

Source-Critical Methodologies in Recent Scholarship on the Khārijites

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Abstract

Many of the difficulties involved in researching the Khārijites come from the lack of primary Khārijite sources, and the subsequent need for scholars to rely on problematic non-Khārijite sources such as heresiography. This article will devote considerable attention to recent source-critical scholarship in English on the early medieval Khārijites (*khawārij*), excluding the Ibāḍiyya, as well as the use of the appellation ‘Khārijite’ as a modern phenomenon.

This article focuses exclusively on the constellation of groups that later Muslims – and especially Muslim heresiographers – dubbed the *khawārij* (sing. *khārijī*), also known by the anglicized form the Khārijites. The first Khārijites emerged after the Battle of Šiffin in 37AH/657CE in opposition to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’s decision to arbitrate his quarrel with Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān. Although largely decimated in the same year by ‘Alī’s army at the Battle of Nahrawān, small groups of Khārijites survived to become part of the opposition to the Umayyads and later the ‘Abbasids. According to Islamic sources, the main divisions of the Khārijites, the Azāriqa, Najdāt, Ibāḍiyya and Šufriyya, split into distinct sub-sects during the first civil war (*fitna*) over the question of secession (*khurūj*), the implications of sin and unbelief (*kufūr*), and the practice of prudent dissimulation (*taqiyya*).¹ They subsequently produced many offshoots, most of which disappeared by the 6th/12th century. Today, the Ibāḍiyya remain as the sole surviving distant relative of the early Khārijites.

Until very recently, academic scholarship on the Khārijites suffered from many of the same problems that plagued the study of other non-Sunnī Muslim groups. Orientalist scholars often imbibed the norms of Sunnīs as paradigmatic of what ‘true’ or ‘orthodox’ Muslims should be. Khārijites, by extension, represented a deviant or ‘heretical’ orientation, whose virtual disappearance was to be explained in terms of doctrinal incoherence, legal deviance and militant extremism.² This problem was compounded by the near complete lack of Khārijite primary sources, in whose absence scholars were forced to rely on reports embedded in non-Khārijite primary literature. And while it is true that non-Khārijite literature often draws upon originally Khārijite materials, such materials are now lost, and the non-Khārijite sources in which these reports survive remain, at the very least, heavily edited and inevitably biased (if not openly polemical). Moreover, the volume and variety of sources facing the researcher is daunting, to say nothing of the often fragmented and contradictory contents of the reports themselves. Unlike the Shī‘a, whose continued existence and textual output created an alternative body of literature that is now changing the way that scholars view this group, the Khārijites did not survive, their works were haphazardly preserved, and scholarship on them has suffered accordingly.

Despite these difficulties and indeed because of them, a number of scholars have recently developed useful methodological approaches to non-Khārijite primary materials in which relevant reports on the Khārijites are embedded. Because of this need to critically engage the texts, this article will focus almost exclusively on three current and inter-related source-critical methodologies in the study of the Khārijites: the deconstruction of non-Khārijite – especially heresiographical – materials, the reclamation of Khārijite materials from non-Khārijite primary sources, and the use of comparative textual and non-textual methodologies. Although these source-critical methodologies do not exhaust the range of new scholarship on the Khārijites, they represent a vital piece of it. Using these methodologies, contemporary scholars have been able to develop a more nuanced understanding of the early Khārijites.

