

COUNTERFEIT MESSIAH, COUNTERFEIT SOVEREIGNTY

Reconstructing al-Dajjāl across Early Islamic, Jewish, and Christian Apocalyptic Traditions and the Possibility of Abrahamic Religious Self-Critique

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STATUS NOTE

This is a research working paper designed to be peer-reviewable, not a claim of peer review. Historical claims, comparative hypotheses, and constructive theological implications are explicitly separated. The paper preserves failed hypotheses and negative findings as part of the evidentiary record.

Abstract

This paper reconstructs al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl as a layered counter-Messianic dossier within early Islamic eschatological tradition and tests proposed relationships with Christian Antichrist traditions, Revelation's wounded Beast, Syriac apocalypticism, and the Jewish counter-Messiah Armilus. The study adopts a motif-stratigraphic and provenance-sensitive method developed in the UCMS/Chronovisor research program, while translating its claims into conventional historical-critical terms: source decomposition, variant control, chronological constraint, transmission analysis, functional comparison, and explicit falsification. The central historical conclusion is deliberately limited. The extant Dajjāl corpus is more responsibly analyzed as an aggregation of distinguishable narrative and recognition complexes than as a demonstrably unitary biography. Its strongest comparison with Christian materials lies not in a proven genealogy of the damaged eye, but in the counter-Messiah problem: deceptive signs, counterfeit sacred authority, recognition under conditions of epistemic stress, and the opposition between the false Messiah and Jesus. The paper rejects several attractive equations: Zechariah's damaged eye is not demonstrably the wound of Revelation 13; Revelation's healed head wound is not demonstrably Dajjāl's ocular defect; the K-F-R inscription is not the Mark of the Beast; and late Syriac or Jewish witnesses cannot be retrojected into the seventh century without independent evidence. A final constructive-theology section asks whether these traditions permit an 'apocalyptic self-critique' in which warnings about counterfeit authority are applied inwardly to religious institutions. It further argues that historical readings of Revelation and recurrent/diagnostic readings need not be mutually exclusive. These reformational implications are presented as proposals generated by the historical reconstruction, not as findings established by it.

Keywords: al-Dajjāl; Antichrist; Armilus; Revelation; Jesus in Islam; Syriac apocalypse; Pseudo-Methodius; hadith; eschatology; apocalypticism; counterfeit sovereignty; interreligious theology

Research Questions

- Can the major Dajjāl motifs be analytically separated without presuming that separability proves chronological priority?
- What historical and functional relationships can responsibly be proposed between Dajjāl, Christian Antichrist traditions, Revelation's Beast, and Jewish Armilus traditions?
- Does the damaged-eye motif provide a demonstrable genealogy, or only a comparative prompt?
- What does the Jesus-versus-Dajjāl complex contribute to the study of counter-Messianism and religious authority?
- Can historically situated readings of Revelation coexist with recurrent or diagnostic applications without collapsing into either total preterism or unconstrained allegory?
- What constructive interreligious implications follow if apocalyptic warnings are treated as tests of one's own institutions rather than only as labels for rivals?

Thesis

The surviving Dajjāl corpus is best treated as a composite counter-Messianic dossier whose constituent motifs circulated in partially distinct configurations and were later read as a coherent eschatological biography. Comparison with Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions establishes a shared problem-space of false messianism, deceptive signs, imperial or sacred authority, and recognition, but does not presently establish a simple linear genealogy from Revelation or a single Christian Antichrist tradition to al-Dajjāl. The strongest comparative bridge is therefore functional and historically contextual rather than ocular-genealogical. This reconstruction permits, but does not historically prove, a constructive proposal: apocalyptic traditions may function not only as predictions about future enemies but also as instruments of religious self-critique.

1. Method: From UCMS Sweep to Historical-Critical Argument

The UCMS/Chronovisor workflow began as an iterative research protocol rather than a recognized academic school. For this paper its useful elements are translated into ordinary historical-critical disciplines. A 'sweep' is treated as a bounded research pass over a defined motif or source cluster; a 'checkpoint' is a provisional state of the argument; and a 'contradiction audit' is an adversarial review in which attractive connections are deliberately subjected to chronology, provenance, variant, and functional tests.

