PART ONE

HISTORY AND SOCIETY

WHO WAS THE SHEPHERD OF DAMASCUS? THE ENIGMA OF JEWISH AND MESSIANIST RESPONSES TO THE ISLAMIC CONQUESTS IN MARWĀNID SYRIA AND MESOPOTAMIA[1]

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Of all the ramified responses of the local populations of Syria and Mesopotamia that the early Islamic conquests inspired, apocalyptic speculations and messianist movements stand among the most dramatic examples of the deeply transformative religious dynamism which resulted from the conquests. Although modern scholarship has of late considerably illuminated our understanding of the apocalyptic literature produced in the wake of these conquests, many of the apocalypticist and/or messianist movements of the era remain rather neglected, even to the extent of being entirely unknown. Aiming to remedy this state of affairs at least partially, this essay examines a hitherto neglected passage from the Persian heresiography *Bayān al-adyān* of the Ghaznavid scholar Abū al-Maʿālī (wr. *ca.* 1092 C.E.) that considerably illuminates the history of such movements among the Jewish inhabitants of Syria and Mesopotamia. This passage, ultimately deriving from the now lost *Kitāb al-Maqālāt* of the influential heresiographer Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq (d. after 864), preserves an account of a Jewish messianist personage of the Umayyad era known as the Shepherd (Ar. *al-rāʿī*) who began a movement among Syro-Mesopotamian Jewry during the caliphate of Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 715–717) and gained famed as a miracle worker and herald of the coming messiah. His movement allegedly ended when, after being imprisoned by the Umayyad caliph, he entered into a period of occultation (Per. *ghāyeb shod*). Through a critical reading of Abū al-Maʿālī's account alongside accounts of Syriac historians living in the 8th century and those of heresiographical works, Muslim, Christian and Jewish, this essays attempts to provide a chronological reconstruction of the currents of Jewish messianist responses to the Islamic conquests as they evolved from the Marwānid to early ʿAbbāsid periods in general and to assess the profound influence of the Shepherd's

[1] The author would like to thank Wadād al-Qāḍī, Fred Astren, and the anonymous reviewer for reading the first draft of this essay and providing many invaluable comments.

movement on the Jewish messianist movement of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī and the ʿĪsawiyya in particular.

Introduction

When in the 630s and 640s the armies of Arabian tribesmen began to flood the lands of Syria and Mesopotamia, the early vanguards of the Islamic conquests walked onto the stage of an apocalyptic drama regarded by much of the region's populace, regardless of their sectarian allegiances, as already underway. Indeed, when looking to 7th century Jewish apocalypticism in particular, the Islamic conquests can with justification be imagined as merely re-igniting the flames of Jewish apocalyptic sentiments and messianic expectations that were first set ablaze by the Byzantine-Persian wars spanning 603–628. Much of the impetus for the surge in apocalypticism among the Jewish denizens of Palestine during this time derives from the Sasanian conquests of Byzantine territories in the Levant and their capture of Jerusalem in 614. With the Persian victories, the Jewish populations found themselves freed of their Byzantine overlords and, in time, even in control of Jerusalem. Certainly, the brief and infamously difficult to interpret period from 614–617 during which the Persians left Jerusalem under Jewish administration created an indelible imprint on the Jewish communities of late antique Syro-Palestine, leading many to look eagerly for the imminent arrival of a messianic redeemer.[2] Yet, a sharp turn of fortune for the Jews resulted from the Byzantines' subsequent victorious campaigns against the Persians led by the emperor Heraclius, himself regarded by a number of his contemporaries as fulfilling archetypal, apocalyptic roles.[3] Besides recapturing the territories recently lost to Persian advances, the Byzantine resurgence brought with it severe reprisals against the Jewish populations of Syria and Palestine in retaliation for Jewish acts of violence against Christians in the wake of the Persian conquest and their perceived collusion with invading Persian forces.[4]

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[2] Elliot Horowtiz, "'The Vengeance of the Jews Was Stronger Than Their Avarice': Modern Historians and the Persian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614," *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (1998): 1–39; Averil Cameron, "Blaming the Jews: The Seventh-Century Invasions of Palestine in Context," *Travaux et Mémoires* (Mélanges Gilbert Dagron) 14 (2002): 57–78.

[3] Gerrit J. Reinink, "Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies during the Reign of Heraclius," in G. J. Reinink and B. H. Stolte, eds., *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 81–94.

[4] Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 203 ff.

Evidence that these tumultuous events inspired and intensified the chiliastic expectations among the Jews of seventh-century Palestine abounds in the apocalyptic literature produced in the time period. These apocalyptic writings convey attitudes that display expectations that the Byzantine victories merely represented the last trial to be suffered before history marched up to the precipice of the messiah's appearance. This is a theme dominating the pages of well-known 7th-century Jewish apocalypses like *Sefer Zerubbabel* and also featuring quite vividly in extant *piyyūṭīm*, or liturgical hymns, which have begun to garner increased scholarly attention.[5] It is in such a context, for instance, that the author of the *Secrets of Rabbi Šim'ōn bar Yoḥai* has the angel Metatron extol the boon represented by the arrival of the Arabian 'Ishmaelites':[6]

> Do not be afraid, mortal, for the Holy One, blessed be He, is bringing about the kingdom of Ishmael only for the purpose of delivering you from that wicked one [i.e., Edom/Byzantium]. He shall raise up over them a prophet in accordance with His will, and He will subdue the land for them; and they shall come and restore it with grandeur.

Succor, it seems, had indeed come to the Jews from an unforeseen source; surely then, the apocalypticist inferred, the messiah's coming drew nigh.

Beyond the removal of perceived Byzantine oppression, the Islamic conquests also brought a conspicuous, renewed religious interest among the newly minted conquest élite in the revival of Jerusalem—particularly the esplanade regarded as the former site of the original Jewish temple—as a center of religious devotion and cultic activity. Muslim interest in Jerusalem contrasted starkly with the studied neglect of their Byzantine forbearers. If the seventh-century Armenian account of (Pseudo-)Sebeos is to be believed, many local Jews viewed the construction activities of "the Hagarenes'" mosque on the area regarded as the former site of the temple as holding clear chiliastic significance, and even as presaging the reconstruction of Solomon's temple. According to Ps.-Sebeos, a number of Palestinian Jews even went as far as to resolve to construct a new

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[5] Günter Stemberger, "Jerusalem in the Early Seventh Century: Hopes and Aspirations of Christians and Jews," in L. I. Levine, ed., *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 260–70; W. J. van Bekkum, "Jewish Messianic Expectations in the Age of Heraclius," in Reinink and Stolte, eds., *The Reign of Heraclius*, 95–112; Nicholas de Lange, "Jewish and Christian Messianic Hopes in Pre-Islamic Byzantium," in M. Bockmuehl and J. C. Paget, eds., *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 274–84.

[6] In John Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 79 f.

synagogue at the base of the earliest Islamic structure.[7] In any case, the Jewish participation in the revival and cultivation of neglected locations of Jerusalem's sacred landscape immediately following the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem *ca.* 637–8—despite Christian efforts to thwart and circumscribe such activities—boasts too much evidence in both Islamic and non-Islamic historical sources to deny its historicity.[8] Furthermore, the significance placed on Jerusalem by the Arabian tribesmen who overtook the city, evidenced by the building activities undertaken therein, was very unlikely to have been undertaken while aloof to its impact on the local Jewish populace. The Jews of Palestine and Jewish visitors from elsewhere likely constituted at least a section of the intended audience for such constructions in the first place.[9]

The urgency encapsulated within the extant Jewish apocalyptic writings and, in particular, the exuberance with which they embrace the Islamic conquests naturally gives rise to the question as to what exactly happened to all this apocalyptic momentum. In a volume dedicated to Fred Donner, it is especially important to emphasize that at least a partial answer to this question is that much of this initial enthusiasm and momentum was absorbed and harnessed by the burgeoning Islamic movement itself, which at its formative, early stages likely remained capacious and accommodating enough to envelope a wide range of sectarian identities, even if this phenomenon began to undergo a dramatic decline by the end of

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[7] R. W. Thomson and J. Howard-Johnston, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 1: 102 f., 2: 249. However, key points of Sebeos' account, which remains problematic in other important respects too, lead one to doubt the accuracy of such assertions, especially the manner in which this anecdote strongly mirrors the narratives of the Romance of Julian the Apostate that portray the Jews as collaborators with the designs of Rome's last pagan emperor to rebuild the Jewish temple, ordered by edict in 363 A.D. though never fully realized. See G. J. Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam," in L. I. Conrad and A. Cameron, eds., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, SLAEI 1 (Princeton: Darwin, 1992), 184 f. For an evaluation of the account attributed to Sebeos in general, see Robert Hoyland, "Sebeos, the Jews and the Rise of Islam," in R. L. Nettler, ed., *Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations* (Luxembourg: Harwood, 1995), 89–102.

[8] Stefan Leder, "The Attitude of the Population, especially the Jews, towards the Arab-Islamic Conquest of Bilād al-Shām and the Question of their role therein," *WO* 18 (1987): 64–71; Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*, trans. E. Broido (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 65–74.

[9] Andreas Kaplony, *The Ḥaram of Jerusalem, 324–1099: Temple, Friday Mosque, Area of Spiritual Power* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2002), 56 f., 247 ff. As attested to also in the *Secrets of Šimʿōn bar Yoḥai*; see Reeves, *Trajectories*, 82 f.

the 7th century.[10] Yet, this cannot be the complete answer insofar as the experiences of and reactions to the early Islamic conquests among the Jewish the communities of Syria and Mesopotamia were by no means uniform. Even those Jews most enchanted with the 'kingdom of Ishmael' found increasingly with the passage of time that many of their messianic fantasies remained unrealized. Not only that, the burgeoning Muslim polity itself also came to perceive such messianism as being at cross purposes with, and even a potential threat to, the aspirations of Muslims themselves.[11] This appears quite acutely in an account recorded by the anonymous Nestorian author of the 7th-century *Khūzistān Chronicle*,[12] where one finds mention of a particularly early messianic pretender appearing among the Jews of Mesopotamia. It reads:[13]

> There appeared a certain Jewish man from Bēṯ Ārāmāyē, from a town called Pelūgātā [Ar., al-Fallūja],[14] where rivers of the Euphrates divide into the tributaries of the various lands. He said that the messiah had come (*amar d-etā mšīḥā*) and gathered together 400 men from the weavers, barbers, and fullers. They burned three churches and murdered the authority of the realm (*šlīṭā d-atrā*). At that time, a force (*ḥaylā*) from ʿAqūlā [Ar. al-Kūfa] attacked and slaughtered them—even their women and children. And their heads they impaled on stakes in his village (*wa l-rīšhōn zpaqw bāh ba-qrīteh*).

The chronicler thus provides us with a rather memorable incident in which Jewish messianism clashed rather bloodily with the newly established Muslim hegemony.[15] The type of incident described in the *Khūzistān*

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[10] Fred M. Donner, *Muḥammad and the Believers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[11] Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, SLAEI 13 (Princeton: Darwin, 1997), 526–31.

[12] In I. Guidi, ed., *Chronica Minora I*, CSCO 1, *scr. syri* 1 (Louvain: Peeters, 1960), 15–39. Translated into German by Th. Nödelke, "Die von Guidi herausgegebene syrische Chronik übersetzt und commentiert," *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Classe*, 128 (1893): 1–48 (Abh. ix). See now Chase Robinson, "The Conquest of Khūzistān: A Historiographical Reassessment," *BSOAS* 67 (2004): 14–39.

[13] *Khūzistān*, 33.

[14] See M. Gil, *Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages*, trans. D. Strassler (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 502–506.

