



ISMA'ILISM III. ISMA'ILI HISTORY

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ORIGINS AND EARLY HISTORY

On the death of Imam Ja'far al-Şādeq in 148/765 his followers from among the Imami Shi'ites split into six groups of which two may be identified as proto-Isma'ilis or earliest Isma'ilis. Imam al-Şādeq had originally designated his second son Esmā'il (the eponym of the Es-mā'iliya) as his successor to the imamate, but as related in the majority of the sources, Esmā'il had predeceased his father. The two proto-Isma'ili groups, which were based in Kufa and supported the claims of Esmā'il b. Ja'far (q.v.) and his son Moḥammad, had already appeared in the lifetime of Imam al-Şādeq but they separated from other Imamis only in 148/765. One of these groups denied the death of Esmā'il and awaited his return as the Mahdi. The members of this group, designated as *al-Esmā'iliya al-ḳāleşa*, or the 'pure Esmā'iliya' by the earliest Imami heresiographers, Nawbakòti and Qomi, who are our main sources for the initial phase of Isma'ilism, held that Imam al-Şādeq had announced Esmā'il's death as a ruse to protect him against 'Abbasid persecution as he had been politically active against them. The second group, designated as the Mobārakiya, affirming Esmā'il's death, now recognized his



eldest son Moḥammad b. Esmā'il as their imam (*Feraq al-šī'a*, pp. 57-58; Qomi, pp. 80-81, 83; Aš'ari, *Maqālāt*, pp. 26-27; Daftary, 1991, pp. 220 ff.). It seems likely that the Mobārakiya, derived from Esmā'il's epithet al-Mobārak, the Blessed One (Sejestāni, *Etbāt*, p. 190; Edris, *Zahr*, p. 199; Ḥ. F. al-Hamdāni, 1958, text p. 10; Ivanow, 1946, pp. 103-12), were originally supporters of Esmā'il before acknowledging Moḥammad as their Imam. At any rate, Mobārakiya was thus one of the original names of the nascent Esmā'iliya, a term coined by later heresiographers.

Nawbakṭi (pp. 58-59) and Qomi (p. 81), who are generally hostile towards the Isma'ilis, identify al-Esmā'iliya al-Ḳāleṣa with the early Ḳaṭṭābiya, the followers of Abu'l-Ḳaṭṭāb (q.v.), the most famous *ḡāli* (a term used pejoratively by heresiographers for those who attribute divine qualities to Imams; see GÖLĀT) in the entourage of Ja'far al-Šādeq, who was eventually repudiated by the Imam. They further hold that on the death of Abu'l-Ḳaṭṭāb in 138/755 a group of his *ḡolāt* followers joined the supporters of Moḥammad b. Esmā'il (*Feraq al-šī'a*, pp. 60-61; Qomi, p. 83). Some later sources, too, refer to close relations between the earliest Isma'ilis and the Ḳaṭṭābis (Lewis, 1940, pp. 33-35). On the other hand, Abu'l-Ḳaṭṭāb is condemned as a heretic by the Isma'ilis of the Fatimid times (see, for example, Qāzi No'mān, *Da'ā'em*, I, pp. 49-50; tr. Fyzee, I, pp. 65-66; idem, *Ketāb al-majāles*, pp. 84-85). Be that as it may, relations between al-Esmā'iliya al-Ḳāleṣa and the Mobārakiya, on the one hand, and between these groups and the Ḳaṭṭābis, on the other, remain rather obscure due to lack of reliable sources. It is certain, however, that all these groups were politically active against the 'Abbasids and they originated within the radical milieu of Imami Shi'ism in Kufa.

Little is known about the life and career of Moḥammad b. Esmā'il, the seventh imam of the Isma'ilis. The relevant biographical information contained in early Isma'ili sources has been preserved by the *dā'i* (q.v.; Isma'ili missionary) Edris (*Oyun*, IV, pp. 351-56; idem, *Zahr*, pp. 204-8). Soon after al-Šādeq's death, and after the recognition of the imamate of his uncle Musā al-Kāzem by the majority of the Imamis, Moḥammad b. Esmā'il left Medina, seat of the 'Alids, and went into hiding. His decision marked the initiation of the *dawr al-satr*, or period of concealment, in early Isma'ilism that lasted until the foundation of the Fatimid state when the Isma'ili Imams emerged from their concealment. Henceforth, Moḥammad acquired the epithet of al-Maktum, the Hidden One, in addition to al-Maymun, the Fortunate One. Nonetheless, Moḥammad maintained his contacts with the Kufan-based Mobārakiya from different



localities in southern Iraq and Persia. He seems to have spent the latter part of his life in Kuzestān, where he had some following. He died not long after 179/795 during the caliphate of the 'Abbasid Hārūn al-Rašid. On the death of Moḥammad b. Esmā'il, the Mobārakiya split into two groups (*Feraq al-šī'a*, p. 61; Qomi, p. 83). A majority refused to accept his death; they recognized him as their seventh and last imam, and awaited his return as the Mahdi or *qā'em*. A second, small and obscure group, acknowledging Moḥammad's death, traced the imamate in his progeny. Almost nothing is known with certainty regarding the subsequent history of these earliest Isma'ili groups until shortly after the middle of the 3rd/9th century, when a unified Isma'ili movement appeared on the historical stage.

It is certain that for almost a century after Moḥammad b. Esmā'il, a group of leaders who were well placed within Isma'ilism worked secretly for the creation of a unified, revolutionary Shi'ite movement against the 'Abbasids. These leaders did not openly claim the Isma'ili imamate for three generations. They had, in fact, hidden their true identity in order to escape 'Abbasid persecution. 'Abd-Allāh al-Akbar, the first of these hidden leaders, had organized his campaign around the central doctrine of the majority of the earliest Isma'ilis, namely, the Mahdism of Moḥammad b. Esmā'il. Organizing a revolutionary movement in the name of a concealed imam who could not be chased by 'Abbasid agents represented an attractive strategy. At any rate, the existence of such a group of early Isma'ili leaders is confirmed by both the official version of the Isma'ilis of the Fatimid period regarding the pre-Fatimid phase of their history (Edris, *Oyun*, IV, pp. 357-67, 390-404) as well as the hostile account of the Sunni polemicists Ebn Rezām and Aḳu Moḥsen preserved in later sources (Ebn al-Dawādāri, VI, pp. 44-156; Maqrizi, *Ette'āz*, I, pp. 151-201; idem, *al-Keṭat*, I, pp. 391-97; Nowayri, XXV, pp. 187-317). Indeed, with minor variations, the names of these leaders, viz., 'Abd-Allāh, Aḥmad, Ḥosayn, or Moḥammad and 'Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi, who were members of the same family and succeeded one another on a hereditary basis, are almost identical in the accounts of the later Fatimid Isma'ilis (Ḥ. F. al-Hamdāni, 1958, text pp. 10-12; Nisāburi, p. 95; see also Hamdani and de Blois, pp. 173-207) and in the lists traceable to Aḳu Moḥsen and his source Ebn Rezām (Ebn al-Nadim, ed. Tajaddod, p. 238; tr. Dodge, I, pp. 462-64; Ebn al-Dawādāri, VI, pp. 17-20; Maqrizi, *Ette'āz*, I, pp. 22-26; Nowayri, XXV, p. 189; Ḥammādi Yamāni, *Kašf*, pp. 16 ff.). However, in the Isma'ili sources these leaders are presented as 'Alids descending from Imam al-Šādeq while in anti-Isma'ili accounts their ancestry is traced to a certain Maymun al-Qaddāh. Modern scholarship has shown that



the Qaddāhid ancestry of the early Isma'ili leaders was constructed by hostile polemicists, soon after the establishment of the Fatimid caliphate, in order to refute the 'Alid genealogy of the Fatimid caliph-imams. Maymun al-Qaddāh and his son 'Abd-Allāh (see 'ABDALLĀH b. MAYMŪN) were, in fact, associated with Imams al-Bāqer and al-Šādeq and had nothing to do with the leaders or imams of early Isma'ilism (see Ivanow, 1946, pp. 61-103; Daftary, 1990, pp. 105-16).

'Abd-Allāh al-Akbar, the first of the early Isma'ili leaders after Moḥammad b. Esmā'il, settled in 'Askar Mokram, in Kuzestān, where he lived as a wealthy merchant. From there he began to organize a reinvigorated Isma'ili *da'wa* sending *dā'īs* to different districts around Kuzestān. At an unknown date, still in the first half of the 3rd/9th century, 'Abd-Allāh found refuge in Syria, where he eventually re-established contact with some of his *dā'īs*, and settled in Salamiya, continuing to pose as a Hāšemid merchant. Henceforth, Salamiya, situated some 35 km southeast of Ḥamā, served as the secret headquarters of the Isma'ili *da'wa*. The efforts of 'Abd-Allāh, and his successors, began to bear fruit in the 260s/870s, when numerous *dā'īs* appeared in Iraq and adjacent regions. It was around 261/874 that Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ (q.v.) was converted to Isma'ilism by the *dā'i* Ḥosayn Ahvāzi (Ebn al-Nadim, ed. Tajaddod, p. 238; Mas'udi, *Tanbih*, p. 395). Ḥamdān, in turn, organized the *da'wa* in the Sawād of Kufa, his native locality, and in other districts of southern Iraq. Ḥamdān's chief assistant was his brother-in-law 'Abdān (q.v.). A learned theologian, 'Abdān enjoyed a certain degree of independence and was responsible for training and appointing numerous *dā'īs*, including Abu Sa'id Jannābi (q.v.), who later founded the Qarmaṭi state of Baḥrayn.

Centered on the expectation of the imminent return of Moḥammad b. Esmā'il as the Mahdi who would establish justice in the world, the revolutionary and messianic Isma'ili movement appealed to underprivileged groups of different social backgrounds. It achieved particular success among the Imami Shi'ites who were disillusioned with the quietist policies of their imams and were left without a manifest imam after the death of the eleventh Imam, Abu Moḥammad Ḥasan al-'Askari (q.v.; d. 260/874). It was under such circumstances that Ḥamdān won many supporters in southern Iraq and embarked on his anti-'Abbasid activities (Ebn al-Dawādāri, VI, pp. 44 ff.; Maqrizi, *Ette'āz*, I, pp. 151 ff.; Nowayri, XXV, pp. 189 ff.; Ṭabari, III, pp. 2124, 2126-27; Ṭabari, tr. XXXVII, pp. 169, 171-73). The Isma'ilis of southern Iraq became generally known as the Qarāmeṭa or Carmatians (q.v.), named after



their first chief local leader. This term was soon applied to other Isma'ili communities not organized by Ḥamdān and 'Abdān. At the time, there was a single Isma'ili movement directed from Salamiya in the name of Moḥammad b. Esmā'il as the Mahdi (Stern, 1961, pp. 99-108; Madelung, 1961, pp. 43-65). In fact, in order to prepare the ground for the emergence of the Mahdi, in 277/890 Ḥamdān established a *dār al-hejra*, or abode of migration, near Kufa, where his followers gathered weapons and other provisions. This abode was to serve as the nucleus of a new society for the Isma'ilis. Similar *dār al-hejras* were later established for the Isma'ili communities of Yemen, Bahrain and North Africa. The Isma'ilis (Qarmaṭis) now referred to their movement simply as *al-da'wa* (the mission) or *al-da'wa al-hadia* (the rightly guiding mission), in addition to using expressions such as *da'wat al-ḥaqq* (summons to the truth) or *ahl al-ḥaqq* (people of the truth).

