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**The *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* Doctrines in the
Thought of Fāṭimid and Alamūt Ismā'īlism:
The Evolution of a Doctrine**

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Introduction: The Current State of Scholarship on the Qā'im and Qiyāma Doctrines - Filling a Void

“O ye the population of the world, Jinns, men, and angels! Know that *Mawlā-nā*, the Qā'im of the Resurrection (*Qā'imu'l-Qiyāmat*), - prostration and laudation on His mention! – is the Lord of everything in existence. He (is) that Lord who is the Absolute Being (*wujūd-i muṭlaq*)... (He) opened the gate of His mercy and by His bounty granted life to all. Glorification and thanksgiving to Him is the duty of every intelligent one. He is exalted in the greatest measure above all this. And He is Glorious and omniscient by His substance”¹.

This extraordinary narrative account vividly depicts a declaration proclaimed on 8th August 1164², during the Islamic month of Ramaḍān just after noon in the mountain fortresses of Alamūt. The orator of this quite unprecedented address was none other than the Nizārī Ismā'īlī Imām Ḥasan II, designated by the Ismā'īlīs with the honorific title of *'alā dhikrihi al-salām* ('upon whose remembrance be peace'). The Imām had ushered in a new dawn, an age of spiritual rebirth and realisation, when God manifested Himself to His creatures in his absolute transcendent unity; an age which the Ismā'īlīs termed “The

¹ Abū Ishāq Quhistānī, *Haft Bāb-i Bū Ishāq*, ed. and tr. W. Ivanow as *Seven Chapters* (Bombay: Ismaili Society, 1959): text. 41, trans. 41-42. An account of the *Qiyāma* proclamation is also to be found in the following sources: 'Ala-ad-Din 'Ata-Malik al-Juvaini. *Ta'rikh-i jahan-gusha*, ed. and tr. J. A. Boyle, *The History of the World Conqueror: Vol 2* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958): 688-700. Juwaynī's narrative of the event exudes greater hostility abounding with curses and aggressive rhetoric; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Secret Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizari Isma'ilis Against the Islamic World* (The Hague: Mouton & Co. Publishers, 1955): 148-150; Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 358-359; Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1967): 72.

² All dates provided in this study will be those of 'Common Era' (CE) as opposed to 'After Hijra' (AH) as used in the Islamic lunar calendar.

Resurrection”. For this Shī‘a Muslim community, the long-awaited Last Day – the *Qiyāma* – had finally arrived.

1. Purpose of this Study

Beliefs associated with notions of the End Time³ vary significantly amongst different religious traditions and belief systems, but also within the Islamic tradition itself. Evidence of this is provided in the form of the interpretation and understandings given to these ideas by the Shī‘a Nizārī Ismā‘īlī Muslims, a sub-community within the Shī‘a tradition of Islam possessing a rich and diverse intellectual and literary tradition⁴. Within Islamic theology, notions of the End Time, final judgement, the destiny of mankind and the messianic figures associated with these events, have formed a major aspect around which much debate has arisen. Within Ismā‘īlī Islam in particular however, the Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāma*) has held special significance, acting as a central idea around which the Ismā‘īlīs during their eventful history, have formed an entire metaphysical and cosmological system of cyclical time.

For the Nizārī Ismā‘īlīs, the monumental proclamation of the End Time by the fourth Lord (*Khudāvand*) of Alamūt, Ḥasan II, took on a hugely different meaning, consequently impacting upon the doctrinal development of Ismā‘īlī eschatology. Following this epoch-defining moment, notions of the *Qiyāma* and what it represented in the Ismā‘īlī theological system and the messianic and eschatological figure who inaugurates the final era of human history – the *Qā’im* – seemed to change. The later writings at Alamūt illustrate a shift in

³ Through the course of this study, terms such as “End Time”, “Last Day” and “Day of Judgement” are to be understood as synonymous with the term *Qiyāma* as used throughout.

⁴ See Farhad Daftary, “Intellectual Life among the Ismailis: An Overview”, in Farhad Daftary, ed. *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2000): 87-111.

doctrine, or rather, a reinterpretation of the doctrines from those previously propagated as the official doctrine of the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs. In order to understand and make sense of this shift in doctrine, one has to trace the development of Nizārī Ismāʿīlī doctrines rooted in their theology, eschatology, modified Neoplatonist philosophy and concept of cyclical time, regarding the concepts of the *Qiyāma* and the eschatological *Qā'im* who inaugurates this final phase of “sacred history”⁵. It is thus interesting to critically explore and assess these developments in a bid to better understand, how the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs have viewed the End Time in contrast to other Muslim communities.

Through utilisation of key primary source texts, this dissertation will trace the evolution in the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines, as envisaged by the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī Muslim community, during two distinct phases of the community’s history - namely, the Fāṭimid (909-1094) and Alamūt (1094-1256) phases of Nizārī Ismāʿīlism⁶.

2. Structure of the Study and Chapter Content

Chapter One will explore the fundamental beliefs underlying Ismāʿīlī thought in order to appreciate the foundation and formative roots of Ismāʿīlī theology, illustrating the

⁵ The term “sacred history” usually describes that history which is regulated by the revelation and religious laws which define it. Nomoto notes that whilst ‘some types of “sacred history,” i.e. a type of history which is ordered by sacred rules or laws conveyed by number, time, organization, etc. do not include the concepts of salvation and the end of time... Ismāʿīlī speculation on history... has a strong tendency to include the ideas of salvation and the end of time, a periodicity based on the number seven, and the idea of hierarchy at the same time’ – Shin Nomoto, *Early Ismāʿīlī Thought on Prophecy According to the Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. ca. 322/934-5)* (Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, McGill University, 1999): 1-2, n.1.

⁶ It should be noted here that whilst the Fāṭimid Dynasty in its entirety spanned the period from 909-1171, the use of the term “Fāṭimid” in the present study will be used in reference to those Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs who would act as precursors of the group who would later become the ‘Nizārī’ Ismāʿīlīs of Alamūt. These Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs remained loyal to the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī Imāms till the eighth Imām-Caliph of the dynasty, al-Mustanṣir, whose death resulted in a schism which split the hitherto unified Ismāʿīlī movement into the Nizārī and Mustaʿlī factions. Thus, the use of the term “Fāṭimids” in this study does not encompass the latter part of the Fāṭimid Dynasty, namely the period from 1094 till its collapse in 1171, during which the ‘Mustaʿlī’ Fāṭimids ruled.

complexities of understanding Ismā'īlī visions of sacred revelational history. Chapter Two will trace the development of the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines as envisaged and understood within the period of Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism. In order to contextualise the position adopted by the Fāṭimids, we shall demonstrate how the doctrinal stances taken emerged from and were a response, not only to the positions taken by the pre-Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs, but also according to the exigencies of the circumstances and time. Having explored the period of Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism, we shall proceed to explain how the doctrines developed further in the Nizārī phase of Ismā'īlism at Alamūt in Chapter Three. This chapter will not only outline the vision of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs in regards to the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* at Alamūt but will also provide us with the opportunity to approach the doctrines critically, comparatively studying them against the views held in the Fāṭimid phase as discussed in the previous chapter.

For the pre-Fāṭimid and Fāṭimid notions concerning the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines, we shall explore the views held by key Ismā'īlī thinkers such as Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. after 934), Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 971) and Nāṣir Khusraw (d. after 1072), as outlined in both primary and secondary sources. Following this we shall, for an understanding of the Nizārī interpretations held during the Alamūt period, utilise the *Haft Bāb-i Bābā Sayyid-nā*⁷ of Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib.

We will demonstrate, firstly, that the *identity* of the *Qā'im* was understood differently during the Fāṭimid and Nizārī phases of Ismā'īlī history respectively. Inexorably linked to the identity of the *Qā'im* was his *function* and *status* which was also viewed in a markedly different manner during the phase of Nizārī Ismā'īlism than envisaged in Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism.

⁷ In the present study, the critical edition and translation of the *Haft Bāb* being utilised was generously provided by Professor Jalal Badakhchani of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Badakhchani for providing this unpublished draft edition for the sole purpose of use in this dissertation.

We shall explore the *Qā'im*'s function in so far as his relationship to ritual law of Islam, the *sharī'a*, was concerned, whilst in discussing the *Qā'im*'s status, we shall refer specifically to his relationship in regards to the previous major Islamic Prophets and Imāms. Secondly, we will discern an evolution in the interpretation of the *Qiyāma* itself and how it was envisaged in both Fāṭimid and Nizārī Ismā'īlism in its relation to the *sharī'a*.

As noted by Walker, “[i]t is hard to find a single coherent account that can explain early Ismaili doctrine”⁸ but we shall attempt to do so by synthesising the various primary and secondary source materials at our disposal, to give an account of the theological development of Ismā'īlī understandings surrounding the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines in both Fāṭimid and Alamūt phases.

Consequently, this study will allow us to appreciate the extent to which Alamūt conceptions diverged from those held as the official doctrine in the Fāṭimid phase of Ismā'īlī history. To appreciate the position taken at Alamūt concerning the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines, we must root our understanding in the historical *Qiyāma* proclamation of 1164 and the significance of this event will be further expounded upon later.

3. Current Problems in the Field and Gaps to Fill

Within the field of Ismā'īlī studies, whilst there has indeed been rapid growth in the output of scholarship over the past five decades, to date however, there has been – to this author's knowledge – no comparative study conducted solely on the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines charting their evolution through Ismā'īlī history. Those scholars who have avidly

⁸ Paul E. Walker, *Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary* (London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1996): 6.

taken it upon themselves to revive interest in scholarship and study on the Ismā‘īlī community have done so through the lens of a broader historical approach. Consequently, these studies have simply been undertaken in the context of a wider study of the chronological history of the Ismā‘īlī community, noting any changes in doctrine fleetingly as part of a ‘bigger picture’. In addition, any studies which *have* attempted to understand the Ismā‘īlī interpretations of the *Qā’im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines have done so, either by assessing specifically these ideas as interpreted in a single phase of Ismā‘īlī history; a flashpoint of the doctrine at one moment in time, *or* with reference to the interpretations of particular figures in Ismā‘īlī intellectual tradition. It is clear that these doctrines have, at various points in their history, formed the focal point around which all other Ismā‘īlī doctrines revolved and thus, a deeper and critical study of these doctrines as envisaged in Ismā‘īlī thought, is sorely lacking and merits further analysis; This study will seek to redress the deficiency in scholarship in this specific area of Ismā‘īlī studies and the void is one which this study, at least in the first instance, proposes to begin to fill.

4. Significance of this Study

The significance of this study lies thus in the fact that it specifically focuses on a major religious community within Islam, whose intellectual contributions to Islamic doctrines on cosmology and eschatology cannot be underestimated. As noted by Bernard Lewis, “Ismā‘īlism expressed itself in an infinity of forms, both doctrinal and organisational”⁹ and consequently, a study exploring the complex Ismā‘īlī interpretations on the *Qā’im* and *Qiyāma* will not only bring us to a better understanding of Shī‘a eschatology, but subsequently also, Islamic eschatology as a whole.

⁹ Bernard Lewis, *Origins of Isma‘ilism: A Study of the Historical Background of the Fatimid Caliphate*, (Cambridge: W Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1940): 1.

Further, this study will encompass more than a simple conclusion that the two systems (Fāṭimid and Alamūt) were different in how they both envisaged the doctrines of the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma*. This study will explore the reasoning behind and justifications for the revisions and reformulations of these doctrines through the ages of Ismā'īlī intellectual development.

We will see that there was a definite shift following the proclamation of the *Qiyāma* at Alamūt in 1164 and the manner in which the eschatological *Qā'im* figure was envisaged which consequently led to an ontological elevation of the figure of the *Qā'im* – to a position almost equalling that of God himself. This study will, in addition, illustrate *why* Alamūt doctrine was revised subsequently repositioning the Imām as a cosmic personality, It is hoped that this focussed study will influence and inspire other specialists in the field of the Ismā'īlī doctrines on the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* to conduct further research into these cosmological and eschatological doctrines, thus coming to more concrete conclusions regarding the possible justification and reasoning behind the revisions made to these theological principles. This study it is hoped, will take the first step in hopefully opening the door for further studies to be conducted into this fascinating area of Ismā'īlī studies.

CHAPTER ONE: The Islamic Concept of the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* and the Fundamental Tenets of Ismā'īlism

1. The Islamic Concept of the Messiah (*Oā'im*) and The Resurrection (*Qiyāma*)

Like most other major religions, if not all, the concept of the End Time, and the messianic figure who inaugurates the final phase of human history, also plays a vital role in the theology of Islam. In order to appreciate the Islamic viewpoint on the Last Day and the messianic saviour, we must first have recourse to, the most important sources within the Islamic tradition itself – the Qur'an and *ḥadīth* literature. Consequently, this section will introduce readers to the Islamic notions concerning the Resurrection and attempt to understand how these events are depicted within Islamic, and subsequently Ismā'īlī, theology.

1.1. The Resurrection

The Qur'anic term for the Resurrection, *Qiyāma*, is derived from the Arabic root *q-y-m* of *qāma*, *yaqūmu*, *qiyām*, which literally means “to stand upright” or “to rise” and the term *qā'im* as the present participle means “the one who rises” or quite simply, “the Resurrector”. Whilst the Resurrection is vividly depicted in Islamic scripture, there is scant information to be found on the identity of the figure who inaugurates the Resurrection and the exact role ascribed to him. Given that the Qur'an is not explicit regarding the messianic figure, our next source of information is the *ḥadīth* literature which is rife with descriptions of this figure; his personality, distinct qualities and actions which he will be tasked with at the appointed time.

The Qur'an utilises a variety of terms and contains numerous verses referring to the End Time. The seventy-fifth sūra (chapter) known as *al-Qiyāma* (The Resurrection) has also been dedicated to an exposition of this eschatological event. This day is described as *yawm al-qiyaama*¹⁰ (the day of 'Resurrection'), *yawm al-dīn*¹¹ (the day of 'Judgement') *yaqūmu al-ḥisāb*¹² (the day of 'Reckoning'), *yawm al-khurūj*¹³ (the day of 'Emergence' [from their graves]).

