"A Scholarly Copyist": Early Ilkhanid Intellectual Networks Through the Prism of Two Colophons[*]

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Popular historiography has long portrayed the Mongol conquest of Iran and Iraq as disastrous and profoundly destructive. Among the widely recounted stories of atrocities committed by the invading armies is their destruction of entire libraries in Alamut in 654/1256 and in Baghdad in 656/1258. Although the more fanciful stories related to these events are no longer repeated in scholarly literature, there is still a widespread idea that Baghdad became little more than "a provincial backwater" following the sack.[1] Recent research has highlighted deep historiographical problems with narratives about Baghdad's decline and underlined the continued importance of the city to scholarly life in Mesopotamia, Iran and beyond.[2] Detailed

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[1] Mona Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, p. 9; Beth K. Dougherty, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq, Third Edition,* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, p. 17; Jack Goldstone, *Why Europe? The Rise of the West in World History, 1500–1850,* Boston: McGraw Hill, 2009, p. 48.

[2] On the continued importance of Baghdad, see Michal Biran, "Libraries, Books, and Transmission of Knowledge in Ilkhanid Baghdad," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62 (2019), pp. 464–502, and Michal Biran, "Baghdād under Mongol Rule," *Baghdād: From Its Beginning to the 14th Century,* ed. Jens Scheiner and Isabel Toral, Leiden: Brill, 2022,

case studies of particular scholars have also contributed to a better understanding of the vigorous intellectual dynamics and networks these scholars were part of.[3] These case studies have made extensive use of a kind of source material which has otherwise been used only piecemeal: information provided in colophons, manuscript notes and various material aspects of manuscripts produced or engaged with during this period. Bruno De Nicola has announced a research agenda to make such data available at scale and has been working with his team on a database of manuscripts produced in the period following the establishment of the Ilkhanate.[4] De Nicola has also worked on case studies that highlight the diversity of intellectual transmission in the period: in one article he examines and contextualises colophons and manuscript notes in one particular manuscript,[5] and in another he compares a set of manuscripts produced by the same copyist.[6] In the present essay we similarly bring together manuscript data and information taken from historical sources for this period to focus on one scribe and two manuscripts he copied in the second half of the seventh/thirteenth century. By studying the information he provides in their colophons, we situate him within the scholarly networks and intellectual elites that link pre-Mongol Alamut and Quhistān in the Iranian East to post-Mongol Baghdad and Maragheh, with the figure of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) as a central node and the Baghdadi historian Kamāl-al-Dīn ʿAbd-al-Razzāq b. Aḥmad b. al-

pp. 285–315. On some of the problems with the historiographical tradition related to the sack of Baghdad, see Nassima Neggaz, "The Many Deaths of the Last 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mustaʾṣim bi-llāh (d. 1258)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 30 (2020), pp. 1–28, and Monica H. Green and Nahyan Fancy, "Plague and the Fall of Baghdad (1258)," *Medical History* 65 (2021), pp. 157–177. See also, more generally, Denise Aigle, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History*, Leiden: Brill, 2015; several of the essays in Bruno De Nicola and Charles Melville (eds), *The Mongols' Middle East: Continuity and Transformation in Ilkhanid Iran*, Leiden: Brill, 2016; and the essays in Timothy May, Dashdondog Bayarsaikhan and Christopher P. Atwood (eds), *New Approaches to Ilkhanid History*, Leiden: Brill, 2020.

[3] Sabine Schmidtke and Reza Pourjavady, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ʿIzz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284) and His Writings*, Leiden: Brill, 2006; Stefan Kamola, *Making Mongol History: Rashid al-Din and the Jamiʿ al-Tawarikh*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019.

[4] Bruno De Nicola, "Manuscripts and Digital Technologies: A Renewed Research Direction in the History of Ilkhanid Iran," *Iran Namag* 5, no. 1 (2020), pp. 4–21. See also the project website at https://www.oeaw.ac.at/iran/nomansland/about/.

[5] Bruno De Nicola, "A Manuscript Witness of Cultural Activity in Mongol Baghdad: Notes on Leiden Or. 95," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 14 (2023), pp. 70–108. We are grateful to Bruno De Nicola for sharing this article and the one in the next note with us ahead of their publication.

[6] Bruno De Nicola, "The 'Kāmūsī Corpus': A Case Study in Manuscript Production and Knowledge Transmission in Ilkhanid Iran," *Iranian Studies* 55, no. 2 (2022), pp. 439–461.

Fuwaṭī (d. 723/1323), commonly known as Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, as one of its prime witnesses.

One of the two manuscripts copied by our scribe is a full copy of the famous encyclopaedic text *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ wa-khullān al-wafāʾ* (Epistles of the Sincere Brethren and Faithful Friends) preserved in Istanbul's Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi as MS Esad Efendi 3638. The place and date of its copying – Shawwāl 686 (November–December 1287) in Madīnat al-Salām, that is, Baghdad – are widely cited. Because of its relatively early copying date, this manuscript has been deemed one of the most authoritative manuscripts for the ongoing new edition of the text under the aegis of the Institute of Ismaili Studies.[7] The manuscript is also famous for its lavishly illustrated double frontispiece ostensibly picturing the Brethren, a unicum in this text's rich and varied manuscript tradition.[8] Much more can be said about the social life of this manuscript, however, and not least about its copyist, who states his name in the final of the text's two colophons: Buzurgmihr b. Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī.[9] We were able to identify another manuscript copied by the same copyist: a codex containing Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, preserved in Lahore as MS Punjab University Library Shirani 1557.[10] As its colophon indicates,

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[7] This manuscript is predated only by a few other manuscripts, most notably by MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Atif Efendi 1681, which was copied in 578/1182 in Shamākhiyya (Shamakhi), capital of the Shīrwān shāhs in present-day Azerbaijan, by a certain Mawdūd b. ʿUthmān b. ʿUmar al-Ṭabīb al-Shirwānī. The editors of the new edition vary by epistle, and the editors' assessment and usage of the manuscripts differ considerably. Particularly notable for our purposes are the volumes edited or co-edited by Carmela Baffioni, as she provides for each a technical introduction in which she notes particularities about the manuscripts used, including MS Esad Efendi 3638, which she appears to consider second in importance to the abovementioned MS Atif Efendi 1681. She has also devoted two articles to particular variant sections found in MS Esad Efendi 3638 (on which see below).

[8] See, among others, Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, London: MacMillan, 1977, pp. 100–103; Sheila S. Blair, "The Development of the Illustrated Book in Iran," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993), pp. 266–274; Eva R. Hoffman, "The Author Portrait in Thirteenth-Century Arabic Manuscripts: A New Islamic Context for a Late-Antique Tradition," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993), pp. 6–20; Gulru Necipoğlu, "The Scrutinizing Gaze in the Aesthetics of Islamic Visual Cultures: Sight, Insight and Desire," *Muqarnas* 32 (2015), pp. 23–61; Wendy M. K. Shaw, *What is Islamic Art? Between Religion and Perception*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, ch. 2. For a codicological description of the manuscript, see Nourane Ben Azzouna, *Aux origines du classicisme: Calligraphes et bibliophiles au temps des dynasties mongoles (Les Ilkhanides et les Djalayirides 656–814/1258–1411)*, Leiden: Brill, 2018, pp. 551–552.

[9] Throughout this essay, we spell his name with *g* to reflect the Persian pronunciation of the name, although he in fact spells it Buzurjmihr, without making use of the Persian letter *gāf*. We consistently refer to him by his first name, and reserve the *nisba* "al-Ṭūsī" for Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.

