

The “Language of God” in Muslim and Jewish Traditions: A Case Study

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The first part of this paper deals with an addition to Epistle 50 of the encyclopaedia of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ entitled “On the Quantity and the Quality of the Species of Administration” (*Fī kammiyya anwā’ al-siyāsāt wa-kayfiyyatihā*)¹. The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ – the “Brethren of Purity” – are the authors of the first medieval encyclopaedia of sciences. The encyclopaedia is a collection of 52 Epistles, divided into four sections: i) propaedeutic sciences; ii) natural sciences; iii) sciences of the soul; and iv) theological sciences. The most recent researches consider that the various epistles were written at different times around the end of the ninth century and the first half of the tenth century. They are extremely heterogeneous, reflecting Babylonian, Indian, Persian, Jewish and gnostic influences, with a number of biblical quotations. The core source is, however, Greek thought. Foreign sciences are reworked to represent the whole religious education intended for an *élite*. Many scholars conjecture that the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ were committed to Ismā’īlī thought, but the question is still open.

¹ My new edition and translation of this epistle appeared in Baffioni *et al.* 2019. For the title see *ivi*, 192.

Ep. 50 describes the “proper attitudes” – a possible translation of the Arabic *siyāsa* – towards body and soul: these are “moderation” and “correct behaviour”. The proper attitudes towards family and fellows are considered subsequently: the rule is even-handed behaviour towards all. In the second part of the treatise, without preamble, the subject of “worship” is addressed. The Ikhwān say that there are two kinds of worship, the one prescribed by the Prophet Muḥammad and the one performed by Greek philosophers; they add to these kinds of worship and their festivals the worship proper to their Brotherhood, which is difficult to understand. What seems obvious, however, is that these forms of worship and their festivals are kinds of “proper attitudes” through which humanity can attain “angelic form”. This purpose is, as we know, the basis of the knowledge and faith of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’.

The addition appears in the Istanbul MS Esad Efendi 3638 (1287 A.D.)²; it is attached at the end of the main text like a seal:

In a copy different from the original (*aṣl*), from which it has been reported at the beginning of this ni<nth> Epistle named “On the Species of [Proper] Attitude>s”, there is a chapter mentioned at its [= of the original] end [that] completes what is necessary to attach to the end of the “Epistle on [Proper] Attitudes”, as its seal, [which] we have reported up to there, and it is this one. (fol. 280a3-4)

The term *aṣl* may indicate either the author’s holograph or a text from which other scripts are derived. This manuscript is hence important for the transmission of the text of the *Rasā’il*, of which the copyist was also aware. At the end of the addition he says: “Copied *verbatim* from a not completely reliable copy. I have compared [it] critically with [another] copy, through which it could be emended, God willing, exalted be He” (fol. 282a4-5). The title is:

Chapter on the knowledge of the universal Adam and his wife, and of the universal Iblīs, of the tree and of interdiction [not to eat] of it; of what happened of the issue with regard to this in the initial condition; of the disobedience that occurred in the world of the [Universal] Soul, of how the sequence of the issue was and how the effusion of the faculty of the [Universal] Soul was in the first of the human individuals and in the Adamic form – namely, [in] the particular Adam, the disobedient, on whom the interdiction of eating the vegetal tree fell; and [on] its explanation from its beginning in the initial state of the elements till the moment of his manifestation in the microcosm, as what appeared in the elements in potentiality appeared [later] in the world of composition in actuality. (fol. 280a4-8)

This is clearly one of the texts that might support the commitment of the Ikhwān to esoterism and even Ismā’īlism. The text is extremely difficult to understand,

² A complete edition and translation of this appendix has been published *ivi*, 237-277.

largely because many words in the MS lack diacritical marks; this might indicate the ignorance of the copyist, who might have been working on a corrupt model, or more probably his determination to maintain the secrecy of some basic points of the text.

1. THE FIGURE OF ADAM IN THE MS ISTANBUL ESAD EFENDI 3638

Before studying the passage I wish to approach in detail, I shall outline the general content of the addition, which is divided into four chapters. At the outset the author(s) say the text contains a symbolic explanation of various kinds of worship, and hence the content of the addition is linked to that of Epistle 50. The aim of the text, in view of major controversies in various groups in contemporaneous Islam, is to disclose secret knowledge about the scriptural story of Adam.

The writer(s) rely on the principle that "roots" must be addressed before any "ramifications". All that exists in the human world already existed potentially in the "roots". This is the case with the story of Adam: in the cosmology described in the text, the universal Adam is said to be the same as the Active Intellect, and the universal Eve the same as the Universal Soul. The desire of the Universal Soul to join Matter is the first "fall" corresponding to the fall narrated in the Scriptures. Just as the human form appeared from the Universal Soul the particular Adam branched off from the universal Eve. The particular Eve appeared from the particular Adam; and as the Active Intellect is superior to the Universal Soul, so the male is nobler than the female. A proof of that is that a sexual relationship does not bring any pain to the man, whereas it results in painful childbirth for the woman.

The rational soul also proceeds from the Universal Soul, and like Matter receives her benefits – but because this comes from a degradation of the Universal Soul, so the rational soul is corrupted by the imaginative faculty that leads it to commixture with natural faculties. The rational soul is the particular Adam, the appetitive faculty is Iblīs and the forbidden tree is Nature.

