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The Ismaili Daʿwa outside the Fatimid Dawla
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Abstract

This article examines the history, structure and successes of the *daʿwa* system prior to and during the establishment of the Fatimid Caliphate. Early Ismaili *daʿwa* took advantage of the fact that there were many discontented factions among the Abbasid populace. Acquiring the allegiance of these groups facilitated the eventual establishment of the Fatimid Caliphate.

During the reign of the Fatimids, the *daʿwa* structure continued to be refined and expanded. Within the Fatimid state, the *daʿwa* enjoyed unbridled freedom to propagate the faith and expound upon ideological developments. However, the Fatimid's policies of tolerance and freedom of religion prevented Ismailism from ever rooting deeply into the North African population. It remained the faith of a minority for the duration of the Fatimid reign.

Ironically, outside the Fatimid *dawla*, the *daʿwa* was more successful in establishing significant Ismaili communities across Asia and into the Subcontinent. It is this stability, achieved outside Fatimid territory, which allowed Ismailism's survival and continuation after the decline of the Fatimid dynasty.

Keywords:

dāʿī, *daʿwa*, Fatimid, imāmate, Ismailis, Shia, Abbāsids, Mustali, Nizārī, Hafizi, Ṭayyibī, al-Kirmānī, al-Sijistānī, al-Nuʿmān, Al-Shirazi, Ḥasan Ṣabbāh, Nāṣir Khusraw

Background

The Ismailis separated from the rest of the Imāmi Shīʿīs on the death of the Imām Jaʿfar al--Ṣādiq in 148/765. By the middle of the 3rd/9th century, the Ismailis had organized a secret, religio-political movement designated as *al-daʿwa* (the mission) or, more precisely, *al-daʿwa al-hādiya* (the rightly guiding mission). The over-all aim of this dynamic and centrally-directed movement of social protest was to uproot the ʿAbbāsids and install the ʿAlīd imām acknowledged by the Ismailis to the actual rule of the Islamic community (*umma*). The revolutionary message of the Ismaili *daʿwa* was systematically propagated by a network of *dāʿīs* or religio-political missionaries in different parts of the Muslim world, from Transoxania to Yaman and North Africa.

Aim of the *Daʿwa* System

The Ismaili *dāʿīs* summoned the Muslims everywhere to accord their allegiance to the Ismaili imām-Mahdī, who was expected to deliver the believers from the oppressive rule of the ʿAbbāsids and establish justice and a more equitable social order in the world. Thus, the

Ismaili *da'wa* also promised to restore the leadership of the Muslims to ʿAlīds, members of the *ahl al-bayt* or the Prophet Muḥammad's family, whose legitimate rights to leadership had been successively usurped by the Umayyads and the ʿAbbāsids.[1] The Ismaili *dā'īs* won an increasing number of converts among a multitude of discontented groups of diverse social backgrounds. Among such groups mention may be made of the landless peasantry and Bedouin tribesmen whose interests were set apart from those of the prospering urban classes. The *dā'īs* also capitalized on regional grievances. On the basis of a well-designed *da'wa* strategy, the *dā'īs* were initially more successful in nonurban milieus, removed from the administrative centres of the ʿAbbasid caliphate. This explains the early spread of Ismailism among rural inhabitants and Bedouin tribesmen of the Arab lands, notably in southern Iraq, eastern Arabia (Bahrayn) and Yaman. In contrast, in the Iranian lands, especially in the Jibāl, Khurāsān and Transoxania, the *da'wa* was primarily addressed to the ruling classes and the educated elite.

Ismaili Doctrine

The early Ismaili *da'wa* achieved particular success among those Imāmi Shīʿīs of Iraq, Persia and elsewhere, later designated as *Ithna'ashariyya* (Twelvers), who had been left in a state of disarray and confusion following the death of their eleventh imām and the simultaneous disappearance of his infant son Muḥammad in 260/874. These Imāmis shared the same early theological heritage with the Ismailis, especially the Imāmi doctrine of the imāmate. This doctrine, which provided the central teaching of the Twelver and Ismaili Shīʿīs, was based on the belief in the permanent need of mankind for a divinely guided, sinless and infallible (*ma'sūm*) imām who, after the Prophet Muḥammad, would act as the authoritative teacher and guide of men in all their spiritual affairs. This imām was entitled to temporal leadership as much as to religious authority; his mandate, however, did not depend on his actual rule. The doctrine further taught that the Prophet himself had designated his cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), who was married to the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, as his successor under divine command; and that the imāmate was to be transmitted from father to son among the descendants of ʿAlī and Fāṭima, through their son al-Ḥusayn (d. 61/680) until the end of time. This ʿAlid imām was in possession of a special knowledge or `ilm*, and had perfect understanding of the exoteric *(zāhir)* and esoteric *(bātin)* meanings of the Qur'ān and the commandments and prohibitions of the *sharī'a* or the sacred law of Islam. Recognition of this imām, the sole legitimate imām at any time, and obedience to him were made the absolute duties of every believer.[2]

By 286/899, when the Ismailis themselves split into the loyal Fatimid Ismaili and the dissident Qarmatī factions, significant Ismaili communities had appeared in numerous regions of the Arab world and throughout the Iranian lands, as well as in North Africa where the Kutāma and other Berber tribal confederations had responded to the summons of the Ismaili *da'wa*. The dissident Qarmatīs did not acknowledge the imāmate of `Abd Allāh al-Mahdī (the future founder of the Fatimid caliphate) and his predecessors, the central leaders of early Ismailism, as well as his successors in the Fatimid dynasty. In the same eventful year 286/899, the Qarmatīs founded a powerful state of their own in Bahrayn, which survived in rivalry with the Fatimid state until 470/1077.[3]

Establishment of an Ismaili State

The success of the early Ismaili *da'wa* was crowned in 297/909 by the establishment of the Fatimid state or *dawla* in North Africa, in Ifrīqiya (today's Tunisia and eastern Algeria). The foundation of this Fatimid Ismaili Shīʿī caliphate represented not only a great success for the Ismāʿīliyya, who now possessed for the first time a state under the leadership of their imām, but for the entire Shīʿa. Not since the time of ʿAlī, had the Shīʿa witnessed the succession of an ʿAlid to the actual leadership of an important Islamic state. By acquiring political power, and then transforming the nascent Fatimid *dawla* into a flourishing empire, the Ismaili imām presented his Shīʿī challenge to `Abbāsid hegemony and Sunnī interpretations of Islam. Ismailism, too, had now found its own place among the state-sponsored communities of interpretation in Islam. Henceforth, the Fatimid caliph- imām could claim to act as the spiritual spokesman of Shīʿī Islam in general, much like the `Abbāsid caliph was the mouthpiece of Sunni Islam.

Inauguration of the Fatimid Caliphate

On 20 Rabīʿ II 297/4 January 910, the Ismaili Imām `Abd Allāh al-Mahdī made his triumphant entry into Raqqāda, the Aghlabid capital in Ifrīqiya, where he was acclaimed as caliph by the Kutāma Berbers and the notables of the uprooted Aghlabid state. On the following day, the *khuṭba* was pronounced for the first time in all the mosques of Qayrawān in the name of `Abd Allāh al-Mahdī. At the same time, a manifesto was read from the pulpits announcing that leadership had finally come to be vested in the *ahl al-bayt.* As one of the first acts of the new regime, the jurists of Ifrīqiya were instructed to give their legal opinions in accordance with the Shīʿī principles of jurisprudence. The new caliphate and dynasty came to be known as Fatimid (Fāṭimiyya), derived from the name of the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, to whom al-Mahdī and his successors traced their ancestry.

Laying Ideological Foundations

The ground for the establishment of the Fatimid caliphate in Ifrīqiya had been carefully prepared since 280/893 by the *dāʿī* Abū `Abd Allāh al-Shīʿī, who had been active among the Kutāma Berbers of the Lesser Kabylia. It was from his base in the Maghrib that the *dāʿī* al-Shi`i converted the bulk of the Kutāma Berbers; and with the help of his Kutama armies he eventually seized all of Ifrīqiya. It is to be noted, however, that Shi`ism had never taken deep roots in North Africa, where the native Berbers generally adhered to diverse schools of Khārijism while Qayrawān, founded as a garrison town and inhabited by Arab warriors, remained the stronghold of Māliki Sunnism. Under such circumstances, the newly converted Berbers' understanding of Ismailism, which at the time still lacked a distinctive school of law *(madhhab),* was rather superficial - a phenomenon that remained essentially unchanged in subsequent decades. The *dāʿī* al-Shīʿī personally taught the Kutāma initiates Ismaili tenets in regular lectures. These lectures were known as the "sessions of wisdom" *(majālis al-ḥikma),* as esoteric Ismaili doctrine was referred to as "wisdom" or *ḥikma.* Abu `Abd Allāh al-Shīʿī instructed his subordinate *dāʿīs* to hold similar sessions in the areas under their jurisdiction.[4] Later, the *dāʿī* al-Shīʿī's brother Abu'l-`Abbas, another learned *dāʿī* of high intellectual calibre, held public disputations with the leading Māliki jurists of Qayrawān, expounding the Shīʿī foundations of the new regime and the legitimate rights of the *ahl al-bayt* to the leadership of the Islamic community. The ground was thus rapidly laid also doctrinally for the establishment of the new Shīʿī caliphate.

