



‘ABDĀN B. AL-RABĪṬ

‘ABDĀN B. AL-RABĪṬ, early Isma‘ili missionary (*dā‘ī*) and author active in the rural district (*savād*) of Kūfa. According to the account of Abu’l-Qāsem Kāšānī (*Zobdat al-tawārīk*, chapter on Esmā‘īliya, ed. M. T. Dānešpažūh, Tabrīz, 1343 Š./1964, p. 19), he came from a village called D-v-r-vā in the *savād*. However, in a passage of Maqrīzī’s *al-Moqaffā*, based on the account of Aḳū Moḥsen, he is called Ahvāzī (Sohayl Zakkār, *Ta’rīk aḳbār al-Qurāmeṭa*, Beirut, 1391/1971, p. 97). This *nesba* is missing in the parallel quotations from Aḳū Moḥsen’s account and could have been added to ‘Abdān’s name owing to a confusion with a well-known Sunnite traditionist ‘Abdān Ahvāzī. On the other hand, it is to be noted that, in the account of Aḳū Moḥsen, ‘Abdān is not listed among the *dā‘īs* of the *savād* converted by Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ and appears as more a partner and the chief propagandist of the movement than a follower. Such a position would well agree with his having initially been sent from Ahvāz, then the seat of the leadership of the Isma‘ili movement, or his having at least been trained there as an ideological counselor and aid to Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ.

‘Abdān’s closeness to the leadership is also indicated by the fact that his brother Ma’mūn, according to Daylamī, was the *dā‘ī* of Fārs after whom the Isma‘ilis there were called Ma’mūniya (*Bayān maḏhab al-bāṭeniya*, ed. R. Strothmann, Istanbul, 1939, p. 21). ‘Abdān trained and appointed many of the *dā‘īs* in lower Iraq and perhaps also some of the *dā‘īs* in the Yaman and Baḥrayn, including Abū Sa‘īd Jannābī, though the reports are not unanimous in this regard. According to the account of Aḳū Moḥsen, Ḥāḡamdān Qarmaṭ later sent ‘Abdān to Salamīya in Syria, where the leadership had moved, in



order to investigate some changes in the doctrinal instructions he received from there. When ‘Abdān returned, confirming serious deviations from the previous doctrine, the two decided to break with Salamīya and to discontinue the religious propaganda. ‘Abdān was soon afterwards murdered by the supporters of Zekrūya b. Mehrūya, one of his *dā’īs* who was opposed to the discontinuation of the propaganda. This happened about 286/899.

After his death, ‘Abdān continued to be recognized by the Isma‘ili (Qarmaṭī) *dā’īs* in lower Iraq as their authoritative teacher. They considered Moḥammad b. Esmā‘il b. Ja‘far as their imam and the Expected Maḥdī and repudiated the claim of the Fatimid caliph ‘Obaydallāh al-Maḥdī to the imamate. A leading role was played among them by ‘Abdān’s nephew, Abu’l-Qāsem ‘Isā b. Mūsā, who was captured by the ‘Abbasid army during the Qarmaṭī revolt in the *savād* in 316/928. A few years later he escaped from prison and remained active in Baghdad spreading the doctrine of his uncle. He and other *dā’īs* ascribed their own doctrinal writings to ‘Abdān. According to Aḳū Moḥsen, they were trying to create the impression that ‘Abdān had been learned in all branches of philosophy and other sciences and had truthfully predicted later events. The number of works, authentic or spurious, ascribed to ‘Abdān was evidently large; for Ebn al-Nadīm mentions a list containing their titles, of which he names eight as belonging to books generally available in his time. None of these seem to be extant, though his *Ketāb al-mīzān* (read thus for *al-mīdān*, *Fehrest*, p. 267) is still mentioned by a Syrian Isma‘ili author of the early 10th/16th century as one of his sources. Some of the works ascribed to him were evidently esteemed and transmitted among the Isma‘ilis loyal to the Fatimids in spite of their heterodoxy. The Fatimid Qāzī al-No‘mān quoted with approval from a *Ketāb al-ebtedā’* of his (*al-Resālat al-moḏheba* in *Ḳams rasā’el esmā‘īliya*, ed. ‘Āref Tāmer, Salamīya, 1956, p. 41). A *Resālat al-šam‘a*, also known as *Resālat al-mafātīḥ*, of ‘Abdān is listed, according to W. Ivanow, in the *Fehrest* of Isma‘ili books of the 12th/18th century Bohra author al-Maḥdū‘. However, in the published edition of this work (*Fehrest al-kotob wa’l-rasā’el*, ed. ‘Alī-Naqī Monzavī, Tehran, 1344 Š./1965) there is no mention of it. A *Ketāb al-rosūm wa’l-ezdewāj* of Abū Moḥammad ‘Abdān is quoted by Zāhed-‘Alī (*Hamāre Esmā‘īli maḏhab kī ḥaqīqat awr os kā neḏām*, Hyderabad, 1373/1954, pp. 548, 615) from a manuscript in his possession.



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