The governing rule is: analogy establishes a question; chronology constrains it; transmission evidence establishes a historical bridge; functional similarity alone establishes neither descent nor identity. This rule was adopted because apocalyptic traditions are unusually vulnerable to retrospective harmonization. Later readers can easily turn several adversaries into one Antichrist, several Dajjāl reports into one seamless biography, or several damaged-body motifs into one inherited wound.

Four firewalls therefore govern the analysis. First, transmission geography is not composition geography: the location of a transmitter does not by itself locate the invention of a motif. Second, separability is not temporal priority: a motif that occurs without another motif can be independent without necessarily being earlier. Third, an earlier parallel is not a demonstrated source: historical availability is weaker than historical transfer. Fourth, a late witness is not evidence of early provenance unless an independent chain of evidence justifies retrojection.

Claims are assigned one of four statuses. PINNED indicates that the claim is directly supported by the relevant primary or strong secondary evidence at the level stated. PROVISIONAL indicates a leading explanatory model with unresolved alternatives. OPEN marks a question for which current evidence is insufficient. REJECTED/QUARANTINED marks an equation or inference that failed the audit or lacks adequate evidence.

1.1 Corpus and evidentiary limits

The primary Islamic evidence used here is concentrated in canonical Sunni hadith collections, especially Sahih Muslim, with comparative use of al-Tirmidhi and later compilations. The Qur'an does not name Dajjāl; his developed role as a sign of the Hour is principally a hadith and later eschatological phenomenon (Tottoli 2022). Because the canonical collections were compiled generations after the first Islamic century, this paper does not equate collection date with composition date. Nor does it claim to perform a complete isnād-cum-matn analysis. Its stratigraphy is therefore a research model requiring specialist verification against Arabic editions, transmitter biographies, manuscript evidence, and the full hadith-critical literature.

The Christian comparison uses Revelation 13 and 17, the Johannine antichrist terminology, the 'lawless one' complex of 2 Thessalonians, and later Syriac apocalyptic traditions. The Jewish comparison uses Armilus principally as evidence that counter-Messianic adversary construction was not a purely Christian-Islamic binary. Pseudo-Methodius is used as evidence for the vitality and adaptability of Syriac apocalypticism under early Islamic rule, not as a source for Prophet-era Dajjāl reports.

2. Reconstructing the Dajjāl Dossier

2.1 Minimum core: counter-Messiah and recognition marker

At the narrowest recoverable level, Dajjāl appears as al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl, a counter-Messianic eschatological adversary marked by an ocular defect and contrasted with authentic divine authority. Sahih Muslim explicitly places al-Masīḥ ibn Maryam and al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl in juxtaposition and

describes Dajjāl as blind in one eye. The comparison is not merely modern nomenclature; the textual organization itself makes the Messiah/counter-Messiah polarity visible (Muslim, Sahih, nos. 169b-c).

This minimum core should not be confused with the complete later dossier. It is analytically useful because it survives even when island confinement, Ibn Ṣayyād, K-F-R, ecological miracles, treasure, and other narrative expansions are temporarily bracketed.

2.2 The ocular complex

The eye is among the most stable recognition motifs, but the reports vary in laterality. One report describes the right eye; other traditions describe the left. This variation matters methodologically: the stable element is ocular defect, not a universally fixed anatomical specification. The proper historical question is therefore not 'which eye was really meant?' but how the defect functions across transmitter and textual families.

The eye's primary function in the Islamic dossier is de-authentication. Dajjāl's body contradicts his claims. The defect helps the instructed observer recognize the counterfeit. This is functionally different from Revelation 13, where the healed wound of one head contributes to astonishment, following, and worship. The superficial resemblance 'damaged body part' therefore conceals a functional inversion.

2.3 K-F-R and bodily legibility

Sahih Muslim 2933c reports that Dajjāl is one-eyed and that K-F-R / kāfir is written between his eyes, readable by Muslims. This is a second recognition technology: the adversary is bodily legible.