Consolidating Authority

The Fatimid caliph-imām al-Mahdī (d. 322/934) and his next three successors, ruling from Ifrīqiya, encountered numerous difficulties while consolidating the pillars of their state. In addition to the continued animosity of the `Abbāsids, and the Umayyads of Spain, who as rival claimants to the caliphate entertained their own designs for North Africa, the early Fatimids had numerous military entanglements with the Byzantines. They also devoted much of their energy to subduing the rebellions of the Khārijī Berbers, especially those belonging to the Zanāta confederation, and the hostilities of the Sunnī inhabitants of the cities of Ifrīqiya led by their influential Māliki jurists. All this made it extremely difficult for the early Fatimids to secure control over any region of the Maghrib, beyond the heartland of Ifrīqiya, for any extended period. It also made the propagation of the Ismaili *da`wa* rather impractical in the Maghrib. In fact, `Abd Allāh al-Mahdī and his immediate successors did not actively engage in the extension of their *da`wa* in order to avoid hostile reactions of the majoritarian Khārijī and Sunnī inhabitants of North Africa. Nevertheless, the Ismailis were now for the first time permitted to practise their faith openly and without fearing persecution within Fatimid dominions, while outside the boundaries of their state they were obliged, as before, to observe *taqiyya* or precautionary dissimulation of their true beliefs.

Continuation of the *Da`wa* and Codification of Ismaili Law

In line with their universal claims the Fatimid caliph-imāms had, however, not abandoned their *da`wa* aspirations on assuming power. Claiming to possess sole legitimate religious authority, the Fatimids aimed to extend their authority and rule over the entire Muslim *umma* and even the regions of the world inhabited by non-Muslims. As a result, they retained the network of *dā`īs* operating on their behalf both within and outside Fatimid dominions, although initially they effectively refrained from *da`wa* activities within the Fatimid state. It took the Fatimids several decades to formally establish their rule in North Africa. Only the fourth Fatimid caliph-imām, al-Mu`izz (341-365/953-975), was able to pursue successfully policies of war and diplomacy, also concerning himself specifically with the affairs of the Ismaili *da`wa*. His overall aim was to extend the universal authority of the Fatimids at the expense of their major rivals, namely, the Umayyads of Spain, the Byzantines and above all, the `Abbāsids. The process of codifying Ismaili law, too, attained its climax under al-Mu`izz mainly through the efforts of al-Qādi al-Nu`mān (d. 363/974), the foremost Fatimid jurist. Al-Mu`izz officially commissioned al-Nu`mān, who headed the Fatimid judiciary from 337/948 in the reign of the third Fatimid caliph-imām al-Manṣūr, to promulgate an Ismaili *madhhab*. His efforts culminated in the compilation of the *Da`ā'im al-Islam (The Pillars of Islam),* which was endorsed by al-Mu`izz as the official code of the Fatimid *dawla*. The Ismailis, too, now possessed a system of law and jurisprudence as well as an Ismaili paradigm of governance.

Key Tenets of Ismaili Law

As developed by al-Nu`mān, Ismaili law accorded special importance to the central Shī`ī doctrine of the imāmate. In fact, the opening chapter in the *Da`ā'im al-Islam,* which relates to <u>walāya</u>, explains the necessity of acknowledging the rightful imām of the time, viz., the Fatimid caliph-imām, also providing Islamic legitimation for the `Alīd state ruled by the

Fatimids belonging to the Prophet's family. In fact, the authority of the infallible Fatimid ʿAlīd imām and his teachings were listed as the third principal source of Ismaili law, after the Qur'ān and the *sunna* of the Prophet which are accepted as the first two sources by all Muslims. In sum, it was al-Qādi al-Nuʿmān who elaborated in his legal compendia a doctrinal basis for the Fatimids' legitimacy as ruling caliph-imāms, also lending support to their universal claims.[5]

Religious Propoganda Within and Against the Fatimid *Dawla*

Al-Muʿizz, as noted, was the first member of his dynasty to have concerned himself with the Ismaili *daʿwa* outside Fatimid dominions. In addition to preparing the ideological ground for Fatimid rule, his *daʿwa* strategy was based on a number of more specific religio-political considerations. The propaganda of the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrayn, Iraq, Persia and elsewhere, who had continuously refused to recognize the imāmate of the Fatimids, generally undermined the Ismaili *daʿwa* and the activities of the Fatimid *dāʿīs* in the same regions. It was, indeed, mainly due to the doctrines and practices of the Qarmaṭīs that the entire Ismaili movement was accused by the Sunni polemicists and heresiographers of *ilḥād* or deviation in religion, as these hostile sources did not distinguish between the dissident Qarmaṭīs and those Ismailis who acknowledged the Fatimid caliphs as their imāms. The anti-Ismaili literary campaign of the Sunni establishment, dating mainly to the foundation of Fatimid rule, was particularly intensified in the aftermath of the Qarmaṭīs' sack of Mecca in 317/930. At any rate, al-Muʿizz must have also recognized the military advantages of winning the support of the formidable Qarmaṭī armies, which would have significantly enhanced the chances of the Fatimids' victory over the ʿAbbāsids in the central Islamic lands. It was in line with these objectives that al-Muʿizz made certain doctrinal adjustments, rooted in the teachings of the early Ismailis and designed to prove appealing to the Qarmaṭīs.[6] Perhaps as a concession to the Qarmaṭī camp, al-Muʿizz and the Fatimid *daʿwa* also endorsed the Neoplatonized cosmology first propounded by the Qarmaṭī *dāʿī* Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943) in his *Kitāb al-maḥṣūl (Book of the Yield)* around 300/912. Henceforth, this new cosmology was generally advocated by the Fatimid *daʿwa* in preference to the mythological Kūnī-Qadar cosmology of the early Ismailis.[7]

Results of *Daʿwa* Strategies

The *daʿwa* strategy of al-Muʿizz won some success in the dissident camp outside the confines of the Fatimid state. The *dāʿī* AbūYaʿqūb al-Sijistānī, who had hitherto belonged to the Qarmati faction, switched his allegiance to the Fatimid *daʿwa.* As a result, large numbers of the Qarmaṭīs of Khurāsān, Sistan (Arabicised, Sijistan), Makran and Central Asia, where al-Sijistānī acted as chief *dāʿī* in succession to al-Nasafi and his sons, also acknowledged the Fatimid Ismaili imām. Al-Sijistānī was executed as a heretic *(mulḥid)* not long after 361/971 on the order of Khalaf b. Aḥmad, the Ṣaffārid *amīr* of Sistān, but Ismailism survived in the eastern regions of the Iranian world. Fatimid Ismāʿīlism also succeeded in acquiring a permanent stronghold in Sind, in northern India, where Ismaili communities have survived to modern times. Around 347/958, through the efforts of a Fatimid *dāʿī* who converted a local Hindu ruler, an Ismaili principality was established in Sind, with its seat in Multan (in present-day Pakistan). Large numbers of Hindus converted to Ismailism in that region of the

Indian subcontinent, where the *khuṭba* was read in the name of al-Muʿizz and the Fatimids. This Ismaili principality survived until 396/1005 when Sultan Maḥmud of Ghazna invaded Multan and persecuted the Ismailis. Despite the hostilities of the Ghaznawids and their successors, however, Ismailism survived in Sind and later received the protection of the Sūmras, who ruled independently from Thatta for almost three centuries starting in 443/1051.[8] On the other hand, Qarmaṭism persisted in Daylam, Ādharbāyjān and other parts of Persia, as well as in Iraq and Central Asia for almost a century after al-Muʿizz. Above all, al-Muʿizz failed to win the support of the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrayn, who effectively frustrated the Fatimids' strategy of eastern expansion into Syria and other central Islamic lands.

