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The Initial Destruction of the Fatimid Caliphate: The Yemen or Maghrib *Shainool Jiwa*

Reference

Jiwa, Shainool. "The Initial Destruction of the Fatimid Caliphate: The Yemen of The Maghrib?" *British Society of Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin* 1, 13 (1986): 15-26

Introduction

The year 297/909 witnessed the declaration of 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī as the first Fatimid Imam/Caliph in the Maghrib (North-West Africa) – a momentous event in Ismā'īlī history. A study of the politico-military events that led to the establishment of the Fatimid state in the Maghrib poses a serious question: Had al-Mahdī's original destination been the Yemen? If indeed that was the case, as a reading of the primary sources indicate, and had al-Mahdī declared his *zuhūr* ('emergence') from Yemen, the entire course of subsequent Fatimid history and indeed of the general history of that region as well as that epoch would have moved in a different direction. The question is important for any attempt to comprehend and assess the objectives the Fatimids had set themselves as well as to gain an insight into the policies they implemented for the achievement of the goals.

A study wholly focusing on this crucial issue has been undertaken by no contemporary scholar in the field, but it has been touched upon by historians such as Ivanow, Gateau, T. Sharaf and Ḥ. I. Ḥasan, Canard, H. Hamdani and more recently, Dachraoui.¹ Most of these historians are in agreement that al-Mahdī was planning to go to the Yemen upon his departure from Salamiyya in Syria in 289/902. They do differ considerably, however on the factors that may have been responsible for the change of venue – if that was the case. The paper aims to examine this decisive aspect of Fatimid history.

A pitfall into which present-day historians have generally fallen when examining al-Mahdī's decision is that they have not conducted an in-depth study of the *da'wa*² (religio-political mission) in the Yemen and the Maghrib. Nonetheless, the need for a study of the genesis of the *da'wa* in these two areas has been expressed by Bernard Lewis, who observes: 'The history of the *da'wa* in Yemen and North Africa is yet to be written'³ - a point that finds echo in the words of the well-known authority on Ismā'īlī studies, W. Ivanow: '...perhaps a proper study of the history of Yemen will reveal ... why the plan of the move to the Yemen should have been altered and when this change took place.'⁴ A background of the kind suggested will be extremely useful and, in fact, necessary not only for identifying all the possible factors that may have influenced al-Mahdī's reversal of decision, but also for determining the relative importance of each of those factors. It is with this in mind that I propose to offer a brief

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survey of the politico-military activities of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in the Yemen and in the Maghrib prior to the establishment of the Fatimid 'state'. But first a survey of our sources.

The Sources

If the paucity of historical information contained in Ismā'īlī sources is a frequent cause for lament, the politico-military aspect of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* movement in the second-third/eighth centuries in the two major centres of its activity – the Yemen and the Maghrib – is particularly well served by primary Ismā'īlī works. Ismā'īlī historical sources offer more information than their non- Ismā'īlī counterparts. That is partly due to the fact that several branches of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*, although active in the various regions of the Islamic world by the late ninth century, do not appear to have been viewed by the non- Ismā'īlī historians of the time as different manifestations of a single entity, directed from a centre. They were, instead, seen as local and isolated bids for political power and military supremacy by individual and independent personalities. The Ismā'īlī writers, on the other hand, had access to more information on the matter, and had a greater vested interest in reporting at length on the affairs of the Ismā'īlī imam and the *da'wa*. This was particularly the case after the establishment of the Fatimid Caliphate, when the fear of persecution by the 'Abbasids was no longer felt, so that the shrouding of the movement's activities in secrecy was no longer warranted.

a. Isma'īli Writings

An indispensable source for the *da'wa* activities in the Yemen as well as the Maghrib is al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's well-known historical work *Ifitāḥ al-da'wa wa-ibtidā' al-dawla*.⁵ Completed in 346/957, the *Ifitāḥ* has been acclaimed by esteemed present-day historians such as W. Ivanow and S.M. Stern⁶ as the earliest extant source on the *da'wa* activities. The two editors of the *Ifitāḥ*, W. al-Qāḍī and F. Dachraoui, as well as Stern,⁷ have painstakingly shown how it became the almost unique source for later historians and how it was absorbed not only into the Ismā'īlī flow of information but also into the mainstream of general Islamic history.

