In Ep. 7 On the theoretical arts of the encyclopaedia of the Pure Brethren (I, 267, 4-11), the Ihwān list six kinds of “legal sciences for the cure of the souls and the search for the hereafter”: 1) the science of revelation; 2) the science of interpretation; 3) the science of traditions; 4) the science of the Law, traditions and norms; 5) the science of memory and spiritual admonitions, of asceticism and of Sufism; 6) the science of the interpretation of dreams. These sciences belong, respectively, to: a) the readers of the Qu’ran and those who know it by heart; b) the imāms and the vicars of the Prophets; c) the authors of hadīts; d) jurists; e) worshippers, ascetics, monks and the like; f) interpreters.

Again, in Ep. 9 On habits (I, 322, 3-323, 20) the Ihwān speak of the eight basic principles of the Law, represented by eight groups of followers and companions of the Lawgiver, who all have the task of perpetuating the memory of the Law, and hence allowing its implementation: 1) reciters of the Holy Book and those who know it by heart; 2) āḥbār-tellers, ḥadīts-transmitters and those who keep by heart the sīra of the Prophet; 3) students of the Law and those who are learned in the Law and in its sunna; 4) commentators of the literal meaning of their expressions; 5) the fighter ansār; 6) vicars of the Law-giver and those who supervise the sāri’a by ordering that which is good and interdicting that which is forbidden; 7) ascetics and worshippers, monks and those who stand up in the temples; preachers in the pulpits; 8) those who are learned in the ta’wil, and those who are experienced in the theological sciences and knowledge, that is to say, the rightly guided (al-mahdiyyūn) imāms and the orthodox (ar-rasīdūn) caliphs.

As we see, these lists are very similar, and the encyclopaedia of the “Pure Brethren” often deals with each of these categories. But I should like to address here the fifth category of the first passage, that of “al-‘ubbād wa z-zuhḥād wa r-rubbān wa-māman šākalabum”, which corresponds to the seventh of the second passage, that of “az-zuhḥād wa l-‘ubbād fī l-masāğid, wa-r-rubbān wa-l-qawwām fī l-bayākil, wa-l-huṭtabā’ alā l-manābah”.

1 Here the Ihwān use the typical mu’tazili expression: al-amr bi-l-ma’ruf wa-n-nahy ‘an al-munkar.

2 For instance, Ep. 22 On animals, II, 299, 18-20 looks especially significant. This passage is related to the well-known assertion, which the Ihwān also repeat, that “religion and kingship are twins”. See also, in the same Epistle, 301, 17-20 and 367, 20-369, 14 passim; Ep. 8 On the practical arts, I, 292, 9-18 and, more specifically on kingship: Ep. 31 On the languages, III, 173, 17-175, 14 and 176, 2-177, 2.
The Ihwān consider this category very positively - that is obvious, given the contexts in which it is treated. On the other hand, in spite of the wide critical position of Islam versus asceticism, and in spite of the fact that the Ihwān generally appear very far from any mystical or ascetical approach to religion, in the Epistles we find positive but varied evaluations of asceticism; and we even find a favourable mention of Christian monachism.

But a reading of the encyclopedia shows above all that asceticism is the main feature of the so-called "Friends of God", the Awwiya' Allāh. As is well known, etymologically this name emphasizes the "closeness" of some kinds of "special" believers to their Lord. Then, within Islam it designates the "saints" and/or the mystics. The same thing happens in the encyclopedia of the Pure Brethren, where, for instance, we find a long passage in which the Awwiya' Allāh are identified with the "saints" according to the usual Muslim hierarchy (Ep. 9, I, 376, 14-378, 16). And there are many passages in which the Awwiya' Allāh share the qualities and behaviour of people whom we could consider "mystics", or even "Sufis". I have already addressed the question whether the "Friends of God" can be identified with the "mystics" of the Muslim tradition, e.g. the sūfi, or not. In this paper I address the problem mainly from the linguistic point of view, taking into consideration the rich and various features related in the Epistles to the "Friends of God", and evaluating their terminology.