Qur'anic depictions of the Resurrection are vivid and extremely descriptive. The day of Resurrection will be one "when eyes are dazzled and the moon eclipsed, when the sun and moon are brought together" (75:7-9). Similarly, it is described as the day when "[winds are] sent forth in swift succession, violently storming, scattering far and wide, separating forcefully, delivering a reminder, as a proof or a warning: what you are promised will come to pass. When the stars are dimmed and the sky is split, when the mountains are turned to dust and the messengers given their appointed time – for what Day has this all been set? The Day of Decision!" (77:1-13)

According to the Qur'an, certain signs will precede the End Time. One of these later used as evidence to uphold the validity of the Ismā'īlī *Qiyāma* of 1164 – is the sounding of a Trumpet (74:8). This trumpet will blast once signalling the annihilation of existence, and then sound once more representing the bringing back to life of all creation, and on this Day, "hearts will tremble and eyes will be downcast" (79:8-9). Most dramatic is the opening of sūra al-takwīr which states: "When the sun is rolled up, when the stars are dimmed, when the mountains are set in motion, when the pregnant camels are abandoned, when wild beasts are

¹⁰ Q.2:85.

¹¹ Q.1:4.

¹² Q.14:41.

¹³ Q.50:42.

herded together, when the seas boil over, when the souls are sorted into classes, when the baby girl buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed, when the records of deeds are spread open, when the sky is stripped away, when Hell is made to blaze and Paradise brought near: then every soul will know what it has brought about.” (81:1-14). Thus, according to the Qur’an, the natural order is completely shaken and the physical world descends into chaos.

Regarding the essential nature and timing of the Resurrection, verses in the Qur’an allude to the knowledge of its arrival as belonging to God alone: “They ask you [Prophet] about the Hour, saying, ‘When will it arrive?’, but how can you tell [them] that? It’s time is known only to your Lord” (79:42-44). It is generally described as creeping up on people suddenly without warning as the Qur’an states: “Lost indeed are those who deny the meeting with their Lord until, when the Hour suddenly arrives, they say, ‘Alas for us that we paid no regard to this!?’” (6:31). It is from these accounts that the Resurrection has been widely interpreted as a physical event. Through the course of this study, we shall demonstrate how the *Qiyāma* was interpreted in a radically unique manner throughout the history of Ismā‘īlism.

1.2. The Messiah

To understand the nature of Islam’s eschatological messianic figure – the *Qā’im* – the Qur’an is less descriptive. The term *Qā’im* referring to a person only appears in the Qur’an three times (3:39; 11:100; 13:33). Hence, for the Islamic conception of the *Qā’im*, the *ḥadīth* literature provides much information, which has been interpreted in a variety of ways by Muslim commentators through the ages, based on their sectarian or ideological persuasions.

Within the broader scope of Shī‘ism, hopes for the *Maḥdī* were, generally speaking, more prevalent. For the Shī‘a, as a community had long been pitted against the Sunnī

majority, living under what it perceived as being the illegitimate rulership of Sunnism, there existed an underlying expectation, a wait for the messianic *Maḥdī*, an Imām from the progeny of the Prophet who would claim rightful leadership over the entire Muslim umma. The Ismāʿīlīs, as a branch of the Shīʿa, in this respect, were no different. For example, a certain *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, found in both Sunni and Shīʿa collections of *ḥadīth*, alleges that even if only a single day were to exist, God would prolong that day until a man would come from his [Muḥammad's] family, from amongst his descendants who would rise against the illegitimate rulership present on the earth in order to dispense justice, equality and peace as there was previously injustice, terror and tyranny¹⁴. This task of dispensing justice and eliminating oppression was important for the Shīʿa and more so for the Ismāʿīlīs, given the unique system of interpretation which they possessed. For them, the task of ushering in a new age free from oppression and filled with peace, had dramatic implications as we shall see, and the perception of the *Qā'im* figure according to Ismāʿīlī doctrine was understood within their specifically understandings of time and history. These will be addressed in the following chapter.

Having addressed the references to the Resurrection and the associated messianic figure in the Islamic scripture and *ḥadīth* literature, we shall move to focussing on their interpretations within the Ismāʿīlī belief system.

2. The Fundamental Tenets of Ismāʿīlism

¹⁴ “Allah will bring out from concealment al-Mahdi from my family and just before the day of Judgment; even if only one day were to remain in the life of the world, and he will spread on this earth justice and equity and will eradicate tyranny and oppression” (Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Vol. 1, P. 99) – accessed 31st July 2012 <http://www.irshad.org/islam/prophecy/mahdi.htm>.

Before attempting to analyse and understand the Ismā‘īlī doctrines of the *Qā’im* and *Qiyāma*, it is essential first to understand the fundamental tenets of the Ismā‘īlī belief system which permeated the teachings of Ismā‘īlism from its inception. These fundamental tenets must be addressed so as to appreciate how and why Ismā‘īlism has interpreted the *Qā’im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines throughout their history in a manner which has contrasted sharply with other interpretations within the Islamic tradition.

Firstly, the early Ismā‘īlīs maintained that revelation itself along with its prescribed religious commandments and prohibitions had two fundamentally distinct aspects; namely an exoteric, manifest and outer aspect – the *zāhir*, and a meaning beneath the surface; the esoteric, hidden and inner aspect – the *bāṭin*. Whilst the task of delivering the revelation (*tanzīl*), rested solely with the Prophets, according to Ismā‘īlī doctrine, it was the job of the successors, the Imāms, to elucidate the inner meanings of the scriptures and their commandments, through a process of spiritual exegesis known as *ta’wīl*¹⁵. Thus, we are able to perceive one of the major aspects of Ismā‘īlī doctrine which permeates their entire system of belief – that of duality¹⁶. The constant pairing of ideas¹⁷ manifested themselves throughout the development of Ismā‘īlī doctrine

Secondly, the Ismā‘īlī worldview envisaged time in such a manner that, rather than progressing in a linear fashion, it instead operated cyclically, with revelation to mankind manifesting in the form of legislation (*sharī‘ā*) brought by six major Speaker-Prophets or

¹⁵ The Ismā‘īlī works on *ta’wīl* were prevalent in the period of Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlism, an example of which would be the *Wajh-i Dīn* of the Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlī *dā‘ī* Nāṣir Khusraw (d. after 1072) described by Daftary as “a masterpiece of *bāṭinī ta’wīl* and still one of the most important religious books of the Ismā‘īlīs of Central Asia” - Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā‘īlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 208.

¹⁶ In Chapter Three, on our discussion of the Alamūt phase of Nizārī Ismā‘īlism, we shall see how this duality actually morphed into a tri-partite division with the additional dimension of absolute truth (*haqīqa*) transcending the duality which existed prior to the proclamation of *Qiyāma* in 1164.

¹⁷ For example, *zāhir/bāṭin*, *tanzīl /ta’wīl*, *nāṭiq/asās*, *Imām/hujja*.

nuṭaqā (sing. *nāṭiq*) who were the inaugurators of six prophetic cycles. The *sharī‘ā* of each *nāṭiq* would remain valid for the remainder of that cycle until such time as a new Speaker-Prophet would arrive to abolish the previous *sharī‘ā* in order to enunciate a new one. In effect, this cyclical conception of time by the early Ismā‘īlīs represented a *horizontal* dimension through which they made sense of revelational sacred history with its culmination in the form of the expected Resurrection. Here we should note that the Ismā‘īlī concept of cyclical time was rather unique. By this we mean that their understanding of revelational history could *not* be considered *cyclical* in an absolute sense, as was perceived by the philosophers in Greek or Hellenistic thought where cyclical time was of a perpetually recurring nature with no *telos* or culmination point. The Ismā‘īlīs, although understanding time as cyclical, *did* however admit to the existence of a *telos* or goal; this was the awaited Last Day – the *Qiyāma*. Thus, we again witness a blend of thought within Ismā‘īlī theological interpretation, here in regards to their understanding of sacred history. Time was neither absolutely Greek or Hellenistic in its conception of eternal cyclicism, nor was it seen as completely linear with definitive start and end points as in other major monotheistic traditions. Rather we have a blend of both ideas which manifests itself in what we could call a “teleological” view of history¹⁸. Nomoto similarly confirms that “though this [Ismā‘īlī] scheme of history appears cyclical, it [does have] a *telos*”¹⁹.

Once the above fundamental tenets of the Ismā‘īlī belief system have been understood, we will then be able to place our analysis of the *Qā‘im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines within the appropriate framework. These will now be addressed through the remainder of this chapter.

¹⁸ Wilferd Madelung, “Aspects of Ismaili Theology: The Prophetic Chain and the God Beyond Being” in *Ismaili Contributions to Islamic Culture*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Imperial Iranian, Academy of Philosophy, 1977): 56.

¹⁹ Shin Nomoto, *Early Ismā‘īlī Thought on Prophecy According to the Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. ca. 322/934-5)* (Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, McGill University, 1999): 3, n.4.

2.1. Ismā'īlī Dualism - Zāhir and Bātin, Tanzīl and Ta'wīl, Nabūwwat and Imāmat

As the foundation of their intellectual system of thought, the Ismā'īlīs, from their very beginnings understood revelation as consisting of two fundamentally distinct yet complimentary aspects; (one aspect known on the surface as) the exoteric, manifest and outer aspect (*zāhir*) and (that which was beneath the surface, representing) the esoteric, hidden and inner aspect (*bātin*). It is to be noted that in the early Fāṭimid phase of Ismā'īlism, neither rendered the other irrelevant or useless. Rather, one without the other would cause the perceptible truth and reality as an impossible truth to comprehend. For the Ismā'īlīs themselves, the exotericism or *zāhir* of the ritual laws of revelation (*sharī'a*) was merely a veil for the *bātin* – the esoteric meaning within. For without a desire to understand the spiritual truths (*haqā'iq*) of the divine scriptures, the religious laws and practises themselves would lose their importance. Similarly, without adherence to the religious laws, one would be unable to attain knowledge of the reality within (*haqā'iq*)²⁰. The diagram below depicts the concept of duality as expounded in early Ismā'īlism.

Nabūwwat	Imāmat
<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Imām</i>
<i>Tanzīl</i>	<i>Ta'wīl</i>
<i>Zāhir</i>	<i>Bātin</i>

The diagram clearly depicts the roles and responsibilities that manifest themselves in the persons of the Prophet and Imām. From the Shī'a and consequently Ismā'īlī perspective, it

²⁰ For a brief summary of these aspects of the early Ismā'īlī teachings on the *zāhir/bātin* principle see Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines, Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 128-136; “Intellectual Life among the Ismailis: An Overview”, in Farhad Daftary, ed. *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2000): 89-93.

was understood that mankind was in constant need of divine guidance, which was the primary purpose behind God's sending of the Prophets in the first instance. The Prophets were commanded to guide people to the knowledge of God but this guidance was envisaged as that which could not and would not end with the passing of Muḥammad and accordingly, the Shī'a attested that divine guidance would continue through his progeny, the Imāms in descent from Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

The Ismā'īlīs however, understood Prophethood and Imāmate in a distinctly unique manner. Whilst the role of the prophets was to deliver the *tanzīl* or revealed message in its *zāhiri* exoteric form through the institution of a legalistic code, the Imāms, would be tasked with the responsibility of its *ta'wīl* – esoteric interpretation or spiritual hermeneutics – for the purpose of elucidating the inner meanings of the *sharī'a*, namely, its *bāṭin*. As the Ismā'īlīs explained, in the era of Islam, it was the Prophet Muḥammad who brought the law and *sharī'a* in its exoteric form, whilst the *ta'wīl* was left to his *waṣī* or legatee, the Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and the imams who succeeded him. Indeed, the Prophet Muḥammad himself, speaking about 'Alī is reported in a *ḥadīth* to have stated “There is one amongst you who will fight you for the *ta'wīl* [of the Qur'ān] in the same manner as I fought for its *tanzīl* (revelation)”²¹. Thus it was the Imāms, who alone were the *ahl al-ta'wīl* (the ‘people of *ta'wīl*’), responsible for “educing the *batin* from the *zahir*”²² and it was they, who were the ones referred to in the Qur'an as *rasikhun fi'l-'ilm* or those who were ‘firmly grounded in knowledge’ (Q.3:7).

²¹ Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Rawḍa-yi taslīm*, ed. and tr. S.J. Badakhchani as *Paradise of Submission: A Medieval Treatise on Ismaili Thought* (New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005): 155.

²² Farhad Daftary, “Cyclical Times and Sacred History in Medieval Ismaili Thought” in K. D'hulster and J. Van Steenbergen ed. *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam: Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008): 151.

Having recognised the duality prevalent in the teachings of the early Ismā‘īlīs, we will now illustrate how this *ẓāhir/bāṭin* paradigm expressed itself within the Ismā‘īlī understanding of time.

2.2. Cyclical Time and the History of Prophetic Revelation

At its inception, Ismā‘īlism understood time not in terms of linear progression but rather in a cyclical fashion.²³ How did the Ismā‘īlīs arrive at this conclusion? Based on the seven days of creation theory found in the Qur’an²⁴ and through their application of the Ismā‘īlī tool of *ta’wīl* (‘esoteric exegesis’ or ‘spiritual hermeneutics’), it was understood that Q7:54 was merely a parable or metaphor symbolising a deeper more esoteric meaning. The argument proposed was thus; with verses in the Qur’an explicitly attesting the fact that God’s actions and intended outcomes as essentially one with no delay between His command and the outcome, what would be the need for God to take ‘seven days’ to create the cosmos?; If God only had to utter the *amr* (Command) or *kalima* (Word) for something in actuality to reach potentiality²⁵ then what could possibly be the meaning behind God requiring ‘six days’ to ‘create’ the world and then ‘ascending the Throne’ on the seventh?