The second valuable Ismā'īlī source for the period under investigation is the *Sīrat Ja'far al-Ḥājib*⁸ composed by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Yamanī at the beginning of the reign of the Fatimid Imam/Caliph al-'Azīz bi-llāh (d.386/996). The *Sīra* is a most useful and detailed eye-witness account of al-Mahdī's journey from Salamiyya in Syria to the Maghrib. Moreover, it sheds light on the crucial issue of al-Mahdī's initial *dar al-hijra* and the subsequent change of venue.

The information in the *Ifitāḥ* and the *Sīra* is corroborated by accounts preserved in the '*Uyūn al-akhbār wa-funūn al-āthār*'⁹ of the ninth/fifteenth century Yemeni *dā'ir*, Idrīs 'Imad al-Dīn. Although this is a work of a later period, 'Imad al-Dīn, as *dā'ir al-du'āt*, had access to Ismā'īlī works which have survived only as excerpts in the '*Uyūn*'. Further references are also found in Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Naysābūrī's *Istīṭār al-Imām*.¹⁰



b. Non-Ismā'īlī Writings

In addition to the Ismā'īlī sources, there are a number of general historical works that have proved particularly pertinent to our purpose. Besides supplementing Ismā'īlī works, they serve a most valuable purpose in that they enable us to control the information reported by Ismā'īlī authors. As there are some historians who report exclusively either on the *da'wa* in the Yemen or the Maghrib, they will be considered under separate headings as follows:

1. The Yemen

Among the local Yemeni historians who have paid considerable attention to the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* movement in the region are Muḥammad b. Mālik, a fifth/eleventh century jurist who joined the Ismā'īlī fold for a short period but subsequently withdrew from the sect. Notwithstanding the polemics that he conducted against the Ismā'īlīs in his *Kashf asrār al-Bāṭiniyya*,¹¹ Ibn Mālik provides a useful insight into the politico-military operations of the Ibn Ḥawshab and 'Alī b. al-Faḍl, the two pioneering *dā'īs* of the Yemen. The *Kashf's* most significant contribution, however, is the information it offers on Ibn al-Faḍl's activities in the Yemen, a subject on which the Ismā'īlī sources remain almost silent. Supplementary information is also found in *Kitāb al-sulūk fī ṭabaqāt al-'ulamā wa-l-mulūk*,¹² by Bahā' al-Dīn al-Janādī (d.732/1331). References to the *da'wa* are also contained in *al-'asjad al-masbūk fī man waliya al-Yaman min al-mulūk* by 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Khazrajī (d. 812/1409).¹³

It must be pointed out that the Zaydī work *Sīrat al-hādī ilā al-ḥaqq Yahyā b. al-Ḥusayn*,¹⁴ being a biography of the first Zaydī Imam of the Yemen, is a source of paramount importance for gauging not only the Zaydī involvement in the politico-military scene in the Yemen at the time, but also for ascertaining Ismā'īlī- Zaydī relations in the region.

2. The Maghrib

Among the major works of non- Ismā'īlī historians that refer to the *da'wa* activities in the Maghrib is *al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār mulūk al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*¹⁵ by Ibn 'Idhrī. The indispensability of his treatise lies in the fact that, besides his reliance on the *Iftitāḥ*, he incorporates detailed reports from chronicles that were contemporary to the *da'wa* activities in the Maghrib, many of which have now been lost. Apart from the apparent bias of the author, a Māliki jurist, the only major flaw with this source is that its writer reports year by year (annals), thus presenting the historical events as a unit. This method of narrating information militates against the emergence of a sequence of events.

