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# AN ANTHOLOGY OF ISMAILI LITERATURE

## A SHI'I VISION OF ISLAM

Edited by Hermann Landolt, Samira Sheikh & Kutub Kassam



## Ibn Ḥusām Khusfī

THE SEASON OF ORISONS<sup>1</sup>

Brothers, by God, it's the season of orisons,  
Seek your desires, for it's the time of needs.

It's the resurrection that manifests every six thousand years,  
Now, as it's the seventh, there's the lord of the resurrections.

If you don't recognize the Imam of the Time in truth,  
You will head for hellfire, despite your hundred thousand devotions.

All who recognized not their lord  
Are certainly plunged in infidelity and darkness.

How can the secret remain hidden between God and his servant?  
For God is the knower of mysteries and master of hidden things.

Abandon your caprice and fleshly thoughts, keep your eye steady on the goal,  
For naught but nonsense is all in your heart, save him.

All I said from my own imaginings and analogies  
Was but a fable and delusion in his presence.

Say the name of Mawlānā with the innermost heart of sincerity,  
For he has become manifest, and his summons is the talk of the town.

From east and west the comrades have manifested,  
But all of this is bound by a single indication.

In your grace, cast a glance upon your humble slaves,  
For among the people there is much discourse.

Give the wine of yearning from the brimful goblet of Mawlānā,  
For all of this is due to the mercy of the congregations.

Forgive Ibn Ḥusām, your humble slave,  
For he is imprisoned in the well of darkness.

1. Ibn Ḥusām Khūsfi, 'Barādarān ba-ḥaqq mawsim-i munājāt ast,' in *Majmū'ā-yi Ash'ār-i madhhabī*, ed., Anjuman-i Ta'lim (Mashhad, 1995), n.p., tr. Shafique N. Virani in *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, A Search for Salvation* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 136–137.

## Ḥusayn

WE CUT OFF OUR HEARTS<sup>1</sup>

We cut off our hearts from attachment to the world,  
Regaling our souls by the light of God's mercy.

Having liberated ourselves from the clutches of the demon of ego,  
We serve the Imam of the Time with sincerity.

We free our hearts from the fraud of the internal devil,  
Sacrificing our lives in the name of the lord of *jinn* and men.

We make the exalted name of the sovereign of faith,  
Gharīb Mīrzā, the litany of our tongues.

Sometimes he's a child, sometimes a youth, sometimes an aged man,  
'Tis incumbent we make the prophetic tradition our sign.

May my life be sacrificed for 'Azīzī who has uttered what follows  
I present to you a single couplet from his noble discourse:

Without doubt he is 'Alī himself. In serving him  
'Tis not comely to lean an atom towards 'why' or 'wherefore.'

While the folk of the law turn their faces toward the Ka'ba,  
We make Anjudān our Ka'ba of reality.

For in the annihilation of the life of this world  
Is everlasting life in that one – so hasten to long for life eternal!

By sinning and disobedience all of us have aged,  
We become youths once again by the light of obedience to him.

When our spirit is liberated from the insinuation of the body,  
We will make our nests in the neighbourhood of divine mercy.

If we remember our origin with probity,  
In the manner of lovers, we will turn our faces towards the place of return...

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1. Ḥusayn, 'Āmad zamān-i ānki maḥabbat 'ayān kunīm,' IIS Persian MS 14698, tr. Shafiqe N. Virani in *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages*, p. 173.

## Dā'ī Anjudānī

THE TRUSTED SPIRIT<sup>1</sup>

'Ali of the age, lord of the time, master of the epoch,  
From whose pleasure all your desires you find.

Commander of the epoch, the lord at whose court  
A hundred kings like Alexander and Caesar you find.

Seated on the throne of '*Whose is the Kingdom*,'<sup>2</sup> by God!  
Whatever you seek from the light of his friendship you find.

Shāh Mustanşir bi'llāh,<sup>3</sup> the bearer of truth (*muḥiqq*) of both the worlds,  
In the felicity of whose glance the garden of Ridwān you find.

Treasurer of knowledge divine, king of the throne, by whom  
With ease the key to the mysteries of both this world and that you find.

The one signified by the parables of the verses of God's word,  
From him the interpretation of the hidden meaning of the Qur'an  
you find...

Day and night, by the nobility of his mighty name,  
Weeping and composing his glories, the holy spirit you find.

Doubtless, the trusted spirit inspires such that  
My heart hastening on the path to the inspirer you find.

From a single hallowed lineage, from 'Ali till present times,  
All, over both worlds, the lords of the command you find.

So long as existed the world, 'twas never bereft of one of them,  
So long as it shall exist, till the end of time, the very same you find.

Traversing the path of naming the Imams of truth,  
Dā'ī! The jewel of your speech is a verity that from the mine you find.

