



JA'FAR B. MANŞUR-AL-YAMAN

JA'FAR B. MANŞUR-AL-YAMAN, a high-ranking Isma'ili author who flourished during the reigns of the first four Fatimid caliphs. His father, **Ebn Ḥawšab** (d. 302/914), originated from a learned Shi'ite family of Kufa, and pioneered the Isma'ili *da'wa* (see **FATIMIDS**) in the Yemen, where his conquests earned him the honorific title of Manşur-al-Yaman (Conqueror of Yemen). Ja'far's detailed account of his father's life (*Sirat abihi*) has been largely preserved through quotations. After Ebn Ḥawšab's death, Ja'far was his only son to remain faithful to the mission (*da'wa*). Antagonism between him and his disgruntled brother, Abu'l-Ḥasan, eventually forced him to emigrate to the Mağreb, where he arrived during the reign of the second Fatimid caliph al-Qā'em (r. 322-34/933-46; see Ḥammādi, pp. 39-41.). Ja'far witnessed the serious anti-Fatimid rebellion led by the Kharijite Abu Yazid (d. 336/947), which rattled the Fatimid state during the last two years of al-Qā'em's reign and the beginning of the reign of his successor al-Manşur (r. 334-41/946-53). Ja'far's fervent support for the Fatimids is expressed in his poems, composed during the years 333-36/945-48 and celebrating Fatimid victories (Stern, pp. 146-52). After defeating Abu Yazid, al-Manşur founded, near Qayrawān, his new residential town Manşuriya, where Ja'far had a fine house. His financial situation led him to mortgage his house, and he was in danger of losing it when the caliph al-Mo'ezz (r. 341-65/953-75) saved him from his predicament by paying off his debt in recognition of his and his father's services ('Azizi Jawḍari, pp. 126-27; tr. pp. 193-94). Ja'far died at an unknown date in the early period of al-Mo'ezz's reign.



Ja'far's works were often copied and incorporated in later anthologies of Isma'ili literature (Poonawala, pp. 71-75, 144, 150, 317, 323). They are largely devoted to allegorical interpretation (*ta'wil*) in which he relates words and expressions from the Qur'an, Islamic rituals, and letters of the Arabic alphabet, to the grades of the hierarchy of the Fatimid *da'wa* (*ḥodud al-din*); the numbers seven and twelve feature prominently in his scheme. Among Ja'far's early works are *Ketāb al-ālem wa'l-ḡolām*, a dialogue of spiritual initiation, and *Ketāb al-kaşf* containing six short pre-Fatimid *ta'wil* treatises dealing mainly with the subject of the imamate. Ja'far viewed the imamate as a continuation of prophecy. His works on stories of the prophets were written particularly with this view. These include *al-Şawāhed wa'l-bayān* supporting 'Ali's succession to the imamate, *Sarā'er al-noṭaqā'* and its sequel *Asrār al-noṭaqā'*, as well as the interpretation of the *sura* Yusof contained in his *Ketāb al-farā'eż wa ḥodud al-din*. One epistle of Ja'far, *Şarḥ dalālāt ḥoruf al-mo'jam* (or *Resālat ta'wil ḥoruf al-mo'jam*), is devoted to the interpretation of the letters of the Arabic alphabet.

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