[10] A microfilm of the manuscript was available to Mujtabā Mīnuvī and ʿAlīriżā Ḥaydarī, who based their critical edition of *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* on five manuscripts copied between 662 and

this manuscript was copied twenty years before the Esad Efendi manuscript, on 12 Rabīʿ I 666/1 December 1267, although it does not note its copying location.[11] *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* is the oldest major work of al-Ṭūsī, originally written in 633/1235–6. It is largely a Persian translation of Miskawayh's (d. 421/1030) *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, but al-Ṭūsī expanded it with additional material on economics and politics, producing, in Joep Lameer's words, a "compendium comprising all three divisions of practical philosophy." For later generations, it became "the most celebrated ethical compendium to have been written in the history of Islam."[12] This claim is indeed confirmed by the exceedingly rich manuscript attestation for this text: Iranian libraries alone contain nearly two hundred copies of it.[13]

In this essay, we take the identification of the copyist in his colophons as a starting point to explore intellectual culture in early Mongol Iran and Iraq. Although neither of the three colophons written by Buzurgmihr are exceptional specimens on a rhetorical or literary level, aligning them with information given in historical literature and data from contemporary manuscripts throws light on manuscript production in the decades following the Mongol sack of Baghdad and on the multilingual intellectual milieu that thrived in the early decades of the Ilkhanid empire. The two manuscripts copied by Buzurgmihr are not only twenty years apart but also written in different languages – Arabic for the *Rasāʾil* and Persian for the *Akhlāq* – and in a different scribal hand. Furthermore, the Esad Efendi manuscript is a carefully produced codex, as is evident from its illustrated frontispiece, so Buzurgmihr clearly was a copyist of considerable stature.

THE COPYIST AND HIS INTELLECTUAL MILIEU

In the colophons our copyist identifies himself respectively as Buzurgmihr b. Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (MS Esad Efendi 3638) and as Buzurgmihr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥabashī al-Ṭūsī (MS Shirani 1557). Ibn al-Fuwaṭī knew him personally. He provides the following *tarjama* for Buzurgmihr in his biographical dictionary *Talkhīṣ Majmaʿ al-ādāb fī muʿjam al-alqāb*:

685, among them MS Shirani 1557. However, as Ḥaydarī admits in the editorial introduction, they initially considered it the least reliable copy and did not include variants from it. They re-evaluated this decision only after realising that MS Shirani 1557 was based on the "first revision" of the text (on which see below); subsequently, they listed its "Ismāʿīlī elements" in the introduction. See Ḥaydarī's introduction in Naṣīr al-Dīn-i Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, ed. Mujtabā Mīnuvī and ʿAlīriżā Ḥaydarī, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khwārazmī, 1385/1978, pp. 6–8.

[11] See Muḥammad Bashīr Ḥusayn, *Fihrist-i makhṭūtāt-i Shīrānī*, Lahore: Intishārāt-i Idāra-yi Taḥqīqāt-i Pākistān, 1968, vol. 3, p. 326.

[12] Joep Lameer, *The Arabic Version of Ṭūsī's Nasirean Ethics with an Introduction and Explanatory Notes*, Leiden: Brill, 2015, p. 2.

[13] Muṣṭafā Dirāyatī, *Fihristgān-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-yi Īrān*, Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1339/1961, vol. 2, pp. 532–546.

Fakhr al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad Buzurgmihr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥabash al-Burūjirdī, the jurist (*faqīh*) and copyist. He was a scholarly copyist (*ʿāliman nāsikhan*), with good handwriting and nimble penmanship and recitation, making few mistakes. He used to reside (*kāna qad aqāma*) in Maragheh in the days of our felicitous lord Naṣīr al-Dīn Abū Jaʿfar [al-Ṭūsī]. Then he returned to Baghdad, where he lived (*sakana*) in the Niẓāmiyya [madrasa]. I visited him there and I wrote on his dictation (*katabtu ʿanhu*) in both Maragheh and Baghdad. He copied (*nasakha*) in his own hand a number of abridged and comprehensive books.[14]

This capsule biography underlines Buzurgmihr's credentials as a professional copyist, which are confirmed by the manuscripts: he was able to produce manuscripts both in Persian and in Arabic utilising different scribal hands, and he may even have been responsible for the illustrated frontispiece of MS Esad Efendi 3638.[15] The biography also provides some information about Buzurgmihr's career trajectory, which somewhat resembles that of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī himself. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's life, about which we know much more, can serve as a close comparison: as a youngster, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī was taken by the Mongols to Azerbaijan, where Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī appointed him librarian of the famed observatory (*khizānat kutub al-raṣad*) of Maragheh. After the death of al-Ṭūsī in 672/1274 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī continued to serve al-Ṭūsī's son Aṣīl al-Dīn at the observatory. He returned to Baghdad in 679/1281, this time on the invitation of the powerful official ʿAṭāʾ Malik Juwaynī (d. 683/1283), and was appointed librarian of the Mustanṣiriyya madrasa.[16] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī was also a copyist, and at least three manuscripts produced by him are known today; these, too, would be worthy of closer analysis.[17] We do not know the reasons behind

[14] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ al-ādāb fī muʿjam al-alqāb*, ed. Muḥammad al-Kāẓim, 6 vols, Tehran: Muʾassasat al-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Islāmī, 1416/1995–6, vol. 2, p. 574 (no. 2017).

[15] It should be noted, however, that illumination tended to be a separate specialisation.

[16] Charles Melville, "Ebn al-Fowaṭī, Kamāl al-Dīn, ʿAbd al-Razzāq," *Encyclopædia Iranica* 8, no. 1, pp. 25–26, available online at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ebn-al-fowati (accessed 14 December 2021). More extensive biographical details are given by Yūsuf Raḥīmlū in "Ibn al-Fuwaṭī," *Dāʾirat al-maʿārif-i buzurg-i islāmī*, ed. Kāẓim Mūsavī Bujnūrdī, Tehran: Markaz-i Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif-i Buzurg-i Islāmī, 1380/2001, vol. 4, pp. 422–427, and by Muḥammad al-Kāẓim in his editorial introduction to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ al-ādāb*, vol. 1, pp. 13–59. See also Muḥammad Riḍā al-Shabībī's important study *Muʾarrikh al-ʿIrāq Ibn al-Fuwaṭī*, 2 vols, Baghdad: Maktabat al-Tafayyuḍ, 1950.

[17] These are MS Istanbul, Köprülü Kütüphanesi, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 978 (a copy of Fakhr al-Dīn [Abū Saʿīd] Bughdī b. ʿAlī b. Qushtumur al-Turkī al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Qānūn al-wāḍiḥ fī muʿālajat al-jawāriḥ*); MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 1499 (a copy of the second volume of Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*); and MS Damascus, al-Asad National Library, Tārīkh 267 (a copy of one volume of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's own *Talkhīṣ Majmaʿ al-ādāb*). For codicological descriptions of the first two of these, see Ben Azzouna, *Aux origines*, pp. 533–534 and 557.

Buzurgmihr's movements between Maragheh and Baghdad, but Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's *tar-jama* implies that they moved in the same circles and had a close professional rela-tionship. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī notes that he wrote on Buzurgmihr's dication by using the phrase *katabtu ʿanhu* in the *tarjama*: while remaining somewhat unclear in the pre-sent *tarjama,* in some other usages of this phrase by Ibn al-Fuwaṭī the meaning is less ambiguous and clearly means that Ibn al-Fuwaṭī attended reading sessions in which he copied down the transmitter's words.[18] It is impossible to assess the age difference between Ibn al-Fuwaṭī and Buzurgmihr, as the earliest known manu-scripts of both are dated to 666/1267–68. We know that Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, at least, was only about 24 years old at that time (he was born in 642/1244).[19] From the fact that Ibn al-Fuwaṭī wrote on the authority of Buzurgmihr, however, we may infer that Buzurgmihr was likely older.

