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# Imāmī Thought in Iran during the Ilkhanid Period

*The Ḥimṣī Rāzī Family*

*By*

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## Contents

List of Figures VII

Introduction 1

Five Generations of the Ḥimṣī Rāzī Family 5

Abū l-Qāsim 19

Tāj al-Dīn Maḥmūd 20

Abū l-Qāsim Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd (653–713 [1255–1313]) 21

“al-Tāj al-Rāzī” Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd (alive in 748 [1347]) 46

Abū Manṣūr Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Alī (b. 733 [1333]) 74

Abū l-Qāsim Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Alī’s *Mishkāt al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*: Editorial Note 78

References 79

Index of Persons 91

Index of Book Titles 95

Index of Places 98

Index of Manuscripts 99

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## القسم العربي

تحقيق نصّ رسالة مشكاة اليقين في أصول الدين من مصنفات المحقّق  
المدقّق جمال الملة والدين علي بن محمود الحمصي نور الله مرقدّه 103

141 فهرس آيات القرآن

143 فهرس الأخبار والروايات

144 فهرس الأشعار

145 فهرس أسماء الأعلام

146 فهرس أسماء الكتب

VI

CONTENTS

147 فهرس أسماء الفرق والمذاهب

149 الألواح

## Figures

The figures are situated in the Arabic part of the book.

1.1	Ms. Berlin, Wetzstein II 1527, fol. 1 <sup>r</sup>	151
1.2	Ms. Berlin, Wetzstein II 1527, fol. 1 <sup>v</sup>	152
1.3	Ms. Berlin, Wetzstein II 1527, fol. 2 <sup>r</sup>	153
1.4	Ms. Berlin, Wetzstein II 1527, fol. 2 <sup>v</sup>	154
1.5	Ms. Berlin, Wetzstein II 1527, fol. 3 <sup>r</sup>	155
1.6	Ms. Berlin, Wetzstein II 1527, fol. 68 <sup>r</sup>	156
1.7	Ms. Berlin, Wetzstein II 1527, fol. 76 <sup>v</sup>	157
2.1	Ms. Berlin or. oct. 623, fol. 4 <sup>r</sup>	158
2.2	Ms. Berlin or. oct. 623, fol. 75 <sup>r</sup>	159
2.3	Ms. Berlin or. oct. 623, fol. 244 <sup>v</sup>	160
2.4	Ms. Berlin or. oct. 623, fol. 257 <sup>r</sup>	161
2.5	Ms. Berlin or. oct. 623, fol. 257 <sup>v</sup>	162
2.6	Ms. Berlin or. oct. 623, fol. 258 <sup>r</sup>	163
2.7	Ms. Berlin or. oct. 623, fol. 258 <sup>v</sup>	164
3.1	Ms. Tehran, Malik 1099 (opening page with a list of contents)	165
3.2	Ms. Tehran, Malik 1099, p. 210	166
3.3	Ms. Tehran, Malik 1099, p. 211	167
3.4–38	Ms. Tehran, Malik 1099, pp. 297–331	168
4.1	Ms. Istanbul, Carullah 554 (opening page, containing a note with a list of contents)	203
4.2	Ms. Istanbul, Carullah 554, fol. 50 <sup>v</sup>	204
4.3	Ms. Istanbul, Carullah 554, fol. 75 <sup>r</sup>	205
4.4	Ms. Istanbul, Carullah 554, fol. 89 <sup>r</sup>	206
5.1	Ms. Tehran, Dānishgāh 2144/29, p. 390	207
6.1	Ms. Berlin, Sprenger 1883bis, fol. 1 <sup>r</sup>	208
6.2	Ms. Berlin, Sprenger 1883bis, fol. 2 <sup>r</sup>	209
6.3	Ms. Berlin, Sprenger 1883bis, fol. 2av	210
6.4	Ms. Berlin, Sprenger 1883bis, fol. 3 <sup>r</sup>	211
6.5	Ms. Berlin, Sprenger 1883bis, fol. 160 <sup>r</sup>	212
6.6	Ms. Berlin, Sprenger 1883bis, fol. 161 <sup>r</sup>	213
7.1	Ms. Tehran, Majlis Sinā 1408 (title page)	214
7.2	Ms. Tehran, Majlis Sinā 1408 (beginning of text)	215
7.3	Ms. Tehran, Majlis Sinā 1408 (end of text with colophon)	216
8.1	Ms. Tehran, Dānishgāh 5471 (title page)	217
9.1	Ms. Istanbul, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 877, page preceding fol. 1 <sup>r</sup>	218
9.2	Ms. Istanbul, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 877, fol. 1 <sup>r</sup>	219