1. Dā'ī Anjudānī, '*Qaṣīda-yi dhurriya*,' IIS Persian MS 15030, tr. Shafiqe N. Virani in *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages*, pp. 174–175.

2. A reference to the famous Qur'anic phrase *liman al-mulk* (40:16). For an Ismaili understanding of this dictum see Naşir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Āghāz wa anjām*, ed. İraj Afshār (Tehran, 1956), Chapter 2.

3. A reference to either Imam Mustanşir bi'llāh II (d. 885/1480) or Imam Mustanşir bi'llāh III (d. 904/1498), known as Gharīb Mīrzā.

## Darwīsh

ARISE!<sup>1</sup>

O heart, from your home in this shadowy container of dust, arise!  
From caring for head, wealth, property and life, like the lovers, arise!

You're trapped in the snare of the world's bait;  
Cut away greed, from thoughts of this and that, arise!

Be not seduced by devilish colours  
In the cause of servitude to the lord of the age, arise!

Leave to infidels the deceits and blandishments of the world;  
In this age of trial, like a chivalrous knight, arise!

Do you desire salvation, O brother of mine?  
Then with affection for the king of Anjudān, arise!

Imam of the age, 'Alī of the time, Shāh Gharīb;  
Gird your loins in his service and from your soul, arise!

It's time to decamp from this world, time to depart;  
Why do you tarry while your companions have left? O Darwīsh, arise!

## Khwāja 'Abd Allāh-i Anṣārī

WISDOM DIVINE<sup>2</sup>

Those who caught the scent  
Of wisdom divine,  
With heart and soul,  
Became slaves of Mustanṣir bi'llāh.

In love, those who became  
Dust at this threshold  
Surpass even the portico of the throne  
On the basis of their eminence.

I became the slave of a sovereign,

1. Darwīsh, '*Dilā az manzil-i in tīrah khākdān bar khīz*,' IIS Persian MS 14712, tr. Shafique N. Virani in *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages*, pp. 175–176.

2. Khwāja 'Abd Allāh-i Anṣārī. '*Har ki az 'ilm-i ladunī shammai āgāh shud*,' collated from IIS Persian MS 15052 and an unnumbered MS, tr. Shafique N. Virani in *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages*, pp. 179–180.

So magnificent and glorious  
 That all who become his slaves  
 Become kings of both worlds.

I became a slave so fortunate  
 That all who beheld me declared:  
 'What a lucky slave  
 Is he whose name is 'Abd Allāh, 'the slave of God.'

The longing of this forlorn one  
 Was but to behold the face of the friend.  
 Praise be to God,  
 The heart gained what it desired!

Save for your essence,  
 In the universe you have no like;  
 Indeed, those who recognize you  
 Are peerless.

How wonderful! In every age  
 He appeared in a different form;  
 Sometimes he's Mustanşir,  
 Sometimes Salām Allāh.

Sometimes an aged man,  
 A child or a fair youth he becomes;  
 Sometimes he ascends to the heavens for the ascension,  
 Or descends into a dark well.

If he appears in a hundred different forms,  
 Why should those of spiritual insight be anxious?  
 Those who see with the eye of the heart  
 Are guided to him aright.

Those who trod not this path  
 Following your command,  
 Indeed, though they be familiars of your court,  
 Are wayward and astray.

By God Almighty!  
 He who disobeys your order,  
 Though he may appear an elder of your court,  
 Is naught but a babe on the path.

O lord!  
 In this lowly world, you know,  
 Years and months passed by;  
 I lived my life in heedlessness.

O lord!  
 In this world for the sake of that one,  
 I sowed not a seed;  
 Now the season's passed.

Then suddenly from the invisible world  
 An oracle whispered in the inner recesses of my heart:  
 'Grieve not! For an unexpected felicity  
 Has been conferred upon you!'

Though I be bereft of worship,  
 I take joy in the certainty  
 That all who became beggars at this court  
 Become lords of majesty.

O lord!  
 Though I've been mighty impudent,  
 I shall not grieve,  
 For your mercy is my companion.

I also ended with your name,  
 Since in the realms of faith and world,  
 The beginning of all tasks,  
 Commences with '*In the Name of God.*'

### Ḥusayn b. Ya'qūb Shāh b. Ṣūfī

#### THE ADORNMENT OF ASSEMBLIES<sup>1</sup>

I have composed these couplets of poesy  
 To ornament the assembly of spirits,

That whoever may peruse these verses  
 May rejoice in the bounty of glad tidings,

That their time be felicitous, their fortune joyous,

1. Ḥusayn b. Ya'qūb Shāh b. Ṣūfī, '*Tazyīn al-majālis*,' IIS Persian MS no. 7822, tr. Shafique N. Virani.