

FOUNDING
THE
FATIMID
STATE



*The Rise of an
Early Islamic Empire*

An annotated English translation of
al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's

Iftitāḥ al-Da'wa

by
HAMID HAJI

Founding the Fatimid State

The Institute of Ismaili Studies
Ismaili Texts and Translations Series, 6

Editorial Board: Farhad Daftary (general editor), Wilferd Madelung (consulting editor), Heinz Halm, Abbas Hamdani, Hermann Landolt, Mehdi Mohaghegh, Roy Mottahedeh, Azim Nanji, Ismail K. Poonawala, Paul E. Walker.

Previously published titles:

1. Ibn al-Haytham, *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shi'i Witness*. An Edition and English Translation of Ibn al-Haytham's *Kitāb al-Munāẓarāt*, by Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker (2000).
2. al-Shahrastānī, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm. *Struggling with the Philosopher: A Refutation of Avicenna's Metaphysics*. A New Arabic Edition and English Translation of al-Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-Muṣāra'a*, by Wilferd Madelung and Toby Mayer (2001).
3. Ja'far b. Manṣūr al-Yaman, *The Master and the Disciple: An Early Islamic Spiritual Dialogue*. Arabic Edition and English Translation of Ja'far b. Manṣūr al-Yaman's *Kitāb al-'Ālim wa'l-ghulām*, by James W. Morris (2001).
4. Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn, *The Fatimids and their Successors in Yaman: The History of an Islamic Community*. Arabic Edition and English Summary of Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn's *Uyūn al-akhbār*, vol. 7, by Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, in collaboration with Paul E. Walker and Maurice A. Pomerantz (2002).
5. Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Paradise of Submission: A Medieval Treatise on Ismaili Thought*. A New Persian Edition and English Translation of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's *Rawḍa-yi taslīm*, by S. J. Badakhchani with an introduction by Hermann Landolt and a philosophical commentary by Christian Jambet (2005).

Founding the Fatimid State:
The Rise of an Early Islamic Empire

An annotated English translation of
al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān’s
Iftitāḥ al-Da‘wa

by
Hamid Haji

I.B.Tauris *Publishers*
LONDON • NEW YORK
in association with
The Institute of Ismaili Studies
LONDON

Published in 2006 by I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd
6 Salem Rd, London W2 4BU
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010
www.ibtauris.com

in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies
42-44 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0EB
www.iis.ac.uk

In the United States of America and in Canada distributed by
St Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010

Copyright © Islamic Publications Ltd, 2006

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

ISBN 10: 1 85043 885 4

ISBN 13: 978 1 85043 885 4

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress catalog card: available

Typeset in Minion Tra for The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Printed and bound in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

The Institute of Ismaili Studies was established in 1977 with the object of promoting scholarship and learning on Islam, in the historical as well as contemporary contexts, and a better understanding of its relationship with other societies and faiths.

The Institute's programmes encourage a perspective which is not confined to the theological and religious heritage of Islam, but seeks to explore the relationship of religious ideas to broader dimensions of society and culture. The programmes thus encourage an interdisciplinary approach to the materials of Islamic history and thought. Particular attention is also given to issues of modernity that arise as Muslims seek to relate their heritage to the contemporary situation.

Within the Islamic tradition, the Institute's programmes promote research on those areas which have, to date, received relatively little attention from scholars. These include the intellectual and literary expressions of Shi'ism in general, and Ismailism in particular.

In the context of Islamic societies, the Institute's programmes are informed by the full range and diversity of cultures in which Islam is practised today, from the Middle East, South and Central Asia, and Africa to the industrialised societies of the West, thus taking into consideration the variety of contexts which shape the ideals, beliefs and practices of the faith.

These objectives are realised through concrete programmes and activities organised and implemented by various departments of the Institute. The Institute also collaborates periodically, on a programme-specific basis, with other institutions of learning in the United Kingdom and abroad.

The Institute's academic publications fall into a number of inter-related categories:

1. Occasional papers or essays addressing broad themes of the relationship between religion and society, with special reference to Islam.
2. Monographs exploring specific aspects of Islamic faith and culture, or the contributions of individual Muslim thinkers or writers.
3. Editions or translations of significant primary or secondary texts.
4. Translations of poetic or literary texts which illustrate the rich heritage of spiritual, devotional and symbolic expressions in Muslim history.
5. Works on Ismaili history and thought, and the relationship of the Ismailis to other traditions, communities and schools of thought in Islam.
6. Proceedings of conferences and seminars sponsored by the Institute.
7. Bibliographical works and catalogues which document manuscripts, printed texts and other source materials.