Even in her abased condition the Universal Soul continues to look for similarity to her cause – the Active Intellect. So, by returning to her initial state she redeems the rational soul. This redemption occurs at the time of the "second beginning" – the restoration of a new Cycle of Unveiling³. During the Cycle of

³ According to Shī'ism and Ismā'ilism, the current human history has seen a succession of six *nuṭāqā'* (pl. of *nāṭiq*, "speaking"), "prophets who bring a religious law": Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. This whole period is considered to be a "Cycle of Occultation" (*ṣatr*), because the true knowledge is hidden behind the exoteric religious Law. Every *nāṭiq* has his own trustee who reveals – to the initiates only – the esoteric meaning of their own Law. Before the Cycle of Occultation,

Unveiling, particular souls return to the Universal Soul purified as a result of the appearance of a “perfect form” – the Shī’ī (or Ismā’īlī) *imām*. In the Cycle of Occultation, however, this perfect form was absent because Iblīs has gained power. Through the Cycles of Unveiling and Occultation, therefore, we have returned to the story of the scriptural Adam – the particular Adam – with whom the story of the *imām* is now interwoven. The redemption of the particular souls and of the Universal Soul are symbolised by the resurrection of each single individual and the Great Resurrection – the Day of Judgement. The chapter of the addition we are interested in speaks of:

[...] the meaning of the particular Adam – understanding by him the first of the human forms [...], [of] his Iblīs, of his wife and of the tree [...] according to the meaning of the interpretation [...] related to the first of the *qā’ims* in the human cycles who existed at the end of the first Cycle of Unveiling [...] the Adam supported by the perfection of the male, his wife who obeyed him, the pure progeny spread from them, [and] Iblīs, absent [...] at its [= of the Cycle of Unveiling] beginning, [but] present at its end [...] [It is a Chapter concerning] the existence of the Adam who became manifest at the beginning of the Cycle of Occultation; the victory of Iblīs over him through seduction, ruse and treachery; his [= Adam’s] association with his [= Iblīs’] children, and [Iblīs’] resistance to the Lord of the Imperative. (fol. 281b8-13)

The way in which he is defined indicates that “Adam” is either the universal Adam – the progenitor of humankind – or the perfect *imām* who lived in the first Cycle of Unveiling, when Iblīs was absent. The apparition of Iblīs is located at the beginning of our Cycle of Occultation. But the particular Adam is also hinted at, to whom the Lord of the Imperative – in Ismā’īlī terms, God – “[...] had delivered [...] the legacy of what will come to pass [...] had given [*al-taslīm*] [...] the letters of the names by which the knowledge of things is extracted after [their] composition and aggregation” (fol. 281b13-14).

2. LETTERS, NAMES AND KNOWLEDGE

The submission of letters and names is described in Chapter 4 of the addition, and I wish to deal with it in particular.

there was a period in which the esoteric meaning of the Law was fully manifest (namely, a “Cycle of Unveiling”, *kashf*). The seventh individual, the *qā’im*, will abrogate Muḥammad’s Law and restore the pure affirmation of divine unity and uniqueness of the times preceding Adam’s fall; in doing so, he will open a new Cycle of Unveiling. According to some later Ismā’īlī trends, there is an endless alternation between Cycles of Unveiling and Occultation.

According to Qur'an 2:30-34 God taught Adam the names of creatures when He decided to establish him as His vicar on earth – and in doing so He placed him above the angels:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth.' They said: 'Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? – whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify thy holy (name)?' He said: 'I know what ye know not.' And He taught Adam the nature of all things [literally, the names, here and later, C.B.]; then He placed them before the angels, and said: 'Tell Me the nature of these if ye are right.' They said: 'Glory to Thee, of knowledge we have none, save what Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom.' He said: 'O Adam! Tell them their natures.' When he had told them, Allah said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?' And behold, We said to the angels: 'Bow down to Adam,' and they bowed down: not so Iblīs: he refused and was haughty: he was of those who reject Faith. (trans. Yusuf Ali 2000)

Other Qur'anic passages tell about the refusal of Iblīs to prostrate himself before Adam, his urging Adam to disobedience and the expulsion from Paradise of Adam and Eve and Iblīs himself⁴, but this is the only verse in which Adam and the "names" are mentioned.

In Islam, by dint of the divine teaching of the names, Adam becomes the first *nāṭiq*, the first speaker, that is the first "bringer of a Revelation" – the Revelation of the names as manifesting knowledge of the essence or true nature of the creatures.

Verses 31-37 of sura 2 have been interpreted by Henry Corbin in a way that could partially agree with our addition, because it refers to the scriptural Adam and to the Shī'ī *imām* as well. According to Corbin, the Great Cycle that includes the totality of the Cycles – the "first beginning" in our text – began with a Cycle of Unveiling inaugurated by the Manifestation of the universal Adam, the Πανάνθρωπος; each Cycle in turn is inaugurated by a particular Adam. Thus the "historical" Adam of our Cycle, spoken of in the Bible and the Qur'an, is far from having been the first man on earth. At the time of the grave symptoms which marked the end of the Cycle of Unveiling that preceded our Cycle, the last *imām* decided once more to impose the discipline of the Arcane, and to confer the imamate to the young Adam – the vicar on the earth spoken of in the Qur'an –, whose father had himself died in the flower of his youth. The transition to the Cycle of Occultation is marked by the entrance of an Antagonist, who is the personification of that Iblīs who, before the beginning of Time, caused the partial obfuscation of the Angel of Humanity. He is one of the surviving dignitaries of