[15] There is a fascinating narrative in which a soldier from the Muslim armies describes seeing the Jews of Iṣfāhān celebrating upon his arrival at the city prior to its conquest in 642. In their midst he sees Ibn Ṣayyād—the Jewish *dajjāl*/antichrist—who is destined to reappear at the apocalypse. This account likely has no historical basis, however. See Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Dhikr akhbār Iṣfahān*, ed. S. Dedering (Leiden: Brill, 1931), 1: 22–23 and Ibn al-Munādī, *al-Malāḥim*, ed. ʿA.-K. al-ʿUqaylī (Qom: Dār al-Sīra, 1998), 222. On Ibn Ṣayyād, see David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, SLAEI 21 (Princeton: Darwin Press,

Chronicle seems to have been quite rare in the 7th century, but clashes of varying severity between Jewish messianists and their acolytes with the Muslim authorities began to occur with the onset of the 8th century. It is within such a context that the movement and preaching of the Shepherd must be weighed and interpreted. To my knowledge, no other scholar has brought him to the attention of historians besides Arjomand, who accords him a brief, passing mention in a study of Islamic apocalypticism.[16] It is necessary, therefore, to begin with an analysis of the principal account from which nearly all of our knowledge of this figure derives.

The Principal Account

Although one may adduce various allusions to the Damascene Shepherd throughout the heresiological literature of the ʿAbbāsid era, most of these are rather arcane and elliptical in their reference to the Shepherd. There survives, in truth, only one full-fledged account of his religious career. It survives in the oft-neglected Persian heresiography *Bayān al-adyān*, penned by an ʿAlid scholar of the Ghaznavid court named Abū al-Maʿālī Muḥammad ibn ʿUbayd Allāh al-ʿAlawī (wr. 1092). Although not a lengthy work, Abū al-Maʿālī's *Bayān* does uniquely stand out as our earliest example of a Muslim heresiography composed in Persian. For our purposes, one of the more useful aspects of his work is that its author, generally speaking, was a scholar who conscientiously employed earlier sources in composing his work, many of which now seem to have been lost.[17]

For his Persian account of the Shepherd, Abū al-Maʿālī depends exclusively upon—and, indeed, probably translates directly from Arabic—an excerpt from the much earlier heresiographical work of the estranged Muʿtazilī thinker Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn Hārūn al-Warrāq known as the *K. al-Maqālāt*. A figure considerably earlier and more influential than Abū al-Maʿālī himself, Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq lived at least until 864, the latest point to which his writing activity can be dated with any certainty.[18]

2002), 110 ff. and W. Raven, "Ibn Ṣayyād as an Islamic 'Antichrist': A Reappraisal of the Texts," in W. Brandes and F. Schmieder, eds., *Endzeiten: Eschatologie in den monotheistischen Weltreligionen*, Millennium-Studien 16 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2008), 261–92.

[16] First in Said Amir Arjomand, "Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classic Period," in Bernard McGinn, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, vol. 2: Apocalypticism in Western History and Culture* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 258; then, subsequently, in idem, "Ḡayba," *EIr*, 10: 341b.

[17] See J. van Ess, "Abū'l-Maʿālī Moḥammad," *EIr*, 1: 334 f.

[18] See W. Madelung, "Häresiographie," *GdAP*, 2: 375.

Although only fragments of the *K. al-Maqālāt* survive and even then only in later works, these fragments testify to the paramount importance of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's work for the development of Muslim heresiography—in particular for that field in which he excelled most brilliantly among his peers, namely the study of non-Islamic sects.[19] The *K. al-Maqālāt* seems to have been rather popular among the scholars of the Ghaznavid court. Its popularity is attested to not only by its extensive use by Abū l-Maʿālī but also by the polymath Abū al-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. after 1050).[20]

We have little reason to doubt Abū al-Maʿālī's assertion that he translates his account of the Shepherd directly from the *K. al-Maqālāt* of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq given his utilization of this work elsewhere in the *Bayān*; therefore, we can regard Abū al-Maʿālī's version as a reasonably faithful and close Persian rendering thereof, even in the absence of the Arabic original. The account as preserved in the *Bayān* reads as follows:[21]

> During the era of the reign and governance of Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Umawī, there appeared a man whom the Jews called *'raʿyā'*,[22] but he was better known (*maʿrūftar būd*) as *'al-raʿī'*. A group of the Jews (*khalqī az jahūdān*) gathered around him, and he called people to piety and asceticism and to abandon their inequities (*ū khalq rā beh zohd va pārsā'ī va-tark-e maẓālem daʿvat kard*). He said, "I am the forerunner of the messiah (*man moqaddemah-ye mahdī-am*)" and called the people (*khalq*) to the religion of the Jews. His supporters made mighty claims and arguments on his behalf (*shīʿah-ye ū az jehat-e ū daʿvihā va-borhānhā-ye ʿaẓīm kardand*). They said that one day he prayed at a home, and the wood of that house turned completely green and began to sprout leaves (*rūzī dar khānah namāz kard chūb-e ān khānah hamah sabz shod va barg bar-āvard*). They also said that in one day they saw him in several cities, and on the date of that same day letters arrived from those cities (*dar yak rūz ū rā beh chand shahr dīdand va-beh tārīkh-e ān rūz az shahrhā nāmah āmad*). [It is also said that] he was imprisoned inside the prison of Damascus, and every day there would fall near him sustenance (*khūrdanī*). One day he disappeared from there (*az ānjā ghāyeb shod*), though the door of the prison remained closed (*va dar-e zindān hamchanān bastah būd*). [They said that] because the Jews greatly

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[19] Ibid.; see also D. Thomas, "Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq and the History of Religions," *JSS* 41 (1992): 275–90.

[20] Cf. J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991–1997), 4: 430 f.

[21] Abū al-Maʿālī al-ʿAlawī, *Bayān al-adyān*, ed. ʿAbbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī, Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, and Muḥammad Dabīr Siyāqī (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Rūzanah, 1997), 75.

[22] The text here reads "r.ʿ.n.ā"; however, this is undoubtedly a textual corruption of "r.ʿ.y.ā", an Arabic transcription of the Aramaic *raʿyā*. Cf. L. Nemoy, "Corrections and Emendations to al-Qirqisānī's Kitāb al-Anwār," *JQR* n.s. 50 (1950): 373.

> vexed him (*chūn jahūdān ū rā beseyār ranjah kardand*), he disappeared (*nāpeydā gasht*). A group of the Jews became his followers and are still of his sect (*khalqī az yahūdān beh ū geravīd va hanūz az ṭabaqah-ye ū hastand*) and say that he was an angel (*farashtah būd*).

As translated by Abū al-Maʿālī, Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's account ostensibly presents us with a number of basic 'facts' about the Shepherd, which one may summarize as follows. The Shepherd's movement originated during the caliphate of Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 715–17), and he drew his following predominantly from the Jews. Remembered particularly as a miracle-working holy-man who called the people to piety and righteous conduct, he harbored profoundly messianistic beliefs, too. Lastly, while calling a multitude to faith in the Jewish religion (certainly Jews, but perhaps even non-Jews, as the identity of 'the people [Per. *khalq*]' in the text is somewhat vague on this point in one instance), he did so while viewing himself as a forerunner (*moqaddemah*) of the messiah/*mahdī*. Although the account focuses on his imprisonment in Damascus, the account provides no hint as to why the Umayyad authorities took such an interest in this miracle-working maven.[23] Yet, after the Shepherd's imprisonment, the account concludes with an even more inscrutable mystery: the complete disappearance of the miracle-worker from his Damascene prison, presumably never to be seen or heard from again.

There is also much that is arcane and even hazardously factitious about the heresiographer's account of the Shepherd. It is not merely that Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq describes the Shepherd's career as attenuated by spectacularly preternatural feats and miraculous events that ought to give historians pause, but also the *way* in which he does so. Most conspicuously, nearly all of the preternatural feats and events mentioned therein harken back to either biblical or qurʾānic miracle *topoi*. Three of the Shepherd's most distinctive miracles in particular bear the tell-tale signs of having been inspired by either biblical or other Jewish/Christian parascriptural materials. That the Shepherd's prayers cause even lumber and felled wood to blossom, for instance, conjures imagery strongly evocative of contemporary,

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[23] It is noteworthy that Abū Hāshim ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya was also placed in the prison of Damascus around the same time, though by Walīd I rather Sulaymān, likely due to the considerable following he enjoyed among the Kaysāniyya, many of whom regarded him as imām. Cf. *EI*[3], art. "Abū Hāshim" (T. Bayhom-Daou). Later, Walīd purportedly released Abū Hāshim for good behavior and placed him under house arrest. See Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 2, ed. W. Madelung (Beirut: Klaus Schwarz, 2003), 648 f. Is it possible that the imprisonment of the Shepherd reflects a somewhat standard Marwānid policy?

pan-sectarian expectations of both the eschatological re-appearance of Aaron's flowering staff and the allegorical imagery associated with the Davidic messiah (Is. 11:1).[24] The Shepherd's miraculously speedy transport from town to town in a single day likewise finds precedence in biblical miracle stories (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:12 and Acts 8:39–40).[25] Furthermore, the contention that the Shepherd mysteriously found sustenance of an unknown origin clearly mirrors a similar miracle attributed to the qur'ānic Mary (Q. 3:37).[26]

Yet, that the miracles associated with the Shepherd so transparently derive from such tropes does not necessarily nullify the historicity of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's account entirely. Their centrality to the religious imaginary of the inhabitants of the early Islamic world ensured their typological significance for any would-be messianic pretender. In other words, these are old miracles of a well-known sort in the late antique world, and the very commonplace status of such tropes created expectations that any apocalyptic movement worth its salt would have to at least address, if not embody. To do otherwise would be a bit of a letdown as ostentatious claimants to divine charisms go. Considering the Jewish context, one particularly compelling aspect of these miracles is the potential 'Elijah connection' that may very well underlie each of the tropes.

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[24] See Reeves, *Trajectories*, 188 f.

[25] For further examples, see R. I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia 58 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 226–27 and especially n. 81 thereto. Given the Islamic context, Muḥammad's miraculous night journey (*isrā'*) from Mecca to Jerusalem and back certainly provides another relevant parallel as well; cf. Q. 17:1 and *EQ*, s.v. "Ascension" (M. Sells). By Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's time, however, the exegetical focus on these āyas falls predominately on the narrative of Muḥammad's ascension, which acquired a much more paradigmatic significance in the Islamic *imaginaire*, rather than that of his miraculous transportation. See Mohammed Amir-Moezzi, ed., *Le voyage initiatique en terre d'islam: Ascensions céleste et itinéraries spirituels* (Louvain: Peeters, 1996).

[26] The Persian word for sustenance in Abū al-Maʿālī's account, '*khūrdanī*' almost certainly translates the Arabic '*rizq*' of the qur'ānic pericope. As I have noted elsewhere, this is a commonplace miracle also attributed to another Syrian pseudo-prophet from the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān named al-Ḥārith ibn Saʿīd; see S.W. Anthony, "The Prophecy and Passion of al-Ḥāriṯ ibn Saʿīd al-Kaḏḏāb: Narrating a Religious Movement from the Caliphate of ʿAbdalmalik ibn Marwān," *Arabica* 57 (2010): 1 ff. The miracle is not solely attributed to would-be prophets in the Islamic tradition; it also appears in narratives of the death of the early Anṣārī martyr Khubayb ibn ʿAdī. See D. Cook, Martyrdom in Islam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21–22. That this martyrological account of Khubayb's death originates from the Umayyad period with the scholar Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī has recently been demonstrated by N. Boekhoff-van der Voort, "The Raid of the Hudhayl: Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī's Version of the Event," in H. Motzki (with N. Boekhoff-van der Voort and S.W. Anthony), *Analysing Muslim Traditions: Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghāzī Ḥadīth* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2010), 305–382.

Like Elijah, the Shepherd is a predecessor to the messiah and herald of his coming (Mal. 4:5), may be miraculously transported by God from place to place (1 Kgs. 18:12; 2 Kgs. 2:11), and miraculously receives sustenance in times of want (1 Kgs. 17:4).[27] Moreover, many of these thematic elements of the Elijah persona had considerably expanded in late antique apocalypticism, as elaborated among both Jews and Christians. For instance, to Elijah is commonly assigned the role of recovering Aaron's flowering rod[28]—the very rod whose magical properties, although unmentioned in the above account, the Shepherd replicates through his prayers. The account preserves another key detail in this respect too where it mentions that some regarded the Shepherd as somehow an angel. Whereas as angel acts as a deliverer in most late antique narratives of holy-men miraculously escaping prison,[29] the Shepherd's prison escape resembles more an apotheosis: it is by virtue of his quasi-angelic nature that he breaks free from his Umayyad jailers. This, again, appears to draw from Elijah's own heavenly ascension and apotheosis as a model,[30] which was regarded in late antique religious thought as having conferred on the prophet a

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[27] For subsequent extrapolations on these themes in Rabbinic literature, see Brenda J. Shaver, "The Prophet Elijah in the Literature of the Second Temple Period," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2001), 198 ff.

