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ISLAMIC RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

No. 7

AL-HIDAYA TU'L-AMIRIYA

being an epistle of the tenth Fatimid Caliph al-Āmir
bi-aḥkāmī'l-lāh

and an Appendix

IQA' ŞAWA'IQI'L-IRGHAM

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

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A.A.A.F.

September, 1938

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INTRODUCTION

The eighth Fatimid Caliph, al-Mustansir bi'l-lāh, died at Cairo after a short illness during the first part of the night of Thursday, the 18th Dhū'l-hijja 487 A.H., i.e. between six and ten P.M. on Wednesday, the 27th December 1094 A.D. His reign was exceptionally long, just over sixty lunar years. Its earlier half coincided with the period of the highest power and prosperity ever attained by Egypt under this illustrious dynasty; but later on signs of rapid decay became more and more manifest. Towards the end of his life the aged Caliph gradually fell under the influence of an able, but selfish and unscrupulous courtier, Afdal, the son of an Armenian convert, who became commander-in-chief of the Fatimid army. Mustansir even married his youngest son (later on the Caliph Musta'li) to Afdal's daughter. This circumstance, undoubtedly, offered every chance to this ambitious man to exercise his influence also over his son-in-law, the next Caliph.

The death of Mustansir was rather sudden, and appears to have come as a surprise to the elder princes and to many high officials of the state, when they were suddenly summoned to the palace only to find that Afdal had already placed on the throne Musta'li (who was at that time either eighteen, or twenty years old), declaring that this was done in accordance with the last will of the late Caliph. All were compelled to swear allegiance to him.

As far as it is possible to ascertain, the official heir-apparent till the end of Mustansir's reign was his eldest son, Prince Nizār, who was over fifty years old at the time of his father's death. Feeling utterly disappointed and hurt by what from his point of view was nothing but pure usurpation of his rights, Nizār escaped with a number of his followers to Alexandria, leaving Cairo the same night. In Alexandria he began to organize his

supporters, and, as is known, in the beginning had a certain amount of success in his campaign against Musta'li. But later on he was betrayed by his generals, captured, and murdered in prison. All this apparently took place during the year 488/1095, and all was over by the beginning of February, 1096, because the *siḡill*, or epistle, of Musta'li, addressed to his officials, and dealing with these matters, as preserved in the VIIth vol. of the *'Uyūnu'l-akḥbār*, is dated the 8th Šafar 489, i.e. the 6th February 1096.

This dynastic dispute had far-reaching consequences. Fatimid Caliphs were not ordinary kings, but primarily religious heads of the Ismaili branch of Islām. The question of their succession was a part of their dogma, and of grave religious importance. These dogmas were firmly established in the course of over three centuries of the existence of the sect by that time. It is, therefore, not surprising that a very large proportion of the followers of the Fatimid Imāms, especially in Asia, remained faithful to the first nominee, Nizār, and, after his death, to his descendants, while in Egypt and the Yaman a considerable proportion supported Musta'li. The Ismaili world was thus split for ever into two main groups, the Nizārīs, now chiefly known in India as Khojas, and the Musta'lians, now represented in India by the Bohoras, Dā'ūdī and Sulaimānī.

Muslim historical works of a general character written chiefly by the Sunnīs, entirely disregard the religious side of the question, either because it was hidden from them, or because they were disinclined to attach any importance to the beliefs belonging to a "heretical" system, as it would appear from their point of view. For this reason the real significance and the implications of this crisis in the succession of the Fatimids, as it affected the Ismaili world, remained rather obscure. In the document edited here in the original Arabic, the point of view adopted by one of the contesting parties is for the first time made available to us. It emanates from the highest authority in the Musta'lian branch of the sect, and is accepted by its faithful followers without reserve.

The work, which is called *al-Hilāyat* *l-Āmiriya*, or *ar-Risālat* *l-Āmiriya*,¹ undoubtedly belongs to the type of official instructive correspondence of the caliphs which is known by the name of *siḡill*, or epistle. By such epistles Fatimid Imāms used to guide their followers in religious matters, especially in various situations of emergency. The present *risāla* was obviously intended as an answer to some actions of Nizārī propagandists, who, however, are not directly referred to in it.