⁴ Qur'an 2: 33; 7: 12-13; 15: 26-36; 17: 64 and 66; 18: 49; 20: 116, and 15: 27.

the previous Cycle who, as such, is of “an essence of fire”. This means that he possesses a direct knowledge of the Truths of the Gnosis, whereas Adam is made of clay, and this means that the sole knowledge that he transmits to those of his Cycle is a hermeneutic of Symbols. Hence the Antagonist refuses to acknowledge him as the *imām* – to “prostrate himself before him” – and decides to provoke a catastrophe. So, he induces the young *imām* to transgress the limits of Eden – where symbols burgeon and in which he is still allowed to dwell by the discipline of the Arcane. He incites Adam to aspire to the Knowledge reserved to the sublime Angels – namely, to the knowledge of hidden Realities that constitutes in its own right the state of Resurrection. So, Adam “breaks the fast”, the vow of silence that is the main ritual prescription of the esoteric Order. “To break the fast” is to taste of the Tree of Knowledge reserved to angels in actuality, to strip oneself of the protective veil of symbol; and this is how Adam appears before his own appalled dignitaries, in that state of terrifying nakedness which leaves him defenceless. Everybody must then leave Paradise⁵.

With regard to our text, however, Corbin’s interpretation is defective because it does not consider the issue of the “names”. This is not only a central issue in our text, it seems to “supplement” the Qur’an, which does not say that God is the “bestower of letters” as well as of names. Letters, in fact, form names when they are in state of “aggregation and composition” and, as taught in logical treatises, are meaningful only when they combine with each other to give origin to words⁶.

But this state of aggregation and composition was “contrary” to the disposition of the letters during the Cycle of Unveiling:

However, they combined with each other in a way contrary to the disposition at the time of the Cycle of Unveiling, when those letters were separated in the subtleties of speculations while lights were united to them as they [= speculations] were free from disobedience and deprived of error and the infamous faults – and the [letters] were not veiled from their reading and their dispositions.

When [Eve] disobeyed and involved [Adam] in her disobedience, she looked to God’s mercy but her disobedience had concealed it. He gave in to it and to what she had read out [= the letters in their primordial isolation] and considered what she had been looking at when she succumbed and evil overcame her. So, they were sent in

⁵ Corbin 1986, 150-152 (= Corbin 1950, 202-206 *passim*; see 217-218).

⁶ With this regard, it is worth recalling that in his version of the *Sefer yeširah* (on which see *infra*) the great rabbi, philosopher and exegete Sa’adiah ben Yosef Gaon (Arabic: Sa’id ibn Yūsuf al-Fayyūmi; Dilas 882 – Baghdad 942) understands the three *sepharim* mentioned at the beginning of the text as meaning that an idea can be expressed through three things: i) sound, to which words correspond; ii) words, which constitute language; and iii) phrases, which come from the mouth. Neither sounds nor words have intelligible meaning in themselves: sense is complete in phrases only. Saadya 1986, 46. *Ivi*, 47, we find a reference to Psalms 19,4. Saadiah’s personal opinion is that things were made out of numbers and letters (*ivi*, 25).

the world of body and dropped <...>, and those forms turned into incomprehensible letters. When they were aggregated, the names of those luminous forms were drawn out from them – [as] the letters proper to the [Universal] Soul – and he [= Adam] was characterised by names without meaning. (fol. 281b14-19)

Our addition means that at the time of the Cycle of Unveiling, in a state of primordial innocence, letters were separated from each other and still their meaning could be understood thanks to the divine light. After Adam's fall, they became "incomprehensible", that is, conjoined in a way that no longer corresponded to the forms inscribed in the Active Intellect. At this moment, the Cycle of Occultation began:

For that [reason] the Cycle of Occultation came after that Adam, with his progeny, was charged with the names: among them [= Adam's progeny] [there was] he who worshipped a name without meaning, he who worshipped a meaning and did not conceal it with a name, and he who knew the name and was sure of the meaning – for this one, worship was perfect. (fol. 281b19-21)

On the one hand, these words may be an allusion to the imperfection of the revelation of Adam, as of each revelation in human Cycles preceding that of the Prophet of Islam. On the other hand, they hint at the *imām*, who is the only person capable – in the Cycle of Occultation – of remembering the "original" names along with the meanings that match them, and hence to accomplish perfect worship – that is, to attain the degree of angels. The *imām*, in fact, knows all the forms inscribed in the Active Intellect – the letters that in primordial time were separated from each other and could be read in another kind of "disposition". This is confirmed by the following lines, where after having mentioned the disobedience of our progenitors, the text passes to the disobedience of Iblīs:

When Iblīs, who was the last one to remain of the people of the Cycle of Unveiling, saw that [that] Adam did not give names composed of letters [in the correct disposition] – indeed, he was giving the people of his Cycle names without knowledge of meanings, abstracted from their matter –, he disdained His order to obey and said, *I am better than he: Thou didst create me from fire, and him from clay* [Qur'an 7:12]. (fol. 281b21-23)

The refusal of Iblīs to prostrate himself is due to the fact that, he being "made out of fire", "[...] he had read those names without aggregation or composition, through a luminous investigation and a rational consideration, free of turbid faults" (fol. 281b23-24). Iblīs knows that an *imām* retains the memory of the original names; if he gives (like the scriptural Adam after the fall), the people of his Cycle names "without knowledge of meanings" (*dūna ma'rifat al-ma'ānī*), he is no longer worthy of his title. Therefore, Iblīs – the only survivor of the

Cycle of Unveiling, who has read the names in their primordial isolation, in the state of innocence – refuses to prostrate himself before the *imām*. But saying that an *imām* gives names to the people of his Cycle “without knowledge of meanings” can only indicate for him the practice of *taqiyya* – dissimulation or denial of religious belief and practice in the face of persecution in the Cycle of Occultation, when people should not know their true meanings. *Dūna ma’rifat al-ma’ānī* means not “without knowing”, but “without making people know”, “without they know” their meanings. Such a misunderstanding would be Iblīs’ fault; for this reason, his refusal to comply with God’s order causes his expulsion from Paradise.

