

MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA

Volume 1

A – K

INDEX

2006

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Editor

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
New York London

on Plato's *Laws*. Alfarabi's distinction as the founder of Arabic-Islamic political philosophy is due to his being the first philosopher within Islam to explore the challenge to traditional philosophy presented by revealed religion, especially in its claims that the Creator provides for human well-being by means of an inspired prophet legislator. Those who now contest that distinction turn a blind eye to the way he sets forth two accounts of the old political science in the last chapter of a popular writing, *Enumeration of the Sciences*. Both presuppose the validity of the traditional separation between practical and theoretical science, but neither is adequate for the radically new situation created by the appearance of revealed religion. The two accounts explain in detail the actions and ways of life needed for sound political rule to flourish but are silent about opinions—especially the kind of theoretical opinions set forth in religion—and thus are unable to point to the kind of rulership needed now that religion holds sway. Nor can either speak about the opinions or actions addressed by the jurisprudence and theology of revealed religion. These tasks require a political science that combines theoretical and practical science, along with prudence, and shows how they are to be ordered in the soul of the ruler.

In other writings—most notably in his *Book of Religion and Aphorisms of the Statesman*—Alfarabi outlines this broader political science. It speaks of religious beliefs as opinions and of acts of worship as actions, noting that both are prescribed for a community by a supreme ruler or prophet. The new political science views religion as centered in a political community whose supreme ruler is distinct in no way from the founder of a religion. Indeed, the goals and prescriptions of the supreme ruler are identical to those of the prophet lawgiver. Everything said or done by this supreme ruler finds constant justification in philosophy, and religion thus appears to depend on philosophy—theoretical and practical. Similarly, by presenting the art of jurisprudence as a means to identify particular details the supreme ruler did not regulate before his death, Alfarabi makes it depend on practical philosophy and thus be part of this broader political science. In sum, his new political science offers a comprehensive view of the universe and indicates what kind of practical acumen permits the one who possesses this understanding, either the supreme ruler or a successor endowed with all of his qualities, to rule wisely. Able to explain the various ranks of all the beings, this political science also stresses the importance of religion for uniting the citizens and for helping them attain the virtues that prolong decent political life. Then, in *Political Regime and Principles of the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the*

Virtuous City, he illustrates how this new political science might work. A general overview of this whole undertaking is provided in *Attainment of Happiness*—the first part of his famous trilogy *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*—where he declares that “the idea of the philosopher, supreme ruler, prince, legislator, and imam is but a single idea.”

CHARLES E. BUTTERWORTH

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FATIMA (AL-ZAHRA') BINT MUHAMMAD (CA. 12 BEFORE HIJRA–11/CA. 610–632)

Fatima was the youngest daughter of the Prophet Muhammad and Khad'ja. She was born in Mecca, probably soon after the beginning of the Prophet's mission in 609–610; according to some sources, a few years earlier. Little is known of her childhood. In the first or second year after the Hijra to Medina in 622, after refusing the suit of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, Muhammad gave her in marriage to his cousin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib; 'Ali was to become the fourth Rightly Guided Sunni Caliph and, according to the Shi'i, Muhammad's divinely appointed successor. Most of the historical reports on Fatima's life are about the details of her marriage. 'Ali did not take another wife in Fatima's lifetime. They had four children, all of whom had important roles in the political and religious life of the first Islamic century: Hasan, the first Shi'i imam; Husayn, the second Shi'i imam and the martyr of Karbala; and Zaynab and Umm Kulthum, who both intrepidly confronted Umayyad authority.

When Muhammad died, Fatima maintained with 'Ali his superior right as the Prophet's successor. She

disputed the caliphate of Abu Bakr and had several fierce altercations with him and his supporter and successor-to-be, 'Umar. Alarmed by her forceful opposition, 'Umar threatened to burn her house down, along with its inhabitants, if her husband did not acknowledge Abu Bakr as caliph; under threat of execution, 'Ali eventually capitulated—according to some reports, only after Fatima died. Fatima also argued with Abu Bakr for her own right to inherit the lands of Fadak; Abu Bakr had denied her Fadak, declaring that he had heard Muhammad say prophets have no heirs. On one occasion of dispute, Fatima is reported to have delivered an eloquent oration (text in *Balaghat al-nisa'*, 54-69) to the assembly of Companions gathered around Abu Bakr. She died at the young age of 23, just two and a half months (six, according to some sources) after Muhammad's death in AH 11/632 CE, and was buried in the Baqi' cemetery in Medina.

The sources attribute several verses of poetry to her in grief-filled elegy of her father, which have been collected in modern times in a slim *Diwan*. Some hadith are also related on her authority, many of which were collected by the historian al-Suyuti in a book titled *Musnad Fatima al-Zahra'*.

Muhammad's line continued solely through Fatima and her children. In particular, the Hasanid and Husaynid lines were religiously and politically important. Shi'i imams of all denominations trace their lineage to the Prophet through Fatima, mostly through her son Husayn, and several ruling dynasties have claimed special status because of ancestry from her. Among them is the Fatimid dynasty of Isma'li caliph-imams who ruled North Africa and Egypt from the ninth through the twelfth centuries; their genealogy was a key factor in legitimizing their claim to the caliphate and the imamate.

