

Brief Reviews

Proofs of Prophecy and the Refutation of the Ismāʿīliyya:

The Kitāb Ithbāt nubuwwat al-nabī by the Zaydī al-Muʿayyad bi-llāh al-Hārūnī (d. 411/1020). By EVA-MARIA LIKA. *Worlds of Islam*, vol. 9. Berlin: DE GRUYTER, 2018. Pp. vii + 177 (Eng.), 152 (Ar.). \$149.99, €129.95, £106.99.

Ismaili relations with the Zaydis during the Fatimid period were both good and bad—less hostile in the beginning but quite polemical by the era of al-Ḥākim when the two main antagonists, the Zaydi imam al-Muʿayyad bi-llāh al-Hārūnī and the Ismaili *dāʿī* Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī exchanged bitter partisan denunciations of each other. One small element of that exchange involved the very treatise presented in the volume under review and the general topic is a major concern of the work as a whole.

But from long before there is evidence of a fairly close affinity between the Zaydis and the Ismailis. Wilferd Madelung's groundbreaking study of Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān's sources for legal materials from which he constructed Fatimid law revealed serious dependency on much earlier ʿAlid writings, many of which were Zaydi. Ismaili refusal to allow *mutʿa* marriage against the doctrine of the Imami Shīʿa, which permits it, accords with Zaydi doctrine and likely derives from the same sources. We now know also that a number of key recruits to the Ismaili *dāʿwa* among the Maghribi elite in the beginning were secretly Zaydi Shīʿis, a prime example being Ibn al-Haytham, whose firsthand account of the advent of the Fatimids constitutes an invaluable historical eyewitness. From about the mid-tenth century we also have a section on the Zaydis in Abū Tammām's Ismaili heresiography featuring five subsects, all destined for hellfire in the view of the author because of their erroneous doctrines.

The present work is Eva-Maria Lika's revision of her 2014 Free University of Berlin dissertation and it looks and acts more like a dissertation than it should. It actually consists of two not well or obviously connected projects. One is a critical edition of the Zaydi imam's Arabic text on the proofs of prophecy, a broad category of writing in Islamic literature, not only among Zaydis but most other sects as well, including the Ismailis. A critically important example of the latter is Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī's *Ithbāt al-nubuwwāt* (Prophecy's proofs), a critical edition of which was published in 2016 in Tehran (edited by Madelung and myself). It appeared, it would seem, too late to be consulted here. But the investigation of this topic in its cross-sectarian context thus far has not been especially productive even though we have at our disposal an increasing variety of treatises repre-

senting different schools to work with. There remains a serious question about what and how much the respective parties knew about the other. This brings up the second contribution of this volume. Because the Zaydi author took care to point out and denounce the Ismailis at the very outset of his treatise, his few remarks have given rise to a substantial excursion (some 75 pp.) about Zaydi–Ismaili exchanges and the history of anti-Ismaili treatises up to the earliest eleventh-century time of the imam al-Muʿayyad. Lika is also quite aware of the anti-Zaydi writings of that same period by al-Kirmānī. Ironically, both men—al-Muʿayyad and al-Kirmānī—likely died in the same year 411/1021. Several of the latter's anti-Zaydi polemics have been consulted, one a treatise entitled specifically *al-Risālat al-kāfiya fī al-radd ʿalā al-Hārūnī*, another the unpublished section on the Zaydis from his *al-Tanbih al-hādī wa-l-mustahdī*.

Abū al-Qāsim al-Bustī, a Zaydi authority contemporary to al-Muʿayyad, did know a great deal about Ismaili works, as is evident from his *Min kashf asrār al-Bāṭiniyya wa-ʿawār madhhabihim*, in which he names and quotes from authentic Ismaili texts. But that does not appear to be as true of al-Muʿayyad. His all too brief comments on the supposed Ismaili doctrine of prophecy belong to the tradition of scurrilous polemic rather than actuality. Lika is here at this point likewise less well informed. (My own *Early Philosophical Shiism*, which has a chapter on prophecy, is missing from the bibliography).

If the Ismaili aspect of the subject is somewhat overplayed given how little it affects this Zaydi imam's text, the main topic, the proof for prophecy, is better served, although it appears that it offers little or nothing that is new. The history of the *iʿjāz* doctrine and general confirmation of the miraculous nature of the revelation depend, for this imam, on evidence of the challenge made to produce an imitation; failure to do so and the proof thereby that it could not be done are for him fundamental. He rejects the possibility of *ṣarfa* (God's intervention) and several so-called imitative or false revelations.

The volume is nicely produced in the main, with reasonably good bibliography and indexes (both Arabic and English). The edition, based on five manuscripts (Cairo, Vatican, two in Tehran, and Berlin), appears carefully done. Its greatest value, however, is less for what it says about the Ismailis than for the Zaydis and this particular imam of theirs.

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