Fruit of Knowledge, Wheel of Learning
Essays in Honour of Carole Hillenbrand

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Contents

Penning the Foundations:
A Comparative Reading of Fatimid Origins Narratives with Abbasid and ʿIbadi Texts

T HE MOMENTOUS REIGNS of the fourth Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Muʿizz li-Din Allah (r. 341–365/953-975) and that of his son and successor Imam-Caliph al-ʿAziz bi'llah (r. 365–386/976–996) witnessed the coming-of-age of the Fatimid foundation narrative.[1] This four-decade period led to the production of works, catalysed by state patronage, which provide primary source narratives of formative developments in Fatimid history. Most prominent of these works was the *Iftitah al-Daʿwa wa-Ibtidaʾ al-Dawla* (Commencement of the Mission and Beginning of the State) by the Fatimid chief-justice (qadi) Abu Hanfia al-Nuʿman (d. 363/974).[2] Other historical works produced in this period include the *Istitar al-Imam* (The Concealment of the Imam) by Ahmad bin Ibrahim (or Muhammad) al-Nisaburi (d. after 386/996),[3] *Sirat al-Ustadh Jawdhar* (Biography of Ustadh Jawdhar) by Mansur al-ʿAzizi al-Jawdhari (d. circa 386/996),[4] and *Sirat Jaʿfar al-Hajib* (Biography of Jaʿfar the Chamberlain) by Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Yamani (fl. fourth/tenth century).[5] Despite variations in content and form, each of these works contributes to relating the origins of the Fatimid state, and the mission of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* that had led to its inception. Their authors belonged either to the Fatimid Ismaʿili *daʿwa*, or were employees of the Fatimid state bureaucracy. Cumulatively, their works came to serve as the official Fatimid foundations narrative.

Accounts concerning various caliphates, regional dynasties as well as religious communities became increasing commonplace in Muslim historiography from the fourth/tenth century onwards.[6] Among the early examples of such works is the anonymous *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* (Reports on al-ʿAbbas), written seemingly before the fourth/tenth century, which relates the origins of the Abbasid *daʿwa* that culminated in their caliphate in 132/750.[7] A similar foundation narrative is to be found in the sixth/twelfth century ʿIbadi work, *Kitab al-Sira wa-Akhbar al-Aʾimma* (The Book on Biographies and Reports on the Imams) by Abu Zakariyya Yahya al-Warjalani, which as part of its larger narrative includes the foundation narrative of the ʿIbadi Rustamid dynasty (160–296/777–909), which was displaced by the Fatimids in North Africa.[8]

Akhbar al-ʿAbbas, Iftitah al-Daʿwa and *Kitab al-Sira* are representative of 'foundation narratives' written in the third/ninth, fourth/tenth and the sixth/twelfth centuries respectively. Each is written within a distinct ideological framework: *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* professes an early Abbasid doctrinal position of broad-based Hashimi Shiʿism with a vested interest in legitimising the Abbasid house; the *Iftitah* invokes an Ismaʿili Shiʿi model of authority, which is invested in a divinely mandated imamate from the lineage of al-Husayn bin ʿAli, while the *Kitab al-Sira* presents the ʿIbadi Khariji model of a meritorious imamate, based on the selection of the most pious and deserving figure. These works therefore serve as salient examples for a comparative reading of Abbasid, Fatimid and ʿIbadi foundational narratives.

This paper aims to explore shared as well as distinct features of Fatimid foundation narratives through specific reference to Qadi al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* in relation to contemporaneous origins narratives in broader Muslim historiography, particularly the earlier *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* and the later *Akhbar al-Aʾimma* of al-Warjalani. Specifically, it reviews the *daʿwa* to *dawla* paradigm permeating all three works and ascertains the extent to which this principle became a dominant feature across these texts.[9] It is apparent that al-Nuʿman was concerned with presenting the righteous Ismaʿili *daʿwa* (mission) as the historical process that led to the formation of the Fatimid *dawla* (state). A comparative analysis of al-Nuʿman's work with the origins narratives presented in *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* and *Kitab al-Sira* highlights that all three texts shared the *daʿwa* to *dawla* model in their conceptions of the process of state-formation. A close textual analysis of these works further demonstrates that they shared a number of other motifs in their narration of the *daʿwa* to *dawla* model. These include mention of *futūḥāt* ('openings' or 'conquests') as symbolic processes that indicated Divine-sanction within the *daʿwa* to *dawla* process. They also include the provision of accounts that locate the religious knowledge (*ʿilm*) of the founders of their movement's *daʿwa* as symbols of the legitimacy of the *dawla* which they subsequently engendered.

Modern scholars have devoted significant effort to the study of the aforementioned Fatimid corpus of historical texts.[10] As these works were lost to scholarship until their rediscovery in the twentieth century, discussions thus far have focused mainly on mining their significant historical data.[11] Analyses of these works as a product of fourth/tenth century Arabic historiographical tradition are therefore limited.[12] Walker's primer on sources from the Fatimid

period,[13] and Brett's discussion on the reliability of the broader body of Fatimid and North African historiography are notable exceptions.[14] Similarly, conclusions presented in modern scholarship on broader Arabic historiography remain to be closely studied in relation to Fatimid historical writings, whose authors were contemporaries of the 'classical' historians of the eastern Islamic world. In examining the models of state-formation shared by Fatimid, Abbasid and 'Ibadi authors, this paper seeks to contextualise Fatimid historical writing within the broader frame of Muslim historiography.

Qadi al-Nuʿman and *Iftitah al-Daʿwa*

Composed around 346/957,[15] Qadi al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* recounts the establishment of the Fatimid state. It provides a detailed history of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* in North Africa led by the religio-political emissary (*dāʿī*) Abu ʿAbdallah al-Shiʿi (d. 298/911) who began his *daʿwa* activity in 280/893. Over the next 16 years, this led to the conquest of North-Africa (*Ifriqiya*) and culminated in the proclamation of ʿAbd Allah al-Mahdi biʾllah (r. 297-323/909–934) as the first Fatimid imam-caliph in 297/909, thus marking the foundation of the Fatimid state. The *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* ends with a brief outline of the major events during the reigns of al-Mahdi biʾllah, his successors al-Qaʾim bi-Amr Allah (r. 322–334/934–946) and al-Mansur biʾllah (r. 334–341/946-953), and to the composition of the work.[16] In the *Iftitah*, there is a progressive transitioning from the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* era of the *Dawr al-Satr* (the period of concealment), during which the identity and whereabouts of the Ismaʿili imams were kept hidden, to the *ẓuhūr* (the public manifestation) of Imam-Caliph ʿAbd Allah al-Mahdi, and the beginning of the *dawla.*

The author, Qadi Abu Hanifa al-Nuʿman bin Muhammad, the architect of Fatimid jurisprudence and author of seminal texts on Fatimid doctrine, was among the most influential Fatimid scholars in the fourth/tenth century.[17] Having entered into the service of the first Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Mahdi biʾllah in 313/925, al-Nuʿman was appointed chief justice over the Fatimid realms in 336/948 by the third Imam-Caliph al-Mansur biʾllah.[18] He reached the apogee of his long career by also serving as the chief of the Fatimid *daʿwa* during the reign of the fourth Imam-Caliph al-Muʿizz li-Din Allah.[19] As Sumaiya Hamdani argues, in the process of transformation that saw the Ismaʿili revolutionary movement become an established polity, Qadi al-Nuʿman's efforts were pivotal in creating a *ẓahirī* (exoteric) legal and doctrinal framework for the Fatimid state.[20]

It is al-Nuʿman's erudition in this period that has earned him the accolade of being the founder of Fatimid historiography.[21] Among his several compositions, many no longer extant, were biographies (*sīra*) of each of the first four Fatimid imam-caliphs.[22] However, it was the *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* that became the most consequential of al-Nuʿman's historical works. Notably, the *Iftitah* was commissioned by al-Muʿizz li-Din Allah, who reviewed and approved the final version, rendering it, according to Brett and Poonawala, an official and authoritative account of the dynasty's own origins.[23] Subsequently, the *Iftitah* was integrated in Ismaʿili *daʿwa* literature as the authentic foundational narrative of the Fatimid state and also found salience in subsequent North African Sunni historiography as a key source for the rise of the Fatimids.[24]

The *Iftitah* reflects a teleological approach to history, which the Fatimid *daʿwa* literature adopted to provide a moral, salvific vision to its adherents.[25] The Fatimid Imams and the Ismaʿili *dāʿīs* under them are presented as the central agents through which God's redeeming intervention in the affairs of humankind is realised through God's continued support (*taʾyīd*) and assistance (*nuṣra*). The trajectory of events that see the transition from *daʿwa* and culminate in the Fatimid *dawla* are therefore presented as inevitable acts of history that have been foreordained.

As noted by al-Qadi, Lindsay and Poonawala, the *Iftitah* mirrors the experiences of the Ismaʿili faithful of North Africa to those of the nascent Muslim community in Mecca. In its narrative, adherents of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* re-enact the deeds and experiences of the Prophet's community, including moving from ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) to knowledge and guidance, from tribalism to a community under God's ordained authority. They suffer the enmity of the irreligious, bear the burden of 'hypocrites' within their own ranks, perform their own migration (*hijra*), and as agents of God's providence, emerge victorious with the founding of the Fatimid state.[26]

The *Iftitah* was thus crafted to legitimise the Fatimid state through the recounting of the righteousness of its *daʿwa.* Yet, as becomes apparent, in adopting this approach, al-Nuʿman's narrative is drawing upon a shared repertoire of state formation to which Abbasid and 'Ibadi writers also subscribed.

The *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*

Composed, in all likelihood, between the third-fourth/ninth-tenth centuries, the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* presents detailed biographies of the forefathers of the first Abbasid Caliphs, followed by narratives on the *daʿwa* that led to the proclamation of the Abbasid Caliphate. Generally divided into two parts, the first part relates the qualities and virtues attributed to the Abbasid forebears. Beginning with the death of al-ʿAbbas bin ʿAbd al-Muttalib (d. circa 32/653), the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, the *Akhbar* provides a succession of biographical entries on his lineal descendants beginning with his son ʿAbdallah bin al-ʿAbbas (d. circa 68/687–688) and then proceeds with accounts on ʿAli bin ʿAbdallah bin al-ʿAbbas (d. circa 117/735), Muhammad bin ʿAli bin ʿAbdallah (d. 125/743) and Ibrahim bin Muhammad (d. 132/749). The second part provides a detailed rendering of the Abbasid *daʿwa*, from the sending of *dāʿīs* to Khurasan by Muhammad bin ʿAli bin ʿAbdallah bin

al-'Abbas, and the dispatch of Abu Muslim al-Khurasani (d. 137/755), to a detailed account of the *futūḥ* of the 'Hashimiyya', that is, the conquest of the Abbasid armies that ultimately led to their seizure of Kufa. It ends on the cusp of the proclamation of the Abbasid Caliphate in 132/749, and thus the beginning of its *dawla*.

The *Akhbar al-'Abbas* has been argued to contain 'by far the most detailed, comprehensive, and coherent account of the Abbasid *da'wa* available in any source.'[27] Following its discovery in 1955 and subsequent publication in 1971, the work has been subject to considerable analysis, leading to a significant revision of the history of this seminal movement in early Islamic history.[28] However, with the extant text found only in a single manuscript with no formal title or author, the provenance of the work has led to numerous debates regarding its title, authorship, dating and completeness.[29] Al-Duri argued that it was composed by Ibn al-Nattah in the third/ninth century. Daniel on the other hand places its composition in the second half of the third/ninth or the early fourth/tenth centuries.[30] While Daniel tentatively suggests Muhammad bin al-'Abbas bin Muhamad bin Yahya (d. 310/922) as an author of the work, he maintains that 'any theory about the authorship of the *Akhbar* must ultimately remain speculative.'[31] Subsequently, Bahramian argued that the work was 'probably written in the first half of the fourth/tenth century.'[32] For the purposes of this study, it is noteworthy that the author of the *Akhbar al-'Abbas* would have been almost contemporaneous to Qadi al-Nu'man.

Despite these controversies, the importance of the *Akhbar* is well-established and is considered to represent a 'highly pro-Abbasid, and perhaps even an authoritative, official, interpretation of Abbasid history.'[33] The work's composite nature, with the first part closely resembling genealogical historiography and the second part on the history of the *da'wa*, has led to the suggestion that the latter is older and 'virtually contemporary' to the *da'wa* itself.[34]

The function of the biographical half of the text has been subject to commentary, with Daniel noting that, 'the author's most obvious purpose was to demonstrate the superior qualities and virtues of the Abbasid family', in which they display the 'greatest piety and religious knowledge.'[35] This therefore constituted a 'meticulous effort' to defend the legitimacy of the Abbasid claim to the imamate.[36] At this stage, the Abbasid claims to legitimacy were predicated on a broader doctrine of Hashimi legitimacy, which regarded any member from the clan of the Prophet Muhammad as eligible to be the 'chosen' (*riḍā*) imam.[37] Consequently, in the biographical section, the *Akhbar* sought to 'depict the Abbasids as being of impeccable virtue and piety and the possessors of spiritual knowledge. Only an individual who met these requirements could be a true *imam*.'[38] In a comparative reading of the *Akhbar* and the *Iftitah,* the conjunction of the two parts in the former is noteworthy. As demonstrated below, beyond ascribing certain qualifications of the Abbasids as imams, this conjunction highlights the ubiquity of the *da'wa* to *dawla* model and the necessity of tracing righteous *'ilm* in the process of state formation.

