

# THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM

## THREE

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## Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn

**Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn** b. al-Ḥasan al-Qurashī (d. 872/1468) was nineteenth in the chain of Ismāʿīlī-Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī *dāʿīs* (agents of the religio-political mission called the *daʿwa*), who were vicegerents of the Concealed Imāms (the full title is *al-dāʿī al-muṭlaq*, “the *dāʿī* with absolute authority”). An able religious, political, and military leader, he was also an eminent historian, poet, and theologian.

### 1. LIFE

Idrīs was born in 794/1392 in the citadel of Shibām, in the Ḥarāz Mountain region of Yemen, into a family of *dāʿīs* whose line stretched back to the fifth incumbent, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. al-Walīd al-Qurashī al-ʿAbshamī al-Anf (d. 612/1215). At the time of Idrīs’s birth, his grandfather, ʿAbdallāh Fakhr al-Dīn (d. 809/1406–7), was the sixteenth *dāʿī*; he was followed by Idrīs’s father, al-Ḥasan Badr al-Dīn I (d. 821/1418), the seventeenth *dāʿī*, then by Idrīs’s uncle, ʿAlī Shams al-Dīn II (d. 832/1428), the eighteenth *dāʿī*. It was presumably from them that Idrīs acquired his formidable body of knowledge. From a young age, he was active in the service of the Ṭayyibī *daʿwa* (the Ṭayyibīs are a community of Shīʿī Muslims who belong to the Mustaʿlī branch of the Ismāʿīlīs and trace their religious and literary heritage to the Fāṭimid Imām-caliphs of North Africa and Egypt).

Upon the death of ʿAlī Shams al-Dīn II, Idrīs became the nineteenth *dāʿī*. During the forty years of his reign, Idrīs lived first in the citadel of ʿArās, whence he allied with the Ṭāhirids of Mīqrāna and Zabīd (r. 858–923/1454–1517) and fought several battles against the Zaydī *imāms* of Ṣanʿāʾ. In 840/1436–7, the region was

struck by a plague in which many leaders of the *daʿwa*, including several of Idrīs’s relatives, died. He returned to Shibām, where he lived the rest of his life. Like his predecessors, Idrīs regulated *daʿwa* affairs in India. He is credited by the Indian Ṭayyibī scholar Khawj b. Malak (d. c.1021/1612), in *Sitt Rasāʾil* (fols. 14–6), and by Shaykh Quṭb (d. 1826), in *Muntaẓaʿ al-akhbār* (173–4), with early planning for the transfer of the *daʿwa* seat from Yemen to India, which would take place almost a century later.

Idrīs died in Shibām on 19 Dhū l-Qaʿda 872/10 June 1468, at the age of seventy-six (Ḥasan b. Nūh, 1:250). His line retained the position of *dāʿī* for another two generations: he was succeeded by his sons, the twentieth *dāʿī*, al-Ḥasan Badr al-Dīn II (d. 918/1512) and the twenty-first, al-Ḥusayn Ḥusām al-Dīn (d. 933/1527), followed by his grandsons, the twenty-second *dāʿī*, ʿAlī (b. al-Ḥusayn) Shams al-Dīn III (d. 933/1527), and the twenty-third, Muḥammad (b. al-Ḥusayn) ʿIzz al-Dīn I (d. 946/1539), the last Yemeni incumbent, who, at his death, transferred his authority to the first Indian *dāʿī*. Idrīs’s mausoleum in Shibām, rebuilt in 1431/2010 by the fifty-second (Indian) *dāʿī* Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn (d. 2014), is regularly visited by Ṭayyibī Bohra pilgrims from both Yemen and India (the Bohra are a community of Indian Muslims who subscribe to the Ṭayyibī branch of Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism) [Illustrations 1 and 2].

### 2. WORK

Notwithstanding other pressing duties, Idrīs spent much of his time teaching and writing books that would become foundational works of the Ṭayyibī *daʿwa*. His favoured spot for writing was by a pond just below Shibām called Birkat Jawjab,



Illustration 1. Ṭayyibī Bohra pilgrims from Yemen and India paying respects in Shibām at the new mausoleum of Idrīs at the time of its inauguration in 1431/2010. Photograph courtesy of Aziz Qutbuddin.

which is still shown by local guides. The earliest description of eleven works by him is provided by the Indian-Yemeni Ṭayyibī scholar Ḥasan b. Nūḥ (d. 939/1533) in *Kitāb al-azhār* (“Book of blossoms,” 2:17–23), reiterated by Quṭb (167–9; Sayyid, 10–6, provides an annotated list of fourteen works, the attributions to Idrīs of the last three being doubtful.)

