taken over his office after his death, occurs in the sources under the name of Rāshid, but is named in this report of al-Madā'inī: Ishāq b. Rāshid (cf. below 2.5.).
- 2.3. Idrīs's career in North Africa is quoted after an *isnād* which is rather difficult to identify: *haddathanī* Muhammad b. 'Amr b. Khālid, Abū 'Ulātha > Abū Khaythama, 'Alī b. 'Amr b. Khālid, '53 Ibrāhīm b. Abī Ayyūb.
- 2.4. In this report, the author quotes a letter of Idrīs adressed to the Berber tribes, on the authority of al-Hasan b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Hasan b. Ja'far b. al-Hasan b. al-Hasan<sup>54</sup>, a grandson of Muḥammad al-Saylaq<sup>55</sup>.
- 49 Ibn Dāwūd, Rijāl 17; Tūsī, Fihrist 16; Najāshī, Rijāl 11; Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/33f.; Ibn Shahrāshūb; Ma'ālim 3; Abtahī, Tahdhīb 240ff. The Imami sources make the unfounded claim that al-Wāqidī used his books without mentioning him.
- 50 As our ms. ascertains, cf., too, C. van Arendonk, Opkomst 290.
- 51 Maqātil 251; (ed. Najaf) 174; Muhallī, Hadā'iq (ms. München, Glaser 86) 1/92a, 22-28.
- 52 Cf. W. Madelung, Akhbār a'immat al-Zaydiyya 175-178.
- It is difficult to substantiate my hunch that we are dealing here with two brothers who could be the sons of the well known Kufan Jārūdite 'Amr b. Khālid, Abū Khālid al-Wāsitī, the main transmitter of the Corpus Juris Zayd b. 'Alī's (cf. R. Strothmann, in: Der İslam 13/1923/23ff.; W. Madelung, Der Imam al-Qāsim 44, 48, 54f., 57).
- 54 Dāwūdī, 'Umda 151; K. Öhrnberg, The Offspring 18; 'Alī b. Muhammad al-Saylaq is not known to have a son called al-Hasan.
- 55 Bukhārī, Sirr al-silsila 19, 74f.; Dāwūdī, 'Umda 151.

2.5. The last report in this part deals with the wars between Idrīs and the Ibādite Imam, 'Abdalwahhāb b. Rustam, with the following isnād: akhbaranī 'Īsā b. Idrīs> abīh> Ishāq b. Rāshid, mawlāhum.

One is inclined to think that this 'Īsā b. Idrīs mentioned here could refer to the son of Idrīs II.<sup>56</sup>, i.e. the grandson of Idrīs b. 'Abdallāh. But one wonders where the author, Ahmad b. Sahl al-Rāzī, could have met him. Furthermore, even if the name Ishāq b. Rāshid refers to Rāshid, the mawlā of Idrīs I., it remains improbable that 'Īsā b. Idrīs II. had heard from him since Rāshid died either in 184/800, 186/802 or 188/804<sup>57</sup>. In any case when he died, Idrīs II. is said to have been eleven years old<sup>58</sup>. This isnād seems to me somewhat suspicious. The author could have derived his material from a written source still unknown to me.

This long report which occupies fols. 165a-166a is devoted more to the inner political and military situation in North Africa at that time than to the career of Idrīs who is hardly mentioned any more. It adds new details to the material already available in other sources dealing with the career of 'Abdalwahhāb b. Rustam, 'Abdallāh b. al-Jārūd and others. It would be interesting to compare this Zaydite material with the reports which appear in the Ibādite sources dealing with the history of the early community in North Africa. As far as Idrīs is concerned we are confronted here with three questions: 1- how long did his stay in North Africa last, 2- when did he die and 3- who was his alleged murderer?<sup>59</sup>

Although our manuscript does not give a date for Idrīs's arrival in North Africa, it provides us with a clue for it. The other sources give dates varying between 170/786-87 and 172/788-89<sup>60</sup>. We read in the manuscript that Idrīs arrived in Egypt occured during the governement of Mūsā b. 'Īsā. Mūsā took over the governement of Egypt in 171/787 and was granted leave in Ramadān 172/February 788 after having governed for one year and five and a half months<sup>61</sup>. This indicates that Idrīs had left

<sup>56</sup> Cf. H. Beck, Idris de kleine 26, 35, 88, 89, 114; K. Öhrnberg, The Offspring, table 30.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. M. Talbi, L'Emirat Aghlabide 347; H. Beck, Idris de kleine 67f., 80ff., 96ff. and see index 371.

