



# ISMA'ILISM XIII. ISMA'ILI LITERATURE IN PERSIAN AND ARABIC

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## ISMA'ILISM

### xiii. ISMA'ILI LITERATURE IN PERSIAN AND ARABIC

Isma'ili literature ("literature" is used here in its wider sense to include all the written products of scholarly disciplines delineated by learning, religion, and science) refers to the literary production of more than a millennium, from the middle of the 3rd/9th century (i.e., before the advent of the Fatimids in 909 in North Africa) to recent times. It deals with the writings of Isma'ili missionaries (*do'āt*, pl. of *dā'i*) and religious dignitaries, either sponsored by the *da'wa* (religio-political organization), or the Fatimid regime, or composed independently. Geographically, it covers wide regions stretching from North Africa to India, wherever Isma'ili missions operated actively and were able to maintain a foothold through local converts and their support. The Fatimids (297-567/909-1171) were great patrons of learning and their newly founded capital, Cairo (al-Qāhera, i.e., the victorious), soon became a rival of older centers like Baghdad as a seat of learning and intellectual activity. Isma'ili literature produced during the pre-Fatimid and Fatimid periods, often referred to as the classical period, with the exception of Nāṣer(-e) Ḳosrow's works, is almost exclusively in Arabic.



After the fall of the Fatimids in Egypt, the Isma'ilis of Yemen, known as the Mosta'li-Ṭayyebi da'wa, continued this tradition of producing Isma'ili works in Arabic. It should be noted that from the very beginning of the Is-ma'ili religio-political movement, Yemen had become an Isma'ili stronghold. Although the first Isma'ili state founded there by Ebn Ḥawšab (q.v.), generally known as Manşur al-Yaman, disintegrated through inner dissensions at the beginning of the 10th century, and hence before the advent of the Fatimids in North Africa, the religious component of the mission survived and achieved new success under 'Ali b. Moḥammad Şolayḥi, who founded the Sulayhid dynasty in 439/1047. The Sulayhids, adherents of Isma'ili faith and nominal vassals of the Fatimids of Egypt, ruled Yemen until 1138, first from their capital Şan'ā', in the north, and then from Dī Jebla, in the south. With the waning of their power, the Isma'ili Mosta'li-Ṭayyebi community not only survived, but their stronghold in Ḥaraz became the headquarters of the da'wa for the next four centuries. It was this Yemeni community that preserved a great portion of the classical Isma'ili heritage and writing by copying and studying those works; as well as augmenting and enriching this literature through their own original contributions in various disciplines of learning. In 1567, following the death of the first Indian dā'i, Yusof b. Solaymān, in Ṭayba in Yemen, the headquarters of the Mosta'li-Ṭayyebi da'wa was moved to Gujarat, on the west coast of India. In the wake of this move most of the Isma'ili literature, preserved from the classical period and produced later in Yemen, was also transferred to India. The Bohras, Indian converts to Mosta'ali-Ṭayyebi da'wa, continued the Arabic tradition by diligently copying and studying those earlier works, and at times commenting on them. Al-Jāme'a al-Sayfiya, a well-known seminary for the Dā'udi Bohras, established by the dā'i 'Abd-e 'Ali Sayf-al-Din in 1814 for the religious education of the community, has continued the Arabic tradition to the present day. Beside preserving a major portion of Isma'ili literature produced in North Africa, Egypt, Yemen and elsewhere, the learned Bohra shaiks have put their own stamp on whatever they have added. The Arabic tradition also prevailed in the Nezāri Isma'ili communities of Syria. They had succeeded in acquiring fortresses in the mountains of central Syria where they ruled from about 1100 to 1273, the year when their power was terminated by the Mamluk ruler of Egypt and Syria, Malek Zāher Baybars. Though the Syrian Nezāri community survived the adversity, they only succeed in preserving a very minute portion of the Fatimid heritage.

