

A painting of a butterfly with yellow and white wings, perched on a pinkish-red flower. The background is a textured blue-grey. Other flowers and leaves are visible in the corners.

IVANOW,

STUDIES IN EARLY PERSIAN ISMAILISM.

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Studies in Early PERSIAN ISMAILISM

by

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Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg.)

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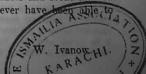
PREFACE

The difficulties of war-time, followed up by the veritable agony or the present post-war period, have created almost unsurmountable obstacles to the publication of both books and papers. Nothing is so sad as the indefinite postponement of publication of a work ready to go to press. However imperfect it may be, it nevertheless contains some proportion of useful knowledge which may prove to be of value to other students. It was therefore a happy occasion when the "Ismaili Society" was founded in Bombay (on the 16th February 1946) for the purpose of rendering assistance to the study of Ismailism and cognate matters. The Society's programme, in addition to the proposed publication of monographs, editions of original texts and their translations, also included a non-periodical magazine, "Collectanea," in which papers might appear whenever material had been accumulated for about two hundred pages.

Present day conditions, with exasperatingly slow communications, have prevented the Society from giving enough publicity to their plans. Thus when I submitted articles I had ready for publication, no contribution from any other author had been received. As it would surely have been odd to publish a non-periodical magazine solely comprising works by one and the same author, it was decided to issue the articles in book form under my own name. The papers were therefore selected to form a more or less homogeneous whole, centring around that still very little known matter, the history of early Ismailism, especially in so far as it is connected with the early history of the Ismaili movement in Persia.

I have to acknowledge my most profound gratitude to the President and members of the "Ismaili Society" for their stretching out a helping hand in a situation which looked well-nigh desperate. Here, as in all my publications on Ismaili matters, I have to offer my heart-felt thanks to all my Ismaili friends for their invaluable and broad-minded assistance without which I would never have been able to do any work on the subject.

Bombay, June, 1947.



I.

MAIN TRENDS IN THE HISTORY OF SHI'ISM.*

This paper sums up observations accumulated in the course of many years of contact with Shi'ite literature. I, personally, always felt acutely, as probably does every student, the meagreness and inadequacy of the general ideas of Shi'ism with which we are usually equipped in school and which we can derive from oriental literature. While working over Shi'ite materials, one has at every step to change one's earlier ideas, revising them, or giving them up entirely as false and utterly misleading. The majority of these we owe to the labours of various Dutch and German scholars of the last century. Belonging almost exclusively to the arm-chair type, with no first hand knowledge and understanding of the conditions of life in the East, they were often misled by their sources which they trusted more than these deserved. Thus many of the impudent falsehoods of Abbasid propaganda became endorsed by them as historical truth. Already towards the end of the last century, however, their errors had been noticed, and a thorough revision, which was badly needed, was started by various scholars, such as J. Wellhausen, H. Lamnius, and others. It is true, that in spite of better facilities, these scholars committed further errors, this time displaying undue admiration for the Omayyads in contrast to the Abbasid sympathies of their predecessors, but we may hope that further studies will help to put things right.

In my earlier publications I was often driven into discussion of matters concerned with Shi'ism in general. The present paper synthesises all that I would still like to re-

* This article was originally intended for publication in a non-technical periodical. Here it has been included, however, because it may be of some use to students for general orientation in the question of Shi'ism. It may therefore serve as a kind of an introductory note to the other articles in this volume.

tain, and cancels what is outdated. I offer it here for what it is worth, and hope that other students find it of some use, in their further researches correcting my errors, and adding what is lacking here.

1. Shi'ism and Religion.

For the definition of the nature of Shi'ism a simple and compact, though hardly correct, formula is still generally used. It was probably finally evolved not earlier than the Abbasid period. This formula describes it as a political movement originated by the baseless claims of 'Ali, and his descendants, to supreme authority. For the first fifty years or so after the death of the Prophet it had nothing to do with religion but later on gradually developed heretical tenets of its own thus causing a schism in Islam.

Contrary to this, all Shi'ite sources, beginning with the earliest, never ceased to stress the theory that Shi'ism always remained a purely religious current in Islam. Political claims were not the cause, but the results of its religious tenets. Shi'ism is described by them as the school of Islam based on the purest and truest tradition, carefully preserved in the family of the Prophet and the circles which were closely associated with him, and therefore having access to more correct and complete information on the subject than others.

A critical solution of the question as to which version is right is very difficult owing to the extreme meagreness of reliable historical information. The real outlines of facts preserved by tradition are badly disfigured, and sometimes obliterated by thick accumulations of the cobwebs of legend. The individualistic mentality of early mediaeval authors who noticed only outstanding actors on the historical stage, and remained blind to the part played by the general forces of an economic, social, or national character, is still more confusing. Strong religious sentiment bitterly resents such ideas as the conditions in the original Islamic community being not so idyllic as they are presented by legend, or that Islam as a religion just after the death of the Apostle

of God was not as complete, uniform, systematic, developed and mature as it appears in the Golden Age stories. Gross anachronisms, different scales of veracity as applied to friends and foes, and many other kinds of aberration in judgment greatly affect the value of the information found in early sources. On the top of all come aberrations generated by our own involuntary tendency to understand events according to our familiar ideas, not as these were understood by the contemporary mind. This applies particularly to the realisation of the tempo of religious development in early Islam. Living in the age of religious indifferentism, or, anyhow, at the time when the great religions of the world, such as Christianity or Islam, have long ago attained stability and maturity, we must make special efforts to comprehend, or feel, the amazingly rapid pace of the growth of ideas at that period when decades mattered as much as later did centuries in the evolution of religious beliefs.

For all these reasons it is impossible to try to reconstruct the picture of the origin and earliest steps of Shi'ism by carefully selecting and placing together small pieces of information quoted from sources directly dealing with the matter. In fact, we have only here and there vague allusions between which there is nothing to give us the clue. However reluctantly, we are compelled to theorize a little, going by inferences and parallels from slightly later periods.

Probably a sound starting point is offered by the indisputable fact that Islam as it was under the Prophet himself was a strict and consistent theocracy. God Himself ruled over His people through His chosen Apostle to whom He conveyed His instructions directly. God not only revealed the new religion, but acted as the lawgiver, spiritual guide, director of communal affairs in case of emergency, and even, on certain occasions, took much interest in the family affairs of the Prophet. Theocracy as a term has also wider implications, and may mean generally the state in which religious law and interests are regarded as of supreme im-

portance.' This, however, is too sophisticated for that early period, for which theocracy may be defined as the community, or state, ruled over by a religious leader in the name of religion. This is exactly what the earliest Islam was.

For some reasons which so far remain entirely obscure, no provision whatever was made for the succession in case of the Prophet's death, and when the sad event took place, secular authority was at once seized by the strongest group, while religious authority, as important if not more vital for the new community in which it formed the mainspring of all its activities, remained in suspense. Tradition, apparently emanating from a much later period than that to which it professes to belong, mentions that on his deathbed the Prophet left to his followers "the Book of God and his own (the Prophet's) example," or, as the Shi'ites prefer, the Book of God and the *'itrat*, i.e. the direct descendants of the Prophet, through his daughter Fāṭima, the Imams. All this implies anachronisms, because the Coran, as is known, was not codified for some 25 years longer, and the tradition of the example of the Prophet was collected, verified and made accessible to every one only after a much longer period. Even if the tradition is substantially true, we, knowing the ways in which the Coran was collected, arranged and edited, may question whether the Prophet or his deathbed had in view exactly this.²

¹ For instance, J. Wellhausen, in his well-known work, "Das Arabische Reich und sein Sturz" (Berlin, 1902), treats the Umayyad caliphate as a theocracy. It is difficult to agree with such a wide interpretation of the term. Surely, if the law of the state is supposed to be based on Divine revelation and the example of the Prophet, this does not imply the "government by God" that the word theocracy literally means.

² The expression "Book of God" in the Coran (cf. XXVIII: 6) often simply means Divine Revelation. If the Prophet had really uttered the words, attributed to him, on his deathbed, we may be well justified in accepting them as referring to the Revelation and the forms of worship with some basic religious prescriptions which are not directly mentioned in the Coran as it is at present. The idea that the Coran and the example of

Anyhow, the unanimous testimony of early annals reveals the fact that, — as it would be natural to expect, — the knowledge of the Coran was confined in the early Islamic community, for quite a considerable period of time, to short extracts, memorised to be recited in the course of the daily prayers. The knowledge of the example of the Apostle of God should have been of necessity rather confused by conflicting reports. All this was obviously not quite sufficient for the guidance of the faithful in the complexity of life.

It may be easily realised how important should have been the position of one who is credited with a sound and comprehensive knowledge of religious matters in the Arab society which was just gradually emerging from the state similar to that of shamanism. We may therefore readily believe that numerous traditions, extolling the importance of knowledge (religious, of course), *'ilm*, and the *'alim*, "one who knows," which later on acquired the meaning of a theologian, were the product of this period, although, of course, they are attributed to the Prophet. The *'alims*, as a very well-known *ḥadith* says, are the heirs of the prophets; angels spread their wings under their feet.³ Medina was the spiritual metropolis of Islam, and such *'alims* constituted its worth.

It seems to be an indisputable fact that amongst the close associates of the family of the Prophet there were many persons recognized as exceptionally well-versed in

the Prophet had to regulate every step in the life of the Muslim, developed later on, was probably alien to the contemporaries of the Prophet who relied on the ancestral custom and their own commonsense in such matters as were not directly connected with religion. The thirst for religious guidance in every step of life obviously belongs to the period of the expansion of Islam when Arab custom had to come in conflict with the national usages of various provinces.

³ Cf. W. Ivanow, "The Alleged Founder of Ismailism", p. 29, where attention is drawn to the frequent cases of ambiguity in such expressions. It is not always certain in Shi'ite tradition whether it really refers to an ordinary learned man, or the "learned, *'alim*, by the mercy of God", i.e. the Alid.

religious matters, such as Abū Dharr, and many others. The head of this group was 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, who was their spokesman. Early Sunnite, i.e. Omayyad, and, later on, Abbasid sources, bitterly hostile to the Alids and Shi'ism, do everything possible to represent him as a person of inferior intellect or learning.¹ We cannot find out precisely whether this is true, and this is immaterial. The fact remains that the masses, especially, in various provinces, in all probability, logically expected that the most reliable tradition concerning religious matters had to be preserved in the family of the Prophet himself. On the other hand, we should bear in mind the peculiar feature of the life of that remote period, namely the clan mentality. According to this, certain privileges belonged not to individuals, but to a clan, as the common property of all members. Thus if the highest authority in Islam was by every one regarded as the prerogative of the Quraysh clan, then we must not be surprised if the same idea is extended to the Alid prerogative, the *'ilm*. For the modern mentality the idea that knowledge may form a sort of a family property may be ridiculous. But, from the point of the clan psychology, it is in no way more ridiculous than that of the rights of royal families to authority, or aristocratic families to various privileges. In early Shi'ism, and especially among Shi'ite sects, the idea of the *'ilm* as an hereditary commodity of the Alids is extremely strong, and is by no means in need of explanation by any mystical tricks concerning special acts of its transfer from the elder to the younger generation.

Assuming that the sum total of theological knowledge possessed by the group centring around 'Alī was certainly not inferior, and probably greater, than that of any other party in Medina, we can easily picture a situation where 'Alī was personally accredited as the custodian of that religious wisdom. This position, moreover, would be assumed quite independently of any claim to temporal au-

thority, and even perhaps without any effort on his part, as the Shi'ites believe.

The changes caused by the death of the Prophet undoubtedly affected this group to a great extent. Sincerely religious persons were perhaps much disappointed, seeing that their aspirations to attain salvation through righteous life under the Prophet's guidance were hopelessly upset. More practical of them probably were disappointed with the loss of their former privileged position, which they enjoyed owing to their proximity to Muḥammad's family. This developed that constantly conservative tendency which is characteristic of Shi'ism, and which, however, in practice was quite compatible with such developments, dogmatical and philosophical, for which other schools of Islam had to wait for centuries.¹

The evolution of the idea of the Alid *'ilm*, religious knowledge, is so rapid, manifold and often astonishingly far-reaching, that it would require much space to survey even its principal lines. It probably developed by mystical inspiration, by that variety of wishful thinking which is so typical of religious process, or by incidental improvisation. Most probably starting from the idea that the Alids must possess greater knowledge than others, it came to the assertion that they *really* had it. Then wishful thinking made the enthusiasts believe that such greater knowledge comprises not only all that others partly know, but also something more than that, not only the "open" matters, but also "hidden", the "inner meaning" which was not revealed by the Prophet to all his followers because

¹ Such an apparently paradoxical situation can be easily explained. While in Sunnite circles new ideas were opposed not only on account of religious conservatism, but also owing to fears of being suspected of hereticism, which very few outstanding persons would brave, the Shi'ite Imam, as the bearer of supreme religious authority, could do what his common-sense and desire of advancing the doctrine would suggest to him, or what would be advised to him by experts. In this way Shi'ism anticipated Sunnism in many cultural matters which in the latter could only be introduced under long and heavy pressure of public opinion.

¹ Cf. H. Lammens, "A propos de 'Alī Ibn Abī Tālib" (al-Machriq, 1922, pp. 311-320).

they were not ready as yet to accept and understand this. He therefore confided it to his most trusted friend, 'Ali, bequeathing to him authority to reveal this gradually. Thus 'Ali becomes the "completer" of the mission of the Prophet, the *Wasi*, or executor of his will. This still undivulged part of the Divine revelation thus becomes his "property," and after him the property of the clan of his descendants. With it they inherit not only the enjoyment of possession, but also the duties, and this is why in early Shi'ism, especially Ismailism, the Imams after 'Ali bear the title *Mutimm*, "completer," i.e. the person whose mission is to complete the task of the Apostle of God.¹ In various extremist sects this process was going on to the tempo of feverish dreams, and already by the beginning of the second c. A.H. had attained absurd dimensions. Not only 'Ali himself, but also many of his descendants and even associates, as, e.g., Sahnun, were deified, and the *Mil 'ilmi* had become a kind of Divine omniscience.²

Probably very little opposition to such ideas was encountered in the less educated circles in which Islam and its spirit had still only a superficial hold, while pre-Islamic

¹ I have already drawn the attention of student to the fact that even in such moderate Shi'ite milieu as the entourage of Imam Ja'far as-Sâdiq the position of the Imam had a tendency to become equal to that of the Prophet. The Imam differed from the latter only in not possessing the gift of foretelling events, and being subject to certain restrictions of the *shari'at*, as in the question of marrying only four legal wives. Cf. "The Alleged Founder of Ismailism", p. 121, footnote. However paradoxically, the Sunnites in this respect had left the Shi'ites far behind. Already the Omayyads, as later on the Abbasids, officially styled themselves *khalifatul-'Idh*, i.e. the Deputy of God, and the theory was advanced that the caliph occupies a higher position than the Apostle of God, because to every king his deputy is dearer and more important than an ordinary ambassador. Cf. W. Barthold, "Caliph and Sultan" (in Russian). *Mir Islama*, 1912, p. 212.

² The eminent heretic, Abū'l-Khaṭṭāb, taught that the Imams know the number of leaves on the trees, number of pieces of sand on the sea shore, and so forth. Cf. "The Alleged Founder of Ismailism", p. 122.

beliefs and mystical dreams were not as yet entirely dead. The exaggerated forms in which their ideas were expressed show nothing but the feverish heat of their sincere religious sentiment, deep and flaming in the darkness of sin and religious idleness of common people. Every new invention of their leader was probably hailed as a great religious achievement, Divine revelation sent to him for his piety and acts pleasing to God. There was nothing more in this than the purest although misguided devotion to God. His Prophet and the latter's *dhurriyya*.

The rights of 'Ali to supreme authority in Islam, which were probably developed much later in the day, and retrospectively in later Shi'ite speculations, are chiefly based on the idea of the continuity of the strictly theocratic order in Islam, and on the general subordination of the secular principle to the religious. If the candidate to the caliphate should be the most deserving person in the community, who could be more deserving than the person who is in possession of the highest religious knowledge? Shi'ism has elaborated this theory in the form of the principle that the *jaḍl*, i.e. the possessor of superior virtue, cannot be subordinate to the *maḍḍl*, i.e. one who is benefitted by some one else's *jaḍl*. This abstract formula had obviously a quite definite relationship to the real life of the time, namely in the political field, in anti-dynastic struggle. Already probably at an early period the legend of the golden age under the Prophet was in vivid contrast to the misery of the real conditions under the Omayyads, and especially later on under the Abbasids. Thus the ideal theocratic ruler, the "completer" of the mission of the Prophet, could automatically become the ideal secular ruler, the deliverer from the distress.

However difficult it may be to dogmatize about the real sequence of the phases of evolution in these matters, we may believe that the differentiation between the pontifical aspect of the ideal theocratic ruler, and his exercise of secular authority had set in at an early period. There are many facts which may be interpreted as indicating that

in early Shi'ite ideas the theory of the Alid clan's ownership of the 'ilm made the community recognize as its owner the head, i.e. the eldest male member of the clan at the time. Later on, however, with the rapid multiplication of the family, and probably the stress on pontifical functions, the principle was developed of the succession in one only line, from father to son. Both the earlier and later principles struggled for a considerable period of time for priority.

There is yet another important question which is rarely raised in discussions of Shi'ism. We have so far dealt with the Imams, i.e. the Alids, the leaders, who appeared either as pontiffs, or secular rulers, or both. The reverse of this is the question of the masses, the followers of the Imams. Their attitude, to these theories and the candidates to the Imamatus obviously depended on forces and processes beyond human control, on social and economical factors. It may be useful to recognize as a general substratum the fact that during something like the first three or four centuries of Islamic history the illiterate masses, especially in the corners remote from immediate contact with cultural centres, had only a very superficial knowledge of Islam, probably only confined to the recitation of prayers and discharge of the basic Muslim religious duties. The same, most probably applied to Shi'ism. The difference between an uneducated Shi'ite and non-Shi'ite most probably consisted at the time merely in the recognition of the principle of the Imamatus, implying the recognition of the preferential right of the Alids to authority, and their candidature to the pontificate in Islam. Likewise it is highly probable that the difference between the numerous branches of the Shi'ites consisted in the preference to this or that particular candidate, or line of the Alids. Transition from one branch to the other, and both conversion to Shi'ism and dissociation from it, were extremely easy and simple.

The most important factor in the development of Shi'ism generally was widespread Messianism. The Coran is full of threats of the sudden and very near end of the

world, and the general misery and distress of the masses made it easier to reconcile oneself with that idea, and even desire it. The word *Mahdi* is not met with in the Coran, and there can be little doubt that the belief was incorporated, together with a great multitude of other beliefs, from Christianity. The idea was so attractive to the general mentality of the masses that it became all-Islamic. Its development, in the sense that before the final destruction of the world there will come the *Mahdi*, who will deliver the humanity from the misery and distress, will overcome his foes, and establish paradisaical order on earth, conformed entirely to Shi'ite dreams. Very early had the *hadiths* begun to circulate in which the Prophet predicted the advent of his own descendant "whose name will be also Muhammad, whose *kunya*, patronymic, will also be like that of the Apostle of God, and who will fill the earth with equity and justice ever so much as it has been filled with injustice, oppression and tyranny." This motif does not disappear from the pages of history till very late. This probably afforded an opportunity for combining finally in one the conceptions of the Imam-pontiff and Imam-secular ruler. It also gave a strong force to the conception of the pontificate without the exercise of the secular authority, and even of the pontificate in suspense, the "concealed Imam," who discharges his spiritual functions even without being actually existent. This strange development appears already at a surprisingly early date in connection with the third son of 'Ali, Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya, who, after his death in 81/700-1, was believed to continue his existence in the mountains of Radwa, and to remain thus till the end of the world.