[28] See *Sefer Zerubbabel* and *Pirqe Mašiaḥ* in Reeves, *Trajectories*, 57 and 159, respectively. From an early date, Jewish writers amalgamated the prophet Elijah with the priest Phineas, the grandson of Aaron (see Num. 25:7), and attributed to Elijah/Phineas the concealment of the very staff of Moses and, although less consistently, the staff's recovery at the advent of the messiah as well. See Robert Hayward, "Phineas—the Same as Elijah," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 29 (1978): 22–34.

[29] Such angelic rescues and deliverance for the unjustly imprisoned seems to have become an influential trope in late antique Syriac matyrologies as well; e.g. see Jean M. Fiey, *Saints Syriaques*, ed. L. I. Conrad, SLAEI 6 (Princeton: Darwin, 2004), 39f. (§58), 115f. (§238), 141 (§315) and Joel Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qadagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 33 (§25). The biblical narratives in Acts 5, 12, and 16 are paradigmatic for these stories; see John B. Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany: Prison-Escape in Acts of the Apostles*, BZNW 131 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2004).

[30] In general, see Alan F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment," in *ANRW* II.23.2 (1980): 1352 ff. and Christopher Begg, "'Josephus' Portrayal of the Disappearances of Enoch, Elijah, and Moses: Some Observations," *JBL* 109 (1990): 691–92. Contrast this picture with the 'Moses of Crete' discussed by the church historian Socrates Scholasticus (d. after 439). According to Socrates, there appeared in Crete in the 400s a Pseudo-Moses claiming to be sent from heaven to lead to the Jews across the sea. After he achieves his deception, he leads many Jews to their death by convincing them to cast themselves into the sea. Thereafter, he disappears, leading the Jews to speculate that he had been a demon (Gk. *daímōn*) sent to deceive them. See *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. G.C. Hansen and trans. P. Périchon and P. Maraval, Sources Chrétiennes 506 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2004–2007), 7: 139 (VII.xxxviii.11).

semi-divine and quasi-angelic nature, both among Jews[31] and Christians.[32] It seems reasonable to hypothesize that the Shepherd, like many Jewish messianists before him, modeled himself along the lines of the archetypal, eschatological persona of Elijah.

Yet, even with this charitable reading, several alarming obstacles remain in the way of embracing the historicity of the account wholesale. The surviving information about the biography of the account's *author* illuminates the nature of story, too. It is well-known that, prior to acquiring infamy as a heretic and freethinker (Ar. *zindīq, mulḥid*), Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq had been an Imāmī *mutakallim* and composed a number of works on the subject of the imāmate and, perhaps most famously, a treatise criticizing the *ʿUthmānīya* of the Muʿtazilī belle-lettrist al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869).[33] Indeed, al-Warrāq's influence among the Imāmī intellectuals persisted rather palpably even well into the 5th/11th century—prominently exemplified, for instance, by the strident efforts of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 1044) to rehabilitate him back into the fold of Islam. Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's familiarity with Imāmī thought and belief, therefore, was indubitably thorough and profound. It is thus quite remarkable that, given his Imāmī pedigree, al-Warrāq's account of the Shepherd also employs an array of Shīʿī tropes and *topoi* as well.

Most prominent among these, of course, is the statement, in Abū al-Maʿālī's Persian re-wording, that after being interned in prison the Shepherd "was made to disappear (*ghāyeb shod*)." Even in its Persian translation, the passage very likely preserves sufficient vestiges of Abū ʿĪsā's

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[31] Lucy Wadeson, "Chariots of Fire: Elijah and the Zodiac in Synagogue Floor Mosaics of Late Antique Palestine," *Aram* 20 (2008): 1–41; Kristen H. Lindbeck, *Elijah and the Rabbis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 46 ff.

[32] Thus, in a sermon of Jacob of Sarug the angels welcome the ascending Elijah to heaven as "angel of flesh, man of spirit (*ʾīrā d-besrā nāšā d-rūḥā*)." See Stephen A. Kaufman, trans., *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on Elijah*, Texts from Christian Late Antiquity 18 (Piscatawny, NJ: Gorgias, 2009), 424–5. Cf. Maja Kominko, "Elijah in the Christian Topography–Syriac Story and Greek Image?" *Aram* 20 (2008): 101–110.

[33] Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. H. Ritter (Beirut: Klaus Schwarz, 2005), 64; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*, ed. Ch. Pellat (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Jāmiʿa al-Lubnānīya, 1974), 4: 77 It was common to claim that so-called crypto-zindīqs, among whose ranks Muslim authors often placed Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq, gained their foothold in the midst of the Muslim community by posing as Rāfiḍīs; e.g., see M. Chokr, *Zandaqa et zindīqs en Islam au second siècle de l'hégire* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1996), 216. However, the historicity of the assertion in Abū ʿĪsā's case finds confirmation in his authorship of a *K. al-Imāma* and the posthumous and often earnest defense of his reputation against accusations of *zandaqa* by a number of Twelver theologians.

original, Arabic account to surmise an early allusion to the Shīʿī notion of occultation (Ar. *al-ghayba*). While written prior to the *ghayba al-ṣughrā* of the Ithnā-ʿAshariyya, the *ghayba* was a long established doctrine by al-Warrāq's time.[34] Having first arisen among the Kaysāniyya (perhaps as early as the death of their imām, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya in 700),[35] the *ghayba* doctrine had regained considerable popularity within al-Warrāq's lifetime through its revival by the Wāqifa-Shīʿa, following the death of the seventh imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim ibn Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in 799.[36]

Indeed, by the time Abū ʿĪsā had begun writing his *K. al-Maqālāt*, the Wāqifa had already emerged as a vibrant faction among the Imāmī-Shīʿa who declared that Mūsā al-Kāẓim had not in fact died but entered into *ghayba*[37]—and having entered into his *ghayba* from prison, much like the Shepherd no less.[38] Mūsā al-Kāẓim shares even further similarities with Abū ʿĪsā's Shepherd: the former also allegedly once touched a felled tree and caused it to become green and then bear fruit,[39] manifested miraculous abilities of locomotion (Ar. *qudrat al-sayr*) by visiting his disciples in

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[34] According to the ʿAbbāsid historian al-Masʿūdī (*Murūj*, 5: 23), the only source to mention his date of death, Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq died in the city of Baghdād in the year 247/861–2 and, thus, prior to the occultation (*ghayba*) of twelfth imām by over a decade. This date, however, seems to be too early; see W. Madelung, "Bemerkungen zur imamitischen Firaq-Literatur," *Der Islam* 43 (1967): 48–49.

[35] See *EIr*, art. "Kaysāniyya" (S. W. Anthony). Jewish and Zoroastrian precedents for the doctrine of the ghayba abound as well. On the Jewish side of things, see the statement of messiah/son of David Menahem bar ʿAmiel before his advent in *Sefer Zerubbabel* in Reeves, *Trajectories*, 5; cf. A. Berger, "Captive at the Gate of Rome: The Story of a Messianic Motif," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 44 (1997): 1–17. From the Zoroastrian side, the figure of the Pišyōtan provides compelling parallels; see Mary Boyce, "The Antiquity of Zoroastrian Apocalyptic," *BSOAS* 47 (1984): 61–66.

[36] E. Kohlberg, "From Imāmiyyah to Ithnā-ʿAshariyya," *BSOAS* 39 (1976): 529 ff.

[37] Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 101–103; see also H. Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shīʿite Islām: Abū Jaʿfar ibn Qiba al-Rāzī and His Contribution to Imāmite Shīʿite Thought* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1993), 87–89 and esp. n. 184 thereto.

[38] M. Ali Buyukkara, "The Schism in the Party of Mūsā al-Kāẓim and the Emergence of the Wāqifa," *Arabica* 47 (2000): 82–83. See also the alleged disappearance from prison of the Ḥusaynid Zaydī imām Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim 'Ṣāḥib al-Ṭālaqān', whom the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Muʿtaṣim imprisoned in c. 219/834–5. Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 82; Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, 4: 349–50. Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī records a number of detailed accounts on the fate of Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim after his escape from al-Muʿtaṣim's prison in Samarra and places his death after his caliphate, claiming that he was re-arrested by al-Mutawakkil and died shortly thereafter in prison; see *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī, 1998), 470–73. So, too, the followers of Sabbathai Zevi while asserting that the angel Gabriel took his form in prison while he ascended to heaven; see Israel Friedländer, "Jewish Arabic Studies: Shiitic Elements in Jewish Sectarianism," *JQR* 2 (1912): 515 f.

[39] E. Kohlberg, "Mūsā al-Kāẓim," *EI*², 7: 647b; cf. Judith Loebenstein, "Miracles in Šīʿī Thought: A Case Study of the Miracles Attributed to Imām Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq," *Arabica* 50 (2003): 233 ff. and K. Sindawi, "The Image of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī in Maqātil Literature," *Quaderni di Studi Arab*i 20–21 (2001): 97.

distant lands though bodily confined in prison,[40] and removed himself from this world due to the sins of his followers and partisans. According to one tradition, Mūsā al-Kāẓim said before his death (or occultation, if you will): "Verily, God Most High became angry with the Shīʿa and made me choose (to sacrifice) either myself or them—and by God, I redeemed them with my own soul (*inna allāh ʿazza wa-jalla ghaḍiba ʿalā al-shīʿa fa-khayyaranī*[41] *bi-nafsī aw hum fa-waqaytuhum wa-llāhi bi-nafsī*)."[42]

All of this leads one to wonder: Is there something parodic—or even sardonic—in Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's account of the Damascene Shepherd as preserved in Abū al-Maʿālī's *Bayān*? Is the account purely a heresiological fiction? I would like to suggest that is not, at least not entirely. Many of the aforementioned features of the account can be understood as typological portrayals; al-Warrāq's account mobilizes a series of religious typologies, which he uses to portray the Damascene Shepherd's mysterious religious message, mission, and, ultimately, disappearance. Filtered through such a typological lens, the reader can apprehend a number of religious *topoi* and tropes common to Jews, Christians and Muslims in Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's age that are themselves quite polysemic, making his narrative as deeply symbolic as it is literary. Yet, does his account proffer *historical* insight? While the penchant of Muslim heresiographers for reading Islamic paradigms into past and present religions and imputing to them ideas which are, in truth, quite foreign is well-known,[43] this may be said to be a feature

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[40] E.g., see Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī, 2005), 1: 95. For further examples see Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Farrukh al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, ed. Muḥsin Kūchabāghī (Tabriz: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-Marʿashlī, 1983), 397–408; M. A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shīʿism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, trans. D. Streight (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 94; and Loebenstein, "Miracles in Šīʿī Thought," 239–40. The ability of supernatural locomotion figures prominently in the miraculous deeds of Mani as well; see *EIr*, art. "Mani" (W. Sundermann).

[41] This is the correct reading, whereas the printed text reads "*ḥayyaranī*".

[42] Abū Jaʿfar al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, ed. ʿA. A. al-Ghaffārī (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1968–1971), 1: 260. The trope thereafter also appears in heresiological treatments of Ibn Saba' and the Saba'iyya. See Saʿd ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Khalaf al-Qummī, *K. al-Maqālāt wa-al-firaq*, ed. Muḥammad Javād Mashkūr (Tehran: Ḥaydarī, 1963), 21 and Ps.-Nāshiʾ al-Akbar (=Jaʿfar ibn Ḥarb, d. 850?), *Uṣūl al-niḥal*, 23, in: J. van Ess, ed., *Frühe muʿtazilische Häresiographie: Zwei Werke des Nāšiʾ al-Akbar* (*gest. 293 H.*) (Beirut: Ergon, 2003). On the authorship of the latter work, see W. Madelung, "Frühe muʿtazilitische Häresiographie: Das *Kitāb al-Uṣūl* des Ǧaʿfar ibn Ḥarb," *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 220–36. Yet, even this notion of the messiah being hidden by God because of the sins of his people has direct Jewish parallels; see Berger, "Captive at the Gates of Rome," 2.