The Persian tradition in Isma'ili literature, started by Nāşer(-e) Ḳosrow, on the other hand, was continued exclusively by the reformed Isma'ilism of Alamut,



that is, the Persian Nezāris. The Nezāri branch originated from internal dissension among the Ismaʿilis over the issue of succession to the caliph-Imam Monstanşer in 1094. Ḥasan(-e) Şabbāḥ (q.v.), an Ismaʿili dāʿi who had succeeded in gaining control of the strong mountain fortress of Alamut in Rudbār, in 1090, later broke off his relations with the Fatimids of Egypt in support of the claims of Nezār b. al-Mostanşer. Ḥasan Şabbāḥ expounded in Persian his new doctrine of *taʿlim*, that in religious faith one has to accept absolute authority of the teacher, that is, the Imam. Persian continued to be the language of the Nezāri state founded by Ḥasan Şabbāḥ until its destruction by the advancing Mongols in 1256. The Persian Nezāris used Persian in their religious writings. They not only abandoned Arabic but also did not show much interest in the preservation of the earlier heritage that was in Arabic. The Persian tradition continued among the Nezāri communities that survived the Mongol onslaught in various parts of Persian speaking regions. Considerations of space do not allow a detailed description of Ismaʿili literature, hence only the most prominent aspects will be highlighted and only their most outstanding representatives will be enumerated here.

*In Arabic.* In their classification of various “sciences” or fields of learning, Muslim writers generally make a distinction between the “religious sciences” (*al-ʿolum al-şarʿiya* also called *al-ʿolum al-naqliya*, “traditional sciences”) and the “foreign sciences” (*ʿolum al-ʿajam min al-Yunāniyin wa-ġayrehem men al-omam*, also called *al-ʿolum al-aqliya*). The former includes Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsir*), tradition (Hadith), theology (*ʿelm-e kalām*), jurisprudence (*feqh*), and other sciences, such as Arabic grammar, philology, rhetoric, and historiography that developed from them. The latter, that is, the so-called “foreign sciences,” include mathematics, natural sciences, medicine, astronomy, philosophy, etc. The Ismaʿilis, on the other hand, draw a fundamental distinction between the *zāher* and the *bāṭen*, the two aspects of religion. The *zāher* consists of exterior expressions of religion as laid down in the law (*şariʿa*) and explains the literal meaning of the Qurʾān. The *zāher* changes with each prophet in accordance with time and circumstances, whereas the *bāṭen*, comprised of the inner, true meaning of the Qurʾān and the *şariʿa*, remains unchanged. The prophet receives the revelation (*tanzil*), transmits it to the people and lays down the *şariʿa*, while it is the Imam who expounds the inner, esoteric meaning of the Qurʾān and the *şariʿa* through *taʿwil* (hermeneutics). The principle of hermeneutics developed by a number of outstanding dāʿis, such as Jaʿfar b. Ebn al-Ḥawşab, Qāzi Noʿmān b. Moḥammad, and Abu Yaʿqub Sejestāni, became the major method of Ismaʿili



doctrine, so much so that it has come to be regarded as typical and characteristic of Isma'ili thought. It was for this reason that the Isma'ilis were often called *bāṭeniya*. Ta'wil begins as a method of verbal interpretation and consists in going from the surface level (*zāher*, exterior) of a given linguistic term or expression to the depth (*bāṭen*, interior) of its meaning. Isma'ili ta'wil is not, therefore, a simple matter of verbal interpretation, rather it has an important ontological significance. For in Isma'ili doctrine, whatever exists in the physical world conceals in its ontological depths an inner reality. Thus, the Isma'ilis classify sciences into two major categories: *zāheri* sciences, and *bāṭeni* sciences. The former comprises of Arabic language and grammar, poetry, history, jurisprudence, and related disciplines; while the latter comprises of ta'wil and *ḥaqā'eq* (lit. truth, reality). The highest level of knowledge is, therefore, called *ḥaqā'eq* or *'elm al-ḥaqā'eq* (the knowledge of the truth) which represents the ultimate cosmological and eschatological system of the Isma'ili doctrine. Despite this twofold division of sciences and religion, they emphasize that both are complimentary to each other, and one cannot exist without the other. Isma'ili literature is therefore overwhelmingly religious in character. In other words, it is heavily tinged with their particular ideology.

