

Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-Malakūtiyya

(The Book of the Keys to the Kingdom)

By

Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq b. Aḥmad al-Sijistānī
(d. after 361/971)

Edited with Notes, Comments and Introduction

By

Ismail K. Poonawala



DAR AL-GHARB AL-ISLAMI
TUNIS

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Introduction

This introduction in English has several objectives. Firstly, it provides the academic without knowledge of Arabic or the reader of the Arabic text -- critically edited for the first time from two recent manuscripts of Indian provenance -- with some references to the life and works of its author Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq b. Aḥmad al-Sijistānī, or al-Sijzī (d. after 361/971). Secondly, it scrutinizes the missionary activities of al-Sijistānī and his two senior contemporaries, viz., Abū Ḥātim Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān al-Rāzī (d. 322/934) and Abū'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943), who also worked as missionaries in north-west Iran, Khurāsān and Transoxania. Thirdly, it recapitulates the debate over a doctrinal controversy between al-Rāzī and al-Nasafī that had erupted around the beginning of the fourth/tenth century.

Soon thereafter, al-Sijistānī intervened in this debate defending the views of his teacher al-Nasafī and refuting the corrections suggested by al-Rāzī. Al-Sijistānī's role in this debate is important because it elucidates his intellectual background, orientation and the development of his thought as it evolved and was reflected in his later works. This summary of the dispute will pave the way for the next stage, which is to contextualize his *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-Malakūtiyya* (*The Book of the Keys to Kingdom*),¹ also called by its short title *Kitāb al-Maqālīd* (*The Book of the Keys*), within the context of Islamic thought and specifically in Ismā'īlī thought. This will be followed by a brief review of al-Sijistānī's times, the structure and organization of *The Book of the Keys to Kingdom*, its contents and the sources. Finally, it will be argued that the *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya* represents a refined stage of earlier attempts by the author/s of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (*Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*) and al-Nasafī to adapt Neoplatonism

* I would like to thank my student Eric Bordenkircher for reading the final draft, his valuable comments and polishing its rough edges.

¹ The term *malakūt* occurs four times in the Qur'an: twice as *malakūt al-samāwāt wa'l-arḍ* (*Sūrat al-An'ām* 6:75 and *Sūrat al-A'rāf* 7:185), and twice as *bi-yadihi malakūtu kulli shay'in* (*Sūrat al-Mu'minīn* 23:88, and *Sūrat Yāsīn* 36:83). I have avoided translating it as "Kingdom of Heaven" since that is omnipresent in Jewish and Christian religious texts. It is difficult to say how the word came into Arabic. The Aramaic/Syriac form is *malkuta da-shmaya*; the Hebrew form is *malkut shamayin*. *El*², s.v. 'Ālam, 'Ālam al-djabarūt, 'Ālam al-malakūt, 'Ālam al-mithāl, by L. Gardet. *Malakūt* is the world of pure self-existent *intelligibilia*. Michot's translation of *al-Aqālīd al-malakūtiyya* (as referred to by Ibn Taymiyya, see Arabic *Tawthīq nisbat al-Kitāb*, p 27) as *The Keys of Sovereignty* seems much less appropriate, given the contents of the book. Michot, "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary," p. 199.

to Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī doctrine and align it with the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd* (belief in the divine unicity). Let me first briefly recount al-Sijistānī's life.

Al-Sijistānī's Life

The Ismā'īlī sources do not provide us with any information about al-Sijistānī's life or missionary activities.² It is from his *Kitāb al-Iftikhār* (*The Book of Boast*) that we know for certain that he was in Iraq around the year 322/934, on his way back from the pilgrimage to Mecca. He states there that the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Qāhir was deposed, blinded, and al-Rāḍī was installed in his place.³ He further adds that during his sojourn in Iraq he discovered that the people of Iraq, instead of rejoicing over the investiture of the new caliph, were unhappy and lamenting over something. He inquired about the reason of their lament, and was told that the new caliph had disgraced himself by having an affair with a handsome lad, who was none other than the son of the *qādī* Abū 'Umar.⁴ To support this contention about the perverted behavior of certain caliphs, he recounts a similar scandal about the preceding 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Muqtadir.⁵ He reports this story on the authority of a jurist named Abū Bashīr al-Marwazī.⁶

Al-Sijistānī narrates caliph Qāhir's incident and other episodes about caliphs from either the Umayyad or the 'Abbāsīd dynasty in the chapter on the imamate in the *Kitāb al-Iftikhār* in such a forceful and partisan tone that one can safely infer from the references that he must have had a Shī'ī religious background and education. One can also infer that he may have already been affiliated with, or was being recruited by the Ismā'īlī movement while he was a promising young man. However, it should be stated

² The family name suggests his *nisba* (relationship, origin) to the province of Sijistān. In the thirty-fifth *iqlīd*, al-Sijistānī refers to three cities: Madīnat al-salām (Baghdad), Nīsābūr (Nīshāpūr) and Zaranj. In his *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, vol. 3, p. 138, Yāqūt describes Zaranj as a capital of the district of Sijistān. The context suggests that al-Sijistānī was familiar with those cities. Baghdad and Nīshāpūr were well-known cities but reference of Zaranj does not make any sense unless that town was important in al-Sijistānī's life. Therefore, I am inclined to suggest that Zaranj was al-Sijistānī's birth place. However, it should be stated that until more evidence comes to light the foregoing assumption should remain, at best, tentative.

³ This incident occurred on Wednesday, 5 Jumādā I, 322/934; see Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa'l-ishrāf*, p. 387-88; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, pp. 279-82; see also Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, p. 6. According to al-Mas'ūdī, al-Rāḍī's *qādī* was 'Umar b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Ya'qūb. Ibn al-Athīr records the death of the chief *qādī* 'Umar b. Abī 'Umar Muḥammad b. Yūsuf, who succeeded his father in that position, in 328/939-40. *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, p. 364.

⁴ Al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-Iftikhār*, 176.

⁵ Al-Muqtadir was first installed in 295/908 when he was thirteen and deposed the following year. But soon thereafter he was installed a second time. Again in 317/929 he was deposed for a short while and then installed a third time. He was killed in 320/932. Ibn al-Athīr remarks: "Al-Muqtadir very much neglected the affairs of the caliphate. The women [his mother] and slaves decided the state affairs." Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, pp. 10-11, 14, 17, 200-03, 243-44.

⁶ We do not know about Abū Bashīr al-Marwazī, but he could have been a Sunnī jurist with whom al-Sijistānī was well acquainted with. Al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-Iftikhār*, pp. 175-76.

that until new evidence comes to light, the foregoing assumption should remain, at best, tentative.

Al-Sijistānī's missionary career stretched across four decades until his death soon after the completion of his last book *Kitāb al-Iftikhār*, a highly polemical work that defended Ismā'īlī doctrines. Paul Walker has correctly stated that this book may have contributed to al-Sijistānī's death.⁷ In this work al-Sijistānī states twice that three hundred and fifty years had elapsed since the death of the Prophet. From this we can deduce that the *Kitāb al-Iftikhār* was composed around the year 361/971-72.

ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), the heresiographer, states that Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijzī, also known as Bandāne, was killed, but does not specify the year or reveal the name of the ruling authority that might have carried out his assassination.⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn, the Persian historian of the Īlkhānīd period, on the other hand, states that al-Sijistānī was executed by the Amīr Khalaf b. Aḥmad, of the Khalafid branch of the Ṣaffārid dynasty. We can ascertain from other historical sources that the latter ruled Sīstān from 352/963 to 359/970 with Ṭāhir and from 359/970 to 393/1003 solely until it was incorporated by Maḥmūd of Ghazna into the Ghaznavid empire.⁹ Hence, we can assume that al-Sijistānī, was probably executed soon after he had completed his last work, although the exact date of his death remains a mystery. Some treatises attributed to al-Sijistānī mention the name of the reigning Fāṭimid caliph-imam al-Ḥākim who acceded to the throne in 386/996, but there is no strong evidence to support that those treatises were composed by al-Sijistānī. Moreover, this would further extend his life and therefore we should discount such an assumption.

Al-Sijistānī spent his life as a missionary (of the Ismā'īlī movement) in the eastern parts of the ʿAbbāsīd Empire, especially in Rayy, Transoxania, and Sijistān. The bits and pieces of information available about his life and activities are derived from non-Ismā'īlī sources. However, it must be noted that one cannot be certain that those curt references, sometimes attributed to a scholar/author with the first name Ishāq, or with the kunya Abū Yaʿqūb, and at other times with different phrases, such as *Panba-dāne*, *al-Khaysafūj* and *al-Sijzī*, refer to the same person. S. M. Stern deserves credit for collecting those scattered references and attributing them to Abū Yaʿqūb Ishāq b. Aḥmad al-Sijistānī.¹⁰

The *Kitāb al-Iftikhār*, as stated above, provides us with two critical clues about the author's life. The work suggests that his career commenced around 321/933; and secondly it indicates that he was still alive and actively engaged in writing until 361/972-73. His career as a missionary (in the service of the Ismā'īlī *daʿwa*) was extensive. With the information collected by Stern from a variety of sources, one is able to fill in the lacuna between those two points which stretches across four decades of al-Sijistānī's life. Stern interprets Ibn al-Nadīm's references to Abū Yaʿqūb with regard to Banū Ḥammad and Ibn al-Nafīs as referring to al-Sijistānī and states that those referrals can be dated around 320s/932s. Thereby, Stern infers that al-Sijistānī might have succeeded the leadership of the *daʿwa* in Rayy not very long after Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī's death in

⁷ Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism*, p. 23.

⁸ Al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-fīraq*, p. 283.

⁹ Dunlop, "Philosophical Discussions;" Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, pp. 172-73.

¹⁰ Stern, "The Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khrāsān and Transoxania," reprinted in his *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*. All the references are to this book.

322/934. Thus, al-Sijistānī may have begun his scholarly career as the leader of the *da'wa* in Rayy, and was eventually transferred further east.

Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027),¹¹ an Ash'arī theologian and a Shāfi'ī jurist, states that when Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-Marwazī was killed, the leadership of the *da'wa* was passed on to Abū'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Nasafī, the *dā'i* in Transoxania, who was also known as Bazdawī. He further adds that al-Nasafī's *da'wa* in the country of Sijistān was led by Abū Ya'qūb. This meant that al-Sijistānī headed the *da'wa* in Sijistān on behalf of al-Nasafī.¹² Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. after 736/1335) mentions an Ismā'īlī missionary named "Ibn Bābwayh" in charge of the *da'wa* in Sijistān (*ṣāhib Sijistān*) on behalf of al-Nasafī.¹³ In light of aforementioned information "Ibn Bābwayh" should be corrected and read as "Ibn Panba-dāne." In the section about the *barzakh* (purgatory),¹⁴ from his book *Khwān al-Ikhwān* (*The Feast of the Brethren*), Nāṣir-e Khusrav (d. ca 481/1088-89) states that al-Mas'ūd (nicknamed Dihqān), son of the martyred Shaykh al-Nasafī, was the head of the *da'wa* in Khurāsān after Abū Ya'qūb Sijzī.¹⁵ Thus, one can infer that al-Sijistānī, who headed the *da'wa* in Sijistān during the lifetime of al-Nasafī, combined it later with the leadership of the *da'wa* in Khurāsān, either immediately after al-Nasafī's death in 331/943,¹⁶ or after a period of some time. Al-Sijistānī's close relationship with al-Nasafī is also confirmed by none other than the *dā'i* Ḥamīd al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020). In his *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ* (*The Book of the Meadows*; will be discussed below in detail), al-Kirmānī refers to al-Sijistānī as a student of al-Nasafī.¹⁷ Since Stern's comprehensive scrutiny of all the extant non-Ismā'īlī sources no new evidence concerning al-Sijistānī's life has been revealed. What follows is a review of the Iranian school of Ismā'īlī thought as represented by its three foremost thinkers and missionaries.

Al-Nasafī, al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī: Their Missionary Activities and Works as Reflected in Some Early Non-Ismā'īlī Sources

When examining early Ismā'īlī history, the foremost question one has to ask is this: What is the main source of information on the early history of the Ismā'īlī

¹¹ *EI*², s.v. Al-Isfarāyīnī, by Madelung.

¹² Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*, p. 221, n. 52.

¹³ Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 6, p. 95.

¹⁴ *EI*², s.v. Barzakh, by Carra de Vaux.

¹⁵ Nāṣir-e Khusrav, *Khwān al-Ikhwān*, p. 131.

¹⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, p. 404.

¹⁷ Al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ*, pp. 98 and 106. He states:

وإذا كان هكذا، فقول صاحب الإصلاح على أصله الذي يتكلم عليه صحيح. وقول صاحب النصرة إذا حمل على الطبيعيات هو صحيح، لكنه أراد المحاماة عن أستاذه [النسفي] ... لكنه [السجستاني] نقل المعنى إيغالا لشعبة فيما نحاه من النقص نصرة لشيخه.

movement, or the commencement of its *da'wa* (i.e., religio-political activities) around the middle of the second/ninth century leading to the establishment of the Fāṭimid dynasty in North Africa? The answer generally given is that the origin of all non-Ismā'īlī sources goes back to the book of Ibn Rizām. His full name is 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Rizām (or Razzām) al-Ṭā'ī al-Kūfī, who lived in the early decades of the fourth/tenth century.¹⁸ He wrote an extremely hostile anti-Ismā'īlī tract entitled *Kitāb al-radd 'ala'l-Ismā'īliyya* (*The Book of Refutation of the Ismā'īlīs*), also called *Naqd 'ala'l-Bāṭiniyya*, (*Critique of the Bāṭiniyya*),¹⁹ most probably during the second quarter of the fourth/tenth century. This was the time when the Fāṭimid Empire was being consolidated by the third caliph al-Manṣūr who had crushed the Khārijī revolt and the fourth caliph al-Mu'izz who was extending Fāṭimid rule across North Africa and beyond.

The author's main contention was that the alleged founder of Ismā'īlism, and by implication the founder of the Fāṭimid dynasty, was a diabolical non-'Alid bent on destroying Islam from within. The original polemical treatise has not survived except through excerpts, notably in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* (*An Index of Arabic Books*), 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī's *al-Farq bayn al-firaq* (*The Distinction between various Sects*), Nizām al-Mulk's *Siyar al-mulūk* (or *Siyāsat-nāme*, *The Book of Government*, or *Rules for Kings*) and some later works such as al-Maqrīzī's *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā' bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-Fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafā'* (*Lessons for the Seekers of Truth in the History of the Fāṭimid Imams and Caliphs*).

Ibn Rizām's work, on the other hand, was used extensively by another polemicist, the Sharīf Abu'l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. 'Alī, from Damascus known as Akhū Muḥsin.²⁰ He wrote his anti-Ismā'īlī tract around 372/982. It, too, has not survived except for some fragments in the works of later Egyptian historians from the Mamlūk era, such as al-Nuwayrī, Ibn Dawādārī, and al-Maqrīzī.

It is worth noting that al-Maqrīzī, a well-known historian of the Fāṭimid dynasty, was the first to have identified Ibn Rizām as the primary source of Akhū Muḥsin. Of course, al-Maqrīzī rejects the thesis of both polemicists, i.e., Ibn Rizām and Akhū Muḥsin.²¹ Even before al-Maqrīzī, another famous historian al-Mas'ūdī, a contemporary of Ibn Rizām, also casts doubts on the latter's reliability.²² Abu'l-Qāsim al-Bustī's (d. 420/1029) refutation of the Ismā'īlīs, Abū Manṣūr 'Abd al-Malik al-Tha'ālibī's (d. 429/1038) book of advice for kings, and Abū Muḥammad al-Yamanī's heresiography should be added to the list of selected sources for scrutiny regarding the lives and works of al-Nasafī, al-Rāzī, and al-Sijistānī.

Ibn al-Nadīm and his *Kitāb al-Fihrist*

Chronologically, Ibn al-Nadīm's *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, composed in 377-78/987-88, in Baghdad, is the earliest source, which briefly describes the activities of al-Nasafī and al-

¹⁸ Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, *passim*.

¹⁹ *Bāṭin* means the inner, hidden, esoteric meaning behind the literal meaning of the Qur'ān and the *sharī'a*. The Ismā'īlīs, in particular, insisted that behind every *ẓāhir*, literal meaning, there is *bāṭin*, hence they were called *al-Bāṭiniyya*. *El*², s.v. *Bāṭiniyya*, by M. Hodgson.

²⁰ Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, *passim*.

²¹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'*, vol. 1, esp. pp. 22-23, 29.

²² Al-Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa'l-ishrāf*, p. 396.

Rāzī while mentioning al-Sijistānī in passing. It should be noted that Ibn al-Nadīm's long account of the origins of Ismā'īlism, as stated by the author, is derived from Ibn Rizām. However, he absolves himself from any responsibility for the truth or falsehood contained in it. About al-Nasafī, who was active in Khurāsān, he states:

In the year 287[900],²³ 'Ubayd Allāh [who later became the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mahdī] sent Abū Sa'īd al-Sha'rānī to Khurāsān.²⁴ He feigned himself to the army commanders [who were Daylamīs] that he was an adherent of the Shī'ī [madhhab] and led a large number of people astray. When he died, he was succeeded by al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-Marwazī, who established himself there until Naṣr [II] b. Aḥmad [II], [the Sāmānid ruler, r. 301-31/914-43], imprisoned him.²⁵ He died in prison and was succeeded by al-Nasafī who enticed Naṣr b. Aḥmad and initiated him into the [Ismā'īlī] *da'wa*, and imposed an indemnity of one hundred and nineteen dīnārs, each dīnār equal to one thousand dīnārs, for al-Marwazī's death. Al-Nasafī alleged that the money would be sent to *al-Qā'im bi'l-amr* in North Africa [i.e., the second ruling Fāṭimid caliph-imam al-Qā'im]. Then, Naṣr was overcome by an illness and was confined to bed and repented for having complied with al-Nasafī's request. He made public his repentance and died. Subsequently, his son Nūḥ [I] b. Naṣr [II, r. 331-43/943-54] gathered the *fuqahā'* [legal scholars] and brought al-Nasafī [before them to debate]. The *fuqahā'* debated with him and ripped apart [his arguments] and exposed him. Nūḥ also found forty of those [one hundred and nineteen dīnārs] [with al-Nasafī]. Hence, the latter, along with other *dā'īs* and prominent commanders of Naṣr as well as those who were initiated into the [Ismā'īlī] *da'wa* were executed and [most of] them were torn apart [perished].²⁶

The above account is reported by Ibn al-Nadīm under the sectional heading: "From a source other than the above account [i.e., other than Ibn Rizām]." It will be noted below that al-Tha'ālibī's account about al-Nasafī and the Sāmānid ruler Naṣr b. Aḥmad differs substantially and seems to be more plausible than that of Ibn al-Nadīm. In the section entitled "The names of the authors of the books of the Ismā'īliyya and the titles of the books," Ibn al-Nadīm, adds:

And there was al-Nasafī, who has already been mentioned. Among his books were: *Kitāb 'unwān al-dīn* [Book on the Meaning of Religion], *Kitāb uṣūl al-*

²³ Stern stated that it was "in the year 307," because he used Flügel's edition of the *Fihrist*, which has 307. It is an error and pointed out by Dodge in his English translation. Stern has translated this and the next passage, but from the Flügel edition. Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in Khurāsān, therefore, began quite early and did not begin until after the establishment of the Fāṭimids in North Africa as suggested by Ibn Rizām and later on argued and refuted by Crone and Treadwell (see below).

²⁴ The accounts of Nizām al-Mulk and al-Maqrīzī, given below, differ in this respect.

²⁵ Al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-Marv al-Rūdhī was a general in the army of the Sāmānid ruler Aḥmad b. Nūḥ, but during the reign of Naṣr b. Aḥmad he asserted his independence. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, pp. 70, 78.

²⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, p. 239. English rendering is mine. Dodge's English translation, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol. 1, pp. 467-68, is marred by inaccuracies and errors.

shar' [Book on the Principles of Law], and *Kitāb al-da'wa al-muntakhaba* [Book on the Chosen Call/Mission].²⁷

Concerning al-Rāzī, in a short paragraph entitled "Another account,"²⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm states as follows:

The first who came on behalf of the sons of [Maymūn] al-Qaddāh to al-Rayy, Ādharbayjān, and Ṭabaristān, was [a man who] was a cotton carder [by profession].²⁹ When he died his son³⁰ succeeded him, and when the latter died, he was succeeded by a man known as Ghiyāth. Then Ghiyāth died and was succeeded by [two persons:] his son and a man known as al-Maḥrūm.³¹ He then died and Abū Ḥātim al-Warsanānī succeeded him. Abū Ḥātim was a dualist,³² then became a *dahrī*,³³ before eventually becoming a heretic and a skeptic. As regards the Yemen, Fārs, and al-Aḥsā', the *du'āt* sent there were on behalf of 'Abdān, the deputy and brother-in-law of Qarmat, or they were sent by the *du'āt* who preceded 'Abdān.³⁴

Regarding al-Rāzī's books, in the section on the names of the authors of the books of the Ismā'īlīs, Ibn al-Nadīm states:

And his name is ... [lacuna in the Arabic original]. Among his books are: *Kitāb al-Zīna* [Book of the Ornament], a big book consisting of four hundred folios, *Kitāb al-Jāmi'* [The Comprehensive Book], which contains *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and other matters.³⁵

Al-Sijistānī, on the other hand, is not listed by Ibn al-Nadīm among the eight Ismā'īlī authors mentioned in that section, instead he receives a cursory reference with regards to his deputies, namely Banū Ḥammād and Ibn al-Nafīs, who are listed among the Ismā'īlī authors. Thus, in the entries of Banū Ḥammād and Ibn al-Nafīs he states:

²⁷ The reading: *al-muntakhaba*, as suggested by Dodge from the Tonk and 1934 MSS. *The Fihrist*, vol. 1, p. 472. None of those works that are mentioned have survived.

²⁸ One does not know what Ibn al-Nadīm meant by this expression. It is quite possible that his source might not have been Ibn Rizām from whom he supposedly derived his long report.

²⁹ His name was Khalaf. See below. Mardāwīj was accused of collaboration with the Qarāmiṭa of Baḥrayn to overthrow the 'Abbāsids, see Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*, pp. 202-203.

³⁰ He is Aḥmad, the son of Khalaf "the cotton carder," see below.

³¹ According to Niẓām al-Mulk, Ghiyāth was succeeded by an anonymous son of Khalaf.

³² A doctrine which holds that there are two mutually antagonistic principles in the universe, good and evil.

³³ It has two philosophical connotations. First, the one who believes in the eternity of the world, and denies resurrection and future life; second, a *mulḥid*, the one who deviates from the true faith. *El'*, s.v. Dahriyya, by Goldziher/Goichon.

³⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, p. 239; Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol. 1, p. 468; I have corrected the errors in Dodge's translation.

³⁵ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, p. 240; Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol. 1, p. 472. It is to be noted that *Kitāb al-Zīna*, is extant and partially edited, while the other work did not survive.

