

## MOSLEM LIBRARIES AND SECTARIAN PROPAGANDA

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One of the most interesting aspects of Moslem literary history is the story of its libraries. It is astonishing that within a few generations after the Arab conquest of the seventh century, descendants of these unlettered conquerors should have been busy collecting and translating the literary remains of earlier civilizations, and with their inspiration writing new books. Although the reports of ʿUmar's responsibility for the destruction of the Alexandrian and Persian royal libraries are probably unfounded, they are true to the temper of the early leaders of Islām. With their contempt for, and general ignorance of, all books save the Koran, it is not unlikely that they did destroy valuable collections of books. But it was not long before some of the Umayyads of Damascus, and more especially the early Abbasids of Bagdad, set about building up great libraries. In their zeal, these first Moslem book-lovers often consciously followed in the footsteps of their ancient Greek and Roman and, even more, their immediate Persian and Christian forerunners. Caliphs and scholars, kings and courtiers, ransacked their world for books and encouraged translators, copyists, and authors.

Even the most cursory survey of the history of Moslem libraries raises questions as to their origins and fate. A previous article by the present writer in the *Library Quarterly*, University of Chicago, July, 1932, described four important libraries of Bagdad. They are not to be viewed as exceptional, but as typical of the libraries which dotted the Moslem world. As was said in that article, libraries grew out of the interests and needs of cultivated individuals, literary societies, and institutions of learning. In turn they suffered various fates. Many private as well as public collections were destroyed or scattered by hordes of ignorant invaders—Turks, Mongols, and Tartars in the East, and Berbers in the West. Christians were also responsible for the destruction of some of the libraries belonging to their Moslem neighbors. Cardinal Ximenez, complaining of the interest Spanish Christians

showed in Moslem books to the exclusion of their own sacred writings, burned eighty thousand volumes in the public square at Granada.<sup>1</sup> The Crusaders are said to have destroyed the great library at Tripolis in Syria and probably committed other similar offenses.<sup>2</sup>

However, it is often forgotten that Moslems themselves were responsible for the loss of priceless collections of books. Many disappeared because of carelessness and neglect, but perhaps as many more were destroyed wilfully. The important part that religious prejudice played in the history of Moslem libraries has not been recognized sufficiently.<sup>3</sup> Many libraries were founded as institutions of religious propaganda, and not a few were destroyed because of later opposition to the ideas which inspired their beginnings. Perhaps it is too obvious to call for more than a passing reminder that the libraries belonging to mosques, shrines, and especially *madrasas*, or theological schools, played a definite part in disseminating the doctrines of Islām. The nature of their collections often reflects the limited interests and purposes of these institutions. With exceptions, they did not contain as great a variety of books as did the libraries built up by men with more varied interests.<sup>4</sup> Libraries as religious foundations are not unknown to us of the West. Roman libraries were often associated with temples;<sup>5</sup> medieval Christian libraries began in monasteries; and the religious reading-room is with us to the present.

The purpose of this article is not to enlarge on the characteristics of those libraries connected with institutions which cultivated and propagated Moslem orthodoxy (Sunnite doctrines), but with certain aspects of those which had to do primarily with the spread of sectarian and heretical doctrines. It was only natural that when the leaders of a new sect became articulate they should have begun to write tracts and

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Ximenez died in 1517 A.D. See Pascual de Gayangos' Preface to his translation of al-Makkari under the title, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties of Spain* (London, 1840), I, viii ff.; also Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs* (London, 1907), p. 435.

<sup>2</sup> Destroyed in 1109 A.D. See Quatremère, *Mémoires géographiques et historiques sur l'Égypte*, II, 506; Hammer, *History of the Assassins*, Eng. trans. O. C. Wood (London, 1835), p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> Some recognition of this is to be found in Olga Pinto's "Le biblioteche degli Arabi nell'età degli Abbassidi," in *La Bibliofilia*, Vol. XXX (1928), and *Encyclopedia of Islam*, art. "Masjdjid," pp. 352-53.

<sup>4</sup> See *Library Quarterly*, July, 1932, p. 280.

<sup>5</sup> F. G. Kenyon, *Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford, 1932), p. 80.

books to present and spread their peculiar tenets. If the schism flourished, these early writings would be preserved, copied, commented upon, and in time augmented by new books, largely intended to defend the sect against the attacks of the orthodox party. If the positions of the group in question were narrowly religious, the books valued would be limited to Korans, collections of traditions, and commentaries on them. If, on the other hand, the doctrines grew out of broader philosophical and scientific interests, their protagonists naturally collected a greater variety of books. Hence we find al-Ma'mūn, who espoused Mu'tazilite theology, fascinated with writings on Greek, Persian, and Indian science, philosophy, and literature. This may appear too obvious to call for emphasis, but we shall find that a recognition of these tendencies is necessary for an understanding of the nature of Moslem libraries and of their history.

In a time when books were none too plentiful and, at best, very expensive, it was important that those interested in the dissemination of learning in general or the doctrines of a certain sect in particular should make their books accessible to the learned and cultured public. Next to discussion and preaching, what better way was there to popularize their tenets than to place in the hands of the reading world those writings which set them forth? In the course of this article it will become clear that the leaders of heresies quite consciously recognized the value of libraries as institutions of propaganda and hence founded and used them as such. This in turn explains the fate of many Moslem libraries. We shall see that whenever orthodoxy prevailed and heretics were persecuted, their books were at once suspect and were destroyed. This is of course only one side of the picture, for the schismatics were equally zealous to suppress the writings of their antagonists.

Even within orthodoxy there were differences of opinion, especially in matters of canon law. It was not uncommon to find extremists of one school wilfully burning the books of one or another of the other schools. We shall see that this happened especially in Spain, where feeling often ran high. Also, there were always conservatives who viewed with apprehension any tendency of the cultured to stray into the sidepaths of studies other than the strictly religious. They were ready to repeat and defend with violence the command attributed to 'Umar, the second caliph, "Touching the books you mentioned, if

what is written in them agrees with the book of Allāh they are not required: if it contradicts they are not desired. Destroy them therefore."<sup>6</sup>

Another aspect of this problem, which must not be overlooked, is the fact that the persecution of heretics and the confiscation of their books put an excellent tool into the hands of those desirous of enlarging their own collections. Even zealous defenders of the faith were not so single-minded as to ignore the advantages—or, let us say, the incidental rewards—offered them in this way. What was more natural, before burning the hated writings, than to look them over and extract the harmless ones? One could not, of course, destroy copies of the sacred Koran, and there were bound to be others too which were not dangerous for the faithful to peruse. "To the victors belong the spoils," applies in religious warfare, with books as the prizes, as well as in any other kind of conflict. Many a conqueror enriched his own library or those of his friends by this means. During periods of persecution, unscrupulous book-lovers, with their tongues in their cheeks, could with propriety and advantage to themselves win public applause by reporting as heretics scholars whose libraries they had long coveted. This seems the best explanation of the confiscation of the library belonging to al-Kindī,<sup>7</sup> for those who brought the charge of heresy against this philosopher were the Banū Mūsa, themselves great book-collectors.<sup>8</sup> However, they kept al-Kindī's collection intact, and had the grace to establish it in Bagdad as a special library, bearing the erstwhile owner's name. Fortunately for al-Kindī, he was exonerated from the charge of heresy and his books were restored to him. Others did not fare so well, and many collections, both of individuals and of institutions, were never returned to their owners but went to build up new libraries. However, the advantages to the world of learning, of this insincere, or at any rate half-hearted, zeal are evident. We cannot but be grateful that many instances of *auto-da-fé* were not as thorough-

<sup>6</sup> A. J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt* (Oxford, 1902), p. 402. This statement appears first in writings of the thirteenth century. See Abū'l-Faraj (*Barhebraeus*), Beirut ed., p. 176; Pococke ed., p. 180; Ibn al-Kifī, ed. Lippert (Leipzig, 1903), *Ta'rikh al-Ḥukamā*, pp. 354-56.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a, ed. Müller (1884), I, 207-8.

<sup>8</sup> See *Library Quarterly*, July, 1932, p. 284.

going as the more conscientious might have wished. One individual, Ibn Ḥazm, could taunt those who burned his books with the verse:

Do not speak to me of burnt vellum and paper: do not lament the information contained in them and destined for mankind.

For if the books are burnt, their contents are not so; since they are still alive in my head.<sup>9</sup>

But we cannot agree with his optimism, for we realize that many precious Arabic and Persian works, known to us only by title or from quotations, were destroyed during outbursts of religious fervor and fanaticism.

In the course of describing several libraries whose history was intimately related to that of sectarian propaganda, it will be necessary to outline very briefly some of the essential positions of the religious groups involved.