One of the last major Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlī *dā‘īs* in the time of al-Mustanṣīr, known as Al-Mu‘ayyad fi al-Dīn al-Shirāzī (d. ca. 1078), strongly criticised those who chose to interpret

²³ For a summary tracing the Ismā‘īlī cyclical view of revelational history, see Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis* (London: Kegan Paul International in association with Islamic Publications Ltd., 1983): 30-58; Farhad Daftary, *The Isma‘ilis: Their History and Doctrines, Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 131-132; Daftary, “Cyclical Times and Sacred History in Medieval Ismaili Thought” in K. D’hulster and J. Van Steenbergen ed. *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam: Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008): 151-158; Paul E. Walker, *Abu Ya‘qub al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary* (London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1996): 73.

²⁴ Quran 7:54 -Your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then settled Himself firmly on the Throne.

²⁵ Q. 2:117; 36:77-83.

the six days in a simplistic and literal manner as referring to six twenty-four hour periods. In his view, the exotericists had clearly misunderstood statements which were, in his opinion, symbolically suggestive of a subtler meaning. He goes on to reason:

“[T]he day begins with the sun-rise and ends with the sun-set and the night begins with the sun-set and ends with the sun-rise. If there is no sun and no heavens how can we talk of days and nights, and the period of the six days?”²⁶

Al-Shirāzī thus questioned, how the verse can refer to creation of the heavens and earth within six twenty-four hour days, which themselves are governed by the movement of the planetary spheres with the rising and setting of the sun, when none of these had even been created as yet. In Ismā‘īlī thought therefore, the six days of creation represented six periods of prophecy (*aṣḥāb-i sharāyi*)²⁷ in which the religious law of God (*sharī‘ā*) was brought to mankind by a Speaker-Prophet, or *nāṭiq* (pl. *nuṭaqā*) – literally meaning ‘enunciator’ or ‘one who speaks’ – in the form of a divine scripture. The *nāṭiq* in each cycle – following the *nāṭiq* of the previous prophetic cycle – was seen as building upon the divine law brought by his predecessor *nāṭiq*. In this way, the *sharī‘ā* brought in each subsequent prophetic cycle could be considered an update mandated by God, of His religious law which was brought to mankind and delivered in stages by the six major *nuṭaqā* in accordance with the requirements of the time.²⁸ In all accounts by the Ismā‘īlī philosophers, the *nuṭaqā* of the six cycles were

²⁶ Al-Shirazi, Mu’ayyad fi’l Din, *Majalis-ul Muayyadiya*, ed. Jawad Muscati and A.M. Moulvi as *Life and Lectures of Muayyad fid-din Shirazi* (Pakistan: Ismailia Association, 1950): 88.

²⁷ Nāṣir Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, ed. Faqir Muhammad Hunzai as *The Face of Religion: Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s Spiritual Hermeneutics* (London, forthcoming): 39-41; Naṣir al-Din al-Ṭūsī, *Rawḍa-yi taslīm*, ed. and tr. S.J. Badakhchani as *Paradise of Submission: A Medieval Treatise on Ismaili Thought* (New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005): 69.

²⁸ For details on the interpretation of the six days of creation according to the Ismā‘īlī *dā‘ī* Nāṣir Khusraw, see Shafique Virani, “The Days of Creation in the Thought of Nasir Khusraw” in Sarfarozi Niyozov and Ramazon Nazariyev, ed. *Nasir Khusraw: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (Tajikistan: Noshir Publications, 2004): 74-83. The concept of cyclical time and persons within the hierarchy of Ismā‘īlī cosmology are also summarised succinctly in Wilferd Madelung, “Aspects of Ismaili Theology: The

Adam²⁹, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, who was considered the sixth *nāṭiq* of the sixth prophetic cycle. He was thus likened to the sixth day in Ismā‘īlī philosophical thought and their theory of creation³⁰. It is therefore with Muḥammad that the *sharī‘a* was perfected in its exoteric form of religious rites and rituals.

The Ismā‘īlīs subsequently conceived of each *nāṭiq* being succeeded by an individual known as the *asās* (foundation) or *wasī* (legatee) and subsequently by seven Imāms, the seventh of whom would rise in rank to become the *nāṭiq* of the next prophetic cycle. The Imām’s role would be to unveil the inner meaning of the scripture so as to arrive at its spiritual truth and reality (*haqīqa*). As its *telos*, or goal, the Ismā‘īlīs awaited the seventh day of creation, representing the cycle of Resurrection (*dawr_al-Qiyāma*). With regards to the early eschatological doctrines of Ismā‘īlism, this final cycle was envisaged as one of pure spiritualism in which the inner essence of all previous revelations would be unveiled and disclosed to mankind.

Unlike the first six cycles established by the arrival of Speaker-Prophets, it would be the figure of the *Qā‘im*, (known as the *Qā‘im al-Qiyāma* or the ‘Lord of Resurrection’) who would inaugurate the *Qiyāma*. However, it is with regard to the seventh cycle – the cycle of

Prophetic Chain and the God Beyond Being” in *Ismaili Contributions to Islamic Culture*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Imperial Iranian, Academy of Philosophy, 1977): 57-58; Unknown Author. *Fasl dar Bayan-i Shinakht-i Imām*, ed. and tr. W. Ivanow as *On Recognition of the Imām* (Leiden: Published for the Islamic Society by E. J. Brill, 1947): 18.

²⁹ Whilst some Ismā‘īlī philosophers, such as Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzi, argued that Adam did in fact bring a *sharī‘a*, others debated the reality of the law he brought, if in fact he even brought any law at all. In this regard see Heinz Halm, “Abū Ḥātem Rāzī”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 1, Fasc. 3 (1983): 315, “Unlike Nasafī and Sejestānī, he [Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzi] declares that Adam revealed a system of religious law (*šarī‘a*) which later was abrogated by Noah” (put weblink); Boustan Hirji, *A Study of al-Risālah al-Bāhirah* (Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, McGill University, 1994): 89-90; Farhad Daftary, *The Isma‘īlis: Their History and Doctrines*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 226.

³⁰ Nāṣir Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, ed. Faquir Muhammad Hunzai as *The Face of Religion: Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s Spiritual Hermeneutics* (London, forthcoming): 41.

Qiyāma – and the messianic *Qā'im* figure who inaugurates and presides within the domain of this cycle, that doctrines amongst the Ismā'īlīs of different periods seem to differ³¹.

The doctrines mentioned here portray the Ismā'īlīs as a community with distinct and unique doctrines built upon radically different understandings of scripture and revelation. Through an appreciation of these beliefs which form the foundation of Ismā'īlī doctrine, we can now proceed to understand the doctrines of the *Qā'im* and the *Qiyāma* as envisaged in our two chosen phases of Ismā'īlī history, demonstrating the exact form and essence of the doctrinal shifts which took place.

³¹ For a very succinct study analysing *Mahdism* in Ismā'īlism see Farhad Daftary, “Hidden Imams and Mahdis in Ismaili History”, in Bruce D. Craig, ed. *Ismaili and Fatimid Studies in Honour of Paul E Walker* (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2010): 1-23.

CHAPTER TWO: Pre-Fāṭimid and Fāṭimid Conceptions of the *Qā'im* and the Seventh Cycle of *Qiyāma*

1. Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Movement and the Founding of the Fāṭimid State

Following the death of the Shī'a Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d.765), the Shī'a split into various groupings. The Ismā'īlīs, who derive their name from al-Ṣādiq's eldest son, Ismā'īl, upheld his imāmate over that of al-Ṣādiq's other sons. However, although understood to have been originally appointed as successor to his father, Ismā'īl is reported to have predeceased him. However, we are led to believe that there existed a group who affirmed the death of Ismā'īl and consequently accepted his son Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl as the rightful successor to the Imāmate and seventh Imām. This group came to be known as the Mubarakīyya; the title *al-Mubārak* ('the Blessed One'), allegedly being an epithet of Ismā'īl himself.

From this point on, the Ismā'īlī Imāms inaugurated the first period of concealment (*dawr al-satr*) during which they were directly inaccessible to their followers, choosing to operate clandestinely for its success. In order to safeguard themselves from persecution, the Ismā'īlī leaders adopted various guises and pseudonyms, only dispensing with these tactics once they were safely in power following their takeover in North Africa in 909³². However, it was during this period that the Ismā'īlī leadership faced its first major crisis occurring during the reign of the first Fāṭimid Imām-caliph 'Abd Allāh (r. 909-934) who was bestowed with the caliphal title of *al-Maḥdī* ('the Rightly Guided One').

³² Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs* (2007): 87-91; ed. *Mediaeval Isma'ili History & Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 1.

In order to appreciate the Fāṭimid ideas surrounding the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* it is important to place these within the wider context of Ismā'īlī doctrinal development, appreciating that the Fāṭimid doctrines themselves emerged from the doctrines of Pre-Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs. The following section will therefore address these early developments so that we can understand the doctrinal position subsequently adopted by the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs.

2. Pre-Fāṭimid and Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism – The Development of Doctrines

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the early Ismā'īlīs encapsulated within their doctrinal thought, a blend of theological and philosophical systems which manifested themselves in a form described as Ismā'īlī Neoplatonism. This coupled with a unique understanding of time and sacred revelational history meant that the Ismā'īlīs possessed a complex belief system, which subsequently came to be revised through the ages. None of the Ismā'īlī doctrines has proved more interesting than the development of thought surrounding the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines and although we will be focussing this study on the Fāṭimid and Alamūt phases of Ismā'īlism, below we will illustrate that pre-Fāṭimid ideas concerning these doctrines were so predominant that it is precisely in regards to these ideas that the first major split occurred in the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*, leading to the establishment of two opposing factions; The Fāṭimids, and the Qarmatians³³.

The earliest Ismā'īlīs, following the disappearance of their seventh Imām Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, had been successful in propagating the doctrine that this Imām, as the seventh Imām of Muḥammad's cycle, was the seventh *nāṭiq* – the long-awaited *Qā'im* and *Mahdī* who would arrive to usher in the seventh cycle of Resurrection as per their original beliefs.

³³ For a study surveying the literature on the relationship between these two groups, see Wilferd Madelung, "The Fatimids and the Qarmatīs of Baḥrayn", in Daftary, *Mediaeval Isma'ili History*, 21-73.

This group is to be identified with the Pre-Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs who severed connections with ʿAbd Allāh al-Maḥdī and the central Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī leadership.

Upon assuming his role as the head of the Ismāʿīlī movement, ʿAbd Allāh al-Maḥdī, now claimed the Imāmate for himself and his ancestors, in descent from the Shīʿa Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq³⁴. He claimed his position as the first Fāṭimid Imām-Caliph and refuted the idea that Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl was the *Qāʿim*. A dissident group, clinging to this belief, led by an Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī* Ḥamdān Qarmat, refused to accept the doctrinal reformations, and broke relations with the Fāṭimids, subsequently establishing their own independent state centred in Bahrayn, known as the Qarmatian movement. From what followed, a new doctrine concerning the identity and role of the *Qāʿim* and the time-frame for the seventh cycle of Resurrection was devised, so as to justify al-Maḥdī’s claim to the Imāmate. It is necessary to address here, these revisions, so as to better appreciate how the stance taken by the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs regarding the *Qāʿim* and *Qiyāma* doctrines actually transpired.

2.1. The *Qāʿim*

2.1.1. Identity

³⁴ To be noted here is an interesting point regarding ʿAbd Allah al-Maḥdī’s genealogical claim. Rather than claiming descent from Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar, the eponym of the Ismāʿīlīs, he instead claimed descent from ʿAbdallah b. Jaʿfar, the eldest surviving son of the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. See Bernard Lewis, *Origins of Ismaʿilism: A Study of the Historical Background of the Fatimid Caliphate*, (Cambridge: W Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1940): 44-67; 71-76; Abbas Hamdani and F. De Blois, “A Re-Examination of al-Maḥdī’s Letter to the Yemenites on the Genealogy of the Fatimid Caliphs”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (1983): 173-207. This claim by al-Maḥdī was however repudiated by his great grandson, the fourth Fāṭimid Imām-Caliph al-Muʿizz (953-975), who reaffirmed his descent from Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar in the text of a private correspondence, sent to an Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī* from Yemen. The text of this letter has been translated and reproduced in S.M. Stern, “Heterodox Ismāʿīlism at the Time of al-Muʿizz”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1955): 10-33, reprinted in his Samuel M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismaʿilism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Leiden: Brill, 1983): 257-288 – All page numbering given when citing Stern’s study will be based on the original journal article published in 1955.

As noted, the messianic saviour in Islam was usually given the title of *al-Mahdī* (the rightly guided) or *al-Qā'im* (the one who rises). Although envisaged with slight variances by different communities of interpretations within Islam, all were in agreement that this eschatological would be a man from the family of Muhammad. Shī'ite doctrine further claimed that *Mahdī* would be “a previous imam who [would] return to avenge the Shī'a as a whole and claim leadership”³⁵. Within Ismā'īlism however, the *Mahdī*³⁶ was interpreted differently as per their cyclical understandings of time and Neoplatonist philosophy.

The Pre-Fāṭimid, specifically Qarmatian, belief concerning the identity of the *Qā'im* was clear – Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl as the seventh Imām of the sixth cycle was the eschatological *Qā'im* and with his arrival he had inaugurated the final cycle of the *Qiyāma* – an age in which the law was no longer applicable and only the inner meanings and hidden realities (*ḥaqā'iq*) existed.

Fāṭimid: The Reform of al-Mu'izz

It was during the reign of the fourth Fāṭimid Imām-Caliph al-Mu'izz (953-975), the great-grandson of 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī, that a further revision – or rather reversal – to the doctrine of the *Qā'im* took place. In this regard, our information comes in the form of two primary source documents which set forth a revised doctrine concerning the *Qā'im* and his identity. As we know, the pre-Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs/Qarmatians held that Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl was the *Qā'im* whilst the reform of 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī who upheld continuity in Imāmate after Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, rejected this notion, also rejecting that Ismā'īl b. Ja'far was the true Imām in the first place. What we see with al-Mu'izz's reform is a reversion *back* to the

³⁵ Walker, *Intellectual Missionary*, 71.

