



QOHESTĀNI, ABU ESHĀQ

QOHESTĀNI, ABU ESHĀQ Ebrāhim, one of the most prominent Nezāri *Ismaʿīli dāʿīs* and authors of the early *Anjedān* period in Nezāri history. He was born around the middle of the 9th/15th century in Moʿmenābād, a district to the east of *Birjand*, in southeastern Khorasan, a region known as Qohestān (Pers. *Kuhestān*) in medieval times. Qohestāni spent his entire life in his native land and died at an unknown date after 904/1498. As mentioned in his sole surviving work, the *Haft bāb*, Qohestāni was a contemporary of the thirty-fourth *imam* of the Qāsemšāhi Nezāri *Ismaʿīlis*, Mostanṣer beʿllāh III, also known as Ġarib Mirzā, who died in 904/1498 and whose mausoleum is still preserved in the village of *Anjedān* in central Persia. In fact, this is the last *imam* of that branch of Nezāri *Ismaʿīlism* to be mentioned by Qohestāni (text, p. 24).

As narrated in the first chapter of Qohestāni's *Haft bāb* (text, pp. 4-9), containing the only available biographical details on him, Qohestāni was born into a non-*Ismaʿīli*, probably Twelver (*Etnāʿašari*), family, and was converted in his youth to Nezāri *Ismaʿīlism* by a local *dāʿī*. Subsequently, he was appointed to the rank of *maʿdun*, or assistant *dāʿī*, in the *daʿwa* hierarchy by the local chief *dāʿī*, a certain *Ḳāja Qāsem*. This appointment would permit Qohestāni to preach as well as commit the *Ismaʿīli* teachings to writing.

In the aftermath of the *Mongol* destruction of the Nezāri *Ismaʿīli* state in Persia in 654/1256, the Nezāri *daʿwa* remained inactive for two centuries while the *imams* were in hiding. However, from the middle of the 9th/15th century, the Nezāri *imams* of the Qāsemšāhi line established their headquarters at



Anjedān, initiating a revival in the *da'wa* and literary activities of their community that lasted some two centuries. Qohestāni is perhaps the earliest Nezāri author of doctrinal works during the Anjedān revival (Ivanow, 1963, pp. 141-42; Poonawala, pp. 269-70; Daftary, 2004, pp. 107, 124; idem., 2007, pp. 406, 433-34).

Manuscript copies of Qohestāni's *Haft bāb*, written in Persian in late 9th/15th century, are relatively rare, but some have been preserved by the Nezāris of [Badakšān](#) (now divided between Tajikistan and Afghanistan) and other regions of [Central Asia](#) (Bertels and Bakoev, p. 103). The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, also has several manuscripts of this work. The *Haft bāb*, comprised of seven chapters (*bāb*), including an initial autobiographical one, covers aspects of the Nezāri teachings of the time. It contains chapters on the seventy-two erring sects in Islam; on the saved community; on prophecy, the revelation (*tanzil*) of the Qur'an and its esoteric interpretation (*ta'wil*); on the imamate and the eras of concealment (*satr*), manifestation (*kašf*), and resurrection (*qiāmat*); on the spiritual and physical worlds, origination (*mabda'*) and destination (*ma'ād*) and the hierarchy of the *da'wa*; and, finally, on certain specific esoteric interpretations (*ta'wilāt*).

The doctrines contained in the *Haft bāb* basically reflect the Nezāri teachings of the [Alamut](#) period, especially after the declaration of the *qiāmat* or spiritual resurrection by [Ḥasan II 'alā dekreh-e'l-salām](#) (r. 557-61/1162-66), the fourth lord of Alamut (see Daftary, 2007, pp. 358-67). In fact, the *Haft bāb* is the only known Nezāri source providing details of that controversial event, which occurred at Alamut on 17 Ramadan 559/8 August 1164 (Qohestāni, text, pp. 41-42). Qohestāni's *Haft bāb* was evidently plagiarized by Moḥammad-Reżā [Kayrķ'āh Herāti](#), another early Nezāri author of the Anjedān period; it was re-named as *Kalām-e pir* and attributed to the famous Isma'ili *dā'i* and poet Nāşer-e Kōsrow (d. after 462/1070) in order to enhance its popularity among the Nezāri communities of Central Asia (Ivanow, 1963, pp. 142-43; Daftary, 2007, p. 433). Abu Eşĥaq Qohestāni evidently produced other works, which do not seem to have survived, including a history of his native land called *Tāriķ-e Qohestān*.



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