

FATIMID HISTORY AND ISMAILI DOCTRINE

Paul E. Walker

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Fatimid History and Ismaili Doctrine



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INTRODUCTION

Of the major Islamic dynasties, only the Fatimids ruled their imperial domain as both caliphs – not unlike earlier and contemporary Umayyads and the Abbasids – and as, more importantly, imams in the full Shiite sense of that term which made of them the supreme authority in all religious as well as secular affairs. For the Ismailis – that branch of the Shī'a who followed the Fatimid line – the reigning imam had a status equivalent to that of the Prophet, except that he did not receive revelation from God. In all other respects the Fatimid rulers were the divinely ordained successors of the Prophet, heirs thus to the full extent of his sanctity and sacral authority. Ismaili doctrine was thus intimately bound up in the progress of Fatimid government. Therefore, it is impossible to make complete sense of Fatimid history without a thorough understanding of Ismailism and its role in the workings of the state this movement brought into being and supported until its final collapse two and a half centuries after inception. However, it is a subject that, due to the lack of appropriate source materials, has proven, until fairly recently, uncommonly difficult to study.

It is not that the Fatimids were reluctant to voice their claims for legitimacy; imperial decrees and pronouncements of the time nearly always emphasize the prophetic and Aliid ancestry of the dynasty. But many details are missing, having never been proclaimed publicly. One important example is the names of the imams who immediately preceded al-Mahdi. But there are others. Many aspects of Fatimid Ismailism remained closely guarded by the mission for teaching and propaganda and its clandestine network in the *da'wa*. Its work was restricted, promoted in strict secrecy and revealed only to those sworn to preserve it from the inquiry of outsiders. Contemporary witnesses not privy to the full range of Ismaili teachings because they lacked permission to examine the books and treatises produced by its *dā'īs* knew little of it. Later Sunni historians, who are frequently our only sources for much of Fatimid history, understood even less. A writer like the famous al-Maqrīzī, who, more than anyone else, attempted to find and incorporate in his own works as many of the earliest accounts as he could, found the topic of Ismaili doctrine obscure and difficult. The public record that was available to him did not include the private material that had once circulated solely within the Fatimid *da'wa*. When the dynasty fell, a Sunni government took over,

and it cared not at all for what it and its supporters considered the heretical tendencies of its predecessor. Only the Yemeni adherents of the Fatimid imams continued to maintain the Ismaili tradition as fully as possible, and it was they who preserved what is left to us of its earliest literature. From what survived there, and later in India, copies of authentic Ismaili texts from the Fatimid era have finally begun to emerge. They have given us a wholly new perspective from which we can begin to reconstruct a complete picture of the intersection of Fatimid history and Ismaili doctrine and begin to understand how one affected the other.

The studies in the present collection have, as one of their principal aims, the investigation of what the sources – both public and private, Sunni and Ismaili – tell us about this aspect of Fatimid rule. Nevertheless, while Ismaili doctrine presumably influenced all aspects of Fatimid policy, how it actually achieved that purpose, and in exactly what ways, is, even with growing access to authentic Ismaili writings from the period, often still difficult to determine. No medieval author thought, for example, to compose a history of the *da'wa*, either as an institution of the state, which it was, or as a mission designed to win over and convert the larger Islamic world of the 4th/10th to 6th/12th centuries. Nevertheless, slowly, through carefully detailed research, most often in connection with an analysis of single incidents or the work of one individual – the writings of a major Ismaili *dā'ī*, for example – that history is becoming significantly clearer and more precise.

The first two studies presented here (both originally published in the *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*) deal with institutions of the Fatimid state. The evidence available about the institutions for the propagation of learning, teaching and scholarship (the subject of number I), though often touted for their role in spreading Ismailism, does not, in general, support such a claim. As but one example, al-Azhar in the Fatimid period was never, except quite briefly, either a college or a university. It did not serve as the headquarters of the Ismaili *da'wa*. Succession to the Ismaili imamate (the topic of number II), even though crucial to the continuing viability of the dynasty, depended doctrinally on the predecessor's infallible designation of his successor, which over many generations proved most difficult to sustain, leading almost inevitably to controversy and eventually to schism.

Each of these papers in its own way aims for comprehensive coverage, noting all aspects of the subject over the full course of Fatimid history. Number III (which also appeared in *JARCE*), by contrast, examines one institution – the *da'wa* – in a narrower historical context – the reign of the caliph al-Ḥākim, a period of particularly intense agitation among this caliph's most loyal adherents. Another study in this volume, number IX (from *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*), also deals with Ismaili works produced at that time, in the latter

case specifically composed to defend the imamate of this same caliph. One more, number IV (reprinted from the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Druze Studies*), on a major Ismaili family and its role as a multi-generational member of the elite, begins its account with the rise to prominence of Mālīk b. Saʿīd al-Fāriqī under al-Ḥākim.

Three articles in this collection look at Fatimid relations with the enemies of the dynasty: the Christian Byzantine empire and the Abbasids. When the armies of al-Muʿizz first conquered Egypt, their commander Jawhar declared that he had come in part to pursue the *jihād* against the Byzantines in northern Syria. To what extent the Fatimids actually wished to engage in a holy war is debatable; more likely such claims served a propaganda purpose: an attempt to enlist the sympathies of the eastern Muslims in their cause, which aimed ultimately at the overthrow of the Abbasids rather than conquest of Anatolia. However, it is not without irony that the Byzantine emperor John Tzimiskēs would employ a similar tactic – crusade-like rhetoric – to justify his unusually successful campaign into southern Syria not long thereafter, which is the main subject of paper number VI (reproduced here, like number V, its predecessor, from *Byzantion*).

The Fatimid-Abbasid rivalry took many forms: rhetorical thrusts and counter-thrusts, claims of false and dubious lineage, control of political territory and allegiances, and the theft of symbols of legitimacy, both real and imaginary. The latter topic is the subject of paper number VIII (from a volume on *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam*).

The Mamluk era historian al-Maqrīzī, already mentioned, dedicated an unusual amount of his attention to the Fatimids. Credible testimony from those around him suggests that he once thought he was, in fact, a descendant of theirs. Whatever the truth of that claim, his works are a major source both for quotations from and paraphrases of histories composed long before his time and for his critical assessment about the trustworthiness of Egyptian versus non-Egyptian witnesses to Fatimid history. Any study of the dynasty has to rely in large measure on what he wrote about it, and it is thus vitally important to understand his attitude toward the Fatimids. That is the topic of paper number VII (from *Mamluk Studies Review*).

Finally, the concluding four studies concern matters of Ismaili doctrine as expressed by its *dāʿīs* during the Fatimid period. Two, numbers X and XI (the former originally published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* and the latter reproduced here from a volume on *Medieval Ismaʿili History and Thought*), present the results of an investigation into a previously unknown work by an obscure 4th/10th century Khurasani *dāʿī* named Abū Tammām. The first deals with the author and his works; the second covers the section of his *Kitāb al-Shajara* that contains a heresiography of the seventy-two damned sects of

early Islam. These two papers serve to identify Abū Tammām and introduce his classification of Islamic heresies, both preliminary to the publication by Wilferd Madelung and myself of the Arabic text with complete English translation (*An Ismaili Heresiography*, Leiden, Brill, 1998).

Numbers XII and XIII involve detailed studies of particular doctrinal themes: time and its role in human history, and metempsychosis or the transmigration of souls. Both represented areas of special sensitivity for the Ismailis, the former in respect to the theory of prophecy, most particularly the end of prophecy and the advent of what is to come afterward, and the latter because many of these early writers denied the resurrection of the body. Without the body what preserved the individuality and identity of the soul? In Neoplatonism – an ancient philosophical school that heavily influenced Fatimid era doctrine – acceptance of metempsychosis is common. And, accordingly, many Ismaili writers were accused of holding to a similar belief – a doctrine, however, they consistently rejected. Nonetheless, both issues – time and reincarnation – reveal the close connection and interaction of Fatimid period dogmatic theorists with the broader philosophical currents in the Islamic world of the time.

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April 2007

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The articles in this volume, as in all others in the Variorum Collected Studies Series, have not been given a new, continuous pagination. In order to avoid confusion, and to facilitate their use where these same studies have been referred to elsewhere, the original pagination has been maintained wherever possible.

Each article has been given a Roman number in order of appearance, as listed in the Contents. This number is repeated on each page and is quoted in the index entries.

I

FATIMID INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING*

In the modern reconstruction of Islamic Egypt, the Fatimids, although known to have been Shiite and hence heretical from the Sunnī perspective, generally receive recognition for the founding of Cairo and for the glory of having established the oldest continuously operating university in the world, al-Azhar. But, in the course of various exaggerations about al-Azhar, Fatimid institutions of learning have become disconnected from the meager evidence for them in the surviving historical records. A kind of boosterism has taken over the story of al-Azhar under the Fatimids and made of it a mythic prototype of the *madrasa*, at the minimum, or even the modern university, at the most outrageous.¹ The false fame of al-Azhar has not, unfortunately, done the study of the Fatimids as much good as harm. Unchecked and unexamined, these legends hinder the evaluation of critical information concerning the relationship of state policy—particularly in reference to religious ideology—and the methods and efforts, or lack thereof, employed for its propagation. As a Shiite dynasty, the Fatimids presumably maintained an interest in establishing and fostering educational institutions that could promote their religious cause, or at the least, could ensure some measure of public loyalty. If al-Azhar actually possessed even a small portion of the eminence often accorded it, what explains Fatimid failure to attract scholars, or to build a solid record of academic conversions among those attached to it? Ismaili scholars, with few exceptions, are not known to have had any connection with such an institution. Al-Azhar was simply neither a major educational institution in the broader sense nor the special focal point for Ismaili propaganda and teaching. The role now foisted on it is not supported by the historical evidence and that helps explain why al-Azhar did not function as a

* I would like to thank Bruce D. Craig for reading and commenting on an earlier version of this paper.

¹See for example, Bayard Dodge, *Al-Azhar: A Millennium of Muslim Learning*, Memorial Edition (Washington, The Middle East Institute, 1974).

prop for state Shiism or even Fatimid political support.

As a direct result of this demotion of al-Azhar, two areas demand further investigation: first, a reconsideration of how and in what way the data in the historical accounts allowed the development of the myth; and second, what were the actual details of Fatimid educational policy in regard to the propagation of either Shiism or state allegiance. If al-Azhar did not function as a university or as a *madrasa*—Shiite or otherwise—did other instructional institutions serve these or similar educational purposes?

The term *madrasa* in this context immediately raises numerous difficult questions. *Madrasa* and university are, of course, not equivalent expressions and the modern word, university, needs to be dropped altogether from this discussion. Although al-Azhar was once an important congregational mosque, it was never, even allowing a certain hyperbole, a university in the Fatimid period. The *madrasa* is now the subject of an intense scholarly debate concerning its exact meaning and origin.² Many medieval and modern authorities would insist that a *madrasa* must have taught *fiqh* and, by most accounts, must have taught only Sunnī *fiqh*. Accordingly, it would be difficult if not impossible to investigate the Fatimid *madrasa*, which, therefore, involves a contradiction in terms in and of itself.

In searching for Fatimid educational institutions, questions about al-Azhar—either as a university or as a *madrasa*—tend thus to be misleading. A true account of Fatimid policy must describe the full range of institutions created by and under the Fatimids. And institutions need not be restricted to those that were formally established and operated. Of those that were, however, one of the most successful educational tools employed by the Fatimids was the *munāẓarāt* (public sessions of interrogation and debate); one of the least effective as an organ of state policy was the *hujar* (military barrack schools). The

²For general background see George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh, 1981), and “Madrassa,” in the *EI2* by J. Pedersen, revised by G. Makdisi. Both provide extensive additional references to primary and secondary literature on the subject. It should be noted in regard to the *EI2* article, however, that its information about the Fatimids is often incorrect and unreliable. Several references in it to the Dār al-ilm and the palace libraries do not accurately reflect the facts in the sources. Chronology is a major problem. In contrast, Makdisi’s *Rise of Colleges* rightfully admits the true limitations of the information concerning al-Azhar as a *madrassa*. See his p. 181 and note.

famous propaganda organization of the Ismailis, the *da'wa*, moreover, although a state sponsored institution, remains the least understood since most of its activities were deliberately kept as secret as possible. Among the other institutions, there were libraries, an astronomical observatory, a research institute, and above all the ever-present system of private informal teaching that may or may not have been regulated by the state in any sense.

One explanation for previous confusion about these institutions is the normal procedure of the later Arabic historians to mix somewhat indiscriminately sources that report information from widely varying periods of Fatimid rule. Al-Maqrīzī's topically organized *Khīṭaṭ* typically covers a single institution with separate accounts from al-Musabbihī in the time of al-Ḥākim, Ibn al-Ma'mūn in the era of al-Āmir, and Ibn al-Ṭuwayr³ during the final phase just prior to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. He often assembles these sources without regard for chronology as if what was true at the close of the Fatimid dynasty might apply equally to the earliest decades of their government in Egypt. In at least one instance, he places a citation from Ibn al-Ṭuwayr between two quotations from al-Musabbihī as if the institution in question—here it is the *majlis al-ḥikma*—functioned throughout in the same fashion, and that the two original sources are describing a Fatimid practice that did not change in the century and a half between one report and the other.⁴

The reality of Fatimid policy is, therefore, both complex and hard to analyze; the sources available are not yet fully accessible and are woefully incomplete even so. Some areas will simply always remain a mystery. The investigation set forth in this article is therefore tentative in part, especially in respect to conclusions concerning the Fatimid education program for its general public. Still, the first step in reaching an understanding of Fatimid intentions and of the reason for

³Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ṭuwayr al-Qaysarānī al-Miṣrī, 525–617/1130–1220, whose work is now lost. On him see Cl. Cahen's brief note in the *EI2*.

⁴*al-Mawā'iz wa'l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār* (Bulaq), I, 391. Hereafter simply *Khīṭaṭ*. In what follows I have generally referred to the Bulaq edition but occasional also to the "*musawwada*" version newly edited and published by A. F. Sayyid (London, 1995). These two texts are often not identical and thus both should be checked one against the other and against other versions of the same information when it exists and can be located.

their successes and failures requires a careful identification of the institutions in question and a rigorous delineation of the evidence for them without either the confusion or the exaggeration now typically applied to this data.

The Munāẓarāt

As stated, use of *munāẓarāt* in which opponents were summoned before an authority of the state for interrogation, or at the least, for a session of questions and answers on issues of religious understanding and interpretation appear to have been relatively effective in the few cases that were tried and for which there now exists a record. The *munāẓara*, as an institution of public or semi-public debate or dispute, had a wide application in the Islamic world at large and there are numerous types, formats, and subjects ranging from issues of theology and law to a sub-genre devoted to the struggle for precedence.⁵ Its role in conversion was important in that these disputes were often held under the auspices of or at the command of the ruler or a wazir and therefore the outcome of the debate involved the prestige of the state itself.

From the first days of their victory in North Africa and before the liberation and advent of al-Mahdī, the brothers Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Shī‘ī and Abu’l-‘Abbās orchestrated a series of *munāẓarāt* in which one or the other of them tested the leading non-Ismaili figures from Qayrawan and the former territories of the Aghlabids. As a direct result, substantial numbers of former Ḥanafīs and Shī‘īs, plus some others, converted and joined the Fatimid movement.⁶

⁵See the survey article by E. Wagner the *EI2*.

⁶The major source for these *munāẓarāt* is the *Kitāb al-Munāẓarāt* by Ja‘far b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Aswad as preserved in the *Kitāb al-Azhār* of the 16th century Yemeni author Ḥasan b. Nūḥ al-Barūchī. Ibn al-Aswad was an eye-witness and participant and he himself converted to Ismailism in the course of his *munāẓarāt* with Abū ‘Abdallāh. I am in the process of preparing an edition, translation and full study of this important text. [Subsequently published in Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker, *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shi‘i Witness* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000).]

Additional evidence of these *munāẓarāt* come from Mālikī *ṭabaqāt* works, in particular the *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt ‘ulamā’ Ifrīqiya* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥārith al-Khushanī, edited by Mohammed ben Cheneb in his *Classes des Savants de l’Ifriqiya* (Alger, 1914), but also in

Although clearly effective in these instances from the earliest period, not much more can be said about use of the *munāẓara*. Subsequent to these efforts, little of the kind appears in the historical records for the Fatimids. Obviously, to be successful, the *munāẓara* institution required the interest and participation of the ruler, meaning here the imam/caliph. Yet almost no cases of the type just mentioned exist in later periods. Al-Mu'izz was, as is evident from Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's *al-Majālis wa'l-musāyārāt*, extremely active in another somewhat similar type of instructional sessions, but these predominately or even exclusively involved his loyal followers and were not confrontations with his opponents.

Nevertheless, another era of *munāẓarāt* belongs to the famous wazir Ya'qūb Ibn Killis. His situation was unusual in many respects; he held power of a high order and could therefore act nearly as freely as Abū 'Abdallāh had done many years earlier. That may have been a key to the revival of this institution as a tool against opponents. Ibn Killis was born Jewish and converted relatively late in life. Still, when he did, he accepted his Islamic role with marked seriousness. Further to his becoming a Muslim, when he joined the Fatimid movement in North Africa, he added an interest in Islamic law and in Ismaili doctrine. Once back in Egypt, following the Fatimid conquest, he rose in importance both within the state and in his personal wealth and power. Ultimately, in 367/977, al-'Azīz appointed him wazir, a rank until then unknown to the Fatimids. From then until his death in 380/991, he more or less governed Egypt.

Ibn Killis employed a portion of his personal wealth for the support of a cadre of scholars and intellectuals who were attached to his private retinue and who participated as an audience in numerous *munāẓarāt* that often featured, among a wide array of Muslims, local Jews and Christians of different factions.⁷ Attending his *munāẓarāt* or being employed by the wazir for the explicit purpose of scholarship

al-Mālikī's *Riyāḍ al-nufūs* and in Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's *al-Madārik*. On this there is an unpublished paper by Sumaiya Hamdani, "The Batin in the Zahir: Fatimid-Sunni Polemics in Tenth-Century North Africa," (MESA, 1994).

⁷On the participation of Jews and Christians, see Sidney H. Griffith, "The *Kitāb Miṣbāḥ al-'Aql* of Severus ibn al-Muqaffa'," *Medieval Encounters* 2 (1996): 15–42; Mark R. Cohen and Sasson Somekh, "In the Court of Ya'qūb ibn Killis: a Fragment from the Cairo Geniza," *Jewish Quarterly Review* n.s. 80 (1989), 283–314; and Bernard Lewis, "Palṭiel: a Note," *BSOAS* 30 (1967), 177–181.

lent a serious academic tone to the activities of the government even if they were actually private ventures of Ibn Killis himself. When al-ʿAzīz had him arrested at one point, Ibn Killis turned over to the ruler a list of the scholars and literary figures on his monthly payroll. Al-ʿAzīz felt he had no choice but to continue these payments but discovered that the amount came to 1,000 dinars per month.⁸ No wonder that Ibn Killis was well known for his interest in and patronage of scholarship.⁹ This is of special importance in discussing the case of al-Azhar as will be seen.

Not much, however, became of Ibn Killis's *munāẓarāt*, though they are confirmed in contemporary Christian accounts and in Geniza materials and they are mentioned in most biographical notices devoted to him in the Arabic sources. Their existence was clearly felt at the time and they must have been important vehicles of a kind of semi-public policy—perhaps, even constituting a prototype for later, more public institutions of a slightly different sort. No obvious list of converts derives from these sessions, however, and their effect may thus have been quite limited and temporary, not outlasting the instigator who arranged them.

Of the *munāẓara* in later periods, there are almost no references. One occurred in the time of al-Ḥākim and then for the academic staff of his Dār al-ʿilm (or al-Ḥikma) about which more needs to be said later.¹⁰ The future of the *munāẓara* as an institution apparently depended on the wishes of subsequent imams none of whom were disposed to this form of public disputation. Of course, *munāẓarāt* may have been held at a lower level but few seem to have been recorded.¹¹ In a sense the deliberate confrontation of opponents, which is implied

⁸Reported by Yaḥyā of Antioch, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Tripolis, Lebanon, 1990), 202, and al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāz al-ḥunafāʾ bi-akḥbār al-aʿimma al-fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafāʾ*, vol. I ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl and vols. II–III ed. Muḥammad Ḥilmī Muḥammad Aḥmad (Cairo, 1967–1973), I, 262. Ibn Killis was arrested in Shawwāl of 373 on suspicion of having poisoned the Turkish amir Alptakīn.

⁹As for example in the biographical notice for him in Ibn Khallikān's *Wafiyāt al-aʿyān*.

¹⁰The incident is mentioned by al-Maqrīzī in his *Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 459, who says that in the year 403 a group (*jamāʿa*), including mathematicians, logicians, jurists, and physicians, from the Dār al-ʿilm met for a *munāẓara* in front of al-Ḥākim.

¹¹al-Maqrīzī (*Ittiʿāz*, II, 175) cites a *munāẓara* of *dāʾīs* in the congregational mosque in the year 416.

in the *munāẓarāt*, seems foreign to the later Fatimids who, after the difficult years of al-Ḥākim, deliberately avoided sectarian controversies and friction whenever possible.

The Majlis al-Ḥikma

As its primary instrument of instruction, the *majlis al-ḥikma* was the most enduring educational institution of the Fatimids. In contrast to the *munāẓarāt*, the *majlis* (or plural *majālis*), “sessions of wisdom” were intended primarily for the edification of Ismailis.¹² Although presumably non-Ismailis who had expressed special interest and who were already candidates for conversion occasionally attended these sessions, the principal aim of the *majlis* was the education of the Ismailis both in Cairo and elsewhere. They were, in fact, held throughout the Islamic world. These formal meetings included lessons in Ismaili lore and in readings from the books of the sect (in the learning of the *ahl al-bayt*) and, most significantly, the payment of a fee, called either the *najwa* or the *fiṭra*, depending on whether it was a regular weekly assembly or one of the feasts. One source specifies that the amount due for this “confidential discourse” was three and one third dirhams, which was not an inconsequential sum—especially to be paid weekly—for many of the less wealthy. The aggregate amounts collected from all such *majālis* world-wide, moreover, provided the imam-caliph with significant income that flowed to his use outside of that derived from the normal taxes and dues of the state.¹³

While the *majlis al-ḥikma* was itself restricted by the factors just mentioned, was it nevertheless designed for the relatively ordinary participation of those who considered themselves Ismaili, which is to say, all those who were attached to the Fatimid ruler on a religious

¹²In general see, in addition to Farhad Daftary's *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrine* (Cambridge, 1990), for the earliest phases, especially for North Africa, Heinz Halm's important *Das Reich des Mahdī: Der Aufstieg der Fatimiden* (Munich, 1991), now in English trans. by Michael Bonner, *The Empire of the Mahdī: The Rise of the Fatimids* (Leiden, 1996), German, 102, 143, 332–33, English, 105–6, 153, 374–77.

¹³There is significant evidence for this in the *sijills* of the collection called *al-Sijillāt al-Mustaṣhiriyya*. Those from the time not long after the advent in Cairo of Badr al-Jamālī often mention how grateful al-Mustaṣṣir is that he can at last begin to receive these dues again following the restoration of internal security.

basis? In assessing the role of the *majlis al-ḥikma*, a number of factors ought to be considered. First, to what degree was it limited to the Ismailis who were bound, in any case, by oath and covenant to the imam-ruler? To the extent that it was restricted, it did not, therefore, serve a propaganda purpose in appealing for converts. Second, did a payment to attend tend to confine access only to those most devoted and most able to pay by virtue of position? Third, if the instruction in these sessions was less academic than homiletic—as one might judge from some of the surviving materials said to have been a part of the program of these *majālis*—was its purpose educational rather than exhortatory? One objective of these sessions, to be sure, was basic instruction for the Ismaili public in Fatimid, i.e., Shiite, *fiqh*, although this was not necessarily its main aim. Each of these points needs further investigation, of course, but they indicate initially an institution that did not serve a broad educational function because it was conceived more narrowly and may have, for that reason, had little popular attraction for students and scholars in Egypt except for a relatively brief period at the end of the 4th/10th century.¹⁴

Side by side with the *majālis* of this type, the Ismaili *da'wa* must have included a series of training and other instructional meetings for its higher officials both in Cairo and elsewhere. About this aspect of the *da'wa* and the training of its agents, there is little data because it was obviously closely controlled and probably secret.¹⁵ The problem here is not the general question of the *da'wa* and its *dā'īs* at large, about which there is a certain amount of useful information,¹⁶ but about how the *da'wa* related to the Fatimid state which presumably controlled and directed it. Did the *da'wa*, as often assumed but without much supporting evidence, provide institutional education and training at its headquarters in Cairo, for example, or in al-Mahdiyya, or any other residence of the imam and his closest aids? Nāṣir-i

¹⁴Enthusiasm for the Ismaili form of Islam and attendance at the *majlis al-ḥikma* grew in Egypt until about the year 400 when it began to wane.

¹⁵For a close look at this problem see my "The Ismaili Da'wa in the Reign of the Fatimid Caliph Al-Ḥākim," *JARCE* 30 (1993): 161–182 [no. III in this volume].

¹⁶On this see Abbas Hamdani, "Evolution of the Organizational Structure of the Fāṭimī Da'wah," *Arabian Studies* 3 (1976): 85–114, and W. Ivanow, "The Organization of the Fatimid Propaganda," *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15 (1939): 1–35, in addition to the works of Daftary and Halm cited previously.

Khusraw, certainly a noted *dā'ī* who clearly acted as a Fatimid agent once he returned to Iran, is often said to have been “trained” in Cairo. The evidence for this claim, however, is hard to come by. Al-Kirmānī, who visited Cairo in the later years of al-Ḥākim, was already an important writer and teacher and the purpose of his coming to the capital was to strengthen the central apparatus of the *da'wa* by his considerable scholarly presence rather than to receive additional training or education.

Thus it is likely that the *majlis al-ḥikma* and the *da'wa*, in this other sense of quasi-political missionary organization, do not overlap precisely. In general the *da'wa* was responsible for the *majlis al-ḥikma* but it is doubtful that the *dā'īs* were the beneficiaries, intended or otherwise, of the instruction in its session. Instead the *dā'īs* were those who conducted the *majlis* for the less advanced Ismailis.

In the North African period, the *majlis* existed but on a less formal basis than it came to possess later in Egypt. Prior to his victory over the Aghlabids, Abū 'Abdallāh offered his followers what amounted to almost a continual *majlis*—that is, sessions of instruction and exhortation more like regular schools. Likewise he instructed the *dā'īs* who resided elsewhere in the territories under his control to do the same. Special sessions were also organized for women.¹⁷

Later practice in North Africa is apparent from references to public readings by Qāḍī al-Nu'mān.¹⁸ Al-Nu'mān, in fact, was responsible for writing most of the legal texts that were commonly used later in Egypt as the core of the weekly *majlis* lectures and readings. The caliph al-Mu'izz had been especially anxious to institute the equivalent of an Ismaili *madhhab*, not unlike that being developed by the Imāmī Shiites at the same time. A publicly accessible *fiqh* was an essential component of any such *madhhab*, if it was to hold its own

¹⁷*Kitāb Iftitāḥ al-da'wa*, ed. Farhat Dachraoui (Tunis, 1975), 146 and 132. The second of these reports concerns the *majlis* held for women and their response to the Ismaili *da'wa*.

¹⁸For the public “readings” and *majālis* of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, see his *Kitāb al-Majālis wa'l-musāyarāt*, ed. al-Ḥabīb al-Faqī, Ibrāhīm Shabbūḥ, and Muḥammad al-Ya'lāwī (Tunis, 1978), 224, 386–388, 435 (and editor's note), 467, and 487, as well as the comments of Halm, *Das Reich*, 332–33, Eng. 375–6 (which includes, on p. 333, Eng. 375–6, a translation of the key passage from *al-Majālis*, pp. 386–87), and Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, 225–27. These “readings” by Qāḍī al-Nu'mān took place on Fridays, a practice emulated by Ibn Killis later.

against the popular Sunnī Mālikī and Ḥanafī legal schools. Qāḍī al-Nu'mān was given a special commission to fulfill exactly that purpose.

Still, after the imam had assumed direct responsibility for the state in 297/910, the term *majlis* for the North African Fatimids probably meant a session for the ceremonial viewing and consultation with the imam and not for weekly lessons and homilies, although both meanings are possible. The direct involvement of the imam seems to have been essential, except for the Friday service where the person offering the lessons read materials approved by him.¹⁹ Prior to the conquest of Egypt, there was little sign of intermediate offices between the imam and his followers; he simply did not make a general delegation of his authority to underlings. In Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's own record of *majālis* (his *Kitāb al-Majālis wa'l-musāyarāt*), the imams, most particularly al-Mu'izz, are always central participants in the sessions. It is their words and deeds he wanted to report, not those of a subordinate *dā'ī*, even of himself. Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's account of the audiences (*majālis*) of the imams, particularly of al-Mu'izz, offers a rare view, therefore, of a different kind of meeting, one that functioned as the center of the *da'wa* at its highest level, as opposed to the lesser public activity of reading to the faithful after the Friday service.

By the time of al-Ḥākim, the *majlis*, as a public institution, had become the *majlis al-ḥikma* or *majlis al-da'wa*. The regular readings and lectures were then given by the chief *dā'ī*, whose authority was conferred by appointment from the imam. Slightly earlier the wazirate of Ibn Killis had granted him wide powers and his own interest in legal affairs allowed him to conduct a form of *majlis* for the Ismailis and others, but it was not accorded the formal recognition that later become standard. Only with the first chief Qāḍī who happened also to have the title and responsibility of chief *Dā'ī* did the *majlis al-ḥikma* begin to function formally as institution of the state. Ibn Killis had held a session at this own home on Tuesdays, and on Fridays he often read to the public from his books, as Qāḍī al-Nu'mān had done before him. It is quite possible that these weekly events were later emulated and turned into the formal *majlis al-ḥikma*. In any case his Tuesday meetings, which were attended by a variety of scholars from differing religious persuasions, resembled most the *munāẓarāt* (or using an-

¹⁹*Majālis wa'l-musāyarāt*, 435, Qāḍī al-Nu'mān refers to reading what the *amīr al-mu'minīn* had ordered him to read *min al-ḥikma yawm al-jum'a*.

other term for a similar event, *mujādala*) described above. His public readings on Friday would be more like the later *majālis*. Both, however, might have once been called *majālis*, in part for the regularity of the time of meeting.

Many, but not all chief *qāḍīs*, were also chief *dā'īs*. The link between the judiciary and this aspect of the *da'wa* is probably a deliberate reflection of al-Mu'izz's concept of an Ismaili *madhhab*, which thereafter grew from the work of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān and was later cultivated by his sons, grandsons, and great-grandson, five of whom were *qāḍīs* and chief *dā'īs*. Their talent was law and not theology and this most likely indicates as well what they propagated through the *majlis al-ḥikma*.

During the period of al-'Azīz and al-Ḥākim and probably for much of the 5th/11th century as well, the office of judge and the duties connected with it were performed primarily in Fustāṭ and the old mosque of 'Amr. The weekly *majlis* for Ismailis required that the *dā'ī* attend sessions in Cairo a few hours away. These were held normally on Thursdays and Fridays in the palace and in al-Azhar with separate assemblies for men and for women. At the height of their popularity in the first half of al-Ḥākim's reign under the *dā'ī*ship of al-Fāriqī, the number of sessions reached as many as five a week, each designated for a different type of audience: commoners in one, women of the palace in another; the elite men and outsiders in yet two others, and so on.²⁰ In one case from these early decades of Fatimid rule in Egypt, a historian reports such large crowds in attendance at the *majlis* that, in 385 for example, eleven men were crushed to death in the throng.²¹ From 395, a similar report mentions crowds so large people died during the *majlis*.²²

In this period also there are indications that on occasion the major books of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, particularly his handbook of *fiqh* materials, the *Da'ā'im al-islām*, or an abridgement of it, were read as lectures. In fact several of his works were popular and it appears that

²⁰The list of five separate session comes from al-Musabbiḥī and therefore also applies to the specific time period that he observed and not to earlier or later practice. See *Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 391; A. F. Sayyid, "Nuṣūṣ ḍā'i'a min akhbār miṣr," *Annales islamologiques* 17 (1981): 1-54, p. 39.

²¹*Itti'āz*, I, 285; *Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 391.

²²*Itti'āz*, II, 54.

altogether they constituted a kind of course in Fatimid law arranged for systematic presentation in teaching sessions, quite possibly in the *majālis al-ḥikma*, under the conditions for the various sessions just outlined. Ibn Killis's treatise on law would have been included since it purported to extend the efforts of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān by adding material based on the authority of later imams, namely al-Mu'izz and al-'Azīz. Eventually, a summary of it, a *Mukhtaṣar*, by Ibn Killis himself comprised, along with the *Da'ā'im*, the essentials of Fatimid *fiqh*. During the reign of al-Zāhir, there was one brief attempt to suppress all other *madhhabs* and to insist that everyone had to memorize the *Da'ā'im al-Islām* and this *Mukhtaṣar* of Ibn Killis's *al-Risāla al-wazīriyya*.²³

Despite these hints at a formal legal curriculum for the *majlis al-ḥikma*, it is more likely that each chief *dā'ī* used a variety of materials, some legal, some not; and that each wrote their own lectures in part. Druze records cite individually numbered lectures from 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān and al-Fāriqī, chief Qāḍīs and *dā'īs* from 394 to 398, and 398 to 405 respectively.²⁴

The fluidity of Ismaili teaching and propaganda during the golden earlier phase in Egypt altered dramatically toward the end of al-Ḥākim's reign. Al-Ḥākim himself closed down the *majlis* on several occasions and the excesses of the Druze movement forced the senior *dā'īs* to retrench and return to the safety of secrecy.²⁵ Nevertheless, the *majlis al-ḥikma* continued throughout the Fatimid period. Al-Maqrīzī, in his general discussion of Fatimid administration, notes the role of chief *dā'ī* and carefully outlines his responsibilities, which included preparation of lectures or readings for the weekly *majlis*. In late Fatimid times, the lecture itself was still presented to the imam

²³This event is likely important as an exception and not as indicating the rule. See *Ittī'āz* II, 175; the year in question was 416. It is probably necessary to read the latter portion of this entry as follows: *wa faraḍa al-Zāhir li-man yahfazu dhalika mālan*. According to I. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature* (Malibu, 1977), 79, excerpts of this "summary" of Ibn Killis's law text survive.

²⁴See S. M. Stern, "Cairo as the Centre of the Ismā'īlī Movement," in *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism* (Jerusalem, 1983, 234–253), 239. They cite specifically nos. 10, 38, 117, 125, and 129 of 'Abd al-'Azīz (Druze epistles nos 72 and 76) and a 144th *majlis* of al-Fāriqī (Druze epistle no. 42).

²⁵On the fate of the *majlis al-ḥikma* during the reign of al-Ḥākim, see my article on "The Ismaili Da'wa in the Reign of the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim."

for his inspection and signature.²⁶ Subsequently, when it was read to the faithful, the written copy in and of itself was an object of reverence and touching it or being touched by it was one part of the ceremony in the *majlis*.²⁷

The word *majlis* and its plural *majālis* refer ambiguously both to the session for the lectures and to the lectures themselves. The literature of the Ismailis from the Fatimid period contains several examples of collected *majālis*. One is said to be a *majālis* of al-ʿAzīz, perhaps a record of sessions where he was present, another is a *majālis al-ḥikma* of al-Ḥākim.²⁸ Those of the chief *dāʿīs* ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and of al-Fāriqī, cited by the Druze, belong to this period, as does one mentioned by Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī as his own work. In this latter case the title, *al-Majālis al-baṣriyya waʾl-baghdādiyya*, would give the first firm indication of written *majālis* from non-Fatimid territory, but it is likely that some form of similar meetings were already long an Ismaili tradition by then and written materials for them probably

²⁶Ittiʿāz, III, 337.

²⁷*Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 391. In his description for the Great *ʿIwān* of the Fatimid palace, al-Maqrīzī provides this information and explicitly credits Ibn al-Ṭuwayr (see as well Ibn al-Ṭuwayr's *Nuzhat al-muqālatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn*, ed. A. F. Sayyid [Beirut, 1992], 110–12). This passage runs as follows:

The chief *dāʿī* ranks just after the chief *qāḍī* and wears robes and other accouterments of the same type as he. He is learned in all aspects of the doctrine of the Ahl al-Bayt which he recites publicly and takes the covenant from those who convert from another doctrine to theirs. He supervises under his control twelve deputy preceptors and, as is the case for the judiciary, he has a series of deputies in the other territories [of the empire]. The *fuqahāʾ* of the state confer with him. They have a meeting place called the *dār al-ʿilm* and a group of them that work there receive quite ample salaries. Those of them who are legal experts agree jointly on a dossier which they call the *majlis al-ḥikma* every Monday and Thursday, a fair copy of which they present to the chief *dāʿī*. He takes it from them and having obtained it from them he passes it on to the caliph on each of those two days. He assumes responsibility over it and when possible obtains the caliph's signature (*alāma*) on its cover. Then he goes to the assembly in the palace to recite the text to the faithful in two different places, one for the men from the seat of the *daʿwa* in the Great *ʿIwān*, and another for the women in the Hall of the *Dāʿī* [*majlis al-dāʿī*] which was one of the largest and most spacious of buildings. When he had completed his recitations to the faithful of both sexes, they would present themselves before him to kiss his hand and he would touch them on the head with the part of the document on which was the signature of the caliph.

²⁸Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, 319 and 323.

existed.²⁹

Three important collections of *majālis* survive. The best known is the massive eight hundred *majālis* by al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who was chief *dā'ī* from 450 with some interruptions until his death in 470. Al-Mu'ayyad also wrote lectures for others, notably the wazir al-Yāzūrī, when he held the office of chief *dā'ī* and, therefore, his collection may include those, as well as the ones he issued in his own name. From about the same time, there is a collection called *al-Majālis al-mustanṣiriyya*, which Stern insisted was the work of the Qāḍī al-Malījī, although this figure is not known to have ever been chief *dā'ī*.³⁰ Yet one more collection comes from the time of al-Āmir. It is the work of Abū Barakāt, the chief *dā'ī* of that period.³¹

The critical role of the *majlis al-ḥikma* in the preservation of an Ismaili identity among the Fatimids is not in doubt. But it was not an institution with fixed parameters or location. These sessions could and did move about and respond to various contingencies. As many as five were held in one week, in different venues, for different audiences; or as few as only one. Moreover, the *majlis* was repeated in other cities and in mosques other than al-Azhar. It is likely, for example, that provincial *dā'īs* prepared and read their own, or alternatively, used the lectures of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān or other materials produced in the *da'wa*.³² Though al-Mu'ayyad was himself a formidable scholar, not all of the other chief *dā'īs* possessed half his skill and intellectual attainments. Qāsim b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, the great grandson of al-Nu'mān, who was chief *dā'ī* when al-Mu'ayyad first arrived in Cairo,

²⁹This type of literature need not have a title that indicates explicitly its origin in the *majālis* institution. A good example of a quasi-Ismaili work that bears the signs of having started as lectures for the *majālis* is the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', but there are other examples as well.

³⁰Stern, "Cairo as the Centre of the Ismā'īlī Movement," reprinted in Stern's *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism* (Jerusalem, 1983), 234–256, 239–40. According to reports recorded in the *Itti'āz* (II, 251, 261, 262, 264, 268, 270, 271, 274, 276), he was the chief *qāḍī* at least seven times and wazir twice between the years 450 and 460, with various additions in Ibn Muyassar (pp. 32 and 35), extending this into 461. It should be noted that, in at least portions of this period, Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn was the chief *dā'ī*. Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, 319–20, offers two other suggestions as to the identity of the author.

³¹See Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, 128.

³²al-Maqrīzī preserves an interesting report (*Itti'āz*, III, 103) about a set of twelve *majliss* that were sent to Ḥurraṭ al-Yaman, the ruler and chief Ismaili official there.

was poorly regarded. Al-Mu'ayyad himself says quite disparaging things about this man.³³ Qāsim obviously inherited his claim to the position for which he had few qualifications other than a distinguished ancestry. But the institution itself endured and survived even the catastrophic schisms that left, in Egypt, the Ḥāfiẓī Ismailis at the end of the Fatimid period reduced to but one faction, opposed at home and abroad by both the Nizārī and the Ṭayyibī Ismailis. Still, when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn formally ended Fatimid rule, he carefully abolished the remnants of the Shiite *madhhab* and replaced it with that of al-Shāfi'ī. Only then, reports al-Maqrīzī, “did the *majlis al-da'wa* in the Azhar mosque and the others cease.”³⁴

The Madrasa

While it is true that the concept of *madrasa* belongs primarily to the Sunnī teaching of *fiqh*, it is nevertheless fair to inquire about the possibility of a Shiite *madrasa* under the Fatimids, particularly in reference to al-Azhar. Al-Maqrīzī included in his *Khiṭaṭ* a section called *Dhikr al-madāris*³⁵ in which, after noting the meaning of the root *darasa* and its derivatives, he suggested an origin for the *madrasa*, stating that it began after the year 400 and appeared first in Naysābūr. From there it moved west. He also recognizes the role of Nizām al-Mulk in its development. In regard to Egypt which was then in the hands of the Fatimids who were, he says, Ismailis and thus opposed to the Shāfi'ī *madhhab* of the Nizāmiyya, the first instance of such teaching being set up on behalf of the government occurred during the caliphate of al-'Azīz and his wazir, Ibn Killis. They did this, he reports, at the mosque of al-Azhar.

The main entry in the *Khiṭaṭ* on al-Azhar contains further detail.³⁶ In the year 378, the wazir Ibn Killis asked the caliph for a grant of funds as stipends for a group of *fuqahā'* and he then provided for them

³³*Sīrat al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn dā'ir al-du'āt*, edited by Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn (Cairo, 1949), 82.

³⁴*Itti'āz* III, 319–20.

³⁵*Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq) II, 362–63.

³⁶*Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq) II, 273.

a cash stipend in an amount suitable for each one. He ordered that they acquire a house in the vicinity of the Azhar mosque and renovate it to suit their purpose. On Fridays they would assemble at the mosque and hold a *ḥalqa* in it following the noon prayer and lasting until the *ʿaṣr* prayer. In addition, reports al-Maqrīzī, they were to receive a grant out of the funds of the wazir each year. There were thirty-five individuals in this group.

Oddly al-Maqrīzī omitted this information from his *Ittiʿāz*, which, however, includes almost no information for this year and the next. Al-Qalqashandī does confirm it and he, unlike al-Maqrīzī, specifically cites al-Musabbiḥī as its source. He also adds a few details. In the *ḥalqa*, he says, they discussed *fiqh*. And a certain Abū Yaʿqūb the qāḍī of al-Khandaq was their chief.³⁷

In terms of the history of the *madrasa*, this event seems especially significant. Ibn Killis would appear to have created a residential college associated with al-Azhar for the teaching of *fiqh*. There is, moreover, no reason to doubt this report. Still, what is missing is, first, an explicit comment on the kind of *fiqh* and, perhaps, how it was taught; and, second but more importantly, an indication of an endowment that might perpetuate this college beyond the time of Ibn Killis.

The rest of al-Maqrīzī's entry on the *madrasa* is pertinent in this regard. After simply noting that al-ʿAzīz and Ibn Killis created the equivalent of a *madrasa* at al-Azhar—an event that was, he notes, reported elsewhere in the *Khiṭaṭ*³⁸—he continues immediately as follows:

Then there was set up in the house of the wazir Yaʿqūb b. Killis a *majlis* frequented by the *fuqahāʾ*. There used to be read in it books of *fiqh* according to their *madhhab*. A *majlis* was also instituted in the mosque of ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ in the city of Fustāṭ for the purpose of reading the *Book of the Wazir*.

In line with previously identified reports, this further information merely confirms the fact that Ibn Killis held his own sessions on *fiqh*

³⁷*Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, III, 363; A. F. Sayyid, "Nuṣūṣ dāʾiʿa," p. 38. "On Fridays they would form a *ḥalqa* in the mosque [of al-Azhar] following the prayer and they would discuss *fiqh*. Abū Yaʿqūb Qāḍī al-Khandaq was the leader of the *ḥalqa* and he would lecture to them until the time of the *ʿaṣr* prayer. The group had thirty-seven members."

³⁸*Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), II, 273.

at his house³⁹ and that he also read his own law book in the public mosque, although not the Mosque of al-Azhar but that of ‘Amr in Fustāṭ.

One of Ibn Killis’s special interests was law and, in this subject he composed a substantial tome, usually called *al-Risāla al-wazīriyya* (the “Wazir’s Epistle”) or *muṣannaḥ al-wazīr*, or the like, to signify his authorship. That a late-comer to Islam and to Ismaili *fiqh* should become a master of it and write a major treatise which became thereafter the source of legal rulings is odd enough to require explanation. One answer is that Ibn Killis used those who worked for him to produce the law text and the other educational materials or literary productions that bear his name. He, for example, also wrote a work on medicine which amounted to a compendium of over one thousand pages. There were other topics—such as variant reading in the Qur’ān—as well.⁴⁰ The secret to his prolific scholarship in the midst of the fulltime administration of the empire is likely due to the plentiful assistance provided by the numerous scholars in his employment.⁴¹ But here, specifically, given his personal interest in the subject of law and his employment of a sizable staff of *fuqahā’*, confusion between his private activities and the public manifestations of them was natural. It was obviously not always clear when he acted as a private philanthropist as opposed to wazir. And what seems even more certain is that without his involvement, the financing of these enterprises must have ended soon enough. There is no real suggestion that either he or al-‘Azīz actually endowed a college.

As to the kind of *fiqh* taught while this institution lasted, it may well have followed Ibn Killis’s lead. Presumably then, it consisted of legal material generally in line with that collected and systematized by Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān in his attempt to formulate an Ismaili legal *madhhab*. But, since judicial office in the Fatimid state did not require belonging to this *madhhab*, it is also possible that the *fuqahā’* in question studied the law of the Sunnīs and Imāmīs as well. Those who held positions at various levels of the judiciary from chief judge down to

³⁹Also *Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), II, 7 (the major entry on Ibn Killis).

⁴⁰See in particular the entry in the *Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), II, 6.

⁴¹Our sources are not clear about this matter. Note, however, the report recorded by Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *al-Ishāra ilā man nāla al-wizāra*, ed. ‘Abdallāh Mukhlis (Cairo, 1924), 91. that forty of *fuqahā’* cooperated in the production of the *Risāla*.

notary witness were occasional members of the other legal schools. A notable example is Ibn Abi'l-'Awwām, chief judge of the empire for a decade starting under al-Ḥākim, who was Ḥanafī.

Following Ibn Killis's death in 380, which occurred only two years later, the influence of his corps of *fuqahā'* began to fade. References to their participation in ceremonies at al-Azhar exist for the next three years but after that nothing.⁴² It must be presumed that the funding, which was mostly due to direct payments from Ibn Killis, ran out when he was no longer the wazir.

The role of al-Azhar after this period was also diminished by the building of other congregational mosques, which received comparable—and often greater—attention from the Fatimid caliphs. Later, when al-Ḥākim came to endow several favorite institutions in the year 400, he selected as beneficiaries of his largess the mosques of Rāshida and Maqs, in addition to al-Azhar, and as well the newer Dār al-'ilm, an educational establishment of a radically different type. A detailed statement of this endowment is preserved in al-Maqrīzī's *Khīṭaṭ* under the entries for each of these institutions.⁴³ In the case of al-Azhar, al-Ḥākim does not provide for a cadre of legal scholars nor does the text hint at their existence.⁴⁴ There is no further evidence of the use of this mosque as a legal college. In fact in the list of venues for the *majlis al-ḥikma*, al-Azhar has the distinction of hosting the public sessions for women.

If al-Azhar, therefore, despite Ibn Killis's attempt to create some form of a college for legal studies, did not subsequently perform this task, then al-Maqrīzī and others are right that the *madrasa* did not exist under the Fatimids. Al-Maqrīzī states quite explicitly in connection with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's razing of al-Ma'ūna in 566 and his building a Shāfi'ī *madrasa* in its place that,

⁴²In 380 the *fuqahā'* and the students of *fiqh* (*al-mutafaqqiḥa*) marched in the procession of the feast (*Itti'āz*, I, 267); in 383, the *fuqahā'* and others were present during Rajab and possibly Sha'bān at al-Azhar (*Itti'āz*, I, 279).

⁴³[The whole *waqfiyya* was included by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir as an appendix to his *al-Rawḍa al-baḥiyya al-zāhira fī khīṭaṭ al-mu'izziyya al-qāhira* and that has now been published, ed. Ayman Fuad Sayyid (Cairo, 1996). See pp. 143–50.]

⁴⁴*Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq), II, 273–75. There are specific allowances for the imams and *mu'adhdhins*, for example, but none for *fuqahā'*.

previously there was no *madrasa* in Egypt for any of the *fuqahā'* because the government was Ismaili ... and thus it [the new Shāfi'i *madrasa*] was the first *madrasa* built in Egypt for the promotion of knowledge [of law].⁴⁵

However, even restricting the concept of *madrasa* narrowly to Sunnī practice, will not make this claim completely accurate. As Leiser has carefully documented, several *madrasas* were already in existence in Egypt at the time of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. To be sure the inspiration for them was derived from the east and specifically from the example of the famous Nizāmiyya founded by Nizām al-Mulk. Thus, although they general conform to the strict definition of *madrasa*, they are late in the history of the Fatimids. Two of them were private creations: one by Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Turtushī, known as Ibn Abī Randaqa (died 520/1126), and a second by Qāḍī Ibn Ḥadīd (d. 529/1135). Yet another was set up by the wazir Riḍwān in the name of the caliph al-Ḥāfiẓ and called the Ḥāfiẓiyya. Nevertheless, despite the role of the government and the name of the caliph, this *madrasa*, copies of whose foundation deed have been preserved in the *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*,⁴⁶ was run by Abū Ṭāhir b. 'Awf, a Sunnī.⁴⁷ Ridwan was also Sunnī and his institution was thus hardly Ismaili or even Shiite.⁴⁸ Therefore, while it is technically true that the *madrasa* in the restricted sense existed in Fatimid Egypt, it was only barely so and with little or no real connection to government policy, certainly none at all to the Ismaili establishment or what remained of it.

⁴⁵*Itti'āz*, III, 319.

⁴⁶*Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, X, 458–59.

⁴⁷*Itti'āz*, III, 167.

⁴⁸On these examples of earlier *madrasas* in Egypt, see the highly informative doctoral dissertation by Gary Leiser which he called *The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt: Madrasas and Mudarrisūn 495–647/1101–1249* (University of Pennsylvania, 1976). His title is slightly misleading in presuming a “restoration” which probably did not take place since Egypt was never really Shiite despite the intentions and efforts of the Fatimid Ismailis and their *da'wa*. See also A. F. Sayyid, *al-Dawla al-fāṭimiyya fī miṣr* (Cairo, 1992), 387–88.

The Dār al-‘ilm

The endowment by al-Ḥākim in the year 400 granted generous benefits to the Dār al-‘ilm and these provisions are more in line with the requirements of an academic institution than was his support of the activities at al-Azhar. Begun in 395, five years prior to the creation of this *waqf*, the Dār al-‘ilm was a favorite project of al-Ḥākim. Unlike the three mosques, the Dār al-‘ilm was a true institute for the advancement, preservation, and propagation of knowledge and with no other purpose. Moreover, it did not have a direct relationship with the Ismaili *da‘wa* or with propaganda and conversion. In many respects it was unprecedented, although the Bayt al-Ḥikma frequently cited as a foundation of the Abbasids some two centuries earlier in Baghdad was a possible model.⁴⁹ Al-Ḥākim seemed to want an open and genuinely public academy, one available to scholars and commoners of all intellectual persuasions.

The information about the creation of the Dār al-‘ilm comes from a report by the historian al-Musabbihī, who was a contemporary observer and therefore certainly reliable and accurate. Several slightly different versions of this one account now exist in the reports of

⁴⁹The most useful earlier study of the Fatimid Dār al-‘ilm is that by Youssef Eche in his *Les Bibliothèques arabes* (Damascus, 1967), 74–97. See also Heinz Halm, “Al-Azhar, Dār al-‘ilm, al-Rasad. Forschungs- und Lehranstalten der Fatimiden in Kairo” in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, ed. Vermeulen and De Smet, (Leuven, 1995), 99–110. For the broad background of the idea of a *dār al-‘ilm*, consult in addition to Eche, the article “Madrasa” in the *EI2*. There are also two entries in the *EI2* by D. Sourdel on “Dar al-Ḥikma” and “Dār al-‘ilm” respectively. As with the article on the *madrasa*, the information in all three concerning Fatimid institutions is only partially accurate. Sourdel apparently sees, for example, a difference between a *dār al-ḥikma* and a *dār al-‘ilm*, in part, based on the Ismaili concept of *majlis al-ḥikma* which he believes to be closely associated both with the palace library and with the Dār al-Ḥikma (al-‘ilm) founded by al-Ḥākim. Yet he includes a “Sunni” Dār al-‘ilm of al-Ḥākim under his entry on the “Dār al-‘ilm.” It is simply true, however, that Dār al-Ḥikma and Dār al-‘ilm are synonymous terms; for the Fatimids they were interchangeable and they refer here to one and the same institution. The confusion about the Fatimids in regard to this and other issues as reflected in these articles ought to be more obvious than it presently is but the reports in the sources are themselves often equally confusing and therefore need to be sorted with caution and analyzed quite carefully, particularly one against the other.

various historians.⁵⁰ All agree, however, that al-Ḥākim set up the Dār al-‘ilm in Cairo, that he supplied it with books from his own palace treasury on a wide variety of subjects, that he paid stipends to a number of scholars who were to teach there, and that he also provided support staff and furnishings. Whoever wanted to could go there and read the books in its new library, could also copy them using the ink, paper and pens that were provided, or they could study with the masters who taught the various disciplines in its curriculum. The authors who recorded this information expressed what must have been contemporary amazement; nothing like this new institution existed anywhere else at that time.

Yaḥyā of Antioch, who, in any case, had a dim view of al-Ḥākim, in part because of his own exile from Fatimid Egypt in the middle of that reign, adds a further curious footnote to his entry about the founding of the Dār al-‘ilm. After only a short time, he says, al-Ḥākim executed several of the scholars who worked in there and the remainder hid from him.⁵¹ The cause of this incident is unknown but it serves here a useful purpose in revealing the names of at least three of the professors at the Dār al-‘ilm in its earliest phase. The person in charge was ‘Abd al-Ghanī b. Sa‘īd al-Miṣrī; the other two were Abū Usāma Junāda b. Muḥammad, the lexicographer, and Abu’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Sulaymān al-Anṭākī, the grammarian. In Dhu’l-Ḥijja of 399, al-Ḥākim ordered the arrest and execution of all three (and perhaps others unnamed in our sources). Abū Usāma and Abu’l-Ḥasan were caught and done away with, but ‘Abd al-Ghanī went into hiding and survived as a result.⁵² Most importantly, he soon resumed his post at

⁵⁰al-Maqrīzī gives three of them, two in his *Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), II, 342 and I, 458, and one in the *Itti‘āz*, II, 56. Another comes from Ibn Sa‘īd’s *al-Mughrib fī ḥulā al-maghrib* (*al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī ḥulā ḥaḍrat al-qāhira*, ed. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār, Cairo, 1970), 60; and yet another in Yaḥyā’s *Ta’rīkh*, 258–59. The most complete occurs in al-Maqrīzī’s entry on the Dār al-‘ilm itself (*Khiṭaṭ* [Bulaq], I, 458–60). The direct citation from al-Musabbiḥī appears also in A. F. Sayyid, “Nuṣūṣ ḍā‘i’a,” 22.

⁵¹*Ta’rīkh*, 258–59.

⁵²*Itti‘āz*, II, 80. For Junāda there is a short biographical notice in al-Maqrīzī’s *al-Muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. al-Ya‘lāwī (Beirut, 1991) #1095 (vol. III, 73–4) and in Ibn Khallikān’s *Wafīyāt al-‘ayān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut, 1968) I, 372; trans. De Slane, I, 337. On ‘Abd al-Ghanī see the article by Th. Bianquis, “‘Abd al-Ganī Ibn Sa‘īd, un savant Sunnite au service des Fatimides,” in *Actes du XXIXe Congrès international des Orientalistes; Etudes arabes et islamiques*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1975), 39–47.

the Dār al-‘ilm; his presence was, for example, explicitly noted at an assembly held there in 403.⁵³ Yet one more name can be added to these three. Sometime prior to 405, a blind scholar, Abu’l-Faḍl Ja‘far, arrived in Cairo and attracted the favorable attentions of al-Ḥākim, who conferred on him the honorific title ‘ālim al-‘ulamā’ and gave him a post in the Dār al-‘ilm as a professor of lexicography and grammar.⁵⁴ What is most remarkable about all four of the named teachers is that none were Ismaili or even Shī‘ī.⁵⁵ The new academy was simply not oriented to the requirements of the *da‘wa*.⁵⁶

That al-Ḥākim’s disapproval of the three professors who suffered his wrath in 399 did not extend to the institution itself is proven by his generosity in 400 when he created the endowment mentioned previously. That act, which is recorded in al-Maqrīzī’s *Khīṭaṭ* in bits and pieces, was a true *waqf*—the dedication of personal property in perpetual support of the institutions named as its beneficiaries.⁵⁷ But,

⁵³ al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 459.

⁵⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *Raf‘ al-īṣr ‘an quḍāt miṣr*, (Cairo, 1957–61) I, 102 (also published with al-Kindī’s *Kitāb al-Wulāt wa kitāb al-quḍāt* [Beirut, 1908], 610).

⁵⁵ Eche found another reference to a meeting of scholars in the Dār al-‘ilm which, although not specifically dated, may come from this period. According to him, p. 84, the Shiite *faqīh* Abu’l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān mentions, in his *Kanz al-fawā’id*, pp. 293–97, such a meeting at the Dār al-‘ilm in Cairo. That the report comes from a Shiite participant does not necessarily have a bearing on the religious orientation of the salaried faculty who were Sunni as far as we can tell.

⁵⁶ In fact some later medieval historians understood the reverse, that al-Ḥākim’s purpose in founding the Dār al-‘ilm was to promote Sunnism against his earlier public advocacy of a militant Shiism. Ibn Taghrī Birdī (*al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, ed. Popper, II, 105–6) seems to indicate that the scholars of the Dār al-‘ilm, for example, were to recite the virtues of the Ṣaḥāba (the Prophet’s companions) whereas al-Ḥākim had only recently ordered their public cursing. This view of the purpose of the Dār al-‘ilm, most completely expressed by Ibn Taghrī Birdī, is that given by several others including Ibn al-Jawzī in his *al-Muntazam* (VII, 246–7). Eche in his *Les Bibliothèques arabes*, p. 76, repeats it citing both Ibn Taghrī Birdī and Ibn al-Jawzī. These authors, however, seem to have been overly impressed by al-Ḥākim’s employment of Sunnī professors and his occasional proclamations of a government policy that forbade religious partisanship. The reality was that, during the periods when he was so disposed, the caliph wanted to avoid sectarian trouble; at those times he therefore did not force the populace to follow either Shiite or Sunni thought and practice exclusively. His Dār al-‘ilm, perhaps in keeping with this spirit, was simply non-partisan.

⁵⁷ It is necessary to reconstruct what remains of the deed from the various parts. Read first the material in the entry under al-Azhar which specifies in general the

in contrast to the expenditures for the upkeep of a mosque and its staff, the Dār al-‘ilm was granted 257 dinars annually to be spent for the following: 10 for reed mats, 90 for the paper used by copyists, 48 for the keeper’s (*al-khāzin*) salary, 12 for water, 15 for the *farrāsh*, 12 for the paper, pen, and ink of the *fuqahā’* who taught there,⁵⁸ 1 dinar for the repair of the curtains on the doorways and windows, 12 for repairing books or replacing pages that might fall out of books, 5 for felt given to the *farrāsh* in the winter, and another 4 for carpets (*tanāfis*) in the winter. This list covers only 209 out of the 257 allotted annual for the support of the Dār and it conspicuously leaves out salaries for professorships. The relatively small balance certainly would not go far in that direction, however. Still, the academic nature of al-Ḥākim’s plan for the Dār al-‘ilm is obvious and it should be noted that, by this endowment, he made it a freestanding institution protected legally from the vagaries of future governmental intrusions. The Dār al-‘ilm was, from the year 400 onward, a *waqf* according to the stipulations of Islamic law and not, therefore, an instrument of the state nor technically under its direct control.

It is necessary to bear that fact in mind when assessing its subsequent history, in part, because there is almost no information about the Dār al-‘ilm for the whole of the 5th/11th century—a situation that is unfortunately true for so much of Fatimid history in general. The famous *dā’ī* Mu’ayyad fi’l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who rose to the position of *dā’ī al-du’āt* after a noteworthy career, is thought to have resided at the Dār al-‘ilm.⁵⁹ He was apparently buried there according to in-

properties turned into *waqf*, and the witnessing by al-Fāriqī, then *qādī al-quḍāt* of the Fatimid state, who drew up the document itself. The details of allowable expenditures, which are different for each, thereafter appear in the individual entries for the four institutions.

⁵⁸*li-man yanẓurū fihā min al-fuqahā’*, or possibly, “those of the *fuqahā’* who supervised it.”

⁵⁹See Abbas Hamdani, “The Dā’ī Ḥātim ibn Ibrahīm al-Ḥāmidī (d. 596H./1199 A.D.) and His Book *Tuḥfat al-Qulūb*,” *Oriens* 23–24 (1974): 258–300, p. 260. Hamdani reports, presumably based on Ḥātim’s *Tuḥfat*, that “Lamak [b. Mālik al-Ḥammādī, the chief Ismailī *qādī* of Yemen and representative of its ruler] was lodged at the famous Dār al-‘ilm, which was then the headquarters of the Fāṭimid Da’wa as well as the residence of the chief *dā’ī* al-Mu’ayyad fi’l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī.” Lamak arrived in Cairo in 454.

formation al-Maqrīzī reports from Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir.⁶⁰ That Mu’ayyad held the post of chief *dā’ī* is confirmed by two imperial edicts (*sijills*) sent to the Yemen both dated 461 which name him and give him this title.⁶¹ Ironically, in that same year, the library of the Dār al-‘ilm was looted by the authorities in order to pay (or appease) senior army commanders.⁶² That the books of the Dār al-‘ilm could be removed under these circumstances implies that they were not covered by the protection normally given to *waqf* property and it is true that they were not donated by al-Ḥākim as a *waqf* as far as can be ascertained. Possibly, then, they continued to be considered assets of the caliph (and by extension the state).

The next mention of the Dār al-‘ilm in Fatimid sources occurs in connection with an incident of heresy and religious deviation. The affair in question began in 513 in the time of al-Afḍal and came to an end only in 517 during the wazirate of al-Ma’mūn b. al-Batā’ihī. Its importance seems central in the history of the Dār al-‘ilm as signaled by al-Maqrīzī’s long discussion of it, which occupies a major portion of his entry in the *Khīṭaṭ*. Since he has taken this information from the son of al-Ma’mūn, it is also likely generally accurate, although the chronology requires some clarification and later writers were not always in agreement about who did what and when.

The main event under which the incident usually appears is the closing of the Dār al-‘ilm and its later reopening in a new location. The affair itself, however, involves a more complex story of two men, one named Barakāt and the other Ḥamīd b. Makkī al-Ṭfīḥī al-Qaṣṣār (“the fuller”).⁶³ The two belonged to or were the instigators of a

⁶⁰*Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 460.

⁶¹*al-Sijillāt al-mustanṣiriyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Mājid (Cairo, 1954), nos. 55 and 61.

⁶²al-Maqrīzī, *Itti‘āz*, II, 295, but see also *Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 409, which reads somewhat differently. This report is one part of a general description of the looting of al-Mustanṣir’s possessions including the palace library. The account of the subsequent fate of the books, therefore, covers more than those from the Dār al-‘ilm.

Sourdel in his *EI2* article on the Dār al-Ḥikma mentions an inventory done in 435/1045 which listed 6,500 books. I am not certain which of the libraries he refers to and so far I have not found the source of his information.

⁶³The principal source for this affair is Ibn al-Ma’mūn for which see *Nuṣūṣ min Akhbār miṣr li-Ibn al-Ma’mūn*, ed. A. F. Sayyid (Cairo, 1983), 44–46; *Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 456–60, (*musawwada*), 303–07. Both Barakāt and Ḥamīd the Fuller were accorded

group known as the *Badī'iyya*, which took to meeting at the *Dār al-ʿilm*, presumably in 513 when this matter first arose. Barakāt drew around him a following and convinced them of various beliefs that the authorities found quite incorrect and heretical. The wazir al-Afḍal ordered these people arrested and the *Dār al-ʿilm* closed. Both of the principals fled or hid.

Disguised as a slave girl, Barakāt was secreted by two loyal adherents in the palace itself and, from that position, continued to have contact with his following. He took sick while there and died and, in the course of various ruses employed to take his body out of the palace and bury it, the whole matter came to light, ultimately reaching al-Ma'mūn, who was then the chief administrator for al-Afḍal. Most of the participants were seized and forced to renounce Barakāt or be executed. And thus the affair might have ended.

After al-Afḍal was himself assassinated in Ramadan of 515, pressure increased to reopen the *Dār al-ʿilm* because of its legal status according to the law which must refer to its constitution as an inalienable *waqf* by the endowment of the year 400.⁶⁴ In any case it was reopened only to have Ḥamīd the Fuller return or reappear and commence a second period of troubles, which were, like the first, associated with the *Dār al-ʿilm*. It is reported that Ḥamīd the Fuller began by teaching Ash'arite theology, then later departed from Islam altogether by pursuing the heretical ideas of al-Ḥallāj, and finally in the same vein claiming divinity for himself. Ultimately in Dhu'l-Ḥijja at the end of 516, al-Ma'mūn had him arrested⁶⁵ and he closed the *Dār al-ʿilm*, seemingly for a second time. Ḥamīd the Fuller was eventually crucified with his most recalcitrant followers in 517.

The *Dār al-ʿilm* was soon reopened but this time with important changes as a consequence of the troubles caused by Barakāt and Ḥamīd the Fuller. When it came time to reopen the *Dār al-ʿilm*, al-Ma'mūn refused to return it to its original location on the western

biographical entries in al-Maqrīzī's *al-Muqaffā al-kabīr*, II, 571–72 (Barakāt, #1014) and III, 684–85 (Ḥamīd, #1309).

⁶⁴al-Maqrīzī says (quoting Ibn al-Ma'mūn): *amara al-khalīfatu al-Āmir bi-aḥkām allāh wazīrahu al-Ma'mūn b. al-Baṭā'iḥ bi-ttikhādh (or bi-i'ādat, in the musawwada) dār al-ʿilm wa fathīha 'alā al-awḍā' al-shar'iyya, Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 459, (*musawwada*), 304; *Nuṣūṣ min Akhbār miṣr li-Ibn al-Ma'mūn*, ed. Sayyid, 45.

⁶⁵Said to be on the advice of the *dā'i* Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥaqqīq.

side of the Small Palace which had been entered from the Bāb al-Tabbānīn and which gave entry also to the royal residence, a site he now put under the direct supervision of the palace.⁶⁶ Instead the new Dār al-‘ilm (*dār al-‘ilm al-jadīda*) was located on the eastern side of the Great Palace where it would be out of the way.⁶⁷ The second change was an explicit condition that the new Dār al-‘ilm be supervised by a “man of religion and a *dā’ī* who was to take charge of it” (*mutawallihā rajil dīn wa’l-dā’ī al-nāzir bihā*). Accordingly, they appointed Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan b. Ādam,⁶⁸ who was a prominent Ismaili *dā’ī*, though not the chief of the *da’wa*.⁶⁹ Al-Maqrīzī at this point notes that the Dār al-‘ilm remained in place and operational under these conditions until the end of the dynasty.

Before addressing the problems of chronology, it is important to notice that, prior to the new imposition of state controls in the person of a supervising religious authority, the Dār al-‘ilm was open to the public as al-Ḥākim had originally intended. That is proven by the congregating in it of non-conformist tradesmen and radicals who were able to subvert the religious established including members of the palace staff.⁷⁰ There was nothing Ismaili about either Barakāt or Ḥamīd the Fuller and their use of the Dār al-‘ilm was taken by both al-

⁶⁶The Bāb al-Tabbānīn was also an entrance to the Small Palace and thus the old Dār al-‘ilm was practically a part of the palace itself. On the problem of the old location and any other that would be too close to the palace, see the report of the discussion of this issue by al-Ma’mūn and advisors as given by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir and quoted by al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 460, (*musawwada*), 302.

⁶⁷On the “New” Dār al-‘ilm, see in particular the entry by al-Maqrīzī on the new Dār al-‘ilm, *Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 445.

⁶⁸*Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 460, (*musawwada*), 302

⁶⁹In the list of those present at the famous assembly of 516 to denounce the Nizārīs, Abu’l-Barakāt b. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqīq is the *dā’ī al-du’āt* and Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan b. Ādam is the *mutawallī* of the Dār al-‘ilm. At some point in 517, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥaqīq died and Abū Muḥammad was promoted to his post although soon demoted again due apparently to his youth (*ḥadāthat sinnihī*), *Itti’āz*, III, 104–05 and Ibn Muyassar, 96 (these two reports must be read in tandem).

⁷⁰Information quoted by al-Maqrīzī from Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (*Khīṭaṭ* [Bulaq], I, 460, (*musawwada*), 302) is fairly explicit about this. He reports that among the reasons for closing the Dār al-‘ilm “was the meeting of people there in order to discuss issues of religious doctrine (*al-khawḍ fi’l-madhāhib*).” The same report adds to this a fear that Nizārīs would also assemble there although there is no specific evidence that they ever did.

Afḍal and al-Ma'mūn as an indication that such a free standing institution could not and should not be allowed to remain open without careful, responsible state supervision. Moreover, it is only from the conclusion of this affair onward that the Dār al-'ilm assumed its final form as an instrument of the *da'wa*, that is, from 517 until the end of Fatimid rule.

The chronological difficulty concerns the matter of exactly when and how many times was the Dār al-'ilm closed during this period. A part of the confusion results from Ibn Muyassar's entry for 517 in which he says quite clearly that in Rabī' I al-Ma'mūn closed the old Dār al-'ilm.⁷¹ Al-Maqrīzī, in his note on the new Dār al-'ilm, reports that al-Ma'mūn open it in the same month of 517. Yet other reports state that al-Afḍal closed it, which means that it was shut down prior to his death in Ramadan of 515. But, in Shawwāl of 516, an assembly of important state officials and Ismaili dignitaries included among them Abū Muḥammad b. Ādam, the *mutawalli* of the Dār al-'ilm.⁷² The only solution is that it was closed and reopened twice, once between the beginning of the affair of Barakāt in 513 and 516 when al-Ma'mūn allowed it to reopen the first time,⁷³ and a second in Rabī' I, 517 when the old Dār was moved to its new location. The latter change was precipitated by the reappearance of Ḥamīd the Fuller—an incident that finally brought about the incorporation of the Dār al-'ilm into the apparatus of the state.

One more incident from much later appears to reinforce this impression. In the year 534, the chief Qāḍī Ibn al-Azraq was given the added responsibility of the instruction in the Dār al-'ilm. When he went there, however, and confronted the resident teacher, the *faqīh* Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ismā'īl, the two came to blows in the midst of quarreling with the result that the Qāḍī returned to the palace on foot, his cloths torn and minus his turban. The caliph al-Ḥāfiẓ took the matter quite seriously. That the Qāḍī would appear publicly in such a state was so serious a scandal, he was removed from office, fined two

⁷¹Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbār miṣr*, ed. A. F. Sayyid (Cairo, 1981), 95.

⁷²*Itti'āz*, III, 84.

⁷³This is more clearly implied in some versions than others. See, for example, the text of al-Maqrīzī's biography of Ḥamīd in his *al-Muqaffā* (III, 684) which says about him in part "he began to frequent the Dār al-'ilm again after (*ba'damā*) the wazir al-Ma'mūn had reopened it."

hundred dinars, confined to his house, and replaced.⁷⁴ Supervision of the Dār al-‘ilm had clearly become a major state appointment, one closely associated with the *da‘wa* and the judiciary. It is with that in mind that al-Maqrīzī’s summary account of the duties of chief *dā‘ī* specifies that he consults with the *fuqahā* of the Shī‘a at the Dār al-‘ilm and that it is there they prepared the dossier (*daftar*), which was called the “majlis al-ḥikma” to be read every Monday and Thursday.⁷⁵ In respect to the Dār, this is, in fact, a practice observed over the course of the latter period of the Fatimids, from 517 until the end of their rule but not that of earlier times.

Libraries

The Fatimids were justly famous for their massive collections of books and for the interest in learning that owning books indicated. For a religious mission built, in part, on the broad incorporation of a wide array of knowledge into a comprehensive understanding of the cosmos in all its aspects, the acquisition of books and treatises was essential, and as there were no obvious limits to the fields that Ismaili authorities studied, no subjects, authors, or works were excluded. The comments of writers such as Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī, or Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī reveal a familiarity with most earlier authors in Arabic representing all factions and persuasions. These Ismaili *dā‘īs* most certainly found and read copies of the books by both their own predecessors and their enemies.

However, except for the most obvious case of the library of the Dār al-‘ilm as just discussed, the literary activities of known Ismaili figures do not necessarily indicate a role for Fatimid libraries. The Dār al-‘ilm was public and readily accessible; its collection was intended for general use. In regard to the other libraries, the evidence that sur-

⁷⁴Ibn Muyassar, 132; Ibn Zāfir, *Akhbār al-duwal al-munqaṭi‘a*, ed. André Ferré (Cairo, 1972), 101; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, 28: 310.

⁷⁵*Itti‘āz*, III, 337. This account of later use of the Dār al-‘ilm comes from Ibn al-Ṭuwayr. See the *Nuzha al-muqlatayn*, 110–12. Note also that in Ibn al-Ṭuwayr’s discussion of the Feast of al-Nahr, p. 185, he mentions that the qāḍī and/or *dā‘ī* would distribute the slaughtered meat specifically to “the students (*ṭalaba*) in the Dār al-‘ilm” among others. This implies that by then it had become a Shī‘ī (Ismā‘īlī) *madrasa*, a residential college teaching, it would seem, Ismā‘īlī *fiqh*.

vives indicates that the imam-caliph amassed his vast holdings as items of treasured rarity not for institutional research and learning. Books, of course, were then rare enough and costly but the question that is of greatest concern in this inquiry is whether and how the ruler's huge treasury of books promoted education in any sense of that term or whether the books did not become merely an additional sign of majesty.

One of the best bits of evidence in favor of the close relationship between the possession of books and the knowledge they contained and therefore could impart comes from an incident that occurred even prior to the founding of the state. Having been forced to depart Egypt, the future al-Mahdī adopted the guise of a merchant and loaded his fairly substantial possessions on pack animals as part of a caravan heading toward North Africa. Four stages westward out of Alexandria, at a spot called al-Ṭāḥūna, thieves looted the party and ran off with, among others items, al-Mahdī's books, which, in words passed on from an eye witness, contained "much knowledge of the imams."⁷⁶ The loss of these books was sorely regretted by al-Mahdī and when, some ten years later, al-Qā'im, his son, recovered them during his first expedition to Egypt, he rejoiced. He is reported to have exclaimed, "If this expedition had no other result but to return these books, it would be a great victory indeed."⁷⁷

Despite the speculations of some medieval historians about exactly what books or what type of books this collection included, there is, in fact, no other evidence about them. Still, the importance of these works on the knowledge of the imams is amply clear from al-Mahdī's expression of concern for their recovery. It is equally obvious that the Fatimid imams continued to collect books of various kinds

⁷⁶*Kutub kānat l-l-mahdī fihi 'ulūm kathīra, fa-kāna asafuhu 'alayhā ashadda min asafihi 'alā ghayrihā mimmā dā'a lahu, Sīrat Ja'far*, Arabic text ed. Ivanow in *Majallat kulliyat al-ādāb* (Cairo University 4 [1936]: 89–133), 115–16; Ivanow, trans. in *Ismaili Tradition Concerning the Rise of the Fatimids* (London, Oxford, 1942), 197; Canard trans. in "L'autobiographie d'un chambellan du Mahdī 'Obeidallah le Fatimide," *Hespéris* (1952), 279–324, p. 295. Canard provides in his note on this event information about additional references to this same incident.

⁷⁷*Ifṭitāh*, ed. Dachraoui, 161; ed. Ivanow, text and translation in *Rise*, Arabic, 41, trans. 226. See also Dachraoui's "Introduction," 86.

including copies of their own sermons and proclamations.⁷⁸ That these holdings may well have formed a library appears to be confirmed by a reference from the year 351 to an audience in al-Manṣūriyya arranged for the Kutāma chiefs during which they were to observe the austere working conditions of the imam in a room around which they could also see doors leading to the “*khazā'in kutub*.” The caliph himself was seated surrounded by ink, documents and books.⁷⁹ Another report from this period mentions a search for a specific book in the library (*khizānat al-kutub*) that consumed more than half of the night due to the number of boxes of books that needed to be opened and checked.⁸⁰

From the beginning of Fatimid rule in Egypt, as with many other topics and subjects, the caliphal libraries merited an entry in al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ*.⁸¹ And, as is also typical, his information covers hit and miss several different periods. The first report pertains to al-'Azīz who, in the year 383, happened to have someone mention to him the famous *Kitāb al-'ayn* by al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, a masterpiece of lexicography. For his part the caliph produced from his library some thirty copies of it, one in the hand of the author himself. Another person presented to al-'Azīz a copy of al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh*, which he had purchased for a hundred dinars. Al-'Azīz thereupon ordered the keeper of his library to bring out the twenty copies he owned, including, again, one in the hand of the author. Similarly, when the *Jamhara* of Ibn Durayd was brought up, al-'Azīz was able to produce a hundred

⁷⁸In the *Sīrat Jawdhar* there is a mention of al-Manṣūr sending him a number of books full of eso- and exoteric knowledge, among them Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's compendium of ḥadīth reports, the *Kitāb al-Īḍāh*, and a *khuṭba* of the caliph himself.

⁷⁹al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, I, 95; Ibn Sa'īd, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 39. It is, of course, wise to remember that the term *kutub* here as elsewhere means a “piece of writing” and not necessarily a bound book. The *khazā'in kutub* thus is the archives of the caliph's personal documents as well as the repository of books and treatises that form his library.

⁸⁰Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *al-Majālīs*, 533.

⁸¹It is essential to consult here the *musawwada*, 138–41, in addition to that of Bulaq. See also R. G. Khoury, “Une description fantastique des fonds de la Bibliothèque Royale *Ḥizānat al-Kutub* au Caire, sous le règne du calife fatimide al-'Azīz bi-llāh (365–86/975–97)” in *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants* (Amsterdam, 1st to 7th September 1978), ed. Rudolph Peters (Leiden, Brill, 1981), 123–140. In spite of its title and its important chapter on the Fatimid Dār al-'ilm, Eche's *Les Bibliothèques arabes*, cited previously, contain surprisingly little information on these royal libraries.

copies it.⁸² If one assumes that these are but examples that illustrate the immense holdings in the Fatimid collections, the palace library was by then already enormous. And also comprehensive—the three books cited in this case do not belong to the category of “knowledge of the imams,” and they are not Shiite or pro-Shiite in respect to religious orthodoxy.

Following al-Maqrīzī’s trail of information, his next subsequent report skips to the year 461 and to the sad account of the looting of the imperial storehouses and treasuries in order to pay troops and government officers. Lacking income and stable finances for the state, the caliph suffered the indignity of giving up a goodly portion of his assets to compensate those owed salaries and other dues. Month by month the contents of various treasuries in the palace were brought out and traded away. Al-Maqrīzī found a long detailed account of these losses in a work called *Kitāb al-Dhakhā’ir*, the “Book of the Treasuries.”⁸³ Among the items taken were countless books on many subjects. They came from as many as forty separate depositories in the palace, one of which alone yielded eighteen thousand volumes on the “ancient sciences.” There were 2,400 boxed Qur’āns⁸⁴ written in “apportioned scripts” (*bi-khuṭuṭ maṣṣūba*) with embellished illuminations of gold and silver. All this was taken, says the source, by the Turks in lieu of salary, and in the end nothing remained in the depositories of the “outer” (*al-barrāniyya*) palace. The treasury of the “inner” (*al-dākhila*) palace, however, was never reached and thus it remained intact.⁸⁵

In one repository a chest was found which contained pens once

⁸²The same information is cited in both the *Khīṭaṭ*, (Bulaq) I, 408, which explicitly credits al-Musabbihī, and the *Itti’āz*, I, 278, which places this event in 383 and thus provides the likely dating. See also A. F. Sayyid, “Nuṣūṣ ḍā’i’a,” 17, which, however, reproduces the text of the Bulaq edition of the *Khīṭaṭ* without any reference to the *Itti’āz*. In Sayyid’s *musawwada* of the *Khīṭaṭ* (p. 140), the date now appears with this passage but is given there as 483 which is clearly erroneous and should read 383. Again, however, the editor fails to note the parallel text in the *Itti’āz*.

⁸³A version of this work as ascribed to al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr exists. *Al-Dhakhā’ir wa’l-tuḥaf*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh (Kuwayt, 1950). See, for example, p. 262.

⁸⁴*khatmat qur’ān fī rab’āt*, here meaning either “boxed” Qur’āns or Qur’āns in their cases.

⁸⁵*Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 408; *Itti’āz*, II, 294.

belonging to the famous calligraphers Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwāb⁸⁶ and with them Qur'āns (*muṣāḥif*) in their hand and that of others similar in style among which was one written in gold and highlighted by a dark background of lapis blue.⁸⁷

In Muḥarram of that same year an eye witness reported seeing twenty-five camels loaded with books headed toward the house of the wazir Abu'l-Faraj Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. al-Mu'izz al-Maghribī who had taken them in place of his salary and that due others in his entourage. The wazir's compensation was estimated at some 5,000 dinars but the value of the books was upwards of 100,000 dinars, according to this report.⁸⁸ A month later in Ṣafar of 461, they were all looted once again, this time from the wazir's house in yet additional upheavals.⁸⁹ Many of these books—along possibly with those from the Dār al-'ilm taken at the same time—found their way to Alexandria to 'Imād al-Dawla Abu'l-Faḍl b. al-Muḥtarif and, following his death, to the Maghrib. Many fell into the hands of the Berbers who were told that these books were contrary to correct religion and they quickly abandoned them or burned them after removing the more utilitarian leather bindings.⁹⁰

Although this story indicates wholesale destruction of the Fatimid libraries, not everything disappeared by any means. As al-Maqrīzī's source states, the library of the inner palace was preserved untouched. Certainly many of the books in question also were picked

⁸⁶These two calligraphers and their "apportioned scripts" (*al-khuṭūṭ al-manṣūba*) were apparently important to the Fatimids who collected examples of their work avidly. On them see "Ibn Muqla," *EI2* by D. Sourdel and "Ibn al-Bawwāb," *EI2* by J. Sourdel-Thomine.

⁸⁷*Itti'āz*, II, 285. See as well, Jonathan M. Bloom, "The Early Fatimid Blue Koran Manuscript," *Graeco Arabica* 4 (1991): 171–77.

⁸⁸Figures given by al-Maqrīzī's source, *Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 409; *Itti'āz*, II, 295.

⁸⁹*Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 409; *Itti'āz*, II, 295.

⁹⁰This part of the story appears differently in the *Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq) from the *Itti'āz*. Is it necessary to interpret the statements of one against the other? If so it is likely that the report in question has suffered more than a little from exaggerations and that the number of books lost for good or destroyed may have been only a fraction of the total taken from the palace. Some fell into the river during transport to Alexandria; some were stripped of leather for shoes and sandals; and some were burn, but many eventually reappeared in the books markets of other cities (or quite possibly even in Cairo itself).

up by local dealers and recycled. The powerful wazir al-Afḍal created his own library years later as did others, quite possibly from the looted books that remained in Egypt.⁹¹ When al-Afḍal died, he left a library found to contain 500,000 books; the caliph al-Āmir move them to the palace, although he also thereafter endowed a great many of them as a *waqf* for public circulation.⁹² Most significantly, al-Maqrīzī's next entry for libraries, which comes from Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, a major source for the final phase of Fatimid rule, indicates holdings as vast as might be expected if no looting had taken place.

Ibn al-Ṭuwayr reports that there was a major library in one of the great halls of the hospital and that the caliph would ride there and dismount to sit on a special bench. He could then order its attendant, al-Jalīs b. 'Abd al-Qawī to bring out whatever material he had a mind to consult, a Qur'ān in apportioned script, or anything else he might want. If he desired to take the book with him, he could and thereafter return it. The library itself was furnished with shelving and partitions all carefully arranged with doors, locks, and labels. It contained over 200,000 bound volumes covering subjects such as the *fiqh* of various schools, grammar, lexicography, collections of hadith, histories, the lives of kings, astronomy, theology, and chemistry. Specifically mentioned are examples of the work of Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwāb, possibly the same items that were taken from the palace depository in 461.⁹³

When the dynasty finally ended and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn took over, he sold off many of the possession of the former rulers. Al-Maqrīzī concludes his entry on the libraries with a note from Ibn Abī Ṭayyī⁹⁴ about the selling of the books. He reports that it was truly amazing how extensive the collection was. Nothing in all the countries of Islam was as large as the one in the palace in Cairo. Astonishingly, it held, he says, twelve hundred copies of al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rikh*, along with an

⁹¹The library of al-Afḍal is mentioned in the *Itti'āz*, III, 51 and 110.

⁹²On this see Sayyid's *musawwada* edition of the *Khiṭaṭ*, p. 140. A figure of 500,000 (*kham sami'at al-f mujallad min al-kutub*) is also given by Ibn Muyassar, p. 80.

⁹³*Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 409. Cf. the *musawwada* of the *Khiṭaṭ* as well as A. F. Sayyid's edition of the fragments from Ibn al-Tu wayr, *Nuzhat al-muqlatayn*, 126–28.

⁹⁴On this Ayyubid historian from Aleppo, see the entry by Cl. Cahen in the *EI2* and the reference he gives.

estimated 1,600,000 books,⁹⁵ and countless exemplars of apportioned script.⁹⁶ As confirmation of these vast numbers, he claims that the Qāḍī al-Fāḍil transferred at least 100,000 of them to his own new *madrassa*. Most of the rest were sold over the space of the next ten years.⁹⁷

If nothing else, it is remarkable that the Fatimid libraries, which held twenty copies of al-Ṭabarī's *History* in 383, despite being looted in the middle of al-Mustanṣir's reign, possessed twelve hundred of the same work at the end in 566. It is not certain, of course, that any copies of al-Ṭabarī were taken in 461; they might, for example, have been housed in the Inner Palace and were spared as a consequence. But it is curious that, although the work of Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwāb, was cited among the losses in 461, numerous examples of their calligraphy were still a part of the holdings at the close of Fatimid rule and that the sources took specific note of this fact.

What is still missing in this account and what is certainly lacking in the information supplied by al-Maqrīzī and his sources is evidence of how these vast collections of books were used, if ever, by scholars and researchers. They appear more as treasuries of prized possessions rather than resources for learning and study. There is no record of visitations, for example. Without that information, the further question of how these libraries might relate to ideology and religious propaganda are pointless. The "sciences of the imams" that was reputed to be in the books lost and then recovered by al-Mahdī indicated a religious content and message. The examples of important library holdings that are cited later have no comparable meaning. While those who reported the later events themselves were not Ismaili and therefore were less interested or knew little about Ismaili

⁹⁵See specifically Sayyid's edition of the *Khiṭaṭ*, p. 140, rather than the Bulaq edition. The new text reads *alf alf wa sittami'at alf kitāb* in place of the older *alf wa sittami'at alf kitāb*, i.e., 1,600,000 instead of 601,000—the latter being a rather odd number in any case.

⁹⁶See also *Itti'āz*, III, 331, which repeats the figure of 1,600,000 for the total and says that there were 1220 copies of al-Ṭabarī and 100,000 bound volumes (*mujallad*) in apportioned script (*khaṭṭ manṣūb*). Al-Maqrīzī adds there, "The sultan sold all of them; the selling of them took up ten years." The editor of the *Itti'āz* includes in the same place a note on several other reports about the disposal of these books from Ayyubid sources.

⁹⁷*Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 409.

activities in the libraries, at this point there is simply no other way to evaluate their religious importance. Regrettably, Ismaili writers did not mention these libraries, nor, as far as can be ascertained, any of the books and treatises known to have been in them, among which, presumably, would have been a complete collection of works by members of the *da'wa* as well as all the edicts and papers of the imams.⁹⁸

The Observatory

Among many other types of institutions, two, in particular, the astronomical observatory (*raṣad*) and the military “barracks” schools (*hujar*), should be noticed in this survey. While it is true that neither served directly to benefit the religious establishment, both in different ways are cases where a major project instigated by the state might have been turning to that end but was not. Even so they are both interesting examples of Fatimid involvement in education and science and further evidence of a government policy to promote learning.

Fatimid interest in the sciences is undeniable and easily confirmed on the basis of the surviving books and treatises produced in the *da'wa* by the most outstanding of the *dā'īs*, notably Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, to name only the three leading figures from different periods. None of these writers, however, was primarily concerned with the physical sciences. But in Cairo, the Fatimids assembled a small group of experts that included among them two giants of medieval Arabic

⁹⁸It might be useful in this regard if there were supervisors and keepers of the libraries, who, like the later overseers of the Dār al-'ilm, were known to be Ismaili *dā'īs*. One example is tempting: to the duties of the new chief *dā'ī* in 517, Ibn Muyassar says that *khazānat al-kutub* (p. 96) was added along with the *khutba* at al-Azhar. Unfortunately, this may have to be read *qirā'at al-kutub*, especially in view of the corresponding passage of the *Itti'āz* (III, 106) which reads in part *al-khutba bi'l-jāmi' al-azhar ma'a qirā'atihi al-kutub*. In another case the *qāḍī* Abū'l-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Ṣuwaybī in the year 524 is mentioned as supervising the library (*khazānat al-kutub*), *Itti'āz*, III, 255. He, however, cannot have been an Ismaili or even Shī'ī and, moreover, what library he was in charge of is not clear. An example that might prove more helpful is that of the attendant cited above whose name is given as “the *Jalīs* Ibn 'Abd al-Qawī” which was also the name or the nickname of the chief *dā'ī* in late Fatimid times. On the Banū 'Abd al-Qawī, see Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzhat al-muqlatayn*, 112.

science, Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥasan b. al-Haytham, a mathematician and physicist, and ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yūnus, an astronomer.⁹⁹ Both rose to prominence under the Fatimids in the time of al-Ḥākim.¹⁰⁰

Al-Ḥākim was himself deeply interesting in astronomy and his government employed its own chief astronomer, a friend and colleague of Ibn Yūnus.¹⁰¹ Although no formal observatory existed in Egypt at that time,¹⁰² Ibn Yūnus with the others actively followed a program of observations, many made from the top of the Muqaṭṭam just east of Cairo. The data resulting from these observations was assembled by Ibn Yūnus, along with others known from older sources and collected by him, into a major resource for all subsequent calculations by professional astronomers. He called it the *Zīj al-Ḥākimī al-kabīr*, in honor of its patron, the caliph al-Ḥākim.

An accumulation of scientists of this order did not occur again in Fatimid Egypt, but there was, in a much later period, an important attempt to build an observatory. This episode, while not a sign of major scientific achievement, is nevertheless a fine illustration of a large governmental investment in a complex scientific project. Again the information about this affair, which was begun by al-Afḍal, comes from al-Maqrīzī’s *Khiṭaṭ*, which, in turn, derives its lengthy report from a certain *Kitāb ‘amal al-raṣad* (“Treatise on the Making of the Observatory”), now apparently lost.¹⁰³

The normal practice of the astronomers at the time of al-Afḍal was to make independent observations and calculations each year and to check these ephemerides together under the supervision of the

⁹⁹On Ibn Yūnus, see the articles in the *EI2* by B. Goldstein and in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* by David King.

¹⁰⁰On Ibn al-Haytham who died in Cairo in 430/1039, see the article on him in the *EI2* by J. Vernet and ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Sabra, “Ibn al-Haytham and the Visual-Ray Hypothesis,” in *Ismā‘īlī Contributions to Islamic Culture*, ed. S. H. Nasr (Tehran, 1977), 189–205. Ibn Yūnus died in 399/1009.

¹⁰¹The astronomer in question was Abū’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Ismā‘īl al-Munajjim al-Ṭabarānī, on whom see *Ittī‘āz*, II, 70; al-Musabbiḥī, 103; Ibn Khallikān, III, 430–31; and A. F. Sayyid, “Nuṣūṣ ḍā‘i’a,” 26.

¹⁰²There is a suggestion that a regular observatory was planned and started not long after Ibn Yūnus’s death but nothing came of it.

¹⁰³*Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), I, 135–38. There is a detailed summary and discussion of this entry in Aydın Sayılı’s *The Observatory in Islam* (Ankara, 1960), pp. 167–75. Cf. H. Halm, “Al-Azhar, Dār al-‘ilm, al-Raṣad,” 107–08.

wazir himself. They also matched their data against that from Syria and against data recorded in two standard collections of tables, one of which was the previously mentioned *Zīj al-Ḥākimī*. Serious divergences were noted and discussed as well as the problem of reconciling newer data with much older information. The authorities agreed that data based on newer observations is better and more reliable. The results convinced al-Afdāl to try to build an observatory in which a new standard could be set, perhaps thereby accruing great honor upon himself for having fathered the project. Accordingly, he brought together a large team of astronomers, mathematicians, and engineers and, after conducting a search put the whole project in the hands of the physician, Ibn Qaraqqa, who was then the person in charge of the government's arms depositories.