An early and important school which arose in Islām was the Muṭʿazilite. The caliph al-Maʿmūn belonged to this party and succeeded in making its doctrines the state religion for a time. The orthodox suffered persecution, but triumphed again under al-Mutawakkil, who in 234 A.H. (= 848-49 A.D.) revoked the religious decrees of al-Maʿmūn. He met with little opposition, for the Muṭʿazilite position was never popular with the masses. In its beginnings it was too rationalistic, and in the end it ran out in a scholasticism with doctrines too metaphysical to be intelligible to the ordinary man. Nevertheless this school made a lasting contribution to the development of Moslem thought. This is hardly the place for a detailed discussion of Muṭʿazilite theology, but it may be well to indicate a few points which have a bearing on the history of literature.

Basically there was a confidence in, and an assertion of, the value of human reason, which was incompatible with the orthodox dependence on an absolutely divine and infallible book as the final authority. Hence arose their most characteristic doctrine of the Koran as a created entity. The Muṭʿazilites saw clearly that the orthodox doctrine of an uncreated book, pressed to its logical conclusions, implied a second eternal being beside Allāh. This position was in harmony with their strict

<sup>9</sup> Al-Maḳḳarī, Arabic text (Cairo), I. 361; trans. De Gayangos, I, 37.

unitarianism, which sought to avoid any tendency to raise the qualities of Allāh to an independent status comparable to that of the persons of the Christian Trinity. Muʿtazilite doctrine at its best gave a high place to human reason and, in contrast with the absolute fatalism of orthodoxy, recognized free will in man as a necessary complement to divine justice. For our present purpose the important thing in all this is that the Muʿtazilites, as essentially rationalistic theologians, valued the products of thought and books other than the Koran. Hence it is not surprising to find that some of the most zealous Muʿtazilites were at the same time ardent book-lovers and book-collectors. It is also evident that a man who exhibited unusual interest in books of a philosophical and scientific nature was likely to be accused, by the strictly orthodox, of Muʿtazilite leanings. This is precisely what happened in the case of al-Kindī and many others. In some cases the suspicions were well founded; in others they were not.

To return to our thesis concerning the relation of libraries to sectarian propaganda, al-Muḥaddasī, the great geographer, born 946 A.D., who published his famous geography in 375 A.H. (= 985 A.D.), speaks<sup>10</sup> of a public library which he visited at Rām-hurmuz in Lūzistān, which was founded with the avowed purpose of promulgating Muʿtazilite doctrines. There was a library building (*dār al-kutub*, "house of books"), located either in the beautiful cathedral mosque (*Jāmiʿ*) or in one of the adjoining arcades. This library and the one at Baṣra<sup>11</sup> were pious foundations (*wakfs*) of a certain Ibn Sawwār. I have been unable thus far to identify this man, but the *Fihrist*, page 139, refers to him as Abu ʿAlī ibn Sawwār al-Kātib, a man devoted to the sciences. Al-Muḥaddasī adds that the endowment for these libraries included support for all those who wished to devote themselves to the study of the Muʿtazilite system, and to reading and copying. Likewise there was a *shaiḥ* lecturing there regularly on Muʿtazilite doctrine. The element of propaganda is evident from these provisions. The Arab geographer says that the library at al-Baṣra was larger, that there were more books, and that it was more frequented than the one at Rām-hurmuz. Earlier in the same work<sup>12</sup> he mentions a book which

<sup>10</sup> Al-Muḥaddasī, ed. De Goeje (Leyden, 1877), p. 413.

<sup>11</sup> According to the Constantinople manuscript of al-Muḥaddasī, one also at al-Rayy.

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 23. l. 5.

he saw and used in al-Baṣra, which leads one to suppose that here was one of the many libraries which he says<sup>13</sup> he consulted in the preparation of his geography. Muḥammad ibn Ishāk, author of the *Fihrist*,<sup>14</sup> quotes Ibn Sawwār as his authority on al-Bustī, the traditionalist, whose works he says he himself had never seen. He speaks of Ibn Sawwār as having founded an endowed (*wakf*) library at Baṣra and quotes him as saying, "In my collection at al-Baṣra . . . , " which implies that this library was founded before the writing of the *Fihrist* in 377 A.H. (= 988 A.D.).

The second Assembly (*Maḳāmā*), called al-Ḥulwanīyya by al-Ḥarīrī, presents a most interesting picture of a group of literary dilettanti<sup>15</sup> assembled in the city library at Baṣra to discuss poetry. While the situation represented is fictitious, it is undoubtedly based on the kind of gatherings which took place regularly in the public library of the author's native city. He says, "I was once present in the town library, which is the council hall of the cultured, the meeting place of residents and strangers."<sup>16</sup> He goes on to tell how an unkempt stranger comes in, seats himself in the last row, but soon joins the discussion and recites one of his own verses, which is much praised by the assembly. At first his authorship is doubted, but the visitor at once produces several couplets extemporaneously and is applauded, honored, and given good clothes. The narrator of this story thereupon recognizes him as the hero of the *Assemblies*, a rascal poet, and talks with him. The poet recites some lines on the fickleness of fate and leaves, "carrying away our hearts with him." Of course there is no way of knowing if the city library pictured by al-Ḥarīrī is the one founded by Ibn Sawwār. Chenery<sup>17</sup> says there were several public libraries in Baṣra, a city long celebrated as a center of learning, and especially noted for its school of grammar. In the Paris manuscript of al-Ḥarīrī there is a most interesting miniature by the celebrated painter Yaḥyā Maḥmūd, pic-

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Ed. Flügel (Leipzig, 1871), p. 139.

<sup>15</sup> The word used is *muta'addibīn*, *littérateur*, which is a derivative from the noun *adab*, *belles-lettres*, rather than *ulamā*, "the learned," "scholars," "scientists," which is suggested by Chenery's translation, "scholars."

<sup>16</sup> *The Assemblies of al-Ḥarīrī*, trans. T. Chenery and F. Steingass (London, 1867, 1898), I, 114; S. de Sacy's Arabic text (2d ed.; Paris: Re naud & Derembourg, 1847), I, 26-27.

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, Introd. to I, 9.

turing a group of scholars in a library, presumably this library of Baṣra. They are seated before an open bookcase in which the books, lying on top of one another, are arranged in small compartments.<sup>18</sup> This description is somewhat of a departure from the main subject, but is an interesting illustration of the use of libraries in the Moslem world of the fifth century.

It was mentioned above<sup>19</sup> that the Constantinople manuscript of al-Muḩaddasī added that Ibn Sawwār also founded a library at Rayy. This later manuscript, represented in DeGoeje's printed text by Notes C, is based on the author's own revision of his earlier edition, made three years later after another journey. Hence it gives us the results of his later observations, based on firsthand experience. It therefore seems permissible to suppose a third library founded by the generous Ibn Sawwār, for the promulgation of his faith.

Rayy, the Greek Rhages, was a city once famous for its great libraries and especially for the one bequeathed by one of the most famous men in Arabic literary history, Ismā'īl ibn ʿAbbād.<sup>20</sup> This man, generally known as the Ṣāḩib (the companion *par excellence*) because of his friendship with Ibn al-ʿAmīd, was the *wazīr* of the Būyid rulers, Muʿayyid al-Dawla and Fakhr al-Dawla. He was himself an author of ability,<sup>21</sup> and his court was one of the most brilliant centers of literature in Persia during the fourth century after the Hijra (=the tenth Christian century). Whether at Rayy or at Iṣfahān, literary men and scholars were attracted both by the sympathy and by the liberality of his patronage. Two instances of the Ṣāḩib's fondness for reading are given by several writers. It was his custom when traveling to take with him thirty camel-loads of books on his favorite subject, *belles-lettres*, but after he received a copy of the *Aghānī* by Abū-l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, he found that that great anthology sufficed him as a travel companion.<sup>22</sup> Again it is related that Nūḩ ibn Maṣṣūr, the Samānid ruler of Khurāsān, tried, by a secret message, to persuade the Ṣāḩib

<sup>18</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale MS Arabe 5847. This has been reproduced in Blochet's *Les enlumineurs des Mss. Orientaux* (Paris, 1926), p. 10, and in the *Festschrift der Nationalbibliothek in Wien* (1926), p. 433.

<sup>19</sup> N. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Yāqūt, *Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Margoliouth, I, 69 f.

<sup>21</sup> *Fihrist*, p. 135, gives the titles of eight books by him. On the Ṣāḩib and his encomiasts see al-Thaʿālībī, *Yatimat al-Dahr*, ed. Beirut, III, 31 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Khallikān, *Bibliographical Dictionary*, trans. De Slane (1843), II, 250, quoted by Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf al-Zunūn* (Leipzig, 1835), I, 366.



to leave the Būyids and enter his service. The Ṣāhib declined to leave people with whom his reputation was established, and as a further excuse mentioned the difficulty of transporting his personal property, his books. Of the latter, according to Yāqūt, he had four hundred camel-loads of scientific works alone.<sup>23</sup> Hajjī Khalifa, a late writer (eleventh century A.H. = seventeenth century A.D.), but claiming to quote the Ṣāhib's own words, says he had 117,000 volumes.<sup>24</sup> Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, a distinguished poet of Iṣfahān, served the Ṣāhib as librarian.<sup>25</sup>

On his death in 385 A.H. (= 995 A.D.), the Ṣāhib left his library as a pious bequest to the city of Rayy.<sup>26</sup> Whether or not it was given to a mosque or school is not stated; but apparently it was housed in a special building, for references to it after that date speak of the "house of books" (*bait* or *dār al-kutub*). During his lifetime it is referred to simply as his collection (*khizāna*).