To attribute the authorship of this epistle directly to the Caliph al-Āmir himself would, in all probability, be a mistake. Kings, especially in the East, rarely write anything except their own names when signing documents. Most probably, like all *siḡilla*, it was compiled by his secretaries, under his direct instructions, or by the officials of what may now be called the propaganda department. It is quite possible that the text was read over finally to the Caliph, and was approved of by him. Although it appears that every *siḡill* was usually dated, and the date formed part of the text, the *risāla* does not contain any indication as to its original date. Perhaps it was omitted in modern copies and may be preserved in old MSS. in case any are still preserved.

The *risāla* contains an appendix, under the bombastic title of *iqā' šawā'iq* *l-irghām*, or "The fall of the lightning of humiliation" (i.e. upon the enemies of the author). It refers to the comments of the dissenters on the original epistle, and the reply, written on behalf of Āmir, refuting their alleged errors. It is stated in it that the original epistle was received on Thursday, the 27th Dhū'l-ḥijja (cf. p. 28, l. 6). Logically it would be an easy matter to find the approximate date by finding in which year about that time the 27th of Dhū'l-ḥijja fell on a Thursday. Āmir ascended the throne when still a child just over four years old in 495/1101, and was assassinated in 524/1131, or two years later, according to the Ismaili historians (who may possibly be wrong). The date in question fell on a Thursday in the years

¹ W. Ivanow, *Guide to Ismaili Literature*, p. 50, No. 173.

512 and 520. But we must not be too sure: these dates may be quite wrong. As in practice, the beginning of the lunar month in the Muslim calendar depends on such an unreliable thing as the visibility of the new moon to the human eye, there is always some discrepancy between the dates given in the comparative tables prepared on the basis of astronomical calculations, and the dates as given by historians. In addition to this, still further confusion is created by the fact that the Ismaili calendar differs from the general Muslim calendar by a day or two, as it takes the beginning of the month from the astronomical moment of the appearance of the new moon. Taking into consideration also the fact that what is according to Muhammadan ideas already Thursday, may still be the evening of Wednesday, it is possible to suggest that the *risāla* was received in Damascus on the 27th Dhū'l-hijja of 515, 517, 518, 520, or 523.¹

The general style and language of this document, as one would expect, had to comply with the recognized requirements of solemnity and dignity, according to the ideas of that period. It is bombastic, full of stylistic tricks, high-sounding epithets, most pious words, and all things that one would expect in a document of this kind. It contains no "business-like" statement of facts, and only alludes here and there, in general and often very vague terms, to different events which it is not easy to identify. All the rest is a profusion of interpretations of different verses of the Qur'ān, Biblical analogies, etc., not uncommonly with a considerable admixture of pure sophisms.

In the course of his argument the author has to admit the most important fact that Nizār was officially proclaimed the heir-apparent of his father, and that provincial agents of the government were duly informed about this (cf. p. 21, l. 12).

¹ The last mentioned date seems to be the most probable because in that year, as is known, a descendant of Nizār, or one who pretended to be, was captured and executed in Cairo. Cf. O'Leary, *Short History of the Fatimid Kadišute* (London, 1923), 212. Another pretender was executed in 521/1127 (*ibid.*, 220).