The *Kitab al-Sira wa-Akhbar al-A'imma*

The *Kitab al-Sira wa-Akhbar al-A'imma* (probably completed before 504/1110) although composed later than the *Akhbar al-'Abbas* and the *Iftitah al-Da'wa*, remains nonetheless the earliest surviving source on the 'Ibadis of North Africa written by an 'Ibadi scholar.[39] Based mainly on oral narratives, the work has been described as essentially a two-part composition. The first part relays the history of the introduction of 'Ibadism in North Africa, thus providing the foundation narrative of the Rustamid *dawla*. The second part documents biographies of eminent Maghribi 'Ibadis up until the sixth/twelfth century.[40]

Abu Zakariyya Yahya bin Abi Bakr al-Warjalani was from the Warjalan region of the Algerian Sahara and became prominent as both a historian and scholar of the 'Ibadiyya.[41] Like al-Nu'man's *Iftitah*, Warjalani's work gained influence among the adherents of his own *madhhab* in later centuries. The structure and function of the *Kitab al-Sira* has recently been subject to a sustained study. In his analysis of 'Ibadi literary scholarship, Paul Love Jr. describes the *Kitab al-Sira* as a work of 'Ibadi prosopography that was motivated by the 'threat of extinction' that faced the 'Ibadi communities of North Africa in the sixth/twelfth centuries following their significant decline in the Fatimid period.[42] Warjalani is argued to have sought to mitigate the loss of communal memory that had plagued the geographically-scattered 'Ibadi communities of North Africa by composing a text that above all linked 'Ibadi 'coreligionists of the past with those of the present.'[43] Love Jr. adds that the *Sira's* function was to provide a narrative of 'Ibadi history in North Africa that contextualised their later medieval condition, which justified the 'uncertainty of their future' but notably created a 'seamless historical transition from the Rustamids to the 'Ibadi scholars of the eleventh century.'[44] This was done through two 'complementary halves' of the text. The first accounted for the history of the 'Ibadi community in North Africa, their 'links with the east' and the history of the Rustamids. The second half, focused on the biographies of 'Ibadi scholars, sought to establish continuity by highlighting the 'passing of the mantle' of leadership to the class of 'Ibadi scholars in the post-Fatimid period.[45]

The focus in this paper is particularly on the *Sira*'s origins narrative as regards the foundation of the Rustamid imamate by 'Abd al-Rahman bin Rustam (d. circa 171/788) around 162/779, and the concurrent foundation of the new 'Ibadi capital of Tahert in modern-day Algeria. The *Kitab al-Sira* relates 'Abd al-Rahman bin Rustam's departure from Qayrawan to Basra in Iraq to 'seek knowledge' at the hands of the famed 'Ibadi scholar Abu 'Ubayda Muslim bin Abi Karima al-Tamimi (d. circa late second/eighth century). While seemingly digressing to give accounts on 'the virtues of the Persians' and the 'virtues of the Berbers', the *Kitab al-Sira* subsequently returns to the biography of Ibn Rustam. It recounts his journey to Basra as following the instruction of an anonymous member of the 'Ibadi *ahl al-da'wa*, his tutelage under Abu 'Ubayda in Basra and his return to Qayrawan as

being among the five 'bearers of knowledge (*ḥamalat al-ʿilm*)' sent by Abu ʿUbayda as missionaries to North Africa. The *Sira* then recounts the establishment of the first ʿIbadi imamate in North Africa, that of Abu'l-Khattab (d. 144/761) who was among the five 'bearers of knowledge'. It then narrates the events that led to the defeat of the ʿIbadis by the Abbasids and their move westwards. Subsequently, the text returns to the imamate of ʿAbd al-Rahman bin Rustam to give a more detailed account of the Rustamid state. It continues through their own schisms to conclude with accounts of their leaders following the fall of the Rustamid state.

The *Iftitah* and Muslim Origins Narratives

The salience of the large-scale production of early Muslim historical writing has received significant scholarly attention in recent decades.[46] Of particular relevance to contextualising al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah* are discussions concerning the writing of 'origins narratives', with the theme of *futūḥ* (conquests) serving as a central motif.

Relating the history of the foundation and the early decades of the Fatimid Caliphate, al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah* ostensibly represents the type of dynastic historiography that was to become common in later medieval Muslim historical writing.[47] Rosenthal has noted that while dynastic historiography was a feature of the later medieval period, examples of such historiography extend back to the early Abbasid period, and would thus predate al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah*.[48] While it is feasible to situate al-Nuʿman's work in this genre, it is important to consider the order and emphasis of the narrative presented in the *Iftitah*. Beginning with events circa 266/880, the *Iftitah* relates the conversion and sending of the Ismaʿili *dāʿī*s Ibn Hawshab (d. 302/914) and ʿAli bin al-Fadl (d. 303/915) to Yemen, followed by a detailed account of the career of Abu ʿAbdallah al-Shiʿi in North Africa from 279/892 to the conquest of Qayrawan, and the end of Aghlabid rule in 296/909. He then charts the successive reigns of the first four Fatimid imam-caliphs up until the composition of the work.

While the entire text covers an eighty-year period, over eighty percent of the text is concerned with the twenty-nine-year history of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* in North Africa—from its initiation in 266/880 to its triumph in 297/909.[49] In contrast, the forty-seven-year history of the reigns of the imam-caliphs occupies less than twenty percent of the text.[50] These are therefore summative chapters of 'dynastic history', reporting the major milestones of the first five decades of Fatimid rule.[51] Al-Nuʿman notes that he has elsewhere covered the reigns of the Fatimid imams in greater detail.[52] Yet, his inclusion of them in the *Iftitah* underscores that the history of the *dawla* formed a critical end-point of this work. It is nonetheless patent that the *Iftitah* is primarily an *origins* narrative.

It has been cogently argued that the majority of Muslim historical writings from the second/eighth century onwards were concerned with relating the origins of the Muslim community.[53] These came to include historical works on the life and mission of the Prophet Muhammad, as well as histories of the early caliphates, genealogies and biographies of the major tribes and figures of the early Muslim community and the key events of early Muslim history.

Donner has argued that the impetus for composing these 'narratives of Islamic origins' lay in the necessity for 'exercises in legitimation' by different Muslim groups following major developments over the first two centuries of Islam. These works were used by Muslim authors to legitimise the various religious doctrines and political developments over the first two centuries of Islam. The works sought to address issues regarding religio-political leadership (*imāma* and *khilāfa*), the legitimisation of Islam's confessional identity vis-à-vis other monotheistic communities and rationalisation of Muslim rule over the non-Muslim majority populace of the Near East. Scholars from across the Muslim traditions responded to these issues by composing origins narratives through their particular vantage points.[54] Consequently, historical writings on the origins of Islam became an integral process through which varied traditions within the *umma* crafted their self-identity and doctrinal stances.[55]

The multitude of concerns that Muslim historical writing sought to address resulted in the emergence of significant themes around which such works focused. Donner classifies these into three broad categories. Firstly, 'themes of inception', which provided 'retrospective origination-points' of a community by locating its birth at a temporal point in time. The most notable example of these are works concerning Muhammad's Prophethood (*nubuwwa*) which situate the inception of the Muslim faith and community. Secondly, 'preparatory themes', in which particular events are anticipated and thus legitimise the inception. Writings on the lives of the Old Testament prophets in Muslim historiography were one prominent theme that came to serve this function. Finally, 'boundary themes', by which scholars sought to delineate the community's distinct identity, internally as well as in relation to others, most notably that of the Muslim *umma* vis-à-vis other monotheistic communities of the Near East.[56] It was through these rubrics that the early Muslim historical tradition began producing a variety of works concerning the origins of Islam. These include major works on the *sīra* and the *maghāzī* (battles) of the Prophet, monographs on the '*ridda*' (wars of apostasy), '*ansāb*' (genealogies) as well as works on the '*fitna*,' the first-second/seventh-eighth century Muslim civil wars.

Among the varied themes of historical writing that made their appearance over the first two centuries of Islam, those of the Muslim 'conquests' (*futūḥ*) had special prominence. Noth has argued that among the Arabic historical works that document the decades following the death of the Prophet, the *futūḥ* 'constituted a—if not the—principal historical rubric under which the early traditionists considered the first decades of Islamic history'.[57] From the second/eighth century onwards, a plethora of *futūḥ* works appeared on the Muslim conquests of Iraq, Syria, North Africa and Iran as well as other cities and regions that were brought

under the early Muslim caliphate.[58] Their proliferation led Robinson to label the third/ninth century as the 'golden age of conquest monographs'.[59]

While the early Muslim record retains the tiles of dozens of *futūḥ* works written in this period, only some are extant. These include the *Futuh al-Sham* (Conquests of Syria) of al-Azdi al-Basri (d. circa 200/810) and the *Futuh Misr* (Conquests of Egypt) of Ibn ʿAbd al-Hakam (d. 257/871).[60] As Robinson notes, specialised *futūḥ* historiography was eventually incorporated into annalistic historiography or into more expansive works such as al-Baladhuri's famous *Futuh al-Buldan* (Conquests of the Regions).[61] Donner categorises *futūḥ* works as belonging to the historiographical 'theme of inception' where they serve as legitimising Muslim rule as the will of God.[62] He adds that *futūḥ* narratives were likely spurred by the Umayyad Caliphs, 'to bolster their claim of hegemony over non-Muslims by relating the conquerors' miraculous success.'[63]

The dominance of origins narratives in Muslim historiography, which by the fourth/tenth century had swelled to a large corpus, set the paradigms upon which communal identity and state-formation were conceptualised. These became widely accepted across the Muslim tradition, despite variances regarding interpretations of events relating to the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the early caliphs among Sunni, Shiʾi or later ʿIbadi historians.[64]

The reading of the *Iftitah*, in comparison with the *Akhbar* and the *Sira,* demonstrates that al-Nuʿman's text is moulded by these principal themes of Muslim historiography. Each of these three works serve as salvation histories of their respective traditions in which the genesis of their community, led by the rightly-guided leaders, was culminated as a result of God's will. In these works, the themes of inception, preparation and boundaries are evident, as is the *daʿwa* to *dawla* paradigm. As becomes apparent, the Fatimid, Abbasid and ʿIbadi authors cast their own origins narratives within the broader prevalent tropes on the origins of Islam.

The *Daʿwa* to *Dawla* Model

Through a comparison of the salient narrative structures and motifs used in the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* and the *Kitab al-Sira,* it is apparent that these works shared a similar conception of the process of state formation with al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah.* As demonstrated below, each of these works broadly follow a three-stage process through which they document the origins and formation of the *dawla*.[65] The first stage relates to the initiation and spread of a *daʿwa* through a knowledgeable and righteous guide and those whom he initiates into the mission. The second stage concerns the initiation of military conquests by these figures, leading to a series of victories or military engagements that are, to differing degrees, instrumental in the formation of their *dawla* and notably, highlight God's aid and sanction for the subsequent genesis of a state. The third and final stage is the establishment of the

dawla itself. A number of shared motifs are found across these texts, including the linking of the righteous forbears of a tradition with those involved in the founding of a state, the hierarchies and organizational processes of the *daʿwa* formation and functions and assertions of God's active aid in their military victories. Reflecting their distinct historical and doctrinal vantage points, the three works expectedly foreground varied aspects of this commonly held origins framework.

While al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah* remains the focus of this study, its contextualisation in the broader context of Muslim historiography is perhaps best served by delineating the major features found in the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* which was possibly composed at least a century prior to the *Iftitah,* followed by a discussion of the significant features of the *Iftitah* and subsequently an analysis of the key features of the *Kitab al-Sira*, as this was written over a century after al-Nuʿman's work.

The *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*

Following the validation of the credentials of the Abbasid forebears in the first part of the text, it is apparent that the process of state formation in the second part of the *Akhbar* follows the distinct three stage process noted above: the establishment of the *daʿwa,* the manifestation of the *futūḥāt* and finally the promulgation of the *dawla.* While the proclamation of the first Abbasid caliph al-Saffah is omitted from the sole surviving manuscript of the *Akhbar*, which stops at the cusp of the pronouncement of the caliphate and thus the beginning of the *dawla*, whether this is the actual ending of the text remains a matter of debate.[66] Nonetheless, the establishment of the Abbasid *dawla* is deemed to be the natural progression following the conclusion of the text.

The commencement of the Abbasid *daʿwa* occupies a significant part of the latter half of the text of the *Akhbar*. It is upon the transfer of the 'testimony' (*waṣiyya*) of Abu Hashim and the beginning of the imamate of the ʿAbbasid Muhammad bin ʿAli that the *Akhbar* has the latter arising, 'as the *dāʿī* upon the command of God (*fa-qāma bi-Amr Allāh dāʿiyan*).'[67] Thereafter, the actual commencement of the *daʿwa* is located in the immediate aftermath of the rebellions and death of Zayd bin ʿAli in 122/739 and his son Yahya bin Zayd in 125/743, and the subsequent reverberations of these events in Khurasan. The *Akhbar* thus holds that consequent to these events the Abbasid imam Muhammad bin ʿAli decided to initiate the *daʿwa* in Khurasan, to call them to 'obedience to the family of the Prophet.'[68]

The text then charts the 'genealogical' linkages through which individuals and communities come to accept the *daʿwa* of the Hashimiyya, and thus of Muhammad bin ʿAli. Centre stage is given to accounts of leading individual *dāʿī*s who gave the imam their allegiance in person, and who then set forth to spread his message. Consequently, the narrative depicts how these *dāʿī*s recruited new adherents, who themselves go on to spread the message of the *daʿwa*. Notable

here, for instance, is the role of Bukayr bin Mahan, who 'strengthened the affair of the *daʿwa*' (*amr al-daʿwa*) and recruited adherents such as Sulayman bin Kathir al-Khuzaʿi.[69] Through these connectors, the *Akhbar* also proceeds to adopt the common motif found in Arabic historiography regarding the 'firsts' (*awāʾil*), listing, for instance, the 'first to know of the *daʿwa* and give the oath of allegiance (*bayʿah*) in Khurasan.'[70]

The *Akhbar's* coverage of the *daʿwa* describes the movement's formal organization and hierarchy. It includes the depiction of the leading role of the *daʿwa*'s *nuqabāʾ* (representatives), who oversaw the next tier of seventy *dāʿīs*.[71] Noteworthy are the recurring references in the narrative of the 'hidden' Abbasid Imam in Humayma (modern-day Jordan) directing the affairs of the *daʿwa,* seeking through this recurrence to cement his position at the apex of what appears as a highly-centralised organization.

The *Akhbar* also makes a concerted effort to reiterate how the *daʿwa* forged a new communal identity among its adherents. The people of the *daʿwa* are referred to as the *Ahl al-Daʿwa,* and its proponents are often called the 'men of the *daʿwa* (*rijāl al-daʿwa*)'.[72] Their eastern, Khurasani, moorings are anchored in the statement of the Abbasid imam Muhammad bin ʿAli: 'our *daʿwa* is eastern (*mashriqiyya*), our helpers (*anṣār*) are the *Ahl al-Mashriq* (the people of the east), and our banners are black.'[73]

Notable in relation to the *Iftitah* and the *Kitab al-Sira* discussed below, are the narratives regarding concealment (*satr* or *kitmān*). Muhammad bin ʿAli is described as having 'concealed his affair (*akhfā amrah*)' until his expectation of the moment upon which he would spread his *daʿwa*.[74] *Dāʿīs* like Bukayr bin Mahan are commanded to 'guard' their tongues.[75] In the famous instruction to his *dāʿī*, Imam Muhammad bin ʿAli thus commands that the people should be called to 'the agreed-upon member from the family of Muhammad' (*al-Riḍā min Āl-Muḥammad*),' but when asked as to who that is, to say that, 'we have been told to keep this concealed (*kitmān*) until he appears.'[76]

The second stage of the state-formation process described in the *Akhbar* is of military 'conquests' (*futūḥ*). This stage marks the public manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) of the *daʿwa,* through the symbolic raising of black banners by Abu Muslim al-Khurasani in villages outside Marw on 1 Shawwal 129/15 June 747.

