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HAZIRLAYANLAR
Mehmet Öz
Fatih Yeşil

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi	
Dem. No:	235446
Taa. No:	956 OCA. Ö



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AHMET YAŞAR OCAK'A
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EDİTÖR
Adem Koçal
Zeynep Berktaş

KAPAK TASARIM
Ravza Kızıltuğ

İÇ DÜZEN
Serhat Küçük

1. BASKI
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TİMAŞ YAYINLARI
Cağaloğlu, Alemkar Mahallesi,
Alayköşkü Caddesi, No: 5, Fatih/İstanbul
Telefon: (0212) 511 24 24
P.K. 50 Sirkeci / İstanbul

timas.com.tr
timas@timas.com.tr
facebook.com/timasyayingrubu
twitter.com/timasyayingrubu

Kültür Bakanlığı Yayıncılık
Sertifika No: 12364

BASKI VE CİLT
Sistem Matbaacılık
Yılanlı Ayazma Sok. No: 8
Davutpaşa-Topkapı/İstanbul
Telefon: (0212) 482 11 01
Matbaa Sertifika No: 16086

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The *Da'wa-Dawla* Relationship in Medieval Ismaili History

Farhad DAFTARY*

The Ismailis appeared on the historical stage as an independent community of Shi'i Imāms in 148/765. Soon, the earliest Ismailis were organized into a dynamic and rapidly expanding revolutionary movement. The aim of this movement, centrally and secretly led from different locations, was to uproot the Abbasids and install the imam recognized by the Ismailis to a new caliphate.

The religio-political *da'wa*, or missionary activities, of the early Ismailis resulted in the establishment of the Fatimid *dawla*, or state, in 297/909 in North Africa. The Ismaili imam had now begun to rule as the Fatimid caliph over an expanding empire. The *da'wa-dawla* relationship, which underlies this study in honour of Professor Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, continued to shape much of the subsequent religious history of the Fatimids.

The Fatimids revived their *da'wa* activities after consolidating their power in North Africa. But these activities achieved their greatest and most lasting success only outside the domains of the Fatimid *dawla*. Within the Fatimid territories, particularly in North Africa and Egypt, the Ismailis remained a minority community, even though Ismailism was the official religion of the realm and as such enjoyed the protection of the state. This explains why Ismailism disappeared in the lands of the Fatimid state on the demise of the Fatimid dynasty in 567/1171, while it survived in regions outside of the Fatimid *dawla*, guaranteeing the continuity of the Ismaili communities and traditions in subsequent centuries.

Indeed, by the closing decades of the 5th/11th century, the Ismaili *dā'īs*, or missionaries, had become quite successful in their activities in several non-Fatimid regions, notably Yaman, Syria, Iraq, Persia and Central Asia. These *dā'īs*, who received their instructions and other support from the central *da'wa* headquarters in Fatimid Cairo, had been rather successful in converting large numbers and winning their allegiance to the Ismaili imam of the time, then ruling as Fatimid caliph. It was upon such a foundation that Ismaili *dā'īs* succeeded in establishing two Ismaili states, in Yaman and Persia, enabling Ismailis to survive to our times in its two major Ṭayyibī and Nizārī branches. We shall now take a closer look at these Ismaili *da'wa-dawla* relations of medieval times.

* The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.

The Early Ismaili Da'wa

The Abbasids succeeded in 132/750 to the caliphate, in succession to the Umayyads, who had long-drawn confrontations with a variety of Shi'i groups. However, the change of dynasty proved to be a source of disillusionment for the Shi'is, who had expected an 'Alid, a member of the extended family of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, the first Shi'i imam, to succeed to the caliphate rather than a member of the Abbasid branch of the Bānū Hāshim, the Prophet's clan of the Quraysh that included the 'Alids as well. The Shi'i Muslims became further disappointed when the Abbasids soon began to persecute their former Shi'i supporters and many of the 'Alids. In time, the Abbasid caliph became the spiritual spokesperson of Sunni Islam, lending support to the elaboration of the Sunni interpretations of the Islamic message.

By the time of the Abbasid victory, Ja'far al-Šādiq, who had succeeded his father, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, as the imam of the Imāmiyya branch of Shi'ism, had acquired a widespread reputation also as a religious scholar. He had been propounding his views on the imamate, which became the central doctrine of Imāmī Shi'ism, the common heritage of the Ithnā'asharī, or Twelver, and Ismaili Shi'is. This doctrine was based on the belief in the permanent need of humankind for a divinely guided, sinless and infallible (*ma'šūm*) spiritual guide, or imam, who, after the Prophet Muḥammad, would act as the authoritative teacher of men in all their spiritual affairs. This imam, who could practise *taqiyya*, or precautionary dissimulation, when necessary, was also entitled to temporal rule as much as to religious authority. However, the imam's spiritual mandate did not depend on his actual rule. The doctrine further taught that the Prophet himself had designated 'Alī, his cousin and son-in-law (married to Fāṭima), as his legatee or *waṣī* and successor by explicit designation or *naṣṣ* under divine command. After 'Alī, the imamate would be transmitted from father to son by the rule of the *naṣṣ* amongst the descendants of 'Alī and Fāṭima (the Fāṭimid 'Alids), and after al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, it would continue in the Ḥusaynid branch of the 'Alid family until the end of time. This Ḥusaynid imam, the sole legitimate imam and spiritual guide at any time, is in possession of a special type of knowledge (*'ilm*), and has perfect understanding of the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and esoteric (*bāṭin*) meanings of the Qur'an and the message of Islam. Recognition of the true 'imam of the time', and obedience to him, were made the absolute duty of every believer (*mu'min*).¹

¹ A comprehensive statement of the doctrine of imamate may be found in the following Twelver and Ismaili works: Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfi*, ed. 'A. A. al-Ghaffārī (Tehran, 1388/1968), vol. 1, pp. 168-548 (*Kitāb al-ḥujja*), containing the earliest Imāmī Shi'i *ḥadīths* on the imamate, and al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān b. Muḥammad, *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, ed. Asaf A. A. Fyzee (Cairo, 1951-1961), vol. 1, pp. 14-98 (*Kitāb al-walāya*); English trans., *The Pillars of Islam*, tr. A. A. A. Fyzee, revised by I. K. Poonawala (New Delhi, 2002-2004), vol. 1, pp. 18-122.

