

Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power: Hurufi Teachings Between Shi'ism and Sufism in Medieval Islam*
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Conclusion

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The *Jāwidān-nāma* in the Context of Islamic Thought

The preceding study of the *Jāwidān-nāma*'s doctrinal contents inevitably raises the following question: how can this doctrine be situated in the history of Islamic religious thought? The present conclusion is intended to discuss this question and to provide observations which, hopefully, can be developed in future research.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the known sources do not contain any significant information concerning Faḍl Allāh's affiliations, such as the names of his teachers, or of any other figures who may have played a prominent role in his spiritual and intellectual education, and in the maturation of his thought. Careful identification of possible references to known authors or currents, such as specific technical terms or other borrowings in the text of the *Jāwidān-nāma*, could shed more light on this issue. But such a study can hardly be undertaken before an accurate critical edition of this work becomes available.

In the meantime, any effort of contextualisation will remain necessarily tentative. In the absence of direct textual evidence that would attest links with specific trends or works, such an effort can only be based on a comparison of the *Jāwidān-nāma*'s doctrines with those of similar religious trends. However, a general, indistinctive comparison with all possible similar currents risks becoming a pure (and virtually endless) exercise of erudition, which will hardly help us to better understand the real place of the *Jāwidān-nāma* in the history of Islamic religious thought. It seemed to me more useful in this chapter to focus on the literary genres and religious trends that had some kind of functional affinity with the *Jāwidān-nāma*, or which could have, with a reasonable degree of probability, influenced the author in his time and place.

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MIR-KASIMOV, Orkhan.

*Christian apocalyptic texts in
Islamic messianic discourse: the 'Christian chapter'
of the Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr by
Fadl Allāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394). Leiden: Brill,
2016 (History of Christian-Muslim relations, 30).
188 pp.*

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the Jewish and Christian scriptures and to reveal their innermost meaning—echoes the position of the original Sunnī thinker al-Biqā'ī who implied that any Muslim scholar with a thorough knowledge of the Qur'ān can discern the authentic parts of the Bible, thus making the thesis of its falsification irrelevant.³⁴

The *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*), a text closely associated with the Ismā'īlī tradition, also contains a significant amount of Jewish and Christian material used together with Islamic scriptural sources apparently without much concern about the argument of falsification.³⁵ However, the use of this material in the *Epistles* seems to be closer to the narratives of the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* than to a full-fledged work of *ta'wīl*.³⁶

The *Jāvidān-nāma* of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī combines both 'negative' and 'positive', polemical and apologetic kinds of exegesis applied to the Jewish and Christian material. However, as we shall observe in the example of the Christian Chapter on which the remaining part of this book will be focused, the 'positive' exegesis clearly predominates in this work. The *Jāvidān-nāma*'s conception of inspired *ta'wīl* as the only source of authoritative hermeneutics is close to the Shī'ī view, but it is embedded into the *Jāvidān-nāma*'s doctrinal discourse without direct references to Shī'ī tenets. In combination with the strongly developed messianic dimension, this conception brings the *Jāvidān-nāma* close to the Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl*, to which its high degree of liberty in the interpretation of the Jewish and Christian material can also be compared. But the framework of this interpretation in the *Jāvidān-nāma*, its topoi and also sometimes the choice of source texts, are quite original. At this point, it will be useful to discuss in more detail the *Jāvidān-nāma*'s theory of *ta'wīl*.

34 See Saleh, 'A Fifteenth-Century Muslim Hebraist', p. 646.

35 On the *Epistles* and their possible doctrinal affiliations, see Godefroid DeCallataÿ, 'Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā')', *EJ3*. On the use of the Jewish and Christian material in the *Epistles*, see Yves Marquet, 'Les Iḥwān al-Ṣafā' et le Christianisme', *Islamochristiana* 8 (1982), pp. 129–158; and Omar Alī-de-Unzaga, 'Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, eds. David Thomas et al., vol. 2 (900–1050), Leiden, 2010, pp. 306–311.

36 Cf. the note of Marquet, 'Les Iḥwān al-Ṣafā' et le Christianisme' p. 155: 'De multiples versets bibliques pouvaient se prêter à leur interprétation: leur ont-ils eux-mêmes appliqué le procédé du *ta'wīl*? Pour vraisemblable que ce soit, nous n'en avons aucune trace.'

The *Jāvidān-nāma* of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī and Its Hermeneutical Theory

In the second half of the 8th/14th century, an Iranian mystic named Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī experienced a series of strange dreams and visions. According to the records left by his followers,¹ we can conclude that in these visions, he progressively received some special knowledge and unusual powers, and eventually reached the decisive enlightenment from which he emerged as the Master of Hermeneutics (*ṣāhib-i ta'wīl*).² The theory of what can be called 'ontological hermeneutics' became the cornerstone of Faḍl Allāh's original mystical and messianic doctrine developed in his works, especially, in his magnum opus, the *Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr* (the Great Book of Eternity), which was considered by his followers as the sum of Faḍl Allāh's divinely inspired knowledge.³ Before discussing the hermeneutical theory of Faḍl Allāh, which

1 Faḍl Allāh and his followers, who split up into several groups after his death, were described in Muslim historical and heresiographical works as Ḥurūfīs, that is, 'letterists', from the Arabic *ḥarf* (pl. *hurūf*) meaning 'letter'. Even though there is no evidence that Faḍl Allāh or his followers applied this name to themselves, the term reflects the prominent role of the 'science of letters' (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*) in Faḍl Allāh's works. On Faḍl Allāh and his followers see Shahzad Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis*, Oxford, 2005, and Mir-Kasimov, *Words of Power*, pp. 1–23, and references cited there.

