

Shah Esma‘il, Deputy of the Hidden Imam?

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Summary: There are hardly any contemporary Persian sources discussing Shah Esma‘il I’s claim to semi-divinity. In this article we offer the translation of an unpublished and hitherto unknown contemporary Persian account that provides proof that Esma‘il was indeed believed to be the expected deputy of the Imam. This belief is further supported by contemporary European sources that reflect the impressions and sentiments that their informants had about Esma‘il and his followers, of which we give relevant examples.

As ERIKA GLASSEN already pointed out in 1971, official Persian chronicles are mostly silent about the claim to divinity, prophethood or deputyship (*velayat; niyabat*) of Shah Esma‘il I (r. 1501–1524).¹ Nevertheless, one finds some references to the alleged otherworldly nature of Esma‘il, such as in QOMI’s *Kholasat al-Tavarikh*.² Another later source, ‘ABDI SHIRAZI’S *Takmilat al-Akhhbar* reports that when Esma‘il arrived in Minkul at the Ostajalu tribe that he was welcomed by a dancing and singing crowd led by the tribal elders, who honored him as the *moqaddameh-ye zaman* or the Precursor of the Lord of Time.³ However, the claim to divine essence was not unique to Esma‘il at that time, it was, as it were, in the air of the era. Some of Esma‘il’s contenders for power likewise claimed it, such as his contemporary Sayyed Mohammad b. Falah Musha‘sha.⁴ Likewise, before Esma‘il took Yazd, its governor, Mohammad Kurrah, had been recognized as Mahdi by the city’s notables.⁵

It is evident that these notions about the semi-divine status of some religious leaders were not isolated and single instances among the Turkic groups in Anatolia and even if they were it begs the question where did the Ustajalu get this notion about Esma‘il being the *na‘eb* or the Imam’s deputy? As GLASSEN pointed out the millenarian beliefs were thriving in

¹ GLASSEN 1971, p. 64.

² AL-QOMI 1363, vol. 1, p. 75.

³ SHIRAZI 1369, p. 38.

⁴ CASSEL 1929, p. 57.

⁵ HAYATI TABRIZI 2018, f. 187r–v [318–321] Based on a *hadith* allegedly concocted by the Qadi of Aberquh: *Raytu al-Mahdi fi qaryatin yuqalu laba qurat*. (I saw the Mahdi in two villages and they called him Qurat – رأيتُ المهدي في قريتين يقال له قرّة).

Anatolia and the underlying socio-economic causes expressed themselves in religious terms, with the emphasis on justice and equality, themes that also characterize the early period of the rise of Esma'īl (see below).⁶ As a result, "Under Isma'īl I, the anthropolatic extremism of the Qizilbash continued unabated. The missionary activity of the Safavid order of which he was the supreme head (*murshid-e kamil*: the perfect guide), and which was conducted through a network of his khalifas (deputies) in Anatolia, remained of crucial importance."⁷

Here we present the translation of a contemporary Persian account that provides further proof that Esma'īl was indeed believed to be the expected deputy of the Imam. This report is part of a manuscript from the Garrette-Yehuda collection in the department of Rare Books and Special Collections of the Firestone Library at Princeton University holds, which was discovered when one of us was working there identifying and cataloging unidentified texts in 1994–1995. This manuscript contains several interesting texts. The first text is a complete Divan of Shah Ne'matollah Wali (ff. 1b–338a), the well-known Sufi Master of the Ne'matollahi order, who migrated to Iran and died in Mahan, near Kerman in south-east Iran. The third text, which covers ff. 340b–400b is a biography of the same Sufi Master, written by one of his disciples, a certain Nasrollah b. Khalil b. Heybatollah.

The second text covers ff. 338a–340b and is the subject of this short article. It contains a treatise of the re-appearance of the Hidden Imam, who, according to Shi'ite traditions disappeared in 329/941 during the so-called Greater Occultation (*gheybat-e kobra*), and is to return to this world at the end of Time. This text, with the title of *Resaleh dar bab-e zobur-e Mahdi* (Treatise concerning the appearance of the Madhi) is based on a poem by 'Alī b. Talib, the first Shi'a Imam, by an unknown author, who interprets this poem on the basis of the numerical value of letters, *'ilm al-huruf* and *'ilm al-jafri*, and concludes that both Shah Esma'īl Safavi and Shah Ne'matollah Wali are, in fact, deputies of the Mahdi or *Na'eb-e Imam-e Zaman*.

