

Christian Lange

Hell's angels and the dogs of the Fire: representations of violence in Sunni eschatological literature

In this paper, I will examine a number of traditions in 9th-12th-century Sunni eschatological literature, that is, reports about acts of (legitimate) violence in the Muslim hell, which reflect a concern with (illegitimate) forms of state violence on earth. Three traditions will be at the center of analysis, each one criticizing a different state actor involved in meting out violence to the populace: the police and court sheriffs (*al-shurat wa-l-jalawiza*), market inspectors (*muhtasibs*) and finally, the sultan himself. In the second part of my paper, I shall then discuss the role of the *zabaniya* (hell's angels), God's agents of (legitimate) violence in hell, in the construction of a discourse that legitimizes state violence on earth. Traditions about violence in the Muslim hell will thus be shown to serve a double function: on the one hand, they challenge illegitimate acts of violence on earth; on the other hand, they can provide an analogy to thisworldly state violence, and thereby help to justify it.