

## THE IRANIAN COMPONENT OF THE NUṢAYRĪ RELIGION\*

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*In memory of my father*

Study of the Nuṣayrī religion reveals the existence of a notable Iranian component, constituting an important element in the syncretistic complex of this religion.<sup>1</sup> This component seems to have played a greater role in the early stages of the formation of Nuṣayrī religion than in its later stages. The aim of the present study is to bring to light and analyse this component, which, to my knowledge, has not attracted much scholarly attention.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless this study does not attempt to evaluate the relative place within the Nuṣayrī religious system of the various elements that constitute its overall mosaic.<sup>3</sup> Rather, it focuses on the Iranian element itself, offering an interpretation of the background and circumstances against which this element entered the Nuṣayrī religion.

The earliest Nuṣayrī source making it possible to study the nature of Nuṣayrī syncretism, including its Iranian element, is *Majmū' al-a'yād* ("Book of Festivals") by Abū Sa'īd Maymūn b. Qasim al-Ṭabarānī (d. 424/1034-35), a prominent leader and prolific scholar in the formative period of the Nuṣayrī region.<sup>4</sup> This is an account of the Nuṣayrī festivals based, according to the author, on a treatise by al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī entitled *al-Risāla al-rāshthāshīyya* and referred to several times in *Majmū' al-a'yād*.<sup>5</sup>

The other source, though it contains somewhat meagre additional information, is a Nuṣayrī catechism entitled *Kitāb Ta'līm diyānat al-nuṣayriyya* (literally: "Book of instruction in the Nuṣayrī religion").<sup>6</sup> A late work most probably composed during the nineteenth century, it seems to have been influenced by Western Christian catechisms circulating in nineteenth-century Syria, as attested by René Dussaud.<sup>7</sup>

The area of the Nuṣayrī religion in which the Iranian component is most prevalent is a theological discussion of the *yawm al-nawrūz* (the Iranian festival of the New Year, beginning with the vernal equinox) and *yawm al-mihrajān* (the Iranian festival of the autumn equinox).<sup>8</sup> These are believed to be the days on which the deity revealed itself in various forms and garbs in all periods, both mythical and historical.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the eschatological manifestation of the deity in the person of the

Mahdī is also believed to take place on these sacred days.<sup>10</sup>

The deity manifests itself cyclically in the form of a trinity. According to the Nuṣayrī trinitarian doctrine, documented as early as the tenth century, two entities or persons (*aqānīm*) emanate from the supreme aspect of the deity. This supreme aspect is named *ma'nā* (connoting meaning or essence) and is at times identified with God himself. The second is the *ism* (the Name) or the *hijāb* (the Veil).<sup>11</sup> The third entity is the *bāb* (Gate) -- namely, the gate through which the gnostic believer may contemplate the mystery of divinity while aiming to attain a mystical union with the deity.<sup>12</sup>

This trinity reveals itself in seven cycles, which span the history of mankind. In each cycle (labelled *dayr*, *kawr* or *qubba*), the deity has been incarnated in historical or mythical persons. The plethora of beings playing a role in the Nuṣayrī divine realm include biblical figures, alongside those from the Greek, Iranian and Arab traditions. In the seventh and last cycle, "the Muḥammadan cycle" (*al-qubba al-muḥammadiyya*), which opens the Muslim era, the trinity was incarnated in three key beings of early Islam: 'Alī as the *ma'nā*; Muḥammad as the *ism*; and Salmān the Persian as the *bāb*.

The syncretistic nature of the Nuṣayrī religion is apparent also in the lists of figures in which the trinity is incarnated throughout the seven cycles, their names deriving from various religious traditions. Noteworthy for the present study is the role played by Salmān the Persian, being the ultimate *bāb* in the most important trinity. Moreover, the identification of Salmān with Rūzbih b. Marzbān (Rūzbih being, in fact, Salmān's Persian name before his conversion to Islam) alludes to the concept to which I shall return later -- namely, that the divinity is believed to have revealed itself among the Iranians already in ancient times, prior to the emergence of Islam. This line of thought is further elaborated in al-Ṭabarānī's discussion of the festival of Nawrūz. The following passage, which opens the chapter on Nawrūz, illustrates the role reserved for the Iranians in Nuṣayrī theology:

[*Nawrēz*] always falls on the fourth day of April. It is the first day of the Iranian year, which begins in the month named *farwardīn*. It is a praiseworthy day, of great moment and importance in the eyes of God and the *mawālī*<sup>13</sup> — peace be upon them — on which they bestow their grace... Know, may God support you by your obedience to Him, that the Persians Kings, the Khosrows (*mulūk al-furs al-akāsira*)<sup>14</sup> used [to celebrate] it and to glorify it. They further used to wear [on this day] crowns made of myrtle (*ās*) and marigold (*ādharjūn*),<sup>15</sup> and to sprinkle water; and this is why it is called *nawrēz*.<sup>16</sup> They used to greet each other and offer presents of myrtle, marigold and olive leaves, and asked for all good wishes and blessings on themselves.<sup>17</sup>

The patron (*al-mawla*, i.e. God manifested in 'Alī) revealed Himself in [the figures of] the Iranian kings, and manifested in them His Names (*asmā*), His Gates (*abwāb*), and the ranks of His holiness — namely, the great luminous world (*al-'ālam al-kabīr al-nūrānī*)<sup>18</sup>... Our master al-Khuṣṣībi — may God sanctify his spirit — clarified this in his epistle and his treatise on the sequence [of divine manifestations] (*Fī'l-siyāqa*)<sup>19</sup> saying: Adam, having concealed himself, revealed himself in [the figure of] Enosh; Seth, who was then the *ma'nā*, removed him (*azālahu*)<sup>20</sup> and revealed himself in a form similar to his [Adam's Enosh]. Adam then revealed himself in [the figure of] Alexander, "the two-horned" (*al-iskandar dhū'l-qarnayn*)<sup>21</sup> Daniel,<sup>22</sup> who was then the *ma'nā*, removed him and revealed himself in a form similar to his [Adam's Alexander]. Adam then revealed himself during the Iranian era (*al-qubba al-fārisīyya*) in [the figure of] Ardashīr, son of Bābak the Iranian,<sup>23</sup> the first Iranian king of the Sasanid dynasty; [Alexander] "the two-horned", who was then the *ma'nā*, removed him and revealed himself in a form similar to his [Adam's Ardashīr]. Adam then revealed himself in [the figure of] Shābūr, son of Ardashīr.<sup>24</sup> Ardashīr, who was then the *ma'nā*, removed him and revealed himself in a form similar to his [Adam's Shābūr]. Adam then revealed himself in the House of the Arabs (*bayt al-'arab*)<sup>25</sup> — in [the figure of] Lu'ayy b. Ghālib. Lu'ayy was given this name because he turned [*alwā*] the [divine] lights from the land of Persia to the land of the Hījāz — for [the persons of the trinity, i.e.] the *ma'nā*, the *ism* and the *bāb* manifested themselves there. [God], however, left the representatives (*nuqatā*) of His wisdom so

that it [the wisdom] would pass among their kings. [Moreover], He established an image (*mithāl*) of the trinity of the *ma'nā*, the *ism* and the *bāb* [in the figures of the kings] Shīrīn, Khīrīn and Khusrōw up to Khusrōw Abarvīz [=Aparwēz], son of Anāshīrvān.<sup>26</sup> The latter "changed and modified [the true religion?], was arrogant and opposed the master Muḥammad. Kingship was cut off from the Iranians because of his [Khusrōw's] disobedience" (*wa-innahu ghayyara wa-baddala wa-stakbara wa-khāfaja al-sayyid Muḥammad fa-nqarāda al-mulk min al-furs bi-ma'siyatihū*).<sup>27</sup>