Banū Hammād: They were from Mosul and were in charge of the *da'wa* in *al-jazīra* (northern Mesopotamia/Iraq) and the adjacent regions on behalf of Abū Ya'qūb [al-Sijistānī], the deputy of the Imam, who resided in Rayy. They compiled books and ascribed them to 'Abdān. Among those books were: *Kitāb al-Ḥaqq al-nayyir* (*Book of the Shining Truth*), *Kitāb al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn* (*Book of the Obvious Truth*), and *Kitāb Bism Allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* (*Book in the Name of Allāh, the Merciful, the Compassionate*).³⁶

Ibn al-Nafīs, Abū 'Abd Allāh. He was among the great *dā'īs* and represented³⁷ Abū Ya'qūb [al-Sijistānī] in Baghdad. But Abū Ya'qūb disapproved of him because of a certain report, which reached him. Hence, [Abū Ya'qūb] dispatched a group of non-Arabs (Persians) who killed him deceitfully in his own house.³⁸

It was known to the students of Islamic history that Ibn al-Nadīm was a Twelver Shī'ī and adept in Mu'talizī theology. However, his Ismā'īlī (i.e., the Qarmatīan) contacts both in Mosul and Baghdad were downplayed or ignored by the later Muslim authors and modern scholarship. In his recent article entitled "Ibn al-Nadīm's Ismā'īlī Contacts,"³⁹ which is based on evidence from the *Fihrist*, Devan Stuart has quite convincingly argued that Ibn al-Nadīm had contact with three prominent Ismā'īlīs from the forty-five acquaintances referred to in the *Fihrist*. Moreover, under the influence of his friend Khushkanānja, a secretary (*kātib* in the chancery) and an eloquent Ismā'īlī author, and his Ismā'īlī teacher al-Ḥasanābādī in Baghdad, Ibn al-Nadīm had flirted with Ismā'īlī Shī'ism in his youth, but grew out of this early phase in his life and eventually portrayed the Ismā'īlīs in a negative light as demonstrated by his *Fihrist*.

In addition to Stewart's observations, one can include additional information. Although Ibn al-Nadīm had contacts with Qarmatī Ismā'īlīs, it is obvious from his brief report that he was ignorant of the major works of al-Nasafī and al-Rāzī. Furthermore, it appears that he was either unaware of al-Sijistānī (who was his contemporary) and his works or that he completely ignored him for some unknown reason/s.

Ibn al-Nadīm has also failed to note an important controversy that erupted among the Ismā'īlīs of Khurāsān as reported by Nizām al-Mulk in the upcoming pages. He is unfamiliar with the Fāṭimids, except for the names of the caliphs, even after they had moved to Egypt. The name of the foremost Fāṭimid author and jurist, al-Qādī al-Nu'mān, as well as the name of the most famous panegyrist of al-Mu'izz, the poet Ibn Hānī al-Andalusī, known as the *Mutanabbī' al-gharb* (the Mutanabbī' of the West), are also absent from the *Fihrist*. His portrayal of the Ismā'īlīs, as pointed out by Stewart, suggests that he did not consider them genuine Shī'a. Hence they are excluded from the chapter on Islamic law altogether. Similarly, the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, a pre-Fārābī composition, is also not mentioned in the *Fihrist*. This research indicates that Ibn al-Nadīm was either

³⁶ None of those works have survived.

³⁷ The Arabic reads: *Wa-kānat al-ḥadra ilayhi khilāfa' li-Abī Ya'qūb*. Dodge has translated as: "Who was to have had the leadership as successor to Abū Ya'qūb." Stern, on the other hand has translated as: "Who was in charge of the capital as a lieutenant of Abū Ya'qūb."

³⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, 241; Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol. 1, p. 473. Stern translated it as: "in his shop," instead of "in his house," because he was using the Flügel edition of the *Fihrist*.

³⁹ Stewart, "Ibn al-Nadīm's Ismā'īlī Contacts."

not well informed about certain groups of Ismā'īlīs, especially the Fāṭimids; ill disposed towards them, or a combination of the two.

Al-Bustī and his refutation of the Ismā'īlīs

The next source is Abū'l-Qāsim Ismā'il b. Aḥmad al-Bustī. He wrote a refutation of the Ismā'īlīs entitled *Min kashf asrār al-bāṭiniyya wa-ʿawār (or ʿiwār) madhhabihim* (*From the Exposure of the Secrets of the Bāṭiniyya and the Flaw in Their Creed*).⁴⁰ Al-Bustī was a student of the famous Muʿtazilī author al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār in Rayy, who held al-Bustī in high esteem. During a later period of his life al-Bustī lived in Gīlān as follower of the Zaydī imām al-Muʿayyad. Stern has noted that al-Bustī was no more favorably inclined to the Ismā'īlīs than his Sunnī contemporary ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, with whom he shared the conviction that Ismā'īlism owed its existence to a Zoroastrian plot to destroy Islam from within.⁴¹ Al-Bustī mentions that he had read Ibn Rizām's account about the origins of Ismā'īlism. However, unlike Ibn al-Nadīm or Nizām al-Mulk (see below), al-Bustī was not interested in familiarizing himself with the history of Ismā'īlī missionary activities: rather he was more interested in refuting their doctrines and discrediting them.

Hence, al-Bustī states that the Ismā'īlīs, in theory, divided the world into twelve regions and sent their missionaries to each and every region. Furthermore, he identifies three *dāʿīs*: Ḥasan al-Najjār who was sent out to Persia, Dandān al-Iṣfahānī who was dispatched to Jibāl (northern Mesopotamia)⁴² and Iraq, and Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Khādim who was sent to Khurāsān. Leaving aside his vituperative tirade against the Ismā'īlīs, what is noteworthy about al-Bustī's refutation is that he expounds Ismā'īlī doctrine and then refutes it from a Muʿtazilī-Zaydī perspective with theological and philosophical arguments. His elaboration of Ismā'īlī doctrine, unlike most of his predecessors did not rely on the works of Ismā'īlī adversaries, rather on the Ismā'īlī works accessible to him. The list of Ismā'īlī works available to him was extensive and includes the following titles of al-Nasafī and al-Sijistānī:

Al-Nasafī's *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl* (*The Yield/Harvest*), al-Sijistānī's *Kitāb al-Yanābīʿ* (*The Wellsprings*), *Kashf al-maḥjūb* (*Disclosure of the Hidden*), *Kitāb al-Baṣā'ir* (*The Discernment*), and an unspecified *Risāla* (*Treatise*).⁴³

In addition to the works of al-Nasafī and al-Sijistānī, whom he quotes quite frequently, al-Bustī had access to al-Marwazī's *Sulwat al-arwāḥ* (*Solace of the Souls*),⁴⁴

⁴⁰ For more information about al-Bustī, see Stern, "Abū'l-Qāsim al-Bustī and His Refutation of Ismā'īlism," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1961, pp. 14-35; reprinted in his *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*. Hence, all subsequent references are to the latter. The surviving extracts from al-Bustī's refutation have been edited by ʿĀdil Sālim al-ʿAbd al-Jādir, under the title *al-Ismā'īliyyūn: Kashf al-asrār wa-naqd al-afkār*. All subsequent textual references to this edition are referred to as al-Bustī, *Kashf al-asrār*.

⁴¹ Stern has summarized al-Bustī's account of the origins of Ismā'īlism, see *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*, pp. 310-15.

⁴² *El*², s.v. *Djibāl* by L. Lockhart.

⁴³ Al-Bustī, *Kashf al-asrār*, pp. 208, 209, 210, 217, 226, 231, 232, 245, 275, 299, 342, 353, 360.

Abū Ayyūb al-Qayrawānī's *Ḥadath al-ʿālam* (Creation of the Universe),⁴⁵ Abū Muḥammad al-Murādī al-Naysābūrī's work concerning *The First* [The Intellect] and *The Second* [The Soul],⁴⁶ Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Khādim's work on *Taʾwīl* (Allegorical Interpretation),⁴⁷ and another *dāʿī*'s (whose name is not clear) work in Persian [on an unspecified subject].⁴⁸

Al-Bustī, therefore, had developed an advanced understanding of Ismāʿīlī doctrine which included: Neoplatonism and its cosmology, Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* hierarchy, the Ismāʿīlī system of law, and its allegorical interpretation of the Qurʾān and the *sharīʿa*. Most of the time he refutes Ismāʿīlī doctrine with rational and logical arguments based on his own convictions. However, he is occasionally guilty of interpreting somewhat maliciously the words of his adversaries to their logical conclusion.⁴⁹ Al-Bustī's argument against Neoplatonic cosmology, similar to al-Ghazālī's, is that the whole cosmic hierarchical system is nothing but a speculative structure that violates certain fundamental principles of Islam.

Strangely enough al-Bustī was unaware of al-Rāzī and his works. Al-Bustī ascribes the *Daʿāʾim* [al-Islām] (*The Pillars of Islam*) to Abū Tamīm [i.e., the caliph al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh], and incorrectly presents the seven pillars of Islam as follows: i) The confession of faith that there is no god but God; ii) The performing of the ritual prayers; iii) The paying of the alms tax; iv) Making a pilgrimage if one is able to do so; v) Fasting during the month of Ramaḍān; vi) *Jihād* in the way of God; and vii) The imamate.⁵⁰ What is interesting to note is that al-Bustī was ignorant of the doctrinal controversy that had first broken out between al-Rāzī and al-Nasafī. Soon thereafter it got aggravated further by al-Sijistānī's defense of al-Nasafī's views and criticisms of the corrections presented by al-Rāzī. This oversight on the part of al-Bustī was probably the result of not having access to al-Rāzī's *Kitāb al-Iṣlāh* (*The Correction*) and al-Sijistānī's *Kitāb al-Nuṣra* (*The Support*).

On the other hand, al-Bustī reports another discord that had broken out between the supporters of al-Nasafī and the followers of al-Sijistānī. He states:

The Ismāʿīlīs say: "How would an intelligent person know the truth, and be able to distinguish it from falsehood [when there is] a great number of liars and a small number of those who acquire knowledge and ascertain [its truth]?" ...

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 199. Nothing is known about al-Marwazī and he could be the same person as Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Marwazī, an amīr in Khurāsān. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature*, p. 40.

⁴⁵ Al-Bustī, *Kashf al-asrār*, pp. 210, 233. Nothing is known about al-Qayrawānī from other sources. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature*, p. 46.

⁴⁶ According to al-Bustī al-Naysābūrī was an eminent *dāʿī*, an assistant to Masʿūd, the son of al-Nasafī. Al-Bustī, *Kashf al-asrār*, p. 223. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature*, pp. 75-76.

⁴⁷ Al-Khādim was the first *dāʿī* sent to Khurāsān. Al-Bustī, *Kashf al-asrār*, pp. 316, 368.

⁴⁸ Al-Bustī, *Kashf al-asrār*, p. 369. The editor of al-Bustī's refutation read his name as al-Jirānī, and stated that he could be identical with the *dāʿī* Abū Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, reported by Rashīd al-Dīn in his *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* and mentioned by Stern in his aforementioned article.

⁴⁹ Stern, *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism*, p. 306.

⁵⁰ Al-Bustī, *Kashf al-asrār*, p. 364. For the seven pillars of Islam, see al-Qāḍī al-Nʿmān, *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*, vol. 1, p. 2; English trans. Poonawala, *The Pillars of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 2-3.

[al-Bustī refuting their claim states:] Know, the object of their [Ismāʿīlīs] posing this question is to prove that there is an inner truth (*bāṭin*), which is an indicator of truth, and that it does not vary. It is only the external form (*ẓāhir*), which varies ... Know, this [rule] applies to them, because they differ among themselves on various issues, [such as] about the Soul and the Command. The statements of the people of al-Baḥrayn differ from that of the people of Khurāsān in most matters. Indeed, [what] they agree upon is [only] with regard to the two original principles [*al-sābiq waʿl-tālī*, i.e., the Intellect & the Soul], and that the *ẓāhir* contains the *bāṭin*. As for the exact nature (*kayfiyyat*) of those matters, they diverge [widely among themselves].

A great disagreement concerning the *daʿwa* occurred among the people of Khurāsān. Al-Nasafī and his followers maintained that the *daʿwa* should concern itself with various aspects (*āfāq*) of the Soul, the cycles [of history and prophecy], and the manner of creation (*kayfiyyat al-khalq*). While al-Khayshafūj [i.e., al-Sijistānī] maintained that the *daʿwa* should first concern itself with the *sharīʿa* (canon law of Islam) and its *taʾwīl* (allegorical interpretation).⁵¹

The [disagreement] led to a sharp split, and [caused] enmity between al-Khayshafūj and the followers of al-Nasafī. They differed [in their opinion] concerning the obligatory [due],⁵² which was 119 dirhams, and the purpose for which it was imposed on [every member of the community]. Some said that it is taken for [imparting] the secrets that go back to Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, while the others said that it is not taken for that, rather it is taken [for imparting] other secrets.⁵³

Unfortunately, Stern disregarded the second part of al-Bustī's aforementioned report about a sharp split which led to a state of enmity between the two groups. Stern only addressed the first part of the report referring to the disagreement concerning the *daʿwa* and inferred that the discord was merely in regards to missionary tactics that were to be used for preaching rather than a doctrinal issue. Moreover, Stern adds that al-Nasafī and those who followed him emphasized philosophical doctrines, while Abū Yaʿqūb who professed the same doctrines, insisted that for tactical reasons the preaching of Ismāʿīlism should begin with the allegorical interpretation of Islamic law. I believe that the discord was much more profound than mere missionary tactics and that it might have developed at a later stage when al-Sijistānī had moved away from his previously held views and began to distance himself from the views held by his teacher al-Nasafī.

Al-Baghdādī and his *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*

In his book entitled *al-Farq bayn al-firaq* (*The Distinction between the Sects*), the heresiographer ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, who had studied and lived in Nīshāpūr, provides some useful information about al-Nasafī, al-Rāzī, and al-Sijistānī.⁵⁴ The

⁵¹ See Stern, *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism*, p. 308.

⁵² The obligatory due was collected from each member of the *daʿwa*.

⁵³ Al-Bustī, *Kashf al-asrār*, pp. 245-46. See Stern's trans. in his *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism*, p. 308.

⁵⁴ For the biography of al-Baghdādī see Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 3, p. 203; *El²*, s.v. al-Baghdādī, by A. S. Tritton.

approach of the author in this book is very didactic wherein he describes each Islamic sect separately and judges it through the lens of orthodoxy and condemns it for deviating from the straight path. Al-Baghdādī devotes more than thirty pages to the exposition of the Ismāʿīlīs and uses the derogatory term of al-Bāṭiniyya (the name given to the Ismāʿīlīs because of their stress on the inner meaning of the Scripture rather than its literal meaning) to describe them. There is no doubt that he knows a lot about the Ismāʿīlīs and their activities in that part of the world, but instead of trying to understand their doctrines and then submitting them to a reasoned critique, he simply tries to create animosity towards them. He demeans their origins by suggesting they originate from Zoroastrianism/Mazdaism,⁵⁵ or the Sabeans. Thus, they fall outside the pale of Islam.⁵⁶ Consequently, whatever information he has about their doctrines, he does not present them as professed by the Ismāʿīlīs but twists them to suit his narrow objective of demonstrating that they have deviated from the path of Islam. Leaving aside his misrepresentation and denunciation of the Ismāʿīlīs, he provides valuable data about al-Nasafī, al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī. He states:

A person belonging to the Bāṭiniyya, known as Abū Ḥātim [al-Rāzī], came to the land of the Daylamites. A group of Daylamites, including Asfār b. Sharwayh [Shīrūye] responded to his call.⁵⁷ A missionary known as al-Shaʿrānī appeared in Nīshāpūr, but was killed there during the governorship of Abū Bakr b. Ḥajjāj. Al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Marwazī responded to the call of al-Shaʿrānī and took his place. The *daʿwa* was carried on after him by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī who was a *dāʿī* in Transoxania, and [after al-Nasafī] by Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijzī, known as Bandāne. Al-Nasafī wrote *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl*, while Abū Yaʿqūb wrote *Asās al-daʿwa* (the Foundation of the *Daʿwa*),⁵⁸ *Taʾwīl al-sharāʿiʿ*, (Allegorical Interpretation of the Canonical Laws),⁵⁹ and *Kashf al-asrār* (Disclosure of the Secrets).⁶⁰ Al-Nasafī and the one known as Bandāne were killed on account of their straying from the right path.⁶¹

Discussing their doctrine and giving it a malignant twist, he states:

⁵⁵ Mazdaism, another name for Zoroastrianism, is derived from the name of the religion's supreme god, Mazda, or Ahura Mazda. *ER*, s.v., Zoroastrianism, by G. Gnoli.

⁵⁶ For Ivanow's assessment of al-Baghdādī, see "Tenth Century Ismaili *Daʿi* in Persia," in his *Studies in Early Persian Ismailism*, pp. 123-40.

⁵⁷ Asfār b. Shīrūye Wardādāwandī was the ruler of the Daylamites. Stern states the events described by Nizām al-Mulk seem to fit well with Asfār's struggle against the Zaydīs in 314/926 and 315/927. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism*, pp. 199-202.

⁵⁸ Ivanow, op. cit., thinks that it might be identical with *Asās al-taʾwīl*, but his assumption is without any evidence because *Asās al-taʾwīl* is by al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān. See Poonawala, "Sources for al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān's Works and Their Authenticity."

⁵⁹ Ivanow, op. cit., thinks that it might be identical with *Taʾwīl al-sharīʿa*, but his assumption lacks any evidence. *Taʾwīl al-sharīʿa* is generally ascribed to the Fāṭimid caliph-imam al-Muʿizz. See Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature*, p. 65.

⁶⁰ Ivanow, op. cit., he thinks but without any firm evidence that this book might be identical with *Kashf al-mahjūb* by al-Sijistānī or *Kitāb al-Kashf* ascribed to Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman.

⁶¹ Al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, p. 283.

The leaders of the Bāṭiniyya stated in their books that God created the Soul. So, God is the First while the Soul is the Second, and both of them designed the universe. They call "the Two: the First and the Second," and sometimes they call "the Two: the Intellect and the Soul."⁶²

The above statement is either a distortion by the author, or a scribal error or evidence of corruption.⁶³ Disclosing the real objectives of the Bāṭiniyya, he states:

Their *daʿī* known as al-Bazdawī [al-Nasafī] stated in his well-known book *al-Maḥṣūl* that *al-mubdiʿ al-awwal* (the First Originator)⁶⁴ originated (*abdaʿ*) the Soul,⁶⁵ then the First and the Second organized the universe with the planning of seven planets and four natures. Substantially, this is what the adherents of Mazdaism maintain that the Yazdān⁶⁶ created Ahriman, and both of them manage the universe, except that the Yazdān is the agent of goodness while the Ahriman is the agent of evil.⁶⁷

Al-Thaʿālibī and his *Ādāb al-mulūk*

In his *Ādāb al-mulūk* (*Rules of Conduct for the Kings*), a book of advice for kings, al-Thaʿālibī, a prominent connoisseur and critic of Arabic literature,⁶⁸ has a brief section on the Ismāʿīlīs. The author was from Nīshāpūr and the book was composed between 403/1012-13 and 407/1016-17 for Maḥmūd of Ghazna's brother-in-law, the Khwārizmshāh Abū ʿAbbās Maʾmūn II (r. 399/1009-407/1017). In this particular section, al-Thaʿālibī cautions rulers against potential disasters, including that of falling prey to heretical doctrines preached by some deviant missionaries. He then recounts the episode of the Sāmānid prince Naṣr II b. Aḥmad (r. 301/914-331/943) who was converted to Ismāʿīlism with a number of his courtiers. In their study entitled "A New Text on Ismailism at the Samanid Court," Patricia Crone and Luke Treadwell have translated the relevant section from *Ādāb al-mulūk* with analysis and comments. It is appropriate to quote a passage from al-Thaʿālibī's account that differs substantially from the accounts of Ibn al-Nadīm (see above) and Niẓām al-Mulk (see below). Al-Thaʿālibī states:

Among them (the evils that afflict kings) are the adroit and unbelieving swindlers who proselytize on behalf of followers of selfish whims, innovators and heretics, such as the Bāṭiniyya, Qarāmiṭa, Ismāʿīliyya ...

⁶² Ibid., p. 285.

⁶³ The reason for the latter assumption is that al-Baghdādī's text is not critically edited.

⁶⁴ The edited text reads: *al-mubdiʿ al-awwal*, is incorrect. God is always described as *al-mubdiʿ*, while the Intellect as *al-mubdaʿ* or *al-mubdaʿ al-awwal*.

⁶⁵ The edited text reads: *abadaʿ al-naḥs*, is also incorrect. *Ibdāʿ* stops at the level of the Intellect while the subsequent procession is described as *inbiʿāth* or *inbijās*.

⁶⁶ Yazdān means God; name of the spirit who is the principle of good, opposite of Ahriman, the originator of evil. Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*. Ormazd or Ahura Mazda is the supreme deity and creator of the world, or the spirit of good. Ahriman is the spirit of evil.

⁶⁷ Al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, pp. 293-94.

⁶⁸ *El²*, s.v. al-Thaʿālibī, by E. K. Rowson.

Al-Saʿīd Naṣr b. Aḥmad fell into this trap. It had been set by Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Muṣʿabī and Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn Sawāda al-Rāzī, two arch heretics ... Among the things related about him [i.e., Naṣr b. Aḥmad] is that he had repented of drinking and shedding blood, fearing the Station of his Lord ... secluding himself to pray and weep in extreme fear of death. But al-Muṣʿabī and Ibn Sawāda continually deceived him with their honeyed words and gradually introduced him to their doctrine ...

Then they sang the praises of that doctrine, i.e. the doctrine of the Ismailis, which is the doctrine of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdahī [al-Nasafī], and they induced him (the amir) to summon him (al-Bazdahī) and to listen to his words. So he (the amir) ordered that he be brought, and when he arrived, he was honoured and revered and found acceptance for the accursed mission and the foolish ideas to which he gave open expression. Al-Saʿīd ordered that seventy dinars weighing a hundred *mithqāls* (of gold) each should be struck for despatch to the lord of diocese (*jazīra*), who was the imam of the mission in their view; so they were struck.

God then favoured Islam by causing al-Muṣʿabī to perish; the position of the people (the Ismailis) weakened, and the cream turned to scum. Al-Bazdahī returned to his village ... He had some of those dinars with him, others were with Ibn Sawāda.

When al-Saʿīd died and his son al-Ḥamīd [Nūḥ] took his place, Ibn Sawāda resumed singing the praises of that doctrine to him. He wrote to al-Bazdahī telling him to send the most skilful and articulate debaters among his missionaries to al-Ḥamīd's court to invite him (to convert), so he did ... So the unbelievers [Ismailis] were confounded; he [the Ismaili missionary who had come there] was reduced to silence and did not reply but returned to al-Bazdahī and told him what had happened. Al-Bazdahī feared the worst. Al-Ḥamīd lost no time in demanding from Ibn Sawāda the return of the aforementioned dinars, but he denied that he had them ... But he (al-Ḥamīd) then stumbled upon most of those dinars in a hiding place in his house. They were removed and al-Ḥamīd had him taken away and beaten until he perished. Al-Bazdahī was ordered to present himself and asked to hand over the rest of the dinars. But he did not do so. When he was addressed on the subject of his doctrine, he asked for a disputation ... [but the amir refused and consulted the jurists whose] response was that he should be killed. So he was killed and crucified.⁶⁹

Al-Thaʿālibī's account veritably differs from that of Ibn al-Nadīm and Niẓām al-Mulk in several important ways. Firstly, Naṣr was converted by al-Muṣʿabī and Ibn Sawāda and al-Nasafī was invited only to complete their task. Secondly, Naṣr did not repent his conversion, rather his repentance preceded the conversion. Thirdly, he did not abdicate in favor of his son as reported by Niẓām al-Mulk. Fourthly, the dinars struck were not earmarked for the Fāṭimid caliph in North Africa but were meant for "the lord of the *jazīra*." Al-Muṣʿabī who had headed the *ālwān al-rasāʾil* (chancery) and rose to the vizierate was the key figure in the conversion of Naṣr. Ibn Sawāda was credited as a missionary by Niẓām al-Mulk. One can concur with the authors of the aforementioned article that al-Thaʿālibī's account of the Sāmānid court comes across as well informed

⁶⁹ Al-Thaʿālibī, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, pp. 168-71; English translation is by Crone & Treadwell, "A New Text," pp. 37-40.

compared to that of Ibn al-Nadīm and Nizām al-Mulk. However, one cannot totally concur with their another conclusion that al-Thaʿālibī's portrayal of the Ismāʿīlīs is better informed. The arguments of Crone and Treadwell in this respect are far fetched and incorrect.