Before proceeding, however, the self-imposed limitations of this study should be made clear. This study will focus on the Khārijites to the exclusion of the one Khārijite offshoot that survived into the late medieval and modern eras: the Ibāḍiyya. Beginning in the early 2nd/7th century, the Ibāḍiyya of Basra trained missionaries who spread their teachings throughout the Islamic world. Toward the end of the Umayyad era, two Ibāḍī inspired uprisings in the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa ultimately resulted in the creation of Ibāḍī Imāmates in Oman and much of present day Algeria, Tunis and Libya. Though the first Ibāḍī empires eventually fell, Ibāḍism became established in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, where it survives today. Additionally, Ibāḍism spread down the East coast of Africa due to the maritime trading of the Omanis. Consequently, literature from and on the Ibāḍiyya is voluminous, and would require a separate study.³ Therefore (and with regret), this study will limit itself to Ibāḍī literature that has a bearing on the broader category of the early Khārijites. Additionally, this article will not examine the contemporary interest in the *khawārij* as a reflection of modern militant Islamic movements such as Egypt's al-Takfīr wa al-Hijra, or al-Qā'ida.⁴ Lastly, this article will focus on recent scholarship written in English, to the unfortunate exclusion of works in Arabic, Persian, French, Italian and German, and of earlier works in English. In fact, Kenney provides a detailed analysis of Brūnnow, Wellhausen, Shaban and Hinds, and advances his own thesis on the need to envision the emergence the early Khārijites as a product of integrated social and religious motivations.⁵ Likewise, Timani's work provides an excellent survey of early Western and contemporary Arab scholarly attempts at understanding the Khārijites. His review of Western literature covers the important initial research on the Khārijites – Brūnnow, Wellhausen, Salem, Watt and Shaban – as well as some of the contemporary writers who deal with the Khārijites as part of broader historical projects: Morony, Robinson and Kenney. Equally important is Timani's examination and analysis of contemporary scholarship in Arabic on the Khārijites, which remains an aspect that is too often left out of treatments in English. His synopses of Hasan, Mukhtar, al-Sayyid, al-Najjar, Mahrus, Shalqam, al-Shahari, 'Abd al-Raziq, al-Busa'id, Fawzi, al-Sabī'i, Mu'ayta and al-Baakay presents the only available English analysis of these intellectuals' work on the Khārijites.

Subverting Non-Khārijite Sources

Lewinstein characterizes the reliance of scholars on medieval heresiography as a 'distinctly uncomfortable' marriage.⁶ While *akhbār* (historical reports) on the Khārijites can be found in a wide variety of medieval Islamic literature, the most pervasive and therefore most commonly consulted genre of text is that of heresiography (sometimes called *firaq* literature). Heresiographies are encyclopaedic collections of information on religions and sects:

as an Islamic textual genre, heresiography began in the 2nd/8th century and continues until the present era. Heresiographical material, while essential to the study of Islamic sectarianism, remains problematic in several ways. As Watt noted, heresiography is late in date, rigid in its taxonomy and often hostile to the groups which it purports to discuss.⁷ As the general lack of sources forces researchers to rely on heresiographical material, the first source-critical approach to be analyzed will be that which deconstructs or subverts non-Khārijite materials – especially heresiographies – in which information about the Khārijites is embedded.

Lewinstein proposes two strategies for subverting the well-known short-comings of heresiographical writings: to deconstruct heresiographical texts with an eye toward ferreting out the sources that produced them or to outflank the standard Ash‘arī-Sunnī heresiographies with those from outside this tradition.⁸ Lewinstein’s article on the Azāriqa (an early Khārijite sub-sect that rejected *taqiyya*, required secession, and regarded sinners and non-Azraqites as unbelievers who could be legally fought and killed) takes the first tact, and critically examines al-Ash‘arī’s section on the Azraqites from one of the most important early heresiographies, the *Maqālāt al-Islamiyyin*. In his analysis, Lewinstein discovers not a unitary text, but rather one that betrays the influences of at least three different traditions. The first tradition deals with the issue of secession (*khurūj*) from the community – a central issue among the Khārijites – in a way that suggests a moderate Khārijite (probably Ibādī) authorship. The second textual tradition relates to reports about the leadership of the sect; its prosopographical concern makes it unique among the materials examined. Third, Lewinstein notices textual themes that deal primarily with legal issues surrounding the Azāriqa. This material seems to echo other legally minded materials outside of al-Ash‘arī. All three of these sub-themes have been woven together to create the text of the *Maqālāt*. What is to be taken away from this discussion is that heresiographical sources on the Khārijites do not simply consist of primary materials with a unitary agenda, but of several layers of materials, with their attendant and numerous polemical agendas, that have been manipulated by the heresiographer-cum-editor. Thus, the task of the historian is first and foremost to deconstruct the different intra-textual accounts of the sects with an eye toward establishing the textual strata and particular polemical concerns that make up the final product. By examining accounts with a critical eye, themes and even possible authors can be teased out of the materials.