Al-Ṭabarānī presents here concisely the doctrine of the Nuṣayrī cyclical manifestation of the divinity in the form of a trinity that reveals itself recurrently throughout human history. Adam, who is repeatedly mentioned in the passage, appearing later under the title *ādām al-ādām*,<sup>28</sup> is a sort of archetypal or pre-cosmic Adam.<sup>29</sup> The divinity — or more precisely an aspect of it, the *ism*, personified in the form of Adam — conceals itself and reveals itself in the figure of Enosh; Seth who was then the *ma'nā* — the supreme aspect of the trinity — removes the *ism*, the second person of the trinity and reveals himself in a form similar to his (Adam's). This process repeats itself in the various manifestations of the deity. Moreover, our text is characterised by the introduction of the notion of internal dynamics within the divine realm, known from other Nuṣayrī texts, an example being an epistle by the tenth-century Nuṣayrī scholar Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. Harūn al-Ṣā'igh.<sup>30</sup> Thus a figure that in a certain manifestation of the deity appears as playing a minor role may be elevated in another cycle to a higher degree, that of a *ma'nā*. Hence in the second cycle Adam, the *ism*, reveals himself in the form of Alexander, whose role is presumably that of a *bāb*, and is removed by the *ma'nā*, Daniel. However, in the next manifestation of the deity — during the Iranian cycle<sup>31</sup> — Alexander is elevated to the degree of *ma'nā*; Adam remains in his role of *ism* and manifests himself in the person of Ardashīr, son of Bābak, the *bāb*. Later, Ardashīr himself ascends to the degree of *ma'nā*, and so on. The uniqueness of this theology lies in the role reserved in it for Adam. In contrast to other Nuṣayrī texts,<sup>32</sup> Adam seems to represent the person of the *ism* in all the cycles.

The most essential point in this passage is the way the author presents the deity as being incarnated among the Iranian kings of the Sasanid dynasty. It should be

stressed, first, that there is nothing exceptional in the concept that the deity manifests itself among the Iranians; for since its beginnings the Nuṣayrī religion, like the Druze religion, has been characterised by its universalist tendency. The religion addressed itself to all mankind, and the doctrinal justification for this found its expression in the belief that the deity, which in its final manifestation was incarnated in the figures of 'Alī, Muḥammad and Salmān, had initially been manifested among various peoples and nations — hence the plethora of names by which are known 'Alī-the-God and the many figures who play various roles within the Nuṣayrī divine realm.<sup>33</sup> Against this background, then, the tendency to accord the Iranians an appropriate representation is not surprising. Our passage however goes further. It reflects a strong tension between Arabism and Iranianism, and seems to have emerged from Shu'ūbī or rather neo-Shu'ūbī circles.<sup>34</sup> However, the struggle between Arabs and Iranians, which has its echoes in both Shi'ī and non-Shi'ī circles, is transposed in our text from the earthly to the divine realm. From the outset, says al-Ṭabarānī, God preferred the Iranians over the Arabs and therefore revealed himself among their kings. The sins committed by the Iranians — or, more precisely, by one of their kings, Khusrow II — brought upon them God's punishment, that is, the transfer of his lights (representing the divine presence) from among them to the Arabs, God's newly elected people.

Precision in chronology is not the strongest feature of this text, which is characterised by its mythical nature. On the one hand it is stated that the transition of the divine presence from the Iranians to the Arabs took place during the lifetime of Khusrow II, whose reign (590–628) corresponds partially to the years of Muḥammad's activity as a prophet; on the other hand Lu'ayy b. Ḡhalīb is presented as the person in whose lifetime this transformation took place. Lu'ayy, however, was one of the ancestors of Quraysh and lived, according to the traditional chronology, some eight generations before Muḥammad.<sup>35</sup> The author further anchors the role of Lu'ayy in a play of words on his name: "Lu'ayy was given this name because he turned the [divine] lights from the land of Persia to the land of the Ḥijāz." (*wa-innamā sunniya lu'ayyan li-annahū abwā al-unwār min ard fāris ilā ard al-Ḥijāz*).<sup>36</sup>

Leaving aside the chronological inaccuracy of the text, it seems that the author's main purpose is to introduce the idea that the decline of the Iranians in the

earthly arena — that is, the collapse of the Sasanid monarchy and the transition of kingship from the Iranians to the Arabs — is a reflection of their fall in the divine arena. Our text does not elaborate on the sins of the Iranians that resulted in the loss of their kingship. The author merely states that the king in question (Khusrow II) "changed and modified [the true religion?], was arrogant and opposed the master Muḥammad";<sup>37</sup> later he adds to the two general sins a third, no less general sin, "[Khusrow II] laid claim to things to which he had no right" (*wa-dalā'a li-naḥsihi mā laysa lahu*).<sup>38</sup>

Accusing Khusrow II of forgery and of altering the religion tallies with the way he is depicted in Muslim historical sources. Thus al-Mas'ūdī in his *Murūj al-dhahab* describes this king as "he who removed the rules of the [Zoroastrian] priests, thereby breaking the accustomed *shari'a* and *sunna*, altering rules and removing prescriptions" (*wa-qad kāna azāla aḥkām al-mūbadhān fa-kharāma bi-dhālika al-shari'a wa'l-sunna al-ma'ḥūda wa-ghayyara al-aḥkām wa-azāla al-rusūm*).<sup>39</sup>

It seems furthermore that the fact that Khusrow II was the Sasanid monarch during whose reign Muḥammad's prophetic mission took place exacerbated the process of denigrating him, making him an archetypal enemy of Islam, the newly emerging civilisation.

It is noteworthy that in the Nuṣayrī myth of the Fall, pride and arrogance are among the sins that caused the souls of the believers to fall from the divine world of lights to the material world.<sup>40</sup> However, the author, whose identification with the Iranians and their religious heritage is unequivocally expressed in this text, mitigates the severe implications of the text by explaining that God's abandonment of the Iranians is not categorical or without hope for the future. On the contrary, in various explicit and implicit ways, the author points to the temporary nature of the removal of God's presence from the Iranians.