2 In two unpublished works, both entitled *Kitāb-i khwāb-nāma* (the 'Book of Dreams'), Faḍl Allāh's initiatory experience is described by his followers 'Alī Nafajī and Sayyid Ishāq Astarābādī. For a more detailed discussion of Faḍl Allāh's initiation, citations from the sources and further references see *Words of Power*, p. 8 ff. The title *Ṣāhib al-ta'wīl* is a standard title of Shī'ī Imāms (see Amir-Moezzi, 'The *Tafsīr* of al-Ḥibārī (d. 286/899): Qur'ānic Exegesis and Early Shī'ī Esotericism', in *The Study of Shī'ī Islam*, eds. Daftary and Miskinzoda, pp. 113–134, especially p. 131). Faḍl Allāh's focus on the knowledge of the *ta'wīl* brings him close to Shī'ī, and probably more specifically to Ismā'īlī tenets. However, there is no evidence that he explicitly claimed to have associations with any Shī'ī group. On the contextualisation of Faḍl Allāh's doctrine, see *Words of Power*, pp. 387–435.

3 On Faḍl Allāh's works, mostly unpublished and only available in manuscripts, see *Words of Power*, pp. 4–5. More particularly, on the *Jāvidān-nāma*, its structure, manuscripts and contents, see idem, pp. 31–45; and Mir-Kasimov, *Jāvidān-nāma*, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 14/6 (2008), pp. 603–605. All references to the folio pages of the *Jāvidān-nāma* in this introductory part correspond to ms. British Library Or. 5957.

Erkhan Mir-Kasimov, Christian Apocalyptic Texts in Islamic Messianic Discourse: The 'Christian Chapter' of the Jāvidān-nāma-yi kabīr by Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī (d. 736/1394), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2017.

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- 269 MIR-KASIMOV, Orkhan. – Notes sur deux textes *hurūfī*:
le *Jāvdān-nāma* de Faḍlallāh Astarābādī et l'un de ses
commentaries, le *Mahram-nāma* de Sayyid Ishāq.
Studia Iranica, 35 ii (2006) pp.203-235. [Abstracts
in French and English.]

Alvarfilih
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27 KASIM 2006

Câvidân - nâme'nin Nesîmîye
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MAHİR KUTLUBAYRAKTAN
SÖZLÜK VE İZLENLER

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphane	
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Tas. No:	297.7 ALP.C

Doçentlik tezi

Dr. ALİ ALPARSLAN

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by a non-Armenian on the major Armenian presence in the region.

Bibliography: G. Bournoutian, *Two Chronicles on the History of Karabagh: Mirza Jamal Javanshir's Tarikh-e Qarabagh and Mirza Adigözal Beg's Karabagh-name*, Costa Mesa, CA, 2004. Akhmedbek Dzhavanshir, *O politicheskom sushchestvovanii Karabakhskogo khanstva s 1747 po 1805 god* (On the political existence of the Khanate of Qarābāḡ from 1747 until 1805), Baku, 1961. Mirza Jamal Javānšīr Garabaghī, *Garabag Tarikhi*, Baku, 1959. Dzhemal Dzhevanshir Karabagi, "Karabag," *Kavkaz* 61-69, 1855. Mirza Cemal Cevansir Karabaghli, *Karabag Tarihi*, Ankara, 1990. Mirzā Dzhemal Dzhevanshir Karabagskiū, *Istoriya Karabaga* (History of Qarābāḡ), Baku, 1959. Mirzā Jamāl Javānšīr Qarābāḡi, *Tāriḡ-e Qarābāḡ*, MS B-712/11603, Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, Baku, Azerbaijan; tr. G. Bournoutian as *A History of Qarabagh: an Annotated Translation of Mirza Jamal Javanshir Qarabaghī's Tarikh-e Qarabagh*, Costa Mesa, Calif., 1994; ed. Ḥosayn Aḥmadi as *Tarikh-e Qarābāḡ*, Tehran, 2003.

(GEORGE BOURNOUTIAN)

JĀVDĀN-NĀMA (also known as *Jāvdān-nāma-ye kabir* or *Jāvdān-nāma-ye elāhi*), the major work of Faḏl-Allāh Astarābādi (d. 1394; q.v.), the founder of the Ḥorufi movement (see HORUFISM). The title, which can be translated from Persian either as the "Eternal Book" or as the "Book of Eternity," has been transcribed here as *Jāvdān* and not *Jāvidān* (although this latter form is more current in Persian and is often used in contemporary literature on the Ḥorufis), because early Ḥorufi authors mostly use the form without the "yā" between the "wāw" and the "dāl."