The ambition of those who set out to construct the observatory was, unfortunately, well ahead of their skills. A large metal ring of about five meters diameter failed once in casting and then could not hold its shape perfectly when in use. Still the team proceeded determinedly under the watchful eye of al-Afdāl himself. When the original site chosen for the observatory on a hill between the Rāshida Mosque and the Birkat al-Ḥabash proved impossible because it did not allow a clear view of the horizon—a fact discovered fairly late in the game—the whole effort was moved to the Mosque of al-Juyūshī on the Muqattam. Finally, after casting an additional smaller ring and other trials, some observations of the sun were taken shortly before al-Afdāl was assassinated and the project interrupted. Al-Ma'mūn b. al-Batā'ihī soon took up the challenge, having himself an interest in his own glory not unlike that of his predecessor in the wazirate. He did not favor use of the Juyūshī Mosque, however, which was named for Al-Afdāl's father Badr al-Jamālī. Instead, he ordered the team of experts to dismantle the instruments and move them to the Bāb al-Naṣr, where, he hoped, they would eventually produce a new and correct set of ephemerides that could be named after himself.

Although some observations were made, al-Ma'mūn did not live long enough to see serious results. Moreover, upon his arrest and execution, word was spread that the purpose of the project all along was demoniac rather than scientific. In addition, the caliph felt slighted that he would not be its principal beneficiary should the resulting *Zīj*, in fact, be named after al-Ma'mūn rather than him. With that, the whole project was closed down, the observatory abandoned, and its

instruments taken apart for scrap.

Al-Maqrīzī's record of this affair, as well as confirming notes in, for example, Ibn Muyassar¹⁰⁴, provide a long list of those involved, including a number of astronomers, instrument makers, engineers, mathematicians, and others, all listed by name. It is an unusual assembling of talent, even if, as appears likely, they were not all as competent as they might have been and the project floundered through several miscalculations and failures.¹⁰⁵

The "Barracks" Schools

While the link between these scientific projects and the staff employed for them and a specifically Ismaili religious mission is not obvious, none is perhaps to be expected. It is true that the Ismailis, alone of Muslim factions, allow precise astronomical calculation of the advent of a new moon rather than insist on actually visual witnessing. That by itself hardly justifies the efforts of either Ibn Yūnus in the earlier period or of al-Afdal's team of experts at a later date. In any case no direct connection seems evident; and none was claimed at the time.

Another more promising case involves the schools that were set up to train future military officers. In the time of al-Mu'izz, the new government undertook to establish a kind of military college for the training of appropriate youth. This institution, a barracks school, *hujar*,¹⁰⁶ obviously provided a means to educate select candidates and prepare them for service in an elite officer corps. The famous al-Dizbirī, a prominent commander of Fatimid armies in Syria in the first quarter of the 5th/11th century, spent two years in the barracks school. There is, however, little further word of the "barracks" (*hujar*) until much later under al-Afdal, over a century later. Al-Afdal revived this institution, or more likely re-created it. The new institution consisted of several (seven?) special barracks set aside to train the children of

¹⁰⁴p. 96.

¹⁰⁵Compare Ibn al-Athīr's account (*al-Kāmil*, X, 98) of the building, use and failing of an observatory in Baghdad by Mālikshah in the year 467.

¹⁰⁶On the *Ḥujar* or *Ḥujariyya*, see the *Khīṭaṭ*, (*musawwada*), 267–70; and Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzhat al-muqlatayn*, 3–5 and 57–58.

deceased amirs and other military commanders. Training in the *hujar* was rigorous and resulted in elite units as well as individual graduates. The cadets were called *ṣibyān al-hujar* (“Youth of the Barracks”) and one unit was known as the *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ*. According to Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, each group was taught the skills of one of the arts and sciences the state might have need of that required bravery and horsemanship and the like.¹⁰⁷ Ismaili religious instruction—the sciences of the Ahl al-Bayt, as it was often called—would have readily fit the curriculum in addition to martial arts and horsemanship and surely it must have, at least in the earliest period. Unfortunately, however, we cannot confirm the religious dimension of this institution in either phase. Perhaps, it had none, but given the Ismaili proclivity for teaching and instruction in its own *madhhab*, something of the sort might be expected. But why then is there no evidence for it? Why did the Fatimids fail to use such schools as a tool for the propagation, especially in the army, of their own creed? If they had, the perpetual problem of army loyalty might have seen a different outcome, but this is, in general, a more complicated question than simply one involving failure to exploit this one institution and it belongs to the larger and more important discussion of religion and the military in general.

Conclusions

Despite grand claims for Fatimid scholarly institutions, this careful review of the evidence about them provided little or no support for such extravagance. Naturally, the *madrasa*, if defined as an academy for the teaching of *Sunnī fiqh*, was not likely to have started as a deliberate foundation of the Ismailis, but al-Azhar, in contrast, now widely viewed as the original university mosque, is thought to have been founded by the Fatimids as the center of brilliant Ismaili scholarly activity. By confusing and chronologically collapsing the limited

¹⁰⁷ *Nuzhat al-muqlatayn*, 57–58. This information occurs in a section on the amir and later wazir Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. al-Salār (d. 548) who was himself once a member of the “Barracks” corps. Note that Ibn al-Ṭuwayr makes an explicit comparison between the *Ṣibyān al-hujar* and the European Knights Templar movement after which he says it was modeled.

data available, al-Azhar, however, is often made to be a combination of itself, the Dār al-‘ilm, the *majlis al-ḥikma*, and the caliphal (palace) libraries. In reality these are four institutions with separate origins, functions, and histories.¹⁰⁸

The myth of al-Azhar itself depends on a single report about the establishment by Ibn Killis of a college for the study of *fiqh* at that mosque but, as his own personal funds were a key part of its funding, we cannot be sure that the “college” outlasted him even briefly, or, in any case, what kind of *fiqh* was ever taught there and for how long. Certainly, al-Azhar served as a congregational (Shiite) mosque but it was not necessarily a teaching institution, especially for *fiqh*, except in one relatively short period.

The Dār al-‘ilm, by contrast, was indeed founded by al-Ḥākim as a secular research institute and as an academy with its own teaching staff. However, of the four scholars whose names we can associate with its earliest years, all were Sunnī. Only much later did it assume a role in the propagation of Ismaili doctrine.

Even while the Dār al-‘ilm was fully functional, the *Majālis al-ḥikma*, which were the true regular, instructional sessions of the Ismaili *da‘wa*, continued as they most likely had in many places—in Egypt and elsewhere—since the beginning of the movement itself. Unlike al-Azhar (or any mosque for that matter) and the Dār al-‘ilm, the *majlis* (or *majālis*) for Ismaili instruction was held in a variety of localities. The *majālis*, in fact, were often convened in various locations for different audiences on the same day.

Distinct from these three institutions, the royal library complex, although impressively stocked with master works by the best of Islamic scholarship and book production, was more of a treasury for items of rare value than an institution for learning. In any case, the palace library was not connected to the Dār al-‘ilm or to the *majlis al-ḥikma* or to al-Azhar.

¹⁰⁸The confusion caused by uncritically juxtaposing information that concerns different institutions or the same institution at widely varying times is not modern. Medieval accounts often contribute to the problem. See, as yet one more example, al-Qalqashandī’s note on the *madrasa* (*Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā*, III, 362–63) which, rather than cite Ibn Killis’s “college” at al-Azhar, gives a “history” of the Dār al-‘ilm which begins by stating that it was the residence of the *dā‘ī* of the Shiites who gathered in it to discuss the sciences associated with their school (*madhhab*) and then mentions that al-Ḥākim provided stipends for them in his *waqf*.

The surviving evidence for Fatimid institutions of learning thus must be approached cautiously. The record is not unambiguous and both terms and dating are problems. The word *ḥikma*, for example, appears in several guises: *majlis al-ḥikma*, *dār al-ḥikma*, *majālis al-ḥikma*, which can mean variously the 'sessions of readings' or 'lessons of wisdom,' the 'Dār al-'ilm,' and the 'book length compilations of lectures' respectively. The term *majlis* is equally confusing. In addition to meaning lectures and the assembly in which the lectures or readings were presented, it also applies to the place where these sessions occurred. Thus one major room of the place was called, for example, the *majlis al-dā'ī* because it was set aside for his use. However, it is essential to separate these institutions when and where they differ, to date as explicitly as possible their exact functions, and to explain the changes in them over time. Despite these disclaimers and the new findings just presented in regard to the function and chronology of Fatimid institutions of learning, many questions also remain unanswered. The role of the Ismaili *da'wa*, though certainly evident in the *majlis al-ḥikma*, in the *munāzarāt*, when in use, and in the later operations of the Dār al-'ilm, is not as clear as it ought to be. Its social purpose within the state as a whole remains murky and is often clouded by doubts about when and how it performed its mission in respect to state policy. Moreover, these are doubts that a careful review of the available evidence has not, so far, managed to dispel.*

*Two references discovered since writing this paper provide interesting information about the personnel who supervised Fatimid libraries and their compensation. In the year 506 a certain Yānis al-Nāsikh (the Copyist) arrived in Cairo coming from Syria. He went to work in the library of al-Afḍal (*Khizānat al-kutub al-afḍaliyya*) where he earned a salary of 10 dinars a month plus three bundles of cloth a year along with various gifts and bonuses (*Itti'āz*, 3: 51). From a later date Ibn al-Ma'mūn reports (p. 54) that the caretakers of the royal libraries each received a silk robe on the day of the festival (*īd*).



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II

SUCCESSION TO RULE IN THE SHIITE CALIPHATE¹

Fatimid Succession: Theoretical Considerations

Over forty years ago, S. M. Stern published two important studies of succession problems in the Fatimid state. He covered on those occasions issues related, first, to the Nizārī-Musta'ī split that resulted, in 487/1094, in a conflict over legitimacy which continues even now and, second, to the obscure events that led, in 524/1130, to the Ṭayyibī/Ḥāfiẓī division in the Ismaili legacy and eventually to the termination of the dynasty itself. Both articles were fine examples of Stern's careful scholarship; they have continued not only to be the most useful analyses of these problems, but to retain great value despite the lapse of time.² There were, however, all along issues in the general matter of succession to a rule based on the Ismaili form of Shiism that Stern did not take up in these particular articles. In addition since his writing, sources have appeared which he either did not consider or were simply unavailable to him. Chief among the latter is the complete text of al-Maqrīzī's *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'*, which is this late Mamluk historian's own quite interesting and valuable history of the Fatimids.³

With the work of al-Maqrīzī now readily accessible, moreover, not only do we have a better command of the facts—or, at the least, a

¹Fred Donner and Paula Sanders were kind enough to offer detailed comments on an earlier draft of this paper and I wish to recognize here their help and advice.

²"The Epistle of the Fatimid Caliph al-Āmir (al-Hidāya al-Āmiriyya)—its Date and its Purpose," *JRAS* 1950, 20–31 [reprinted in *History and Culture in the Medieval Muslim World*, Variorum Reprints, 1984, No. X] and "The Succession to the Fatimid Imam al-Āmir, the Claims of the Later Fatimids to the Imamate, and the Rise of Ṭayyibī Ismailism," *Oriens* 4 (1951): 193–255 [reprinted as No. XI in this Variorum volume].

³Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā' bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafā'*, vol. 1, edited by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (Cairo, 1967), vols. 2 and 3, edited by Muḥammad Ḥilmi Muḥammad Aḥmad (Cairo, 1971, 1973). On al-Maqrīzī, see the article by F. Rosenthal in *EI2*.

fuller record of the facts—concerning various cases of succession, disputed and otherwise, but we have a real opportunity, as well, to evaluate al-Maqrīzī's handling of them as an historian. Judgments of this kind were far more difficult, for example, when based solely on his topical encyclopedia, the *Khitat*,⁴ which previously was the only account by al-Maqrīzī available for most periods of Fatimid rule.⁵ However, this must, for the moment, remain a secondary goal as our main focus here will be the general problem of Ismaili succession in theory and practice.

It is true, moreover, despite Stern's acknowledge grasp of Ismaili doctrine and sources, that neither of the studies in question was intended by him as a complete presentation on the theme of succession. His first article was primarily about a later, after-the-fact, Musta'ī (Āmirī) document that was itself clearly both apologetic and polemical: it was issued by the reigning government in Cairo to denounce its Nizārī opponents.⁶ Stern was able to prove its date and probably its authorship and this was his principal aim. Only incidentally did he recount the details leading to the Nizārī/Musta'ī dispute. In the second article he explored in greater depth the confusion surrounding the death of al-Āmir, the succession of al-Ḥāfiẓ, and the secession of the Ṭayyibīs Ismailis of Yemen from the Egyptian *da'wa*. In both cases, however, if we are to achieve a thorough explanation of the critical events, we require a complete review of Ismaili theory of their doctrine of the imamate, in so far as it can be ascertained, particularly with regard to the designation of a new imam by the previous one.

Although some medieval and some modern historians treat the Fatimid rulers as members of a dynasty in the same category as the Umayyads and the Abbasids, a Shiite understanding of the imamate, and especially the Ismaili version of it, raises the succession problem well above nearly all contemporary situations that might have occur-

⁴ *al-Mawā'iz wa'l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār* (Bulak edition reprinted Beirut, 1970).

⁵ Earlier published versions of the *Itti'āz* made available solely the first portion of it.

⁶ This is the *al-Hidāya al-Āmiriyya*, edited along with its appendix called *Īqā' ṣawā'iq al-irghām* by A. A. A. Fyzee, Islamic Research Association, No. 7 (Calcutta, 1938), on which, in addition to the article of Stern cited here, the comments below.

red in rival forms of rule. From their own perspective, and that of their loyal followers, the Fatimids governed as God's sole, infallible representatives and they could, accordingly, lay claims to complete sacred, as well as secular, powers and prerogatives. Most importantly, the Ismaili Shī'a accepted the Fatimid caliphs on this basis.

The theory of succession accepted by the Ismailis derives from the very root of Shiism. In contrast to Sunnis, who recognize a principle of "election," the Shī'a, by and large, allow only "designation" (*naṣṣ*). For them the prophet literally "designated" 'Alī as his sole successor. This distinction between election and designation is well known in heresiographical discussions.⁷ As the party of designation, the Shī'a, however, also disagreed among themselves, falling roughly into three camps. The Zaydis maintain that the prophet's designation of 'Alī carried, in one fashion or another, to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn but not beyond the Prophet's two grandsons. Additional imams will, nevertheless, arise from the progeny of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn but they will not be known by an exact designation on the part either of the previous imams or of the prophet. The Twelver Shī'a, once the twelfth imam had come into existence and had commenced his rule, began to insist that all twelve of the imams were, in fact, "designated" in advance by the prophet himself.⁸ Thus, ultimately, neither the Zaydi nor the Twelver Shī'a held to a doctrine of continuing designation. By contrast, however, the Ismailis, unlike the other Shī'a, assert that each imam in turn must designate his own successor. This latter concept of *naṣṣ*, which once lay at the heart of all Shiism, eventually faded in importance except in the single case of the Ismailis for whom the doctrine of continuing designation preserved its critical religious meaning and significance. It became, however, also a source of troublesome anxiety with the advent of actual, physical government and the temporal progress of a real dynasty that was genealogically quite fallible even while theoretically incapable of barrenness, or of erroneous inheritance, or any other sign of failure.

⁷See, for example, Nashwān b. Sa'īd al-Ḥimyarī (d. 547/1178), *al-Ḥūr al-'īn* (Cairo, 1948), 150f, but many others could be cited as well. On the various forms of both theory and practice, in general, see Emile Tyan, *Institutions du droit public musulman*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1954 and 1956).

⁸On this development, see E. Kohlberg, "From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-'ashariyya," *BSOAS* 39 (1976): 521-534.

As the possessor of God-given infallibility (*iṣma*), the Shiite imam cannot and does not make a mistake. For him to do so is the equivalent of God Himself being wrong and in error. Therefore, where the doctrine of *naṣṣ* continues to apply, the older imam must unerringly chose his successor by a formal act of designation, but at the same time that designation will carry with it the awesome fullness that God Himself conveys in any decision He might choose to make. Needless to say, human frailty hardly tolerates such august responsibility.

The trial case for the Shī'a in all periods that were to follow was that of the Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq who, by most reports, publicly designated his second son Ismā'īl as the person to succeed him. This fact was accepted as the formal act of *naṣṣ* required by Shiite theory and was therefore a designation by an infallible imam of the new imam who would inherit the full powers of the imamate. Ismā'īl was thus not only Ja'far's choice but was God's choice as well. However, to the extreme chagrin of Ja'far's numerous, deeply committed followers, Ismā'īl died before his father. The consequences of this natural but seemingly unforeseen event were, understandably, disastrous. Could it have been that Ja'far was not infallible after all? Or (what amount almost to the same thing) that he was not the true imam?⁹

The split of the Shī'a into Imāmīs (later Twelvers) and Ismailis is but one result of this unwelcome and traumatic incident. But the very origin of the Ismailis belongs to this difficult period and to the uncertainty it engendered. That Ja'far's choice of Ismā'īl had been a mistake could not be admitted by his Shī'a under any circumstances, although as long as the father lived there was hope of an explanation and a correction to this perception of error. Apparently, though, Ja'far did not appoint another in place of Ismā'īl and the theoretical argument by which he might have done so is, generally speaking, missing. Imami writers like al-Nawbakhtī admitted as much even a hundred years after the fact.¹⁰ The Shī'a were adept, however, at theological

⁹Needless to say the numerous possible explanation of what transpired each come with sectarian implications. A full catalog of the results of this incident would require many pages. What follows covers only some of the major positions and only insofar as they help explicate the understanding of later succession problems.

¹⁰Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Kitāb Firaq al-Shī'a*, edited by H. Ritter (Istanbul, 1931).

adjustments; the catastrophic trauma of Ja'far's selection of Ismā'īl was eventually lessened by one of several different explanations. God, some argued, could change His mind.¹¹ The Imamis eventually settled on another son, Mūsā, as imam and they provided what was, to them, adequate documentation of the propriety of Mūsā's elevation. By contrast a few holdouts insisted that Ja'far himself was not yet dead; rather he was still alive and in occultation.¹² Yet another group—those who formed the main party of what became the Ismailis—refused either of these possibilities (and others that were proposed at the time) and claimed instead that the designation of Ismā'īl was not only sound, no matter the early death of Ismā'īl, but, because Ja'far's choice was correct, the succession necessarily moved thereafter beyond Ismā'īl to his own son Muḥammad. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl was, in fact, the ancestor of the later Fatimids.¹³

Nevertheless, among the Ismailis the specter of a properly designated successor predeceasing the imam who had made the designation, continued to haunt all future situations. This background was perfectly well remembered by the Fatimids and by their Ismaili followers. The case of Ja'far and of Ismā'īl, after all, had determined the subsequently identity of the *Ismā'īliyya* (even if this name is not that which the true Ismailis used for themselves).¹⁴ What is not quite as clear is whether non-Ismailis perceived (or could have perceived) a similar set of problems in the various cases of succession that arose

¹¹This is one application of the concept of *badā'*, God's change of mind. On this see the article "badā'" in the *EI2* (by Goldziher and Tritton), and M. J. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufīd* (Beirut, 1978), 329–39.

¹²A sect known in the heresiographies as the Nāwusiyya.

¹³This is not an appropriate place to review the vast literature about the origins of the Fatimids. The essential references are contained in F. Daftary's *The Ismā'īlis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990). For the present purpose, however, it may be useful to note a later Fatimid polemic that was appended to the *Hidāya* and called *Īqā' ṣawā'iq al-irghām*, p. 35, which makes a point of insisting on this fact. This is a point made as well in Abu'l-Fawāris's *al-Risāla fi'l-imāma*, ed. S. N. Makarem (Delmar, NY, Caravan Books, 1977), a treatise of a prominent *dā'ī* at the time of al-Ḥākim, Arabic text, 35–37.

¹⁴Although in late Fatimid polemics such as the *Īqā'*, mentioned in the last note, p. 29, there is a stress on what it means to say of oneself "I am an Ismā'īli" (*anā rajul Ismā'īli*). Notice also that the writer of this pamphlet specifically states that it is because "the *naṣṣ* which was given for Ismā'īl cannot be abrogated in favor of Mūsā," 35–36.

later. It would be important to ascertain here, for example, if al-Maqrīzī from his quite late medieval vantage point realized the full ramifications of the Ismaili doctrine of *naṣṣ*.¹⁵

Within the Fatimid empire, many ordinary citizens recognized the Fatimid rulers only in the manner that they would have for any other dynasty. This often involved political allegiance alone without any acknowledgement of religious import in the caliphate. Also, in many other instances, this act of obedience combined a political with only a quasi-religious acceptance that stopped well short of full Ismaili membership. The Fatimids were treated by the majority of their subjects as members of the *ashrāf* whose claim to political legitimacy was similar and perhaps no better than that of the Abbasids. In this context the complex doctrine of *naṣṣ* held little meaning and that was true for most of the population of the Fatimid empire. However, the real Ismailis, the true *awliyā'* ("saints," as they were known in the Fatimid state), were, in contrast, deeply concerned about this very problem. The *da'wa* that the Ismailis had built upon the absolutism of their imam depended on an uninterrupted, lineal descent of imam after imam; each one must be properly chosen and designated by his predecessor. Where for the average observer the issues at play passed without extravagant expectations, to the Ismailis, the events in each case of succession required a precise ritual that invoked a sacred, religious stipulation and resulted in ordination of a new master of the temporal world.

However, what that ritual included and who was in a position to observe it is hard to determine now because so few individuals were involved—and especially few are those whose observations or involvement was subsequently passed on to our surviving historical sources. In fact much of our evidence is self-contradictory, perhaps even deliberately so, since it reflects either the views of an uninformed outsider or the selective recollection and reconstruction by a later Ismaili apologist attempting to support one side against another. We are left, therefore, with arguments that seek to prove one claim

¹⁵I am fairly certain that he fully understood, but the most striking evidence occurs in a report about the caliph al-Āmir's extreme regret and concern at having erroneously appointed the Christian monk (*al-rāḥib*), known as Abū Najāḥ b. Fanā, who had unjustly tax his subjects. *Itti'āz*, pp. 125–127, especially p. 127 where it states explicitly that "the precondition of being the imam is to be infallible" (*wa shart al-imām an yakūn ma'sūman*).

and destroy the opposition. Beyond this, the policy of designation, by necessity, had to be pursued with utmost caution and circumspection, lest the unfortunate case of Ismā'īl be repeated. In several instances later writers, in fact, argue that the observable events were mere smoke screens or false leads designed either to hide the truth or to placate the weak-minded and unwary.¹⁶

One general rule, nonetheless, seems certain. The goal of each imam in regard to succession was to provide what we would consider a "revocable" *naṣṣ*, that is, a designation as firm as possible but yet, to the end of that imam's reign, not final in its theological significance.¹⁷ In practice that meant choosing a son to be groomed for succession whose actual designation was provisionally known only to a trusted third party who was sworn to secrecy. If the imam himself meantime should die, that provisional designation immediately went into effect and became absolute. In the rare event that the designee should die first, the secret of the provision in his favor could be quietly nullified and another chosen in his place. There were thus two stipulations in Fatimid policy: one to provide at all time for succession even under the requirement imposed by the doctrine of *naṣṣ*; and yet never to allow such decisions to become irrevocable should the heir die prematurely.

In practice this rule meant that often one prince was clearly favored and was therefore the obvious choice to succeed, but the formal act of designation waited until the previous imam had actually died (or was, perhaps, only at death's door). The explicit *naṣṣ* was then

¹⁶For an example of the latter argument, see below the various discussions in the later polemics about the meaning of the caliph al-Ḥākim's appointment of his cousin 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Ilyās as successor.

¹⁷It is worth recognizing that in general Islamic theory the designation (*bay'a*) cannot be revoked by the person making the designation but only renounced by the designee. See Tyan, I, 275–79. Shiite theory is more complex in that ideally, once a formal designation is made, the *naṣṣ* cannot be undone by either party. It is not really a contract between human parties but is rather a divine choice, a contract only between God and his imam on earth. The abrogation of a *naṣṣ* is theoretically utterly impossible and hence a "revocable" *naṣṣ* is a contradiction in terms, except, however, if the earlier *naṣṣ* was, for whatever reason, incomplete or not definitive. Despite this contradiction, therefore, revocation and abrogation become, nonetheless, almost of necessity, major themes in what follows here.

frequently conveyed by testament, which is to say, as a bequest,¹⁸ and was usually passed on by a third party subsequent to the exact moment of death.

A Paradigm: The Succession to al-Qā'im

Having extrapolated this procedure as the governing paradigm, however, it is ironic that the first case of succession among the Fatimids—that of al-Qā'im—is an obvious exception. The second of the Fatimid imam/caliphs was publicly recognized as early as 299/912,¹⁹ long before al-Mahdī's death in 322/934. Al-Qā'im had, moreover, been intimately associated with his father's career, traveling with him throughout the arduous flight from Salamiya to Sijilmāsa and sharing confinement in the latter city until they were liberated by Abū 'Abdallāh al-Shī'i and the Kutāma tribesmen. That the future al-Qā'im was thus destined to succeed was not in question.²⁰ But the actual formal declaration which was made relatively early in al-Mahdī's reign was open to the same danger as proved fatal in the case of Ismā'il. The answer as to why provisions of another kind were not followed must depend, in this instance, on factors that forced al-Mahdī to override a policy of caution.

Of greater urgency in the early years of Fatimid government was the very concept of dynasty and of continuity in the face of previous expectations, among many Ismailis (and the Shī'a at large), of a single messianic achievement by the Mahdī alone. Various interpretations

¹⁸On the concept of bequest (*al-waṣīyya*) in this context, see the comments of Stern, "Epistle," 21 and Paula Sanders, "Claiming the Past: Ghadīr Khumm and the Rise of Ḥāfiẓī Historiography in Late Fatimid Egypt," *Studia Islamica* 75 (1992): 81–104, p. 93, in reference to the *Hidāya*. Abū'l-Fawāris makes the same point. On the Sunni practice of employing written bequests, see Tyan, I, 265–67 and 271ff.

¹⁹W. Madelung, "Das imamat in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre," *Der Islam* 37 (1961), 66. Qādī al-Nu'mān reports in his *Iftitāḥ al-da'wa*, ed. Wadad al-Qādī (Beirut, 1970), 273, on the designation of al-Qā'im as *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn* that, *'ahada [al-mahdī] ilā ibnihi Muḥammad abī al-qāsim al-Qā'im . . . wa ajrā amr kutubihi bismihi wa sammāhu walī 'ahd al-muslimīn*. Madelung noted that this event in 299/912) was associated closely with the execution of Abū 'Abdallāh. Cf. *Itti'āz*, I, 68.

²⁰See, however, also H. Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdī: Der Aufstieg der Fatimiden* (Munich, C. H. Beck, 1991), 246–49, for a discussion of the threat of another possible outcome.

then actively promoted by Eastern Ismailis and their *da'wa* was also focused on the role of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl who was, according to them, the Messiah whose advent would signal the end of history.²¹ The claim of al-Mahdī, the first Fatimid “conqueror of cities,”²² denied the very doctrinal basis of this other notion of messiahship. The designation of al-Qā'im, whatever the risk, was important in establishing the principle of succession in and of itself. The role of the Fatimid imams, according to the newly revealed teaching, needed to be understood in terms of collective goals: they (plural)—a line of imams—will establish justice and rid the world of inequity.

The meaning of the early elevation of al-Qā'im, however, despite its most likely motivation, became almost immediately a matter of contention. Those who rejected al-Mahdī's claim to imamate for himself, also denied the imamate of his son, although as time wore on, there was a tendency to accept al-Qā'im, and hence his successors, while even so, curiously, not allowing al-Mahdī's own legitimacy. Al-Mahdī, for these people, was of a different lineage than al-Qā'im. This and other understandings of al-Qā'im's succession belie a far more complex problem than one of simple designation because it involves issues connected with the many controversies surrounding Fatimid genealogy—a matter beyond the scope of the present inquiry.²³ It is likely that both this issue and the early designation of al-Qā'im, therefore, have little or no bearing on the problem of Fatimid succession in any subsequent case.²⁴

But, if al-Qā'im's designation was anomalous, that of his successor the future al-Manṣūr appears to be paradigmatic. In fact the evidence that comes to us in the latter case is, quite possibly, better and more revealing than any other. The most informative report concerning the selection of al-Manṣūr comes from a senior trusted, Ismaili servant, usually known simply as Ustādh Jawdhar. His dictated memoirs

²¹Much of the *da'wa* at that time still expected the reappearance of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl and therefore tended to deny al-Mahdī's claim either in part or altogether.

²²This is a phrase that appears, for example, in Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī's *Sullam al-najāt* as a way of specifying the Fatimid caliphs (ed. M. A. Alibhai in “Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī and *Kitāb Sullam al-Najāt*: A Study in Islamic Neoplatonism,” Harvard University Ph. D. dissertation, 1983, p. 84 of the Arabic text.

²³For a full discussion of these issues, see Madelung's “Das Imamāt,” 65–86.

²⁴For a full analysis of its actual meaning, see Madelung, “Das Imamāt,” 65–86, and Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, 128–29.

are a rich source of data on the inner workings of Fatimid administration in the North African period where Jawdhar often held fairly high responsibility and was himself personally intimate with the caliphs.²⁵ Jawdhar says that when it was time to perform the burial rites for the deceased al-Mahdī—an act done quite privately and away from public scrutiny—al-Qā'im, who was at that moment about to inter the corpse, interrupted the process to announce that he must first appoint a *ḥujja* of his own. The implied symbolism is that al-Qā'im could not formally commence his reign as imam, which would begin at the moment of burial, until he had taken care to designate, however provisionally, his own successor. As a second step, also, he revealed this designation—that of his son Ismā'īl—to Jawdhar, accompanied by a solemn oath of secrecy, which, Jawdhar claims, was to last seven years. By this deed Jawdhar had himself been appointed, according to his own account, the *mustawda'* of the *naṣṣ* for the future imam.²⁶

There is no reason to doubt the essential elements of this report. It is true that similar story appears in Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's record of his conversations with the various Fatimid imams that he himself worked with and for.²⁷ In the latter version it is al-Manṣūr, the caliph, who attests to a private designation in his favor by his father at the time of al-Mahdī's funeral.²⁸ Some modern observers have remarked on this duplication and the occurrence of two such incidents for the same succession, each claiming a unique and privileged sharing of the fact in question with the imam, and they suggest that it must mean that one report is false and the other true. That is to say, either Jawdhar is truthful and Qāḍī al-Nu'mān not, or vice versa.²⁹ But such a judgment is not necessary since both could equally well be quite accurate. Al-

²⁵ *Sīrat al-ustādh Jawdhar*, recorded by Abū 'Alī Manṣūr al-'Azīzi al-Jawdhārī, edited by Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn and Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī Sha'ira (Cairo, 1954), French translation, *Vie de l'Ustādh Jaudhar*, by M. Canard (Alger, 1958). For the general question of succession, Canard offers important comments in his introduction. See pp. 21–22.

²⁶ *Sīrat al-ustādh Jawdhar*, 39–40; trans. 53–56.

²⁷ *Kitāb al-Majālis wa'l-musāyarāt*, edited by al-Ḥabīb al-Faqī, Ibrāhīm Shabbūh, and Muḥammad al-Ya'lāwī (Tunis, 1978)

²⁸ *al-Majālis*, 137 and 447–449. Cf. p. 220.

²⁹ See the comments of the editors respectively of *Sīrat al-ustādh Jawdhar*, 40, n. 28; of *al-Majālis*, 448, n. 4; and of M. Canard, trans. of the *Sīrat al-ustādh*, 56, n. 40.

Qā'im communicated his decision independently to both subjects. Jawdhar's function was to insure a reliable, uncontested transition; Ismā'īl was, however, privy from the beginning to his father's intention. It is likely, moreover, that neither one knew of the other's awareness of the same fact. For al-Qā'im to have admitted to Ismā'īl that he was already chosen, did, on the other hand, prevent his father from easily altering his designation thereafter should he, in the (perhaps) unlikely event, wish to replace him with another son for whatever reason. It would be much simpler to deal with Jawdhar, a mere servant, if Ismā'īl should die prematurely.

The story told by Jawdhar contains two key terms that, so far as I know, appear in no other context where they have exactly the same meaning. They are *ḥujja* and *mustawda*.³⁰ However, both words play significant roles in other Shiite contexts, including particularly Ismaili (and non-Ismaili) discussions of the Ismaili imamate. For the Twelver (Ithna 'asharī) Shī'a, *ḥujja* always refers to the imam. The imam is God's *ḥujja* (proof, assurance) in the terrestrial realm. Among the Ismailis in the Period of Concealment, i.e. prior to the advent of open rule, the term was applied to the head of the sect, who was or was not also thought to be the imam, depending on which portion of the *da'wa* was involved. Many clearly understood the *ḥujja* simply to be the acting leader of a *da'wa* on behalf of an imam (Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl) who was then in occultation. Later, *ḥujja* was the name for the rank of the twelve chiefs of the regional *da'was*, implying that there were twelve *ḥujjas* in all, all distinctly subordinate to the reigning imam/caliph. Jawdhar's use of the term, however, does not match these others. Al-Qā'im, therefore, indicates in this context another sense for it and quite possibly he shows, in the use of this term, a broader understanding of his responsibility and duty as imam. Significantly, if the imam should die without an heir, that fact itself carries an extremely awkward consequence. The earth, according to Shiite theory, can never be without an imam—a *ḥujja*, in the sense of God's "assurance" to humankind. Should an imam die without male issue (or with male issue who are not themselves designated for succession), there is no convenient avenue for remedy in either theory or

³⁰On both see the useful comments of M. Canard given in the notes to his translation, 52, n. 32 and 53, n. 35. See also Madelung, "Das Imamāt," 63, n. 117, and F. Dachraoui, *Le Califat Fatimide au Maghreb* (Tunis, 1981), 292–298.

practice. A brother does not inherit under these conditions as might be possible in ordinary dynastic succession (nor does an undesignated son). Rather, lack of issue nullifies the very imamate of the individual who does not produce a successor. An imam's failure to pass on the sacred office as he must from father to son automatically forces the adherents of that imam to retrace his lineage back one step or more and retroactively follow another line to the true, present imam. Al-Qā'im by referring to his son as his *ḥujja* thus specifies that the son is, in fact, the validation the father's imamate.

The second term, *mustawda'*, has a curious and controversial history in medieval and modern accounts of the Fatimids.³¹ A number of Ismaili related sources suggest that some of the imams, especially in the Period of Concealment, were temporary holders of the imamate by "deposition" (*mustawda'*). This depository function did not, according to this theory, indicate the true imamate; the same person could not be both *mustawda'* imam and "veritable" imam—some writers employ the term *mustaqarr* for the latter. There is no doubt that certain Shī'a groups spoke about a *mustawda'* imamate; one striking example were those few who claimed that 'Alī was himself not actually an imam, that he was instead a *mustawda'*, and that his role was merely to hold the actual imamate in trust for the grandsons of the prophet.³² Another version of a *mustawda'* imam exists in the mind of some Ismaili authorities and others who derive their conception of this doctrine from similar sources. For them there were originally two lineages, both holders of the imamate, one non-Aliid (or possibly non-Ismā'īlī—that is, not descendants of Ja'far's son Ismā'īl) and the other properly Ismā'īlī.³³ Again this idea is not pertinent in regard to Jawdhar, who was not, in any sense, considered even for a moment

³¹Canard, p. 21, reviews much of the appropriate material on the use of this term.

³²This is the doctrine of a Shiite sect known as the Khashabiyya, followers of Ṣurkhāb al-Ṭabarī, a subsect of the Zaydiyya. On them see my "An Ismā'īlī Version of the Heresiography of the Seventy-two Erring Sects," in F. Daftary, ed. *Studies in Ismā'īlī Thought and Doctrine* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 161–77, p. 172. [Reproduced in the present volume, no. XI.]

³³See, for example, the explanation of Abbas Hamdani and F. de Blois in their study, "A Re-Examination of al-Mahdī's Letter to the Yemenites on the Genealogy of the Fatimid Caliphs," *JRAS* (1983), 173–207. Cf. other material such as that cited by Bernard Lewis in his *Origins of Ismailism* (Cambridge, 1940), 72–73. Also Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, 104–105, 115, 349.

the imam. Quite the contrary, Jawdhar as *mustawda'* makes sense of this term in a way that the other suggested meanings do not. The trust Jawdhar bore was to convey the *naṣṣ* to its intended recipient if and when it might be necessary for him to do so. His function was much more like that of the executor in the case of a bequest.³⁴

Although Jawdhar insisted that the period of his secrecy was to be only seven years and that he was faithful in this obligation, that does not also mean that, on his own, he could or did announce what he knew at the close of such a period publicly. There is no record, in any event, of his having done so. Instead, it is obvious that no public disclosure took place, despite the seven-year restriction having expired, until al-Qā'im lay dying twelve years hence at the end of his reign. Only then did a formal rite of designation occur. In front of al-Qā'im, the *naṣṣ* was finally and definitively given in favor of Ismā'il³⁵, who was to assume his responsibilities as imam barely a month later (his regnal title al-Manṣūr and the full public announcement of his imamate came later following the defeat of the Kharijite rebel Abū Yazīd).

A Designation Twice Altered: The Succession to al-Mu'izz

The preceding case of succession was, however, hardly problematic.³⁶ The first instance of potential difficulty, especially of the kind outlined earlier, developed in the reign of al-Mu'izz. Again, an incident related by Ustādh Jawdhar helps explain an otherwise obscure

³⁴ Abu'l-Fawāris, a *dā'ī* writing during the later reign of al-Ḥākim, drew almost the exact analogy at work here. He compares the *mustawda'* who acts as *kafil* (guardian) of an infant heir in a legal bequest to the situation of the person who preserves the inherited knowledge requisite in the imamate until an imam who comes to the position in infancy reaches maturity. See his *al-Risāla fī'l-imāma*, Arabic text, 35.

³⁵ Our sources are not entirely clear as to the exact timing. See Canard's n. 38, p. 55 and n. 40, p. 56. Farhat Dachraoui, *Le Califat Fatimide au Maghreb* (Tunis, 1981), 186, uses the date 7 Ramaḍān 334. On the ceremony see the *Sīrat al-ustādh*, trans., 139.

³⁶ In fact we should recognize a certain amount of hagiographic reconstruction in Fatimid accounts, which tend to do away with all problems and possible conflict from earlier periods. Al-Maqrīzī, for example, quotes from Ibn Zūlāq a story about a family gathering in which al-Mahdī recognizes the presence in the room of himself, al-Qā'im, al-Manṣūr, and the infant al-Mu'izz and remarks how wonderful it is to have four imams together at the same time. See the *Itti'āz*, I, 134–35.

matter.³⁷ Al-Mu‘izz had four sons: Tamīm, ‘Abdallāh, Nizār, and ‘Aqīl. Tamīm was the eldest and at some point, possibly because of his seniority, was considered the likely heir.³⁸ Whether he was ever actually favored, his fall from grace occurred early and for reasons only hinted at in our sources, which are unforthcoming in this regard.³⁹ Relatively late in his reign, almost certainly between 358 and 361, al-Mu‘izz, as al-Qā’im before him, confided in Jawdhar the designation of the second son ‘Abdallāh with a similar pledge of secrecy. Shortly thereafter—perhaps seven months, as Jawdhar says—al-Mu‘izz took several others into the same confidence, but all, like Jawdhar, sworn to secrecy.⁴⁰

Soon, however, an incident took place that sorely tested Jawdhar’s ability to maintain the secret. He was fond of proclaiming out loud, even in the presence of the imam, that one is obligated to given obeisance to God, to the imam, and to *that one of his sons who has been selected as heir designate*. All others in the imam’s family are due only the love that one gives one’s own kinfolk and nothing more. The test came on an occasion during which Jawdhar had, of necessity, to approach the four sons of al-Mu‘izz in a public ceremony and offer formal salutations. The audience fully expected Jawdhar to begin with Tamīm, the oldest son. Instead, overcome by what he knew incontrovertibly to be the actual state of affairs, he went straight to ‘Abdallāh, kissed the ground before him and then his stirrup. ‘Abdallāh, according to our report, was so shocked by what happened that he fell off his horse. Others were deeply scandalized by the affront. However, al-Mu‘izz, once he learned of the incident, was only bemused and apparently commented that Jawdhar had always seemed “inspired”.⁴¹

What makes this event most interesting to us is that this same ‘Abdallāh, who we know was al-Mu‘izz’s choice for succession—a fact attested so graphically by Jawdhar’s public *faux pas* and by his own

³⁷ *Sīrat al-ustādih*, 139–140; trans., 213–216.

³⁸ See the *Itti‘āz*, I, 235, for evidence that he was once given the designation *walī ‘ahd*.

³⁹ [Information discovered since writing this article reveals that Tamīm was passed over when it became apparent that he could not produce offspring. However, the exact nature of his impediment remains unclear.]

⁴⁰ Trans., 213. See especially Canard’s note no. 467.

⁴¹ *lam yazal jawdhar muwaffaqan mudh kāna*, *ibid.*, 139; trans., 215.

account of the incident—died in Egypt in 364 while his father was still alive. The situation of Ismāʿīl and Jaʿfar was, therefore, about to be repeated almost exactly, so much so, in fact, that Marius Canard, who made a fine French translation of Jawdhar's memoirs and who, more than anyone else, has considered this event closely, noted that a succession from ʿAbdallāh—i.e. ʿAbdallāh's own son—ought to have been expected despite his early death.⁴² That, however, presupposes a true, formal recognition of ʿAbdallāh and a *naṣṣ* properly and unreservedly given.⁴³ That requirement Jawdhar could not fulfill on his own no matter what he did as long as the imamate remained in the hands of al-Muʿizz, who was himself not disturbed, it seems, by the premature disclosure of his intention on the part of an old family servant. Al-Muʿizz could and did replace ʿAbdallāh with Nizār, who, though surprised and perhaps unprepared, subsequently received the proper designation and succeed as al-ʿAzīz.⁴⁴

Al-Ḥākim's Designations of Cousins

The next case that requires comment is also the most unusual. Al-Ḥākim followed his father al-ʿAzīz easily and, though the new imam was but eleven years old at the time, the carefully planned succession caused no difficulty. What came later is another matter. Al-Ḥākim

⁴²Translation of *Sīrat al-ustādh*, 213, n. 467.

⁴³On the other hand, the provisional designation of ʿAbdallāh as the prince of choice must have become well known. Al-Muʿizz apparently was not reticent to accord ʿAbdallāh public favor as if he would succeed. See the *Ittiʿāz*, I, 135, 137 (ʿAbdallāh to begin attending the imam's council), 202–24 (ʿAbdallāh's command of Fatimid armies against the Qarmatians), 208 (his victory celebrated), and finally 217–18 (ʿAbdallāh falls ill and dies; a large funeral held with elaborate mourning).

⁴⁴*Ittiʿāz*, I, 232, citing information from Ibn Zūlāq. But see especially 236–37 for confirmation of the date of the designation and *bayʿa* in 365. Al-Maqrīzī includes there (pp. 236–37) a story from Ibn Muḥadhdhab, who reports directly from the imam al-ʿAzīz, concerning an event that took place after arriving in Egypt in which al-Muʿizz singled him out from among his brothers for eventual succession. There was thus obviously a tendency from early times to recast the “history” of the designation in the subsequent period so that any hint of previous error, doubt or hesitation would be erased. This report explains, in effect, that al-ʿAzīz was his father's ultimate choice all along. Note also how this case is handled in the polemical *Īqāʿ*, p. 36. There is a short note on Ibn al-Muḥadhdhab in A. F. Sayyid's article “Lumières nouvelles sur quelques sources de l'histoire fatimide en Egypte,” (*Annales islamologiques* 13 [1977]: 1–41), 7–8.

was, by all admissions, a person little given to the ordinary and commonplace, even in the observance of the expected trappings of royal ceremony. His outlandish alteration of normal rules of behavior created consternation throughout his empire and, most decidedly, within the Ismaili *da'wa*. One change of this kind was his totally unexpected and unexplained appointment, late in his reign, of a cousin, 'Abd al-Raḥīm, as the *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn*, the "Heir Designate of the Muslims."⁴⁵ Al-Ḥākim by then had two sons and the birth in each case was publicly proclaimed in ceremonies marked by the performance of the *'aqīqa* by the leading member of the *ashraf* accompanied by important officials of high rank.⁴⁶ The second of these sons, moreover, possessed apparently some extra claim on the succession, perhaps because of his mother's lineage or status. He—the future al-Zāhir—was adopted, in any case, at some point in these confused events by al-Ḥākim's powerful older sister Sitt al-Mulk.⁴⁷ Since he had a normal avenue of succession, it is tempting to regard al-Ḥākim's peculiar designation of 'Abd al-Raḥīm as a tactical ruse. The caliph is

⁴⁵The use of the title *walī 'ahd*, *walī al-'ahd*, *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn*, and *walī 'ahd al-mu'minīn* actually indicates the "holder of a contract of homage or fealty (from the Muslims, or from the Believers)". It was the standard designation for the heir to whom often the oath of allegiance (the *bay'a*) had been given in advance of succession as in the earliest and most famous case of Yazīd b. Mu'āwīya. On this in general see Tyan, especially vol. I, 279–86. In Fatimid usage the idea of contract hardly fits since neither is there a "contract of allegiance" (an *'ahd*) nor an "oath of allegiance" (a *bay'a*), both of which imply "election" to office, but instead a unilateral designation (a *naṣṣ*). An Ismaili does not "choose" to give homage to the new imam since in no sense is the matter up to the individual. Still, the Fatimids obviously preserved the older, non-Shiite forms which may have been kept expressly for their non-Ismaili subjects. Even so one must wonder exactly what these titles and the protocol that went with them meant in terms of Ismaili doctrine. Are they, for example, merely outward, i.e., *ẓāhirī*, conventions that may or may not convey the inner reality, the *bāṭin*?

⁴⁶The first of these sons, al-Ḥārith Abu'l-Ashbāl, was born on the 9th of Rabī' al-Awwal 395 and the formal celebrations were held on at least the following four days. See *Itti'āz*, II, 55. 'Alī Abu'l-Ḥasan, the future al-Zāhir, was born in Ramaḍān of the same year and given similar attention. See *Itti'āz*, II, 58.

⁴⁷Yahyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṭākī, *Ta'rikh* (ed. L. Cheikho, B. Carra de Vaux and H. Zayyat, Beirut, 1909), 207 and 235. Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī ḥulā ḥadrat al-qāhira* (ed. H. Naṣṣar, Cairo, 1970), 63–64, gives a detailed formulation of the designation which included reference to 'Abd al-Raḥīm in the *du'ā* as holder of "my *'ahd* and that of the Muslims", the "*khalīfa* after me" like Aaron was to Moses (i.e., cousin to cousin). See also Abu'l-Fawāris, Arabic, 12. Cf. Yaacov Lev, *State & Society in Fatimid Egypt* (Leiden, Brill, 1991), 34–36.

known to have tired of his public duties and of the intensely troublesome role in which they involved him. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm was thus, in this view, to be a kind of shadow caliph, or rather, a symbolic stand-in who could assume the ceremonial function of the true imam but not the actual, i.e. veritable, position that is implied by sacred designation. However, the heir in this case was widely proclaimed the chosen successor; coins were, for example, minted with his name.⁴⁸ Far away in the North African dependency of the empire, the ruler there, Bādīs Abū Manād,⁴⁹ is reported to have reacted to the designation with considerable bewilderment. “Why would he do this and ignore his own son?” he is said to have remarked.⁵⁰ Surely, therefore, many accepted the choice of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, albeit per force, as a true and final action in the matter.

Al-Ḥākim, however, not content with one designation, soon made another that was even more baffling than the first. The second choice fell on another cousin, al-‘Abbās b. Shu‘ayb, who was given the title *walī ‘ahd al-mu‘minīn*, “Heir designate of the Believers.”⁵¹ In Ismaili thinking, and indeed that of many Muslims, the “believers” (*mu‘minūn*) form a more exclusive and more important segment of Islamic society than Muslims simply. For Ismailis the “believers” are themselves—that is, the Ismailis—as opposed to the majority who are mere “muslims.” Thus Ibn Shu‘ayb’s title is better than the one of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, if in fact a judgment of this kind is relevant. Those who were to become the Druze recognized this distinction and saw, nevertheless, that the facts were the opposite of reality.⁵² ‘Abd al-Raḥīm remained, apparently, the favorite of al-Ḥākim. That this is accurate is

⁴⁸ On the designation of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. Ilyās, see the *Itti‘āz*, II, 100–101, 103, 110, and Yaḥyā, *Ta’rīkh*, 205–08.

⁴⁹ Bādīs b. al-Manṣūr b. Yūsuf b. Bulukkīn b. Manād, the 3rd Zirid ruler of North Africa, who died in 406/1016.

⁵⁰ See Ibn Sa‘īd al-Maghribī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 64 and 74. In the *Itti‘āz*, II, 100–101, the matter of advertising the nomination of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm is put quite explicitly: an announcement was to be read from all *minbars* in the empire. Bādīs is said to have remarked, “If it were not that the imam does not interfere in administration, I would have written to him [urging him] not to transfer this status from his son to the family of his uncle.”

⁵¹ Yaḥyā, *Ta’rīkh*, 219–220.

⁵² For the Druze discussion of this matter, see the *Rasā’il al-ḥikma*, epistle no. 17, “Risālat al-tanzīḥ” (Beirut, 1986), pp. 189–91.

confirmed by events during the actual succession following al-Ḥākim's mysterious disappearance. 'Abd al-Raḥīm had been sent to Damascus as its governor just before; he was recalled and done away with mostly likely to snuff out any chance that some had been fooled into thinking that his designation was the real one.⁵³ Ibn Shu'ayb, by contrast, was allowed to live out his natural life, even though, when he eventually died a few years later, the historians freely recorded his having once held the claim to be heir to the throne.⁵⁴

But what of the actual succession to al-Ḥākim? There is not much to be said, unfortunately, because, although the sudden disappearance of the imam might raise interesting questions on a theoretical level, the installation of al-Zāhir, though very young and not known to have been publicly designated, caused little stir, if any.⁵⁵ Sitt al-Mulk was, following the realization that al-Ḥākim would not return, immediately in complete charge. She, in fact, ruled the state and empire from that point until her own death.⁵⁶ With no problem that we can perceive, she raised her nephew to the imamate. Quite

⁵³On the death of 'Abd al-Raḥīm, see *Itti'āz*, II, 116. The editor in note 2 on that page gives another account from Abu'l-Maḥāsīn Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk miṣr wa'l-qāhira*, IV, 193–94. Cf. Lev, *State & Society*, 35.

⁵⁴On his appointment, see Yaḥyā, *Ta'rikh*, 219–20. His death notice is in the *Itti'āz*, II, 173, in the entry for the year 415 (13 Shawwāl) and it says explicitly "The amir Abū Hāshim al-'Abbās b. Shu'ayb b. Da'ūd b. 'Abdallāh al-Mahdī who had been the *walī 'ahd al-mu'minīn*." The corresponding passage in al-Musabbiḥī, *al-Juz' al-arba'ūn min Akhbār miṣr*, edited by A. F. Sayyid and Th. Bianquis (Cairo, 1978), 105 is slightly corrupt: for Sa'īd, read Shu'ayb (as in the index). Al-Musabbiḥī also calls him *walī 'ahd amir al-mu'minīn* in this context, which clouds the issue somewhat. See as well *Itti'āz*, II, 183–84, where al-Maqrīzī remarks that, at the beginning of al-Zāhir's reign, the affairs of the nation were in the hands of his aunt and that "it was she who made sure the caliphate came to him instead of to the *walī 'ahd* Abū Hāshim al-'Abbās." Ibn Shu'ayb was subsequently forced to pledge allegiance to al-Zāhir with a sword hanging over him. The *Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq, 2: 447; Ayman Fuad Sayyid ed., 4: 859) contains an entry on the "Masjid of the *walī 'ahd al-mu'minīn*", who was this same Abū Hāshim al-'Abbās bin Shu'ayb.

⁵⁵The theoretical basis for either of al-Ḥākim's designations and how those claims might have played out or the reasoning behind al-Zāhir's eventual succession in their stead is not discussed as such in our sources for the year in question. However, the situation of 411 was not forgotten but rather suppressed. Over a century later it reappears in the polemical rhetoric employed in another case which the protagonists at that later time thought analogous and thus explainable by these earlier events.

⁵⁶*Itti'āz*, II, 124 and particularly 174 where al-Maqrīzī provides her obituary.

possibly she could, even rightly, claim this prerogative as the *mustawda'*—a position she may have assumed, whether anyone else knew it or not, and which hardly anyone could contest, given both her accumulated hold on power and her undeniable seniority in the caliphal family.⁵⁷

Schismatic Succession: al-Mustanşir and His Sons

If al-Zāhir's succession occurred in strange circumstances, that of his only surviving son, al-Mustanşir, passed without incident and the latter commenced, in 427/1035 or 1036, a reign that may well be the longest of any medieval Muslim ruler, lasting until 487/1094. Until the end of al-Mustanşir's rule, therefore, despite the possibility of the problems we have noticed, particularly in the succession to al-Mu'izz and to al-Ḥākim, the Fatimids had enjoyed by then at least 184 years in power without a serious fight over succession—and this achievement happened despite the peculiarly demanding requirement of infallible designation at each turn. The next case was, however, to be utterly different and to result in a momentous split that brought two factions into being, each at war with the other. It is a split, moreover, that never healed and is one that remains in effect even today, nearly a thousand years later.

Ironically, the genesis of the trouble in the succession to al-Mustanşir may be due to the length of the reign which allowed for an unusual fertile production of potential heirs and yet, at the same time, demanded a clear, though perhaps changing, policy in regard to the choice of a successor over an uncommonly long period. Where no son or only one must have caused anxiety, al-Mustanşir had too many. Where a short reign did not occasion a reason for a new selection of an heir, the length of this rule took the fortunes of the Fatimids from the peak of their achievement to the lowest levels of weakness and finally once again to the summits of power. What actual effect these changes had on the problem of succession, we can only guess, but it is fair to suspect, at the least, that the varying fortunes of the dynasty entered al-Mustanşir's thoughts in this regard.

⁵⁷Yahyā, *Ta'rīkh*, 235. On her dealings with the two former holders of the *walī 'ahd*, see the *Itti'āz*, II, 183–84.

As is well known, when al-Mustanşir died, his following immediately fell into two camps, one in support of the new caliph al-Mustaʿlī, and the other aligned with Nizār who refused to acknowledge his brother's elevation and went into rebellion. The names of both brothers also serve to indicate the resulting sects—the Mustaʿlī Ismailis and the Nizārī Ismailis—that derive each from the parties to these original events.

Although Stern and others have tried to make sense of how the split came about, many questions remain. Various kinds of new information provide, if not answers that will ultimately aid either of these parties or contribute a definitive resolution of the issues, at least more concrete, clearer explanations for a number of facts. The account of al-Maqrīzī—that is, the account(s) he chose to give in his *Ittiʿāz*—is especially useful in this regard. Significantly, al-Maqrīzī does not support either the Nizārī or the Mustaʿlī version exclusively; instead he presents a far more complex picture than the one traditionally given by either of these factions or, in fact, by modern historians who have written about this incident.

An interesting place to begin our investigation of this case, however, is not with the events leading to the fateful twenty-four hours surrounding the death of al-Mustanşir, but with the equally curious question of who were the sons of al-Mustanşir and how many? Inadvertently, al-Maqrīzī provides an unusual kind of evidence in this matter. When Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn brought a formal end to Fatimid rule in 567/1171, he ordered all available members of the former ruling family arrested and incarcerated in the Dār al-Muẓaffar, males and females to be kept separated. Obviously the females needed to be imprisoned for some months only. The males, however, were held until death. In the year 608/1211, the sixty-three individuals that remained were transferred to the citadel. Of these but forty were living in 623/1226 when an interested party decided to make an inventory of them. Al-Maqrīzī provides us that list and it gives the names of the surviving Fatimids with full genealogy back to al-Mustanşir.⁵⁸ Using it one can obtain the beginnings of a family tree for, at least, a portion of the later Fatimids. No such record is complete, however, but it does prove to us that al-Mustanşir had a great

⁵⁸*Ittiʿāz*, III, 347–48.

many sons.⁵⁹

More information exists about his sons also in the narrative of the *Itti'āz* and, importantly, in an independent source, the *Sijillāt* of al-Mustanşir. A collection of these imperial announcements—some that had been addressed to the Ṣulayḥids in the Yemen—survives and has been published.⁶⁰ At least three of the *Sijillāt* in this collection have as their principal purpose the announcement of the birth to al-Mustanşir of a son.⁶¹ Therefore, all in all, there exists more information about the sons of al-Mustanşir than has heretofore been taken into account with regard to the succession problem.⁶² My investigation of all this evidence suggests, in fact, that al-Mustanşir had at the minimum seventeen sons whose names we can recover.⁶³

One leading question about them is who was the oldest. The record on this is not quite clear but the choice is between Nizār and another son, 'Abdallāh, with it likely to be the former as often supposed. In the document Stern analyzed, Nizār's sister recalls that the mothers respectively of Nizār and of 'Abdallāh were caught quarreling about which of their sons would succeed. This incident surely reflects an internal disagreement that may well mirror the problem of who was eldest or most senior in some other way. One of the *Sijillāt* contains an assertion that Nizār is the eldest, but several other records seem to specify that 'Abdallāh was the oldest (or perhaps only the highest in seniority or rank) of al-Mustanşir's sons.⁶⁴

⁵⁹It does not give a record of those who died without issue, or of those who left Egypt, or in one way or another did not get included in this highly unusual survey of survivors.

⁶⁰*al-Sijillāt al-mustanşiriyya*, edited by 'Abd al-Mun'im Majīd (Cairo, 1954). On this collection see the preliminary study by H. Hamdani, "The Letters of Al-Mustanşir bi'llah," *BSOAS* 7 (1933–35): 307–324.

⁶¹No. 6 in the collection announces the birth on the 14th of Ṣafar 452 of Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad; no. 8 a son named al-Muḥsin Abu'l-Faḍl; and no. 11 a son named al-Ḥasan Abū Muḥammad.

⁶²Yet another case is mentioned by Nāşir-i Khusraw in his *Safarnāma*—a son's birth was celebrated in 439, ed. M. Ghanizada, Berlin, Kaviyani, 1922, p. 77; trans. Thackston, p. 55.

⁶³It is, of course, difficult to separate in this information one son from another if there exists only a *kunya* or only an *ism*, as happens not infrequently. Most certainly several sons of al-Mustanşir, for example, used the same *kunya*.

⁶⁴See *Itti'āz*, III, 11 and 87; Taj al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Muyassar (d. 677/1278), *al-Muntaqā min Akhbār mişr*, edited A. F. Sayyid (Cairo, IFAO, 1981), 101; *sijills*

It is quite possible therefore that both Nizār, who was born, we know, in 437/1045, and ‘Abdallāh, each from a different mother, were born at approximately the same period. A disagreement about their claims might be due to status of the mother as well as an exact precedence in time of birth. The mother may have played a role in determining Fatimid succession since chronological seniority and primogeniture was not an essential factor. Her social rank and status could, therefore, count if the reigning imam-caliph wished to accord her or her son special recognition. But about this we have no other information. Al-Mustanṣir’s own mother was, for a time, a *de facto* regent but, since he was an only son, her status can have had little to do with his succession, her power accruing to her from her son and after the fact. There is, nonetheless, no doubt that many did regard ‘Abdallāh as senior and some of these people assumed a claim to the imamate on his behalf, perhaps accordingly.

It is thus also evident that al-Mustanṣir had a presumptive heir (possibly more than one) from the year 437/1045. Since he began his imamate at the age of seven in 427/1035, ten years had passed and he was then only seventeen years old. Those ten years, however, must have been anxious times for the true believers as they waited for the birth of a possible successor. Their relief at having ‘Abdallāh and Nizār would have understandably brought a certain attachment to either or both of these princes.⁶⁵

In the ensuing years a number of other sons enter the record. A most curious and perhaps significant example was announced in rather extravagant language in the year 452/1060 in a *sijill* to the Yemen. That year a son named Abu’l-Qāsim Aḥmad was born. The *sijill* uses the occasion to note the great auspiciousness of this event and the similarity of the child’s name to that of the prophet, and it even

nos. 35 and 43 from the *Sijillāt* (both of the year 489 and both explicitly state that Nizār is the oldest in “years” [*huwa al-akh al-akbar sinnan*]). But, although the first born was a presumptive heir until others came along, the oldest son does not possess automatic rights. A. F. Sayyid, *al-Dawla al-fāṭimiya fī miṣr* (Cairo, 1992), 154, for example, as is the case with many other modern scholars, is wrong to describe Nizār as *ṣāhib al-ḥaqq al-sharī* (“holder of the legal right”) on this basis alone.

⁶⁵On the status of ‘Abdallāh see below. Note also that he is likely the same as the Abū ‘Abdallāh who appears in a few citations as the *walī al-‘ahd*. For example, Ibn Muyassar, 97, mentions that a house near the Faṭḥ al-khalīj was owed or built by this prince who was *walī al-‘ahd*.

quotes the Quranic passage about “Aḥmad”.⁶⁶ Yet, although it cannot be accepted, later authorities attempted to equate this Aḥmad with the future al-Musta‘lī, who, however, was born later in 467/1074 or possibly 468.

A highly significant piece of evidence about this early period of al-Mustanṣir’s rule and his attention to the succession occurs in al-Maqrīzī’s account of the terrible troubles (al-Maqrīzī calls it the *fitna* or the *ayyām al-shidda*⁶⁷) that began in 454/1062 and were to last until the coming of Badr al-Jamālī twelve years later. During this period the economy of Egypt collapsed, the government was progressively impoverished, and the various military units revolted over lack of pay and took to rampages and independent actions that eventually severed most of the country from Cairo. Al-Mustanṣir saw his power reduced almost to nothing.⁶⁸ About 461/1068, in the depths of despair and uncertainty, the caliph began to send his family to safer territory. In one notable incident, he dispatched his sons—we should probably presume that the sons mentioned have critical importance—away from the capital in an effort to scatter them as a caution against a coup to end the dynasty altogether.

Al-Maqrīzī reports this incident carefully and places it in 461.⁶⁹ Al-Mustanṣir, he says, sent ‘Abdallāh,⁷⁰ along with a son named Abū ‘Alī, to Badr al-Jamālī, then at Acre. He dispatched another son, Abū’l-Qāsim Muḥammad, the father of the future caliph al-Ḥāfiẓ, to Ascalon by way of Damietta. No son remained with al-Mustanṣir in Cairo except Abū’l-Qāsim Aḥmad, who was obviously the son born in 452 and announced in the *siḡill* mentioned above. Nizār, whose usual *kunya* was Abū’l-Manṣūr, is not included in al-Maqrīzī’s text at this point but it is highly unlikely that he was not involved in this move since the later

⁶⁶See *siḡill* no. 6 of the collection. The Quranic passages are 61:6, where Jesus is said to have told the Jews that he brought good tidings of a messenger to come named Aḥmad, and 21:73, which says rather directly “We made them imams (*a’imma*) who lead by our order.”

⁶⁷*Itti’āz*, III, 137.

⁶⁸See, for example, *Itti’āz*, II, 306–07.

⁶⁹*Itti’āz*, II, 298. Without this account Stern obviously had trouble finding a proper year in which to locate this event. See his “Epistle,” 24, n. 4. The other citations of this fact come from much later. See Ibn Muyassar, 100 and *Itti’āz*, III, 84; but both these references are also clouded by the polemical intent of the report in question.

⁷⁰Or Abū ‘Abdallāh.

versions of the same story indicate that he was. When this incident later became a source of polemical strategy, the reports claimed that al-Mustanşir's policy was to "send the highest (in his regard) to the most important (post)".⁷¹ Those who supported the caliphate of al-Musta'li wanted to claim that the most important post is the one nearest to the imam himself. However, it makes more sense the other way around. Aḥmad was then nine years old and, in any case, is not the future al-Musta'li. Instead 'Abdallāh was surely the son that al-Mustanşir was most concerned to protect and that was why he was sent to Badr al-Jamālī. Exactly where Nizār fits in this scheme may be impossible to determine with precision.⁷²

Within five years, however, Badr had been invited to Cairo and had begun to restore order in Egypt. Nevertheless some of the sons of al-Mustanşir remained abroad. In Ascalon a wife of Abu'l-Qāsim Muḥammad gave birth to 'Abd al-Majīd (al-Ḥāfiẓ) only in 467 or 468.⁷³ At nearly the same time—467 or 468—yet another son was born to al-Mustanşir and given the name Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad. Does this second application of the name imply that the former Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad had meanwhile died? Such must be the case.⁷⁴ A portion of a *sijill* concerning the second Aḥmad's birth that was sent to the Yemen survives in Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn's *Uyūn al-akhbār*.⁷⁵ It is highly curious that this *sijill* does not appear with the others of the collection called *al-Sijillāt al-Mustanşiriyya*. However, not only does Idrīs date this *sijill* and therefore the birth of this Aḥmad to the period in question, but al-Maqrīzī and other historians are quite specific about al-Musta'li's age at death in 495/1101—he was twenty-seven years, one month and

⁷¹*sayyara al-a'lā ilā al-a'lā*.

⁷²In the later use of this fact for polemical purposes (see the *Itti'āz*, III, 84–85) 'Abdallāh is said to have gone to Acre, Abū 'Alī and Abu'l-Qāsim to Ascalon, and Nizār to Damietta. Cf. Ibn Muyassar, 100.

⁷³*Itti'āz*, III, 137.

⁷⁴Jamāl al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Zāfir, *Akhbār al-duwal al-munqaṭi'a*, ed. André Ferré (Cairo, IFAO, 1972), 77, in listing the sons of al-Mustanşir, begins with Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad *al-Asghar* which could well refer to Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad "the Younger" rather than the "youngest" (of the sons altogether).

⁷⁵The text of this *sijill* was printed by Ḥusayn Hamdani in his *al-Ṣulayhiyyūn wa'l-ḥarakat al-fāṭimiyya fi'l-yaman* (Cairo, 1955), 319–20.

29 days old.⁷⁶ There is little chance of a mistake, therefore, and it now appears even more likely that the future al-Musta'li was the youngest of al-Mustansir's sons. He was, moreover and perhaps most importantly, the only one born (and raised) under the dictatorship of Badr.

The twenty odd years of Badr al-Jamālī's wazirate, during which he assumed total control of the Fatimid government, were altogether a period of prosperity and wellbeing. The caliph, whose fortunes were nearly eclipsed immediately prior to Badr's advent, was apparently deeply appreciative of Badr's strong rule; at least that is the undeniable message in *sijill* after *sijill* sent to the Yemen over the course of these years. Badr restored the financial base of the imam's position by ensuring conditions that allowed Ismaili organizations to function and for the regular fees (*najwā* and *fiṭra*, for example) to be collected and dispatched safely to headquarters.⁷⁷ Without these dues the caliphate would surely have floundered and, even if it had survived, it would have done so as a helpless pawn in the hands of others. It is customary to disparage the role of Badr, especially in regard to the religious mission of the Fatimids as Shiite imams, but that attitude does not necessarily reflect historical reality nor the evidence that remains from his period. In addition once the Nizārī/Musta'li split occurred, the dictatorship of Badr and his son al-Afdal were blamed by the losing faction for a whole range of evils.

Nevertheless, it is also true that no era of Fatimid government is as poorly documented as the years between 466 and 487. Despite Badr's major achievements in building a unified imperial city out of Cairo and Fustat and in setting Egypt on a course that continued long after him, the sources for his years are deplorably non-existent. Four years, for example, are completely unrecorded in the surviving annals.⁷⁸ Nothing is known for certain about how Badr may have

⁷⁶*Itti'āz*, III, 27. There is, nevertheless, some disagreement about the exact year of his birth but only whether it took place in 467 or 468. It cannot have been as early as 452.

⁷⁷*al-Sijillāt al-mustansiriyya*, examples: nos. 23, 36, and 57.

⁷⁸One four year period between 473–476 lacks all documentation in the Egyptian sources and, except for a few items mentioned in surviving *sijills* from the Yemeni collection, there is simply little or no information about them. Moreover, many of the other years of Badr's reign are hardly better.

effected the Ismaili *da'wa* of which he was titular head as *dā'ī al-du'āt*.⁷⁹ What policy he might have contrived as to the terms of the eventual succession is likewise obscure. And in the end he died seven months before al-Mustanşir, leaving thereby, presumably, some leeway for the caliph to escape from whatever policy Badr might have planned to bring about.

The succession to Badr, therefore, arrived chronologically prior to that of al-Mustanşir. It was, moreover, far from easy and, although after some serious dissension, Badr's son al-Afdal gained his father's power and prerogatives, the latter's position was less than firmly secured in the beginning.⁸⁰ It is in this context that al-Mustanşir agreed to a marriage of his youngest son, Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad, to al-Afdal's sister. However, the actual motive of either the caliph or al-Afdal can only be surmised and whether or not this marriage reliably indicates the choice of this son for succession is doubtful. In any event, although a contract of marriage was written according to later (after the fact of the succession itself) documents, the union was not fully consummated prior to the death of al-Mustanşir.⁸¹ Thirty years later polemical sources gave great importance to a marriage banquet held at the time of the marriage at which the caliph supposedly seated the future al-Musta'li on his right hand and the rest of his sons on his left. The same source insists that Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad was accorded the title *walī 'ahd al-mu'minīn* on this occasion and that this clearly established his precedence over the brothers—Nizār and 'Abdallāh—who were both (at one time or another) *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn*.⁸² It should be noted, however, that the seating plan fits the purpose of the event which is a marriage of the son on the right and that both of the titles used here had been considerably debased by al-Ḥākim when he applied them to al-'Abbās b. Shu'ayb and 'Abd al-Raḥīm respectively, seemingly without consequence for the eventual succession.

Not long after, the caliph took sick with the illness that brought about his death, which occurred during first part of the night of

⁷⁹Technically Mu'ayyad fī'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī remained *dā'ī al-du'āt* until his death in 470/1077 and only thereafter did Badr assume this title.

⁸⁰On this succession see *Itti'āz*, II, 331–332.

⁸¹*Itti'āz*, III, 28. See also *Itti'āz*, III, 85 and Ibn Muyassar, 102.

⁸²*Itti'āz*, III, 85; Ibn Muyassar, 102; Stern, "Epistle," 23, 27; and *Hidāya*, 13.

Thursday, the 18th of Dhu'l-Hijja 487 (=Wednesday, December 27, 1094).⁸³ What information we have about this fateful night comes from the same polemics as cited above. However, having taken note of that fact, it is nevertheless interesting that the persons said to have been present included not only Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad, who was given a final interview with his dying father, but a sister of the aged caliph, a daughter of al-Zāhir. This sister may well have acted as *mustawda'*. What was al-Afḍal's exact role? Did he actively prevent the contact of the father with his other sons? His unwanted and unwelcome presence is naturally assumed by those parties who deny the outcome in the subsequent succession fight.

Whatever al-Afḍal's presumed role during the night, what he actually did following al-Mustansir's death is known, although the precise chronology of these events is subject to some disagreement and possible controversy. Here al-Maqrīzī reveals himself, not merely as the preserver of facts derived from now lost chronicles, but as a careful historian with a critical eye.⁸⁴ According to him, when al-Afḍal learned of al-Mustansir's death, he went with Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad to the palace and to the throne room and seated him on the caliphate throne with the regnal name al-Musta'li. Thereupon, with himself seated in the position of wazir, he summoned the other sons, namely Nizār, 'Abdallāh, and Ismā'īl. As these three—we must assume that, since these are the only sons mentioned at this point, they each had special importance—entered the room, they were immediately aware of the rank of their youngest brother as implied in the seating arrangement. Al-Afḍal announced the succession of al-Musta'li, claiming it as the final decision of the deceased imam, and he ordered the brothers to kiss the ground and pledge allegiance. All three refused and each one firmly insisted that he could not do so because their father had named him to succeed. Note particularly that al-Maqrīzī reports that there were three separate sons who each claimed the succession, not just Nizār or 'Abdallāh, and not counting Aḥmad (al-Musta'li). This is to say, that at the moment when al-Afḍal first announced the succession of al-Musta'li, three other sons held, by

⁸³Fyze, "Introduction" to *Hiḍāya*, 1.

⁸⁴The details that follow here come from the *Itti'āz*. Some portions of al-Maqrīzī's narrative reconstruction appear as well in Ibn Muyassar but not all.

their own belief, a valid right to the office of imam.⁸⁵

In the ensuing confusion, al-Afḍal was evidently caught off guard. Of the three dissenting brothers, Nizār was most adamant, strongly insisting that he possessed a perfect claim and that, in fact, he had a written document from his father clearly bestowing the imamate on himself.⁸⁶ Before anyone could stop him he rushed out from this gathering with the announced intention of retrieving the document in question.

If al-Afḍal had really planned this event as a coup in which he would install al-Mustaʿlī against the well recognized wishes of the dead caliph and his sons, al-Maqrīzī's account hardly confirms or corroborates such an interpretation. Rather it appears as if al-Afḍal was caught unprepared, quite possibly because he was naively presuming that the last minute designation of Aḥmad by al-Mustanṣir as he lay dying was in and of itself the ultimate word, and could not conceivably be countermanded by any of the other sons. But, as it was, Nizār got away without declaring his allegiance⁸⁷ and, instead of going after the promised document, fled immediately from Cairo to Alexandria where he knew he had support. The other two brothers, still holding out, went off to a near by mosque. Al-Afḍal, now alerted to his mistake, immediately dispatched his own men both to bring back Nizār (too late) and to watch over ʿAbdallāh and Ismāʿīl most carefully.

That others, as well, were not privy to any fixed or final determination in the succession is proven by yet another report given by al-Maqrīzī. As al-Afḍal began, probably the same day, to assemble his personal forces along with the elements of the palace that were beholden to him or his father or to al-Mustaʿlī, the senior *dāʿī*—that is,

⁸⁵Ironically, Abu'l-Fawāris, an Ismaili authority cited earlier, had discussed such a situation as is implied here if, in fact, this designation was truly unknown or in real doubt. He, however, was most probably thinking of the situation of the succession to Jaʿfar al-Šādiq.

⁸⁶The existence of a written designation was also used later by the supporters of Nizār as an argument on his behalf. The *Hidāya* discounts this claim, not by denying its existence, but by stating that written documents are not used by the *ahl al-bayt* in such matters.

⁸⁷Of course, the Mustaʿlī faction later insisted that he had sworn allegiance but that is doubtful. See *Ittiʿāz*, III, 11, where Nizār declares, "Any oath I would give is nullified by the [fact of] his being younger than I and [by the existence] of a document [*khatt*] written by my father that is in my possession appointing me his heir [*walī aḥdihī*]."

the highest authority in the Ismaili *da'wa*, if al-Afḍal's own nominal title of *dā'ī al-du'āt* is disregarded—proclaimed, when he learned of al-Mustanṣir's passing, 'Abdallāh the new imam, with the regnal name al-Muwaffaq.⁸⁸ Does this act indicate that the local *da'wa* organization had reason to expect that 'Abdallāh's designation would hold good? Al-Maqrīzī suggests that the *dā'īs* were in doubt among themselves, even though the particular *dā'ī* in question, by name Barakāt, who was the *Amīn al-du'āt*, chose the risky course of backing 'Abdallāh.

Soon, however, al-Afḍal put an end to the growing uncertainty. He had Barakāt arrested and eventually executed. A grand assembly was convened in short order and all were commanded to obey the new imam and caliph, al-Musta'li, which all quickly and unanimously did. Al-Afḍal orchestrated this second ceremony meticulously, taking the *bay'a* to al-Musta'li first from the *qāḍī al-quḍāt* and then moving down the ranks.⁸⁹ Finally, the two brothers, who had waited until then in the mosque under guard, were brought back, this time to face a fait accompli and this time to swear loyalty and accede to their brother's rule without evident hesitation; under the circumstances, there was little else they could have done.⁹⁰

Nizārī Claims

In the aftermath of al-Musta'li's succession and the victory of al-Afḍal in his campaign to suppress the revolt of Nizār, few signs of the complex struggle for the imamate remained other than the continuation of Nizārī Ismailism as the principal opposition. As time went on the sole concerns of the Musta'li Ismailis were Nizārī claims and vice versa. The candidacy of 'Abdallāh, about which we can discern something, and of Ismā'īl, about which we are entirely ignorant, disappeared when they both pledged to obey al-Musta'li. Understandably, then, the focus of all sources that derive from later periods

⁸⁸ *Itti'āz*, III, 13.

⁸⁹ The chief *qāḍī* was al-Mu'ayyad bi-Naṣr al-Imām 'Alī b. Nāfi' b. al-Kuḥḥāl, who was executed shortly after this incident along with the *Amīn al-du'āt* Barakāt. Does this suggest that he also was reluctant to accept al-Musta'li?

⁹⁰ al-Nuwayrī, vol. 28, 245, reports that 'Abdallāh went to Alexandria with Nizār. If he ever did so, it must have happened at a later time.

concentrate on Nizār and the outcome of his rebellion, or that of his adherents, especially during the remaining years of Fatimid rule in Egypt. While Nizār's case may well represent a valid understanding of where the succession should have gone according to al-Mustanşir's true wishes, that it was picked up by not only Nizār's sons in North African and some partisans in the Yemen but most importantly by Ḥasan b. Şabbāḥ in Iran meant that it did not die out. Instead it became, almost at once, a virulently implacable enemy of the ruling faction in Egypt and its dependencies; it set in motion armed rebellions, spread propaganda against the *da'wa* for al-Musta'ī, and soon enough let loose a network of assassins bent on revenge. Any source that reflects in any way the later stages of the controversy is bound to be tainted by this concern for or against the Nizārī cause to the exclusion of other candidates that might have existed when al-Mustanşir died. Al-Maqrīzī, whose entry on al-Musta'ī begins with the version outlined above, must have deliberately avoided this trap. In fact he interrupts his account soon enough to comment that some people observe that al-Mustanşir had already enthroned his son Nizār because he was the eldest of his sons and thus it was he who was given the position of heir apparent. Al-Maqrīzī continues thereafter with this second account, which he clearly offers as that of a certain group (*qawm*).

When al-Mustanşir's death approached, he wanted to secure the *bay'a* of the notables of the realm in favor of Nizār, but al-Afḍal resisted such a step, holding out until the caliph died. All that, as this version goes, was due to personal animosity between Nizār and al-Afḍal caused by various slights by one to the other in the past. A key moment, however, occurred when the time of pledging drew near and al-Afḍal was forced to campaign actively among the Turkish amirs against Nizār, warning of unwanted consequences for them if Nizār came to power. Al-Afḍal's intrigue apparently worked. The amirs joined him in resisting and only a certain Muḥammad b. Maşāl al-Lukkī maintained his loyalty to Nizār—and that because, reports al-Maqrīzī, Nizār had promised him the wazirate in place of al-Afḍal.

Here al-Maqrīzī resumes what must be his primary narrative of the events, beginning with the second assembly in which 'Abdallāh and Ismā'īl acceded to the rule of al-Musta'ī. He continues shortly after that with the story of Nizār's revolt in Alexandria.

In that city Nizār was well received; not only al-Lukki but the governor, Naşr al-Dawla Aftakīn al-Turkī, the Qāḍī Abū 'Abdallāh

Muḥammad b. ‘Ammār, and the inhabitants embraced his cause. Al-Afḍal was quite alarmed and immediately set out for Alexandria with troops. Nizār and Aftakīn, however, intercepted him on the outskirts of the city where the two sides fought several skirmishes that resulted in the defeat of al-Afḍal, who was thereafter in retreat toward Cairo. The Nizārī camp was able to raid the countryside at will.

This first encounter took place in Muḥarram of 488 and it was not until later that same year, following careful preparations that included winning over many of Nizār’s tribal allies with gifts and other inducements, that al-Afḍal could muster enough force to defeat Nizār and drive him back in to Alexandria, which was thereupon invested and bombarded. As the situation inside deteriorated towards the month of Dhu’l-Qa‘da (i.e., some eleven months after the death of al-Mustanṣir), Ibn Maṣāl al-Lukkī fled, carrying away his not inconsiderable fortune which had previously supported the rebels.⁹¹ Aftakīn and Nizār, fearing for the welfare of those around them, sought a guarantee of safety. It was granted but both leaders were arrested and sent to Cairo. There, according to al-Maqrīzī, who again reports in the voice of a third party, “he surrendered Nizār to a member of the palace entourage of al-Musta‘lī and the latter built around him walls and [in there] he died.”⁹² Another account, also given by al-Maqrīzī, states that Nizār was killed in Alexandria but al-Maqrīzī says that the first version is much more likely.

These details seem relevant here because a major question in the case of the Nizārī claim is to what extent a sizable segment of the Ismailī community expected his succession and how certain they were of it. One answer is that, despite later attempts to attribute Nizār’s motives in revolting solely to hatred of al-Afḍal, there are still undeniable signs of a Nizārī faction that arose too quickly to be merely a manifestation of that hatred. A prime example is the adherence of Ḥasan b. al-Ṣabbāḥ and the Persian *da’wa* to Nizār. Al-Maqrīzī notes in his comments on the death of Nizār that the Ismā‘īlis of both Persia and Syria accepted his imamate and claimed that al-Mustanṣir had, in fact, made the designation in his favor. Al-Mustanṣir had, after

⁹¹Ibn Maṣāl, in fact, saved himself; and his son, Abu’l-Faṭḥ Sālim, later became the wazīr at the end of al-Ḥāfiẓ’s reign and the beginning of that of al-Ẓāfir.

⁹²*Ittī‘āz*, III, 14.

all, told Ḥasan b. al-Ṣabbāḥ that Nizār would be his successor.⁹³

There is a further curious bit of information. Al-Maqrīzī tells a story about al-Afḍal's mother who, while her son was away fighting the forces of Nizār, was in the habit of circulating about Cairo inquiring in disguise for signs of loyalty or lack thereof to her son. Two examples are given in this story of persons—one “a fanatic Ismaili” (*kāna Ismāʿīliyyan mutaghāliyan*) and the other “a Nizārī” (*kāna nizārīyyan*)—who cursed al-Afḍal and praised his opponent.⁹⁴ It is possible to interpret this incident as merely being anti-al-Afḍal but it appears equally likely to indicate serious support for Nizār among the Ismaili population of Cairo.

Whatever the actual feelings of Egyptian Ismailis, Nizār's capture brought an end outwardly to the resistance in that country. Several members of the caliphal family, however, fled to the far West, among them specifically three of Nizār's brothers, Muḥammad, Ismāʿīl, and Ṭāhir, and a son of his named al-Ḥusayn.⁹⁵ It appears probable, moreover, that this Ismāʿīl is the same as the brother who was forced to recognize al-Mustaʿlī at the second assembly arranged by al-Afḍal.⁹⁶

Thus a small coterie of dissidents and Nizārī supporters gathered somewhere in the West (the Maghrib) waiting for an opportunity to reassert their claim(s) to the imamate. In 526 a son of Nizār, Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn, the one who had fled Egypt in 488, now ended his concealment by gathering a sizable force and setting out for Egypt. The ruler of that time, al-Ḥāfiẓ, managed to subvert the leaders of al-Ḥusayn's army and when it arrived within reach, had him arrested and killed, whereupon his troops disbanded.⁹⁷

The pitiful end of this al-Ḥusayn was, however, not the final attempt of these Western Nizārīs to make good on their claim to the imamate. In 543 another army appeared from out of the Maghrib led this time by a man who, according to al-Maqrīzī's entry, merely claimed to be a son of Nizār. His fate at the hands of al-Ḥāfiẓ, after an early success, was almost exactly that of al-Ḥusayn in the earlier

⁹³ Admitted as much by al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāz*, III, 15.

⁹⁴ *Ittiʿāz*, III, 15–16.

⁹⁵ *Ittiʿāz*, III, 15.

⁹⁶ The Muḥammad mentioned here as having fled to the West may be Abu'l-Qāsim Muḥammad, the father of the future al-Ḥāfiẓ.

⁹⁷ *Ittiʿāz*, III, 147.

incident.⁹⁸ Yet again in 556 (according to al-Maqrīzī) or 557 (according to others), during the reign of al-ʿĀḍid, Muḥammad, the son of Ḥusayn, again approached Egypt from the West and made an appeal for support. He put together a large group of followers, assumed the name al-Mustanṣir, and resolved to move to take Cairo. Ibn Ruzzīk, the wazir, however, easily duped him into thinking that he would personally raise the *daʿwa* in his favor and, by such false promises of favor, lured Muḥammad to his tent where he was arrested. Thereafter he was transported to Cairo and killed.⁹⁹

There is yet another bit of evidence about Nizārī pretenders. When the great wazir al-Maʾmūn fell from grace, one crime charged against him was having sent instructions to a loyal amir in the Yemen, Najīb al-Dawla, (of having sent the amir himself to Yemen) to strike coins there in the name of al-Imam al-Mukhtār Muḥammad b. Nizār.¹⁰⁰ This information in al-Maqrīzī's history does not say more about this Muḥammad but presumably he is yet another of Nizār's sons. The date of this event is too early for him to be the grandson just mentioned. Both Muḥammad and al-Ḥusayn would have been contemporary pretenders, but possibly one operating from the Maghrib and the other from the Yemen (or somewhere else in the East).

The Counterpolemic of the Mustaʿlīs

None of the various attempts to assert Nizārī legitimacy compare, of course, with the effort of Ḥasan b. Ṣabbāḥ from his headquarters in Alamut. As early as 515 agents acting on behalf of the eastern Nizārīs infiltrated Egypt and murdered al-Afḍal. Evidently the partisans of this branch in the recent schism remained fairly numerous in the capital and, even with the increased awareness of the threat they posed to al-Āmir—son and successor of al-Mustaʿlī—and to his new wazir, al-Maʾmūn, that lead directly to heightened security, the

⁹⁸See *Ittiʿāz*, III, 186, which likely follows Ibn al-Muyassar (p. 139). There is another account in Ibn al-Qalānisi, 302. The similarity of the two cases of 526 and 543 might be mistaken as one and the same but al-Maqrīzī reports them separately.

⁹⁹*Ittiʿāz*, III, 246.

¹⁰⁰*Ittiʿāz*, III, 110.

Cairene establishment grew extremely apprehensive from the top down. Al-Ma'mūn undertook unprecedented measures to prevent further infiltration and to uncover any and all latent or hidden sympathy for Nizār or those upholding his claim to the imamate (and that of his successors).

The details of the new anti-Nizārī security arrangements that began in 516 have been adequately reviewed by Stern in the first of the two articles cited at the beginning of this paper. The principal event of that year for our purposes was an assembly of the court—mainly, but not exclusively, of Ismaili officials and royal family members—to hear arguments against the propaganda of the Nizārīs and to witness the public testimony of Nizār's own full sister denying all claims on his behalf and supporting the final designation of al-Musta'ī as the true imam. Based in part on this event, al-Ṣayrafī the chief spokesperson of the government issued the now famous *al-Hidāya al-Āmiriyya* (or at least a version of it), which is a prime document in the defense of al-Musta'ī's (and, accordingly, al-Āmir's) case for succession. There are thus two slightly different pieces of evidence involved, a record of this assembly itself and the *Hidāya*, both highly partisan and tendentious, and neither therefore without suspicion of polemical intent. Still this episode is instructive and must be looked at carefully.

Stern has, however, done most of what can be done with this data. He did not have al-Maqrīzī's version, it is true, but though there are a few slight additions and changes in the material of the *Itti'āz*, it contains much of the same information and, in at least one case, quotes Stern's main source, Ibn Muyassar, outright. One notable change is in al-Maqrīzī's re-ordering of the story and placing it in the entry for 516 instead of 518. Ibn Muyassar had included his account of the same event with his notice of the death of Ḥasan b. Ṣabbāḥ in 518.

Even with Stern's achievement, there are a few comments that seem necessary. On the occasion of the meeting to discuss the evidence against Nizār, three arguments were mentioned. The first concerned the rank of the "Heir Designate of the Believers" (*walī 'ahd al-mu'minīn*) versus "Heir Designate of the Muslims" (*walī 'ahd al-muslimīn*). Claiming that the former is superior to the latter, al-Musta'ī's followers thought his right to the imamate fully given when, by their report, he was granted this designation upon contracting his marriage to al-Afḍal's sister. Significantly, although much

was made of the case of al-Ḥākim and his designation of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm as *walī ‘ahd al-muslimīn*, both in the public assembly and in the *Hidāya* (about which more below), no where do the partisans remember that al-‘Abbās b. Shu‘ayb was given the title *walī ‘ahd al-mu‘minīn* by the same al-Ḥākim. A second argument about coinage is hardly worth a comment except that it indicates the Nizārī camp’s similar lack of historical knowledge.¹⁰¹ Either that or a similar careless resort to unfounded polemics. A further error appears in the claim that when forced to send his sons away from Cairo for safety, al-Mustanṣir kept the future al-Musta‘lī with him. Al-Maqrīzī repeats the argument where it occurs in his sources for the assembly in question, although he rightly entered the appropriate information much earlier in his account of the year 461 where it originally belonged. He does not indicate, however, in either place that the Abu’l-Qāsim Aḥmad mentioned as staying in Cairo in 461 cannot be the same as the one who succeeded as al-Musta‘lī.

The ultimate purpose of this assembly was to have Nizār’s own full sister denounce him and his followers, which she did, quite possibly under threat of her life and that of her sons. Among the points she is said to have made, several are interesting. First she confirms the rivalry between Nizār and ‘Abdallāh (specifically in her case between their mothers). Second she provides a possibly important account of the role of al-Mustanṣir’s own sister, the daughter of al-Ẓāhir, in the transfer of the designation. She remembered that the sister, her aunt, was called in the night of al-Mustanṣir’s death and given a private audience with the imam. Later when asked who held the right of succession, she reported, “It is a trust that he charged me to execute and he instructed me that the caliph (*khalīfa*) following him is to be his son Abu’l-Qāsim Aḥmad.”¹⁰² Whether this report, coming as it does years after the fact and only under the circumstances mentioned, is to be trusted, it does fit well with the concept of a *mustawda‘* used to convey the *naṣṣ* at the final moment of the previous imam’s natural life.

The *Hidāya*, in fact, makes most of the argument that the only

¹⁰¹ Stern, “Succession,” 23–24. The argument concerns a deliberate attempt to claim that the name Nizār on an older Fatimid coin is that of the Nizār here whereas, in fact, it referred to al-‘Azīz whose name also happened to be Nizār.

¹⁰² *Itti‘āz*, 86–87; quoted from Ibn Muyassar.

valid designation will occur at the time of death, *fī waqt inḡṣālihi wa daqīqat intiḡālihi* (“at the time of his passing and the moment of his death”).¹⁰³ Such a claim appears far more sound on the surface than any other since the main Nizārī argument relies simply on an earlier designation of Nizār, which a deathbed designation would nullify. The *Hidāya* also seeks to use the designation of ‘Abdallāh against Nizār in that it weakens just this claim of earlier designation. According to the *Hidāya*, ‘Abdallāh was nominated *walī ‘ahd al-muslimīn* later than Nizār and thus replaced him, as in fact, by this line of argument, did Abu’l-Qāsim Aḡmad eventual replace them both. What gives Nizār precedence over ‘Abdallāh? it asks. But the *Hidāya* strangely insists that the designation of either Nizār or ‘Abdallāh served only to calm the fears of al-Mustanṣir’s anxious, weak-minded followers who needed some assurance that a heir was available, although all along the imam knew that a son would be born later who would become the true imam. The document then cites the case of al-Ḥākim, who, it says, named ‘Abd al-Raḡīm his successor under similar circumstances since at the time he had no son. Again the facts of history are distorted: al-Ḥākim’s sons were widely recognized and the anomalous promotion of ‘Abd al-Raḡīm over his own son was perfectly well understood at the time.

Other curiosities in the *Hidāya* appear less interesting unless we imagine the opposing argument that must lie behind them. One is a denial that a written document appointing Nizār as successor can have any validity. The *ahl al-bayt*, says the *Hidāya*, do not employ writing in their activities and transactions. Another assertion is that, if the designation of Ismā‘īl b. Ja‘far was sound, as being an “*Ismā‘īlī*” automatically implies, then the designation of Nizār must be correct as well. These two points, although quickly rejected by the *Hidāya*, must have formed a part of the Nizārī arsenal of polemical counter-argument.

It is odd that the *Hidāya*, as well as the public assembly just discussed, mix weak with strong arguments and thereby dilute the best claim for al-Āmir’s father accordingly, as if the proponents of this position expected few to recognize the truth. Perhaps by the time of these events, almost twenty years after the succession in question, careful knowledgeable debate no longer mattered since the sides had

¹⁰³*Hidāya*, 6. Stern notes a similar phrasing in a half dozen places throughout the treatise. See p. 29 of his article.

long been separated by bitter antagonism and hostility.

An Unresolved Succession: The Death of al-Āmir

Only eight years later, moreover, the Nizārīs managed to assassinate al-Āmir himself. Fear of exactly that eventuality apparently began to prey upon the caliph's mind and there is some evidence that he acted in a way and said things that might indicate psychotic depression engendered by apprehensive of a violent death.¹⁰⁴ Still his own succession was finally assured apparently by the birth in the third month of 524 of a son who was proudly proclaimed as heir with the name Abu'l-Qāsim al-Ṭayyib. Al-Āmir had been caliph approximately twenty-nine of his thirty-four years and, his having produced no male child until then, must have strained his credibility as the proper imam considerably, especially in view of constant Nizārī propaganda in opposition to this very claim. It would seem from the single Egyptian source we possess that all efforts were made to advertise the birth of al-Ṭayyib,¹⁰⁵ but that is, in itself, not much different than in numerous previous cases for other rulers and their male off-spring in this dynasty. The *siḡills*, extant for al-Mustanṣir, for example, indicate a similar rejoicing and display of pride at each birth of a son.¹⁰⁶ Yet the sons so mentioned did not necessarily succeed, nor were they considered leading candidates. However, surely as the only son of al-Āmir, al-Ṭayyib was fully presumed to have the appropriate designation, at least for the moment. The news was, as usual, conveyed to the Yemen and there accepted as a blessed acknowledgment of the

¹⁰⁴His close associates claimed that just prior to his death he said in reference to himself, *al-maskīn al-maqtūl bi-l-sikkīn* ("the poor fellow who will be killed by a dagger"). See *Itti'āz*, III, 137, and the full analysis of this same story that Stern ("Succession," 202–03) assembled from other sources. Note as a possible additional confirmation of the imam's mental state, the report Stern relates from Yemeni Ṭayyibī sources (pp. 199 and "Appendix I," 232–33) about how the *dā'īs* in regular attendance on al-Āmir found his remarks most often unintelligible.