Three major points attest the unequivocal philo-Iranian nature of the author and his desire to witness a world in which Iranian supremacy is restored.

(1) The author emphasises that God's abandonment of the Iranians is not complete. On the contrary, even after abandoning them and electing the Arabs in their stead, God deposited among them "representatives of His wisdom" (*maqāmāt hikmatihī*) — that is, a trinity in the

image of the supreme trinity, personified in the figures of three kings, Shirvīn, Khirvīn and Khusrow. The author points out the inferior nature of this trinity, stating that the three “take care of the [divine] wisdom instead of the *ma'nā*, the *ism* and the *bāb*, since they are the servants of the *ma'nā* and those who know him, the *ism* and the *bāb*” (*wa-annahum yaqūmūna bi-maqān al-ma'nā wa'l-ism wa'l-bāb li-annahum 'abīd al-ma'nā al-'arīfūna bihi wa-bi'l-ism wa'l-bāb*).<sup>41</sup>

Only the third of these (Khusrow) can be identified as a historical figure; the other two (Shirvīn and Khirvīn) seem to be pure inventions, as is often the case with figures within the divine emanations in Nuṣayrī (as well as in Druze or Ismā'īlī) texts. For the author it is sufficient that the names have an Iranian ring. Later, this inferior trinity is mentioned again, and the author explicitly identifies Khirvīn and Khusrow with Muḥammad and Salmān --- the *ism* and the *bāb* --- while Shirvīn is presented as the supreme hypostasis of the trinity, identified with 'Alī.<sup>42</sup>

The author further emphasises that “when abandoning the Iranians and bestowing his wisdom upon the Arabs, God was satisfied with them and promised he would return to them” (*wa-anna al-mawlā jallat qudratuhu khallaja ḥikmatahu fi'l-furs wa-ntaqala 'anhum wa-huwa rāḍin 'alayhim wa-aw'aduhum annahu ya'īdu fihim*).<sup>43</sup>

In addition, al-Khaṣībī attempts to minimise the Iranians' loss of supremacy to the Arabs by stating that they continued to celebrate the festivals of the Nawrūz and Mīhrajān, which had been instituted by their kings, just as the Arabs<sup>44</sup> observe the three festivals of 'īd al-fitr, 'īd al-aḡḡā and 'īd al-ghadir. All these festivals, then, will be celebrated until the future appearance of the Mahdī.<sup>45</sup>

(2) The chief merit of the Iranians, which the author adduces as the reason for God preferring them, is that, unlike the Arabs, they preserved the divine mystery --- that is, the mystery of God's manifestation and concealment through fire, which is at the heart of Nawrūz. This notion is presented through a striking interpretation of the Qur'anic verses relating to God's revelation to Moses in the burning bush:

He [= 'Alī] is the one who said that God the most High entrusted you with a secret and revealed something among you [= the Arabs] and enabled you to receive it. But you lost it while the Iranians guarded it. This

thing is God's concealment from them and His manifestation among them through fire, and His manifestation in light (*wa-huwa lammā aḡhara fihim al-ghayba bi'l-nūr wa'l-zuhūr bihā wa'l-nūr wa'l-zuhūr bihi*). And to this refer [God's] words in the account of Moses: “He [= Moses] observed on the side of the Mount a fire. He said to his household ‘Tarry you here; I observe a fire. Perhaps I will bring you from it’ (*ānasa min jānib al-tūr nūran qāda li-ahlīhi: [u]mkathū innī ānastu nūran la'allī ātikum minhā*) (Q. 28:29)<sup>46</sup> ‘a brand or I shall find at the fire guidance’ (*bi-ḡabas aw ajīda 'alā al-nūr hudan*) (Q. 20:10). And in another account ‘I shall bring you news of it or a faggot from the fire, that haply you shall warm yourselves’ (*ātikun minhā bi-khaḡar aw jadwa min al-nūr la'allakum taḡtalimū*) (Q. 28:29). “When he came to it, a voice was heard from the right bank of the watercourse, in the sacred hollow, coming from the tree: ‘Moses I am God, the Lord of all Being’ (*fa-lammā ātāhā nūḡya [min shāt] al-wādī al-ayman fi'l-buḡ'a al-mubāraka min al-shajara an] yā Mūsā [imī anā llāh rabḡ al-'ālamīnā]*)” (Q. 28:30). ‘Put off your shoes. You are in the holy valley Tuwa’ (*ikhla' nu'layka innaka bi'l-wādī al-muḡakkas tuwar*) (Q. 20:12) --- up to his [statement] in his [= al-Khaṣībī's] epistle] on *Figh*: “The Iranians worshipped fire and awaited [God's] appearance from it, hence God's appearance among them. They constantly uphold it, manifest it, set it ablaze and await the fulfillment of His promise. This is the reason for the Iranians' celebration of Nawrūz and the wearing of crowns on it.”<sup>47</sup>

The supremacy of the Iranians over the Arabs found expression in their guarding of the mystery with which God had entrusted them --- that is, the mystery of fire and light as a medium through which God reveals himself to the initiated. The Iranians are praised throughout al-Ṭabarānī's discussion of the Nawrūz for their perceiving the inner qualities of fire and light. To stress the notion of fire/light, the author --- though aware of the correct etymology of the word *nawrūz*, connoting “new day”<sup>48</sup> --- bases the significance of the day on a fanciful etymology of the term that he derives from the words *nūr* (light) and *ziyy* (clothes).<sup>49</sup> This strong emphasis on fire and light may reflect a residue of Zoroastrian reverence for fire. However, even if the author is alluding here to his sympathy toward Zoroastrian worship, he is reluctant to convey it outright. He may therefore have referred to the Qur'anic

story about God's revelation to Moses as a means of facilitating the acceptance of this notion.<sup>50</sup>

The day of the Nawrūz becomes then the heart of the author's discussion. Following traditions prevalent in Imāmī literature, it is depicted as a cosmic day, one on which major historical or mythical events took place. It is believed to be the day on which God accepted the covenants of his servants to worship him and to believe in his unity (referring to Q. 7:172);<sup>51</sup> the first day on which the sun rose, the winds blew and the splendour of the world was created; the day Noah's ark came to rest upon Mount Ararat. It is the day on which Gabriel came down to Muḥammad summoning him to be the Messenger of God. It is the day on which Muḥammad bore 'Alī upon his shoulder so that he could fling down and destroy the idols of Quraysh from atop the Ka'ba; the day on which the Prophet ordered his companions to pledge allegiance to 'Alī as his heir. It is the day on which the Mahdī shall appear with his deputies, triumph over the Antichrist and crucify him.<sup>52</sup>

