

Introduction

I. GENERAL PRESENTATION

Like all literary classics, the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām* (*The Book of the Master and the Disciple*) is an old, yet timeless story: the initial story of one seeker’s quest for and gradual realisation of the ‘truth’—the spiritual knowledge and eternal life of the true ‘knowers,’ the ‘friends of God’—and the ongoing story of their necessary return to this world in order to fulfil their responsibility to transmit that divine ‘trust’ and discovery to their fellow human beings, to their family and the other members of their wider community, in the ways that are appropriate to each situation.¹ Like its models and constant source of inspiration in the Qur’an and hadith, this story is only a sort of map—a guide and reminder—that readers must follow and interpret in their own way, in the light of their own experience and insight. Since the universal meaning and interest of this tale, and its remarkable artistic qualities, are so readily apparent, we shall say only a few words in this opening section concerning its main themes and structure. For this work, despite its age and unfamiliar origins, should be immediately accessible to most readers without any further introduction.

However, it is also true that the original Arabic text of the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām*—which has unfortunately remained hidden from the wider Arabic and Islamic world for many centuries—is a

work of substantial *historical* importance with regard to (a) the development of Arabic literature (especially in its unique use of the dramatic dialogue form); (b) the still largely unexplored relations between Sufi themes and institutions and corresponding dimensions of earlier Shi'ī tradition; (c) our general understanding of the early stages of Ismaili Shi'ism and the Fatimid *da'wa*, which are still too often the subject of many highly inaccurate myths and stereotypes; and (d) the still relatively unstudied religious history of the Musta'li branch of Ismailism from the fall of the Fatimid state down to the present day. These and other historical aspects of the work are discussed in greater detail in section II of this Introduction. In addition, since the author of this book, Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman (late 3rd-early 4th century AH), is largely unknown to any but a handful of scholarly specialists, we have outlined in section III what little is known of his life and main surviving writings, virtually all of which are still unpublished. section IV examines the significance for the reader of the author's complex usage of Qur'anic passages and allusions throughout this text. Finally, section V of the Introduction discusses the manuscripts of the Arabic text and the methods and format followed in this critical edition, including its notes and indexes.

The *Kitāb al-'Ālim wa'l-ghulām* is, to begin with, the dramatic presentation of a series of personal encounters between various seekers of the spiritual truth and other individuals who act in some way as their spiritual guide or 'father.' Thus we are presented not only with the relationship between the 'Master' or 'Knower' ('*ālim*) and his disciple or 'young man' (*ghulām*) mentioned in the title, but also with those between the overall narrator and his disciples (in the opening and concluding paragraphs); between the Knower and his own spiritual master; between the young man Ṣāliḥ and the 'highest master' (*al-shaykh al-aḥbar*), at the centre and climax of the book; between Ṣāliḥ and his own physical father; between the religious dignitary Abū Mālik and the other notables of his city; and finally the long disputation between Ṣāliḥ and Abū Mālik at the end. Now each of these archetypal spiritual encounters—which together underline the full variety of human capacities and predispositions in this domain, and the correspondingly wide range of appropriate

methods of spiritual pedagogy and guidance—can be viewed from either side of those relationships. Or, as the narrator puts it at the very beginning of the work (paragraph [3]), this book is about *both* the proper behaviour of those who are seeking the truth (*ādāb al-ṭalībīn*) and the ‘ways of proceeding’—through appropriate action, teaching and belief—of ‘the righteous,’ of those who are spiritually receptive, prepared and suited for those ways (*madhāhib al-ṣāliḥīn*).

So if the dramatic focus and unity of the work flows initially from the reader’s natural interest in the fate of the sympathetic young hero (the aptly named ‘Ṣāliḥ’), the ongoing fascination and lasting interest of this book also derive from its deeper insight into the real possibilities and conditions of spiritual growth and guidance, which are tellingly revealed in the contrasting attitudes and approaches of the various spiritual teachers in different contexts of study and initiation. At this more profound level of intention, the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām* continues to offer new insights at each reading, like a mirror reflecting each reader’s own experience and personal situation—just as is the case with those scriptures that are the author’s own constant reference and point of departure.

Of course, this analogy to the understanding of revelation is anything but accidental here, since the structure and composition of this text as a whole is governed at each stage by the fundamental distinction between the three dimensions of the ‘outward,’ ‘inner’ and ‘innermost spiritual’ aspects of reality (*zāhir*, *bāṭin* and *bāṭin al-bāṭin*: see especially paragraphs [144]–[169]). However, here those categories are not simply applied to the interpretation of the Qur’an and the *sharī‘a*, but in fact correspond more fundamentally both to the basic metaphysical structures of all reality (*dunyā*, *ākhirā*, etc.) and to the corresponding human spiritual types and forms of awareness—that is, to the essential spiritual stages of the ‘divine knower,’ the ‘seeker of (spiritual) knowledge,’ and the wayward masses mentioned in the famous saying of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib that is alluded to in several key passages.² And equally important, in still another perspective, are the similar correspondences of those three metaphysical categories with the earthly and spiritual hierarchies of Ismaili religious guidance, the *ḥudūd al-dīn*.³

Now it is the possibility of movement between these levels, the natural impetus to reach a higher degree of spiritual understanding, that forms the dynamic and dramatic aspect of this work, indeed its very *raison d'être*, while at the same time determining the extraordinary suitability of the dialogue form. For the essential characteristic of the spiritual reality (*al-ḥaqq*) or 'true religion' (*dīn Allāh, dīn al-ḥaqq*, etc.), the essential spiritual level of the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*, is that it cannot be fully expressed, or perceived, either as mere formal, subjective belief (the *zāhir*) or as the symbols that represent the esoteric hierarchy of the *bāṭin*. Therefore it cannot ultimately be 'taught' in any of the ways which might be appropriate to those two lower levels; it can only be lived. Hence the bridge to each higher level of spiritual insight can only be crossed by means of the appropriate action and experience, the difficult—and necessarily unique and individual—ongoing task of inner spiritual effort and realisation. The master can at best only guide and encourage that delicate and indispensable process of spiritual alchemy.

Thus this central theme of the essential interplay between spiritual knowing and right action (*'ilm* and *'amal*)—and of their ever-present common ground in divine grace (*al-minna*)—constantly underlies the dramatic development of this work. And if every reader must ultimately supply the actual correlates of those terms from their own experience, still the author has so artfully presented the more universal roots of that search in the recurrent painful doubt, constriction and neediness of the unenlightened soul—through the exemplary figures of both the young 'disciple' Šāliḥ and the learned theologian Abū Mālik—that almost anyone can identify with at least the initial stages of their quest.

This ultimate spiritual finality of the *bāṭin al-bāṭin* likewise openly determines the treatment of the historical and institutional means or 'vehicles' for its realisation in this story—most notably the organisation of the early (pre-Fatimid) Ismaili *da'wa* and its particular structures and teachings within the larger context of Islamic thought and history. Here (unlike many of the author's later, more specifically Ismaili writings) the decisive role of those particular historical institutions and intentions, although constantly assumed, is largely implicit at first, so that each reader—like Abū Mālik and his followers

at the end—is repeatedly challenged to put the central characters' far-reaching claims to the critical test of personal experience and commitment. But the ultimate practical criterion—in this book, at least—clearly remains the actual effectiveness of this or any other path in realising those universal spiritual aims that are so artfully evoked and presented here. In this respect, modern readers of the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām* can hardly avoid noticing the recurrent homologies and similarities, whether at the experiential level of spiritual realisation or in the more formal domain of key religious ideas and structures, between this Ismaili text and certain more familiar features of later Sufism. Whatever the possible historical connections between these two vast Islamic movements (see section II.B below), such striking resemblances do lead the attentive reader back toward their common spiritual source and inspiration in the Qur'an and hadith.

II. THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE KITĀB AL-ʿĀLIM WA'L-GHULĀM

As already mentioned, the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām*, quite apart from its intrinsic literary and philosophic merits, should also be of considerable historical interest to scholars and students of (a) the development of Arabic prose literature; (b) the historical relations of Sufism and esoteric Shi'ism; and (c) early Shi'i movements and the spread of the Ismaili-Fatimid *da'wa*. The special historical importance of this work has not yet been adequately reflected in writing on those fields, due to its long period of virtual inaccessibility outside the Musta'li-Ṭayyibī tradition of Ismailism. The fact that modern researchers now do have access to this text and to many other related writings also serves to underline our relative lack of accessible in-depth studies of (d) the religious and philosophic history of the post-Fatimid Musta'li branch of Ismailism, both in Yemen and later in India.

A. The Literary Form of the Text¹

To the best of our knowledge, the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām* is by far the most accomplished example of the full-scale narrated⁵ dramatic dialogue form in Arabic literature—an example all the more remarkable in that it seems to have been developed in relative autonomy, on the basis of the Arabic sources discussed below, without any direct influence, for example, from the early dialogues of Plato (even if one finds remarkable literary and philosophic parallels, almost surely unknown to our author, in the similar narrative frameworks of the Platonic dialogues). Ja‘far b. Maṣūn al-Yaman’s re-creation of that literary form is especially noteworthy for his strikingly appropriate use of dramatic realism and irony (especially in his characters’ widely contrasting development of Qur’anic and theological allusions)—characteristics which are likewise of central importance in the Socratic dialogues, but which were seldom effectively realised by Plato’s later philosophic imitators. The author’s realistic, moving portrayal of certain spiritual (and social) ‘types’—most notably in the more fully developed characters such as the young disciple Ṣāliḥ and the learned theologian Abū Mālik—has already been noted. But even more important in conveying his essential message is the repeated ironic contrast (sometimes not without a touch of humour) between the different meanings of the same key religious terms (e.g., the Mu‘tazilī slogan of divine ‘unity and justice’ (*‘adl wa tawḥīd*) in the concluding theological discussion with Abū Mālik) as they are perceived by characters with radically differing degrees of spiritual understanding.

The same remarkably developed stylistic characteristics also serve to bring out—again as in real life (or as with Socrates)—the essentially dialectical or rhetorical nature of many of the discussions, in which the ‘guiding’ figure tentatively adopts his interlocutor’s own (false or inadequate) premises and then exaggerates or twists them to make a philosophically significant (and personally appropriate) point.⁶ The artful marriage of all these distinctive features of the dramatic dialogue form provides repeatedly highlighted reminders that each seeker’s understanding of spiritual meanings—the saving ‘knowledge’ in question throughout this work—is, above all, a

function of individual states of awareness and particular contexts and predispositions, of inner realities that can never be adequately conveyed on the uni-dimensional plane of abstract concepts, rote transmission and rhetorical disputation corresponding to the popularly accepted 'knowledge' of the formally 'learned' (the '*ulamā*') in this or any other tradition.

Now the immediate historical antecedents for Ja'far b. Manṣūr's extraordinary development of this particular literary form, so far as we can tell, are to be found primarily in three types of Arabic religious literature whose direct traces can be seen—artfully transformed—throughout the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, as well as the author's other writings.⁷ The most obvious of these influences is of course the example of certain particularly relevant emblematic spiritual narratives within the Qur'an (e.g. Moses and the mysterious divine 'servant,' later known as al-Khāḍir, in the Sura of the Cave; or Joseph and his brothers), along with the amplification and development of many shorter Qur'anic stories or allusions in the later literatures of textual commentary (*tafsīr*) and the 'tales of the prophets' (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*)—a vast literature which, especially in its traditional Shi'i expressions, is a major subject of many of Ja'far b. Manṣūr's later theological works. The second area is the immense literature of hadith—in Ja'far's case, both from the Prophet and from the early Shi'i imams—which often does contain famous anecdotes perfectly illustrating the kind of dramatic spiritual encounters and conversations developed at length in the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, although usually in the hadith on a much shorter and less elaborate scale.

The third obvious form of literary or rhetorical influence—openly mirrored here in the long concluding debate between Ṣāliḥ and the Mu'tazilī theologian Abū Mālik—is the widespread practice in the author's time of religious and theological disputations (*munāzarāt*), such as the famous discussions with the physician Abū Bakr al-Rāzī described by Ja'far b. Manṣūr's near-contemporary, the Persian Ismaili thinker and missionary Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, in his *Kitāb A'lām al-nubuwwa*.⁸ In particular, we only recently have had access, in a well-annotated English translation, to a long 'Book of Disputations' (*Kitāb al-Munāzarāt*) in this genre, which is of extraordinary

historical interest since its author is a slightly older Tunisian Shi'i scholar (Ibn al-Haytham) whose adult life was largely spent working for the early Fatimid court and whose writing brilliantly depicts the actual methods and approaches of learned Ismaili teachers and missionaries in the earlier period of 'concealment' (*satr*) of the imams immediately prior to, and at the very beginning of, the Fatimid caliphate in North Africa, perhaps only a few years after the composition of the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām*.⁹ However, it is noteworthy that almost all our direct literary 'imitations' of such debates, including the elaborate Ismaili versions of al-Rāzī and Ibn al-Haytham—perhaps partly because they were normally written down by only one of the two debating parties—tend to be remarkably dry, stilted and artificial (as in most later Western philosophic imitations of Plato's dramatic dialogue form). In fact, it is probably the famous humorous parodies of such scholarly debates in books such as al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* that come closest to catching the dramatic vivacity, humour and vigour of Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr's own writing at its best.

Finally, a fourth possible, if more hypothetical, literary influence on Ja'far's writing would be the complex genre of edifying Arabic tales and fables (often adapted from earlier Hellenistic, Christian and Indian sources) that is exemplified by such diverse works as the famous stories of *Kalīla wa Dimna*, the fascinating *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Budhāsf*, or the famous political animal parables of the Ikhwān al-Safā'.¹⁰

However, even the most cursory comparison of the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām* with any of these earlier Arabic literary genres only serves to emphasise the extraordinary originality and literary power by which its author so creatively and subtly adapted those materials to the expression of his chosen subject.¹¹ Those distinctive literary characteristics are especially evident, to begin with, in his constant maintenance of the inner thematic coherence and philosophic unity of the work, despite its length, shifting settings and the considerable diversity of its cast of characters. Even more striking is his remarkable ability to marry dramatic realism with the intellectual demands of his subject, so as to depict in a credible manner the growth, ongoing change and sudden shifts of perspective and

awareness which actually are such essential features of inner spiritual life and development. Those traits are perhaps most beautifully illustrated in the way in which the author only gradually reveals the inner reality of spiritual ignorance underlying the extensive conceptual and traditional knowledge and formal beliefs of the young disciple at the beginning of the work, and of the learned Abū Mālik at the end. Most obviously, all of these outstanding literary characteristics are equally distant both from the episodic, often purely allegorical approaches of earlier (and later) fables and edifying tales, and from the one-dimensional, purely conceptual rhetorical positions of the disputation form in any of the literary examples that have come down to us. In comparison with those possible Arabic 'sources,' one can only marvel at the highly accomplished development of this distinctive literary genre of the dramatic dialogue in the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām*.

