

## From Space to Place

### *The Quranic Infernalization of the Jinn*

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The aim of this paper is to outline how autochthonous spirits and demons of central Arabia were infernalized by the Quran as a part of the Islamization of the region. The method to achieve this is ostensibly straightforward, namely, compare and contrast the nature of the region's supernatural beings before and after the coming of Islam. However, as is well known, almost all the knowledge concerning the pre-Islamic period comes from Muslim authors;<sup>1</sup> the authenticity and date of so-called "pre-Islamic" Arabic poetry are not beyond doubt;<sup>2</sup> and even situating the Prophet's career in central Arabia, as Islamic tradition asserts, is nowadays a scholarly decision, not an inevitability.<sup>3</sup> In view of these difficulties, this paper proposes to consider only the representation of the autochthonous supernatural entities of central Arabia before and after the advent of Islam, without asking if this representation is a *true* record of any historical reality. In other words, in what follows the question of the historicity of this representation is postponed.

For the most part, the Quran serves as the principal source of this representation, because not only does it describe the allegedly degenerate world into which the Prophet was born, namely, the world of the pre-Islamic period; but it also sets forth a corrected version of that world, namely, the world of the prophetically-led Islamic period. As indicated by its title, the paper's underlying argument is that the Islamization of central Arabia was coterminous with a reconfigured hierarchy of the spiritual entities believed to exist there, the lowest rank of which were the spirits and demons, the jinn, who were put in, or became associated with, hell.<sup>4</sup>

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1 A growing body of scholarship is slowly altering this situation, as succinctly discussed in Von Sivers, *Origins* 1–14.

2 For a succinct discussion of the problems concerning the alleged historicity of this poetry, see Reynolds, *Qur'ān* 30–3.

3 See, e.g., Hawting, *Idolatry* passim.

4 Despite the paucity and ambiguity of the evidence with which to make distinctions, it is important to acknowledge at the outset the different classes of jinn that are named in the

In a recent publication, Angelika Neuwirth discerns notions of space as portrayed in pre-Islamic poetry and compares them to the Quran.<sup>5</sup> She writes:

[In the poetry,] the relation of man to space appears to be tense. The pagan poet or more precisely his persona, the Bedouin hero, has to reconquer space over and over again in order to meet the ideals of *murwwa* and thus fulfill his role as an exemplary member of tribal society.<sup>6</sup>

As an example, she cites the closing verses of al-Shanfarā's *Lāmiyyat al-'arab* (duly noting, also, that al-Shanfarā was an outlaw, not a member of society):

How many a desert plain, wind-swept, like the surface of a shield, empty, impenetrable, have I cut through on foot / Joining the near end to the far, then looking out from a summit, crouching sometimes, then standing / [...].<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to this Bedouin requirement to overcome what she terms “embattled space,”<sup>8</sup> Neuwirth finds that in the Quran the human is “relieved of this burden.” She says:

Moving in an urban space he orients himself to ethical values that are symbolically mirrored in the urban structures themselves. [...] [T]he frequent descriptions of deserted space as a marker of loneliness, of the search for meaning and never ending questions which figure so

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literature. For example, in the so-called pre-Islamic poetry, there is frequent mention of the *ghūlāt* (sg. *ghūl*). See, e.g., Ibn Zuhayr, *Bānat* 102, including the extensive note 2, 102–3. In the Quran, there is frequent mention of the *shayāṭīn* (sg. *shayṭān*); and in the Islamic period, frequent mention of both the *ghūlāt* and *shayāṭīn*, along with the *'afārīt* (sg. *'ifrīt*), *sa'ālī* (sg. *si'lāt*), and *murrād* (sg. *mārid*). See Tritton, *Spirits* 715–17. Note, however, Bauer, *'Ifrit* 486–7, for the absence of exegetical support regarding claims sometimes made by translators of the Quran that the word “'ifrīt” (Q 27:39) is to be understood as a class of jinn. On the ultimately unclear, mostly fine distinction between the jinn and *shayāṭīn* in the Quran, see, inter alia, Fahd, *Génies* 176–7, and Chabbi, *Seigneur* 534 n. 289, but note the slightly greater distinction made in Welch, *Allah* 744–5, and Waardenburg, *Islam* 36–9.

5 Neuwirth, *Geography* 293–313.

6 *Ibid.*, 301.

7 Shānfara, *Lāmiyyat al-'arab*, as cited in translation in Sells, *Desert* 30–1.

8 Neuwirth, *Geography* 301. Also: “Space [...] is often presented as the site of a battlefield, a scene of human strife for self-assertion against threatening nature.” *Ibid.*, 302.

prominently in pagan poetry, also resound in the many allusions to deserted space in the Qur'ān. But in the Qur'ān [...] all the questions are answered. The desolate places are historical sites, evoked through the reports of events [...] assuring the listeners of a divinely endorsed order [...].<sup>9</sup>

As Neuwirth reads the Quran, the Quranically recoded space of the Hijaz is inherently meaningful space.