Other sources that touch, albeit briefly, on *da'wa* activities include Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*,¹⁶ *al-Durra al-muḍiyya fī akhbār al-dawla al-Fāṭimiyya*¹⁷ by Ibn al-Dawādārī, Ibn Khaldun's *al-'Ibar wa-dīwan al-mubta da'wa -l-khabar*¹⁸ and *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā bi-akhbār al-A'imma al-Fāṭimiyyin al-Khulafā*¹⁹ by al-Maqrīzī.



The Genesis of the Ismā'īlī *Da'wa* in the Yemen

By way of prefatory comment it is important to make the point that in the eighth and ninth centuries AD there was a great flurry of Ismā'īlī *da'wa* activity in various parts of the Muslim world. Whatever the activity and wherever located, it was directed centrally by the Ismā'īlī Imam, who at that time resided at Salamiyya in Syria. One of the prominent political aims of this *da'wa* was to establish a political realm for the Imam.

As far as the Yemen is concerned, the earliest dated record of the sending of Ismā'īlī *dā'īs*, or 'emissaries' to the country relates to the dispatch of Ibn Ḥawshab²⁰ and 'Alī b. Faḍl²¹ in 268/881.²² However, Qāḍī al-Nu'mān reports on Ibn Ḥawshab's authority that upon the latter's arrival at 'Adan Lā'a in the north of the Yemen a man called Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Khalīf was conducting *da'wa* activities and was awaiting the arrival of Ibn Ḥawshab from the central headquarters at Salamiyya. Ibn Ḥawshab also came across some 'Shi'ites' (*qawm min al-shī'a*) known as the Banū Mūsā in the south of the country, who were in close contact with the 'Shi'ites' in the north.²³ Thus it would appear that *da'wa* activities had already taken root in the Yemen at a relatively early date.

Subsequent to their arrival in the country, Ibn Ḥawshab and 'Alī b. al-Faḍl settled in the two extremes of the country, the former in the north and the latter in the south. Consequently, within a couple of years of their activities they were in a position openly to declare that they were preaching for the Ismā'īlī Imam 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī.²⁴ These two Ismā'īlī *dā'īs* had to contend for politico-military supremacy with the Yu'firid dynasty,²⁵ which represented 'Abbasid interests in the area; and the Zaydīs,²⁶ who formed another branch of Shi'ism. Within two and a half decades of their arrival in Yemen, the two *dā'īs* had gained virtual mastery over the country. In 293/905 they met each other for the first time since the inception of their activities in the country.²⁷ They had disputes over matters of policy as well as a clash of personalities, as will be discussed later.

Consequently, in 296/909 'Alī b. al-Faḍl broke ties with the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* altogether.²⁸ This took place in the very year in which al-Mahdī declared himself the first Fatimid Imam/Caliph in the Maghrib.

The Genesis and Dissemination of the Ismā'īlī *Da'wa* Activity in the Maghrib

Chronologically, the first known instance of *dā'īs* is being sent to the Maghrib is to be found in al-Nu'mān's *Ifītāḥ al-da'wa*. He states that the two *dā'īs* al-Ḥulwānī and Abū Sufyān were sent by the sixth Shi'i Imam in the Ḥusaynī line, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) in 145/762.²⁹ These two *dā'īs* settled in the Kabylia region of what is today Algeria.

With the arrival of *dā'ī* Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shi'i³⁰ in the Maghrib in 280/893³¹ Ismā'īlī *da'wa* activities gained impetus. Al-Shi'i took up residence with the Kutāma Berbers, who were ranked among the most numerous and strong Berber tribes in the region. They also possessed some of the best lands in the Maghrib.³² Moreover, they were largely independent of the



Aghlabid amirs – the vassals of Abbasid authority in the region. Of all the dynastic states in the third/ninth century Maghrib, the Aghlabids proved to be the most vulnerable to the emergent Ismā'īlī state under al-Shi'i. In fact, it was to the latter that Aghlabid rule succumbed in 296/908. By 289/901-2, al-Shi'i had secured his first major victory against them, by wresting the strategic fortress of Mīlā from their hands. Another quarter from which al-Shi'i had to face opposition were the various Kharijite principalities that had become a part of the Maghribi scene since the late seventh/eighth century.³³

