



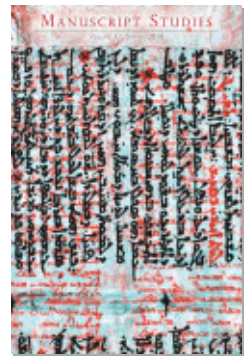
PROJECT MUSE®

---

The Intricacies of Capturing the Holdings of a Mosque  
Library in Yemen: The Library of the Shrine of Imām  
al-Hādī, Ṣaʿda

Sabine Schmidtke

Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for  
Manuscript Studies, Volume 3, Number 1, Spring 2018, pp. 220-237  
(Article)



Published by University of Pennsylvania Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mns.2018.0010>

➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/693319>

# The Intricacies of Capturing the Holdings of a Mosque Library in Yemen

*The Library of the Shrine of Imām al-Hādī, Ṣaʿda*

---

SABINE SCHMIDTKE  
*Institute for Advanced Study*

## *Heritage Under Threat*

THE LIBRARIES OF YEMEN are well known to be treasure troves not only for the rich and still largely unexplored literary tradition of the Zaydi branch of Shiism but also for a much wider spectrum of Islamic intellectual history, beyond Zaydism. The history of Zaydism in Yemen dates back to the ninth century CE when Imām al-Hādī Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 298/911) founded a Zaydi state with Ṣaʿda as his capital. When in the sixth/twelfth century the Zaydis of Yemen became politically unified with their coreligionists in the Caspian region of northern Iran, where a second Zaydi state had been established during the ninth century, a transfer of scholars and books set in from northern Iran, a leading intellectual center at the time, to Yemen.

Some of the libraries in Yemen that were founded during this period still exist today. This is the case, by way of example, for the library that was

---

I wish to thank Camilla Adang and Hassan Ansari for their comments on an earlier draft of this contribution, and Gabriele vom Bruck for confirmation that the library of al-Imām al-Hādī is still intact, while the *samsarat* al-Hādī has been destroyed (personal communication, 9 September 2017), most likely as a result of the bombing of Ṣaʿda on 9 May 2015.

founded by Imām al-Manṣūr bi-llāh ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥamza (r. 593/1197–614/1217) in his capital Ṣafār. The library grew steadily over the centuries and was transferred during the early twentieth century to the newly founded al-Khizāna al-mutawakkiliyya, nowadays the Maktabat al-Awqāf or al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, located on the premises of the Great Mosque in Sanaa in an annex building that had been constructed for this purpose by order of Imām Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Dīn (r. 1904–48).<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, many of the libraries of Yemen were time and again affected by instances of loss of books through theft, confiscations, and even destruction of entire collections. In the course of Imām al-Manṣūr’s all-out war against the Muṭarrifiyya sect during the thirteenth century, for example, nearly the entire literary legacy of the Muṭarrifis was destroyed. Incidents of destruction of private book collections also occurred during the Ottoman occupation of major parts of Yemen, between 1547 and 1629 and again between 1872 and 1918.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, manuscripts became a highly valuable commodity when European, Ottoman-Turkish, and Saudi merchants and travelers to Yemen began to purchase thousands of manuscripts that are nowadays housed by libraries outside of the country. In fact, one of the principal purposes behind Imam Yaḥyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn’s previously mentioned founding in 1925 of the Khizāna al-mutawakkiliyya in Sanaa, where he had the remains of the former ruler’s library in Ṣafār transferred, together with the holdings of many other historical libraries, was to put a stop to theft and other losses. The

---

1 Cf. R. B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock, eds., *Ṣan‘ā’: An Arabian Islamic City* (London: The World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983), 350b; Ismā‘īl b. ‘Alī al-Akwa’, “al-Turāth al-fikrī fī ghābir al-Yaman wa-ḥādirihā,” *Majallat Majma’ al-lughā al-‘arabiyya al-urdu’* 4 xi–xii (1401/1981): 83–86; Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 119–22; Horst Kopp and Eugen Wirth, *Beiträge zur Stadtgeographie von Sana’a*, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B, Geisteswissenschaften 95 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1990), 38.

2 See, e.g., Serjeant and Lewcock, *Ṣan‘ā’*, 90b, which relates that the governor of Sanaa, Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥaymī al-Suwaydī, out of revenge, had the house of the scholar Sayyid Aḥmad al-Kibṣī plundered and destroyed, including the latter’s large library. The person in question is most likely Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī al-Kibṣī (1239/1823–24–1316/1898–99); on him, see ‘Abd al-Salām b. ‘Abbās al-Wajīh, *Alām al-mu‘allifin al-Zaydiyya* (McLean, VA: Mu’assasat al-Imām Zayd b. ‘Alī al-thaqāfiyya, 1420/1999), 186–87n174.

numerous codices that had originally been produced for the library of Imām al-Manṣūr bi-llāh and were sold at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries to various libraries in the Middle East and Europe indicate that this was indeed a serious concern. Confiscations of private libraries also frequently occurred over the course of the twentieth century. In 1948, when Imām Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn (r. 1948–62) ordered the execution of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Wazīr, who served at the time as president of the parliament, and had some of the houses of the Bayt al-Wazīr demolished, the library of the Bayt al-Wazīr was confiscated and taken to the Great Mosque in Sanaa.<sup>3</sup> Following the coup d’état of 1962, the former palace library and the personal collections of the members of the royal family, as well as the collections of former ministers and other government officials, were confiscated and eventually transferred to the Maktaba al-ḡarbiyya and later on to the newly founded Dār al-makhṭūṭāt.