This library, both during the owner's lifetime and later as a city library, must have been an important one, for several writers speak of consulting it, or mention valuable books in it. Authors under the patronage of the Ṣāhib dedicated their works to him and, as was the usual practice, often presented him with the first copy. To mention a few cases: One of the earliest local histories of Persia, a monograph on the city of Ḳum, was dedicated to him.<sup>27</sup> Al-Thaʿālibī, of Nishāpūr, dedicated his *Latāʾifu'l-maʿārif* to the Ṣāhib.<sup>28</sup> The grammarian Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī dedicated his *al-Ḥujja* to his patron, and Yāqūt quotes one of his authorities, Salāma ibn Ghiyyādh, as saying that he used the author's autograph of *al-Ḥujja* in this library at Rayy in the year 522 A.H. (= 1128 A.D.).<sup>29</sup> Twice al-Muḥaddasī speaks of consulting interesting items in the Ṣāhib's library. Once<sup>30</sup> he describes a sort of pic-

<sup>23</sup> Yāqūt, *op. cit.*, II, 315. See also Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, I, 215 = Arabic text, ed. Wüstenfeld, No. 95; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, under year 385; and al-Thaʿālibī, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 f.

<sup>24</sup> Hajjī Khalifa, *loc. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> Yāqūt, *op. cit.*, I, 66, 69 f.; Ibn Khallikān, trans. De Slane, III, 644 and 646, n. 6, quoting al-Thaʿālibī, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 59 f., 148 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Yāqūt, *op. cit.*, III, 2.

<sup>27</sup> A Persian manuscript of this work is in the British Museum (see E. G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia* [New York and London, 1902], I, 374).

<sup>28</sup> See De Jong's edition (Leyden, 1868), p. 2, and Browne, *op. cit.*, II, 88, 93-94, 101-2, 374-75.

<sup>29</sup> Yāqūt, *op. cit.*, III, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Muḥaddasī, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

torial map, executed on muslin, representing the seas and rivers of Asia as a great bird, with wings outspread, of which he saw copies in several libraries, one of them in that of the Ṣāhib. In the Constantinople manuscript this traveler and geographer speaks of a book by Abū Zaid al-Balkhī which he saw in the Ṣāhib's collection.<sup>31</sup>

The library building (*dār al-kutub*) spoken of by al-Muḩaddasī, page 391,<sup>32</sup> as near the great fruit market in al-Rūdha, a suburb of Rayy, at first glance appears to refer to the library bequeathed by the Ṣāhib, for the Constantinople manuscript adds that it was founded by the Ṣāhib and contained but few books. All the manuscripts and the printed text of al-Muḩaddasī say that the library was located in a *khān*. This raises several problems. Al-Muḩaddasī published his work in 375 A.H. (=985 A.D.), i.e., ten years before the death of the Ṣāhib, and the revision (Constantinople manuscript) three years later in 378 A.H. So he must have been in Rayy some time before 375, and possibly again between 375 and 378. At any rate, he could not have meant the great public library established in 385 A.H. (=995 A.D.). His earlier references<sup>33</sup> are only to the private library of the Ṣāhib, to which, of course, he must have had access during the latter's lifetime. Another difficulty lies in the reference on page 391 to the few books in this library, whereas we know that the collection, both during the Ṣāhib's lifetime and subsequently, was a large one. At the time it was destroyed an eye-witness, al-Bayhaḩī,<sup>34</sup> says the catalogue filled ten volumes. Further, al-Muḩaddasī says the library was situated in a *khān* and was a collection of stories, which also does not fit descriptions of the library of this versatile connoisseur. It seems likely, therefore, that the Ṣāhib, a public-spirited book-lover, gave to a *khān* in one of the suburbs of Rayy a small collection of light literature of the sort with which travelers might while away spare moments. Incidentally, this is the first reference I have found to a library of pure fiction. The term used is *dāru ḩl-kutubi ḩl-uḩdūtha* ("house of story-books"). *Al-uḩdūtha*, meaning various kinds of stories, chiefly those which are fictitious, is probably used to avoid ambiguity. The feminine noun *al-uḩdūtha* is to be

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5, n. a.

<sup>32</sup> See also G. le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate* (Cambridge University Press, 1905), p. 215.

<sup>33</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 5, n. a, and p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted by Yāḩūt, *op. cit.*, II, 315.

taken as in apposition to the broken plural *al-kutub*. The only difficulty which remains lies in the term "house of books" (*dār al-kutub*), which elsewhere seems to refer to a library building. One can hardly imagine a library building within the confines of a *khān*, especially if it was intended to house only a few books. Perhaps here the term simply means a room or shelf of books, but the usage is unusual. The gift of books to a caravanserai for the benefit of travelers was not an otherwise unheard-of procedure. Ibn al-Athīr says that the poet and genealogist, Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh al-Marw al-Rūdhī, owned a guesthouse in which were books and chess sets. The learned were in the habit of perusing the books, while the ignorant played chess!<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately the generosity of the Ṣāḥib did not benefit the scholars of his favorite city as long as he had hoped, for in the year 420 A.H. (= 1029 A.D.) the Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna, who had long been engaged in conquests in India, turned his face westward and descended upon the city of Rayy. As the champion of the orthodox caliph of Bagdad, al-Ḳādir, he determined to crush all evidences of heterodoxy. He exiled the Būyid ruler of Rayy, Majd al-Dawla, crucified a number of Bāṭinīs or Ismāʿīlīs<sup>36</sup> and Ḳarmaṭians, banished the Muʿtazilites and burned their books, together with those of philosophers and astronomers, and finally carried off a hundred loads of presumably harmless literature to his capital at Ghazna.<sup>37</sup> That this destruction of heretical books included the Ṣāḥib's library is evident from the report Yāḳūt gives<sup>38</sup> on the authority of the historian al-Bayhaḳī, who says:

After the Sulṭān Maḥmūd ibn Subuktigīn burned it [the library building, not simply the books] I inspected this house [of books] and found the catalogue was ten volumes. When the Sulṭān Maḥmūd came to al-Rayy it was told him that these books were books of the Rawāfiḍ<sup>39</sup> and heretics, so he took from among them all those which were on dogmatic theology [*ʿilm al-kalām*] and ordered them burned.

<sup>35</sup> *Op. cit.*, under the events of the year 602. See also W. Barthold, *Turkistan* ("Gibb Memorial Series" [1928]), p. 439, and Sir E. D. Ross, "The Genealogies of Fakhr-ud-Dīn Mubārak Shāh," *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Edward G. Browne* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 392 ff.

<sup>36</sup> See below, p. 102.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *op. cit.*, under the year 420; Muḥammad Nāzim, *The Life and Times of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna* (Cambridge University Press, 1931), pp. 80-83; also Browne *op. cit.*, II, 160.

<sup>38</sup> *Op. cit.*, II, 315.

<sup>39</sup> An extreme Shiʿite sect (see D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory* [New York, 1903], p. 212).

This authority does not describe the fate of the other books, but very likely some of them were among those carried off by the conqueror to his capital, there to enrich the library of his newly founded university. If we are to accept the word of Salāma ibn Ghiyyādh<sup>40</sup> that in 522 A.H. (= 1128 A.D.) he was in Rayy in the library bequeathed by the Šāhib, it is apparent that some of the collection was intact over a hundred years after Maḥmūd's ravages.

Ibn Isfandiyār, in the Preface to his *History of Ṭabaristān*<sup>41</sup> says he used the libraries of Rayy, especially the one in the college founded by Shāhin Shāh ibn Shahriyār, during the year 606 A.H. (= 1210 A.D.). This was only five years before the city was devastated by the Mongols, from which catastrophe it never recovered. Yāqūt, who passed through Rayy at this time, describes most of it as in ruins. Probably the libraries which survived Maḥmūd's onslaught, as well as those built subsequently, were destroyed or carried off by the Mongols, as were similar institutions in other cities of Persia.<sup>42</sup>

It is not evident on which charge of heresy the Šāhib's library was destroyed, but Maḥmūd's motive was doubtless mixed with political considerations. The Būyids, to whom the Šāhib was attached, had long been powerful in Persia, and controlled the caliphs of Bagdad. Maḥmūd was eager to break their power.<sup>43</sup> The Būyids were Shiites and, in general, had been lenient with the other schismatics. Hence various heretical groups and their literatures flourished during this period.

There is much discussion as to Maḥmūd's sincerity as a champion of orthodox Islām and as a patron of learning. The details of this interesting problem cannot be set forth here. Some scholars look upon him as an unscrupulous barbarian, eager only for spoils and self-aggrandizement, nevertheless posing as a defender of the faith and a patron of learning. Others idealize Maḥmūd and picture a religious zealot with an overwhelming passion for the arts and sciences. Both groups forget that human nature and men's motives are seldom so simple, single, and unmixed.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted by Yāqūt, *op. cit.*, III, 12.