He further states that this appointment was first cancelled by the subsequent nomination of Nizār's younger brother 'Abdu'l-lāh, and later on by the *naṣṣ* to Musta'li, in the last moments of Mustansir's life (cf. p. 18, l. 7 sqq.). This "nomination at the moment of expiring" made under very suspicious circumstances, as we have seen, does not seem very convincing. Further on, the author tries to argue that a verbal order is more valid than an order given in writing (cf. p. 21, l. 14). He specially emphasizes the alleged fact that Nizār and 'Abdu'l-lāh were both given the title of the *walī 'ahdī'l-muslimīn*, while only Musta'li was called the *walī 'ahdī'l-mu'minīn*. The matter seems to be somewhat dark, although the difference between *islām* and *imān* in Muslim theology, and particularly in Ismaili doctrine, is well known. It is difficult to see whether this difference in title, even if it was real, implied any material distinction. The author's own attempts at referring to historical precedents are rather poor. He can only cite a single instance from the history of the Fatimids, namely the fact that the same title, *walī 'ahdī'l-muslimīn*, was bestowed by the Caliph al-Ḥākim bi-amr'l-lāh (386-411/996-1021) upon a certain 'Abdu'r-Raḥīm (cf. p. 17, l. 11), who was a relation of the Caliph. His story is rather enigmatic, like many things that pertain to the reign of Ḥākim. All that is known is that at the moment of the Caliph's death he was the governor of Damascus, where he was very unpopular due to his extortions. As the party of Ḥākim's son, Zāhir, was strong, he was proclaimed Caliph in Cairo, and 'Abdu'r-Raḥīm was later on lured to the capital, and then cast into prison, where he died soon after. But his story, whatever its real end, is rather unconvincing because firstly, it seems quite obvious that Ḥākim really intended to appoint him as his own successor, and secondly, that the Caliph, at least in the last years of his reign, was not quite responsible for his actions.¹

¹ This episode is still very dark. Sectarian authors, quite naturally, are not fond of discussing it, and orthodox historians, naturally, take it

The most amazing thing in all this is the fact that the author quite earnestly admits, and even emphatically defends, the principle of revocation of the *naṣṣ*. As is known, Ismailism itself came into existence as an independent sect of Islām in circumstances closely resembling the case of Nizār, and the immediate cause of the split of the Shi'ite community was exactly the defence of the dogma of the irrevocability of the *naṣṣ*. The sect was formed by the followers of Ismā'il, the son of Imām Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq who refused to recognize the legality of the second *naṣṣ*, to Mūsā al-Kāzim, although there is much more foundation for this in the fact of Ismā'il's pre-deceasing his father. And yet they firmly stood for the transfer of the rights of Imāmat to Ismā'il's son, Muḥammad, in preference to Ismā'il's younger brother, Mūsā.

We do not know whether the principle of the irrevocability of the *naṣṣ* was as strictly followed in practice as it was defended in the dogma, and was never violated before the case of Musta'il. But it is indisputable that *Imāmat* with all its religious, mystical, and other implications, could never be treated as an ordinary *possession*, even in a broader sense, as the authority of an ordinary king, nor could it be subject to the ordinary rules laid down in the *shari'a*, of bequest, gift, sale, etc., at the will of its "owner". It is difficult to believe that in its case the later will could cancel the preceding one, as the author tries to prove.¹ Especially strange would it be to claim that it should be cancelled by the alleged *naṣṣ fi da'iqaṭi'l-intiqāl*, i.e. the

only at its face value. Their point of view is that the real successor of Ḥakīm, Ḥābir, could succeed his father only because of the support he found in his party. Cf. O'Leary, op. cit., 189.

¹ Cf. p. 8, ll. 3-5: "He for some reason bequeaths something to one, and his orders should be carried out. Then after a time, he may cancel his bequest, doing this for the purpose of benefit and instructions to the people, in correspondence with their degrees (of faith) and attainments". It may be noted that this utterly fails to tally with the author's own arguments based on the Imām's miraculous foreknowledge. As is known,

nomination (made by the Caliph) at the moment of his death, to which the author refers several times, in view of the rather doubtful circumstances which accompanied it.¹

As Musta'li was only just over eighteen years of age, or, according to Ismaili historians, twenty, at the time of Mustansir's death, it is obvious that his wedding could not have been celebrated more than seven years before his father died, i.e. when he was about thirteen years of age. It is quite probable that in reality it took place much later. Thus it would appear that during the exceptionally long reign of Mustansir, something like fifty-five years, there was no heir-apparent, until the Caliph, at the memorable wedding, in a rather elusive way, appointed Musta'li, by bestowing upon him the title of *walī 'ahdī'l-mu'minin*. All this sounds very improbable.² The story of the appointment of 'Abdu'l-lāh is so doubtful that even the author himself does not press it much, and gives no facts to support it.³

Ismailism does not take the point of view that the Imām, once having uttered the *naṣṣ* to one of his sons, is bound to observe it by some force from outside. They believe that though the Imām may be absolute master of his word, he miraculously *knows*, which of his sons is to succeed him. Thus if he alters his *naṣṣ*, it is equivalent virtually to a confession of his mistake, in other words of his being not the real and infallible Imām.