The earliest extant writings, such as the *Ketāb al-kašf* (The book of revelation), *Ketāb al-rošd wa'l-hedāya* (The book of proper conduct and guidance), and *Ketāb al-ālem wa'l-ḡolām* (The book of the master and the disciple), ascribed either to Ebn al-Ḥawšab or his son Ja'far, give us insights into the theory of the imamate, the practices of the mission, the technique used for the esoteric interpretation, and a partial picture of the entire framework of their doctrines. Another important work from the early period that occupies a unique position in the history of Islamic thought and exercised a great influence on the Muslim elite is *Rasā'el ekwān al-ṣafā' wa-kollān al-wafā'* (the epistles of the brethren of purity). *Ekwān al-ṣafā'* (q.v.) was a pseudonym assumed by the authors of this well-known encyclopedia who described themselves as a group of fellow-seekers after truth. They deliberately concealed their Isma'ili identity so that their treatises could gain wider currency and appeal to a broader cross-section of the society. The philosophical system of the *Rasā'el* is a synthesis of reason (*'aql*) and revelation (*waḥy*), wherein the cosmos is viewed as a unified whole. The philosophical structure and the cosmology are derived from Neoplatonic and Neo-Pythagorean sources. The *Rasā'el* offered a new political order headed by an 'Alid Imam. Their utopia, referred to as *al-madina al-fāzela al-ruḥāniya* (the spiritual, virtuous city) or *dawlat ahl al-kayr* (the governance of



virtuous people), was to be governed by a lawgiving philosopher-prophet or his spiritual successor. The organization and arrangement of the *Rasā'el* and their classification of the sciences, although somewhat different from the twofold division into the *zāheri* and the *bāṭeni*, reflect their ultimate objective.

Conspicuously absent from Isma'īli literature are the two important branches of Islamic sciences, Hadith and tafsir, classified as branches of the *zāheri* sciences. The reason for their absence could be explained by the fact that, after the establishment of the Fatimid dynasty, the imamate as conceived by Isma'īli doctrine, unlike what happened in the case of the Imāmis (i.e., the Twelver Shi'ites), became a living institution. It implied that as long as the Imam (i.e., the Fatimid caliph-imam), who represented the living *sonna* of the Prophet was accessible, there was no need for the compilation of Hadith and tafsir. The traditions needed for clarification of the *šari'a* and handed down by the Imams, were collected by Qāzi No'mān in his *Da'ā'em al-eslām*, hence there was no further need for them. As for the external philological meaning of the Qur'ān, any tafsir could be used. Its inner true meaning, however, could be obtained only through the *ta'wil* derived from the rightful Imam. For this reason, the Imam, the repository of true knowledge and the authoritative interpreter of the Qur'ān, is often called “the speaking Qur'ān” (*Qor'ān-e nāteq*), while the Qur'ān, since it needs an interpreter, is called “the silent Qur'ān” (*Qor'ān-e šāmet*). There are numerous works on *ta'wil* that deal with specific verses or chapters of the Qur'ān. Qāzi No'mān's *Asās al-ta'wil* (the foundation of *ta'wil*), *Ta'wil al-da'ā'em* (*Ta'wil* of the pillars), and *Ta'wil al-šari'a* (*Ta'wil* of the canon law of Islam) and Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman's *Sarā'er al-noṭaqā'* or *Asrār al-noṭaqā'* (*Secrets of the noṭaqā'*, i.e., the major prophets), *Ketāb al-farā'eż wa ḥodud al-dīn* (the book of religious duties and the hierarchy of the *da'wa*), *Ketāb al-reżā' fi'l-bāṭen* (the book of the inner meaning of foster relationship), *Ketāb ta'wil al-zakāt* (the book of the esoteric interpretation of the alms tax), and *Ta'wil surat al-nesā'* (the esoteric interpretation of the Qur'ānic chapter on women) are noteworthy works of *ta'wil* from the early period. Sejestāni's *Ketāb al-efteḳār* (*The book of glory*) is the best example of the whole range of *ta'wil* applied to the basic beliefs of Islam and its *šari'a*; as well as being a compendium of Isma'īli doctrine. *Mezāj al-tasnim* (medley of a fountain in Paradise) by Žiā'-al-Dīn Esmā'il b. Hebat-Allāh, a partial tafsir from *Surat al-tawba*, verse 94, to *Surat al-'ankabut*, verse 44, was compiled during the second half of the 18th century in Yemen.