The majority of the passages related to our topic are in Ep. 9, but the features of the "Friends of God" are also dealt with in other Epistles, e.g. in Ep. 22, II, 7-8, which refers just to Ep. 9, stating that there it is explained "how everybody should behave, in order to be worthily counted among the Friends of God".

The features, or "distinguishing marks" of the "Friends of God" are widely and multifariously considered. The complete lexicon will be published soon; here, I consider only the most important items.

From the complete reading of the whole encyclopedia we find first of all the personal features related to the "Friends of God". An examination of the terms recorded shows that the most frequent roots are AMN, RHW, ZHD, SLM and SDQ.

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1) AMN, 4 items: amān, security (Ep. 38, III, 312, 5); amāna, trustworthiness (Ep. 9, I, 359, 16: as a consequence of abstinence and chaste life); iman, faith (Ep. 9, I, 376, 2: inherited from the Prophets); āminin, peaceful (Ep. 9, I, 376, 11: they lived in this world —)

devoutness (wa'ahhād), reception of divine confirmation (ta'yis) and inspiration (iḥām), renunciation (zabāda) of the world and neglect of his quest, and craving (ragḥa) and longing (ṣiḥāj) for the hereafter (378, 1-4). That of abdāl is "one of the degrees of the sūf hierarchical order of saints" according to EF. s.v. abdāl (they are also forty for some hadīt-transmitters, like Ibn Hanbal). For the same position cf. Marquet 1973:139. We can also recall that the Ihwān speak, e.g., also of al-ḥukama' an-nuṣūjāt (so combining two other sūf hierarchical degrees) in Ep. 38 On resurrection, III, 303, 9, in a passage interesting for the topics dealt with in the present article.

2) RHW, 3 items: ṣāliḥ, good (Ep. 36, III, 312, 12: having a good character); ṣafī, sincere (Ep. 36, III, 312, 12; genuine); ṣawād, rank (Ep. 38, III, 312, 12; one reaches this rank). For similar terms, see also ibn Hanbal and others.

3) ZHD, 4 items: amīn, correct (Ep. 36, III, 312, 12; they are correct); āla, near (Ep. 38, III, 312, 12; one is near); amān, security (Ep. 38, III, 312, 5); amāna, trustworthiness (Ep. 9, I, 359, 16: as a consequence of abstinence and chaste life); iman, faith (Ep. 9, I, 376, 2: inherited from the Prophets); āminin, peaceful (Ep. 9, I, 376, 11: they lived in this world —)

4) SLM, 4 items: almā'ī, poor (Ep. 38, III, 312, 5; they are poor); amīn, correct (Ep. 36, III, 312, 12); āla, near (Ep. 38, III, 312, 12; one is near); amān, security (Ep. 38, III, 312, 5); amāna, trustworthiness (Ep. 9, I, 359, 16: as a consequence of abstinence and chaste life); iman, faith (Ep. 9, I, 376, 2: inherited from the Prophets); āminin, peaceful (Ep. 9, I, 376, 11: they lived in this world —)

5) SDQ, 4 items: sūfī, mystic (Ep. 36, III, 312, 5; qualified as mystics); sāliḥī, good (Ep. 36, III, 312, 12; having a good character); ṣawād, rank (Ep. 38, III, 312, 12; one reaches this rank); ṣawāda, position (Ep. 38, III, 312, 12; one reaches this position). For similar terms, see also ibn Hanbal and others.

Devotions (wa'ahhād), reception of divine confirmation (ta'yid) and inspiration (iḥām), renunciation (zabāda) of the world and neglect of his quest, and craving (ragḥa) and longing (ṣiḥāj) for the hereafter (378, 1-4). That of abdāl is "one of the degrees of the sūf hierarchical order of saints" according to EF. s.v. abdāl (they are also forty for some hadīt-transmitters, like Ibn Hanbal). For the same position cf. Marquet 1973:139. We can also recall that the Ihwān speak, e.g., also of al-ḥukama' an-nuṣūjāt (so combining two other sūf hierarchical degrees) in Ep. 38 On resurrection, III, 303, 9, in a passage interesting for the topics dealt with in the present article.