¹ Though the author often refers to this last moment's *naṣṣ*, he never mentions who really was the witness of such an important act. From what is known, it is quite obvious that Nizār and his party were not represented at the moment of the Caliph's death.

² On p. 20, l. 2 the author, obviously conscious of this difficulty, goes so far as to say that the *naṣṣ* to Nizār, and later on to 'Abdu'l-lāh, was made by Mustansir only as a concession to the public impatience, in order to placate his followers. He apparently does not notice that this implies insincerity of the Imām in his actions.

³ Cf. p. 18, ll. 3-4: "(the Caliph) appointed 'Abdu'l-lāh as the *walī 'ahdī'l-mu'minin*, in like manner as Nizār. Letters (*ḥuṭūṭ*) in his own handwriting are still in existence as a proof for this". It is very difficult to understand what these *ḥuṭūṭ* may be. Private letters? To whom? Or state papers? And if really the appointment of 'Abdu'l-lāh superseded that of Nizār, why does not the author mention the cause of it?

With regard to the memorable occasion of the wedding of Musta'li, which plays the central rôle in the argument of the author, it provides, in addition to the bestowing of the title mentioned above, yet another sign of the elevation of the young prince above his brothers,—namely his being seated on the right hand of his father while all other princes had to sit on the left side. It is difficult to find in this a decisive indication as to whether such arrangement constituted something extraordinary from the point of view of the Fatimid court etiquette. As Musta'li was the centre of the celebrations, the hero of the day, perhaps he might have been specially honoured on the occasion, without any prejudice to the rights and dignity of his elder brothers. The author's reference to the fact that there were still some people alive who personally attended the ceremony, shows how much importance he attached to this detail of the event. He says further on that in the document enumerating the dowry (or wedding presents), *kitābu's-sadāq*, the title of the young prince is also given as the *wali 'ahd'il-mu'minīn* (cf. p. 13). We may perhaps believe him, although the list was lost centuries ago. But this seems hardly to be intended as anything like an official proclamation of Musta'li as the heir to the throne.

A very interesting story is given by the author (p. 14) in which he mentions the testimony of Nizār's sister. The latter, as the author narrates, in the presence of witnesses publicly denounced the claims of Nizār to the Imānat, and condemned his attitude, invoking curses upon all those who supported him.

She said that on several occasions her father, the late Caliph al-Mustansir, gave her to understand that it was his intention to appoint Ahmad (Musta'li) his heir-apparent. She added further that her brother Nizār, on the memorable occasion of Musta'li's wedding to the daughter of Afdal, came to her, and said that till then he still cherished the hope of being his father's successor. But after seeing the ostentation with which his father showed his favour towards the youngest prince, by giving him precedence over his elder brothers, he had to give up all

hope. Thus, as she said, Nizār was quite conscious that he was acting wrongly when he rose in rebellion.

The author adds: by this (her profession) God desired to purify her from the pollution of disobedience before her death, and granted her the end of a faithful one (p. 14, l. 16).

The story is really interesting in its implications: it is quite possible that a certain estrangement did take place between the father and his eldest son, as may happen in any family, of high or low position. This certainly could easily be exploited for their own ends by Afdal and his party, whom the ascension of Nizār threatened to dislodge from their high positions. But at the same time from the words of Nizār quoted by his sister, it appears that until the fateful wedding there was no official act by which Nizār was deprived of his position as heir-apparent. He only anticipates it, seeing the attitude of his father. Thus the story of the appointment of 'Abdu'l-lāh seems to be very doubtful. And the attitude of the latter after the ascension of Musta'li also produces the impression that he neither claimed any special rights, nor was he considered dangerous.