It should be emphasised that the ritual drinking of wine during the celebration of the Nuşayrī Mass (*quddās*), though performed on various occasions, is closely affiliated to the day of Nawrūz. This sacred wine, called in Nuşayrī texts *'abd al-nūr* ("the servant of light"), is believed to be a central element in the Nuşayrī Nawrūz festival. As al-Ṭabarānī states in the name of al-Khaṣībī: "Drink<sup>53</sup> in it [i.e. in the Nawrūz] *'abd al-nūr* for it is the entity of the fire which God made as his greatest sacrifice and the most noble entity" (*wa-sta 'milū fihī 'abd al-nūr alladhī huwa shakhs ḥādithī al-nūr allatī ja'alāhā allāh qurbānahu al-a'zam wa-shakhsahu al-mukarram*).<sup>54</sup>

This affinity between the sacred wine and the festival of Nawrūz is further elaborated in *Majmū' al-a'yūd* in a liturgical hymn ascribed to al-Khaṣībī and cited also in the Nuşayrī Catechism.<sup>55</sup> Here are its first, second and fifth verses:

1. Nawrūz is a beneficial and successful truth / realised in the closeness to God of the most noble of [the sons of] Hāshim (*nawrūz ḥaqq mustafid ghānim / mutahaqqiq bi-walā'it akram Hāshim*)
2. [It is] a day on which God revealed Himself in the Iranian cycles / before the cycle of the Arabs (*yawma abāna llāhu fihī zuḥūrahū / qabla al-a'aribi fi qibāb a'ājim*).
5. Drink pure wine, for this is the day on which his light was manifested in the clouds (*fa-shrab min al-*

*khamr al-zulāl fa-innahu / yawma tajallā nūruhu bi-ghamā'im*).<sup>56</sup>

These verses epitomise some of the major ideas dealt with above. The Iranians are presented here as the people among whom the deity revealed itself on the day of the Nawrūz before its manifestation among the Arabs. The sacred wine consumed during the festival of the Nawrūz symbolises the divine light, the essence of 'Alī-the-God, who appears *inter alia* through the clouds.<sup>57</sup>

(3) The divine predilection for the Iranians is reflected in their being represented also in the last two manifestations of the trinity — throughout both the Christian cycle (*al-qubba al-'isāwiyya*) and the Muḥammadan cycle (*al-qubba al-muḥammadiyya*) — that is, in the era of the Iranians' decline and the rise of the Arabs. In both cycles the Iranians play the role of the *bāb*: in the Christian cycle, the *bāb* is incarnated in Rūzbih b. al-Marzbān; in the primary and most perfect trinity it is incarnated in the figure of Salmān the Persian, who is seemingly regarded as a prefiguration of Rūzbih b. al-Marzbān (Rūzbih being Salmān's Persian name, prior to his conversion to Islam).<sup>58</sup>

The supremacy of the Iranians over the Arabs, as well as over all other nations, emerges additionally from the belief that they are the only nation among which the deity manifested itself repeatedly. According to al-Ṭabarānī, unlike other peoples and nations among which the deity reveals itself in a single cycle, the Iranians, or rather their kings, are distinguished by four cycles of revelation, named *qibāb* or *tabaqāt*. Three of these cycles — primarily the first two — correspond in part to two periods in early Iranian mythology. The author lists the names of kings of the Pishdadid and the Kayānid mythical dynasties among whom the divinity revealed itself.<sup>59</sup>

The first cycle consists of five of the Pishdadid kings — Kayumārth, Ṭahmūrath, Jamshīd, Bivarāsp and Farīdūn; to them are added various Iranian mythological heroes such as Rostam.<sup>60</sup>

The second cycle includes all four kings of the Kayānid dynasty — Kay Qobād, Kay Kāvūs, Kay Khusrow and Kay Lohrāsb;<sup>61</sup> accompanied by other names, some of which are unidentifiable. Noteworthy is the inclusion of Cyrus (Kūrus), the only representative of the historical Achaemenid dynasty.<sup>62</sup> The third and fourth cycles include the names of kings from the

Sasanid dynasty, to whom are again appended various Iranian names, some of which seem to be invented (e.g. the enigmatic Zādān al-akbar and Zādān al-asghar). Even a cursory glance at these lists reveals that they are replete with inaccuracies and anachronisms. Their main purpose seems to be to accentuate both the supremacy of the Iranians and the antiquity of their election as God's chosen people.

Finally of note is the place of the Persian language in Nusayrī writings in general and in the account of the Nawrūz and Mihrajān in particular. The chapters dealing with the Iranian festivals, like Nusayrī literature in general, are written in Arabic; this includes the liturgical sections of prayers and liturgical instructions. Against this background the following short prayer for the day of Mihrajān, interspersed with ritual invocations in Persian, stands out. These invocations may reflect a residuum from the early days when not only the Iranians but also their tongue enjoyed a distinguished status in the Nusayrī religion:

O Nōbahār, O Nōbahār;<sup>63</sup> be aware, be aware, be aware; By the eternal Bahman, by the manifestation in the clouds, by Rūzbih-Salmān,<sup>64</sup> by the priests, by the Priest of priests; O new spring, O new spring, O new spring; be aware, be aware, be aware, [I beseech you to] remove evil from us and to realize for us that which we acknowledged with respect to you in preexistence... (..yā nōbahār; yā nōbahār; zīnhār; zīnhār; be-bahman al-azālī wa'l-zohūr al-kahawarī wa-rūzbih al-salsālī, be-mōbahār, be-mōbahār al-mōbahār; yā nōbahār; yā nōbahār; yā nōbahār; zīnhār; zīnhār; illā kushafta 'annā al-zulm wa-ḥaqqayta lanā mā aqrannā laka fi'l-qidam).<sup>65</sup>

The syncretistic dimension of Nusayrī religion prevails once again in this liturgical hymn. The divine emanation which the believers summon, here named Bahman . . . the Vohu Manah (Good Thought) of the Avesta and the Pahlavī texts<sup>66</sup> . . . does not seem to refer to a specific deity but rather to indicate Iranian identity in general.<sup>67</sup> Bahman, the most supreme manifestation of the Iranian deity, is mentioned recurrently under various abstract derivations such as *al-bahmaniyya al-sughrā* and *al-bahmaniyya al-kubrā*, *al-qibāh al-bahmaniyya*. Moreover, the deity is depicted as manifesting itself in clouds, here named *kahawar*,<sup>68</sup> a synonym of *ghamā' im* in the above-cited verse from al-

Khaṣībī's hymn on Nawrūz. The believer further beseeches the *bāb Salmān-Rūzbih*, namely, the gate through which he aims to attain the mystery of divinity.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The existence of an Iranian component in the Nusayrī religion is unquestionable, yet it nevertheless raises some important and interrelated questions: (1) How did Iranian elements find their way into the Nusayrī religion? (2) What is the relative significance of these elements in the Nusayrī syncretistic mould?; (3) Why did this Iranian, neo-Shu'ūbī phase have only a marginal impact on the Nusayrī religion?

