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POLEMICS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE FATIMI CALIPHS

POLEMICS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE FATIMI CALIPHS

By

PRINCE P. H. MAMOUR



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PREFACE

SOME time ago I began collecting material for an extensive history of the Fatimi Caliphs, and had in mind devoting a chapter to the "origin" of the dynasty, a point which has been extensively debated by ancient and modern historians. I intended to give the two sides of the story: on the one hand that the Fatimis were descended from the Prophet Mohammed; and on the other, that they derived their origin from Meimun Kaddah, said to have been a Materialist, and therefore according to Moslem theology a heretic. In this case the reader, after seeing the two accounts, would have been left to draw his own conclusions. However, during my research work in tracing the origin of the two stories, I found that although almost every historian who has mentioned the name *Fatimis*, in connection with anything appertaining to the dynasty—Caliphate, Imamate, doctrines, literature, art, sciences—has expressed his opinion freely as to whether they were heretics or genuine lineal descendants of Mohammed, not one has made a critical survey of the whole question, in spite of the wealth of detail that exists concerning the matter. I have therefore made a full study of the origin of the Fatimis, discovering in the process that it is possible to give a judgment on this question.

Amongst the ancient historians, the learned Makrisi attempted a survey of this kind. In his *Life of Obeydallah*, the member of the dynasty who established their independence in Northern Africa, he collected all the information he could concerning the two opposing accounts, and gave his views on them. But

although this work has never been surpassed, it is far from complete, since he was able only to consult manuscripts which he could find in Egypt, owing to lack of friendly relations and communication between the various Islamic countries of his time. Naturally there were in Egypt, since it was one of the chief centres of learning, copies of works of some foreign historians, but certainly Makrisi could not have obtained copies of all the works on the subject, especially those written in Persian, and since it was then impossible to secure genuine Ismaili works, he followed the main details as already laid down by a preceding chronicler, Ibn Khaldun.

Among modern historians, no one has made a comprehensive study of the subject. Baron Silvestre de Sacy translated part of Makrisi's account in his *Chrestomathie Arabe*, and Nuweiri's in his *Exposé de la Religion des Druzes*, himself agreeing with Makrisi's decision. Étienne Quatremère began publishing Makrisi's material, intending later to compare it with several other historians' works, but in his *Mémoires Historiques sur la Dynastie des Khalifes Fatimites*, he merely translated some of it, and stated his non-agreement, leaving his study half completed, without the final comparison which he had at first intended to make. More recently E. Blochet, in his *Le Messianisme dans l'hétérodoxie Musulmane*, criticised a number of the historians' views, basing his work mainly on Persian sources, and agreed to a certain extent with Makrisi. Except for these few works, this subject, which has played such a very important part in the history of Islam, appears to be neglected. I am of course referring to those works which have dealt critically and at some length with the origin of the Fatimis, and not to the many books on the doctrines and history of the dynasty when they were in power, wherein the authors have briefly spoken either against or in favour of the genuineness of the Fatimis' direct descent from

the Prophet, often giving merely one reason for their view, and usually relying on the authority of some preceding historian. Some have even ignored the whole question, despite the fact that it was on this that depended the prestige of two of the greatest powers of the middle ages, the Abbasids and the Fatimis, dismissing this vital point with : " There is much to be said on both sides."

This present study therefore, owing to the wealth of unused material available, the need for a critical study on the subject, and the interesting nature of the theme, has grown beyond the proportion of an ordinary chapter, and is therefore presented separately as being an exhaustive and systematic research work on the subject.

As far as is humanly possible, all that has been said about the origin of the Fatimis, whether ancient or modern, in published or unpublished works, is examined, this including a survey of over 100 different genealogies. When all these works are thus brought into juxtaposition and closely scrutinised, some strange facts emerge, and one is led to a revaluation as to the fictitiousness or otherwise of certain important characters. However, when the grains of similar truths are sifted from the wealth of matter available, we are enabled to place persons and events in their proper historical setting and chronological order, and arrive at a definite decision on this much debated question. That it should thus be possible to obtain a settled viewpoint as to the Fatimi origin is of especial interest now, when the religion, literature and history of the Fatimi Caliphs has become such an important subject of study among historians.

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INTRODUCTION

THE Fatimi Caliphs reigned from A.D. 910 to 1171 in Northern Africa and the Levant. At the height of their power their dominions extended from the Atlantic to the Tigris. They professed the Shia Faith in Islam, claiming direct descent from the Prophet Mohammed.

During the reign of Obeydallah (A.D. 910-934), the Imam who established the independence of the Fatimis, the Sunni Moslems were forced to acknowledge the unwelcome fact that the Shias, after struggling for over two centuries since the death of the Imam Husein in 680, had at last been successful in establishing a Caliphate, Obeydallah was ruling in Northern Africa as the " Commander of the Faithful," and was calling himself *Fatimi* Caliph, indicating his descent from Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet. The acceptance of this by the Sunnis, although strongly resented by the Abbasid Caliphs of Baghdad, continued uninterruptedly during the reigns of Obeydallah's son, grandson, great-grandson, great-great-grandson, and great-great-great-grandson, until the year 1011, a century after the Fatimi Caliphate was established in Rakkada, and a period during which the Fatimis had extended the boundaries of their empire until it included all the countries lying between the Tigris and the Atlantic. Then at long last there appeared in Baghdad the first signs of questioning as to the illustrious descent of the Fatimis. In 1011, a declaration was made and a document, prepared under the supervision of the Abbasid Caliph, signed by Sunni officials and a number of noteworthy Shias, asserting that " the undersigned

witnesses declare and attest " that the Fatimis were not descended from Fatima, but from Deisan, the materialist heretic. From this date onwards until a few years ago the question of the Fatimis' descent was a controversial subject among the Arab historians, some upholding and some denouncing the prophetic claims of the dynasty. Naturally, in both cases, politics, religious bias and personal prejudice played a vital part in the drawing of conclusions. European scholars also, who began early in the nineteenth century to learn and study Arabic, urged thereto by the work of Silvestre de Sacy, joined the arguments on this subject.

The question of the Fatimis' descent was first treated in Europe about a century ago. Two eminent orientalists, Silvestre de Sacy and Étienne Quatremère, wrote essays simultaneously; the former, in his classical work on the religion of the Druses, speaking in favour of the noble descent of the Fatimis; and the latter, although explaining his incapacity to give judgment because of the insufficient number of Arabic historians' manuscripts at his disposal, holding the view that the Fatimis were impostors as regards their prophetic claims, basing this deduction on the few works he was able to consult. Since the publication of these two works, practically all western scholars writing on the Fatimis have expressed themselves decidedly on the subject, in some instances even denouncing the members of the dynasty as " heretics," " atheists," and " materialists." A good number of these historians, as is apparent from the scanty references to other writers they have made on the Fatimis in their works, have based their views either directly or indirectly on those of De Sacy or Quatremère, without making any effort to obtain a personal conclusion. Other historians again, while not entirely using these two scholars as their authorities, have quite often involuntarily been influenced by the biassed Arabic works

they have consulted, and at times even have not been without personal prejudice. A very few scholars, refraining from stating that they hesitate to give a definite judgment, and then ranging themselves among the pro- or anti-Fatimis because of one certain point or another, have preserved faithfully both sides of the argument, and left the reader to judge for himself.

When Étienne Quatremère in 1836 wrote his essay, unfortunately left half completed, he said[1]: "In beginning this work, one important question presents itself before everything else, the answer to which would be of the greatest interest. The Fatimi Caliphs claimed, as their name indicates, to trace their origin to Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed and wife of Ali. Were their assertions in this respect based on the truth, and did the Fatimis really belong to the family of Ali, or were they nothing but clever and fortunate impostors? Such is the first question that the writer who undertakes to elucidate this period of history has to ask himself." It is indeed important to decide whether the Fatimis were in reality descended from Fatima, since if they were, then the Abbasids of Baghdad and the Omeyyas of Damascus and Cordova could not be considered *Caliphs*, "Successors" of the Prophet, the Fatimis having first right to that office by reason of their direct descent. It must be remembered that the Sunni Caliphs ruled as *secular* monarchs,[2] and not until later, when their glory vanished, did they claim supreme headship of Islam by emphasizing their descent from the Prophet, the Abbasids tracing their descent to an uncle of Mohammed, and the Omeyyas to one of his distant relatives. All the Sunni Caliphs, when bereft of their temporal power, without exception, then proceeded to claim a position in Islam on the ground that they

[1] Quatremère, *Mémoires Historiques sur la Dynastie des Khalifes Fatimites*, *J.A.*, Aug., 1836, p. 101.

[2] C. A. Nallino, *Appunti sulla natura del "Califfato,"* p. 10; C.S. Hurgronje, *Mohammedanism*, p. 130.

were descended from the Prophet, despite the fact that they refuted the principle of hereditary descent upheld by the Shias. But if the Fatimis are admitted as lineal descendants, then the Sunni Caliphs can no longer hold their position in the history of Islam.

Such being the importance of the question of the Fatimis' descent, it would seem incredible that the History of the Caliphate could be written without a decisive view being reached regarding this momentous factor. Yet this is the strange case. Since Arabic was first introduced into the West, hundreds of European scholars have written extensively on the Caliphate, although without any decided opinion as to who were the rightful Caliphs: the Fatimis, or the Abbasids and the Omeyyas. Whichever side is believed to be correct, then the history of that dynasty ought to be considered the "History of the Caliphate," and the other regarded as secular history, if a consistent attitude towards the subject is to be maintained.

In England, Sir William Muir made the first copious study of the Caliphate,[1] drawing his information largely from the famous German scholar, Gustav Weil's work,[2] but apart from recording the activities of Ali and his two sons, Hasan and Husein, he wrote less than four pages about Obeydallah and his successors. This was not because he regarded the Fatimis as "impostors," but as he himself states, because the Arabic sources he used were all written under Abbasid supremacy, and therefore their main aim was "to exalt that dynasty" at the expense of others.[3] Quite a large number of historians who, unlike Muir, have expressed an opinion on the Fatimis' descent, have voiced their views with so many hesitating statements that they leave the reader totally confused concerning the whole question.

[1] Muir, *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline, and Fall*, 1892.
[2] Weil, *Geschichte der Chalifen*, 5 vols., 1846-62.
[3] Muir, *ibid.*, revised edition, 1924, p. 597.

From this it might appear that it is impossible to arrive at a correct conclusion as to the Fatimis' descent. But this is not so. Since the eleventh century over two hundred Arabic historians have written about the Fatimis, writers who comprised the highest intellect in Islam. Among them were noted kadis, judges, jurisconsults, jurists, ulemas, scribes, secretaries of states, viziers, philosophers, poets, euphemists, biographers, court historians, scientists, travellers and geographers. These learned men wrote about the Fatimis' descent not in order to supply some slight information on this matter together with their other details, but as an important point on which they desired to give their opinion. They wrote on the Fatimis, a few even being hired for the purpose, with a definite aim in their minds : either to refute or to substantiate the claim of the Fatimis. Surely the testimony of so many intellectual figures in Islam offers sufficient material for us to judge whether the Fatimis were or were not descended from Fatima. It can be alleged that practically all the ancient historians who have written on this subject were to a certain extent biassed, but by studying the whole range of literature dealing with this question it is possible to form a balanced and impartial opinion.

In order to do this satisfactorily it is necessary to discuss and examine all the arguments put forward concerning the genealogy of the Fatimis, and to sift the works of the Moslem chroniclers and European scholars for the truth underlying their assertions and opinions.

I

THE MANIFESTO OF BAGHDAD

1. CAUSES THAT GAVE RISE TO THE MANIFESTO

THE causes that gave rise to suspicion with regard to the genuineness of the Fatimis' descent from the daughter of the Prophet are many. It is noteworthy that there were no disputes as to this matter for a whole century after the Fatimi Caliphate was established in Northern Africa. This doubting originated in Baghdad in the year 1011, when a special declaration was made and a curious document signed. At that time, the Fatimi Caliph reigning in Egypt was Hakem Biamr Allah (996-1020), while the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad was Kadir Billah (991-1031). The reasons for the Abbasid denouncement of the Fatimis' origin, according to most authorities on this subject,[1] can be summed up as follows :

1. The perpetual hatred of the Abbasids towards the descendants of Ali and Fatima when they menaced their political power.[2]
2. Their embitterment because the Fatimis had deprived them of all their western dominions.[3]

[1] Statements of representative authorities are quoted at the end of the reasons. See pp 21-4.

[2] The reason for this was that the Abbasids had then begun to lay strong emphasis on their descent from the family of the Prophet, but as the Alids could in this respect claim a superior position through Fatima and Ali, they (the Abbasids) could not supersede them, in spite of being recognised as rulers by the Sunnis, and were therefore jealous and even afraid that for this reason, since they were bereft of temporal power, they might be overthrown.

[3] The provinces over which the Fatimis ruled had formerly professed Sunnism, and had therefore recognised and publicly declared that they acknowledged the suzerainty of the Abbasid Caliph.

3. Their jealousy because Cairo, the seat of the Fatimi Caliphate, had superseded Baghdad as a centre for the arts, sciences and literature of the Mohammedan world.[1]
4. Their fear that if this state of affairs continued, the little that was left to the Abbasids would also vanish with the whole of Islam recognising the Fatimi Caliphate.[2]

[1] From the time of the founding of Cairo in 969, until the first denouncement was made in Baghdad in 1011, the Fatimis had proved themselves the most powerful and efficient rulers, both temporally and spiritually, in Islam. In 1005 the Caliph Hakem Biamr Allah had founded the famous " House of Sciences " in Cairo, which was attracting the intellectuals of the whole world. The University of Azhar in Cairo, founded in 970, was already famous for its free tuition " of the then known sciences in Islam by the ablest professors," and of its granting of free lodgings to students of all nations.

[2] Since the Fatimis had transferred their capital from Mansuria to Cairo in 973, they had become the strongest Moslem nation, while in Baghdad the Abbasids had totally lost their power, even the influence of their name having waned within the walls of the Round City. Baghdad from 945 was in the hands of the Buweihi emirs, who were ruling the city and the eastern dominions of the Abbasids. The extremely humiliating position of the Abbasid Caliphs was due to the fact that the Buweihi emirs were Shias, and therefore did not recognise the Abbasids' claim to the supreme headship of Islam, but used them as mere puppets for their own glorification among their Sunni subjects. Before the Buweihis had captured Baghdad in 945, the Abbasids had already sunk into degradation several times, on one occasion the Caliph Muktadir (908-932) being publicly denounced as the " Representative of the Devil " by his most faithful general, Munis, and then killed (Abul Feda, *Annales Moslemici*, ii., p. 366). The Caliph who succeeded him, Kahir (932-934), being dethroned, blinded, and left in the streets to find his own means of livelihood, died after 7 years of terrible poverty. Under the rule of the Buweihis, the Abbasids' position became less than nothing, the ordinary citizen probably having his rights better protected. The Caliph Mustakfi (944-946) was blinded ; his successor, Muti (946-974), was forced to abdicate and then exiled, after which all the prerogatives that had as yet been retained by the Caliphs were one by one assumed by the Buweihis. The Caliph Tai (974-991) was made to walk out of the city gates in order to welcome the return of one of the emirs. The sounding of the drums at sunrise, sunset and nightfall, which had been done in exclusive honour of the Caliphs, was now carried out before the Buweihis' palace, and the names of these Shia emirs were inserted in the Friday *khutbas*, which meant that they had assumed completed sovereignty, this last marking " the lowest depths of degradation that the Caliphate of Baghdad had ever reached " (T. W. Arnold, *The Caliphate*, p. 65). After being compelled to give up all his rights, even to the extent of writing a diploma and bequeathing the Abbasid throne to the Buweihi emir Adud ed-Daula, the Caliph Tai was forced to abdicate. In these circumstances, the next Caliph, Kadir (991-1031), was naturally as apprehensive about his own fate as about the Abbasids' future. While these were the conditions in Baghdad, the Fatimi Caliph Hakem suddenly started a policy of tolerating the Sunnis in Egypt (Ibn Khallikan, *Kitab Wafayat el-Ayan*, iii., p. 451). This happened in the year 1008. Although Hakem chose the Malikis (one of the four chief schools in Sunnism), whose doctrines as compared

5. They were helped by the fact that the descendants of Ali were not all on good terms with each other.[1]
6. Quite a number of those living in or near Baghdad were won over, while it was an easy matter to force those who remained faithful to their own traditions to uphold the Sunnis.[2]

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with the others' were less disquieting to the Shias, his action nevertheless was unprecedented, and therefore significant. He allowed the Sunnis to speak well of the first two Sunni Caliphs, Abu Bekr and Omar, and in the year 1010 he founded a college and gave his permission for the teaching of the Malıki system of jurisprudence. The result of these actions was so to please the Sunni population of Egypt (they belonged to the Malıki school before the coming of the Fatımis) that they broadcast the news of the generosity of Hakem. When the chief of the Arabs of the Okeil, named Karwash ibn Mukallıb ibn Musayıb, heard of the excellent treatment of the Sunnis in Egypt, he ceased recognition of the suzerainty of the Abbasid Caliph, and instead acknowledged the Fatımi Caliph. In the spring of 1011, all the states of Karwash: Mosul, Diar Bakir, Anbar, Madeın, Kufa, and others, said the *khutbas* or public prayers in the name of Hakem. This was the last blow that the Abbasid Kadır Billah in Baghdad could bear. It meant that the Abbasids had lost the last vestige of respect as pontiffs even in avowedly Sunni countries. (It was a few months later that Kadır intrigued and succeeded ın denouncıng the Fatimıs as impostors.)

[1] The three well known famılies claiming descent from Ali and Fatima, Fatimıs, Idrısis, Ithna-Asharıs ("Twelvers"), who became famous because of the rôles they played ın Shia politics, were far from beıng frıendly with one another. The dıssension between the Fatımıs and the Twelvers had arisen from the fact that the former recognised the lıneal descendants of Alı as their Imams, and the latter devıated from this dırect course after the 6th Imam, and acknowledged not the eldest son of thıs Imam, but a fourth son called Musa ("Moses"). The Twelvers recognised altogether twelve Imams, and earnestly believed that their 12th Imam had not died, but had *dısappeared*, and would return to bring justice and equity to this earth. As to the Idrisis, they were in bitter enmity with the Fatımıs, because the little independent state they had founded in the Western Maghreb had been wiped out by the Fatimis when the latter had fırst come into power in Northern Africa.

[2] There were many descendants of Ali employed in governmental posts in Baghdad; these could naturally be influenced against the Fatımis. The Zeidis, an important branch of the Shias, had doctrınes which were akin to some of the Sunnis'; the same case applies to the Keısanis, another offspring of Shiism. The Twelvers spoke well of Sunnism because several of their Imams (Musa Kasim, Ali Rıda, Mohammed Jawad) had been frıendly with the Abbasıd Caliphs, hoping that they and their partisans might not be persecuted but given good positıons at the court. The Idrisis openly professed the Sunni tenets, because without doing so they would have been unable to receive help from the Omeyya emirs of Spain, who many times sent them all that they needed in the way of munitions and provisions in order to rebel against the Fatimis (see el-Bekri, *Description de l'Afrique Septentrionale*, *J.A.*, 1859, February, p. 180, and April, p. 340). The Karmatis, a notorious branch of the Shias, after being looked on askance by the Fatimis for a long time, offered their forces to the Abbasids at the end of the tenth century to crush the Fatimis in Syria and Egypt.

7. The rulers of Baghdad and of the eastern dominions of the Abbasids, the Buweihi emirs, in spite of being Shias, were wary of the power of the Fatimis and so fearful of the menace afforded to their realm by the nearness of Egypt, that they could be relied upon to support the Abbasid Caliphate.[1]
8. These together with all the Sunnis who had been conquered on the establishment of the Fatimi Caliphate and who still favoured the former ruling families, as well as the members of the Sunni ruling and deposed dynasties, were ready to use any weapon that would enable them indirectly to attack the Fatimis.[2]
9. In these circumstances a denouncement of the genuineness of the noble descent would stand a good chance of undermining the prestige of the Fatimis; on the other hand, even if it failed

[1] The policy of the Buweihis had been from the very beginning, solely where the Fatimis were concerned, to uphold the Abbasids, so that if at any time the Fatimis turned their attentions to Baghdad and to further east, they (the Buweihis) having upheld the Sunni Caliphate could rely on the support of the Sunni subjects. They were using the Abbasids as tools in their hands, both against danger from outside and for purposes of administration within their dominions. In the year 980, when an ambassador had arrived from the Fatimi Caliph Aziz, with an underlying reason to see how strong was Baghdad, the emir Adud ordered the Abbasid Tai to give the most pompous reception that had ever been held in Baghdad. The ambassador was so impressed with the power of the Abbasid Caliphate, that he could not help exclaiming: "Is this God almighty?" As a result of this the Fatimis did not entertain a plan of attacking Baghdad. The ambassador naturally did not realise that the elaborate reception was a solemn farce. (See Arnold, *Caliphate*, pp. 66-8.) Sir Thomas Arnold states that the Buweihis had the sagacity of Napoleon in matters of religion.

[2] That is, to attack the genuineness of the noble descent of the Fatimis, by which that dynasty claimed supreme headship of Islam. When the Fatimis first came into power, three dynasties, each of whom had ruled for over a century, lost for ever their crowns: The Aghlabis of Ifrikia, the Rustamis of Tahert, and the Mudrars of Sijilmasa. Their descendants, and especially their Sunni supporters, could naturally be relied upon to denounce the Fatimis and the Shia doctrines if a safe opportunity was given them. The Omeyyas of Spain had never felt safe with the Fatimis. They had helped many revolts in the Maghreb with the hope that these might lead to the downfall of the Fatimi Caliphate. They too would obviously be pleased to join any measure that denounced the Fatimis. As to the Idrisis, who alleged that they were descended from Ali, they had already proved themselves more than once the bitter enemies of the Fatimis.

in its effect, the state of the Abbasids would be in no way affected.[1]

10. The time was opportune since the then ruling Fatimi Caliph, Hakem, was the first of his dynasty to be unpopular.[2]
11. A special record was kept in Baghdad of all the genealogies of the noted families in Islam, from which any mention of the Fatimis' descent could easily be erased and something else substituted in its place, which would make it impossible for the Fatimis, even if they desired, to prove their noble descent to the satisfaction of the Sunnis, who recognised officially only the records in Baghdad.[3]
12. Given a good advertisement and the full approval of the Abbasid Caliph, a formal denunciation of the Fatimis' illustrious genealogy would obviously have only two results from the Sunni point of view: either it would be taken up by the Sunni writers and all the others who had a grudge against the Fatimis, and be used as an instrument of ridicule, in which case no more Sunni princes would recognise the suzerainty of the Fatimis, and thus their growing power would be checked; or there would be war between Cairo and Baghdad. In both instances the Abbasid Caliphate would gain rather than lose.[4]

[1] The Abbasids at this time had not only lost their political power, prestige, and spiritual authority, both inside and outside Baghdad, but also had become literally puppets in the hands of the Buweihi emirs. Having thus reached "the lowest depths of degradation," they could obviously fear of nothing worse that could happen to them.

[2] When Hakem ascended the Fatimi throne in 996, he was a temperamental boy of eleven, with an unusual breadth of outlook due to his bringing up by his Christian mother.

[3] It would be quite easy to take such a measure because not only would the Buweihis be pleased to support a step that might, without any trouble, lead to the lessening of the prestige and therefore the power of the Fatimis, but also there would be no difficulty in influencing the government officials to uphold the measure.

[4] The war of course would be waged between the Fatimis and the Buweihis, and while the two would thus be engaged, the Abbasid Caliphate would have an opportunity of making a bid for independence.

13. There were only three ways in which the Fatimis could retaliate: By sending an army against Baghdad, by proving beyond doubt that they were descended from Ali and Fatima, by regarding the accusation as a jest and ignoring the whole matter. But with the destruction of the Baghdad records, none of these means could serve to prevent their enemies using for ever this weapon against them, to the ultimate benefit of the Abbasids.

From the above it is apparent that whether the Fatimis were or were not descended from Ali and Fatima, the Abbasids had good reasons for and much assistance in denouncing them in the year 1011 as "impostors." We shall now consult the views of historians regarding this subject.

2. OPINIONS OF HISTORIANS

"Suspicion[1] of the dynasty only appears at a comparatively late period in literature; it is obvious also that any means must have seemed legitimate to the Abbasids to overthrow their dangerous and superior rivals."

"When[2] the family first became of political importance their Alid descent was not disputed at Baghdad. When their success became a menace to the Caliphs of Baghdad, genealogists were employed to demonstrate the faslity of the claim, and a considerable literature, both official and unofficial, rose in consequence."

"The Abbasid[3] Caliphs took great pains to discredit the genealogy of the Caliphs of Egypt. The descendants of Abbas, being unable to repel these

[1] E. Graefe, in *Encyclopædia of Islam*, ii, art. "Fatimids," p. 88.
[2] D. S. Margoliouth, in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th ed., x, art. "Fatimites," p. 202.
[3] É. Quatremère, *Mémoires Historiques sur la Dynastie des Khalifes Fatimites*, *Journal Asiatique*, Aug., 1836, pp. 103, 106.

redoubtable rivals who defied them even in their capital, endeavoured at least to make them lose, before the eyes of the Moslem people, this inestimable advantage which was giving them the quality of descendants of the Prophet. . . . Those of the Alids who signed the document or condemned without reserve the assertions of the Fatimis, did so under the influence and under the poniard of the Abbasids."

" The doubts[1] which have been raised regarding the origin of this family are due to nothing but the statecraft and intrigues of the Abbasids, who satisfied in this way their sterile rage against a rival power which had taken away from them half of their states."

" The genealogy[2] of the Mahdi Obeydallah which is given by the enemies of the Fatimi Caliphs has been forged by them in all manners ; it is certain that the Abbasid Caliphs did not hesitate to use this procedure to disqualify their competitors, and to abuse them, even when having at hand all the proof for the authenticity of the Alid descent of the Mahdi Obeydallah."

" This[3] year (A.D. 1011) the Abbasid Caliph assembled the leading Alids and several prominent canonists at Baghdad, and prepared a manifesto against the Alid claims of the Fatimi Caliphs. The motives and pressure brought to bear are obvious."

And lastly, as an example of the ruthlessness of the Abbasids, even when they were at the height of their power, the following might be quoted from three works which have been written recently.

" Malik ibn Anas[4] was one of a group of Alids who had given their oath of allegiance to Mansur (second

[1] S. de Sacy, *Exposé de la Religion des Druzes*, Paris, 1838, Introduction, p. 66.

[2] E. Blochet, *Le Messianisme dans l'hétérodoxie Musulmane*, Paris, 1903, p. 82 ; *cf.* Inostrančev, *Torjestvennıı viezd Fatımidskıch Chalıphov*, in *Zapiski Vost. Otd. Imp. Arch. Obshc.*, vol. xvii.

[3] De Lacy O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, London, 1923, p. 166.

[4] D. M. Donaldson, *The Shiite Religion*, London, 1933, p. 281.

Abbasid Caliph: 754-775). They had done this under compulsion, and afterwards, in A.D. 762, they wished to withdraw it. Malik ibn Anas, who was the founder of the earliest school of Mohammedan law, ventured to make the decision that an oath given under compulsion was not binding, and for so doing, in spite of whatever authority he could cite from the Traditions, he was publicly flogged. The experience taught him the lesson that even a chief justice must recognise existing political authority, for after his whipping he continued to figure in the public life of Medina for thirty-three years, and during the last year of his life the Caliph Harun er-Rashid (fifth Abbasid Caliph: 786-804) attended his classes. While his interest in collecting the traditions was for the sake of their bearing on questions of jurisprudence, and the *Muwatta* is not one of the six canonical collections, notwithstanding this limited objective it was necessary for him to scrupulously regard the wishes of those who were in political authority."[1]

"The compilation[2] of the canonical collections dates from the time when the Abbasids were firmly in the saddle, and by this time systematic efforts had been made to extirpate the memory of the predecessors of the reigning house. We know that their names were even removed from public monuments."

"After[3] the Abbasids had achieved success (in A.D. 752) and had got all the help they wanted from the Shias, they, without hesitation, threw them over, and even persecuted those members of the Shia party whom they deemed dangerous to the stability of their rule. In the Abbasid court obedience was made all the more impressive by a strong characteristic, the presence of the sinister figure of the executioner by the side of the throne, with a strip of leather to catch the

[1] Malik ibn Anas was the pupil of Jafar Sadik, the 6th Imam of the Shias.
[2] W. Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam*, Oxford, 1924, p. 37.
[3] T. W. Arnold, *The Caliphate*, Oxford, 1924, pp. 28-9, 56.

blood of the victim. Summary executions became characteristic of the administrative methods of the Abbasids, and many a man summoned in haste to the Palace took the precaution of carrying his shroud with him."

The above quotations which have been taken at random from works representative of every shade of thought on this subject, nevertheless all show an interesting agreement of opinion as to the character and probable actions of the Abbasids. From the writings of these scholars it is obvious:

1. The Abbasids had no scruples as to what methods they employed against anyone who menaced their prestige as the " Supreme Head " of Islam.
2. They showed no hesitation even with regard to the alteration of existing laws when such suited their purpose.
3. Their first denunciation against the Alid claims of the Fatimis was made in Baghdad in the year 1011, and not when that dynasty came into power in 910.

It should be further noted that no historian before the year 1011 wrote anything derogatory about the Fatimis' descent from Ali and Fatima, or anything doubting their genealogy; and the Fatimis, from the year they declared their independence in Northern Africa, announced every day in the calls to prayer of the muezzins in the thousands of towns and villages stretching from the Atlantic to the Euphrates that came under their authority, and in the official prayers or *khutbas* on Fridays in the larger towns, that they were directly descended from Fatima and Ali, the daughter and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed, and nowhere was any voice raised in opposition of this august claim.

3. THE MANIFESTO

The manifesto made in Baghdad in November, 1011, denouncing for the first time the noble descent of the Fatimis, reads as follows[1] :

" The undersigned witnesses declare and attest that which follows, namely : that Maad, son of Ismail, son of Abdel Rahman, son of Saiyid,[2] derives his origin from Deisan, son of Saiyid, from whom the sect of Deisanis have received their name ; that this man who assumes to-day the sovereign authority in Egypt, that is Mansur, surnamed Hakem (may God condemn him to perdition and to total ruin !), son of Nizar,[3] is the grandson of Maad, son of Ismail, son of Abdel Rahman, son of Saiyid (may God not accord him even a single blessing !) ; that Saiyid having come to the Maghreb received there the name Obeydallah, and the title *Mahdi ;* that all his ancestors who have preceded him, impure and abominable men (may they be accursed by God and by the angels who pronounce the maledictions !), are impostors, rebel heretics who do not belong in any manner to the family of the descendants of Ali, son of Abu Talib, and that the genealogy which they have invented is nothing but a lie and an impersonation ; that this despot of Egypt, as well as those who have preceded him, are sinners, infidels, materialists (*zindikis*), unbelievers, atheists who disown Islamism, who have permitted illegitimate carnal intercourse, declared licit the usage of wine, shed blood, anathematised the prophets, and assumed the divinity."

The above manifesto, when shorn of its maledictions and circumlocution, contains the following statements regarding the genealogy of the Fatimis :

" The undersigned declare that Hakem, now reigning

[1] Abul Feda, *Annales Moslemici*, iii, pp. 15-7.

[2] These were the names of the Fatimi Caliphs ; their surnames, in the same order, were : Moezz, Mansur, Kaim, Obeydallah.

[3] His surname, under which he ruled, was Aziz.

in Egypt, is descended from Saiyid, who when he came to the Maghreb received the name Obeydallah; but this Saiyid derives his origin from Deisan, son of Saiyid, from whom the sect of Deisanis derive their name; Saiyid's ancestors were all heretics and did not, as they have alleged, belong to the family of the descendants of Ali."

It is important that this manifesto should be studied in detail, for it was after this was made public that the Sunnis began calling the Fatimis "heretics," and all later accusations were based upon and referred to this first denunciation. From it we learn:

1. *Saiyid* and *Obeydallah* were the names of the same person.
2. Saiyid (Obeydallah) was the person who came to the Maghreb and ruled there (A.D. 910-934).
3. It was the descendants of this same man who ruled in Northern Africa from 910 to 1011.
4. The names of every ancestor of the Caliph Hakem up to Obeydallah are given.
5. The names of the ancestors of Obeydallah, excepting Deisan, are not given.
6. The ancestors of this Deisan, or of Obeydallah, whoever they were, had alleged that they belonged to the family of the descendants of Ali.

It is also significant that the manifesto reads as if its perpetrators knew something about the genealogy of the Fatimis, for although it makes only one accusation, it also fully admits or confesses a number of other facts about them, some of which have been mentioned above.

4. THE RECORDS IN BAGHDAD

Another very important point to remember in this connection is that a few years before the manifesto was made in Baghdad, the famous poet Abul Hasan

Mohammed Masawi, better known as Radi, who was himself a reputed descendant of Ali, had written a poem in praise of the Fatimis, in which he had fully admitted the direct descent of the Fatimis from Ali.[1] Radi had further, in his capacity of official registrar of all the genealogies of Alid families, recorded at Baghdad the lineal descent of the Fatimis from Ali.[2] He had been installed as *Nakib* (Registrar) at Baghdad by the Buweihi emir and the Abbasid Caliph, and his decisions were accepted by the Abbasid court. His office was a hereditary one, so that his family had for generations specialised in the intricacies of genealogies. But in the year 1011 when the proclamation was made, Radi, like all the other Alids dependent on the Abbasid court, joined the campaign against the Fatimis. Regarding Radi's changing of opinion on the genealogy of the Fatimis, O'Leary comments[3]: "It is natural to suppose that he was actuated by fear or complaisance."

5. EFFECT OF THE MANIFESTO

In modern times it has been frequently asked: Why did not the Fatimis make an official declaration counteracting the manifesto of Baghdad? The answer is that there was no call for this at the time, because first the reasons that caused the accusation were so evident and second its falsity so obvious. Had the Fatimi court at Cairo taken a serious view of the manifesto and thereupon treated it as of official moment, we might indeed conclude that in spite of their sovereignty and their claim they feared the accusation.

The news of the manifesto caused merely annoyance to the Fatimi Caliph Hakem, and this simply because

[1] Radi's *Diwan*, Beirut, p. 972.
[2] Abul Feda, *Ann. Mosl.*, ii, p. 309; *cf.* Margoliouth, in *Enc. Brit.*, 11th ed., x, art. "Fatimites," p. 202.
[3] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 34.

of his policy of toleration towards the Sunnis in Egypt. He had even founded a college in Cairo, and given his permission for Maliki jurisprudence to be taught there, a measure of leniency which none of his predecessors had shown. But when he learnt that in spite of this friendly attitude the Sunnis away from Egypt could treat him in such a manner, he at once began a campaign of persecution against them. The college he had founded for the Malikis was closed, and all the allowances he had made for the Sunnis were withdrawn. Further, although he did not make a formal declaration refuting the manifesto, he publicly denounced as heretics the doctors of jurisprudence, the notabilities and the genealogists who had signed the denouncement.[1]

It was at the height of this persecution that the emir of Mecca, Abul Futuh, who was under the authority of the Fatimis, suddenly made up his mind to listen to the invitation of a rebel in Syria, and went there to the tribe of the Banu Tay in order to declare himself " Caliph " and march on Cairo. Before leaving Mecca he made the people swear fealty to himself, and took with him such holy relics as the staff of the Prophet and the sword of Ali.[2] In the meantime Hakem, realising the danger of pursuing his revenge on the Sunnis, granted a pardon to the rebel, and there was a reconciliation. Abul Futuh therefore though at first well received by the Banu Tay, soon found himself deserted on all sides, and having lost his holy relics hastily returned to Mecca.

It did not take the Abbasid Kadir Billah long to

[1] De Sacy, *Vie du Khalife Hakem Biamr Allah*, p. 357. It seems also that the Jews suffered for no fault of their own because of the manifesto of Baghdad. J. Mann (*The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*, 1, p.34) writes: " From the praises bestowed upon Hakem we can gather that till 1012 the Jews had not yet experienced to the full the Caliph's whims. On the contrary, he is commended for the great reforms he introduced in the country. A positive proof that the synagogues were not destroyed before 1012 we have in the mention made of ' the great synagogue ' of Fustat (Cairo) where the Jews assembled on Shevat 5th to celebrate their deliverance."

[2] C. S. Hurgronje, *Mekka*, 1, p.59.

realise that his manifesto against the Fatimis had served him well. Whenever any recalcitrant, either Sunni or Shia, wished to speak against the Fatimis, he could use this excellent weapon to win the support of the common people, who could thus be influenced especially when in addition liberty, equality or looting was promised. In this way all the enemy rulers of the Fatimis, and even the subordinate officials, were able at will to denounce the Fatimis as "impostors," to the glorification of the Abbasids. It should be noted that all that the laymen knew about the Fatimis' descent from Ali, they had heard from the *khutbas* of that dynasty. Now they were being informed by the Abbasid Caliph, supported by many Alid notabilities and other genealogists in Baghdad, that the claim of the Fatimis was a false one. The people therefore could choose between the two, in accordance with their own feelings towards one or the other, since they themselves had no way of proving either.

II

DEISAN

I. DEISAN AND HIS PLACE IN HISTORY

NOW we will examine the only accusation in the manifesto: that Saiyid (Obeydallah) was descended from Deisan, whose ancestors did not, despite their claims, belong to the family of the descendants of Ali.

Deisan was indeed a historical character, the founder of the Deisanis, but by discernment we find that he could not have been the Fatimis' ancestor *who claimed descent from Ali*, nor in any way connected with Obeydallah, or even with Ali, for the simple reason that he lived and died about four hundred years before the Prophet Mohammed started to preach Islamism. This Deisan, who is the central figure in almost all the accusations against the Fatimis, was none other than the Bar Deisan of Syriac literature, who had been converted to Christianity about two centuries after Jesus' death. The books that contained his doctrine, along with Mani's and Marcion's, have been much discussed by scholars of Zoroastrianism and early heresies in the Persian religion. That the name mentioned in the manifesto of the Abbasids refers to this pre-Islamic character there can be no doubt, because it states emphatically that "they were descended from the founder of the heretical sect of Deisanis, who did not belong to the family of descendants of Ali." There was only one sect of Deisanis, and there was only one person who founded them,

who was Bar Deisan of Syriac literature, who died four centuries before Islamism was born.[1]

Regarding Deisan, the following is written by O'Leary, despite the fact of his ranging himself among the anti-Fatimi historians[2]: "The reference to 'Daysan the Dualist' is pure fable. This Daysan appears frequently in Arabic history as the legendary founder of the *Zindiks*, a name given to the followers of the pre-Islamic cults of Mesopotamia and Persia."

2. WHY DEISAN WAS CHOSEN

Since this was the only accusation made in the manifesto, the choice of this special character Deisan must have been a deliberate one, because it is scarcely possible that the most educated class in Baghdad should make the accusation without giving it much thought. Indeed, it is quite within the bounds of reason that the manifesto was made as a "first trial." If, against all their planning to make the denouncement at an opportune moment, it so happened that it was disregarded in all quarters, then the whole matter could be treated as a great jest, and it could be proved beyond doubt that nothing serious was meant by it because Deisan had lived and died four centuries before the Prophet, in which case the ridicule would revert on those who took the matter seriously. But if, as it was desired and expected, it succeeded in sowing a measure of doubt in the people's minds, as to whether the Fatimis were really genuine descendants of Ali, then the accusation could be greatly enlarged and added to, thus making the situation more complicated, and also creating opportunities of undermining the prestige of the Fatimis.

[1] For information regarding Bar Deisan, see the works of the early Christian Church Fathers, among others the following: Eusebius, Euschius, Epiphanius, Adamantius, Moses Bar Kepha, St. Ephraim. See also Burkitt's Introduction to Mitchell's *Prose Refutations of St. Ephraim.*

[2] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 18.

It has been already remarked that in the manifesto the names of the ancestors of Obeydallah until Deisan were not given, and that Deisan was stated to have been a heretic because he had founded the sect of *Zindikis*, " Materialists," or of Dualists, who were called after him Deisanis.[1] It is therefore not surprising to find that all the later accounts of the Sunni anti-Fatimi historians centre round this Deisan, and the genealogical tree between him and Obeydallah. There have been a number of statements made about Obeydallah, giving rise to suspicion regarding his identity, but these are few compared with those about his ancestors. As to his descendants who ruled as Caliphs in Northern Africa, there have been no doubts expressed about their descent from Obeydallah, because after all the large amount of correspondence and number of coins issued during their reigns could not be altogether denied or made to disappear. We shall now examine the accounts concerning Obeydallah's ancestors until Deisan, so that we may be able to establish the truth about his correct descent.

3. ALTERATION FROM DEISAN TO MEIMUN

The first modification on the name *Deisan* we find is its conversion into *Ibn Deisan*, " Son of Deisan." The reason for this is obviously twofold. First because certain Moslem historians who wrote about Deisan before 1011 called him Ibn Deisan, probably referring to the son of Deisan who was also famous, and second because by calling him " Son of Deisan " a new character was created and the discussion about Deisan at once changed to that about his son, who therefore now became the central figure in the accusation.

[1] By *Materialists* the Moslem historians meant those who did not believe in Creation, but in the endless life of matter, a doctrine (in other words *Aristotelianism*) which was heretical in Islam. By *Dualists* the historians meant those who believed in two gods : *Ormuzd* (Light) and *Ahriman* (Darkness), or Good and Evil, which was the religion of the ancient Persians, Zoroastrians.

Thus, while before we were arguing about Deisan, we shall presently find ourselves debating about Meimun Kaddah ibn Deisan, and soon all that we shall find is the name Meimun, who was a historical character and lived six centuries after Deisan, and founded the sect of Meimunis or Kaddahis in Islam. This is in fact exactly the way the historians have written on the subject since 1011. Whether the clever shifting of names from a pre-Islamic character into a ninth century one was done consciously or unconsciously by the writers, the reader is left to judge for himself. Before going further, we might have examples of these two points: Ibn Deisan the pre-Islamic character, and Meimun the founder of Meimunis in Islam.

The famous traveller Masudi, who wrote a valuable work called *Muruj ed-Dahab* in A.D. 947, says concerning the Zindikis[1]: "There were many heresies when the books of Mani, Ibn Deisan and Marcion were translated from the Persian and Pahlavi by Abdallah ibn Mukaffa and others." Here clearly Ibn Deisan stands for the famous Deisan who lived four centuries before Mohammed. As to Meimun Kaddah, there has been much written about him. Here is a reference from one of the earliest accounts[2]: "Those who first preached impious doctrines in the time of Islamism were Abul Khattab Mohammed, son of Abu Zeinab, of the Banu Asad, and Abu Shakir Meimun, son of Deisan, son of Saiyid Ghadban, author of the book called *The Hippodrome, or In Support of Materialism*, and Abu Saiyid, native of Ram Hormuz, in the province of Ahwaz, which belonged to the sect called Khurremis." The same chronicler after thus describing Meimun at the beginning of his account, later on names him[3]: "Abu Shakir Meimun ibn

[1] Masudi, *Muruj ed-Dahab*, viii, p 293.
[2] Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad, cited by Quatremère *Mémoires Historiques*, *J.A.*, Aug, 1836, pp. 131-142.
[3] *Ibidem*, p. 135.

Saiyid, surnamed Ghadban." Whether through forgetfulness or carelessness it is noticeable that he has left out "son of Deisan." The author of this account is Emir Izzeldin Abu Mohammed Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad ibn Tamin ibn Moezz ibn Badis Himiari, and his chronicle on the history of Kairawan has been extensively made use of by later Sunni historians who have wanted to write against the Fatimis, such as Nuweiri. He is, as his name indicates, the grandson of the notorious Moezz ibn Badis, who publicly denounced the Fatimis as "impostors" in the Maghreb in 1044, and having in this way won the support of the laymen, led a successful rebellion against that dynasty and founded a kingdom of his own, thus depriving the Fatimis of their western dominions. A close perusal of Abdel Aziz's account will reveal several things which prove that, in view of his position in the Maghreb, he was either not telling the truth or was deliberately inventing a story or confusing certain historical facts. In the first instance he does not quote the name of the authority on whose writing or statement he based his own account, which was against the custom then practised by the chroniclers when they wished to make an important statement about a famous dynasty. Secondly, his statement that Abul Khattab and Meimun were the first to preach impious doctrines in Islamism is untrue, because before the ninth century there had been scores of founders of heretical sects who had been denounced by the majority of Islam as apostates. Thirdly, his account of Meimun has no connection with the story he relates afterwards about Abdallah. According to him, Meimun was the father of Abdallah and practised magic in Jerusalem, while Abdallah suddenly appeared in Persia and after taking part in a rebellion, founded a sect, and later having escaped to Syria began preaching heretical doctrines. He does not state what became of Meimun during the years that Abdallah was organis-

ing his sect, although apparently the two were living near each other. After stating that Abdallah was the son of Meimun, he completely forgets about the latter and gives the career of Abdallah. It seems that he has tried rather crudely to connect Abdallah, who was the great-grandfather of Obeydallah, with Meimun, by stating that they were father and son, so that since Meimun was considered by other historians to be the son of Deisan, and therefore a heretic, the Society of the Pure Brethren that Abdallah founded in order to establish the rights of the Fatimis might also be regarded as a heretical sect.

The name *Ibn Deisan* or *Meimun* plays an important part in the accounts of the ancient Sunni writers on the origin of the Fatimis. One historian writes[1]: "The Fatimis derive their origin from Deisan, the founder of the sect of Dualists, who admit two gods, one of which has created the light and the other the darkness. Deisan had for son Meimun, surnamed *El Kaddah* ("The Oculist"), who has given his name to those who are called Meimunis, and formed a separate sect in the midst of the Shias. Meimun had for son Abdallah, who showed himself more perverse, more artful, and more cunning than his father. He put to work all the resources of his spirit to annihilate Islamism. He was learned and profoundly versed in the knowledge of the dogmas, religions, and scientific opinions of all the sects in the world." Regarding the author of this extract, I shall let the famous Makrisi,[2] who has written a lengthy history of the Fatimis, speak[3]: "The Sherif Abul Husein Mohammed ibn Ali, better known under the name of Akhu Muhsein Dimashki, in the work which he has composed in

[1] "Ibn Razzam," cited by Makrisi in Quatremère's *Mémoires, loc. cit.*, pp. 117-8.