In the meantime, the Isma'ili *da'wa* had appeared in many other regions in the 260s/870s. 'Abdān's brother Ma'mun was active as a *dā'i* in Fars, where the Isma'ili converts became known as the Ma'muniya (Daylami, p. 21). The *da'wa* in Yaman was initiated by Ebn Ḥawšab (q.v.), later known as Maṣṣur al-Yaman. He arrived there in 268/881, accompanied by his collaborator 'Ali b. al-Faḏl. By 293/905-6, when 'Ali occupied Ṣan'ā', these *dā'is* were in control of almost all of Yaman (Qāzi No'mān, *Eftetāh*, pp. 32-54; Janadi, *Ketāb al-suluk*, in Kay, 1892, text pp. 139-52, tr. pp. 191-212). Yaman also served as a base for the extension of the *da'wa* to other regions. In 270/883, Ebn Ḥawšab sent his relative Haytam as a *dā'i* to Sind, initiating the *da'wa* on the Indian subcontinent (Qāzi No'mān, *Eftetāh*, pp. 45, 47; S. M. Stern, 1949, pp. 298 ff.; Hamdani, 1956). On Ebn Ḥawšab's instructions, the *dā'i* Abu 'Abd-Allāh al-Ši'i was active among the Kotāma Berbers of Lesser Kabylia in the Maghreb by 280/893. Ebn Ḥawšab sent other *dā'is* to Yamāma, Egypt and Baḥrayn. After his initial activities in Fars, Abu Sa'id Jannābi was sent to Baḥrayn by Ḥam-dān and 'Abdān in 273/886, or a few years later. He rapidly won converts there from among the bedouins and the Persian emigrants (Ebn al-Dawādāri, VI, pp. 55-62, 91 ff.; Maqrizi, *Ette'āz*, I, pp. 159 ff.; Nowayri, XXV, pp. 233 ff.; Ṭabari, III, pp. 2188 ff., 2196-97, 2205, 2232; Ṭabari, tr. XXXVIII, pp. 77 ff., 86-89, 98, 128-29; Mas'udi, *Moruj*, VIII, pp. 191 ff.; de Goeje, pp. 33-47, 69 ff.)

In the early 260s/870s, the *da'wa* was taken to the region of the Jebāl in Persia by Ḳalaf al-Ḥallāj, who established himself in Ray. There, the Isma'ilis became known as the Ḳalafiya. Under Ḳalaf's successors as chief *dā'is* of the Jebāl, the *da'wa* spread to Qom, Kāšān, Isfahan, Hamadān and other towns of that



region. Ġiāt, the third *dā'i* of Ray, extended the *da'wa* to Khorasan and Transoxania on his own initiative. But the *da'wa* was officially established in Khorasan during the last decade of the 3rd century (the first decade of the 9th century) by Abu 'Abd-Allāh Kādem who set up his secret headquarters at Nišābur. A later chief *dā'i* of Khorasan, Ḥosayn b. 'Ali Marwazi was an eminent amir in the service of the Sāmānids and he succeeded in extending the *da'wa* to Herat, Ġur and other localities under his control, (Neẓām-al-Molk, pp. 282-95, 297-305; tr. Darke, pp. 208-18, 220-26; Ebn al-Nadim, ed. Tajaddod, p. 239; Baġdādi, *Farq*, ed. Badr, p. 267; Stern, 1960, pp. 56-90; repr. in idem, 1983, pp. 189-233).

By the early 280s/890s, a unified Isma'ili movement had replaced the earlier Isma'ili groups. But in 286/899, soon after 'Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi, the future Fatimid caliph, had succeeded to leadership in Salamiya, Isma'ilism was wrought by a major schism. Ḥamdān now noticed significant changes in the doctrinal instructions he received from Salamiya, and dispatched 'Abdān there to investigate the matter. Ḥamdān found out that instead of advocating Moḥammad b. Esmā'il as Mahdi, the new leader now claimed the imamate for himself and his predecessors, the central leaders of the Isma'ili *da'wa* in the *dawr al-satr*. Ḥamdān and 'Abdān refused to accept this doctrinal change, allowing for continuity in the imamate. They renounced their allegiance to the central leadership of Isma'ilism and suspended all *da'wa* activities in Iraq. Soon after, Ḥamdān disappeared while 'Abdān was murdered at the instigation of a subordinate *dā'i*, Zekrawayh b. Mehrawayh, who initially remained loyal to Salamiya (Ebn al-Dawādāri, VI, pp. 65-68; Maqrizi, *Ette'āz*, I, pp. 167-68; Nowayri, XXV, pp. 227-32; Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 295; tr. Kramers and Wiet, II, p. 289; Madelung, 1961, pp. 59-65, 69 ff.; Daftary, 1993, pp. 123-39).

'Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi's reform is explained in a letter he later sent to the Isma'ili community in Yaman (see Ḥ. F. al-Hamdani, 1958; also Hamdani and de Blois, 1983), in which an attempt is made to reconcile his reform with the actual course of events in pre-Fatimid Isma'ili history. He explains that as a form of *taqiya*, the central leaders of the *da'wa* had assumed different pseudonyms, such as al-Mobāarak and al-Maymun, also assuming the rank of *hojja*, proof or full representative, of the absent Imam Moḥammad b. Esmā'il. 'Abd-Allāh, whose own pseudonym had been al-Sa'id, the Happy One, further explained that the earlier propagation of Moḥammad b. Esmā'il as Mahdi was itself another dissimulating tactic and that this was in reality another collective pseudonym for every true imam in the progeny of Ja'far al-Ṣādeq. The



statements of ‘Abd-Allāh are corroborated by the few surviving early Isma‘ili sources (see, for instance, Ja‘far b. Maṣṣur al-Yaman, *Ketāb al-kašf*, pp. 97-99, 102 ff., 109-10, 135, 160; also Madelung, 1961, pp. 254-58).

The doctrinal reform of ‘Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi split the Isma‘ili movement into two rival factions. One faction remained loyal to the central leadership and acknowledged continuity in the imamate, recognizing ‘Abd-Allāh and his ‘Alid ancestors as their imams, which was in due course incorporated into the Fatimid Isma‘ili doctrine of the imamate. These Isma‘ilis now allowed for three hidden imams (*al-a‘emma al-masturin*) between Moḥammad b. Esmā‘il and ‘Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi. This loyalist faction came to include the bulk of the Isma‘ilis of Yaman and those communities in Egypt, North Africa and Sind, founded by *dā‘is* dispatched by Ebn Ḥawšab. On the other hand, a dissident faction, originally led by Ḥamdān, rejected ‘Abd-Allāh’s reform and maintained their original belief in the Mahdship of Moḥammad b. Esmā‘il. Henceforth, the term Qarmaṭi came to be applied more specifically to the dissidents, who did not acknowledge ‘Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi, as well as his predecessors and successors in the Fatimid dynasty, as their imams. The dissident Qarmaṭi faction, which lacked central leadership, soon acquired its most important stronghold in the Qarmaṭi state of Baḥrayn, founded in the same eventful year 286/899 by Abu Sa‘id Jannābi who sided with Ḥamdān and ‘Abdān (Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 295). There were also Qarmaṭi communities in Iraq, Yaman, Persia and Central Asia. The subsequent history of Qarmaṭism is not treated here (see F. Daftary, “Carmatians,” in *EIr*, IV, pp. 825-32; Madelung, “Qarmaṭī,” in *EI*² IV, pp. 660-65; idem, 1959; idem, 1996).

Meanwhile, the *dā‘i* Zekrawayh b. Mehrawayh had gone into hiding following the events of the year 286/899, possibly fearing reprisals by ‘Abdān’s supporters in Iraq. From 288/901 he sent several of his sons as *dā‘is* to the Syrian desert where large numbers of bedouins were converted. Zekrawayh now aimed to establish a Fatimid state in Syria for ‘Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi without his authorization. Soon Zekrawayh’s sons summoned their bedouin followers to proceed to Salamiya and declare their allegiance to the imam who was still guarding his identity. In the event, ‘Abd-Allāh, whose position had now been dangerously compromised, secretly left Salamiya in 289/902 to escape capture by the ‘Abbasid agents sent after him. He first went to Ramla, in Palestine, and then in 291/904, following the defeat of Zekrawayh’s movement in Syria by an ‘Abbasid army, he embarked on a historic journey which ended several years later in North Africa where he founded the Fatimid



caliphate (see Yamāni, *Sirat al-Ḥājeb*, pp. 107-33; tr. in Ivanow, 1942, pp. 184-223; French tr. Canard, 1952, pp. 279-324). After their defeat in Syria in 291/904, Zekrawayh and his sons turned against 'Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi and joined the Qarmaṭi camp. Zekrawayh was finally defeated and killed in 294/907 by the 'Abbasids while his Qarmaṭi movement lingered on for a while longer (Ṭabari, III, pp. 2218-46, 2255-75; tr. XXXVIII, 113-44, 157-79; 'Arib, pp. 9-18, 36, 137; Mas'udi, *Tanbih*, pp. 370-76, 391; Ebn al-Dawādāri, VI, pp. 69-90; Maqrizi, *Ette'āz*, I, pp. 168-79; Nowayri, XXV, pp. 246-76; Halm, 1979, pp. 30-53; idem, *Empire of the Mahdi*, pp. 66-88, 183-90).

The early Isma'ilis elaborated the basic framework of a system of religious thought, which was further developed or modified in the Fatimid period. Central to this system was a fundamental distinction between the exoteric (*zāher*) and the esoteric (*bāṭen*) aspects of the sacred scriptures and religious commandments and prohibitions. Accordingly, they held that the Qur'ān and other revealed scriptures, and their laws (*šari'as*), had their apparent or literal meaning, the *zāher*, which had to be distinguished from their inner meaning hidden in the *bāṭen*. They further held that the *zāher*, or the religious laws, enunciated by prophets underwent periodical changes while the *bāṭen*, containing the spiritual truths (*ḥaqā'eq*), remained immutable and eternal. These truths, representing the message common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, were explained through *ta'wil* or esoteric exegesis, which often relied on the mystical significance of letters and numbers. In every age, the esoteric truths would be accessible only to the elite (*Ḳawāṣṣ*) of humankind as distinct from the ordinary people (*'awāmm*) who were only capable of perceiving the apparent meaning of the revelations. Consequently, in the era of Islam, the eternal truths of religion could be explained only to those who had been initiated into the Isma'ili *da'wa* and as such recognized the teaching authority of the Prophet Moḥammad and, after him, that of his *waṣi*, 'Ali b. Abi Ṭāleb, and the rightful imams who succeeded him; these authorities were the sole sources of *ta'wil* in the era of Islam. Initiation into Isma'ilism, known as *balāḡ*, was gradual and took place after the novice had taken an oath of allegiance, *'ahd* or *mitāq*. The initiates were also obliged to keep secret the *bāṭen* imparted to them by a hierarchy (*ḥodud*) of teachers (see Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, *Ketāb al-ālem*; Halm, "Isma'ili Oath of Allegiance," pp. 91-115). By believing in the *bāṭen* aspect of religion, the Isma'ilis came to be regarded by the rest of the Muslim community as the most representative of the Shi'ites propounding esotericism in Islam and, hence, their common designation as the Bāṭeniya (q.v.). This designation was also used in a derogatory sense accusing the



Isma'ilis of generally ignoring the *zāher*, or the *šari'a*.

The esoteric truths or *ḥaqā'eq* formed a gnostic system of thought for the early Isma'ilis, representing a distinct worldview. The two main components of this system, developed by the 280s/890s, were a cyclical history of revelations or prophetic eras and a gnostic cosmological doctrine. They applied their cyclical interpretation of time and the religious history of humankind to Judaeo-Christian revelations as well as a number of pre-Islamic religions such as Zoroastrianism with much appeal to non-Muslims. This conception of religious history, reflecting a variety of influences such as Hellenic, Judaeo-Christian, Gnostic as well as eschatological ideas of the earlier Shi'ites, was developed in terms of the eras of different prophets recognized in the Qur'an. This cyclical conception was also combined with the Isma'ili doctrine of the imamate inherited from the earlier Imamis.