For the reason given earlier regarding the difficulties intrinsic to accepting pre-Islamic poetry as authentic, Neuwirth's conclusions regarding pre-Islamic versus Quranic space are problematic. When, however, the question of historicity is once again bracketed, or postponed, they point to a phenomenon that is borne out in at least one other area of Quranic representation. That area concerns the jinn and their subtle, spatial translation from moral or at least amoral, predominantly aerial beings to commonly immoral, predominantly chthonic, infernalized associates of Satan.

## 1 The Quranic Translation of the Jinn

Regarding the aerial nature of the jinn, on the basis of two Quranic assertions, this defining characteristic would seem certain. The first of these assertions is that the jinn are capable of ascending the skies at will to reach heaven's boundaries (Q 15:18; 37:10; 72:8–9).<sup>10</sup> The second assertion is that the jinn are composed of a type of fire (Q 15:27; 55:15), a composition that should be taken to mean “the burning air of the solar day,” as Jacqueline Chabbi has recently argued.<sup>11</sup> The details of Chabbi's argument are too many to summarize here, but they are founded upon her initial distinction between nocturnal and diurnal fire.<sup>12</sup> In tribal Arabian society, she explains, the light and heat of the former were valued positively;<sup>13</sup> whereas the light and, above all, the heat of diurnal fire, principally the sun, were valued negatively. From the burning, sunlit air, desert mirages would arise, for example, and they were to be trusted no more than the jinn, another category of shape-shifting entities that could

9 Ibid., 306–7.

10 See also Q 67:5, where it is said the *shayāṭīn* make this ascension.

11 Chabbi, Jinn 48. This encyclopaedia entry includes summarized parts of a chapter on the jinn in idem, *Seigneur* 185–211. See immediately below for more information.

12 Ibid., 189–94.

13 Cf. Fahd, *Feu* 43–61, a summary of which is found in idem, *Nār* 957–60.

swiftly appear and disappear.<sup>14</sup> For Chabbi, any explanation of the Quranic assertion that the jinn are made of a type of fire, which is not mindful of this distinction between positively and negatively valued fire in tribal Arabia, risks resulting in mistranslation.

Notwithstanding the apparent incontrovertibility of the two foregoing Quranic assertions, in two verses concerning the biblical story in Exodus 4:3, where Moses throws down his rod and sees it writhe before him as a snake, the Quran says the rod writhes “as if a jinni (*ka-annah jānn*)” (Q 27:10; 28:31).<sup>15</sup> In two additional verses recounting the same event, the Quran makes no mention of a jinni, but says the thrown rod “is a snake (*hīya thu‘bān*)” (Q 26:32; 7:107). In these four verses, the identity of jinni and snake have been conflated. Because the snake is considered to be an especially chthonic being in many cultures and religions,<sup>16</sup> the conclusion follows that although the predominant, clearly stated view of the Quran regarding the jinn is that they are aerial beings, alongside this view is an implication that the jinn are in fact chthonic creatures or have chthonic associations.

It is perhaps not without consequence that in Nöldeke’s chronology of the Quran, three of these same four “chthonic” verses (Q 7:107; 27:10; 28:31) were revealed later than the aforementioned five “aerial” verses (Q 15:18; 15:27; 37:10; 55:15; 72:8).<sup>17</sup> This fact might lead one to the conclusion that there was a moment during the period of Quranic revelation when the jinn transitioned from aerial to chthonic beings. According to the same chronology, however, the fourth of these four chthonic verses (Q 26:32) was revealed third out of the nine aerial and chthonic verses, rendering such a conclusion of questionable value.

The secondary literature on pre-Islamic demonology reflects this Quranic ambiguity regarding the nature of the jinn. Giorgio Levi Della Vida, for

14 Ibid., 189–90, 192.

15 With the notable exception of Rudi Paret and Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, most translators tend to say “as if a snake,” because *jānn* can also mean a snake, as per the Prophetic hadith: “There are various species of snakes: *jānn*, *afā’i*, and *asāwid*.” See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* vi, 21 (k. tafsīr al-Qur’ān [s. al-Qaṣaṣ], ch. 1, no. 4772). This dual meaning is almost certainly because in early and medieval Islam a snake was thought to be the jinn’s most common visible form. On this, see below, and Canova, *Serpenti* 199–201. See Chabbi, *Seigneur* 194–6, for further discussion of the two Quranic verses and their translation.