Isma'īli literature of pre-Fatimid and Fatimid periods reflects the general



concern of Muslims and of Islamic theology, which was being developed and debated among scholars of various schools of thought, such as the Mu'tazilite, Ash'arite, and the Imāmi theologians (*motakallemun*). The major Isma'ili contribution to Islamic thought is their formulation of a new synthesis of reason and revelation based on Neoplatonic cosmology and Shi'ite doctrine. Thus, they offered a new world order under the Imam who resembles Plato's philosopher-king. The classic formulation of this synthesis, as indicated above, is found in the *Rasāel Eḳwān-al-Ṣafā* (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity).

The philosophical trend was the most dominant in the Iranian school of the Isma'ili da'wa and it has contributed the lion's share to this discipline. The elaboration of theoretical and doctrinal discourse among major dā'īs varied to a certain extent in keeping with their social and intellectual environment as well as their textual sources. The spirit of intellectual inquiry fostered by the da'wa allowed some degree of freedom. In his *Ketāb al-eṣlāḥ* (The book of correction; lost), Abu Ḥātem Aḥmad Rāzi (q.v.) wrote a correction of Abu'l-Ḥasan Moḥammad b. Aḥmad Nasafi's views expounded in his *Ketāb al-maḥṣul* (The book of the harvest). Rāzi disagreed with the latter concerning several issues, such as the precedence of *qazā'* (fate, predestination) over *qadar* (freedom of will), the imperfect nature of emanation (*fayẓ*) of the Soul (*nafs*) from the Intellect (*'aql*), and the dissociation of šari'a from the first *nāṭeq*, that is, Ādam. In his *Ketāb al-noṣra* (The book of support; lost), Abu Ya'qub Eshāq Sejestāni (q.v.) disagreed with Rāzi's corrections and upheld Nasafi's opinions. In his *Ketāb al-riāz* (The book of the meadow), Ḥamid-al-Din Aḥmad Kermāni tried to harmonize the acrimonious debate that had raged within the da'wa. He criticized the previous views and offered his own solutions. In his *magnum opus*, *Rāḥat al-'aql*, Kermāni modified the earlier Neoplatonic cosmology he had inherited by introducing the Ten Intelligences and their astronomical counterparts that had been current in philosophic circles since Abu Naṣr Fārābi (q.v.). In accordance with this system Kermāni revised the structure of the spheres, the hierarchies of the physical world and of the da'wa, known as *ḥodud-al-din*. The refined cosmology of Kermāni was adopted with some modifications by the Mosta'li-Ṭayyebis of Yemen. Again, considerations of space prevent one from elaborating on this except for citing some important works on *ḥaqā'eq* during the Yemeni period: *Kanz al-walad* (The treasure of the offspring) by Ebrāhim Ḥāmedi, *al-Anwār al-laṭifa* (Delicate lights) by Moḥammad b. Ṭāher Ḥāreṭi, *Ketāb al-daḳira* (The book of the treasure) by 'Ali b. Moḥammad b. Walid, and *Zahr al-ma'āni* (The blossoming of [spiritual] concepts) by 'Emād-al-Din Edris. Numerous small treatises entitled *al-mabda'*



*wa'l-ma'ād* or *al-ebtedā' wa'l-entahā'* (the beginning and the end) compiled during the Yemeni period attempt to summarize the ḥaqā'eq system very much like the account of the soul's initial downfall and its subsequent ascent through "knowledge."