Cf. e.g. the comparison between "the way of God" of the Muslim and that of the monk in his cell, in the apologue, entirely against the latter, in Ep. 9, I, 338, 22-342, 15. Also in Ep. 22, II, 286, 1 the Qurayšite praises God because He gave to his people "the best of religions". More generally, we read in Ep. 46 On the essence of faith, IV, 84, 3-4 that "revelation is the noblest gift man finds in the world".

4) Cf. e.g. the harsh description of ascetical practices in Ep. 22, II, 359, 13-360, 6.

5) For instance, in Ep. 25 On conception, II, 444, 13 asceticism from world is said to be ordered by Prophets. In Ep. 27 On the development of the particular souls within the natural human bodies, III, 15, 9 "adoration, asceticism, mysticism, adherence to the school of the Divines (at-ta'alluq wa-z-zuhd wa-at-tasawwuf wa-luzum maddhib ar-rabbaniyyin) are quoted among the praiseworthy qualities.

6) Cf. e.g., with reference to the abstention from food, Ep. 9, I, 358, 3-14.

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8) The Ihwān report Qur'ān and ahbār for their description. Finally, they quote a hadīt (missing in Wensinck [1936] as far as I could see), which reads as follows: "This summa always needs forty just men from the sect of Abraham, the friend of God". After a presentation of Abraham, which recalls the haggadic story of his being thrown into fire, Qur., XXI, 69 is quoted (which closes his story in the Holy Book). Then (377, 3-13) we read that "among those forty four men of them are abdāl, and they are called abdāl because they substitute one creature with another, and make one purification after another. In fact, these forty men are selected from a total of four hundred ascetics (zahādirn), gnostics (kririn) and sure (muḥaqquin), and these four hundred are selected from four thousand penitent (al-adhibn) and sincere (mudhjin) believers, and every time that one of the four passes away, one of the forty takes his rank (rubba); and when one of the four hundred passes away, one of the four hundred takes his rank; and when one of the four hundred passes away, one of the four thousand rises to his status (manzila), reaches his grade (marada) and takes his place; and every time that one of the four thousand passes away, one of the penitent and sincere believers raises to his position (mahān), reaches his degree (darāgā) and takes his place". After the quotation of a series of hadīts and of Qur., XXXV, 32, the Ihwān conclude that these people are the heirs of the Prophets and the vicars of God; their heritage is science ('ilm), faith (iman),
The Iḥwān consider this category very positively - that is obvious, given the contexts in which it is treated. On the other hand, in spite of the wide critical position of Islam versus asceticism\(^1\), and in spite of the fact that the Iḥwān generally appear very far from any mystical or ascetical approach to religion\(^2\), in the Epistles we find positive but varied\(^3\) evaluations of asceticism\(^4\); and we even find a favourable mention of Christian monachism\(^5\).

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\(^9\) Cf. Baffioni 2000, where I hinted at the possibility that the Iḥwānī Friends of God are just the Shi’ite imāms (in spite of the fact that, in the passages of Eps. 7 and 9 quoted above - like in a sort of ta’ayya - the imāms are placed in another category). In many places, moreover, the Iḥwān urge the imitation of the “Friends of God” (cf. Ep. 9, I, 334, 10-15 and 360, 8-13) and, finally, just as the Iḥwān regret that caliphs kill the imāms, they also regret the murder of the “Friends of God” (cf. Ep. 22, II, 361, 4-22: an allusion to the condition of the Iḥwān, themselves persecuted as imā’īlīs?). Finally, it could be meaningful to recall that the listing of “distinguishing marks” is a constant practice of the Ismā’īlī propagandists in reference to the Prophets.

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\(^10\) In this Epistle, the “Sincere Friends” are again spoken of, cf. 376, 22, and 377, 19. On the “Friends of God” cf. also Ep. 38, III, 298, 16, 21, 24; 299, 4 and 9; on their qualities cf. Ep. 22, II, 376, 24-377, 6.

