

one associated with Jārūdī beliefs. In other words, the terms “Batrī” and “Jārūdī” do not refer to clearly demarcated groups but rather describe Zaydī beliefs at two different times. This evolution is depicted as an internal fight between factions due to the nature of heresiographical sources, which view religious groups (or subgroups) as static and timeless.

A number of studies have highlighted the seminal role of Yaḥyā b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 189/805), who spent fifteen years (174–189/790–805) as the de facto head of the Zaydī movement, in the shift from a Batrī to a Jārūdī orientation (Haider, *Origins*; Jarrar, *Arba‘u rasā’il*; Jarrar, *Some aspects*). Prior to this period, most Zaydīs espoused theological views and held ritual law positions associated with the Batriyya. Yaḥyā, however, was raised and educated in the household of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (the sixth Twelver Shī‘ī Imām, d. 148/765), and his later advocacy for Jārūdī beliefs, which resemble those of the Twelver Shī‘a, was likely a result of this link with al-Ṣādiq. His position led to considerable discomfort and conflict between him and the majority of his Kufan followers, culminating in his refusal to lead the Kufans in prayer due to their (in his eyes) incorrect ritual practice (Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, 392–3; ‘Alī b. Bilāl, 494; al-Nāṭiq, 101). In time, however, Yaḥyā managed to impose his authority over the community. By the time of his death, Batrī influence was in clear decline and, over the next few centuries, Zaydīs adopted Jārūdī positions on most theological and legal matters.

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Jokes and joke books

Arabic literature of the pre-Mongol period contains many thousands of **jokes**. From the fourth/tenth century onwards, jokes were compiled into **joke books**, a genre that remained popular in the post-Mongol and modern periods. A similar, although chronologically somewhat later,