



KETĀB AL-RIĀŽ

KETĀB AL-RIĀŽ *fi'l-ḥokm bayna al-šādayn: Šāḥeb al-eṣlāḥ wa šāḥeb al-noṣra* (Book of gardens on the judgment between the authors of the *Eṣlāḥ* and the *Noṣra*), one of the many works of [Ḥamid-al-Din Kermāni](#) (d. after 411/1020), an Isma'ili *dā'i* (missionary) in Iraq on behalf of the Fatimid Imam al-Ḥākem be-Amr-Allāh (r. 386-411/996-1021). It is a classic example of the method of intellectual discourse and internal critique among Isma'ili *dā'is*. Divided into a preface and ten chapters, it covers a range of topics including the First Intellect, the Universal Soul, the human soul, matter and form, the divisions of the world, and *qazā' wa'l-qadar* (decision and estimation; divine decree), among others.

As its title attests, the *Riāž* is primarily a critical assessment of two works by the author's Isma'ili predecessors: the *Ketāb al-eṣlāḥ* of [Abu Ḥātem Rāzi](#) (d. after 322/933-4), written to critique passages in the *Ketāb al-maḥṣul* of Abu'l-Ḥasan Moḥammad Naḳṣabi or Nasafi (d. 331/942), and the *Ketāb al-noṣra* of [Abu Ya'qub Eshāq Sejestāni](#) (d. after 360/970), written in defense of Naḳṣabi. Kermāni also corrects some statements in the *Ketāb al-maḥṣul* concerning fundamental points such as *tawḥid* (monotheism), which were overlooked by Rāzi.

Since the publication of Wladimir Ivanow's *Studies in Early Persian Ismailism* in 1948, the differences of opinion among these Isma'ili *dā'is* has drawn the attention of a number of scholars, most notably [Samuel Miklos Stern](#). This focus has tended to overshadow the predominant theme of internal discourse exemplified in the *Riāž*, and the tone of great respect that Kermāni



demonstrates for his predecessors, whom he emphasizes were following the right path and whose works, he insists, must be studied before his own *Rāhat al-'aql* (Kermāni, pp. 21-29). Mutual cooperation and strengthening is thus the predominant motive in the work's composition.

Kermāni's methodology of internal critique is grounded in the central doctrines of Isma'ili Shi'ism, which explain that the world has never been bereft of a divine guide. Six *nāteqs* (prophet) have brought scriptures and a *šari'a* (prophetic religion) which are in *tanzili* or exoteric language. They each appoint an *asās*, who promulgates the *ta'wil* or esoteric interpretation, which is continued through the cycle by a chain of imams. In order to propagate the *da'wa*, the summons to true knowledge, the prophet, the *asās*, and the Imam in their respective times also have *ḥodud-e din*. The *ḥodud-e din* consists of twelve *hojjas* who in turn appoint, as their subordinates, *dā'is* to look after the *da'wa*. This organization of the *ḥodud* is according to the tradition of the previous prophets, such as Moses having twelve *naqibs* (chiefs; Qur'an 5:12) and Jesus having twelve *ḥawāris* (disciples; Qur'an 61:14; Kermāni, p. 213; Abu Ḥātem Rāzi, 2015, pp. 595-602; Ja'far b. Maṣsur, pp. 172-74; Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow, 1977, pp. 251-52). The six cycles culminate in a seventh, that of the *Qā'em*, who brings Allāh's religion to its fulfillment.

In the cycle of the imamate, the imam is at the apex, with twelve *hojjats* under him. The imam is infallible, but his *hojjats* and *dā'is* are not. They receive *ta'wili* knowledge from him according to their submission, dedication, and yearning. They must therefore resolve their shortcomings by working together and having recourse to the imam. Thus, in the last chapter of the *Riāž*, Kermāni explains:

Knowing that other than the imam himself, nobody can comprehend and preserve all the sciences of religion, the *nāteq* appoints twelve *hojjats* under the imam. They receive the exoteric and esoteric aspects of the religious teachings (from the imam), according to their natures (*jawāher*) and capacity of acceptance and deduction, so that they may guide others. Thus, religion is like a human being [in whom the rational soul is the imam] and the senses are the *ḥodud*. If one of the senses fails to detect something, the other senses must perceive it. By this, the previous sense is in no way defamed. Similarly, what Abu Ḥātem had done and what I am doing do not defame the author of the *Maḥsul* in any way. It is



not as some ignorant people have thought, that the former *dā'i* had attacked and defamed the latter. Rather, we are simply fulfilling our duty of cooperating in the execution of the *da'wa* (Kermāni, pp. 49-50, 213-14).

This explanation also clearly demonstrates that Kermāni himself did not claim any final authority in the matter, as that was the prerogative of the Imam alone.

The significance of the *Riāž* may be gauged from Kermāni's own reference to it in his *Rāḥat al-'aql* (p. 23): "Prior to reading the *Rāḥat al-'aql*, the reader must direct his attention to the *Riāž*. The explanation therein may be a help and a power to conceive the truth in that about which they differed. The reader should not be satisfied with reading it just once, ten, twenty or [even] fifty times. Rather, its contents must become a preserved form in the reader's soul."

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