[43] A famous example is that of Mani and his alleged claim, like Muḥammad, to have been *khātam al-anbiyāʾ*; see G. G. Stroumsa, "'Seal of the Prophets': The Nature of a Manichean Metaphor," *JSAI* 7 (1986): 61–74.

present in all heresiological writing more generally speaking.[44] On the other hand, there is also the Imāmī penchant for attributing nearly every known miracle and wonder to the imāms, motivated by the impetus to portray them as archetypal holy-men theoretically capable of performing any divinely sanctioned miracle.[45] Hence, any attempt to disentangle the historically 'true' assertions of such an account poses a number of formidable hermeneutical obstacles that are unavoidable, given the features of the heresiological genre. Still, from the perspective of the present author, it seems too parsimonious to deny the account any historicity whatsoever. The question still remains unanswered though as to just how one ought to go about discovering if any historical events or persons actually lie behind the account. Therefore, to further evaluate this account requires that we cast our net wider than we have hitherto ventured to do.

Dāʿī vs. Rāʿī: A Pre-History of the ʿĪsawiyya?

Abū al-Maʿālī's *Bayān* preserves the only full-fledged narrative account of the Shepherd; however, outside the pages of this Persian heresiography one does stumble upon other references to his existence, albeit quite obliquely. These additional references allow one to at least surmise that his existence was not entirely unknown outside the work of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq and his Ghaznavid redactor and to thereby conceive of his movement in the larger context of Jewish messianism in 7th and 8th centuries. One of the more straightforward, earlier examples of these references comes from the work of one of al-Warrāq's contemporaries: the *Mafātiḥ al-ʿulūm* of Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khʷārazimī (d. *ca.* 850). In his treatment of the Jewish sects, al-Khʷārazimī briefly mentions a Jewish sect known as "the Rāʿiyya, named after one who made claims to prophecy among them [i.e., the Jews] and was named the Shepherd."[46] Likewise, al-Bīrūnī, who

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[44] A. Cameron, "How to Read Heresiology," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33 (2003): 471–92.

[45] M. A. Amir-Moezzi, "Savoir c'est pouvoir: exégèse et implications du miracle dans l'imamisme ancient (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimain V)," in D. Aigle, ed., *Miracle et Karāma: Hagiographies médiévales comparés* (Turnhout, Brepols: 2000), 251–86 (esp. 258–62).

[46] Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khʷārazimī, *Mafātiḥ al-ʿulūm*, ed. G. van Vloten (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1895), 34–35: "*al-rāʿīya mansūbūn ilā wāḥidⁱⁿ tanabbaʾa fihim wa-kāna yusammā al-rāʿī*"; Eng. tr. C. E. Bosworth, "Al-Ḫwārazmī on Theology and Sects: the chapter on *kalām* in the *Mafātīḥ al-ʿulūm*," *BÉO* 29 (1977): 92. Abū al-Maʿālī also mentions a Jewish sect known as the Rāʿīya; see *Bayān*, 29.

as noted above also had access to al-Warrāq's *Maqālāt*, lists the Shepherd by name in his *al-Āthar al-bāqiya* alongside another messianist, the Jewish rebel Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī, among those who "proclaimed themselves prophets from among their [i.e. the Jews'] sects."[47]

Al-Bīrūnī's mention of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī alongside the Damascene Shepherd brings us to the most intriguing aspect of the sparse Muslim heresiological discussions of early Jewish sectarianism—and also one of its most perplexing. Abū al-Maʿālī also discusses Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī and his movement in the *Bayān*; moreover, he also draws a direct and explicit link between the Shepherd and Abū ʿĪsā by casting the former as the latter's predecessor. The extent to which Abū al-Maʿālī's account of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī depends on the writings of al-Warrāq remains more ambiguous than in the account of the Shepherd, where he explicitly indicates that he directly quotes al-Warrāq's *Maqālāt*. Yet, there are strong indications that Abū al-Maʿālī does at least draw upon and summarize al-Warrāq's text. The relevant section of his account reads as follows:[48]

> In the days of Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr a man from among the Jews appeared named Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī. He was a tailor from the inhabitants of Nisibis whose name was [originally] Abū Isḥāq ibn Yūsuf. He said to the people (*beh khalq goft*) that he was the messenger of the messiah (*rasūl-e masīḥ*) and that before the messiah his five messengers will come first (*pīsh az masīḥ panj rasūl-e ū bekhʷāhand āmad badav*). They said that the Shepherd was one of this group and that he himself was Jesus, the son of Mary (*az ān jomlah yakī rāʿī rā goft va keh ū khūd ʿĪsā ibn Maryam būd*). He also said that there was a place where the aides of Moses lived (*yārān-e Mūsā ānjā bāshand*) in the midst of this world (*dar meyān-e donyā*) where there is a river (*daryā*) that runs through the sand (*dar rīg mī ravad*). For six days of the week it is thus; but on the Sabbath this sand must remain in place and cease to run. Uttering repeatedly such trifles (*turrahāt*), a multitude (*khalq*) gathered around him.

This account contains a number of striking features. Most uncanny is Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī purported identification of the Shepherd with Jesus of Nazareth (i.e., ʿĪsā ibn Maryam). This assertion finds no exact parallel in other accounts and is, therefore, difficult to interpret on its own.[49]

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[47] Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiya ʿan al-qurūn al-khāliya*, ed. E. Sachau (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1878), 15.11: "*mutanabbiyī firaqihim*".

[48] *Bayān al-adyān*, 75.

[49] Recently, van Ess (*Der Eine und das Andere*, 827 ff.) has used this passage to argue for a Judeao-Christian basis to Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī's revolt. In my view, however, this conclusion is unwarranted for reasons to be discussed shortly. It is more likely that Abū ʿĪsā's

I would like to suggest that this identification results from an error on Abū al-Maʿālī's part, deriving from a transposition of the title *masīḥ* with the qurʾānic name for Jesus of Nazareth. We shall encounter confirmation for this hypothesis further below. More important to emphasize, however, is that Abū al-Maʿālī's placement of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī as an admirer and continuator of the Shepherd's religious message is, in fact, not unique and finds confirmation elsewhere.

The most important text confirming the Shepherd's relationship with the movement of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī is one long known and much studied by modern scholarship: the *K. al-Milal wa-al-niḥal* of al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153). The relevant passage from al-Shahrastānī mirrors to a great extent that of Abū al-Maʿālī, so much so that al-Shahrastānī's account probably preserves much of the wording of the Arabic *Vorlage* upon which Abū al-Maʿālī's account depends. The account of al-Shahrastānī affirms that Abū ʿĪsā "claimed that he was the messenger of the awaited messiah (*rasūl al-masīḥ al-muntaẓar*)" and "that the messiah has five messengers who shall come before him, one after another." Shahrastānī adds further details, too, such as Abū ʿĪsā's alleged claim to be a prophet (*nabī*), and, most importantly for our interests, that,

> He would make it requisite to testify to the veracity of the messiah and he extolled the message of the Shepherd. He also claimed that the Shepherd is himself the messiah (*kāna yūjibu taṣdīq al-masīḥ wa-yuʿaẓẓimu daʿwat al-rāʿī wa-zaʿama anna al-rāʿī huwa al-masīḥ*).[50]

Textually, my translation above has amended Cureton's Arabic text to read *daʿwat al-rāʿī* rather than *daʿwat al-dāʿī* as conventionally read. The latter, better-known reading likely resulted from the text's similarity to Q. 2:186, "If my servants ask you about me, I am near and answer the call of he who calls out when he has called out to me (*daʿwat al-dāʿī idhā daʿānī*)." Thus, the text of Shahrastānī's *Milal* was likely inadvertently quranicized by a copyist,[51] effectively occluding the mention of the Shepherd (al-Rāʿī) from the text.

Abū al-Maʿālī and al-Shahrastānī's account clearly parallel each other, although they do depart from one another in important details, too. Despite

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messianic revolt was Jewish in inspiration—as opposed to Jewish-Christian—but nonetheless embraced a wide array of non-Jewish followers.

[50] *K. al-Milal wa-al-niḥal*, ed. W. Cureton (Leipzig: Harrossowitz, 1923), 168, where one should emend the text to read "*daʿwat al-rāʿī*" rather than "*daʿwat al-dāʿī*."

[51] I would like to thank Wadad al-Qāḍī for suggesting to me the possibility of this qurʾānic etiology for the corruption of Shahrastānī's text.

the persistent, albeit inadvertent, misreading of Shahrastānī's entry on the ʿĪsawiyya, both texts refer explicitly to the Shepherd/al-Rāʿī as important, influential predecessor of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī. Most prominently, Abū al-Maʿālī's account places the Shepherd among the five messengers while attributing to Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī the belief that the Shepherd was himself Jesus of Nazareth (*redivivus*?). By contrast, al-Shahrastānī, while repeating the five messenger *topos*, identifies the Shepherd simply as the progenitor of Abū ʿĪsā's religious message (*daʿwa*) and asserts that he regarded the Shepherd as the *messiah*—not Jesus of Nazareth as claimed by Abū al-Maʿālī.

These textual divergences and overlaps strike me as being predominantly redactionary in nature. What differences do exist arise entirely from subtle rearrangements of shared sets of keywords and ideas. This strongly suggests that the texts shared a mutual dependence upon an independent rendering of a single, older narrative. This narrative, given what we know about the authors of these texts, was likely authored by al-Warrāq. Finally, the fact that al-Shahrastānī stops short of claiming the Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī regarded the Shepherd as himself being Jesus of Nazareth is textually significant for Abū al-Maʿālī's text, as noted above, insofar as it provides important evidence that Abū al-Maʿālī's source text merely stated a title—i.e., *al-masīḥ*—and did not claim that Abū ʿĪsā regarded the Shepherd to be Jesus of Nazareth.

An additional feature pointing to al-Shahrastānī's and Abū al-Maʿālī's mutual dependence on Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's *Maqālāt* is the presence in both accounts of a distinctive, stylistic technique of heresiological writing, which seems to be a trademark of al-Warrāq's stylistic depiction of these two Jewish sectarians. This trademark style consists of a tendency to describe and depict the beliefs of 'false'-prophets in terms of religious types well-known in al-Warrāq's day. We have previously observed this same technique in al-Warrāq's account of the Shepherd, which he heavily colored with tropes and religious ideas current to the Imāmīs of his lifetime. This tendency remains perceptible in the accounts of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī in al-Shahrastānī and Abū al-Maʿālī, which likely relied heavily on al-Warrāq's material.