But, from what the author himself states further on in his *risāla*, Mustansir never went further than showing his great affection to his youngest son, in preference to his other sons. Thus it may be definitely accepted that until the alleged and extremely doubtful *naṣṣ* on the death-bed, Nizār remained the only official heir-apparent.¹ This also fits in quite well with the story of Nizār's being taken by surprise on the enthronement of his brother: he was so sure of his rights that an emergency like this caught him quite unprepared.

¹ On p. 22, l. 3 the author goes so far as to say that Mustansir appointed Musta'li as his successor secretly from Nizār, fearing that the latter may harm his brother. The author does not bring any proof for this, and it seems rather doubtful. In fact, this idea is quite popular in Ismaili literature whenever circumstances such as those in this case are dealt with. Plotting and designs on the life of the Imām are often attributed to his less lucky brothers. The *Zahrū'l-ma'ānī* mentions that Imām Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq had to keep his grandson, Imām Muḥammad b. Ismā'il, in concealment out of fear of Mūsā Kāzim!

The story of the testimony of the princess is by itself very interesting: why should a princess royal, the daughter of a Muslim ruler of such importance as the Fatimid Caliph Mustanşir, talk in public, in the presence of witnesses, discussing her family affairs, and denouncing her own brother in this manner? The answer can only be that the story refers to the trial which was instituted after the rising of Nizār, and the princess was implicated in it. It is quite obvious that being frightened to death the aged princess was doing her best to defend herself, and that her words are far from being an impartial testimony. The words of the author about her being "to purify her from the sin of disobedience before her death", and her "blissful end of the faithful" which she earned by this, are really ominous. It would be very interesting to find some information as to how the princess died soon after this,—of natural causes, or whether her "blissful end of the faithful" was achieved with extraneous help despite her emphatic denunciation of her brother. Another proof which the author presses against Nizār is the fact that he, and his brother 'Abdu'l-lāh, both swore allegiance to Musta'li on his accession (cf. p. 22, l. 12). "If he had the right to succeed his father, why should he swear allegiance to his brother?" (l. 15)

The question is not an easy one to answer. Unfortunately, there are many different versions as to what really happened on this occasion. The Musta'lian authors quite naturally say that Nizār really swore allegiance, and only then escaped, thus breaking his oath, whether voluntary or forced. But there are other historians, and they are far from being pro-Nizār, who nevertheless relate that when Nizār was summoned to the palace only to find that his father was dead, and Musta'li was enthroned by the commander-in-chief, he protested, saying that he had a written document concerning his appointment as the heir. He said that he was going to fetch it, left the palace (thus without having sworn), and then escaped to Alexandria.¹

¹ Cf. O'Leary, op. cit., 211.

Thus there is no certainty as to the circumstances of the alleged swearing of allegiance. It is quite possible also, that taken by surprise, and threatened with instant death at the hands of the self-appointed defenders of the throne,—the party of Afdal,—he had no choice but to swear allegiance, and subsequently to treat the oath as a forced one.

There is also no certainty as to what happened to his brother 'Abdu'l-lāh, who, according to the author, reconciled himself to the situation, and apparently remained unmolested. But there are also reports that he sided with Nizār, but later on surrendered himself. Nothing further is known about him.

Another decisive argument which the author uses against Nizār is the alleged extinction of his house (p. 23, l. 11 sq.), which, according to Ismaili ideas, definitely proves the futility of a person's claims to the Imāmat. The latter is an eternal and divine institution, which, if true, God will never permit to be discontinued in the family from which He chose the Imāms. As is quite natural to expect, he refuses to believe in the fact that descendants of Nizār continue in Persia, through "the son of a slave girl who conceived from the son of Nizār". He does not miss any opportunity to express doubts as to whether the child really was Nizār's grandson, and whether he really was nominated. But the fact that such a contingency is taken into consideration by the author, in itself shows that rumours were already widespread about the grandson of Nizār having been brought to Alamut by the efforts of Ḥasan b. aṣ-Ṣabbāh. The author also refers (p. 15, l. 2) to other descendants of Nizār who, according to him, acquiesced in what happened, and made no further claims.