B. Sufism and Esoteric Shi'ism

The apparent resemblances between certain approaches in this work and many familiar aspects of later forms of Sufism, whether on the planes of religious ideas, individual spiritual realisation or socio-institutional arrangements, are so frequent that their full analysis would require a book in itself. However, where religious ideas and spiritual realities are concerned, it would be very difficult to demonstrate that those formal similarities reflect hypothetical historical 'influences' (in either direction), since such similarities obviously owe a great deal to the common sources and spiritual inspiration of both Sufism and esoteric Shi'ism in the teachings of the Qur'an and hadith,¹² on the one hand, and in certain universal realities of human nature and experience (especially the essential connections between spiritual understanding (*'ilm*) and practical experience on the other). In the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām*, of course, this latter dimension of universality is dramatically underlined by the intentional, carefully constructed aura of uncertainty concerning the time and place of the story and the mundane details of its characters' lives. And these same universal themes—especially the emphasis on the perennial role of the spiritual hierarchy (the

ashbāb), and of the constant presence of the 'friends of God' (the Qur'anic *awliyā' Allāh*) as humanity's spiritual guides—are developed in profuse detail, with reference to all the central figures and symbols of earlier Islamic religious tradition, throughout the author's other surviving writings.

Here, however, we can only mention two of the more historically significant points of convergence between the thought of the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām* and later Sufi conceptions in Islam. The first of these is that the highest degree of true spiritual knowledge and insight characterising the 'friends of God' is always represented as something to which *each* properly qualified disciple can aspire and eventually attain, given the appropriate inner discipline, spiritual intention and the equally essential elements of divine grace and support (*tawfiq*, *minna*, etc.). Although this fundamental possibility clearly underlies the aims and structure of our text as a whole, as the ultimate goal of the spiritual path it is brought out most openly in paragraphs [159]–[169], where the Knower also pointedly, albeit discreetly, alludes to the possibility that the disciple's own *inner* imam or guide ('*your* imam,' the *ḥabl Allāh*)—like the realities of the spiritual hierarchy and the spiritual world (*bāṭin al-bāṭin*) more generally—may be other than the visible imam and his representatives in this world.

The second striking point of 'parallelism' here is the spiritualisation and concrete 'internalisation' of earlier Islamic theological discussions (especially in Mu'tazilī *kalām*) concerning the divine names and attributes: i.e., their transformation from the relatively abstract, conceptual context of scholastic theology into a comprehensive metaphysical expression of the divine presence as mirrored and manifested—and realised to greatly varying degrees—in the very human presence and indispensable guiding example of the 'friends of God' (the *awliyā'*). That essential metaphysical 'personalisation' of *kalām* conceptions is already quite evident here both in the initiatic 'naming' episode (paragraphs [268]–[288]) and especially throughout the longer discussions with the Mu'tazilī Abū Mālik concerning the true—or at least, the humanly knowable—reality of God's 'unity and justice.'¹³ In these passages in particular, that traditional theological vocabulary, in this newly 'Platonised'

perspective, already provides a coherent conceptual framework for expressing the inner relations of those fundamental metaphysical categories and dimensions of reality—the *ẓāhir*, *bāṭin* and *bāṭin al-bāṭin*—whose importance was already mentioned above.

Needless to say, the early Ismaili *da'wa* (and Shi'ī thought more generally) also had its own historical specificities which are amply illustrated throughout this dialogue, features which have now been studied in detail by several generations of political and intellectual historians.¹⁴ No doubt the most obvious and most practically important of those distinctive features is Ja'far b. Manṣūr's thoroughgoing insistence—particularly in the impassioned concluding paragraphs of Ṣāliḥ's discussion with Abū Mālik—on the wider, universal *political* role of the Ismaili imamate and the *da'wa* structure as guides, not just for a relatively small spiritual elite, but potentially for the Islamic community (and indeed even humankind) as a whole. And this broader politico-religious perspective and ambition, of course, reflects the author's (and his family's) own openly Ismaili historical commitments, an engagement that is expressed even more plainly in all that we know of his family background, his life and works, as explained in the biographical discussions below.

However, given the distinctively spiritual justification and metaphysical framework underlying that political commitment as it is explained in the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, it is certainly easy to see how the activity and teachings of the type of *da'wa* (preaching and teaching) so vividly portrayed in this work—to the degree that Ja'far b. Manṣūr's idealised image does reflect actual practices—could easily have been quite influential in helping to convey similar spiritual conceptions and related understandings of Islam into those many historical settings where the more purely political aspirations of the Fatimids eventually became ineffective, discredited in public opinion (by the ensuing centuries of 'cold war' and 'propaganda' under first the Abbasids and then their Seljuq successors), or were simply no longer a viable option.¹⁵ In other words, since we know that the Ismaili and subsequent Fatimid teachers like those dramatically depicted here were historically active throughout the Islamic world for several centuries, Ja'far's work suggests important ways in which their religious teachings could well have had more lasting and

far-reachingly creative influences in domains which extended far beyond the more visible, public historical signs of Shi'i ideological adherence and overt political success.¹⁶

C. Early Ismailism and the Pre-Fatimid *Da'wa*

The past century has seen a remarkable profusion of scholarly studies of the formative phase of Ismaili Shi'ism in its wider historical contexts, both during the earliest period of 'concealment' (*satr*) and during the initial North African period of the Fatimid dynasty, thanks to pioneering research by Ivanow, Hamdani, Strothman, Corbin, Stern and others, and then to more recent detailed studies by Nagel, Halm, Madelung and other researchers cited in our Bibliography. The broad features of that vast and lastingly influential historical movement developed by those scholars have been carefully summarised in the recent, widely accessible surveys of Ismaili history by Farhad Daftary, and are therefore sufficiently familiar to interested students of Islamic history today so that there is no need to repeat them here.

However, those approaching the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* without any specialised background in early Ismailism and its wider context in Islamic history of the 3rd-4th/9th-10th centuries may well be surprised to discover that they have acquired indirectly some very vivid and useful impressions of that long-ago historical context from a most unexpected source. If the 'general readers' of Islamic history in this period may at most be numbered in the thousands, millions of people world-wide have read some of the *Dune* novels of Frank Herbert (or seen the film based on the first volume of that series) without ever realising that they were actually encountering a powerful, imaginative recreation in a 'science-fiction' setting of this formative period of Ismaili and Islamic history. For the *Dune* stories were apparently based loosely on Ibn Khaldūn's famous *History*, a historical account which, interestingly enough, largely derives its presentation of this period ultimately from Ja'far b. Manṣūr's own dramatic history of his father's key role in the early Ismaili *da'wa* (the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* discussed in the biographical section below). That dramatic story, most likely written down during the same

early Yemeni period of Ja'far's life as the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, was eventually adapted into al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's triumphalist account of the early Fatimids, *Iftitāḥ al-da'wa*, which went on to become the primary historical source, for the early Ismailis and Fatimid dynasty, used by Ibn Khaldūn and most other later Muslim historians of this troubled period.

The gradual collapse of the ruling authority of the vast Abbasid empire and the simultaneous resurgence, at all its fringes,¹⁷ of a multitude of more localised political and cultural traditions, often expressed in the form of a host of diverse and competing 'heterodox' and semi-'messianic' popular (and more elite) religious movements, are all brilliantly conveyed in those novels, along with the pervasive climate of repression, suspicion and intermittent persecution (often carried out by local commanders and semi-independent warlords) where the central power was still able to exert some control. All these essential historical elements of the context of the early Ismaili movement are memorably re-created in ways that remain broadly true to the highly unsettled religious and political currents of Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr's own time.

The term 'messianic' here, in the Islamic context, refers to the generalised public expectations—by no means restricted to Shi'i settings—for a *mahdī* or 'rightly-guided one' from the family of the Prophet, the promised eschatological saviour-figure who would appear to re-establish justice and order, and who was expected to either purify or transcend the preceding religious revelation. Indeed the honorific title given by later Ismailis to Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr's own father, 'Maṣṣūr al-Yaman' (the 'divinely-aided' conqueror of that region), itself reflects the vocabulary of Islamic eschatology referring to that redeeming figure. And as with messianic movements more generally, the actual balance of eschatology, religious fervour and more mundane local political, social and cultural discontentment varied greatly from one individual or situation to another, even within what were nominally the same 'sectarian' movements.

Still another broad historical parallel to the nascent Ismaili Shi'ism of Ja'far's and his father's day, from more familiar recent times, is the immense scope of 'socialist' movements and currents of ideas from the time of the French Revolution down to the present. While

much of the political, social and cultural history of the past two centuries—worldwide, and certainly from Europe to China—could be written in terms of that vague, but popularly compelling complex of ideas, ideals and related social and political movements, most people are well aware of the incredible diversity and constantly shifting spectrum of motivations, meanings, actual contexts and ‘movements’ which would have to be included under any such rubric—and of the extraordinary ways the enemies and opponents of this or that *particular* ‘socialist’ (or ‘communist’) idea, teaching or political movement constantly imagined and (mis-) represented, both unconsciously and quite intentionally, all sorts of what appear in retrospect as often fantastic images of the particular ideas and movements in questions. It is extremely helpful, if not indispensable, to keep that broad set of parallels in mind when approaching any of the literatures—whether the vast spectrum of medieval Islamic polemics, or the increasingly well-grounded researches and speculations of modern historians—relating to the complex of early Shi‘i movements and ideas of which Ja‘far b. Maṣṣūr and his writings were one small, but influential part.

Readers of this book who are already familiar with some of that literature concerning the history of early Ismailism and the Fatimid *da‘wa* will almost certainly be struck by the distance between the widespread popular images of those movements and the distinctive conceptions and ideas portrayed in the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām*. This is not the place to detail all the origins of those popular images and misconceptions about the Ismailis, whether in the long-ago Abbasid and Seljuq polemics against the Qarmaṭīs (Qarāmiṭa) and Fatimids (and later the Nizārīs of Alamūt), or in the often exclusive concentration of modern historians on those outwardly more ‘visible’ and highly dramatic political episodes. However, this work, along with the other writings of Ja‘far b. Maṣṣūr discussed in the following section, does point to a much more nuanced and diverse picture of the origins and nature of early Ismailism,¹⁸ while raising many as yet unanswered questions of historical interpretation that deserve further detailed study by specialists in this field. One way of suggesting some of those alternative historical perspectives is to look at the problems posed by the contrast between the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-*

ghulām (with the ideas and conceptions it represents) and certain widespread myths or stereotyped conceptions concerning those influential historical movements, prejudices which in many cases extend to the treatment of Ismailism and Shi'ism much more generally.

To begin with, readers of modern secondary accounts (not to mention their popular and journalistic summaries) are most often left with the impression that the 'Ismaili movement,' whether in its early or later stages of development, was somehow monolithic and uniform with regard both to its socio-political structures and aims and its intellectual expressions in religious or philosophic thought. But if such an assumption is obviously absurd when measured against the full range of historical forms and expressions associated with 'Ismailism' throughout longer periods of Islamic history, it is almost equally unfounded even with regard to what we know of single time periods—such as the era just prior to the political establishment of the Fatimids, which is the apparent context of the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām*.¹⁹ In order to forestall any possible misunderstanding, it is important to stress that our aim here is certainly not to replace one myth by another: it is far from clear, for example, to what extent the ideas and conceptions represented in this dialogue (or in many other roughly contemporary Ismaili-inspired texts, such as some of the influential *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā') actually corresponded to wider concrete historical realities, or to what extent they primarily express their authors' own idealised personal conceptions and aspirations. In either case the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām* does present a rather different and internally coherent paradigm for understanding our very fragmentary historical evidence about the aims and structure of the early Ismaili *da'wa*, in at least the four following areas.

The first of these common stereotypes is the notion that the early Ismaili *da'wa*, prior to the establishment of the first Fatimids, was an exclusively political—or even 'revolutionary'—movement dedicated above all to the establishment of a particular form of Shi'i government (as a replacement for the Abbasid caliphate), and from its beginning under some all-encompassing central control and guidance. (A basic corollary of this political conception, the reduction of Ismaili and Shi'i thought of that period to some sort of political

ideology or even 'propaganda,' is dealt with in the following section.) Now, given the well-known examples of dozens of preceding political *da'wa* movements and organisations and their rebellions (including a multitude of Shi'ī and Khārijī rebels and would-be Mahdīs) from early Umayyad times onward, combined with the eventual historical establishment of the centralised Fatimid dynasty, it is certainly easy to understand why most subsequent historians—whether in the medieval Muslim world or more recently in the West—have naturally tended to interpret the broader 'Ismaili movement' in this familiar political perspective. However, even a cursory reading of the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*—which is supported in this respect by a considerable body of historical and literary evidence from roughly the same period—clearly suggests that the 'actors' in this particular movement at all levels were motivated by a far more diverse range of conceptions and aspirations,²⁰ most of which are in fact carefully illustrated within this book (and can also be found in comparable religio-political movements throughout human history).²¹

What is so noteworthy about the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* is that this wider range of motives and aspirations is here carefully placed within a framework that is indeed potentially 'political,' but in this case strictly governed by an essentially spiritual aim and intention. The *da'wa*, in Ja'far's conception, is aimed above all at assuring both the wider awareness of human beings' true spiritual end (the *'ilm*, or spiritual knowledge, of its main protagonists) and the accessibility of the appropriate means (the corresponding *'amal*) for realising those potentialities, in the ways that are possible for each individual. The claim to religiously legitimate political power and authority, from this perspective, is ultimately justified only as a means or instrument to that end of spiritual awakening and development—a goal itself necessarily limited, in its fullest expression, to a relatively small elite²²—and everything else is subordinate to the furthering of that spiritual search, which can (and will) clearly continue under almost any conceivable political circumstances, given its universal human roots. Whatever the 'truth' or wider appeal of Ja'far b. Manṣūr's portrayal and self-conception of the early Ismaili *da'wa*, it is no doubt this essentially spiritual and religious intention

and understanding portrayed here, and not any more limited political or historical aims, that explain the continued use and ongoing interest of this Ismaili text (and others like it) for many centuries in other parts of the Muslim world (see section II.D immediately below).