Al-Shahrastānī's account, for instance, asserts that Abū ʿĪsā led a rebellion during al-Manṣūr's caliphate in the city of Rayy (a fact Abū al-Maʿālī neglects to mention) and that, once engaged in battle, he drew a circle around his followers using a myrtle staff (*ʿūd ās*) that protected them from being harmed by the caliph's armies. Just as we saw in case of the narrative of the Damascene Shepherd, this passage contains a subtly typological

casting of the events of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī's revolt—one also finds such mastery of 'circle magic' featured in the *sīra*-literature as an ability of the Prophet[52] and, in particular, the usage of a myrtle staff itself evokes Aaron's rod and its magical properties just as does the Shepherd's miracle of causing deadwood to green and bloom.[53]

To this example, one should add al-Shahrastānī's record of Abū ʿĪsā's claim to have miraculously traveled to the tribes of Moses (*banī Mūsā ibn ʿImrān*) behind the sea of sand to whom he preached the word of God.[54] Again, the typological nature of this narrative is quite apparent. Not only does Shahrastānī's account evoke older Jewish concepts—the 'sea of sand' in particular references the Talmudic river of stones named *Sambatyon* beyond which the exiled tribes of Israel settled[55]—but the story of Abū ʿĪsā's journey to the lost tribes of Israel also appears to be a typological adaptation of the story native to the Islamic tradition as well. The Prophet Muḥamamd, too, allegedly had been transported to visit the lost tribes of Israel during his *isrāʾ*. According to the traditions relating the event, Muḥammad preached to these lost tribes the tenets of Islam, after which they embraced him and his message as sent by God. This account of Muḥammad's miraculous journey to the lost tribes begins appearing in exegetical glosses on the people of Moses (*qawm Mūsā*) of Q. 7:159 as early as the mid-8th century.[56] It is hard to imagine that Warrāq's account of Abū ʿĪsā's journey to the lost tribes was not influenced by this story. It is notable that Abū al-Maʿālī's account emphasizes the centrality of the lost tribes in Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī's preaching as well, strongly suggesting that both he and Shahrastānī utilized al-Warrāq's *Maqālāt* as a template for their own account. In further keeping with Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's

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[52] The first to note this connection was I. Goldziher, "Zauberkreise," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. J. Desomogyi (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1970), 5: 403 ff.; citing the story the Prophet's and al-Zubayr ibn ʿAwwām's visit to the *jinn* in Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī, *al-Riyāḍ al-naḍira fī manāqib al-ʿashara*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Abū al-ʿAlāʾ (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jindī, 1970–1971), 4: 49 f.

[53] See Reeves, *Trajectories*, 187 ff. (esp. 194). On the myrtle rods and magically protective circles in Jewish traditions, see Steven Wasserstrom, "The ʿĪsawiyya Revisted," *SI* 75 (1992): 63 and n. 27 thereto.

[54] Shahrastānī, *Milal*, 168: *wa-dhahaba ilā banī Mūsā ibn ʿImrān alladhīna hum warāʾa al-raml li-yusmiʿahum kalām Allāh*.

[55] For origins of this myth of the Lost Tribes in Midrash and its Muslim iterations and adaptations, see Wasserstrom, "ʿĪsawiyya," 63 f. and Uri Rubin, *Between Bible and Qurʾān: The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-Image*, SLAEI 17 (Princeton: Darwin, 1999), 26 ff.

[56] For an early attestation to the story see, Muqātil ibn Sulaymān al-Balkhī, *al-Tafsīr*, ed. ʿAbdallāh Maḥmūd Shiḥāta (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1979–1989), 2: 554 (cited in Rubin, *Between Bible and Qurʾān*, 47 f.).

penchant for typological parallels, one should note that the feats of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī are claimed by Shīʿite imāms in Imāmī literature as well.[57] Furthermore, just as Abū ʿĪsā sought aid for his revolt from the legendary lost tribes, so too the people of Moses are often said to fill the ranks of the Mahdī's/Qā'im's armies in Shīʿī eschatology as well.[58] The prominence of Shīʿī typologies in both the account of the Shepherd and of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī strongly suggest a common author who was well acquainted with the religious ideas and narratives current among the Imāmiyya in the 9th century. Since we know who the author of the account of the Shepherd was, we undoubtedly can know that the author of the account of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī behind those of al-Shahrastanī and Abū al-Maʿālī was also al-Warrāq.

Despite the considerable body of scholarship that has been written on Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī and his movement, the indebtedness of this personality and his movement to that of the Shepherd, or at least the mere connection between the two, has gone unnoticed by nearly all studies of Abū ʿĪsā and his sect, the ʿĪsawiyya, due to a stubbornly persistent misreading of the text of Shahrastānī's *K. al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*. The misreading arose from the fact the Cureton's edition of the MS of Shahrastānī's work renders the two instances of '*al-rāʿī*' in the above text as '*al-dāʿī*'. Subsequent editions of Shahrastānī's text slavishly follow Cureton's reading—despite the recent efforts of Gimaret and Monnot in their French translation of al-Shahrastānī's heresiography and Arjomand to bring attention to and to rectify the corrupted reading.[59] Cureton's (admittedly understandable) misreading of the text thereafter misguided scholars for over a century to search for the possible influence of Shīʿite opposition movements on Jewish sectarian movements of the early Islamic period, due to the Shīʿites' well-known utilization of clandestine, organized networks of *dāʿī*s to propagate both their religious doctrines and political programs. This same misreading of *dāʿī* for *rāʿī* reappears, furthermore, in al-Shahrastānī's

[57] Usually the story is attributed to Muḥammad al-Bāqir, in which he narrates a story about a certain man whose identity he does not reveal but who almost certainly is himself; see al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (attrib.), *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ*, ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Qom: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 2004), 315 ff. The apostle Paul famously uses this trope as well in 2 Cor 12. See also Rubin, *Bible and Qur'ān*, 45, 77 (I am unconvinced, however, by Rubin's linking of such miracles with the Shīʿī doctrine of the *ghayba*).

[58] Rubin, *Bible and Qur'ān*, 45.

[59] D. Gimaret and G. Monnot, trans., *Livre des religions et des sectes* (Louvain: Peeters, 1986), 1: 640 and n. 55 thereto; Arjomand, "Islamic Apocalypticism," 277 n. 30.

passages on Abū ʿĪsā's considerably more shadowy successor Yūdghān,[60] who Shahrastānī also asserts revered and continued the message of the Shepherd, too. The longevity of this error is likely rooted in the fact that the first scholar led astray by Cureton's erroneous reading was the deservedly much-revered Israel Friedländer, who cited the importance of *dāʿīs* to the ʿĪsawiyya as compelling evidence for the influence of Shīʿism on Jewish sectarianism.[61] His interpretation, followed by virtually every historian of the sect thereafter, found its most earnest proponent in Yoram Erder who, in his otherwise impeccable work on the Abū ʿĪsā and the ʿĪsawiyya, chased the illusory notion as far down the rabbit hole as one would imagine possible. Erder did this even despite his knowledge of the existence of Abū al-Maʿālī's account and its unambiguous associations of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī with the Shepherd's movement.[62]

Within both al-Shahrastānī's and Abū al-Maʿālī's texts, the nature of the continuity between the Shepherd and Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī in terms of their common beliefs—i.e., beyond their shared messianism—remains somewhat vague. The Ashʿarī heresiographer ʿAbd al-Qāhir ibn Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 1037) provides us, however, with an insightful and indispensible clue into the nature of this continuity in a short discussion of the Khārijī sect known as the Yazīdiyya and its founder Yazīd ibn [Abī] Unaysa.[63]

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[60] Shahrastānī, *Milal*, 169.1 again emending the text to read "*al-rāʿī*" rather than "*al-dāʿī*."

[61] Israel Friedländer, "Jewish-Arabic Studies: Shiitic Elements in Jewish Sectarianism," *JQR* n.s. 3 (1912): 261–65.

[62] Yoram Erder, "The Doctrine of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī and Its Sources," *JSAI* 20 (1996): 186 ff. Depending solely on Monnot's French translation for Abū al-Maʿālī's account of Abū ʿĪsā (see his *Islam et religions* [Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986], 107), Erder perfunctorily dismisses Monnot's emendation of Shahrastānī's "*dāʿī*" to "*rāʿī*", declaring "There is no basis for the suggestion to change the world *al-dāʿī* to *al-rāʿī*" (ibid., 185 n. 124). Moshe Gil came closest to noticing the textual problem, highlighting a number of problematic aspects to identifying Yudghān as "al-Rāʿī" (*Jews in Islamic Countries*, 247 and n. 151 thereto).

[63] On whom, see J. van Ess, "Yazīd ibn Unaisa und Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī: Zur Konvergenz zweier sektiererischer Bewegnung." In *Studi in onore di Francesco Gabrieli nel suo ottantesimo compleanno*, ed. R. Traini (Rome: Università di Roma "La Sapienza", Dipartimento di Studi Orientali, 1984), 1: 301–313; idem, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 2: 614 ff. There are many divergent names for this sect and its founder. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (depending on Dhahabī's *Mīzān*) knows him as Zayd ibn Abī Unaysa in his *Lisān al-mīzān* (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-Niẓāmiyya, 1911–13), 2: 501 f; Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī gives his name rather as Burayd ibn Abī Unaysa in his *al-Wāfī bi-wafayāt*, vol. 10, eds. ʿAlī ʿAmāra and Jacqueline Sublet, Bibliotheca Islamica 6j (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1980), 123; and Ibn al-Murtaḍā renders his name as Yazīd ibn Abī Shayba in *al-Munya wa-al-amal fī sharḥ al-milal wa-l-niḥal*, ed. M. J. Mashkūr (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 33.

ʿAbd al-Qāhir states that Yazīd believed that "it is necessary to recognize the ʿĪsawiyya and the Raʿyāniyya of the Jews as Believers because they affirmed the prophecy of Muḥammad (*yajibu an yakūna al-ʿĪsawiyya wa-al-raʿyāniyya*[64] *min al-yahūd muʾminīn li-annahum aqarrū bi-nubuwwat muḥammad*[in])."[65] By 'the Rayʿāniyya', ʿAbd al-Qāhir undoubtedly intends the followers of the Shepherd—the sect's name appearing here as derived from the Aramaic rendering of his title (i.e., *raʿyā*; see above) rather than the Arabic *rāʿī*—and thus provides us here with an indispensible insight. ʿAbd al-Qāhir here posits not a minor doctrinal continuity between the followers of the Shepherd and those of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī but, what's more, a continuity on the very point for which the ʿĪsawiyya were most remembered by Muslim theologians: their recognition of Muḥammad's prophecy as legitimately true but as limited to the Arabs.[66]

This belief features not only in Muslim heresiological treatments of the ʿĪsāwiyya, but also Jewish ones as well. The Karaite scholar Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī (fl. early 10th century) states that Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī not only recognized Muḥammad and Jesus but also "enjoined [his followers] to read the Gospel and the Qurʾān to know their interpretation (*amara bi-qirāʾat*

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[64] Goldziher suggested that "*al-raʿyānīya*" ought to be emended to read "*al-yudghānīya*" in Ṣadr's edition; see his review in *ZDMG* 65 (1911): 361–62. His is a plausible rendering, with the benefit of mirroring the chronological priority of the ʿĪsawīya over the Yudghānīya in the text. However, I concur with Friedländer (art. cit., 285 and n. 413 thereto) that, strictly speaking, the emendation is superfluous. Also, Goldziher's suggestion reveals no cognizance on his part of our messianist Shepherd from Damascus but merely of Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī's account of Yudghān.

[65] *K. al-Farq bayna al-firaq wa-bayān al-firqa al-nājiya minhum*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣadr (Cairo, 1910), 263–64. Cf. idem, *al-Milal wa-al-niḥal*, ed. A. N. Nader (Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1970), 78 where the similar claim is made regarding Yazīd's beliefs, but where the two sects are not mentioned as examples. Yazīd ibn Unaysa's ecumenical approach was staunchly rejected by nearly all theologians, as were other, more notorious beliefs of his like his expectation of a non-Arab prophet to arise from the mysterious qurʾānic Ṣābiʾa who would abrogate the law of Muḥammad. See Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 103 f. Cf. the Imāmī tradition wherein it is Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq who relates that he read in the *Muṣḥaf Fātima* that the *zanādiqa* shall appear in the year 128/745–6 in Ṣaffār, *Baṣāʾir*, 157 and Kulaynī, *Kāfī*, 1: 240. The latter is likely a reference to the beginning of the ʿAbbāsid movement; see E. Kohlberg, "Authoritative Scriptures in Early Imāmī Shīʿism" in É. Patlagean and A. Le Bolluec, eds., *Les retours aux écritures fondamentalismes presents et passés* (Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 303.