16 Lurker, *Snakes* 8456–60. For the role of snakes in early and medieval Islam in specific, see Canova, *Serpenti* 191–207, and idem, *Serpenti* (2) 219–244; and most recently, Schubert, *Dämon* 15–34.

17 Nöldeke/Schwally, *Geschichte* i, 74–164.

example, says that the jinn are aerial beings,<sup>18</sup> whereas William F. Albright implies that they are subterranean.<sup>19</sup> As with the Quran, the latter view is the minority view;<sup>20</sup> nevertheless, because it apparently contradicts the claim of the present paper that the advent of Islam resulted in the jinn becoming creatures of the underground, it must be examined further.

In 1940 William Albright published his article, "Islam and the religions of the ancient Orient." Included in this text is the author's proposed history and etymology of the word "jinn," in which he implies that the pre-Islamic jinn are subterranean beings. According to Albright, the word derives from a modified Aramaic word, "genyā," demon, which was introduced into Arabic most probably in the late pre-Islamic period.<sup>21</sup> He claims that, upon the word's introduction into Arabic,

[the] occult figures of depotentized pagan deities with which the imagination of the Christian Aramaeans peopled the underworld, the darkness of night, ruined temples and sacred fountains, were organized by Arab imagination into the jinn of the Arabian Nights [...].<sup>22</sup>

Much in this theory has proved contentious, as will be discussed immediately below, but it is relevant to note here that Albright's assertion that the Aramaic

18 Giorgio Levi Della Vida, private correspondence to Joseph Henninger, dated 16/01/1964, as cited in Henninger, *Belief* 46 n. 239.

19 Albright, *Islam* 293.

20 In addition to Albright, who propounds it, and Henninger, who mostly supports it (see below), Gonzague Rykmans avers a chthonic nature for the pre-Islamic jinn, but on no apparent evidence. See Ryckmans, *Religions* 11. Joseph Chelhod also argues for a chthonic nature, but does so almost exclusively on the basis of a coherent, dualistic theory of what constitutes the supernatural (*forces occultes*) for the pre- and early Islamic Arabs of the Hijaz; not on the incoherent evidence pertaining or purporting to pertain to the pre-Islamic period. This theory impels him to categorize the jinn as chthonic and the angels as celestial. See Chelhod, *Structures* 72–81. Wellhausen seems to hold both views, but it is not clear if he is referring to pre-Islamic jinn when he asserts the jinn's chthonic nature; this information is important to know, because as will be shown below, the chthonic nature of the Islamic period jinn is well attested. See Wellhausen, *Reste* 151. Jacqueline Chabbi is minded to ignore the chthonic nature suggested by the Quranic verses on Moses's rod writhing "as if a jinn." See Chabbi, *Seigneur* 196.

21 "[T]he word is neither Arabic nor Ethiopic, but a slight modification of Aramaic *genē*, 'hidden,' plural *genēn*, 'hidden things,' and emphatic plural *genayyā*, which appears as the name of a class of deities in inscriptions from the third century AD at Dura and in the Jebel esh-Shā'r, northwest of Palmyra." See Albright, *Islam* 292.

22 *Ibid.*, 293.

Christian jinn were chthonic in nature is corroborated by *The Book of the Holy Hierotheos*. Attributed to the East Syrian mystic, Stephen Bar-Sudhaile (of Edessa, fl. c. 500), this text recounts the journey of the Christian mind through the regions of the world in its attempt to ascend to the Godhead. Below the earth, in the world's nether regions, live the demons.<sup>23</sup>

Returning to Albright's theory in specific, although it is scarcely credible that the tribes of central Arabia had no concept of, and/or word for, spirits and demons prior to the introduction of this allegedly Aramaic term in the early centuries of Christianity, for Joseph Henninger the theory is "undoubtedly correct in its core assumptions."<sup>24</sup> This support is significant, as Henninger has reasonable claim to being one of the more informed specialists in "jinn studies," if only because he is one of the more recent, benefitting thus from the many studies preceding him.

However, as mentioned already, excepting Henninger, there is noteworthy scepticism towards the theory. Giorgio Levi Della Vida, for example, flatly denies there is a link between the Aramaic and the Arabic words, and additionally asserts that they refer to two different types of spirit: the first to chthonic ones, the second to aerial ones.<sup>25</sup> Fritz Meier thinks little better of it, troubled, for example, by the provenance of the second "n" in the modified Aramaic word's alleged translation into Arabic.<sup>26</sup> More cautious in his criticism, Jean Starcky effectively dismisses the proposed etymology,<sup>27</sup> but not the

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23 Bar-Sudhaile, *Book* esp. 70–3, 96–102. Cf. Luke 8:31; Daley, *Early Church* 175; Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius* 125, 154, 160. In the interest of full disclosure, it must also be noted that Bar-Sudhaile attests to the existence of aerial demons, too. However, in comparison to the subterranean demons, these demons are both less severe and considerably less destructive with respect to the mind, and the author devotes little attention to them. Bar-Sudhaile, *Book* 31–3. With thanks to Tommaso Tesei for bringing this and the other sources and studies to my attention.