Although this particular text in the abovementioned collection lacks a date, nonetheless, the first and the third manuscripts are dated 924/1518 and 925/1519 respectively. Therefore, it would be safe to assume that the *Resaleh dar bab-e zobur-e Mahdi* was also copied during that same time, because the handwriting is the same in all three texts and the pagination also follows the sequence.

When, after Soltan Ya'qub's death (1490), a succession war broke out, Esma'īl, or more likely his coterie of the so-called Sufis of Lahejan, in 1499

⁶ GLASSEN 1971, p. 63

⁷ ARJOMAND 1984, p. 110.

decided to take advantage of the muddled situation and try and establish his claim to Soltan Ya'qub's kingdom. His initial military success, his anti-Sunni activities, the uncertainty about his religion, and the veneration in which his followers held him, made an enormous impression in Europe at that time.⁸ Although there are no contemporary Persian sources dealing with Esma'il's rise to power, while the later ones are mostly silent about Esma'il alleged claim to semi-divinity, European sources leave no doubt about the matter. There are two important published sources, one from 1502, and the other from 1508, which shed much light how Esma'il was seen by his followers and how this was reflected in their behavior and comments about that of his enemies. Although the Europeans who wrote these reports were neither ocular witnesses nor did they meet with Esma'il, but their writings reflect the impressions and sentiments that their informants had about Esma'il and his followers.

The first European report, published as a broadsheet in German in 1502 states unequivocally that Esma'il was referred to as the prophet Elya.⁹ The same source states that "the praise for his father and also because of his own piety his people consider him to be their earthly God and in their tongue they call him Elya, which means as much as God."¹⁰ The second report, also published as a broadsheet, this time in Italian in 1508 with the telling title of *Vita del Sophi* (The Life of the Sophy) states that "His true and proper name is Siah Ismail [sic; Shah Esma'il], which means 'the prophet Ismail'."¹¹ It is of interest that the first broadsheet mentions that Esma'il was considered a God, because he praised his father. This is of important, because Esma'il's father, Soltan Heydar had also been venerated by his followers "from Rum, Talesh, and Siyah-kuh (Qarajeh-dagh) as their God (*ma'bud*) and, neglecting the duties of *namaz* and public prayers (*'ibadat*), looked upon the sheikh as their *qibla* and the being to whom posternation was due (*masjud*)."¹² Likewise, the followers of Esma'il's grandfather (Joneyd) "openly called Shaykh Junayd God (*ilah*) and his son, son of God (*ibn-Allah*). In his praise they said:

⁸ FLOOR 2016.

⁹ The word *Elya* is a bastardization of 'Ali, the name of the first Imam of the Shiites, by which appellation many of Esma'il's followers referred to him. The earliest Venetian letters mention the prophet's name variously as Ely, Alli, and Siech Alli. SCARCIA AMORETTI 1979, pp. 9 (02/06/1502), 12 (27/07/1502), 14 (12/09/1502).

¹⁰ The authors of the broadsheet assume that this word, in bastardized form, refers to the name of the Moslem God, Allah rather than to the name of 'Ali.

¹¹ JODOGNE 1980, p. 227, line 34–35; see also SCARCIA AMORETTI 1979, pp. 26 (14/09/1502), 30 (03/11/1502), 38 (12/11/1502), 49 (22/11/1502), which letters describe him as a prophet sent by god and a holy man. For an English translation of the *Vita*, see FLOOR 1399.