Following the conquest of Mīlā, al-Shi'i invited the Imam 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī to come to the north. In the meantime, an untimely revolt of some *ex-dā'īs* to gain political authority for the Imam in Syria coupled with a warrant of arrest issued against the Imam by the 'Abbasid Caliph, made al-Mahdī leave Salamiyya secretly.³⁴ He arrived in Egypt in 291/903-4, and it was in Egypt that he was faced with the momentous decision of choosing either the Maghrib or Yemen as the centre of his *zuhūr* or 'emergence', and therefore the seat of the future Fatimid Caliphate.

Al-Mahdī's Change of Proposed Destination

The two major Ismā'īlī works reporting on the issue of al-Mahdī's destination, the *Iftitāh*³⁵ and the *Sīra*,³⁶ make explicit mention of al-Mahdī's intention to travel to the Yemen.

Ja'far al-Ḥājib, one of the companions of al-Mahdī on the latter's journey from Salamiyya and therefore an original source on the travel plans of the Imam, states that on leaving Salamiyya, al-Mahdī declared that he was going to the Yemen. He admits that until the night before the departure from Egypt to the Maghrib, 'al-Mahdī never revealed his real intention of going to the Maghrib.'³⁷ There are a number of statements in the *Iftitāh* that may be adduced to corroborate this fact. Most non-Ismā'īlī sources state that al-Mahdī's initial destination was the Yemen. In general, an examination of the sources reveals that the Yemen was indeed the original setting for the establishment of the Fatimid Caliphate and the *zuhūr* of al-Mahdī. The question then arises: What was it that caused al-Mahdī to reverse such a crucial and considered decision?

It is difficult, in fact well nigh impossible, to determine all the possible factors that may have contributed to this change of decision. This is partly due to the remoteness in time of the issue in question. However, this difficulty arises mainly from the very nature of the information that is sought. It was a decision taken by a certain individual under specific circumstances, and the only manner in which a complete answer can be ascertained is by probing into the mind of the individual who resorted to such a judgement. Matters would perhaps have been much more straight-forward if there had survived a biographical work on the decision maker (that is, al-Mahdī), where perhaps the factors which were taken into consideration by him for resolving such a momentous issue would have been laid out.³⁸ Unfortunately, this is not the case. What can be attempted, however, is an examination of the factors, suggested by the sources, which al-Mahdī may have taken into account in changing his decision.



The *Ifṭitāh* is the earliest extant Ismāʿīlī source shedding any light on this important issue. It states that one of al-Mahdī's *dā'īs* preceded him to the Yemen, where he incited the *dā'ī* Ibn al-Faḍl to revolt. Consequently, the *dā'ī* ruined al-Mahdī's plan of entering the Yemen, who therefore 'disliked entering the Yemen under such a circumstance.'³⁹ Further, what is implicitly evident throughout the *Ifṭitāh*, though not stated explicitly by al-Nu'mān is that the politico-military success achieved by the *dā'ī* al-Shi'i in the Maghrib was a key factor in al-Mahdī's preference for it.⁴⁰

A detailed examination of Ismāʿīlī *da'wa* activities in Yemen and the Maghrib at the time suggests many other potential causes for the change of al-Mahdī's plans. In order to afford a clearer insight into what these may have been I will now consider them under the three following heads:

'External Factors', 'Yemenite Factors', 'Maghribi Factors'.

Some Possible Factors Influencing al-Mahdī's Change of Plan

A. External Factors

a. 'Abbasid persecution:

The fact that the 'Abbasids were on a constant lookout for any political activities in which the Shi'a may have been involved at that time is too well known a matter to need further elucidation. As can be attested from the sources, a particularly vigilant watch was maintained on Ismāʿīlī activities during the last years of the *dawr al-satr*⁴¹ (period of concealment). Indeed, one of the major causes cited as motivating al-Mahdī's departure from Salamiyya in 289/901 was the warrant of arrest issued against him by the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Muktafī (d. 295/907).