Comparison with Revelation's mark is possible at the broad level of apocalyptic inscription, but their functions are reversed. Revelation 13's mark identifies participation in the Beast's economic-religious order; Dajjāl's inscription identifies the counterfeit himself. Accordingly, the equation K-F-R = Mark of the Beast is rejected, and numerical equations between K-F-R and 666 are quarantined absent independent textual evidence.

2.4 Ibn Ṣayyād: candidate identification and unresolved expectation

The Ibn Ṣayyād complex is important because it preserves uncertainty rather than a polished biography. A contemporary individual could be suspected of being Dajjāl, which implies that 'Dajjāl' was already an intelligible category capable of being mapped onto a living candidate. The existence of this candidate-identification complex does not establish that Ibn Ṣayyād generated the Dajjāl tradition. It instead shows that the expectation could circulate in a form sufficiently open to permit contested identification.

2.5 Tamīm al-Dārī and al-Jassāsa: confinement biography

The Tamīm/Fāṭima bint Qays report supplies one of the most elaborate narrative environments: sea travel, an island, the hairy creature al-Jassāsa, a chained figure, interrogation about conditions in the outside world, and anticipated release. Al-Tirmidhi preserves a version explicitly framed as Tamīm's report and identifies the travelers as people from Palestine. The episode is structurally separable from Ibn Ṣayyād and from shorter ocular reports.

Al-Jassāsa is best described minimally as a narrative routing intermediary. It redirects travelers to the confined figure, who then solicits information. Calling it an 'intelligence network' may be a useful functional analogy, but exceeds what the text itself establishes.

2.6 The counterfeit-miracle complex

The mature Dajjāl dossier intensifies the recognition problem by giving falsehood persuasive effects. Paradise and fire are inverted; abundance and deprivation can be manipulated; extraordinary acts threaten to make power look like truth. This generates what the UCMS investigation called the

'anti-miracle rule': an extraordinary event does not authenticate its source merely by occurring. That rule has obvious comparative resonance with biblical and Christian warnings about deceptive signs and 'lying wonders,' but each motif requires independent historical analysis before borrowing is claimed.

2.7 Jesus and the defeat of Dajjāl

The role of Jesus is not incidental to the mature Sunni Dajjāl tradition. Reference scholarship notes that in most Sunni traditions Jesus terminates Dajjāl's rule after his return, with Ludd/Lydda among the locations attached to the killing (Encyclopaedia Iranica, 'Dajjāl'). Modern scholarship on Islam's Jesus likewise treats the descent of Jesus and the struggle against Dajjāl as a major hadith-based eschatological complex (Saritoprak 2014). The important comparative point is structural: Islamic tradition preserves Jesus as Messiah while placing him opposite al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl, the counterfeit Messiah.

3. Christian Adversary Complexes: Why 'the Antichrist' Must Be Decomposed

A central correction of the project is terminological. Revelation does not present a character named 'the Antichrist.' The term antichrist appears in the Johannine epistles, while Revelation presents a dragon, a sea beast, another beast/false-prophetic figure, Babylon, and other adversarial images. Second Thessalonians presents a lawless adversary associated with deceptive signs. Later Christian interpretation increasingly reads such materials together. Therefore comparison should not assume a single pristine Christian Antichrist biography standing opposite a single pristine Islamic Dajjāl biography.

3.1 Revelation 13: wound, signs, allegiance

Revelation 13 describes one head of the sea beast as having received a death blow that is healed; the earth responds with amazement and allegiance. A second beast performs great signs, deceives the inhabitants of the earth, and directs worship toward the first beast. The chapter therefore combines wound/recovery, signs, deception, authority, worship, and a mark regulating participation in economic life. These elements create a dense authentication problem, but they are distributed across multiple symbolic agents.

The wound has often been discussed in relation to Nero redivivus traditions, although scholarship does not treat that identification as mechanically settled. The Nero hypothesis is strengthened by the long-standing interpretation of 666 in relation to Nero Caesar, while the precise relation of the wounded head to Nero-return traditions remains debated. For the present argument, the important point is modest: Revelation's wound functions within a Roman-imperial symbolic field and contributes to counterfeit legitimacy; it is not simply an injured eye.