¹⁰⁵Stern first brought this report to public attention in modern times. It comes to us from Ibn Muyassar and also appears in al-Maqrīzī's *Itti'āz* although it is likely only one and the same account (which would be the lost chronicle of Ibn al-Muḥannak).

¹⁰⁶For an example of the opposite, i.e., elaborate mourning at the death of a son (in this case the three year old son of al-Zāhir), see al-Musabbiḥī, 104–105.

new imam to be.¹⁰⁷

Eight months later on the 4th of Dhu'l-Qa'da, al-Āmir was murdered and his reign brought unexpectedly to a sudden end.¹⁰⁸ In the confusion that followed, a party of the palace led by Buzghash and Hizār al-Mulūk,¹⁰⁹ two intimate servants of the deceased, announced a bizarre final declaration of the previous imam in which he had, in effect, designated as the new imam a fetus then carried by one of his concubines.¹¹⁰ He had also appointed his cousin 'Abd al-Majīd as regent in the interim between his death, of which he possessed foreknowledge, and the infant's full succession.¹¹¹ 'Abd al-Majīd, whether in on this scheme or genuinely believing it, accepted and then proceeded to implement al-Āmir's wishes. Al-Ṭayyib was ignored as if he was no longer alive or had ceased to be designated in view of the new arrangement.

These few facts are only the opening scenes of a complex drama that played out swiftly with scarcely enough space between major events for either the historians closer to them or for us to keep a proper perspective. The end result, however, left the Fatimid imamate divided once again, this time between those who never wavered in their support of the mysterious child, al-Ṭayyib, and those who acquiesced in the dubious and after the fact claims of this same 'Abd al-Majīd who later announced that he—and not either al-Ṭayyib or the

¹⁰⁷The *sijill* announcing this fact is preserved in the history of Najm al-Dīn 'Umāra, *Yaman: Its Early Medieval History*, ed. and trans. H. C. Kay (London, 1892), Arabic text, 100–102; trans., 135–36. Although 'Umāra states unequivocally that al-Āmir had given the *naṣṣ* in favor of al-Ṭayyib (*bi-naṣṣ 'alayhi bi-l-imāma*) according to this *sijill*, the text of the proclamation itself is far less explicit about any such a “designation.”

¹⁰⁸One bit of information that several writers thought remarkable was that al-Āmir was the tenth of the Fatimid caliphs and also the tenth in direct lineage succession—a fact they found unusual. See the *Itti'āz*, III, 133.

¹⁰⁹There seems to be no exact consensus on the spelling of these two names. Stern used Hazārmard and Bargash (“Succession,” 202–04; *Fatimid Decrees* [London, Faber and Faber, 1964], 42); Sanders, 84, Buzghash and Hizār al-Mulūk. In the *Itti'āz*, III, 137, for example, the latter's name is Hizār al-Mulūk Jawāmard, styled also al-Afḍal.

¹¹⁰I am not quite sure of the woman's exact status. Al-Maqrīzī refers to her as *al-jiha al-fulāniyya* (*Itti'āz*, III, 137). Ibn Muyassar calls her *nisā' al-Āmir*. For complete citations to other sources for this incident, see A. F. Sayyid's notes to his edition of Ibn Muyassar, 113, n. 288. See also *Itti'āz*, III, 152, for one account providing an extension to the story of both mother and her male child.

¹¹¹Said to have, in part, occurred to al-Āmir in a dream.

unconfirmed fetus of the concubine—was the imam and caliph al-Ḥāfiẓ.

Stern, in the second of this two articles, was the first to begin to make sense of the Ṭayyibī/Ḥāfiẓī split and, most importantly, to gather the evidence from various sources for, first, the details of the transition from al-Āmir to al-Ḥāfiẓ, second, the later Ḥāfiẓī explanation of how ‘Abd al-Majīd could receive the imamate from his cousin, and, third, what happened to the Ismaili *da’wa* in the Yemen as a direct result of these events in Cairo. Since his work the text of al-Maqrīzī’s *Itti’āz* has allowed some further clarification though the whole remains, as it probably always will, murky at best.¹¹²

Oddly, the various proponents of a new rule against that of al-Ṭayyib needed only to prove that the child was dead, which they apparently could not do. The main portion of the Ismailis in the Yemen accepted the last formal designation that they had received as fixed and final, a true *naṣṣ*, conclusively confirmed by the imam’s own subsequent death. They noted as well that al-Ṭayyib was the twenty-first imam, the conclusion of three sets of seven, and therefore well situated for a new period of occultation.¹¹³ In their view, al-Ṭayyib had

¹¹² As the likely sequence it seems probably that, although al-Ṭayyib did indeed exist, he did not survive. When therefore al-Āmir died suddenly, no heir could be found. Buzghash and Hizār al-Mulūk made the best of a bad situation knowing full well that in Shī’a dogma an imam must be present and that a line without issue is itself invalid. The story of a pregnant consort of al-Āmir was a means of buying time. That is shown by al-Ḥāfiẓ’s immediate assumption of regnal titles even though pretending to be only a regent. The revolt of Kutayfāt was an unanticipated calamity but one that arose from personal motives in him and in the army and not religious or dynastic interests. However, having set aside al-Ḥāfiẓ and assumed power, Kutayfāt attempted to locate another properly qualified Fatimid which to him meant a son of al-Āmir. A search of the palace turned up no heir; no sons could be found, neither al-Ṭayyib nor the issue of the pregnant female. At that point he declared in favor of the Awaited Imam, now aiming his propaganda and his own claim of legitimacy at the Twelver Shī’a of whom there seemed to have been a sufficient number in Egypt at that time. Without true understanding of his new policy, however, he began to reject from public activities not only Ismaili formulae and rites but also general Shiite usage as in the call to prayer. This clumsiness in religious policy coupled with his antagonizing of the palace guard eventual brought his down fall and the restoration of al-Ḥāfiẓ, who thereafter moved to claim the imamate for himself in his own right.

¹¹³ On the reaction of the Yemeni *da’wa* and the subsequent development of Ṭayyibī doctrine, see Stern’s study. Note especially p. 200 for the declaration about al-Ṭayyib as the seventh.

gone into hiding and out of ordinary contact with his followers. Nevertheless the imamate continued and even now there is an imam in al-Ṭayyib's line although, understandably, the details of further successions are unknown.

By contrast, the survival of the Cairo imamate was then and is now subject to external scrutiny and the story of how it continued is of some interest. Again it was Stern who first provided a scholarly analysis of the issues. More recently Paula Sanders has carefully reviewed the evidence and especially the arguments put forth in Ḥāfiẓī propaganda.

A preliminary question, even here, goes back to the problem of the child al-Ṭayyib. When al-Āmir was killed, did any of those who assumed command ever claim to act on his behalf? If not why not?¹¹⁴ The story that al-Āmir himself revoked the *naṣṣ* in favor of an unborn son is on the surface crazy and hardly credible, unless it is true.¹¹⁵ What makes a judgment impossible is that within hours of the declaration of 'Abd al-Majīd as regent, but more particularly of Hizār al-Mulūk as his wazir, the troops announced their preference for Abu 'Alī, son of al-Afḍal, known as Kutayfāt, as wazir instead. Al-Maqrīzī, who provides a full description of these events, says that Buzghash and Hizār al-Mulūk went to 'Abd al-Majīd and told him of the imam's last instructions and that the formal ceremony installing him as the regent and Hizār al-Mulūk as his wazir took place the same day the 4th, a Tuesday. Although al-Maqrīzī reports that 'Abd al-Majīd was merely the regent, he nevertheless reports that he used the throne name al-Ḥāfiẓ li-dīn Allāh even at this time.¹¹⁶ The revolt on behalf of

¹¹⁴It is Ibn Muyassar (p. 113) who reports quite explicitly that al-Ḥāfiẓ hid (or ignored) the matter of al-Ṭayyib. Al-Maqrīzī chose not to include this fact in his version. That al-Ḥāfiẓ ever acted on behalf of al-Ṭayyib instead of the unborn child, as claimed in Ṭayyibī doctrine which may have been official in the Yemen commencing with news of the murder of al-Āmir, seems unlikely to have been the case in Egypt. See Stern, "Succession," 203, n. 1. Cf. 204, n. 2. This view need not deny that some Ismailis in Cairo continued also to remain loyal to al-Ṭayyib like their associates in the Yemen.

¹¹⁵That the imamate might devolve upon a fetus as yet unborn seems to have been quite acceptable in Ismaili theory. See Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *al-Majālis*, 521, for the argument that age is of no account in the succession, and Abu'l-Fawāris, 34–36, about the more extreme case of the unborn child.

¹¹⁶Al-Maqrīzī (*Itti'āz*, III, 137) says that he was installed as *kafīl* (guardian or regent) but with the regnal title. Ibn Muyassar (p. 113) reports that the people gave a

Kutayfāt commenced almost immediately and soon resulted in the deposition of Hizār al-Mulūk, who was thereafter murdered in secret, and the elevation of Kutayfāt on the following day (Wednesday the 5th). Kutayfāt, whose own motivation included revenge against the Fatimids for the killing of his brothers and the confiscation of his father's and grandfather's property, quickly turned on al-Ḥāfiẓ and put him in prison. One source we have for this says it took place on Thursday the 16th but that appears, at least in al-Maqrīzī's account, to be a mistake for Thursday the 6th—in other words, the day after Kutayfāt's elevation.¹¹⁷ None of these critical steps, therefore, lasted more than a day each; al-Ḥāfiẓ's first stay in power was no more than two days.¹¹⁸

bay'a to the amir 'Abd al-Majīd as *walī 'ahd* until the exact condition of the woman (wife, *nīsā*) of al-Āmir—i.e., whether she carried a male child or not—was known.

¹¹⁷Notice Stern's problem with the dating here ("Succession," 204, n. 1). See, in addition, the comments of A. F. Sayyid in n. 390, p. 113 of his edition of Ibn Muyassar. Our sources for the sequence of dates from the assassination of al-Āmir to Kutayfāt's proclamation of Twelver Shiism do not agree at all. Ibn Muyassar reports that Kutayfāt was elevated on "Monday (others say Thursday) the 16th of Dhu'l-Qa'da. Then he ordered the arrest of Abu'l-Maymun [i.e., 'Abd al-Majīd] on the morning after his *bay'a* and instituted the *da'wa* for the Awaited Imam." Ibn Zāfir, 94, has a similar entry, which, however, seems more clearly to make this *bay'a* that of the army to Kutayfāt. Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, ed. M. M. Amīn and M. H. M. Aḥmad, vol. 28 (Cairo, 1992), 296, provides yet another version of what is probably the same entry. He reports that Kutayfāt was appointed on Thursday the 6th. Ibn Muyassar's source (Ibn al-Muḥannak?) and that of al-Maqrīzī—also probably the same source—must have contained the faulty date "16th" rather than "6th." However, the 6th was a Thursday according to al-Maqrīzī's information. The phrase "morning after his *bay'a*" must also indicate the day immediately subsequent to his appointment as wazir on the 5th, which al-Maqrīzī's source indicates was a Wednesday. The day al-Āmir was murdered is given as the 4th, a Tuesday. Except for this mistake, which can now be corrected to read the "6th", al-Maqrīzī's account appears to be the most careful and accurate. But two alternate readings might be constructed from other sources, which state that al-Āmir was killed on Tuesday the 2nd. If so then the 16th is also a Tuesday and might well be the correct day on which Kutayfāt instigated the *da'wa* for the Twelfth Imam. Yet another possibility is that al-Āmir was killed on Tuesday the 14th as claimed in yet one more source. I am more inclined to accept al-Maqrīzī's dates with an allowance that Kutayfāt's arrest of al-Ḥāfiẓ occurred on the 6th but his shift canceling the Ismaili *da'wa* came later on the 16th, which may help explain some of the problems in his and the other accounts.

¹¹⁸Although it seems likely that, at first, Kutayfāt preserved the formality that he was merely the wazir of al-Ḥāfiẓ, who was the *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn*, even while the latter was actually under arrest.

Among the questions left unanswered is the exact status of ‘Abd al-Majīd according to the proclamation of the initial public announcements. Why, for example, did he assume a throne name, viz al-Ḥāfiẓ li-dīn Allāh, if he was only regent?¹¹⁹ Or is it likely that he understood himself as *mustawdaʿ* for the imamate? If so was it conceived as a substitute imamate, perhaps, and thus quite different in significance than the earlier notion of *mustawdaʿ* (as in the case of Ustādh Jawdhar)? The seating of al-Ḥāfiẓ implied his role as caliph, as did his appointment of a wazir. These matters then raise the question of whether Kutayfāt ever acted as wazir for al-Ḥāfiẓ and, if so, for how long?¹²⁰ Also, did Kutayfāt at any time attempt to locate a child of al-Āmir (al-Ṭayyib or the fetus to be born?) in order to perpetuate the Fatimid imamate? Some evidence points in this direction. Whatever the truth of these matters, however, Kutayfāt ultimately simply abolished the *daʿwa* of the Fatimids and substituted that of the Hidden Imam of the Twelver Shīʿa, which in effect meant a total alteration of the principle on which this government was based.¹²¹ About this there can be little doubt. Al-Maqrīzī, among others, preserves the public prayer that Kutayfāt instituted for himself, and examples of his coinage naming the Awaited Imam (*al-imām al-muntaẓar*) exist.¹²² Most indicative,

¹¹⁹The *Ittiʿāz*, III, 137, says: *fa jalasa al-madhkūr [ʿAbd al-Majīd] kafīlan*, i.e., as “regent.” The term *kafīl* does mean regent but the title *walī ʾahd al-muslimīn* does so only remotely. In the present context the latter, moreover, could hardly be taken in the sense of regent rather than “Heir Presumptive (or Designate).” Stern in his *Fatimid Decrees* (p. 44 and elsewhere) equates *walī ʾahd al-muslimīn* in the *sijill* he analyzes with “regent,” as if there is nothing strange about this usage. Of course, the concept of “regent” instead of “heir” appears to fit the case of al-Ḥāfiẓ in 524, but the document from Sinai proves that al-Ḥāfiẓ called himself *walī ʾahd al-muslimīn* from the first moments of his succession and that fact may well be significant. The same document also uses the term *kafīl* in reference to Kutayfāt (he is *kafīl quḍāt al-muslimīn*).

¹²⁰That he did was first established tentatively by Stern (“Succession,” 204) and then confirmed by him on the basis of the *sijill* mentioned previously that was issued by Kutayfāt to the monks of Sinai in Dhuʾl-Qaʿda of 524. See his *Fatimid Decrees* (document no. 3), 35–45, particularly his comments on p. 43.

¹²¹*Ittiʿāz*, III, 140–41.

¹²²Lists and details were given by Stern, “Succession,” 205–06; *Fatimid Decrees*, 43–44; and A. F. Sayyid, *Taʾrīkh al-madhāhib al-dīniya fī bilād al-yaman*, 160–65. Ibn Zāfir, 94, gives the protocol for the public invocation (*khuṭba*) following the introduction of the Twelver Shiʿite *madhhab* (*madhhab al-ithnā ʾashariyya*). Stern, “Succession,” 206, n. 1, provides additional information, but note, contrary to Stern, his textual sources were right about Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar.

however, is information that Kutayfāt eliminated all references to Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq by which he obviously intended to deny the very foundation of the Ismaili imamate. Still it is reasonable to suppose that he took this drastic measure only after ascertaining that no legitimate Fatimid successor remained because the last true imam had died without designating an heir. A last step was to remove the name of al-Ḥāfiẓ from the Friday *khutba*. The Fatimid line was thus closed and its very propriety was rendered suspect as a result.

Kutayfāt's triumph, however, was itself short lived. In his zeal to restore the rights of his family, he bore down hard on vested interests among the palace guards, who finally found the means to assassinate him after a lapse of little more than a year. Al-Maqrīzī adds to this a note that the final turning point was Kutayfāt's canceling use of the Shiite formula "Come to the best of works; Muḥammad and ʿAlī are the best of men" in the call to prayer. These measures along with elimination of the names of Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar and al-Ḥāfiẓ, reports al-Maqrīzī, finally caused the revolt against him.

At that point there was no hope of finding a direct heir of al-ʿĀmir; al-Ṭayyib had vanished and the unborn child apparently was not a male (or did not and had never existed). The loyal palace contingent resorted to the imprisoned al-Ḥāfiẓ, who was brought back once again as "regent" or "heir apparent" (*walī ʿahd al-muslimīn*), the latter title appearing on coins from 526, the year of his liberation. That al-Ḥāfiẓ could be regent only and yet *walī ʿahd* is itself strange. Why was he the "heir" from the beginning if he could merely claim to be a regent acting for the true heir? Does this title indicate that another plan was in the works?

The situation of al-Ḥāfiẓ being nothing more than regent, whatever his title, could not last, however, unless, like the Yemeni *daʿwa*, Egypt might adopt the imamate of the hidden al-Ṭayyib. An imam must exist by Shīʿa dogma. The solution in Cairo was to proclaim al-Ḥāfiẓ imam in the true sense and to arrange a proper "explanation" of how such a turn of events could have happened. This eventuality may have been intended from the first; its delay was due to the coup of Kutayfāt. In 526 finally a second ceremony of allegiance (*bayʿa*) was held and thereafter al-Ḥāfiẓ ruled as imam.¹²³

¹²³ *Ittīʿāz*, III, 146. Note specifically that al-Maqrīzī calls it a "second *bayʿa*."

Ḥāfiẓī Pretensions and the End of the Dynasty

One major point in al-Ḥāfiẓ's favor all along was his seniority in the ruling family.¹²⁴ Born in Ascalon in 467 while his father, Abu'l-Qāsim Muḥammad b. al-Mustanṣir, was staying there awaiting the restoration of order in Egypt, he was 58 or 59 in 526—the year of his own restoration—and older, we are told, than any of his surviving uncles. But seniority, like primogeniture, was never an essential element in Ismaili succession and could not by itself confer a right to the imamate. Despite his lack of a proper claim, however, al-Ḥāfiẓ and his supporters announced a new policy and proclaimed him imam. He rode in caliphal garb and issued a formal *sijill* in which his status was explained as, in fact, quite properly foreseen by his cousin al-Āmir, who had designated him as his successor all along.

This *sijill*, or at least the version that has come down to us, is relatively simple and straightforward in comparison to the *Ḥidāya*, even if, like the latter, it is based on a fanciful readjustment of historical reality.¹²⁵ The Ḥāfiẓī party knew that they had to rely on a cousin-to-cousin transition of the imamate. Muḥammad's designation of 'Alī was, of course, the main prototype, but the clever propagandists also noted that al-Ḥākim had designated his cousin, 'Abd al-Raḥīm. Surely there was in these cases material from which to work. It is curious that having settled on 'Alī's case, the writers of the *sijill* insisted, in addition, that it proved the validity of selecting a cousin over an uncle. Perhaps, the 'Abbasid claim of succession by the uncle prompted this argument.¹²⁶ If not, was there, in 526, yet another son of al-Mustanṣir who was still living and who might have been a candidate?¹²⁷ Or were they thinking of Nizār?

The story of al-Ḥākim's designation of 'Abd al-Raḥīm is here

¹²⁴Explicitly noted by al-Maqrīzī, *Ittī'āz*, III, 137.

¹²⁵The text of the *sijill* is preserved in Abu'l-'Abbās Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā'*, IX, 291–297. The most informative analysis of Ḥāfiẓī purposes and propaganda, particularly of this *sijill* and the events surrounding it, is the study by Sanders cited earlier.

¹²⁶The Abbasids, once in power, argued that their legitimacy derived from 'Abbās, the only surviving uncle, and hence chief legal heir, of the prophet. 'Abbās's rights were thus easily greater than those of 'Alī, a cousin. See further Tyan, I, 286–315.

¹²⁷Al-Maqrīzī in his *Ittī'āz* (III, 179) mentions a son of al-Mustanṣir called Abu'l-Ḥusayn—an uncle therefore of al-Ḥāfiẓ—who attempted a coup in 539.

twisted to predict a future event. As al-Ḥākim had a son (the future al-Ẓāhir), his appointment of ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, a cousin, had no purpose when it happened long ago. But, as the actions of imams bear hidden, often inscrutable meanings, al-Ḥākim’s true intention, as it is now clear, was not other than to signify the future transfer of the imamate from cousin to cousin in the event of an imam having no male issue. Just as Muḥammad had no male heir, so, too, al-Āmir; and both, Abū ‘Alī Maṣṣūr al-Ḥākim bi-amr Allāh and Abū ‘Alī Maṣṣūr al-Āmir bi-aḥkam Allāh, had almost identical names to prove the connection. A further claim was that al-Mustaṣṣir had, in fact, designated al-Ḥāfiẓ’s father the *walī ‘ahd al-muslimīn*, as had al-Ḥākim so named ‘Abd al-Raḥīm. The trouble with this fact is that al-Mustaṣṣir had several sons each of whom used the *kunya* Abu’l-Qāsim, among them al-Ḥāfiẓ’s father, Muḥammad, and the two sons named Aḥmad. We cannot therefore verify even if the father was ever accorded the title *walī ‘ahd al-muslimīn*. Significantly, he is not included anywhere in the earlier polemical rejection of this rank: for example, in the *Hidāya*, which mentions both Nizār and ‘Abdallāh as *walī ‘ahd al-muslimīn* but not Muḥammad. All of these pro-Ḥāfiẓ claims, weak as they are, constitute, in the eyes of the Egyptian Fatimids, the *naṣṣ* for al-Ḥāfiẓ, and it was on this basis that the imamate continued for the next four reigns.

At this point in the progress of Fatimid rule, the flimsiness of its religious claim must have become obvious to all but the most devoted.¹²⁸ The falling away of, first, the Nizārīs and then the Ṭayyibīs, left behind only a fraction of the original Ismaili sentiment in Egypt. But it is wise not to allot too great an importance to the disaffection of Iran, Syria, and Yemen for the near term. The Fatimids never were leaders in much of the territory they ruled in the absolute Shiite sense except for a small minority of the population, which we can only discern with difficulty and most often cannot discuss accurately because we do not know who and how many were actually Ismaili. A greater number simply accepted the Fatimids on a less demanding basis. Many joined the government in Egypt without worrying about

¹²⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, for example, states directly in his obituary for al-Ḥāfiẓ that he was raised to power without a designation (*fa innahu waliya bi-ghayri ‘ahdīn*), *Itti‘āz*, III, 190. Despite Ḥāfiẓī propaganda, few accepted the arguments in the *siyill* of 526, especially those concerning prior designation.

the fine points of designation and infallibility. Nevertheless, it is equally wrong to dismiss the religious claim altogether. As both Stern and Sanders¹²⁹ show, the proclamation of al-Ḥāfiẓ in 526 aimed to establish legitimacy on a Shiite and Ismaili footing and to recapture as much religious as political authority as possible.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ and the later Egyptian Ismailis certainly attempted to preserve religious forms. They continued, for example, to appoint a chief *dā'ī* (a *dā'ī al-du'āt*) to the end of the rule and we can confirm the existence of significant numbers of Ḥāfiẓī Ismailis. One treatise—a long didactic poem called *al-Shāfiya*—survives in a Ḥāfiẓī version, a fact which points to the need among this group for religious instruction in basic doctrine of the same kind as used by Nizārī and Ṭayyibī Ismailis.¹³⁰

However, as much as the Ḥāfiẓī faction might have striven to preserve their Ismaili Shiite imamate by facile propaganda in the earlier crisis, the record of subsequent successions seldom displays the same concern for theoretical validation. In 528, for example, al-Ḥāfiẓ gave the designation (*'ahd*) to his favorite son, Sulaymān, the eldest of his male children. Two months later Sulaymān was dead and, although the father grieved for his loss, he immediately appointed another son, Ḥaydara, as his *walī 'ahd*.¹³¹ Infallibility was apparently forgotten. Later that same year under intense pressure from yet another son,

¹²⁹Sanders's study ("Claiming the Past") follows Stern in looking seriously at the real basis of the Ḥāfiẓī claim that most authorities on Ismailism have tended to dismiss as worthless and generally ineffectual. Sanders treats Ḥāfiẓī rhetoric as a reasoned, carefully planned effort to assert a valid argument for legitimacy on Ismaili terms—one that began with the proclamation and continued thereafter. What remains to be examined is to what extent such "propaganda" depended solely on paid agents of the *diwān* pandering to their overlords or whether it was genuinely aimed at a public or semi-public audience. Were there in Egypt (or elsewhere) Ismailis for whom the prolongation of the imamate mattered under these conditions? Was, therefore, the argument of the proclamation truly serious and did its proponents really expect the populace to believe that al-Āmir had actually designated al-Ḥāfiẓ, his cousin? Given the long history of Shiite rhetorical reconstruction of various previous successions, that question cannot be answered simply.

¹³⁰See the edition (with English translation) of this work by S. N. Makarem (Beirut, 1966) and the reviews of it by W. Madelung (ZDMG, 118 [1968]: 423–24; and *Oriens*, 23–24 [1970–71]: 517–18). In the edition of the same treatise by A. Tamir (Beirut, 1967), the Ḥāfiẓī verses are missing.

¹³¹*Itti'āz*, III, 149.

Ḥasan, whose disaffection with his own father and brother were, in part, responsible for terrible chaos in the realm, al-Ḥāfiẓ dropped Ḥaydara and recognized Ḥasan as his successor.¹³² When this act did not diminish the troubles, the caliph finally resolved to have Ḥasan poisoned, which he succeeded in doing soon thereafter. Finally at the end of the rule, the imamate was ultimately passed by bequest,¹³³ not to either of the remaining older sons, but to the youngest,¹³⁴ Abu'l-Manṣūr Ismā'īl, who became al-Ẓāfir.

The succession to al-Ẓāfir, moreover, just four and a half years later was accompanied by the callous murder of his two older brothers and a prominent cousin lest they interfere with the elevation of the five year old al-Fā'iz following the assassination of his father.¹³⁵ When al-Fā'iz died at the age of eleven and obviously without issue, the wazir, Ṣāliḥ al-Ṭalā'i' b. Ruzzīk merely went to the palace and inquired matter-of-factly what sort of family member they had to offer. The parties calmly discussed the possibilities: an older person or a younger? Finally Ibn Ruzzīk selected 'Abdallāh, son of the amir Yūsuf, who was a son of al-Ḥāfiẓ, then eleven years old.¹³⁶ All pretense of divine sanction seem to have been dropped.

A message emerges prominently from the recounting of these incidents precisely by contrasting them with the earlier record of Fatimid succession and its problems. If al-Ḥāfiẓ still understood his Ismaili legacy well enough to insist on an elaborate protocol of investiture and validation, such notions faded as the residual power of the caliphate declined or was increasing usurped by the wazirs, who, unlike Badr al-Jamālī, observed the formalities of Ismaili rites and rituals less and less—and only at moments of transition or when convenient. Still, there was a remarkable longevity to this decline. A stridently anti-Ismaili hostility that might have snuffed it out sooner is not in evidence. The final three Fatimids were accorded a degree of

¹³²End of Ramaḍān, 528. *Itti'āz*, III, 150. Cf. Ibn Sa'īd, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 87.

¹³³*bi-waṣīyyat abīhi lahu al-khilāfa*, *Itti'āz*, III, 193.

¹³⁴*Itti'āz*, III, 193.

¹³⁵Or, alternately, as Usāma b. Munqidh, an eyewitness to these events, reports, the wazir al-'Abbās executed the three on the pretext that they were the ones who had murdered al-Ẓāfir. See his *Kitāb al-i'tibār*, edited by Philip Hitti (Princeton, 1930), 20–21; English trans. *Memoirs of an Arab-Syrian Gentleman* (Beirut, 1964), 46–47.

¹³⁶*Itti'āz*, III, 243.

respect that belies religious disagreement and rejection. Even at the close of the rule, when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn abolished Fatimid sovereignty, he did so only when the death of the last caliph al-ʿĀḍid was confirmed. Moreover, he is recorded as explaining to al-ʿĀḍid's son Da'ūd, "I am the agent (*nāʿib*) of your father in the matter of the caliphate and he has not made a bequest that recognizes you as his *walī ʿahd*."¹³⁷ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn would not continue the Fatimid line, so he says, because there was no designation of a successor, not because, as a devout Sunni, he hated the Shīʿa and their caliphate, though he certainly preferred the ʿAbbasids in their stead. Da'ūd and his family might retain some hope of a restoration¹³⁸ but, unlike the situation of al-Ḥāfiẓ, which had proven precarious and traumatic enough, this time the strong hand of Sunni rule quickly eliminated most vestiges of Fatimid government and suppressed almost all traces of its few remaining supporters.¹³⁹

¹³⁷*Ittiʿāz*, III, 347.

¹³⁸There were, at the time it was abolished, a great number of Fatimids. As sons of al-ʿĀḍid alone, I can count seventeen possibly eighteen, even though he was barely twenty-one when he died.

¹³⁹On later pretenders and the survival of small pockets of Ismailis in Egypt, see Stern, "Succession," 211–12, and P. Casanova, "Les derniers Fatimides," *MIFAO* 6 (1897): 415–45.

III

THE ISMAILI DA'WA IN THE REIGN OF THE FATIMID CALIPH AL-ḤĀKIM¹

Introduction

By definition an Islamic state will have an ideology. For the Fatimids that ideology was based ostensibly in a transnational organization, the *da'wa*, which functioned both as a propaganda and missionary agency outside the confines of political rule and as an internal ideological organ within the state. The *da'wa*, which ought to have born an intimate relationship with the state it served, however, existed prior to the state and also long after it had ceased. Ironically, the state, the *dawla*, often appears in the historical literature as if it were a separate, unconnected institution, functioning independently or even at odds with its ideological counterpart. For modern investigators, the interaction of these two institutions, thus, continues to suggest, on the one hand, an explanation for critical turning points in the history of this rule and yet, on the other, a baffling dichotomy between doctrinally expressed theory and actual practice. Was the Ismaili *da'wa* actually an instrument of the Fatimid state? Is there any sense in which the state in reality followed the *da'wa* which had once created and sustained it? Or either of these possibilities depending on time and circumstances?²

These questions about the history and function of the Ismaili *da'wa* during the period of Fatimid government constitute a major unsolved problem in the historiography of this reign. Perhaps the most

¹I would like to thank both Fred Donner and Abbas Hamdani for their useful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

²In another context the issues at play here could be explained as those between church and state. For Muslim society the concept of church as a parallel yet distinct institution along side the state is inappropriate. Nevertheless, given the special nature of the Ismaili *da'wa*, which did, in fact, perform an ecclesiastical function and did act as a duly constituted organization, the comparison comes closer than in most other Islamic situations.

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obvious manifestation of this issue concerns the failure of the Fatimids to alter significantly the religious affiliation of those they ruled. The territories of the Fatimid empire remained overwhelming Sunni despite the presumed proselytizing effort of a government and a highly skilled *da'wa*, which together promoted a clear, Shiite religious agenda. Or, was it not the case that the Ismaili *da'wa*, which frequently prospered abroad with notable successes, attempted a comparable role at home? Was it, in short, the policy of the Ismaili state to attempt the conversion of its subject population and if not why not?

To answer such questions requires a complete picture of the *da'wa* in each of the several periods of Fatimid history. This must include the details of its activity both outside and within the empire and some effort to connect the two. With that as a goal, even a cursory examination of the sources for Fatimid history quickly reveals a serious problem and this helps explain why the matter tends to be ignored by modern historians of either the *da'wa* or the *dawla*. The preponderance of historical evidence for the Fatimids derives from relatively late Sunni histories and these in turn rely on older writings, which are also Sunni. A second important category of evidence comes from Christian chronicles and Jewish Geniza documents. Such sources simply were not privy to the inner workings of the Ismaili *da'wa*, except in a few rare situations. Better information ought to exist, however, in the extensive writings of the agents of the *da'wa*, which is to say, in the works of the *dā'īs* themselves. Much of that literature survives, having been copied and preserved by the post-Fatimid Ṭayyibī *da'wa* in the Yemen and in India. With few exceptions, unfortunately, it is entirely doctrinal. History, either as a record of the reigns of the various imams or of the *da'wa* and its *dā'īs*, did not occupy a prominent place in it. Ismaili Shiism, especially in the Fatimid period, recognized in each successive, living imam the sole authority for determining religious policy. A deceased imam carries no weight and has no direct bearing in ongoing affairs. The actions and words of the previous imams, thus, preserved no more than an antiquarian value.

For the Ismailis the "history" of the *da'wa* was relatively inconsequential and, therefore, in those cases where genuine historical material was composed by members of the *da'wa*, the works in question, such as Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's histories and the autobiography of Mu'ayyad

fi'l-dīn, must be regarded as exceptions.³ The main Ismaili account of much of Fatimid history, the *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* of the 9th/15th century Yemeni Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn, does not really provide a coherent history of either the *dawla* or the *da'wa*.⁴

The two prime sources for a history of the *da'wa*, Sunni oriented histories and Ismaili doctrinal treatises, therefore, bear little relationship to one another. Non-Ismaili chronicles provide an account of the state, much as they might for any Muslim dynasty, largely unaware of its religious and ideological activities. At the same time a substantial body of Ismaili theological and doctrinal writing attests to considerable intellectual movement by an aggressive *da'wa* working apparently to support and spread that very state. Naturally, the first of these two provides little or no information about the *da'wa* and the second is coincidentally generally silent about the state it presumably served. Making sense of their interaction will not be easy.

The Reign of al-Ḥākim: A Test Case

As a preliminary exploration of this problem, this study focuses solely on the reign of al-Ḥākim bi'amr Allāh (386/996 – 411/1021). There are several reasons for choosing this period as a test case for a problem of this kind. For one al-Ḥākim's twenty-five year rule was pivotal in the transition between the North African and the later Egyptian phase of Fatimid history. This is clearly seen in the fate at his hands of the offspring of the major figures involved in the conquest and move to Egypt. For another it features a rule by a caliph/imam of such personal and enigmatic character that it produced an unusual and noticeable reaction in all the sources, both non-Ismaili histories and Ismaili doctrinal literature. Al-Ḥākim was the last of these rulers to

³For Qāḍī al-Nu'mān note in particular his *Iftitāḥ al-da'wa wa ibtīā' al-dawla*, whose very title suggests the theme of this paper, but also his *Sharḥ al-akhbār*. The *Iftitāḥ* was edited and published by W. Kadi under the title *Risālat Iftitāḥ al-da'wa* (Beirut, Dār al-Thiqāfa, 1970). Mu'ayyad's *Sīrat al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn* was edited by Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn (Cairo, Dār al-Kātib al-Maṣrī, 1949).

⁴For a detailed overview of Ismaili literature, see Ismail Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature* (Malibu, Calif., Undena Publications, 1977). Idrīs's *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* under the editorship of Mustafa Ghalib. The volume of greatest importance for this paper is VI (Beirut, Dār al-Andalus, 1984).

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conduct the affairs of government in person. He was, moreover, idiosyncratic—at least in the eyes of most beholders—and that trait left an indelible mark on the evidence for his period. His years also happened to receive the attention of three contemporary witnesses: the aristocratic, Muslim chronicler, al-Musabbihī,⁵ and two Christian writers, Yaḥyā of Antioch⁶ and Ibn al-Muqaffa'.⁷ Musabbihī, who was an intimate of the court and a friend of the powerful, left a massive record of the years 386 through 405, which, though lost in its original, is preserved in later accounts, notably that of Maqrīzī.⁸ In pursuit of the special investigation of the *da'wa*, Musabbihī appears to provide an unparalleled window onto activities normally unseen in histories of the Fatimids. Finally, although the general problem of relating *da'wa* and *dawla* has been neglected in much of the scholarly literature,⁹ serious studies of the reign of al-Ḥākim are plentiful and a few of them are particularly rich in the details necessary for this sort of analysis. Three have special importance in this study: those of J. Van

⁵Musabbihī is the amir al-Mukhtār 'Izz al-Mulk Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. Aḥmad, who died in 420/1029. The only surviving portion of this work was edited by Ayman F. Sayyid and Thierry Bianquis, *Tome quarantième de la chronique d'Égypte de Musabbihī*, I, Partie Historique, (Cairo, IFAO, 1978). Ayman Sayyid also gathered together all of the known fragments of earlier sections in his article "Nuṣuṣ ḍā'i'a min Akhbār miṣr li-l-Musabbihī," *Annales islamologiques* 17 (1981): 1–54.

⁶Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṭākī, *History*, ed. L. Cheikho (Paris, 1909).

⁷Sāwīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Ta'rikh baṭārikat al-kanīsa al-miṣriyya*, edited with English translation Aziz Atiya et al. (Cairo, 1948). [This history covers the patriarchate of many individuals over a long span of time and was composed by a number of authors. The section dealing with the era of al-Ḥākim was actually written by Michael, bishop of Tinnis.]

⁸Most especially, in this author's *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā' bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafā'*, published in three volumes: I, edited by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (Cairo, 1967); II & III, edited by Muḥammad Ḥilmī Muḥammad Aḥmad (Cairo, 1971, 1973). Material from al-Musabbihī also appears in Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* (*Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa'l-i'tibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār*) (Bulaq). For the *Itti'āz* it is also necessary to consult a list of corrections and emendations to the text of Aḥmad that were offered by Cl. Cahen and several of his students. See "Notes et documents," *Arabica* 22, pp. 302–20.

⁹An important exception is the essay of S. M. Stern, "Cairo as the Centre of the Isma'ili Movement," now available in his *Studies in Early Isma'ilism* (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1983), 234–253. Also Farhad Daftary's *The Ismā'īlīs: their history and doctrines* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), 224–53, gives a highly useful summary of what has been written on this subject to date.

Ess,¹⁰ H. Halm¹¹ and Th. Bianquis.¹² Of these Van Ess's comes closest to the answers for the questions posed above but the other two also cover important aspects of the subject.¹³

As with these and other studies of the reign of al-Ḥākim, it is often easy to be distracted by the fascinating personality of al-Ḥākim himself. This ruler's acts and edicts form an enticing subject in themselves—one certainly important to an understanding of the period and to Fatimid rule at large—which may or may not relate directly to the *da'wa*, except in so far as the imam/caliph was theoretically the supreme embodiment of that *da'wa*. There is a danger that an investigator will attempt to analyze al-Ḥākim's behavior rather than look for evidence of how the *da'wa* acted or reacted. Having said that, however, it must also be admitted that most writers of that era themselves tried to explain the caliph's strange and puzzling intrusions into public life. Not only is the contemporary literature from the regular *da'wa* replete with warnings not to judge al-Ḥākim but the most striking trace of this problem is to be found in the Druze canon. The latter may, in fact, most accurately indicate, albeit not directly, the true state of affairs in the last years of the reign.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Chiliasische Erwartungen und die Versuchung der Göttlichkeit: Der Kalif al-Ḥākim (386–411 H.)* (Heidelberg, 1977).

¹¹ "Der Treuhänder Gottes: Die Edikte des Kalifen al-Ḥākim," *Der Islam* 63 (1986): 11–72.

¹² *Damas et la Syrie sous la domination fatimide (359–486/969–1076)*, 2 vols. (Damascus, Institut français de Damas, 1986 and 1989).

¹³ Of the three only Van Ess focuses on precisely those issues which most concern the *da'wa*. Bianquis, however, included in his work one place or another nearly all of the evidence that appears in the non-Isma'ili chronicles. And although he presents an account of Fatimid involvement in Syria, the Egyptian background of those events receives close scrutiny. Halm set out to unravel the numerous problems connected with the historical reports of al-Ḥākim's edicts. To the extent that the activities of the *da'wa* and the actions of al-Ḥākim overlap, he takes notice of the necessary data about the former. Van Ess has written a study of religious problems associated with the rule and actions of al-Ḥākim but, more so than Halm or Bianquis, his evidence derives from Isma'ili and Druze treatises and thus reflects the concerns of the *da'wa* better than the others.

¹⁴ The standard account of the Druze remains that of A. I. Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1838). A modern reappraisal is David Bryer's "The Origin of the Druze Religion," *Der Islam* 52 (1975): 47–84, 239–264; and 53 (1976): 5–27. Like the work of Bryer much of the literature on the Druze movement attempts to trace its origin in Fatimid Egypt and the reign of al-Ḥākim rather than use Druze

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One central question is whether there is a relationship between al-Ḥākim's edicts and the *da'wa*.¹⁵ Did al-Ḥākim crystallize what was until his time the secret teaching of the Ismailis and their *da'wa* and turn it into the policy of the state at large?¹⁶ Was there an inter-connection between the imam's legal proscriptions and previous doctrine? Did members of the *da'wa* better appreciate or comprehend the new rules and regulations than any one else, especially those who had no background in Ismaili thinking and doctrine?

In order to provide a focus on the evidence concerning these and the other problems about the *da'wa* in this specific period, it seems appropriate to group the evidence around two general themes. First an investigation of which personnel within the state belonged to the *da'wa*. Even the question of who was Ismaili and who was not is not always clear in the sources. The Fatimids were notorious for their employment of non-Ismailis and even non-Muslims in their administration. But which offices and which holders of those offices understood their function as necessarily related to the Ismaili movement as a whole? Did the situation change over time and if so when? The second area involves methods. Assuming that the *da'wa* pursued a definite doctrinal program, what was the actual form and content of that program. Where was it taught, to whom, and how?

The Ismaili Establishment

No discussion of the personnel of the Fatimid state can exclude the imam-ruler. More so is this the case during the reign of al-Ḥākim

writings, especial the canonical texts, to elucidate events and attitudes of the non-Druze *da'wa* which are also reflected in this material. For evidence of what can be done with these writings, see Stern, "Cairo as the Centre," 239, and Van Ess, *Chiliasmische Erwartungen*, 63–85. Unfortunately the texts in question, being to this date unpublished, are not readily accessible.

¹⁵In Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's biography of al-Ḥākim's chief judge ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān in his *Rafī' al-īṣr ʿan quḍāt miṣr*, edited Ḥāmid ʿAbd al-Majid et al. (Cairo, 1957 and 1961), 361, he credits certain restrictions, particularly for women, which concern the customary observance of ʿĀshūrā, to the initiative of the judge who was also head of the *da'wa*. Only subsequently did al-Ḥākim rule in this matter when he confirmed the judge's ruling. Does this report reliably indicate the involvement the *da'wa* in the regulatory policies of al-Ḥākim?

¹⁶This is, for example, an explanation offered by Yaḥyā, 220.

where the record reflects his direct, personal involvement. Once he was rid of Barjawān, his tutor and guardian, al-Ḥākim again and again took direct charge of his government.¹⁷ For every delegation of authority by him to subordinate holders of key offices, there was a retraction of that authority, usually by the demotion and subsequent execution of the office-holder in question. Al-Ḥākim, more than any other Fatimid, resented the system of intermediaries, which were required in any system of government. Yet each time he assumed direct charge of affairs, he was quickly and inevitably overwhelmed by the press of urgent business. His rule was characterized by regular periodic cycles of appointments and demotions, and of his own interference and intervention, on the one hand, and various schemes to provide for others to take charge, on the other.¹⁸

For example, during the period of al-Ḥākim there were no wazirs, as there had been while Ya'qub b. Killis served his father or as there were to be later. The closest position, the *wāsiṭa*, is not really comparable. In al-Ḥākim's state the imam required specific intermediaries between himself and various military units and contingents; these latter were sharply divided by ethnic and racial composition. The role of *wāsiṭa* provided an appropriate buffer in that situation but it is wrong to conclude that the office of *wasāṭa* included a wide array of governing functions. In fact there was no exact policy. Often the principal agent of the imam-caliph was a Christian, reflecting purely practical, pragmatic considerations in the choice. Needless to say there is no suggestion that any of those who were holder of the *wāsiṭa* under al-Ḥākim held religious importance in terms of the *da'wa*. Curiously, moreover, the important *dīwān al-inshā'*, the chancery, which had primary responsibility for issuing diplomatic correspondence, diplomas of appointment and investiture, and general edicts, was frequently directed by a Christian. Like the office of *wasāṭa*, the chancery, therefore, did not require an Ismaili background. Its most famous head, Ibn Sūrīn, was said to be able to compose whatever kind of missive the state and its ruler required. The historical accounts are

¹⁷Barjawan was murdered in 390.

¹⁸See among other examples, Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī ḥulā' ḥaḍrat al-qāhira*, edited Ḥusayn Naṣṣār (Cairo, 1970), 354: "it is said that the caliph al-Ḥākim used to take matters in his own hands and to assume himself charge of management and administration."

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sensitive to this policy and carefully record which documents were actually written by al-Ḥākim and which in his own hand.¹⁹ The presence of non-Muslims and non-Ismailis at the center of power proves that Ismaili religious affiliation was not required for high office.

In a sense, because the Fatimid state demanded of every citizen an oath of allegiance to the ruler and the ruler was himself the Shiite imam, following the precept of lineage and designation, the basic *da'wa* was fulfilled simply by recognizing and obeying this caliph. A key moment in al-Ḥākim's ordination, for example, occurred when the chief judge Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān mounted the *minbar* and instituted the *da'wa* to al-Ḥākim bi-amr Allāh.²⁰ That act alone and of itself discharges the minimal conditions required by Shiite theory.

Initially, the highest Ismaili authority in the state, other than the imam, was the chief judge, the *qāḍī al-quḍāt*. At the beginning of al-Ḥākim's reign this was an office held by the son of the great Fatimid jurist, al-Nu'mān, who merely continued in the position he had held for some years. The chief judge also presided over the *da'wa* as supreme *dā'ī*, the *dā'ī al-du'āt*. Such a development probably does not predate the period of al-Ḥākim's father, however. Moreover, the precise connection between jurisprudence and the normal activities of the *da'wa* or its theological teachings is not obvious and needs an explanation. It is doubtful that al-Nu'mān himself was ever personally in control of the *da'wa* or its agents. His own fairly intimate record of meetings and sessions with the caliph al-Mu'izz mentions the arrival and departure of eastern *dā'īs* but does not suggest that the *qāḍī* was in any way in charge of their activities.²¹ By the commencement of al-Ḥākim's period that had changed and the *da'wa* was now subsumed in the judiciary.

The chief judge was therefore quite powerful. And he was not subservient to any other office except the imam. Moreover, he had control over a number of other departments such as pious endow-

¹⁹Idrīs, 'Uyūn, VI, 277; Ittī'āz, II, 98.

²⁰Ittī'āz, II, 5.

²¹See his *Kitāb al-Majālis wa'l-Musāyarāt*, edited by al-Ḥabīb al-Faqī, Ibrāhīm Shabbūh, and Muḥammad al-Ya'lāwī, (Tunis, 1978). Al-Nu'mān was certainly never the chief judge of Egypt. Ibn Ḥajar says that he was in charge of the judiciary in the army ('askar) of al-Mu'izz (appended to al-Kindī, *The Governors and Judges of Egypt*, edition of the Arabic text, Rhuvon Guest [Leiden, Brill, 1912], 589).

ments and weights and measures.²² But one of his principal responsibilities was to conduct the sessions of the *majlis al-ḥikma*, the assemblies for the propagation of Ismaili doctrine. These were held on Thursday and Friday. In them the *qāḍī* read from the books, which according to one report contained the “special wisdom of the house of the prophet.”²³ The role of *dā'ī al-du'āt* appears therefore quite specific. The *da'wa* was not merely an aspect of judicial practice. Maqrīzī provides in his history of the Fatimids, the *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā' bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafā'*, a general description of the office of chief *dā'ī* when and where it was separate from that of chief judge.²⁴

In practice it is all but certain that, at the beginning of al-Ḥākim's reign, and while the descendants of al-Nu'mān retained control of the office, the books taught in these sessions of the *majlis*²⁵ were those written by al-Nu'mān, such as the *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, and *Ta'wīl al-Da'ā'im*.²⁶ The historians report in particular that 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Muḥammad, the grandson of al-Nu'mān, who held the chief judgeship from 389 until 394, began with his grandfather's *Ikhtilāf uṣūl al-madhāhib*.²⁷

That the Ismaili state promoted the works of al-Nu'mān and the

²²For example, *Itti'āz*, II, 106, lists the judge's full responsibilities, at least as held in that one particular case.

²³Maqrīzī in his *Khīṭaṭ* and in his *Itti'āz* reports from Musabbihī (see A. F. Sayyid, p. 14) that in the year 385 Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān sat on the dias in the palace and read from the “sciences of the *āl al-bayt* according to the practice previously customary for him and his brother ('Alī b. al-Nu'mān) in Egypt and for his father (al-Nu'mān) in the Maghrib.” So great was the throng on that occasion, eleven men died in the crush. The Caliph himself performed the rites for the deceased.

²⁴*Itti'āz*, III, 337.

²⁵The term *majlis* and its plural *majālis* has a range of meanings. Basically it is the place where an assembly is held, but by extension it is also the content of that assembly. A series of lectures read at such sessions is also called *majālis*. Likewise the sitting of a judicial tribunal is a *majlis*.

²⁶*Da'ā'im al-Islām*, ed. A. A. A. Fyzee, 2 vols. (Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1951-1961); *Asās al-ta'wīl*, ed. Aref Tamer (Beirut, Dār al-Thiqāfa, 1960); *Ta'wīl al-da'ā'im*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan al-A'zmī, 3 vols. (1968-1972). On the importance of the *Da'ā'im*, see Idrīs, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, VI, 300.

²⁷Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafi' al-iṣr*, II, 360. The work itself was edited by Mustafa Ghalib (Beirut, Dār al-Andalus, 1973). The introduction to the text as preserved states that 'Abd al-'Azīz was especially commissioned to teach it. On the books taught in the *majālis*, see also Stern, “Cairo as a Centre,” 236-238.

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views they contain is no accident of personal loyalty among his sons and grandsons, though their acquisition of the chief judgeship and parallel control over the *majlis* sessions is symptomatic of the same tendency. As a counter stroke to the general tenure of Ismaili theological literature, the writings of al-Nu'mān deliberately sought to create a constitutional base for Fatimid rule in an environment predominately hostile to radical, antinomian Shiism. With the guidance and certainly the blessing of al-Mu'izz, al-Nu'mān attempted to turn Ismailism into a *madhhab* not unlike that of the contemporary Twelver Shi'a. Whereas the Ismailis need not depend on Tradition in any sense, since they follow a living imam, al-Nu'mān established a legal doctrine for them rooted in the *akhbār* of the earliest imams. He added to this several histories. His own personal account of conversations with al-Mu'izz likewise recorded for posterity the exemplary acts and deeds of the imam of his time. The net effect represents a cautious and conservative effort to make Fatimid rule acceptable with a non-Ismaili public, especially that of Egypt and its neighboring dependencies.²⁸

In the early years of al-Ḥākim, the family of al-Nu'mān and his relatively benign view of Ismaili doctrine continued to prevail. The *da'wa*, at least in so far as it conformed to this model of Ismailism, was thus tamed and domesticated. There were, nevertheless, two uncontrollable factors at work. One was al-Ḥākim whose own proclivities for activism and confrontation hardly fit al-Nu'mān's (and al-Mu'izz's) benevolent policy. The other involved the outside. Theoretically, once appointed chief judge and once recognized as head of the *da'wa*, the sons and grandsons of al-Nu'mān held power over *dā'īs* in distant lands. Whether this was actually the case at this time is not certain. More likely the *da'wa* beyond the confines of the empire paid little heed to the chief judge in Cairo rather than attempted direct contact with the imam. Access to the imam was to become a singular issue for the *da'wa*. Presumably al-Ḥākim with his personal style was more

²⁸On Qāḍī al-Nu'mān see the following: A. A. A. Fyzee, "Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, the Fatimid Jurist and Author," *JRAS* (1934), 1-32; R. Gottheil, "A Distinguished Family of Fatimide cadis (al-Nu'mān) in the Tenth Century," *JAOS* 27 (1906): 217-296; Wilferd Madelung, "The Sources of Ismā'īlī Law," *JNES* 35 (1976): 29-40; Ismail Poonawala, "A Reconsideration of al Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's Madhhab," *BSOAS* 37 (1974): 572-579; and Wadad Qadi, "An Early Fatimid Political Document," *SI* 47 (1978): 71-108. For the importance of the *Da'ā'im* to the Fatimids, see Stern, *Studies*, 244-45 and 309-10.

available than later imams. The Druze experience bears directly on this problem but that does not necessarily reflect policy in the earliest years of al-Ḥākim.

The chief judges or *qāḍī al-quḍāt* for al-Ḥākim are the following in chronological order: Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān until his death on the 4th of Ṣafar 389²⁹; al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. al-Nu'mān,³⁰ nephew of the previous *qāḍī*, from 389 until he was demoted on the 16th of Ramaḍān 394 and executed on the 6th of Muḥarram, 395³¹; 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān, cousin of the former and his long time rival,³² until the elevation of Mālīk b. Sa'īd al-Fāriqī on the 16th of Rajab 398;³³ Al-Fāriqī lasted until his execution on the 16th of Rabī' II 405³⁴; and finally Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Abī'l-'Awwām, who outlasted al-Ḥākim himself. Note that although the first three of these belong to the tribe of al-Nu'mān the remaining two did not. In fact while al-Fāriqī was an active Ismaili—one especial conscientious and energetic in fulfilling his duties as chief *dā'ī*—Ibn Abī'l-'Awwām was a Ḥanafī jurist and thus utterly unqualified to head the *da'wa*. His appointment to the judiciary, therefore, in effect finally separated the *da'wa* from its position in the scheme of al-Nu'mān and restored its independence under a new chief *dā'ī*, Khatkīn al-Ḍayf, who had no conflicting responsibilities.³⁵

²⁹In order to avoid confusion, dates will hereafter appear only in *hijra* years.

³⁰Maqrīzī insists that al-Ḥusayn was the first judge to be actually called in his *sijillāt qāḍī al-quḍāt* or *dā'ī al-du'āt* (*Ittī'āz*, II, 49). Bianquis, 273. Ibn Ḥajar, however, says that 'Alī b. al-Nu'mān was the first since his *sijill* specified that all the other administrative districts were to be subsumed within his jurisdiction (*Rafī' al-iṣr*, 409). This distinction, therefore, appears to be possibly merely nominal.

³¹*Ittī'āz*, II, 49–50, 59. Maqrīzī, in noting that al-Ḥusayn was the first judge to actually hold the titles *qāḍī al-quḍāt* and *dā'ī al-du'āt*, adds the grime fact that he was also the first to be burned after execution.

³²'Abd al-'Azīz had expect to succeed his father Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān immediately since he was already occupying his place due to the latter's prolonged illness. On the troubles between the two cousins, see *Ittī'āz*, II, 37, 40–41.

³³'Abd al-'Azīz was then executed in 401 along with his brother-in-law, the son of the famous general Jawhar, *Ittī'āz*, II, 86.

³⁴*Ittī'āz*, II, 106–107.

³⁵In Maqrīzī's *Khīṭaṭ* (Bulaq edition), I, 403–404, the details for an installation ceremony of the *qāḍī al-quḍāt* are given according to whether the judge was or was not also the *dā'ī*.

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But while this much and more can be said about the role of the chief judge, it provides little or no information about the lesser ranks of the *da'wa*. In the doctrinal literature there are various detailed accounts of the Ismaili ecclesiastical structure. The theme of *hudūd* (hierarchy and rank) is vital to Ismaili speculation. Typically, they picture twelve office holders called either *lāḥiq* (plural *lawāḥiq*) or *ḥujja* (plural *ḥujaj*) or even *naqīb* (plural *nuqabā'*), each of which governs one of the twelve districts or territories of the world. Sometimes at their head is a single office, the *bāb*. Beneath these chiefs of the regional *da'was*, there were the individual *dā'īs*, also called *janāḥ* (plural *ajniḥa*). In more elaborate schemes the *dā'īs* were divided into a number of gradations. Below all were the novice members, the *mustajībūn*. In Ismaili writings the most basic respondent to the *da'wa* is a *mu'mīn*, a "believer", in distinction to ordinary *muslims*, the latter being attached solely to the outward, literal tradition without knowledge of its inner, spiritual meaning and significance.

In the period of al-Ḥākim, as in others, there was a fairly extensive literature produced concerning both the theoretical importance of authority and the requirement of obedience and proper respect with in ranks. One of the clearest and best accounts of the role of a *dā'ī*, the *al-Risāla al-mūjaza al-kāfiya fī ādāb al-du'āt*, was composed by Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysābūrī, an important author from al-Ḥākim's time.³⁶ The writings of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, who played a critical part in defending the *da'wa* during the last years of al-Ḥākim and who was the major Ismaili theologian of the era as a whole, contain numerous descriptions of the *da'wa*, both theoretical and practical. His *al-Risāla al-Waḍī'a fī ma'ālim al-dīn*, for example, ends with two chapters specifically on the comportment, proper behavior and obedience of

³⁶The original of this work is lost but is preserved for the most part in the *Tuḥfat al-qulūb* of the 6th/12th century Yemeni *dā'ī* Ḥātim al-Ḥāmidī. For an analysis of its contents and significance, see Abbas Hamdani, "The Dā'ī Ḥātim Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī (d. 596 H./1199 A.D.) and his Book *Tuḥfat al-qulūb*," *Oriens*, 23–24 (1970–1971): 258–300; and W. Ivanow, "The Organization of the Fatimid Propaganda," *JBBRAS* 15 (1939): 1–35. Another work of al-Naysabūrī, the *Ithbāt al-imāma*, ed. M. Ghalib (Beirut, Dār al-Andalus, 1984), 37, gives the following ranks for the *da'wa*: imam, *ḥujaj*, *lawāḥiq*, *du'āt*, *ajniḥa*, *ma'dhūnūn*, and *makālibīyūn*.

an individual *dā'ī*.³⁷

Still it is difficult to match this material with events inside the Fatimid state. What are the domestic equivalents of the ranks described by either al-Naysabūrī or al-Kirmānī? Did the *da'wa* inside the empire function like it did outside? In some historical accounts the term *dā'ī* does occur for various individuals in Egypt, Syria and other provinces.³⁸ Another term also appears somewhat regularly, *awliyā'*. For example when al-Fāriqī was installed as head of the *da'wa*, he ceremoniously paraded to Cairo and “received the books of the *da'wa* which were read out in the palace to the *awliyā'*.”³⁹ On one occasion Maqrīzī reports that “the *awliyā'* and others gathered in the palace on Thursday . . . to listen to what the *qāḍī* read out of the books of the *majālīs al-ḥikam* but were prevented from doing so.”⁴⁰ Surely, then, the Ismailis within the empire were known as *awliyā'*, which in this context means something like ‘sanctified,’ i.e. the “faithful” or the “saints”.⁴¹

Given the hierarchical nature of the Ismaili understanding of the cosmos and of religious authority, there must have existed more to the *da'wa* than the vague *awliyā'*.⁴² A possible additional rank in the

³⁷This work of al-Kirmānī has not been published. A manuscript is available in the Fyze collection of Bombay University Library. [Subsequently published in 1987 by Muḥammad 'Isā al-Hurayrī in Kuwait].

³⁸Example: *Ittī'āz*, II, 12 (a *dā'ī* 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh). There are other examples like this but the problem with most is determining what the user means by the term. Is this title a formal (Ismaili) designation in each of these cases?

³⁹*Ittī'āz*, II, 71–71.

⁴⁰*Ittī'āz*, II, 103. Another example, II, 82.

⁴¹*Awliyā'* as a term of this kind is particularly prominent in al-Nu'mān's *Iftitāḥ* where he is, of course, speaking about the early Berber adherents of the Ismaili cause. This term also appears in Ismaili literature in reference to members of the *da'wa*. For the time of al-Ḥākim, see for example al-Kirmānī's *Mabāsīm* (full citation given in note no. 124 below), Husain edition, 113 (*awliyā' al-da'wa*).

⁴²The office of *naqīb al-ashrāf* or head of the Aliids was also important but, while the *ashrāf* played a role in the affairs of the Fatimids, it is not clear that they were necessarily devotees of the Ismaili cause. The most important *sharīf* in this period was Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī who was a friend of the powerful figures and who was asked to perform the *'aqīqa* ceremony at the birth of both of al-Ḥākim's sons. On him see *Ittī'āz*, I, 209; II, 30–31, 40, 55, ('*aqīqa* for al-Ḥārith), 58 (the '*aqīqa* for the future al-Zāhir), 72–73, 88 (notice of his death). Unfortunately the name al-Rassī appears incorrectly in volume II and in the index to the *Ittī'āz*.

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domestic structure is provided by the term *ḍayf*. Musabbihī relates a curious incident concerning al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. al-Nu'mān. Once while this judge and *dā'ī* was leading the 'asr prayer in the Old Mosque in Fuṣṭāṭ, a man described as an "Andalusian Maghribī" rushed at him with a sickle, striking him twice, leaving deep wounds in his face and head. The man was arrested and quickly dispatched, but the event left others seriously concerned.⁴³ From that day on the chief *qāḍī* traveled with armed guards and always prayed in public surrounded by the "*shuyūkh al-aḍyāf*," who were arrayed in rows so as to shield him from view. The *qāḍī* prayed first while the *aḍyāf* stood behind. Only when he completed his prayers did they pray themselves.⁴⁴ *Aḍyāf* is, of course, the plural of *ḍayf* but neither term is otherwise well known as the title of an office. There is only one other mention of it in the sources. Maqrīzī, in giving a list of responsibilities held by al-Fāriqī as chief judge, includes among them the *amr al-aḍyāf*, "command of the *aḍyāf*".⁴⁵ Therefore, most certainly, at this period the term *ḍayf* indicates an officer of the state under the control of the head judge or head *dā'ī*.

The account of the attack on the *qāḍī* comes from Maqrīzī and from Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī both of whom must have taken it from Musabbihī. Ibn Hajar ignores the term *ḍayf* but Maqrīzī retains it, although it is likely that neither one understood it.⁴⁶ Because the

⁴³The date of the attack is uncertain. Ibn Ḥajar puts it on the 8th of Ṣafar 391 (p. 208; A. F. Sayyid, "Nuṣūṣ," 34) but he also reports that al-Musabbihī includes this event in his account for the 2nd of Muḥarram 393.

⁴⁴*Itti'āz*, II, 49–50; *Rafi' al-iṣr*, 208; Bianquis, 273. Maqrīzī says (p. 49), "He had been attacked in the mosque. Thereafter al-Ḥākim assigned a detail of the *shuyūkh al-aḍyāf* to ride with him to each sitting (a session, *majlis*, of court) that he attended and also a detail of guards with swords in sheaths to march in front of him every day. If he was present in the Old Mosque and rose to pray, the detail of *al-aḍyāf* would stand behind him in rows to conceal him. None of them would pray until he had completed his prayers and returned to the session (*majlis*). When he was sitting for his sessions, they would be standing on his left and right. He was the first judge for whom that was done."

⁴⁵*Itti'āz*, II, 106; Bianquis, 358. The list runs as follows: judiciary (*al-qāḍā'*), the *mazālim*, pious endowments (*al-aḥbās*), the *da'wa*, the mint, the bureau of weights and measures, and command of the *aḍyāf*. Because they appear separately, it would seem that *da'wa* and the *aḍyāf* do not overlap.

⁴⁶Ibn Ḥajar's report (*Rafi' al-iṣr*, 208) says, for example, simply that "a guard armed with swords (*suyūf*) were arrayed behind him."

attacker is described as an Andalusian Maghribī, his motivation has to have been either religious or political. Musabbihī would have said more if it had been due to a personal grievance. The government's response of protecting the *qādī* with rows of *aḍyāf* must therefore have a corresponding meaning. That the *aḍyāf* were chosen for this mission (rather than, say, the police or army) seems to indicate that they already occupied a rank second to the *qādī/dā'ī* and that their Ismaili loyalty was tried and true.

A search of the historical literature provides a small but interesting list of persons with the title *ḍayf*. Of the seven found three seem to be sons or grandsons of a *ḍayf*. A good example is provided by a wazir under al-Mustanṣir, Abu'l-ʿAlāʾ ʿAbd al-Ghanī b. Naṣr b. Saʿīd al-Ḍayf, who was executed in 466 when the famous Badr al-Jamālī assumed power.⁴⁷ Another is ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Ḍayf, known as Saḍīd al-Dawla, who was executed in 415, after a distinguished career with the Fatimids.⁴⁸ Both of these men are not *aḍyāf* but rather are descendants of them. A more direct connection with the title is the case of Sayyār al-Ḍayf who was in charge of the barrage of the *khalīj* in 415.⁴⁹ Yet another candidate is Abu'l-Fawāris Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb al-Ḍayf,⁵⁰ an important agent of the Fatimids in Syria during al-Ḥākim's reign. It was he who was given the responsibility of going to Jerusalem and

⁴⁷*Ittī'āz*, II, 248–249, 272, 313, 334. Maqrīzī says of him that he once carried the inkwell of the wazir and was titled *al-Ṣādiq al-Ma'mūn*. These are, curiously, also attributes of Khatkīn al-Ḍayf from al-Ḥākim's period, on which see below. Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *al-Ishāra ilā man nāla al-wizāra* (edited ʿAbdallāh Mukhlis, Cairo, 1924), p. 48 (Arabic numbering) gives his name as ʿAbd al-Ghanī b. Naṣr b. Saʿīd al-Ḍayf but on p. 54 calls him ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ibn al-Ḍayf. It appears, therefore, that Saʿīd, the grandfather was the *ḍayf*.

⁴⁸He played a major role in Syria, on which see Bianquis, 321, 337, 400. Yaḥyā, 214, 215, 239, and 245 (giving the circumstances of his execution). Ibn al-Qalānīsī, *Dhayl Ta'rikh Dimishq*, edited H. F. Amedroz (Leiden, Brill, 1908), 69, 71. *Ittī'āz*, II, 114, 131, 147 (note particularly the incident described on p. 131 in which Saḍīd al-Dawla is mentioned first in a letter of the caliph al-Zāhir to his governor of Aleppo as ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Ḍayf and then immediately referred to as *ibn al-ḍayf* "son of the *ḍayf*." There is some confusion about this man's *kunya*. In the majority of cases it is given as Abū Maṣṣūr, although Abu'l-Ḥasan also occurs. Bianquis (p. 337) calls him both names.

⁴⁹*Ittī'āz*, II, 149.

⁵⁰It is also possible that Aḥmad was not the *ḍayf* but rather his father Yaʿqūb. On him see *Ittī'āz*, II, 75; Yaḥyā, 195–196, 214; Ibn al-Qalānīsī, 67.

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bringing about the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre.⁵¹ Also mentioned occasionally as a *dā'ī*, this Abu'l-Fawāris left a small treatise called *al-Risāla fi'l-imāma*, which he once dictated to one of his subordinates.⁵² Finally, and most importantly, the very person who was elevated to position of chief *dā'ī* at the moment when al-Ḥākim decided to appoint a non-Ismaili to the position of *qāḍī al-quḍāt* was Khatkīn al-Ḍayf, (the *Ḍayf*).⁵³

Curiously, depending on which member of a given genealogy bears the title *ḍayf*, most references seem to point to a time early in al-Ḥākim's rule or before. Thus the institution of the *adyāf* commenced roughly at the first decades of Fatimid rule in Egypt. Only one citation comes from a later period: that of a certain Ghadhā al-Mulk, Sa'īd b. 'Ammār al-Ḍayf, mentioned by Maqrīzī in his account of the year 515. This report says that this *ḍayf* was "the supervisor of the affairs of the *ḍiyāfāt* and of the correspondence coming into the Presence from all directions." This officer stood guard at the threshold of the Amir's audience; no one held a loftier position than he.⁵⁴ Ismaili literature does not mention this office and the title itself is rare in the later literature, if it occurs at all. Of course, it is also possible that no source for the later periods was as well informed as Musabbihī, who alone mentions the *adyāf* in this way. Later the term *ḍiyāfa* is common enough; it implies a form of tax collected from the prominent merchants in order to provide hospitality for travelers and strangers.⁵⁵ In Maqrīzī's notes on Fatimid administration at the end of his *Itti'āz*, he says,

They had a service which they called the *niyāba*. Its superintendent

⁵¹Ibn al-Qalānīsī, 67. On this incident in general see Marius Canard, "La Destruction de l'Eglise de la Résurrection par le calife Ḥākim et l'histoire de la descente du feu sacré," *Byzantion* 35(1955): 16–43, reprinted in *Byzance et les musulmans* (Variorum) item XX.

⁵²The treatise itself was edited and translated by S. Makarem, *The Political Doctrine of the Ismailis* (Delmar, New York, Caravan Books, 1977).

⁵³Two others occur in the *Itti'āz*, III, 75 (Ghadhā al-Mulk, Sa'īd b. 'Ammār al-Ḍayf) and 122 (Ṣāliḥ Ibn al-Ḍayf). The latter reference comes under the entry for the year 522 but also uses the vague *ibn al-ḍayf*. The information about Sa'īd b. 'Ammār from the year 515, however, may be more significant. On this see below.

⁵⁴*Itti'āz*, III, 75.

⁵⁵See *Itti'āz*, III, 54, 58, 79, 98, 121, 226 (the *dār al-ḍiyāfa*).

would greet ambassadors arriving from various kings. It was he who supervised the *dār al-ḍiyāfa* and he would be known in our time as the *mihmandār*.⁵⁶

Dozy defines *mihmandār* as, “an officer at the court charged with receiving and accompanying foreign ambassadors or other important persons.” But such a function alone does not warrant the title *ḍayf*; the Arabic term ‘*ḍayf*’ by itself means ‘guest’ and the *mihmandār*, in contrast, performs the role of a host. Surely the earlier Fatimid usage is closer to this than *mihmandār*.

The one *ḍayf* for whom there now exists enough information to allow scrutiny is Khatkīn. His name and titles alone provide an important insight into his life and career.⁵⁷ Khatkīn may be either Qut-takīn⁵⁸ or Akh-takīn⁵⁹ both of which are Turkic. Previous to his entry into Egyptian affairs, he had been the ink bearer for the Buyid ruler ‘Aḍud al-Dawla in Baghdad and thus retained the *nisba* al-‘Aḍudī.⁶⁰ From Ramaḍān to Shawwāl, 392, he was al-Ḥākim’s governor in Damascus. Ibn al-Qalānisī refers to him as “*al-Qā’id Khatkīn al-Dā’ī al-ma’rūf bi’l-ḍayf*” and notes that he was rough and undiplomatic in speech. Determined to reduce the pay of the troops, he quickly brought about his own demotion when they revolted.⁶¹ A number of years later when al-Ḥākim voiced suspicion and hostility toward the Christian Easter celebrations at the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, it was Khatkīn who related to him the famous story of how the miraculous deception of spontaneous light was actually achieved, causing the Fatimid ruler to order its destruction. The historian says, “Khatkīn was fully familiar with this matter because of his frequent visits to Syria and his repeated involvement in the correspondence

⁵⁶*Itti’āz*, III, 342.

⁵⁷It is commonly accepted that Khatkīn also had the name Abū Maṣṣūr. However, Maqrīzī (*Itti’āz*, II, 46, 60, 75, 119), Yaḥyā (57–58, 65, 67), and al-Kirmānī (see below) do not give him a *kunya*. The source of it may be Ibn Taghrī Birdī (*al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, IV, 205) but is this possibly a confusion with Abū Maṣṣūr ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Ḍayf?

⁵⁸First suggested by Van Ess.

⁵⁹This is the way it appears in Ghalib’s edition of Idrīs’s *Uyūn al-akhbār*, VI, 283.

⁶⁰Ibn al-Qalānisī, 65, “*wa kāna qadīman ṣāhib dawāti*” l-Mālik ‘Aḍud al-Dawla.”

⁶¹Ibn al-Qalānisī, 57–58; *Itti’āz*, II, 46.

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from al-Ḥākim to its governors.”⁶² Sometime later he may have been in charge of Damascus yet again.⁶³ Still later he was sent by al-Ḥākim to Madina to open the house of Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and to retrieve its contents.⁶⁴ Finally late in 405 or early 406 he was chosen to be *dā'ī al-du'āt* and to reopen the *majlis al-ḥikma* and reconstitute the *da'wa*. That particular event must be discussed in greater detail below in connection with other matters.

At this point one may speculate that, because Khatkīn held the rank of *ḍayf* his career somehow illustrates what it means. Possibly, although he is sometimes referred to as *dā'ī*, that was not his function, since a *dā'ī* was primarily a preacher or teacher. Instead the *aḍyāf*, Khatkīn included, were lay officials without the responsibility of preaching. Their role may have been connected with discipline and revenue collection within the ranks of the faithful Ismailis. They may have constituted a sort of Ismaili paramilitary for domestic purposes.⁶⁵ The term *ḍayf* could quite conceivably indicate that those holding this rank had come into Fatimid service from outside the empire and not by one of the several other avenues of entry such as clan membership (the Kutāma Berbers or the Turkish troops, for example) or *mamluk*, i.e., slave status (as with the famous Jawhar). If it is correct that the titles *dā'ī* and *ḍayf* are distinct, it may explain why, when he was eventually made *dā'ī al-du'āt* in the extraordinary circumstances of having a non-Ismaili chief *qāḍī*, Khatkīn found it necessary to enlist the aid of al-Kirmānī, a much more knowledgeable, eloquent, and able *dā'ī* than himself.

⁶²Ibn al-Qalānisi, 67. See also *Itti'āz*, II, 75. Ibn al-Qalānisi's account is more complete but probably based on the same source.

⁶³See Bianquis, 330.

⁶⁴The date of this event is uncertain, which probably means that it took place during the period from 406 to 410 when historical information for the reign is woefully inadequate and confused by comparison to the earlier years. See Idrīs, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, VI, 284 (giving the year 410); and *Itti'āz*, II, 118. Bianquis, 300–301. But Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, IV, 222, records it during his account of the year 400.

⁶⁵Another role may have been control of private correspondence and access to the imam or to the amir or possibly the *dā'ī al-du'āt*. Note how this might apply to both Khatkīn in the period of al-Ḥākim and to Ghadhā al-Mulk much later.

The Ismaili Da'wa

Passing now to the theme of methods, it is again impossible to begin without taking notice of the activities of al-Ḥākim. Surely, Van Ess makes the best sense of the imam's purpose when he characterizes it as doing *amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*. This thoroughly familiar injunction to "insure the good and prohibit the unacceptable" is, in Shiite Islam, primarily the duty of an imam or more so than for the ordinary Muslim. Al-Ḥākim took up his role with complete seriousness; he earnestly set out to correct the flaws of a society long accustomed to a lax and lenient interpretation of Islamic regulations. That, as the living repository of correctness, he possessed the power to define right and wrong in all cases, only meant that he could proceed however he personally saw fit. Possessing infallibility (*iṣma*) he could do no wrong. The result was a long series of edicts prohibiting a strange variety of foods, drinks, rites, rituals, customs, and other staples of Egyptian life. Many found in violation of these new laws were severely punished. More were summarily arrested and executed, whether for this sort of crime or another. The population learned to both fear and respect their ruler. If awe is an important quality for a head of state, al-Ḥākim achieved its supreme example. Two themes dominate contemporary Ismaili writings about the imamate: they all contain explicit references to al-Ḥākim's ability to perform *amr bi'l-ma'rūf* and to inspire an awesome dread among those he governed.⁶⁶

But, was there a connection between Shiite, especially Ismaili, teachings and the many edicts of al-Ḥākim? Could they be explained on Shiite terms? That is not a simple problem and an answer would require a much longer discussion than is possible here. The work of Halm, and before him Van Ess, have already explored most of the information available. The kinds and variety of acts done by al-Ḥākim are also far too complex to allow for pat answers. After all, a sub-

⁶⁶For *amr bi'l-ma'rūf* in Ismaili literature of that time, see al-Naysābūrī, *Ithbāt*, 68, or al-Kirmānī, *Maṣābīḥ*, 150–151. Even non-Ismaili authors understood this point. See Ibn Saʿīd, *al-Nujūm*, 61 and 74, where he reports that in the time of al-Ḥākim, "there appeared in Egypt such probity, justice and the commanding of good and prohibiting of evil (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*) that its fame spread far and wide." Al-Ḥākim's ability to inspire fear and dread is a standard theme in non-Ismaili accounts of his reign, but as recognized in Ismaili works, see for example *Maṣābīḥ*, 150–151 and Idrīs, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, VI, 248.

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stantial number of those who lived through his government, as well as many of the modern researchers, have concluded that only insanity can explain what al-Ḥākim did. Ismaili literature in his time, moreover, stressed that the acts of the imam are like those of God, not those of a human, and therefore they can no more be explained in human terms than can God Himself. That writers like al-Kirmānī, al-Naysābūrī, and Abu'l-Fawāris found it necessary to make this point shows how concerned they were about the problem.⁶⁷ Ironically, the Druze also saw the point, only in their case they understood the argument of these establishment *dā'īs* about al-Ḥākim and God quite literally.

Given that a complete account cannot be given in this context, it is nevertheless important to deal with certain elements of al-Ḥākim's program. Broadly speaking his actions affected four categories of subjects: the prohibition of foods and drink; the imposition of a strict moral code; the restriction and alteration of religious practice; and various modifications in the way he presented himself to his public and what he expected in return.

The first of these involved such matters, for example, as banning vegetables like *mulūkhiyya*, *gīrgīr*, and *tirmis*, forbidding eating fish without scales, outlawing all alcoholic beverages and severely restricting access to dates, honey, grapes, raisins, and other fermentables so that neither beer or wine could be made at all, even by Muslims in private or Christian for the sacrament. The second area covered, among other things, corruption in the performance of public duties, but it was most noticeable in a long series of laws, which increasingly restricted the public movements of women. There is much more to each of these categories⁶⁸ but it is enough to recognize them generally and to note that the laws restricting women began as early as 391, those for foodstuffs in 395. They lasted, moreover, throughout al-Ḥākim's reign, often being repeated and reinforced.

The third area is more problematic. It involved separate policies on the part of the government affecting non-Ismaili Muslim, on the one hand, and Christians and Jews, on the other. The regulations for

⁶⁷ al-Naysābūrī's comments in his *Ithbāt*, 87–93, could not be more pertinent or revealing about the attitude of the *dā'wa*.

⁶⁸ Many more edicts also do not fit precisely into these four categories, such as rules governing the slaughter of cattle or the extermination of dogs.

non-Muslims, which involved forcing them to wear distinctive clothing, badges (a cross for Christians, for example), and ride inferior animals, in addition to an extensive program of destroying religious buildings and confiscating property connected with them, are hard to make sense of except as an attempt to promote conversion. What nullifies that explanation are the occasional benevolent gestures by al-Ḥākim such as allowing in 404 any Christian to leave his kingdom with all his moveable possessions,⁶⁹ or finally rescinding most of these rules and allowing apostasy for those who had become Muslim.⁷⁰ In any case a connection to the Ismaili *da'wa* in this policy is not obvious. Perhaps, al-Ḥākim, following standard Ismaili teachings, understood his role as encompassing the religious tradition—and hence status—of both Christians and Jews. They were thus, in his view, not exempt from his right, as the sole living heir to that tradition, to perform *amr bi'l-ma'rūf* in their communities as well as his own.⁷¹

The regulations affecting non-Shiite Muslims are a different matter. As early as the conquest by Jawhar, the Fatimids insisted on at least a minimal observance of the Shiite cult, notably the use of the formula “*ḥayy ‘alā khayr al-‘amal*” in the call to prayer and allowing the mourning ceremonies of ‘Āshūrā’. Presumably the *da'wa* considered these essential and actively promoted Shiite usage. In Ṣafar of 395, al-Ḥākim took additional steps that raised the threat of a serious, outright conflict with the non-Shi’a Muslims of the realm. He ordered the public cursing of the *salaf*—that is, those members of the prophet Muḥammad’s generation who had refused to recognize ‘Alī’s ordination as his successor. This would include the first three “orthodox” caliphs and others like the prophet’s wife, ‘Ayshā’. Moreover, al-Ḥākim commanded these curses be etched into the walls of all mosques and any other space available and to be outlined in paint and gold letters.⁷² This was a direct, biting challenge to the populace, requiring of them a form of compliance that separated Shi’a from non-Shi’a. Maqrīzī reports that as a result “people came from the dis-

⁶⁹Ibn al-Muqaffa’, 196; *Itti’āz*, II, 100.

⁷⁰Ibn al-Muqaffa’, 205, 208 (permission to rebuild churches).

⁷¹See also what the Druze canon reports as the explicit reason offered by al-Ḥākim himself: De Sacy, *Exposé*, I, 373–377.

⁷²*Itti’āz*, II, 54.

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tricts and towns to enter the *da'wa*, so many that separate days were set for the women, and the crowds increased so that many died in the swarm."⁷³

At this relatively early point in Fatimid rule, Sunni and Shi'a were, in part, naturally separated by location. The new capitol, al-Qāhira, having within it those directly beholden to the Ismaili rulers presumably also contained a predominantly Shiite population. Its mosques, al-Azhar, Rāshida and that of al-Ḥākim were most likely to be Shiite. The Old Mosque in Fustāṭ, however, was founded by 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ and was clearly the main Sunni congregational mosque even after the Fatimids imposed Shiism on the government. Ironically, al-Ḥākim was the first of the Fatimids to lead prayer there (in Ramaḍān of 403).⁷⁴ Al-Ḥākim's attempt to coerce public cursing of the *salaf* (as with a number of other anti-Sunni regulations) probably failed quickly. Little more than two years later, on the 9th of Rabī' II 397, he issued an edict of tolerance, specifically ordering that the engraved curses be effaced. From that time forward he promoted in general a policy of peaceful coexistence among Islamic factions.

The relatively brief duration of this most extreme Fatimid attempt to fully apply Shiite doctrine in all matters of public concern was hardly long enough to permit conclusions about the interest of the *da'wa* in supporting this policy. The reaction by a part of the population significantly increased attendance at the *majālis*, suggesting an upsurge in local Shiism, but it must have also encouraged an intolerable form of extremism, leading to the threat of anarchy. Significantly, prior to canceling his insistence on cursing the *salaf*, al-Ḥākim sharply rebuked his own Ismaili followers. Maqrīzī, the principal source, does not say much but he does report that some four months prior to the edict of tolerance, when the Ismailis gathered for the *majlis* at the palace, they were beaten instead and nothing was read on that occasion.⁷⁵ It appears as if al-Ḥākim, who meanwhile faced the extremely dangerous revolt of Abū Rakwa, realized that to unleash the *da'wa* and to press the general Muslim public into the performance of purely Shiite religious rituals might bring an end to the

⁷³ *Itti'āz*, II, 54.

⁷⁴ *Itti'āz*, II, 96.

⁷⁵ *Itti'āz*, II, 68.

regime itself. His new policy, moreover—one that he carried out to the end of his reign—stayed away from any form of zealotry. Henceforth neither he nor the *da'wa* promoted, at least in public, more than lukewarm partisanship. Interference with another's cult and involvement in religious dispute was now forbidden. The repercussions of this policy, begun in 397, were generally beneficial—although it did hampered the spread of Shiism—until the commencement of the Druze crisis when the tables were turned and the Ismaili establishment was now threatened from within.

The *da'wa* outside the empire obviously took some notice of events in Cairo but did not experience the details. Al-Kirmānī's various writings are hard to date in most cases because he revised and reissued them at a later period. However, he, like al-Naysābūrī, did include specific mention of al-Ḥākim and of certain policies emanating from Cairo. In one place he cites a specific decree addressed to “some of the elders of the *da'wa* in the east.”⁷⁶ His own *al-Maṣābīḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma*, which includes a personal defense of al-Ḥākim, was probably written about 404 or 405 somewhere in Iraq.⁷⁷

Most dramatic of all achievements of the external *da'wa*, however, was winning over the 'Uqaylid amir Qirwash b. al-Muqallad, who, for one brief month in 401,⁷⁸ had the *khuṭba* read in the name of al-Ḥākim in such Iraqi cities as Mawṣil, Anbār, Madā'in, and Kūfa at the very heartland of Abbasid territory. This *khuṭba* was unique and says in part “Thanks to God Who by His light dispels the flood of anger and by His majesty demolishes the pillars of graven images and by His power causes the sun of righteousness to rise in the west.”⁷⁹ The last phrase is a clear reference both to an old Shiite tradition and to the appearance of the Fatimids in North Africa.

Even if this triumph was reversed quickly, as it was in only a month, the *da'wa* at large, which had been greatly strengthened by

⁷⁶*al-Risāla al-muḍī'a*, 59.

⁷⁷Note also how al-Naysābūrī feels it necessary to comment on “the time in which we live,” (*al-waqt al-ladhī nahnu fīhi*), p. 87. In al-Kirmānī's *Maṣābīḥ* he already was able to point with pride to al-Ḥākim's *amr bi-l-ma'rūf*, his *zuhd* (asceticism: he chooses to ride a donkey, for example), his generosity and capacity to inspire fear and dread.

⁷⁸Beginning Friday the 4th of Muḥarram.

⁷⁹*Itti'āz*, II, 88.

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the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, continued to expect further successes. Those far away from events in Cairo apparently did not perceive what a toll al-Ḥākim imposed on those at home. When al-Kirmānī arrived in the city, he immediately felt the need to circulate a pamphlet decrying the gloom he found overhanging the *da'wa* in Egypt. Ever confident of eventual victory himself, he speaks in his *Risālat mabāsīm al-bishārāt* as an outsider recently arrived who hopes to convince other members of the *da'wa* that the dream is still alive, that al-Ḥākim bears all the true signs of an imamate on the verge of greatness, and that by the year 411 the Islamic world will once again be unified.

That al-Kirmānī should have to deliver such a message bespeaks the trouble and doubt he encountered. More than the various issues mentioned above, this crisis of confidence stemmed directly from the personal behavior of al-Ḥākim. One aspect of this problem were measures taken by him to control or silence the *da'wa*, including arresting and executing the chief *dā'ī*, but also closing the *majlis al-ḥikma*. Another was al-Ḥākim's own shift away from the customary comportment and trappings of rule to an ascetic abstinence and avoidance of traditional responsibilities. For example, in messianic style he adopted the donkey as his riding animal; he dressed simply, refused to wash, and appointed a surrogate caliph to take his place on public occasions. These measures were destined to wreak havoc on the *da'wa*, whether al-Ḥākim so intended or not. This burden fell more intensely on the internal *da'wa* than its external counterpart.

The information now available for this period of Fatimid rule and the role of the internal *da'wa* places great importance on the institution of the *majlis al-ḥikma*. Maqrīzī says specifically that the *majlis al-ḥikma* is the *majlis al-da'wa*. Musabbihī described some details of these occasions.⁸⁰ The conduct of the *majlis* was the responsibility of the chief *dā'ī* who would frequent the palace to read the lectures on law and doctrine to the faithful. Several sessions might be held divided by the sex and rank of the audience. The *dā'ī* would prepare his text at home, and then send it to someone in the government service who would prepare a neat copy after showing it to the caliph. At each session of the *majlis* a fee was called the *najwā* ("confidential dis-

⁸⁰A. F. Sayyid, "Nuṣūṣ," 29; *Khīṭaṭ*, I, 291; Stern, "Cairo as a Centre," 242. See also Madelung, "Madjlis: 2. Ismaili Usage," *EI*2.

course”)⁸¹ was regularly collected as contributions from those who paid it, either cash or specie, men or women, whose names were recorded against the amount they contributed. Similarly at the Feast they paid an amount called the *fiṭra*. All in all a sizable sum was raised which, according to Musabbihī, was forwarded to the treasury (*bayt al-māl*).

When al-Ḥākim dismissed al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. al-Nu‘mān in 394 and had him executed not long after, the reason given was malfeasance in office. Al-Ḥusayn had mishandled funds deposited with him as a bequest to an orphan. There is no hint of a connection to his role in the *da’wa*, which in any case was not noteworthy.⁸² But al-Ḥusayn represented the family of al-Nu‘mān and the old North African establishment nevertheless. Although threatened by this disgrace, for the moment the old tie between the family of al-Nu‘mān and the *da’wa* persisted. This time ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu‘mān was immediately given a decree (*sijill*) allowing him to assume the functions of his deposed cousin, including “collecting the *fiṭra* and *najwā*”—the two fee payments which each Ismaili gave, in addition to the *khums*, in support of the imam. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was also to “attend the *majlis* in the palace, promote the *da’wa* among the people, read what was read to those who entered the *da’wa*.” Maqrīzī continues, “and he was present that Thursday, the 12th of that month, to read what it was customary to read and to collect the *najwā* and *fiṭra*.”⁸³

For ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, who resented al-Ḥusayn’s tenure as chief judge and *dā’ī*, there are suggestions that he was especially active in this role once it fell to him. The Druze canon, for example, attributes to him a set of written *majālis* and there are hints that he specialized in

⁸¹This use of *najwā* is firmly grounded in a Quranic injunction, specifically 58: 12, “O those of you who believe, when you consult the Apostle in private, spend something as alms before your *najwā*.” The fees for a confidential discourse within the Ismaili system of *majālis* were evidently understood in analogy to the situation depicted in this verse. See also 58: 13 and 4: 114. That this verse is meant is confirmed by reference to it in a letter (*sijill*) of al-Mustansir to his followers in the Yemen (no. 23 in the collection edited by A. Mājid, *al-Sijillāt al-mustansiriyya* [Cairo, 1954], 83–85). Notes as well that letters nos. 36 and 57 also contain confirmation of the collecting of *najwā* dues.

⁸²Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafi’ al-iṣr*, 207–212; *Itti’āz*, II, 24, .

⁸³*Itti’āz*, II, 50. See also *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 390–391 and Halm, “Gottes,” 41–42. For Ibn Ḥajar’s biography see *Rafi’ al-iṣr*, 359–365.

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recording the *majālis* and *musāyārāt* of al-Ḥākim, as his grandfather had done for al-Mu'izz.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, in 396, during his tenure, the *majlis al-ḥikma* was closed by al-Ḥākim at least once.

Meanwhile in Jumādā II 395, al-Ḥākim had created at Cairo an educational institution that had no sectarian focus. This was the *Dār al-ḥikma* (also known as the *Dār al-'ilm*). A number of legal scholars took up residence in it and al-Ḥākim had it generously stocked with books on all sorts of subjects. Any one could go there and copy them; ink, pens, and paper were provided. The ruler also urged the specialists in such fields as mathematics, logic, and medicine to be present in it.⁸⁵ Was this latter establishment intended to rival and counterbalance the Ismaili *majlis*? Or is there no connection between them? In contrast to a much later period, in the reign of al-Ḥākim the *Dār al-ḥikma* and the *Majālis al-ḥikma* were not directly related. Al-Ḥākim retained a clear personal interest the new secular institution but was often at odds with the Ismaili one.

The edict of tolerance from 397 orders that none shall involve themselves in what they cannot understand rather than busying themselves instead in their own livelihood and eschewing involvement in the deeds of the Commander of the Faithful or his commandments. Was this shift in policy linked to changes in the *da'wa*? It is hard to say. A year later al-Ḥākim installed a new chief *qāḍī* on the 16th of Rajab 398. Mālik b. Sa'īd al-Fāriqī, although for thirteen years a subordinate judge to the various descendants of al-Nu'mān, was not himself one of them.⁸⁶ In usual style he first rode to the Old Mosque in Fustāṭ to claim his position as *qāḍī al-quḍāt* and then returned to Cairo to "receive the books of the *da'wa* which were read to the faithful in the palace." Although al-Ḥākim again canceled the *majālis* during this judge's administration, al-Fāriqī lasted six years, nine months and twenty-one days—a fact that was duly noted by Musabbiḥī. Moreover, al-Fāriqī was both highly competent and extremely active. Alone among the judges of the time, he was given the right to appoint his

⁸⁴Rafi' *al-iṣr*, 361.

⁸⁵*Itti'āz*, II, 56; *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 445, 458–460. There is a full description of an endowment given by al-Ḥākim in 400 to support the work of the *Dār al-ḥikma*. See also A. F. Sayyid, p. 31; Van Ess, *Chilastische Erwartungen*, 33–34.

⁸⁶He had been the *nā'ib* of the al-Nu'mān family for thirteen years according to Ibn Ḥajar (see *Rafi' al-iṣr*, appended to al-Kindī, 608). Bianquis, 288.

own deputy. The reason given was his preoccupation with attending to the affairs of al-Ḥākim,⁸⁷ but Maqrīzī says also that he convened an increased number of *majālis*: one for the *awliyā'*, one for the leaders of the state, one for palace servants, another for commoners and casual visitors, and two more for the women (in the palace and in al-Azhar). In each he collected the *najwā* and, at the feast, the *fiṭra*.⁸⁸ In addition, Ibn Hajar reports, "he also supervised correspondence arriving from various governors and the communications with *dā'īs*; it was he who appraised al-Ḥākim of all this."⁸⁹ As with 'Abd al-'Azīz, the Druze canon records fragments of al-Fāriqī's *majālis*,⁹⁰ which means that he not only read from the older books but composed his own sermons for these occasions.

The rise of al-Fāriqī coincided with the fitful and tragic decline of his predecessor, who with his family and brother-in-law, the son of Jawhar, were alternately hounded into fleeing the country or being rehabilitated, until their joint execution in 401. Another prominent figure who held high office at this time, Abu'l-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. al-Maghribī, also attempted escape at the same period, but successfully.⁹¹ At first Ibn al-Maghribī was subsequently involved in a scheme to promote the Aliid leader of Mekka as a rival caliph.⁹² When al-Ḥākim was able to deflate that plan, he move to Baghdad and helped create the famous Baghdad Manifesto of 402 which denied the genealogical claim of Fatimid descent. Al-Maghribī could, of course, profess an intimate knowledge of al-Ḥākim's rule and possibly also the secrets of hidden Fatimid doctrines.⁹³

Unlike this al-Maghribī, but like the former chief judge, the son of Jawhar—himself once commander of the Fatimid armies—and any number of others, the fate of many was a public execution and the confiscation of their property for the special *dīwān* established to

⁸⁷ *Rafi' al-iṣr*, appended to al-Kindī, p. 603.

⁸⁸ *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 282. A. F. Sayyid, "Nuṣūṣ," 29.

⁸⁹ Ibn Hajar, appended to al-Kindī, 605.

⁹⁰ Stern, "Cairo," *Studies*, 239.

⁹¹ Yaḥyā, 198, reports that so many senior officials fled Egypt at this time, al-Ḥākim was forced to mitigate the harshness of his campaign against them.

⁹² A fact noted by, among others, Idrīs, *Uyūn*, VI, 273–75.

⁹³ Bianquis, 304.