[2] S. Lane-Poole (*The Story of Cairo*, Preface, pp. x-xi) writes about Makrisi: "The remarkable accuracy, completeness, and research of his detailed description need no praise of mine: they are universally recognised."

[3] Makrisi, cited by Quatremère, *loc. cit.*, p. 117.

order to defame the Fatimi Caliphs of Egypt, has written on this subject a long narrative, which, when all is said, is not by him, and has for author Abu Abdallah ibn Razzam. This writer has put it in the special treatise where he refutes the opinions of the Ismailis,[1] and from where the Sherif extracts it, without daring to find fault with it. This tradition, which is received eagerly by the chroniclers of Syria, Irak and the Maghreb, is spread everywhere, and is to be found textually copied in all the historical treatises. But this work is nothing but a tissue of falsehood, and I would have abstained from quoting it if I had not thought that I might appear to have not known or ignored it." As Makrisi states, because Sherif Abul Husein was regarded as a noted Alid, the work which was ascribed to him and which in reality was not written by him was cleverly exploited by many historians, with the hope that the word of an Alid denouncing the Fatimis might bear a strong influence in the accusations against the noble descent of the dynasty. It is interesting to notice that almost every historian, including scholars of recent times, when denouncing the Fatimis have referred to this work as a reliable authority, despite the fact that it is now not extant, and we are left to judge it from the quotations of other historians' works, whose prejudice against the Fatimis might have moved them to transcribe it negligently. How far or even how little these biassed anti-Fatimi historians, amongst whom Nuweiri is notorious, can be trusted, is difficult to determine, because Makrisi guardedly states that in the work written by Ibn Razzam " he refutes the opinions of the Ismailis," while in the quotation given from it we have seen that there is a definite statement about the origin of the Fatimis, which is certainly not in agreement with the refuting of the opinions or tenets of the Ismailis.

There are several other points to be remarked in

[1] The Ismailis proper were the upholders of the Fatimi Imams.

the above two quotations from Abdel Aziz's and Ibn Razzam's accounts. In both of them there is scarcely anything mentioned about either Meimun or Deisan, except to say that they were heretics, and fix their parental relation with Abdallah; and then long descriptions are given of this Abdallah as to his cunning and artfulness during his long career. It will be further noticed that Ibn Razzam, whose narrative is apparently the older, clearly states that Deisan was "the founder of the sect of Dualists, who admit two gods," while Abdel Aziz does not refer to this but is content to give the name of Deisan's father, "Saiyid, who was surnamed Ghadban." There is a special reason for this, which does not seem to have been understood by western scholars. Here is a representative opinion from Europe[1]: "Evidently the charge which lay at the bottom of this statement originally meant that Maymun was a Zindiq, and so could be described as a follower of Ibn Daysan, not that he was actually Ibn Daysan's son, which would be an absurd anachronism." If this explanation was given to the ancient Sunnis as an interpretation of their statement, they would doubtless brand the perpetrators as apostates and heretics. For it was the Sunnis who accused the Ismailis of the greatest charge of apostasy they could think of: introducing allegorism in Islam, for the first time giving to every line in the Koran an esoteric as well as an exoteric meaning. It would therefore be wrong to say that the Abbasid Caliph, the supreme head of the Sunni world, meant that the Fatimis were descended from a *follower* of Ibn Deisan's doctrines, when the actual statement in the manifesto asserted that they were descended from the *founder* of the Deisanis. Nor can the accusation be explained away as a "mistake" on the part of the Abbasid Caliph, because in the circumstances

[1] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 18. This writer has apparently confused the terms *Deisan*, *Ibn Deisan*, and *Ibn Deisan's son*.

such a mistake could not be made. As I have already pointed out, it was a " first trial " to test the credulity and faith of the people. As for Abdel Aziz's and Ibn Razzam's accounts, they are of the greatest interest since they have been the authorities most cited and relied upon by the ancient chroniclers and modern scholars who have tended to doubt the genuineness of the claim of Alid descent of the Fatimis. They show the development of the accusation from the term *Deisan* to *Meimun*.

In order to explain this more clearly, I will give an example of how the identities of people were and still are determined, when written proofs are not available for immediate consultation. If a person was asked: " Who is Ramsay MacDonald ? " He would reply: " The Prime Minister of England." This explanation of the position of Ramsay MacDonald would be sufficient to satisfy the questioner. If he was asked: " Who is John Smith ? " and he did not know who John Smith was, he would, we presume, say so ; but if he professed to know something about him, then the most likely answer he would give, since John Smith is not known, would be this: " John Smith was the father of Arthur Smith," or, " John Smith was the son of Robert Smith." If he was further asked to say who Robert Smith was, he would doubtless continue up the genealogical tree until he came across a noteworthy person : " George Smith was the Mayor of Bondsfield," and here the questioner would quite likely stop asking for further information. For after all people who trace back their descent, do so to a famous person, and state for what that person was renowned, after which general curiosity is satisfied. Similarly with Deisan and Meimun. If this was put in a " question and answer " form, it would read like this if the Abbasids were answering the questions. " Who was the progenitor of the Fatimis ? " " Deisan." " Who was Deisan ? " " He was the founder of the Dualists or Deisanis." This was the first step of the explanation as given in

the manifesto. The second step, which shows how *Meimun* was introduced, is given in Ibn Razzam's account. " Who was the progenitor of the Fatimis ? " " Meimun." " Who was Meimun ? " " The son of Deisan." " Who was Deisan ? " " The founder of the Dualists." When this second explanation was given, from the way Meimun is introduced it is evident that the identity of *Deisan* had been questioned. The additional information about Meimun, that he was an oculist and gave his name to his followers, is therefore given, so that those who had any doubts about Deisan could take up Meimun. The third step, given by Abdel Aziz, shows clearly how the term *Deisan* was eclipsed in order to pave the way for exaggerating that of *Meimun*. " Who was the progenitor of the Fatimis ? " " Meimun." " Who was Meimun ? " " The son of Deisan." " Who was Deisan ? " " The son of Saiyid." " Who was Saiyid ? " " He was the one surnamed Ghadban, the grandfather of Meimun who was the author of the book on Materialism."

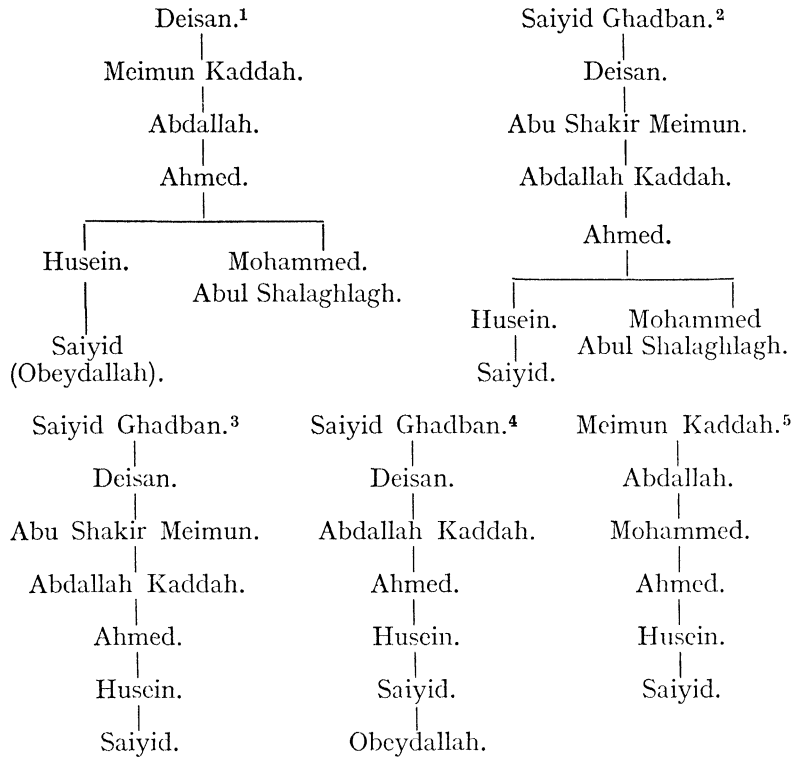
Now since it was the custom to identify people by their work or position, the third explanation was later adopted by the historians who wished to write against the Fatimis, because it was an easy method of doing away with the " absurd anachronism." In quite a number of cases the name of Deisan was altogether left out, showing still more clearly that the writers knew quite well who Deisan was in history, and were deliberately emphasizing Meimun's notoriety in order to avoid mentioning Deisan and thus escape being exposed to ridicule.

4. GENEALOGIES : DEISAN AND MEIMUN

The following tables show the various genealogies that have been given by those historians who have taken an anti-Fatimi attitude.[1] They present practic-

[1] It should perhaps be explained that by " pro-Fatimi " and " anti-Fatimi " it is meant the historians who upheld the Alid claims of the Fatimis and those who denounced them.

ally all the diverse forms that are now extant, and incidentally show the development from the use of the term *Deisan* to *Meimun*.



[1] "Ibn Razzam," wrongly called "Akhu Muhsein," cited by Makrisi in Quatremère's *Mémoires Historiques*, *J A.*, Aug , 1836, pp 117-123. It should be noted that Obeydallah's names were *Saiyid Abu Mohammed Obeydallah al-Mahdi Billah*, and that any of these names was used as his designation.

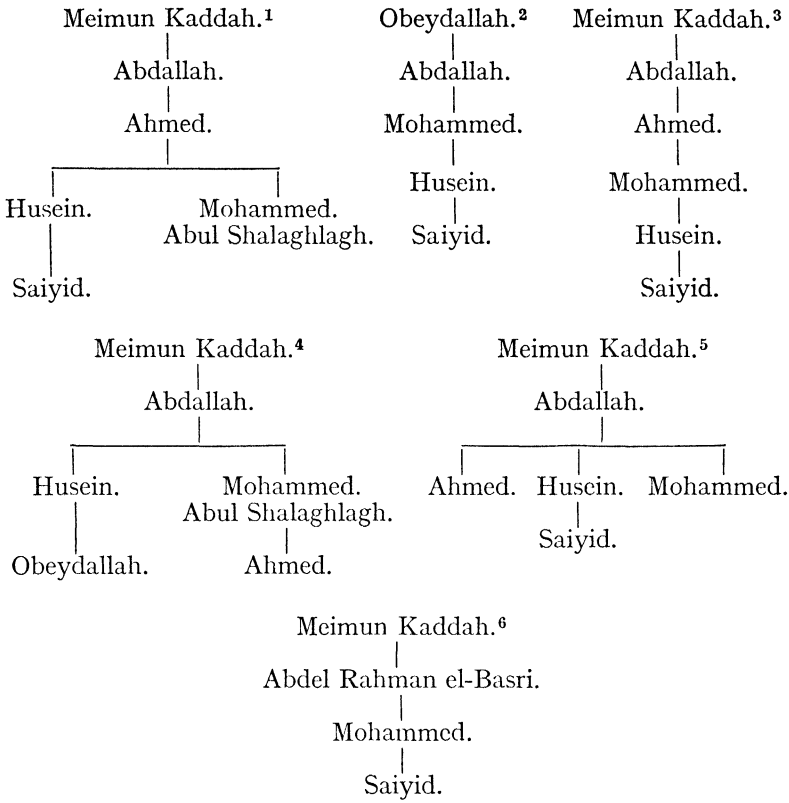
[2] Emir Izzeldin Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad ibn Tamim ibn Moezz ibn Badis, in Quatremère's *Mémoires*, *loc. cit.*, pp 131-142. This genealogy is also given by Nuweiri, who copies Abdel Aziz's account *in toto*. See "Extrait de Nowairi" in De Sacy's *Religion des Druzes*, Introduction, pp 440-453.

[3] This is the genealogy upheld by Nuweiri, see "Extrait de Nowairi," *ibid* , p. 438.

[4] Given by Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p 87, as an example of the diverse forms of genealogies to be found in various Persian works. He represents Obeydallah as the *son* of Saiyid, but does not quote his source of authority.

[5] Makrisi, cited in Quatremère's *Mémoires Historiques*, *loc. cit* ,p 115, showing the form of genealogy upheld by one section of the anti-Fatimis.

DEISAN



In the above tables the name *Deisan* appears in only four, *Saiyid Ghadban* in three, *Meimun* in nine, while the names *Abdallah, Ahmed, Mohammed, Husein* and *Saiyid* (*Obeydallah*) in almost all of them. These

[1] Nuweiri, *ibid.*, p. 439, on the authority of the Kadi Abu Bekr ibn Taiyib.

[2] Makrisi, *ibid.*, p. 116, showing another form of the genealogy given by the anti-Fatimis.

[3] Kadi Abdel Jabar el-Basri, cited by Abul Mahasin in *Nujum ez-Zahira*. See Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 88.

[4] Blochet, *ibid.*, p. 85.

[5] Ibn Nadim, *Kitab el-Fihrist*, cited by M. J. de Goeje, *Mémoires sur les Carmathes du Bahrain et les Fatimides*, pp. 19-21. This genealogy is also the one given by Ala ed-din Juweini in his *Jihan Kusha*, and by Rashideddin in his *Jami et-Tawarikh*.

[6] Ibn Athir, who extended the history of Tabari (see De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 278), cited by Blochet, *ibid.*, p. 84.

last names, and the different ways they are placed in the genealogical trees will be dealt with fully later. *Deisan* we have already discussed in detail. *Saiyid Ghadban* is of interest only in showing another attempt on the part of the anti-Fatimis to divert public attention from *Deisan*. As far as I have been able to ascertain, he is mentioned in history for the first time[1] by Abdel Aziz Abu Mohammed ibn Shaddad, the grandson of the notorious Moezz ibn Badis who rebelled against the Fatimis in 1044. Other chroniclers, such as Nuweiri, when giving the name *Saiyid Ghadban*, have quoted Abdel Aziz as their authority.[2] No historian has given any information about him, except that he was called *Saiyid*, was surnamed *Ghadban*, and was the father of Deisan. It might be wondered why, if he was considered worthy of mention as the earliest ancestor, a little more should not have been known as to where he lived, his career, and his views on religion, as in the case of the other ancestors of the Fatimis whose names are cited, or the progenitors of any other dynasty. But as has been said, he is doubtless a mythical figure invented to veil Deisan, and perhaps link Deisan and Obeydallah, thus making the two characters namesakes, since Obeydallah's original name was also *Saiyid*. Regarding *Meimun*, it will be worth while to learn all that has been said by historians about him, since he has been represented as a noted heretic by those who have written about him.

[1] Except for the manifesto of Baghdad.
[2] See "Extrait de Nowairi," in De Sacy's *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 440.

III

MEIMUN EL-KADDAH

I. CONCERNING THE IDENTITY OF MEIMUN

THE first difficulty that presents itself in determining the career of Meimun is that no historian has mentioned in what year or what place he was born, and when or where he died. The second difficulty is the elusiveness of his figure in history, for he makes his appearance suddenly in the swift moving events of the eighth century, flickers in Persia for a moment, in Palestine for another, in several towns at the same time, then drifts into the unknown as mysteriously as he came. Some historians, among whom there are several with a favourable attitude towards the Fatimis, have said that he laid the foundations of the " secret doctrines," or the Society of the Pure Brethren, which later developed into the powerful body of the Ismailis or the revolutionary Karmati sect. But the unnecessarily hazy references to him, if he was indeed such an important character, and the persistent way the anti-Fatimis have mentioned his name as the heretic ancestor of the Fatimis, owing to which those writing about the dynasty have naturally been influenced to say something about him, call for a closer study of his character and identity in history.

The learned De Sacy, who made the sect of the Druses and all that concerns the origin of the Ismaili or Fatimi religion his life study, has been able to find this much of information about Meimun[1]: " Meimun professed the doctrine of the Shias, but inwardly he

[1] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., pp. 68-9.

was a *Zindiki*, that is Materialist.[1] He is given as father or, according to one of the manuscripts of Makrisi, as paternal uncle, Deisan. The surname *Kaddah*, which signifies *eye-specialist*, is given by Abul Feda to Abdallah, son of Meimun ; the books of the Druses give it to Meimun : it is quite possible that they bore it one after the other, and perhaps both exercised the same profession. Bibars Mansuri says that Meimun has given his name to the sect of *Kaddahis*. I have not found this name elsewhere. Makrisi speaks of a Khariji sect named *Meimunis*, from Meimun, son of Imran, their chief ; but I do not think that this Meimun has anything in common with Meimun Kaddah.[2] Abul Feda makes Meimun depart from Karaj and Ispahan, and makes Abdallah come from there to Ahwaz, then to Basra, and finally to Salamia. Makrisi says simply that he (Abdallah) was from Ahwaz, and having been obliged to escape, he took refuge at first in Basra and then in Salamia."

Thus we pass from Meimun to a long description of Abdallah. In the *Encyclopædia of Islam* the designation *Meimun Kaddah* has no place except incidentally under the name of Abdallah.

2. WHERE DID MEIMUN PREACH HIS DOCTRINES ?

In the above accounts it is striking that the Arabic historians on whose works the details about Meimun are based, and who are recognised authorities on the histories of the countries lying westward of Persia, have all placed Meimun in Persia, a country about which their knowledge was scanty, and they have not stated that Meimun went to any of the countries

[1] This is mentioned by Abul Feda, *Annales Moslemici*, ii, p. 311.

[2] Blochet (*Le Messianisme*, p. 61) gives the following genealogy for " the founder of the Karmatis " : Abdallah ibn Meimun ibn Amrou (Imran ?) ibn Saddak ibn Kaddah el Ahwazi. This is apparently based on the information of Persian historians, whose details on the Karmatis and on almost everything that occurred outside their country are so scanty and second-hand that unfortunately they cannot be relied upon. See p. 82.

west of Persia. Now the following quotation from the emir Abdel Aziz Abu Mohammed ibn Shaddad, who was a native of the Maghreb and therefore his knowledge of the countries between Persia and the Mediterranean was second-hand, will be of interest[1] :

" Those who first preached impious doctrines in the time of Islamism were Abul Khattab Mohammed, son of Abu Zeinab, of the Banu Asad, and Abu Shakir Meimun, son of Deisan, son of Saiyid Ghadban, author of the book called *The Hippodrome, or In Support of Materialism,* and Abu Saiyid, native of Ram Hormuz, in the province of Ahwaz, which belonged to the sect called Khurremis.[2] All three impressed on their adherents that each practice of devotion has a hidden meaning, that God has never really imposed upon His saints and on those who are attached to the Imams the obligation of prayer, of tithes, of fasting, of pilgrimage ; that He has not prohibited the usage of anything at all, and that they can legitimately marry their mothers and sisters.[3] All

[1] Emir Izzeldin Abu Mohammed Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad ibn Tamim ibn Moezz ibn Badis Himiari, *Collection and Explanation Regarding the History of Kairawan, of Kings and Distinguished Personages that this City has Produced, also the Rest of the Maghreb.* This important account has been preserved in the works of Makrisi (*Kitab Mukaffa*), Nuweiri and Abul Mahasin (*Nujum ez-Zahira*). The quotations of Makrisi and Nuweiri were cited simultaneously by Quatremère (*Journal Asiatique,* Aug., 1836, pp. 131-142) and De Sacy (*Religion des Druzes,* Introd , " Extrait de Nowairi," pp. 440-452). Nuweiri calls the author *Abu Mohammed Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad ibn Tamim ibn Moezz ibn Badis,* and gives the name of the book thus : *Collection and Explanation Concerning the History of the Maghreb and of Kairawan.* In my translation above I have followed Makrisi's version, because he has cited Abdel Aziz's account *verbatim* ; Nuweiri relates it in his own words on the authority of Abdel Aziz, and shows signs of having " polished " and even improved the details and sequence of events in the narrative. I have noted below some of these important alterations. The student will find a comparison between the two versions of the greatest interest, in demonstrating how much of the original account was lost, preserved, altered, and extended when an unscrupulous reporter told the story in his own words.

[2] Nuweiri's report of this account begins in this way : " The first of this family (Fatimis) who became known was Abu Shakir Meimun, son of Deisan, son of Saiyid Ghadban. He was of the number of those who were attached to Abul Khattab Mohammed, son of Abu Zeinab, freedman of the family of the Banu Asad."

[3] Nuweiri has : " He has left them free to have carnal intercourse with their daughters and sisters," and does not mention " Imams."

these pretentious religious duties, they said, that are a supplication for the people and for those who are aware of only the outward meaning, are not at all necessary for men who have a distinguished rank. Adam and all the prophets were nothing but impostors, who aimed at obtaining pre-eminence over other men.

" Under the dynasty of the Abbasids these sectaries acquired great power, and progressed, supported by Abul Khattab and his partisans, by reason of the ardent zeal they showed in defending the interests of the family of Hashim (Abbasids). The children of Abbas became also their protectors; but an investigation, which took place in the city of Kufa, having unveiled their secret feelings, and proved even with evidence that Abul Khattab intended to abolish the religious ordinances, and declare licit all the actions prohibited by divine laws, Isa ibn Musa had him arrested with seventy of his companions, and their heads were cut off.[1] The remainder of these sectaries dispersed to the different provinces of the empire, some going and settling in Khorasan and India. As for Abu Shakir Meimun ibn Saiyid, surnamed Ghadban,[2] he went to Jerusalem, accompanied by a number of his disciples. They began to practise magic, witchcraft, enchantment, astronomy,[3] alchemy, and an adopted piety and detachment from earthly

[1] For a correct account of Abul Khattab (died A.D. 783-4), who was a contemporary of Jafar Sadik, the 6th Imam, see Shahrastani, *Kitab el-Milal wan-Nihal*, ed. Cureton, i, p. 136; Makrisi, *Kitab el-Mawaiz wal-Itibar*, ii, p. 352; Kashi, *Marifat Akhbar er-Rijal*, pp. 187-199; Ibn Nadim, *Kitab el-Fihrist*, p. 186; Ibn Athir, *Kamil*, viii, p. 21. Abul Khattab is said to have been the first person in Islam who read the Koran with an attempt to see its allegorical meaning, which act the Sunnis said constituted apostasy. Hence the desire of Abdel Aziz and Nuweiri to connect Meimun with Abul Khattab, so that the former could be regarded as a heretic. For the Abbasids' claim of the Caliphate through a legendary bequest of Abu Hashim (died 697-8), who was a grandson of Ali through his wife Hanafia, see Tabari, *Annales*, iii, 24, 2500; Ibn Khaldun, *Mukaddima*, i, p. 360; Van Vloten, *Recherches sur la Domination Arabe, le Chiitisme et les Croyances Messianiques*, pp. 44-6.

[2] Nuweiri also reports Meimun's name in this way at the present juncture of the narrative. It is significant that unlike at the beginning of the account, both of them have now left out " ibn Deisan."

[3] This reads *astrology* in Nuweiri's account.

things. Abu Shakir Meimun had a son named Abdallah, surnamed Kaddah,[1] whom he initiated into the secrets of his sect, and instructed him to adopt the greatest zeal for the claims of the Shias.

" Abdallah, during the reign of Mamun (Abbasid Caliph : 813-833),[2] having united with Ishak ibn Ibrahim ibn Musab, started a rebellion and proclaimed the claims of the Shias at Karkh and Ispahan.[3] Amongst their numbers was a man named Mohammed, son of Husein, grandson of Jihan Bakhtar, surnamed Didan.[4] Possessor of an immense fortune, he lived in the environs of Karkh[5] and Ispahan, and professed a deep hatred of the Arabs. Abdallah having heard of him went to find him. Abdallah practised medicine, above all the treatment of the maladies of the eye, and the healing of the matter that gathered in this organ. As he announced that he acted thus from a disinterested motive, and having as aim only to please God, he soon made a great reputation, which spread to Ispahan and all the province of Jibal. Didan, having heard his praises, invited his presence. Abdallah, preferring himself to make a bitter criticism of the vices of the Arabs, gained by this means the affection

[1] The reading of Abdel Aziz's account would point to Meimun having the son Abdallah *before* he came to Jerusalem, but Nuweiri's version suggests that he had him *in* Jerusalem.

[2] This *Mamun* should not be confused with *Meimun Kaddah.*

[3] Here Abdel Aziz does not state how Abdallah suddenly appeared in Persia when his father Meimun was in Jerusalem We do not know whether when Meimun had gone to Jerusalem, Abdallah had remained in Persia, or having accompanied his father, had returned at a later date. This of course if Abdallah had been born earlier than this time, and if the statement that Meimun had gone to Jerusalem is a truthful one. However, both Abdel Aziz and Nuweiri clearly state that it was after Meimun had gone to Jerusalem and practised " magic " there that he initiated Abdallah into the " secrets " of his sect. Had Meimun returned back to Persia ? We do not know. He is not mentioned again. The name *Meimun* disappears from both versions as mysteriously as it had appeared. Nuweiri does not speak of Abdallah going with Ishak ibn Ibrahim and leading a rebellion at Karkh and Ispahan.

[4] *Didan* is variously given by the historians as *Zidan, Zeidan, Zindan, Dandan, Dindan.* There has not been a suggestion that perhaps this person is the one that the Sunnis meant when they said *Deisan,* and so, at least one trouble of ascertaining its truth has been saved.

[5] This is given as *Karaj* by Nuweiri.

of his host, who gave him large sums of money.[1] Fortified with this money, Abdallah went to the province of Kufa, and from there sent to all the districts cunning *dais* (missionaries). At his death he was succeeded by his son Ahmed, who continued to carry out the plans of his father."[2]

In this account of Abdel Aziz it seems that Meimun had left Persia and gone to Jerusalem, a town which was little known to Abdel Aziz, as far as its history was concerned, like any of the other districts in Persia.

[1] It might be interesting to see how Nuweiri has reported this meeting between Abdallah and Didan: "There was a man amongst the principal Shias whom the people called *Mohammed ibn Hasan ibn Hayan Najjar*, and who was called *Dindan*, he lived in the environs of Karaj and Ispahan, and possessed great influence and considerable lands: it was he who ruled these countries He hated the Arabs, he spoke evil of them, and collected every kind of information that was unfavourable to them. All those who wanted to participate in his deeds of liberality gained his favour by saying bad things of the Arabs. Abdallah Kaddah, son of Meimun, heard of him, of his hatred towards the Arabs, and also of his liking of astrology; and went to find him. Now, Abdallah practised medicine and the art of the treatment of the maladies of the eye; he cured the eyes that were prone to gathering matter; and pretended that he was doing this in order that it may receive the favour of God. This conduct spread his fame in the countries of Ispahan and Jibal Dindan had him called, entered into conversation with him, was greatly pleased with him and found him as he desired him to be. Abdallah did not for a moment spare the reproaches against the Arabs, he even said much more evil about them than Dindan had thought of himself; by this the admiration that Dindan had conceived for Abdallah increased." It will be noticed that Nuweiri does not say where Abdallah was when he went to find Didan or Dindan, unlike Abdel Aziz who suggests that he was at Ispahan and leading a rebellion. It is improbable that Abdallah was at Jerusalem from where his fame spread to Jibal and Ispahan in Persia, which is the suggestion that we gain from Nuweiri's account On the other hand, if we take it for granted that Abdallah never left Persia, how can we account for the information that Meimun went to Jerusalem and after forming a sect of his followers initiated there his son Abdallah into the "secret" doctrines, which is given by both Abdel Aziz and Nuweiri? It is likely that if there was a person named Meimun, who was the father of Abdallah, he never went to Jerusalem and did not have "secret" doctrines. Nuweiri further reports a long conversation between Abdallah and Didan which is not to be found in the original account of Abdel Aziz and which we might take as another indication of his own liberality with his imagination to concoct stories about the origin of the Fatimis. Regarding the "large sums of money" which Didan is supposed to have given to Abdallah, Nuweiri reports: "Dindan gave to Abdallah *two million dinars* (gold coins). Abdallah received this money and distributed it in the different districts of Ahwaz, of Basra, and of the territory of Kufa, at Talekan, in the Khorasan, and at Salamia which depends on the territory of Emessa."

[2] Here Nuweiri writes: "Abdallah then died, leaving many sons. The one who succeeded him was his son Ahmed; he took the place of his father and continued to march on his traces."

The historian Nuweiri, who reports the narrative, is not enthusiastic about Meimun's stay in Jerusalem, and unlike all the other details which he exaggerates, he says as much as is found in the original account of Abdel Aziz. If indeed there was any truth in the account that Meimun went to Jerusalem, Nuweiri would have had to say more on the subject, since he was living near and had the opportunity of consulting other authorities. From this we come to the conclusion that if Meimun had really been sufficiently known in his day and attracted the attention of the people and the authorities, so as to be remembered by Abdel Aziz two centuries later, doubtless the better known chroniclers of his (Meimun's) time who lived in Egypt and Syria would have written something about him. But there is no record of any historian living before A.D. 1011 having written a line on Meimun Kaddah.

Both Abdel Aziz and Nuweiri, however, although extremely brief in their accounts of the "magician" in Jerusalem, are rather anxious to write about Meimun's "origin" in Persia, especially about his son's activities there. The other Arabic chroniclers who were natives of Irak and Egypt, are also unanimous in agreeing that Meimun's career took place in Persia. It will be interesting now to see an account of Meimun as given by the Persian historians, who being natives of the place naturally would know better the history of their own country.

The oldest Persian work describing the various subdivisions in Shiism that has survived to this day is a treatise written in the year 1092, by Abul Maali Mohammed, of the court of the Ghaznawi sultan Ala ed-Daula Abu Saiyid Jalaleddin Masud.[1] Two years before this was written, in 1090, the notorious Hasan ibn Sabbah had founded an independent

[1] Sultan Masud had ascended the Ghaznawi throne in 1089. The text of this treatise, called *Kitab Bayan el-Adyan*, was published by Ch. Schefer, in his *Chrestomathie Persane*, i, pp. 132-171, from a manuscript copy dated A.D. 1494.

kingdom in Alamut, the inaccessible capital of the province of Rudbar, in the Elburz range, south of the Caspian Sea. His followers, called *fidawis*, " devotees," had been so zealous in upholding the cause of their master that they had threatened to sweep away all who opposed him, thus becoming known, or rather being spoken of by their enemies, as the terror of Persia. It is therefore to be presumed, as we shall presently see from an extract, that the treatise of Abul Maali was written in order to destroy the popularity of Hasan ibn Sabbah among the populace. Hasan had previously upheld the nomination of Nizar, the son of the Fatimi Caliph Mustansir (1035-1094), who had been disinherited, and as a result the sect which Hasan had later founded, Nizaris, was known as a division of the Ismailis. The extract below will be of interest in demonstrating how Abul Maali, in denouncing Hasan's followers, has denounced also the Ismailis, and has accordingly traced the latter's "origin," like all the anti-Fatimis, to Meimun Kaddah.

" The Batinis[1] form the fourth subdivision of the Shias[2]; the foundation of their doctrine rests outwardly on Shiism and on the adoration of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali, son of Abu Talib, but in reality, it is absolute infidelity. This sect had its birth in Egypt: three men, named Meimun Kaddah, Isa Tchaher Lakhtan and Fulan Dindani, all three infidels and heretics, were united in a great friendship and used to come together to feast and drink. One day, Meimun Kaddah said: ' I have a deep hatred of the religion of Mohammed, and I have not an army with which I can wage war against the Moslems; I lack the advantage of wealth, but I have so many ruses

[1] Abul Maali, *Kitab Bayan el-Adyan*, pp. 158 *et seq. Batinis* (" Esoterics ") was one of the names given to the Nizaris and the Karmatis, apparently because they, according to their enemies, had " secret " and esoteric doctrines.

[2] Abul Maali's classification of the main subdivisions of Shiism may be compared with the learned studies of Shahrastani (native of Persia) and Ibn Hazm (native of Spain), whose works, both of them, are called *Kitab el-Milal wan-Nihal*: " Book of Religions and Sects."

and stratagems that if someone would help me, I could destroy the Moslem religion completely.' Isa Tchaher Lakhtan said to him : ' I possess an immense fortune, and I want to use it for this purpose, and I will spare nothing to arrive at this end.' All three agreed[1] on it.

" Meimun Kaddah had a son of a very agreeable physique ; he was renowned for his beauty. Meimun Kaddah practised medicine, and he boasted of knowing how to cure maladies ; he brought up his son in the manner of the Alids.

" Isa Tchaher Lakhtan gave money so that this child was surrounded by a great entourage, and these three persons spread everywhere the news that he was descended from Ali ; they behaved on his behalf as if in reality they were his servants, and they brought him with great pomp to Cairo. They did not presume to sit in front of him, spoke to him with the greatest respect and with a deference that was absolute, and would not allow anyone to go near him. They conducted themselves in such a manner that a legend came into being round this child, and he thus reached a very high position ; it was then that they created their sect by saying that religious law had an aspect that was esoteric (*batin*), and an aspect that was exoteric (*zahir*). . . . This doctrine which is taught is heterodox and leads astray those who read it ; many people in Tabaristan have allowed themselves to be seduced by him and have adopted his beliefs. The group thus formed are the *Sabbahis* or the followers of Hasan ibn Sabbah, who was a man speaking the Arabic language and of Egyptian origin ; he was one of the great missionaries of the sect."[2]

[1] These two speeches, put in the mouths of Meimun and Isa, are excellent examples showing one of the many effective methods adopted to stir up public feeling against undesirable persons.

[2] Hasan ibn Sabbah was a Persian who had received his education in Nishapur. The story that he was an Egyptian may be attributed to the fact that he had visited Egypt in 1078, and after being converted to the Ismaili faith in Cairo, had taught the Ismaili doctrines in Persia with great

In Abul Maali's account we learn the strangest of all stories that Meimun Kaddah and his sect had commenced their activities in Egypt, an instance which is not reported by the other chroniclers, especially by those who had made the history of Egypt their life study. We might understand this confusion of places if we remember that at the time when Abul Maali was writing his treatise, the Fatimi Caliphs were reigning in Egypt, and he was endeavouring to denounce the followers of Hasan ibn Sabbah by connecting him with the Ismailis in Egypt.[1]

Thus almost all the anti-Fatimi historians who have written on the " origin " of the Fatimis or the Ismaili sect, have placed Meimun Kaddah in a country far away from their own districts, so that no reference could be made to the works that were at hand, and the story would stand a chance of being taken as the truth. The one point, however, on which all of them are in agreement, is that Meimun Kaddah, irrespective of where he lived, founded a sect with " secret " doctrines, which was organised by his son Abdallah, and which later became known as the Ismailis or the Fatimis. Now, taking this as our guide, since it is the only detail given by all of them, two questions arise :

1. Was there a person called Meimun Kaddah, or was this name merely used in order to designate some genuine historical character, whose descendants established the independence of the Fatimis ?
2. Were the doctrines attributed to Meimun Kaddah or to his son Abdallah really against religious codes, and were the Ismailis as undesirable a body of men as the anti-Fatimis have represented them ?

success. An excellent description of his career and of the history of his followers may be found in J. von Hammer's *Geschichte der Assassinen aus Morgenlandischen Quellen*, Stuttgart, 1818.

[1] After Hasan ibn Sabbah's followers declared their independence in Alamut in 1090, they ceased relations with the Ismailis proper in Egypt.

Before answering the first question it is necessary to deal with the second, since only by examining the doctrines of the Fatimis or Ismailis will we be able to decide as to the good or bad character of Meimun, from whom these teachings are alleged to have originated. Moreover, Meimun was denounced in order to refute the claims of the Fatimi Caliphs of Egypt.

3. MEIMUN'S DOCTRINES WERE THOSE OF THE ISMAILIS

Until thirty-six years ago no reliable manuscript containing the doctrines of the Ismailis proper, written by a person who had authoritative knowledge of them, was known to European scholars. All those therefore who wrote before 1898, depended for information on the descriptions given by the anti-Fatimi historians, whose views naturally were far from being impartial. There were a number of historians, however, such as Ibn Khaldun and Makrisi (both Sunnis), who tried to defend the claims of the Fatimis, but in their time they did not have the opportunity of consulting all the works on the subject in Islamic countries, and had to resort to the unwise course of examining and transcribing the information already supplied by the opposing party ; they were therefore unable to write a reliable treatise on the doctrines.[1] Several anonymous manuscripts also, which were at first thought of as having been written by the Ismailis themselves, were discovered later to be forged works, examples of which had been used in order to belittle the Ismailis in the eyes of the credulous people.

In 1898, however, the French orientalist Paul Casanova announced for the first time in Europe

[1] To the learned Makrisi however justice must be made. He was the only historian in the middle ages who went to some trouble to collect all the information he could find, both from anti-and pro-Fatimi chroniclers, regarding the alleged origin of this dynasty. But he had the drawback of being a Sunni and living under Sunni supremacy, so that the details he could gather were only from those works which had been approved by the authorities.

that a manuscript had been discovered which could be relied upon as giving a correct account of the doctrines. He wrote[1]:

"It is known[2] how rare are the original documents relating to the Ismailis.

"Above all[3] I believe it to be in the truth to affirm that the philosophical doctrines of the Ismailis are contained entirely in the Treatises of the Brethren of Purity. And this I believe to be the reason that explains 'the extraordinary seduction that the doctrine exercised on serious men.'[4]

"The Treatises[5] might be compared in our days with those of Freemasonry, whose mystical doctrines and at times political proceedings offer astonishing analogies with what we know of the doctrines and proceedings of the Ismailis.[6] In any case, it can be affirmed that the Ismailis have been deeply calumniated when they have been accused by their adversaries of atheism and of debauchery. The *Fatwa* of Ibn Taiyimia, which I have cited above, pretends that their last degree in the initiation is the negation of even the Creator.[7] But the *Jamiat* that we have discovered, is, as everything in it indicates, the last degree of the science of the Brethren of Purity and of the Ismailis; there is absolutely no basis for such an accusation.[8] The doctrine appears extremely pure, greatly elevated,

[1] P. Casanova, *Notice sur un Manuscrit*, *J A.*, Jan. 1898, pp. 151-9.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

[4] The quotation is from M. J. de Goeje, who in 1886 published a work called *Mémoires sur les Carmathes du Bahrain et les Fatimites*, in which he took an unnaturally strong view against the Ismailis, but he admitted that (p. 172) he could not explain how the doctrines of such an undesirable sect attracted the intellectuals of Islam. De Goeje was unable to differentiate between the doctrines of the Ismailis and those of the Karmatis.

[5] Casanova, *ibid.*, p. 159.

[6] *Cf.* Pappus, *La Science Occulte.*

[7] According to the anti-Fatimis, and to those who have relied on their information, the Ismailis had "seven or nine degrees of initiation, in which the initiate was gradually taught to become an atheist."

[8] The "Brethren of Purity" were the *dais* (missionaries) who were assembled and organised by Abdallah, in order that the original doctrines of the Ismailis or Fatimis may be preserved and taught to the Believers.

and even very simple. I repeat it is a kind of practical and æsthetic teaching of the unity of God and the Universe, which is absolutely opposed to scepticism and materialism, as it is based on the general harmony of all the parties in the world, the harmony desired by the Creator because it is Beauty itself. My conclusion is that we have there one more example of an extremely pure and greatly elevated doctrine which has become, in the hands of fanatics and unscrupulous men, a source of monstrous manifestos and deserving the infamy which is attached to the historical name of Ismailis."[1]

[1] The manuscript that Casanova announced is called *Risalat el-Jamia*, and comprises the last section of the Ismaili encyclopædic work, *Rasail Ikhwan es-Safa*, "Treatises of the Brethren of Purity." It is a *Summary* of the more important questions discussed in the larger work. The discovery of this manuscript and the announcement of Casanova settled the dispute concerning the "Treatises," and made it clear that these were propounded by Ismaili missionaries (see R. A. Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 371; and the brief study of the *Rasail* by H. F. Hamdani, *Rasail Ikhwan as-Safa in the Literature of the Ismaili Dawat*, in *Der Islam*, 1932, pp. 281-300). Before this however there were many copies of the "Treatises" known to Europe, but it was not known that these belonged to the Ismailis, and also the copies were so defective that they could not be relied upon as true reproductions of the original work. Some twenty years before Casanova's announcement, for instance, Fr. Dieterici edited and translated into German one of these copies. He published the Arabic text under the heading: *Die Abhandlungen der Ichwan es-Safa in Auswahl*, Leipzig, 1886. Earlier than this, John Platts translated from a copy of Maulawi Ikram Ali a section of the "Treatises," the part "treating of the contest between man and the animal creation, on the subject of the former's claim to supremacy." This was published under the heading, *Ikhwanu-s-Safa; or, Brothers of Purity*, London, 1869. In order to appreciate the condition of the manuscripts known at that period, and the opinions formed on them, a few extracts from Platt's preface to his translation will be worth quoting. He was "Inspector of Public Instruction in the N. Circle, Central Provinces, India." The following are from the *Translator's Preface*, pp. iii-vi:

"The Ikhwanu-s-safa, or 'Brothers of Pure Friendship,' *literally*, Brothers of Purity, is the title of fifty-oneArabic treatises of some considerable antiquity, the joint production of several authors, some say five, some ten, who lived and worked together in the closest intimacy and harmony, hence the title of the work. One of these works alone has been translated into Urdu, under the title given to the collected fifty-one treatises in Arabic. And yet some of the remaining treatises well merit translation.

"The Urdu Ikhwanu-s-safa has for some years held the honoured position of a 'test-book for the first Civil and for the Military Interpreter's Examination, and for the Examination for a Certificate of High Proficiency in Urdu.' It was, therefore, judged that a careful translation of it into English would prove of the highest utility to students.

"As an additional aid to accuracy, I have in the course of translating compared the Urdu with the original Arabic, page by page, throughout.

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The above marked the beginning of a new era of understanding in Europe concerning the history and doctrines of the Ismailis. Since then many more manuscripts have been discovered, and these have established beyond doubt that the Ismailis were less deserving of being called " heretics " than the avowedly most pious Sunni or any other sect in Islam. Sixty years before Casanova wrote his *Notice*, the learned Silvestre de Sacy had endeavoured to show the merits of the Ismailis by examining a great mass of biassed writings of the Sunnis, in a work which was his life study[1]; but his single voice had been disregarded and rejected by the rest of the scholastic world, in the same way as Copernicus' discovery of the earth's

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This has enabled me to detect many important errors in the Urdu translation, errors which disfigure the work to a degree that makes it extremely desirable that it should be subjected to careful revision and correction.

" The truth is, that Maulawi Ikram Ali's knowledge in general, and his knowledge of Arabic in particular, were so meagre as to disqualify him completely for the work he had the hardiness to undertake. And it is on this account that so much nonsense, and so many absurdities appear in his translation. I feel it my duty to say that I am not judging his work as though it were a *literal* translation; but as professing ' to give the substance of the original.' Now, so far is he from accomplishing this, that he repeatedly, through his ignorance of Arabic, either turns good sense into nonsense, or alters the meaning of the Arabic into something quite opposed to it, or embellishes it with something quite irrelevant to the matter in hand. And in those parts of the work which touch on Natural History, he has done all in his power to bring into utter contempt the whole mass of scientific knowledge in the possession of the Mohammedan people. These are not mere assertions on my part. Any competent judge can satisfy himself by a comparison of the Urdu work with the original; and the reader will find numerous instances pointed out by me in the notes to my Translation.

" The English translation is based on the text edited by Major Nassan Lees, in some respects the best text there is; but still not such as to reflect credit on the editor. It contains numerous errors, chiefly typographical, which, by a careful examination of the proof-sheets, might easily have been avoided. Some, however, are errors in the placing of the diacritical points; and these are calculated to do serious harm to any student who reads the work with an ordinary Indian Munshi."

The Urdu text of Maulawi Ikram Ali was published in 1810. Although John Platts has found so many faults in this and other texts, he himself not being an Ismaili has displayed an entire lack of understanding of the allegorical doctrines of the Ismailis, despite the fact that he has translated (*Preface*, p. xii): " The aim in this treatise has been to illustrate by the tongues of animals, the realities of knowledge and true perceptions of God."

[1] De Sacy, *Exposé de la Religion des Druses*. The Druses were an offshoot of the Ismailis proper.

motion, Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, and Lister's discovery of the use of antiseptics were rejected for whole centuries by the world of learning. Even after Casanova's public announcement in 1898, there were many historians who retained their former prejudiced attitude towards the Ismailis. To-day however this has changed in certain circles where Ismailism has been recently taken up as a speciality.[1]

Ivanow writes[2]: "Only a few genuine Ismaili works were known till about ten years ago (in 1923) in different Western libraries.[3] . . . The student[4] who is interested in the Ismaili literature most probably would look for information about its division into sections, in accordance with the 'degrees of initiation,' about which he reads in every book that is devoted to the subject. As I already have had the chance to

[1] In this connection it might be interesting to note that there are still a number of scholars who seem to be content to consult the older historians' biassed works with regard to the Shias in general and the Ismailis in particular. O'Leary (*A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, 1923), and Donaldson (*The Shiite Religion*, 1933) do not appear to have known of the existence of special studies on the Ismailis or Fatimis by Goldziher, Becker, Ivanow, Hamdani, Casanova, Tritton, Kraus, etc.

[2] W. Ivanow, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature*, London, 1933, Introd., p. 1.