Finally, whatever the wider usefulness of the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām* as a historical portrait of early Ismailism, it does strongly point out the considerable limits of any central political (or ideological) ‘control’ at this period. Even more tellingly, the range of pedagogical procedures illustrated here—for example, the careful instructions given to Šāliḥ to speak appropriately and cautiously when he returns to his father and city (at [298]–[304] and [555]), or the ambivalent position of the *bāṭin* of ideology and temporal hierarchy in relation to spiritual truth and realities (the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*)—do actually correspond to the wide range of Ismaili thought and ‘doctrines’ to be found in different settings at this and later periods.²³

In fact, what this work does very clearly bring out is how the allegiance of different individuals to the Ismaili imam (or his *ḥujja*) and the religious hierarchy of the *da‘wa*, beyond the mere formal fact of their initial oath of fidelity (*bay‘a*), was characteristically motivated—and no doubt manifested—in a number of different ways: e.g., political support (again, for a wide variety of motives); economic assistance and co-operation (payment and use of the *khums* due to the imams); loyalty to certain more specifically social, spiritual or philosophic conceptions of the role of the imamate, and so on. Most of these possibilities of motivation are at least suggested in the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām* (which stresses their hierarchical integration within a broader spiritual framework), and they can all be historically illustrated elsewhere already at the early stages of Ismailism, even before the establishment of the Fatimid dynasty. And finally, the complexity of this range of motivations and understandings helps explain how that allegiance, in each of these possible forms, could—and often actually did—fairly easily come to an end whenever a particular imam (or his representatives) failed to realise one or more of those very different sets of expectations.²⁴

Another frequent misconception concerning Ismaili Shi‘ism, whether at this early stage or in most later periods, is that the many

forms of writing and thought produced by its followers were all centred around the claims for a single distinctive and authoritative 'teaching' or 'doctrine'—usually understood (implicitly or explicitly) as a sort of political ideology on the plane of formal belief.²⁵ Once again, there is no doubt that this was *one* of the potential functions of Ismaili thought and writing (as of Shi'i thought more generally) in this and many other periods. But any exclusive focus on this aspect of 'political theology' and 'ideology'—an element which is inevitably present in Islamic writing of any period—inevitably tends to obscure the immensely wider set of common Qur'anic and Islamic conceptions and problems dealt with in virtually every known Ismaili writing,²⁶ while at the same time glossing over the often equally significant basic differences of outlook, assumptions and ultimate intentions separating the many types and representatives of 'Ismaili literature' even within this and other periods.²⁷

The *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*—again whether or not it is fully representative of the socio-historical realities of the Ismaili *da'wa* in the pre-Fatimid period—is especially revealing in this regard because of its clear and consistently repeated distinction between what it terms the *bāṭin* (corresponding, in the religious realm, to a relatively familiar body of Shi'i 'ideological' interpretations of Qur'anic symbolism in terms of cosmology, the religious hierarchy, etc.)²⁸ and the underlying, universal spiritual reality it calls the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*, which can only be fully realised through the necessary rare combination of individual predisposition, ongoing spiritual discipline and divine grace, under the proper guidance of a true master. Needless to say, the *bāṭin* (in this specially limited sense) looks entirely different when it is viewed or unthinkingly accepted by itself and when it is perceived as fully illuminated by the deeper spiritual meanings and intentions revealed to the true 'knower' who has actually realised those common, deeper spiritual realities which it is meant to convey.

In fact, the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* as a whole is entirely devoted to bringing out the manifold corresponding functions of each of those levels of thought and reality: it is no accident if the spiritually apt 'young man' Ṣāliḥ quickly leaves behind the *bāṭin* in his first long discussion with his guide—while the theologian Abū Mālik and

his followers have not even arrived there at the end. For the meta-physical and epistemological schema outlined (and assumed) here can be readily applied as well to most of the distinctive themes to be found in any account of Ismaili 'doctrines.' To take a particularly well-known example, the diverse 'cycles' of prophets, messengers, imams etc., discussed in many slightly later Ismaili works can be understood (a) on the level of historical and traditional—or of cosmological—erudition (i.e., their '*zāhir*'); (b) as one element of an official 'political theology' or 'ideology,' either as justifying a particular dynastic claim or as pointing to a historical project and ideal yet to be realised (i.e., their *bāṭin*, as that term is used here); or (c) as purely symbolic allusions to constantly present grades or types of spiritual realisation and understanding (the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*). The 'real' meaning of such symbols, as Ja'far indicates, necessarily depends on the situation and intentions of each author and reader (or guide and disciple) alike,²⁹ but it certainly cannot be reduced to, nor exhausted by, a single 'exoteric' plane of socio-political interpretation.

A third, closely related common historical misconception concerning early (and even later) Ismailism is that it arose from the original and intentional propagation, in the Islamic context, of a particular philosophic or 'gnostic' point of view. Often this historical image—which has its scholarly basis in a justifiable interest in the important philosophic writings of such Ismaili thinkers as Muḥammad b. al-Nasafī, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, Abū Yā'qūb al-Sijistānī, al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, Ḥanīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī and Nāṣir-i Khusraw,³⁰ not to mention the more complicated case of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'³¹—is closely allied with the more widespread popular assumption, deeply rooted in centuries of hostile propaganda, that the Ismailis represented some sort of extraneous, even hostile 'innovation' (*bid'a*) with regard to the main currents of Islamic thought and history.

Without denying the importance of those (almost exclusively Persian) Ismaili thinkers in their own right and while fully acknowledging the distinctiveness of the intellectual tradition they represent, even a cursory comparison of their works with the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* or any of Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr's other works will immediately bring out the very different sources of his thought and writing

in a profound reflection on (and wide-ranging acquaintance with) the Qur'an and hadith, especially as conveyed by an elaborate and long-standing body of Shi'ī tradition.³¹ The profoundly Arab and thoroughly Islamic outlook and presuppositions reflected in his use of those materials, as well as in the cultural assumptions of the main characters in this work, are likewise exemplified throughout the writings of his famous younger contemporary, the Qādī al-Nu'mān. This should certainly not be taken to suggest that the works of these two Arab authors are either more 'authentically' Ismaili or Islamic than those of the famous Iranian philosophers just mentioned. What is more important, however, from a strictly historical point of view, is the way the undeniable contrast between the writings of these two groups of near-contemporary Ismaili authors—and the wider intellectual traditions and contrasting cultural milieus they clearly represent³²—itself helps point out the dangers and limits of those stereotypes discussed in the preceding sections.

A fourth common misconception about early Ismailism—a prejudice that encompasses all the three preceding points and is at once both the least founded in actual Ismaili literature and the most clearly rooted in hostile propaganda—is that it preached some sort of vague 'autonomianism' (*ibāḥa*) or at least an eventual transcending of the Islamic revelation (*sharī'a*), whether generally and universally (e.g., in an eventual messianic or eschatological context) or for a special initiatic elite. But if there are several well-known cases, emphasised precisely by common Shi'ī traditions (shared with the Twelvers and others), of such messianic 'excesses' (*ghulāt*) even among the followers of some of the earliest imams, nothing of the sort is at all visible in the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, which clearly goes to the greatest possible lengths, throughout all the encounters between the Knower and his disciple, to emphasise the essential inner interdependence of all three levels of reality, but more especially of the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*.³³ In fact, a thorough critique of this common temptation of a sort of 'spiritual autonomianism'—i.e., of denigrating the routine practice of the commonly accepted religious obligations in favour of a more purely 'spiritual' conception of Islam or a chiliastic 'revolutionary' transformation of the human condition—is one of the central themes of this work as a whole, since the Knower

repeatedly stresses the key role of the prescribed practices of each divine revelation within the spiritual work that must be undertaken by each disciple.

With Ja'far b. Manṣūr, the vehemence of this insistence on the fundamental role of the external aspect (*zāhir*) of the revelation clearly has its own more poignant personal roots in the dramatic apostasy (and violently 'antinomian' revolt) of his father's Yemeni follower and erstwhile Ismaili companion, 'Alī b. al-Faḍl. For that story and its vividly drawn moral is the primary theme of his *Sīrat Ibn Hawshab*, discussed in the biographical section III below. This insistence, which is equally apparent in his other works, may also have a more 'official' background in the reaction of Ismaili leaders to the even more shocking and notorious actions of the various Qarmaṭī groups.³⁴ In any case, the Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's extremely influential writings, for example, are equally steadfast and unequivocal in their affirmation of (and studied attention to) the importance of the revelation—as understood in Shi'ī tradition, of course—and its practice and observance without exception.³⁵

D. Later Musta'li Ismailism

While the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* is undoubtedly of real historical importance with regard to our understanding of early Ismailism and the pre-Fatimid *da'wa*, that particular historical aspect of its interest should not obscure the fact that—along with the rest of Ja'far b. Manṣūr's writings³⁶—it has continued to be carefully studied and copied down through the centuries as an important part of the curriculum of religious studies in the Musta'li Ismaili community (in both its Sulaymānī and Dā'ūdī branches).³⁷ As indicated by the provenance of the manuscripts discussed in the following section, as well as numerous additional recent manuscripts cited in Poonawala's *Biobibliography*, the book appears to have been studied regularly for centuries by both major branches of the Musta'li Ismailis and in Yemen—where the works of Ja'far b. Manṣūr (as a key historical 'forefather' of Yemeni Ismailism) seem to have enjoyed special favour—as well as among the larger educational centres of that Ismaili group in western India (Gujarat). The special role of the

Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām in the religious studies of the Mustaʿli Ismailis is already mentioned, for the 12th/18th century, in the famous *Fihrist* of Ismaili Literature by Ismāʿil b. ʿAbd al-Rasūl al-Majdūʿ. And for the contemporary period, Prof. Osman Yahya has personally reported, on the basis of his teaching in Surat, that it was being used in the beginning stages of the three-stage religious studies curriculum (the *maʿārif*, *ḥaqāʾiq* and *asrār*) of the Bohras, while another (confidential but well-placed) modern informant has indicated that its proper place is at the very culmination of that course of study (i.e., among the 'secrets' or *asrār*).³⁸

In any case, the existence of these numerous, carefully copied and corrected recent manuscripts, in an area where the natural life of such documents is normally quite short, points to the continuous intrinsic religious interest of this text in very different historical conditions from those surrounding its original composition. At the same time, the abundance of such texts in manuscript form also serves to highlight the relative lack of recent scholarly interest in the characteristic religious thought and structures of that community during those little-known centuries of Ismaili history, despite the vast range of Ismaili literature that has now become publicly available, both in manuscript and in printed form, during the past few decades.

III. JAʿFAR B. MANṢŪR AL-YAMAN AND HIS WRITINGS

The reliable external evidence concerning the life of Jaʿfar b. Manṣūr is so extremely limited that one can easily construct very different hypotheses concerning the date of composition of the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām* and most of his other extant writings.³⁹ We know from the *Kitāb Kashf asrār al-Bāṭiniyya wa akhbār al-Qarāmiṭa*, an anti-Ismaili polemic (as its title indicates) by Ibn Mālik al-Yamanī, that Jaʿfar's father Ibn Ḥawshab, the leader and co-founder—hence his honorific, messianic title of 'Manṣūr al-Yaman,' 'the divinely aided (founder)' of the Yemeui Ismaili community—died of natural causes, as a fairly old man, in the year 302/914–915.

We are also told by the same source that after a number of dramatic events involving the apostasy and eventual massacre of most

of Ja'far's family in the Yemen, he permanently emigrated to the court of the second Fatimid Caliph-imam al-Qā'im (ruled 322-334/934-946) in Ifrīqiya, modern-day Tunisia. The first direct signs of his presence at the Fatimid court and of his continued passionate support for the Fatimid cause are several poems written in commemoration of victories during the famous revolt of Abū Yazīd, in the last two years of the reign of al-Qā'im (333-334/945-946) and under the subsequent reign of al-Manṣūr (r. 334-341/946-953).⁴⁰ And the *Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhar*, while recounting an incident from the early years of the reign of the following Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz (r. 341-365/953-975) involving Ja'far's house near the palace in the recently founded capital of Manṣūriyya, incidentally mentions Ja'far's high rank in the esteem of that Imam.⁴¹ Finally, as W. Madlung has shown in detail, at least two of Ja'far's later doctrinal works demonstrate the reworking of the Fatimid genealogy and corresponding theories of the succession of the Shi'i imams (as well as the assimilation of a more sophisticated philosophic vocabulary) which took place under the patronage of the Imam al-Mu'izz.⁴²

Probably the most important biographical indications about Ja'far b. Manṣūr's early life and family background, however, are those now contained in the opening chapters of al-Qādī al-Nu'mān's *Iftitāh al-da'wa*, the book which has served as the primary source for most later histories of the beginnings of the Fatimid dynasty, including Ibn Khaldūn's famous and influential *History*. The early sections of that work, devoted to the story of Ja'far's father, his conversion to Ismailism and his successful mission to the Yemen, are largely taken literally (or paraphrased) from a longer biography of Manṣūr al-Yaman that is almost certainly by Ja'far himself (i.e., the *Sīrat Ibn Hawshab* or '*Sīrat Abīhi*'), while most of the rest of that account cites eyewitness reports from 'a close member' of Manṣūr al-Yaman's family who is likewise almost certainly Ja'far himself.⁴³

Now one of the most moving of those eyewitness accounts in the *Iftitāh al-da'wa*, 'from someone who was present with [ʿAbdullāh al-Shi'i, the eventual founder of Fatimid rule in Ifrīqiya] the day he said goodbye to' the Yemen, in the year 280/893, gives a detailed description of the particular room in 'Adan Lā'a (Ja'far's home town), its view, and what was said by Manṣūr al-Yaman at that occasion.⁴⁴

Thus, assuming that Ja'far would have to have been at least an older child in order to remember such details, this would put the latest possible date for his birth back towards the year 270—a timeframe that fits well with the date of Maṣṣūr al-Yaman's marriage within a local Shi'i family, shortly after his arrival in Yemen in 268/882.⁴⁵

As for the date of Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr's death, it seems quite likely (although this is only one possible hypothesis) that al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's massive, but unacknowledged 'borrowing' from Ja'far's *Sīrat Ibn Hawshab* presupposes that he was already dead at the time of its writing (ca. 346/957), when he would have been more than seventy years old.⁴⁶

On the basis of this very limited data, therefore, one could suppose that the greater part of Ja'far's life—including the composition of the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, his history of his father's successful Ismaili mission (the *Sīrat Ibn Hawshab*), and several other works—probably took place in the Yemen, both before his father's death (in 302/914) and the initial political successes of al-Mahdī in the Maghreb, as well as during the following tumultuous decades there prior to the reign of al-Qā'im. This hypothesis seems to fit best with both the historical data and the internal evidence of the subjects and development of his writings. (But if one were to assume that Ja'far was *not* the eyewitness to those later Yemeni events cited by al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, then it could be maintained that he emigrated to Ifriqiya as a relatively young adult and spent most of his life in the Fatimid court.)

In either case, though, the contents and subjects—and even the style—of his writing seem to reflect the division between those two periods of his life and of the Ismaili-Fatimid *da'wa* more generally.⁴⁷ Thus the events of both the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* and his *Sīrat Ibn Hawshab*, whatever the actual dates of composition of those two works, are clearly set in the 'heroic period' of the early *da'wa* (of the imams of 'concealment' or *satr*), prior to its lasting political successes in the Maghreb, and are correspondingly oriented toward a relatively wider (and less exclusively Shi'i) Muslim readership. In comparison, all the rest of his later writings are in the nature of theological teaching manuals clearly directed almost exclusively toward readers who are already thoroughly converted to a particular

Ismaili point of view; as such, they are almost certainly the product of his later employment as an official theologian and religious dignitary in the Fatimid court.