But when he resisted with this [kind of] resistance, he was veiled from that view, was turned upside down, became confused, ceased from that consideration and was veiled from it, and it was said to him, *get out, for thou art of the meanest (of creatures)* [Qur’an 7: 13], for your resistance and your opposition [see Qur’an 7: 12; 17: 66]. (fol. 281b24-25)

Though Iblīs is said to be the one who “expected the pure worship [...] [in reality], by opposing to his Lord, [he] desired to be associated [with Him]” (fol. 281b12). Therefore, not only is this Iblīs charged with the sin of *hybris* – as is the case for his disobedience to prostrate himself before the scriptural Adam: he is now charged with polytheism, because he wanted to appropriate for himself functions proper to God (here, the function of judgment). The text ends as follows:

This is an indication of what is found in the human circle and [in] the descendants of Adam when chiefs come and those who follow them in the Cycle of Unveiling: through their essential, luminous lights they investigate knowledge as if it were a reflection without composition or aggregation, and the intermediaries that pass that knowledge to them [= the descendants of Adam] are [of the same nature as the Universal] Soul, holy [for the] faculty of the [Active] Intellect. [Instead,] in the Cycle of Occultation the meanings of the intelligible and the sensible objects are notified to them, but their investigation [is associated] with composition and aggregation, and with the conjunction of the subtle with the dense. (fol. 281b33-282a1)⁷

To sum up: In the state of primordial innocence, the letters are isolated, but perfectly comprehensible in themselves. In the Cycle of Unveiling, God submits them to Adam in the correct composition and aggregation, transmitting to

⁷ I limit myself to remark that this paragraph might contain another resemblance with the above-mentioned interpretation by Corbin, but saving the *imām*’s impeccability and infallibility. If “chiefs and those who follow them in the Cycle of Unveiling” hint at the highest degrees of the Ismā’īlī hierarchy, the text might mean that in the Cycle of Occultation they have investigated isolated letters and pure forms and transmitted such a knowledge, which should have been kept secret.

him the knowledge of the entire creation. But after the fall, the understanding of the meanings of sensible and intelligible things is endangered by changed composition and aggregation. The "letters" in the lower world are only a pale image of the letters of the heavenly world, characterised by direct origination from God. From the ontological standpoint, the junction of the rarefied with the dense corresponds with this feature.

3. THE *SEFER YEṢIRAH* AS GROUND OF ABULAFIA'S KABBALISTIC DOCTRINE

In this section I first compare the addition with the views of the Spaniard mystic and thinker Abraham Abulafia, one of the most important representatives of the ecstatic and prophetic Kabbalah. He was born in Zaragoza in 1240 and died some time after 1291⁸.

Divine language is the core of Abulafia's kabbalistic views⁹. As we know he developed his theories on the basis of the first Judaic script on the topic, the ancient *Sefer Yeṣirah* "The Book of Formation". Here the term "formation" indicates a work or "creation" from something pre-existing and hence excludes *creatio ex nihilo*¹⁰. A part of tradition ascribes the book to the patriarch Abraham, mentioned at the end of the text, who is considered to be the inventor of the alphabet. Another tradition points to the "Chief of the Sages" Rabbi Akiva ben Joseph (ca. 50-135 A.D.), a leading contributor to the *Mishnah* and to *Midrash*

⁸ Some time ago, I participated in the conference *Centri e periferie nella storia del pensiero filosofico* (Lecce, 26-28 marzo 2017), where I read a paper (Baffioni Forthcoming) in which I considered the issue of the language taught to Adam in the addition, in light of the article "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" by Walter Benjamin (1892-1940). This essay was brought to my attention by Tara Woolnough, editor in chief of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. I quote from Benjamin 1986. The text remained unpublished during Benjamin's life, and was first published in Edmund Jephcott's English translation in 1978 (Benjamin 1986, 74). German version titled "Über die Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen", in *Angelus Novus*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag 1966. Despite the wide debate around the time of its composition, the article is supposed to have been inspired by Gershom Scholem, who initiated Benjamin to Jewish mystics. For the suggestion to consider Abulafia I thank in particular Fabrizio Lelli, Antonino Rubino and Diana Di Segni. I am also deeply indebted to my colleague and friend Giancarlo Lacerenza, who attentively read a first draft of this paper offering illuminating suggestions, and kindly provided me with some materials related to my research. Of course, all deficiencies are my own responsibility.

⁹ As remarked by Lacerenza, one should not speak of Kabbalah before the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. Therefore, referring to the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, I simply speak of "Jewish influences". We could suggest a kabbalistic influence for the text of the MS Istanbul Efendi 3638, but there is no certainty about when it has been actually written.