According to their cyclical view, the Isma'ilis held that the religious history of humankind proceeded through seven prophetic eras (*dawrs*, q.v.) of various duration, each one inaugurated by a speaker or enunciator (*nāteq*) of a divinely revealed message which in its exoteric (*zāher*) aspect contained a religious law (*šari'a*). Each *nāteq* was, in turn, succeeded by a spiritual legatee (*waši*), also called the silent one (*šamet*) and later the foundation (*asās*), who revealed to the elite the esoteric truths (*ḥaqā'eq*) contained in the *bāten* dimension of that era's message. Each *waši* was succeeded by seven imams, who guarded the true meaning of the sacred scriptures and laws in their *zāher* and *bāten* aspects. The seventh imam, also called *motemm*, of every era would rise in rank to become the *nāteq* of the following era, abrogating the *šari'a* of the previous era and enunciating a new one. This pattern would change only in the seventh, final era of history. As the seventh imam of the sixth era, the era of the Prophet Moḥammad and Islam, Moḥammad b. Esmā'il was initially expected to return as the Mahdi (or *qā'em*) as well as the *nāteq* of the seventh eschatological era when, instead of promulgating a new law, he would fully reveal the esoteric truths of all the preceding revelations. This original cyclical view of religious history was modified after 'Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi's doctrinal reform. Recognizing continuity in the imamate, the seventh era now lost its earlier messianic appeal for the Fatimid Is-ma'ilis, for whom the final eschatological era, whatever its nature, was postponed indefinitely into the future. On the other hand, the Qarmaṭis of Baḥrayn and elsewhere continued to consider Moḥammad b. Esmā'il as their Mahdi who, on his reappearance as the seventh *nāteq*, was expected to initiate the final age of pure spirituality



(see F. Daftary, "Dawr," in *Elr*, VII, pp. 151-53; also Ebn Ḥawšab Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, *Ketāb al-rošd*, pp. 185-213; tr. Ivanow, 1955, pp. 29-59; Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, *Ketāb al-kašf*, pp. 14 ff., 103-4, 109-10, 113-14, 132-33, 138, 143, 150, 169-70; Qāzi No'mān, *Asās al-ta'wil*; Sejestāni, *Etbāt*, pp. 181-93; Corbin, 1983, pp. 1-58; Madelung, 1961, pp. 51 ff., 82-90; Halm, 1978, pp. 18-37; Walker, 1978, 355-66).

The cosmological doctrine of the early Isma'ilis may be reconstructed from the fragmentary evidence preserved in later Isma'ili texts (see especially Stern, 1983, pp. 3-29; Halm, 1978, pp. 18-127, 206-27; idem, "The Cosmology of the Pre-Fatimid Ismā'īliyya," in Daftary, ed., 1996, pp. 75-83). This doctrine, representing a gnostic cosmological myth, was espoused by the entire Isma'ili (Qarmaṭi) movement until it was superseded by a new cosmology of Neoplatonic provenance. According to this doctrine, through His intention (*erāda*) and will (*mašī'a*), God first created a light (*nur*) and addressed it with the Qur'ānic creative imperative *kon* (be!). Through the duplication of its two letters, *kāf* and *nun*, the name acquired its feminine form Kuni. On God's command, Kuni created from its light Qadar, its male assistant. Kuni and Qadar were thus the first two principles (*ašlān*) of creation. It was out of the original heptad of consonantal letters of Kuni-Qadar, also called the higher letters (*al-ḥoruf al-'olwiya*), that all other letters and names emerged; and with the names there simultaneously appeared the very things they symbolized. This doctrine explained how God's creative activity, through the intermediary of Kuni and Qadar, brought forth the beings of the spiritual world, also accounting for the creation of the lower physical world which culminated in the genesis of Man.

THE FATIMID PERIOD TO 487/1094

In this period, often referred to as the "golden age" of Isma'ilism, the Isma'ilis possessed an important state of their own and Isma'ili thought and literature as well as *da'wa* activities attained their summit. After his stay in Ramla, 'Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi arrived in Egypt in 291/904 where he spent a year. Subsequently, he was prevented from going to the Maghreb, where the *dā'i* Abu 'Abd-Allāh al-Šī'i had been successfully active among the Kotāma Berbers from 280/893 (see Qāzi No'mān, *Eftetāḥ*, pp. 71-222; Dachraoui, pp. 57-122; Halm, *Empire of the Mahdi*, pp. 9-128; M. Talbi, *L'Émirat Aghlabide 184-296/800-909*, Paris, 1966, pp. 579-672), because the Aḡlabid rulers of the region and their 'Abbasid overlords had discovered the Imam's plans and awaited to arrest him. 'Abd-Allāh now headed for the remote town of



Sejelmāsa, in southern Morocco, where he lived quietly for four years (292-96/905-9), maintaining his contacts with Abu ‘Abd-Allāh who had already commenced his conquest of Efrīqia (the eastern part of the Maghreb) with the help of his Kotāma soldier-tribesmen. By 296/908, this Kotāma army had achieved much success signaling the fall of the Aġlabids. On 1 Rajab 296/25 March 909, Abu ‘Abd-Allāh entered Raqqāda, the royal city outside of the Aġlabid capital of Qayrawān, from where he governed Efrīqia, as al-Mahdi’s deputy, for almost a whole year. In Ramazān 296/June 909, he set off at the head of his army for Sejalmāsa to hand over the reins of power to the Isma‘ili imam himself. ‘Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi was acclaimed as caliph in a special ceremony in Sejelmāsa on 7 Du‘l-Ḥejja 296/27 August 909. With these events the *dawr al-satr* in early Isma‘ilism had also ended. ‘Abd-Allāh al-Mahdi entered Raqqāda on 20 Rabi‘ II 297/4 January 910 and was immediately acclaimed as caliph (for a detailed eyewitness account of the establishment of Fatimid rule, see Ebn al-Haytam, *Ketāb al-Monāzarāt*). The Isma‘ili Shi‘ite caliphate of the Fatimids had now officially commenced in Efrīqia. The new dynasty was named Fatimid (Fāṭemiya) after the Prophet’s daughter, Fāṭema, to whom al-Mahdi and his successors traced their ‘Alid ancestry.

The Fatimids did not abandon the Isma‘ili *da‘wa* on assuming power, as they entertained universal aspirations aiming to extend their rule over the entire Muslim community. However, the early Fatimid caliph-imams, ruling from Efrīqia, encountered numerous difficulties while consolidating their power. In particular, they confronted the hostility of the Kharijite Berbers and the Sunni inhabitants of Qayrawān and other cities of Efrīqia led by their Māleki jurists. Under the circumstances, the Isma‘ili *da‘wa* remained rather inactive in North Africa for some time (Madelung, 1999, pp. 97-104). Fatimid rule was established firmly in the Maghreb only under al-Mo‘ezz le-Din Allāh (341-365/953-975), who succeeded in transforming the Fatimid caliphate from a regional state into a great empire. He was also the first Fatimid caliph-imam to concern himself significantly with the propagation of the Isma‘ili *da‘wa* outside the Fatimid dominions, especially after the transference of the seat of the Fatimid state in 362/973 to Egypt, where he founded Cairo as his new capital city. The *da‘wa* policy of al-Mo‘ezz was based on a number of religio-political considerations. In particular, he was apprehensive of the success of the Qarmaṭi propaganda which not only undermined the efforts of the Fatimid Isma‘ili *dā‘is* operating in the same lands, notably Iraq, Persia and Transoxania, but also aroused the general anti-Isma‘ili sentiments of the Sunni Muslims who did not distinguish between the Isma‘ilis and the Qarmaṭis who



had acquired a reputation for irreligiosity and lawlessness. Al-Mo'ezz's policies soon bore fruit as the Isma'ili *da'wa* and Fatimid cause were reinvigorated outside the Fatimid state. Most notably, Abu Ya'qub Sejestāni (q.v.), the *dā'ī* of Sistān, Makrān and Khorasan, who had earlier belonged to the dissident Qarmatī faction, transferred his allegiance to the Fatimids; and, consequently, many of his followers in Persia and Central Asia acknowledged the Fatimid caliph-imam. Isma'ilism also acquired a stronghold in Moltan, Sind, where an Isma'ili principality was established.

The caliph-imam al-Mo'ezz also permitted into the teachings of the Fatimid *da'wa* the Neoplatonic cosmology elaborated by the *dā'īs* of the Iranian lands. Henceforth, this Neoplatonized cosmology was advocated by the Fatimid *dā'īs* in preference to the earlier mythological doctrine. In the course of the 9th/10th century, Moḥammad Nasafi, Abu Ḥātem Rāzi and Sejestāni had set about harmonizing their Isma'ili Shi'ite theology with Neoplatonic philosophy. This led to the development of a unique intellectual tradition of philosophical theology in Isma'ilism. These *dā'īs* wrote for the educated classes of society and aimed to attract them intellectually. This is why they expressed their theology, always revolving around the central Shi'ite doctrine of the imamate, in terms of the then most intellectually fashionable terminologies and themes. The Iranian *dā'īs* elaborated complex metaphysical systems of thought with a distinct Neoplatonized emanational cosmology. In this cosmology, fully elaborated in Sejestāni's *Ketāb al-yanābi'* and other works, God is described as absolutely transcendent, beyond being and non-being, and thus unknowable (Sejestāni, *Kašf al-maḥjub*, pp. 4-15). Here, the Neoplatonic dyad of universal intellect (*'aql*) and universal soul (*naḥs*) in the spiritual world replace Kuni and Qadar of the earlier cosmology; and the emanational chain of creation is traced finally to Man, while recognizing that God created everything in the spiritual and physical worlds all at once (Sejestāni, *Etbāt*, pp. 2-3, 28; Nāṣer-e Ḳosraw, *Jāme' al-ḥekmatayn*, pp. 210-32). These *dā'īs* also expounded a doctrine of salvation as part of their cosmology. In their soteriology, the ultimate goal of salvation is the human soul's progression towards his Creator in quest of a spiritual reward in an eternal afterlife. This depended on guidance provided by the authorized sources of wisdom in every era of history (see Daftary, 1990, pp. 234-45; Walker, 1993, pp. 67-142; idem, 1996, pp. 26-103). Neoplatonic philosophy also influenced the cosmology elaborated by the Isma'ili-connected Eḳwān al-Ṣafā' (q.v.). It was also in al-Mo'ezz's time that Isma'ili law was codified and its precepts began to be observed by the judiciary throughout the Fatimid state.



The Isma'ilis had high esteem for learning and created distinctive traditions and institutions of learning under the Fatimids. The Fatimid *da'wa* was particularly concerned with educating the converts in Isma'ili esoteric doctrine, known as the *ḥekma* or “wisdom.” As a result, a variety of lectures or “teaching sessions,” generally designated as *majāles* (singular, *majles*), were organized. The private lectures on Isma'ili esoteric doctrine, known as the *majāles al-ḥekma* or “sessions of wisdom,” were reserved exclusively for the Isma'ili initiates who had already taken the oath of allegiance and secrecy. The lectures, delivered by the *dā'i al-do'āt* at the Fatimid palace, were approved beforehand by the imam. Only the imam was the source of the *ḥekma*; and the chief *dā'i*, commonly called *bāb* (the Gate) in Isma'ili sources, was merely the imam's mouthpiece through whom the Isma'ilis received their knowledge of Isma'ili esoteric doctrines (see Kermāni, *Rāḥat al-'aql*, pp. 135, 138, 143, 205-8, 212-14). Many of these *majāles* were in due course collected and committed to writing. This Fatimid tradition of learning culminated in the *Majāles al-Mo'ayyadiya* of the *dā'i* al-Mo'ayyad fi'l-Din Širāzi (see Maqrizi, *al-Keṭaṭ*, I, pp. 390-91; Qalqašandi, X, pp. 434-39; Halm, “The Isma'ili Oath of Allegiance,” pp. 98-112; idem, 1997, pp. 23-29, 41-55; Walker, 1997, pp. 182-86). Another main institution of learning founded by the Fatimids was the Dār al-'Elm, the House of Knowledge, sometimes also called Dār al-Ḥekma. Established in 395/1005 by the caliph-imam al-Ḥākem (386-411/996-1021), a variety of religious and non-religious subjects were taught here and it was also equipped with a major library. Many Fatimid *dā'is* received at least part of their training at the Dār al-'Elm (Maqrizi, *al-Keṭaṭ*, I, pp. 458-60; Halm, 1997, pp. 71-77; Walker, 1997, pp. 189-93).