As Michal Biran has highlighted, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's biographical dictionary con-tains many entries on scholars whose career paths mirror those of Buzurgmihr and Ibn al-Fuwaṭī. In the first few decades after the Mongol takeover, intellectual activ-ity in Baghdad, Maragheh and Tabriz was deeply entangled with the activities of the influential polymath Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, and scholars regularly travelled be-tween these locales.[20] Al-Ṭūsī switched allegiances from the Ismāʿīlī polity in the

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[18] The phrase is found over 100 times in *Majmaʿ al-ādāb*, often with information about where and in which year the dictation took place. A few cases also give details about what was dictated to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī: *Majmaʿ al-ādāb*, vol. 1, p. 72 (no. 4) (Ibn al-Fuwaṭī notes that he copied down and read out *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* on the authority of ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū al-Fatḥ Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl al-Shīrāzī), p. 393 (no. 600) (Ibn al-Fuwaṭī notes that he copied down ʿAzīz al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī al-Ṭūsī's poetry).

[19] This first known manuscript produced by Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, MS Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 978, is a copy of *al-Qānūn al-wāḍiḥ fī muʿālajat al-jawāriḥ* by Fakhr al-Dīn (Abū Saʿīd) Bughdī b. ʿAlī b. Qushtumur, a book about birds of prey and falconry. The manuscript is quite luxuriously produced, with several calligraphed chapter and section titles and an illuminated frontis-piece. Its contents and production quality indicate a wealthy aristocratic patron, but none is named explicitly.

[20] Further research on intellectual culture in Maragheh and its regional and transregional dissemination is currently being undertaken by Hadel Jarada. See her presentation "Islamic Intellectual History during the Mamluk-Ilkhan War: The Case of Marāgha and Its Manuscript Culture" in the webinar series "Pre-modern Islamic Manuscripts," Nomads' Manuscripts Landscape project, 23 February 2022, https://www.oeaw.ac.at/iran/veranstaltungen/event-details/pre-modern-islamic-manuscripts (accessed 27 April 2022). Hadi Jorati is also prepar-ing a monograph on the life and social contexts of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, based on his PhD dis-sertation "Science and Society in Medieval Islam: Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī and the Politics of Pat-ronage", unpublished PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2014. We are grateful to Hadi Jorati for sharing his dissertation with us. As there appear to be differently spaced versions of the dissertation in circulation we refer to chapters in the notes below and not to page numbers. For a review of the PhD dissertation on which it is based, see Sara Yıldız, "Science and Soci-ety in Medieval Islam," 29 September 2015, http://dissertationreviews.org/science-and-

Alamut valley to the Mongols after playing a major role in negotiating the surrender of the Alamut strongholds to Hülegü, the Mongol conqueror and the founder of the Ilkhanid dynasty.[21] He subsequently held high positions in the early Ilkhanid empire, although his exact relationship to the authorities has frequently been mischaracterised as one of direct patronage or bureaucratic service, while it in fact appears to have been a relatively informal relationship. In Hadi Jorati's words: "in all likelihood he merely had an advisory role of some undetermined, and perhaps varying, capacity." In switching to the Mongol side, he had foregrounded "his mathematical and astronomical expertise" so his advisory role may have been largely in line with that expertise.[22] It is likely a major part of the reasons behind why the Mongols funded the construction of his observatory in Maragheh, as its original core project was the production of the famous *Zīj-i īlkhānī*.[23] Jorati has argued, however, that for al-Ṭūsī himself this was also a way to create an intellectual environment that could exist largely independently and, crucially, at some distance from the Mongol court and its volatile environment.[24] The large quantities of books from the libraries of Baghdad and Alamut al-Ṭūsī had been granted when these places were captured by the Mongols were taken to Maragheh where they no doubt helped to foster a productive intellectual environment. When he returned to Baghdad shortly before his death in 672/1274, he was reportedly accompanied by many of his students and scholarly companions, indicating that by this point the project in Maragheh had run its course and Baghdad had taken over as the major regional intellectual centre.[25] Although Ibn al-Fuwaṭī provides no dates of birth or death for Buzurgmihr, nor for his moving between Maragheh and Baghdad, we know that he was in the latter city in 686/1287, when he finished copying the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ* there. It is likely that Buzurgmihr would have been one of the members of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's circle who moved with him to Baghdad in the final years of his life.

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society-in-medieval-islam/. (accessed 27 April 2022). For the traditional biography of Ṭūsī, see George E. Lane, "Tusi, Naṣir-al-Din i. Biography," *Encyclopædia Iranica,* online edition, 2018, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tusi-nasir-al-din-bio (accessed 15 December 2021).

[21] Hadi Jorati has highlighted the deep historiographical problems with the portrayal of these events in his dissertation, highlighting that they should also be understood in the context of factional strife amongst the Ismāʿīlī leadership. Jorati, "Science and Society in Medieval Islam", chapter 3.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., chapter 4.

[24] Ibid. Jorati zooms in on the intellectual profile of the observatory, insofar as it can be reconstructed through the work of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī. This notably includes a brief discussion of the capsule biography of Buzurgmihr we translated above.

[25] Ibid.

The *nisba*s provided in our colophons for Buzurgmihr suggest that he or his family participated in the large-scale westward migration patterns that are well attested for the seventh/thirteenth century and in fact even earlier. Whereas Ṭūs is an important city in Khurasān, that is, eastern Iran, Burūjird lies more or less at the opposite end of the Iranian world, on the eastern rim of the Zagros mountains. That Buzurgmihr's family moved westward and eventually ended up working in the new intellectual centres of the Ilkhanid empire makes sense, especially in the context of the political instability that preceded this time: Ṭūs was sacked twice during the Mongol invasions of Iran in the early 1220s, and shortly before that the city had seen significant upheaval in the wake of the Khwārazmshāhs' takeover of the region from the Ghūrids. Large-scale migration, at least among the intellectual elite, was thus already in full swing for much of the seventh/thirteenth century.[26] Although we do not know the specifics of Buzurgmihr's or his family's travels, and they may very well have followed earlier patterns of scholarly migration in the Persianate world instead of being caused by political upheaval, it is clear that Buzurgmihr endeavoured to lay claim to Persianate cultural capital later in life. This is evident in the first place from his copying of the Persian text of *Akhlāq-i Naṣīrī* in MS Shirani 1557. Additionally, the fact that he signs his name in both of his colophons with only the *nisba* al-Ṭūsī makes one wonder whether he wanted to stress his ancestral ties to distant Khurasān and especially to the city which had produced the influential Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.

Buzurgmihr's Persianate cultural background and his instrumentalisation of linguistic capital were not unique. From a cursory exploration of catalogue data and manuscripts listed by Nourane Ben Azzouna in her codicological description of manuscripts from Ilkhanid Iraq and Iran, it becomes obvious that many contemporary copyists had Persianate backgrounds and copied texts in both Arabic and Persian. This is confirmed by several entries in Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's biographical dictionary. A family of scribes is for example attested who were active between Baghdad and Shahrazur: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Nūshābādī and his son Dawlatshāh, who produced copies of al-Jawharī's *Ṣiḥāḥ* (MS Tehran, National Library of Iran, Arabic 917) and al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf* (MS Tehran, University Central Library 2002), respectively, between the years 680/1281–2 and 681/1282–3.[27] Several copyists working

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[26] Richard Bulliet dates the great migrations of Iranian scholars to the west to the late sixth/twelfth century and attributes them to upheaval created by the Khwārazmshāhs in Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate and Camels in Early Islamic Iran: A Moment in World History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 117–120.