Over the second half of the twentieth and the first decades of the twenty-first century, Yemeni authorities have been constantly fighting manuscript dealers, trying to prevent them from smuggling manuscripts out of the country.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, many of the libraries of Yemen have been severely damaged, looted, or even destroyed over the past few decades as a result of the political turmoil and wars that Yemen has witnessed, and the continuing war in the country, with daily bombardments, constitutes an imminent threat not only to the local population but also to the cultural heritage of the country, including its many libraries.<sup>5</sup>

---

3 Cf. Gabriele vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 79–80. Cf. also Kopp and Wirth, *Beiträge zur Stadtgeographie von Sana’a*, 41.

4 See, e.g., “Antiquities & Manuscripts Captured with Three Persons,” 2008, <http://www.almotamar.net/en/4739.htm>; “Attempted Smuggle of 40 Manuscripts, Failed,” 2008, <http://www.almotamar.net/en/5414.htm>; “51 Yemeni Antiquity Pieces, 312 Manuscripts Seized,” 2010, <http://www.almotamar.net/en/7886.htm>; Fakhri Al-Arashi, “14 Stolen Manuscripts Returned to the Ministry of Culture,” *National Yemen*, 2013, <https://nationalyemen.com/2013/11/17/14-stolen-manuscripts-returned-to-the-ministry-of-culture/>; Nasser Al-Sakkaf, “Authorities Thwart Smuggling of 14 Historic Manuscripts,” 2013, <https://www.yementimes.com/en/1731/news/3152/Authorities-thwart-smuggling-of-14-historic-manuscripts.htm>.

5 For details, see David Hollenberg and Anne Regourd, “Manuscript Destruction and Looting in Yemen: A Status Report,” *Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen* 21 (2016): 157–77; Lamyā Khalidi, “The Destruction of Yemen and Its Cultural Heritage,” *International Journal*

## *Salvaging the Zaydī/Yemeni Manuscript Tradition, 1951–2017*

In view of the richness and the uniqueness of the manuscript holdings of the many public and private libraries in Yemen, various international projects have been launched since the early 1950s to salvage some of these treasures. In 1951–52, in 1964, and again in 1974, scholarly expeditions from Egypt were dispatched to Yemen. They explored the holdings of the various public libraries in Sanaa as well as those of some of the smaller libraries in Sanaa and other cities, and produced microfilms of selected manuscripts, which they brought back to Cairo. In 1982, a delegation from Kuwait assessed and partly microfilmed the manuscripts of the Maktabat al-aḥqāf in Tarīm in Hadhramaut, and in 1985 a Kuwaiti team engaged in filming and cataloging some 308 manuscripts held by the Dār al-makhṭūṭāt in Sanaa. Iranian governmental and private institutions also engaged in filming significant numbers of Yemeni manuscripts at the turn of the millennium.

The various initiatives to produce surrogates of manuscripts, be it in microform or digitally, did not aim at preserving the manuscripts—the intention was rather to make them accessible to the respective local scholarly community in Egypt, Kuwait, or Iran, hence the selective approach in all those endeavors. Characteristically, the surrogates are housed in the relevant institution that was in charge of filming them in the first place, with no attempt to make them available to a larger audience. It is only in the case of Iran that the digital surrogates prepared were also made available to the Muʾassasat al-Imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfiyya (Imam Zayd bin Ali Cultural Foundation = IZbACF) in Sanaa, whose personnel continued to digitize the holdings of additional private libraries. The various recent digitization efforts supported

---

*of Middle East Studies* 49 (2017): 735–38; “Damages on Yemeni Culture Sector and Heritage by Saudi-US Aggression in 1000 Days,” 2017, <https://www.yemenpress.org/slider/damages-on-yemeni-culture-sector-and-heritage-by-saudi-us-aggression-in-1000-days.html>. See also generally “Decision 40 COM 7 State of Conservation of World Heritage Properties,” World Heritage Committee, 2016, and “Security Council Condemns Destruction, Smuggling of Cultural Heritage by Terrorist Groups,” March 2017. Generally on the history of the Zaydī/Yemeni manuscript tradition, see Sabine Schmidtke, “Preserving, Studying, and Democratizing Access to the World Heritage of Islamic Manuscripts: The Zaydī Tradition,” *Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen* 23, n.s. 4 (2017): 103–66.

by the German Foreign Office<sup>6</sup> and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in conjunction with the National Endowment for the Humanities<sup>7</sup> also aimed at capturing a select number of private collections. The holdings of seven personal libraries in Sanaa and Kawkabān were digitized in the course of the two projects, some three hundred manuscripts in total. Again, only a fraction of these digitized materials are available through open access to date.