The Isma'īlis view history as a progressive cycle, which advances through seven major cycles, each inaugurated by a *nāṭeq* (speaking prophet; pl. *noṭaqā'*) or *ulu'l-'azm* (endowed with resolution) who brings revelation and promulgates law in its external form. Ādam, (Adam), Nuḥ (Noah), Ebrāhim (Abraham), Musā (Moses), 'Isā (Jesus), and Moḥammad were the six *noṭaqā'*. Each succeeding *nāṭeq* abrogates the law of his predecessor and brings a new law. *Nāṭeq* is followed by *asās* (foundation), or *ṣāmet* (one who remains silent) who promulgates the *bāṭen* through *ta'wil*. Šiṭ (Seth), Sām (Shem), Esmā'il (Ishmael) or Eshāq (Isaac), Hārūn (Aaron), Yuša' (Joshua) the son of Nun, Šam'un al-Šafā' (Simon Peter), and 'Ali were the six *osos* of the aforementioned six *noṭaqā'*. The *asās*, in turn, is followed by series of seven imams; the last rises in rank and becomes the *nāṭeq* of the following era. Thus, each major cycle contains seven minor cycles. The length of each cycle varies. Moḥammad b. Esmā'il b. Ja'far al-Šādeq, considered by some groups of Isma'īlis as the seventh *nāṭeq* would abrogate the *zāheri šari'a* of Mo-ḥammad and promulgate the *bāṭen*. This doctrine, however, has undergone many modifications in the course of Isma'īli history. During the Fatimid period, *zāher* and *bāṭen* together were considered two complimentary aspects of religion and both were emphasized. However, dormant antinomian tendencies have resurfaced from time to time throughout Isma'īli history.

Given this view of history one finds very few historical works in Isma'īli literature. Qāzi No'mān was an early exception to this rule; and although he composed several historical works, only the following have survived: *Eftetāḥ al-da'wa wa-ebtedā' al-dawla* (Commencement of the da'wa and the establishment of the [Fatimid] state; Dachraoui has analyzed and summarized it in his edition in French) deals with the beginning of the Isma'īli mission in Yemen and North Africa, leading to the establishment of the Fatimid dynasty. No'mān's account is based on contemporary sources that have not survived. It is, therefore, a primary source for that period and has been exploited extensively by modern historians. *Šarḥ al-aḳbār* (The elucidation of the traditions), in three volumes, is a detailed account of the outstanding traits of 'Ali b. abi Tāleb and early Imams up to Imam Ja'far al-Šādeq, based on the traditions of the Prophet. It is followed by a brief account of the advent of the



Fatimid Mahdi and the traditions concerning this event. *Ketāb al-manāqeb wa'l-maṭāleb* (the book of virtues and defects) treats the history of the two powerful clans, Banu Hāšem and Banu Omayya, from pre-Islamic times up to the reign of the Fatimid Caliph-Imam al-Mo'ezz. As the title indicates, No'mān exposes immoral traits and vices of the Banu Omayya by juxtaposing them with the piety and learning of the Imams from the House of Banu Hāšem. *Ketāb al-majāles wa'l-mosāyarāt* is a collection of No'mān's intimate conversations with al-Mo'ezz during their strolls together as well as through the correspondence between them.

