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ABŪ ḤAYYĀN AL-TAWḤĪDĪ AND THE BRETHERN OF PURITY

Since the famous tenth-century man of letters Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (ca. 320/932–414/1023)¹ named four specific contemporary writers as the authors of the otherwise anonymous encyclopedic work *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*,² it became almost traditional for both medieval and modern scholars to accept his story as fact.

Abū Ḥayyān's version was contained in his *Kitāb al-Imtā' wa'l-Mu'ānasa*,³ written between 373/983 and 375/985. This was a collection of thirty-seven séances at the court of Ibn Sa'dān, the wazīr of the Būyid ruler Ṣamsām al-Dawla (372/983–376/987), during the time of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Tā'ī' (363/974–381/991).

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I dedicate this article to the memory of my friend Professor Deodaat Breebaart (d. 13 May 1977, in Cairo).

¹ Among the various studies made on the life and work of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, the following prominent ones should be noted: (a) Paul Kraus, 'Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī', in *al-Thaqāfa* (Cairo), 6, 284 (1944), 21–23; (b) 'Abd al-Razzāq Muḥyi'd-Dīn, *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī: sirātuḥu wa Āthāruḥu* (Cairo, 1949); (c) Ibrāhīm al-Kaylānī, *Essayiste arabe du IV^e siècle de l'hegire (Xe s.): Introduction à son oeuvre* (Beirut, 1950); (d) S. M. Stern, 'Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī', *EL* (1954); (e) Iḥsān 'Abbās, *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (in Arabic) (Beirut, 1956); (f) Aḥmad al-Ḥūfī, *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (in Arabic) (Cairo, 1957); (g) Ibrāhīm Zakariyya, *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (in Arabic) (Cairo, 1964); (h) Ibrāhīm al-Kaylānī, *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (in Arabic) (Cairo, 1966); (i) Murādiyān Khudāmard, *Barrasī Dar Aḥwāl wa Āsār-i-Abū Ḥayyān 'Alī b. Muḥammad ibn 'Abbās Tawḥīdī-i-Shirāzī* (in Persian) (Tehran, 1974); (j) Marc Berge, *Essai sur la personnalité morale et intellectuelle d'Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (2 vols.; Paris, 1974), the latest and most exhaustive study.

² The following complete editions of this work have been printed: (a) *Kitāb Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, ed. Wilayat Ḥusayn (Bombay, 1888); (b) *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, ed. Khayr al-dīn al-Zarkalī (4 vols.; Cairo, 1928), with two separate introductions by Ṭāha Ḥusayn and Aḥmad Zakī Pasha; (c) *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (4 vols.; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957) (page numbers in this article refer to this edition). The following three editions of the concluding sections of the *Rasā'il* have been printed: (a) *Risālat Jāmi'a at al-Jāmi'a*, ed. 'Arif Tāmir (Beirut, 1959); (b) *Al-Risālat al-Jāmi'a*, ed. Jamil Ṣalība (2 vols.; Damascus, 1969) (the editor considers the attribution of this work to al-Majrīṭī's authorship as valid); (c) *Al-Risālat al-Jāmi'a*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālib (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1974).

³ Ed. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad al-Zayn (3 vols. in 1; Beirut, 1939–1944; 2d ed., 1953) (hereafter referred to as *al-Imtā'*). Contains at the end two lists of observations and criticisms by Muṣṭafā Jawād and Paul Kraus.

It would be appropriate to describe at the outset the position and loyalties of Ibn Sa'dān at the Būyid court and the exact role that our author Abū Ḥayyān filled under Ibn Sa'dān's patronage. Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad Abū 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'dān was the commander (*al-'arīḍ*) of the Turkish troops of the Būyid Amīr 'Aḍud al-Dawla from about 369/980. On the latter's death in 372/983 and with the arrest of Abū'l-Rayyān, the finance minister Ibn Sa'dān took over the duties of the Ministry of Finance. When the caliph confirmed the next Būyid ruler Ṣamṣām al-Dawla as the supreme Būyid amīr, Ibn Sa'dān was appointed wazīr in 373/983.

