



ESHĀQ AḤMAR NAḶA'Ī

ESHĀQ AḤMAR NAḶA'Ī (d. 286/899), full name: Eshāq b. Moḥammad b. Abān Abu Ya'qub al-NaḶa'ī al-Aḥmar al-Bašri, a prominent Shi'i extremist active in Iraq, founder of the Eshāqīya *ḡolāt* sect, and the alleged author of a number of texts. Three of the works attributed to him (see below) are partially preserved in later quotations, whereas two, titled *Ketāb akbār al-sayyed* and *Ketāb majāles Hešām*, are lost. Eshāq himself was a follower of the *ḡolāt* sect called 'Alyā'īya, who allegedly worshipped 'Ali b. Abi Ṭāleb as a god who had sent Moḥammad as his prophet; they were also said to have worshipped Ḥasan, Ḥosayn, and Fāṭema (Sa'd al-Qommi, pp. 59-60; Kašši, nos. 591, 1014; Rāzi, p. 307; Šahrastāni, I, p. 179; Ṭusi, pp. 411, 428; Ḥā'eri, II, pp. 30-31; Ebn Ḥazm, p. 66; 'Asqalāni, II, p. 71-75; Halm, 1978, p. 245-46; idem, "Ulyā'īya"; idem, 1982, pp. 278-82).

Eshāq was probably close with the *Nošayris*, with whom he shared some of his fundamental teachings; perhaps this is why numerous excerpts from his works have been preserved in the *Nošayri* written tradition, his name appears in the chains of transmitters in *Nošayri* texts, and one *Nošayri* author counts his followers as monotheists (Ḥasan b. Šo'ba al-Ḥarrāni, p. 58). However, Eshāq eventually split from this group, perhaps because of his rivalry with the *Nošayri* leader *Moḥammad b. Nošayr* (Ṭabarāni, *Majmu'*, pp. 130, 195, 205; Moḥammad b. Nošayr, "Akwār," pp. 34, 58, 63-65; Ḥasan b. Šo'ba al-Ḥarrāni, pp. 34-35; Friedman, p. 9-10).

Eshāq's ideas as described by the heresiographers resemble those of the 'Alyā'īya's; thus, he is said to have believed in the divinity of 'Ali, who had



dispatched Moḥammad as his messenger; he taught the successive incarnations of God in the form of the Imams, which is an idea adopted by some early *ḡolāt* groups (Kaṭīb al-Baḡdādi, p. 380; Ebn Jawzi, p. 593; 'Asqalāni, II, p. 73; Halm, 1982, pp. 278-82; on God's successive incarnations in *ḡolāt* thought, see pseudo-Jo'fi, 2004, pp. 130, 136, 176; Sa'd Qommi, p. 56; Nowbakṭi, p. 40; Aš'ari, p. 11; Modarressi, 1993, p. 21; Tucker, pp. 42, 107).

Several excerpts from Eshāq's four alleged works—*Ketāb al-ṣerāṭ* (different from the *Ketāb al-ṣerāṭ* attributed to Mofazzal al-Jo'fi), *Bāṭen al-taklif*, *Ketāb al-ṣalāt*, and *Ketāb al-tanbih*—have survived in the works of later Noṣayri authors Ḥasan b. Šo'ba al-Ḥarrāni (passim), 'Ali b. Ḥamza al-Ḥarrāni (p. 258), Jelli (p. 164), and Ebn Noṣayr (*Meṭāl*, p. 211). Although the excerpts are too few to give a comprehensive idea about the contents of the works, the doctrines they contain clearly echo some of the ideas attributed to the *ḡolāt* by heresiographers. Thus, some of the passages state that Moḥammad was God's servant (*'abd*) who created the world on His behalf, which resembles the teachings of the *mofawweza* branch of the *ḡolāt*. Some elaborate on the notion that religious obligations are in reality names of persons, and true worship is to know (*ma'refa*) these persons, an idea which was expressed in *ḡolāt* literature and attributed to them by their critics. Finally, some of the passages speak of the positive and negative aspects of singing and homosexual intercourse (*lewāt*), which echoes the numerous accounts stating that the *ḡolāt* allowed sexual contact between men (Ḥasan b. Šo'ba al-Ḥarrāni, 167-168; Nowbakṭi, p. 39). The *Ketāb al-ṣerāṭ* was refuted by Nahiki and Fayyāz in works which are now lost (Nowbakṭi, pp. 38-39; 'Abd-al-Qāher Baḡdādi, p. 246; Sa'd al-Qommi, pp. 51, 60-61; pseudo-Jo'fi, 2007, p. 40; Kašši, nos. 512-13; Šaffār, pp. 546-55; Aš'ari, p. 10; 'Abd-al-Jabbār, p. 73; Abu Tammām, p. 77; Modarressi, pp. 21-28; on the refutations of the *Ketāb al-ṣerāṭ*, see, Mas'udi, III, pp. 265-66; Ebn Ḥazm, p. 66; 'Asqalāni, II, p. 73).

