



ṬUSI, NAŞIR-AL-DIN I. BIOGRAPHY

ṬUSI, NAŞIR-AL-DIN

i. Biography

Abu Ja'far Moḥammad K̄vāja Naşir-al-Din Ṭusi (b. Ṭus, 11 Jomādā I 597/17 February 1201; d. Baghdad, 18 Du'l-Ḥejja 672/25 June 1274), was a philosopher, physician, astronomer, vizier of the founder of the [Il-Khanid](#) dynasty, [Hulāgu](#) (Hülegü) Khan (r. 1256-65), and the chronographer of the succeeding Il-Khan, [Abaqa](#) (r. 1265-82). “One of Hülegü Khan’s greatest distinctions was that he was a contemporary of and knew K̄vāja Naşir-al-Din Ṭusi” (K̄vādamir, III, p. 105; tr. pp. 59-60). Ṭusi was a towering contemporary of the Jovaynis (see [‘ALĀ’-AL-DIN JOVAYNI](#) and [ŞĀḤEB DIVĀN JOVAYNI](#)), revered more for his intellectual prowess than for his considerable political influence, who slid, seemingly without difficulty, from being a student in Nishapur under the rule of the [Khwārazmshahs](#) to service with the Isma‘ili warlords of Qohestān, through elevation to the court of the Neẓāri Imam, [‘Alā’-al-Din Moḥammad III](#), in his fortified eyries of [Alamut](#) and Maymundez, and lastly to an honored and very influential position in the inner sanctum of Hulāgu Khan’s government (*divan*; Daftary, 2007, pp. 378-79; Lane, p. 213). Described by the historian Raşid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh (ca. 1247-1318) as “the most learned and wisest man in the world” (tr., III, p. 985) and more recently by [Edward Browne](#) as a “double-dyed traitor” (II, p. 457), Ṭusi has earned sharply conflicting judgments over



the centuries. The common factor underpinning the many epitaphs and epithets associated with him is the intensity of the emotion that his name invariably excites.

Ṭusi was born into a family that followed “the exoteric aspects of the shari‘at” and whose profession was “to promulgate the exoteric sciences” (Ṭusi, *Sayr wa soluk*, p. 3, tr. p. 26), which suggests that they were Twelver Shi‘ite clerics. His father, Wajih-al-Din Moḥammad b. Ḥasan Ṭusi, was a respected Imami jurist and he made sure that his son received a sound educational background in Arabic, the Qur‘an, Hadith, and in Shi‘ite jurisprudence following the teachings of ‘Alam-al-Hodā al-Şarif al-Mortażā (355-436/966-1044), a noted adversary of the Mu‘tazilite theologian ‘Abd-al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad (d. 415/1024-25). Like his father, Ṭusi had a wide range of interests in which he was encouraged to indulge, particularly the sciences and philosophy. It was at Nishapur, between 1213 and 1221 and during his pursuit of knowledge under the tutelage of Kamāl-al-Din Moḥammad Ḥāseb, that he first encountered references to Isma‘ili doctrines, which intrigued and attracted him. “It is possible that the truth may be found among people who are, in the eyes of [your contemporaries], the most contemptible people” (Ṭusi, *Sayr wa soluk*, p. 3, tr., p. 27). Along with his fellow pupils Qoṭb-al-Din Meşri and Farid-al-Din Dāmād, he continued his studies in mathematics, natural sciences, Avicenna’s philosophy, and medicine. He received his training in jurisprudence after leaving Nishapur for ‘Erāq-e ‘Arab, where he studied under the Shi‘ite scholar Mo‘in-al-Din Sālem b. Badrān Māzini. The mathematician and astronomer from Mosul, Kamāl-al-Din Yunes (1156-242), a former pupil of the scholar *Bābā Afzal-al-Din Kāşāni* (d. 1213), also contributed to his well-rounded classical education. It was recognized from an early age that Ṭusi was to be an exceptional scholar.