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receive on behalf of the state this new form of revenue.⁹⁴ The difficulty of life in Cairo, especially for members of the major established families, was obvious. A great many individuals and groups asked for and received guarantees of security (*amāns*) from al-Ḥākim but these were faint protection. Numerous edicts about religious policy were issued, generally but not consistently, in favor of Sunni practices, and among them was one in 400 “canceling the collection by the *qāḍī* of the *khums*, the *fiṭra*, and the *najwā*.” Another, at the same time, ordered the “cessation of the *majālis al-ḥikma*, which were ordinarily read to the Faithful each Thursday and Friday.”⁹⁵ But some five months later, perhaps slightly less, in 401, yet another decree “restores the *majālis al-ḥikma* and the collection of the *najwā*.”⁹⁶ Shortly thereafter a new edict again stresses that no one is to object to whatever the imam does nor to delve into matters beyond understanding. Elements of the Shiite cult were returned and “the *da'wa* and *majlis* were reinstated according to the usual pattern for them.”⁹⁷

Fear and uncertainty, however, were prevalent. The officers of the state had little or no security and were changed with frightening frequency. Coincidentally, al-Ḥākim's own mode of conduct became less and less standard. His riding in public increased, his dress more and more approximated a plain style, his mount was always a donkey, and he was accompanied by only a few grooms. He added to these nightly trips into the desert. Yet, for Ramaḍān of 403 and 404, he insisted on praying each Friday in one of the four principle congregational mosques: Rāshida, outside the Bāb al-Futūḥ, Azhar and the Old Mosque in Fustāṭ. As he rode to and from prayers, he stopped often to receive petitions and to listen to the common people.⁹⁸ On one Friday in 404, Maqrīzī reports that al-Ḥākim stopped so frequently on his return from al-Azhar and spent so much time talking and laughing with the commoners, he did not reach the palace again

⁹⁴The *dīwān al-mufrad* or *dīwān al-wadī'a*; see al-Kirmānī, *Maṣābiḥ*, 150 (the latter), and *Itti'āz*, II, 81 (the former term, concerning events of the year 400).

⁹⁵*Itti'āz*, II, 82.

⁹⁶*Itti'āz*, II, 85. Note correct reading is “al-najwā.”

⁹⁷*Itti'āz*, II, 86. Maqrīzī says here that “five month passed between the prohibition and permission for that.”

⁹⁸*Itti'āz*, II, 96 and 103.

until sunset.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, in Ṣafar of 404, he assembled various of his followers in the palace and had read to them a decree recognizing his cousin 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Ilyās as the *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn* during his lifetime and the caliph after his death.¹⁰⁰ Thereafter, as al-Ḥākim's riding increased and his ascetic tendencies intensified, 'Abd al-Raḥīm adopted the formal trappings of rule.¹⁰¹ Coins were minted in his name in 404.¹⁰² Al-Ḥākim attempted to divert attention from himself to his new heir apparent. In Rabī' II, 405, he finally order that petitions not be presented to him in person but to 'Abd al-Raḥīm or the *qāḍī al-Fāriqī*.¹⁰³

The Crisis of 405–406

Not long after that, however, al-Ḥākim did away with al-Fāriqī, perhaps because of suspicion on his part of the judge's complicity with Sitt al-Mulk, the caliph's sister and sometime rival.¹⁰⁴ The closing of the *majālis al-ḥikma*, the death of the highly respected al-Fāriqī, as well as the general turmoil and unease throughout the increasingly unstable government, only added to the confusion. The anomalous appointment of 'Abd al-Raḥīm rather than al-Ḥākim's own son created doubt in the most loyal of followers. In this situation al-Ḥākim, who did away with his *wāsiṭa* about the same time, made yet one more surprising move. While the *majlis al-ḥikma* remained closed and while he undertook the general administration himself, he realized that he not do without a chief judge for long. Among those few individuals he himself held in respect one was the blind lexicographer and grammarian Abu'l-Faḍl Ja'far, whom al-Ḥākim had dubbed '*Ālim al-ūlamā'*' and assigned a post in the *Dār al-ilm*. Al-Ḥākim tried out on him the names of various candidates for the judgeship until they came to that

⁹⁹ *Itti'āz*, II, 104.

¹⁰⁰ *Itti'āz*, II, 100–101.

¹⁰¹ *Yahyā*, 205–208.

¹⁰² *Itti'āz*, II, 103.

¹⁰³ *Itti'āz*, II, 105.

¹⁰⁴ The demise of al-Fāriqī took place in Rabī' II 405. See also A. F. Sayyid, "Nuṣūṣ," 32.

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of the Ḥanafī jurist Ibn Abī'l-ʿAwwām. Jaʿfar replied that, although the man was “a supremely competent Egyptian and was fully conversant with the judiciary and the people of the country—there being no Egyptian better suited for the job than he—he does not belong to your *madhhab* nor that your forefathers.”¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, al-Ḥākim accepted this advice and made the appointment, requiring only that four Ismaili jurists were to sit in his court in case a matter arose in which the Ismaili legal view should prevail.¹⁰⁶ Naturally, the decree of appointment, which gave Ibn Abī'l-ʿAwwām control of the judiciary for the whole of the empire except Palestine,¹⁰⁷ did not include the *daʿwa*, which remained, therefore, without direction.¹⁰⁸

On the 18th of Ramaḍān, 404, those who had gathered at the palace to listen to the *majlīs* had found that they were prevented from doing so.¹⁰⁹ How long did this closing last? What relationship did this have to the subsequently death of al-Fāriqī and the decision to appoint a non-Ismaili to the position of *qāḍī al-quḍāt*? Throughout the year 405, al-Ḥākim kept up a frantic pace of outings, riding from Jumādā onward more than twice a day. This is when he commences to use a donkey almost exclusively.¹¹⁰ By the end of the year he had increased his excursions to as much as six a day.¹¹¹ This information comes from Maqrīzī, who in turn must have it from Musabbihī. Al-Ḥākim's behavior had become more and more unfathomable as the

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafiʿ al-ʿisr*, I, 102. Ibn Abī'l-ʿAwwām was born in Egypt in 347. He had been a *shāhid* for Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān and later assumed charge of the *furūd*. There may be some special importance in Jaʿfar's comment about the judge's Egyptian background. Al-Ḥākim himself was born in Egypt. Significantly the two member of al-Nuʿmān's family he demoted and executed both were born in North Africa.

¹⁰⁶ A. F. Sayyid, “Nuṣūṣ,” 37. There was a precedent for this at the time of ʿAlī b. al-Nuʿmān (see *Rafiʿ al-ʿisr*, 408) when a Shāfiʿī jurist was made a judge under similar conditions.

¹⁰⁷ Palestine was given to another judge. Ibn Abī'l-ʿAwwām's territory included specifically Cairo, Alexandria, Mekka and Medina, Libya (Barqa), North Africa, and Sicily.

¹⁰⁸ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 108; Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafiʿ al-ʿisr*, I, 103. Ibn Abī'l-ʿAwwām was given control of prayers, the *khuṭba*, the endowments of mosques as well. He was the first Fatimid judge to hold court in the Old Mosque instead of his own house.

¹⁰⁹ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 103.

¹¹⁰ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 107.

¹¹¹ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 110.

rate of change accelerated. And, at this critical juncture, the flow of information, so detailed and plentiful heretofore, ceases, making an adequate explanation of these complex events henceforth all but impossible.

Up to the end of 405, Maqrīzī could rely on Musabbihī for a mass of details, but beginning with 406 that source was unavailable, or so it appears. As a result Maqrīzī reports little for the remaining years of al-Ḥākim and nothing at all for 407. What happened to Musabbihī? His *Akḥbār miṣr* continued, at least for the period 414-415, which is the only section of the original text to survive. That section is the fortieth part. Maqrīzī also mentions a thirty-fourth part but from a much earlier period. The answer, then, must be that Musabbihī's chronicle ended about 405, even though it resumed ten years later. Perhaps, Musabbihī suffered himself some misfortune in the confusion and uncertainty that befell Fatimid Egypt during the last years of al-Ḥākim.

Beginning with 406, therefore, Yaḥyā, who by then had departed Egypt and moved to Byzantine Antioch, is the best witness to the continuing events in Cairo. His testimony does not have the immediacy and timeliness of Musabbihī, but from 406 onward it becomes vitally important by default nonetheless. In regard to the critical event in question—that of the closing and reopening of the *da'wa* in this period—he reports as follows:

Al-Ḥākim had locked the door of the *majlis*, which was where he had himself received the oath of loyalty (*bay'a*) from his own *shī'a* and where their special wisdom (*'ulūm*) was read to them. It remained locked for a period until Khatkīn the *Ḍayf* was given the title *dā'ī al-du'āt*. Al-Ḥākim returned control of the *majlis* to him and henceforth it functioned in the same manner as it had previously. Subsequent to that, al-Ḥākim added *al-Ṣādiq al-Amīn* to Khatkīn's title.¹¹²

Yaḥyā does not say how long the *majlis* was closed but it cannot

¹¹²Yaḥyā, 209. Note that Yaḥyā includes this information directly after his account of events in 405 when the office of *wāsiṭa* was likewise vacant and when al-Ḥākim ran the government on his own. That report states in part, "he continued without a *wāsiṭa* for a period of four months [beginning Shawwāl 405]. The employees of the various bureaus began to enter themselves into his presence and to seek of him whatever they required and he would order them in each of these matters as he wished."

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have been brief. Khatkīn was not selected until well after the elevation of Ibn Abī'l-'Awwām,¹¹³ probably not until the end of 405 and perhaps the beginning of 406. Maqrīzī's entry for 405 is relatively detailed yet it does not mention either the restoration of the *majlis* or Khatkīn's appointment.

It is in this context that al-Kirmānī comes to play an extraordinary role.¹¹⁴ Already a prominent *dā'ī* in the regions of Baghdad and Basra—that is, Iraq and the territories adjacent—al-Kirmānī was probably already known for a number of his books and treatises. Now, in the period between 405 and 407, when Khatkīn begins to try to restore the status and prestige of the *da'wa* in Cairo, al-Kirmānī leaves Iraq and arrives in Egypt. Did Khatkīn summon him? Did Khatkīn know him from his own previous service in Baghdad?¹¹⁵

One of al-Kirmānī's first known acts was to compose a ringing defense of al-Ḥākim and his imamate, which he called the *Risālat mabāsīm al-bishārāt*.¹¹⁶ This treatise is remarkable in its frank and

¹¹³ Ibn Abī'l-'Awwām was made chief judge in either Jumādā II or Sha'bān 405. Ibn Ḥajar says he favors Sha'bān and adds that there was no *qāḍī* for two or three months prior to this (*Rafi' al-iṣr*, 101). However, in Ibn Ḥajar's biography of al-Fāriqī, he states that Egypt had no chief judge for three months, twenty-three days after him (*Rafi' al-iṣr*, appended to al-Kindī, 608). This places Ibn Abī'l-'Awwām's installation about the 9th of Sha'bān.

¹¹⁴ Little has been written about al-Kirmānī despite his importance. Idrīs devoted a large part of his entry for al-Ḥākim in the *Uyūn al-akhbār* to the achievements of al-Kirmānī (VI, 281–288) including a catalog of his writings. The later Yemeni view of al-Ḥākim's period, thus, apparently found its lasting value in what al-Kirmānī wrote. On al-Kirmānī works in general see Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, 94–102. The first serious attempt to provide a chronology of these works is that of Van Ess, "Zur Chronologie der Werke des Ḥamīdaddīn al-Kirmānī," in an article called "Biobibliographische Notizen zur islamischen Theologie," *Die Welt des Orients* 9 (1978): 255–261. Van Ess gives there all of the hard facts connected with the dates of these treatises, but errs in so far as he relies on internal citations from one work to another. Except in a few quite explicit cases where the context of such a citation indicates that the cited work must precede the one which cites it, al-Kirmānī's writings are riddled with cross references which he himself seems to have added when he revised and reissued them. [Now add to these, particularly in reference to the question of chronology, Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Ḥākim* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1999).]

¹¹⁵ On Kirmānī, see also Van Ess, *Chilastische Erwartungen*, 51–62 (especially 56–62).

¹¹⁶ This work has appeared three times in addition to a substantial quotation from it in Idrīs's *Uyūn al-akhbār* and published with it. M. K. Ḥusayn included it in his *Ṭā'ifat al-Durūz* (Cairo, 1962), 52–71. Mustafa Ghalib first published it in his *al-Ḥarakat al-*

unvarnished admission of the previous troubles within the *majlis al-ḥikma* and in the *da'wa*. Arriving as an immigrant and visitor at the seat of prophetic and Aliid authority—namely Cairo—al-Kirmānī says himself that he found the atmosphere dark with pervasive clouds, the people grievously afflicted, the old order annulled thus denying the *awliyā'* their normal sustenance, and the observance of the *majlis al-ḥikma*, formerly of such benefit, canceled. The esteemed members of the *da'wa*—those most worthy—were lost, perplexed and without power; others presumed to lead but chaos reigned. The city was full of hostility, mutual rejection and recriminations, and colleagues in the *da'wa* were fighting among themselves.¹¹⁷ All this was, according to al-Kirmānī, in large part because the relentless inconsistency in the caliph's actions forced those who so wanted to understand him either to despair of their religious position altogether or to extremism (*ghuluw*).¹¹⁸ In writing the *Mabāsīm al-bishārāt*, al-Kirmānī attempted to quiet those who had begun to despair by affirming the extraordinary nature of al-Ḥākim's era. Because his was not the quieter times of his father and grandfather, unusual events and happenings were to be expected.¹¹⁹ But, al-Kirmānī confidently predicts, the old forecast that at the end of 400 years from the death of the prophet Muḥammad in the year 11, the world of Islam will once again be reunited under one Imam, al-Ḥākim bi-amr Allāh, both Abbasid and Ghaznavid enemies having been by that approaching date vanquished.¹²⁰

Al-Kirmānī's audience for this treatise is the *da'wa* in Cairo. He intended to undertake himself its revival. The question is when. On this the work itself is quite specific; al-Kirmānī says he is writing in a specific Seleucid year nine years prior to 1335.¹²¹ Many manuscripts

bāṭiniyya fi'l-Islām (Beirut) and then reissued it in his edition of the complete set of thirteen epistles (*rasā'il*) which Ismaili tradition groups under al-Kirmānī's name. That collection *Majmū'āt rasā'il al-Kirmānī* (Beirut, 1983) contains eleven treatises by al-Kirmānī, one by a later *dā'ī* and one of anonymous origin. *Mabāsīm al-bishārāt* is pp. 113–133. The anonymous work, *Khazā'in al-adilla*, is from the time of al-Ḥākim and appears to be a summary of doctrines in treatises of al-Kirmānī's predecessor Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, particular the latter's *al-Yanābī'* and *al-Iftikhār*.

¹¹⁷ *Mabāsīm*, Ḥusayn edition, 52–53; Ghalib, *Majmū'a*, 113–114.

¹¹⁸ Ḥusayn edition, 53, 62; Ghalib, 123, 144.

¹¹⁹ Ḥusayn edition, 57–58; Ghalib, 119.

¹²⁰ 12th *faṣl*; see Van Ess, *Chilastische Erwartungen*, 59–62.

¹²¹ Husain edition, 65; Ghalib, 126.

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give as the year in question 1327. Some others make it 1326.¹²² Van Ess strongly supports 1326 and based on that states definitively that the treatise was written in the Hijra year 405.¹²³ This means, in turn, that al-Kirmānī arrived in Cairo during that year, not later as often reported. Arguing that he came to Cairo in 405, when the *majlis* was definitely closed, closely fits his own description of the situation he found there. On the other hand, the manuscripts, which give 1327, may well accurately convey al-Kirmānī's own text. There is no other reason for writing a seven in place of six. If this is, in fact, correct then al-Kirmānī was saying that the nine years between his time and 1335 includes both 1327 and 1335, possibly because he wrote at the beginning of 1327. The Seleucid year begins Oct. 1st and thus the corresponding Hijra years are Rabī'a II, 405 to 406, and Rabī'a II, 406 to 407. If al-Kirmānī wrote the *Mabāsīm al-bishārāt* at the beginning of 1327, it places it in the latter part of the first half of 406. The work of reconstituting the *da'wa* had recently begun under Khatkīn, although as yet al-Kirmānī does not mention him. Despite dating this treatise to 406 by this method, surely al-Kirmānī had seen something of the unhappiness that previously prevailed amongst the faithful.

Not long afterward al-Kirmānī was further encouraged to undertake a series of lectures and writings to shore up the *da'wa*.¹²⁴ The first of these, called the *Risāla al-durriya fī ma'nā al-tawhīd wa al-muwahḥid*, carried an explicit recognition of Khatkīn's role.¹²⁵ By now Khatkīn was the "door (*bāb*) to the imam's mercy, entitled *al-Ṣādiq al-Ma'mūn*, *dā'ī al-du'āt*."¹²⁶ Khatkīn's job was to order and protect "the sons of the rightly guiding *da'wa*." The title *al-Ṣādiq al-Ma'mūn* is that mentioned by Yaḥyā of Antioch.

Other treatises by al-Kirmānī followed this one and in addition he must have promoted his previous works, perhaps teaching them in

¹²²In support of 1326 are Kraus, Van Ess and one of the two manuscripts used by Ghalib to edit Idrīs's *Uyūn al-akhbār* (VI, 251). For 1327 are Ghalib's editions, Ḥusayn's edition and the other manuscript of the *Uyūn*.

¹²³"Zur Chronologie/al-Kirmānī," 255, 256–257, and n. 8, p. 256.

¹²⁴The series most likely includes *al-Risāla al-durriya*, *al-Risāla al-naẓm*, *al-Risāla al-raḍīya*, *al-Risāla al-muḍī'a*, and *al-Risāla al-rawḍa* in that order (they are numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 in the standard *Majmū'a*).

¹²⁵*Majmū'a*, 19.

¹²⁶p. 20.

the *majālis*. Generally, these works of al-Kirmānī are erudite and highly philosophical. His vision of what the *da'wa* should include basically supports Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's requirement of formal, legal observance but adds to it a complex intellectual doctrine not dissimilar to that of al-Fārābī or, more particularly, Ibn Sīnā, his contemporary.¹²⁷ This intellectual tendency, however, must have caused yet another trial for the faithful in Cairo.

The Druze Threat

Meanwhile the enigmatic al-Ḥākim continued to defy reasonable predictions. Already the treatises by al-Kirmānī and al-Naysabūrī had warned that expecting to understand the personal activities of the imam was hazardous.¹²⁸ One result was loss of faith but the other was possibly worse, an extremist wish to identify al-Ḥākim with the divine.¹²⁹ Ismailism, and Shiism, for that matter, had never been entirely free of those who wanted to elevate 'Alī above the Prophet and the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of scripture ahead of scripture itself. The establishment within the *da'wa*—writers like al-Kirmānī—had to insist over and over again that proper observance and worship contained both physical deeds and spiritual knowledge. The law, the *sharī'a*, was, and remained, absolutely essential. Nevertheless, members of the *da'wa* often voiced a more radical view—one that denied the law in favor of the spiritual interpretation of it. One element of the trouble in Cairo clearly belongs to this problem.

Another, however, was to have even greater ramifications. The influx of *dā'īs* from far away provinces included several who began to preach the most extreme form of this heresy. Their argument was that, once the law is dead, only the living imam is real: all truth resides in him; all else is false. This doctrine, coupled with the pro-

¹²⁷ al-Kirmānī's as yet unpublished *al-Risāla al-Waḍī'a* includes a fairly lengthy summary of the ritual obligations of an Ismaili Muslim not dissimilar to Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's *Da'ā'im al-Islām*. Moreover, al-Kirmānī cites al-Nu'mān in several places: *Rāḥat al-'aql*, 20; *al-Kāfiya*, 165.

¹²⁸ For example, al-Kirmānī, *Mabasim*, Husain, 69; Ghalib, 130–131; al-Naysabūrī, *Ithbāt*, 90.

¹²⁹ al-Naysabūrī, *Ithbāt*, 92.

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found enigma of the current imam, produced a reaction in the last years of al-Ḥākim against the intellectualism of al-Kirmānī and the formalism of the established *dā'īs*. Seeking to bypass Ismaili tradition and its *da'wa* and to link directly into the unique personal inspiration of al-Ḥākim himself, the dissentients began to propagate the idea of his divinity.

During the time of al-Ḥākim's caliphate, three main figures are normally recognized as belong to this movement: al-Darazī, al-Akhram and Ḥamza. The first played apparently a minor role except in lending his own name to the Druze. Subsequently, it became the name outsiders used for the sect that grew out of these events. Al-Akhram carried particular importance mostly because in Jumādā II 408, al-Kirmānī addressed a letter to him, setting out the doctrine of those who challenged the traditional teachings and rebutting them. Two themes stand out in al-Kirmānī's epistle: that those who had rejected the *da'wa* questioned its intellectual abstraction, on the one hand, and denied its historical understanding of prophethood, on the other. Their answer was an instinctive grasping for something palpable and real: an object of worship present and visible. In regard to the claim of al-Ḥākim's divinity, al-Kirmānī refers to it as "the doctrine of your associates." It is, in any case, a claim al-Ḥākim himself denies, according to al-Kirmānī. All in all, al-Kirmānī notes, there is amply grounds for "unleashing against you the penalty of the sword," were it not (ironically) for the stern injunction, in force at the time, not to interfere in any one else's religion.¹³⁰

The associates of al-Akhram may have included al-Darazī but most certainly Ḥamza and his followers, who had begun their own form of a *da'wa*—one proclaiming the divinity of al-Ḥākim—in the year 408. In 409 they inexplicably ceased to preach openly, allowing a respite in the gathering conflict between them and the establishment. So great was the antagonism already, Yaḥyā reports, that whenever the partisans of Ḥamza, known by his chosen title *al-Hādī*, would

¹³⁰ *al-Risāla al-wā'iẓa* (edited M. K. Husain, *Majallat kulliyat al-ādāb* [Cairo] 14 [1952]: 1–29), pp. 27–29; ed. Ghalib, *Majmū'a*, 134–47, pp. 145–46. Van Ess, *Chilistische Erwartungen*, 65. Note that al-Ḥākim's edicts, such as that of 397, forbade interfering directly in anyone else's religious practice. Although al-Ḥākim as imam might do so, no other person, even officials of the *da'wa*, were permitted to act against another Muslim. Thus the *da'wa* had no authority to chastise the instigators of the Ḥākim cult, except by words and exhortation.

encounter those of Khatkīn, the two sides would engage in mutual cursing. Each had already declared the other heretical.¹³¹

About this time al-Ḥākim, apparently not satisfied with his nomination of 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Ilyās, recognized the son of the amir Ibrāhīm Abū Hāshim, an uncle of his, as *walī 'ahd al-mu'minīn*, and appointed him to supervise a number of affairs in the government.¹³² Yaḥyā says that the caliph was frequently sick, was more and more ascetic in personal habits, and stopped most of his regular activities of a public kind.¹³³ The new appointment of al-'Abbās b. Shu'ayb as heir apparent for the faithful should have given this person a higher status than 'Abd al-Raḥīm, who in any case, was sent off to Damascus as its governor. A later Druze epistle argues that it is precisely because Ibn Shu'ayb's title is better than that of Ibn Ilyās, although the latter was much closer to al-Ḥākim, that it is known that reality here is the opposite of the truth.¹³⁴ Whatever actually went on, either in the mind of al-Ḥākim or in the public explanation of these actions, the Druze texts at least confirm the general events in question. They recognize in opposition to the truth hierarchy of their religion a set of opponents, the *didd*. Except for Ḥamza, who was most likely himself a product of the Cairo *majālis al-ḥikma* under 'Abd al-'Azīz and then al-Fāriqī, until his rebellion and self-proclaimed prophecy about 408, the rest of the Druze hierarchy does not show up in the non-Druze sources and may not have played a prominent role in Cairo itself. The *didd*, by contrast, are perfectly familiar: the *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn*, 'Abd al-Raḥīm; the *walī 'ahd al-mu'minīn*, al-'Abbās b. Shu'ayb; the *dā'ī al-du'āt*, Khatkīn; the *'Ālim al-'ulamā'*, Ja'far; and the *qāḍī al-quḍāt*, Ibn Abī'l-'Awwām. Although all five were members of the establishment, the last two named were not Ismaili, but that does not seem to have had a bearing on the Druze attitude toward them. That these five play this role in Druze thought probably means that all of them continued in their respective positions throughout both 408 and especially 410,

¹³¹ Yaḥyā, 223–224.

¹³² Yaḥyā, 219–220.

¹³³ Yaḥyā, 217–220, 224.

¹³⁴ No. 17 of the Druze canon, *Risālat al-tanzīh*, 189–90.

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when Ḥamza reopened his *da'wa*.¹³⁵ Al-Kirmānī's absence from this list is strange but may be because he never received or held an official position in Cairo. It also suggests that perhaps he was not in Cairo for the final confrontation during the year 410. His magnum opus, the *Rāḥat al-ʿaql*, was revised and completed in Iraq in 411, indicating that he had returned to his former home by then if not before.

One final event requires comment. When al-Ḥākim rode off into the Muqaṭṭam hills, two days before the end of Shawwāl in 411, and did not return, he acted out a scenario long a staple in Shiite lore, the occultation of the imam, the *ghayba*. Whatever the truth of the stories later circulated to explain how he might have died, it was imperative for the mainstream establishment convincingly to prove that he was dead and that his imamate was over.¹³⁶ It fell to the sister Sitt al-Mulk both to "invent" the story of the imam's murder so that her nephew al-Zāhir could proclaim a new *da'wa* and to bear the subsequent scandal of being taken as an willing participant in al-Ḥākim's assassination.

Conclusions

The foregoing account of the *da'wa* during the reign of al-Ḥākim followed the trail of evidence as far as it leads. Naturally, the results leave numerous questions unanswered or only partially explained. Nevertheless, for certain elements of the general problem, a clearer picture emerged from this analysis. For example, good evidence suggests that a general enthusiasm for the Ismaili movement and its Shiite *da'wa* remained in effect throughout the first decade or so of al-Ḥākim's government, although it seemed to falter and decline at a later stage. Devotion to the religious message of the Fatimid caliph, however, was never especially wide spread; Egypt was and remained a Sunni country. But Shiism of the Ismaili variety enjoyed considerable success, particularly if such an achievement is defined by attendance at the *majālis al-ḥikma* and the payment of the distinctive dues

¹³⁵ *Risālat al-tanzīh* (no. 17) and no. 13, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, come from the second year of Ḥamza's mission, i.e. 410. Bianquis, 364. Note that the second year of the Druze era is 410, not 409 which is not counted. See Van Ess, *Chilistische Erwartungen*, 78.

¹³⁶ The technical term for this position is *qaṭ'iyya*.

associated with membership in this uniquely Ismaili institution. But, as the unpredictable reforms of al-Ḥākim increased in scope and intensity and his unusual, public persona began to undergo bizarre changes, the perception of him was blurred and became confused. Loyalty to him commenced to waver. Because he seldom favored unambiguously and in fact frequently castigated his own Ismaili following, many of them progressively lost their commitment to his *da'wa*. Lack of guidance became crucial and, in the latter half of his reign, he ceased to provide it, except fitfully. As a consequence the *da'wa* floundered. Not only did the Ismaili community begin to despair of its own convictions, but the drive to proselytize and propagate its message lost its operating rationale. In these unique circumstances, the apologetic pleas of contemporary *dā'īs*, such as al-Kirmānī and al-Naysābūrī, have added poignancy. Both men represent the *da'wa* outside of the empire and away from Cairo. Their faith continued undiminished and undaunted by the adverse reputation of their eccentric imam. In contrast the *da'wa* in the capital, at the very seat of apostolic authority, undoubtedly suffered a severe setback when it could no longer maintain confidence in its own attachment to an imam it could not understand. The internal *da'wa* drifted toward the polarized extremes al-Naysābūrī and al-Kirmānī warned against: either to give up one's faith or to accept the divinity of al-Ḥākim. These appear strange alternatives but they define accurately both what began to occur and what the establishment, knowing other examples from Shiite history, said it feared would happen. In this situation al-Ḥākim relinquished control over the government one final time. Beginning near the end of 405, he introduced yet another set of reforms designed to allow him to withdraw from his previous public commitments. A major beneficiary was the *da'wa*. At its lowest point in terms of direction and morale, al-Ḥākim permitted a trusted senior agent and advisor, Khatkīn, to renew its mandate and to set it back on whatever course he should determine for it. Khatkīn in turn granted a sub commission to al-Kirmānī, the most gifted theoretical mind in the entire *da'wa*, and charged him with the responsibility of reestablishing its once widely recognized intellectual respectability. The combined effort of Khatkīn and al-Kirmānī came just in time. The two opposing forces of disintegration and deification were about to split al-Ḥākim's following. These two leaders of the Ismaili establishment subsequently reinvigorated the teachings of the mission,

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thereby restoring the guidance the *da'wa* was missing, and vigorously attached the proponents of deification. Because of their efforts, Ḥamza and his associates were defeated, at least within Egypt, and the Ismaili *da'wa*, as well as its *dawla*, survived, to be passed to al-Zāhir, the son and successor of an imam soon to disappear from the scene.

IV

ANOTHER FAMILY OF FATIMID CHIEF QĀḌĪS: THE AL-FĀRIQĪS

Almost a century ago Richard Gottheil published an important article entitled “A Distinguished family of Fatimide Cadis (al-Nu‘mān) in the Tenth Century.”¹ His purpose was to call attention, not simply to the founding member of this influential family, but to his descendants who occupied, one after the other, the highest position in the Fatimid judicial system. Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān was even then famous for his role in creating an Ismaili law, for several books on the Fatimid imams and one on the establishment of the dynasty, although at the time none of them had been published. In fact accurate information about them was generally lacking altogether in modern scholarship. Fortunately, however, over the intervening years copies of many of these same works have been located, edited, and published and the investigation of Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān’s career has received considerable scrutiny by a number of competent scholars.²

The situation with regard to the lives and careers of his descendants is not quite as favorable and that makes Gottheil’s original article still valuable. Moreover, Gottheil’s major contribution in that piece was to publish for the first time the various biographies of Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān’s family members from Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī’s essential work on the judges of Egypt, the *Raf‘ al-iṣr ‘an quḍāt miṣr* (“Raising the Burden from the Judges of Egypt”). Although Ibn Ḥajar wrote this study of Egypt’s judges in the mid-15 century³, he gathered his information from much older sources which included, most significantly,

¹*Journal of the American Oriental Society* 27 (1906): 217–296.

²See, for example, Ismail Poonawala, “al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān’s Works and the Sources,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 36 (1973): 109–15; Poonawala, “A Reconsideration of al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān’s *Madhhab*,” *BSOAS* 37 (1974): 572–579; and Wilfred Madelung, “The Sources of Ismā‘īlī Law,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 35 (1976): 29–40.

³In 852/1448 according to Ḥājjī Khalīfa. See Gottheil, p. 224–5; “Ibn Ḥajar,” *EI2*.

al-Musabbihī's *Akhbār miṣr*, a massive account of Egyptian history composed during the very period that it chronicles. Al-Musabbihī was an amir in the Fatimid government, a confidant of its rulers and elite, and an eyewitness to many of the events he recorded. Since most of it is now lost, any quotation or transmission of information from it is highly important. In this case, moreover, Ibn Ḥajar himself had chosen to focus on the lives of judges and that had forced him to bring together for this purpose whatever facts he could find about these very descendants of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān.

Ironically, although Gottheil had made Ibn Ḥajar's Arabic text of these biographies available (along with an English translation), the whole of the work itself has never been published.* In an appendix to his edition of al-Kindī's *Judges of Egypt*, Guest published the same material plus some additions,⁴ and much later an edition of the first part of Ibn Ḥajar's whole work began to appear in Egypt, only to end with at least a third of the text yet to be published.⁵

Nevertheless, thanks to the work of Gottheil and others after him, the al-Nu'mān family and their importance to the governance of the Fatimid state has become fairly well known. But there were all along several other major families that played a significant role in Fatimid history. The study of these members of the ruling elite, moreover, helps reveal crucial factors in the success, or lack of it, for the dynasty as a whole. Political, especially when limited to the caliphs, and military history do not adequately explain how the state functioned. It is quite useful, accordingly, to investigate the elites, especially the bureaucratic elite, as is in this case, and to come to understand their position in underpinning and supporting the governing structure.

One more major family that appears reasonably clearly in the sources but which has not received scholarly attention is that of the al-Fāriqīs, who first rose to prominence under the descendants of al-Nu'mān but then continued to provide several chief judges and *wazīrs*

* [At the time of writing, the quite recent, complete edition of this work by 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar (Cairo, 1998) was not yet known to me.]

⁴*Kitāb al-Wulāt wa kitāb al-quḍāt*, ed. Guest (Leiden, 1912).

⁵Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Raf' al-iṣr 'an quḍāt miṣr*, al-Juz' al-awwal fī qismayn, ed. Ḥāmid 'Abd al-Majīd (Cairo, 1957–61). All references in this article are to this older edition except where noted.

on their own. Although by the measure of their scholarly credentials alone they were not nearly as distinguished as the al-Nu'māns, mainly because their founder never came close to Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's towering eminence as a scholar of law, they nonetheless occupied a similar niche in the history of the Fatimid empire.

While it is simply undeniable that Qāḍī al-Nu'mān deserved the fame and honor he earned in his lifetime and was later accorded him retrospectively—his writings continued to speak for him and it is no accident that his law books became the standard sources and manuals of practice for Ismaili *fiqh* in all subsequent periods—his role as a judge is less certain although it was also highly significant.⁶ Yet, despite moving to Cairo at the end of his life with the caliph al-Mu'izz, he never became chief judge of Egypt. The Fatimids kept in that position Abū Ṭāhir al-Dudhlī, a Mālikī jurist held over from the previous regime. Only when Abū Ṭāhir grew too infirm to preside was he finally replaced with Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's son 'Alī in 366. 'Alī's elevation was the beginning of the family's dominance over the judiciary in Egypt and elsewhere, but there is evidence that even he was never granted absolute control over all sections of it. However, when he was replaced in 374 by his brother Muḥammad, the latter's authority had increased significantly. And, finally in 389 with the appointment of 'Alī's son al-Ḥusayn, a grandson of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān and the third member of his clan to succeed him, the accumulation of formal titles and attendant authority in the hands of this family was complete.

Fortunately, in contrast to earlier instances of appointments to the position of chief judge, for al-Ḥusayn, the text of his formal *sijill*—the court issued diploma of investiture as *qāḍī*—is preserved in its entirety in al-Qalqashandī's encyclopedic manual of chancery practice.⁷

⁶*Fiqh* is the formal understanding of the law and a *faqīh* is the person who determines what, based on its sacred sources, the law is. The equivalent English term is "jurisprudent." A judge, a *qāḍī*, merely applies the law to specific cases that come before him and he often has to consult a *faqīh* in order to find out what the law is. Qāḍī al-Nu'mān would certainly be considered both a *faqīh* and a *qāḍī* since he was competent in *fiqh* and active as a judge. It is not clear, however, which of his descendants or which of the al-Fāriqīs might have been regarded as learned in legal theory and law beyond that necessary for its application as a *qāḍī*. The sources available do not indicate, in any case, that any of them wrote works on law.

⁷*Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā'* (Cairo: 1912–1938), X, 384–88. On al-Ḥusayn's appointment, see also al-Maqrīzī's *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā' bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-fāṭimiyyīn al-*

It sets out clearly the vast responsibilities of the new *qāḍī al-quḍāt*, the “judge of judges,”⁸ who, as his title now indicates, was to appoint his own subordinate judges, not only in the cities of Egypt, such as Fustat, Cairo, and Alexandria, but elsewhere in the empire as well, such as Mecca, Madina, the towns of Syria, North Africa (the Maghrib) and Sicily.⁹ As chief judge he was also to supervise the mosques, pious endowments, the mint, and the bureau of weights and measures. Beyond this al-Ḥusayn was made the chief *dāʾī* of the empire, the *dāʾī al-duʿāt*, and that gave him control of the *daʿwa* both at home and abroad. Normally his duties in this latter office had him presiding at the weekly “session of wisdom” (the *majlis al-ḥikma*)¹⁰ wherein he read to the faithful regular lessons in Ismaili doctrine and collected a fee (the *naḥwā*) paid by them to support the imam and his work. Whereas he held the *qāḍī*’s court in his house in Fustat, these sessions of Ismaili teaching were given either in various rooms of the royal palace or in the mosque of al-Azhar, both in Cairo.¹¹

It must be noted that during the reign of al-Ḥākim (as was the case for most of early Fatimid history), there was no *wazīr* and thus the chief judge and chief *dāʾī* were beholden to no superior other than the imam-caliph. These positions were accordingly more powerful in that era than they were to become later when they were most often subservient to the *wazīr*(s).

Following the deposition of al-Ḥusayn, his cousin ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, the son of Muḥammad, was appointed to the same set of offices, making him the fifth member of the family to hold what was basically an analogous degree of responsibility. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was also the third of them to have such a position during the reign of al-Ḥākim, which

khulafāʾ, vol. I, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl and vols. II-III, ed. Muḥammad Ḥilmī Muḥammad Aḥmad, Cairo, 1967-1973), II, 23, and his biography in the same author’s *al-Muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. M. al-Yaʿlāwī, 8 vols. (Beirut, 1991), no. 1253.

⁸Later authorities such as al-Maqrīzī insist that al-Ḥusayn was the first of the Fatimids to have this title.

⁹Sicily is not cited by name in this particular *sijill* but seems to have been implied. Other examples from about the same time do mention Sicily.

¹⁰The term *majlis* (plural *majālis*) somewhat ambiguously refers both to the event, that is the session itself, and to the text of the lecture given or read in the session.

¹¹The *sijill* appointing al-Ḥusayn *qāḍī al-quḍāt*, however, does not specify his duties as *dāʾī*.

had commenced already in the period of Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān. But when al-Ḥākim decided to remove 'Abd al-'Aziz in 398/1008, he decline to continue what may have by then have seemed a tradition. Instead of yet another descendant of al-Nu'mān, he selected for the combined office of judge and *dā'ī*, Mālik b. Sa'īd al-Fāriqī, who was previously *qāḍī* of Cairo, acting in that role as a deputy of the *qāḍī al-quḍāt*.

In fact Mālik had been a major figure in the judiciary for the past thirteen years and was thus in all likelihood the senior judge within the system. His elevation to the supreme rank of *qāḍī al-quḍāt* was therefore natural, except in that such a move ended the dominance of the al-Nu'mān family.¹² Mālik was also appointed *dā'ī al-du'āt*, which suggests that he had strong ties to the Ismaili community and was viewed as one of them. Or, at the least, he was considered religiously devoted to al-Ḥākim, the imam for whom the *da'wa* made its appeal. Unfortunately, there is no information about Mālik's background beyond the name of his father, Sa'īd, and grandfather, Mālik,¹³ and the *nisba* of origin *al-fāriqī* which means someone from Mayyāfāriqīn, a town in the Diyarbakr region of north Mesopotamia.¹⁴ This *nisba*

¹²Ibn Khallikān, for example, felt it necessary to comment on this fact even though he must have been aware that yet another descendant of al-Nu'mān was to occupy this position in later times. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās, 8 vols. (Beirut, 1968), vol. 5, p. 422, trans. De Slane, vol. 3, p. 572.

¹³The grandfather's name is given in some sources as Sa'īd instead of Mālik. [It is important to add here another al-Fāriqī, Abu'l-Qāsim Sa'īd b. Sa'īd, who was the tutor of the young al-Ḥākim. He is mentioned as standing to the caliph's immediate left just after the killing of Barjawān in 390 (*Itti'āz*, II, 27). In the following year, 391, al-Ḥākim ordered him killed. The report by al-Maqrīzī runs as follows (*Itti'āz*, II, 42): "...al-Ḥākim executed his tutor Abu'l-Qāsim Sa'īd b. Sa'īd al-Fāriqī while he was walking alongside him by motioning to the Turks with his eyes after having contrived with them to kill this man. He was then cut down by their swords. It was he who introduced al-Ḥākim to the affair of state and read to him petitions. He had been allowed into such matters as if he were a wazīr." I have not found anywhere, however, a statement as to exactly how this Sa'īd is related to the judge Mālik, although possibly they were brothers. However, given the age difference and the chance that the common grandfather was Sa'īd and not Mālik, this Sa'īd b. Sa'īd could well be the judge's father rather than brother.]

¹⁴Mayyāfāriqīn was about 25 kilometers north of the Tigris in the region north of the modern town of Mardin.

obviously became the equivalent of a family name for the many al-Fāriqīs, although alone it says little about why.

Because his period in office had been carefully covered by al-Musabbiḥī, a relatively large amount of information about Mālik's career and character was available to those historians who still possessed a copy of this chronicle, mainly Ibn Ḥajar, whose biographical entry on him is fairly substantial, and al-Maqrīzī, whose work on the Fatimids, the *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'*, included more detail for the period of Mālik's career than for many others precisely because he found ample material about it in his sources.

The investiture of Mālik and the accompanying ceremony is, accordingly, described more fully than for most other instances of the kind.¹⁵ Al-Musabbiḥī had copied Mālik's *sijill* of appointment into his account verbatim and must have observed personally the event as a whole. The new supreme judge received his gold threaded robes and turban,¹⁶ and sword in the palace. He was also given one richly caparisoned mule and two others loaded with luxurious goods. As his *sijill* was being read out to those assembled in the palace, Mālik stood and, at each mention of al-Ḥākim's name, he knelt down and kissed the floor. After completion of this ceremony, the entire court with all its notables proceeded en masse from Cairo to Fustat and to a repetition of the same formalities in the Old Mosque of 'Amr.

Mālik was himself noted for his eloquence, for his clemency, above all for his generosity. The latter trait seems to have left a distinct impression and he was later remembered for having never turned away those who sought his help. There are several examples of his judicial acts in which, to solve a hotly disputed matter between contenting parties, he provided funds for a settlement out of his own pocket. A woman claimed that she had been married to a man who denied it. The judge gave the man money with which he could then arrange a divorce for the woman by their paying an agreed compensation out of these same funds. In another instance, a dispute about whether a woman owned a house or whether it was *waqf* property was

¹⁵This is not to say that Mālik was accorded extraordinary attention but that the investiture ceremonies of his period, as recorded by al-Musabbiḥī, are described in significant detail.

¹⁶*Qamīs, ghilāla, 'imāma, and ṭaylasān.*

solved by the judge donating his own money to settle the matter. Yet one more case involved a man accuse of stealing silver candlesticks from the mosque in Fustat. The man's excuse was that the candlesticks were God's property and his daughters were destitute and hungry. The *qāḍī* again used his own funds to provide for these same daughters and the candlesticks were promptly restored to the mosque.

Not all such stories were as simple or could be resolved as happily. In one more instance of the judge's penchant for generosity it caused him considerable risk and eventual peril. It occurred during the period when al-Ḥākim had ordered that no woman should appear on the street and, to make sure that it did not happen, had actually forbidden shoemakers from fashioning shoes for women so that they would be physically unable to go out at all. Mālik happened to pass by a house from which he heard a woman pleading for help and calling out to him. She said that her brother was in a terrible way and that she wanted to go to see him before he died. The judge, at great risk to himself, took pity on her and, in direct violation of the law, had her escorted by his men to the brother's house and once there locked securely inside. A short time later, he began to realize his mistake and suspect the worst. The woman's husband soon appeared before him asking the whereabouts of his wife who, he swore up and down, had no brother. The judge then knew he had aided and abetted the commission of a horrendous evil and not the least of his misdeeds had been to countermand the explicit order of al-Ḥākim. Understanding that the imam would soon know everything, he went immediately to explain his error and beg forgiveness, which was apparently granted. The police were dispatched at once to the house where, upon entering, they discovered the woman and her lover quite intoxicated and sound asleep wrapped in each other's arms. Both, needless to say, suffered the severest punishment.

Despite this last episode and in all likelihood because of the other instances of his unfailing generosity, al-Ḥākim clearly favored Mālik in ways that he had not any of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's descendants. In fact there is a fair amount of evidence that al-Ḥākim distrusted all of the latter's family. On Mālik, by contrast, he showered gifts of material

goods and properties of land.¹⁷ On one occasion al-Ḥākim gave him outright a grand house that formerly belonging to the amīr Muflīh, who was known as the “Bearded (eunuch),” including with it all of the sumptuous contents that were to be found inside. Al-Ḥākim kept raising Mālik’s status and bringing him into an ever more intimate relationship with himself. He, for example, ate constantly at al-Ḥākim’s table, where he was seated in a more lofty position than any judge who preceded him. On public occasions Mālik ascended the *minbar* with the caliph and, for the years 401 and 402, al-Ḥākim delegated him to lead prayers, give the *khutba*, and make the sacrifice on the feast days in the imam’s own place.¹⁸

The range of Mālik’s duties included all those of his predecessors and one list of them specifies the following¹⁹: the judiciary (*al-qadāʾ*), the court of appeals against injustices (*al-mazālim*)²⁰, supervision of pious endowments (*al-aḥbās*), the religious appeal (*al-daʿwa*), the mint (*dār al-ḍarb*), the bureau of weights and measures (*dār al-ʿiyār*), and the command of the *adyāf* corps²¹ (*amr al-adyāf*). To oversee all of these institutions personally would have been impossible; Mālik obvious had to delegate many matters and some of his deputies are named in the sources. But the demands on his time were even more extreme than indicated by this list. Al-Ḥākim required his presence constantly

¹⁷On specific *iqṭāʾāt* granted Mālik, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 77.

¹⁸*Ittiʿāz*, II, 79, 82, 85, 88, 90, 91, 98–9. Two other facts are of interest in this regard: in 404 when al-Ḥākim decided to make an endowment specifically to support the mosques of al-Azhar, Rashida, and Maqs plus the Dār al-ʿilm, he had Mālik draw up the deed (*waqfiyya*) and attest to it; in 403 Mālik apparently began to build an observatory (*raṣad*), which likely was also a project of the imam who was known to have an interest in astronomy. On this project see the *Ittiʿāz*, II, 95.

¹⁹This list is given by al-Maqrīzī, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 106–07, as a part of his obituary notice for Mālik.

²⁰Frequently the court of grievances and petitions (*mazālim*) was not within the jurisdiction of the *qādī* but went either to an independent judge or to the *wazīr*. Because Mālik’s original appointment had omitted it, for example, when it was added to his responsibilities in 401, a second elaborate ceremony of investiture was thought to be necessary.

²¹This corps of paramilitary supporters of the Ismaili establishment was unique to that time and is, as a consequence, poorly known. On it see my article “The Ismaili *Daʿwa* in the Reign of the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 30 (1993): 161–182, pp. 168–70. [No. III in the present volume; see pp. 14–18.]

and yet Mālik also enthusiastically performed, not merely his duties as a judge, but those of chief *dā'ī* in addition. In the latter role it was he who received all the correspondence coming in from the *dā'īs* abroad and then appraised the imam of what messages it contained and what was happening elsewhere in the vast network of the *da'wa*. He also regularly prepared and read the various weekly *majālis al-ḥikma*, which during his tenure, increased in frequency to as many as five a week, each given in a different place and for a different audience.²² No. 42 of the Druze Epistles, *al-Risāla al-mawsūma bi'l-tanbīh wa'l-ta'nīb wa'l-tawbīkh wa'l-tawfīq* by Bahā' al-Dīn, mentions a 144th *majlis* that was read to the faithful by Mālik.²³ It is unclear, however, if this citation implies that this was Mālik's own *majlis* number 144, which would mean that he had already himself given well over one hundred prior to it.²⁴

Nevertheless, despite ample evidence of the high regard al-Ḥākim had for al-Fāriqī, in the year 405, after he had held office for six years, nine months and twenty-one days, the imam ordered his execution. The cause is reported to have been Mālik's visits to the house of Sitt al-Mulk, al-Ḥākim's sister, complicity with whom the imam regarded as treason in some manner. Nothing in this affair is quite clear; but it is the only information available to explain al-Fāriqī's sudden fall from grace. Even after putting Mālik to death, al-Ḥākim honored his two sons, the older, Abu'l-Faraj, by having him ride in public processions and the younger by allowing both to inherit their father's land holdings completely even though much, if not most, of the estate had been a gift from the imam. The net income from it is reported to have been 15,000 dinars per annum²⁵; the sons of Mālik were thus very rich indeed.

²²See Walker "The Ismaili Da'wa," 175.

²³See p. 331 of the Beirut edition of the Druze Epistles. Also A. I. Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes* (Paris, 1838), XI, 678; and S. M. Stern, "Cairo as the Centre of the Ismā'ili Movement," [reprinted in his *Studies in Early Ismā'ilism* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 234–256], 239.

²⁴Even if he read the same *majlis* to all of the various audiences in any given week, that still requires fifty or more a year. A 144th would then put it in his third year in office, i.e. sometime in 401 or 402.

²⁵*Itti'āz*, II, 107.

To replace Mālik, al-Ḥākim again ignored the family of al-Nu'mān (as well as that of al-Fāriqī). As *qāḍī al-quḍāt*, in accord with a recommendation given him by a trusted advisor, Ja'far, the blind scholar who was known as the 'Ālim al-'ulamā', al-Ḥākim picked Ibn Abi'l-'Awwām, who was not only not an Ismaili but was a Ḥanbalī, a *madhhab* noted for its animosity to the Shī'ites.* This man had, however, occupied a number of important posts in the judiciary and was considered in local circles a quite competent jurist. For the position of *dā'ī al-du'āt* the imam turned to a member of his private staff, Khatkīn al-Ḍayf. The three men just mentioned—Ja'far, Ibn Abi'l-'Awwām, and Khatkīn al-Ḍayf—all subsequently had a major role in the Druze crisis that was to occur not long afterward.

References to the al-Fāriqīs, however, disappear from then on until nearly a decade later when, from the year 414, there is a report of Mālik's son Abu'l-Faraj being appointed *qāḍī* of the eastern Nile Delta city of Tinnīs.²⁶ By then Khatkīn had been replaced as *dā'ī al-du'āt* by Qāsim the son of 'Abd al-'Azīz, the former chief judge, *dā'ī*, and member of the al-Nu'mān family. Thus at least the *da'wa* had returned to the control of this family. Ibn Abi'l-'Awwām remained chief judge until his death in 418. Only then was he succeeded by this same Qāsim, finally bringing a complete restoration of the al-Nu'māns to the elaborate domain they had once held.

Qāsim, who was never highly regarded by those who encountered him and whose claim to office was obviously based solely on his lineage, lasted as judge barely more than a year before he was removed. Nevertheless, the *da'wa* remained in his hands for another twenty-two years.²⁷ As the *qāḍī al-quḍāt*, the government now selected

*[Since writing this I discovered that the claim of this man's Ḥanbalī affiliation is most likely false. He was instead Ḥanafī, a legal *madhhab* less at odds with the Fatimids. See now my article "The Relationship between Chief *Qāḍī* and Chief *Dā'ī* under the Fatimids" in G. Kraemer and S. Schmidtke, eds. *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies* (Leiden: Brill, 2006, pp. 70–94), p. 83, n. 51 and the references listed there.]

²⁶al-Musabbihī, *Akhbār miṣr*, pt. 1, ed. Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid and Th. Bianquis (Cairo, 1978), p. 3 (f. 132b).

²⁷al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who met Qāsim in the latter's capacity as chief *dā'ī*, was less than impressed by him. See the *Sīrat al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn dā'ī al-du'āt*, ed. Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn (Cairo, 1949), 82.

Abu'l-Faḥ²⁸ 'Abd al-Ḥākim al-Fāriqī, Mālik's brother, who had evidently until then been *qāḍī* of western Tripoli.²⁹ From 419 until 427, he was the chief judge and, in this one measure, he therefore likewise restored the al-Fāriqīs to power. But, like Qāsim, 'Abd al-Ḥākim was not well regarded and the one story that is preserved about him reflects poorly on his character.³⁰

During his tenure a wealthy Ismaili named al-Zayla'ī died leaving a considerable estate to his single heir, a daughter. By Shī'ī (and Ismaili) law, in contrast to the rule for Sunnīs, a daughter may inherit the whole of her father's estate. This daughter was therefore quite wealthy and there were many who lined up to seek her hand in marriage, including quite unfortunately the *qāḍī* himself, who should have been watching out for her best interests not his. She refused to marry him and, in anger, he located several witnesses who were willing to declare her incompetent (*safīha*). The *qāḍī* was able in this way to retain discretionary power over her fortune. She, however, eventually freed herself and fled from him. Thereafter she managed to have her cause brought before the *wazīr* al-Jarjarā'ī, who immediately commenced an investigation. He began a proceeding in which another set of witnesses, one of whom was Mālik's younger son Abu'l-Ḥusayn who was therefore also the nephew of the *qāḍī* in question, verified her integrity and discretion (*rushd*). The *wazīr* subsequently ordered 'Abd al-Ḥākim, the judge, to restore completely the entire fortune to the girl and he sent his own servant to audit the *qāḍī*'s holdings to insure that it was done. The original set of witnesses were punished, the new set rewarded, and the *qāḍī* confined to his house. At first his son attempted to assume the position of judge in his father's place but shortly thereafter 'Abd al-Ḥākim was removed from

²⁸The kunya Abu'l-Faḥ appears only in the *Raf' al-iṣr* ("Abu'l-Faḥ b. Sa'īd al-Fāriqī huwa 'Abd al-Ḥākim") but it is there in two places one of which is Ibn Ḥajar's list of *kunyas*, ms. Istanbul, Millet Kütüphanesi, Fayzullah, 1455.

²⁹I.e. Libyan Tripoli. For 'Abd al-Ḥākim's association with Tripoli see Ibn Ḥajar's biographical entry for his son 'Abd al-Karīm, p. 366.

³⁰The follow account comes from the *Raf' al-iṣr*, 308–10 (There is a version of the same in Guest's al-Kindī, 613–4).

it altogether. He never again left his house and died there seven years later in 435 still confined.³¹

Meanwhile, Qāsim was once again given control of the judiciary, which he thereafter continued to hold, along with the *da'wa*, until 441, when the famous al-Yāzūrī took over both positions. Al-Yāzūrī was also by then *wazīr* and thus, until his fall and execution in 450, he combined in himself the three most powerful offices of the state short of the imamate itself. During the whole of this period, from the demotion of 'Abd al-Ḥākim in 427 until the demise of al-Yāzūrī in 450, there is no record of the al-Fāriqīs, although presumably they were active at some level in public affairs.

Following the removal of al-Yāzūrī, the names of various al-Fāriqīs appear once again in the sources and the family enjoyed another period of success. Six of them—all descendants of 'Abd al-Ḥākim—held the post of chief *qāḍī* (or that of deputy for him) at one time or another; at least one was twice the *dā'ī al-du'āt*; and three became *wazīrs*, all between 450 and 461. It is true that none of them lasted in office for long on any given occasion. Tenure in a post in this era was measured in months, not years, and more often in days.

The first to achieve prominence in this next generation of al-Fāriqīs was Abū 'Alī Aḥmad, a son of 'Abd al-Ḥākim.³² He became chief judge in 450 and again three more times, along with other offices. His brother Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm³³ was elevated to the position of *qāḍī al-quḍāt* in 453 and then made *wazīr* as well, the first of his family to occupy this latter rank.³⁴ When he died, still in office, in 454, his brother Aḥmad took over briefly before being removed ten days

³¹ Geoffrey Khan has discovered a marriage contract among the papers of the Cairo geniza that was drawn up under this same 'Abd al-Ḥākim b. Sa'īd. See his *Arabic Legal and Administrative Documents in the Cambridge Genizah Collections* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), document no. 32 (p. 194).

³²On him see the *Raf' al-iṣr*, 78–9, and Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbār miṣr*, ed. A. F. Sayyid (Cairo, 1981), 18, 23, 55.

³³On him see *Raf' al-iṣr*, 366, Ibn Muyassar, 23, 55; *Itti'āz*, II, 262, 264, 333; and Ibn al-Ṣayrafi, *al-Ishāra ilā man nāla al-wizāra*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Mukhlis (Cairo, 1924), 49.

³⁴As duly noted by Ibn Muyassar who is the main source for information about these later al-Fāriqīs.

later. Yet Aḥmad regained both posts that same year and was also each of these times the chief *dā'ī* as well.³⁵

For almost all of the period from 450 until his death in 470, the head of the *da'wa* was the highly eminent al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī. It is therefore easy in general to understand why few of these al-Fāriqīs held that position. Aḥmad's tenure in the *da'wa*, which was brief enough in any case, was evidently a rare exception. His nomination to the other two offices was, however, not; *wazīrs* and *qāḍīs* came and went with increasing frequency. Another prominent al-Fāriqī, also named Aḥmad but whose *kunya* was Abū Aḥmad,³⁶ became chief *qāḍī* at least seven times and *wazīr* on possibly six separate occasions, all between 455 and 461. Known also by the honorific title Jalāl al-Mulk,³⁷ he was the son of 'Abd al-Karīm and thus a grandson of 'Abd al-Ḥākim. During the same period there were two al-Fāriqīs with the same *ism* and *kunya*: both were Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī.³⁸ One of them was chief *qāḍī* in 456³⁹ and the other the *nā'ib qāḍī* on behalf of his brother Jalāl al-Mulk in 455.⁴⁰ Normally when someone such as Jalāl al-Mulk was promoted to *wazīr*, he delegated the judiciary to another person, in this case his own brother. Yet one other al-Fāriqī, Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Mālik ('Amīd al-Mulk),⁴¹ was delegated to the position of *qāḍī al-quḍāt* by his father 'Abd al-Karīm in 453-4.

Here, with this confusing record of promotions and demotions, the story of the al-Fāriqīs ends in the year 461 with the last mention of them. Their ultimate fate was apparently not recorded and they made no further appearance in Fatimid history. Not so long after the final tenure of Jalāl al-Mulk, who was the last of them and who had also been one of many *wazīrs* during the darkest days of the period

³⁵This Aḥmad died in Syria having departed Egypt to visit Jerusalem in 456.

³⁶Ibn Ḥajar remarks that he was one of those who were given a *kunya* with the same name as their *ism*.

³⁷For him it is important to consult Ibn Muyassar (index) as well as the biography in the *Raf' al-iṣr*, 83-5.

³⁸The chances of confusion in the sources over the identity of these two men is obvious, most especially as they held office at nearly the same time.

³⁹*Raf' al-iṣr*, 400; Ibn Muyassar, 23, 28..

⁴⁰Ibn Muyassar, 28; *Itti'āz*, II, 268; *Raf' al-iṣr*, 84.

⁴¹*Raf' al-iṣr*, 367. There is a possibility that 'Abd al-Mālik and 'Amīd al-Mulk are different readings of the same name/title.

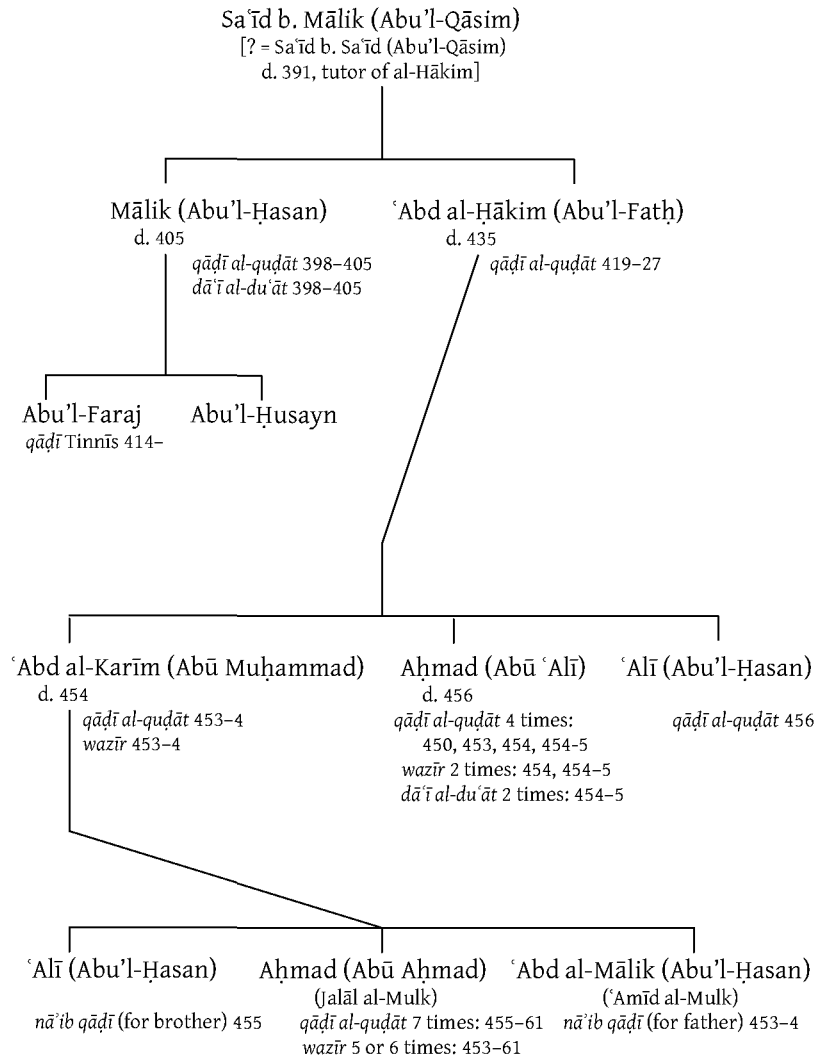
known as the “Time of Calamity” (*ayyām al-shidda*), the imam in 466 summoned the general Badr al-Jamālī to Cairo and gave him free rein to restore order. One of Badr’s sternest measures was to execute many of those who had once held the position of *wazīr*. None of the al-Fāriqīs are cited in the lists of those killed but simple omission of their names likely means little. To be sure the years of Badr’s rule are the least well documented of Fatimid history. In any case Badr assumed the office of both *wazīr* and *qāḍī* and, following al-Mu’ayyad’s death in 470, that of *dāī* as well. The names of his subordinates seldom appear in the few sources available.⁴²

A study like this of a single family over more than seventy-five years of Fatimid history helps enormously in elucidating the role of the elite in support of that regime. The al-Fāriqīs were well educated Ismailis who could and did serve in the highest positions of the government. Surely they were not alone in this. The careers of the descendants of al-Nu’mān provide another interesting example but there were likely many more. Few, however, attained such lofty positions. By and large, the historical sources do not mentioned the others except perhaps for single individuals who happened to reach prominence. Nonetheless, many of the lesser elite must have played an important part at a lower level in the various departments of the government. Rarely is the surviving detail as complete as it is for these two families. In fact this picture of the al-Fāriqīs depends on gathering scattered information and carefully reconstructing the family’s involvement at various periods. That it can be done at all suggests, first, that this was a family of great importance—enough to command the attention of the chroniclers—but, second, that, if better sources were available, other examples would certainly exist and

⁴² After submitting a final draft of this paper, I discovered a reference in Ibn Ḥajar’s *Raf’ al-iṣr* (p. 136) to the effect that, after Badr had assumed control over the judiciary, he first deputized ‘Abd al-Ḥākim b. Wahīb al-Malījī to run it but later removed him and appointed in his place Jalāl al-Mulk (Aḥmad) b. ‘Abd al-Ḥākim al-Fāriqī. Therefore the influence of this family clearly extended somewhat beyond the dates cited in this article. [Another reading of the family name in this latter case is al-‘Irqī, which if correct—it appears more likely that it is—precludes any connection to the al-Fāriqīs.]

more of the major families, whose various careers were possibly quite similar to the al-Fāriqīs but with slightly less success, would then come into focus.

The al-Fāriqī Family



V

A BYZANTINE VICTORY OVER THE FATIMIDS AT ALEXANDRETTA (971) *

In the year 969, the Byzantines under Nicephorus Phocas established their suzerainty over the Hamdanid territories of northern Syria and, as if to crown a long series of victories, they seized the great, patriarchal city of Antioch and restored it to the Empire. That year coincidentally also saw the murder of Nicephorus and the assumption of power by John Tzimiskes. On the southern shores of the Mediterranean, the balance of power also changed. From the West the Fatimids moved East under the able leadership of Jawhar the Sicilian. They seized Egypt and moved from it quickly into Palestine and Syria.

It was not by coincidence that the fall of Antioch and the Fatimid invasion of Syria occurred within a year. The loss of Antioch was deeply regretted by the Muslims. The Berber troops of the Fatimids, as well as any number of local fighting contingents in Syria and Palestine, were anxious and ready to move against the Byzantines. In the winter perhaps even before the end of 970, Ja'far ibn Falāḥ, the Fatimid commander in Syria, responded to the challenge. He sent, against Antioch at that time, a large army of his own Berbers under the command of an officer named Futūḥ and as many back-up troops as he could muster from the various districts of Palestine and southern Syria.

In spite however of the fact that the Muslim army was sizable — Cedrenus says it contained 100,000 soldiers ⁽¹⁾ —

(*) Several people have given me aid and suggestions in the preparation of this paper. I would especially like to mention Professors Wilferd Madelung and Walter Kaegi of the University of Chicago.

(1) George CEDRENUS, *Historiarum Compendium*, II (ed. I. Bekker, Bonn, 1839), pp. 382-383. Cf. Gustave SCHLUMBERGER, *L'Épopée Byzantine à la fin du X^e siècle*, I (Paris, Hachette, 1896), pp. 219-220.

a close siege of five months through the winter and into the spring proved to be a disappointment for the Fatimids. When consequently their position in Damascus was threatened by a hostile force of Qarmatians then moving toward Syria from the East, Ja'far reluctantly ordered Futūḥ to lift the siege and return.

Such then are the details of the first brief but dramatic clash of these two major powers in the eastern Mediterranean, or at least that is the way it appears judging from the relatively short notice given by Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd of Antioch, formerly the most reliable of Arabic historians ⁽¹⁾.

The Byzantine historians Leo Diaconus and Cedrenus ⁽²⁾, on the other hand, offer a version of the same event differing in one essential point. They claim in effect that the Byzantine army of the East fought a single, decisive battle with the enemy and won. As a consequence, they further suggest, Antioch and northern Syria were saved from the immediate threat of occupation by the Muslim army.

The Byzantine accounts relate that John Tzimiskes, faced with a twin Arab-Russian threat to the Empire upon his accession, undertook himself to move north into Bulgaria against the Russian menace there. Meanwhile to protect his recently acquired possessions in Syria, then under attack by the Fatimids, he ordered the Strategos of Mesopotamia to gather troops in his region and to go to the aid of the besieged ⁽³⁾. He also appointed a certain Nikolaos, a patrician and a eunuch of his immediate circle ⁽⁴⁾, as commander to take charge of an additional army rushing to the rescue of Antioch. Nikolaos, already much practiced in the art of

(1) YAḤYĀ IBN SA'ĪD OF ANTIOCH, *Histoire* (ed. with French trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, *Patrologia Orientalis*, XVIII (1924), pp. 701-833, and XXIII (1932), pp. 349-520). His report of this incident occurs on pp. 350-351 of volume XXIII.

(2) LEO DIACONUS, *Historiae*, VI, 8 (ed. C. B. Hase, Bonn, 1828), pp. 102-103. CEDRENUS, *l.c.*

(3) CEDRENUS, II, 383.

(4) ... τὸν πατρικίον Νικόλαον, ἐνὰ ὅντα τῶν ὑγκειωμένων αὐτῷ ἐθνοῦ-
χων ... , CEDRENUS, II, 383. ... Νικολάου τοῦ Πατρικίου στρατηγού-
ντος ὅστε οἰκείος ὢν σπάρδων τῷ βασιλεῖ ... , LEO DIACONUS, 103.

war ⁽¹⁾, drew up his new army and despite the paucity of his troops succeeded in routing the Muslims ⁽²⁾.

The Byzantine version of this encounter is, as Schlumberger cautiously observes, "... quelque peu différente" ⁽³⁾, than the version of Yaḥyā. In effect the Byzantines claim to have relieved Antioch by a decisive victory of arms not, as Yaḥyā seems to suggest, by the reluctant withdrawal of the Fatimids in order to meet a new threat to their Syrian position further south.

Because no clear account of this defeat has hitherto surfaced in Muslim chronicles, historians have largely ignored Nikolaos's brilliant and decisive victory. Now however new Arabic sources offer what seems like a nearly complete confirmation of this Byzantine triumph. Three versions of the Fatimid attack against Antioch are now available which Schlumberger did not have. They, as is the case with much historical information in Arabic, come from relatively late sources. At the same time however they are obviously based themselves on much older, perhaps contemporary, chronicles. Although the three authors in question do occasionally mention their sources, it appears impossible to identify them in relation to this particular incident. It is clear also that despite certain similarities, which seem to suggest a common source, each contains material not utilized or not included by the others.

One version is from a fifteenth century Ismaili ⁽⁴⁾ collection of historical and doctrinal information compiled in the Yemen by Idrīs ibn al-Ḥasan, 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468 ⁽⁵⁾). His work, called *'Uyūn al-Akḥbār*, is massive, comprising seven volumes, but only volume six concerns this

(1) ... ἐμπειρίαν ἐκ πολλῆς μελέτης τῶν ἀγώνων ἐκέκτητο, Leo Diaconus 103.

(2) ... ὅς ταῖς λοιπαῖς προσμίξας δυνάμεσι, καὶ συμπλακείς τοῖς βαρβάροις μυριοπλασίους οὖσιν, ἐτρέψατο λαμπρῶς καὶ ἐσκέδασεν ἐνὶ πολέμῳ ..., Cedrenus, II, 383.

(3) Schlumberger, *L'Épopée*, I, 222.

(4) Ismaili designates the religious sect of which the Fatimid caliphs were the leaders.

(5) On Idrīs see W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Literature* (Tehran, 1963), pp. 77-82.

period. Here is a translation of the key portion ⁽¹⁾.

Ja'far ibn Falāḥ wrote to the commander Jawhar requesting permission of him to send troops to carry out an attack against Antioch which was then in the hands of the Christians from Anatolia. The Commander accordingly gave him permission to undertake this. He [Ja'far] then dispatched 'Abdallah ibn 'Ubaydallah al-Ḥusaynī Akhū Muslim ⁽²⁾ and he sent with him also his *Ghulām* Faṭḥ ⁽³⁾. He gave them a considerable sum of money and ordered a large force from Damascus to march with them.

(1) The *'Uyūn al-Akhbār* exists only in manuscript. I am indebted to Dr. Abbas Hamdani for allowing me to take this excerpt from a manuscript in his possession. The Arabic text runs as follows (page 150):

wa kataba Ja'faru bnu Falāḥ ilā Jawhar
al-qā'idi yasta'dhinuhu fī taṣyīri 'asākira
lil-ghazwi ilā al-Anṭākiya wa hiya fī aydī
al-naṣārā min al-rūmi fa'adhina lahu al-qā'idu
bidhālika fanadaba 'Abd Allahi bni 'Ubayd Allahi
al-Ḥusaynī akhā Muslim wa anfadha ma'ahu ghulāmahu
Faṭḥan wa a'tāhum mālan kathīran wa sayyara
ma'ahum min Dimishq 'asākira 'azīmatan fasārū fī
naḥwin min 'ishrīn alfan wa tawallaw 'alā Anṭākiya
waḥaṣārū man fihā waḍayyaqū 'alayhim ḥattā
ashrafū 'alā faṭḥihā thumma jā'at 'asākiru al-rūmi
bimā lā qibala lahum bihā fakhāfū 'alā man
ma'ahum min juyūshi al-muslimīna fa'nṣarafū
ilā Dimishq.

(2) This man was the brother of Muslim ibn 'UbaydAllah al-Ḥusaynī, a prominent Aliid in Cairo at the time of the Fatimid conquest. This 'AbdAllah later defected and joined the Qarmatians apparently in the hope of being recognized as their Mahdi. Sometime later he was captured in upper Egypt. See AL-MAQRIẒI, *Ilti'āz*, cited below.

(3) This name in all likelihood should be Futūḥ in conformity with other accounts. FṬḤ in Arabic is of course close to FTḤ and the difference may be due to scribal error.

Ghulām is an Arabic word meaning boy or youth but in medieval texts it is often applied to military officers. This most probably indicates that the person so designated was purchased as a boy and trained as a private military retainer. A *Ghulām* might nevertheless later rise to the highest positions of command.

They proceeded therefore with about 20,000 men and were able to gain control over [the district of] Antioch harassing and besieging those within until they were on the point of capturing it. At that moment troops of the Byzantines arrived against which they had no power. They [the Fatimid commanders] consequently became afraid for those in the armies of the Muslims who were with them and they departed for Damascus.

From this version several new facts are apparent: first that the army of the Fatimids was commanded by a certain 'Abdallah ibn 'Ubaydallah al-Ḥusaynī Akhū Muslim as well as Futūḥ (Fath); secondly that the army numbered 20,000 men; and third that its commanders ordered a retreat because the Byzantines brought up reinforcements. There is no mention in it however of a decisive battle although its pro-Fatimid author may have wished to cover up any such defeat.

Another account also comes from a fifteenth century history — this time from the well-known, Egyptian, Mamluk historian, Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī's (d. 1334-1442), *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā*, his monumental history of the Fatimid caliphate⁽¹⁾. He offers the following account⁽²⁾:

When it was [the month of] Rabī' al-Awwal [3]60⁽³⁾, Ja'far dispatched his *Ghulām* Futūḥ at the head of an army to Antioch which had then been in the hands of the Byzantines almost three years⁽⁴⁾. He went to the governorates of Damascus, Tiberias and Palestine and gathered men from them. He then sent army after army to Antioch.

The time was winter and they beleaguered it until winter left.

As caravans were passing [to it] even while they [the

(1) TAQĪ AL-DĪN AḤMAD IBN 'ALĪ AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā bi Akhbār al-A'immat al-Fā'imīyīn al-Khulafā*, I (ed. Al-Shayyāl, Cairo, 1967). On al-Maqrīzī, see the article on him by C. BROCKELMANN, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, III (Leiden, Brill, 1936).

(2) *Itti'āz*, I, p. 126.

(3) January 2-January 31, 971.

(4) It is hard to understand how the author arrived at this figure since Antioch fell to the Byzantines only in October 969, barely more than a year before the commencement of this attack.

Muslims] were pressing hard in the fighting, Ja'far had them followed by troops numbering approximately 4,000 as reinforcements for them ⁽¹⁾. They then captured about 200 mules carrying provisions to the inhabitants of Antioch and took them. They had approached Alexandretta [at one point], but there were troops of the Byzantines in control of it and they attacked them [the Muslim army]. The army was defeated and they [the Byzantines] killed many of them.

The news then came to Ibn Falāḥ of the defeat of his army and also of the march of the Qarmatians toward Syria. ... So he sent [an order] to his *Ghulām Futūḥ* to depart Antioch and to proceed back to him. This reached him at the beginning of Ramadan ⁽²⁾ and so he marched with those who were with him and they left a great deal of food and fodder. They came to him in Damascus but then each group among them went to its own district.

One may conclude the following points from this source : first, a minor point, that Ja'far drew his armies specifically from Damascus, Tiberias and Palestine — Fatimid possessions — and none apparently from northern Syria which was Byzantine territory ; second that the besieging army was able only after reinforcement to intercept supply caravans coming to the relief of Antioch ; and third the crucial fact that the Fatimid army was in fact defeated when a part of it (perhaps the same 4,000 men sent to seize the caravans) tried to gain control of Alexandretta.

Another Egyptian, Mamluk historian wrote a third version of this same Fatimid attack. Abū Bakr ibn al-Dawādārī (fl. 1st half of 14th century) like al-Maqrizī, compiled, among numerous volumes completed in 1335, one on the history of the Fatimids. In the sixth volume of his history, known under the general title of *Kanz al-Durar wa Jāmi' al-Ghurar* ⁽³⁾,

(1) "Wa sārat al-qawāfilu wahum muliḥḥūna fī l-qitāli fa arda-fahum Ja'farun bi'asākira fī naḥwi arba'at ālāfin madadan lahum ».

(2) June 30-July 29, 971 — i.e. six months after the beginning of the siege, it came to an end.

(3) ABŪ BAKR IBN 'ABDALLAH IBN AYBAK AL-DAWĀDĀRĪ, *Kanz al-Durar wa Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, VI (ed. Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, German title : Die Chronik des Ibn al-Dawadari, Cairo, 1961). On Ibn Al-Dawādārī, see the article on him by B. Lewis, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, and ed., III, Leiden, Brill, 1968.

there is the following narrative ⁽¹⁾ :

When Ja'far ibn Falāḥ had taken control of Damascus, he collected monies from it and his circumstances were thereby enhanced. He [then] set his sights on the taking of Antioch supposing that there was no one in it who could prevent this. It had been three years since the Byzantines had taken it from the Muslims.

He dispatched toward it an army under the command of a *Ghulām* he had called Futūḥ. That was in the month of Safar or in Rabi' al-Awwal in the year three hundred and sixty ⁽²⁾. He also mobilized people in the governorate of Damascus and others and sent army after army [to Antioch]. It was then the beginning of winter and they therefore underwent great hardships because of the severity of the cold and the inclemence of the winter ⁽³⁾. They continued in a like manner until the approach of spring. The inhabitants of Antioch, moreover, defended themselves fiercely and consequently they [the Fatimids] failed to gain their intended goal.

There was [at this time] an army of Byzantines, mentioned as the army of the *Turbāzī* ⁽⁴⁾, in control of Alexandretta.

(1) *Kanz al-Durar*, VI, pp. 132-133.

(2) December 4-January 1 and January 2-January 31, 970-971.

(3) "... min quwwati al-bard wa-nkilābi al-shitā".

(4) In the printed text this word appears as طبرباری *ṬBR-Bārī*. This however is certainly an error as the Byzantine title *τραπεζίτης* and its Arabic form طبربازی, *Turbāzī* (or sometimes *Afrābāzī*) appears fairly frequently in other sources. Peter Phocas, nephew of the Emperor Nicephorus, occupied a prominent command in Northern Syria in the years before the Fatimid siege of Antioch. At least two Arabic sources contain explicit references to him as the *Turbāzī*. "He [Nicephorus] sent his *Ghulām* Peter, the Stratopedarch (*Iṣṭrātōbidarkh*), who is known as the *Afrābāzī*", reports Yaḥyā (*Patrologia*, XVIII, p. 814). Kamāl al-Dīn ibn al-'Adīm likewise refers to Peter as the *Turbāzī* (*Zubdat al-Ḥalab min Tārīkh Ḥalab*, I (ed. Sāmī Dahhān, Damascus, 1951), p. 161, 162 and 163.

On the origin and significance of this title, see the discussion of M. CANARD, *Sur deux termes militaires byzantins d'origine orientale, Byzantion*, XL (1970), 226-229. Canard fails, in this article, to mention the various Arabic forms of *τραπεζίτης* which however seem to be derived from Greek or Armenian and probably not from the original Persian.

Accordingly Ibn Falāḥ prepared a detachment to go against them in which there were 4,000 men under the command of a Berber chieftain ⁽¹⁾ called 'Arās and with him was the Amir of the people of Tarsus, Ibn al-Zayyāt ⁽²⁾. They proceeded until they were on the point of gaining the camp of the Byzantines. Thereupon they saw pavillions of the Byzantines in a field, some of which were tents made of brocade, and they were rapidly diverted to plundering. The *Ṭurbāzī* meanwhile, alerted to their presence, took the warriors of his army and withdrew from the valley ⁽³⁾. Thus when the Berbers entered the tents bent on plunder, the *Ṭurbāzī* was able to attack them and they were defeated as the sword caught them from all sides.

Ibn al-Zayyāt then made haste ⁽⁴⁾ and took 'Arās and

There remains a problem nevertheless of identifying the *Ṭurbāzī* mentioned here by Ibn al-Dawādārī. The use of this title to designate Peter Phocas in other sources raises the possibility of misidentification. A victory of Peter, as *Ṭurbāzī*, over a contingent of Khorasanians at Alexandretta (YAHYĀ, *Patrologia*, XVIII, p. 814) a couple of years before the Fatimid advance was similar enough to that described here by Ibn al-Dawādārī that he may have confused the two incidents. One also wonders if it is possible that Peter was still in command in Northern Syria in 971. In all likelihood he was not because he is thought to have been then in command of the advanced guard of the army Tzimiskes was moving against the Russians (SCHLUMBERGER, *L'Épopée*, I, p. 47). Finally however there is the question of whether the title *Ṭurbāzī* could also refer to the Nikolaos who the Byzantine historians say was in command at the time of the Fatimid defeat. This certainly seems likely. Nikolaos, like Peter, was a eunuch of the Basileus' circle and also like him was a veteran warrior. Ibn al-Dawādārī's source may have known of the Byzantine commander at Alexandretta only by title (or he may have assumed that the title of *Ṭurbāzī* applied to this commander as it did to the former).

(1) ... kabīr min al-Maghāribatī ...

(2) Ibn al-Zayyāt appears later as the leader of Tzimiskes' Arab auxiliaries in his campaigns of 974 and 975.

(3) The Arabic text here has *al-sawād*, the black land. This most likely refers to the cultivatable areas on the floor of the valleys, although with available information it is difficult to determine exactly where this battle took place.

(4) Reading *bādara* for *wādara* — suggested by Prof. Wilferd Madelung.

climbed the mountain with him. He thus escaped, but those who had been with them were struck down in the narrow pass.

This was the beginning of their weakening (1). Their resolve was broken and their authority began to disintegrate (2). Moreover the news came then to Ibn Falāḥ that the Qarmatians were marching toward Syria.

In spite of the similarity of this report to that of al-Maqrīzī, which probably indicates a common source, it contains important new information. Here at last is an almost complete confirmation of the Byzantine account. It would seem that the separate contingent of 4,000 troops, mentioned by al-Maqrīzī and here said to be under the joint command of a Berber leader named 'Arās and an Amir from Tarsus, attempted at some time during the siege, to move north from Antioch and seize the port of Alexandretta. Their motive in so doing was to prevent the resupply of Antioch from that direction (3). The Byzantine commander who was there however, and who is designated in this source as *Turbāzī* (*T b r bārī*) but who was almost certainly Nikolaos, left the valley and his camp temporarily to the enemy while he placed his army for an ambush once the Muslims had grown careless. He then attacked and delivered a severe defeat to his enemy, nearly annihilating them. It was this Byzantine victory which, as al-Dawādārī says, "was the beginning of their weakening," and thus it was here that "their resolve was broken and their authority began to disintegrate".

Beyond reporting this information, which at last confirms the account of the Byzantine chroniclers, it is difficult to know how much significance to assign to this Fatimid defeat. Certainly it was instrumental in ending their siege of Antioch and it probably thereby reaffirmed Byzantine hegemony over the surrounding cities and towns. It is tempting moreover to see in it at least part of the cause for the early loss of Syria

(1) "fakānat hadhihi awwala khumūlihūm".

(2) "wa -nkasarat qulūbuhum wa bada'a amruhum yanḥallū".

(3) Perhaps they wanted to open a sea route for their own supplies as well.

by the Fatimids. If, for example, Ja'far ibn Falāḥ had possessed the troops and the prestige he lost at Alexandretta, he might have resisted the onrush of the Qarmatians. The armies of the local districts might have aided him had they not dispersed. All this however is only conjecture. It is certain that the Qarmatians did come ; that Ja'far died fighting them before Damascus ; and they with their Syrian allies swept the Fatimid army out of Palestine thereby delaying a decisive test of strength between the Fatimids and Byzantium until 975 — the year of the well-known crusade of John Tzimiskes.

VI

THE "CRUSADE" OF JOHN TZIMISCES IN THE LIGHT OF NEW ARABIC EVIDENCE

I

NEW ARABIC SOURCES

In 975, as he had in 972 and 974, the Byzantine emperor John Tzimiskes took to the field against the Moslems on his eastern front⁽¹⁾. The authors of many sources in several languages note the existence of a major Byzantine offensive in Syria during this year, but when a French translation of Matthew of Edessa's Armenian chronicle appeared in the xixth century, this event began to take on major implications for both Byzantine and crusading history. Matthew had included in his text what purports to be a letter from the Emperor himself to his vassal-ally Ashot III, the ruler of Armenia (953-977). In this letter, or at least in the Armenian translation of it, Tzimiskes gave a full and complete, if boastful, report of his military exploits for this year.

Gustave Schlumberger and Ernest Honigmann, the most important modern scholars to write in detail about this campaign, reconstructed

(1) On the problem of the chronology of Tzimiskes' campaigns against the Moslems see M. CANARD, *La date des expéditions Mésopotamiennes de Jean Tzimiscès*, in *Mélanges Henri Grégoire*, II (Brussels, 1950): 99-108, and the references there. Canard in this article is mainly concerned with establishing the existence of an expedition led by the Emperor in 972. The Arab sources are often unclear, confusing sometimes the *Domesticus* and the Emperor. Cf. D. ANASTASIEVITCH, *Die Zahl der Araberzüge des Tzimiskes*, in *Byz. Zeitschr.*, XXX (1920-30): 400-405; and *La Chronologie de la guerre russe de Tzimiscès*, in *Byzantion*, VI (1931): 337-343, and also F. DÖLGER, *Chronologie des grossen Feldzuges des Kaisers Johannes Tzimiskes gegen die Russen*, in *Byz. Zeitschr.*, XXXII (1932): 275-292.

the Emperor's itinerary in 975, largely from his own account⁽²⁾. Moreover, because of the sensational and compelling nature of this major source, it continues to dominate judgements of the importance of this event in almost all subsequent accounts of the pre-crusades and of this period of Byzantine history. In spite of this some writers have been uneasy with what they sensed were exaggerations on the part of the Emperor. Tzimisces' own version has him capturing Baalbek, Damascus, Tiberias, Nazareth, the Decapolis, Acre, Caesarea, Beirut, Sidon, Byblos, and a number of Moslem-held forts of northern Syria. He proclaims: "...there remained nothing up to Ramla and Caesarea, neither sea nor land, which had not submitted to Our Imperial Majesty ...", and that, "...all Phœnicia, Palestine, and Syria have acceded to the rule of the Romans"⁽³⁾. If all of this were in fact true, it would have been one of the most remarkable feats of Byzantine arms.

The general tone of the letter gives the unmistakable impression that the campaign of 975 was indeed a crusade. Tzimisces states clearly what he hoped to accomplish: "We ... were intent on delivering the holy sepulcher of Christ our God from the bondage of the Moslems". Accordingly, modern historians of the crusades have been especially interested in it, particularly as this event occurred 124 years before the first of the Latin crusades. "L'objectif de la croisade byzantine était tout naturellement Jérusalem ...", wrote Grousset in a section of *Histoire des Croisades* entitled "La croisade Byzantine sous

(2) Gustave SCHLUMBERGER, *L'épopée Byzantine à la fin du dixième siècle*, I (Paris, Hachette, 1896): 281-308 (hereafter cited as Schlumberger), and Ernest HONIGMANN, *Die Ostgrenze des Byzantinischen Reiches* (Brussels, 1961): 98-103 (hereafter cited as Honigmann).

(3) *The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, translated from the original Armenian, with a commentary and introduction by Ara Edmond Destourian (Ph. D. dissertation, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J., 1972). As this text was made after a fresh collation of existing manuscripts, it appears to be vastly superior to the Armenian text published by Dulaurier in Jerusalem in 1869 or to his French translation which appeared in 1868. Although the Tzimisces material was available in a French translation as early as 1811, Dulaurier's 1868 version is the source of nearly all subsequent quotations. It was reprinted, for example, in the *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Documents Arméniens*, I (Paris, 1869): 13-20. A Russian translation of Tzimisces' letter by Kučuk-Joannesov also appeared in *Vizantijskij Vremennik*, X (1903): 19 f.

Jean Tzimiscès" (4). And Ostrogorsky remarked that this campaign, "...breathed the veritable crusading spirit" (5).

To allow such an interpretation, however, means to accept Tzimiscès' version as it stands in Matthew's Armenian chronicle. Since this text was first published, there have been few significant contributions clarifying the problem of the letter's authenticity and re-evaluating what actually was accomplished by the Emperor. In 1925, Bartold challenged Tzimiscès' claim to have entered Palestine suggesting that it was all in the realm of fantasy (6). He thus came down in favor of the testimony of Yahya of Antioch and all known Greek and Arabic sources which mention no such conquests. In 1934, on the other hand, Nicolas Adontz investigated a shorter letter by Tzimiscès, appended to the main one and also recorded by Matthew. His research seemed to strengthen the case for authenticity (7). Honigmann, writing in 1935, relied basically on sources available to Bartold and Adontz. Since then, however, significant Arabic sources have come to light which have yet to be used in this regard.

This material comes from two, now apparently lost, primary accounts which are partially extant in secondary recensions. One report of Tzimiscès' activities in Syria comes from the initial section of Ibn al-Qalānisi's *Dhail Ta'rikh al-Dimishq*. Although the text was published in 1908 (8), it was ignored until Marius Canard translated it and called attention to its account of Tzimiscès' campaign in 1961 (9). It is a good source of information as it is rich in details,

(4) René GROUSSET, *Histoire des Croisades*, I (Paris, 1934), xviii. Cf. his more cautious evaluation done later in his *Histoire de l'Arménie des origines à 1071* (Paris, Payot, 1949): 494-500. There, he has used the articles of Bartold and Adontz cited below.

(5) George OSTROGORSKY, *History of the Byzantine State*, rev. ed., transl. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick, Rutgers Un. Pr., 1969): 297.

(6) Reprinted in V. V. BARTOLD, *Sochinenia* (Moscow, 1966), vol. 6, 580.

(7) Nicolas ADONTZ, *Notes Arméno Byzantines, II, La Lettre de Tzimiscès au roi Ashot (Ašot)*, in *Byzantion*, IX (1934): 371-377. This article also appears in a collection of his works entitled *Etudes Arméno-Byzantines* (Lisbon, 1965): 141-147.

(8) *Ta'rikh Abī Ya'lā Hamza b. al-Qalānisi* known as *Dhail Ta'rikh Dimishq*, ed. H. F. Amedroz (Leyden, Brill, 1908). (Hereafter cited as Ibn al-Qalānisi).

(9) Marius CANARD, *Les sources arabes de l'histoire Byzantine aux confins des*

though only for events associated with the city of Damascus. On the Emperor's conquests before and after the taking of that city, it is unfortunately vague and hopelessly confused.

The other account comes from a pro-Fatimid writer living in Cairo at the time of these wars. It is Ibn Zūlāq's *Sīra* or *Life* of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz (d. 975) ⁽¹⁰⁾. It is of particular importance because it gives us material often absent from other Arabic histories. In it, the author has made chronologically arranged entries of news reaching him in Cairo at that time. While this journal is fragmented and lacks any sense of narrative continuity, the incidental information it contains not only clarifies the situation in Syria but helps fix the dates of certain events connected with Tzimisce's involvement there ⁽¹¹⁾.

It is essential to note that although this work is no longer extant, it was consulted by many later Egyptian chroniclers. Ibn al-Dawādārī refers to Ibn Zūlāq as a source for his history of the Fatimid

X^e et XI^e siècles, in *Revue des études byzantines*, XIX (1961): 284-314. The pertinent material from Ibn al-Qalānisi is translated on pages 293-295.

On the problem of the authorship of this section, Claude CAHEN, *Note d'historiographie Syrienne, la première partie de l'histoire d'Ibn al-Qalānisi*, in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb* (Cambridge, Harvard Un. Pr., 1965): 156-167.

The accounts of al-Ḥamdānī, *Ṭakmilat Ta'rikh al-Ṭabarī* (ed. Albert Kan'ān, Beirut, Catholic Pr., 1961), al-Makīn Ibn al-'Amīd, *Historia Saracenica* (ed. and trans. Thomas Erpenius, Leyden, 1625), and Abū al-Faraj Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography* (Eng. trans. Wallis Budge, vol. 1, London, Oxford Un. Pr., 1932) depend upon this same source, and many other Moslem histories written later obviously used material from this section either as it appeared in Ibn al-Qalānisi's work or in its original form. Ibn al-Athīr used it but seems to have neglected Tzimisce's exploits altogether and al-Maqrizī, who frequently quotes from Ibn al-Athīr, derives his reports on the Greeks in this period from Ibn Zūlāq. The question, however, of contamination of sources or the possibility of it is a nightmare which may never see an adequate resolution.

(10) Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Ibrāhīm b. Zūlāq (306/919-387/997). On him see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s. v. "Ibn Zūlāq".

(11) In this period, a day by day diary or journal is very rare. Ibn Zūlāq's notes as they appear in extant quotations, however, are not dated day by day but appear to be arranged in chronological order. Months and years are clearly designated, sometimes half months, but it is difficult to be more exact. Even that, however, is a significant step forward.

dynasty⁽¹²⁾ and al-Maqrīzī includes substantial sections of the *Sīra* of al-Mu'izz in a work on the Fatimids which he called *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā*⁽¹³⁾. Al-Maqrīzī goes out of his way to indicate that he was highly impressed by its value⁽¹⁴⁾. In general, Ibn al-Dawādārī's chronicle parallels that of al-Maqrīzī but provides less information on the whole, although it occasionally differs and therefore cannot be ignored.

These Arabic sources supply all together so much new evidence that it seems desirable to reconstruct afresh the whole sequence of events before and during the Byzantine campaign of 975 and the Moslem reaction to it. What follows, therefore, is such a reconstruction though based primarily on new information. Peripheral details, known from sources long available and adequately dealt with elsewhere have been omitted. Finally, a new look at this now famous campaign will give us the opportunity to re-evaluate its importance to the history of the crusades.

II

MOSLEM FORCES IN SYRIA ON THE EVE OF TZIMISCES' "CRUSADE"

When the Fatimid general Jawhar entered Egypt in 969, it meant that the Byzantines would face a new, though relatively familiar, enemy in the buffer territory between their outpost at Antioch and whatever Palestinian possessions the Fatimids might inherit from the Ikhshidids, the previous rulers of Egypt and Palestine. The Byzantines may not have guessed, however, the extent to which the Fatimids had organized and spread their propaganda even in Syria. In the main this was directed against their rivals for the caliphate and was, therefore,

(12) Abū Bakr ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Die Chronik des Ibn al-Dawadari: Der Bericht über die Fatimiden*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munaggiḍ (Cairo, 1961). Arabic title: *Kanz al-Durar wa jāmi' al-qhurar: VI, al-Durra al-Mudīya fi Akhbār al-Dawla al-Fāṭimīya* (Hereafter cited as IBN AL-DAWADARĪ).