¹² KHONJI 1992, p. 58.

he is the Living One, there is no God but He.”¹³ Thus, it would seem that the seeds of what was to come had already been sown by Esma‘il’s immediate forebears and, by 1500, he plucked the low-hanging political-religious fruits. So strong was the belief in Esma‘il’s Godhead that it was even dangerous to doubt this in the presence of his fanatical followers. When

A heathen bishop named Sygnerchodi¹⁴ came to this prophet, whom he asked whether he had ever seen God, traveling in the world as he did. He replied that God was in heaven, and his followers had considered his words to be so offensive and blasphemous that they cut the heathen bishop to pieces, because the people pray to him (Elya) as to an earthly God.¹⁵

Thus, Esma‘il not only had inherited the family business, but also father’s and grandfather’s claim to divinity. Writing as the poet Khata‘i, Esma‘il not only claimed to be issued from Sheikh Safi Ardabili and the heir of Joneyd and Heydar, related to Ali Morteza (an aspect also stressed by the two European broadsheets), but also to be the reincarnation of Ali’s divine substance, and having been with God, he had now had returned to the world. Although in human guise, Esma‘il personified prophetic and Imamite essence, and he had returned as God’s light, the Seal of Prophets, as a Perfect Guide, and the guiding principle.¹⁶

Esma‘il also seems to have adopted one aspect of a prophet’s or an Imam’s traditional public persona in public, as shown in artistic depictions, for the *Vita* submits: “He is revered by his people as a prophet and to get more fame he does not let himself seen other than with a covered and veiled face.”¹⁷ In this connection is interesting to note that the short Persian history translated by GLASSEN also has a veiled person play a role, this time that of the Mahdi himself, who initiates Esma‘il’s *khoroj* (advent) as his deputy.¹⁸ If

¹³ KHONJI 1992, p. 57.

¹⁴ We have not been able to identify this person or name. The only term that suggests itself, be it somewhat far-fetched, is a contraction of German *sygner* or rather *syger*, meaning ‘victor’ and Persian *chodi* or *khoda*, meaning ‘God’, which gives the name Nasrollah. In the Latin version his name is given as “Chaidj” or Hajj, presumably a Sunni scholar.

¹⁵ FLOOR 2016, p. 282, n. 83. A similar report is found in a Venetian report concerning the Sophy of 27 December 1501, where it is said: “Exeth [i. e. the Sophy] asked a captured Turk named Talisman, ‘Where is God?’ and he replied, ‘God is in heaven,’ and he immediately had said Talisman cut in half.” When Esma‘il asked the same question from an Armenian priest, the latter replied: “He is in heaven and on earth,” Esma‘il then said: “Let him go, because he knows where God is.” SCARCIA AMORETTI 1979, p. 4, no. 1.

¹⁶ MINORSKY 1940–1941. For the Turkish text of Khata‘i’s poems, see GANDJEI 1959.

¹⁷ JODOGNE 1980, p. 227, line 79 (*la facia coperta e velata*). The veiled face (*velato capite*) as well as the fact that he was venerated as Ali’s substitute (*in loco de uno Ali*) and not as a king, but as a holy man and a prophet (*sancto et propheta*) is also confirmed by a Frenchman, who, in 1507, was in Esma‘il’s camp. SCARCIA AMORETTI 1979, pp. 139–140.

¹⁸ GLASSEN 1971, p. 67, n. 31.

Esma'íl indeed wore a veil, which he did not do around 1510 and thereafter (at least it is not reported), this indicates that in 1508 Esma'íl still believed, or at least acquiesced in, that he was the *na'eb-e Imam*. Such a behavior is in line with the sentiments expressed in the poems that Esma'íl wrote under the penname KHATA'I,¹⁹ and clearly emphasized the cultish nature of the Qizilbash movement.

The prophecies that are referred to in QOMI's *Kholasat al-Tavarikh* and in the text presented below in translation are also mentioned in contemporary European reports, thus, lending credence to the existence, or at least in the belief in, of such prophecies at that time. On this issue ROTA reports: "Of the father it is said that through astrological science he knew from his son's birth what kind of man he would become."²⁰ This is somewhat vague, but later the same source submits:

When he had done this [the sacking of Shamakhi in 1500] his fame grew so big that daily from many parts and lands many people of his sect and religion joined him and this because, *through their books [they knew] that a new prophet of their religion would come*, who would make it prosper and thrive and would subdue and destroy all others.²¹

Therefore, it would seem that these prophecies were written during Esma'íl's rise to power to further lend credence to the popular belief in his semi-divine status.