The *futūḥ* is preceded in the earlier segments by accounts that denote the upcoming military victories of the *daʿwa* as pre-ordained and thus recipients of divine sanction. Among these are the prophecy of Ibn ʿAbbas that the bearer of the *daʿwa* should be kept secret until it reaches Jurjan, after which he will find its *iftitāḥ*.[77] Similarly, Muhammad bin ʿAli prophesies to his *dāʿī* that, 'if you see the black banners coming from Khurasan then their people shall not come across a fort unless they conquer it (*fataḥūh*), nor will a banner of their enemy be raised until it is shredded.'[78] Such preparatory statements form a staple of the *Akhbar* and emerge as part of the now widely studied broader circulation of Prophetic traditions in anticipation of the Abbasid movement.[79]

Following the reporting of the public manifestation of the black banners, the *Akhbar* text becomes primarily a work of *futūḥ*. Thereon, its subheadings outline the centrality of the conquests with the text divided into the *fatḥ* of Marw, Sarakhs, Tus, Naysapur, Qumis, Tabaristan, Rayy, Hamadan, Qumm and Isfahan, culminating with that of Kufa in 132/749.[80]

God's agency in securing the conquests on behalf of the *daʿwa* is ubiquitous throughout the text. Pronouncement of a conquest is often termed as a divine act, noting that 'God conquered (*fataḥa*) many lands for them (i.e. the *daʿwa*).'[81] This is evident in the *Akhbar's* accounts of letters sent by Qahtaba bin Shabib al-Taʾi (d. 132/749), the famed Abbasid general who led the armies of the *daʿwa* in their decisive battles against the Umayyads in Khurasan and Iran.[82] Qahtaba's letters to Abu Muslim about the conquests of the *daʿwa* have the general pronouncing that 'God had conquered (*fataḥa*) for him.'[83]

The text of the *Akhbar* ends with the death of the Abbasid Ibrahim al-Imam in 130/748 and an account of the transfer of his *waṣiyya* to his brother, the future Caliph Abu'l-ʿAbbas al-Saffah (r. 132–136/750–754).[84] Following the work's charting of the initiation, organization and cohesiveness of the *daʿwa,* and the manifestation of divinely-aided conquests, the *Akhbar* ends its origins narrative on the brink of the beginning of the Abbasid *dawla*.

The *Iftitah al-Daʿwa wa Ibtidaʾ al-Dawla*

The very title of al-Nuʿman's work—*Iftitah al-Daʿwa wa-Ibtidaʾ al-Dawla*— announces that the *daʿwa* to *dawla* paradigm is the organising principle through which the establishment of the Fatimid state is recounted. While al-Nuʿman places greater emphasis on the *daʿwa* than the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* and the *Kitab al-Sira*, the significance of which is noted below, his work reflects the tripartite structure outlined above.

The singular emphasis on the *daʿwa* is evident from the onset of al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah* where the introductory paragraphs set out the doctrinal framework regarding the concept of *daʿwa* upon which the work is predicated. This manifests as part of al-Nuʿman's articulation of the Shiʿi principle of *imāma* that after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, divinely inspired guidance is availed in each era through an imam from his progeny who serves as God's proof (*ḥujja*) on earth and whose succession and continuity are guaranteed by God.[85] Al-Nuʿman adds that in each region (*jazīra*) of the world there are *dāʿīs* who act as guides to the imam. He continues that while there have been many such *dāʿīs*, his concern in this work is to relate the *daʿwa* of the Maghrib that culminated in the era of al-Mahdi biʾllah.[86] The raison d'être of the *Iftitah* is therefore articulated as a documentation of the *daʿwa* that led to the proclamation of this righteous imam.

The mainstay of the *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* is concerned with the history of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* in North Africa under the leadership of the *dāʿī* Abu ʿAbdallah al-Shiʿi.

It commences however, with a detailed rendition of the Isma'ili *da'wa* in Yemen that preceded that of North Africa, thus providing an account of the Isma'ili *dā'ī* Ibn Hawshab, an Iraqi Ithna 'Ashari Shi'i who converted to the Isma'ili *da'wa* during the *dawr al-satr* (period of concealment), the term used in Isma'ili doctrine to denote the age of hidden Isma'ili imams prior to their public manifestation through the founding of the Fatimid state.[87] Following his conversion, Ibn Hawshab was sent to Yemen by the imam to initiate the Isma'ili *da'wa* there.

In stating his rationale for beginning the work with the *da'wa* in Yemen, al-Nu'man explains that 'it was the basis (*aṣl*) of the mission which we intend to relate,' and because the *dā'ī* 'Abu 'Abdallah, 'received instruction from the head of its *da'wa* and followed his moral example.'[88] For al-Nu'man, it was therefore critical to underwrite the credentials of the North African *da'wa* through its linkage to the *da'wa* in Yemen, which was initiated by the Isma'ili imam himself. Accordingly, al-Nu'man first provides an evocative account of the imam's conversion of the *dā'ī* Ibn Hawshab into the *da'wa* prior to accounting for the sending of Ibn Hawshab to Yemen.[89] This is followed by a biography of 'Abu 'Abdallah al-Shi'i, who is sent to Yemen as a disciple of Ibn Hawshab.[90]

The sending of Abu 'Abdallah from Yemen to North Africa earmarks the real focus of the *Iftitah*. Like the *Akhbar,* the *Iftitah* also seeks to provide a 'genealogical linkage' between the imam, his *dā'ī*s and the latest adherents of the Isma'ili *da'wa*. At each stage following Abu 'Abdallah's arrival in Ifriqiya, the role of this *dā'ī* as the initiator of further adherents into the *da'wa* is delineated. The *dā'ī* thus becomes the medium through whom many of the Kutama Berbers and others take the oath of allegiance (*'ahd*) to the hidden Isma'ili imam.[91] This linkage is promoted in the text by accounts concerning those whom Abu 'Abdallah had trained, and who themselves then served as *dā'ī*s in their own regions. This culminates through reports of a groundswell of support as evidenced at Ikjan, a *dār al-hijra*, a place of refuge set up following the precedent of the Prophet Muhammad, where 'people came to him from everywhere, and later at Tazrut, when people came to him from everywhere, and his cause became manifest.'[92]

The *Iftitah* is infused with reports regarding prophecies and 'knowledge of predictions (*'ilm al-ḥadathān*)' that foretell God's preordainment of the reign of al-Mahdi bi'llah. These reflect Donner's 'theme of preparation' outlined above. As Poonawala has noted, the *Iftitah's* introductory segment seeks above all to present the notion of 'divine endorsement' especially when relating Ibn Hawshab's initiation of the *da'wa* in Yemen.[93] Belief in God's sanction and succour for the founding of the Fatimid *dawla* thus forms the bedrock of the *Iftitah*. Accordingly, in the opening sentences al-Nu'man offers praise to God as 'the supporter of the truth and helper of its adherents'. He quotes Qur'anic excerpts that, read together, announce God's promise of victory and inheritance for His party, His forces, and His righteous servants.[94] It is this doctrinal framing that underpins the *Iftitah's* 'theme of preparation' through a number of elucidations.

The Isma'ili *da'wa* was predicated on the belief in the appearance of the *Mahdi*, a central theme that is evident in the *da'wa* literature.[95] Al-Nu'man composed a work dedicated to the subject titled *Kitab Ma'alim al-Mahdi*, to which he refers his readers in the *Iftitah*.[96] Beyond this, signs and prophecies regarding the immanence of the *Mahdi* are woven throughout the text, including those pertaining to Ibn Hawshab and Abu 'Abdallah al-Shi'i.

Significantly, al-Nu'man also attributes prophecies related to the Mahdi to the opponents of the *da'wa*. In one of the few departures from the chronological rendering of events, it relates at length that the Aghlabid *amīrs*, their family and many in the region already knew the prophecies regarding the Mahdi. Hence, the reigning Aghlabid amir Ibrahim bin Ahmad (r. 261–289/875–902) is said to have 'paled' when receiving a letter from Abu 'Abdallah al-Shi'i, as the former had a 'liking for the science of predictions and future events (*'ilm al-ḥadathān wa akhbārī mā yakun*).'[97] Thereafter, al-Nu'man states that elements of the Aghlabid household had 'Shi'i leanings' and 'reported accounts of the Mahdi … on the authority of the Prophet … and studied books of predictions and tales of future events (*wa yadrusūn kutuba'l-ḥadathān wa'l-akhbār 'ammā yakūn*).'[98] Ibrahim is reported in the text to have 'understood all this and pursued it.' The *Iftitah* then relates the Aghlabid *amīr's* visitation to an unnamed poet who was 'well-versed in the science of predictions (*'ilm al-ḥadathān*)' before reproducing verses that it labels as having been 'widespread.'[99] Cumulatively, these verses foreordain the end of Abbasid dominion over the Maghrib, announcing that their reign will only extend to twenty governors.[100] They then proclaim the future rising of the 'sun of God from the west'[101] and the emergence of a son of Fatima, who 'will fill God's earth with justice and mercy.'[102]

Elsewhere, al-Nu'man quotes verses from an otherwise unknown poet, Ibn 'Aqib, proclaiming the conquering armies of the 'Imam of Guidance' being 'led by a mature man learned in the books (of prophesies)'.[103] Notable also is a later report in which Ibrahim bin Ahmad advises his son Abu'l-'Abbas to flee to Sicily when he witnesses the advance of Abu 'Abdallah al-Shi'i, for 'he is the one who will put an end to our dynasty.'[104]

The demarcations of the new community are also described in the *Iftitah* through a detailed description of its organization and communal identity. At the apex of the *da'wa* is the imam himself, as described in the imam's role in the instruction and conversion of Ibn Hawshab. Notable also in elucidating this theme is the *Iftitah*'s coverage of Abu 'Abdallah al-Shi'i's reorganization of the tribal structure of the Kutama Berbers of Ifriqiya. He states that Abu 'Abdallah 'divided the Kutama into seven sections (*asbā'an*) … He appointed in every locality a *dā'ī*. He called the commanders and senior *dā'ī*s *mashāyikh*.'[105]

The genesis of a new communal identity similarly forms an integral part of the text,[106] with descriptions of the ties engendered between the new adherents.[107] Amongst them al-Nu'man notes that people were called 'brethren (*ikhwān*)' and formed bonds with each other, privately and publicly.[108] This was credited to

the actions of the *dāʿī* Abu ʿAbdallah, who would 'elucidate to them the reward of mutual bonds between them (*al-tawāṣul baynahum*)' so much so that 'no community or generation behaved like they did.'[109] This communal cohesiveness is depicted in the *Iftitah* as an ideal, such that 'a community like them had not been seen or known about.'[110]

Writing in the mid-fourth/tenth century with retrospective knowledge of the conflagrations between certain segments of the *daʿwa* and al-Mahdi biʾllah, al-Nuʿman adds discerning caveats about the emergence of the new community and the existence of insincere elements within the fold. He notes that with the increasing success of the *dāʿīs*, there were in Ifriqiya entire regions in which 'no one remained without entering the *daʿwa*.' However, he adds that those who adhered to the *daʿwa* either did so 'willingly' or 'out of fear'.'[111] Subsequently, he provides a graded division of these adherents with the most pious at the highest level and the hypocrites and deceivers in the lowest rung. He adds that the latter were 'tolerated' just as the Prophet Muhammad had once 'tolerated the hypocrites in Medina.'[112]

The *Futuhat* and the Establishment of the *Dawla*.

From the onset of the *Iftitah,* al-Nuʿman draws upon the notion of *futūḥ* whereby the *daʿwa* progresses towards establishing a *dawla*. Early on, he labels Ibn Hawshab's first conquests in Yemen as *futūḥ*.[113] He refers similarly to the *daʿwa*'s salient conquest of the city of Mila in the Maghrib in 289/902.[114]

However, it is after the text's reporting of the emigration (*hijra*) of al-Mahdi biʾllah from Sijilmasa in that same year, and the subsequent account of the *daʿwa*'s conquest of Satif in 291/904, that al-Nuʿman embarks on an extended *futūḥ* narrative.[115] He devotes the next thirty-eight pages of the Arabic text to detailing the major battles and events that culminated in the *daʿwa's* final defeat of the Aghlabids and the conquest of Qayrawan in 296/909.[116] The *futūḥ* theme culminates with a vivid description of the final battle against enemy forces on Saturday 23 Jumada II 296/19 March 909, leading to the *iftitāḥ* of the town of Urbus and the collapse of Aghlabid rule.[117] The arrival of Abu ʿAbdallah al-Shiʿi in Raqqada and his subsequent conquest of Qayrawan provide the endpoint of this major excursion.[118]

In his account, al-Nuʿman deploys a number of *futūḥ*-related motifs found in wider historiographical writing. Prominent is the assertion that such conquests were preordained and aided by God. This is illustrated in al-Nuʿman's citing of Ibn ʿAqib's verses regarding al-Bayda, another name for the future Fatimid capital al-Mahdiyya: 'From it the whole earth will be conquered.'[119]

The *Iftitah*'s assertion of God's direct aid for the *daʿwa* is especially evident in its rendition of the first major battle of the *daʿwa* sometime before 289/902. This saw the gathering of a coalition of the major Berber tribes around the city of Mila to confront the forces of Abu ʿAbdallah al-Shiʿi. The forces of the *daʿwa* are described

as being surrounded on all sides by the coalition.[120] That God's direct aid would assure them victory is alluded to when the supporters of the *dāʿīs* proclaim that they will not surrender until God 'grants us victory (*yaftaḥ Allāhū lanā*)' or they die to the last man.[121] Following the defeat of the opposition troops from Satif, the text pronounces that it was God who, 'put them to flight before them.'[122] When seeking to conclude the larger report on the *daʿwa's* victory, al-Nuʿman relates that 'God dispersed the troops that had banded together against them.'[123]

The pivotal role of the Ismaʿili imam in the issuance of these *futūḥāt* is similarly established in the text through reference to Abu ʿAbdallah al-Shiʿi's correspondence with al-Mahdi biʾllah. In his letter regarding the *iftitāḥ* of Satif, the *dāʿī* thus announces 'the victory which God had granted him (*bimā wahaba Allāh min dhālikāʾl-fatḥ*)'. Al-Nuʿman then adduces the imam's blessing (*baraka*) as having agency in the realisation of this conquest.[124]