[27] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī mentions a certain ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Nūshābādī, identifies him as a scribe and a jurist, and notes that he attended sessions in the Mustanṣiriyya madrasa in 701/1301. He also notes that ʿIzz al-Dīn was an "excellent, smart and discerning youth" (*shāban fāḍilan kayyisan ʿāqilan*); *Majmaʿ al-ādāb*, vol. 1, p. 267. Although his name suggests that he might be the father of our older copyist, his designation as a "youth" makes that supposition unlikely.

in Baghdad in the same period as Buzurgmihr also bear distinctively Iranian *nisbas*.[28] Paying closer attention to the *nisbas* attested in biographical dictionaries, especially Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's, and collating that data with *nisbas* given in colophons and manuscript notes could help in charting in greater detail the scale and impact of such migrations, which have so far been evaluated largely on the basis of information given in narrative historiography.[29]

THE MANUSCRIPTS COPIED BY BUZURGMIHR

Both of the manuscripts copied by Buzurgmihr are important specimens of classic works. These copies attest to the period's intellectual life and are especially suggestive about the kinds of texts that were being read in the circles around al-Ṭūsī. The date of copying of the *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* manuscript, which falls well within the lifetime of al-Ṭūsī, along with Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's indication that our copyist moved in al-Ṭūsī's circles, makes this manuscript especially valuable. As noted earlier, this manuscript is written in Persian (except for its colophon, which is written partly in Arabic), and Buzurgmihr utilises a very different style of calligraphy here compared with the *naskh* script he utilises in MS Esad Efendi 3638. The script in MS Shirani 1557 is markedly more cursive and showcases a few features that seem to prefigure the *nastaʿlīq* script that would emerge in eighth/fourteenth-century Tabriz.[30] He employed a different *qalam* for this script compared to the script that

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[28] Three examples from the 670s/1270s: MS London, British Library Or. 2792 (a copy of Nāṣir al-Muṭarrazī's *Kitāb al-īḍāḥ*) was copied by Fattūḥ b. Muʿādh al-Mashhadī al-Ṭūsī in 670/1272; MS London, British Library Or. 7759 (a copy of Ibn Ḥājib's *Al-Īḍāḥ*) was copied by Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān al-Daylamī al-Hūshānī in 673/1274; MS Mashhad, Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍawī Library 682 (a copy of Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Nafasī's *Sharḥ Asās al-kiyāsa*) was copied by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Badakhshānī Kāshgharī. The first two of these manuscripts were copied in the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa. We have not seen any of these manuscripts and base our observations on Ben Azzouna, *Aux origines*, 536 and 539 (the first two MSS) and Dirāyatī, *Fihristgān-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-yi Īrān*, vol. 19, p. 15 (the third MS).

[29] A quantitative approach to studying social phenomena through naming conventions was famously pioneered by Bulliet to study the scale and pace of conversion to Islam: Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979. More recently, Maxim Romanov has contributed to this field with computational methods and modelling of Arabic biographical dictionaries and chronicles; see his "Algorithmic Analysis of Medieval Arabic Biographical Collections," *Speculum* 92, no. 1 (2017), pp. 226–246. One of the present authors, Aslisho Qurboniev, has worked on quantifying birthplace metadata for authors writing in Arabic in the first five centuries of Islamic history: Qurboniev, "First Five Hundred Years of the Arabic Book: The Native Origin of the Authors," KITAB Project blog, 29 April 2021, http://kitab-project.org/b/.

[30] Adam Gacek notes that the mature form of *nastaʿlīq* "emerged in its definite form in Iran (Tabriz and Shiraz) in the late 8/14th century"; Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, p. 165. For a detailed discussion of the genesis of *nastaʿlīq*, see

appears in the Esad Efendi manuscript.[31] The manuscript concludes with a short letter from the famous Persian mystic Abū Saʿīd b. Abū l-Khayr (d. 440/1049) to Ibn Sīnā (d. 427/1037), followed by the latter's answer and a three-line prayer by Ibn Sīnā.[32] This material is in Arabic and is written in a *naskh* script that has some similarities with the script used in MS Esad Efendi 3638, so it appears likely that this addition, too, was copied by Buzurgmihr. The nimble switching between scripts shows that already by the mid-seventh/thirteenth century, before the formalisation of *nastaʿlīq*, a distinction existed between what were considered the appropriate calligraphic hands for Arabic and Persian, respectively. These two manuscripts offer an opportunity to study more closely the modus operandi of a scribe adept at writing in both hands.

Yet beyond its linguistic and calligraphic nuances, there are still more reasons that make this copy of *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* an important witness to the social, intellectual and political shifts in Iran within al-Ṭūsī's lifetime. It is the oldest extant manuscript of his first revised version of the work, after he changed the original preface, in which he generously praised his Ismāʿīlī patrons, to one in which he distanced himself from them.[33] The original work, written twenty years earlier in 633/1236, had been composed at the request of the local Ismāʿīlī ruler (*muhtasham*) of Quhistān, Nāṣir al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Abī Manṣūr (d. 655/1257), and it included a preface (*khuṭba*) and an epilogue (*khātima*) with a clear Ismāʿīlī tenor.[34] In the original preface, al-Ṭūsī invoked and eulogised the Ismāʿīlī imam, the ruler of Alamut ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad, in an Ismāʿīlī fashion as "Lord of the Lords, Master of the Age, the Interpreter of the Divine, the Most High (ʿAlā) of the World and the Religion (*al-Dīn*), the Shadow of God in the Two Worlds, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan *glorified be his mentioning and sanctified be his command* (*li-dhikrihi al-tasbīḥ wa-li-amrihi al-taqdīs*)", while hailing Nāṣir al-Dīn as "the Greatest King, the Exalted

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Elaine Wright, *The Look of the Book: Manuscript Production in Shiraz, 1303–1452*, Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Series, 2012, pp. 231–254.

[31] We are grateful to Frédéric Bauden for his advice on this point.

[32] In the lower margin, below the prayer, a well-known quatrain also attributed to Ibn Sīnā is written in a later hand in fully developed *nastaʿlīq*. Compare De Nicola's interpretation of poetry attributed to Ibn Sīnā on the title page of MS Leiden, Or. 95, an important early copy of al-Ṭūsī's *Ḥall mushkilāt al-Ishārāt*. De Nicola, "Manuscript Witness", p. 91.

[33] Other "Ismāʿīlī elements," however, were preserved, which leaves no doubt about this copy's uniqueness, a fact not immediately realised by the editors of the work, Mīnuvī and Ḥaydarī. Al-Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, ed. Mīnuvī and Ḥaydarī, p. 7.

[34] This preface is preserved in at least four manuscripts and was first edited and published by Jalāl al-Dīn Humāʾī as "Muqaddima-yi qadīm-i Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī," *Majalla-yi Dānishkada-yi adabiyāt-i dānishgāh-i Tihrān* 3, no 3 (Farvardīn 1335/1957), pp. 17–25. The text of the epilogue, part of the "old preface," and a discussion of the context can be found in Mudarris Rażavī, *Aḥvāl va āṣār-i Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī*, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1354/1976, pp. 449–455. The edition of *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* by Mīnuvī and Ḥaydarī omits both the old preface and the epilogue.