Esma'íl's military successes also confirm that he was but fulfilling a divine destiny. "They have now taken twelve kingdoms/ and he always wins them without slaughter and storming/ because they believe he is a *miraculous* man./"²² It was not only the success itself, but also the manner in which he won that was miraculous, if not divine. After having taken Shamakhi in 1500, the *Vita* noted that

he unexpectedly immediately won, sacked and burnt it with fire and flames rather than *miraculously* with the men that were with him given that the city and land should have been sufficiently [able] to withstand a large and powerful army of more than three thousand horsemen.²³

¹⁹ MINORSKY 1940–1941; GANDJEI 1959.

²⁰ JODOGNE 1980, p. 228, line 94.

²¹ JODOGNE 1980, p. 228, line 99. Our emphasis.

²² ROTA 1515, p. 16. Our emphasis.

²³ JODOGNE 1980, p. 228, lines 95–96. Our emphasis. The people of Shamakhi had fled from the city before Esma'íl's arrival. The sources don't report any military activity against the city, let alone burning it. Perhaps ROTA or his source confused the massacre of Shamakhi's inhabitants and the destruction of the city and its environs by Soltan Heydar, Esma'íl's father, in 1488. KHONJI 1992, p. 62.

The same sentiment was expressed when, in 1504, Esma'il against all odds defeated Morad Khan at Shiraz.

In the first encounter the Sophy had the worst part of the outcome and many of his men were killed. Despite this they never turned away, not because of gold or status, but they fought for [their] faith and none of them feared death, because they believe that if they die they go to paradise. Just like wild boars they continued to fight ferociously, walked over the dead bodies of their comrades without any fear and fought there where the battle was most severe. They fought so much longer and bravely that they broke and smashed Morad Khan's entire army, an event that truly is more *miraculous and divine* than human.²⁴

The unlikely outcome of the various battles, where Esma'il's inferior force defeats larger and well-armed superior forces was presented as miraculous and which put the fear of God into the hearts of his opponents. ROTA goes even so far as to note that: "given that with all the great power that he has the Turkish king fears that of Shah Esma'il." Likewise, the Turkmen opponents are filled with terror. "Because of the great cruelty that he committed against the Turkmen and their relatives they greatly feared the name of the Sophy."²⁵

Esma'il's success was due to the faith that his followers had in him and because of that they were willing to fight till the last man standing. Other Venetian sources are also very positive about the belief of Esma'il's followers in his divinity and his prophethood.

This Sophy is loved and revered by his people as a god, and especially by his soldiers, many of whom enter into battle without armour, expecting their master Ismael to watch over them in the fight. There are also others to go into battle without armour, being willing to die for their monarch, rushing on with naked breasts, crying 'Schiac, Schiac.' The name of God is forgotten throughout Persia and only that of Ismael is remembered; if any one fall when riding or dismounted he appeals to no other god but Schiac, using the name in two ways; first as the god Schaic; secondly as prophet; as the Mussulmans say 'Laylla, laylla Mahamet resurall,' the Persians say 'Laylla yllal Ismael vellialla'; besides this, everyone, and particularly his soldiers, consider him immortal, but I have heard that Ismael is not pleased with being called a god or a prophet.²⁶

It is of further interest to see that the Anatolian and other peasants not only joined Esma'il because of religious considerations and prophecies, but also because he brought Justice and Equality and shared his wealth with his followers, who did not receive wages. BIDLISI later reported about this period

²⁴ JODOGNE 1980, p. 231, lines 192–197. Our emphasis.

²⁵ JODOGNE 1980, p. 228, line 122; p. 229, lines 144–145.