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2) RHW, 1 item recurring 4 times: râba, rest (Ep. 38, III, 312, 5; Ep. 9, I, 360, 3: from pains; Ep. 38, III, 312, 3: their hearts [are] in —; Ep. 38, III, 312, 5: in — with themselves)

3) ZHD, 3 items: zubd, asceticism, recurring 2 times (Ep. 9, I, 333, 16; Ep. 9, I, 369, 12); zahâda, renunciation (Ep. 9, I, 378, 3: of this world, inherited from the Prophets); tazhid, incitement to abstention (Ep. 9, I, 375, 15: from this world, their work)

4) SLM, 3 items: salâma, safety, recurring 2 times (Ep. 9, I, 359, 17: as a consequence of abstinence and chaste life; Ep. 9, I, 376, 11: from trouble and pains); tasâ-im, submission (Ep. 9, I, 360, 3); salâm-in, safe (Ep. 9, I, 376, 11-12: they left this world —)

5) SDQ, 3 items: sidq, sincerity, recurring 2 times (Ep. 9, I, 333, 14: of speech; Ep. 9, I, 360, 5: in speech); sadaqa, charity (Ep. 9, I, 359, 21); tasdiq, confirmation (Ep. 9, I, 360, 6: of faith in conscience).

But in the encyclopaedia we find more features and attributes, which I have subdivided as follows: a) further definitions of the introduced by negations or privative terms; c) relationship of the introduced —; f) their religious knowledge; g) attributes of the introduced —; h) attributes of the introduced — linked to gnosiology.

Among the features introduced by negative terms or negations are: 1) absence of doubt and uncertainty, twice (Ep. 9, I, 375, 17; Ep. 39, III, 343, 2-3); 2) abstention from eating and drinking (Ep. 9, I, 333, 9; Ep. 9, I, 358, 10); from carnal passions (Ep. 9, I, 358, 3); from evil thoughts and behaviour, each twice; 3) absence of ill-will or evil intention towards the others (Ep. 38, III, 312, 5-6; Ep. 38, III, 312, 6); each twice.

As to the relationship of the Awliya' Allah with God, among the other statements, we can here recall that the “Friends of God” are said to be “those who love God and whom God loves” (Ep. 9, I, 360, 9), and consequently their invocations are always answered (Ep. 38, III, 312, 2). Moreover, the “Friends of God” constantly behave as if they have seen God (Ep. 9, I, 338, 13-14; Ep. 39, III, 343, 2-3); they experience Him in every situation (Ep. 9, I, 376, 6); they crave for the encounter with God (Ep. 9, I, 360, 10).

Let us now come to the personal qualities ascribed to the “Friends of God”, which could belong to the sufi tradition. I am, of course, aware that our discussion cannot enter into any details of the various sufi personalities and schools:

1) taqwa, godliness (Ep. 9, I, 369, 13; Ep. 9, I, 359, 17: as a consequence of abstinence and chaste life); mahabbah, love (Ep. 9, I, 360, 1; Ep. 9, I, 359, 18: of the hearts, as a consequence of abstinence and chaste life); ridâ, satisfaction (Ep. 9, I, 327, 5-6: with little of the delights and pleasures of the world; Ep. 9, I, 333, 13; Ep. 9, I, 360, 2); wâzb, asceticism (Ep. 9, I, 333, 16; Ep. 9, I, 369, 12); tasawwuk, trust (Ep. 9, I, 369, 13); all of these belonging to the sufi experience since its beginnings;

2) other attributes such as some of the so-called maqâmat in sufi authors: amâna, trustworthiness (Ep. 9, I, 359, 16: as a consequence of abstinence and chaste life); rifq, kindness (Ep. 9, I, 360, 22; Ep. 9, I, 363, 4);