Despite al-Nuʿman's doctrinal framing and use of literary motifs, he nonetheless seeks to provide a realistic narrative to maintain the work's integrity and ensure its acceptance in the broader tradition. Thus, in the process of the *futūḥ,* defeats, retreats or failures of the *daʿwa* are also recorded. In the first major campaign against the Aghlabids, the text details two occasions on which Abu ʿAbdallah's army was routed, with snowfall delaying the Aghlabid march, thus enabling the *daʿwa* side to regroup. It was this fortuitous turn of events that led to the chance defeat of a minor Aghlabid detachment, contributing to the demoralisation and retreat of the Aghlabid army.[125] Accounts of major losses similarly mark the narrative of the conquest at Satif.[126]

The entry of Abu ʿAbdallah al-Shiʿi into the Aghlabid capital at Raqqada in 297/909 marks the transition from *daʿwa* to *dawla*. Here, the third stage of the process commences where administrative and dynastic historiography are brought to the fore. Al-Nuʿman relates Abu ʿAbdallah's pronouncement of a general amnesty to the people of Qayrawan (*amān*), his dispatch of governors (*ʿummāl*) to the neighbouring regions, his appointment of a new head of the judiciary, and changes in coinage as well as in the public liturgy to reflect Shiʿi formulae.[127] However, the real commencement of the *dawla* phase of the text begins with the appearance (*ẓuhūr*) of the Ismaʿili imam following Abu ʿAbdallah's departure to free al-Mahdi biʾllah from Sijilmasa.[128] The 'theme of preparation' is brought to a close by a rendering of the successes of the *daʿwa* epitomised through the positioning of the adversities that al-Mahdi faced during his migration from Syria to Ifriqiya as 'proofs and portents (*barāhīn wa-dalāʾil*)' of God's decree regarding 'al-Mahdi's cause.'[129]

The text relates the journey of al-Mahdi biʾllah and his *dāʿī* from Sijilmasa to Qayrawan, with al-Mahdi being announced as caliph (*fa duʿiya biʾl-khilāfa*) after his arrival in Raqqada on 21 Rabiʿ II 297/7 January 910.[130] With this, the narrative of the *dawla* formally begins. Al-Nuʿman recounts the administrative and political policies of al-Mahdi, including his 'organisation of the administrative departments

and orders to levy taxes.'[131] Subsequently, he describes the affair of the 'hypocrites' namely those in the *daʿwa* who sought to depose al-Mahdi, including Abu ʿAbdallah, which led to the demise of the latter.[132] It is with these proclamations that the *origins* narratives of the *Iftitah* comes to a close, followed by a brief survey of the major events of the Fatimid *dawla* until the year of its composition.

The *Kitab al-Sira*

The shared origins framework is also evident in the narratives pertaining to the origins of the Rustamid state in the *Kitab al-Sira*. This is conveyed through the use of conceptual terminology particularly relevant to ʿIbadi doctrine, variances which may be ascribed to distinctions in doctrine between the Shiʿi and ʿIbadi traditions. While Ismaʿili doctrine upholds a continuous line of imams regardless of the appearance or disappearance of their 'dynastic states' (*dawla*), ʿIbadi doctrine necessitates the pronouncement of a public imamate as requiring particular qualifications and contexts, and thus it is the 'imamates' themselves which could appear or disappear. Nonetheless, the structure of the *Kitab al-Sira* depicts a functioning ʿIbadi *daʿwa* when beginning its foundations narrative of the Rustamid state, which reached its apogee in the five 'bearers of knowledge' (*ḥamalat al-ʿilm*) travelling from Basra to the Maghrib, as the principal cause for the *wilāya* ('authority') and *imāma* of the Rustamids. Thus, while in the Fatimid context al-Nuʿman crafts his narrative to report the 'beginning of the *dawla*' (*ibtidāʾ al-dawla*), in this text, al-Warjalani seeks to demonstrate the 'beginning of the [Maghribi] imamate' (*ibtidāʾ al-Imāma*).[133]

Similarly, the term *futūḥ* or its derivatives are not found in the *Kitab al-Sira*. These can be contextualised through the specific circumstances of ʿIbadi history in this period. In the lead-up to the establishment of the Rustamids, the ʿIbadi imams of the Maghrib, notably Abu'l-Khattab, secured significant military victories but also suffered major defeats. Moreover, the Rustamid state remained geographically centred on its newly-founded city of Tahert which was surrounded by Berber tribal affiliates and without any strategic urban conquests. Nonetheless, as demonstrated below, in the *Kitab al-Sira* accounts of the military victories of the ʿIbadis are depicted as ordained through God's decree and are considered integral to the transition from the *daʿwa* to the Rustamid *Imama*.

In its introduction, the *Kitab al-Sira* relates how the ʿIbadi *daʿwa* appeared in North Africa, and how the role of the 'people of the *daʿwa* (*ahl al-daʿwa*)' catalysed the career of the founder of the Rustamids. The first historical report to appear in the text concerns the two famed forebears of the Kharijis, Salamah bin Saʿid and ʿIkrimah, the *mawla* of Ibn ʿAbbas. These two legendary figures are described riding together to the Maghrib 'upon the same camel', with Salamah bin Saʿid 'pronouncing the *daʿwa* for the ʿIbadis (*yadʿū ilaʾl-ʿIbāḍiyya*)' while ʿIkrima 'pronounced the *daʿwa* for the Sufriyya (*yadʿū ilaʾl-Ṣufriyya*).'[134]

The text then charts the role of the *Ahl al-daʿwa* in the genesis of the career of ʿAbd al-Rahman bin Rustam. In Qayrawan, Ibn Rustam, an adherent of the ʿIbadis, is advised by an anonymous 'man from the people of the *daʿwa* (*faqāla lahu rajul min ahl al-daʿwa*)' to go to the Iraqi city of Basra to gain knowledge. These two reports on the first *dāʿīs* and the dispatch of Ibn Rustam to Basra constitute the opening chapter of the *Kitab al-Sira*.

In the next two chapters, the text elucidates the merits (*faḍāʾil*) of the Persians and the Berbers respectively. While ostensibly digressions, these chapters notably provide a narrative on the 'theme of preparation' for the upcoming ʿIbadi state. Seemingly, they reflect a notable regard for the ʿIbadi imam ʿAbd al-Rahman bin Rustam and his sons, who were of Persian origin, as well as the Berbers of North Africa who formed the bulk of the ʿIbadis. Significantly however, in both the chapters, sayings of the Prophet Muhammad are adduced that pre-ordain a future role of particular Persians and Berbers as 'revivers' of religion, and thus implicitly legitimise and foreordain the formation of the righteous Rustamid state.[135]

That the *Kitab al-Sira* demonstrates a recurring theme of establishing linkages between the ʿIbadis of the *Maghrib* and the 'East' has already been noted.[136] This is particularly evident in its relaying of the history of the five 'bearers of knowledge', five ʿIbadis who left their homeland in North Africa to seek knowledge from ʿIbadi scholars of Basra, before returning westward. Included among them was Abu'l-Khattab ʿAbd al-ʿAʾla bin al-Samh al-Muʿafari, the first imam of the ʿIbadis of the Maghrib. Also included was ʿAbd al-Rahman bin Rustam al-Farisi, the founder of the future Rustamid state.[137] Through a description of their education and apprenticeship at the hands of the pre-eminent ʿIbadi leader Abu ʿUbayda, the *Kitab al-Sira* weaves the intellectual genealogy of the North African ʿIbadis, and the founder of the Rustamid state, with the originators of the tradition in Iraq.

Of special import is the narrative of the return of the five 'bearers of knowledge' to North Africa, which denotes the transmission of instruction and the establishment of hierarchy in the conduct of the broader ʿIbadi *daʿwa*. They are entrusted with instructions from the ʿIbadi leader Abu ʿUbayda on establishing the imamate in the Maghrib, stipulating the necessary conditions and the identity of the community's first imam. Accordingly, Abu ʿUbayda instructed them that if upon their return, they found, 'from the people of their *daʿwa* what was required in terms of men and strength,' then they were to appoint an authority from among them, indicating that this should be Abu'l-Khattab.[138]

The second stage of state-formation appears in the subsequent chapters of the *Kitab al-Sira*. An account of the proclamation of the imamate of Abu'l-Khattab in Tripolitania in the year 140/758 is provided, followed by narratives of their immediate seizure of the North African city of Tripoli and subsequent campaigns against Ifriqiya and Qayrawan. The ʿIbadi conquest of Qayrawan in 141/758 forms a notable account in which God's active agency is credited for the ʿIbadis' military victories. Among the reasons cited for this major conquest, was the sigh of an

oppressed woman who called out, 'O Abu'l-Khattab help me (*aghithni*)…God caused her voice to be carried,' and was thus heard by Abu'l-Khattab in Tripoli.[139] Elsewhere, the narrative states that, 'God defeated [Qayrawan's] people at the hands of Abu'l-Khattab.'[140]

The forceful defeat of Abu'l-Khattab by the Abbasid general Muhammad bin al-Ashʿath al-Khuzaʿi in 144/761 terminated the ʿIbadi imamate and led to his death. Nonetheless, in the immediate aftermath of ʿIbadi resistance to Abbasid forces, the theme of God's agency in delivering victory to the ʿIbadis is invoked in the text. The *walāya* of the ʿIbadi leader Abu Hatim (Yaʿqub bin Habib al-Kindi) is showcased as a major rebellion against the Abbasids, led from the ʿIbadi regions of Jabal Nafusa in Tripolitania in 151/758, and lasting until Abu Hatim's death four years later. Though ephemeral, Abu Hatim's victories are described as 'those ordained by God through his hands…(wherein) God defeated his enemies for him.'[141] The final part of the text concerns the origins narratives of the Rustamids. It accounts for the departure of ʿAbd al-Rahman bin Rustam and his son Wahb from Qayrawan, the former having served as its governor for Abu'l-Khattab, and it also charts the ascendency of Ibn Rustam over the ʿIbadi remnants in the western regions of Ifriqiyya.[142]

The *Kitab al-Sira's* account of the establishment of the city of Tahert showcases the narrative on state-formation, deploying miracles in describing the settlement of the city. It describes how the people of authority (*ahl al-naḍr*) selected Ibn Rustam as their imam. Among his qualities, the most eminent was that he was identified by those around him as being 'one of the five who carried knowledge.'[143] Having received the *bayʿah,* his Imamate commences. Following the establishment of the Rustamid state, the link to the 'east' is reiterated in the *Kitab al-Sira* which states that when the *ahl al-daʿwa* of the ʿIbadiyya informed their brethren in Basra of events in Tahert, the latter sent Ibn Rustam three treasure-loads, thus affirming their continued link to the newly founded Rustamid state.[144]

The Role of Knowledge in the *Iftitah, Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* and the *Kitab al-Sira*

It is apparent that the major themes of Muslim origins narratives, and the *daʿwa* to *dawla* process, provide the framing features of the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* the *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* and the *Kitab al-Sira*. Yet, al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah* also retains certain unique features that stem from its distinct provenance. A comparative analysis of the three works establishes that the role of the *daʿwa* held central importance for al-Nuʿman in ways that supersede those found in either the *Akhbar* or the *Kitab al-Sira.* Similarly, the role of *ʿilm* forms a salient and pervasive feature for al-Nuʿman. These characteristics are nonetheless also relevant in their own distinctive ways in the *Akhbar* and the *Kitab al-Sira.* The location of authoritative

bearers of *ʿilm* serves as an integral part of the introductory segments of both the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* and the *Kitab al-Sira*.

The biographical entries in the first half of the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* provide in-depth expositions of the forebears of the Abbasids as bearers of magnanimity, nobility, generosity, patience, wisdom and forbearance, piety and sustained worship. Notably, they are also the possessors of authoritative religious knowledge. As noted by Daniels, such reports served as affirmations of the Abbasid claim to the imamate.[145] The *Akhbar's* approach to knowledge is aptly summed up in its statement that, 'Whosoever wants knowledge, generosity and beauty, let them go to the house of al-ʿAbbas b. ʿAbd al-Muttalib and they will find all of these therein.'[146]

From the outset, the focal point of the *Akhbar* is to establish the superiority of the knowledge of ʿAbdallah b. ʿAbbas b. ʿAbd al-Muttalib. This emphasis is also evident across the post second/eighth century Abbasid historiographical tradition.[147] The *ʿilm* of ʿAbdallah ibn ʿAbbas forms a substantive segment of his biographical entry in the *Akhbar*,[148] as epitomised in the well-known statement that ʿAbdallah b. ʿAbbas was known as the *ḥabr* ('rabbi' or 'learned one') of this *umma* because of his knowledge.'[149] Ibn ʿAbbas' proficiency is notably attributed to his attachment to ʿAli b. ʿAbi Talib, who is said to have 'nourished him with knowledge.'[150] The *Akhbar* subsequently affirms Ibn ʿAbbas' superiority in *ʿilm* by reporting statements made by notable figures of early Muslim history.[151] These include the second caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khattab who calls Ibn ʿAbbas 'the most knowledgeable of all people (*aʿlam al-nās*).'[152] This appears despite a report in the text that Ibn ʿAbbas accosted the caliph by claiming that the Quraysh took the right of the family of the Prophet, implying the right of succession and the caliphate.[153] These accounts in the *Akhbar* are interspersed with varied reports that highlight the role of Ibn ʿAbbas as a teacher to the Basrans, wherein as part of his exhortations, he spurs them on in the pursuit of *ʿilm*.[154] As Daniels has noted, the *Akhbar* emphasises Ibn ʿAbbas' knowledge by relaying extended narratives that show his ability to outwit his opponents as well as highlighting the superiority of his knowledge in comparison with his contemporaries.[155] Instructive here is the long account that reports how the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (*Hirqal*) wrote to the Umayyad caliph Muʿawiyah, posing him a series of enigmatic questions. When the caliph is told by an unnamed advisor that he will be unable to respond to them, he is advised to write to Ibn ʿAbbas, who provides him with the necessary answers.[156]

The *Akhbar* emphasises the knowledge of Ibn ʿAbbas to a heightened degree, but it is noteworthy that this trait is also evident in the biographical entries on his son and successors: the biographical section on ʿAli b. al-ʿAbbas emphasises his prayers (*ṣalāt*), majesty (*jalālah*), and generosity (*jūd*). While not directly proclaiming his own knowledge, it nonetheless highlights the transmission of such knowledge in the Abbasid line by showcasing ʿAli b. ʿAbbas' knowledge of the future. Accordingly, in a report he provides an interpretation (*taʿwīl*) of his own dream regarding the future of the Abbasid dynasty, in their battles against

the Umayyads and each other.[157] Elsewhere it reports that ʿAli b. ʿAbdallah was whipped by the Umayyad caliph al-Walid b. ʿAbd al-Malik for proclaiming that the authority (i.e. the caliphate) would soon be transferred to his own sons.[158]