[3] A paper called *Esquisse d'une Bibliographie Qarmate*, containing a bibliography of the manuscripts known in France relating to the Ismailis, was contributed by Louis Massignon to a Volume dedicated to E. G. Browne in 1922, pp. 329-338. Another paper called *The Ismaili MSS. in the Asiatic Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, was contributed by Ivanow to the *Bulletin* of the *Russian Academy*, 1917, pp. 359-386. This was briefly reviewed by E. Denison Ross in the *Journal* of the *Royal Asiatic Society*, 1919, pp. 429-435. Yet another paper called *Description of the Ismaili MSS. Collected by the Author Himself* (A. Semenov), appeared in the *Bulletin* of the *Rus. Acad.*, 1918, pp. 2171-2202. These three papers might be said to have contained details of the few manuscripts that were known to Europe as late as 1922. Since then many more manuscripts have come to light, as is apparent from Ivanow's *Guide to Ismaili Literature*. The reason why Ismaili manuscripts were not known to the general public from A.D. 1171 to 1800 was because after the Fatimi Caliphate ceased to be an administrative authority in 1171, no Sunni ruler entertained Ismaili propaganda within his dominions, and since there were no broad minded countries where Ismailism could be studied openly, the Ismailis had to conceal their religious treasures, in case these were confiscated. But for this wise measure of theirs, and their unique devotion to their Cause, we would have been unable to-day to ascertain the truth about their highly intellectual tenets.

[4] Ivanow, *Guide*, Introd., pp. 19-20.

note elsewhere,[1] these degrees of initiation, understood in the sense similar to the masonic[2] degrees, etc., are pure fiction. There are no traces of them either in the Ismaili literature, according to the statements of most learned Ismaili specialists, in whom I have all reasons to have full confidence, or in practice. Quite naturally, the education of a learned Ismaili requires as much systematic and progressive study as any other form of learning anywhere. It is quite natural that people of no education were not encouraged to read difficult and most abstract treatises on high philosophy, because, quite naturally also, their misunderstanding of the ideas expressed therein would surely mislead them. The hierarchy of the spiritual dignitaries, which probably has given the basis to the whole story, apparently was in ordinary life purely administrative in character, though some symbolic meaning was attached to it in higher speculations. Just as in every religious community, people who devote themselves to profound studies in philosophy and theology are very rare outside clerical circles. And though a layman may or may not possess knowledge of these matters, such is obligatory in the case of high clerical dignitaries. Thus it is quite natural that a *dai* (' missionary ') or a *hujjat* (' proof '), or a chief dai in a country in the Fatimid time had to be ' initiated ' into the highest ' wisdom,' which was naturally not intended for everybody, and therefore ' secret.' . . . If there was any secret knowledge at all, it most probably belonged to purely worldly affairs connected with policy and administrative matters. . . . One[3] may be amazed at the impudence of authors like an-Nuweiri and others, who presented their own inventions

[1] Ivanow, *An Ismailitic work by Nasirud-din Tusi*, in *J.R.A.S.*, 1931, pp. 534, 557.

[2] Compare this reference to Freemasonry with the one made by Casanova. These two show the advance made towards the understanding of Ismailism during the last thirty years. See p. 54.

[3] Ivanow, *Guide*, Introd., p. 22.

as reliable information, taken as truth by different students."

A third example will suffice to show the purity of purpose of the Ismailis who united under the name of the Brethren of Purity. The student who wishes to further his knowledge on this subject may consult the works mentioned in these extracts.

" They[1] formed a Society for the pursuit of holiness, purity, and truth, and established amongst themselves a doctrine whereby they hoped to win the approval of God, maintaining that Religious Law was defiled by ignorance and adulterated by errors[2], and that there was no means of cleansing and purifying it except with philosophy, which united the wisdom of the faith and the profit of research. Accordingly they composed fifty treatises on every branch of philosophy, theoretical as well as practical, added a separate index, and entitled them *The Treatises of the Brethren of Purity.*"

In the above quotation from Ibn Kifti we learn that not only the Ismailis were not heretics, but also they were so pure that they were trying to cleanse the Law of all the impurities that had been introduced into it. This is probably one of the reasons why their doctrines attracted the intellectuals in Islam, and drove the Abbasids from very early days to persecute the Ismailis and their Imams, in case the latter should become suddenly popular, and growing powerful, menace the stability of the Abbasid rule. This does not concern us at present, however, our aim being to learn that the Ismailis did not teach heretical doctrines, as they have been accused, and through this settle the dispute con-

[1] Ibn Kifti, *Tarikh el-Hukama*, ed. Lippert, p. 83 ; *cf.* R. A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs, 1930, p. 370.

[2] This doubtless refers to the eagerness of the Abbasid Caliph Mamun to introduce Greek doctrines into Islamism, because in the *Treatises* there are passages denouncing the policy of the Caliph Mamun as heresy. *Cf. Rasail Ikhwan es-Safa*, iv, p. 229.

cerning Meimun Kaddah, or the "origin" of the Fatimis.

Who then was Meimun Kaddah, if all these pure doctrines are attributed to him, or to his son Abdallah, and he is alleged by the Sunnis to have been the ancestor of the Fatimis? In order to see at a glance whom exactly the anti-Fatimis indicated by the word *Meimun* amongst the ancestors of the Fatimis, the following genealogies given by those who have upheld the Alid claims of the dynasty may be found of use. We can now compare these tables with those of the anti-Fatimis given previously.

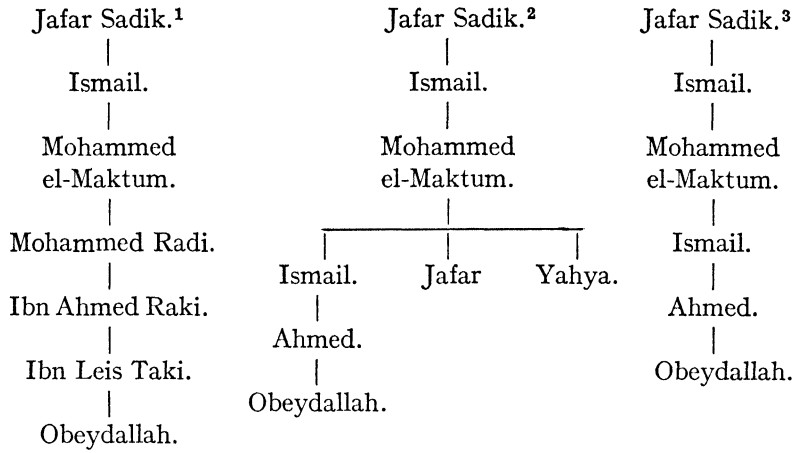
4. GENEALOGIES: MOHAMMED EL-MAKTUM

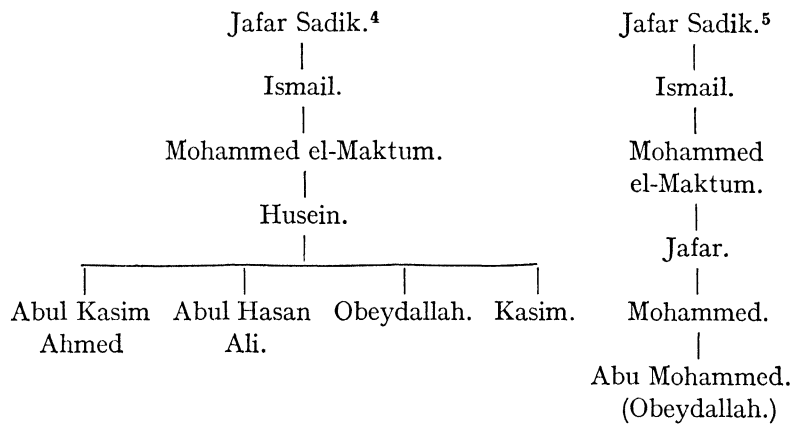
Jafar Sadik.[1]	Safar Sadik.[2]	Jafar Sadik.[3]
Ismail.	Ismail.	Ismail.
Mohammed el-Maktum.	Mohammed el-Maktum.	Mohammed el-Maktum.
Abdallah Rida.	Abdallah Radi.	Abdallah.
Ahmed Wafi.	Husein Wafi.	Mohammed. / Ahmed.
Husein Taki.	Ahmed Taki.	Husein.
Obeydallah.	Obeydallah.	Obeydallah.

[1] This is given by Makrisi, *Mémoires Historiques*, *J.A.*, Aug., 1836, p. 115. Ibn Khallikan and Ibn Khaldun also give it. O'Leary (*A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 36) states that in his opinion it was the genealogy recognised as official by the Fatimis.

[2] Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 86, on the authority of Makrisi and Ibn Khallikan. In this table the positions of Husein and Ahmed are given wrongly, as Makrisi and Ibn Khallikan do not place them in such a way, and Blochet himself on another page (*ibid.*, p. 81) places Ahmed *before* Husein.

[3] Ibn Nadim, *Kitab el-Fihrist*, p. 137.





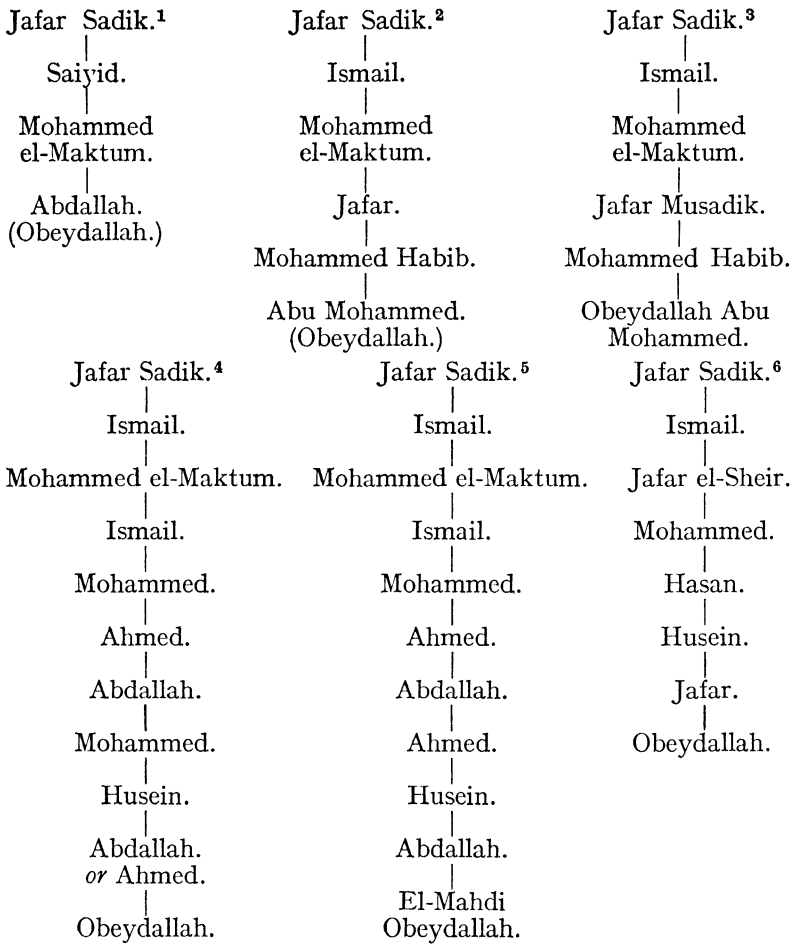
[1] Juweini, *Jihan Kusha, Bibl. Nat. MSS. Supp. Pers., No.* 205, *fol.* 158.

[2] De Goeje, *Mémoires sur les Carmathes du Bahrain et les Fatimides*, p. 9, cited from "*Genealogy of the Alids*," *Bibl. Nat. MSS. Ar., No.* 2021, *fol.* 218, and *MS. Leyden, No.* 686.

[3] Abul Feda, *Ann. Mosl.*, cited by O'Leary, *Short History*, p. 36.

[4] Makrisi (*Mémoires Historiques, ibid.*, p. 116) gives this genealogy, with the "narrative" attached to it, in order to demonstrate how much a story could be altered when it was recorded after passing through many people on hearsay evidence.

[5] Makrisi, *idem*, on the authority of the "Sheikh esh-Sharaf, the genealogist."



[1] Makrisi, *ibidem*, p. 115.

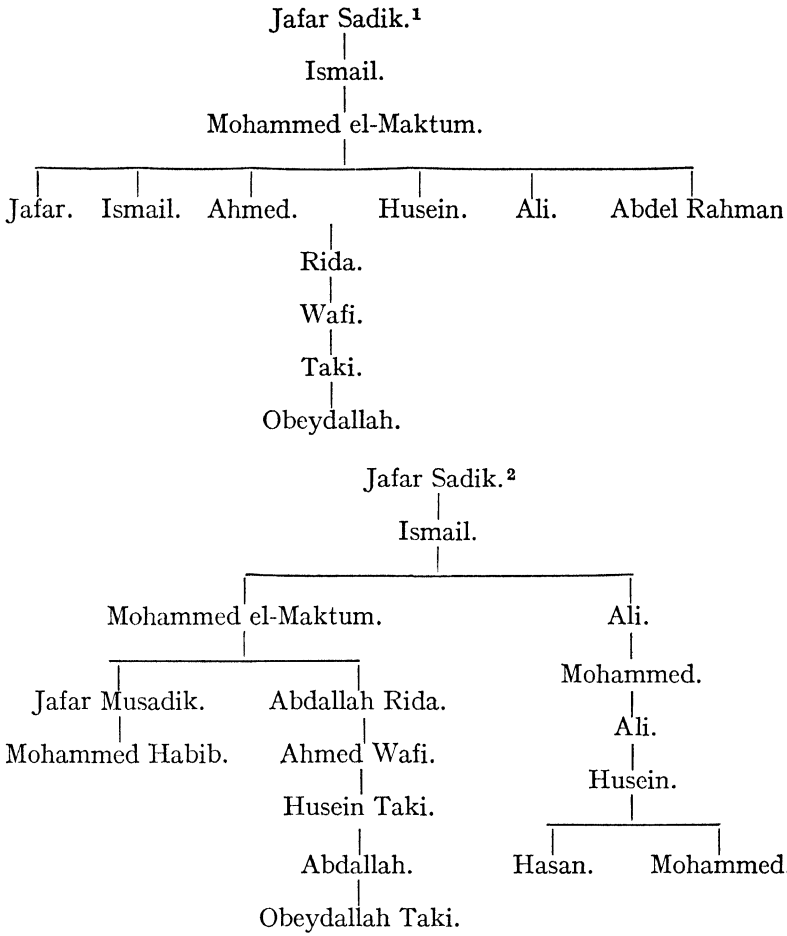
[2] Abul Nasr el-Bukhari, *Bibl. Nat. MSS. Ar., No.* 2021, *fol.* 134.

[3] Makrisi, *ibid*, p. 113. This genealogy is declared by Makrisi to be the "Official" one of the Fatimis. Ibn Khaldun also gives it as official, and Israel Friedlaender has taken it as such (*The Heterodoxies of the Shiites*, *J.A.O.S.*, 1909, p. 160, Appendix B).

[4] This, according to the books of the Druses, is the one they considered the correct genealogy of the Fatimis; De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 67.

[5] S. Lane-Poole, *Muhammadan Dynasties*, and *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 116. According to Lane-Poole this was the "official" genealogy of the Fatimis. If he has based it on the books of the Druses (he does not cite his source of authority), it might be noted that he gives the name of Obeydallah's great-grandfather as *Ahmed*, while the Druses *Mohammed*.

[6] Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 82.



All the above genealogies, although slightly differing one from another, show mainly that the Fatimis, or

[1] *Dastur el-Munajjimin*, *Bibl. Nat. MSS. Ar.*, *No* 5968. Part of the text of this manuscript (it was acquired by the *Bibliothèque Nationale* of Paris from Ch. Schefer) was published by De Goeje, *Mémoires sur les Carmathes du Bahrain et les Fatimides*, p. 203. See the remarks of Blochet, *Messianisme*, p. 80.

[2] This is given as the correct genealogy of the Fatimis by E. de Zambaur, *Manuel de Généalogie et Chronologie pour l'histoire de l'Islam*, Hannover, 1927, p. 95. He has based it on the different genealogies given by Wüstenfeld, *Geschichte der Fatimiden Chalifen*, p. 13, and Ibn Khallikan, *Biographical Dictionary*, ed. De Slane, ii, p. 77.

Obeydallah, who established the independence of the dynasty, were descended from Mohammed *el-Maktum*, "The Concealed," who was the grandson of Jafar *es-Sadik*, "The Veracious." Now before pointing out that *Meimun* was the name used by the anti-Fatimis to indicate Mohammed el-Maktum, it is appropriate to state briefly the pro-Fatimis' version of the "descent," since we have already dealt with all that concerns Meimun.

5. ORIGIN OF THE ISMAILIS

Jafar Sadik was the 6th Imam and lineal descendant of the Prophet, and as such he was recognised by all the Shias proper.[1] At his death, in 765, his followers did not agree as to his successor. One party upheld his eldest son, Ismail. The other party said that Jafar had made a second nomination, and that he had chosen his fourth son, Musa, to succeed him.[2] The latter therefore drifted apart from the main branch of the direct descendants of the Prophet. Those who upheld Ismail as the rightful Imam, when he died, recognised his son Mohammed as the next Imam. These were called *Ismailis*.

At the time of this schism, the Abbasids had already established their independence from the Omeyya Caliphs of Damascus, with the help of the Shias,[3] and had adopted a policy of severing their relations with the Shia community, in case that party, with their legitimist views, became a danger to the stability of their

[1] Tabari, *Annales*, ii, 1699.

[2] Donaldson, *The Shiite Religion*, p. 153. According to some other historians Musa was the *second* son of Jafar, but the information that he was the *fourth* son seems to be more correct, because he is represented as being a year younger than his nephew Mohammed (Blochet, *Messianisme*, p. 53), who was the first son of Ismail ibn Jafar See my remarks in *J.R.C.A.S.*, 1934, p. 143.

[3] This had happened because the Abbasids had at first preached the cause of the "Family of the Prophet," in order to win as many supporters as possible. The Shias had interpreted the phrase as meaning the direct descendants of the Prophet; but the Abbasids, after succeeding in establishing their Caliphate, had explained that it applied to the descendants of the uncle of the Prophet, Abbas.

rule.[1] When shortly after the death of Jafar Sadik the Shias in certain districts began to revolt in view of the way they had been treated, the Abbasids at once retaliated by persecuting those members of the descendants of the Prophet whom they thought dangerous to their growing prestige.[2]

6. THE CAREER OF MOHAMMED EL-MAKTUM

When the Abbasids made plain their intention of not tolerating any of the descendants of the Prophet laying claims to the supreme headship of Islam, the Imam of the Ismailis, Mohammed, the grandson of Jafar Sadik, went into concealment, in order to escape this persecution and save the direct descendants of the Prophet from extinction. Whether by doing so he wished merely to save his own life and also those of his descendants, or whether he intended to lead a movement in order to establish his rights as the Imam of the Moslems, and thought that only under cover of concealment he could effectively carry out his plans, is not mentioned by the historians. It is recorded, however, that after his concealment his close companions gave out to the Ismailis that thenceforward their Imam would be *Concealed*, and not be known personally to the Moslems as a whole, except to a very few *dais* or missionaries, until such time when it would be safe for him to appear again publicly as the Imam. After this he was not seen or heard of again by the Moslem community under the name of *Imam Mohammed.* He was referred to thereafter, by all those who wished to remember him or to speak about him, as *Mohammed el-Maktum,* " Mohammed the Concealed."[3]

[1] Arnold, *Caliphate*, pp. 55-6.
[2] *Idem.*
[3] This measure on the part of the Ismailis was proved later to be justified, when Musa was called to Baghdad by the Abbasids and poisoned there. Musa's son, Ali Rida, had a similar ending; and all their descendants were either poisoned or kept imprisoned throughout their lives by the Abbasids. See Donaldson, *The Shiite Religion*, pp. 152-241.

When this happened he was living in Medina, the home of his ancestors, and was about twenty years of age. This is determined by the fact that he is mentioned as being a year older than his uncle, Musa,[1] who was nineteen years of age when Jafar Sadik died in 765. It was immediately after Jafar's death that the schism occurred about the succession, shortly after which Mohammed went into concealment.

In the Arabic historians' works it is not reported what he did after he retired from public activities as the Imam. He could certainly not have shut himself in a house and lived there for the remainder of his life. Had he been captured and killed by the Abbasids, it would have been mentioned by the chroniclers, as it was done in the case of all the other noteworthy descendants of Ali. It is natural to suppose, therefore, that he left Medina, where he was known, and went to a place where he would not be recognised by the people as the *Imam*. This in fact is mentioned by two historians, one of whom is the famous Persian chronicler Juweini:[2] "Mohammed ibn Ismail, who had been born during the life of Jafar Sadik, and who was a year older than Musa, went to Irak and settled at Rei; he then retired to Damawand. The locality called *Mohammedabad* at Rei was named after him. He had several sons who escaped to Khorasan; they went to Kandahar and settled on the borders of Hindustan. They called Mohammed ibn Ismail from the countries of the West; he went then to Syria, and as he did not any more claim the Imamate, nobody tried to persecute him; he died in that country where one section of his descendants remained."[3]

This much then is known of Mohammed the Concealed, and is not refuted by any historian: that after

[1] Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 53.

[2] Juweini, *Jihan Kusha*, and Rashideddin, *Jami et-Tawarikh*, cited by Blochet, *ibidem*.

[3] Compare this with the account of Abdel Aziz, that "*Meimun* came to Jerusalem with a number of his disciples." See p. 46.

his *concealment* in Medina, he went to Persia as a private individual, and lived there at Rei and at Damawand, which lies to the south-east of the Elburz range. The reference to his going to Syria is vague. It suggests two things: either the writer is referring to Abdallah and his descendants who escaped from Persia to Syria and there claimed descent from Mohammed ibn Ismail, or Mohammed himself after leaving Damawand was heard of no more, but since some men (Abdallah and his descendants) in Syria claimed later to have been descended from him, he was deemed to have gone there, and, having died, there remained "one section of his descendants."[1] It is significant to notice also that "he did not any more claim the Imamate, and nobody tried to persecute him," regarding which we might ask: Did he specially come forward at any time to claim the Imamate, and, did he now change his name and live under an assumed one? He was, it must be remembered, considered as Imam by his followers, and there was no need for him either to claim or to disclaim the Imamate. We must therefore interpret it that after he went into *concealment*, and reached Damawand, since he was still being recognised under his original name,[2] he ceased calling himself *Mohammed* or *Imam Mohammed*, which would account for the statement "he did not any more claim the Imamate," and, as he could not live without a name, he took another.[3] A second significant point to consider is that, he was specially "called from the countries of the West." At that time no person who was not of considerable

[1] Although Abdel Aziz states that "*Meimun* came to Jerusalem," the fact that he also reports that Abdallah was still in Persia, which is mentioned by all the other historians, proves that Mohammed did *not* leave Persia. Had he left that country, he would naturally have taken his heir, Abdallah, who was then still a youth, with him

[2] That he was still calling himself *Mohammed* is proved by the fact that "the locality called *Mohammedabad* at Rei was named after him."

[3] It should perhaps be mentioned that this is discussed from the point of view of *not* the adherents of Mohammed, who knew him as the *Imam* and recognised him as such, but from the point of view of *outsiders*: the general public, the authorities, and historians like Juweini.

importance would be called from even one country to another, not to mention many countries at the same time. This would point out that although he was in concealment in Persia, that is to say he was living incognito or under an assumed name, he was still known to some people in the countries of the West (Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Egypt), who would naturally be his missionaries.

7. "MEIMUN" WAS THE ASSUMED NAME OF MOHAMMED EL-MAKTUM

Now, we might appropriately ask, who was *Meimun el-Kaddah*, "Meimun the Oculist," who made his appearance in Askar Mukarram in Persia, exactly at the time when Mohammed was heard of no more after he left Damawand? In all the historians' accounts where Meimun is mentioned, he appears suddenly on the scene of history, and is described as an able oculist. Nothing at all is said about his youth, nor about his father and grandfather, except the recording of mythical names. We have already seen that there is no foundation of truth in the statements that he was the son of *Deisan*, and that the doctrines which he preached were *Zindiki*, "Materialism." Is it possible that Mohammed, during his stay in Rei and Damawand, learnt to become an eye-specialist, and changing his name to *Meimun*, began to travel and to heal people?

It is indeed quite possible. He was still in his early twenties when he went to Persia, and he had certainly time to learn a profession.[1] Of all the professions, that

[1] The possibility that he lived in absolute idleness until his death, which might mean forty years or more, when during that whole time Musa and his descendants were coming more and more into prominence because he himself was *concealed*, may well not be considered, since he was still recognised by all the Ismailis, and he could certainly have come forward and publicly guided them, even though this meant his persecution by the Abbasids, as in the case of Musa. The fact that he had followers (missionaries) in many countries, who knew him in his concealment, proves that he secretly guided them, keeping the spirit of Ismailism alive amongst the adherents, which again proves that he was a capable diplomat and ready to serve his followers in

of the physician would be the one most likely for him to choose, since it would be the only one to bring him in close touch with many people, and enable him to win their sympathy and friendship. This would in fact be an excellent way to preach whatever doctrines he wished, and if it ever came to the notice of the government, he would have many loyal supporters amongst the laymen, people who through his healing of them were indebted to him for life. Among common people a reputation for being a healer quickly spreads, and when a few cures in supposedly hopeless cases are effected, thousands of others begin to believe in the healer, and whenever possible, loyally support him and become attached to him. As to Mohammed being an eye-specialist, or oculist, anyone who has travelled in the East with a desire to understand native life knows that even to-day, in spite of the advance of science, eye-diseases are more prevalent than any other. Hence doubtless the reason why Mohammed would choose to become a healer of the eyes.

Since it was quite possible for Mohammed el-Maktum to be Meimun el-Kaddah, and for Meimun the Oculist to be Mohammed the Concealed, we shall not be surprised to find that every detail related by the chroniclers about Meimun (with the exception of course of *Deisan* and *Materialism*), however exaggerated or disparaging or misrepresented, whether by the pro-Fatimis or the anti-Fatimis, accurately describes Mohammed. In order to see this we shall reconsider all that has been said about Meimun, and about his son Abdallah.[1] We will begin with the account of Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad, the grandson of Moezz ibn Badis, who because of his position in the Maghreb, has had exceptional reasons to write against the Fatimis.

whatever way he could, and therefore ready also to choose a means (oculism under an assumed name) by which he could make a reputation, and having won the support of many more people, preach his cause.

[1] The quotations that follow are from the extracts from various historians' accounts that have already been given further above. See pp. 45-52.

" Meimun was the author of the book called *The Hippodrome, or In Support of Materialism.*" If we substitute *Ismailism* for " Materialism," by which name as we have seen the anti-Fatimis invariably referred to the doctrines of the Ismailis as propounded by Meimun, Abdallah and Ahmed, it at once becomes evident that, if we accept the information, Meimun was not only an eye-specialist, but also a supporter of Ismailism ; in fact, so strong was his desire to uphold the views of the Ismailis, and so deeply was he versed in the various doctrines of his time, that he could refute, to a certain extent successfully if he could win adherents, all the other dogmas and uphold only that of the Ismailis, as is proved by his book, *In Support of Ismailism.* This is significant, because there is no record of anyone else in Persia at that time or earlier having supported the succession of Ismail as against Musa's. Persia was the one place where everyone upheld Musa's nomination (they have done so to this day), Arabia and the countries westward to it being those who adhered to Ismail. Therefore for an eye-specialist in the very midst of the Persians to have suddenly learnt all about Ismailism within a few years after the schism, and to have written a book supporting it, which means that he was arguing against the other sectarians in Shiism, when there could not have been as yet any other book on the subject, is indeed remarkable, and points out clearly that *Meimun* was Mohammed the Concealed.[1] All this of course if we believe in the statement that *Meimun* had written a book on *Materialism.* On the other hand if we disbelieve

[1] The possibility that " Meimun " was perhaps one of the *dais* or missionaries of Mohammed the Concealed has also been considered by the present writer. This could not have been, because at this period " Ismailism " had not yet been developed as a separate set of doctrines to the advanced stage of being effectively taught to the missionaries. The missionaries were preaching only the doctrine of upholding the succession of Ismail, while " Meimun," as all the historians have unanimously stated, was personally laying the first foundation stone of the tenets which were later to be developed and organised by his son Abdallah and be called " Ismailism."

it, we have to admit that *Meimun* did not preach heresy.

" Meimun impressed on his adherents that each practice of devotion has a hidden meaning." Here we learn that *Meimun* had adherents, and therefore, in addition to practising oculism, preached certain doctrines, and also had followers who received their teachings from him. This would refer to his missionaries who came to ask for advice or instructions, or he had won a following for a definite cause which he was preaching. In the words " hidden meaning " we learn more clearly what his teachings were, for they refer to *allegorism*, which was the doctrine of the Ismailis. *Meimun* therefore, was quite obviously preaching the cause of Ismail, that is to say, his own cause.

" Meimun went to Jerusalem, accompanied by a number of his disciples. They began to practise magic, witchcraft, enchantment, astronomy, alchemy, and an adopted piety and detachment from earthly things." In this we have further proofs that *Meimun* was Mohammed the Concealed. He was " accompanied by a number of his disciples " indicates that he had followers as well as the chosen disciples, and that there were other disciples besides those with him (missionaries in other countries), and also that those with him were his retinue and formed the nucleus of all his adherents, who directed the movements of the followers in the various countries. That they were the leaders of the adherents is proved by " *they* practised magic," which indicates that both *Meimun* and his chief missionaries were all doing something which was not very well understood by the laymen. The " magic, astronomy, alchemy " can be interpreted only in two ways : either this description of their work was adopted as a safeguard under cover of which they could carry on undisturbed their work of guiding their adherents, or they were indeed deeply learned in what we may call

occultism. Now this *occultism* is important to note. Almost all the Imams, amongst whom the 4th (Ali Zein el-Abidin), the 5th (Mohammed Bakir), the 6th (Jafar Sadik) are prominent, have been stated to have known the science of the stars and to have worked *miracles*. No founder of any heretical sect is described as being deeply versed in such knowledge. How then can we explain that *Meimun* knew magic, astronomy and alchemy, if we do not interpret that he was Mohammed the Concealed under an assumed name, and had been brought up in the traditional way of the Imams, that is to say, had been taught all the then known " wisdom " from childhood ? It is evident that in the case of the Imams[1] who did not become a menace to the Abbasids, the latter's partisans did not deny that they had worked *miracles*, but in the case of Mohammed the Concealed, since he of his own accord was calling himself *Meimun* and was not publicly using the title *Imam*, his profound knowledge was described as *magic*, which word would be explained by some as only the detrimentally emotional synonym for *miracle*. That *Meimun* and his *disciples* were not in any way *evil*, as the words " magic and witchcraft " might suggest, but on the contrary were extremely righteous and learned, is proved by the fact that they showed " an adopted piety and detachment from earthly things." Here again the word *adopted* is used in order to depreciate the *piety*. But a discerning person will see that it in no way alters the main statement that they *were* pious, and detached from earthly things, that is to say, they *were* serving a very high Cause.

" Meimun had a son named Abdallah, surnamed Kaddah (' Oculist '), whom he initiated into the secrets of his sect, and instructed him to adopt the greatest zeal concerning the claims of the Shias." The historian Abul Feda also mentions that Abdallah was an eye-specialist. If we accept De Sacy's theory

[1] Here Musa and his descendants are also included.

that both *Meimun* and Abdallah practised this profession, then it is obvious that as *Meimun* had been successful in preaching his cause in this way, he had naturally taught his son the same method. In the present quotation we have two more points which are important. It is the first time we hear that *Meimun* was the head of a sect, and there is no information as to its founding. Is this not an indication therefore that the sect was already there before *Meimun*, and it quite likely comprised the Ismailis ? That this was the case is in fact proved by the statement " claims of the Shias," which naturally refers to the political independence of the Ismaili Imams.[1] With regard to *Meimun* initiating Abdallah " into the secrets of his sect," we can interpret this as Abdallah reaching his majority, and being informed that upon his shoulders rested the dignity of the lineal descendant of the Prophet, and further being taught the plans that *Meimun* himself had evolved in order to establish the independence of the Imams. All these things were naturally " secret " from outsiders.

" Abdallah, during the reign of Mamun (Abbasid Caliph : 813-833), took to arms and proclaimed the opinions of the Shias at Karkh and Ispahan." Here again we have evidence that *the sole aim of both " Meimun " and Abdallah from the very beginning was to " proclaim the opinions of the Shias," i.e., the claims of the Ismaili Imams.* At this time *Meimun*, if he was still alive, must have been about seventy years of age, but as he is not mentioned again we are to presume that he had died and that his son Abdallah had succeeded him. The rebellion at Karkh and Ispahan is not mentioned by the Persian chroniclers, and there is no record of the Abbasids having sent out an army

[1] It is important to notice here that " claims of the Shias " does not apply to Musa and his descendants, because they were personally known to the public as the Imams of the " Twelvers," and they had no claims that needed to be taught in secrecy. The word *Shias* therefore applies strictly to the *Ismailis*.

against them ; nor does the chronicler of this narrative state the result of the revolt, since he does not say that Abdallah was either captured or successful. It is therefore difficult to judge whether there is any truth in this assertion, with the exception of course that it proves that the historian knew in reality who Abdallah and his father were. On the other hand it might be one of the means by which the anti-Fatimis hinted that either *Meimun* or Abdallah, the ancestor of the Fatimis, was a " revolutionary."

" As Abdallah announced that he healed the eyes from a disinterested motive, and having as aim only to please God, he soon made a great reputation, which spread to the environs of Ispahan and all the province of Jibal." It is certainly obvious that Abdallah had chosen his father's way of winning the people and his means of preaching his cause.

" Abdallah, preferring himself to make a bitter criticism of the vices of the Arabs, gained by this means the affection of his host, who gave him large sums of money. Fortified with this money, he went to the province of Kufa, and sent from there cunning missionaries." By the word " Arabs " we are apparently to understand " Abbasids," for the passage is supposed to hint that Abdallah was a Persian, and therefore not descended from the Kureish, the tribe to which the Prophet belonged. It is striking that the chronicler chooses this way of implying what he wishes to say rather than stating outright that Abdallah was a Persian and not an Arab. The importance of this play on words lies in the fact that if Abdallah is made to appear a Persian, then naturally he can be represented as an alien to the Arabs, and therefore not an Imam. The instance of the money, both from the point of view of the giver and the use the receiver makes, is one more proof that there was a high and genuine Cause which inspired them.

" Abdallah had for successor his son Ahmed, who

continued the execution of the plans of his father." Here in the word "successor" we have something very important to consider. We have already learnt that Abdallah *succeeded* Meimun, and now Ahmed has *succeeded* Abdallah. *Succeeded* to what? we may ask, if there was no kingdom, no dynastic rights, no title, and no people to rule? It is obvious that the chronicler has only omitted to say that *Meimun* was the same person as Mohammed the Concealed, which addition would of course explain the whole situation.

This far we have examined only one account of *Meimun* by an anti-Fatimi historian. Although he is the earliest to write on this subject, we will now survey briefly all that the others have said about him.

The historian Nuweiri, who was another notorious anti-Fatimi, has reported the same account of Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad, which we have examined above. Two things, however, in Nuweiri's narrative we find more striking than in the original. The first is that Nuweiri makes a clearer statement that *Meimun* was a contemporary and friend of Abul Khattab. Now this Abul Khattab was a contemporary and a great admirer of Jafar Sadik, the grandfather of Mohammed the Concealed. He later founded the sect of *Khattabis*.[1] If this statement is a truthful one, we have one more proof that Meimun was alive during the lifetime of Jafar, and therefore was a contemporary of Mohammed the Concealed. Unless we take for granted that these two names designated the same famous person, how can we account for the fact that Meimun claimed the rights to the Imamate during the lifetime of Mohammed the Concealed,[2] without being exposed by the latter or by his followers, when the two lived in the same

[1] On Abul Khattab see Shahrastani, *Kitab el-Milal wan-Nihal*, i, p. 136; Makrisi, *Kitab el-Mawaiz wal-Itibar*, ii, p. 352. Makrisi states that the Khattabis were divided into fifty branches!

[2] We have already seen that Meimun began preaching from the very beginning "the claims of the Shias," and that Mohammed el-Maktum was alive at that time in the country where he was preaching, and that the Ismailis knew Mohammed before he went into *concealment*. See pp. 65, 73.

country ? The second important statement of Nuweiri is with regard to the large sums of money that Abdallah received from his host Didan. He writes : " Didan gave to Abdallah two million dinars (gold coins). Abdallah received this money and distributed it in the different districts of Ahwaz, Basra, the territory of Kufa, Talekan, Khorasan, and Salamia which depends on the territory of Emessa." If this statement is not an exaggeration, we might ask : Would any person give such a sum to another if he was not sure of the other's genuineness, and would the receiver spend the whole amount almost at once in this way if he was not the genuine Imam ? [1]

The chronicler Abul Maali, whose work is the oldest Persian treatise we possess on the " origin " of the Ismailis, a work specially written to denounce that community, has also unintentionally emphasized that *Meimun* was the Imam of the Ismailis, that is, it was the assumed name of Mohammed the Concealed. This is apparent when we deprive his account of its bias and exaggerations. He writes : " Meimun Kaddah had medical pretentions, and he boasted of knowing how to cure maladies ; he brought up his son in the manner of the Alids. Isa Tchaher Lakhtan gave money so that a great entourage was brought round this child, and these three persons spread everywhere the news that he was descended from Ali ; they behaved on his behalf as if they were in reality his servants. They did not now sit in front of him, spoke to him with the greatest respect and with a deference that was absolute. They conducted themselves in such a manner that a legend came into being round this child, and he thus reached a very high position." From the tone of this

[1] In this connection it is interesting to notice that although the chroniclers state that Didan gave money to Abdallah only when he learnt of the latter's desire to destroy Islamism, they do not ever mention that he used the money for this end, but they describe in detail how he then acquired missionaries who spread his teachings throughout many districts, the teachings being those of the Ismailis.

account it would seem that it was a "legend" that Meimun and his two friends "spread everywhere" the Alid claims of Abdallah. But when we remember that as early as A.D. 790 it would have been impossible to spread such a false claim, because Mohammed el-Maktum was still alive at this time and hundreds of other Alids who knew each other both personally and by name, we must consider the statement as either untruthful, or in fact the truth, *i.e.*, that Abdallah was genuinely descended from Ali.

Makrisi writes:[1] "Abdallah was learned and profoundly versed in the knowledge of the dogmas, of the religions, and of the scientific opinions of all the sects in the world." No other "impostor" in Islam has been mentioned by any historian as having had such knowledge. And it is universally admitted that Abdallah was a "learned theologian."[2] Unless we take for granted that he was the Imam of the Ismailis, *i.e.*, the son of Mohammed the Concealed (*Meimun*), and had been brought up in the traditional way of the Imams, how can we account for his great erudition, when he is represented as being poor and having received money from Didan only when the latter began to admire his knowledge?

The historians whose accounts we have consulted so far have been those who have scrupulously adhered to the rule of not mentioning in their accounts of *Meimun* the names of Jafar Sadik and Mohammed the Concealed. We may reasonably believe that at least some of them have written in this way so that the omission of better known characters might be a strong impetus to the laymen to regard Meimun and his descendants as "heretics." But there are a few historians, whose works have fortunately survived, who have given a better indication of the relations between the names *Meimun* and *Mohammed el-Maktum*. Naturally in

[1] Makrisi, *Chrestomathie Arabe*, i, p. 348; and *Mémoires Historiques*, *J.A.*, Aug., 1836, p. 118.
[2] M. Th. Houtsma, *Enc. of Islam*, i, p. 26.

their accounts, since they also are anti-Fatimis, we shall not find anything good about the ancestors of the Fatimis, but they will help us to realise the connection of *Meimun* with the Imam of the Ismailis.

"Jafar Sadik[1] had sent his grandson Mohammed ibn Ismail with Abu Shakir Meimun, known under the name of Meimun el-Kaddah, in the Tabaristan; after the death of Jafar Sadik, Meimun el-Kaddah confided his son Abdallah to Mohammed ibn Ismail, saying to him: 'The parental union results in the material birth of the child, but spiritual relationship comes from the attachment that people have for a certain person. You say that somebody is the son of a man because he has been born from his wedlock, but he who has received from someone the Science and the Intelligence which are the essence of the spiritual life, is he not his son even nearer than the other? As to myself, I am born spiritually of Mohammed ibn Ismail, by reason of the secrets of the Science which he has revealed to me; it follows, therefore, that I can call myself his son.' In short, he ended by saying: 'Abdallah is the son of Mohammed ibn Ismail, his heir presumptive; he has confided him to me to bring him up and to save him from the ambushes which his enemies lay for him.' When Abdallah had attained the age of seventeen, Meimun el-Kaddah proclaimed effectively that he was the Imam, and the Shias raised no objection to recognising him as such."

It is evident that this chronicler knows the truth about *Meimun*, and it is indeed pitiable to find him struggling in order to separate him from Mohammed ibn Ismail. He begins his account by saying that Meimun confided his son to Mohammed ibn Ismail, then adds that Meimun himself pretended to be the son of Mohammed, and ends it all by stating that

[1] This extract is from Rashideddin's *Jami et-Tawarikh*. Its details agree with the celebrated Juweini's *Jihan Kusha*. *Cf.* Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 89.

Meimun kept his own son but pretended that the latter was the son of Mohammed. His assertion that " the Shias raised no objection in recognising him as Imam," disproves his intention and makes clear that the Shias, *i.e.*, the Alids, were aware that he was the Imam of the Ismailis, and moreover recognised him as such. We should sympathise with the chronicler in his efforts to make *Meimun* appear a different person from Mohammed the Concealed, because he has tried at least to give an explanation. But the historians who flourished in Egypt and the Maghreb and who simply represented *Meimun* as a " heretic," without any effort to give a little more explanation, cannot be sympathised with, because amongst some of them the deliberate attempt to disassociate *Meimun* from Mohammed the Concealed, by the common method of ignoring the latter, is apparent. In Rashideddin's account, which was the one adopted by Juweini, we have the significant statement that Jafar Sadik sent his grandson Mohammed with *Meimun* to Tabaristan. Would it not be possible that, as the persecution of the Abbasids grew severer, it was Jafar who advised Mohammed to leave Medina, and go to one of the mountainous regions in Persia and live there under an assumed name, in order to evade the authorities? Quite probably, since Jafar had watched the Abbasids rise from nothing to become one of the greatest powers in the world, and also witnessed their slow but sure policy of exterminating the Alids who had political ambitions.

The truth then about the mysterious figure of *Meimun* in history may be summed up as follows: he was the son of Ismail, and grandson of Jafar. His followers, the Ismailis, called him *Mohammed* and recognised him as their 7th Imam in direct succession from the Prophet. He was born in Medina about the year 745, and was about twenty years of age when his grandfather Jafar died, and shortly after that, in view of the persecution of the Abbasids, he went into *concealment.*

He left Medina and went to Rei in Persia and lived there for a time. In Rei he learnt medicine, more especially oculism, and after some years left there also and went to Damawand. He was at this time still using his original name *Mohammed*. When he left Damawand, he took an assumed name, which for the present we shall say was *Meimun*. Whether he took this step because he was being recognised by everyone, and did not wish to attract attention, especially from the authorities, in view of the fact that he intended to start preaching and spread propaganda for his own cause and thought that he could do so more safely under an assumed name, or because he was advised in this respect by his grandfather Jafar, is not known, but it is quite natural to presume from his subsequent career that each of these reasons had a certain bearing on his decision to change his name. His activities after this have been described by various historians, the important ones of whose works have already been cited above. They agree on the whole in essence; that *Meimun* was an eye-specialist, that he preached the Cause of the Imamate, and that he had a number of followers who were called, according to some historians, after him *Meimunis* or *Kaddahis*. These few followers were doubtless his "disciples" and the Ismaili missionaries who came to receive guidance or instructions from him. Two reasons may be given as to why these were called after him. First, it was the custom in those days, as it still is, to call the followers of a person, if they were not already known to the world by a special name, after his own name or title, unless he or they chose to be known by a special name and made this wish known to outsiders.[1] Second, *Meimun* himself might have preferred under the circumstances to have his followers called by all those who were not Ismailis after his assumed name, since this would avert the

[1] Examples of this are legion: Khattabis, Zeidis, Musawis, Mohammedans, Moslems, Twelvers, Babis, etc.

danger of the discovery of his plans. The fact that the son of *Meimun*, Abdallah, became the head of the same followers, who having later prospered, were known by the whole Moslem world as *Ismailis*, proves that the former " disciples " of *Meimun* were none other than Ismaili missionaries, since it cannot be argued that under *Meimun* they professed one doctrine and then under Abdallah they changed their beliefs to Ismailism.