It is worth mentioning that in addition to these arguments in favour of Musta'li, which may be regarded as the principal ones, the author also mentions several other matters which may be briefly summed up here. On p. 12, ll. 12-13 he offers this proof in favour of Musta'li that in his miraculous foreknowledge Mustanşir had given his youngest son the name and the *kunya*

of the Prophet,—Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad. "This is the hidden mystery which only those who know and understand can decipher." It would thus appear that all Imāms could only have the name and the patronymic of the Prophet!

When Musta'li was born, his father was congratulated on the birth of a prince (*amīr*). But Mustansir replied that they should rather felicitate on the birth of "the *imām*" (pp. 12-13).

Once, before Musta'li was born, Nizār and 'Abdu'l-lāh, in the presence of their father, argued about their rights to be appointed as the heir-apparent. The Caliph, most probably annoyed by this altercation, and angry, in a threatening way, said that the real heir was still to be born (p. 13, l. 10).

There is a profusion of Biblical parallels, interpretations of different verses of the Qur'ān, etc., all in the same strain which appear convincing only to the lucky ones who possess that divine gift, the "child-like faith". The end of the *risāla* consists of a eulogy on Musta'li, who appears as an ideal figure, in possession of the most superhuman virtues.

The appendix, *Īqā' šawā'iqi'l-irghām*, opens with the story about a letter, written to the Caliph Āmir by some disobedient officials in Damascus, after the *risāla* was received there and met with their complete disapproval. In reply to their simple but awkward questions, this additional epistle was written on behalf of the Caliph. There are no allusions to any historical facts, or anything new that may be useful for elucidating this rather dark matter, in fact, it contains what may appear as pure sophisms, and nothing else. No useful purpose would be served by a complete translation of these epistles,—their logic and flowery style can only be appreciated when read in the original.

In conclusion it may be worth while to add here a note on the treatment of this important event, i.e. the case of Nizār, which it received at the hands of Ismaili historians. Unfortunately, the scarcity of historical works in Ismaili literature is so great that in this particular case we may speak not of historians, in the plural, but only of one single author, Sayyid-nā

'Imādu'd-dīn Idrīs, the 19th *dā'ī* of the Yaman (d. 872/1468), who left two works containing historical information, i.e. the '*Uyūnu'l-akhbār*' and the '*Zahrū'l-mā'ānī*'. All other available works on the history of the sect are entirely dependent on him, and are of too late a period to reflect a genuine historical tradition.

It seems as if already by the time of Sayyid-nā Idrīs, i.e. the beginning of the ninth century A.H., there were no documents of historical value, except for a few *siyills*, preserved in the Ismaili community from the Fatimid times. The '*Uyūnu'l-akhbār*' gives ample testimony to this: it obviously depends for information about political and other events on general historical works, such as Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Khallikān, etc., summing them up, retouching in the sectarian spirit, and adding here and there some notes on religious life. The rest of it is purely religious "lyrics", consisting either of eulogy of the Imāms, or discussions of a dogmatical or philosophical nature. Thus it is no wonder that we learn nothing new from this source.

The events accompanying the accession of Musta'li are not in any way studied by the Sayyid-nā in proportion to their importance for the future evolution of the Ismaili sect. It appears that he did not so whole-heartedly accept the statements of the *Āmiriyya*, or, perhaps, regarded its contents as familiar to every serious Ismaili reader. In any case, of all the proofs advanced by Āmir he selects only that about the miraculous foresight of Mustansir which he displayed when he rebuked his arguing sons, Nizār and 'Abdu'l-lāh. He also mentions about the seating of Musta'li on the right of the Caliph on the memorable wedding.