<sup>58</sup> H. Beck, Op. Cit. 65f. The history of Idrīs I. and Idrīs II. is based on contradictory and mostly legendary reports.

I am not going here to discuss these problems in detail, cf. M. Talbi, L'Emirat Aghlabide 362ff.; H. Beck, Op. Cit. 15ff.

<sup>60</sup> M. Talbi, Op. Cit. 366f.; M. Ismā'īl, Adārisa 55ff.

<sup>61</sup> Kindī, Wulāt Misr 132; at the same time Wādih was in charge of the post. Kindī mentions that Idrīs entered Egypt under the government of 'Alī b. Sulaymān, who overlooked him so he could leave to North Africa (Wulāt 131f.).

Egypt before Ramadān 172, a fact that is confirmed by some other sources<sup>62</sup>.

In the report of 'Isā b. Idrīs, it is said that Idrīs had stayed in Tangier for seven years and that he was killed there after Harthama b. A'yan<sup>63</sup> took over Kairouan in Jumāda 179/May-June 79564. In his discussion, M. Talbi argues that this year most probably coincides with that of Idrīs' death<sup>65</sup>. The report passes over the personality of the man who is supposed to have poisened him in silence (he speaks of a group and uses the verb in the plural: ...ilā l-nafar alladhīn kāna Hārūn wajjahahum ilā Idrīs ilā tanja li-yasqūh al-summ hattā fa'alū)66. A few pages earlier the author mentions on the authority of Abū Ulatha, Muhammad b. 'Amr b. Khālid (cf. 2.3) that Shammākh al-Yamāmī was appointed by Hārūn al-Rashīd to the post office of Egypt, instead of Wadih who had helped Idrīs to flee from Egypt, under the government of Mūsā b. 'Īsā. al-Shammākh was given the instruction either to kill Idrīs or to send someone to do the job, if Idrīs had left for North Africa. At any rate this report does not suggest that al-Shammakh himself was the murderer, but only that he was instructed to invigilate the case. The oldest report on this case is referred to by Ibn Habīb (d. 245/859) who, however gives no source<sup>67</sup>, but mentions that the assassination was carried out during the government of Harthama by a Medinan (rajul min ahl al-Madīna) who poisened him with a fish. Two other versions of his assassination found circulation in the sources<sup>68</sup>: The first mentions al-Shammākh al-Yamāmī to have poisened Idrīs, either with tooth powder or with a water-melon. This version is

- 62 Cf. M. Talbi, Op. Cit. 366ff.
- 63 Ch. Pellat, in: *E.I.*<sup>2</sup> 3/1971/231.
- Most of the sources agree that Idrīs I. died in Walīla. Walīla is in the province of Tangier.
- 65 Op. Cit. 371f.; but cf. Abū Zakariyyā'Ibn Khaldūn, Bughya 1/79 (French translation 1/101f.), who dates his death in the year 175; Lévi-Provençal, Islam d'Occident 14 dates his death even earlier; M. Ismā'īl, Adārisa 59.
- 66 Akhbār Fakhkh 166b, 21.
- 67 Asmā' al-mughtālīn 197f.
- 68 Both appearing with variations, cf. M. Talbi, L'Emirat Aghlabid 369ff.; H. Beck, Idris de kleine 18-56. The late sources made a synthesis between the two reports and added to the legendary features, cf. Ibn Abī Zar', al-Anīs al-mutrib 22ff.; Ibn Khaldūn, 'Ibar 4/24f.; al-Himyarī, al-Rawd al-mi'tār 610; Ibn al-Qādī al-Miknāsī, Jadhwa 22f.; al-Salāwī, Istiqsā 1/142-144.