Pādishāh, the Supporter (*Nāṣir*) of Truth/God and Religion (*al-Dīn*), the Refuge of Islam and all Muslims, the King of the Kings of both Arabs and Persians, the Most Just among the Commanders of the Sword and the Pen, the Emperor of the World and the Sovereign of Iran."[35] After the fall of Alamut, al-Ṭūsī replaced the Ismāʿīlī preface with a new one, in which he described his more than two decades of association with Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs as "forced exile" and "imprisonment."[36] He also changed the preambles of at least three other works that he had written for his Ismāʿīlī patrons to reflect the changing political realities.[37] However, the rest of the Ismāʿīlī references in the *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, as well as the epilogue, were not removed from the revised text. While several manuscripts preserve the original Ismāʿīlī preface and epilogue, MS Shirani 1557 represents a unique in-between case, a witness to the complex composition history of the text. This complicated history must have had significant implications for copyists of al-Ṭūsī's work such as Buzurgmihr, who in the Persian part of his colophon cautiously apologises for any potential mistakes in the book.[38]

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[35] Humāʾī, "Muqaddima-yi qadīm-i Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī," pp. 22–23.

[36] See al-Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, ed. Mīnuvī and Ḥaydarī, p. 34. On al-Ṭūsī's relations with the Ismāʿīlīs, see Mīnuvī's editorial introduction and his final notes on this subject at pp. 14–32. See further Farhad Daftary, "Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and the Ismailis," *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies*, ed. Farhad Daftary, London: I. B. Tauris, 2005, pp. 171–182. For a historical critical reading of this "narrative of captivity", see Jorati, "Science and Society in Medieval Islam", chapter 3.

[37] After the fall of Alamut, al-Ṭūsī also changed the Ismāʿīlī preamble and epilogue of his short Persian treatise on astronomy, the *Risāla-yi Muʿīniyya*, and its commentary, *Sharḥ-i Muʿīniyya*, both written at the request of Abū Shams Muʿīn al-Dīn, the son of Nāṣir al-Dīn. Some manuscripts still contain the original preamble with the exaltation of the Ismāʿīlī imam and the patrons. Rażavī, *Aḥvāl va āsār*, pp. 384–390. Discussing al-Ṭūsī's "rebranding" of himself, Hadi Jorati has argued that al-Ṭūsī "purposely destroyed the material evidence for his deep involvement with the Batinis, so as to pave the way for a new life under the Ilkhans". Jorati, "Science and Society in Medieval Islam", chapter 3. Joep Lameer has recently argued, based on his study of MS Leiden, Or. 683/1, that al-Ṭūsī similarly changed the dedication of his Persian work on mysticism, *Awṣāf al-ashrāf*, from his Ismāʿīlī patrons to the Ilkhanid vizier Shams al-Dīn al-Juwaynī (d. 683/1284), and that the text must thus be dated to the beginning of his stay with the Ismāʿīlī ruler of Quhistān. Joep Lameer, "On the Value of Written Evidence: The Preamble of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's (672/1274) Awṣāf al-ashrāf," presentation in the webinar series "Pre-modern Islamic Manuscripts," Nomads' Manuscripts Landscape project, 17 November 2021,
https://www.oeaw.ac.at/fileadmin/Institute/IFI/Video/Webinar3_Lameer.mp4 (accessed 26 April 2022). On the fate of the Ismāʿīlī elite and the community under the Ilkhanids, see Shafique N. Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, A Search for Salvation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

[38] Although al-Ṭūsī recommended that subsequent copyists (*arbāb-i nusakh*) replace the original preface with the new one, he was aware of other Ismāʿīlī references in the text, which led him to stress the non-sectarian nature of the work and to include another disclaimer at

It is not clear when the manuscript was checked against al-Ṭūsī's later recension of the work and revised. The manuscript copied by Buzurgmihr did not originally contain the chapter on the responsibility towards one's parents (ḥuqūq-i padarān va mādarān), which al-Ṭūsī had added to the end of the fourth chapter (faṣl) of the second discourse (maqāla) in the year 663/1264–5, three years before this manuscript was copied by Buzurgmihr. Al-Ṭūsī added this short chapter at the suggestion of a certain Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, who visited him at Maragheh.[39] Only a later editor, presumably the one who also added marginal notes to the colophon, inserted this section in four new folios (ff. 135v–138r), using a less cursive handwriting and including fewer lines per page (14–15 lines as opposed to Buzurgmihr's consistent 17 lines per page); the editor also crossed out the extra lines remaining from the previous chapter and marked them with the letter ز (for zāʾid).[40] The absence of this section makes it clear that Buzurgmihr did not have access to al-Ṭūsī's latest revision of the work and relied on a "first edition" that still preserved the Ismāʿīlī epilogue and references.

In addition to the preface and the epilogue, which are valuable for reconstructing the early history of the text, the manuscript contains notes of ownership and marginalia that help us trace the later circulation of this copy.[41] Elaboration on these notes is beyond the scope of the current paper, but the ones written directly

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the end of the introduction, apologising to readers for any potential faults in the text. See al-Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī,* MS Shirani 1557, f. 212v; see also, al-Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, ed. Mīnuvī and Ḥaydarī, pp. 35–37.

[39] Mudarris Rażavī and Jamāl al-Dīn Humāʾī identified him as ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū l-Muẓaffar ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Jaʿfar b. Ḥusayn al-Naysābūrī, whom Ibn al-Fuwaṭī mentions as an Ilkhanid inspector and chancery official for Wāsiṭ and Basra with connections to Shams al-Dīn and ʿAlā al-Dīn Juwaynī. Although Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's mention of this individual's visit to Maragheh makes him a likely candidate, his different *laqab* and the absence of the *nisba* in early manuscripts of *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* led Mīnuvī and Ḥaydarī to doubt the identification. See al-Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, ed. Mīnuvī and Ḥaydarī, 387–388 (notes to p. 236).

[40] These are not the only inserted folios. The person who inserted these folios also tried to harmonise this copy with the later revision of the work. Other folios were inserted by other owners: f. 8, written in a very sloppy handwriting, and f. 151, written in a highly refined *nastaʿlīq*, were clearly inserted much later. See also Ḥaydarī's introduction to al-Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, 11.

[41] At one point, for example, it belonged to the royal library of the emperor Awrangzeb, who apparently consulted it twice, first on 7 Rabīʿ I 1103/28 November 1691 and again on 3 Rabīʿ I 1305/2 November 1693. Later, during Nādir Shāh's invasion of India, the manuscript seems to have been looted from the royal treasury and sold in a Delhi market before a buyer named ʿAbd al-Hādī gifted it back to the royal library on 20 Jumādā II 1171/28 February 1758. See Muḥammad Bāqir, "Barrasī-yi nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī az āsār-i Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī dar Kitābkhāna-yi Dānishgāh-i Panjāb-i Lāhūr (Pākistān)," *Yādnāma-yi Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī* [conference proceedings], Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Dānishgāh, 1336/1957, vol. 1, pp. 26–33, at 27–28.

on the margins of both parts of the colophon deserve attention. A later scribe, who also retraced fading letters in the manuscript, made sure that the date of the copying was clearly written with letters and numbers next to both parts of the colophon. There is also a calligraphic and fully vocalised *basmala*, presumably written by the same hand, below the colophon on f. 212v, and the marginalia suggest that this was meant to be followed by the old preface: "This is the old preface, which the author, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī, withdrew." The *basmala* was clearly meant to introduce the preface and now hangs purposelessly at the end, since the preface was never copied despite the ample blank space left after the colophon. Another note on the left margin of the colophon on f. 212v records the "correction of parts of it … three hundred years after its copying." And yet another final note in a clear and refined *nastaʿlīq*, added at the end of Dhū l-Ḥijja 1035/September 1626 on f. 211r, informs us that the book was taken to Burhānpūr in India and revised by another person, who must have been the one who inserted the folios in *nastaʿlīq* and copied the quatrain attributed to Ibn Sīnā on the margins of the final folio.[42] More could be said about these notes, but already these brief remarks show that premodern readers carefully checked colophons, evaluated their relationship to a manuscript's body text to clarify textual issues, and did not shy away from intervening in the text to make it reflect better their understanding of the text's importance or relationship to other manuscripts. The readers should thus be taken into account in any study of a text's reception history.