A later wazīr, Abū Shujā' al-Rūdhwarī of the Caliph al-Muqtadī (467/1075–487/1094) and the most knowledgeable historian of the time of Ibn Sa'dān, reports⁴ an astonishing Qarmaṭian conspiracy in which Ibn Sa'dān seems to be involved. Previously 'Aḍud al-Dawla and Bakhtiyār had given fiefs to the Qarmaṭians in Wāsiṭ and Saqy al-Furāt. Ibn Shāhūyeh, the envoy of the Būyid prince of Rayy, Fakhr al-Dawla, in Baghdad in 374/984,⁵ had been won over to the Qarmaṭian cause and behaved as a Qarmaṭian representative.⁶ In the words of Abū Shujā': 'Ibn Shāhūyeh, their [the Qarmaṭians'] representative, lived in the capital like a wazīr, obtained audiences of sovereigns who fell in with his ideas, while the grandees were afraid of him, put up with his arrogance, and obeyed his commands – for no reason except his relations with these people.' The Būyid prince of Shīrāz, Sharaf al-Dawla, sent a mission to the Qarmaṭians,⁷ and 'in this year [374/984] Ishāq and Ja'far of Ḥajar, two of the six Qarmaṭians called sayyids, came and took possession of Kūfa where they had prayer offered in Sharaf al-Dawla's name'.⁸ Although the Qarmaṭians of Baḥrayn were never vassals of the Fāṭimid caliphate, they tended to serve the anti-'Abbāsīd purposes of the Fāṭimids, preserving their doctrinal and political autonomy and securing subsidies from the Fāṭimid caliphate from time to time. It is likely that the Qarmaṭian influence at Baghdad from 'Aḍud al-Dawla's time onward was exercised in collusion with the caliphate of Cairo.⁹

Now Ibn Shāhūyeh was one of the confidants of Ibn Sa'dān which opened the latter to the charge that he was in league with the Qarmaṭians and with

⁴ Abū Shujā' 's *Dhayl* to Miskawayhī's *Tajārib al-Umam* in the *Eclipse of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate*, ed. and trans. H. Amedroz and P. S. Margoliouth (6 vols.; Oxford, 1920–1921), text III, 109, trans. VI, 113. This particular reference and the outline of Ibn Sa'dān's career are based on Abū Shujā'.

⁵ *Ibid.*, VI, 102.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁹ The Fāṭimid caliph al-'Azīz and 'Aḍud al-Dawla had exchanged ambassadors, ostensibly to form a united front against Byzantium. During the Shī'ite-Sunni rioting in Baghdad during Bahā al-Dawla's amirate, in 398/1007–1008, the Shī'ite battlecry was the name of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Hākīm (Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam* [10 vols.; Hyderabad: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1939 ff.], VII, 238, cf. M. Kabir, 'The Relation of the Buwayhids with the Fāṭimids', *Indo-Iranica*, VIII [1955], 31). Such Fāṭimid influence at Baghdad between 369/980 and 398/1008, I believe, could conveniently have been exercised through the good offices of the Qarmaṭians. See also n. 25 below.

Sharaf al-Dawla, a charge that was made by Ibn Sa'dān's enemies, 'Abd al-'Azīz Yūsuf and Abu'l-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Barmūyeh.¹⁰ Consequently Ṣamṣām al-Dawla had Ibn Sa'dān and Ibn Shāhūyeh arrested. Ibn Sa'dān's enemies 'Abd al-'Azīz and Ibn Barmūyeh were jointly appointed to the office of the wazīr. Later in the same year, 375/985, because of the mutiny of his Turkish troops, Ibn Sa'dān, was executed.¹¹