In the course of history, for quite obvious reasons, the pontiff has overshadowed the secular ruler in the conception of the Imam. The idea of the pontificate could develop unrestrictedly, while the few occasions which history offered for testing the theocratic theories in practice coincided with unfavourable periods in which the functions of the secular ruler were reduced to barely more than a desperate struggle for existence.

✓ It may be useful to note that the identification of the idea of the *Mahdī* with that of the Shi'ite Imam began at an early period. Its traces are clear in the tradition related by Imam Ja'far. Later on the Fatimids not only identified the Imam with the promised *Mahdī*, but even went further than this, plainly recognising the principle that the *Mahdī* is a collective, or dynastic, name for the dynasty of the Imams from the house of the Prophet, who are like one and the same person, only appearing in different bodies and states, although being in spirit one and the same all through the ages.¹

2. Shi'ism and Class Stratification.

The rise of the religion of Islam accompanied the transition of wide masses of the Arab population from the primitive tribal order and economy to the higher forms of life which, in the form of settled communities and occupation with trade, had already penetrated the peninsula. Its emergence on the historical stage, however, coincided with an exceptional combination of circumstances when both Sasanian Persia to the East and Byzantine provinces to the North, N.-W., and West were in a state of rot and complete decay. This permitted Islam to spread like wildfire, carried by the desert bands to the limits of the then known world. The new religion was then in its infant, immature and plastic state. It influenced the conquered nations with its ardent spirit, but itself had much to absorb from the older religions and civilisations. It is known from chemistry that some elements keenly react with other elements in what is called *status nascendi*, while remaining indifferent in ordinary conditions. This was exactly the case with Islam which in such conditions produced a stable, strong and durable new civilisation in which it is impossible to see a mere mixture.

The countries conquered by the Arabs were passing through a long period of economic distress, and their class

structure was simple. At the head stood the officials and nobility, the next layer was formed by small landowners, traders, clergy, and others. And at the bottom there were the toiling masses of the agricultural population, nomads and numerous slaves. The conquerors have inherited this order, and although their religion had imbued much of the Arab patriarchal democracy and the ideal of religious equity, in practice the new rulers had done everything possible to leave the conditions as they found these, even when the majority of the conquered became converted to Islam.¹

During the more flourishing periods of the caliphate, behind the imposing façade of Damascus, there was intense misery in the provinces, and in the vast rural areas. These had little chance of cultural advancement, not only owing to the heavy burden of taxation and the duty of feeding the landlords, but also because of permanent state of insecurity of life and property produced by chronic unrest. In addition to taxation, the productive population had not only to meet extortions by the corrupt administration, but often wanton destruction of assets during innumerable local wars, in which they were looted both by friend and foe, and especially by the government forces which were always more dangerous to the population which they defended than to the enemy. All this was going on, year in and year out, with very short intervals.

The story of the caliphate policy in landownership and taxation is long and complex because here established prac-

¹ The supposed democracy of the original Islam was obviously different in origin from the modern conception of democracy. It was simply the equality of the members of the Arab clan, which really meant a much expanded family. The idea was transferred onto the new religious brotherhood which had to form a new unit on clan-like lines. This becomes particularly evident in the oft-repeated disputes over the division of war booty, and other matters in which the rank and file Arabs presented their claims. In the long and unattractive story of the new converts being promised equal position with Arabs with regard to taxation, and repeatedly cheated, the Arab financial interests invariably triumphed over religious considerations and supposed democracy.

¹ Cf. 'The Rise of the Fatimids', p. 51.

tice, local custom, interests of the state treasury, and religious idealism very often came into conflict. The continuous vacillation of the regime added not a little to the general decay and impoverishment. For petty landowners the living on the land became more and more difficult, and they flocked not only to the towns generally, but especially to the large administrative centres such as Basra or Kufa. This flight of the landowners assumed such dimensions that energetic rulers like al-Hajjāj had to take specially drastic measures to stop it, sending back the runaway landlords to their properties, and even branding them with the names of their native villages for better control.¹

However incidental and, so-to-speak, improvised was the origin of the Islamic community, it, despite its infancy, was in its mentality already a full-fledged imperialistic state. The myth of the Muslim invaders offering the conquered the choice between Islam and death has long since been exploded, and every reliable historical authority depicts the motives of the early conquests as mainly financial just as it was the case with the Romans, namely the acquisition of loot. Even at a much later period idealistic and purely religious motives for warlike moves and occupation were usually excuses for a particularly brutal and treacherous form of state brigandage. Early Islam, especially in the East during the first c. A.H., was a colonial empire. It organised a net of cantonments and garrisons, and the policy of occupation was so clearly and definitely carried out that very often the conquerors were prohibited from acquiring immovable property in the occupied country.

As everywhere, such cantonments and garrisons always attracted to them certain classes of the natives of the country who came as merchants, servants, and so forth. As towns were also the seat of the administrative authorities, jurisdiction, religion, education and trade, they attracted also well-to-do landowners who looked for a more comfortable life and protection, especially during the periods of unrest. Others flocked to towns in search of employment in the

administration or in the armed forces which were often raised by the Arabs.

When speaking of early mediaeval Persia, and Western Asia in general, except for Arabia-proper, it is necessary to realise that at that early period its ethnic composition, which even now is complex, was incomparably more heterogeneous. The term "Persian" in application to the times of the early caliphate may mean anything. The inhabitants of Persia belonged to many entirely different races, spoke a great variety of languages, and even the one which was called Persian was subdivided into several large groups of dialects. As a result of the most varied historical and other causes very often every district, and sometimes even every village, had its own dialect. All these had one feature in common, namely the absence of literature.¹ The Persian language which was later on developed and became the literary language of the group, namely the Persian of Herat and adjacent districts, differed substantially from Western Persian.² In Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt, with their Semitic, and, in addition, not very numerous population, local languages soon became submerged in Arabic, but in the East the latter never went further than the cantonment and highly educated circles.³

¹ There was, certainly, some literary activity in Sughd, Sogdiana, where Syriac alphabet was adapted to the local Iranian language, and was also occasionally used for writing in Persian, both of the Eastern and Western groups. This literature, however, probably had only a local importance in that remote borderland. The Pehlvi script and meagre religious literature developed by the Zoroastrian priests had scarcely any national importance at all, being entirely confined to the priestly caste.

² As is known, the first serious attempts at creating a literature in Persian belong to the Samanid government, and were made in the middle of the fourth/tenth c., when Arabic literature had already passed its classic period.

³ Although high class literary Persian became gradually permeated with Arabic words and phrases, it seems that during the period of the Arab garrisoning of Persia no Perso-Arab jargon came into existence. This may be partly explained by the fact that the Arab occupation force was very small, rarely

¹ See J. Wellhausen, "Das Arabische Reich", p. 244.

The study of Arabic was a paying proposition because it was not only the way to acquire religious learning, but also to secure a good post in administrative or revenue service.¹ Of course, it was difficult and long, and for this reason normally accessible only to those who possessed certain means. Facilities of learning it were only found in towns. Such close connection of Arabic with religion, the rulers, better off classes and towns has introduced a new and extremely powerful factor, the cultural, in the life of the empire, leading to a deep and ever widening cleavage in all nations which were concerned with it, because Arabic had become a class asset, a strong uniting bond of class-interests.²

exceeding some forty thousand fighting men. Thus all Arabs, with their families, scarcely numbered more than 200,000 at the highest. Besides, Arabic was obviously too difficult and linguistically remote from the languages which were spoken by the local population.

¹ As is known, Arabic became the language of official correspondence and account keeping in the caliphate only in the last quarter of the first c. A.H.

² Even now, when religious knowledge by no means brings with it fat income, in Muslim countries, especially India, knowledge of Arabic, however poor in reality, is the object of pride, and is treated as a sign of social distinction. The original purpose of the knowledge of a language, to be a channel through which useful knowledge flows, is long forgotten, but the prejudice remains. The reason why this language with many sounds difficult of pronunciation, undeveloped syntax, and its horrible script, became so much cultivated, was pressing religious necessity. At that early period religion had to be studied from its original sources, the *Coran* and *hadith*. Both these lent themselves to no satisfactory translation partly because except for Syriac and Copt there were no literary languages. Persian, as we have seen, became an Islamic literary language only much later on, and was subdivided into many dialects. On the other hand, Arabic, which is abnormally rich in words as much as it is abnormally poor in ideas (as is quite normal for the language of nomads roaming the desert), in what should be regarded as its "basic lexical fund" had a remarkable number of verbs overlapping in their meaning, or covering an abnormal variety of implications based on some extraordinarily far-fetched associations. This makes it extremely ambiguous.

The enthusiasm which early Islam inspired in its new converts played the part of a ferment which brought the new civilisation to remarkably high levels. The admirers of Arabic rightly point out with pride its remarkable achievement. With his knowledge of Arabic any one, say, an inhabitant of a place on the Atlantic coast, could easily feel himself at home in the educated strata of any town as far as the confines of China or Central India. Everywhere he would find those who understood him, his interests, and views. The cultural achievements of the unifying factor of the common language and the unity of administrative authority cannot be exaggerated. All this finds its closest parallel in modern India where English as the language of the new civilisation destroyed the age long barriers of the innumerable local languages, religious differences, and social prejudice. An educated English speaking Indian, moreover, would easily move in foreign countries wherever English is understood.

This attractive picture, however, has a different aspect. In a great majority of cases the educated Indian becomes not only an alien, but almost a foreigner in his ancestral village. There are many cases in which such an individual highly educated in English, is illiterate in his mother tongue. He can only exist in the town, or big cities, and has really lost all ties with his ancestral culture.

An exactly similar development accompanied the rise of the new Islamic civilisation. The town dwellers, especially in Persia, have done immense work to organise Islam as a religious system, develop the poor beginnings of Arabic literature into a mighty edifice, and even in the course of the time to develop a new national literature of their own, closely affiliated to the Arabic. All this was done by the people who were sincerely and deeply animated

and in the case of such book as the *Coran*, defies an adequate translation even into modern languages incomparably better developed than the Arabic language itself. We may well imagine that for those early Persians it was far easier to learn Arabic, and memorize the whole text of the *Coran* rather than translate it into their own mother tongue.

with the interests of a new and foreign religion, a foreign language, and colonial interests of a foreign empire. They, with few exceptions, wholeheartedly supported the Sunnite brand of Islam, with its peculiar problems, rabidly opposing what they regarded as heresies. They gradually developed complete unity with their conquerors, and gradually absorbed them, preserving, however, their spirit and outlook. They created a magnificent civilisation which at its time was *the* civilisation of the world.

At the same time very often just at the gates of the cantonment town there began quite a different world, of the real Persia, hostile to the outlook of the city with its cultural achievements. The people often not only spoke a different dialect, or even language, but differed in their religion, either siding with Shi'ism, or, anyhow, belonging to a different *madhhab*, persuasion. This position was mostly a rule rather than exception. These people had merely a slight "coating" of Islam on their mentality, automatically performing the prescribed rites, and automatically repeating the prescribed prayers in a foreign and unintelligible language. Their whole outlook, their ideas, religious and other predilections, were different from those of the town dwellers. Of course, they had little leisure in their hard lot to think much of such matters, but whenever their intellectual and spiritual life became intensified, they often searched for other, more intelligible and congenial ways of quenching their spiritual thirst. They had their own language, mostly in the form of a dialect, their own popular poetry, substantially differing in form and subject from the highly cultivated, their own inherited customs, which sometimes little changed from the time immemorial, their own art conceptions in the form of traditional carpet patterns, or generally textiles, and so forth. In fact, they continued their ancient tardition, and possessed their own culture which slowly developed in the course of thousands of years, being as little stirred up by Islam as it was disturbed by its predecessors. It was for this reason that heresies, popular and often heretical

forms of Sufism, and religious extremism found much success in this milieu, partly because these movements rose from these strata, and partly out of the spirit of opposition to the tyranny and oppression of the rulers and their associates.

Shi'ism, with its ideals of the idyllic theocracy, justice and equity for everybody, personal safety, freedom from oppression and exploitation, unlimited and unending, was particularly attractive to the masses. It is unfortunate for the student that the mediaeval historian, with his personalist outlook, is concerned with kings, celebrities, and outstanding persons, and rarely in his interests descends lower than the class of petty landowners. We read about the existence of the masses of the rural population only in rather laconic and always vituperative accounts of religious, agrarian or other unrest, sectarian risings and other exceptional events supported by the peasants. It is quite natural that Shi'ism with its strong Messianic element appealed the most, and had the lasting influence, which it still possesses in our time, in these strata.

This deep cleavage between the town and the village continuously drained the latter of all elements more capable of cultural progress, enterprising, and able to raise their standard of living. All these, as it is even now, invariably preferred to make a better use of their opportunities, going over to the town. The village was thus for long centuries continually being deprived of the element which could supply it with real leaders. It was this continuous exodus that rendered Islamic countries backward as they emerged in modern times. There was obviously nothing essentially backward in Islam as a religion and civilisation, as compared with other religions, perhaps even it was rather the other way. The effect of backwardness, however, was produced by the fact that the thin educated layer, not unnaturally, was either economically uprooted, or, in self protection, changed sides, rapidly adjusting itself to new ideas and conditions, thus leaving only the permanently backward classes to represent Islam. These

classes, however, despite the progress during many centuries, could not nevertheless be treated as really and thoroughly Islamic, capable of being proper exponents of its long and complex culture.

3. Shi'ism and Political History of Islam.

In the history of Islam, as we can see, Shi'ite theocratic ideals, especially combined with Messianic expectations, could often knit together, as, for instance, in the powerful upheaval led by Abū Muslim, the most heterogeneous elements, such as Persians and Arabs, Shi'ites and Khārijites, peasants and landowners. If we disregard, on the one hand, numerous Alid risings which obviously had the character of personal escapades of political adventurers, or, on the other hand, expressly mystical sects formed by small numbers of fanatics, we may classify political formations in which Shi'ism played a leading part according to the mutual relation of the two principal elements, namely the pontifical and the secular authority.

The simplest form would be the case in which Shi'ism forms the religion of the state, just as in case of any other form of Islam, when the state is neither supposed to be a theocracy, nor do its heads claim any pontifical functions.

A variant of this is the Zaydi type, in which the head of the state has to be a descendant of 'Alī and Fāṭima, but is not recognized as a real pontiff, exercising full religious authority.

¹ Theoretically, I believe, a state which adopts Shi'ism of the Ithnā-ashari variety should be regarded as resembling by its position those semi-independent states which sprang up at the decay of the caliphate, but recognised the supreme authority of the caliph. In their case such supreme authority, secular and spiritual, belongs to the fiction of the "concealed Imam", whose representatives on earth were experts in religious matters, the *mujtahids*, as in the Safawid or Qajar Persia. We know very little as to how this question stood in the Buyid states, or such small later formations as the Sarbadārīds of Sabzawār (737-783/1337-1381). The latter state, however, appears to belong more to the popular movements.

An almost full-sized case of Shi'ite conception of theocracy was presented by the Fatimid caliphate, in which the Imam was both the secular ruler and the real pontiff in one person. It is, however, necessary to point out that the Fatimid case had many limitations, because the type of Shi'ism which really formed the religion of the state, in theory, was, nevertheless, not kept entirely open.² In addition, the Imam could not exercise his full authority over a considerable number of his followers scattered in the non-Shi'ite states where they had to exist in disguise, thus forming a secret organisation. The Fatimids had not only many Muslim subjects who did not recognize their rights to the pontificate, but also, as in Egypt, large masses of Christians.

The form directly opposite to the Fatimid state was the organisation of the Twelver Shi'ites whose Imams, till 260/874, exercised only their pontifical functions without possessing either secular authority or territory. After that date this form of Shi'ism was content with the abstraction of the idea of the Imam-pontiff, in the name of the concealed XIIIth Imam, who probably was never even born.

A great difficulty in judging the real effect of Shi'ite ideology upon the political activities of its adepts is caused by the fact that none of the schools mentioned above offers a plain and exhaustive formula of its aims and aspirations. This is due to purely incidental causes, because Shi'ism rarely had full freedom to express its wishes. The authors of Shi'ite books had to be very circumspect in order not to harm themselves and their readers in case the book fell into wrong hands. Such aims are vaguely formulated in various *hadiths*, chiefly of Messianic character, in which prophecies are ascribed to the Apostle of God concerning what is ultimately going to happen.³ In the Ithnā-ashari

¹ The Fatimids, for obvious reasons, while openly preaching the basic, or *dhahir* form of Ismailism, did not encourage the broadcasting of its philosophy, except amongst those possessing the necessary educational qualifications which would render them immune from misunderstanding.

² Such *hadiths* are usually scattered in varying contexts, and

school only 'Alī b. Abī Tālib is recognised as the real *Amīr al-mu'minīn*, i.e. caliph. His descendants were deprived of this office by the brutal force, but when the concealed XIIth Imam "returns," he will certainly resume all the rights of his ancestor. In Fatimid Ismailism such aspirations are expressed slightly clearer. They are scattered in the form of prophecies the gist of which is that the Imam, who is the Mahdi, will smash the forces of the tyrants and oppressors, and will introduce a regime of universal equity and justice, making the true Islam the religion of the world. Thus there will be one herd under one shepherd, enjoying blissful paradisaical existence.

All this clearly indicates that when Shi'ism still cherished its practical political aspirations, its programme was probably conceived as a dynastic change in the Islamic world. Instead of the caliph-usurper ruling from Baghdad over the empire of Islam, there should be the ideal Alid ruler who will firmly establish his ideal theocracy. The change was apparently imagined on the lines of the change from the Omayyads to the Abbasids, only this time with the right candidate.

Thus an interesting mutual connection may be followed between the rise, intensity and decline of the Shi'ite political aspirations, in their active form, and the similar phases of the idea of the caliphate. We can see that despite invariably disastrous failures of the Alid risings, they are very numerous exactly during the period of the highest development of the strength of the Abbasid empire. They become rarer and less dangerous with its decline, and apparently cease with the foundation of the Fatimid caliphate, probably for the precise reason that the latter at last succeeded in realising, however partially, such aspirations. As soon as the Fatimid state was formed, it exhibits a strong tendency to expand Eastwards, in the direction of Baghdad.

It is not easy to lay hand on them when required. I therefore availed myself of an interesting collection included by the great Ismaili jurist and theologian, Qāḍī Nu'mān (d. 363/974) in his *Sharḥ al-akḥbār*. See the "Rise of the Fatimids", pp. 95-125.

But by this time the Abbasids become more and more mere puppets in the hands of their hired troops, their empire crumbles to pieces, and Baghdad loses all its symbolical significance as the recognised seat of the all-Islamic authority. For this reason the Fatimids, having reached Egypt, lay the foundation of Cairo, a new seat of the authority which was probably expected to become soon all-Islamic. They lavish means on making it worthy of its intended rôle, encourage unprecedented development of culture, and really succeed in such preparations. But the historic stage rapidly changes, and not in their favour. Egypt proves to be a trap for them, because, having no local resources to build reliable and sufficient national armed forces, they fall to the temptation of keeping a large hired army. And this ultimately kills them as it had killed the Abbasids before them, and with them the ideal of a single Islamic empire. In fact, however, the Fatimid dreams died before the physical death of their state, when the de facto independent former provinces of the caliphate, still nominally recognising the uniting authority of the caliph, were absorbed by the powerful empire of the Saljuqs.¹ When this happened, it became obvious that the brutal force of the invaders could be only smashed by physical force, and it was not for the resources of a little country like Egypt to dream of achieving this. Ever since that time the Fatimid state more and more loses its vital force, the masses lose interest in it, the propaganda which had made such astonishing progress in the third and fourth c. A.H. becomes more and more paralysed, and finally Ismailism disappears in the Western part of the Islamic world as a political force.