transmitted on the account of four authorities: Sālih b. 'Alī<sup>69</sup>, Ahmad b. al-Hārith b. 'Ubayda<sup>70</sup>, the Zaydite Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Muhammad b. al-Qāsim<sup>71</sup> and Muhammad b. Mūsā al-Barbarī<sup>72</sup>. The scond version goes back to 'Alī b. Muhammad b. Sulaymān al-Nawfalī (d. 204/819)<sup>73</sup>. He identifies the murderer with the Zaydite theologian and one of the *du'āt* of Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh (according to the ms. 167b)<sup>74</sup>, Sulaymān b. Jarīr<sup>75</sup> al-Jazarī<sup>76</sup>, who poisened him with perfume (*qārūrat ghāliya*; some reports have a fish instead)<sup>77</sup>. However, the originator of this report was an Imāmī, who is accused by the Zaydite Abū l-Faraj of being prejudiced in what he reports about the Zaydites and of telling lies<sup>78</sup>. Although this report is isolated<sup>79</sup>, the fact that it found circulation in Zaydite literature indicates that it was accepted to a certain extent among them<sup>80</sup>. We also may have to take into consideration the controversies among the Zaydites themselves which could have led to the adop-

- 69 Ibn al-Faqīh, Buldān 81f. (tooth powder), on Sālih b. 'Alī, cf. H. Beck, Idnis de kleine 18; H. Masse, Abrégé du Livre des pays 99, he identifies him wrongly (index 428) with Sālih b. 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. al-'Abbās who died in 151/768.
- 70 Bakrī, Masālik 121 (tooth powder).
- 71 Bakrī, Masālik 121 (water-melon).
- 72. Abū 1-Faraj, Maqātil 490 (tooth powder), on Muhammad b. Mūsā (d. 294/906), cf. S. Günther, Op. Cit. 205f. Abū 1-Faraj's source is 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-'Alawī, who wrote a book on "Akhbār sāhib Fakhkh" and another on "Akhbār Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh" (fn. 11 above).
- 73 Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/598; Prosorov, Arabskaia Istoriceskaia 181; Günther, Op. Cit. 151-152.
- 74 C. van Arendonk, *Opkomst* 73. Yahyā and Sulaymān could have met during Yahyā's short stay in al-Jazīra before Yahyā entered Baghdad (cf. fol. 166b).
- 75 In some sources the name is distorted into Hurayz.
- 76 Ash'arī, Maqālāt, index 636; C. van Arendonk, Opkomst 73f., 82ff.; W. Madelung, Der Imam al-Qāsim 61ff.; M. Watt, Formative Period 162ff. (German version Der Islam II, 165ff.).
- 77 Maqātil 489; Bukhārī, Sirr al-silsila al-'alawiyya 12; Bakrī, Masālik 118ff. (Istibsār 194-196); Abū Zakariyyā'Ibn Khaldūn, Bughya 1/79.
- 78 Magātil 518; (ed. Najaf) 238f.
- 79 A shorter but similar report (Maqātil 490) is given on the authority of Yahyā b. al-Hasan (d. 277/890, S. Günther, Op. Cit. 226ff.) > Dāwūd b. al-Qāsim al-Ja'farī (d. 261/875, Tūsī, Fihrist 131; Najāshī, Rijāl 113; al-Khatīb, Ta'rīkh Baghdād 8/369).
- 80 Cf. C. van Arendonk, Opkomst 73; W. Madelung, Der Imam al-Qāsim 62; Turjumān 78b, 13-23; Muhallī mentions in al-Hadā'iq al-wardiyya (ms. München, Glaser 86, fol. 110b) the version which names Sulaymān b. Jarīr, he then adds that some reports mention instead a man who was wearing like the Jews (most probably al-Muhallī is depending on Ahmad b. Sahl al-Rāzī, cf. fol. 162a) and others mention a barber. Strangely enough, al-Muhallī gives Muhammad b. Jarīr (al-Tabarī) as his source. In his history (Ta'rīkh 3/561f.; (ed. Ibrāhīm) 8/198f.; (Engl. transl.) 30/29). Tabarī gives only the version with al-Shammākh without naming his source (wa-qīla).

tion of this version. Our manuscript, on the contrary, confirms the early reports which put Idrīs's death in relation with al-Shammākh al-Yamānī.