Eshāq is listed as one of the transmitters of a short treatise titled *Ādāb 'Abd-al-Moṭṭaleb*, whose ideas regarding 'Ali and God resemble those of Eshāq and the Eshāqiya. Thus, the treatise states that 'Ali is God and Moḥammad is his prophet, and that through the knowledge of God the believer may attain to the rank of the prophets (*Ādāb*, pp. 261-87; cf. Ebn Jawzi, p. 191).

Eshāq had a group of followers called after him Eshāqiya, who likewise professed his ideas about 'Ali's divinity and his relation to Moḥammad, and held that whoever possesses the knowledge of Moḥammad's descendants is a prophet. The Eshāqiya were active in [Madā'en](#) and in the 10th century



probably migrated to Syria (Ebn Jawzi, pp. 191, 593; 'Asqalāni, II, p. 71; Šahrastāni, I, pp. 192-93; Kaṭīb al-Baġdādi, p. 380). They had strained relations with the Noṣayris (Ṭabarāni, *Hāwi*, pp. 59, 63, 74; idem, *Dalā'el*, p. 153), and, according to some accounts, they were extirpated by the Noṣayris in the 13th century (Halm, 1978, pp. 252-53; Friedman, p. 53).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Abd-al-Jabbār, *al-Moġni* XX, ed. 'Abd-al-Ḥalim Maḥmud and Solaymān Donyā, Cairo, 1969.

Abu Tammām, *Ketāb al-šajara*, tr. and ed. Wilferd Madelung and Paul as *An Ismaili Heresiography: The 'Bāb al-shayṭān' from Abū Tammām's Kitāb al-shajara*, Leiden, 1998.

Ādāb 'Abd-al-Moṭṭaleb, in Abu Musā and Šayḵ Musā, eds., *Selselat al-torāt al-'alawi* VI, *al-majmu'a al-mofazzaliya*, n.p. (Lebanon), 2006, pp. 261-87.

Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Ali b. Esmā'il al-Aš'ari, *Maqālāt al-eslāmiyin wa eḵtelāf al-moṣallin* ed. H. Ritter, Wiesbaden, 1980.

Ebn Ḥajar al-'Asqalāni, *Lesān al-mizān*, ed. 'Abd-al-Fattāḥ Abu Ġadda, 2 vols., Beirut, 2002.

'Abd-al-Qāher al-Baġdādi, *al-Farq bayna'l-feraq*, ed. Moḥammad 'Abd-al-Ḥamid, Cairo, n.d.

Kaṭīb al-Baġdādi, *Tārik Baġdād* VI, Beirut, n.d.

Ebn Jawzi, *Talbis Eblis*, ed. Aḥmad b. 'Oṭmān al-Mazid, Riyadh, 2002.

Ebn Ḥazm, *Ketāb al-feṣal fi'l-melal wa'l-ahwā' wa'l-neḥal*, tr. I. Friedlaender as "The Heterodoxies of the Shiites in the Presentation of Ibn Ḥazm," *JAOS* 28, 1907, pp. 1-80.

Yaron Friedman, *The Nuṣayrī-'Alawīs*, Leiden, 2010.



Abu 'Ali al-Ḥā'eri, *Montahā'l-maqāl* II, Qom, 1995, pp. 30-31.

Heinz Halm, "Das Buch der Schatten: Die Mufaḍḍal-Tradition der Ġulāt und die Ursprünge des Nuṣairiertums," *Der Islam* 55, 1978, pp. 219-66.

Idem, *Die Islamische Gnosis*, Zürich and Munich, 1982, pp. 278-82.

Idem, s.v. "Ulyā'iyya," in *ET*²X, 2000, p. 814.