Abū Ḥayyān describes a vast circle of Ibn Sa'dān's companions and courtiers in his *al-Imtā'*,¹² *al-Ṣadāqa*,¹³ and *al-Muqābasāt*.¹⁴ Some of them are individuals of whom Abū Ḥayyān approves. Some are his own teachers, the orthodox Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī al-Sijistānī and Abū Sa'id al-Sirāfī, the mathematician Abu'l-Wafā al-Būzjānī, the philosopher and historian Miskawayh, the Christian philosopher Ibn Zura'a, his neighbor the Jewish philosopher Wahb b. Ya'ish al-Raqqī, the secretary Ibn 'Ubayd, and the poet Ibn al-Ḥajjāj. He admires certain people whom he does not like, such as the philosopher Abū Bakr al-Qūmsī and the writer Abū'l-Qāsim al-Ahwāzī. There are others in Ibn Sa'dān's court whom Abū Ḥayyān detests. They are Ibn Shāhūyeh, Bahrām b. Ardešhir, Ibn Makīkha, Ibn Ṭāhir, and Ibn 'Abdān mentioned above. To this category belongs another prominent figure and a close associate of Ibn Sa'dān, Zayd b. Rifā'a.¹⁵

Ibn Sa'dān seems to have used Abū Ḥayyān as a reporter on people, and he usually drew him into conversation in such a way that Abū Ḥayyān would be obliged to tell the wazīr what other people thought of him or of his close companions. One example was Ibn Sa'dān's inquiry about Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī. Ibn Sa'dān wanted to know what the orthodox philosopher thought of him.¹⁶ Again Ibn Sa'dān wanted Abū Ḥayyān to tell him what he heard in connection with Ibn Barmūyeh's accusations against the wazīr for his association

¹⁰ This is evidenced by Abū Ḥayyān himself in the third séance of his *Imtā'*, I, 41–50. Abū Ḥayyān is relating the report of Ibn Barmūyeh about Ibn Sa'dān's friendship with such people as Ibn Shāhūyeh who is expressly stated to be the agent of the Qarmatians, Bahrām b. Ardešhir the Zoroastrian, Ibn Makīkha the Christian, Ibn Ṭāhir, and Ibn 'Abdān. Abū Ḥayyān is relating Ibn Barmūyeh's report to Ibn Sa'dān himself on the latter's insistence and with great reluctance. In another work, *Risālat al-Ṣadāqa wa'l-Ṣadiq* (Damascus, 1964), pp. 63–64, Abū Ḥayyān describes various companions of Ibn Sa'dān, 'the weightiest and the closest to his heart', according to him, being Ibn Shāhūyeh. Bahrām is also included and Ibn Sa'dān is reported as having had a very high opinion of him. Bahrām was executed with Ibn Sa'dān in 375/985. Ibn Shāhūyeh escaped.

¹¹ Details in Abū Shujā' in Amedroz and Margoliouth, eds., *Eclipse of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate*, IV, 103–113.

¹² Of the 956 notices scattered throughout *al-Imtā'*, a great number of them belonged to people under the patronage of Ibn Sa'dān.

¹³ *Al-Ṣadāqa wa'l-Ṣadiq*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Kaylānī (Damascus, 1964), pp. 63–71.

¹⁴ *Al-Muqābasāt*, ed. Ḥasan al-Sandūbī (Cairo, 1929), p. 85, notice 3. Total number of notices, including those of a few companions of Ibn Sa'dān, are 71, according to the calculation of Berge, *Essai*, I, 541.

¹⁵ Biographical notices on these people can be had from Berge, *Essai*, I, 511–583, based mainly on the three works of Abū Ḥayyān mentioned above in nn. 3, 13, and 14.