In 1233 and after completing his formal education, Ṭusi found a patron who was to have an immense influence on his future. This was the Isma‘ili governor of Sartakt in Qohestān, Moḥtaşam Nāşer-al-Din ‘Abd-al-Raḥim b. Abi Maşur (d. 655/1257), and it was to him that Ṭusi dedicated perhaps his most well-known book, *Aklāq-e nāşeri*. Both men had a deep interest in ethics, and two years earlier Tusi had, on his patron’s behalf, translated into Persian the *Adab al-wajiz le’l-walad al-şagīr*, a treatise on the correct behavior of children attributed to *Ebn al-Moqaffa’*. He followed this translation with *Aklāq-e moḥtaşami*, which was based on the Moḥtaşam’s own concept and notes, even though Ṭusi published it under his own name. What is significant about this



period is that Ṭusi later on he claimed that the dedication in his book and the work he had carried out at the time were all conducted under duress and did not reflect his true feelings (Tusi, *Šarḥ al-Ešārāt* II, p. 145; tr. in Dabashi, 1996b, p. 334; see also Lane, pp. 221-23). After his falling out with the Ismaʿilis, Ṭusi republished *Aklāq-e nāšeri* with a different introduction and different conclusions, but without the dedication to Moḥtašam Nāšer-al-Din.

Shortly after the appearance of the two *Aklāq* studies (ca. 1246), Ṭusi published his spiritual autobiography, *Sayr wa soluk*, in which he describes how he came to turn away from exoteric *kalām* and to immerse himself in esoteric philosophy. This same year he is recorded as being in Alamut, the headquarters of the Ismaʿilis (Badakhshani, p. 10; Daftary, 2007, p. 379). It is unclear whether his initial presence there was for pleasure, reward, or punishment, since there had been unease at his secret contacts with the Abbasid caliph al-Mostaʿsem (r. 1242-58) in Baghdad. Waṣṣāf records how the caliph's Shiʿite vizier Ebn al-ʿAlqami had revealed the existence of a complimentary *qaṣida* addressed to al-Mostaʿsem penned by Ṭusi, which caused considerable suspicion at the time (Waṣṣāf, p. 29, ed. Āyati, pp. 24-25).

However, Jalal Badakhchani (Ṭusi, *Sayr wa soluk*, tr., p. 5) is dismissive of these stories because the various dates do not tally. Ṭusi spent in all twenty years in the fortresses of Alamut and Maymundež, during which time he was able to immerse himself in the renowned libraries access to which would have been a major motivation in his apparent acceptance of Ismaʿili doctrine.

Ṭusi's own renown as a scientist and thinker was the reason that he was chosen to lead negotiations with Hülegü Khan, Čengiz Khan's grandson and the founder of the Il-khanid dynasty (1256-1336), when he arrived in Iran demanding submission from all those who would claim authority in the region. Ṭusi immediately realized that it was his task to convince the young Ismaʿili Imam, Rokn-al-Din Koršāh, that resistance was pointless and that his only option was to negotiate for the survival of his own family, possibly abandoning his followers to their fate (Rašid-al-Din, p. 398).

Ṭusi's fate was assured because Hülegü Khan had been asked by his brother, Möngke, to send the famed "astrologer" back to Mongolia to build the Great Khan an observatory (Saliba, 2006, p. 359; Kʿāndamir, p. 58). Though Ṭusi considered himself an astronomer rather than an astrologer, he was quite willing to play any part to safeguard his future, and with the Qāʿān Möngke having expressed dissatisfied with the work of his own court astrologer, Jamāl-al-Din Moḥammad-Ṭāher b. Zaydi Bokāri, an immense opportunity was open



to Ṭusi. His immediate task was to ingratiate himself with Hülegü Khan and salvage what he could from the shattered Isma‘ili stronghold. Reprieved with him from supposed Isma‘ili bondage were the sons of physicians Ra‘is-al-Dawla and Mowaffaq-al-Dawla ‘Ali, the latter being the grandfather of Rašid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh (p. 483).