Undoubtedly the most important historical evidence for understanding the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām* and the origins of Ja‘far b. Manṣūr’s own spiritual and religious conceptions is contained in the surviving fragments of his *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab*, his biography of his father, Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥasan b. Faraj b. Ḥawshab b. Zādān al-Kūfī.⁴⁸ That story, as we can reconstruct it from the sections cited by various later Yemeni authors (as well as those adapted in the *Iftitāḥ al-da‘wa*), remarkably parallels the outline of the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām* in many respects, and is even more openly conceived as a sort of indirect, archetypal spiritual autobiography.⁴⁹ Among the relevant points mentioned there are Ibn Ḥawshab’s Kufan background as a devout and learned Twelver Imami Shi‘i disturbed by the apparent (and at that date, quite recent) absence of a living imam.⁵⁰ This strong parental influence is reflected in the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām* and throughout Ja‘far’s other writings, both in his vast formal knowledge of many areas of earlier Shi‘i tradition,⁵¹ and in his constant stress on the absolute practical religious importance of the ongoing presence in this world of the imam and the mediating spiritual hierarchy of the *awliyā’*, the ‘friends of God.’⁵² Ja‘far goes to great lengths, both in the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* and here in the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām*, to emphasise that this is not simply an abstract theological or political thesis, a sort of ideological project, but rather a living reality that his father had verified in his personal contacts with the imams of his time, and which Ja‘far himself went on to exemplify in his own personal devotion to their successors in the Fatimid dynasty, despite the dramatic apostasy and violent opposition of his older brother and the rest of his family.⁵³

Finally, perhaps the most important religious and dramatic theme of the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* is the constant contrast between the true spiritual understanding of Ja‘far’s father and the narrowly political outlook of his Yemeni friend and disciple ‘Alī b. al-Faḍl, who eventually led a bloody revolt (in many ways closely resembling the other notorious Qarmatī uprisings during the last decade of the third

Islamic century) against both the Fatimids and other Muslim communities in the Yemen.⁵⁴ As already noted, Ja'far b. Manṣūr's insistence on the absolute importance of the full observance of the prophetically revealed *shari'a* and the 'external' dimension (the *ẓāhir*) of religion—no doubt partly in reaction against these and other familiar messianic movements and antinomian tendencies—is a constant theme throughout the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* and many of his other writings.⁵⁵

As we have already noted, the remaining writings of Ja'far b. Manṣūr have for the most part been preserved for centuries in many manuscript collections of the Musta'li-Ṭayyibī Ismailis,⁵⁶ a fact that reflects both Ja'far's continuing special prestige as a teacher of Ismaili scriptural interpretation (*ta'wīl*), from early Fatimid times onward, and perhaps also a certain pride among later Yemeni Ismailis in their famous 'native son.' Among those other writings, the most accessible volumes are the *Kitāb al-Kashf* (first edited by R. Strothmann, London-Bombay, 1952; M. Ghālib, Beirut, 1404/1984), a lengthy and curious compilation of several earlier Shi'i works of *ta'wīl*,⁵⁷ and his *Sarā'ir al-nuṭaqā'* and *Asrār al-nuṭaqā'* (both edited by M. Ghālib, Beirut, 1404/1984), works devoted to the inner meanings of Qur'anic and other stories from the lives of earlier prophets and imams. Apart from the few poetic *qasidas* celebrating the Fatimid Caliph al-Manṣūr's victory over the Khārījī rebel Abū Yazīd that were preserved in the '*Uyūn al-akhbār*' of Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn (see note 40 above), Ja'far's remaining unpublished works,⁵⁸ as indicated by their titles, are likewise virtually all devoted to similar questions of Ismaili *ta'wīl* and its traditional Shi'i theological and doctrinal foundations: *K. al-Farā'id wa ḥudūd al-dīn*;⁵⁹ *K. al-Ridā' fī al-bāṭin*; *K. Ta'wīl al-zakāt*;⁶⁰ *Risālat Ta'wīl Sūrat al-Nisā'*; and the *K. al-Shawāhid wa'l-bayān fī ithbāt amīr al-mu'minīn wa'l-a'imma*.

Now all of these works are strikingly distinguished from the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* in that they are almost exclusively devoted to what is here called the *bāṭin* of religion—i.e., not so much the spiritual reality and truth itself (the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*), but rather the intermediate stage of Ismaili 'doctrines' and the organisation of the this-worldly religious hierarchy as they are symbolised in a certain

consistent (but, to the outsider, often apparently arbitrary) interpretation of Qur'anic symbols that is clearly derived from a wider body of earlier Shi'i tradition.⁶¹ As we have already indicated, the predominance in these works of this sort of elaborate formal (and evidently largely traditional) Shi'i *ta'wīl*, which is primarily aimed at reinforcing or deepening the faith of those who are already true believers, is probably connected with the later period of Ja'far's more official theological position at the Fatimid court. Yet, however radically these later works may differ from the *Kitāb al-Ālīm wa'l-ghulām* (and the *Sīrat Ibn Hawshab*), both in style and content, they do demonstrate certain common themes and concerns. The most notable of these common elements are the author's extraordinary familiarity with the Qur'an and a vast range of earlier Shi'i hadith and interpretive literature, and his persistent focus on the recurrence of certain spiritual types and situations as they are illustrated in their perennial, archetypal form in the Qur'an and earlier Islamic tradition.

IV. READING A QUR'ANIC DIALOGUE

The fact that this particular work of Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr has been carefully studied by many generations of readers for over a millennium should suggest that there is perhaps some truth in his forceful insistence at the very end of this tale (boldly echoing the Qur'anic Sura of Joseph) that it is something more than just another 'made-up story.' However, given the understandable unfamiliarity of its literary form and original contexts for most readers today, it may be helpful to indicate some practically useful ways to begin to discover this work's hidden depths and riches. To begin with, the essence of the dramatic dialogue form is to entice and simultaneously *oblige* the properly prepared and motivated reader into an increasingly deeper inner, necessarily 'personalised' exploration of the particular issues (whether ethical, political, epistemological or metaphysical) dramatised through the conflicting viewpoints of the various 'actors' participating in each drama. Thus the lasting effectiveness of that literary form depends above all on the author's ability to capture and articulate genuinely archetypal perspectives and issues which

are rooted in recurrent human situations and possibilities, in what Ja'far here calls the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*, the 'innermost reality' of things. Rather than expressing 'doctrines' or 'ideas' which could otherwise be formulated in a simpler, more prosaic and accessible form, the spiritually operative dimension of this dramatic dialogue is rooted in the author's quintessentially Qur'anic awareness that each appropriately prepared reader already participates unavoidably in the same recurrent metaphysical dramas, and therefore must necessarily discover his or her own answers to these fundamental challenges and dilemmas.

Plato, like Ja'far here, typically engaged his contemporary readers in his dramatic dialogues by including both well-known historical actors and a host of literary and mythical figures and allusions whose archetypal roles and wider symbolic significance were readily apparent to his original educated audience. For Ja'far and his originally intended audiences, the familiar (to them!) figures and allusions of the Qur'an and hadith—which of course stretch back through a vast panorama of 'sacred history,' symbolism and forms of interpretation partially shared with cognate Judaeo-Christian religious traditions—provided a similar, but perhaps far more extensive, symbolic field of archetypal references. Given Ja'far's own remarkable mastery of those inner dimensions of the Qur'an and related Islamic traditions, any serious reading of this exemplary dialogue requires a close, careful attention to all the relevant dimensions of that vast web of Qur'anic allusions out of which he has woven this drama. Since those scriptural allusions are typically quite brief, and often employed in an ironic, ambiguous or pointedly critical manner which frequently forces the student to refer back to their broader, detailed original Qur'anic contexts, that participatory 'work' required to penetrate Ja'far's dialogue may be quite demanding for modern readers.

Yet those who take the time needed to study the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* as it was intended to be read will discover that the entire book is carefully designed as a three-part dialectical discussion between (a) the experiences and situations of the characters in the drama; (b) each reader's own experiential 'version' of these archetypal situations; and (c) the sometimes lengthy and elaborate (or

problematically symbolic) articulation of the themes underlying these situations, and the corresponding 'laws' and recurrent structures of spiritual life scattered throughout the Qur'an.⁶² As with most forms of 'esoteric' writing in traditional Islamic culture, this text therefore presupposes a much more active, demanding and ongoing 'participation' on the part of its intended 'readers' than we normally assume today.⁶³

To begin with, the original audiences for this text, like most readers of the Arabic down to the last century, could safely be assumed to have an intimate and detailed awareness of the Qur'an, such that the briefest allusion was sufficient to evoke the typically much longer and widely scattered Qur'anic passages suggested by what are, in many cases, only one or two Arabic words. Thus thoughtful readers who could approach this text with that essential preparation would eventually discover that its ultimate subject—especially throughout the first, less polemic, half of the work—might even be summarised as the accomplished spiritual intelligence of the underlying structures and principles of one's spiritual life through the illuminating perspectives of the Qur'an.⁶⁴ So it should not be hard to imagine what is lost if one reads through the English without stopping to reflect on the relation between the 'visible' drama and the implicit mediating presence of the Qur'an.

Therefore, serious students of this text, whether they are working individually or in a study group (and the latter approach, as with Plato's dialogues, is usually more fruitful and illuminating) will want to look up key Qur'anic allusions and reflect on their relations to the recurrent events and spiritual laws being dramatised in each passage. We have attempted to facilitate such careful study by identifying in italics and giving references to the first few Qur'anic occurrences of the terms in each passage or allusion,⁶⁵ although those more familiar with the Qur'an will immediately recognise that the entirety of the dialogue is in fact inseparably woven together from central Qur'anic themes.

V. MANUSCRIPTS AND EDITION

This edition of the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām* is based on the following five manuscripts:

[1] This manuscript, completed on 21 Dhū al-Ḥijja, 1098 AH (= October 9, 1687), is now located in the collection of the library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, which kindly provided a photocopy and the opportunity to study the original. It is described in A. Gacek's *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies*, vol. 1, (pp. 3-4, item 6), and is the same copy listed in I.K. Poonawala's *Biobibliography of Ismā‘īlī Literature* (p. 74, item 14) as belonging to the Ismailia Association for Pakistan. The text comprises 182 pages (12.5 x 18 centimetres) of 13 lines (7.5 cm.) per page.

This is undoubtedly the most carefully copied and corrected manuscript among those available for this edition; it was also collated with more than one earlier manuscript during the copying process, as indicated by the occasional marginal indications (also included in our critical apparatus) of alternative readings from 'another manuscript' (نسخ). Other indications of the extreme care with which this manuscript was prepared include the provision throughout of red marks (like inverted commas, slightly above each line) to separate each phrase, and the inclusion of vocalisation at several points where confusion or ambiguity would otherwise be likely.

An important historical point—which also may explain the exemplary state of this manuscript—is that it bears the official seal, both at the beginning and at the end, of ‘Sayyidnā Hibat Allāh b. Ibrāhīm’ (d. 1160/1747 in Najrān, Yemen), who was the 32nd chief *dā‘ī* in the Sulaymānī branch of the Musta‘lī-Ṭayyibī Ismailis (see the chronological listing of the chief *dā‘īs* of this branch in Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, p. 368). The fact that the manuscript once belonged to this chief *dā‘ī* (and quite possibly to his predecessor, since it was copied during his term of office) may indicate that it was meant to be used as something of an official or ‘master’ copy in the curriculum of Ismaili religious studies of which it was an important part (see section II.D above).

[ح] This manuscript, completed on 27 Shawwal, 1267 AH (25 August, 1851), now belongs to the library of the Jāmi'a Sayfiyya, the madrasah of the Bohra (Dā'ūdī-Musta'li) Ismaili community in Surat, India; an excellent photocopy was generously made available by Professor Osman Yahya. The text consists of 200 pages (13 x 19 cm.) of 11 lines (7.5 cm) per page. It is in an extremely clear and legible hand, and contains a number of more recent marginal explanations, added diacritical markings (some in pencil), and other signs of recent and continuing use.

The lengthy and informative colophon at the end of this manuscript (included in our edition) indicates that it was copied by a certain Ismā'il b. 'Ajabshāh in the time of the 47th Dā'ūdī Ismaili chief *dā'ī*, Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir Najm al-Dīn b. Ṭayyib (see Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, p. 368). The manuscript has on many pages the personal seals of both Ismā'il b. 'Ajabshāh and Jābir b. Shaykh Ismā'il (presumably a son of the original scribe); the latter seal bears the name in Arabic, Gujarati and English (Latin script). This manuscript is apparently not included in the list given by Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, p. 74.

[ي] This manuscript, also from the Bohra Ismaili community of Surat, was in the possession of Professor Osman Yahya, who again kindly encouraged us to examine and copy it. It lacks a colophon or seals which would permit exact dating, but in the opinion of Dr Yahya it would seem to date from the early 19th century in India—i.e. roughly contemporary with or even slightly earlier than the preceding copy. The only explicit indication of ownership or provenance is the more recent mention, in pencil on one of the (otherwise blank) opening pages, of one "Abd al-Qādir b. Yūsufbhai' and 'Wazīrī al-Jāmi'a al-Sayfiyya, Sūrat, al-Hind.' This manuscript is likewise apparently not mentioned in Poonawala's *Biobibliography*.

The text of this copy covers 160 pages (9.5 x 15.5 cm.), varying from 13 to 17 lines (of 6.5 cm.) per page, written in a compact but extremely legible and careful hand. There are a few blank spaces, noted in our critical apparatus, where the scribe clearly left the section markings (i.e., 'the knower/young man said,' etc.) to be completed later in red ink, but neglected to do so on certain pages. As with the preceding manuscript, there are also a few more recent

marginal annotations (addition of diacritical markings, glosses of difficult Arabic terms, etc.), frequently in pencil, again indicating that the copy has continued to be used up to the present day for study purposes.

[ف] This is the manuscript at the Bombay University library (M. Goriawala, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Fyzee Collection of Ismaili Manuscripts*, Bombay, 1965, no. 13; Poonawala, p. 74, item 14), a photocopy of which was kindly made available by the library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies in London. The text comprises 118 pages of 18 lines (of 8 cm) to the page; it is dated 1314 AH/1897 AD (both dates being given in the colophon). The handwriting is relatively hurried and careless when compared with the other manuscripts above, although still legible and with some diacritical points, and the text contains a great number of unique variant readings which are apparently due to the scribe's heedlessness and, in certain cases, his evident desire to 'correct' or simplify unfamiliar or ungrammatical expressions.

The main interest of this particular manuscript is historical, in that it first served to bring the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām* to the attention of the larger scholarly community, through the article by W. Ivanow, 'The Book of the Teacher and the Pupil,' in his *Studies in Early Persian Ismailism* (Cairo, 1948), pp. 85-113.

[ك] This is a recent transcription, kindly provided by Mme Stella Corbin, of a relatively early photocopied manuscript which had been sent to Professor Henry Corbin by W. Ivanow; the original manuscript was dated 10 Jumādā 1, 1012 AH (Nov. 15, 1603). That copy was described by Ivanow (in his article just mentioned, p. 88) as being of 163 pages of 13 lines (4 inches long) to the page. However, we were unable to locate either the original manuscript or photocopies of it so as to verify the readings in Corbin's transcription; for the same reason, it was impossible to determine whether or not Ivanow's copy was the same as one of the several other manuscripts in private Bohra collections (for which no colophon dates are given) cited in Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, p. 74.

Orthographic and Grammatical Particularities

All the manuscripts used for this edition share certain orthographic features, differing from the conventions of modern Arabic printed texts, which are common to Arabic manuscripts from the Western Indian region (and often to earlier Arabic manuscripts more generally). In addition, all of the copies used for this edition did provide the full diacritical points, although their reading (again as with any Arabic manuscript) was occasionally problematic. Vocalisation, on the other hand, was very rare, with the exception of the specification of some unusual verbal forms which was already noted for manuscript 1.