- 3. Part three (fols. 166b-184b) follows the career of Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh and his fate in the jail of Hārūn al-Rashīd. The *isnāds* in this part are the following:
- 3.1. al-Hasan <b. 'Abdalwāḥid> (cf. 1.1. above). He relates a report on Yaḥyā's sojourn in Baghdad during his concealment and his flight afterwards. This is reported with the following isnād: al-Ḥasan > Ibrāhīm b. Yūnus (?) > his father(?) > Fulayt 'an Sulaymān. The 'an mentioned after Sulaymān seems to be a slip of the pen which has to be corrected to Fulayt ibn Sulaymān who is mentioned fol. 161b and 167b among the du'āt of Yaḥyā, and who accompanied his brother Idrīs to Egypt<sup>81</sup>.
- 3.2. Sa'īd b. Buhlūl *min* abnā' *Fāris bi-Ṣan'ā'* (?). He relates a report on Yaḥyā's eight months' stay in Yemen, where al-Shāfi'ī<sup>82</sup> and others are said to have studied by him.
- 3.3. Abū Zayd (i.e. 'Umar b. Shabba). On his authority originates the bulk of the material dealing with Yahyā's stay in Daylam, his imprisonment by Hārūn al-Rashīd and his death in jail (fols. 167b-183b). Ibn Shabba's main source here is al-Madā inī who is quoted eight times without raising the transmitters chain after him. Although we find in the sources reports with similar content, this material, derived from Ibn Shabba > al-Madā'inī, is new and quite original. On one occasion, Ibn Shabba relates a report from Ibn Zabāla<sup>83</sup>.
- Both Abū l-'Abbās al-Husaynī in K. al-Masābīh and Muhallī in al-Hadā'iq al-wardiyya have instead: Fulayt b. İsmā'īl (W. Madelung, Akhbār 56, 175; cf., too, C. van Arendonk, Opkomst 291). I could not identify this name in the available sources. Possibly, Fulayt, could be a misspelling of Talīd!; a certain Talīd b. Sulaymān (d. 190/805) attested in the Imāmī sources (Najāshī, Rijāl 83; Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/132). He transmitted from Ja'far al-Sādiq. He appears once in Abū l-Faraj's Maqātil (p. 181 tilmīdh instead of Talīd which is clearly an error; (ed. Najaf) 129) transmitting from 'Abdallāh b. al-Hasan b. al-Hasan (al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's father). This report by Abū l-Faraj is taken from Talīd on the authority of 'Abbād b. Ya'qūb (d. 250/864, Najāshī, Rijāl 208; Ardabīlī, Jāmi' 1/431; S. Günther, Op. Cit. 112f.) who else appears in Maqātil (ed. Najaf, 174) as a transmitter from Artāt b. Habīb (1.2. above).
- 82 Cf. fn. 46 above.
- 83 GAS 1/343f.; G. Schoeler, Verzeichnis 382.

An account of the clash between Yahyā and Bakkār al-Zubayrī at al-Rashīd's court is introduced with this short isnād: wa-haddathanī Abū l-Nattāh 'an al-Madā'inī qāl wa-haddathanī al-Dabbī 'an ba'd al-Nawfaliyyīn. G. Schoeler suggested, quite rightly, Abū l-Nattāh to be emended in Ibn al-Nattāh<sup>84</sup>. Ibn al-Nattāh (d. 252/866) is Muhammad b. Sālih, from whom Ahmad b. Sahl al-Rāzī, the author of our manuscript, could not have transmitted directly<sup>85</sup>. He is a historian with 'Abbasid sympathies on whose authority al-Tabarī relies in reporting certain accounts on Yahyā's career. He is also the alleged author of "Akhbār al-'Abbās wa-wuldih".86. al-Tabarī's material on Yahyā is clearly anti-Talibide and characterized by Abbasid tendencies. This report is also found in al-Tabarī (wa-dhakara al-Dabbī anna shaykhan min al-Nawfaliyyīn qāl..)87. Most probably, the author takes this report from the same book by Ibn Shabba from which he derives the remaining material88, and Muhammad b. Ṣāliḥ appears as a source of Ibn Shabba elsewhere89. al-Dabbī, mentioned here, is al-Mufaddal b. Muhammad the famous scholar who is said to have been a Zaydite<sup>90</sup>.