¹⁶ *Al-Imtā'*, I, 29–41, second séance.

with Ibn Shāhūyeh and his Qarmaṭian agents.¹⁷ In the same way, Ibn Sa'dān questioned Abū Ḥayyān about the ideas and beliefs of his companion Zayd b. Rifā'a.¹⁸

This last conversation is relevant to the question of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*'s authorship. Abū Ḥayyān later related the conversation to Abu'l-Wafā al-Būzjānī,¹⁹ at whose suggestion the *Imtā'* was written. The wazīr had heard Zayd expound the esoteric meaning of letters and wanted to know about his philosophy from Abū Ḥayyān. The latter expressed his reluctance saying, 'You knew him before you knew me, then and later, in patronage, experience, and service. He has an old brotherhood and a known relationship with you.'²⁰ But the wazīr was insistent. So Abū Ḥayyān, after preparing the ground by duly praising Zayd's learning and intelligence, stated that the latter was keeping bad company when he was at Baṣra, namely that of people such as Abū Sulaymān Muḥammad b. Ma'shar al-Bustī known as al-Maqdisī, Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Hārūn al-Zanjānī, Abū Aḥmad al-Nahrajūrī, and al-'Awfī (or al-'Awqī).²¹ Abū Ḥayyān then added that it was this Baṣra group that composed the *Rasā'il*. Abū Ḥayyān further suggested that this group was not necessarily confined to these four, but that there were also others; he did not, however, expressly include Zayd in it. He further stated that the book contained fifty tracts with an additional *Fihrist* and that he had seen some of the tracts. Moreover, he had carried some of these epistles to his mentor Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī al-Sijistānī who, it seems, had not seen them before, for it took him a long time to read them; ultimately al-Manṭiqī criticized the tracts as containing a futile attempt at reconciling philosophy and religion.

At another place in his *al-Imtā'*,²² Abū Ḥayyān gives a long story about a Zoroastrian and a Jew as related (*haddathani*) to him by al-Qādī Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Hārūn al-Zanjānī, who is described as the *ṣāhib al-madhhab* (leader of the sect, meaning the Qarmaṭian or the Fāṭimid). This al-Zanjānī was mentioned before as a member of the heretical group of Baṣra. The story is found verbatim in the *Rasā'il* (I, 308–310). Stern contends that Abū Ḥayyān, at the time of

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 41–50, third séance. See n. 10 above.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 3–6, seventeenth séance. See A. Aḥmad 'Alī, 'Zaid b. Rifā'a and His Abridgement of Ibn al-Sikkī's *Iṣlāḥ al-Manṭiq*', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 90 (1936), 201–208.

¹⁹ See 'Abū'l-Wafā al-Būzjānī' in *EI*².

²⁰ In fact it was Zayd b. Rifā'a who had introduced Abū Ḥayyān to Ibn Sa'dān (see Stern, 'Abū Ḥayyān').

²¹ On these individuals see the information collected in Aḥmad 'Alī, 'Zaid b. Rifā'a', also in S. M. Stern's 'The Authorship of the Epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'', *Islamic Culture*, 20, 4 (Oct. 1946), 367–372, together with an addendum in *ibid.*, 21, 4 (Oct. 1947), 403–404, and in his 'New Information about the Authors of the Epistles of the Sincere Brethren', *Islamic Studies*, III (1964), 405–428. Cf. Susanne Diwald, *Arabische Philosophie und Wissenschaft in der Enzyklopädie . . .* (Wiesbaden, 1975), pp. 10–14, Introduction. For the reading al-'Awqī instead of al-'Awfī, see M. Kurd 'Alī's Introduction to his edition of Bayḥaqī's *Ta'riḫ Ḥukamā'* (Damascus, 1940), p. 36.

²² *Al-Imtā'*, II, 157–160.

reproducing a verbal narration in his *al-Imtā'*, refreshed his memory from a copy of the *Rasā'il* itself.²³

In another of his books, *Risālat al-Ṣadāqa wa'l-Ṣadīq* ('The Book of Friendship'), begun for the wazīr Ibn Sa'dān and completed some thirty years later, Abū Ḥayyān gives a list of the men of letters in the wazīr's court. It is again Zayd b. Rifā'a who figures prominently as reporting the wazīr's own opinion of his various courtiers.²⁴ Nothing is mentioned here about his association with the authors of the *Rasā'il*.