In general, the orthography has been 'modernised' to accord with modern standard Arabic usage where that seemed desirable to avoid possible confusion or misunderstanding on the part of contemporary readers who would normally be unfamiliar with some of the spelling conventions followed in these manuscripts. In particular, orthography has been changed systematically for the following points:

- (a) *Alif maqṣūra* has been spelled as such (e.g., الـى), instead of the fully pointed *yā'* (الي) usually found in all the manuscripts, which could otherwise frequently be confusing.
- (b) *Alif mādda*, which is usually missing in the manuscripts, has been indicated as such (e.g., أءاب, أءمن).
- (c) The 'seat' of the *hamza* has been indicated according to the accepted common modern forms (except in Qur'anic quotations). In the original manuscripts, the *hamza* was almost always either missing entirely or else indicated only by a sometimes ambiguous *wāw* or *yā'* (e.g., بءو for بءأ or اوءى for أوءأ).
- (d) Standard abbreviations have been spelled out in full: e.g., ءعالى for ءع

Readers may also notice occasional minor deviations, such as are common in most middle Arabic texts, from strict grammatical norms concerning such matters as Arabic numbers, the agreement of subject and verb, pronouns and their referents, and so forth. In such cases readings given by all the manuscripts have usually not been corrected where the meaning would still remain clear, although

sometimes a grammatically 'correct' variant reading has been chosen for the main text even where it was not supported by the older and more reliable manuscripts. This problem was frequently posed by the many passages where the author paraphrases or alludes to a Qur'anic verse in a context which requires some slight grammatical changes (for example, a different person, number or tense of the verb) from the original Qur'anic context. Often the variant readings at such points indicate that certain later scribes attempted to 'correct' the Arabic either toward the Qur'anic or the grammatically appropriate reading, so that the author's original choice may now be difficult to determine.

Variant Readings and Manuscript Affiliations

The condition of these manuscripts and their relations reflect the unusual history of the text itself: as something of a 'textbook' in the elaborate curriculum of religious training in the Musta'li Ismaili tradition over many centuries, this work has been continually studied and copied out by generations of students (see section II.D above). This unbroken tradition of group study, requiring close attention to the actual text, may help account for the fact that all the manuscripts, despite their different ages, are in fact in remarkably close agreement.⁶⁶ Very few of the variant readings concern more than a single letter or word, and even fewer make any significant difference in the basic meaning of the text.

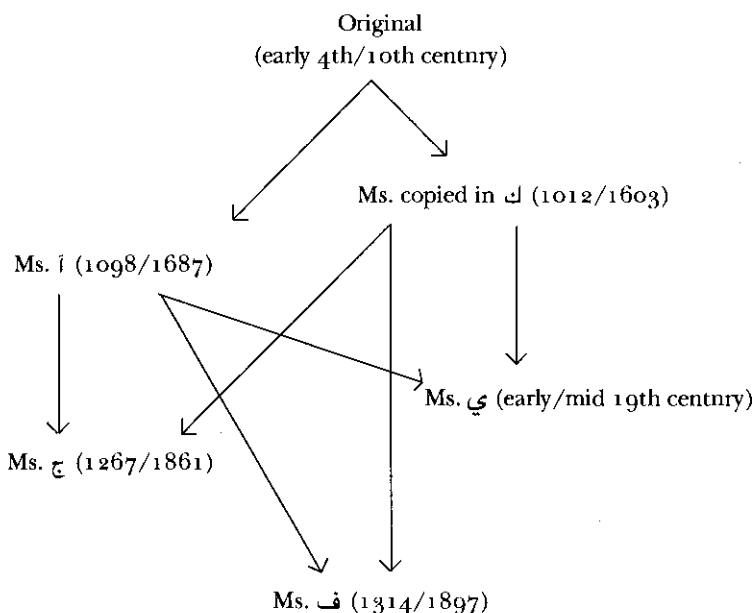
The following observations concerning the relative reliability and carefulness of the different manuscript copies and their possible historical affiliations help to explain the weight given to certain manuscripts (especially the oldest, 1) in the selection among variants for the main printed text. The following conclusions are based on a detailed statistical analysis of all the variant readings:

- (a) Confirming the impression that the transmission process has involved ongoing careful study of the copies, virtually all of the cases (some 97 per cent) involve a *single* variant reading, which may be shared by one or more manuscripts.

- (b) In the great majority of cases, the variant reading is clearly recognisable as a single copyist's error: some 70 per cent of the variants are found only in a single manuscript, and only very rarely (especially with the two oldest manuscripts) has that unique reading seemed more appropriate.
- (c) The ranking of manuscripts according to the number of unique variants found in each confirms the initial impression that the early Ismailia Association/IIS manuscript [i] is the most carefully copied and corrected (with only about 70 unique readings), while the very late Fyzee Collection copy [ف] is, relatively speaking, rather carelessly done (with almost 190 unique readings, many of them obvious copyist mistakes). The two manuscripts originating in Surat [ي and ج] both seem to have been carefully copied and corrected (roughly 90 unique readings in each), while with the recent transcription of Ivanow's (originally oldest) manuscript [ك] (with some 115 unique readings) it is difficult to say which variants were already in the original manuscript and which were introduced in the recent transcription process.
- (d) It is quite evident that no single manuscript used in preparing this edition was simply copied directly from one of the others. However, certain of the manuscripts are certainly more closely related than others, judging from those cases (27 per cent of the total variant readings) where a given reading is supported by three manuscripts against two others. The detailed analysis of those cases suggests the following conclusions:
- (i) The two oldest manuscripts [i and the original of ك] represent two clearly separate manuscript traditions, since their 'separative' readings are opposed some 70 per cent of the time.
 - (ii) None of the three more recent manuscripts [ف, ج and ي] seems to have been copied directly from any of the others, since there is a substantial number of separative readings in every case.
 - (iii) The manuscript ج is considerably closer to the Ismaili Association/IIS manuscript [i], and the manuscript ي is more closely related to the tradition of the original manuscript

underlying ك, while the more recent Fyzee collection manuscript [ف] appears to draw almost equally from the traditions represented by ا and by the original of ك.

For the sake of simplicity, the above conclusions about the relationships of these manuscripts over time and their relative affiliations—since the complexities of their actual historical relations are likely to remain unknown—can be represented graphically as follows:



Format of the Arabic Edition

The presentation of the Arabic text adopted here involves certain departures from the form of the original manuscripts (in addition to the spelling changes already mentioned) designed to make the edition more readable and the allusions in the text more accessible to those wishing to study it in depth. These changes in format are as follows:

- (a) Section and paragraph divisions: In the original manuscripts the different speakers in the dialogues (but not usually the unnamed background narrator) are clearly distinguished by having their names and the opening 'he said' (*qāla...*) written in red ink; the word *ثم* indicating important subdivisions, is also sometimes given in red ink. Following these indications, we have clearly separated each speaker's contribution and have also given separate section divisions for each separate intervention of the narrator, who is not so clearly indicated in the original manuscripts. The consecutive numbering of these sections of the dialogue is also an editorial addition aimed at facilitating cross-references to the Arabic indexes and the English translation and notes.
- (b) Punctuation: *All* punctuation has been added by the editor, with the aim of bringing out the structure and procedure of the argument. Apart from the scribe's rare 'phrasing' indications in manuscript 1 alone, the manuscripts themselves contain only the minimum suggestions provided by the few Arabic particles and conjunctions, so that alternative punctuations (with corresponding changes in interpretation, etc.) would of course be possible for many passages, as in any dramatic text.
- (c) Citations of Qur'an and hadith: As explained above (section iv), this book is largely woven together from a multitude of allusions to hundreds of passages of the Qur'an and to various important hadith, usually from the Prophet, but also including allusions to important sayings of early Shi'i imams widely respected by Sunni Muslims as well, especially 'Alī (such as the famous conversation with Kumayl later included in *al-Nahj al-balāgha*), Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ja'far al-Šādiq. This web of allusions—reflecting the author's remarkable culture and facility in the spiritual interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith—is generally so artfully and unobtrusively constructed that it often seems an almost invisible part of the natural flow of the discussion: such 'hidden' citations, as we have indicated in the English translation, are in fact far more numerous than the few explicit quotations from the Qur'an.

While longer Qur'anic allusions are usually identified in the English translation, only the relatively few explicit Qur'anic quotations have been set off by quotation marks and printed with the full vowelings in the Arabic text. The index of Qur'anic references does include allusions as well as quotations, keyed to the section numbers which are the same for both the Arabic and English. These indications have been given, in most cases, only for extended passages (of at least two or three words), and not for individual Qur'anic terms—although the most relevant of these can be found in the long index of technical terms. The numbering of Qur'anic verses used here follows the Cairo edition most commonly used today.

References to Prophetic hadith have been given in the notes to the Arabic edition from the canonical collections of Prophetic sayings (usually following Wensinck's *Concordance*).⁶⁷ Sayings of the early Shi'ī imams have been given from standard reference works (especially *Nahj al-balāgha*), both Ismaili and Twelver, and especially from accessible printed editions of near-contemporary Ismaili works (particularly by al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī), as such references help to indicate the familiarity and currency of such sayings in wider Ismaili and Shi'ī circles at this early period. (However, obviously these references should not be taken to indicate the actual or probable literary sources of the hadith as they were used in this text.) In some cases the full text of the Prophetic saying itself (though not the *isnād*), or of several alternative versions, has been quoted at length where that information could be important for grasping the allusion in the text. (We have not attempted, however, to cite the vast hadith literature, whether from the Prophet or the imams, commenting on the many Qur'anic passages and terms alluded to in the text.) It is likely that we have overlooked certain hadith allusions, especially from the immense Shi'ī literature where convenient reference works are only slowly becoming more available; we would be most grateful to readers who would draw such cases to our attention, so that they could be indicated in any future edition of this book.

- (d) Citation of variant readings: Variant readings are indicated by footnotes immediately following the term (or passage) in question, with the alternative reading(s) appearing at the bottom of the page; the footnote numbering of variants begins anew on each page of text. We have indicated in the footnotes only the manuscript source(s) for the variants; the reading included in the main text is therefore that given by all the other manuscripts not cited in the footnote. (As indicated above, some 70 per cent of the variant readings exist only in a single manuscript.) An alternate reading involving the *addition* of a word (or words) is indicated by the sign '+', followed by the addition. A variant involving the *omission* of a word or phrase is indicated by the sign '-', followed by the word or words missing in that manuscript.

The abbreviation نسخة أخرى for نسخ (‘in another manuscript’) indicates an alternative reading given in the margin of manuscript 1, the only copy having this sort of explicit indication of collation with more than one other manuscript.⁶⁸ Most of the remaining indications (for example, بياض for a blank space, etc.) should be self-explanatory in the context.

- (e) Indexes and cross-references: Detailed Arabic indexes have been provided for: (i) key technical terms and concepts, with special attention to those that provide the framework for Islamic (and particularly Shi‘i) religious thought; (ii) proper names, places and titles of books; (iii) allusions to hadith, sayings of the imams and Arabic proverbs; (iv) Qur’anic verses and some Qur’anic allusions. The numbers given in each Index refer to the sections of the printed Arabic text also given in the English translation, numbered consecutively from beginning to end (and *not* to page numbers). This procedure was adopted to facilitate both the location of references (since the sections are usually considerably shorter than a page) and especially easy cross-reference between this Arabic text and indexes and the English translation and notes.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. The timeless, perennial nature of this situation is emphasised both by the repeated allusions to the similar roles of the pre-Islamic prophets and divine messengers mentioned in the Qur'an—especially the archetypal story of Moses and the initiatic figure, later identified as al-Khādir, in the Sura of the Cave (18:60–82), which is constantly in the background here—and by the complex frame story (in the opening paragraphs), which places the core narrative in the larger perspective of an ongoing transmission of spiritual knowledge spanning several more generations down to the time of the core drama.

2. The saying in question is the famous account of Imam 'Alī's dramatic 'confession' to his disciple, Kumayl b. Ziyād, which is more familiar today in the later version found in the *Nahj al-balāgha* (ed. M. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, n.d.), although it is also found in earlier Shi'ī sources (such as the *Kitāb al-Irshād*). See the lengthy (unacknowledged) quotations of 'Alī's teachings from there at paragraphs [157], note 76, and [392], note 165 below.

3. In this respect, these early Shi'ī categories of *zāhir*, *bāṭin* and *bāṭin al-bāṭin* closely correspond with the popular—and equally problematic—later Sufi distinction between *sharī'a* (revealed tradition), *ṭarīqa* (the initiatic way) and *ḥaqīqa* (the underlying divine reality).

4. Many of the points developed in this section would be almost equally applicable to another closely related work (also largely in dialogue form) by the same author, his biographical account of the mission of his own father (the *Sīrat Ibn Hawshab*), if we can judge by the longer fragments of that hook preserved in al-Qādī al-Nu'mān's *Kitāb Iftitāḥ al-da'wa* (ed. W. al-Qādī, Beirut, 1970) and in the *Uyūn al-akhbār* (ed. M. Ghālib, Beirut, 1973–1984) of the later Yemeni Isnailī historian Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn (see the longer discussion of that work in section III of the Introduction).

5. As already noted, the wider narrative context and complex frame story developed in the opening paragraphs serve an essential purpose in bringing out the deeper time perspective—extending back into the past and down to the writer's own day—that dramatically illustrates the author's characteristic insistence on the ongoing transmission of the divine 'trust' of spiritual knowledge and the wider responsibilities that implies for each of his readers.

6. The other side of this is that such statements would often be meaningless or gravely distorted if they were to be taken out of their particular rhetorical and dramatic context. As noted in section II.C of the Introduction,

the neglect of such essential contextual considerations, whether intentional or unintentional, has frequently led to relatively caricatural portrayals of Ismaili religious thought and writing in a number of later historical (and often polemical) settings.

7. Not only are there no direct signs of any sort of borrowing of this literary genre from Plato (or from his less artistic imitators in Hellenistic culture), but the few writings of Plato that are known to have been translated into Arabic (or at least those that have survived in that language) were mainly in a summary, highly abridged form, coloured by intervening philosophic traditions that placed little or no positive value on their distinctive literary qualities and techniques, including the dramatic dialogue form.

8. Ed. Ş. al-Sāwī and G.R. al-A'wānī (Tehran, 1397/1977).

9. The Arabic edition is included in the recently published bilingual volume, *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shi'i Witness*, edited and translated by W. Madelung and P.E. Walker (London, 2000). This important and only recently 'rediscovered' work is much more of a vivid, living (and credible) eyewitness account of the early Fatimid period than most of the well-known historical sources mentioned in the following discussion and the Bibliography, which were typically written down as 'official' histories or apologetic justifications, sometime well after the actual events they describe.

10. If these latter two Arabic works are mentioned in particular here, it is not because of their (still quite problematical) origins, but rather because of their subsequent historical association and preservation by the same Musta'ī-Ṭayyibī branches of Ismailism which preserved the manuscripts of the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*. For the *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Budhāsf*, itself quoted repeatedly in the later *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Şafā', see the Arabic edition by Daniel Gimaret (Beirut, 1972). And note especially that editor's longer discussion of the history of the manuscripts and their origins in the Introduction (pp. 9–61) to his French translation of the same text, *Le Livre de Bilawhar et Budhāsf selon la version arabe ismaélienne* (Geneva-Paris, 1971), concluding with the judgment that 'For us, the *Kitāb Bilawhar wa Budhāsf* of the Ismailis represents what is probably one of the first monuments of Arabic prose. ...' (The term 'Ismaili' here refers only to the location of the surviving Arabic manuscripts of this work, and not necessarily to the nature of their doctrinal contents or historical origins.)