History and manuscripts. The composition of this voluminous work (the complete copy contains about 500 folios) probably took many years. Interpreting the allusive indications found in the *Korsi-nāma* of 'Alī al-A'īā (d. 1419; q.v.; one of the most significant followers of Faḏl-Allāh), Hellmut Ritter (1892-1971) suggested that the *Jāvdān-nāma* could have been finished by 1386 (Ritter, pp. 22-23). Moḥammad-'Alī Tarbiat relates in the *Dānešmandān-e Āqarbāyjan* (p. 553) that Faḏl-Allāh wrote the *Jāvdān-nāma* during his imprisonment in Alinjaq in 1394, but this does not seem very plausible since Faḏl-Allāh was executed shortly after his arrest. The *Jāvdān-nāma* does, however, mention Baku, the capital of Shirvan where Faḏl-Allāh spent the last few years of his life, and the date 2 Rabi' II 796/4 February 1394 (British Library, MS Or. 5957, fol. 85b), that is, just seven months before the most probable date of his execution on 6 Du'l-Qa'da 796/2 September 1394. It is therefore possible that Faḏl-Allāh completed the *Jāvdān-nāma* shortly before his death.

Like most Ḥorufi texts, the *Jāvdān-nāma* is only available in manuscript form, with the exception of the fragments included in the *Vāḡa-nāma* of Šādeq Kiā (pp. 42-45)

and those in an unpublished dissertation (Mir-Kasimov, 2007a, pp. 495-733). As for the other Ḥorufi writings, the catalogue descriptions require careful scrutiny, and much work still has to be done in order to identify the manuscripts. Among the dated copies of the work, the one in the Millet Library in Istanbul (MS Ali Emiri Farsi, no. 920, dated 992/1584) is perhaps the oldest of the extant. According to the Gölpınarlı catalogue (pp. 56-59), the Millet Library copy was transcribed in Baku from a manuscript which, in its turn, was copied from the manuscript written by Maḡdumzāda (d. 1441), the daughter of Faḏl-Allāh. After the second half of the 15th century, the text of the *Jāvdān-nāma* was essentially preserved and transmitted within the Bektashi order of dervishes, from which some copies of this work found their way to the European libraries in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries (Huart, 1889, pp. 238-70; Browne, 1896, pp. 69-86; Idem, 1907, pp. 533-81). According to manuscript catalogues, there are copies of the *Jāvdān-nāma* in libraries in Istanbul, Cairo, Leiden, Cambridge, and in the British Library in London, as well as in some private collections.

The original *Jāvdān-nāma-ye kabir* (the "great" *Jāvdān-nāma*) was written in an idiosyncratic idiom, which mixes the literary Persian with the archaic dialect of Astarābād; the text starts with the word *ebtedā'* (beginning) repeated six times. This version should not be confused with the shorter and simplified version written without the use of the dialect, which is also ascribed to Faḏl-Allāh and known as the *Jāvdān-nāma-ye ṣḡīr* (the "little" *Jāvdān-nāma*). Two works in Ottoman Turkish are described as adaptations or translations of the latter version: the *'Ešq-nāma* (the Book of Love) of 'Ezz-al-Din 'Abd-al-Majīd b. Ferešta Taravi (Firishte-oḡlu, d. 1459-60), written in 1430; and the *Dorr-e yatim* (the Unique Pearl), composed by a Bektashi dervish named Mortazā in 1638-39 (Gölpınarlı, pp. 114 and 144-47). The former has been translated into modern Turkish under the title *Ilm-i Cavidan* (see Taravi).

Structure and contents. The account of the text given here is based on the manuscript of the British Library. It is therefore feasible that some of the conclusions made here might need to be modified after the thorough comparison of the extant copies of the work has been made. The *Jāvdān-nāma* is without doubt the main source on the original Ḥorufi doctrine. Notwithstanding its foundational role, the contents of the *Jāvdān-nāma* cannot be easily comprehended. The structural idiosyncrasies and some of the difficulties encountered in this text could be a result of intentional encryption elaborated in the Iranian heterodox milieu of the late medieval period, and there are some indications suggesting this possibility in the *Jāvdān-nāma* itself as well as in some later Ḥorufi works. An attempt to comprehend and analyze the contents of the *Jāvdān-nāma* with the help of the indications found in the *Jāvdān-nāma* itself and in other Ḥorufi works was made in Mir-Kasimov, 2007a.

One of the impediments here is the use of a little known local dialect already mentioned above and of the special

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362. MIR-KASIMOV, Orkhan. *Ummīs versus imāms in Hurūfī prophetology: an attempt at a Sunni/Shī'ī synthesis? Unity in diversity: mysticism, messianism and the construction of religious authority in Islam.* Ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov. Leiden: Brill, 2014, (Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts, 105), pp. 221-246. On the *Jāwidān-Nāma* of Astarābādī.

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