24 Henninger, *Belief* 51. See also, *idem*, Pre-Islamic 9 and 19 n. 63.

25 As cited from the aforementioned private letter to Henninger, in *ibid.*, 46 n. 239. This refutation is also found in summary form in Levi Della Vida, *Arabia* 54.

26 Meier, *Arabischer* 191–2. Although Meier finds much of merit in Wensinck's classic etymological study of the word "jinn" (Wensinck, *Etymology* 506–14), he acknowledges that the matter remains uncertain. *Ibid.*, 198. With thanks to Bernd Radtke for proffering a copy of Meier's article.

27 "Nous partageons donc l'opinion de ceux qui considèrent le mot palmyrénien GNY' comme un emprunt à l'arabe." Seyrig and Starcky, *Gennéas* 255. This is said without reference to Albright's proposed etymology.

history, which he finds worthy of consideration;<sup>28</sup> an approach later reiterated by Jacques Waardenburg.<sup>29</sup>

Another look at the Quran's representation of the jinn offers a way of moving beyond this scholarly impasse, at least with regard to the proposed history of the word. If the Quran could be shown to be referring to chthonic beings in its use of "jinn," that would facilitate two outcomes. First, it would add weight to Albright's account of the jinn's non-Arab origins, whether these origins be total, as per his theory, or partial, as seems more plausible. This is because, if the jinn really were once depotentized pagan deities, as Albright asserts, one would expect them to have the same nature as those deities, and so be chthonic, too. Second, it would suggest the existence in the pre-Islamic period of the location in which a number of Quranic concepts of hell were to find a home, namely, the underworld. For although it is not possible to assert definitively that the Quranic hell is below ground, so ambiguous is the Quranic evidence, there are a number of verses that indicate the Quran considers it to be there. For example, hell is likened to a pit (*ukhdūd*, Q 85:4) and a structure bordered with a brink (*shafā*, Q 9:109); it has a lowest level (*al-dark al-asfal*, Q 4:145), and covers its occupants like the lid of a saucepan (*muṣada*, Q 104:8); on Judgment Day, all will be made to kneel around it and look into the abyss, with only the god-fearing being rescued (Q 19:68–72).<sup>30</sup> Lastly, because the Quran implies that the sun derives its heat from the underworld, nightly traversing this subterranean continent from west to east to stoke its fire (Q 18:86), the inference is that hell is there, too.<sup>31</sup> Such an inference would be in keeping with a growing academic trend that views the Quran not just as Muslim scripture, but as a document of late antiquity.<sup>32</sup> As is well known, the

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28 Referring (in the footnotes only) to Albright's article, Starcky asks rhetorically: "Une question historique se pose: les djinns ne seraient-ils pas des divinités adoptées tardivement par les Arabes?" To this question, he gives an ambiguous response: "Certes, ils ne sont pas attestés avant Mahomet, mais on a pourtant quelques indices positifs de leur caractère autochtone." *Ibid.*, 255.

29 Waardenburg, *Islam* 31.

30 The interpretation of all these verses, it should be added, remains open to debate. With thanks to Christian Lange for sharing a work-in-progress in which he considers anew the cosmological and structural coordinates of hell; the present discussion has benefitted from this work.

31 See the analysis of this verse in Toelle, *Coran* 97–100, a brief summary of which is found in *idem*, *Fire* 212. As Toelle writes in this summary: "As far as the qur'ānic sun (*shams*) is concerned, it clearly appears to be nothing other than hell-fire."

32 See, for example, Neuwirth, *Koran* passim.

underworld played a significant role in late antiquity, and the Quran appears to reflect that.<sup>33</sup>

Proceeding solely on the foregoing Quranic evidence concerning the subterranean location of hell, and not referring to the two jinn-specific verses regarding the rod of Moses discussed earlier, syllogistically it is straightforward to show that the Quran considers the jinn to be chthonic beings (in addition to preserving traces of an aerial understanding of their nature). For not only does the Quran state that the jinn are made from a type of fire (*mārij min al-nār*) (Q 55:15), fire being the predominant Quranic term for hell (*al-nār*); but in another verse, it specifies that the fire of which they are made is from the *samūm* (Q 15:27), the scorching wind of hell.<sup>34</sup> Neither of these two associational, or connotative readings contradicts the literal, or denotative, aerial-related reading of the same verses mentioned earlier. This is because the denotative reading pertains to the creation of the jinn in the pre-Islamic period, before the institution of hell as a Quranic concept; whereas the two connotative readings occur after the institution of hell as a Quranic concept, when words that were chemical (*nār*) or meteorological (*samūm*)<sup>35</sup> in significance in the pre-Islamic period have become overlaid with infernal associations. The syllogism is therefore: the jinn are composed of elements barely dissociable from hell; hell is underground; the jinn are chthonic beings.