11. The same remarkable literary gifts are equally apparent in the surviving fragments of his *Sīrat Ibn Hawshab* (discussed in section III), another 'cautionary tale' which beautifully illustrates the same subtle artistic use of

the dramatic dialogue form, constant allusions to hadith and the Qur'an, and other distinctive literary features found in this text. Marshall Hodgson (*The Venture of Islam*, Chicago, 1974, vol. 2, p. 493) has also noted the wider cultural significance of this genre of Ismaili 'accounts of one's own spiritual search and discovery.'

12. See the detailed indexes of Qur'an and hadith allusions and related notes to the English translation.

13. The potential 'affinity' which Ja'far b. Mañšūr suggests in those concluding discussions between the fundamental theses of Ismaili (and most early Shi'i theology)—its Neoplatonic stress on the ineffable unknowability (*tanzih*) of the ultimate divine 'One,' and the corresponding absolute practical religious centrality of the divinely inspired attributes and guidance of the more humanly accessible imams and 'friends of God'—and these familiar tenets of Ahū Mālik's Mu'tazilī theological creed highlights the growing role of Mu'tazilī thought visible in all the forms of Imami Shi'ism (Twelvers, Zaydi, Ismaili) at the time Ja'far was writing. However, it should be stressed—for the majority of readers unfamiliar with the evolution of early Islamic theology—that these distinctive emphases are already quite central in the earliest, common *shared* sources and expressions of Shi'i thought. Perhaps the most dramatic and accessible illustration of that point is to be found in the dozens of famous 'sermons' attributed to the Imam 'Alī that are collected in the *Nahj al-balāgha*, where those basic themes (of God's *tanzih* and our essential human need for the 'revelation' and ongoing guidance of the 'friends of God') pointedly structure each of those classical formulations of Shi'i teaching.

14. Those distinctive Ismaili and broader Shi'i institutions, with their intellectual and religious assumptions and terminologies, are briefly explained in short footnotes to the translation as they are gradually introduced in the course of the dialogue.

15. In any case, it is certainly these dominant, profoundly spiritual dimensions of the work (and not its initial ideological claims) that account for the survival and continued regular use of this text down through the centuries in the religious studies of the Bohra (Musta'li-Ṭayyibi) branch of the Ismailis (section II.D of the Introduction), long after the practical abandonment of any wider political hopes for the imamate.

16. One quite visible and relatively uncontroversial sign of such wide-ranging and relatively 'clandestine' influences was the well-studied key role of Ismaili conceptions in a number of medieval Jewish philosophers and religious thinkers primarily living in the Muslim 'West' (see the essay by S. Pines cited at note 18 below). The continuing sensitivity of Sunni-Shi'i

issues has unfortunately too often continued to hinder, even in modern Western scholarship, a similarly open exploration of potential Ismaili (and wider Shi'i) influences on such developments as the metaphysics of Avicenna or the cosmologies of later key Muslim thinkers in Andalusia and the Maghreb.

17. Hence the early lasting political successes of the early Ismaili (pre-Fatimid) *da'wa*, as of other competing rebellions and religio-political claims at that time, were mainly in relatively remote areas where the authority of the Abbasids (and later the Seljuqs, etc.) was exercised, if at all, only indirectly through local chieftains and tributaries: Yemen, Sind, the Berber peoples of North Africa, and the mountains of Badakhshān, among others.

18. The full diversity and variety (geographical, doctrinal and political) of the 'Ismaili movements' in the period both prior to and even after the initial success of the Fatimids has become much clearer through the painstaking historical researches of W. Madelung (summarised in the articles in the *EI*2, vol. 4, on 'Ismā'īliyya' and 'Qarmaṭī'), supplemented by several recent works by H. Halm and the more fragmentary studies of S.M. Stern (see detailed references in Bibliography). Together, these studies clearly bring out—primarily at the level of political history and its more narrowly 'ideological' reflections—the multiple differences between the Fatimids (or their predecessors) and the Qarmaṭīs, and the considerable variety of different movements, ideologies and historical situations included under both epithets. (Generations of later Ismaili and anti-Ismaili writers alike both tended to overlook these distinctions and conflicts—albeit for very different reasons.)

However, the wider implications of these important new historical insights and distinctions have not yet been fully assimilated and reflected at the level of broader literary, philosophic and religious studies of these movements. Because the most original modern scholars, like their predecessors, have continued to focus primarily on political history and those (relatively narrow) aspects of Ismaili writings—e.g., the changing 'doctrine' of the imamate—directly related to political events and sectarian developments, relatively little attention has been paid to the wider religious and philosophic dimensions of Ismaili literature, and especially to the many areas where it overlaps with other Shi'i (or even more broadly Islamic) perspectives and ways of thinking. In English, S. Pines' modestly entitled article on 'Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*' (see Bibliography) is probably the best readily accessible introduction to the wider philosophic and religious interest of this literature.

19. As noted in the biographical section III of the Introduction, Ja'far b. Maṣū'ir's adult life apparently spanned the period just prior to the establishment of Fatimid rule in Ifrīqiya and the reigns of several of the first Fatimid caliph-imams, for whom he worked after his emigration (at an uncertain date) from the Yemen. Therefore, it is theoretically conceivable that the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* could have been written after his move to North Africa and simply have been 'set' in an earlier period. However, on the basis of purely internal evidence (and the striking contrast with Ja'far's more numerous Ismaili doctrinal writings clearly produced under official Fatimid sponsorship) it is very difficult to imagine that in such a case this work would not have made at least some mention of the recent public establishment and widely propagated claims of the first Fatimid imams. Instead, readers can easily verify that this book consistently treats the Ismaili *da'wa* as being in concealment and a state of persecution *throughout* the Islamic world, as was the case prior to the establishment of the Fatimids; likewise, the rank and exact nature of the 'grand master' (*al-shaykh al-akbar*, etc.) is treated with the same intentional vagueness that evidently surrounded the public identity of the imams during the period of concealment (*satr*)—not least for very practical political reasons.

20. In the 'young man' Šāliḥ's latter discussions with Abn Mālik in particular, Ja'far b. Maṣū'ir does clearly acknowledge the sort of widespread popular socio-economic grievances that historians usually point to in explaining the historical success of Fatimid (and other) 'propaganda' during this period. And in the repeated attacks in the first half of the work on those who would claim to do away with the *shari'a* (or with its 'external' religious duties, the *zāhir* more generally), Ja'far likewise acknowledges the pitfalls of a sort of antinomian, messianic, 'revolutionary' appeal whose violent dangers and illusions he had himself apparently experienced in their most extreme form: see the discussion of his *Sirat Ibn Hawshab* in section III of the Introduction.

It is also worth noting that one finds an even wider range of religio-philosophic motivations and dimensions developed throughout the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Šafā'—a fact which no doubt accounts for the lasting and remarkably diverse appeal of that encyclopaedic work in very different situations (Sunni and Shi'i, mystical, philosophic, scientific, political, etc.) throughout later Islamic history.

21. The history of recent 'socialist' movements, in all parts of the world, tellingly provides a host of dramatic and recurrent illustrations of highly influential activists, theoreticians, artists, organisers and others who were diversely inspired by radically different ideals and aims than those which

were eventually put into practice by the politically 'successful' beneficiaries of those same movements.

22. In this work, note especially the long search of the Knower at the beginning, through many cities, for a *single* suitable pupil to transmit the 'life' of his spiritual understanding, and the way that the astute reader is eventually left with no real illusions about the relative spiritual capacities of Abū Mālik and his companions, for example.

23. One of the most thorough, specific studies of this complex process of the interaction between Ismaili thought and teachings and their religious and political repercussions is Azim Nanji's *The Nizārī Ismā'īlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (Delmar, N.Y., 1978), which explicitly mentions (pp. 102-6) the striking relevance of the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulam* as a model for illustrating (and explaining) the later creative and lastingly effective activities of the Ismaili *pīrs* in a totally different cultural and historical milieu. The same point is illustrated in greater detail, for periods closer to the time of Ja'far b. Manṣūr himself, in several of the pioneering articles of S.M. Stern (e.g., on the early spread of Ismailism in Sind—where the first *dā'īs* were sent from Yemen by Ja'far's own father—and in Khurasan) included in his *Studies in Early Ismā'ilism* (Jerusalem-Leiden, 1983).

24. The historical illustrations of these different sorts of 'secession' from any central control—whether in religiously sectarian, purely political or more individual form—throughout Ismaili history (before, during and after the period of the Fatimid dynasty) are far too numerous to list here; they are, of course, closely paralleled by numerous incidents in the earliest history of Shi'ism and in the histories of its other major branches as well. As discussed in section III of the Introduction, the famous exemplifications of this phenomenon that are probably most immediately reflected in Ja'far's writings (including the present work) are the notorious cases of 'Alī b. al-Faḍl (in the *Sīrat Ibn Hawshab*), of the Qarmaṭīs and of some of the Fatimids' earliest Berber allies in North Africa (including the *dā'ī* 'Abdulāh al-Shī'ī himself)—not to mention the lesser-known, but no doubt more poignant apostasy of Ja'far b. Manṣūr's own brother (and most of the rest of his extended family) after the death of his father.

25. To take only one of the most common examples, the long and ongoing controversy as to whether the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' are an Ismaili (or Shi'ī) work or not almost always turns on such assumptions concerning the nature and sources of the supposed central 'teachings' (and broader character and aims) of the early Ismaili *da'wa*. See, for example,

the lengthy discussions summarised in I.R. Netton's *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity* (London, 1982).

26. What is especially striking in Ismaili writings of this fairly early period (e.g., those of Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr or of his near-contemporary Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī) is that they are often not set in an implicitly sectarian and intra-Islamic apologetic framework, but instead self-confidently and straightforwardly take up the exposition and defence of Islam in general—often on points which would indeed be widely accepted by Muslims 'belonging' to other socio-religious groups. It is thus rather surprising, in contrast, that most modern secondary accounts still seem to follow the later hostile medieval polemicists and heresiographers in their basic assumption that the Ismaili point of view (like the perspectives of other Shi'ī groups, Sufis, philosophers, etc.) necessarily represents an outside, 'sectarian' or 'foreign' interpretation arbitrarily imposed on some other (purportedly non-interpretative) 'orthodox' understanding of Islam.

27. The frequent absurdity of trying to understand diverse 'Ismaili' authors mainly in terms of their (supposedly common) theologico-political sources and intentions, instead of their wider relations within the full range of relevant Islamic thought in each individual case, becomes quite apparent if one reverses that perspective and applies it, for instance, to such 'Sunni' thinkers as Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn 'Arahī. It remains to be shown whether such categorisation (i.e., as 'Ismaili') is really a great deal more revealing, for example, with regard to such Ismaili near-contemporaries as our Yemeni *dā'ī* Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr, the North African jurist al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān and the Persian philosopher Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī.

28. This sort of sometimes rather contrived Qur'anic interpretation (*ta'wīl*)—largely derived from a common body of earlier Shi'ī tradition, including much of the cosmological and astronomical symbolism—is alluded to here primarily in the preliminary discussions of the Knower on the *zāhir* and *bāḥin* (of the Islamic revelation) in paragraphs [84]–[92]. This type of material is, of course, greatly amplified in Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr's other works of Qur'anic exegesis, which—unlike the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulam* itself—seem to have been written exclusively for an audience of committed Ismailis, most probably in the Fatimid court in Tunisia (see section III of the Introduction). This is the type of exegetical writing almost exclusively described in the available secondary accounts of Ismaili 'doctrine' during this period, usually without clarifying what may have been later, original additions of Ismaili imams (or their followers) and what belongs to the broader, pre-existing body of Shi'ī traditions largely shared with the Twelvers and other Shi'ī groups.

29. Another similar illustration of this outlook within the *Kitāb al-‘Ālim wa’l-ghulām*—which is likewise reflected in a wide range of later Ismaili literature—is the complex treatment of the Qur’anic expression *ḥudūd Allāh* (‘God’s limits’) and related terms. Again, these *ḥudūd* can be understood as the divine decrees (*aḥkām*) in general (at every level of conception from the most metaphysical to the most mundane legal sense); as a reference to the cosmic spiritual hierarchy, from God through the angels and other spiritual realities (the *asbāb Allāh*, in the language used here) down to their earthly manifestations; as a justification for or reference to a wide variety of strictly human hierarchies and their corresponding functions (political, religious, etc.); and as an allusion to the inner limits and structures of being (whether moral, metaphysical, etc.).

30. See the important study by S. Pines cited at note 18 above, and full bibliographical references in I.K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā‘īlī Literature* (Malibu, CA, 1977). The relative lack of serious studies of these thinkers until very recently, even in comparison with other areas of Islamic philosophy, is reflected in the fact that until recently only one major scholarly survey of that field, Henry Corbin’s *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris, 1986) has given them any sustained attention. The juxtaposition of these famous names perhaps suggests less about the specific origins and character of Ismaili thought in particular than it does about the cultural structures underlying the curious ongoing localisation, throughout Islamic history, of so many of the most accomplished representatives of the many currents of Islamic philosophical thought (including its related theological and mystical forms) within the area of the Iranian plateau.

31. The author’s own personal roots in that broad corpus of tradition shared with earlier Twelver Shi‘ism, illustrated in some of the notes to this edition, are clearly explained by the important biographical indications concerning his father’s intellectual background as a devoted Imami scholar, in his *Sīrat Ibn Hawshab* discussed in section III of the Introduction.

32. With these other Ismaili authors, as with Ja‘far (or al-Qāḍī al-Nūmān), it is easily possible to explain the particular form and orientations of their writings in terms of these authors’ own specific intellectual background, and the particular expectations and interests of their intended readership, without postulating any sort of larger, overall intellectual or doctrinal evolution from an ‘archaic’ or ‘mythic’ Yamani school’ to a more ‘advanced’ or ‘philosophic’ ‘Persian school.’ This conception—first put forward in these terms by W. Ivanow, in his *Ibn al-Qaddāh* (Bombay, 1957), pp. 136 and following—apparently inspired the elaborate, but not entirely persuasive, recent development of this hypothesis in H. Halm’s *Kosmologie*

und Heilslehre der Frühen Ismā'īliya (Wiesbaden, 1978). That interpretation arbitrarily assumes both a separation of early Ismaili (or 'proto-Ismaili') thought from the much wider body of pre-existing Shi'ī (and early Islamic) tradition, and a rejection or minimising of the wider, highly diverse range of complex cosmological and metaphysical frameworks actually contained in this tradition.

33. This should not be taken to indicate any simplistic resolution or denial of all the real practical and larger political problems associated with what may be understood by 'the *sharī'a*' and its proper interpretation and application. But the type of questions Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr raises in that regard are no more radical than those to be found in many other realms and currents of Islamic thought.