It is to be regretted that Lewinstein did not continue his work on ferreting out the sources of heresiographical texts. Not only does his method have a broader application beyond the sect of the Khārijites, but it can (and should) be applied to other Khārijite sub-sects in other works. Such textual-critical analysis should be the basis for any subsequent work on the Khārijites that relies in a substantial way on heresiography. Too often it is not. Similarly, historical texts such as Ibn Sa‘d, al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī, al-Jāhīz, al-Mas‘ūdī, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Khaldūn, insofar as they represent amalgamations of earlier sources, would benefit from Lewinstein’s type of analysis. In the case of historical works, the researcher may simultaneously benefit from the growing body of critical scholarship on early Islamic historiography.⁹

A related source-critical methodology is at work in Lewinstein’s article on the Ṣufriyya, in which he examines the appellation ‘Ṣufriyya’ as it has been applied to the groups labeled as such in the heresiographical corpus.¹⁰ Through a critical-comparative analysis, Lewinstein concludes that the heresiographers invented or possibly inherited an already invented category – the ‘Ṣufriyya’ – into which they could dump all problematic or otherwise un-categorizable Khārijite material. In essence, this article points out the pitfalls

of the heresiographical need for a rigid taxonomy of sects. Again, it exhorts researchers to read critically the materials under consideration, never forgetting that artificial organizational practices are often imposed on the works, resulting in distortions or outright fallacies.

In a third article, Lewinstein explores an alternative method of dealing with the problems of the heresiographical genre by subverting the standard Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite inspired heresiographies.¹¹ Lewinstein here examines a different kind of heresiography: specifically Eastern Hanafite heresiography. Lewinstein considers this type of heresiography an 'independent yet often neglected tradition of *firaq* writing'.¹² The value of these materials lies in their offering another (often legal) perspective on Islamic sectarianism that comes from outside of the oft consulted Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite works (i.e. al-Shahraṣṭānī, al-Baghdādī and al-Nāshī' al-Akbar).

In a broader sense, Lewinstein reminds his readers that alternate types of heresiography must be consulted to gain a fuller view of the sect in question. In the years since Lewinstein's article, there has been an increase in the number of non-Ash'arī/Mu'tazilī-Sunnī works available to the researcher. In particular, Madelung and Walker have edited and published a translation of Abu Tammām's *Bāb al-Shayṭān* from the *Kitāb al-Shajara*. This Khurāsānī Ismā'īlī heresiography, along with al-Rāzī's chapter on heresiography from the *Kitāb al-Zīna*, offer fresh perspectives on the Islamic sects, and contain sections on the Khārijites. Likewise, Crone and Zimmerman's edition and translation of Sālim Ibn Dhakwān's *Risāla* provides an early Ibādī text with a substantial section devoted to the early Khārijites. Lesser known, but still important, is the Ibādī heresiographer-historian al-Qalhātī: his *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān* preserves early Ibādī materials on the Khārijites that have not been widely utilized.

Lewinstein's method of critically evaluating and using non-Sunnī works should also be applied to non-Sunnī historical sources on the Khārijites. Thus, sections on the early Khārijites from the Ibādī author al-Izkawī's *Kashf al-Ghumma* may be consulted (the entirety of this work is now available in a critical Arabic edition). Both al-Qalhātī's *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān* and al-Izkawī's *Kashf al-Ghumma* seem to rely on the 2nd/8th century Ibādī scholar Abū Sufyān, whose work is now lost, as does al-Barrādī's *Jawāhir al-Muntaqāt*. Kāshif's collection of early Ibādī epistles is another source for scattered references to the Khārijites. In all cases, researchers must remain conscious of the lens through which the material is presented. Critical distance must never be sacrificed, and Lewinstein's methods for dissecting heresiographical materials should consistently be applied.

Recovering Khārijite Sources

Crone's work presents a related angle on the study of the early Khārijites, and introduces us to the second of our three stated methodologies to be examined: that of recovery. Mention has already been made of her edition and translation, with Zimmerman, of Salim b. Dhakwān's *Risāla*.¹³ The notes to the Epistle offer a helpful discussion of its context, along with a discussion of the sects mentioned by Ibn Dhakwān, who was himself an Ibādī. The Epistle remains unique in that Ibn Dhakwān offers critiques of many of the early non-Ibādī Khārijite sects while he presents a developing notion of Ibādism. The Epistle stands, therefore, at a crossroads between the early Khārijites and the later medieval Ibādiyya.

When a primary source is not available, Crone recovers other materials from secondary sources. In an article on the use of title Caliph she mines the available secondary sources

for references to Khārijite usage of the terms *khalīfa* (Caliph) and *amīr al-mu'minīn* (Commander of the Faithful).¹⁴ In so doing, she challenges Salem's (and her own initial) assertion that the Khārijites abandoned the title after they established their own local polities. Likewise, in an article on the earliest usage of the *ḥadīth*, usually associated with the Khārijites, which commands believers to obey the Caliph even if he is as lowly as an Ethiopian slave, Crone chronicles the instances of the *ḥadīth* through several sources.¹⁵ She argues that it first expressed Sunnī quietism before it was marshaled to stand as Khārijite doctrine (which, she argues, it is not).