A better knowledge of the formative phase of the Nusayrī religion and its early development would help to resolve these issues. If we were to accept the assumption that the Nusayriyya emerged among extremist Shi'ī groups in third/ninth-century Iraq,<sup>69</sup> it would be rather easy also to explain the existence of an Iranian component within this religion. It is possible, on the basis of Muslim heresiographic literature, to draw a picture of the politico-religious ferment in Iraq at the end of the third/ninth century. This was the time of the Minor Occultation of the last Imam of the Twelver faction and the resurgence of the hitherto clandestine Ismā'īlī movement in Iraq and other provinces of the Muslim empire. Other extremist Shi'ī groups . . . later labelled *ghulāt*<sup>70</sup> . . . were active at the time, among them apparently the proto-Nusayrī circle centred around the figure of Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr, the eponym of the Nusayrī religion.<sup>71</sup> Iranian devotees and missionaries were active in these movements, entertaining the covert . . . or even overt . . . aspiration of reviving Iranian past glory, or at least of moulding a synthesis between Arabism (or rather Shi'ism) and Iranian culture. Among these philo-Iranians may be mentioned the Mughiriyya, Manṣūriyya, Khaṭābiyya<sup>72</sup> and other Shi'ī sub-sects. The neo-Mazdaki Khuramiyya movement was also active in that period, aspiring to restore the lost Iranian past through a renaissance of the Mazdaki religion.<sup>73</sup>

Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi's recent study, "Shahrbanū, dame du pays d'Iran et mère des Imams: entre l'Iran préislamique et le shiisme imamite",<sup>74</sup> contributes significantly to promoting a better understanding of the complex encounter between Arabism and Iranianism in the early centuries of Islam.

Amir-Moezzi focusses on the legend about the betrothal of the daughter of Yazdgird III (regn. 632–51), the last Sasanid king, to the Imam Ḥusayn. This legendary marriage was perceived in certain Shīʿī traditions as the beginning of the sacred encounter between Arabism and Iranianism, and the Imams of the Ḥusaynid line were seen as drawing their sanctity from two holy sources. That this tendency to fuse Arabism and Iranianism was rife with tension is abundantly reflected in the texts studied by Amir-Moezzi as well as in the Nuṣayrī sources presented here. Alongside attempts at conciliation, Amir-Moezzi points to three major tendencies of Iranians toward Arab-Muslim heritage: (a) an extremist attitude, often characterised by a complete rejection of Arab heritage; (b) an attitude of turning back on the Iranian heritage and striving for an unconditional acceptance of and total immersion in the Arab-Muslim identity; and (c) an attempt to achieve harmonisation between the Iranian heritage and Arab-Muslim civilisation.<sup>75</sup> The Nuṣayrī texts presented here naturally reflect the first tendency.

However, the philo-Iranian spirit did not thrive for long. It seems that with the emigration of the Nuṣayrī sect from its cradle in Iraq, where it was exposed to Iranian influence, to its new centre in Syria in the days of al-Khaṣībī and his successors, the Iranian elements lost their relevance whereas other, notably Christian, components prevailed.<sup>76</sup>

The marginalisation of Iranian motifs notwithstanding, their memory was imprinted on the Nuṣayrī collective memory and survived in the domain of ritual in the form of the Nawruz and Mihrajan festivals. The persistence of these festivals in recent times is attested both by the Nuṣayrī catechism and by al-Adhānī's *al-Bākūra al-sulaymāniyya*, both of which include them among the various Nuṣayrī holy days.

In addition to the general tension between Iranianism and Arabism reflected in the passages of *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* cited here, it would not be difficult to point out specific figures who may have served as channels of Iranian influence on the nascent Nuṣayriyya. Especially worthy of mention is al-Khaṣībī's teacher, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Jamān al-Junbulānī (d. 287/900), of the district of Fāris, who had seemingly played an important role in introducing Persian elements into the Nuṣayrī religion.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, some of the prominent sages appearing in *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* as transmitters of traditions – e.g. al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Qazwīmī, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b.

Ayyūb al-Qummī, Abū al-Ḥusayn ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Khurāsānī, al-Fayyāḍ b. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Ṭūsī — are of Iranian origin. These scholars also may have contributed to introducing Iranian elements into the new religion.<sup>78</sup>

#### Notes

\* An earlier version of this article was read in a seminar of a research group on “Exclusivity and Universality in Shīʿī Islam”, held at the Institute for Advanced Studies of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the winter of 2002–03. I am grateful to Professors Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Eitan Kohlberg and Shaul Shaked for reading this article and for their instructive comments.

<sup>1</sup> On the syncretistic nature of the Nuṣayrī religion, see R. Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nusairis* (Paris, 1900), pp. 17–76 (“les nusairis depuis l’époque romaine jusqu’à nos jours”); M. Moosa, *Extremist Shiʿites: The Ghulat Sects* (New York, 1988), especially the chapter on the Nuṣayrī festivals (pp. 382–97). On the presence of syncretistic motifs in Islam in general, see C. Colpe, “The Phenomenon of Syncretism and the Impact on Islam”, in *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Middle East: Collected Papers of the Symposium, Berlin 1995*, ed. K. Kehl-Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkelé and A. Otter-Beaujean (Leiden, New York and Cologne, 1997), pp. 35–48.

<sup>2</sup> Exceptions are the British missionary Samuel Lyde, who in his pioneering monograph on the Nuṣayrī religion – *The Asian Mystery: The Ansairi or Nusairis of Syria* (London, 1860) – devoted a few pages (137–38) to this topic; and Moosa, *op. cit.*, pp. 332–36, 392–93, 399–400.

<sup>3</sup> On the Christian components in the Nuṣayrī religion, see H. Laumens, “Les Nusairis furent-ils chrétiens? A propos d’un livre récent”, *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien* VI (1901), pp. 33–50; M.M. Bar-Asher, “Sur les éléments chrétiens de la religion Nusayrite-Alawite”, *JA* CCLXXXIX (2001), pp. 185–216.