<sup>41</sup> Trans. E. G. Browne, "Gibb Memorial Series," (1905), p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> G. le Strange, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-18; Sprengling and Graham, *Barhebraeus' Scholia on the Old Testament* (Chicago, 1931), Part I, Prefatory Note, p. vii.

<sup>43</sup> See Firishita, trans. A. Dow under the title, *A History of Hindostan* (London, 1768), Part I, p. 93; *Encyclopedia of Islām*, arts. "Ghaznavids," p. 155, and "Maḥmūd."

The great charge against Maḥmūd as a patron of literature is the shabby treatment he accorded the two most brilliant men at his court, al-Bīrūnī and Firdawsī. The latter fled from Ghazna after delivering a bitter satire against the Sultān because the gift he received for his *Shāhnāma* was not as large as he had been led to expect. It is also difficult for us to see how a true devotee of literature could destroy books ruthlessly as Maḥmūd did at Rayy. We should prefer a religious tolerance that could value the writings even of those with whom it could not agree. This doubtless is asking too much of one who was primarily a conqueror, eager above all else for power. It is probably more just to realize that Maḥmūd's character was one full of contradictions. He could quite sincerely champion a most literal interpretation of the Koran, and at the same time, shrewdly aware of the political advantages of religious conservatism, use religion to further his own ends. He might, a minor poet himself, desire a brilliant court at which assembled the great of the age, yet decline to impoverish himself, to meet the exaggerated expectations of his protégés. Hence the ruthless and mercenary conqueror of India and Persia, the persecutor of heretics, the destroyer of books, and the apparently heartless patron could spend leisure hours devoutly copying the Koran, or building a magnificent capital. His court was brilliant, his mosque and other public buildings were beautiful, and his university, liberally endowed, contained a well-stocked and diversified collection of books.<sup>44</sup> It is fortunate that he was neither simply a religious fanatic nor a ruthless vandal, but that, whatever his motives, he saw fit to carry home at least some of the books he took in his various campaigns. With them he stocked his new library.

Unfortunately Maḥmūd's capital in turn was destroyed in 550 A.H. (= 1155-56 A.D.), by the "World-burner," 'Alā al-Dīn Ḥusain.<sup>45</sup> In the *Chahār Maqāla* there is a curious statement that whereas he razed the

<sup>44</sup> Al-'Uṭbī, *Kitāb al-Yamīnī*, trans. of Persian text by J. Reynolds (Oriental Translation Fund, 1858), pp. 462-67; Mohammed Nāzīm, *op. cit.*, pp. 157 ff., esp. p. 166; M. Elphinstone, *History of India* (9th ed., 1916; notes and additions by E. B. Cowell), pp. 333-37; N. N. Law, *Promotion of Learning in India by Muhammadans* (London, 1916; Foreword by H. Beveridge), pp. xvi f. and 6-12; Firishta, *op. cit.*, Part I, pp. 53, 74-75, 96; Lane-Poole, *History of India*, Vol. III: *Mediaeval India from the Mohammedan Conquest to the Reign of Akbar the Great*, p. 33.

<sup>45</sup> Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-37, 52; Firishta, *op. cit.*, p. 140. This date is disputed. *Encyc. Islām*, art. "Ghazna," gives 544/1149; Zambaur, *Manuel de généalogie pour l'histoire de l'Islām* (1927), p. 284, gives 545.

beautiful buildings erected by Maḥmūd and his successors, he bought with gold the poems written in their praise, and placed them in his own library.<sup>46</sup>

Moving westward, we find Egypt during the tenth and twelfth centuries A.D. under the rule of the Fatimid caliphs, exponents of Ismāʿīlī Shiism. This heresy originated in conflicts over the question of the rightful successors of Mohammed, the partisans of ʿAlī coming to be known simply as the *Shīʿa* ("party"). In their view the only legitimate heads of the Moslem state were the descendants of Fāṭima, the prophet's daughter, and wife of ʿAlī, the fourth caliph, especially through their son, Ḥusain. Hence they rejected all the orthodox caliphs after ʿAlī and substituted a line of *Imāms*. After the twelfth *Imām* died childless, the Shiites developed the doctrine of the hidden *Imām*, i.e., that the last *Imām*, Mohammed ibn Ḥasan, did not really die, but disappeared. He is in hiding, directing his followers, and will reappear to usher in the new age. This question of leadership is the most important difference between the Shiite and the Sunnite, and from it have developed differences in doctrines and religious practices. Shiite theology is essentially Muʿtazilite.

The Shiite *Imām* became a vastly more important figure than the orthodox caliph, for in addition to being Mohammed's temporal successor, he was the infallible authority in all religious matters. One of the distinctive techniques of Shiite Islām, derived from Manicheism, which has results often inexplicable to outsiders is that of secrecy (*kitmān*) and prudence (*taḳīya*). This means that the Shiite devotee is authorized and even obliged to hide his convictions from enemies of his sect. Among his enemies he is to behave as one of them. In a large measure this accounts for the missionary power of this great schism, for its representatives are free to go out into the world, and only after winning confidence are they to insinuate their peculiar ideas. The methods of doing so were carefully worked out; even stock questions are suggested by which the missionary may first raise doubts in the minds of his would-be converts. Various divisions arose in the ranks of the Shiites, as was natural in a sect which based its claims on allegorical interpretations of the Koran and traditions.

<sup>46</sup> Nidhāmī i-ʿArūdī-Samarḳandī, *Chahār Maqāla*, trans. E. G. Browne; reprinted from *JRAS*, July and October, 1899 (London, 1900), p. 48.

After various vicissitudes one party, the Ismāʿīlis, became powerful enough to build up a rival caliphate opposed to the orthodox Abbasids of Bagdad. From 909 to 1171 A.D. the Fatimid dynasty controlled Egypt and parts of North Africa and Syria. The Ismāʿīlī Shiites differed from the *Imāmī* chiefly in their acceptance, as seventh and last *Imām*, of Ismāʿīl ibn Jaʿfar al-Šādiq, one of the sons of the sixth *Imām* according to the reckoning of the *Imāmīs*. The latter trace their succession through a different son of Jaʿfar—namely, Mūsā al-Kāzīm—and look upon Mohammed ibn Ḥasan as the twelfth and last *Imām*; hence they are popularly known as the “Twelvers,” whereas the Ismāʿīlis are “Seveners.”

The Fatimid caliphs early espoused the cause of learning and built up a tremendous library in their palace, the exact size of which is difficult to ascertain. At the time of al-ʿAzīz, caliph from 365 to 386 A.H. (=975–96 A.D.), the collection contained twenty copies of the famous history of al-Ṭabarī, one of them the author’s autograph; thirty-odd sets of the dictionary called *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*; one hundred manuscripts of the *Jamhara* of Ibn Duraid; and eighteen thousand volumes of the ancient sciences.<sup>47</sup> In spite of the fact that in 395 A.H. (=1005 A.D.) the caliph al-Ḥākim gave a large number of the books from the royal library to his new institution, the House of Science, the palace collections were unusually large. Ibn al-Ḳiftī says that in 435 the *wazīr* Abū Ḳāsim ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad took charge of the affairs of the library, catalogued it, and repaired worn bindings. A scientist especially interested in astronomy, who was present at that time, describes two valuable globes which he saw in the library, and adds that there were on astronomy, geometry, and philosophy alone sixty-five hundred treatises.<sup>48</sup>

All except the private library of the inner palace were completely destroyed in 461 A.H. (=1068–69 A.D.), during the famine and reign of terror occasioned by a failure of the Nile and the struggles between the Turkish troops and the black Sudanese regiments. Each sought for control of Upper Egypt and the person of the caliph al-Mustansir. The books, including twenty-four hundred beautifully written and adorned Korans, together with other valuables, were carried off by

<sup>47</sup> Maḳrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ* (Būlāq, 1270), I, 408.