Ṭusi claims that Hülegü had him “brought forth from that place (Alamut) and ordered me to observe the stars” (cited in Boyle, p. 247). Hülegü later called upon Ṭusi to assess the danger, as foretold in the stars, in assailing the caliph and Baghdad, since he had already been warned that the heavenly portents were inauspicious. Ṭusi reassured his new master, whose “heart lit up like a tulip in spring,” that the only dramatic event to take place would be Hülegü replacing the caliph on his throne (Rašid-al-Dīn, p. 1007; tr. p. 493). Among Hülegü’s party, Ṭusi found many admirers including the Jovayni brothers, one of whom, ‘Alā’-al-Din ‘Aṭā-Malek, the author of *Tāriḳ-e jahāngošāy*, was to become the Il-khanid governor of Baghdad, while the other one, Šams-al-Din Moḥammad, became the chief of secretariat (*šāḥeb[-e] divān*) of the new state. An anecdote claims that Ṭusi’s diplomatic action once saved ‘Aṭā-Malek from the potentially fatal displeasure of Hülegü (Jovayni, I, introd., pp. xc-xci).

The last days of Baghdad are detailed in Ṭusi’s own hand in the account added to Jovayni’s history of Čengiz Khan and the Mongols, which covers the period up to the fall of the Isma‘ilis (Jovayni, III, pp. 280-92). Ṭusi witnessed first hand the events surrounding the siege of Baghdad and the death of the Caliph al-Mosta‘sem on 14 Šafar 656/20 February 1258 (Jovayni, III, pp. 290-91), and accompanied Hülegü Khan on his campaigns in the west. Ṭusi along with the last vizier of the ‘Abbasid caliph, the Shi‘ite Ebn al-‘Alqami (d. June 1258), would have been instrumental in the decision to spare the Shi‘ite holy sites of Iraq while placating and gaining the support of the local Shi‘ite notables such as [Ebn Ṭāwus](#).

During the final stages of the siege of Baghdad, Ṭusi was entrusted with delivering personal messages to the caliph and, stationed at the Halba Gate, with receiving and checking those that would surrender. In Ṭusi’s viewpoint, the caliphate and indeed the Sunni Mamluks and their feuding Syrian warlords were the deviators from the true path and the “parsimonious Caliph,” a sectarian and fanatical blasphemer (Waşşāf, p. 43; Āyatī, p. 24, from Ṭusi’s letter to the Mamluks; K̄vāndamīr, III, p. 106, tr. p. 61; Lane, p. 220). That the Shi‘ites welcomed the toppling of the ‘Abbasid dynasty is well attested by the “treachery” of the caliph’s minister Ebn al-‘Alqami in the sparing of the



lives of the Shi'ite clergy in Baghdad and the readiness of the mainly Shi'ite inhabitants of Ḥella and Najaf to welcome the Mongol armies (Raşid-al-Din, pp. 1019-20; Lane, p. 221). It has been suggested that this could have been due to rumors circulating that Naşir-al-Din had succeeded in converting Hülegü Khan to Shi'ism and to the Hadiths that predict that the final victory of the expected Mahdi would be achieved with the help of the armies from Turan. "There will come the sons of Kantura, ... they have faces like leather-covered shields and noses like the trunks of elephants; they will not enter a land without conquering it, and approach no flag without overturning it" (Lane, p. 221; Waşşāf, p. 36).

The early death of Möngke removed the necessity of Ṭusi's dispatch to China and, in recognition of his services in procuring the relatively peaceful submission of the Isma'ilis and his advice to Hülegü on the overthrow of the last 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mo'taşem Be'llāh (r. 1242-58), the Il-khan awarded him the libraries of Iraq and of the Isma'ilis and the proceeds of some of Baghdad *waqfs* to finance an observatory (*raşad-kāna*) and a seat of learning in the Mongols' new capital at Marāğa. It was Ṭusi's appropriation of these *waqfs* that earned him the ire of Sunni Arab chroniclers such as Ebn Aybak Şafadi (1296-1363) as much as his involvement in the events in Baghdad. Ṭusi's role in the fall of Baghdad is fully recorded by Raşid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh (pp. 1007-9), Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi (pp. 94-96), K'āndamir (II, pp. 338-41, tr. pp. 59-60), and even Maḥmud Aqsarā'i (p. 49), as well as most other Persian chroniclers: "Hülegü Khan commanded him to construct the observatory here in this country, for he had become aware of the goodness of his character and the sincerity of his heart and wished him to be in attendance on him" (Raşid-al-Din, pp. 1024-25).