Information on the structure and functioning of the Isma'ili *da'wa* organization was among the most guarded secrets of Isma'ilism. The religio-political messages of the *da'wa* were disseminated by networks of *dā'is* within the Fatimid dominions as well as in other regions referred to as the *jazā'er* (singular, *jazira*, “island”). Each *jazira* was placed under the charge of a high-ranking *dā'i* referred to as *ḥojja*; and every *ḥojja* had a number of *dā'is* of different ranks working under him. Organized in a strictly hierarchical manner, the Fatimid *da'wa* was under the overall supervision of the imam and the *dā'i al-do'āt*, or *bāb*, who acted as its administrative head. The *da'wa* organization developed over time and reached its full elaboration under the caliph-imam al-Mostaṣer (see Daftary, “Dā'ī,” in *EIr*, VI, pp. 590-92; idem, 1990, pp. 224-32; Stern, 1972, pp. 437-50; Hamdani, 1976, pp. 85-114). It was in non-Fatimid regions, in the *jazā'er*, especially Yaman, Persia and Central Asia,



that the Fatimid *da'wa* achieved lasting success (Daftary, 1999, pp. 29-43; idem, "Medieval Isma'ilis," pp. 48-61). The *da'wa* was intensified in Iraq and Persia under al-Ḥākem. Foremost among the *dā'īs* of this period was Ḥamid al-Din Kermāni (q.v.). A learned philosopher, he harmonized Isma'ili theology with a variety of philosophical traditions in developing his own metaphysical system. In fact, Kermāni's thought represents a unique tradition within the Iranian school of philosophical Isma'ilism. He expounded a particular cosmology, replacing the Neoplatonic dyad of intellect and soul in the spiritual world by a system of ten separate intellects in partial adaptation of Fārābi's Aristotelian cosmic system (Kermāni, *Rāḥat al-'aql*, pp. 134 ff.) Kermāni's cosmology was not adopted by the Fatimid *da'wa*; it later provided the basis for the fourth and final stage in the evolution of Isma'ili cosmology at the hands of Ṭayyebi Mosta'li *dā'īs* of Yaman (see W. Madelung, "Cosmogony and Cosmology. vi. In Isma'ilism," in *EIr*, VI, pp. 323-24; de Smet, 1995, pp. 16-377; Walker, 1999, pp. 80-117). Al-Ḥākem's reign also coincided with the initial phase of what was to become known as the Druze religion, founded by a number of *dā'īs* who had come to Cairo from Persia and Central Asia, notably Aḵram, Ḥamza, and Darzi. These *dā'īs* proclaimed the end of the era of Islam and declared the divinity of al-Ḥākem. Kermāni was officially invited to Cairo around 405/1014 to refute the new extremist doctrines from a theological perspective (M. G. S. Hodgson, "Duruz," in *EI*² II, pp. 631-34; Bryer).

The Isma'ili *da'wa* activities outside the Fatimid dominions reached their peak in the long reign of al-Mostaṣer (427-487 /1036-1094), even after the Sunni Saljuqs had replaced the Shi'ite Buyids as overlords of the 'Abbasids in 447/1055. The Fatimid *dā'īs* won many converts in Iraq and different parts of Persia and Central Asia. One of the most prominent *dā'īs* of this period was al-Mo'ayyad fe'l-Din Širāzi who after his initial career in Fars settled in Cairo and played an active role in the affairs of the Fatimid *dawla* and Isma'ili *da'wa*. In 450/1058, al-Mostaṣer appointed him as *dā'ī al-do'āt*, a post he held for twenty years, with the exception of a brief period, until his death in 470/1078 (see al-Mo'ayyad fe'l-Din, *Sirat*; Klemm, pp. 2-63, 136-92). Al-Mo'ayyad established closer relations between Cairo and several *jaziras*, especially Yaman where Isma'ilism had persisted in a dormant form throughout the 4th/10th century. By the time of al-Mostaṣer, the leadership of the *da'wa* in Yaman had fallen into the hands of the *dā'ī* 'Ali b. Moḥammad al-Ṣolayḥi, an important chieftain of the Banu Hamdān in the mountainous region of Ḥarāz. 'Ali al-Ṣolayḥi rose in Ḥarāz in 439/1047, marking the effective foundation of the Ṣolayḥid dynasty ruling over different parts of Yaman as vassals of the Fatimids until 532/1138.



On 'Ali's death in 459/1067, Lamak b. Mālek Ḥammādi was appointed as chief *dā'i* of Yaman while 'Ali's son Aḥmad al-Mokarram succeeded his father merely as head of the Ṣolayḥid state. The *dā'i* Lamak had earlier spent five years in Cairo, studying with the chief *dā'i* al-Mo'ayyad. From the latter part of Aḥmad al-Mokarram's reign, during which time the Ṣolayḥids lost much of Yaman to Zaydis there, effective authority in the Ṣolayḥid state was transferred to al-Mokarram's consort, al-Maleka al-Sayyeda Ḥorra. She also played an increasingly important role in the affairs of the Yamani *da'wa* culminating in her appointment as the *hojja* of Yaman by al-Mostaṣer. This represented the first application of a high rank in the *da'wa* hierarchy to a woman ('Omāra b. 'Ali al-Ḥakami, *Ta'riḳ al-Yaman*, in Kay, 1892, text pp. 1-102, tr. pp. 1-137; Ḥ. F. al-Hamdāni, 1955, pp. 62-231). The Ṣolayḥids also played an active part in the renewed efforts of the Fatimids to spread the *da'wa* on the Indian subcontinent (see al-Mostaṣer, *al-Sejellāt*, pp. 167-69, 203-6). The Isma'ili community founded in Gojarāt by *dā'is* sent from Yaman in the second half of the 5th/11th century evolved into the modern day Ṭayyebi Bohra community.

Meanwhile, the Isma'ili *da'wa* had continued to spread in many parts of the Iranian world, now incorporated into the Saljuq sultanate. By the early 460s/1070s, the Persian Isma'ilis in the Saljuq dominions were under the leadership of 'Abd al-Malek b. 'Aṭṭāš who had his secret headquarters in Isfahan. He was also responsible for launching the career of Ḥasan-e Ṣabbāḥ (q.v.) who in due course led the Isma'ili *da'wa* in Persia. In Badaḳšān and other eastern parts of the Iranian world too the *da'wa* had continued to spread after the downfall of the Sāmānids in 395/1005 (Ebn al-Atir, IX, pp. 211, 358, X, pp. 122 ff., 165-66; Barthold, pp. 251, 304-5, 316-18). One of the most eminent *dā'is* of al-Mostaṣer's time, Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow played an important part in propagating Is-ma'ilism in Central Asia as the *hojja* of Khorasan; he also spread the *da'wa* to Ṭabarestān and other Caspian provinces. It was mainly during his period of exile in Yomgān that Nāṣer extended the *da'wa* throughout Badaḳšān while maintaining his contacts with the *dā'i* al-Mo'ayyad and the *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo. In fact, the Isma'ilis of Badaḳšān, now divided between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and their offshoot groups in the Hindu Kush region, now situated in Hunza and other northern areas of Pakistan, regard Ṣāh Nāṣer-e Ḳosraw as the founder of their communities (Ivanow, 1948; Berthels, *Nasir-i Khosrov*; Corbin, "Nāṣir-i Khusrau," pp. 520-42; Daftary, 1990, pp. 215-18; Hunsberger, pp. 220-54). By the time the Qarmaṭi state of Baḥrayn was finally uprooted in 470/1077-78 by some local tribal chieftains, other



Qarmaṭi groups in Persia, Iraq, and elsewhere too had either disintegrated or switched their allegiance to the Isma'ili *da'wa* of the Fatimids. There was now, once gain, only one unified Isma'ili *da'wa* under the supreme leadership of the Fatimid caliph-imam.

During the long reign of al-Mostaṣfer the Fatimid caliphate had already embarked on its decline resulting from factional fighting in the Fatimid armies and other political and economic difficulties. The unruliness of the Turkish troops led to a complete breakdown of law and order, and drove al-Mostaṣfer to appeal to Badr al-Jamāli, an Armenian general in the service of the Fatimids, for help. Badr arrived in Cairo in 466/1074 and soon assumed the leadership of civil, judicial and religious administration in addition to being “commander of the armies” (*amir al-joyuṣ*), his main source of power. He managed to restore peace and relative prosperity to Egypt in the course of his long vizierate of some twenty years, as the *de facto* ruler of the Fatimid state. Badr died in 487/1094, having arranged for his son Afzal to succeed him in the vizierate. Henceforth, real power in the Fatimid state remained in the hands of the Fatimid viziers who also commanded the troops, whence their title of “Vizier of the Sword” (*wazir al-sayf*). They were also in charge of the *da'w* organization and activities.

Al-Mostaṣfer, the eighth Fatimid caliph and eighteenth Isma'ili imam, died in Du'l-Ḥejja 487/December 1094, a few months after Badr al-Jamāli. Thereupon, the unified Isma'ili *da'wa* split into two rival factions, as al-Mostaṣfer's son and original heir-designate, Nezār, was deprived of his succession rights by Afzal who quickly installed Nezār's younger half-brother to the Fatimid throne with the title of al-Mosta'li be'llāh (487-95/1094-1101). The two factions were later designated as the Nezāriya and Mosta'liya. Afzal immediately obtained for al-Mosta'li the allegiance of the notables of the Fatimid court and the leaders of the Isma'ili *da'wa* in Cairo who now also recognized al-Mosta'li's imamate. Nezār refused to pay homage to al-Mosta'li and fled to Alexandria where he rose in revolt, but he was defeated and killed in 488/1095. The imamate of al-Mosta'li was recognized by the Isma'ili communities of Egypt, Yaman, and western India. These Isma'ilis, who depended on the Fatimid regime, later traced the imamate in the progeny of al-Mosta'li. The bulk of the Isma'ilis of Syria, too, joined the Mosta'li camp. On the other hand, the Isma'ilis of Persia who were then already under the leadership of Ḥasan-e Šabbāḥ supported the succession rights of Nezār. The Central Asian Isma'ilis seem to have remained uninvolved in the Nezāri-Mosta'li schism for quite some time



(al-Mostanşer, *al-Sejellāt*, pp. 109-18; Ebn al-Qalānesi, p. 128; Ebn Moyassar, pp. 59 ff., Ebn al-Dawādāri, VI, pp. 443 ff.; Maqrizi, *Ette'āz*, III, pp. 11 ff.; idem, *al-Keṭaṭ*, I, pp. 422-23; Ebn Tağriberdi, V, pp. 142-45).

