

limited to writings by Jewish authors; *Kitāb al-Kāfi* by Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (colophon reproduced in plate X), for example, is transcribed into Hebrew letters. Attention should be called in particular to Antidotarium Nicolai (entry 34*), an influential Latin treatise on compound remedies, which exists in many Hebrew manuscripts, and several Arabic ones. These are translations from Latin; all extant Arabic versions are in Hebrew script! Other texts are written in Karshuni. Yet with the exception of entry 78C, where some words are printed out in Syriac, the extracts in the catalogue are all transcribed back into the Arabic alphabet. For the list of remedies taken from Nicolas, printed on pages 125–30, Savage-Smith has added to the transcribed Arabic-letter name a Hebrew transliteration in Arial Unicode. This policy is a throwback to the scholarly practice of one-hundred years ago. It may be a necessary convenience for those unable to read anything that is not in the Arabic alphabet, but it comes at the expense of the autonomy of Hebrew and Syriac letters. In any event, it is certainly wrong to dub as “original” an Arabic-letter text by Maimonides. A number of autographed medical fragments of Maimonides have been found in the Cairo Genizah, and they are in Hebrew letters.

The volume has been proofread very carefully. There is, however, one recurring typographical error – the result, I assume, of using a copy and paste function in the word-processor, so that the same error appears more than once: F. Rosenthal’s studies are collected in F. Rosenthal, obviously, not R. Rosenthal, *Science and Medicine in Islam* (pp. 9, 18).

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FRANÇOIS DE BLOIS:

Arabic, Persian and Gujarati Manuscripts: The Hamdani Collection in the Library of the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

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In the eighteenth century a learned Ismaili named ‘Alī b. Sa‘īd al-Ya‘burī al-Hamdānī migrated from Yemen to Gujarat. He brought manuscripts that became the beginnings of a family library, which was considerably augmented by his descendants, some of whom were eminent Bohra Ismaili scholars. The library included many texts regarded as secret to the Bohra Ismailis and not for outsiders, although they also included texts by non-Ismaili authors. In the twentieth century, manuscripts of the Hamdani family collection were among the most significant to be consulted in the modern scholarly publications that opened the Ismaili literary tradition to non-Ismailis.

A portion of this library is now dispersed (pp. xxv–xxxiv), but Professor Abbas Hamdani, a descendant of ‘Alī ibn Sa‘īd al-Hamdānī, has donated 270 of them to the Institute of Ismaili Studies (London), where they now reside. Professor Hamdani’s generosity and foresight in making this donation are highly praiseworthy, as it has made accessible to interested scholars major works of the Ismaili literary heritage that were not otherwise available, including many texts not yet published. The volume under review here presents detailed descriptions of these manuscripts, many containing more than one text. Ten pages of the front matter (pp. xxv–xxxiv) consist of Abbas Hamdani’s own “History of the Hamdani Collection of

Manuscripts”, including important and interesting family history relevant to the history of the manuscripts. Apart from this, the volume is the result of much hard work and painstaking attention by François de Blois. It is the fourth catalogue of manuscripts from the Institute for Ismaili Studies to be published so far, following that of Adam Gacek in two volumes (London, 1984–85) and two by Delia Cortese (New York and London, 2001 and 2003). The texts by Ismaili authors that make up the bulk of the collection derive from different periods: a few very old texts attributed to Ja‘far b. Maṣūir al-Yaman (d. c. 950) (but which may be older, see p. 7), and then others by authors of the Fātimid period, of Ṣulayḥid Yemen, of Ṭayyibīs in India, as well as copies of sections of the *Rasā‘il Ikhwān al-ṣafā’*. There are also a number of works on religious subjects by Zaydis, Twelver Shiis, Sunnis, and miscellaneous works on Arabic language, poetry, *adab*, history, philosophy, astronomy, medicine and the occult arts. The overwhelming majority of the Hamdani manuscripts are written in Arabic, although there are several Persian manuscripts as well as several in Gujarati (the latter in either the Gujarati or the Arabic script). Most of the manuscripts were copied in the nineteenth century, but there are thirty-one older dated manuscripts. The eldest of them contains the *Kitāb al-riyāḍ* of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 1020/21), the first half of which was copied before 1359 (pp. 60–66). Other highlights include manuscripts written by means of ciphers in “secret scripts” (pp. xxii–xxiii) and the only two known copies of the letters of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qummī, an eleventh-century secretary of the Ṣulayḥid kings and a noted figure in his time (Mss. 1487–8, handlist 36a–b; pp. 91–5). Each manuscript is provided with a physical description, summaries of contents, commentary, and bibliographies. A small number of the manuscripts are described in only very brief terms, as damage from worms and other factors have brought them to the point of disintegration. These were too fragile to be examined closely, as observed in the introductory notes (p. xxii).

This manuscript catalogue will serve as a reference work not just for these particular manuscripts, but for all the texts described herein. De Blois’ commentary frequently provides important contributions to the study of the texts themselves, not just the manuscripts. For example, his treatment of the Hamdani manuscript of *Kitāb al-‘ālim wa-l-ghulām* (Ms. 1402, handlist 29; pp. 5–9) delivers good reasons for calling into question the ascription of this text to Ja‘far b. Maṣūir al-Yaman (as accepted, for example, by its editor, James Morris). The bibliographies accompanying the entries on the texts are responsible and make it even more useful as a reference for research on Ismaili literary tradition. I found only a few oversights in the bibliography: Strothmann (1952), mentioned on p. xxiii, is missing from the bibliography; the entries on the two manuscript copies of Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī’s *Kitāb al-Zīna* (pp. 18–20) might have referred to Jamal Ali’s *Language and Heresy in Ismaili Thought: The Kitāb al-Zīna of Abu Hatim al-Razi* (Piscataway, 2008).

The volume is equipped with useful apparatus such as genealogical tables of the Ṣulayḥids of medieval Yemen and of the Hamdani family, indexes of titles, authors, scribes, and manuscripts dated before 1800, and twenty black-and-white photographs and eight colour plates giving examples of manuscript leaves.

No student of Ismaili texts or of Arabic learning in India can afford to overlook this catalogue. It belongs in every reference collection on Arabic literature.

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