There are two more questions yet to be settled concerning the name *Meimun*. The first is whether Mohammed the Concealed himself chose this name in order to begin his propaganda, or was there another person called by the same name who was indeed a true heretic and whom the anti-Fatimis have endeavoured to make use of in their desire to denounce the father of Abdallah. The historian Makrisi states that there was a *Khariji* sect called *Meimunis*, after their leader *Meimun*, the son of Imran. Were there then two Meimuns or only one? According to De Sacy there were two. He writes:[1] " I do not think that this Meimun (founder of the Khariji sect) has anything in common with Meimun Kaddah." According to Blochet there was only one, who was the founder of the Karmatis:[2] " The Karmatis chose as their chief one named Abdallah, son of Meimun, son of Amrou (Imran ?), son of Saddak, son of Kaddah el-Ahwazi." In my opinion there was only one: Mohammed the Concealed under an assumed name. From the genealogy that Blochet gives it is evident that Makrisi means the same person, but since Makrisi has been pro-Fatimi, De Sacy has been led to believe that the founder of an alleged Khariji sect could not have been the same person who developed the doctrines of the Ismailis. The explanation for this may be found in the confused way the historians have used the names *Karmatis* and *Ismailis*, quite often substituting the one

[1] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 69.
[2] Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 61.

for the other. The Karmatis were considered heretics both by the Sunnis and the Ismailis proper, and did not appear as a separate sect until the year 889, a century after *Meimun* preached the Ismaili doctrines. They were founded in 889 by Hamdan, surnamed Karmat, who is said to have been at first a missionary of the Imam Ahmed (grandson of Mohammed the Concealed), but later to have seen a very good opportunity in the outward " secrecy " of the Ismailis to evolve his own heterodox doctrines, after which he and his followers completely separated from the original or orthodox Ismailis. This Hamdan Karmat is nowhere mentioned as being a connection of Abdallah ibn *Meimun*. It is therefore to be presumed that both Blochet and Makrisi mean the *Ismailis* when they refer to " Meimun," the son of Imran or Amrou. In fact this genealogy itself shows that it is a contorted description of the genealogy of Mohammed the Concealed. It may be interpreted in this way : Abdallah, son of " Meimun " (Mohammed the Concealed), son of Amrou (Imran = Ismail ?), son of Saddak (Jafar *Sadik* ?), son of Kaddah el Ahwazi ("Oculist of Ahwaz " = Meimun Kaddah ?). When Makrisi speaks of a *Khariji* sect, he quite possibly means a *heretic* sect (Karmatis), since the Kharijis were recognised by the whole of Islam as apostates, and often the name of a notorious sect was used in order to describe a smaller and less known sect whose doctrines appeared or were thought of as equally odious. It is possible, therefore, that Makrisi has been led from the various accounts of the chroniclers before him, wherein the names *Karmati* and *Ismaili* are frequently used one for the other, to come to the conclusion that, *Meimun*, who is spoken of as a " heretic " in connection with the Ismailis, is perhaps the founder of the *Karmatis* ; hence doubtless the views of De Sacy and Blochet. On the other hand whether there were two Meimuns or one, or whether this was the name that Mohammed the Con-

cealed himself chose as a disguise, or still whether it was given to him by later historians in order to make him appear two different people, matters not at all when we remember that whatever was the name that the father of Abdallah, who is designated as *Meimun el-Kaddah* after his *concealment*, adopted in order to begin his propaganda of preaching the Cause of the Imamate and of the Ismailis, and whose followers later were known by outsiders as *Ismailis*, was no other person than Mohammed the Concealed, son of Ismail, son of Jafar Sadik.

The second important question about *Meimun* is whether this name, or the name *Meimunis*, is mentioned in any of the Ismaili works, either the early ones or those that have only come to light in recent years. On this subject we may consult Ivanow's *Guide to Ismaili Literature*, which is the first worthy attempt that has yet been made to present the whole of the better known Ismaili works in a comprehensive and chronological order :[1] " It is necessary to realise that the Ismaili tradition and literature have not preserved any memory of Abdallah ibn Meimun el-Kaddah, Didan el-Ahwazi, Ahmed ibn Khayal, Abdan, etc. . . . In the atmosphere of the extraordinary religious conservatism which Ismailism presents, such oblivion of the founder of the religion, in case Abdallah ibn Meimun really was the originator, seems quite improbable."[2] The Ismailis then have no knowledge of the name *Meimun*, or more correctly, they have not preserved any memory of it in their works. The reason for this is obvious. To them their Imam was known by his original name, *Mohammed el-Maktum* (Mohammed the Concealed), or by his title, *Sahib ez-Zaman* (Master of the Age), and they had neither cause nor reason to use or to know his assumed name. Quite

[1] W Ivanow, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature*, 1933, Introd., p. 15.

[2] Without any desire to belittle the learning of W. Ivanow, I may state that as I have already pointed out further above, Abdallah *developed* and *systematised* the doctrines which were *originally expounded by his father* " *Meimun.*"

possibly the bulk of the Ismailis did not know that Mohammed was the same person as was preaching under the name *Meimun*. In case it was passed on to outsiders this would doubtless be known only to the missionaries, who were all trustworthy men, and could be relied upon not to divulge the secret. The name *Meimun* therefore, or any other name that Mohammed might have chosen to use for the benefit of outsiders would be known, apart from his missionaries, only to the Sunni and Abbasid persecutors, in other words the anti-Ismailis, who indeed have preserved it in their various accounts. Further, it is now a known fact that in view of being at once persecuted if they were discovered to be preaching their Cause, the Concealed Imams (any of them : Mohammed, Abdallah, Ahmed, etc.) changed their names at certain times (the assumed ones) in order to evade detection. In this respect De Sacy writes :[1] " These men (the Concealed Imams), obliged to seek concealment, took sometimes one name and sometimes another, in order to shelter from the pursuit of their enemies." The learned John Nicholson, who was the first English scholar to make a study of the Fatimis with his translation of Arib ibn Saad's work, writes on this subject :[2] " They themselves (the Concealed Imams) have taken different names at different times in order to elude discovery." Regarding these changes of names it is important to realise that it is not a difficult matter in Arabic to change certain names, or even for people who do not remember the correct name of a person but only half of it, to give him a " generalised " name. Thus all the names beginning with *Abd* (" Slave ") or *Abd el* (" Slave of "), and ending with any of the ninety-nine different names of Allah, such as Aziz, Karim, Rahman, may be altered to *Abdallah*, without any strong feeling of " wrong "

[1] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 252.
[2] Arib, *Establishment of the Fatemide Dynasty in Northern Africa*, trans. J. Nicholson, 1840, p. 12.

attached to it either by the givers or the receivers. The son of Mohammed the Concealed, Abdallah, is mentioned as *Abd er-Rahman* by the author of *Dastur el-Munajjimin*. It may have been that Abdallah himself changed his name, and it is quite possible also that the author knew the correct name and other writers have called him in the generalised way " Abd-allah." This might be another reason why the Ismailis preserved only one name of each of their Concealed Imams, with their titles, which we might take to be the originals, since not only the Imams themselves had to resort to this means in view of the persecutions, but also some of the people who were not Ismailis but who wished to refer to them called them by names which they thought might quite likely be the correct ones. Perhaps we should be glad that each of the assumed names of the Concealed Imams are not preserved by the Ismailis, in agreement with the different periods at which the changes occurred, otherwise this extremely difficult task of bringing together the different and widely opposing pieces of information given by the two sides and forming one continuous narrative, would have been practically impossible.

8. CONCERNING THE NAME " MEIMUN "

It will not now be difficult to answer a very important question, since we have already seen how it was possible for Mohammed the Concealed to be *Meimun*, without this assumed name ever coming up in the works of the Ismailis or even troubling them. The question is this : How is it that *Meimun el-Kaddah* has been represented as a " heretic " both by the anti-Fatimi and the pro-Fatimi chroniclers ? This naturally leads us to the interesting point that the whole problem about *Meimun*, and all the other names (Deisan, Didan, etc.) of fictitious or real people who have been represented as " heretics " in connection with the Ismailis, has been discussed and debated entirely by the Sunnis. Those

few Alids who took an adverse attitude towards the Ismailis may be classed as Sunnis, since as we have seen they did so under the compulsion of the Abbasids, or like the Idrisis themselves had Sunni tendencies. The Ismailis themselves, who have written many works on heretics and heterodoxies, have neither admitted nor denied the existence of the name *Meimun*, which is of course significant. Had there been a man whose real name was Meimun, and who was constantly being connected as a heretic with the name *Ismaili*, there would obviously have been some reference to him in the Ismaili works, either admitting that he was an Ismaili and not a heretic, or denying that he was an Ismaili and was a heretic. But their absolute silence about *Meimun*, which is a proof that this was the assumed name of the Imam Mohammed,[1] has perplexed the pro-Fatimi Sunnis, amongst whom Makrisi and Ibn Khaldun are prominent. The problem that these learned and conscientious historians were faced with in this respect was indeed very difficult, and we might sympathise with them. They doubtless knew, since they were the most learned authorities on the history of the Maghreb and Egypt where the Fatimis reigned, that this dynasty could not have risen to power and ruled for such a long time without being descended

[1] In this connection it cannot be argued that the Ismailis' ignoring of *Meimun* could be taken as a sign that he was not one of them, because had he really not been their Imam, they would have felt at ease in writing about him, as they have done in the case of all the other heretics whose names have been associated with them, as for instance the Karmatis. I should perhaps mention also that the Ismaili works we now possess have not been written by the laymen, who were doubtless ignorant about *Meimun*, but by the Imams themselves and their missionaries or officials, who of course knew the truth about him They have therefore obviously not mentioned *Meimun* for two reasons : their explanations might have been misunderstood by their lay adherents, and worse still, have received the derision of their enemies, and perhaps have been broadcast in deliberately contorted and misinterpreted ways ; there was no earthly reason why they should mention *Meimun*, since if their works fell in the hands of their enemies it would give rise to an unnecessary debate between the Sunnis and the Ismailis, and amongst themselves they knew that every Concealed Imam took an assumed name to outsiders, and this being no novelty to them it was nothing to write about ; besides, they mentioned none of the assumed names of any of their Concealed Imams, for these were not meant for themselves and therefore did not concern their adherents. See p. 203.

from the Prophet. They could also probably account for the reasons that led the Abbasids to make the denunciation, and the ridiculous story about " Deisan." All these could be described as *lies*. But how could they account for *Meimun* and the history of a whole century previous to the establishment of the Fatimis in Northern Africa, when in all probability they had discovered that it was true that the Ismailis had begun to be organised under *Meimun*, Abdallah and Ahmed? Lies could be said for diplomatic reasons about one or two names (*Deisan* and *Meimun*), but surely the history of a sect during a whole century could not be invented and broadcast, and received with credence without there being some grain of truth in it. We do not know if Ibn Khaldun and Makrisi had recourse to Ismaili historical works containing the history immediately after the time of Mohammed the Concealed,[1] but even if they had, the absence of the name *Meimun* would make them wonder, since they themselves not being Ismailis could not know the truth about him, whether in fact such a person who was in reality a heretic had lived, and the anti-Fatimis were trying to associate him as a heretic with the Ismailis. And naturally, being unable on the one hand to find evidence in the

[1] Makrisi was able to find a work of the Kadi Numan, who held the offices of secretary of state and chief judge in Egypt under the Fatimi Caliph Moezz Lidin Allah. The work is called *Origin of the Illustrious Dynasty*, and was written before A.D. 980. In it there is no reference to *Meimun*, nor to Abdallah ; it begins with the history of the Ismaili mission to the Yemen, during the period of the Imamate of Ahmed (son of Abdallah), which culminated in the success of the Ismailis in Northern Africa. The fact that it fully admits the descent of Obeydallah from this Ahmed, and that Ahmed was recognised in his time as the Imam, without refuting or even commenting on any disputes about Ahmed being a " heretic," is sufficient proof that before the year 980 there was no question of doubt about Ahmed being the Imam, and therefore about his genuine descent from Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, neither on the part of the anti-Fatimis nor the pro-Fatimis, nor also among the Abbasids and the rest of the Sunnis. From this it would follow that the fact of Ahmed being the son of Abdallah, and the latter being the son of Mohammed the Concealed or *Meimun*, was a matter fully understood at that time by all those who took an interest in the genealogies of the various noted families. A quotation from the Kadi Numan's work by Makrisi will be found in Quatremère's *Mémoires Historiques sur la Dynastie des Khalifes Fatimites*, *J.A.*, Aug., 1836, pp. 123-131.

Ismaili works of the connection of *Meimun* with the Imams, because they would consider that had that name belonged to an Imam it would have been mentioned, and on the other hand equally unable to deny that *Meimun* existed, since there was no proof to the contrary and so many historians had written about him, they came to the conclusion that *Meimun* had really existed but that he was a heretic and not an ancestor of the Fatimis. Moreover, still being unable to account for the assertion of the anti-Fatimis that *Meimun* was connected with the Ismailis, they decided that even if there was a connection, he could not have belonged to the Ismailis proper, there being nothing to prove this in the Ismaili works, but rather that he was the originator of the Karmati revolutionary doctrines. The reason for this was that although the Karmatis were an offshoot of the original or orthodox Ismailis, they were nevertheless regarded as heretics by the main branch of the Ismailis for their many deeds of sacrilege. It is interesting to notice that both Ibn Khaldun and Makrisi have based their deduction on the sole principle that if Meimun was a heretic, then he must have originated the Karmati doctrines. This theory is also the one that has been adopted by those European scholars who have taken a pro-Fatimi attitude, amongst whom may be named De Sacy, Blochet and Ivanow. Although, as we have seen, it is to a certain extent a correct deduction in as much as it is based solely on the purity of purpose of the orthodox Ismailis, the researches of these learned men themselves prove that the conclusion they have arrived at with regard to the genealogy of Obeydallah is far from being correct where it concerns *Meimun*, since the genealogies they have constructed as the true ones are not in agreement with one another. Makrisi, for instance, who has followed Ibn Khaldun, has said that the correct genealogy of Obeydallah was the following :[1]

[1] Makrisi, *Mukaffa*, in *Mémoires Historiques*, *loc. cit.*, p. 113.

Obeydallah, son of Mohammed Habib, son of Jafar Musadik, son of Mohammed the Concealed, son of Ismail, son of Jafar Sadik. This is obviously based on the theory that if *Meimun* was a heretic, then his descendants, Abdallah, Ahmed, Husein, could not have been the direct ancestors of Obeydallah. But on the other hand he makes a strange assertion that these three men were recognised as Imams,[1] which not only contradicts his former contention but also brings to light the fact that they could not have been heretics. De Sacy has taken as the correct genealogy the one given in the books of the Druses, which shows seven different Imams between Obeydallah and Mohammed ibn Ismail, including Abdallah and Ahmed.[2] Blochet has made the startling statement that Obeydallah's official genealogy was that he was descended from Musa, the brother of Ismail and uncle of Mohammed the Concealed,[3] and that *Meimun* was the originator of the Karmati doctrines.[4] This is of course not true because apart from everything else the name *Ismaili* itself indicates that the Ismailis, and therefore the Fatimis, based their whole claim to the Imamate on their direct descent from Ismail. Ivanow on the other hand admits that Ahmed was the second Concealed Imam (the first being his father Abdallah, the son of Mohammed el-Maktum),[5] but is wary in connecting this Abdallah with Abdallah ibn *Meimun*.[6] All these learned pro-Fatimi scholars, despite their seeing the falsity of the accusations against the Fatimis and therefore believing in the genuineness of their Alid claims, have agreed that Meimun was a heretic. But if they had seen also the following two points, and connected the two, they would have realised that *Meimun* was the assumed name of Mohammed the Concealed, and there-

[1] *Ibidem*, p. 115. [2] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 67.
[3] Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 78.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-2.
[5] Ivanow, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature*, p. 30.
[6] *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. 15, footnote 1.

fore they would have agreed on the one and only correct genealogy of the Fatimis.

1. The term " Karmati " *did not exist* before the year 887,[1] because Hamdan Karmat, the founder of the Karmati sect and doctrines was a farmer and driver of oxen until that year,[2] and because this man began preaching a set of *new* doctrines only from 889 onwards.[3]
2. The term *Ismaili* existed in 765, immediately after the death of Jafar Sadik, when the great schism occurred between the upholders of Musa and those who upheld the succession of the Imamate through Jafar's eldest son Ismail. *Ismailism* began to be preached about ten or twenty years later, during the lifetime of Ismail's son, Mohammed the Concealed,[4] by " *Meimun.*" The Ismaili doctrines were further developed and systematised by Mohammed's son, Abdallah, who also planned the writing of the famous *Treatises of the Brethren of Purity* by a Council of the most learned and efficient exponents of the Brethren (Missionaries). And Abdallah's son, Ahmed, carried Ismailism almost to perfection, and saw to the completion of the *Treatises*. All this took place before 840, about fifty years before Hamdan Karmat, the founder of the Karmatis, was heard of.

9. CONFUSION OF THE TERMS " ISMAILI " AND " KARMATI "

Some historians have been able to distinguish *Karmati* from *Ismaili* only recently, like Ivanow, who writes :[5] " It is not true that the term *Qarmati* is ' contemporary ' with Ismailism in general : this term

[1] De Sacy, *loc. cit.*, p. 166. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 167. [3] *Ibid*, p. 189.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 165. [5] Ivanow *loc., cit.*, p. 1.

appears and disappears exactly and only with the Qarmatian sect." But other historians, both pro- and anti-Fatimi, have misunderstood even this small but important point. L. Massignon (pro-Fatimi) has used the term "Qarmate" freely for the whole Ismailis, irrespective of the orthodox Ismailis, the Fatimis, the particular Karmati sect, or the Nizaris.[1] Stanley Lane-Poole (anti-Fatimi) has made the strange statement that[2] "the Carmathians were the true parents of the Fatimids," by which of course is meant the *Ismailis*. It should be noted that although the Karmatis were at at first an offshoot of the Ismailis, they later taught such sacriligious and depraved doctrines that they were branded as heretics even by the Ismailis. Their doctrines might be called exactly the opposite of the teachings of the original Ismailis. In fact until this revolutionary sect was exterminated in 988, it was in constant enmity with the orthodox Ismailis, the Fatimis. In these circumstances, once the Karmatis had separated from the Ismailis, it would be wrong to say that their doctrines had anything to do with the Fatimis; they should be considered as those of a totally different and separate sect.

The reason for the confusion of the terms *Karmati* and *Ismaili* among modern scholars might be due to the desire of the ancient anti-Fatimi historians, such as Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad and Nuweiri, to call the Ismailis "heretics." These chroniclers have not only made use of the popular custom of calling certain sects by names that were resented by all, in order to arouse the feeling of the general public against those whom they disliked, but also the fact that the Karmatis had at first sprung from the Ismailis has given them an excellent opportunity to use one name for the other. The cunning of their psychology in choosing this means

[1] Massignon, *Esquisse d'une Bibliographie Qarmate*, in a Volume of Oriental Studies Dedicated to E. G. Browne, 1922, p. 329.
[2] Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 94.

to defame the Fatimis may be seen in the way even modern scholars have reacted to it when following their appellation. Their method of reasoning was somewhat as follows :

All Fatimis were Ismailis ;
All Karmatis were Ismailis ;
Therefore, all Fatimis were Karmatis.

If this same trick of crooked logic was reverted back on themselves, we could equally well declare :

All Abbasids were Moslems ;
All Kharijis were Moslems ;
Therefore, all Abbasids were Kharijis.[1]

It will not be within the scope of this *Polemics* to describe the important schism between the Ismailis and the Karmatis, the reasons that gave rise to it, the new doctrines that were later adopted by the Karmatis, and the subsequent enmity between the two, an interesting subject about which no historian has as yet written critically and at length.

[1] The following interesting anecdote will serve to illustrate that the ancient Arab chroniclers were aware of the effect of employing " crooked logic " : " In the year 293 (A.D. 906), Abu Ishak ibn Suleiman, the physician, arrived from the East, and visited Ziyadetallah (the last reigning Aghlabi prince in the Maghreb) while he was in el-Arbus. The following is his account of the interview : ' I waited on Ziyadetallah, the moment of my arrival, and discovered, in the society in which I found him, much more inclination to gaiety than to gravity. One of the company, Ibn Khanbash, addressed me in these words : " You say that salt things are sweet, do you ? " I said : " Yes ! " " Also that sweet things are sweet ? " I said : " Yes ! " " Then," said he, " salt things are sweet things, and *vice versa* " To this I replied : " Sweet things are sweet on account of their mild, luscious taste ; but salt things by virtue of their rough, pungent flavour." However, as he continued to pride himself not a little on this witticism, I was tempted to say to him : " You say that a dog is alive, as well as that you yourself are alive ? " He said : " Yes ! " " Ergo," said I, " you are a dog, and a dog you." This was received with shouts of laughter by Ziyadetallah, and I hereby saw that he had more taste for wit than for wisdom.' " See Abdel Latif, *Relation d'Égypte*, p. 43 ; Arib, *Establishment*, p. 67.

IV

MUSA IBN JAFAR

I. GENEALOGIES: DESCENT FROM MUSA

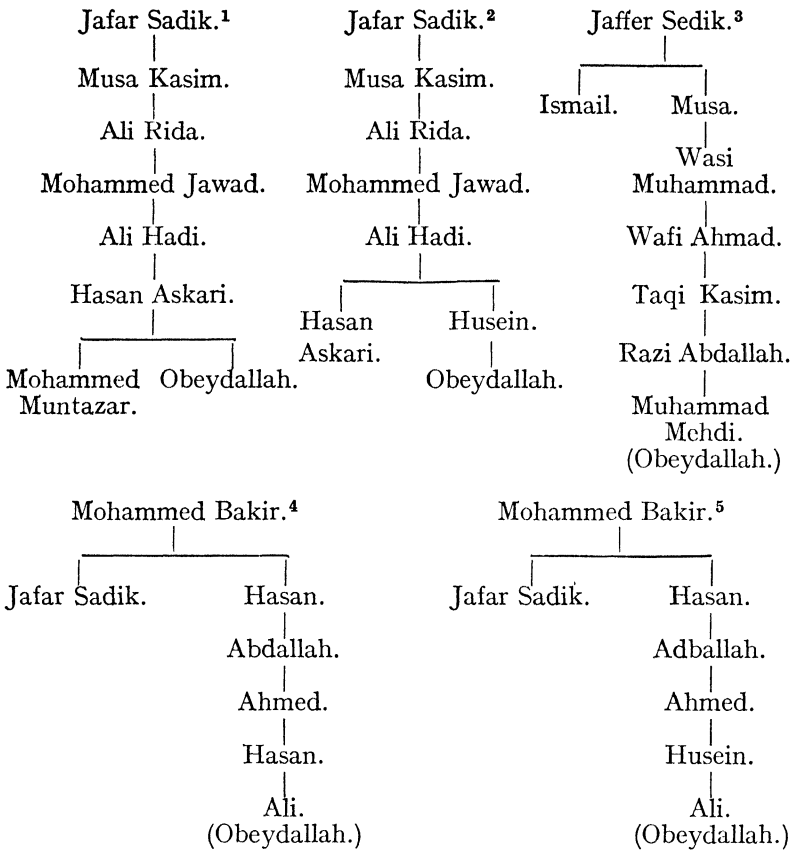
I SHALL now deal with the set of genealogies which have been represented by the anti-Fatimi chroniclers as the correct ones of Obeydallah, and one of which unfortunately the learned pro-Fatimi Blochet has taken as the truth.

Jafar Sadik.[1]	Jafar Sadik.[2]	Jafar Sadik.[3]
Musa.	Musa.	Musa.
Ali.	Ali Rida.	Ali.
Mohammed.	Mohammed Jawad.	Mohammed.
Ali.	Ali Hadi.	Ali.
Hasan.	Hasan Askari.	Husein.
Obeydallah.	Mohammed Muntazar. (Obeydallah.)	Obeydallah.

[1] This is given by Nuweiri, " Extrait de Nowairi," in De Sacy's *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 438. Blochet (*Le Messianisme*, p. 78) has taken it as the official genealogy of the Fatimis. It is mentioned also by O'Leary as a variant amongst others, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 37.

[2] O'Leary, *ibidem*, with the additional information that unlike the preceding genealogy, this one admits " Mohammed Muntazar as the 12th Imam (of the *Twelvers* who upheld Musa's nomination) who ' disappeared ' in 874, and asserts that Obeydallah who appeared in North Africa was this same Mohammed emerging from Concealment, after an interval of 29 years."

[3] Given as the official genealogy of Obeydallah by Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad, the author of the chronicle of Kairawan. It is cited as a variant amongst others on Abdel Aziz's authority by Makrisi (*Mukaffa*, in Quatremère's *Mémoires Historiques, loc. cit.*, p. 114), and mentioned as the official genealogy of the Fatimis, again on the authority of Abdel Aziz, by Abul Mahasin (*Nujum ez-Zahira*, in Blochet's *Le Messianisme*, p. 82).



2. HISTORIANS' VIEWS

In connection with the above, that Obeydallah was descended from Musa and not from Ismail, the views

[1] Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 95, footnote 1.

[2] Ibn Khallikan (*Kitab Wafayat el-Ayan*), on the authority of Ibn Athir (*Kamil*), cited by O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 37. According to Ibn Hazm (*Kitab el-Milal wan-Nihal, J.A.O.S*, 1909, p. 76), Hasan Askari, who was the 11th Imam of the *Twelvers*, died without offspring, " and *Jafar* his brother took possession of the estate."

[3] S. I. A. Shah, *The Prince Agha Khan : An Authentic Life Story*, London, 1933, p. 240, Appendix A. See pp. 129-132.

[4] Ibn Khallikan (*Kitab Wafayat el-Ayan*), cited by O'Leary, *loc., cit.*, p. 38.

[5] Makrisi (*Mukaffa*), in Quatremère's *Mémoires Historiques, loc. cit*, p. 115, on the authority of an anti-Fatimi historian whom he does not mention.

of two scholars might be quoted. According to Blochet,[1] these genealogies are the ones given and believed in by " a group of the partisans of the Fatimis who were not Ismailis." I disagree with this for four reasons :

1. The *partisans* or *followers* or *adherents* of the Fatimis *were* Ismailis, and therefore they were the first to uphold their descent from Ismail. Those of the *subjects* of the Fatimis who were Sunnis, naturally believed in what their rulers (Fatimis) themselves claimed (descent from Ismail), or refused to believe in their Alid claims altogether. Those of the *subjects* of the Fatimis who were Shias but not Ismailis, and therefore belonged to the " Twelvers " or some other Shia group, knowing the history of and taking an interest in Shiism and therefore the various Alid descents, especially those who claimed to be Imams, either knew and recognised the correct genealogy of the Fatimis (descent from Ismail), or like the anti-Fatimis denied this illustrious ancestry altogether.
2. The *upholders* of the Alid claims of the Fatimis amongst the ancient Sunni historians, the prominent ones being Ibn Khaldun and Makrisi, gave as genealogy of the Fatimis one that showed their descent from Ismail.
3. The Fatimis were known as *Ismailis* before they attained independence and power, which name indicates that they were descended from and upheld the claims of Ismail to the Imamate as against Musa's.
4. No " partisan " of the Fatimis amongst the ancients, that is those who lived before the sixteenth century, whether the word stands for *adherent, upholder, subject* or *supporter,* irrespective of race or creed, who acknowledged the

[1] Blochet, *Le Messianisme,* p. 82.

Alid claims of the Fatimis, believed in any genealogy except those showing their direct descent from Ismail.

O'Leary makes the following comment on the descent from Musa :[1] " There are genealogies which show adaptations from the ' Twelvers ' accounts, and these cannot be much more than later attempts to connect the Fatimid line with that recognised by the other Shiites." He however adds : " These genealogies must be dismissed as later suggestions since it is clear that the Ismailian sect rejected the Imams of the ' Twelvers ' after Jafar as-Sadiq : but it may be that Ahmed's first claim was simply to be an Alid, and not necessarily the son of the house of Ismail."

Without any desire to belittle this scholar's learning, I disagree with his latter statement, for as we have already seen not only Ahmed's father Abdallah, but also his grandfather *Meimun* or Mohammed the Concealed, from the moment he started preaching, taught the claims of Ismail to the Imamate. It is futile to argue that these early Concealed Imams preached the claims of *any* Alid, or at the beginning gave out hazy details of their doctrines, and when they were successful, developed a definite claim ; for without a definite and very clear purpose from the very beginning they would not have been successful and attracted the intellectuals (hundreds of missionaries) in Islam, and they would surely not have been able to preach for over a century under the vigilance of the Abbasids, and without a very clear and genuine claim to the Imamate ultimately achieve success. A few hundred followers might be obtained by a false pretender through his strong personality, but not thousands of followers through the medium of hundreds of missionaries. There have been scores of Alids and non-Alids who have wrongly pretended claims to the Imamate, but not one was suc-

[1] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 37.

cessful under the Abbasids for more than a few years, unless within a very short time he was able to establish an independent headquarters or kingdom and there exercise his authority, extending it by force. Nor can it be said that the early Concealed Imams preached the cause of Musa and his descendants at the beginning, and later changed it to that of Ismail, because Musa and his descendants were known both to the Abbasids and the Shias, and there was nothing *concealed* about them to preach in secrecy; and besides, as the historians of both pro- and anti-Fatimi tendencies are agreed, in those days "the Arabs preserved their genealogies with care and pride,"[1] and it was one of the very first questions that a person asked about a claimant to the Imamate, and therefore no tampering with one's genealogy or changing from one line of descent to another could have possibly ensured success during a century of propaganda by missionaries.

3. ORIGIN OF THE STORY OF DESCENT FROM MUSA

When the source of origin of the genealogies which show Obeydallah as being descended from Musa is inquired into, it leads to an interesting discovery about the accusations against *Meimun* and his descendants. The only historians among the ancients who have said that these genealogies were the official ones recognised by the Fatimis, have been *without exception* anti-Fatimis, such as Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad, Nuweiri, Abdul Mahasin, and others. These historians have altogether disregarded the references in hundreds of works, written before their time, wherein the claims of the Fatimis concerning Ismail are mentioned, which they must have consulted in order to write their own histories. They have equally ignored the fact that the Fatimis, before they attained power, were known to the whole world, both the educated and the uneducated,

[1] Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 95.

as *Ismailis*, which name suggests that their claims were dependent on Ismail.[1] Now any historian who pretends to be a conscientious writer, naturally makes at least one reference to the term *Ismaili*, which is so much connected with the Fatimis, and either agrees or disagrees with the meaning it conveys. But when he preserves a menacing silence regarding it, making not a single reference to it in a long history which he gives out as a detailed account of the " origin " of the Fatimis, then he shows quite clearly that there is deliberate untruthfulness in his narrative. In both Abdel Aziz's and Nuweiri's accounts of the " origin " there is not one reference to the term *Ismailis*. Does this not mean that these historians knew the truth about *Meimun* and his descendants, and that in themselves feeling guilty endeavoured not to make it apparent by deliberately ignoring the term *Ismailis*? Does it not show also that although they thought they might be able to disregard *Ismailis*, they could not very well ignore *Fatimis* (descent from Fatima), since it was under this name that the dynasty ruled as Caliphs for nearly three centuries, and therefore they purposely invented the story of descent from Musa? It should be noted that although they themselves originated the genealogy showing descent from Musa, they said that this was the genealogy officially recognised by the Fatimis.

[1] Even after the Fatimis came into power, the term *Ismaili* was retained for over two centuries as designating the " religion " of the Fatimis, and it was concurrently used with the term *Fatimi*, the latter meaning the political authority of the dynasty. And long after the Fatimis had fallen from power, their adherents were still referred to as *Ismailis*. Thus an " Ismaili Masri " meant an Egyptian who professed the Ismaili faith, and an " Ismaili Maghrebi " a native of the Maghreb whose religion was Ismailism. An example of this is given by the historian Ibn Hajar (b 1372), who was chief kadi of Cairo from 1424 to 1449, in his work *Raf el-Isr*, a biographical dictionary of the chief kadis of Cairo (*Bibl. Nat. MS. Ar. No.* 2149, *fol.* 136*b*, *line* 1) : An-Numan ibn Mohammed ibn Mansur ibn Ahmed ibn Hayun *el-Ismaili el-Maghrebi*. A second example is given by the famous Spanish rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, born at the beginning of the twelfth century, who went on a long voyage through the then known world between 1160-1171. Speaking of the Jews under Fatimi domination, he writes : " In all *Ismaelite* countries there is a special tax on the Jews." (See A. Andréadès, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, in *Economic History*, iii, 1934, p. 17.)

4. WHY MUSA WAS CHOSEN

Now there are two reasons why they chose Musa's and not another line. First, since they had said that *Meimun* and his descendants were " heretics " and were not in any way connected with the descendants of Ali, they could not say that some historians had written that there were " friendly relations " between *Meimun* and Mohammed the Concealed, or even that Abdallah and Ahmed had claimed to be descended from Ismail apart from preaching Ismail's cause, because this might have exposed (like Rashideddin's account), or at least so they felt, the untruthfulness of their accusations. Second, if the people could be made to believe that the Fatimis themselves based their claim to the Imamate on their descent from Musa, then of course it would be an easy matter to make them believe also that the Fatimis were " heretics " and were not connected in any way with either Musa or any other descendant of Ali, because every educated person in Islam knew that Musa's descendants had nothing whatever to do with the ancestors of the Fatimis. The Shias who upheld Musa and his descendants as their Imams numbered thousands in Persia, and they naturally knew the history of their own Imams. If these were told that the Fatimis themselves claimed direct descent from Musa, and their whole Caliphate was based on this, naturally they would be the first to denounce them as heretics, since they knew that there could not be any truth in this claim. It is significant to note that no Persian chronicler has reported this story of " descent from Musa " in connection with the Fatimis. The cunning of Abdel Aziz and Nuweiri lies in the fact that they have chosen the best known genealogy in Shiism, and they have not reported " some historians say the Fatimis were descended from Musa," but that they have made the blunt statement " the Fatimis themselves claimed descent from Musa,"[1]

[1] " Extrait de Nowairi," in De Sacy's *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 438.

which has been taken as the truth by people (like Blochet) who did not think of doubting these historians' integrity. We might excuse Abdel Aziz for consciously adopting this means in order to rouse the feeling of the Maghrebis against the Fatimis, because he was the grandson of Moezz ibn Badis who rebelled against that dynasty and founded an independent kingdom in the Maghreb, and he had to use any effective method in order to undermine the people's faith in the Fatimis in case of desire to return to the former administration. But there can be no excuse for Nuweiri following Abdel Aziz's example in this extreme way. He lived long after the Fatimis had been overthrown by Salaheddin, and he could certainly have followed the examples of Ibn Khallikan, Jamaleddin, Abu Shama, and other historians who lived before him, and who rejected the claims of the Fatimis (descent from Ismail) by mentioning it on the strength of simply reporting the accounts of other chroniclers. That Nuweiri had recourse to almost all the works written before him is proved by the painstaking and large encyclopædia he compiled, and therefore his deliberate method of giving only Abdel Aziz's account as the truth about the Fatimis can be interpreted in no other way except as a strong desire on his part to make use of his own name as an authoritative historian in order to impress these views. We need not ponder as to whether he was really ignorant of the correct claim of the Fatimis, because his researches could not have failed him to yield the term *Ismailis*. Historians who lived later than himself have been able to find a great deal about the Fatimis, written before his time.

V

THE JEWISH LEGEND

I. THREE JEWISH STORIES

WE have seen so far that there was no truth in the assertion about *Deisan* or *Ibn Deisan* in connection with the ancestors of the Fatimis, that *Meimun* was not a heretic but this was the assumed name of Mohammed the Concealed, that this Mohammed and his descendants, Abdallah, Ahmed and Husein, preached nothing except the doctrines and the Cause of the Ismailis, and that the Fatimis did not claim and were not descended from Musa, but from Ismail. It is now necessary to deal with a Jewish Legend, which seems to centre round the figure of Obeydallah. Although this story has been lately recognised as just another "invention," no justifiable explanation has yet been given for regarding it as such except the "bitterness of the Abbasids," and it will therefore be worth our while to examine it fully, in case some doubt may linger in present day or future historians' minds.

There have been altogether three stories connecting the name of the Fatimis with the Jews. These are:

1. Meimun, the son of Deisan, was a Jew.[1]
2. Obeydallah was the son of a Jewish smith. When his father died, his mother married the Imam Husein or the Imam Ahmed, and thus he became the adopted son of an Ismaili Imam.[2]

[1] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 34.

[2] Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 95; Makrisi, *Mukaffa*, in Quatremère's *Mémoires Historiques*, *loc. cit.*, p. 115.

3. Obeydallah was killed in a prison in Sijilmasa, and when Abu Abdallah, his missionary, came to release him, in order not to disappoint his adherents, he found a Jewish slave to impersonate him, whose descendants became the Fatimi Caliphs.[1]

These stories, it should be noted, like all the other accusations against the Fatimis, are related by anti-Fatimi historians, who lived after the year 1011.

2. THE IMPORTANT STORY

The strange thing about these three stories is that when they are put together, the second story proves the falsity of the first, and the third the falsity of the second, so that actually there remains only the last, the third, to account for. To put it more clearly: If Obeydallah's adopted father was the Ismaili Imam, the latter could not have been descended from a Jew, and if Obeydallah was the son of a Jewish smith, and therefore himself a Jew, there seems scarcely any need to mention that he was impersonated by another Jew, since all Jews were still Jews and one story would suffice, if it was a truthful one, to make the Fatimis descended from a Jew, unless of course by admitting these three it is is desired to make the Fatimis Jews three times over! It is obvious that these stories have originated from the same minds which have asserted that the doctrines of the Ismailis were those of the Dualists and therefore heterodox in Islam. The one story, however, which has received more credence than the others, and which is cited by almost all the historians writing on the "origin" of the Fatimis, is the impersonation of Obeydallah by a Jew, and this will be now our object of examination.

"It was[2] by calling the Moslems to recognise as

[1] Quatremère, *Mémoires Historiques, loc. cit.*, p. 108.

[2] Quatremère, *Mémoires Historiques sur la Dynastie des Khalifes Fatimites*, *J.A.*, Aug., 1836, p. 108.

Imam a descendant of the Prophet, it was by proclaiming the name of the Mahdi, this mysterious being whom nobody had seen and whom all the world wanted to see, that Abu Abdallah had, in great measure, obtained his brilliant successes. . . . As soon as Abu Abdallah had by his victories raised to the highest point the confidence of his party, he ran to Sijilmasa in order to deliver the Mahdi from his prison, and to present him to his adherents, who demanded with great impatience to see him. It is quite believable that if, having arrived in Sijilmasa, the general (Abu Abdallah) found Obeydallah killed, he searched immediately on the spot for an audacious adventurer (a Jew) who consented to fill a perilous but brilliant rôle. . . . He was going to put on the throne an unknown person, whom he himself had never seen. . . ."

The above story of Quatremère is evidently based on Ibn Khallikan's (anti-Fatimi) story, which states that[1] the ruler of Sijilmasa, before escaping from the city, executed Obeydallah, and when Abu Abdallah entered the prison he found the dead body of his master with a faithful Jewish slave. Aware that the death of the Mahdi would serve as a tragic end to his own victories, he at once forced the Jewish slave to keep silence, and leading him out declared: "This is your Mahdi."

In the *Encyclopædia Britannica* we read:[2] "Whether Obeydallah's identity with the Madhi for whom al-Shii (Abu Abdallah) had been fighting was known to the governor of Sijilmasa is uncertain. If it was, the governor and his master the Aghlabite sovereign might have been expected to make use of their knowledge and outwit al-Shii by putting his Mahdi to death. Opponents of the Fatimites assert that this was actually done, and that the Mahdi presented to the army was not the real Obeydallah, but a Jewish captive, who had been suborned to play the rôle."

[1] Ibn Khallikan, *Kitab Wafayat el-Ayan*, ii, p. 78.
[2] Margoliouth, *Enc. Brit.*, 11th ed., x, art. "Fatimites," pp. 202-3.

According to another historian :[1] " The victorious missionary had to rescue his spiritual chief from a *sordid prison* in Sijilmasa."

Now from all these accounts it would seem that it was really possible for a Jewish slave to impersonate Obeydallah, and from the dubious way the story is presented one would think that the identity of the person who was finally proclaimed the Mahdi and who ruled as the first Fatimi Caliph, is indeed open to dispute. The importance of this question lies in the fact that if the Mahdi was a Jew, then all his descendants who ruled as Fatimi Caliphs were also Jews, and therefore they were in no way connected with the descendants of Ali, the husband of Fatima. I might remark also in passing that here it is taken for granted by the historians (anti-Fatimis) that Obeydallah was a genuine descendant of Ismail, and that it is his impersonation by a Jew that is insisted, otherwise, if such were not the case, why should this story be broadcast in order to defame the Fatimis ? Now for Quatremère's poetically imaginative statement : " The Mahdi, this mysterious being whom nobody had seen and whom all the world wanted to see."[2]

According to the *Encyclopædia of Islam,* Obeydallah was not such a " mysterious " person : [3] " Obeydallah was at that time (before he left Salamia in Syria) no obscure or utterly unknown personality, but well known as the grand-master (Imam ?)[4] of the Ismailis."

[1] Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages,* p. 96.

[2] By the word *Mahdi,* it is without doubt meant here *Obeydallah,* because it is nowhere mentioned that Abu Abdallah had anyone else in his mind when he proclaimed the approaching moment for the public appearance of the Mahdi.

[3] E. Graefe, *Enc. of Islam,* ii, art. " Fatimids," p. 88.

[4] The term *Grand Master* was first used in connection with an Ismaili movement by Hasan ibn Sabbah, who after founding an independent kingdom in 1090 with the Nizaris (a sectarian subdivision in Ismailism) in northern Persia (Alamut), and not wishing to take a purely political title (Sultan, Emir), in case his authority as a religious leader was doubted by his followers, and naturally being unable to call himself *Imam* because he was not a descendand of Ali, he chose the title *Grand Master,* which served his purpose equally well. His successors ruled under this title until 1164, when Hasan II suddenly

Besides this testimony there is much evidence which prove beyond doubt that nobody impersonated the real Obeydallah, and which, in view of their importance in this connection, strange to say, do not seem to have been taken into consideration by the scholars who have cast doubts on the identity of Obeydallah.

3. AN AUTHORITY ON THE SUBJECT

In a case such as this where it is essential to find a chronicler on whose work we can rely, the obvious course is to resort to one who has lived as near as possible to that period, and who has written with sufficient knowledge of the events and details to warrant his being regarded as our choice. Such a historian has lived and his account of the establishment of the Fatimis in Northern Africa has fortunately survived. He is Arib ibn Saad, who was a contemporary of Obeydallah, and who also lived during the reigns of Obeydallah's son and grandson. Regarding his detailed account its translator writes :[1] " It is the work of an author who appears, both from nearness of time and local circumstances, to have possessed advantages which render his narrative one of the most valuable authorities of that time and country." Arib was a native of Spain, and an upholder and admirer of the

proclaimed himself an *Imam*, claiming to be the grandson of Nizar, the disinherited son of the Fatimi Caliph Mustansir, through a secret union of his mother with a son of Nizar. Thenceforward Hasan's successors ruled as Imams until 1256, when the kingdom was abolished by the Mongols. The title *Grand Master* was adopted in 1164 by the head of the Syrian branch of the Nizaris, who declared in that year their independence from Alamut under Rashideddin, who is famous in history because of his resistance of Salaheddin's invasion on his little territory on the Ansari Mountains. Rashideddin and his successors were also popularly called *The Sheikh* by their adherents, *Le Vieux* by the French Crusaders, *The Old Man of the Mountains* by the English under Richard I. This Syrian principality was abolished in 1274 by sultan Bibars of Egypt. The term *Grand Master* has been used by the ancient chroniclers in connection with no other Ismaili sectaries, not even the Karmatis. See J. von Hammer, *Geschichte der Assassinen, passim.*

[1] Arib ibn Saad, *Establishment of the Fatemide Dynasty in Northern Africa*, trans. J. Nicholson, *Preface*, p. 1.

Omeyya Caliphs there, and being conscious of the enmity of the Omeyyas for the Fatimis, we can rest assured that if there was anything known in his time defamatory to Obeydallah or the Fatimis as a heretical whole, either in connection with a Jew or *Deisan* or *Materialism,* it would have been without doubt reported by him. As his translator remarks :[1] " I also fancy I recognise a little partiality in the manner in which the author returns to the mention of Spain." Now the following information has been derived mainly from Arib's narrative, and care has been exercised to include only those details which have been reported and not refuted by later historians, among whom may be named the strongly anti-Fatimi Ibn Khallikan.