In a piece that investigates the issue of the dispensability of the Imāmate by the Najdites (this early Khārijite group resembled the Azāriqa in doctrine, except that they softened their understanding of sin to accommodate human ignorance), Crone translates portions of al-Shahrastānī's *Nihāyat al-Iqdām* in order to isolate portions of the text that al-Shahrastānī may have taken from an originally Najdite source.¹⁶ From an analysis of the text she is able to consider the claim – made by various heresiographers – that the Najdites dispensed with the necessity of the Imāmate in much the same manner as some medieval Mu'tazilite groups. Indeed, Crone's analysis, in this article and in other works, draws out the parallels with the Mu'tazilite claims, but it also goes further to speculate that the argument was made much later by the surviving remnants of the Najdāt who likely existed in the Arabian Peninsula after their initial destruction following the second civil war.¹⁷ By postulating a historical progression of ideas, Crone is able to remind her readers of the historical development of sectarian doctrines; a simple fact that is sometimes overlooked in studies of the Khārijites.

Other types of Khārijite materials that can be reconstructed from existing secondary sources include the poetry of the Khārijites, which has been collected by Iḥsān 'Abbās and published in a single volume.¹⁸ Given this invaluable resource, it is to be lamented that so few studies of the Khārijites utilize their poetry. Exceptions include Gabrieli's initial foray into Khārijite poetry, and Donner's article on piety and eschatology in which he uses Khārijite poetry to reflect on the possibility of early Khārijite eschatological expectation (or participation, as Donner would have it).¹⁹ While Donner's analysis of the piety of the Khārijites is helpful, his take on the eschatological overtones of the poems is less convincing. Khalidi also uses the poetry of the Khārijites in an article that explores the theme of violence in relation to the promise of salvation.²⁰ While Khalidi catalogues some of the themes of Khārijite poetry, his conclusions remain (to his own admission) unsystematic. Al-Qadi's examination of the *rā'iyya* of 'Amr b. al-Ḥuṣayn al-'Anbarī provides an example of how poetry can be used to investigate the extent of Qur'anic influence on poetry: al-Qadi concludes that such influence is limited by poetic conventions, especially those relating to battlefield accounts.²¹ Her article, however, does not examine Khārijite poetry as such, and much research remains to be done in this field.

Lastly, there are materials relevant to the Khārijites to be discovered in the vast corpus of Ibādī materials that have recently been edited and published in Oman and North Africa. For example, there is the yet unstudied early Khārijite creed of Abū al-Faḍl 'Isā b. Nūrā al-Khārijī, which is preserved in the 3rd volume of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Kindī's *Bayān al-Shar'*.²² Further investigation of the Ibādī textual materials might uncover similar materials. Likewise from the Sunnī corpus, al-Mubarrad's *Kāmil* contains letters purported to be from Nafi' b. al-Azraq and Najda b. 'Amr al-Ḥanafī, the eponymous 'founders' of the Azraqites and Najdāt respectively, as well as questions supposedly asked of Ibn 'Abbās by Nāfi'.²³ Although the historical veracity of these materials is highly doubtful, a thorough study remains to be completed.

Comparative Methodologies

The last type of investigation to be here considered is that of comparison, conceived broadly to include comparison with extra-textual sources (especially numismatic evidence), within a given tradition, or with traditions that lie outside of the Islamic fold. Sizgorich has provided the most recent comparison of the Khārijites with the world of late antique Christianity, particularly as it touches the topic of 'militant devotion'. He situates a chapter on the Khārijites in the midst of a book investigating 'why militant forms of piety and the figures associated with militant and aggressive modes of religiosity became such crucial resources for communal self-fashioning among early Christian and early Muslim communities'.²⁴ Sizgorich finds the Khārijites – or rather the image of them that is preserved in the sources – of a piece with the early Islamic image of ascetic-warriors.²⁵ While Sizgorich is unwilling to countenance 'horizontal influences' between contemporaneous Christian and Khārijite groups, his contextualization of the particular Khārijite modes of militant piety within the larger framework of Christian-Muslim articulations of violence and devotion remains a helpful model. However, much work remains to be completed on the contextualization of the Khārijite forms of militant devotional piety in the early period. For one, a methodology that more thoroughly examines the poetry and narratives of the Khārijites as literature might be better suited to tease out what connections, if any, exist between the ways that Christians narrated tales about their monks and martyrs and the ways in which the early Khārijites told their own stories. Such an investigation would begin by comparing the narratives about the early Khārijite martyrs that are preserved in later Sunnī literature with the same stories as they are preserved in the Ibādī corpus. This literary material could then be fruitfully compared with the large body of late antique Christian martyrdom stories that are preserved in Syriac. While Sizgorich is safe to doubt actual contacts between Christians and Khārijites, the specific influences of martyrdom as an early Syriac literary genre on early Khārijite narrative and poetry remain to be investigated.