The Egyptian Expedition

Meanwhile, al-Muʿizz had made detailed plans for the conquest of Egypt, a vital Fatimid goal which the first two members of the dynasty had failed to achieve. To that end, the Fatimid *daʿwa* was intensified in Egypt, then beset by numerous economic and political difficulties under disintegrating Ikhshīdid rule. Jawhar, the capable Fatimid commander who had pacified North Africa for al-Muʿizz, was selected to lead the Egyptian expedition. Having encountered only token resistance. Jawhar entered Fusṭāṭ, the capital of Ikhshīdid Egypt, in Shaʿban 358/July 969. Jawhar behaved leniently towards Egyptians, declaring a general amnesty. Subsequently, the Fatimids introduced the Ismaili *madhhab* only gradually in Egypt, where Shīʿism had never acquired a stronghold. Fatimid Egypt remained primarily Sunnī, of the Shāfiʿī *madhhab,* with an important community of Christian Copts. The Fatimids never attempted forced conversion of their subjects and the minoritarian status of the Shīʿā remained unchanged in Egypt despite two centuries of Ismaili Shīʿī rule.

Jawhar camped his army to the north of Fusṭāṭ and immediately proceeded to build a new royal city there, the future Fatimid capital al-Qāhira. (Cairo). Al-Muʿizz had personally supervised the plan of Cairo with its al-Azhar mosque and Fatimid palace complex. Jawhar ruled over Egypt for four years until the arrival of al-Muʿizz. In line with the eastern strategy of the Fatimids, in 359/969 Jawhar dispatched the main body of the Fatimid armies for the conquest of Palestine and Syria. In the following year, the Fatimids were defeated near Damascus by a coalition of the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrayn, Būyids and other powers. Later in 361/971, the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrayn advanced to the gates of Fusṭāṭ before being driven back. Henceforth, there occurred numerous military encounters between the Fatimids and the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrayn, postponing the establishment of Fatimid rule over Syria for several decades.[9]

The Caliph Moves to Egypt

In the meantime, al-Muʿizz had made meticulous preparations for the transference of the seat of the Fatimid state to Egypt. He appointed Buluggin b. Zīrī, the *amīr* of the loyal Ṣanhāja Berbers, as governor of Ifrīqiya. Buluggin, like his father, had faithfully defended the Fatimids against the Zanāta Berbers and other enemies in North Africa; and he was to found the Zīrid dynasty of the Maghrib (361-543/972-1148). Accompanied by the entire Fatimid family, Ismaili notables, Kutāma chieftains, as well as the Fatimid treasuries and the coffins of his predecessors, al-Muʿizz crossed the Nile and took possession of his new capital in Ramaḍān 362/June 973. In Egypt, al-Muʿizz was mainly preoccupied with the elaboration of Fatimid governance in addition to repelling further Qarmaṭī incursions. Having transformed

the Fatimid *dawla* from a regional power into an expanding and stable empire with a newly activated *daʿwa* apparatus, al-Muʿizz died in 365/975.

Cairo served from early on as the central headquarters of the Fatimid Ismaili *daʿwa* organization that developed over time and reached its peak under the eighth Fatimid caliph-imām al-Mustanṣir (427-187/1036-(094). The religio-political message of the *daʿwa* continued to be disseminated both within and outside the Fatimid state through an expanding network of *dāʿīs*. The term *daʿwa*, it may be noted, referred to both the organization of the Ismaili mission, with its elaborate hierarchical ranks or *ḥudūd,* and the functioning of that organization, including especially the missionary activities of the *dāʿīs* who were the representatives of the *daʿwa* in different regions.

Secrecy Surrounding *Daʿwa* Functioning

The organization and functioning of the Ismaili *daʿwa* are among the most secretly guarded aspects of Fatimid Ismailism. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Ismaili literature of the Fatimid period recovered in modern times has shed only limited light on this subject. Information is particularly meagre regarding the *daʿwa* and the activities of the *dāʿīs* in hostile regions outside the Fatimid *dawla*, such as Iraq, Persia, Central Asia and India, where the *dāʿīs*, fearful of persecution, were continuously obliged to observe *taqiyya* and secrecy in their operations. All this once again explains why Ismaili literature is generally so poor in historiographical details on the activities of the *dāʿīs* - information that in Fatimid times may have been available only to the central headquarters of the Ismaili *daʿwa*, headed by the person of the imām. However, modern scholarship in Ismaili studies, drawing on a variety of Ismaili and non-Ismaili sources, including histories of Egypt, has now finally succeeded to piece together a relatively reliable sketch of the Fatimid Ismaili *daʿwa*, with some of its major practices and institutions.

Central *Daʿwa* Objectives

The Fatimids, as noted, aspired to be recognized as rightful imāms by the entire Muslim *umma*: they also aimed to extend their actual rule over all Muslim lands and beyond. These were, indeed, the central objectives of their *daʿwa*, which continued to be designated as *al-daʿwa al-hādiya,* the rightly guiding summons to mankind to follow the Fatimid Ismaili imām. The word *dāʿī,* literally meaning "summoner", was used by several Muslim groups and movements, including the early Shīʿī *ghulāt*, the `Abbāsids, the Muʿtazila, and the Zaydiyya, in reference to their religio-political missionaries. But the term acquired its widest application in connection with the Ismāʿīliyya, while the early Ismailis and Qarmaṭīs in Persia and elsewhere sometimes used other designations such as *janāḥ* (plural*, ajniḥa*) instead of *dāʿī.* It should also be noted that at least from Fatimid times several categories of *dāʿīs* existed in any region. Be that as it may, the term *dāʿī* (plural, *duʿāt*) was applied generically to any authorized representative of the Fatimid *daʿwa*, a missionary responsible for propagating Ismāʿīlism through winning new converts, and followers for the Ismaili imām of the time. As the provision of instruction in Ismaili doctrine for the initiates was from early on an important responsibility of the *daʿwa*, the *dāʿī* was also entrusted with the religious education of the new converts or *mustajībs*. Furthermore, the Ismaili *dāī* served as the unofficial agent of the Fatimid *dawla*, and promoted secretly the Fatimid cause wherever he operated. The earliest record of this aspect of the *dāʿī's* activity is best exemplified in the

achievements of the *dāʿī* Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī (d. 298/911) in North Africa. Within Fatimid dominions, the Ismaili *daʿwa* was protected by the Fatimid *dawla* and doubtless some collaborative relationship must have existed between them as both were headed by the person of the caliph-imām.[10]

Despite his all-important role, however, very little seems to have been written on the *dāʿī* by the Ismaili authors of Fatimid times. The prolific al-Qāḍi al-Nuʿmān, head of the *daʿwa* for some time, devoted only a few pages to the virtues of an ideal *dāʿī*.[11] He merely emphasizes that the *daʿwa* was above all a teaching activity and that the *dāʿīs* were teachers who promoted their message also through their own exemplary knowledge and behaviour. A more detailed discussion of the attributes of an ideal *dāʿī* is contained in the only known Ismaili work on the subject written by the *dāʿī*-author Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Nīsābūrī, al-Nuʿmān 's younger contemporary.[12] According to al-Nīsābūrī, a *dāʿī* could be appointed only by the imām's permission (*idhn*). The *dāʿīs*, especially those operating in remote lands outside Fatimid dominions, seem to have enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, and they evidently received only their general directives from the central *daʿwa* headquarters. In these generally hostile regions, the *dāʿīs* operated very secretly, finding it rather difficult to establish frequent contacts with the *daʿwa* headquarters in Cairo.

Under these circumstances, only Ismailis of high educational qualifications combined with proper moral and intellectual attributes could become *dāʿīs* leading Ismaili communities in particular localities. The *dāʿīs* were expected to have sufficient knowledge of both the *zāhir* and the *bātin* dimensions of religion, or the apparent meanings of the Qurʾan and the *sharīʿa* and their Ismaili interpretation (*taʾwīl*). In non-Fatimid lands, the *dāʿī* also acted as a judge in communal disputes and his decisions were binding for the members of the local Ismaili community. Thus, the *dāʿī* was often trained in legal sciences as well. The *dāʿī* was expected to be adequately familiar with the teachings of non-Muslim religions, in addition to knowing the languages and customs of the region in which he functioned. All these qualifications were required for the orderly performance of the *dāʿī's* duties. As a result, a great number of *dāʿīs* were highly learned and cultured scholars and made important contributions to Islamic thought. They also produced the bulk of the Ismaili literature of the Fatimid period in Arabic, dealing with a diversity of exoteric and esoteric subjects ranging from jurisprudence and theology to philosophy and esoteric exegesis.[13] Nāṣir-ī Khusraw was the only major Fatimid *dāʿī* to have written his books in Persian.