According to the majority of the sources, Imam Ja'far al-Šādiq had originally designated his second son, Ismā'il, the eponym of the Ismā'iliyya, as his successor by the rule of *naṣṣ*. However, on al-Šādiq's death in 148/765, his Imāmī Shi'i followers split into several groups, two of which may be identified with the earliest Ismailis. These two groups, based in Kūfa, in southern Iraq, and later designated as the 'pure Ismailis' and the Mubārakis, recognized Ismā'il or his son Muḥammad b. Ismā'il as their respective imams. Furthermore, on the death of Muḥammad b. Ismā'il, not long after 179/795, his Mubārakī partisans split into two groups. A majority, who may be identified as the predecessors of the dissident Qarmaṭīs, refused to accept Muḥammad b. Ismā'il's death. They acknowledged Muḥammad as their seventh and last imam who would return as the Mahdi, or *qā'im*, the restorer of true Islam who would establish justice in the world. A second group affirmed Muḥammad b. Ismā'il's death and now began to trace the imamate in his progeny.² Meanwhile, another group of Imāmī Shi'is had traced their imamate in the progeny of another of Ja'far al-Šādiq's sons, Mūsā al-Kāzim; they were later designated as the Ithna'asharīs, or Twelvers, in view of the fact that they eventually recognized a line of twelve imams.

By the middle of the 3rd/9th century, a unified Ismaili movement had emerged. For almost a century after Muḥammad b. Ismā'il's death, a group of 'Alid leaders, well placed within the nascent Ismaili movement, had worked secretly for the formation of a unified revolutionary movement. These leaders did not openly claim the Ismaili imamate; and their real identities remained known only to a handful of close associates. They organized the Ismaili *da'wa* around the central belief of the bulk of the earliest Ismailis, namely, those who recognized Muḥammad b. Ismā'il as their hidden Mahdi.

During this initial phase in Ismaili history, known as the period of concealment (*dawr al-satr*), the Ismaili *dā'īs* were operating secretly in numerous regions and winning an increasing number of converts. By the 260s/870s, there had come into existence a single Ismaili movement. The Ismailis now referred to their religio-political movement simply as *al-da'wa* (the mission), or *al-da'wa al-hādiya* (the rightly guiding mission). It was a summons to all Muslims to give their allegiance (*bay'a*) to the sole legitimate imam of the time, the imam recognized by the Ismailis.

Centred on the expectation of the imminent emergence of the Mahdi who would establish the rule of justice in the world, the early Ismaili *da'wa* had a considerable Messianic appeal for underprivileged groups of diverse social backgrounds. The Mahdi would deliver a multitude of oppressed and dis-

² See al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *Kitāb firaq al-Shi'a*, ed. H. Ritter (Istanbul, 1931), pp. 57-58, 60-61; Sa'd b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qummī, *Kitāb al-maqālāt wa'l-firaq*, ed. M. J. Mashkūr (Tehran, 1963), pp. 80-81, 83, and F. Daftary, *The Ismā'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 2007), pp. 88-96.

contented groups from the inequities of the social order established under the Abbasids, who in the eyes of the Ismailis (as with the earlier Shi'is) were also the usurpers of the 'Alid rights to leadership. The revolutionary message of the Ismaili *da'wa* was disseminated throughout different regions, especially in Iraq, eastern Arabia (then known as Bahrayn) and Yaman, and among different social strata.³ Subsequently, the *da'wa* met with equal success in Persia and Central Asia,⁴ and later in North Africa. In particular, the *da'wa* won the support of many Imāmī Shi'is of the Twelver line, who at the time did not have a manifest imam or any organization after the death of their eleventh imam, al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, in 260/874.

After its initial success in Iraq and Bahrayn, the *da'wa* spread rapidly in Yaman. Ibn Ḥawshab, later known as Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, originally a Kūfan Imāmī, was converted by a *dā'ī* and then dispatched to Yaman, where he arrived in 268/881 accompanied by his chief collaborator 'Alī b. al-Faḍl. As a result of the rapid success of these *dā'īs*, the Ismaili *da'wa* was preached publicly in Yaman by 270/883; and by 293/905, when Ibn al-Faḍl occupied Ṣan'a', almost all of Yaman had been brought under the control of the Ismaili *dā'īs*, though later they lost much of it to the Zaydis established there. Yaman also served as a base for spreading the *da'wa* to remoter regions, especially North Africa.

The *dā'ī* Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shī'ī, and his elder brother Abū'l-'Abbās, too, had been converted in Kūfa from Imāmī (Twelver) Shi'ism to Ismailism. Subsequently, Abū 'Abd Allāh spent some time in Yaman operating under Ibn Ḥawshab. By 280/893, Abū 'Abd Allāh was already active as a *dā'ī* among the Kutāma Berbers of the Lesser Kabylia in Ifriqiya (present day eastern Algeria and Tunisia). Initially, he established himself in Īkjan, near Mīla, and propagated Ismailism in the name of the Mahdi. Subsequently, he transferred his headquarters to Tāzrūt, which remained the seat of the *da'wa* in North Africa for almost ten years. It was from that base that the *dā'ī* Abū

³ Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden, 1879-1901), series III, pp. 2124ff.; English trans., *The History of al-Ṭabarī: Volume XXXVII, The 'Abbāsid Recovery*, tr. Philip M. Fields (Albany, NY, 1987), pp. 169ff.; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol. 25, ed., M. J. 'A. al-Ḥinī (Cairo, 1984), pp. 189ff.; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 6, ed. Ṣ. al-Munajjid (Cairo, 1961), pp. 44ff.; Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā' bi-akhlāq al-a'imma al-Fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafā'*, ed. J. al-Shayyāl and M. Ḥ. M. Aḥmad (Cairo, 1967-1973), vol. 1, pp. 151ff. For the initiation of the *da'wa* in Yaman, see al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān b. Muḥammad, *Iftitāḥ al-da'wa*, ed. W. al-Qāḍī (Beirut, 1970), pp. 32-54; English trans., *Founding the Fatimid State: The Rise of an Early Islamic Empire*, tr. H. Haji (London, 2006), pp. 20-41.

⁴ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk (Siyāsāt-nāma)*, ed. H. Darke (2nd ed., Tehran, 1347/1968), pp. 282-295, 297-305; English trans., *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, tr. H. Darke (2nd ed., London, 1978), pp. 208-218, 220-226, and S. M. Stern, "The Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurāsān and Transoxania", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 23 (1960), pp. 56-90, reprinted in his *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism* (Jerusalem and Leiden, 1983), pp. 189-233.

'Abd Allāh converted the bulk of the Kutāma Berbers and transformed their tribal confederation into a disciplined army.⁵

Shi'i Islam had never developed deep roots in Ifrīqiya, where the Berber tribesmen generally adhered to diverse schools of Khārijism, while Qayrawān, its capital city, founded as a garrison town by Arab soldiers, along with many other towns of the region, were strongholds of Sunnism of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence. It is reported that the *dā'ī* Abū 'Abd Allāh exercised full authority over the affairs of the converted Kutāma Berbers and became very popular amongst them. He personally taught the Kutāma converts Ismaili doctrines in regular sessions (*majālis*), later designated as "sessions of wisdom" (*majālis al-ḥikma*), since esoteric Ismaili doctrine was referred to as "wisdom", or *ḥikma*. Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shi'i also had a group of subservient *dā'īs* who similarly held lecture sessions for their own local Berber converts, with separate sessions for women.