The preservation and circulation within Ilkhanid scholarly circles of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ* and of works produced by al-Ṭūsī for the Ismāʿīlī rulers of Quhistān and Alamut are curious. The popularity of the *Rasāʾil* and the controversy surrounding the Ismāʿīlī connection of its authors (on which see below) must have had significant implications for these works' production in a milieu in which the Ismāʿīlīs of Iran and Syria were linked to conspiracy theories spread by their political enemies.[43] The destruction of the Ismāʿīlī polities of northern Iran had of course been one of the primary objectives of Hülegü's campaign in Iran, and it is in the course of this campaign that al-Ṭūsī switched sides. Following this, he personally distanced himself from his Ismāʿīlī past and removed Ismāʿīlī elements from the *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*. Nonetheless, he seems to have maintained his connection with Quhistān and remained in contact with some of his former Ismāʿīlī associates.[44] The

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[42] The reading of the date AH 1035 is not certain, however. If it is read as 1135, the note must have been added after the manuscript had left the royal library.

[43] Farhad Daftary, "The Study of the Ismaʿilis: Phases and Issues," *The Study of Shiʿi Islam: History, Theology and Law,* ed. Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda, London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2014, pp. 47–54. For a more detailed treatment of the perception of Ismāʿīlīs by their Muslim as well as European enemies, see Farhad Daftary, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Ismaʿilis,* London and New York: I.B Tauris Publishers, 1995.

[44] Seyyed Jalal H. Badakhchani, *Contemplation and Action: The Spiritual Autobiography of a Muslim Scholar*, London: I. B. Tauris and Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1999, p. 8.

copying of the present manuscript by Buzurgmihr in fact coincides with a long journey undertaken by al-Ṭūsī together with his student Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311) to Quhistān and Khurāsān between 665/1267 and 667/1269, from which he returned accompanied by the local prince Manūchihr b. Īrānshāh b. ʿAlī al-Quhistānī.[45] In Quhistān, al-Ṭūsī was the guest of the ruler ʿImād al-Dīn Abū l-Fidāʾ, who died in 666/1268 during al-Ṭūsī's stay. His family remained close to al-Ṭūsī's, as shown by the marriage of al-Ṭūsī's elder son, Ṣadr al-Dīn, to ʿImād al-Dīn's daughter, the princess known as al-Quhistāniyya.[46] Clearly, al-Ṭūsī was one of the most well-connected and influential power brokers in the Ilkhanid realm; he not only facilitated the conquest of Iran and Iraq by the Mongols but also played a role in the transfer of predominantly Persian-speaking scholars to Baghdad and Maragheh.

The copy of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ* (MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 3638) was produced a decade after al-Ṭūsī's death, and its copying is explicitly situated in Baghdad (Madīnat al-Salām), so there is no indication that the manuscript was produced within or for members of al-Ṭūsī's circle. As noted earlier, the illustrated double frontispiece on ff. 2v and 3r has garnered much attention from art historians over the years. It suggests a wealthy patron, but the patron's identity remains unknown, as no name is mentioned on the frontispiece or in the body text. In fact, the double frontispiece appears only after the *fihrist* which provides an overview of all the epistles and the respective four parts (*aqsām*, sg. *qism*) to which they belong. In the manuscript, this *fihrist* starts *in medias res* on f. 1r, with the last few words describing the epistles of the *Rasāʾil*'s first quarter, and continues on f. 2r, which lists the epistles of the remaining three parts. At least one folio is thus missing from the manuscript, and it is possible that the manuscript's patron would have been mentioned on the title page on the recto of the missing first folio, or perhaps on the verso of that folio, containing the start of the *fihrist* and possibly some introductory discourse.

The Ismāʿīlī resonances of the Punjab University Library manuscript are in fact also relevant for this copy of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*. Although the question of

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[45] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ al-ādāb*, vol. 1, p. 421. The journey is also reported by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī in his introduction to *al-Tuḥfa al-saʿdiyya*, his commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *al-Qānūn fī l-ṭibb*, which Sayyid Muḥammad Mishkāt quotes in the introduction to his edition of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī's *Durrat al-tāj li-Ghurrat al-dubāj*, Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Ḥikmat, 1369/1990, p. 39. The journey is likewise mentioned in al-Sallāmī, *Tārīkh ʿulamāʾ Baghdād al-musammā Muntakhab al-mukhtār*, ed. ʿAbbās al-ʿAzāwī, 2nd ed., Beirut: al-Dār al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Mawsūʿāt, 1420/2000, p. 177.

[46] Nonetheless, according to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, al-Ṭūsī described ʿImād al-Dīn as an oppressive ruler "who was destroying people's homes to build a mansion there." When he died during al-Ṭūsī's visit, the latter apparently inscribed a scoffing quatrain in Persian, quoted by Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, on one of the porticos (*īwān*) of his mansion. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ al-ādāb*, vol. 2, p. 34.

the work's authorship remains a matter of debate among modern scholars, rumours of the Brethren having been Ismāʿīlīs certainly circulated around the time of Buzurgmihr's copying. His younger contemporary Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) described the Brethren in heresiographical terms: at one point, in a discussion of the Mongol sack of Baghdad and al-Ṭūsī's involvement in it, he referred to "the authors (aṣḥāb) of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ* and their like, for they are amongst [the Ismāʿīlīs'] imams," adding that they had propagated ideas concerning the origins of the intellect that had infiltrated the thought of Muslim authors and brought the latter unwittingly close to unbelief.[47] In fact, throughout his many works he repeatedly referred to the Brethren, identifying them variously as Ismāʿīlīs, Qarmaṭians and esotericists (*bāṭiniyya*) while situating the work's composition in early Fatimid Cairo on the basis of internal references in the text to Christian conquests in Syria (referring to the Byzantine advances in the late fourth/tenth century) or in Buyid circles, echoing the narrative about the text's authors first propounded by Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (see below). He also strongly rejected the apparently commonly held association of the text with Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq.[48] Similar ideas subsequently circulated among scholars influenced by Ibn Taymiyya, such as al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), who refers to the Ikhwān in at least two different heresiographical works.[49] Within Nizārī Ismāʿīlī communities, the reception of the *Rasāʾil* was more ambiguous around this time, although the Ismāʿīlī poet Nizārī Quhistānī (d. 720/1320) did refer to members of the Ismāʿīlī community of Tabriz as "Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ" in his *Safarnāma*, possibly suggesting that the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs of Iran and Syria already claimed the *Rasāʾil* as part of the Ismāʿīlī canon.[50] Among the Ṭayyibī Ismāʿīlīs of Yemen, the *Rasāʾil* had been introduced already by the sixth/twelfth century, as is evident from Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī's (d. 557/1162) *Kanz al-walad*.[51] By the ninth/fifteenth century, some authors from this community at-

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[47] Cited in al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, Cairo: al-Muʾassasa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, n.d., vol. 32, pp. 270–271.