There are a few items in his information which although they contain no direct bearings on the conflict, yet are very interesting in themselves. This is a *siyill* of Mustansir in which he informs the *dā'ī*-governor of the Yaman, Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣulayḥī, about the birth of his son Aḥmad (Musta'li), who was born in 467/1074-5. There is, however, no mention of his being appointed the heir-apparent.

Further on he quotes a *siġill* of Musta'li, issued by him apparently on the completion of the campaign against Nizār, which ended with the latter's imprisonment and death. The *siġill* is dated the 8th Šafar 489/6-ii-1096. Thus it is obvious that the matter was brought to completion not long before the date.

Instead of any serious historical information, Sayyid-nā Idrīs gives nothing but profuse praises of Musta'li and of Afḡal, reviling Nizār, and accusing him for the introduction of all sorts of nefarious practices. All this is highly doubtful, and it is probable that these are an anachronism. The author simply transferred upon Nizār the accusations which were levelled by their enemies against the Nizāris during subsequent centuries, and which had nothing to do with Nizār himself.

Thus no light comes from the '*Uyūnu'l-akḥbār*'. Still less enlightenment can be derived from another work of the Sayyid-nā, the *Zahr-u'l-ma'āni*. The tenth chapter of this treatise is devoted to what may be called the "historiosophy" of Ismailism, i.e. a religious interpretation of the hidden meaning and purpose of the history of the sect. The book deals generally with what may be described as the mystical interpretation of the Ismaili system and its symbolism, and the tenth *bāb* explains the relative position of the different Imāms. It is regarded as a highly "secret" work, supposed to be read only by the initiated and trained sectarians.

It is remarkable, therefore, to observe that the author, who is supposed to be the same Sayyid-nā, shows very little acquaintance with what is written in the '*Uyūnu'l-akḥbār*'. The events, whenever referred to, are narrated quite differently from what they are in the former. Great emphasis is laid on miraculous things, and some stories are quite legendary. While in the '*Uyūn*' the author appears as a highly devoted priest, taking everything only in so far as it is concerned with religion, here he appears to be narrating fairy tales. He has not much to tell about these highly important events, and what he says

really is worth mentioning as a specimen of his mentality. He piously narrates that when Mustansir died, his sons began to argue about succession. As it was impossible to settle their dispute in an ordinary way, the sacred sword of 'Ali, *Dhu'l-faḡār*, was brought in, together with 'Ali's armour. Each of the princes in turn tried to draw the sword from the scabbard, but were unsuccessful. Then came Musta'li,—and lo!—the sword was unsheathed. There is no doubt that all this is nothing but a folk-lore story, usually figuring in fairy tales about contesting bridegrooms for a beautiful princess.

Another addition is apparently taken from the well-known narrative of Ibn al-Athīr. The author mentions that when Ḥasan b. aṣ-Šabbāḥ interviewed the Caliph Mustansir, he asked about the name of the heir-apparent. This, as the author says, was wrong, because such questions (however natural they may appear to an unsophisticated devotee) should not be asked. One must wait until the Imām of his own accord reveals such things. For this reason Mustansir replied "Abū Maṣṣūr". As this patronymic was known as that of Nizār's, Ḥasan became sure that the Imām meant his eldest son. But in reality Mawlā-nā meant Musta'li who was not yet born.

Most probably this is nothing but a specimen of the "retouching" of well-known historical accounts, done in a very primitive way. Although Ibn al-Athīr mentions such an interview of Ḥasan with the Imām, Nizārī sources, which would naturally be expected to emphasize this, report no such interview. Secondly, as it is almost certain that Ḥasan visited Cairo in 472/1079-80, Musta'li, who according to Musta'lian sources was born in 467/1074-5, was already in existence, and surely his name would be known to such a devoted follower of the Imām. And, thirdly, there is no other mention of Musta'li's *kunya* being Abū Maṣṣūr, or the fact—quite strange by itself—that he had two *kunyas*, Abū'l-Qāsim, by which he was usually known, and the other one. It is also highly improbable that while his elder brother was still alive, he would be given exactly the same *kunya*. It is really

remarkable that Sayyid-nā Idris, omitting all such stories in his work intended for a more general public, the *‘Uyūn*, reserved them for the highly “initiated” only.

