Note on the Term al-mushtarī and the Dating of Leiden Or. 1020a

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This small communication is prompted by a passage in Joep Lameer’s interesting article on Avicenna’s Kitāb al-Ishārāt in a previous number of this journal. The author rightfully questions the dating of an old—purportedly the oldest—manuscript of the text to before 408 AH on account of a purchase note supposedly from that year.

In this note, the main undated statement of purchase is supplemented in the margin, but clearly in the same hand, with two words and one number written in three lines. This clearly written note has hitherto been interpreted as: “al-mushtarī / sana / 408,” which translates as “the buyer/ [in the] year / 408.”

The dating itself can be dismissed with a swift glance at the much younger handwriting, but the meaning of the number, so clearly decipherable, needs explanation. If it was not an outright forgery, what does it signify? Lameer consulted Jan Just Witkam who suggested reading the digits in reverse order, i.e. 804 AH. In turn, Adam Gacek confirmed the rare existence of this phenomenon but with the caveat that he only knew of Indian examples. Since this is clearly not an Indian manuscript and the hand appears younger than 804 AH, further explorations are called for.

Drawing from a vast number of notes that I have collected over the past five years, I would like to offer another interpretation. It is my assumption that

2 To establish this corpus, I have collected the secondary notes (statements of ownership, private reading, public reading, endowments, borrowing, births and deaths, etc.) from manuscripts I could inspect at Beirut American University, Berlin Staatsbibliothek (collections Landberg, Sprenger, Wetzstein I + II, Ms.or.oct., Ms.or.quart), Gotha Forschungsbibliothek, Halle, Leipzig, and Tübingen, as well as material from online digitized collections (mainly Dublin, Harvard, Michigan, Paris) and the few catalogues mentioning these notes in a more or
the problem is not, in fact, posed by the numerals, but rather the apparently unequivocal terms written above them. I submit that both words, as clearly written as they may seem, have been deciphered incorrectly, until now.

Let us start with *al-mushtarī*. It is translated here as the buyer, a term that does exist, albeit rarely, in the corpus of notes I have collected. However, it is always embedded in an unequivocal syntactic structure and followed directly by the name of the buyer designated. By contrast, a substantial number of notes exist in which the same grapheme should be read as *al-mushtarā*, the object or act of purchase. While this term, too, is uncommon, overall it is sufficiently well attested, with a wide chronological and regional range from the 8th/14th to the 13th/19th century and from Egypt to Baghdad. It is generally encountered in three forms: undetermined, determined with an article, or determined by the personal suffix *-hū*.

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3 *min al-mushtarī* + name: Gotha orient. A 1222 (dated 954), Leipzig Vollers 172.
4 *bi-mushtarā* + name: Berlin Ms. or. quart. 1072 (Damascus);
   *mushtarā* + name: Gotha orient. A 746 (dated 1195), Gotha orient. A 1630 (dated 1103),
   Gotha orient. A 1683, Gotha orient. A 1784;
   one occurrence of a female form, *mushtarāt* + name, either by way of mistake or with reference to a female designate for the object of purchase, like *nuska* or *mujallada*: Wetzstein II 1372 (after 1172, before 1270);
   *mushtarā* min + place: Berlin Sprenger 798 (dated 955, Cairo), Berlin Wetzstein II 174 (dated 1271, Damascus);
   *mushtarā* fi + place: Beirut aub ms 520.956 R59RA (dated 1248, Alexandria);
   *mushtarā* + price: Gotha orient. A 1813.
5 *sāra bi-ḥukm al-mushtarā*: Leipzig Vollers 313; *bi-ṭarīq al-mushtarā*: Wetzstein II 186 (dated 1122, Damascus); *al-mushtarā min* + name: Beirut AUB MS 610 B33fA (dated 926). Once, a plural is formed, *min al-mushtarayāt*: Vollers 41.
6 *mushtarāhu min* + name: Beirut AUB MS 160 Y95kA (dated 1841 AD), Beirut AUB MS 349.297 R89 (dated 774), Berlin Ms. or. oct. 433, Berlin Wetzstein II 1877 (after 1065), Leipzig Vollers 746 (dated 1740).
   *mushtarāhu min* + place: Gotha orient. A 299 (Cairo), Tübingen MA VI 174 (dated 1845 AD, near Latakia).
   *mushtarāhu bi* + place: Wetzstein II 1662 (Damascus).
   *mushtarāhu* + date: Gotha orient. A 1435 (Ramla).