Ismailism of the Alamūt period in Persia, though an offshoot of the Fatimid system, had politically quite a different nature, namely that of many other popular move-

¹ The Saljuqs, being fanatical Sunnites, as is well-known, ostentatiously showed their respect to the caliph of Baghdad, and nominally recognized him as the supreme authority, in so far, of course, as this suited their political interests. Such hypocritical tactics, however, could not deceive anyone.

ments in Persia which were going under the Shi'ite banner, in which class interests played a prominent part.

Shi'ism was apparently introduced into Persia by Southern Arab clans, such as Ach'ari, Madh'ij, and others, who laid foundation to an important Shi'ite centre in Qum. Already at an early period Shi'ism was widespread all over Khorasan. It seems to be more than a mere coincidence that al-Ma'mûn (198-218/813-833) choose the East as the place for his strange experiment with abdication in favour of 'Ali ar-Ridâ. The whole proceedings still remain dark, but it is not impossible that the wide spread of Shi'ism suggested the plan of the transfer of the secular authority of the caliphs to the person whom a great proportion of the Shi'ite-minded masses treated as the only legitimate pontiff of Islam at his time. Such transfer would pacify the anti-dynastic Shi'ite circles, while the Abbasids could keep the Alids as puppets in their hands. This, of course, is merely a suggestion.

In the Western part of Persia Shi'ism becomes endemic in the Caspian provinces, where Zaydi Imams ultimately become independent rulers (250-316/864-928). It is quite easy to see why Shi'ism had so much success in this particular province. It consists of a high mountainous belt, up to about 14,000 feet, with the Southern slope arid, and the Northern having excessive rainfall, and therefore covered with thick jungles. Village population is exceedingly poor because torrential rains often wash down their terraced fields. The narrow belt of lowlands along the sea coast is in the hands of landowners who mercilessly exploit the continuously semi-starving population. The economic distress here could easily take the religious form of impatient Messianic expectations, and even the desire to speed up the advent of a blissful existence. The Buyids who also originated from this locality, developed their activities chiefly far to the South.

The Ismaili propaganda, which was probably developed from the middle of the third ninth c., found ample human material all over Persia and Central Asia. Probably

nowhere had Ismailism penetrated so deeply into the mentality of the masses as here. Much nonsense has been written concerning Shi'ism, or particularly Ismailism, being a product of Persian national spirit, peculiar mentality, etc., as if there never existed any Shi'ites except for the Persians, and as if the majority of the Persians were not devout promoters of Sunnism. In reality the situation finds its full explanation in the economic conditions of these localities, and the discontent and unrest connected with these. It is always conveniently forgotten that when the Arabs felt the pinch of the Abbasid rule, they could easier present some opposition owing to their tribal organisation which did not disappear for a very long time. The Persian peasants were helpless because they were isolated in villages and a united policy was for them an insuperably difficult achievement. This is why they were left to indulge in powerless indignation, complaints, and religious wishful thinking in the form of the Shi'ite dreams.

The advent of the Saljuqs who practically completed their conquest by 447/1055, dealt a death blow to the Eastern Shi'ite centres of learning, in Central Asia and Khorasan. Their hold, however, was not so deadly in Western Persia and in the South. Here the Shi'ite minded masses, having lost faith in their expectations of an early return of the Ninth Imam of the Ithna-'ashari line, which was very popular in the third and fourth c. A.H., apparently went over in large numbers to Ismailism. The remote Fatimid state was, anyhow, passing through the second century of its existence, and to the religious mind such durability might have proved the sign of God's endorsement of its truth. Not only were Ismaili cells found all over Persia, but in some arid tracks whole districts were now formed of Ismailis. Qubistân, and further on a substantial part of the Kirmân province, Fârs, Isfahân, and especially the distress belt of the Caspian mountains contained a considerable proportion of the Ismailis. The Yaman, Syria, and remote Sind, also had many.

When the internal catastrophe of the dispossession of

the right successor of al-Mustangir, his son Nizār, took place (in 487/1094), and Egyptian Ismailism practically came to the end of its history, the spirit was still strong in the East. Towards the end of the v/xi c., when the enthusiastic dā'i, al-Ḥasan b. aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ, succeeded in organising to a certain extent the available Shi'ite sentiment, establishing his headquarters in Alamūt, the conditions had changed completely. Ismailism was almost entirely a popular movement. This at once showed itself in extremist tendencies, such as the alleged cancelation of the *ẓāhir*, i.e. obligatory forms of worship, and universal sanction for "worship in spirit".¹ The old type of the learned Isma'ili dā'i probably here disappears with al-Ḥasan b. aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ himself. His successors are portrayed by the available historical sources as dignitaries promoted from the ranks. The community needed stern and practical leaders who were able to withstand the overwhelming forces of the powerful Saljuq empire, in an unparalleled hundred and fifty years' struggle.² The most remarkable point in this is that they nearly won. Before the final show-down the relations of Alamūt with the outer world appeared to be improving and becoming more normal. Then came that dreadful cata-

¹ The tendency of treating ordinary forms of worship as obligatory to those who have acquired the "higher knowledge" is, as is well-known, typical of all gnostic and mystical sects. In Ismailism this line of thinking makes itself felt since probably its very inception. The theory was objected to and suppressed by the official doctrine under the Fatimids whose experts carried on a long struggle with it. Nevertheless, it apparently so much appealed to certain groups that after having been repeatedly condemned it could revive in full vigour at any time. So far we have no detailed account of the solemn declaration of the "Great Resurrection", made in Alamūt, coming from genuine Isma'ili sources, and it would be difficult to determine in how far such sanction of the "worship in spirit" was really given by the supreme authorities of the community.

² I do not refer to the Syrian Isma'ilis, of Masyaf, Qadmus-Markab, and other Isma'ili strongholds between Hamā and the sea, because they obviously had only local importance, never exercising any influence upon the Isma'ilis of larger communities in the East.

strophe in the history of the Islamic world, namely the invasion of the brutal Mongols which senselessly destroyed almost the entire cultural heritage of Islam, the culture-bearing strata of society, and completely upset its historical course. It brought in its trail the no less brutal Tamerlane with his worthy successors, who practically extinguished the Middle East as a cultural factor in human history.

Shi'ism and Ismailism received a deadly blow, but were not destroyed simply because the Persian nation itself was not completely annihilated. Ismailism went underground, assumed Sufic garb, tried to regain its hold of Sind and to spread in India, simultaneously with similar attempts made from the Yaman by the remnants of Egyptian Ismailism. Many Shi'ite extremist movements sprang up, one of the most important being the popular form of Sufism which became rapidly permeated with the Ali-Ilahi ideas. There were also new sects at work in the Caspian provinces, in Badakhshān, and even in the fanatically Sunnite Afghanistan.

Ithna-'ashari Shi'ism still preserved some learning; and even on some occasions reaped small triumphs as in converting some Mongol rulers to its school. Shi'ite extremism, however, made remarkable progress, penetrating even the heart of the Turkish Sunnite stronghold in the form of the Bektashi order of *dawāshishes*. And then came the great revolution in the form of the rise of the Safawid state.

We have mentioned above that wide masses of the illiterate and uneducated population, especially in Persia, being excluded from participation in the main stream of the cultural process by the abnormal domination of a difficult foreign language, Arabic,¹ continued to live in their ancestral tradition which in the course of a very long period had spontaneously developed many features of not very high, yet genuine civilisation. The terrible experience of

¹ It, of course, was not the fault of Arabic as a language, but generally of its being a foreign tongue, inaccessible to the masses.

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the XIII and XIV ce., accompanied with much forced migration of the population, brought Islam deeper into popular life. This, however, stimulated dormant predilections to beliefs in the supernatural, miracles, deification of saints, and so forth. All these were for a long time kept at bay by the iconoclastic tendencies of official Sunnism, probably not without much influence of the original petty landowner class, serving as cultural intermediary. This class suffered the losses during that catastrophic period, and the new landlords, the officials, amongst whom there was a large percentage of Turks, who received land in remuneration of their services, obviously stood too far away from their new peasants to exercise any influence on them in religious matters.

While Shi'ism was successfully suppressed over most of the Islamic world by the triumphant combination of Sunnism and brute force, suddenly Sunni Persia almost overnight became an enthusiastically Shi'ite country. Such a change may at first sight appear strange, incidental and paradoxical, but in reality was not so. It was simply the case of the loss of the cultured class, and emergence of backward popular ideas.

A petty headman of a Turkish predatory tribe which roamed where now is the Russo-Persian frontier in the Caucasus, Ismā'il Šafawī, a Sunni by religion,¹ conceived a really ingenious plan for harnessing the Shi'ite sentiment of the masses. He declared himself a Shi'ite, of Sufic inclinations, and anyhow really succeeded in stirring up a considerable force of Turks, professing Ali-Ilahism. After a long and tedious story of his early adventures, richly interspersed with reports of atrocities of almost unconceivable brutality, he succeeded in putting in motion larger and larger masses of the Ādharbayjāni Turks and some other elements. With their fanaticism stirred up to unbelievable pitch,

¹ Cf. W. Barthold, "Caliph and Sultan", *Mir Istama*, 1912 p. 360, who refers to Well, "Geschichte des Abbasidenchalfats", II, 402, and "Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka", III, 274.

shoots their *kalāms*,¹ which they expected to make them immune from the enemy's bullets, they fought desperately, and won many decisive battles.

In an incredibly short space of time, similar to that in which Ismailism disappeared in Egypt under Saladin, Sunnism disappeared from Persia, except for a few inaccessible corners, and it shortly became enthusiastically Shi'ite.

Learned Ithna-'ashari Shi'ism was taken out of naphthalene, and after several centuries of stagnation and learned rumination in the form of commentaries and super-commentaries on a few remaining classic works, it was called to direct the religious life of the new Shi'ite nation. There were even occasional tendencies towards bringing the constitution of the new government to something approximating theocracy, with *mujtahids*, experts in theology, in the absence of an Imam, exercising the Divine guidance on his behalf. All this led merely to the appearance of huge herds of supposed Sayyids, descendants of the Prophet, and generally of all kinds of religious parasites. As would befit a theocracy, courts of law were entirely in the hands of the *'ulamā*, and the degree of corruption encouraged by them surpasses imagination.

The form of Shi'ism which was thus called to guide national life was that which practically stopped in its growth by the middle of the fifth/eleventh c., with the conquest of the Saljuqs. It was thus about half a millennium behind the time, and its long period of existence mostly as a scholastic relic² had given it many unattractive features. It attached immense importance to formalities in worship, introduced a ridiculous amount of taboos, resus-

¹ This term is applied by the Ali-Ilahis to verses supposed to be uttered by various avatars of 'Alī on certain memorable occasions. They are composed in Kurdish, Gurani and Turkish.

² The long period of about five hundred years, between the conquest of the Saljuqs and Ismā'il Šafawī, produced very few eminent theologians in the Ithna-'ashari school. The Šafawī and Qajar periods merely abounded in compilations, some of them of enormous size, like Majlis's *Bihārul-'anwār*.

cited the worst and the most anti-social ideas of the Zoroastrian priests about the "purity" or "impurity" of everything in life. It sanctioned and encouraged on a large-scale prostitution in the guise of legal temporary marriages, and, above all, stopped every kind of progress in independent thought, every desire to advance, which invariably evoked the merciless spite and vengeance of the learned. From the most cultured country in the early middle ages Persia became in more modern times one of the most backward corners of the Islamic world, and this has ruined its history to an unparalleled extent.

The masses which were chiefly responsible for the overthrow of Sunnism in the country remained indifferent, and even hostile to the "right form of religion." They simply continued their old tradition, using every opportunity which the new system offered to promote their own tastes and predilections. They encouraged lawshies who in their ideas were close associates of the Ali-ilahis, and openly supported the mystical and extremist currents on which the *'ulamā* poured their curses. They created a whole pantheon out of the members of the family of the Prophet, and his associates, of early Shi'ites, Sufis, and others. Despite of the serious opposition of the learned, they developed theatrical performances commemorating the "passions" of the Imams and their families. The swing was so powerful that ultimately the learned capitulated and became themselves the chief participants in various performances which were obviously taken from mediaeval Catholic Europe and were grossly opposed to the spirit of Islam.

Official Shi'ism, again as Sunnism during the earlier periods, remained pure only in towns, amongst the better educated classes, who, however, no longer possessed the energy, enthusiasm and cultural ferment of their ancestors, under the rabidly zealous and unfriendly regime of the newly attempted theocracy. Turks, the kinsmen of the shahs, now played the leading part. All this very soon decayed, and in the beginning of the eighteenth c. the new dynasty completely collapsed before the bands

of the predatory Afghans who invaded the country. The exploits of Nadir sapped the last strength of the nation which entered a period of chaos. Only in one corner of the country, namely that which had escaped comparatively unscathed, did a new centre of order and resistance come into being. This time it was plainly and openly Ali-ilahi, in the person of Karīm Khān Zand and his Gurani tribe (1163-1193/1750-1779). He and his successors were too weak, however, to influence events. After a long period of agony and the most ruinous unrest, another Turkish clan, the Qājārs, seized the authority. They possessed neither the talents of Ismā'il Safawī, nor any idea of their own. Under their rule affairs were left to drift in largely the same way as they did under the Safawids, with the same detrimental results. This was particularly untimely in view of the changes in Europe and beginning of the capitalistic expansion. Even at such a late period, however, Shi'ism showed signs of life, producing such movements as Shaykhism and Babism. Shi'ite-Sufic organisations were not entirely dead even in the first quarter of the XX c.

In India and other countries Shi'ism of the Ithnā-*'ashari* branch chiefly followed the example and lead of its metropolis, Persia. Quite a different position was taken by Ismailism. It was professed chiefly by various trading communities who availed themselves of the new conditions, i.e. the British rule in India, the great expansion of trade, industry and education. From an underground community always living in constant fear of brutal persecutions, they became one of the most advanced and prosperous groups of population.

In the rapidly changing conditions of the modern world it would be impossible to assess with any degree of certainty the potentialities of Shi'ism in the cultural, political and religious spheres. It may be only safe to say that it still retains considerable attraction to the less educated and economically weaker classes through its still unextinguished Messianic dream.

EARLY ISMA'ILI TERMINOLOGY.

The student of Ismailism possessing some first hand acquaintance with genuine works of Fatimid literature may often feel greatly puzzled when coming across elaborate accounts of the Ismaili doctrine in various treatises by the authors belonging to the anti-Fatimid camp. One may wonder from whence come all the theories which the authors explain in detail, and especially the terms in which such ideas are couched? Genuine Ismaili works of the Fatimid period and later often contain nothing of the kind. The inference that suggests itself therefore is that such accounts are a product of crude and impudent forgery.

The explanation, as we are going to see presently, is different. It appears that such strange accounts of Ismailism in fact date from a very early period. Probably when what may be called "the Ismaili problem" first presented itself to the Muslim world, it evoked considerable interest. Some genuine works were acquired, and the doctrine, adversely and unfairly interpreted, came into circulation in Muslim literature. Later on, when the rapidly growing Ismaili theology had gone far from its initial phase, and the doctrine as it was in the very beginning had become obsolete, the general literature, with its usual disregard for anachronisms, never cared to bring its notions up to date. Learned authors repeated the old story over and over again, with more and more emphasis on its alleged impiety, occasionally adding some new details which they incidentally picked up, concerning the doctrine of their own time, or anyhow a much later period, thus gradually creating a hopeless confusion which had ultimately come to stay in mediaeval accounts of the Ismaili doctrine.

Most probably when we acquire an idea of Ismaili literature more adequate and systematic than it is at present, we shall be able to make good use of such seemingly imaginary early reports of anti-Ismaili authors, clearing those

points which still remain very obscure. It is quite possible that crumbs of correct information are preserved in such versions, and it is only necessary to obtain a reliable method to sift the truth from the untruth in order to make these of some use for our studies.

It is indeed quite natural that so few early works, especially dating from the pre-Fatimid period, have been preserved. As in every literature, especially religious, except in the case of certain outstanding works, the newer and more technically perfect treatises gradually replace the older which become not only obsolete, but sometimes undesirable from the orthodox point of view as reflecting the doctrine in a still undeveloped or unreformed state. It is quite probable that with the progress of the systematic study of Ismaili literature some ancient works may be discovered amongst various anonymous and half forgotten opuscles which it still preserves. We may also hope to come across more or less substantial extracts or quotations from ancient works incorporated in those of a later date.

At present, as far as I can see, apparently the only substantial and obviously genuine early work, probably dating from the period which preceded the establishment of the Fatimid caliphate (297/909) is the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*. It is sometimes regarded as a work by Ibn Hawshab, or the Mansūr al-Yaman, the famous Ismaili missionary who converted the Yaman. His full name was Abū'l-Qāsim al-Iḥṣāyī b. al-Fariḥ Ibn Hawshab al-Kūfī. The story quoted from his *Sirat* unfortunately for us, lost in Qadī Nū'mān's *Iftitāḥ al-daw' wa* (completed in 346/957) narrates how he was sent by the Ismaili Imam to 'Adan (Aden) as a *dā'i* in 266/889. His mission had exceptional success, and by about 293/906 practically the whole Yaman was under his authority, although later on he met with setbacks and had to quell many rebellions. The exact date of his death apparently remains unknown.

If the *K. al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* is his work (and there is nothing impossible in such a supposition), then it was one of his early productions. It is described further on in

detail in this volume. There is, however, a collection of fragments which according to the colophon belong to the *Kitāb al-Ruḥd wa'l-Hidḡat*, also attributed to the same worthy. Here we need not enter into the question of whether it is genuine or not as all this is discussed further on in the introduction to its translation. It will suffice to say that the general style, terminology, tone, etc., of these books seem to be so much akin that even if they are the compositions of different authors, there may be little doubt as to their coming from one and the same school. The difference is only that while the *K. al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* (let us abbreviate this title in references as KAG) is a popular book, apparently intended for the general public, or, at least, for new converts, the other, *Kitāb al-Ruḥd wa'l-Hidḡat* (abbr. KRH) was a technical treatise for study.

Generally speaking, Ismaili terminology during the more than a millennial evolution of the doctrine, appears to be remarkably fluid. There are certain terms which from the beginning to the end preserve the same meaning. Other terms remain, but obviously change their implications, while there are many which characterise only one particular period, or belong to the usage of one definite province. The study of terminology may therefore become a valuable auxiliary means of ascertaining or verifying the chronology of various works which for some reason evoke doubts as to their genuineness. Ismaili literature presents quite a wide field for such search for reliable criteria as there are many works which, being the compositions of authors whose names have been forgotten, are attributed by oral tradition (which is rarely reliable) to various celebrities.

It would be still too early to raise the question of the historical evolution of the Ismaili terminology as a whole. In this paper I would like to offer only an analysis of the terminology of these two early works, KAG and KRH, with the hope that further studies may permit us to accumulate sufficient materials for a gradual study covering the whole history of Ismailism, with all its branches and sub-divisions.