## VIII

## FIGURES

- 9.3 Ms. Istanbul, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 877, fol. 2<sup>r</sup> 220
- 9.4 Ms. Istanbul, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 877, fol. 6<sup>r</sup> 221
- 9.5 Ms. Istanbul, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 877, fol. 67<sup>r</sup> 222
- 9.6 Ms. Istanbul, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 877, fol. 67<sup>v</sup> 223
- 9.7 Ms. Istanbul, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 877, fol. 207<sup>r</sup> 224
- 9.8 Ms. Istanbul, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 877, fol. 207<sup>v</sup> 225
- 10.1 Ms. Istanbul, Damad İbrahim 147 (title page with ownership statement) 226
- 11.1 Ms. Istanbul, Esad Efendi 1238 (title page with ownership statement) 227
- 12.1 Ms. Khuy, Madrasa-yi Namāzī 63, fol. 155<sup>v</sup> 228
- 12.2 Ms. Khuy, Madrasa-yi Namāzī 63, fol. 313<sup>r</sup> 229
- 13.1 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 12521 (opening page with note by Maḥmūd al-Mar'ashī) 230
- 13.2 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 12521, fol. 26<sup>r</sup> 231
- 13.3 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 12521, fol. 32<sup>r</sup> 232
- 13.4 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 12521, fol. 73<sup>v</sup> 233
- 13.5 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 12521, fol. 118<sup>r</sup> 234
- 13.6 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 12521, fol. 119<sup>v</sup> 235
- 13.7 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 12521, fol. 138<sup>r</sup> 236
- 14.1 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 13030 (opening page with note by Maḥmūd al-Mar'ashī) 237
- 14.2 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 13030, fol. 23<sup>r</sup> 238
- 14.3 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 13030, fol. 45<sup>r</sup> 239
- 14.4 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 13030, fol. 46<sup>r</sup> 240
- 14.5 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 13030, fol. 57<sup>r</sup> 241
- 14.6 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 13030, fol. 75<sup>r</sup> 242
- 14.7 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 13030, fol. 80<sup>r</sup> 243
- 14.8 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 13030, fol. 93<sup>r</sup> 244
- 14.9 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 13030, fol. 134<sup>v</sup> 245
- 15.1–165 Ms. Qum, Mar'ashī 3212/1, fols. 1<sup>r</sup>–83<sup>r</sup> 246
- 16 *Masjid-i Quṭb-i Rāwandī* (Khusrushāh)  
(<https://aniya.blog.ir/post/40>) 411
- 17 *Masjid-i Quṭb-i Rāwandī* (Khusrushāh)  
(<https://aniya.blog.ir/post/40>) 411
- 18 *Ārāmgāh-i Quṭb-i Rāwandī* (Khusrushāh)  
(<https://aniya.blog.ir/post/26>) 412
- 19 Tombstone of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī (Qum)  
(<http://qompajoohi.ir-ششم-قرن-فیلسوف-راوندی-قطب-راوندی>) 413
- 20 Tomb of Faḡl Allāh al-Rāwandī (Kāshān)  
(<https://hawzah.net/fa/Mostabser/View/63312/9506/رحلت>) 414

FIGURES

IX

- 21 Ms. Los Angeles, UCLA Library, Caro Minasian Collection Ar 97, title  
page 415
- 22 Ms. Los Angeles, UCLA Library, Caro Minasian Collection Ar 97, p.1 416
- 23 Ms. Los Angeles, UCLA Library, Caro Minasian Collection Ar 97,  
p. 51<sup>o</sup> 417