[48] For an overview of Ibn Taymiyya's different references to the text, see Yahya J. Michot, "Misled and Misleading … Yet Central in Their Influence: Ibn Taymiyya's Views on the Ikhwân al-Safâʾ," *The Ikhwân al-Safâʾ and their Rasâʾil*, ed. Nader El-Bizri, Oxford: Oxford University Press and Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008, pp. 139–179.

[49] Al-Dhahabī, *Kitāb al-ʿArsh*, ed. Muḥammad b. Khalīfa al-Tamīmī, Medina: al-Jāmiʿa al-Islāmiyya, 2003, vol. 1, p. 86; idem, *al-Muntaqā min minhāj al-iʿtidāl fī naqḍ kalām ahl al-rafḍ wa-l-iʿtizāl*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, Riyadh: Wikālat al-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Tarjama, 1993, vol. 1, pp. 171–172.

[50] See Nadia Eboo Jamal, *Surviving the Mongols: Nizārī Quhistānī and the Continuity of Ismaili Tradition in Persia*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2002, pp. 132–135. Jamal also cites the *Shāfiya*, a work attributed to the ninth/fifteenth-century Syrian Nizārī *dāʿī* Abū Firās al-Maynaqī, which confirms the usage of this appellation by the Ismāʿīlīs of Adharbāyjān in the Mongol period; *Surviving the Mongols*, p. 133.

[51] Farhad Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 234. To be sure, the Ismāʿīlī authors of the Fāṭimid period, such as the *dāʿīs*,

tributed the work explicitly to the hidden Ismāʿīlī imam Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh (d. 225/840).[52] On manuscripts, this attribution appears, as far as we are currently aware, only on two late Bohra copies of the companion texts *Risālat al-Jāmiʿa* and *Risālat Jāmiʿat al-Jāmiʿa*.[53] Instead, the most common attribution of the text on manuscript copies is to the Andalusi scholar Maslama al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964), although in such attributions he is frequently confused with the slightly later Andalusi scholar Maslama al-Majrīṭī (d. 398/1007).[54]

The Esad Efendi manuscript attributes the authorship of the *Rasāʾil* to yet another candidate: the Basran group of scholars who were identified as the work's authors by Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023). While this attribution has been challenged by some scholars because of al-Tawḥīdī's general unreliability, others have endorsed it as accurate. Many accept at least the idea that the text was written by a group of scholars engaged in collaborative reading and writing around the time claimed by al-Tawḥīdī, even if they take al-Tawḥīdī's identification of the members of the group with a pinch of salt.[55] Buzurgmihr's manuscript identifies the

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al-Muʾayyad fī al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī and Nāṣir-i Khusraw, were well familiar and engaged with the *Rasāʾil*.

[52] The earliest evidence for this authorship attribution is in the work of Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468). See Daniel De Smet, "L'auteur des *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* selon les sources ismaéliennes ṭayyibites," *Shii Studies Review* 1 (2017), pp. 151–166.

[53] These are three nineteenth- and twentieth-century manuscripts held by the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, all copied by members of Bohra (that is, Ṭayyibī) communities in India: Ismaili Special Collection Unit MSS 914, 992, 1009. The first of these is a copy of *Risālat Jāmiʿat al-Jāmiʿa*, while the other two volumes together constitute a full copy of the *Risālat al-Jāmiʿa*. The earliest known copy of *Risālat Jāmiʿat al-Jāmiʿa*, in all likelihood produced by a Ṭayyibī scribe in Yemen and dated to 1055/1645, does not claim this authorship: MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, ar. C 93, f. 96b.

[54] There is a significant degree of confusion concerning this author and his role in the transmission of the *Rasāʾil*. The classic study disentangling some of this material is Maribel Fierro, "Bāṭinism in al-Andalus: Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964), Author of the 'Rutbat al-Ḥakīm' and the 'Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm (Picatrix),'" *Studia Islamica* 84 (1996), pp. 87–112. See now also Godefroid de Callataÿ and Sebastien Moureau, "Again on Maslama Ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and Ibn Khaldūn: New Evidence from Two Manuscripts of *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*," *al-Qanṭara* 37 no. 2 (2016), pp. 329–372. See also Godefroid de Callataÿ, "From Ibn Masarra to Ibn ʿArabī: References, Shibboleths and Other Subtle Allusions to the Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ in the literature of al-Andalus," *Studi Magrebini* 12–13 (2014–15), pp. 217–67.

[55] Abbas Hamdani, "Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi and the Brethren of Purity," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 9 no. 3 (1978), pp. 345–353. For a recent affirmation of al-Tawḥīdī's claim, see Marina Rustow, *The Lost Archive: Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020, p. 193. For a balanced assessment, see Godefroid de Callataÿ, *Ikhwan al-Safa': A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam*, Oxford: OneWorld, 2005, pp. 3–11.

authors on the top right panel of the illustrated double frontispiece, thus clearly doing so as part of the original production of the text in a prominent position. He notes that the information was taken from Ẓahīr al-Dīn Abū l-Qāsim al-Bayhaqī's (d. 564/1169) *Tatimmat ṣiwān al-ḥikma*.[56] As if to further underline the relevance of this attribution, a later reader added a *tarjama* for one of these purported Basran authors, Ibn Rifāʿa, taken from "the history" of Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī (d. 764/1363), to the manuscript's flyleaf.[57] However, as Carmela Baffioni has shown, the manuscript also contains some variant material in the 50th epistle that appears to propound distinctly Ismāʿīlī cosmological conceptions.[58] Other variant, though not per se Ismāʿīlī materials in this manuscript have recently been noted by Omar Alí-de-Unzaga.[59] As such, this manuscript appears to occupy an ambiguous place similar to that of the Punjab University Library manuscript as far as the relationship of the text to Ismāʿīlism is concerned. Like the copy of the *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, it may have been based on a copy of the text that circulated in Ismāʿīlī circles and that was transferred to Maragheh or Baghdad after the Mongol conquest. Both manuscripts

[56] For the attribution in al-Bayhaqī's text, see his *Tatimmat ṣiwān al-ḥikma*, ed. Muḥammad Shafī, Lahore: University of the Panjab, 1935, pp. 4–5. On the author, see Heinz Halm, "Bayhaqī, Ẓahīr-al-Dīn," *Encyclopædia Iranica* 3, no. 8 (1998), pp. 895–896, available online at https://iranicaonline.org/articles/bayhaqi-zahir-al-din-abul-hasan-ali-b (accessed 13 April 2022). The attribution to the Basran group is also found on two other early manuscripts (as well as a few later ones), but there the attribution has clearly been added by later hands on the flyleaves: MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Esad Efendi 3637 and MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 6647. In the former, the orthography of the note suggests that the addition on the flyleaf was made still in the Islamic Middle Period, whereas in the latter the authorship is explicitly extracted from the Ottoman bibliographer Ḥājjī Khalīfa's (d. 1068/1657) *Kashf al-ẓunūn*.

[57] Note, however, that this *tarjama* concludes with the statement that some scholars are of the opinion that the *Rasāʾil* was written by a group of Fatimid scholars. Ibn Taymiyya was also aware of the attribution of the text to the Basran group. See Michot, "Misled and Misleading," p. 143.