Meanwhile, in 286/899, shortly after his accession to the central leadership of the Ismaili *da'wa*, then located in Salamiyya in Syria, 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī (the future founder of the Fatimid caliphate) had felt secure enough to dispense with the *taqiyya* tactics of his predecessors. He now claimed the imamate openly for himself and his ancestors, the same individuals who had actually organized and led the Ismaili *da'wa* after Muḥammad b. Ismā'il. He later explained the dissimulating practices of his predecessors, who had hidden their identities under code-names and pretended to be the *ḥujjas*, or chief representatives, of the concealed Mahdi, Muḥammad b. Ismā'il, and he concluded that the earlier belief in the Mahdship of Muḥammad b. Ismā'il had itself been another *taqiyya* measure.⁶

'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī's declarations split the then-unified Ismaili *da'wa* and community into the rival dissident Qarmaṭī Ismailis and the loyal Ismailis. The latter accepted 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī's claims and acknowledged continuity in the Ismaili imamate, which became the official doctrine under the Fatimids. This loyal camp included the bulk of the Ismailis of Yaman and other communities founded in North Africa, Egypt and elsewhere by *dā'īs* dispatched by Ibn Ḥawshab. On the other hand, the dissident Qarmaṭīs, originally named after Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ, their first chief *dā'ī* in Iraq, retained their previous belief in the Mahdship of Muḥammad b. Ismā'il and refused to recognize as their imams 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī and his predecessors as well as successors in the Fatimid dynasty. The dissident Qarmaṭīs comprised the communities in Iraq and Bahrayn, and parts of Persia.

⁵ Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Iftitāḥ*, ed. al-Qāḍī, pp. 71-222; tr. Haji, pp. 55-183; M. Talbi, *L'Émirat Aghlabide, 184-296/800-909* (Paris, 1966), pp. 623-699, and H. Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids*, tr. M. Bonner (Leiden, 1996), pp. 9-128.

⁶ See Ḥusayn F. al-Ḥamdānī (ed. and tr.), *On the Genealogy of Fatimid Caliphs* (Cairo, 1958); F. Daftary, "A Major Schism in the Early Ismā'īlī Movement", *Studia Islamica*, 77 (1993), pp. 123-139, and his *The Ismā'īlīs*, pp. 116-126.

In fact, in the same year 286/899, the *dā'ī* Abū Sa'id al-Jannābī founded a Qarmatī *dawla* in Baḥrayn. Abū Sa'id, who married the daughter of the head of the prominent Banū Sanbar local family, had been active as a *dā'ī* for some time in Bahrayn, rapidly winning converts from amongst the bedouins and the Persians residing there. By 286/899, with the important support of the Rabi'i tribe, Abū Sa'id had brought the larger part of Bahrayn under submission. In 287/900, the Qarmatīs were in control of the suburbs of Hajar, the ancient capital of Bahrayn and the seat of the Abbasid governor. Around 290/903, Abū Sa'id finally seized Hajar after defeating an Abbasid army, and he now established his headquarters at al-Aḥsā', which later became the capital of the Qarmatī state of Bahrayn. Abū Sa'id had, in fact, founded a prospering state on the success of the Ismaili *da'wa* in eastern Arabia, the first such *dawla* created on the basis of the Ismaili *da'wa*. This state, lasting for almost two centuries until 470/1077, proved a menace not only to the Sunni Abbasids but also to the Shi'i Fatimids.⁷ The Qarmatīs of Bahrayn engaged in ravaging activities to the detriment of the entire Ismaili community, culminating in their attack on Mecca during the pilgrimage season in 317/930. All this prevented the Qarmatīs of Bahrayn from exercising any lasting influence over other Qarmatī communities which lingered on for some time in different parts of the Iranian lands.

Meanwhile, 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī had secretly left Salamiyya in 289/902, as his position had been compromised by the activities of some zealot *dā'īs*, led by Zikrawayh b. Mihrawayh and his sons, who had organized a premature campaign in Syria for declaring a Fatimid state there without the authorization of 'Abd Allāh himself. In 291/904, 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī arrived in Egypt, avoiding capture by the Abbasid agents who were then in pursuit of him. By the following year, instead of heading for Yaman, evidently his original destination, the Ismaili imam decided to go to the Kutāma country, where the *dā'ī* Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shī'i had already achieved much success. However, en route to Ifrīqiya the imam was obliged to change his plans once again, as the Aghlabid rulers of Ifrīqiya had learned about his imminent arrival. Under the circumstances, the imam joined a caravan of merchants and set off for the remote town of Sijilmāsa, in today's southeastern Morocco, and lived there quietly for four years (292-296/905-909); he maintained contact with Abū 'Abd Allāh, who was then preparing to launch the final military phase of his campaigns of conquest in Ifrīqiya.

⁷ On the Qarmatīs of Bahrayn and their relations with the Fatimids, see W. Madelung, "The Fatimids and the Qarmatīs of Baḥrayn", in F. Daftary, ed., *Medieval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 21-73, and F. Daftary, "Carmatians", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 4, pp. 823-832.

The Fatimid Dawla and Ismaili Da'wa

By 290/903, Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shī'i had commenced his conquest of Ifriqiya, covering today's Tunisia and eastern Algeria, then ruled by the Sunni Aghlabids on behalf of the Abbasids. After seizing the entire Kutāma region, Abū 'Abd Allāh embarked on systematic offensives against Ṭubna and other major cities of Ifriqiya. By 296/908, Abū 'Abd Allāh's Kutāma army had achieved much success, effectively signalling the fall of Qayrawān, the Aghlabid capital. Under the circumstances, Ziyādat Allāh III, the last Aghlabid ruler, hastily abandoned the palace city of Raqqāda, in the suburbs of Qayrawān, and fled to Egypt. On 1 Rajab 296/25 March 909, Abū 'Abd Allāh entered Raqqāda, receiving a delegation of the notables of Qayrawān who had come to congratulate the Ismaili *dā'ī* on his victory.

Acting as 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī's deputy, Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shī'i governed Ifriqiya for almost a whole year with his "helpers of the truth" (*anṣār al-ḥaqq*), as his Ismaili Kutāma Berbers were called. He appointed new governors to all major cities, and introduced the Shi'i form of *adhān*, or call to prayer. In the *khuṭba* at the Friday sermons, too, he added the blessings of the *ahl al-bayt* (the Prophet's family) but withheld the name of al-Mahdī, who was then still in Sijilmāsa. Abū 'Abd Allāh's newly struck coins heralded the arrival of God's proof (*ḥujjat Allāh*), reflecting the earlier Imāmī Shi'i tradition of using the terms *ḥujja*, or *ḥujjat Allāh*, and *imām* synonymously. Abū 'Abd Allāh's chief assistant was his brother Abu'l-'Abbās Muḥammad, a learned *dā'ī* of high intellectual calibre, who held numerous public disputations with the leading Mālikī Sunni jurists of Qayrawān in that city's Great Mosque, expounding the Shi'i foundations of the new order and the legitimate rights of the *ahl al-bayt* to the leadership of the Muslim community.⁸ The ground was, thus, rapidly laid doctrinally also for the establishment of a new Shi'i caliphate.