MOSTA'LI ISMA'ILISM

The Fatimid state survived for another 77 years after the Nezāri-Mosta'li schism of 487/1094. These decades witnessed the rapid decline of the Fatimid caliphate which was beset by continuing crises. Al-Mosta'li and his successors on the Fatimid throne, who were mostly minors and remained powerless in the hands of their viziers, continued to be recognized as imams by the Mosta'li Isma'ilis who themselves soon split into Ḥāfezi and Ṭayyebi branches. After al-Mosta'li's premature death in 495/1101, the all-powerful vizier Afzal placed his five-year-old son on the throne with the caliphal title of al-Āmer be-Aḥkām Allāh. Afzal was murdered in 515/1121; and when al-Āmer himself was assassinated in 524/1130, the Mosta'li Isma'ilis were confronted with a major crisis of succession. A son, named Ṭayyeb, had been born to al-Āmer a few months before his death; and he had been designated as the heir. But on al-Āmer's death, power was assumed by his cousin, 'Abd-al-Majid, the eldest member of the Fatimid family, and nothing more was heard of Ṭayyeb. After a brief confusing period in Fatimid history, when Twelver Shi'ism instead of Isma'ilism was adopted as the official religion of the Fatimid state by Afzal's son Kotayfāt who had succeeded to the vizierate, 'Abd al-Majid re-emerged on the scene in 526/1132, proclaiming himself as caliph and imam with the title of al-Ḥāfez le-Din Allāh; and Isma'ilism was reinstated as the state's religion (Ebn al-Qalānesi, pp. 203, 229, 242 ff., 262, 270, 272-73, 295-96, 308; Ebn Zāfer, pp. 94-101; Ebn Moyassar, pp. 113-41; Ebn al-Dawādāri, VI, pp. 506-56; Maqrizi, *Ette'āz*, III, pp. 135-92; Ebn Tāğriberdi, V, pp. 237-87).

The irregular proclamation of al-Ḥāfez as imam, whose father had not been imam previously, caused a major schism in Mosta'li Isma'ilism. As in the case of the Nezāri-Mosta'li split, the Mosta'li *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo endorsed the imamate of al-Ḥāfez, who claimed al-Āmer had personally designated him (see Qalqaşandi, IX, pp. 291-97). Therefore, it was also acknowledged by the Mosta'li Isma'ilis of Egypt and Syria as well as a portion of the Mosta'lis of Yaman. These Isma'ilis, who recognized al-Ḥāfez and the later Fatimid caliphs as their imams, became known as the Ḥāfeziya. On the other hand, the Şolayhid queen of Yaman, al-Sayyeda, who had already drifted away from Cairo, upheld Ṭayyeb's cause and recognized him as al-Āmer's successor to the imamate. As a result, the Mosta'li community of the Şolayhid state, too,



recognized Ṭayyeb's imamate. These Mosta'li Isma'ilis of Yaman, with some minority groups in Egypt and Syria, initially known as the Āmeriya, became later designated as the Ṭayyebiya. Ḥāfeẓiya Is-ma'ilism disappeared completely soon after the collapse of the Fatimid dynasty and caliphate. The Ayyubid Ṣalāḥ al-Din, the last Fatimid vizier, ended Fatimid rule in 567/1171 and thereafter persecuted the Isma'ilis of Egypt. Henceforth, Mosta'li Isma'ilism survived only in its Ṭayyebi form (Casanova, pp. 415-45; Stern, 1951, pp. 193-255; Daftary, 1990, pp. 256-84).

Ṭayyebi Isma'ilism found its permanent stronghold in Yaman, where it received the initial support of the Ṣolayḥid queen al-Sayyeda who had been looking after the affairs of the Mosta'li *da'wa* there with the help of the *dā'i* Lamak b. Mālek Ḥammādi and then his son Yaḥyā (d. 520/1126). It was soon after 526/1132 that the Ṣolayḥid queen broke her relations with Cairo and declared Yaḥyā's successor Do'ayb b. Musā as the *dā'i moṭlaq*, or *dā'i* with absolute authority, to lead the affairs of the Ṭayyebi Mosta'li *da'wa* on behalf of Ṭayyeb, who was thought to be in hiding. This marked the foundation of the Ṭayyebi *da'wa* independently of the Ṣolayḥid state. On Do'ayb's death in 546/1151, Ebrāhim Ḥāmedi succeeded to the headship of the Ṭayyebi *da'wa* as the second *dā'i moṭlaq*. The Ṭayyebi *da'wa* spread successfully in the Ḥarāz region even though it did not receive the support of any Yamani rulers after the death of the Ṣolayḥid queen in 532/1138. After Ebrāhim Ḥāmedi (d. 557/1162), the position of *dā'i moṭlaq* remained hereditary among his descendants until 605/1209 when it passed to 'Ali b. Moḥammad al-Walid of the Banu al-Walid al-Anf family of the Qorayš, and it then remained in this family, with minor interruptions, until 946/1539. The Ṭayyebi Isma'ilis are of the opinion that in the current period of *satr*, initiated by Ṭayyeb's own concealment, their imamate has been handed down among his descendants down to the present time. All these imams have remained in concealment, and in their absence the *dā'i moṭlaqs* lead the affairs of the Ṭayyebi *da'wa* and community (Hamdani, 1970, pp. 279 ff.; Daftary, 1990, pp. 285-91; idem, "Sayyida Ḥurra: The Ismā'īlī Ṣulayḥid Queen of Yemen," in G. R. G. Hambly, ed., *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, New York, 1998, pp. 117-30).

In the doctrinal field, the Ṭayyebis maintained the Fatimid traditions, and preserved a good portion of the Isma'ili texts of the Fatimid period. Similarly to the Fatimids, they emphasized the equal importance of the *ẓāher* and *bāṭen* aspects of religion, also retaining the earlier interest of the Isma'ilis in cyclical history and cosmology which served as the basis of their gnostic, esoteric



ḥaqā'eq system of religious thought with its distinctive eschatological themes. This system was founded largely by Ebrāhim Hāmedi who drew extensively on Kermāni's *Rāḥat al-'aql* and synthesized its cosmological doctrine of the ten separate intellects with gnostic mythical elements (see Hāmedi, *Kanz al-walad*). This represented the final modification of Neoplatonic cosmology in Isma'ili thought (Corbin, 1983, pp. 37-58, 65 ff., 76 ff., 103 ff., 173-81; Daftary, 1990, pp. 291-97). The Ṭayyebi *da'wa* organization has drawn on Fatimid antecedents with certain modifications. As in the case of imams, every *dā'i moṭlaq* has appointed his successor by the rule of the *naṣṣ*. The *dā'i moṭlaq* was normally assisted in the affairs of the Ṭayyebi *da'wa* by several subordinate *dā'is* designated as *ma'dun* and *mokāser*.

Meanwhile, the Ṭayyebi *dā'i moṭlaqs* in Yaman maintained close relations with the Ṭayyebi community in western India. There, the Isma'ili converts, mostly of Hindu descent, were known as Bohras, a name believed to have been derived from the Gojarāti term *vohorvu* meaning "to trade," since the *da'wa* originally spread among the trading community of Gojarāt. The Isma'ili Bohras of Gojarāt were persecuted under the Sunni sultans of the region from 793/1391, forcing them to observe *taqiya* in the guise of Sunnism. With the establishment of Mongol rule in 980/1572, however, Bohras began to enjoy a certain degree of religious freedom and conversions to Sunni Islam ended.

On the death of the twenty-sixth *dā'i moṭlaq*, Dā'ud b. 'Ajabšāh, in 997/1589, his succession was disputed, leading to the Dā'udi-Solaymāni schism in the Ṭayyebi *da'wa* and community. The great majority of Ṭayyebis, then located in India, acknowledged Dā'ud Borhān al-Din (d. 1021/1612) as their new *dā'i* and became known as Dā'udis. A small number of Yamani Ṭayyebis, too, supported the Dā'udi cause. On the other hand, a minority of all Ṭayyebis, who accounted for the bulk of the community in Yaman, recognized Solaymān b. Ḥasan (d. 1005/1597) as their new, twenty-seventh *dā'i*; they became known as Solaymānis. Henceforth, the Dā'udi and Solay-māni Ṭayyebis followed separate lines of *dā'is*. The Dā'udi *dā'is* continued to reside in India, while the headquarters of the Solaymāni *da'wa* were established in Yaman (Moḥammad 'Ali, *Mawsem-e bahār*, III, pp. 169-259; Misra, pp. 27-31; Daftary, 1990, pp. 299-306). Subsequently, the Dā'udi Bohras were further subdivided in India due to periodical challenges to the authority of their *dā'i moṭlaq*.

In 1200/1785, the headquarters of the Dā'udi *da'wa* was transferred to Surat, where the forty-third *dā'i*, 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din (1213-32/1798-1817), founded a seminary known as Sayfi Dars, also Jāme'a Sayfia, for the education of Dā'udi



scholars and the functionaries of the community. This seminary, with a major library, has continued to serve as an institution of traditional Islamic learning for the Dā'udi Bohras. Since 1232/1817, the office of the *dā'i moṭlaq* of the Dā'udi Ṭayyebis has remained among the descendants of Šayk Jiwānġi Awrangā-bādi, while the community has experienced intermittent strife and crisis rooted in opposition to the *dā'is*' authority. The present *dā'i moṭlaq* of the Dā'udi *da'wa*, Sayyednā Borhān al-Din, succeeded to his position as the fifty-second in the series in 1385/1965. The total Dā'udi population of the world is currently (2002) estimated at around 900,000, located mainly in South Asia. Since the 1920s, Bombay, with its largest single concentration of Dā'udi Bohras, has served as the permanent administrative seat of the Dā'udi *dā'i moṭlaq*. The Ṭayyebi Bohras, together with the Nezāri Khojas, were also among the earliest Asian communities to settle, during the nineteenth century and subsequently, in East Africa (Amiji, 1969, pp. 141-81; idem, 1975, pp. 27-61).

In Yaman, the leadership of the Solaymāni Ṭayyebis has remained hereditary, since 1088/1677, with few exceptions, in the same Makrami family. Unlike the Dā'udis, the Solaymānis have not experienced succession disputes and schisms. The Solaymāni *dā'is* established their headquarters in Najrān, in northeastern Yaman, and ruled over that region with the military support of the local Banu Yām. In the twentieth century, the political prominence of the Solaymāni *dā'is*, checked earlier by the Ottomans, was further curtailed by the Sa'udi family; Najran was, in fact, annexed to Saudi Arabia in 1353/1934. The present *dā'i moṭlaq* of the Solaymānis, the forty-ninth in the series, Sayyednā Šarafi Ḥosayn Makrami who succeeded to office in 1396/1976, lives in Saudi Arabia. At present, the Solaymāni Ṭayyebi Isma'ilis of Yaman number around 70,000 persons. The Solaymāni Bohras represent a very small community of a few thousands in India (Daftary, 1990, pp. 318-23).

NEZĀRI ISMA'ILISM OF THE ALAMUT PERIOD

By 487/1094, Ḥasan-e Šabbāḡ (q.v.), who preached the Isma'ili *da'wa* on behalf of the Fatimids within the Saljuq dominions in Persia, had emerged as the leader of the Persian Isma'ilis. He had already been following an independent policy, and his seizure of the mountain fortress of Alamut (q.v.) in 483/1090 signalled the commencement of an open revolt against the Saljuq Turks as well as the foundation of what was to become the Nezāri Isma'ili state. As an Isma'ili Shi'ite, Ḥasan-e Šabbāḡ could not have tolerated the anti-Shi'ite policies of the Saljuqs, who as the new champions of Sunni Islam aimed to uproot the Fatimids. Ḥasan's revolt was also an expression of Persian



“national” sentiments, as the alien rule of the Saljuq Turks was intensely detested by the Persians of different social classes. This may explain why he substituted Persian for Arabic as the religious language of the Isma‘ilis of Persia (see Daftary, “Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and the Origins of the Nizārī Isma‘ili Movement,” in Daftary, ed., 1996, pp. 181-204). It was under such circumstances that in al-Mostaṣer’s succession dispute Ḥasan supported Nezār’s cause and severed his relations with the Fatimid regime and the *da‘wa* headquarters in Cairo which had supported al-Mosta‘li. By this decision, Ḥasan had founded the independent Nezārī Isma‘ili *da‘wa* on behalf of the Nezārī imam. As a result of this decision, the Nezārī *da‘wa* survived the downfall of the Fatimid dynasty, a pattern similar to the subsequent fate of the Ṭayyebi *da‘wa* in Yaman (Jovayni, III, pp. 186-216; tr. Boyle, II, pp. 666-83; Rašid al-Din, pp. 97-137; Kāšāni, pp. 133-72; Hodgson, 1955, pp. 41-98; Daftary, 1990, pp. 324-71).