Daʿwa Methodology

Like other aspects of the *daʿwa*, few details are available on the actual methods used by the Fatimid *dāʿīs* for winning and educating new converts. Always avoiding mass proselytization, the *dāʿī* had to be personally acquainted with the prospective initiates, who were selected with special regard to their intellectual abilities and talents. Many Sunnī sources, influenced by anti-Ismaili polemical writings, mention a seven-stage process of initiation (*balāgh*) into Ismailism, and even provide different names for each stage in a process that allegedly led the novice to the ultimate stage of irreligiosity and unbelief.[14] There is no evidence for any fixed graded system in the extant Ismaili literature, although a certain degree of gradualism in the initiation and education of converts must have been unavoidable. Indeed, al-Nīsābūrī relates that the *dāʿī* was expected to instruct the *mustajīb* in a gradual

fashion, not divulging too much at any given time: the act of initiation itself was perceived by the Ismailis as the spiritual rebirth of the adept.

Functions of the *Dāʿī*

It was the duty of the *dāʿī* to administer to the initiate an oath of allegiance (`ahd or *mīthāq*) to the Ismaili imām of the time. As part of this oath, the initiate also pledged to maintain secrecy in Ismaili doctrines taught to him by the *dāʿī*. Only after this oath the *dāʿī* began instructing the *mustajīb*, usually in regular "teaching sessions" held at his house for a number of such adepts. The funds required by the *dāʿī* for the performance of his various duties were raised locally from the members of his community. The *dāʿī* kept a portion of the funds collected on behalf of the imām, including the *zakāt,* the *khums* and certain Ismaili-specific dues like the *najwā,* to finance his local operations and sent the remainder to the imām through reliable couriers. The latter, especially those going to Cairo from remote *daʿwa* regions, also brought back Ismaili books for the *dāʿīs*. The Fatimid *dāʿīs* were, thus, kept well informed on the intellectual developments within Ismailism, especially those endorsed by the *daʿwa* headquarters.

Majalis and the Proliferation of Ismaili Ideology

The scholarly qualifications required of the *dāʿīs* and the Fatimids' high esteem for learning resulted in a number of distinctive traditions and institutions under the Fatimids. The *daʿwa* was, as noted, concerned with the religious education of converts, who had to be duly instructed in Ismaili esoteric doctrine or *ḥikma.* For that purpose, a variety of "teaching sessions", generally designated as *majālis* (singular, *majlis),* were organized. These sessions, addressed to different audiences, were formalized by the time of the Fatimid caliph-imām al-Ḥākim (386-411/996-1021).[15] The lectures on Ismaili doctrine, the *majālis al-ḥikma,* as noted, were initiated by the *dāʿī* Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī, and then systematized by al-Qādi al-Nuʿmān. In the Fatimid state, from early on, the private *majālis al-ḥikma,* organized for the exclusive benefit of the Ismaili initiates, were held separately for men and women. These lectures, delivered by the chief *dāʿī (dāʿī al-duʿāt)* who was often also the chief *qāḍī (qāḍī al-qudat)* of the Fatimid state, required the prior approval of the Fatimid caliph-imām. There were also public lectures on Ismaili law. The legal doctrines of the Ismaili *madhhab,* adopted as the official system of religious law in the Fatimid state, were applied by the Fatimid judiciary, headed by the chief *qāḍī.* But the Ismaili legal code, governing the juridical basis of the daily life of the Muslim subjects of the Fatimid state, was new and its precepts had to be explained to Ismaili as well as non-Ismaili Muslims. As a result, public sessions on the *shariʿa* as interpreted by Ismaili jurisprudence, were held by al-Qādi al-Nuʿmān and his successors as chief *qāḍīs,* after the Friday midday prayers, in the Fatimid capital. In Cairo, the public sessions on Ismaili law were held at al-Azhar and other great mosques there. On these occasions, excerpts from al-Nuʿmān's *Daʿāʾim al-Islām* and other legal works were read to large audiences.

On the other hand, the private *majālis al-ḥikma* continued to be held in the Fatimid palace in Cairo for the Ismaili initiates who had already taken the oath of allegiance and secrecy. Many of these *majālis,* normally prepared by or for the chief *dāʿī,* were in time collected in writing. This distinctive Fatimid tradition of learning found its culmination in the *Majālis* of

al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078), chief *dāʿī* for almost twenty years under al-Mustanṣir. Fatimid *dāʿīs* working outside Fatimid dominions seem to have held similar "teaching sessions" for the education of the Ismaili initiates. In non-Fatimid territories, the Ismailis observed the law of the land wherever they lived, while taking their personal disputes to local Ismaili *dāʿīs*. The Fatimids paid particular attention to the training of their *dāʿīs*, including those operating outside the confines of the Fatimid state. Among the Fatimid institutions of learning mention should be made of the Dār al-ʿIlm (House of Knowledge), founded in 395/1005 by al-Ḥākim in Cairo. A wide variety of religious and non-religious sciences were taught at this institution which was also equipped with a major library. Many Fatimid *dāʿīs* received at least part of their education at the Dār al-ʿIlm.[16] By later Fatimid times, the Dār al-ʿIlm more closely served the needs of the *daʿwa*.

Organisation of the *Daʿwa*

The Fatimid *daʿwa* was organized hierarchically under the overall guidance of the Ismaili imām, who authorized its general policies. It should be noted that the *daʿwa* hierarchy or *hudūd* mentioned in various Fatimid texts seems to have had reference to a utopian situation, when the Ismaili imām would rule the entire world. Consequently, the *daʿwa* ranks mentioned in these sources were not actually filled at all times: some of them were probably never filled at all. The chief *dāʿī (dāʿī al-duʿat)* acted as the administrative head of the *daʿwa* organization. He appointed the provincial *dāʿīs* of the Fatimid state, who were stationed in the main cities of the Fatimid provinces, including Damascus, Tyre, Acre, Ascalon, and Ramla, as well as in some rural areas. These *dāʿīs* represented the *daʿwa* and the chief *dāʿī*, operating alongside the provincial *qāḍīs* who represented the Fatimid *qāḍī al-quḍāt*. The chief *dāʿīs* also played a part in selecting the *dāʿīs* of non-Fatimid territories. Not much else is known about the functions of the chief *dāʿī*, who was closely supervised by the imām. As noted, he was also responsible for organizing the *majālis al-ḥikma;* and in Fatimid cere-monial, he ranked second after the chief *qāḍī*, if both positions were not held by the same person.[17] The title of *dāʿī al-duʿāt* itself, used in non-Ismaili sources, rarely appears in the Ismaili texts of the Fatimid period which, instead, usually use the term *bāb* (or *bāb al-abwāb),* implying gateway to the imām's "wisdom", in reference to the administrative head of the *daʿwa* organization. The *dāʿī* Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmāni makes particular allusions to the position of *bāb* and his closeness to the imām.[18]

Further Evolution of the *Daʿwa* Organisation

The organization of the Fatimid *daʿwa*, with its hierarchy of ranks, developed over time and reached its full elaboration under the caliph-imām al-Mustanṣir.[19] There are different references to the *daʿwa* ranks *(ḥudūd)* after the imām and his *bāb*. According to the idealized scheme, the world, specifically the regions outside Fatimid dominions, was divided into twelve *jazīras* or "islands" for *daʿwa* purposes; each *jazīra* representing a separate *daʿwa* region. Delineated on the basis of a combination of geographic and ethnographic considerations, the "islands", collectively designated as the "islands of the earth" *(jazāʾir al-ard),* included Rūm (Byzantine), Daylam, standing for Persia, Sind, Hind (India), Sin (China), and the regions inhabited by Arabs, Nubians, Khazars, Slavs (Ṣāqāliba), Berbers, Africans (Zanj), and Abyssinians (Ḥabash).[20] Other classifications of the "islands", too, seem to have been observed in practice. For instance, Nāṣir Khusraw refers to Khurāsān as a *jazīra* under his own jurisdiction; and this claim is corroborated by the well-informed Ibn Hawqal,

who further adds that Baluchistan, in eastern Persia, belonged to that *jazīra*.[21] In this sense, Khurāsān seems to have included neighbouring regions in today's Afghanistan and Central Asia. Among other regions functioning as *jazīras* of the Fatimid *daʿwa,* mention may be made of Yaman as well as Iraq and western Persia, for a time headed by the *dāʿī* al-Kirmānī.