The role of knowledge is also emphasised in the *Akhbar*'s lengthy entry on Muhammad b. ʿAli b. ʿAbdallah b. al-ʿAbbas and this includes a section on his 'knowledge and jurisprudence (*ʿilm wa fiqh*).'[159] The text relates a statement by a noted early Muslim scholar, Saʿid b. Jubayr (d. 94-95/711-712), who proclaims that he wishes not to die until he sees a son of ʿAbdallah b. ʿAbbas pronounce *fatwas* in the way that Ibn ʿAbbas once did. Saʿid subsequently praises God that he was able to witness the young Muhammad b. ʿAli b. ʿAbdallah offer a *fatwa* in the mosque in Medina.[160]

It is in the *Akhbar's* rendition of the imamate of Muhammad b. ʿAli, that knowledge retains primary importance.[161] Firstly, this concerns the transmission of esoteric knowledge and prophecies from the ʿAlid household to the Abbasids. When accounting for the famous transfer of the *waṣiyya* of Abu Hashim to Muhammad b. ʿAli, thus marking the transfer of the line of the imamate from the ʿAlid to the Abbasid lines, the notion of esoteric knowledge is adduced when the *Akhbar* pronounces that Abu Hashim passed the *waṣiyya* and his 'secrets' (*asrār*) to Muhammad b. ʿAli b. ʿAbdallah b. al-ʿAbbas.[162]

However, it is in the account of the 'yellow parchment (*al-ṣāḥīfa al-ṣafrāʾ*)' that the most symbolic reference to the transfer of knowledge is made. The *Akhbar* stipulates that this was a parchment that once belonged to ʿAli b. Abi Talib. It is pertinent that these narrations in the *Akhbar* should begin with a reference to Abu Jaʿfar Muhammad b. Ali, namely the Shiʿi imam Muhammad al-Baqir (d. circa 114–117/733–735) who is asked whether the family of ʿAbbas 'have received anything from the knowledge (*min al-ʿilmin shay*').' Al-Baqir replies that, 'They have the yellow parchment, which used to belong to ʿAli b. Abi Talib.'[163] The *Akhbar* describes how the parchment was first passed to a son of ʿAli b. Abi Talib, Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya, who passed it to his own son Abu Hashim, who then transferred it to the Abbasid Muhammad b. ʿAli from whom it finally passed to the latter's son, Ibrahim. The contents of the yellow parchment are reported in the *Akhbar* as having contained the 'knowledge of the black banners of Khurasan (*ʿilm rāyāt al-Khurasān al-sūd*)', as well as the time and manner of their appearance and the identity and description of Abbasid supporters.[164] As a symbol of the knowledge of the ʿAlid household, the transfer of the 'yellow parchment' to the Abbasid Muhammad b. ʿAli thus marks the transfer of knowledge from one line of the Prophet's clan to another.

The *Akhbar* expressly asserts the significance of knowledge in its qualification of the imamate. The text explains that it seeks to establish proof (*ḥujja*) that Muhammad b. ʿAli was qualified for the imamate and was thus obliged to receive 'obedience from the community (*al-ṭāʿa minaʾl-ummatī*).' Amongst the proofs it cites are that Muhammad b. ʿAli was the great-grandson of al-Abbas b. ʿAbd al-Muttalib, the uncle of the Prophet, and thus was his heir. Additionally, it states that

Muhammad b. ʿAli's virtues, piety and knowledge were unrivalled in his era, that it was he who arose to establish the truth, and that others among the *Ahl al-Bayt* had agreed that he was the 'possessor of authority' (*uluʾl-amr*). Finally, it pronounces that authority (*al-amr*) is inherent in him and his sons as it is predicated on these attributes including their innate knowledge (*ʿilm*).[165] While the subsequent sections of the *Akhbar* relay little regarding the importance and transfer of *ʿilm,* its vital qualification in the claim to the imamate of Muhammad b. ʿAli, and as an inherited feature of the Abbasid claim to authority, is reiterated in the text.

When compared to early Shiʿi notions of authority, ʿIbadi doctrine does not place the same emphasis on authoritative knowledge as a qualification for the imamate. Nonetheless it is notable that the transfer of *ʿilm* retains an important position in the introductory part of the origins narrative of the Rustamids.

The commencement of the Rustamid state and of the ʿIbadi presence in the Maghrib is centred on the five 'bearers of knowledge' of whom ʿAbd al-Rahman b. Rustam was one. As related in the *Kitab al-Sira*, ʿAbd al-Rahman b. Rustam's own journey to the east and his return are centred on his desire to seek knowledge and authoritative teaching (*taʿlīm*).[166] The subsequent history of Ibn Rustam in Basra similarly revolves around the same theme. The text reports that when the five, including Ibn Rustam, arrived in Basra and met with Abu ʿUbayda, 'they told him that they sought knowledge (*taʿlīm al-ʿilm*).' Abu ʿUbayda responded favourably, so they stayed with him for a number of years. Subsequently, 'having learnt the quantum of knowledge that God had decreed for them,' they set out to return to their lands in North Africa.[167] It is following this account of the transmission of *ʿilm* that the history of the ʿIbadi imamate in North Africa proceeds.

The Role of Knowledge in the *Iftitah al-Daʿwa*

In distinction to the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* and the *Kitab al-Sira,* the acquisition and transmission of knowledge form the cornerstone of al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah*. Across the text, al-Nuʿman presents divinely aided knowledge as a unique prerogative of the imam. He establishes that it was knowledge that catalysed the success of the *daʿwa* in Ifriqiya, and expends considerable effort in relaying the transmission of knowledge from the Imam to his *dāʿīs*, and through them, to the community at large.

The divinely aided knowledge (*taʾyīd*) of the imam forms a core doctrinal principle in Imami Shiʿism and permeates al-Nuʿman's narrative in the *Iftitah*. This is iterated firstly in accounts that relate the imam's knowledge of prophecies regarding the advent of the *daʿwa*.[168] For instance, when dispatching ʿAli b. al-Fadl and Ibn Hawshab to Yemen, the imam asks the former, 'Do you know ʿAdan Laʿa?' This region in Yemen is later asserted by the imam as the location from where the 'cause will be manifest.'[169] ʿAli b. al-Fadl, despite being a native of Yemen, had not heard of the area. Following his arrival in Yemen, Ibn Hawshab is reported

as having enquired about it from the local inhabitants, but none had heard of it.[170] It was only after Ibn Hawshab's fortuitous meeting with a Shi'i Yemeni clan called the Banu Musa, who take the oath of allegiance, that they tell him of other Shi'a in a place called 'Adan La'a. The inhabitants of this town subsequently became stalwarts of the *da'wa* and, through their entry, affirmed the preordained knowledge of the imam residing in Iraq.[171]

In the *Iftitah*'s narrative of Ibn Hawshab's career, the role of knowledge holds centre stage. This highlights the importance of knowledge in the conversion process, as well as the potency of the knowledge of the *dā'ī* after giving his allegiance to the imam. The *Iftitah* begins by noting that Ibn Hawshab was a knowledgeable person who came 'from a learned Shi'i family (*ahlu baytin 'ilmin wa-tashayyu'*).' Notably, his conversion to the *da'wa* is predicated on an intellectual process. Having questioned the veracity of the Ithna 'Ashari doctrine following the occultation of the twelfth imam in 260/874, Ibn Hawshab is reported as having subsequently encountered the Isma'ili imam on the banks of the Euphrates, without knowing his true identity. The imam and Ibn Hawshab embark on a series of exchanges that demonstrate the limits of Ibn Hawshab's knowledge of the Mu'tazili doctrine of unity and justice of God as related to the Qur'anic scripture.[172] This causes turbulence in the future *dā'ī*'s mind.[173] It was this intellectual encounter that ultimately fostered Ibn Hawshab's allegiance to the Isma'ili imam and he then took the oath of allegiance before the imam's representative, who is similarly described as 'a man who possessed deep knowledge (*ma'ahu 'ilm kathīr*).'[174]

As the *Iftitah* pertains in the main to the career of Abu 'Abdallah and the Isma'ili *da'wa* community in Ifriqiya, it deploys a number of strategies to relate the role of knowledge in the unfolding of the *da'wa* at the turn of the fourth/tenth century. The text regards possession of knowledge by the *dā'ī*s as integral to their success and reiterates the superiority of their knowledge in multiple ways. Notably, it traces the transmission of knowledge through the 'sessions of wisdom (*majālis al-ḥikma*)' that were distinctive to the Isma'ili *da'wa* prior to and after the onset of Fatimid rule.[175]

The role of knowledge is central to the *Iftitah*'s presentation of Abu 'Abdallah al-Shi'i's career. In the passages introducing the *dā'ī*, his aptitude for learning is highlighted. He is described as 'learned and intelligent (*dhī 'ilmin wa aqlin*)', 'most proficient in the esoteric knowledge and with limited competence in the knowledge of the exoteric.'[176] The transmission of the imam's knowledge to Abu 'Abdallah al-Shi'i is situated in the latter's discipleship under Ibn Hawshab, to whom the *da'i* was sent in order that the latter 'enlighten him, guide him and instruct him'.[177] Thus while in Yemen, Abu 'Abdallah is reported to have 'attended his [Ibn Hawshab's] instructional sessions and accompanied him on his military expeditions without leaving his side.'[178]

Following his discipleship under Ibn Hawshab, the *Iftitah* proceeds to attribute the success of Abu 'Abdallah's mission amongst the Kutama Berbers to the *dā'ī*'s knowledge. Having met with the Kutama pilgrims at Mecca and engaged them in

discourse regarding the virtues of 'Ali b. Abi Talib, it was Abu 'Abdallah's conduct, and particularly his knowledge, that bolstered his authority amongst these pilgrims. The Kutama are described as having 'heard from him something new, the like of which they had not heard.' 'They sought his opinion and he gave it to them (*yastaftūnahū fa-yuftīhim*)'.[179] Their invitation to Abu 'Abdallah to travel to Kutama territories arose principally from his position as a teacher, whereby the Kutama said to him, 'We do not think you will find a country more advantageous for you to teach in (*fi'l-ta'līmī*) than ours.'[180]

Furthermore, the *Iftitah* adopts three principal approaches to validate the superiority of the *dā'ī*'s knowledge. Firstly, it traces intellectual linkages between Abu 'Abdallah and earlier Shi'i scholars in North Africa, connecting them to the pivotal Shi'i imam, Abu 'Abdallah Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sadiq (d. 148/765).[181] The *Iftitah* narrates that in the year 145/762-763, Imam al-Sadiq sent two individuals called Abu Sufyan and al-Hulwani to Ifriqiya to 'spread the exoteric knowledge of the imams from the progeny of Muhammad (*an yabsatā ẓāhira 'ilmi'l-a'immatī*)'.[182] This led people from different tribes including the Kutama to adopt Shi'ism. Notably, they are described in this text as labourers ploughing the land in anticipation of the one coming to sow the seeds.[183]

While al-Nu'man is explicit that 135 years had elapsed between the sending of the two *dā'ī*s and the arrival of Abu 'Abdallah al-Shi'i in North Africa, he nonetheless maintains a living connection between them through reports of a follower of al-Hulwani called Abu al-Muffatish who is said to have studied with al-Hulwani as a very young boy and then with his disciples. The now aged Abu'l-Muffatish is reported to have met with Abu 'Abdallah in the final years of his life.[184]

Upon arriving in Kutama territory, Abu 'Abdallah al-Shi'i is reported to have been met by three figures including Abu 'Abdallah al-Andalusi and the aforementioned Abu al-Mufattish, both of whose knowledge and expertise is emphasised in the text.[185] Abu 'Abdallah al-Shi'i's own erudition is confirmed when the *Iftitah* narrates how he 'talked with them at length and brought them clarification.'[186] The text then has Abu'l-Muffatish voicing his impression that Abu 'Abdallah is the 'sower of seeds' who had been previously foreordained, 'By God, I do think that you are the sower (*ṣāḥibā'l-badhrī*) announced by al-Hulwani.' Yet, Abu'l-Muffatish remained doubtful because Abu 'Abdallah did not fulfil certain criteria that al-Hulwani had pronounced, namely that the *dā'ī* would have a 'finger in his mouth (*fī fiyahī asba'un*)'. When subsequently Abu 'Abdallah administers the oath of allegiance to his followers and orders them to remain silent, he places a finger on his mouth to symbolise the order of secrecy (*kitmān*). He clarifies that this was 'what al-Hulwani was talking about' and negates the physical possibility of having a finger in one's mouth.[187] Through this series of reports, the *Iftitah* confirms the *dā'ī*'s knowledge, affirms his intellectual heritage to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, and establishes that the *dā'ī*'s own understanding of al-Hulwani's teaching superseded that of Abu al-Muffatish.[188]

The second method adopted by the *Iftitah* to showcase Abu ʿAbdallah's knowledge concerns his preordained awareness of a geographical place, similar to that noted above with the imam and Ibn Hawshab. Upon his arrival the *dāʿī*, having never been in Ifriqiya before, asks the Kutama 'in which locality among you is a ravine called *Fajj al-Akhyar* (the Ravine of the Righteous)?' Rather amazed, the people 'looked at each other as if they understood that he already knew the place.' When recognising the location upon his arrival, the *dāʿī* is asked by his companions, 'from where did you learn its name?' To which Abu ʿAbdallah replied that this knowledge came from a hadith about the emergence of the Mahdi and the future role of the Kutama, which was the cause for this place to be so named.[189]

The third method similarly serves to confirm the superiority of the *dāʿī*'s knowledge and establishes its centrality in the success of the *daʿwa*. This pertains to the *Iftitah*'s account of the reluctance of the enemies of the *daʿwa* to engage in direct disputation with Abu ʿAbdallah al-Shiʿi. In several instances, the Arab and Berber chieftains express their reluctance at having their own scholars (*ʿulamā*) engage with the *dāʿī* in public disputations (*munāẓarāt*). This concern is explained as stemming from their fear that Abu ʿAbdallah 'would win the argument' and gain greater stature.[190] In one such instance, the *Iftitah* presents their argument thus:

> He (Abu ʿAbdallah) is a man from the people of the east who, as you
> know, are devils. Our ulama are Berbers, a people who do not have that
> intelligence. If they were to debate, he would win the argument against
> them, and they will find no argument against him. This will increase the
> seduction through him and strengthen his cause.[191]