The Zaydi Manuscript Tradition (ZMT) aims at salvaging the Zaydi literary tradition by gathering digital surrogates of as many Zaydi manuscripts as possible in a single repository and providing comprehensive and systematic open access to them for scholars worldwide, regardless of whether the physical manuscripts are preserved in Europe or in North America, in Yemen, or elsewhere in the Middle East. The ZMT is a joint project initiated by the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS), Princeton, in partnership with the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML) at Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota. Work on the ZMT began in September 2016, and to date the project comprises some 1,500 digitized manuscripts from several European and Yemeni libraries, which are accessible online through the project's portal and HMML's *virtual* reading room. The initiative consists of two components: (1) a digital portal on the IAS website that serves as a comprehensive research guide to relevant collections of Zaydi manuscripts, providing precise information on the location of each collection with a full list of its holdings and the relevant bibliography for every single codex.<sup>8</sup> The digital portal further functions as a *gateway* to (2) the manuscript surrogates that are available in HMML's *virtual* reading room (*vHMML*),<sup>9</sup> which serves as a repository of digital surrogates of manuscript

---

6 "Preserving Yemen's Cultural Heritage: The Yemen Manuscript Digitization Project," 2010. See Sabine Schmidtke and Jan Thiele, *Preserving Yemen's Cultural Heritage: The Yemen Manuscript Digitization Project*, Hefte zur Kulturgeschichte des Jemen 5 (Sanaa: Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland & Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Orient-Abteilung, Außenstelle Sanaa, 2011).

7 "The Yemen Manuscript Digitization Initiative," 2010–13. See <https://ymdi.uoregon.edu/> and <http://pudl.princeton.edu/collections/pudl0079>, accessed 5 October 2017.

8 [www.ias.edu/digital-scholarship/zaydi\\_manuscript\\_tradition](http://www.ias.edu/digital-scholarship/zaydi_manuscript_tradition), accessed 5 October 2017.

9 [www.vHMML.org](http://www.vHMML.org), accessed 5 October 2017.

codices and will eventually include full metadata for the manuscripts through its cataloging tools.

### *The Library of the Shrine of Imām al-Hādī, Ṣa‘da*

Among the collections that have recently been processed for inclusion in the ZMT project are the manuscripts of the library of the Imām al-Hādī mosque in Ṣa‘da.<sup>10</sup> The history and current situation of the collection is characteristic for many manuscript libraries of Yemen, private as well as public. While the mosque was constructed during the lifetime of the Imam al-Hādī in the ninth century, the library was not set up until the early twentieth century, together with the *madrasa ‘ilmiyya*, which is also located on the premises of the mosque.<sup>11</sup> While the library was counted at some point among the most important mosque libraries of Yemen, the situation began to deteriorate sometime before the revolution of 1962 with the appointment of *al-qāḍī* Ḥasan [b.] Ṣalāḥ Dabbāsh as its custodian, who was succeeded after his demise by his son, Ṣālīḥ. During their terms the library suffered from neglect and was subject to regular incidents of burglary and theft. The situation improved again during the 1990s following the appointment of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Shāmī (1926–2013) as minister of religious endowments and guidance (*wazīr al-awqāf wa-l-irshād*).<sup>12</sup> Al-Shāmī took measures to salvage the library and encouraged the preparation of a catalog of its holdings.

---

10 ZMT 01600 through 01675. See the entire collection at <https://www.vhmml.org/readingRoom/>, accessed 5 October 2017. Search “ZMT” in the HMML Project Number field.

11 The following brief account of the history of the library is based on ‘Abd Allāh Ḥammūd Dirham al-‘Izzī, *Fibris makhṭūṭāt maktabat mazār al-Imām Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hādī ilā l-ḥaqq. Ṣa‘da, al-Jumbūriyya al-yamaniyya* (Qum/Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi buzurg-i ḥaḍrat Āyat Allāh al-‘uzmā Mar‘ashī Najafī/Wizārat-i umūr-i khārijīyya, 1425/2004), 1–12. For the Imām al-Hādī mosque, see also Else Niewöhner-Eberhard, *Ṣa‘da: Bauten und Bewohner in einer traditionellen islamischen Stadt*, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B, Geisteswissenschaften 64 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1985), 234–35. See also figure 1.

12 On him, see al-Wājīh, *A‘lām al-mu‘allifīn al-Zaydiyya*, 179–80n168, <http://www.yemeress.com/alkhabar/57129>, accessed 5 October 2017.



FIGURE 1. Photograph of the Imām al-Hādī mosque complex, dated 20 March 2015 (i.e., prior to the bombardment of 9 May 2015). Source: <http://mandabpress.com/news6959.html>.

In his survey of manuscript libraries of Yemen of 1993, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ‘Alī al-Mu’ayyad (d. 2005) gives the total number of manuscripts in the collection as “ca. 100,” adding that “the collection has been halved over the last thirty years owing to several factors, including war.”<sup>13</sup> The figure provided by al-Mu’ayyad is corroborated by a catalog prepared by ‘Abd Allāh Ḥammūd Dirham al-‘Izzī. The highest shelfmark recorded by al-‘Izzī is “218,” while his catalog covers a total of only 131 codices. Assuming that the collection has again grown since 1993, this would confirm al-Mu’ayyad’s statement that the collection had been halved over the past three decades. Al-‘Izzī had completed his descriptions of the collection in May 2000<sup>14</sup>—the Iranian scholar Sayyid ‘Alī Mūjānī relates in his preface to al-‘Izzī’s catalog that when he visited Ṣāda in 2002, he was approached by al-‘Izzī, who inquired about possibilities to have the catalog published. As a result of his

13 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ‘Alī al-Mu’ayyad, “Yemen,” in Geoffrey Roper, ed., *World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts* (London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1994), 3:661.