Each *jazīra* was placed under the overall charge of a high ranking *dāʿī* known specifically as *ḥujja* (proof, guarantor), also called *naqīb, lāḥiq* or *yad* (hand) in early Fatimid times. The *ḥujja* was the highest representative of the *daʿwa* in any "island", and he was assisted by a number of subordinate *dāʿīs* of different ranks operating in the localities under his jurisdiction. These included *dāʿī al-balāgh, al-dāʿī al-muṭlaq,* and *al-dāʿī al-maḥdūd* (or *al-maḥṣur).* There may have been as many as thirty such *dāʿīs* in some *jazīras*.[22] The particular responsibilities of different *dāʿīs* are not clarified in the meagre sources. It seems, however, that *dāʿī al-balāgh* acted as liaison between the central *daʿwa* headquarters in the Fatimid capital and the *ḥujja's* headquarters in his *jazīra,* and *al- dāʿī al-muṭlaq* evidently became the chief functionary of the *daʿwa,* operating with absolute authority in the absence of the *ḥujja* and his *dāʿī al-balāgh.* The regional *dāʿīs,* in turn, had their assistants, entitled *al-maʾdhūn,* the licentiate. The sources mention at least two categories of this rank, namely, *al-maʿdhūn al-muṭlaq,* and *al-maʿdhūn al-maḥdūd* (or *al-maḥṣūr),* eventually called *al-mukāsir.* The *maʿdhūn al-muṭlaq* often became a *dāʿī* himself; he was authorized as the chief licentiate to administer the oath of initiation and explain the rules and policies of the *daʿwa* to the initiates, while the *mukāsir* (literally, breaker) was mainly responsible for attracting prospective converts and breaking their attachments to other religions. The ordinary Ismaili initiates, the *mustajībs* or respondents who referred to themselves as the *awliyā Allāh* or "friends of God", did not occupy a rank *(ḥadd)* at the bottom of the *daʿwa* hierarchy. Belonging to the *ahl al-daʿwa* (people of the mission), they represented the elite, the *khawāṣṣ,* as compared to the common Muslims, designated as the *ʿāmmat al-Muslimīn* or the *ʿawāmm.* The ranks of the Fatimid *daʿwa,* numbering to seven from *bāb* (or *dāʿī al-duʿāt)* to *mukāsir,* together with their idealised functions and their corresponding celestial hierarchy, are elaborated by the *dāʿī* al-Kirmānī.[23]

Daʿwa Within and Without the *Dawla*

The Fatimid *daʿwa* was propagated openly throughout the Fatimid state enjoying the protection of the government apparatus. But the success of the *daʿwa* within Fatimid dominions was both limited and transitory, with the major exception of Syria where different Shīʿī traditions had deep roots. During the North African phase of the Fatimid caliphate, Ismailism retained its minoritarian status in Ifrīqiya and other Fatimid territories in the Maghrib where the spread of the *daʿwa* was effectively checked by Mālikī Sunnism and Khārijism. By 440/1048, Ismailism had virtually disappeared from the former Fatimid dominions in North Africa, where the Ismailis were severely persecuted after the departure of the Fatimids. In Fatimid Egypt, too, the Ismailis always remained a minority community. It was outside the Fatimid state, in the *jazīras,* that the Fatimid Ismaili *daʿwa* achieved its greatest and most lasting success. Many of these "islands" in the Islamic world, scattered from Yaman to Transoxania, were well acquainted with a diversity of Shīʿī traditions, including Ismailism, and large numbers in these regions responded to the summons of the Ismaili *dāʿīs.* By the time of the Fatimid caliph-imām al-Mustanṣir, significant Ismaili communities representing a united movement had appeared in many of the *jazīras.* By then, the dissident Qarmaṭīs had either disintegrated or joined the dynamic Fatimid *daʿwa.*

Al-Kirmānī's Success and Abbasid Reactions

In Iraq and Persia, the Fatimid *dāʿīs* had systematically intensified their activities from the time of the sixth Fatimid caliph-imām al-Ḥākim. Aiming to undermine the ʿAbbāsids, they concentrated their efforts on a number of influential tribal *amīrs* in Iraq, at the very centre of ʿAbbasid power. Foremost among the *dāʿīs* of al-Ḥākim's reign was Ḥamīd alDīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020), perhaps the most learned Ismaili scholar of the entire Fatimid period. Designated as the *ḥujjat al`Irāqayn,* as he spent a good part of his life as a chief *dāʿī* in both the Arab Iraq and the west-central parts of Persia, al-Kirmānī succeeded in converting several local chieftains in Iraq, including the `Uqaylid *amīr* of Kūfa and several other towns who acknowledged Fatimid suzerainty. It was in reaction to the success of the *daʿwa* in Iraq that the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Qādir (381-422/991-1031) launched a series of military campaigns against the refractories as well as an anti-Fatimid literary campaign, culminating in the Baghdad manifesto of 402/1011 denouncing the Fatimids and refuting their ʿAlīd genealogy.[24] This manifesto was read from the pulpits throughout the ʿAbbāsid caliphate. It was also the learned *dāʿī* al-Kirmānī who was invited to Cairo to refute, on behalf of the *daʿwa* headquarters, the extremist doctrines then being expounded by the founders of the Druze movement.

Daʿwa Expansion in Iraq and Persia

The *daʿwa* continued to be propounded successfully in Iraq, Persia, and other eastern lands even after the ardently Sunnī Saljūqs had replaced the Shīʿī Būyids as the real masters of the ʿAbbasid caliphate in 447/1055. Important Ismaili communities were now in existence in Fārs, Kirmān, Iṣfahān and many other parts of Persia. In Fārs, the *daʿwa* had achieved particular success through the efforts of the *dāʿī* al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, who had penetrated the ruling Būyid circles. After converting AbūKālījār Marzubān (415-440/1024-1048), the Būyid *amīr* of Fārs and Khūzistān, and many of his courtiers, however, al-Mu'ayyad was advised to flee in order to escape ʿAbbāsid persecution. Subsequently, he settled in Cairo, where he played an active part in the affairs of the Fatimid *dawla* as well as the Ismaili *daʿwa* which he headed for twenty years from 450/1058 until shortly before his death in 470/1078. As revealed in his autobiography, al-Mu'ayyad played a crucial role as an intermediary between the Fatimid regime and the Turkish commander al-Basāsīrī who championed the Fatimid cause in Iraq against the Saljūqs and the ʿAbbāsids.[25] In fact, al-Basāsīrī, with Fatimid help and al-Mu'ayyad's strategic guidance, seized several towns in Iraq and entered Baghdad itself at the end of 450/1058. In the ʿAbbāsid capital the *khuṭba* was now pronounced for al-Mustanṣir until al-Basāsīrī was defeated a year later. That Fatimid suzerainty was recognized in ʿAbbāsid Iraq - albeit for only one year - attests to the success of the *dāʿī* al-Mu'ayyad and the *daʿwa* activities there. Al-Mu'ayyad established close relations between the *daʿwa* headquarters in Cairo and the local headquarters in several *jazīras,* especially those located in Yaman and the Iranian lands.

In Persia proper, the Ismaili *daʿwa* had continued to spread in the midst of Saljūq dominions. By the 460's/1070's, the Persian Ismailis were under the overall leadership of a chief *dāʿī,* ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAṭṭāsh, who established his secret headquarters in Iṣfahān, the main Saljūq capital. A religious scholar of renown and a capable organizer in his own right, ʿAbd al-Malik was also responsible for launching the career of Ḥasan Ṣabbāh, his future successor and the

founder of the independent Nizārī Ismaili *daʿwa* and state. Further east, in certain parts of Khurāsān, Badakhshān and adjacent areas in Transoxania, the *daʿwa* continued to be active with various degrees of success after the downfall of the Sāmānids in 395/1005.[26] Despite incessant persecutions of the Ghaznawids and other Turkish dynasties ruling over those regions of the Iranian world, Nāṣir Khusraw and other *dāʿīs* managed to win the allegiance of an increasing number to the Fatimid Ismaili imām.

Nāṣir Khusraw

A learned theologian and philosopher, and one of the foremost poets of the Persian language, Nāṣir Khusraw spread the *daʿwa* throughout Khurāsān from around 444/1052, after returning from his well-documented voyage to Fatimid Egypt. As the *ḥujja* of Khurāsān, he originally established his secret base of operations in his native Balkh (near today's Mazār-i Sharīf in northern Afghanistan). A few years later, Sunnī hostilities obliged him to take permanent refuge in the valley of Yumgān in Badakhshān. There, enjoying the protection of a local Ismaili *amīr,* Nāṣir spent the rest of his life in the service of the *daʿwa.* It is interesting to note that even from his exile in the midst of the remote Pamirs, Nāṣir maintained his contacts with the *daʿwa* headquarters in Cairo, then still headed by the chief *dāʿī* al-Muʾayyad. In fact, the lifelong friendship between al-Muʾayyad and Nāṣir Khusraw dates to 439/1047 when both of these distinguished Persian Ismailis arrived in the Fatimid capital. On that occasion, Nāṣir stayed in Cairo for three years furthering his Ismaili education.[27] It was evidently Nāṣir Khusraw who extended the *daʿwa* in Badakhshān, now divided by the Oxus between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. At any rate, the modern-day Ismailis of Badakhshān, and their offshoot communities in Hunza and other northern areas of Pakistan, all regard Nāṣir Khusraw as the founder of their Ismaili communities. Nāṣir Khusraw died not long after 462/1070, and his mausoleum is still preserved near Fayḍābād, the capital of Afghan Badakhshān.