This book falls into category three listed above.

In facilitating these and other publications, the Institute's sole aim is to encourage original research and analysis of relevant issues. While every effort is made to ensure that the publications are of a high academic standard, there is naturally bound to be a diversity of views, ideas and interpretations. As such, the opinions expressed in these publications must be understood as belonging to their authors alone.

*To the memory of
Aliya*

Table of Contents

<i>Maps and Tables</i>	xii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
<i>Chronology</i>	xv
Introduction	1
Translation of <i>Iftitāh al-da'wa</i> : Commencement of the Mission	17
1 The account of the beginning of the mission (<i>da'wa</i>) in the Yemen, the [<i>dā'ī</i>] in charge of it, and the factors which allowed him to accomplish his mission.	20
2 Anecdotes about Abū al-Qāsim, head of the <i>da'wa</i> in the Yemen.	34
3 Forerunners sent to the Maghrib before the <i>dā'ī</i> 's arrival there.	41
4 The arrival of Abū 'Abd Allāh, <i>dā'ī</i> of the Maghrib, to the head of the <i>da'wa</i> in the Yemen and his departure from there on his behalf.	45
5 Abū 'Abd Allāh's meeting with Kutāma tribesmen in Makka and his arrival with them in Kutāma territory.	48
6 Abū 'Abd Allāh's arrival in Kutāma territory and the beginning of his mission there.	55
7 Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad's reply to Mūsā b. 'Abbās conveyed by an envoy from him and his message to Abū 'Abd Allāh.	61

8	The uprising of the coalition of Kutāma against Abū ‘Abd Allāh to seize him in Īkjān.	77
9	Abū ‘Abd Allāh’s departure from Īkjān and his journey to Tāzrūt.	81
10	Meeting of the coalition to find a way to resolve the case of Abū ‘Abd Allāh.	84
11	Offensive by all the tribes against Abū ‘Abd Allāh and his victory over them.	89
12	Abū ‘Abd Allāh’s founding at Tāzrūt a place of refuge and a base from which to wage war against the tribes.	96
13	Measures adopted by Abū ‘Abd Allāh among the Kutāma to reign over them and for which they submitted to him.	100
14	The conquest of the town of Mīla.	110
15	Abū Ḥawāl’s military expedition to Kutāma territory and his retreat from there.	112
16	Abū Ḥawāl’s second military expedition and his defeat.	116
17	Al-Mahdī’s emigration from his residence in the east, and his arrival in Sijilmāsa.	121
18	The conquest of the town of Saṭīf.	126
19	Ziyādat Allāh’s dispatching Ibrāhīm b. Ḥabashī to Kutāma territory to fight Abū ‘Abd Allāh and his defeat.	128
20	The conquest of the town of Ṭubna.	131
21	The conquest of the town of Billizma.	134
22	The battle of Dār Maluwwal.	136
23	The conquest of the town of Tijis.	137
24	Ziyādat Allāh’s proclamation addressed to the provinces to pacify them and calm down the fright which he learnt had spread therein.	140
25	Ziyādat Allāh’s setting out at the head of troops for al-Urbus and his withdrawal from there.	147
26	The conquest of the town of Bāghāya.	150

27	Abū ‘Abd Allāh’s battles at Majjāna and in its region adjacent to al-Urbus.	153
28	The battle of Dār Madyan.	157
29	The conquest of Qasṭīliya and Qafṣa.	161
30	The conquest of the town of al-Urbus and Ibn Abī al-Aghlab’s defeat.	165
31	Ziyādat Allāh’s flight from Raqqāda.	168
32	Ibrāhīm b. Abī al-Aghlab’s arrival in al-Qayrawān and his designs over the city.	171
33	Abū ‘Abd Allāh’s arrival in Ifrīqiya, his stay in Raqqāda and the consolidation of his position there.	174
34	Safety granted by Abū ‘Abd Allāh to the populace and his administrative and political measures.	176
35	Ziyādat Allāh’s journey, his arrival in the east, and events relating to him until his death.	183
36	Abū ‘Abd Allāh’s march to Sijilmāsa, his conquest of that town and al-Mahdī’s departure from there.	192
37	Al-Mahdī’s coming from Sijilmāsa and his arrival in Ifrīqiya.	202
38	Political measures taken by al-Mahdī as imam and applied publicly amongst the people.	205
39	Events relating to the hypocrites against al-Mahdī and the outcome of their affair.	213
40	Inhabitants of Ifrīqiya who betrayed the clemency granted to them and their punishment for treason and hostility.	223
41	General events relating to al-Mahdī until his death.	226
42	Summary account of the period from the death of al-Mahdī, peace be upon him, until the time this book was composed.	230