3.2 The three-wound firewall

The investigation initially explored a chain linking Zechariah 11's damaged eye of the worthless shepherd, Revelation 13's healed head wound, and Dajjāl's ocular defect. The chain failed as a demonstrated genealogy. The three motifs differ in anatomy, narrative function, and evidentiary context. They must therefore remain separate unless an intermediate textual or transmission bridge is produced. This negative result is methodologically valuable because it redirects comparison from morphology toward function.

3.3 Counterfeit resurrection as an authentication problem

The next Dragon-Antichrist research problem emerges precisely here. Christian proclamation places resurrection at the center of Jesus' vindication, while Revelation depicts a beast whose death-like

wound is reversed and whose recovery contributes to allegiance. Dajjāl traditions add episodes in which apparent mastery over death or restoration becomes part of deceptive authentication. The comparative question is not whether these are 'the same resurrection.' It is whether apparent reversal of death can function as a contested credential of sacred authority. This formulation avoids conflating distinct narratives while preserving the epistemic problem that makes the comparison historically and theologically interesting.

4. The Syriac and Late-Antique Apocalyptic Environment

The seventh-century Near East was an intense environment of political, confessional, and apocalyptic reinterpretation. Syriac Christian communities lived through Byzantine-Persian war, conquest, new regimes, taxation, conversion pressures, and rapidly changing imperial horizons. Pseudo-Methodius, composed in Syriac in northern Mesopotamia in the late seventh century, is a particularly important witness to the capacity of Christian apocalypse to reconfigure inherited motifs in response to Islamic rule (Bonura 2025; Giardini 2024).

This context makes Christian-Islamic interaction historically plausible, but it cannot be used as a universal solvent. Pseudo-Methodius is later than the prophetic period and therefore cannot simply be made the source of reports attributed to Muhammad. Its evidentiary value is environmental: it demonstrates that Syriac apocalyptic language and political theology were active, adaptive, and mobile in precisely the broader world in which early Islamic eschatology was also developing.

4.1 Lexical questions and the danger of one-step borrowing

Reference scholarship records competing proposals for the etymology of dajjāl, including Arabic derivations and proposed Syriac/Aramaic connections. The existence of a plausible lexical environment is not the same as a demonstrated borrowing event. A defensible historical claim requires phonological, semantic, chronological, and transmission evidence. Accordingly, this paper treats a Syriac contribution to specialized Dajjāl vocabulary as open/provisional rather than established.

5. Armilus and the Jewish Counter-Messiah: From Binary to Network

Armilus matters because the comparison is not simply Christianity versus Islam. Jewish apocalyptic traditions also construct a final anti-Messianic ruler defeated in the messianic drama. The history and dating of Armilus materials are complex; later witnesses cannot automatically be projected into the seventh century. Joseph Dan's classic work and later studies of *Sefer Zerubbabel* show both the importance of the figure and the difficulty of reconstructing his earliest form.

The responsible conclusion is therefore network-shaped rather than genealogically linear. Christian Antichrist, Jewish Armilus, and Islamic Dajjāl occupy overlapping counter-Messianic problem-spaces in communities that interacted across Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. This establishes a comparative triangle. It does not establish a synchronized seventh-century exchange of every mature motif, nor does Armilus currently supply the missing ocular intermediary.

6. Hadith Stratigraphy and Competing Formation Models

The Dajjāl corpus can be decomposed into motif packages: candidate identification (Ibn Ṣayyād); confinement/island biography (Tamīm/Jassāsa); ocular recognition; inscription; deceptive signs;

ecological and economic powers; and Jesus/Ludd. Decomposition is analytically useful because not all reports contain all elements. It is not, by itself, a chronology.

6.1 Four models

Model A: early unified biography. A substantially complete Dajjāl biography existed early and surviving variation reflects selective reporting. This remains possible but explains modularity less economically.

Model B: modular accretion. Distinct motifs circulated separately and accumulated around a shared adversary. This fits the separable complexes well, but must not infer chronology from separability alone.

Model C: major Levantine/Syrian integration. A substantial phase of integration occurred in the Levantine/Syriac contact zone. Historically plausible, especially given Palestinian and Syrian connections, but not demonstrated by transmitter geography alone.