Yes, it is correct that all reports about the beginning of the Ismāʿīlī mission in Khurāsān originate from Ibn Rizām who describes its beginning after the establishment of the Fāṭimid dynasty in North Africa. Thus, based on Stern's article, Crone and Treadwell have further opined that the mission to Khurāsān was a continuation of a deviant missionary preacher Aḥmad b. al-Kayyāl⁷⁰ and was not connected with the pre-Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī movement. Here again the authors of the above article have argued without any firm evidence. Their suggestion is no more than mere speculation. Their suggestion is rejected for various reasons. Firstly, as pointed out above, Ibn al-Nadīm reports from sources other than Ibn Rizām that ʿUbayd Allāh, before he established himself in North Africa and assumed the title al-Mahdī, sent Abū Saʿīd al-Shaʿrānī to Khurāsān in 287/900. Crone and Treadwell have overlooked the new edition of the *Fihrist* and its translation and relied on the citations by Stern who used Flügel's edition of the *Fihrist*. Secondly, one thinks that Ibn Rizām's ulterior motive was to connect the Qarāmiṭa and other dissident groups with the Fāṭimids to discredit the latter in the eyes of the Muslim world. Thirdly, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, the chief *dāʿī* during the reign of the Fāṭimid caliph-imam al-Ḥākim, claimed al-Rāzī, al-Nasafī and al-Sijistānī for the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿwa*. Al-Kirmānī came from the eastern region and must have been well informed about the Ismāʿīlī missionary activities in that part of the Islamic world. The mission in Khurāsān was therefore established during the pre-Fāṭimid period of Ismāʿīlī activities but subsequently it must have drifted away from the main stream. The fact remains that al-Sijistānī, the youngest of the three major thinkers, reconciled himself with the Fāṭimids and accepted them as deputies of the Qāʾim.

Ibn Ḥazm and his *Kitāb al-Fiṣal fīʾl-milal*

In his heresiography entitled *Kitāb al-Fiṣal fīʾl-milal waʾl-ahwāʾ waʾl-niḥal* (*The Decisive Word on Sects, Heterodoxies and Denominations*), Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), an Andalusian historian, jurist, philosopher and Zāhirī theologian, hardly adds to our knowledge of the Ismāʿīlīs. He simply states that the Ismāʿīlīs along with the Qarāmiṭa have openly proclaimed their hostility towards Islam by abandoning it altogether and professing Mazdaism. For him, the *ahl al-sunna* (the people who follow the *sunna* of the Prophet) are the only "People of Truth," while the rest of the Muslim sects are "the People of Innovation."⁷¹

Nizām al-Mulk and his *Siyar al-mulūk*

The next source is *Siyar al-mulūk* (*Manners of the Kings*), also known as *Siyāsat-nāme* (*The Book of Government, or Rules for Kings*), by Nizām al-Mulk, the famous

⁷⁰ See *EL*², s.v., al-Kayyāl, by W. Madelung.

⁷¹ Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb al-Fiṣal fīʾl-milal waʾl-ahwāʾ waʾl-niḥal*, vol. 2, pp. 113, 116.

vizier of the Seljuq Sultans Alp Arsalān and Malik Shāh. The *Siyāsat-nāme* was composed between 479/1086 and 484/1091, after Nizām al-Mulk had fallen out of favor with Malik Shāh. He was murdered in 485/1092 by the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs whom he had denounced vehemently in the above-mentioned book. Although the *Siyāsat-nāme* was composed almost a century after Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, Nizām al-Mulk was better informed about certain aspects of the Ismāʿīlī-Qarmaṭī movements in that part of the world than some of his predecessors previously discussed, except al-Thaʿālibī.

It is worth noting that the *Siyāsat-nāme* consists of two distinct parts. The first part sets forth the Persian theory of kingship and deals with the practical aspects of rulership, whereas the second part is quite different.⁷² It is in the second part that the author declares that the times are like the end of days, the evil eye is at work; things are going seriously wrong and disaster is feared. The opening paragraph of chapter 40, the first chapter of the second part, specifies all the ills in a masterly and skillfully disguised manner. The diagnosis is expressed in a form of hypothetical case. Chapters 43 to 47 are devoted to the history of several heretical sects, such as Mazdak, Sinbād, the Qarmaṭīs and the Bāṭinīs, Bābak and the Khurram-dīnīs. Chapter 43 is entitled "Exposing the facts about heretics who are enemies of the state and Islam." The opening passages of this chapter explicitly demonstrates Nizām al-Mulk's hostility towards the Shīʿites in general and the Ismāʿīlīs in particular, and is thus worth reproducing here. He states:

Your humble servant wanted to compose a few chapters on the rising of various rebels, so that all the world might know how great has been my concern for this kingdom, and how sincere my loyalty and devotion to the empire of the Seljuqs, especially to The Master of the World, may Allāh perpetuate his reign and to his children and family, may the evil eye be averted from this epoch!

Seceders have existed in all ages ... these dogs will emerge from their hiding places, and will revolt against this empire. They claim to be Shīʿites and most of their strength and reinforcement comes from the *Rāfiḍīs* and Khurram-dīnīs ... In their speech they claim to be Muslims, but in reality they act like unbelievers ... The religion of Muḥammad, upon him be peace, has no worse enemy than them, and the kingdom of The Master of the World has no more vile and more accursed opponent.

There are certain persons who on this very day hold privileged position in this empire ... are members of this [Ismāʿīlī] faction and secretly do its business, assist its policies and preach its doctrines. They try to persuade The Master of the World to overthrow the house of the ʿAbbāsids, and if I were to lift the lid from the top of that pot – Oh! the disgraceful things that would be revealed! ...

However, I have introduced into this *Book of Rules [for Kings]* a section dealing with the revolts of these Bāṭinīs, because it is important to explain as concisely as possible who they are, what sort of beliefs they hold, whence they first originated, how many times they have emerged, and in each case who was responsible for putting them down – so that after my death it may be a reminder

⁷² The editor and translator of Nizām al-Mulk's work Darke states that it is certain that the second part of the book was never seen by Malik Shāh. Darke adds that this conclusion could be inferred from the librarian's note on the manuscript. Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. xiii.

for [succeeding] Masters of the Kingdom and the Faith. For this accursed faction has broken out and perpetrated massacres even in the lands of Syria, Yemen and Spain. I will only relate, in the manner of an epitome, what they have done in Persia. Whoever wishes to learn all the facts about them and all the disasters, which they have caused to the kingdom and the religion of Muḥammad, The Elcct, upon him be peace, should study the histories, especially the *History of Isfahān*.⁷³ Now I will proceed to describe about one hundredth of what they have done in the land of Persia ...⁷⁴

Hubert Darke, the editor and the translator of *Siyāsāt-nāme*, has astutely pointed out that it was Nizām al-Mulk's quarrel with the Seljuq Sultan Malik Shāh that affected his relationship with the Sultan, and may have led to his being expunged from office. These developments may account for the tone of bitterness and frustration that pervades the second part of the *Siyāsāt-nāme*.

Another reason for Nizām al-Mulk's outcry against heretics, particularly against the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs was the return of Ḥasan-e Šabbāḥ from Egypt in 483/1090 and his seizure of the mountain fortress of Alamūt which facilitated his activities in Persia. Chapter 46 is entitled "On the risings of the Qarmaṭīs and Bāṭinīs and their evil doctrines - may Allāh curse them." It constitutes twenty-eight pages. Nizām al-Mulk's story about the origins of the Ismā'īlīs, similar to that of Ibn al-Nadīm, is derived from Ibn Rizām without disclosing his name. In the following paragraphs we will give a thumbnail sketch of his account, omitting fanciful details, but still retaining pertinent information about al-Nasafī, al-Rāzī, and al-Sijistānī. In regards to the Ismā'īlī missionaries in Rayy and its environs, Nizām al-Mulk states:

The origin/s of the Qarmaṭī religion was as follows. Ja'far al-Šādiq had a son whose name was Ismā'īl. He died before his father leaving a son named Muḥammad ... Now this Muḥammad had a certain Ḥijāzī page called Mubārak, and he was a calligrapher in the fine script known as *muqarmat*. For this reason he was called Qarmaṭwayh. This Mubārak had a friend in the city of Ahwāz whose name was 'Abd Allāh b. Maymūn al-Qaddāh. The latter was one day sitting with him [Mubārak] in private ... After that they parted; Mubārak went towards Kūfa, and 'Abd Allāh to Kūhistān of Iraq; and they sought to win over the people of the Shī'a ...

Mubārak carried on his activities in secret ... in the district around Kūfa. Of the people who accepted his teaching, the Sunnīs call some of them Mubārakīs and others Qarmaṭīs. Meanwhile 'Abd Allāh b. Maymūn preached this religion in Kūhistān of Iraq ... He then appointed a man called Khalaf to succeed him and said to him, 'Go in the direction of Natanz, for thereabouts in Rayy, Qumm, Kāshān and Āba the people are *Rāfiḍīs* [Shī'a], professing Shī'ī beliefs; so they will accept your teaching.' He himself (i.e., 'Abd Allāh) departed to Baṣra, fearing trouble.

So, Khalaf came to Rayy in the district of Pashāpūya in a village called Kulīn (or Kulayn), and stayed there and practiced embroidery, at which craft he was expert ... he made out that the religion [he was preaching] was that of the

⁷³ Darke states that most of the histories of Isfahān that are known to have existed have now been lost. Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government* p. xviii.

⁷⁴ Nizām al-Mulk, op. cit.

House of the Prophet (*ahl-e bayt*) and had to be kept secret. When the Qā'im appears it will be revealed, and the time of his advent is near... When he came to know that he had been discovered, he fled from Kulīn and went to Rayy and died there.

He had converted a few of the inhabitants of Kulīn, and his son Aḥmad b. Khalaf took his father's place and continued to foster his father's religion ... Then Aḥmad b. Khalaf found a man named Ghiyāth, who was well versed in literature and grammar; he made him his successor to spread the *da'wa*. This Ghiyāth then embellished the principles of their religion with verses from the Qur'ān, traditions of the Prophet, Arab proverbs, and various verses of poetry, and composed a book entitled *Kitāb al-Bayān (The Explanation)*. In it he described the meanings of 'prayer,' 'fasting,' and other ordinances of religion in the manner of a lexicon ... Ghiyāth fled and went to Khurāsān. Some of the people who adopted this religion were known by the Sunnīs of Rayy as Khalafīs, and others as Bātinīs ...

After Ghiyāth had been forced to flee from Rayy and gone to Khurāsān, he stayed at Marv al-Rūdh, where he proselytized the amīr Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-Marv al-Rūdhī. The latter was converted; his authority extended over Khurāsān, especially over Ṭāliqān, Maymana, Pāryāb, Gharchistān, and Ghūr. After he adopted this religion (Ismā'ilism), many from the population of those districts followed him.

Ghiyāth then nominated a successor at Marv al-Rūdh to maintain the converts in that religion and propagate it, while he himself returned to Rayy and began to preach again there in secret. Then he appointed as his deputy a man from the district of Pashāpūya called Abū Ḥātim [al-Rāzī], who was well versed in Arab poetry and rare traditions,⁷⁵ and together they began preaching [openly]. In Khurāsān he [Giyāth] had already promised that before long in such-and-such a year the Qā'im (whom they call the Mahdī) would appear ... However, it chanced that the promised time for the coming of the Mahdī arrived, and he was proved false ... He was obliged to flee and nobody knew where he went.

After that the Seveners [Ismā'ilīs] of Rayy came to an agreement with one of the grandsons of Khalaf, they combined under his leadership. When he was about to die he named his son, called Abū Ja'far the Elder, as successor; but he was overcome by melancholy, so he appointed a man named Abū Ḥātim Laythī [al-Rāzī] to deputize for him. By the time Abū Ja'far got better, Abū Ḥātim had consolidated his position, and holding Abū Ja'far to no account, had taken over the leadership. So the leadership passed from Khalaf's family. Abū Ḥātim sent missionaries abroad into the districts on all sides of Rayy, such as Ṭabaristān, Gurgān, Iṣfahān and Ādharbayjān, and proceeded to convert the people. The amīr of Rayy, Aḥmad b. 'Alī, accepted his invitation and became a Bātinī.⁷⁶

Then it happened that the Daylamites revolted against the 'Alavids [Zaydī rulers] of Ṭabaristān ... By chance Abū Ḥātim went at this time from

⁷⁵ The text reads *ḥadīth-e gharīb*, which means "rare traditions [of the Prophet and the Imams]." In this context it does not mean "strange tales," as translated by Darke. Unfortunately, there are several discrepancies between the Persian text and its English translation, especially with regards to place names.

⁷⁶ Aḥmad b. 'Alī was governor of Rayy between 307/919-20 and 311/924. See Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'ilism*, pp. 196-98, 200-201.

Rayy to Daylamān, and he visited the Daylamites, whose chief was Asfār b. Shīrūye Vardādāvandī. He went to him and made an alliance with him, vilifying the 'Alavids; he set about defaming them and declared that their rule was not legitimate; one should be an 'Alavī in religion, not in genealogy. He promised them, 'Soon an imam will come forth from the Daylamites, and I know what his doctrine and discourse will be.' The men of Daylamān and Gīlān accepted his teaching with alacrity, and his dealings with them prospered. This was in the days of Asfār b. Shīrūye and partly in the days of Mardāvīj b. Ziyār.⁷⁷ The wretched Daylamites and Gīls 'fled from the rain and resorted to the gutter;' they sought the path of orthodoxy but they fell into the snare of heresy. For some time they continued their association with him.

When they saw that the period had elapsed in which he had promised that the imam would appear, they said, 'This religion is baseless; the wretched fellow seems to be an imposter.' They renounced him ... attacked Abū Ḥātim with intent to kill him, but he fled, and in that flight he died ... The Seveners remained in confusion for a while, but secretly they reorganized themselves and eventually settled down under the leadership of two men - 'Abd al-Malik Kawkabī and Ishāq [al-Sijistānī]; the latter lived at Rayy and the former at Girdkūh.⁷⁸

Stern has provided additional information from other sources and stated that Abū Ḥātim, probably, left Rayy after his patron Aḥmad b. 'Alī died in 311/924 and went to Ṭabaristān. The 'Alids against whom the Daylamites revolted were Zaydī rulers.⁷⁹ This part of Nizām al-Mulk's report is verified by al-Baghdādī in his *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, as stated above. When Mardāvīj superseded Asfār, Abū Ḥātim remained in favor. According to al-Kirmānī, the famous debate between Abū Ḥātim and the physician philosopher Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyya al-Rāzī took place in Rayy in the presence of Mardāvīj. Stern has pointed out some chronological issues with al-Kirmānī's report that are contingent on the date of Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's death. If the date of his death is given as 320/922-23, then Kirmānī's report is correct. However, if the date of his death is given as 311/923-24 or 312/925, then the debate may have taken place during the governorship of Aḥmad b. 'Alī.

Leaving aside some differences in the names of the early missionaries sent to Rayy, one notices that Nizām al-Mulk's report about al-Rāzī's activities is more detailed than Ibn al-Nadīm's report. It is not clear whether the Ishāq mentioned by Nizām al-Mulk is the "Abū Ya'qūb" mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm.

The next section on the emergence of the Bāṭinīs in Khurāsān and Transoxania by Nizām al-Mulk relates the long story of al-Nasafī and his spectacular success in winning over the courtiers and the Būyid ruler of Bukhārā. The details are considerable and reveal

⁷⁷ See Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*, pp. 199-201. Mardāvīj b. Ziyār al-Jilī was the commander-in-chief of Asfār when the men of Daylamān and Gīlān conquered Jurjān in 315/927. The following year they conquered Ṭabaristān and Rayy in the name of the Sāmānid ruler Naṣr b. Aḥmad. The Zaydī ruler of Ṭabaristān was killed in 316/928. Following the struggle for power between Asfār and Mardāvīj, the latter emerged as victorious but was killed in 323/934 by the Turks. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, pp. 176, 189-90, 192-97, 298-303.

⁷⁸ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, pp. 284-87; *The Book of Government*, pp. 208-12.

⁷⁹ Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*, pp. 200-01. Al-Baghdādī's account (see above) confirms the report of Nizām al-Mulk.

al-Nasafī's tactics for successfully reaching the highest level of authority. Nizām al-Mulk states:

When Ḥusayn b. 'Alī Marv-ar-Rūdhī [who was converted to the Ismā'īlī faith by Ghiyāth] was at the point of death he handed on his mission in Khurāsān to Muḥammad [b. Aḥmad] Nakhshabī and made him his successor. This man was from the [brilliant] company of the philosophers of Khurāsān, and he was a theologian. Ḥusayn [b. 'Alī] enjoined him in his will to leave a deputy in that place and himself to cross the Oxus and go to Bukhārā and Samarqand to convert the people of those cities, paying particular attention to the nobility of the court of the amīr of Khurāsān, Naṣr b. Aḥmad; this would strengthen his position. So when Ḥusayn [b. 'Alī] died, Muḥammad Nakhshabī succeeded him and proselytized many of the people of Khurāsān ... There was a man called 'the son of Savāda' (*Ibn Sawāda*), who had escaped from the hands of the Sunnīs at Rayy and fled to Ḥusayn Marv-ar-Rūdhī in Khurāsān; he was one of the leaders of the Bāṭinīs. Muḥammad Nakhshabī made him his successor at Marv-ar-Rūdh ... and went to Bukhārā.

He found that the reputation of the sect [i.e., the Ismā'īlīs] was low there, and he did not dare to come into the open. So he left there for Nakhshab, where he succeeded in converting Bakr Nakhshabī, who was a boon companion of the amīr of Khurāsān and one of his relations. Now Bakr was a friend of Ash'ath who was the amīr's private secretary and ranked as a boon-companion; he converted him too. Other converts were Abū Maṣṣūr Chaghānī who was head of the military department and had married Ash'ath's sister, and Āyatāsh who was the amīr's private chamberlain and a friend of those just named.

This group then said to Muḥammad Nakhshabī, 'There is no need for you to remain in Nakhshab; arise and come to Bukhārā, the capital. We will see to it that in a short space of time we exalt your cause to the skies, and bring persons of reputation into this religion.' So he arose and went from Nakhshab to Bukhārā where he joined this group in consorting with the notables and disseminating his propaganda amongst them. He made his converts swear not to say anything to anyone until he told them and made the word public. At first he was preaching the Shī'a religion; later he gradually shifted to Sevener doctrines, and into this sect he brought the chief of the city of Bukhārā, the land tax collector and the leading citizens and merchants; also he converted Ḥasan Malik who was governor of Īlāq⁸⁰ and one of the king's courtiers, and 'Alī Zarrād who was the private steward.

Most of these whom we have mentioned were confidants of the king. When his following had increased, he had designs upon the king himself. He persuaded the courtiers constantly to speak favorably of him in front of Naṣr b. Aḥmad in drunkenness and sobriety. They did this and took his part so well that Naṣr b. Aḥmad became eager to meet him. So they took Muḥammad Nakhshabī before the amīr of Khurāsān, and extolled his learning; the amīr received him gladly and treated him kindly. At every opportunity Muḥammad brought a part of his teaching to the amīr's attention, and whatever he said, the amīr's intimates and companions who had embraced the religion added their approval and applause, saying, 'It is so.' Naṣr b. Aḥmad treated him with increasing favor and could not bear to be without him. Eventually Naṣr accepted his solicitation;

⁸⁰ It is the rural part of Bukhārā. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, vol. 1, pp. 291-92.

Muḥammad Nakhshabī then became so influential that he could appoint or depose ministers, and the king did whatever he said.

When Muḥammad Nakhshabī's affairs reached this point he made his propaganda public; his co-religionists rallied round him and they boldly proclaimed the religion; and the king himself supported the Seveners. Now the Turks and officers of the army were displeased that the king had become a Qarmatī ... So the learned men and judges of the city and neighboring places got together and approached the commander-in-chief of the army ... the next day he mentioned this subject to Naṣr b. Aḥmad; but it did no good ... and the army officers began to communicate with one another to see what to do ...⁸¹

The story continues for another five pages vividly describing how the Turkish army conspired to kill the king by planning a feast and drinking party. However, the king became aware of it, and outsmarted the army officers by arranging to have the commander-in-chief's head cut off. Naṣr b. Aḥmad then resigned, repented, and nominated his son Nūḥ. Nūḥ put his father in shackles and soon thereafter beheaded Muḥammad Nakhshabī and several amīrs who had become Bāṭinīs. The killing and plundering of Ismāʿīlīs in Bukhārā and its environs continued for seven days until all of these heretics were purged from Khurāsān and Transoxania.

Concerning the long stories in the *Siyāsāt-nāme*, including the story of Naṣr b. Aḥmad and the Qarāmīṭa, Hubert Darke has correctly observed that the story about the Barāmika is not by Niẓām al-Mulk, rather it was taken from the *Tārīkh-e Barāmika* (*History of the Barāmika*). Darke adds that the *History of the Barāmika* could have been the model by which Niẓām al-Mulk had before he began composing these stories. However, Niẓām al-Mulk had gone a step further than his model through the more prevalent usage of the fictional element. For example, these stories contain considerable conversation, which though partly fictional, gives the impression that it is based on real life.⁸² Compared to Niẓām al-Mulk's account, Ibn al-Nadīm's story appears to be simple but the issue of an indemnity being sent to the Fāṭimid caliph in North Africa by al-Nasafī casts serious doubt over the authenticity of Ibn al-Nadīm's report. As noted earlier, al-Thaʿālibī's account seems more plausible than Niẓām al-Mulk's account where the latter has mixed facts with fiction. It is also quite possible that Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Thaʿālibī and Niẓām al-Mulk might have drawn on an earlier common source that has not survived. In that case it appears that both Ibn al-Nadīm and Niẓām al-Mulk have taken the liberty to distort the original report. Moreover, it is well known that al-Nasafī did not recognize the Fāṭimid caliph-imams. Niẓām al-Mulk concludes his account of the Ismāʿīlīs by stating:

Whenever the Bāṭinīs have appeared they have had a nickname, and have been known by a different title in every city and province; but in essence they are all the same. In Aleppo and Egypt they are called Ismāʿīlīs; in Qumm, Kāshān, Ṭabaristān and Sabzvar they are called the Seveners; in Baghdad, Transoxania and Ghaznayn they are known as Qarmatīs, in Kūfa as Mubārakīs, in Baṣra as Rāwandīs and Burqāʿīs, in Rayy as Khalafīs, in Gurgān as The Wearers of Red, in Syria as The Wearers of White, in the West as Saʿīdīs, in Lahsāʾ and Baḥrayn

⁸¹ Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, pp. 287-305; *The Book of Government*, pp. 212-26.