Parallel to Sizgorich, other scholars look for comparisons within the early Islamic tradition to contextualize Khārijite movements. Donner examines the Khārijite motivation to establish a community of true believers as an extension of the original mission of the Prophet Muhammad.²⁶ In emphasizing piety as the dominant style of Khārijite legitimation, Donner explicitly compares the Khārijites to earlier Qur'anic and Prophetic models of piety. Donner's concern with establishing continuity between the Khārijites and earlier Islamic models of legitimation is echoed in Crone's estimation of the Khārijites as 'systematizing the principles behind the early caliphate in Medina'.²⁷ In their own ways, both of these scholars compare the later Khārijites with earlier trends within the Islamic fold.

Another type of comparative methodology uses heretofore neglected numismatic evidence from the Khārijites. This neglect is quite surprising given that the near total lack of Khārijite textual evidence elevates the easily identifiable Khārijite coins to the status of irrefutably authentic Khārijite relics. Numismatists have long known and written about these Khārijite issues. Walker's catalogues of Arab-Sāssānian and Arab-Byzantine coins remain the standard works on known Khārijite coins of the pre-reform period, and include examples of the early Khārijite coins, such as the silver Arab-Sāssānian *dirhams* of the Azāriqa and the 'Aṭawīyya (an offshoot of the Najdāt).²⁸ Wurtzel's study of late Umayyad revolutionary coinage addresses the post-reform Khārijite coins from Kufa and environs, and includes the *dirham* minted, in great likelihood, by Ḍaḥḥāk b.

Qays (often considered a ‘Šufrite’), as well as a *fals* minted in his name.²⁹ These studies offer a typical numismatic analysis of Khārijite coinage: their primary concern is to identify and classify the coins without necessarily exploring what the coins might teach us about the Khārijites who produced them. Moreover, they address coins that are easily recognized as Khārijite, either because they contain the name of a Khārijite leader, or because they employ the distinctive Khārijite (and Ibādite) slogan *lā ḥukm illā li-lāh* (No Judgment but God’s).

Other coins are not so easily identified as Khārijite, and remain of disputed attribution. Sear’s article on the coin of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. MDWL raises some of the general questions surrounding the attribution of Arab-Sāsānian coins and deals with the equally problematic issue of administrative authority in the late 1st/7th century.³⁰ Mochiri published a study of Islamic civil war coinage in which he not only includes many known Khārijite coins, but argues for the re-attribution of other coins to the Khārijites.³¹ His theories are not accepted by numismatists – no textual evidence exists to back up his speculations, some of which are tenuous at best – and his work represents one of the more bizarre attempts to classify Khārijite coinage. In addition, the possible ‘Šufrite’ issues of North Africa (the coins of Khalaf b. al-Mudā’, ‘Amr b. Ḥammad, ‘Iyād b. Wahb and Ma’zūz b. Ṭālūt) are ambiguous: it is unclear whether they represent actual Khārijite issues, Idrīsī gubernatorial issues, or even the issues of Idrīs II’s regents.³² (Fig. 1) Ibn Khaldūn mentions Ma’zūz b. Ṭālūt as a leader of the Šufī Khārijites of the West Moroccan coast, along with Ṭarīf Abū Šāliḥ and Ṭarīf al-Maṭgharī.³³ However, coins issued in Ma’zūz’s name were minted long after his death (the coins were minted in 223–24AH/ 838–39CE), and contain the phrase *al-‘adl li-lāh* (Justice is God’s). Album attributes the coin to the Mu’tazilites, but it is worth noting that the Ibādīyya also embraced the notion of God’s Justice.³⁴ And because the Ibādīyya and ‘Šufriyya’ (here meaning non-Ibādī Khārijites) were quite close doctrinally, it is entirely possible that these North African Khārijites also embraced a notion of God’s Justice. Thus, Ma’zūz’s coin is not necessarily a Mu’tazilite issue, but could, in fact, be Khārijite.