³⁶ The Ismā'īlīs themselves from their very inception as a religio-political movement have preferred to use the term *Qā'im* to denote this messianic saviour.

pre-Fāṭimid idea, with slight modifications to allow for the continuity of Imāmate as al-Mahdī had done a mere three decades earlier³⁷. He reasserted the imāmate of Ismā‘īl and subsequently his son, Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl, also once again repositioning him as the focal point of Ismā‘īlī messianic expectations; as the *Qā'im*. Essentially, al-Mu‘izz proposed an interesting idea; that of the *khulāfa*³⁸ (‘deputies’, or ‘lieutenants’). This idea regarding the *Qā'im* and his lieutenants was to be explained by al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān in his work *al-Risāla al-mudhhiba* and was subsequently accepted as the official position of the Fāṭimids in regards to the identity of the *Qā'im*.

The doctrine explained that the *Qā'im* Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl had three degrees or ranks: (1) a degree in the corporeal world (2) the degree of Resurrection in the spiritual world, and (3) the celestial degree of the final Reckoning which would involve the judgement of souls. With regards to the first corporeal degree, this itself had two aspects – that of the Speaker Prophet (*nāṭiq*) and of the rightly-guided successors and lieutenants (*al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn*). Al-Nu‘mān explained that the *Qā'im* had attained his first corporeal degree as the historical Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl, but as he had lived and died in the period of concealment, a series of persons would be tasked with the unveiling of the inner meanings of the law – these were the Fāṭimid Imām-Caliphs, the *khulafā'*, in whom the *Qā'im* attained his second corporeal degree. According to al-Nu‘mān, the *khulafā'* would continue to rule for an unspecified time³⁹, and the second and third degrees of the *Qā'im* would only be attained at the End Time, the timing of which was again left open to speculation⁴⁰.

³⁷ Daftary, *The Ismā‘īlīs*, 164.

³⁸ A term used for instance by one of the early Ismā‘īlī *dā'īs* al-Sijistānī – See Walker, *Intellectual Missionary*, 75.

³⁹ Here we have the same idea as explained by al-Mahdī in his own reform which allowed for the continuity of Imāmate in mini-cycles or groups of seven indefinitely “until all of a sudden the speaker [*Qā'im*] appears when God Almighty desires”.

⁴⁰ Hollenberg sums up the doctrine slightly differently stating that: “[J]ust as the End of Days has different stages, so too does the nature of the *Qā'im* Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl. He had briefly appeared in

What this meant regarding the identity of the *Qā'im* was clear. Prior to the reform of 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī, it was envisaged as Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, and it was so once again now in the time of al-Mu'izz. The slight modification was this: His appearance was not unique to a particular phase in history; rather he would have multiple appearances. First, he had manifested himself corporeally in the period of concealment (*dawr al-satr*), secondly he had appeared corporeally in the form of Abd Allāh al-Mahdī the founder of the Fāṭimid dynasty, and finally he would manifest himself to mankind in his second and third degrees, in his spiritual and celestial limits respectively at the End Time. In the interim however, his functions of elucidating the *bāṭin* of the *sharī'a* would be left to his descendents and lieutenants, the *khulafā'*⁴¹.

We have thus explained the *second* revision to the doctrine of the *Qā'im*'s identity. But why did al-Mu'izz institute reform in the first place? We know that 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī's reform was necessary in order to justify his claim to the Imāmate but if the Imāmate was accepted then why the need for a reversion back to the old pre-Fāṭimid doctrine of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl being the *Qā'im*? (albeit with the introduction of the doctrine of the *khulafā'*). The reasoning seems to have been two-fold: (1) To win back to the Fāṭimid

corporeal form... disappeared in "the period of the hidden Imāms," and returned as 'Abd Allāh the *Mahdī* at the beginning of "the period of disclosure." In the present period, he [wa]s in his spiritual limit and [wa]s represented on the earth by the Fāṭimid caliphs. Later, at the conclusion of the End of Days, he w[ould] advance to the celestial "limit" to pass judgement on all souls". See David Hollenberg, *Interpretation After the End of Days: The Fāṭimid-Isma'īlī Ta'wīl (Interpretation) of Ja'far ibn Manṣūr al-Yaman (d. ca. 960)*, (Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2006): 29-30. Interestingly he does not mention the two-fold nature of the *Qā'im*'s corporeal degree as al-Nu'mān does, namely that of the Speaker-Prophet (*nāṭiq*) and then subsequently that of the Lieutenant-Imāms, the Fāṭimids (*khulafā'*). As a result he erroneously explains that the *Qā'im* attained his *second* degree (i.e. the spiritual degree of Resurrection) in the dynasty of the Fāṭimids, when in fact the *khulafā'* only represented his second corporeal degree.

⁴¹ Farhad Daftary, "Cyclical Times and Sacred History in Medieval Ismaili Thought" in K. D'hulster and J. Van Steenbergen ed. *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam: Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008): 155.

mission, those who had earlier rejected the claims of ‘Abd Allāh al-Mahdī⁴² by creating a subtle doctrinal change through which the dissidents may gradually come to accept the Fāṭimids, albeit not as Imāms but as the deputies of the still-awaited Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl and (2) It would seem that in the time of al-Mu‘izz there were certain *dā‘īs* who held what Stern terms “heterodox” ideas in regards to the nature of the Imāmate after Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl. They seemed to believe that it had been transferred to an individual outside the line of Imāmate, which would thus render the Fāṭimids as being illegitimate rulers. Al-Nu‘man confirms that this stating that:

“al-Mu‘izz saw that it would take a long education to eradicate this kind of doctrine from their hearts, and that most of the adherents of Ismā‘īlism in that region were attached to this teaching, and realized that ordering them to renounce their doctrines might lead to their defection from the Ismā‘īlī cause.”⁴³

Hence, the reform of al-Mu‘izz gave an important role to the Fāṭimids, suggesting that they - himself included - were *khulafā’* or deputies, acting on behalf of the *Qā’im* Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl but still Imāms from his progeny. Thus, through a reworking of the *Qā’im* doctrine, not only was al-Mu‘izz able to reassert Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl as the *Qā’im*, but was also able to reconcile this with the position which he and his predecessors had held as Imāms, thus allowing for continuity in the Imāmate.

Later Fāṭimid: The *Qā’im*’s Identity in the thought of Nāṣir Khusraw

⁴² Daftary, *The Ismā‘īlīs*, 163; Hollenberg, *Interpretation After the End of Days*, 164-165.

⁴³ Stern, “Heterodox Ismā‘īlism”, 15.

Having explained the early Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī speculations regarding the identity of the *Qā'im* we shall end with the views expounded by Nāṣir Khusraw, a Fāṭimid *dā'ī* who operated towards the end of the eleventh century.

The Fāṭimid doctrine on the imāmate during his time was that which had been retained from the time of al-Muʿizz which had upheld continuity in the Imāmate. Regarding the identity of the *Qā'im* we have seen the complex doctrine proposed by al-Muʿizz which resulted in a proclamation that the Fāṭimid Imām-Caliphs were the *khulafā'* of the *Qā'im* Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl. Now, in a period where successive Imāms had come and gone, by the time we arrive at the period of the Imām al-Mustanṣir, the situation is such that no major works are being written on the doctrines of the *Qā'im* as they were in the period of early Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlism which had emerged from a movement whose whole ideology was structured around this messianic figure. What we can conclude is that, in this latter period, rather than the view being that Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl had manifested himself as the *Qā'im*, the concept was reversed so that it was the *Qā'im* who was viewed as having manifested himself as Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl. This followed from the doctrine of al-Muʿizz which held that the *Qā'im* would have multiple manifestations as opposed to just one – a view which, as we shall see in the following chapter was developed in the Nizārī Ismāʿīlism of Alamūt. What this meant was that the focus was removed from the historical Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, whereas in the period of early Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlism, he was still very much at the centre of their messianism. As for the view of Nāṣir Khusraw, Daftary states that Khusraw accepted the advent of the *Qā'im* as being: “a future event”, but he refrained from making further specific predictions regarding his advent... “nor d[id] he... attach any particular significance to the actual number of imams or their heptads”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 209.

Thus, we approach the end of the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī era aware of the complexities of their doctrine concerning the identity of the *Qā'im*. Throughout the period, different ideas and reforms were instituted to take account of historical phenomena – such as the claims of the Fāṭimid Imāms to the Imāmate – and it was these circumstances which provided the springboard for reform in this period of Nizārī Ismāʿīlī history. In the next section, we shall explain how the Fāṭimids understood the *function* and *status* of the *Qā'im*⁴⁵. For our discussion on pre-Fāṭimid ideas surrounding the function and status of the *Qā'im* we shall look to the writings of the Ismāʿīlī *dā'ī* Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. after 934) and in the period of Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlism we shall briefly mention the ideas in circulation at the time of al-Muʿizz according to Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī, finally proceeding to discuss the views of Nāṣir Khusraw during the final period of Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlism, as expounded in his major work the *Wajh-i Dīn*⁴⁶.

2.1.2. Function and Status

Pre-Fāṭimid: The *Qā'im*'s Function and Status in the Thought of Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī

Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī was a pre-Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī *dā'ī*, one who it seems rejected the claims of the Fāṭimids to the leadership and thus sided with the Qarmatians, expecting the advent of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl as the *Qā'im*⁴⁷. Regardless of his affiliation however, his writings are important as representing the earliest Ismāʿīlī thought on a range of matters

⁴⁵ Given that the ideas surrounding the function and status are inextricably linked to one another, they will be discussed as a pair as it would be impossible to address one without addressing the other also.

⁴⁶ Nāṣir Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, ed. Faqīr Muhammad Hunzai as *The Face of Religion: Nāṣir-i Khusraw's Spiritual Hermeneutics* (London, forthcoming).

⁴⁷ For the life of Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī and a discussion regarding his identity, see Nomoto, *Early Ismāʿīlī Thought on Prophecy*, 17-29; Heinz Halm, “Abū Ḥātem Rāzī”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 1, Fasc. 3 (1983): 315.

related to prophetology, imāmology and more importantly for our present study, on Ismā‘īlī Qā’imology. So just how did al-Rāzī envisage the *Qā’im* and what precisely was his role and status in the thought of pre-Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlism?

According to Nomoto, al-Rāzī, in his work the *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ*, implies that “the Qā’im possesses a higher rank than any other prophet”⁴⁸ explaining that whilst the *nuṭaqā’* are responsible for calling mankind to the *sharī‘a* through the prescription of rules, obligations and practices⁴⁹, the *Qā’im*’s function is to act as the zenith of the prophetic mission through penetration of the deeper meaning of all the *sharā‘ī‘* brought by the previous six *nuṭaqā’*. As Nomoto concludes, [t]his [cyclical] history has its own final *telos* or culmination which is the *parousia* of the messianic figure, who is the seventh prophet called the Qā’im”⁵⁰ – Thus, despite the fact that all seven *nuṭaqā’* are described by al-Rāzī as the *ulū’l-‘azm* (possessors of resolution), he clearly envisages the *Qā’im* as holding a superior rank over that of the other six. The *Qā’im*’s advent is represented by al-Rāzī therefore, as the culmination of sacred revelational history.

Fāṭimid: The *Qā’im*’s Function and Status in the Thought Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī

One of the Fāṭimid *dā‘īs*, Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 971), avidly took to discussing the doctrines of the *Qā’im* in his time under al-Mu‘izz. What we know from his writings is that he also envisaged Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl as the awaited *Qā’im* whose job would be undertaken by his *khulafā’* in the interim period prior to his final manifestation. But what of the *Qā’im*’s function and status? According to al-Sijistānī, “The rank of *qā’im* exceeds that of the *nāṭiq* as

⁴⁸ Nomoto, *Early Ismā‘īlī Thought on Prophecy*, i.

⁴⁹ Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Iṣlāḥ*, ed. Nomoto in *Early Ismā‘īlī Thought on Prophecy*, 96.

⁵⁰ Nomoto, *Early Ismā‘īlī Thought on Prophecy*, 3.

well as that of the six preceding Lords of Resurrection and that of the *mahdī*, as the most absolute manifestation of the Universal Intellect”⁵¹

This high rank of superiority is also evident from a chapter in his *Kitāb al-Iftikhār* where he explains that whilst the mission of the *nuṭaqā’*, the apostles, is one of action (*da’wa ‘amalīyah*), the *da’wa* of the *Qā’im* is one of pure uninhibited knowledge (*da’wa ilmīyah*). He adds that whilst the participation in action and deeds is open to all, the mission of knowledge would be available only to the one who possessed endeavour (*dhū al-qaṣd*)⁵². By asserting this, al-Sijistānī implies that the ritual laws (*sharā’i’*) are inferior to the knowledge which is contained within them (*bāṭin*) and consequently, as the prophets have been charged with delivering the outer form of the law (*ẓāhir*) and the *Qā’im* has been tasked with the process of unveiling the realities within, it is to be understood that al-Sijistānī clearly envisaged the ontological superiority of the *Qā’im* over that of the prophets – a trend which we shall see more clearly manifested in the Nizārī Ismā’īlism of Alamūt. As he states in his *Kitāb al-Mahjūb*

“The Mahdī is the one who shows humans the path. All the Prophets before him guided humans to the path of God; but their words were veiled and their sciences were concealed, because the times required this. But once the process had reached its end and the lifting of the veils has come near and the cycle of unveiling (*dawr-i kashf*) has arrived... the person who will appear then will guide humans without [having recourse to] veils and symbols, and he will unveil to them all of the True

⁵¹ Boustan Hirji, *A Study of al-Risālah al-Bāhirah* (Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, McGill University, 1994): 158.

⁵² Nomoto, *Early Ismā’īlī Thought on Prophecy*, 115, n. 97.

Knowledge that had been [veiled] in the religious Laws and the [prophetic] books”⁵³

Thus, in al-Sijistānī, we see the clearly defined Fāṭimid conception of the role of the *Qā'im* which is to elucidate the inner meanings and realities of the scriptures. There is a clear idea of unveiling (*kashf*) here. The *Qā'im* is envisaged as being the eschatological figure that liberates mankind from the fetters of the *exoterics* (*ẓāhir*) of the religious law (*sharī'a*) and reveals to them the *esoteric* and hidden meanings (*bāṭin*) and truths (*ḥaqā'iq*). He does not repeal the *sharī'a* completely, because his task is precisely, as al-Sijistānī says, to “unveil to them all of the True Knowledge that had been [veiled] in the religious Laws and the [prophetic] books”. If the *sharī'a* were to be removed completely then the *Qā'im* accordingly would have no purpose and so one can conclude that his role is understood as dependent upon the existence of the *sharī'a* for without a *sharī'a* there is no inner or outer meaning and thus nothing to unveil.