<i>Bibliography</i>	237
---------------------	-----

<i>Index</i>	248
--------------	-----

Maps and Tables

Maps

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----|
| 1 | The Maghrib | xix |
| 2 | The Eastern Maghrib | xx |

Tables

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Kutāma Clans and their Lineage | xxi |
| 2 | The Aghlabids | xxii |

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Dr Farhad Daftary, Head of Department of Academic Research and Publications at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, for inviting me to undertake this project as well as for his support during the course of my work. I am grateful to the staff of the library of the Institute for providing access to its rich collections of manuscripts and printed materials indispensable for my project.

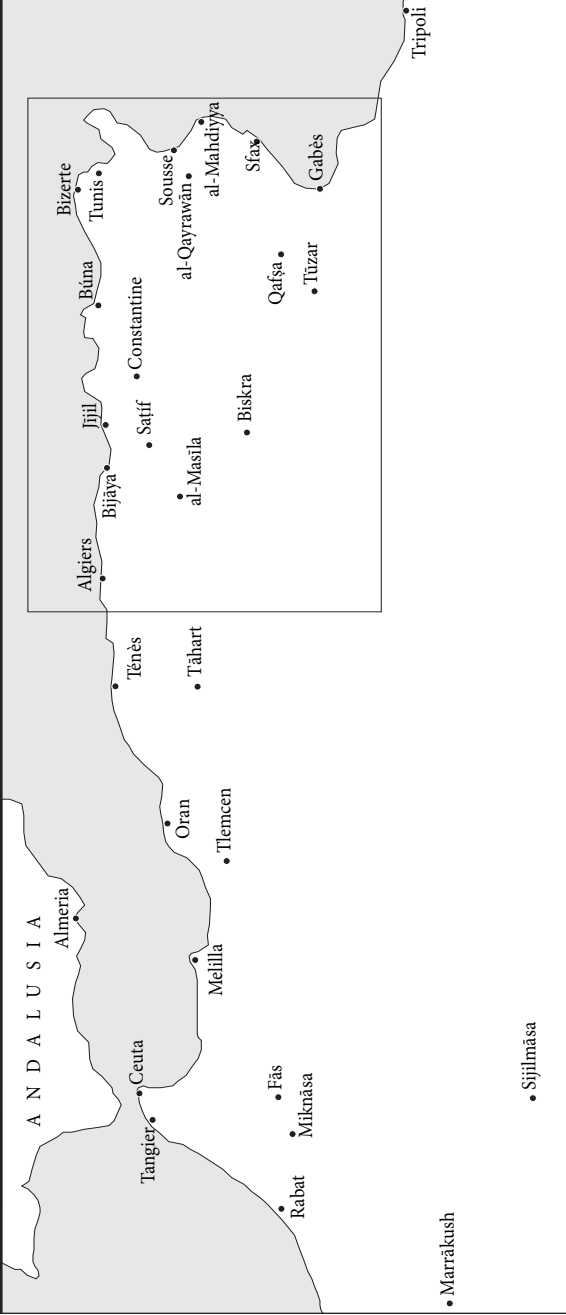
I am particularly indebted to Professor Wilferd Madelung for going meticulously through the entire manuscript of my work. His corrections and invaluable comments have ameliorated the quality of my translation. I am also most thankful to Marzuki Haji of the Cartographic Resources Unit at the University of Plymouth for his invaluable assistance in drawing a master map of the area studied. Finally, I would like to thank Kutub Kassam for his painstaking editorial review of my manuscript.