14 He signs the introduction (*muqaddama*) with the dates 2 Ṣafar 1421/6 May 2000 (*Fibris*, p. *jīm*).



mediation, Maḥmūd Maʿashī, the head of the Āyat Allāh Maʿashī Najafī Library in Qum, accepted al-ʿIzzī's *Fibris* for publication, which was realized, as previously mentioned, in 2004. In return, the Iranians were granted the right to produce digital surrogates of a select number of codices that are nowadays accessible in various libraries in Iran, including the Maʿashī library in Qum. Al-ʿIzzī's *Fibris* is included verbatim and in its entirety by ʿAbd al-Salām al-Wajīh in his *Maṣādir al-turāth fī l-maktabāt al-khāṣṣa fī l-Yaman*,<sup>15</sup> though the latter fails to credit al-ʿIzzī for his work. Al-ʿIzzī is only mentioned insofar as al-Wajīh includes al-ʿIzzī's introduction (pp. 429–32), with the latter's signature at its end (p. 432).

Al-ʿIzzī arranged his descriptions of the manuscripts in his *Fibris* according to the following disciplines: Qurʾānic sciences and exegesis (pp. 13–16), traditions (pp. 17–19), theology (pp. 21–27), legal theory (pp. 29–33), law (pp. 35–67), law of inheritance (pp. 69–71), grammar (pp. 73–85), rhetorics (pp. 87–89), ascetism and mysticism (pp. 91–93), and multitext volumes (pp. 95–133). This structure disagrees with the arrangement of the manuscripts in the library itself, as is indicated by the shelfmarks recorded by al-ʿIzzī. The original library arrangement looks as presented in table 1.

The digital surrogates of manuscripts from the library that were produced at the time amount to seventy codices in total. In table 2, those listed in al-ʿIzzī's catalog that have been digitized are marked in bold.

In addition to these, the digital collection of the Imām al-Hādī library comprises twenty-one codices that are not described in al-ʿIzzī's catalog. The possibility that these constitute later additions to the library cannot be ruled out, though it might be more plausible that al-ʿIzzī's catalog covers only a part of the library's holdings. The actual size and scope of its manuscript collection thus remains uncertain—an observation that applies to most if not all published catalogs of private manuscript collections in Yemen.

Al-Izzī's partial catalog of the collection and, more importantly, the digital surrogates that are now accessible through vHMML provide a sound material basis to study the curriculum that was taught at the *madrasa ʿilmiyya*

---

15 ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh, *Maṣādir al-turāth fī l-maktabāt al-khāṣṣa fī l-Yaman* (McLean, VA: Muʿassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfiyya, 2002), 2:429–514.

TABLE 1. Arrangement of the Manuscripts in the Library.

theology ( <i>uṣūl al-dīn</i> / <i>ʿilm al-kalām</i> )	shelfmark nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 (shelfmark nos. 13 and 14 are missing in al-ʿIzzī's catalog)
legal theory ( <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> )	shelfmark nos. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 (shelfmark nos. 21 through 29 are missing in al-ʿIzzī's catalog)
rhetorics ( <i>ʿilm al-maʿānī wa-l-bayān</i> )	shelfmark nos. 30, 31, 32, 33,* 34 (shelfmark nos. 35 through 51 are missing in al-ʿIzzī's catalog)
Qurʾānic sciences and exegesis	shelfmark nos. 52, 53, 54, <sup>a</sup> 54, <sup>b</sup> 55 (shelfmark nos. 56 through 59 are missing in al-ʿIzzī's catalog)
traditions ( <i>ḥadīth</i> )	shelfmark nos. 60, 61, 62, 63 (shelfmark no. 64 is missing in al-ʿIzzī's catalogue)
law of inheritance ( <i>ʿilm al-farāʾid</i> )	shelfmark nos. 65, 66, 67, 68 (shelfmark no. 69 is missing in al-ʿIzzī's catalog)
asceticism and mysticism ( <i>ʿilm al-bāṭin wa-l-taṣawwuf</i> )	shelfmark nos. 70, 71, 72, 73 (shelfmark no. 74 is missing in al-ʿIzzī's catalog)
grammar ( <i>naḥw</i> )	shelfmark nos. 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97 (shelfmark nos. 98 and 99 are missing in al-ʿIzzī's catalog)
law ( <i>fiqh</i> )	shelfmark nos. 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148 (shelfmark nos. 149 through 199 are missing in al-ʿIzzī's catalog)
multitext volumes ( <i>majāmiʿ</i> )	shelfmark nos. 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219