The *Zij al-ilkāni* is the one major literary work that remains from this period and provides a unique insight to his life and work at the seat of learning that he could call his own. Ṭusi was ordered to complete the *Zij al-ilkāni* in twelve years rather than the thirty years it required. The tables of planetary cycles were based wherever possible on original observations, though existing astrological knowledge was incorporated whenever appropriate. He was able to isolate several serious shortcomings in Ptolemy's astronomy and foreshadowed the later dissatisfaction with the system that culminated in the Copernican reforms. The *Zij al-ilkāni* retained its position as the most popular astrological table for at least two hundred years. He finished it at the age of about seventy under Hülegü's successor, Abaqa. The introduction to his



treatise is indicative of the wide international audience for Ṭusi's scholarship. Written in Persian, the *lingua franca* of the empire from China to Arabia, the language is plain and simple and explains such basics as a brief outline of the rise of Islam and the fact that Prophet Moḥammad was a native of Mecca, details which would have been unnecessary for local consumption. He translated the date 1203, the year of the Pig, not only to the Muslim calendar, but also to the calendar of the Zoroastrians, the Eastern Christians, and the Chinese. He also made extensive use of Chinese technical jargon in, for example, describing the three cycles of the sexagenary system and using the Chinese names for the ten celestial stems and twelve earthly branches of the sexagenary cycle (Allsen, pp. 162-65; Lane, p. 218).

The milieu in which Ṭusi wrote was highly conducive to scholarship and the Isma'ili academics were cocooned from the horrors without the walls of their sanctity so much so that the fame of the libraries and the treasure trove of scientific equipment encouraged scholars, Muslim and non-Muslim, to seek refuge in their fortresses.

Among the more famous names that are known to have availed themselves of the facilities at Marāḡa are Bar Hebraeus ([Ebn al-'Ebri](#) of Islamic sources), Faḡr-al-Din Ḳialāṭi from Tibilisi, Faḡr-al-Din Marāḡi Mawṣeli, [Ebn al-Fowaṭi](#) ('Abd al-Razzāq), Mo'ayyad-al-Din 'Orzi Demašqi, Yaḡyā'l-Din Maḡrebi (Ebn Abi-'l-Šokr), and the metaphysician, Najm-al-Din Dabirān Qazvini (Saliba, pp. 358-67; Ḳvāndamir, pp. 58-59). The mirthful astronomer [Qoṭb-al-Din Širāzi](#) (d. 1311), who was the closest colleague and student of Ṭusi at the observatory, was not included in this distinguished list of names compiled by Ṭusi in his *Zij al-ilkāni*, apparently due to his rather joking response to Abaqa's question reported by Ḳvāndamir (III, p. 116, tr., p. 66), which resulted in a serious break in their friendship. Ṭusi was able to cast off the sectarian parochialism, which plagued so many of his contemporaries, and cast his aspirations towards wider horizons. He adapted comfortably into this new intellectual milieu with the rich and nourishing intellectual climate he had helped create and which has been reflected in his work.

Bar Hebraeus describes Ṭusi as "a man of vast learning in all branches of philosophy. ... Under his control were all the religious endowments in all the lands under Mongol rule" (cited in Browne, III, p. 18) The Syrian Divine's *Chronography* devotes a warmly laudatory paragraph to Ḳvāja Naşir and his words suggest a personal acquaintance: "He constructed instruments for the observations of stars, and the great brass spheres that were more wonderful



than those that Ptolemy set up in Alexandria, and he observed and defined the courses of the stars. And there were gathered together about him in Marāḡa ... a numerous company of wise men from various countries. And since the councils of all the mosques and the houses of instruction (i.e., colleges) of Baghdad and Assyria were under his direction he used to allot stipends to the teachers and to the pupils who were with him” (Bar Hebraeus, p. 451; Lane, pp. 213-14).