<sup>4</sup> The complete title of the book is *Kitāb Sabīl rāḥat al-arwāḥ wa-dalīl al-sūrūr wa-l-ghāḥ ilā fāḥiq al-ashāḥ*. A critical edition was published by R. Strothmann in *Isl.* XXVII (1946). General accounts of the Nuṣayrī festivals are offered by some modern scholars. See e.g. Lyde, *op. cit.*, pp. 175–82; Dussaud, *op. cit.*, pp. 136–52; Moosa, *op. cit.*, pp. 382–97; Abū Musā ʿĪrānī, *al-ʿAlawīyyūn al-nuṣayrīyyūn: baḥth fi ʿaḥdā wa-l-tarīkh* (Beirut, 1984), pp. 133–62; ʿA. al-Dujayh, *Kitāb Majmūʿ al-aʿyād wa-l-ṭarīqat al-khaṣībīyya*, in *Majallat al-majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿirāqī* (1956),

- pp. 618–29. For an analysis of the Nusayrī calendar and the syncretistic and antinomian nature of the Nusayrī festivals, see M.M. Bar-Asher and A. Kofsky, *The Nusayrī-ʿAlawī Religion: An Enquiry into Its Theology and Liturgy* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 111–51.
- <sup>5</sup> The Persian title, *rāst bāshīyya*, is derived from the imperative *rāst bāsh* (be righteous). This work, ascribed to al-Khaṣṣībī, is thus far known only from quotations in *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, p. 12, line 10, and p. 154, line 10. On al-Khaṣṣībī and his role in the formation of the Nusayrī religion and identity, see Yaron Friedman, “al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥundān al-Khaṣṣībī: A Historical Biography of the Founder of the Nusayrī-ʿAlawite Sect,” *Studia Islamica* XCIII (2001), pp. 91–111.
- <sup>6</sup> The text is available in two manuscripts: ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 6182, ff. 1a–20b; ms. Berlin (Königliche Bibliothek), no.2086, pp. 3–84. For an edition accompanied by an annotated English translation of the text, see Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 163–221 (henceforth: *Nusayrī Catechism*).
- <sup>7</sup> Dussaud, *op. cit.*, introduction, p. xxii.
- <sup>8</sup> *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, pp. 188–229.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202, lines 9–16.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 199, lines 17–18; cf. also *ibid.*, p. 201, lines 1–5. See also J. Walbridge, “A Persian Gulf in the Sea of Lights: The Chapter on Naw-Rūz in the *Bihār al-anwār*,” *Iran* XXXV (1997), pp. 85–92.
- <sup>11</sup> These terms represent the two aspects of its dialectic nature: pointing to the divinity and thus revealing it to the initiated, while veiling it from the uninitiated.
- <sup>12</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the Nusayrī trinitarian doctrine, see Dussaud, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–72; Moosa, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–56, 342–51. See also Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–42; Bar-Asher, “Sur les éléments chrétiens de la religion Nusayrite-ʿAlawite,” pp. 191–99.
- <sup>13</sup> I.e. the Imams and the other persons in whom the deity manifests itself throughout history.
- <sup>14</sup> I.e. the kings of the Sasanid dynasty.
- <sup>15</sup> These two plants are integral elements of the Nawruz rituals. Apart from the passage cited here, see *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, pp. 201, 202, 208, 211. For the use of myrtle in Nusayrī rituals, cf. Sulaymān al-Adhānī, *Kitāb al-Bākūra al-sulaymāniyya fi kashf asrār al-diyāna al-nusayriyya* (Beirut, n.d.), p. 37 (new edition [Cairo, 1410/1990], p. 47). See also Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī [citing Ibn Babawayhi’s *ʿIlal al-sharāʿī* and *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*]: “The Sasanids appointed for each day an appropriate sort of aromatic plant and flower and a kind of wine, presented in an orderly fashion from which they did not deviate” (*wa-kānat al-akāsira rasamat li-kulli yawm* *nawʿan min al-rayāḥin yūdaʿu bayna yadayhi wa-lawnan min al-sharāb ʿalā rasm muntaẓam lā yukhālifūnahu fiʿl-tarṭīb*) (*Bihār al-anwār* [Beirut, 1403/1983], vol. LVI, p. 115). Myrtle branches also play an important role in Mandaean ritual (see E. Lupien, *The Mandaeans: The Last Gnostics* [Grand Rapids and Cambridge, 2002], pp. 15, 23, 25, 29).
- <sup>16</sup> The explanation given here regarding the affinity of the rituals to the name of the festival is not clear. On the various etymologies offered by al-Tabarānī for the name Nawruz, see above, p. 218, and nn. 48–49.
- <sup>17</sup> Some of the rituals depicted here seem to preserve ancient rites performed in pre-Islamic Iran. See e.g. P. Azkāyī, *Nowrūz: Tarikhe va-marjaʿ Shenāsi* (n.p., 1353sh/1974), pp. 2–14; G.F. von Grunbaum, *Muḥammadian Festivals* (London, 1976), pp. 53–56; R. Levy and C.E. Bosworth, “Nawruz,” *EP*, vol. VII, p. 1047. On Nawruz in Sasanid Iran, see also M. Grignaschi, “Quelques spécimens de la littérature sassanide conservés dans les bibliothèques d’Istanbul,” *JA* CCLVI (1996), pp. 1–142, at pp. 103–08 (The Arabic text of *Kitāb al-Tāj fi sirat Anūshirvān li-Ibn al-Muqaffāʾ*), pp. 129–35 (an annotated French translation of Ibn al-Muqaffāʾ’s text).
- <sup>18</sup> That is, the primordial world of light in which, according to the Nusayrī myth, the souls of the believers existed before their fall into the terrestrial world. See e.g. al-Adhānī, *al-Bākūra al-sulaymāniyya*, ed. Beirut, pp. 59–61 (= ed. Cairo, pp. 69–71); Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 52, 75–77.
- <sup>19</sup> This seems to be identical with the more complete title *Fī siyāqat al-zuhūrāt* occurring anonymously in the thirteenth-century Nusayrī polemical treatise [= *Munāẓara*] by Yūsuf b. al-ʿAjūz al-Nashshabī, ms. Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale), fonds arabe 1450, fols. 118b. The title seems to refer to the sequence of God’s cyclical manifestations throughout the history of mankind.
- <sup>20</sup> This notion of removal (*izālā*) of a certain divine emanation to make room for another appears also in al-Nashshabī’s *Munāẓara*. See *ibid.*, pp. 117a–b.
- <sup>21</sup> On this Qurʾānic appellation of Alexander the Great (Q. 18: 83, 86, 94), see W. Montgomery Watt, “al-Iskandar,” *EP*, vol. IV, p. 127. It is noteworthy that in Iranian mythology Alexander appears *inter alia* as an Iranian king. See e.g. Firdawsī, *Shah-nāma*, books 18–20. See also W.L. Hanaway, “Eskandar-Nāma,” *ELr*, vol. VIII, pp. 609–12; Iskandarnawāh, *A Persian Medieval Alexander-Romançe*, tr. M.S. Southgate (New York, 1978); Y. Yamanaka, “Ambiguïté de l’image d’Alexandre chez Firdawsī: les traces des traditions sassanides dans le Livre