Isma'ili literature of the Fatimid period contained at least half a dozen autobiographies and biographies. Unfortunately, two important ones, *Sirat Ebn Hawšab*, and *al-Sira al-Kotāmiya*, used by Qāzi No'mān for his *Eftetāḥ al-da'wa*, have not survived. *Sirat al-Hājeb Ja'far* (tr. into English and French), written by a scribe during the reign of 'Aziz, describes the journey of the Fatimid Mahdi from his hiding place in Salamiya, Syria, to Sejemāsa and his subsequent arrival at Raqqāda. *Sirat al-Ostād Jawḍar* (tr. into French) was written by a scribe who served Ostād Jawḍar, the chamberlain of Mo'ezz. *Sirat al-Mo'ayyad* is an autobiography of the famous dā'i Abu Naṣr Mo'ayyad fi'l-Din of Shiraz during the reign of the Caliph-Imam Mostanṣer, who played a leading role as an intermediary between the Turkish military leader Abu'l-Hāreṭ Arsalān Basāsiri and the Fatimid government in the campaign against the Saljuqs after the fall of the Buyids in Baghdad.

'Emād-al-Din Edris was another noted historian of the da'wa during the Yemeni period. His *'Oyun al-aḳbār* (The fountainheads of history), in seven volumes, narrates the history of the Prophet and the Isma'ili Imams until the occultation of the twenty-first Mosta'li-Ṭayyebi Imam, son of the Fatimid caliph-Imam Āmer, following the latter's assassination in around 524/1130. Some of the sources used by Edris have not survived. The first three volumes still remain unedited. Although volumes four, five, and six have been edited, they cannot be regarded as definitive editions. The seventh volume, which also contains the history of the Sulayhid dynasty in Yemen, is available in a critical edition with an English summary. *Nozhat al-afkār wa-rawzat al-aḳbār* (The promenade of reflection and the meadow of history), in two volumes, is a political history of Yemen after the collapse of the Sulayhid dynasty up to the year 853/1449. It is considered a most important primary source for the three-hundred-year history of the Mosta'li-Ṭayyebi community in Yemen. In his third work, entitled *Rawzat al-aḳbār wa nozhat al-asmār* (The meadow of history



and the promenade of stories), Edris continued the history of Yemen where he had left off in the *Nozhat al-afkār* up to the year 870/1465. During the Indian period, the following works should be noted for the beginning and the early history of the Mosta'li-Ṭayyebi da'wa in Gujarat. *Majmu' al-rasā'el al-sett* by Kawj b. Malek and *Ketāb pali midu* by Shaikh Ādam Ṣafi-al-Din. *Montaza' al-aḳbār*, in two volumes, by Qoṭb-al-Din Borhānpuri is a comprehensive history of the da'wa. The first volume deals with the history of twenty-one Mosta'li-Ṭayyebi Imams, and the second volume with the history of the dā'is beginning with the first *dā'i moṭlaq*, Do'ayb b. Musā Wāde'i, to the year 1824. It is an important source for the later Yemeni and early Indian periods.

Another genre peculiar to the Isma'ilis is that of sermons (*majāles*; pl. of *majles*), prepared by the chief dā'i to be delivered to the faithful at special sessions. Usually these lectures were written and submitted to the caliph-Imam for approval. Qāzi No'mān's *Ta'wil al-da'ā'em* is composed in this form and was delivered as sermons. The most famous is *al-Majāles al-mo'ayyadiya*, in eight volumes, each volume with a hundred *majles*, composed by Mo'ayyad fi-Din of Shiraz. Ḥātem Ḥāmedi abridged those eight volumes in his *Jāme' al-ḥaqā'eq* and divided it, according to the subject matter, into eighteen chapters. The *al-Majāles al-monstaṣeriya* of Abu'l-Qāsem Maliji were written during the reign of Mostaṣer, and the *Ma-jāles Abi'l-Barakāt* were composed by Abu al-Barakāt Ḥalabi during the reign of Āmer. In addition to these works the following should be noted. The *Majāles Sayyedenā Ḥātem Ḥāmedi*, *Majāles al-noṣṣ wa'l-bayān* of 'Ali b. Moḥammad b. Walid, and an anonymous work entitled *Majāles 'Āšuriya*, containing sermons to be delivered during the first ten days of Moḥarram.