4. CORRECT DETAILS CONCERNING OBEYDALLAH

When Abu Abdallah had been sufficiently successful in the Maghreb to warrant his inviting his master, the Imam Obeydallah, to take charge of affairs, he sent two, or according to others three, messengers to him at Salamia in Syria, in order to ask him to come. One of these messengers was his only brother, Abul Abbas. Whether Abu Abdallah himself knew Obeydallah personally or not we do not know. Some say that he was sent to the Maghreb by the chief missionary in the Yemen, Ibn Hausheb, others that he was sent by Obeydallah's father Husein, or by his grandfather Ahmed. Arib does not mention it, because he deals only with the events in the Maghreb, and therefore we shall take the view that Abu Abdallah did not know Obeydallah personally. On receiving the message Obeydallah at once left Salamia for the Maghreb, accompanied by his mother, his son Abul Kasim, Abul Abbas, and a number of other companions, who were his missionaries in Salamia. The group thus forming a caravan were disguised as merchants, in order not to

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

arouse suspicion. The Abbasid Caliph at Baghdad, however, was informed of this in an alarmingly quick time, and he sent three letters, with a description of Obeydallah and orders for his arrest, to the governor of Egypt, the Aghlabi ruler of the Maghreb, and the ruler of Sijilmasa. Obeydallah succeeded with some difficulty in passing safely through Egypt and arriving at Tripoli. There, aware that he was being eagerly awaited by the Aghlabi ruler Ziyadetallah, he sent forward Abul Abbas to Kairawan in order to see how matters stood with Abu Abdallah. The latter's invitation, however, had been a little premature, and Ziyadetallah was still in power, so that as soon as Abul Abbas arrived at Kairawan he was arrested and taken before the ruler. When Obeydallah heard this he at once left Tripoli and took the perilous road to Kastilia. In view of the danger that now threatened him, he left his mother behind in Tripoli, both to look after his belongings and for her own safety, and took with him only his son Abul Kasim, who was as yet a boy. He intended to stay in Kastilia for a while, in the hope that Abul Abbas might be able to escape or be set free and join him there, bringing some news with him on the conditions in the country. Abul Abbas, however, was unable to escape, for he would not admit anything except that his companions had been merchants and were not concerned with the disturbances in the country, and he was therefore sent to prison. After staying in Kastilia for a short time, and judging from the silence of Abul Abbas that the worst had happened, Obeydallah left that town also, and with his son began the long desert journey to Sijilmasa. He arrived in this town about the end of November 904, was received by the ruler himself on account of his great learning, and during the next three and a half years enjoyed the hospitality of his host.[1] His presence in Sijilmasa

[1] Regarding these dates see the remarks of Nicholson, *Establishment*, p. 62, footnote 12, and p. 64, footnote 13.

must have been known to Abu Abdallah, for we read of the latter sending a message with a sum of money in gold he had collected from the spoils of a recent victory.[1] Following this one day the ruler of Sijilmasa, El Isa, received a letter from Ziyadetallah, in which he read that the very man who was aiming at the rulership of the whole world was now in his hands, and that it would be wiser to have him kept in prison. Not believing that Obeydallah, whom he had entertained for so long and found so wise and upright, could be such a dangerous character, he questioned him, and then the young Abul Kasim separately, as to whether there was any truth in the letter. These two, however, naturally would only state that they were not concerned with it. But in order to feel safer, El Isa confined *the two of them* "in the garret of the house of his daughter, Miriam,"[2] perhaps hoping that his beautiful Miriam might be able to win their confidence. Abu Abdallah on the other hand succeeded in winning many victories over Ziyadetallah's armies, and ultimately drove him out of the country. He then liberated his brother, Abul Abbas, who had been in custody for five years since 904, and brought him to Rakkada, his headquarters. His next move was to call the mother of Obeydallah from Tripoli, in order to assign to her suitable quarters in Rakkada. When he had arranged for a temporary government to look after the administration of the country, he left his brother, Abul Abbas, as his deputy, and set out for Sijilmasa, with a tremendous army that comprised nearly half a million men. At his approach El Isa grew alarmed, and went to question Obeydallah for the second time, to see if Abu Abdallah's attitude

[1] Arib, *ibid.*, p. 63.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 103. It should be noted that El Isa was *not* a subject ruler of Ziyadetallah, although the latter has been described as his "master" in both the *Enc. Brit.* (art "Fatimites") and the *Enc. of Islam* (art. "Fatimids"). El Isa had his own mint in Sijilmasa and his coins were issued in his own name. See Arib, *Ibid.*, p. 63.

had anything to do with him. The secret, however, was not divulged. El Isa then questioned the young Abul Kasim, in a separate quarter, and even had him bastinadoed, but neither judicious interrogation nor force would persuade the youthful heir apparent to the Imamate to betray his father. And when Abu Abdallah approached Sijilmasa and pitched his camp at some distance from the city, in order if possible to open friendly negotiations, and sent envoys requesting a private interview with the ruler on an important matter, El Isa became enraged at the outward mystery and yet precarious situation, and had the envoys executed. A second deputation met with a similar result. Abu Abdallah then advanced on the city, and after a short battle, El Isa escaped to the desert with his family. This happened on the night of 26th August, 909. At daybreak the following morning the inhabitants of the city opened the gates, and came to proffer their submission to Abu Abdallah. The latter's first question to them was concerning Obeydallah and Abul Kasim, and learning of the house in which they were confined, he at once entered the town and commanded their liberation. " As soon as he saw Obeydallah," writes the historian Arib ibn Saad,[1] " he dismounted and went on foot to him, and bowed himself before him, and wept for excess of joy." He then mounted both the father and the son on worthy steeds, and going before them on foot, accompanied by the chiefs of the tribes, conducted them to the tent which he had specially prepared for the occasion. " This is my lord and your lord," he cried to the people, shedding happy tears, " the Mahdi to whose obedience I invited men. God has fulfilled

[1] Arib ibn Saad, *Establishment*, p. 103. Arib's description of these events is so detailed and vivid, and he writes in such an authoritative and detached way, that unless his account is disregarded we cannot explain the statements of some historians that Abu Abdallah " entered " the " sordid prison " of Obeydallah, except by *imagination*. Even if we agree with these, there is the young Abul Kasim to account for, who was always with his father in Sijilmasa. See p. 199.

His promise to him, restored him his rights, and made his Cause to conquer."[1] On reaching the tent, he ceremoniously delivered up his authority into Obeydallah's hands.

A year later, when Obeydallah was ruling the country as the Caliph, and his son Abul Kasim had been proclaimed in the *khutbas* as the heir to the Fatimi Caliphate, Abul Abbas approached his brother and said to him[2]: " A year ago you were the undisputed monarch of this country, master of all; but now, few regard you with the same respect; are you content to remain inferior to a person to whom you delivered up your position out of your own free will? " These words poisoned the mind of Abu Abdallah against the Mahdi. It is not known whether he had given thought to his inferior position, or having done so, had dared to voice it aloud, after his unsuccessful attempt to take the Mahdi's place over ten years before. But it is evident that as soon as he realised that his feelings were shared by others, he did not hesitate to make another attempt for supremacy, this time of course choosing a subtler way. On the morning of Saturday, 6th September, 910, while he was resting at a place called Thur, near Tenes, " he assembled[3] the chiefs of the Kutamas, and conversed with them concerning Obeydallah, and conspired with them to depose him, saying to them: ' His actions are not like those of the Mahdi, for whom I used to try to win you; and I am afraid that I have been mistaken in him, and have suffered a similar delusion to that of Ibrahim ibn Khalil, when the night closed over him and he saw a star, and said: " This is my Lord! "[4] It is, therefore,

[1] Arib, *ibidem*.

[2] Ibn Khallikan, *Kitab Wafayat el-Ayan*, i, p. 465. Arib (*Establishment*, p. 94) states that " Abul Abbas was of shallow understanding, hasty and talkative."

[3] Arib, *Establishment*, pp. 120-1.

[4] This alludes to the Koran, Sura XI, 76, which reads: " And when the night overshadowed him (Abraham), he beheld a star. ' This,' said he, ' is my Lord ' ; but when it set, he said, ' I love not gods which set.' "

incumbent on me and on you to examine him, and make him show those signs which are known to the genealogists, and which are to be found on the Imam.' Whereupon he told them that, according to the tradition, the Mahdi would have the words : ' Al Mahdi, the Prophet of God,' written between his shoulders, just as the Prophet had the seal of his prophetic mission stamped between his shoulders[1] ; and that the Mahdi would come with unequivocal signs and would stamp his seal in the rock."

The Kutamas were impressed by this announcement, and resolved that on their return to Rakkada, their first task would be to call upon Obeydallah, and demand of him proofs that he was the Mahdi. The proofs would consist of the sign between the shoulders and of the performance of miracles. When the army returned to Ifrikia, at the beginning of January, 911, a certain Kutama of high repute, who was called *the sheikh of sheikhs*, accompanied by others of his tribe, approached Obeydallah and said[2] : " If you are the Mahdi, let us witness a miracle, as we doubt what you have said." His impudence was punished by death. But Abu Abdallah was not reprimanded, in spite of the fact that Obeydallah was aware both of the plot and its conspirators. He was left alone with his brother, Abul Abbas, perhaps in recognition of their past services, to see what they would finally do. If there had been any doubt about Obeydallah's identity, naturally now was the time to bring it forward publicly, for as we know Abul Abbas had seen Obeydallah and knew him from Salamia. But except for a statement that Obeydallah was not the *Mahdi* (" Messiah "), nothing was said, either in respect of Obeydallah being impersonated by a Jew, or of him

[1] The Prophet is said to have had a protuberance between his shoulders, as large as a pigeon's egg, and surrounded by hair. The credulous interpreted this as having a deep meaning. *Cf.* Abul Feda, *Ann. Mosl.*, 1, p. 190.

[2] De Sacy, *Origine de la Dynastie des Fatimis*, in *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 275.

not being a descendant of Ali. These latter assertions would have been indeed excellent weapons to use, if they had been true, to bring about the downfall of Obeydallah. And both Abul Abbas and Abu Abdallah had quite a long time at their disposal in which to plan their evil purpose, and also they were desirous of finding an effective means by which they could hurt the Mahdi.

From the time of their arrival from the Maghreb the two brothers were busy plotting a rebellion: Abul Abbas by estranging the Kutamas from their sovereign, and Abu Abdallah by gathering the chiefs of the various tribes in his house, outwardly for entertainment, secretly to scheme with them for a plausible excuse to start a sedition. When, however, they heard of the fate of *the sheikh of sheikhs*, Abu Abdallah grew alarmed, and in case his conspiracy was discovered, changed the place of the secret meetings from his house to that of Abu Zaki, who was the nephew of the governor of Tripoli and one of the discontented leaders in league with him.

For several months the nightly gatherings continued without being discovered, and Jarwih (one of the highest officers of Abu Abdallah and at the same time a faithful adherent of Obeydallah), who was always present, informed Obeydallah each day of the events of the previous night. Then one morning the unexpected happened. Abu Abdallah came to the court with his robe turned inside out. He had been having very little sleep and had doubtless overlooked the correct wearing of it when hastily putting it on. Obeydallah noticed it but said nothing. The next day the same thing happened. On the third day, when Abu Abdallah again appeared in the same way, Obeydallah asked him why he was wearing his garment so, and questioned him as to whether he had undressed during the last three nights when retiring to bed. Abu Abdallah, taken unaware, replied that he had

not noticed it. Obeydallah then asked if he had not passed the last three whole nights in the house of Abu Zaki, and on his assent, asked again why he had left his home altogether. Abu Abdallah replied that he was afraid. "One does not fear except from his enemy," said Obeydallah. From this Abu Abdallah understood that the Mahdi was aware of all that was happening, the nightly gatherings, the conspiracy, and the members who were plotting. As a punishment, Obeydallah said that he would send the three of the chief conspirators, Abul Abbas, Abu Abdallah and Abu Zaki, to distant provinces, in order to stop their underhand work in the capital. His intention was to see first how this step would be received by the people, and if there was little dissatisfaction, to have the rebels executed.

This fact doubtless the rebels realised, and naturally if they could they would have done their best to carry out their plan before being separated from each other. We may therefore deduce from this that if they had even one good complaint to bring against Obeydallah, they would have done so successfully, since not only had they the whole army at their command, but also they were, especially Abu Abdallah, more popular with the people than Obeydallah himself, because the latter had as yet been with them for only a year. But they were not able to do anything.

On the morning of 28th July, 911, seven months after the conspiracy was first planned, Abu Zaki was executed in Tripoli by his own uncle, by the orders of Obeydallah. Abu Zaki was indeed a tragic figure, for we read that he tried to amend for his past career by subduing an important rebellious tribe in the province of Tripoli, and by sending the heads of their chiefs in accordance with the custom of the time to Rakkada, as a sign of his success and loyalty to the ruler. But he was too late in returning to the righteous path, because Obeydallah had already issued orders

for his execution. On the same evening Abu Abdallah and Abul Abbas together were put to death in Rakkada. It was carried out by Jarwih and several other Kutamas, on the instructions of Obeydallah. When Abu Abdallah saw that his onetime faithful officer was approaching to kill him, he cried out: "Hold! My son Jarwih!" But the latter replied: "He whom you enjoined us to obey has ordered us to kill you." And at this Abu Abdallah met his end.

5. OBEYDALLAH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN IMPERSONATED

Now from the above account we can make several important conclusions:

1. Obeydallah was not put in a "prison" in Sijilmasa, but was retained in custody, together with his son Abul Kasim, in the house of the ruler's own daughter.
2. Obeydallah was known personally to the inhabitants of Sijilmasa. This is deduced from the fact that (*a*) he lived there for three and a half years as the guest of the ruler before he was put in custody, and (*b*) from the way Abu Abdallah on his entry ordered the people to liberate him and his son Abul Kasim.
3. Abu Abdallah did not himself enter the place of custody, but waited still mounted on his horse until Obeydallah appeared on the scene.
4. It was *not* possible for Abu Abdallah to search for an "adventurer" in order to impersonate Obeydallah, since he was not only accompanied by his chief officers, but also by the deputation from the city.
5. It was *not* possible for the inhabitants of the city to replace Obeydallah with another person, because Abul Kasim was there, and the latter

would have stated the treachery in order to be avenged for his father's death.

6. If Obeydallah had really been killed, Abul Kasim would *not* have kept silent, because in that case he himself would have succeeded his father as the Imam, and this fact would have been confirmed by all the missionaries in the various Moslem countries who had known him in Salamia.
7. Even if Abul Kasim *had* kept silent, and also if Abu Abdallah did not himself know Obeydallah personally,[1] any impersonation by another person would have been discovered when the party reached Rakkada, where Abu Abdallah's brother, Abul Abbas, and Obeydallah's own mother, met them.
8. If the ruler of Sijilmasa *had* indeed killed Obeydallah, he would have doubtless made this fact public after escaping to the desert, so as to enjoy the satisfaction of his revenge.
9. If there had been any doubts about Obeydallah's identity, or about his descent from Ismail and therefore from Ali and Fatima, both Abu Abdallah and Abul Abbas would have made it public during the seven months of their unmolested conspiring against Obeydallah, during which time they were extremely desirous to find a plausible excuse to make a sufficiently

[1] Although here I have taken the view that Abu Abdallah did not know Obeydallah personally, because this seems to be the strongest point raised by the historians, it should not be presumed with an absolute certainty that such was in reality the case. The strongly anti-Fatimi Ibn Khallikan, on the authority of the historian Ibn Rakik, reports that (*Kitab Wafayat el-Ayan*, ii, p. 185) Abu Abdallah knew both Obeydallah and the latter's father from Irak, and that it was by them that he had been sent as a trustworthy officer to the Yemen, in order to help the chief missionary there, Ibn Hausheb, who had finally sent him to the Maghreb, as a successor to the two missionaries who had died in that country. From the way Abu Abdallah recognised and greeted Obeydallah in Sijilmasa, this in fact seems to be the case. But I have put my view above in order to prove that even if Abu Abdallah did not know Obeydallah, it would still make no difference to the fact that Obeydallah could not have been impersonated.

strong case to win the support of the people. It should be remembered that Obeydallah's firm hand was not popular among the people during the first two years of his reign. All the two brothers could say was that he was not the Mahdi (Messiah), which did *not* mean that he was not the Imam.

10. It is beyond the bounds of credulity that a person could be found at a moment's notice who could have the required knowledge of the highly developed Ismaili doctrines in order to impersonate Obeydallah. The Fatimi Imam was firstly the spiritual guide of his adherents, and only secondly was he known to outsiders as Caliph.[1] Besides, there has not been a single instance in history where a commoner has been asked to replace a monarch, and having done so, has succeeded in dispensing the services and influence and power of his finder, and has also displayed the same masterly temporal and spiritual leadership which were such a characteristic of Obeydallah during his reign of a quarter of a century, which incidentally was the chief reason for the Fatimi dynasty gaining a firm footing in Northern Africa. There have been instances of commoners rising to important positions, but this has been due to their own capabilities and the practical and hard work of many years. There have also been instances where ministers or relatives of monarchs have been asked to replace others, but these have only remained puppets in the hands of their finders.

11. Even if we admit that by a strange miracle somebody did impersonate Obeydallah, and stranger still this fact was kept secret by

[1] *Cf.* Ivanow, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature*, p. 1 : " Fatimides were primarily the *Imams* for their own followers, and only then *Khalifs* for the outsiders."

all those who knew him, both friends and enemies, even then it would make no difference to the claim of the Fatimis that they were descended from Ismail, because when Obeydallah died in 934, it was Abul Kasim, the son of the real Obeydallah, who succeeded as Caliph, and it was Abul Kasim's descendants who ruled as Fatimi Caliphs ; *and this fact has not been refuted nor doubted by any historian.*

12. Finally, we have a proof that Obeydallah was known not only to the inhabitants of Sijilmasa and a few others in the Maghreb who comprised his immediate companions, but also to thousands of missionaries and Shia followers scattered in all the Islamic countries. The historian Arib ibn Saad states that when Obeydallah had both Abu Abdallah and Abul Abbas put to death, in case his action was misinterpreted through hearsay evidence, he wrote a letter addressed to all the Shias in the East (Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Irak, Persia) which read :[1] " The position of Abu Abdallah and Abul Abbas with regard to Islam is known to all, and the Faithful are indebted to them. But Satan hath caused them to stumble, and they have been purified by the sword. Farewell."

6. REPRESENTATIVE OPINIONS

We shall now end this episode of the Jewish Legend by giving a number of views by representative scholars :

" This assertion,[2] that Obeydallah was of Jewish descent, is certainly to be traced to the hatred of his enemies."

" The stories[3] that make him (Obeydallah) of either

[1] Arib, *Establishment*, p. 128.
[2] E. Graefe, *Enc. of Islam*, ii, art. " Fatimids," p. 88.
[3] D. S. Margoliouth, *Enc. Brit.*, 11th ed., x, art. " Fatimites," p. 202.

Jewish or Karmatian origin may be neglected, as the product of malice."

"There[1] is a story that Obeydallah was the son of a Jewish smith. This is one of the three forms of what we may call the Jewish legend, the attempt to trace the Fatimid dynasty to a Jewish source."

[1] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, pp. 33-4. See further in this connection Inostrančev, *Torjestvennii viezd Fatimidskich Chaliphov*, in *Zapiski Vost. Otd. Imp. Arch. Abshc.*, vol. xvii; and especially I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, i, p. 205.

VI

THE MESSIANIC IDEA

I. CONCEPTION OF THE "MESSIAH"

WE will now examine the only fault that has been found with Obeydallah, that he was not the Mahdi. This in fact was used to defy Obeydallah's authority not only by Abu Abdallah, but also by the Idrisis, descendants of Ali through the second Imam Hasan, who struggled to retain their little independent state on the extreme north-western corner of Africa after the Fatimis attained power. It has also led many anti-Fatimi historians to write satirically concerning Obeydallah, and several European scholars have been inclined to follow their example.

The word *Mahdi* in Arabic means "Rightly Guided," or "He who is Guided by God," in other words "Messiah." In Islam, as well as in most other religions, including Christianity, where the coming of a Messiah is predicted, he is represented as the Saviour of Mankind.[1] As we know there are in particular two traditions connected with the Saviour. The first is that he will appear at the end of time, and the second that when he at last comes he will bring with him justice and equity to the earth. These traditions, however, as we shall presently see, are only a secondary matter to the important rôle the figure of the coming Saviour is made to play in the minds of people.

The origin of the Messianic idea has been traced

[1] *Cf.* the interesting study of I. Friedlaender, *Die Messiasidee im Islam*, in *Festschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstage A. Berliner's*, 1903, pp. 116-130, especially pp. 121-3, 127.

back to myths, and some scholars have connected it with the reason that led the Egyptians of the pharaonic days to embalm their dead. Since then, in almost all ages and in every country, the notion that a Messiah was coming from the Mysterious Beyond, with the Knowledge that he had learnt there during his long sojourn, or during his retirement and therefore concealment from public view in this world, in order to save mankind, has been predicted and heralded with great solemnity from time to time, especially among oppressed races or communities. The reason for this Messianic idea receiving more attention among persecuted people is obvious: Where the need of a Saviour is most felt, there will the people await most eagerly his coming. There have developed, however, two ideas regarding the appearance of the Messiah. One is that he will be the same person who has already made an appearance some time before, and the other that he will be a new character and greater than all who have gone before him, since he will be invested with the Supreme Command. But in both cases the one important point that looms the greatest in the people's minds is that he will save mankind.

This word *mankind* needs our careful consideration, for behind it lie the explanations of the two traditions regarding "the end of time" and "the Saviour who will bring justice and equity." It is therefore the key to the Messianic idea.[1] What then is meant by *mankind* in this connection? It is obvious that it does not mean all the people living on this earth, for in the ancient days nations were not as friendly as they might be considered now. If the Jews used the word, for instance, they did not mean surely that their Messiah would save the Romans! And if the Moslems used it, they did not include the Jews, or *vice versa*.

[1] I should perhaps mention that here the notion of a Messiah is examined from the point of view of the ordinary person, since it was to the mass of the people that this was mainly proclaimed.

Actually then, those who believed in a Messiah who would save mankind, believed that he would first and foremost save their own community, and therefore save them from their enemies. From this therefore the conclusion can be drawn that by " the end of time " is meant " the end of persecution " of the oppressed people, which would naturally be when the Messiah appeared. " Equity and justice " would be deemed as having been administered when the oppressed were free from and as strong as their oppressors. This doubtless explains why the Messianic idea played such an important part in the minds of the persecuted.

2. OBEYDALLAH THE " MAHDI "

Now we come to Obeydallah and his being called the *Mahdi*. The Ismailis believed that their Saviour would be the Imam who would be able to save them from the persecution of the Abbasids, and unite them under the banner of a united nation when they would enjoy equity, justice, and peace. Since they upheld the doctrine that there would always be an Imam to be their Spiritual Guide, whether he was concealed from the public or not, they believed therefore that their Saviour would make his appearance at the expedient time through one of these Imams. This might be the reason why some scholars have thought that the Ismailis *worshipped* their Imams. If the statement that the Saviour would make his appearance through one of the Imams is considered too philosophical to be easily understood, it can be stated in this way, which of course is the same thing: the Imam who would deliver the Ismailis from the yoke of their oppressors would be their Saviour. The " miracle " or the " sign " necessary to herald the appearance of the Mahdi would naturally be the announcement that the Ismailis were thenceforth liberated from their oppressors. Traditions or stories

such as Abu Abdallah cited, that the Mahdi would have this name " written between his shoulders," and would " stamp his seal in the rock," may be dismissed as legendary, for it is obvious that they are invented for the sole purpose of kindling rebellion among the common people against their sovereign. According to the Ismaili doctrines, therefore, Obeydallah fully carried out or performed the miracle necessary to prove that he was their Saviour, and because of this his title *Mahdi* cannot be derided or denied to him. The head of a community quite obviously chooses his titles to suit the conventions of his own people, as did Obeydallah, and any criticism from the point of view of those who do not belong to that community, is naturally superficial. Considering Obeydallah not only saved his adherents, the Ismailis, from their persecutors of two centuries, but also raised them high above the level of their age-old enemies, the Abbasids, which standard was maintained by his descendants for nearly three centuries, he was indeed their Saviour, the Mahdi.

It should not be presumed from the above, however, that the views held by the Ismailis concerning their Mahdi were unique in Islam. In all the other divisions and subdivisions of Islam the doctrines regarding the Mahdi were practically the same. Thus when the Abbasids attained power and declared their independence from the Omeyyas, their third Caliph took the title *Mahdi* (A.D. 775-779), because he considered that he was the one " Rightly Guided " by God and one whom the people should follow rather than anyone else. Later in almost every instance where a new sect appeared, either the leader himself took the title *Mahdi* and promised to his followers that he would lead them to independence, or his adherents looked upon him as a *prophet* or *guide*. It need scarcely be added that some of these, or their followers, looked upon the others who were contemporary to them as

" apostates." Although it would not be correct to judge these sects from the point of view foreign to themselves, the correct gauge in such cases seems to be to judge them by their merits. Those who called themselves *Mahdis* before they had saved their followers, or having been successful, taught spurious doctrines, obviously cannot be called " Rightly Guided." But in the case of Obeydallah, when his doctrines have already been admitted as having been pure, and as we know also he took the title *Mahdi* only when he had finally established the independence of his adherents, we cannot but acknowledge his claim. That he was the Saviour of the Ismailis, and also the Saviour of all the Shias, and even the Saviour of the whole of Islam, is proved by the fact that while during the two centuries before he made his public appearance, Islam and especially Shiism was being constantly divided and subdivided into smaller sections by scores of pseudo-Mahdis, who apart from claiming descent from the Prophet were forming new sects of their own ; after his appearance, all this religious turmoil ceased, and during the next whole century until 1011, while his descendants were ruling as Caliphs, not one person appeared from any community in Islam who declared himself to be the Mahdi, nor was there a single further break in Shiism during that period.[1] And this alone should be sufficient proof to the sceptics that Obeydallah was both known and recognised in his time as the lineal descendant of the Prophet, hence the reason that after him no other claim to the Imamate was made.

[1] By this it should not be understood that the sects who had been founded before the public appearance of Obeydallah became united, but simply that no new sects were formed.

VII

UNCERTAINTY OF GENEALOGIES

I. STATEMENTS OF HISTORIANS

WE have now examined the assertions regarding Deisan, Meimun, Materialism, and the Jewish Legend; but there remains yet one other question to explain. This last point, however, has been regarded by European anti-Fatimi historians as the most important invalidity of the Fatimis' claim. This seems to be their difficulty: If the claim of the Fatimis was genuine, they demand, why are not the genealogies showing their descent from Fatima in agreement, especially those given by the historians who have upheld their claim? A few of the statements made in this connection might be quoted.

"One reason[1] which, in my opinion, strongly opposes the claims of the Fatimis, is, at all events, the difference of the opinions which is to be found among the historians on the subject of the genealogy of these Caliphs."

"There were[2] at least eight different genealogies provided for Obeydallah, and this discrepancy among his own supporters is a strong argument against his pretended descent from Ali and the other Imams."

"The weakest[3] part of the Fatimid claim lies in the great diversity of forms the claim takes in different writers."

"The uncertainty[4] of the genealogies offered by

[1] Quatremère, *Mémoires Historiques sur les Khalifes Fatimites*, *J.A.*, Aug., 1836, p. 110.
[2] Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 95.
[3] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 36.
[4] Margoliouth, *Enc. Brit.*, 11th ed., x, art. "Fatimites," p. 202. See pp. 199-200.

their (Fatimis') partisans renders any possible solution impossible."

"What is[1] surprising, however, is the absolute uncertainty of tradition regarding the genealogy of the Fatimis."

"I have[2] on my part weighed the reasons for and against and I remain very perplexed. I do not find any decisive argument one way or the other."

It is evident then that the "uncertainty" of the genealogies is held by historians as the strongest argument for dubiety concerning and rejection of the claims of the Fatimis. What seems to me most surprising, however, is that this point of all the others should be considered the important one, since even a little knowledge of Arabic works and manuscripts renders such a statement valueless. Those historians who have based their dubiousness on the uncertainty of the genealogies, whether these have been the ones given by the partisans of the Fatimis, their enemies, or both, have been careful not to state exactly wherein this "uncertainty" lies. Are we to understand that the names of Obeydallah's ancestors have been variously given by the historians? Or that some have traced his descent from Ismail, others from "Meimun," still others from Musa? Or even that the number of names shown between Obeydallah and Ismail vary from three to seven? Whichever of these is considered to justify the "uncertainty" of Obeydallah's genealogy, we shall presently see that the different assertions do not make any difference to the Fatimis' claim. In fact, had they all agreed, then we would have been reasonably expected to comment on its doubtfulness.

[1] Graefe, *Enc. of Islam*, ii, art. "Fatimids," p. 88.

[2] Casanova, *La Doctrine Secrète des Fatimides d'Égypte*, in *Bul. Inst. Fr. Arch. Or.*, xviii, 1921, p. 128. See further for similar statements: Wüstenfeld, *Geschichte der Fatimiden Chalifen*, pp. 12-3; August Müller, *Der Islam*, i, p. 597; De Goeje, *Mémoires sur les Carmathes du Bahrain et les Fatimides*, pp. 8-12.

2. THE DIVERSITY OF NAMES

Now we will take the first of the three possible meanings of the word "uncertainty": the diversity of the names of Obeydallah's ancestors. There are several reasons why his ancestors are shown by chroniclers under various names. The first and most important reason is that they themselves have taken different names *to outsiders*, in order to evade the vigilance of the Abbasids. Those chroniclers who therefore wrote on hearsay evidence naturally put down the names which they had heard.[1] There is nothing extraordinary in this, since even to-day, and even without any political reasons, many men of distinction choose to be known by certain names at certain times. The fact that Obeydallah was known at one time as *Saiyid*, or by any other name, does not alter the fact that these names represented the same person. Strangely enough all the historians do agree that *Obeydallah* and *Saiyid* were the designations of the same person, but it seems to have been difficult for some to understand that this could have been so with his ancestors without there being anything mysterious or uncanny attached to it. D. S. Margoliouth, for instance, comments with surprise and emphasis that "even his (Obeydallah's) father's name is quite uncertain,"[2] as if this makes any difference to the fact that whatever his name, since he is recognised as the preceding Imam, he was the father of Obeydallah. Other historians, however, have been able to understand this simple position of the ancestors of Obeydallah under the Abbasids, and they have expressed the reason for the diversity of their names: "These men, compelled to seek concealment, took sometimes one name and sometimes another, in order

[1] It is interesting to notice that the famous chronicler Tabari, for this reason, expressly stated in his copious *History of the World*, that he declined any responsibility for the information collected by him. *Cf.* R. Paret, *Enc. of Islam*, iv, art. "Tabari," pp. 578-9.

[2] Margoliouth, *loc. cit.*

to escape the pursuit of their enemies."[1] "They themselves have taken different names at different times in order to elude discovery."[2]

A second reason for the diversity of names is that the chroniclers of the Middle Ages rarely preserved the correct names of the characters. This might seem strange to those unaccustomed to reading ancient manuscripts, but historians who have translated any work dating back a few hundred years, know how extremely difficult it is to find the names in agreement in any two copies of the same work.[3] Thus the names *Hasan* and *Husein* are often found written one for the other[4]; *Ahmed* for *Mohammed*, or *vice versa*[5]; *Abdallah* written for almost any name beginning with *Abd* and ending with one of the ninety-nine different names of *Allah*, such as *Abd el-Karim*, *Abd el-Latif*, *Abd el-Aziz*, *Abd er-Rahman*, etc.[6] In some manuscripts even *Obeydallah* has been transcribed as *Abdallah*.[7] These, however, are common errors. The difficulty comes when people are called by totally different names, such as the famous missionary-in-chief of the Ismailis

[1] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 252.

[2] Nicholson, *Establishment of the Fatemide Dynasty*, p. 12.

[3] The reason for this of course is that before the days of printing, copies of works were written by hand. Since it was difficult for one person to write by hand ten or twenty copies of a voluminous work, different persons were employed for the purpose. Even if we do not take into account negligent copyists, it is not difficult to imagine that the task of copying a large work which was also written by hand, could not have been done faultlessly, especially in the case of Arabic manuscripts wherein proper names abound everywhere. Later historians who were unable to consult original works of chroniclers, and therefore had to resort to copies of them, or even when further copies were made from a previous copy, owing to the perishing of the latter through time, an error once made was repeated and perhaps made worse in all the later copies. Practically ninety-nine per cent. of the manuscripts now extant are only copies of the original works.

[4] This is the most common (*cf.* De Sacy, *ibid*, p. 445), apparently because Hasan and Husein were the grandsons of the Prophet, and they were sometimes called *El Hasanein*, "The two Hasans."

[5] Margoliouth, *Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate*, iv, p. 51.

[6] *Cf.* Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 80.

[7] For instance the manuscript in Leiden (No. 832) of Abdel Latif, *Relation d'Égypte*, trans. De Sacy. In another copy of the same work (MS. in Paris, No. 673) the name is given correctly as *Obeydallah*. *Cf.* the remarks of Gustave Dugat, *Études sur le Traité de Médecine d'Abu Jafar Ahmed, intitulé : Zad el-Musafir*, *J.A.*, April-May, 1853, p. 333.

to the Yemen during the 9th century. He is called by the historian Makrisi *Abul Kasim Hasan Kufi ibn Farash ibn Hausheb.* Abul Feda and Bibars Mansuri call him *Rustam ibn Husein ibn Hausheb ibn Zadam en-Najjar Kufi.*[1] It would have been impossible to connect these two lengthy designations had it not been for the terms *Ibn Hausheb* and *Kufi.* It is obvious that in such cases where the names given for one person by the various historians do not agree, the names should not be taken as a correct means of identifying characters in history, but the description of their careers considered as a surer guide. This method of course should be adopted in the case of the Concealed Imams, since the very nature of their concealment renders their identification almost impossible in any other way.

A third reason for the diversity of names is that historians were accustomed to call people by their personal names, their surnames, or any one of their numerous titles. Thus Blochet remarks[2]: "The various Moslem historians give to the missionary Abu Abdallah all the surnames possible, in such a manner that often it is very difficult to find the thread of their narrative. Abdallah-*Meshreki*, Abdallah-*Shii*, Abdallah-*Sufi*, *Abu*-Abdallah-Sufi, Meshreki, Shii, are one and the same person to whom the chroniclers have given different surnames in accordance with the diverse circumstances of his religious life." De Sacy in his study of the Ismailis often explains in footnotes the various names of the characters mentioned by the chroniclers. In one instance he writes[3]: "*Maad* is the proper name of the Caliph Moezz, *Ismail* that of his father Mansur, *Abdel Rahman* that of Kaim, and *Saiyid* that of Obeydallah. It should be observed that Kaim was born in Salamia, before his father

[1] *Cf.* De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 255.
[2] Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 72.
[3] De Sacy, *ibid.*, p. 253.

Obeydallah had gone to the Maghreb ; that he had at Salamia the name *Abdel Rahman,* but in the Maghreb changed it to *Mohammed.*"[1]

These quotations refer to characters who were well known in history, and who were not obliged to change their names in order to elude the persecution of the authorities. If these people have been called by so many different names, how much more would this be expected in the case of the Concealed Imams, who even themselves were driven to change their names, and therefore how slightly can we rely on identifying them by the names recorded ?[2]

3. THE DIVERSITY OF PROGENITORS

Now we will take the second of the three possible meanings of the word " uncertainty " with regard to the genealogies : the tracing of the origin of the Fatimis to Ismail, " Meimun," or Musa. This question of the descent has already been discussed in detail, and it has been shown that *Meimun* was the assumed name of Mohammed the Concealed, the son of Ismail, and that the assertions of the anti-Fatimi chroniclers with regard to the descent from Musa have no foundation of truth. But although it can be proved that the Fatimis were descended from Ismail, son of Jafar Sadik, a certain work published last year[3] has included as appendix a genealogy, which needs our consideration here, since it has been recently written and it purports to be an " authentic " work. The genealogy represents the Fatimis as being descended from Musa, the fourth son of Jafar, instead of Ismail, his eldest son, and for

[1] This *Abdel Rahman,* or *Mohammed,* or *Kaim,* is of course the same person as *Abul Kasim,* which name is given by other historians.

[2] *Cf.* the statement of D. S. Margoliouth (*Enc. Brit.,* 11th ed. art. " Fatimites ") : " Even Obeydallah's father's name is quite uncertain."

[3] S. I. A. Shah, *The Prince Agha Khan : An Authentic Life Story,* London, 1933.

this no reasons are given.[1] This is the genealogy *verbatim :*

Jaffer Sedik, or the Just.

Ismail,
Eldest son of Jaffer Sedik.

Musa,
Jaffer Sedik's second son acknowledged by the ordinary Shiahs as the Seventh Imam.

Ali Wasi Muhammad.

Ali Wafi Ahmad.

Ali Taqi Kasim.[2]

Ali Razi Abdullah.

Ali Muhammad Mehdi,
the first Ismailian Caliph of Egypt.

Ali Koem bi-Amr-illah Ahmad.

Ali Mansur bi-quwat-illah Ali.

Ali Muaz bi-din-illah Saad.

Ali Aziz b-illah Nasr.

The names, surnames and titles mentioned are so hopelessly mixed that I think it is useless to examine each one separately. In order to see at a glance the correct place of each character and his title, the follow-

[1] It is without any desire to belittle the learning of any author, or the merit of any work, that I examine here all the details relevant to this subject. My comments are intended entirely as research work on the history of Islam during the Middle Ages.

[2] *Taki* was the surname of the Imam Husein, and *Kasim* was the surname of Musa ; accordingly, " Taqi Kasim " cannot be the *name* of *one* person.

ing table, showing the descent from Mohammed the Concealed,[1] can be used for comparison. The *italicised* words represent the titles or surnames of the characters :

Mohammed *el-Maktum.*
|
Abdallah *Radi.*
|
Ahmed *Wafi.*
|
Husein *Taki.*
|
Abu Mohammed Obeydallah *el-Mahdi.*
|
Abul Kasim Mohammed *el-Kaim Biamr Allah.*
|
Abu Tahir Ismail *el-Mansur Biamr Allah.*
|
Abu Tamim Maad *el-Moezz Lidin Allah.*
|
Abu Mansur Nizar *el-Aziz Billah.*

In comparing these two, although the names, and especially the titles, of the Concealed Imams can in no way be taken as a guide to identifying the persons, when the author of the " Authentic Life Story " gives strange names to well-known figures in history,[2] such as I have not found mentioned by any historian, if the author is ill-informed on these primary details, his information concerning other matters also, such as the descent from Musa, should not in my opinion be taken as reliable. Musa's descendants were called Ali Rida, Mohammed Jawad, Ali Hadi, Hasan Askari, Mohammed Muntazar,[3] and these names are known throughout the whole of Persia, where the people

[1] This person is the one designated " Ali Wasi Muhammad." See also p. 155.

[2] Such as calling all the Imams by the same name *Ali*, Obeydallah *Mohammed* (instead of *Abu Mohammed*, " Father of Mohammed "), his son the Caliph Kaim *Ahmed*, the latter's son the Caliph Mansur *Ali*, the Caliph Moezz *Saad* (instead of *Maad*), and the Caliph Aziz *Nasr* (instead of *Nizar*).

[3] Whether Mohammed Muntazar existed at all has been a subject of controversy, some noted historians having stated that his father died without offspring. See Ibn Hazm, *Kitab el-Milal wan-Nihal*, *J.A.O.S.*, 1909, p. 76.

consider Musa and his descendants as their Imams and are accordingly called " Twelvers." The Persians do not recognise any other Imams except these. Therefore for Obeydallah and the Fatimis to be represented as Imams directly descended from Musa is not correct. The ancestors of the Agha Khan were natives of Persia, but they were not, and did not claim to be, descendants of Musa, as all the historical works on this subject attest. Perhaps the author of the " Authentic Life Story " not being an Ismaili himself has thought that Musa was the legal successor of Jafar Sadik, following the tradition of the Persians, and accordingly has traced the descent inadvertently to him. On the other hand it might be that the book is " authentic " only where it concerns the present Agha Khan, and does not claim to be (as it is a non-scholastic work for the general public) a reliable record of the ancestry of the Agha Khan.

One more comment might be made on the many titles and surnames that have been given to the various missionaries and Imams. As Blochet states, " the chroniclers have given different surnames in accordance with the diverse circumstances " of their religious lives, and therefore it is not surprising to find that writers have not followed a definite rule in the giving of specific surnames to the Imams, especially in the case of the Concealed Imams. This diversity of designations is in particular to be found among Persian writers, who apparently have not had access to the works of the western Moslem historians, wherein a certain amount of rule and form has been maintained.[1] As an example we might quote a genealogy given by a Persian Ismaili,[2] whose designations (shown in *italics*) of the Imams will be of interest to compare with the general rule followed by Western historians.

[1] I am referring to the noted chroniclers of Egypt, Syria, Arabia and the Maghreb.

[2] Ghulam Ali ibn Mohammed (fl. A.D. 1697), *Lamaat et-Tahirin*. This was briefly reviewed by Ivanow in *J.A.S.B.*, 1922, p. 405.

Jafar *Sadiq.*
|
Ismail *Imam Zada.*
|
Mohammed *es-Sabih.*
|
Ahmed *er-Radi.*
|
Mohammed *et-Taki.*
|
Ahmed *el-Kufi.*
|
Abdullah *Mahdi*
(Obeydallah).
|
Mohammed *el-Kaim.*
|
Mawlana Ismail *el-Maghrebi.*
|
Muizzuddin.

The terms *Zada, Sabih, Mawlana, Wasi, Biquwat* (the last two given by the author of the "Authentic Life Story"), are not mentioned in connection with the Ismaili Imams by any of the chroniclers who lived westward of Persia. Similarly in another book by the same author *Meimun* is variously called "Mausun (the dentist)" and "Mannim," designations which I have not found given in any historical work.

4. THE DIVERSITY OF GENEALOGICAL TREES

We now come to the third of the three possible meanings of the word "uncertainty" in connection with the genealogies: the *number* of names shown between Obeydallah and Ismail as varying between three and seven. This last question has been considered

by scholars as the most important. It has been asked: Even though the Concealed Imams have been called by different names, why should the historians differ with regard to the *number* of Imams between Obeydallah and Ismail? This question, like all the others on the "uncertainty," seems to me unnecessary if one has a knowledge of the Arabic manuscripts.

For instance, Nuweiri gives the genealogy of Meimun thus[1]: *Abu Shakir Meimun ibn Deisan ibn Saiyid Ghadban.* In the same work, and even as near as on the following page, he refers to him thus: *Abu Shakir Meimun ibn Saiyid.* It is noticeable that *ibn Deisan* has disappeared, and therefore while in the former genealogy three names appear, the latter contains only two. The account of the chronicler Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad has a similar reduction in the number of names. These two historians, however, we might say, have consciously made the mistake for a definite purpose, but on the other hand it must be observed that the Arabic manuscripts are full of instances where such mistakes have been made quite inadvertently. In Arabic practically all names are given with their genealogies, thus: Mohammed ibn Ismail ibn Jafar ibn Mohammed ibn Ali ibn Husein ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib. When such long descriptive names are repeated over and over again in connection with almost all the persons in a single work, it is not difficult to see that sometimes one or two names can be missed out unintentionally. And when once a mistake of this kind is made in copying a large manuscript, future copyists continue making the same mistake, or even perhaps miss out other names also. Thus by the time twenty or thirty copies of a work are made, names and genealogies are found to have altered beyond recognition. Examples of such cases are legion in Arabic works, and it is not necessary to

[1] "Extrait de Nowairi," in De Sacy's *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 440.

quote examples other than the ones hitherto cited,[1] since all scholars dealing with manuscripts regard such instances as ordinary. It is needless to add that when the names of well-known figures are mentioned with their genealogies, mistakes are rare, for the copyists know these names and genealogies by heart as part of their education, but in the case of lesser known characters, such as the Concealed Imams, confusions are very frequent. We might, however, quote how De Sacy describes the ancestors of Obeydallah, the Concealed Imams, as he is one of the few great orientalists that Europe has produced[2] :

" Obeydallah was the son of Husein, son of Ahmed, or the proper son of Ahmed. According to the books of the Druses, which are of great authority here, Saiyid, who changed afterwards his name to Obeydallah, and was recognised in Africa as the Mahdi, was the son of Ahmed. Ahmed had also the name Abdallah, at least one Druse writer, contemporary of Hakem, says so positively in a work which makes part of the accounts of the Druses. The same Druse writer, who states that Ahmed, father of Saiyid, had also the name Abdallah, names also Saiyid, *son of Shalaghlagh.* In comparing all that the various historians have said regarding Saiyid, the following seems to me the most correct. Ahmed had left two sons, *Husein* and *Mohammed* : the latter was surnamed *Abul Shalaghlagh.* Husein had Saiyid for son ; but Saiyid having lost his father, when he was still a child, was brought up by his uncle Mohammed, who gave him his daughter to marriage.[3] Saiyid in consequence has been called

[1] Take as an example the name of the missionary Ibn Hausheb given by Makrisi, Bibars Mansuri and Abul Feda, and most of the genealogical tables cited previously. Nuweiri calls Ibn Hausheb thus : *Abul Husein* or *Abul Kasim* or *Hasan* or *Rustam ibn Karhin ibn Hausheb ibn Dadan.* " Extrait de Nowairi," De Sacy, *ibid.*, p. 445. See p. 128.

[2] De Sacy, *ibid.*, p. 252.

[3] From this it can be seen how the anti-Fatimi historians have built up the story of the Jewish smith.

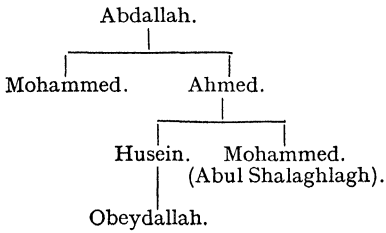
son of Ahmed, although he was in reality his grandson, and *son of Abul Shalaghlagh*, because he had been brought up by the latter. He has also been called *son of Abdallah*, because his grandfather Ahmed was the son of Abdallah (or because Ahmed himself has also had the name Abdallah). Lastly, *Abul Shalaghlagh* has also been written as *Shalaghlagh*, by measure of contraction: these kinds of confusions are not at all rare among the oriental writers."

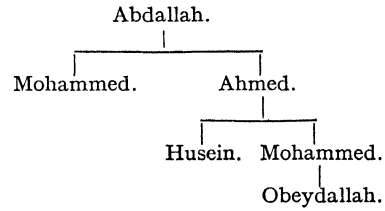
Earlier in the genealogical tree of Obeydallah, we notice similar confusions, thus: Abdallah had two sons, Mohammed and Ahmed; consequently, according to the historian Ibn Nadim, Ahmed has been variously described as either the son of Mohammed, and therefore the grandson of Abdallah, or the son of Abdallah.[1] The confusion seems to arise from the fact that apparently Mohammed succeeded Abdallah as the Imam of the Ismailis (according to Ibn Nadim), and when he died, without offspring, his brother Ahmed succeeded him, hence the error concerning Ahmed. This applies also to the two sons of Ahmed. When Husein died, leaving the infant Saiyid, his brother Abul Shalaghlagh carried on the affairs of the Imamate until Saiyid became of age, or until he himself died, hence doubtless the reason for Abul Shalaghlagh being considered as an Imam who succeeded Husein and to whom Obeydallah succeeded.

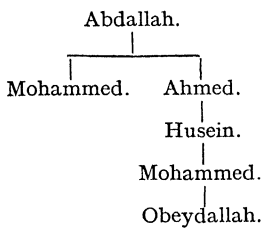
Although this far we have only considered the genealogical tree between Obeydallah and Abdallah, in order to see at a glance in how many different ways even this little information could be described, and has been described, by the historians (such as the Druses, Ibn Nadim, Bibars Mansuri, Nuweiri, Ibn Athir, etc.), we will put all the various informations of the

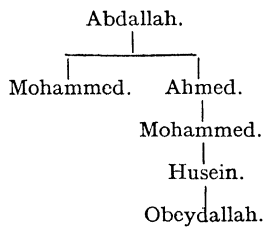
[1] Ibn Nadim, *Kitab el-Fihrist*, p. 137. This writer is sometimes referred to after the name of his book, *Fihrist*. He should not be confused with the Indian Ismaili, called Ismail Majdu, who flourished in the eighthteenth century. The latter's work is called *Fihrist-ul Majdu*, and he is also known as the *Fihrist*. Ibn Nadim flourished in the tenth century.

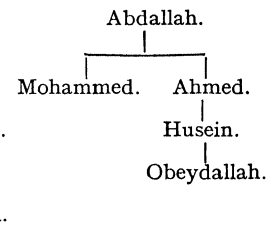
chroniclers we have so far consulted into proper genealogical trees.