Along with the confirmation of the knowledge of the *dāʿī*, the *Iftitah* also recounts the transmission of knowledge from him to the adherents of the *daʿwa*, thereby linking the knowledge of the imam to the followers. Upon his arrival in Ifriqiya, the *Iftitah* relates that Abu ʿAbdallah began holding 'instructional sessions (*majālis*)' particularly on the virtues of ʿAli b. Abi Talib.[192] That these were successful is related through the *dāʿī* administering the oath of allegiance to those who were well-disposed and had 'retained his teachings.'[193]

In speaking of the spread and fame of the *daʿwa*, the *Iftitah* relates the chain of transmission of knowledge, as existing adherents attracted others through their pious conduct and charitable works, thus augmenting the pool of followers who returned 'frequently to listen to him (Abu ʿAbdallah).' Specific accounts of teaching sessions are similarly provided, such as when Abu ʿAbdallah visited the Banu Saktan, the *Iftitah* relates that 'they vacated for him a place to sit and listen to his instruction (*samāʿ*).'[194] Notably, the *Iftitah* also provides detailed descriptions of Abu ʿAbdallah's teaching sessions:

> Among his policies was also to take great care to give them advice,

remind them and repeat to them exhortation and wisdom (*bi'l-waṣāya wa'l-tadhkira*). He would gather them for this purpose and hold sessions (*majālis*) for them most of his days. He would order the *dāʿīs* whom he dispatched to do the same and train them for this purpose. Most of their days were spent attending assemblies and listening to sermons (*aktharuhā mashāhid, wa-samāʿ mawāʿiẓ*).[195]

Descriptions in the *Iftitah* of such teaching sessions also extended to women. Female adherents of the *daʿwa* are reported to have attended the *majalis* and listened to words of wisdom (*yashhadnā'l-majālisa wa yasmaʿna'l-ḥikma*). It also includes attestations of those who followed these sessions and rose to the rank of *dāʿīs*, including Umm Musa, the daughter of al-Hulwani.[196]

The importance of the *majalis* is clear across the *Iftitah* and becomes a recurring feature of the narrative:

> Abu ʿAbd Allah dispatched *dāʿīs* to the tribes and himself conducted
> instructional sessions (*majālis*), sitting in session every day for the
> believers, relating hadith to them and giving them explanations. He
> ordered the *dāʿīs* to do the same. The believers became sincere in their
> intent, their understanding increased and their condition became sound.[197]

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This paper set out to examine Fatimid origins narratives through a study of the *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* of Qadi al-Nuʿman and to compare this text with two contemporary counterparts, the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* and the *Kitab al-Sira* of al-Warjalani. The discussion demonstrates that the *Iftitah* displayed the same core themes that shaped early Muslim historiography and that the *daʿwa* to *dawla* paradigm was shared across the three noted works. Knowledge and its transmission across various segments of the *daʿwa* occupied a paramount position in the Fatimid origins narrative, while assuming a lesser degree of potency in the *Akhbar* and the *Kitab al-Sira*.

The differences in al-Nuʿman's narrative can be attributed to the work's provenance. Unlike either the *Akhbar* or the *Kitab al-Sira*, al-Nuʿman's work was produced under the direct instruction of a reigning imam-caliph, al-Muʿizz li-Din Allah, who himself issued instructions for its production, surveyed its contents and approved its text before its dissemination.[198]

Significantly, the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* retained its salience through the course of the Fatimid Empire. Unlike the Abbasid *daʿwa* which was disbanded following the killing of Abu Muslim al-Khurasani and the founding of the Abbasid state, the Ismaʿili *daʿwa*, survived the killing of Abu ʿAbdallah al-Shiʿi, and became an integral part of the state apparatus.[199] *Dāʿīs* continued to hold teaching sessions

in the Fatimid lands and beyond, and the *daʿwa* continued to promote the authority of the Fatimid sovereigns. As an author and a scholar, al-Nuʿman was above all a *dāʿī* himself, who held his own *majālis* in the palace of the imam.[200] In composing the origins narrative of the Fatimid realms, he demonstrates his familiarity and acumen in positioning the Fatimid paradigm within the larger frame of Muslim historiography.

Notes

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1. For surveys on the reigns of these two seminal Fatimid imam-caliphs, see F. Dachraoui, 'al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition (henceforth EI2) , ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, online edition; Shainool Jiwa, 'al-ʿAzīz bi'llāh', *Encyclopaedia Islamica*; Paul Walker, 'al-'Azīz bi-llāh', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, THREE (henceforth *EI³*), ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson, online edition. For detailed renditions of the reign of al-Muʿizz see Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids*, trans. Michael Bonner, Leiden 1996, 338–421; Michael Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE*, Leiden 2001, 269–364; and including the reign of al-ʿAzīz, Farhad Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis: Their History and Doctrines*, 2nd edition, Cambridge 2007, 156–178.

2. Qadi Abu Hanifa al-Nuʿman bin Muhammad, *Kitab Iftitah al-Daʿwa wa-Ibtida' al-Dawla*, ed. Wadad al-Qadi, Beirut 1970; ed. Farhat al-Dashrawi (Farhat Dachraoui), Tunis 1975; Excerpts and English trans. Wladimir Ivanow in *Ismaili Tradition Concerning the Rise of the Fatimids*, London/New York 1942, 4046, trans. 224–231 and full English trans. Hamid Haji, *Founding the Fatimid State: The Rise of an Early Islamic Empire*, London 2006. This paper references Dachraoui's Arabic edition and Haji's translation respectively.

3. Ahmad bin Ibrahim (or Muhammad) al-Nisaburi, *Istitar al-imam wa-tafarruq al-duʿat fi'l-jaza'ir li-talabihi*, ed, Wladimir Ivanow, in *Majallat Kulliyat al-Adab, al-Jamiʿa al-Miṣriyya/Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts*, University of Egypt, 4.2, 1936, 93–107; *Akhbar al-Qaramita*, ed. Suhayl Zakkar, Beirut 1971, 111–132 and English trans. W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Tradition*, 157–183

4. Manṣur al-ʿAzizi al-Jawdhari, *Sirat al-Ustadh Jawdhar*, eds. Muhammad Kamil Husayn and Muhammad ʿAbd al-Hadi Shaʿira, Cairo 1954; French trans. Marius Canard, *Vie de l'ustadh Jaudhar (contenant sermons, lettres, et rescripts des premiers califes Fâtimides)*, Algiers 1958. The most recent critical Arabic edition and English translation is Hamid Haji, *Inside the Immaculate Portal: A History from Early Fatimid Archives: A New Edition and English Translation of Manṣūr al-ʿAzīzī al-Jawdharī's Biography of al-Ustādh Jawdhar*, London 2012.

5. Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Yamani, *Sirat al-hajib Jaʿfar bin ʿAli wa-khuruj al-Mahdi min Salamiyya*, ed. Wladimir Ivanow

in *Majallat Kulliyat al-Adab, al-Jamiʿa al-Miṣriyya/Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts*, University of Egypt, 4/2, 1936, 107–133; English trans. W. Ivanow in *Ismaili Tradition*, 184–223. French trans. M. Canard, 'L'autobiographie d'un chamberlain du Mahdî ʿObeidallâh le Fâtimide', *Hespéris* 39, 1952, 279–324.

6. Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd edition, Leiden 1968, 87.

7. *Akhbar al-dawla al-ʿAbbasiya wa fihi akhbar al-ʿAbbas wa waladihi: A history of the Abbasid Movement, Reflecting Abbasid Trends and Ideas before the Time of al-Mahdi. Written in the Third/Ninth century, by an Unknown Author*, eds. ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Duri and ʿAbd al-Jabbar al-Muttalibi, Beirut 1971 (henceforth *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*).

8. Abi Zakariya' Yahya bin Abi Bakr, *Kitab Siyar al-A'imma wa-Akhbarihim: al-maʿruf bi-tarikh Abi Zakariya'*, ed. Ismaʿil al-ʿArabi, 2nd edition, Beirut 1975.

9. The term *daʿwa*, literally meaning a 'call' or an 'invitation' refers to a religio-political 'mission' that called for recognition of an imam. The cognate *dāʿī* thus refers to a 'missionary' or one who embarks on public calls for allegiance. *Dawla*, with the original meaning of 'turn' or 'cycle', by the fourth/tenth century had come to mean a 'dynastic state'. For an overview of the usage of the terms see Franz Rosenthal, 'Dawla', *EI³* and Maurice Canard, 'Daʿwa', *EI³*. For the history of the *daʿwa* in the Ismaʿili context see Daftary, *Ismaʿilis*, 98–116.

10. The pioneering works of Vladimir Ivanow were instrumental in bringing the *Istitar al-Imam* and *Sirat Jaʿfar al-Hajib* to the fore and for emphasizing the significance of al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah*. See Ivanow, *Ismaili Tradition*. Thereafter other scholars including Wadad Qadi, Farhat Dachraoui, Maurice Canard and Hamid Haji have provided scholarly commentary to accompany their critical editions and translations of the *Iftitah* and *Sirat Jawdhar* in their respective introductions to their editions of the works. For their editions see notes 1–4 above.

11. Such works include that of Wilferd Madelung who used information presented in the *Iftitah*, the *Sirat Jawdhar* and the *Istitar al-Imam*, along with several other early Ismaʿili texts, in his still-authoritative exposition of early Ismaʿili doctrine. See Wilferd Madelung, 'Das Imamat in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre' in *Der Islam*, 37.1–3, 1961, 66, 76, 78. Works focused on polemics regarding Fatimid genealogy made extensive use of the data presented, for example Bernard Lewis, *The Origins of Ismaʿilism: A Study of the Historical Background for the Fatimid Caliphate*, Cambridge 1940, 16ff. Similarly, major works on the North African phase of Fatimid history rely heavily on the historical information presented in the corpus e.g. Farhat Dachraoui,

Califat fatimide au Maghreb, 296-362/909–973: Histoire politique et institutions, Tunis 1981; Halm, *Empire*; Brett, *Rise of the Fatimids*.

12. Hamdani provided an initial survey of the background and summaries of texts by Fatimid writers thus contributing to the rediscovery of these materials; see Husayn Hamdani, 'Fatimid History and Historians', *Religion, Learning and Science in the ʿAbbasid Period*, ed. M. J. L. Young et al., Cambridge 1990, 234–47.

13. Walker's work provides a comprehensive survey of the literary and documentary source material pertaining to Fatimid history from the fourth/tenth century to the medieval Mamluk period. See Paul Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its Sources*, London 2002, 15–91. While Walker notes that much of Fatimid historical writing belongs to the North African phase, he argues that such historical writing was seemingly a 'low-priority' for Fatimid authors, with the critical caveat that 'memoirs' are excluded from this classification. Indeed, for Walker one of the remarkable features of this literature is that it focuses on 'personal memoirs rather than histories', Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire*, 193.

14. Brett emphasises the theological imprint present in Fatimid as well as Sunni Ifriqiyan sources for this period, arguing that as these were 'sacred histories,' such texts oscillated between 'a version of the past and a commentary upon the events as they took place.' Adducing Wansbrough in this analysis, Brett maintains the latter's objection that they were not devoid of ideological purpose, and that rather, such sources were predicated 'upon the familiar themes of Islamic historiography,' which in this case are linked to 'the fate of the Abbasid Caliphate and the success of the Fatimid revolution.' See Brett, *Rise of the Fatimids*, 8–12.

15. Ismail K. Poonawala, 'The beginning of the Ismaili Daʿwa and the Establishment of the Fatimid Dynasty as Commemorated by al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān', *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung*, eds. Farhad Daftary and Josef W. Meri, London 2003, 338.

16. For an extended summary of the contents see Haji, *Founding*, 7–11. For a detailed French summary of the main sections of the work see Farhad Dachraoui, introduction to *Iftitah al-Daʿwa*, by Qadi al-Nuʿman, 39–143.

17. Scholarly literature on Qadi al-Nuʿman is substantial, encompassing studies on Fatimid doctrine, law and history. For a survey of earlier twentieth-century scholarship on al-Nuʿman see Farhat Dachraoui, 'al-Nuʿmān', *EI³*. For a catalogue of al-Nuʿman's writings both extant and non-extant, see Ismail K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismaʿili Literature*, Malibu 1977, 48–68; Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies*, London 2004, 142–146. Scholarship on al-Nuʿman has continued apace over the past decade. An important recent article by Madelung illuminates the often nebulous aspects of al-Nuʿman's early life and education, see Wilferd Madelung, 'The Youth and Education of the Qāḍī Abū Ḥanfifa al-Nuʿmān', *Islam: Identité, Altérité, Hommage à Guy Monnot*, ed. Mohammad-Ali Amir-Moezzi, Turnhout 2013, 331–341. Devin Stewart has also recently composed a critical edition and translation of al-Nuʿman's *Kitab Ikhtilaf Usul al-Madhahib* in al-Qadi al-Nuʿman, *The Disagreements of the Jurists: A Manual of Islamic Legal Theory*, ed. and trans. Devin Stewart, New York 2015. Poonawala has recently published a revised chronology of al-Nuʿman's publications including an up-to-date commentary on previous scholarship on al-Nuʿman, see Ismail K. Poonawala, 'The Chronology of al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān's Works', *Arabica* 65.1/2, 2018, 84–162.

18. Poonawala, 'The beginning of the Ismaili Daʿwa', 338.

19. Poonawala, 'The beginning of the Ismaili Daʿwa', 339.

20. Sumaiya A. Hamdani, *Between Revolution and State: The Path to Fatimid Statehood*, London 2006.

21. Haji, *Founding the Fatimid State*, 2.

22. While the biographies themselves have not survived, their existence is known mainly from allusions in al-Nuʿman's other works. These included the *Kitab Maʿalim al-Mahdi* (The Signs of the Mahdi), *Sirat al-Qaʿim*, *Sirat al-Mansur* and *Sirat al-Muʿizz*, see Poonawala, *Chronology*, 112, 115, 120, 151. *Sirat al-Muʿizz* constitutes a distinct genre of historical writing, as a work written in verse that relays al-Muʿizz's biography and the major events of his reign in the first part, with the second part offering an analysis of al-Muʿizz's orations. The fuller title of the work is *al-Urjuza al-mawsuma bi-dhat al-minan fi sirat al-Imam al-Muʿizz li-Din Allah*, see Poonawala, *Chronology*, 151–153.

23. Brett refers to it as 'the dynasty's own version of the history of the revolution in North Africa' and 'the new dynasty's account of its origins', Brett, *Rise of the Fatimids*, 49. Poonawala similarly describes the work as being compiled by al-Nuʿman to retrieve 'officially sanctioned view about the beginning of the *daʿwa* and the establishment of the *dawla*', Poonawala, 'The beginning of the Ismaili Daʿwa', 340. Notably, other foundation narratives of the Fatimid state, such as that of al-Jazzar (d.369/979), a prominent physician and historian, have not survived the vagaries of time and circumstance. Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire*, 178.