In the wake of consolidating his control over Ifriqiya, Abū 'Abd Allāh set off at the head of his Kutāma army towards Sijilmāsa to hand over the reins of power to 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī. The Ismaili imam made his triumphant entry into Raqqāda on 20 Rabī' II/4 January 910. On the same day, he was publicly acclaimed as ruler by the notables of Qayrawān and the Kutāma Berber chiefs; the following day, the *khuṭba* was pronounced for the first time in all the mosques of Qayrawān in the name of Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh, with his full titles, namely, *al-imām al-mahdī bi'llāh* (the imam rightly guided by God) and *amīr al-mu'minīn* (commander of the faithful).⁹ At the same time, a manifesto was read out from the pulpits announcing that the cali-

⁸ For these disputations and the events of the first year of Fatimid rule in Ifriqiya, see Abū 'Abd Allāh Ja'far Ibn al-Haytham, *Kitāb al-munāẓarāt*, ed. and tr. W. Madelung and P. E. Walker as *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shi'i Witness* (London, 2000), containing the memoirs of a *dā'ī*.

⁹ Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Iftitāh*, ed. al-Qāḍī, pp. 249-250; tr. Haji, pp. 205-206.

phate had finally come to be vested in the *ahl al-bayt*. The new caliphate was designated Fatimīd (Fāṭimiyya), derived from the name of the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, to whom al-Mahdī and his successors traced their 'Alid ancestry. The Shi'i caliphate of the Fatimids had now officially commenced in distant North Africa. The success of the early Ismaili *da'wa* was thus crowned, less than twenty years after its inauguration in Ifrīqiya, by the establishment of the Fatimid *dawla*, headed by the Ismaili imam of the time, in the very heart of Mālikī Sunni and Khārījī territories of North Africa.¹⁰

In line with their universal claims, the early Fatimid caliph-imams did not abandon their *da'wa* activities upon assuming power, retaining their networks of *dā'īs* both inside and outside the Fatimid *dawla*. However, the first three Fatimids, al-Mahdī (d. 322/934), al-Qā'im (d. 334/946) and al-Manṣūr (d. 341/953), who reigned entirely from Ifrīqiya, were primarily concerned with consolidating their power amid a highly hostile milieu. In addition to the continued animosity of the Abbasids, and the Umayyads of Spain, who as rival claimants to the caliphate had their own designs on North Africa, the Fatimids had numerous military encounters with the Byzantines. Closer to home, the early Fatimids were obliged to devote much of their energy to subduing both the rebellious activities of the Khārījī Berbers, especially those belonging to the Zanāta confederation, and also the hostilities of the Sunni inhabitants of Qayrawān and other cities of Ifrīqiya led by their influential Mālikī *fuqahā'* or jurists.

During the initial decades of Fatimid rule, when Ismailis represented a minority in a state dominated by Khārījī and Sunni communities, the Ismaili *da'wa* activities were rather dormant throughout the Fatimid dominions in Ifrīqiya. However, the Ismaili *dā'īs* had continued to be active in Yaman, Iraq and various parts of the Iranian world. Many of the eminent *dā'īs* now operating in Persia and Central Asia, such as Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/934) and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943), belonged to the dissident Qarmaṭī faction of Ismailism. At the time, the Qarmaṭīs still had their main stronghold in Bahrayn and remained very hostile towards the Fatimids, also frustrating the Fatimid designs of expansion towards the central lands of Islam.

Fatimid rule was firmly established in North Africa only during the reign of the fourth caliph-imam, al-Mu'izz (341-365/953-975). Taking advantage of the pacification and stability of the state, al-Mu'izz was able to pursue successful policies of war and diplomacy, transforming the Fatimid caliphate from a regional state into a great empire with flourishing intellectual, artistic and commercial activities. He was also the first member of his dynasty to have directly concerned himself with the affairs of the *da'wa*. In particular,

¹⁰ For an exhaustive survey of different categories of sources on the Fatimids, see Paul E. Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its Sources* (London, 2002), pp. 93-202.

he intensified the *da'wa* outside Fatimid dominions, partly to win the support of the dissident Qarmaṭīs and re-establish the ideological unity of the Ismaili movement. The Qarmaṭī propaganda then circulating in Bahrayn, Iraq and the Iranian lands generally undermined the *da'wa* activities of the Fatimids in these regions. Al-Mu'izz was also apprehensive of the dangerous influence of Qarmaṭī ideas on the beliefs of the loyal Ismailis of the eastern lands, who then acknowledged the Fatimid caliphs as their imams. The efforts of al-Mu'izz to gain the allegiance of the eastern Qarmaṭīs were partially successful. He won over the *dā'ī* Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 361/971), who now endorsed the imamate of the Fatimids. Consequently, the dissident Ismailis of Khurāsān, as well as Sīstān, too, lent their support mainly to the Fatimid cause. Through the activities of his *dā'īs*, al-Mu'izz also succeeded in establishing a Fatimid foothold in Sind, where around 347/958 a Fatimid vassal state was founded with its seat at Multān.¹¹ This Ismaili state survived until 396/1005 when Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna invaded Multān and annexed the region to his own dominions. However, Fatimid Ismailism survived in Sind and later received the protection of the Ismaili dynasty of the Sūmras, ruling from 443/1051 for almost three centuries.

Meanwhile, al-Mu'izz had made detailed preparations for the conquest of Egypt, a vital Fatimid goal which his predecessors had failed to achieve. The Fatimid expedition, led by Jawhar, the ablest of all the Fatimid generals, arrived in Fustāṭ, the old capital of Egypt, in Sha'bān 358/July 969. Jawhar camped his army to the north of Fustāṭ and proceeded to build a new city there. The future Fatimid capital was later called "al-Qāhira al-Mu'izziyya" (The Victorious One of al-Mu'izz), or al-Qāhira (Cairo) for short. Cairo soon became equipped with gates, royal palaces, mosques (including al-Azhar) and also buildings for government departments and the Fatimid army. Al-Mu'izz transferred the seat of the Fatimid state from Ifriqiya to Egypt, entering Cairo in 362/973. Henceforth, Cairo served as the seat of the Fatimid *dawla* as well as the central headquarters of the Ismaili *da'wa* with the Fatimid caliph-imam serving as the supreme head of both institutions.