Owing to the deplorable condition of the text of KRH

in the copies which were accessible to me, in a few cases, I had to leave the matter as insufficiently clear. In any case it would be a useful work if any one who has access to a better copy should verify the entries. It would be also an important achievement if some other text of the same age is found and its terminology compared with that in the present works.

Nātiq. This term seems to be of an early origin, with quite definite implications. In the general development of Ismaili terminology it shows a tendency to disappear, but during the early period it preserves its literal meaning of "speaking, preaching, speaker," i.e. *al-Imāmu'n-Nātiq* (KAG), or even, as in another place, *Imāmu'l-lāh an-Nātiq* (KAG), "the preaching leader," or "the preaching leader of (sent by) God." I am inclined to the belief that *nātiq* was originally a secret "code word" used by the sectaries for *Rasūlu'l-lāh*, the Apostle of God, or such expressions as the Prophet, *Nabī*, etc. The expressions (in KRH) such as *Imāmu'z-zāhir*, *Imāmu'l-bāṭin*, *A'immatu'l-haqq al-bāṭin*, are probably not technical terms. The term *Nātiq* freely alternates with *Rasūl*. In the Fatimid period the latter completely replaces it later on. Here (KRH) sometimes, however, both are combined in one, and *ar-Rasūlu'n-Nātiq* is often followed by *wa khalīfatuh 's-sādiq* which must refer to the Imam, in an ordinary Shi'ite sense.¹ The terms *Sābiq*, "foregoing" and *Tālī*, "the following" to denote the Prophet and the *Wāṣī*, or generally Imam, as found in some anti-Ismaili accounts, do not appear here, and probably are not used in Ismaili works in that sense. They belong to philosophical speculations, referring to the 'Aql and *Nafs*.²

¹ Ismaili authors generally systematically avoid the use of the expression *khalīfa*, for obvious reasons. Thus the fact that it is used here may indicate a really early origin of the text, implying the fact that such "boycott" had not yet become a firmly established practice.

² These are often used and explained in the paper on the "Early Controversy in Ismailism", published further on in this volume.

Wāṣī. This is another stable term which does not disappear during the Fatimid period. Early Ismailism, stressing Messianic beliefs, tended to stress the descent of the Fatimids from the Prophet through his daughter Fāṭima. Obviously for this reason 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib was placed in a class by himself, and not included into the number of the Imams (as happened centuries later). He was the *Asāsul-Imāmat*, i.e. the "foundation of Imamat",¹ in other words the founder of the dynasty of the Imams. It may be noted that in these early texts (KRH) he is also styled "the *ḥujjat* of the *Nātiq*", "the like of whom had never been created" (*lam yukhlāq mithl 'Alī 'alay-hi's-salām ji'l-ḥujaj*). We shall discuss further on the real meaning of the term *ḥujjat*. The term *Wālī* (officially accepted in the Ithna-'ashari doctrine) is never applied to him. Here (KRH) *wālī* may mean leader; the Plur. *awliya'* means "followers". The term *Asās*, so often used by Nāṣir-i Khusrāw and in early Fatimid works, does not appear here at all. The term *Ṣāmit*, "silent", i.e. *Wāṣī*, as opposed to *Nātiq*, "speaking", also does not appear here, as also the title of 'Alī, the *Amīru'l-mu'minin*.

Dā'i. This expression here seems to have the wide though clear meaning of a missionary, propagandist, a dignitary in the propaganda hierarchy, not in the purely technical sense of the *dā'i* in Fatimid times. I have already drawn the attention of students to the fact that early Ithna-'ashari literature clearly avoids its application to its own missionaries, although applying it to the preachers of heretical doctrine such as Khattabism.² Persian Ismaili authors of the IV-X c., such as Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī and Abū Ya'qūb as-Sijzi (as we shall see further on in this volume), use the expression *dā'i* as a simple participle, not as a technical term. Instead of this they use the word *janāḥ* (Plur. *ajniḥa'*) which means "wing," "limb." It appa-

¹ Not as incidentally called in modern Ismaili texts, edited by S. Guyard, p. 204, *Asāsud-da'wat*, "the foundation of the propaganda". This seems meaningless because the preaching of the Prophet was also *da'wat*.

² Cf. "The Alleged Founder of Ismailism", p. 125.

parently disappears (together with the other similar terms, presumably invented as "code words") in the next century. It would be interesting to ascertain whether its use was confined to Persia. This term, *dā'i* is also avoided in KAG, perhaps because it is generally a popular work, and uses instead of this the expression *'alim* or *mu'allim*, i.e. teacher. This may in fact refer to *ma'dhūn*, as it appears from the context where the teacher does not seem to be a dignitary of high rank. The author sometimes uses the non-committal expression *shaykh*, "gentleman," "old man."

All this may indicate that the word *dā'i* possessed some either dangerous or contemptible associations in general speech. It may be noted that Abū Ḥatīm ar-Rāzi, an author whom no one would suspect of lacking insufficient knowledge of Arabic, in his *K.al-Isḥāḥ* instead of the usual Plur. from *dā'i*, which should be *da'it*, repeatedly uses *ad'iyā'*. Normally this is the plural from *dā'i*, which means "invited," "pretending to be a relation of one," "adopted (son)." In the texts dating from the same fourth/tenth c., some other expressions are used, such as *yad*, plur. *ayādī*, "hand," or general *ḥāṭiq*, "associate," all probably introduced for the purpose of camouflage, *taghiyya*, at the time when the Fatimid successes in North Africa had created the atmosphere of widespread acute suspicion in the caliphate and other ruling circles.

Imām. Contrary to the three preceding terms, the term *Imām* is used very loosely, and its implications are not always quite clear. It looks as if the KRH, with its stress on the eschatological element, is obviously conscious of the vague nature of the term, and always adds a definition limiting such implications. To convey the idea of the Imam in the sense of Fatimid terminology, namely one of the seven Imams who follow the syzygy of the *Nāṭiq* and *Waṣī*, the author uses an expression such as *al-Imāmu'l-Mutimm*, the "completing Imam" (i.e. the Imam whose mission is to complete the work of the Pre-

phet), or simply *Mutimm*, "completer."¹ The word *Imām* alone is often used, but either in the sense of "leader," "headman," or without its definition simply for stylistic purposes, to avoid repetition.

While abstracts such as *risālat*, from *Rasūl*, and *waṣāyat*, from *Waṣī*, are freely used, the term *Imāmat* appears only rarely, as in early Ithna-'ashari texts, in contrast to the Ismaili works of the Fatimid period.

How vague is the use of the term *Imām* can be seen from the instances already mentioned above, *Imāmu'z-zāhir* and *Imānu'l-bāṭin*, or *Imāmu'l-lāh an-Nāṭiq*, or *Imāmu'l-ḥaqq al-bāṭin*, conveying quite different ideas. There is yet another idea in the expression of KRH: '*Alī... al-Imām ba'd Muḥammad fi 'aṣri' z-zulmat*, i.e. 'Alī who was the *Imām* after Muḥammad, in the period of darkness.

Interesting implications may be attributed to the strange expression (KRH): *marātibu'l-A'imma min waladi-hi*, i.e. the degrees (?) of the Imams, his (i.e. the Prophet's) descendants. This, however, may be simply the case of the author's unusual application of the term *marātib* (he uses many words not in their ordinary sense). It may imply no idea of "progeny," just as *marātibu'd-din as-sab'a* (KRH) simply means "the seven fundamental principles of the religion" which are described as the gate to the '*ilm dini'l-lāh*, the "wisdom of the religion of God." These have nothing to do with the alleged "degrees of initiation," quite unknown to the Ismaili system, but simply the all-Islamic basic "beliefs in God, His angels, His Book, His Apostle, resurrection, the Day of Judgment, and reward for good actions or punishment for bad."

The *Mutimm*, i.e. "completer" (of the work of the

¹ The Plur. of *Mutimm* is *Atimmd*, which is probably intended as a homonym of *A'imma*. Both Sing. and Plur. of it are in common use in the works of the Persian Ismaili authors of the IV/X c., and occasionally appear in modern or even quite modern works (as in S. Guyard's Ismaili texts, p. 327, note 58), and even in Druze literature. S. de Sacy regards *atimmd* as the Plur. from *tamim*, but in these texts neither the expression *tamim* nor *tdmn* are used.

Apostle of God) here really corresponds with the term *Imām* according to the later usage. The KRH always takes them as a heptad, creating the impression that the work was written before the expiry of the period of their domination. This term, incidentally used in the works of the early Fatimid period, is also in use in *al-Isḥāḥ* of Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī, as in the scheme: *nabī* — *mutimm* — *lahiq* — *janāh* — *ma'dhūn*. Here the *Waṣī* is obviously omitted, *Mutimm* stands for the later *Imām*, and *lahiq* for *ḥujjat*.

The Plural *atimmā'* for this heptad does not appear here, but is already found in the works of Abū Ḥātim and Abū Ya'qūb. Occasionally they even use for the same idea the term *awciyā'*. It may be added that in the Fatimid period and later the Imams of the first heptad were called *atimnā'*, the second *khulafā'*, and the third *abdāl*. Here the term *abdāl*, which may be rendered by "substitutes," has a wider sense applicable to all except for the *Nātiq* (KRH), i.e. Imams, *ḥujjats*, *dā'is*, and so on, because they come one to take the place of the other just as the abrogated verses of the Coran are replaced by the new ones.

Hujjat. In the Fatimid system, when it had attained its maturity, the word *ḥujjat* was terminologically used only to denote a dignitary in the propaganda hierarchy who directed the *da'wat* work in a certain large area, probably showing uniform conditions, nationality of the followers, language, etc., styled *jazīra*, "section," or "division."¹ The traditional number of such *ḥujjats* were twelve, which was most probably ideal, not actual. Moreover, in addition to such working *ḥujjats*, as they were called "the *ḥujjats* of the day," there were another twelve "*ḥujjats* of the night," whose rank was considered to be superior. Unfortunately for the student, Fatimid literature contains little or nothing definite to help us to form an idea as to the real nature of their functions, duties, rights and privileges. Nothing is said about the character of the differ-

¹ On the *jazīras* see the footnote on pp. 20-21 in my "Rites of the Fatimids".

ence between these two classes. It is only possible, from the general analogy of the distinction of *la'wāl* allegories between "day" denoting everything plain, *zāhir*, and "night," symbolizing *lāṭīn*, to suggest that while the "*ḥujjats* of the day" were actually directing the *da'wat* in their divisions, the "*ḥujjats* of the night" were members of the central council reporting the affairs, and dealing with the supreme orders to be conveyed to corresponding divisions. This, of course, is merely a suggestion.

In these texts, or rather in KRH (as the KAG does not touch on the matter), we see the word prior to its receiving its clear and definite terminological meaning. The expression *ḥujjat*, ordinarily means "proof, argument, witness, testimony, token." In Semitic religions we very often find the idea of testifying the truth of claims, either of the truth of religion, or of God being one, or the truth of the mission of a prophet, and so forth. The Biblical prophets testify the truth of God and His religion, John the Baptist testifies the mission of Jesus, Muhammad the Prophet is sent not only as a warner, but also witness, testifying the truth of God's oneness. The idea finds a great development in Shi'ism, especially sectarian, and, as in the beliefs of the Ali-ilahis, the "proof" of the truth of the re-incarnation of the *Ṣūḥab-kār* may be even an animal, or even an inanimate object. Thus it is possible to see that the original implications of the rank of the *ḥujjat* was to serve as a "token" of the Imam, as his representative, who accepted the oath of allegiance from the followers on behalf of the latter. The "*shaykh*" to whom the *ḥujjat* in KAG takes the new convert to swear allegiance may be the *ḥujjat* of the province.

The text of the KRH presents some features which appear quite extraordinary if compared with the ideas of the Fatimid time. The text always mentions twelve *ḥujjats*, and seven Imams; it appears as if this does not mean that there should be twelve *ḥujjats* at every moment during the period of the domination of the heptade, as it should be according to Fatimid theories, but altogether twelve *ḥujjats*

during the whole period. The author, in his Kabbalistic speculations, often adds the number of the *hujjats* to the number of the Imams, thus making these 19, as if both figures referred to units of equal denomination. We need not, of course, take this too seriously, just as the reference to the traditional twelve *jasiras*, which, as a round figure, simply symbolize the whole earth. The number twelve of the *hujjats* is here probably taken abstractly, without any consideration of its implications.

The second is a strange theory, from the Fatimid point of view, that the *hujjat* becomes an Imam after his Imam and before the next Imam, and that an Imam cannot become an Imam unless he has been for some time a *hujjat*. This seems to be quite incompatible with the theory of the seven Imams, predestined by God, all being the descendants of the Prophet. How could a *hujjat* in the Fatimid time sense, i.e. a promoted *da'i*, an ordinary mortal, become the Imam, one of the seven? There could not be surely, from a religious point of view, any interregnum during which a *hujjat* could act as an Imam. Here nothing is said of his acting on behalf of an Imam who is a minor. Most probably the strange situation is entirely due to confusion in the use of terms.

In early Shi'ite usage *hujjat* appears as an equivalent of the Imam. In Kulini's *al-Kāfi fi 'ilmī d-dīn*, the great Ithnā-ʿashari compendium of Shi'ite tradition, the book on *Imām* (or *Imānat*) is entitled *Kitābu'l-hujjat*. We can see in the text of the KRH that 'Ali is called the *hujjat* of the Prophet. In another place, as we have seen, it is said that "no *hujjat* was ever created comparable to 'Ali."

If we pay attention to the fact that in the statement that a *hujjat* becomes an Imam after the earlier Imam is gone, and before the successor-Imam comes up, the term *Imām* is not qualified (with *Mutimm*), it may have the meaning of a general rule that the deputy may act as the head of the department during an interregnum¹. The same

¹ Perhaps what this statement (which sounds so amazing from the point of view of the spirit of Ismailism) really implies

applies to the statement that no *Imām*, headman, (generally not the *Mutimm*), can attain his office without first going through the *hujjat*-ship, i.e. being a deputy. It is unfortunate that the fragmentariness of the text of KRH makes such important matters ambiguous.

It seems that this theory does not apply to the case of the *hijab*, or "protective screen", the theory which seems to have been popular in the literature of the Fatimid period. According to this during the period of *safr*, occultation, a devout and self-sacrificing *da'i*, or several such *da'is*, in case the real Imam is threatened with danger, could, and in fact did, pose as the Imam, thus attracting the danger upon themselves instead of the genuine Imam. It is impossible to ascertain whether such a "screening" device was really used, or whether this is simply one of those retrospective theories which were invented and popularized during the later Fatimid period to make straight in the history of the earlier Imams what did not tally with the ideas current in later times. We may note that the alleged dangers to the Imams, and plotting by their enemies, grow in Shi'ite legends generally as time passes.

Another explanation of these puzzling statements may be suggested. If we accept here the Imam in the sense of the *Mutimm*, or the Imam according to the usage of the Fatimid time, and *hujjat* as a general term for a deputy, it would be possible to take these expressions meaning that no Imam can become the real Imam (= *Mutimm*) unless he was for some time acting as a *hujjat*, i.e. deputy, to the Imam (his father), obviously for the acquisition of expe-

rience. This is parallel to the administrative practice of the Omayyad (and perhaps early Abbasid) governments. On the death of a caliph, and before reliable news and official confirmation arrived about the election of his successor, the governor of the province, according to law, had to demand from his subordinates an oath of personal allegiance to himself. Thus during the period of the interregnum, real or merely technical, due to the non-reception of official news, he acted as the supreme ruler of the province. This was a well-established routine practice designed to avoid anarchy, and it may be possible that the Ismailis followed the same idea.

rience. Then it would be natural that the *hujjat*, the Imam's deputy, the candidate to Imamship, would assume the authority of the Imam as soon as his father dies, and before the next Imam, in case not himself, but his brother is to succeed¹. This also explains the reference to 'Ali as the incomparable *hujjat* (of the Prophet). We may add that in Persia in the next, IV/X c., for the *hujjat* a code-word was used — *lāhiq*, Plur. *lawāhiq*, abstr. *luhūq*.

Bāb. The most elusive of the terms used in the hierarchy, *bāb*, already existed in Shi'ite circles at least by the beginning of the third/ninth c.² In the KRH it appears twice, in references to the hierarchy, and the order invariably is: *hujjat*, *bāb*, *dā'i*. It is not easy to be sure whether such order implies that *bāb* was inferior to the *hujjat* in standing, if we accept the latter term in its implications of the Fatimid period. If we take that *hujjat* here means the Imam, then *bāb* at that period should stand for the later *hujjat*. There is, of course, nothing improbable in this. Although under the Fatimids *bāb* appears as the top of the hierarchy, there is apparently no indication

¹ In the Nizāri branch of the Ismailis, probably in the IX/XV or X/XVI c., the principle was introduced that the *hujjat* (apparently only one) could only be appointed from amongst the closest relatives of the Imam (cf. "On the Recognition of the Imam", Bomkay, 1947, p. 11, note). Unfortunately for the student, the allusion to this is too obscure to see how the principle worked. It would be reasonable to suggest, however, that as the community in Persia was at that time small, and as there was a very small number of full time workers from amongst whom a *hujjat* could be appointed, the Imams were compelled to fill the vacancy with one of their own relatives who was expected to render faithful service for being personally interested in the preservation and prosperity of the authority of the Imams. Although this is merely a conjecture, perhaps it would be possible to suggest that an identical situation at the beginning of the Ismaili movement; necessitated a similar arrangement, namely that the *hujjat*, the authoritative representative of the Imam, usually was one of his relatives. If we accept this theory, we may simultaneously also offer a possible explanation to the existence of such a remarkable variety of the versions in the genealogy of the Fatimids.

² Cf. "The Alleged Founder of Ismailism", p. 125, note 2

to his functions. For me it is also not clear whether *bāb* is the same as the *dā'i'd-du'dt*, in the sense of the chief *dā'i*, as it appears in non-Ismaili literature, minister for religious propaganda.

Naqib. This term, meaning "officer," "man in charge," is very elusive because it neither shows its meaning from the implications of the original verb, nor does the context help to determine these. It is found in both KRH and KAG. The *Nātiq* is accompanied by twelve of them, and these twelve, in the same manner as the *hujjats*, are allegorised by the twelve months of the year. In KAG the terms *hujjat* and *naqib* sometimes alternate, and the latter is connected with 12 *jazīras*. We may also remember that in the Abbasid propaganda by which they succeeded in bringing about the revolution, twelve *naqibs* with seventy followers were appointed.

It appears that out of the twelve *naqibs* of the Prophet Muhammad four were of a different standing from the other eight, that 'Ali was the greatest *naqib*, and also the assistant and the *hujjat* of the *Nātiq*, to whom the latter confided the esoteric knowledge. Three other *naqibs*, out of the first four, were sinners. If, taking into consideration Shi'ite sentiment, we suppose that the first three, sinning *naqibs* were the first three caliphs, then who were the eight others? It is highly improbable that the Omayyads, "the tree cursed in the Coran," could be in a Shi'ite theory recognized as the *naqibs* of the Prophet. Besides, there were not eight, but fourteen of them. Still less can we expect the Abbasids to be treated as the *naqibs*. The eighth of them was *al-Mu'tasim* (218-227/833-842), but it would be difficult to believe that the work was composed during his reign, before 227/842. We have then to suggest that just as 'Ali appears in a double capacity of the *Wasi* and, simultaneously as a *naqib*, then most probably the other eight *naqibs* are the seven *Mutimms*, and the eighth — the Mahdi. The first three caliphs, according to Shi'ite belief, were usurpers, and the fourth, 'Ali was the only legitimate caliph, the Anīrū'l-mu'minīn. His successors.

the *Mutimms*, were not *de facto* caliphs, while they were such *de jure*.