The coinage of the Zanj rebels of the late 3rd/9th century Iraq is equally problematic: it remains unclear to what extent Khārijism (even Ibādism) or messianic Shi’ism animated the rebellion, and while the *dirhams* of the Zanj remain strongly suggestive of Khārijite themes – especially in their usage of the slogan *lā ḥukm illā li-lāh* – they also mention ‘Alī (presumably ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib) and refer to the leader of the revolt, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad, as the awaited *mahdī*. For these reasons, they cannot reliably be considered ‘Khārijite’ issues proper.³⁵ Finally, there are the interesting coins of Mismār b. Salm of al-Qaṭīf, which Bates suggests could be Khārijite.³⁶ However, as the coins remain the sole evidence for the existence of the Banū Mismār, more textual evidence will be needed to determine if they represent a Khārijite issue.

Despite the problems of attribution, the academic value of the coins to the study of the Khārijites lies in the types of numismatic analysis pursued by researchers like Bacharach, who analyzed what was on and what was in (i.e. the iconography and the metallic composition) the coins of the Ikhshidids,³⁷ and Treadwell, who argues that ‘coins can yield their full benefit to the historian, if they are interpreted, not as disembodied and decontextualized objects, but in light of the narrative provided by contemporary historians’.³⁸ In the case of the Khārijites, the iconographic evidence can fruitfully, albeit carefully, be compared to the textual evidence as a means of augmenting or testing the plausibility of non-Khārijite sources and secondary scholarship. For example, Madelung mentions the coins of Azāriqa and ‘Aṭawiyya-Najdāt as indicative of a rivalry in Kirmān between ‘Aṭiyya b. al-Aswad, the eponymous founder of the ‘Aṭawiyya, and Qaṭarī b.

(a)



(b)



Fig. 1. Silver *Dirham* of Khalaf b. al-Mudā', minted in 176AH/792CE at the Tudgha mint (Steve Album, with permission).

al-Fujā'a, the leader of the Azraqite Khārijites after the death of Nāfi' b. al-Azraq.³⁹ (Fig. 2) Madelung argues that the attribution of 'Commander of the Faithful' on Qaṭarī's coins should be viewed as a challenge to the authority of 'Aṭīyya, who also minted coins (but without the claim to a Caliphal title). However, Qaṭarī's numismatic declarations to a type of Caliphal authority are not sufficient in themselves to establish a rivalry with the 'Aṭawiyya: they could also have been aimed at the Umayyad Caliphs or the Zubayrids



Fig. 2. Silver *Dirham* of Azraqite Khārijite Qatari b. al-Fujā'a, minted in Arab-Sassānian style in 75AH/694-95CE at Ardashir-Khurra (ART) mint in Fars province. Obverse Field Pahlavi inscription, left of bust, reads 'splendor may be increased'; Pahlavi inscription right of bust reads 'Qatari, Commander of the Faithful'. Arabic inscription in obverse margin reads 'No judgment but God's' (*Dr Busso Peus Nachf, auction 382, lot 723, with permission*).

(who likewise claimed the title 'Commander of the Faithful' on some of their coins).⁴⁰ Additionally, the statement is written in a miniscule Pahlavi script in the obverse field of the coin, and one may rightly wonder who among the Arabic speaking Hanafī tribesmen or local *mawālī* of the 'Aṭawiyya would have been able to read it. The overall appearance of the coins honor the numismatic 'reputation' of Arab-Sassānian coinage, suggesting that the intended recipients of the coins were local Kirmānis, many of whom would have been Christian, Jewish or Zoroastrian. Rather than emphasizing a sectarian rivalry between two Khārijite groups, the conservative iconography of Khārijite coins seems to minimize the overtly sectarian content of the coin itself. This feature suggests that the coins were meant to be circulated beyond the immediate population of Azraqite or 'Aṭawī-Najdite Khārijites who minted them.

Moreover, the intended circulation of Azraqite or 'Aṭawī-Najdite coins challenges the heresiographical portrait of some of these groups – especially the Azāriqa and 'Aṭawī-Najdāt – as inimically hostile to all non-Khārijite Muslims. In this way, numismatic evidence can be used comparatively with textual evidence as a way to check the veracity of some heresiographical claims. That heresiographers created inaccurate images of the Khārijites comes as no surprise: heresiography is a polemical literature aimed at delineating the 'saved' sect from those that are damned. All the same, the coins of the Khārijites offer a rare opportunity, in this case, to determine in what specific areas and to what extent heresiographers distorted the portrait of the Khārijites in their writings.