It is interesting to note that, according to the eye-witness account of Ja'far al-Hājib, the Yemen was employed as camouflage for al-Mahdī's protection.⁴² It is quite likely that 'Abbasid agents were aware of al-Mahdī's plan to go to the Yemen. Consequently, a large number of them had been dispatched there to await al-Mahdī's arrival.⁴³ This concentration of 'Abbasid power in the Yemen may indeed have dampened al-Mahdī's enthusiasm to proceed to the Yemen.

b. The defection of *dā'ī* al-du'āt Fīrūz:

The defection of the chief *dā'ī*, Fīrūz, at a crucial moment in al-Mahdī's brief stay in Egypt is singled out by al-Nu'mān⁴⁴ as the chief factor responsible for al-Mahdī's abandoning the Yemen. Although the *Ifṭitāh* does not mention Fīrūz by name, the activities that it ascribed to the man in question are exactly the same as those conducted by Fīrūz, according to the eye-witness account of *Sīrat Ja'far*.⁴⁵ Significantly, the *Sīra*, which provides by far the most



detailed account on the defection of Fīrūz, explicitly states that it was only after ‘Fīrūz became quite certain that al-Mahdī really intended to go the the Maghrib .. [that] he decided to deceive the Imam’.⁴⁶ ‘Imad al-Dīn Idrīs⁴⁷ substantiates the information provided by the *Sīra*. Thus, whatever the reasons for the defection of Fīrūz - an issue that needs to be researched at some length, but which falls beyond the scope of this study - his role in seriously harming the Ismā‘īlī movement in the Yemen and subsequently influencing al-Mahdī to abandon it must be viewed, if not with outright rejection, at least with some scepticism.⁴⁸

B. Yemeni Factors

a. Conflict between Ibn Ḥawshab and ‘Alī b. al-Faḍl:

Ironically, the single most important factor that sapped the strength of the political and military achievements of the Ismā‘īlī movement in the third/ninth century Yemen was the worsening internal dissension between the two pioneering *dā‘īs*, Ibn Ḥawshab and ‘Alī b. al-Faḍl. At their first meeting since their arrival in the Yemen in 292/904-5, the very year in which al-Mahdī was on the verge of taking the vital decision whether to proceed to the Yemen or not – the two *dā‘īs* differed on matters of policy. Ali b. al-Faḍl, whose military successes had outweighed those of Ibn Ḥawshab, was of the opinion that a policy of further military conquests should be embarked upon. Ibn Ḥawshab, on the other hand, sought a policy of consolidation in existing territories, particularly since the two *dā‘īs* were by that time operating in the same territories.⁴⁹ But this was not all; there was a clash of personalities between the two *dā‘īs* as well. Thus dissension between them was inevitable. al-Mahdī, who was undoubtedly watching the activities of the two *dā‘īs* in the Yemen, can only have been deterred by these discouraging developments within the Ismā‘īlī movement in the country.

b. Yu‘firid and Zaydī rivalry:

As stated earlier, the Ismā‘īlī cause in the Yemen was challenged politically by the Yu‘firids - the young but powerful dynasty that represented ‘Abbasid interests in the area - but more significantly, the Ismā‘īlī *dā‘īs* had to cope with another Shi‘a power, namely, the Zaydīs, whose cause had been considerably strengthened by the arrival of their Imam al-Hādī ilā al-ḥaqq in 280/893. The choice for al-Mahdī was, in Ivanow’s words ‘ ... between the quiet and certain position of an ordinary Imam in the Yemen and the ambitious programme of the Mahdī ...’⁵⁰ in the Maghrib. This statement may be taken as meaning that in the Yemen al-Mahdī faced the prospect of being just another Shi‘i Imam, while in the Maghrib he would be the awaited Imam. Moreover the Ismā‘īlī *dā‘īs* were at the time involved in an as yet unresolved struggle for politico-military supremacy in the Yemen and had achieved limited successes only. Meanwhile, politico-military developments in the Maghrib seemed more promising for the establishment of an Ismā‘īlī *dar al-hijra*.