- des Rois," in *Actes du Colloque de Paris, 27–29 novembre 1999* (Paris, 1999), pp. 341–53.
- <sup>22</sup> Here and elsewhere Daniel is associated with the Iranian era. See e.g. *Nuṣayrī Catechism*, pp. 173–74 (question 14), with note 46. According to Muslim tradition, Daniel lived in Iran and is believed to be buried at Susa in the district of Khūzistān. See e.g. Ibn Ishāq Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Thaʿlabī, *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ al-musammā bi-ʿarāʾis al-majālis* (Beirut, n.d.), pp. 187–91.
- <sup>23</sup> Namely, Ardāshīr (regn. 224–41), conqueror of Iran and the first king of the Sasanid dynasty. Later, al-Ṭabarānī depicts him as “the king of kings, who built cities and constructed marvellous buildings therein, paved roads and enacted laws, established the Arab foundations of religion (!), and unveiled the ancient Iranian religions” (*shāh shāhān, wa-huwa alladhī banā al-mudun wa-aḥara al-abniya al-ʿajiba fimā banā min al-mudun wa-tarraqa al-turuq wa-sharraʿa al-sharāʾiʿ wa-aqāma uṣūl al-dīn al-ʿarabiyya wa-kashafa mā kāna qaḍīman min al-diyānāt al-fārisiyyāt*) (*Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, p. 210, lines 17–19).
- <sup>24</sup> I.e. Shābur I (regn. 241–72).
- <sup>25</sup> *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, p. 189, line 3. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 211, line 1, where the author employs the plural form: *buyūt al-ʿarab*. See also *ibid.*, p. 223, line 5: *al-buyūt al-fārisiyyāt waʿl-amākūn al-bahmaniyyāt waʿl-masākin al-ʿjamiyyāt* (for Bahman, from which the term *bahmaniyyāt* is derived, see below, n. 66). The notion of the divinity as residing in a place is widespread in Nuṣayrī theology. See e.g. Bar-Asher and Kofsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 54–55. See also M. Sharon, “*Vā-yifgaʿ ba-maqom va-yalen sham...ʿ*” – *Le-mashmaʿūt ha-mmila ‘maqom’ ba-miqra*, in *Mehqarim be-miqra u-ve-hinnukh muggashim li-professor Moshe Arend* (=“*And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there...ʿ*” [Gen. 28:11] — On the meaning of the word ‘place’ in the Bible”, in *Studies on the Bible and Education presented to Professor Moshe Arend*, ed. D. Rafel (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 188–98 (in Hebrew).
- <sup>26</sup> Khusrow II (regn. 590–628).
- <sup>27</sup> *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, pp. 188–89.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197, line 13.
- <sup>29</sup> For the notion of a pre-cosmic Adam or rather seven Adams (*sabʿat ādamīyīn* or *awādīm*), see the proto-Nuṣayrī work *Kitāb al-Ḥaḥṭ waʿl-aqilla* (attributed to al-Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar al-Juʿfi), edited by ʿA. Tamer (Beirut, 1969), pp. 160–77 (*fī maʿrifat mā jāʾa fī taṣṭīḥ al-ādamīyīn al-sabʿa*).
- <sup>30</sup> See Bar-Asher and Kofsky, “A Nuṣayrī Treatise on the Duty to Know the Mystery of Divinity”, in *idem*, *The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawi Religion*, pp. 89–97.
- <sup>31</sup> Later it will become clear that there are in fact several Iranian cycles (*al-qibāb al-fārisiyyāt*).
- <sup>32</sup> See e.g. *Nuṣayrī Catechism*, p. 171 (question 5).
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 183–85 (questions 43–44).
- <sup>34</sup> On which see S. Enderwitz, “al-Shuʿūbiyya”, *EP*, vol. IX, pp. 513–16.
- <sup>35</sup> See e.g. the genealogy of the Prophet at the beginning of Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq’s *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, tr. A. Guillaume (Oxford, 1955), p. 4.
- <sup>36</sup> *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, p. 189, lines 3–4. The tradition is cited also in al-Ṭabarānī’s *Kitāb al-Maʿārif*, ms. Or. 304 in the Staats-und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, Carl von Ossietzky, p. 28a, lines 1–2.
- <sup>37</sup> *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, p. 189, lines 6–7.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 210, lines 22–211, line 1.
- <sup>39</sup> *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*, ed. C. Pellat (Beirut, 1966), vol. I, p. 312. On this king see also al-Ṭabarī’s instructive chapters, *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk)*, vol. V, translated and annotated by C.E. Bosworth (New York, 1999), pp. 146–62, 236–45, 260–67.
- <sup>40</sup> See above, n. 18.
- <sup>41</sup> *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, p. 189, line 18 — p. 190, line 1.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207, lines 13–14. See also *ibid.*, p. 211, lines 5–13.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190, lines 2–3.
- <sup>44</sup> It goes without saying that by “Arabs” the author is referring in fact to the Shiʿis who are the only Muslims to celebrate the Ghadir Khumm festival.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189, lines 11–14. A similar interpretation of the cult of fire with its affinity to the revelation to Moses in the burning bush is given by Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191). See Shihābuddīn Yahyā Sohravardī, Shaykh al-Ishrāq, *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. II (*Œuvres en persan: Opera Metaphysica et Mystica II*), ed. S.H. Nasr and H. Corbin (Paris, 1970), pp. 188–90. For an annotated French translation of the latter paragraphs, see Shihābuddīn Yahyā Sohravardī, *L’Archange enpourpré: quinze traités et récits mystiques*, translated from Persian and Arabic by H. Corbin (Paris, 1976), pp. 113–16. I owe the references to Suhrawardī’s works to M.A. Amir-Moccezi.
- <sup>46</sup> The English translation of Qurʾānic verses here and throughout the article is taken from A. Arberry, *The Qurʾān Interpreted* (London, 1955), with occasional modifications.
- <sup>47</sup> *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, p. 190, lines 3–11. See also a partial translation of the passage in Lyde, *The Asian Mystery*, p. 137.
- <sup>48</sup> *Majmūʿ al-aʿyād*, p. 208, line 13: “*waʿl-nawrīz al-yawm al-jadīd.*”