- 3.4. Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm <al-Rassī> (1.7. above). Three reports quoted in this part are based on his account.
- 3.5. Abū Hāshim Ismā'īl b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. Hasan b. 'Ubaydallāh b. al-'Abbās b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib. The author transmits from him directly another report on the confrontation between al-Zubayrī and Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh at the court of al-Rashīd (cf. 3.3.). His father 'Alī died in 264/877<sup>91</sup>. Abū Hāshim Ismā'īl is transmitting from Hamza b. al-Qāsim,
- 84 Verzeichnis 382.
- 85 Cf. fn. 88 below.
- 86 Cf. The editor's preface 15ff.
- 87 Ta'rīkh 3/616f.; (ed. Ibrāhīm) 8/244f.; (Engl. transl. 30/120).
- 88 Else, is Ibn al-Nattāh two generations elder than Ahmad b. Sahl the author of this manuscript, and thus he could not have transmitted directly from him; hereto, cf. p. 275f. and fn. 95-97 of this article.
- 89 Cf., eg., Akhbār al-Madīna 1270.
- 90 Abū 1-Faraj, Maqātil 338, 372; (ed. Najaf) 251; I. 'Abbās's preface on: Dabbī, Amthāl al-'Arab 18-20 where he discusses the date of his death (thus Bosworth's fn. 458 (Tabarī, Engl. transl. vol. 30) is to be revised).
- 91 Dāwūdī, 'Umda 286f.; Mus'ab, Nasab Quraysh 79; Ibn Hazm, Jamhara 67.

most probably a descendant from Hamza b. Hasan b. 'Abdallāh b. al-'Abbās b. Abī Tālib, who studied by Ja'far al-Sādiq<sup>92</sup>.

- 3.6. Abū 'Alī al-Bustānī (?) > Ibn Sammā'a sāhib Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Shaybānī<sup>93</sup>. He tells the story of al-Rashīd's infringement of the indemnity he had granted Yahyā b. 'Abdallāh (through al-Fadl b. Yahyā). al-Shaybānī refused to give a legal judgment (fatwā) which could have enabled Hārūn al-Rashīd to infringe the indemnity, thus causing al-Rashīd to harbor ill will against him. Such a legal opinion was given then by Abū l-Bakhtarī<sup>94</sup>. The story is verified also in other sources with some variations<sup>95</sup>. Only Abū l-'Abbās al-Hasanī gives at the end of the report an account transmitted by Muhammad b. Sammā'a showing that al-Rashīd used to favour al-Shaybānī thereafter<sup>96</sup>. The Zaydite sources claim that al-Shaybānī had good relations to their Imams and that he relied in his K al-Siyar al-kabīr mainly on K. al-Siyar of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya without mentioning him<sup>97</sup>.
- 3.7. Another version of Hārūn al-Rashīd's infringement is given on the authority of Hārūn al-Washshā' (1.5. above) > 'Abdal'azīz b. Yaḥyā al-Kinānī, an eyewitness who took part in the occasion. al-Kinānī is mentioned elsewhere in this manuscript as one of the *du'āt* of Yaḥyā<sup>98</sup>. Most likely, this 'Abdal'azīz is to be identified with 'Abdal'azīz b. Yaḥyā al-
- 92 Ardabīlī, *Jāmi* 1/283.
- 93 D. 233/847 or 236/850, al-Khatīb, Ta'rīkh 5/3431-343; Ibn Hajar, Tahdhīb 15-19.
- Wahb b. Wahb (d. 200/815), GAS 1/267; Wakī', Akhbār al-qudāt 1/248f.; Najāshī, Rijāl 303; Kashshī, Rijāl 261f.; Mus'ab, Nasab Quraysh 222; Ibn Hazm, Jamhara 119; Ibn Shahrāshūb, Ma'ālim 114; C. van Arendonk, Opkomst 62f.
- 95 Tabarī, Ta'rīkh 3/619f.; (ed. Ibrāhīm) 8/247, on the authority of: Abū l-Khattāb (Bosworth (Tabarī, Ta'rīkh, Engl. transl. 30/125, fn. 472) identifies him with Hamza b. 'Alī, a rāwī frequently cited by Tabarī) > Ja'far b. Yahyā b. Khālid (al-Barmakī); Abū l-Faraj, Maqātil 479f., Abū l-Faraj relies on a collective isnād which he gave on page 465; Abū l-'Abbās al-Hasanī, K. al-Masābīh, in: (W. Madelung, Akhbār 61ff.); Nātiq bil-Haqq, al-Ifāda, in: (W. Madelung, Akhbār 81f.); Muhalli, al-Hada'iq al-wardiyya (ms. München, Glaser 86) fol. and W. Madelung, Akhbār 204f., Muhallī quotes here Abū l-Faraj's version; cf., too, al-Kardarī, Manāqib 2/436-38; M. Kawtharī, Bulūgh al-murām 49-55; M. Khadduri, The Law of Nations 33ff.
- 96 K. al-Masābīh, in: W. Madelung, Akhbār 63.
- 97 Hereto, cf. M. Jarrar, "Sīra, Mashāhid and Maghāzī", fn. 184, in: Late Antiquity and Early Islam, vol. II (ed. L. Conrad).
- 98 Fol. 167b, cf., too, W. Madelung, Akhbār 56, 175; C. van Arendonk, Opkomst 291.