By the time of al-Ḥākim (386-411/996-1021), the Fatimids had generally realized the difficulty of achieving a speedy conquest of the Muslim East. In fact, a stalemate had now developed between the Fatimids and the Būyids, the overlords of the Abbasids. Nonetheless, the Fatimids still aimed at penetrating the eastern lands of the Islamic world through their *da'wa* activities. As a result, the Ismaili *da'wa* was greatly intensified under al-Ḥākim, who

¹¹ Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (2nd ed., Leiden, 1906), pp. 481-482, 485; A. Hamdani, *The Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa in Northern India* (Cairo, 1956); A. Z. Khan, "Ismā'ilism in Multan and Sind", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 23 (1975), pp. 36-57; D. N. Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind* (Leiden, 1989), pp. 126-140, and Halm, *Empire of the Mahdi*, pp. 385-392.

also concerned himself with the training of the *dā'īs*. In 395/1005, al-Ḥākim founded the Dār al-'Ilm (House of Knowledge) in a section of the Fatimid Palace in Cairo.¹² Functioning as a true academy, this institution with its major library was used by scholars of different religious persuasions. Many Ismaili *dā'īs* received at least part of their training at the Dār al-'Ilm, which also variously served the Ismaili *da'wa* of the Fatimids.

The Ismaili *dā'īs* were now dispatched to diverse regions in the Islamic world, both inside and outside the Fatimid *dawla*. The *dā'īs* were openly active in Fatimid dominions in Egypt and Syria. But it was in the eastern regions, especially Iraq and Persia, that the *da'wa* became particularly successful and the *dā'īs* operating secretly began to win converts and sympathizers. A large number of *dā'īs* were assigned to those territories outside the Fatimid state, where they targeted various social strata. In Iraq, the seat of the Abbasid caliphate, the *dā'īs* evidently concentrated their efforts on local rulers and influential Arab tribal chiefs, with whose support they aimed to bring about the downfall of the Abbasids.¹³ Foremost among the Fatimid *dā'īs* operating in Persia and Iraq during the reign of al-Ḥākim was Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. ca. 411/1020), an eminent philosopher, and, arguably, the most learned Ismaili theologian of the entire Fatimid era.¹⁴ By the time of al-Ḥākim, the Qarmāṭīs of the eastern lands had lost much of their earlier influence, and, in Bahrayn they had become merely a local power.

The *da'wa* activities reached their peak during the long reign of al-Mustanshir (427-487/1036-1094). The *da'wa* organization, which had acquired a definite shape under al-Ḥākim, was expanded during al-Mustanshir's imamate. By this time, the Fatimids had progressively come to command the religious loyalty of numerous local Ismaili communities in many regions beyond the borders of their state, while Ismailism had never become the majority religion within the Fatimid dominions. The organization and evolution of the Fatimid Ismaili *da'wa*, as well as the scope and functions of various actual or potential ranks (*ḥudūd*) within that organization, are amongst the most obscure aspects of Ismailism.¹⁵

¹² Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-mawā'iz wa'l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār* (Būlāq, 1270/1853-1854), vol. 1, pp. 391, 458-460, and vol. 2, pp. 342, 363, and H. Halm, *The Fatimids and their Traditions of Learning* (London, 1997), pp. 71-78.

¹³ See Paul E. Walker, "The Ismaili *Da'wa* in the Reign of the Fatimid Caliph al-Ḥākim", *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 30 (1993), pp. 161-182, reprinted in his *Fatimid History and Ismaili Doctrine* (Aldershot, UK, 2008), article III.

¹⁴ See Daniel de Smet, *La Quiétude de l'intellect: Néoplatonisme et gnose Ismaélienne dans l'oeuvre de Ḥamīd ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī* (X/XI^es) (Louvain, 1995); Paul E. Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Ḥākim* (London, 1999), and F. Daftary, "Ḥamid-al-Din Kirmānī", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 11, pp. 639-641.

¹⁵ See A. Hamdani, "Evolution of the Organisational Structure of the Fāṭimī *Da'wah*", *Arabian Studies*, 3 (1976), pp. 85-114; Samuel M. Stern, "Cairo as the Centre of the Ismā'īlī Movement", in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire* (Cairo, 1972), pp. 437-450, reprinted, in his *Studies*, pp.

The *da'wa* was under the overall guidance of the Ismaili imam of the time, who authorized its policies and teachings. There was a single chief *dā'ī*, or *dā'ī al-du'āt*, also referred to as the *bāb* in the Ismaili sources, who acted as the executive head of the *da'wa* organization. He was closely supervised by the imam, and assisted by a number of subordinate *dā'īs*. The chief *dā'ī* was evidently also responsible for appointing the provincial *dā'īs* within the Fatimid state. The Ismaili authors make occasional allusions to the seemingly elaborate organizational structure of the *da'wa*, designated as the *ḥudūd al-da'wa*. It should be noted, however, that the hierarchy traceable in the Fatimid texts seems to have had reference to a paradigmatic or utopian situation, when the Ismaili imam would rule the entire world. In other words, it is certain that the diverse *da'wa* ranks mentioned in the sources were not actually occupied by incumbents at all times, and some of them may never have been filled at all.

The Fatimid Ismaili *da'wa* was organized hierarchically, in line with the particular importance accorded to hierarchism in Fatimid Ismaili thought. There are a number of partial accounts of the *da'wa* ranks or *ḥudūd* after the imam and his *bāb* (or *dā'ī al-du'āt*). All Ismaili authors agree that the world, presumably the non-Fatimid part of it, was divided into twelve *jazā'ir* (singular, *jazīra*; literally, island) for *da'wa* purposes, with each *jazīra* representing a separate and somewhat independent region for the penetration of the *da'wa*. To this author's knowledge, the complete list of these twelve regions, commonly designated as the "islands of the earth" (*jazā'ir al-arḍ*), may be found in only one Fatimid source, by al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (d. 363/974), the foremost Fatimid jurist who served as chief *dā'ī* and chief *qāḍī* (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*) under the early Fatimids.¹⁶ These *jazā'ir* included, for instance, al-'Arab (Arabs), al-Rūm (Byzantines), al-Hind (India), al-Sind (Sind), al-Zanj (Africans), al-Ṣīn (China), al-Daylam (Persia); and later Khurāsān and Yaman were also mentioned as representing such *jazā'ir*. Each *jazīra* was placed under the charge of a high ranking *dā'ī* called the *ḥujja* (proof or guarantor), also called *naqīb* or *lāḥiq* by the Ismaili authors of the early Fatimid period. The *ḥujja* was the chief local *dā'ī* and the highest representative of the *da'wa* in the region under his jurisdiction.

The *bāb* and twelve *ḥujjas* were followed, in the *da'wa* hierarchy, by a number of *dā'īs* of varying ranks and titles in every *jazīra*. Finally, there was the rank of the assistant to the *dā'ī*, generically titled as *ma'dhūn*, the licentiate. At the bottom of the *da'wa*, and not as a rank in its hierarchy, there was

234-253, and F. Daftary, "The Ismaili *Da'wa* outside the Fatimid *Dawla*", in M. Barrucand, ed., *L'Égypte Fatimide, son art et son histoire* (Paris, 1999), pp. 29-43, reprinted in his *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies* (London, 2005), pp. 62-88.