But as we know, in the time of al-Mu'izz, the *Qā'im* doctrine was revised, giving the *Qā'im*, three degrees. As al-Sijistānī envisaged the Fāṭimid Caliph-Imāms as *khulafā'* of the *Qā'im*, it was they – as his manifestations in his second corporeal degree and legitimate representatives – who were tasked with unveiling the *bāṭin* beneath the *ẓāhir*, and who would “act righteously and represent the doctrine and the deeds of the *Qā'im*” through “interpreting the inner meaning of the laws”⁵⁴.

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⁵³ Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-Mahjūb*, tr. Hermann Landolt as *Unveiling the Hidden* in Hermann Landolt, Samira Sheikh & Kutub Kassam ed. *An Anthology of Ismaili Literature: A Shi'i Vision of Islam* (New York and London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008): 129.

⁵⁴ Daftary, *The Ismā'ilīs*, 165.

We see in Nāṣir's writings, an explicit affirmation of the *Qā'im*'s superior role over that of the law-giving prophets. In his major work of *ta'wīl*, the *Wajh-i Dīn*, Nāṣir makes numerous references to the figure of the *Qā'im* in regards to his salvific function and his cosmic importance as the universal discloser of the truths within the religious scriptures in relation to the previous *nuṭaqā'* and Imāms.

He establishes the premise that the *sharī'a* has two aspects; the *ẓāhir* (body), and the *bāṭin* (soul)⁵⁵ confirming the view typically held within Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism, that: "Since... the *bāṭin* of things is nobler than their *ẓāhir*, and the permanence of the *ẓāhir* of all things depends on their *bāṭin*, it necessarily follows that... the *sharī'at* of the Prophet [is] ennobled by [its] *bāṭin*"⁵⁶. Emphasising that the *bāṭin* is superior in relation to the *ẓāhir*, he states that: "Just as the body is contemptible without the soul, in the eyes of God the Book and the *sharī'at* have no value without meaning and *ta'wīl*"⁵⁷ Through this, Nāṣir sets the logical premise for what will follow; Having explained the duality of the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, he explains that whilst the Prophets are responsible for the *tanzīl*, the Imāms are responsible for the *ta'wīl*. But as the Imāms educe the *bāṭin* from the *ẓāhir*, and the *bāṭin* is the purpose and meaning of the *ẓāhir*, it necessarily follows that the function and role of the Imām is given precedence, and the *Qā'im*, as shall be seen, was envisaged as holding an even greater importance.

Nāṣir proceeds to discuss the mission of the "six commanding Prophets"⁵⁸, concluding that their role was to command people to work. Nāṣir then mentions specifically that these prophets not only commanded action, but also "promised them [the people in each prophet's time] that in

⁵⁵ Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, 39.

⁵⁶ Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, 52.

⁵⁷ Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, 52

⁵⁸ Noted here as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad - Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, 39.

this manner, one day they would be rewarded for their work”⁵⁹. Here it is interesting to note that Nāṣir alludes to the fact that the prophets foretold of a day (i.e. the *Qiyāma*) when each would be “rewarded” in addition to indicating the arrival of the one who would act as the rewarder. This person, designated by Nāṣir, as the “lord of the reckoning” was to be identified with the *Qā'im* of the *Qiyāmat*, who would recompense the believers for their “work” through the provision of “wages”⁶⁰. The day of the *Qā'im* was thus likened to the Sabbath.

Thus, Nāṣir, in his writings of the later Fāṭimid period, elevated the person of the *Qā'im* to a station of huge importance, one that had possibly not been expressed so explicitly in Ismā'īlism before. Certainly in the early Fāṭimid interpretations of the *Qā'im*'s status, this idea was not made explicit; rather what we see in the writings of the early period is a clear ontological elevation of the *Qā'im* above that of the *nuṭaḳā'*. What we do not see is – what Khusraw seems to suggest – that the whole purpose of revelation and worship (as the word and deed) was the person of the *Qā'im* (the meaning) and that the prophets were simply harbingers for his advent⁶¹. Interestingly enough, this position which placed the *Qā'im* at the centre of Ismā'īlī sacred history was adopted by the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs of the later Alamūt period who fulfilled the messianic expectations of the earlier Ismā'īlīs with the proclamation of *Qiyāma* in 1164.

Having assessed the evolution of interpretation surrounding the figure of the *Qā'im* in pre-Fāṭimid and Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism we will now proceed to explore the concept of the

⁵⁹ Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, 39.

⁶⁰ Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, 40 – What these wages represent and how they are to be dispensed, Nāṣir does not explain here at this point.

⁶¹ This position is explicitly made when he explains that “The *qibla* signifies the lord of the *qiyāmat*... [and] when the *mu'adhdhin* calls the *adhān*, he first faces the *qibla*. This signifies that the *nāṭiq* showed that his *da'wat*... is towards the lord of the *qiyāmat*” - Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, 97-98 and 116 where Nāṣir describes the *Qā'im* of the *Qiyāma* as “the goal and end of all *ḥadds* [ranks within the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* hierarchy]”

Qiyāma itself, specifically in regards to what it was understood to represent spiritually for the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs.

2.2. The *Qiyāma*

As we have established, the Ismāʿīlī interpretation of the *Qiyāma* was inexorably linked to the duality which founded the basis of their theology. Through the instrument of *taʿwīl*, the Ismāʿīlī philosophers interpreted the seven day creation theory in the Qurʾān as representing something deeper and more profound.

Essentially, each of these first six prophetic cycles, during which mankind was governed by religious laws, was seen as a *dawr al-satr* (period of concealment) during which the realities of the prescribed laws were veiled by the laws themselves. In contrast, the seventh and final cycle, the *dawr al-Qiyāma*, was envisaged as a *dawr al-kashf* (cycle of manifestation) during which the realities and spiritual truths (*haqāʾiq*) of all previous religions would be manifested upon the earth for mankind. The era of *Qiyāma*, would not be one regulated by a new *sharīʿa* but rather an “era of pure spiritual knowledge unshackled by the Law”⁶².

That Ismāʿīlī doctrine upheld the *Qiyāma* as a spiritual incident, is confirmed from the very earliest writings of the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿīs*. One such advocate of this position (the Resurrection as a spiritual event in the life of the individual soul) was al-Sijistānī (d. after 971), an Eastern Iranian *dāʿī* (missionary) for the Ismāʿīlī movement who – as we have

⁶² Wilferd Madelung, “Aspects of Ismaili Theology: The Prophetic Chain and the God Beyond Being” in *Ismaili Contributions to Islamic Culture*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Imperial Iranian, Academy of Philosophy, 1977): 57-58.

already noted – belonged to, what Halm and others have termed, “the Persian School”⁶³. In his *al-Risālah al-Bāhirah*, al-Sijistānī questions those who consider the Resurrection as being a physical event and wonders how any intelligent person can consider this to be so. How can they, he wonders, accept all the apocalyptic notions, and *still* accept that even after all these have taken place, that the bodies of human beings could possibly survive!? He describes those who understand the Resurrection in physical terms as having expectations of “falsehood, false testimony and delusion”⁶⁴. Thus, according to al-Sijistānī, and the many others that followed, the *Qiyāma* was not a physical, worldly event comprised of a sequence of temporal incidents, but was in fact envisaged as a subtle matter of the soul and the spiritual realm⁶⁵.

It is therefore important to appreciate that Ismā‘īlī emphasis on the *Qiyāma* as a spiritual occurrence was one which seems to have remained consistent in their doctrine and was not in question. At no point in the historical development of Ismā‘īlī theology, was the Resurrection interpreted as a *purely* physical episode. If, therefore, the Ismā‘īlī interpretation of the *Qiyāma* did not differ in this aspect of the doctrine, what exactly were the unique aspects of the Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlī interpretations of the *Qiyāma*? One can suggest that it was with respect to *other aspects* of the *Qiyāma* that doctrines amongst the Ismā‘īlīs evolved, namely (1) the timing of its arrival and its duration, and; (2) the nature of its relationship to the *sharī‘a*.

2.2.1. Pre-Fāṭimid views on the *Qiyāma*

⁶³ Halm, Heinz, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismailiyya: Eine Studie zu islamischen Gnosis* (Weisbaden: Kommissionverlag Franz Steiner, 1978): 16.

⁶⁴ Abu Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī, *Al-Risālah al-Bāhirah*, tr. Boustan Hirji in *A Study of al-Risālah al-Bāhirah*, 67-68.

⁶⁵ Al-Sijistānī, *Al-Risālah*, tr. Boustan Hirji in *A Study of al-Risālah al-Bāhirah*, 69, 73, 75.

As we saw above, the idea that the *Qiyāma* was a unique phase in sacred history spanning one-thousand years was that which was acknowledged by the pre-Fāṭimid or Qarmatian Ismāʿīlīs. Consequently, with the arrival of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl as the *Qāʾim*, the pre-Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs believed that he had thus inaugurated the final period of human history during which the *sharīʿa* was now no longer relevant and as such, only the *ḥaqāʾiq* would exist. Within this framing of sacred history therefore, the early Ismāʿīlīs saw the *Qiyāma* as representing the final seventh *dawr*, the final one-thousand year period in the history of mankind which had already spanned six-thousand years (representing the first six periods of prophecy inaugurated by the six major *nuṭaqā*) beginning with the arrival of the first *nāṭiq*, Adam. Suffice to say; in concluding the doctrine of the pre-Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs, they held that the *Qiyāma* had arrived with Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl as the seventh *nāṭiq* and *Qāʾim*. Consequently, the final one-thousand year period of human history had begun. In this last period, the *sharīʿa* was no longer seen as useful and was thus emphatically annulled.

2.2.2. Fāṭimid views on the *Qiyāma*

Moving forward to the period of Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlism, we witnessed a clear revision to the interpretation of the timing and duration of the *Qiyāma*. As a result of ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī’s claim to the Imāmate and subsequent acceptance of a continuous Imāmate, the duration of the sixth period of the Prophet Muḥammad had to be revised so as to account for this change in the doctrine of the Imāmate. Accordingly, for the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs, “the seventh *dawr*, earlier defined as the spiritual age of the Mahdi, had now completely lost its messianic appeal... [and] the final age... was henceforth postponed indefinitely into the future”⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ Daftary, “Cyclical Times”, 15; Daftary, “Hidden Imams and Mahdis”, 7-8. This held true throughout the remainder of the period and will thus not be delved into any further here.

Having explained the official Fāṭimid views concerning the timing and duration of the *Qiyāma*, we can now proceed to explore the more interesting question of how exactly the *Qiyāma* was perceived in its relation to the *sharī'a*. Did the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs uphold the existence of the *sharī'a* in the *Qiyāma* or was it to be discarded?

Al-Sijistānī took to discussing the importance of the *Qiyāma* and what it represented for the Ismā'īlīs. The *sharī'a*, as we know, was to be abolished at the inauguration of the *Qiyāma* and al-Sijistānī confirmed this through a hermeneutical reading of certain Qur'anic verses which depict the allegedly physical conditions which will (accompany or) preclude the *Qiyāma*. One such incident was the stripping away of the sky described in Q. 81:12. Here, he interpreted the sky as being a metaphor for the *sharī'a* which, at the time of the *Qiyāma* would be “stripped away” from mankind. The *da'wa* of the *Qiyāma* is thus described by al-Sijistānī as one of knowledge (*'ilmīyah*) as opposed to one of deeds (*'amalīyah*). As would become typical of the later Ismā'īlī viewpoint – most notably at Alamūt – the *sharī'a* was viewed as a veil for the true knowledge which lay hidden within and is brought by the prophets, the *nuṭaqā'*. As a result al-Sijistānī views the *Qiyāma* as the period in which the believers will transcend the law, reaching that which is beyond, the level of spiritual truth, knowledge and intellect, all of which would render the ritual obligations unnecessary⁶⁷.

Returning to Nāṣir Khusraw – who reflects the final period of Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism – we see that he also addresses the concept of the *Qiyāma*, in his *Wajh-i Dīn*⁶⁸. As mentioned in the section discussing Nāṣir's concept of the function and status of the *Qā'im*, he explained that

⁶⁷ Hirji, *A Study of al-Risālah*, 220. What is unclear however, is if he viewed *both* aspects of the *sharī'a* as being stripped away at the time of *Qiyāma* – that is *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* or whether he simply envisaged the former as being eliminated.

⁶⁸ As the figure of the *Qā'im* and the concept of *Qiyāma* are almost always discussed alongside one another in Nāṣir's *Wajh-i Dīn*, some of the points noted here may have been mentioned in the section above entitled “Later Fāṭimid: The *Qā'im*'s Function and Status in the Thought of Nāṣir Khusraw”.

the six Prophets came like days of the week, whilst seventh of them representing the Sabbath, would inaugurate the Resurrection. This day was to be a day of reward⁶⁹.

However the most interesting aspect of Nāṣir's thought on the *Qiyāma* emerges in his views on the applicability of the *sharī'a*. For instance, whilst the pre-Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs envisaged the *Qiyāma* as the seventh and final cycle of the *Qā'im* in which the *sharī'a* would no longer be relevant (in either its *ẓāhir* or *bāṭin* form), Nāṣir explains, that the *sharī'a* as mentioned, has two aspects – the “universal” (*'aqlī*) and the “specific” (*waz'ī*) and only the *latter* aspect would be nullified. This “specific” aspect of the *sharī'a* he explained as including certain religious obligations such as “ablution, prayer, almsgiving, the pilgrimage, and so on”⁷⁰ whilst the “universal” aspect of the *sharī'a* – which referred to the laws which governed society such as prohibition against murder, theft, fornication etc. – would remain in force so as to uphold the natural order.