Unfortunately for the student, these fragments do not contain the names either of the *Mutimms*, nor of the eight remaining *naqibs*. It is not certain whether al-Hasan b. 'Ali was included in the seven, or whether the heptad started with al-Husayn.

Mahdi. The KRH is full of the spirit of Messianic expectations, and treats the *Mahdi* as the seventh *Nātiq*. He is to be the eighth Imam from the house of 'Ali and Fātima. The later term *Qā'im*, which came into use under the Fatimids, probably to avoid ambiguity in references to the caliph al-Mahdi, is here not used at all. The seventh *Nātiq*, or *Mahdi*, will not introduce a new *shari'at*, and therefore will not have a *Wasi*, or *Mutimms*, to reveal its *ta'wil*. He will be the Judge of the Last Day, "coming (in quite a Christian way) in glory to judge the living and the dead." His advent will apparently signify the end of the world.

The KAG devotes an interesting passage to the question of whether the Prophet Muḥammad was the last *Nātiq*, and arrives at the conclusion that it was not so. I have already drawn the attention of students to the fact that the Fatimids made use of the old Shi'ite tradition according to which what is expected to be done by one Imam, and was not done, will be done by one of his successors, and that this will be as good as if done by himself. The Fatimids turned the idea of the promised Mahdi into a collective name, denoting the Fatimid dynasty. It was thus a collective Mahdi, the Fatimid Imams were all Mahdis. Individuals were coming and passing, but the Mahdi as such remained continually working and ruling.¹ Neither the KRH nor KAG contain any allusion to this. Their

¹ The stress in such theory is on the *physical*, i.e. genealogical and dynastic continuity, probably intended, consciously or unconsciously, to avoid undesirable complications. There is nothing whatever in it to be connected with the fantastic theories of mystics about the transfer or transmigration of the spirit, incarnations, and other similar superstitious beliefs.

eschatology is entirely faithful to the letter and spirit of the 'Coran, and they expect the final catastrophe which will put an end to the world.

The fragments of the KRH do not contain any clue to the name of the *Mahdi*, the eighth in descent from 'Ali. If al-Hasan was treated as a *Mutimm*, then the eighth should have been 'Abdu'l-lāh b. Muḥammad b. Ismā'il b. Ja'far as-Sādiq, who was probably a historic figure, and flourished towards the end of the second/eighth c. and the beginning of the next one. If the first *Mutimm* was al-Husayn, then the eighth should have been according to the Fatimid tradition, Ahmad b. 'Abdi'l-lāh, the grand-father of al-Mahdi, the alleged author of the Encyclopaedia of *Ikhwānu's-safā'*, who was perhaps himself responsible for sending Ibn Hawshab to the Yaman.¹

We may add here a few words on other technical expressions in these texts, chiefly KRH, because the KAG, by its nature, uses very few technical terms. It is interesting to note that the terms *mustajib* and *ma'dhūn*, the first meaning an initiated member, "who has the right to ask questions about the doctrine," and the second implying the initiated one who received permission to do preaching, do not appear in these books. They, however, very often figure in the works of Abū Hātim ar-Rāzi and Abū Ya'qūb as-Sijistāni. Here (in KRH) the converts are called *awliyā'* ("friends"), or *aṣḥabu'l-dā'i*, i.e. the *dā'i's*

¹ The strange theory that the eighth Imam after 'Alī b. Abī Tālib should become the seventh *Nātiq* and the expected *Mahdi*, and not the *seventh*, as was believed all through the Fatimid period, is obviously quite logical. If after every *naqi* or *asds*, accompanying every *Nātiq* there should be seven Imams, then the next *Nātiq* should be obviously the eighth, and not the seventh descendant. It is quite possible that such apparent strangeness of the theory is a guarantee of its genuineness. It was perhaps later on sacrificed to the belief concerning the mystic implications of the number seven, when already the Fatimids had to count more than seven generations from their ancestor. As is known, they modified this early belief into the theory that the last *Nātiq* will be the seventh in his group of seven.

associates. *Mu'nān* is the Ismaili, as distinguished from Muslim, a Muhammadan in general.

An interesting term is *muhṛim* (in KRH), in the sense of the initiated convert. Perhaps in KAG we find its explanation, in the sense of one "who dons the *ihrām* of the pilgrim, and, strengthened by the helping hand, is enabled to circumambulate the Ancient House of God." Under the latter, Ka'ba, not the original Islamic sanctuary is meant, but the Imam, the *qibla* of the Ismailis.

The word *maqām* (so much used in Sufism) is given here wide meanings of office, duty, mission, as in KRH (the *Waqf*) *yukmil bi-hi maqāma-hu* (i.e. *Nāṭiq's*).

The word *makān* has the meaning of the later term *ṣahūr*: *bayn kull makān Nāṭiqayn*.

For the idea of the *ṭīrat*, the period of the domination of one revealed *sharī'at*, before it is abrogated and replaced with the law revealed to the next Apostle of God, according to the general Islamic ideas, here, instead of the latter term *dawr*, the author of the KRH uses *waqt*, which may be an earlier term. It is not easy to find out whether such use of the expression is purely individual. The term *dawr*, in the sense of the orthodox *ṭīrat*, seems to be already well developed in early Fatimid literature.

The KRH as represented by our fragments does not discuss such matters at length, but it seems worth noting that probably by the middle of the next century, as we can see from the *Sullamū'n-najāt* by Abū Ya'qūb as-Sijistānī, already a gradation of periods of time in connection with the spiritual hierarchy was in existence. In a passage he refers to it as *kawr*, *dawr*, *qirān*, *sinān*. The first is apparently the complete cycle of seven millennia: *Ṣāḥibū'l-kawr* is *al-Qā'im 'alay-hi's-salām*. He is superior to *aṣḥābū'l-adwār*, i.e. *Nāṭiqs*. The *Nāṭiq*, in his turn, is superior to the *aṣḥābū'l-qirān*, or *Atimmā'*, i.e. *Matinnū* the Imams. And the *Matinnū* is superior to the *aṣḥābū's-sinān*, i.e. *lāhiqs*, or *hujjats*. Thus *qirān* is the Plur. from *qarn* (usually *qurān*). This expression gave so much trouble to the late de Goeje who, in his well-known "Memoire,"

treated it as *qirān*. Sing., in the sense of the conjunction of planets which in astrology was associated with exceptional good luck and success of those whose fate it influenced. In certain cases in his sources such meaning may be quite correct; but it would be worth while re-examining these because the scheme mentioned above is obviously quite logical. The *Qā'im* crowns a period of seven thousand years; the *Nāṭiq* dominates a millennium; the Imam whose tenure of his office lasts whole life, dominates a *qarn*, i.e. a period of time of a generation, i.e. about 30 years, while the *hujjats*, promoted from experienced and deserving *dā'is* obviously towards the end of their lives, hold their office only for a period of several years.

It may be noted that both the terms *ṣāḥir* and *baṭīn* are apparently used as substantives and adjectives. This is important because later on *baṭīn* acquired the meaning of a substantive only, "the esoteric doctrine."

This, I hope, may serve the purpose of drawing the attention of students to the fact that early Ismaili terminology sometimes considerably differs not only from that of much later periods, but even from that, so-to-speak, round the corner, namely the period of the earlier Fatimid Imams.



III.

THE BOOK OF RIGHTEOUSNESS
AND TRUE GUIDANCE.

(Kitābu'r-Rushd wa'l-Hidāyat).

Amongst the works of Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq b. Ahmad as-Sijzi, or as-Sijistāni (perhaps, as is mentioned in some sources, surnamed Bandāna), an eminent Ismaili *dā'i* in Persia who died probably soon after 360/971, there is an incomplete treatise on the principal dogma of Islam, under the title *Sullamu'n-Najāt*, "the Ladder to Salvation." In all known copies, as I was assured by Ismaili experts, the work is incomplete at the end, and contains a kind of an appendix with the heading (*fasl*) *Min Kitābi'r-Rushd wa'l-Hidāyat*. At the end of it is stated that these are the "words" of *Manzūru'l-Yaman*, i.e. Ibn Ḥawshab, the famous early *dā'i*, who was sent in 266/880 to Aden.

The title and authorship of the *Sullamu'n-najāt* apparently do not evoke any doubt. The title is mentioned in the work itself, even twice. The author refers as to his own earlier work to *al-Maqālidu'l-Malakūtiyya*, which is obviously the same work as referred to (as simply *Maqālid*) by the famous specialist, Sayyid-nā Ḥamidu'd-din al-Kirmāni, in his *K. ar-Riyāḍ*, analysed further on in the paper on the "Early Controversy." An extract from the *Maqālid* is given in the first volume of that valuable chrestomathy of Ismaili classics, the *Majmū'u't-Tarbiyat* by Sayyid-nā Mḥd b. Tāhir b. Ibrāhīm al-Hārithi (d. 584/1188, cf. *Guide*, p. 53).

The *Sullamu'n-najāt* was obviously intended for the instruction of beginners. It explains the basic dogma of Islam in Ismaili interpretation: on 1. God; 2. His Angels; 3. His revealed Books; 4. His Apostles; 5. Resurrection of the dead; 6. Judgment Day; and 7. Paradise and Hell. These basic principles (*maḍātibu'd-din*, as in KRH, or, as in KAG, *abniyatu'd-din as-sab'a*) are those which are mentioned in the Coran itself.

The text breaks on the fifth section (*ba'th*), after which comes the heading mentioned above. The appendix apparently has nothing to do with the *Sullam*, and there is no indication as to why, how, and when it has been added. The appendix does not form a continuous text, but consists of a number of fragments, shorter and longer, which, judging from their style, all belong to the same treatise. For this reason it is possible to believe that the colophon belongs to all of them, not to the last one only: *najaz kalām Mansûr'l-Yaman naqqara'l-lâh wajha-hu*, i.e. "(here) ends the speech of Mansûr'l-Yaman, may God beautify his countenance."

This raises many questions: why does the author, or rather scribe, use the expression *najaz*, which is rather unusual, instead of the usual *tamm* or *intahâ*? The expression *naqqara'l-lâh wajha-hu* seems to be comparatively modern (it appears in the Ismaili texts edited by S. Guyard, occasionally in the Druze works, etc.). It seems to be little used in the Fatimid literature. Perhaps a few disjointed leaves from KRH were at an early period incidentally added to a copy of the book, being mistaken for its continuation, and later, because of religious conservatism, remained unseparated. We need not take too seriously the statement of the colophon implying the authorship of Ibn Hawshab, because this is obviously based on tradition, and tradition always has a tendency to attribute every book to a suitable celebrity.

The internal evidence of these fragments supports the idea of their belonging to a very early period, perhaps really that of Ibn Hawshab. The work is full of the intense spirit of expectations of the *Mahdî*, the promised Messiah in the person of the last and seventh *Nâfiq*. As *ḥuḡ* is the name of the last and seventh *Nâfiq* in Ismailism, it would be impossible to think that such expectations could be expressed after the triumph of the Fatimids in 297/909. The book must have been compiled prior to that date.

Nothing definite may be suggested for the determin-

tion of the earliest date after which the book was composed. The author speaks about the impending advent of the Seventh *Nâfiq* in terms implying an event belonging to the still remote future. He repeatedly refers to the seven *Mutimms*, i.e. Imams, the descendants of 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib, who should precede the *Mahdî*. It would, however, be too incautious to catch the author on his word, and believe he was still writing before the expiry of the period of the seven *Mutimms*. This would lead to the belief that the treatise was written still in the second/eighth c. We have already discussed above (see p. 47) the names of the possible *Nâfiq*, the Eighth lineal descendant of 'Alî, whom the author might have in view, but all this is not very convincing, because he leaves us no key to the problem.

It may be argued that if we accept the theory of the authorship of Ibn Hawshab, it is possible that he, staying in his remote Yaman, could have written all this without any clear knowledge of the events, such as the Ismaili rising, known in history as the "Qarmatian invasion" of Syria in 290/902. Perhaps the book was composed even before that date, and, in fact, may be one of the earliest works of the *Mansûr'l-Yaman*. Unfortunately for us, however, there is no answer to such a question. The style of the work hardly justifies the theory that its author was an Arab. It is true that, having been so many times recopied during more than eleven centuries by people of limited education, the text was bound to accumulate all kinds of errors. It appears, however, that many of these most probably belong to the author himself, especially the use of words in a strange sense, extraordinary syntax, and expressions which probably were always unintelligible to readers. The impression thus created is that it is the work of a foreigner whose Arabic was not up to standard.

I offer here a tentative translation of the text based on two quite new copies, one of 1933, (A), and the other, (B), belonging to Mr. A.A.A. Fyzee, dated 1946. Both are hopelessly bad. The scribe of the second obviously

tried to introduce emendations which almost invariably make the text still more corrupt. It would therefore be futile to attempt preparation of its edition with such means at one's disposal, and the more reasonable course would be to postpone this until a better copy is found. Events, however, make such postponement generally inevitable. Owing to riots and other troubles in Bombay it is practically impossible to print or lithograph any Persian or Arabic text at present. Thus the matter has to wait.

In publishing this tentative translation I have to emphasise that it has been printed only because it is not so much the letter of the contents that here matters to the student as the spirit of the work. Its fragmentary character prevents us from forming a correct idea of its theories, but, nevertheless, leaves us sufficient opportunity to have a glance of that lost world, with its mentality, in which works of this kind were written.

A TRANSLATION OF THE

Kitābu'r-Rushd wa'l-Hidāyat.

Know, — may God have mercy on thee! — that the "name (of) Allāh" is (in Arabic) written with the help of seven letters, from which fourteen (others) are derived.¹ (Thus) three groups of seven (*tasabī'*)² are again³ formed, because a name and a meaning (*ma'nā*) co-exist with

¹ In all the speculations of this kind the author obviously takes into consideration not only the letters themselves, but also the letters forming the names of the letters, as *a-l-f* in the case of *alif*, or *l-a-m* in the case of *lām*. His mathematical sense, however, often misleads him in his calculations.

² The term *tasabī'* (Plur. of *tasbī'*, which does not occur here) means "making sevenfold, taking in groups of seven" It is here used in the sense of the usual expression for a heptade, *usab'*, Pl. *asabī'*, which is both common in early texts (as in the *K. ar-Riyāḍ* by Sayyid-nā Hamīdu'd-dīn al-Kirmānī) and in modern, as in the Ismā'īlī fragments edited by S. Guyard "Fragments relatifs à la Doctrine des Ismaélis".

³ As some other words, the author uses *ayḍan* in an old common sense, apparently meaning "likewise, similarly".

everything. In the same way (the words) "tongue (and) ear" are (together) composed of seven letters from which (fourteen others can be derived. (Thus) these also consist of groups of seven, and the tongue and ear share between themselves all human speech.¹

The first words of the Coran are "in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate." These words, in Arabic, *Bismi'l-lāh*, are written (with the help of) seven letters, from which twelve others can be derived. These are followed by the twelve letters (of the end of the phrase), the words *ar-Rahmān ar-Rahīm*. (And the first) chapter (of the Coran), entitled *al-Ḥamd*,² is composed of seven verses. The seven letters of the *Bismi'l-lāh* allegorically stand for the seven *Nātiqs*, great Prophets, and from these are derived twelve letters which symbolize the fact that every *Nātiq* is followed by twelve *naqiṣ*, or "headmen."³ Then the twelve letters (composing the words) *ar-Rahmān ar-Rahīm*, with the nineteen other letters which are derived from these, symbolize the fact that from the *Nātiqs* are derived the Imams, seven after each of them, with twelve *hujjats*, thus making nineteen altogether.⁴

The seven verses which form the chapter *al-Ḥamd* stand allegorically for the seven degrees (i.e. basic principles) of the religion (*marātibu'd-dīn as-sab'*).⁵ (Just as)

¹ Typically for such Kabbalistic speculations, the authors always treat the letter, and not the sound which it denotes, as the basis, or element not only of speech, but idea, *ma'nā*. It is therefore noteworthy that our author refers to the tongue and ear, emitting and receiving the sound.

² On several occasions the author refers to various *shārs* under the titles which differ from those commonly accepted now. This may be a trace of some local school of reading the Coran.

³ Concerning the term see p. 45.

⁴ The author adds the number of the *hujjats*, twelve, to the number of the Imams probably as abstract and ideal figures, not as those of all the *hujjats* which in fact existed during the period of the seven *Mutimins*.

⁵ Cf. above, p. 39. The same expression is also used further, on pp. 189 and 198 of the text, edited by Dr. M. Kamil Hussein

the chapter *al-Ḥamd* opens the Book of God, so the "degrees of religion" open the door of knowledge of the religion of God.

There are letters in the *Coran*, standing at the beginning of certain *sūras* (used in their original value, not in numerical capacity).¹ They at first appear to be meaningless, (just as those at) the beginning of the chapter *al-Baqara* (ii),² or in others. The letter *alif* allegorizes the *Nāṭiq*, and *lām* stands for the *Waṣī*, while *mīm* symbolizes the Imam. This is what the letters *a-l-m* at its beginning stand for.

At the beginning of the chapter *al-A'rāf* (vii) there stands the group *a-l-m-s*. Here the letter *alif* symbolizes the *Nāṭiq*, *lām* — the *Waṣī*, *mīm* — the *Mutimm* *Imām*,³ and *sād* — the *ḥujjat* of the Imam. At the beginning of the chapter *Yūnus* (x) there stands the group *a-l-r* in which *alif* refers to the *Nāṭiq*, *lām* to the *Waṣī*, while *rā* symbolizes the *Mutimm* Imam. The same applies to (other places) where *rā* appears in the beginning of the chapter. In the chapter *ar-Ra'd* (xiii) there stands at the beginning *a-l-m-r*...⁴

... because both the diacritical dots which appear above the letter *q* are apparent, and also because *qāf* and *nūn* symbolize the *Nāṭiqs* and Imams. The single dot which is placed above the letter *n*, *nūn*, is similar to the true believer (*mu'min*) because he openly professes only the in the Ismaili Society's "Collectanea", vol. I, 1948, I shall further on refer here to that edition simply as "text".

¹ It is useful to recall the fact that *ḥurūfu'l-mu'jama* means simply letters of the alphabet, while *al-ḥurūfu'l-mu'jama* (as originally in the copy) would mean dotted letters. The initial letters in the *Coran*, referred to here, all are dotless, obviously because in the original Kufic script no diacritical dots were originally used.

² The title of the second chapter is so consistently written in my copy for *al-Baqara*. In B the original form was obviously altered by the scribe.

³ Note that the *Imām* is here specified as the *Mutimm*, while it was not specified just above.

Here in both copies there is a lacuna.

Wall-ship (*waldyat*) of 'Ali, which implies the plain aspect of the knowledge of the Imam. He does not, however, discuss (in public) anything connected with the esoteric wisdom of the Imam (*bāṭin* 'ilmi-hi). Likewise, the diacritical dot above its apparent bearer (*ṣawq ṣāḥiri-hā*) has as its position (*mustaqarru-hā*) the letter *nūn*, symbolizing esoteric wisdom, which is concealed, — such is its symbol.¹ When the five diacritical dots (*'uḥmāt*)² come together, and are added to the fourteen letters, the total thus becomes nineteen, and this forms yet another symbol for those nineteen, namely the seven Imams and twelve *ḥujjats*.