Although no theory concerning the pre-Islamic jinn can be proved conclusively, the fact that the Quran at times considers the jinn to be chthonic adds weight to Albright's theory of their non-Arabian origins. As mentioned earlier, for this theory to be more plausible, it would be better were it restricted in scope so that it referred to just a part of the jinn's *otherwise* autochthonous conceptual and lexical origins. As Henninger also notes, it is quite possible to imagine this original Arabic word having been "infiltrated" by non-Arabian elements at the conceptual level.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, with sole regard to Albright's much contested etymology, the existence of a jinn-like class of beings in the Quran, the *zabāniya* (Q 96:18), adds weight there, too. This is because this lexically uncertain word is possibly a remnant of the Arabic nomenclature

33 On the underworld in late antiquity, see, inter alia, Kaufmann, Virgil 150–60, including the literature review *ibid.*, 150 n. 1.

34 On the *samūm* of hell in the Quran, see also Q 52:27 and Q 56:42; on the *samūm* as a scorching desert wind, see immediately below. On the non-religious uses and connotations of fire (*nār*) in the pre- and early Islamic periods, see Fahd, Feu 43–61.

35 Wensinck, *Samūm* 1056.

36 "Even if the Arabic etymology were certain, it would still be possible for non-Arabian elements to have infiltrated the contents of the idea." Henninger, *Belief* 46–7 n. 239.



of the indigenous Arabian spirits and demons before they were collectively called jinn.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that the Quran considers the jinn variously chthonic and aerial does not invalidate the claim made at the start of this paper that the jinn undergo a spatial transformation with the advent of Islam. Rather, it highlights what was said earlier, namely, the Quran references a variety of notions prevalent in late antiquity, often leaving contradictory ones unreconciled.<sup>38</sup> Even so, what is required to validate the paper's claim, is to show the chthonic nature of the Islamic period jinn, because then a contrast can be obtained, the Quran's ambiguity notwithstanding.

At first glance, the evidence for the Islamic period looks equally ambiguous. For example, a tradition attributed to Mujāhid (d. ca. 102/720) says: "The abode of the jinn is the air, the seas, and the depths of the earth (*maskan al-jinn al-hawā' wa al-biḥār wa a'māq al-arḍ*)."<sup>39</sup> However, Mujāhid is also alleged to have reported the following:

When God created the father of jinn, He said to him: "Make a wish!" [The jinni] replied: "I wish that we neither see nor are seen, that we belong beneath the ground, and that our elderly revert to youth (*lā narā wa-lā nurā wa-annā nadkhula taḥt al-tharā wa-anna shaykhanā ya'ūda fatan*)."<sup>40</sup>

Judging by the number of early Islamic traditions relating encounters with jinn in the guise of snakes, this wish for ophidian attributes, including ecdysis, was granted,<sup>41</sup> the word for a type of jinn, *shayṭān*, even becoming a term for a

37 See the chapter by Christian Lange in the present volume for a discussion of the *zabāniya*, 75–84. Lange's discussion is entirely unrelated to the possibility mooted here.

38 E.g. Quranic cosmology, which is at once Aristotelian-Ptolemaic and ancient Semitic. Neuwirth, *Cosmology* 445; see also Tesei, *Cosmological* 22.

39 Cited in al-Maqdisī, *Bad'* ii, 71 (Arabic), 62 (French). This ambiguity is amply replicated in that great treasure trove of jinn lore, *The Arabian Nights*, as conveniently illustrated in Lebling, *Legends* 218–26, and still more concisely in Marzolph and van Leeuwen, *Arabian* ii, 535–6.

40 *Ibid.*, ii, 71–2, 62. *Mā taḥt al-tharā* is a Quranic phrase meaning "beneath the ground" (Q 20:6); it is quite possibly referenced in this tradition.

