



## MAJDU', ESMĀ'IL

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**MAJDU', ESMĀ'IL** b. 'Abd-al-Rasul (d. Ujjain, India, 1183 or 1184/1769-70), an Isma'ili Mosta'li-Ṭayyebi of the Dā'udi Bohra faction, a scholar from India well-known for his Bibliography (*Fehrest*) of extant Isma'ili manuscripts; he catalogued approximately 250 works with their full or partial contents and arranged them according to Isma'ili curriculum for the study of its literature. [Wladimir Ivanow's](#) *Guide to Ismaili Literature* was based on this *Fehrest*. Ivanow had found its copy by chance with a bundle of disjointed leaves in Lucknow for a paltry sum of money. The original Arabic text was edited from three recent manuscripts of Indian provenance and published in Tehran in 1966. Internal evidence suggests that it was compiled during the time of the thirty-ninth *dā'i* (summoner) Ebrāhim Wajih-al-Dīn (from 1150/1737 to 1168/1754), as the author refers to him and his teacher with the conventional invocation: *Aṭāla Allāho baqā'ahu* (May God extend his life!)

Nothing is known about his early life, education, and family except that he and his son Hebat-Allāh were the students of Loqmānji b. Ḥabīb-Allāh (d. 1173/1760), the renowned Isma'ili pundit of his time. Soon both father and son became distinguished scholars in their own rights. Esmā'il was honored by the fortieth Dā'udi *dā'i* Hebat-Allāh al-Mo'ayyad fi'l-Dīn (d. 1193/1779) with the title of Shaikh and a high rank in the *da'wa* hierarchy. However, in 1175/1761, under mysterious circumstances, Esmā'il's son, Hebat-Allāh, claimed that he was in contact with the hidden [Imam](#) (who had moved with his retinue in the vicinity of Ujjain) through his chief *dā'i*, 'Abd-Allāh b. Ḥāreṭ, who appointed him at the rank of *al-ḥojja al-layli* (a rank in the *da'wa* hierarchy higher than



that of the *dā'i moṭlaq*). His claim implied that the living fortieth *dā'i* should yield his position to him by virtue of his superior status. Esmā'il supported his son's claim, and two leading scholars of the time, namely, Hebat-Allāh (the son of Loqmānji b. Ḥabib-Allāh) and 'Alī b. Sa'id Hamdāni, not only supported Hebat-Allāh's claim but also composed treatises in praise of him and his learned father. Hence, their movement gathered momentum, and they openly propagated their mission in Ujjain, the headquarters of the *da'wa*. Thus, it posed a serious threat to the *dā'i's* authority and his religious establishment.

Soon persecution of their followers, called Hebtiya (Heptia in Gujarati), after its founder Hebat-Allāh, started. Consequently, both father and son managed to flee, but they were chased, imprisoned by the local authorities wherever they sought refuge, and brought back to Ujjain. The *dā'i* attempted to reconcile and bring them back to the fold but he failed. During the turmoil Hebat-Allāh was seized, and his nose was cut off as a sign of disgrace. For this reason he was given the derogatory nickname Majdu' (one whose nose is amputated). The whole episode is dramatically depicted in vivid colors by two historians of the *da'wa*, namely, Qoṭb-al-Din Borhānpuri (d. 1241/1826), who refers to Esmā'il as *al-mal'un* (the accursed) and to his son Hebat-Allāh as *al-majdu'*; and Moḥammad-'Alī Rāmpuri (d. ca. 1315/1897-98), who refers to Esmā'il by the nickname al-Majdu'. Thus, it seems that the derogatory surname was transferred from the son to his father, as he was the author of several other works in addition to the *Fehrest*.

Esmā'il died in 1183 or 1184/1769-70 in Ujjain, but the date of his son's death is not recorded. Later sources state that a few families of Hebtiya survived in Ujjain until the beginning of the twentieth century. It should be noted, however, that the *da'wa* sources accuse both the father and the son of holding antinomian tendencies, stealing *da'wa* books from the *dā'i's* private library (*kezāna*), and also committing other illicit acts.

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