In addition to his duties regarding the observatory (*raşad-kāna*), Ṭusi, already sixty years old by 1259, was entrusted with the administration of the religious endowments and foundations (*waqf*) and the finances of the new kingdom.

Ṭusi ended his days in Baghdad, where he had moved along with many of his pupils and followers some months before his death, and at his request he was buried near the tomb of the seventh Shi‘ite Imam Musā al-Kāẓem (d. 183/799). K̄vāndamir records that while digging the burial site for Ṭusi, a hidden unused chamber was found. It had once been intended for the caliph al-Nāşer and its date of completion was the birthday of K̄vāja Naşir-al-Din, 17 February 1201 (according to K̄vāndamir, III, p. 106; tr. p. 60), just one of the many legends and stories which began to accumulate around this unique figure.

Ṭusi was foremost a seeker after intellectual and academic truth and he would apparently serve any master who could provide him with the facilities to indulge his passion and his art. He had always relished scholarly confrontation “for he held fast to the opinions of the early philosophers, and he combated vigorously in his writings those who contradicted them” (Bar Hebraeus, p. 452; Lane, p. 214).

Ṭusi’s three sons went on to serve the later Il-Khans after their father’s death, Şadr al-Din ‘Ali took over his father’s positions, and Aşil-al-Din Ḥasan initially went with [Ġāzān Khan](#) to Syria where he was given the governorship of Damascus, while another son, Faḡr-al-Din Aḡmad, eventually met his death at the hands of the same reformist Khan (Waḡid Dāmḡāni, p. 14; Lane, p. 215).

As well as being a prolific writer with 150 treaties and letters attributed to him, Ṭusi was one of the greatest scientists, philosophers, mathematicians, astronomers, theologians, and physicians of the time. He wrote mostly in Arabic, although his most famous works are in Persian. A treatise on geomancy was composed in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish demonstrating his proficiency in all three languages (Nasr, 1996, p. 208). He made significant



contributions to many academic fields and he wrote several treatises on different sciences and subjects including geometry, algebra, arithmetic, trigonometry, medicine, metaphysics, logic, ethics, and theology. Five major works on logic have survived with his *Asās al-eqtebās*, which is considered one of the most important works on the subject, while his treatise on Shi'ite theology, the *Tajrid*, has attracted over 400 commentaries and glosses (Naşr, 1996, p. 209). Ṭūsī also found time to explore, practice, and advise on the promotion of a healthy and an active sex life researching medicines that can be “rubbed on the penis so that it can be lengthened and strengthened, as you desire”; additives and recipes that can render pounded pistachios with honey such that “you will see a miracle”; and finally the saliva produced after ingesting cubeb, pellitory, Chinese cinnamon, ginger, and coconut, kneaded with thick bee’s honey that, when applied to the erect penis, will cause “indescribable rapture experienced by both the man and the woman” (Tusi, *al-Bāb al-bāhiya*, ff. 56a, 61a, tr., pp. 116, 121). He is also credited with the composition of poetry, mostly in Persian, and also chronograms in Persian. Many of these were recorded by [Moḥammad Jājarmi](#) (II, pp. 834-35).

His major contribution in mathematics (Naşr, 1996, pp. 208-14) is said to be in trigonometry, which for the first time was compiled by him as a new discipline in its own right. Spherical trigonometry also owes its development to his efforts, and this includes the concept of the six fundamental formulas for the solution of spherical right-angled triangles. His mathematical training is very evident in the order and system that he used in his classification and breakdown of the Il-Khan’s revenue compiled when he was appointed as a financial overseer, but prior to his later appointment as inspector of religious endowments (*waqf*; Minorsky, pp. 64-85).