¹⁰ "The verb *br'* used in the very first sentence of the creation story does not imply [...] *creatio ex nihilo*, a concept that first appears in II Maccabees 7 :28, but denotes, as it does throughout the Bible, a divine activity that is effortlessly effected" (Paul 1971, 1059). On the reason of Castelli's translation "creazione" and not "formazione" see [Donnolo] 1880, 38.

Halakha (Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph 1970, 10): obviously, both attributions are without foundations and the real authorship of the book remains a matter of debate¹¹.

Accordingly, the hypotheses concerning the dating of the *Sefer Yeşirah* are numerous. Some authors – such as for instance Lazarus Goldsmith – placed the *Sefer Yeşirah* at 100 A.D., others – such as Leopold Zunz – between 800 and 900 A.D. Gershom Scholem proposes a range between the third and the sixth century, in Palestine¹². According to Piergabriele Mancuso, the work was likely composed between the sixth and the seventh century in Palestinian area (Mancuso 2001, 7).

We can read the *Sefer Yeşirah* in a short version of 1,300 words and a long one of 2,500 words¹³, to which the abovementioned version of Sa'adiah ben Yosef Gaon and that of Rabbi Eliyahu Gaon of Vilna (1720-1797) are to be added (Mancuso 2001, 8). The *Sefer Yeşirah* was introduced to Christian scholarship via a Latin translation of William Postel in 1552 (Klein 1994), ten years prior to the first issue of the printed Hebrew text, which took place in Mantua in 1562 (Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph 1970, 3).

The book is divided into two parts. The first consists of a cosmology, and the second establishes a correspondence between the work of God in the universe and in the human body – with no mention of a human soul.

The *Sefer Yeşirah* says that God engraved His name in thirty-two mysterious Paths of Wisdom, through three *Sepharim* (*sprym*)¹⁴. That is to say that the universe was created through the three divisions of creation called *sefer*, *sefar* and *sippur* (I, 1)¹⁵. These terms are variously understood and translated by scholars¹⁶, but they can be generally deemed to refer to numbers, letters and the ways in which they are combined in words or speech.

The thirty-two Paths are the ten *Sephiroth* and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The *Sephiroth* are said to be the same as numbers (I, 3)¹⁷ and are to be understood as the degrees of creation. From the Spirit God “produced

¹¹ On this see e.g. [Donnolo] 1880, 13. According to Scholem, the attribution to rabbi Akiva “only makes its appearance in the Kabbalah literature from the 13th century onward” (Scholem 1971b, 786).

¹² Various hypotheses are discussed: see Scholem 1971b, 785-786.

¹³ Both the versions are edited in Hayman 2004.

¹⁴ *Sprym* is only a plural hinting at three different objects with a common root *spr*. Therefore, Lacerenza proposes to leave it untranslated. The term, however, is sometimes translated as “books”. So the English translator, William Wynn Westcott: “SPRIM, the plural masculine of SPR, commonly translated *book* or *letter*: the meaning here is plainly ‘forms of expression’”. *Sepher Yetzirah* 1893, 34: note 7. No translation provided in Shadmi’s Italian version. *Sepher Yetzira*’ 1981, 8.

¹⁵ See *Sepher Yetzirah* 1893, 34: note 8.

¹⁶ [Donnolo] 1880, 32-33; Mancuso 2001, 106; Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph 1970, 5; Saadya 1986, 30.

¹⁷ On this see [Donnolo] 1880, 23.

Air, and formed in it twenty-two sounds--the letters" (I, 10)¹⁸, that "are the Foundation of all things" (II, 1)¹⁹. One might say that the *Sephiroth* are like form and the letters like matter. With these twenty-two letters God composed every created thing (II, 1-2).

With regard to our topic, a basic work of Abraham Abulafia is *The Epistle on the seven paths (Sheva Netivot ha-Torah)*, in which he repeatedly mentions the *Sefer Yeşirah*. The "paths" are the ways that lead to the comprehension of the Torah. In the sixth path, which describes how one may attain knowledge of the Name of God – which amounts to knowledge of God Himself – Abulafia uses the techniques of *gematria*²⁰ and *notarikon*²¹ which also imply permutations and substitutions of letters. The process could continue infinitely: it comes to an end only because of the weakness of human intellect²². The sixth path fits only those whose activity is joined to the Active Intellect²³. After the description of the sixth path, Abulafia refers to *Sefer Yeşirah*²⁴. The seventh path – the seat of the Sacred – encompasses all the others: those who enter it become aware of the divine *Logos* – the Word par excellence²⁵. The *Logos* is represented as an overabundance of the Name – a divine emanation or *şefa*²⁶ – that reaches rational faculty through the mediation of the Active Intellect; in other words it becomes the prophetic faculty²⁷.

Similar ideas are also expounded in his *Book of the Sign*, written during Abulafia's exile on the island of Comino near Malta between 1285 and 1288. In this visionary and autobiographical treatise the author, who bears the oneiric and biblical name Zechariah, is charged by God with the composition of a book whose ideas would distance him from the sages of Israel. Abulafia believes that the

¹⁸ I quote from Wm. Wynn Westcott's translation. *Sepher Yetzirah* 1893, 16.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, 18.

²⁰ Putting into relationship the words and their numerical value, *gematria* explains language by itself and not by the mediation of concepts. See Trigano 2008, 22. Through *gematria*, the 70 languages may be known. [Abulafia] 2008, 46.