A contemporary of Abū Ḥayyān, the famous Mu'tazilite scholar, 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadānī, chief qāḍī of Rayy (ca. 325/936–415/1025) in his *Tathbīt* attacks the Shi'ism of al-Zanjānī and of the Fāṭimid dā'īs among whom he includes the followers of al-Zanjānī such as Zayd b. Rifā'a, Abū Aḥmad al-Nahrajūrī, al-'Awfī, and Abū Muḥammad b. Abī'l-Baḡhl, secretary and astronomer. Then he adds: 'All these are residents of Baṣra and are still alive; others there are, in places other than Baṣra.' These are, however, not described as the authors of the *Rasā'il*, although with the exception of Ibn Abī'l-Baḡhl who is included and Abū Sulaymān al-Maqdisī who is omitted, it is the same Baṣra group that Abū Ḥayyān speaks of in his *al-Imtā'*.²⁵

Lastly, Abū Ḥayyān's teacher Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī (ca. 300/912–375/985),²⁶ philosopher–scientist of the court of the Būyid Amīr 'Aḍūd al-Dawla, mentions in his book *Ṣiwān al-Ḥikma* that Abū Sulaymān al-Maqdisī was the author of the fifty-one tracts of the Brethren of Purity. Al-Maqdisī, in Abū Ḥayyān, is one of the members of the Baṣra group. Al-Manṭiqī mentions al-Maqdisī as the sole author of the *Rasā'il*.²⁷ There are some problems with regard to al-Manṭiqī's report. His work is preserved only in the form of a later *muntakhab* (selection) in which additional material has been included, based mainly on the works of al-Tawḥīdī. Thus al-Manṭiqī's report would be synonymous with Abū Ḥayyān's. This does not seem to be correct, at least in connection with the biographical notice of al-Maqdisī, for the simple reason that the

²³ Stern, 'New Information', p. 406.

²⁴ Abū Ḥayyān, *Risālat al-Ṣadāqa*, 62 seq. See biographical notes by the editor on the individuals mentioned by Abū Ḥayyān. Stern ('Authorship', p. 369) is mistaken in assuming that this *Risāla* was dedicated to Zayd.

²⁵ 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Tathbīt Dalā'il Nubuwwat Sayyidnā Muḥammad*, ed. 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān (2 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-'Arabiyya, 1966), II, 611. The same passage taken from MS 1575 of the library of Shahīd 'Alī Pāsha, Istanbul, has been quoted in Stern, 'New Information', pp. 407–415. It is notable that al-Zanjānī's group is described by 'Abd al-Jabbār as 'dā'īs', propagating the cause of the Fāṭimid imāms of the Maghrib. It is possible that 'Abd al-Jabbār may have mistaken Qarmaṭian dā'īs for the Fāṭimid or, what is more likely, they were Qarmaṭian dā'īs working in Iraq in collaboration with the Fāṭimid caliphate (see n. 9 above). Besides the Baṣra group, 'Abd al-Jabbār names other Fāṭimid dā'īs of his time (*Tathbīt*, II, 594–595). For 'Abd al-Jabbār as a useful source of information on the Fāṭimid Da'wa, see H. Ritter, 'Philologia III: Muḥammadanische Haresiographien', *Der Islam*, 18 (1929), 34–55 (esp. p. 42).

²⁶ For a brief notice on him see Stern 'Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī,' *EI*².

²⁷ Al-Manṭiqī, *Kitāb Ṣiwān al-Ḥikma* (MS 1408, Mehmet Murad Library, Istanbul), fol. 174, quoted in Stern, 'Authorship', p. 371.

information of *al-Imtā'* is not the same, even in an abbreviated form, as the one contained in the *Muntakhab Ṣiwān al-Ḥikma*.²⁸