²⁶ BARBARO/CONTARINI 1873, part 2, p. 206 (Romano); for the same sentiments, see Idem, part 2, 115 (Angiollello).

that “There is no mine or thine and they ate together what they had.”²⁷ This stood in stark contrast to the behavior of the Ottoman elite, who treated their subjects rather poorly and with much oppression. This situation had given rise to major peasant revolts in Anatolia in 1423 and again in 1511, the latter clearly inspired by the hope held out by the expectations of Esma'il's mission (bringing justice) and his semi-divinity.²⁸ Therefore, the Ottoman commanders and pashas were afraid of Esma'il's activities, “because of the great and positive rumors/repute of this Sophy/ who was extending his great freedom/ and the very best brotherhood and justice/ that he accorded everybody/ in such a manner/ that innumerable people follow him.”²⁹ Other Venetian documents report that Esma'il distributed the booty to his followers and kept nothing for himself, which did two things for him. First, it showed that he was a successful leader, for nobody wants to follow a bad and unlucky one. Two, it proved that, in addition to gore and glory, lots of fun and booty could be had. “This had the desired result, for even those who were not Sufis, flocked to his banner. In this, in the course of a few days, he had more than 4,000 men.”³⁰ This egalitarian aspect of the Sophy's image was also reported by the Portuguese author TOMÉ PIRES around 1515, who wrote that Esma'il was known as “the Equaliser or Sophy”.³¹ This aspect of Esma'il's behavior even appealed to the oppressed masses in Europe, who believed that he would also liberate them.³² Safavid sources also report that booty was distributed among Esma'il soldiers and the fact that his troops did not disappear as they normally did after they had made enough booty was adduced as an example of the devotion of Esma'il's troops. Also, that prior to that same battle, the troops put their possessions under a tree and that each found his belongings again after the battle was something that QOMI found noteworthy. While Elvand had to chain the camels to keep his troops from fleeing Esma'il could count on warriors who literary would sacrifice themselves, believing that death was not to be feared.³³ Moreover, Esma'il's treasury was always empty, because he shared his wealth with the low and the high among his supporters.³⁴

²⁷ BIDLISI 1868, vol. II, p. 136; SCARCIA AMORETTI 1979, p. 42 (22/11/1502), “haver fatto tutte le cosse commune”.

²⁸ GLASSEN 1971, p. 63. On the 1511 revolt, see YILDERIM 2008, pp. 345–415.

²⁹ ROTA 1515, p. 14.

³⁰ BARBARO/CONTARINI 1873, part 2, pp. 187–188.

³¹ PIRES 1944, vol. 1, p. 23. See also FLOOR 2016, p. 280, n. 73.

³² FLOOR 2020.

³³ AL-QOMI 1363, vol. 1, pp. 62, 71; MONTAZER-SAHEB 1349, p. 525; BARBARO/CONTARINI 1873, vol. 2, pp. 51–52.

³⁴ QOBAD AL-HOSEYNI 1379, pp. 45–46; RUMLU 1357, p. 238; AL-QOMI 1366, p. 154; AMORETTI 1979, p. 140.

In short, the above-mentioned references to contemporary European reports about Shah Esma'il (1502, 1508) bear out the tenor of the attached translation of the *Resaleh*, viz. that he was venerated as semi-divine, as a prophet, as a deputy-Imam and texts such as the *Resaleh* or the one published by GLASSEN only served to bolster this popular belief in Esma'il, the leader of the cult. Although later Persian histories do not emphasize this aspect of Esma'il's rise to power, this may be due to the fact that i. They were not written by contemporaries, who had experienced Esma'il's charisma and the chiliastic ecstasy of his followers, and ii. The course of history did not bear out Esma'il's semi-divinity, because he failed to defeat and extirpate the Sunnis, the harsh and undeniable reality that denied the exclusive claim of Shiism to truth and divine origin. Nevertheless, some Persian historians still continued to stress the link, if not of Esma'il, at least of the Safavid lineage with the Mahdi. QADI AHMAD GHAFARI clearly held such belief, because he stated that the rise of Shah Esma'il was linked with the *Saheb al-Zaman* (the Lord of Time). He adduced proof for this statement from this poem:

صَبِيٌّ مِنَ الصَّبِيَّانِ لَا رَأْيَ عِنْدَهُ وَلَا عِنْدَهُ جِدًّا وَلَا هُوَ يَعْقِلُوا
Sabyun min al-sibyan la ra'ya 'indahu va la 'indahu jiddan va la huwa ya'qulu
 A youth from among the youths who has no opinion [of his own]
 And who is not serious and does not think³⁵

He explained this poem as showing the link between rise of Esma'il and the appearance of *Saheb al-Zaman*, because when this poem is dissected on the basis of the *abjad* numerical meaning then the following sentence is the result:

مَا هُوَ إِلَّا شَاهُ اسْمَعِيلَ ابْنِ حَيْدَرَ ابْنِ الْجَنْبِذِ الْمَوْسَوِيِّ
Ma huwa illa Shah Isma'il bin Haydar bin al-Junayd al-Musawi.