Model D: multi-center circulation and aggregation. Partly distinct materials circulated through Hijazi, Iraqi, Syrian/Levantine and broader networks and were progressively read together. This is the leading descriptive model, but remains provisional pending full isnād-cum-matn and manuscript work.

6.2 Why multi-center aggregation currently leads

The multi-center model explains three features simultaneously: the existence of sharply different narrative complexes, the persistence of variant recognition details, and the later availability of a highly integrated biography. It also avoids requiring a single undocumented act of invention. Its weakness is evidentiary: without comprehensive transmitter-network analysis, it can become an elegant story rather than a demonstrated history. For that reason the model is explicitly provisional.

7. Contradiction and Provenance Audit

The strongest methodological result of the project may be the list of claims it refused to preserve. The audit was designed to prevent a compelling cross-religious pattern from becoming a manufactured genealogy.

Claim tested	Status	Reason
Zechariah eye -> Revelation wound -> Dajjāl eye	REJECTED as demonstrated genealogy	No adequate intermediate chain; motifs differ anatomically and functionally.
Revelation wound = Dajjāl eye	REJECTED	Healed head wound authenticates Beast; persistent eye defect de-authenticates Dajjāl.
K-F-R = Mark of the Beast	REJECTED	Opposite bearer/function: adversary identification versus adherent/economic allegiance.
K-F-R = 666	QUARANTINED	No adequate textual or historical bridge.
St. George/Lyddā dragon -> Jesus kills Dajjāl at Ludd	REJECTED as genealogy	Chronology and narrative development do not support the proposed source chain.
Pseudo-Methodius -> early Dajjāl	REJECTED	Late-seventh-century composition cannot explain earlier attributed material without independent retrojection evidence.

Syrian transmitter -> Syrian invention	REJECTED inference	Transmission geography is not composition geography.
Armilus = missing eye intermediary	OPEN/unsupported	Comparative relevance does not supply the required ocular transmission evidence.
Mature Dajjāl = single borrowed Christian biography	REJECTED	Islamic dossier is internally modular; Christian 'Antichrist' is itself composite.

Negative findings are not ancillary. They alter the central thesis. The project began with an ocular-genealogical hypothesis and ended with a stronger but more abstract comparative result: the traditions repeatedly stage counterfeit authority under conditions in which signs, power, and appearance threaten to mislead the observer.

8. The Double-Composite Principle

The comparison is most stable when neither side is artificially simplified. Later Christian Antichrist tradition draws together several New Testament adversarial streams; the Dajjāl dossier likewise contains distinguishable report complexes. These processes are not claimed to be identical. The methodological consequence is simply that motif-by-motif comparison is superior to comparing two supposedly unitary biographies.

This principle also prevents a common apologetic error. Historical development within a tradition does not by itself falsify that tradition's theology. Conversely, theological commitment does not eliminate the historian's obligation to reconstruct development. The paper therefore separates historical claims about textual formation from confessional judgments about revelation.

9. Counterfeit Sovereignty and the Epistemology of Apocalypse

The phrase 'counterfeit sovereignty' names the strongest functional convergence produced by the investigation. It does not mean that Dajjāl, Revelation's Beast, the dragon, Armilus, and later Antichrist are one entity. It identifies a recurring narrative problem: an adversarial power can possess real efficacy, persuasive signs, institutional or political reach, and apparent legitimacy without possessing ultimate legitimate authority.

In this architecture, the observer is part of the event. The crisis is not only what the adversary does but how claims are authenticated. Recognition markers, prior warning, deceptive signs, inscription, allegiance, and the contrast between Messiah and counter-Messiah all concern calibration of judgment. For that reason 'epistemological apocalypse' is useful as modern analytic vocabulary, provided it is not projected backward as the actors' own technical category.

9.1 The anti-miracle rule

The rule can be stated minimally: extraordinary efficacy is insufficient evidence of divine authorization. This proposition is compatible with biblical warnings about deceptive signs, with Christian traditions of lying wonders, and with the Dajjāl dossier's insistence that impressive effects can belong to a false claimant. It is also the hinge between the historical reconstruction and the constructive argument below.