Among the anthologies of Isma'ili literature three deserve special mention. The *Majmu' al-tarbia*, compiled by Moḥammad b. Ṭāher Ḥāreṭi, in two volumes, and *Ketāb al-azhār wa majma' al-anwār* by Ḥasan b. Nuḥ Bharuchi in seven volumes. Both these anthologies have preserved extensive excerpts as well as complete treatises of some of the earlier works which are no longer extant. *Ṣandūq al-la'ālī'* is another anthology that was compiled by an anonymous author (Poonawala, 1977, pp. 144-48, 179-82).

Isma'ili literature is rich in religious and devotional poetry. *Diwāns* of Mo'ayyad of Shiraz and Soltān Kaṭṭāb are just two outstanding examples among several of this genre of poetry. *Semṭ al-ḥaqā'eq* by 'Ali b. Ḥanzāla is a versified version of Isma'ili doctrines. *Al-Orjuza al-moḳtāra* by Qāzi No'mān, in 2,375 verses, deals with the imamate. His *Montaḳaba* is yet another attempt at



versifying the Pillars of Islam and law. Among the several treatises on the question of the imamate the following should be noted: *Tatbit al-emāma* by the caliph-Imam Maṣṣur, *Eṭbāt al-emāma* by Aḥmad Nisāburi, *Resāla fī'l-emāma* by Abu'l-Fawāres, and *Ketāb al-maṣābih* by Ḥamid-al-Din Kermāni.

Qāzi No'mān, the founder of Isma'ili law, wrote numerous books on jurisprudence, with the *Da'ā'em* as the most famous. Among the chancery documents, *al-Sejellāt al-mostanṣeriya*, and *al-Hedāya al-āmeriya*, are worth noting from the Fatimid period. *Qarāṭis al-Yaman* contains letters exchanged between the da'wa dignitaries in Yemen and India (Poonawala, 1977, pp. 326-28). *Ketab al-zina* (The book of ornament) of Abu Ḥātem Rāzi is a dictionary of Islamic theological terms, which also contains a section on Islamic heresiography. It is a comprehensive work on Islamic nomenclature and Rāzi's philo-logical method of discussing the etymologies of those terms sheds light on the history of Arabic linguistics. His other work, *A'lām al-nobuwa* (The distinguishing marks of prophecy), records Isma'ili views in defense of religion and the principle of prophethood while refuting the arguments of his opponent, Abu Bakr Moḥammad b. Zakariyā' Rāzi. In his *al-Aqwāl al-dahabiya fī'l-ṭebb al-nafsāni*, Ḥamid-al-Din Kermāni supported Abu Ḥātem's criticism of Abu Bakr Rāzi's views on the therapy of the mind expounded in the latter's *al-Ṭebb al-ruḥāni*. Lastly, Esmā'il b. 'Abd-al-Rasul Majdu's *Fehrest*, compiled during the second half of the 18th century, provides a detailed catalog of extant Isma'ili literature.

*In Persian.* Nāṣer(-e) Kōsrow's works were preserved by the Nezāris of Persia and Central Asia, and most of his extant works are edited and some translated into French, English, and Russian. He was the first Isma'ili dā'i to have used Persian exclusively for his intellectual and poetic discourse. His poetry is didactic. His *Safar-nāma* depicts a vivid picture of the 11th century Islamic world from Transoxania to Egypt and includes visits to Mecca and Jerusalem. He first traveled across the Caspian coast of Persia into eastern Anatolia and southward to Syria and Palestine. He spent three years in Cairo and returned taking the southern route down to Aswān and crossing the Red Sea to the Ḥejāz, the Arabian peninsula to Basra, and passing through the Carmathian (Qarmaṭi) state in Laḥsā; finally arriving at Balk through southern Persia. His role in the establishment of Persian as a language of philosophical discourse is yet to be assessed.