'Ali b. Ḥamza al-Ḥarrāni, *Ḥojjat al-'āref fi etbāt al-ḥaqq 'alā'l-mabāyen wa'l-makālef*, in Abu Musā and Šayḵ Musā, eds., *Selselat al-torāt al-'alawi* IV. *Majmu'at al-ḥarrāniyin*, n.p. (Lebanon), 2006, pp. 239-75.

Ḥasan b. Šo'ba al-Ḥarrāni, *Ḥaqā'eq asrā- al-din*, in Abu Musā and Šayḵ Musā, eds., *Selselat al-torāt al-'alawi* IV. *Majmu'at al-ḥarrāniyin*, n.p. (Lebanon), 2006, pp. 9-179.

Moḥammad b. 'Ali al-Jelli, *Ḥāwi'l-asrār*, Abu Musā and Šayḵ Musā, eds., *Selselat al-torāt al-'alawi* II. *Rasā'el al-ḥekma'l-'alawiya*, n.p. (Lebanon), 2006, pp. 157-217.

Mofazzal al-Jo'fi (attrib.), *Ketāb al-šerāt*, ed. Monşef 'Abd-al-Jalil, Bēghazi, 2004.

Idem, *Ketāb al-ḥaft wa'l-azella*, ed. Arif Tamir, Beirut, 2007.

Moḥammad b. 'Omar al-Kašši, *al-Eḵtiār fi ma'refat al-rejāl*, ed. Ḥasan Moştafawi, Maşhad, 1969.

Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Ali b. Al-Ḥosayn b. 'Ali al-Mas'udi, *Moruj al-ḍahab* III, ed. Ed. Marbier de Meynard, Paris, 1864.

Hossein Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam*, Princeton, 1993.

Moḥammad b. Noşayr, *Ketāb al-akwār al-nurāniya wa'l-adwār al-ruḥāniya*," in Abu Musā and Šayḵ Musā, eds., *Selselat al-torāt al-'alawi* I. *Rasā'el al-ḥekma l-'alawiya*, n.p. (Lebanon), 2006, pp. 31-205.

Idem, *Ketāb al-meṭāl wa'l-şura*, in Abu Musā and Šayḵ Musā, eds., *Selselat al-torāt al-'alawi* I. *Rasā'el al-ḥekma'l-'alawiya*, n.p. (Lebanon), 2006, pp. 207-34.



- Ḥasan b. Musa al-Nowbakṭi, *Feraq al-šī'a*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, Istanbul, 1931.
- Sa'd b. 'Abd-Allāh al-Qommi, *Ketāb al-maqālāt wa'l-feraq*, ed. Moḥammad Jawād Maškur, Tehran, 1963.
- Abu Ja'far al-Šaffār al-Qommi, *Bašā'er al-darajāt al-kobrā fi fazā'el āl Moḥammad*, ed. Moḥsen Kučabāgi Tabrizi, Tehran, 1984, pp. 546-56.
- Abu Ḥātem al-Rāzi, *Ketāb al-zina*, ed. Sāmarrā'i, in his *Al-ḡoluw wa'l-feraq al-ḡāliya*, Baghdad, 1972, pp. 225-312.
- Abu'l-Faṭḥ al-Šahrastāni, *al-Melal wa'l-neḥal*, ed. Moḥammad Fahmi Moḥammad, Beirut, 1413/1992.
- Maymun b. al-Qāsem al-Ṭabarāni, *Majmu' al-a'yād*, ed. R. Strothmann, *Der Islam* 27, 1946, pp. 1-273.
- Idem, *al-Ḥāwi fi 'elm al-fatāwi*, ed. Abu Musā and Šayḵ Musā in *Selselat al-torāt al-'alawi* III, n.p. (Lebanon), 2006, pp. 45-116.
- Idem, *Ketāb al-dalā'el fi'l-masā'el*, ed. Abu Musā and Šayḵ Musā in *Selselat al-torāt al-'alawi* III, n.p. (Lebanon), 2006, pp. 117-156.
- William F. Tucker, *Mahdis and Millenarians: Shī'ite Extremists in Early Muslim Iraq*, Cambridge, 2008.
- Moḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭusi, *Rejāl*, ed. Moḥammad-Šādeq Āl Baḥr-al-'Olum, Najaf, 1381/1961.