C. Maghribi Factors



a. The politico-military success of al-Shi'i:

The politico-military successes achieved by the *dā'ī* Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shi'i in the Maghrib are cited by the sources and faithfully repeated by present-day historians as a major force that tipped the scales in favour of the Maghrib as the venue for al-Mahdī's state. While these successes were of major consequence, their extent and significance in the Maghrib circa 290-2/903-5 have been over-estimated by scholars. A careful reading of the source material shows that the conquests conducted by al-Shi'i up to that time had not been decisive enough to compel al-Mahdī, solely on that basis, to take positive steps towards the Maghrib. The only military success of which al-Mahdī would have been aware before his decision to head for the Maghrib was the conquest of Mīlā in 289/901-2.

b. The weaknesses of Aghlabid realm:

Unlike the case in the Yemen, where 'Abbasid interests had been reinvigorated by the powerful Yu'firid dynasty, the 'Abbasid cause in the Maghrib had suffered a major setback with the accession of the indolent and pleasure-loving Ziyādat Allāh III as the Aghlabid ruler in 290/902-3. Moreover, the inherent weakness within the Aghlabid realm as well as external aggression sapped, even further the authority of the amir over his territories. It seems logical to assume, given the sharp political acumen of al-Mahdī, that he would have had the foresight to sense the imminent politico-military achievements of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in the area, and the weaknesses of the Aghlabid state would have provided him with one such indication.

c. The Idrisids:

Finally, even though the Zaydī Idrisids had managed to establish themselves as rulers in Morocco as early as 172/788 – contrary to the position in the Yemen, where the Ismā'īlīs and Zaydīs were vying for political and military authority in the same territories – the two movements in the Maghrib were operating in areas that were independent of each other.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a more detailed reading of the primary Ismā'īlī and non- Ismā'īlī sources reveals that the Yemen was indeed the initial destination that al-Mahdī had in mind for his *dār al-hijra*. The analysis and interpretation of the available evidence presented in this paper suggest that no single factor can be held to have prompted al-Mahdī's decision to switch his plans away from the Yemen in favour of the Maghrib. In general, it is permissible to conclude that prospects of establishing an Ismā'īlī state in the Yemen must have seemed much more bleak than those offered by the optimistic scene that had developed in the Maghrib. It would appear that this is why al-Mahdī, in the final analysis, opted for the latter as suitable for making his *zuhūr*. What also comes to light is the fact that al-Mahdī, like his



predecessors at Salamiyya, was the central directing force within the *da'wa*. The evidence of the sources, furthermore, suggests that al-Mahdī's decision was exclusively his own, for he does not appear to have discussed the change of destination with his *dā'īs*.

Notes:

¹ W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Tradition Concerning the Rise of the Fatimids* - hereafter abbreviated to *Rise* - London, 1942; T. Sharaf and H. I. Hasan, *'Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī*, Cairo, preface dated 1947; A. Gateau, 'La Sīrat Ja'far al-Ḥājib: Contribution à l'histoire des Fatimides' in *Hespéris* 34 (1947), pp 375-96; M. Canard, 'L'Autobiographie d'un chambellan du Mahdi 'Obeidallāh le Fātimide' in *Hespéris* 39 (1952), pp 279-329; H. Ḥamdānī, *Al-Sulayhiyyūn wa-l-ḥaraka al-Fāṭimiyya li-l-Yaman*, Cairo, 1955; F. Dachraoui, edition of Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's *Ifṭitāḥ al-da'wa*, with analysis of contents, Tunis, 1975.

² For further information on *da'wa* see M. Canard, 'Da'wa,' *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New edition (=EI²), II, pp. 168-70.

³ B. Lewis, *The Origins of Ismā'īlism*, Cambridge, 1940, pp 74-5.