The number of the chapters of the *Coran* is 114, which is symbolical.³ If this number is divided... the end of each of the nineteen parts, and their beginning... the number testify the other. This (refers) to the *Mutimm*

¹ The author apparently speaks of several terms written with the help of dotted letters. The implications of this far-fetched simile are obviously connected with the fact whether the diacritical dot, belonging to the letter *nūn*, in its connected form, is written or not, as in *an-Nāṭiq*. If it is not written, then it is "concealed".

² The word which appears here in A reads as *taḥiyyat* (greetings), or *nukhabāt* (chosen ones), while in B it is left without dots. It seems to me that this is '*uḥmāt*', diacritical dots, belonging to the terms which have been mentioned in the complete text. The expression is not a very common one, and this is probably why the word was much mutilated in the process of re-copying.

³ The sentence which follows seems to be quite meaningless in both manuscripts, most probably because portions of it have been omitted. It is easy to locate the probable lacunas. "If this number is divided" — how? Here is certainly the first lacuna. The word *ḥarf* must probably stand for *ḥaz'* or *ḥaz'*, meaning the parts into which the *Coran* should be thus divided: *ḥarf* apparently gives no sense at all. Another lacuna must be after *qāḍi-hā*, because there is no obvious grammatical connection in these words. Mystics are never good with figures: if 114 is divided by seven, it will give 16, not 14 or 19, plus two, upsetting all the symbolism further on. In order to get 19, it is necessary to divide 114 by six, not seven. It is difficult to see in what connection the author's references stand to the six *waḥṣ* (or *dawrs*) of the earlier *Nāṭiqs*.

Imams and twelve *hujjats*, because between the appearance of each two successive *Nātiqs* it is they who fulfil their mission (*maqāmdtu-hum*). The period of time (*waqt*) between Muḥammad and the Mahdī is the "sixth time" (*al-waqt al-sādis*). Muḥammad is the sixth *Nātiq*, the Coran was revealed to him, and the number of its chapters refers to the six periods (*al-aḡāt as-sitta*) between the seven *Nātiqs*, seven Imams, and twelve *hujjats*. There is also another symbol contained in the chapters of the Coran, namely that of the seven *Mutimms* Imams between every two successive *Nātiqs*.

Similarly, with regard to the Coran, the first chapter symbolizes Muḥammad, because it was he who delivered it, and after it, continuing the chapters by seven, we find (each seventh of) them containing the mention of Muḥammad, in a like manner, in each seven, to the end of the Coran. At the same time (each group of) seven chapters, by their number, symbolize every complete group of seven *Mutimms* between each two *Nātiqs*. They refer in their contents to the Seventh of the *Nātiqs* who is due to come by the commandment of God, and the order that is going to be fulfilled (*amr ḥādīth*). In every seven chapters in which there is a mention of (any) commandment and order to be fulfilled (*amr ḥādīth*) there is an indication of the *Nātiq* who is to come after Muḥammad (*ḡl'm*),¹ as well as a reference to and mention of Muḥammad (*ḡl'm wa āl-hī*). This is because it also refers to his mission (*maqām*) and the missions of those *Nātiqs* who came before him, as also to the *Nātiq* who (is to come) after him, his descendant, and seven Imams, also from his progeny, just as the Imams between the *Nātiqs* who...²

¹ It seems useful, to save space, to adopt this transliteration of the usual "initials" of the formula of the invocation of blessings upon the Prophet. In a text such as this it may matter on certain occasions, and therefore it would be unwise to omit it altogether.

² In the manuscripts there is no lacuna here, although its presence is quite obvious. The impression that this text creates is that the copyists, finding it very difficult to follow the con-

... the Coran is his book which he preached and called humanity to recognize himself and those (Prophets) who came before him and are to come after him. Thus the proof contained in the number refers to him. It (the Coran) therefore opens with his (*ḡl'm*) mention. The first chapter, *al-Faḡl*, alludes to Muḥammad because it is called *Ummu'l-Kitāb* which was revealed to him. And what alludes to Muḥammad, at the same time alludes to the Prophets who came before him. Then there are six chapters, the first of them being *al-Baqar* (ii), and the seventh *al-Anfāl* (viii), which mentions the obligatoriness of the (rules concerning the division of) booties. This symbolizes the *farḡ*, commandment of God concerning the Seven *Mutimms*, by its position as the seventh, and the Seventh of the *Nātiqs* by the reference to the commandment of God which it contains, as he is bound to come by the unalterable command.

Then a new group (of seven) begins after the chapter *al-Anfāl*, which is followed by the chapter *al-Barā'at* (ix). It opens with the words "An immunity from God and His Apostle..." which implies Muḥammad (*ḡl'm*). After it there come six chapters and the seventh is *an-Naḥl* (xvi), which opens with "God's bidding will come, seek not then to hasten it on." This alludes to all the seven *Mutimms*, by its number, and also to the Seventh of the *Nātiqs*, because it refers to the "command of God" which is to come, "do not seek to hasten it," and this means the time of his manifestation (*waqt ḡuhūri-hi*).

A new group begins after the chapter *an-Naḥl* (xvi), which is followed by "*Banā Isrā'il*" (xvii), which opens with "Praises be to Him who took His slave a journey by night..." and this refers to Muḥammad. After this chapter there are six more, and the seventh is the chapter *an-Nūr* (xxiv) which opens with "A chapter which We have sent down and determined..." This refers to the seven *Mutimms*, and also to the Seventh of the *Nātiqs* in

tents, soon give it up, and write mechanically, easily overlooking words, or even whole lines.

what it contains concerning the mention of the impending punishment and the victory (or: bliss).

Then begins a new group, after the chapter *an-Nûr*, which is followed by the chapter *an-Nûr*, which is followed by the chapter *al-Furqân* (xxv), which opens with "Blessed be He who sent down the *Furqân* to His slave that he might be unto the world a warner..." By this Muhammad is meant. After this chapter there follow six others, and the seventh is *al-Jazar* (xxxii)¹ in which the Resurrection is mentioned. It refers to all the seven *Mutimms* by its number, and also to the Seventh of the *Nâtîqs* by its reference to the Resurrection.

After it a new group of seven begins, starting with the chapter *al-Ahzâb* (xxxiii) which opens with "O thou Prophet! fear God..." This refers to Muhammad (*sl'm*). After this *sûra* there are six more, and the seventh is *al-Mu'min* (xl). It is the first of the chapters at the beginning of which the letters *h-m* appear, *al-hawcâmîn*. It contains the mention of the "day of cry of despair," the Black Day, the words such as these: "and warn them of the day when hearts are chocking in the gullets" (xl, 18), and all this refers to the time of the manifestation of the seven *Mutimms*, and thus also refers to the Seventh of the *Nâtîqs*. It is followed by the chapter (xli) *H.M. as-Sajdat*², at the beginning of which (verse 2) there is "a book whose signs are detailed, an Arabic *Qur'ân*..." The implications of the words "*Qur'ân*," or "Book," are that it comes from the Arab *Nâtîq*. (The words) "its signs are detailed, the Arabic *Qur'ân* for the people..." mean that the degrees (*awarâtib*) of the Imams from his descendants have been determined. "The Arabic *Qur'ân* to the people who know," i.e. the people who know the foundations of the commandements of God concerning the Imams after His Apostles. Then (God) adds (verse 3) "a herald of good tidings and a warner," i.e. one Imam after another, preaching and warning. The ordinary idea (*zâhir*

of the Coran is that it is the Book which was sent down to Muhammad. It is said in it (xli, 43) "naught is said to thee but what was said to the apostles before thee." This is a reference to Muhammad, and an address to him. It is also said in it (xli, 25): "those who do not believe do not listen to this *Qur'ân*," which is exclusively associated with this particular Apostle of God.

Then after the chapter *H.M. as-Sajda* there are six others, and the seventh is *al-Fath* (xlvi), which opens with "verily, We have given thee a glorious victory" — verily God will give victory (or: bliss) to the believers by the manifestation of the Seventh of the *Nâtîqs*, and also to the progeny (*ahl bayt*) of the Apostle of God (*sl'm wa ali-hi*).¹

Then begins a new group of seven after this chapter which is followed by *al-Hajârât* (xlix). It opens with "O ye who believe! do not anticipate God and His Apostle," The latter is Muhammad. After this *sûra* there follow six chapters, and the seventh is *al-Wâqî'a* (lvi) with what is mentioned in connection with its advent (i.e. of the Resurrection), and this implies the time (*waqt*) of the manifestation of the Seventh of the *Nâtîqs*.

Then begins a new group of seven chapters, with *al-Hadîd* (lvii) following the preceding *sûra*. It is stated in it (verse 9): "He is it who sends down upon His slave manifest signs," and this refers to Muhammad. And it is stated in it also (verse 28): "O ye who believe, fear God and believe in His Apostle. He will give you two shares of His mercy." The Apostle, referred to here, is Muhammad. The words "two shares" promised to those who believe in Muhammad (mean) that God sent to them two *Nâtîqs* from His Apostles, because "mercy" (*rahmat*, in *ta'wil* denotes the apostles (*rusul*). Then Muhammad is the Apostle of God, and the second *Nâtîq*, (who is to come) from his progeny, is al-Mahdi, the Seventh of the

¹ The usual name of the XXXII *sûra* is *as-Sajda*.

² This chapter, XLI, is usually called "*Fuṣṣilat*."

¹ The verb *f-t-h* has many implications besides "victory". The expression "complete fulfillment of aspirations" would be nearer to the sense.

Nāṭiqs. Similarly, "two shares of mercy" may also mean two doses, lots, etc., because the word *kisf*, share, denotes also portion, part. "And He will make a light for you to walk in" (verse 28) refers to the light of the true esoteric religion (*nūru'd-da'watil-haqqil-bātin*), and the covenant to which they call the people, as has been mentioned, commented upon, and explained above. "And He will forgive you" (v. 28) means: by the covenants which will purify you. "And God is forgiving, merciful" (end of verse 28) — the meaning was explained above.

Then, after the chapter *al-Hadīd*, there follow six *sūras*, and the seventh is *at-Taghābun* (lxiv). The day of *taghābun*, "cheating," is the Day of the Resurrection. This chapter, by its number, alludes to the seven *Mutinms*, and to the Seventh of the *Nāṭiqs* (because) Resurrection is mentioned in it. After this chapter follows *at-Talāq* (lxv), which opens with: "O thou Prophet! when you divorce women, then divorce them at their term." (Thus) Muhammad is mentioned in it.

After it there follow six chapters, and the seventh is *al-Jinn* (lxxii), in which are found the words (v. 25-26): "until when they see what they are threatened with, then shall they surely know who is most weak at helping and fewest in numbers. Say, I know not if what ye are threatened with be nigh, or if my Lord will set for it a term." The words "what you are threatened with" imply the time (*waqt*) of the manifestation of the Seventh of the *Nāṭiqs*, — this is the "Hour" (*as-Sā'at*, xlii, 16): "and what shall make thee know whether haply the Hour is nigh?" The chapter *al-Jinn*, by its number, alludes to the seven *Mutinms*, and to the Seventh of the *Nāṭiqs* by references contained in it. It is followed by the chapter *al-Muṣammil* (lxxiii). This name is addressed to Muhammad (*gl'm*).

After it there come six *sūras*, and the seventh is *Ab-hasa wa ta'allā* (lxxx). It contains the words (v. 33): "but when the stunning noise shall come" which refer to the time (*waqt*) of the manifestation of the Seventh of the

Nāṭiqs. It (thus) by its number alludes to the seven *Mutinms*, and, by a reference to the "stunning noise," to the Seventh of the *Nāṭiqs*, which is the period of the *ṣahār*.

After it comes the chapter "*Idhā'sh-shamsu kucwirat*" (lxxxi). The sun is a symbol of the *Nāṭiq*, i.e. Muhammad. This chapter is followed by six more (and the seventh is) *al-Ghāshiyā* (lxxxviii), which opens with "Has there come to thee the story of the overwhelming?", which means the time (*waqt*) of the manifestation of the Seventh of the *Nāṭiqs*. By its number it alludes to all the seven *Mutinms*, and by the mention of the Resurrection alludes to the Seventh of the *Nāṭiqs*.

Then follows the chapter *al-Fajār* (lxxxix) in which Muhammad is directly addressed in the words (verse 5): "Hast thou not seen how thy Lord did with 'Ād?" The dawn (*fajār*) is a symbol of the *Nāṭiq*. This *sūra* (thus) refers to Muhammad. It is followed by six other chapters, and the seventh is (the one which opens with): *Iqra' bi-smi Rabbi-ka* (xcvi), "Recite in the name of thy Lord who created man from congealed blood". It thus opens with a commandment and order, the words "recite, etc." By its number it alludes to all the *Mutinms*, and refers to the Seventh of the *Nāṭiqs* by the implication of the commandment, and the order which is to be fulfilled.

It is followed by the *sūra* which opens with the words (xcvii): *Innā anzalnā-hu fi laylatil-l-qadr*, i.e. "Verily, We sent it down on the Night of Power. And what shall make thee know what the Night of Power is?" This is what was revealed to Muhammad (*gl'm*). After it there follow six chapters, and the seventh is *al-Huṭmat* (civ)¹ in which (verse 6) it is said: "(it is) the fire of God kindled, which rises above the hearts." This refers to the time (*waqt*) of the manifestation of the Seventh of the *Nāṭiqs* which is implied in the reference to the *huṭma*, "devouring fire," which is associated with his manifestation.

¹ Usually called *al-Hamza*.

Then follows the chapter *al-Fil* (cv), which opens with the words: "Hast thou not seen what thy Lord did with the people of the elephant?" This is a direct address to Muhammad (*ḡl'm*). After this there follow six chapters,¹ and the seventh is *al-Ikhlās* (cxii) (opening with): "Say: He, God, is one." It is, as they say, the most perfect form of the profession of the oneness of God (*taḥhid*), which signifies the time (*waqt*) of the manifestation of the Seventh of the *Nātiqs*. It (thus) alludes to all the seven *Mutimms* by its number, and to the Seventh of the *Nātiqs* by being the perfect expression of the profession of the oneness of God and perfection of religious beliefs which are (associated with) the time (*waqt*) of his manifestation.

Thus is completed the division of the number of the chapters of the Coran into groups of seven (*tasabī*). It refers to the seven *Mutimms* and seven *Nātiqs*. There remain (however) two *sūras*, i.e. *al-Falaq* and *an-Nās* (cxiii and cxiv). We may add both these *sūras* to (our scheme of) groups of seven. The words (cxiii, 1): "Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak" allude (generally) to the *Nātiqs* because the dawn is the advance of the morning in the sky, and the words (cxiv, 1): "Say: I take refuge with the Lord of people" refers to the *ḥadd*, rank, of the *Mutimms*. It is because the position of men is on the surface of the earth which is from the "second rank" (*al-ḥadd ath-thānī*).²

Thus this system of proofs is supported by the arrangement of the Coran and the number of its chapters. If thou countest those of them in which Muhammad (*ḡl'm*) is mentioned, which (also) refer to (all) the *Nātiqs* (generally, (thou wilt find) that they number 14....³

... Muhammad, they refer to the seven *Mutimms*. Of these there are also fourteen *sūras*. Those *sūras* which refer only to the *Nātiqs* (also) refer to them (i.e. *Mutimms*?), and the *sūras* which refer to the *Mutimms* allude to all seven of

¹ In A "then five *sūras* after it".

² The author, very unfortunately, does not explain what it means, and what is the "first *ḥadd*". Perhaps the latter refers to the world of angels?

³ Another lacuna, interrupted by the words: "which contains... Apparently only a short passage is missing.

them (*tamām as-sab*). The Seventh of the *Nātiqs* is also referred to in them. They also contain the double allusion to the fact that every *Nātiq* has a *shari'at*, the system of religious law, which was not introduced before him, and that every *Mutimm* merely completes the law of the *Nātiq* who preceded him. Thus for every *Nātiq* there are two *sūras* as testimonies, just as in the case of every *Mutimm* because there are fourteen in favour of the *Nātiqs*, and as many in the case of the *Mutimms*. This also proves that every *Nātiq* must for certain have a *Wasi* to complete his mission (*maqāmu-hu*), and that (similarly) every *Mutimm* must also have *ḥujjats*¹ to have his mission (*maqāmu-hu*) completed, because the basis of his *maqām* (mission) is the religion (which belongs) to the *Nātiqs* (or: because the foundation of the religious mission, *maqāmi'd-dīn*, belongs to the *Nātiqs*?).

The *Mutimms* are seven, as has been already mentioned above. If therefore there are altogether fourteen *sūras* in the Coran which prove the truth of the *Nātiqs*, and a like number similarly proving that of the *Mutimms*, there are 28 *sūras* altogether, and their number corresponds with the total number of the letters of the (Arabic) alphabet, which is the basis of every kind of speech. After such system of proof there remain only two additional *sūras*, just as in the alphabet there are two coupled letters, *lām-alif*. These letters are just as those *sūras*, because they (have been joined) for being returned, together with other letters, into speech. Similarly, the two *sūras*, are returned in the proof of what has already been mentioned. Both these *sūras*, namely *al-Falaq* (cxiii) and *an-Nās* (cxiv) indicate the two *ḥadds*, or degrees. The possessors of such two *ḥadds*, degrees or ranks (*ashḥabul-ḥaddayn*) have already been mentioned in the preceding *sūras*.² The coupled letters, *lām* and *alif*, are added to the 28 (ordinary)

¹ Here it is simply said: *min ḥujjat*, "some" *ḥujjats*, not exactly twelve, which is perhaps the total of the *ḥujjats* during the whole period of the seven *Mutimms*.

² These are obviously the *Nātiq* and the *Wasi*.

letters, and symbolize the seven *Nātiqs*, seven *Waṣīs*, seven degrees (or steps to) the religion (*marātibū'd-dīn-as-sab'*) which exist at every period of time, and the seven *Mutimms* Imams (*al-A'immat al-Mutimmūn*), thus making a total of twenty eight.

The two joint letters are like Muḥammad and 'Alī, because *alif* stands (generally) for *Nātiqs* at the beginning of (various) *sūras*, and *lām* symbolizes *Waṣīs*. They have been already included amongst the letters of the alphabet, and we also mentioned (the position of) Muḥammad amongst the *Nātiqs*, and also the *Waṣīs*. The letter *y* (*yā*) at the end of the name of Mahdī, who is the last of the Imams and the *Nātiqs*, is the last of all the letters. It stands at the end as a proof of the truth of all the *shari'ats* which appeared before him (i.e. the Prophet), and that after him the advent of no new *shari'at* is predicted, in the way in which the (early) *Nātiqs* used to predict the advent of each other. In this way Moses predicted the advent of Jesus (saying): "after me there will come to you the Masīh, Messiah" [not in the Coran]. The Jews expect him to this day. Jesus predicted the advent of Muḥammad (*ḡal'm*), as is said in the Coran (xi. 6): "and giving you glad tidings of an apostle who shall come after me whose name shall be Aḥmad." Similarly, Muḥammad predicted the advent of al-Mahdī (may mercy from him be on us). He indicated that al-Mahdī will complete both the degrees, namely the degree of Prophethood and the rank of the *Waṣī*. He is the "Completer" (*al-khattām*), and the completer occupies a higher position than the completed, *nakhtām*. In this way al-Mahdī is the highest limit of both degrees, their completer.