So long as researchers must deal with non-Khārijite, fragmented and often hostile sources when they study the Khārijites, their methodologies must be fine-tuned to critically examine the predilections and hurdles that the nature of the sources present. This essay has delineated three broadly conceived methodologies for dealing with these problems. Lewinstein's work presents a way for evaluating heresiographical materials, one that can be exported to deal with other types of early Islamic literature as well (especially historical texts). Crone and others have successfully rooted out Khārijite texts from

non-Khārījite sources, while Sezgorich and Donner employ comparative models within various frameworks to emphasize different aspects of the Khārījites. Another variation on this method involves checking the plausibility and veracity of non-Khārījite materials on the Khārījites through comparison with numismatic evidence. And while this essay has not been able to address much of the other interesting historiographical developments in the field, it is hoped that scholars will appreciate what work remains to be done, and how they might productively go about doing it.

Short Biography – Adam Gaiser

Adam Gaiser's research interests lie in early Islamic sectarian movements, especially the early Khārījites, the Ibāḍiyya and the Shī'ā. He has published articles on these topics in the *Journal of Islamic Studies*, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* and the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam*. His book, *Origin and Development of the Ibāḍī Imāmate* (Oxford, forthcoming), locates the conceptual roots of the Ibāḍī Imāmate in the formative Ibāḍī period in Basra, early Khārījites, *rāshidūn* Caliphs in Mādina, Prophet Muhammad and pre-Islamic Arabs. Current research examines the hagiographical literature and poetry of the Khārījites and Ibāḍiyya in the context of early Syriac Christian martyrdom narratives. Before coming to the Florida State University, Gaiser taught at the College of the Holy Cross and the University of Virginia. He holds a BA in Comparative Religion from the College of William and Mary, and an MA and PhD in the History of Religions from the University of Virginia.

Notes

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¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1879), 2:516–20; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī (Beirut: al-Sharika al-Muttaḥida, 1978), 3:114–15.

² The trend continues among certain contemporary scholars. Dabashi, for example, insists on viewing the foundations of Khārījite authority as a broadly disseminated charisma that spread legitimacy too thinly among the Khārījite community and subsequently failed to create stable institutions of leadership. As representative of the Khārījites, Dabashi tends to focus on the most extreme and violent examples – the Azāriqa and Najdāt – who existed for less than twenty years, rather than other groups (such as the early Ibāḍiyya) who persist until the present day. In addition, the supposed 'failure' of Khārījite groups to establish stable institutions of authority might better be attributed to the relentless Umayyad campaigns which successfully eradicated all but a few of the early Khārījite movements. See H. Dabashi, *Authority in Islam* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 121–45.

³ For an introduction to the Ibāḍiyya, see V. Hoffman, "The Articulation of Ibāḍī Identity in Modern Oman and Zanzibar", in *Muslim World*, 14/2 (2004): 201–16; T. Lewicki, "The Ibāḍī Community at Basra in the Seventh to Ninth Centuries and the Origins of the Ibāḍī States in Arabia and North Africa", in *Journal of World History*, 13 (1971): 51–130 (part one); "The Ibāḍites in North Africa and the Sudan to the Fourteenth Century", *Journal of World History* 13 (1971): 83–130 (part two); E. Savage, *A Gateway to Hell, A Gateway to Paradise: The North African Response to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); J. C. Wilkinson, "The Early Development of the Ibāḍī Movement in Basra", in G. H. A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 125–44; 241–49; *The Imamate Tradition of Oman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁴ For helpful discussions of this phenomenon, readers should consult J. Kenney, *Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and H. Timani, *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Kharijites* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

⁵ J. Kenney, "The Emergence of the Khawārij: Religion and the Social Order in Early Islam", in *Jusūr*, 5 (1989): 1–29.

⁶ K. Lewinsein, "The Azāriqa in Islamic Heresiography", in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 54 (1991): 251.

⁷ M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, (Oxford: Oneword Press, 1998), 2–6.

⁸ K. Lewinsein, "The Azāriqa in Islamic Heresiography", 251–52.

⁹ See F. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998).

¹⁰ K. Lewinsein, "Making and Unmaking a Sect: the Heresiographers and the Šufriyya", in *Studia Islamica*, 76 (1992): 75–96.

¹¹ K. Lewinsein, "Notes on Eastern Ḥanafite Heresiography", in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114 (1994): 583–98.

¹² K. Lewinsein, "Notes on Eastern Ḥanafite Heresiography," 583. Examples of Eastern Hanafī heresiographies include Ibn al-Jawzī's *Talbīs Iblīs*, al-Nasafī's *Kitāb al-Radd 'alā al-Bida'*, and the anonymous *Kitāb al-Firaq al-Muftariqa bayna Ahl al-Zaiḡ wa al-Zandaqa*.