(13) Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā bi Akhbār al-A'imma al-Fāṭimīyīn al-Khulafā*. Vol. I, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (Cairo, 1967). (Hereafter cited as AL-MAQRIZI). The passages concerning Tzimisces in Syria do not appear in the older editions of this work.

(14) AL-MAQRIZI, p. 232.

part of a Moslem sectarian struggle. Byzantine territories, however, also served the same organization as a field of potential conquest and the here-to-fore successful Greek armies were pictured as bogey-men by Fatimid agents in order to frighten non-cooperative fellow Moslems. The successful campaigns of Nicephoras Phocas, which culminated in the fall of Antioch and the submission of the Hamdanid territories in Syria, were used by the Fatimids as an excuse for their own conquest of Egypt and Syria⁽¹⁵⁾.

Almost immediately after Egypt had fallen, Jawhar dispatched Ja'far Ibn Falāḥ, a Berber chieftain, with contingents of his Kutama tribesmen toward Palestine and Syria. In a relatively brief campaign, the Berbers under Ja'far took Ramla and then Damascus. Further efforts brought Tripoli into the Fatimid camp and it became the capital and, from then on, mainstay of their attempt to hold Syria. Finally Ja'far dispatched Futūḥ, his own subordinate, with a fairly large force against the great city of Antioch. The Byzantines, however, were firmly entrenched there and five months later, the Fatimid armies, having over-extended themselves and suffering large losses in an attempt to capture Alexandretta, were compelled to withdraw as the Qarmatians threatened to invade Syria from the east⁽¹⁶⁾.

This defeat for the Fatimids presaged others which followed quickly. In 360/971, Ja'far Ibn Falāḥ was killed by the Qarmatians before Damascus. The Qarmatian threat to Egypt did not pass quickly and only in Ramadan 363/May-June 974, when certain of their Arab auxiliary troops were bribed to desert the field of battle did they finally depart homeward to al-Aḥsā in Bahrain⁽¹⁷⁾.

(15) M. CANARD, in *L'Impérialisme des Fatimides et leur propagande* (AIEO-Alger, VI, p. 167 f.), cites more interesting evidence of this from the famous Arabic poet Ibn al-Hāni and the geographer Ibn Ḥawqal. The argument made to the Egyptians for Fatimid occupation of Egypt, i.e. to conduct the holy war against the enemy, was clearly expressed in the safe conduct (*al-Amān*) which Jawhar gave the Egyptian delegation that came to him and suggested the surrender of Egypt. See AL-MAQRIZI, pp. 103-106.

(16) New evidence from AL-MAQRIZI, p. 126, and IBN AL-DAWADARI, p. 133, seems to confirm the account given by the Byzantine sources that the Arab-Berber army was severely weakened and demoralized by their defeat before Alexandretta. See Paul WALKER, *A Byzantine Victory over the Fatimids at Alexandretta* (971), in *Byzantion*, XLII (1972): 431-440.

(17) AL-MAQRIZI, pp. 202-206; IBN AL-QALANISI, pp. 3-4; IBN AL-

Immediately the Caliph al-Mu'izz sent a detachment of his Berber troops under Abū Maḥmūd, son of Ja'far ibn Falāḥ, in pursuit⁽¹⁸⁾. At the same time the Caliph appointed Zālim ibn Mawhūb al-'Uqailī governor of Damascus⁽¹⁹⁾. Soon Abū Maḥmūd arrived there with Berber troops chasing the main Qarmatian army and camped at Zālim's invitation on the outskirts of the city.

The Arabic sources clearly specify that the armies of the Fatimids in this period were composed of Maghribis⁽²⁰⁾, that is North Africans, thereby perhaps implying that they were mainly Berbers. The Fatimid leaders must have known full well the danger of using such Berber troops in strange territories, but although they had a certain amount of local support in Syria, it was totally unreliable as the events of Tzimisce's 975 campaign were to prove. Thus, when Tzimisce later speaks of the "abominable Africans" who prevented his march into Jerusalem, he puts his finger on this point. The only absolutely loyal troops the Fatimids had in Syria, perhaps also in Egypt, were the Kutama Berbers⁽²¹⁾.

DAWADARI, pp. 159-160. It should be noted that the Qarmatians, not the Abbasids, were the main rivals of the Fatimids for Moslem control of Syria, and that their rivalry seriously weakened Moslem resistance to Byzantine advances.

(18) AL-MAQRIZI, p. 206 ; IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 3 ; IBN AL-DAWADARI, p. 160 ; IBN AL-ATHIR, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, VIII (ed. Tornberg, Leyden, Brill, 1862), p. 470. It is reported by Ibn al-Dawādārī that Abū Maḥmūd was given 10,000 horsemen. Al-Maqrīzī gives the figure 20,000 for the whole force.

(19) Zālim ibn Mawhūb was a member of the Banū 'Uqail, a powerful and influential family in Ḥawran and Bathaniya and the surrounding region. After the initial conquest of Syria by Ja'far ibn Falāḥ, they were defeated and reduced in power. Accordingly Zālim was sent to the Qarmatians in al-Aḥsā to urge them to invade Syria and repel the Berbers. The Qarmatians, however, needed no urging ; they had just lost the tribute from Syria. Incensed, they moved toward Syria, apparently aided by Abbasid money and arms. In their train followed many of the defeated Syrian Arabs like Zālim. In the general retreat after the Fatimid victory, Zālim returned to Damascus and seems to have wrangled an appointment as governor of Damascus from the Fatimid Caliph. IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 4 and IBN AL-ATHIR, p. 470.

(20) "*Maghāriba*" (plural of *Maghribī*) that is the inhabitants the *Maghrib* which is equivalent to the modern Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

(21) This is an often misunderstood point. It is easily seen that Tzimisce's main opposition came from the newly installed ruler of Egypt, but al-Mu'izz's basic support lay neither in Cairo nor in Syria. His army was transplanted from Tunisia, and

For various reasons, the citizens of Damascus reacted strongly against these Berber troops. From Shawwāl 363/June-July 974, there ensued a continual battle in the various streets and quarters of Damascus between the two ⁽²²⁾. Ultimately Abū Maḥmūd succeeded in ousting Ḥālīm and he appointed his nephew, Jaish ibn al-Ṣamṣāma, governor of the city. There was little calm, however, and the trouble continued. Al-Muʿizz, disturbed by reports of the killing, burning and general destruction commanded his governor of Tripoli, Rayyān, a eunuch of Slavic origin, to proceed to Damascus in order to investigate and report on the true state of affairs there. He also instructed him to order Abū Maḥmūd to leave. Upon Rayyān's arrival Abū Maḥmūd departed Damascus, in Shaʿban 364/April-May 975, leaving most of his troops with Rayyān and heading toward Ramla ⁽²³⁾. The situation in Damascus thereafter was momentarily calm and might have continued that way except for the arrival, late in the same month, of an entirely new element in Syrian politics.

it was almost entirely composed of Berbers. In many ways the Fatimids were as much strangers to Syria, in 975, as Tzimisces and his Greek-Armenian army, especially when that army contained a number of Arab auxiliary forces from the marches of the Syrian north. That is why Tzimisces distinguishes between the "abominable Africans" and the local Arabs.

(22) The troubles in Damascus occupy many pages of the Arabic chronicles and the situation seems extremely complex. In addition to the normal merchant-artisan groups, the governor, Ḥālīm, and the Berber troops of Abū Maḥmūd, there were bands of Arab bandits in the surrounding areas and inside the city itself there were gangs of youths (*Al-Aḥdāth*) organized as civil militia. Above all the *Shurṭa*, a local police group under a strongly anti-Fatimid leader named Ibn al-Māward, tended to promote their own cause rather than cooperate with the Fatimid troops. IBN AL-DAWADARI, pp. 166-167, says that Abū Maḥmūd was unable to pay his soldiers and they therefore plundered the area for their compensation. Whether this is correct or not, violence between the Berbers and most of the other groups began and continued almost one full year. See also: IBN AL-QALANISI, pp. 3-9; AL-MAQRIZI, pp. 211-13; IBN AL-ATHIR, pp. 470-72.

(23) IBN AL-DAWADARI, pp. 166-67, 169; IBN AL-QALANISI, pp. 9-11; IBN AL-ATHIR, p. 472; AL-MAQRIZI, pp. 213-14. Al-Maqrīzī gives the date of Abū Maḥmūd's leaving Damascus and next refers to him as holding Tiberias. This implies that if he did indeed get to Ramla, he returned quickly. It is more likely that he got only as far as Tiberias when news of a Byzantine advance toward Damascus overtook him.

From the east, Abū Maṣṣūr Alptikīn⁽²⁴⁾, a Turkish adventurer and refugee from the recent struggle in Iraq between Turkish Mamluks and Būyid Emirs over the control of the Abbasid caliph⁽²⁵⁾, now entered Syria followed by four to five hundred horsemen. The arrival of the pro-Abbasid Alptikīn with this strong backing created a new challenge to the Fatimids and a new opportunity for their enemies⁽²⁶⁾. At this particular moment Syria was as firmly in the hands of the Fatimids as it had ever been. Damascus was under the watchful eye of the lately arrived Rayyān, Ẓālim ibn Mawhūb, who had been forced out of the governorship of that city in January 975, by Abū Maḥmūd, had moved to Baalbek as governor. Abū Maḥmūd and his nephew Jaish ibn al-Ṣamṣāma waited at Tiberias. And for reasons to be discussed later, al-Mu'izz in Jumāda 1st 364/January-February 975, had sent Nuṣayr, another eunuch commander of Slavic origin, with yet another army described as large, to Syria. It was now in Beirut⁽²⁷⁾.

The Turks camped first at Jūsiya, a small village between Hims and Baalbek⁽²⁸⁾. From north of Jūsiya in Hims, Abū al-Ma'ālī ibn Ḥamdān, the *de jure* ruler of Aleppo and northern Syria, as son of the great Saif al-Dawla, took an immediate interest in these uncommitted Turkish soldiers⁽²⁹⁾. At the same time that Ẓālim set out against Alp-

(24) The spelling of Alptikīn's name varies considerably. Some have it Alftikīn, Haftikīn, or Aftikīn (in Arabic). Some have it AL-PETHGAN (Bar Hebraeus). It is clear, however, that it is the Turkish name Alp Tikīn.

(25) The complications and troubles in Baghdad at the close of Bakhtiyār's reign are described in nearly all the Arabic sources of the period. The best, however, and the most accessible is IBN MISKAWAIH, *Tajārīb al-Umam* (Text and English trans. by Amedroz and Margoliouth, *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate*, 7 vols., London, 1920-21).

(26) Alptikīn's group apparently numbered about 400 horsemen. IBN AL-DAWADARI, p. 167, and AL-MAQRIZI, p. 219. Tzimiscēs, if the "person called Turk" is really Alptikīn, says he had about 500 knights (MATTHEW, p. 24).

(27) Both WÜSTENFELD (*Geschichte der Fatimiden-Chalifen*, Göttingen, 1881, p. 127) and QUATREMERE (*Vie du Khalife Fatimide Moezz-li-din-Allah*, in *Journal Asiatique*, III, 1837, p. 200) report this without noting their source. AL-MAQRIZI, p. 218, implies that Nuṣayr was not sent until *Jumāda al-Ukhra*, February-March. In any event there is a strong hint that these troops were sent to offset a Byzantine build-up north of Tripoli.

(28) On Jūsiya see GUY LE STRANGE, *Palestine under the Moslems* (Beirut, Khayats, 1965), pp. 39, 40, 467.

(29) AL-MAQRIZI, p. 219; IBN AL-DAWADARI, pp. 168-69; IBN AL-ATHIR, p.

tikīn from the south, Abū al-Maʿālī dispatched his eunuch Bishāra from Hims with a company of men to aid Alptikīn. When, subsequently, Bishāra informed Ẓālim by letter of his intentions, Ẓālim gave up his attempt to capture Alptikīn and returned to Baalbek. Alptikīn then proceeded with Bishāra to the outskirts of Hims where he was much honored by Abū al-Maʿālī.

At first, Alptikīn asked to be appointed governor of Kafar Tāb, as vassal to Abū al-Maʿālī⁽³⁰⁾, but as a secret plea for aid arrived from Ibn al-Māwardī, the anti-Fatimid leader in Damascus, he withdrew this request giving the excuse that he was returning to Baghdad. Instead, he proceeded south to Damascus and reached its vicinity on the last days of Shaʿban 364/2nd week of May 975⁽³¹⁾.

Since Alptikīn's Turks fled Iraq only the 14th of Jumāda I, 364/January 30, 975, these events must have passed rapidly.

483. In 359/970, the Byzantines had been able to seize Aleppo from its *de facto* ruler Qarʿuwaih, once a Mamluk of Saif al-Dawla and theoretically the representative of Abū al-Maʿālī in that city. The terms of the treaty, however, gave the Greeks virtual sovereignty over Aleppo although they had allowed Qarʿuwaih to retain his position. Also as part of this treaty Hims, Hamah and many other towns and fortresses of northern Syria fell under Byzantine protection. Abū al-Maʿālī therefore ruled almost without a kingdom.

(30) IBN AL-DAWADARĪ, pp. 168-69; AL-MAQRIZĪ, pp. 219-220. Ibn al-Dawādārī reports that it was Abū Taghlib ibn Ḥamdān rather than Abū al-Maʿālī but the former was still governor of Mosul and in any case not near Jūsiya or Kafar Tāb. On the other hand Abū al-Maʿālī, mentioned by al-Maqrizī, should have been in Hims. Kafar Tāb is a small town in the Hims district (LE STRANGE, *Palestine*, pp. 35, 39, 40, 473).

(31) Stories of Alptikīn's coming to Damascus differ considerably. In one place al-Maqrizī, pp. 218-19, reports that Alptikīn wrote to al-Muʿizz asking permission to proceed to Damascus and that the Caliph responded by mobilizing forces to send against him. Yahya ibn Saʿīd of Antioch, *Histoire* (ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, fasc. II, *Patrologia Orientalis*, XXXIII, 1932, p. 368) agrees with regard to Alptikīn's letter and Ibn al-Qalānisi, p. 12 and Ibn al-Athīr, p. 484, confirm that an army was being prepared to go against Alptikīn. They report, however, that al-Muʿizz wrote first inviting him to join the Fatimid cause and come to Cairo. Unfortunately, Ibn al-Qalānisi couples this event with the death of al-Muʿizz and that would place this exchange long after Alptikīn's arrival. In view of the lack of time between his coming into Syria and reaching Damascus and al-Maqrizī's report (in another place), p. 220, that Rayyān left the city unguarded, it seems unlikely that these letters were exchanged until after Tzimisce's campaign, if ever.

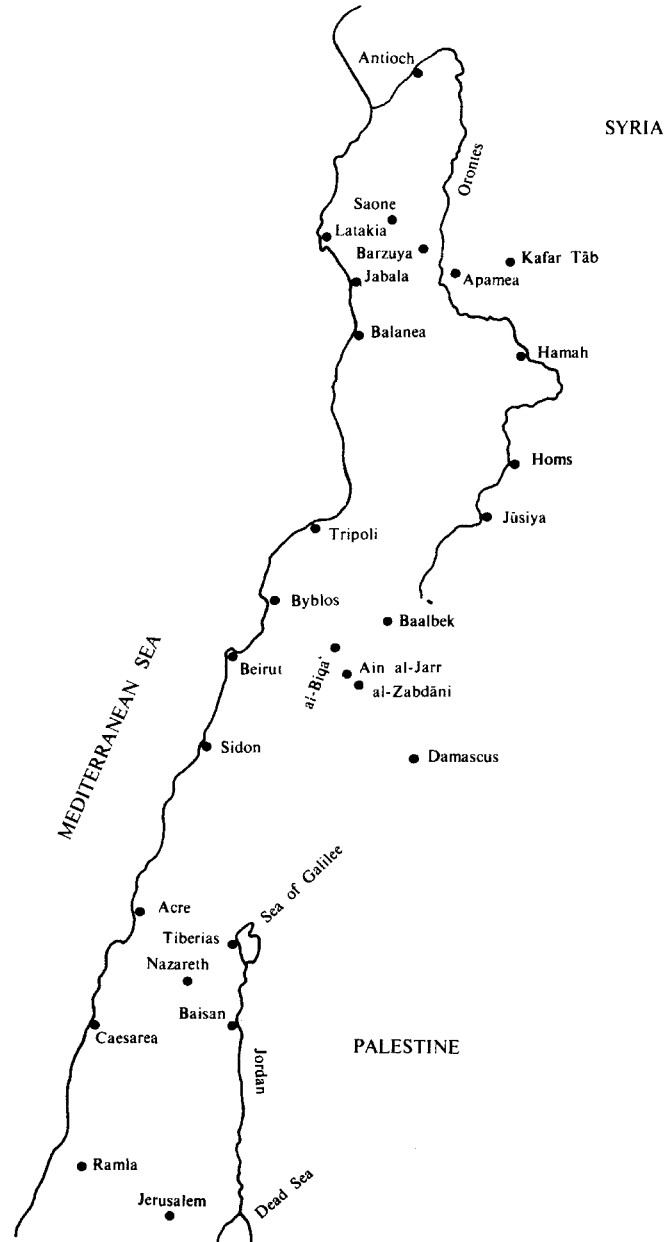
Likewise, the period of Rayyān's administration of Damascus up to this moment could not have been more than two or three weeks, and even before Alptikīn arrived, he set out with his army through the Dummar pass toward Baalbek and Tripoli. He had been moved to abandon Damascus because of the news, reported from Tripoli, that the "enemy", i.e. the Greeks, were afield and he feared Tripoli was their main objective. Ironically, as Alptikīn was approaching Damascus through the Eagle's Pass (*Thaniya al-'Uqāb*), Rayyān departed with his entire force on another route⁽³²⁾.

Camping on the outskirts of Damascus, Alptikin received the notables of the city who invited him to take command of them and end the depredations of the Egyptian forces and the gangs of youths who had been causing their troubles. Alptikīn then assumed control. He changed the Friday citation (*Khuṭba*) from that of al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allah, the Fatimid Caliph, to that of al-Ṭā'i, the Abbasid master he had just left, and he tried to rectify the affairs of the city although he was to leave again within less than two weeks.

It was the middle of May 975, and definite news now reached Damascus that Ibn Shimishqīq (Tzimisces), "King of the Romans", had moved his army from Antioch up the Orontes valley to Hims⁽³³⁾. With that, one more faction entered the Syrian free-for-all.

(32) AL-MAQRIZI, p. 220, gives these details. On Dummar pass, see *Yacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch* (ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Leipzig, 1866), vol. II, p. 587; and for *Thaniya al-'Uqāb*, the same, vol. I, p. 936. IBN AL-DAWADARI, pp. 169-70; IBN-AL-QALANISI, pp. 11-12; IBN AL-ATHIR, pp. 483-84. IBN AL-ATHIR and ABU AL-FIDA, *Kitāb al-Mukhtasar fī Akhbār al-Bashar* (Cairo, 1907), vol. I, p. 115, report, probably incorrectly, that Rayyān was forced out of Damascus by the inhabitants after Alptikīn arrived there.

(33) "Wa shā'a khabaru'l-adūwī annahu qad aqbala fī jaishin 'aẓimin (and reports of the enemy spread that he was approaching with a great army)", AL-MAQRIZI, p. 200. "Wa kāna qad waradat al-akhbāru anna'l-'adūw min al-rūm wa huwa Ibn al-Shimishqīq wa huwa yawm'idha dumustuq al-rūm qad kharaja yurīdu'l-bilād (and the news had arrived that the enemy from Anatolia, he being Ibn Shimishqīq [Tzimisces], who was then Domesticus of the Romans, had set out toward that region)", IBN AL-DAWADARI, p. 169.



III THE BYZANTINE CAMPAIGN

In 974, Tzimisces had moved a large, impressive army into Armenia. There he asked the aid of his vassal, King Ashot III, in a coming campaign. The Bagratid Armenian ruler, although reluctant, apparently furnished 10,000 armed troops and general provisions ⁽³⁴⁾. The Emperor then marched into northern Syria, though the exact itinerary this year remains confused. The Arab chronicles took little notice of these events and the facts concerning them reported by Matthew of Edessa are in part fanciful. Tzimisces' letter, however, seems to leave no doubt that he conducted operations against many villages and fortresses in the summer of 974 ⁽³⁵⁾. The question is where? Some of our information indicates that the Byzantine army was active between Antioch and Tripoli and perhaps throughout northern Syria. These activities may have served as an exploration for major operations in the following year ⁽³⁶⁾.

New evidence shows that in June of 974, an ambassador from the Byzantines arrived in Cairo. The exact nature of the message he carried is not reported although he spoke to the Caliph about an armistice and presented a letter to him. He died soon after his arrival, however, and al-Mu'izz sent him home in a coffin ⁽³⁷⁾. If a motive

(34) Cf. the interesting discussion of the events leading up to this campaign from the Armenian point-of-view by GROUSSET, *L'Arménie*, pp. 489-498.

(35) MATTHEW, pp. 20-23.

(36) *Ibid.* IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 12, says that Tzimisces took possession of most of the *Thughūr* or fortresses on the Byzantine-Arab border. This tends to confirm Tzimisces' own account but since the chronology in Ibn al-Qalānisi is often confused, it is impossible to rely on his statement entirely.

(37) Reported by AL-MAQRIZI, pp. 208-209. He says: "and an ambassador of the Roman King came. The people accordingly gathered to see him and al-Mu'izz sat for him on a golden couch. He entered and kissed the floor several times. He was then permitted to sit on a cushion.

"'Alī ibn al-Husain, Judge of Adhana [*a town in the north of Syria*], was present and he spoke, 'Oh, Amīr al-Mu'minīn, God's prayers are on you. This (and he pointed to the Ambassador) is a plague on Islam and the cause of evil for Moslems and prisoners of war'.

"But al-Mu'izz gave him a disapproving glance and he went out. The Ambassador then spoke concerning an armistice and al-Mu'izz accepted his letter and

need be found for Tzimisce's campaign, apart from those mentioned in his own letter, the death in Cairo of his ambassador may suffice. Al-Maqrīzī, our source for this incident, does not indicate that foul play was involved, but certainly the Byzantines would have been suspicious. That same month "rumor increased", in Cairo, "of the movement of the Romans to Antioch", and signaled apparently the arrival in that city of Tzimisce's army⁽³⁸⁾. Accordingly, in the winter which followed, the Fatimid Caliph dispatched the eunuch Nuṣayr with a large army toward Syria.

It seems clear then that both sides were moving troops into position late in 974 and early 975. Tzimisce mentions taking up winter quarters apparently at Antioch⁽³⁹⁾. He himself may have returned to Constantinople that winter and rejoined his army only in the spring⁽⁴⁰⁾. While he was away, his army may have foraged far enough afield to alarm the pro-Fatimid inhabitants of Tripoli. In any case, the Emperor knew, perhaps from Arab allies, that major Fatimid armies occupied Tripoli, Damascus and Beirut by the end of the winter. The implied threat to Antioch did not escape him as in turn the Byzantine threat to Tripoli was clear to the Fatimids.

In April 975, Tzimisce was ready to go and he set his army in motion⁽⁴¹⁾. Fresh evidence suggests that the first units were sent straight south to create the impression of a Byzantine advance toward Tripoli. In Cairo, news of a fight with the Greeks near Tripoli in Sha'bān/April-May was recorded⁽⁴²⁾. This report sufficiently alarmed the eunuch Rayyān in Damascus that he deserted it and moved toward the coast. The Byzantine ruse worked and the interior of southern Syria was consequently emptied of Fatimid troops. The Emperor, accordingly, moved hastily up the Orontes valley first to Hims which,

settled him in a house". Several pages later (p. 214) without warning al-Maqrīzī reports: "And in it [Dhū al-Qa'da 363/August 974] the ambassador of the Roman king died. So al-Mu'izz sent him to the land of the Romans in a coffin".

(38) Reported by AL-MAQRIZI, p. 214, "wa kathura al-irjāfu bimasīri 'l-Rūmī ilā Antakiya".

(39) MATTHEW, p. 23.

(40) SCHLUMBERGER, p. 284, n. 4.

(41) MATTHEW, p. 23.

(42) AL-MAQRIZI, p. 218.

under Abū al-Ma'ālī, was already a tributary of the Empire by treaty. So far, Tzimisces and the main body of his army were unopposed⁽⁴³⁾.

In the latter half of May, he proceeded on up the Orontes valley to Baalbek. According to al-Maqrīzī, Alptikīn also apparently moved to Baalbek at this moment in order to capture the pro-Fatimid Zālim. He intended, in addition, to end the depredations of various Arab bedouins who held the territory between Damascus and Baalbek, and he may have hoped to check Tzimisces. Zālim fled immediately leaving the town to Alptikīn and the bedouins suffered a defeat. Alptikīn then apparently tested the strength of the much larger Byzantine army which easily defeated him and he retreated to Damascus. Tzimisces besieged Baalbek, captured it on May 29th, 975, and took many prisoners, much gold, silver and beasts⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Byzantine cavalry and raiding parties continued their progress south by plundering the district of Baalbek and the surrounding areas (*al-Biqā'*). An attempt, however, to extend their activity to al-Zabdānī was repulsed by the inhabitants who occupied the narrow paths against them and prevented them from entering the valley⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Tzimisces followed his victory at Baalbek by threatening to move on Damascus. The account in Ibn al-Qalānīsī, here, begins to supply detailed information⁽⁴⁶⁾. According to it, when it became clear that Damascus was to be Tzimisces' next target, one of the leaders of his

(43) AL-MAQRIZI, p. 220, and TZIMISCES (MATTHEW, p. 23), agree perfectly. IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 12, must be wrong, therefore, in reporting that Hims was taken by force. LEO THE DEACON, *Historiae* (ed. Hase, Bonn, 1828), pp. 165-66 (cf. SCHLUMBERGER, p. 294) would make Manbij (*Μέμπειτζε*), a town in the district of Aleppo, fall first in this campaign. While this may have happened, it probably took place in the year before as it does not lie on the main route of the Byzantine army in 975. Leo further states that Tzimisces paused on his way south in order to capture Apamea (Apameia). Unlike Manbij, this town does fall along the route of the army, but it was already, at least in theory, under Byzantine control by the same treaty as that mentioning Hims. See IBN AL-ATHIR, p. 445, and IBN AL-'ADIM, p. 163.

(44) YAḤYA, p. 368 ; AL-MAQRIZI, pp. 220-21 ; MATTHEW, pp. 23-24. Al-Maqrīzī alone mentions the involvement of Zālim and Alptikīn. Yaḥyā alone gives the exact date, and adds that a certain Ḥusain ibn al-Šamšām was captured.

(45) AL-MAQRIZI, p. 221.

(46) IBN AL-QALANISI, pp. 12-14. For a French translation, see CANARD, *Les Sources Arabes*, pp. 293-95. Cf. SCHLUMBERGER, pp. 295-97.

Arab auxiliary troops who had been recruited from vassal territories on the Byzantine-Moslem marches, Abū Bakr Ibn al-Zayyāt⁽⁴⁷⁾, wrote to Alptikīn and the people of Damascus advising them to submit to the Romans for their army was far too strong to be resisted. Those in Damascus, it continues, realized the truth of what Ibn al-Zayyāt reported. They apparently knew that with the almost continual civil strife in the city, since the Qarmatians departed one year before, they could do no better than beg leniency of Tzimisces and offer tribute in order to be spared the destruction which the Byzantine army would surely bring. Having reached an accord they wrote to Ibn al-Zayyāt accepting his advice and he in turn informed the Emperor. Tzimisces in agreement with his usual policy promised the safety of the city, its citizens and their possessions in return for their formal submission and a fixed annual tribute. The news was carried back to Damascus by Ibn al-Zayyāt himself. The townsmen and their Turkish allies were glad on the one hand to have saved themselves and their city and on the other to obtain a pledge of safety which would operate against the hated Berbers who still menaced them from several directions. They, therefore, responded enthusiastically to Ibn al-Zayyāt's further suggestion that they go out to meet the Emperor. Alptikīn led forth his Turkish cavalry arrayed in their finest attire and equipment and with him came the patricians and elders of the city. Tzimisces in turn received them with appropriate formalities and, with the mediation of Ibn al-Zayyāt, began to discuss the terms under which he would spare Damascus.

At this point it becomes difficult to reconcile the various accounts of what happened. This may be due to the variety of points-of-view represented by the original eye-witnesses. Of these only that of Tzimisces is known with certainty. The Arabic sources, however, also

(47) When the Fatimids were besieging Antioch in 360/971, a certain Ibn al-Zayyāt, Amīr of Tarsus and 'Arās, the leader of one group of Fatimid troops, made an attack on al-Iskandaruna (Alexandretta). (IBN AL-DAWADARI, p. 133, and AL-MAQRIZI, p. 126, report the same incident in a slightly different fashion). See WALKER, *Byzantine Victory*. The Ibn al-Zayyāt mentioned by IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 12, as having joined the army of Tzimisces, must be the same. Only Ibn al-Qalānisi and BAR HEBRAEUS, p. 174 (where he is called bar-Zaiath 'Zawath') mention his involvement in Tzimisces' campaign.

appear to be based on eye-witness accounts though their actual source is unknown. They are, moreover, as rich in details as Tzimisces' own record. What follows is, therefore, pieced together from facts in all three primary accounts.

At the meeting arranged by Ibn al-Zayyāt those assembled apparently agreed to pay an annual tribute of possibly as much as 60,000 dinars. Tzimisces and the congregation then proceeded to Damascus, the Emperor to see its wonders and Alptikīn and the others to raise the required tribute⁽⁴⁸⁾.

A sum as large as this would have been difficult to draw out of a rebellious city already torn continually by internal conflict. Tzimisces apparently did not camp on the outskirts of Damascus but halted his army back in the region known as *al-Biqā'*⁽⁴⁹⁾. The townsmen along with Alptikīn tried during this brief waiting period to placate Tzimisces by taking gifts to him. Carefully advised by Ibn al-Zayyāt, Alptikīn attempted also to approach the Emperor and offer fealty. Tzimisces, according to Ibn al-Qalānisi's source, was impressed and pleased by Alptikīn's courtly demeanor and ordered him to ride. His equestrian skills also excited the Emperor's admiration and he further honored the Turkish leader. Finally he asked Alptikīn for his prize mount and his lance. Alptikīn, this story continues, withdrew briefly and returned with twenty horses and more arms and gifts. Tzimisces, however, refused the extra gifts and accepted only the original horse and lance. In return the Emperor gave Alptikīn quantities of silk brocade, jewelry, parade horses and mules: gifts which he carried

(48) TZIMISCES (MATTHEW, p. 24) mentions the sum of 40,000 dahekans (Armenian dinars); AL-MAQRIZI, p. 222, says Alptikīn collected 30,000 dinars for Tzimisces; YAḤYA, p. 368, says the tribute was to be 60,000 dinars; IBN AL-DAWADARI, p. 170, says 30,000 dinars were collected which Tzimisces accepted and then left the remainder for Alptikīn. It seems possible, therefore, that Yaḥyā's figure is close to the correct one, although it is impossible to know for certain as the whole sum was apparently never collected. Cf. also BAR HEBRAEUS, p. 175 and IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 13, who mentions a sum of 100,000 dirhams. Cf. CANARD, *Les sources Arabes*, p. 294).

(49) Only IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 13, mentions Tzimisces going to Damascus to see it and his camping on its outskirts. It is possible he did this without moving the main contingents of his army. AL-MAQRIZI, pp. 221-222, clearly implies that he did not remain at Damascus if he ever went there at all.

with him especially for giving high honor to foreign princes ⁽⁵⁰⁾. By these gifts and Alptikīn's repeated oath of fealty, they seem to have cemented their relationship and the Turkish adventurer became Tzimisces' commander in Damascus ⁽⁵¹⁾.

Alptikīn, in order to explain the slowness with which the tribute was being collected, described to Tzimisces the current state of affairs in the city, the constant strife, destruction and the impoverishment of the tradesmen unable to open their markets or carry on commerce. In Ibn Zūlāq's notes, Tzimisces is said to have responded, "We do not come just to take money. We came rather to seize the country by our swords. You have come to us with gifts and we have responded to your petition. Our goal in taking money is that it be said we took possession of the city. Therefore we take its gifts" ⁽⁵²⁾. In response, Alptikīn further explained that since the city had been his only a short time, he had little control of its affairs. He then singled out Ibn al-Māward, who, he said, had prevented him from acting in the situation. Tzimisces ordered Ibn al-Māward seized to facilitate Alptikīn's raising of the tribute within the city ⁽⁵³⁾. He also apparently remitted a significant part of the total sum to Alptikīn, perhaps to strengthen him and confirm his position as ruler of Damascus.

When the news of Alptikīn's defection to the Greek side and his compromising meeting with Tzimisces reached Abū Maḥmūd, who had just barely been removed from the Fatimid governorship of Damascus and who was then waiting at Tiberias, he attempted to reassert his leadership. He ordered his nephew Jaish ibn al-Ṣamṣāma to march on Damascus. Jaish and his forces, however, were soon delivered a severe defeat by Alptikīn's Turks and they took him as a

(50) These events are recorded by IBN AL-QALANISI, pp. 12-14; and BAR HEBRAEUS, p. 175. On the possible significance of Tzimisces' presents to Alptikīn, see SCHLUMBERGER, p. 297.

(51) AL-MAQRIZI, pp. 221-22, implies such a thing and TZIMISCES (MATTHEW, p. 24) states it clearly. Tzimisces' further assertion that he became a Christian is almost certainly a fabrication either on the Emperor's part or on that of his Armenian translator.

(52) AL-MAQRIZI, p. 221.

(53) *Ibid.* On Ibn al-Māward see note 22. Tzimisces mentions an old man who was governor of Damascus. Perhaps this man was meant, otherwise Alptikīn would have been considered governor.

captive to Tzimisces. The main force of Byzantines were stopped at the time at 'Ain al-Jarr, 18 miles from Damascus waiting there for the tribute money ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Upon receiving it, Tzimisces moved on without delay, and his own account states that from Damascus ⁽⁵⁵⁾ :

we went to the Sea of Galilee, where our Lord Jesus Christ had performed a miracle with one hundred and fifty-three fish. We were intent on laying siege to the town of Tiberias also, but the townspeople came in submission to Our Imperial Majesty and brought us many gifts like the Damascenes had done and also tribute in the amount of thirty thousand dahekans, not counting many other valuable presents. They requested that one of our commanders be put over them and gave us an affirmation of loyalty as had the Damascenes, promising to be subject to us perpetually and to give us tribute ceaselessly. On that basis we left them free of enslavement and did not devastate the town or the region ; moreover, we did not plunder them because the region was the native land of the holy apostles. We felt the same way about Nazareth where the Theotokos, the holy virgin Mary, heard the good tidings from the angel. We also went to Mount Tabor and climbed up to that place where Christ our God was transfigured. While we remained in that place, people came to us from Ramla and Jerusalem to beseech Our Imperial Majesty, looking for compassion from us. They asked a commander be appointed over them and became tributary to us, swearing to serve us ; all of these things which they asked we indeed did. We also were intent on delivering the holy sepulcher of Christ our God from the bondage of the Moslems. We established military commanders in all the areas which had submitted and become tributary to Our Imperial Majesty ; these were Baisan called Decapolis, Genesareth and Acre also called Ptolemais, and by a written statement they undertook to give tribute ceaselessly from year to year and to serve us. We went up to Caesarea which is on the coast of the great Mediterranean sea, and they also submitted and came under our rule. If the abominable Africans had not fled to the coastal fortresses where they had taken refuge because they feared us, by the assistance of God we would have gone to the holy city of Jerusalem and would have stood in prayer at the holy places of God. When we heard that the coastal

(54) AL-MAQRIZI, pp. 221-22. 'Ain al-Jarr is now found on modern maps as 'Anjar.

(55) MATTHEW, pp. 25-27.

inhabitants had fled, then we brought to submission the upper part of the country, subjecting it to the rule of the Romans and establishing a commander there. We brought under our control many towns, besieging and assaulting those which did not submit ; having captured them we went by the coastal route which leads directly to the famous, renowned and heavily fortified town of Berytus, which today is called Beirut.

Here in the heart of Tzimisces' own letter is some of the most interesting and at the same time most doubtful information. The progress of the Byzantine army is well attested to by all sources up to the surrender of Damascus. From there, however, all accounts, except that of Tzimisces, say he marched directly west to the coast.

Until now the authenticity of Tzimisces' letter is unchallenged. Apparently preserved in the Armenian Royal Archives, probably in the original Greek, it survived and found its way into the xiith century history of Matthew of Edessa (⁵⁶).

In spite of its remarkable agreement with the Arabic sources in other details, the case against believing the letter with respect to the Palestinian conquests of Tzimisces is strong. Most significantly, these events are not mentioned by other historians, and it would be strange indeed if either the primary source of Ibn al-Qalānisi or that of al-Maqrizi took no note of these dangerous military and political incursions so far toward Jerusalem, if they in fact happened. The Greek historians, likewise, do not record these triumphs of Tzimisces. There is also a strange inconsistency in Tzimisces' own version of his itinerary. He would have us believe he went straight from Caesarea to Beirut and only later thought to return and capture Sidon. More telling, however, is the fact that Abū Maḥmūd, in spite of losing his nephew Jaish to the Turks, is mentioned as still holding Tiberias after the Byzantines have departed Damascus and attacked Beirut. This, it

(56) DULAURIER (*Chronique*, pp. xvi-xvii) argued that "Dans quelques passages, cette version présente des noms propres conservant les inflexions grammaticales qu'ils avaient dans le texte primitif. On y lit *Vridoun*, qui est le nom de la ville de Béryte à l'accusatif, Beryton ; *ovoulon* pour obolôn, génitif pluriel d'*ovolos*, obole". It is interesting that another Armenian historian, Samuel of Ani, who also mentions this letter but without giving the text, says Tzimisces penetrated to Jerusalem itself and wrote the letter from the holy city (SCHLUMBERGER, pp. 292-93). There was, therefore, something of a Tzimisces legend among some later Armenian historians.

would seem, cannot be reconciled with Tzimisces' claim that this city surrendered to him. In addition, as will be seen shortly, there were simply not enough days between the episode at Damascus and Tzimisces' return to northern Syria for all the events and accomplishments he claims to have made in Palestine. What then can explain his strange account, his claim to have climbed Mount Tabor, taken Tiberias, Nazareth, Caesarea and Acre, and his appointing military commanders over them? One of the many possibilities is that Tzimisces' letter lay untranslated in the Royal Archives from its arrival until many years after when the events of 975 were only dimly remembered. Tzimisces' sudden death in January 976, the intense internal struggles of Basil II's early reign, and most of all the successful Latin crusade of 1095-1099, probably facilitated this and pushed Tzimisces' triumphs far into the background. When they were remembered and when his letter finally was translated into Armenian, it might have been colored by misunderstanding and myth. It is also possible, however, that Tzimisces invented or exaggerated his Palestinian exploits to enlarge his triumphs and his own glory, and for special reasons, suggested below, to justify himself to his Armenian allies. It seems clear now, with the weight of new sources, that Tzimisces and the main Byzantine army moved quickly from 'Ain al-Jarr to Beirut⁽⁵⁷⁾ and in all probability did not enter Palestine.

Abū al-Faṭḥ ibn al-Shaikh, the leading figure, and the elders of the city of Sidon came to Tzimisces while he was besieging Beirut and negotiated a deal including tribute and gifts similar to that of Damascus⁽⁵⁸⁾. Thus he did not need to move his army south to that city. Beirut itself was still garrisoned by a Fatimid force under the eunuch Nuṣayr and he strongly contested the Byzantine attempt to seize it. However, when it became clear that the Berbers could not hold out, Tzimisces sent a message to them and to the inhabitants of Beirut saying, according to our Egyptian source, "I do not wish the destruction of your city nor do I wish to fight you. I only want you to surrender this eunuch and those with him to me, and I will appoint for you on my part a *Dharwār* (?) to defend you from those who

(57) As stated by AL-MAQRIZI, p. 222 and IBN AL-DAWADARI, p. 171.

(58) IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 14 ; BAR HEBRAEUS, p. 175 ; MATTHEW, p. 27. Al-Maqrizī does not mention Sidon at all.

have designs against you". This offer was apparently opportune, for Nuṣayr and his followers, said by the Emperor to number 1,000, were soon surrendered. Tzimisce accordingly appointed a *Dharwār* (?) in Beirut to act on his behalf⁽⁵⁹⁾.

After the capture of Beirut, Tzimisce marched swiftly northward wasting little time in taking Byblos by force⁽⁶⁰⁾ and perhaps other cities before he reached Tripoli, which was then still held by the eunuch Rayyān with a large force of Berbers. The Byzantine attack, moreover, probably began long before the Emperor arrived. The first skirmish occurred, according to Ibn Zūlāq, in late April or early May⁽⁶¹⁾. Tzimisce himself reports that before reaching the city, he sent cavalry units of the *thematikoi* (Themes) and the *taxatoi* (garrison troops) into a defile near Tripoli where a party of some 2,000 Berbers, apparently foraging unawares, were ambushed and many killed or imprisoned. Nevertheless, the city itself did not yield and probably before the middle of June the Emperor reluctantly gave

(59) A short version of Tzimisce's message is found in AL-MAQRIZI, p. 222; and the longer, quoted here, comes from IBN AL-DAWĀDĀRĪ, p. 171. The incident is confirmed by YAḤYA, p. 369. TZIMISCES (MATTHEW, p. 27), IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 14, and BAR HEBRAEUS, p. 175, report that Beirut was taken by force, after a violent struggle, but do not mention the exchange of messages.

The designation *Dharwār* or *Dhirwār* occurs only in Ibn al-Dawādārī. Al-Maqrīzī simply says that, "a person with 200 men (*shakhṣan fī mi'atay rajūlin*)", was appointed. The Arabic letter (dh) is often confused with (z) both in script and pronunciation and therefore this *Dharwār*, is obviously the holder of the office mentioned by IBN ḤAWQAL, *Kitāb Ṣūra al-'ard* (ed. J. H. Kramers, Brill, 1838), part I, p. 196, as *Zarāwira* (pl. of *Zarwāra* or *Zirwāra*). The person who holds this rank would be called, therefore, *zirwār*. See N. OIKONOMIDES, *L'Organisation de la frontière orientale de Byzance aux X^e-XI^e siècles et le taktikon de l'Escorial, XIV^e Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines : Rapports II* [Bucarest, 1971], p. 87. He suggests that the word applies to the commanders of small frontier themes — themes which were added to the Empire in the course of the 10th century. The use of the term in Ibn al-Dawādārī's report of Tzimisce's taking Beirut may, therefore, be especially significant if it indicates what actually took place. Did the Emperor hope to create a series of coastal themes under direct Byzantine control? At this point, it should be remembered, Tzimisce still thought he could also capture Tripoli. It is also noteworthy that he was content to dominate the interior by means of local puppets.

(60) MATTHEW, p. 27; IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 14.

(61) AL-MAQRIZI, p. 218.

up. Before lifting siege, the Byzantine army laid waste the gardens of the region by cutting down the vines, olive trees and date palms. The city, however, remained in Fatimid hands⁽⁶²⁾.

In Cairo al-Mu'izz received the news of the fighting at Tripoli and of the apparent defeat of the Byzantines near the middle of June. The failure of Tzimisces to take Tripoli elated the Caliph and he gave alms in thanks. In the latter half of July, the heads of Byzantine soldiers arrived and were paraded about the city as additional proof of Fatimid victory⁽⁶³⁾. Tzimisces, however, did not think himself defeated. His frustrating attempt to break the defense of Tripoli was an annoying but relatively minor setback. Later, on the return to Antioch, which occupied the rest of the summer, he added the fortresses of Jabala, Balanea, Saone (Sihyun), and Barzuya to his domain⁽⁶⁴⁾. At this time the Byzantine army was some distance from Fatimid troops and the struggle between the two seems to have ended with the lifting of the siege of Tripoli. Those areas of northern Syria which now fell to Tzimisces were almost certainly controlled independently by local Moslem forces. The major aim of Tzimisces had already been accomplished and, moreover, he apparently felt free to send an am-

(62) MATTHEW, p. 28; AL-MAQRIZI, p. 222; YAḤYĀ, p. 369; IBN AL-QALĀNISI, p. 14; IBN AL-DAWĀDARI, p. 171; LEO THE DEACON, p. 168. Some interesting details of the siege are given by Tzimisces, Ibn al-Dawādārī, and Ibn al-Qalānīsī (take the cutting of the date palms around the city as applying to the siege of Tripoli not Antioch and therefore agreeing with Tzimisces' own account). IBN AL-QALĀNISI and AL-MAKIN (p. 290), who give the same account, seem to confuse Tzimisces at Tripoli with Nicephoras Phocas at Antioch in 359/969.

The story of the marvelous comet which appeared in August of this year, mentioned by Leo the Deacon, p. 168, is sometimes connected with this siege (Cf. SCHLUMBERGER, pp. 300-302). The news of the Byzantine defeat at Tripoli, however, apparently reached Cairo on, or soon after, the *ʿid al-Fiṭr* (June 14, 975) according to al-Maqrīzī, p. 222. Therefore, it is more likely that Tzimisces had moved back into northern Syria before the appearance of the comet.

(63) Apparently, before the middle of *dhū al-Qaʿda*/July 13-August 12, 975. IBN AL-QALĀNISI, p. 14, says the fighting around Tripoli lasted 40 days. If this is true, it is further proof that Tzimisces had units of his army there from the beginning of the campaign even though he arrived himself only in June.

(64) Yaḥyā, p. 369; Matthew, p. 28. Yaḥyā and Tzimisces mention all four and LEO THE DEACON, p. 166 and 168, confirms the capture of Barzouyah, and Valanias. See HONINGMANN, pp. 100-101.

bassador to al-Mu'izz in Cairo. Ibn Zūlāq, at any rate, recorded the arrival of an ambassador from the Greeks at the end of this summer⁽⁶⁵⁾. It is not clear what instructions this ambassador had, but it is surely safe to conclude that he was to negotiate some kind of formal end to the hostilities.

(65) Probably in Muḥarram/September-October, 975, as reported by AL-MAQRIZI, p. 225.

In the *Kitāb al-Dhakhā'ir wa'l-Tuḥaf* (ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh, Kuwait, 1959, p. 82) of the QADĪ AL-RASHĪD IBN AL-ZUBAYR (d. 463/1070-71), there is a story of finding in the treasury of the Fatimid Caliph four saddles (with bridles) worked with black brocade, gold and white jasper. On them it was written that they were a gift to al-Mu'izz from the King of the Romans received after his entry into Egypt. If so, they were brought to Egypt by either the Byzantine embassy of 974 (see note 37) or that mentioned here.

Concerning this last embassy to al-Mu'izz, there is the following curious story about the cause of the Caliph's death related, by among others, IBN ABĪ DĪNAR (*al-Mu'nis fī akhbār Ifrīqīya wa Tūnis* [ed. Amari, *Bibl. Arabo-Sic., texts*, app. pp. 11-12]. "And the cause of his [al-Mu'izz] death was that a number of times the King of the Romans sent him an ambassador who visited him in Africa and in Egypt. One day he was alone with him (his name was Nikūla [?]), and al-Mu'izz li dīn Allāh asked him, "Do you remember that you came to me when I was in Mahdiyya [his residence in Tunisia] and I told you that you would come to me in Egypt and I would be ruling over it"? He replied, "Yes". So he said to him, "And I say to you now you will come to me in Baghdad and I will be caliph"! The ambassador replied, "If you will assure me of my safety and not get angry, I will tell you what I really think". He said to him, "Say what you think : you are safe". He replied, "The King sent me to you that year and I arrived [first] in Sicily where your governor met me with his troops and I witnessed wonders from him. Then I came to Susa and I saw in it your army so large it dazed my mind. Then I proceeded to Mahdiyya and there was scarcely an end to the extent of your armies and servants and the multitude of your companions so that I almost died. I arrived at your palace and I saw a light which dazzled my sight. Then I entered into your presence and you were on your couch. I beheld your greatness and supposed you were the creator not a creature. If you had said to me that you would ascend to heaven, I would have believed you and would have been convinced of that. I have come to you now and I do not see such things. When I came upon this city of yours, there was a gloomy blackness in my eye. In your palace I entered into your presence but I did not find such awesomeness in you as there was that year. I knew that this was a sign of the future and that it is now the opposite of what it used to be". Al-Mu'izz bowed his head and the ambassador left him. The fever took hold of al-Mu'izz, his sickness grew heavier, and stayed with him until he died. God have mercy on him".

IV THE RESULTS OF THE CAMPAIGN

Many of those forces shaping the course of events in Syria during and before the summer of 975 continued to play their respective roles in 976. If Tzimiscēs had seriously upset the balance of power or simplified a complex and confusing situation in the south, the effect was only slight and temporary. Damascus remained in the hands of Alptikīn, but the Byzantines apparently lost their influence there as soon as they departed. Even the Qarmatians could not continue forever to prop up Alptikīn in the face of the persistent Fatimid armies. The vastly increased force the Fatimids sent against him eventually brought him to defeat and capture, although by then he had managed to maintain himself in Damascus almost three and one half years⁽⁶⁶⁾.

Nevertheless, Tzimiscēs had gained one major accomplishment. Ja'far Ibn Falāḥ was able to send an army against Antioch in 971, and in 974-975, it was still theoretically exposed to attack by Fatimid armies. Tzimiscēs knew the danger of total Fatimid control in Syria. By his campaign in 975, he ended this danger and relieved Antioch, and possibly much of Byzantine Syria, from the real or imagined threat from Egypt. By helping Alptikīn to consolidate his position in Damascus, he created a buffer between the Empire and the Fatimids. It was consequently impossible for Egypt to move enough force north to attack Antioch again.

(66) The ultimate irony of the whole conflict between Alptikīn and the Fatimids began with his capture. Instead of being punished, he was given honors and a high position. Apparently those same chivalrous qualities which Tzimiscēs found so pleasing in him were recognized by the Fatimid Caliph al-'Azīz. In addition, however, al-'Azīz, unhappy at his own exclusive dependence upon Berber troops whose leaders were not always strictly obedient, saw a chance to create a private palace guard out of the captured Turks and use it as a wedge between himself and the Berber chiefs. In this, he was eventually successful, although not without opposition from the Berbers and his own bureaucracy. It is reported that the *Wazīr* Ya'qūb Ibn Killis had Alptikīn poisoned. In any case he died in 369/August 978-August 979, under unusual circumstances. AL-MAQRIZI, p. 246; IBN AL-DAWADARI, p. 189; IBN AL-QALANISI, p. 21; IBN AL-ATHIR, p. 487. All except al-Maqrīzī implicate Ya'qūb Ibn Killis in his death.

The campaign of 975, however, though certainly brilliant in conception and execution, could hardly have been a crusade for the recovery of Jerusalem. Such a goal would have had exactly the opposite result to that which Tzimiskes surely intended. Any threat to Jerusalem would have aroused and unified the Moslems and their consequent anger would have only aided the Fatimid cause. As it was, his quick thrust into southern Syria served to remind the Fatimids of the sphere in which Byzantine hegemony had been previously established and which the Byzantines were perfectly capable of defending. Tzimiskes was, no doubt, generally satisfied with what he had accomplished. He had, in effect, put to rest the question of a Fatimid-Byzantine boundary in Syria and it is likely that the ambassador from the Byzantines, who arrived in Cairo in the late summer of 975, came to cement a formal agreement on this boundary.

Tzimiskes' letter, while doubtful as to its accuracy regarding his conquest in Palestine, remains remarkably sound as a source in many other respects. It is clear nonetheless that an interpretation of it which pictures the Emperor undertaking and carrying out a crusade is hard to accept. Therefore, if his letter is to be considered entirely authentic, it might be useful to re-examine it, not as a record of what actually transpired but of its author's public policy toward the then semi-autonomous Armenians to whose king the letter was addressed.

Tzimiskes' letter to Ashot III not only contains claims of unlikely victories in Palestine but it also explains that it was all done for the sake of a united Christendom. Why should such a letter be sent to the king of Armenia? One possible answer appears as a result of Adontz's, and later Grousset's, analyses of the significance of the second letter by Tzimiskes which follows in Matthew's chronicle⁽⁶⁷⁾. It would seem that a period of great tension between Armenia and the Byzantine empire had existed just prior to Tzimiskes' campaign against the Arabs in 974. The causes of this hostility include the Byzantine annexation of Taron (about 967 or 968) and long standing religious differences between the Armenian and Greek churches. Tzimiskes' second letter indicates that the most immediate problem was a dispute over the occupancy of certain borderline fortresses.

(67) ADONTZ, *Notes Arméno-Byzantines*, II, and GROUSSET, *L'Arménie*, pp. 493-500.

Originally Tzimiscēs may have set out from Constantinople in 974 to quiet resentment and discontent in Armenia itself. Ashot for his part may have given the Emperor troops and provisions in order to placate him and divert him from the Armenian situation. In any case the Armenian soldiers must have been useful in the Arab campaigns and it is likely that Tzimiscēs' letter is recognition first of all of that fact. That, however, does not explain why he felt the need to emphasize his supposedly religious motives in this particular attack in Syria.

It should be remembered, in light of these justifications, that the Fatimids publicly excused their conquest of Egypt and Palestine, for example, with the argument that they were carrying the Holy War to the Christians. They hoped thereby to gain the sympathy of their Sunnite, Moslem opponents. Likewise, the Byzantines may have wanted a similar publicly stated policy to attract the heterodox Armenians. It is in this context then that the Emperor wrote his now famous letter to Ashot III. Accordingly, Tzimiscēs' exaggerations were quite possibly contrived as part of an ongoing effort to enmesh the Armenian principalities in imperial policy. By the same token, it was apparently unnecessary to overplay this campaign in Constantinople where it earned notice more for the sacred relics brought back than for military conquests.

It is clear, especially from our new Arabic sources, that the Moslems felt no real threat to their control of Jerusalem in 975. In fact Tzimiscēs' incursion in southern Syria that year passed so quickly, they hardly reacted at all. For them, it was but a momentary interlude in the midst of civil wars. Therefore, although the war in 975 was in part religiously motivated, faith was more a public relations' excuse than the real cause which propelled the soldiers to fight. It was not the campaign itself which "breathed the veritable crusading spirit", but the Emperor's after-the-fact letter written to put the most diplomatically valuable face on his recent achievements.



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VII

Al-Maqrīzī and the Fatimids

The role of al-Maqrīzī in the historiography of the Fatimids is immense; he looms so large in fact that what he wrote often seems to overwhelm all other sources of information about them. Regardless of how one assesses his strengths and weaknesses as a historian in other respects, his contributions in this one area remain critical in any reconstruction or assessment of Fatimid history. Moreover, if he offered nothing other than the preservation of older sources, that would be enough. He provides a mass of material where little else exists.¹

And several sources not by him nevertheless depend on him. For the study of the Fatimids, where so few works survive, especially for Egypt, those that we know because of his efforts stand out. One prime example is what remains of the Egyptian historian Tāj al-Dīn Ibn Muyassar's *History of Egypt* (*Tārīkh Miṣr*). Ibn Muyassar's dates are 628–77 and thus he precedes al-Maqrīzī by over a century and a half. Thought by many to have been the most important work on the Fatimid period before al-Maqrīzī, it has long been known that this chronicle was al-Maqrīzī's main source for the reconstruction of a major period—a fact easily demonstrated by comparing the surviving text of Ibn Muyassar with al-Maqrīzī's Fatimid history, the *Itti'āz*. But in fact, what we possess of Ibn Muyassar is merely a set of detailed notes taken from the original by al-Maqrīzī himself in the year 814. It is not in all likelihood a verbatim transcription. The surviving manuscript is, moreover, only a copy of those same notes.

There are other less dramatic examples. Only a small section of the massive history by al-Musabbihī (d. 420/1029)² has been recovered and it is now in the Escorial. On the title page of that manuscript is the signature of al-Maqrīzī, indicating apparently that he once possessed and/or used it.³ Similarly, al-Maqrīzī's name and seal are visible on the title page of the Vienna manuscript of Ibn

¹On the historiography of the Fatimids see in general my *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and Its Sources* (London, 2002).

²The amir al-Mukhtār 'Izz al-Mulk Muḥammad al-Musabbihī's *History*, said to have comprised 13,000 folios in all, has for the most part all but disappeared. His life spanned the period 366–420 and his history the years 368–415.

³The same title page has the signature as well of al-Awḥadī. See the photograph of it reproduced in the edition by Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid and Thierry Bianquis, *Al-Juz' al-Arba'ūn min Akhbār Miṣr*, pt. 1 (historical section) (Cairo, 1978), plate 1 (transcribed on p. 1).

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al-Furāt.⁴ In two other cases, those of Ibn al-Ma'mūn and Ibn al-Tuwayr, much of what remains of their works are the sections that appear in the writings of al-Maqrīzī.

Several of al-Maqrīzī's own works concern the Fatimids in one way or another. The major ones are, first, the *Khīṭaṭ*, which is itself, at least in inspiration, a work on Fatimid Cairo and Fatimid institutions. A *khīṭṭah* (plural *khīṭaṭ*) is both a location or a building and as well an institution, such as a department of government. For al-Maqrīzī the office of chief *dā'ī*, the *dā'ī al-du'āh*, is such an institution, a *khīṭṭah*.⁵ Begun out of a sense of nostalgia for the city of his birth and boyhood and its antiquities, much of the *Khīṭaṭ* centers on the Fatimids, even though the final version came to encompass most of Egypt. Al-Maqrīzī's great biographical dictionary, *Al-Muqaffā al-Kabīr*, aspired to include all prominent individuals in the Islamic period who had lived in or visited Egypt. It is less obviously dedicated to the Fatimids. However, of the parts that survive, which contain some 3600 individual entries, I count over 500 related more or less to Fatimid history. Many are quite brief: Andalusians, for example, who passed through Egypt on the hajj; but a fair number of the entries are extensive. Several concern persons one might not expect: there is a biography of a Berber rebel who harried the Zirid rulers of North Africa in the period when they still recognized the suzerainty of the Fatimids in Egypt. After at last defeating and capturing this man, the Zirid ruler executed him and sent his head off to Cairo. And thus, comments al-Maqrīzī, this man merits inclusion in this book—at least his head came to Egypt. Among the longer and more noteworthy biographies are those of the first three Fatimid caliphs: al-Mahdī, al-Qā'im, and most peculiarly al-Manṣūr. Both al-Mahdī and al-Qā'im had lived in Egypt; al-Qā'im also twice led a Fatimid army into Egypt trying to capture it. But al-Manṣūr was born in the Maghrib and died there. His corpse, however, came with al-Mu'izz (along with the bodies of his grandfather and great grandfather) when the Fatimids moved their capital to Egypt. Thus he, too, fit al-Maqrīzī's requirement for the *Muqaffā*.

But, important as these two works are, al-Maqrīzī's major contribution was his *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā' bi-Akhhār al-A'imma al-Fāṭimīyīn al-Khulafā'* (Lessons for the true believers in the history of the Fatimid imams and caliphs), a single, large work devoted exclusively to the Fatimids. It was, it is true, only one of a series of three works on the history of Egypt from the Arab conquest until the

⁴As noted by Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid in the introduction to his edition of Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām Ibn al-Tuwayr, *Nuzhat al-Muqlatayn fī Akhhār al-Dawlatayn* (Beirut, 1992), 14*.

⁵See the *musawwadah*, ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid (London, 1995), 94: "This institution (*al-khīṭṭah*), that is the office (*waṣīfah*) of the chief *dā'ī* I have not observed in any state other than that of the Fatimid caliphs, especially in Egypt. The institution is based on an appeal to the masses to accept what of the Ismaili *madhhab* they used to believe in." The Bulaq text ([1853], 391) is not the same.

year of al-Maqrīzī's own death. The first, his *'Iqd Jawāhir al-Asqāṭ min Akhbār Madīnat al-Fuṣṭāṭ*, went to the year 358.⁶ Next is the *Itti'āz*, his history of the Fatimids, and finally his *Al-Sulūk li-Ma'rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, which covered the Ayyubids and Mamluks. The pattern of these histories thus suggests that the Fatimids were not accorded as much attention as might be supposed from the one work in isolation. Still, even if it is one of a series, it stands out. Excluding those that are merely a part of a broader history and a few that deal with limited portions of the Fatimid experience as a whole, the *Itti'āz* is the only medieval history of them we have.⁷

Al-Maqrīzī's lavish attentions to the Fatimids, his evident sympathy for them, and his well-known acceptance of their genealogical claim of descent from 'Alī and Fāṭimah—despite its rejection by most Sunni authorities—gained him special notice among his contemporaries, both those friendly to him and those who were not. But a typical reaction is that of an unknown writer who added a comment in the margin of the Gotha ms. (the autograph) of the *Itti'āz* immediately after al-Maqrīzī's section on Fatimid genealogy.⁸

The concern of the author with refuting what was said by the specialists in genealogy about the validity [of the claim of descent] of the Fatimids, and his attempt to vindicate them, his constant praise for them, and defense of their *madhhab* . . . is excused because he traced his own ancestry to them. He used to state, particularly in the beginning of a book and in his own hand, that his line went back to Tamīm [ibn al-Mu'izz].

As a descendant of the Fatimid caliphs he might well be expected both to support their position and to write a laudatory account of their reign. The view expressed in this comment was apparently shared by many others, as at least supplying a reason to explain al-Maqrīzī's interest in the Fatimids. Nearly all of his biographers mention it, for example. Some even, perhaps hoping to discredit him, hint at the possibility that he was personally attracted by Ismaili doctrine, that he was a

⁶This work is now lost.

⁷Remarkably, there is as yet no history of the Fatimids in a European language. The only modern example is Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan's *Tārīkh al-Dawlah al-Fāṭimīyah fī al-Maghrib wa-Miṣr wa-Suriyā wa-Bilād al-'Arab* (2nd ed., Cairo, 1958; 3rd ed., Cairo, 1964). But the most important book on the Fatimids in Arabic is Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid's *Al-Dawlah al-Fāṭimīyah fī Miṣr: Taḥsīn Jadīd* (Cairo, 1992; 2nd ed., Cairo, 2000) which by its very nature does not cover the North African phase.

⁸Given in Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl's note in his edition of the text, *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā' bi-Akhbār al-A'imma al-Fāṭimīyah al-Khulafā'* (Cairo, 1967–73), 1:54 n. 2.

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crypto-Ismaili. These are, however, two separate problems: Was al-Maqrīzī, or did he think he was, a descendant of the Fatimids? And did he accept in any way Ismaili doctrines?

The question of his ancestry is immediately complicated by al-Maqrīzī's refusal in all his works, despite the evidence of the statement above, to admit his Fatimid descent or provide a full genealogy going back to the Fatimids—a fact already noted by contemporaries such as Ibn Ḥajar. In other words, al-Maqrīzī himself did not make such a claim in his written work, but extended his line back no more than ten generations. From where, then, does this widely cited fact come and on what sort of evidence is it based?

Ibn Taghrībirdī, al-Maqrīzī's own student, remarks in the *Nujūm al-Zāhirah* that al-Maqrīzī's ancestry could be extended back to 'Alī via the Fatimid caliphs, a fact he learned from al-Maqrīzī's nephew al-Nāṣirī Muḥammad, the son of his brother.⁹

Ibn Ḥajar, in the *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, offers two bits of evidence.¹⁰ A) The story of a Meccan scholar who read a work of al-Maqrīzī's with him on the front of which he had written a list of al-Maqrīzī's ancestors running back to Tamīm the son of al-Mu'izz, the Fatimid caliph who founded Cairo. But then al-Maqrīzī himself erased that same list and in his works he never (again?) extended the line that far back. B) Another story comes from al-Maqrīzī's brother who was curious to learn how they were related to the Fatimids. Al-Maqrīzī supposedly told him that he and his father entered the Mosque of al-Ḥākim one day and the father told the son, "My son, this is the mosque of your ancestor."

In the same author's *Al-Durar al-Kāminah*¹¹ he comments that al-Maqrīzī used to say that his father mentioned to him that he was a descendant of Tamīm ibn al-Mu'izz, the builder of Cairo, but that he should not reveal this fact to anyone he could not trust.

Al-Maqrīzī's neighbor, friend, and fellow historian, al-Awḥadī, composed lines of verse in which he states rather directly, "Boast among the people, Taqī al-Dīn, with full pride in a noble Fatimid ancestry; when you related something good about them and face opposition, trace it back to the Ḥākimī [al-Ḥākim]."¹²

⁹See, under the year 845, his obituary for al-Maqrīzī: Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Maḥāsīn Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1929–49; 1963–71), 15:490. There is, however, no detail given of such a genealogy. In Ibn Taghrībirdī's *Al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi wa-al-Mustawfā ba'da al-Wāfi*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1984) there is a biography of al-Maqrīzī (1:415–20) but again no genealogy (nor any claim for it).

¹⁰*Inbā' al-Ghumr bi-Abnā' al-'Umr* (Hyderabad, 1976) under the year 845, 9:172.

¹¹*Al-Durar al-Kāminah* (Cairo, 1966), 3:5.

¹²As far as I know Nasser Rabbat was the first to notice these lines, which appear in al-Maqrīzī's biography of al-Awḥadī in the *Durar al-Uqūd al-Farīdah fī Tarājīm al-A'yān al-Mufīdah*, ed.

There is in all this still no specific genealogy. Al-Sakhāwī in his *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi'* also gives none, although he does repeat disparagingly what Ibn Ḥajar had said, adding a nasty comment about al-Maqrīzī's reliance on an untrustworthy genealogist.¹³ Nevertheless in his *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk* he provides a complete genealogy going back, not merely to al-Mu'izz, but from him to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.¹⁴ This is the only complete genealogy for al-Maqrīzī that I know of.¹⁵

What can we make of all this? Obviously someone wanted to be descended from the founder of Cairo. Tamīm, al-Mu'izz's oldest son, was the link. But Tamīm, born in 337, although the oldest, was passed over in the succession in the mid-350s when it was learned that he would never produce offspring (*lammā ra'ā an lā yu'qib*). We don't know exactly why: impotence or another physical defect. A Shi'i imam, however, must produce an heir, otherwise he cannot be the imam. But the point here is that Tamīm also cannot have been al-Maqrīzī's ancestor; or to put it another way, al-Maqrīzī was not his descendant. Whoever was originally responsible for this claim had made the wrong choice of a Fatimid.¹⁶ Most importantly al-Maqrīzī knew about the impotence of Tamīm, or at least, he came to know of it. But in his *Itti'āz* he does not mention this fact, although it might be expected there. Nevertheless, in his biographical entry for Tamīm in the *Muqaffá*, he is quite clear about it.

Another fact worth repeating here also comes from al-Maqrīzī. When Saladin put an end to the caliphate he rounded up all the Fatimids and detained them where they could not procreate and thus produce more Fatimids. Thirty years later in 608, sixty were still held; in 623, forty remained. We have their names thanks to al-Maqrīzī. If sixty-three were still in custody after 30 years, there must have been many, many more in 558: possibly as many as 200? 300? Saladin was quite

'Adnān Darwīsh and Muḥammad al-Miṣrī (Damascus, 1995), 2:239. He quite rightly saw their significance as well. For this reference and some others I benefited from an unpublished earlier version of his paper in this volume which he kindly provided to me.

¹³Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Cairo, 1934–36), 2:21–26.

¹⁴Did al-Sakhāwī possibly accept as genuine the genealogy he gives for the line from al-Mahdī to Ja'far al-Šādiq: "al-Mahdī. . . ibn Majīd ibn Ja'far, ibn Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn Ja'far. . .?"

¹⁵As printed: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Dhayl al-Sulūk* (Bulaq, 1896), 21–24; however, there are problems: the key segment runs: ". . . Tamīm ibn 'Alī ibn 'Ubayd ibn Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-Mu'izz . . ." which cannot be correct. Al-Mu'izz had four sons: Tamīm, 'Abd Allāh, Nizār (al-'Azīz), and 'Aqīl. See my "Succession to Rule in the Shiite Caliphate" (*Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 32 [1995]: 239–64), 246.

¹⁶Admittedly there is some confusion in the data presented to us. Tamīm ibn al-Mu'izz was the uncle of al-Ḥākim and therefore, even if he had produced offspring, he and al-Ḥākim belong to different lines.

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thorough; there were to be no descendants at all!¹⁷

At this point it is obvious that the evidence is hardly unambiguous and it is therefore difficult to explain all these claims with a simple solution. However, it appears that the basic assertion of Fatimid descent in the case of al-Maqrīzī is a family myth or legend. Note in particular the role of the father and the brother. The neighbor al-Awḥadī may have learned what he knew from the same source. At any rate al-Awḥadī died in 811, thirty-four years before al-Maqrīzī. His lines of verse therefore belong to the first half of al-Maqrīzī's life, quite possibly before he discovered how unlikely the family legend was. When he did, he simply stopped making the claim on his own behalf; but he could not—and perhaps saw no harm in not—prevent others (such as his own brother) from repeating it.

But what about those who saw him as a sympathizer, a Shiite, or even a crypto-Ismaili? His acceptance of the Fatimid claim of a valid descent from 'Alī, despite its rejection by most Sunnis, his generally soft-hearted attitude to the Hashimids and the Alids (the Ashrāf, i.e., descendants of either Ḥasan ibn 'Alī or Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī), and his obvious tolerance for Shiite doctrines were well known. But do they indicate something deeper and more profound?

Here there are three separate questions to consider. The first involves his support of the Fatimid genealogy. The second is his attitude toward the public doctrines of the Ismailis as applied by the Fatimids. The third concerns his reaction to the secret esoteric doctrines of the Ismaili *da'wah*. But did he even know about the last and if he did, in what manner and based on what sources? Sunni denunciation of Ismaili doctrine occurred regularly but rarely was it directed at authentic pronouncements by the Ismailis themselves.

The problem of Fatimid genealogy is interesting. Al-Maqrīzī was one of only a handful of the later Sunni writers to accept it. But his argument is curious.¹⁸ According to him, it is plausible, which means that he could find specialists in the genealogy of the Alids who assured him that descent from Ja'far through Ismā'īl and his son Muḥammad might well continue to al-Mahdī, the founder of the caliphate. Moreover, the main detractors, namely Akhū Muḥsin and Ibn al-Rizām, were obviously out-of-line and clearly consumed by bias. As were the Abbasids, who did not denounce it until they had lost a huge share of territory and were threatened directly and immediately, and even then they had to resort to force in

¹⁷It should be recognized that these facts by themselves do not exclude all lines of descent. Several sons of al-Mustanshir fled Egypt during the dispute over the succession of al-Musta'li and they are not all accounted for, nor their offspring. On this see "Succession to Rule in the Shiite Caliphate," 248–56.

¹⁸His comments occur in at least three places: *Itti'āz*, 1:15–54 (esp. 52–54); *Khiṭaṭ* (Bulaq), 1:348–51; *Kitāb al-Muqaffā al-Kabīr*, ed. M. al-Ya'lāwī (Beirut, 1991), 4:523–70 (bio. of al-Mahdī, no. 1528).

order to convince the Ashrāf to sign on to their proclamation of the denunciation.¹⁹ Had the Fatimids been liars, al-Maqrīzī continues, God would never have allowed them the tremendous successes they in fact achieved. (This latter argument is admittedly extremely weak, as al-Maqrīzī's contemporaries obviously realized.) But finally, and much more importantly, he observes that the major Egyptian historians accepted its validity, among them Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir,²⁰ Ibn al-Ṭuwayr,²¹ and Ibn Khaldūn.²² Those who rejected it were most often non-Egyptians, for example, the Syrians or the Baghdadis.

Al-Maqrīzī's accounts of public doctrines for the better part also down-play the differences between Shiite practice and that of the Sunnis. The Fatimids, in his view, simply followed the practice of 'Alī and of the Ahl al-Bayt; it was their *madhhab*. To cite but one example, when al-Mu'izz's uncle died, the caliph allowed seven repetitions of the *tabbīr* instead of the expected five. 'Alī himself had approved, al-Maqrīzī notes, an adjustment of the number in accord with the rank of the deceased.²³ Al-Maqrīzī sees in this aspect of Fatimid doctrine, as with other examples of the kind, nothing denoting unacceptable heresy. Mild preference for 'Alī (*tafḍīl 'Alī*) apparently did not threaten him.

What about theology and the secret doctrines of the *da'wah*? Did al-Maqrīzī really understand the true nature of Ismailism? This is an important question. He certainly had read anti-Ismaili tracts and refutations, many quite scurrilous and hostile. He knew therefore of the standard accusation leveled against them of antinomianism, that is, of having rejected the outward observance of legal rites and rituals in favor of esoteric knowledge. But did he actually know about the content of genuine Ismaili writings and of their actual doctrines?

Here it is useful to quote at length his assessment of the problem as reflected in the concluding pages of the *Itti'āz*. There he says the following:²⁴

What They May Be Faulted For (Or Not)

There is no disputing the fact that this group was Shi'i and that they maintained the superiority of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib over the rest

¹⁹The date of this famous proclamation issued in Baghdad by the Abbasids is 402.

²⁰*Al-Rawḍah al-Bahīyah al-Zāhirah fī Khīṭat al-Mu'izzīyah al-Qāhirah*. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid (Cairo, 1996), 6–7.

²¹Ibn al-Ṭuwayr's acceptance is reported by Ibn al-Zayyāt (*Al-Kawākib al-Sayyārah fī Tartīb al-Ziyārah*, 176) as noted by Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid in his introduction to Ibn al-Ṭuwayr's *Nuzhat al-Muqlatayn*, 14*.

²²Whether or not Ibn Khaldūn counts as an Egyptian, when al-Maqrīzī knew him, he did live in Cairo.

²³*Itti'āz*, 1:146.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 3:345–46.

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of the Companions and that, out of the various *madhhabs* of the Shi'ah, they adhered to that of the Ismā'īlīyah, who affirm the imamate of Ismā'il ibn Ja'far al-Šādiq and trace the continuation of it in offspring of his among imams that were hidden up to 'Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī, the first of those who ruled in the Maghrib. The remainder of the Shi'ah do not recognize the imamate of Ismā'il and, in direct opposition to them, deny it vehemently.

Along with their deviation from the general *madhhab* of Shiism they were excessive in terms of *rafḍ* [i.e., refusal to accept the authority of others, 'Umar and other Companions], although those who came earlier were more concerned to safeguard themselves from the kind of perversions engaged in by the later ones. Then al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh went even further in meddling with doctrine. But he was hardly consistent in this and was quick to change his mind. When he leaned to one doctrine, he proclaimed it and imposed it on the people. But soon thereafter he reverted to something else and expected the populace to abandon what he had imposed on them and turn to what he had now come up with. A man known as al-Labbād al-Zawzanī [Ḥamzah]²⁵ joined him and this man now professed openly the *madhhab* of the Bāṭinīyah.²⁶ There had been some of this among the earliest of them. However, the people rejected this *madhhab* in so far as it comprised things not known among the earlier imams and their successors, and also what in it contradicted the shari'ah.

Next, in the time of al-Mustaṣṣir, al-Ḥasan ibn al-Šabbāḥ²⁷ came to see him. He spread this *madhhab* in various regions, summoning the masses to it. He also permitted the killing of those who opposed him. Accordingly, disapproval [of them] intensified and the outcry against them increased in every direction up to the point that they were excluded from Islam and the community of believers.

When the Abbasids were overcome with hatred for them

²⁵This Ḥamzah, who was originally a *dā'ī* in Egypt under al-Ḥākim, became the founder of the Druze.

²⁶Al-Maqrīzī apparently means by this term those who subscribe to the inner *bāṭinī* understanding of the law and scripture to the exclusion of its outward *ẓāhirī* aspects. In other words they deny the physical reality of the law itself and no longer observe its strictures.

²⁷Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ created and led the Nizārī Ismailis who became legendary, if not notorious, for use of assassination to control their enemies, hence the common name for his followers, the Assassins.

[the Fatimids] and were reeling from the hurt of their having captured from them the territories of Qayrawan, the regions of Egypt, Syria, the Hijaz, the Yemen, and ultimately even Baghdad, the Abbasids found a special way to denigrate them. They repudiated any genealogical link of theirs to ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib and insisted instead that they were the descendants of a Jew. The Abbasids procured spokesmen who would say this and the latter filled the books of history with it.

Later the Ghuzz arrived and from their number Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh and his nephew Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn were appointed viziers of the Fatimids. These men were creatures of the Abbasid regime. They had been raised on its doorstep, nurtured by its favors; they were steeped in the doctrine of its supporters and in hostility toward its enemies. Their closeness to the Fatimid regime only increased their aversion to it and its favor to them filled them with nothing but ill-will and animosity, until having benefited from it, they attained enough power to bring about its end and do away with it completely.

However, the foundations of Fatimid rule were firmly grounded within proper limits; their eminence ascended higher than the stars; their followers and loyalists were too numerous to count; their supporters and backers had filled every region and territory. Wanting to obliterate their light, to replace their very lighthouses, the Abbasids attempted to smear them with charges of depravity and abomination. This is how an enemy acts, and is obviously in accord with the condition of his being an enemy.

But ponder, may God have mercy on you, the secrets of existence and distinguish among historical reports as you would distinguish between good and bad coins. Discover, by avoiding passions, the real truth. What you will discern in the great numbers of attacks on them is that those accounts of repulsive acts, especially those leading to their expulsion from the community of Islam, are found almost exclusively in the books by easterners, that is, among the Baghdadis and Syrians, as for example in the *Muntaẓam* of Ibn al-Jawzī, the *Kāmil* of Ibn al-Athīr,²⁸ the *History of Aleppo* of Ibn Abī Ṭayy, the *Tārīkh al-‘Imād* of Ibn Kathīr, the books by Ibn Wāṣil al-Ḥamawī, Ibn Shaddād, and al-‘Imād al-Iṣfahānī, and others

²⁸For his judgment of Ibn al-Athīr, see also *Iti’āz*, 1:232. Ibn al-Athīr, he says, relied on Iraqi and Syrian historians who did not know Egypt well. Al-Maqrīzī prefers the Egyptian Ibn Zūlāq, for example.

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like these. Books by Egyptians, who took great care in recording what they report, contain almost nothing of the kind at all. So judge according to reason and vanquish the forces of prejudice, give everything its proper due, and be rightly-guided.

In the preceding passage al-Maqrīzī appears to minimize the heretical nature of Ismaili doctrine, except in the two cases of extremists, Ḥamzah and the Druze, and the Assassins after Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ. The former group rejected Islamic law and the latter advocated the killing of those who opposed them. Both are clearly unacceptable and are intolerable in his mind. But al-Maqrīzī seems to be separating carefully these obviously heretical transgressions from what are, in his view, otherwise doctrines that remain within the bounds of Islam. It is more than likely that he personally did not subscribe to the Shiism of the Fatimids but he refused nonetheless to condemn it. He also will have nothing to do with what he sees as the flagrantly inaccurate and trumped-up charges against them put in circulation by the Abbasids and their hired guns. Moreover, he tends to reject the authority of any non-Egyptian, as the list he has just given well illustrates.²⁹

But surely he knew more than he is not saying. Or, possibly, there are issues involved—subjects pertaining to the work of the Ismaili *da‘wah*—that al-Maqrīzī had either ignored or had not yet discovered. As to this latter category, his remarks in the *Khīṭaṭ* introducing his discussion of the *da‘wah* seem particularly to the point (statement from the *musawwadah*³⁰):

Most people of our time are ignorant of their beliefs and thus, as a way of disavowing it, I want to explain their doctrines here based on what I discovered in the books they themselves composed for that purpose (i.e., for the *da‘wah*).

What did he “discover” in their books and when? What books?

Prior to dealing with these questions it is useful to return to some historiographical issues about what he wrote, when, and in what order.

MAIN WORKS RECONSIDERED FOR HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ORDER

The *Khīṭaṭ*, which was the first to enter modern scholarship, is well known and widely used despite the faulty Bulaq edition of 1853. Having now two versions of

²⁹For a similar rejection of Ibn Abī Ṭayy whose bias he claims is not shared by any of the Egyptian historians, see *Itti‘āz*, 2:119. Note also *Itti‘āz*, 1:232 (and the comments of the editor al-Shayyāl, 1:30).

³⁰P. 94.

it, a *musawwadah* and a final draft, allows the study of its development. The *Itti'āz* (also badly edited) by contrast is known only from a partial *musawwadah* and a copy of the whole that has been taken from what is likely the same original *musawwadah*. In other words, no final draft exists. And, in all probability, none was ever made.

Thanks to the recent investigations of Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid³¹ and Frédéric Bauden³² on al-Maqrīzī's methods, we are fairly sure that he employed his first drafts as a kind of working file to which he either added marginal additions or inserted bits of paper with new material between the pages. Apparently he planned to return to produce a final version at some future time.

As with the *Itti'āz*, the portions of the *Muqaffā* that survive represent an unfinished draft, a *musawwadah*. The *Itti'āz* was published in its entirety only in 1973; the latter in 1991. Neither one is as well known or as thoroughly studied as the *Khiṭaṭ*. In fact the *Muqaffā* is even now often ignored although it contains a great deal of information not in the other two.³³

Given that two of these major works exist only as a first draft, it is quite reasonable to assume that al-Maqrīzī kept all three projects active simultaneously, adding from one to the others as he came upon new material. It is certainly essential for modern scholars to consult all three. Al-Maqrīzī often identifies his source in one but not in the others; presumably, therefore, the former is more likely to contain a verbatim quotation of the source and the others merely paraphrases or some other reworking of the same material. However, as Bauden's discoveries have shown, what might look like a quotation may already represent a paraphrase and thus not the original text. Accordingly, for example, the work now attributed to Ibn Muyassar and which is in reality a set of al-Maqrīzī's notes from it, may owe as much to al-Maqrīzī as to Ibn Muyassar.

It remains to be seen whether we can find a basis for arranging these three works of al-Maqrīzī in some chronological order. Here the differences among them in the presentation of facts or, more significantly, what is missing from one as opposed to another may help. Also there is a suggestive passage at the end of

³¹Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid's contribution to the study of al-Maqrīzī is extensive. See, for example, his introduction to his edition of the *Khiṭaṭ Musawwadah* as well as the following "Early Methods of Book Composition: al-Maqrīzī's Draft of the Kitāb al-Khiṭaṭ," in *The Codicology of Islamic Manuscripts, Proceedings of the Second Conference of Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation 1993* (London, 1995), 93–101, and "Remarques sur la composition des *Ḥiṭaṭ* de Maqrīzī d'après un manuscrit autographe," in *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron*, vol. 2, *Egypte Post-Pharaonique* (Cairo, 1979), 231–58 + plates.

³²See his article in this volume.

³³As but one example, note that it has a long biography of al-Yāzūrī which is not cited at all in the recent *Encyclopaedia of Islam* article on him.

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the *Itti'āz* in which al-Maqrīzī comments:³⁴

In an account of the *khīṭaṭ* of Cairo, *in shā' Allāh*, I will describe the relics of their rule and review the management of their state so that, in regard to matters of this world, you will come to understand the extent of their achievement and the insignificance of those who came after them.

It appears therefore that when he finished this draft of the *Itti'āz*—which is the only one known to have existed—he had not yet written the *Khīṭaṭ*; the latter was then only a project in his mind (but perhaps one he was just about to begin). If so, all subsequent revisions of it also come after the *Itti'āz*. What he learned while gathering material for the *Khīṭaṭ* thus may or may not have found its way back also to the *Itti'āz*. And the *Muqaffā* is quite likely later still. We are quite sure in this latter case that he never completed it.³⁵

Vis-à-vis the *Itti'āz*, the *Muqaffā* contains significant new information that ought to have been included in the former but is not to be found there. The *Itti'āz*, for example, contains four pages on the reign of al-Manṣūr (plus at most four additional pages on the pursuit of Abū Yazīd included at the end of the section on al-Qā'im). By contrast the *Muqaffā* has fifty-two pages on al-Manṣūr with quite valuable new information. It provides, for example, the details of how and why, with a fairly precise date for when, al-Manṣūr brought Qāḍī al-Nu'mān from his post in Tripoli to al-Manṣūriyah—a date nearer the end of his reign and later than most scholars have supposed.³⁶ In the biography of Tamīm ibn al-Mu'izz we are given the reason, cited earlier, for his having been passed over. In a biography of the chief qadi Ibn Abī al-'Awwām, who was appointed by al-Ḥākim in 405, al-Maqrīzī makes clear he was a Hanafi (a fact that is surely correct). Ibn Ḥajar had claimed he was a Hanbali.³⁷ There is a biography of Ḥamzah ibn 'Alī, the founder of the Druze, which gives the date and details of his death.³⁸ For the later

³⁴3:344.

³⁵According to information supplied by al-Sakhāwī. See his *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 23 and *Al-Ḍaw'*, 2:22.

³⁶*Muqaffā*, bio. no. 780.

³⁷Ibid., bio. no. 584. On the Hanafi affiliation of this qadi see Gary Leiser, "Hanbalism in Egypt before the Mamlūks" (*Studia Islamica* 54 [1981]: 155–81), 159–60.

³⁸On this information and its meaning see Heinz Halm, "Der Tod Ḥamzas, des Begründers der drusischen Religion," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras* ed. U. Vermeulen and D. De Smet (Leuven, 1995–2001), 2:105–13.

vizier al-Ma'mūn, new information reveals that he was Imami Shi'i.³⁹ And, in one more case, the biography of al-Musta'li explains a simple conspiracy of al-Afdal with a sister of al-Mustansir to throw the succession to this caliph (rather than, say, Nizār) with a tacit understanding that they, the sister and the vizier, would thereafter share power: he in public and she within the palace.⁴⁰ The point is that this is not what is reported in the *Itti'āz*.

All this suggests that al-Maqrīzī wrote the *Muqaffá* well after the *Itti'āz* and that he included in it a great deal of information that he had come upon in the meantime. Moreover, he did not bother to add it to the older *Itti'āz*. It seems likely as well that the *Khīṭaṭ* did not benefit from much of this material, it also being earlier, even in its final draft.⁴¹

Returning to the question of al-Maqrīzī's knowledge of authentic Ismaili works, we may now be in a position to see a chronological progression in his knowledge of the secret works of the *da'wah*. What he says in the *musawwadah* of the *Khīṭaṭ* in one place (as quoted above), and repeated in the Bulaq edition in different places, establishes that, according to his own account, he found genuine Ismaili books and treatises and learned from them. He speaks repeatedly in the latter of their books: "... matters stipulated in their books,"⁴² "what is accepted in their books an account of which this book cannot include because of its length,"⁴³ "... and things of this sort are found in their books; the source of it is the writings of the Philosophers ... they go on at great length with other expressions ... this book cannot contain the full extent of the statements of this kind."⁴⁴ "They uphold the doctrine that God is neither eternal nor temporally created but rather what is eternal is His command (*amr*) and word (*kalimah*) and what is temporally produced is His creation as explained at length in their books."⁴⁵ Near the end of this section on the Ismaili *da'wah* he says: "It is dealt with in extenso in their books and all this constitutes the knowledge of the *dā'ir*. They have many books composed for that purpose from which I have taken the summary just given."⁴⁶

His summary of esoteric Ismaili doctrine, i.e., the *da'wah*, is, moreover, despite some relatively unimportant problems, reasonably accurate and accords well with

³⁹*Muqaffá*, bio. no. 2999.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, bio. no. 638.

⁴¹I have not compared enough of the specific Fatimid material in these two for a sound judgment about how it relates precisely from one to the other.

⁴²Bulaq ed., 1:393.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 395.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

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what we know from the writings of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī⁴⁷ and Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī,⁴⁸ to cite but two of the main Fatimid-era Ismaili authorities. Here is a key point: at the final stage of the initiation of an Ismaili, the candidate is taught that the prophet’s miracle is the law, which is expressed on the one hand by “symbols a person of intellect will comprehend and on the other by an open declaration recognizable by everyone.”⁴⁹ “Revelation is the delivering of God’s word [to the prophet], following upon which the prophet embodies it [i.e., makes it incarnate, *yujassiduhu*] and then presents it to the people.”⁵⁰

But what “books” exactly? We have no way of knowing precisely except in one case. Bauden has now discovered in one of al-Maqrīzī’s notebooks a passage from al-Kirmānī’s *Rāḥat al-‘Aql*. Clearly then al-Maqrīzī was able to find a copy of this one work and to use it.⁵¹ Most probably he located more and thus when he says he derives his understanding of Ismaili doctrine from their books, that is in fact true.⁵²

Is it possible to say when this happened, even relatively? If the chronology suggested above reflects reality, then it appears likely that al-Maqrīzī’s work on the *Itti‘āz*, which is his most sympathetic portrayal of the Fatimids and is a defense of them, and which closely follows in the appropriate sections what he gleaned from Ibn Muyassar, must belong to a period not long after 814, when he took his notes from this source. Why would he excerpt Ibn Muyassar after he had written the *Itti‘āz*? It must be the other way around: the *Itti‘āz* came later. Subsequently—i.e., after 814—he composed a first draft of the *Khīṭaṭ* and then reworked it at least once. And it contains an account of the secret doctrines of the Ismaili *da‘wah* that is not in the *Itti‘āz*, nor even alluded to there.

⁴⁷On this fourth century *dā‘ī* see the following studies of mine: *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge, 1993); *The Wellsprings of Wisdom: A Study of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī* (Salt Lake City, 1994); and *Abu Ya‘qub al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary* (London, 1996).

⁴⁸On al-Kirmānī, see Daniel De Smet, *La Quiétude de l’Intellect: Néoplatonisme et gnose ismaélienne dans l’œuvre de Ḥamīd ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī (Xe/XIe s.)* (Leuven, 1995), and Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Ḥākim* (London, 1999).

⁴⁹Bulaq ed., 1:395. This doctrine implies a double *bāṭinī/ẓāhirī* form of the truth (in the manner, for example, advocated by the philosopher Ibn Rushd).

⁵⁰*Musawwadah*, 105. Note that, according to this doctrine, the Prophet is the author of the written form of the revelation. He is the lawgiver, the *shārī‘*. On this in the thought of al-Sijistānī, see my *Early Philosophical Shiism* ch. 11 (pp. 114–23), *Intellectual Missionary*, 49–50, and *Wellsprings*, 8–10.

⁵¹Personal communication.

⁵²Knowledge of and/or the citation of genuine Ismaili works by non-Ismailis was extremely rare.

Conclusion: Just as al-Maqrīzī eventually discovered that he could not have descended from the Fatimid caliphs, he also learned more and more about their secret doctrine, not from malicious detractors like Ibn al-Jawzī or Ibn al-Nadīm or the others he mentioned in the statement taken earlier from the *Itti'āz*, nor as revealed by the renegade Druze, the erratic and unstable al-Ḥākim, or the Assassins after Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ, but from their own writings, the authentic works of true Ismaili *dā'īs*. He then realized that the Ismaili *da'wah* was far more sophisticated yet also therefore dangerously alien to his own religious outlook than if it had been merely a *madhhab* of the Ahl al-Bayt. Subsequently, his former enthusiasm for the Fatimids abated.⁵³ He never went back to finish the *Itti'āz* and he expanded the *Khiṭaṭ* far beyond its original narrow focus on the Fatimid capital and governing institutions, until ultimately it encompassed all of Egypt and its history.

⁵³That he lost his enthusiasm for the Fatimids does not mean also that he lost interest in the details of the history of their period since he obviously continued to collect such material. And I think, for example, it is quite obvious from his biography of al-Manṣūr that on a personal basis he deeply admired this one caliph (if not others).

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Purloined Symbols of the Past: The Theft of Souvenirs and Sacred Relics in the Rivalry between the Abbasids and Fatimids

The Fatimids Acquire Dhu'l-Fiḳār

In the year 320/932, the rebellious general Mu'nis lured the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir from his palace to his death on a battlefield just outside Baghdad.¹ As often happened in such cases, plundering of the deceased caliph's palace and possessions followed, this time aimed especially against his harem and servants who were thought to have profited excessively from the cupidity of their master. In the midst of this looting, one of the ladies from the dead caliph's harem, at that moment threatened with public exposure or worse, cried out for someone among the mob to shield her and convey her to a place she knew to be safe. One gallant gentleman took pity and answered her plea, telling her to remain closely under his protection until they could reach safety. She responded to his kind offer by declaring that although she possessed nothing to provide him a proper recompense, she could instead

indicate to him that, in such and such an apartment, there was a box in which he would find hidden the fabled sword of the Prophet, Dhu'l-Fiqr – the very one Muḥammad had given to 'Alī at the Battle of Uḥud. The lady's rescuer subsequently brought both her and the sword safely out of the palace.

What the lady in question possibly did not realize was that the man who just happened to witness this scene of looting and who appeared as her saviour at that timely juncture was himself an Ismaili and an agent of the Fatimid caliph, then ruling in far away North Africa. His acquisition of Dhu'l-Fiqr was thus, in his eyes, partly the work of God; when he sent the sword to his own master, he was, in fact, merely restoring this sacred symbol to its rightful owner, the true heir of both the Prophet and of 'Alī. Where the Abbasids had once taken it from the Fatimids, now with God's help it was returned to them.²

Exactly how Dhu'l-Fiqr got from Baghdad all the way to al-Mahdiyya, we do not know. Still, there is interesting and suggestive evidence of Fatimid activity in Baghdad at the time of the crisis during which it was purportedly recovered. Most importantly, as a result of the same chaos, Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Tamīmī, a captive Fatimid military commander, escaped from an Abbasid prison after fourteen years of detention. He had been a key figure in the campaigns of the future Fatimid Caliph al-Qā'im (322–334/934–946) against Abbasid Egypt at the beginning of the 4th/10th century. These early attempts to extend their control over the Nile failed ironically in large part because of the intervention of Mu'nis, the same general who was later responsibly for al-Muqtadir's deposition and death. In 306/918, Ya'qūb b. Ishāq had commanded the Fatimid fleet against Egypt but was seized the following year and transported to Baghdad where he suffered for seven years in a miserable underground cell. Later, his situation improved and he was allowed above ground; funds sent surreptitiously by the Fatimid al-Mahdī began to reach him and his jailers. Following liberation in 320/932, he began a long arduous journey back to North Africa, full of perils and risk of recapture.³ But perhaps he brought with him the then recently recovered sword of the Prophet.