3) qualities like tasâ-im, submission (Ep. 9, I, 360, 3); sabr, patience (Ep. 9, I, 333, 13; Ep. 9, I, 360, 3-4: in misfortunes and trial); kâfif, sufficiency (Ep. 9, I, 360, 3); we could also recall the expression tasfâr-rud fi l-bâlâwût (Ep. 9, I, 327, 9) very akin to the sufi halâwa; other qualities concerning the relationship with God, such as mahabbah, love (Ep. 39, III, 342, 19); hüsân az-zann, good belief (Ep. 9, I, 369, 15); tabâqqaq, certitude (Ep. 9, I, 376, 3); ibâs, sincere devotion (Ep. 9, I, 360, 5); hawâf, fear (Ep. 9, I, 369, 14; cf. also Ep. 9, I, 360, 2); raqâ’, hope (Ep. 9, I, 369, 14; cf. also Ep. 9, I, 360, 1); tumâ’ ina, repose (Ep. 9, I, 360, 5); mûrif, knowledge (Ep. 9, I, 376, 5: soundness of their — of their Lord; Ep. 39, III, 342, 5-6; cf. Ep. 9, I, 360, 1, 27, 36; 1); lîqa (Ep. 9, I, 360, 5); tasawwuk, trust (Ep. 9, I, 360, 4); yaqîn (Ep. 9, I, 338, 13; Ep. 9, I, 376, 10) and tayyâqqu, certainty (Ep. 9, I, 376, 5). We can also recall other passages, like Ep. 9, I, 375, 20-21, which recalls glîk; Ep. 9, I, 338, 13-14, which recalls muhsâbî; Ep. 9, I, 376, 6, which recalls muštâhâda; and the expressions yarâwânahu ru’îyat al-baqq, they see God truly (Ep. 9, I, 376, 5-6: in every circumstance) and inmâhâqat al-agyûr ‘inda ru’îyâtîb hamîqâtîb, every other thing is effaced, when they see (God’s) true nature (Ep. 9, I, 376, 10).
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Among the features introduced by negative terms or negations are: 1) absence of doubt and uncertainty, twice (Ep. 9, I, 375, 17; Ep. 39, III, 343, 2-3); 2) abstention from eating and drinking (Ep. 9, I, 333, 3; Ep. 9, I, 358, 10); from carnal passions (Ep. 9, I, 358, 3); 3) from pains; Ep. 38, III, 312, 3: their hearts are in —; Ep. 38, III, 312, 5: in — with themselves.

12 Eating little is also defined: mazra at al-fikr (field where cogitation is cultivated, Ep. 9, I, 358, 11); yunhii al-hikma (source of wisdom, 358, 11); huyat al-hikma (life of sagacity, 358, 11); misabih al-qalb (fump of the heart, 358, 12); tabib al-hudud (physician of the body, 358, 12); qatl al-labaruti (killer of carnal appetites, 358, 12); hadím al-waswa (what demolishes temptation, 358, 12); mwnl al-ilhm (what sends down inspiration, 358, 13); tama min far an-nafs (hindrance from spiritual vice, 358, 13); amána min biddat al-ball (safety from the severity of reckoning, 358, 13). Consequences of eating little, moreover, are takhur (thankfulness, 358, 13) and vanishing of kufu an-nma (ingratidate, 358, 14).

13 As a consequence of asceticism expressed in Ep. 9, I, 358, 3 as qillat al-asfl (little eating) and takh al-labarut (neglect of carnal appetites), one is asabhi fúlsan (healthier in body, Ep. 9, I, 358, 6); asakl hufa (better in memory, 358, 6), asakl fasman (purer in mind, 358, 7-6); asakl ghalim (higher in heart, 358, 7), cf. my text asakl níma (less needful of sleep, 358, 7); asad ra’yan (more sincere in viewing, 358, 7); asaqf al-saw (sharper in insight, 358, 7-8); asaqf al-fikr (finer in mind, 358, 8); asyg saman (more disposed to pay attention, 358, 8); asyg hisan (healthier in sensation, 358, 8); ashtat ra’yan (informed in opinion, 358, 8); asqal laqal (more receptive of science, 358, 8-9); aswad hararátan (faster in motion, 358, 9); aislam tabi’at (safer in nature, 358, 9); asqal mutat (lesser in trouble, 358, 9); aswad muwsasa (wider in charity, 358, 9); akram bukugan (noble in natural dispositions, 358, 10); ashtat suhbatan (firmed in friendship, 358, 10); ashy f t-qalub (sweeter in hearts, 358, 10).