¹⁶ Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān b. Muḥammad, *Ta'wīl al-da'ā'im*, ed., Muḥammad Ḥasan al-A'zamī (Cairo, 1967-1972), vol. 2, p. 74, and vol. 3, pp. 48-49. See also Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, *Ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*, ed. 'Ārif Tāmīr (Beirut, 1966), p. 172, where seven of these *jazā'ir* are mentioned.

the ordinary initiate called *mustajīb* (literally, respondent). The initiated members of the community, now belonging to the *ahl al-da'wa*, represented the elite, as compared to non-Ismaili Muslims, or the *'āmmat al-Muslimīn*.

From early on, the term *dā'ī* was applied generically by the Ismailis in reference to any authorized representative of their *da'wa*, a religio-political propagandist responsible for spreading the Ismaili teachings and for winning suitable followers for the Ismaili imam. During the Fatimid period, the *dā'ī* was moreover the unofficial agent of the Fatimid *dawla* operating secretly in many non-Fatimid territories, where the *da'wa* aimed to establish the rule of the Fatimid caliph-imam. In spite of its unique importance to the Ismaili cause, however, almost nothing seems to have been written by the Ismailis on the subject of the *dā'ī* and his functions.

A general discussion of the qualifications and attributes of an ideal *dā'ī* is contained in what is evidently the only independent Ismaili treatise on the subject, written towards the end of the 4th/10th century by the *dā'ī* Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysābūrī. This treatise, *al-Risāla al-mūjaza*, has not survived directly, but it is quoted almost completely in some later Ismaili works.¹⁷ According to this treatise, a *dā'ī* could be appointed only by the imam's permission (*idhn*) and, having been sent to a certain locality, he would then operate rather independently of the central headquarters, receiving only general instructions from the central authorities. Only those candidates possessing the highest educational qualifications combined with the proper moral and intellectual attributes could become *dā'īs*. In addition to having good organizing abilities, the *dā'ī* was also expected to be sufficiently familiar with the teachings of different religions as well as various Islamic traditions, whilst knowing the local languages and customs of the province in which he was to operate.

Many of the Fatimid Ismaili *dā'īs* were highly trained in a variety of specialized institutions at Cairo and elsewhere, such as the Dār al-'Ilm and al-Azhar, prior to being sent to the field. The high degree of learning attained by Fatimid *dā'īs*, many of whom were outstanding scholars, is attested by the fact that the bulk of the Ismaili literature surviving from the Fatimid period was written by these *dā'īs*, who were thoroughly versed in theology, jurisprudence, philosophy and other fields of learning, as well as *ta'wīl* (esoteric exegesis), which became the hallmark of Ismaili thought. The *dā'ī* was also responsible for the training of his *ma'dhūns*, and for supervising the religious education of the *mustajīb*s. The Ismaili *da'wa* was propagated openly within the Fatimid *dawla*. But with the exception of Syria, where a diversity

¹⁷ Al-Naysābūrī's *al-Risāla al-mūjaza al-kāfiya fī ādāb al-du'āt*, ed. and tr. V. Klemm and P. E. Walker as *A Code of Conduct: A Treatise on the Etiquette of the Fatimid Ismaili Mission* (London, 2011), has been preserved at the end of Ḥatīm b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī's *Tuḥfat al-qulūb*, ed. A. Hamdani (Beirut, 2012), pp. 129-173.

of Shi'i traditions had already existed for centuries, the success of the *da'wa* in Fatimid dominions, stretching at various times from North Africa to Palestine and portions of Syria, was both very limited and transitory. It was in non-Fatimid territories, the *jazā'ir*, that the Ismaili *da'wa* achieved lasting success. That Ismailism survived the downfall of the Fatimid dynasty is indeed testimony to the achievements of the *dā'īs* operating outside the Fatimid *dawla*, especially in Yaman, Persia and Central Asia, where Ismailism survived in its Ṭayyibī and Nizārī forms.

The Ismaili Da'wa outside the Fatimid Dawla

Many of the non-Fatimid territories, scattered from Central Asia to Yaman, were already well acquainted with a variety of Shi'i traditions, including Ismailism, and responded positively to the summons of the learned and skillful *dā'īs*. By the time of al-Mustanşir, a dynamic and unified Ismaili movement had been established in the *jazā'ir*, and the dissident Qarmaṭīs, too, had by this time either disappeared or switched their allegiance to the Fatimids. The Fatimid Ismaili *da'wa* was propagated successfully in the eastern lands even after the Sunni Saljuqs had replaced the Shi'i Būyids as the overlords of the Abbasids in 447/1055. The *da'wa* was particularly active in Iraq and various parts of Persia as well as in the mountainous region of Badakhshān in Central Asia.

The most prominent *dā'ī* of al-Mustanşir's time was al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī. He was originally influential as a *dā'ī* in the Būyid circles of Fārs in Persia before going to Cairo in 439/1047. Henceforth, he played an active part in the affairs of the Fatimid *dawla* and Ismaili *da'wa*.¹⁸ In 450/1058, al-Mustanşir appointed him chief *dā'ī*, a post he held for almost twenty years until shortly before his death in 470/1078. In that capacity, al-Mu'ayyad established closer relations with *da'wa* leaderships in several *jazīras*, especially in Yaman and the Iranian world. He also played a central role as an intermediary between the Fatimids and the Turkish commander al-Basāsīrī, who briefly led the Fatimid cause in Iraq against the Saljuqs. Capitalizing on the success of the Ismaili *da'wa* in Iraq, al-Basāsīrī seized several cities there and finally entered Abbasid Baghdad, where he had the *khutba* read for one full year, from the end of 450/1058, in the name of the Fatimids while the Abbasid caliph was kept in captivity.

Another prominent *dā'ī* of al-Mustanşir's time in the *jazā'ir* was Nāṣir-i Khusraw, who played a key role in propagating the Fatimid Ismaili *da'wa* in

¹⁸ See al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Sīra*, ed. M. Kāmil Ḥusayn (Cairo, 1949); V. Klemm, *Memoirs of a Mission: The Ismaili Scholar, Statesman and Poet al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī* (London, 2003), and T. Qutbuddin, *Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī and Fatimid Da'wa Poetry* (Leiden, 2005).

the remote eastern regions of the Iranian world.¹⁹ A learned theologian, philosopher, traveller and poet, Nāṣir was born in 394/1004 near Balkh, then part of Khurāsān. Around 437/1045, Nāṣir experienced a spiritual upheaval and converted to Ismailism. Thereupon, he commenced his seven-year journey that took him to Fatimid Cairo.²⁰ Nāṣir stayed in Cairo for three years and was trained as a *dā'ī*, also establishing close relations with the *dā'ī* al-Mu'ayyad. Upon returning to Balkh, Nāṣir started his career as the *ḥujja* of Khurāsān. However, Nāṣir's success soon aroused the enmity of the Sunni 'ulamā', who enjoyed the support of the region's Saljuq rulers. Eventually, Nāṣir was obliged to take refuge in the valley of Yumgān, in Badakhshān, then ruled by an Ismaili *amīr*, Abu'l-Ma'ālī 'Alī b. al-Asad. He stayed in Yumgān at least for fifteen years until his death after 465/1072.