⁴ Ivanow, *Rise*, p.94

⁵ Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Ifṭitāḥ al-da'wa wa-ibtidā' al-dawla*, ed. W. al-Qāḍī, Beirut, 1970. This work has also been edited by F. Dachraoui. Cf. note 1.

⁶ Ivanow, *Rise*, pp. 6-7; Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shi'i, *EI²*, I, p. 104. A great deal of attention has been focussed on the *Ifṭitāḥ* in recent years, and a number of studies have been based on it. See M. Canard, 'Autobiographie', pp 324-8; T. Nagel, *Frihe Ismailiya und Fatimiden im Lichte der Risalat Ifṭitāḥ al-da'wa: ein in religionsgeschichtliche Studie*. Bonn, 1972; Cf. I.K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature*, California, 1977, pp 58-60.

⁷ W. al-Qāḍī, Introduction to *Ifṭitāḥ*, pp 20-5; Dachraoui, Introduction to *Ifṭitāḥ*, pp. 36-8; Stern, 'Abū 'Abd Allāh', *EI²*, I, p.104.

⁸ Ed. W. Ivanow, *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts of the Egyptian University*. 1936, pp. 93-133, and trans. by the same author in his *Rise*, pp. 184-223. See also A. Gateau, 'La Sīrat', pp 375-96; M. Canard, 'Autobiographie', pp 279-329.

⁹ Volume five contains the relevant information. It has been edited by M. Ghālib. Beirut, 1975.

¹⁰ Edited by Ivanow in the *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts of the Egyptian University*, 1936. Trans. by the same writer in *Rise*, pp. 157-183.

¹¹ Ed. S. Zakkār, *Akhbār al-Qarāmīta ft al-Aḥsa' -- al-Shām -- al-'Irāq -- al-Yaman*, Damascus, 1980, pp 203-51. The work was edited by al-Kawtharī in Cairo in 1939.

¹² Ed. and trans. into English by H.C. Kay, *Yaman: Its Early Medieval History*. London, 1892.

¹³ Relevant sections of the work have been edited by S. Zakkār in his *Akhbār al-Qarāmīta*, pp 411-31.

¹⁴ Ed. S. Zakkār, Beirut, 1972. Segments of the *Sīra* that are pertinent to the study are also to be found in S. Zakkār's *Akhbār al-Qarāmīta*. Due to the unavailability of the earlier work, the latter has been referred to in this paper.

¹⁵ Published in Beirut, 1950. Volume I contains information on the *da'wa*.

¹⁶ Ed. C. Johannes, Beirut, 1965-7. Vols. VII and VIII are relevant for *da'wa* activities.

¹⁷ Ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, Cairo, 1961.

¹⁸ Ed. Bulaq, 1284 AH. Vols. III, IV and VI contain information on the *da'wa*.

¹⁹ Vol. I incorporates information on the *da'wa*. Ed. J. al-Shayyāl, Cairo 1967.

²⁰ For background information on Ibn Ḥawshab see *Ifṭitāḥ*, pp. 32-8; *Kashf*, p.218.

²¹ For further information on 'Alī b. Faḍl see *Ifṭitāḥ*, pp. 38ff; *Kashf*, pp. 216-8; *al-'asjad al-masbūk*, pp. 413-4

²² *Ifṭitāḥ*, p. 42

²³ *Ifṭitāḥ*, p. 45; al-Ṣulayhiyyūn, pp. 32-3

²⁴ *Ifṭitāḥ*, p.44; Cf. Ṣulayhiyyūn, p.33.

²⁵ For information on the Yu'furids see Kay, *Yaman*. pp. 223-30; R. Strothmann, 'Ya'furids, *EI*, p. 1145; C.L. Geddes, 'The Yu'firid Dynasty of Ṣan'ā.' Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1959.



²⁶ For the Zaydī activities at that time see *Sīrat al-Hādī*, pp. 85-110; Kay, *Yaman*, pp. 226-9, 314-7; R.B. Serjeant, 'The Zaydis', *Religion in the Middle East*, ed. A. Arberry. Cambridge, 1969. Vol.II.

