

# Science in the City of Fortune

# Bonner Islamstudien

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Eva Orthmann & Petra G. Schmidl (Eds.)

## Science in the City of Fortune

The *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* and its World



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## Preface

The Nizārites from Alamut have not left many traces for us. Most of their books as well as their castle were burnt when Hülägü conquered the Nizārite stronghold in 1256. One of the few surviving books probably was the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn*, which dates back to the period of Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ. The *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* is primarily an astronomical text, compiled on the basis of some of the most important astronomical treatises of that time. But it also contains a chapter on mundane astrology as well as a long chapter on historiography. This particular combination of different traditions of science and learning has been studied in a DFG project based at the University of Bonn. One of the aims of the project has been to analyze the only known manuscript of the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* and to provide information on its origin and composition. The first part of the present volume is devoted to some of the results of this project.

Alamut was however not an isolated island, but was connected to its Iranian environment as well as to other Ismaili centers of learning in Syria and Egypt. In the context of an interdisciplinary workshop at the University of Bonn, organized in July 2011, experts on different branches of knowledge specialized in the Ismailiyya and historical and scientific developments in adjacent regions were brought together to better understand these regional and religious impacts. The articles in the second and third part of this book are based on the contributions of this workshop. By combining some of the results of the project with these contributions, we aim to draw a more general picture of the intellectual activities during the 11th and the 12th century and their interrelationship on a local as well as supra-regional level, and thereby to better understand the influence of religious and political factors on the production of knowledge.

The first article by Orthmann and Schmidl introduces the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* and examines the provenance and history of the text and its manuscript. The article not only provides a detailed description of the copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale, but also discusses different opinions about its origin and date and argues for Alamut as its probable place of composition. The second article analyzes the sources of the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn*. Since especially the astronomical and astrological books of

the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* are compilations, a detailed investigation of the quotations as well as their selection and composition is presented here. In the historiographical part, a specific color scheme has been applied as a basic reference system which is introduced and examined here.

The two articles of the second part are both devoted to astronomy and explore two important aspects of the astronomical sources used in the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn*. In “The Maliki calendar in the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn*”, Benno van Dalen assembles and analyzes all occurrences of this calendar in the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* and considers their relation to other astronomical works. Johannes Thomann explores the criterion for the visibility of the lunar crescent taken over from Ḥabash al-Ḥāsib in the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn*, a problem closely related to inner-Islamic debates on the legal validity of calculating the calendar, a practice adopted by the Ismailis, instead of determining the beginning of the new month by reports of eyewitnesses.

The third part of the book encompasses articles on historiography and the intellectual environment of the Nizāriyya. Osamu Otsuka looks into the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn*'s importance as a historiographical source. He especially investigates unique information preserved in the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* and asks about possible influences of this book on later historiographies. Malihe Karbassian analyzes the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn*'s approach to the pre-Islamic history of Iran and presents two different ways of history writing adhered to in the book.

Delia Cortese discusses Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's travel to Egypt. The presentation and discussion of two manuscripts of a work titled *Sarguzasht-i Sayyidnā* kept at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London are at the core of her article. In his contribution on the Ismailis of Isfahan, David Durand-Guédy gives a very detailed and long account of the role of that city in the development of Ismailism in Iran. He is in particular interested in the relationship between Aḥmad b. ʿAṭṭāsh, the son of ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAṭṭāsh, the former leader of the Ismailis in Isfahan, and Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ.

The article by Paul Walker focusses on the Fatimid court in Cairo. He asks about the role of natural sciences, especially medicine and astronomy and astrology, by investigating the careers of several high-ranking scientists from that epoch. The correlation between the Ismaili *daʿwa* and scientific endeavors is also scrutinized. Wilferd Madelung's article leads back to the importance of astrology and astronomy in the realm of the Nizāriyya



by investigating the *Safīnat al-aḥkām* by Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. He sheds new light on the sources of the *Safīnat al-aḥkām* and identifies Ismaili as well as non-Ismaili sources of that text. He furthermore indicates that mundane astrology, which was so important for the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn*, did not play an important role any more in the later Ismaili and Nizārī *da‘wa*.