That cannot be other than Shah Isma'il, son of Heydar, son of al-Joneyd al-Musavi

However, by that time Shah Esma'il was dead and thus, there was no longer political coin in arguing his case as being the Imam's deputy.³⁶ Therefore, QADI AHMAD GHAFARI preferred to boost Esma'il's oldest son and his

³⁵ This poem has been claimed to be part of the sermon known as *Khutbat al-bayan* attributed to Imam Ali, but is not included in *Nahj al-Balaghah*. Many Shi'a scholars believe that there is no reliable evidence that this sermon was in fact composed by Ali b. Abi Talib and reject the composition of the poem by him. The earliest known source where the poem is found is in the *Divan Ali ibn Abi Talib* compiled by HOSEYN B. MO'IN AL-DIN MAYBODI, dated 911/1505. All authorities have questioned the authenticity of attributing this poem to Imam Ali. TEHRANI 1403, vol. 9, p. 101 states that it is not clear how and through which chains of transmission this poem is attributed to Imam Ali.

³⁶ Nevertheless, in popular memory Esma'il's sacred nature as the Imam's deputy lived on, even as late as the mid-17th century, see Ross 1896, pp. 329–333.

patron by arguing that the poem did not refer to Shah Esma'il, but to Shah Tahmasp (r. 1525–1576). Because, if you read Shah Tahmasp based on its *abjad* meaning the result is *Akhar al-Zaman* (the Last of Time), which was equal to 930/1524, or the year of his accession to the throne. Although Shah Tahmasp, who had become a born-again Moslem in 1534, rejected these claims and suggestions that he was the Imam's deputy, some Persian historians still continued to suggest that he had a solid connection with the last Imam.³⁷

One thing is clear, whether Esma'il really made a claim to semi-divinity for some time or not, his most fervent supporters really believed it. Therefore, even those of his contemporaries, who had joined his cause, because they had no choice and accepted the reality of his rule, paid lip-service to the belief that Esma'il was at least on a mission for God. Concerning Esma'il's coronation, KHVANDAMIR referred to a well-known prophetic saying that "God sends at the beginning of every century someone to renew the faith" and continues "the foundation of the Prophet's religion be reinforced by the Safavid shah's efforts, never, since the sun of his rule had risen, had victory turned its back on him – or would it ever. ... he mounted the throne and placed the crown of the caliphate and world conquest on his head."³⁸

In the name of God, the most Compassionate and Merciful

And then,

So said the brother of the Prophet and his successor, the Imam of the people of the earth and heaven, Ali al-Murtada, may Allah's greetings be with him.

Poem:

يا بُيِّ إِذَا جَاءتِ التَّرْكُ فَانْتَظِرْ
 وَلايْتِ مَهْدِيْ يَقُوْمُ وَ يَعدِلْ
 وَ ذَلْ مَلُوْكِ الْاَرْضِ مِنْ آلِ هاشِمِ
 وَ بُويعَ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ يَلْدِ وَ يَهْزِلْ
 صَبِيٌّ مِنْ الصَّبِيَّانِ لا رَأى عِنْدَهُ
 فَلا عِنْدَهُ جِدًّا وَ لا هُوَ يَعدِلُوْا
 فَتُمْ يَقُوْمُ الْقائِمِ الْحَقِّ مِنْكُمْ

³⁷ For further proofs submitted by Qadi Ahmad, see GHAFARI 1343, pp. 256–266, 281–282. QOBAD AL-HOSEYNI 1379, p. 63 wrote that Shah Tahmasp's rule "*ta zaman-e hozur-e hezrat-e Saheb al-Amr momtad khabad shod*" (would last until the appearance of the Lord of Command [i.e. the Mahdi]). RAZI 1339, vol. 1, p. 154 reports that numerical value of the death year of Shah Tahmasp results in *Davazdah Imam*, or the 12th Imam.