- <sup>49</sup> “*Fa-sammā Allāh dhālīka al-yawm al-nūr wa-sammā-lu al-fūs nawrīz mushtaqq min al-nūr wa’l-zīyy*” (*ibid.*, p. 198, lines 9–10). See also the other popular etymology ascribed to Abu ‘l-Khaṭṭāb (d. c. 138/755), the eponym of the Khaṭṭābiyya extremist Shī‘ī sect: “*Rīz* in Persian denotes protection from transmigration; its meaning in Arabic is ‘he who knows God, may He be exalted on the day of the Nawrīz, is safe from transmigration’”, (*rīz bi’l-fārisīyya amān min al-musūkhiyya; tafsiṛuhu bi’l-‘arabiyya man ‘arafa Allāh yawma al-nawrīz amīna min al-musūkhiyya*) (*ibid.*, p. 202, lines 7–8).
- <sup>50</sup> The author refers here to a number of accounts of God’s manifestation through fire to various individuals, e.g. Abel and Abraham (*ibid.*, pp. 213–14).
- <sup>51</sup> On this verse, known as “the verse of covenant” (*āyat al-mūthāq*), and its importance in Shī‘ī doctrine, see R. Granflich, “Der Urvertrag in der Koranlegung (zu Sura 7, 172–73)”, *Isl.* I.X (1983), pp. 205–30, which discusses this verse in detail and also devotes some space to early Imāmī exegesis. See also M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shī‘ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, tr. D. Streight (New York, 1994), p. 34; M.M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism* (Jerusalem and Leiden, 1999), pp. 132–33.
- <sup>52</sup> *Majmū‘ al-a’yād*, p. 199; See also, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. I.VI, p. 92. In both sources the tradition is cited in the name of Ja‘far al-Šādiq’s *mawla*, al-Mu‘allā b. Khunays. See also Walbridge, “A Persian Gulf in the Sea of Lights”, pp. 88–89.
- <sup>53</sup> Literally: use.
- <sup>54</sup> *Majmū‘ al-a’yād*, p. 215, lines 16–17. See also *Nuṣayri Catechism*, p. 196 (question 92).
- <sup>55</sup> *Majmū‘ al-a’yād*, pp. 208–09; *Nuṣayri Catechism*, p. 195 (question 90). See also Moosa, *Extremist Shi‘ites: The Ghulat Sects*, pp. 399–400.
- <sup>56</sup> *Majmū‘ al-a’yād*, pp. 208–09; see also *Nuṣayri Catechism*, p. 195 (question 92) in the English translation; pp. 218–19 (the Arabic text).
- <sup>57</sup> For the belief among certain *ghulat* groups that the deity, manifested in ‘Alī, reveals itself in various celestial elements, see e.g. Abu ‘l-Faḥr Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Libre des religions et des sectes* (“*Kitāb al-mīlād wa-l-nihāl*”), annotated French tr. D. Gimaret and G. Monnot (Paris and Louvain, 1986), vol. I, p. 451.
- <sup>58</sup> See al-Ṭabarānī’s *Kitāb al-Ma‘ārif*, p. 83, lines 2–3: “*ima awwal mu’jizāt Salmān wa-huwa Rūzbih ibn al-Marzbān fi anwāt Tā‘ al-ayhī al-salām*.” See also Ḥusayn al-Nūrī al-Ṭabarī al-Ṭabarī, *Nafas al-rahīmīn fi fadā’il Salmān* (n.p., 1411/1991–92), pp. 27–29; L. Massignon, “Salmān Pāk et les prémices spirituelles de l’Islam iranien”, in *Opera Minora*, ed. Y. Moubarek (Beirut, 1963), vol. I, pp. 443–83, esp. pp. 450–53.
- <sup>59</sup> A treasure trove for the study of these dynasties and for the mythologies related to the kings mentioned here, is Firdawsi’s *Shāh-nāma*. See also A. Christensen, *Les Kayānides* (Copenhagen, 1931); “Kayānids,” *EP*, vol. IV, p. 809.
- <sup>60</sup> *Majmū‘ al-a’yād*, pp. 209–10.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210, line 6.
- <sup>63</sup> This can be rendered either as “spring” (literally “new spring”) or as a Zoroastrian fire shrine.
- <sup>64</sup> Salmān is referred to in the Arabic text that follows as Salsal, one of the appellations by which he is sometimes known.
- <sup>65</sup> *Majmū‘ al-a’yād*, p. 224, line 19–225, line 4.
- <sup>66</sup> On Bahman (=Vohu Mana) in Zoroastrianism, see M. Royce, *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden and Cologne, 1975), vol. I, pp. 209–11, 277–78; J. Marten, “Bahman”, *EP*, vol. III, pp. 487–88.
- <sup>67</sup> It seems then that the author presents Bahman here as the *ma‘nā*, while Salmān maintains his usual role as *bāb*.
- <sup>68</sup> See e.g. *Lisān al-‘Arab*: “*al-kahḥawar min al-sahāb huwa qita‘ min al-sahāb andhāl al-jibāl*”, whence F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian English Dictionary* (London, 1892), p. 1056: “clouds like mountains; a large mass.” See also the expression *al-qubba al-kahḥawariyya* (*Majmū‘ al-a’yād*, p. 211, line 15). See also M. Ullmann, *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache* (Wiesbaden, 1970), vol. I, p. 399.
- <sup>69</sup> See e.g. H. Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis, die extreme Schia und die ‘Alawiten* (Zürich and Munich, 1982), pp. 282–83.
- <sup>70</sup> See on this Amir-Moezzi, “Aspects de l’imamologie duodécimaine I: remarques sur la divinité de l’Imām”, *Studia Iranica* XXVI (1996), pp. 194–216, especially pp. 195–96.
- <sup>71</sup> On Ibn Nuṣayr and his role in the formation of Nuṣayrism, see Bar-Asher and Kofsky, “Dogma and Ritual in *Kitāb al-ma‘ārif* by the Nuṣayri Theologian Abū Sa‘ūd Maymān b. al-Qasim al-Ṭabarānī (d. 426/1034–35)” (forthcoming).
- <sup>72</sup> On these sects, see e.g. Shahrastānī, *Libre des religions et des sectes*, vol. I, pp. 515–25. See also the entries on these groups by W. Madelung in *EP*, vol. VII, pp. 347–48 (al-Mughīriyya); vol. VI, pp. 441–42 (Mansūriyya); vol. IV, pp. 1132–33 (“*Khaṭṭābiyya*”).
- <sup>73</sup> On this sect, see e.g. Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*, Columbia Lectures on Iranian Studies 4 (New York, 1988), pp. 1–11; idem, “*Khaṭṭābiyya*”, *EP*, vol. V,

pp. 63–65; P. Crone, “Kavād’s Heresy and Mazdak’s Revolt”, *Iran* XXIX (1991), pp. 21–42.

<sup>74</sup> In *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* XXVII (2002), pp. 497–549.

<sup>75</sup> For a detailed analytical survey of these three attitudes, see *ibid.*, pp. 532–34.

<sup>76</sup> See above, n. 3.

<sup>77</sup> See Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis*, pp. 296–97. See also Muḥammad Amin Ghālib al-Ṭawīl, *Ta’rikh al-‘alawiyīn* (Beirut, n.d.), pp. 258–59.

<sup>78</sup> Of interest is Lyde’s observation in his discussion of Nawrūz that “the wild conceits to be found in the passage from which I have taken the above [namely, the commentary on the revelation to Moses in the burning

bush] are probably due to some Persian, and, in fact, one of the divisions of the book where it is to be found is styled ‘the traditionary sayings of Abu-‘Ali of Busra, in his dwellings in Shiraz, in the year of the Hijra 327 (A.D. 938).’” (*The Asian Mystery*, pp. 137–38). The book referred to by Lyde is a Nuṣayrī manuscript entitled “Manual for Sheikhs” (probably identical with the work known from other sources as *Kitāb al-Mashyukha*), extracts of which are included in Lyde’s book (pp. 233–69). So far I have not been able to trace this Abu ‘Ali, who appears also in *Majmū‘ al-a’yūd* (p. 28), though in a different context, and may also have served as a link, as Lyde suggests, in the importation of Iranian materials into the Nuṣayrī religion.