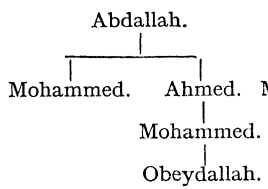


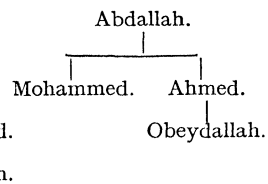


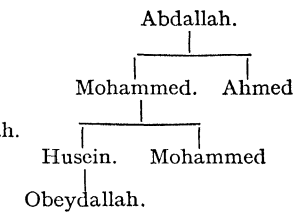


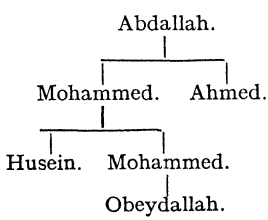


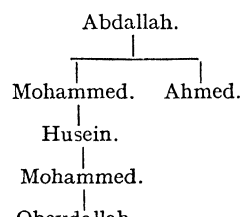


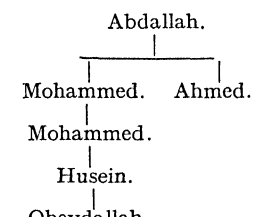


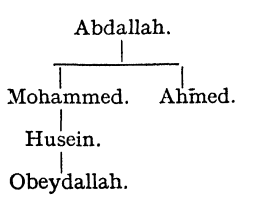


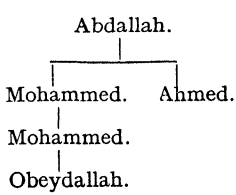


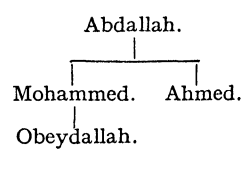













Abdallah.
Mohammed. Ahmed.
Husein. Mohammed.
Obeydallah.
Abdallah.
Mohammed. Ahmed.
Obeydallah. Mohammed.
Husein.
Abdallah.
Mohammed. Ahmed.
Obeydallah. Husein.
Mohammed.
Abdallah.
Mohammed. Ahmed.
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Abdallah.
Husein. Ahmed.
Obeydallah. Mohammed.
Abdallah.
Mohammed. Husein.
Ahmed Mohammed.
Obeydallah.
Abdallah.
Mohammed. Husein.
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Abdallah.
Ahmed. Obeydallah.
Husein.
Mohammed.
Abdallah.
Ahmed. Obeydallah.
Mohammed.
Husein.
Abdallah.
Mohammed. Husein.
Obeydallah. Ahmed.
Abdallah.
Ahmed. Obeydallah.



In the above it will be noticed that the rule of calling each person with a definite name has been observed, and yet it results in not less than fifty different genealogies, the number of the persons' names appearing between Abdallah and Obeydallah varying from four to nothing. These have been given by various historians who consciously or unconsciously throughout their works have varied the form of designations or the number of persons.[1] Now when we examine the genealogy earlier than Abdallah, and find that Abdallah's father, Mohammed

[1] *Cf.* the remarks of Ibn Nadim and De Sacy cited above.

the Concealed, had another son named Jafar, surnamed Musadik, who also had a son named Mohammed, surnamed Habib, and some historians have stated that these two preceded Abdallah in the Imamate, it can be seen how easily with the inclusion of these, the diversity of the form of genealogies could rise to nearly a hundred, the number of persons appearing in the genealogies varying between three and seven.

It would perhaps be as well to remember in this connection that in Arabic people's names do tend to confusion. Thus a person who is called Ahmed, and has a father called Abdallah, and a son called Mohammed, is designated thus: Abu Mohammed Ahmed ibn Abdallah. When copying this short name if either *abu* or *ibn* is missed out, it does not become very clear who is whose son and whose father, since there is no special rule whether the son's, the father's or the personal name should be put first. On the other hand if any one of the names is missed out, then of course this small genealogy which would have otherwise comprised three generations, is not only reduced to two, but also hopelessly confused. When besides this we remember that manuscripts had to be copied by hand, and once the original was not available, copies of copies had to be made, we can quite easily understand how a slight error once made with a name could be gradually developed into such confusion that it would be past recognition. This of course would happen oftener with longer designations and lesser known characters than with names and characters of universal repute. But if we now consider that many confusions have been effected with names and genealogies of persons whose identities have not been made a subject of controversy, how far would this be true in the case of the Concealed Imams, whose names and genealogies have been given, or attempted, not only by almost every historian who has mentioned the Fatimis, but also a good number

of the chroniclers have given long descriptions of what other historians have said on the subject.

As to the European scholars' point of view that the question of the genealogy of the Fatimis should be left open as " uncertain," my reply will be that most names and genealogies that have been sufficiently cited in Arabic manuscripts are " uncertain "—if this term can be used—and therefore since these same scholars have established other dynasties' genealogies, they should consider it their duty as historians to do the same in the case of the Fatimis, naturally taking a little more trouble over them than the others, since theirs has been a controversial subject for ten centuries. The fact that so much has been written about the Fatimis should not be regarded, in view of the condition of the manuscripts, as an excuse for expressing doubt about their genealogy and calling it " uncertain," but on the contrary this should be looked upon as showing that we have sufficient material to-day to be able to make an effort to sift the correct from the false, and find the truth underlying it.[1] In doing so, however, the following important points should always be borne in mind: the manuscripts we are able to consult are only copies of the original works and naturally contain many errors; the Concealed Imams have themselves changed their names at different times; the " origin " of the Fatimis has been a controversial subject for the past ten centuries, and therefore not only many early historians have had reason to confuse intentionally the correct genealogy, but also the more they have written on the subject, the more works contain errors; the adherents of the Fatimis, the Ismailis, have not written on the subject with a view of examining or proving the genealogy, but all those who have written debating this matter have been non-Ismailis, most of them anti-Fatimis; there-

[1] It is interesting to notice that no ancient historian was satisfied that the origin of the Fatimi Caliphs could be simply left at: " It is uncertain."

fore not only there have been, as we should have expected, many intentional confusions, but also the few non-Ismailis (Ibn Khaldun, Abul Feda, Makrisi, etc.) who have been disinclined to participate in this enmity, have not had the required knowledge or been able to consult reliable works in order to write authoritatively on the subject.

5. ON THE CHOICE OF RELIABLE WORKS

In examining the works of ancient historians we formed the inevitable impression: that they are rarely to be relied upon with regard to the names and genealogies. But this should not be the final viewpoint of scholars endeavouring to form a correct opinion on the subject. All works, in fact, both ancient and modern, being produced by human beings, naturally cannot be expected to be faultless. It was stated, however, that the ancient works contained more errors because they were copied many times by hand. But it will be worth our while now to see whether in the works of modern writers, with the facility provided by the printing press, correct details are given in regard to either specific or general subjects. Further, since our examination of the ancient works included all authors, irrespective of their extent of learning, we will do the same with modern writers, choosing such works as are both scholastic and of a semi-technical nature. In choosing extracts from modern works, however, we will include only those that although they concern Islam and the Ismailis generally, nevertheless do not contain references to the question of the " origin " of the Fatimis, so that they should be free from decided opinions, and we may be able to give a better judgment on them. It might be emphasized also that in giving extracts our aim is not to belittle the learning of their authors, but on the contrary to emphasize again to those European scholars who have stated that the origin of the Fatimis is " uncertain "

owing to the unreliability of details in ancient works, that no historical work is absolutely reliable, and that it should be historians' duty to find out what is reliable and therefore certain, irrespective of whether the works are ancient, modern, scholastic or semi-technical.

" Ideas[1] that are current in Afghanistan about Sufism are that the cult dates from the latter part of the eleventh century, and was founded by a branch of that sect of Islam known as Ismaelites, headed by one Hassan Sabah, who, driven from Cairo by the persecution of the orthodox, spread a modified form of the Ismaelite doctrine throughout Syria and Persia. . . . That he was the founder of Sufism as we know it to-day is certain."[2]

" The movement[3] of Ismailiyas was started by Abdallah ibn Mausun, the Dentist, who died in A.D. 874. He made use of the doctrine of Wakil, and represented himself as speaking for the hidden Imam. The missionaries he sent out were to insinuate themselves into the confidences of people by all and every means and then, after getting a pledge of secrecy, were to induce the convert to give implicit obedience to the Imam, or his earthly representative. His disciple started A.H. 277 (A.D. 890) the Carmathian sect, after his own name of Hamdan Carmat. The fanaticism of this sect as well as of Fatimides or Western Ismailiyas and other Shia sects like the Assassins, was actuated by the notion of the return of the Mahdi. Abdullah bin Mannim, the founder of the Ismailiya sect seems to have affirmed the indestructibility of matter, and further that God is not apart from his manifestations."[4]

[1] S. I. A. Shah, *Afghanistan of the Afghans*, London, 1928, pp. 163, 165.

[2] According to this passage the famous Persian Sufi poets (Hafiz, Attar, Rumi, Jami, etc.) were Ismailis ! For a correct account of the Sufis see *Encyclopædia of Islam*, art. " Sufism."

[3] Shah, *Eastward to Persia*, London, 1930, pp. 167, 168.

[4] Compare this passage with the " Authentic Life Story " of the Agha Khan, Appendix I, by the same author, wherein he has given a genealogy showing the Imams of the Ismailis, the Fatimis, and the " Assassins " (Nizaris), as being descended from Musa, the 7th Imam of the *Twelvers*.

" Mohamet, the epileptic Indian prophet."[1]

" At the courts of pre-Islamic Khalifs."[2]

" In the year 647, the Khalif of Baghdad, Othman, determined to wrest Africa from Byzantium."[3]

The above extracts are from works that might be called semi-technical. Now let us consult some statements made by experts on the subject.

" Musa el Kasim, son of Jafar el Sadik, and eighth Imam of the Shias."[4]

" Imam Jafar, son of Imam Mohammed, son of Imam Ali, son of Imam Hasan, son of Imam Ali."[5]

" Ismail died five years before his father, Jafar el Sadik, in the year A.H. 145 (A.D. 762). The author of Jihan Kusha (Juweini) gives also this same date."[6]

" Ismail died before his father, five years according to Blochet."[7]

" Ismail died five years before his father in A.H. 143 (A.D. 760)."[8]

" In A.H. 312 (A.D. 924) Obeydallah added a suburb to Kairawan which he called al-Muhammadiya, and which served as a kind of royal cantonments closed against the ordinary citizens."[9]

[1] Dr. A. Cannon, *The Invisible Influence*, London, 1934, p. 92.

[2] S. Erskine, *Vanished Cities of Northern Africa*, London, p. 176.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 192. Baghdad of course was founded in 762.

[4] Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 124. Musa was the *seventh* Imam of the Twelvers.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 78. The last but one name should be *Husein*. In this instance there *were* two brothers (Imams) called Hasan and Husein, and therefore any confusion between the two names would lead to misapprehension. The source on whose authority Blochet gives the genealogy has also the wrong name, *Hasan* (see " Extrait de Nowairi," De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 438), but it seems strange that he should have copied it without commenting or even correcting it. See p. 127.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 51. Jafar died in 765, and therefore, if we take the *date* of Ismail's death given above (762) as the correct detail, the " five years " would not be correct.

[7] I. Friedlaender, *The Heterodoxies of the Shiites, J.A.O.S.*, 1909, p. 133. He does not comment on it.

[8] Cl. Huart, *Enc. of Islam*, ii, art. " Ismailiya," p. 549. The above two and the present extracts are given in the order of their publication. They are of interest in showing how an error once made inadvertently, in modern times, could be repeated over and over again, without any comment, and finally be developed to a definite statement by giving a date that agreed with it.

[9] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 85. Mohammedia

" Obeydallah, son of Abdallah, son of Husein, son of Ahmed."[1]

It might be said in connection with the above that their errors rest on small details, but there are many examples where the inaccuracies are far from trivial. Compare the following statements with one another. They have all been made by Stanley Lane-Poole :

" The Fatimids[2] so far wear a brutal and barbarous character. They do not seem to have encouraged literature or learning ; but this is partly explained by the fact that culture belonged chiefly to the orthodox Caliphate (Abbasids), and its learned men could have no dealings with the heretical pretender."

" The Fatimid[3] rule established in Egypt by Moezz subsisted for two centuries by no merits of the rulers, nor any devotion of the subjects. No great ideas, nor ambitious schemes found a place in their policy."

" In Egypt itself[4] their power rested upon no equitable basis, nor upon any general adhesion to the Shia doctrines ; their throne was founded upon fear, and subsisted by the terror of their foreign legions. The Berber troops, constantly recruited from their birthplace in the west, the Turkish mercenaries, renewed by purchase and volunteering from the east,

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was not founded by Obeydallah (he had nothing whatever to do with it and did not even see it), but by his son, Abul Kasim Mohammed. Its correct date of founding is 928. It was not a suburb of Kairawan, but a town hundreds of miles to the south-west of Kairawan, in the Maghreb. It was built over the site of the ancient Mesila, and to-day is a prosperous town. O'Leary does not quote his source of authority, but he has evidently based it on Lane-Poole's *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 98, where the latter states also that it was a suburb of Kairawan founded in 924, and that it served as capital to Abul Kasim. Mohammedia never became the capital of any of the Fatimi Caliphs. Kairawan had no suburb called Mohammedia under the Fatimis. The chroniclers El-Bekri, El-Kairawani and Ibn Hammad give detailed information on the city of Mohammedia.

[1] Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 116. This is a section of the genealogy given by Lane-Poole as the " official " one of the Fatimis. Although he does not quote his authority, he has evidently based it on De Sacy's *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 67, where we read *Mohammed* instead of *Ahmed*.

[2] Lane-Poole, *ibid.*, p. 98.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

the bloody and sensual Sudanis from the south, these were the bulwarks of the Egyptian Caliphate and the sole cause of its longevity."[1]

After pouring these anathemas on the Fatimi dynasty as a whole, he writes:

"He was[2] a man (Moezz) of politic temper, a born statesman, able to grasp the conditions of success, and to take advantage of every point in his favour. He was also highly educated, and not only wrote Arabic poetry and delighted in its literature, but studied Greek, mastered Berber and Sudani dialects, and is even said to have taught himself Slavonic. His eloquence was such as to move his audience to tears. To prudent statesmanship he added a large generosity, and his love of justice was among his noblest qualities."

"Aziz,[3] the son of Moezz, was an excellent ruler. Big, brave, and comely in person, a bold hunter, and a fearless general, he was of a humane and conciliatory disposition, loth to take offence, and averse from bloodshed."

"His[4] reign (Aziz's) saw many architectural and engineering triumphs at Cairo, such as the Golden Palace, the Pearl Pavilion, his mother's mosque at the Kerafa cemetery, the foundation in 991 of the great mosque known as el-Hakim's, some important canals, bridges, and naval docks. Aziz was a man of orderly mind, and introduced many reforms in ceremonies and management."

"His (Hakem's)[5] most original foundation was the 'Hall of Science,' erected in 1005 chiefly for the propagation of Shia theology, but also for the promotion of learning in general—astronomy, lexicology, grammar,

[1] Compare the statement of E. Graefe, *Enc. of Islam*, ii, art. "Fatimids," p. 92: "Obeydallah's successors were able for long to maintain a position of splendour and power. This they owed not, as Lane-Poole supposes, to their foreign guards, who on the contrary very soon showed themselves a source of danger."

[2] Lane-Poole, *ibid.*, p. 99.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

poetry, criticism, law, medicine. It was a luxuriously fitted establishment, with a magnificent library, largely supplied from the royal palaces, open to everyone, and supplied with all necessaries of study. All the men of learning of Cairo and many visitors from afar used to meet there, and once they were invited in a body to the palace, and returned clothed with robes of honour."

"Nasiri Khusrau[1] found Egypt in a state of tranquillity and prosperity. The shops of the jewellers and money changers, he says, were left unfastened, save by a cord stretched in front, and the people had full confidence in the government and in the amiable Caliph (Mustansir)."

"The Caliph's (Mustansir's)[2] suite included various princes visiting the court, from the Maghreb, Yemen, Rum, Slavonia, Georgia, Nubia, Abyssinia, and even Tatars from Turkestan and the sons of the king of Delhi. Poets and men of letters attended."

"It says much[3] for the literary zeal of the Fatimids that, in spite of this lamentable destruction (the library in the Hall of Science containing 100,000 works), they set about collecting books with so much energy that Saladin found at least 120,000 volumes in their library a century later."

"The general[4] testimony of the Arabic historians points to a mild and even benevolent treatment of the fellahin (peasants) as the prevailing policy of the Fatimid government."

"In art,[5] as has been shown, the immense wealth of the Fatimids tended to encourage the production of costly and beautiful objects of luxury, and the Caliphs and their viziers were notable builders. The great mosques of el-Azhar and Hakem are still standing to testify to their zeal, and the remains of the smaller mosques or chapels of el-Akmar and of es-Salih ibn

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 141. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 142. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 149.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 157. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Ruzzik display the bold and effective designs and austere Kufic inscriptions for which Fatimid art is renowned. The three massive gates of Cairo are among the most enduring relics of the Shia government in Egypt, and it is worth noticing that the formula of faith inscribed in beautiful Kufic characters over the Gate of Victory in the reign of Mustansir has triumphantly survived eight centuries of dominant orthodoxy."

It seems to me strange that these statements could have been written in one small book. In another work the same author writes[1] :

" The Fatimid Khalifs had raised Egypt to the position of a great Mediterranean power. Ibn Tulun had a fleet of 100 ships, but the Fatimid Moezz built 600 in his new dock near Cairo and disputed the command of the sea with the powerful Khalif of Cordova. His government was just and tolerant. . . . Luxurious as the Fatimids were, and profuse patrons of the arts, they were not wholly indifferent to the claims of learning."

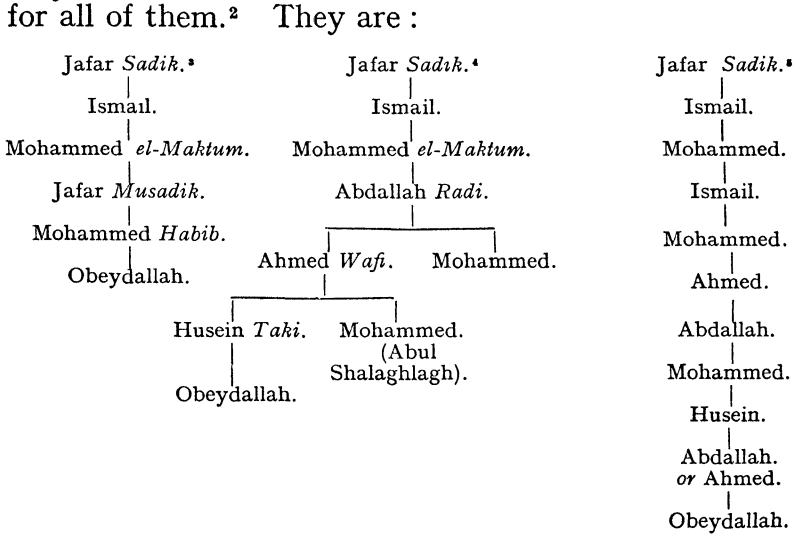
We have now seen that although faults have been found with the works of ancient historians, the accounts of modern writers of both scholastic and semi-historical nature are not free from errors, despite the fact that to-day copies of works are not produced written by hand. It should be observed also that the examples have been limited to a few taken at random from many books of this kind, but even then confusion of names, incorrect citations, adaptation of details without discernment, and prejudiced and contradictory statements, are met with frequently. In making a choice of works in any particular subject, therefore, especially on a theme such as the " origin " of the Fatimis, which has been debated by almost every historian for the last ten centuries, it should not be considered

[1] Lane-Poole, *The Golden Age of Arab Culture*, in *The Universal History of the World*, iv, pp. 2538-2540.

sufficient to report simply what any writer, however learned, or even three or four writers together, have said on the subject, for quite likely these might have copied from one another. In order to come to a satisfactory and correct result an attempt should be made to bring together everything that has been written by practically all writers, preference naturally being given to learned works, and then by discarding what may be regarded as superficial and prejudiced, to judge the remainder with detached discernment.

6. THE CORRECT GENEALOGY

When the genealogies that have been given by all the historians[1] are brought together and compared with one another, it will be noticeable that there are only three main ones, and these have served as bases for all of them.[2] They are :



[1] See the genealogies given hitherto.

[2] This is apparent when we clear them of the confusions with regard to the variety of names and erroneous citations.

[3] Makrisi, *Mukaffa*, in Quatremère's *Mémoires Historiques*, *J.A.*, Aug., 1836, p. 113.

[4] Dai Idris Imadeddin, *Uyun el-Akhbar*, iv, pp. 300 *et seq.*; Ibn Nadim, *Katib el-Fihrist*, pp. 137 *et. seq.*

[5] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 67.

The first of these is given by Makrisi, who has followed Ibn Khaldun in many of his details regarding the Fatimis. This genealogy is mentioned by very few other historians. The second is given by an Ismaili missionary, Saiyidna Imadeddin Idris ibn Hasan (died in A.D. 1468), who held the position of 19th *dai* of the Yemen. This is mentioned (at times Mohammed el-Maktum appearing under his assumed name *Meimun*) by almost 98 per cent. of the historians who have written on the "origin" of the Fatimis. The third is given in one of the religious books of the Druses, called *Division of the Sciences*, and is cited by De Sacy in his *Religion des Druzes*. We will now endeavour to find (*a*) whether one of these is the correct genealogy, and (*b*) whether all these are based on another one which is the original and true genealogy. It might be mentioned again that neither the names nor the number of the Imams shown are a guide to identifying the correct one among them. We will presently see that without relying on either of these factors, the three genealogies together will supply us with the correct solution.

The first important question that we have to consider is this: Has Makrisi based his genealogy[1] on the one given by the greater percentage of historians, with this difference that he has contracted the other a little and called the Imams by different names (perhaps taking designations by which the Imams themselves were known at certain times)? Or has he given an original genealogy? The answer to this Makrisi himself has given. He writes, in explanation of the three surnames appearing in the genealogy that is most cited[2]: "*Radi* is the same as Abdallah, son of

[1] Although Makrisi based many of his details on those of Ibn Khaldun, it should be observed that he himself took pains to arrive at the truth on the question of the origin of the Fatimis, by consulting all the works he could find in his time; and therefore his finding may be regarded as his own. He being a Sunni however (like Ibn Khaldun), was unable to have access to the requisite Ismaili works on the subject. He was a contemporary of the Dai Idris Imadeddin.

[2] Makrisi, *ibid.*, p. 115.

Mohammed, son of Ismail, son of Jafar Sadik. *Wafi* was called Ahmed. *Taki* had for first name Husein. All three concealed themselves in order to elude the pursuits of the Abbasids, who were searching for them eagerly, knowing that one of them would assert his claims to the Caliphate; and Mahdi was called Obeydallah by measure of prudence." It is evident therefore that Makrisi means different persons by the names *Jafar Musadik* and *Mohammed Habib*. He further emphasizes this by giving a long quotation from the Kadi Numan's work on the first Ismaili mission to the Yemen,[1] wherein Ahmed is referred to as Imam, and Husein as the latter's son. This makes it apparent that he knew the names Abdallah, Ahmed and Husein were connected with Obeydallah, and that these were names by which certain persons were recognised generally; and he also knew that these were not the same as *Jafar Musadik* and *Mohammed Habib*, whose names he never confuses with the others.

Now the second important question arises: Why did Makrisi choose to think Jafar Musadik and Mohammed Habib were Obeydallah's ancestors instead of Abdallah, Ahmed and Husein? The answer to this is simple. As has already been stated, before Makrisi's time, all the historians westward of Persia who had written on the controversial subject of the "origin" of the Fatimis, had represented Abdallah as the son of *Meimun*, asserting that this person was a Materialist and that his descendants had "pretended" to the Imamate, and had given long descriptions of how their doctrines gave rise to the destructive tenets of the Karmatis, and how this sect and the Ismailis were the same. Now Makrisi was faced with two difficulties. Firstly he could not disprove that Abdallah was the son of *Meimun*, nor did he discover anything in the Ismaili writings regarding *Meimun*, since this was the assumed name of Mohammed the

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 123-131.

Concealed.[1] Secondly he was unable to differentiate between the doctrines of the Ismailis and the Karmatis, despite the fact that he has used these two designations (when relating their political history) correctly, and therefore he was equally unable to disprove that the tenets of the Karmatis originated from Abdallah.[2] In these circumstances, if he was convinced that the Fatimis were genuine descendants of Ismail, he had no alternative but to disassociate their name from those of Abdallah and Meimun.

Now we come to the third important question: Who then were Jafar Musadik and Mohammed Habib? Were they connected in any way with Mohammed the Concealed ("Meimun") and Abdallah, and did they play a part in the Ismaili movement organised by the latter? Two historians furnish us with the reply to this question. The Persian chronicler Juweini states that Mohammed the Concealed "had several children who escaped to Khorasan. The most remarkable of his descendants spread in the cities of this country and there made many proselytes."[3] The author of *Dastur el-Munajimin*[4] says that

[1] Not only the Ismaili works do not give any of the assumed names of the Concealed Imams, but also they rarely refer to them by their names. *Cf.* Ivanow, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature*, p. 30: "He (Ahmed Wafi) is rarely mentioned by name, and the Ismaili authors refer to him as *Sahibu'r-Rasail* (Author of the Treatises)." The practice of referring to the Imams and the Caliphs by their titles is an accepted custom among Moslem historians.

[2] In describing the doctrines of the Fatimis Makrisi has followed the example of Nuweiri, who describes in detail the tenets of the Karmatis as being those of the Ismailis, on the authority of one named *Akhu Muhsein*, whom he makes a descendant of Jafar Sadik. Under the name *Akhu Muhsein* many things have been written against the Ismailis, but we shall have more to say on this later. To do Makrisi justice, however, it must be said that in his time if he wished to describe the doctrines of the Ismailis, he had no alternative but to take the only account he could find. Apparently he relied on this single account of *Akhu Muhsein*, perhaps judging that the integrity of other renowned historians would not have permitted them to write whole narratives untruthfully. The Ismailis concealed their religious books after the fall of the Fatimis in 1171, a good number of the books being taken out of Egypt to the Yemen, the Levant and Rum. Nuweiri's account of the "doctrines" has been translated by De Sacy, in his *Religion des Druzes*, and Makrisi's by Paul Casanova, in his *La Doctrine Secrete des Fatimides d'Égypte*. See pp. 160-9.

[3] Juweini, *Jihan Kusha*, *Bibl. Nat. MS. Supp. Pers. No.* 205, *fol.* 157.

[4] The text of this was published by De Goeje in his *Mémoires sur les Carmathes du Bahraïn et les Fatimides*. See pp. 63, 85.

Mohammed the Concealed had six sons, one of whom was named Jafar. According to these historians therefore it is apparent that Abdallah had several of his relatives helping him in his work of organising the Ismailis. That one of these relatives was doubtless his own brother Jafar is proved by the fact that several chroniclers not only give Jafar various titles, in accordance with the custom of giving surnames to the Imams, but also represent Obeydallah as being descended from him, which indicates that Jafar indeed played a very important part in the work of Abdallah. Thus Rashideddin in his *Jami et-Tawarikh* states that several writers make Obeydallah descended from Jafar *es-Salami*, son of Mohammed, son of Ismail. Another historian called Sheikh Abul Nasr el-Bukhari, who was a Shia,[1] gives a genealogy as follows on the authority of other writers: Obeydallah, son of Jafar, son of Husein, son of Hasan, son of Jafar *esh-Sheir*, son of Mohammed, son of Ismail. Abul Nasr further states that in his opinion the following was the correct genealogy: Obeydallah, son of Mohammed Habib, son of Jafar (*el-Musadik*), son of Mohammed, son of Ismail. The latter is also the one reported by Ibn Khaldun and Makrisi. From these details we can form two genealogies, showing the alleged descendants of Jafar, the brother of Abdallah. A comparison between the two shows that the second is a confusion of the first:

Jafar *Musadik*.
|
Mohammed *Habib*.

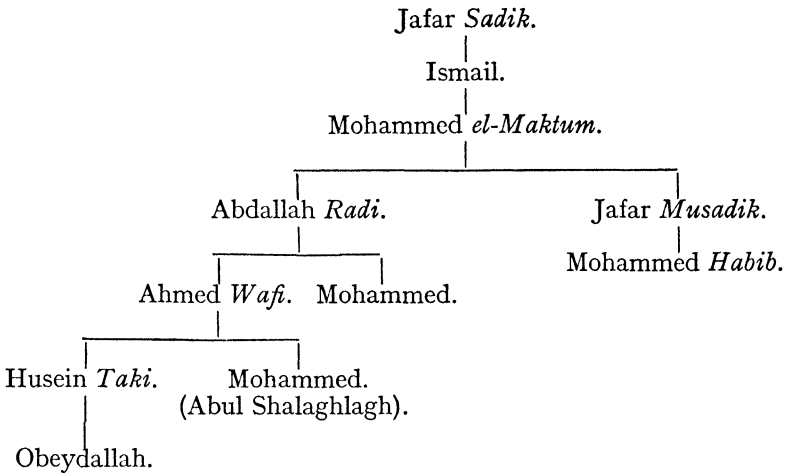
Jafar *Sheir* (or *Salami*).
|
Mohammed.
|
Hasan.
|
Husein.
|
Jafar.

[1] *Bibl. Nat. MS. Ar. No.* 2021, *fol.* 134 *et seq.*

We now come to the most important question: Why have the historians Makrisi, Ibn Khaldun and Abul Nasr Bukhari represented Mohammed Habib as Obeydallah's father, instead of the genuine person, that is the Imam Husein? There are two reasons which quite naturally led them to take their view. First, the Imam Husein died when Obeydallah was still an infant, and the latter was brought up by his uncle, who was called Mohammed (Abul Shalaghlagh). Since many of the accounts have been written on hearsay evidence, some have stated that Mohammed was the father of Obeydallah. Thus the question has come up in various works as to whether Husein or Mohammed was the true father of Obeydallah, the emphasis usually resting naturally on Mohammed, for he was the one with whom Obeydallah was most seen and associated. Second, the names Mohammed and Husein, the latter being the son of Ahmed, son of Abdallah, have been associated with Meimun, who has been called a Materialist. It is therefore obvious that the above three historians, having once been convinced that Obeydallah was a genuine descendant of Ismail, have thought that the "Mohammed" who was being referred to as the father of Obeydallah, was perhaps Mohammed Habib, the son of Jafar Musadik. The fact that Mohammed Habib and Jafar Musadik had played a prominent part in the Ismaili movement has doubtless convinced them that they were in reality Obeydallah's father and grandfather. Such deductions and confusions, it must be remembered, are frequently met with in the accounts of historians. Another very important point in this connection is that all this has been debated at length by non-Ismailis, without any reference to the works of the Ismaili missionaries, who were undoubtedly the correct persons to know the genealogy of their Imams, especially those who were concealed.

We have now ascertained the positions of Jafar

Musadik and Mohammed Habib in their relation to the Concealed Imams, and we will therefore set down the correct genealogy of the Ismaili Imams, showing the descent of Obeydallah.



It is needless to add that the above genealogy could be confused in the hands of historians and copyists of manuscripts into more than a hundred different forms, since we have already seen that the genealogy between Abdallah and Obeydallah alone has been altered in not less than fifty ways. A comparison between this genealogy and the one given in the books of the Druses will show that the latter have represented each person between Mohammed el-Maktum and Obeydallah as being the son of one another, using certain names by which the Imams were known at definite periods. This confusion again emphasizes that each and all of them played prominent parts in the movement that finally brought about the establishment of the Fatimis as an independent Caliphate.

VIII

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

I. HISTORIANS WHO WROTE BEFORE A.D. 1011

THE statement was made at the beginning of this study that no historian who wrote before 1011 on the Fatimis has written anything defamatory concerning the Alid descent of that dynasty. It will be appropriate now to examine as to who were the chroniclers at that period, and what they said, if anything at all, regarding the genealogy of the Fatimis.

A glance at the long list of names of Moslem historians shows that very few flourished between 910 and 1011, from the year Obeydallah declared the independence of the Ismailis until the Manifesto denouncing the Fatimis was made in Baghdad, in proportion with the large number of learned writers who lived betwee, th e 11th and 15th centuries. These few, howeverwe will name, dividing them into two sections.

In the first section come the historians who have written on the Ismailis and Fatimis but have not been referred to by later writers as having written against the doctrines of that community or the Alid descent of the Fatimis. These are :

Abu Jafar Ahmed ibn Jazar, a pupil and contemporary of the famous Abu Ishak ibn Suleiman, the court physician of Obeydallah. Abu Jafar himself was a celebrated physician, for the historian Ibn Hammad states that the two of them attended Obeydallah during his last illness. Abu Jafar later became the

private physician of Abu Talib, grandson of Obeydallah and brother of the Caliph Mansur, apparently because he admired his noble qualities. He wrote many studies on medicine, and one work called *Akhbar ed-Daula*, "History of the True Dynasty," which contained an account of the commencement and progress of the Fatimi Caliphate.[1]

Abu Ishak Ibrahim ibn el-Kasim ibn er-Rakik, flourished about the middle of the tenth century. He served the Fatimis as the head of one of the governmental departments in Kairawan, and as far as we know wrote three works: *History of North Africa*, *Genealogical History of the Berbers*, and a *Treatise* in verse on the different kinds of wine. Leo Africanus refers to him as *Ibn Rachich*, and Marmol as *Ibn el Raquiq*. In 1844 De Slane wrote[2]: "Ibn Rakik was still living in 952," and, "In the seventeenth century several copies of his historical works were still existing in North Africa." But unfortunately these works are not extant to-day. Apparently they contained important details concerning the period of the Fatimis' rule, for both et-Tijani and Nuweiri, especially the latter, made great use of them in their historical accounts of North Africa. Ibn Khaldun, however, cites him only in order to prove that his information is not correct, where it concerns the Berbers. On the other hand it is noteworthy that neither Nuweiri nor Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad report anything against the Alid claims of the Fatimis on the authority of Ibn Rakik.

Ibn Hukal flourished about the beginning of the tenth century. He was a great traveller and geographer, having travelled the whole length of the Moslem world, from East to West, beginning from Baghdad in 943. He studied the works of his pre-

[1] *Cf.* Ibn Khallikan, *Biographical Dictionary*, trans. De Slane, i, p. 672; Abdel Latif, *Relation d'Égypte*, p. 43.

[2] De Slane, *Lettre à M. Hase*, *J.A.*, Nov. 1844, p. 347.

decessors, helped greatly his contemporary el-Itakhri in his work, and wrote an account of travels called *Masalik wal Mamalik*. Dozy states erroneously that he was a spy (missionary ?) of the Fatimis.[1] I have not found his name mentioned in the Ismaili works, nor is his work regarded by the Ismailis as that of an Ismaili author. The section of his *Masalik* dealing with Northern Africa was translated by Baron MacGuckin de Slane in 1842.[2] It contains many interesting descriptions of the cities that have long since disappeared as they were under the Fatimis.

Abu Jafar ibn Mohammed el-Marudi, historian and poet, composed a long account in verse of the early rise of the Fatimis. Several quotations from his work are given by el-Bekri,[3] but unfortunately the latter does not cite the name of the work. According to the references of el-Bekri, el-Marudi must have flourished about the middle or the end of the tenth century.

Kadi Numan, a famous and prolific Ismaili writer, died in 974. He was the first Chief Judge of the Fatimis in Egypt, and wrote some 46 works on History, Tradition, Biography, Canon Law, Dogmatics, Esoteric Philosophy, Allegorism and Controversy. He also collected the sermons of the four Caliphs under whom he served. His works on Controversy do not contain a single mention of there being any question in his time of the Abbasids doubting the direct descent of the Fatimis from the Prophet. One of his noteworthy actions was to collect and set down in permanent form, under the guidance of the Caliph Moezz, the Ismaili laws on jurisprudence existing in his time.[4]

[1] Dozy, *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne*, iii, pp. 17, 181.

[2] Ibn Hukal, *Description de l'Afrique*, trans. De Slane, *J.A.*, Feb., 1842.

[3] See, for instance, el-Bekri, *Description de l'Afrique Septentrionale*, *J.A.*, 1859, i, p. 177.

[4] A brief biography of the Kadi Numan was recently written by Asaf A. A. Fyzee, *J.R.A.S.*, 1934, pp. 1-15. I should perhaps mention that Kadi Numan was not the only Ismaili writer between 910 and 1011. There were the famous *dais* Abu Abdallah en-Nasafi (died in 952 ; not to be confused with the *dai* of the Maghreb who was called Abu Abdallah and died in 911 ; the latter was the author of a book called *The Doctrines of God as Revealed*

Masudi, a noted Arab traveller, born in Baghdad, died in Damascus in 956. According to him, he had a " thirst for knowledge," and accordingly began in 915 to measure the whole length and breadth of the eastern half of the Moslem world, from Egypt to the China Sea, and from Zanzibar to the Caspian. He composed a history of the world in 30 volumes, collecting in it all the tales and legends that he had heard. Although he covered in this work almost the whole field of interest in his time in philology, theology, philosophy, ethics, and politics, and wrote on such subjects as " Materialism," he does not mention the name " Meimun," nor does he refer to the doctrines of Abdallah and Ahmed as being " heretical."

Arib ibn Saad was a Spanish scholar who flourished about the middle of the tenth century. We have already had occasion to refer to him. He was undoubtedly a reputed scholar in his time, and enjoyed the patronage of the Omeyya emirs of Spain, serving as Secretary to the emir Hakam II (961-976). He wrote an abridgment of Tabari's famous history, adding to it the histories of North Africa and Spain, regarding which Tabari wrote nothing.

Miskaweihi was an office-holder at the courts of the Buweihi emirs of Baghdad, Moezz ed-Daula, Rukn ed-Daula and Adud ed-Daula. He wrote a work called *The Experiences of the Nations*, which included a copious history of the Abbasid Caliphs of his time (from Muktadir to Tai : 908-991), and from his intimate details it seems that he was well-informed on his subject. We shall hear more of him later.

In the second section come four chroniclers who are alleged to have referred before 1011 to the Ismailis and Fatimis in their works. They are Akhu Muhsein,

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to Abu Abdallah), Abu Yakub es-Sijistani, Abu Hatim el-Warsinani, Jafar ibn Mansur, etc. Above however are mentioned only those authors, both Sunni and Shia, who wrote on the *history* of the Fatimis. The Ismaili missionaries wrote philosophical treatises.

Ibn Razzam, Ibn Nadim, Tabari. These four are relied upon by later historians as the most authoritative chroniclers on the question of the doctrines or genealogy of the Fatimis, so that a critical examination of their characters and works is appropriate.

The learned De Sacy writes in introducing his translation of Nuweiri's account of the doctrines of the Ismailis[1]: "Two famous authors will supply me for this with invaluable aid: these are Makrisi and Nuweiri. These two historians have doubtless drawn from the same source, for they employ nearly always the same expressions, and it is possible to correct the text of one with that of the other; but as Nuweiri is sometimes a little more lengthy, I will follow him for preference. This writer has derived all that he reports from a work whose title he does not indicate, composed by a Sherif whose name is Abul Hasan Mohammed ibn Ali, and who is known under the name of Akhu Muhsein. He was descended from Mohammed, son of Ismail, son of Jafar, and Nuweiri counts but five generations between him and Mohammed, son of Ismail; so that there is reason to believe that he was a contemporary of Obeydallah, the first of the Fatimi Caliphs, which, combined with his intimate relations with the branch of the Sherifs descended from Mohammed, son of Ismail, authorise us to think that he should have been well instructed."

Blochet writes[2]: "Nuweiri only summarises what an Alid Sherif had written, named Akhu Muhsein, and whose complete name was: Abul Husein Mohammed ibn Ali ibn el Husein Ahmed ibn Ismail ibn Mohammed ibn Ismail ibn Jafar el Sadik."

When we compare the genealogy given by Blochet and the statement of De Sacy that there were "five generations between Akhu Muhsein and Mohammed, son of Ismail," it will be noticeable that there were

[1] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., pp. 73-4.
[2] Blochet, *Les Messianisme*, p. 54.

in reality only three generations, so that, contrary to the theory of De Sacy, if we apply his own statement, Akhu Muhsein was not a contemporary of Obeydallah, but lived a generation or two earlier.[1]

Now who was this Akhu Muhsein, on whose authority so many later historians have given accounts of doctrines said to have been those of the Ismailis? He is represented as the only Alid who wrote on the Ismaili tenets before the year 1011, and therefore his word is taken as an authoritative one. Before examining his identity we might quote again Makrisi's comments[2]: "The Sherif Abul Husein Mohammed ibn Ali, better known under the name of Akhu Muhsein Dimashki, in the work which he has composed in order to defame the Fatimi Caliphs of Egypt, has written on this subject a long narrative, which, when all is said, is not by him, and has for author Abu Abdallah ibn Razzam. This writer has inserted it in the special treatise where he refutes the opinions of the Ismailis, and from where the Sherif has extracted it, without daring to find fault with it. This tradition, received eagerly by the chroniclers of Syria, Irak and the Maghreb, is spread everywhere, and is to be found textually copied in all the treatises of history. This account, however, is nothing but a tissue of falsehood."

We learn from Makrisi that the account of doctrines ascribed to Akhu Muhsein was not in reality written by him, but he had extracted it from another writer, called Ibn Razzam. But the fact that Akhu Muhsein

[1] It might be observed that De Sacy has made his deduction by following the confused genealogy given in one of the religious books of the Druses, which shows *seven* generations between Obeydallah and Mohammed el-Maktum, so that, taking his erroneous statement of *five* generations between Akhu Muhsein and Mohammed el-Maktum, it does appear that Obeydallah and Akhu Muhsein were perhaps contemporaries. But if we take into account the correct number of *three* generations for Akhu Muhsein as supplied by Nuweiri, and compare it with the correct genealogy of Obeydallah, which also shows *three* generations between him and Mohammed el-Maktum, we shall arrive at the strange conclusion that despite De Sacy calculating wrongly, and this on a confused genealogy, he has nevertheless made a correct statement!

[2] Makrisi, in Quatremère's *Mémoires Historiques, loc. cit.*, p. 117.

had followed the lead taken by Ibn Razzam, and he *is* described as an Alid descended from Mohammed el-Maktum, raise the necessity for us to find out more about him, since only by forming a correct opinion on his identity and place in history will we be able to decide whether to credit him with the authoritative voice that has been usually given him.

Two historians state exactly what became of the descendants of Mohammed el-Maktum. These are the Persian Juweini and the author of *Dastur el-Munajimin*. According to them Mohammed had six children. The most remarkable of the descendants of these six children spread in the cities of Khorasan and there made many proselytes. The remainder went to Kandahar and settled on the borders of Hindustan.

According to this information then the ancestors of Akhu Muhsein were either among the " remarkable " descendants who endeavoured to win support for the cause of the Ismaili Imamate, or among those who settled in India. We will therefore determine under which group he came.

During the lifetime of the Imams Abdallah, Ahmed and Husein, it is not known for certain how many of their relatives were alive and helping the movement. We have already seen that there were two named Jafar Musadik and Mohammed Habib. But did these survive until Husein and did they leave any issue? We hear of a certain Sherif endeavouring to reconcile the followers of Hamdan Karmat with the main branch of the Ismailis in the lifetime of Husein,[1] when the first signs of a disagreement appeared and it was feared that the followers whom Karmat had won might drift apart. But the name of this Sherif is not given, and he is stated to have been killed in a sedition.[2] He is not mentioned as having had offspring.

After the death of Husein, however, we find ourselves on surer ground regarding the members of this family.

[1] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., pp. 196-202. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

While the brother of Husein, Mohammed, surnamed Abul Shalaghlagh, was administering the affairs of the Ismailis until the son of Husein, Obeydallah, became of age, we have no record of there being any other relatives except these two. When Abul Shalaghlagh also died, there remained only Obeydallah, who now having grown up was able to guide the Ismailis. Abul Shalaghlagh is not stated to have had offspring, and the fact that Husein died while Obeydallah was still a child gives us reason to believe that Obeydallah had no brothers. But a far better indication of how many members were still alive is supplied by the instance when Obeydallah prepared to leave Salamia for the Maghreb. He gathered together all his entourage, and forming a caravan, disguised as merchants, began his long journey to the Maghreb. The only kinsmen who are mentioned in this caravan are his mother, and his only son, Abul Kasim. This is emphasized by the fact that when he reached Tripoli, he left his mother in that city, and with Abul Kasim took the road to Sijilmasa. In Sijilmasa again we hear of only Obeydallah and Abul Kasim, and when they were released, and Obeydallah ruled as Caliph, his mother is mentioned as having been brought from Tripoli to Rakkada, the capital. During the first few years of the reign of Obeydallah, when it was so difficult to find reliable officers to quell the many rebellions (after the death of Abu Abdallah the missionary), it is natural to suppose that if he had any relatives, near or distant (in addition to Abul Kasim), he would have called them to help him during his difficult times, or at least recompensed them with high positions for past services. Or, if there had been any kinsmen who knew him from Salamia and had helped him there, they would have doubtless repaired to Rakkada to have a little share in the success of Obeydallah. The fact that after he left Salamia, this place ceased to exist for the Ismailis as a missionary

centre, and during his Caliphate no kinsmen are mentioned except his son Abul Kasim, lead us to conclude that he had no contemporary kinsmen, except of course his own offspring.