In philosophy, his contribution to logic and metaphysics has been recognized, particularly his treatise on logic, *Asās al-eqtebās*, but it was his work on ethics entitled *Aklāq-e nāşeri* and the earlier *Aklāq-e moḥtaşami* that became the most well known books on the subject, and remained popular for centuries.

Both works were originally dedicated to his Isma‘ili patrons though he rescinded these dedications later. However, they remain arguably Isma‘ili inspired books. In the thirteenth century Islamic world, the distinction between philosophy, still sometimes a suspect field of study, and *kalām* was not always clear and was indeed often very blurred. During the thirty-year long period, he spent as “captive” of the Isma‘ilis, he also produced another major work, the *Rawżat al-taslim* in addition to a number of shorter treatises which



unequivocally reflect Isma‘ili ideology (Daftary, 2007, p. 379; Badakhchani, pp. 15, 18-19).

Rawzat al-taslim, composed at Alamut and completed in 1243, is Ṭusi’s major Isma‘ili work. It covers a variety of themes including the nature of the imamate, prophethood, eschatology, ethics and human relationships, the cosmos, religion in general, God, and the nature of existence. The work is arranged to lead the reader progressively from an understanding of the physical world to the spiritual world with the penultimate of the twenty-eight chapters dealing with pre-Islamic beliefs including Sabaenism and Indian practices. The final chapter or *taşawworāt* (notions) is a unique question/answer session with the Isma‘ili Imam, ‘Alā’-al-Din Moḥammad, which is extant only by reference in the tables of content and in fragments. In the latest English translation these fragments of the Imam’s responses have been included as an annex. The significance of this work lies in its comprehensive treatment of Isma‘ili thought, articulation of Ṭusi’s thoughts on recognition of the Imam of the day, and the teachings of Imam Ḥasan ‘Alā Dekrehe’l-Salām concerning the resurrection. The language and imagery are both highly technical and very simple. In explaining the necessity of submission (*taslim*), he concludes “Therefore he will wholeheartedly ... renounce all that was the source of his worldly comfort, choosing to abide by his teacher’s will rather than follow his own preference” (ed. and tr. Badakhchani, p. 108, no. 314).

Ṭusi believed that there were limits to speculative reason and that the metaphysical and supra-rational nature of knowledge that he was attempting to realize were unattainable without the presence of an authoritative teacher. Once he had converted and submitted to the words of his teachers he experienced a series of unveilings. He explains methodically through a series of proofs and arguments that divine knowledge is only attainable through the mediation of a universal teacher who must be extant and recognizable amongst humankind (*Sayr wa soluk*, nos. 8-13, 17-37, 39-49, 50-57 ..., tr., introd., p. 13).

In his *Tawallā wa tabarrā*, Ṭusi explores the Quranic concept of solidarity and dissociation by which is meant closeness and identification with Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Ṭāleb and the Imams while distancing oneself from the negative and destructive instincts and emotions of lust, anger, and hatred. Through uniting these two processes the passions of human nature can be transmuted into love, yearning, and gnosis or *ma‘refat*. The aim of the process brought about



through rational reasoning and the intellect is contentment (*reżā*), submission (*taslim*), and certitude (*iqān*). For Ṭusi, it is certitude that can transform hatred into love and the ‘primordial past’ into the ‘subsequent future’ between which two states Man exists corresponding to the physical world and the spiritual realm or from another perspective, predestination and free-will (*Rawżat al-taslim*, ed. and tr. Badakhchani, p. 249, no. 13).

Maṭlub al-moʻmenim was written at the request of a close female associate of the Imam who wanted a summary in four chapters of Ismaʻili eschatological doctrine, esoteric exegesis of religious law, *tawallā wa tabarra* (solidarity and dissociation), and the defining traits of an Ismaʻili. The observance of the shariʻat has often been a controversial subject with Ismaʻilis, and in this work Ṭusi makes it plain that for him the ideal, the “man of truth” (*mard-e haqiqat*), is one who is able to combine adherence to the esoteric and exoteric Islamic law, *zāher* and *bāṭen*.