Thus, we may conclude, the epistle of Āmir and genuine Ismaili historians do not lift the curtain of uncertainty from this most important moment in the history of Ismailism. Their information is incomplete, and though there are many interesting details which are revealed in the course of the argument, the main point still remains quite obscure.

The text of this *risāla* has been prepared after a collation of not less than six different MSS. Not a single one of these, however, has any special value, and as they are all modern, the earliest having been transcribed about a hundred years ago, it has not been thought necessary to give a detailed description of each. Moreover, as in the case of most Ismaili MSS., the owners would themselves probably object to a more detailed description.

The text offered here cannot be characterized as anything but tentative, and very few variants are given. It is to be hoped that by publishing it, it may reach the hands of those who have better copies themselves, or are kind enough to suggest emendations and corrections. The text contains many doubtful passages and several difficulties which the editor does not pretend to solve. Nevertheless, in spite of its infirmities, the publication of this *risāla* paves the way for a better understanding of the interesting problem of succession to Mustansir; for in the estimation of the sectarians themselves, it is the earliest and the most authoritative defence of Musta’lī’s claims to the Imāmat.

NOTES

- p. 4, l. 7. One MS. adds *وَمِيْلَهُمْ* after *لَمَّا هَضَمُوا*.
 p. 6, l. 3. *Sic*, but *اختاروه* seems better.
 p. 7, l. 13. A learned shaykh prefers *يسار* to *يسار*.
 p. 10, l. 5. Read *تَالَا* (Dr. Daudpota).
 p. 12, l. 8. Read *عَمِلُوا عَلَى شِبْهِ الْخ*.
 p. 13, l. 8. This passage presented great difficulty, being incorrectly copied in many cases. Apparently it refers to the special “sign manual” of the Imām, which in this case was *صَحَّ وَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ*.
 p. 13, l. 9. No such book is known in the *Da‘wat* collections. It would be of great value if it still exists.
 p. 14, l. 5. Read *كَأَنَّ نَفْسَ الْخ*.
ibid. Dr. Daudpota suggests *الْخ يَتَحَقَّقُ كَمَا يَتَحَقَّقُ*.
 p. 14, l. 11. Read *عَلَى مَالَجٍّ* (Dr. Daudpota).
 p. 17, ll. 5-6. A shaykh suggests that the word *نفس* be omitted. Read *يَجِبُ بِهِ حَقُّ الْخ*.
 p. 18, l. 5. A MS. has *لَنْ يَكُونَ* for *يَكُونُ*.
 p. 19, l. 12. A MS. reads *عَنْ رَتْبَةِ نَجَاهُمْ الْخ*.
 p. 19, l. 14. Read *الزَّمَانِيَّة*.
 p. 20, l. 10. The reference is Qur. 2, 100.
 p. 22, l. 5. Conjectural. The MSS. have *بِحَاجَةٍ مِنْ مَاضٍ*, and in one we have *الْخ دَاعٍ*.
 و عبيد طاعته فأي داع الخ

p. 23, l. 10 ما بينهم الخ . *Sic*, in the two best MSS. The passage is corrupt, and Dr. Daudpota suggests: ما بيننا فمل

و ايضا فمل

p. 23, l. 15. Read ما علم ان هذا الولد نص على الخ

p. 24, l. 2. Read مخبر

p. 24, l. 7. For حياة, some MSS. have حياة.

p. 24, l. 12. For حياة some MSS. have حياة.

p. 25, l. 5. Read ذكر (Dr. Daudpota).

p. 33, l. 5. Refers to p. 29, ll. 3-4. Qur. 10, 36.

p. 33, l. 14. Read لا آيات من آيات

p. 34, l. 3. Dr. Daudpota kindly points out that تلقى is Qur. 23, 106.

p. 35, ll. 4-5. Read كذلك

كذلك (Qur. 29, 40).

p. 36, ll. 7, 9, 12. Referring to Qur. 20, 19.

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