Now we come to Akhu Muhsein. It is evident that he or his ancestors did not belong to the group of " remarkable " descendants of Mohammed el-Maktum who preached the doctrines of the Ismailis. Accordingly, he must have belonged, if his identity is a real fact in history, to the other group who settled in India. The question therefore arises whether he living in India could have been sufficiently in touch with the first group who developed the doctrines of the Ismailis, in order to be able to write an account as detailed as the one ascribed to him. This is scarcely possible, for not only the Ismailis moved gradually westward from Persia as they grew stronger, until they settled in the west of Northern Africa, but also there was little interrelation between India and the Middle East at this period, especially no *constant* contact, as would have been needed for Akhu Muhsein to be aware and learn of the development of the doctrines. Even if we accept the view that he was able to make such intercourse, and also that he was a contemporary of Obeydallah, it seems a little unreasonable that a manuscript written by him in India could have been unearthed in the west of Persia more than a century later, for as we know the agitation to write against the Fatimis and to learn all that was derogatory about them did not begin until the year 1011. On the other hand, if we ponder the question whether he might by chance have belonged to the group of " remarkable " descendants, here again it is unlikely that he would have written against the doctrines of the Ismailis, because it is known that the whole group worked together in one spirit for the guidance and welfare of the Ismailis. Again, even if we take the view that perhaps he had a grudge for some reason or another against his kinsmen,

once more he would not have been able to produce the account ascribed to him, for he would have doubtless known of the existence of the *Treatises of the Brethren of Purity*, and read its contents, which makes it impossible for any person to calumniate and to misrepresent it in such a way as to produce the details given in the account reported under the name of Akhu Muhsein.

In determining whether or not a Sherif named Akhu Muhsein existed at all, and if so, at what period, we are naturally bound to follow the details supplied by other historians concerning him, for the work under consideration having perished long ago, we are unable to gain information from an original source.

As De Sacy remarks, there are only two noteworthy historians who have preserved in some measure the contents of the work. They are Nuweiri and Makrisi. Nuweiri writes nothing regarding Akhu Muhsein except to give him a genealogy which makes him appear a contemporary of Obeydallah. But Makrisi gives a few details which throw light on his identity. He writes : " The Sherif known under the name of Akhu Muhsein, in the work which he has composed in order to defame the Fatimi Caliphs of Egypt, has written on this subject a long narrative, which, when all is said, is not by him, but by Ibn Razzam. . . . The Sherif has extracted it without daring to find fault with it." Here then we learn that, first, Akhu Muhsein had copied the work from another writer's *in order to defame the Fatimi Caliphs of Egypt*, and second, he had done so *without daring to find fault with it.* These two details at once place him, if he existed at all, *not* as a contemporary of Obeydallah, but at some period after the year 1011, since the Fatimis did not take their residence in Cairo until 973, and the desire of the Abbasids to speak and to write against the Fatimis did not begin until 1011. Moreover, the

fact that the Sherif did not " dare to find fault " with what he had copied proves that he was strongly under the influence of the Abbasids, otherwise, we might reasonably presume, he would have made some comments with regard to his own views on the subject for thus writing or copying a calumniating account relating to his own kinsmen.

Having ascertained the correct period at which Akhu Muhsein might have lived, it is now necessary to determine also as to the true nature of the work ascribed to him, and its real author, Ibn Razzam. With regard to this person we have details given by an older historian than either Nuweiri or Makrisi, and therefore we will give preference to him as an authority preceding the others. He is the famous Arab traveller Masudi, who died in Damascus in 956. He writes[1] : " In our book entitled *The Treasures of the Religion and the Secret of the Worlds* (now lost), where we spoke about the founders of sects, heads of religion, and of different doctrines which they have professed, we cited the doctors who have contested the sect of Karmatis, refuted their propositions and exposed their systems." Among these doctors he names Abu Abdallah Mohammed ibn Ali ibn Razzam, and adds[2] : " And what each of these authors says of the Karmatis is different from what another one says : besides, the members even of the sect deny all that is affirmed in these books and refuse to recognise their fidelity." With regard to this passage of Masudi, P. Casanova writes[3] : " It is the testimony the most ancient, after that of Tabari. It is, as can be seen, the formal condemnation of Ibn Razzam, who, as we have said, is the authority followed by the *Fihrist* (Ibn Nadim) and also by Akhu Muhsein, which Nuweiri and Makrisi have followed in their turn."

[1] Cited by P. Casanova, *La Doctrine Secrète des Fatimides d'Égypte*, in *Bul. Inst. Fr. Arch. Or.*, 1921, p. 156.
[2] *Ibidem.*
[3] *Idem.*

It is evident then that the work written by Ibn Razzam concerns not the Ismailis, but the Karmatis. Whether the refutation of certain doctrines of the Karmatis by one author, who is not in agreement with the other authors of his time, and whose statements are denied by the Karmatis themselves, can be taken as a sufficiently reliable authority, does not concern us here. All that is relevant at present, is that the work written by Ibn Razzam and ascribed to Akhu Muhsein, describes *only* the doctrines of the *Karmatis,* who formed a *separate* sect of their own after they drifted apart from the Ismailis. The reason why the work was later taken as describing the doctrines of the Ismailis, may be found due to the way the Abbasids and other Sunni historians, after the year 1011, endeavoured to associate the Ismailis with the Karmatis by using one term for the other, in order to lead the people to think of the Ismailis as badly as they might of the Karmatis. Since Makrisi states that the work is " received eagerly by the chroniclers of Syria, Irak and the Maghreb, is spread everywhere, and is to be found textually copied in all the treatises of history," we may reasonably conclude that hundreds of copies of the work were made by hand, and because there was a strong urge by the Abbasids and Sunni rulers and all other anti-Fatimis to write against the Fatimis, we may equally well take the view that it was not a difficult matter in the copies to substitute the term *Ismaili* for *Karmati.* Even without the anti-Fatimi historians intentionally using one term for the other, once a tradition was established by the Abbasids that the two communities were the same, it is quite feasible that the copyists themselves effected the change—for as Ivanow states[1] : " There is no doubt that the term ' Karmati ' becomes entirely forgotten long before the Mongol invasion (A.D. 1258), and only learned people in all Islamic communities

[1] Ivanow, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature,* p. 1.

know what it means;"[1]—perhaps thinking that by substituting *Ismaili* for *Karmati* they were making it clearer for the convenience of all readers! It should be remembered that once a confusion of the terms was made, especially by as authoritative a voice as the Abbasid Caliph's, and a tradition established, it does not matter whether intentionally or otherwise, it would be very difficult to deviate from it afterwards; and once a copyist effected the alteration, all copies later made from this copy would contain the change. Hence the reason that by the time Makrisi (died in 1442) was able to examine a copy, he was deceived by the terms used in it, and despite being himself an upholder of the genuineness of the Alid claims of the Fatimis, thought that the description of the doctrines contained in it (as distinct from the section where it refutes the opinions of the Karmatis [" Ismailis "]), concerned the Fatimis', since he being a Sunni was naturally unable to consult unmolested Ismaili works in his time. It is interesting to notice also that according to Makrisi, the work is written in order to " defame the Fatimi Caliphs of Egypt," which undoubtedly refers to the " origin " of the Fatimis. This again proves the change (addition of details) the work had undergone by the time it reached Makrisi's period, for according to Masudi, Ibn Razzam, who lived long before the Fatimis conquered Egypt, wrote nothing about either the origin or the doctrines of the Fatimis.

Although we have now established a correct view of the work ascribed to Akhu Muhsein, and its real author, Ibn Razzam, the identity of Akhu Muhsein still remains an open question. Was he a real character in history? Personally I am inclined to think that he is a mythical figure,[2] invented for the convenience of

[1] The Karmatis ceased to exist as a political power in 988.

[2] Comp. C. H. Becker, *Beitrage zur Geschichte Ägyptens unter dem Islam*, i, pp. 4 *et seq.*

anti-Fatimi historians, and I take this view on three grounds: First, Makrisi's remarks place him definitely at some period after the year 1011; second, the historian Nuweiri (died in 1332), who lived a century before Makrisi, not only makes no reference to Ibn Razzam, but gives to Akhu Muhsein a genealogy which makes him be taken for the real author of the work, who as we have seen from Masudi was a contemporary of Obeydallah, which proves that Akhu Muhsein was not a known character in whatever period he lived in spite of being represented as an authority on the doctrines of the Ismailis[1]; third, it is not feasible that Akhu Muhsein could have been a descendant of Mohammed el-Maktum, because, (a) if he lived before 1011 he would have been either one of the group of "remarkable" descendants, or, if not, when the Ismailis became successful, he would have had no reason to write against them when by virtue of his descent he could have commanded a high position in the continent of Northern Africa, (b) if he really was a descendant of Mohammed el-Maktum he would have known the difference between the terms *Ismaili* and *Karmati*, and he would certainly not have confused the terms before 1011 when copying the account of Ibn Razzam, (c) if he lived after 1011, and had been under the influence of the Abbasids, he would have doubtless chosen to go to Egypt where the Fatimis were ruling independently, rather than remain in Baghdad and be exposed to the calumnies poured on all the descendants of Mohammed el-Maktum, and where he was forced to copy a manuscript confusing the terms *Ismaili* and *Karmati*, (d) if he lived after 1011 and was regarded as an authority on the Ismailis, he would not have been given a genealogy representing him as a contemporary of Obeydallah, (e) if he belonged

[1] It should be observed that historians who flourished a century before Nuweiri, such as Abu Shama, Kamaleddin, Bahaeddin, Sibt ibn Juzy, who were anti-Fatimis, have not referred to Akhu Muhsein, nor to Ibn Razzam.

to one of the group who settled in India, there would have been little chance for him to discover a copy of Ibn Razzam's account, or even if he was able to do so, then for some unearthly reason copied it in the confines of India, his own manuscript would have had little likelihood of being discovered many years later in either Irak, Syria or the Maghreb, for the special purpose of being " textually copied in all the treatises of history." It should be noted also that in India he could have had no reason to confuse the terms as done in the manuscript, for there was no persecution of the Ismailis in India at that period.

Ibn Nadim is another historian whose work, *Kitab el-Fihrist*, is often consulted with regard to the history of the various Shia communities before the eleventh century. He is stated to have died about the year 988, and therefore the *Fihrist* is valuable. But as Casanova states, he has derived all his details concerning the Karmatis from Ibn Razzam's account, and therefore it is of no avail to ponder on the question as to whether it applies also to the Ismailis, or whether his information on the Karmatis, on the authority of Ibn Razzam, can be relied upon.

There remains of the four chroniclers who are considered as " authorities " on the " origin " of the Fatimis by later historians, only Tabari. This Tabari is a well known character in history. He was born about the year 839 in Amul, the capital of the province of Tabaristan in Persia, and died there in 923. He studied in the best known cities of his time, namely, Amul, Rei, Baghdad, Basra, Kufa, Cairo, and wrote a voluminous work on the history of the world, called *Tarikh er-Rasul wal-Muluk*, bringing the history down to 915. It seems then that he would have written something about the early rise of the Ismailis, and that his information can be relied upon, since he is reported as having been in Egypt in 876, when the persecution of the Ismailis was at its highest. We

will see first to what extent he has been cited by later historians as an authority on this subject.

The Arab historians who came after Tabari, strangely enough, do not seem to regard him as an authority worth referring to on the Ismailis, or on the genealogy of the Fatimis, for historians like Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Khallikan, Nuweiri, Makrisi, have not made use of his work with regard to this subject. Although this, as we have stated, seems strange, we shall presently see that there was a special reason for it. Three modern scholars, however, have cited him as an authority on the genealogy of the Fatimis. They are De Goeje, Blochet and O'Leary.

According to De Goeje, Tabari has written that Obeydallah was not descended from Ali, but from Meimun Kaddah.[1]

Blochet writes[2]: "The celebrated Arab historian Tabari is of opinion that Mohammed ibn Ismail never had a son named Abdallah."[3]

O'Leary writes[4]: "Tabari says that Mohammed ibn Ismail had no son named Abdallah."

In a manuscript copy of Tabari's history that is extant to-day, there is indeed a passage saying that Mohammed el-Maktum did not have a son named Abdallah.[5] Before accepting these assertions on the genealogy of the Fatimis, however (for Abdallah was the great-grandfather of Obeydallah and the son of Mohammed el-Maktum), we must ask ourselves the inevitable question: Has Tabari really made these statements, and can we rely upon the manuscript copies of his original work? In a case such as this which has been a subject of controversy among ancient and modern historians, it is only by examining the

[1] De Goeje, *Mémoires sur les Carmathes du Bahrain et les Fatimides*, p. 12.
[2] Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 80.
[3] Blochet also states (*ibid.*, p. 83): "L'historien arabe Tabari était un sunnite farouche."
[4] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 36.
[5] Tabari, *Annales*, iii, 2218.

veracity of each statement that we will at length arrive at the truth.

The answer to this question has fortunately been supplied by other modern scholars, and therefore we will report their own statements.

" Tabari's[1] most important work is his history of the world. The well known Leyden edition gives only an abbreviated text of the huge work which is said to have been ten times as long, but even it fills twelve and a half volumes. The history stops in July, 915. It was afterwards continued by other historians, the lesser known Farghani, Hamadhani (who brought the history down to 1094), Ibn Miskaweih. Ibn Athir made large use of Tabari's work and sought to harmonise different accounts and to supply gaps from other sources. Ibn Athir wrote until 1225, so that in a sense he continued Tabari's history. Tabari procured the material for his history of the world from oral tradition, for the collection of which he had ample opportunity on his travels. He did not work up the material into a connected account of historical events. He was rather content to collect the available material and to record the different, often contradictory, accounts as they were handed down to him. He therefore declined any responsibility for the reliability of the traditions collected by him."

" Tabari,[2] who ignores the Fatimis of the Occident (Northern Africa) and the sect of Abdallah ibn Meimun, tells us that the missionary who seduced Karmat preached for an Imam of the family of the Prophet, but he does not specify to which branch of this family he belonged."

" Tabari[3] knew nothing on the history of North Africa and Spain."

A certain manuscript copy of Tabari's history that

[1] R. Paret, *Enc. of Islam*, iv, pp. 578-9.
[2] Casanova, *La Doctrine Secrete, loc. cit.*, p. 125.
[3] *Enc. of Islam*, i, art. " Arib ibn Saad."

was discovered in Persia, was translated into French about 70 years ago.[1] Although this is also an abbreviation of Tabari's history, as are all manuscripts of Tabari's work that are extant to-day, the date of the manuscript and the fact that it is in Persian (Tabari was a native of Persia), as distinct from the fact that it does not contain the " gaps supplied by Ibn Athir " and the continuations of the history by other chroniclers, give us reason to believe that we can rely upon it as a faithful reproduction of the original work. In this manuscript there is no reference to Mohammed ibn Ismail, Meimun, Abdallah, the Ismailis or the Karmatis. It contains a chapter called " The Zindiks under the Reign of Hadi " (Fourth Abbasid Caliph : 780-786),[2] which is evidently the period at which Mohammed el-Maktum or Meimun and Abdallah preached their doctrines. Although a detailed description is given of the Zindiks and their doctrines, and the names of its upholders are cited in full, no mention is made of the Ismailis, or any of the names that are connected with this community.

If we now bring together all that we know of Tabari and the copies of his history, we will arrive at the following conclusion : Although Tabari was a contemporary of Obeydallah, he did not write about the Fatimis, because he only travelled in and collected the traditions of the countries lying eastward of Egypt. He simply wrote down what he heard from other people, without making any comparisons with historical facts or endeavouring to ascertain the truth. Since these concerned mainly the countries in which he travelled, almost all the subjects related revolved naturally round the themes that were of moment in those countries at his time, and therefore regarding the Maghreb where Obeydallah reigned he could not have heard anything of vital interest to put

[1] *Chronique de Tabari* , trans. H. Zotenberg, 4 vols., Paris, 1867-74.
[2] *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 447-453.

down. But the historians who came after him discovered that his work would be much more consulted if new subjects were introduced into it, such as those which became the topic of the day after his time. Thus the lesser known historians Hamadhani, Farghani, Ibn Miskaweih, Arib ibn Saad, in turn put their pens to it and either continued the history down to their own times or corrected certain details in the text about which they thought they knew better. The last named historian, for instance, noticing that there was nothing about the history of North Africa and Spain in the work of Tabari, himself wrote and added to it the accounts of these places. When this mass of historical data reached the hands of the celebrated Ibn Athir (1160-1234), this worthy of Irak undertook the difficult task of making it a work of permanent value. He went through the whole *History*, tried to harmonise its details with correct information wherever he could find, added further material to it where he thought it was lacking or where there were "gaps," in short, he polished and revised the whole of it and brought the history down to his own time. The change that the work underwent by the time he had finished with it may be seen from the remark of De Sacy[1]: "The historian who is wrongly indicated under the name of *Tabari* in the *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque Royale*, is no other, as M. Reinaud points it out in his *Bibliographie des Croisades*, than the celebrated Ibn Athir."

My concluding remark then on the *History* of Tabari, or rather the copies of it that we possess to-day, and the details in it that concern the "origin" of the Fatimis, will be that these were *not* written by Tabari, but by the historians who came after him and who lived after the year 1011, especially by Ibn Athir, who was eleven years of age when the rule of the Fatimis was ended by Salaheddin, and who lived to witness the unsuccessful attempts of the Ismailis to restore

[1] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 278.

it again, and the suppression of these by Salaheddin. The brother of Ibn Athir, it should be remembered, entered the service of Salaheddin, and through his loyalty rose to become the vizier of Malik Afdal, the son of Salaheddin, in Damascus.

The reason for historians like Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Khallikan, Nuweiri, Makrisi, not citing Tabari as an authority on the Fatimis or Ismailis was doubtless twofold: either they had copies of the original work of Tabari in their time and could learn from these that he had not written on the Ismailis, or they were aware that historians like Ibn Athir had "revised" it, so that nothing in the *History* could be relied upon as having been written by Tabari himself.

2. WHAT WAS SAID OF THE FATIMIS IN BAGHDAD BEFORE 1011

A reliable way to learn whether anything was said in Baghdad concerning the "origin" of the Fatimis during the reign of Obeydallah, which lasted from 910 to 934, would be to find a historian who lived before 1011 and who had sufficient knowledge of the events and intrigues in the Abbasid court during that period. It is of course natural to suppose that when Obeydallah became the ruler of the whole of North Africa west of Egypt, and was recognised there as the "Commander of the Faithful," if there had been any doubts as to the Alid claims of the Fatimis at that period, some remark would have been made in Baghdad, especially when we consider that North Africa previously acknowledged the suzerainty of the Abbasid Caliph.[1]

The historian Miskaweihi held office in the courts of three Buweihi sultans of Baghdad, the last of whom was the famous Adud ed-Daula. Accordingly, he was in office as late as 990. He wrote an extensive history of the reigns of the Abbasid Caliphs of his

[1] In this connection see also Chapter I, section 4: *The Records in Baghdad.*

time, the intimate details of which prove that he was well acquainted with all that went on in the Abbasid court. The general tone of his history also shows that he was an ardent supporter of the Abbasid Caliph as the Supreme Head of Islam.

The following extracts therefore are given from his history of the reigns of Muktadir, Kahir and Radi, 908-940. They comprise *all* the references to Obeydallah and the Fatimis.

"Munis[1] the Eunuch was at this time absent from the capital (Baghdad), having been dispatched to Egypt to oppose the Alid[2] ruler of the Maghreb, who was invading Egypt with a force of 40,000 men."

"When[3] Munis departed for Egypt on his expedition against the Alid of North Africa, Ibn Farajaweihi found the opportunity for a more strenuous campaign against Ali ibn Isa."

"In[4] the year A.D. 308 news came from Egypt of the movement (for the second time) of the Fatimi ruler of the Maghreb in its direction. Munis the Eunuch was dispatched thither in consequence."

"There[5] had come the invasion of the Alid from Africa, who had occupied most of the districts in Egypt."

"In[6] the year A.H. 309, despatches were received and read from the pulpits announcing the rout of the Maghrebi and the pillaging of his camp. Munis the same year received the title Muzaffar ("the Victorious"). He was also given the government of Egypt and Syria."

"The Alid[7] has been routed since Safar."

[1] Miskaweihi, *Kitab Taiarib el-Umam*, trans. Margoliouth, Oxford, 1921, i, p. 40.

[2] The term *Alid* is used to designate the *descendants* of Ali, and not the followers of the descendants of Ali. Its use is similar to the use of the terms Abbasid, Fatimi, Idrisi; and unlike those of Karmati, Musawi, Keisani, which indicate the *followers* of Karmat, Musa, Keisan.

[3] Miskaweihi, *ibid.*, p. 48.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

" Mohammed ibn Khalaf[1] also brought accusations against his chief (Yusuf ibn Abul Saj), asserting that the latter had previously concealed from him his religious beliefs, but when he had come to Wasit had become more communicative; and had revealed to him that according to his belief he owed Muktadir no allegiance, and the world in general owed the Abbasids none; the ' Expected Sovereign ' being the Alid who was in Kairawan."

Besides the above, no other remarks were made concerning the Fatimis. These however show that Obeydallah *was recognised as an Alid* by the Abbasids. In Baghdad, indeed, before the precarious position of 1011 when unless some strong measure was taken the Abbasid Caliphate was doomed to surrender before the supremacy of the Fatimis, the descendants of the Prophet (from Abu Talib) were treated with respect, and it was the understood thing that they were the only ones to lead and to rule others, as the following extracts show:

" Ibn Furat (the vizier)[2] makes no secret that he rejects the claims of the Abbasids."

" Two messengers[3] were dispatched from Radi (the Caliph) and Ibn Reik, to remind Baridi (a rebel) that he was not a descendant of Abu Talib anxious to be sovereign."

" Baridi[4] said to his followers: ' I know that among you are the descendants of Abu Talib, and the offspring of the Refugees and the Helpers. To protect you is one of the sacred duties of Islam, and I imagine that God will forgive me all my sins if I relieve you of annoyance.' "

The following extract shows how the Abbasids denounced publicly (before 1011) any person in Islam who they thought had no legitimate reason to call himself " Commander of the Faithful."

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 188.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 403.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 411.

"In[1] the year A.H. 321 Ali ibn Yalbak and his secretary proposed to institute the cursing of Muawiya from the pulpits. This measure was suggested by the growing power of the Spanish Umayyad Abdel Rahman II. It had been contemplated by Mutadid. The public were agitated by this."

Finally, the following show that before 1011 the terms *Karmati* and *Ismaili* or *Fatimi* were never confused with one another. In Miskaweihi's work there are many passages regarding the Karmatis, since the latter reached the height of their power between 908 and 940 and came in touch with the Abbasids, but seven examples will suffice. Throughout the work the Karmatis are *always* referred to by this term.

"When[2] Ali ibn Isa assumed the vizierate he was consulted by Muktadir on the subject of the Karmatis and advised that correspondence should be started with Abu Saiyid Hasan ibn Bahram Jannabi (the chief of Karmatis); the Caliph thereupon gave the vizier instructions to write a letter to this chief. He wrote a long letter wherein he invited him to obey the Caliph. At the end he said: 'It is a door to protect thee if thou accept the boons which the Caliph is prepared to vouchsafe unto thee.'"

"Ibn Furat[3] proceeded to examine Ali ibn Isa on the subject of the presents and the arms transmitted by him to the Karmatis, and the correspondence and the amenities which had passed between him and them."

"The[4] arrest (of Muhassin) was notified by the beating of drums in Baghdad at midnight, which alarmed the inhabitants, who supposed that the Karmatis had seized the capital."

"Had[5] the canal remained standing, the Karmatis

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 295.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 121.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 200.

would have crossed by it, nor would they have been dismayed by the numbers of the imperial forces. Those forces would have been routed, and the Karmatis would have taken Baghdad."

"No one[1] high or low had any doubt that the Karmatis would take Baghdad."

"But[2] many of the Karmatis were killed. When the news of this reached Baghdad, general relief was felt; Muktadir and the Queen-mother when they heard of his (the chief of Karmatis') departure gave a hundred thousand dirhems in charity."

"It[3] happened that Abu Tahir the Karmati[4] came and entered Kufa. Ibn Reik (the emir of Baghdad) moved out of Baghdad and dismounted in the Garden of Ibn Abil Shawarib. Thence he dispatched a message to Abu Tahir of Hajar,[5] who had demanded that the sultan should every year send him money and food to the value of about 120,000 dinars, on condition of his remaining in his own country. Ibn Reik offered to provide that amount, only as pay to Abu Tahir's men, and on condition that they should be enrolled by the Sultan."

In these extracts regarding the Karmatis it is interesting to notice that the Abbasids were prepared to send an annual tribute and investiture with robes of honour to the Karmatis. In these circumstances, the Karmatis could not have been as "obnoxious" to them as later historians have represented. It was nearly a century afterwards, when the Karmatis had ceased to exist as a political power, that the Abbasids began denouncing them as "heretics," in memory of all that they had suffered through them. But this is not relevant here, and we will not go into details.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 203.
[2] *Idem.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 414.
[4] Abu Tahir became the head of the Karmatis after Hasan.
[5] Hajar was the capital of the Karmatis in the Bahrain.

3. LEGENDS CONCERNING THE FATIMIS

Like all famous people in history, the Fatimis have had legends clustering around them. But there have been some historians, among them European scholars, who have believed in a number of these. It will therefore be appropriate to recount all the legends that have been related concerning the Fatimis, and examine them to see if there is any truth in them. As an introduction it might be said that these legends concern the genealogy of the Fatimis, and they describe certain events as having happened before the year 1011, so that their main purpose lies in making the Alid claims of the Fatimis appear as if they were a subject of controversy long before 1011.

The most important of the legends, and one which seems to have received more credence than the others, describes an event as having happened shortly after Moezz, the great-grandson of Obeydallah, entered Cairo. This is how Quatremère, the first European scholar to report it, tells it, on the authority of Ibn Khallikan, Nuweiri and Abul Mahasin[1]: "Among the personages who went out to meet Moezz were many Sherifs, that is to say descendants of Ali. In the midst of these could be distinguished Abdallah ibn Tabataba, who, addressing the Caliph, begged him to be good enough to explain in what manner he was descended from the Prophet. Moezz promised to convoke a meeting immediately, which all the Sherifs could attend, in whose presence he would produce the proofs of the legitimacy of his claims. In fact, as soon as Moezz was established in Cairo he announced a formal assembly, to which all the inhabitants were invited. The prince, seated on a throne, asked the Sherifs if they had amongst them some chiefs. They replied that there was not a single personage missing from their society. Thereupon Moezz, half drawing

[1] Quatremère, *Vie du Khalife Fatimite Moezz Lidin Allah*, *J.A.*, Jan., 1837, pp. 166-7.

his sword from its scabbard, said fiercely: 'Here is my genealogy.' Then, throwing handfuls of coins on the spectators, added: 'Here are my proofs.' All protested that this demonstration was convincing to them, and that they recognized Moezz as their only and legitimate sovereign."

Quatremère, in another study of his, repeats this story, but slightly changes the words of Moezz, as follows[1]: "Here is the author of my race"; and, "Here are my genealogical titles;" and adds[2]: "These words announce that Moezz did not believe very much in the right claimed through his birth; that, being a debtor to his successes by the power of his arms, he relied only on them to maintain it and to pursue the course of his conquests; and that, knowing himself the feebleness of the arguments employed by his ancestors, he liked better to cut the knot rather than to endeavour to untie it."

Lane-Poole describes the same story, and adds[3]: "It was perhaps the best argument that he (Moezz) could produce. The Sherifs did not contest it."

Blochet also reports the story, but makes the following remark[4]: "This story is perfectly impossible, and, until proof to the contrary, it is permissible to believe that if Moezz had had such doubts on his nobility[5], regarding which we know nothing, he would not have been eager to express his views to the chief of the Alids in Cairo."

O'Leary is the latest to retell the story, and he writes[6]: "The story is an improbable legend"; and again[7]: "No serious credence can be given to the story."

[1] Quatremère, *Mémoires Historiques sur les Khalifes Fatimites*, *J.A.*, Aug., 1836, p. 111. [2] *Idem.*
[3] Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 108.
[4] Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 78.
[5] "The nobility among the Moslems," states Blochet in a footnote (*ibidem*), "consists uniquely in the title of descendant of the Prophet."
[6] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, p. 35.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

We have here the views of four European scholars, who uphold, denounce, and doubt the genuineness of the story. Who is then correct among them ? Blochet has already made a discerning criticism, to which might be added : If the Alids in Cairo did not believe from the very beginning in Moezz' Alid descent, they would not have wanted to enquire about it ; if they believed in it, they would have again not asked any questions ; and if they had doubts on it and there had already been some argument among themselves, they would have scarcely dared to ask the victorious Moezz on his first entry into his own capital concerning it. Quatremère thinks that the ancestors of Moezz "employed feeble arguments," but evidently he is not sufficiently acquainted with their history, otherwise he would have known that they employed no arguments—to use his own phrase—with regard to their Alid descent. However, more than any of these flaws in the story, there is one point which proves it a legend. The person who is supposed to have addressed Moezz, Abu Mohammed Abdallah ibn Tabataba (died in 959), was peacefully reposing in his grave when Moezz entered Cairo in 973. But this important discrepancy, in addition to the others, apparently does not convince Quatremère, and he endeavours to change it in order to make the story appear true. He writes[1] : " Perhaps it was Ibn Tabataba's son, because, according to the testimony of the most reliable historians, Ibn Tabataba had died 14 years before. However it may be, the Sherif addressed the Caliph." Despite the unconvincing way this statement is presented, we might have pondered whether there is any truth in it, on the theory that such confusion of names often occurs among historians. But there is a reason for not considering it. Ibn Khallikan (1211-1282) is the chronicler who, as far as we know, has reported the story for the first time, and he himself rejects it on the

[1] Quatremère, *Vie du Moezz, ibid.*, p. 166.

ground that Ibn Tabataba was not alive at that time.[1]

Quatremère reports a second legend concerning Moezz, on the authority of Abul Mahasin (1411-1469)[2]: "Hasan, chief of the Karmatis, master of Damascus, in the year 970 pronounced from the pulpit maledictions against Moezz and his ancestors, and added: 'These men are descendants of Kaddah; they are charlatans, impostors, enemies of Islamism; we know them better than anyone else, since it was from amongst us sprang their ancestor Kaddah.'" According to Quatremère, the story should be relied upon as a historical event. But there is a flaw in the story, which makes it apparent that it was invented after the year 1011, when the Alid claims of the Fatimis were denounced for the first time. According to the story Kaddah "sprang" from the Karmatis, which means that the Karmatis existed long before Kaddah, that is to say in the time of Jafar Sadik, which is of course absurd. The statement cannot be said to have been a confusion of some other statement, for there are no names in it except "Kaddah," and the meaning it conveys is perfectly clear.

Another legend is related by Ibn Khallikan about the son of Moezz, Aziz Billah.[3] According to this story, one day Aziz found a piece of paper in the pulpit of the Old Mosque, when according to custom he ascended it. On it were the following words: "We have heard a doubtful genealogy proclaimed from the pulpit of this mosque. If what you say is true, name your ancestors to the fifth degree. If you desire to prove your assertion, give us your genealogy, one that is as certain as that of Tai (Abbasid Caliph: 974-991). If not, leave your genealogy in the shade and enter with us in the great family which includes mankind. The most ambitious vainly strive to

[1] Ibn Khallikan, *Kitab Wafayat el-Ayan*, iii, p. 366.
[2] Quatremère, *ibid.*, p. 80. See p. 90. [3] Ibn Khallikan, *ibid.*, iii, p. 525.

have a pedigree like that of the sons of Hashim (Abbasids)."

O'Leary, who cites this story, makes the following comment[1] : " The incident seems probable enough as the Egyptians generally were not at all in sympathy with Shiite claims ; it seems, however, that there was a growing feeling even amongst Fatimid supporters that the Khalif would do well to discard the Shiite religious theories, which were now of no assistance to the dynasty, and that he would do better if he posed frankly as a secular ruler." This explanation does not seem to me sufficiently convincing to warrant the story being regarded as genuine. The fact of the Egyptians not being in sympathy with *Shia* theories—if such was the case in reality, which I doubt—would not necessarily make them denounce the genealogy of any or all the descendants of Ali ; and the " Fatimid supporters " (Ismailis, Shias, Sunnis ?) have certainly never had " a growing feeling " amongst themselves that " the Khalif would do well to discard the Shiite religious theories." I have not come across a similar statement or a suggestion approaching it even in theory in any of the ancient or modern works. But besides this the story has sufficient material in it to judge it on its own ground. It asks : " Name your ancestors to the fifth degree." The ancestry of Aziz to the *fifth* degree, of course, stops at Obeydallah, or at his father Husein if we exclude Aziz. The names of the Caliphs between Obeydallah and Aziz are recorded by all the chroniclers who wrote on their history, and there has been no confusion about them for they reigned as Caliphs. It is evident then that whoever has invented the story, has been so eager to cast doubts on the genealogy of the Fatimis that his anxiety has contributed to his own undoing. As we have seen, the controversy concerning the genealogy centres mainly on the ancestry of Abdallah, the

[1] O'Leary, *ibid.*, p. 116. See p. 186.

great-grandfather of Obeydallah, and not on that of his descendants.

There is another legend around the figure of Aziz. It is related by Ibn Khallikan.[1] According to him, Aziz once addressed a "derisive and sarcastic" letter to the Omeyya emir of Spain, Hakam II, to which the latter replied: "You satirise us because you have heard of us; if we had heard of you we would reply." This is apparently intended to ridicule not only the Alid claims of the Fatimis, but also the literary attainments of Aziz. But the question that concerns us is whether such an exchange of letters did take place in the time of Aziz, or whether it was a story invented after the year 1011. O'Leary, who cites it, makes the following comment[2]: "The Fatimid Khalifs were not able to maintain their somewhat dubious pedigree above the reach of criticism. In Egypt there were many undoubted descendants of Ali, and some of these, as well as other people, were strongly inclined to resent the Khalifs' pretensions."

There are only three points that need be taken into consideration with regard to this story. First, Aziz is described as "of a humane and conciliatory disposition, loth to take offence."[3] If such was the case, it seems scarcely possible that he would have written the letter. Second, in those days, as now, court etiquette forbade any ruler (especially those belonging to the proud Arab race) to satirise other rulers of their time. The Abbasids were one of the few exceptions to this rule, because they poured maledictions from their pulpits on all and sundry, those who lived before or during their time, irrespective of whether they were Omeyyas, Fatimis, Zeidis, or any other dynasty in Islam as long as they claimed to be the head of Islamism. But the dignified Fatimis are nowhere stated to have lowered themselves to this

[1] Ibn Khallikan, *ibid.*, iii, p. 525. [2] O'Leary, *ibid.*, p. 116.
[3] Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, p. 119.

level. Third, the proclamation of Aziz ascending the throne was made on August 9th, 976, and Hakam died on the first of October of the same year, so that it is scarcely possible that an exchange of letters took place within that short interval. A one way journey from Cairo to Cordova in those days, either by land or by sea, took not less than three months. Apart from these three points, the naval wars between the Fatimis and the Omeyyas for the supremacy of the Mediterranean during the reigns of four Caliphs (Obeydallah to Moezz: 910-975) are well known, so that it is not feasible that an Omeyya would write: "If we had heard of you."

Aziz's son, Hakem Biamr Allah, is the one Fatimi Caliph whose life has probably been more misrepresented than any of the others'. Among the many stories related about him, the following concerns the genealogy of the dynasty. It is reported by De Sacy[1]: "One day Hakem found, in the midst of the petitions presented to him, a paper containing the following words: 'We have heard read in this mosque a false genealogy. If what you say is true, let us learn your genealogy as Tai. If all your claims are in accordance with the truth, name your ancestors to the seventh degree.'" The resemblance of this story to the one related about Aziz is apparent. If it is a true story, it is naturally apparent also that events that took place after the first denouncement was made in 1011, were also described as having happened before that year, in connection with the previous Caliphs. But I doubt if there is any vestige of truth in them. It is easy to relate that a paper was found in the pulpit or in the midst of petitions presented to the Caliph, but not so easy for such a thing to have happened. Until any papers could come to the notice of the Caliph, they would have to pass through innumerable hands in the government, and so even if there were such

[1] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 254.

papers, they would not reach him. As to the pulpit in the mosque, one would imagine that the mosque had guardians, and obviously no stray person would be allowed, or dare, to go near the pulpit from where the Caliph preached in person.

There are several other legends related about the Fatimi Caliphs, but they do not contain references to their genealogy, so that they are not relevant here. All those that revolve round the genealogy have been given above. The main point to remember about them is that they have all been related by historians who lived after the year 1200, and this on hearsay evidence, so that having in view the controversy on the subject at that period, they can be dismissed as legends, since we have already seen that the events they describe are not likely to have occured. One thing that is interesting to notice about them, however, is that they have been reported as " true " stories by those historians, both ancient and modern, who have elsewhere attempted to deny the allegation of the Shias that the Prophet appointed Ali as his successor.

In conclusion it will be worth while now to give a really true story, showing how much truth there was in all these denouncements of the Alid claims of the Fatimis. The story may be regarded as describing genuine events for three reasons : It is not related on hearsay evidence ; it is not reported on the authority of another historian whose word might be doubted ; it describes the author's own experience. This is it[1] :

" The author of this work, Jamaleddin ibn Wasil, Chief Kadi of Hama, says : In the year 1245, I made a voyage to Egypt. Suleiman was at that time alive. I heard that the sect of the Egyptian Ismailis depended on him, and that they had in him a profound faith. I have seen many people assemble around him and take counsel from him. Suleiman, grandson of Adid

[1] *Bibl. Nat. MS. Suppl. No. 725, fol.* 34. *Cf.* P. Casanova, *Les Derniers Fatimides*, in *Mém. Mis. Arch. Fr. au Caire*, vi, 1893, pp. 438-440.

(Fatimi Caliph: 1160-1171), died in the Citadel in the year 1250, in the reign of Malik Salih. . . . There remained from the Fatimis only two men imprisoned in the Citadel of the Mountain in Cairo, both of them grandsons of Adid Lidin Allah. The name of one of these was Kasim. He had heard that I had written the history of Malik Salih, and that therein I had mentioned the Fatimis, and given the general opinion and what the genealogists have said about them—some of whom make them descended from the Jews. So, one day, as I was going near the Citadel and passed by the prison gates, I saw that Kasim, grandson of Adid, was standing there. He asked me who I was, and when I informed him, he told me to go near him. When I went to him, he said to me: 'Is it you who says that our genealogy goes back to the Jews?' I was greatly confused, and had to admit it. I put the fault on the sayings of the historians. He spoke no more."

This interesting anecdote is the only instance where a Fatimi is stated in those days to have commented on the denouncements of the Alid claims of the dynasty. Regarding the reliability of the anecdote, as can be seen, there is no doubt. If, therefore, the genealogy of the Fatimis was indeed a matter of doubtful origin, as De Goeje has thought, why should a Chief Judge who had written the history of the reigning sultan, when confronted by a Fatimi imprisoned prince, who was presumably not liked by the Abbasids or any of the Sunnis, be "greatly confused," and "put the fault on the sayings" of other historians? It is interesting to notice that this anecdote has not been reported by later anti-Fatimi historians, such as Ibn Khallikan, Nuweiri, Abul Mahasin, Quatremère, De Goeje, Lane-Poole, O'Leary, who have taken so much delight in relating legends, and also that Lane-Poole has ranged Jamaleddin amongst the anti-Fatimi chroniclers.[1]

[1] Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, p. 96.

4. CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF HISTORIANS' REMARKS

It will be appropriate now to conclude this *Polemics* with a few important and representative remarks of the historians. As has been said at the beginning, a glance at their works shows that very few of them, both ancient and modern, have written on this subject critically, owing to the controversial matter and their own prejudice. Among the ancient chroniclers, for instance, Nuweiri is a representative one. He simply gives the views of a few historians on the genealogy, and then says what he considers to be correct, without offering any reason, and goes on to narrate the account that he has read in another work. But there have been exceptions among these chroniclers, like Ibn Khaldun and Makrisi, who have felt it their duty to give certain reasons for upholding the Alid claims of the Fatimis, since most of the historians before and during their time have rejected them. These reasons therefore we will cite, and compare them with the views of modern historians, later on giving also certain opinions of the latter separately.

Makrisi, a Sunni judge in Egypt, has made an interesting study on this subject, collecting almost all the shades of opinions in his time,[1] both among the upholders and the denouncers of the Fatimis, and has also made a discerning criticism on them. After describing the rumours that originated in Baghdad against the claims of the Fatimis, he writes[2]:

"If one would give a little attention to it, one would recognise that they are stories made for pleasure, and indeed, at the period when this happened, the descendants of Ali, son of Abu Talib, were extremely numerous, and the Shias showed them a great respect. What is it that could have possibly engaged their partisans to abandon them in order to recognise as Imam a descendant of Materialists or a man with a Jewish origin? The man with the least common

[1] Makrisi, *Chrestomathie Arabe*, 2nd ed., ii, pp. 88 *et seq.* [2] *Ibidem.*

sense would not act in this manner. All this has come from the artifice of feeble princes of the Abbasid dynasty, who did not know how to rid themselves of the Fatimis: because the power of the Fatimis endured without interruption for 270 years, and they deprived the Abbasids of the countries of Africa, Egypt, Syria, Diar Bakir, the two Sacred Cities and the Yemen. They made even the *khutba* in their name at Baghdad, for forty weeks. The armies of the Abbasids could not cope with them, and therefore these, in order to inspire the people with aversion for their rivals, spread calumnies against their origin. The lieutenants of the Abbasids hastened to give vent to these calumnies. The officers and the emirs who waged war against the Fatimis, adopted with pleasure these false rumours, because they found in them, for themselves and for their masters, a kind of indemnity for reproaches which were being made to them for being unable to oppose the Fatimis in resistance, and reconquer from them Syria, Egypt and the two Sacred Cities of which they had been deprived. These calumnies were made public in Baghdad; the kadis declared, by official manifestos, that the Fatimis had nothing in common with the descendants of Ali; many doctors attested this with their signatures . . . in the reign of Kadir, in 1011. But all these attestations were founded on sayings and anecdotes which were spread in Baghdad, a city whose inhabitants, all partisans of the Abbasids, calumniated the origin of the Fatimis, feared as an evil augury the descendants of Ali, son of Abu Talib, and had never ceased, from the beginning of the power of the descendants of Abbas, to make the Alids go through all kinds of undignified treatments. The historians and the authors of chronicles have thereafter adopted that attitude, as they had heard it related, without any reflection; and yet nothing is farther from the truth.

" There would be need for no other proof for what

has been said here than the letter written by Mutadid, one of the Abbasid Caliphs (892-902), regarding Obeydallah the Shia, to the Aghlabi prince at Kairawan, and to Ibn Mudrar at Sijilmasa, to invite them to arrest Obeydallah. Think a little, in effect, what results from this proof: If Mutadid had thought that Obeydallah did not belong to the race of Ali, he would not have written to the two personages whom I have named, to have him arrested; because in those days, men did not attach themselves to the party of an impostor, they did not give him any assistance, and they did not follow anyone except personages genuinely descended from Ali. Now Mutadid had fears concerning Obeydallah; because obviously, if he regarded him as an impostor, he would not have paid any attention to him, and he would not have apprehended that a single hamlet would be taken from his domains. The descendants of Ali, son of Abu Talib, were always on their guard and went in alarm of the Abbasids, because they were at all times the object of their pursuit, and the Abbasids did not cease to seek occasions to torment them and to expose them to all kinds of corporal punishments. Also some had been exiled and expatriated, others trembled and waited for some misfortune, which did not hinder their partisans, who were numerous and spread everywhere, having for them an attachment and an eagerness to serve them, which surpasses all that one can imagine. A good many times it was seen that one of them insurrected, but always they were pursued. They therefore had no other resource except to conceal themselves, so that they were scarcely recognised, and Mohammed, son of Ismail, the Imam ancestor of Obeydallah, was called *Maktum*, that is to say Concealed. This name was given to him by the Shias, when they came together to keep him in concealment, in order to safeguard him from the power of their enemies."

De Sacy makes the following comment on Makrisi's criticisms[1] : " To the reasonings of Makrisi it can be added that if Obeydallah had been an impostor, stranger to the posterity of Ali, the genuine descendants of Ali, who never despaired that a day would come when they would be able to win their rights, would have had the greatest interest in unmasking him." De Sacy of course means that the genuine descendants of Ali would have unmasked Obeydallah during his lifetime, if he had really been an impostor, and not waited for a whole century, and then done so, at least a few of them, under the influence of the Abbasids, during the lifetime of the great-great-great-grandson of Obeydallah, Hakem.

In comparison with the reasonings of Makrisi and De Sacy, it will be interesting now to read Quatremère's[2] : " The letter of the Caliph Muktadir (908-932),[3] which ordered to arrest, at any price, the flight of Obeydallah (from Salamia to the Maghreb) ; this letter, which Ibn Khaldun[4] regards as decisively in favour of the claims of the Fatimis, does not seem to me, by a long way, as conclusive. In fact, the Abbasids knew by experience how easy it was, above all by proffering a revered name, to seduce the ignorant and credulous multitude, and to make them lift up the standard in favour of a clever and audacious man. They themselves had made use of these methods to arrive at the sovereign power, and an entire success had crowned their efforts. From that time, daring competitors had attempted the same enterprise, with

[1] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 251.

[2] Quatremère, *Mémoires Historiques sur les Khalifes Fatimites*, *J.A.*, Aug., 1836, pp. 111-2.

[3] In the various accounts of the historians the name of the Abbasid Caliph varies, being sometimes Mutadid, Muktafi or Muktadir. *Muktafi* I think is correct, because it was during his reign (902-908) that Obeydallah left Salamia and arrived in Sijilmasa. See Abul Feda, *Annales Moslemici*, ii, p. 314; Makrisi, *Chrestomathie Arabe*, 2nd. ed., ii, p. 38 ; J. Nicholson, *Establishment*, p. 65.

[4] It is apparent that Makrisi had come to the same conclusion as Ibn Khaldun.

results more or less happy: but these successive revolts had not been repressed without long efforts and a great carnage. The Abbasids could not but keep their eyes open on all those who, supported by real or imaginary titles, presented themselves to the people as heirs to the Caliphate. If this danger was affrighting when it manifested in countries near the centre of the empire, where in such a case the methods of repression could be employed in good time, how could there not present alarming chances when the impostor chose for the theatre of his intrigues a country far away, such as Africa. It is therefore not surprising that the Caliph, desiring to prevent such calamities, has wanted to root out the evil by ordering to arrest and to punish, by all means possible, a man on the move who was menacing civil war in the midst of the Moslem states."