Having described the reports of Abū Ḥayyān, 'Abd al-Jabbār, and al-Manṭiqī, it is now in order to point out certain comparisons and contradictions in them. For both Abū Ḥayyān and 'Abd al-Jabbār, the *ṣāhib al-madhhab* is al-Zanjānī, who is the leader of the Baṣra group. Unlike Abū Ḥayyān, however, 'Abd al-Jabbār is completely silent on the question of the authorship of the *Rasā'il*. In both reports, Zayd b. Rifā'a is associated with al-Zanjānī and is not mentioned as an author of the *Rasā'il*. In Abū Ḥayyān's *Risālat al-Ṣadāqa*, the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* are not mentioned whereas Zayd b. Rifā'a is. In *al-Imtā'*, Zayd is represented, not as author but as a friend of the authors of the *Rasā'il*. Again, whereas Abū Sulaymān al-Maḡdīsī is the sole author of the *Rasā'il* according to Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī, he is just one of the several authors according to Abū Ḥayyān, and he is totally unheard of in 'Abd al-Jabbār. In his *al-Imtā'*, Abū Ḥayyān seems to be the person who introduced his mentor Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī to the *Rasā'il*, whereas the latter in his own work seems already to have known the *Rasā'il*, their number and their author.

By the time of al-Manṭiqī, the *Rasā'il* were almost complete (he mentions 51 tracts). In fact we have an earlier reference to them as pointed out by Susanne Diwald. The anonymous author (Pseudo-Majrīṭī) of *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm*, written between 343/954 and 348/960, repeatedly refers to and quotes from the *Rasā'il*. The above dates establish, therefore, an earlier *terminus ad quem*,²⁹ although they do not rule out the possibility that the author or authors of the *Rasā'il* mentioned by al-Manṭiqī and Abū Ḥayyān could have been living before these dates. These dates make it unlikely, however, that al-Maḡdīsī or al-Zanjānī, who were reported active in 373/983, could have composed so large an encyclopedic work at least twenty-five to thirty years earlier, that is, around 343/954 to 348/960, when they would have been very young.

What appears certain from the report of 'Abd al-Jabbār is that al-Zanjānī and his group were active in the Fāṭimid Da'wa at Baṣra and in contact with other Da'wa units elsewhere. Again it is evident from *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm* that the *Rasā'il* already existed at the latest by 348/960. According to al-Manṭiqī and Abū Ḥayyān, the *Rasā'il* reflected an unorthodox system of thought. Now, when being questioned by the wazīr Ibn Sa'dān about Zayd b. Rifā'a, Abū Ḥayyān who was averse to Zayd could prove Zayd's heresy by associating him with a supposedly heretical work, the *Rasā'il*, and with a group of heretics at Baṣra. This proof could have been achieved with encouragement from Abū Ḥayyān's teacher, Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī, a highly orthodox individual. What was, therefore, in question was not the authorship of the *Rasā'il*, but the heretical nature of the views and character of Zayd, which was thought to be proved by

²⁸ I understand that Dr. Wadad al-Qādī is now working on the problem of the additions to al-Manṭiqī's work made by the author of *al-Muntakhab*.

²⁹ Diwald, *Arabische Philosophie*, p. 16. See my review on this work in a forthcoming issue of *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.

the company that Zayd kept and by the type of work that his companions had allegedly composed. The authorship of the *Rasā'il* does not seem to be Abū Ḥayyān's central concern in the report in *al-Imtā'* under consideration.

The wazīr Ibn Sa'dān being himself involved in the activities of the Qarmaṭian lobby through Ibn Shahūyeh must have wanted to find out from Abū Ḥayyān the extent of the public knowledge of his involvement. A question about the philosophy of a known heretical member of his close group such as Zayd would serve the purpose of eliciting such information. There is nothing that Abū Ḥayyān could have added to what Ibn Sa'dān already knew about Zayd. Hence the need of Abū Ḥayyān to bring in the *Rasā'il* to embellish and give credence to his story. After all, Abū Ḥayyān was not above the art of fabrication. We know of his having fabricated the message of Abū Bakr to 'Alī which was taken from Abū Ḥayyān and copied by Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd in his *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*.³⁰

For about two centuries and a half, Abū Ḥayyān's report rested without comment when Ibn al-Qiftī (d. 642/1244) in his *Ta'rikh Ḥukamā'*³¹ revived it and reproduced the relevant quotation from *al-Imtā'*. Ibn al-Qiftī does not positively say that he accepts Abū Ḥayyān's story. He also mentions that the secrecy surrounding the names of the authors led to people thinking that one of the imāms in the line of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib or one of the early Mu'tazilite theologians had composed the *Rasā'il*.³²