[58] Carmela Baffioni, "Ismaili Onto-Cosmological Doctrines in the Manuscript Tradition of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ," *Shii Studies Review* 3 (2019), pp. 37–62. It is remarkable that Baffioni apparently did not consider the copyist's identity or the location of copying relevant for this discussion. In another article, she has studied variant material related to Aristotle's *De interpretatione* (ultimately going back to Syriac commentaries) included in the 12th epistle in this manuscript: Baffioni, "Il 'computo delle proposizioni' nel MS Esad Effendi 3638 e la tradizione siro-araba," *Le vie del sapere in ambito siro-mesopotamico dal III al IX secolo: Atti del convegno internazionale tenuto a Roma nei giorni 12–13 maggio 2011*, eds Carla Noce, Massimo Pampaloni and Claudia Tavolieri, Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2013, pp. 253–278.

[59] He notes, among other things, that the version of Epistle 31 "On languages" found in the manuscript is the oldest known attestation of a longer recension than that found in the earliest manuscript. Omar Ali-de-Unzaga, "The Missing Link? MS 1040: An Important Copy of the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'*," *Texts, Scribes and Transmission: Manuscript Cultures of the Ismaili Communities and Beyond*, ed Wafi A. Momin, London: I.B. Tauris 2022, p. 105.

could be fruitful source material for debates about the reception of Ismāʿīlī intellectual history, which has thus far been studied almost exclusively based on the works of intellectual giants such as Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406). The manuscript evidence suggests that debates about the Ismāʿīlīs' intellectual legacy also had repercussions for the choices made by copyists, or at the very least that they created a sensitive situation that the copyists had to manage.

The *tarjama* of Ibn Rifāʿa added to the flyleaf of the *Rasāʾil* manuscript indicates that the space of the codex itself became a venue for discussing a text's origins and values. This addition did not amount to an intervention on the scale of what we can see in the Punjab University Library manuscript, but the flyleaf also includes a line of poetry by Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749/1349) attesting to the growing propagation of the *Rasāʾil* as a cultural reference.[60] Another later reader likewise left a note on the back of the flyleaf in which he mentions having found some statements in the text that accord with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1210) *Kitāb al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya* [*fī ʿilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabīʿiyyāt*]; this note shows that the text was read in conjunction with other important works of philosophy. The later circulation and reception history of the manuscript is not entirely clear, but its appearance in the Esad Efendi Library, which was founded in 1846 on European models and which contained mostly works of history and literature, is interesting.[61]

The year 686/1287 appears to have been a moment of great interest in the *Rasāʾil* in Baghdad: at least one more manuscript of the full *Rasāʾil* was produced there in the same year. This manuscript, which is not nearly as widely known as Esad Efendi 3638, is preserved in Tehran's Majlis-i Shūrā Library, MS 4708.[62] The manuscript was finished only a month before Buzurgmihr's completion date, on 5 Ramaḍān 686 (14 October 1287) in Madīnat al-Salām, i.e. Baghdad, and the copyist gives his name as Khalīl b. Yūsuf b. Sālār b. ʿAlī. We are again lucky that this copyist is included in what has been preserved of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's biographical dictionary. In his short *tarjama* for this copyist, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī notes that he had "accurate, beautiful, and correct handwriting" (*khaṭṭ maḍbūṭ malīḥ ṣaḥīḥ*) and that he copied many books and was interested in philosophy and literature.[63] The copy is

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[60] For this line of poetry and a translation of the full poem from which it was taken, see Gowaart Van Den Bossche, "Oh Brethren, Where Are Ye? How to Search for Words and Phrases in the OpenITI Corpus, Demonstrated with the Phrase 'Ikhwan al-Safa,'" KITAB Project blog, 9 February 2022, http://kitab-project.org/Oh-Brethren-Where-Are-Ye-How-to-search/.

[61] İsmail E. Erünsal, "Istanbul Libraries in the Ottoman Period," *History of Istanbul: From Antiquity to the 21st Century*, vol. 8, *Literature, Arts and Education II*, ed. Ç. Yılmaz, Istanbul: İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, n.d., p. 298.

[62] A digitised microfilm copy is preserved in Arabic Manuscripts Institute Baʿthat Īrān al-thāniyya 172. Our assessment of this manuscript is based on this microfilm copy. See also Dirāyatī, *Fihristgān-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-yi Īrān*, vol. 16, p. 416.

[63] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ al-ādāb*, vol. 5, pp. 13–14 (no. 4530).

indeed written in careful handwriting with a consistent layout, suggesting that it, too, may have been produced for a wealthy patron. Two further manuscript copies of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ* are worthwhile to highlight here, as both were likely produced in the Ilkhanid domains around the same time. The first volume of the two-volume set BnF Arabe 6647–6648 was copied in Shaʿbān 675 (February 1277); the second volume does not include a colophon, but the manuscript is written in the same hand. Although no place of production is noted, by the year 709/1309 the manuscript had ended up in Yazd, where someone crossed out the colophon and added a collation note next to the first volume's colophon.[64] Another important partial copy of the text was produced in this same cultural orbit, but a few decades later, in 717/1318 by Abū al-Ẓaffar Muḥammad b. al-Ashraf b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Nassāba. This is again an agent who was known to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī: he notes that he met him in 707/1307 in Tabriz and provides a rather extensive gene-alogy identifying him as an ʿAlid descendant. He was born in Baghdad in 677/1278–9 and was a respected poet and scholar.[65]

All of this manuscript evidence indicates a notable surge of interest in the *Rasāʾil*, resulting in a flurry of copying activity. The manuscript copied by Buzurg-mihr indicates that this interest was at least in part to be situated in elite circles. The production of two manuscripts of the same text in the same year in the same city further underlines the importance of abandoning facile narratives about that city's decline after the Mongol sack. More than a mere coincidence, the two manu-scripts of the *Rasāʾil* show that the city harboured a lively intellectual culture in which classic texts were reproduced and important new scholarship was continu-ously emerging.

CONCLUSION

Assessments like the one presented in this article will be much facilitated in the future by the manuscript database currently being compiled by the Nomads' Manu-script Landscape project, but even the preliminary survey of a number of cata-logues and databases that we undertook for this paper turned up nearly a hundred manuscripts that were, with a high degree of certainty, produced in the Ilkhanid realm between the sack of Baghdad and the first decade of the eighth/fourteenth century, and nearly half of these were produced in Baghdad itself. This preliminary data suggests that in his later years Buzurgmihr was active not in a declining intel-lectual centre but in what can rightfully be called the intellectual heart of the early Ilkhanid state. Perhaps Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's move to Baghdad just before his death

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[64] MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 6647, folio 191b.

[65] MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Wetzstein 1889. The copy includes the full third *qism* of the text as well as the first *risāla* of the fourth *qism*. Non vidi. W. Ahlwardt, *Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin: Verzeichniss der Arabischen Handschriften,* vol. 4, p. 381 (no. 5041). Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ al-ādāb*, vol. 3, p. 156–7 (no. 2387).

should be seen in that light as well – as a move to a city that had regained some of its intellectual splendour and in which old centres of learning such as the Niẓāmiyya and Mustanṣiriyya madrasas were housing significant numbers of scholars, copyists and students. Recent research by Nourane Ben Azzouna, Michal Biran and Bruno De Nicola has highlighted this vitality, but there is clearly much more that can be fruitfully explored. We hope that the analysis presented here and the accompanying reader demonstrates the importance of colophons and manuscripts in general as a documentary witness in Islamicate intellectual and social history. As highlighted in this paper, consideration of the material aspects of manuscripts and especially the contexts of their copying should be a prominent feature of such investigations into the period's intellectual culture.

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Literary Snippets

Colophons Across Space and Time

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