²¹ *Notarikon* is an exegetical technique that understands words as sigla (each letter of a word as the initial letter of another word), or breaks the words down into two or more elements, each of them endowed with a proper meaning: [Abulafia] 2008, 47.

²² [Abulafia] 2008, 47.

²³ *Ivi*, 45-46.

²⁴ *Ivi*, 49. Another reference to the *Sefer Yetzirah* is found *ivi*, 68.

²⁵ *Ivi*, 49-50 and notes 88-89.

²⁶ *Ivi*, 50: note 90.

²⁷ "Cette voie mène à l'essence même de la prophétie authentique ; elle donne les moyens d'une approche de la quiddité du Nom unique, à cet être unique qu'est le prophète parmi les hommes." (*ivi*, 50) Here Abulafia refers to Maimonides, for whom, however, divine speech is a metaphor only. *Ivi*, 50: note 92.

Tetragrammaton – the four-letter biblical name of the God of Israel – is sealed in the human soul and assumes that the mysteries of divine names will be revealed through the combinations – *şeruphim* – of its letters, which have the power to illuminate all things. By invoking special mystical practices Abulafia aimed at the highest spiritual experiences and even prophecy, which would eventually enable him to apprehend intuitively the true nature of God (Aboulafia 2007, 5-6).

Abulafia himself wrote a commentary on the *Sefer Yeşirah*, which is still unpublished²⁸ and contains important autobiographical material. It was composed in Sicily in 1289²⁹ and is entitled *Treasury of the Hidden Eden (Oşar Eden HaGanuz)*. A part of it, from the Bodleian Ms. Or. 606, has been translated by Aryeh Kaplan. In it Abulafia claims that because the letters are the very essence of creation, their force can be channelled into his spiritual being through writing them and composing permutations of them³⁰. In Kaplan's words, "The way of Permutation is the closest way to truly know God"³¹.

4. WALTER BENJAMIN'S INTERPRETATION OF DIVINE AND HUMAN LANGUAGE

Before I offer a brief comparison between our texts, I must make one important observation. The relationship between Adam and language in the Bible and Qur'an commonly leads to the recognition of two different conceptions of language. Adam appears in the second tale of creation³² provided by the Book

²⁸ Lacerenza calls attention to the following amateur edition and translation: Alexandru Munteanu (Ed.), Abraham Abulafia, *Oşar Eden Ganuz*, David Smith USA 2016. Extracts of the work in A. Neubauer, "Oşar Eden ganuz", *Revue des études juives* 9 (1884).

²⁹ Kaplan 1982, 74. According to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, the work was written in 1285-86.

³⁰ *Ivi*, 83.

³¹ *Ivi*, 84. The word *şeruf*, permutation, usually means "to purify", as clarified *ivi*, 323: note 99. Abulafia describes his mystical experience as follows: "Write each expression down immediately. Manipulate the letters and seek out other words having the same numerical value [...] this will be your key to open the fifty gates of wisdom [...] You must be alone when you do this. Meditate (*hitboded*) in a state of rapture so as to receive the divine influx [...] Permute the letters [...] and you will reach the first level [...] The hairs on your head will stand on end and tremble [...] This blood within you will begin to vibrate because of the living permutations that loosen it. Your entire body will then begin to tremble, and all your limbs will be seized with shuddering. You will experience the terror of God [...] You will then feel as if an additional spirit is within you, [...] passing through your entire body and giving you pleasure. It will seem as you have been anointed with perfumed oil [...] You will rejoice and have great pleasure. You will experience ecstasy and trembling [...] This is like a rider who races a horse, the rider rejoices and is ecstatic, while the horse trembles under him [...] through this wondrous method, you will have reached one of the Fifty Gates of Understanding. This is the lowest gate [...]" (*ivi*, 85).

³² "Another story of creation, *Genesis* 2: 4b-24 [...] describes a much more anthropocentric version" (Paul 1971, 1060).

of *Genesis*³³: according to Walter Benjamin's article *On Language as Such and on the Language of Man* – probably inspired by Gershom Scholem's ideas on Jewish mystics –, Adam "is [...] invested with the *gift* of language and is elevated above nature" (Benjamin 1986, 322)³⁴. According to Benjamin, in the name man enters in communion with the creative divine word – God's linguistic being – that is, God made things knowable in their names. But far from wishing to subject humankind to language – the instrument of His creation – God disposes that language in humankind is a free choice: "God rested when he had left his creative power to itself in man" (Benjamin 1986, 323). Scholars have consequently recognised the conception of language by convention in the biblical tale³⁵.

On the other hand the conception of language by nature can be detected in Qur'an 2:31. As explained by the Muslim philosophers who substitute the divine attributes of Will and Power with the divine attribute of Knowledge, divine creation is represented as embedding in matter the forms that are found in the mind of God, to which names correspond – and there can be only one name for any individual created being³⁶.

Despite the radical diversity between language by convention and language by nature, Benjamin's analysis shows the contrast to be more apparent than real. If humanity names things according to divine Knowledge then "Man is the knower in the same language in which God is creator" (Benjamin 1986, 323). When God created him in his image, he established an identity between the mental being of man and the language in which creation took place, between the mental being of man and the word that is the linguistic being of God. In this perspective, man is not so free to name things. Hence, according to Benjamin, Adam limits himself

³³ The Book of *Genesis* provides two different tales of creation. In the first one, in the recurrent formula, "Let there be [...] He named", Walter Benjamin recognised both creative language and finished creation, both word and name. The divine word "is cognizant because it is name" (Benjamin 1986, 323), as is demonstrated by the second recurring formula, "God saw that it was good".