Later reports of Bar Hebraeus (7th/13th cent.), Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī (d. ca. 750/1350), and al-Shahrazūrī (8th/14th cent.) are mere echoes of Ibn al-Qiftī.³³

³⁰ *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, ed. Ḥasan Tamīm (5 vols.; Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1963–1964), III, 556–566. Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd (pp. 564–566) exposes Abū Ḥayyān's tendency to fabricate, which, he says, is also evident in Abū Ḥayyān's *Kitāb al-Baṣā'ir*. See also Stern, 'Abū Ḥayyān', and Berge, *Essai*, I, 21.

³¹ *Ta'rikh Ḥukamā'*, ed. J. Lippert (Baghdad and Leipzig, 1903), pp. 82–88.

³² For other theories about authorship see Husayn Hamdani, '*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* in The Literature of the Ismā'īlī Ṭayyibī Da'wat', *Der Islam*, 20 (1932), 281–300, and *idem*, *Baḥth Ta'rikhi fī Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa 'Aqā'id al-Ismā'īliyya fiha* (Bombay, 1935), pp. 1–12. G. Flügel ('Inhalt und Verfasser . . .', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 13 [1859], 22–24) relates the report of al-Amīr al-Ṣafadī about many theories current in his time concerning the authors of the *Rasā'il*. Some attribute authorship to the Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) and some, on the latter's authority, to his ancestor 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Some attribute authorship to Ja'far's contemporary and friend, the alchemist Jābir b. Ḥayyān, others to an unknown Mu'tazilite theologian. Some say it was the famous al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111) and others, on the latter's authority, that it was the great mystic martyr Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj.

The seventeenth-century historian of Spain and North Africa, al-Maqarrī, in his voluminous work, *Nafh al-Ṭīb*, reports that the great mathematician of Spain, Abū'l-Ḥākīm 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kirmānī (d. 462/1070) visited the Ṣābian city of Ḥarrān and from there brought back with him copies of the *Rasā'il* to Spain. Al-Maqarrī's translator, P. De Gayangos (*Muhammadan Dynasties in Spain* [London, 1840–1843], I, 427–429) says that it was Maslama b. Aḥmad al-Majrīṭī (d. 395/1005) who introduced the *Rasā'il* in Spain, basing his conclusion on Ḥājji Khalifa who notices under the year A.H. 395 that the *Rasā'il* were written by al-Majrīṭī. This was echoed by A. Nicoll, J. Uri, and M. Casiri, catalogers of Arabic manuscripts at Oxford and Escurial (Flügel, 'Inhalt und Verfasser', pp. 22–24).

³³ *Ibid.*

Al-Shahrazūri had tried to reconcile the viewpoint of Abū Ḥayyān who maintained that the *Rasā'il* were composed by several authors with that of al-Manṭiqī who held that they were written by a single person. Al-Shahrazūri sought to do this by stating that Abū Sulaymān al-Maḡdisī, the author named by al-Manṭiqī, was the spokesman for the committee of authors named by Abū Ḥayyān. This conjecture, of course, is al-Shahrazūri's and a very late one at that.³⁴ He omits the key figure al-Zanjānī and substitutes Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Wahrūn al-Ṣābī.³⁵ In this connection, it should be noted that the *Rasā'il* are couched as an address of a group of brethren to another larger group of brethren, of authors to their audience, but at times they lapse into the singular and it appears as one author is speaking to many brethren.³⁶ Those having no definite information about the *Rasā'il*'s author or authors may make different conjectures, as Abū Ḥayyān and al-Manṭiqī have done. Al-Shahrazūri's view would have made sense, had it not been an afterthought.