10. Has Revelation Already Happened? Historical Instantiation without Exhaustion

The Dajjāl-Antichrist comparison prompted a broader interpretive question: if Revelation's Beast imagery was intelligible within the first-century Roman imperial world, does that mean Revelation has 'already happened'? The question is too binary. Major interpretive families - preterist, historicist, futurist, and idealist/recurring - distribute historical reference and future expectation differently. The present paper does not adjudicate the whole book of Revelation among these systems.

What can be argued more narrowly is that historical instantiation and continuing applicability are not logically exclusive. Revelation 13 can encode recognizable features of Roman imperial power and Nero-related memory while later communities continue to use its symbolic grammar to diagnose analogous structures. Such reuse must remain controlled by textual features rather than becoming unlimited allegory. The claim is not that every disliked regime is 'the Beast,' but that a historically grounded symbol can acquire a recurrent diagnostic afterlife.

10.1 From timetable to detector

If this proposal is accepted, apocalypse is not reduced to prediction. It can function simultaneously as memory, diagnosis, warning, and expectation. A historical referent does not necessarily exhaust a symbol; a future expectation does not require denying the original historical horizon. This middle position helps explain why apocalyptic texts can remain politically and ethically potent after the empires that first shaped their imagery have vanished.

The danger is obvious: recurrent readings can become mechanisms for demonizing contemporary opponents. The constructive proposal below therefore imposes an asymmetry. The first legitimate target of a recurrent apocalyptic diagnostic should be the interpreter's own community and institutions, not a rival group.

11. A Profound Reformational Implication: Apocalypse as Religious Self-Critique

This section changes genre. It is constructive theology and interreligious ethics generated by the historical analysis, not a historical conclusion established by it. The proposal begins with a simple observation: apocalyptic communities often apply counterfeit-authority language outward. The Beast, Antichrist, Dajjāl, or false prophet is identified with an opponent. Yet a detector that can recognize deception only among one's enemies is epistemically weak.

11.1 The inward turn

An inward apocalyptic audit asks whether one's own institution treats worldly success as proof of divine favor; whether wealth, size, coercive power, or political victory are allowed to authenticate theological claims; whether leaders can be contradicted; whether historical provenance can revise inherited narratives; and whether extraordinary claims are tested by standards other than spectacle.

This is not a program for merging Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Their doctrinal disagreements remain real: Christology, prophecy, scripture, covenant, and authority cannot be dissolved by comparative mythology. The reformational proposal is narrower: each tradition can apply its own warnings about counterfeit sacred authority to itself before applying them to others.

11.2 Jesus at the junction

The Islamic role of Jesus makes this proposal unusually provocative. Islam rejects classical Christian claims of incarnation and divine sonship, yet its hadith-based eschatology retains Jesus as Messiah

and, in the dominant Sunni complex, as the one who destroys Dajjāl. The result is not a hidden Christian concession inside Islam. It is a genuine Islamic configuration in which Jesus remains indispensable to the final defeat of the counterfeit Messiah.

This produces a shared question without producing a shared Christology: what distinguishes authentic sacred authority from its most persuasive counterfeit? Christians and Muslims answer the identity of Jesus differently, while Jewish traditions reject central claims made by both. Yet all three inherit resources for criticizing false prophecy, idolatrous sovereignty, deceptive signs, or false messianism. The shared field is therefore ethical-epistemic before it is doctrinal.

11.3 Reformation without homogenization

A viable Abrahamic reformation in this sense would not seek a synthetic super-religion. It would seek provenance honesty and reciprocal vulnerability to evidence. Christianity could acknowledge the historical aggregation of Antichrist motifs without treating development as theological defeat. Islam could investigate Dajjāl within Late Antique Jewish-Christian-Islamic contact zones without assuming that interaction negates revelation. Jewish apocalyptic traditions could be studied as active participants in the same contested world rather than as mere prefaces to later religions.