\* Al-ʿIzzī lists two works in his catalogue as bearing the shelfmark “33,” *Kitāb ʿArūs al-afrāḥ sharḥ Talkhbīs al-Miftāḥ*, by Bahāʾ al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Kāfī al-Subkī (d. 772 AH/1370–71 CE) (p. 88—al-ʿIzzī erroneously attributes the work to al-Taftāzānī) and *Kitāb al-Rawḍ al-ḥāfil al-jāmiʿ limā shiʿta min maʿānī al-Kāfil*, by Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn (p. 33). In view of the context, it is more likely that shelfmark no. 33 refers to al-Subkī's work: Nos. 30 through 34 consist of two copies of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Qazwīnī's (d. 739/1338) *Talkhbīs al-miftāḥ*, with several commentaries and supercommentaries on the work, viz. *al-Muṭawwal* by Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, al-Subkī's *ʿArūs al-afrāḥ sharḥ Talkhbīs al-Miftāḥ*, and glosses by al-Fāḍil Ḥasan al-Shiblī on the *Muṭawwal*. For al-Qazwīnī's *Talkhbīs al-Miftāḥ* and the later commentary literature on the work, see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*. Erweitert um ein Vorwort von Jan Just Witkam (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1:353f, vol. S 1:516–18.

TABLE 2. Digital Surrogates of Manuscripts from the Library.

theology ( <i>uṣūl al-dīn</i> / <i>ʿilm al-kalām</i> )	nos. <a href="#">1</a> , <a href="#">2</a> , <a href="#">3</a> , <a href="#">4</a> , <a href="#">5</a> , <a href="#">6</a> , <a href="#">7</a> , <a href="#">8</a> , <a href="#">9</a> , <a href="#">10</a> , <a href="#">11</a> , <a href="#">12</a>
legal theory ( <i>uṣūl al-fiqh</i> )	nos. <a href="#">15</a> , <a href="#">16</a> , <a href="#">17</a> , <a href="#">18</a> , <a href="#">19</a> , <a href="#">20</a>
rhetorics ( <i>ʿilm al-maʿānī wa-l-bayān</i> )	nos. <a href="#">30</a> , <a href="#">31</a> , <a href="#">32</a> , <a href="#">33</a> , <a href="#">34</a>
Qurʾānic sciences and exegesis	nos. <a href="#">52</a> , <a href="#">53</a> , <a href="#">54<sup>a</sup></a> , <a href="#">54<sup>b</sup></a> , <a href="#">55</a>
traditions ( <i>ḥadīth</i> )	nos. <a href="#">60</a> , <a href="#">61</a> , <a href="#">62</a> , <a href="#">63</a>
law of inheritance ( <i>ʿilm al-farāʾid</i> )	nos. <a href="#">65</a> , <a href="#">66</a> , <a href="#">67</a> , <a href="#">68</a>
ascetism and mysticism	nos. <a href="#">70</a> , <a href="#">71</a> , <a href="#">72</a> , <a href="#">73</a>
grammar ( <i>naḥw</i> )	nos. <a href="#">75</a> , <a href="#">76</a> , <a href="#">77</a> , <a href="#">78</a> , <a href="#">79</a> , <a href="#">80</a> , <a href="#">81</a> , <a href="#">82</a> , <a href="#">83</a> , <a href="#">84</a> , <a href="#">85</a> , <a href="#">86</a> , <a href="#">87</a> , <a href="#">88</a> , <a href="#">89</a> , <a href="#">90</a> , <a href="#">91</a> , <a href="#">92</a> , <a href="#">93</a> , <a href="#">94</a> , <a href="#">95</a> , <a href="#">96</a> , <a href="#">97</a>
law ( <i>fiqh</i> )	nos. <a href="#">100</a> , <a href="#">101</a> , <a href="#">102</a> , <a href="#">103</a> , <a href="#">104</a> , <a href="#">105</a> , <a href="#">106</a> , <a href="#">107</a> , <a href="#">108</a> , <a href="#">109</a> , <a href="#">110</a> , <a href="#">111</a> , <a href="#">112</a> , <a href="#">113</a> , <a href="#">114</a> , <a href="#">115</a> , <a href="#">116</a> , <a href="#">117</a> , <a href="#">118</a> , <a href="#">119</a> , <a href="#">120</a> , <a href="#">121</a> , <a href="#">122</a> , <a href="#">123</a> , <a href="#">124</a> , <a href="#">125</a> , <a href="#">126</a> , <a href="#">127</a> , <a href="#">128</a> , <a href="#">129</a> , <a href="#">130</a> , <a href="#">131</a> , <a href="#">132</a> , <a href="#">133</a> , <a href="#">134</a> , <a href="#">135</a> , <a href="#">136</a> , <a href="#">137</a> , <a href="#">138</a> , <a href="#">139</a> , <a href="#">140</a> , <a href="#">141</a> , <a href="#">142</a> , <a href="#">143</a> , <a href="#">144</a> , <a href="#">145</a> , <a href="#">146</a> , <a href="#">147</a> , <a href="#">148</a>
multitext volumes ( <i>majāmiʿ</i> )	nos. <a href="#">200</a> , <a href="#">201</a> , <a href="#">202</a> , <a href="#">203</a> , <a href="#">204</a> , <a href="#">205</a> , <a href="#">206</a> , <a href="#">207</a> , <a href="#">208</a> , <a href="#">209</a> , <a href="#">210</a> , <a href="#">211</a> , <a href="#">212</a> , <a href="#">213</a> , <a href="#">214</a> , <a href="#">215</a> , <a href="#">216</a> , <a href="#">217</a> , <a href="#">218</a> , <a href="#">219</a>