The reasonings of Quatremère appear at a glance quite logical, but they are not justifiable. He states that " the Abbasids themselves had made use of these methods to arrive at the sovereign power," but he forgets that *after* " an entire success had crowned their efforts," they would *not* have been able to keep their position for more than the short period the power of their sword lasted, had they not claimed descent from the Prophet, and had this not been *received as genuine by the Sunni Moslems*. He states that " daring competitors had attempted the same enterprise with results more or less happy," but again he forgets that no *impostor* had succeeded *through his missionaries* in becoming suddenly the sovereign of a whole continent, such as Africa, and further, no *impostor* had been able to claim descent from the Prophet without being exposed after a very short period by the other Alids. As to the letter of the Abbasid Caliph, he seems to have misunderstood entirely Ibn Khaldun's and Makrisi's reasonings. Makrisi writes: " Think a little," if the Caliph had thought that Obeydallah

did not belong to the posterity of Ali, would he have written the letter ? We will therefore go a little deeper into this. Until the Caliph could hear whether or not a person was an impostor, or for that matter even hear of his name, his advisers would naturally know of it, and accordingly the matter would be known to quite a number of other people. In this case therefore the " intellectuals in Islam "—to use De Goeje's phrase—would not have adhered to Obeydallah, as they seem to have done, and therefore there would have been no cause for alarm in Baghdad. But more important than this is the fact of the Abbasid Caliph actually writing the letter, or rather three letters, to the governor of Egypt and the rulers of Kairawan and Sijilmasa.[1] Now the Caliph never wrote a letter to his governors concerning their conduct towards a rebel or impostor, least of all to two independent rulers (eight months' journey distant) who merely recognised his nominal suzerainty as Pontiff, and whose forefathers had more than once severed even this allegiance. The rebels would be dealt with by the rulers or governors of the countries concerned. If they were impostors, and preached liberty and equality, naturally only the lowest classes would adhere to them, and the Abbasid Caliph would therefore have no fear of losing his own position among the middle or higher classes. If the person was of the posterity of Ali but not a direct descendant, even then the Abbasids would have no fear, for according to strict Shia laws, the majority of the Shias would not support him, and therefore he would have only a small following and be regarded as a sectarian. Even if an impostor succeeded in establishing an independent kingdom, it would not have enough support from outside to affright the Abbasid Caliph to such an extent as to make him write three letters. But apart from these

[1] See the remarks of J. Nicholson, *Establishment of the Fatemide Dynasty*, pp. 64-5 ; and O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, pp. 61-2.

there has not been a single instance in the history of Islam—except Obeydallah's—from its very beginning in the seventh century, where a Caliph has personally written a letter from his capital to a distant country in order to warn a ruler or governor concerning a rebel or impostor or even a descendant of Ali who was endeavouring to raise a rebellion.[1] Hence the reasonings of Ibn Khaldun and Makrisi that the Abbasid Caliph had a very strong reason for writing about Obeydallah, and this could not have been anything else except the fear that if Obeydallah succeeded, it would sooner or later menace the very foundation of the Abbasid Caliphate, as indeed from the extracts of Miskaweihi given above we have noticed it did. But then Quatremère has not understood even what was the foundation stone of the Abbasid Caliphate. He writes[2]: "It did not matter at all to the Abbasids that their adversaries derived their origin from such or such a personage of the family of the Prophet; but they were very much interested to demonstrate that the Fatimis were nothing but impostors," but volunteers no reason as to why they were and they could possibly be "very much interested" if "it did not matter at all." Personally I fail to see any justification, or even logic in this instance, for such statements.

De Sacy however has been able to grasp this fundamental point, for indeed it is necessary to realise it in order to be able to form a correct opinion on the subject. He writes[3]: "This dynasty, known by the name of *Fatimis* and by that of *Ismailis*, traced their origin to Ali, and consequently to Mohammed, by his daughter Fatima. It was on this illustrious and respectable origin that these princes founded their

[1] It should be remembered that no letter followed the Idrisis when they escaped from Arabia to the Western Maghreb and there set up a kingdom. Nor did a letter follow the single Omeyya who escaped to the Maghreb to raise a kingdom in Spain.

[2] Quatremère, *loc. cit.* [3] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., pp. 247-8.

rights to the Caliphate, that is to say to the sovereign power and supreme pontificate. For the same reason, the Abbasid Caliphs, interested to contest with them a birth which was the most solid foundation of their claims, and which assured them the respect and attachment of all the partisans of Ali, did not forget anything that could render their genealogy open to suspicion, and might deprive them of this important title of descendant of the Prophet. From there are born opposing opinions on the origin of the dynasty of Fatimis. We have already said that we think as Makrisi, that the founder of their power, Obeydallah, surnamed Mahdi, descended genuinely from Ali."

Quatremère has taken two other points from Ibn Khaldun and given his opinion on them. The first is this[1] : " Ibn Khaldun asks how if Obeydallah was nothing but an impostor, he and his successors were able in a considerably short time to unite under their domination so many provinces. But it is necessary only to peruse the history of the Orient in order to be convinced that, quite often, clever and audacious adventurers have effected with almost prodigious rapidity conquests even as astounding." Here it is evident that Quatremère has not understood the main point of Ibn Khaldun. The latter has not stated that " audacious adventurers" have not been able to found kingdoms (a bold statement which one would hesitate to make), but that no *impostor*, relying solely on his claim of descent from the Prophet, has been able to become suddenly the Caliph of as many provinces, and pass the throne to his descendants, which is of course perfectly true.

The second is this[2] : " Ibn Khaldun asks if one could suppose without some apparent reason that the Shia Abu Abdallah had exposed with so much perseverence his fortune and life in order to maintain the rights of an impostor ; that at the moment when he saw himself

[1] Quatremère, *ibid.*, p. 105.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 107. See p. 201.

master of the northern part of Africa, he sought to find in the prisons in Sijilmasa an unknown man to put him on a throne where he himself could have sat. I would reply that, if the history of the Orient is examined, in more than one circumstance these men will be met who, becoming fanatics by their attachment to the interests of a sect to which they were devoted, sacrificed all for it, making complete abnegation of their personal interests : such was Abu Moslem at the period when the Abbasid dynasty arose." Here again Quatremère has not understood the main argument of Ibn Khaldun. The latter has not stated that Abu Abdallah was not attached to the cause of Obeydallah and did not devote to it all, but that he would not have been attached had Obeydallah been an impostor, which is quite true. Quatremère brings as example Abu Moslem, but he does not seem to realise that although this man was devoted to the Abbasids, he did not sacrifice anything to an *impostor*.

It seems to me that Quatremère has had an entire misconception of the Caliphate and more especially the history of the Fatimis. This is how he describes Abu Abdallah[1] : " As can be seen from the history, Abu Abdallah was a man exactly as was desired for the playing of such a rôle : credulous, easily believing the genealogical proofs, and possessing great riches, which gave him a powerful means for seduction." On the contrary if the history of Abu Abdallah is read carefully, it will be noticed that he was not credulous, he was not " easily believing the genealogical proofs," and he certainly did not possess "great riches." In fact he was so poor when he presented himself to Ibn Hausheb, that the latter had to pay for his travelling expenses in order to send him to the Maghreb.[2]

[1] *Idem.* See p. 199.

[2] Regarding the " great riches," Nicholson writes (*Establishment of Fatemide Dynasty*, p. 33) : " On the contrary, it is expressly asserted by Ibn Khallikan, in the *Life of Abu Abdallah*, that he entered Africa without money or troops ; and the historical account is much in favour of his having neither employed, nor possessed, wealth to further his purposes."

The following is also a statement of Quatremère, the misconception of which is apparent[1]: "The disposition of the Alids, for or against the claims of the Fatimis, should not, it seems to me, be regarded as absolutely conclusive. Pride, fear, jealousy, and other sentiments, could have influenced the opinions of these men who, because they belonged to an illustrious blood, were not more sheltered from passions which govern the actions of everything that exists on this earth."

It has been necessary to dwell rather lengthily on the *Mémoires Historiques* of Quatremère, because unfortunately he has been followed by almost ninety per cent. of the European scholars who have lived after him. Although he was a reputed orientalist in his day, strange to say his works do not seem to bear the stamp of that impartial discernment which is necessary for correct dealing with Arabic manuscripts and their prejudiced authors. Quatremère's *Mémoires* on the origin of the Fatimis is not the only work in which misunderstandings are to be met with frequently, for they abound in his studies which are cited as those of an "authority" by modern scholars. The learned De Slane wrote[2]: "In 1831 the late M. Quatremère published, in *Notices et Extraits, vol. xii*, an abridged translation of an Arabic manuscript belonging to the *Bibliothèque Impériale*, and containing a topographic and historical account of Northern Africa. This treatise, to which a famous voluminous Spanish writer, named Abu Obeid el-Bekri, put the finishing touches in 1068, is cited very frequently by Arab writers of the following centuries. It had also, among occidental Moslems, a high reputation and honour which was greatly justified by the importance and exactitude of the informations which it gave to the historians and

[1] Quatremère, *ibid.*, p. 105. See p. 201.

[2] M. de Slane, *Description de l'Afrique Septentrionale*, Introd., *J.A.*, Oct., 1858, pp. 412-3.

geographers. The translation of M. Quatremère revealed to learned Europe the high importance of the Arabic manuscript, although it left much to be desired. Without counting the suppression of almost all the historical informations and the many lacunae which this scholar had not perceived, one saw, on almost every page, errors to rectify and questions to clarify."

We will now survey briefly some of the remarks of scholars who wrote on this subject after the accounts of De Sacy and Quatremère were published. John Nicholson, who translated in 1840 part of Arib ibn Saad's history of Northern Africa, wrote[1]: "Two writers have recently expressed themselves at some length upon this subject: De Sacy in favour of it, and with much greater strength of evidence; and Quatremère against it." With regard to the story that Obeydallah was killed in Sijilmasa, Nicholson wrote[2]: "It is, in reality, one more argument in favour of Obeydallah's genuineness, inasmuch as it adds one more inconsistent account to the tissue of contradiction about him. In fact, the motives of the Abbasids, and of writers of strong sectarian prejudices, were so very urgent, that they have defeated their own end: they have concocted stories which are so absolutely incompatible with each other, that a critical reader would be entitled, for that very reason, to reject them altogether. On the other hand, indeed, the Ismailis increased the confusion which reigns in all accounts of them, by resorting to disguise, which is the parent of inconsistencies; but the discrepancies found in any statements coming from their party are comparatively so few and so easily explained away, that there need be no great doubt on which side the truth lies."

Although Nicholson was the first scholar writing in English who made some remarks on the historians' accounts on this subject, his last statement is a befitting

[1] Nicholson, *Establishment of the Fatemid Dynasty*, p. 32.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 33-4.

reply to all the scholars of his country who wrote after him and expressed themselves dubiously on this subject, that according to English Law, if people are incapable of finding anything but " uncertainty " in a case, they should give the benefit of the doubt to the defendant.

In the *Encyclopædia of Islam,* article " Fatimids," E. Graefe makes a few comments on the origin of the Fatimis. He does not give his opinion as to whether he thinks the Fatimis were genuine Alids or not, but leaves it an open question. He puts forward only three reasons for not giving a decisive view in favour of the genuineness. The first is this : " If it is urged by the defenders of the legitimacy of the Fatimids, among whom Makrisi and Ibn Khaldun are prominent, that Obeydallah would never have had to suffer from the plots and persecution of the Abbasids, if the latter had not feared him as an Alid, it can be said in reply to this argument that Obeydallah was at that time no obscure or utterly unknown personality, but well known as the grand-master of the Ismailis and that this might be the reason why he was suspected." This reply of Graefe is apparently an endeavour to point out that Obeydallah could have been suspected without being a genuine descendant of Ali ; but it serves to convey exactly the opposite meaning, and proves that Obeydallah was indeed genuine. The use of the term " grand-master " I have already explained. The Ismailis had no such thing as " grand-master " or " head " between the years 765 and 1090 : they had *Imam,* chief-missionaries and missionaries. If, therefore, according to Graefe, Obeydallah was " well known " to the Abbasids as a person whom *all* the Ismailis proper obeyed, that is sufficient proof that he was known to the Abbasids also as a direct descendant of Mohammed ibn Ismail, for the Ismailis proper recognised no person as their head except a direct descendant, who was their Imam. In this connection

it should be well borne in mind that at that time no person except a genuine Imam would have been able to hold all the Ismailis together, and prevent them from being divided into several sectarian movements.

The second reason Graefe gives is this: "Nor is the objection quite convincing that, with the great number and wide dissemination of the Alids at that time, it would have been impossible for their adherents to attach themselves to the descendants of a Magian (Dualist)." To this I would reply that the objection *is* very convincing, and that it would have been *literally impossible.* He does not give any example to sustain his statement, but in support of mine I will state that in the history of Islam there has not been a single instance where "adherents of Alids" have "attached" themselves to an "impostor," without the latter being exposed by genuine Alids within a very short time.

The third reason of Graefe is this: "It must not be forgotten that the Alids themselves have repeatedly attacked the genuineness of the Fatimid genealogy with great vigour and have taken up a directly hostile attitude to them." Here I think the "great vigour" and "directly hostile" are exaggerations. The Alids, and for that matter the Abbasids, *recognised* Obeydallah as a genuine descendant of Ismail from 910 to 1011, as Radi's *Diwan* written in Baghdad a few years before the manifesto of 1011 confirms. The reason why a *few* Alids, as compared with all of them, joined in the calumnies of the Abbasids after 1011, has been already made plain in the course of this *Polemics.* I might add that the Abbasids made several manifestos in Baghdad against the Fatimis between 1011 and 1258, but since those that were made after the first one of 1011 were in essence only repetitions, they need not be considered separately.[1]

[1] In this study I have not considered the statement that the Fatimis were descended from Akil, the uncle of the Prophet, for the following reasons: (*a*)

The learned Paul Casanova has given the following as his reason for ranging himself amongst the modern anti-Fatimi historians[1]: "I have on my part weighed the reasons for and against and I remain very perplexed. . . . I do not see at what moment they could have made the shuffling out of the descendants of Ali and their replacement by those of Meimun. However, the hypothesis which seduces me, and which would range me definitely among the adversaries if it had some authority to support it, would be the following: Meimun and his descendants, who ended by founding a dynasty called Fatimi, were in reality Fatimis." Here it is evident that Casanova has taken this view on the sole theory that Meimun has been represented as a Dualist or Materialist. But we need not go into detail here over Meimun again. It might be said only that there could have been no "shuffling" between various lines of descent, having in view the fact that from 765 onwards there were always Ismailis, and that their religion was, and still is, the most conservative in Islam, on the question of the Imamate.

August Müller also has based his dubiety regarding the genuineness of the Fatimis on Meimun alone. He states that[2] "the genuineness is shaken" by the Druses, who simply make Meimun an Alid. Now this needs elucidation, for it has been repeated by several other scholars, on the old theory concerning Meimun. The question that has evidently puzzled these historians has been as to why the Druses should

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this statement is not made by any of the ancient writers of reliable standing as historians and chroniclers; (*b*) no historian has given a genealogy showing the descent of Obeydallah from Akil; (*c*) the statement is reported on hearsay evidence by only two ancients; (*d*) its falsity is apparent by the fact that the better known historians have not even commented on it; (*e*) Akil was the most revered of the Prophet's uncles for his great learning and righteousness (see De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 195), so that even if we agree with the statement, it will still make the Fatimis belong to the family of the Prophet; (*f*) the proving of the Fatimis' descent from Ali and Fatima will by itself invalidate the assertion. *Cf.* also Buhl, *Enc. of Islam*, i, p. 239.

[1] Casanova, *La Doctrine Secrète des Fatimides d'Égypte*, p. 128.

[2] A. Muller, *Der Islam im Morgen- und Abendland*, 1885-7, i, p. 597.

make Meimun "simply" an Alid, without saying definitely whether the Fatimis were or were not descended from him, especially when the Sunni historians have represented him as a "heretic." The Druses of course were an offshoot of the Ismailis, and formed a separate sect in 1021; they therefore, although not being considered as Ismailis proper, nevertheless retained sufficient knowledge from the main branch to be given some credence on questions about which the Ismailis proper are silent. In the books of the Druses, as we shall presently see, Meimun is *not* made "simply" an Alid; although it is not mentioned also definitely that this was the assumed name of Mohammed the Concealed, it will be noticed that this is *suggested*, in accordance with the allegorical doctrines of the sect. Compare the following three extracts from De Sacy's *Religion des Druzes*:

"The seven[1] Imams are named, in the books of the Druses, Ismail, son of Mohammed; Mohammed, son of Ismail; Ahmed, son of Mohammed; Abdallah, son of Ahmed, of the race of Meimun Kaddah; Mohammed, son of Abdallah; Husein, son of Mohammed, of the race of Meimun Kaddah; lastly, Abdallah, father of Mahdi, who was also called Ahmed."

"Another[2] proof that Mohammed, son of Ismail, is correctly he to whom belongs, according to the system of the Esoterics, on which is founded that of the religion of the Druses, the title of *Seventh Natek*, is that the seventh *asas* is Kaddah, or Meimun Kaddah, surnamed *Tawʾli*. Now the *asas* should be contemporary to the *natek*, since he is his vicar, his aid, his lieutenant."

"Whatever[3] it may be of these genealogies, Meimun Kaddah was contemporary to Mohammed ibn Ismail."

These are the three extracts on which August Müller states that the genuineness of the Fatimis is "shaken."

[1] De Sacy, *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 67.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol i, p. 84.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 85.

Unfortunately the learned De Sacy also has not been able in this instance to read through the allegorism of the Druses, perhaps because he has followed the usual theory that Meimun was a separate and distinct person. But in the first extract, more than the second and the third, it can easily be seen that the fact of Abdallah and Husein being described as direct descendants of Mohammed ibn Ismail *and yet of the race of Meimun Kaddah,* suggests not that Meimun and Mohammed were two separate people, but on the contrary one and the same person. In the second extract we have this emphasized again, that Meimun was the *external* appearance, and Mohammed the *internal,* of one person. This is one of the examples of the allegorical doctrines of the Ismailis and the Druses which to an *outsider* has many pitfalls, and accordingly *outsiders,* like August Müller and others, should not come to conclusions without going a little deeper into things.

To my knowledge there have been only two historians who have approached quite near the truth on this subject. The first is Abul Feda, who gives the following genealogy[1] :

Jafar.
|
Ismail.
|
Mohammed the Concealed.
|
Meimun.
|
Abdallah.
|
Mohammed.
|
Obeydallah.

Here Meimun is represented as the son of Mohammed, but this is only to be expected from Abul Feda, for

[1] Abul Feda, *Annales Moslemici,* ii, p. 309.

naturally he being a Sunni could not have understood the doctrines of the Ismailis. But another chronicler, reported by Rashideddin in his *Jami et-Tawarikh*, has been able to interpret the allegorism concerning Meimun correctly. He gives the genealogy thus[1] :

Jafar.
|
Ismail.
|
Mohammed-Meimun.
|
Abdallah.
|
Mohammed Habib.
|
Obeydallah.

A comparison between this and the previous genealogy will at once make clear that Abul Feda has followed this author, and has tried to make it clearer in his own Sunni way. It will be interesting also to compare this one with the genealogy given by Ibn Khaldun and Makrisi.

About the time when August Müller made his statement regarding Meimun, another scholar produced a work on the Fatimis and the Karmatis. He was Michael Jan de Goeje, the Dutch orientalist, who brought the denouncements of Quatremère to a climax.[2] The strange assertions he made concerning the Fatimis were such that they would have cast doubts on his sincerity as a historian, but for one important factor, which might excuse him. His lectures were listened to by Easterners, and several Sunni chiefs. " Though perhaps not a teacher of the first order, he wielded a great influence during his long professiorate not only over his pupils, but over theologians and eastern administrators who attended

[1] Cited by Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 81, footnote 2.
[2] De Goeje, *Mémoires sur les Carmathes du Bahrain et les Fatimides*, 1886.

his lectures."[1] We will therefore be content to quote only the statement of Blochet concerning him[2]: "According to De Goeje, the falsity of the claims of the Fatimis was a subject of doubt for no person in the Orient. Such was not however the opinions of the three best Moslem Sunni historians, and certainly the most conscientious: Abul Feda, Makrisi and Ibn Khaldun." What makes the work of De Goeje less worthy of consideration than that of Quatremère, however, is the fact that he has shown throughout his work a decided partiality on this subject, without making the least attempt to consider a little the integrity of those chroniclers who have seen in the Fatimis genuine descendants of Ali. But Quatremère, for all his misunderstandings, has been sincere in his study. He writes[3]: "There are yet more than one lacunae in these *mémoires* that have been impossible for me to fill. It is this reason above all that has made me present here at least a section of my work for the consideration of the enlightened men who attach some importance to the history of the Orient. I have thought that those who have at their disposal materials which I have been unable to consult, would kindly inform me of the works which they possess, indicate to me the details which have escaped my investigations, and also put me in a position to offer, in a new edition, a history more dignified for the attention of the learned, richer in details, and therefore more instructive. . . . Thus I do not pretend to have decided the question of the genealogy absolutely."[4]

More recently than the works of the scholars hitherto cited, O'Leary published a short history of the Fatimi

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th ed., art. "Goeje."
[2] Blochet, *Le Messianisme*, p. 79.
[3] Quatremère, *Mémoires Historiques*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 101, 112.
[4] Unfortunately Quatremère did not produce this work he speaks of, for perhaps he would have seen more reality in the origin of the Fatimis from the Prophet. His *Mémoires Historiques sur la Dynastie des Khalifes Fatimites* comprised only *half* of "the section of my work" which he intended to publish, and this half did not contain the "comparisons" between the works of various chroniclers which he promised to give "later."

Caliphate, in which are to be found some interesting remarks on the chroniclers who wrote about the Fatimis. Here is one[1]: "The strongly anti-Fatimi Ibn Khallikan . . . as a partisan of the Abbasids, delights in reporting anecdotes to the detriment of the Fatimi Caliphs." This is another[2]: "Makrisi, the leading Egyptian authority of a later age, was strongly pro-Fatimi, but he claims the noble rank of *saiyid* on the ground of descent from Ali through the Fatimis, and so is prejudiced in their favour." The former of these statements is a recognised fact by other historians, and so need not be emphasized here; but the latter seems to contradict the statements of other scholars, such as De Sacy, Quatremère, Becker, Lane-Poole, that Makrisi was a "conscientious" writer. It will therefore be appropriate to examine here whether Makrisi was in any way "prejudiced."

Makrisi was born in Cairo in 1364. Beginning his career as deputy judge, he soon distinguished himself as an authority on tradition, and in turn became head of the Hakimia Mosque, professor of tradition in the Muweidia College, administrator of the Wakf, and professor in two colleges in Damascus. In the latter town he stayed for about ten years. At the age of 54 he gave up these public duties and devoted himself to literary work. In 1430 he went to Mecca on a pilgrimage and remained there for five years. He died in Cairo in 1442, at the age of 78. His literary works include the famous *Khitat*, which is regarded to-day as the most reliable and authoritative work on Cairo, and his great *Mukaffa*, which he began on the huge scale of eighty volumes, but was able to complete only sixteen of it. It was intended to be a full history of all the rulers and famous men who lived in Egypt up to his time. Several volumes of this important work are to-day extant in autograph.

[1] O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, pp. 35, 115.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Now taking into account Makrisi's career, and the fact that he was a pious Sunni, could we accuse him of being "prejudiced" in favour of the Fatimis simply because he claimed the noble rank of *saiyid*? It seems scarcely likely, since he was not an Ismaili. A person of his learning and position could scarcely uphold the Alid claims of the Fatimis if in himself he thought that they were "impostors." Moreover, unless he was absolutely convinced of the genuineness of the Fatimis, naturally he himself would have never claimed, because of his standing, to be *saiyid* through them. But O'Leary seems to have overlooked the fact that it was a much more difficult task for Makrisi to call himself *saiyid* than to follow the example of other Sunni writers, in which instance he would naturally have been favoured by his contemporaries and the various rulers of Egypt, Syria and the Hijaz. Indeed, it might even be said that if after all his researches he came to the conclusion that the Fatimis could not have been genuine, he would have been the first to denounce them, and naturally not call himself *saiyid*, since he would have realised that if his investigations did not avail him anything, it would be useless to try to make the Fatimis appear genuine. His researches, therefore, for this reason alone, are worth our consideration.

O'Leary, after stating that Makrisi was prejudiced, has accordingly endeavoured to refute two of his statements. This is one[1]: "Makrisi argues that the Alid descent of the Fatimis was never attacked by the acknowledged Alids who then existed in considerable numbers,[2] an argument which is far from being true." This argument is in fact true, for the *few* Alids who denounced the Fatimis were under the influence of the Abbasids and other Sunni rulers, and therefore their statements can scarcely be taken as *acknowledged*

[1] O'Leary, *ibid.*, p. 35.
[2] Makrisi, *Chrestomathie Arabe* i, p. 349. See p. 215.

authorities on the subject. Here is the second[1]: "Elsewhere Makrisi defends the Fatimi claims[2] by saying that the Alids were always suspected by the Abbasid Caliphs, and so 'they had no resort but to conceal themselves and were scarcely known, so that Mohammed ibn Ismail, the Imam ancestor of Obeydallah, was called the Concealed.' But this tells the other way: it admits that the Alid genealogy was not well known." The statement of Makrisi, when read with discernment, will be found to contain nothing that "tells the other way." It is simply a statement that the *Alids* had to conceal themselves because they were persecuted. It does *not* refer to the descendants of Mohammed ibn Ismail, but to the many Alids before the latter's time who endeavoured to claim the Imamate, such as the descendants of Zeid, the brother of the 5th Imam, Mohammed Bakir.[3]

O'Leary has also made two other statements of his own[4]: "After the Fatimi claims had been laid before the world the Abbasids brought forward many

[1] O'Leary, *loc. cit.*

[2] Makrisi, *loc. cit.*

[3] In this connection I find it necessary to comment on O'Leary's translation of the statement of Makrisi. The source he gives is this: "Maq 1, 349," which, judging from the *Bibliography* at the end of his book, is the "*Chrestomathie Arabe*, first edition, vol. i, p. 349" of De Sacy, wherein the latter translated into French portions of Makrisi's study on the Fatimis. De Sacy's translation, from which O'Leary cites, reads thus: "Ils n'eurent donc d'autre ressource que de se cacher, et à peine les connaissait-on, au point que Mohammed, fils d'Ismail, l'imam aïeul d'Obeidallah, fut nommé *mectoum*, c'est-à-dire caché." It will be observed that this means not "they were scarcely *known*," but "scarcely *recognised*." Although the difference at a glance appears slight, it is important. O'Leary has emphasized that they were scarcely known to anyone, but Makrisi means that they were scarcely recognised by the authorities and persecutors, because his preceding statement is this: "A good many times it was seen that one of them (the Alids before the time of Mohammed ibn Ismail) insurrected, but always they were pursued." De Sacy has quoted this same portion of Makrisi's study in his second edition (revised and enlarged) of *Chrestomathie Arabe*, 1826, vol. ii, p. 92, and in another work of his: *Religion des Druzes*, Introd., p. 251. I have however left O'Leary's statement above because, despite the meaning he has conveyed, Makrisi is quite clear in his account that he is not referring to the descendants of Mohammed ibn Ismail, but to the Alids before his time, "the descendants of Ali, son of Abu Talib" (*Chres. Ar., ibidem*; and *Religion des Druzes, ibidem*). See p. 191.

[4] O'Leary, *ibid.*, pp. 34, 35.

calumnies. . . . Historians differ very much as to how far the Fatimis succeeded in proving their Alid descent, and contemporary opinion was quite as varied." To these it might be replied that the Alid descent of the Fatimis was never "laid" before the world for the approval of anyone (the Abbasids denounced it after having known of it and acknowledged it for a whole century), that contemporary opinion was not "as varied," for as we have seen nothing was said against it between 910 and 1011, and that the Fatimis neither succeeded, nor failed, "in proving their Alid descent," because they never debated the matter.

Wüstenfeld is another historian who wrote a short history of the Fatimi Caliphs, but since "his work is only a *resumé* of sources, and no history,"[1] we cannot take his account as a critical study on this subject.

Now we might quote two short passages from Makrisi's study on Egypt and Ibn Hammad's history of the Fatimis, showing that the Fatimis declared that they were descended from the Prophet from the very first year of their rule. They are the actual words that the muezzins added to their daily calls to prayer in all the towns under the Fatimis, from the year 910 to 1171. The first is from Makrisi and refers to the time of the Caliph Moezz[2]:

"O God, spread Your benedictions on the Imams, the ancestors of the Commander of the Faithful Moezz Lidin Allah."

Ibn Hammad, writing of the time of Obeydallah, adds the following words[3]:

"Honour to thee, to thy pious ancestors, and to thy glorious descendants. This is our perpetual prayer to the day of the last judgment." Ibn Hammad states that this formula became the standard call of the

[1] C. H. Becker, *The Cambridge Mediæval History*, ii, p. 764.
[2] Cited by Quatremère, *Vie du Khalife Fatimite Moezz*, *J.A.*, 1837, i, pp. 51-2.
[3] Ibn Hammad, *Documents Inédits sur Obeydallah*, *J.A.*, 1855, i, pp. 542-3.

muezzins under the Fatimis for as long as they held authority over a Moslem country.

Besides these, it might be said that unless the Fatimis were genuine direct descendants of Mohammed ibn Ismail, the Ismailis proper would never have remained a united community from 765 to 910, and moreover would not have upheld the Fatimis as their Imams until 1171, having in view the extreme conservatism of their doctrines and there always being Ismailis after the year 765.

This far criticisms have been made only of the remarks of modern historians, but a few words might be added regarding a number of ancient chroniclers (not yet cited), who have made references to the origin of the Fatimis. There are, for instance, Abu Shama, Kamaleddin, Sibt ibn Juzy, Bahaeddin.

Abu Shama (1203-1268) was an Arab historian born in Damascus. He received his education in Syria and Egypt, and became a teacher in one of the schools in his native town. He wrote a large work on the lives of Nureddin and Salaheddin, in which he collected every statement and account that he could find said or written against the Fatimis, hoping that perhaps by denouncing the Fatimis and praising the Ayyubis he might receive the favour of the reigning sultans. In this history of his, called *Kitab er-Raudatein fi Akhbar ed-Daulatein*, he wrote that a certain kadi named Abu Bekr Mohammed ibn Taiyib, had written a book entitled *Revelations of the Secrets of the Esoterics*, in which the kadi had refuted the Alid claims of the Fatimis; another kadi named Abdel Jabbar Basri, had written a book entitled *Book of the Authenticity of Prophecy*, in which again the illustrious origin of the Fatimis had been disputed. He himself on the strength of these had written a separate work on the Fatimis, called *Treatise where the heresy, lies, ruses and the deceit of the descendants of Obeid are unveiled*. But apparently he went a little

too far in this work to receive the approval of his betters. He did not realise that although certain kadis could be induced for diplomatic reasons to write against the Fatimis immediately after the fall from power of that dynasty, or that the kadis themselves could write because of their positions and with hopes for promotion, it was not proper for a rising man to take an extreme view from the very beginning. He was concerned in a crime and drew strong suspicion on himself, and shortly afterwards was mobbed to death by an excited crowd.[1]

Kamaleddin (1192-1262) wrote the history of Aleppo. He belonged to a reputed family of kadis and himself became kadi of Aleppo and served faithfully under the two last Ayyubi sultans. In fact he was so attached to the Ayyubis that, when the Mongol Hulagu conquered Aleppo, he escaped with Sultan Malik Nasir to Cairo, where he died. Accordingly, in his work we find the Fatimis denounced and the Ayyubis glorified *in excelsis*.

Sibt ibn Juzy (1186-1257) was born in Baghdad where he was brought up by his grandfather, a writer and preacher who had very strong views on the Sunni doctrines he taught. Under this strict supervision of his learning and views on religion, Sibt rose to the position of professor and preacher in Damascus, where he died. He wrote a history of the world in several volumes, called *Mirat ez-Zaman fi Tarikh el-Ayan*, wherein we do not find anything good said about the Fatimis, probably because in addition to his grandfather's early influence, his own father was in the service of the vizier of Baghdad, Ibn Hubeira.

Bahaeddin ibn Shaddad (1145-1234)[2] was born in Mosul and received his education in Baghdad. After a short professorship in his native town, he went to Damascus and there entered the service of Salaheddin,

[1] C. Brockelmann, *Enc. of Islam*, i, p. 106.

[2] This person should not be confused with Abdel Aziz ibn Shaddad, the grandson of Moezz ibn Badis, who was a native of the Maghreb and wrote a history of Kairawan.

whom he served faithfully, as well as his successors Zahir and Aziz. As a result of this service, he followed the attitude of his contemporaries in denouncing the Fatimis and praising the Ayyubis.

These historians were among the first group of chroniclers who held important positions in various Moslem countries immediately after the fall from power of the Fatimi dynasty, and wrote against the Fatimis obviously for diplomatic reasons. It might be asked whether there was not a single person among them who had courage enough to write his own views on the subject, without being influenced by the sultans. Apparently there was not, or rather his work has not survived. Jamaleddin ibn Wasil is a good example who, as we have seen, himself relates why he wrote against the Fatimis: to follow the "accepted" historians, in other words, he was afraid or he wanted to please the sultan. On the other hand, the public flogging of the celebrated Ibn Anas by the Abbasids was a lesson that could not be easily forgotten by future kadis. As D. M. Donaldson writes[1]: "The experience taught him the lesson that even a chief justice must recognise existing political authority."

To this group of chroniclers belong also Ibn Athir and Ibn Khallikan. On the former we have already written: he received his education in Baghdad and his brother entered the service of Salaheddin. But regarding the latter a few more words might be added. Indeed Ibn Khallikan might be regarded as the chief anti-Fatimi chronicler whom later historians have followed. He was born in Arbela, had as tutor the anti-Fatimi Bahaeddin ibn Shaddad, and rose to prominence by becoming in 1238 deputy of the chief kadi in Cairo. After holding various professorships in schools in Cairo and Damascus, he began to write his famous *Biographical Dictionary*, which he completed

[1] Donaldson, *The Shiite Religion*, p. 281. Ibn Anas was a Shia who refused to recognise the claims of the Abbasids.

about twenty years later. He died eight years after completing this work, in 1282, at the age of 71. Like his contemporaries, he felt bound to write against the Fatimis because of his position, since at this time there were several descendants of the last reigning Fatimi Caliph, Adid, still imprisoned in the Citadel in Cairo, and the attempts of the Shias in Egypt to restore the Fatimi Caliphate did not cease until a few years after Ibn Khallikan's death.

Thus with the numerous writings of these chroniclers, the accusations against the Fatimis passed into the standard texts studied by later historians, some of the latter being also their pupils, and in such countries as Egypt, Syria and Irak, owing to the urge of the Abbasids and the Sunni rulers, practically all the historians followed the " tradition " firmly established by these previous writers. Ibn Dukmak (1308-1388), for instance, wrote his famous history of Egypt, in twelve volumes, at the special command of sultan Malik Zahir Barkuk, so that he could write nothing in praise of the Fatimis. Another historian, Ibn Furat (1334-1388), who composed a worthy chronicle, simply reported *verbatim* the words of his predecessors. A third, Ibn Iyas (1448-1522), who wrote a detailed history of Egypt, specialised only on the period following the Mamluk rule, so that concerning the Fatimis he only copied the accounts of his predecessors. A fourth, Suyuti (1445-1505), the son of a teacher and himself a reputed professor, lost his position once because of " breach of trust," and accordingly all his references to the Fatimis in his *History of Egypt* faithfully reflect the accounts of the " accepted " historians. And regarding Abul Mahasin (1411-1469), whose father was a governor of Damascus and mother a slave of sultan Zahir Barkuk, Quatremère himself writes[1] : " He could do nothing but to follow the

[1] Quatremère, *Mémoires Historiques sur les Khalifes Fatimites*, *J.A.*, Aug., 1836, p. 102.

opinions of the writers who had preceded him." And yet Quatremère has faithfully reported many of the legends concerning the Fatimis related by Abul Mahasin without commenting on their reliability.[1]

If we now survey this long list of names of reputed historians who have written detailed histories of Egypt and its neighbouring countries, we cannot but admire the courage of Makrisi in disregarding all that these famous but biassed chroniclers before him had written on the Fatimis, and undertaking the difficult task of going through their works, finding out what the historians in other countries, such as the Maghreb, had written, and making enquiries on this subject from the many Alids who were in Egypt in his time. He was able to do this, it must be observed, when he had given up his public duties and had devoted himself entirely to literary work and historical research, and also when (in the fifteenth century) the urgent need to write against the Fatimis had a little diminished. His statement that the illustrious descent of the Fatimis was never doubted by the *acknowledged* Alids, that is to say by those Alids who gave their own opinion on the subject and were not under any outside influence, is quite true, for as he states, despite the calumnies of the Abbasids and the innumerable writings of the anti-Fatimi historians, the chief of the Alids in Cairo in his time, the *Sheikh esh-Sharaf*, who was also the genealogist of that period for all Alid questions, firmly asserted that he was positive of the genuineness of the Fatimis.[2] This was four centuries after the Fatimis were denounced in Baghdad.

Makrisi's statement, however, is not the only evidence we can rely upon showing that the Alid claims of the Fatimis never became a subject of doubt to those who were able to give their uninfluenced views on the subject, as the following testify.

[1] We might also mention Kalkashandi (d. 1418), who compiled an encyclopædia from the works of his predecessors for the use of the government.

[2] Quatremère, *ibid.*, p. 116.

Basasiri was the Turkish general under the last Buweihis, and held the position of military governor of Baghdad. He was a Shia, like the Buweihis, and, like them, did not believe in the claims of the Abbasids to the Caliphate. Accordingly, when the vizier of the Abbasid Caliph Kaim (1031-1075), Ibn Muslima, invited the Sunni Seljuks to come and save Baghdad from its long Shia rule, Basasiri left the city before the powerful Toghrul Beg entered it in 1055. "When[1] Toghrul Beg entered Baghdad and put Malik Rahim (the Buweihi sultan) in prison, the Deilemi soldiers were disbanded. These, quitting Irak, rallied round Basasiri, who had joined the Fatimi cause in Syria, and who soon waxed strong enough to rout a column of the Seljuks. In 1058, at the head of his Syrian levies, he entered Baghdad and proclaimed the Caliphate of the Fatimi ruler of Egypt. The grand vizier of Toghrul was taken prisoner, and, exposed in an oxhide to the contempt of the populace, was thus hanged. Even Kaim, abjuring his own right, was forced to swear fealty to the rival Caliph. The emblems of the Abbasid Caliphate, robes and turban, ancient jewels, and royal pulpit, were sent to Cairo, with Kaim's formal renunciation of the dignity." Basasiri had the support of the famous Okeili Kureish ibn Badran.

In connection with this event, it should be observed that Basasiri, the Deilemis, and the Buweihi sultans, belonged to the "Twelver" sect of the Shias, and accordingly unless they were positive of the genuineness of the Fatimis they would not have proclaimed their names in the *khutbas* in Baghdad.[2] The Fatimis

[1] W. Muir, *The Caliphate : Its Rise, Decline and Fall*, revised edition, 1924, pp. 581-2.

[2] Among other personages in Islam who believed in the genuineness of the Fatimis, might be named the two famous families of Ibn Furat and the Banul Maghribis. A member of the Ibn Furat family held the position of vizier of Baghdad at three different periods during the reigns of Muktadir and Kadir. Another member, called Fadl ibn Jafar, and known as Ibn Furat IV, became vizier of Hakem in Egypt in 1015. There is reason

gave them no material help in their endeavour to seize Baghdad. Interesting it is also to notice that this event occurred nearly half a century after the Abbasids had denounced the Fatimis in Baghdad. Needless to add, as soon as the Sunni Toghrul Beg took Baghdad a year later, the Abbasid Caliph prepared the third of the series of manifestos against the Fatimis. The second had been made in 1053,[1] when the Shias in Baghdad showed a tendency to return to their old loyalty to the Fatimis as the descendants of the Prophet.

Besides this instance, the works of the chroniclers who were not under any anti-Fatimi influence show also that the genuineness of the Fatimis was not doubted. The famous Ibn Hazm is a good example. He lived for some years after the denunciation of the Fatimis. He was a staunch supporter of the cause of the Omeyyas in Spain, and can be said to have been one of the few scholars in his time who rose to high esteem and position in that country. He wrote a work called *Kitab el-Milal wan-Nihal*, " Book of the Religions and Sects," and although in it he argued with great vigour whether the 12th Imam of the Twelvers ever existed at all, he wrote nothing in referring to Obeydallah about him not being genuine, despite the fact that the Omeyyas and the Fatimis waged intermittent wars for nearly a century. Another famous scholar, Shahrastani, a native of Khorasan, who wrote in 1127 a work with a similar title, collected in it

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to believe that after the Fatimis were denounced in Baghdad, the Ibn Furat family (Shias) refused to serve under the Abbasid Caliphs. The Banul Maghribis comprised four members of an important family. The first, Abul Kasim Husein, known as Maghribi I, was secretary to the Hamdani Seif ed-Daula at Halab. His son, Abul Hasan Ali, Ibn Maghribi II, was vizier to Seif ed-Daula and Saad ed-Daula, then entered the service of the Buweihi Sharaf ed-Daula, and finally became vizier of Hakem in 1003. The latter's eldest son, Abul Kasim Husein, was vizier to the Okeili Karwash. And the fourth important member of this gifted family, Abul Faraj Mohammed, served first under Basasiri, and then under the Fatimi Mustansir as vizier from 1058 to 1060.

[1] E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 1906, p. 196.

all the reliable information that he could find on the Magians, Dualists, and Jews, but said nothing about the Fatimis not being genuine, or the Ismailis having had " heretical " doctrines, although during his three years' stay in Baghdad he had doubtless been initiated into the denouncements against the Fatimis. El-Bekri, the learned traveller who was a pious Sunni, wrote a detailed account in 1068 of his journey from Egypt to the Atlantic, describing in it the histories of every reputed town he visited, and although he referred to the Fatimis many times, he said nothing about them not being Alids. A similar book of travels with copious historical information was written by et-Tijani in 1309, a famous scholar of North Africa of that period, but again we find nothing in the work concerning the Alid claims of the Fatimis being doubted. Ibn Hammad was a member of the royal family of Bougie, who flourished a short while before Ibn Khaldun. His detailed history of the Fatimi Caliphs is well known, but in it we do not find any denouncement of the Alid claims of the Fatimis.[1] And of course we have the three most conscientious and learned Sunni historians in Islam : Ibn Khaldun, Makrisi and Abul Feda. Abul Feda was born in 1273 and belonged to the famous Ayyubi dynasty founded by Salaheddin. In 1310 he became governor of Hamat, in 1312 was raised to the position of king of Hamat, and in 1320 received the hereditary rank of sultan. His *History of the World* and *Geography* have already attained celebrity among the classics of Islam. Makrisi has been referred to more than once in the course of this

[1] This Ibn Hammad, whose full name is Kadi Abu Abdallah Mohammed ibn Ali ibn Hammad, flourished under the rise of the Almohad dynasty. He was a pious Sunni, and for his vast erudition was greatly respected by the ulemas of Constantine (see Cherbonneau, *Galerie des Littérateurs de Bougie, J.A.*, June, 1856, p. 477). Two copies of his famous history, unpublished yet, called *Account of the Deeds of the Fatimi Dynasty*, are to be found in the *Bibl. Nat.* of Paris, No. 1888. and in the *Bibl. Nat.* of Algiers, No. 1988. He should not be confused with another Ibn Hammad, who was an Ismaili and flourished about two centuries before him. The latter is the author of a treatise entitled *Ashar fi mad Ahlul Beit.*

study.[1] Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) was the celebrated scholar of Tunis, who was invited in turn by the rulers and scholars of Fez, Granada, Bougie, and Cairo, in order to lecture in their colleges and hold important administrative posts. In Cairo he lectured at the Azhar and the Samhia, and in 1834 sultan Zahir Barkuk appointed him Maliki Chief Kadi, which position he held until his death with short interruptions during a pilgrimage to Mecca and an excursion to Damascus. "Ibn Khaldun's[2] *History of the Berbers* will always remain a valuable guide for everything that refers to the life of the Arab and Berber tribes of the Maghreb and the mediæval history of that country. It is the fruit of fifty years' direct observation and industrious study of books and chronicles as well as diplomatic and official documents of his time. His *Mukaddima,* which deals with all branches of Arab sciences and culture, remains, as regards the depth of thought, clearness of exposition and correctness of judgment undoubtedly the most important work of the age, which seems to be surpassed by no other work of a Moslem author."

These learned men were all conscientious and pious Sunnis and they were not under the influence of either the Abbasids or the Fatimis, so that their upholding of the Alid claims of the Fatimis points out the fact that the genuineness of the dynasty was never doubted by any learned person in Islam, who was at the same time unbiassed and free from outside influence, despite all the denouncements in Baghdad. And indeed, when the details of these denouncements are examined carefully and brought together and then judged with discernment, the truth is unmistakable: The Fatimis were the direct descendants of Ali and Fatima.

[1] A valuable contribution to the scattered fragments of European literature on the Fatimis was made by H. Bunz, who edited and translated Makrisi's *Ittiadh el-Hunafa Biakhbar el-Khulafa: Fatimidengeschichte von al-Makrizi.*

[2] A. Bel, *Enc. of Islam,* ii, pp. 395-6.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bibl. Nat.	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
J.A.	Journal Asiatique, Paris.
J.A.O.S.	Journal of the American Oriental Society, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A.
J.A.S.B.	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.
J.R.A.S.	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London.
J.R.C.A.S.	Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, London.