3) absence of ill-will or evil intention towards the others (Ep. 38, III, 312, 5-6; Ep. 38, III, 312, 6); each twice.

As to the relationship of the Awáliya’ Alláh with God, among the other statements, we can here recall that the “Friends of God” are said to be “those who love God and whom God loves” (Ep. 9, I, 360, 9), and consequently their invocations are always answered (Ep. 38, III, 312, 2). Moreover, the “Friends of God” constantly behave as if they have seen God (Ep. 9, I, 338, 13-14; Ep. 39, III, 343, 2-3); they experience Him in every situation (Ep. 9, I, 376, 6); they crave for the encounter with God (Ep. 9, I, 360, 10).

Let us now come to the personal qualities ascribed to the “Friends of God”, which could belong to the súfi tradition. I am, of course, aware that our discussion cannot enter into any details of the various súfi personalities and schools:

1) taqwá, godliness (Ep. 9, I, 369, 13; Ep. 9, I, 359, 17: as a consequence of abstinence and chaste life); mahabba, love (Ep. 9, I, 360, 1; Ep. 9, I, 359, 18: of the hearts, as a consequence of abstinence and chaste life); ridá, satisfaction (Ep. 9, I, 327, 5-6: with little of the delights and pleasures of the world; Ep. 9, I, 333, 13; Ep. 9, I, 360, 2); zikr, asceticism (Ep. 9, I, 333, 16; Ep. 9, I, 369, 12); waswakkul, trust (Ep. 9, I, 369, 13); all of these belonging to the súfi experience since its beginnings.

2) other attributes such as some of the so-called maqámat in súfi authors: amána, trustworthiness (Ep. 9, I, 359, 16: as a consequence of abstinence and chaste life); rifq, kindness (Ep. 9, I, 360, 1; Ep. 9, I, 360, 5); tawakkul, confidence (Ep. 9, I, 376, 6, 2); hafa, fear (Ep. 9, I, 361, 14; cf. also Ep. 9, I, 376, 2); yaqin, hope (Ep. 9, I, 369, 14; cf. also Ep. 9, I, 376, 1); tama’ ina, repose (Ep. 9, I, 360, 5); ina, knowledge (Ep. 9, I, 376, 5: soundness of their — of their Lord; Ep. 39, III, 342, 5-6; cf. Ep. 9, I, 376, 1, which recalls tawakkul; other qualities concerning the relationship with God, such as mahabba, love (Ep. 39, III, 342, 19); hászn az-zann, good belief (Ep. 9, I, 369, 15); tabaqq, confidence (Ep. 9, I, 376, 1); ibalsin, sincere devotion (Ep. 9, I, 360, 5); hafa, fear (Ep. 9, I, 369, 14; cf. also Ep. 9, I, 376, 2); yaqin, hope (Ep. 9, I, 369, 14; cf. also Ep. 9, I, 376, 1); tama’ ina, repose (Ep. 9, I, 360, 5); ina, knowledge (Ep. 9, I, 376, 5: soundness of their — of their Lord; Ep. 39, III, 342, 5-6; cf. Ep. 9, I, 376, 27-36, 1); tiga (Ep. 9, I, 360, 5); yasvakul, trust (Ep. 9, I, 360, 4); yaqin (Ep. 9, I, 338, 13; Ep. 9, I, 376, 10); and tawakkul, certainty (Ep. 9, I, 376, 5). We can also recall other passages, like Ep. 9, I, 375, 20-21, which recalls gíker, Ep. 9, I, 338, 13-14, which recalls musahába; Ep. 9, I, 376, 6, which recalls mshaháda; and the expressions yaruna'huru ni'at al-haqiq, they see God truly (Ep. 9, I, 376, 5-6: in every circumstance) and inmahaaqat al-agyr 'inda ru'yatib haghqatibi, every other thing is effaced, when they see (God's) true nature (Ep. 9, I, 376, 9-10).
I would like, finally, to recall the beautiful passage in which the Ḥanān say that the “Friends of God” “are people for whom every place and time are the same”... Every day is to them like one and the same feast, and one and the same Friday; every place is like one and the same mosque, every direction like a qibla and a miḥrāb: withersoever you turn, there is the Face of God; all their movements are like an act of worship to God” (Ep. 38, III, 311, 9-12). As is well known, this state is typical of the mystic and sufī experiences.