⁸² Niẓām al-mulk, *The Book of Government*, pp. xvi-xvii.

as Jannābīs, and in Iṣfahān as Bāṭinīs; whereas they call themselves The Didactics and other such names. But their only purpose is to abolish Islam, to mislead mankind and cast it into perdition.⁸³

Al-Yamanī and his *‘Aqā’id al-thalāth wa’l-sab‘īna firqa*

The next source is *‘Aqā’id al-thalāth wa’l-sab‘īna firqa* (*Tenets of Seventy-Three Sects*) by an author who used the pseudonym Abū Muḥammad al-Yamanī. Helmut Ritter who had examined the manuscript copy of the *‘Aqā’id* preserved in Istanbul (‘Āṭif 1373) found textual evidence, which suggests that the book was compiled around 540/1145-46 in Yemen.⁸⁴ It is a heresiography of the seventy-three Islamic sects which according to the author, all of the sects except one (i.e., *ahl al-sunna wa’l-jamā‘a*) are damned. What is unique about this work is that it contains an unusually long entry about the Ismā‘īlīs - almost one third of the whole book which extends over 240 printed pages. Leaving aside al-Bustī’s work which is discussed above, and al-Ghazālī’s *al-Mustaẓhirī*, or *Faḍā’ih al-Bāṭiniyya* (*Scandalous Acts of the Bāṭiniyya*, which is beyond the scope of this survey), al-Yamanī’s work is the most detailed refutation of Ismā‘īlī doctrines. The author is fairly acquainted with the whole range of Ismā‘īlī teaching as he has enumerated a number of early Ismā‘īlī works accessible to him. He states:

Indeed I have tested them [i.e., the Ismā‘īlīs] well because of the proximity of residence and have [also] read a great number of their abominable books. These books dealt with definitive issues [based on the *sharī‘a*], but my perception of [those books] is that their meanings and allusions lead to the annulment of the *sharī‘a*.⁸⁵

The reason the author did not reveal his real name was because he feared for his life. Although he wrote the refutation after the fall of the Ṣūlyahid dynasty, the Ismā‘īlīs were still a force to be reckoned with in Yemen. The Banū Ḥātim who controlled Ṣan‘ā’ and the surrounding regions of the north, were on good terms with the Musta‘lī-Ṭayyibī *da‘wa*, while the Banū Zuray‘ who professed the Ḥāfiẓī *da‘wa* were based in Aden and controlled southern Yemen.

Al-Yamanī was a staunch Sunnī and in the words of a Saudi editor of the *‘Aqā’id al-thalāth wa’l-sab‘īna firqa*, the author was a "*Salafiyy al-‘aqīda*" (a neo-orthodox). Al-Yamanī states quite categorically that the Ismā‘īlī imams were not from the progeny of Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl, since the latter died without leaving behind any offspring. He, therefore, asserts that those who claim this ancestry [i.e., the Fāṭimid caliphs of Egypt] were, in fact, the descendants of Maymūn b. Mubārak al-Qaddāh. Subsequently, al-

⁸³ Ibid., p. 231.

⁸⁴ H. Ritter, "Phililogika III: Muhammedanische Haresiographien," *Der Islam*, 18 (1929), pp. 34-54.

⁸⁵ A Saudi scholar edited this book from three manuscripts. I have obtained an older copy of the manuscript that was transcribed in 793/1391 and preserved in Mashhad, Iran. Unfortunately, the editor did not have access to this manuscript. There are significantly better variant readings in this copy and I have followed this copy in my translation. I have referred the manuscript as "MS." while I have referred the printed edition as "edn." Al-Yamanī, *‘Aqā’id al-thalāth wa’l-sab‘īna firqa*, MS. fol. 229 v.; idem, *‘Aqā’id* (edn.), vol. 2, pp. 512-13.

Yamānī explicitly accuses the Ismāʿīlīs of heresy. It should be noted that he quotes al-Sijistānī's *Kitāb al-Iftikhār* quite frequently. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to state that he refutes it chapter by chapter. He also cites al-Nakhshabī's [al-Nasafī's] *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl* and Abū Tammām's *Shajart al-dīn* twice. He brands all Ismāʿīlī missionaries as heretics. Then he provides a list of Ismāʿīlī books that he had consulted. The catalog is quite impressive and it has been arranged chronologically as follows:

Kitāb al-Izdiwāj of Abū Muḥammad [ʿAbdān];⁸⁶ *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*,⁸⁷ *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl* and *Kitāb al-Masʾala waʾl-jawāb* of Abūʾl-Ḥusayn al-Nakhshabī [or al-Nasafī]; *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ* of Abī Ḥātim [al-Rāzī]; *Kitāb al-Kashf* [of Jaʿfar b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman]; *Kitāb al-Iftikhār*, *Kitāb al-Maqālīd* and *Kitāb al-Bishāra* of Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī; *Kitāb Taʾwīl al-sharīʿa* [of the Fātimid caliph al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh]; *Kitāb Shajarat al-dīn wa-burhān al-yaqīn* of Abū Tammām, and *Kitāb al-Burhān* [also of Abū Tammām];⁸⁸ *al-Risāla al-durriyya*, *al-Risāla al-mulaqqaba biʾl-nuẓum*, *al-Risāla al-mulaqqaba biʾl-rawḍa* [of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī]; *al-Ajwiba* by an imam⁸⁹ to the questions posed by ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ṣulayhī.⁹⁰

The authors of the following titles, on the other hand, cannot be verified from the extant Ismāʿīlī sources and they are:

Kitāb al-Fajr, *Kitāb al-Muʾabbad*, (or *al-Muʾayyad*); *Kitāb al-Mumāthala waʾl-muḥāṣara*, *Kitāb Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, *Kitāb al-Istirshād*, *Kitāb Taʾwīl al-naḥw*, *Kitāb al-Ladhdha*, *Kitāb Sullam al-hidāya*, *Kitāb Kashf al-kashf*, and *Kitāb al-Sirr*.

After the list of the above books al-Yamanī adds the following note.

And [I have read] other than those [just enumerated, but if I cite them all] the number and explanation would become [too] long. For that reason I have mentioned [only] what I was able to recall readily, so that an intelligent Muslim will be amazed at [the number of those books] and a gullible ignorant person will be on his guard against them [Ismāʿīlīs]. God knows best what is right!⁹¹

Although al-Yamanī respectfully addresses all Ismāʿīlī authors with the honorific title of "*Shaykh*" attached to their names, after exposing their teachings he generally makes remarks, such as: "This indicates nothing but their corrupt interpretations, their

⁸⁶ Could it be identical with *Kitāb al-Rusūm waʾl-izdiwāj* of Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdān? See Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature*, pp. 33, 316.

⁸⁷ Al-Yamanī's reference to the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* as an Ismāʿīlī work is significant.

⁸⁸ *Kitāb al-Burhān* was condemned by al-Muʿizz. See al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Kitāb al-Majālis waʾl-musāyarāt*, p. 144; Madelung & Walker, *An Ismaili Heresiography*, p. 6.

⁸⁹ ʿAqāʾid (edn.) has: *ajwiba min baʿḍ minhum li-ʿAlī b. Muḥammad*; however the MS. reads: *ajwiba min baʿḍ aʾimmatihim li-ʿAlī b. Muḥammad*. If the manuscript reading is correct, then the imam in question would be al-Mustanṣir. But, if the other reading (i.e., edn.) is correct then it might be the work of al-Muʾayyad al-Shirāzī. See Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature*, p. 108.

⁹⁰ Al-Yamanī, ʿAqāʾid (edn.), vol. 2, pp. 513-14.

⁹¹ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 514.

ignorance and stupidity." He frequently quotes from *Kitāb al-Iftikhār* and refutes its statements by claiming that it blatantly violates the text of the Qur'ān and the *sharī'a*. To support his rebuttal, he generally relies on the obvious meaning of numerous verses of the Qur'ān and at times traditions of the Prophet. Al-Sijistānī seems to be his chief target for ridicule. At times he addresses al-Sijistānī as follows: "This *Shaykh* who annuls resurrection and denies the Day of Resurrection, the Day of Reckoning, the [existence of] Paradise and the Hell." Referring to a refrain used by al-Sijistānī throughout the book -- *What pride could be greater than comprehending the truth and alighting on the right path?* — al-Yamanī rebuts and states: "The one who boasts about his slanderous accusation," or "The one who brags about his declaration of unbelief and abrogation [of the *sharī'a*]." ⁹²

Referring to al-Nasafī he states: "A *Shaykh* from among them who is called Abu'l-Husayn al-Nakhshabī said in a book that he wrote about this heresy entitled *al-Mas'ala wa'l-jawāb* ... " ⁹³ About al-Rāzī he states: "A *Shaykh* from among them called Abū Hātim composed a book and titled it '*The Correction*,' thinking that with this book he had rectified [the doctrine] that one of his fellow-in-faith had corrupted. Indeed, this *Shaykh* did not rectify the corrupt [doctrine] with a sound one so that it would come close to truth. Rather he corrected the unsound [doctrine] with an unsound [doctrine], [which is] similar to patching a rag with a rag." ⁹⁴

In a long section entitled "Ismā'īlī interpretations of the Qur'ānic verses," al-Yamanī has given a wide variety of samples and demonstrated the fact that very often these *Shuyūkh* have contradicted themselves in their interpretations of the same verse/s. Two interpretations of Abū Tammām from his book *Shajarat al-dīn* come under severe criticism. The first interpretation is about punishment in Hell, which is interpreted by Abū Tammām to imply the everyday rigorous implementation of the Islamic *sharī'a* and its strict observance by a Muslim. ⁹⁵ Subsequently, al-Yamanī remarks: "It is nothing but an annulment of the *sharī'a*, and a blasphemy that God cannot forgive them." The second example deals with the interpretation of the Qur'ānic verse: *Thus We have appointed an enemy for every prophet: devils (shayāṭīn) from both men and Jinn.* ⁹⁶ Here, al-Yamanī points out that Abū Tammām has stated that 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (the second caliph) and Abū Jahl b. Hishām (a staunch opponent of the Prophet in Mecca) represent the figures of *Iblīs* and *Shayṭān* during the prophethood of Muḥammad. ⁹⁷ He thus brands Abū Tammām with heresy and states: "[He is] a heretic and [totally] uninformed of the truth and the [right] path. The children and the fool [from among men] would mock his statement and so [we cannot predict] how the intelligent [people] will react to such an obvious [erroneous] and wicked statement?"

The author of the *'Aqā'id al-thalāth wa'l-sab'īna firqa* being a Yemeni, has given a detailed account of the pre-Fāṭimid *da'wa* activities of Ibn Ḥawshab and 'Alī b.

⁹² Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 659-62.

⁹³ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 525.

⁹⁴ Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 596-98.

⁹⁵ In *Khwān al-ikhwān*, pp. 132-33, Nāṣir-e Khusrav states that according to al-Sijistānī the canon laws of the prophets were similar to *barzakh*, and the physical world was similar to a Hell.

⁹⁶ *The Qur'ān* (6:112), translated into English by Alan Jones, p. 139.

⁹⁷ Al-Yamanī, *'Aqā'id* (edn.), vol. 2, p. 721. In the text of Abū Tammām, 'Umar's representation is correct but not that of Abū Jahl, see Abū Tammām, *Bāb al-Shayṭān*, p. 3 (Arabic pagination).

Faḍl in Yemen. He has also covered the Qarāmiṭa of al-Baḥrayn quite fairly. Although he had access to both *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl* and *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ*, it is disappointing that al-Yamanī did not dwell on the major doctrinal controversy between al-Nasafī and al-Rāzī. The reason for his silence is not particularly surprising. One is inclined to think that he was not very interested in the philosophical issues. He states that according to the Ismāʿīlīs the Command [of God] was the cause of creation, and that the Intellect and the Soul are the two principles through which the universe emerged in the descending cosmological order. His rebuttal to these philosophical assumptions is very simple. He states: "The gist of what they profess is tantamount to their admission of the eternity of the world and an obvious confession that the existence of the universe is without the Creator." He then simply dismisses the philosophical discussion as "the stupidity of the philosophers."⁹⁸

Another feature of al-Yamanī's heresiography to be noted is that the author divides the Shīʿa (*al-Rawāfiḍ*) into three major groups: the Zaydiyya, al-Ghāliyya (the extremists who deify the imams), and al-Bāṭiniyya.⁹⁹ He then states at the beginning of the section concerning al-Bāṭiniyya that they are also called al-Qarāmiṭa and *al-Taʿlīmiyya*.¹⁰⁰ Thereupon, he states that the Bāṭiniyya can be further divided into six groups: Al-Kaysāniyya, al-Nuṣayriyya, al-Jarīriyya, al-Ṭarīfiyya, al-Imāmiyya, and al-Ismāʿīliyya.¹⁰¹

Al-Shahrastānī and his *al-Milal waʾl-niḥal*

Let me conclude this interesting survey with Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), a thinker and historian of religious and philosophical doctrines. He was also from Khurāsān and received his education in Nīshāpūr. In the introduction to his monumental work *al-Milal waʾl-niḥal* (*Religious and Philosophical Sects*), composed in 521/1127-28, he states:

The promise that I have taken upon myself [in composing this book] is to describe every sect as I found its description in their books without taking sides either with them or against them, and without discriminating between the sound and the unsound [doctrine], and [without] determining its correctness from falsehood. Although the glimpses of truth and the scent of falsehood might not be hidden from the discerning intellects that pursue rational evidences.¹⁰²

As he stated at the beginning of the book, al-Shahrastānī's presentation of the Ismāʿīlīs, compared to all other authors surveyed above, is precise, succinct and fair. He elaborates on the new preaching that was started by Ḥasan-e Ṣabbāḥ and translates his *al-Fuṣūl al-arbaʿa* (*The Four Chapters*) from its original Persian to Arabic, but adds nothing

⁹⁸ Al-Yamanī, *ʿAqāʾid* (edn.), vol. 2, p. 518.

⁹⁹ Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 448-49.

¹⁰⁰ This is according to the Mashhad manuscript copy. The edited text adds al-Khurramiyya to this list (*ʿAqāʾid* (edn.), vol. 2, p. 477). The term *Taʿlīmiyya* was applied to the Nizārī followers of Ḥasan-e Ṣabbāḥ. For the latter's teaching see Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, pp. 325-28; Hodgson has translated a long passage from al-Shahrastānī's *al-Milal waʾl-niḥal*.

¹⁰¹ Al-Yamanī, *ʿAqāʾid* (edn.), vol. 2, p. 477.

¹⁰² Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal waʾl-niḥal*, vol. 1, p. 14.

about the Khurāsānī mission and its three eminent missionaries: al-Nasafī, al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī. Besides being a close associate of the Seljuq Sultan Sanjar, al-Shahrastānī is generally regarded as an Ashʿarī. However, he was also accused of being an Ismāʿīlī. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, whose father's maternal uncle was a student of al-Shahrastānī, asserts that al-Shahrastānī was an Ismāʿīlī and calls him *dāʿī al-duʿāt* (the chief missionary). In his *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya*, Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), a Shāfiʿī jurist, nonetheless contends the authenticity of the accusation and is inclined to believe that al-Shahrastānī's being an Ismāʿīlī was a later fabrication. His Qurʾān commentary entitled *Mafātīḥ al-asrār* (*Keys to the Secrets*) indicates evidence of Nizārī Ismāʿīlī doctrine. Thus, the question as to whether al-Shahrastānī was an Ismāʿīlī or not, cannot be concluded with certainty.¹⁰³

An Early Doctrinal Controversy in the Iranian School of Ismāʿīlī Thought

Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl of al-Nasafī

The origin of the controversy is believed to have started with the dissemination of the book *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl*, particularly among the Ismāʿīlī missionaries in Khurāsān. It was composed by al-Nasafī most probably at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century.¹⁰⁴ Although it no longer exists, from the ensuing debate concerning its contents, it appears that the book was an early comprehensive work on Ismāʿīlī doctrines. In addition to expounding the pre-Fātimid Ismāʿīlī teachings, the author had inherited from his predecessors, the pre-Fārābīan (Fārābī, d. 339/950) version of Neoplatonism which was introduced by al-Nasafī and disseminated among the followers of al-Kindī (d. ca 252/866). In the aforecited book, al-Nasafī introduced the three hypostases of Plotinus, viz., the One, the Intellect, and the Soul, and the theory of creation (i.e., a series of gradual procession) of the universe from One (i.e., God) into the Ismāʿīlī cosmology and tried to adapt it to the Islamic principle of monotheism and Ismāʿīlī teaching. The process of adaptation and interpretation on Neoplatonism was bound to provoke criticism and different reactions from other thinkers within the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa*. This is, in fact, what happened within certain Ismāʿīlī circles in Khurāsān. The reason is obvious because the orientation of the *daʿwa* in this region, as preceded in the above survey, was intellectual and philosophical, quite different than the *daʿwa* operating in other parts of the Islamic world, such as the Yemen and North Africa.

¹⁰³ See Poonwala, *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature*, pp. 254-57; *Et*², s.v. al-Shahrastānī, by G. Monnot.

¹⁰⁴ For al-Nasafī's works, see Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature*, pp. 40-43; Walker, "The Ismāʿīlīs," pp. 78-79. Our statement that al-Nasafī was al-Sijistānī's teacher is based on al-Kirmānī's report in his *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ*, pp. 98, 106, which states that his *Kitāb al-Nuṣra* was intended to defend his teacher [al-Nasafī]. The Arabic reads: *lākinnaḥu arāda al-muḥāmāt ʿan ustādhihi*; at another place al-Kirmānī says: *lākinnaḥu naqal al-maʿnā iḡhāl^m li-shuʿbat^h jīmā naḥāhu min al-naqṣ nuṣrat^m li-shaykhihi [al-Nasafī].*

Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ of al-Rāzī

Al-Rāzī, al-Nasafī's contemporary who was also an accomplished theologian, thinker and familiar with Neoplatonism, was the first to react.¹⁰⁵ It is important to note that there were slightly different versions of Neoplatonism in circulation at this time. Excluding other doctrinal issues, this was also a cause for disagreement between al-Nasafī and al-Rāzī as their sources and orientations varied. Consequently, al-Rāzī wrote his *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ* to rectify what he considered to be the errors in the *Maḥṣūl*. The *Iṣlāḥ* has survived, but is incomplete at the beginning and end. The lack of evidence does not allow one to pinpoint the exact date of its compilation. It is known that al-Rāzī died in 322/934-35 and therefore one can assume that the *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ* must have been written during the second decade of the fourth/tenth century or even earlier. In turn, one can presume that the *Maḥṣūl* was compiled a few years earlier, i.e., at the beginning of fourth/tenth century.

Kitāb al-Nuṣra of al-Sijistānī

The *Iṣlāḥ* of al-Rāzī prompted our author, al-Sijistānī to respond to the criticism leveled against his teacher since he also subscribed to those views.¹⁰⁶ One believes that al-Nasafī and al-Sijistānī relied on the same sources of Neoplatonism. Al-Sijistānī, therefore, composed *Kitāb al-Nuṣra* to defend the views of his teacher and criticized the corrections presented by al-Rāzī. In his *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ* (*The Book of the Meadow*),¹⁰⁷ al-Kirmānī who was familiar with the works of al-Sijistānī, states that the latter compiled the *Kitāb al-Nuṣra* before his later works, particularly *Kitāb al-Maqālīd* and *Kitāb al-Iftikhār*. Al-Kirmānī had reached this conclusion because he discovered that al-Sijistānī had changed his position in the *Maqālīd* and the *Iftikhār* from his previous work the *Kitāb al-Nuṣra*.¹⁰⁸ One can thus accept that *Kitāb al-Nuṣra* was an early work of al-Sijistānī and he may have even written it at the beginning of his career when he was still under the influence of his teacher.

Kitāb al-Riyāḍ of al-Kirmānī

Al-Kirmānī, the foremost *dā'ī* during the reign of al-Ḥākim (r. 386/996-411/1021), who was later given the honorific title *ḥujjat al-'Irāqayn* (the chief *dā'ī* of both *al-'Irāq al-'Arabī* and *al-'Irāq al-A'jamī*), resided in the 'Abbāsid capital of Baghdad.¹⁰⁹ He was the

¹⁰⁵ For al-Rāzī's works see Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature*, pp. 36-39; Walker, "The Ismā'īlīs," pp. 79-81.

¹⁰⁶ For al-Sijistānī's works see Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature*, pp. 82-89; Walker, "The Ismā'īlīs," pp. 81-84.

¹⁰⁷ Ḥusayn al-Hamdānī's "*Maqālat Kitāb al-Riyāḍ*," was the first article to enumerate the contents of the book.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ*, pp. 72, 93.

¹⁰⁹ For al-Kirmānī's life and works, see Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature*, pp. 94-102; Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī*; idem, "The Ismā'īlīs," pp. 84-88; *El²*, s.v. al-Kirmānī, by De Bruijn; De Smet, *La Quiétude de l'Intellect* (study of al-Kirmānī's *Rāḥat al-'aql*).

most learned and talented theologian of his day, and an eminent thinker who was highly conversant in the Greek philosophical trends (post-Fārābian) that were prevalent at the time. During the last years of al-Ḥākim's reign, he was summoned to Cairo to combat the proto-Druze movement. Soon after his arrival at the Fāṭimid capital, he actively engaged in teaching and writing. His main concern in Cairo was how to meet the challenge posed by dissident elements within the *da'wa* itself on an intellectual level and refute their erroneous and deviant views. His role was simultaneously delicate and challenging, but he was highly skilled for the task. After confronting the immediate threat posed by these extreme views concerning the doctrine of an incarnated of God in the person of the imam, he turned his attention to an earlier controversy that had erupted within the Iranian school of Ismā'īlism and composed *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ*.

Kitāb al-Riyāḍ was his last composition (explained below) wherein he revisited the debate between al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī that had been provoked by al-Nasafī's work. He wrote *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ* with the sole purpose of settling once and for all a dispute that had raged on for a considerable time within Ismā'īlī circles in Khurāsān. The full title of his book is indicative of its contents and his intent to correct the deviations of some highly venerated and learned *du'āt* of the *da'wa*. Its full title reads: *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ fī'l-ḥukm bayn al-ṣādayn: Ṣāhib al-Iṣlāḥ wa-ṣāhib al-Nuṣra* (Book of the Meadows in Judgment between the two [books with the letter] ṣād: the author of al-Iṣlāḥ and the author of al-Nuṣra).¹¹⁰

In another study, I have pointed out that al-Kirmānī was probably frustrated by the inaction of al-Ḥākim and might have left Cairo in 408/1017 at the height of the Druze controversy, thinking that he had done all the work that was possible for him to do and left the rest for the caliph-imam.¹¹¹ In 411/1020, when he had returned to Iraq he most likely revised his *magnum opus* *Rāḥat al-'aql* (The Comfort of Reason). It should be noted that while there are numerous references to *Rāḥat al-'aql* in the *Riyāḍ*, there are only three references in the former of the latter. These cross-references have confused some scholars, especially when they read in "The Second Pathway" (*al-mashra' al-thānī*) of the "First Rampart" (*al-sūr al-awwal*), of *Rāḥat al-'aql* where it is stated: *allafahu fī sanat ihdā 'ashara wa-arba' mi'a fī diyār al-'Irāq* (He compiled it in the year 411[1020-21], in the country of Iraq). However, if one translates "*allafahu*," to mean "he revised it," the puzzle is solved.¹¹² When al-Kirmānī revised the earlier version of *Rāḥat al-'aql*, he incorporated other corrections besides those references to the *Riyāḍ* because it dealt with similar issues. This explains why al-Kirmānī did not cite the *Riyāḍ* in his other works except in *Rāḥat al-'aql* (after it was revised). At the beginning of the last chapter in his *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ*, he states:

I observed in *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl* [that certain things are treated incorrectly], which must have compelled Abū Ḥātim to explicate and amend whatever he was able to

¹¹⁰ Al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ*, in the introduction, p. 50. Unfortunately, the editor incorrectly vocalized the word *fī'l-ḥukm* as *fī'l-ḥikam*. Surprisingly, the author of the article "al-Kirmānī" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., followed the incorrect vocalization of the editor.

