

Ismail b. Abd al-Rasul

MAJDUʿ, ESMĀʿIL b. ʿAbd-al-Rasul (d. Ujjain, India, 1183 or 1184/1769-70), an Ismaʿili Mostaʿli-Ṭayyebi of Dāʿudi Bohra faction, a scholar from India well-known for his Bibliography (*Fehrest*) of extant Ismaʿili manuscripts, of which he catalogued approximately 250 works with their full or partial contents and arranged them according to Ismaʿili curriculum for the study of its literature. Wladimir Ivanow's *Guide to Ismaili Literature* was based on this *Fehrest*. Ivanow had found its copy by chance with a bundle of disjointed leaves in Lucknow for a paltry sum of money. The original Arabic text was edited from three recent manuscripts of Indian provenance and published in Tehran in 1966. Internal evidence suggests that it was compiled during the time of the thirty-ninth *dāʿī* Ebrāhim Wajih-al-Dīn (from 1150/1737 to 1168/1754), as the author refers to him and his teacher with the conventional invocation: *Aṭāla Allāho baqāʾahu* (May God extend his life!)

Nothing is known about his early life, education, and family except that he and his son Hebat-Allāh were the students of Loqmānji b. Ḥabīb-Allāh (d. 1173/1760), the renowned Ismaʿili pundit of his time. Soon both the father and son became distinguished scholars in their own rights. Esmāʿil was honored by the fortieth Dāʿudi *dāʿī* (summoner) Hebat-Allāh al-Moʿayyad fiʿl-Dīn (d. 1193/1779) with the title of Shaikh and a high rank in the *daʿwa* hierarchy. However, in 1175/1761, under mysterious circumstances, Esmāʿil's son, Hebat-Allāh, claimed that he was in contact with the hidden Imam (who had moved with his retinue in the vicinity of Ujjain) through his chief *dāʿī*, ʿAbd-Allāh b. Ḥāreṭ, who appointed him at the rank of *al-ḥojja al-layli* (a rank in the *daʿwa* hierarchy higher than that of the *dāʿī motlaq*). His claim implied that the living fortieth *dāʿī* should yield his position to him by virtue of his superior status. In addition to his father Esmāʿil, two leading scholars of the time, namely Hebat-Allāh (the son of Loqmānji b. Ḥabīb-Allāh) and ʿAlī b. Saʿīd Hamdāni not only supported Hebat-Allāh's claim but also composed treatises in praise of him and his learned father. Hence, their movement gathered momentum and they openly propagated their mission in Ujjain, the headquarters of the *daʿwa*. Thus, it posed a serious threat to the *dāʿī*'s authority and his religious establishment. Soon persecution of their followers called Hebtiya (Heptia in Gujarati), after its founder Hebat-Allāh, started. Consequently, both the father and son managed to flee, but they were chased, imprisoned by the local authorities wherever they sought refuge, and brought back to Ujjain. The *dāʿī* attempted to reconcile and bring them back to the fold but he failed. During the turmoil Hebat-Allāh was seized and his nose was cut off as a sign of disgrace. For this reason he was given the derogatory nickname Majduʿ (one whose nose is amputated). The whole episode is dramatically depicted in vivid colors by two historians of the *daʿwa*, namely, Qoṭb-al-Dīn Borhānpuri (d. 1241/1826), who refers to Esmāʿil as *al-malʿun* (the accursed) and to his son Hebat-Allāh as *al-majduʿ*; and Moḥammad-ʿAlī Rāmpuri (d. ca. 1315/1897-98), who refers to Esmāʿil by the nickname al-Majduʿ. Thus, it seems that the derogatory surname was transferred from the son to his father, as he was the author of several other

works in addition to the *Fehrest*. Esmā'il died in 1183 or 1184/1769-70 in Ujjain but the date of his son's death is not recorded. Later sources state that a few families of Hebtiya survived in Ujjain until the beginning of the twentieth century. It should be noted, however, that the *da'wa* sources accuse both the father and the son of holding antinomian tendencies, stealing *da'wa* books from the *dā'ī's* private library (*kezāna*) and also committing other illicit acts.

Bibliography: Abdul Husain, *Golzār-e Daudi for the Bohras of India*, Burhanpur, n.d., pp. 47-49. Qoṭb-al-Din Borhānpuri, *Montaza' al-aḳbār fi aḳbār al-do'āt al-aḳyār*, see Delia Cortese, *Arabic Ismaili Manuscripts: The Zāhid 'Alī Collection in the library of the Institute of Ismaili Studies*, London and New York, 2003, pp. 123-24, no. 107, pp. 901-26. Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'ilīs: Their History and Doctrines*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 2007, pp. 285-86. Anonymous, *Aḳbār al-do'āt al-aḳramin* (in Gujarati), Rajkot, 1939, pp. 287-96. Wladimir Ivanow, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature*, London, 1933. Idem, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliographical Survey*, a second amplified ed. of *A Guide to Ismaili Literature*, Tehran, 1963. Esmā'il b. 'Abd-al-Rasul Majdu', *Fehresat al-kotob wa'l-rasā'e*, ed. 'Ali-Naqi Monzawī, Tehran, 1966 (for a list of additional sources and his extant works, see Poonawala). Ismail K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'ilī Literature*, Malibu, 1977, pp. 204-06. Moḥammad-'Ali Rāmpuri, *Mawsem-e bahār*, 3 vols., Bombay, 1883-94, III, pp. 481, 492-526.

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