The revolt of the Persian Isma‘ilis soon acquired a distinctive pattern and method of struggle, adapted to the decentralized power structure of the Saljuq sultanate and their much superior military power. Ḥasan devised a strategy to overwhelm the Saljuqs locality by locality and from a multitude of impregnable mountain strongholds. Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ did not divulge the name of Nezār’s successor to the imamate. In fact, numismatic evidence shows that Nezār’s own name appeared on coins minted at Alamut for about seventy years after his death in 488/1095, while his progeny were blessed anonymously (Miles, pp. 155-62). The early Nezārī Isma‘ilis were thus left without an accessible imam in another *dawr al-satr*; and, as in the pre-Fatimid period of concealment, the absent imam was represented in the community by a *hojja*, his chief representative. Ḥasan and his next two successors at Alamut as heads of the Nezārī *da‘wa* and state, were recognized as such *hojjas* (*Haft bāb-e Bābā Sayyednā*, pp. 21-22; Abu Eshāq Qohestāni, text p. 23). It seems that already in Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ’s time many Nezāris believed that a son or grandson of Nezār had been secretly brought from Egypt to Persia, and he became the progenitor of the line of the Nezārī imams who later emerged at Alamut (Jovayni, III, pp. 180-81, 231-37; tr. Boyle, II, pp. 663, 691-95; Rašid al-Din, pp. 79, 166-68; Kāšāni, pp. 115, 202-4).

From early on in the Alamut period, the outsiders had the impression that the Persian Isma‘ilis had initiated a “new preaching” (*al-da‘wa al-jadida*) in contrast to the “old preaching” (*al-da‘wa al-qadima*) of the Fatimid times. The “new preaching” did not, however, represent any new doctrines; it was merely



a reformulation of the old Shi'ite doctrine of *ta'lim*, or authoritative teaching by the imam. It was mainly Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ himself who restated this doctrine in a theological treatise entitled *al-Foṣṣal al-arba'a*, or *The Four Chapters*. This treatise, originally written in Persian, has been preserved only in parts (see Ṣahrastāni, pp. 150-52; tr. Gimaret and Monnot, I, pp. 560-65; Jovayni, III, pp. 195-99; tr. Boyle, II, pp. 671-73; Rašid-al-Din, pp. 105-7; Kāšāni, pp. 142-43; Hodgson, 1955, pp. 51-61, 325-28). The doctrine of *ta'lim*, emphasizing the autonomous teaching authority of each imam in his own time, became the central doctrine of the Nezāris who, henceforth, were designated also as the Ta'limiya. The intellectual challenge posed to the Sunni establishment by the doctrine of *ta'lim*, which also refuted the legitimacy of the 'Abbasid caliph as the spiritual spokesman of all Muslims, called forth the reaction of the Sunnis. Many Sunni scholars, led by Ġazāli, attacked the Isma'ili doctrine of *ta'lim* (see Ġazāli, *Faḏā'eḥ al-Bāṭeniya*, ed. 'A. Badawi, Cairo, 1964; Mitha, pp. 28-102).

By 489/1096, when the fortress of Lamasar was seized, Ḥasan had acquired or built numerous mountain strongholds in Rudbār, the center of Nezāri power. At the same time, the Isma'ilis had come to possess a network of fortresses and several towns in Qohestān, in southeastern Khorasan, which remained the second most important territory of the Nezāri state. Later, the Nezāris acquired Gerdkuh (q.v.) and other fortresses in the regions of Qumes, Arrajān and Zagros. By the opening years of the 6th/12th century, Ḥasan had begun to extend his activities into Syria by sending Persian *dā'is* from Alamut. By the final years of Ḥasan's life, the anti-Saljuq revolt of the Persian Nezāris had lost its effectiveness, much in the same way that the Saljuqs under Barkiāroq and Moḥammad Tapar had failed in their prolonged military campaigns to uproot the Persian Isma'ilis from their strongholds. The Isma'ili-Saljuq relations had now entered a new phase of "stalemate" (Daftary, 1990, pp. 340-44, 361-65; Hillenbrand, pp. 205-20).

After Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ's death in 518/1124, Kiā Bozorg-Omid (q.v.) followed as the head of the Nezāri *da'wa* and state. A capable administrator like his predecessor, Bozorg-Omid (518-32/1124-38) maintained the policies of Ḥasan and further strengthened and extended the Nezāri state. The Isma'ili-Saljuq stalemate essentially continued during the long reign of Bozorg-Omid's son Mo-ḥammad (532-57/1138-62) as the third lord of Alamut (Jovayni, III, pp. 216-22; tr. Boyle, II, pp. 683-86; Rašid al-Din, pp. 137-61; Kāšāni, pp. 172-99; Daftary, 1990, pp. 371-86). By then, the Nezāri state had acquired its distinctive administrative structure. Each Nezāri territory was placed under the overall



leadership of a chief *dā'i* appointed from Alamut; the leader of the Qohestāni Nezāris was known as *moḥtašam*. These *dā'is*, as well as the commanders of major strongholds, enjoyed a large degree of independence and local initiative, contributing to the dynamism and resilience of the Nezāri movement. Being preoccupied with their struggle and survival in an extremely hostile environment, the Nezāris produced military commanders rather than learned theologians of the types operating under the Fatimids. Consequently, the literary activities of the Nezāris were rather limited during the Alamut period. Nevertheless, the early Nezāris did maintain a sophisticated outlook and a literary tradition, elaborating their teachings in response to changed circumstances. Ḥasan Šabbāḥ himself is credited with establishing an impressive library at Alamut. Other major fortresses in Persia and Syria, too, were later equipped with significant collections of manuscripts, documents and scientific instruments. Firmly united with a remarkable sense of mission, the Nezāris acknowledged the supreme leadership of Alamut and obeyed without any dissent the religious policies initiated at that fortress initially by the Nezāri imam's *ḥojjas* and, subsequently, by the imams themselves. Meanwhile, the Nezāris had been eagerly expecting the appearance of their imam, who had remained inaccessible since Nezār's murder in 488/1095.

The fourth lord of Alamut, Ḥasan II (q.v.), to whom the Nezāris referred with the expression '*alā dekrehe'l-salām* (on his mention be peace), succeeded to leadership in 557/1162 and, soon after, declared the *qiāma* or resurrection initiating a new phase in the religious history of the early Nezāris. On 17 Ramazān 559/8 August 1164, in the presence of the representatives of different Nezāri communities who had gathered at Alamut, he delivered a sermon in which he proclaimed the *qiāma*, the long awaited Last Day. About two months later, a similar ceremony was held at the fortress of Mo'menābād, near Birjand, and the earlier *koṭba* and message were read out by Ra'is Moẓaffar, the *moḥtašam* in Qohestān. There, Ḥasan II's position was more clearly equated with that of al-Mostanṣer as God's caliph (*kalifa*) on earth, implicitly claiming the status of imam for the lord of Alamut (Jovayni, III, pp. 222-39; tr. Boyle, II, pp. 686-97; Rašid-al-Din, pp. 162-70; Kāšāni, pp. 199-208; Abu Eshāq Qohestāni, text pp. 19, 24, 38-39, 40-44, 46-47, 53, 58, tr. pp. 19, 23, 38, 40-44, 46-47, 53-54, 58; Hodgson, 1955, pp. 146-59; Lewis, 1967, pp. 70-75, Daftary, 1990, pp. 385-91).

Ḥasan II relied heavily on Isma'ili *ta'wil* and earlier traditions, interpreting *qiāma* symbolically and spiritually for the Nezāris. Accordingly, *qiāma* meant



nothing more than the manifestation of unveiled truth (*ḥaqīqa*) in the person of the Nezāri imam; it was a spiritual resurrection only for the Nezāris who acknowledged the rightful imam of the time and were now capable of understanding the truth, the esoteric essence of Islam. It was in this sense that Paradise was actualized for the Nezāris in this world. The Nezāris, like Sufis, were now to rise to a spiritual level of existence, from *zāher* to *bāṭen*, from *šari'a* to *ḥaqīqa*, or from the literal interpretation of the law to an understanding of its spiritual essence and the eternal truths. On the other hand, the “outsiders,” the non-Nezāris who were incapable of recognizing the truth, were rendered spiritually non-existent. The imam proclaiming the *qiāma* would be the *qā'em al-qiāma*, or the lord of resurrection, a rank which in Isma'ili religious hierarchy was always higher than that of an ordinary imam.

Ḥasan II's son and successor Nur-al-Din Moḥammad devoted his long reign (561-607/1166-1210) to a systematic doctrinal elaboration of the *qiāma*. The exaltation of the autonomous teaching authority of the present Nezāri imam now became the central feature of the Nezāri thought; and *qiāma* came to imply a complete personal transformation of the Nezāris who were expected to perceive the imam in his true spiritual reality. Nur-al-Din Moḥammad also made every Nezāri imam potentially a *qā'em*, capable of inaugurating the era of *qiāma*. In the spiritual world of resurrection there would no longer be any need for ranks of the *da'wa* intervening between the imam-*qā'em* and his followers. There would now remain only three categories of persons, reflecting different levels of existence in terms of relationships to the Nezāri imam. There are the “people of opposition” (*ahl-e tazādd*), the non-Nezāris who exist only in the realm of appearances (*zāher*) and are spiritually non-existent. Secondly, there are the ordinary followers of the Nezāri imam, the “people of gradation” (*ahl-e tarattob*), who have penetrated the *šari'a* to its inner meaning. However, they have access only to partial truth, as they still do not fully understand the *bāṭen*. Finally, there are the “people of union” (*ahl-e vaḥdat*), the Nezāri super-elite, or the *aqašš-e kāšš*, who perceived the imam in his true spiritual reality as the epiphany (*mazhar*) of the word (*kalema*) of God (Ṭusi, *Rawza*, text pp. 104-5, 112, tr. pp. 119, 128-29; idem, *Sayr*, text pp. 17-18, tr. pp. 47-48); only they arrive at the realm of the *ḥaqīqa*, in a sense the *bāṭen* behind the *bāṭen*, where they find full truth and as such, they enjoy full salvation in the paradisaal state actualized for them in this world. It seems that the privileged state of the *ahl-e vaḥdat* was attainable by only a few. Nur-al-Din Moḥammad also explicitly affirmed the Nezārid Fatimid descent of his father



and, therefore, himself, explaining that Ḥasan II was in fact imam and the son of a descendant of Nezār b. al-Mostaṣer who had earlier found refuge in Alamut. Henceforth, the Nezāris recognized the lords of Alamut, beginning with Ḥasan II, as their imams (*Haft bāb-e Bābā Sayyednā*, pp. 4-42; tr. Hodgson, in his *Order of Assassins*, pp. 279-324; Ṭusi, *Rawḏa*, text pp. 42, 44-45, 47-56, 98-99, 101-2, tr. pp. 46-47, 49-50, 52-63, 111-12, 115-16; Jovayni, III, 240-42; tr. Boyle, II, pp. 697-99; Rašid-al-Din, pp. 170-73; Kāšāni, pp. 208-14; Hodgson, 1955, pp. 160-84, 210-17).