<sup>48</sup> Ibn al-Ḳiftī, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

the Turks as payment for wages due. Maḳrīzī quotes an eyewitness as saying that he saw twenty-five camel-loads of books taken by one creditor, the *wazīr* Abū-l-Faraj Mohammed ibn Ja'far al-Maghribī.<sup>49</sup> Beautiful bindings were used to make shoes for the soldiers. Part of the leaves were burned. Others were thrown into the river, and those which remained were dumped in the desert where they were soon covered with sand, forming the Mounds of Books which remained for years. A few volumes were apparently carried out of the country.<sup>50</sup>

The successors of al-Mustanṣir must have been ardent book-collectors, for about a hundred years later, 567 A.H. (= 1171 A.D.), when Saladin took Cairo and brought the Fatimid caliphate to an end, the library was large, varied, and exceedingly valuable. One of Maḳrīzī's authorities<sup>51</sup> speaks of the library as being in a court of the Ancient Hospital, and describes how the caliph used to visit it. At such times authors would present their works for his approval. This is rather perplexing, for the first hospital in Cairo, known subsequently as the Ancient Hospital, was founded by the Sultān Ḳalā'ūn in 683 A.H. (= 1284 A.D.), over a hundred years after the death of the last Fatimid caliph. Perhaps the confusion arises from the fact that this hospital, which had a fine library, some of the books of which are reported as having once been in the Fatimid collection,<sup>52</sup> occupied part of the site of the old west palace of al-ʿAzīz. A later writer might carelessly project this hospital back into the time of the Fatimids, although Maḳrīzī is hardly excusable for having perpetuated this misunderstanding. The latter describes how the books were shelved, classified, and catalogued. He speaks of the variety of books, mentioning precious manuscripts in the handwriting of famous scribes. The staff consisted of a librarian, two copyists, and two attendants. The size of the collection at the time of Saladin's occupation of Cairo is given variously, ranging from 120,000,<sup>53</sup> 601,000,<sup>54</sup> and 1,000,000<sup>55</sup> to the fabulous number of 2,600,000 volumes.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Maḳrīzī, *op. cit.*, I, 408-9.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 409.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407; Ibn Taghribirdī abu'l-Mahāsin, *Annales*, ed. Juynboll (Leyden, 1855), II, 482; Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt in the Middle Ages* (London, 1925), p. 284.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Khaldūn (Bulaḡ, 1284), IV, 8.

<sup>54</sup> Maḳrīzī, *op. cit.*, quoting Ibn abī Tayy, author of a lost biography of Saladin, I, 409.

<sup>55</sup> Abū Shāma, *Kitāb al-Rawḡatain* (Cairo, 1287-88), I, 200.

<sup>56</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin* (New York, 1898), p. 115 n.



The royal library, which had survived other vicissitudes, came to an end with the downfall of the Fatimid caliphate and Ismaʿīlī doctrine. Saladin caused the name of the Abbasid caliph to be mentioned in public prayers, and a few days later the last Fatimid caliph died. Saladin at once set about the re-establishment of orthodoxy with suitable schools to propagate its doctrines. Of the palace treasures he kept nothing for himself. He gave 100,000, or 120,000, volumes to his learned chancellor, the *kādī* al-Fāḍil. Some authors say al-Fāḍil bought the books.<sup>57</sup> These finally found their way into the library of the *madrasa*, theological college, the Fāḍiliyā, which he opened in 580 A.H. (= 1184–85 A.D.).<sup>58</sup>

The private library of this man must have been large, for he is everywhere spoken of as a great collector of books. On another occasion when Saladin took the city at Āmid on the Tigris, in the year 1183, he gave the library of 1,040,000(?) volumes to al-Fāḍil, who selected and carried away seventy camel-loads.<sup>59</sup> However, the books did not find a safe resting-place even there, for the learned often borrowed books which they failed to return, and finally most of them disappeared during the famine of 694 A.H. (= 1294–95 A.D.), when students sold them at the rate of a volume for a load of bread. Maḳrīzī says there remained in his time an exceedingly valuable and ancient Koran, in Kūfic, reputed to have been written by the third caliph, ʿUthmān, for which al-Fāḍil paid 30,000 dinars.<sup>60</sup>

The rest of the books in the Fatimid library were sold at public auction over a period of ten years.<sup>61</sup> Abū Shāma, quoting ʿImād al-Dīn, Saladin's secretary, gives a vivid picture of the sale, how the leaves had been loosened from their bindings and were mixed, so that they were sold cheaply in bundles. One wonders if those who bought the bundles were ever able to separate *belles-lettres* from works on astronomy, studies on law from those on logic, medical works from mathematical, and histories from commentaries, as Abū Shāma describes the mixture.<sup>62</sup> ʿImād al-Dīn adds that he himself bought some of the

<sup>57</sup> Abū Shāma, *op. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> Maḳrīzī, *op. cit.*, I, 409; II, 366–67; Ibn Khaldūn, *op. cit.*, IV, 8.

<sup>59</sup> Abū Shāma, *op. cit.*, quoting Ibn abī-Tayy, II, 39.

<sup>60</sup> Maḳrīzī, *op. cit.*, II, 366.

<sup>61</sup> Abū Shāma, *op. cit.*, I, 200, 268; Ibn al-Athīr, under the year 567; Maḳrīzī, I, 409.

<sup>62</sup> *Op. cit.*, I, 268.

manuscripts. The sultan, noting his interest, thereupon gave him his choice of those which remained.

The confiscation and break-up of the Fatimid library at Saladin's command is rather surprising from one whom we are accustomed to look upon as one of the most enlightened gentlemen of the East. The episode must be viewed both as the regular accompaniment of conquest and as an attack of orthodoxy upon a center of schism.<sup>63</sup>

Another famous Fatimid institution which came to an end with the fall of the heretical caliphate was the House of Science or House of Wisdom (*dār al-ʿilm* or *dār al-ḥikma*). Unfortunately we have not as detailed information concerning its fate as we have on that of the royal library. We have only Maḳrīzī's brief remark that it lasted as long as the Fatimid dynasty.<sup>64</sup> It is probable that the library of the House of Science was disposed of much as was that of the palace. It too was an institution under the patronage of the caliphs, and, as will be seen, distinctly intended for the propagation of Ismāʿīlī doctrine.

The first House of Science was founded in 395 A.H. (=1005 A.D.), by the caliph al-Ḥākim, one of the strangest figures in all Moslem history. From the earliest days of the Fatimid residence in Cairo scholars of all sorts were wont to assemble in the presence of the caliphs to discuss doctrinal as well as more general problems.<sup>65</sup> Al-Ḥākim crystalized these gatherings into a more formal academy, for which he provided very comfortable quarters, endowed with liberal stipends for all concerned. The chief purpose of the House of Science throughout its history was that of encouraging and propagating the study of the distinctive doctrines of the Ismāʿīlīs. There was also, perhaps at some times more than others, a liberal interest in all the known sciences.

<sup>63</sup> An incident somewhat similar and probably less excusable occurred in 579 A.H. (=1183 A.D.) when Saladin took the city of Aleppo. He gave al-Masʿūdī al-Bandahī, who had been tutor to one of his sons, permission to take whatever books he wished from the library of the Friday Mosque. This library was a pious bequest, left in perpetuity to the great mosque of Aleppo. Although that city had been at one time a Shiite stronghold, for some years previous to Saladin's occupation, the official religion, which of course included the chief mosque, was Sunnite. Hence this violation of a *wakf* can hardly be excused as an attack on heterodoxy, but must rather be viewed as a breach of canon law growing out of friendly intent. Yāḳūt, *Biographical Dictionary*, VII, 20; Ibn Khallikān, trans. De Slane, III, 100 = Wüstenfeld, No. 670. See also *Encyc. Islām*, art. "Masdjid," p. 353.

<sup>64</sup> Maḳrīzī, *op. cit.*, I, 445.

<sup>65</sup> Von Hammer, *op. cit.*, pp. 33 ff.

An integral part of the foundation was an excellent library stocked with books from the palace collections, including works on the sciences and general literature. The library was open to the public both for reading and for copying. To facilitate the latter, free paper, pens, and ink were provided. Is it too fanciful to see in this provision a deliberate attempt to further the spread of Ismā'īlī doctrines? By thus encouraging men to copy books a wide distribution for them was assured. Many might thereby come to own books which they could never have afforded to buy. In an age when time was of small account, men who were eager to acquire books were content to spend endless hours copying the works they desired, especially in a library which provided free living along with the necessary materials. Imagine a public library of today with a free dormitory and dining-room attached! These generous provisions for the convenience and comfort of scholars remind one of the ancient museum and library of the Ptolemies at Alexandria.

The annual budget of 257 dinars seems meager, but probably was adequate inasmuch as it merely covered the running expenses of the library and did not include the salaries of the members of the academy or provision for the purchase of new books. The former were paid out of the general endowment of the institution and the latter were gifts from the caliph's private library. The items on the budget may be of interest:<sup>66</sup>

|   | Dinars |
|---|--------|
| Salary of the librarian.....                              | 48     |
| Salary of the attendant.....                              | 15     |
| For rush mats.....  | 10     |
| For winter carpets.....                                   | 5      |
| For winter mats.....                                      | 4      |
| For repair of the curtains.....                           | 1      |
| For water.....  | 12     |
| For paper.....  | 90     |
| For paper, pens, and ink, for those using the library . . | 12     |
| For repair of books.....                                  | 12     |
| Total.....  | 209    |

How the difference was expended is not stated.

<sup>66</sup> Makrīzī, I, 459. The figures given by De Slane in the Introduction to his translation of Ibn Khallikān, I, xxix f., differ slightly.