34. The later spread of this particular myth concerning the Ismailis throughout the Islamic world does seem to have its roots mainly in Abbasid propaganda (sometimes perpetuated by earlier modern scholarship) attempting to associate the Fatimids in the popular imagination with some of the particularly infamous actions of the Qarmaṭīs, such as the stealing of the Black Stone from the Ka'ha.

35. See especially the two-volume edition by A.A.A. Fyze of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's *Da'ā'im al-Islām* (Cairo, 1951-60) which subsequently served as the basic reference for Ismaili law throughout the Fatimid period and, for the Musta'li-Ṭayyibī branches, down to the present day, as well as Fyze's English translation of the opening chapters on *walāya* in *The Book of Faith* (Bombay, 1974). Robert Brunschwig's article on 'Fiqh Fāṭimide et histoire de l'Ifriqiya' (see Bibliography) gives an excellent overview and important historical background concerning the relatively minor differences in Islamic ritual as outlined in the *Da'ā'im* (vol. 1), in comparison with the major Sunni legal schools.

36. The important ongoing role of Ja'far's writings in the Ismaili *da'wa* of the Fatimid era is indicated by Ḥamid al-Kirmānī's particular mention of 'the books of Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman' as exemplars of those 'books of *ta'wīl* comprising the inner worship (*al-'ibāda al-bāṭiniyya*) connected with (spiritual) knowledge' which should be studied—along with the more exoteric works concerning religious practice (*'amal*), such as those of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān—before approaching his own comprehensive work of Ismaili philosophy, the *Rāḥat al-'aql* (ed. M. Ghālib, Beirut, 1967, p. 109). The special respect surrounding the works of Ja'far in this later Fatimid period is also suggested by the attribution to him of at least one surviving clearly apocryphal work, the *Kitāb al-Fatarāt wa'l-qirānāt*: cf. the detailed discussion by H. Halm in 'Zur Datierung des isma'ilitischen Lehre' (see

Bibliography). The special case of his *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* is discussed in section III.

37. For the post-Fatimid period (in the Musta'li-Ṭayyibī tradition of Yemen), it is significant that Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr's various writings are repeatedly quoted by many of the famous Yemeni *dā'īs* (as with the representative case of his *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab*); the citations from this Yemeni literature noted by Poonawala (*Biobibliography*, p. 71) are by no means exhaustive. For the modern and contemporary periods, Poonawala (pp. 70–5) lists numerous manuscripts of almost all of Ja'far's works (mostly from Bohra collections in India). Similarly, the manuscript collection of The Institute of Ismaili Studies, which is a fairly accurate reflection of the Ismaili literature preserved in India (cf. Gacek, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies*, London, 1984–85, vol. 1), contains more works by Ja'far (and usually with multiple copies) than any other Ismaili author except al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān and the philosopher al-Kirmānī. This well-attested tradition of ongoing study (and careful copying) seems to account for the relative lack of major divergences among the manuscripts used in this edition (see section v of the Introduction). The continuing modern study of the work is also indicated by the freshly pencilled marginal annotations and explanations for students visible in several of the manuscripts used for our edition.

38. It seems quite possible that both informants may be correct, since the work—as discussed in section I—can be read on many different levels, and is explicitly devoted (cf. paragraph [3] and the concluding paragraph of the Arabic text) to illuminating *both* the proper approach of 'beginners' on the spiritual path (*ādāb al-ṭālibīn*) and to the complex problems and methods of spiritual pedagogy that are confronted by the 'guides' and spiritual teachers in many different contexts and situations (the *manāḥij al-ṣāliḥīn*).

39. In particular, most standard secondary accounts in major reference works (both in Arabic and in Western languages) contain a great deal of completely mistaken or purely hypothetical suppositions, while leaving out important information. Much of this confusion can be traced to a remark—added by a later reader—at the end of one manuscript of Ja'far's *Asrār al-nuṭaqā'* that implies a date of 380/990. The ensuing mis-dating forced first W. Ivaouw (*Ismaili Literature: A Bibliographical Survey*, Tehran, 1963, p. 21) and then Paul Kraus ('La Bibliographie ismaélienne,' p. 486) to make Ja'far a 'grandson or great-grandson' of Maṣṣūr al-Yaman—despite the unanimous historical evidence to the contrary—and to suggest that early Yemeni Ismaili works such as the *Kitāb al-'Ālim wa'l-ghulām*

and the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* (and possibly the *Kitāb al-Kashf*) could not be his writing (again despite the unanimous textual and historical evidence to the contrary). Unfortunately, these misleading conclusions were then followed by both Brockelmann (*GAL*, Supplement, I, p. 324), who therefore leaves out almost all of Ja'far's works, and by Sezgin (*GAS*, I, pp. 578-9), and were also repeated in the many Arabic editions and Ismaili histories produced by Muṣṭafā Ghālib.

The reliable historical sources are listed by Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, pp. 70-1. However, Poonawala (possibly still influenced by the mistaken dating by Ivanow and Krans) places Ja'far *after* al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (d. 363/974) and the early Fatimid poet Ibn Hānī' (362/973), although he was certainly older than both of them; in fact, it is probable that he was at least contemporary with—and quite possibly somewhat older than—the famous early Persian *da'īs* Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 323/934) and al-Nasafī (d. 332/943). The article on 'Dja'far' by H. Halm in the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Supplement, fasc. 3-4, pp. 236-7) summarises the very limited known biographical evidence, without any description of Ja'far's writings or their possible chronology. Additional bibliographical information, derived from later Yemeni Ismaili authors, is also included in the 'étude bibliographique' in H. Feki's *Les Idées religieuses et philosophiques de l'ismaélisme faitimide* (Tunis, 1978), pp. 16-19, and in the fundamental historical study by W. Madelung ('Das Imamāt in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre,' see Bibliography) discussed in several of the following notes.

40. These panegyric poems, taken from volume 6 of the late Yemeni *dā'ī* Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn's (d. 872/1468) monumental history of the imamate, the '*Uyūn al-akhbār*, are conveniently collected in a previously unpublished article ('Ja'far Ibn Manṣūr al-Yaman's Poems on the Rebellion of Abū Yazīd') included in S.M. Stern's *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*, pp. 146-52; they do not contain any new biographical information, apart from their evidence of Ja'far's religious devotion to the Fatimid cause. Stern's article also briefly summarises the troubled events in the Yemeni *da'wa* following Ibn Ḥawshab's death, as recounted in Ibn Mālik al-Ḥammādī's *Kashf asrār al-Bāṭiniyya* (ed. S. Zakkār, Damascus, 1482/1982). (Idrīs's own historical source is unidentified: it could be an earlier chronicle of Abū Yazīd's rebellion, but also possibly a larger collection of Ja'far's own poetry circulating in the Yemen, since the anti-Ismaili author Ibn Mālik, for example, cites one line from a longer poem Ja'far sent to his brother after the latter's apostasy.) See note 48 below.

41. The full incident is recounted in al-Jawdhari's *Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhār* (ed. M.K. Ḥusayn and M.A.H. Sha'ira, Cairo, 1954, p. 126; French tr. M. Canard, Algiers, 1958, pp. 193-4). The account describes the Caliph al-Mu'izz paying off a mortgage which Ja'far had taken on his house near the palace, because of this Imam's great respect for Ja'far and the services of his father. The language of this account strongly suggests that Ja'far was probably quite an old man by the time of this incident. Another famous anecdote—recounted almost five centuries later by Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn (see H. Hamdani, 'Some Unknown Ismā'īlī Authors,' ref. in Bibliography), and summarised by Poonawala (*Biobibliography*, p. 70)—describing the way in which al-Mu'izz taught al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān about Ja'far's higher spiritual rank, is almost surely apocryphal, given the substantial literary evidence of personal acquaintance between these two leading Ismaili authors in the court of al-Mu'izz.

42. See Madelung's classic study, 'Das Imamāt,' especially pp. 94-100, focusing mainly on Ja'far's *Ta'wīl al-zakāt*; the *Kitāb al-Adilla wa'l-shawāhid*, cited in this connection, consists of only a few pages in the extant manuscripts. As discussed below, Madelung suggests there (pp. 51-8; p. 95, n. 275) that the majority of Ja'far's writings—and especially the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām* and the *Kitāb al-Kashf*—considerably antedate the reign of al-Mn'izz, reflecting an earlier, specifically Yemeni Ismaili tradition. As discussed above (section II.D), we agree strongly with that Yemeni dating and provenance for the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*. However, Madelung's 'suspicion' (p. 96, n. 282) that the *Ta'wīl al-zakāt* must date from the end of al-Mu'izz's reign (i.e., ca. 364/976), because a discussion concerning the succession to the imamate could be an allusion to contemporary problems involving the sons of al-Mn'izz, does conflict with stronger suggestions (from within the *Iftitāḥ al-da'wa* and *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab*: see following note) that Ja'far would have been at least ninety years old by then—and therefore he probably died nearer the beginning of al-Mu'izz's reign. (For a vivid depiction of Fatimid court life and intrigue during the time of al-Mu'izz, see M. Yalaoui, *Un Poète chiite d'occident ... Ibn Hānī' al-Andalusī*, Tunis, 1976.)

43. These sections alternate between what are clearly fragments taken directly from an unidentified literary work—which we take to be the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* mentioned separately by later Ismaili sources (see note 49 below), since it is in precisely the remarkable dramatic dialogue form of the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, written in the same striking Arabic style and distinctive language, and recounts a very similar story—and al-Qāḍī Nu'mān's own paraphrases and summaries of the same events (based on

these 'eyewitness' reports), in a way that shifts the guiding focus away from Maṣṣūr al-Yaman himself to the Qāḍī's later personal interest in al-Mahdī and the Fatimid uprising in the Maghreb. It is our hypothesis that al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, by 're-writing' and paraphrasing what was probably a single coherent written source, was trying to give the impression that this section was basically his own composition—especially since this sort of concealed use of earlier sources is certainly not that uncommon among other Arabic historians. The alternative hypothesis suggested by A. Hamdani ('An Early Fatimid Source,' pp. 66–7, see Bibliography), that 'the Sira would have been a proscribed book almost immediately after its composition,' seems rather unlikely in view of the evidence we have just noted for Ja'far's high position under al-Mu'izz, the continued study of all the rest of his religious works throughout the Fatimid period, and the lack of any other evidence for such a 'ban.'

Note in particular the following internal descriptions of this key unnamed source (*Iftitāh al-da'wa*, from the edition by W. al-Qāḍī): 'what was reported to us by a person of knowledge and trustworthiness among the people of [Maṣṣūr al-Yaman]...' (p. 33, at the very beginning of the *Iftitāh*); 'trustworthy sources from the people of [Maṣṣūr al-Yaman] reported to us...' (p. 47); 'one of the people of [Maṣṣūr al-Yaman] reported to us...' (pp. 48, 53). In each of these cases, these phrases seem designed simply to conceal the fact that al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān is actually quoting from (or paraphrasing) what is actually a single written source. Given the fact that (as reported by Ibn Mālik: see note 53 below) all the rest of Ja'far's family apparently stayed behind—and were eventually massacred—in Yemen, this source in Ifrīqiya could hardly be anyone else but Ja'far himself (or his own written work).

44. *Iftitāh* (ed. W. al-Qāḍī), p. 62.

45. See the *Iftitāh* (ed. W. al-Qāḍī), p. 45, for the description of Maṣṣūr al-Yaman's marriage to the daughter of a devoted Shi'i recently martyred in the prisons of the Sunui ruler of Ṣan'a; this is the only wife mentioned explicitly in any of the sources. The story also mentions that it was this woman's first cousin (*ibn 'ammihā*)—i.e., Ja'far's own uncle—who was sent as the first Ismailī *dā'i* to Sind, where al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān adds that the *da'wa* was still flourishing in his time. (For details concerning the success of that *da'wa* enterprise and its political establishment in Sind [Multan] during this later period, see S. M. Stern's articles on 'Ismā'īlī Propaganda and Fatimid Rule in Sind' and 'Heterodox Ismā'īlism at the Time of al-Mu'izz,' reprinted in *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*, pp. 177–88 and 257–88.)

Ibn Mālik al-Yamanī's account of the dramatic events after Manṣūr al-Yaman's death (below, note 53) suggests that Ja'far was Manṣūr's second-oldest son, after the eldest (and future apostate), Abū al-Ḥasan Manṣūr; Ibn Mālik also mentions a third son named Abū al-Faḍl and other, unnamed 'awlād.'

46. Apart from this possible indication of a death date around 346/957, we would therefore agree with the estimate of A. Hamdani ('An Early Fatimid Source,' p. 65) who points out that Ja'far's name is not mentioned in a list of the notables who accompanied al-Mu'izz to Egypt in 362/973, and concludes that he must have 'lived somewhere between 270/883 and 360/970, reaching an advanced age of between 80 to 90 years.' The prolific editor M. Ghālib, in his edition of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥamīdī's *Kanz al-walad* (ed. M. Ghālib, Wiesbaden, 1971, p. 43, n. 1) also gives the dates 240-347 AH for Ja'far's life (relatively close to our approximation here), although he does not cite any source or explanation for those dates in that work, and elsewhere usually gives quite different dates (apparently derived from Ivanow, Kraus and Brockelmann) in his other editions of Ja'far's works.

47. In particular, this biographical hypothesis closely coincides with what W. Madelung distinguishes (in 'Das Imamāt') as three approximate periods or strata of writings attributed to Ja'far: a 'Yemenite' period, which would include the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* and Ja'far's possible 'editorship' or compilation of the *Kitāb al-Kashf* (cf. pp. 51-8); such relatively earlier theological works as the *Shawāhid* and the *Kitāb al-Farā'id* (including the discussion of al-Mahdī's famous letter to the Yemen), written in Ifrīqiya prior to the doctrinal changes of al-Mu'izz (p. 95, n. 275); and the late *Ta'wīl al-zakāt*, reflecting the new interpretation of the imamate introduced by al-Mu'izz (pp. 95-101). Most importantly, these particular dates give no reason to deny either the unanimous attribution to Ja'far of such pre-Fatimid works as the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, or the many internal stylistic and thematic links between those dramatic works and his later, more purely theological writings.

48. The historical data concerning the period of Ibn Ḥawshab's activity in Yemen, based on these fragments and on many other historical and geographical sources, is analysed in complete detail in H. Halm's long article on 'Die Sirat Ibn Haušab' (see Bibliography). However, this study (despite its title) is *not* specifically concerned with the distinctive literary and religious dimensions of that composition in particular, and does not point out the many serious problems raised by al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's obvious transformations and abridgements of that text. Nor does it point out the evident dependence of both Idrīs and Ibn Mālik on the very limited selections of

the Qādī, or the problematic character of Ibn Mālik's Ismaili sources for the events following Ibn Ḥawshab's death (see note 53 below).