²⁷ *Kashf*, pp.231-2

²⁸ *Kashf*, pp. 233; *al-Masbūk*, p.425; *Kitāb al-sulūk*, pp. 201-2. On the Apostasy of 'Alī b. al-Faḍl, see C.L.Geddes, 'The Apostasy of 'Alī b. al-Faḍl, in *Arabian and Islamic Studies: Articles presented to R.B. Serjeant*, ed. R.L. Bidwell and G.R. Smith, London, 1983, pp. 80-5. For a critique of the above article see S. Jiwa, 'The Initial Destination of the Fātimid Caliph 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī's *dār al-hijra*: Yaman or Maghrib'. Unpublished MA thesis, McGill University, Montreal. August 1984, pp 54-8.

²⁹ *Ifītāh*, p.54.

³⁰ For information on *dā'ir* al-Shii see *Ifītāh*, pp. 59-71; *al-Bayān*, p. 124ff; *Itti'az*, I, pp. 51-6; *Sīrat Ja'far*, p.206; S.M. Stern, 'Abū 'Abd Allāh', *EF*², I, pp. 103-4

³¹ *Ifītāh*, p.68

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 62-9; Dr Lacey O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalīfate*, London, 1923, p.55.

³³ For information on the genesis of the Kharijites see G. Levi della vida, 'Khāridjites', *EF*², IV, pp. 1074-7.

³⁴ It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss at length the factors responsible for al-Mahdī's departure from Salamiyya. For information on the issue see *Sīrat Ja'far*, pp. 187-9 and *Istitār al-Imām in Rise*, pp. 163-82. For a detailed explanation of events at Salamiyya prior to the departure of al-Mahdī, see H.Halm, 'Salamiya: Home of the Fatimids', pp. 1-12, typescript, courtesy of the author of a lecture delivered at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, 3 November 1983.

³⁵ *Ifītāh*, pp. 149-51

³⁶ *Sīrat Ja'far*, pp. 189-95

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 195

³⁸ It is well known that a biographical work on al-Mahdī was compiled by al-Nu'mān for the latter alludes to it in his *Ifītāh*, p.32. 'Imād al-Dīn also refers to it in his '*Uyūn*, Vol.V, p. 119; Cf. Poonawala, p.318.

³⁹ *Ifītāh*, pp. 149-50.

⁴⁰ *Itti'āz*, p. 52, reports the same information.

⁴¹ This period began with the death of the sixth Shi'i Imam in the Ḥusaynid line, Ja'far al-Sādiq in 148/765 and ended with the *zuhūr* ('emergence') of Imam al-Mahdī in 296/909.

⁴² *Sīrat Ja'far*, p. 194

⁴³ Sharaf and Ḥasan, '*Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī*, p. 113; *al-Sulayhiyyūn*, p.40.

⁴⁴ *Ifītāh*, pp. 149-50

⁴⁵ *Sīrat Ja'far*, pp.195-7

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-6

⁴⁷ '*Uyūn al-akhbār*, V, p.95

⁴⁸ It must be borne in mind that the *Ifītāh* was written after al-Mahdī's accession to power in the Maghrib, whilst the *Sīrat Ja'far* is an account of al-Mahdī's journey as it unfolded. Thus, it is far more likely that the latter is more accurate on this issue than the former. For a detailed explanation of the *dā'ir* Fīrūz's rebellion and its implications see S. Jiwa, *op.cit.*, pp. 150-3.

⁴⁹ Geddes, 'Apostasy', p. 82

⁵⁰ Ivanow, *Rise*, p.52. W.Madelung in a personal communication dated 15 May 1984, affirms that 'the arrival of al-Hādī in Yaman may have been a factor in the decision of al-Mahdī not to go there...'

Postscript: I wish to record my gratitude to Dr Carole Hillenbrand, University of Edinburgh, and Dr Mohamed Alibhai, formerly of McGill University of Montreal, for the valuable advice and assistance they have given me in connection with this paper.