in Ṣāʿda. The majority of titles represent the standard canon of Zaydi scholarship at the turn of the twentieth century, with a clear focus on Islamic law that is suggested by the proportionally high percentage of works on *fiqh*, legal theory and inheritance law.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, the Imām al-Hādī library houses a number of rarities. For the Muʿtazilite tradition, these comprise an incomplete copy of the first part of the theological summa, *K. al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, by Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. al-Malāḥimī al-Khʿārazmī (d. 536/1141), the principal

16 Cf. the *madrasa al-ʿilmiyya* that was opened in Bīr al-ʿAzab in Sanaa by Imām Yahyā in 1344/1925–26 and its curriculum as described by Ismāʿīl al-Akwaʿ, *al-Madāris al-islāmiyya fī l-Yaman* (Beirut/Sanaa: Muʿassasat al-risāla/Maktabat al-jīl al-jadīd, 1406/1986), 400–434. See also Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 108–9; cf. also Kopp and Wirth, *Beiträge zur Stadtgeographie von Sanaʿa*, 38.

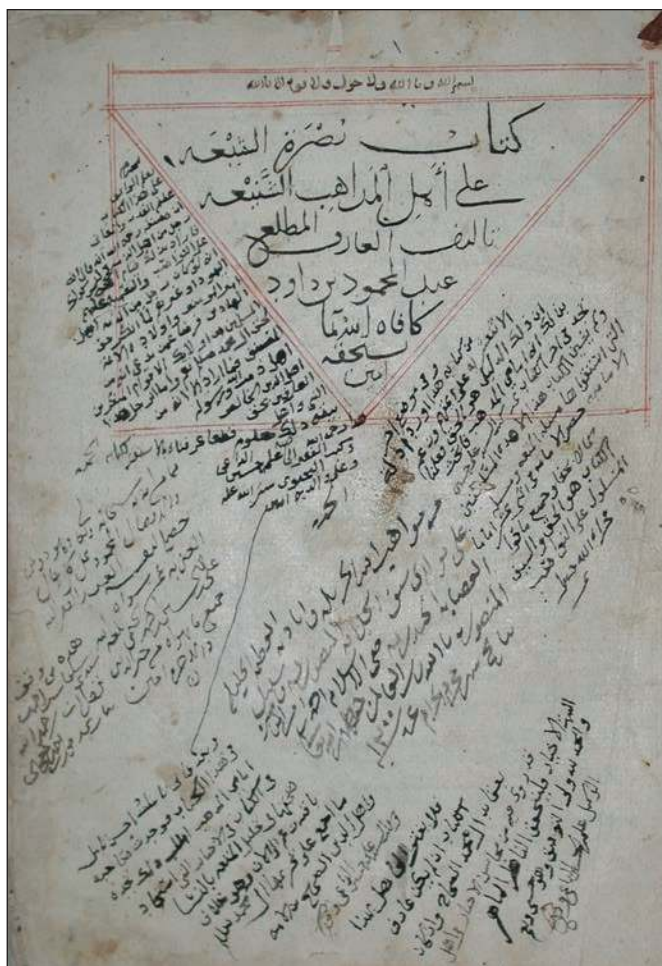


FIGURE 2. Ms Sa'da, Maktabat al-Imām Yaḥyā b. Ḥusayn [ZMT 01674], title page.

representative of the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044);<sup>17</sup> volume two of the latter's work on legal theory, *K. al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-fiqh*,

17 ZMT 01617; al-ʿIzzī, *Fibris*, 25 no. 7. The manuscript was consulted by Wilferd Madelung in the preparation of the revised edition of the work (*Kitāb al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, revised and enlarged edition by Wilferd Madelung [Tehran: Mīrāth-i maktūb, 2012]).



FIGURE 3. Ms Sa'da, Maktabat al-Imām Yahyā b. Husayn [ZMT 01674], p. 422.

which was popular among the Zaydis of Yemen;<sup>18</sup> and an incomplete copy of the last volume of al-Hākim al-Jishumī's (d. 494/1101) *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-masā'il*,

18 ZMT 01616; al-ʿIzzī, *Fihriis*, 30 no. 15. This manuscript was not consulted by Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh in his edition of the text (Damascus: al-Maḥād al-ʿilmī al-faransī li-l-dirāsāt al-ʿarabiyya bi-Dimashq, 1964). See also Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, *Studies in Medieval Islamic Intellectual History*, Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies 7 (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2017), 73n36.