[66] On the rejection of their status as Muslims even with their affirmation of Muḥammad's prophetic call, see Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, *K. al-Tamhīd*, ed. Richard J. McCarthy (Beirut: Librairie Orientale, 1957), 161, 165 *et passim*; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Maʾmūn al-Mutawallī, *al-Mughnī*, ed. Marie Bernand, Supplément aux Annales Islamologiques 7 (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1986), 52; al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *al-Shafāʾ bi-taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī (Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1977), 2: 1070; Morṭażā ibn Dāʿī Ḥasanī Rāzī, *Tabṣerat al-ʿavāmm fī maʿrefat maqālāt al-anām*, ed. ʿA. Iqbāl (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Asāṭīr, 1984), 22f.

al-injīl wa-al-qurʾān wa-maʿrifat tafsīrihimā)."[67] Qirqisānī also provides a further parallel between the fate of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī and the Shepherd of Abū al-Maʿālī's *Bayān* by recording the belief among the ʿĪsawiyya that Abū ʿĪsā too had entered into occultation. According to Qirqisānī, Abū ʿĪsā rebelled against the Muslim authorities with an army. When he was killed, "A group of his followers claimed that had not been killed but had only entered into the mountain's crevice, and no word of him was heard thereafter (*qawm^{un} min aṣḥābihi yazʿamūna annahu lam yuqtal wa-innamā dakhala fī kharq^{in} min al-jabal wa-lam yuʿraf khabaruhu*)."[68] This means that Abū ʿĪsā, like the Shepherd, did not die a human death, but disappeared into occultation, according to his followers.[69]

A re-visiting of Shahrastānī's treatment of the Jewish sects, therefore, initially appears to provide a sound chronological and historical framework within which one can begin to understand the Shepherd's movement, despite the heavily typological cast in which the accounts of both messianist personas were written. Shahrastānī's account of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī and his successor Yūdghān suggests that messianist movements remained common among the Jews from Syria to Iran throughout the 8th century and that such movements, moreover, arose as an organically united phenomena rather than a series of unrelated, isolated movements. Continuity between these movements persisted despite the geographic distances separating them. Evidence for this may be found in Jewish sources as well. Despite the centrality of Iranian geography in the accounts of Abū ʿĪsā's messianist activities around Rayy, Qirqisānī knows of large numbers of ʿĪsawiyya in Damascus, for example.[70] Yet, before such a continuity can be asserted with certainty, a number of reservations must be addressed. These arise from the fact that the historical context of Abū

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[67] Yaʿqūb al-Qirqisānī, *K. al-Anwār wa-al-marāqib: A Code of Karaite Law*, ed. L. Nemoy (New York: Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1939–43), 1: 52. Cf. al-Maqdisī, *K. al-Badʾ wa-al-taʾrīkh*, ed. Cl. Huart (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899–1919), 4: 35; Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-al-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-athār*, ed. A. F. Sayyid (London: al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2003), 4(2): 960 where it is said Abū ʿĪsā believed in the prophecy of Muḥammad after ascending to heaven and encountering him there. It is interesting to note al-Maqdisī places the follower of Abū ʿĪsā's successor, Yudghān, alongside the Christian sects (op. cit., 4: 42.2 and 46.7, reading "*al-yūdghānīya*" where the MS reads "*al-yudhʿānīya*").

[68] Qirqisānī, 1:12.

[69] The occultation of the Ṭālibid ʿAbdallāh ibn Muʿāwiya (d. 747 or shortly thereafter), who rebelled in eastern Iran in 744–747, is described in similar terms as well; see Nawbakhtī, *Firaq*, 31 and Ashʿarī *Maqālāt*, 22.

[70] Qirqisānī, 1:12.ult.

ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī, though himself a much better known personage than the Shepherd, remains extremely problematic.

This is due to the fact that the two principal sources hitherto utilized by scholars for writing the history the activities of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī and his movement, one Muslim and the other Jewish, are in profound disagreement over the historical context in which his movement begins. The principal Muslim source, the *Milal* of al-Shahrastānī, places the origins of his movement during the reign of the Umayyad caliph Marwān II (r. 744–750) but asserts that his movement did not begin to manifest its revolutionary tendencies until the reign of the second ʿAbbāsid caliph Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr (r. 754–75), during which he staged the revolt that cost him his life. By contrast, the Karaite author al-Qirqisānī places both the beginning of Abū ʿĪsā's movement as well as its climax in a subsequent uprising against the Muslim authorities all within the reign of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (r. 685–705). The conundrum posed by these two accounts is a famous one, and scholarship has been split from an early date between two camps, with some scholars preferring the earlier date of al-Qirqisānī and others preferring the later date of al-Shahrastānī. However, due to the circumstantial nature of the evidence put forward to resolve the impasse, no definitive consensus has yet emerged.[71]

Can the new data from Abū al-Maʿālī's *Bayān* on the Shepherd ameliorate this issue? Given the divergences between the Muslim and Jewish sources on Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī, it should come as no surprise that one finds a similar dissonance between the Muslim and Jewish sources on the issue of the Shepherd. Hence, the Karaite al-Qirqisānī actually does know of a figure bearing the title of al-Rāʿī; however, al-Qirqisānī's "Shepherd" is not Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī's predecessor but, rather, his *successor*. According to al-Qirqisānī, it was Yūdghān who was called by his followers "the Shepherd (*raʿyā*)." This contradicts al-Shahrastānī's assertion that Yūdghān merely revered the Shepherd, as did Abū ʿĪsā. The Karaite scholar further states that Yūdghān's title "*raʿyā*" merely served as the shortened form for *rāʿī al-umma*—i.e., the shepherd of the community.[72] Al-Qirqisānī's also account notably claims that "[Yūdghān's] followers purport that he is the messiah and that he has not died; they [thus] expect his return (*aṣḥābuhu*

[71] Wasserstrom, "ʿĪsawiyya," 58 ff.
[72] Qirqisānī, 1: 13, 52 f.

yazʿamūna annahu al-masīḥ wa-annahu lam yamut wa-hum yatawaqqiʿūn rujūʿahu)."[73]

Al-Qirqisānī's account clearly creates problems for the chronology encountered in the Muslim sources discussed above. There is a temptation to harmonize the texts by imagining a scenario in which Yudghān is not actually identical with the Damascene Shepherd but, rather, appropriates his title; but this does nothing to resolve the remaining chronological contradictions. Without resorting to harmonization, however, the overlaps between al-Qirqisānī's account of Yudghān and al-Warrāq's account of the Shepherd (as redacted by later sources) suggests one of two scenarios. The first is a scenario in which one account is 'false' and the other 'true'; and the second a scenario in which al-Qirqisānī's account inverts the correct chronology by placing the Shepherd after Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī and thereby erroneously imputes information about the Damascene Shepherd to Yudghān while relying on Muslim sources—perhaps al-Warrāq himself but, if so, probably indirectly. However, all of this is admittedly speculative and tendentiously attributes the muddling to al-Qirqisānī while treating al-Warrāq's account, by virtue of its earlier date and despite its imperfect redaction by later authors, as unassailably accurate. This solution, therefore, remains equally problematic.[74]

In what follows I would like to suggest an alternative path to circumvent this conundrum that separates the data provided by the Muslim and Jewish sources. Although I believe it is impossible to ever fully resolve the conundrum, a solution presents itself by turning to a somewhat unexpected source. It is to this source that our study now turns.

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[73] Qirqisānī, 1: 52.ult. The accounts of subsequent Jewish authors hardly diverge from Qirqisānī's account, but this is due to fact, as Gill has argued (*Jews in Islamic Countries*, 146 f.), that his account serves as the template for all others thereafter.

[74] In a recent work available to me only after having written the present study, Josef van Ess discusses the issues raised by Abū l-Maʿālī's passage on the Rāʿī somewhat in detail; see his *Der Eine und das Andere: Beobachtungen an islamischen häresiographischen Texten*, StIO 23 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2011), 2: 827–29. Van Ess decides, too hastily in my view, to identify the Rāʿī of Abū l-Maʿālī's account with Yūdghān in Qirqisānī's account, being that Qirqisānī also attributes to Yudghān the title 'al-Rāʿī'. However, this historical reification of Qirqisānī's account encounters an insurmountable problem: Abū l-Maʿālī places his Rāʿī in Syria and depicts him as Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī's predecessor, whereas Qirqisānī places Yudghān in Iran, namely Hamadān, and also depicts him as a successor, rather than predecessor, of Abū ʿĪsā. Though van Ess puzzles over this, he never provides a good solution to the problem and even neglects to take into account that Shahrastānī describes Yūdghān as himself a proponent of the Rāʿī's message, as Shahrastānī also describes Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī as doing (*Milal*, 169.1, again emending the text to read "*al-rāʿī*" rather than "*al-dāʿī*").

Severus the Imposter

As noted in the introduction, Muslim and Jewish authors were not the only writers to notice, observe, and report stories of the misadventures of messianic claimants and would-be prophets who arose among the Jewish inhabitants of lands overrun in the course of the Islamic conquests. Syriac-speaking Christians of sundry sectarian and geographical perspectives also observed and took note of this phenomenon, providing us with a welter of relevant materials that can illuminate considerably a number of the mysteries of the accounts of the Shepherd examined above.

A particularly long account of a similar charismatic religious figure of utmost importance to this study appears in the 8th-century, Syriac history known as *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn* (hereafter: *Chron. Zuqnīn*). This anonymous author of this work speaks of an imposter (Syr. *maṭʿyānā*) appearing in the West among the Jews who is subsequently crucified by them ca. 734–5—i.e., in the middle of the reign of Umayyad caliph Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 724–743).[75] The account begins as follows:[76]

> At this time [Satan] stirred up a man from Mardīn in a village named PLḤT[77] and led him to the West, to the land of the Samaritans. He was introduced to the house of an important Jew, and while there, he impregnated the daughter of that Jew. When the Jews learned about this matter, they beat him to the point of death, applying various tortures because he was Christian. When he found an opportunity, he fled from them, and set his mind on all kinds of evil doings against them. He went down to the land of Bēṯ Ārāmāyē [i.e., Southern Mesopotamia] that was immersed in all the evils of sorcery. He gave himself over to sorcery (*ḥarāšūtā*) and all the crafts of the Deceiver (*ṣenʿāteh d-ākelqarṣā*). He was trained in all evil doings and became perfected in them. Thus he left and went up to that land, and said to them, "I am Moses, who in the past brought out Israel from Egypt, and who was with them in the sea and in the desert (*marbārā*) for forty years. Now I come to rescue Israel and to bring her out of the desert (*marbārā*). Then I will introduce her afresh to inherit this Promised Land, as your forefathers inherited in the past when the Lord had destroyed all the nations that were there before them. And now, too, he will destroy all of them before you, and you

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[75] J.-B. Chabot, ed., *Incerti auctoris Chronion Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, CSCO 91, 104, *scr. syri* 43, 53 (Louvain: Peeters, 1927, 1965), 2: 172–74 (hereafter *Chron. Zuqnīn*).

[76] Ibid., 2: 173f. Here, I reproduce with only minor changes the translation of Amir Harrak, trans., *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn Parts III and IV, A.D. 488–775* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaevel Studies, 1999), 163f. See also the French translation of Robert Hespel, *Chronicon anonymum Pseudo-Dyionysianum vulgo dictum, II*, CSCO 507, *scr. syri* 213 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 130 ff.

[77] Unidentified; see Harrak, 163 and n. 2 thereto.

> will enter it and inherit it as in the past, and all the scattered of Israel will gather as it is written, "He will gather the scattered of Israel." (Ps. 147:2)

The chronicler's account continues to relate the Jews' gullibility in following this man and, subsequently, the imposter's guileful and misanthropic deeds against them: he would take groups of them up to the mountain paths only to cast them over their peaks, and he would confine them in caves and clefts to die from deprivation. This imposter allegedly also manipulated the Jews with his mastery of sorcery learned during his sojourns in Bēṯ Ārāmāyē in order to extort massive amounts of the Jews' gold, wealth, and property. Once he finished having his way with them, the imposter fled and returned to his homeland, whereupon the insidious nature and the cruelty of his chicanery soon become apparent. The account concludes:

> Then the Jews came to themselves, realizing what he had done to them; all of them went out after him to the four corners, asking about him and searching for him. When they found him, they brought him to Hishām, the Commander of the Faithful (*Hīšam amīrā da-mhaymnē*), who handed him over to them. After they had made him suffer all sorts of tortures and injuries, they crucified him on a wooden cross, and he died (*zaqpūhy ʿal qaysā wa mīt*).[78]

The author of *Chron. Zuqnīn* cast his account in a transparently didactic tone, which certainly produced embellishments and exaggerations in the account; however, he provides us, I contend, with an account of a figure who shares uncanny similarities with aspects of the portrayals of the Damascene Shepherd and Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī found in the Muslim and Jewish sources that needed to be explored.