When referring to the duality within Ismā'īlism, it is the ritual obligations which, as we have mentioned before, have both a *ẓāhir* form (the physical act of worship itself) and a *bāṭin* meaning (that which the ritual act symbolises). It is the *ẓāhir* prescriptions, Nāṣir says, which will be lifted at the time of *Qiyāma*, and thus only the *bāṭin* will remain. He explains this in his treatise *Khawān al-Ikhawān* whereby he explicates his position on the applicability of the *sharī'a* and its role in the period of *Qiyāma*. He questions “[i]f the observance of the *sharī'at* is so critical to proper expression of faith, why... would its structures be lifted with the advent

⁶⁹ Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, 41; The later Nizārī Ismā'īlī author of the Alamūt period, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, would reinforce this distinction between the eras of the prophets and that of the *Qā'im* in one of his treatises – “The Resurrection is the day of reward (*rūz-i thawāb*) and the [period of] religious law (*sharī'at*) is the day of action. Today there is action without reward; tomorrow there will be reward without action” – See Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. *Āghāz wa anjām* ed. and tr. S.J. Badakhchani as *Origin and Destination*, in S.J. Badakhchani, *Shi'i Interpretations of Islam: Three Treatises on Theology & Eschatology* (New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010): 56.

⁷⁰ Alice C. Hunsberger, *Nāṣir-i Khusraw's Doctrine of the Soul: from Universal Intellect to the Physical World in Isma'ili Philosophy*, (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Columbia University, 1992): 212.

of the Lord of the Resurrection (*khudāwand-qiyyāmat*)?”⁷¹. As mentioned above, his reference to the *sharī‘a* here would be to that “specific” part of it, the ritual practices and obligations – which would be dispensed with at the advent of the *Qā‘im* and the inauguration of the *Qiyāma*. Similarly, in his *Wajh-i Dīn* he makes even clearer his position on the *sharī‘a*, explaining that at the *Qiyāma*, “the *bāṭin* of the *sharī‘at* will be revealed through [the *Qā‘im* of the *Qiyāma*]”⁷². Thus, the position on the *Qiyāma* in the later period of Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlism was clear; it was not an era in which the *sharī‘a*, in its totality, would be abolished rather it would be the outer form which was dispensed with so that the inner meanings, the *bāṭin*, could be made manifest. As we shall see in the following chapter, this view which upheld the existence of the *sharī‘a* in the period of *Qiyāma* – albeit in its *bāṭin* aspect – was not one which the Nizārī Ismā‘īlīs adhered to and was completely revised.

4. Concluding Remarks

As discussed, the revisions which took place surrounding the *Qā‘im* throughout the Fāṭimid period concerned mainly the *identity* of the *Qā‘im*. His role – as the one who would unveil the spiritual truths (*ḥaqā‘iq*) of all preceding revelations – and status – as holding a position of primacy over all previous prophets and Imāms – was fairly consistent throughout the period. In this regard we can suggest the reasoning behind this emphasis on the identity of the *Qā‘im* and why the doctrinal revisions were focussed on this aspect of the *Qā‘im* at the expense of other aspects.

Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlism, as we have seen, emerged from complex beginnings. With the Ismā‘īlī mission initially being preached in the name of the expected *Qā‘im* Muḥammad b.

⁷¹ Hunsberger, *Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s Doctrine of the Soul*, 212.

⁷² Khusraw, *Wajh-i Dīn*, 126.

Ismā'īl, a repudiation of this amounted to a rejection of the heart of the movement. The entire mission had been led in the name of the *Qā'im* and the reform instituted by 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī had an impact to the extent that it caused the first major schism within the Ismā'īlī community. Now although it could be assumed that this was the end of the matter, clearly the figure of the *Qā'im* was being awaited with such expectancy that there existed a large number of Ismā'īlīs who still had messianic hopes even after al-Mahdī's reform. Consequently, this situation necessitated, once more, an official doctrinal reform, which the Fāṭimid obliged with through al-Mu'izz, who attempted to win back the dissidents to the Fāṭimid cause by reasserting the rank of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl as the *Qā'im* whilst also allowing for further heptads of Imāms.

Thus, we saw once again a change in attitude and understanding by the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs to the doctrine of the *Qā'im* and more specifically a revised understanding of his identity. As time passed under the reign of further Fāṭimid Imām-Caliphs and the expectations associated with the *Qā'im* remained unfulfilled, further heptads of Imāms were incorporated into the theory of cyclical time and his identity and timing of his arrival remained open to theory and speculation. However, with ideas surrounding his identity still being debated and messianic expectations still rife in the latter phase of Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism, these hopes manifested themselves in the deification of the Fāṭimid Imām-Caliph al-Ḥākim and the subsequent formation of the Druze movement which split from the central Fāṭimid *da'wa*⁷³. Although not acceptable in the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism of Cairo which – in contrast to early Ismā'īlism – asserted the complementary nature of the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* of the *sharī'a* – once the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs split from Cairo and established themselves at Alamūt, the situation

⁷³ For a study exploring the founding and origin of the Druze sect, see Marshall G. Hodgson, "Al-Darazī and Ḥamza in the Origin of the Druze Religion", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (1962): 5-20; For a detailed study on the doctrines of the sect, refer to Kais M. Firro, "The Druze Faith: Origin, Development and Interpretation", *Arabica*, No. 58 (2011): 76-99;

shifted fundamentally, as we will see in the following chapter. In a new religio-political context the Ismā'īlīs had a freedom and liberty which they did not possess in Cairo. Isolated from the outside world, the Nizārīs saw themselves in a new light and the messianic expectations were once more revived. Unlike the situation in which they found themselves in Cairo – in an environment which preached moderation and suppressed exaggeration in regards to doctrines and beliefs (*ghulūww*) – at Alamūt, the messianic ideals could no longer be contained and on 8th August 1164, the *Qiyāma* was proclaimed; the *Qā'im* had finally arrived.

CHAPTER THREE: Alamūt and Nizārī Ismā‘īlism: Proclamation of the *Qiyāma* and Revision of the Doctrine – The Final Evolution?

1. Nizārī Ismā‘īlism and the Nizārī State of Alamūt⁷⁴

In this chapter, we shall attempt to understand how the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines were envisaged in the Nizārī Ismā‘īlism of Alamūt and why the interpretation of both shifted so drastically.

As already noted earlier, although the Fāṭimid dynasty ended in 1171, for the Nizārīs⁷⁵, their time in Fāṭimid Cairo ended in the year 1094, at which point the community hereafter continued their survival in the mountain fortresses of Alamūt in Iran after pledging allegiance

⁷⁴ For a thoroughly detailed historical understanding of this period of Ismā‘īlism, the most comprehensive work is without doubt Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Secret Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizari Isma‘ilis Against the Islamic World* (The Hague: Mouton & Co. Publishers, 1955) a work which has come closer than any other to comprehensively studying the *Qiyāma* doctrine. However, in reviewing Hodgson’s work, although acknowledging it as a “fundamental item in the literature on Ismā‘īlism”, Samuel Stern notes, that “[Hodgson] has on the whole confined himself to history in the stricter sense of the word and dealt with the theology of the movement only in so far it is inseparably interwoven with its political development” - S.M. Stern, “Review: The Order of Assassins, the Struggle of the Early Nizārī Ismā‘īlīs against the Islamic World by G. S. Hodgson” *Oriens*, Vol. 11, No. 1/2 (1958): 279. Thus, whilst Hodgson’s scholarship clearly warrants merit and acclaim, we must appreciate what has been noted; the study undertaken placed the theology of the Nizārī Ismā‘īlīs as being of secondary importance within the wider socio-political context of the period.

⁷⁵ The term Nizārī is used commonly to denote those Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlīs who upheld the rights of Nizār to the Imāmate following the death of the Fāṭimid Imām-Caliph al-Mustanşīr. These Ismā‘īlīs broke away from the central leadership of the Fāṭimids in Cairo who had accepted another of al-Mustanşīr’s son’s al-Musta‘lī as the Imām. Subsequently, the group who held firm to the heir-designate Nizār came to be known as the Nizārī Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlīs or simply, the Nizārīs. See Daftary, *The Ismā‘īlīs*, 241-243. For the complex situation regarding the succession dispute and the death of al-Mustanşīr, see Paul E. Walker, “Succession to Rule in the Shiite Caliphate”, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, Vol. 32 (1995): 249-258.

to al-Mustans̄ir's heir designate and eldest son, the deposed Nizār. It is alleged that a son or grandson of Nizār, was taken secretly by a *dā'ī* loyal to Nizār's claims, to Alamūt where he was sheltered by the Ismā'īlī *dā'ī*, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ⁷⁶ who had peaceably seized the fortress of Alamūt, in the mountain strongholds of Iran four years prior in 1090 - who protected this descendant of Nizār in the mountain fortresses of Alamūt⁷⁷. The Nizārī Imāmate continued for three generations whereby the Imāms remained in *dawr-al-satr* whilst the mission was continued by three Supreme *dā'īs*, known as *Ḥujjats*, (literally 'proofs') who led the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in the absence of their Imāms⁷⁸.

It was during the life of the third leader of Alamūt, Muḥammad b. Kiya Buzurg Ummid (d. 1162) that certain members of the Ismā'īlī community appeared to grow restless given the situation they now found themselves in. Cut off from the outside world and still in wait for their Imām, the urge to revive earlier messianic expectations grew increasingly strong. At the centre of these messianic expectations was none other than the alleged son and subsequent successor of Muḥammad b. Kiya, known as Ḥasan⁷⁹.

⁷⁶ For a detailed study of Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ and the founding of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī state at Alamūt, see Farhad Daftary, "Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ and the origins of the Nizārī Isma'ili movement", in Farhad Daftary, ed. *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 181-204.

⁷⁷ Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, 363-364.

⁷⁸ Illustrations depicting the chronology of and rulership of the Lords of Alamūt can be found in Hodgson, *Order of Assassins*, 42 and Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, 302

⁷⁹ There has been much controversy and a divergence of opinion surrounding Ḥasan's alleged Nizārī descent. It would appear that in his own period of rule, Ḥasan II initially claimed the status of "hujja" or "proof" of the Imām, whilst later identifying himself as the "hujja" of God assuming the position identical to that held by the Imām-Caliph al-Mustans̄ir whom we know was considered Imām by the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs. However, the later claim post-*Qiyāma* by Muḥammad III – the son of Ḥasan II – was that Ḥasan II was *not* the son of Muḥammad b. Kiya Buzurg Ummid – only appearing to be so – but was in fact, the son of a descendant of Nizār b. al-Mustans̄ir thus making Muḥammad III himself *also* a legitimate Imām physically descended from Nizār b. al-Mustans̄ir. The issue of genealogy here is clearly complex and any detailed discussion surrounding the genealogy of Ḥasan II would fall beyond the scope of this study. However, other scholars have attempted to address this issue. See for instance Hodgson, *Order of Assassins*, 147-148, 150-152, 152 n.24; Hodgson, "The Isma'ili State", in *Cambridge History of Iran: Volume 5, The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*. ed. J.A. Boyle. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968): 457-458, 461; Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1967): 70-71.

Subsequently, in the year 1164, having gathered the various dispersed Ismā'īlī communities at the foot of the grounds of Alamūt, Ḥasan II – later known by the Nizārīs by the title '*alā dhikrihi al-salām* – arose and delivered an epistle announcing the arrival of the long-awaited Last Day⁸⁰. The proclamation of the *Qiyāma* in 1164 is to be understood as a unique and distinct event, and as the axis around which all subsequent Nizārī interpretations of the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines were based. Following 1164, the doctrines once held by the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs *had* to be understood in a new light as defined by Ḥasan II. It therefore represented a defining moment for the community in its theological understandings concerning time and salvation. Given its importance, we shall address the *Qiyāma* first before proceeding to examine the doctrine concerning the *Qā'im*

1.1. The *Qiyāma*

As we have seen, the history of Ismā'īlism has tended to view the *Qiyāma* as a distinct phase in the framework of sacred revelational history, during which the *sharī'a* would no longer be needed. Nāṣir Khusraw specified however that in the *Qiyāma*, the *ẓāhir* of the *sharī'a* would give way to its *bāṭin*, thereby implying only a partial annulment of the *sharī'a*. The duality still existed thus in Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism. However, in the realm of *Qiyāma* at Alamūt, a whole new position was adopted regarding the religious laws, one which saw an evolution not just from *ẓāhir* to *bāṭin*, but from the *sharī'a* as an all-encompassing system, to a transcendent third realm of existence; that of ultimate reality or *ḥaqīqa*. Also interesting to note is that whilst, Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism advocated the idea that the *ḥaqīqa* or absolute spiritual truths were to be found within the *bāṭin* of the *sharī'a*, at Alamūt, the *ḥaqīqa* was now explicitly identified with the inner

⁸⁰ For the narrative account of this incident refer to our introduction to this study, 5; Also see n.1 on the same page for additional sources in which the event has been described.

reality of the Imām and thus the *Qā'im*. This was a clear doctrinal reinterpretation of the Ismā'īlī concept of *ḥaqīqa*, which was now accepted as being a spiritual state of elevation whereby an individual experienced an intimate realisation of the Imām's true luminous essence. Through recognition of the *ḥaqīqa* – as manifested through the person of the Imām-*Qā'im* – the individual believer would attain the recognition of God Himself.