Philosophical Ismailism

Nāṣir Khusraw was also the last major proponent of "philosophical Ismailism", a distinctive intellectual tradition elaborated by the *dāʿīs* of the Iranian lands during the Fatimid period. Influenced by the pseudo-Aristotelian texts circulating in the Muslim world, these *dāʿīs* elaborated complex metaphysical systems harmonizing Ismaili Shīʿī theology with a diversity of philosophical traditions, notably Neoplatonism.[28] The *dāʿīs* of the Iranian lands, perhaps in reflection of their *daʿwa* policy, wrote for the educated strata of society, aiming to appeal intellectually to the ruling elite. This may explain why these *dāʿīs,* starting with al-Nasafī, expressed their theology in terms of the then most fashionable philosophical themes. This tradition has only recently been studied by modern scholars mainly on the basis of the numerous extant works of al-Sijistānī, while Nāṣir Khusraw's contributions still remain largely unexplored. Be that as it may, these *dāʿīs* of the Iranian lands elaborated the earliest tradition of philosophical theology in Shīʿī Islam without actually compromising the essence of their message which revolved around the Shīʿī doctrine of the imāmate.

Success in Yaman

The Ismaili *daʿwa* achieved one of its major successes of the Fatimid times in Yaman, where Ismailism had survived in a subdued form after the initial efforts of the *dāʿīs* Ibn Ḥawshab

Manṣūr al-Yaman (d. 302/914) and Ibn-al-Faḍl (d. 303/910). By the time of al-Mustanṣir, the leadership of the *da'wa* in Yaman had come to be vested in the *dā'ī* ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Sulayḥī, a chieftain of the influential BanūHamdān. In 429/1038, ʿAlī rose in the mountainous region of Ḥarāz marking the foundation of the Ṣulayḥid state. The Ṣulayḥids recognized the suzerainty of the Fatimids and ruled over various parts of Yaman for more than a century. ʿAlī al-Ṣulayḥī headed the Ismaili *da'wa* as well as the Ṣulayḥid state in Yaman, an arrangement that underwent several changes in subsequent times. By 455/1063, he had subjugated almost all of Yaman, enabling the *da'wa* to be propagated openly in his dominions.[29] The Ṣulayḥids established close relations with the Fatimid *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo, when al-Mu'ayyad was the chief *dā'ī* there. After ʿAlī, who was murdered in a tribal vendetta in 459/1067, his son Aḥmad al-Mukarram succeeded as sultan to the leadership of the Ṣulayḥid state, while the *dā'ī* Lamak b. Mālik al-Ḥammādī (d. 491/1098) acted as the executive head of the Yamanī *da'wa*.

From the latter part of Aḥmad al-Mukarram's reign (459-477/1067-1084), when the Ṣulayḥids lost much of northern Yaman to Zaydīs, effective authority in the Ṣulayḥid state was exercised by his consort, al-Malika al-Sayyida Ḥurra, a most remarkable queen and Ismaili leader.[30] She played an increasingly important role in the affairs of the Yamanī *da'wa* culminating in her appointment as the *ḥujja* of Yaman by al-Mustanṣir. This represented the first application of a high rank in the *da'wa* hierarchy to a woman. Al-Mustanṣir also charged her with the affairs of the *da'wa* in western India. The Ṣulayḥids played a major part in the renewed efforts of the Fatimids to spread Ismailism on the Indian subcontinent, an objective related to the Fatimid trade interests. At any rate, from around 460/1067, Yamani *dā'īs* were dispatched to Gujarāt under the close supervision of the Ṣulayḥids. These *dā'īs* founded a new Ismaili community in Gujarāt which in time grew into the present Ṭayyibī Bohra community.

Fatimid Decline and Dissension

By the early decades of al-Mustanṣir's long reign (427-487/1036-1094), the Fatimid caliphate had already embarked on its political decline. In rapid succession, the Fatimids now lost almost all of their possessions outside Egypt proper, with the exception of a few coastal towns in the Levant. Al-Mustanṣir's death in 487/1094 and the ensuing dispute over his succession led to a major schism in the Ismaili *da'wa* as well, aggravating the deteriorating situation of the Fatimid regime. Al-Mustanṣir's eldest surviving son and heir designate, Nizār, was deprived of his succession rights by the scheming and ambitious al-Afḍal, who a few months earlier had succeeded his own father Badr al-Jamali (d. 487/1094) as the all-powerful Fatimid vizier and "commander of the armies" (*amir al-juyush*). Al-Afḍal installed Nizār's much younger half-brother Aḥmad to the Fatimid caliphate with the title of al-Mustaʿlī biʿllāh, and he immediately obtained for him the allegiance of the *da'wa* leaders in Cairo. In protest, Nizār rose in revolt in Alexandria, but was defeated and executed soon afterwards in 488/1095. These events permanently split the Ismaili *da'wa* and community into two rival factions, designated as Mustaʿliyya and Nizāriyya after al-Mustanṣir's sons who had claimed his heritage. The imāmate of al-Mustaʿlī, who had actually succeeded his father on the Fatimid throne, was recognized by the *da'wa* organization in Cairo, henceforth serving as central headquarters of the Mustaʿli Ismaili *da'wa*, and by the Ismailis of Egypt, Yaman and western India, who depended on the Fatimid establishment. In Syria, too, the bulk of the Ismailis seem to have initially joined the Mustaʿlī camp. The situation was drastically

different in the eastern Islamic lands where the Fatimids no longer exercised any political influence after the Basāsīrī episode.

The Nizārīs Split from Fatimid Headquarters

By 487/1094, Ḥasan Ṣabbāh, a most capable strategist and organizer, had emerged as chief *dāʿī* of the Ismailis of Persia and, probably, of all Saljūq territories. Earlier, Ḥasan had spent three years in Egypt, furthering his Ismaili education and closely observing the difficulties of the Fatimid state. On his return to Persia in 473/1081, Ḥasan operated as a Fatimid *dāʿī* in different Persian provinces while developing his own ideas for organizing an open revolt against the Saljūqs. The revolt was launched in 483/1090 by Ḥasan's seizure of the mountain fortress of Alamūt in northern Persia, which henceforth served as his headquarters. At the time of al-Mustanṣir's succession dispute Ḥasan was already following an independent revolutionary policy; and he did not hesitate to uphold Nizār's rights and break off his relations with the Fatimid establishment and the *daʿwa* headquarters in Cairo. This decision, fully supported by the entire Ismaili communities of Persia and Iraq, in fact marked the foundation of the independent Nizārī Ismaili *daʿwa* on behalf of the Nizārī imām who was then inaccessible. Ḥasan Ṣabbāh also succeeded in creating a state, centred at Alamūt, with vast territories and an intricate network of fortresses scattered in different parts of Persia as well as in Syria. Ḥasan Ṣabbāh (d. 518/1124) and his next two successors at Alamūt, Kiyā Buzurg-Umīd and his son Muḥammad, ruled as *dāʿīs* and *ḥujjas* representing the absent Nizārī imām. By 559/1164, the Nizārī imāms themselves emerged openly at Alamūt and took charge of the affairs of their *daʿwa* and state.[31] The Nizārī state lasted for some 166 years until it too was uprooted by the Mongol hordes in 654/1256. However, the Nizārī Ismaili *daʿwa* and community survived the Mongol catastrophe. The Nizārī Ismailis, who currently recognize the Aga Khan as their imām are today found in more than twenty-five countries of Asia, Africa, Europe and North America.

Fatimid Disintegration

In the meantime, Mustaʿlī Ismailism had witnessed an internal schism of its own with seminal consequences. On al-Mustaʿlī's premature death in 495/1101, all Mustalī Ismailis recognized al-Āmir, his son and successor to the Fatimid caliphate, as their imām. Due to the close relations then still existing between Ṣulayḥid Yaman and Fatimid Egypt, the queen al-Sayyida, too, acknowledged al-Āmir's imāmate. The assassination of al-Āmir in 524/1130 confronted the Mustaʿlī *daʿwa* and communities with a major crisis. By then, the Fatimid caliphate was disintegrating rapidly, while the Ṣulayḥid state was beset by its own mounting difficulties. It was under such circumstances that on al-Āmir's death power was assumed as regent in the Fatimid state by his cousin ʿAbd al-Majīd, while al-Āmir's infant son and designated successor al-Ṭayyib had disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Shortly afterwards in 526/1132, ʿAbd al-Majīd successfully claimed the Fatimid caliphate as well as the imāmate of the Mustaʿlī Ismailis with the title of al-Ḥāfīz li-Dīn Allāh. The irregular accession of al-Ḥāfīz was endorsed, as in the case of al-Mustaʿlī, by the *daʿwa* headquarters in Cairo; and, therefore, it also received the support of the Mustaʿlī communities of Egypt and Syria, who were dependent on the Fatimids. These Mustaʿlī Ismailis, recognizing al-Ḥāfīz (d. 544/1149) and the later Fatimid caliphs as their imāms, became known as Ḥāfīziyya.