Chronology

- 145/762 The Shī'ī *dā'īs* Abū Sufyān and al-Ḥulwānī arrive in the Maghrib.
- 184/800 The Aghlabid residence al-Qaṣr al-Qadīm (al-'Abbāsiyya) founded by Ibrāhīm b. al-Aghlab, founder of the Aghlabid dynasty.
- 263/876 Raqqāda founded by the Aghlabid emir Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad.
- 266/880 'Alī b. al-Faḍl's pilgrimage and conversion to the Ismaili cause.
- 268/881 The *dā'īs* Ibn Ḥawshab and 'Alī b. al-Faḍl arrive in the Yemen.
- 270/883 Their mission becomes manifest in the Yemen.
- 279/892 Abū 'Abd Allāh meets Kutāma pilgrims in Makka.
- 280/893 Abū 'Abd Allāh arrives in Kutāma territory on 14 Rabī' I/4 June.
- 289/902 Rajab/June–July: al-Mahdī departs from Salamiya.
- 289/902 Abū 'Abd Allāh's conquest of Mīla.
- 289/902 Dhū al-Qa'da/October: First Aghlabid expedition under Abū Ḥawāl sets out to Kutāma territory.
- 290/903 Second Aghlabid expedition commanded by Abū Ḥawāl sets out against Abū 'Abd Allāh.
- 290/903 28 Sha'bān/27 July: The Aghlabid emir Abū al-'Abbās 'Abd Allāh is murdered.
- 290/903 Ramaḍān/July–August: The Aghlabid emir Ziyādat Allāh executes his brother Abū Ḥawāl, his paternal uncles and his brothers.
- 291/904 Abū 'Abd Allāh's conquest of Saṭīf.

- 291/904 Aghlabid counter-offensive under the command of Ibn Ḥabashī.
- 293–296/
906–909 Abū ‘Abd Allāh conquers Ṭubna, Billizma, Tijis and Bāghāya. He defeats the Aghlabid army near Dār Madyan, and takes Qasṭiliya and Qafṣa.
- 295/907 Ziyādat Allāh leaves for al-Urbus, gathers his troops there and entrusts the command of the army to Ibrāhīm b. Abī al-Aghlab.
- 296/909 1 Jumādā II/25 February: Abū ‘Abd Allāh begins his march from Īkjān against Ibn Abī al-Aghlab in al-Urbus.
- 296/909 21 Jumādā II/17 March: Abū ‘Abd Allāh sends a detachment of horsemen to Manyūla, and the following day to Shaqbanāriya.
- 296/909 23 Jumādā II/19 March: Abū ‘Abd Allāh disposes his troops for battle, and takes al-Urbus. Ziyādat Allāh escapes from Raqqāda. End of Aghlabid rule.
- 296/909 1 Rajab/25 March: Abū ‘Abd Allāh enters Raqqāda.
- 296/909 1 Ramaḍān/24 May: Abū ‘Abd Allāh appoints al-Marwadhī *qaḍī*.
- 296/909 Ramaḍān/June: Abū ‘Abd Allāh leaves for Sijilmāsa, leaving his brother Abū al-‘Abbās and Abū Zākī in charge of government.
- 297/910 20 Rabī‘ II/6 January: al-Mahdī arrives in Ifrīqiya; he enters Raqqāda triumphantly and confers high honours on Abū ‘Abd Allāh and Abū al-‘Abbās.
- 297/910 21 Rabī‘ II/7 January: al-Mahdī is proclaimed caliph at Raqqāda, al-Qayrawān and al-Qaṣr al-Qadīm.
- 298/911 15 Jumādā II/18 February: Abū ‘Abd Allāh, Abū al-‘Abbās and Abū Zākī are executed.
- 301–302/
913–914 First Fatimid expedition against Egypt commanded by Ḥubāsa b. Yūsuf.
- 303/916 al-Mahdī lays the foundations of the city of al-Mahdiyya.
- 306/918 Second Fatimid expedition against Egypt commanded by the future al-Qā’im.

- 306/918–19 The construction of al-Mahdiyya is completed.
308/921 Shawwāl/February–March: al-Mahdī moves to al-Mahdiyya.
- 312/924 al-Nu‘mān enters the service of al-Mahdī.
322/934 14 Rabī‘ I/4 March: Death of al-Mahdī.
322/934 On 10 Jumādā II/28 May, al-Mahdī’s death is announced.
- 332/943 The Kharijite Abū Yazīd begins his rebellion.
334/946 13 Shawwāl/18 May: Death of al-Qā’im.
336/947 Abū Yazīd is defeated by al-Manṣūr.
337/948 al-Manṣūr invests al-Nu‘mān with the highest judicial office of the Fatimid state.
- 341/953 29 Shawwāl/19 March: Death of al-Manṣūr. Beginning of the reign of al-Mu‘izz.
- 344/955 Fatimid fleet raids Almeria in Andalusia.
346/957 al-Muḥarram/April: al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān completes the *Iftitāḥ al-da‘wa*.
- 347/958 Jawhar’s campaign in the Maghrib to re-establish Fatimid authority.
- 358/969 Jawhar’s conquest of Egypt for the Fatimids.
362/973 al-Mu‘izz moves to Egypt accompanied by al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān.
- 363/974 End of Jumādā II/27 March: Death of al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān in Cairo.



Map 1: The Maghrib