It was mainly during his period of exile in the midst of the Pamir mountains that Nāṣir-i Khusraw extended the *da'wa* throughout Badakhshān, while maintaining correspondence with the chief *dā'ī* al-Mu'ayyad and the headquarters of the *da'wa* in Cairo. Indeed, the Ismailis of Badakhshān (now divided between Tajikistan and Afghanistan) and their offshoot communities in the Hindu Kush region, now situated in Hunza and other northern areas of Pakistan, regard Nāṣir-i Khusraw as the founder of their communities. The Ismailis of Badakhshān, who later adhered exclusively to Nizārī Ismailism, have preserved Nāṣir's work as well as a good share of the Nizārī literature, all written in Persian.

In the meantime, the Fatimid *da'wa* had continued in many parts of Persia, now incorporated into the Saljuq sultanate. By the early 460s/1070s, the Persian Ismailis of the Saljuq dominions owned the authority of a single chief *dā'ī*, 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Aṭṭāsh, who had his secret headquarters at Iṣfahān, the main Saljuq capital. A learned *dā'ī*, 'Abd al-Malik evidently received his general instructions from Cairo, where Badr al-Jamālī had succeeded al-Mu'ayyad as *dā'ī al-du'āt* in 470/1078. 'Abd al-Malik revived the *da'wa* in many parts of the Saljuq dominions, and he was also responsible for launching the career of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, the future founder of the Nizārī Ismaili state and the independent Nizārī *da'wa*.

Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ was born in the mid-440s/1050s in Qumm, in central Persia, into a Twelver Shi'i family. Subsequently, the Ṣabbāḥ family moved to the nearby city of Rayy, the centre of the Ismaili *da'wa* in the Jibāl. It was at Rayy that soon after the age of seventeen Ḥasan was introduced to Ismaili doctrines by one of the several local *dā'īs*. There, he was initiated and took

¹⁹ See W. Ivanow, *Nāṣir-i Khusraw and Ismailism* (Bombay, 1948); Andrey E. Bertel's, *Nāṣir-i Khosrov i ismailizm* (Moscow, 1959), and Alice C. Hunsberger, *Nāṣir Khusraw, The Ruby of Badakhshan: A Portrait of the Persian Poet, Traveller and Philosopher* (London, 2000).

²⁰ Nāṣir-i Khusraw has left a vivid account of his travels, with a detailed description of Fatimid Cairo, in his *Safar-nāma*, ed. and tr. Wheeler M. Thackston Jr. as *Book of Travels* (Costa Mesa, CA, 2001).

the oath of allegiance (*'ahd*) to al-Mustanşir, the Ismaili imam of the time. Soon afterwards in 464/1072, Ḥasan was brought to the attention of the *dā'ī* 'Abd al-Malik, who was then staying in Rayy. Recognizing Ḥasan's talents, the *dā'ī* appointed him to a post in the *da'wa*. In 469/1076, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ set off for the Fatimid capital to further his Ismaili education, as Nāṣir-i Khusraw had done some three decades earlier according to the established practice of the Fatimid *da'wa*.²¹

Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ seems to have learned important lessons in Fatimid Egypt, where he stayed for three years. By that time, the Persian Ismailis were already aware of the declining fortunes of the Fatimid regime. The shrewd Ḥasan had witnessed the difficult situation of al-Mustanşir at the very heart of the Fatimid *dawla*. He must have realized that the Fatimid regime, then already under the effective control of the all-powerful vizier Badr al-Jamālī, lacked both the means and the resolve to assist the Persian Ismailis in their struggle against the ardently Sunni Saljuqs, whose alien rule was detested by Persians of different social classes. Upon returning to Persia in 473/1081, Ḥasan travelled extensively through Persia in the service of the *da'wa* for some nine years while already formulating his revolutionary strategy against the Saljuqs. Ḥasan, eventually appointed as *dā'ī* of Daylam, concentrated his attention on the general mountainous region of Daylam in northern Persia, and eventually chose the inaccessible fortress of Alamūt there to establish his headquarters. In 483/1090, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ cleverly seized that mountain stronghold, initiating a new phase of armed revolt of the Persian Ismailis against the Saljuqs and also marking the effective foundation of what was to become the independent Nizārī Ismaili state. This state comprised a network of fortresses in Daylam and Quhistān, in south-eastern Khurāsān, with a number of towns as well as fortresses in other regions of Persia, and later in Syria.²² The Ismaili state in Persia survived, despite numerous odds, until 654/1256 when it was uprooted by the all-conquering Mongols.

The Fatimid *da'wa* achieved another of its major external successes closer to Cairo, in Yaman where Ismailism had persisted in a subdued form throughout the 4th/10th century, receiving the secret allegiance of several

²¹ On Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ's life and career, see 'Aṭā-Malik Juwaynī, *Ta'rikh-i jahān-gushā*, ed. M. Qazwinī (Leiden and London, 1912-1937), vol. 3, pp. 186-216; English trans., *The History of the World-Conqueror*, tr. J. A. Boyle (Manchester, 1958), vol. 2, pp. 666-683; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh: qismat-i Ismā'īliyyān*, ed. M. T. Dānishpazhūh and M. Mudarrisi Zanjānī (Tehran, 1338/1959), pp. 97-137; ed. M. Rawshan (Tehran, 1387/2008), pp. 97-135; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins* (The Hague, 1955), pp. 41-98, and F. Daftary, "Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ and the Origins of the Nizārī Ismā'īli Movement", in Daftary, ed., *Medieval Ismā'īli History*, pp. 181-204, reprinted in his *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies*, pp. 124-148.

²² For the best description of Alamūt and other medieval Nizārī strongholds, see Peter Willey, *Eagle's Nest: Ismaili Castles in Iran and Syria* (London, 2005).

tribes, especially some of the Banū Hamdān. By the time of al-Mustanşir, the leadership of the *da'wa* in Yaman had fallen into the hands of 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ṣulayḥī, an important Hamdānī chieftain in the mountainous region of Ḥarāz. In 439/1047, the *dā'ī* 'Alī al-Ṣulayḥī rose in Ḥarāz marking the effective foundation of a Ṣulayḥid dynasty, ruling over different parts of Yaman as vassals of the Fatimids until 532/1138.²³

The foundation of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty ushered in a new, open phase in the history of Ismailism in Yaman, under the close supervision of Fatimid Cairo. The *dā'ī* 'Alī al-Ṣulayḥī headed the Ismaili *da'wa* as well as the Ṣulayḥid *dawla* in Yaman. On the death of 'Alī in 459/1067, Lamak b. Mālik al-Ḥammādī, who had earlier spent five years in Cairo staying with the chief *dā'ī* al-Mu'ayyad at the Dār al-'Ilm, was appointed as chief *dā'ī* of Yaman while 'Alī's son Aḥmad al-Mukarram succeeded his father merely as head of the Ṣulayḥid state. However, from the latter part of al-Mukarram's rule, effective authority in the Ṣulayḥid state was exercised by his consort, al-Malika al-Sayyida Arwā. It is a testimony to the Ṣulayḥid queen's capabilities that upon the assumption of political power she also came to play an increasingly important role in the *da'wa* affairs, which culminated in her appointment as the *ḥujja* of Yaman by al-Mustanşir shortly after the death of her husband in 477/1084.²⁴ She was also entrusted with the *da'wa* activities in Gujārāt, in western India; and the Ismaili community founded there in the second half of the 5th/11th centuries by *dā'īs* dispatched from Yaman evolved into the modern Ṭayyibī Bohra community. In 460/1068, the Ṣulayḥids conferred 'Adan's governorship on two Hamdānī brothers, who founded the Ismaili dynasty of the Zuray'ids (460-571/1068-1175).