an encyclopedic theological summa with detailed discussions of substances, physics, and biology from a Muʿtazilite theologian's point of view.<sup>19</sup> This last part of the *Sharḥ al-ʿUyūn* is otherwise attested only in two manuscripts that are preserved in the Maktabat al-awqāf in Sanaa<sup>20</sup> and in the library of the King Saud University.<sup>21</sup> Another noteworthy work in the field of theology is *ʿUmdat al-mustarshidīn*, a theological summa by the prominent thirteenth-century Yemeni/Zaydī theologian Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ḥumayd b. Aḥmad al-Muḥallī (d. 652/1254).<sup>22</sup> The library also has a copy of *K. Nuṣrat al-shīʿa ʿalā ahl al-madhāhib al-shanīʿa*, by a certain “Abd al-Maḥmūd b. Dāwūd” (figs. 2 and 3).<sup>23</sup> The author's name is a pseudonym of the renowned Imami scholar Raḍī al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Mūsā Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266), and the work in question is his polemical anti-Sunni text *al-Ṭarāʾif fī [maʿrifat] madhābb al-ṭawāʾif*. It is only among the Zaydis of Yemen that this otherwise famous work circulated under a different title that is attested in this manuscript.<sup>24</sup> The manuscript of a theological work entitled *Nihāyat dhawī al-ʿuqūl ʿalā sharḥ al-uṣūl* by a certain ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Ḥusaynī seems to be a unicum.<sup>25</sup> Of special value is further *al-Masāʾil al-nāfiʿa bi-l-barābīn al-qawīyya al-ṣādiʿa*, by al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Qāsim al-Qāsimī al-Muʾayyadī al-Ḍaḥyānī (1863/64–1924/25), which was transcribed from the author's rough copy, on 14 Rabīʿ II 1316/September 1898 (figs. 4 and 5).<sup>26</sup>

19 ZMT 01612. The manuscript is not described in al-ʿIzzī's catalog.

20 MS Sanaa, Maktabat al-awqāf no. 707. For a brief description of the manuscript, see Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ruqayhī, ʿAbd al-Allāh al-Ḥibshī, and ʿAlī Wāḥḥāb al-Ānsī, *Fibriṣt makḥṭūʾāt maktabat al-Jāmiʿ al-kabīr Ṣanʿāʾ* ([Sanaa: Wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-irshād, 1404/1984), 2:663.

21 MS Riyadh, King Saud University Library no. 7783. For a description of the manuscript and a digital surrogate, see <http://makhtota.ksu.edu.sa/makhtota/8453/1>, accessed 3 October 2017. Together with Hassan Ansari, the present writer is currently preparing a critical edition of al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī's *Sharḥ Uyūn al-masāʾil*.

22 ZMT 01649; cf. al-ʿIzzī, *Fibriṣ*, 22n1.

23 ZMT 01674. The codex is not described in al-ʿIzzī's catalog.

24 For the *Ṭarāʾif* and Ibn Ṭāwūs's use of a pseudonym in this case, see Etan Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work: Ibn Ṭāwūs and His Library*, IPTS 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 57–59 no. 51. For the reception of the work in Yemen and its peculiar title (which is not mentioned by Kohlberg), see Hassan Ansari, “*Ṭarāʾif-i Ibn Ṭāwūs wa raddiya-āy barān*,” <http://ansari.kateban.com/post/1234>, accessed 5 October 2017.

25 ZMT 01675; cf. al-ʿIzzī, *Fibriṣ*, 24 no. 5.

26 ZMT 01615. The manuscript is not described in al-ʿIzzī's catalog. For the author of the work, see al-Wajīh, *Aʿlām al-muʿallifīn al-Zaydiyya*, 356–60 no. 351.





FIGURE 4. Ms Sa'da, Maktabat al-Imām Yahyā b. Ḥusayn [ZMT 01615], title page.

The collection contains a fair amount of incomplete codices, with beginning and/or end missing. About two-third of the manuscripts are dated: nineteen manuscripts were produced during the eleventh/seventeenth century, eleven manuscripts were transcribed during the tenth/sixteenth century, eight manuscripts are dated to the ninth/fifteenth century, two manuscripts are dated to the eighth/fourteenth century, and two to the seventh/thirteenth

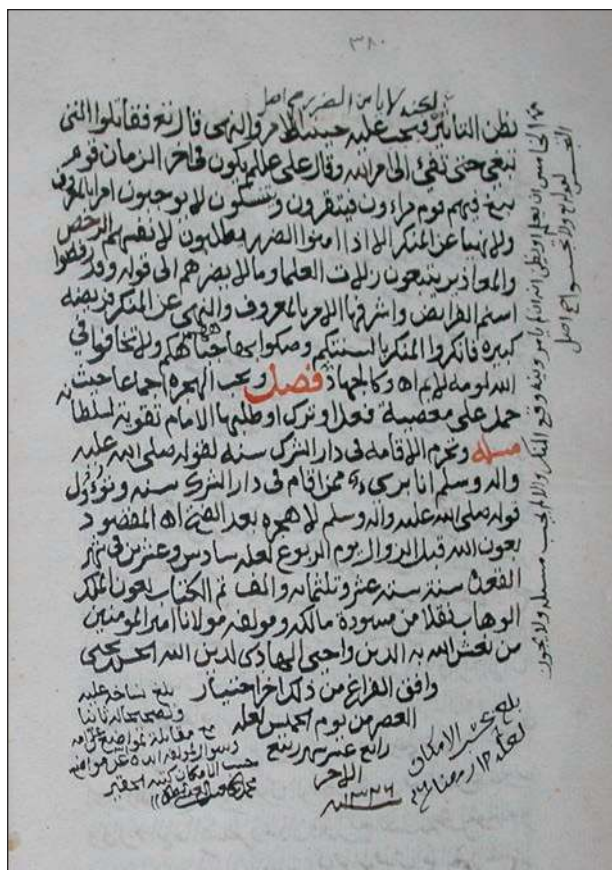


FIGURE 5. Ms Şa' da, Maktabat al-Imām Yahyā b. Ḥusayn [ZMT 01615], p. 380.