41 See, for example, the stories collected in al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt* i, 173–4. Almost all of these stories are summarized in Fahd, *Génies* 194–5. See also the stories referred to in Smith, *Lectures* 128–9. For a brief, comparative analysis of the snake-like jinn, see El-Zein, *Islam* 95–100.

snake.<sup>42</sup> The jinn's sobriquet during the Islamic period, namely, *ahl al-ard*, people of the earth, is presumably premised upon this identification with snakes, either fully or in part.<sup>43</sup>

In conclusion, then, to this comparison between the pre-Islamic and Islamic period jinn regarding their aerial or chthonic nature, although contradictory evidence is found for both periods, the predominant trend is that with the advent of Islam the jinn go underground. Henninger's thoroughgoing review of the state of academic knowledge concerning both periods serves to confirm this, for he says of the Islamic period:

Among the sedentary population in Palestine and Syria the habitat of the jinn is thought to be the earth, the underworld. They are frequently described in analogous (comprehensive) terms, e.g. *ahl al-ard*, "people of the earth", etc. This is the reason why they are found mainly where there is a connection with the underworld. These are, above all, springs, wells, cisterns and indeed all places linked to underground water. [...] Cracks in the ground caused by great heat, and even a scratch in the ground made with a plough, can be sufficient opening to allow the spirits access to the surface of the earth.<sup>44</sup>

## 2 The Quranic Moralization of the Jinn

If the foregoing has succeeded in demonstrating the spatial transformation of the jinn with the advent of Islam, as well as indicating the existence of a

42 Zbinden, *Djinn* 88, including n. 3 for the names of other scholars who have asserted the same, to which list could be added, Chelhod, *Structures* 74. On the ultimately unclear, mostly fine distinction between the terms *jinn* and *shayṭān*, see above, n. 3.

43 According to Smith, the earliest reference to this sobriquet is in Ibn Hishām's biography of the Prophet. See Smith, *Religion* 198 n. 2. However, although the reference there is admittedly ambiguous, it almost certainly means "human beings," which is how it is used elsewhere in this biography. See Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* ii, 31. (An approximate translation of this passage is available in Ibn Hishām, *Life* 179, where no mention is made of the jinn.) For other references to *ahl al-ard* in this text, all of them meaning "human beings," see Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* i, 166, tr. 90; and i, 167, tr. 91. Correct references to the jinn as *ahl al-ard* are common in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western travelogues and studies. See, inter alia, Doughty, *Travels* 159 n. 1; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube* 22.

44 Henninger, *Belief* 12–14. Referring to a Quranically resonant image for the jinn's subterranean habitat, Doughty writes: "They inhabit seven stages, which (as the seven heavens above) is the building of the under-world." Doughty *Travels* i, 259. See also, Westermarck, *Ritual* i, 371–3.

pre-Islamic subterranean locale in which certain Quranic ideas concerning hell could find a home, nothing yet in this paper has demonstrated the Quranic moralization of the jinn. The following analysis aims to correct that.

With regard to the pre-Islamic jinn, in the Quran the jinn are represented as, *inter alia*, beings that humans take as their protectors (sg. *walī*, Q 7:30) and even worship (*ya'budūn*, Q 34:41).<sup>45</sup> This indicates that the jinn were not construed negatively, as immoral, in the pre-Islamic value system, an indication that is confirmed in the secondary literature. Henninger, for example, writes:

[Pre-Islamic jinn] are not “evil” spirits in the moralistic sense, [...] but are morally neutral. They are helpful or harmful according to whim, depending on whether they are friendly or hostile to a person [...].<sup>46</sup>

With the commencement of the Quranic revelations and the introduction of teleological time, including the eschatological concepts connected to it, the jinn become associated with hell and are accordingly evaluated as immoral.<sup>47</sup> The evidence for this is threefold.<sup>48</sup> First, in view of the two Quranic verses cited earlier regarding the fiery make-up of the jinn (Q 15:27, 55:15), one can say that, as represented in the Quran, the jinn have a hellish composition, something they cannot be said to have had prior to the institution of hell as a Quranic concept. Second, even though not all the jinn are destined for damnation, as evidenced by four verses (Q 46:19; 72:11, 14; 55:46),<sup>49</sup> many are so

45 On the Quranic usage of *walī* and the related *walā'*, see Chabbi, *Seigneur* 533–4 n. 288. On the “worship” of the jinn, see: Tritton, *Spirits* 726, where he asks whether this term should be understood as monotheistic propaganda and not taken literally; Henninger, *Belief* 36–9, where he carefully reviews the literature on this question; and most recently, Crone, *Religion* 175–7.

46 Henninger, *Belief* 35. Cf. Nöldeke, *Arabs* 669; and especially Seyrig and Starcky, *Gennéas* 256, where the authors make a similar appraisal: “Au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle, il ne semble pas que les Arabes aient considéré les djinns comme des esprits malfaisants. C'étaient encore des dieux proprement dits, quoique leur rôle bienfaisant ne soit guère marqué.” Additional positive functions of the pre-Islamic jinn are described in Fahd, *Divination* 68–76, 91–117.