¹¹¹ Poonawala, "Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī and the Proto-Druze." There I have indicated that one does not know the exact date of al-Kirmānī's arrival nor the exact date of his departure, or the circumstances under which he decided to leave Cairo.

¹¹² Al-Kirmānī, *Rāḥat al-'aql*, p. 20. See also van Ess, "Zur Chronologie," pp. 257-61 Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī*, p. 32.

amend [from that book]. Whatever he did not discuss and might have overlooked [in his *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ*], I am obliged to explain and fulfill my responsibility with regard to certain things that are not permitted [to be expressed incorrectly] in a sound belief system, [particularly] with regard to the profession of the unity of God and concerning His divine ordinances ... if God prolongs my life, I will deal with those issues in [yet] another book. Indeed, I will [fulfill my promise and] do it because no excuse would be accepted [by God] in such a [serious] matter...¹¹³

It seems, that al-Kirmānī did not live long enough to fulfill his promise and write another book after the *Riyāḍ* concerning the controversy except to revise his most important work *Rāḥat al-ʿaql*. If the above assumption is correct, then he may have died soon after he completed the final revision of the latter work.¹¹⁴ In "The Third Pathway" of "The First Rampart," he enumerates several of his works and those of his predecessors as prerequisite readings for perusing his great work. After mentioning the works of al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh and Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr al-Yaman, he reveres the works of his major Iranian predecessors, namely the three *Shuyūkh*: Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nakhshabī (al-Nasafī) and Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijzī (al-Sijistānī). It is here again that he draws the reader's attention to his works, particularly *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ* with its complete title.¹¹⁵

In "An Early Controversy in Ismailism," W. Ivanow has fully elaborated on the debate and analyzed the contents of both *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ* and *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ*.¹¹⁶ In *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī*, Paul Walker has also summarized the debate mainly as presented by al-Kirmānī. Therefore, in what follows I will concentrate mainly on those issues that help us reconstruct the contents of both *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl* and *Kitāb al-Nuṣra* from the extracts found in the works of al-Rāzī and al-Kirmānī. First, I will scrutinize *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ* to cull al-Nasafī's position as presented and refuted by al-Rāzī. Then I will turn to *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ* as it summarizes the views of the trio, viz., al-Nasafī, al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī before refuting them. This, in turn, will give us a clearer picture of al-Sijistānī's position when he wrote his *Kitāb al-Nuṣra*.

Shortcomings in the *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl*

The first thing worth noting is that al-Rāzī and al-Kirmānī point out that there were certain serious shortcomings in the doctrines preached by al-Nasafī and then recorded in his *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl*. Al-Rāzī states:

¹¹³ Al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ*, p. 214.

¹¹⁴ In the second *mashraʿ* of the first *sūr*, al-Kirmānī states that he composed [revised] *Rāḥat al-ʿaql* in 411/1020-21 in the country of Iraq. Al-Kirmānī, *Rāḥat al-ʿaql*, p. 20. See also van Ess, "Zur Chronologie", pp. 257-61; Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī*, p. 32.

¹¹⁵ Al-Kirmānī, *Rāḥat al-ʿaql*, p. 22. It reads: *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ fī'l-ḥukm bayna al-Shaykhayn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī wa-Abī Yaʿqūb al-Sijzī fīmā ikhtalafā fīhi wa-takallamā ʿalayhi fī kitābihimā al-Iṣlāḥ al-ladhī li-Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī wa'l-Nuṣra al-ladhī li-Abī Yaʿqūb*.

¹¹⁶ Ivanow, *Studies in Early Persian Ismailism*, pp. 87-122. His note 1 on p. 106 should be amended to read that the *Rāḥat al-ʿaql* was composed before the *Riyāḍ*, but the former was revised later. Hence al-Kirmānī added those references to the *Riyāḍ* in it. The contents of the *Riyāḍ* are summarized by Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī*, pp. 44-45.

Now, we proceed with the correction of the errors that occurred in the book [*al-Maḥṣūl*] and circulated [among the people]. I intend to discuss [those errors] because the erroneous doctrines are not permitted [in one's faith]. [On the other hand], I will refrain from the discussion of derivative principles ... [because] mistakes are allowed with regard to [the derivative principles] if the author's intention [in presenting those matters] was correct and sound...¹¹⁷

In the introduction of *Kitāb al-Riyād*, al-Kirmānī also stresses the same point. He states:

The most worthy thing for a person who professes the unity of God is that he should turn his attention to that very concept and reflect on it and on obtaining the knowledge about His ordinances ... I noticed that the *Shaykh*, Abū Ḥātim, may God's mercy be upon him, corrected what he considered to be unsound [doctrine] in the *al-Maḥṣūl*. And the *Shaykh*, Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijzī, may God's mercy be upon him, supported the author of the *Maḥṣūl*, thereby testifying to the soundness of al-Nasafī's views. However, the matters concerning which both [Abū Ḥātim and Abū Ya'qūb] disputed do not pertain to the subsidiary principles about which discord is permitted if the fundamental principles are sound.

I found the *Shaykh*, Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijzī, may God's be mercy upon him, accurate at times in his refutation, but he also treated the *Shaykh*, Abū Ḥātim unjustly at other times. Some times both argued without [maintaining] proper sequence [of their thought]. Nevertheless, the author of the *Maḥṣūl* had stated something [incorrectly], particularly in the chapter[s] dealing with the *tawḥīd* and the First Intellect, leaving aside [other errors concerning minor things] that pertained to the *furū'* (secondary rules). The *Shaykh*, Abū Ḥātim, may God have mercy upon him, therefore, ought to have corrected and discussed [those major issues]. Instead, he elaborated his book [the *Iṣlāḥ*] with the discussion about the *furū'* and neglected the [*uṣūl*, fundamentals].¹¹⁸ This was more harmful to the *da'wa ḥādīyya* (i.e., the Ismā'īlī community) when they took up positions on a discord concerning the lofty way to the profession of *tawḥīd*, the divine ordinances, and [led them] to the state of disrepair. Therefore, I intend to cite the statements of both [Abū Ḥātim and Abū Ya'qūb]; what is said in the *Iṣlāḥ* by way of correction and what is said in the *Nuṣra* by way of refutation ... Thereafter, I will discuss what was ignored [by Abū Ḥātim] in the *Maḥṣūl* that touches upon the fundamental principles [of faith, i.e., the *uṣūl*] about which disagreement is not permitted. I will clearly differentiate the truth, craving for reward [from God].¹¹⁹

Al-Rāzī's Corrections

First, al-Rāzī's *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ* will be examined. According to al-Rāzī, al-Nasafī maintained that the First Originated Being is perfect because it [came into being] through perfect Origination via the perfect Originator. In other words, the Originator is perfect; hence His act of Origination cannot be anything except perfect. Consequently, the

¹¹⁷ Al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ*, p. 23.

¹¹⁸ Al-Kirmānī's observation is correct because a major portion of the *Iṣlāḥ* deals with incorrect *ta'wīl* of the Qur'ānic verses about the *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, and other issues.

¹¹⁹ Al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-Riyād*, pp. 49-50.

product has to be and is also perfect. Al-Rāzī objects to the very premise of al-Nasafī that the Originator (i.e., God) can be predicated with any attribute and states:

Rather we assert that the First Originated Being is perfect because [He came into being] through Origination which is perfect. Moreover, the First Originated being and the [act of] Origination are identical (*ays wāḥid*). The Originator, who is most sublime and most lofty, absolutely does not require any attribute. We describe Him neither with perfection nor do we assert that He is perfect. It is [totally] wrong to [describe Him] in such a manner.¹²⁰

Therefore, one can understand why both al-Rāzī and al-Kirmānī rebuked al-Nasafī of violating the most fundamental Islamic principle of *tawḥīd*. Accordingly, God transcends human description and no attributes can be ascribed to Him. The reader will observe that in the *Maqālīd* al-Sijistānī tries his best to refine the concept of *tawḥīd* and maintains absolute transcendence of God. In this respect al-Sijistānī did move away from his previous position.

Next, according to al-Rāzī, al-Nasafī maintained that since the Soul was imperfect (compared to the Intellect), it needed the benefits of the Intellect to achieve its actual perfection.¹²¹ So, the Soul got into a state of unrest to invoke the benefits [of the Intellect]. Because of its unrest there occurred a motion [in the Soul]. When the Soul obtained the nourishment [from the Intellect] it became tranquil. The state of rest achieved by the Soul was, therefore, [the state of tranquility] from that of quest. Thus, both [motion and rest] are traces generated by the Soul [in its very nature] through the power derived from the Intellect. For that reason the Matter and the Form became the foundations for the composition of the universe.

Al-Rāzī, contrary to al-Nasafī, asserts that the Soul by its very nature is perfect, because it issued forth from the Intellect in a state of perfection. Moreover, the Soul is a perfect procession (emanation, *inbi'āth*) from the perfect, because the Intellect is perfect. Hence, what is lacking in perfection is the Soul's act, not its very nature. The Soul's action, on the other hand, does not attain perfection except with [the passage of] time. The emanation/springing forth of the Soul [from the Intellect] is contemporaneous with time, and the Intellect and time are indeed identical. Again, both the First Originated Being and the Origination are identical, since there is no time before the Origination, and therefore time and the Origination are identical (they are one and the same being), because God originated all beings in one stroke (*duf'at^{an} wāḥidat^{an}*). The First Originated Being, the focal point for all beings, is perfect and so is the Second [the Soul] that comes forth from the First [the Intellect]. Although the Soul needs the benefits of the First, this need is not due to some imperfection in the Soul's nature. Similarly, although the First is perfect, this perfection is due to its desire of achieving a union with the Command, which is the Origination itself. This is not due to any imperfection in the Intellect's very nature; otherwise it would imply imperfection both in [the Intellect and the Soul].

¹²⁰ Al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ*, pp. 36, 37.

¹²¹ Unfortunately all the citations from the *Maḥṣūl* by al-Rāzī are so mixed up with his refutation that one cannot make out al-Nasafī's reason for the Soul's imperfection in its very nature.

Following this, al-Rāzī goes into further detail about motion and rest. His view is that motion and rest are traces of the Soul; [they are not in its very nature] due to the power derived from the Intellect, [again both motion and rest are traces of the Soul] in the matter and the form, and for that reason the matter and the form are the foundation(s) of universe as elucidated by the ancient sages.

The next point raised by al-Nasafī is that the matter generated by the Second [i.e., the Soul] does not resemble the Soul in the same manner that the Second was generated by the First. Al-Rāzī strongly disagrees with al-Nasafī's position and asserts that the Second, emanating from the First, does resemble the latter. In fact, al-Rāzī affirms that the Second is the counterpart of the First, although the First has a higher status and nobler rank than the Second. Al-Rāzī adds further that the relation of the Second [i.e., the Soul] with the matter is not similar to that of the First with the Second, rather the matter, which is the substance of this universe, is a dark and dense substance. He asserts that there is no single particle of this universe that is derived from the Two Original principles united with the Word of the Creator. Al-Rāzī [evades the question about the origin of matter] and claims that one is not permitted to state that either a part of the universe, or all of its parts, are generated from the Two Original principles. The substance of this universe is generated from matter and form and they are the foundations of this compound universe.

One can see through this debate that both al-Nasafī and al-Rāzī ultimately draw their arguments from Neoplatonic sources; however, their sources vary which led them to different conclusions. Without going into further detail it should be briefly noted that there were several manifestations of Neoplatonism available in Arabic: the Neoplatonism of Plotinus, Porphyry (Plotinus' disciple, biographer, fellow teacher and successor in his academy in Rome), and Iamblichus (Porphyry's student). Today, Proclus is regarded as the third most important Neoplatonist after Plotinus and Porphyry. Hence, the question of the identification of the sources of al-Nasafī and al-Rāzī should be left for future research.

The next major point of discord, discussed at great length by al-Rāzī concerns the cyclical hierohistory of seven major epochs. Each epoch was inaugurated by a major prophet called a *nāṭiq*. Al-Nasafī maintained that the "messengers with determination"¹²² were the seven *nuṭaqā'*. The first *nāṭiq*, Adam, inaugurated the first cycle of history but was without determination since he did not introduce any *sharī'a* (canon law). Al-Rāzī states that this assumption is wrong because *sharī'a* is not identical to *'azīma* (determination). Moreover, al-Nasafī maintained that the master of the seventh cycle [al-Qā'im] was also among the messengers with determination. Al-Rāzī stipulates that al-Nasafī's assumption that *'azīma* (determination) and *dawr* (a cycle of history) are identical is also wrong. To argue this point, al-Rāzī elaborates on the linguistic meaning of the terms *sharī'a*, *'azīma*, and *dawr* with quotations from the Qur'ān. He affirms that the messengers who brought the *sharī'a* were six: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad; not five as maintained by al-Nasafī. Al-Rāzī asserts that Adam, the first *nāṭiq* did introduce *sharī'a*. The messengers of determination, on the other hand, al-Rāzī maintains were five: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad.

¹²² The Qur'ān (46:35), translated into English by Alan Jones, p. 466; the term is "*ūlu'l-ʿazm min al-rusul*" (the messengers of determination).

Al-Nasafī advocated that there is no *nātiq* after Muḥammad who put together a new *sharīʿa* and consequently the *sharīʿa* of Muḥammad will continue to prevail until the Day of Resurrection (*al-qiyāma*). Noah was the first messenger with determination because he abolished the *sharīʿa* of Adam. Adam was without determination because there was no *sharīʿa* for him to abrogate. The masters of the cycles of history are seven: Adam is the first, while the seventh [al-Qāʾim] is the last. Concerning the advent of the latter, the Prophet had given good tidings when he stated: "If only one day is left of the duration of the world, God will prolong that day until a person from my progeny will emerge who will fill the world with justice as it was filled with injustice before."¹²³

Al-Rāzī then adds: "We are in the cycle of the Prophet Muḥammad, and when this cycle is completed, mankind will indeed get in touch with the Master of the seventh cycle. The latter will not compose new *sharīʿa*, and there is no preceding *sharīʿa* to be revoked by him. Rather he will reveal the hidden, esoteric meaning of the prevailing *sharīʿa*."

It is to be noted that in later works, particularly the *Maqālīd* and the *Iftikhār*, al-Sijistānī maintained his previous position that supported al-Nasafī's opinion that Adam did not introduce *sharīʿa*. The prophets who introduced *sharīʿa* by revoking the previous one were five: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad.

Following the discussion of cyclical history and the preeminent prophets, a major portion of the *Iṣlāḥ* is devoted to the *taʾwīl* of the verses dealing with the stories of the prophets in the Qurʾān. It is here that al-Rāzī demonstrates a superior knowledge of biblical stories by revealing serious errors of understanding and interpretation on the part of al-Nasafī. However, this is beyond the scope of our present study. Suffice it to say, al-Kirmānī correctly observed that al-Rāzī was bogged down in secondary details and overlooked some significant issues that were incorrectly defined by al-Nasafī.

Al-Kirmānī's critique of al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī

So, let us now turn to al-Kirmānī and his *Kitāb al-Riyād*. It is divided into ten chapters and each chapter is subdivided into several sections. Here are the chapter headings (in italics) and other pertinent information:

1. *Soul, the first procession [from the Intellect]*. It is the longest chapter of the book and the discussion revolves around the two opposing positions taken by al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī respectively whether the Soul is perfect or imperfect. Al-Kirmānī cites the *Nuṣra* profusely and states that its author is not accurate in his criticism of al-Rāzī, because he has incorrectly applied the theories of the physical world to the spiritual realm.

2. *The First Intellect or the First Originated Being*. The discussion is focused on two contrary views held by al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī concerning motion (*al-ḥaraka*) and quiescence (*al-sukūn*). Al-Rāzī maintained that they were inherent in the very nature of the First (Intellect) and the Second (Soul). They are inherent in the First, because when the First was originated it got united with the origination. Hence, the union has left two

¹²³ For Mahdī tradition/s see Wensinck, *Concordance*, s.v. j-w-r.

traces: the act of origination and the object of origination. Similarly both motion and quiescence are inherent in the Second, because it was both the process of emanation and the emanate entity. Al-Sijistānī, on the other hand, asserted that motion is caused by desire; hence the Intellect is quiescence while motion is connected with the Soul. Al-Kirmānī resolves the issue by stating that both quiescence and motion belong to the material world and those concepts cannot be applied to the primal spiritual realities like the Intellect and the Soul.

3. *The Soul and the Prime Matter, whether they resemble the First or not.* Al-Kirmānī rebukes al-Sijistānī for misrepresenting al-Rāzī's position. He objects to al-Nasafī's statement that although the Second [i.e., the Soul] was engendered by the First [i.e., the Intellect], the Second does not resemble the First. Al-Rāzī maintains that even though the Second was engendered by the First, the Second does not [totally] resemble the First but is similar to the First despite [the fact that] the First is higher in rank and nobler in status. Al-Rāzī further objects to al-Nasafī's assertion that the Prime Matter was engendered by the Soul. On the contrary, al-Rāzī asserts that the Prime Matter is [merely] a trace left behind by the Soul and therefore it does not resemble the latter [at all]. Moreover, al-Rāzī states that [unlike the Soul] Prime Matter is dark and turbid.

The crux of the debate is that there is no connection between the higher spiritual world and the lower material world because the former is luminous and radiant while the latter is dark and opaque. Al-Sijistānī explains this riddle by elaborating on the two dimensions of the Soul -- the higher and the lower; the higher is directed towards the luminous realm while the lower is directed towards the realm of Nature. Al-Kirmānī flatly dismisses al-Sijistānī's argument by stating that the Soul is not a body and cannot be described as having two dimensions.

4. *Are particular souls parts or traces of the Universal Soul?* This chapter also deals with the relation of particular souls to the Universal Soul. Al-Rāzī asserted that [human] rational souls are not parts, but traces of the Universal Soul. Al-Sijistānī rejected al-Rāzī's position by resorting to al-Nasafī's view that rational souls are indeed parts of the Universal soul. To lend further support to his argument, al-Sijistānī argues that if we do not accept this premise then all of our religious tenets, such as the prophethood or prophecy, imamate, *wiṣāya* (trusteeship), divine revelation, and the revealed law/s will be invalidated because if a particular soul is merely a trace (or appearance) of the Universal Soul it can neither perceive, comprehend nor derive benefit/s from the one that acts upon it (*mu'aththir*, i.e., the Universal Soul). Moreover, the prophets' claim that they perceive the higher and nobler world, comprehend the spiritual hierarchy, derive benefit/s from that realm and bring back illumination from above, especially from the Two Roots [the Intellect & the Soul], and the three branches [*al-jadd*, *al-fath*, and *al-khayāl*] that extend from those Roots cannot be sustained. Now, al-Sijistānī argues, if the souls of the prophets were mere traces of the Universal Soul they would not have been able to comprehend what was revealed to them, or been able to perceive the very spiritual beings that are part of the Universal Soul.

Al-Sijistānī argues further by stating that the Intellect originated with the Word, the Soul is a form of the Intellect, and the Nature was engendered by the Soul, hence the rational souls are parts of the Universal Soul. The concept of *al-tawḥīd*, therefore, should

be pronounced in this sequence [negation of physical attributes followed by negation of spiritual attributes, i.e., two-fold negation]. It is worth noting that al-Sijistānī maintained the same view in his *Kitāb al-Yanābī*¹²⁴ -- the seventeenth and the eighteenth wellsprings (*yanbū*).¹²⁴ However, his explanation of the seventeenth wellspring leads to misinterpretation because it appears to suggest that a soul leaves one body and enters another body. Both al-Kirmānī and Nāṣir-Khusrav, therefore have accused al-Sijistānī of holding the doctrine of metempsychosis.¹²⁵ It should be noted that the forty-fourth *iqḷid* is devoted to refuting metempsychosis. Al-Sijistānī thus seems to have amended his earlier view.

Al-Kirmānī rejects the whole chain of al-Sijistānī's arguments and objects to manner of expression. Al-Kirmānī affirms that it is not permissible [for a Muslim] to state (explicitly) that the Intellect was originated through the Word, because it implies that the Intellect was preceded by the Word. Al-Kirmānī affirms that the Intellect is nothing but the very essence of the Word, and the Word is nothing but the very essence of the Intellect. He also rejects al-Sijistānī's primary assumption that particular souls are parts of the Universal Soul on the ground that the Soul is not a body susceptible to division. Al-Kirmānī sums up his arguments by stating that both the Soul and the Nature (ultimately) proceed from the First and the issue of superiority or inferiority depends on their relation to each other. He then explains that the issuing forth of the Soul from the Intellect was the first procession (*al-inbi'āth al-awwal*), while the issuing forth of the rational souls is the second procession (*al-inbi'āth al-thānī*). To be concise, these thorny issues were also debated by later Neoplatonists. In the twenty-fifth *iqḷid*, al-Sijistānī struggles to grapple with this very issue and clarifies his position as to why he had to insert the Word between the Originator and the First Intellect.¹²⁶

5. *Man is the fruit of the [material] world.* Al-Rāzī maintained that Man is entirely the ultimate outcome (fruit) of this world. Al-Sijistānī, on the other hand, argued that such a premise implies that the rational soul does not survive after it departs from the body and does not pass on to the next world. Al-Sijistānī adds that this is what the *Dahriyya* (materialists) believe. He affirms that indeed Man is the fruit of the higher, nobler and luminous world. This was the reason for the coming of the prophets and their warnings that this world is only transitory while the hereafter is everlasting. Without going into the details as to how both al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī arrived at their respective conclusions, al-Kirmānī asserts that Man is the fruit of both worlds, because he grew out of the two worlds. In this world Man attains an initial perfection while in the next he attains a second perfection.

6. *On Movement, Quiescence, Matter, and Form.* According to al-Rāzī, al-Nasafī maintained that matter and form are like the spirit (*rūḥ*) in motion, while quiescence is

¹²⁴ The seventeenth Wellspring is entitled: "On affirming a universal soul out of which the partial souls in humans proceed," and the eighteenth Wellspring is entitled: "That the substance of what are parts in the human is a portion of universal soul." Walker, *The Wellsprings of Wisdom*, pp. 70-73.

¹²⁵ Madelung, "Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī and Metempsychosis."

¹²⁶ The twenty-fifth *iqḷid* is entitled: Concerning why it is believed that there is no intermediary between the Word and the Preceder (the Intellect).

like the body (*jism*) to both matter and form. Matter is an imaginary movement in the things that are composite, and it is of three types. Without going into an explanation, al-Rāzī objects to al-Nasafī's statement and says: "The case is quite the reverse, motion and quiescence are like a spirit to the matter and the form, while the latter two are like a body to motion and quiescence." This is because as al-Rāzī explains, the spirit is finer than the body and the latter is coarser than the former. Likewise motion and quiescence are finer than matter and form, and therefore coarser than the former two.

