



ESMĀ'ĪL B. JA'FAR AL-ŞĀDEQ

ESMĀ'ĪL b. JA'FAR AL-ŞĀDEQ, Abū Moḥammad, the sixth Imam and the eponym of the Isma'īlis. He also carried the epithet of Mobārak, "the blessed" (Sejestānī, p. 190; Edrīs, *Zahr*, p. 199; Ivanow, 1946, pp. 108-12), on the basis of which one of the earliest Isma'īli groups became designated as the Mobārakīya. Esmā'īl was the eldest son of Imam Ja'far al-Şādeq by his first wife Fāṭema, a granddaughter of Imam Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb (*Feraq al-šī'a*, p. 58; Qomī, p. 80; Ebn 'Enaba, p. 233; Qāzī No'mān, *Šarḥ* III, p. 309). Esmā'īl was the full-brother of 'Abd-Allāh al-Afṭaḥ, the Imam of the Faṭḥīya (or Afṭaḥīya). Esmā'īl was some twenty-five years older than his half-brother Mūsā al-Kāzem, the seventh Imam of the Twelver Shi'ites (Eṭnā'ašariya), who was born in 128/745-46 (Ja'far b. Manṣūr, p. 258). Esmā'īl had established close relations with the radical followers of his father, who were dissatisfied by the quiescent policies pursued by him and other Imams of the Emāmīya. Esmā'īl may have actually cooperated with Abu'l-Ḳaṭṭāb (d. 138/755-56), the most prominent extremist (*ḡālī*) on the fringe of the Emāmīya and the eponym of the Ḳaṭṭābīya (Ja'far b. Manṣūr, pp. 256-57). Louis Massignon (pp. 16-19) has suggested that Abu'l-Ḳaṭṭāb was the spiritual or adoptive father of Esmā'īl, hence his *konīa* of Abū Esmā'īl. Possible collaboration between Esmā'īl and Abu'l-Ḳaṭṭāb remains shrouded in obscurity, despite the fact that the Imami sources, generally hostile to the Isma'īlis, identify the nascent Isma'īli with the early Ḳaṭṭābīya (*Feraq al-šī'a*, pp. 58-59; Qomī, p. 81). The later Isma'īlis regarded Abu'l-Ḳaṭṭāb as a heretic and repudiated the Ḳaṭṭābīya (Qāzī No'mān, *Da'a'em* I, pp. 49-50, tr. pp. 58-59; idem, *Majāles*, pp. 84-85).



According to several traditions reported by Kaššī (pp. 217-18, 321, 325-26, 354-56, 390; tr. Ivanow, 1923, pp. 305-10), Esmā'īl had also established contacts with other radical Shi'ites, notably the prominent extremist Mofaẓẓal b. 'Omar Jo'fi. Esmā'īl reportedly protested in Medina in 133/750 against the execution of Mo'allā b. Kōnays, another extremist follower of Ja'far al-Şādeq (Kaššī, pp. 376-82; Najāšī, p. 296; Edrīs, 'Oyūn, pp. 326-27). According to another report (Kaššī, pp. 244-45; Najāšī, pp. 81-82), Esmā'īl was involved in a militant anti-'Abbasid plot in collaboration with several others, which included Bassām b. 'Abd-Allāh Şayrafī, a radical Shi'ite engaged in money lending in Kūfa. This association is one of several reported by the Imami sources which caused Ja'far al-Şādeq to express his dissatisfaction with those radical Shi'ites who were leading his son astray. Few other indisputable facts about Esmā'īl are available. Isma'ili sources (e.g., Edrīs, 'Oyūn, pp. 332-50) contain little historical information of any value concerning Esmā'īl and the initial phase of Isma'ili history. Eṭnā'aşarī sources, which are better informed than the Sunni authors on the Shi'ite groupings, are hostile towards Esmā'īl. Because the former sources uphold the rights of Mūsā al-Kāẓem to the imamate, they regard Esmā'īl as a reprobate and accuse him of dipsomania (*Feraq al-şī'a*, p. 90; Qomī, p. 103; Kaššī, pp. 473-74). It is known, however, that Ja'far al-Şādeq had designated Esmā'īl as his successor to the imamate by the rule of the *naşş*. This designation, in fact, forms the basis of Isma'ili claims (Madelung, pp. 43 ff.; Daftary, 1991, pp. 219 ff.).

The exact date and the circumstances of Esmā'īl's death remain unknown. According to the Isma'ili tradition and some Isma'ili sources, Esmā'īl survived his father. However, the majority of sources report that he died before Imam Ja'far al-Şādeq (d. 148/765) in Medina, and was buried in the Baqī' cemetery there. Many Isma'ili and non-Isma'ili sources state that during Esmā'īl's funeral procession Imam al-Şādeq attempted to show the face of his dead son to witnesses. Some of the same sources also indicate that Esmā'īl was seen soon afterward in Başra (Qāzī No'man, *Şarḥ* III, p. 309; Ja'far b. Manşūr, pp. 262-63; Edrīs, *Zahr*, pp. 200-201; Shaikh Mofīd, p. 431; Raşīd-al-Dīn, p. 10). In such accounts of Esmā'īl's death and burial, al-Manşūr (136-58/754-75) is named as the ruling caliph. Other sources cite later years for Esmā'īl's death, the latest date being 145/762-63 (Maqrīzī, I, p. 15; Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, III, p. 126; Raşīd-al-Dīn, p. 10; *Dastūr al-monajjemīn*, cited by de Goeje, p. 203). Ḥasan b. Nūḥ Bharūcī (pp. 234-35; Ivanow, 1942, p. 30), an Indian Isma'ili author, writes of visiting Esmā'īl's grave in the Baqī' cemetery in 904/1498. His grave was still there in 1302/1885 (Farāhānī, p. 288), but it was later destroyed, along



with other graves in the Baqī', by the Wahhābīs.

With the death of Imam al-Şādeq in 148/765, two Kufan-based splinter groups separated from the Imamīs and constituted the earliest Isma'īli group (Daftary, 1990, pp. 93 ff.). One group, designated by the Imami heresiographers as al-Esmā'īliya al-kāleşa (*Feraq al-şī'a*, pp. 57-58; Qomī, p. 80), denied the death of Esmā'īl during his father's lifetime, maintained that he was the true Imam after al-Şādeq, and believed that he would eventually return as Mahdi. A second group affirming Esmā'īl's death during the lifetime of al-Şādeq traced the imamate to Esmā'īl's son Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl. Imami heresiographers call this latter group the Mobārakīya (*Feraq al-şī'a*, p. 58; Qomī, pp. 80-81). A faction of the Mobārakīya later developed into the Fatimid Isma'īlis, upholding the continuity of the imamate in the progeny of Esmā'īl, acknowledging Esmā'īl himself as their sixth Imam. This enumeration was subsequently retained by the various branches of the Isma'īli.

See also [ISMA'ILISM](#).

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