From a somewhat vague remark of Maḳrīzī's it appears likely that this library, as well as the royal collection, suffered in the catastrophe of 461 A.H. (= 1068 A.D.).<sup>67</sup>

In 513 A.H. (= 1119 A.D.) the *wazīr* al-Afḍal closed the House of Science because of charges that its teachings were heretical, of course from the Ismā'īlī point of view. It was reopened in a new place, presumably with restrictions, by the next *wazīr*, al-Ma'mūn, in 517 A.H. (= 1123 A.D.). This new House of Science lasted fifty years, until the fall of the Fatimid dynasty.<sup>68</sup>

There is often considerable confusion in descriptions of the royal library and that of the House of Science, making them to appear as one and the same, but Maḳrīzī lists them among the royal treasuries as separate and distinct.<sup>69</sup> Both libraries reflect the intellectual and religious interests and ambitions of the heretical Fatimid caliphs and came to an end with the re-establishment of orthodoxy under Saladin.

Among the heretics persecuted by Maḥmūd at Rayy in 420 A.H. was a group of Bāṭinīs or Ismā'īlīs.<sup>70</sup> It is therefore apparent that this heresy was to be found in Persia as well as in Egypt. An offshoot of the Egyptian branch rose to great religious and political power, owing to the efforts of al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ and his followers, who established themselves in mountain strongholds of Persia and Syria. They are generally known to the west as the Assassins. Al-Ḥasan, for a time at the Fatimid court, went to Persia, and in 483 A.H. (= 1090-91 A.D.) conquered a fortress situated on a rocky crag, called Alamūt. This remained the headquarters of the secret order until 654 A.H. (= 1256 A.D.). The Assassins soon commanded a series of mountain castles from which they were able to control the surrounding plains. The Syrian branch, with a center at Maṣyād, is best known through the accounts of the Crusaders, who had various dealings with successive chiefs, who were referred to as the "Old Man of the Mountain" (*Shaikh al-Jabal*).

The Assassins succeeded in terrorizing the East by their sudden and usually successful attacks on men of importance who had incurred their displeasure. Saladin was one of the few intended victims who

<sup>67</sup> I, 409; see also I, 445, and above, p. 93.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 445.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 408.

<sup>70</sup> See above, p. 93.

escaped. The dagger or poison was administered by the *Fidā'īs*, the third grade of the order, whose sole duty was to obey implicitly the instructions given by the leaders. It is doubtful whether these emissaries knew much either of the secret doctrines or of the political aspirations of the Grand Masters whom they served. Far too little is known of the history, organization, and doctrines of this powerful order, partly because of the secrecy in which they shrouded their activities, and also because of the total destruction of their theological books and archives at the time when Alamūt was destroyed.

Al-Ḥasan and his successors made much of the mystic number seven (7). In addition to the seven *Imāms*, there are seven degrees of emanation through which an inaccessible deity is made known to the universe, there are seven corresponding cycles of time, and seven prophets throughout the ages have been assisted by seven helpers. There are seven degrees of initiation in the order. These ideas were common to all Ismā'īlīs, including, of course, the Fatimids of Egypt, but they received a new emphasis in the hands of the neo-Ismā'īlīs, or Assassins.<sup>71</sup>

Probably their most distinctive contribution was the amazingly effective politico-military organization, which they perfected for the propagation of their faith. They worked out in a very practical fashion the essential but secret doctrine of the Ismā'īlīs, that diverse religions are symbols for the use of the masses; for the fully initiated alone is reserved a philosophical and abstract doctrine, the science of *bāṭin* or the inner meaning concealed in the verses of the Koran. The initiates of the seven orders or grades learned increasingly of the allegorical interpretations and secret tenets of the sect. But the antinomianism of which the order is generally accused was only for the highest orders, who alone enjoyed the privileges implied in al-Ḥasan's central dictum, "Nothing is true; all is allowed." The members of the lower ranks were kept in strict submission and in general observed the regulations binding on all Shiite Moslems.

Most of the Grand Masters were astute enough to see that their

<sup>71</sup> H. Lammens, *Islām*, trans. Sir E. D. Ross (London, 1929), pp. 156 ff.; *Encyc. Islām*, arts. "Assassins," "Ismā'īlī," "Ḥasan ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ"; Browne, *op. cit.*, II, 190 ff., 453 ff.; R. Levy, "The Account of the Ismā'īlī Doctrines in the *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh* of Rashid al-Dīn Fadlallah," *JRAS*, 1930, pp. 509-36; Sir William Muir, *The Caliphate*, rev. T. W. Weir (Edinburgh, 1915), chap. lxxii: "Ismā'īlians, Carmathians and Fatimids."

strength lay in their ability to preserve order and secrecy, but al-Ḥasan II foolishly announced himself as the promised *Imām* and true caliph. He assembled the people from the vicinity of Alamūt at a great feast (1164 A.D.) and disclosed to them the secret doctrines which hitherto had been reserved for the fully initiated. He declared the abrogation of the laws of Islām, saying that men were now free to give themselves up to feasting, joy, and frivolity. Probably from his time is to be dated the inscription, if the report is genuine, which Mirkhond says reputable people claimed to have seen. Over the door of the library of the castle at Alamūt were engraved the words:

With the help of God  
The ruler of the world  
Loosened the bonds of the law.  
Blessed be his name.

This, of course, refers to al-Ḥasan II.<sup>72</sup>

His grandson, Jalāl al-Dīn, al-Ḥasan III, who became Grand Master in 1210 A.D., saw the danger of allowing such license to the common people, and reversed the antinomianism of his grandfather and father. He posed as an orthodox Moslem, declared his submission to the Abbasid caliph, and performed approved good works. As a final proof of his devotion to true religion, he invited the learned men of nearby Qazwīn to send a deputation to Alamūt, there to inspect his library, promising to destroy all books which they deemed heretical. He anathematized the founder of the order and subsequent Grand Masters and all their works and ways and apparently cast their writings into the fire.

Von Hammer-Purgstall thought Jalāl al-Dīn merely made a show of burning the heretical books, but actually destroyed the works of accepted theologians of Islām.<sup>73</sup> It is perfectly obvious that he did not destroy the sacred writings of the order, for they were found some years later when Alamūt was captured by Hülāgū in 1256 A.D. However, it is doubtful whether he actually destroyed any books of value, for Hülāgū's secretary found many books worth saving. It seems likely that one clever enough to put on such a show to prove his orthodoxy

<sup>72</sup> *Notices et extraits*, Vol. IX, Part I; Trans. Mirkhond on the Assassins by M. Jourdain, pp. 166 f.; Persian text, pp. 225 f.; see also von Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>73</sup> Von Hammer, *op. cit.*, pp. 154, 179; see also Hamdu'llāh Mustawfī-i-Qazwīnī *Tarikh-i-Guzida* ("Gibb Series"), text: I, 524; trans.: II, 129-30.

would have been able to substitute dummies or copies, especially since the deputies do not seem to have examined the books, committed to the fire, sufficiently to know their real nature. They were probably nervous upon finding themselves in such an awesome place as Alamūt and were eager to be gone. At any rate, the heretical books survived. The envoys were duped, at least for the time being, and Jalāl al-Dīn earned for himself the title of "The New Moslem." This incident is a good example of the application of the technique of dissimulation mentioned above. The pose of innocent orthodoxy was not maintained for long, and in a short time the order was re-established on the old basis, and continued to carry out its politico-religious program.

As time went on the leaders learned the value of courting the favor of important persons, especially among the learned. Not a few scholars of repute preferred serving them, or at any rate ceasing to inveigh against them, to constant fear of poison or the dagger. All this, of course, is the dark side of the picture. It is almost the only one preserved for us by Moslem and Christian historians, but we know far too little of the studies and literature of the Assassins to speak with finality. The other side is the suggestion made thirty years ago by Professor D. B. Macdonald<sup>74</sup> that there was to be found among them a genuine devotion to learning and in their religious teaching, at their best, elements which attracted thoughtful minds. It is certain that they had interests other than those in their own doctrines. At least two poets of repute belonged to their ranks, Nāṣir-i-Khusraw<sup>75</sup> and Nizārī of Kūhīstān.<sup>76</sup> Their mathematical and astronomical studies were of a high order. We shall see that their conquerors found a rich and varied library and much valuable scientific apparatus at Alamūt.

The Assassins' last celebrated guest, probably an unwilling one, was the versatile Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274 A.D.).<sup>77</sup> It was he who, acting as *wazīr* to the last Grand Master, Rukn al-Dīn, persuaded him to surrender his stronghold to Hülāgū, the Mongol Īlkhān. The planned attack made by the Mongols on Alamūt and other fortresses of the Assassins is evidence that the order was still a power to be reck-

<sup>74</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>75</sup> Browne, *op. cit.*, II, 218-47.

<sup>76</sup> Browne, *Persian Literature under Tartar Dominion* (Cambridge University Press, 1920), pp. 154 f.

<sup>77</sup> G. Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science* (Baltimore, 1931), II, Part II, 1001 ff.

oned with in Persia. Al-Ṭūsī played into the hands of the conqueror and was rewarded by being taken into his service as *wazīr*, administrator of *wakfs*, and finally as head of the observatory which Hülāgū founded at Marāgha, south of Tabrīz, in 1259 A.D.