Al-Sijistānī rejects al-Rāzī's correction and states that such an analogy is incorrect. If one follows that logic, then those substances that are perceptible through the senses should be bodies for the accidents, since they are coarser than the latter and the accidents should be their spirits. Rather, al-Sijistānī adds that we should examine the definition of the spirit and the body. Accordingly, the body is the one that accepts three dimensions: length, breadth, and depth. The parts of the spirit, on the other hand, resemble each other. Similarly, motion is divided into three kinds: motion from the middle, motion towards the middle, and motion at the middle.¹²⁷ For this reason motion resembles a body.

Al-Kirmānī dismisses both positions held by al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī as corrupt and based on a false assumption lacking any proof. He states that motion and quiescence are antonyms and they cannot be combined in one place at the same time. Similarly, matter and form exist together, one cannot separate from the other, although one is the agent (i.e., the form) and the other is (i.e., the matter) is the object of that action. Al-Kirmānī rejects al-Sijistānī's definitions of spirit and body and asserts that the *rūḥ* and the *nafs* are synonyms and not bodies. Similarly, the three dimensions are not bodies. Al-Kirmānī also corrects al-Rāzī's statement that the First Cause was the Origination described as the Word of God, and expressed by the term "*kun*," and its interpretation. He asserts that the Prime Matter is hypothetical (*wahmī*) as the Origination itself is hypothetical. The Origination does not manifest itself except with the First Originated being. The latter is not a body, so neither motion nor quiescence can be predicated on it.

7. *About the constitution of the world.* Al-Rāzī states that the world is composed of four substances, four structures and four types of mankind. The assembled and the dissolved [thing] is one and the same substance. A human being's mate or likeness is not a horse, because a human stands alone with his rational soul. Man therefore does not have his equal among the components of the world and its generated beings or things. Rather the human being is like the cosmos [in itself] because he has united all substances of the universe and is, thus, considered a microcosm.

Al-Sijistānī's response is that the state of pairing (matching up a set or putting together) is not only contingent upon the state of belonging to the same genus, but it also depends on the condition of admissibility. Al-Sijistānī states that this lower, coarse world is the counterpart of the higher, finer world, although both are quite distinct from each other. For example, consider the resemblance between a man and a horse. A horse is not from the genus of man, although both share the genus of life. Despite saying that the lower, coarser world is the counterpart of the higher, finer world, both are linked together

¹²⁷ The division of motion, like other things, is stated in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, vol. 3, p. 204.

with respect to the giving and receiving of benefits. Al-Sijistānī then asserts that powers of the higher world are connected with those of the lower world.

Al-Kirmānī states that al-Rāzī's reasoning is impossible to follow but al-Sijistānī's explanation of genus is correct, although the counterpart of man, with all the virtues as is the case with the prophets and the imams, cannot exist except for the angels. Al-Kirmānī then rebukes al-Sijistānī for citing the philosopher Empedocles instead of the Imams, who inherited the secret [knowledge] of revelations and are, therefore, the trustees of God's knowledge on earth.

8. *On al-qadā' and al-qadar (fate and divine decree)*. This chapter contains longer citations from the *Iṣlāḥ* and the *Nuṣra* and is accompanied by al-Kirmānī's refutations. The discussion begins with the position of al-Nasafī who stated that *al-qadā'* corresponds to the *sābiq* (the Preceder = the Intellect) while *al-qadar* corresponds to the *tālī* (the follower = the Soul). Al-Rāzī argues that such a correspondence is incorrect because *al-qadar* precedes *al-qadā'* just as the *sābiq* precedes the *tālī*. Al-Rāzī supports his argument by expounding on the linguistic meaning of *al-qadar* and its usage in the Qur'ān. He thus maintains that *taqdīr* means to determine and *al-qadā'* means to categorize a thing or to cut out a garment (*tafṣīl*) according to a certain measurement. In other words *al-qadā'* is like cloth that is measured by the tailor. The measuring takes place before the act of cutting (*tafṣīl*). Once the tailor has cut it, it means that he has determined the fate (*qadā'*) of that cloth.

Al-Sijistānī disagrees with al-Rāzī's explanation and states that the analogy of cloth is misleading. Defending the views of al-Nasafī, al-Sijistānī asserts that when God originated the Intellect, He accomplished his task of creating both worlds, because the Intellect contained the totality of all forms; nothing was kept from the Intellect. Al-Rāzī's analogy of cloth, therefore does not hold water. Al-Kirmānī dismisses the views of both al-Rāzī and al-Sijistānī by stating that they are inconceivable. He then takes al-Sijistānī to task for having stated that the Intellect contains the form of both worlds.¹²⁸

Al-Sijistānī interprets the following verse: *There is no sin for those who believe and do righteous deeds concerning what they have eaten, if they are god-fearing and believe and do righteous deeds and then are god-fearing and believe and then are god-fearing and do good. God loves those who do good,*¹²⁹ to imply that God permitted the prophets to abandon the use of the *sharī'a*. Al-Kirmānī rejects al-Sijistānī's interpretation and asserts that the above verse does not either indicate literally (*zāhir^{an}*) or figuratively (*bāṭin^{an}*) that the prophets were permitted to abandon the use of *sharī'a*. Then al-Kirmānī expresses his wonder about how an eminent *dā'ī* like al-Sijistānī could have indulged in such a statement without reflection and scrutiny. Al-Kirmānī unequivocally states that it is not permissible for either the prophets or those who hold lower ranks in the *da'wa* hierarchy to abandon *sharī'a*. He declares that al-Sijistānī's *ta'wīl* is corrupt and immoral. It is obvious from the above discussion that at one time al-Sijistānī maintained such a position.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ For more details see Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī*, pp. 80-103

¹²⁹ *The Qur'ān* (5:93), translated into English by Alan Jones, p. 123.

¹³⁰ Later on al-Sijistānī abandoned his previous views and also acknowledged the Fāṭimid caliph-imams as deputies of the expected Qā'im.

9. *On the shari'ah of Adam and the wasiyy of Noah.* It has already been indicated above that according to al-Nasafi, Adam promulgated religious knowledge without prescribing religious rites or issuing ordinances (*shari'ah*). Al-Kirmānī further elaborates this issue because the implications of such a statement were grave. It carried within it antinomian tendencies for the abolition of the *shari'ah*. One could easily draw the wrong analogy between the first *nāṭiq* without the *shari'ah* and the last, seventh *nāṭiq* by anticipating that he would abolish the Islamic *shari'ah*. In fact, this was the case with the Qarāmiṭa. Hence, correcting some of al-Rāzī's weak arguments, al-Kirmānī affirms that Adam could not have commanded and forbidden certain things to his people without receiving appropriate revelations or ordinances from God. The establishment of *shari'ah*, with the promulgation of God's commands and prohibitions, therefore, depends primarily on revelation. This unequivocally demonstrates al-Kirmānī's emphasis that the first *nāṭiq* did promulgate *shari'ah*. The introduction of law was absolutely necessary because it was meant to regulate the affairs of mankind.

Al-Kirmānī rejects the arguments presented by al-Sijistānī against al-Rāzī's position as being inadequate and showing a lack of serious reflection on a matter of great concern. Moreover, al-Kirmānī points out that without the *shari'ah*, the observances of regulations and the outward performance of religious rites cannot be imbued with any interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and inner meaning (*bāṭin*). Al-Kirmānī insists that both the *ẓāhir* (outward performance of acts) and the *bāṭin* (the inner true meaning) are like two sides of the same coin, one without the other does not stand. It certainly proves that Adam inaugurated a new era of *shari'ah*.

Al-Sijistānī argues that at the dawn of human era -- the epoch of Adam -- it was not necessary to establish *shari'ah*, because people generally obeyed the divine ordinances as stated in the Qur'ān. It states: *They [the angels] said, "Will You put in it [earth] someone who will wreak mischief in it and will shed blood, while we glorify You with praise and declare You holy?"*¹³¹ However, by the time of Noah the situation had drastically changed and the introduction of *shari'ah* had become a necessity for later generations. For this reason Noah inaugurated laws and made them obligatory.

Al-Kirmānī rejects outright the above argument and refers to his *Kitāb al-Maṣābīḥ* wherein he expounded on his explanation that the establishment of law is essential for the welfare of humanity.¹³² The situation during the era of the seventh *nāṭiq* will be identical to the first era of Adam and the establishment of law would be indispensable. Al-Kirmānī also rejects al-Sijistānī's explanation that the prescription of bodily acts (religious rites) was meant to direct people to the worship of one God (*tawḥīd*). Rather, he affirms that the prescription of bodily acts and obeying the law were meant to correct the deviations of the human soul and acquire a noble character so that human beings would resemble the angels. As for the claim that the Qā'im will lift up the *shari'ah* (i.e., abrogate it), al-Kirmānī states that this is a preposterous belief without any

¹³¹ *The Qur'ān* (2:30), translated into English by Alan Jones, p. 28.

¹³² Al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-Maṣābīḥ*, ed. and trans. Walker, *Master of the Age*, pp. 24-28 (Arabic pagination); English trans. pp. 59-62. It is "The Fifth Light" in Part One and is entitled: "In proof of the law and the importance of works and their necessity, comprising seven demonstrations."

foundation. He rejects further al-Nasafī's and al-Sijistānī's claim that Adam did not appoint his legatee (*waṣiyy*) and that Noah was the first to do so.

Al-Sijistānī presented another argument in support of his view that neither Adam initiated *sharī'a* nor would it be necessary for the Qā'im to enforce *sharī'a*. Since there were no imams who preceded Adam, it was not necessary for him to establish the *sharī'a*. The *sharī'a* is inaugurated and established only when there are imams who precede a *nāṭiq* or succeed him. Similarly, the imams of the era (*dawr*) of Muḥammad preceded the advent of the Qā'im, but there were no imams to succeed him. In other words, there is no new cycle (*dawr*) of the imams to follow the Qā'im, except the cycle of his *lawāḥiq* (adjuncts) and *khulafā'* (deputies).

Al-Kirmānī flatly refuses to accept such a defense and explains that the cycles are of two kinds. The first is the major cycle of the *nuṭaqā'* which is preserved by the imams who succeed those *nuṭaqā'*. The second is a minor cycle, within the major one, for the *mutimm* imams (one who completes the cycle) who complete the cycles of seven imams (*asābi'*). These cycles will continue until [the major cycle] is completed. Al-Kirmānī does not elaborate the concept of *adwār* here, but promises to deal with it in another book.¹³³ It has already been indicated above that al-Kirmānī made a similar promise in the introduction to his last chapter of the *Riyād*, but he did not live long enough to fulfill his promise. On the other hand, al-Sijistānī, as demonstrated by his *Kitāb al-Iftikhār*, had modified his view by accepting the Fāṭimid caliph-imams as deputies of the Qā'im.

Al-Kirmānī's Critique of al-Nasafī

10. This chapter is exclusively devoted to rectifying the major errors in the *Maḥṣūl*, dealing with the concept of *tawḥid* and the Originated Being (the First Being), overlooked by al-Rāzī. Al-Kirmānī is perplexed by how these aforementioned prominent issues escaped al-Rāzī's scrutiny. The introductory passage of this chapter reveals much of al-Kirmānī's role in bringing various factions of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* together.¹³⁴ It was due to his efforts that the works of al-Nasafī, al-Rāzī, and al-Sijistānī were introduced into the "main stream" of the *da'wa* and got their authors accepted as belonging to the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*.

A number of *maqālīd* deal with these outstanding topics. Hence it is interesting and worthwhile to find out the system of thought al-Sijistānī inherited from his teacher al-Nasafī and was reflected in his *Kitāb al-Nuṣra* which is now lost. First, I will introduce al-Nasafī's position as stated by al-Kirmānī and then present the latter's arguments refuting al-Nasafī's views.¹³⁵

Al-Nasafī: "God is the Originator of things (*shay'*), and nothing(s) (*lā shay'*), intelligible (*'aqlī*), imaginary (or illusionary, *wahmī*), speculative (*fikrī*), and logical

¹³³ Al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-Riyād*, p. 206; he states:

وسنذكر ذلك في غير هذا الكتاب باذن الله تعالى.

¹³⁴ I have copied this passage in Arabic in the Appendix No. 2. It is also translated by Walker in his *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī*, pp. 60-61.

¹³⁵ In what follows I have summarised al-Nasafī's views and al-Kirmānī's refutation.

(*manṭiqī*). I mean whatever falls under the aforementioned categories and others that do not fall under those categories."

Al-Kirmānī: "Such a statement makes it necessary [and takes it for granted] that there are certain things among God's creation that were originated by Him, but cannot be discerned through intellect, imagination, or speculation. It implies that those things cannot be logically appraised. It further implies that although the existence of such things is impossible, one can still believe in their existence (as implied by the premise). Hence, [let us assume that they exist.] In such a case their existence must fall in one of the following three categories: i) they preceded the existence of the Intellect; ii) they coexisted with the latter; or iii) they followed the existence of the Intellect."

Al-Kirmānī: "The first scenario is impossible because nothing preceded the Intellect except God, and the Intellect is a pure Origination of God. The second scenario is also impossible because the Intellect is the Origination, and the essence or entity of the Intellect at the time of its creation cannot be but one; it cannot be two [entities]. Even if we assume coexistence [of the Intellect with other entities], because of their dissimilarities yet sharing existence, it implies multiple causes from God or that there was another entity besides God. This is a necessary assumption simply because the existence of the effect is commensurate with its cause. Since both of those entities [the Intellect and other entities] are dissimilar, it would require two or more causes. The third scenario is also impossible, because the Intellect would not have failed to notice those entities as it perceives everything intelligible and sensible. In short, such a belief is nothing but straying from the right path.

"Following his affirmation that God originated thing/s (*shay*'), and no-thing/s (*lā shay*'), al-Nasafī did not specify what falls or does not fall under those categories. If by thing/s he meant corporeal thing/s and by no-thing/s non-corporeal things in the realm of origination, he is wrong.

"Moreover, both the essences and accidents, intelligible or sensible, come under thing/s. Perhaps by no-thing/s al-Nasafī meant what some philosophers had deprived a thing of its two essential characteristics of belonging to either the essences or accidents. The latter position is called a transformed proposition and it is like saying: "Not human." It means affirming everything [or all attributes] that a human being does not have. Such a proposition robs the human being of his very existence without affirming that which is not a thing."

Al-Kirmānī sums up this discussion and states: "Perhaps al-Nasafī meant that the Originator of a thing and no-thing is indeed the Originator of His own essence, which is something other than a thing. And the Originator of a thing, is something other than His own essence. However, al-Nasafī is wrong if he meant that it is the denial of the tangible essence of a thing. In the latter case, al-Nasafī's statement that God the High, is the Originator of a thing is incorrect because the thing is the Origination. And it is the tangible essence of existence, and no-thing amounts to the denial of Origination and

annulment of existence. If no-thing meant the denial of Origination, then it is also incorrect that it could be Origination. Consequently, such a denial is impossible."

Al-Nasafī: "[God] is the Originator of things, but not from a thing. He, and nothing else persists with Him. When we say: 'He and nothing with Him,' we negate thing and no-thing and make both of them originated (created). We thereby disassociate every form, simple and compound, from His ipseity (existence). Thus, we make everything, which could be categorized or uncategorized by speech to have been created [by God] and finite. Indeed, no-thing comes after [the existence of] a thing, because its categorization [as no-thing] occurs only after the existence of a thing."

Al-Kirmānī refutes the above statement, sentence by sentence and demonstrates that those prepositions are incorrect and fallacious. For example, the following two statements are contradictory: i) [God] is the Originator of things not from a thing. He and nothing else persists with Him. ii) God is the Originator of thing/s (*shay'*), and no-thing/s (*lā shay'*).

Al-Kirmānī: "When al-Nasafī asserts that nothing persists with Him, the question arises: 'From where comes no-thing at the time of origination?'"

Al-Nasafī: "No-thing comes after [the existence of] a thing, because its categorization or description [as no-thing] occurs only after the existence of a thing."

Al-Kirmānī rejects the above position and states: "But the term no-thing cannot be applied to any tangible essence in existence, because it does not have existence altogether. The term can be applied only to a thing."

Al-Nasafī: "Indeed the Creator, most high, originated (created) the world at once (*duf'at^{an} wāḥidat^{an}*), which means He originated the Intellect all at once too. As a result the forms of the two worlds [the higher and the lower] and all they contain emerged from the latter [the Intellect] as determined by Him. However, those forms were not pointed at with their ipseities [as long as] they reside in the Intellect. Yet, the Intellect's knowledge is inclusive of these forms and they are known by the Intellect, although in actuality the Intellect preceded over those forms. In other words, either in actuality or in potentiality, the Intellect and all the forms are identical."

Al-Kirmānī: "The above description cannot be applied to the First Originated Intellect, because what precedes existence cannot be conceived of with what is created, since its existence depends on its creator who created it. [The Originated Being] does not need to know more than the knowledge of itself and [the fact] that it is originated and its existence is not by itself. Rather its existence is due to other agency, which is the Originator and that it is the cause of all existence below it. Al-Nasafī's description applies to the intellect that proceeds from the natural, physical world, and not to the First Originated Being."

Al-Nasafī: "The cause of the Intellect is the unity of the Creator -- the exalted and powerful. The unity is eternal, hence the Intellect becomes eternal."

Al-Kirmānī: "The above statement of al-Nasafī implies that something preceded the First Intellect in existence and it is the cause [of the Intellect], which is called unity. But we have already explained before that absolutely nothing precedes the First Intellect in existence that could be more worthy of description than the attribute of eternity. Unity is not the cause of the First Intellect, which precedes the latter; rather it is the essence of the First Intellect. The latter is the very essence of unity. The First Intellect is one. It is the cause [of creation] and it is the effect [of that creation]. It is the Origination, and it is the Originated [Being]. Both are identical. It is the perfection and it is perfect. It is the eternity and it is eternal. It is the existence and it exists with one [indivisible] essence. The statement of the author of the *Maḥṣūl*, therefore, applies to the intellect/s in the physical world and not to the realm of the Origination (*ibdāʿ*)."

Al-Nasafī: "The Intellect is called perfect because [it came into existence] through the Origination. The reason for its [perfection] is that the Origination came about from the Originator. A perfect Origination only produces a perfect Originated [Being]."

Al-Kirmānī: "The above affirmation by al-Nasafī is erroneous for several reasons. First, al-Nasafī applies the term intellect to the Originated [Being] and makes it similar to its Originator, by describing it as perfect. This is nothing but *shirk* (belief in a plurality of gods). God is above and beyond perfection. The analogy itself is wrong because al-Nasafī applies the terminology used in the physical world to the higher realm."¹³⁶

Al-Nasafī: "Verily, the Intellect bestows forms [upon the descending hierarchy] from its very cause, which is the Word [or the Command of God]. The bestowal of benefit by the Intellect is similar to that of the sun, which bestows its light on things that acquire it. Thus, it is apparent that the Word, which became the cause of things protruding from the Intellect, is not the ipseity of the Intellect; rather the Intellect is an intermediary between the Word and what comes after the Intellect."

Al-Kirmānī: "We totally disagrees with the above affirmation and al-Nasafī's description does not apply to the First Originated Intellect, because the latter does not need something else besides itself in the creation of other things from it. We reiterate that the First Intellect is the embodiment of the Word and the cause [of creation] and is not a different entity. Nothing precedes the First Originated Intellect except God."

Al-Nasafī: "Origination is a medium between the Originator and the Originated. The latter is [like] a trace left behind by an actor [acting] upon an object. The process of origination is therefore like an intermediary between the actor and the object. The existence of this process is due to the part of the actor -- the Originator. Hence, the trace of that process is to be found on the part of the Originator in the object. This process or form -- i.e., the origination -- thus occurred in the Originator."

¹³⁶ It should be noted that al-Kirmānī rebukes al-Sijistānī for making similar errors.

Al-Kirmānī: "We totally reject this explanation and state that it implies that God did not originate, which is contrary to the belief of those who profess their belief in the unity of God. Al-Nasafī has made the origination other than the Originated Being by asserting that origination was a form (or an image) of the Originator."

Finally, al-Kirmānī concludes the book by defending the twin aspects of religion: *Zāhir* (exterior) and *bāṭin* (interior). The former consists of performing the obligatory acts as laid down in *sharīʿa*. The latter is comprised of knowing the hidden, inner, true meaning of the Qurʾān and the *sharīʿa*. Both the exoteric and the esoteric aspects are complimentary to each other. Therefore, al-Kirmānī calls the two corresponding features of worship as *al-ʿibādatayn* (two forms of worship). The first is *al-ʿibāda al-ʿamaliyya* (the worship of God by carrying out religious obligations and observation of religious rites). The second is *al-ʿibāda al-ʿilmiyya* (the worship of God by knowledge & philosophical reflection).

Al-Sijistānī and His Times

As noted above al-Sijistānī lived an active life as an (Ismāʿīlī) missionary during the first half of the fourth/tenth century, especially between the years 322/934 and 361/971-72. His lifetime therefore, coincided with the rise of the Būyids as commanders in the army of the successful Daylamī Mardāwīj b. Ziyār, the founder of the Ziyārid dynasty in Persia. In 334/945 Aḥmad b. Būya entered Baghdad and assumed the title Muʿizz al-Dawla, and the ʿAbbāsīd caliphs began a century of tutelage under Būyid *amīrs*. Like most of the Daylamites, the Būyids were Shīʿīs, probably of Zaydī persuasion and then became Imāmīs (Twelvers). Their domination was accompanied by a lively intellectual ferment not only in the capital Baghdad but also in the provinces under their rule. At the height of Būyid power, Baghdad had reached its peak as described by the city's famous historian al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. He writes:

In the entire world, there has not been a city which could compare with Baghdad in size and splendor, or in the number of scholars and great personalities. The distinction of the notables and general populace serves to distinguish Baghdad from other cities, as does the vastness of its districts, the extent of its borders, and the great number of residences and palaces.¹³⁷

In his *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, Joel Kraemer has recounted the cultural revival during the Būyid period and given a detailed account of the cultural life, various theological schools, circles, and societies that flourished under their domain. He has also portrayed the scholars who were al-Sijistānī's senior and junior contemporaries, such as the renowned philosopher al-Fārābī who became known as the 'second teacher.'

¹³⁷ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh madīnat al-salām*, vol. 1, p. 440; Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad*, pp. 108-9 (translation is by Lassner). See also Kraemer, *Humanism*, p. 46.

(the first being Aristotle), an outstanding historian al-Mas'ūdī, a Twelver savant al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī known as *al-Mantiqī* (the logician), and a Khurāsānian philosopher Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī. During this period the Būyids were one of several contemporary Shīʿī dynasties that dominated the heartlands of Muslim world: the Fāṭimids of North Africa and Egypt, the Ḥamdānids of Syria, the Barīdīs of Baṣra, and the Qarāmiṭa of Baḥrayn. Shīʿī ascendancy on such a scale was unprecedented in Islamic history to this point. Although in Khurāsān and Transoxania the Sunnī Sāmānid dynasty ruled Ismāʿīlī influence at their court, particularly among the ruling elite, was quite conspicuous as demonstrated by the activities of the three major Ismāʿīlī missionaries: al-Rāzī, al-Nasafī and al-Sijistānī. The reigning *amīr* Naṣr b. Aḥmad had adopted Ismāʿīlism.¹³⁸

Al-Sijistānī was a philosopher and a theologian as attested by his works; however, he cannot be entirely associated with either group. He skillfully used the tools provided by both disciplines to advance the Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī cause. Like al-Ghazālī, al-Sijistānī believed that deductive reasoning and demonstrative proofs did not yield certain and infallible knowledge, especially about God and religious matters. He categorically states that laws are necessary for the well being and safeguarding of society as well as for the salvation of mankind. According to him Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad were the five prophets who brought laws. Al-Sijistānī's expected Messiah, al-Qā'im, al-Mahdī will not bring any new laws but reveal the inner or real meaning of laws and the Scriptures. Therefore, he unequivocally states that the performance of obligatory duties and religious rituals as well as seeking their inner true meaning through esoteric interpretation, are mandatory. In other words, the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin* are complementary aspects of the Qur'ān and the *sharīʿa*; one without the other becomes invalid.

Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya: Its Structure and Organization

The Book of the Keys to Kingdom consists of seventy concise essays, varying in length from two and a half pages to eleven pages, on various themes that can be classified into three major categories: Islamic theology, Neoplatonic philosophy and Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī doctrine. In general, each essay expounds a well defined subject. However, given the nature of the book wherein the author undertook to outline the whole cosmic system with its spiritual, corporeal and religious hierarchies, those essays cannot be neatly classified into water tight compartments. Rather they should be viewed as the author's efforts to integrate various components into one unified system. The underlying objective of al-Sijistānī is to reconcile revelation with reason. Hence, the reader should not be surprised to find that innumerable citations of the Qur'ānic verses and some traditions of the Prophet are subtly interwoven with different themes of the essays.

The Book of the Keys to Kingdom, or simply *The Book of the Keys*, as referred to by the author, is a major work of al-Sijistānī. It was composed after *The Book of the Wellsprings* (*Kitāb al-Yanābīʿ*) and it complements the latter in its breadth.

¹³⁸ Kraemer, *Humanism*, p. 87.

Unfortunately, the author's introduction to *The Book of the Keys to Kingdom* is missing or it might have been subsequently removed as is the case with his other work *Ithbāt al-nubū'a* (or *al-nubū'āt*).¹³⁹ Therefore, it is appropriate to cite what al-Sijistānī had to say in the introduction to *The Wellsprings*. He states:

My aim in this book called *The Wellsprings* is not to occupy myself with anything previously discussed in the books of our predecessors but rather with issues in which there still exists a debt they have not paid to provide people with explanations and guidance.¹⁴⁰

The importance of *The Book of the Keys to Kingdom* cannot be overstated because it contains a lot of philosophical and doctrinal material not dealt with or elaborated by the author in his other works, especially *The Book of the Wellsprings*. The scope of material addressed by the author in *The Book of the Keys to Kingdom* is extensive and impressive even if one just glances through its table of contents. It is a major contribution to Islamic thought and culture because it attempted to harmonize Neoplatonism with Islamic teaching.

As a collection of compact essays, it has an internal structure and organization that is similar to the pattern of Arabic translation of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*.¹⁴¹ Paul Walker's critique of the organization of *The Book of Wellsprings* is also appropriate for *The Book of the Keys to Kingdom*.¹⁴² It should therefore be stated that the book's organization resembles a pyramid flowing from the top down to the lowest level of created beings. At the summit stands God, described as the Originator, followed by the First Originated being, also referred to as the Intellect and the Preceder. It is followed by the Soul which is described as the first procession gushing out from the Intellect. Between God and the Intellect is the Command or Word of God, which is identified as the real cause of creation. God therefore transcends the universe. The emanationary hierarchy of the spiritual realm is followed by the physical world. The Soul stands in the middle of two realms. From the Soul, emanating in descending order, each from the preceding, is the following entities: Prime Matter, Form (secondary Matter), the Spheres, and the sublunary world of the four Elements. From these elements proceeds a series of entities in rising order: Minerals, Vegetables, Animals and Man.¹⁴³ The corporeal world begins with nature and culminates in the birth of human beings – the ultimate goal of creation.

The attention, thenceforth, is turned to "the world of religion" with its hierarchy, which runs parallel to that of the spiritual world. Several aspects of revelation, divine law, their hermeneutics and prophecy are discussed. The meaning of resurrection and some aspects of the human soul after it departs from the human body and its cognizance are reviewed. However, as a note of caution it should be stated that al-Sijistānī does not

¹³⁹ This is not surprising as some chapters from his *Ithbāt al-nubū'a* are also expunged.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-Yanābī'*, p. 5; Walker, *The Wellsprings of Wisdom*, p. 41.

¹⁴¹ See Badawī, *Aflūṭīn 'inda 'l-'Arab*, pp. 8-18.

¹⁴² Walker, *The Wellsprings of Wisdom*, pp. 21-24.

¹⁴³ It should be noted that al-Sijistānī did not treat all things/themes of the corporeal world as we have depicted.

present in this book a systematic exposition of the whole cosmic system as he had done briefly in his last work *Kitāb al-Ifṭikhār*.¹⁴⁴

Therefore, what follows is neither a summary nor analysis of the whole book, rather a brief outline of the important concepts within that system so that the reader will have a more sophisticated understanding of the contents. In all fairness, it should also be stated that al-Sijistānī inadequately treats certain subjects and his arguments are not always convincing. Given the nature of the book, it is not easy to translate the author's thoughts and concepts into English. In fact, certain themes require additional research of al-Sijistānī's sources in order to evaluate his contributions and originality. This task must be left to younger scholars in the field of Ismā'īlī studies.

Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya: Its Contents

The book opens with the invocation of God and concludes with the subject of the righteous religious life for humankind. Throughout the book the "acquisition of proper knowledge" (*ma'rifa* = gnosis) is emphasized. In what follows we will concentrate on some of the main themes presented in the book. As an aid to future research we have collected al-Sijistānī's scattered statements in their original Arabic and arranged them into specific issues, such as God, the Command, the Origination, the Intellect, the Soul, etc.¹⁴⁵ I have attached several appendices to the text that shed more light on certain issues discussed in the book.

God is described in a Neoplatonic term as "the Originator" who originated the universe "at once" and *ex nihilo*. The twin concepts, "at once" and *ex nihilo*, are further elaborated in separate expositions (in *iqḷids* 22 and 29). Al-Sijistānī affirms God's absolute transcendence and states that His divine nature is inaccessible to humans. He is absolutely unlimited and undetermined.¹⁴⁶ Al-Sijistānī further states that the pure identity which is attributable to the Originator is nothing more than the existentiality of the First Originated being. This, in fact, is derived from the existentiality of the originating [process] as bestowed by the Originator on the First Originated being. In other words, the Originator is what the First Originated being knows through its own existentiality.

Thus, the latter's awareness of its own existentiality of what created it is, in fact, the identity of the Originator. Simply put, it means that God is beyond the existentiality of the First Originated being and that the latter cannot transgress over its own existentiality. Al-Sijistānī further asserts that the knowledge of "pure origination" is even beyond the reach of the spiritual entities, let alone the human intellect. In order to remove God further from the universe, al-Sijistānī states that the cause of origination (or creation) is not God but His Command or Word. In the process of origination, the Command is

¹⁴⁴ I have given the summary of its contents in its English introduction.

¹⁴⁵ See Appendix No. 5.

¹⁴⁶ Al-Sijistānī's concept of God is very similar to that of Plotinus' first principle of reality, the One beyond intellect and being; the One absolutely unlimited and undetermined. Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 222-35.

somehow united with the First Originated being; however, al-Sijistānī adds that it does not add to the expanse of the First Originated being, similar to a drop in the ocean. Everything emanates from within the First Originated being, yet it remains simple and singular without multiplicity.

In the second essay the First Originated being or the Intellect is described as a dot which is similar to a circle that surrounds what is inside it. This dot, as al-Sijistānī stresses, is indivisible (its unity is accentuated), but since it is a dot it is only the fountainhead of everything spiritual and physical. Once again al-Sijistānī emphasizes that the knowledge of the Intellect does not go beyond its own identity. God transcends the cosmic system and His greatness is unsusceptible to existentiality or non-existentiality. Thus, al-Sijistānī's conception of God is very much like Plotinus' doctrine of the One beyond being and intellect. It is worth noting that al-Sijistānī's God even transcends the unity of Plotinus' first principle which propounds the idea that the First Originated being is "Being" and "Intellect."

The third essay is devoted to the theme of God's munificence — a common theme in the *Enneads* of Plotinus and Islamic tradition -- that extends to everything in His creation, including the spiritual and physical, noble and lowly. A fitting example of God's super abundant munificence described by al-Sijistānī is that He originated the Intellect with perfect origination; hence the Intellect or the First Originated being is perfect and its essence contains perfection. The sign of the Intellect's perfection is that it overflows with perfection and this overflowing is infinite and undiminishing. It is like the first principle of Plotinus wherein the One or Good is described as overflowing with superabundance which is a consequence of His unbounded perfection, yet He remains unchanged and undiminished by His giving out. The chain that connects this munificence between the two realms, the spiritual (the upper) and the physical (the lower), is described as a kind of inspiration (*ta'yīd*) that flows from the Intellect through the Soul to the prophets and their successors and ultimately to human beings. It is here that al-Sijistānī inserts Ismā'īlī religious hierarchy and the appropriate functions of its various ranks. The spiritual world therefore cannot be reached except through the *ta'yīd* and that chain.¹⁴⁷

The fourth tract is on the infinite power (*al-quḍra*) of the Originator. Al-Sijistānī differentiates between the two terms *al-quḍra* and *al-quwwa* and states that the former is more general while the latter is more specific. Hence, it is the *al-quḍra* which is linked to the Will. The *quḍra* of the Originator is not within anybody's reach because it is beyond all beings and He is the Originator of all beings.

The fifth tract is concerning beingness or essence. Al-Sijistānī states that the beingness often ascribed to God is His "pure origination," which is His Command or Word and His munificence. In other words, He is beyond being spiritually and physically.

¹⁴⁷ Man for Plotinus is in some sense divine, and the object of the philosophical life is to understand this divinity and restore its proper relationship with the divine All, in that All, to come to union with its transcendent source, the One or Good. The object of philosophy according to Plotinus is to attain to our true end, union with the Good, in the divine All, by waking to a knowledge of our true self and its place in reality. We cannot truly know ourselves except in our context; we must know our place in and relationship to the whole. Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 222-35.

The Ismā'īlī concept of *al-'ibāda al-'ilmiyya* is very similar to Plotinus' concept of the highest life, which is a life of intense, intuned, self contained contemplative activity.

God is thus removed from beingness, the cause of creation. Al-Sijistānī has devoted another essay to this issue. The Soul is described as receiving "munificence" from above, i.e., the Intellect, and passing it over to the descending chain of being. The Soul is further depicted as a "moving substance" and as an "intermediary" between the Intellect and the lower, corporeal world. Duality, therefore, begins with the Soul.

The sixth *iqḷīd* concerns God's paramount sovereignty (*al-rubūbiyya*). God's sovereignty is described as real, genuine, and authentic, while all other sovereignties are depicted as merely figurative or metaphorical. It is worth noting that the Arabic paraphrase of the *Enneads* of Plotinus, known as *The Theology of Aristotle*, begins with *al-rubūbiyya*.¹⁴⁸

In the seventh *iqḷīd* God is described as unique, pure unicity that cannot be perceived by human intellect. God's uniqueness is such that He transcends the numerical number one. Pure uniqueness (*maḥḍ al-fardiyya*), which is equated with *al-fardāniyya*, is the Command of God which brought into being the Preceder (*al-sābiq*). God is therefore described as *munfarid* (alone, i.e., detached from the numbers). It is the First Effect (the Preceder) which is *al-fard al-maḥḍ* (the pure number one). This essay is a suitable example of the author's linguistic ability to analyze and define difficult concepts. It should be noted that al-Sijistānī was also a neologician who coined several new terms and verbs which include the verb *ayyasa* (to bring into being) from a noun *ays* (being) and *layyasa* (to terminate existence) from *lays* (non-being).

The eighth *iqḷīd* is devoted to refuting the claim of those philosophers who assert that God is the cause of creation. Al-Sijistānī who was well versed in the art of disputation (*kalām*), states that if one assumes such a premise it supposes that God is either the eternal cause of creation or that He was not the cause at the beginning, but became a cause afterwards. Given the choice between those two alternatives, al-Sijistānī adds that if those philosophers affirm the first possibility it would imply that the creation (i.e., the universe) was with Him eternally. God, therefore, could not be the originator of the universe; since He would exist side by side with the universe. In other words, it demonstrates the doctrine of the eternity of matter. (the 29th *Iqḷīd* also refutes the doctrine of pre-eternal matter.) Al-Sijistānī states that this belief is simply absurd.

If one affirms the second option, it would mean that God was not the cause of creation, but eventually became the cause. This necessitates the assumption of yet another cause for which reason God became the cause of creation. Now, if a thing is preceded by a cause, the argument suggests that such a thing is merely an effect or a product of a prior cause. Consequently, God whom the philosophers described as the cause of creation, in this case, merely becomes an effect of some other cause that preceded Him. This, al-Sijistānī declares, is impossible and an obvious contradiction of their statement that God is the cause of creation.

In the following *iqḷīd* (the ninth), al-Sijistānī refutes another assertion of "some of the ignorant philosophers" that God is a substance. Al-Sijistānī's arguments in this essay are directed at abolishing the assumption that underlies the various definitions of a substance which implies different characteristics, such as change, transformation, finitude or infinitude, the spiritual or the physical. Al-Sijistānī's God or the "first principle" in Neoplatonic language, as stated above, transcends even its first product, i.e., the

¹⁴⁸ See Aflūḡīn *‘inda al-‘Arab*, pp. 3 and 8.

Intellect, described interchangeably as the First Originated being or Preceder. All names are inadequate for al-Sijistānī's God as is the case with the 'first principle' of Plotinus. Hence, in the following *iqḷīd* (the tenth) al-Sijistānī alludes to his theory of double negation and states that whosoever worships God by using negative theology does not worship Him in a befitting (or beneficial) manner, since such worship is for some created beings.

The eleventh *iqḷīd* is devoted to refuting those who affirm that God is a thing but not like other things. Al-Sijistānī declares that such an assumption is false and impossible.

The twelfth *iqḷīd* concerns the distinction between the numerical one and the One that is non-numerical.

In the thirteenth essay al-Sijistānī demonstrates that anthropomorphism is masked with stripping God of all attributes that He becomes merely an idle concept.

In the fourteenth *iqḷīd* al-Sijistānī offers his interpretation of the three terms used in the Qur'ān to describe God as the Creator and the Giver of form. It is obvious from his explanation that he has given a Neoplatonic twist to this interpretation. The word *khāliq*, he states, means God originated everything out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), while *bārī* means He originated things with essences but without forms. *Muṣawwir* means He originated forms without matter. Then, using philosophical language, he adds that the word *bārī* means God brought into existence all beings without form, namely He originated the First Intellect, the fountainhead of all beings, without form. The word *muṣawwir* means the giver of form without matter and it implies that the origination of the Soul was through the Intellect. The Soul is further depicted as the source of all forms, spiritual and corporeal. The Soul is therefore a pure form independent of matter in its very essence.

Likewise, in the sixteenth *iqḷīd* al-Sijistānī gives a philosophical interpretation to four additional terms: the First, the Last, the Evident, and the Hidden, which are used in the Qur'ān to describe God. Al-Sijistānī selects these four terms from among the 'Beautiful Names of God' in Islamic tradition, because they are the only antonyms used for God's names. In his explication, al-Sijistānī relies on Ismā'īlī doctrine and interpretation and states that the names of God mentioned in the Qur'ān allude to various ranks of the spiritual and physical hierarchies as developed by the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*. This theme, i.e., the *da'wa* hierarchy, is further pursued in the seventeenth *iqḷīd* where al-Sijistānī asserts that the members and limbs ascribed to God, either in the Qur'ān or Islamic tradition, should be interpreted as alluding to the ranks of the religious hierarchy called *ḥudūd al-dīn* (various ranks of the *da'wa* hierarchy).

The four important ranks for understanding of the cosmic system are: the Intellect and the Soul in the spiritual realm and the Speaking-prophet (*al-nāṭiq*) and the Founder (*al-asās*, the prophet's vicegerent) in the religious realm. Since the "First" appellation confers a certain merit and virtue on its holder, its antonym the "Last" deprives those very qualities to the holder of the latter. However, the "Last" appellation confers a different kind of merit and virtue on its holder not shared by the former. The same applies to the other pair of antonyms -- the "Evident" and the "Hidden." The pair of the Intellect and Soul in the spiritual realm is then compared and contrasted with the pair of the *nāṭiq* and his *asās* in the religious realm.

The eighteenth *iqḷīd* is devoted to the comparison between the *sūrat al-ikhhlāṣ* (the Chapter 112 of Sincerity or declaration of God's unity in the Qur'ān) and the Islamic

formula of the confession of faith (*shahāda*). The juxtaposition of the two and their relationship with each other is adroitly explained by al-Sijistānī. He states that the *sūrat al-ikhhlāṣ* and the *shahāda* contain both the affirmation and negation of God, but in reverse order. In other words, the *sūrat al-ikhhlāṣ* first affirms God and states: *He is God, One. God, the Eternal*,¹⁴⁹ and later equates negation with God by stating: *Who has not begotten, nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him*.¹⁵⁰ The *shahāda*, on the other hand, first negates God and then asserts God by stating: "There is no god but Allāh." Al-Sijistānī then perceptively adds that the Chapter of Sincerity is placed towards the end of the Qurʾān because it stands for deanthropomorphism and the glorification of God. The reason for such an arrangement is that in the earlier chapters of the Qurʾān God is often depicted in anthropomorphical terms. The confession of faith, on the contrary, begins with negation because the formula of confession comes first in dealing with the *sharīʿa* and is therefore pronounced before the acts of devotion and religious observances and rituals.

The nineteenth *iqḷīd* deals with the concept that the Command of God or His Word acts as an intermediary between Him -- the Originator -- and His creation (i.e., the First Originated being, or the Intellect). It should be indicated that in my previous article I hinted that the doctrine of the Command closely resembles the parallel doctrine of the Word in the Longer Version of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*.¹⁵¹ S. Pines was the first to point out the connection between the Longer Version and the Ismāʿīlīs.¹⁵² The debate concerning this issue has been pursued and elaborated by other scholars, especially by Paul Fenton in his article "The Arabic and Hebrew Versions of the *Theology of Aristotle*,"¹⁵³ and F. W. Zimmermann in his long article on "The Origins of the So-called *Theology of Aristotle*."¹⁵⁴ In the section below about al-Sijistānī's sources, I have discussed the new conclusions reached by Zimmermann.

Hence, it is appropriate to summarize the justification given by al-Sijistānī for his insertion of this intermediary in the Neoplatonic cosmology between the One and the Intellect. Al-Sijistānī equates the Command with God's will to stress that the universe is shaped by God and does not transgress its bounds. Without the principle of Will, namely the Command, God's entity could be annulled and creation could be compared to light emitting from sun or heat emitting from fire. This, in turn, means that the action of the actor and the actor himself are one and the same. Hence, it would further imply that God's act and His identity are identical. Al-Sijistānī further argues that the evidence to support his position is the certainty of the Intellect, the first effect of the origination and its substantiality that remains without change or transformation. Consequently, the universe created by the Command does not change.

¹⁴⁹ *The Qurʾān* (112:1-4), translated into English by Alan Jones, p. 596.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Poonawala, "Al-Sijistānī and His *Kitāb al-Maqālīd*," p. 279.

¹⁵² S. Pines, "La longue recension de la Théologie d'Aristote dans ses rapports avec la doctrine ismaélienne," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, vol. 22 (1954), pp. 7-20.

¹⁵³ It is a good survey of the Longer Version of the *Theology of Aristotle* in Arabic and Hebrew including their manuscripts respectively. However, it is beyond the scope of this introduction to discuss his findings.

¹⁵⁴ It is a comprehensive survey of the subject with exhaustive bibliography.

The twentieth *iqḷīd* dispels any doubt that might arise in one's mind that there is the "drawing of benefit" or "dispelling of harm" by the Originator in the creation of the universe. Al-Sijistānī's argument suggests that the assumption of such a premise necessarily leads one to yet another assumption that there was some kind of shortcoming or excess in the first place that led the Originator to remedy the previous situation. Al-Sijistānī states that the sheer assumption of such a premise on the part of the Originator is neither befitting Him nor beneficial to mankind because He originates all beings not from any pre-existing being, but from *ex nihilo*. Al-Sijistānī further argues that such an assumption leads to another origination, and another and another. Such an assumption is therefore ridiculous.

The twenty-first *iqḷīd* deals with the concept of time that is generally divided into three periods: Past, present and future. Al-Sijistānī states that similar to time, eternity (*al-dahr*) has three dimensions or states. The first dimension, *al-azal*, which lies with the Originator cannot be speculated about. The second dimension, called *al-azaliyya*, gets united with the First Originated being during the light of origination. The third dimension, called *al-azālī*, is that which flows from the First Originated being to the Soul. The *azal* is therefore beyond the reach of the First Originated being. Al-Sijistānī further adds that the *azaliyya*'s beginning and end cannot be known. It should be noted that the division of *azal* is not known in the Arabic sources.¹⁵⁵

The twenty-second *iqḷīd* is devoted to explaining that the origination was 'all at once' and not sequential, or moment by moment. To assume otherwise implies that the origination lacked perfection and that matter was indispensable to the process of origination. The next two chapters (the twenty-third and twenty-fourth) explicate the cause. The former *iqḷīd* explains that the cause is identified because of the existence of its effect. Al-Sijistānī states that the first cause (the cause of the causes) is the Word or the Command of God because it brought into being all beings. Al-Sijistānī asserts that it is impossible that an existing thing could be the cause of its own existence. The latter *iqḷīd* explains that in certain respects the cause is united with its effect. Hence, if the union is removed it is impossible to state that one is the cause and the other is the effect. He then briefly reviews the whole cosmic system in descending order from top to bottom as a cause and an effect.

The twenty-fifth *iqḷīd* explains the reason why it is believed that there is no intermediary between the Word and Preceder. Since the Preceder (i.e., the Intellect) contained all beings in its essence but could not avail itself of the cause of its being or existentiality, it needed a cause which made it possible to express itself by denying what it contained. The denial is nothing but "non-being" (*lā aysa*). Hence, al-Sijistānī adds that as an inquiring mind he contemplated about "being" (*ays*) and "non-being" (*lā ays*) and whether it is conceivable to have an intermediary between the two. Now, if one believes that there is an intermediary between them, then it could be either "being" or "non-being." If one assumes that an intermediary to be "being," and the existentiality of the Preceder already possesses its "being," then in such a case "being" cannot be an intermediary. However, if one assumes "non-being" to be the intermediary and that "being" cannot be divorced from the essence of the Preceder in order to be its cause and intermediary, it is therefore not possible to resolve this dilemma. The intellect itself cannot possibly

¹⁵⁵ See *El²*, s.v. *Kidam* by R. Arnaldez.

separate between "being" and "non-being". Hence, if the intermediary between "being" and "non-being" is the Preceder and the "non-being" is the cause of "being", it is impossible that there can be an intermediary between the Preceder and the Word.