The most pressing and obvious question raised by this text, in my view, is: Does this account narrate the activities of the Shepherd, albeit without naming him as such? Certainly there are stark incongruities between this account and that of al-Warrāq. For one, the Arabic heresiological accounts make no mention of the Shepherd's execution but merely of his imprisonment. Moreover, the executed imposter of *Chron. Zuqnīn* meets his end during the caliphate of Hishām, some two decades after the reign of Sulaymān in which al-Warrāq places the story of the Shepherd. Certainly

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[78] The Syriac here is vague, accommodating a number of different translations. Cf. Harrak, "they crucified him on a stake," (164) and Hespel, "ils le crucifièrent sur le bois" (132). Here, I have translated *qaysā* (lit., 'wood') as a cross (cf. Syr Acts 5:30) as parallel to the Arabic *khashaba*, which can also be used in the sense of cross.

this is the greatest obstacle to reconciling the accounts. Yet, this can be surmounted if one considers that merely the imposter's *death* occurs during the caliphate of Hishām and al-Warrāq's account concerns itself merely with his departure—a detail that might correspond with the above imposter's sudden abandonment of his followers and return to his homeland in *Chron. Zuqnīn*. It is also notable that the narrative of *Chron. Zuqnīn* in fact remains ambiguous as to when the imposter began his activities. Given the open-ended nature of the account, the events narrated therein could have feasibly preceded Hishām's caliphate by some years. Indeed, as will be shown below, other Syriac accounts confirm the likelihood of this scenario.

Before addressing this issue further, though, I would like to dwell on the compelling continuities between the Zuqnīn chronicler's account and the Muslim and Jewish heresiological tradition that merit close attention. It is striking that the Zuqnīn chronicler gives this Jewish messianist a *Christian* pedigree. Certainly, the claim that he later feigned being a Jew only to take revenge against those who had sorely punished him for his illicit sexual relationship with a Jewish girl bears the marks of a malicious calumny. Yet, one may find here a vestigial trace of the intersectarian openness that also distinguished the Jewish messianism of the Shepherd and Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī. Furthermore, it is significant that the Zuqnīn chronicler portrays his imposter as a crafty magician schooled in diabolical arts. Although the description here is certainly hostile, what the chronicler's depiction really amounts to is a condemnatory manner of referring to the fact that this imposter was, like the Shepherd, regarded by his admirers as a miracle-worker. All religiously sanctioned criteria for positing distinctions between the wonders of miracles and magic, especially among prophets false and true, remained protean in application and conceptualization, whether in antiquity or late antiquity, since magic could often seem 'miraculous' and miracles could often seem 'magical'. Debates over how the wonders of the prophets differed from and/or encompassed the preternatural feats of magicians persist into late antiquity, although they can first be seen as emerging as a problematic within the pluralistic context of antiquity. Depending on one's perspective, miracles could either affirm the veracity of a prophet or expose the devilish origins of his demonic craft.[79] For a late antique Christian readership, the clincher in

[79] Anitra Bingham Kolenkow, "Relationship between Miracle and Prophecy in the Greco-Roman World and Early Christianity," in *ANRW* II.23.2 (1980): 1471–1506.

the above account, however, is that the imposter profits monetarily from his prophetic claims—the *sine qua non* for exposing prophets among religious communities of early and late antiquity.[80]

Even more substantive are the chronicler's notices on the imposter's message. What interests us in particular is his claim not only to be Moses but his desire to re-gather Israel from the desert/wilderness (Syr. *marbārā*). This desire expresses an idea deeply consonant with Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī's claim that the lost tribes of Israel would soon re-gather.[81] Although not directly attested to as a part of the Shepherd's message, the appearance of this theme in Abū ʿĪsā's movement may provide indirect evidence of its importance to the Shepherd's message as well, inasmuch as Abū ʿĪsā had been deeply influenced by him. Here, the importance of the Elijah-like miracles attributed to the Shepherd in al-Warrāq's account assume renewed importance, for this keys us into the possibility that the Shepherd either billed himself, or was billed by his followers, as an Elijah-like figure. By late antiquity, Elijah had long since assumed the role in Jewish apocalypticism of the personality who would regather the lost tribes of Israel (e.g., see Sirach 48:10). The claims by the Zuqnīn chronicler's imposters, therefore, fall very much in line with the many Elijah-like miracles attributed to the Shepherd in al-Warrāq's account preserved by Abū al-Maʿālī. The Zuqnīn chronicler's assertion that the imposter claimed to be Moses, though difficult to interpret, is also potentially congruent with the title of 'the Shepherd' found in the Muslim heresiographers' accounts, for Moses is widely referred to in Rabbinic literature as 'the faithful shepherd', 'shepherd of Israel', etc.[82] It is theoretically possible that—just as Abū al-Maʿālī erroneously transposed '*masīḥ*' for ʿĪsā ibn Maryam in his adaptation of

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[80] E.g. see Didache 11:12, Hermas Man. 11:7–12.

[81] An idea that survives in Karaite religious thought and that remains prominent in Jewish eschatology more generally speaking; see Erder, "Doctrine," 185, n. 123.

[82] See Aaron Rosemarin, *Moses im Lichte der Agada* (New York: Goldbaltt, 1932), 82 and Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, trans. H. Szold (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1967–1969), 7: 322a. The title "faithful shepherd" appears as early as the Second Temple Period, as it features in a liturgical fragment from the Qumran texts (see *1Q 34bis* ii.8). However, see James R. Davila, *Liturgical Works*, Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls 6 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 24, who interprets the text as referring to David. Jesus' claim to be the 'good shepherd' in Jn. 11:14 may also allude to this title of Moses; see J. Jeremias, "Mōysês," in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964–76), 4: 872. Compare this data with mention of the 'seven shepherds' of Israel to be resurrected from the day at the Messiah's advent in the *responsum* of R. Hai Gaon (939–1038 C.E.) on the topic of redemption; the names of the so-called shepherds are Adam, Seth, Methuselah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Jacob (Reeves, *Trajectories*, 140).

al-Warrāq's account—so the Zuqnīn chronicler transposed the title of 'Shepherd' with Moses. Then again, it is equally plausible that the Zuqnīn chronicler's claim that the imposter touted himself as the second coming of Moses is merely a trope.[83] Otherwise, the anonymous chronicler may merely preserve a detail about the Shepherd entirely congruent with what we known about his message from al-Warrāq's account—i.e., by donning the title of *al-Rāʿī*, or *Raʿyā*, he in fact claimed to be Moses.[84] While such solutions may strike one as mere harmonizations, they find further support elsewhere in the Syriac historical tradition, and one need not rely solely on such speculations to sustain the connection between the Muslim accounts and that of *Chron. Zuqnīn*.

As fortune has it, yet another Syriac account survives—or, rather, multiple accounts based on an earlier archetype—relating events that putatively transpired ca. 720–1. The second account was likely penned by a contemporary of the Zuqnīn chronicler, Theophilus of Edessa (*ca.* 695–775), whose historical work, though no longer extant, served as the basis for many subsequent Christian histories for events in the Near East spanning from *ca.* 590 to 750.[85] Theophilus' text, therefore, comes down to us only partially as redacted in Syriac by Dionysius of Tell-Maḥrē (d. 845; whose own history survives only in the redaction of the anonymous Syriac *Chronicle of 1234*, but also to a great extent in the *Chronicle* Michael the Syrian, d. 1199), in Arabic by Agapius of Manbij (d. *ca.* 941), and in Greek by Theophanes the Confessor (d. *ca.* 817).[86] In what follows,

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[83] The Zuqnīn chronicler's account may betray the influence of the story of the 'Psuedo-Moses' of Crete, who claimed to be Moses sent from heaven to lead the Jews across the sea on dry land, narrated in Socrates Scholasticus, *Histoire*, 7:138–9 (VII.xxxvii). Both stories share interesting, structural commonalities in that both Socrates' Pseudo-Moses and that of the Zuqnīn chronicler beguile the Jews first by claiming to be Moses, then convincing them to abandon their wealth, and eventually succeed in killing large numbers of them by casting them off cliffs.

[84] Al-Qirqisānī, it should be recalled, gives the title *raʿī al-umma*—a fitting Arabic parallel to 'the shepherd of Israel'—as one of the variants of the title of the Shepherd (op. cit., 1: 52 f.), albeit with reference to Yūdghān. For thematic presentations of Elijah as 'the second Moses', see Shaver, "Prophet Elijah," 58 ff.

[85] Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 400 ff. For Hoyland's attempt to reconstruct this source, see ibid., 631–71 (Severus appears at p. 654).

[86] J.-B. Chabot, ed., *Chroncium ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, CSCO 81–82, *scr. syri* 36–37 (Louvain: Peeters, 1916, 1920), 1: 308 and Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, 2: 490 (Fr.) and 4: 456 (Syr.). Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), 1: 401 (A.M. 6213); Eng. trans. Cyril Mango and Rogert Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 554; Agapius of Manbij, *K. al-ʿUnwān*, part 2.2, ed. and trans. A. A. Vasiliev, in *PO* 8 (1912): 504.

I give the version redacted by Dionysius of Tell-Maḥrē as preserved in *Chron. 1234*; it reads:[87]

> At this time, a Syrian from Edessa named Severus (Sāwīrā)—a crafty and cunning man (*gaḇrā ṣnīʿā wa mdarmā*)—was living in a town named GSKĀ[88] in the province (*šūlṭānā*) of Mardīn. Hoping to acquire some money, he went to the Jews and led them astray/seduced them (*eṭʿī b-hōn*). To some of them he would say, "I am the messiah (*mšīḥā*)," but to other Jews "the messenger of the messiah (*īzgarā da-mšīḥā*)."[89] He acquired large quantities of gold and afterwards when he became well-known to Maslama (*etṭbeb lawāṭ MWSLM*).[90] [Maslama] arrested [Severus] and took all that he had acquired. But when he confessed to the scheme, [Maslama] released him.

A number of details immediately key us into the fact that this account mirrors not only that of the chronicler of Zuqnīn but also that of al-Warrāq. Looking first to *Chron. Zuqnīn*, one can see that both figures hail from Mardīn; both are imposters who led Jews astray; both are known for their guile and conjurers' tricks, which they use to extort large sums of money from the Jews; and both make messianic claims. There can be, therefore, little doubt that, despite the fact that Theophilus' account apparently does not narrate the execution of this imposter, the two accounts refer to the same individual. With regard to Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's account, it is noteworthy that both Theophilus' and his relate the story of a messianist whom the Umayyads arrest and to whom they attribute highly similar preaching.

The above account from *Chron. 1234* preserves what is by far the longest version. Other redactors of Theophilus' account provide much briefer versions with fewer details. Agapius, although also providing a much shorter account, adds a number of important details that bring it into further conformity with the account in *Chron. Zuqnīn*. These are that the man "was Christian but converted to Judaism (*kāna naṣrānīy^{an} watahawwada*)"; that "he claimed he came to save them and then collected great wealth"; "had acquired knowledge many deceitful tricks and a bit of sorcery";[91] and, most problematically, that Yazīd II ibn ʿAbd al-Malik

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[87] *Chron. 1234*, 1: 308.

[88] Unidentified.

[89] The biblical prophet Elijah also appears prior to the parousia of Jesus as "the messenger before Christ/the Messiah (*īzgarā qdām mšīḥā*)" in the *Baḥīrā Apocalypse* 3.22, in B. Rogemmena, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 263.

[90] I.e., Maslama ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (d. 738), Umayyad prince and (at the time of this account) governor of al-Jazīra, Armenia and Ādharbāyjān; see *EI*^{2}, s.v. "Maslama ibn ʿAbd al-Malik" (G. Rotter).