24. As Dachraoui has noted, it is apparent that as regards the history of the Fatimids in North Africa, it is the *Iftitah* that serves as the principal source on which Ibn ʿIdhari's *Bayan al-Mughrib*, Ibn al-Athir's *al-Kamil*, Maqrizi's *Ittiʿaz*, Nuwayri's *Nihaya*, Ibn Khaldun's *al-ʿIbar*, Ibn al-Khatib's *Aʿmal al-Aʿlam*, Ibn Hammad's *Akhbar Muluk Banu ʿUbayd* and Ibn Zakayria's *Kitab al-Sira* have based their renditions. Dachraoui concludes that it is apparent 'from the time of al-Nuʿman to the time of Ibn Khaldun', that 'the historians of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* trusted the tradition of al-Nuʿman, and considered him a trustworthy historian, though he was the official historian of a Shiʿi state.' See Dachraoui's introduction to the *Iftitah*, by Qadi al-Nuʿman, *dal*.

25. See the introduction to Idris ʿImad al-Din, *The Founder of Cairo: The Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Muʿizz and his Era: An English Translation of the Text on al-Muʿizz from Idris ʿImād al-Dīn's ʿUyūn al-Akhbār*, trans. Shainool Jiwa, London 2013, 42–44 where this approach has been discussed in relation to Fatimid history. For a comparative analysis of Fatimid salvation history as composed by the medieval Ismaʿili writer Idris' Imad al-Din with contemporary Sunni historiography of the Fatimids see Shainool Jiwa, 'Historical Representation of a Fatimid Imam-Caliph: Exploring al-Maqrīzī and Idrīs' Writings on al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh', *Alifba: Studi Arabo-Islamici e Mediterranei*, 22, 2008, 57–70. Poonawala, 'The beginning of the Ismaili Daʿwa', 340, notes that 'history for al-Nuʿman is not a bare collection of discrete accounts of the past and their enumeration, but it serves a more noble purpose of imparting lessons and wisdom,' and that 'al-Nuʿman's representation of the past history of the *daʿwa* and the establishment of the *dawla* is thus significant because of its meaningfulness of the present.'

26. Lindsay and Poonawala highlight how the *Iftitah* symbolically parallels precedents in the career of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina to the mission of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* in Ifriqiya: see James E Lindsay, 'Prophetic Parallels in Abu ʿAbd Allah Al-Shiʿi's Mission among the Kutama Berbers, 893–910', *International*

Journal of Middle East Studies 24/1, 1992, 39–56 and Poonawala, 'The beginning of the Ismaili Daʿwa', 338–364. Elsewhere, an analysis of the *Iftitah* as the primary document for a study of the messianic doctrines of the early Ismaʿili *daʿwa* and its evolution in the North African context form the subject of Tilman Nagel's monograph, *Frühe Ismailiya und Fatimiden im Lichte der Risālat Iftitāḥ ad-Daʿwa: eine religionsgeschichtliche Studie*, Bonn 1972.

27. Elton L. Daniel, 'The Anonymous "History of the Abbasid Family" and Its Place in Islamic Historiography', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14/4, 1982, 425.

28. An introduction to the work prior to its publication was provided in ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Duri, 'Ḍaw jadīd ʿalā al-daʿwah al-ʿAbbāsiyyah', *Majallat Kulliyat al-Adab waʾl-Ulum*, 2, 1957, 64–82. Subsequent works that provided commentary on the importance of the work include Farouk Omar, *The Abbasid Caliphate, 137/750–170/786,* Baghdad 1969, 16–19; Elton Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Kurasan Under Abbasid Rule,* Chicago 1979, 35ff; Moshe Sharon, *Black Banners from the East: The Establishment of the Abbasid State: Incubation of a Revolt,* Jerusalem 1983, 233–237; Saleh Said Agha, *The Revolution which Toppled the Umayyads: Neither Arab nor Abbasid,* Leiden 2003, xxii–xxiii.

29. The full title as given in the manuscript is *Kitāb fīhī akhbār al-ʿAbbas wa fadāʾiluhu wa manāqibuhu wa fadāʾil wuldihi wa manāqibihim raḍiya Allāh ʿanhum arjmāʿīn.* The editor al-Duri chose the title *Akhbar al-Dawla* on the basis that the work is concerned with the *daʿwa,* and that *daʿwa* and *dawla* are synonyms (Duri, *Akhbar al-Dawla,* 18). Daniel rejected this especially on the basis of the circularity of the argument and adduces the generally accepted practise of referring to the work as *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* (Daniel, 'Anonymous', 419–420).

30. Among the arguments noted by Daniel in rejection of this ascription, most notable is that Ibn al-Nattah was an elder to al-Baladhuri, who in the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* serves as a senior authority (Daniel, 'Anonymous', 423).

31. Daniel, 'Anonymous', 424. Such evidence included the necessary connections with the Abbasid family, the fact that this Muhammad bin al-ʿAbbas was known to have written a work titled *Manaqib baniʾl-ʿAbbas,* and that his dates generally correspond with the traditionists whom the *Akhbar* relies on as direct informants.

32. Bahramian cites the presence of ʿAli bin Ibrahim bin Hashim al-Qummi (d. mid third/ninth century) in the chain of narrations of the *Akhbar* to justify this later dating, see A. Bahramian, 'Akhbār al-Dawla al-ʿAbbāsiyya, trans. Suheyl Umar, *Encyclopaedia Islamica.* Bahramian also proposes an association between the author of the *Akhbar* and the still elusive author of the famous *Kitab al-Futuh,* Ibn Aʿtham al-Kufi, who likely wrote between the third-fourth/ninth-tenth centuries.

33. Daniel, 'Anonymous', 425.

34. Daniel, 'Anonymous', 427.

35. Daniel, 'Anonymous', 427.

36. Daniel, 'Anonymous', 427.

37. On the debates regarding the ambivalence as well as salience of the term *al-riḍā,* and whether this was used as a 'code-name' for a pre-exisiting Abbasid candidate or if it denoted the movement's desire to select a 'chosen' candidate from the Hashimid household, see Patricia Crone. 'On the Meaning of the Abbasid Call to al-Rida.' *The Islamic World: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis,* Princeton 1989, 95–111.

38. Daniel, 'Anonymous', 428. Daniel distinguishes the idea of the imam from that of the caliph, in that the former is 'more special in character.'

39. The work is also known by the title *Kitab Siyar al-Aʾimma wa-akhbarihim* (Book on the Biographies of the Imam and their (historical) reports), and as *Taʾrikh Abu Zakariyya* (History of Abu Zakariyya). Earlier works in Arabic historiography recount the history of the Rustamid Imamate in North Africa, notably Ibn al-Ṣaghir's work on the Rustamid imams. Ibn al-Ṣaghir however was not an ʿIbadi and has been ascribed Shiʿi tendencies, see T. Lewicki, 'Ibn al-Ṣaghīr', *EI².*

40. Paul M. Love Jr., *Ibadi Muslims of North Africa: Manuscripts, Mobilization, and the Making of a Written Tradition,* Cambridge 2018, 37–42.

41. A. de Motylinski/T. Lewicki, 'Abū Zakāriyyā' al–Wardjlānī', *EI2.*

42. Love Jr., *Ibadi Muslims,* 34.

43. Love Jr., *Ibadi Muslims,* 34–35.

44. Love Jr., *Ibadi Muslims,* 37.

45. Love Jr., *Ibadi Muslims,* 42.

46. For a succinct overview of scholarship related to recent approaches to early Muslim history see Fred M. Donner, 'Modern Approaches to Early Islamic History', *The New Cambridge History of Islam. Volume I: The Formation of the Islamic World Sixth to Eleventh Centuries,* ed. Chase Robinson, Cambridge 2010, 625–648.

47. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 87, notes that 'dynastic historiography', that is, historical writings that dealt with the history of different Muslim *dawlas,* became numerous after the 'disappearance of central authority' in the post fourth/tenth century era. R. S. Humphreys et. al, 'Taʾrīkh', *EI²,* notes that political biographies and dynastic chronicles became part of the emphasis of 'middle-period historians,' in reference mainly to the post-fifth/eleventh century era and especially the Mamluk period of historiographical writing.

48. These include notably the work of Ibn al-Nattah on the Abbasid *dawla* as well as the 'biography of Muʿawiyah and the Umayyads' attributed to ʿAwana bin al-Hakam (d. 147/764 or 153/770), neither of which are extant. See Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography,* 89–90.

49. These segments thus occupy 293 pages out of the 339 in the printed Arabic edition, al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 1–294. The equivalent in the English translation is 182 out of 237 pages, al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* trans. *Founding the Fatimid State,* 20–202.

50. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 294–339, trans. 202–237.

51. Included in the *Iftitah* are references to the foundation of the Fatimid capital at al-Mahdiyya in 303/916, the Fatimid expeditions to Egypt in 303–301/913–914 and 306/918, the series of wars and treaties between the Fatimids, Byzantines and Umayyads as well as the rebellion of Abu Yazid al-Nukkari between 332–336/943–947. The coverage of these is summative. For instance, events related to Abu Yazid's rebellion and al-Manṣur's reign are covered in three pages, al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 332–335.

52. For al-Nuʿman's works on al-Mahdi, al-Qaʾim, al-Mansur and al-Muʿizz see Poonawala, *Chronology,* 112.

53. Donner has thus noted that 'historical writing about their own origins' came to have central importance for the early Islamic communities, see Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing,* Princeton 1998, 117.

54. The broader answer to the question as to why 'origins narratives' garnered the power of legitimacy, is located in the very function of historical writing. Donner thus notes that 'present' situations are given significance when situated 'within a context that stretches back into the past, to an *arché* or putative beginning.' The writing of history of the intervening development between the 'beginning' and the 'present' becomes a

'tradition.' By serving as the bridge between the 'origins' and the 'present', this tradition therefore gives the 'present' a distinct significance, Donner, *Narratives,* 112–113. Having identified 'some moment in the past' as the moment when a religious community, political structure or even intellectual tradition began, consequently, the writing of history becomes a 'profoundly legitimising activity' and 'authorises a community's very claim to legitimate existence', Donner, *Narratives,* 114.

55. Donner, *Narratives,* 142.

56. See Donner, *Narratives,* 142–143, for his articulation of these broad themes and their definitions.

57. Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study,* 2nd edition in collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad, trans. M. Bonner, Princeton 1994, 31.

58. Noth argues that *futuh* works likely emerged out of localised collections pertaining to individual battles or the conquests of major cities that were then collated to form larger *futuh* collections (Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition,* 32–33). Donner however seeks to modify this view by stating that broader *futuh* historiography was contemporaneous with more localised works (Donner, *Narratives,* 175–177).

59. Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography,* Cambridge 2003, p. 42; on page 18 he similarly labels the *futuh* as an early theme of historiography.

60. Donner, *Narratives,* 175.

61. Robinson, *Historiography,* 42.

62. As Donner notes in *Narratives,* 177, this is manifest by accounts that demonstrate God's decree for the rule of the believers through the use of 'tell-tale phrases' that report battle victories resulting directly from the aid of God. These phrases include 'God opened the city to the Muslims', 'God destroyed the Byzantines', 'God delivered the Muslims'. Other functions of *futuh* accounts included their ability to advance claims of prestige for a particular tribe, as well as serving as pious exhortations to battle (179).

63. Donner, *Narratives,* 181.

64. Donner, *Narratives,* 285–291 for a discussion of the notion of 'multiple orthodoxies' and the broad acceptance of the framework of the Muslim origins narratives.

65. Sharon, *Black Banners,* 27, notes the importance of the *daʿwa-dawlah* paradigm as a 'crucial concept' in cementing the 'principles and rhetoric of revolution' and state-formation in post-Abbasid political theory, as testified by later medieval authors such as Ibn Khaldun. However, he narrowly situates this paradigm as being uniquely engendered by the Abbasid *daʿwa* which tried to signify their *daʿwa* and *dawla* as mirroring that of the Prophet, an aspect he argues was later inherited by Ismaʿili and other movements, 24–25.

66. For a discussion regarding the completeness of the surviving manuscript of the *Akhbar* see Daniel, 'Anonymous', 420.

67. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 166.

68. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 167.

69. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 201ff.

70. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 201. These firsts came to include Yazid bin al-Hunayd, Abu ʿUbaydah Qays bin al-Sari al-Masli and Sulayman bin Kathir al-Khuzaʿi. On the ubiquity of the motif of 'firsts' in the early written Arabic tradition see F. Rosenthal, 'Awāʾil', *EI².*

71. See for instance *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 213–219 and 222.

72. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 213.

73. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 199.

74. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 166.

75. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 166.

76. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 194.

77. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 120.

78. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 120.

79. See for example Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies,* vol.2, ed. Samuel M. Stern, trans. Samuel M. Stern and C. R. Barber, New York 1971, 123.

80. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 310–371 ff.

81. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 281.

82. See Moshe Sharon, 'Ḳahtaba', *EI².*

83. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 237; see also 324, 327, 330, 349.

84. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 387–415.

85. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 1, trans. 19.

86. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 2, trans. 20.

87. The *Dawr al-Satr* (period of concealment) refers to an era in Ismaʿili history when the identities of the Ismaʿili imams, beginning with Muhammad b. Ismaʿil (d. circa late 2nd/8th century), were closely guarded and concealed from public view due to the Abbasid persecution of Shiʿi Imams. The era thus encompasses 153–297/765–909, ending with the manifestation (*zuhur*) of the Fatimid imam-caliph al-Mahdi biʾllah. For the history of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* in this period see Daftary, *Ismaʿilis,* 87–128.

88. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 2, trans. 20.

89. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 4–31, trans. 2–40.

90. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 30–31, trans. 45. See also Poonawala, 'The Beginning of the Ismaili Daʿwa', 346ff.

91. Of the numerous examples, see for example, al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 49, 135, trans. 59, 110.

92. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 79, 83, trans. 77, 88. The *dar al-hijra* (abode of emigration) refers to fortified centres in which adherents of the *daʿwa* settled in resonance with the famed emigration (*hijra*) of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622. Ibn Hawshab is said to have established a *dar al-hijra* at ʿAdan Laʿa. On the role of such 'abodes of emigration' in the third-fourth/ninth-tenth century history of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* see Daftary, *Ismaʿilis,* 108–110, 126.