We may add that the letter *y*, in accordance with the numerical value of letters of the alphabet, signifies ten, and the Seventh *Nātiq* is the tenth after Muḥammad, 'Alī and the seven Imams, the *Mutimms* from their progeny. He is also the Seventh of the *Nātiqs*, and, at the same time, the eighth (*thāmin*) after (*sic*, *ba'd*) the *Mutimm* Imams. It is to this that the word of God (lxix, 7) refers

"seven nights and eight days". Here the word "nights" refers to the *Waṣīs*, and "days" refers to the *Nātiqs*, because night comes after the end of the day, while after al-Mahdī there will be no (new) system of the *ta'wīl* which will be practised by a *Waṣī*: there will be no (new) *Nātiq* after (that) "night".¹ As God says (lxxx, 26-31): "then We have cleft the earth asunder," — and the earth signifies a *Waṣī*, — "and made to grow therefrom the grain and the grape, and the hay, and the olive, and the palm, and gardens closely planted, and fruits and grass." And the meaning of the "grass" is 'Alī, with the seven Imams from his descendants and the Eighth, the Mahdī, the Seventh of the *Nātiqs*.

The Mahdī's name is Muḥammad, or rather he has two names, each of which are written with the help of four letters. At the end of one of these there is the letter *d* (*dāl*), while at the end of the other there is *y* (*yā*). The letter *d* stands at the end of the name Muḥammad, who is the Apostle of God, while *y* stands at the end of the name 'Alī. It implies that it comprises the whole of the revelation (*tanzīl*) preached by Muḥammad, as also the whole of the esoteric doctrine, *ta'wīl*, preached by 'Alī. (This) is the proof of its comprising everything. The end of his name is the last letter, and the end of everything is its limit (*ghāyat*). Thus he (Mahdī) possesses the knowledge of both of them (i.e. the Prophet and 'Alī) to the fullest extent, just as his name comprises all the names.

We may add that the combined letter, *lām-alif*, symbolizes Muḥammad and 'Alī in his sanctity (*walāyat*), or his birth, descent (*wilādat*) in view of his comprising the degrees of both Muḥammad with his Prophethood, and 'Alī with his *Waṣī*-ship.² Similarly in these letters there are (allusions to) the names of the *Nātiqs* who came before him, which are limited to twenty five letters. Thus there remain, to complete 28, three letters. The names of the

¹ This does not mean that the expected Mahdī will not be a *Nātiq*, but there will be no more *Nātiqs* after him.

² This obviously refers to the Mahdī.

Wāṣis are limited to 24, out of the 28, thus there remain four. It has been mentioned above that four is the *ḥadd*, degree, of the *Nāṭiqs* and three is the *ḥadd* of the *Wāṣis*, and that the *maqām*, contents (?) of the religion of God at every period of time consists of nine *ḥudūd* (points?) which, surely, have to be complete. And four for the *Nāṭiq* mean that he certainly must have a *Wāṣi*, just as four certainly also contain three. With these figures seven is complete.

This is the end of the section (*faṣl*). May God bless our Lord Muḥammad with his Pure Descendants, and save them all!

... And His words (xvi, 103): "and whenever We change one verse for another, (God knows best what He sends down)" mean that one Imam follows the other. They are (therefore) *Abdāl*, "substitutes," with their *ḥujjats* and *dā'is*, because God substitutes an Imam for his predecessor. He says (vii, 186): "They will ask you about the "Hour," for what time it is fixed? — say: the knowledge of this is only with God (that is, in the Book): none shall manifest it at its time but He. It is heavy in the heaven and the earth. It will not come to you save of a sudden," etc. And He also says (xxxiii, 63): "People will ask thee about the "Hour." Say: the knowledge thereof is with God. And what is to make thee perceive that the "Hour" is haply nigh?" And He says (lxxix, 42-43): "They will ask thee about the "Hour," for when it is set whereby canst thou mention it?" (To the end of the chapter). The "Hour" is the manifestation of the Mahdī, the *Nāṭiq*, the Seventh of the *Nāṭiqs*. God has concealed the time of his manifestation from His Prophet and from all men, but asserted in His Book this (His) firm decision (*ta'kid*) to His Prophet because it was His ordinary way (*sunnat*) with all the *Nāṭiqs* who came before him (i.e. Muḥammad), not to reveal the time in which He was going to send any one of them. And His word *thaqīlat*, "became heavy," refers to the Imams and *ḥujjats* who (also) do not know the time of his advent. "I

will come to you of a sudden" (vii, 186). This is the way in which the days have become (divided into groups of) seven days, changing in accordance with the (movements of) the seven luminaries and spheres (under the command) of God.

The Imams observe the religions (*sharā'i'*) founded by the seven *Nāṭiqs*. (Thus) the position of the Imams has become like that of night, symbolizing the position of the *ḥujjats* (*marātibu'l-A'imma šarāt al-laylāt tadall 'alā marātibih-l-ḥujaj*). The noon has become a symbol (*mathal*) of the Imam, and night of the *ḥujjat*. This may be proved in the way as follows: the words *layl* and *nahār* (night and noon) are written with the help of seven letters, just as the words *Imām* and *ḥujjat*. "A night", *laylat*, requires four letters, just as *Imām*, and the "day", *yawm*, after it, requires three letters, as *ḥujjat*. This indicates that the *ḥujjat* may become an *Imām* (in due course) after his Imam, and before the next Imam, and that the Imam [who] was a *ḥujjat* to an Imam (*la-hu*) before he himself had become an Imam, because the day implies the noon, and this symbolizes the Imam. With regard to the three letters of which the word *ḥujjat* is composed, they indicate that he must become a *ḥujjat* before he becomes an Imam. The word *layl*, night, consists of three letters, like *ḥujjat*, while the four letters in the word *Imām* refer to him, what he will become later on having been (before) a *ḥujjat* to an Imam (*ḥujjatu-hu*).

The same matter is indicated by seven letters, and this is also why the words "year" and "sun" are of feminine gender, while they symbolize the Imam, and why the words "month" and "moon," symbols of the *ḥujjat*, are of masculine gender. The word *nahār*, noon, is a symbol of the Apostle of God, the *Nāṭiq* (*ar-Rasūl an-Nāṭiq*), while *layl*, night, is a symbol of the *Mutimm* Imam (*al-Imāmu'l-Mutimm*). The word *nahār*, noon, is again a symbol in the sense that it is applied to the *Mutimm* Imam, while *layl*, night, is applied to the *ḥujjat*. This is because the twelve hours of the day indicate the light of the sun, while

the twelve hours of the night indicate moonlight. In the same way the Apostle of God — the *Nātiq* is accompanied by twelve *naqibs* who call humanity to (follow) his plain teaching (*‘ilm ar-Rasul az-zahir*), i.e. the revelation (*tanzil*), symbolized by the light of the sun, while the *Mutimm* Imam is followed by twelve *hujjats* who call humanity to (follow) the esoteric teaching of the *Mutimm* (*‘ilm al-Mutimm al-batin*), i.e. *ta’wil*, which is symbolized by the moon, just as the *tanzil*, plain revelation, is symbolized by the noon, while the *ta’wil* is also “night.”

The Apostle of God does not preach the *ta’wil*, and does not reveal it. He only communicates it to his greatest *naqib*, deputy, who is his *hujjat* and *wasf*. The latter does not preach the *ta’wil* personally, he merely transfers it to his *hujjat* who preaches it and calls humanity to follow him. The *hujjats* learn from him the esoteric knowledge (*‘ilmu’l-batin*). This is why the Imam and *hujjat* are symbolized by the noon and night, respectively.

Similarly the year, on the same (lines) serves as a symbol. The sun and the days that are lit with it, are divided into groups of seven (*tasabti*), symbolizing the seven Imams, because seven symbolizes them. It is also because the sun is a symbol of the Imam, and the twelve months, connected with the rotation of the moon, are symbols of the *hujjats*, because their number is twelve, and the latter is their symbol. The Moon (also) is a symbol of the *hujjat*. The four days that remain after dividing the days of the year into groups of seven symbolize the four sacred luminaries which themselves are a symbol of the four *naqibs* of the Apostle of God, and (those) of the *hujjats* whose position is higher than the rank of others. God, praise be to Him, says (ix, 36): “Verily, the number of months with God is twelve months” — which refers to the *naqibs* and *hujjats*, — “on the day when He created the heavens and the earth,” — i.e. the day when He sent the *Nātiq* and appointed *Nātiqs* to the *Wasfs*. — “Of

¹ Thus not a *Wasf* is appointed to the *Nātiq*, and it is not the *Nātiq* who occupies the higher position, but the *Wasf*.

these four are sacred,” — i.e. the four *naqibs* whose rank is higher. — Then He says: “such is the firmly established religion. Do not let yourselves commit sins in these (months).” This means: such is the religion firmly established, which pleases Him, and which He raised for them (the humanity). Do not make yourselves open for sin by ignoring it, because whoever ignores the saints of God, and becomes attached to others, commits a sin.

The offices (*maqamat*) of Apostles, *Wasfs*, Imams, and *hujjats* are institutions introduced by God (*huddu’l-lah*), as also what is established in the way of God’s commandments (*farid*) and His practices (*sunan*). Whoever opposes the command of God concerning these, commits a sin.

The same applies to the position of the twenty eight luminaries, which are also divisible into groups of seven (*tasabti*), and in every seven, one, one of their number, is the higher *naqib* who is (like) the *Wasf* of the Apostle of God, receiving his knowledge while the other three do not. This is like the four corners of the Ka’ba, on four sides. One of them is open, and is touched (by the pilgrims) while three others are covered, and out of the four sides one is the *qibla*, in the direction of which the faithful pray. Its significance (*hadd*) is greater than that of other three sides, whether the East, or West, or North, or South¹.

In this sense God mentions in His Book the four winds, saying (li, 41): “We sent against them a destructive wind.” Or, in another place (xxx, 45): “And of His signs is that He sends forth the winds with glad tidings.” And yet in another place (vii, 55): “He it is who sends forth the winds as heralds before His mercy.” Thus there are four winds (mentioned here). The *‘aqim*, devastating, is like the *naqib*, who possesses the knowledge, but does not transfer it (to any one), and does not preach it (as it should) because He calls it (xv, 22) “fertilisers”². The

¹ As every one can realise, the direction of the *qibla* varies with the change of the geographical position of the country. In India it would be West, in Morocco-East, in Caucasus-South, etc.

² The *lawdigh* are those varieties of breeze which are favourable for fertilisation of the palm tree which, as is well-known,

fertilising breeze from which are not derived the zephyrs which bring glad tidings is like the *naqib* who (only) preaches the plain doctrine ('ilm) of the Apostle of God, bringing only that message which the Prophet has brought. God, praise be to Him, says to His Apostle (s'l'm) (xxxiii, 44): "Verily, We have sent thee as a witness and a herald of glad tidings, and a warner." It means that the Apostle of God preaches only the plain doctrine of the revelation (*ḡāhīrū't-tanzīl*).

The winds which He (vii, 55) "sends as heralds before His mercy" are like the chief *naqib*, who is the nearest to the Apostle of God, because "mercy" is a symbol of the Apostle of God. God says (xxi, 107): "We have only sent thee as a mercy to the worlds." Thus "mercy" means the Prophet. The winds of glad tidings are the *Wāṣī* who spreads what the Apostle of God intends for the faithful from the knowledge of *ta'wīl* after his death. While the Prophet is living, he, the *Wāṣī*, acts as his assistant, helping him in his mission. The proof that one of the four helps to spread the doctrine ('ilm) of the Apostle of God while the other three do not, are the words of God concerning these winds (li, 42): "the devastating wind that left naught on which it came without turning it into ashes." This indicates that this particular *naqib*, one of the three, kills in accordance with the plain punishment prescribed by the Apostle of God, but does not revive (anyone) by his esoteric knowledge ('ilmu'l-bāṭin). God says (xv, 22): "And We sent forth the fertilising winds, and made water descend from the sky, and we gave it to you to drink, nor is it ye who store it up." By "water" religious knowledge ('ilm) is meant. The sky means the Apostle of God. He does not(?) say "we made fertilising breezes blow," because other breezes cannot impregnate. This indicates that the knowledge ('ilm) descends to the faithful from the heaven not through the services of that particular *naqib*.

is either male or female. Obviously only a soft breeze can transfer the spores from the male tree to the female, and not strong winds.

and He says (xxx, 45): "And of His signs is this that He sends forth the winds with glad tidings to make you taste of His mercy, and to make the ship go at His bidding." From this it appears that that *naqib* preaches and teaches only the ordinary (*ḡāhīr*) doctrine ('ilm) of the Apostle of God. God says: "to make you taste of His mercy," not "to make you taste of these winds," which bring glad tidings. "Mercy" means the Apostle of God, and implies that His doctrine ('ilm) is not given through the hands of this *naqib*, one of the three. "The ship to go at His bidding" means that "the ship" is other than those three and is like the fourth *naqib* who goes at the bidding of the Apostle of God preaching the esoteric doctrine (*ḡad'ā bi-bāṭin 'ilmi-hi*).

God said (vii, 55): "He it is who sends forth the winds with glad tidings before His mercy," — to the end of the verse, — "happily you may remember." The meaning of such glad tidings is explained by (the picture of) the winds carrying heavy clouds, i.e. *dā'ir*. The "dead city" (mentioned in the verse) is that in which the inhabitants (exclusively) follow only the outer side of the religion ('ilmu'z-ḡāhīr). There is no (spiritual) life in it which would drive it (the city) to the Truth (*al-Haqq*). The words (vii, 55): "And We sent down thereon water" means the sending down of religious knowledge ('ilmu'd-dīn), symbolized by water. "And We brought forth with it every kind of fruit" refers to those believers who answer the *ḡad'wat* anywhere. The descendants of the Prophet (*ahl bayt*) in such a city are the "fruits" owing to their knowledge. "Thus do We bring forth the dead" means that the ignorant are in this way saved from the death of ignorance. "Perhaps you may remember" means that perhaps you may see the vegetation of the trees grown through the water in the *ḡāhīr*, and will through this remember the explanations of the *mu'min* based on the knowledge of religion ('ilmu'd-dīn). Their deliverance from ignorance is similar to the growth of the plants and fruits from the soil. The "glad tidings" are the *Wāṣī*, and it is he who sends

the *dā'is*, in whose hands is (spiritual) life, as God says (ii, 159): "in the clouds that are pressed into service betwixt heaven and earth." This refers to the Imam and *hujjat*, serving and obedient, well trained (*al-'ālim*), who calls (humanity to follow) the plain doctrine of the Imam (*'ilmu'l-Imām az-zāhir*) and the esoteric teaching of the *hujjat* (*'ilmu'l-hujjat al-bātin*). The fall of the shower from the cloud symbolizes the (reception of the) knowledge (*'ilm*) which is heard from the *dā'is*. (From the showers plants begin to grow, just as the *mu'min* (spiritually) grows by religious education (*'ilmu'd-dīn*)...¹

... God says (xiii, 13): "He it is who shows you the lightning for fear and hope; and He brings up the heavy clouds... (and so forth, to the words)...only in error." The words "shows you the lightning" mean the seeking after the Truth, sent to the followers of the plain religious doctrine (*ahlu'z-zāhir*) which leads them out from the punishment for ignorance. The words "brings up heavy clouds" refer to the *dā'is* who bring stores of knowledge (*kunūzu'l-'ilm*). "The thunder praises," i.e. searching after the Truth, "and the angels too for fear of Him," means that by "angels" the *hujjats* are referred to. They are called angels, *mald'ika*, for what the Imams made them possess (*m-l-k*)² of the knowledge of religion (*'ilmu'd-dīn*), righteousness (*al-hidāya*).

And (about) flashes of lightning: God says (vii, 139): "and Moses fell down in a swoon," i.e. obedient, speechless, unable to answer.

The meaning of (xiii, 15) "as one who stretches out his hand to the water that it may reach his mouth, but it reaches it not" is that one (stretches out his hands) to the learned of his community, asking them for the esoteric meaning which constitutes the living force of religion (*al-*

ḥayāt wa huca'l-ḥayāt) but they are helpless to give it, and the seeker remains far from his goal.¹

The words of God (xxx, 47-49): "sends forth winds to stir up clouds; then He spreads them forth over the sky as He pleases... (till the words)... He is mighty over all." The beginning of the phrase refers to the esoteric meaning of the teaching of the Apostle of God (*'ilmir-Rasūl*). God spreads it "as He likes." "He scatters them" (i.e. clouds) means that He appoints the *dā'is*, *bābs* and *hujjats*, sending them to various places. "Pieces," *kisaf*, of clouds, symbolize sects and parties (*al-firaq wa'l-qifa*). "And you see the rain come forth amongst them" means that the knowledge of *ta'wil* comes from the *dā'is* and *bābs*, and is heard from them (by the people). They discuss it all, and it becomes the lot of (all of) them.

"And when (verse 48) He causes it to fall upon whom He pleases of His slaves, behold they hail it with joy... (to the words)... confused." This last word means perplexed (and refers to) those who do not know the true teaching (*'ilmu'l-ḥaqq*) or the path to salvation. (xxx, 49): "Look then at the vestiges of God's mercy." These symbolize Muhammad and the one who will come after him (i.e. Mahdī). The word *athar* is written with the help of three letters. "It (=rain) quickens the earth after its death" (again three letters). This means that He appoints the *hujjats* with *dā'is*, after a period during which they were not active, thus reviving with their help those who respond (to the preaching) after their having been dead in ignorance. "Verily, that is the quickener of the dead," bringing people back from the death in ignorance to the life in knowledge, as it is mentioned in the Coran that "mercy" means the Prophet. He, — exalted be His name, — says (xxi, 107): "We have not sent thee except as a mercy to the worlds"....²

¹ In the text *wa huca ba'id min-hum*, obviously an error for *min-hu*, i.e. from the knowledge that is sought.

² Here there is again a lacuna in the text. It seems that the author returns to the matters discussed at the end of p. 71 and beg. p. 73, where he discusses the verse XXX, 45. It may

¹ Here follows a passage apparently so hopelessly disfigured by accumulated errors in the course of repeated transcription that it presents no connected sense.

² Here the play of words refers to the root *m-l-k*, to possess from which the word *mald'ika*, angels, is derived.

...The "ship" (*fulk*) (xxx, 45)¹ symbolizes the *naqib*, and also the preaching of the esoteric doctrine (*da'watul-bāṭin*), i.e. the *Waṣī*; and (further in the verse 45) *faḍl*, "grace" again symbolizes the *Waṣī*, while *ni'mat*, benefaction, refers to the Apostle of God. Such are their allegorical names in the esoteric teaching, *bāṭin*, wherever they are found in the Book of God, just as in what God said to His Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣ'l'm*) (xciii, 11): "and for the sake of the benefaction of Thy Lord tell it" ... i.e. for the sake of the *Nāṭiq*, the Apostle of God, who is coming after thee from amongst thy descendants. And He said (dxxix, 20): "and others who beat about in the earth craving the benefaction (*faḍl*) of God," i.e. those who are craving the teaching of the *hujjats* from the wisdom of the *Waṣī* (*'ilma'l-hujaj min 'ilmi'l-Waṣī*) in *ta'wil*. The expression, *faḍlu'l-lāh*, the benefaction of God, consists of seven letters, just as the words *Rasūl* and *Waṣī* (together).