[91] In Arabic: *zaʿama annahu jāʾa la-yukhalliṣahum fa-jamaʿa māl^{an} ʿaẓīm^{an} wa-qad taʿallama makhārīq^{an}* [*sic*] *kathīra^{tan} wa-shayʾ^{an} min al-siḥr*. Cf. the similar statement

(r. 720–724), once he heard of him, had him executed.[92] No other account deriving from Theophilus mentions Severus' death at the hands of the caliph Yazīd II: Theophanes is silent on the matter, and Michael the Syrian merely notes briefly that "the governor (*aḥīdeh da-šlīṭā*) exposed his tricks (*awdaʿ b-ṣenʿāteh*)."[93] There is a distinct possibility that either Theophilus' account contained further details in agreement with the chronicler of Zuqnīn, or that Agapius himself augmented Theophilus' account with details from *Chron. Zuqnīn*. The latter possibility may have the added benefit of providing a rationale for Agapius' unique assertion that Yazīd II had the imposter executed, for Theophilus' original account appears to have left the fate of Severus open-ended.[94]

The most salient observation to be had is how the additional details of Theophilus' account bring us even closer to the Muslim heresiological accounts of the Shepherd. Although not exactly in chronological harmony with Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's account of the Shepherd, the chronological proximity of the two accounts renders the disharmony between Severus' release from prison in the reign of Yazīd II and his *appearance* during Sulaymān's caliphate quite negligible. There is, of course, no mention of the Shepherd's *ghayba*; however, this appears to have been one

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concerning the Persian Zoroastrian Prophet and miracle-working al-Muqannaʿ who rebelled against the ʿAbbāsids ca. 756–80 in Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1994), 3: 263. See also Elton L. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under Abbasid Rule* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1979), 137–47.

92 Agapius, *ʿUnwān*, 504.

93 Michael, *Chronique*, 4: 456.

94 Scholars have adduced other sources as mentioning Severus, too; however, these are of dubious value. Some later manuscripts of the Mozarab Chronicle of 754 mention a similarly devious imposter named Serenus (viz., 'he who is serene') as appearing in Iberia and running afoul the authorities there, but this story results from later interpolation and was not original to chronicle. For the Iberian account, see Chron. 754, §74 in K. B. Wolf, trans., *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1990), 139–40. Joshua Starr was, perhaps, the first scholar to demonstrate the problematic nature of this textual interpolation in his, "Le mouvement messianique au début du VIII^e^ siècle," *Revue des étude juives* 52 (1937): 88 ff. As for the oft-cited Goanic *responsum* of a certain Rabbi Naṭronai treating former followers of a Jewish imposter wishing to readmitted into the community, the identification of the person mentioned therein can only be sustained by identifying the rabbi giving the *responsum* with Naṭronai ben Nehemiah, who acted as Gaon of Pembedita from 719–80. As does Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 28 n. 29 and Harris Lenowitz, *The Jewish messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 77 f. However, Jacob Mann long ago demonstrated rather definitively that this identification is unwarranted and, furthermore, insupportable. See J. Mann, "An Early Theologico-Polemical Work," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 13–14 (1937–38): 454 ff., where he demonstrates that the *responsum* must date between 832–74, but certainly no earlier. Gil, although aware of this scholarship, oddly utilizes both sources as unproblematic in his *Jews in Islamic Countries*, 248, 252.

of al-Warrāq's typological glosses to his account. If historical, al-Warrāq's attribution of a belief in the *ghayba* among the Shepherd's followers must merely reflect an attempt of a number of his followers to explain why the Shepherd disappeared from their midst after having been released from prison. Most important of all is the key detail of Severus' preaching preserved by Theophilus, particularly in Dionysius of Tell-Maḥrē's redaction, that he claimed to be the messiah to some,[95] yet claimed to be merely the messenger of the messiah to others. These two details correspond exactly to the account of the Shepherd's claims to be the messiah's predecessor on the one hand and on the other Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī's preaching about the Shepherd one encounters in al-Shahrastānī's *Milal*. This testifies to the remarkable intersection between both sources and demonstrates—potentially—that there exists further Syriac testimony to the continuity between the ʿĪsawiyya and the Shepherd's movement posited by the Muslim sources.

The testimonies of Theophilus—inasmuch as it survives intact—and of the chronicler of Zuqnīn are of extraordinary importance in that they write as contemporaries of these events, or, at the very least, as persons in whose lifetimes the aforementioned events transpired. This is not to say that either account is without blemish or unproblematic in many respects; indeed, both include their fair number of distortions, exaggerations, and inaccuracies arising from either the vagaries of hearsay and/or religious biases. Nevertheless, their accounts contain remarkable—even uncanny—details that are parallel to the heresiological account of the Shepherd authored by Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq. All of this evidence, when it is compounded together, makes a rather compelling case, I believe, for hypothesizing that the Syriac accounts of the imposter from Mardīn and the Muslim heresiological accounts of the Shepherd are all inspired by and derive from the same historical person and movement, despite the formidable obstacles that lie in the way of reconciling all of these historical narratives definitively. The death of the imposter in *Chron. Zuqnīn* in all likelihood merely relates historical events beyond the chronological scope of either the accounts of Theophilus or Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq, for these latter two sources only mention the messianist's disappearance and appear to have no knowledge of his ultimate fate.

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[95] Agapius, *ʿUnwān*, 504; Theophanes, 554 (adding tendentiously that he also claimed to be the Son of God).

Conclusion: A Revisitation of Jewish Messianist Movements in the Early 8th Century

This study began as an attempt to interpret an enigmatic passage on a messianist personage preserved in the *Bayān al-adyān* of Abū al-Maʿālī al-ʿAlawī, but we have found that the account serves as an ideal springboard from which to explore many issues that remain unresolved in the history of Jewish messianism of the early Islamic period. This has led us to examine a wide array of sources that are quite rarely read in light of one another. The sources and accounts surveyed have offered us insights into messianist movements with their origins in the Jewish populations of Syro-Mesopotamia at the beginning of the 8th century and have also provided clues into the ultimately apocalyptic inspiration of such movements. Tantalizing though the insights they offer may be, many of the details they provide are disparate in content and, therefore, do not facilitate the process of discovering the continuities between the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian sources that discuss these movements. In this essay, I have attempted to demonstrate that the account of the Shepherd authored by Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq and preserved via a Persian translation in Abū al-Maʿālī's *Bayān al-adyān* provides the historian with enough historical data to ameliorate this state of affairs.

The challenges and obstacles standing in the way of envisioning how such sources might converge are formidable indeed. As we explored above, most of these accounts are characterized by a markedly didactic and typological mode of writing. This observation applies whether this writing assumes the conventions of the genre of the heresiographer or that of the chronicler. Yet, even though these modes of writing often produced details that *prima facie* prove to be contradictory and irreconcilable, there emerges across all the genres of writing—even despite the confessional and linguistic barriers demarcating them—a readily recognizable set of salient themes and events that cannot be attributable to the existence of textual interdependence or other similar mechanisms. One of the most compelling examples of such salient themes comes via the independent testimony of the Islamic sources that, on the one hand, some of the Shepherd's disciples regarded him as a mere messenger of the messiah while others regarded him as the messiah himself; and, on the other hand, the claim of Syriac historical tradition that Severus claimed to some of his followers to be the messiah and to others to be merely his messenger. Despite the obvious chronological differences dividing the Persian, Arabic, and Syriac accounts of this 8th-century messianist persona,

it seems safe to infer that these chronological difficulties derive primarily from the divergent emphases within the given accounts. Read together, they leave the distinct impression that though they call him by manifold names—the Shepherd (Ar. *al-rāʿī*), Severus, or merely 'the imposter' (Syr. *maṭʿyānā*)—these accounts in fact refer to the same personality insofar as they all relate, albeit in varying degrees of completeness, essentially the same skeletal narrative of his preaching and activities. Each account preserves disparate but connected impressions, the content of which depends on the relative narrative, didactic, and/or polemical emphases of the given account. Read together and in a complimentary fashion, they create a compelling, albeit patchwork, portrait of a Jewish messianist of the early 8th century.

Synthesizing the most salient data, therefore, the following conclusions may be made. The preaching of the Shepherd and the movement it inspired marks the first known messianist, apocalypticist movement to take root among the Jewish populations in the Islamic Near East and to have left a sectarian legacy among the Jewish religious community. A great deal of the success of the Shepherd can be attributed to his adeptness as a wonder worker and as an Elijah-like herald of the coming messiah. The movement's impact, moreover, was not transitory but, rather, also generated a long lasting legacy among the Jewish populations of the still burgeoning Islamic world.

This is a legacy most clearly seen in the successor movement of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī and, subsequently, the influence of the ʿĪsawiyya, a movement of profound importance for the emergence of Karaite Judaism, which would become in time the most important Jewish sectarian movement originating in the Islamic world. Furthermore, the data on the Shepherd and his movement allows historians to at last resolve the chronological problems plaguing the periodization of Abū ʿĪsā's movement. Based on the wide array of sources that place the Shepherd's movement in the early 8th century and also unanimously assert that Abū ʿĪsā's movement came after his, al-Qirqasānī's dating of his movement to the reign of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik should be abandoned in favor of al-Shahrastānī's placement of his movement in the caliphal reigns spanning from the last Umayyad, Marwān II, to the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr.[96]

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[96] Al-Shahrastānī, of course, likely takes his periodization from Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq. Al-Qirqisānī's back projection of Abū ʿĪsā al-Iṣfahānī into the late 7th century likely reveals more about his views of Jewish sectarianism than the historical context of the founder of the ʿĪsawiyya.

Lastly, the case of the Shepherd shows us how the apocalyptic and messianic sentiments that emerged out of responses to Islam profoundly colored the Jewish messianist movements of the 8th century. These movements represent a phenomenon most conspicuously noticeable in their apparently ecumenical posture towards non-Jews and their attempts to accommodate early Muslim claims regarding the prophethood of Muḥammad, even if they did so entirely on their own terms. It is also likely—although the evidence for this is not as strong as that for other facets of his movement—that the Shepherd promoted an ecumenicist posture towards non-Jews, perhaps by even accommodating them within his movement and by drawing upon the initial openness of Islam that soon thereafter declined.[97] In this way, the Shepherd's message and movement also testifies to the enduring nature of the apocalyptic sentiments circulating among the Jews immediately following the Islamic conquests well into the 8th century. This continued relevance of the Jews' messianist optimism in the wake of the Islamic conquest for subsequent messianist movements finds even further confirmation if one accepts the Syriac testimony in *Chron. Zuqnīn* to the optimistic preaching of the so-called 'imposter' that Israel would soon be re-gathered from its diaspora as a reflection of the Shepherd's preaching as well. Because such sentiments had been formed largely in the crucible of upheavals and monumental changes experienced by the Syro-Mesopotamian Jewish communities of the 7th century, the apocalyptic and messianist momentum that resulted would inevitably produce movements of the sort we have encountered in this essay. This momentum found perhaps one of its most compelling and fascinating proponents in the Shepherd, and for this reason, it is about time that he take his proper place in the consciousness of modern historians of the early Islamic world.

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[97] Scholars have frequently found resonances, for example, between endorsement of Muḥammad's prophecy to the Arabs in the *Secrets of Rabbi Šim'ōn bar Yoḥai* and the preaching of Abū 'Īsā al-Iṣfahānī (Wasserstrom, "'Īsawiyya," 62, 65–70 and Erder, "Abū 'Īsā," 18), but to my knowledge, no scholar has hitherto noticed the resonance between his movement and the *Secrets'* portrayal of the Messiah of the lineage of David as hiding from the Jews because of their sinful rejection of him (see Reeves, *Trajectories*, 85 f). This theme of the Davidic Messiah entering into hiding from the *Secrets* strikingly resonates with Abū 'Īsā's clarion endorsement of the previous message of the Damascene messianist al-Rā'ī, who also reputedly went into hiding because his displeasure with the Jews and whom, as we now know, Abū 'Īsā also reputedly revered as the messiah.

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