At the same time, our analysis reveals a quite complex picture, because in spite of the Sufism-flavoured terminology just examined, the “ascetics” – with whom the “Friends of God” share, as we have seen, most of their attributes – are placed by the Ḥanān within a strictly “legal” vision in the passages of Eps. 7 and 9 recalled at the beginning of this article; and we read, also in Ep. 9, that the Awliyāʾ Allāh are those who warn people against neglect of the practice of the disposition of the Law (I, 323, 11-12).

Moreover, the passages dealing with their “religious knowledge” recall notions strictly speaking proper to the šari’a, such as: 1) the straight way towards God (Ep. 9, I, 369, 16); 2) the method (minḥābf) of the sunna (Ep. 9, I, 369, 16); 3) hereafter and things related to it: resurrection, announcement, congregation, reckoning, balance, guidance and requital (Ep. 9, I, 363, 12-13; Ep. 9, I, 375, 11); 4) the angels and the way of their inspiration, the devils and the way of their temptation and possession (Ep. 9, I, 363, 6-9); nn. 3 and 4 being introduced by the term ma’rifā or the verbal form ya’rifuna, just as the Ḥanān relate also the term tāwaqqun, certainty, to the hereafter when speaking of the Friends of God (Ep. 9, I, 327, 14), who are also called al-mustabsirīn, those who are endowed with inner vision (Ep. 9, I, 338, 13; Ep. 9, I, 375, 11; Ep. 38, III, 311, 7-8: through the eye of certainty and the light of guidance). As to the root RY, I think that the context of the expression la yarawna gastu’u ʿallāh ʿaḍi l-baqīqa, do not see anything else in its truth (Ep. 9, I, 376, 7) could also shift the question of the ru’yat Allāh to the gnosiological issue, in spite of the passages quoted above. On the same line could be read the words yarawna gazzā sayyīlāmīn, they see the requital of their sins (Ep. 9, I, 338, 16). In fact, they belong to the text which opens by hinting at the elect (kawāṣqa), the gnostic (ārīfqa) believers and those endowed with inner vision (mustabsirīn), and runs as follows: “[they] appeal to God with sincerity and certainty, and night and day they are careful about what they do, as if they experienced and saw God, and find the reward of their deeds hour by hour, without any delay, even of a sole moment, and it is the good announcement (budnā)” in the worldly life, before they reach the hereafter; and they also see the requital of their sins, through which their acts are sanctioned, and only a small part of it is hidden to them”. Here, also Qur., VII, 201 is quoted (where the form mubsirīna appears). In my opinion, deeds are in this passage a clear consequence of knowledge, and any reward and requital can thus be known or fore-known by the mustabsirīn. In the same Epistle, finally, the Ḥanān relate right opinions, ārā to the “Friends of God” (Ep. 9, I, 376, 3).

And even if we are told that the “Friends of God” regard God alone (la yanzuruna ʿilā l-lāhib, Ep. 9, I, 376, 6-7) and the varieties of His beneficence, the greatness of His favour and the courtesy of His blessings (Ep. 9, I, 375, 21-22), on the other hand, the texts state that they are engaged in the nazār, study of the vestiges of the past (Ep. 9, I, 327, 10); of the writings of wise men and of the reports of the campaigns of past kings (Ep. 9, I, 327, 11-12) and of teachers suggestions (Ep. 9, I, 369, 15).