³⁸ KHVANDAMIR 1362, vol. 4, p. 467.

و بِالْحَقِّ آتَيْكُمْ الْحَقَّ وَ بِالْحَقِّ يَعْمَلُ
 سُمِّيَ بِنَبِيِّ اللَّهِ نَفْسِي فِدَاكَ قَدَمَهُ
 فَلْتَ تَتَّخِذْ سِوَاهُ يَا بُنَيَّ وَ عَجَلْ

O my son, when a Turk appears then sit in waiting
 For the *vilayat* of the Mahdi will rise and bring justice
 And kings of the earth from the lineage of Hashim will be humiliated
 And he will take an oath of allegiance from those who are devoted to him
 (will make a *bay'ah* with them) and will be kind to them.
 A youth from among the youths who has no opinion [of his own]
 And who is not serious and does not think [He is crazy]
 And then will rise up from among you the Upholder of the Truth [*haqq*]
 And he will bring you the truth and will act by the truth
 He will be called son of Allah, may my life be sacrificed for him
 As I said do not follow other than him, O my son and hurry.

It may not be concealed to the people of wisdom and knowledge, people of insight and vision that many great Friends (*awliya*) of Allah and exalted 'ulama, who have, on the basis of calculation [of numerical values] found apparent harmony and correspondence among some names, have also seen profound spiritual relationship among them as well. In consideration of this introduction and thanks to the purity of their intentions, some of the derishes often grasp some point about the meaning of those names, which are not without interest. For instance, a poem is recorded in the *Divan* of Imam 'Ali (*mazhar-e 'ajayeb* and *mazaher-e gharayeb* مظاهر عجائب و مظاهر غرائب), the successor of Mohammad, the *Vali* [Friend of God] and its meaning is briefly as follows:

His Holiness Imam 'Ali has said that a child from among my offspring's children, whose affair may be understood in human intellect [will emerge]. Without any effort kings of the earth will make covenant with him and will obey him. When such a child appears, it is the time for the emergence of the *Sahib al-Zaman* [the Mahdi], who is hidden from his enemies until the end of Time, as it has been said: *al-Imam thani ash'ar mustatirun min 'uduwwihibi* [the Twelfth Imam remains hidden [veiled] from his enemies امام ثانی عشر [مستترون من اعدائه] Numbers 5, 7, 2, 1 [1, 2, 7, 5?] point to this. Their numerical value, according to the science of Jamal corresponds to *al-Imam bar haqq* [the Legitimate Imam]. Also, by this exalted name is called Shah Esma'il b. Heydar b. Joneyd Ardabili. It amounts to [the numerical value] of 1178: *Ay qaba-ye padeshahi rast bar bala-ye tu* [O! He to whom fits the royal garment ای قباي پادشاهی راست بر بالای تو] Therefore, it is no longer a secret that the said numbers correspond to the [numerical value] of these letters: *ghayn* (غ), *qaf* (ق), *ayn* (ع) and *kaf* (ك). The modifier (*bayyinat*) of these letters are ye (ی),

nun (ن), *alef* (ا), and *fa'i* (ف). The numerical value of *ye* (ی), *nun* (ن), and *alef* (ا) is 202, corresponding to the name of Mohammad and 'Ali, may peace be upon them. Because [the numerical value of] Mohammad's name is 92 and that of 'Ali is 110, totaling 202. This points to the fact that these two exalted beings in secret (*batin*) are in favor of an assist the King of noble ancestry in whom the world seeks refuge, may God make his kingdom eternal as long as the turning cosmos survives,

As it has been observed, any territory that his imperial star wishes to turn, even before arriving there, the people of that territory are conquered and become obedient. This is one of the peculiar characteristics of the Seal of Prophets, may God's greetings be upon him. As it has been said that

Nusirtu bi'l-ru'b masiritan shahr [نُصِرْتُ بِالرُّعْبِ مَسِيرَةَ شَهْرٍ];

To any direction I turned, I was helped by fear [of the enemy],
namely, to any direction that I turn suddenly fear takes over the enemy's heart.
Statements of this kind are frequently made in the sayings of His Holiness.