The governing norm would be reciprocal: no community may use historical criticism aggressively against another tradition while exempting its own texts and institutions from comparable scrutiny. This is a reformational implication because it relocates apocalypse from the task of identifying an external monster to the task of making communities harder for counterfeit sovereignty to capture.

11.4 The counterfeit-sovereignty test

- Does institutional power substitute for argument or evidence?
- Is political success interpreted as proof of divine endorsement?
- Can leaders and inherited interpretations be corrected without being treated as enemies of the faith?
- Are miracle claims or extraordinary experiences permitted to bypass ordinary standards of verification?
- Does the community preserve the record of failed predictions, contradictions, and revisions?
- Can the tradition distinguish loyalty to God from loyalty to a religious institution?
- Are apocalyptic labels applied inwardly before they are weaponized against outsiders?

These questions do not determine which religion is true. They test whether a religious community's method of authentication is vulnerable to the very counterfeit-authority problem its scriptures and traditions warn against.

12. Discussion

12.1 What is genuinely new in this synthesis?

None of the individual ingredients is unprecedented: scholars have long studied Dajjāl, Christian Antichrist, Nero redivivus, Syriac apocalypse, Armilus, Jesus in Islamic eschatology, and interreligious transfer. The contribution proposed here is architectural. It combines motif decomposition with explicit negative-result preservation and argues that the strongest cross-traditional comparison emerges only after the most visually seductive genealogy - the wounded eye - is demoted.

The resulting model replaces a linear descent tree with a constrained network: multiple communities inherit biblical and post-biblical adversary traditions, develop them under changing political conditions, and sometimes share vocabulary or motifs. Specific transfer claims remain local hypotheses requiring local evidence.

12.2 Why the failed eye hypothesis matters

Failed hypotheses are often edited out of polished humanities writing, leaving the impression that the final thesis was obvious from the start. Here the failure is theoretically productive. The eye initially promised a concrete genealogical bridge. Its inability to carry that burden forced the analysis toward function: what do bodily defects, wounds, inscriptions, signs, and restorations do to the observer's judgment? The move from morphology to authentication is the paper's central conceptual transition.

12.3 Risks of the reformational proposal

The constructive section faces at least four risks. First, it can flatten doctrinal differences into generic ethics. Second, it can turn historical criticism into a covert theology of religious progress. Third, 'counterfeit sovereignty' can itself become a rhetorical weapon for labeling opponents. Fourth, recurrent readings of apocalypse can become unfalsifiable.

These risks require constraints: doctrinal disagreements must be named rather than harmonized; historical findings must remain independent of constructive use; the diagnostic should be applied first to the interpreter's own community; and claims of recurrence should identify specific structural correspondences rather than rely on atmosphere or resemblance.

13. Limitations and Conditions for Falsification

This paper is a working synthesis, not the endpoint of specialist philological research. It has not yet performed exhaustive Arabic manuscript collation, full isnād-cum-matn analysis, Syriac lexical reconstruction, or comprehensive reception history. English translations and searchable digital corpora are useful for mapping but cannot substitute for critical editions in final publication.

13.1 Evidence that would materially change the model

- An early, securely dated witness containing a substantially unified Dajjāl biography would strengthen the early-unity model and weaken modular-accretion accounts.
- A securely dated Christian or Jewish text demonstrating the distinctive Dajjāl ocular configuration in a transmissible pre-Islamic context would reopen the eye genealogy.
- Philologically decisive evidence for a particular Syriac lexical source of dajjāl would upgrade the Syriac bridge from provisional environment to demonstrated lexical transmission.
- Earlier Armilus evidence with distinctive shared motifs could change the chronology of the Jewish-Christian-Islamic comparative triangle.
- A robust isnād-cum-matn study showing that supposedly separable motif packages actually derive from one early transmitter complex would require substantial revision of the multi-center model.
- Evidence that the Jesus/Ludd complex is significantly later or regionally secondary would alter the weight assigned to the Messiah/counter-Messiah axis, though not necessarily eliminate it from the mature tradition.