Meanwhile, the Syrian Nezāris had entered into an important phase of their history under Rāšed-al-Din Senān, their most famous leader who had been appointed as chief *dā'ī* in Syria by Ḥasan II soon after his own accession in 557/1162. Senān reorganized and strengthened the Syrian Nezāri *da'wa*, also consolidating their network of fortresses in the Jabal Bahrā', in central Syria. Aiming to safeguard his community, he entered into intricate and shifting alliances with the major neighboring powers and rulers, notably the Crusaders, the Zangids and Ṣalāh-al-Din. Senān taught his own version of the doctrine of *qiāma*, which did not acquire deep roots in the Syrian Nezāri community. The only one of the Syrian *dā'īs* to act somewhat independently of Alamut, Senān led the Syrian Nezāris for almost three decades to the peak of their power and fame until his death in 589/1193 (Abu Ferās Šehāb al-Din Maynaqi, *Faṣl*, in Guyard, pp. 387-489; B. Lewis, "Kamāl al-Dīn's Biography of Rāšid al-Dīn Sinān," *Arabica* 13, 1966, pp. 225-67; idem, 1967, pp. 110-18; Hodgson, 1955, pp. 185-209; Mirza, pp. 22-39; Daftary, 1994, pp. 67-74, 94 ff.).

Nur-al-Din Moḥammad's son and successor, Jalāl-al-Din Ḥasan (607-18/1210-21), proclaimed his own daring religious policy, aimed at redressing the isolation of the Nezāris from the larger world of Sunni Islam. Consequently, he publicly repudiated the doctrine of *qiāma* and ordered his followers to observe the *šari'a* in its Sunni form, inviting Sunni jurists to instruct his people. Indeed, Jalāl-al-Din Ḥasan did his utmost to convince the outside world of his new policy. In 608/1211, the 'Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣer acknowledged the Nezāri imam's rapprochement with Sunni Islam and issued a decree to that effect. Henceforth, the rights of Jalāl-al-Din Ḥasan to Nezāri territories were officially recognized by the 'Abbasid caliph, as well as by the Ḳvārazm-Šāhs, who were then establishing their own empire in Persia as successors to the Saljuqs, and by other Sunni rulers. The Nezāris accepted their imam's new instructions without any opposition. They evidently viewed Jalāl-al-Din Ḥasan's declarations as a reimposition of *taqiya*, which had been



lifted in *qiāma* times; the observance of *taqiya* could, thus, imply any type of accommodation to the outside world as deemed necessary by the infallible imam. Be that as it may, the Nezāri imam had now successfully achieved peace and security for his community and state (Jovayni, III, pp. 243-49; tr. Boyle, II, pp. 699-704; Rašid-al-Din, pp. 174-78; Kāšāni, pp. 214-17; Hodgson, 1955, pp. 217-25; Daftary, 1990, pp. 404-7).

Under 'Alā'-al-Din Moḥammad (618-53/1221-55), Jalāl-al-Din Ḥasan's son and successor as the penultimate lord of Alamut, the Sunni *šari'a* was gradually relaxed within the community and the Nezāri traditions associated with *qiāma* were revived, although the Nezāris continued to appear to outsiders in Sunni guise. The Nezāri leadership now also made a sustained effort to explain the different doctrinal declarations and religious policies of the lords of Alamut. All these teachings were interpreted comprehensively within a coherent theological framework, aiming to provide satisfactory explanations for the seemingly contradictory policies adopted at Alamut. Intellectual life indeed flourished in the long reign of 'Alā'-al-Din Moḥammad, receiving a special impetus from the influx of outside scholars, who fled the first waves of the Mongol invasions and took refuge in the Nezāri fortress communities. Foremost among such scholars, who availed themselves of the Nezāri libraries and patronage of learning, was Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi, who made major contributions to the Nezāri Isma'ili thought of the late Alamut period during his three decades amongst them in Qohestān and Rudbār.

It is mainly through Ṭusi's extant Isma'ili writings, notably his *Rowzat al-taslim*, that we have an exposition of Nezāri thought of the Alamut period as it developed during *qiāma* and its aftermath. *Qiāma*, Ṭusi explained, was not necessarily a final eschatological event, but a transitory condition of life when the veil of *taqiya* would be lifted to make the unveiled truth accessible. In the current cycle of history, however, the full *qiāma*, or Great Resurrection (*qiāmat-e qiāmāt*) would still occur at the end of the era initiated by the Prophet Moḥammad. Be that as it may, the identification between *šari'a* and *taqiya*, implied by the teachings of Ḥasan II, was now made explicit by Ṭusi who also identified *qiāma* with *ḥaqiqa*. Thus, the imposition of the Sunni *šari'a* by Jalāl-al-Din Ḥasan was presented as a return to *taqiya*, and to a new period of *satr* or concealment, when the truth (*ḥaqiqa*) would be once again concealed in the *bāṭen* of religion. The condition of *qiāma* could, in principle, be granted by the current Nezāri imam at any time, because every imam was potentially also an imam-*qā'em*. Thus, Ṭusi now expounded a new doctrine of



satr. In his integrated theological presentation, human life could alternate between periods of *qiāma*, when reality is manifest, and *satr*, when it would be concealed, requiring the observance of *taqiya*. In this sense, the term *satr* was redefined to imply the concealment of the religious truths and the true spiritual reality of the imam, and not the physical inaccessibility of his person, as had been the cases in the pre-Fatimid and early Alamut periods (Ṭusi, *Rawḍa*, text pp. 61-63, 101-2, 110, 117-19, 132-33, 143, 145, 147, tr. pp. 67-69, 115-16, 126, 136-38, 154-55, 173, and elsewhere; Hodgson, 1955, pp. 225-38; Daftary, 1990, pp. 407-12). The teachings of the late Alamut period brought the Nezāris even closer to the esoteric traditions more commonly associated with Sufism.

Nezāri fortunes in Persia were rapidly reversed when the collapse of the Ḳvārazmian Empire brought them into direct confrontation with the invading Mongols. When the Great Khan Möngke decided to complete the Mongol conquests of western Asia, he assigned a priority to the destruction of the Nezāri Isma‘ili state, a task completed with some difficulty in 654/1256 by Hülegü who led the main Mongol expedition into Persia. Shortly before, in 653/1255, ‘Alā’-al-Din Moḥammad had been succeeded by his eldest son Rokn-al-Din Ḳoršāh, who would rule for exactly one year as the last lord of Alamut (Jovayni, III, pp. 259-78; tr. Boyle, II, 712-25; Rašid-al-Din, pp. 185-95; Kāšāni, pp. 224-33; Daftary, 1990, pp. 416 ff., 421-30). The youthful imam engaged in a complex, and ultimately futile, series of negotiations with Hülegü. On 29 Šawwāl 654/19 November 1256, Ḳoršāh descended from the fortress of Maymundež in Rudbār in the company of Našir-al-Din Ṭusi and Nezāri dignitaries, and surrendered to the Mongols. With the fall of Alamut a month later, the fate of the Nezāri state was sealed. Alamut and many other fortresses were demolished. In the spring of 655/1257, Ḳoršāh himself was killed by his Mongol guards in Mongolia, where he had gone to see the Great Khan. By then, the Mongols had massacred large numbers of Nezāris in their protective custody. Shortly afterwards, the Nezāri castles in Syria submitted to the Mamluks; Kahf was the last Nezāri outpost there to fall in 671/1273. However, the Syrian Nezāris were permitted to remain in their traditional abodes as loyal subjects of the Mamluks and their successors. Having lost their political prominence, the Nezāris henceforth lived secretly in numerous scattered communities.

POST-ALAMUT NEZĀRI ISMA‘ILISM

In the wake of the Mongol debacle, the Persian Nezāri Isma‘ilis survived the



downfall of their state and strongholds. Many migrated to Central Asia and Sind, where Isma'ili communities already existed. Other isolated groups in Persia soon disintegrated or were assimilated into the religiously dominant communities of their locality. The centralized *da'wa* organization and direct leadership of the Nezāri imams had also disappeared. Under these circumstances, Nezāri communities developed independently while resorting to the strict observance of *taqiya* and adopting different external guises. Many Nezāri groups in the Iranian world disguised themselves as Sunni Muslims. Meanwhile, a group of Nezāri dignitaries had managed to hide Rokn-al-Din Kōršāh's minor son, Šams-al-Din Moḥammad, who had then succeeded to the Nezāri imamate. Subsequently, Šams-al-Din was taken to Azarbaijan, where he and his next few successors to the imamate lived secretly.

Šams-al-Din, who in certain legendary accounts has been confused with Mawlānā Jalāl-al-Din Rumi's spiritual guide Šams-e Tabriz, died around 710/1310. An obscure dispute over his succession split the line of the Nezāri imams and their following into the Qāsem-šāhi and Moḥammad-šāhi (or Mo'men-šāhi) branches (Ivanow, 1938, pp. 57-79; Daftary, 1990, pp. 446 ff., 451-52). The Moḥammad-šāhi imams, who initially had more followers in northern Persia and Central Asia, transferred their seat to India in the 10th/16th century and by the end of the 12th/18th century this line had become discontinued. The sole surviving Moḥammad-šāhi Nezāris, currently numbering about 15,000, are to be found in Syria where they are locally known as the Ja'fariya (Daftary, 1990, pp. 532-34). The Qāsem-šāhi branch has persisted to the present time. The last four Qāsem-šāhi imams have enjoyed prominence under their hereditary title of Āqā Khan (also Āghā Khan and Aga Khan). It was also in the early post-Alamut times that Persian Nezāris, as part of their *taqiya* practices, disguised themselves under the cover of Sufism, without establishing formal affiliations with any of the Sufi *ṭariqas*. The practice soon gained wide currency among the Nezāris of Central Asia and Sind as well. The earliest manifestation of this phenomenon is found in the writings of the poet Ḥakim Sa'd al-Din Nezāri Qohestāni (d. 720/1320). He is the earliest known post-Alamut Nezāri author to use poetic expressions and Sufi idioms for concealing Isma'ili ideas, a model adopted later by many Nezāri authors of Persia, Afghanistan and Central Asia.

In early post-Alamut times, a most obscure phase in Is-ma'ili history, the Nezāris had some success in regrouping in Daylam, where they remained active throughout the Ilkhānid and Timurid periods. A certain Kōdāvand Mo-



hammad (d. 807/1404), a Moḥammad-šāhi imam, even occupied Alamut for a while, before he was dislodged by Sayyed ‘Ali, the powerful Zaydi ruler of Daylamān. The Nezāris did not survive in the Caspian region after the 10th/16th century (Zāhir al-Din Mar‘aši, *Tāriḳ-e Gilān va Daylamestān*, ed. M. Sotuda, Tehran, 1347 Š./1968, pp. 52-68, 69-70, 76 ff., 81 ff., 89, 121, 123-30). Soltan Moḥammad b. Jahāngir (d. 998/1589) and his son Soltan Jahāngir (d. 1006/1597), belonging to Banu Eskandar rulers of Kojur, adhered to Nezāri Isma‘ilism and spread it in their dominions; they represent the last known references in the sources to Isma‘ilism in northern Persia (Šayḳ ‘Ali Gilāni, *Tāriḳ-e Māzandarān*, ed. M. Sotuda, 1352 Š./1973, pp. 88-89, 100). Only a few isolated Nezāri groups survived a while longer in Daylam during the Safawid period when Alamut was used as a prison. In Badaḳšān and other parts of Central Asia, the Isma‘ilis evidently acknowledged the Nezāri imamate only during the late Alamut period as a result of the activities of *dā’is* dispatched from Qohestān. These *dā’is* founded local dynasties of *pirs* and *mirs* who ruled over Šoḡnān and other districts of Badaḳšān. Later, the Nezāris of Badaḳšān were severely persecuted by the region’s Timurid and Özbek rulers.