Further Offshoots

In Yaman, too, some Mustalīs, led by the Zurayʿids of ʿAdan who had won their independence from the Ṣulayḥids, supported the Ḥāfīzi *daʿwa*. On the other hand, the aged Ṣulayḥid queen al-Sayyida who had already drifted apart from the Fatimid regime, upheld the rights of al-Ṭayyib and recognized him as al-Āmir's successor to the imāmate. Consequently, she severed her ties with Fatimid Cairo, much in the same way as her contemporary Ḥasan Ṣabbāh had done a few decades earlier on al-Mustanṣir's death. Her decision was fully endorsed by the Mustaʿlī community of Gujarāt. The Ṣulayḥid queen herself continued to take care of the Yamanī *daʿwa* supporting al-Ṭayyib's imāmate, later designated as Ṭayyibiyya. Until her death in 532/1138, al-Sayyida worked systematically for the consolidation of the Ṭayyibī *daʿwa*. In fact, soon after 526/1132 she appointed al-Dhu'ayb b. Mūsā al-Wādiʿī (d. 546/1151) as *al-dāʿī al-muṭlaq,* or the *dāʿī* with absolute authority over the affairs of the Yamanī *daʿwa*. This marked the foundation of the independent Ṭayyibī Mustaʿlī *daʿwa* on behalf of al-Ṭayyib and his successors to the Ṭayyibī imāmate all of whom have remained inaccessible.[32] The Ṭayyibī *daʿwa* was, thus, made independent of the Fatimids as well as the Ṣulayḥids: and as such, it survived the downfall of both dynasties. The Ṭayyibī *daʿwa* was initially led for several centuries from Yaman by al-Dhu'ayb's successors as *dāʿīs*. In subsequent times, the stronghold of Ṭayyibī Ismailism was transferred to the Indian subcontinent and the community subdivided into several groups: the two major (Da'ūdī-Sulaymānī) groups still possess the authorities of their separate lines of *dāʿī muṭlaqs* while awaiting the emergence of their imām. The Ṭayyibī Ismailis have also preserved a good share of the Ismaili literature of the Fatimid period.

Ismaili Survival Amidst Fatimid Collapse

On 7 Muḥarram 567/10 September 1171, Saladin, ironically the last Fatimid vizier, formally ended Fatimid rule by instituting the *khuṭba* in Cairo in the name of the reigning ʿAbbāsid caliph. At the time al-ʿĀdid, destined to be the seal of the Fatimid dynasty, lay dying in his palace. The Fatimid d*awla* collapsed uneventfully after 262 years amidst the complete apathy of the Egyptian populace. Saladin, the champion of Sunnī "orthodoxy" and the future founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty, then adopted swift measures to persecute the Ismailis of Egypt and suppress their *daʿwa* and rituals, all representing the Ḥāfīzi form of Ismailism. Indeed, Ismailism soon disappeared completely and irrevocably from Egypt, where it had enjoyed the protection of the Fatimid *dawla*. In Yaman, too, the Ḥāfīzi *daʿwa* did not survive the Fatimid caliphate on which it was dependent. On the other hand, by 567/1171 Nizārī and Ṭayyibī *daʿwas* and communities had acquired permanent strongholds in Persia, Syria, Yaman and Gujarāt. Later, all Central Asian Ismailis as well as an important Khoja community in India also acknowleged the Nizārī *daʿwa*. That Ismailism survived at all the downfall of the Fatimid dynasty was, thus, mainly due to the astonishing record of success achieved by the Ismaili *daʿwa* of Fatimid times outside the confines of the Fatimid *dawla*.

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[1] See F. Daftary, 'The Earliest Ismāʿīlīs", *Arabica*, 38 (1991), p. 214-345.

[2] See, for example, Abū Jaʿfār Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Usūl min al-kāfī*, ed. ʿA.A. al-Ghaffārī (Tehran.1388/1963), vol. 1. p. 168-548.

[3] On the schism of 286/899 in Ismailism, and the subsequent hostile relations between the Fatimids and the Qarmaṭīs, see W. Madelung, "The Fatimids and the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrayn", in F. Daftary, ed., *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought,*(Cambridge, 1996), p. 21-73; F. Daftary, "A Major Schism in the Early Ismāʿīlī Movement", *Studia Islamica*. 77 (1993), p. 123-139 and his "Carmatians", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 4, p. 823-832.

[4] The propagation of the Ismaili *daʿwa* in North Africa, culminating in the establishment of the Fatimid state, is treated in al-Qāḍī Abū Ḥanifa al-Nuʿmān b. Muḥammad's *Iftitāḥ al-daʿwa,* ed. W. al-Qāḍī (Beirut, 1970), p. 71-222; ed. F. Dachraoui (Tunis, 1975), p. 47-257. See also F. Dachraoui. *Le Califat Fatimide au Maghreb, 296-365 H./909-975 JC.* (Tunis, 1981), p. 57-122; F. Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 134 ff., 144-173, and H. Halm. *The Empire of the Mahdī: The Rise of the Fatmids,* tr. M. Bonner (Leiden, 1996), p. 9-128.

[5] See al-Qāḍī Al-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim al-Islām,* ed. A. A. A. Fyzee (Cairo, 1951-61), vol. 1, p. 1-98: partial English trans, *The Book of Faith,* tr. A. A. A. Fyzee (Bombay, 1974), p. 4-111; A. Nanji, "An Ismāʿīlī Theory of *Walāyah* in the *Daʿāʾim al-Islām* of Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān ", in D. P. Little, ed., *Essays on Islamic Civilization Presented to Niyazi Berkes* (Leiden, 1976), p. 260-273, and I. K. Poonawala. " al-Qāḍi al-Nuʿmān and Isma'ili Jurisprudence", in Daftary, ed.. *Mediaeval Isma'ili History,* p. 117-143.

[6] S. M. Stern, "Heterodox Ismāʿīlism at the Time of al-Muʿizz '", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,* 17 (1955), p. 10-33, reprinted in his *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism* (Jerusalem-Leiden, 1983), p. 257-288; W. Madelung. "Das Imāmat in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre'", *Der Islam,* 37 (1961), p. 86-101, and Daftary. *The Ismāʿīlīs,* p. 176-180, where additional sources are cited.

[7] On these developments, see S. M. Stem, "The Earliest Cosmological Doctrines of Ismāʿīlism", in his *Studies,* p. 3-29; H. Halm, "The Cosmology of the Pre-Fatimid Ismāʿīliyya”, in Daftary, ed., *Mediaeval Isma'ili History,* p. 75-83, and Paul E. Walker, *Abu Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī: Intellectual Missionary* (London, 1996), p. 26-103.

[8] S. M. Stem, " Ismāʿīlī Propaganda and Fatimid Rule in Sind", Islamic Culture, 23 (1949), p. 298-307, reprinted in his Studies, p. 177-188; A. Hamdani. *The Beginnings of the Ismāʿīlī Daʿwa in Northern India* (Cairo, 1956), p. 3-16, and Halm. *Empire of the Mahdi, p. 385-392.*

[9] The gradual establishment and decline of Fatimid rule in Syria is treated at length in Thierry Bianquis. *Damas et la Syrie sous la domination fatimide, 359-468/969-1076* (Damascus, 1986-89), 2 vols.

[10] See, for instance, Abu Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī, *Ithbāt al-nubuwwāt,* ed. ʿArif Tamir (Beirut, 1966), p. 91, 100, 128; W. Madelung and P. E. Walker, *An Ismaili Heresiography: The "Bāb al-Shayṭān" from AbuTammdm's Kitab al-Shajara* (Leiden, 1998), text p. 7, 132, translation p. 26, 120, and A. Hamdani, "Evolution of the Organisational Structure of the Fāṭimī Daʿwah", *Arabian Studies,* 3 (1976), p. 85-114.

[11] Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Kitāb al-himma fī ādāb atbāʾ al-aʾimma,* ed. M. Kamil Husayn (Cairo, 1948), p. 136-140.

[12] al-Nīsābūrī's treatise, *al-Risāla al-mūjaza al-kāfiya fi ādāb al-duʿāt,* has not been recovered so far, but it has been preserved in later Ismaili sources. A facsimile edition of the version preserved by Ḥasan b. Nūh Bharūchi (d. 939/1533), an Indian Ismaili scholar, is contained in Verena Klemm, *Die Mission des fāṭimidischen Agenten al-Muʾayyad fi d-dīn in Shīrāz* (Frankfurt, 1989), p. 206-277. The same text provided the basis for W. Ivanow's "The Organization of the Fatimid Propaganda", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,* NS, 15 (1939), p. 18-35.