Alamūt was destroyed in 1256 A.D. ʿAṭā Malik al-Juwaynī, the secretary of Hülāgū, was permitted to examine the library, which had been accumulating since the time of the founder of the order. Some authors make the sweeping statement that the library was entirely destroyed along with the other treasures of the Assassins.<sup>78</sup> Al-Juwaynī himself, however, is authority for the statement that Korans and other unobjectionable books, together with astronomical apparatus, were saved and sent to the library of the observatory at Marāgha. Inasmuch as al-Ṭūsī joined Hülāgū after the destruction of Alamūt, and became the head of the new observatory, it seems likely that he may also have had a hand in saving these treasures. He is said to have built up a large private library from books, which he acquired as his share of the loot of his master's conquests. Before destroying the sacred writings of the Assassins, al-Juwaynī took the opportunity to peruse some of them, and later used the material he gathered in the third part of his history, *Taʾrīkh-i-Jahān Gushā*. Among the sources which he quotes was the *Sargudhasht-i-Saiyidna*, an anonymous biography of al-Ḥasan, the first Grand Master. He also mentions the *Taʾrīkh-i-Jang-i Dailam* and the *Taʾrīkh-i-Sallāmī*; the latter having been written for the Būyid Fakhr al-Dawla, whose *wazīr* was the above-mentioned Ṣāhib.

Mr. Harold Bowen<sup>79</sup> suggests the probability that Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 1318 A.D.) used al-Juwaynī's original notes as a source for his *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh*. This seems reasonable inasmuch as his account gives details obviously from the above-mentioned life of al-Ḥasan I omitted in the text of al-Juwaynī. Also, both authors use in introducing their extracts identical words which are of a sort that could not have appeared in the original. This points to both having used the same notes made from the biography. In addition, al-Juwaynī's version as compared to Rashīd al-Dīn's gives evidence of more thorough

<sup>78</sup> Ibn Isfandiyyār, *History of Tabaristān*, trans. E. G. Browne ("Gibb Series"), p. 259. But see also *Encyc. Islām*, art. "Al-Djuwainī."

<sup>79</sup> "The *Sargudhasht-i Saiyidna*, the 'Tale of the Three Schoolfellows' and the *Wasāyā* of Nizām al-Mulk," *JRAS*, October, 1931, pp. 771 ff.



editing than does that of the latter. It seems likely, therefore, that Rashid al-Dīn has preserved, perhaps in entirety, the notes which al-Juwaynī made on that memorable occasion when he examined the library at Alamūt.

I have been unable to consult the complete texts of either of these, unquestionably the most important sources for the doctrine and history of the Assassins. But, judging from all discussions and quotations from the two, it is apparent that we are indebted to Hūlāgū and his secretary for preserving the substance of some of the valuable manuscripts belonging to this interesting library, although we do regret that their zeal did not permit them to save the originals.<sup>80</sup>

From these illustrations it is evident how intimately the history of Moslem libraries is bound up with the rise and fall of sects within Islām. We have seen that religious motives were often mixed with political and personal considerations. The ideal of political and religious unity is as characteristic of Islām as it was of medieval Christianity. Both religions viewed with suspicion the presence of schismatics in their midst, for heretical groups frequently aspired to political as well as religious independence and, in turn, were notoriously intolerant of the orthodox if they gained the ascendancy. The power of the written word was thoroughly recognized both by those who wished to set forth their doctrines and by those who wished to suppress them. Much as we regret that the destruction of libraries frequently accompanied the persecution of heretics, we must admit the astuteness of those who realized that the pernicious writings must go if the heresy was to be stamped out. As long as they remained, there was always a danger that an interest in its teachings might be revived.

However, the books produced by heretics were not the only ones which aroused the antagonism of the orthodox. We have noticed<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> See Introd. to al-Juwaynī, *Tārīkh-i-Jahan Gushā*; Browne's translation of Mirza Mohammed's Persian Introd. ("Gibb Series," I, xxvii); footnote on p. xxviii of Persian Introd. gives the two passages from al-Juwaynī's text relating to the library. Vol. III, on the Assassins, has not yet been published. Facsimile of al-Juwaynī's *Tārīkh*, Vol. III, was published by the Royal Asiatic Society (London, 1931), p. 69. For Rashid al-Dīn's material see D'Ohsson, *Histoire des Mongoles* (Amsterdam, 1852), III, Book IV, 198. For a suggestive and vivid, though admittedly fictitious, picture of the activities of the Assassins of Alamūt, and of the great library, see Harold Lamb, *Omar Khayyām* (New York, 1934), pp. 201 ff.

<sup>81</sup> See above, p. 85.

that the advocates of a very strict interpretation of Islām usually viewed with suspicion the tendency of some of their fellow-Moslems to stray from strictly religious studies into other fields. An interest in polite literature, science, and especially philosophy was looked upon as unnecessary and even detrimental to the truly religious life. Islām as well as Christianity had its Puritans. A period of enlightenment and toleration inevitably brought its reaction.

In no country has this been shown more clearly than in Spain. Theologically, the Umayyads were orthodox, but the rival caliphate which they established was opposed to the accepted theory of the religious state. Al-Ḥakam II, caliph from 961 to 977 A.D., was probably the most scholarly ruler in all Moslem history, and during his reign the country enjoyed comparative peace and material prosperity. He was not satisfied merely to have a brilliant court, which drew scholars, artists, and men of letters from all over the world, but he insisted on education for the masses as well. Out of his private purse al-Ḥakam supported twenty-seven schools for the poor children of his capital.<sup>82</sup> The University of Cordova was thronged with great teachers who drew thousands of students, delighted with the freedom of thought and expression upon which the caliph insisted. Religious toleration and academic freedom were the order of the day.<sup>83</sup>

Books were al-Ḥakam's consuming passion, for he preferred his library to his throne. His agents went all over the world buying rare and valuable manuscripts, both old and new, and scribes were employed in libraries throughout the East, copying those which could not be purchased. Outstanding authors were easily induced to send the first copies of their new works to Cordova, being assured of liberal rewards.<sup>84</sup> Al-Ḥakam's example was followed by others to such an extent that libraries, both public and private, sprang up in every city in Andalus. It was a heyday for authors and the makers of books. Of course many patronized the arts and collected books merely with the

<sup>82</sup> Dozy, *Spanish Islām*, trans. F. G. Stokes (London, 1913), p. 455; Sell, *Islām in Spain* (Madras, 1929), p. 88.

<sup>83</sup> Dozy, *op. cit.*, pp. 454 ff.; Sell, *op. cit.*, p. 89; *Encyc. Islām*, art. "al-Ḥakam II."

<sup>84</sup> Al-Maḥḥarī, ed. Cairo, I, 180 ff.; trans. De Gayangos, *op. cit.*, II, 169; I, Appen. C, which gives an extract from Sa'īd of Toledo, who died in 462 A.H. (1068-70 A.D.); Ibn Khaldūn, *op. cit.*, IV, 146; Ibn al-Athīr, *op. cit.*, under the year 366; Ibn al-Abbār, *Hullat al-Siyarā: Notices sur quelques manuscrits arabes* (Leyden; Dozy, 1847-51), pp. 101-3.

desire to be fashionable, for it was felt that a display of learning was the surest means of access to royal favor.<sup>85</sup>

However, the caliph himself was sincerely devoted to learning, and numerous anecdotes are recounted by historians to show his consideration for teachers and writers. He is said to have owned at least 400,000 volumes (some say 640,000),<sup>86</sup> many of which were annotated in his own hand. He employed librarians, copyists, miniature painters, and binders who kept the books in good repair and added new ones to the collection. Every effort was made to make their use convenient and delightful. A magnificent building was designed and erected especially for the housing of the royal library.<sup>87</sup>

It must have seemed that a Golden Age had dawned—an age of enlightenment and tolerance—with Reason enthroned in the chair of the caliphate. Unfortunately, al-Ḥakam's reign was short and his successor was his fourteen-year-old son, Hishām II. The boy was completely dominated by, and later the virtual prisoner of, his minister, al-Manṣūr ibn abī 'Amir, commonly known to Europe as Almanzor, a man who had risen to power under al-Ḥakam. Al-Manṣūr came to Cordova as an obscure student, but his pleasing personality and unusual executive abilities soon brought him recognition. He courted and won the favor of Subḥ, the mother of al-Ḥakam's only son, and by her influence he rose to a position of eminence and influence. After the accession of Hishām his rise was even more rapid, those who stood in his way were disposed of, and, by various schemes too numerous to recount, he degraded the young caliph to the state of a helpless and harmless puppet. Al-Manṣūr became the virtual head of the state—a position he was able to maintain until his death in 1002 A.D.

An unsuccessful conspiracy to assassinate Hishām and replace him by a cousin made al-Manṣūr realize that the opposition he needed to fear most came from the side of the conservative religious leaders, the *fakīhs*, whose customary influence had been considerably curtailed by al-Ḥakam's liberal policies. A reaction against the skepticism which had become prevalent during the past reign had already set in, and

<sup>85</sup> Al-Maḡḡarī, trans. *op. cit.*, I, 139 ff.; *Cambridge Medieval History*, III, 435 f.