By the middle of the 9th/15th century, Isma‘ili-Sufi relations had become well established in the Iranian world. Indeed, a type of coalescence had emerged between Persian Sufism and Nezāri Isma‘ilism, two independent esoteric traditions in Islam which shared close affinities and common doctrinal grounds. This explains why the Persian-speaking Nezāris have regarded several of the greatest mystic poets of Persia, such as Sanā‘i, ‘Aṭṭār and Jalāl-al-Din Rumi, as their co-religionists (see, for instance, Fedā‘i Ḳorāsāni, pp. 113-16). The Nezāri Isma‘ilis of Persia, Afghanistan and Central Asia have continued to use verses of the mystical poets of the Iranian world in their religious ceremonies. The dissimulating Persian Isma‘ilis also adopted visible aspects of the Sufi way of life. Thus, the imams appeared to outsiders as Sufi masters or *pirs*, while their followers adopted the typically Sufi guise of disciples or *morids* (see F. Daftary, “Ismā‘īli-Sufi Relations in Early Post-Alamūt and Safavid Persia,” in L. Lewisohn and D. Morgan, ed., *The Heritage of Sufism*, Oxford, 1999, III, pp. 275-89).

By the middle of the 9th/15th century, the Nezāri imams of the Qāsem-šāhi line emerged in the village of Anjedān (q.v.), in central Persia, in the guise of Sufi *pirs*, initiating the so-called Anjedān revival in Nezāri Isma‘ilism that lasted some two centuries. With Mostanṣer be’llāh II (d. 885/1480), who adopted the Sufi name of Šāh Qa-landar, the Qāsem-šāhi imams became definitely



established in the locality where their tombs are still preserved. Taking advantage of the changing religio-political climate of Persia, including the spread of 'Alid loyalism and Shi'ite tendencies through Sunni Sufi orders, the imams successfully began to reorganize and reinvigorate their *da'wa* to win new converts and reassert their authority over various Nezāri communities. These communities, notably those in Afghanistan, Central Asia and India, had been led for long periods by independent hereditary dynasties of *pirs*. The imams now gradually replaced these powerful autonomous figures with their own loyal *dā'īs* who would also regularly deliver the religious dues to them.

The Anjedān period also witnessed a revival in the literary activities of the Nezāris, especially in Persia where authors such as Abu Eshāq Qohestāni and Kayrkvāh Harāti produced the earliest doctrinal works of the post-Alamut period. In the context of Nezāri-Sufi relations during the early Anjedān period, valuable details are preserved in the *Pandiāt-e javānmardī*, containing the religious admonitions of Imam Mostanşer be'llāh II. In this book, the Nezāris are referred to with Sufi expressions such as *ahl-e ḥaqīqat*, or the "people of the truth," while the imam is designated as *pir* or *morşed*. The imam's admonitions start with the *şari'at-ṭariqat-ḥaqīqat* categorization of the Sufis, describing *ḥaqīqat* as the *bāṭen* of *şari'at* which would be attained by the believers (*mo'mens*) through following the spiritual path or *ṭariqat*. The *Pandiāt* (text pp. 2-3, 11, 13, 14, 34-36, 54-58, 65-68 and elsewhere) further explains, in line with the earlier Nezāri teachings of *qiāma* times, that *ḥaqīqat* consists of recognizing the spiritual reality of the imam of the time. The Nezāris now essentially retained the teachings of the Alamut period, especially as elaborated after the declaration of *qiāma*. The current imam retained his central importance in Nezāri doctrine, and the recognition of his true spiritual reality remained the prime concern of his followers (Abu Eshāq Qohestāni, text pp. 19-20, 37-38, 53-54, 58, 67-68, tr., pp. 19-20, 37-38, 53-54, 58, 67-68; Kayrkvāh, *Kalām-e pir*, text pp. 46, 72-73, 86, 95-96, 100, 114-16; idem, *Taşnifāt*, pp. 18 ff.).

The advent of the Safavids and the proclamation of Twelver Shi'ism as the state religion in 907/1501, promised a more favorable atmosphere for the activities of the Nezāris and other Shi'ite communities in Persia. The Nezāris did, in fact, initially reduce the intensity of their *taqiya* practices. However, this new optimism was short-lived as the Safavids and their *şari'at*-minded '*olamā'*' soon persecuted all popular forms of Sufism and those Shi'ite movements which fell outside the confines of Twelver Shi'ism. The Nezāris,



too, received their share of persecutions. Šāh Ṭāher Ḥosayni (d. ca. 956/1549), a learned religious scholar and the most famous imam of the Moḥammad-šāhi line, was persecuted in Shah Es-mā'il's reign (907-30 /1501-24). However, Šāh Ṭāher, whose religious following and popularity had proved unacceptable to the Safavid ruler and his Etnā'ašari scholars, fled to India in 926/1520 and permanently settled in the Deccan where he rendered valuable services to the Neẓām-šāhs of Aḥmadnagar. It is interesting to note that from early on in India, Šāh Ṭāher advocated Twelver Shi'ism, which he had obviously adopted as a form of disguise. He achieved his greatest success in the Deccan when Borhān Neẓām-šāh proclaimed Twelver Shi'ism as the official religion of the state in 944/1537. Šāh Ṭāher's successors as Moḥammad-šāhi imams continued to observe *taqiya* in India mainly in the form of Twelver Shi'ism (see Ferešta, *Tāriḳ-e Ferešta*, ed. J. Briggs, Bombay, 1832, II, pp. 213-31; 'Ali b. 'Aziz Ṭabātabā, *Borhān-e ma'āter*, Hyderabad, 1936, pp. 251-70, 274 ff., 281 ff., 291, 308, 324-26, 338-39, 448-50, 452-53, 584; Daftary, 1990, pp. 487-91).

Meanwhile, Shah Ṭahmāsp persecuted the Qāsem-šāhi Neẓāris of Anjedān and had their thirty-sixth imam, Morād Mirzā, executed in 981/1574. By the time of Shah 'Abbās I (995-1038/1587-1629), the Persian Neẓāris had successfully adopted Twelver Shi'ism as a second form of disguise. Šāh Ṭāher may have been the first Neẓāri imam to have conceived of this new form of dissimulation, which was now adopted by the Qāsem-šāhi Neẓāri imams and their followers (see Daftary, 1990, pp. 471-74). By the end of the 11th/17th century, the Qāsem-šāhi *da'wa* had gained the allegiance of the bulk of the Neẓāris at the expense of the Moḥammad-šāhis. The *da'wa* had been particularly successful in Afghanistan, Central Asia and several regions of the Indian subcontinent. In South Asia, the Hindu converts became known as Khoja, derived from the Persian word *k'vāja* (Nanji, 1978, pp. 50-83). The Neẓāri Khojas developed an indigenous religious tradition, known as Satpanth or the "true path" (to salvation), as well as a devotional literature known as the *gināns* (q.v.). With the fortieth Qāsem-šāhi imam, Šāh Neẓār (d. 1134/1722), the seat of this branch of the Neẓāri *da'wa*, then representing the only branch in Persia, was transferred from Anjedān to the nearby village of Kahak, near Qom and Maḥallāt, ending the Anjedān period in post-Alamut Neẓāri Isma'ilism.

By the middle of the 12th/18th century, in the unsettled conditions of Persia after the demise of the Safavids and the Afghan invasion, the Neẓāri imams moved to Šahr-e Bābak in Kermān, a location closer to the pilgrimage route of



the Khojas who regularly traveled from India to see their imam and deliver their religious dues. Soon, the imams acquired political prominence in the affairs of Kermān. The forty-fourth imam, Abu'l-Ḥasan, also known as Sayyed Abu'l-Ḥasan Kahaki, was appointed around 1170/1756 to the governorship of the Kermān province by Karim Khan Zand; earlier he had been the *beglerbegi* or governor of the city of Kermān (Vaziri, pp. 543-65). It was in his time that the Ne'mat-Allāhi Sufi order was revived in Persia. Imam Abu'l-Ḥasan had close relations with Nur-'Ali-šāh and Moštāq-'Ali-šāh among other Ne'mat-Allāhi Sufis in Kermān (Daftary, 1990, pp. 498-503). After Abu'l-Ḥasan's death in 1206/1792, his son Šāh-Ḳalil-Allāh succeeded to the Nezāri imamate and eventually settled in Yazd. In 1232/1817, he was murdered in a mob attack on his house. Šāh-Ḳalil-Allāh was succeeded by his eldest son Ḥasan-'Ali-šāh who was appointed to the governorship of Qom by Fath-'Ali-Šāh and also given properties in Maḥallāt. In addition, the Qājār monarch gave one of his daughters in marriage to the young imam and bestowed upon him the honorific title of Āqā Khan (q.v.), meaning lord and master—this title has remained hereditary among Ḥasan-'Ali-šāh's successors.

Ḥasan-'Ali-šāh was appointed to the governorship of Kermān in 1251/1835 by Moḥammad Shah Qājār. Subsequently, after some prolonged confrontations between the imam and the Qājār establishment, Āqā Khan I, also known as Āqā Khan Maḥallāti, left Persia in 1257/1841. After spending some years in Afghanistan, Sind, Gojarāt and Calcutta, he settled permanently in Bombay in 1265/1848, marking the advent of the modern period of Nezāri Isma'ilism. As the spiritual head of a Muslim community, Āqā Khan I received the protection of the British in India. The Nezāri imam now engaged in a widespread campaign for defining and delineating the distinct religious identity of his Khoja following. The Nezāri Khojas, too, had dissimulated for long periods as Sunnis and Twelver Shi'ites while their religious traditions had been influenced by Hindu elements. With the help of the courts in India, Āqā Khan I's followers were legally defined as Ši'a Imami Isma'ilis (see Ḥasan-'Ali-šāh, Āqā Khan, *Ebrat-afzā*, Bombay, 1278/1862, pp. 8-49; Vaziri, pp. 60-64, 608-13; Algar, pp. 61-81; Daftary, 1990, pp. 504-13).

Āqā Khan I died in 1298/1881 and was succeeded by his son Āqā 'Ali Šāh, who led the Nezāris for only four years (1298-1302 /1881-85). The latter's sole surviving son and successor, Solṭān Moḥammad Šāh, Āqā Khan III, led the Nezāris for seventy-two years, and also became well known as a Muslim reformer and statesman. Āqā Khan III, too, made systematic efforts to set his



followers' identity apart from other religious communities. The Nezāri identity was spelled out in numerous constitutions that the imam promulgated for his followers in different regions, especially in India, Pakistan and East Africa. Furthermore, the Nezāri imam became increasingly concerned with reform policies that would benefit not only his followers but other Muslims as well. He worked vigorously for consolidating and reorganizing the Nezāris into a modern Muslim community with high standards of both male and female education, health and social well-being, as well as developing a new network of councils for administering the affairs of his community. The participation of women in communal affairs also received a high priority in the imam's reforms.

Āqā Khan III died in 1376/1957 and was succeeded by his grandson, Mawlānā Ḥāẓer Imam Šāh Karim Ḥosayni, as he is addressed by his followers. The present imam of the Nezāris, the forty-ninth in the series, has continued and substantially expanded the modernization policies of his predecessor, also developing numerous new programs and institutions of his own which are of wider interest to the Muslims and the Third World countries (Daftary, 1990, pp. 518-32, 537-48). He has created a complex institutional network generally referred to as the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), which implements projects in a variety of social, economic and cultural areas. Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, as he is known internationally, has his secretariat near Paris. Numbering several millions, the Nezāri Isma'īlis are scattered as Muslim minorities in more than twenty-five countries of Asia, Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

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