In fact, the '*Sīrat abīhi*' (i.e., of Ja'far's father) is mentioned by name only by several later Ismaili *dā'īs* of Yemen, some of whom apparently had access to a separate, complete copy, since they quote a longer passage (translated and edited by A. Hamdani, 'An Early Fatimid Source') which does not appear at all in al-Qādī al-Nn'mān or the many later historians who adapted his text. These references to the *Sīrat abīhi* are as follows (cf. H. Feki, *Les Idées religieuses*, p. 16):

- (a) The *Ghāyat al-mawālīd* of al-Sulṭān al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 533/1138); this source does not mention Ja'far's own name, and is clearly referring to the fragments preserved by al-Qādī al-Nn'mān in the *Iftitāḥ al-da'wa*. (See the Arabic text cited in Ivanow, *Ismaili Traditions Concerning the Rise of the Fatimids*, London, 1942, p. 36).
- (b) The *Kitāb Majmū' al-tarbiyya* by Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥārithī (d. 584/1188); this anthology reproduces a part of the text—completely independent of al-Qādī al-Nn'mān's work—given at greater length in Ibn al-Walid's *Risālat al-Wahīda* (full reference below).
- (c) The *Lubb al-ma'ārif* by 'Alī b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Walid (d. 682/1284).
- (d) The *Risālat al-Wahīda fī tathbit arkān al-'aqīda* by his son Ḥusayn b. 'Alī Ibn al-Walid (d. 612/1215), which contains the longer passages—completely independent of the *Iftitāḥ al-da'wa*—edited and translated by A. Hamdani ('An Early Fatimid Source').

It does not appear that Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468) had access to this separate (and probably complete) copy of the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab*, since his excerpts (like those of Ibn Mālik and all the later Sunni historians, including Ibn Khaldūn) seem to be completely drawn from the *Iftitāḥ al-da'wa*.

49. Although the *Sīra* is no doubt based on Ja'far's first-hand knowledge of his father's (and his own family's) experiences, everything about the work—judging by the contents, structure and distinctive Arabic style (remarkably identical with the language of the *Kitāb al-'Ālim wa'l-ghulām*)—indicates that it is definitely a later literary composition by Ja'far, clearly composed after his father's death and the subsequent rebellion by his father's Yemeni fellow-missionary 'Alī b. al-Faḍl. The ongoing contrast between these two figures, with their radically differing levels of spiritual maturity and insight, governs the dramatic and thematic structure of the whole work, just as in the more elaborate encounters of this type depicted in the *Kitāb al-'Ālim wa'l-ghulām*. Its form is also that of a dramatic

dialogue, in which each of the characters (not just Ibn Ḥawshab) speaks in the first person, and in which the sections of dialogue are tied together by a narrator's comments and explanations. The fragment preserved in the *Risālat al-Wahīda* (see preceding note) is especially important in this regard, as it shows with certainty that the *Sīra* was *not* simply an autobiographical memoir, and since the key themes of that fragment—particularly the ongoing spiritual mediating presence of the imams and 'friends of God,' even in times of their politico-historical 'concealment' (*satr*)—are precisely those governing virtually all of Ja'far's own writings.

50. The *ghayba* ('occultation') of the twelfth imam is traditionally dated at 260/874, and the opening scene of the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* is clearly meant to occur shortly after that date; Ibn Ḥawshab himself is presented as already being an adult and an accomplished Imami Shi'i scholar by that time—which would imply that he was a fairly old man at the time of his (apparently non-violent) death in 302/914.

51. Professor W. Madelung, in an important article on 'The Sources of Ismā'īlī Law' (see Bibliography) has likewise pointed out in detail the absolute importance of Kufan Shi'i sources (including some Zaydī works) in the surviving fragments of one of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's largest compilations of Ismaili *fiqh*. However, the possible role of Ja'far (and his father) in transferring that wider underlying body of Shi'i tradition—much of which is now preserved mainly in Twelver Imami texts and hadith collections—into the Ismaili context in North Africa has not yet been explored. For example, no similar research has yet been undertaken concerning the broader sources of Ja'far's many compendia of Shi'i *ta'wīl* and prophetic tales, such as the *Kitāb al-Kashf*, the *Asrār al-nuṭaqā'*, etc., even though virtually all of those works are based on and presented through a vast body of hadith going back to the early Shi'i imams (especially Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and his father Muḥammad al-Bāqir), just as in the more 'exoteric' writings of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān.

52. It is arguable that this is, in fact, the central governing theme of each of the works attributed to Ja'far, clearly dominating the particular doctrinal 'variations'—reflecting the vicissitudes of the Fatimid dynasty—that are the more specific focus of Madelung's study of 'Das Imamāt.' As can clearly be seen in the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, this recurrent theme of the continuity and presence of a hierarchy of spiritual guidance—and the concomitant possibility of actually reaching the rank of the 'friends of God'—has wider Islamic (and human) religious dimensions that have not yet been adequately reflected in the more historically and politically focused studies of early Ismaili thought.

53. This dramatic factional episode, arising from the Imam al-Mahdī's eventual choice of Manṣūr al-Yaman's experienced Yemeni fellow-*dā'i* 'Abdullāh b. al-'Abbās al-Shāwirī (instead of Ja'far's older brother Abū al-Ḥasan al-Manṣūr) to succeed Ibn Ḥawshab as head of the Ismaili community in Yemen, is recounted in Ibn Mālik al-Yamani's *Kashf asrār al-Bāṭiniyya* (= *Akhbār al-Qarāmiṭa*, pp. 343-6). There the account actually appears to be based on later Ismaili sources, probably including Ja'far himself, since the narrative—despite the flagrant anti-Ismaili intentions of Ibn Mālik's later work—is quite sympathetic to Ja'far's position and his forceful criticism of his older brother's policies. Ibn Mālik's account includes (p. 345) one line of a poem Ja'far later sent to his older brother from Ifrīqiya, after Abū al-Faḍl's murder of al-Shāwirī and his 'apostasy' (from Shi'ism) and public return to Sunni-Abbasid allegiance. And often this historical account is directly presented as a 'quotation,' for example, of dialogues between Ja'far and his older brother, or of Manṣūr al-Yaman's death-bed advice to his followers—a distinctive structural feature of all our fragments of the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* (and the *Kitāb al-Ālim wa'l-ghulām*). However, the style and literary quality of this particular dialogue is clearly not that of the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* fragments preserved by al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, so that Ibn Mālik himself must have either paraphrased a later section of that work, or some other Yemeni Ismaili chronicler continuing that story.

Ibn Mālik's account concludes (pp. 345-6) with the dramatic story of how—some time after the murder of al-Shāwirī and Ja'far's ensuing emigration to Ifrīqiya (i.e., some two or three decades after the death of his father in 302/914)—his older brother, despite his public return to Sunni-Abbasid allegiance, was finally betrayed by yet another of his own followers, so that 'the children of [Abū al-Ḥasan al-] Manṣūr and his *ḥarīm* were driven out of' their home and were eventually attacked by neighbouring tribesmen 'and slaughtered, all of them, adults and children alike, and the women enslaved,' so that 'Manṣūr had no known posterity at all.'

54. The story of Ibn al-Faḍl's military campaigns and notorious antinomian activities is recounted in more detail by a number of (equally hostile) early non-Ismaili sources, which are discussed by H. Halm, 'Die *Sīrat* b. Ḥawshab,' who also points out the way the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* intentionally understates the evident political and military importance of al-Faḍl's activities in the early expansion of the Yemeni *da'wa*—no doubt just as later Ismaili accounts from North Africa tell us relatively little about the specific Berber leaders who actually accounted for 'Abdullāh al-Shīrī's eventual political success.

55. It is very likely that the passion with which this theme is presented in both the *Kitāb al-ʿĀlim wa'l-ghulām* and the *Sīrat Ibn Ḥawshab* (as well as in Ja'far's other works) has much more to do with the immediate events of his father's mission and the subsequent attacks by Ibn al-Faḍl than with what some historians have viewed as an 'evolution' in Fatimid doctrines—after the establishment of their dynasty—away from an originally more 'messianic,' 'Mahdist' and 'antinomian' outlook. In any case, Ja'far's almost certainly pre-Fatimid work translated here does not seem to represent a tendentious 'rewriting' of the history of the pre-Fatimid Ismaili *da'wa* so as to eliminate its supposedly messianic or antinomian teachings. Instead, it more likely points to the much wider diversity both of the formal teachings and 'doctrines' pragmatically adopted by the *dā'īs* in different settings, and of the possible public reactious and relevant social bases—which, as in many such popular religio-political movements at any period, seem to have had very little to do with theology or spirituality—that were apparently involved in many of these late third/ninth-century messianic movements in widely scattered regions of the Islamic world.

56. See full details in Poonawala, *Biobibliography*, pp. 70–5; Gacek, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, as well as the discussion of the manuscripts used in this edition in section v of the Introduction. While by no means a complete listing of the extant manuscripts of Ja'far's writings, Poonawala's work is considerably more exact and complete than the corresponding sections in earlier Ismaili bibliographies given by Brockelmann, Sezgin, Kraus and Ivanow (which have been the basis of most subsequent secondary accounts).

57. See especially the discussion of this work in Madelung, 'Das Imamāt,' pp. 52–8. There is no reason why Ja'far should not have been the 'editor' or compiler of this work (as indicated by all the manuscripts), especially since, as already noted, virtually all of his theological writings consist of a similar (if more polished and coherent) sort of reworking of traditional Shi'i and Qur'anic materials. However, given the evident nature of the work as a compilation of diverse earlier Shi'i writings and interpretations—many of which almost certainly pre-date the known beginnings of any distinctively Ismaili *da'wa*, there is certainly no reason to attribute all the ideas and doctrines in it to Ja'far himself (or even to earlier Ismailis); see the recent discussion by H. Halm in his 'The Cosmology of the pre-Fatimid Ismā'īliyya,' pp. 79–80, in F. Daftary, ed., *Mediaeval Ismā'īli History and Thought* (London, 1996).

58. H. Feki's mistaken identification of a supposedly 'lost' work by Ja'far ('*al-Tawārīkh wa'l-siyar*,' in his *Les Idées religieuses*, p. 16) is actually based simply on a quotation from Ja'far recorded in Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāmidī's

Kanz al-walad (p. 218; later repeated in Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn's *Zuhr al-ma'ānī*), in which Ja'far simply refers to 'what was mentioned in the histories and biographies ...' As already mentioned above in regard to the unnamed source (including one of Ja'far's poems) for the later sections of Ibn Mālik's history, there are almost certainly fragments of other writings by Ja'far preserved in the works of later Yemeni authors. Often, for instance, in the *Kanz al-walad* just mentioned, these Yemeni authors quote hadith or passages from unnamed works by Ja'far whose exact provenance has not yet been determined. Similarly, the *Kanz al-walad* twice quotes unspecified 'works (*awḍā'*) of Manṣūr al-Yaman' which are not part of the extant fragments of his *Kitāb al-Ruḥd wa'l-hidāya*. (These other fragmentary works of Manṣūr al-Yaman, incidentally, are not mentioned by Poonawala.)

59. The famous letter of al-Mahdī to the Ismailis in the Yemen concerning the genealogy of the Fatimids, which Ja'far describes in his *Kitāb al-Farā'id wa ḥudūd al-dīn*, has been the subject of a long series of articles and disputes that have seldom touched on the contents and context of the rest of this work or of Ja'far's writings in themselves. See the most recent and complete discussion of this difficult problem (including reference to much of the earlier literature on the question) in A. Hamdani and F. de Blois, 'A Re-Examination of al-Mahdī's Letter' (see Bibliography).

60. See Madelung's detailed analysis of the revised theory of the Ismaili imamate in this late work in 'Das Imamāt,' pp. 95-101.

61. One has the impression—which remains to be demonstrated by more detailed historical investigations—that much of the content of these works of *ta'wīl*, as is obviously the case with the *Kitāb al-Kaḥf*, is a sort of compilation and adaptation of pre-existing Shi'ī themes and interpretations, often shared by common Twelver Imami traditions. The verification of this hypothesis, which does fit with what we know of Ja'far's father's own religious background and training, would require a detailed study of these works by a scholar thoroughly acquainted not only with the writings of Ismaili contemporaries such as al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, but also more particularly with the vast early body of cognate Twelver Shi'ī hadith.

62. Of course the author also makes similar use of allusion to key elements of the hadith (reported sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad and early Shi'ī imams) and early Islamic sacred history, usually carefully drawing on materials shared by both Sunni and Shi'ī traditional sources. However, because of the unfamiliarity of many readers with these sources, we have explained most of those key allusions briefly in footnotes at the corresponding passages, giving references to their parallel usage, where possible,

in other Ismaili and Twelver Shi'i authors and sources (such as al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān).

63. For further discussions and illustrations of these distinctive rhetorical features and assumptions shared by a wide range of pre-modern Islamic intellectual traditions, see our forthcoming study, *Between the Lines: An Introduction to Islamic 'Esoteric' Writing*.

64. The author's particular usage of Qur'anic passages and allusions to allude to *universal* spiritual themes and phenomena (what the Knower usually terms the 'innermost spiritual dimension,' *bāṭin al-bāṭin*) which we are describing here is in most cases clearly distinct from his more 'technical' interpretations of certain Qur'anic terms and passages as applying to specific figures of the then-contemporary Ismaili spiritual hierarchies and construction of sacred history (that dimension the Knower normally refers to as the *bāṭin*, or 'inner aspect' of religion). Those latter, specifically Shi'i usages are usually clearly and straightforwardly explained in the course of the dialogue, although they may appear somewhat artificial to outside (non-Shi'i) observers; again, we have usually explained that historical context of those technical usages in footnotes as they first appear. In any case, those particular technical meanings attributed to Qur'anic terms and symbols usually need to be formally 'taught' and explained, which is not the case with the deeper, experientially grounded phenomena and laws of the universal spiritual dimension, the *bāṭin al-bāṭin*.

65. Since the author often alludes to a dozen or more related Qur'anic verses (which would require an impractically lengthy listing of all related occurrences), dedicated readers without access to the original Arabic will need to refer to H. Kassis's *A Concordance of the Qur'an* (Berkeley-London, 1983), which is an indispensable tool for this kind of study. In addition, we should point out that the most accurate and reliable English translation of the Qur'an (A.J. Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted*, London, 1953) unfortunately does not follow what has become the standard (Arabic and English) verse numbering of the Qur'an and only indirectly indicates by typographic format the beginning of each verse; however, the variations in Arberry's numbering are very small (usually no more than one or two verses' difference from the standard numeration we have adopted in this translation), and attentive readers normally can locate the verse(s) in question without too much difficulty.

66. An apparent exception to this are the two recent manuscripts (one from 1253 AH and the other undated) used in the version published posthumously under the name of Dr. Muṣṭafā Ghālih, *Arba' a kutub haqqāniyya* (Beirut, 1403/1983), pp. 15-74, which reached us only after our completion

of this critical edition in 1984. This printed version (apparently undertaken after Dr. Ghālih's death in 1981) contains hundreds of errors and omissions, but a great many of those cases seem to come from the text having been set in print or transcribed rather carelessly: often the Arabic phrase makes no sense as printed, but one can readily see what must have been the actual reading in the original manuscripts. As a result, it was practically impossible to know which variant readings were actually found in those two manuscripts and which discrepancies were generated separately during the stages of printing, transcription, etc. In general, the manuscripts used in this Beirut version seem closest to the late (and likewise relatively hastily copied) Fyzee manuscript [ف] used in this edition.

67. In most cases, of course, similar Prophetic hadith are also included in the extant Shi'ī (primarily Twelver Imami) collections.

68. See the discussion of this practice and the related abbreviations by Gacek, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, pp. xiv-xv.