<sup>86</sup> Al-Maḡḡarī, trans. *op. cit.*, III, 169 = Arabic text, I, 180; A. Müller, *Der Islam in Morgen und Abendland* (Berlin, 1887), II, 535.

<sup>87</sup> Sell, *op. cit.*, p. 89; J. Ribera, *Bibliófilos y bibliotecas en la España musulmana* (Zaragoza, 1896), p. 29.

al-Manṣūr saw clearly that he faced a people willing to be led by the theologians and canon lawyers of the old school. These men suspected his religious views, and especially his interest in philosophy. Al-Manṣūr realized that this suspicion had been, and could be, used against him again. There were many, jealous of his sudden rise, who would be quick to support any opposition to him, so he resolved to allay once and for all the suspicions of the *fakīhs* and convince them of his orthodoxy. The method he devised reminds one of that used by Jalāl al-Dīn, the Assassin Grand Master.<sup>88</sup>

He invited a group of the most fanatical and religious leaders of Cordova to examine the library left by al-Ḥakam, and to remove all books of which they disapproved, promising to consign them to the flames. Works on philosophy and most of the sciences were deemed harmful, and the only books which were approved were those dealing with rhetoric, grammar, poetry, history, law, traditions, medicine, and arithmetic.<sup>89</sup> Al-Manṣūr must have been fully aware of the seriousness of this blow to scholarship, but he was willing to pay any price to win over the religious leaders who might otherwise menace his position. From then on he was careful to pay them every respect and to make a public show of his own piety. He is said to have written a beautiful Koran, which he carried about and which he was seen reading frequently.<sup>90</sup> His devotion to religion was never questioned again.

Al-Ḥakam's library, or what was left of it, remained unmolested as long as al-Manṣūr lived, but during the Berber siege, which ended with the fall of Cordova in 403 A.H. (= 1013 A.D.), Wāḍiḥ, governor of the city, sold most of the books to pay his troops.<sup>91</sup> The few which survived this catastrophe were stolen and sold when the city was sacked by the Berbers a few years later. Some went to distant lands, but Sa'īd of Toledo, writing in 460 A.H. (= 1067-68 A.D.), says:

Most of the literary treasures which the royal library contained were scattered throughout this country; some were taken to Seville, some to Granada, some to Almeria and other cities; I myself met with many in this city [Toledo]

<sup>88</sup> See above, p. 104.

<sup>89</sup> Al-Maḥḥarī, trans. *op. cit.*, I, 141, and Appen. C, pp. xl f.; Ibn Khaldūn, *op. cit.*, IV, 146; Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *op. cit.*, II, 69; Ibn Adhārī, *Al-Bayano 'l-Mogrib*, ed. Dozy (Leyden, 1848-51), II, 314 f.

<sup>90</sup> Al-Maḥḥarī, trans. *op. cit.*, II, 220.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169; Ibn Khaldūn, *op. cit.*

that were saved from the general ruin, and in the number there were a few which escaped the search and destruction made in the days of al-Manṣūr, and whose contents might, if detected, have brought upon them a similar fate.<sup>92</sup>

Instances might be multiplied to show that many of the leaders of the Spanish Moslems were characterized by a conservatism and even fanaticism which could not tolerate the presence of books savoring of heterodoxy. The verse by Ibn Ḥazm quoted on page 87 is an eloquent reminder of prejudice against the writings of one of the most respected literary men of Spain.

Al-Ghazzālī's *Iḥyā*, a by no means unorthodox work, was condemned by the *Kadīs* of Cordova and publicly burned.<sup>93</sup>

Ibn Zuhr (Avenzoar), the first of a family of eminent physicians, so disapproved of Avicenna's *Ḳānūn* that he cut to pieces an unusually fine copy which had been given him and used the margins as slips on which to write prescriptions.<sup>94</sup>

The Almohade caliph, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb (d. 1199 A.D.), although the patron of several noted scholars, including Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Ibn Ṭufayl, Ibn Bajja (Avempace), and Maimonides, and himself devoted to philosophical studies, felt that such interests were for the cultured few but likely to encourage independent thought among the masses. Hence he advocated the principle, "Back to the Koran and the traditions of the prophet," and in Spain and Africa publicly burned works on theology and canon law, especially those by doctors of the Malikite school. His excuse was that they "consisted largely of fallible human reasoning about divine ordinances."<sup>95</sup>

And so it appears that, on the one hand, a desire to propagate religious doctrines led men to write and gather books in libraries, where they would be accessible to the public, and, on the other, religious

<sup>92</sup> Sa'īd as quoted in Appen. C. to al-Maḳḳarī, *op. cit.* I, xli; see also Ibn Khaldūn, *op. cit.*

<sup>93</sup> Macdonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 245 f.; Sell, *op. cit.*, p. 118. The writings of 'Abd Allāh ibn Masarra of Cordova, who had brought home from the East a system of natural philosophy, suffered the same fate (T. J. de Boer, *History of Philosophy in Islam*, trans. Jones [London, 1903], p. 174).

<sup>94</sup> Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a, *op. cit.*, II, 65.

<sup>95</sup> See Introd. by A. S. Fulton to his revision of Simon Ockley's translation of the *History of Hayy ibn Yaqzān*, by Ibn Ṭufayl (New York, n.d.), pp. 14 f.; Nicholson, *op. cit.*, pp. 432 f.; Abdo'l-Wahid al-Marrēkoshī, ed. Dozy (2d ed.; Leyden, 1881), pp. 172, 174, 175, 201 ff. The Almohades were one of the two Berber dynasties that ruled Andalus during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, after the fall of the Umayyads.

fanaticism, intolerant of books likely to lead men astray, destroyed the collections so painstakingly assembled. But underneath all this turmoil and prejudice, was there not—perhaps often quite unconscious and quite unrecognized—a genuine curiosity about life and thought and a love of beauty which carried men beyond their prejudices? Scribes who painstakingly made beautiful Korans doubtless had a pious desire to do all honor to the sacred book, but also found in the writing an outlet for their own love of beauty, a desire to make something lovely for its own sake.

Libraries were founded to further particular doctrines, but soon books crept in and phases of literature were cultivated which were hardly necessary for strictly religious purposes. So, too, champions of orthodoxy who destroyed the books of those whom they persecuted seem to have had a secret curiosity about their contents. Al-Juwaynī might earnestly have desired the destruction of the hateful writings of the Assassins, but he took time to dip into a few, and even made notes before committing them to the fire. One cannot but feel that Maḥmūd of Ghazna was able to excuse as harmless any books which appeared desirable, and carried them away to enrich his own library. How often was some tempting manuscript tucked into the sleeve or girdle of a zealous “examiner” of heretical books? Books, like paintings, have a way of disappearing only to turn up years later in some far-distant place.

In conclusion it is interesting to note that there are still in existence today several libraries attached to institutions whose purpose it is to preserve and propagate Shiite doctrines. Outstanding among them are those in the shrines at Najaf and Karbala in Iraq, and Meshed in East Persia—places which have long been pilgrimage centers. I have recently received the first printed catalogue of the library in the shrine of Imām Riḍā at Meshed and hope soon to be able to write an account of this notable library and its collection. Hitherto these books have been inaccessible to Western scholars, but it is to be hoped that the publication of this excellent catalogue is the first step in opening up these treasures to the world of scholarship. Dr. Dwight M. Donaldson, who purchased the catalogue for me in Meshed, says that the library is soon

to be moved to a new museum, where it can be used by non-Moslems.<sup>96</sup> Even a most cursory glance at this catalogue shows that here for hundreds of years have been preserved manuscripts, both in Arabic and in Persian, which orientalists have long considered lost.

A recent article in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, April, 1933, "Some Unknown Ismā'īlī Authors and Their Works," by Ḥusain F. Hamdānī, whets our appetite for the further information which he promises on the collection long preserved in secrecy by the Ismā'īlī *Da'wat* in Yemen. After the end of the Fatimid power in Egypt, their literature practically disappeared in that country, as we have seen above. Fortunately, the *Da'wat* of Yemen had seen the value of these works and both preserved them and encouraged an interest in their content. The study of these manuscripts will probably clear up many doubtful points and enlighten our ignorance on the doctrines, laws, and history of the Ismā'īlīs. It seems likely that in this obscure part of South Arabia is still burning dimly the lamp lighted by the Fatimid caliphs of Egypt which once burned so brightly in the House of Science.

<sup>96</sup> *The Shi'ite Religion* (London, 1933), pp. 183, 187; Mirza Muḥammad Wali Khān Asadi, *Fihrist-i Kutub-i Kitāb Khanahyi Mubarak-i Asitān-i Qudsī Radawī* ("Catalogue of the Blessed Library of the Holy Shrine of the Imam Rida [at Mashhad]") (3 vols.; Mashhad, 1927).