¹³ P. Crone and F. Zimmerman (eds., trs.), *The Epistle of Sālim Ibn Dhakwān* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁴ P. Crone, "The Khārījites and the Caliphal Title", in G. R. Hawting, J. A. Mojaddedi, and A. Samely (eds.), *Studies in Islamic and Middle Eastern Texts and Traditions in Memory of Norman Calder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 85–91.

¹⁵ P. Crone, "'Even an Ethiopian Slave': The Transformation of a Sunni Tradition", in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 57 (1994): 59–67.

¹⁶ P. Crone, "A Statement by the Najdiyya Khārījites on the Dispensability of the Imamate", in *Studia Islamica*, 88 (1998): 55–76.

¹⁷ See also P. Crone and F. Zimmerman, *The Epistle of Sālim Ibn Dhakwān*, 206–11; P. Crone, "Ninth-Century Muslim Anarchists", in *Past and Present*, 167 (2000): 3–28.

¹⁸ I. 'Abbās (ed.), *Shi'r al-Khawārij: Jam' wa Taqdim Ihsān 'Abbās*, 3rd edn (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1974).

¹⁹ G. Gabrieli, "La Poesia Khārījita nel Secolo degli Omayyadi", in *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 20 (1943): 331–72; F. Donner, "Piety and Eschatology in Early Kharijite Poetry", in I. al-Sa'afin (ed.), *Fi Mihrab al-Ma'rifah: Festschrift for Ihsān 'Abbās* (Beirut: Dar Sader Publishers, 1997), 13–19.

²⁰ T. Khalidi, "The Poetry of the Khawārij: Violence and Salvation", in T. Scheffler (ed.), *Religion Between Violence and Reconciliation* (Wurtzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2002), 109–22.

²¹ W. al-Qāḍī, "The Limitations of Qur'anic Usage in Early Arabic Poetry: The Example of a Khārījite Poem", in W. Heinrichs and G. Schoeler (eds.), *Festschrift Ewald Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag, vol. 2: Studien zur arabischen Dichtung* (Beirut: Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1994), 162–81.

²² Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Kindī, *Bayān al-Shar'*, 3: 277–94, interspersed with comments by medieval Omani Ibaḍī jurists (Muscat: Wizārat al-Turāth al-Qawmī wa al-Thaqāfa, 1984).

²³ al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil: Bāb al-Khawārij* (Damascus: Dār al-Ḥikma, n.d.), 59–68; 112–16.

²⁴ T. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 4.

²⁵ T. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*, 196–230.

²⁶ F. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998), 102.

²⁷ P. Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 59.

²⁸ J. Walker, *A Catalogue of the Arab-Sassanian Coins* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1941), 111–13.

²⁹ C. Wurtzel, "The Coinage of the Revolutionaries in the Late Umayyad Period", in *ANS Museum Notes*, 23 (1978): 161–99.

³⁰ S. Sears, "Umayyad Partisan or Khārījite Rebel?: The Issue of 'Abd al-'Azīz b. MDWL?", in *Studia Iranica*, 31/1 (2002): 71–78.

³¹ M. I. Mochiri, *Arab-Sassanian Civil War Coinage: Manichaeans, Yazīdiyya and Other Khawārij* (No publishing information given).

³² S. Album, *A Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 2nd edn (Santa Rosa: Steve Album, 1998), 37 (Album nos. 430–33).

³³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn* (Riyad: International Ideas Home, n.d.), 1659.

³⁴ S. Album, *A Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 37 (Album no. 433).

³⁵ J. Walker, "A Rare Coin of the Zanj", in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (1933): 655.

³⁶ M. Bates, "The Coinage of Mismar b. Salm, Ruler of al-Qaṭīf in the 3rd/9th Century", in A. K. al-Khalifa and M. Rice (eds.), *Bahrain Through the Ages: The History* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 98–103.

³⁷ J. L. Bacharach, *Islamic History Through Coins: An Analysis and Catalogue of Tenth-Century Ikhshidid Coinage* (New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2006), 5–9.

³⁸ L. Treadwell, "Shahanshah and al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad: The Legitimation of Power in Samanid and Buyid Iran", in F. Daftary and J. W. Meri (eds.), *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2003), 319.

³⁹ W. Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988), 57.

⁴⁰ Album, *A Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 16 (Album no. 16).

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