13.2 Claims this paper does not make

- That Dajjāl is historically identical to Revelation's Beast or the Christian Antichrist.
- That Judaism, Christianity, and Islam derive from one hidden apocalyptic religion.
- That Revelation has been proven completely fulfilled.
- That Islamic tradition secretly affirms Nicene Christology because Jesus kills Dajjāl.
- That historical borrowing, where it occurs, proves or disproves revelation.
- That modern political or religious actors can be identified as Dajjāl or Antichrist from the comparative model presented here.

14. Conclusion

The Dajjāl investigation began with an apparently concrete clue: a damaged eye. That clue did not survive as the genealogy initially imagined. Zechariah's eye, Revelation's wounded head, and Dajjāl's ocular defect must remain distinct until transmission evidence justifies reunion. The K-F-R inscription cannot responsibly be collapsed into Revelation's mark; Pseudo-Methodius cannot be retrojected into the prophetic period; and transmitter geography cannot be made to stand in for composition geography.

What survived is more consequential. Dajjāl is best studied as a counter-Messianic dossier in which recognition, deceptive efficacy, bodily legibility, and bounded but persuasive power converge. Christian Antichrist traditions are likewise composite, and Jewish Armilus traditions expand the field beyond a Christian-Islamic binary. The resulting historical picture is not a single monster migrating intact across religions, but an interacting apocalyptic ecology in which communities repeatedly confront the problem of counterfeit sacred authority.

The theological implication must remain an implication. If apocalyptic traditions warn that signs, power, institutional reach, and apparent success can accompany falsehood, then religious communities cannot safely reserve those warnings for their rivals. The most demanding use of apocalypse is reflexive: to ask how one's own institutions authenticate authority, preserve contradiction, correct error, and distinguish fidelity to God from fidelity to power.

Islam's preservation of Jesus as the Messiah who defeats Dajjāl sharpens this problem without resolving interreligious doctrine. It leaves Christianity and Islam, alongside Jewish counter-Messianic traditions, facing a shared human question: how is legitimate sacred authority recognized when counterfeit authority has learned to look convincing? The historical investigation cannot answer that question for theology. It can, however, make careless answers more difficult.

Appendix A. Claim-Status Ledger

Claim	Status
Dajjāl is a counter-Messianic eschatological adversary in hadith tradition.	PINNED
Ocular defect is a central recognition motif; laterality varies.	PINNED
K-F-R functions as an identification marker in canonical hadith.	PINNED
Tamīm/Jassāsa is a structurally separable confinement narrative.	PINNED
Ibn Ṣayyād preserves candidate-identification uncertainty.	PINNED
Jesus defeats Dajjāl in the dominant Sunni eschatological complex.	PINNED
The mature Dajjāl dossier is analytically composite.	PINNED at textual-architectural level
Multi-center circulation/aggregation best explains current evidence.	PROVISIONAL
A major Levantine/Syriac integration phase occurred.	PROVISIONAL
Syriac contributed directly to specialized Dajjāl vocabulary.	OPEN/PROVISIONAL
The eye derives from Zechariah through Christian Antichrist tradition.	OPEN; not demonstrated
Armilus supplies a direct historical intermediary.	OPEN/unsupported
Revelation wound = Dajjāl eye.	REJECTED
K-F-R = Mark of the Beast / 666.	REJECTED/QUARANTINED
Pseudo-Methodius is a source of early Dajjāl tradition.	REJECTED
Revelation is proven completely fulfilled.	NOT CLAIMED
Apocalyptic self-critique is a historically proven doctrine common to all three religions.	NOT CLAIMED; constructive proposal

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Source-Control Note

Before journal submission, all primary-source references should be normalized against critical Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac editions; hadith numbering should be mapped across editions; the Dan/Armilus bibliographic entry should be verified against the exact article publication; and paywalled secondary works should be checked in full rather than from abstracts or reference summaries. This working paper intentionally flags those tasks rather than manufacturing bibliographic precision.

Acknowledgment of Research Process

This paper consolidates an iterative UCMS/Chronovisor research sequence developed through extended human-AI dialogue. AI assistance was used for research organization, comparative hypothesis generation, adversarial auditing, and drafting. All historical claims remain subject to human verification against primary texts and specialist scholarship. This disclosure is included because peer review requires provenance not only for ancient sources but also for the modern research process.