Poem:

جائی که نشان بی نشانست آنجا انگشت خیال در دهانست آنجا

That Abode which is the land of no name and sign
The land in which one bites one's finger in astonishment

His Holiness the Pole of the *Awliya* and the Guide of the purified, *Nur al-Din Ni'matullah* May God sanctify his mysteries, has by strange signs and mysterious ways shown [the sign of the time of the appearance of this Imam of the Age.] That sign is as follows:

عین، ز، ذال چون گذشت از سال بوالعجب کار و بار می بینم
چون زمستان پنجمین بگذشت ششمین خوش بهار می بینم
نائب مهدی آشکار شود بلکه خود آشکار می بینم
بندگان جناب حضرت او سر به سر تاجدار می بینم

When *ayn* (ع) and *za'i* (ز) and *dhal* (ذ) are gone in the year
I see the affairs [of the world] amazing
When the fifth winter is gone
I see the sixth one like a pleasant spring
The *Na'eb* [deputy] of the Mahdi will appear
Because I see it myself clearly
All the slaves of His Holiness
I see them having a crown on their head.

It should not remain a secret that according to the experts of the science of *Jafr*, which is the foundation of all sciences, *ayn* (ع), *za'i* (ز), and *dhal* (ذ) corresponds to 878. It should also be clear that since the above refers to the

appearance of the *Imam-e Zaman* [the Lord of Time] and is on the arrangement of the sun, therefore, it will be in the solar calendar. In other words, whenever 878 solar years have passed, strange things will appear. I have read in some books of commentary [on the Qur'an] that unless the 'ulama and the commentators have indicated that when verse 18:25 (And it is said they tarried in the Cave three hundred years and add nine) was revealed, some Jewish scholars, who had converted to Islam, abandoned Islam and became heretics. His Holiness, the King of the *Awliya*, 'Ali Morteza, may God's greetings be upon him, asked them what is the reason of your abandoning the religion? They told him that "we believe in the fact that the Torah is the word of God, Most High, and it is said that the people of the Cave stayed in that famous Cave for 300 years. Whereas in the word revealed to Mohammad (pbuh), it is so reported that their stay in the Cave was 309 years. Since there must be an error in God's affairs, therefore, we became doubtful." His Holiness 'Ali, may God's greetings be upon him, smiled and said: "you have misunderstood these calculations. Both are correct, because the 300 years mentioned in the Torah are solar years. Every 100 solar years are equivalent to 303 lunar years. Therefore, 300 solar years are equivalent to 309 lunar years and so both statements are correct and have the same and identical meaning." It should be known that the lunar year starts in Muharram and ends in Muharram and includes 354 days. Consequently, every year there is a 12-day difference between the lunar and solar year and, therefore, every 100 solar years is equivalent to 103 solar years.

In consideration with this introduction 878 that is drawn from *ayn* (ع), *za'i* (ز), and *dhal* (ذ), if applied to the solar calendar it will be 26 years less, that is to say, the solar year of 878 will be the lunar year of 904. Therefore, the year 904 will be the beginning of the period of strange happenings. After that, when the fifth winter, which is the fourth year, that is 905, the *Na'eb-e Mahdi* will appear. It should be known that the word *Na'eb*, which is composed on *nun* (ن), *alef* (ا), *ya* (ی), and *ba* (ب) has a numerical value of 231, which is the same as that of Esma'il Hadi. That is to say, the person who will be the *Na'eb* of the Mahdi is named Esma'il, who will be the people's guide from deviation to the straight path. As we clearly see, it is an allusion to this fact that the numerical value of the blessed name of [Shah] Ne'matollah is also 231.

Poem:

این یار هم‌لنست اگر جامه بدل کرد ای
 این روز در این خرقه زنگار بر آمد
 این باده همانست اگر شیشه بدل کرد
 بنگر که چه خوش بر سر خمار بر آمد

This beloved is the same as she always was
 Even though today she appeared [changed into] in a blue garment
 This is the same wine only it changed the bottle
 Look and see how subtly it entered into the head of the drunken ones

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