In any case, the first public display of this potent symbol of Shi'i legitimacy occurred not quite so early as these events but rather at another critical juncture, this time at the lowest ebb of Fatimid fortunes, when the revolt of Abū Yazīd brought this Khārījī rebel near to destroying the Ismaili Fatimid state. At that point, reduced to quasi-imprisonment in their capital city of al-Mahdiyya, al-Qā'im died. Without announcing the death of his father, the young Ismā'il, son of al-Qā'im and his successor in the Fatimid caliphate, who would later assume the regnal name al-Manṣūr (334–341/946–953), began his own rule by taking personal control of the Fatimid army against the menacing Abū Yazīd, known as the *ṣāhib al-ḥimār*, the 'Man on the Donkey,' or, as the Fatimids always called him, the Dajjāl, the Arch-Deceiver and Anti-Christ. In the many battles that followed, al-Manṣūr time and time again rode into combat at the head of his forces brandishing Dhu'l-Fiqr, the sword of his two ancestors, the Prophet and 'Alī.⁴ These were stirring epic events and, in the end, al-Manṣūr, 'The Victor,' triumphed completely. Even much later, the memories of those glorious moments reverberated with strong symbolic meaning; those who saw them – the young Imam-caliph and the fabled sword together – never forgot.

Yet others, like the great legal scholar al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, who had not been present in the field, were later allowed a chance to see the sword personally. During an audience with the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz (341–365/953–975), the subject of Dhu'l-Fiqr prompted the caliph to have it brought out and displayed to the assembly. The Qāḍī was moved to write a description of the sword for posterity.⁵

For the Shi'a, the gift of this sword to 'Alī by the Prophet forever signified the transfer of power from Muḥammad to his successor, not on the occasion of the battle of Uḥud when it was given, but eventually. It was one sign – yet a key one – among many that 'Alī had been chosen to succeed and to inherit leadership from Muḥammad. That either the Umayyads or the Abbasids might possess Dhu'l-Fiqr indicated a religious violation of God's intention, a rebellion and disobedience that had to be redressed by the restoration both of the sacred sword and the caliphate-

imamate to the descendants of 'Alī.⁶ The events of the year 320/932 brought that about: the sword came home to its rightful owners. The Fatimids were granted thus an additional marker of their legitimacy and the Abbasids thereby lost one of theirs.

The theft of Dhu'l-Fiqār from Baghdad – though not actually a theft in the eyes of the Fatimids but rather a recovery – viewed as one element in the larger struggle and rivalry between these two claimants to supreme rule over the Muslim community as a whole, represents a minor victory for one side against the other. In truth, the preceding facts may have been known only to the Fatimids for whom, rather than the oblivious Abbasids, its recovery or loss held such importance.⁷ Still, the rivalry of these two religious superpowers played out through many similar examples involving stolen objects, sacred relics and souvenirs of power, along, of course, with a constant fight for superiority through rhetorical jab and counter jab, poems of derision against each others' genealogy and lineage, and manifesto against manifesto. To an extent it involved a game of rearranging the past, of the conflict of historical memories and of selective appropriation or degradation. There were, as well, struggles over sacred territory, in addition to the conquering and control of actual lands and political dominions. The prime example here is the Ḥijāz and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Of almost no strategic value and certainly not worth a military campaign, the cities of the Prophet and the birth of Islam held, nonetheless, inestimable symbolic meaning for Muslims. Control of the Ḥijāz, therefore, implied spiritual supremacy; to be recognized in the Friday sermon (*khutba*) at Mecca carried enormous value for the Fatimids or conversely for the Abbasids, whichever side should succeed in gaining either it or the meaning it conveyed.

Purloining Relics

Yet another category involves the theft or attempted theft and acquisition of the corpse or bodily members of individuals regarded for one reason with particularly high reverence. In the Christian world the trade in relics of the saints and other holy persons became especially brisk and important. Likewise many

were subject to theft as the competition for ownership and possession of such relics increased. In the early medieval Islamic realm there were fewer examples of bodily relics being moved about but it was not unknown. A famous case in the Fatimid period is, first, the miraculous discovery of the head of Imam Ḥusayn, enshrined at Hebron under the Fatimid commander Badr al-Jamālī and its later removal from there to Cairo by the *wazīr* Ṭalāʿī^c b. Ruzzīk.⁸ But, since the Fatimid authorities both ‘found’ the head in the first place and then moved it, that event in either its initial or later phase does not involve the theft of the object in question, it need not be considered in detail here. More to the point are the various stories put into circulation about Fatimid attempts to steal the Prophet’s body from Medina and, though less germane, another that features the Saljūq *wazīr* Nizām al-Mulk and Badr al-Jamālī in collusion on a plan to transfer the body of al-Shāfiʿī to Baghdad.

Although there are several accounts to consider, it is obvious that the incident described in each is quite improbable. Both the Fatimid Caliphs al-Ḥākim and al-Ḥāfiz, for example, are reported to have sent agents to Medina to steal the Prophet’s body surreptitiously. A similar story is told about the Zangid ruler Nūr al-Dīn, who intervened in a timely fashion to prevent a Christian plot of the same kind. In each of these remarkably similar cases, it is the accusation of having attempted the theft in and of itself and not the actual truth, that matters.

One possible impetus for such stories, however, may depend on what is likely a historical reality, that is, al-Ḥākim’s dispatching of his agents, under the *dāʿī* Khatkīn al-Ḍayf, to open the house of Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in Medina and bring its contents back to Cairo. Versions of the basic account appear in both Egyptian and Eastern sources by among others Ibn al-Jawzī⁹ and Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir.¹⁰ Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn, the Ismaili historian of the Ismaili Imams,¹¹ also records it, as most significantly, does Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, who was a contemporary.¹² Ibn al-Jawzī’s note, recorded under the year 400/1009–10, claims that al-Ḥākim obtained the consent of the ʿAlid *ashraf* in Medina to open the house with the promise that he only wanted to see what was in it

and that the items would be returned to their original place once they had been brought to Cairo for his inspection. The house had reportedly not been entered since the death of Ja'far in 148/765, over 250 years before. But now from it Fatimid agents retrieved a bed (*sarīr*), carpets or mats, utensils and a Qur'an (*maṣḥaf*) which they carried to Cairo accompanied by a delegation of Ḥusaynid and Ḥasanid nobles. In the end al-Ḥākim gave back only the bed and kept the rest, arguing that they were more rightfully his. Idrīs, writing from the Ismaili side, adds the important fact that al-Ḥākim had already known what was in the house and exactly where. He was thus able to instruct his agents accordingly. His knowledge derived from inherited family memory; it was proof of his imamate and his true descent from Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.

If, then, the preceding event was historical fact, the stories that would enter circulation less than a century later about al-Ḥākim sending his men to tunnel secretly under the tombs of the Prophet and of Abū Bakr and 'Umar in order to steal the remains of all three for reburial in Egypt are hardly credible. But the charge was made nonetheless both in western sources, such as the writings of the Spanish geographer al-Bakrī, and the easterner, Ibn Fahd al-Makkī.¹³ Yet why al-Ḥākim even entertained a notion of this kind is difficult to imagine. Abū Bakr and 'Umar were to many Shī'a hated villains and great satans. Of what use could their remains be in this situation? And, despite hints that the Fatimids hoped to create a cult centre in Cairo, there is no evidence that they wanted to negate or in any way annul the pilgrimage to the holy cities of the Ḥijāz. The *hajj* remained important to them and they went to great lengths to coopt and thus control the 'Alids who ruled both Mecca and Medina.

But, although an obvious attempt to smear the Fatimids and their Imam-caliph, stories of the same kind were repeated and even readjusted to fit later conditions. According to a record in al-Nuwayrī, the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥāfiẓ, frustrated by Abbasid and Saljūq control over the holy cities in the Ḥijāz in his time, contrived a plan whereby he sent as many as forty agents, described as clever and quite capable men, to Medina to steal the Prophet's body and bring it to Cairo. These men set themselves up in Medina

and, to avoid detection, attempted to dig a tunnel to the Prophet's burial place from quite a distance away. They calculated that they could accurately judge exactly at what point to emerge from underground in order to achieve their aim. But, reports al-Nuwayrī, 'God, the exalted, preserved His Prophet from the violation of being moved away from the place that He had chosen for him.' The tunnel the thieves were digging caved in on top of them and they were all destroyed.¹⁴

One might speculate that some later writers mistook al-Ḥāfiẓ for al-Ḥākim or vice versa, but that does not explain yet another version in which Nūr al-Dīn b. Zangī dreamt that the Prophet called him to Medina to stop the attempt by two Christian spies to dig into his tomb and steal his remains. Nūr al-Dīn rushes off to Medina and with some difficulty finally unmasks the culprits who had been sent there for this evil purpose by a king of Spain. Having uncovered the plot and put to death the perpetrators, the Zangid ruler then fills their tunnel with lead to prevent a similar occurrence in the future.¹⁵

Thus, at least two of the several versions of such attempts to steal the Prophet's remains have as their real purpose vilifying the Fatimids (although other villains could be used). Another incident is of a similar type but features a quite different object. The perpetrators this time, however, were first the famous Saljūq *wazīr* Nizām al-Mulk and second the powerful Fatimid *wazīr* Badr al-Jamālī. In the year 474/1081, so the story goes,¹⁶ Nizām al-Mulk, then in the process of establishing the Nizāmiyya, his new *madrasa* in Baghdad, requested Badr in Egypt to exhume for him the body of the jurist al-Shāfi'ī, founder of the Shāfi'ī legal *madhhab*, who was buried in the cemetery to the east of Fustāt. Nizām al-Mulk was a Shāfi'ī himself and his *madrasa* was devoted to teaching Shāfi'ī doctrine. Clearly the Fatimids had little regard for this or any Sunni school of law. Therefore Badr, again according to the story, was willing to oblige (although what he might gain from the exhumation is hardly obvious). However, when Badr's men approached the tomb and began to remove some bricks, and just as an opposing crowd of unhappy Egyptians gathered to stone them, a violent odour poured out, enveloped them and prevented

further work. It was a miracle! Badr quickly gave up on the plan. But as a result al-Shāfiʿī's status grew considerably, his prestige with the Egyptians substantially enhanced. Neither the Fatimid *wazīr* nor the eastern Saljūqs could claim him.

The Theft of Symbolic Objects and Souvenirs of Power

In the matters at hand the physical objectification of religious righteousness is especially important. What symbols and souvenirs, relics and reminders did either side value most; which gave them, in their own eyes, superiority through possession? Conversely, given an opportunity, what object did either side choose to steal? In this rivalry the demotion of the opponent is often nearly as useful as the promotion of oneself. The theft of a sacred or symbolic object reduces the power of those who once held it dear and meaningful. The *baraka* it confers no longer supports them; perhaps now it flows instead to its new owner. As in the incident in the Qurʾanic story of Sulaymān and Bilqīs, the Queen of Sheba, a physical symbol of power and rule, her throne, must be stolen and thereby diminish or outrightly deny the pretensions of her claim to dominion. Magically, one of Sulaymān's followers delivers the throne to him in an instant; Bilqīs no longer knows her former place. She has been dethroned.¹⁷

In the examples of purloined insignia that follow here, few possess nearly the same degree of sacrality or magic as either Sulaymān's henchmen or the fabled Dhu'l-Fiqr, or even the remains of the Prophet. Dhu'l-Fiqr, as in the story with which we begin, is almost too perfect an example of a physical symbol of religious legitimacy. Not only is it an ideal whose reality, though symbolically potent, cannot actually be proven, but it involves a sword, an object of almost universal representation in kingship and righteous rule. The same historian who reported the full details of the fate of Dhu'l-Fiqr in its liberation from Abbasid Baghdad and its use by the Fatimid North African caliphs to rally support in the battle against Abū Yazīd provides, in one more of his books, a wonderful and instructive account of yet another example of its (later) legendary role. When the Fatimid Caliph

al-Mustanşir died in 487/1094, his sons debated amongst themselves who should succeed. In the midst of grave doubt and disagreement, they finally brought out Dhu'l-Fiqr. Each son in turn tried to draw the sword from its scabbard, but only al-Musta'li, the eventual successor, was able to pull it out.¹⁸

If the following cases do not quite match Dhu'l-Fiqr or the Prophet in spiritual symbolism, they are nevertheless, each in a different way, valid indications of meaning, memories and value in the struggle between the two caliphates. And they involve, by their very nature, markers of legitimacy which, in this rivalry, often carried both religious and political significance together; religion cannot be easily separated from political rule in these cases even where the object stolen and desecrated might also feature in a more profane setting as, for example, might occur in the dynastic conflict between two local contenders for purely territorial kingship.

The next example is a curious mixture of both. By the year 371/981, the earlier willingness of the Būyid 'Aḍud al-Dawla to observe somewhat friendly relations with the Fatimids had given way to fairly stiff hostilities on both sides. The Būyids had a tendency to ignore the Islamic caliphate – even the Abbasids to whom they accorded nominal recognition – in favour of their own notion of a universal kingship, quite possibly modelled on pre-Islamic examples, that called up memories of ancient Iran. Miffed by 'Aḍud al-Dawla's growing pretensions and his liking for the accoutrements of ancient kingly style, such as use of the title Shāhanshāh, 'King of Kings,' the Fatimid al-'Azīz found some bold and clever men to journey to Baghdad that year and steal the silver lion figure from the prow of the Būyid's personal river craft (*zabzab*). The people, reports the historian, were duly amazed and quite impressed by this audacious, public affront to 'Aḍud al-Dawla's overweening pride and arrogant irreverence for the imamate.¹⁹

Following chronological order, the next incident falls in the year 381, and, like the situation in 320, is connected to disorder in Baghdad that resulted from the deposition of one Abbasid and his replacement by another. In that year the caliph al-Ṭā'i' was

done away with by the Būyid Bahā' al-Dawla and there was considerable looting of the palace and caliphal possessions.²⁰ Naturally, the Fatimids again benefited from the chaos; it is likely that they were well represented in Baghdad by agents of various kinds. Objects were certainly stolen from the Abbasids on that occasion and conveyed to Cairo. The evidence here, however, is not from a direct report recorded at the time but from a much later mention of how the same (or some of the same) objects found their way back to Baghdad. A virtually identical report occurs in the histories of Ibn Zāfir, Ibn Muyassar and Ibn al-Athīr. Ibn Muyassar's version runs as follows:

And [in the year 462] a number of merchants arrived in Baghdad carrying with them garments belonging to al-Mustanşir along with various of his treasures and his goods and *splendid items that had once been taken from Baghdad as loot at the time of the deposition of al-Ṭā'ī li'llāh in the year 381*. They also had some of what was taken as loot during the incident of al-Basāsīrī.²¹

Ibn Zāfir specifies that these object had been looted from the palace (*al-qaṣr*); Ibn al-Athīr says it was the seat of the caliphate (*dār al-khilāfa*); and Ibn Zāfir adds that thereupon 'God restored it to its true owners' (*faraddahu allāhu ilā arbābihi*).²²

Unfortunately, the information on the items from the looting of 381/991–92 is scant.²³ Ibn al-Athīr does give a short list of objects but they may be from the later plunder of al-Basāsīrī, or from the mass of goods taken in 461–62/1068–70 from al-Mustanşir's own palace treasuries in yet another incidents to be discussed below. As this case illustrates, however, several examples of purloining involved the chance looting by agents, representatives, or partisans of one side against the other. The flow of such objects readily passed back and forth and in some situations obviously the intermediaries were merchants and brokers who merely knew where to obtain the best price for an item that had once belonged to one of the opposing caliphs.²⁴

But in many ways these objects held a special value as souvenirs of the opposition, now owned by the opposing party as a sign of the other's loss of respect and worth. A different example involves a pair of incidents that each feature gifts and insignia sent by the

caliphs to curry favour and which subsequently fell into the hands of the enemy.

The first concerns the famous pilgrimage of Ḥasanak in 414/1024. For the years 410 and 411/1020–21, the Khurāsānīs failed to reach Mecca; the route there was always difficult and treacherous in this period due to the predatory raiding and constant extortion by Arab tribes along the way. The pilgrimage for 413/1023 was fairly successful, however, although there were reports of conflict between the Egyptians and Khurāsānīs that year in Mecca itself.²⁵ For 414/1024, the Khurāsānīs made a special effort, aided in part by funds granted by important people. They also enlisted as their leader the *amīr* Abū ‘Alī Ḥasan b. Muḥammad who was known by the name Ḥasanak. He was not only wealthy and powerful but also a close associate or protégé of the Ghaznawid Sultan Maḥmūd. Once in Baghdad the Khurāsānī caravan joined with the Iraqis, themselves under the leadership of the ‘Alid Abū’l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Aqsāsī. Together they reached Mecca and then Medina but at that point realized that the normal return route to Baghdad had become blocked. In the midst of this crisis, having with them some 60,000 camels and 200,000 people, they decided to proceed from Medina by way of the Wadī al-Qurā to Ayla and from Ayla to Ramla and thence back to Baghdad through Syria. With so large a party, it would have been folly to invade Fatimid Syria without the explicit permission and the good will of its ruler.

As will shortly become apparent, this incident soon became a matter of intense dispute and, even later still, was used as an excuse to condemn Ḥasanak and bring about his execution. Nevertheless, the exact evidence of what happened, as depicted in the eastern sources, especially for the Ghaznawids, is rather brief. In Fatimid sources, by contrast, there is much more and, luckily, a key contemporary report survives. Moreover, in this case, it occurs in the court chronicle by the *amīr* al-Musabbiḥī. Though for the most part lost, one precious section of his history of Egypt is extant and it deals by chance with the key months of the years 414 and 415/1023–24. Al-Maqrīzī, who certainly consulted al-

Musabbiḥī, also adds information that must derive from yet another source. Both accounts should be read together.²⁶

Al-Maqrīzī reports that it was al-Aqsāsī who wrote to the Fatimid caliph seeking permission to cross Syria. Since this man represented the 'Alids of Baghdad as well as the Abbasid caliph, Cairo, in expectation of favourable propaganda, was only too glad to comply. The Fatimid Caliph al-Zāhir (411–427/1021–1036) ordered his military governors and allies in Syria to extend to the pilgrims the finest hospitality, complete with provisions for both humans and their beasts. Ibn al-Athīr reports that the ruler of Egypt gave each man in the group a goodly sum of money so that the people of Khurāsān would hear of his generosity.²⁷ It was duly noted, moreover, that this occasion provided a wonderful opportunity for this huge party to extend their pilgrimage by a visit to Jerusalem. As a result of this grand gesture, al-Musabbiḥī adds, all and sundry departed for their distant homes afterward well pleased, full of praise, fine memories, and thankful for the beneficence of the Fatimid caliph.²⁸

Although al-Aqsāsī played the leading role, noted just now according to the Egyptian sources, there is no doubt that the Fatimid caliph understood also the position of Ḥasanak and exactly who he was and who he represented. Maḥmūd of Ghazna had been the implacable enemy of the Ismailis in his territories and elsewhere; many of them had been killed by him. That his representative was now at the mercy of the Fatimids and asking for their help was taken as a sign of his possible friendship, a turn-about perhaps. When an ambassador from Ḥasanak arrived in Cairo, the caliph al-Zāhir staged a grand, full-dress convocation of the court to impress him and his young son. He, on his part, brought as a gift for the caliph fifteen she-camels laden with valuable commodities.²⁹ For his part al-Zāhir gave, says al-Maqrīzī, to al-Aqsāsī a thousand dinars and a great number of garments. He also gave Ḥasanak a similar set of gifts among which was a *khil'a*, a special robe of honour. To him he conveyed as well a horse fitted out with golden trappings.³⁰ There were also letters and gifts to be carried on to Maḥmūd.

Although quite necessary in view of the circumstances, this lit-

the dalliance with the Fatimids was deeply troubling to the Abbasid caliph. Ḥasanak, sensing danger, avoided Baghdad and returned directly to Khurāsān where he reported what had transpired to his master without immediate consequence. The rage of al-Qādir in Baghdad only increased, however; what his rival al-Zāhir had done infuriated him beyond measure. He lashed out against al-Aqsāsī and had him arrested,³¹ and he wrote to Maḥmūd demanding from him the horse, the clothes and the *khil'a*³² that had been given to Ḥasanak. They were to be brought to Baghdad for desecration and burning. Though Maḥmūd thought al-Qādir a doddering old fool, he complied. Al-Qādir assembled the masses of Baghdad, burned the items in question in front of all, and dedicated the gold from them for the poor by distributing it to them forthwith.³³ Thereby, comments al-Maqrīzī, al-Zāhir, despite having shown them generosity and having made it possible for them to visit Jerusalem, was robbed of the praises of those same Khurāsānī and Transoxianian pilgrims.³⁴ The Abbasid caliph had made sure that good memories turned bitter.

The Fatimids never forgot this indignity. Some twenty-seven years later they found an opportunity for revenge in kind. In 443/1051, al-Mu'izz b. Bādīs, the Zīrid ruler of North Africa, suffered one of several fits of pique at his Fatimid overlords and renounced his allegiance to them. He then sent an ambassador to Baghdad to proclaim his adherence to the Abbasids and to request a suitable acknowledgment of that fact from them. Baghdad was only too happy to respond favourably. A diploma of investiture (*'ahd al-wilāya*), a black banner (*liwā' aswad*) and a *khil'a* were prepared immediately, and an ambassador chosen to carry them to the Zīrid al-Mu'izz. The Abbasid ambassador, Abū Ghālib al-Shīrāzī, however, faced an unenviable task: he had to transport a load of gifts plus these special objects, notably the *khil'a* and the black banner – the latter being the quintessential trademark of the Abbasids – to far away North Africa, possibly by having to pass directly through Fatimid territory. That surely would have been outright folly. Even if the black banner could be folded and concealed, Fatimid spies in Baghdad were obviously fully aware of the embassy and its purpose. Abū Ghālib decided to avoid this problem by going north

into Byzantium and proceeding from there to Ifrīqiya. The Byzantines, however, stopped him and the emperor Constantine IX had him arrested.

According to al-Maqrīzī, who provides the greatest detail about this event, there was some to-do in Constantinople about this matter. Ambassadors from al-Mu‘izz and the Saljūq Sultan Tuğhril Beg tried unsuccessfully to plead for release of the Abbasid representative. Constantine was at that moment, however, quite disposed to uphold the cause of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir with whom he then had friendly relations. The timely arrival of a Fatimid ambassador with impressive gifts certainly also helped decide the issue. Abū Ghālib and all he carried with him were sent off to Cairo, the Abbasid ambassador to be publicly displayed and humiliated, and the objects he brought with him to be ceremonially desecrated and burned. The Fatimids gleefully excavated a small trench in the open area ‘between the two palaces’ (*bayna’l-qaṣrayn*), summoned the people and burned the diploma, the black banner and, most pointedly, the *khil‘a*, just as, report the Arab historians, the Abbasid al-Qādir had done in the case of the *khil‘a* that al-Mustansir’s father al-Zāhir had given to Ḥasanak.³⁵ Though separated by almost thirty years, memories of the earlier affront to their dignity remained alive and fresh down to the details.

This auspicious riposte was followed a few years later by the crowning success of the Fatimids. In 450/1058, the Turkish adventurer, Arslān al-Basāsīrī, supported by Arab tribal allies and money and arms sent from Cairo, seized Baghdad, looted the caliphal palaces, nullified the Abbasid caliphate, and proclaimed al-Mustansir and the Fatimids supreme.³⁶ He also technically thereafter held the former Abbasid caliph al-Qā’im himself a prisoner. In actuality, however, al-Basāsīrī allowed one of his allies to take possession of al-Qā’im, and the latter held him during the interim, in part, as a prudent precaution for his own future safety. The Abbasid caliph (and his caliphate) was thus preserved, even while he was himself under the detention of his enemies.

Al-Basāsīrī’s activities on behalf of the Fatimids were long anticipated and quite possibly even planned by them. Al-Mustansir was, at first, overjoyed with the result. From the loot, al-Basāsīrī

selected many notable and symbolic objects for dispatch to Cairo. Those mentioned by al-Maqrīzī are a *mindīl* (a turban) belonging to al-Qā'im with which he had attired himself with his own hands (it had been fashioned on a mold of marble to prevent it from becoming unknotted), a cloak (*ridā'*) of his, and the lattice screen (*shubbāk*) behind which he had reclined. These clearly possessed special meaning because of their close (personal?) identification with the Abbasid caliph. Al-Mustanşir went out of his way to have them housed in Cairo at the Dār al-Wuzarā'. There they remained until the end of the Fatimid state when, according to al-Maqrīzī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn took possession of the palaces and sent the turban and cloak back to Baghdad. At that time Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn also returned a document that al-Qā'im had been forced to write against his own interest in which he testified that the Abbasids held no right to the caliphate over the descendants of Fāṭima. The screen (*shubbāk min al-ḥadīd*) is reported to have been acquired by the Fatimid *wazīr* al-Afḍal who had it built into his official residence. Much later it was taken from the ruins of this building by Baybars al-Jashankīr for his tomb.³⁷ Al-Maqrīzī reports further that the loot that reached Cairo following al-Basāsīrī's victory included a great deal of treasure, books and other precious objects.³⁸ Various authorities obviously still remembered exactly which items were involved.

When al-Mustanşir first learned that he had been recognized as caliph in Baghdad, he was naturally extremely pleased but, when he realized that his Abbasid rival was not out of the picture, his mood began to change. At first he sent an offer of 10,000 dinars to Muhāris, the nephew of Quraysh, al-Basāsīrī's ally who now controlled al-Qā'im, to have him send the Abbasid caliph to Cairo. The ultimate souvenir of the Abbasids would have been the de-throned caliph in person. Apparently, al-Mustanşir conceived at the time grand plans for the generous treatment of al-Qā'im. He was to have his own palace, a sumptuous allowance of one hundred dinars a day, and he would ride before al-Mustanşir in all the processions of the Fatimid caliph. Yet another option was to reinstall him in Iraq as a vassal of the Fatimid empire.³⁹ None of this came to fruition, of course.

The adventure of al-Basāsīrī, though it brought recognition to the Fatimids for forty consecutive Fridays in the mosques of Baghdad, was doomed early in the game. The Saljūq onslaught that al-Basāsīrī and his supporter wished to prevent arrived despite them. In short order Tughril Beg reclaimed the initiative and swept all before him. He restored al-Qā'im to his throne in Baghdad and began actively to reverse the damage done to the prestige of them both. Already, in Cairo, there were those who feared the worst; support in Egypt for al-Basāsīrī had dissipated even as he triumphed. It had been a costly, pyrrhic victory at best. It is nevertheless intriguing to speculate about what might have happened. Obviously, the ultimate in purloining insignia would have been the capture and transportation to Cairo of the Abbasid caliph in person. Al-Mustanşir, however, may not have realized that the Abbasid ruler could be easily replaced by another from his family. Many Abbasids were deposed, as had been al-Muqtadir and al-Tā'i' in 320/932 and 381/991 respectively. The Fatimid caliphs, by contrast, could not be deposed by any one but God; if al-Mustanşir were to have been captured, he would retain nonetheless the *imamate* until his death.

Although he was thus secure in his own *imamate*, al-Mustanşir's governing powers never again reached as far as they had on this one relatively brief occasion. His control over his empire declined rapidly following the defeat of al-Basāsīrī. Even Egypt slipped slowly from central regulation as conditions throughout the country deteriorated over the next decade. What followed was labelled the time of hardship, the *ayyām al-shidda*, or simply social and governmental collapse, the *fitna*.⁴⁰ At the worst period of subsequent famine and chaos, even al-Mustanşir's family began to leave Egypt, or perhaps to be deliberately asked to find a better or safer residence. At the height of the disorder in 461/1068–69, al-Mustanşir had no means to pay his troops or even the officials in the government. In desperation the palace treasuries were opened one by one and their contents traded off in place of salaries. There exists a fairly lengthy account of the marvellous items brought out of the palace during this period. Most of the soldiers and many of the government officials simply sold what they took in lieu of salary

to local merchants and dealers in precious objects. Their value in Cairo would have quickly declined as the market became flooded. Merchants, say contemporary reports, began arriving in Baghdad with all manner of objects – clothes, jewels, books, carpets, along with members – mother and daughters – of the Fatimid caliph's own family. Many of these same objects were recognized or were known to have been previously taken from Abbasid palaces, either during the transition after al-Ṭā'i' or at the time of al-Basāsiri.⁴¹

Thus, if the earlier years of the Fatimids witnessed their gain and advantage as registered in the theft of symbolic objects of legitimacy and prestige, the later period saw the reverse. Although not until the victory of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn did complete restoration occur for the Abbasids, from the time of these troubles under al-Mustansir, the balance had clearly turned against the Fatimids.

The cases of purloined relics, insignia and souvenirs of power just discussed are all, or nearly all, of those recorded in our sources. However, they are surely not the only ones that occurred. Nevertheless, they are enough to reveal interesting patterns and themes in the rivalry between the Abbasids and the Fatimids. Two of them, the first and the second – the theft of Dhu'l-Fiḡār and the attempted theft of the physical remains of the Prophet – concern symbolic objects that possess a high degree of obvious sanctity in religious terms. Yet neither appears to be more real than legendary. The purported attempt to steal Muḡammad's body from Medina sounds, in fact, simply fanciful. It is more likely to be an account concocted by the detractors of the Fatimids to discredit them than an actual event. Even a historian like al-Nuwayrī seems to mistrust the story he himself reports; significantly he does not name his source. The other examples illustrate a variety of less spectacular but, often, more real purloining.

In these latter situations, as in the case of Ḥasanak's *khiḡ'a*, public desecration is clearly central for objects having the power to endow honour. Ceremonial destruction is essential to negate that power and to ensure that no one else acquires or thinks to acquire that distinction. By burning the object, the source from which its status flows loses its power to confer honour. At an even lower

level, the act of taking the silver lion figure from 'Aḍud al-Dawla was a clever and audacious retort but not one of high religious significance. Yet it does provide evidence for the active pursuit and defence of caliphal prerogative by means of the theft of status symbols. The looting of palaces was often more mundanely profitable than symbolically valuable. Still, the difference between profane and sacred in these situations depends on intangible meaning. Memories can be stolen, appropriated or desecrated in tandem with the fate of the souvenirs that serve to bring it back into focus. Objects that confer legitimacy may do so merely because they belong, or once belonged, to a person whose sanctity inheres in his possessions as well as in himself. Theft is a violation in and of itself. Just as power accrues through possession, it diminishes in proportion to each item lost. In a rivalry such as this, where religious authority and political rule are inseparable, the acquisition or nullification of sanctity and legitimacy depend on factors often not readily apparent except to those intimately involved. Therefore, what one side chose to take from the other through an overt act of de-possession surely indicates, at a minimum, both what the violated party considered meaningful and memorable, as well as what the violator thought worth the effort to steal, if not monetarily then symbolically.

Notes

I would like to thank Bruce D. Craig for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. An older version of it was offered at the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Meeting (1996) under the title 'Purloined Insignia: Stolen Symbols of Legitimacy in the Abbasid-Fatimid Rivalry.'

1. On al-Muqtadir and Mu'nis, see K.V. Zetterstéen and C.E. Bosworth, 'al-Muqtadir bi-llāh, Abu'l-Faḍl Dja'far' and H. Bowen, 'Mu'nis al-Muzaḥḥar,' *EI2*, vol. 7, pp. 541–542, 575.

2. The story related here naturally comes from Fatimid Ismaili sources. The primary account derives from al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's *al-Majālis wa'l-musāyarāt*, ed. al-Ḥabīb al-Faqī, Ibrāhīm Shabbūḥ and Muḥammad al-Ya'lāwī (Tunis, 1978), p. 114, and reappears in Idrīs' *Uyūn al-akhbār*. For the latter, one should use the edition by Muḥammad al-Ya'lāwī

entitled *Ta'rikh al-khulafā' al-Faṭimiyyīn bi'l-Maghrib: al-qism al-khāṣṣ min Kitāb 'uyūn al-akhbār* (Beirut, 1985) which supersedes the other editions of this part. Idrīs (pp.232–233) takes the report of al-Nu'mān and places it in the context of al-Muqtadir's murder as described here. No Abbasid source, as far as I know, mentions anything about the sword in connection with this exact incident although the danger to al-Muqtadir's harem and the looting of his womenfolk and servants is well known. However, the *Kitāb al-hadāyā wa'l-tuḥaf*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh (Kuwait, 1950) (*Book of Gifts and Rarities*, tr. al-Qaddūmī [Cambridge, MA, 1996], pp.190–191) contains a fairly explicit reference to its being among the possessions of the Abbasid caliph al-Raḍī in 329/941, nine years later. Al-Raḍī succeeded al-Qāhir who had come to power following al-Muqtadir.

3. See *'Uyūn al-akhbār*, pp.234–236. Subsequent references to this work for this period are to al-Ya'lāwī's edition, cited by actual page numbers in the printed version and not the numbers used by the editor for cross referencing and the index.

4. *'Uyūn al-akhbār*, pp.361, 362, 374, 376, 377, 390, 395, 400, 408, 410, 412, 413, and 420. The last citation here is to the text of a sermon (*khuṭba*) delivered by al-Manṣūr upon his victory over Abū Yazīd in which he refers pointily to his father al-Qā'im as the 'heir of the sword of his ancestor, Dhu'l-Fiqr (*wārith sayfjaddihi dhi'l-fiqr*). Note also p.449 and the involved story on pp.732–735 that al-Nu'mān related about a dream of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz concerning a battle by his son against the Qarmaṭians which took place after his arrival in Egypt. In the latter al-Mu'izz is visited and aided by his ancestors and their swords including 'Alī and Dhu'l-Fiqr. The campaign of al-Manṣūr against Abū Yazīd is covered fully by H. Halm in his *Das Reich des Mahdi* (Munich, 1991), pp.276–289; English tr. M. Bonner, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids* (Leiden, 1996), pp.310–326. References to Dhu'l-Fiqr occur on pp.279 and 284–285; trans. pp.313 and 319–320.

5. *Kitāb al-majālis*, p.114. Al-Nu'mān provides a fairly detailed description of the sword. See the discussion by Halm, *Reich*, pp.313–314, trans., p.353.

6. Obviously any mention or use of the sword evoked powerful memories of the Prophet and, particularly for the Shi'a, of 'Alī. For an explicit discussion of its importance, from the Fatimid imam's perspective, in the designation of 'Alī, see the comments of al-Mu'izz reported by al-Nu'mān (*Kitāb al-majālis*, pp.208–209): only 'Alī and the Prophet ever used the sword; its symbolic value was immense while its physical worth was slight.

7. Note again the existence of the evidence, cited above, that the Abbasids were still able to maintain that they possessed Dhu'l-Fiḡār. For at least one non-Ismaili source that reports Fatimid possession of the sword, see Ibn Ḥammād, *Histoire des Rois 'Obaïdides (Akhhbār mulūk Banī 'Ubayd wa-sīratihum)*, ed. and tr. M. Vonderheyden (Algiers and Paris, 1927), pp.24–25 (al-Manṣūr announces that he has been given Dhu'l-Fiḡār by his father).

8. On this see now Daniel de Smet, 'La translation du *ra's al-Ḥusayn* au Caire Fatimide,' in U. Vermeulen and D. de Smet, ed. *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, II (Louvain, 1998), pp.29–44.

9. *Al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rikh al-mulūk wa'l-umam* (Hyderabad, 1939), vol.7, p.246. See also Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira* (Cairo, 1348–91/1929–72), vol.4, p.222, and Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī'l-ta'rikh*, ed. C.J. Tornberg (Leiden, 1851–76; repr. Beirut, 1965–67), vol.9, p.219.

10. *Al-Rawḍa al-bahīyya al-zāhira fī khitāṭ al-mu'izziyya al-Qāhira*, ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid (Cairo, 1996), p.40. Virtually the same information appears in al-Maqrīzī's *Khitāṭ* (Būlāq, 1270/1853–54), vol.1, p.453.

11. *'Uyūn al-akhbār*, ed. M. Ghālib (Beirut, 1984), vol.6, p.288. Idrīs assigns the event to the year 410/1019–20 which must be a mistake for 400/1009–10 and credits his information to al-Sharīf al-Ḥimyarī al-Ḥusaynī's *Kitāb al-ma'rūf bi-Kanz al-akhbār fī'l-siyar wa'l-akhbār*.

12. The incident is mentioned in his as yet unpublished *Tanbih al-hādī wa'l-mustahdī* (p.234 of ms. 723 belonging to The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London).

13. On this claim and the various versions of it, see the study by Yūsuf Rāḡib, 'Un épisode obscur d'histoire Fatimide,' *Studia Islamica*, 48 (1978), pp.125–132. See also Shaun Marmon, *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Societies* (New York, 1995), pp.35–38.

14. *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol.28, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and Muḥammad Ḥilmī Muḥammad Aḥmad (Cairo, 1992), p.308.

15. On this episode, see Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr* (Wiesbaden, 1975), vol.1, p.241; Marmon, *Eunuchs*, pp.35–38, and Rāḡib, 'Episode,' pp.129–130.

16. Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khitāṭ*, vol.2, p.462, and Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, *La Capitale de l'Égypte jusqu'à l'époque Fatimide al-Qāhira et al-Fustāt: Essai de reconstitution topographique* (Beirut, 1998), pp.446–447.

17. Qur'an 27: 22–42.

18. For some unspecified reason, this story appears in Idrīs' *Zahr al-ma'ānī*, a purportedly esoteric work, and not in his previously cited *'Uyūn al-akhbār*, presumably an exoteric work. See W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Tradition*

Concerning the Rise of the Fatimids (London, etc., 1942), p.5 and A.A.A. Fyzee's introduction to his edition of the *Hidāyat al-Āmiriyya* (London etc., 1938), p.15. The *Zahr al-ma'āni* itself was not available to me.

19. On the general policy of the Būyids, see Wilferd Madelung, 'The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh by the Būyids and the Reign of the Daylam (*Dawlat al-Daylam*)', *JNES*, 28 (1969), pp.84–108 and 168–183. For Fatimid policy with respect to the Būyids, see Shainool Jiwa, 'Fāṭimid-Būyid Diplomacy during the Reign of al-'Azīz Billāh (365/975–386/996)', *JIS*, 3 (1992), pp.57–71. More specifically, for the details surrounding this particular incident, see Heribert Busse, 'The Revival of Persian Kingship under the Būyids,' in D.S. Richards, ed. *Islamic Civilization, 950–1150* (Oxford, 1973), pp.47–69, especially p.61. Although the theft is reported by both Ibn al-Jawzī (*al-Muntazam*, vol.7, p.107) and al-Maqrīzī (*Itti'āz al-hunafā'*, vol.1, ed. al-Shayyāl, p.261) and is thus not in dispute, either as to its actually happening or its general significance, the exact nature of the object stolen has caused considerable confusion. This problem stems from difficulties in the Arabic text in both sources. A *zabzab* (plural, *zabāzib*) is a reasonably well known kind of river gondola used fairly extensively by important figures (including caliphs) in and about Baghdad during the 4th and 5th/10th–11th centuries. See Darwīsh al-Nukhaylī, *al-Sufun al-Islāmiyya 'alā ḥurūf al-mu'jam* (Alexandria, 1974), pp.54–57. (His version of the crucial passage is found on pp.55–57.) When Adam Mez first cited this evidence, he correctly inferred that the text must have read, in part, '*alā ṣadr zabzab 'aḍud al-dawla* there was a silver lion (figure)' although he actually says, 'Sultan 'Adudeddaulah hatte am Stern seiner Gondel (zabzab) einen silbernen Löwen' (*Die Renaissance des Islām* [Heidelberg, 1922], p.2–3). Bukhsh and Margoliouth (*The Renaissance of Islam*, p.3) translate this 'Sultan Adad-ud-Dowlah had a silver lion affixed to the stern of his gondola in Baghdad.' Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī Abū Rīda's Arabic translation (*al-Ḥaḍāra al-Islāmiyya fī'l-qarn al-rābi' al-hijrī* (Cairo, 1947), p.3, reads, '*kāna 'alā ṣadri zabzab li'l-sultān 'aḍud al-dawla ṣūratun li-sab'i min al-fidḍa*.' That is likely what the Arabic text of either original source should have read as well. (Obviously *ṣadr* refers to the prow of the boat rather than the stern.) The general confusion about the meaning of this text first arose, however, because al-Maqrīzī's manuscript has, according to al-Shayyāl, *ṣuwar*, in place of *ṣadr* although that is likely to be the result of a simple scribal slip and al-Shayyāl was perfectly right to correct it, which he did, citing Mez (in Arabic). The text of Ibn al-Jawzī is more difficult. He has '*kāna 'alā ṣadr 'aḍud al-dawla zabzab 'alā ṣūrat al-sab'i min al-fidḍa*.' Due to the obvious

difficulty of the text, Busse, although citing Mez, would have the item in question be a pectoral in the shape of a *zabzab* with the image of a lion on it. He suggests amending the second *‘alā* to read *‘alayhi*. And he says ‘...the meaning of the passage becomes clear: There was on ‘Aḍud al-Dawla’s breast a *zabzab* [=a pectoral in the shape of a boat]; a lion was represented on it, [the pectoral] was made of silver.’ (Bracketing by Busse.) Busse evidently had not seen the reference in al-Maqrīzī and al-Shayyāl’s emendation of the text there.

Busse, I think, strains too hard to force the text to say what it does not. The figure of the lion was obviously either sitting on the prow of the boat or was actually a part of the prow. It was thus far more visible to the public than any pectoral possibly worn by ‘Aḍud al-Dawla. Why, in any case, should such a pectoral be described as being like a *zabzab*? It would most certainly be an odd choice of descriptive terms. On the contrary prow figures on boats were common especially in ancient times. A relief from Khorsabad shows river boats with prominent horsehead figures on their bowsprits. A battle scene from Madinet Habu depicts Ramesses III’s army fighting the Sea People in boats that have lion heads on their prows (and each lion has an Asiatic head firmly gripped in its jaws.) In these two examples, one from Iraq and one from Egypt, the figure is a part (the cap) of the bowsprit. There are, however, other examples where the lion figure sits on the prow instead. See for examples Björn Landström, *Ships of the Pharaohs* (New York, 1970), pp.105, 109, 117, 121 and 131. (For other types of figures, see pp.140, 121, 119; the lion bowsprit of Ramesses is depicted on pp.111–113).

20. See the report of Ibn al-Jawzī (*al-Muntaẓam*, vol.7, pp.156–58). Ibn Miskawayh says he prefers not to discuss the sordid details of this transition.

21. Ibn Muyassar, *al-Muntaqā min Akhbār Miṣr*, ed. Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid (Cairo, 1981), p.36.

22. Ibn Zāfir, *Akhbār al-duwal al-munqaṭi’a*, ed. A. Ferré (Cairo, 1972), p.75; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol.10, p.61. The last comment by Ibn Zāfir may well refer to a specific item that al-Basāsiri had sent to al-Mustanṣir. See also al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, vol.26, p.68, and vol.28, p.233. For more on the latter incident see below.

23. Yet one more report, mentioned by R.B. Serjeant in his *Islamic Textiles* (Beirut, 1972), p.110, citing Ibn Taghribirdī (ed. Popper, vol.2, p.181) concerns a collection of Abbasid garments that the Fatimids obtained from Bahā’ al-Dawla’s plundering of the Dār al-Khilāfa in 381/991.

24. One example is from the *Book of Gifts*: 'Al-Ḥāfir, a ruby stone that weighed seven dirhams, passed from the Abbasids to the Fatimid caliphs in Egypt' (*Kitāb al-dhakhā'ir*, p.192, trans al-Qaddūmi, p.193). There are others as well.

25. See, for example, the *Book of Gifts* (*Kitāb al-dhakhā'ir*, pp.193–194, trans. p.193). Now see also Heinz Halm, 'Der Tod Ḥamzas, des Begründers der drusischen Religion,' in U. Vermeulen and D. de Smet, ed. *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, II, pp.105–113.

26. Al-Musabbiḥī, *al-Juz' al-arba'ūn min Akhbār Miṣr*, ed. A.F. Sayyid and Th. Bianquis (Cairo, 1978), pp.22–23 and 28–29; al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, vol.2, ed. Aḥmad, pp.137–139. It should be noted that there are several errors in this section of this edition of the *Itti'āz*. Maḥmūd's honorific name is not 'Ayn al-Dawla but Yamīn al-Dawla, for example. For the eastern sources, consult Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.16; Bayhaqī, pp.181–183 (= H.M. Elliott and John Dowson, *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, vol.2, *The Muhammadan Period*, pp.91–93); 'Abd al-Ḥayy Gardizī, *Kitāb zayn al-akhbār*, ed. M. Nāẓim (Berlin, 1928), pp.96–97; C.E. Bosworth, *Ghaznavids* (Edinburgh, 1963), pp.182–184.

27. *Al-Kāmil*, vol.9, p.340.

28. Al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, pp.22–23. Al-Musabbiḥī concludes this entry by saying, '*wakāna dhalika min ḥusni tawfiq Allāh li-hādhihi'l-dawlati wa min sa'ādatihi.*'

29. *Ibid.*, p.29, referred to as '*al-rasūl al-ajamī al-muqaddam dhikruhu.*'

30. Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, vol.2, p.138.

31. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol.9, p.340, says that [al-Aqsāsī] thereafter took sick and died.

32. A *khil'a* is a ceremonial robe that confers distinction and special regard on the recipient. They were often quite lavish and covered with gold embroidery. See N.A. Stillman, 'Khil'a,' *EI2*, vol.5, pp.6–7. The author in fact includes there a copy of a painting of Maḥmūd donning a *khil'a*.

33. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol.9, p.350 (under the year 416/1025–26) and al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, vol.2, pp.137–139.

34. Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, vol.2, p.139.

35. Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbār Miṣr*, pp.11–12; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, vol.28, p.219 and al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, vol.2, p.214. Although al-Maqrīzī's account includes a version given by Ibn Muyassar, he provides additional facts as well. It might be noted that after the ceremonies, al-Mustanṣir relented and sent the Abbasid ambassador back to Constantinople. For

the cause of al-Mu'izz b. Bādīs' disaffection, see al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, vol.2, pp.214ff; Ibn Zāfir, *Akhbār*, pp.69–71; H.R. Idris, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Zirides, X-XII siècles* (Paris, 1962), pp.127–142; and the other citations provided by A. F. Sayyid in the note 40 to his edition of Ibn Muyassar, pp.11–12.

36. The basic details of these events in Iraq appear in numerous sources as, for example, in Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol.9, pp.641f, and Ibn al-Qalānisi, *Dhayl ta'rīkh Dimashq*, ed. H.F. Amedroz (Leiden, 1908), pp.81–90, but the eastern historians do not mention the objects that were sent to Cairo. For them consult al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, vol.2, pp.252–255.

37. See A. Fu'ād Sayyid, *La Capitale*, p.469, citing al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, vol.1, p.439, and vol.2, p.416, and M. Canard, 'Le Cérémonial Fatimite et le cérémonial Byzantin: Essai de comparaison,' *Byzantion*, 21 (1951), p.361.

38. Specifically, here, *al-dhakhā'ir wa'l-kutub wa'l-qaḍīb wa'l-burda*, *Itti'āz*, vol.2, p.253. The latter two items, if the reading is correct, are not easily identified. Is the *qaḍīb* a sceptre, for example, or a bow or a sword? Is the *burda* a special item, as for example the famous *burda* of the Prophet? There is a short list of objects from this loot in the *Kitāb al-dhakhā'ir*, pp.195–196; see also trans. paragraphs nos 256–260.

39. Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, vol.2, pp.254–255.

40. For the most complete account of this period see al-Maqrīzī's *Itti'āz*. He, for example, provides a long description of the looting of al-Mustanṣir's treasures, including lists of items taken (vol.2, pp.279–301). Some of the same objects are described in the *Kitāb al-dhakhā'ir wa'l-tuḥaf*, although whether what we have of this book is identical with al-Maqrīzī's source is not clear.

41. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol.10, p.61; Ibn Zāfir, *Akhbār*, p.75, and Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbār Miṣr*, p.36.

CHAPTER VIII ADDENDA

1. In reference to Dhu'l-Fiqr as a possession of the Fatimids, an unpublished work of al-Kirmānī (the same treatise mentioned above, note number 12) claims explicitly (p. 233 of the ms) that al-Ḥākim has it. This author lived at the time of al-Ḥākim and he explains that possessing Dhu'l-Fiqr is a key factor in identifying the legitimate imam of the Muslim community.

2. Among the items reported taken from the house of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq at the time of al-Ḥākim (see p. 369 above), a mat (*ḥaṣīr*) came later to play a major role among the furnishings brought out of storage and used at the *muṣallā* during the Fatimid caliph's visit for the ceremony connected with his delivery of the festival *khutba*. Ibn Taghrī Birdī (*al-Nujūm*, 5: 176) describes the occasion as follows:

When he rode to the *muṣallā* for the festival sermon, he was preceded there by his men with furnishings and implements. The *mihrab* was swathed in golden *sharb* linen and three mats were laid out overlapping one another, on top of which was a fine mat, which was by them highly prized. It was a piece of a mat that they claimed had once belonged to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. During the time of al-Ḥākim it had been taken, along with other items, from Ja'far's house in Madina when it was opened by this caliph's order.

The same or similar report appears in other sources: Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, al-Maqrīzī's *Khīṭaṭ*, and the history of Ibn al-Ma'mūn, which is most likely its ultimate source, thus dating it to the year 516/1122. For full references and comment, see my forthcoming study *Festival Sermons of the Fatimid Caliphs* (London, 2008).

3. Al-'Azīz's motive for arranging the theft of 'Aḍud al-Dawla's silver lion is carefully explained by Ibn Zāfir (*Akhbār al-duwal al-munqaṭi'a*, ed. Ferré, pp. 5, 33–35) as a response by the Fatimid caliph to the Buyid amir's assembling, in 369/979–80, a group of Iraqi authorities to denounce the purported lineage of the ruler in Cairo. An exchange of emissaries and correspondence between the two sides at this time is well known, but not Ibn Zāfir's additional claim about this particular public repudiation of Fatimid genealogy by the Aliid

nobility (*ashrāf*) of Baghdad, Basra and Kufa at the urging of ‘Aḍud al-Dawla, as reported solely in this one source. Nonetheless, according to ibn Zāfir, it was this act specifically that prompted al-‘Azīz and his wazīr Ibn Killis to arrange for the theft of the lion figure.

4. Maḥmūd’s unkind treatment of the objects brought back by Ḥasanak had, it seems, an earlier precedent. In the year 403/1012, al-Ḥākim sent a letter inviting Maḥmūd to accept allegiance to the Fatimids. Ibn al-Jawzī recorded the event rather tersely (*al-Muntazam* 7: 262):

In Dhu’l-Qa’da Yamīn al-Dawla Abu’l-Qāsim Maḥmūd sent to the [Abbasid] caliph a letter that had come to him from al-Ḥākim, the ruler of Egypt, requesting him to accept obedience and enter among those who followed the Fatimids. Maḥmūd had torn it apart and spat on it.

Ibn Taghrī Birdī, who often derives his information from Ibn al-Jawzī, adds this event to his account of what happened to the eastern pilgrimage caravan in 414/1024 to help explain the acts of desecration that followed. See *al-Nujūm* 4: 232 and 251; also Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie sous la domination Fatimide*, 410–12.



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IX

“In Praise of al-Ḥākim” Greek Elements in Ismaili Writings on the Imamate

In September of 1009, the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim, from his imperial seat in Cairo, sent an order to an agent in Syria to proceed to Jerusalem and arrange there the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.¹ With the aid of the military governor of southern Palestine, the man did exactly what he had been commanded to do: incite a mob first to loot the church of its valuables and then to tear it down. Whatever the true reason for the caliph's actions—a point much debated thereafter—the demolition of this one church fit a general pattern and seemed to follow an overt policy of the state. A significant number of Christian and Jewish houses of worship were likewise destroyed both in Syria and in Egypt over the same period. But, for European Christians, Byzantines and more particularly Latins, this one event reverberated with special resonance, leaving a lasting impression of the perfidy of the Muslims and of al-Ḥākim in particular.²

In the east the reaction was different. Whereas Christians knew the church as the Resurrection (*al-Qiyāma*), the Muslims referred to it as the Garbage (*al-Qumāma*). And its disappearance was not permanent in any case. It and many of the other churches and synagogues were rebuilt even before the end of al-Ḥākim's reign; significantly, pilgrimage to the site in Jerusalem did not end. More serious for the non-Muslims of the east were vexatious sumptuary laws that adversely affected them in

¹ On this event see the classic study by CANARD M. (1955), “La Destruction de l'Eglise de la Résurrection par le calife Ḥākim et l'histoire de la descente du feu sacré,” *Byzantion* 35, p. 16-43, reprint in *id.* (1973), *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche-Orient*, London, item XX, as well as the more recent article by VAN REETH J. (1998), “*Al-Qumāma* et le *Qā'im* de 400 AH: le trucage de la lampe sur le tombeau du Christ,” in VERMEULEN U. and DE SMET D. (eds.), *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras II*, Leuven, p. 171-190.

² Two centuries afterward, deep into the era of the crusades, its great historian, William of Tyre, would comment quite pointedly in the introduction to his *History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*: “Conspicuous among the many other impious acts for which [al-Ḥākim] was responsible was the total demolition of the church of the Lord's Resurrection ... originally built ... at the command of the Emperor Constantine....” (WILLIAM OF TYRE (1943), *History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea* (*Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*), tr. BABCOCK E. A., 2 vol., New York, vol. I, p. 66.

Fatimid domains; those took longer to forget. For Muslims, by contrast, at the popular level, the destruction of churches was seen as overdue and there are reports of celebration and wide-spread approval of the caliph's policies. His fame grew accordingly, not merely in the territories he controlled, but outside in the heartland of his main rivals, the Abbasids of Baghdad and the east. At last the ruler of Islam was actually fulfilling the original mission of the prophet. That al-Ḥākim could claim to be Muḥammad's direct lineal descendant added poignancy and a sense of justice to his cause; he would complete what his prophet-ancestor had begun. Street demonstrators in Baghdad protested an action they disliked by calling out his name "Yā, Ḥākim, yā, Maṣṣūr".³ In August of 1010 the 'Uqaylid ruler of northern Mesopotamia, Qirwāsh b. Muqallad, announced that he would henceforth recognize the Fatimids, thus declaring his allegiance to al-Ḥākim in place of the Abbasids.⁴

Although the destruction of one church or another was certainly not the cause for Qirwāsh's shift of allegiance, a major apologist for the Fatimids, the philosopher-theologian al-Kirmānī, in his own ringing defense of al-Ḥākim's exclusive right to the caliphate, chose to quote the passage from Isaiah (21:9) wherein the rider approaches the watchtower shouting "Woe, woe to Babylon; he will smash what they worship into pieces."⁵ The "he" in this context is, for this author, first the prophet Muḥammad, as alluded to in the Hebrew Bible, and secondarily his rightfully appointed successor, al-Ḥākim. To make the allusion about places of worship more exact, he goes on to cite a passage from what he calls the *Book of Iqlīmas* by St. Peter which says, "there will come from the offspring of Ismā'il (Ishmael) a prophet whose name begins with (the letter) *mīm* and ends with *dāl* [i.e., Muḥammad] and he will conquer all lands and destroy all the churches in them."⁶

³ Maṣṣūr is the personal given name of al-Ḥākim. One such event was the Sunni-Shiite riot of 398/1007. IBN AL-JAWZĪ A. (1939), *Al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rikh al-mulūk wa al-umam*, 7 vol., Hyderabad, vol. VII, p. 238; DONOHUE J. J. (2003), *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq, 334H/945 to 403H/1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future*, Leiden, p. 284; HALM H. (2003), *Die Kalifen von Kairo: Die fatimiden in Ägypten, 973-1074*, Munich, p. 264.

⁴ This event occurred in Muḥarram 401/August 1010. See IBN AL-ATHĪR A. (1964), *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rikh*, ed. TORNBORG C. J., 9 vol., Leiden (reprint, Beirut), vol. IX, p. 223; IBN AL-JAWZĪ, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. VII, p. 249-51; AL-MAQRIZĪ T. (1967) (1971) (1973), *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā' bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-Fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafā'*, vol. I, ed. AL-SHAYYAL J., vol. II and III, ed. AHMAD M. H. M., Cairo, vol. II, p. 88.

⁵ This version of this passage from Isaiah is that given by al-Kirmānī in his *Kitāb al-Maṣābiḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma*, on which treatise see below.

⁶ On this claim see the study by DE SMET D. and VAN REETH J. M. F. (1998), "Les citations bibliques dans l'œuvre du dā'i ismaélien Ḥamid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī," in VERMEULEN U. and VAN REETH J. M. F. (eds.), *Law, Christianity and Modernism in Islamic Society: Proceeding of the Eighteenth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, 1996*, (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 86) Leuven, p. 147-160, and the citations there.

Naturally, not all Muslims approved of these aggressive policies of al-Ḥākim; many of his own subjects suffered from other provisions he had decreed, for example, the extreme restriction of the movements of women who were forbidden to appear in public. Most importantly, non-Ismaili Muslims in general failed to recognize the legitimacy of the Fatimid dynasty. Support for al-Ḥākim largely depended on acceptance of his claim of descent from the prophet. That the Sunnis and many of the Shi'a refused to do. The Abbasid caliph al-Qādir was, moreover, quite obviously threatened directly and personally and he reacted as forcefully as he could. He quickly brought about a reversal of Qirwāsh's allegiance, bringing him back to the Abbasid fold within only a month. In addition, in November of 1011, he assembled in Baghdad a group of scholars and other civic leaders, many Shiites among them, to swear that the ancestry of the Fatimids was not related to the prophet and that claims to that effect were bogus.⁷ Furthermore he began to urge various scholars, principal among them the head of the Mu'tazilites, al-Iṣṭakhri,⁸ to write refutations of the Fatimid doctrine, specifically that regarding the imamate. Several others by highly respected authorities were composed in this same period, one by the famous Ash'arite theologian and Maliki jurist, al-Bāqillāni.⁹ Nor were these limited to the Sunnis. At least two came from major figures among the Zaydi Shi'a.¹⁰

This outpouring of anti-Fatimid sentiment grew in opposition to the spread of support for al-Ḥākim. In turn the veritable flood of writings against him and his reign generated its own reaction in his favor among his most ardent followers. Over the final decade of his rule, when the agitation both for and against him reached its peak, members of his *da'wa*—the Ismaili organization of propaganda and support¹¹—composed several treatises in his defense. Two in particular deserve close scrutiny in

⁷ On the Baghdad manifesto, see DAFTARY F. (1990), *The Ismā'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*, Cambridge, p. 604 n. 93, for citations. This manifesto was issued on Rabī' II 402/November 1011. IBN AL-JAWZĪ, *al-Muntazam*, vol. VII, p. 255-56; AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *Itti'āz*, vol. I, p. 43-44. Manifesto signees are listed by IBN AL-JAWZĪ, *al-Muntazam*, vol. VII, p. 255-56, listing 16 individuals.

⁸ Al-Iṣṭakhri died in 404/1013-14 and therefore his anti-Fatimid work likely dates to the period 402-04/1011-1013. IBN AL-JAWZĪ, *al-Muntazam*, vol. VII, p. 268; IBN AL-ATHĪR, *al-Kāmil*, vol. IX, p. 81.

⁹ Al-Bāqillāni's refutation of the Ismailis had the title *Kashf al-asrār wa haṭk al-astār*. On it see the editor's introduction in AL-BAQILLĀNĪ M. (1947), *Kitāb al-Tamhīd fī al-radd 'alā al-mulhida wa al-rāfiḍa wa al-khawārij wa al-mu'tazila*, ed. AL-KHUDAYRĪ M.M. and ABU RIDĀ M. 'A., Cairo, p. 259 n. 3; and IBN KHALDŪN 'A. (1958), *The Muqaddimah, an Introduction to History*, tr. ROSENTHAL F., (Bollingen Series 43) New York, vol. I, p. 43-44, esp. n. 122.

¹⁰ The two Zaydi treatises were composed by Abu'l-Qāsim al-Bustī and the Zaydi imam Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Mu'ayyad bi-allāh. What survives of the former work, which was called *Kashf al-asrār wa naqd al-afkār*, has been edited and published by AL-'ABD AL-JĀDIR 'A. S. (ed.) (2002), *al-Ismā'iliyyūn, Kashf al-asrār wa naqd al-afkār*, Kuwait, n° 2.

¹¹ See further WALKER P. E. (1993), “The Ismaili Da'wa in the Reign of the Fatimid Caliph Al-Ḥākim,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 30, p. 161-182, and references there.

this context; they both belong to a special genre of writings about the imamate, its proof. And, in part because they intend not merely to defend the Fatimid imamate but to establish its claim on the basis of the proof of science, both to a major extent depend on types of argumentation derived from Greek thought.

The earlier of the two is by the aforementioned Ismaili theologian-philosopher Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī.¹² At some point in the period 1013-1015, while he was himself in Iraq—his original base of operations—he composed this work which he called *Lights to Illuminate the Proof of the Imamate* (*al-Maṣābiḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma*).¹³ The later treatise is by Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysābūrī, an important but nonetheless obscure agent-advocate (*dā'i*) for al-Ḥākim.¹⁴ Though not himself noted for a personal interest in that subject, this man wrote a work that has importance in this context precisely for its use of and appeal to philosophy. But he also called his work simply *Proof of the Imamate* (*Ithbāt al-imāma*).¹⁵

For all Muslims, the imamate denotes in this instance the supreme leadership of the community, not simply in religious terms but in all aspects of governance. For the Shī'a, moreover, the imam holds complete authority over the Islamic polity. Acting in the place of the prophet, in accord with the sacred lineage that defines his right as the designated heir of the founder, he alone determines the meaning of scripture and the stipulations of the law. From his ancestors, the imam inherits an infallible knowledge of the truth. He alone can unerringly decide what is and is not acceptable in all matters that concern Muslims. Not to recognize him or not to accept his total authority is to invite perdition. Ordinary Muslims have access to the literal wording (the *ẓāhir*) of the scripture and law they all follow, but, without the guidance of the living imam, they cannot comprehend its meaning (its *bāṭin*). The outward forms of the law—the language that expresses it and the acts it commands—require, in order to be meaningful and thus valid, the continuing authority of a

¹² For a more complete introduction to his thought, see WALKER P. E. (1999), *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Ḥākim*, London, and DE SMET D. (1995), *La Quiétude de l'Intellect: Néoplatonisme et gnose ismaélienne dans l'œuvre de Ḥamīd ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī* (x^e/xi^e s.), Leuven. There is a good but brief outline by DE BRUIJN M. T. P. (1986), "al-Kirmānī," in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, vol. V, Paris-Leiden, 1960-2004, p. 166-167.

¹³ This work was first edited and published from a poor manuscript by GHĀLIB M. (1969), *Kitāb al-Maṣābiḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma*, Beirut; a new edition by Walker based on a number of better manuscripts with a complete English translation is forthcoming.

¹⁴ About this man we know very little, except that he composed, in addition to the work discussed here, a short history of the Ismaili imams during their period of concealment prior to the caliphate, and a treatise on the proper comportment of *dā'is*.

¹⁵ First published by Ghālib in Beirut; a new edition by Arzina Lalani will appear shortly in London. I must thank her for both bringing this important work to my attention at this time and sharing her text, preliminary translation and notes with me prior to their publication.

divinely sanctioned interpretation. That comes from the imam and no one else. Absolute devotion to the current imam is therefore an essential element of the faith.

It would thus seem that, as Shiites, the political theory of the Ismailis must center around the question of the imamate. However, if the subject at hand is political philosophy, most notably as expressed by Ismaili writers prior to the reign of al-Ḥākim, there are several major points of reservation. Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī had been the leading exponent of philosophical doctrine among them in the earlier Fatimid period.¹⁶ But, although we might expect al-Sijistānī to provide a theory of the imamate, he seems largely to ignore it. His primary concern was prophecy and secondarily a parallel but lower rank defined by the term “founder” (*asās*). For Islam these are, first, the Prophet Muhammad and, second, his successor ‘Alī. The imamate occupies in his writings an important but nevertheless secondary position. Al-Sijistānī was in addition in many ways as Plotinian a Neoplatonist as any Muslim could be. For him the hypostatic intellect and soul, both as undivided universals, preserve their place in his thought. Humans participate in both; our intellects and our souls are part of those same universals. The pairing of intellect and soul on the cosmic spiritual level required for al-Sijistānī that there exist also a pair of authorities who hold parallel ranks in the terrestrial physical realm. They are the prophet, more particularly the speaking, lawgiving-prophet (*nāṭiq*), and his Founder. One is the perfect representative of the intellect; the other of soul. But there is no special cosmic principle to explain the more ordinary rank of imam.

Nonetheless, the actual reality of the imam, a ruler in the here and now, obviously created conditions al-Sijistānī’s theories had not covered adequately. What he had tried to reserve for prophecy and its philosophical rationale in order to give it a unique role in the metaphysics of the created realm, later Ismaili writers transferred, in so far as they could, to the imamate and in particular the current imam under whom they lived and worked. The unusual conditions that characterized the reign of al-Ḥākim seem to have enhanced that necessity.

Although the rule of a living imam is an axiom of Shiite doctrine and is the basis of any Shiite government, the majority of the Shī‘a by the time of al-Ḥākim had opted for an imam in occultation, one theoretically present but not directly accessible. The Fatimid Ismailis, by contrast, followed an imam who was not merely alive but quite visible and, in the case of al-Ḥākim, accessible to the public to a degree rare among Islamic heads of state. The Fatimid caliph was fond of riding through

¹⁶ On al-Sijistānī and his thought, see the following studies by WALKER P. E. (1993), *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī*, Cambridge; *id.* (1994), *The Wellsprings of Wisdom: A study of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī’s Kitāb al-Yanābī*, Salt Lake City, Utah; and *id.* (1996), *Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī: Intellectual Missionary*, London.

the streets of Cairo with almost no escort—a fact well known to his supporters and to his enemies. Nonetheless, for the authors of the two treatises, it was obviously also necessary to review carefully and in detail the facts that had established this imam's authority and had given him the exclusive right to govern. The Ismailis had already written on aspects of the topic at length. The two from the era of al-Ḥākim took it up, however, in a context less for the consumption of those already devoted to it than to convince outsiders to accept it. Evidently the conditions of his imamate provoked a special response, perhaps that of arguing the case more openly and directly in a situation of increasing agitation, uncertainty and external opposition.

Al-Kirmānī's motive, as he himself noted, was to induce the Buyid wazir, Fakhr al-Mulk, to accept the authority of al-Ḥākim. The Buyids were then the overlords of the eastern Islamic lands. Al-Kirmānī knew that the wazir leaned toward the Shiite cause, or was even Shiite himself. His task was thus to prove, first, that the imamate—as defined by the Shī'a—is essential to Islamic government and, second, that the only valid line of imams ran from Ja'far al-Šādiq through his son Ismā'il to the latter's descendant al-Ḥākim. The first portion of al-Kirmānī's agenda was, in addressing a committed Shiite, not difficult except in the requirement of establishing it by formal logical proof, which is what he also attempted. The second, by contrast, offers numerous points of possible contention, among them why the line of imams should have moved from Ja'far, who is (and was) widely accepted by the Shī'a as an imam, to that of the Fatimids, who are (and were) rejected by the majority of them.

While both treatises begin with lengthy sections on the general theme of the necessity of the imamate, they each also end in praise of al-Ḥākim as its ideal representative. On that both agree: al-Ḥākim and his rule were for them the most perfect examples of the divinely sanctioned model of the ruler and of his government. Yet the two works are also quite different. Al-Kirmānī wrote for a public not under the direct control of his imam. He therefore had to persuade by arguments he could prove against general skepticism. Although al-Naysābūrī's treatise likewise self-consciously promotes the idea of proving the necessity of the imamate, it often treats its subject less as an object to be proven than as figurehead to be celebrated. The imamate becomes in his work a sacred monarchy, the explanation of which depends less on the arguments of reason than on analogy and metaphor based on other examples of supremacy in the natural world. Al-Naysābūrī composed his within the Fatimid domain; he was thus addressing a receptive audience.¹⁷

¹⁷ Near the beginning of this second treatise, in the traditional section of benedictions for the prophet and the imams—and al-Ḥākim in particular as the living imam—he adds to these a curious note calling for

But nonetheless his task was also complex. Al-Naysābūrī’s work falls most likely in the period between 1018 and 1021, therefore during the last three years of the reign. Near the end of his laudatory account of the imam’s achievements, which closes his treatise, he hints at another, secondary motive that prompted it. Despite all his fine and glorious traits, al-Ḥākim was, as these contemporary witnesses admit, so unusual in his manner of rule no other Muslim leader was or had been like him. Therefore to judge him and his actions by the standard of human beings, or other rulers among them, al-Naysābūrī claims, can only lead to confusion and possible rejection of his authority. Those who view what he does in its true light will see, he says, that his commands and prohibitions, his giving and his taking away, are to be compared with the acts of God, not with those of mere humans. Yet, he continues, many fail this test; they are thus perplexed by what they see or hear reported about the imam. The measure for human actions is not appropriate to him. But, also, some regard him with a tendency toward exaggeration and then, moving in the opposite direction, claim that he is, in fact, divine. It is necessary to avoid both these extremes, al-Naysābūrī insists.

For al-Naysābūrī to confess so readily that some followers of al-Ḥākim regarded his unusual behavior as a sign of his divinity matches what we know about various groups that eventually coalesced into the Druze. As far as we can tell, they first went public with their claim about his divinity in the year 1017. Al-Naysābūrī was evidently cautioning against them and what he considers their heresy. His own praise of the imam thus had to walk a fine line between a doctrine of monarchy raised to its most sanctified level, on the one hand, and implications suggesting the deification of the ruler who was himself the object of such extreme exaltation, on the other. But for al-Naysābūrī, even to mention that possibility, if only to reject it, means that it was already happening at the time he wrote.¹⁸

such blessing to fall as well on “the heir apparent, the successor to the caliphate” (*wali ‘ahd al-muslimin wa khalifat amir al-mu‘minin*). That phrase can only refer to the cousin of al-Ḥākim who had been proclaimed heir apparent in 1013, titles for which this man continued to hold until his death in 1021, shortly after the end of the reign. These words became a standard phrase added to all public documents including coins over the whole of this same period, strongly suggesting that al-Naysābūrī’s *Proof of the Imamate* was itself, like that declaration, primarily intended for public consumption.

¹⁸ Druze sacred writings, the *Rasā’il al-ḥikma*, which date to the same period, confirm many essential details both about al-Ḥākim’s actions and policies and the doctrines of the Ismaili *da’wa* and its response to them. They in fact offer a doctrine of the imamate much like that expressed in al-Naysābūrī’s treatise including what might be described as its celebratory tendency to laudatory excess. For them, however, al-Ḥākim is God, an incarnation of the deity not unlike Jesus for Christians. Their imam is God’s—meaning al-Ḥākim’s—prophet, Ḥamza b. ‘Alī, a contemporary of these events who was the real founder of the Druze. What the Ismaili writer applies to al-Ḥākim, they consider true of Ḥamza, but the rhetoric is nonetheless strikingly similar. Since these early Druze authorities all seem to have come out of the Fatimid *da’wa*, the preservation of such concepts among them is surely connected to their former involvement with it. We

There is almost none of this metaphorical enthusiasm in al-Kirmānī's proof for the imamate. In later treatises he does take note of the situation in Egypt and the threat of the Druze-like movements he personally encountered there. But earlier, from the vantage point of Iraq, his goal was different. Nevertheless, the standing of al-Ḥākim as the perfect incarnation of the prophetic inheritance was uppermost in his mind. The promise of Islam is fulfilled in the present by this imam, his imam. And, following a long series of demonstrations of specific premises, that is how his argument ends. There, in conclusion, he outlines the qualifications required for supreme leadership of the Islamic community. The true imam must have been designated by God and His prophet (or a line of imams); have committed no sin at all; have always been chaste, never having encouraged corruption of any kind; is courageous; generous; ascetic; just; knows both the literal and figurative meaning of the Book of God; knows what is permitted in the law and what forbidden; knows the interpretation of the Scripture; understands the principles of legal judgments; is near and dear to God and His prophet; and close to God.

This list of virtuous traits and qualifications for the imamate follow, in al-Kirmānī's treatise, the argument of more general facts. The absolute indispensability of the imamate derives from the necessity of the prophet who is God's messenger to humans and their mentor. Because he must exist, and because his function as God's representative does not cease, yet he cannot remain to carry out his task indefinitely, another must assume his place. The prophet was sent to all humankind, all those in his time and all who come into existence until the day of judgment. At his death, his designated successor—the imam—begins to fulfill all of his former responsibilities, save only that of receiving revelation. He is, like the prophet, infallible. Like him the community has no role in his selection. If the community on its own attempts to choose someone for the imamate for any reason, that choice has no validity. Ultimately, al-Kirmānī establishes that no individual at the time of the prophet's death, nor at various key transitions in the lineal chain of inheritance of the imamate, nor in his own period, has all the required qualifications except al-Ḥākim (and the specific line of imams from whom he descends).

In this portion of his work, however, while a theory of Islamic rulership is obvious, there is little overt sign of a specifically Greek background to it. One might make a claim about certain of the virtues he insists must be present, such as generosity, justice, courage, knowledge of the law, which match elements of the

can include in this an interesting shift from the concept of the imam as the universal intellect (*'aql kullī*), in keeping with an older Neoplatonist terminology in Ismaili writings, to the imam as active intellect (*'aql fa'āl*), which is how al-Kirmānī, following al-Fārābī, would prefer it. Significantly, one of the later Druze epistles cites al-Fārābī.

Hellenistic ideal. But there is no evidence that al-Kirmānī sees these traits as anything but firmly Islamic. The first half of his treatise, however, has a slightly different agenda and that, at least in part, most certainly depends on elements of Greek philosophical thought.

It is typical of al-Kirmānī to avoid admitting his dependence on philosophy, yet it exists in much of what he wrote. For a start he commences his Proof with an outline of the premises required by the topic. He then proceeds first to prove that the world has a Maker and was thus made by that Maker. He offers seven demonstrations to prove that fact, all quite Aristotelian. Here is one example:¹⁹

The fourth demonstration: A characteristic of what does not transform from what its elements are, or change, and is not susceptible to an action is that it is not an effect, and the characteristic of what is susceptible to an action on the basis of which it undergoes transformation from one state into another and changes overtake it is that it is an effect. The world in its spheres, stars, and kingdoms does not appear in a single state but with its planets eternally rising or setting, or it is always day or night, or such that what exists in the kingdom remain forever in its present condition. The transformation from the state of coming-to-be, rising, and daylight into a state of corruption, setting, and night-time exist in it. For that reason we know that it is of the kind of thing that is receptive to an act that transforms and changes it. If it is of the sort that submits to such an act, it is an effect. If it is an effect, that requires an agent and the agent is the maker. Thus the Maker is proven.

But even more obvious is his next step, which is to prove the existence of the soul and “that it is a living substance with capability, despite being devoid of knowledge at the commencement of its existence, it is everlasting following the corruption of the physical body by means of which it acquires knowledge and actions.” The soul is the first perfection of the natural body, its mover and animator. It did not have existence prior to that body but comes-to-be with the latter. Yet it persists even after the body dies, enduring then in accord with its acquired status on the measure of previous thoughts and actions, all of which constitute its second and ultimate perfection.²⁰ A good example of his method is the following passage:

The rest of anything that begins to rest comes to it either by nature or by coercion. Anything the rest of which is by nature, for its being at rest to cease, requires the movement of a mover, such as is the case of the millstone, which, when what

¹⁹ The passages from this work that follow here have been translated from my own forthcoming edition of the Arabic text.

²⁰ For greater detail on how this concept fits into the thought of al-Kirmānī and for its history in the writings of others, see the important study by DE SMET D. (1999), “*Perfectio prima – perfectio secunda*, ou les vicissitudes d’une notion, de St. Thomas aux Ismaéliens ṭayyibites du Yémen,” *Recherches de Théologies et de Philosophie médiévales* 66, p. 254-88.

moves it stops, it reverts to a state of rest. What is moved by coercion does not come to rest except when restrained by a restrainer, such as is the case with the agitation of a reed in flowing water, which is not stilled except by the restraint of a restrainer. If the restraining force goes away, it resumes its movement. The rest of the human person at death is due neither to the coercion of a coercive force nor to the restraint of it by a restraining force. Therefore, it is proven that its rest is natural and, if its rest is by nature, the cessation of its rest, when it was in motion, must be due to movement imparted to it by a mover and its rest, when it comes to rest, must be due to the mover having stopped moving it. Given that it is essential that the cessation of its rest be due to a mover's moving it and its coming to rest be due to the mover's ceasing to move it, it follows necessarily that, in its state of motion, it has a mover, since it would not move if that stopped. The mover is what we refer to as soul. Therefore soul is proven.

Any thing that is in agreement with the definition of something is identical to or the like of it. Since the definition of substance is that it accepts contraries without undergoing a transformation in its essence and, since the soul that animates the human person is receptive to contraries, such as knowledge and ignorance, bravery and cowardice, generosity and miserliness, without a transformation of its essence, and since everything that accepts contraries without undergoing a transformation in its essence is a substance, the soul is a substance. Because it is a substance, it is everlasting in and of itself. Hence the soul is a substance that lasts forever.

The Aristotelian basis of this definition of soul is quite evident. What it is doing in a treatise on the imamate that culminates in a statement of the perfect Islamic regime is at least curious. To understand, it is essential to recognize al-Kirmānī's next premise, which is a proof of what he calls the "divine regime" (*al-siyāsa al-rabbāniyya*). Despite the use of the term *siyāsa* elsewhere with the connotation of worldly "governance," here it means God's justice, the administration of justice by a requital for deeds done and thoughts acquired, good for good and bad for bad. God's reward for the soul comes in the afterlife, not in this, and that is not self-evident. It must be taught.

The mercy of God the exalted is perfect and God has sent messengers to keep His servants away from destructive worldly pleasures and desires. If what is better than the pleasures of worldly sensations did not exist, there would be a defect in keeping them away from these pleasures because of something that has no real connection to His mercy. The mercy of God is too exalted to suppose a defect in it. From this we know that, for the souls in avoiding those pleasures of the here and now forbidden them, and in those ordered to do so in doing what is best for them, there is a reward for avoiding the one and doing the other. Thus the reward is both necessary and proven.

On its own the soul will gravitate to the easy path, following what it learns from its senses naturally, like the animals. It thus acquires bad habits. To prevent this course and lead it rightly, the soul requires a regime of good actions, i.e., the law.

Virtuous character is to souls as forms are to sensations, whether commendable or reprehensible, and the excellence of souls lies in those that are commendable, which consist of being just, merciful, controlling anger, being brave, worshipful, truthful, abstinent, pious, pure and devout, not in those that are reprehensible, which include injustice, lack of mercy, swiftness to anger, the cowardice of seeking to remain in this world, disdain for worship, lying, treachery, miserliness, committing venal sins, greed, and failing to take proper note of God. In a youthful state, the souls of humans acquire worldly moral traits naturally and the continuation of its habitual course causes it to acquire vile habits. These habits, which become its works, are the cause for the consolidation of the forms of moral traits in the souls, be they commendable or reprehensible. With respect to the necessity of seeking the excellent, how impossible is the acquisition by the souls of the virtues and its shedding what bad habits it acquired in its youthful state other than as a consequence of rites that are in themselves the acts of devotion by which the souls acquire the excellences of those moral traits that exist among humans. As a result, in consequence thereof, souls gain the nobility of perfection because these devotions, which are its works, are essential for the training of the souls. And the works are the law with its stipulations and norms.

Still it is necessary to understand the true and ultimate meaning of the law, the unseen goal for which it was created. That requires the authoritative interpretation of it and thus the acquisition of knowledge about its reality.

Every thing that exists must be either set in its actuality, as with the human being whose form exists in his rationality and act, or like the source of blood whose form exists in the animal, or like the date palm whose form is in its trunk, fronds and date clusters, or like fire whose form is in its burning and heating; or is a potential, as is the case for sperm, which is potentially a human being, or the plants, which are potentially the blood in the animal, or the date pit, which is potentially a date palm, or the spark, which is potentially fire. What exists potentially is baser and more of this world in comparison with what exists in actuality. The elements of it achieve no nobility except by proceeding to actuality, and its proceeding to the state of actuality cannot happen without the transformation from the state it had in being potential. The transformation, by means of which it departs the condition of being potential, happens only on the basis of the actual. The souls of humans exist as potentially knowing, understanding, rational, discriminating, and other than these, that are there potentially, not actually, in accord with what is present in its condition when a youth and a child. From that we know that the souls, which do not have that nobility, have not themselves proceeded to actuality. Since what has in its potentiality the possibility of nobility upon becoming actual, to leave it as it is in its state of potentiality is not wise. Rather making it proceed to actuality through action is the wise course. Thus it is essential, with respect to the obligation of the wise course, for the All-wise to cause it to proceed to actuality through action. Action is work and the best of works are those that perform the worship of God the exalted. Thus works are the sanctioned rules of the prophets and they are the exercises of the soul. Its proceeding to the state of actuality is necessary.

The final step in al-Kirmānī's argument concerning the preliminaries leading to the imamate is the proof of the necessity of the prophetic office.

The souls at the commencement of their activity are essentially ignorant but brought forth for that afterlife which is the abode of the requital. That abode with its sublime glory, containing what no eye has seen nor ear heard nor entered the hearing of a man, is not an object of sight so as to see it and to prefer it. Hence, given the perfect mercy of God the exalted, it is necessary that there be for it an inducement that makes known that it is better, to create thus the desire for its treasures. It is essential to express them in terms of sensible objects so that they are closer to the comprehension of those who try to picture them. The one who provides that inducement is the inspired messenger. Thus the prophetic office is essential.

Each thing that does not join in the definition of another thing is distinct from that thing and separate from it. What participates in the definition of something else is within its horizon and is a part of its totality and its form. The progression of the soul is toward the spiritual world by means of obedience to God and to His messenger. There is no way for it, however, to participate in the definition of that other and, on its own, to assume its forms so that it might be within that other horizon. If it separates from the world of individual persons, it adheres to that of which it participates as its definition. Accordingly, wisdom and perfect mercy require that there be a preceptor for it who provides it with the features of the spiritual world so that it comes to participate in the definition of the latter. The one who instills the features of the spiritual world is the inspired person and the inspired person is the messenger. Thus the prophetic office is essential.

God singled out humans among animals by replacing the weapons they have, such as claws, beaks, fangs, hooves, and others, with discrimination, good management, ability, and excellence of choice. It is thus in his nature to seek rulership and to hold on to it to the exclusion of others, and to love gaining ascendancy and subjugating others. With what they have been given in the form of excellence in knowledge, trickery, and ability, none of them are safe from the oppressing of some by others and attempting to spread evil throughout the earth. Hence, in accord with wisdom, it is necessary to create a mediator on behalf of God who will command them and prohibit them and preserve the proper order among them to prevent the ruin of some at the hands of others. That mediator, who commands and prohibits on the authority of God, is the messenger. Thus the prophetic office is essential.

To achieve the immortality of the human being, there is an urgent need for regulations that are credible and ordinances that are extensive so that humans will act in accord with these ordinances and its program, thereby to hold secure their blood, property and sexual relations. Otherwise nothing one person possessed of money, treasure and womenfolk would be any more his than another's. The regulations, since they cover acts, are not created on their own. An action must derive from an agent. Hence there must be an agent who fashions these regulations and issues them, who commands and prohibits, and deals with humans in accord with its stipulations. That agent is the one inspired by God the exalted, the One obeyed. The inspired person is the messenger and thus the prophetic office is necessary.

It should be reiterated here that al-Kirmānī’s demonstration of the general principles leading to the necessity of the governing of the human community by the prophet are meant to carry over to the imamate. All that is true of the prophetic office applies equally to the imamate except for the reception of revelation. The imams do not make law; they are not legislators, lawmakers or revelators. But, otherwise, his argument, in so far as it deals with the governance of human society in any other respect, establishes the ongoing necessity of the Shiite imamate. No other form of government, Islamic or otherwise, is valid. Therefore the Greek elements in his general theory cannot be separated from his discussion of particular details about the imamate and who does or does not have the right to it. The whole is one continuous argument. In the end, it is al-Ḥākim, and only al-Ḥākim, who has assumed or could assume the role of the prophet as ruler and monarch.

By contrast, al-Naysābūrī, who must certainly have known about this treatise of al-Kirmānī, does not regard his purpose as the construction of a “demonstration,” in the Aristotelian sense, but rather of an explanation of the imamate. Nonetheless, he imagines his work as a proof of it. Like al-Kirmānī, he devotes the greater part of his treatise to general principles, letting those lead at the end to the way in which they apply to the imam of his time, al-Ḥākim. But, whereas for al-Kirmānī, al-Ḥākim represents an embodiment of the prophetic office as understood and expected by most Muslims, al-Naysābūrī emphasizes aspects of it that raise it to a kind of supremely sanctified monarchy, stressing its unique holiness, almost more so than that of the prophet. Here are some preliminary passages that define his view of the imamate:²¹

Praise God who sent the messengers and prophets, who appointed imams and caliphs, a blessing for the saints, a punishment for enemies, a benefit to religion and to the world, a building for the afterlife and the here-and-now. ... I bear witness also that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger, superior to all other messengers, immune to all sin and error, may God bless him with a blessing that cannot be numbered and is without limit. May God bless his loyal heir [‘Alī], the most truthful, the master of the explanation and the secrets; also the imams descended from the Martyr [Ḥusayn] in whom praise, glory, infallibility, and righteousness abide; and also the master of the palace and the age [al-Ḥākim], who is sustained by conquest and victory—the most excellent benediction of God be upon him, the most bounteous of His blessings and the purest of His salutations. [And the same to the *Wali ‘ahd*, the heir designate] (p. 26)

The imamate is the pivot of religion and its foundation. Around it revolve all religious and worldly affairs and the welfare of the next life and this. By means

²¹ The translated passage to follow are all based on Arzina Lalani’s new edition of the Arabic text. For convenience I have included in parenthesis the page numbers of the corresponding sections of the older Ghālib edition.

of it the dealings of the servants and the well-being of the land maintain their proper order. By means of it the reward in the abode to come arrives. Through it one attains knowledge of the absolute unity (of God) and of the revealed message based on proofs, demonstrations, and irrefutable evidence; and therein one reaches an understanding of the law and its foundation, and of the interpretation thereof and its explanation. (p. 27)

... At no time or season can the world be without an imam whereas the prophet lives at one time and not another. ... [But] the affirmation of the imamate is an affirmation of prophecy, God called the imam an apostle when He said ... to Abraham: "Verily I am making you an imam for the people." (p. 27-8)

... The imam occupies the place of the messenger in his own time and era. ... An imam exists in the world at all times; at no time is it lacking one. The imam upholds the law and maintains its veracity as we have said. What has now become clear and is thus firmly established is that religion revolves around the imam and that, except by depending on the acts of the imam with respect to the law of the prophet in his era, no one has a connection to that prophet or to his position and to his law in such a manner that its validity has undergone no change or alternation in any way. No one apprehends the true reality of the law and its interpretation or meaning except through him. (p. 27-8)

The difference between the two treatises lies in part in a matter of such emphasis. Al-Naysābūrī simply moves quickly to the subject of the imamate. As better befits his goal of extolling the imam, he thus dispenses with the proof of prophecy. In so doing, as much of his laudatory rhetoric attests, he could have avoided including the more obvious elements of Greek philosophy. Yet he himself makes a point of doing exactly that—that is, appealing to philosophy and to the works of the philosophers—when he comments at the outset:

Many works on the proof of the imamate by the masters in the *da'wa* employ inferences from and quotations of the Qur'anic verses that are well accepted as having been revealed in the matter of imamate and the imams. Reports have also been related concerning it from the Prophet. Those who came before have left nothing in this regard for those who come later and there is not much benefit in simply repeating the same concepts using different words. Our intention is rather to compose a treatise on the proof of the imamate based on adducing evidence and drawing inferences from the natural world and social and political regulations, and as well on the basis of intellect, necessity, innate disposition and character, from the consensus of the adherents of each of the religious communities, and from the philosophers and mathematicians. (p. 27-8)

In other words, al-Naysābūrī deliberately seeks to argue for the imamate using the doctrines of the philosophers (among others), which here means the Greek philosophers as seen through Arabic sources. But, even so, his method is not a demonstration of a formal principle. It is rather, as in the following passages, a declaration of it.

We maintain that the necessity of the imamate and the imams is a requirement of natural character, innate disposition, nature, the intellect, political governance, convention, and regulations, and is regarded as necessary in every law, religion and religious community in the same way that the Maker's being necessary is axiomatic in natural character, innate disposition, and the intellect, and in every religious community and religion. However, beyond His being necessary, people disagree about the Maker and about what is entailed in that. They judge the matter according to personal whims and opinions and the tradition of their forefathers and teachers, claiming that the Maker so required by natural character and innate disposition is a substance or the elements or the planets or the sun and something else. In judging in this fashion without knowledge, they describe the Creator with attributes that imply either His similarity [to some other thing] or polytheism. Likewise in regard to the necessity of the imamate, once having admitted that the imam is required, they lapse into dissention. Some insist that the imam who is stipulated by the intellect is the sage in every age. The philosophers are an example here; they call their teachers imams, or sages (*ḥukamā'*), the head of the scholars (*ra's al-'ulamā'*), the governor of the world (*sā'is al-'ālam*), and the teacher (*al-mu'allim*). (p. 28)

For most of his treatise, al-Naysābūrī adheres to an argument based on the notion of “disparity” (*tafāwut*) and differences of merit (*tafāḍul*). He expresses this principle as follows:

We say that the existence of disparity (*tafāwut*) and differences of merit (*tafāḍul*) in all things that comprise the root principles, the natural kingdoms, and the branches thereof is the most solid evidence and firmest argument in proof of the imamate and of the imams. God created things so as to be disparate and of different merit with respect to genus and species. Then He created in each genus and species an ultimate limit, the highest degree, the end, the most excellent no other of that genus or species can attain. (p. 31)

It is a notion he has adapted in all likelihood from al-Sijistānī's work on the proof of prophecy (his *Ithbāt al-nubuwwa*²²), where this concept is applied not to the imam but to the prophet. But, as his predecessor had done with the subject of prophecy, al-Naysābūrī uses many of the same categories to characterize the imamate. He continues his thought:

At this point we will mention the disparity and differences of merit in each principle and kingdom of nature and show that for each genus and species its ultimate limit and highest degree points to the imam in every time and period. (p. 33-4)

Significantly, for his first example, he turns to the philosophers.

²² There is a quite unreliable edition of this work: AL-SIJISTĀNĪ A. Y. (1966), *Ithbāt al-nubuwwa*, ed. TAMER 'A., Beirut.

We note that the sages among the philosophers speak of ten categories. They say that one cannot contemplate a thing or discuss it otherwise than in reference to these ten: substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, possession, posture, action, affection. The acme of the ten is substance on which the rest depend and which thus is the most important of them. It supports the other nine. The substance they describe here is an indication of the everlasting, intelligible, luminous, truly real substance from which all souls derive illumination. On it depend all nine of the religious accidents. Yet it is not in need of creation and it draws no benefit itself from anyone in the world. But rather all derive benefit from it and have need of it. It is the imam, and the other members of the religious hierarchy below him are like the nine accidents. (p. 34)

But other examples that are equally relevant in this context follow.

We maintain that, of the four elements from which the first compounds were composed, two are active and two passive. The active ones are heat and cold; the passive are dryness and humidity. The ultimate of them and the most noble is heat. From it there is radiance, light, motion, and elevation and the other three elements depend on it. It has precedence in origin and in existence. No principle or natural kingdom would be complete without it. Similarly the imam is the light of souls; from him there is intelligible light, motion and elevation. No principle of a thing is complete without him, likewise the religious kingdoms. The most illustrious and highest of the spheres is the sphere of spheres. All revolve in it. Within his religion the imam is like the sphere of spheres with respect to [the other] religious spheres. All the heavenly bodies and religious houses of the zodiac operate under his command. Should someone claim here that this is rather a symbol for the messiah (*al-qā'im*) given that the highest principle of the universe points, in respect to the four principles, to the intellect. We answer that the imam is the messiah and he is the speaking-prophet (*nātiq*) in his time and era. He assumes the speaking-prophet's place. In his realm the imam occupies the place of the universal intellect. (p. 34-5)

We hold that there are many planets and among them there exists disparity and differences of merit. The ultimate and highest degree among them in nobility and excellence is the sun. Physical eyesight draws its light from it; all animals, plants and generated creatures grow because of it; without the effects of the sun they will not grow. In a similar manner the imam is the 'sun' of religion. Insight takes light from him; souls derive radiance from the light of his guidance and wisdom; and the hearts of God's friends glow. In virtue of that some propose to glorify the sun. Because they acknowledged the symbol but not what it symbolizes, these worshippers of the sun fall thereby into a great confusion. But it is for that very reason that the prophet indicated that the rising of the sun from the west would signal the rising of the imam in the Maghrib. Should the physical sun cease even for the blink of an eye its orderly revolutions about its center, its regular rising and setting, the world would completely fall apart. As that is impossible both rationally and physically, the statement of the Prophet is insupportable otherwise than on the basis of this allegorical interpretation of it. In fact by the grace and

favor of God his interpretation has proven to be accurate [ie. the imam al-Mahdi, the first of the Fatimid caliphs, did come to power in the West]. (p. 35-36)

...The ultimate of the animals, plants, minerals and the natural kingdoms is man and the welfare of the animals and what preceded them is accomplished by him. It is he who brings order to matters that concern them. Similarly the imam is the ultimate of man, his highest degree, his consummation and perfection. The affairs of men are put in order by the imam. Just as the usefulness of all that precedes men reverts to men, so the usefulness of all men reverts to the imam. From them man learns the virtues and sciences. From them they acquire discernment and perspicacity. Through them is the betterment of their dealings in religious and worldly matters, and their salvation. By them are they led to acknowledge the Maker and admit to the necessity of thankfulness to the Benefactor and how to display that thanks. Through them they learn about the messenger and the kind of obedience due him.