³⁴ *Genesis* 2.19-20 says, "Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast in the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him." English standard version (ESV) consulted on line on June 28th 2019, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+2&version=ESV>. On this passage see Pope 1971, 234.

³⁵ On this issue see [Abulafia] 2008, 91.

³⁶ This theory is surprisingly similar to Scholem's description of the kabbalistic process: "At the head of the world of divine qualities he puts the 'thought' (*mahashavah*), from which emerged the divine utterances, the 'words' (λόγοι) by means of which the world was created. Above the 'thought' is the Hidden God, who is called for the first time by the name **Ein-Sof* ('the Infinite' [...]). Man's thought ascends through mystic meditation until it reaches, and is subsumed into, Divine 'Thought' [...] The speech of men is connected with divine speech, and all language, whether heavenly or human, derives from one source – the Divine Name." Scholem 1971a, 523. This statement is made with regard to the commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* of Isaac the Blind (d. ca. 1235), Abraham b. David's son.

to expressing the knowledge God transmitted to him – moving from a mental language to another mental language. And the language of the biblical God are exactly the names that, in the Qur'an, God teaches to man.

In our text, the aggregation of letters in names – letters that mirror the substance of the forms that God had passed onto the heavenly hypostases so to eventually give origin to the world recalls the abovementioned philosophical Islamic representations of creation, and corresponds to the “sounds” produced by the biblical Adam to translate divine knowledge into things³⁷.

On the other hand, the letter-forms of our addition in their original isolation exactly mirror the Paradisiac language of perfect knowledge described by Benjamin; and the aggregation “contrary” to that of the letters of the names taught by God seems – after the fall – to reproduce the biblical Babel of languages, in which humankind shifted between names devoid of meanings and meanings devoid of names because they no longer had a secure basis for understanding. In this context we should remember how the beginning of the Cycle of Occultation was described in our addition: “[there was] he who worshipped a name without meaning, he who worshipped a meaning and did not conceal it with a name, and he who knew the name and was sure of the meaning” (fol. 281b19-21).

5. THE ADDITION IN MS ISTANBUL ESAD EFENDI 3638 AND ABULAFIA: A COMPARISON

I focus now on some of the numerous similarities recognizable in the conceptions of language gleaned from the Arabic addition – and, more generally, the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* – and Abulafia.

The concept of God as the Maker of the Universe, which is clear in the *Sefer Yeṣirah* that is at the basis of Abulafia's doctrines, is widespread in the *Ikhwānīan* encyclopaedia and in Islamic thought in general, where it is usually related to Plato's *Timaeus*. Other features proper to the *Sefer Yeṣirah* can be detected in Muslim philosophy and in our addition and/or the encyclopaedia of the Brethren of Purity.

The existence of the twenty-two Hebrew letters set there at the beginning of the process of creation, where the letters symbolise the various elements of creation, corresponds to the primordial isolation of the letters in the Arabic text. The idea that God composed every created thing and the form of everything which shall hereafter be (VI, 9)³⁸ from the twenty-two letters recalls the names

³⁷ Vajda 2002, 72, who remarks that “tout cela est écarté de Dieu.”

³⁸ See VI, 9 in Shadmi's translation: “Queste sono le 22 lettere, con cui incise EHYE 1, YA 2, 3

that in paragraph 7 of our addition God later gave to creatures – “the names of what was to come and appear from them” (fol. 280b10). Numbers are not explicitly mentioned in the Arabic text, but numerology is a constant element in Islamic cosmologies and in the Ikhwānian cosmology in particular³⁹. In our addition, number finds its role in the opposition between one and two and between the absolute uniqueness of God and the duality of creation, starting from the Active Intellect. The names of the whole of reality are derived from the primordial “couples” of which the passage speaks.

Another possible comparison is with the end of the *Sefer Yeşirah* (VI, 4) where Abraham and God’s covenant with him are mentioned:

And after that our father Abraham had perceived, and understood, and had taken down and engraved all these things, the Lord most high revealed Himself, and called him His beloved, and made a Covenant with him and his seed; and Abraham believed on Him and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. And He made this Covenant as between the ten toes of the feet – this is like that of circumcision; and as between the ten fingers of the hands and this is that of the tongue. And He bound the twenty-two letters unto his speech and shewed him all the mysteries of them⁴⁰.

Almost at the end of the Arabic addition, the author establishes a connection between “the world of the spheres and the dwellers of heavens” and “the true natures of things and attributes as viewed by Abraham”. To do so, he compares the Sun, perfect in its lights by itself, and the Moon that acquires its light from the Sun but is destined to give it back to the Sun. When the Moon is full, “it shines at the time when the bestower of light sets, with the perfection of its lights, in imitation of [the Sun]”. But at that moment, the Sun turns and begins to withdraw its light from the Moon – with no decrease or increase in it during the process (fol. 281b27-33). This passage can be seen as an allusion to the letters (i) in their primordial state and (ii) as the seminal reasons of creation. My hypothesis is confirmed by the terminology used. In paragraph 23, the author(s) refer to the Sun as having “a perfect encompassment [*iḥāṭat al-tamām*]” of everything under

יהוה degli eserciti, Dio Onnipotente, Iddio ELOHIM 4, e fece di loro tre Sefarim, e creò da loro tutto il Suo Mondo e formò con esse tutto il Creato e tutto ciò che sarà formato nel futuro.” *Sepher Yetzira*’ 1981, 27; missing in Wynn Westcott’s translation.