A careful study of such and other attributes calls for further analysis, but I will only recall here the fact that the “Friends of God” are considered as “having a firm grasp in science”, rāthibuna fi l-ilm, by the same words of Qur., III, 7 which, according to the Ismāʿīlī perspective, can be referred only to the imāms.18

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14 Cf., on the same line, Ep. 9, I, 376, 9.
16 The same ideas and Qur’ānic verse are repeated in II. 15-16, 20, 23.
17 And, in the same passages, ʿulā l-ʿālāb, persons of understanding, and ʿulā n-ʿabāb, persons of mind (Ep. 9, I, 357, 8-9; Ep. 9, I, 378, 24).
18 Cf. e.g. Ep. 9, I, 323, 18-20; 357, 6 and 375, 16; Ep. 46, IV, 82, 19-21.
I would like, finally, to recall the beautiful passage in which the Iḥwān say that the “Friends of God” “are people for whom every place and time are the same”\(^14\). Every day is to them like one and the same feast, and one and the same Friday; every act of worship to God” (Ep. 38, III, 311, 9-12)\(^16\). As is well known, this state is typical of the mystic and Sufi experiences.

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18 Cf. e.g. Ep. 9, I, 323, 18-20; 357, 6 and 375, 16; Ep. 46, IV, 82, 19-21.
In conclusion, it should be clear, even from this very partial analysis, that the Iḥwān as-Safā' mainly stress the qualities and activities of the Awliyā' Allāh related to gnosiology, as I hope to demonstrate more fully on another occasion.

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L'ELABORATION DE L'ELIXIR SELON PS.-SĪGIŠTĀNI. ALCHIMIE ET COSMOGONIE DANS L'ISMAELISME TAYYIBITE

Daniel De Smet

K. U. Leuven

Parmi les manuscrits ismaéliens conservés à la Bibliothèque Universitaire de Tübingen figure un petit traité intitulé Kitāb al-Garīb fi ma'nā l-īksīr ("Le Livre de l'Étranger concernant l'essence de l'elixir")1. Il est attribué à Abū Ya'qūb as-Sīgištānī (liauydānā Abī Yaʿqūb as-Sīgištānī) le célèbre dāʿi ismaïlien d'époque fatimide, probablement exécuté par le gouverneur du Sīstān Halaf b. Ahmad vers 971 (Walker 1996:XII). Le mot Kitāb dans le titre s'avère quelque peu pretentieux vu la brièveté du traité: notre manuscrit compte à peine 18 folios, d'une écriture spacieuse bien soignée. Il est daté du vendredi 25 ūmmādā al-Awwal 1333, soit le 11 avril 1914.

Le texte semble peu répandu. Poonawala n'en mentionne que quatre manuscrits, tous modernes et transmis par la communauté Bohra aux Indes2. Ceci est confirmé par Ivanow, qui en connaissait une copie "in a private collection"3.

Dèja Ivanow avait émis des doutes quant à l'attribution de ce texte à Abū Ya'qūb as-Sīgištānī: il le classe parmi les "works doubtful" de cet auteur (Ivanow 1963:30). Le même scepticisme prudent a été adopté depuis lors par Poonawala, Sezgin et Ullmann4. Mais aucun de ces auteurs nous dévoile la raison de ses doutes.

Dès une première lecture, je ne pouvais que m'associer à leur avis: rien dans le contenu ni dans le style ne rappelle les ouvrages d'as-Sīgištānī; le traité ne comporte même aucun élément spécifiquement ismaïlien5. Au contraire, une étude plus poussée

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1 Il porte la cote Ma VI 314 et fait partie des 44 manuscrits ismaéliens vendus en 1971 par Mustafā Gālib. Selon l'inventaire inédit de cette collection, dressé par Abbas Hamdani et que Heinz Halm a eu l'obligeance de me communiquer, le manuscrit proviendrait de la collection Hamdani. Nous tenons à remercier les responsables de la Bibliothèque de Tübingen de nous en avoir fait parvenir un microfilm.


3 Ivanow 1963:30 n° 52. Ivanow et Poonawala relèvent une variante dans le titre du traité: certains manuscrits donneraient fi ma'nāf al-īksīr au lieu de fi ma'nā l-īksīr.


5 Fait significatif, les invocations d'usage au début du traité concernent Allāh, Muhammad et sa famille, sans aucune mention des Imams chiites.