Just as the usefulness of all animals and what precedes them reverts to man and man is, on account of that, their administrator, so in a similar manner the benefit of all men reverts to the imams. They are the rulers of men, both enjoining men and forbidding them. If it were not for the imams and their guiding of men, directing them, preserving their welfare in this life and the next, and inducing them to acquire the virtues and avoid the vices and bestial habits, there would be no difference between the beasts and men. Rather, on the contrary, the animals would be superior since man, if he were not receptive to training and did not acquire in himself the virtues and did not learn from the imams nor acquire reason from them, would be worse than the beasts. The beasts cannot degenerate in the way a human can; there are many benefits in the beasts, whereas the human who has neither reason nor religion is entirely bad and degenerate. On that account God said: “The worst of the beasts in the sight of God are the deaf and dumb who do not understand” [8: 22]. He also said: “They are like cattle, nay, more misguided even, for they are headless” [7: 179]. In that, if it were not for men, there would be no wisdom in the creation of the plants and animals, nor their usefulness, in the same way, if it were not for the imam, there would be no wisdom in the creation of mankind, nor would man’s superiority be manifest. Man was created for religion and the acquisition of the virtues and of science. He learns science and religion from the imams. It is through them that religion is maintained and perfected. If the superiority of men was not manifest, neither would that of the animals and plants. There would be no wisdom in the creation of man, the plants and the animals. If the wisdom in creating them is untrue, the wisdom in the creation of the universe as a whole is null and void. (p. 40-41)

Therefore, it is certain that the natural worlds in their entirety were created for the sake of man and that man was created for the imams and to receive religion from them and by them become perfect, manifest his virtues, his organization and his management. If the worlds and created beings in their entirety were created for the imams and all the benefits of the worlds revert to them and the rest of creation depends on them and all is theirs, in what they bestow on creation, whether by their favor, their generosity, or their mercy, and in what they hold back, they are not under any obligation nor do they owe a favor in return. Whoever would

take from this world any thing without their permission and approval is forbidden to do so. That constitutes usurpation. (p. 41-42)

We maintain that, because the plants are greater than the earth by the addition of a single spirit (*rūḥ*)—that being the spirit of growth—the earth has become subservient to the plants which grow on it and absorb a power from it. Given that the animals exceed the plants by the addition of a single spirit and the earth by two spirits—the spirit of growth, and the spirit of sensation—the earth is subservient and walked upon and the plants are subservient and eaten. Because humans exceed the animals by the addition of the spirit of reason, the earth is subservient and built upon, sown and planted, and brought under his direction and control. Hence he eats the plants and fruits, using whatever of them he likes and burning what he does not. He dominates the animals, riding those he has need of, slaughtering, milking, shearing their wool, employing them as he desires by force regardless of the animal's displeasure. Since the imam stands above because of additional spirits, powers and a purity the like of which ordinary humans do not possess, the ultimate extent of purity in the human animal is combined in the imam along with the refinement of nature, the ultimate of its purity, the ultimate of the sensate animal and its purity, the furthest felicity of heavens, the harmony of nature, the most rarified influence of the spheres and planets in their entirety. So great is this that the imam becomes the essence (*mukhkh*) of the whole universe. Thereupon the refinements of the spirit of reason and pure thought and the entirety of the intelligible spirit unite in him, along with the whole of the spirit of holiness (*rūḥ al-quds*) of which humans possess only a tiny portion, not great, except what they obtain from the imam and his favor to those on whom he chooses to bestow it. ... (p. 42-43)

Since God combines for them these powers, virtues and spirits as an addition to those of the human, man is altogether subservient to them. God gave them dominion over all that preceded humans, namely the animals, plants, the earth, and the minerals. He caused all of that to be subservient to them. Thus the animals are subservient to man and are his possession based on the addition of a single weak spirit and the plants are subservient to the animals by the addition of a single weak spirit and the earth is subservient to the plants due to the addition of a single weak spirit. The measure of the additional spirits that the imams have over them indicates the increase in their dominance and subjugation of men. The authority of their rule over them which, in regard to the use of coercion, is commensurate with what the aforementioned powers and spirits would entail for humans. No human can remove himself from the rule of the imam and his control in the same way that no animal can escape the control of humans. Those wild beasts having no benefit or merit that do evade the control of men are by the judgement of reason and the law to be killed, destroyed and annihilated precisely because they are not servile to men nor under his control and direction. Similarly whoever refuses to obey the imam and thus behaves like a wild beast is the same as a harmful beast whose killing, destruction and annihilation has become permissible in accord with the determination in law, reason, nature and social order (*siyāsa*) of his having rebelled against the rule (*mulk*) of the imam. (p. 43-44)

God created the world and fashioned some of the creation, as we have said, in accord with this arrangement—mutually disparate, of uneven merit, greater and

lesser power, more and less noble — so that they would understand that, because in each species and genus there exists an ultimate, a highest degree, and a leader (*raʿs*) in nobility and excellence, the whole has without any doubt also an ultimate and highest degree in respect to nobility and excellence. He is the leader of the world and the governor (*sāʿis*) of it. It has become clear that leadership (*riʿāsa*) and rulership (*siyāsa*) are required of necessity by nature, creation, natural character, innate disposition. A person who denies the law and religion cannot deny, either in reason or in actuality, that the world has a governor (*sāʿis*), a leader (*raʿis*) and a ruler (*mudabbir*), since it is required by necessity. Based on the evidence from creation and the natures we have already cited, it follows necessarily also that he must be the most excellent of all, the noblest of them, most perfect, most knowledgeable and most pure, and that the foremost leader (*muqaddim*) is the imam in all things and he is the ruler and the head. The name “imam” is not applicable to someone who is led, nor does the term “superior” apply to someone who has a superior, nor the term “predecessor” to someone preceded. For all that, all the adherents of religions and faiths, the philosophers, the Materialists (*al-dahriyya*), and Agnostics (*al-muʿaṭṭila*) also affirm that the governor of the world must be the most excellent among them, the most perfect group in merit and the most knowledgeable of them. There is not to be found in the world a ruler (*sāʿis*) with this attribute other than the imams. (p. 53-54)

We note that the philosophers construe governance (*al-siyāsa*) in three categories: governance of the individual, governance of the family, and governance of the public. Governance of the individual is a man’s governance of his own soul. Governance of the family is a man’s governance of his household and dependents. Governance of the public is the governance of cities and towns (*kuwar*). Governance by a man of his soul stipulates that governance apply to his keeping it from all manner of vices, wicked behavior, beastly habits and reprehensible inclinations and that he governs his soul with the control of a man of stout resolution, his self against himself. He punishes it with reproach and remorse if it is bad and rewards it with praise and happiness when it behaves well, and seeks more of the like. The governance of the family is for a man to direct his household and dependents so as to preserve their welfare and encourage them to acquire the virtues and acceptable character traits. He punishes those of them who are bad by censure and other such things and rewards those of them who behave nicely with praise and the like. The governance of the public is man’s governance of cities, directing the cities to preserve the welfare of their livelihood, keeping them from blameworthy habits and reprehensible acts, maintaining for each one in it his position, punishing those among them who are bad with censure, rewarding those among them who behave well with praise, and safeguarding and directing the affairs of their religion and salvation. (p. 54-55)

This, for which they have coined the term “governance” (*siyāsa*), is not to be found in the world nor in those who claim the imamate nor among the sultans nor among their scholars. This characteristic is not to be found other than among the imams of the family of Muhammad. Except them there is no one in the world who possesses that attribute. The philosophers agree that someone who does not undertake the governing of his soul should not have governance of his family and that he who does not govern well his family should not have the name denoting

governance of the public in any way at all. The imams of the people of outward meaning (*ahl al-ẓāhir*) and their sultans and their scholars are devoid of this qualification. Those who attend the sessions of these imams and refer to themselves by their names do not govern themselves or their families or the people or those we witness today engaged in amusements, depravity and corruption. This qualification, which the philosophers use to characterize the ruler, is not to be found in any of their sultans. Perhaps the person who decreed this order of things had as his purpose urging the people to obey the imam. He thus described the imam with the attributes of the ruler so that they would seek a ruler with this qualification and description. But they would then not accept any of those who do not fit this description until at last they reached the true imam. (p. 55-56)

Finally, after a lengthy review of such examples of excellence, partly, as in the preceding passages, connected to components that are Greek in one way or another, but along with many others of a purely Islamic nature, the author comes to his ultimate purpose, the praise of al-Ḥākim. He begins:

We will now move on to cite some of the virtues of the Guardian of the Age and Time, the Commander of the Faithful, [al-Ḥākim] ... We say that God radiates the world with His light as He promised and said He would when He stated: "The earth will radiate with the light of its Lord" [39: 69], which is to say, the earth of the outer meaning (*arḍ al-ẓāhir*) radiates with the justice of the Commander of the Faithful and the earth of inner meaning (*arḍ al-bāṭin*) with knowledge and explanation (*al-'ilm wa al-bayān*). (p. 82-83)

Here he continues with the specific application of his earlier general principles to the current imam, whom he identifies by his title Commander of the Faithful (*Amīr al-Mu'minin*). This section constitutes the special praise of al-Ḥākim.

We hold that, because in every species, genus, root principle, branch and law there is an ultimate and highest degree of nobility, excellence, rank, status and position no other can attain, in a way similar among the imams there is an ultimate, highest degree and limit and that among those in the past no one else reached the same rank or limit. That ultimate and limit is the Commander of the Faithful. He is the ultimate of ultimates and limits above which there is no other ultimate or limit. In the advent of mankind the wisdom of the world appears. The plants and animals that are in it and their welfare is made perfect by man and the benefit of all reverts to him. So, too, do the imams complete the virtues of man. The wisdom in their creation appears and the benefit of all men reverts to the imams. In a similar way, in the Commander of the Faithful, the concerns of the prophets and legatees are brought to completion; their affairs are put in order; and the perfection of the wisdom in their ordinances, laws and interpretations becomes manifest. He is like the head and they are like the body; they are like the body and the Commander of the Faithful is like the soul. The body is not perfect without the soul. The Commander of the Faithful is like the heart and the others who have gone before are like the

members. In the uniting of the soul and life with the heart, all members obtain life and recompense. (p. 83-84)

The perfection of mankind was due to his being the final natural kingdom of the world. He received all of what the rest had and also added some things that no other kingdom had a share in. The imams gain from all the excellences possessed by humans and are, in being human, also at the ultimate, the highest degree and the most pure of them. Yet it is possible as well for them to receive something not within the power of humans. Moreover the benefit of all that precedes reverts to them. For that reason the Commander of the Faithful combines the excellences of those who went before. Their benefit and knowledge reverts to him and in fact he exceeds double that. The power of the Prophet and his excellence was due to the combination in him of the excellences of those who preceded in the passing of the ages, and in all of their knowledge. There is in him also what he added himself. In a similar way the Commander of the Faithful combines the excellences of all those prophets, imams and sages who preceded in the passing of the ages and his adding over and above that things they were unable to do. If he had not attained this position the wisdom in their attainments would remain imperfect. The sum of all the worlds—the spiritual, the physical, and the legal—is today the Commander of the Faithful and it is for his sake that they were created. (p. 84-85)

...Adam, and the rest of the caliphs (*khulafāʾ*) who were called caliphs, was a caliph because he was the beginning of those who held the position of caliph. Those after him who held it held it by virtue of having some qualification for it. For that reason they were given this title. A person who displays a portion of a thing is called by that thing. The Commander of the Faithful is, however, the full reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of the caliphate, both in religion and in the world. The Prophet said: “The Sultan is the shadow of God on the earth.” He meant by that the Commander of the Faithful. A shadow of something as it is meant in this instance is something that casts a shadow over all that is within its range. But, with the exception of the Commander of the Faithful, there is no one who functions with respect to creation as God does.

The philosophers say that philosophy is to resemble the Creator as far as it is possible for a man. To come to resemble the Creator is to act with His creation as He would act and for a man to treat them and himself as God does with Himself and with creation and in accord with creation’s example. This formula was stolen by the philosophers from the Adherents of Truth (*ahl al-ḥaqīqa*). Nevertheless among the philosophers and the others none truly fulfills this claim except the Commander of the Faithful. All of his dealings with the creation are like God’s dealings with His creation in respect to the creating and provisioning of the world and the like. (p. 86-87)

Aside from the insertion of the Greek elements in the foregoing, the rhetorical exaggeration employed by al-Naysābūrī should be obvious. The imam has become the be-all and end-all, the ultimate ruler of a divinely conceived kingdom on earth. That all of this should be true of al-Ḥākim strains the bounds of Islamic doctrine to the furthest limit, perhaps even exceeding, or at the least testing, the normal boundaries of

Ismaili doctrine at the time. But, though mindful of the Druze heresy and its excess, al-Naysābūrī withholds little, even going so far as to claim that al-Ḥākim is the messiah, as in the following passage.

...He [al-Ḥākim] completes all who have gone before. Possibly someone will say, but this is the attribute of the messiah (*qā'im*) of the last days and the Commander of the Faithful is not the last. We reply: the Commander of the Faithful is the messiah of his time and period, and the messiah of those in the past, and their completer (*mutimm*). (p. 85)

In summary, al-Naysābūrī has just claimed for al-Ḥākim the following: man is the best of creatures and end of the world; the imam is the best of men and the best is naturally perforce the ruler and leader of them. As the holder of power the imam is God's shadow on the earth. He is the sun that illuminates the hearts of God's friends. The imam occupies the place that corresponds to that of the universal intellect or logos in its realm. He is the complete and ultimate sage; the brain of the world in its entirety, its head. He is the legislating-prophet (*nāṭiq*) and the messiah of his own time and era.

Missing here is a confirmation that al-Ḥākim will not be the last, that the imamate will continue in his progeny, and that many more imams will come. Such an assertion appears regularly in the writing of al-Kirmānī. He employs it, for example, to counter the argument of the proto-Druze, who saw in al-Ḥākim a final imam-messiah figure, who has no heir because he begets no offspring. Al-Naysābūrī's failure to indicate that the imamate will proceed beyond the current imam is, however, most likely a rhetorical device that serves merely to enhance the meaning of the moment. Both he and al-Kirmānī confidently predict a surpassing ultimate victory for al-Ḥākim in the near future, one in which all or most of his enemies will fall and he will rise to a position of dominion over the whole of the Islamic community.

APPENDIX

THE ISMAILIS, PHILOSOPHY AND THE PHILOSOPHERS

In any discussion of the Greek strand in Islamic thought, the major figures normally considered are those by and large already reasonably well known to most scholars in the field. The Ismailis discussed in this paper are not. Scholars of Islamic thought can certainly be expected to have read a list of works by the major thinkers. The Ismailis, however, seldom make that list. Despite the recovery of important Ismaili texts over the past fifty years, few, if any, have been published in good editions, and many remain unpublished altogether. Therefore, until more work is done on them, we are often fortunate enough simply to know about these Ismaili writings and a little about who wrote them and when.

Nonetheless we can trace evidence of the Ismaili movement back to about the early 870s, although it may well be older.²³ From that time onward, it was well organized and centrally directed. Our sources provide names of agents (*dā'īs*) recruited from then onward and dispatched from Kufa or another Iraqi-Syrian town to fairly distant bases in Northern Iran, Khurasan, Yemen, Egypt, and North Africa. Even with a growing list of *dā'īs* and an ever more precise knowledge of their movements and interconnections, we know, however, relatively little about their earliest doctrines beyond statements about the imamate and even that is, admittedly, a confused jumble of contradictions. One source hints at an Ismaili cosmological doctrine that appears to feature a Gnostic-type myth, perhaps of early Shiite provenance. Presumably, it pre-dates the introduction of philosophical material which, however, later supplanted it and eventually replaced it almost entirely, leaving merely a few traces of what had come before.

Most of the Ismaili *dā'īs* were highly educated, quite likely prior to their involvement in the movement, an education that surely served their later purposes. Ibn al-Haytham, a Qayrawani Shiite who joined the Fatimids as a *dā'ī* in 909, indicates himself that he had read and studied a substantial number of ancient classics of philosophy, including those by Plato and Aristotle. But, most importantly, his record of conversations with Abu'l-ʿAbbās, the brother of the famous Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Shīʿī—the man who created the Fatimid triumph in the west—reveals that this Abu'l-ʿAbbās, who by 909 had worked for the Ismaili *da'wa* in a high position for over

²³ The best general account of the Ismailis in this early period is Daftary's *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines*. But see also MADELUNG W. (1978), “Ismā'īliyya”, *EP*, IV, p. 198-207. An essential tool for the investigation of Ismaili literature is POONAWALA I. (1977), *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature*, Malibu, California.

twenty years, was himself fully conversant with the classical philosophical tradition.²⁴

The introduction of philosophy, however, fell to the eastern, Qarmatian wing of the Ismailis. Our earliest sources are the writings of Abū Ḥatīm al-Rāzī, the leading *dā'i* in Northern Iran (d. 934), and Muḥammad al-Nasafī, his counterpart in Khurasan (d. 943). Both men actively promoted a philosophically inclined version of Ismailism, especially al-Nasafī and his circle (there were others in Khurasan). The next generation (if that is the right word) was even more aggressive in that respect. This group includes one major disciple of al-Nasafī known to us solely by the *kunya* Abū Tammām and the more familiar Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. soon after 971), who is arguably the most important and most influential of the Ismaili writers from his century. Once accepted, if not endorsed, by the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz (r. 953-975), al-Sijistānī's interpretation of this brand of intellectual Ismailism became standard for the Ismailis until the end of the dynasty.

The next significant Fatimid thinker²⁵ is Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī who, to judge from the evidence in his works, was active between 1008 and 1021, a period that encompasses all his known writings. Significantly, al-Kirmānī, in contrast to the earlier figures, specifies by name the Fatimid imam he wrote for, in his case, al-Ḥākim. And, unlike them, he belongs to a different philosophical tradition—that best defined, if not created, by al-Fārābī. For al-Kirmānī, many of the Neoplatonic doctrines advocated by his predecessors in the *da'wa* had become unsupportable and needed to be abandoned. He wanted to substitute for them a whole constellation of notions remarkably like those proposed by al-Fārābī, who had preceded him, and Ibn Sīnā, who was his contemporary. Still, two generations later, the major Fatimid writers, Nāṣir b. Khusraw and al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shirāzī, remained firmly in the camp of al-Sijistānī, rather than al-Kirmānī.

Ismaili interest in philosophy did not stop with these two but continued later, especially in the Yemen, where, however, most writers that we know at present tended to collect and preserve older texts (or parts of them) rather than create new ones. Even so it would be remiss not to note the real possibility that the literature of the Yemeni Ṭayyibī *da'wa* holds true surprises, not simply for the history of Ismaili thought, but for the study of philosophy in the Islamic world. These later authori-

²⁴ See MADELUNG W. and WALKER P. E. (2000), *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shi'i Witness*, London, p. 111 *sqq.* (English), 59 *sqq.* (Arabic).

²⁵ Significantly, in the present context, al-Naysābūrī, the author of the treatise discussed above, does not rank as a philosopher, his use of philosophy being for the most part derivative and secondary. There is no indication that he himself cultivated a knowledge of it.

ties sought all earlier texts that might contain in any way material related to the full range of Ismaili interests, the writings of Greek philosophers among them.

It is also true that not all Ismaili *dā'īs* or the Fatimid caliphs expressed an interest in philosophy and philosophical doctrines or in classical learning. There was a fairly common view in the *da'wa* that it is better to concentrate on Islamic, particularly Shiite, as opposed to foreign, sources of thought. The writings of many *dā'īs* show no explicit influence of or concern for Greek ideas. Nevertheless, Ismaili thought in its formative period would be simply incomprehensible without a background in philosophy, especially in Neoplatonism, which runs throughout the writings of the main figures. What they said would be unintelligible without references to classical Greek thought. These writers adapted elements of philosophy to their use, not merely on the basis of vague generalities, but by employing specific terms in a technical language borrowed more or less directly from translations of ancient texts. Although the works they composed to explain their Ismailism were not strictly speaking philosophical, many portions are nonetheless small treatises of philosophy.

The Ismailis wrote about subjects where such doctrines are appropriate. For example, all uphold the absolute primacy of intellect within the created universe. The first created being is intellect; it is the sum and substance of all subsequent being; it governs and rules the universe. The law and revelation it is based on are not, and cannot be, in conflict with universal reason. They are not each separate sources of truth, but are instead identical. They are both, in fact, manifestations of reason. The role of a legislating prophet—those prophets who actually make the law, i. e., the lawgivers—is to construct an incarnation of intellect that is suitable for the physical world. Sacred law, the governing principle of human society, is intellect incarnate. Converting what is theoretical into a practical instrument for the management and then amelioration of human society, the lawgiver guides it in this way to its collective salvation. Scripture therefore signifies intellect and is a reflection of it. Such an understanding of intellect and its role is most certainly philosophical; it reveals clearly a Greek legacy.

Even so the Ismaili approach to philosophy in general and the philosophers in particular was quite fraught with ambiguity. They endeavored wherever possible to deny that philosophers, especially the ancient Greeks, held an authority above that of the legislating prophets from their own religious tradition. Admitting that the philosophers possessed an admirable skill with, and even mastery of, mathematics, physics, and logic, they had, according to these Ismaili authors, discovered almost nothing that they had not ultimately taken from a prophetic source. Ismaili rejection, however, applied less to the content of philosophy than to the contributions claimed for specific individual thinkers. For them, the philosophers, on their own

account, offered nothing but personal speculations that led them to mere opinions, most often in contradiction to each other. What might be true in philosophy had depended instead on the guidance supplied by the divinely inspired prophets; without it the works of the philosophers, though in themselves frequently brilliant and profound, yielded a result that lacked validity and true importance.

Thus an Ismaili writer like al-Sijistānī could castigate the Abbasids for having squandered the treasury of the Muslim nation in paying to have the works of “agnostic materialist Greek” philosophers rendered into Arabic.²⁶ Abū ‘Alī (a.k.a. Ḥamdān Qarmāṭ), the head of the *da‘wa* until his death in 933, composed a special work to refute the “agnostic philosophers.”²⁷ Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī included in his *Signs of Prophecy* (*A‘lām al-nubuwwa*)²⁸ a complete summary of the doxology we know as the *Pseudo-Ammonius* precisely to prove that the ancient philosophers were hopelessly confused about the truth. His principal goal in that treatise was to refute the claims made by Abū Bakr al-Rāzī on behalf of philosophy—Abū Ḥātim like several other Ismaili writers was particularly incensed at Abū Bakr—and the names of individual Greeks and the opinions ascribed to them that he found listed in the *Pseudo-Ammonius* were for him ample evidence that philosophers on their own could have never attained the truth in the absence of prophetic guidance. Ibn al-Haytham states this point as well: that the Greeks obviously benefited from sources of knowledge that ultimately had come to them from the prophets.²⁹

But it should be noted that this attitude does not preclude acceptance of doctrines that derived from Greek works or the translations thereof. The Ismailis might insist that Greek teachings had a prophetic origin in some distant past but the particulars of their arguments—its form and language—owed more to the history of philosophy and to its reception in the Islamic world. This means only that the Greeks are not to be given credit for them, or more precisely, for what in them is later judged by the Ismaili *da‘wa* to be valid and true. Our Ismaili authors may thus range freely through the ancient legacy and pick and chose what appeals to them, without needing to cite the Greeks as authorities.

²⁶ AL-SIJISTĀNĪ A. Y. (2000), *Kitāb al-Ifitikhār*, ed. POONAWALA I., Beirut, p. 175.

²⁷ IDRĪS ‘I. (1985), *‘Uyūn al-akhbār*, in AL-YA‘LĀWĪ M. (ed.), *Ta’rikh al-khulafā’ al-fāṭimiyyin bi-al-Maghrib: ‘al-qism al-khāṣṣ min Kitāb ‘Uyūn al-akhbār’*, Beirut, p. 237.

²⁸ AL-RAZĪ A. Ḥ. (1977), *A‘lām al-nubuwwa*, ed. AL-SAWĪ Ṣ. and A‘WANĪ Gh., Tehran, p. 125-132 and 152-159.

²⁹ MADELUNG, WALKER, *The Advent of the Fatimids*, p. 137 sqq. (English), p. 87 sqq. (Arabic).

X

ABŪ TAMMĀM AND HIS *KITĀB AL-SHAJARA*: A NEW ISMAILI TREATISE FROM TENTH- CENTURY KHURASAN

In 1965 Arif Tamir, a Syrian Ismaili scholar of no small accomplishment in terms of works written and edited, published in Beirut a text called *Kitāb al-Īdāh*, which he claimed was the work of Abū Firās Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maynaqī—a prominent authority in the Syrian Ismaili community during the first half of the sixteenth century. This new addition to the body of available Ismaili materials proved to contain important examples of sophisticated, quasi-scientific intellectual doctrines and, beyond that, citations of other authors and texts not available elsewhere. The trouble was that this work, however valuable, gave almost no evidence of having been written in Syria, and especially not in the era of Abū Firās.

Although Abū Firās's father came originally from Daylam, the son was born in Syria in 859/1455 and grew up in the mountain fortresses that belonged to the Ismailis of that region, such as Maṣyāf and Qadmūs and most particularly Maynaqa, where he spent the greater part of his life until he died, having become the chief *dā'ī*, in either 937/1530 or 947/1540–1.¹ Thus, there could be little question but that a treatise by him—especially one as extensive and learned as the *Īdāh*—indicated not only Abū Firās's acquisition of scientific and philosophical knowledge that put him in the same league as the major figures from much earlier (such as the 4th/10th century giants Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, Muḥammad al-Nasafī, and Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī) but, as well, a brilliant continuity in the scholarly traditions of this community. In his enthusiasm for Abū Firās's treatise, Tamir added to this

I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the important assistance of both Abbas Hamdani and Everett Rowson in various aspects of this investigation. I must also thank Wilferd Madelung for corrections he suggested to an earlier version.

¹See Tamir's introduction and I. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1977), 294–95.

comparison later writers of even greater stature, such al-Kirmānī, an Ismaili writer, and Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī, both of whom were almost certainly not Ismaili. The *Īdāh* was proof that the Ismailis had retained in Syria a strong attachment to their intellectual heritage long after—in fact centuries after—its classical inception and greatest flourishing.²

The Syrian group to which Abū Firās belonged did not follow the same line of imams that eventually produced the Aga Khans. Locally they are known as Jaʿfarī Ismailis. Among them, apparently, a tradition of preserving and copying older texts continues to exist. Rumors of this had led W. Ivanow, perhaps the foremost of the modern scholarly pioneers in the effort to recover and catalog the literature of the Ismailis, to attempt to obtain detailed information about this community's literary holdings. Most intriguing was the possibility that the Syrians, as users of Arabic from the beginning, might have examples of the earliest works, some of which seem to have been lost to the Ṭayyibī Ismailis of Yemen and India, the other and generally most productive source of original texts from the earliest centuries. Non-Ṭayyibī, non-Syrian Ismailis, such as the Nizārīs of Iran and India have no comparable tradition of Arabic scholarship and, accordingly, did not retain examples of the oldest literature. Ivanow in his 1963 *Ismaili Literature: a Bibliographical Survey*, however, noted the difficulty of gaining access to Jaʿfarī-held materials and credits there an unnamed “journalist of Beirut” for providing him a list of what might exist.³

Among the titles he gives, three that have particular importance in regard to the present investigation were grouped under the name “Nakhshabī,” which Ivanow insisted has “obviously nothing to do with the ancient Nakhshabī.” Nakhshabī and Nasafī are the same—Nasafī is simply the Arabized form of the Persian Nakhshabī.⁴ The person Ivanow refers to is the famous philosophical author and *dāʿī*, who was martyred in 332/934 at the Samanid court.⁵ The three works

²Tamir's “Introduction,” section on *qīmat al-kitāb*.

³*Ismaili Literature* (Tehran, 1963), 168–173.

⁴Thus, in almost any place one appears, the other could be substituted without indicating a different person.

⁵On him in general see the entry in Poonawala's *Biobibliography*, 40–42, as well as S. M. Stern, “The Early Ismāʿīlī Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Kurasan and

in question are (no. 795) *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl*, (no. 796) *Kitāb al-Burhān*, and (no. 797) *Kitāb al-Īdāḥ*. The title *al-Maḥṣūl* is the same as that of Muḥammad al-Nasafī's highly influential, seminal treatise, considered by many authorities to be the first work to attempt the philosophical interpretation of Ismaili doctrines.

The presence also of the title *al-Īdāḥ* in Ivanow's list without an attribution to Abū Firās, who is nevertheless represented by other titles, should have caused concern in the case of Tamir's assertion that he was its author. This is especially so in view of the material in the *Īdāḥ*, which hardly fits the sixteenth century. Most important in this regard is its doctrine about the imamate—a doctrine that expresses a concept of the *Qā'im* and his *khulafā'* that is characteristic of the Iranian writers during the 4th/10th century but does not exist during later times.⁶ Taken at face value, the *Īdāḥ* could only have been composed in the 4th/10th century, almost certainly in Khurasan where its author says he is or has been. There are, in addition, a number of other points of reservation, chief being the numerous citations in it of the *Maḥṣūl*, a work by someone the text itself calls only *al-Ḥakīm al-Ṣādiq*.⁷ These citations, however, cannot refer to anyone but the famous al-Nasafī and to his work the *Maḥṣūl*—not as Tamir wanted to insist, to the imam Aḥmad b. 'Abdallāh.⁸ Other material in

Transoxania," BSOAS, 23 (1960): 56–90; reprinted in *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism* (Jerusalem-Leiden, 1983), 189–233. There is a review of his doctrines in chapter three of my *Early Philosophical Shiism* (Cambridge, 1993).

⁶These writers identify Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, grandson of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, as the *Qā'im* who is presently in occultation and who is represented in worldly affairs by a series of *khulafā'* ("caliphs"). On this see Wilferd Madelung's "Das Imamāt in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre," *Der Islam* 37 (1961): 43–135, particularly 101–114 on what he identifies as the Persian School; also Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their history and doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990), 167–168 and 234–246.

For some references of this type in the *Īdāḥ*, see pp. 45–46, 124–125 (note, however, in this instance that the list of imams has been altered to conform to the modern Nizārī doctrine that drops Ḥasan b. 'Alī), 132 (where Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl is correctly regarded as the eighth "successor" (*khalīfa*) of the prophet; 'Alī was not an imam but rather the *waṣī/asās*; he is however enumerated in this context as a "successor"), and 99 (citing the "second seven," i.e., those who follow the *Qā'im*).

⁷Cited in the text at least ten times: pp. 26, 52, 54, 55, 88, 91, 112, 116, 140, and 148.

⁸Among other bits of evidence for this, there is a brief passage on page 117 that also appears in al-Kirmānī's *Riyāḍ*, 225, and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī's *Iṣlāḥ*, 32–34. Both are

the text names the famous physician Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313)⁹ and there are pieces of it that parallel closely the so-called *Pseudo-Ammonius*, an important, pseudo-epigraphical doxography of ancient Greek philosophical opinions which itself has a connection to the work of both Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322) and al-Nasafī.¹⁰

Tamir himself was likely uneasy with his attribution of the *Īdāh* to Abū Firās because, in 1982, he reissued virtually the same material under the title *Shajarat al-yaqīn*, this time stating that its author was the well known, Iraqi, 3rd/9th century, Qarmatian *dāʿī* ‘Abdān (3rd/9th century). Most disturbing about its reappearance in this form is not the highly improbable attribution to ‘Abdān and the early Qarmatians—after all, there are indications that a number of ‘Abdān’s followers wrote books in a period subsequent to his murder in 286 and ascribed them to his authorship.¹¹ The *Shajara/Īdāh* could have been such a work and thus the anachronism of its citations of Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and Muḥammad al-Nasafī could be explained in this way. But what is truly more serious and perplexing is why Tamir himself failed in the second publication to admit the coincidence between one text and the other. The differences between them are for the most part transparent: the *Shajarat al-yaqīn* leaves out phrases, a few references to names that cannot have been known in the 4th/10th century are dropped, and the second version provides, on occasion, an alternative reading. Thus, while it is quite possible that Tamir’s sources supplied him with two works already differing in attribution and in phrasing, comparing the two carefully makes the publication of the *Shajarat al-yaqīn* look more like a shoddy effort to account for numerous doubts arising from the mistaken claim for Abū Firās’s authorship. It might, for example, still have been argued that Abū Firās had reused an older work and that the discovery of the *Shajara* had finally made that clear. Tamir, however, did not do this but rather, through his silence, left the matter hanging. As will be seen, the truth is that both claims about authorship are almost certainly entirely false; neither ‘Abdān

clearly citing al-Nasafī and not an imam. For full references to these two works, see notes 16 and 17 below.

⁹Pp. 54 and 55.

¹⁰On this connection see chapter two of my *Early Philosophical Shiism*, as well as material presented here below.

¹¹Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (Cairo, n.d.), 281; Dodge, Eng. trans. 470.

nor Abū Firās had a hand in writing the *Shajara/Īdāh*. The questions of variation, however, needs to be reconsidered in the light of evidence about the text—its date and its real author—now to be offered.

My own interest in this work grew out of research on the early Ismaili Neoplatonist philosophers. It has long been thought that al-Nasafī and his *Maḥṣūl* hold the keys to understanding how and why Neoplatonism entered the Ismaili intellectual tradition. Written at the beginning of the 4th/10th century, the *Maḥṣūl* seems to have circulated widely both in Ismaili circles and elsewhere. Al-Nasafī earned repute as a philosopher even from those who would have rigorously rejected his Ismaili religious views.¹² During the period of his greatest achievements, just prior to his martyrdom, the Ismailis of Khurasan enjoyed an uncharacteristic era of acceptance at the Samanid court. A prominent Amir, Ḥusayn al-Marwazī, actively promoted their cause, providing support and protection, and possibly a forum for their scholarly teaching, exchanges and research.¹³ Ostensibly, all this came to an end—perhaps merely a hiatus—with the death, first of the Amir, and then with a violent reversal in the sentiment of the ruling house, leading directly to the execution of al-Nasafī and many of his followers in 332/934. For the next thirty years or so, the outstanding Neoplatonizing figure was Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī, who seems to have been active then mainly in Sijistan and not in Khurasan.¹⁴

Unlike al-Sijistānī, whose books and treatises, by and large, found an honored niche in later Ismaili libraries, those of al-Nasafī, though well regarded by some in their day, apparently were not preserved.¹⁵ That places great value on all those citations from them that do remain in other works, notably in Abū Ḥātim’s *al-Iṣlāḥ*, which is a point by point refutation of the *Maḥṣūl*,¹⁶ in Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī’s

¹²Note, for example, how Nizām al-Mulk in his *Siyāsat-nāma* characterizes him as “one of the philosophers of Khurasan and a theologian” (quoted by Stern, “Early Ismā‘īlī Missionaries,” 219).

¹³On him see Stern, *Studies*, 195, 217–219.

¹⁴The most complete account of these events is Stern’s “Early Ismā‘īlī Missionaries,” but see also my *Early Philosophical Shiism*, chapters one and three, which contains some additional information.

¹⁵The one exception is a short treatise called *Kawn al-‘ālam* (ms. Ismaili Institute, London).

¹⁶This work has not been published: ms. Hamdani library. [It has now been published. *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ*, ed. Ḥasan Mīnūchehr and Mehdī Moḥaghegh (Tehran, 1998).]

al-Riyāḍ, which is a critical review of the dispute about the *Maḥṣūl*,¹⁷ and in Abū al-Qāsim al-Bustī's *Kashf asrār al-Bāṭinīya*, which, as a fairly early Zaydi denunciation of Ismaili thought, is one of the most knowledgeable witnesses to 4th/10th century Ismaili writings.¹⁸ As an addition to these, the *Īḍāḥ*, which cites and/or quotes the *Maḥṣūl* in a number of instances, offers a further critical source of information—a fact duly noted by Ismail Poonawala in his monumental 1977 *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature*.

In my study of the references to the *Maḥṣūl* in the *Īḍāḥ*, I was aware continually both of their importance and of the difficulty of separating what belonged to al-Nasafī from what might be the work of the author of the *Īḍāḥ* itself. The exact quotations in question are not clearly marked. Moreover, with the recent publication of an annotated and indexed text of the *Pseudo-Ammonius*, it became relatively easy to investigate parallels with that text as well. Ulrich Rudolph, the editor of the *Pseudo-Ammonius*, had already identified several passages in it that also appear among the later citations of the *Maḥṣūl*, though he did not examine those in the *Īḍāḥ*.¹⁹ Several, however, do occur in the *Īḍāḥ*²⁰ and in such a way as to suggest that, quite possibly, al-Nasafī is the common source.²¹

Still, with the matter of the connection between the *Shajarat al-yaqīn* and the *Īḍāḥ* unresolved, the provenance of this material remained up in the air. I, therefore, began to look for further references in Ismaili literature to the *Shajara*, thinking that it was unlikely that an early text would have escaped the notice of the later, especially Ṭayyibī, authorities who were themselves, in the Yemeni phase of

¹⁷Ed. Tamir (Beirut, 1960).

¹⁸ms. Griffini collection, Ambrosiana, Milan, no. 41. On al-Bustī and this work, see Stern's "Abu'l-Qāsim al-Bustī and his Refutation of Ismā'īlism," *JRAS* (1961): 14–35; reprinted in *Studies*, pp. 299–320. [This work of al-Bustī has now been published in *al-Ismā'īlīyūn: Kashf al-asrār wa naqd al-afkār*, by 'Ādil S. al-'Abd al-Jādir (Kuwayt, 2000).]

¹⁹*Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonios: Ein Beitrag zur neuplatonischen Überlieferung im Islam* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1989).

²⁰Most notably *Īḍāḥ*, 90–91, in relationship to *Pseudo-Ammonius* XI:6–11 (p. 45).

²¹Another tantalizing possibility is the citation of a work called simply *Kitāb al-Mabādī* (p. 79 of the *Īḍāḥ*) which might refer to the *Pseudo-Ammonius* whose only known title is *Fī arā' al-falāsifa bi-khtilāf al-aqāwīl fī'l-mabādī*. Thus *al-Mabādī* may indicate a direct connection between these passages and this enigmatic pseudo-doxology.

their history, assiduous collectors and preservers of the older tradition which they in general, unlike some other Ismailis, continued to uphold.

The one obvious choice was a *Kitāb al-shajara* by a little known *dāʿī* named in the sources as simply Abū Tammām.²² Poonawala put him in “the first half of the sixth/twelfth century or earlier” (my em-phasis). This dating is based on the citation of Abū Tammām and his *Shajara* in a late 6th/12th century Yemeni writer’s *Ḍiyāʾ al-albāb*,²³ which in turn was carefully outlined in detail by al-Majdūʿ in his 12th/18th century catalog of Ismaili literature.²⁴ Poonawala also found a reference for this *Shajara* in a non-Ismaili heresiography by Abū Muḥammad (*Mukhtaṣar fī ʿaqāʾid*) where the title appears as follows: *Kitāb shajarat al-dīn wa burhān al-yaqīn*.²⁵ Whatever the value of the rest of this title, which almost certainly covers two separate works rather than one, it does indicate the probable source of Tamir’s *Shajarat* [...] *al-yaqīn*.

Once this connection was made, verification required checking the quotations from Abū Tammām’s work, as published in al-Majdūʿs *Fahrasat al-kutub* against Tamir’s *Shajara/Īdāḥ*. Evidence for them soon became apparent in the *Shajara/Īdāḥ*, confirming that the origin of Tamir’s text is the *Shajara* of Abū Tammām.²⁶ A subsequent visit to Prof. Abbas Hamdani, a leading authority on Ismaili literature and the owner of one of the best collections of it, soon added further proof. He and I sat together and collated the appropriate passages of the *Shajara/Īdāḥ* with the quotations of it in his copy of ʿAlī b. al-Walīd’s *Ḍiyāʾ*, this time not being limited by the extreme brevity of al-Majdūʿs truncated citations. One important result was the realization that the

²²Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, 132.

²³By ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Walīd al-Anf al-Qurashī (ʿAlī b. al-Walīd). See the entry in Poonawala’s *Biobibliography*, 156–161.

²⁴Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd al-Rasūl, known as al-Majdūʿ, *Fahrasat al-kutub wa al-rasāʾil*, ed. Ali Naqī Munzavi (Tehran, 1936), 229–237.

²⁵Note that this title contains both a *Shajara* and a *Burhān* which as will be apparent are separate titles for two different books by Abū Tammām. This information from the *Mukhtaṣar fī ʿaqāʾid* appears in Poonawala’s entry for Abū Tammām; I have not seen a copy of it.

²⁶The correspondences are as follows: *Ḍiyāʾ* Question 16 (al-Majdūʿ, p. 233) = *Īdāḥ*, 9; *Ḍiyāʾ* 19 (al-Majdūʿ, 233–234) = *Īdāḥ*, 70; *Ḍiyāʾ* 21 (this Question is not found in the published text of al-Majdūʿ which has in its place Question 22) = *Īdāḥ*, 89–90; *Ḍiyāʾ* 22 (al-Majdūʿ, 234) = *Īdāḥ*, 143; and *Ḍiyāʾ* 25 (al-Majdūʿ, 235) = *Īdāḥ*, 27 and 45, respectively.

Īdāh, as one might have suspected, is closest to Abū Tammām, being far more accurate than the *Shajarat al-yaqīn*, which tends to abbreviate and occasionally only to paraphrase.

With this evidence there could be no question about Abū Tammām's authorship of the *Shajara* although it did not, by itself, provide any direct clue as to who he was or exactly when he lived. Nor did it really establish conclusively whether the Syrian text might yet be an independent recension, perhaps a re-use by a later writer such as Abū Firās.

Confident that Tamir's *Shajara* must be identical or nearly so with the *Shajara* of the other references, I inquired with a colleague in London about the *Shajara* that is among the Ismaili manuscripts held by the Ismaili Institute there. He reported, however, that their copy is not the same as Tamir's text but is rather a different work. Fortunately, Prof. Hamdani, who does not himself own a copy of Abū Tammām's treatise, soon located another copy that had once belonged to his grandfather. He had xeroxed copies made both for himself and for me. In his letter²⁷ that came with my copy, he also noted that what he was sending did not seem to be the same book as the one edited by Tamir. He pointed out that there were, however, some similarities in subjects discussed. He did offer the hope that, as the work before us was labeled "Part One" (*al-juz' al-awwal*), there might still be a possibility that the quotations in the *Ḍiyā'*—not found in this manuscript—are from the missing "Second Part." He is of the opinion, however, that such a "Second Part" is not known in the modern Ṭayyibī collections. As to a date, he suggested that the time of the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz would be the earliest because the text mentions the *Ash'arīya*, followers of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, the famous theologian who died in 324/936.

Once all of this material was assembled in one place, further pieces of the puzzle quickly came to light. Indeed, as Hamdani thought, the *Shajara/Īdāh* of Tamir more or less constitutes the second part of Abū Tammām's work. However, using solely the evidence provided by the Hamdani manuscript of Part One and the *Īdāh* as published, without additional information, a complicated picture emerges of the original *Shajara*, though, of course, more so for the latter portion than the first which now has a verifiable manuscript source.

²⁷Dated Sept. 29, 1991.

At this point, it will be useful to provide a general outline of the whole text, in part to show how the various items in it fit together, especially those from the *Īdāh*, but also to indicate the wealth of information it offers about Ismaili thought and doctrine in the time and place this text represents.

Abū Tammām begins by noting the distress of a colleague as to the meaning of a work called *Kitāb al-Rāḥa*. It is in response to this dilemma that he proposes to write the *Shajara* in which he sets out to cover the four (spiritual) categories of beings: namely the angels, the jinn, the *shayāṭīn*, and humans (*ins*).²⁸ His major theme in so doing, according to his own introduction, is the difference between the angels who are proximate (*muqarrabūn*) and the others, and between the *shayāṭīn* (*shayṭāns*, satans) and the *abālisa* (*iblis*es, devils). What follows through to the end of the *Īdāh* carries out this general intention more or less in order.

There is one more mention of the *Kitāb al-Rāḥa*, much later (f. 197r) where it is ascribed simply to the Sage (*al-Ḥakīm*). The *Kitāb al-Rāḥa*, according to this report, confirmed the doctrine that the age of Adam was one of deeds or works (*ʿamal*) and not law (*sharīʿa*). Abū Tammām believes that the discussion in that work is sufficient and need not be repeated or developed in his own. This evidence makes clear that the book in question is not by Abū Tammām. One might conjecture, instead, that it is by al-Nasafī, whose *Maḥṣūl* is cited once in the Hamdani manuscript (f. 175r) and once again in a passage of the *Īdāh* that is confirmed independently by the *Ḍiyāʾ* as belonging to Abū Tammām's text.²⁹ In the later passage, he is called the Excellent Sage (*al-Ḥakīm al-Fāḍil*, not, as in Tamir's version, *al-Ḥakīm al-Ṣādiq*), a title indicating extremely high regard but not, I think, an imam.³⁰

The problem with attributing the *Rāḥa* to al-Nasafī is that it runs against what Abū Ḥatīm reports as the view of this author concerning the age of Adam. As is now well known, the *Iṣlāḥ* credits al-Nasafī with a doctrine stating that Adam had no law (*sharīʿa*) but that he was nevertheless one of the *ulū al-ʿazm*—a Quranic phrase for those who

²⁸This simplified outline appears most particularly in the later part. See *Īdāh*, 148.

²⁹*Īdāh*, 88 (with the title wrongly given as *al-Ḥāṣil wa al-maḥṣūl*). Compare *Shajarat al-yaqīn*, 90. This is the 21st Question in the *Ḍiyāʾ*.

³⁰In view of this evidence it is probably necessary to correct accordingly the text of Tamir throughout.

possess special religious authority. Almost no one else accepted this second premise, although a number of Ismaili scholars supported the first and asserted likewise that Adam had no law. What al-Nasafī can have really meant is not exactly clear from Abū Ḥātim, who is hostile to the whole approach in any case. He thought it obvious that Adam had a law. For him the very concept of esoteric knowledge and the necessity of a special *da'wa* to control access to it required this position in regard to Adam.

Abū Tammām, on the other hand, claims that,

Each of the seven speaker-prophets (*nuṭaqā'*) had command and law according to his rank. As for Adam he had no law (*sharī'a*). That is because he commanded by means of works (*al-a'māl*), even while tolerating their neglect. The definition of work is what may be neglected whereas the definition of law (*sharī'a*) is what cannot be neglected. For that reason they called his era an era of work. ... As for Noah he commanded by works but also did not tolerate their neglect and for this reason the works he ordered his community to engage in are called "laws" (*sharā'i*).³¹

Can al-Nasafī have originally meant something like this? It would be difficult to verify it without the *Maḥṣūl* itself and it may be quite significant that Abū Tammām cites the *Rāḥa* in this instance and not the *Maḥṣūl*. Moreover, Abū Ḥātim seems to imply more or less unequivocally that al-Nasafī recognized neither law nor works in the era of Adam.³²

The first section of Abū Tammām's *Shajara* covers the subject of angels *in potentia* (*bi-l-qūwa*) and angels *in actu* (*bi-l-fi'l*). This relatively short section matches closely a portion of Muḥammad al-Ḥārithī's (d. 584/1188) *Majmū' al-tarbiya* (a section of part two).³³ This Yemen authority was the teacher of the author of the *Ḍiyā'*.³⁴ In al-Ḥārithī's

³¹The key sentences are *ammā Ādam fa-innahu lam yakun lahu sharī'a wa dhālika li-annahu amara bi-l-a'māl wa sawwagha tarkahā. Fa ḥadd al-'amal mā yajūz tarkuhā wa ḥadd al-sharī'a mā lā yajūz tarkuhā*. The corresponding passage of *Idāh*, (p. 7) is faulty. As well it omits the reference to the *Rāḥa*.

³²The discussion of this issue in al-Kirmānī's *Riyāḍ* (pp. 176–212), where it offers Abū Ḥātim's arguments, is not as complete and therefore as accurate as in the original.

³³Ms. Hamdani library.

³⁴On him and his work, see Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, 143–150.

work this passage is labeled *min kalām Nakhshabī* (“from a discourse of Nakhshabī”). Variations between the two manuscript versions—not extensive in any case—could imply that both are copies of a common source, Abū Tammām’s being slightly altered from an original. The source would be the work of Muḥammad al-Nasafī, possibly the *Maḥṣūl*. Or, it can mean that Abū Tammām, if he is actually its author, like the well known al-Nasafī, was himself from Nakhshab (Nasaf). A third possibility is yet another writer named Nakhshabī, which category includes the two sons of the author of the *Maḥṣūl*, themselves prominent *dā’īs* of the following generation.

Next is a brief discussion of the jinn, followed by an elaborate account of the *shayātīn* which runs all together approximately 159 folios and includes an extensive description of the seventy-two damned sects within Islam, each of which owes its status to a leader who is one of the *shayātīn*, meaning the scholars of the *Ahl al-zāhir* (the *fuqahā’ al-qishrīya* in the author’s terminology). This section contains fascinating details about the beliefs and doctrines of each of the seventy-two sects, among them the *Ash’arīya*, as noted by Prof. Hamdani.³⁵ Al-Ash’arī’s *Kitāb al-Luma’* is cited as well. For the purpose of dating, this reference appears to put the *Ash’arīya* among the offshoots of the *Kullābīya*, an affinity that Ibn al-Nadīm recognized in his *Fihrist*, but which is hardly one the later *Ash’arīya* would admit except as a distant point of departure. The only other item for comparable dating is a mention of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nāshī.³⁶ Moreover, the whole list even with its few peculiarities corresponds nearly precisely with that given by al-Khwarazmī in his *Mafātīḥ al-‘ulūm*, a secretaries’

³⁵I am now in the process of preparing a separate study of this heresiographical material. [See now “An Ismā’ili Version of the Heresiography of the Seventy-two Erring Sects” in F. Daftary, ed. *Medieval Ismā’ili History and Thought*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 161–177 [no. 11 in this volume], and *An Ismā’ili Heresiography: The “Bāb al-Shayṭān” from Abū Tammām’s Kitāb al-Shajara*, critical edition of the Arabic text (with Wilferd Madelung) and English translation and introduction (Leiden: Brill, 1998)]. Note here that when this subject comes up again later (*Idāh*, 76), Abū Tammām describes briefly the general content of this earlier section and says, “In like manner are the differences that exist among the literalists according to the explanation we outlined in the first part of this book of ours when discussing the sects.”

³⁶F. 77r. If this is, in fact, a mention of the younger al-Nāshī who died in 366/976 although he was active also at a much earlier period.

manual written at the Samanid court at Bukhara about 370.³⁷ There are one or two slight variations but a significant alteration between the two lists occurs only in Khwarazmī's placement of the Ismailis among the *Ghulāt* and in Abū Tammām's discussion of the *Ithna 'ashariya*. For Abū Tammām the *Ahl al-bāṭin*, i.e., the Ismailis, are the seventy-third sect—the one saved for paradise.

As some of the material for individual sects is almost word for word that given in al-Ash'arī's own earlier heresiography, considering it one of Abū Tammām's sources in this section accords well with the mention of him and his *Luma'*.³⁸ Yet, all in all, because Abū Tammām provides the full reasoning and the details that lie at the base of his arrangement of these sects, and al-Khwarazmī does not, the *Shajara* definitely appears to pre-date the brief, unjustified material in the *Mafātīḥ al-'ulūm*, which would be a copy of it. Of course, this is not an absolutely secure standard but it fits other evidence, some of which will be discussed later, and thus, this preliminary reckoning would show that Abū Tammām's *Shajara* must fall between the time of al-Ash'arī and al-Khwarazmī.

Once his account of the damned sects is complete, Abū Tammām turns to his own group and the importance of *ta'wīl*. This leads to a section on *ta'wīl* (*Bāb al-ta'wīl*) followed by a section on the *abālisa* (commencing with f. 183r). From folio 192r-v of the Hamdani manuscript, the text begins to overlap that of Tamir's *Shajara/Īdāḥ*. The opening portion of the latter was originally a part of the section on the *abālisa*. This concordance, however, continues into the section on humans, ending more or less with line 8, page 43 of the *Īdāḥ*, which equals f. 230 of Abū Tammām. I say more or less because the actual close of "Part One" is line 4 of p. 41 of the *Īdāḥ*.³⁹

The overlapping of the two texts for so many pages is both curious and yet somewhat fortunate. It allows us an opportunity to ex-

³⁷On which see in addition to the Arabic text, the translation of the appropriate chapter by C. E. Bosworth, "Al-Hwarazmī on Theology and Sects, the Chapter on *Kalām* in the *Mafātīḥ al-'ulūm*," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 29 ["Hommage Henri Laoust"] (1977): 88-91.

³⁸[Now, however, see the study that follows. Al-Ash'arī is not, in all likelihood, the source of Abū Tammām, but instead a parallel witness to the same text of Abu'l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka'bī.]

³⁹The one item from the *Ḍiyā'* (Question 18), not found in the *Īdāḥ*, may reflect Abū Tammām, part one, f. 233, but not precisely enough to be certain.

amine carefully the relationship between them and therefore to draw a few tentative conclusions about the material in the later sections where we have no text of Abū Tammām's own version. Were Part Two of his work available, we could more easily dispense with Tamir's text altogether since it now appears full of problems and perhaps hopeless uncertainty. However, without a copy of part two, we are left to sort out the value of Tamir's *Īdāh* and to use it to obtain information about Abū Tammām and his ideas. To begin this task, it is helpful to look closely at the overlapping section.

There are two major points that must be stated at the outset. First, the *Īdāh* is surely garbled and out of order. Passages in these initial pages do not belong there; some are mixed up even in the matching portions.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, because a quotation from Abū Tammām, found in the *Ḍiyā'* (Question 16), corresponds to material in the *Īdāh*, p. 9, although it does not occur in Abū Tammām's part one, we can be certain that the extraneous passages even here come from part two. This does not explain how they came to be inserted at the beginning of the *Īdāh*.

The second point is that there is plenty of evidence that the text in these pages was altered consciously. One example is a reference, p. 2, l. 8, that reads *fīmā taqaddama min kutubinā* ("in material covered in our previous books") instead of *wa qad dhakarnā ta'wīlahu fīmā taqaddama* ("and we have stated its interpretation in what precedes [of this book itself]") as it is in Abū Tammām's original. The subject is a *ta'wīl* that had been given in an earlier part of the book. The compiler of the *Īdāh* apparently did not know that and so altered the reading to avoid raising questions. Another example, p. 6, l. 3 or thereabouts, fails to name the opponents of Muḥammad, 'Alī, and the Qā'im. The real author had no hesitation (apparently) about naming the *Iblīs* of Muḥammad, who was 'Umar, or his *shayṭān*, who was Abū Jahl. Moreover, the *Iblīs* of 'Alī was Zubayr and his *shayṭān* was Ṭalḥa. For the Qā'im, however, he hesitates as to naming his *iblis*, though not his *shayṭān*, who was the Abbasid Caliph Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr. A further problem is what appears to constitute a systematic changing of terms. Abū Tammām consistently uses the word *al-bahā'im* or *al-bahā'im wa al-sibā'* as the generic term for non-human animals. The

⁴⁰For some notes on the extent of the correspondence between the two, see the appendix at the end of this article.

Syrian text has converted this in nearly all instances to *al-ḥayawān al-akhras*. In a final example, p. 22, ll. 16-17, the famous description of paradise as “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor entered the heart of a man,” has been credited to the Gospel of Luke. While it is found in the New Testament, surely Abū Tammām and Abū Firās, and even ‘Abdān knew it as the *ḥadīth qudsī* that it also is.⁴¹

Much more in the text of the *Īdāḥ* is corrupt as it stands though some of this may be simply printing errors or other types of production or transition mistakes.⁴² It would be good to have access to the Syrian manuscripts on which either it or the *Shajarat al-yaqīn* were based.⁴³ Tamir neglects either to describe them or indicate their location.

Who was Abū Tammām and where does his *Shajara* fit in the history of Ismaili literature? Fortunately, the confusion engendered by the publication of his work twice, falsely ascribed, first, to a sixteenth century figure and then, second, to one of the ninth has now been resolved. There is, moreover, yet one more essential piece of evidence to be analyzed. Early in Tamir’s *Shajara*, the author mentions a book of his own called *al-Burhān* (p. 12). In the *Īdāḥ* this attribution to Abū Tammām is not clear at all although the book itself is cited in the parallel passage.⁴⁴ Is, nevertheless, a *Kitāb al-Burhān* another of Abū Tammām’s books?⁴⁵ Although book citations in either of these

⁴¹I Corinthians ii, 9, but see J. Robson, *Ḥadīth Quḍsī*,” *EI*2.

⁴²There is a good illustration of this in a passage from Abū Tammām at f. 211r where he is talking about what becomes of plants that have separated from their roots (and the earth). The original mentions *al-adhān* (oils) as well as perfumes and tasty items. In the *Shajara* of Tamir (23, l. 5) this is *al-adhhān* (minds?) and, in the *Īdāḥ* (21, l. 1, although correct at 23, l. 7), it is *al-azhār* (flowers). *Adhhān* does not fit at all, but *azhār* vaguely does. Another kind of example occurs on p. 27 of the *Īdāḥ*. *Al-Bukhārīya*(?) should read *al-Najjārīya* as given much earlier in the text.

⁴³Such manuscripts would also be helpful in editing part one of Abū Tammām’s *Shajara* the present copy of which contains its own faults.

⁴⁴It appears all together at least eleven times in the *Īdāḥ*: pp. 8, 35, 46, 76, 79, 119, 120, 131, 134, 141, and 145.

⁴⁵It is necessary at this point to recall that Ivanow’s list of Syrian books contained a *Burhān* as well as the information that Abū Muḥammad cited Abū Tammām’s work in such a way as to include both a *Shajara* and a *Burhān*.

A *Burhān* by al-Sijistānī is mentioned by Tamir in his 1956 *Khams rasā’il Ismā’īliya*, p. 17. He reported that it is among the Syrian Ismaili manuscripts in Maṣyāf and that it

Syrian texts should be treated with caution, especially, of course, in the *Īdāh* when the cited item is from a period later than the middle of the tenth century (such as *Rāhat al-'aql*, the *Suhrawardīya*, or the *falāsifa al-islāmīyīn*). In this case, however, the *Ḍiyā' al-albāb* contains explicit confirmation of the connection between Abū Tammām and the *Kitāb al-Burhān*. Twice 'Alī b. al-Walīd remarks on a passage in question in which Abū Tammām refers to his own work, the *Burhān*, although it would appear that it no longer existed in the Yemen by this writer's time.⁴⁶

The references to the *Burhān* in the *Īdāh* indicate that, unlike the *Shajara*, the *Burhān* dealt with matters as they really are, namely, the pure truth unvarnished (*bāṭin*, *ḥaqā'iq*). It and other books of its kind are discourses providing the very essence of truths as they are in themselves. 'Alā dhawāt al-ḥaqā'iq bi-ā'yānihā, is an example of this stipulation in one such citation.⁴⁷ Whereas the *Shajara* takes into account both the revelation (*tanzīl*) and the esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*),⁴⁸ apparently the *Burhān* provided the inner truths (*ḥaqā'iq*) solely, without going into *zāhirī* knowledge. Significantly, it is this

contains as many as 700 pages. Oddly, however, Tamir appears later to have forgotten this claim in regard to al-Sijistānī.

There is, among the many titles cataloged by Poonawala and others, a work called *Kalīla wa ḍimna* which al-Majdū' says is also known as *Kitāb al-Burhān*. Al-Majdū's description of this particular work, although suggestive, does not by itself seem to match what we know of Abū Tammām's book by the same title.

⁴⁶The first occurs in Question 21 in the author of the *Ḍiyā'*'s own answer. He says, "Abū Tammām has mentioned that he discussed them [the 99 names] in the *Shajara* in that manner within the confines of persuasion only and he claims that he discussed them in truth (*bi-l-ḥaqīqa*) in the *Book of Proof* (*Kitāb al-Burhān*).” Later the same author reports (Question 25) that, "He had promised to disclose that and its true reality (*ḥaqīqatahu*) in his *Book of Proof* (*Kitāb al-Burhān*).” But 'Alī b. al-Walīd also indicates in the same section that he himself cannot verify such claims about the *Burhān*, presumably because it is no longer available.

⁴⁷P. 79. This phrase describes, in fact, a class of books that in contrast to two other classes are noteworthy as having no *zāhir* elements. Note that this is what Abū Tammām considers to be the meaning of *burhān*. *Mubārhana* books (p. 79) are those that reveal the *ḥaqā'iq* of things without the *zāhir*. More explicit is the statement on pp. 8–9, which no doubt originally adjoined the discussion on p. 79. Other citations of the *Burhān* can be added. (The books mentioned in this passage of the *Īdāh* on p. 79 should be compared with that of Tamir's *Shajara*. Al-Kirmānī's *Rāhat al-'aql*, for example, does not belong here at all.)

⁴⁸See *Īdāh*, 148.

point that ‘Alī b. al-Walīd confirms most directly concerning the references to the *Burhān* in the *Shajara*.

A *Kitāb al-Burhān* (or *Risālat al-Burhān*), moreover, did occupy a prominent place among Ismaili books at the time of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu‘izz. Both Abū ‘Isā al-Murshid and Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, themselves high ranking religious authorities in the Fatimid state, mention it and indicate in one way or another unease over it—or at a minimum unease at its apparently forthright disclosure of *bāṭinī* knowledge. Clearly both also well knew that some other Ismailis regarded it differently. They acknowledged (as did al-Mu‘izz) that its author was a *dā‘ī* of some note.

Al-Murshid’s statement was first brought to light by S. M. Stern who, however, found no other material to explain it or the context in which it appears.⁴⁹ I think now that the matter is no longer in doubt. The paragraph in question is a discussion of why the ultimate esoteric truth cannot be allowed out to those not absolutely qualified to receive it. Al-Murshid then says,

You have heard before what the *Kitāb al-Burhān* says about someone who failed to guard the truth properly and what happened to him.⁵⁰

Surely, given what we know about the *Burhān* of Abū Tammām, this is a reference to his work.

Al-Nu‘mān’s reference is not quite as clear-cut. In his *Majālis wa al-musāyara*⁵¹, he describes a session held with the caliph al-Mu‘izz on the subject of the meaning of proof (*burhān*). Several of the assembly attempted to provide a valid (to al-Mu‘izz’ liking) account of proof or demonstration. At one point someone brings out a treatise (*risāla*) called *al-Burhān*. Al-Nu‘mān then reports that,

Al-Mu‘izz looked it over and then threw it aside, saying, “By God, what a disaster that someone like the author of this treatise is connected to us and that he claims to be one of our *dā‘īs*. There is in

⁴⁹See his *Studies in Early Ismā‘īlism*, 3–29.

⁵⁰Stern, *Studies*, 15 and 26.

⁵¹Ed. al-Ḥabīb al-Faqī, Ibrāhīm Sabbūh, and Muḥammad al-Ya‘lāwī (Tunis, 1978).

this treatise neither a discussion of nor anything having the real sense of a proof except in the name used for its title.⁵²

As this work of al-Nu‘mān appears to date no later than 351/962-3, this *Burhān* was surely in circulation well before then.⁵³

Without an explicit connecting link, however, between Abū Tammām’s *Burhān* and these other references, which do not indicate the name of the work’s author, the identification of the two must remain tentative. The context is, however, both suggestive and compatible, lending support to the idea that they are the same.⁵⁴ Moreover, the dating of Abū Tammām’s *Shajara*—a later work by him—based, as we saw, on internal information points also to the time of al-Mu‘izz.

Who then was Abū Tammām? The most obvious and most tantalizing choice is the Abū Tammām al-Nīsābūrī of the *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma*.⁵⁵ This obscure philosophical figure was the author of a *Risāla fi’l-ḥudūd*, but, more to the point, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī reported about him that he attempted to combine philosophy and religion⁵⁶ and that he was a Shiite—an affiliation that got him into much trouble. Because this Abū Tammām was once employed at the court of Marḍāwīj al-Jīlī, he must have been active prior to 323. Later, he was present at the learned sessions of the Amir of Sijistan, Abū Ja‘far, along with the much more famous logician, Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī. If he was also the Ismaili author of the *Shajara*, an even later connection—following the death of Muḥammad al-Nasafī—to his native Khurasan would pro-

⁵²*Majālis wa’l-musāyarāt*, 144.

⁵³This date was determined by Stern on the basis of historical events recorded by Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān in this work (*Studies*, 262).

⁵⁴This is less the case with the citation by al-Murshid than that of al-Nu‘mān but even in the latter, al-Mu‘izz’s comment about the book not really being about *burhān*, in the sense of proof as ordinarily conceived, would fit.

⁵⁵This connection was first made, as far as I know, by Everett Rowson in a private suggestion to me. On this al-Nīsābūrī, see the *Muntakhab ṣiwān al-ḥikma*, ed. D. M. Dunlop (The Hague, 1979), 147; Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtā’ wa’l-mu‘ānasa*, ed. A. Amin and A. al-Zayn (Beirut, n.d.), 2: 15–16; Stern, “Missionaries,” *Studies*, 202 and 208; and Joel Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and His Circle* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 16–19 and 22–23.

⁵⁶Note that this problem came up also in a Fatimid context under al-Mu‘izz. See *Majālis*, 408–409, and Stern’s discussion in *Studies*, 265, 284–5. Of course, Abū Tammām was only one of several authors to combine religion and philosophy even in the Ismaili domain.

bably be necessary, although Abū Tammām's own Khurasani residence is based on only a few personal references that might imply that he had lived in the region rather than actually having been dwelling there when he wrote the *Shajara*.⁵⁷

Of the other possibilities—assuming that the Yemeni citation of the opening section of the *Shajara* as being “*min kalām al-Nakhshabī*” points to one and the same work—there are the sons of al-Nasafī, who would have both carried the *nisba* “Nakhshabī.” The better known son is Ḥasan Mas‘ūd al-Nakhshabī, identified by al-Bustī, by Nāṣir-i Khusraw, and by Abū Muḥammad.⁵⁸ This last named witness is the heresiographer who also knew of Abū Tammām and his *Shajara*. He, however, gives Ḥasan Mas‘ūd's *kunya* as Abū al-Ḥusayn.⁵⁹ Moreover, a short treatise by Ḥasan al-Nakhshabī exists⁶⁰ and, while it contains material in some ways similar to that in the *Shajara*, its terminology (such as heavy use of “*al-‘aql al-thānī*”) appears at odds with the known passages from Abū Tammām. Therefore, the other son Dihqān, about whom little else is known, is on the surface the more likely choice.⁶¹ The material from Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *Khwān al-ikhwān* is significant, in this regard, however, not only in apparently citing two sons of al-Nasafī but for another view⁶² belonging to yet another group who maintained that the soul must pass through seven stages, just as the body must complete seven stages in its growth. This is exactly the doctrine of Abū Tammām according to the *Īdāh*. See, for example, p. 61, also pp. 29-30 and 32. The stages of soul are: *nāmiya*, *ḥissīya*, *nāṭiqā*, *‘āqila*, *qudsīya*, *‘ālima*, and *kallāma*. This evidence seems to preclude Dihqān being identical with Abū Tammām.

⁵⁷For example, in Abū Tammām's story of the talking birds, he mentions someone coming to Khurasan from Iraq (*Īdāh*, 56). In his account of the Mubayyiḍa (ff. 88r–92r) he implies that he is personally acquainted with them in Khurasan. He also tends to give examples of the use of Farsi as in f. 15r.

⁵⁸Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, 75 and 531; W. Madelung, “Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī and Metempsychosis,” *Iranica Varia: Papers in Honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater, Textes et Memoires*, vol. 16 (Leiden, Brill, 1990), 132; Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Khwān al-ikhwān*, ed. Y. el-Khachab (Cairo, 1940) 115, and ed. Qawim (Tehran, 1959), 135.

⁵⁹Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, 531.

⁶⁰*Kitāb al-Akwār wa al-adwār*, ms. Ismaili Institute, London.

⁶¹See Madelung's analysis of the key passages from Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *Khwān al-ikhwān* in his “Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī and Metempsychosis,” 132 and n. 9.

⁶²Khachab, 113; Qawim, 132.

While much of this information yields few hard facts, it does locate Abū Tammām and his work with greater precision than previously possible. One important result is an improvement in our knowledge of what is looming ever larger in the literature of the early Ismailis, namely, the Khurasan school. Al-Bustī clearly speaks of such a school, the *Ahl al-Khurāsān*, and reports strong disagreement between them and some other Ismailis of the time.⁶³ He, moreover, identifies a group of partisans (*aṣḥāb*) of al-Nasafī as continuing this tradition. With the loss of the *Maḥṣūl* and related literature, however, it has heretofore been hard to trace the details of such differences.⁶⁴ By at last identifying one substantial product of that school—one that, unlike the *Maḥṣūl*, survives—we can begin to study the individual doctrines espoused by it.

At this point we realize that al-Nasafī (and perhaps others such as the Amir al-Marwazī) constituted a founding generation in Khurasan. Al-Sijistānī may have been a part of the early group. An important feature of this school was continued loyalty to the thought of al-Nasafī and his *Maḥṣūl*. The founder(s) were survived and followed by, among others, Abū Tammām (al-Nīsābūrī? al-Nakhshabī?) and Ḥasan Mas‘ūd al-Nakhshabī.⁶⁵

Of the works belonging to this school, we know, then, of the *Maḥṣūl*, the *Nuṣra*, the *Kitāb al-rāḥa*, a treatise by al-Nasafī called *Kawn al-‘ālam*,⁶⁶ al-Marwazī’s *Sulwat al-arwāḥ*,⁶⁷ Abū Tammām’s *Burhān* and

⁶³*Kashf asrār al-Bāṭiniyya*, f. 10r–v. At this point it is worth noting an odd reference in the *Īdāḥ* (p. 137) to someone called the “Khurasanian Sage” (*al-Ḥakīm al-khurāsānī*).

A major question in view of al-Bustī’s testimony is whether to include Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī among the *Ahl al-Khurāsān* by this reckoning. Al-Bustī in this same passage appears to describe an intense quarrel within the Khurasani faction between al-Nasafī’s followers and al-Sijistānī.

⁶⁴One such item might include al-Sijistānī’s *al-Nuṣra*, his defense of al-Nasafī’s doctrines against the challenge to them by Abū Ḥātim. That early work of al-Sijistānī is also no longer extant.

⁶⁵There are a few other names in the sources that may belong here.

⁶⁶Ms. Ismaili Institute, London.

⁶⁷Cited and quoted by al-Bustī, *Kashf asrār*, f. 2r–v. On the possible identification of the amir as the author of this treatise, see my *Early Philosophical Shiism*, chapter three.

his *Shajara*,⁶⁸ and Ḥasan Mas'ūd's *Kitāb al-Akwār wa al-adwār*.

As a general impression of this literature, it could be added that it leans pronouncedly toward a quasi-scientific tradition and relies on an almost evolutionary (astrological-alchemical) notion of the relationship between the development of the physical universe and of the human soul. The physical sciences (cosmology, biology, specific properties of things and creatures), thus, become vital to the explanation of and for religious principles. Philosophical Neoplatonism, although without question one element within this outlook, is nevertheless somewhat incidental and almost peripheral to the scientific side. This must be taken simply as a preliminary judgment based solely on impressions of the works listed above or such evidence for them as exists. They and most of the rest of this literature must be sorted and compared carefully with Ismaili writings produced elsewhere before the characteristics of the school of Khurasan can be clearly delineated.⁶⁹ However, the *Shajara* of Abū Tammām is a major source for such an investigation and, however unreliably published, its second part at the moment contains the only readily accessible material of this type.

⁶⁸In addition to their copy of the *Shajara*, the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London owns a copy of an *Urjūza* (no. 162) said to be by Abū Tammām. Both were noted by Poonawala. Through the good offices of the Institute, I was able to obtain copies of both, which however, turn out to be, in all likelihood, later Ṭayyibī summaries or paraphrases—one in prose, the other in poetry—of Abū Tammām's original work.

⁶⁹A preliminary checklist of characteristics might include the following doctrines (among others): spontaneous generation; physical things transformed into higher order things (e.g. iron into gold); Adam had no law; prophetic responsibility undergoes a progressive development; the *qā'im*—Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl—has appeared in one (human) form; he is represented now by the *lawāḥiq* and the *khulafā'*; the *qā'im* as *mahdī* will ultimately appear again in his "pure identity" (*huwiya basīṭa*); the saints (*awliyā'*) then will be able actually to "see" spiritual beings; the universe is divided into bodily beings (*jismānī*), heavenly beings (*jirmānī*), and spiritual beings (*rūḥānī*); after souls depart their physical coverings (*qawālīb*) in the corporeal world, they wait (in *barzakh*) in the heavenly world (in the seven lower heavenly spheres for the punished, the higher two for the saved) until the second blast of the trumpet at which time they move to everlasting paradise (or hell).

Appendix

The following notes give a rough idea of the correspondence in those portions of the texts of the *Īdāh* and of Abū Tammām that overlap, which, in any case, vary seriously in accuracy and exactness:

<i>Īdāh</i>	<i>Abū Tammām</i>
p. 1 – 4	f. 192r – 197
5 – 7.2	200 – 207 (portions)
7.3 – 8	197r – 199
8 (middle) – 11 (middle)	---
11.12 – 13	207r – 209
14 (1st para.)	---
14.13 – 14.17	207r–v
14.18 – 20.6	---
20.7 – 25	209v – 220
26.1 – 26.10	---
26.11 – 27.6	220v – 222v
27.7 – 28 (middle)	(not in Abū Tammām at this point but is quoted in <i>Ḍiyā'</i>)
28 (middle)	221v(some phrases)
30 – 32.12	224 – 227r
32.13 – 38.6?	---
38.7 – 38.18	227r
38.19 – 40.9	233v – end of Part One
42 (1st para.)	---
42 (2nd para.) – 43.8	228 – 230



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XI

An Isma‘ili version of the heresiography of the seventy-two erring sects

IN ISLAMIC theological disputation, the use of heresiography was a standard weapon of both offence and defence. It was widely practised and practically no individual group failed to compose, at one time or another, a catalogue of its enemies and to set out therein a list of each sect's distinguishing (and erring) features. Of the great number of treatises of this kind known to have been written, however, relatively few have survived and, although examples have been available that provide the viewpoints of the Ḥanafis, the Ash‘arīs and the Mu‘tazilīs, for example, and certain types of Shi‘is, no true heresiography was, until recently, known for the Isma‘ilis. However, there is no intrinsic reason why it should not have existed. A major Isma‘ili writer from the early part of the 4th/10th century, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/934), left in his *Kitāb al-ḥijā* a valuable account of words and terms that appear in heresiographical literature.¹ In his explanations and definitions for these terms, he offered what amounts to materials for a more formal heresiography. At the end of the 4th/10th or beginning of the 5th/11th century, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, another highly important Isma‘ili *dā‘ī*, wrote a fairly extensive refutation of various Islamic sects in his *Tanbīh al-hādī wa’l-mustahdī* and that, again, could easily form, in a slightly different context, a heresiography.² Beyond these two examples, other Isma‘ili works contain explicit references to any number of opposing sectarian tendencies which they castigate and reject. In short, Isma‘ili specialists on doctrinal issues were, like Muslim authorities in other groups, fully conversant with the historical elaboration of theological and legal controversies over a complete range of Islamic sectarian developments.

Recently, additional Isma‘ili material has come to light in a hitherto

all but unknown work by an obscure Khurāsānī *dāʿī* named Abū Tammām who flourished during the 4th/10th century. The work is called *Kitāb al-shajara*, and Part One of this treatise turns out to contain a full and formal heresiography of the seventy-two erring sects, much in the standard tradition of Islamic writings on that subject. While an early impression of the material in this new Ismaʿili heresiography already shows it to be of major importance, a full analysis of it is not yet complete. Nevertheless, it is useful now both to announce this discovery and to contribute some tentative observations about its value for the study of Islamic sects and the heresiographical tradition about them.

Abū Tammām, the author of the *Kitāb al-shajara*, remains rather obscure – a fact that reflects lack of information about him in both common historical accounts and in the records of the later Ismaʿili *dāʿwa*. His name appears, for example, in later Ismaʿili works solely in this form without an *ism* or a *nisba*. His Khurāsānī origin is established only from information in his writings which contain references to his being in Khurāsān and to material showing that he was a disciple of the famous Khurāsānī philosopher and *dāʿī*, Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943). Further references prove also that he was the author of another work called *Kitāb al-burhān*.³ The latter treatise was the subject of an adverse judgement by the Fatimid caliph-imam al-Muʿizz (341–365/953–975) and, probably as a consequence, ceased to be preserved by the *dāʿwa*. The little information that does exist thus locates him, in the greatest likelihood, as part of the Khurāsānī school of Ismaʿilism that followed al-Nasafī in the second quarter of the 4th/10th century.⁴

Ironically, Abū Tammām's *Shajara* first appeared in print falsely labelled as a work of a 10th/16th century Syrian Nizārī Ismaʿili *dāʿī*, Abū Firās Shihāb al-Dīn al-Maynaqī,⁵ and then, in a second version, as that of the 3rd/9th century *dāʿī* Abdān.⁶ Those publications, both by ʿĀrif Tāmīr, although largely the same, contain only that portion of Abū Tammām's work which once formed, more or less, Part Two of the *Kitāb al-shajara*. Despite these publications of Tāmīr, we have no manuscripts of this Part Two nor any information about them. On the other hand, Professor Abbas Hamdani, once alerted to the importance of this text, was able to trace and obtain a copy of Part One of the *Kitāb al-shajara* among the manuscript holdings of his family.⁷ His efforts, meanwhile, have convinced him that copies of Part Two are not readily available in the Ismaʿili collections held by the Ṭayyibī Ismaʿilis and that it may not have survived with them at all. It is Part One which offers a largely self-contained heresiography and it can be investigated

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independently of the many, unresolved but peripheral, questions that relate to the rest of Abū Tammām's original *Shajara*.

The book as a whole is roughly organized around an inquiry into the various kinds of beings: angels, *jinn*, *shayṭāns*, *iblis*es, and humans, as each in turn exists, first, as a potential (*bi'l-quwwa*) and, second, as an actuality (*bi'l-fiʿl*). It is the third section on the *shayṭāns* that provided Abū Tammām an opportunity to insert his heresiography.

Having completed his account of the angels and the *jinn*, he launches into the subject of the *shayṭān*. They are, as might be supposed from other Ismaʿili sources, the propagators of the *ẓāhir* (exterior) of scripture and religion without the corresponding *bāṭin* (interior). The *shayṭān*, Abū Tammām says, are the *fuqahāʾ al-qishriyya*, those who cling to the external word, the *qishr* (shell), without comprehending the internal meaning, the *lubb* (kernel).⁸ Lest there be any doubt about his Ismaʿili viewpoint, he specifically cites in this section for the *ahl al-bāṭin* ('Adherents of the Inner Meaning') the well known 'rope of God' which, according to him in this case, runs as follows: *qalam, lawḥ, jadd, fath, khayāl, nāṭiq, asās, imām, ḥujja* and *janāḥ*. This is the standard version of the Ismaʿili hierarchy as expressed in the distinctive, technical language that is common to members of the Persian *daʿwa* in the 4th/10th century.⁹ Next, he mentions several *ḥadīths* concerning dissension in Islam or in other religious communities which has occurred or will occur. Finally, he concludes this thought with the famous *ḥadīth* that claims that the Banū Isrāʾīl were divided after Moses into seventy-one sects, all of which are in Hell except one which is in Paradise; that the community of Jesus divided after him into seventy-two, all in Hell save one in Paradise; and finally that after the Prophet his community will divide into seventy-three sects, seventy-two in Hell and one in Paradise.¹⁰ Moreover, says Abū Tammām,

No doubt exists that for each of these sects there was a chief or a *dāʿī* who called the people to his particular point-of-view and belief. These are the *shayṭān* . . . After the Messenger departed from this world, the *ahl al-ẓāhir* ('Adherents of the External Word') split into seventy-two sects, while the *ahl al-bāṭin* remained as they were, no dissension occurring among them nor animosities and doubt as happened among the *ahl al-ẓāhir*, who curse one another and separate into opposing groups.¹¹

It is at this point that he announces his intention to

delineate these *madbāhib* and *firaq*, *madhhab* by *madhhab*, *firqa* by *firqa* and to explain the beliefs of each of them.¹²

XI

From this point in the *Shajara*, Abū Tammām turns away from the general theme of his book to begin a detailed outline of the distinguishing doctrines of the seventy-two sects, which he proceeds now to discuss with reasonable care and thoroughness. In fact, the next 122 folios (or some 244 pages) of the *Shajara* – with the exception of a few short digressions – are taken up with an account of the erring sects, arranged, as he had stated, sect by sect. Only at the end of this does he return once again to the *abl al-bāṭin* and to the explanation of how this group alone, through the operation of *ta'wīl* (interpretation), which is the cornerstone of their doctrine, allow a reconciliation of the various issues of conflict that have separated those other, diverging Islamic sects, bringing about a single, undifferentiated, enduring truth; one that transcends dissension and contradiction.

Given its overall length and the amount of specific information about each sect, this new heresiography is likely to be of great importance. Moreover, Abū Tammām was far less concerned with refutation than many other Muslim writers of this type of work. Although he is not above expressing disgust at a blatantly unacceptable sectarian doctrine, he generally intends merely to illustrate conscientiously how Muslims who lack proper guidance will inevitably go astray. By holding exclusively to the literal, external teaching of false leaders, people fall into error. His heresiography is a catalogue of such errors. But, by ultimately relying on a grand principle that provides an escape – the ultimate accommodation vouchsafed by interpretative reconciliation – Abū Tammām is able to delineate freely a full account of each sect and its distinguishing features without immediately engaging in partisan rhetoric. Nevertheless, in a few instances, especially at those points where he interjects his own personal observations of sectarian behaviour, as he does with the infamous Mubayyida, Abū Tammām does cross this line to the partisan position one finds in other examples of heresiography. Still, on balance, his effort to understand and explain sectarian differences is admirably thorough and relatively non-partisan.

Unlike any other known work on the sects, Abū Tammām's commences with a division of the whole into three classes according to three different fundamental principles. Each principle groups together exactly twenty-four of the seventy-two sects. These principles are the following: (1) that obedience [to God] is entirely a matter of faith (*al-qawl bi-anna al-tā'a kulluhā min al-īmān*); (2) that the laws are not constitutive of faith (*al-qawl bi-anna al-sharā'i' laysat min al-īmān*); and (3)

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that the imam after the Messenger of God is ʿAlī. However, except for this arrangement in divisions of $24 \times 24 \times 24$, the sect list which he presents divides irregularly into eleven *madhhabs* as follows: the Muʿtazila (six sects), the Khawārij (fourteen sects), the Ḥadīthiyya or *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* (four sects), the Qadariyya or Mujbira (five sects), the Mushabbiha (thirteen sects), the Murjiʿa (six sects), the Zaydiyya (five sects), the Kaysāniyya (four sects), the ʿAbbāsiyya (two sects), the Ghāliya (eight sects), and the Imāmiyya (five sects). Later, he will claim that there cannot be seventy-two without a seventy-third or eleven without a twelfth as if these numbers, including especially the eleven *madhābiḥ*, were necessary and essential to his schema.

For the initial division into twenty-fours, however, there seems to be no logical reason as to why it must be exactly this way, or where such an arrangement might have come from. Moreover, at least in the case of one of the ʿAbbāsiyya sects, the Rāwandīyya, he admits that they believe the imamate to have passed directly from the Prophet to his uncle al-ʿAbbās, not to ʿAlī as stipulated in the general statement of principle.

This raises serious questions about the origin of Abū Tammām's sect list and whether or not it fits his declared purpose. An obvious explanation is that his list was derived from another work, perhaps one that did not share his particular focus and sectarian interests. Further evidence for this conclusion exists in his section on the Mushabbiha where he has inadvertently added a sect that violates the proper numerical order – an order which is otherwise obvious. Abū Tammām simply continues the following entry, as one of his sources must have done, with the original numbering scheme and he thus winds up with two successive sects numbered 'seventh' in that section. He was, moreover, seemingly unaware of this mistake.

Decisive evidence suggesting that Abū Tammām's sect list comes from an outside source is its appearance in virtually identical form in the list provided by al-Khwārazmī in his *Mafātīḥ al-ʿulūm*.¹³ This work, written at the Sāmānid court in Khurāsān around 370/980–981 or slightly earlier, offers an exceedingly brief enumeration of the Islamic sects and provides, in nearly all cases, only a name, a principal from whom the sect stems, and for a few of them a sentence about their doctrine. Abū Tammām, on the other hand, gives extensive entries for each, although he does so for the same list of sects with only a rare, apparently minor, exception.¹⁴ Still, the lists of Abū Tammām and

al-Khwārazmī possess a striking degree of similarity. But they do contain enough small divergences in details to prove that they both were derived from yet another source – a source about which one can, at present, only speculate.

On the other hand, while it is true that the list itself is of unknown provenance, the actual material contained in Abū Tammām's individual entries – material missing in al-Khwārazmī's brief statements – can in many cases be found elsewhere, often in the *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* of Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/ 935–936).¹⁵ Since Abū Tammām included the Ash'ariyya among the sects and mentioned as its founder al-Ash'arī (fol. 64r), even citing al-Ash'arī's work *Kitāb al-luma'*, it would be reasonable to expect this link to indicate the lineage of his heresiography. Even admitting the substantial overlap in the material in both works, closer examination reveals, however, that al-Ash'arī is not Abū Tammām's source. Rather, the individual entries in al-Ash'arī's text that match Abū Tammām's in some respects, are, almost certainly, parallel versions of a common, earlier source. This is confirmed on the basis of comparisons with another known heresiography, the *Ḥūr al-'īm* by Nashwān al-Ḥimyarī (d. 574/1178).¹⁶ Although relatively late, this heresiography is based on much older material. It contains, in several cases, sentences that appear also in the *Shajara*, although not in al-Ash'arī's text even when all three coincide for the same entry in other respects. Since al-Ḥimyarī cites his source, which is the heresiographical treatise of Abū'l-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/931), one may presume that al-Balkhī's work lies behind the heresiography of Abū Tammām, as it certainly does also for that of al-Ash'arī. At any rate, the published portion of al-Balkhī's text – the section on the Mu'tazila¹⁷ – allows an instance for specific textual comparison of the two.

A noteworthy feature of al-Balkhī's account of the Mu'tazila is his statement of what they, as a group, agree upon in general. An almost identical version of the same statement is found at the beginning of Abū Tammām's entry on them. Although there are slight discrepancies between the wording of the two works, there is little doubt that Abū Tammām's section on the Mu'tazila derives from al-Balkhī, including most of the points Abū Tammām enumerates for each of the six individual subsects. But it is also likely that there was an intermediary – not al-Ash'arī – between al-Balkhī and Abū Tammām. This step is necessary to account for the sect list in the *Shajara*, which cannot have been based on al-Balkhī to judge from the arrangement of his Mu'tazila section as a whole. In addition, the division by three general statements

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of principle remains unaccounted for. Perhaps such an intermediary was an earlier Isma'ili authority; one candidate would be Muḥammad al-Nasafī and his work *Kitāb al-maḥṣūl*, which Abū Tammām recommends in the *Shajara*.¹⁸ On the other hand, al-Nasafī, as an Isma'ili, is unlikely to be al-Khwārazmī's source. Another candidate, who might have been available to both Abū Tammām and al-Khwārazmī, is the philosopher Abū Zayd al-Balkhī who is known to have written a work on the sciences called *Kitāb aqṣām al-ʿulūm* which may have been similar to the later *Mafātīḥ al-ʿulūm*.¹⁹ Abū Zayd once worked for the Isma'ili *amīr* al-Marwazī in Khurāsān and was also a good friend of Abū'l-Qāsim al-Balkhī. At one time, he, Muḥammad al-Nasafī, the *amīr* al-Marwazī and quite likely Abū Tammām, were all members of the same circle living in the same city.

Significantly, none of the material in Abū Tammām comes from the earlier *Kitāb al-ẓīna* of his Isma'ili colleague Abū Ḥātim or, for that matter, from Imāmī Shi'i works like the *fīraq* treatises of al-Nawbakhtī and al-Qummī.

Still, the instances where the texts of al-Ḥimyarī, al-Ash'arī, or even al-Balkhī himself, help establish the ultimate source of Abū Tammām for various passages and thus seem to account for such material in the *Shajara*, do not fully explain the whole of what it contains. A number of personal observations exist, for example, that surely belong to Abū Tammām alone. Other, relatively numerous, entries relate to sects that do not appear in the works of either al-Ash'arī or al-Ḥimyarī; many are, in fact, not dealt with in any other *fīraq* treatise (excepting that of al-Khwārazmī). Since al-Balkhī's work is, until now, available only for the portion that covers the Mu'tazila, judgements about the rest of its original contents depend at this time solely on the evidence from al-Ash'arī and al-Ḥimyarī. Accordingly, where there is no material on a given sect in these two works, does an entry for that sect by Abū Tammām nevertheless reflect al-Balkhī as its ultimate source? Or were there yet other sources that Abū Tammām or an intermediary utilized besides al-Balkhī?

Abū Tammām's descriptions of as many as eight sects are, for most purposes, unique in the literature of heresiography. Furthermore, his account of several others stands alone even though the basic facts surrounding these sects were known previously from other sources. In several more cases, his entries, although in part a reflection of other material, provide either additional information, or in some instances, versions of al-Balkhī which are slightly at odds with either al-Ash'arī or

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al-Ḥimyarī. In the absence of al-Balkhī's work, these passages constitute a valuable second or third witness to his original text. All in all, the material that Abū Tammām's heresiography contributes to the study of Islamic sects is more extensive than can readily be summarized here. On this occasion, we can present only a few tentative conclusions and some examples that indicate what may be expected from a full exploration of the new material in the *Shajara*.

In presenting these conclusions and examples, it is useful to group the following remarks into several categories: (A) new versions of al-Balkhī's text; (B) new facts that add to older materials; (C) new accounts of known sects; (D) personal observations that confirm other reports; and (E) descriptions of sects that were previously unknown.

(A) *New versions of al-Balkhī*

Almost all of the entries in the *Shajara* which appear also in one form or another in al-Ash'arī and/or al-Ḥimyarī contain variant readings or phrasing. This is also true in regard to al-Balkhī's text where it exists, as in his introduction to the Mu'tazila. Moreover, although it is often possible to find a part of Abū Tammām's description of a particular sect in al-Ash'arī and the balance in al-Ḥimyarī, not infrequently certain items are missing in both. Thus, for example, in the case of the Bid'iyya (fols. 35v–37r) of the Khawārij, Abū Tammām provides the name of the principal, Yaḥyā b. Aṣṣam, and the fact that they accept only three daily prayers and hold that the tradition requiring five is a fake.²⁰ They also forbid, he reports, eating fish that are not slaughtered.²¹ The rest of the entry can be found in either al-Ash'arī or al-Ḥimyarī. Another example is Abū Tammām's account of the Ḍaḥḥākiyya (fols. 42r–43r) where again he gives the name of the principal and at least one fact about this group not found in the other two works. Al-Ash'arī and al-Ḥimyarī, on the other hand, both mention a doctrine held in a subsect of the Ḍaḥḥākiyya about the non-rights of non-Khārijī women that Abū Tammām did not include. Yet another example of this type is the whole of Abū Tammām's version of the Ḥadīthiyya (fols. 43r–51v) which goes beyond the limited material that exists in the other two.

(B) *New facts that add to older materials*

In a number of cases Abū Tammām's entries provide clarification of items in previous accounts that were formerly either incomplete or

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vague and problematic. One relatively simple example of this type relates to the section on the Zaydiyya and to his discussion of the Dukayniyya²² (fols. 109v–110v) who were, according to him, disciples of al-Faḍl b. al-Dukayn and Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥakam. Abū Tammām explicitly reports of this group that in general they upheld the doctrines of the Mu'tazila. Abū Nu'aym al-Faḍl b. al-Dukayn was a reasonably famous traditionist in Kūfa whose Zaydī tendencies, while not everywhere recognized, were nonetheless clear. That he was the founder of a school was also understood.²³ The second person, Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥakam, on the other hand, must be the same as the Ḥakam al-Mu'tazilī, vaguely cited in this context by others.²⁴ Another curious fact comes from Abū Tammām's entry for the Nā'ūsiyya (fols. 140r–141r), a sect in the Imāmiyya *madhhab*. They maintained, says Abū Tammām, that Ja'far al-Šādiq is not dead but rather is still alive and 'is imprisoned on one of the islands in the Western Sea' – the latter assertion does not appear elsewhere.

(C) New accounts for known sects

The Karrāmiyya offer a good example here. As a sect the Karrāmiyya were more apt to be discussed in later heresiographical literature such as the 5th/11th century *al-Farq bayn al-firaq* of al-Baghdādī. Al-Ash'arī had included them among the Murji'a and had given a brief and rather uninformative description of them.²⁵ Although it is one of the earliest reports available, his report is hardly adequate. By contrast, Abū Tammām provides a fairly extensive entry on the Karrāmiyya (fols. 64v–66v), which he locates among the Mushabbiha (following in numerical order his account of the Ash'ariyya). Although many of the details in this material conform to facts otherwise known about this sect, the overall presentation is not directly related to that of al-Ash'arī and, therefore, possibly not to al-Balkhī. A striking new piece of information that Abū Tammām adds, for example, is that the Karrāmiyya,

maintain that the people will be gathered [at the *hashr*] in Jerusalem and that their chief, Muḥammad b. Karrām, had brought about the relocation to Jerusalem from Khurāsān and its vicinity of more than five thousand families. Seeing that humanity will be gathered in it, having removed there at this time, [the *hashr*] will be easier for them on the day of resurrection since they will be already closer to it.

That Ibn Karrām moved to Jerusalem at the end of his life and that his

followers existed there in large numbers was previously known.²⁶ Abū Tammām now explains why this happened.

Another section of the *Shajara* covers both the Kullābiyya (fols. 62v–63v) and the Ash‘ariyya (fols. 63v–64v), as if the second were closely related to the first. This is an association that is prominent in the discussions of both groups by Ibn al-Nadīm and the Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār – that is, in accounts produced during the 4th/10th century – but it is not so noticeable in the version of their origin offered by the later Ash‘arīs. For the Kullābiyya, on whom there might have been a passage in al-Balkhī, a new piece of information offered by Abū Tammām is that Muḥammad b. Kullāb was a Christian prior to becoming Muslim. The entry on al-Ash‘arī by itself is curious in that it presupposes recognition of him and his following as a sect at a fairly early date, assuming that Abū Tammām did, in fact, belong to the second quarter of the 4th/10th century as appears likely. Does this citation of the Ash‘ariyya also mean that, for example, al-Balkhī too might have included such an entry? Al-Balkhī’s death in 319/931, before that of al-Ash‘arī, certainly suggests otherwise. Thus, the Kullābiyya/Ash‘ariyya material may belong to a slightly later period.