The Persian Nezāris used Persian exclusively in their religious writings and did not develop any interest in the copying and preservation of the classical



Arabic heritage of the Fatimid period. Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ expounded his new teaching (*al-daʿwa al-jadida*), often called the doctrine of taʿlim, by formulating four propositions. The first demonstrates the need for a teacher in order to know God by refuting rationalism in its contention that human reason by itself is capable of obtaining the absolute truth. Once the need for a teacher is established, the second proposition poses the question: Is any teacher acceptable or must the teacher be a trustworthy person? When the Sunni position that any teacher will do is refuted, the need for a trustworthy teacher (*moʿallem-e ṣādeq*) is established. The third proposition, directed against non-Ismaʿīli Shiʿites, poses the question as to whether it is necessary to know that teacher and acquire knowledge through him. The fourth and the final proposition attempts to answer the issue raised in the third proposition by proving that a particular Imam, that is, an Ismaʿīli Imam of Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ, could be the authentic teacher. He expounded his doctrine in a Persian treatise, *Čahār faṣl*, which has been preserved only in fragments. This doctrine had a great impact on the Sunni population, hence Abu Ḥamed Ġazālī in his *Mostaṣheri* tried to wrestle with the intellectual issues posed by this doctrine (see ĠAZĀLĪ and THE BĀṬENĪS).

A major shift in the Nezāri doctrine came during the time of Ḥasan II, the fourth ruler of Alamut, who proclaimed the doctrine of the *qiāma* (resurrection). From then on the lords of Alamut also claimed the imamate for themselves. With the new doctrine the imam became the focal point, and *qiāma* meant seeing God in the spiritual reality of the imam. The elaboration of this teaching with its cosmological implication and the development of the doctrine of the Perfect Man in contemporary Sufism paved the way for the future relationship of the post-Alamut Nezāris with Sufism. The Syrian Nezāris do not seem to have been affected by the *qiāma* doctrine, and they continued the earlier Fatimid tradition.

Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi, a major intellectual figure of the 13th century, a scientist, a philosopher, and a theologian, should be mentioned here for his long association with the Nezāris. It appears that during that period he himself had embraced the Ismaʿīli Nezāri faith. In his spiritual autobiography entitled *Sayr wa soluk*, he describes how his search for knowledge led him to embrace Ismaʿīli esoteric philosophy. In it he also elaborates Ḥasan(e) Ṣabbāḥ's doctrine of taʿlim. Another work, *Rawżat al-taslim*, also known as *Taṣawwūrāt*, an ethico-eschatological guide for ascending from the physical to the spiritual world, is an important testimony to Ṭusi's Ismaʿīli-oriented philosophy.



Despite the Mongol massacres, the Persian Nezāri communities did survive in certain areas, especially in Rudbār and Qohestān and they lived clandestinely under the cover of Sufism. The Nezāris of Badaḳṣhān and other remote regions succeeded in preserving the bulk of the extant Nezāri literature of the Alamut period. The widely scattered communities of post-Alamut period, differentiated in terms of their vernacular language and socio-ethnic background, more or less developed their own particular religious literature, independently of one another. Nezāri history, for the first two centuries after the fall of Alamut, remains quite obscure. The poet Nezāri Qohestāni was the first post-Alamut author who chose the verse and Sufi forms of expression to conceal his Isma'ili identity and views; and later authors followed in his footsteps. The period known as Anjedān (q.v.; from the name of this village in central Persia), lasting about two centuries from the second half of the 15th century marks a revival in Nezāri thought and its missionary activities. It was during this period that the Nezāri Imams of the Qāsemšāhi line developed close associations with the Ne'mat-Allāhi Sufi order and attempted to extend their control over the remaining Nezāri communities. Most noteworthy poets and authors of this period are Abu Eshāq of Qohestān and Kayrḳvāh of Herat. They were followed by Kāki of Ḳorāsān and his son 'Aliqoli Raqqāmi.

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