93. Poonawala, 'The Beginning of the Ismaili Daʿwa', 346–350.

94. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 1, trans. 19. The verses quoted in the *Iftitah* thus proclaim: 'It is the party of God that must certainly triumph (*hizba'Allahi humu'l-ghalibun*)'; that 'Our forces—they surely must conquer (*inna jundana lahumu'l-mansurun*)' and notably in the use of verses of Biblical antecedent from the Qurʾanic chapter of 'The Prophets' that 'My righteous servants shall inherit the earth (*anna'l-arda yarithuha'l-salihun*)'. The Qurʾanic verses are parts of 5:56; 37:173 and 21:105 respectively.

95. Farhad Daftary, 'Hidden Imams and Mahdis in Ismaili History', *Ismaili and Fatimid Studies in Honour of Paul E. Walker,* ed. Bruce D. Craig, Chicago, 2010, 1–23. For an overview of the subject see W. Madelung, 'al-Mahdi', *EI².* For the divergence of views on the identity of the Mahdi within the early Ismaʿili movement and the subsequent emergence of the Qaramita, see Farhad Daftary, *Ismailis,* 116–126, and 'A Major Schism in the Early Ismāʿīlī Movement', *Studia Islamica* 77, 1993, 123–39.

96. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 1–2, trans. 19–20.

97. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 59, trans. 63.

98. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 62, trans. 66–67.

99. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 62, trans. 67. The full verses of this unknown poet are found in al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 63–66., trans. 67–69.

100. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 65, trans. 68.

101. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 65, trans. 68.

102. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 65–66., trans. 68.

103. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah,* 69, trans. 70.

104. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 115., trans. 99
105. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 124., trans. 104–105.
106. For those beyond the *daʿwa*, al-Nuʿman relates that those who 'adhered to his (Abu ʿAbdallah's) *daʿwa* (*dakhala fi daʿwatihi*) became known as easterners (*al-mashāriqa*)' al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 79, trans. 77.
107. al-Nuʿman described the excellence of those who entered into his *daʿwa* (*ṣalāḥ aḥwāl man dakhala daʿwatihi*) as constituting abstinence from sin, piety and devotion to good acts; qualities which motivated others to join, al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 79, trans. 77.
108. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 122, trans. 103
109. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 130, trans. 108; al-Nuʿman here relates 'remarkable tales' (*akhbāruʾl-ʿajība*) of those who would spend the entirety of their wealth and donate all their possessions like Kuwayrit bin Qays al-Lahiṣi.
110. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 122, trans. 103.
111. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 116, trans. 99.
112. The classification provided thus distinguishes between those who sought 'God's favour and reward', those who wished a portion of this world and the next (*al-dīn waʾl-dunya*); those who wanted glory, honour, prestige and leadership (*al-fakhr, waʾl-sharaf, waʾl-dhikr, waʾl-riʾāsah*), those who sought gain and benefit, those who entered out of envy, and rivalry, and finally those who entered out of 'fear, dissimulation and deceit' (*khawfan wa taqiyyatan wa mudārātan*; see al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 118, trans. 100.
113. The text thus pronounces that the 'The affair of the *daʿwa* manifest in Yemen (*ẓahara amruhāa*).' It denotes Ibn Hawshab's military conquests in which he 'conquered towns in the Yemen (*waftataḥā madāʾin al-Yemen*) and gained control of Ṣanʿa", al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 18, trans. 34.
114. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 135, trans. 110.
115. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 165, trans. 126.
116. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 165–203, trans. 126–150. These include accounts on the *Futuhat* of Tubna (173, trans. 131), Billizma (178, trans. 134), Tijis (182, trans. 137), Baghaya (203, trans. 150), Qastiliya and Qafsa (222, trans. 161) which occurred concurrently between 293–296/906–909.
117. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 227–233, trans. 165–168.
118. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 243, trans. 174.
119. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 67, trans. 69.
120. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 99, trans. 89.
121. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 100, trans. 90. Here it is Abu ʿAbdallah al-Andalusi, the progenitor of the Banu Hamdun, who stands to proclaim the *dāʿī*'s resolve.
122. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 108, trans. 95.
123. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*,109, trans. 95.
124. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 172, trans. 131.
125. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 142, trans. 114.
126. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 166, trans. 127.
127. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 246–251, trans. 176–179.
128. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 269, trans. 192.
129. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 288, trans. 202.
130. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 293, trans. 205.
131. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 303, trans. 211.
132. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 306ff., trans. 213ff.
133. In its introductory section, the *Kitab al-Sira* elucidates the structure of the origins narrative pertaining to the Rustamids. Accordingly, al-Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 39, notes: 'The first [part] of this [text] is the recounting of the appearance of the Ibadi *madhhab* in the lands of the Maghrib, and the matter of the "five bearers of knowledge" (*ḥamalat al-ʿilm*]) to the lands of the Maghrib, and how the imamate began (*ibtidāʾ al-imāmā*)

134. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira,* 40.
135. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 48, in the chapter on the 'Merits of the Persians (*dhikr faḍāʾil al-Furs min al-ʿAjam*),' an account is given of the Qurʾanic verses regarding those who would turn away from religion, to which the Prophet Muhammad said that those who would rise up to restore religion would be from the people of Salman al-Farsi. In the chapter on the 'Merits of the Berbers (*dhikr faḍāʾil al-Berber*)', a statement from the archangel Gabriel to the Prophet is quoted that the Berbers will be a people 'who will revive the religion of God (*yaḥyūn dīn Allāh*) after it has died' (51).
136. Love Jr., *Ibadi Muslims*, 38–39.
137. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 54.
138. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 56; the text then notes (57) that upon the arrival of the five in Tripolitania, the community there was in a state of *kitman* (without an imam), following which they agreed to give the *bayʿah* to Abuʾl-Khattab; prior to this Abuʾl-Khattab was the imam in *sitr* (secret) (57–58).
139. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 60.
140. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 64.
141. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 74, 77.
142. Warjalani, *Kitab al Sira*, 71.
143. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 81.
144. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 81ff.
145. See Daniels, 'Anonymous', 427–428.
146. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 28.
147. Berg argues this as having been a feature especially of later Abbasid propaganda in their rivalry with the ʿAlids. He adds that because the Abbasids were generally unable to demonstrate al-ʿAbbas himself as being an equal to ʿAli ibn Abi Talib in religious knowledge, pro-Abbasid writers therefore sought to project the qualities of knowledge on his son, ʿAbdallah ibn ʿAbbas. See Herbert Berg, 'Abbasid Historians' Portrayal of al-ʿAbbas ibn ʿAbd al-Muttalib', *ʿAbbasid Studies II: Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies Leuven, 28 June-1 July 2004*, ed. J. Nawas, Leuven 2010, 13. On this elevation of Ibn ʿAbbas see also Herbert Berg, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam: The Authenticity of Muslim Literature from the Formative Period*, London and New York 2013, 214. The *Akhbar's* assertion that Ibn ʿAbbas himself learnt from ʿAli perhaps indicates the earlier dating of this part of the text.
148. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 28-36.
149. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 28.
150. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 28.
151. Pronouncements on the superiority of Ibn ʿAbbas' knowledge (*ʿilm*) and opinon (*raʾy*) are thus attributed to ʿAbdallah ibn ʿUtbah (*Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 29) and also include the statement from Mujahid on the breadth of Ibn ʿAbbas' knowledge (*Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 34).
152. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 32. See also 29.
153. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 33.
154. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 34.
155. Daniels, 'Anonymous', 427; see also *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas,* 42–50.
156. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 66–67. See also Daniels, 'Anonymous', 427.
157. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 137.
158. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 139, see also 151.
159. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 161.
160. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 161–162.
161. It is notable that the author of the *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas* (165), expressly sets out the doctrine of the imamate as proclaimed by the earlier Abbasid caliphs as compared with later

developments. The work thus notes that ʿAli ibn ʿAbdallah b. al-ʿAbbas and his sons used to claim the continuation of the Kaysani imamate of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, until this was rejected by al-Mahdi, who claimed rather that the imamate after the death of the Prophet had passed to his uncle al-ʿAbbas and then to his sons and descendants.
162. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 165. For the significance of the transfer of the imamate from Abu Hashim to the Abbasid line see A. Bahramian and H. Ansari, 'Abū Hāshim', *Encyclopaedia Islamica*. Earlier discussions on the significance of this 'transfer' include Julius Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, trans. M. G. Weir, Calcutta 1927, 503–505; C. Cahen, 'Points de vue sur la "Révolution ʿabbāside"', *Les peuples musulmans dans l'histoire médiévale*, Damascus 1977, 105–160, 129 and S. Moscati, 'Abu Hāshim', *EI²*.
163. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 184.
164. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 184–185.
165. *Akhbar al-ʿAbbas*, 166.
166. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 41–42: "Abd al-Rahman was told by the people of the *daʿwa*, that if you seek the knowledge of the people of this affair (*ʿilm ahl hādhaʾl-amr*) that you have assigned yourself to and become associated with, and I see that you seek this, then set forth to the lands of Basra, for there is found a scholar by the *kunya* Abu ʿUbayda, whose name is Muslim ibn Abi Karimah al-Tamimi, and with whom you will find what you seek.'
167. Warjalani, *Kitab al-Sira*, 55–56.
168. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 8, trans. 26: thus for instance the imam's prophecy that the religion will not triumph and rise except from the Yemen and the imam's prophecy to Ibn Hawshab that 'indeed God will cause you to triumph and *dāʿī*s will indeed proceed from you to the remotest parts of the earth.' al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 11, trans. 28.
169. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 11, trans. 29.
170. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 14, trans. 32: Ibn Hawshab says 'I asked every Yemenite I met about ʿAdan Laʿa, but they all said that Laʿa itself was a well-known place but we do not know ʿAdan Laʿa (*lākin mā naʿruf ʿAdan Lāʿa*). We only know ʿAdan Abyan.'
171. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 16, trans. 32–33.
172. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 7, trans. 24: Ibn Hawshab is asked by the imam whether he believes in the 'justice and unity of God' (*anta mimman yaqūl biʾl-ʿadl waʾl-tawḥīd*) in regard to the Qurʾanic verse 18:74, which relates the slaying of a youth at the hands of Moses. When Ibn Hawshab is asked to reconcile this doctrine with this verse, he replied that he was unable to do so, as 'I lack knowledge thereof' (*innanī ila ʿilm al-wajh fī-dhālika la-faqīr*).
173. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 8, trans. 25: Ibn Hawshab reports 'The purport of what he said greatly impressed upon my heart, and my mind became preoccupied with what I had heard (*shaghala ma samiʿtū minhu dhihnī*).
174. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 8, trans. 25.
175. On the history and function of the Ismaʿili *majalis* see Heinz Halm 'The Ismāʿīlī Oath of Allegiance (*ʿahd*) and The Session of Wisdom (*majālis al-ḥikma* in Fatimid Times)', *Mediaeval Ismaʿili History and Thought,* ed. Farhad Daftary, Cambridge 1996, 91–115. For the teachings of the *daʿwa* taught in these *majalis* see Daftary, *Ismailis,* 128–136 and Halm, *Empire*, 106–107.
176. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 30, trans. 45.
177. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 30, trans. 45.
178. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 31, trans. 45.
179. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 35, trans. 48–49.
180. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 39, trans. 51.
181. See Poonawala, 'The Beginning of the Ismaili Daʿwa', 350, for

a commentary on the importance of 'establishing the *daʿwa's* origins as going back' to Jaʿfar al-Ṣadiq.
182. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 27 trans. 42. Abu Sufyan is said to have related the virtues of the *Ahl al-Bayt* to the inhabitants of the Ifriqiyian city of Tala (ancient Thala). These inhabitants as well as others from the nearby towns of al-Urbus and Nafta came to learn from him (*yastamiʿūna minh wa yaʾkhudhūna ʿanh*) (27, trans. 43). Separately, al-Hulwani is said to have gone to Sujmar on the eastern edge of Kutama territory, and who became famous because of his piety, virtue and knowledge (29, trans. 44).
183. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 30, trans. 44.
184. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 30, trans. 44.
185. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 41, trans. 53: they are described as having been considered by Abu ʿAbdallah as being 'a people who had more knowledge and understanding (*lahum al-maʿrifa waʾl-fahmi*) than the ones whom he had seen and accompanied.' Later (42, trans. 54) Abu ʿAbdallah al-Andalusi's own credentials are emphasised when he is described as having 'understanding, acuteness and knowledge (*maʿrifa*)', being a teacher who had 'risen to the rank of the learned' (*ṣāra ilā darajatiʾl-ʿulamā*').
186. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 41, trans. 53.
187. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 42, trans. 54.
188. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 43, trans. 55; later, Abu al-Muffatish also agrees to concur if the *dāʿī*'s successes are finally proven but notes he will be unable to accompany the *daʿwa* due to his frailty and advanced age.
189. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 48 trans. 56. See also Poonawala, 'The Beginning of the Ismaili Daʿwa', 351 on the relationship between '*kitmān*' (concealment) and Kutama as presented in this part of the text.
190. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 83, trans. 79.
191. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 85, trans. 81. The same motif is evident in the coalition of opponents to the *daʿwa* who attempt to recruit the Berber chieftain Mahmud ibn Harun (of the Ghasman). He is reported as asking for a debate between Abu ʿAbdallah and the ulama, but they express a similar fear (91, trans. 85).
192. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 49, trans.56.
193. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 49, trans. 56.
194. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 53, trans. 59.
195. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 128, trans. 107.
196. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 132, trans. 109.
197. al-Nuʿman, *Iftitah*, 146, trans. 115.
198. al-Nuʿman himself relays these instructions from the imam-caliph regarding the composition of the *Iftitah*. See Qadi al-Nuʿman, *Kitab al-majalis waʾl-musayarat,* eds. al-Habib al-Faqi, Ibrahim Shabbuh and Muḥammad al-Yaʿlawi, Tunis 1978, 117–118. For a version of this account in the work of the later medieval Ismaʿili author Idris ʿImad al-Din (d. 872/1468) see Jiwa, *Founder of Cairo*, 96.
199. Walker, 'Dāʿī (in Ismāʿīlī Islām)', *EI3*, notes that the 'Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa*, unlike many other Islamic *daʿwas*, did not cease to exist but rather became a part of the governing apparatus.' See also F. Daftary, 'The Ismaili Daʿwa outside the Fatimid *Dawla*', *L'Egypte Fatimide: Son art et son historie*, ed. M. Barrucand, Paris 1990, 29–43. For an alternate view on the killing of Abu ʿAbdallah to the *Iftitah*, see W. Madelung and P. Walker, *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shiʿi Witness*, London and New York, 2000, text 55–56, trans. 107.
200. For al-Nuʿman's own account of his delivery of the *majalis* in al-Muʿizz li-Din Allah's palace, see al-Nuʿman, *Kitab al-majalis*, 386–388. For Idris' version see Jiwa, *Founder of Cairo*, 85–88.