century, one manuscript to the twelfth/eighteenth century, and two to the thirteenth/nineteenth century. The oldest codex in the collection is a multi-text volume containing the *K. al-Maqāmāt* of Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī al-Baṣrī (d. 516/1122) (dated to Jumādā II 653) and the *K. al-Najm min kalām sayyid al-ʿarab wa-l-ʿajam* Muḥammad al-nabī al-mursal al-karīm by Aḥmad b. Maʿadd b. ʿIsā b. Wakīl al-Tujībī al-Uqlīshī (d. 550/1155)





FIGURE 6. Ms Ša'da, Maktabat al-Imām Yahyā b. Ḥusayn, #115 [ZMT 01603], title page.

(dated to Dhū l-Qa'da 553).<sup>27</sup> It is followed by a precious copy of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī's (d. 450/1058) *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* that was completed in Rabī'

27 ZMT 01669; cf. al-ʿIzzī, *Fibris*, 123–25; he renders both the title and the name of the author of the *K. al-Najm* as “*K. al-Muʿjam min kalām . . .*” by “Aḥmad b. Maḥdī b. ʿIsā.” On the *K. al-Najm* and its author, see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*, Erweitert um ein Vorwort von Jan Just Witkam (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1:456f. no. 6, vol. S 1:633 no. 6. For the reception of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* among the Zaydis, see Ansari and Schmidtke, *Studies in Medieval Islamic Intellectual History*, 212 no. 87. Cf. also Shirley Guthrie,

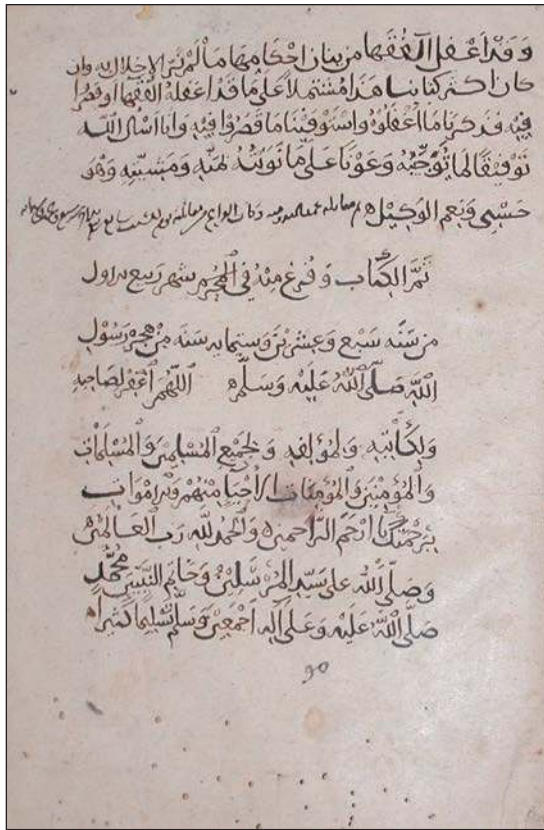


FIGURE 7. Ms Şa'da, Maktabat al-Imām Yahyā b. Ḥusayn, #115 [ZMT 01603], final page.

I 627 (figs. 6 and 7) and has not been taken into consideration for any of the published versions of this important text.<sup>28</sup> Another early codex contains volume one of the *K. al-Luma' fi fiqh Ahl al-Bayt 'alayhim al-salām* of al-Amīr 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Yahyā b. Yahyā b. al-Nāṣir (fl. seventh/thirteenth century) (dated to Dhū l-Qa'da 696), a legal work that was very popular among the

*Al-Hariri's Maqamat: A Little-Known Illustrated Manuscript from Sana'a', Yemen, Dated 1709* (independently published, 2017).

28 ZMT 01603. See also al-'Izzī, *Fihris*, 46–47 no. 115. Al-'Izzī erroneously states that the manuscript is not dated.

Zaydis of Yemen and is preserved in countless manuscripts.<sup>29</sup> Eight manuscripts were transcribed, according to al-ʿIzzī, during the twentieth century.<sup>30</sup> The overall ratio is again typical for the majority of Yemeni libraries.

---

29 Cf. al-ʿIzzī, *Fibris*, 39 no. 105. For the author and the work, see Ansari and Schmidtke, *Studies in Medieval Islamic Intellectual History*, 182 no. 9.

30 To the extent this could be verified, some of the dates provided by al-ʿIzzī in his catalog turned out to be erroneous. In more general terms, his descriptions are not always reliable and should be treated with some caution.