Another example of this type is Abū Tammām’s entry on a sect he calls the Ghamāmiyya (fols. 131v ff.), one of the Ghāliya *madhhab* among the Shi‘a. Al-Khwārazmī knew that this was an unfamiliar sect and he therefore included a line of description about it, namely, that these people believe that God comes down to earth in a cloud (*ghamām*). Abū Tammām, however, goes further and comments that the Ghamāmiyya base this claim on verse II: 210 of the Qur’an which says that God will come to them in the shadow of the clouds (*fi ṣulalīn min al-ghamām*) and, in addition, he quotes several lines of a poem by the Kaysānī poet al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī in censure of them. Now, although the material in Abū Tammām’s account belongs, according to him, to a sect called the Ghamāmiyya, this reference is surely to the same group that al-Ash‘arī lists under the Sabā’iyya and the heresiographer al-Ḥimyarī actually labels ‘al-Saḥābiyya’, *saḥāb* here being a synonym of *ghamām*.²⁷

(D) *Personal observations that confirm other reports*

The Mubayyida, the ‘wearers of white’, are a sect that emerged in the wake of the ‘Abbasid revolution but continued independently of it in various parts of Iran long afterward. For the details of their doctrines and activities, Abū Tammām’s entry in the *Shajara* (fols. 88r–92r) by and

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large duplicates information previously known. However, none of the other reports are as direct and succinct as his, nor – especially important in this case – as personal.

They began, he says, as the followers of al-Muqannaʿ whose name was Hishām b. Ḥakīm al-Marwazī, and they are a part of the Mushabbihā because they believe that God is corporeal. To them each of the messengers was divine; if God wishes to speak to corporeal beings He enters the form of one of them and makes him a messenger-prophet, able to command and prohibit. For this doctrine they cite the Qurʾān (LIII: 3–12). The humans so chosen by God were Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, Abū Muslim and finally al-Muqannaʿ. Between His manifestation in these persons, God has returned to His throne, and now they – the Mubayyiḍa – await a further reappearance.

The Mubayyiḍa, according to Abū Tammām, consider licit among themselves access to each other's women, as well as carrion, blood, the flesh of pigs, wine and other forbidden things; in the scripture these items signify only the names of men whose leadership God has rejected. At this point Abū Tammām interjects his own presence. He says,

I have seen a great number of them and disputed with them. None of them have any knowledge of what constitutes the foundations of their faith. We do not know al-Muqannaʿ nor his times except [only] their [present] deceits.²⁸

They are an exclusive sect, he continues, not mixing with others although living interspersed with Muslims.

(E) New sects

The following entries in the *Shajara* describe sects for which there is apparently no other information (or almost none).²⁹

(i) The Ṣabbāhiyya (fols. 60r–62r). They are a part of the Qadariyya and stem from a certain Abū Ṣabbāḥ b. Maʿmar (or Muʿammar). They claim that the most excellent person after the Prophet was ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Among their other doctrines is a refusal to accept animals slaughtered by the *ahl al-kitāb* or enter into marriage with their womenfolk. These prohibitions commenced, they insist, with the changing of the *qibla*.³⁰

(ii) The B_ṭāniyya (fols. 73r–75r). As the seventh entry among the Mushabbihā, Abū Tammām names first a sect which could be either al-B_ṭāniyya or al-T_ḥāniyya. These people believe that Adam was created in the image of al-Raḥmān (God).

(iii) Aṣḥāb al-Faḍā' (fols. 75r–76r). Next, he describes another sect, also numbered as the seventh of the Mushabbiha, which he calls 'Aṣḥāb al-Faḍā'' (fols. 75r–76r). Al-Khwārazmī, who does not list the former, calls the latter al-Qaḍā'iyya. Abū Tammām is more informative. This group consists of two sections, one stemming from someone named 'Abd Allāh b. Abī 'Abd Allāh al-Taymī and the other from Maṣṣūr b. Bishr al-Umawī. Both say that God is '*al-Faḍā'*'.

(iv) The Minhāliyya (fols. 86v–88v). The Minhāliyya stem from al-Minhāl b. al-Maymūn al-'Ijlī and are one of the Mushabbiha who believe that God is a body with length, breadth, and width and that He is able to change His essence into different, physical forms.

(v) The Ijtihādiyya (fols. 104r–105v). Ijtihādiyya is a name which relates to two different groups: followers respectively of Jaḥḍar b. Muḥammad al-Tamīmī and Muḥammad b. Rammād al-Ḥulaybī (?) al-Mukawwa' (?). They are a part of the Murji'a and they hold basically that every Muslim who exercises *ijtihād*, viz., every *mujtahid*, is correct and sound in belief, regardless of other details, and that all these will enter Paradise without judgement. Some of them even argue that all who affirm the existence (*aysīyya*) of God will attain Paradise even if they do not recognize the Messenger(s).

(vi) The Khashabiyya (fols. 110v–111v). According to the *Shajara*, they were originally those adherents of al-Mukhtār who used wooden weapons but who were known later in Khurāsān by their leader Ṣurkhāb al-Ṭabarī. Strangely, although the affiliation with al-Mukhtār might place them among the Kaysāniyya, Abū Tammām lists them as a subset of the Zaydiyya and goes on to explain that for them 'Alī was not an imam but merely the 'executor' (*wasī*) of the imamate that the Prophet had deposited with him until he could pass it on to al-Ḥasan. Thereafter the imamate will remain among the descendants of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, that is, with the Fatimids. It may reside in any one of them who rises in revolt whether that person is knowledgeable or ignorant, just or tyrannical, and, if two should claim it at the same time, no one should take sides in the struggle between them.

(vii) The Ḥubbiyya (fols. 76v–78v). Perhaps the most curious of the newly revealed sects are these Ḥubbiyya, another of the Mushabbiha. Abū Tammām has little sympathy for them, calling them the partisans of pompous talk and delusions. They were given the name 'Ḥubbiyya' because they maintain that they love God and do not worship Him out of fear of punishment or hope of His reward. God, for them, is a body in the form of a handsome youth. Abū Tammām then relates the

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following report about their secret activities that he says comes to him from Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Nāshi'. The latter had said that a certain 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Mūsā b. Ja'far reported to him the following ceremony from Yahyā b. Mu'adh al-Rāzī who was himself well known among these people. Al-Rāzī said that he was in Iraq where he attended a ceremony in which a beautiful youth, clothed in the finest garments, was seated on a dais that was raised above the floor. Two hooks were placed above him and a curtain was suspended between him and the audience with a keeper to raise and lower the curtain on command. The people in attendance at the house where this ceremony took place then recited songs of desire and plaintive hymns, mentioning the *ḥūr al-'in* and Paradise and what God has prepared in it for the saints. These supplicants continued, with increasing fervour, to ask to be permitted a visit and to savour that youth. When we implored, says al-Rāzī, and begged, he ordered the keeper of the curtain to raise it. We persisted relentlessly until the keeper raised it and when it was raised and he appeared on that throne, we fell on our faces. This continued in this fashion until dawn broke at which time we departed and dispersed.

(viii) The Khalafiyya (fols. 111v–114v). The Khalafiyya are a subset of the Zaydiyya, stemming from a certain Khalaf b. 'Abd al-Ṣamad. They claim that the imam after Zayd was this 'Abd al-Ṣamad, a son of Zayd! Abū Tammām readily admits that the genealogists agree that this man was a client of Zayd, and not his son, and those who make this claim are liars. However, for the Khalafiyya the imamate was passed from 'Abd al-Ṣamad to his own son Khalaf, to the latter's son Muḥammad, and then to Aḥmad, a son of this Muḥammad. Khalaf fled from the Umayyads to the country of the Turks. According to them, there is a descendant of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Khalaf who resides there even now and will rise as the Messiah (*al-Mahdī*). They do not know the names of the imams after Aḥmad, however, but as the knowledge of an imam comes to him by inspiration (*ilhām*), not by acquisition (*iktisāb*), and the imam comprehends all languages, he (and he alone) will be able to explicate the book that Khalaf left behind which he composed in letters of an alphabet unknown to any one else.

The Khalafiyya subscribe to a doctrine of *tawḥīd* which denies that one may describe or characterize God in any way. For example, one may say neither that He is knowing nor that He is *not* knowing (*'ālim wa lā lā 'ālim*). He is not 'powerful' and not *not* 'powerful' (*lā qādir wa lā lā qādir*); He is not a thing and not *not* a thing (*lā shay' wa lā lā shay'*). Such a teaching is almost identical to that of the Ismaʿilis, particularly as taught

by the *dā'i* Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, who was presumably a contemporary of Abū Tammām.

Yet another complex set of doctrines held by these Khalafiyya reflect a form of pentadist (otherwise called in Arabic *al-mukhammisa*) devotion to fives: five primary angels, Mīkhā'il,³¹ Jibrā'il, 'Izrā'il, Mīkā'il and Isrā'īl, for example; and five chosen creatures on earth, namely, Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. They also cite many other examples of fives: five fingers, five pillars of Islam, five senses, five prayer times, five books of scripture, five things leading to salvation and five special months of the year.

With his description of this strange sect, Abū Tammām concludes his account of the Zaydīs by appending a few general remarks on the common characteristics of this *madhhab* as a whole. In this regard, he mentions that the Zaydīs have produced a great number of books on the laws, the *aḥkām* and *fiqh*, among which is the *Kitāb al-mustarshid*, written, reports Abū Tammām, by al-Nāṣir al-'Alawī.³² It is possible that the author of the *Shajara* may himself have been personally familiar with Zaydī writings such as the one he cites here.

(ix) The Ishāqiyya (fols. 117r–118v). This group is a part of the Kaysāniyya that derive from someone named Ishāq (b. 'Amr).³³ They trace the imamate from 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, then to Abū Hāshim 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, then to the son of his brother al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, then to 'Alī the son of al-Ḥusayn (al-Ḥasan),³⁴ who died without issue. Thereupon, the Ishāqiyya broke up into two groups, one reverting to the expectation of the reappearance of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya himself, and a second holding that the imamate would be confined to the progeny of this Muḥammad. The latter group held that upon the death of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, the imamate reverted to the descendants of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya and that it resides at the time with one of them who had fled the Umayyads and 'Abbasids by going to the country of the Turks. They maintain that they know his name and place of residence and that the Messiah (*al-Mahdī*) will come from there, i.e., from the direction of the Turks, and that he will explain the Qur'an in Turkish (*bi'l-Turkiyya*), answering all questions in Turkish with a translator as an intermediary.³⁵ Otherwise, reports Abū Tammām, this group accepts doctrines which conform to those propounded by the Mu'tazila.³⁶

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NOTES

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- 1 This section of the *Kitāb al-zīna* was edited and published by ‘A. S. al-Sāmarrā’ī in his *Al-Ghulw wa’l-firaq al-ghāliya fi’l-haqāra al-Islāmiyya* (Baghdad, 1972), pp. 228–312.
- 2 Ms. Fyzee Collection, Bombay University Library.
- 3 An *urjūza* that both W. Ivanow (*Ismaili Literature*, Tehran, 1963, p. 68) and I. K. Poonawala (*Biobibliography of Ismaʿili Literature*, Malibu, Calif., 1977, p. 132) mention in their catalogues of Ismaʿili works as belonging to Abū Tammām is, most likely, the product of a Ṭayyibī author as, for certain, is the ‘summary’ of the *Shajara* found in Ismaʿili collections. Manuscripts of both exist in the Institute of Ismaili Studies Library in London.
- 4 For a complete presentation of the evidence for these conclusions, see my study ‘Abū Tammām and his *Kitāb al-Shajara*: A New Ismaili Treatise from Tenth-Century Khurasan’, *JAOS*, 114 (1994), pp. 343–352.
- 5 *Kitāb al-idārah*, ed. ‘Ārif Tāmīr (Beirut, 1965).
- 6 *Shajarat al-yaqīn*, ed. ‘Ārif Tāmīr (Beirut, 1982).
- 7 This manuscript – the only one presently known – contains 236 folios of ten lines per page. It was copied in Shawwāl 1310/May 1893, apparently as Part One (*al-juḡʿ al-awwal*) alone. The copyist says: ‘waqaʿa al-farāgh min tansīkh hādha al-kitāb al-musammā bi’l-juḡʿ al-awwal min al-shajara li-Abī Tammām’, implying that as far as he knew the work itself was known as *Part One of the Shajara*. This seems to mean that Part Two had long since become separated from Part One and quite possibly lost. Significantly, al-Majdūʿ in his important 12th/18th century catalogue of Ismaʿili works, *Fihrist al-kutub wa’l-rasāʾil*, ed. ‘A. N. Munzavī (Tehran, 1966), did not refer to such a book directly but only as a series of second hand quotations in another, later text. Hereafter, this work is cited as *al-Shajara*.
- 8 *Al-Shajara*, fol. 13r.
- 9 They are identical, for example, to those employed by Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī.
- 10 *Al-Shajara*, fol. 22v.
- 11 *Ibid.*, fols. 22v–23r.
- 12 Abū Tammām’s use of these two terms is fairly standard although an exact English rendering of both is difficult. A *madhhab* (plural, *madhāhib*) is a broader and more inclusive tendency, perhaps like a ‘school’ but not quite so academic, and a *firqa* (plural, *firaq*) is a splinter grouping, which is, more properly, a ‘sect’. A *madhhab* will most often have divided or splintered into *firqas*.
- 13 Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Khwārazmī, *Mafātīḥ al-ʿulūm* (Cairo, 1923). On this work see, C. E. Bosworth, ‘Al-Hwārazmī on Theology and Sects, the Chapter on *Kalām* in the *Mafātīḥ al-ʿulūm*’, in *Hommage Henri Laoust, Bulletin d’Études Orientales*, 29 (1977); pages 88–91 of this article give an English translation of the key passage that contains al-Khwārazmī’s version of the sect list.
- 14 Although al-Khwārazmī did not make this claim, his list covers exactly seventy-two sects plus the conspicuously added al-Ismāʿīliyya, which he placed at the end of the Ghāliya. In Bosworth’s translation, it appears (p. 91) as if the Mamṭūra are separate whereas, as Abū Tammām makes clear, this is merely a pejorative name of the previously cited al-Wāqifiyya. But he also recognized only seven *madhāhib* and, unlike Abū Tammām,

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- clustered all the Shi'a together as one by enumerating the main divisions as *firq* and the subdivisions as *ashraf* (types).
- 15 Al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb maqālāt al-Islāmiyyin*, ed. H. Ritter (Wiesbaden, 1963).
 - 16 Nashwān b. Sa'īd al-Ḥimyārī, *al-Ḥūr al-'in* (Cairo, 1948).
 - 17 Abu'l-Qāsim al-Balkhī, 'Dhikr al-Mu'tazila', from his *Kitāb al-maqālāt*, in *Faḍl al-i'tizāl wa-tabaqāt al-Mu'tazila*, ed. F. Sayyid (Tunis, 1974), pp. 61–119.
 - 18 *Al-Shajara*, fol. 175r.
 - 19 This possibility was suggested to me by Wilferd Madelung.
 - 20 According to Abū Tammām, the Bid'iyya maintained that the compulsory prayers were three per day. Most later heresiographers report that, for them, it was only two per day – a doctrine quite obviously heretical. Abū Tammām says explicitly that it was three: *al-fajr, al-maghrib*, and *al-atama* and insists that the proof for them is the Qur'an, XI: 114 (And perform the prayer at the two ends of the day and nigh of the night; surely the good deeds will drive away the evil deeds).
 - 21 This fact is substantiated by al-Nāshī' but with a different textual presentation; see J. van Ess, *Frühe mu'tazilitische Häresiographie* (Beirut, 1971), p. 70.
 - 22 It must be observed here, as in several other instances, that the reading of the Hamdani manuscript is corrupt or uncertain and needs to be corrected from other sources, such as those in this instance that give the names of the individuals in question.
 - 23 On this point, see W. Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen* (Berlin, 1965), p. 73.
 - 24 Ibid.
 - 25 Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, p. 141.
 - 26 On the Karrāmiyya in general, about which there are a number of important fairly recent studies, see C. E. Bosworth's article in EI2 and the references given there.
 - 27 Al-Ḥimyārī, *al-Ḥūr*, p. 154, and al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, p. 16.
 - 28 The manuscript reads apparently *hidāqabum*, which I trust is probably *khida' abum*.
 - 29 These all will have been known to a degree from al-Khwārazmī, but in these particular cases, not from another earlier, or in most instances, later source.
 - 30 On these Šabbāhiyya, see now J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra* (Berlin, 1991–), vol. 2, pp. 562–563, and vol. 5, pp. 226–227.
 - 31 This is the chief angel, according to Abū Tammām, but the word is unpointed in the manuscript and, therefore, the reading Mikhā'il when there is yet another angel named Mikā'il, must be a conjecture.
 - 32 A *Kitāb al-mustarshid* or *Kitāb al-mustarshid fi'l-tawhīd* by al-Hādī ila'l-Ḥaqq (d. 298/911) is known; see Madelung, *Der Imam*, pp. 166 ff., and C. van Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'Imāmat Zaidite au Yémen*, tr. J. Ryckmans (Leiden, 1960), pp. 283–287. It is not clear why Abū Tammām attributes this work to al-Nāšir al-'Alawī, since that could mean either al-Nāšir al-Uṭrūsh, al-Hādī's contemporary, or perhaps more likely, Aḥmad al-Nāšir, the son of al-Hādī.
 - 33 The Hamdani manuscript gives only the name Ishāq with a blank space following. I have completed it from information in al-Khwārazmī.
 - 34 The Hamdani Ms. reads in part 'thumma abūhā Hāshim thumma 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya', but the manuscript is certainly garbled at this point. Also, the name 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn is probably an error for 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan.
 - 35 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. M. R. Tajaddud (Tehran, 1971), p. 408, mentions an Ishāq the Turk in his section on the Muslimiyya (Abū Muslimiyya) which may represent

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a garbled response to Abū Tammām's Ishāq. If so, Ibn al-Nadīm conflated into one sect Abū Tammām's Khalafiyya (of the Zaydiyya), the Ishāqiyya, and the supporters of Abū Muslim.

- 36 Since writing this article, I have discovered an important connection between Abū Tammām and Zurqān, a Muʿtazilī heresiographer of a generation prior to al-Balkhī about whom little is known except quotations from his work by later authors, including especially al-Ashʿarī. It appears, therefore, that Abū Tammām drew on at least this one additional source.



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XII

ETERNAL COSMOS AND THE WOMB OF HISTORY: TIME IN EARLY ISMAILI THOUGHT

THE PROBLEM OF TIME

One of the more serious and threatening, yet unsolved, problems in theology is uncertainty about the meaning of time. Clearly, the theologian of an omnipotent and absolute God must reconcile His transcendence with the human worshiper's graphic and personal particularity. To come to terms in the matter of spatial dimension is, moreover, relatively easy when compared with the problem of the temporal dimension. Compounding the woes of the theologian (or perhaps causing them) is the abject poverty of all languages in proper terms for time and aspects of time.¹ In describing time, all theologians resort to the use of an artificial vocabulary – so unfortunate because it makes the communication of already unfamiliar ideas doubly difficult.

Martin Nilsson, years ago, in a perceptive study of primitive time-reckoning² recognized this fact and discovered furthermore that for many societies even the most elemental concern with temporal orientation is either lacking or but weakly developed. There are societies that do not 'keep time', to use a modern expression, at all. Not only are their languages nearly devoid of time words, but it would appear that they have almost no interest in temporality. Nilsson, whose study began as an attempt to explain ancient Greek concepts of time, reports that the most common method of reckoning time involves what he describes as counting *pars pro toto*. One does not count intervals of time, but rather periodically recurring things or events such as suns, moons, sleeps, winters. These events are the instants of a kind of subjective, biological, or natural time. It is the advent of the instant and of the thing which matters, not the exact length of the interval between each one.

This is precisely what is involved in the Koranic doctrine of time. There, time is reduced to a series of liturgical 'instants' which are discontinuously perceived and which must be experienced by two 'witnesses of the instant'. A new moon, for example, on which so many ritual or legal observances depend,

¹ One example is the nearly universal lack of a proper word for the whole twenty-four hour period. The word *Nychthemeron*, which means exactly that, is rare and obscure. The English word 'day', applies, of course, to the hours of sunlight and only by extension to night time.

² Martin P. Nilsson, *Primitive Time-Reckoning: A Study of the Origins and First Development of the Art of Counting Time among the Primitive and Early Cultural Peoples* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1920).

must actually be seen and cannot be calculated from theoretical tables. It is both possible and acceptable for two villages, sometimes only a mountain range apart, to count the days of a month differently. Significantly, among Islamic sects, it is only the Ismailis, whose theory of time and history we will shortly discuss, who allow an astronomical calculation of time.³

The notion of time as the repetition or the periodic recurrence of archetypal events is not, it would seem, so difficult or heavy a burden for theologies built upon it. As Mircea Eliade brilliantly explains in his *Myth of the Eternal Return*, this kind of temporal orientation allows each new moment of time to be a re-creation of the first instant and of the primordial first event, which determined the subsequent now repeated moment.⁴ The function of this kind of time-reckoning is to heighten the subjective meaning of periodic events to the almost total exclusion of objective numeration, to emphasize the similarity of the ritual 'instant' with its prototype, and to thereby annul the effect of change and temporality. The real length of the temporal interval between such events is unimportant. There is no space; only points. Thus, for the Muslim, history is not a 'duration' but a 'galaxy' of instants, all ultimately preparing for the one last, perfect hour (*sā'a*), the moment of judgment.⁵ The timeless transcendence of the Divine easily encompasses this kind of 'history' because it is not truly temporary. It has no duration.

But this kind of time, a time without extension, did give way in many theologies to a more complex concept which involved the notion of a fixed and determined extension or interval of time within timeless eternity. It has become a commonplace to recognize in antiquity two opposing views of this temporal extension of the historical process. One, said to be that of the Greeks, sees the intervals of time as forming a kind of circle in which events tend to repeat themselves. The other, said to have come from the Hebrews, sees historical time as the linear progression of unique, nonrepeatable events.

Momigliano has rightly pointed out in an essay entitled 'Time in Ancient Historiography' that neither of these two notions was exclusively the property of either Greeks or Semites and, in fact, versions of both existed in various levels of both cultures.⁶ Nevertheless, the conflict between the concept of time as a cycle that tends to return upon itself and of time as a line moving from one point in the remote past where it began toward another point totally unlike the first somewhere in the future where it will end is a useful standpoint from which to analyze the semicyclical, semilinear notions of time which are a

³ See Louis Massignon, 'Time in Islamic Thought', *Papers from Eranos Yearbooks*, vol. 3. *Man and Time*, Bollingen series XXX.3 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957), pp. 108-109.

⁴ *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour* (Paris, 1948); Eng. trans. Willard Trask, Bollingen series XLVI (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954).

⁵ Massignon, 'Time in Islamic Thought', p. 108.

⁶ Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Time in Ancient Historiography', *History and Theory*, Beiheft 6, *History and the Concept of Time* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), pp. 1-23.

fundamental part of the dogmas of sects like the Ismailis. Their thinking about time, in fact, probably derives from a combination of both Greek and Semitic sources.

Judging from the persistent reappearance of the ideal of cyclical time in the doctrines of eschatologically oriented religions, one senses that some idea of the periodic repetition or renewal of time was even for them an important necessity. The theory of time, therefore, once possibly weakly developed, later assumes an increasingly complex yet more fundamental role in theology as the notion of what constitutes time and history expands.

In the simplest terms what is added is the idea of limited time, that is, limited in relationship to the idea of an eternity or endless time. Some have referred to this as a kind of 'retarded eternity'.⁷

It is relatively easy to see that God's time is either not time at all, He being free from any thought of sequence, change, and difference, or that divine time is a kind of infinite, limitless time without end or beginning. This latter idea, however, seems to be the same as the former, if one argues that the Absolute encompasses time as a whole, all at once. The notion of eternity and of timelessness may therefore be essential in absolute monotheism. It is an integral element of this kind of divinity. For this reason, time must be thought of as a piece of eternity, if it is possible at all to speak of eternity as having parts.

Here, then, at least tentatively, is the major problem confronting theologians, like those of the Ismaili sect, who believe both in an absolute and eternal God and also in a fixed, semilinear history. They must first explain how things clearly of a temporary nature are related to a God totally unconnected with time. How is it, to put it simply, that the timeless, the eternal, encompasses limited parts, or that time is a part of eternity? Furthermore, after explaining the relationship of time to eternity, they then must give meaning and justification to that part of eternity which constitutes their own history. Unable to argue that each new instant is a new creation because they believe in the continuous duration of temporal process and in the necessity of history for human salvation, the Ismailis were forced to construct an explanation, a theory, of both time and history. For them, time could not be the vague, inaccurate passing of instants; it had to flow from a determined and meaningful past into a future pregnant with expectation.

THE ISMAILI DEFINITION OF TIME AND ETERNITY

Only two major treatises on time survive from classical antiquity: one from Aristotle's *Physics* and the other from Plotinus's *Enneads*.⁸ Although both largely agree in the comparing of time to a circle and in the idea that time has

⁷ Henry Corbin, 'Cyclical Time in Mazdaism and Ismailism', *Papers from Eranos Yearbooks*, vol. 3, *Man and Time*, pp. 144 ff.

⁸ *Physics* IV. 10-14. 217b-224a, and *Enneads* III. vii.

unrestricted perpetuity, there are subtle differences between them. Some of these bear directly on early Ismaili doctrines of time.

Aristotle states clearly that time is the measure or number of motion according to prior and posterior. In this basic definition, he seems to ignore the idea of duration and to number only the instant. Because this definition did not go further, Aristotle opened himself, though somewhat unjustifiably, to two specific and telling criticisms. First, he seems to completely ignore the concept of time as an extension because his definition takes account of only the instant between two unspecified or undefined spaces. Second, it limits time to the measurement of motion only. It thereby raises such serious questions as, for example, whether time can measure the period of a body at rest. Perhaps I should also add here, parenthetically, that for Aristotle things with eternal being are not in time at all.

Both of the weaknesses mentioned were later noted by Plotinus and by many others.⁹ Crescas, for example, in his critique of Aristotle, carefully defines time in a way that explicitly recognizes these two points. He says, 'Time is the measure of the *continuity* of motion or of *rest between two* instants.'¹⁰ Gersonides' definition, somewhat earlier than that of Crescas, is also close to the point. He argued that time 'is the measure of motion as a whole according to the instants which form the boundaries of motion but not according to the instants which only distinguish the prior from the posterior'.¹¹ On the other hand, in fairness to Aristotle, it must be recognized that he had stated that 'that which is bounded by instants appears to be time'. On the question of the relationship of time and motion and time and rest, he likewise admitted that we 'measure motion by time' and also 'time by motion, because they are bounded together'.¹² It is necessary to grasp the difficulties in Aristotle's attempt to define time for it was, in part, his definition and its seeming restriction to a mechanical basis which the Neoplatonists, starting with Plotinus and including some Ismailis, rejected.

Plotinus, in an extremely perceptive analysis of the subject of time and particularly of all theories that held time to be the measure of motion or to have dependence on motion in any way, denied for a variety of reasons, the validity of such connections. For him, time exists independent of motion itself and of the thing in motion. These things share in time but do not define it.

Significantly, his own exploration of this subject began with an attempt to define what is meant by the term eternity. That, he concluded, is 'the life which belongs to that which exists and is in being, all together and full, completely without extension or interval'.¹³ Eternity is the life of that which is not 'continually acquiring being' for it exists whole and complete all at once. There is no

⁹ The most interesting and perceptive discussion of Aristotle's attempt to define time and the problems it caused Arab and Jewish philosophers is to be found in Harry Austryn Wolfson's *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1929 and 1957), pp. 93-98, 283-91, and 633-664. What follows here owes a great deal to Wolfson's brief but complete notes on the philosopher's definitions of time.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 289 and 651 ff.

¹² See the discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 646 ff.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 653.

¹³ *Enneads*. III, vii, 3.

aspect of it of which it can be said that it 'will be'. It is, in fact, identical with Intellect, the second hypostasis of the scheme which he followed and which the Ismaili theologians inherited.

Time, then, belongs to that which is not always the same and about which we can say that it needs a time to come. No matter how perfect in other respects, some things are deficient in time. For Plotinus these things include even those measured by an unlimited time or a time without end. The motions of the spheres, which are perpetual, are nevertheless within time. For him they have temporal extension.¹⁴

In most Neoplatonic systems, including that of the Ismaili theologian al-Sijistānī, discussed later, the eternal must be the origin of the temporal but only in the sense that the former is the 'cause' of the latter. It should be clear that the cosmos is in a state of perpetually 'coming-to-be'. The temporal allotment of the universe as a whole is unlimited.

Turning now to Plotinus's conception of partial time, it is important to see that, for him, time is not the same as 'a certain length of time'. According to him, it is this latter thing which can be measured by motion. Moreover, rather than time measuring motion, it is motion that measures the length of a certain time. Time exists independent of motion and the heavenly circuit only shows time but is not time itself. For him, time is what he calls, after Plato, 'an image of eternity'. It arises as the result of Soul's attempt to grasp the timeless, undifferentiated wholeness of Intellect. Soul, always desiring something not present to it, moves to fulfill such desires. It moves in a continuous sequence in response to the eternal image of Intellect. The life of this movement is time itself. It, therefore, in the words of Plotinus, 'is the life of Soul in a movement of passage from one way of life to another'.¹⁵ Time came into existence simultaneously with the universe when both were generated by this restless activity of Soul.

Plotinus, by insisting that time is an extension belonging to Soul rather than to motion, elevated time well above Aristotle's attempt to limit it to a kind of accident of the latter. In this, he found a large following among later scholars in the Arabic world. Basically, these differences revolved around the question of whether time is an extension or duration measured, in part, by motion, or whether time is only the measure of motion. The eclectic Ikhwān al-Ṣafā give both definitions. 'It is said', they report, 'that time is the number of the repeated movements of the sphere; others say it is an extension counted by the movements of the sphere'.¹⁶ The word employed here for extension, *mudda*, becomes a part of many subsequent theoretical explanations of time. It is employed by Saadia, al-Ghazālī, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, and others. Ibn Sīnā, in contrast, restricts the idea of time to that given by Aristotle's definition.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Enneads*, III, vii, 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, III, vii, 11.

¹⁶ *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā*, vol. 11 (Beirut, 1957), p. 17. Cf. Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique*, pp. 635 and 655, and the commentary by S. M. Stern in *Isaac Israeli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 74-76.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 75-76, and particularly Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique*, pp. 638-640. The

The problem of how to describe eternity and whether it is timeless on the one hand or a form of absolute time on the other (a problem implicitly raised by Plotinus) was to plague those who held time to be independent of and possibly superior to the movement of the spheres. Plotinus clearly separated time and eternity by making the latter timeless. In Islamic theology, the classic case of one who failed to specify this difference was Abū Bakr al-Rāzī. On this subject, he is reported to have said, 'I hold that Time is both an absolute time and a limited time. Absolute time is duration (*mudda*) and perpetuity. It is eternal and it moves ceaselessly without stopping. The limited [form of time] is that which exists through the movement of the spheres and the course of the sun and planets.'¹⁸ In this scheme there appear to be two divisions in time: one measurable and the other immeasurable. With Abū Bakr, however, there is a question of whether his 'absolute time' include not only the Plotinian restless extension of Soul but also all forms of eternity. Significantly, he uses the terms *dahr*, *sarmad*, *qadīm*, and *abad* in reference to it, all of which are normally applied to true eternity.

It was this doctrine (along with others) which drew a host of attackers upon Abū Bakr. In the forefront of his most vociferous opposition stood many of the major early Ismaili theologians. Though they did not agree completely among themselves, they were unanimous in condemning Abū Bakr's doctrine of time.

It is perhaps necessary here to explain the length of this preliminary discussion before arriving at the central concern of this article, namely, early Ismaili doctrines of time. All of the foregoing ideas were necessary as an introduction to Ismaili statements on time. Ismaili theologians were well acquainted with Aristotle's definition of time. They knew of the arguments against it put forth by Plotinus, although it is unlikely that they knew of him by name; instead his ideas came to them from a variety of anonymous or falsely ascribed Neoplatonic sources. In the precious few early Ismaili text that we now possess, the subject of time is treated as if the reader were also fully conversant with the various positions on the question of the meaning of time. References to time in these sources are nearly always brief and incomplete, and they presuppose familiarity with the subject.

The first major Ismaili theologian whose writings are now extant was Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, fellow townsman of Abū Bakr. It was he who left us the clearest exposition of Abū Bakr's theory of time. This, quoted in part above, is contained in Abū Ḥātim's *A'lām al-Nubūwa*, and in it we find the first Ismaili rejection of this theory.

In his own statement of time, Abū Ḥātim unfortunately takes up only a weak defense of Aristotle's position. 'We do not know', he says 'of a reality for

term *mudda*, 'extension', translates the Neoplatonic term *diastyma* used, for example, by Plotinus. In view of Aristotle's failure to mention the concept of extension, it assumes extra importance.

¹⁸ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakariyā al-Rāzī, *Rasā'il Falsafīya*, ed. Paul Kraus (Cairo, 1939), p. 304. This statement is there quoted from Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī's *A'lām al-Nubūwa*.

time other than what we have mentioned in the way of the movements of the sphere and the sun, and of the number of the years, the months, the days, and the hours.’¹⁹ In addition, he explicitly states that time was created along with the world and with the sphere. This is unfortunate because in another work, *Kitāb al-Isḥāḥ*, in an attempt to correct the doctrines of his fellow Ismaili Muḥammad al-Nasafī, he argues that time is the same being as the Intellect. It, the Intellect, the Ibdāt, and Perfection (all technical terms in the Ismaili version of Neoplatonism) are for him one and the same. Soul and Time, then, proceed simultaneously from Intellect according to him.²⁰ But, if this is so, how can he reconcile this ‘perfect’ time with time which he mentioned in his debate with Abū Bakr and which is constituted by the motions of the sphere? Later, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, in his role as an Ismaili compiler and propagandist, explained that ‘time is eternity measured by the movements of the heavens, whose name is day, night, month and year. Eternity is Time not measured, having neither beginning nor end.’²¹

The statements of these two Ismailis certainly agree, and it is difficult to see any real distinction between the ‘absolute time’ of Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and the ‘perfect’ time of Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, or the unmeasured, eternal time of Nāṣir-i Khusraw. Indeed, it is odd that Abū Ḥātim should have clearly placed time (*zamān*) in a position that a more cautious and perhaps more learned theologian might have avoided. The next two major figures in Ismaili doctrinal history took pains to point out his error and to chide him for making time an eternal and equating it with Intellect.²² Significantly, as part of their criticism of him, they both argued that time is constituted only by the motions of the spheres.

After Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, the next statement on time comes from Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī, one of the two critics mentioned above. Al-Sijistānī has left us several chapters on aspects of time in works other than his criticism of Abū Ḥātim’s *Al-Isḥāḥ*. His discussion of the subject not only avoids the error of the two al-Rāzīs, but in some respects returns to the more sober doctrines of Plotinus and the ancient Neoplatonists. Although he argued that time is an accident (*‘arad*)²³ and that it is the measure of motion, in his doctrine of eternity he emphasized its true timelessness.

In a chapter of his *al-Maqālīd* (The Keys), al-Sijistānī goes to some trouble to explain carefully three aspects of eternity (*dahr*). Just as time (*zamān*) has three ‘sides’ (*jihāt*), he says, namely, a past, a living, and an awaited, so too does eternity possess three states (*aḥwāl*). The first is what is with the Mubdi‘ (the Innovator, i.e., God) but there is no way for thought, imagination, speech, or expression to represent this or to understand it. It is called the Azal (Eternity

¹⁹ *Rasā’il Falsafīya*, p. 304.

²⁰ *Kitāb al-Isḥāḥ*, MS, Library of Dr. Abbas Hamdani, f. 111a.

²¹ *Yāmi‘ al-Ḥikmatayn*, ed. Henry Corbin (Tehran: Institut Franco-Iranien, 1953), p. 118.

²² See especially the remarks and notes of Ḥamid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī in his *al-Riyāḍ*, ed. ‘Arif Tāmir (Beirut, Dār al-Thāqafa, 1960), pp. 67, and 98–99.

²³ *al-Maqālīd*, MS, Library of Dr. Abbas Hamdani, p. 102.

Itself). The second state is what Its innovating joins to the First Being (*Ays*). It is *azaliya* or eternity. The third state is what the Intellect, that is, the First Being or the Preceder, emanates upon its effect, or Soul, in order to establish by means of it the conditions of creation, that is, of the creation of the physical world. This is called the *azali* or the eternal. It represents Intellect as overseer of the lower world, and its absence, even for a moment, would mean annihilation. Thus, the eternal is absolutely essential for the existence of the world. The eternal Intellect, which has life, wisdom, and science, must by this overview shine its blessings on this world at every moment. 'Nay,' he adds, it is 'not in every moment but rather in every thousand times a thousand parts of the moment that it casts a thousand times a thousand glances on [the world].' 'Otherwise,' he says 'how could wondrous forms which differ in kind, shape, design and composition generate from the motion of a circle which has no life, no wisdom and no science or from lifeless elements which have no brilliance'?²⁴

Eternity must be appreciated and put in its rightful place. Those who attribute it to the physical world fall into confusion and error. That which has difference in its dimensions and bodily parts or has parts or motions that are in mutual opposition cannot be associated with eternity. It is reserved for Intellect in which the beginning is the same as the end and the middle is the same as the sides and there is no difference in any dimension whatsoever.

Clearly, al-Sijistānī exiles time to a realm below Intellect and recognizes the true timelessness of eternity. In his discussion of the various aspects of eternity, he finds a specific nomenclature appropriate to each feature of the realm of Intellect. The three divisions he mentions probably owe a great deal to proposition 53 of Proclus's *The Elements of Theology*. There, Proclus divides eternity into a participant, the participated, and the unparticipated. The first, he explains, is the eternal thing, the second is its eternity, and third is Eternity in itself.²⁵

Proclus, whose discussion of time and eternity came in part from Plotinus, nevertheless added through clarification several interesting and useful points. He was apparently extremely concerned with explaining how the 'self-constituted', that is, the eternal, can have a temporal history. Accordingly, he recognized a distinction between temporal existence and temporal activity. The idea of the 'self-constituted' excludes the former but not the latter. The human soul, for example, which Proclus and many other Neoplatonists hold to be eternal, can have a temporal activity.²⁶ It is this explanation of an eternal which can have temporal activity that seems to partly bridge the gap between time and eternity and to explain al-Sijistānī's idea of the *azali* which emanates from Intellect on the physical world.

In the long run, however, another proposition in Proclus's discussion of time

²⁴ *al-Maqālid*, *iqḥid* 21, pp. 82–84.

²⁵ Ed. E. R. Dodds, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 50–53 and commentary, pp. 228–229.

²⁶ *Elements of Theology*, props. 45–51. See particularly Dodds's commentary on props. 50 and 51, pp. 226–227.

may be even more useful. Proposition 55 declares: 'Of things which exist in time, some have a perpetual duration, whilst others have a dated existence in a part of time.' Seeking a mean term between the eternal and 'that which comes-to-be in a part of time', he finds something which 'comes-to-be' perpetually. This, unlike the eternal, is 'diffused and unfolded in temporal extension' and is 'composed of parts each of which exists separately in an order of succession'. This then, according to Proclus, is the link between the true eternal and measurable time. It is likewise his explanation of the temporal perpetuity of the cosmos.²⁷

Thus, for Proclus, there are two kinds of time: one perpetual and one temporary. Neither of these seems foreign to the thought of Plotinus and also, it would appear, though this is more difficult to prove, a similar division of time is implied in the writings of al-Sijistānī and other early Ismaili writers. In the *Maqālīd*, there is a special chapter devoted to establishing the identity of what he calls the *daymūmiya* (durative).²⁸ Unfortunately, this term is but poorly defined. His only goal is to prove that it is something other than eternity. He says that it is a characteristic of Soul's activities in the same way that eternity is a characteristic of Intellectual emanations. The latter do not elapse because no period or duration is attached to them. The former, on the other hand, abide only as long as the period (*mudda*) of their function, and two durations may have different magnitudes: one larger and the other smaller. Soul, he notes helpfully, persists in its activity only as long as the period of its desire for what Intellect spreads before it in the way of emanations. But it seems that, though al-Sijistānī avoids admitting it, this process is perpetual. Soul's activities, for example, have perpetual duration but not true eternity.

At this point, it seems sufficiently clear that although we have identified two important aspects of al-Sijistānī's doctrine on time and eternity, and that both are of Neoplatonic provenance, he refuses to admit that either one is time. Unlike the two al-Rāzīs, he holds that eternity is completely timeless, and unlike Plotinus, he seems at first not to classify Soul's activity under time, having called it instead *daymūmiya* (durative). In explaining that time (*zamān*) has no creative function but rather only that of change and transformation, he states clearly that, 'in truth, time is the measure of motions.'²⁹ This seems like an affirmation of Aristotle's idea of time until we realize that, for al-Sijistānī, as for Plotinus before, Soul's activity is motion. Soul's *daymūmiya*, its durative quality, is in time and is a kind of time. It is the 'perpetually coming-to-be' described by Proclus.

In sum, then, al-Sijistānī sees time as a kind of perpetual change and transformation. It is that which partakes of temporal dimensions because it is never temporally complete. Nevertheless, despite the incomplete nature of particular time, the cosmos as a whole is eternal and it is clear that the Ismaili solution to the time-eternity problem is to argue that the individual human's life partakes of this perpetuity.

²⁷ *Elements of Theology*, pp. 52–54, 229–230.

²⁸ *al-Maqālīd*, *iqḥid* 35, pp. 124–127.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, *iqḥid* 41.

Here, we must turn to another aspect of time, for it is in the Ismaili understanding of history that we find the real significance not of cosmic time but of human time. It must be kept in mind that for al-Sijistānī, and Ismaili writers like him, it is Soul that engenders time because it must move until its longings are fulfilled. History then is the record of Soul's quest for this unachieved perfection. Because each human soul is a part of universal Soul, this history is also the history of human achievement.³⁰

Mankind, which was created all at once,³¹ is in the process of seeking the benefits of Intellect in order that the collectivity of human souls may one day rise from temporal activity to intellectual eternity and thereby to salvation. Man is, above all, involved in a historical process; he belongs to a particular situation somewhere in the flow of history. To grasp his own individual role, it is imperative that he knows exactly where he is in time. At this point, one must also reckon with the Ismaili notion of prophecy. Because the prophet is the 'deputy of the Intellect' in the lower world, it is he who causes the appearance there of 'intellectual emanations'.³² As explained by al-Sijistānī, the prophets see ('āyanū) into the world of pure things (*al-'ālam al-basīt*)³³ and 'they rise to that subtle world by means of their pure souls. They take from the spiritually subtle and luminous delights [there] that which they carry to the created world.'³⁴ The prophets and other members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy are charged with conveying the benefits emanating from Intellect to mankind, and therefore each individual man must understand which particular prophet governs his own time for it is from him that these blessings flow.

It is interesting that such a pivotal role in the structure of human ontology should be recognized by the Ismailis as belonging to a whole series of individuals. Here, their concept of history and the importance they accord to it betrays itself. The prophet is a historical being and his function must be repeated in every historical era. 'Each of the prophets', says al-Sijistānī, 'differs in his rule and his law because of his time, his place and the people to whom he is sent.'³⁵ In fact the prophet is called by the Ismailis the 'master of time' (*sāhib al-zamān*) or the 'decoration of time' (*zīnat al-zamān*).³⁶ Time is a function of the appearance of prophets. The Christian era is measured from the time of Jesus; the Islamic era from Muḥammad.

This cycle of great prophets, that is, the lawgiving prophets, began with Adam who had no father and no mother.³⁷ He thus also began human history.

³⁰ See, in general, Paul Walker, 'An Early Ismaili Interpretation of Man, History and Salvation', *Ohio Journal of Religious Studies*, 3 (1975), 29-35.

³¹ al-Sijistānī, for example, ridicules the idea of human generation from a primal pair. Like the cosmos, mankind was created *daf'atan wāḥidatan*. See his *al-Yanābī*, ed. Henry Corbin in *Trilogie Ismaélienne* (Tehran: Institut Franco-Iranien, 1961), text, p. 56.

³² See his *Ithbāt al-Nubūwāt*, ed. 'Arif Tāmīr (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1966), p. 169.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

In the scheme of al-Sijistānī and most early Ismailis, it was Adam who inaugurated what they call the 'period of concealment' (*dawr al-satr*), a time when appearance and reality are essentially different. As this 'concealment' progresses chronologically, argue the Ismailis, the law of the founding prophet suffers from decay and the increasing ignorance of those who adhere to it. Periodically, a new lawgiver must arise and bestow a fresh law on those who will accept it. He begins a new cycle and is accordingly master of the time that follows.

From the era of Adam, time now has moved in such cycles to the era of Muḥammad. For the Ismailis this meant that six great prophets had come: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and finally Muḥammad. He is, as is commonly held by nearly all Muslims, including the Ismailis, the 'seal' of the prophets. The future, however, will see the advent of a new stage of history with the beginning of the era of the Messiah, the *Qā'im* (said by a large number of early writers to be Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il ibn Ja'far al-Ṣādiq). It will be an era without law because, at that time, Truth will be manifest and unconcealed. It is what the Ismailis call 'openness' (*kashf*).

While reading early Ismaili descriptions of the coming of this messianic era, it is hard not to sense their expectation that it is a heralding of the return to paradise and an end to history. Al-Sijistānī gives us a most remarkable analogy of this fact. He compares the body of six great prophets to a human fetus in the womb. As there are six parts, he says, to embryonic growth before birth, so too are there six lawgiving prophets in the stages of human social development before mankind emerges from history.³⁸ Thus, in a sense, this image pictures mankind waiting now in a pregnant universe for the ultimate upheaval which will deliver him from the womb of history.

If the foregoing correctly explains the Ismaili concern for time, it is clear why they could not leave the counting of temporal periods and events to the uncertain observation of a new moon's appearance. For them, each new moment was not the re-creation of the archetypal event, but was a step on the ladder of time leading to salvation and paradise. While the older, more traditional, Islamic conception essentially looks backward to the golden age *in illo tempore*, the Ismailis, at least the early ones, theoretically faced forward to the coming dawn of a new era.

The major difficulty with this Ismaili image of history, that is, their vision of an upward helix of limited time, is that there cannot be a limited series of cycles with beginning and ending in an eternal cosmos or perpetual world, unless such a series is part of a larger repeating pattern. Their upward helix is not truly cyclical and hence cannot be the sole part of an eternity. To reconcile the eternal nature of the universe and the partial temporality of man, they must still recognize that a beginningless run of cycles preceded Adam and that an endless series will follow their Messiah. The logical result of following the Neoplatonic

³⁸ *Ithbāt al-Nubūwāt*, p. 168.

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premises regarding time eventually forced many later Ismailis to admit just this.³⁹ The early writers, however, apparently did not. For them, human history went from Adam to the Messiah and if there was to be more, they found no need to mention it. Having accepted 'history' and the notion of time as an objective duration, they sought valiantly to fit both in the eternal cosmos of their theological predilections. At the same time, they tried to cling to their intimate involvement in the uniqueness of Koranic hierohistory. But the conflict and tension in these mutually irreconcilable visions inevitably surfaced. In the post-Fatimid period, many Ismailis, confronted not only by this problem but also by the not unrelated difficulty of explaining the various cycles of imams, chose a doctrine of an endless series and the ongoing repetition of the Koranic pattern of Adam-initiated cycles. By doing so they unavoidably depreciated history and reduced the temporal urgency of the human situation. A major result was the loss of that vital sense of expectation which was so crucial in the success of the early Ismaili mission.

³⁹ On this development and the doctrines connected with it, see Corbin, 'Cyclical Time in Mazdaism and Ismailism'.

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THE DOCTRINE OF METEMPSYCHOSIS IN ISLAM

Any analysis of doctrines concerning metempsychosis in Islam must begin with the recognition of a fundamental point: for the orthodox Muslim, acceptance of a belief in bodily resurrection, regardless of whatever philosophical or theological problems that might entail, effectively precludes the concept of reincarnation in almost all forms. If soul—that is individual soul—preserves its connection to its particular body, or has this connection reestablished, there can be, accordingly, no possibility of the same soul moving into another body.

This fact tends to restrict the chance of finding proponents of a theory of metempsychosis, or those accused of it, to various groups that deny bodily resurrection. In practice this would implicate the Philosophers, some of the Mu'tazila and parts of the Shī'a, particularly the Ismā'īlīs.¹ In the investigation which follows, it is the attitude of these three which are the most obviously vulnerable and theoretically susceptible, either to a real attachment to the idea of transmigration of souls or, more commonly, to the charge of holding a belief in it.

The subject of the transmigration or reincarnation of souls was frequently brought up and discussed by the medieval Muslim writers on doctrines and heresies. Their perceptions of the issues involved were, in general, astute and well informed, although the *aṣḥāb al-tanāsukh* or *ahl al-tanāsukh*, as the proponents of metempsychosis are called in Arabic, nearly always received a clear and harsh rejection. The strength and vehemence of the polemic against this idea in such literature indicates both that, at least some Muslims of earlier times seem to have believed in it and that, consequently, falling into such

¹And, of course, the various groups of *ghulāt* among which there exists such extreme notions of the divinity of 'Alī that few would accept them as Islamic except in point of origin. However it is with offshoots of radical Shiism, like the Druze and Nusayris, that true religiously grounded ideas of metempsychosis continue to find a place.

error was one of the known paths to heresy. Thus, protecting oneself from it (or charges of it) carried relatively high priority.²

Here it is necessary to distinguish between two unrelated categories of doctrines concerning reincarnation. One bears in Arabic the label *ḥulūl*, indicating a doctrine which holds that the spirit (or soul, *rūḥ*) of God or of a divine nature has transmigrated from the Prophet Muḥammad, first to 'Alī and then to various of his successors (e.g. the Imams, or Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, or Abū Muslim al-Khurasānī, depending on the sectarian proclivities involved in each case). While this set of concepts appear frequently in the general discussions of metempsychosis, they are but rarely confused with the more usual notions understood by the term *tanāsukh*.³

Quite properly most writers saw the idea of the transmigration of souls as a characteristic of Hindu religious thought. In such a system the soul of an individual human being passes at death into the body of another human or that of a lower animal according to the merit earned or sins committed in the life just ended. After cycles of death and rebirth, some souls rise in station to a point where they escape the physical world altogether. Others, however, remain forever drift-

²The literature on this subject is fairly extensive and can be divided into two groups according to the primary interest and intentions of the investigator. Much of it is devoted to the identification of persons or groups accused of holding this belief in the various heresiographies (Nawbakhtī, Baghdādī, Ibn Ḥazm, or Shahrastānī, for example) and to an analysis of their claims. Others have traced this notion from non-Islamic sources (Hindu or Manichean) into what was the unsympathetic or more often outrightly hostile territory of Islam where, of course, it seemed to give rise *ipso facto* to the birth of heresies. See the following: E. Rehatsek, "Doctrines of Metempsychosis and Incarnation Among Nine Heretic Mohammadan Sects," *JBBRAS* 14 (1880), 418-438; Ernest L. Dietrich, "Die Lehre von der Reinkarnation im Islam," *Zeitschrift für religions und geistes Geschichte*, 9 (1957), 129-149; Rainer Freitag, *Seelenwanderung in der islamischen Haresie* (Berlin, 1985); and Heinz Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis: Die extreme Schia und die 'Alawiten* (Zurich, 1982).

The philosophical implications of metempsychosis need not follow the same trends as that of the so-called extremists (*ghulāt*). In this vein there is an interesting article by Guy Monnot called "La Transmigration et l'immortalité," in *Melanges Institut Dominicain d'études orientales du Caire*, 14 (1980), 149-166.

³On *ḥulūl* see L. Massignon and G. C. Anawati, "*Ḥulūl*," *EI2*, III, 570-571. The authors note among other points connected with the use of this term for a special doctrine held by some Islamic group that it also denotes the concept of incarnation as professed by the Christians.

ing from one to another form of corporeal existence.

Preeminent among the various medieval Muslim accounts of Indian doctrines is the monumental study of al-Bīrūnī—a 5th/11th century masterpiece of comparative cultural analysis, *Tahqīq ma lil-hind*⁴. There, significantly, while the author presents a detailed account of Hindu beliefs about metempsychosis, he also quite explicitly assigns it to the ancient Greeks, particularly to Plato. His explanation is both clear and precise:

This was also the opinion of the ancient Greeks; for John Philoponus relates as the view of Plato that the rational souls will be clad in the bodies of animals, and that in this regard he followed the fables of Pythagoras.⁵

The attribution of a belief in metempsychosis to Plato is no mere passing, obscure reference. To the contrary al-Bīrūnī used a substantial portion of this section of his work on India to provide quotations from the key passages of Plato's *Phaedo*, which along with references in his *Timaeus*, *The Republic*, and *Phaedrus*, are our own principal sources of his thoughts on this subject.⁶

Here are the critical sentences of some example from these citations:

[According to Socrates in the book *Phaedo*]: 'The soul that is not pure cannot go to Hades. It quits the body still filled with its nature [i.e. bodily nature], and then migrates into another body, in which it is as it were, deposited and made fast. Therefore, it has no share in the living of the company of the unique, pure, divine essence.'⁷

Al-Bīrūnī also cites from this dialogue Socrates' mention of

⁴Abū Rayhān al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048), *Kitāb fī Tahqīq mā li'l-Hind* or *Al-Bīrūnī's India* (original edition by Edward Sachau [London, 1887], revised and reprinted, Hyderabad, 1958). English translation by Sachau (London, 1888). The material noted here is from al-Bīrūnī's chapters five and six, 38–44; trans. 50–67.

⁵*Tahqīq*, 49; trans. 65.

⁶Plato's own comments on metempsychosis occur as follows: *Phaedo* 81c–82b; *Phaedrus* 248c–249b; *The Republic* 617d–620e; and *Timaeus* 41–42 and 90e–92c.

⁷*Tahqīq*, 43; trans. 57.

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“soiled”, disembodied souls who “circle round the graves and cemeteries...in shadowy forms.” He continues,

Further he [Plato] says: It appears that these are not the souls of the good, but the souls of the wicked, which wander about in these things to make an expiation for the badness of their former kind of rearing. Thus they remain until they are again bound in a body on account of the desire for the bodily shape that has followed them. They will dwell in bodies the character of which is like the character that they had in the world. Whoso, e.g. only cares for eating and drinking will enter the various kinds of asses and wild animals; and he who preferred wrong and oppression will enter the various kinds of wolves, falcons, and hawks.⁸

It is clear, therefore, that for the medieval Muslim world a reasonably complete understanding of the place and importance of the idea of metempsychosis in Plato’s philosophy was not only possible but likely, and the attribution of such doctrines to this highly respected ancient sage was proven and exact.⁹ Other heresiographers and writers of works on sectarian tendencies could be cited. Al-Baghdādī in his book on Muslim sects includes a chapter on the *aṣḥāb al-tanāsukh* in which he repeatedly ascribes this belief to portions of the *falāsifa*, that is the Philosophers, specifically Socrates and Plato. Unfortunately, al-Baghdādī’s detailed analysis of this subject was consigned to a second book which is now lost.¹⁰

Clearly the doctrine of metempsychosis, whatever its popular manifestations in the Islamic world or its easily dismissed association with the Hindu religion, was also recognized as having a serious, philosophical aspect which required more than a casual effort to

⁸*Tahqīq*, 49–50; trans. 65.

⁹The quotations cited by al-Bīrūnī are numerous. In general they are quite accurate in following the Greek original. Since no integral translation of any of Plato’s dialogues can be proven to have existed in Arabic, they have assumed special importance in the investigation of just how this philosopher was understood in the Islamic world. Much of al-Bīrūnī’s material here comes from the *Phaedo*.

¹⁰It was a book entitled *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, according to his own statement in his *Al-Farq bayn al-firaq* (Cairo, n.d.), 272; English trans. by Abraham S. Halkin (Tel Aviv, 1935), 92. References to Socrates and Plato and their role in forming the doctrine of *tanāsukh* occur at 270–272 of the Arabic text.

refute and reject. That the otherwise acceptable Plato proposed such ideas made them that much more dangerous.¹¹

In the Islamic context, philosophers, and those theologians who were close in attitude, faced a variety of special problems connected with the difficulty of avoiding Plato's advocacy of metempsychosis. By refusing to provide for the eventual resurrection of the body, which thereby allows the soul to exist or re-exist in its individual and particular corporeal form, these thinkers raised the prospect of soul becoming a disembodied creature in need of a new existence. Many, if not most, Muslim authorities agree on the eternal survival of the human soul but some hold that its future state is spiritual only and therefore entirely apart from its former body which suffers corruption and dissolution. The obvious questions in this latter case concern the form of the surviving soul and the mode of its new existence.

Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī are the two Islamic philosophers most often viewed as true followers of Plato in one way or another (as separate, for example, from those connected to him through adherence to some variety of Neoplatonism.) Both offer interesting, although radically different, approaches to this problem.

Al-Fārābī, whose Platonism was more political than metaphysical, is hardly guilty of subscribing to metempsychosis. Moreover his attitude to Plato's attachment to it is curious and instructive. He wrote an important treatise on the works of Plato and there outlined the purpose and content of the *Phaedo* in such a way as to deny that it contained exactly those ideas which are abundantly clear in the quotations from the same work given by al-Bīrūnī. Al-Fārābī cleverly avoids the implication that Plato held a doctrine of *tanāsukh* by offering instead an interpretation which accounts for what the text says while refusing to deal with the problem of the afterlife of the soul.

Then he [Plato] investigated...whether man ought or ought not to prefer security and life along with ignorance, a base way of life, and bad actions—whether there is or is not a difference between man's existence and life when leading such a way of life, and his existence

¹¹ Parenthetically, it might be noted that some versions of the history of philosophy which circulated widely among Muslim writers maintains that it was the very teaching of Pythagoras, carried to India by one of his disciples, which became the source for the Indian version of this doctrine about the soul.

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and life, not as a man, but as a beast and worse than a beast. ... Whether it is preferable to lead a beast's way of life and a way of life worse than a beast's way of life, or to die.¹²

Ought he to view death as preferable?

He explained that one ought to prefer death to such a life and that such a life only leads him to one of two conditions: the performance of either bestial activities alone or else activities worse than bestial. For there is no difference between [seeing] a man who possesses the most perfect bestiality and performs the most perfect activities thereof, and assuming that he is dead and transformed into that beast and its shape. Thus there is no difference between a man who acts like a fish, and a fish with the shape like that of a man.¹³

It is quite evident that al-Fārābī has no interest either in Plato's comments on metempsychosis in the *Phaedo* nor even in admitting that they support an interpretation that puts this philosopher among those who uphold it. It is only in al-Fārābī's *Harmonization of the Two Opinions of the Divine Plato and Aristotle*, another work altogether, that there appears a reluctant admission that the *Phaedo* does contain material which indicates the soul's pre-existence and immortality. It is a brief reference to Plato's concept of the soul's "remembering" and little more.¹⁴

At this juncture it is worth pointing out that other Muslim phil-

¹²*Alfarabius de Platonis Philosophia*, ed. Franz Rosenthal and Richard Walzer (London, 1943), 17–18; English trans. by Muhsin Mahdi, *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, revised edition (Ithaca, 1969), 63–64.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Jam' bayna ra'yay al-ḥakīmayn Aflātūn al-ilāhī wa Aristātālīs*, ed. F. Dieterici, *Philosophische Abhandlungen* (Leiden, 1890), 1–34. The discussion in question appears on 19–22. It is worthwhile here to quote again from al-Bīrūnī's *India* (text, 43–44; trans. 57):

Further he [Plato] says: 'If the soul is an independent being, our learning is nothing but remembering that which we had learned previously, because our souls were in some place before they appeared in this human figure. When people see a thing to the use of which they were accustomed in childhood, they are under the influence of this impressionability, and a cymbal, for instance, reminds them of the boy who used to beat it, who they, however, had forgotten. Forgetting is the vanishing of knowledge, and knowing is the soul's remembrance of that which it had learned before it entered the body.'

osophers likewise sidestepped the recognition of Plato's theory here by converting his meaning into something else. Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī, in his version of the history of ancient philosophy, changed the idea of 'remembering' or 'recollecting' to that of 'rousing'. It becomes then an act by which material forms remind a person of universals: by observing, for example, straight lines, one apprehends absolute straightness. For a soul to remember requires that it have existed previously, but in al-ʿĀmirī's scheme no prior knowledge and consequently no prior existence need be supposed.¹⁵

In terms purely of devotion to Plato no Muslim philosopher matches Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, even though his source was simply the *Timaeus* and in all probability not the other dialogues such as the *Phaedo* and *The Republic*.¹⁶ The eternity of the soul is a central feature of his thought, and among the fragments of his philosophical writings that survive there exists material explaining, in semi-mythical language, how the soul descended into the particular and became mired in a physical nature, and how it can eventually win freedom from this state by the acquisition of knowledge.¹⁷ Soul, however, can also become overwhelmed by its tendency to enjoy too much the delights of the flesh. Citing Plato, he says,

...If the soul leaves the body without having acquired these ideas [i.e. philosophy] and without having recognized the true nature of the physical world, but rather still yearning after it and eager to exist therein, it will not leave its present dwelling place but will continue to be linked with some portion of it; it will not cease—

¹⁵A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate: Al-ʿĀmirī's *Kitāb al-amad 'alā l-abad*, ed. and trans. Everett K. Rowson (New Haven, 1988), 116-17, 278-80. Cf 156-59, 310-12. Cf. 156-159, 310-312. Al-ʿĀmirī died in 381/992.

¹⁶Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyā' al-Rāzī (d. 313/925). Most of the extant evidence for his philosophical thought was collected by Paul Kraus and published as *Rasā'il falsafiyya li'l-Rāzī* (Cairo, 1939). On the question of al-Rāzī's devotion to Plato's *Timaeus*, see Kraus's comments on page 139 and those of S. Pines, "Notes sur Abū Bakr Rāzī," *Nouvelles études sur Awḥād al-Zamān Abū-l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī* (Paris, 1955), 60-61.

¹⁷The evidence for this account of the soul derives from the hostile restatement of it by an Ismā'īlī opponent Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322) in his *A'lām al-Nubuwwa*, ed. Sawy (Tehran, 1977). This material was already available in Kraus's *Rasā'il*, 308. See also the study by Lenn Goodman, "Rāzī's Myth of the Fall of Soul: Its Function in His Philosophy" in G. Hourani, ed. *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany, 1975), 25-40.

because of the generation and corruption within the body in which it is lodged—to suffer continual and reduplicated pains, and cares multitudinous and afflicting.¹⁸

Would that this description were more explicit! Does the soul continue to associate with its original body, or does it transmigrate to a new one as Plato and his followers in this area would hold?¹⁹ In one reference in al-Rāzī's *al-Sīra al-falsafīyya*, while commenting on the ethical right and wrong of killing animals, he mentions that their souls which, unlike man's, cannot escape from their bodies, could be rescued accordingly by their slaughter.²⁰ What does he mean? What is the nature of the existence of soul when it finally escapes and how is it related to its previous, particular self? One answer is that it rejoins the undifferentiated soul of the All like a drop of water returning to the sea. Obviously although al-Rāzī was frequently accused of propounding a theory of metempsychosis, an exact and explicit statement of this in his own words is missing except perhaps by implication.

The real *aṣḥāb al-tanāsukh* in Islam, aside from the highly radical

¹⁸ *al-Tibb al-rūḥānī* in *Rasā'il*, ed. Kraus, 30–31; English trans. by A. J. Arberry, *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (London, 1950), 32–33.

¹⁹ It is entirely possible that al-Rāzī was thinking of the passage in Plato's *Timaeus* (42) where he says:

He who lived well during his appointed time was to return and dwell in his native star, and there he would have a blessed and congenial existence. But if he failed in attaining this, at the second birth he would pass into a woman, and if, when in that state of being, he did not desist from evil, he would continually be changed into some brute who resembled him in the evil nature which he had acquired, and would not cease from his toils and transformations until he followed the revolution of the same and the like within him, and overcome by the help of reason the turbulent and irrational mob of later accretions, made up of fire and air and water and earth, and returned to the form of his first and better state. English by B. Jowett in *The Dialogues of Plato*, 2 vols. (New York, n.d.), II, 23.

²⁰ Arabic text in *Rasā'il*, ed. Kraus, 105. This work was originally published by Kraus in "Raziana I" (*Orientalia*, n.s. IV [1935], 300–334), with a French translation. See in particular Kraus's note on page 328 citing another reference to al-Rāzī's doctrine as given by Ibn Ḥazm. The implication is that human souls do not pass into the bodies of animals. Against this is the testimony of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, again cited by Kraus. See pages 174–179 of his edition of the *Rasā'il*. There is an English translation of the *Sīra* by A. J. Arberry available in his *Aspect of Islamic Civilization* (Ann Arbor, 1971), 120–130.

sects, seem to be a few of the early Mu'tazila and in particular several followers or disciples of the early theologian al-Nazzām. Shahrastānī, and most of the other heresiographers, point to a certain Aḥmad ibn Ḥābiṭ (or Ḥā'iṭ or Khābiṭ) and one Faḍl ibn al-Ḥadabī. He reports that these men and others were disciples of al-Nazzām but they studied as well the books of the philosophers and they added to the school of al-Nazzām three innovations: denial of the existence of the atom, denial of the ability of God to increase the pleasure or pain of hell or heaven, and a declaration in favor of metempsychosis.²¹

Their doctrine of metempsychosis can be outlined as follows:

God began the created existence of His subjects as beings mature and sound of intellect in a place that is other than the world in which they are today. He perfected their minds and created in them knowledge and understanding of Him and bestowed His blessings on them. That person who is governed by commandments and prohibitions and who receives the grace of God is the soul that resides in the body and not the body itself which is merely a shell for the soul. The soul is living, knowing and capable. All living beings are of one genus; therefore, all kinds of animals are subject to the imposition of legal burdens, though each according to its form and method of expression. Since God entrusted them with legal obligations in the place where they were first created, they thanked Him for this. Some of them obeyed Him in all that He commanded them to do but some others rebelled altogether. Those who obeyed were confirmed by Him in the abode of blessings; those who rebelled He sent to dwell in the lasting punishment of the fire. Some, however, obeyed Him in part and rebelled in part. These He put in this world and clothed them with a variety of bodies having solid shapes and different forms such as men,

²¹ *al-Milal wa al-niḥal* (Cairo, n. d.); printed with Ibn Ḥazm's *al-Fiṣal fī al-milal wal-ahwā' wal-niḥal*, part I, 91. A similar account of Ibn Ḥābiṭ and his doctrine concerning *tanāsukh* occurs in 'Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī's *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Majīd (Cairo, n.d.), 273–276. This portion of Shahrastānī's work has now been translated into English by A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn as *Muslim Sects and Divisions* (London, 1984), and more importantly, into French with extensive notes and commentary by Daniel Gimaret, *Livre des religions et des sectes*, I Leuven: Peeters/UNESCO, 1986). The material on the Ḥābiṭiyya (or Khābiṭiyya as Gimaret prefers) occurs on 221–227. Halkin has translated al-Baghdādī's *al-Farq* into English (see note 10, above). The section on the followers of the doctrine of metempsychosis, including the account of Ibn Ḥābiṭ, is chapter twelve (pp. 91–98).

animals, beasts, insects, etc. which are afflicted with pleasure and pain, comfort and hardship, wretchedness and distress in proportion to their sins and disobedience in that place where they were first created. The living being which is the soul will not cease reappearing in this world in different shapes and forms as long as its obedience remains mixed with iniquity. The imposition of God's legal charge to His creatures continues until their works become pure obedience and they are restored to the abode of eternal blessings; or perhaps, on the other hand, their rebellion becomes complete and they move on to the everlasting punishment of the fire.

This must be taken as the classical Islamic account of metempsychosis. Ibn Ḥazm, reviewing the same material, says explicitly that Ibn Ḥabīb grounded his thesis in the Qur'anic verse (VI:38): "There is not an animal in the earth, nor flying creature flying on two wings, but they are peoples like unto you." The key phrase is *umam amthālukum*, meaning a "nation like you." For Ibn Ḥabīb this obviously implies that all living beings are of one genus—all interrelated and all subject to the divine rule such that each one may accept or reject the command of God.

Among Shiite theologians there were frequent accusations of belief in metempsychosis either from their non-Shiite opponents or from other Shiite scholars. It is, of course, in several of the off-shoots of the Shiite movement that the most blatant manifestations of this doctrine occur in modern times—the Druze and the Nusayris. In former periods other radicals (*ghulāt*) also accepted some form of *tanāsukh*.²² Nevertheless, generally speaking, Shiite theologians condemn all forms of belief in the transmigration of souls. They frequently single out Abū Bakr al-Rāzī in this regard and compare the doctrine they see in other thinkers with his, damning them by such association. Even before al-Rāzī was famous enough to fit into the standard scheme of rejection, al-Nawbakhtī, one of the most important of the early Imami writers, issued a book entitled *A Refutation of*

²²For examples see Gimaret's notes to Shahrastānī, 448, 454, 511. Shahrastānī finds four unacceptable innovations characteristic of the *Ghulāt*: *al-tashbīh wal-badā' wal-rā'ī'a wal-tanāsukh* (that is anthropomorphism or assimilationism, changing in God's mind, the return [of a Messiah], and transmigration). Gimaret, 508 and note no. 8.

Tanāsukh. It is apparently no longer extant.²³

The constant appearance of charges and counter-charges must be taken as a sign of the inherent difficulty of avoiding all taint of this doctrine. Ibn Babūya (Shaykh Ṣādūq), a 4th/10th Twelver Shiite scholar of major importance, provides a good example. In his work on the creed he makes two related mistakes, apparently innocent of their possible implications. In the first place he repeats a saying of the Prophet which runs as follows:²⁴

[Souls] were the first of created things. This follows from the saying of the Prophet ... 'The first thing which God created out of nothing were the blessed and pure souls and compelled them to affirm His unity. Thereafter He created the rest of creation.'

He also reports a Tradition from Ja'far al-Ṣādiq that,

God instilled friendship among souls in their existence in the world of shadows 2,000 years before the creation of bodies.

Again he cites a prophetic saying:

The souls are like a collection of armed forces; those among them that are acquainted with one another are united, while those who are not are disunited.²⁵

And the Qur'ānic verse VII:172:

And when thy Lord brought forth from the loins of the sons of Adam their progeny and made them testify concerning themselves: 'Am I not your Lord?' And they answered, 'Yes, we testify [to it].'

²³Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shī'a*, ed. H. Ritter (Istanbul, 1931). He discusses the proponents of *tanāsukh* on pages 32–37. The editor provides evidence of the existence of al-Nawbakhtī's *al-Radd 'alā aṣḥāb al-tanāsukh* in his introduction (p. yā' ṭā'), citing there Ibn al-Nadīm and al-Najāshī.

²⁴Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Babawayhī (or Ibn Babūya) al-Qummī, known as Shaykh Ṣādūq (d. 381/991). This passages which follow are taken from A. A. A. Fyzee's English translation of Ibn Babūya's *Risālat al-i'tiqādāt: A Shi'ite Creed* (London, 1947), 48–53.

²⁵Fyzee, *A Shi'ite Creed*, 50.

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Each of these statements was obviously understood by Ibn Babūya as having no implication of *tanāsukh* but if they are read against that account of the pre-existence of souls that is credited to Ibn Hibāt, a dangerous tendency readily appears. Any doctrine which implies the pre-existence of the soul, such as that of Ibn Hibāt which affirms that individual souls confronted God prior to their coming into this world, may also convey a doctrine which sees the bodily period of the soul's existence as only one phase among several.

Further to this he insists in this same place that souls are made for permanence, that they will endure eternally. Here he cites another saying of the Prophet:

You were not created for extinction, but for eternal existence and you will only be transferred from one abode to another. Verily the souls are strangers in the earth and imprisoned in the bodies. And our belief concerning them is that after their separation from the bodies, they survive, some of them in happiness, others in torments....

These statements clearly lean in the direction of Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and almost invite the charge of belief in metempsychosis. In fact Ibn Babūya saved himself only by following this last remark with a declaration that the disembodied souls wait until such time as God "causes them to return to their bodies."

A more learned and cautious Twelver theologian such as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd would see these problems. Al-Mufīd, almost in horror, exclaims that the idea of souls being created 2,000 years before their bodies is based on a weak source. But, he admits, use of the Tradition that supports this notion has already done its damage.

And doubt has entered the minds of the ignorant traditionists among the Shī'a, so that they have imagined that active essences, subject to command and prohibition, were created in particles which were mutually acquainted, intelligent, understanding, and speaking. God afterward created bodies for them and put them into them.²⁶

²⁶Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān al-Ḥārithī al-Baghdādī, or al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, (d. 413/1022), *Kitāb Sharḥ 'aqā'id al-ṣādūq aw Taṣḥīḥ al-i'tiqād*, ed.

This, of course, al-Mufīd does not accept.

If that were so, we would have some knowledge of what we used to be, and when reminded of it would recall it.²⁷

Plato's theory of *anamnesis* or recollection in its application to the proof of the soul's pre-existence is clearly relevant. Al-Mufīd knows this quite well (whether or not he identifies it specifically with Plato). "And the explanation which Abū Ja'far [Ibn Babūya] has given of the meaning of spirit and soul is the very thesis of the partisans of metempsychosis—although he did not know it."²⁸ Furthermore, he continues,

What he said about souls being permanent is unacceptable. ... What he has so fancifully related is really the doctrine of many of the godless philosophers,²⁹ who claim that the soul is not touched by the coming-to-be and corruption, and that it is permanent, whereas only composite bodies vanish and corrupt; and some of the partisans of metempsychosis hold this too, claiming that souls forever repeat their forms and abodes (*hayākil*), are not temporarily produced, and do not perish.³⁰

With the Ismā'īlī Shī'a, whose doctrines were often expressed in a language quite literally derived from that of the philosophers, particularly from various expression of Neoplatonism, the accusation of

Abbasquli S. Wajdi (Tabriz, 1371), 33–34. English trans. by Martin J. McDermott in his *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufīd* (Beirut, 1978), 362–363.

²⁷"Were it not so, a man could be born and raised in Baghdad, stay there twenty years, then move to another city, forget his having been in Baghdad, and not remember anything about it.... No intelligent person would hold this." *Sharḥ 'aqā'id*, 34–35; McDermott trans., 363.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹"*al-falāsifa al-mulḥidūn*".

³⁰*Sharḥ 'aqā'id*, 36–38; McDermott trans., 364. Note further to this discussion the close connection in Shiite thought between the terms *tanāsukh* (*al-arwāḥ*) and *rajj'a*, the latter having connotations of a special kind for the Shī'a who believe in the occultation of the imam and his possible future return (from the dead?). See I. Friedlander "The Heterodoxies of the Shiites in the Presentation of Ibn Ḥazm," *JAOS* 29 (1908), 26–28.

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belief in metempsychosis was even more common. Significantly, the only Muslim writer cited by name in al-Bīrūnī's section on this subject is Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, an Ismā'īlī author of strong Neoplatonic tendencies. Al-Bīrūnī charges him with maintaining in his work entitled *Kashf al-Mahjūb*,

that the species are preserved; that metempsychosis (*tanāsukh*) always proceeds in one and the same species, never crossing its limits and passing to another species.³¹

Given that many of this author's ideas bear the mark of some as yet unidentified Neoplatonic source or sources, this kind of transmigration has special interest. Plotinus had quietly accepted Plato's teaching. In *Ennead* III, 4, 2, he speaks of "Those who have maintained the human level". They are men once more the second around. But others, he admits, become animals, depending on the quality of life they have led: those torpid in grossness and without spirit become mere growing things; those who love song become vocal animals; kings ruling unreasonably but without other vices become eagles; "futile and flighty visionaries ever soaring skyward" become high-flying birds; and the civic minded of less merit become animals of a communal tendency like bees.

In spite of both Plotinus' and Plato's forthright espousal of metempsychosis, not all Neoplatonists accepted the full doctrine as readily as they. Jamblichus wrote a treatise called "That Metempsychosis Does Not Take Place from Men into Reasonless Beasts nor from Reasonless Beasts into Men, but from Beasts into Beasts and from Men into Men."³² If al-Bīrūnī was correct in his attribution of this latter

³¹*Taḥqīq*, 49; trans. 64–65.

³²The whole range of problems connected with this subject as they appeared in later Greek Neoplatonism and in early Christian reaction to this was analyzed by P. Courcelle in an article entitled "Anti-Christian Arguments and Christian Platonism: from Arnobius to St. Ambrose" in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. A. Momigliano (Oxford, 1963). I am indebted to Everett Rowson for calling my attention to this valuable discussion. It must be noted that this evidence for the attitude of Jamblichus indicates a general trend among the later writers away from the doctrine of Plato and Plotinus. This point is clearly made by Prof. Courcelle. The particular reference to Jamblichus is cited on pp. 162–163. The actual word in the title

version of *tanāsukh* to al-Sijistānī, it would be tempting to ascribe the origin of it to Jamblichus or one of the other late classical writers who shared it with him. How it went from them to al-Sijistānī remains for the moment unclear.³³

Unfortunately but characteristically, what survives of al-Sijistānī's work does not support al-Bīrūnī, at least not explicitly. The *Kashf al-Mahjūb* is now lost in its original Arabic version except for a few widely scattered quotations. Instead there exists a Persian paraphrase, which, while showing signs of being quite early (from the time of Nāṣir-i Khusraw or earlier), is obviously a redaction of the book in an edited, and possibly censored, form. In any case, in none of this evidence is the subject of metempsychosis discussed in detail; certainly the view mentioned above is not admitted or even explicitly recognized.³⁴

What does lend credence to al-Bīrūnī's report is a statement by Nāṣir-i Khusraw in his *Zād al-Musāfirīn* openly avowing that al-Sijistānī upheld a doctrine of *tanāsukh*, particularly in the *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, until finally ordered to abandon it by higher Ismā'īlī authorities (here presumably the Imam himself).³⁵

is not "metempsychosis" but "metensomatosis" (= to change bodies) but the distinction is more technical than required in the current context.

³³Ibn Ḥazm (as noted by Paul Kraus in his volume of al-Rāzī's *Rasā'il*, 174–175) divides those who uphold *tanāsukh* into two groups. "One," he says, "believes that souls after their separation from their bodies pass into another body even if it is not of the same species as the one they left. This is the opinion of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥābiṭ [Kraus reads Ḥā'it, see 174, n.], Aḥmad b. Yanūsh, his student, Abū Muslim al-Khurasānī, and Muḥammad b. Zakariyā' al-Rāzī, the physician. It is (also) the opinion of the Qarmatians among the Ismā'īlīs and the Shiite Extremists.... The second group believes that the transmigration of souls cannot go into a species other than that which they left. ... These are among the Dahriyya."

³⁴*Kashf al-mahjūb*, Persian text ed. Henry Corbin (Teheran, 1949). The subject of *tanāsukh* comes up on page 60, but he there rejects it, using much the same tone as appears in his *al-Maqālīd* (see below). Cf. al-Sijistānī's *lithbāt al-nubuwwa*, ed. 'Arif Tāmīr (Beirut, 1966), 88, where he classifies the "Tanāsukhiyya" as one *madhhab* amongst other in Islam. On the whole problem see the comments of S. Pines, "La Longue recension de la théologie d'Aristote dans ses rapports avec la doctrine Ismaélienne," *Revue des Études islamiques* 27 (1954): 7–20, at page 15, note 4.

³⁵*Zād al-Musāfirīn* (written in 453/1061), ed. Muhammad Badhl al-Rahman (Berlin, 1341). His discussion of *tanāsukh* begins on page 420; reference to al-Sijistānī occur on 421–422.

Against this there is a chapter in another work by al-Sijistānī, called *al-Maqālīd*, which unequivocally rejects belief in metempsychosis. This treatise survives and is certainly his most important work of those extant.³⁶ In view of this author's key position, not merely in the history of Ismā'īlī doctrine but perhaps even more significantly in the history and development of Islamic Neoplatonism, his flirtation with different solutions to the problems of the soul are of considerable interest. To hold, as he did, that soul is a universal substance, existing as one of the three hypostases of the higher, permanent world (following Plotinus) and that our souls are a part of that soul puts him squarely in line with those philosophers who confessed to some sort of metempsychosis. How else does the soul move from universal to particular and back other than by temporarily occupying a body? In what way does it preserve its particular self except by being attached to that (or another) body?

A summary of al-Sijistānī's refutation from the *Maqālīd* follows:³⁷

His first argument states that to assume that animals are more unhappy than humans—an assumption which is required if transmigration of the soul into animal form is a punishment—is false since animals clearly enjoy their sensual and physical existence more than do humans.

Secondly, he notes that to have animals receive human soul necessitates that animal follow human in the order of creation while the truth is that animal is the genus of which human is a particular species. It is therefore necessary to suppose that some animals were produced having a metempsychosed human soul in them but others without one. But, says al-Sijistānī, if it be proven that any exist without having such a soul, the rest must be likewise.

³⁶Its contents were described by I. Poonawala in an article entitled "Al-Sijistānī and his *Kitāb al-maqālīd*" in D. P. Little ed., *Essays on Islamic Civilization Presented to Niyazi Berkes*, (Leiden, 1976), 274–283, and in my Ph. D. Dissertation, *Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī and the Development of Ismā'īlī Neoplatonism*, University of Chicago, 1974. The unique manuscript on which all studies have been based is a part of the collection of Prof. Abbas Hamdani, and it is he who must be given an especially sincere note of gratitude for his constant generosity in allowing this material to be used.

³⁷The section is entitled "*Fī anna al-tanāsukh bāṭil*" and is the forty-fourth *Iqlīd* (pp. 154–159 of the Hamdani manuscript). Interestingly it is followed by a section called "That souls reappearing again with bodies as its form upon the sphere arriving at a certain point is impossible."

A third point is that if a sin is the reason for the descent of souls into this world, one must argue either that they descend altogether or part by part. If the former, there would need to be a great horde of individuals which existed simultaneously and that is impossible and incomprehensible without procreation. However if it involves procreation, the multitude would go back to a single, original individual. If this one is the origin of the rest, *tanāsukh* would require the descent of a single soul only, the rest coming into existence through procreation.³⁸

Another reason the doctrine cannot be correct is that any notion which holds that humans were punished for sins committed previous to their present creation requires that the prophets also have sinned. This, for the Shī'a like al-Sijistānī who maintain the impeccability (*iṣma*) of the prophets and imams, is absurd.

Again, if that sin were a single, universal sin, how could it produce the varying and different individual forms or beings that result from it? On the other hand, if it were possible that there were differing and dissimilar sins, how could such differences have existence in the simple, higher—that is spiritual—world?

Moreover, did the souls who sinned previously thereafter have the power to create their own worldly forms or was that the work of God? If it was their own doing, what could be more noble, he says, than a sin which brings forth the power to invent such marvelous and wonderful individual forms which even the souls in this world are not capable of producing. If it was God who made forms for these souls, it is more likely that He did so as a reward than a punishment since it is by means of its individual form that the nobility of a soul appears.

Whoever ponders carefully the constitution of animals and the inherent or intended benefits they provide cannot have a doubt in this matter and certainly will not judge that this is a punishment involving the transmigration to them of human souls.

³⁸Interestingly, the problem of how to find enough souls to fit the number of existing bodies or vice versa was "solved" by the Druze. For them each Druze soul at death goes to another Druze body. This requires that the number of births and deaths be equal and constant. Conversion is not permitted. Obviously surpluses and deficits must happen from time to time. The answer is that far away and out of touch there is another Druze community (in China), which receives the extras or supplies the number in deficit at any one period.

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Next al-Sijistānī turns to the frequently cited Qur’anic verse (VI:38): “There is not an animal in the earth, nor flying creature flying on two wings, but they are peoples like unto you.” Its use in support of metempsychosis was noted above in connection with the ideas of Ibn Habit and his colleagues. For al-Sijistānī, however, “rather than prove the truth of *tanāsukh*, it establishes its falsity, since God informs us in this verse that for each of the animals its species is a nation like ours and not that any one of them can have its souls transmigrated into another type.”³⁹

Finally the author of the *Maqālīd* also reports that proponents of metempsychosis find further evidence for this doctrine in other Qur’anic verses which state: “God made from them the monkey and the pig” [LX:5] and “We said unto them: Be ye Apes, despised and loathed” [LXV:2]. In response al-Sijistānī says,

This metempsychosis is not the changing of the individual but has rather the meaning of changing the disposition of a soul or spirit from that of being human to that of the monkey which is to eat, drink, dance, play the buffoon and so forth in the manner of the monkey or pigs or dogs or their like. When people have forsaken obedience to the holy men—taking [thereby] direction from their example and finding deliverance in their good character—God alters their dispositions so that they become those of pigs, far removed from human characteristics.

As for the transformation of an individual from the human form to the form of the monkey or of pigs, this is something quite utterly impossible. There is no chance of it at all and in any way and it is therefore correct that *tanāsukh* is false.⁴⁰

In analyzing the forgoing arguments, it may be more important to consider what al-Sijistānī does not say than what he does say. His opponent is obviously someone like Ibn Habit though it need not be any specific person and it may, in fact, be some unidentified group within the Ismā’īlī movement itself. There is, moreover, even a possibility that he is answering charges made against his own doctrines. In any event the version of metempsychosis he refutes in this chapter of

³⁹*al-Maqālīd*, 158.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 159.

his *Maqālīd* confronts most complete that frequently presented in Sunni heresiographical literature as a set of doctrines first expounded by those few disciples of the Mu'tazilite al-Nazzām mentioned previously. Plato (and Plotinus) cannot be meant because of the decidedly theological nature of the account that involves God's creating individual souls and their obedience or disobedience to Him. Several of al-Sijistānī's declarations also put Plato's kind of metempsychosis out of court, in particular the last quoted remark, which makes *tanāsukh* between species clearly untenable. It does not, however, explicitly rule out the reappearance of the soul in more than one body having the *same* species. If, as al-Bīrūnī reports, he once held that souls do move from one individual of a given species to another of the same species—a doctrine distinctly recalling Jamblichus' similar claim—then this chapter of the *Maqālīd* may not contain a complete denial of metempsychosis since it fails to deal with this possibility.

Nevertheless it is true that readers of al-Sijistānī's *Maqālīd*, or for that matter his other surviving works, would have to conclude that, for him, metempsychosis is a false doctrine and that he has offered no evidence which could be construed to the contrary of this result. Perhaps, then, Nāṣir-i Khusraw was right, and in a later stage of his life this one element of his quite genuine Neoplatonism was modified (or removed from public discussion). Accordingly, his extant works either belong to a subsequent phase, or more likely, were revised in those parts that needed restatement.

Al-Sijistānī is unusually explicit in rejecting the resurrection of the body. Salvation is for the soul only; paradise is entirely spiritual. Given this, he ought to have faced the problem of how the soul remains individual and how it could possibly obtain rewards based in any sense on its previous, temporary existence in the corporeal world. It is this dilemma, after all, which leads philosophically into the realm of uncertainty and the quagmire of reincarnation.

Ultimately none of the Islamic philosophers had an answer to this quandary although there was little difficulty for most in responding to the more basic question of how to define the soul in such a way that it cannot have existed prior to its body. The necessary material for this answer came from Aristotle's concept that the soul is the entelechy of the body. For the Islamic philosophers who by and large follow this doctrine, soul and body have an intimate relationship. A

human body cannot come into existence without a soul, nor human soul without a body, even though the mature soul survives the breaking of the bond between the two. Ibn Sīnā, for example, specifies that the soul employs the body. The body is animated by the soul. If there were souls that moved into a body by *tanāsukh*, then such bodies would of necessity possess two souls—one, so-to-speak, natural to it and another of foreign origin. The latter one would therefore have no functional relationship to that particular body.⁴¹ Furthermore, since the human soul is potentially intelligent first and becomes truly or actually intelligent only secondarily, the latter state is of a different quality from the former. In what way could the latter enter a newly conceived body? This would result in a mature soul in an immature body. The infant born with the soul of Socrates would have his fully developed mind, and yet the physical form of a baby. This is a contradiction in terms and thus violates the very definition of soul.

This solution is the basic answer to the problem as far as most Islamic philosophers are concerned. And even among the Ismāʿīlīs it received a powerful exponent in the person of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī who preceded Ibn Sīnā by a few years.⁴² His response to the question of metempsychosis is quite similar to that of the more famous philosopher and most likely betrays the influence on both of them of al-Fārābī's Aristotelianism. Yet, while the position of Ibn Sīnā on this issue is relatively well known, that of al-Kirmānī (and therefore those Ismāʿīlīs who follow him) is not. The prominence of al-Sijistānī, who happened to be ardently Neoplatonic in his philosophy, lent a commensurate weight to the influence of his ideas in Ismāʿīlī doctrine. Accordingly, various concepts that imply the pre-

⁴¹For this argument of Ibn Sīnā, see in particular *Avicenna's De Anima*, Arabic Text, ed. F. Rahman (London, 1959), 234.

⁴²There has been relatively little written about al-Kirmānī. In general see the following: I. Poonwala's *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature* (Malibu, 1977), 94–102; J. van Ess, "Biobibliographische Notizen zur islamischen Theologie: I. Zur Chronologie der Werke des Ḥamīdaddīn al-Kirmānī," *Die Welt des Orients*, 9 (1978), 255–261; and J. T. P. de Bruijn, "al-Kirmānī," *El2*, V, 166–167. It appears from evidence available at this point that al-Kirmānī flourished during the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi Amr Allāh (386/996–411/1021) and is therefore senior to Ibn Sīnā, who died in 428/1037, although they were certainly contemporary for much of their lives. [See now also my *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Ḥākim* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1999) and other studies cited there.]

existence of the soul remained active in the thinking of this group.

However, al-Kirmānī is forthright and consistent in his rejection of *tanāsukh*. To be sure he often argues against it in a manner similar to al-Sijistānī. In his *Tanbīh al-hādī wa al-mustahdī*,⁴³ there is a chapter specifically devoted to the refutation of those who uphold *tanāsukh*, namely, according to al-Kirmānī, the *Iṣḥāqīyya* and the *Nuṣayriyya*. In part this material echoes al-Sijistānī but in a significant way its author goes beyond his predecessor to establish as impossible that the particularization or individualization of the soul—which itself is due precisely to its association with body—ever repeat the act which caused it to become particular in the first place. Once it is particular, and therefore discrete, it commences a process of development, moving from something having mere potentiality to a final stage of true actualization. The cause of the latter stage is something which already exists in full actuality as what the soul is to become: for al-Kirmānī this is the Imam or Prophet, which like al-Fārābī's active intellect, is intellect *in actu*. The soul begins its existence ignorant like, he says, a blank sheet of paper, and it thereafter acquires knowledge and form until it finally separates from its body at death to continue as a purely intellectual substance.⁴⁴

The soul begins its existence in the physical world and not before. It commences its own being, therefore, with the coming-to-be of the body with which it is attached and, although it is an eternal, enduring substance, it nevertheless starts in a state of ignorance, devoid of knowledge. As it acquires knowledge it becomes what the human soul is meant to be, i.e. a rational, knowing soul. It is then in motion toward its ultimate maturity and perfection. At last it survives when the body dies and it remains perpetually fixed in that state its merits have earned for it. Reattachment to another body would be for it as absurd as the concept of a grown date palm becoming a seed or a mature man

⁴³Pp. 169–176 of the manuscript in the A. A. A. Fysee Collection of the Bombay University Library (M. Goriawala, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Fysee Collection of Ismaili Manuscripts* [Bombay, 1965], 43)

⁴⁴See in particular al-Kirmānī's *al-Maṣābīḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma*, ed. M. Ghalib (Beirut, 1969), third *miṣbāḥ* on soul, 40–47, and his *Rāḥat al-'aql*, ed. M. Kamil Hussein and M. M. Hilmy (Cairo, 1953), 18, where the characterization “blank (or white) sheet of paper” (*“al-qirṭās al-abyaḍ”*) occurs.

sperm.⁴⁵

In general al-Kirmānī, Ibn Sīnā and the other Philosophers do seem to have put to an end the argument about the soul's having an existence independent of the body in the sense of its having some kind of universality. The Plotinian notion of a hypostatic, universal soul requires that it have existence prior to the body; the solution reached here denies that possibility. But it does not provide answers for the problem of how the soul can continue once that very body, which came into being with it, disappears. Islamic philosophers would like to reject the idea of the soul's priority but not its posteriority. For them despite the logic they employed in defining soul as something individual precisely because of the particular body it inhabits, they still insist that it survives in a personal form. Yet how can the soul be individual without a body?⁴⁶ What is its "form" in a disembodied state?

Among the answers given is that it acquires what is called a "pneumatic body"—that is, some kind of spiritual body. This and related concepts will later in Islam give rise to notions such as those of Mullā Ṣadrā concerning a world of symbolic or shadowy beings where the disembodied human soul continues to exist after death.⁴⁷ It remains individual and particular because it has a form or at least a quasi-form. It can therefore assume those characteristics, in its shadowy existence, which Plato's theory of transmigration suggested: the soul becomes what it most intensively lived in its previous existence, although not by reoccupying an earthly body but by becoming the symbolic form of that animal it most imitated in its previous mode of behavior. And the specter of metempsychosis in Islamic thought

⁴⁵In addition to the passages already cited for the doctrine of al-Kirmānī, see also his *al-Aqwāl al-dhahabiyya*, ed. S. al-Sawī (Tehran, 1977), 52–54, and *Rāḥat al-'aql*, 364 and 395–397. The example of the date palm (*nakhla*) and date pit (*nawā*) and man and sperm (*nuṭfa*) occur in the latter work on p. 396.

⁴⁶See the useful note on this point by S. Van Den Bergh in his English translation of Averroes' *Tahafut al-Tahafut* (London, 1954), II, 12.

⁴⁷For more on the view of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1641), see Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany, N.Y., 1975), 247–250, and James Winston Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction of the Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (Princeton, 1981), 140, 146, 147, 151, 168, 169 and elsewhere. The passage on page 147 contains a direct reference to the teaching of Plato and how it may be interpreted.

therefore returns once again, not just in strange and remote territories, but in the thoughts and doctrines of its most serious philosophers and theologians.



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