Idrīs wrote three major works of history: (1) best known is his seven-volume history of Islam, *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* (“Flowing springs of historical reports”). Particularly noteworthy for its unique Fāṭimid-Ṭayyibī perspective, it begins with the life of the prophet Muḥammad, then narrates the histories of ʿAlī, Fāṭima, and the twenty-one Imāms, including the Fāṭimid caliph-Imāms of North Africa

and Egypt (297–524/909–1130), as well as the Fāṭimid *daʿwa* in Yemen under the Ṣulayhids, who ruled the southern highlands and Tihāma region from 439/1047 to 532/1138. Companion to the works of the Mamlūk historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), the *ʿUyūn* is arguably the most detailed source of Fāṭimid history. Two complementary texts—(2) *Nuḥat al-afkār* (“A promenade for minds”), and (3) *Rawḍat al-akhbār* (“A garden of historical reports”)—chronicle the history of the Ṭayyibī *dāʿīs* in Yemen up to the author’s time; they are also our main source for Idrīs himself, used by Shaykh Quṭb for his biography of Idrīs (166–75) and other Yemeni *dāʿīs*.

Two other large works by Idrīs are (4) *Ẓahr al-maʿānī* (“Flowers of meanings”), a



Illustration 2. A view of Shibām in the Ḥarāz mountains. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, by yeowatzup from Germany, 2010.

high-level book of theology (*ḥaqāʾiq*); and (5) a *dīwān* (collection) of eloquent poetry in the Fāṭimid *daʿwa* poetry tradition of al-Muʿayyad al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078), containing praise of Muḥammad, ʿAlī, the Imāms, doctrinal articulations, lament poems for al-Ḥusayn (the martyr of Karbalāʾ), and expressions of personal spirituality.

Six shorter treatises by Idrīs are: (6) *Ḍiyāʾ al-baṣāʾir wa-zubdat al-sarāʾir*, a question-and-answer (*masāʾil*) work on difficult theological issues; (7) *Risālat al-bayān limā wajab fī taʾwīl shahr Rajab wa-taʾwīl al-ashhur al-thalātha Rajab wa-Shaʿbān wa-shahr Ramaḍān wa-maʿnā ṣalāt Umm Dāʾūd wa-maʿnā al-ṣiyām*, an esoteric exposition (*taʾwīl*) on the meaning of the months of Rajab, Shaʿbān, and Ramaḍān, the meaning of the ritual prayer of the fifteenth of Rajab, and the fast of Ramaḍān; (8) *Risālat ṭīlāḥ al-aʿlām wa-ibānat al-ḥujja*

*fī kamāl ʿiddat al-ṣiyām*, a treatise on the necessity of completing the full thirty days of fasting; (9) *Risāla fī l-radd ʿalā ʿālim min ʿulamāʾ al-Ṣaydiyya*, a refutation of the work of a Zaydī scholar; (10) *Risāla fī l-radd ʿalā al-zindīq al-musammā bi-l-Jamal*, a treatise against an atheist referred to as al-Jamal (the Camel); (11) and *Risālat mudhīdat al-buhtān wa-mūḍīhat al-ḥaqq fī ṣawm shahr Ramaḍān*, a treatise against a group of Indians (perhaps Bohra dissidents) who were, in opposition to Ismāʿīlī doctrine, promoting *ruʾyat al-hilāl* (moon-sighting) for marking the beginning and end of Ramaḍān.

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## Ikhwān, Saudi Arabia

The **Ikhwān** were Arab tribesmen from the territory of Najd who abandoned nomadic life to settle in agricultural colonies in the early twentieth century and who embraced the Wahhābī doctrine, thereby playing a significant role in the rise of modern **Saudi Arabia**. They considered the shift from nomadic to sedentary life as a migration from unbelief to belief, hence a settlement was called a *hijra* (pl. *hujar*), or place of emigration, an allusion to the prophet Muḥammad's emigration from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E. The Ikhwān contributed zealous fighters to 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Sa'ūd's (c. 1880–1953) military campaign to restore Saudi power in the Arabian Peninsula.

How the Ikhwān first formed and whose idea it was to establish their colonies is not known. The earliest colony dates to around 1912. Abandoning nomadism had two notable effects. First, Ibn Sa'ūd's nascent polity could more easily control tribesmen dependent on cultivation. Second, their settlement made it possible to instruct them in the Wahhābī doctrine, which endorsed obedience to the ruler and waging *jihād*.

While the Ikhwān proved of great military worth to Ibn Sa'ūd, especially in the conquest of the Ḥijāz in the early 1920s, their zeal also implied challenges to his rule. The massacre of al-Ṭā'if in 1924, where Ikhwān killed several hundred men after conquering the town, was one notorious example of their understanding of *jihād*. Ibn Sa'ūd was careful to limit Ikhwān participation in the conquest of Mecca in October 1924 to avoid international Muslim outrage over a possible violation of its sanctity. He then disappointed Ikhwān tribal *shaykhs* when he did not appoint them to govern parts of the Ḥijāz.