## Introduction

§1 Scholars studying the development of Imāmī doctrinal thought since the time of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (355–436 [966–1044]), one of the last Imāmī thinkers to be influenced by Mu‘tazilite Bahshamite thought (and perhaps the most prominent of them), are confronted with a lack of sources. Many pertinent works by Imāmī thinkers who lived in the various centers of Shī‘ī learning in Baghdad, Rayy, Khurāsān, Najaf, al-Ḥilla, and the *bilād al-Shām* since the mid-fifth [mid-eleventh] century have not come down to us. Even during al-Murtaḍā’s lifetime there were repeated incidents of violent unrest in Baghdad. Attacks against Shī‘īs in Karkh in 416 [1025–1026], 417 [1026–1027], and again in 422 [1031] led to the destruction of some of al-Murtaḍā’s works as well as of parts of the earlier Imāmī written heritage. Toward the end of 448 [1056–1057] or in early 449 [1057–1058], the house of al-Murtaḍā’s former student al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (385–460 [995–1067]) was demolished along with his rich library. Although al-Ṭūsī himself managed to flee to Najaf, where he spent the rest of his life, many of his writings, including some of his most important theological works, were destroyed. In 451 [1059] the Seljuq Ṭughril Beg’s (r. 428–455 [1037–1063]) march on Baghdad led to the devastation of the academy of learning (*dār al-‘ilm*) and its library; the institution had been founded in Karkh by the Shī‘ī Shāpūr b. Ardashīr (330–416 [942–1035/36]) and housed a collection of Shī‘ī books.<sup>1</sup> During the Seljuq period, 434–600 [1042–1203], the center of Imāmī scholarship shifted to Najaf (later on also al-Ḥilla) and especially to Rayy and Khurāsān. The biobibliographical sources attest to heated debates among practitioners of Imāmī *kalām* concerning some of the key doctrines of the Bahshamiyya and the alternative notions developed by Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436 [1044]) and his followers in Rayy. But this revival of Imāmī thought was brought to an end by the civil war between Ḥanafīs and Shāfi‘īs in this city at the turn of the seventh [thirteenth] century. The final blow came with the Mongol occupation of Rayy, which nearly obliterated the literary legacy of Imāmī scholarship in the city, including the extensive theological literature produced since the fifth [eleventh] century.<sup>2</sup> Over the course of the fifth [eleventh] century, the *bilād al-Shām* (Ramla, Tripoli, and Aleppo) emerged as yet another center of

1 Detailed references to the various incidents are given in Ansari and Schmidtke, *Al-Šarīf al-Murtaḍā’s Oeuvre and Thought in Context*, vol. 1, pp. 69–72.

2 See Ansari and Schmidtke, “The Shī‘ī Reception of Mu‘tazilism (II): Twelver Shī‘īs” as well as our *Imāmī Thought in Transition* (in preparation).

Imāmī learning,<sup>3</sup> but this period of flourishing, too, came to an end in the mid-sixth [twelfth] century during the Zengid and early Ayyubid period.<sup>4</sup> A series of increasingly harsh measures were taken against Shī'īs, including Imāmīs, again causing losses of Imāmī literature; the writings lost included some of the *kalām* works written during this period.<sup>5</sup>

§ 2 In recent years, an increasing number of theological writings by Imāmī thinkers who lived between the lifetimes of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (597–672 [1201–1274]) have come to light. Whereas Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's doctrinal works, *Qawā'id al-'aḳā'id* and *Tajrīd al-i'tiqād*, introduced Avicennan terminology and selected Avicennan concepts into Imāmī *kalām*, Imāmī theologians of the late fifth [eleventh] and sixth [twelfth] centuries, beginning with the generation of al-Murtaḍā's students, were torn between the doctrines of the Bahshamites, their doctrinal alternatives (especially the notions of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and his followers), and what were perceived as the more authentic theological views of the imams. The latter were often identified with those of al-Murtaḍā's teacher, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (336 or 338–413 [948 or 950–1022]), who, in turn, was influenced by the doctrines of the Mu'tazilite school of Baghdad. Mu'tazilite thought, Avicennan notions, and the quest to return to the early doctrines of the imams continued to constitute the principal parameters of Imāmī theological thought over the following centuries. However, the continuing shortage of sources hampers the study of this crucial phase in Imāmī intellectual history. Many important works are known only as titles mentioned in, for example, the *Fihrist asāmī 'ulamā' al-Shī'a wa-muṣannifihim* by the sixth-[twelfth]-century Imāmī scholar Muntajab al-Dīn 'Alī Ibn Bābawayh, the best-informed source on Imāmī scholarship in Ray and Khurāsān in his lifetime. A similar dearth of sources can be observed for Imāmī (and non-Imāmī) scholarship in Iran during the Ilkhanid period. Mamluk historiography disregarded scholarly production in Iran, and only some of the local biographical and biobibliographical sources have come down to us.