[13] For a comprehensive survey of this literature, see I. K. Poonawala. *Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature* (Malibu, Calif.,1977), p. 35-132.

[14] Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab,* vol. 25, ed. M. J. 'A. al-Ḥīnī et al. (Cairo, 1984), p. 195-225: Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar,* vol. 6, ed. S. al-Munajjid (Cairo, 1961), p. 97 ff.; ʿAbd al-Qāhir b. Tāhir al-Baghdādī. *al-Farq bayn al-fīraq,* ed. N. Badr (Cairo, 1328/1910), p. 282 ff., and Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazalī, *Fadāʾih al-Bāṭiniyya,* ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo, 1964), p. 21-36.

[15] Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-mawāʿiz waʾ l-iʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ waʾ l-āthār* (Bulaq, 1270/1853-54), vol. 1, p. 390-391, vol. 2, p. 341-342; H. Halm, "The Isma'ili Oath of Allegiance *(ʿahd)* and the 'Sessions of Wisdom' *(majālis al-ḥikma)* in Fatimid Times", in Daftary, ed., *Mediaeval Isma'ili History,* p. 91-115; his *The Fatimids and their Traditions of Learning* (London, 1997), especially p. 23-29, 41-55, and P. E. Walker, "Fatimid Institutions of Learning", *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt,* 34 (1997). p. 179-200.

[16] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ,* vol. 1, p. 458-460, and Halm, *The Fatimids,* p. 71-77.

[17] Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Qalqashandī. *Subh al-aʿshā* (Cairo, 1331-38/1913-20), vol. 3, p. 483, vol. 8, p. 239-241, vol. 11, p. 61-66, and al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ,* vol. 1, p. 391, 403.

[18] Hamid al-Dīn al-Kirmānī. *Rḥāat al-ʿaql,* ed. M. Kamil Ḥusayn and M. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī (Cairo, 1953), p. 135, 138, 143. 152, 205-208, 212-214, 224, 260-262 and elsewhere.

[19] 19 See S. M. Stern, "Cairo as the Centre of the Ismāʿīlī Movement", in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire* (Cairo, 1972), p. 437-450, reprinted in his *Studies,* p. 234-256; P. E. Walker. "The Ismaili Daʿwa in the Reign of the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim", *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt,* 30 (1993), p. 161-182; Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs.* p. 224-232, and his "Dāʿī", *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* vol. 6, p. 590-593.

[20] Al-Sijistānī, *Ithbāt,* p. 172. al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Taʾwīl al-daʿāʾim,* ed. M. Ḥ. al-Aʿzamī (Cairo, 1967-72), vol. 2, p. 74, and vol. 3, p. 48-49.

[21] Nāṣir Khusraw, *Zad al-musafirin,* ed. M. Badhl al-Rahman (Berlin, 1341/1923), p. 397, and Ibn Hawqal, *Kitab surat al-ard,* ed. J. H. Kramers (2nd ed.. Leiden, 1938-39), p. 310.

[22] Nāṣir Khusraw, *Wajh-i dīn,* ed. G. R. Aʿvānī (Tehran, 1977), p. 178.

[23] Al-Kirmānī, *Rāḥat al-ʿaql,* p. 134-139, 224-225, also explained in H Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis,* tr. R. Manheim and J.W Morris (London, 1983), p. 90-95. See also Nāṣir Khusraw, *Shish Faṣl,* ed. And tr. W. Ivanow (Leiden, 1949), text p. 34-36, translation p. 74-77, his *Wajh-i dīn,* p. 255, and R. Strothmann, ed., *Gnosis Texte der Ismailten* (Göttingen, 1943), p. 57, 82, 174-177

[24] Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'*, ed. J. al-Shayyāl and M. Ḥilmī M Aḥmad (Cairo, 1967-73), vol.1, p. 45-46

[25] Al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Sīrat al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn dā'ī al-du'āt,* ed. M. Kāmil Ḥusayn (Cairo, 1949), especially p. 94-184, and Klemm, *Die Mission,* p. 2-63, 136-192.

[26] For details, see al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz,* vol. 2, p. 191-192; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi' l-ta'rīkh,* ed. C. J. Tornberg (Leiden.1851-76), vol. 9, p. 211, 358. vol. 10, p. 122 ff., 165-166, and W. Barthold. *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion,* ed. C. E. Bosworth (4th ed., London, 1977), p. 251. 304-305. 3(6-318.

[27] Nāṣir Khusraw describes the splendour and prosperity of the Fatimid capital most vividly in his famous *Safar-nāma.* ed. M. Dabīr Siyāqī (Tehran, (356/1977). p. 74-99; English trans. *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels (Safarnāma),* tr. W. M. Thackston, Jr. (Albany. NY. 1986), p. 44-57.

[28] For details of the metaphysical systems of the Iranian *dā'īs,* as elaborated especially in the works of al-Sijistānī, see P. E. Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 67-142, and his *The Wellsprings of Wisdom: A Study of AbūYa'qūb al-Sijistānī's Kitāb al-Yanābī`* (Salt Lake City, 1994), especially p. 37-111. The critical edition of al-Sijistānī's *Kitāb al-yanābī`,* together with a summary French translation, may be found in H. Corbin, *Trilogie Ismaélienne* (Paris-Tehran, 1961), text p. 1-97, translation p. 5-127. Al-Kirmānī's system, as propounded in his *Rāḥat al-`aql,* and its philosophical provenance, are thoroughly studied in Daniel de Smet's *La Quiétude de l'intellect: Néoplatonisme et gnose Ismaélienne dans l'oeuvre de Ḥamid ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī (Xᶜ/XIᶜ.)* (Louvain, 1995). Of Nāṣir Khusraw's major theological-philosophical texts, only two have been published so far in critical editions with translations into European languages: see his *Jāmi` al-ḥikmatayn,* ed. H. Corbin and M. Mu`in (Paris-Tehran, 1953); French trans. *Le Livre réunissant les deux sagesses,* tr. I. de Gastines (Paris. 1990), and *Gushāyish va rahāyish,* ed. S. Natīsi (Tehran, 1961); ed. and tr. F. M. Hunzai as *Knowledge and Liberation* (London, 1998).

[29] The earliest Ismaili accounts of the Ṣulayḥids, and the contemporary *da'wa* in Yaman, are contained in the *dā'ī* Idrīs `Imād al-Dīn b. al-Ḥasan's `*Uyūn al-akhbār,* vol. 7, and his *Nuzhat al-afkār,* which are still in manuscript forms. The best modern study here is Ḥusayn F. al-Hamdāni's *al-Sulayhiyyūn wa' l-ḥaraka al-Fāṭimiyya fi' l-Yaman* (Cairo, 1955), especially p. 62-231.

[30] See F. Daftary, "Sayyida Hurra: The Ismā'īlī Ṣulayḥid Queen of Yemen", in Gavin R. G. Hambly, ed.. *Women in theMedieval Islamic World* (New York, 1998), p. 117-130, where additional references are cited.

[31] For the early history of the Nizārī *da'wa* and state, coinciding with the final eight decades of the Fatimid *dawla,* see `Atā-Malik Juwaynī, *Ta'rīkh-i jahān-gushā,* ed. M. Qazwīnī (Leiden-London, 1912-37), vol. 3, p. 186-239; English trans. *The History of the World-Conqueror,* tr. J. A. Boyle (Manchester, 1958), vol. 2, p. 666-697; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins* (The Hague. 1955). p. 41-109, 145-159; B. Lewis, *The Assassins* (London, 1967), p. 38-75; F. Daftary, "Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and the Origins of the Nizārī Isma'ili Movement", in Daftary, ed.. *Mediaeval Isma'ili History,* p. 181-204, and his *The Ismā'īlīs,* p. 324-391, 669-687, where full references to the sources and studies are given.

[32] On the early histories of Musta`lī Ismailism as well as the Ḥāfīzī and Ṭayyibī *da'was,* see S. M. Stern, "The Succession to the Fatimid Imam al-Āmir, the Claims of the Later Fatimids to the Imāmate, and the Rise of Ṭayyibī Ismailism", *Oriens,* 4 (1951), p. 193-255, reprinted in his *History and Culture in the Medieval Muslim World* (London. 1984), article XI; A. Hamdani. "The Ṭayyibī -Fāṭimid Community of the Yaman at the Time of the Ayyūbid Conquest of Southern Arabia", *Arabian Studies,* 7 (1985), p. 151-160, and Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs,* p. 256-286. 654-663.