The unified Ismaili *da'wa* of al-Mustanşir's period split into two rival branches upon his death in 487/1094, later designated as Nizāriyya and Musta'liyya. Nizār b. al-Mustanşir (d. 488/1095), the original heir-designate, was deprived of his succession rights by the powerful vizier al-Afdal, who installed Nizār's much younger brother al-Musta'li (d. 495/1101) to the Fatimid caliphate. The imamate of al-Musta'li was also acknowledged by the official *da'wa* establishment in Cairo, as well as by the Ismaili communities of Egypt, Yaman and western India. These Ismailis, who depended on the Fatimid regime and later traced the imamate through al-Musta'li's progeny,

²³ Idris 'Imād al-Dīn b. al-Ḥasan, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 7, ed. A. F. Sayyid, with summary English trans. by P. E. Walker and M. A. Pomerantz, as *The Fatimids and their Successors in Yaman* (London, 2002), text pp. 5-36, 98-150. See also Ḥusayn F. al-Hamdānī, *al-Ṣulayḥiyyūn wa'l-ḥaraka al-Fāṭimiyya fi'l-Yaman* (Cairo, 1955), pp. 62-231.

²⁴ Idris 'Imād al-Dīn, *Uyūn*, vol. 7, text pp. 150-177; F. Daftary, "Sayyida Ḥurra: The Ismā'īlī Ṣulayḥid Queen of Yemen", in Gavin R. G. Hambly, ed., *Women in the Medieval Islamic World* (New York, 1998), pp. 117-130, reprinted in his *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies*, pp. 89-103, and D. Cortese and S. Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam* (Edinburgh, 2006), pp. 129-140.

maintained their relations with Cairo, which served hereafter as headquarters of the Musta'lian Ismaili *da'wa*.

The situation was quite different in the eastern lands where the Fatimids no longer exercised any political influence. By 487/1094, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ pursuing his revolutionary policy had clearly emerged as the uncontested leader of the Ismailis of Persia; and, in the dispute over al-Mustansīr's succession, Ḥasan showed no hesitation in supporting Nizār's rights. In fact, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ now founded the independent Nizārī Ismaili *da'wa* and severed his ties with the Fatimid regime and the *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo. He preached the Nizārī *da'wa* on behalf of the Nizārī imams, who remained inaccessible for several decades. And in their absence, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ and his next two successors at Alamūt claimed to be the *ḥujjas*, or chief representatives, of the hidden imams. The Nizārī Ismaili *da'wa*, thus, survived the downfall of the Fatimid *dawla*, as well as that of the Nizārī Ismaili state.

Meanwhile, the assassination of al-Āmir, al-Musta'li's son and successor to the Fatimid throne, in 524/1130 confronted the Musta'lian Ismailis with a new succession dispute that split their community into Ḥāfiẓī and Ṭayyibī factions. The Fatimid caliphate, too, was now on the verge of disintegration, marked by an almost uninterrupted chain of dynastic, religious, political and military crises. On al-Āmir's death, power was assumed by his cousin al-Ḥāfiẓ, who soon also claimed the imamate. As in the case of the Nizārī-Musta'lian schism, al-Ḥāfiẓ's imamate was endorsed by the *da'wa* headquarters in Cairo; and, hence, it also received the support of the bulk of the Musta'lian Ismailis of Egypt and Syria, as well as the Zuray'ids of 'Adan, who now became the chief *dā'īs* of the Ḥāfiẓī *da'wa* in Yaman.²⁵ These Ismailis, recognizing al-Ḥāfiẓ and the later Fatimids as their imams, became known as the Ḥāfiẓiyya. All Ḥāfiẓī Ismaili communities disappeared soon after the fall of the Fatimid dynasty in 567/1171. On the other hand, the Ṣulayḥid al-Sayyida Arwā, who had already become somewhat disillusioned with Fatimid Cairo, championed the cause of al-Āmir's infant son, al-Ṭayyib, and recognized him as his father's successor to the Musta'lian imamate. These Musta'lian Ismailis of Yaman, India, and some other parts, were later designated as the Ṭayyibiyya. Queen Arwā broke off her relations with Cairo and the Fatimid regime, similarly to what Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ had done a few decades earlier.

Until her death in 532/1138, al-Sayyida Arwā made every effort to consolidate the Ṭayyibī *da'wa*. It was soon after 526/1132 that she declared al-Dhu'ayb b. Mūsā al-Wādī'ī (d. 546/1151) as *al-dā'ī al-muṭlaq*, or *dā'ī* with absolute authority, to lead the *da'wa* on behalf of al-Ṭayyib, who remained hidden. This marked the foundation of the independent Ṭayyibī *da'wa*, henceforth called *al-da'wa al-Ṭayyibiyya*. Having earlier severed her ties with

²⁵ On these schisms, see Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, pp. 241-248.

the Fatimid regime, she now made the new Ṭayyibī *da'wa* independent of the Ṣulayḥid *dawla*, a measure that was to ensure the survival of Ṭayyibī Ismailism under the leadership of a *dā'ī al-muṭlaq*. Al-Dhu'ayb's successors, as leaders of the Dā'ūdī, Sulaymānī and 'Alawī branches of Ṭayyibī Ismailism, have all retained this title down to the present day. The Ṭayyibī Ismailis of all branches are of the opinion that their imamate has been handed down, in the current period of *satr*, or concealment, among al-Ṭayyib's descendants, all remaining hidden until the present time.

That Ismailism has survived in its Nizārī and Ṭayyibī forms has, to a large measure, been thus due to the success of the Ismaili *dā'īs* who operated outside the Fatimid *dawla*, but were variously supported by the central *da'wa* headquarters and machinery located in Cairo. In no small measure this lasting success may also be traced to the foresight and leadership abilities of two outstanding *ḥujjas* of the hidden imams in medieval Ismaili history, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (d. 518/1124) and the Ṣulayḥid al-Sayyida Arwā (d. 532/1138). Although the Fatimids failed to establish their rule over the entire Muslim community, they did indirectly succeed, through the activities of their *da'wa*, in ensuring the continuity of their Shi'i Ismaili heritage after losing their *dawla* to stronger Sunni adversaries.