Kinānī al-Makkī (d. 240/854)<sup>99</sup>, to whom *K. al-Ḥayda* is attributed<sup>100</sup>. It seems that the words  $q\bar{a}la$  al-Makkī, which procede the ensuing report (fol. 171b) refer to the same 'Abdal'azīz as well.

3.8. The remaining four *isnāds* in this part are difficult to explore. Most of the *isnād* members are local authorities of al-Rayy. These reports deal with the different stories of Yahyā's death and burial, and comprise clear legendary features (fol. 183a,18-184a).

The study of the material and some of the main isnāds contained in this manuscript allow us to make certain observations on the milieu and the time in which the author, Ahmad b. Sahl al-Rāzī, lived. His surname (kunya) indicates that he was a native of Rayy, and is confirmed as well by some of the isnāds, whose material is derived directly from local authorities in Rayy. It can be established, too, that a remarkable number of his main transmitters were Kūfans<sup>101</sup>, a fact that points to the close links that existed between the Zaydite communities in both Kūfa and Rayy/Daylam.

When did the author live?<sup>102</sup> If we consider that the youngest authority from which he relates is al-Murādī (d. 290/902) and the oldest 'Umar b. Shabba (d. 263/876)<sup>103</sup>, he should have been born at least twenty years before 263/876<sup>104</sup>, i.e. around 243/857, and should have died at least twenty years after his youngest authority, al-Murādī, i.e. around 315/928, especially if we take into account that he derived his materials directly from authorities which Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī (d. 356/967) quoted through an extra chain in the *isnād*. It seems strange that a transmitter

- 99 GAS 1/617; cf. fn. 42 above.
- 100 Cf. J- Salībā's introduction to K. al-Hayda; J. van Ess, in: Owens 18-19/1967/101.
- 101 Except, 'Īsā b. Mihrān who is from Baghdad but could have visited Kūfa, and 'Umar b. Shabba who is from Basra.
- 102 Cf. the attempt of G. Schoeler, Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Teil II, 382.
- 103 If we understand that the term haddathanī, which he uses when he is quoting Ibn Shabba, means that he is taking from him directly and not citing from a book by Ibn Shabba. Another one of his old authorities should be: Muhammad b. al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (cf. 1.7. and 3.4. above), the son of the Zaydī Imam (d. 246/860).
- 104 If we consider that the usual age of visiting lectures (halaqāt al-'ilm or majālis al-tadrīs) were twenty years, though we hear of some scholars who started visiting these lectures earlier. Some reports show that some scholars used to take an ijāza for their sons as early as the son was five years of age. Cf. al-Rāmhurmuzī, al-Muhaddith al-fāsil 190-192; 'Iyād, al-Ilmā' 52ff.

could have taken directly from a late authority (i.e. al-Murādī) who died thirty years after the first authority this same transmitter relies upon (i.e. Ibn Shabba). Nevertheless we can conclude – considering the reservations we have just mentioned – that the author Ahmad b. Sahl should have died during the first quarter of the fourth/ tenth century.

Considering the common sources used by both Ahmad b. Sahl al-Rāzī and, one generation after him, Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī through different transmitters, it seems safe to suggest that both of them were using a written source which was already in circulation during the lifetime of al-Rāzī (i.e. the first quarter of the fourth/tenth century).

This manuscript which represents one of the earliest historiographic works of the Zaydites contains significant new information concerning the battle of Fakhkh, its aftermath and the career of both Idrīs and Yaḥyā b. 'Abdallāh. It not only sheds new light on the avialable historical works, their sources (some of which are lost) and the relation between them (through the study of the isnāds), but also helps us to clarify the relation of many celebrated scholars of the third/ninth century to the early Zaydite Imams.

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