47 Cf. “At the beginning of Muhammad's career, the *jinn* were held to be Allāh's creatures, accepting or rejecting the prophet's message. But when Muhammad's legitimacy is at stake and he is reproached with being inspired by a *jinnī*, the *jinn* are demonized and their works are practically identified with those of the *shayāṭīn*.” See Waardenburg, *Islam* 41.

48 Reference to Nöldeke's chronology of the Quranic suras offers no additional evidence, for as before (p. 59) it proves inconclusive. See Nöldeke/Schwally, *Geschichte* i, 74–164.

49 To accept this particular verse as proof that not all the jinn are destined for hell, the reader must also accept that the entire sura from which it comes, *al-Raḥmān* (Q 55), is addressed to both humans and jinn.

destined, as evidenced by the greater number of verses stating or implying this (Q 6:128; 7:38, 179; 11:119; 26:94–5; 32:13; 55:39; 72:15). Third, the jinn's relationship with Iblis, the Devil, renders them immoral by association.

As with the nature of the jinn, the location of hell, and so many other matters, the Quran is ambiguous on the nature of the Iblis, in one verse stating that he is “from among the jinn” (Q 18:50) and in another implying that he is an angel (Q 20:116). Muslim exegetes have argued to and fro regarding which of these two natures is intended by the Quran.<sup>50</sup> Although not an exegete, Andrew Rippin has recently discussed this exegetical argument in his entry on the Devil for the *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, and inadvertently or otherwise he appears to side with the first position, saying: “The Qurʾān *clearly* indicates, however, that Iblis was one *of* the jinn.”<sup>51</sup> On that view, as just stated, the jinn are immoral by association.<sup>52</sup>

This negative evaluation of the jinn continues with the Quranic verses recounting their thwarted attempts to steal from, or deceive (*astaraqa*) heaven (Q 15:18). In keeping with Neuwirth's discernment of a Quranically recoded spatial order as discussed at the start of this paper, in these verses the jinn are represented as no longer able to occupy the superior position that was theirs before. No more can they sit unobstructed at the borders of heaven, eavesdropping on the secrets of the “high assembly” (Q 37:8), but are violently sent back to earth (e.g. Q 72:9); one of the reasons for this being the need to defend the Quran as a divine, not demonic revelation (Q 26:210).<sup>53</sup>

The foregoing treatment of the Quranic placement of the jinn in the subterranean hell, or, at the very least, the Quranic association of the jinn with hell, is not without conceivable repercussions for how the Quran and Hadith represent hell. For it is possible to see portrayed in a few Quranic verses and hadiths a jinn-hell hybrid, a monstrous hell: living, breathing, and barely restrained by its handlers, its “keepers” (*khazanatuhā*).<sup>54</sup> In Q 25:11–12, for example, one reads (in Yusuf Ali's translation):

50 For a summary of the different exegetical arguments during the early and medieval periods, see Awn, *Satan* 25–9.

51 Rippin, *Devil* 527; my emphasis.

52 Related to this conclusion, it is also said by some medieval exegetes that Iblis is the originator, the father, of all jinn. See Awn, *Satan* 31.

53 As explained in Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, i, 166, tr. 90. For an analysis of this explanation, see Hawting, *Eavesdropping* 25–38.

54 Q 25:12, 50:30, 67:7–8.

Nay they deny the Hour (of the judgment to come): but We have prepared a Blazing Fire for such as deny the Hour: When it sees them from a place far off, they will hear its fury and its raging sigh.

And in Q 67:7–8, one reads (also in Yusuf Ali's translation):

When [the deniers] are cast therein, they will hear the (terrible) drawing in of its breath even as it blazes forth, almost bursting with fury. Every time a group is cast therein, its Keepers will ask, "Did no Warner come to you?"

In the canonic Sunni Hadith, aspects of this portrayal are repeated. For example:

Allah's Apostle said, "The Fire complained to its Lord: 'O Lord, part of me consumes the other part.' So He gave it permission to breathe out twice: one breath in the winter and one in the summer. [The breath in the summer] is the most intense heat that you feel then, and [the breath in the winter] is the most intense cold that you feel then."<sup>55</sup>

Lastly, hell might even be said to act like a jinn if one reads Q 78:21, "Lo! hell lurketh in ambush," in conjunction with reports about Islamic-period jinn as creatures who lie in wait for the unsuspecting.<sup>56</sup>

To see in this portrayal just a possible "jinn-ification" of hell would be to overlook the portrayals of a personified hell in Judeo-Christian traditions and the likely influence of those portrayals upon the Quran and Hadith.<sup>57</sup> However, if one accepts the argument put forward in this paper regarding an Islamic infernalization of the jinn, one might also be willing to consider a possible demonization of the Islamic inferno, a jinn-hell hybrid.