In the *Haft Bāb-i Bābā Sayyid-nā*, the Ismā'īlī *dā'ī* Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd writes “Sayyidnā [Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāh] may his soul be sanctified, says: ‘When the *Qā'im* manifest himself, he will... remove the veil of precaution (*taqiyya*)... we witnessed all these glad tidings in our lord ‘Alā Dhikrihi al-Salām”⁸¹. Consequently, in the period of *Qiyāma* at Alamūt, the inauguration of *Qiyāma* is seen as removing the veil, or *taqiyya* (represented by the *sharī'a*). In line with the earlier Ismā'īlī position on the futility of law in the period of the *Qiyāma*, “the ties and chains of *sharī'at* were taken from the necks of the faithful”⁸² and Ḥasan II had brought them into a state of *ḥaqīqa*, identified as synonymous with the realm of *Qiyāma*. When referring to the *sharī'a* however, we must go back to the division made by Nāṣir Khusraw between that part of the *sharī'a* which is universal (*'aqlī*) and that which is specific (*waz'ī*) As he explained, whilst the former referred to the laws which governed society such as prohibition against murder, theft, fornication etc., the latter referred to “the part of the *sharī'at* which is specific [and] involves items like ablution, prayer, almsgiving, the pilgrimage, and so on”⁸³. At the *Qiyāma*, the universal *sharī'a* would remain in force to uphold the natural order. When talking about abrogation of the *sharī'a* however, it was the specific aspect of it which would be nullified by the command of the *Qā'im*, as it was these rituals which – in their *ẓāhir* form – were simply

⁸¹ Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātīb, *Haft Bāb*, ed. and tr. S. Jalal Badakhchani as *Seven Chapters* (London: The Institute of Ismaili Studies, forthcoming): 21.

⁸² Quhistānī, *Haft Bāb*, text. 41, trans. 42.

⁸³ Hunsberger, *Nāṣir-i Khusraw's Doctrine of the Soul*, 212.

deeds and actions, whilst it was their symbolic meaning – *ḥaqīqa* – which gave the laws meaning in the first place.

To arrive at a conclusion regarding the conception of the *Qiyāma* at Alamūt, what is clear is the identification between *sharī'a*, *taqiyya* and *satr*, directly contrasting with *Qiyāma*, *ḥaqīqa* and *kashf*. In comparing this position with that adopted in Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism, we can see that in the latter, the *sharī'a* is upheld, with the *Qā'im*'s role merely being the unveiling and manifesting of the esoterics of the law which are described as the *bāṭin*. However in the Nizārī Ismā'īlism of Alamūt, the *sharī'a* in both its exoteric *and* esoteric aspects is eliminated entirely. The *Qiyāma* was thus defined as a totally transcendent realm of existence, one in which neither *zāhir nor bāṭin* had a place. As mentioned above, rather than being a progression from the *zāhir* to the *bāṭin*, the *Qiyāma* – as a realm in which the ultimate truth was revealed – surpassed all duality and surpassed the *zāhir/bāṭin* paradigm which existed in the realm of *sharī'a*. Essentially, in the realm of the *Qiyāma*, the *ḥaqā'iq* could be seen as “a third level of being, in effect a *bāṭin* behind the *bāṭin*... that of ultimate reality [which] went beyond the old Ismā'īlī interpretations of the *sharī'a* as these had gone beyond the *sharī'a* itself”⁸⁴ The *Qiyāma*, was the realm of unity and the *Qā'im* – as we shall see – the man of unity.

In the realm of *Qiyāma*, there was only absolute reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and unity (*wahda*) of being. All was merged in the eternal essence of the *Qā'im*, himself now, the perfect manifestation of the Divine on earth, and the one who would grant eternal paradise to some and condemn to eternal hellfire others. Once again, this was not interpreted as physical heaven and hell, rather, paradise was true recognition, or gnosis (*ma'rifāt*) of the unity of being whilst hell was considered the polar opposite of this, a state of eternal ignorance. As stated by Mahmūd in his *Diwān-i Qā'imīyāt*.

⁸⁴ Hodgson, “The Isma'īli State”, 464-465; Walker, *Intellectual Missionary*, 77.

“In the realm of the *sharī‘at*, when you speak of the Imam, the *Qā‘im* and God, that is how it should be.

But in the realm of the Resurrection, by dictate of truth, you have to perceive all the three as one”⁸⁵

We can conclude the following; the Ismā‘īlism of Alamūt no longer saw the *Qiyāma* as a distinct period of history within the system of cycles as that held in Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlism. Following the reimposition of the *sharī‘a* by Ḥasan III, certain Ismā‘īlī scholars, notably Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, took it upon themselves to redefine the doctrine of *qiyāma* from even that which was held prior to the reimposition of the *sharī‘a*. In his *Rawḍa-yi taslīm*, Ṭūsī explains that “the cycle of Muḥammad... was the beginning of the cycle of the Resurrection, and the resurrection is particular to the Imam who is the lord of the Resurrection”⁸⁶ and thus identifies the *Qiyāma* as a state or condition “particular to [an] Imam” who can choose to proclaim a *Qiyāma*.

From the above statement, it can be concluded – from a point whereby we understand the *sharī‘a* and the *Qiyāma* as diametrically opposed to one another – that if the Resurrection did indeed begin with the arrival of Muḥammad then from this moment on, the *sharī‘a* was merely a veil for the state of Resurrection. Thus, what Ḥasan II did was simply to remove this veil, thereby causing the *Qiyāma* (and consequently the *ḥaqīqa* also) to manifest once more. As noted, the first six cycles of prophecy were viewed as periods of concealment whilst the period of the Resurrection was understood to be a period of unveiling or manifestation. But from the writings

⁸⁵ Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib, *Dīwān-i Qā‘imiyyāt*, in S. Jalal Badakhchani, “Poems of the Resurrection: Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib and his Dīwān-i Qā‘imiyyāt”, in Omar Ali-de-Unzaga, ed. *Fortresses of the Intellect: Ismaili and Other Islamic Studies in Honour of Farhad Daftary* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2011): 439.

⁸⁶ al-Ṭūsī, *Rawḍa*, 140.

of Ṭūsī, as opposed to Fāṭimid conceptions of the *Qiyāma* being a distinct phase to arrive at some distant, undetermined time in the future, the *Qiyāma* was now seen as an eternal state, at some points manifesting and at some points being hidden but always existing. And just as the sun existed despite the appearance of the clouds which at times would conceal it, similarly too, the *Qiyāma* would exist perpetually despite the reappearance (or in the case of Ḥasan III, reimposition) of the *sharīʿa*, which would once more veil for the *Qiyāma* and the *ḥaqīqa* therein.

1.2. The *Qāʿim*

1.2.1. Identity

Prior to the *Qiyāma* at Alamūt, the identity of the *Qāʿim* had been the one aspect of the doctrine which had not received as much treatment as the others such as the function and status of the *Qāʿim*.

However, in Maḥmūd's *Haft Bāb*, we see a clear designation of the individual who is to be regarded as the *Qāʿim*. Somewhat similar to the views held by the early Fāṭimids, the *Qāʿim* would not be linked to a specific individuals, not *khulafās*' but Imāms in the truest sense. In order to justify this position, Maḥmūd quotes prophetic *ḥadīth* in which the *Qāʿim* was identified by the Prophet as 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib'⁸⁷. An interesting *ḥadīth* relates that:

⁸⁷ “[27] It is well-known that the Prophet, Peace upon him, pointed to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, when he was asked: ‘Who will be the Resurrector of the resurrection?’ Will it be [anyone but] ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib? In another place he was asked about the Resurrector, he said: ‘the one who puts his sandals together’. When they looked back, they saw that our Lord ‘Alī, Peace be upon him, was putting his sandals on the top of the other, and was setting them right”⁸⁷ - Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd, *Haft Bāb*, 14.

“this saying of the Prophet that ‘on the day of the Resurrection multitude of angels, Jinn and mankind will get together to lift the banner of the Resurrection, but they cannot lift it. ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib will come and will lift the banner of the Resurrection.”⁸⁸ From this, Maḥmūd concludes that “*Mawlānā* ‘Alī, prostration and prayer is due upon mention of him, is the *qā’im-i qiyāmat* and else there is no one above him”. But is he referring to the historical ‘Alī? It would seem not for he further claims that:

“[34] All the imams are just the same as *Mawlānā* ‘Alī... It is he, who neither has a beginning nor an end”⁸⁹

Thus, by assimilating all the historical Imāms into the single cosmic ‘Alī, Maḥmūd successfully absolves himself of any responsibility for identifying a specific figure as the *Qā’im*. Not only this, but by collapsing the temporal distinctions between Imāms, he is able to lead readers to the conclusion that:

1. If ‘Alī – as per the prophetic *ḥadīth* – is the *Qā’im* of the *Qiyāmat*, and;
2. “All the imams are just the same as *Mawlānā* ‘Alī”, then;
3. All Imāms are *Qā’ims* in potentiality, only becoming *Qā’im*’s in actuality if they choose to inaugurate a period of *Qiyāma* wherein the *ḥaqīqa* is once again manifested and the exoterics of the *sharī’a* thrown from the believers.

1.2.2. Function and Status

Function

⁸⁸ Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd, *Haft Bāb*, 16.

⁸⁹ Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd, *Haft Bāb*, 16.

“The secret of the Resurrection is a great mystery; the prophets have not been allowed to unveil that secret because they are lords of the religious law (*aṣḥāb-i sharī‘at*). The lords of the Resurrection (*aṣḥāb-i qiyāmat*) are a different group”⁹⁰ – This statement, one which notes the “lords of the Resurrection” as being plural, confirms the Nizārī view that there was not simply one manifestation of the *Qā’im*. Although in reality there was only One, in the realm of relativity, each Imām was seen as the *Qā’im* of his time. This seemed to reflect a view similar to that held post-reform of al-Mu‘izz whereby the *Qā’im* – although seen as being one – was understood as having multiple manifestations. The difference however, would be in the fact that whilst in the time of al-Mu‘izz, the Fāṭimid Imām-Caliphs were seen only as deputies of the *Qā’im*, now at Alamūt, given that every Imām – when seen rightfully – in reality was ‘Alī, every Imām was consequently understood as being the *Qā’im* as ‘Alī was the *Qā’im*.

We have seen how the figure of the *Qā’im* was envisaged in the Fāṭimid phase of Ismā‘īlī history with regards to his function. Referring to the prophetic hadith which asserted that the role of the *Mahdī* would be to fill the earth with justice as it has been filled with oppression and tyranny, the ‘oppression’ referred to was traditionally interpreted symbolically by the Ismā‘īlīs, as representing the *sharī‘a* (in force during the first six cycles of prophecy). The *sharī‘a* was perceived merely as a veil for the esoteric inner meanings of the scriptures (*bāṭin*) which further contained and concealed within them, the true essence of scripture (*haqā’iq*) which itself was the ultimate reality⁹¹.

⁹⁰ Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. *Āghāz wa anjām* ed. and tr. S.J. Badakhchani as *Origin and Destination*, in S.J. Badakhchani, *Shi‘i Interpretations of Islam: Three Treatises on Theology & Eschatology* (New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010): 56.

⁹¹ As similarly noted by the 15th century Ismā‘īlī *dā‘ī* Khayrkhwāh-i Harāṭī in a treatise entitled *Fasl dar Bayān-i Shinākht-i Imām*: ‘...it has to be known that every “day of the faith” is equal to one thousand years of this world (so that) a week of the Religion lasts seven thousand years. In these seven days the “day of the faith” is only one, not more [i.e. the seventh day or the *dawr al-Qiyāma*]... The

In the Nizārī Ismā‘īlism at Alamūt, we see this complete shift in attitude towards the *sharī‘a* manifest itself in the attitude of our author Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd. It is no longer viewed as necessary, but rather, following the proclamation of the *Qiyāma* by Ḥasan II, the chains of the *sharī‘a* – viewed as a burden for the believers, shackling them to the mere outer and literal aspects of the revealed laws⁹² – are removed from the necks of the believers with the inauguration of the *Qiyāma*. The final messianic era of the *Qā‘im* was no longer a theory, it was reality. His arrival at Alamūt in the form of Ḥasan II heralded a new dawn; an era in which the fetters of the *sharī‘a* were discarded and, consequently, the believers liberated, through the *Qā‘im*’s revealing of the ultimate truth (*haqiqā*) which had hitherto been veiled by the *sharī‘a*⁹³. Thus, in the prophetic hadith, the real sense and meaning of the word ‘justice’ would be the act of bringing to an end the religious laws and revealing the spiritual truths (*haqā‘iq*), which, for the Ismā‘īlīs was the primary purpose behind revelation, in the first instance.⁹⁴

other six days are called the “night of the faith,” and the reason for this is that at that time the law (*sharī‘a*) of the prophets is a *veil* (*hijāb*) of the Imam just as the night is the veil of the sun in this world⁹¹.

⁹² This position is less evident in Fāṭimid Ismā‘īlism which chose to adopt a more moderate stance regarding the applicability and validity of the outer aspects of revelation (*ẓāhir*) and its complementarity with the inner meanings contained therein (*bāṭin*). That understanding which regarded the *sharī‘a* as obsolete and a burden on the believers, concealing from them the innermost realities (*haqā‘iq*), thus being almost counter-productive to salvation was the Ismā‘īlism of Alamūt.

⁹³ See Farhad Daftary, “Cyclical Times and Sacred History in Medieval Ismaili Thought” in K. D’hulster and J. Van Steenberg ed. *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam: Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008): 151-158 where he notes, “the seventh *natiq*... would not bring a new *shari‘a*... [but] his own mission would consist of fully revealing to all mankind the hitherto hidden esoteric truths (*haqa‘iq*) concealed in all the preceding revelations... In this final age, there would be no need for religious laws... In the final, millenarian age of pure spiritual knowledge, the *haqa‘iq* would be completely freed from all their veils and symbolism”. (155).