There also exist certain compositions ascribed to Ṭusi, which are believed to have been altered to cover up or re-orientate their message in order to make them more acceptable in a twelve-Shiʻite milieu. A philosophical treatise, the *Resāla-ye jabr wa qadar*, which has had all quotations from the Imam Ḥasan ʻAlā Dekreheʻl-Salām, has been omitted while a manual of instructions on conducting ceremonies to accompany conversion to Ismaʻilism has simply been attributed to another author.

The list of Ṭusi’s known treatises is exhaustive; Carl Brockelmann lists 56 and George Sarton 64. About a quarter of his listed works are concerned with mathematics, a fourth astronomy, another fourth philosophy and religion, and the remainder a variety of other subjects including his detailed explanation of the tax system under the Il-Khans (see Minovi and Minorsky). Not so well-known are some minor works that Ṭusi undertook, presumably at the behest of his Mongol masters. The *Fāl-nāma*, the *Resāla-ye raml*, and the *Resāla-ye estekrāj-e kabāyā* deal with divination and the esoteric. Many of his books, originally written in both Arabic and Persian, were translated into Latin and other European languages in mediaeval times.

For many, the main controversial point surrounding Naşir-al-Din Ṭusi is the sincerity of his adherence to or rejection of Ismaʻilism. In his spiritual autobiography, the *Sayr wa soluk*, he states unequivocally his belief in *taʻlim* and the necessity of an authoritative and infallible teacher (ed. and tr. Badakhchani, tr., pp. 29-30; text, pp. 5-6). Ṭusi claims that it was his



dissatisfaction with *kalām* (scholastic theology) and *ḥekmat* (philosophy) that led him to the belief in the Isma‘ili doctrine of submission (*taslim*). However, it is not unreasonable to assume that actual contact with this infallible Imam, especially the youthful Rokn-al-Din Ḳorşāh, might have eventually caused him to revert to his more conservative Imami beliefs. A revealing anecdote concerning Ṭusi is reported by the Arab court official Ebn Fowaṭi, who served the Il-Khans in Baghdad. Asked by Hülegü, ca. 1260, to explain a group of *qalandars* that the Il-Khan had encountered on the plain of Ḥarrān, Ṭusi had answered that they were “the uncounted (surplus) of the world,” leading Hülegü to order immediately the unfortunate dervishes’ execution. Elaborating, presumably after the slaughter, Ṭusi expounded to his master that mankind was divided into four categories; rulers, traders, craftsmen and agriculturalists. Those who did not fall within these categories “were a burden [on the people]” (Ebn Fowaṭi, p. 343; Lane, p. 223). Clearly, Ṭusi viewed his fellow citizens with a dangerous degree of arrogance and it cannot be thought surprising if his encounter with the Isma‘ili Imam of the Age, the young Ḳorşāh, left him disappointed. He was a thinker and a searcher after truth and he did not confine his associates or his sources of knowledge to the narrow limits of sectarian dictates or even of Islam. His own role in the court as Hülegü’s ‘meanest slave’ is clearly elucidated in a short essay quoted in the *Tāriḳ-i šāhi*, in which he explains the historical role in Iran of the king, the men of the sword and the men of the pen, and the advantages for each if these roles and duties are observed. He includes the ‘*olamā*’ as one of the four categories of men of the pen but specifies that by ‘*olamā*’ he means only philosophers, astronomers, and physicians (*Tāriḳ-e šāhi*, pp. 39-41; Lane, p. 223).

Ṭusi had served and gained acclaim in the courts of an Isma‘ili prince, two Isma‘ili imams and two non-Muslim Mongol kings, and had retained the trust and respect of them all. He had also, reputedly, been in correspondence with the Sunni ‘Abbasids, presumably in order to sound out Baghdad as a potential haven. Ṭusi remained loyal throughout his life to his true calling and did not deviate from his role as *ḥakim*.



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