Although Sunnis honor Fatima as the beloved daughter of the Prophet and the ideal of gentle Muslim womanhood, the Shi'is venerate her further as one of the "Five Pure Ones" (*Panj-tan Pak* in Persian and Urdu; *al-Khamsat al-Aihar* in Arabic), namely, Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn. The Shi'is consider her one of the *ahl al-bayt* (people of the Prophet's house) from whom God "removed all impurity" (Q 33:33). They believe that Fatima, although not an Imam, possessed the infallibility (*isma*) and the power of intercession (*shafa'a*) of the Imams. They attribute several miracles to her, such as the miracle of her divinely luminous veil, which caused an entire Jewish clan to convert to Islam.

Fatima is known by several titles, the best known of which is "al-Zahra'" (the luminous one); the Fatimids named their famed Al-Azhar University after her. She is also known as "Batul" (the virgin),

referring to purity and piety rather than celibacy. Enigmatically, she is also called "Umm abiha" (the mother of her father), a title interpreted in various historical or esoteric ways. Finally, both Shi'is and Sunnis believe—the latter following hadith considered sound by authors of their canonical collections, Bukhari and Muslim—that Muhammad designated her "mistress of the women of Paradise" (*sayyidat nisa' al-janna*) and "mistress of all the women in the world" (*sayyidat nisa' al-'alamin*).

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See also Shi'ism

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FATIMIDS

The Fatimids were a major Isma'ili Shi'i dynasty that ruled over different parts of the Islamic world, originally from Ifriqiyya and later Egypt, from AH 297/909 CE until 567/1171. Comprised of the following fourteen caliphs, the Fatimids were also acknowledged as Isma'ili imams:

1. al-Mahdi (297–322/909–934)
2. al-Qa'im (322–334/934–946)
3. al-Mansur (334–341/946–953)
4. al-Mu'izz (341–365/953–975)
5. al-'Aziz (365–386/975–996)
6. al-Hakim (386–411/996–1021)
7. al-Zahir (411–427/1021–1036)
8. al-Mustansir (427–487/1036–1094)
9. al-Musta'li (487–495/1094–1101)
10. al-Amir (495–524/1101–1130)
11. al-Hafiz
 - As regent (524–526/1130–1132)
 - As caliph (526–544/1132–1149)
12. al-Zafir (544–549/1149–1154)
13. al-Fa'iz (549–555/1154–1160)
14. al-'Adid (555–567/1160–1171)

The Fatimids traced their ancestry, through the early Shi'i imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765), to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and his wife Fatima, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter and the eponym of the dynasty.

Foundation and North African Phase

By the middle of the third/ninth century, the Isma'ilis had organized a dynamic, revolutionary movement, designated as *al-da'wa al-hadiya*, the rightly guiding

mission, or simply as *al-da'wa*. The aim of this movement, led secretly from Salamiyya in Syria, was to install the Isma'ili imam to a new caliphate, in rivalry with the 'Abbasids. The Isma'ili imams claimed to possess sole legitimate religious authority as the divinely appointed and infallible spiritual guides of Muslims; hence they regarded the 'Abbasids, like the Umayyads before them, as usurpers who had deprived the rightful 'Alid imams of their claims to leadership. The message of the Isma'ili *da'wa* was spread in different parts of the Muslim world, from Transoxiana and Sind to North Africa, by a network of *da'is*, religiopolitical propagandists.

The early Isma'ili *da'wa* achieved particular success in North Africa due to the efforts of Abu 'Abdullah al-Shi'i, who was active as a *da'i* among the Kutama Berbers of the Lesser Kabylia, in present-day eastern Algeria, since 280/893. He converted the bulk of the Kutama Berbers and transformed them into a disciplined army, which later served as the backbone of the Fatimid forces. By 290/903, Abu 'Abdullah had commenced his conquest of Ifriqiyya, covering today's Tunisia and eastern Algeria. The Sunni Aghlabids had ruled over this part of the Maghrib, and Sicily, since 184/800 as vassals of the 'Abbasids. By Rajab 296/March 909, when Abu 'Abdullah entered Qayrawan, the Aghlabid capital, Aghlabid rule was ended. Meanwhile, the Isma'ili imam, 'Abdullah al-Mahdi, had embarked on a long and historic journey. He left Salamiyya in 289/902, avoiding capture by the 'Abbasids, and after brief stays in Palestine and Egypt, he had been living in Sijilmasa, today's Rissani in southeastern Morocco, since 292/905. 'Abdullah continued to hide his identity while maintaining contact with the *da'i* Abu 'Abdullah. In Ramadan 296/June 909, Abu 'Abdullah set off at the head of his army to Sijilmasa, to hand over the reins of power to 'Abdullah al-Mahdi. 'Abdullah al-Mahdi entered Qayrawan on 20 Rabi' II 297/4 January 910, and was immediately acclaimed as caliph. This represented a great achievement for the Isma'ilis whose *da'wa* had finally led to the establishment of a *dawla*, or state, headed by the Isma'ili imam.

In line with their universal claims, the Fatimid caliph-imams did not abandon their *da'wa* activities on assuming power. Aiming to extend their authority and rule over the entire Muslim community (*umma*) and others, they retained their network of *da'is*, operating both within and outside Fatimid dominions. However, the *da'wa* was reinvigorated only after the Fatimids transferred the seat of their state to Egypt. The first four Fatimid caliph-imams, ruling from Ifriqiyya, encountered numerous difficulties while consolidating their power. In addition to the continued hostility of the 'Abbasids, and the Umayyads of