⁹⁴ Mohammad Ali, Amir-Moezzi, “Only the Man of God is Human: Theology and Mystical Anthropology According to Early Imāmī Exegesis”, p.6, in Etan Kohlberg, ed. *The Formation of the Classical World: Volume 33: Shī‘ism* (Wiltshire: The Cromwell Press, 2003): 22, “The end of time is marked by the universal initiation into the esotericism of all religions that is set forth by the *qā‘im*, the

Status

In the Nizārī Ismāʿīlism of Alamūt, The Imām-*Qā'im* took precedence over the previous *nuṭaqā'*. Whilst the Prophet was merely an individual who *brings* the *sharī'a*, it was the Imām-*Qā'im* who acts as the *source* of the *sharī'a* itself. Consequently, this Imām-*Qā'im* figure not only possessed the power and authority to reveal the *haqā'iq* of the *sharī'a* and apparently remove it completely, as per his command, but also was the individual in each era who interacted with each of the six major Speaker-prophets. This role reversal between the Prophet and Imām is noted by Buckley also who states that

“... as Qā'im [Ḥasan II] inaugurated the Paradisal state, the new age. Ḥasan then surpassed the prophet Muhammad as well as all the previous Imāms; in fact, the prophet came to be seen as just *one* of the six preceding prophets who had foretold the coming of the Qā'im”⁹⁵

He was the Imām – the recognition of whose inner essence and reality – could bring a believer into a paradisal state on earth. He was no longer just the conduit through whom a believer could attain nearness to God but was rather, himself, the Face of God on earth; the eschatological figure who interacted with every major Prophet and revealed to them a *sharī'a* for its deliverance to mankind⁹⁶. But he only morphed into this figure for the believers when inaugurating a period of *Qiyāma*. At this point the Imām would become the Imām-*Qā'im* and in the realm of *Qiyāma*, the believers would have direct, unmediated access to the *ḥaqīqa* –

eschatological saviour” – Amir-Moezzi’s statement demonstrates that even Twelver Shī‘ism ascribed a similar role to the eschatological *Maḥdī* figure, which was essentially esoteric in nature.

⁹⁵ Buckley, “The Nizari Isma‘ilites’ Abolishment of the Shari’a”, 144.

⁹⁶ Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd, *Haft Bāb*, 9-11.

which was identified with the inner reality of the Imām-*Qā'im*. Through this knowledge, the believer achieved recognition of God within the Imām and thus attained salvation through the vision of the Divine (*Didār*).

Whilst explicitly identified as separate from God in Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism, in that of Alamūt, post-*Qiyāma*, the dividing line separating the Creator from the created dissolved resulting in a merging of the *Qā'im* with the Divine. For example, in the letter of al-Mahdī mentioned in Chapter Two, he explains that “there will be as many imams as God wills, until all of a sudden the speaker [*Qā'im*] appears when God Almighty desires”⁹⁷ – a statement clearly demonstrating separation between God and the *Qā'im*, however in the writings of Alamūt, the *Qā'im* is perceived as having no existence outside his own essence. As Maḥmūd explained, in the realm of the *sharī'a*, the Imam, the *Qā'im* and God, are to be seen as separate entities whilst in the realm of the Resurrection, “you have to perceive all the three as one”⁹⁸

To conclude this chapter which has critically analysed and compared the interpretations of the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* as envisaged in Fāṭimid and Alamūt Ismā'īlism, we provide here a portion of Ḥasan Maḥmūd's *Diwān* where the connection or rather unity which defined the person of the *Qā'im* at Alamūt is clear. The superiority of the *Qā'im* over not only the Imāms who preceded him but also the six major *nuṭaqā* who were conceived of within Ismā'īlī sacred history, is made explicit. It illustrates the evolution of understanding and interpretation of this figure at Alamūt. As Ivanow noted, “What distinguished the reformed Ismailism of the Nizārī form from the Fāṭimid version [was] the practical deification of the Imam”.⁹⁹ The *Qā'im* thus

⁹⁷ al-Mahdī, “Letter to the Yemenites”, 178.

⁹⁸ Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd, *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt*, 439.

⁹⁹ Wladimir Ivanow, “Introduction” in Abu Ishaq Quhistani, *Haft Bāb-i Bū Ishāq*, ed. and tr. W. Ivanow as *Seven Chapters* (Bombay: Ismaili Society, 1959): 17.

was no ordinary figure. He was above being the *mazhār* of the Universal Soul, above being the *mazhār* of the Universal Intellect and understood now as *mazhār* of the primordial Command to create (*amr*) the Word (*kalīma*) of God on earth. The *Qā'im* was above all else. He *was* the Luminous essence of God on earth¹⁰⁰.

“You are the Most Sacred, the King and Judge.

Here in this world, people describe You differently.

Persians call you *Khudā*, Arabs *Allāh*,

Turks *Tengrī*, and Europeans *Deus*,

No doubt, without exaggeration,

You can be called by all these names.

But with the specific name of the *Qā'im*,

You are exalted, above and independent of such epithets”¹⁰¹.

¹⁰⁰ “[The Imām] is God’s *Nāsūt*, or manifestation’ or in other words, he is God as He appears to mankind. Whereas *al-Lāhūt* is God *qua* God, as He is in Himself” - Sami N. Makarem, “The Philosophical Significance of the Imām in Ismā‘īlism” *Studia Islamica*, No. 27 (1967): 50.

¹⁰¹ Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib, *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt* in Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Rawḍa-yi taslīm*, ed. and tr. S.J. Badakhchani as *Paradise of Submission: A Medieval Treatise on Ismaili Thought* (New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005): 262, n.161.

Concluding Remarks

From our previous chapters we have been able to discern the existence of a doctrinal shift in the interpretations of the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines for the Ismā'īlī community in two distinct phases of their history. The period of Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism was known for its more moderate stance taken with regards to the applicability and legitimacy of the *sharī'a* and the complementary nature of the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* of the *sharī'a*. This stance, which coupled adherence to the *sharī'a* with salvation at the *Qiyāma*, although not emphasised, did come to the fore at points in Ismā'īlī history when the socio-political circumstances of the time demanded. It was originally held that the essence of the *sharī'a* – as in its *ḥaqīqa* – would be truly unveiled in the final period of *Qiyāma*, the era of manifestation (*dawr al-kashf*) of pure spiritualism. The ultimate truths hidden within all religions (*ḥaqā'iq*) were thus to be found hidden deep within the *sharī'a* and as such the position of the *sharī'a* and its importance in the salvation of the community in the period of early Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism was thus clearly defined. Indeed the *sharī'a* was seen as absolutely crucial for ones understanding of religion for it was the exoteric rituals of the *sharī'a* which masked the essence and meaning within. The ritualism and exoteric symbols veiled what was symbolised. As we have seen however, this Ismā'īlī interpretation of the *Qiyāma* was radically altered at Alamūt following the proclamation of the *Qiyāma* in 1164 by Imām Ḥasan II.

The *Qiyāma* was no longer seen as a unique event in history, rather it was a constant occurrence and time itself varied between cycles of concealment (identified with the *sharī'a*) and cycles of manifestation (identified with the *ḥaqīqa*). As regards the applicability of the law in the realm of *Qiyāma*, given that the *Qā'im* summoned people not to the worship of God but to God himself in the “Person of Unity”, namely the *Qā'im* of the *Qiyāmat*, following the *sharī'a*

was considered worthless. The whole purpose behind the existence of the *sharī'a*, as we have noted, was that it contained the truths within it, encompassing both aspects, *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* and the *ḥaqīqa* – in effect “a third level of being... a *bāṭin* behind the *bāṭin*”¹⁰² – would be accessed through the latter. However, given that, in the realm of the *Qiyāma*, the *Qā'im* embodied within himself, the *ḥaqīqa*, what then was the need for the *sharī'a*? Through this, the arbitrary rules of the *sharī'a* were seen as pointless. As Hodgson confirms,

“Ḥasan is limited by no ranking (*ḥadd*) [and he] brings men to the unlimited reality beyond *ta'wīl*. In the *Ismā'īlī* atmosphere every statement of fact [was] subject to a further *ta'wīl*. But Ḥasan at last summon[ed] to no statements, to no actions, but to *himself* as wordless and timeless”¹⁰³ (emphasis added)

This statement clearly demonstrates the transcendence beyond duality which was made evident in the realm of the *Qiyāma* as envisaged in *Nizārī Ismā'īlism*. Whilst in the period of *Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism*, the role of the *Qā'im* was to unveil the realities (*ḥaqā'iq*) hidden within the *sharī'a*, in the *Qiyāma*, the realities were manifested within the person of the *Qā'im* himself. Now, rather than understanding the *Qiyāma* as involving a progression from *tanzīl* to *ta'wīl* and from *ẓāhir* to *bāṭin*, a entirely new realm existed, one in which true *tawḥīd* (Unity) was to be experienced in the person of the *Qā'im*, the man of God *par excellence*. The following diagram thus depicts, as per our understanding from the evidence, the *Nizārī* interpretation of the *Qiyāma*. As contrasted with the diagram on page 18 in Chapter One, we see clearly the third column as representing the new existence as manifested in the *Qiyāma*.

¹⁰² Marshall G. S. Hodgson, “The *Ismā'īlī* State”, *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 5, ed. J.A Boyle. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968): 464-465.

¹⁰³ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Secret Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizari Isma'ilis Against the Islamic World* (The Hague: Mouton & Co. Publishers, 1955): 305.

Nabūwwat	Imāmat	Qiyāmat
<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Imām</i>	<i>Qā'im</i>
<i>Tanzīl</i>	<i>Ta'wīl</i>	<i>Tawhīd</i>
<i>Zāhir</i>	<i>Bāṭin</i>	<i>Haqīqa</i>

With regards to the role of the Imām, within the Nizārī doctrine of Ismā'īlism, the *Qiyāma* completely elevated the status of the Imām to that of a potential *Qā'im* and thus every Imām was now considered as possessing the ability to inaugurate a period of *Qiyāma* – when the truths *haqīqa* would manifest – or a period of *sharī'a* when the essence and spiritual realities were once again hidden beneath the veils of the exoterics of the *sharī'a*. In this period the symbols and rituals would be reinstated for the Ismā'īlī community. This was most clearly manifested in the reimposition of the *sharī'a* by Imām Ḥasan II's grandson Ḥasan III. It was in this Nizārī Ismā'īlism of post-*Qiyāma* Alamūt that the view regarding the *sharī'a* consequently changed drastically. It was now envisioned that salvation for the Ismā'īlīs would be found only through true recognition of the *Qā'im*'s essence.

The purpose of this study was to clearly illustrate the flexibility with which the Ismā'īlī community has, in the past, interpreted its doctrines of the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma*. This evolution of interpretations has been most evident in the shift which manifested during the Ismā'īlism of Fāṭimid Egypt and that of Alamūt. But did this quite substantial shift amount to a complete overhaul of the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī doctrines concerning the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma*? We could suggest, as Ivanow does, that although significant enough to be noted in anti-Ismā'īlī circles, the Nizārī Ismā'īlism of Alamūt was not so different so as to constitute a complete overhaul of Fatimid Ismā'īlism. From the research presented in this study, it is evident that doctrines surrounding the *Qā'im* and *Qiyāma* doctrines in Ismā'īlism have undergone constant revision

and re-revision dependent upon the circumstances in which Ismāʿīlism had been operating. The messianic ideals of the Pre-Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs were so strong and influential that certain groups would not concede to the doctrinal reformulations established by the first Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mahdī.

Thus, it could be argued that for the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs of Alamūt their apparently radically different understandings of the *Qāʿim* and *Qiyāma* were merely the next step in evolution of the doctrines as required by the new socio-religio-political context which they now found themselves in¹⁰⁴.

As explained by Badakhchani, ‘While the Nizārī Ismaili *daʿwat*... continued to adhere to the foundational principles of classical Shiʿi and Fatimid Ismailism, there emerged an additional set of conceptual formulations to reflect the new intellectual and spiritual vistas that opened out in the age of the Resurrection’¹⁰⁵

How can we build upon the scholarship in this area of Ismāʿīlī studies, that of their eschatology and “sacred history”? Hodgson, in his 1955 work *The Secret Order of Assassins*, suggested that “[o]ne of the most desirable of these [studies] would be a study of the whole development of Nizārī theology – a study which could not stop at the fall of Alamūt”¹⁰⁶ Thus, first to be proposed would be a doctrinal study along these lines, spanning the entire history of Nizārī Ismāʿīlism. This of course would be a vast ranging study and undoubtedly a huge

¹⁰⁴ See Ivanow, “Introduction” in Quhistani, *Haft Bāb*, 16-17 where he states: “...the reform proclaimed by the *Qiyāmat-i Qiyāmāt* was by no means an attempt to overhaul, revise, or alter the Fatimid doctrine. The Fatimid doctrine was accepted as a building over which a new storey was raised” subsequently reaffirming that “Nizari-reformed Ismailism was no “new” Ismailism, but merely the same Ismailism as before, only in a form constituting the next step in evolution which was logically, organically and historically prepared”.

¹⁰⁵ Badakhchani, “Poems of the Resurrection”, 437.

¹⁰⁶ Hodgson, *Order of Assassins*, 33 n.44.

task to undertake but one which would contribute greatly to our understandings of Nizārī doctrines in so far as they have shaped the Nizārī community throughout its colourful history.

Secondly, as we have seen, even within Fatimid Ismāʿīlism the major Ismāʿīlī thinkers and *dāʿīs*, who contributed greatly to what we now can call the Fāṭimid literary and intellectual tradition, differed in certain aspects of their doctrines. Major *dāʿīs* such as Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, Abū Yaqʿūb al-Sijistānī, Hamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, and al-Muʿayyad fiʿl-Dīn al-Shirāzī, each had variant understandings regarding the figure of the *Qāʿim*, his role, status and purpose in the Resurrection. In addition each had his own conceptions and speculations regarding the nature and more crucially the *timing* of the Resurrection itself. As such, a useful study would be a detailed comparative study examining the views of all the major Fatimid *dāʿīs* across the broad spectrum of Fatimid Ismāʿīlism as a whole in order to give us a clearer picture of where these *dāʿīs* differed in their interpretations and also what was the reasoning behind these differences¹⁰⁷. A study along these lines of enquiry would aid us in better understanding the course taken later at Alamūt. Additionally, a study along these lines would situate Fatimid conceptions in the broader discourse of Muslim apocalyptic thought. In this brief study, an analysis of the entire breadth of Fatimid Ismāʿīlī discourse on the *Qāʿim* and *Qiyāma* doctrines would have fallen beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, it is without doubt a study which would warrant consideration for future scholars focussing on Ismāʿīlī “sacred history” and eschatology.

¹⁰⁷ It has recently come to my attention - following private correspondence - that Khalil Andani of Harvard Divinity School will be exploring this precise area of investigation in the course of his Masters research which will culminate in the completion of a thesis exploring the *Qiyāma* doctrine as articulated by all the major Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī thinkers, thereby situating Ismāʿīlī interpretations as hugely important within the broader discourse of Muslim apocalyptic thought.

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