Concerning the words (of God) (iii, 163): "And do not count those who are killed in the way of God as dead, but living with their Lord, provided for... (till the words)... those left behind them." The words "do not count those" (refers to those) who were overpowered by the traitors and atheists, defeated (while fighting) for the cause of God, i.e. the *Waṣī*. ("Do not regard them) as dead, but living"... i.e. living by the knowledge of the right way (*'ilmu'l-hudā*) (which is in the possession) of their *Wali*, i.e. protector. "They are provided for" means that they hear the wisdom (*hikma*). "Rejoicing in what God has given them of His benefaction (*faḍl*)," i.e. with what has reached them of the benefaction of the Apostle of God.

The words of God (ii, 257): "The right way has been distinguished from the wrong, and whoso disbelieves in Taghūt and believes in God, he has got hold of the rope of salvation (*'urwatu'l-uthqā*)." The Apostle of God is *ṣaḥāb*, justice, and the *Waṣī* is *rushd*, uprightness:

also be due to the confusion in the order of the leaf on which the fragments were written.

¹ In B here stands *al-faḍl*, instead of *al-fulk*, which may be some one's emendation.

These words consist of seven letters. ("There is no disapproval of faith")¹ means that God does not dislike anyone who believes. ("The right way) has been distinguished (from the wrong"), i.e. God explained to His Apostle the position (*maqām*) of 'Alī, i.e. the *Waṣī*, i.e. *rushd*, uprightness. The following of him is uprightness (distinguished) from what is opposite to it. By this He means an offender, trespasser. Such offender *Tāghūt* is when he criminally disobeys the *Waṣī*. Such is disobedience (*tughyān*) as opposed to being faithful (*imān*), i.e. being the one who rejects the rebel and remains loyal to...² "he has hold of the rope of salvation (which is) in the *Waṣī*-ship in it (?)."³ after the Prophet-hood, and in the *Imāmat* after the *Waṣī*-ship.

The words of God (lxxxix, 5-11): "Hast thou not seen how thy Lord acted with 'Ād? With Iram of the supports?...⁴ (till the words)... did multiply wickedness therein." The words "with 'Ād" mean the first...⁵ and the 'Ād literally means the rebel, i.e. the offender who transgressed the limits within which he should remain. The expression *dhātu'l-imād*, "possessing supports," refers to 'Alī, — peace be upon him! As to Iram, — *rdm*, "repairer" is the Truth, and also the Apostle of God (*ṣ'l'm*). and following him. "Possessing the support" is *ta'wil* because it is the support of religion and the aim of the seekers

¹ The original part of this verse, *lā ikrāh fi'd-dīn*, is here omitted, but the author obviously refers to it. Usually this sentence is translated: "there is no compulsion in religious matters", which is inaccurate. What is apparently implied, is that "(God) will not dislike one's faith", obviously so long as it is sincere, even if erring.

² Here is a lacuna in the text.

³ It is difficult to see to what *fi-hi* refers. Perhaps it should be *fi'd-dīn*?

⁴ Iram, as is well-known, is supposed to be a locality in Southern Arabia, although it is also identified with Damascus, or Alexandria, etc. The "supports" are also translated as "pillars, columns", etc. Cf. the note by A.J. Wensinck in E.J., II, 519-520.

⁵ A short lacuna.

(after Truth). This is why God, praise be to Him, says (xiii, 2): "(He) who raised the heavens without supports that you can see," i.e. without the advantage of the knowledge of *ta'wil* that you can see, and which only His Apostle and his *Wasi* could see, and which the Prophet transferred to the latter by the order of God.

Then He says (xiii, 6-7): "Iram with supports such as have never been created in the lands." It is a country, and symbolizes the *hujjats*. Nobody was ever created amongst the *hujjats* similar to 'Ali, — peace be upon him! God refers to Iram in feminine gender because nouns denoting countries or lands are of feminine gender. The land, however, is the earth, which is a symbol of the *Wasi* and *hujjat* if they are connected with the Apostle of God and the Imam, as has been explained above. Thus "Iram with supports the like of which has not been created," is 'Ali, the possessor of *ta'wil*. "And Thamūd who hewed stones in the valley" (lxxxix, 8) refers to the second...¹ "Hewed stones" means prevented the *hujjats* from carrying on the preaching of the inner truth of the religion (*da'wat-i-haqq al-bātin*) whom 'Ali, — peace be upon him, — appointed for this purpose. This is because *jawb* in Arabic means cutting, and stones in the esoteric doctrine signify the *hujjats*, because stones come from the hills, and hills mean *hujjats*. This is clear from what He says in the story of Moses (xviii, 62): "Hast thou seen when We resorted to the rock," i.e. one of His *hujjats*. The word (lxxxix, 8) ("hewed stones") in the valley" refer to the Imam, because he is symbolized by the valley, or watercourse (*uádi*), because from him flows esoteric knowledge (*'ilmu'l-bātin*) just as water flows in the watercourse. Hence it refers to 'Ali because he was the Imam after Muḥammad during the period of darkness. Thus it means that they interfered with the work of the *hujjats*, the *hujjats* of the Imam, preventing them from carrying out their preaching, oppressing and obstructing them. This is the meaning of the verse "hewed stones in the valley"

¹ A short lacuna.

(lxxxix, 8). And He says (lxxxix, 9): "and Pharaoh of the stakes," which refers to the third...¹ stakes of unbelievers are the accursed tree mentioned in the Coran (xvii, 63). Then He says (lxxxix, 10-11): "who were outrageous in the land and did multiply wickedness therein." (This means that) they rose in rebellion against 'Ali, — peace be upon him! It is to him that the word *al-bilād* refers in *ta'wil*. "And they multiplied crimes" means that they committed many crimes, altering (the idea of) his mission, rejecting what referred to it in the teaching of *ta'wil*...²

... And the testimony to the fact that the expression *uádi*, watercourse, really is one of the symbols of 'Ali, are the words of God, — praise be to Him (xiii, 18): "He sends from the sky water, and the watercourses flow according to their bulk, and the torrent bears the floating scum... (till the words)... thus does God strike out paraboles." The words "sent down from the heavens" means "sent down from the Prophet in order that he ('Ali) could convey in his preaching the esoteric doctrine (*'ilmu'l-bātin*), as is said elsewhere (xix, 97): "We have only made it easy for thy tongue" (that thou mayest thereby give glad tidings to the pious). The expression (xiii, 18) "and the watercourses flow" refers to the Imams preaching the esoteric doctrine (*'a'immat-i'l-bātin*), who stand by the orders of the Apostle of God, the first of whom is his *Wasi*. Every one of these Imams preaches esoteric doctrine (*'ilmu'l-bātin*), in so far as it reaches him, just as sweet water flows in the watercourse according to its capacity. This water forms the inside of the earth (*buṭūnu'l-ard*).

Similarly, the Imams preaching the *bātin* (*al-'a'immat alay-him as-salām al-bātin*) have in their breasts proofs (*fi yudūri-him al-hujaj*). Just as water flows in the watercourse and does not spread over the surface of the earth, so the Imam's mastery over the esoteric doctrine is obvious,

¹ A short lacuna.

² Another lacuna. All this obviously refers to some heretics who opposed the authority of 'Ali.

plain, not hidden. Outstanding and apparent are regarded as noble, hence (xiii, 18) it is said, "swelling" (about the volume of water flowing in the watercourse). The expression (in the same verse) "and from what they set fire to" means: from what they repeatedly discussed, talking nonsense, and trying to find in the *zahir*, or plain injunctions of religion, (proofs of) the sanctity (*ta'at*) of the Imam. This is because God says (in the same verse) "thus does God strike out parables" in the Coran, because the Apostle of God preaches the Divine revelation and plain doctrine, while about him (i.e. the Imam, and his position) there are only *ta'at* principles in esoteric doctrine. The *tanzil*, plain religious doctrine, is openly communicated by the Prophet to every one who follows him but the *ta'at* is communicated by him to his *Wasi* in secret. He, the Prophet, therefore, by the order of God, indicates (it) to the *Wasi*, so that the latter might hear the *ta'at* from him. Whoever adheres only to the plain revealed religion, disregarding the *ta'at*, will not live (spiritually). The revealed doctrine (*tanzil*) is plain shown to every one, there is nothing to hide in it. The word of God "*Qur'an*" is explained in *ta'at* as "connected" (*maqrin*) with Muhammad, the preacher of the plain revelation (*tanzil*), and 'Ali, the teacher of *ta'at*, allegorical interpretation. Both of them are connected in this, the Apostle of God and the *Wasi*, in regard to their authority and importance (*qudratan wa 'izzatan*). This is why everywhere in the Coran the words "authority" and "importance" are used, they refer to the Apostle of God and the *Wasi*, — peace be upon them!

Know, my God have mercy on thee, that God, — exalted be His name, — made a key to knowledge, and this is His covenant, and the oath of loyalty¹ He made it the greatest means (to achieve) it, and repeatedly mentioned this in His Book and treasures of His religion and

¹ This obviously refers to '*ahd*, the oath of allegiance (and secrecy) which is discussed at length in the KAG, giving *ta'at* aspect of the practice.

philosophy (*hikmat*). With the help of this He accepts the merits of those who obey Him. He made such a covenant with Adam, — peace be upon him, — and said (xx, 114): "We did make a covenant with Adam of yore, but he forgot it." And He said to Muhammad (xxxiii, 7): "and when We took of the prophets their oath" (to the end of the verse). This was (a sign of) generosity to them, because of the great honour and importance which such covenant implies. God said (ii, 118): "My covenant touches not the evildoers." And He made faithfulness to it obligatory. He says (xvi, 93): "be faithful to the covenant of God when ye have covenanted" (to the end of the verse). And He again says (xlviii, 10): "Verily, those who swear the oath of loyalty to thee do but swear allegiance to God. God's hand is above their hands" (to the end of the verse). By this He explained that whoever swears allegiance to His Apostle, he swears it to God Himself, and who does this, God enters a covenant with him, and the honour of the covenant is due to its being a connection with Him. He promised a great reward for faithfulness in observing it. He says (xiii, 20): "Those who fulfil God's covenant and break not the oath... (to the words) ... these shall have the recompense of the abode, gardens of Eden, etc." He praised the covenant, and attached a great reward to those who remain faithful to it, and also a painful punishment to those who fail. He said (xii, 25): "Those who break God's covenant after entering it... (to the words)... and for them is an evil abode." And also (vii, 100): "Nor did We find in most of them (faithfulness to) the covenant" (to the end of the verse). And He says...¹ (xv, i, 48): "(And they prostrated themselves) except for Iblis, who was one of the Jinns, who disobeyed the command of his Lord." God thus made those who do not observe the covenant similar to Iblis with whom God became angry and cursed him.

God said (viii, 57): "Verily, the worst of beasts in

¹ Again a short lacuna, apparently only the words "and they prostrated..." are omitted.

God's eyes are those who do not believe" (to the end of the verse). And He said (ix, 7): "How can there be for idolaters a treaty with God and His Apostle?" — on account of the great honour which the covenant implies.

And He said in the story of Lot (xxix, 27): "Lot's words to his people: Verily, ye approach an abomination which no one in all the world ever anticipated in you. What, do ye approach men?" "Men" means *dā'īs*. In other words, you take upon yourselves to oppose the *dā'īs*, preventing them from carrying on their *da'wat*. ("And stop people on the highway").¹ This is highway robbery. And the "highway" symbolizes the preaching of the Truth (*ad-da'wat ilā'l-haqq*). "And (verse 28) you approach in your assembly sin," i.e. sin against your Imam, whose authority you flout by preventing the *dā'īs*, who call people to (follow) him, from carrying on their preaching (*da'wat*), (which is) the path of the faithful, by which they attain to his (Imam's) religion and his sanctity. They (the *mu'mins*) thus become turned away from swearing allegiance to the *dā'īs* with which task the Imam entrusted them.

God says about the faithful (*mu'minin*) who have assumed to themselves the duties of the pilgrim (*haddu'l-muḥrim*)² (xxiv, 41): "Every soul is pledged for what it earns, except for those who are associated with the right." This means that every *dā'ī* is responsible for what he preaches, and those whom he leads, but not the faithful who follow him (*aṣḥāb'u'd-dā'ī*).³ God says (xxiv, 42): "In Paradise they shall ask about sinners," i.e. about those who sinned by preventing the truth (to reach others) and not believing in it. The *mu'mins* who faithfully fol-

lowed the *dā'ī* will ask the liars (xxiv, 43): "What drove you into hell-fire?" i.e. brought you into the fire of punishment. And the liars will reply (verse 44): "we were not of those who offered prayers," i.e. we did not preach the truth. "Prayer" in the esoteric doctrine means *da'wat*. The righteous (*aṣḥāb'u'l-yamin*), i.e. the *mu'mins* who faithfully followed the *dā'ī*, will reply: "we (also) were not from amongst the *dā'īs*, and yet we are in Paradise." The sinners will say (verse 45): "we did not feed (the poor)," i.e. we did not explain or relate (tradition) to the faithful concerning the wisdom (*ḥikmat*). The followers of the *dā'ī*, i.e. the faithful, will say: "and we also did not explain or relate the tradition." The liars will say (xxiv, 46): "but we did plunge into discussion with those who plunged," i.e. we engaged ourselves in arguing and futile talk. And the faithful will reply: "we also talked with those who discussed religion and tradition." The liars will then say (xxiv, 47-48): "we denied the Judgment Day as a lie until we saw for ourselves that it was true." This means "we denied the belief (in the advent of) al-Mahdi, the Seventh of the *Nūṭiqs*. And the faithful will reply: "but we did not regard the belief in al-Mahdi as false, but attached ourselves to him. We observed the covenant, we were his supporters. By this we earned Paradise, while you, by your actions, earned punishment in fire, for the reason that you treated as liars the righteous ones, the followers of the *dā'īs*. The *mu'min* is therefore like the pilgrim (*muḥrim*) who dons the *ihram*, who has attained manhood.

Such is the *ta'wil* and *tafsir* i.e. allegorical and literal explanation (of this verse), in the ordinary and esoteric senses.

(Here) end the words of Maṣṣūm I-Yaman, may God beautify his countenance !

¹ Although the author quotes the original verses, he omits this one, but further on refers to it.

² Cf. above, p. 45. It appears that *muḥrim* may be an early equivalent of the later *mustajib*, i.e. an initiated member of the community. Cf. S. Guyard, *op. cit.*, 278.

³ Apparently the idea is that so long as the new convert sincerely follows the teaching of the *dā'ī*, he is right, the responsibility for his beliefs being true resting with the teacher.

IV.

THE BOOK OF THE TEACHER AND THE PUPIL

The *Kitābu'l-ʿĀlim wa'l-Ghulām* is a comparatively small work which in print would not comprise more than about a hundred pages of ordinary size. The name of its author has not been preserved, and tradition which makes it the work of Maṣṣūʾi'l-Yaman, i.e. the eminent early *dāʿī* of Ismailism in Southern Arabia, Abū-Qāsim al-Husayn b. al-Farāh Ibn Ḥawshab al-Kūfi, seems to be quite unreliable. As is known, Ibn Ḥawshab was in 266/879 sent to Aden where his mission was ultimately crowned with great success. There is, however, no doubt that the archaic tone of the work and its ideas, combined with some indications which may be derived from inner evidence, show that it belongs to a very early period in the development of the Ismaili doctrine, probably really preceding the foundation of the Fatimid state in Northern Africa, in 297/909. For this reason it is impossible to accept another version of tradition which connects it with the descendant of Ibn Ḥawshab, probably a grandson, Jaʿfar b. Maṣṣūʾi'l-Yaman, the famous mystic writer of the early Fatimid period, who died soon after 380/990 which is the date of the composition of his *Asrār-u'n-Nuṭaqāʾ* (cf. *Guide*, p. 36, and the "Rise of the Fatimids," p. 18). This theory would have been difficult to accept both from the point of view of great difference in style, and the archaism of ideas.

An indirect proof of an early origin of the book may also be sought both in its dialogical form and even in the title. In Shi'ite literature of the end of the second/eighth and the third/ninth centuries we find many religious treatises with similar titles which later on completely disappear. Hi-shām b. al-Hakam, the well-known Shi'ite philosopher who died in 199/815, had amongst his works a *Kitābu'sh-Shaykh wa'l-Ghulām* (Najāshi, 304); 'Ayyāshi, an eminent Shi'ite scholar of Samarkand of the same period,

had a *Kitābu'l-ʿĀlim wa'l-Muta'allim* (Najāshi, 247). We find also titles like *Risāla fī'l-Qāḍi wa'l-hakam* (Naj. 51), or *Risālat ar-Rāhib wa'r-Rāhiba* (Naj. 97, 120), and many more.

The most important indication, however, is the indubitable proximity of the style, ideas, and terminology of this treatise with the early work, discussed on the preceding pages, the *Kitābu'r-Rushd wa'l-Hidāyat*. Such proximity is so evident, despite the difference in the type of both works, that it would be easy to think that these come from one and the same school, if not from the pen of one and the same author.¹

The work is an instructive story, most probably quite imaginary, of the conversion of a young man to Ismailism, and his early steps in his career as a *dā'i*. This form is obviously chosen for explaining various elementary ideas of Ismailism in an attractive and popular way, probably within the limits allowed to beginners. The narrative is in the form of a dialogue frequently interrupted by the author's own remarks, by what may be intended as his psychological "running commentary." Extreme caution and circumspection in expression is observed all through the work, making it so different from the usual style of works written under the Fatimids. The author purposely remains vague and evasive in everything that might be used for the arraignment of the community in case the book fall into the hands of persecutors. He is patently anxious always to leave a way out. All this obviously deprives the

¹ We know that certain eminent Ismailis were later on struck off the list owing to various dissensions and conflicts with the "orthodox" party, such as Hamdān Qarmat, 'Abdān, and many others. It is quite possible that at least some of them were the authors of certain works which were composed by them before they deviated from orthodoxy. Perhaps in such works by anonymous authors we really have some of the works of those erring and therefore forgotten worthies, which at a later period were attributed to the authorship of the earliest celebrity in the historical period of Ismailism, namely the Hawshab.

book of much of its value as a source of information. Nevertheless, we cannot afford to overlook and neglect it. In view of the complete absence of genuine sources concerning the pre-Fatimid phase of Ismailism every scrap is precious, and a book such as this deserves careful study. Moreover, it seems to be of particular value on a question which has been the subject of much deliberate perversion of facts in general literature, namely the procedure of conversion.

A complete edition of the text and its translation would be scarcely worth time, labour and expense which these would entail. The reason is the remarkably diffuse style of the author. This is probably not so much a part of his determination to be evasive in his statements as rather unsuccessful efforts to beautify his style, by following some models while not having much experience in clearly expressing his ideas. This makes the reading of his book extremely boring and tiresome. He revels in excessive and quite superfluous circumlocution and polite phrases. For instance, instead of using what is in modern practice a full stop, he very often introduces what may be called a transition passage: "and when he finished this his speech, and explained his ideas and their meaning, so that they became clear and intelligible, he then proceeded further on to say..." In such a flood of words sense is not infrequently drowned.

There is something Byzantine in the author's love for etiquette and punctiliousness in various polite formulas, so surprising in an early Arabic book produced at the time when Arab patriarchy was not yet entirely a matter of the past. He displays amazing sentimentality. The faces of his heroes pale with emotion, their eyes are constantly filled with tears, almost on every page, and they seem to be unable to restrain themselves in the matter of compliments, confession of love, respect and affection. The author's excessive sense of politeness at least doubles the size of his book.

For this reason it seems to be quite sufficient to offer here a synopsis of the work, for the indication of its main