55 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* iv, 106 (k. bad' al-khalq, ch. 10, no. 3260).

56 See, for example, Nöldeke, *Arabs* 670; also Cunial, *Spiritual* 120, where she writes: "The *ghūl* is supposed to lie in wait at places where men are destined to perish; she entices them there, especially by night." The Quran translation is from Pickthall, *Meaning* 427.

57 As discussed by Christian Lange in his chapter of the present volume (pp. 86–7) e.g. "The idea that hell is a monster that talks has a rich Judeo-Christian genealogy: In 1 Enoch, a text written around the turn of the millennium, hell is said to have a 'mouth' with which is 'swallows' the sinners (56:8). In 3 Baruch (1st–3rd c. CE), hell is the 'belly' of a 'dragon' (4:5, 5:3)."

### 3 Concluding Remarks

In summary of the preceding pages, the claim was made at the outset that the advent of Islam was coterminous with a Quranic recoding of the supernaturally inhabited space of the Hijaz, exactly as per the argument of Neuwirth regarding the Quranically recoded, naturally inhabited space of the Hijaz. The ambiguity of the Quranic evidence notwithstanding, as well as the currently unresolvable academic debate regarding the jinn's origins, it was argued that the predominant trend of this recoded, supernaturally inhabited space revealed a reconfigured hierarchy of spiritual entities. It was shown that in this reconfigured hierarchy, the lowest rank were the jinn, who had been removed from open space and placed in, or become associated with, hell. Lastly, it was argued that in this process of infernalization, the jinn's moral value was simultaneously revised, dropping from moral or amoral in the representation of pre-Islamic period to immoral in the representation of the Islamic period.

In the context of religious studies as a whole, not just Islamic studies, there is little that is surprising in these findings; similar results have, for example, been presented in a recent article about the effects of Christianity on the autochthonous spirits of Ireland.<sup>58</sup> What alone might be considered surprising about these findings is that they are not valid for all of Islamic history, their Quranic pedigree notwithstanding. For example, in the period for which anthropological studies exist, the nineteenth century onwards, the jinn are neither consistently evaluated as immoral nor consistently associated with hell.<sup>59</sup> This fact does not, however, invalidate the findings, which can be verified by inquiring into the fate of angels.

If the paper's argument is correct, as supernatural beings, angels, too, should undergo a transformation. As noted by Alfred Welch in his seminal, diachronic reading of the Quran concerning the emergence of the doctrine of absolute monotheism, or *tawḥīd*, they do. They are transformed from visible, quasi-independent beings in the Meccan and early Medinan, pre-battle of Badr

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58 Borsje, *Monotheistic* 53–81. With thanks to Marcel Poorthuis for bringing this text to my attention.

59 See, for example, Westermarck, *Ritual* i, 388–90, where the jinn are evaluated neutrally, described as “connected with [...] mysterious forces” and “personifications of what is uncanny in nature.” I owe this important caveat to Remke Kruk. As noted above, however, this neutral evaluation of the jinn is not consistently found in anthropological studies. For example, in Mohammed Maarouf's recent publication on contemporary Moroccan jinn-related practices, he observes: “Generally, [the Ben Yeffu healers] distinguish between two major types of jinns: the satanic (*shayṭani*) and the divine (*rabbani*).” *Idem, Jinn* 102.

(2/624) suras (e.g. Q 11:69–73; 19:17–21) to invisible beings, so closely related to the will of God that it makes little sense to talk of them as independent, in the post-Badr suras (e.g. Q 3:38–47).<sup>60</sup> As noted by Welch, too, the battle of Badr is also a watershed moment for the jinn, because thereafter the Quran refers to them no more.<sup>61</sup> From about the same time, Allah—that ultimate supernatural entity—is repeatedly represented in the Quran as the cosmos's sole deity, *al-Wāḥid* (e.g. Q 12:39, 13:16, 14:48), all other spiritual entities having been either effectively stripped of their individuality (angels) and the divinity attributed to them (idols), or rendered mundane (Iblīs) and no longer mentioned (jinn): a hierarchy of One.<sup>62</sup>

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60 Welch, Allah 746–8, 752.

61 Ibid., 749, 751–2. The term *shayāṭīn* drops out at the same time. Ibid., 745.

62 Ibid., 742–3, 750–1. But note Crone's disagreement with Welch's *tawḥīd* argument in Crone, *Religion* 173 n. 24.

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