§ 3 One way to overcome the deplorable gaps in our knowledge of Imāmī intellectual history is to consult documentary material that is primarily preserved in the rich but hardly explored manuscript tradition. Ownership statements, authorial and scribal colophons, collation notes, *ta'līqāt*, and *ḥawāshī*,

3 For theological tracts by Imami authors from this period, see Ansari and Mousavi, "Five Imāmī Credal Texts".

4 An exception was the region of Jabal 'Āmil, which developed into an important center of Shī'ī scholarship beginning in the seventh [thirteenth] century.

5 For some titles by Imāmī authors that are still attested to have been available in one of the libraries of Aleppo during the seventh [thirteenth] century, see Sbath, *Choix de livres*.

as well as the rich *ijāza* literature, provide extensive information about the circles of Imāmī scholarship especially during the Ilkhanid period. The present study aims to showcase what can be achieved by gathering and piecing together paratextual material from the materials of manuscript collections around the world. Its goal is to bring to the forefront scholars whose contributions have fallen into oblivion.

§4 One of the many Imāmī intellectual microcosms that have come to the attention of scholars over the past decades is the Ḥimṣī Rāzī family, which flourished in Iran during the seventh [thirteenth] and eighth [fourteenth] centuries. Rudolf Sellheim (1928–2013) was the first to devote a study to this family on the basis of three pertinent codices preserved in the Berlin State Library (Mss. or. oct. 623, Wetzstein II 1527, and Sprenger 1883bis).<sup>6</sup> This was followed by another study by one of the present authors (S.S.) that included a facsimile of one of these Berlin codices—namely, al-Tāj al-Rāzī Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd al-Ḥimṣī al-Rāzī’s commentary on Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī’s *Qawā’id al-‘aqā’id* (Ms. Wetzstein II 1527).<sup>7</sup> Since then, we have gathered ample additional materials that are preserved in Iranian and Turkish libraries and that complement the data provided by the three Berlin codices. This evidence, together with information gleaned from the relevant biobibliographical and historiographical literature, provides deeper insights into the history of the family and the scholarly and doctrinal profiles of its members.

•••

§5 The *editiones principes* of selected works by members of the Ḥimṣī Rāzī family—namely, the *Mishkāt al-yaqīn*, a note on *istiḥālat ittihād al-bārī ma‘a l-makhlūqāt*, and the introductions to *Kashf al-ma‘āqid*, *al-Amālī al-‘irāqīyya*, and *al-Maṭālib al-qudsīyya* (see below, §§ 31, 54, 58, 68)—were prepared by Hamid Ataei Nazari in collaboration with Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke. The authors wish to express gratitude to Garrett Davidson, Mahmud Mar‘ashi, Reza Mukhtari, Ahmad Reza Rahimi Riseh, ‘Abd al-‘Aṭī Muḥyī al-Sharqāwī, and Luke Yarbrough for kindly assisting us in obtaining access to some of the manuscripts discussed in this book. Thanks are also due to the following libraries for providing us with digital copies of the codices referred to throughout this study and for granting permission to include reproductions of selected images: in Tehran, the Central Library of Tehran University, the Malik National Library and Museum, Majlis Library and Majlis-i Sinā Library; in

<sup>6</sup> Sellheim, *Materialien*, pp. 142–147.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Tāj al-Rāzī, *Kashf al-ma‘āqid*.

Khuy, the Madrasa-yi Namāzī; in Qum, the library of Āyat Allāh al-‘Uzmā Najafi-yi Mar‘ashī; in Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library and Köprülü Library; in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin–Preussischer Kulturbesitz; in Los Angeles, the UCLA Library. The Historical Studies–Social Science Library of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ, kindly agreed to make available surrogates of all the manuscripts we have consulted for this study under the file name “Medieval Imāmī Thought Collection.” These may be consulted by appointment. Financial support for the purchase of digital surrogates of the relevant manuscripts was generously provided by the Gerard B. Lambert Foundation. We also express our gratitude to the two anonymous peer reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions, to Hanna Siurua for her careful copyediting of the final manuscript, and to María Mercedes Tuya for her help in preparing the images.