An additional argument exists against assuming an intermediary between the Word and the Preceder. If one assumes there is an intermediary between the Preceder and the Word then it is only natural that the intermediary would have obtained more of its share of benefits from the Word of God than the Preceder. If that was the case, the latter would have lacked the benefits (of God) to that extent and would not have been independent by itself nor would have contained everything (within itself). But, the fact is that the Word is not hidden (or separate) from the Preceder; rather both of them are identical. Consequently, any delay or pause, even for a moment, cannot be assumed between the union of the Word or the Command and the object commanded, i.e., the Preceder. Any delay between the two would imply imperfection in the object, i.e., the Intellect.

The twenty-sixth *iqḷīd* explains why it is believed that one intermediary (i.e., the Intellect) is between the Soul and the Word. Al-Sijistānī states that the eminent ancients and sages (*ḥukamāʾ*) unanimously maintained that the Soul is an everlasting moving substance. When the Word is characterized as non-being it cannot be described as motionless or moving, since those are the qualities of an existing being. Thus, it necessitates that there be an intermediary between the Word, the first cause, and the everlasting moving soul. The Intellect, which is everlasting and motionless, is united with the Word. The motionless surrounds the moving in all respects. And the one that does the surrounding is prior to what is surrounded. The former is superior in rank and nobility than the latter. The motionless in its perfection and affluence of its essence is above division and multiplicity in itself, while the moving needs division and multiplicity. Moreover, the Soul is an intermediary between these two realms: the intelligible and nature.

The twenty-eighth *iqḷīd* is devoted to clarifying certain issues concerning the Command, such as whether it can be characterized as "being" or "non-being." Al-Sijistānī concludes the discussion by asserting that the Command is not a being, rather it brings being into beings. It should be added that very often al-Sijistānī follows the method of *ʿilm al-kalām* (Islamic theology), which is explicative and defensive, but always postulates the existence of an opponent who raises hard questions. Thus, with this dialectical method it is not only the choice of arguments but also the method of presenting an argument that will vary. Hence, the next question raised by al-Sijistānī is:

There cannot be a Command from the One who commands without the Will. And if the Will precedes the Command, creation is entailed. Consequently, other factors such as time, existence (or beingness), and place also intervene with the process.¹⁵⁶

Al-Sijistānī refutes the rational objections by stating that he is merely using the Command of the Originator for approximation because it is too presumptuous to ascribe time, being, existence, or place to the Will of God. He categorically states that the identity or existence of the Command cannot precede the act of origination.

¹⁵⁶ See the twenty-eighth *iqḷīd*.

The next *iqḷīd*, the twenty-ninth, deals with nullification of pre-eternal matter co-existing with the Originator. Al-Sijistānī argues that if one assumes that eternal matter is without form, it raises other serious issues. Firstly, what caused the Originator to create forms at a later stage? Secondly, why did the Originator neglect to create forms during the infinite period that preceded His creating forms? If the answer is that God did not will forms earlier; then, it should be said that matter already preceded the Will; hence it suggests the assumption of yet another reason for the Will to act. Al-Sijistānī finally argues that the assumption of pre-eternal matter is absurd and leads one to assume that the Originator had a "form" of the universe before He originated. Since the author has already dealt with this issue in his earlier work *The Wellsprings of Wisdom*, he refers the reader to the thirty-third *Wellspring*.¹⁵⁷

The thirtieth *iqḷīd* refutes the claim of those who assert that the action of God was subsequent to the action of the Soul. It is obvious that this refutation is aimed at the gnostic and dualist groups.

Suffice it to say, I have given enough glimpses of the contents to arouse the curiosity of the reader. Now, we should turn to al-Sijistānī's sources, especially for the *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya*.

Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya: Its Sources

In his *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neo-Platonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī*, Paul Walker has addressed al-Sijistānī's Neoplatonic sources. Hence there is no need to revisit the issue. It is certain that for *The Book of the Keys to Kingdom*, al-Sijistānī drew quite substantially from the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*. Reading the latter (i.e., the *Enneads* of Plotinus) helps to better understand *The Book of the Keys to Kingdom*, particularly concerning the key concepts dealt with by al-Sijistānī, such as the Divine transcendence, the origination "at one stroke" or "all in all" or "all at once," the Command or the Word of God, *al-wāṣiṭa* (medium/mediation), the Intellect and the Soul. The reader of *The Book of the Keys* will recognize that it contains numerous bits and pieces from the *Theology of Aristotle* and also realize that some material is cleverly adapted by al-Sijistānī.¹⁵⁸

Here I would like to draw the attention of the reader to a comprehensive study about the pseudo-Aristotelian work: the so-called *Theology of Aristotle* by F. W. Zimmermann entitled "The Origins of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*." Zimmermann has dealt with related issues, such as its translation into Arabic, the Arabic and Hebrew Versions, and the Shorter and the Longer Versions. In addition to that, Zimmermann has challenged most of the prevailing assumptions and has cogently argued that: Firstly, the *Theology of Aristotle* consisted of a larger corpus of Arabic texts of Neoplatonic

¹⁵⁷ It is entitled: "That there was no form for the world with the originator prior to the origination." Walker, *The Wellsprings of Wisdom*, pp. 96-98.

¹⁵⁸ For the Arabic translation movement see the "Introduction" by McGinnis & Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, pp. xvii-xxxi; it deals with the major issues and recent studies. For Neoplatonic sources and their translation, see D'Ancona, "Greek into Arabic."

extraction, which included the Latin version of *Liber de causis* (*Kalām fī maḥd al-khayr*), parts of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* (*Mabādi' al-ilāhiyyāt*) and other treatises. Secondly, the aforementioned corpus was the work of al-Kindī's workshop with free paraphrases of the original texts into Arabic. Thirdly, the paraphrases of *Enneads iv-vi* were rendered from Greek and not Syriac. Zimmermann also postulates that the *Theology of Aristotle* originated in the early ninth century, most probably in the first third (i.e., the beginning of the third Islamic century). Zimmermann further assumes that the Arabic translation of another pseudo-Aristotelian work *Kitāb Sirr al-khalīqa* (*the Secret of Creation*), predates the *Theology of Aristotle*. The full title of the former is: *Sirr al-khalīqa wa-ṣan'at al-ṭabī'a: Kitāb al-'ilal* and it is ascribed to Apollonius of Tyana.¹⁵⁹

In the opinion of the present writer, Zimmermann's cogently argued assumptions are helpful in resolving the thorny problems concerning various versions of the *Theology of Aristotle* and provide a better explanation for the question raised by its Ismā'īlī connection, notably with the Longer Version. Accordingly, the doctrine of the Word, found in the *Sirr al-khalīqa* existed in Arabic sources at the pre-Neoplatonic stage and before the pre-Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī movement emerged during the second half of the third/ninth century.¹⁶⁰ It should be noted that there is no trace of the Neoplatonic scheme of emanation in the earliest Ismā'īlī cosmology, i.e., pre-Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism.¹⁶¹ It has also been pointed out by Paul Kraus that Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, who believed the *Sirr al-khalīqa* to have been composed during the reign of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Ma'mūn, made ample use of it.¹⁶² Thus, given the present state of our knowledge in Ismā'īlī studies one can conclude this discussion about al-Sijistānī's sources by citing what Zimmermann has to say. He states:

Initially, Ismā'īlī theology took the form of a cosmological *Kunstmythos* well below the intellectual level of contemporary Arabic Neoplatonism. But even at that stage,

¹⁵⁹ It is edited by Ursula Weisser.

¹⁶⁰ See Zimmermann, "The Origins," p. 197. He has translated some relevant passages from *Sirr al-khalīqa*.

¹⁶¹ Stern, "The earliest cosmological doctrines of Ismā'īlism," in his *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*, pp. 3-29; Halm, "The cosmology of the pre-Fatimid Ismā'īliyya."

¹⁶² Al-Rāzī, *A'lām al-nubū'a*, pp. 107-08, 275-76. Al-Rāzī states:

وفي كتاب بليناس [بلينوس]: إنه كان يضرب الأمثال، وقال: أنا بليناس صاحب الطلسمات والعجائب، أنا الذي أوتيت الحكمة من مدبر العالم ... وأخذته الكتاب من بين يديه الذي فيه سرّ الخليقة والأمثال الكثيرة التي ضربها والرؤيا التي ذكرها ... وقد كنت ناظرت الملهد على أشياء في كتاب بليناس. وقد كان ذكر لنا أن صاحب هذا الكتاب "حدوثي" وأنه كان في هذه الشريعة، وتسمى بهذا الاسم، ووضع هذا الكتاب، وقد ذكرنا شيئاً من كلامه والأمثال التي ضربها في كتابه. فذاكرت الملهد بذلك، فقال: هذا هو صحيح، وقد عرفناه، واسم هذا الرجل فلان، وكان أيام المأمون، وكان حكيماً متفلسفاً. وهكذا كنا سمعناه من غيره. فهذا الرجل سلك سبيل أولئك الحكماء القدماء ... ولكنه قد جرّد القول في التوحيد، وردّ على أصحاب الاثنين وسائر الملهدين، وأثبت حدث العالم، وأورد في ذلك حججاً كثيرة قويّة، ثم تكلم في كون العالم، وعلى علل الأشياء ...

The above passage was edited by Kraus in "Raziana II," p. 373. Variants in the readings are not recorded here. See also Weisser, *Das "Buch über das Geheimnis der Schöpfung,"* p. 54.

the divine act of creation supposed to have set in motion the cosmic drama of religious history was conceived in terms of the doctrine of the Word: moved by a creative urge (*irāda*), God produces through his Word (*kalima*) or Command (*amr*), viz., the Koranic imperative 'Be!', an entity from which the world unfolds.¹⁶³

Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya and the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*

Finally, I would like to add that al-Sijistānī's *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya* represents an advanced stage of adapting Neoplatonism to Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī doctrine and aligning it with the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd* (belief in the divine unicity). Al-Rāzī's critique of the *Maḥṣūl* suggests that there were serious shortcomings in the attempt of al-Nasafī. Even the attempt by authors of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (*Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*) in this respect was far from success. The question of the *Rasā'il*'s Ismā'īlī connection and the related issue of their dating have been discussed at length in my forthcoming study entitled "*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* in Modern Scholarship: A Critical Review of Two Centuries of Research." Suffice it to reiterate here that the dating of the *Rasā'il*, as I have argued in the latter study, is certainly a pre-Fārābī or a post-Kindī composition. In other words, the *Rasā'il* are pre-Sijistānī.

In their orientation, the authors of the *Rasā'il* were Neopythagoreans. One might ask the question: What does it mean? Yes, it is true that the term Neopythagorean has been widely and diversely used. A recent historian of Greek philosophy has correctly pointed out that Neopythagoreanism comprises of play with the numbers, mysticism, theosophy, belief in miracles, and philosophy; but the term is a loose catch-all, and what is being held together is a semi-religious belief in Pythagoras' wisdom.¹⁶⁴ It would not be out of place to cite a few lines from the book *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans* by Charles Kahn who states:

It is no part of this study to pursue the transformation of Pythagorean themes in the great creative synthesis constructed by Plotinus in the third century A. D., or in the work of the Neoplatonic philosophers who follow Plotinus. We must, however, take note of the fact that, after Numenius, the Neopythagorean tradition is fully absorbed into Neoplatonism. Perhaps the most striking piece of evidence for this continuity is the existence of two classic *Lives of Pythagoras*, composed in the late third and early fourth centuries A. D. by two major Neoplatonic philosophers: Porphyry, the disciple and editor of Plotinus, and by Iamblichus, the pupil and rival of Porphyry ... both Porphyry and Iamblichus represent Pythagoras as a mythic figure, the paradigm of the sage as divine man. And both Porphyry and Iamblichus make use of the life of Pythagoras as a popular introduction to Platonic philosophy. Furthermore, the miraculous side of the Pythagoras legend is fully developed in both *Lives*, and it is natural to suppose that these accounts were composed with the implicit goal of providing a pagan competitor for the Christian gospels.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Zimmermann, "The Origins," p. 197.

¹⁶⁴ Johansen, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, p. 514.

¹⁶⁵ Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, pp. 133-34.

Now, let us examine some of the Neopythagorean features of the *Rasā'il*. In the first volume on Mathematical-Philosophical Sciences, the first five epistles follow the enlarged Pythagorean quadrivium consisting of the first epistle "On Arithmetic," the second "On Geometry," the third "On Astronomy," and the fifth "On Music." Between the last two, the fourth epistle "On Geography" is inserted, as it was considered a part of the science of astronomy. The third volume entitled Spiritual-Intellectual Sciences opens with the epistle "On the Intellectual Principles of the Existing Beings According to the Pythagoreans."¹⁶⁶ Without going into the details, the Ikhwān describe God as the cause of the creation, or the cause of everything in existence. They also depict God as One, the origin or the cause of the numbers. They state that the Intellect is the first being to have emanated from God's existence. They further add (probably addressing the Muslim reader) that the Intellect was the first being God brought into existence without any intermediary and then brought into being the Soul, with the mediacy of the Intellect.

The following epistle, or the second epistle, is entitled "On the Intellectual Principles According to the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'."¹⁶⁷ After paying homage to Pythagoras and stating that numbers are the first things in the whole nature, they endorse Pythagoreanism as their *madhhab* (creed). In fact, like the Pythagoreans the Ikhwān believe that the universe as a whole could be explained and understood in mathematical terms.

In short, unlike al-Sijistānī the Ikhwān fully subscribed to Neoplatonism (Neopythagoreanism). The reader can easily perceive the striking differences between the *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya* and the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* when examining those religiously sensitive issues. Hence, there is no need to elaborate. I conclude this long introduction by stating that the works of al-Sijistānī, particularly the *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya*, represents the fine tuning of Neoplatonism with the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd* and the transcendence of God.

¹⁶⁶ It is the first epistle, see *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, vol. III, p. 178.

¹⁶⁷ *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, vol. III, p. 199.

Contents of *The Book of the Keys to the Kingdom*¹

1. On the invocation of the Originator [God].
2. On the majesty of the Originator.
3. On the munificence of the Originator.²
4. On the [infinite] power of the Originator.³
5. Concerning [the essence of] being.
6. Concerning paramount sovereignty.⁴
7. Concerning uniqueness.⁵
8. On [the issue that] God is not a cause.
9. On [the issue that] God is not a substance.
10. Those who worship God by denying his attributes and limitations do not worship Him in a beneficial manner since such worship [i.e., negation of attributes]⁶ is applied to some created beings.⁷
11. One who says that God is a thing but not like other things is false and impossible.⁸
12. On the distinction between the numerical one and the One that is non-numerical.
13. On [the issue that] upon careful examination, anthropomorphism is masked with "stripping" God of all attributes [such as power, knowledge etc.]
14. On explaining the meaning of [the terms] the Originator, the Creator and the Giver of forms.
15. On [the issue that] God is more certain than all things with certainty although He shares no property either with limited or non-limited created beings.⁹
16. On re-examining the meaning of the four names [applied to God] which are: the First, the Last, the Evident and the Hidden.
17. On the meaning of attributing members and limbs to God that are too sublime to be mentioned.

¹ This translation is a revised version of my previous summary translation in Poonawala, "Al-Sijistānī and His *Kitāb al-Maqālīd*." For Paul Walker's translation see *Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistānī: Intellectual Missionary*, pp. 112-15.

² Walker has read the text as *wujūd*, hence his translation 'existence' is incorrect.

³ The Arabic word used is *qudra*, which means capacity or power. However, both the words do not convey the essence of *iqdār*. Omnipotence is closer to the author's understanding of *qudra*.

⁴ In keeping with what is discussed in this chapter, the above translation of *al-rubūbiyya* is more appropriate than 'divinity.'

⁵ I have preferred 'uniqueness' over 'unicity' because God's unicity is not the issue.

⁶ It is also called 'negative theology' that conceives of ultimate reality as so transcending human thought that it can be described only negatively.

⁷ Walker's reading of the Arabic text and its translation is incorrect. The later part of the title is translated as 'since worshipping Him is incumbent upon certain created beings.'

⁸ Walker did not have access to Zāhid 'Alī manuscript, hence his translation 'God is not like other things ...' is incorrect.

⁹ Walker's incorrect reading of the text resulted in the translation of 'although He shares no property with created beings of any rank.'

18. On the conformity of the Chapter of Sincerity (or the declaration of God's Unity)¹⁰ with the Islamic confession of faith.
19. That the Command [or the Word] is an intermediary between the Creator and His creation.
20. On [the issue that] there is no drawing of benefit or dispelling of harm in origination.
21. On the meaning each [of the three terms]: eternity, the eternal and eternality entails.
22. On [the issue that] the origination does not occur in such a way that it increases moment by moment.
23. On [the issue that] the cause is so called because of its effect.
24. On [the issue that] in certain respects, a cause is so united with its effect that it may be said that they are one.
25. Concerning why it is [believed] that there is no intermediary between the Word and the Preceder [the Intellect].
26. Concerning why it is believed that there is one intermediary between the Soul and the Word.
27. On the word 'no' which is a particle of negation and denial.
28. On [the issue that] the Command of God is sanctified above creation since it is the cause of creation.
29. On nullification of pre-eternal matter co-existing with the Originator, He be praised!¹¹
30. On repudiating the statement of those who claim that the action of God is subsequent to the action of the Soul and that it is because of the Soul's activity God therefore acted.
31. On [the issue that] 'existence' cannot be appropriately predicated on the First Originated Being, let alone the Originator.
32. On [the issue that] the Intellect causes the subjugation of creatures to the One who originated it.
33. On [the issue that] the Soul would not have changed from potentiality to actuality were it not for an intermediary between the Nature and the Intellect.
34. On the distinction between natural operations and intellectual operations.
35. On [the issue that] an unending duration does not measure up to eternity and how to recognize it.
36. On affirming that the world of compounded things is derived from the world of simple (or pure) things.
37. On [the issue that] if the soul leaves the body, does some of its cognizance cease?
38. On affirming a substance devoid of length, width, and depth (i.e. dimensionless).
39. On [the issue that] the universe is not susceptible to the increase of anything.
40. On [the issue that] resurrection is for souls and not for disintegrating and dissipative bodies.
41. On [the issue that] time does not bring things into being, but is only empowered to bring change and transformation.

¹⁰ Chapter 112 of the Qur'ān.

¹¹ Walker's incorrect translation, 'On disavowing any eternality in addition to the Originator,' is the result of his misreading the text.

42. On [the issue that] the absence of intellect means the nonexistence of all virtues.
43. On [the issue that] the presumption of some people that the Soul is higher than the celestial sphere, and the Intellect is higher than the Soul in the same manner as the elevation of water on earth and that of air on water, is a false assumption.
44. On [the issue that] metempsychosis is false.
45. On [the issue that] the returning of souls to bodies in the manner they were once situated upon the arrival of the celestial sphere to a certain point is impossible.
46. On the manner of how one conceives of angels in human form.
47. The spiritual substances resist definition (or fixed boundaries), let alone the Originator.
48. On [the issue that] punishment applies to certain souls, and the refutation of those who claim that all souls return to a reward without retribution.
49. On [the issue that] the motion of the Soul is infinite (or without end).
50. On [the issue that] the prophecy cannot be bestowed without knowledge.
51. On [the issue that] it is not possible to unite all people under one law,¹² however it is possible to unite them through true knowledge.
52. On the distinction between revelation and interpretation.
53. On the reason why the religious laws stopped at five and do not exceed this number, and what prohibitions these five laws contain which unequivocally prevent an increase.
54. On the characteristics of ambiguous verses.
55. On [the issue that] the superiority of humans to animals lies in knowledge, not in form alone.
56. On [the issue that] creation is so immersed in humans that no aspect has escaped.
57. Concerning the Will that is attributed to God, sublime is His remembrance!
58. On [the issue that] as an aspect of intellect, God, the high, has a religion that is hidden from the unworthy.
59. On [the issue that] the law is not sufficient by itself; however it is indispensable for true knowledge hidden underneath.
60. On [the issue that] the spiritual is prior to the corporeal.
61. On [the issue that] the creation is to religion like the prime matter is to form, and religion is to the creation as form is to prime matter.
62. On the excellence of the even number that follows six — eight.
63. On [the issue that] the comprehension of the inner truths of laws do not abrogate the requirement of the performance of ritual obligations.
64. On the meaning of the Holy Spirit and by what is it superior to the rational and sensate soul.¹³
65. On the meaning of a blast of the trumpet and the manner in which it is to be recognized.
66. On [the issue that] there could be no faith without knowledge.

¹² Walker's translation, 'for all people to agree on one law,' is incorrect because he did not amend the faulty textual reading.

¹³ Walker incorrectly read '*rūḥ*' and '*qudus*' as separate words and therefore translated 'On the meaning of the spirit and the holy.'

67. On [the issue that] the blameworthy conduct debases the soul just as the praiseworthy conduct exalts it.
68. On the reason why discord and dissension occur following the death of each of the Speaking-prophets in their communities.
69. On [the issue that] the soul will not live on without knowledge, nor is there any endurance for it without knowledge.
70. On the righteous religious life.

Chronology of al-Sijistānī's works¹

مؤلفات السجستاني حسب الترتيب الزمني

The following chronology is based mainly on internal evidences scattered in al-Sijistānī's surviving works. It is assumed that the author had completed each work when referred to it in his subsequent composition/s. It is quite plausible that the author was working simultaneously on more than one book.²

1. *Kitāb al-Nuṣra*: It is no longer extant, but was an early work wherein he defended his teacher al-Nasafī's views against that of al-Rāzī. Some views held by the author in this book were abandoned in his latter works.
2. *Ithbāt al-nubū'āt* (or *al-nubū'a*). Edited by 'Ārif Tāmir. It is referred to in *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya*, pp. 205, 249. In the *Ithbāt* and all his subsequent works, al-Sijistānī maintained his previous position that Noah was the first prophet to have introduced law (*sharī'a*). However, he changed his earlier view concerning the Fāṭimids and accepted them as *khulafā'* (deputies) of the *Qā'im* until the latter's return.³
3. *Al-Kāmil*. No longer extant, but is referred to in *Ithbāt al-nubū'āt*, p. 28.
4. *Al-Bishāra* or *Kitāb al-Bishāra*. It is not extant but is referred to in *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya*, p. 160, and *Kitāb al-Iftikhār*, pp. 153, 164.
5. *Sullam al-najāt*. Edited by Mohamed Alibhai for his doctoral dissertation.
6. *Kitāb al-Yanābī'*. Edited by Henry Corbin. It is referred to in *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya*, p. 111.
7. *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya*. It is referred to in *Sullam al-najāt*, p. 16 (Arabic text), and *Kitāb al-Iftikhār* pp. 33, 203.
8. *Kitāb al-Iftikhār*. Edited by Ismail K. Poonawala. It was the last composition of al-Sijistānī.

¹ This listing is not comprehensive because I am not able to examine carefully all extant manuscript copies ascribed to al-Sijistānī and preserved in various public and private collections. *Al-Risāla al-bāhira* is edited and translated into English by Bustan Hirji as part of her dissertation submitted to McGill University in 1995, but I am unable to obtain a copy.

² For example in *Ithbāt al-nubū'āt*, p. 28, al-Sijistānī states:

لعلنا نشرح في كتابنا الموسوم بالكامل إن يسر الله لنا ذلك.

³ In his *Ithbāt al-nubū'āt*, pp. 181-82, 185, 187, al-Sijistānī states:

آدم هو أول مرتبة النطقاء، وأول مرتبة دور الستر، ولم يكن له شريعة يأتي بها ... إن نوحاً أول من بنى الشرائع ... وكذلك القائم سلام الله على ذكره أقام بعد الغيبة خلفاءه لئلا ينقطع نور الله تعالى عن العالم.