Although al-Manṭiqī names Abū Sulaymān al-Maḡdisī as the author of the *Rasā'il*, he lets it slip out that 'the *Rasā'il* are current among people and are widely read'.³⁷ The writing of so large an encyclopedic book is itself a lifetime's work. Added to that, the time taken in achieving widespread publicity would antedate the *Rasā'il* considerably.

To my mind, Abū Ḥayyān's theory is full of pitfalls. It is tempting to accept a 'textual evidence', but in the case of so complex a work as the *Rasā'il*, any evidence has to be tested at length by the ideas expressed in the work itself. A long line of modern scholars had accepted Abū Ḥayyān's story, beginning with Flügel (1859)³⁸ and Dietirici (1858–1872)³⁹ and continued with Lane-Poole (1883),⁴⁰ DeBoer (1903),⁴¹ and Aḥmad Zakī (1928).⁴² They accepted it, however, without relating the authors named by Abū Ḥayyān to any Fāṭimid or Qarmaṭian mission. Since Husayn Hamdani's rejection of this theory (1932),⁴³ the traditional acceptance of Abū Ḥayyān's story has been questioned. Hamdani pointed

³⁴ It can be argued that this is not al-Shahrazūri's conjecture but the opinion derived from al-Manṭiqī, *Ṣivān al-Ḥikma*, the complete version, which al-Shahrazūri must have seen and which has since been lost. Since we cannot check against this complete version, such an argument would become a case of a conjecture about al-Shahrazūri's conjecture!

³⁵ A. Sprenger, 'Notices of Some Copies of the Arabic Work Entitled *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 17 (1848), Part I, 501–507; Part II, 183–202. The relevant passage from al-Shahrazūri is quoted by Sprenger in Part I of his article, p. 502.

³⁶ For example *Rasā'il*, IV, 20, 45, 63, 65, 67, 71, 76, 77, and elsewhere.

³⁷ See the passage quoted in Stern, 'Authorship', p. 371.

³⁸ Flügel, 'Inhalt und Verfasser'.

³⁹ F. Dietirici, *Die Philosophie der Araber in X Jahrhundert N. Chr. aus den Schriften der Lautern Bruder* (8 vols.; Leipzig, 1858–1872).

⁴⁰ S. Lane-Poole, *Studies in a Mosque* (Cairo, 1883; reprinted, Beirut, 1966), pp. 193–196.

⁴¹ T. de Boer, *History of Philosophy in Islam*, English trans. E. R. Jones (London, 1903 reprinted, New York, 1967), pp. 81–84.

⁴² Aḥmad Zakī in his introduction to the Cairo edition of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (1928), p. 21.

⁴³ Hamdani, '*Rasā'il Ikhwan al-Ṣafā'*,' and idem, '*Baḥth Ta'rikhi*', cited above.

out the acceptance of the *Rasā'il* as a Fāṭimid work in the tradition of the Yamānī Ṭayyibī Da'wa. Stern, however, resurrected Abū Ḥayyān while accepting the Fāṭimid or Qarmaṭian character of the *Rasā'il* (1946, 1964).⁴⁴ Although, recently, Yves Marquet⁴⁵ in several studies has avoided leaning on Abū Ḥayyān, he does not completely reject him. Marquet thinks that Abū Ḥayyān's Baṣra group could have been later editors of the *Rasā'il*.

My present rejection is fortified by the internal evidence of an earlier time layer of the theological–philosophical ideas expressed in the *Rasā'il* as well as by the textual evidence from an early Fāṭimid dā'ī Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman (ca. 270/883–361/971) who places the *Rasā'il* in the period prior to the establishment of the Fāṭimid caliphate. These are the subjects of two more of my papers awaiting publication.⁴⁶

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⁴⁴ Stern, 'Authorship' and 'New Information'.

⁴⁵ Yves Marquet, 'Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *EI*².

⁴⁶ The first of these papers is entitled 'Al-Fārābī and the Brethren of Purity' which I am revising for publication in a volume edited by Professor Parvez Morewedge, and the second is entitled 'An Early Fāṭimid Source on the Time and Authorship of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*', in press for a forthcoming issue of *Arabica* (Paris).