³⁹ Let us think, e.g., to the four elements, the four primordial qualities, the four temperaments; the five geometrical solids symbolizing the elements; the seven planets; the eighth mixtures; the nine kinds of the three natural kingdoms (minerals, plants and animals); the twelve constellations, etc.

⁴⁰ *Sepher Yetzirah* 1893, 26-27. So Shadmi’s translation of VI, 10: “E quando capì Abramo nostro padre, e guardò e vide e incise e plasmò e riuscì a comprendere, allora apparve su di lui il Signore di tutto e lo chiamò Mio Amore, e fece con lui il patto tra le dieci dita delle sue mani ed è questo il patto della lingua, e tra le dieci dita dei piedi ed è questo il patto della «MILA’», e così disse su di lui: Prima di formarti nel grembo già ti conoscevo.” *Sepher Yetzira*’ 1981, 27.

it, and to the full Moon in front of the Sun as having an “embrace [proper to] consideration [*iḥāṭat al-ta’ammul*]”, probably as an allusion to the fact that the Moon “reflects” the light of the Sun. In paragraph 24, the higher degrees of the Ismā’īlī hierarchy investigate knowledge “as if it were a reflection [*istqrā’ ta’ammul*] without composition or aggregation”.

For Abulafia, Hebrew language is the symbol of the election of Israel (Trigano 2008, 18). God’s choice in favour of Israel, its language and writing, makes Hebrew a sacred language that – through combination of letters – encompasses the whole of 70 languages of people⁴¹. In the Islamic tradition, Arabic is the language of God, in which He revealed the Holy Qur’an, the final revelation. In his commentary on the *Epistle on the Seven Paths* Shmuel Trigano remarks that Hebrew language is the most immediate reality for the Jewish consciousness: it is the matter of the world and nature, the “book of Nature” that can be directly read by humans. To study the holy Book is the same as studying the laws of Nature. In the creation the Word is immediately the same as the real; the same Hebrew term *davar* indicates the thing and the word, *res* and *verba* (Trigano 2008, 21). The text continues in a different perspective⁴²; but also in Islamic thought – Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ included – there are two languages of God, both expressed in terms of *āyāt*: the spoken language – the Qur’an, where *āyāt* means “verses” – and the written language – Nature, where *āyāt* means “signs”. Studying the two offers the possibility of apprehending something of the divine Nature. Commenting upon an untitled fragment of the MS Florence Laurentiana-Medicea Plut. II, 48:

[...] the truth of the attainment of reality is the comprehension of the divine name, and [...] within the 22 letters the comprehension of the name is found, [...] and [...] out of the combination of letters, the known, the knower, and knowledge [are one] ... [dots in the text] and whoever comprehends the Agent Intellect gains the life of the world to come and belongs to the secret of the angels of the living God (Idel 2011b, 60).

Moshe Idel identifies its author in Abulafia and remarks that “The affinity between letters and the knowledge of the Agent Intellect means that the cosmic intellect is attained by means of the combination of letters” (Idel 2011b, 367: note 45). Despite the role played by logic in the Arabic addition, our text introduces “aggregation and composition” in the knowledge and teaching of the *imām* and hints at a symbolic language and a secret knowledge. When it is stated that the

⁴¹ *Book of the Seven Ways*, Book II, 8 (*ibid.*, 92). In Book II, 9 alphabet is described. The ink is like seminal fluid. In Book II, 10 letters are said to be composed of matter and form; words of letters; things of words; hence, the letters inform us about the whole reality. Everything can be perceived in three different ways: the written book, the spoken speech, and the spiritual book compound of thought letters.

⁴² Trigano 2008, 21: “Mais au commencement n’était pas le verbe [...]”.

imām knows all the forms inscribed in the Active Intellect – the isolated letters that in primordial time could be read in another kind of “disposition” – a further parallel arises with the prophetic knowledge as described by Abulafia.

Abulafia’s conception of the divine *Logos* that somehow selects a prophet from among humankind recalls ideas that were widespread in Islamic thought from the tenth century onward. Generally speaking, it states that God emanates onto the Active Intellect the forms of the things kept in His mind, which through the Universal Soul pass to human rational souls. According to the philosopher al-Fārābī (d. 950), when a sage comes to know all the forms possessed by the Active Intellect in his “acquired Intellect” he becomes the same as a prophet. The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ maintain ideas very similar to this, even from the lexical standpoint. In the cosmology described in our addition, God set the form of the things in the Active Intellect (fol. 280b13); later, it is said that the rational soul proceeded from the Universal Soul in the same way as the Universal Soul proceeded from the Active Intellect, and that the rational soul receives the benefits joined to the Universal Soul without any intermediary (fol. 280b35-281a2).

The main issue in the Jewish works we have considered is the language of God, and even the Name of God. The Arabic text does not explicitly refer to the Name of God, but it is certainly God’s language that was taught to Adam. According to Shī’ī esoterism, on the other hand, the *imām* knows the “Supreme Name of God”; and the *imām* is one of the protagonists of our addition.

6. THE IKHWĀN AL-ṢAFĀ’, DUNASH IBN TAMĪM AND SHABBETAY DONNOLO

My comparison is grounded on the synchrony between the Arabic MS and the texts by Abulafia. If the Arabic addition were approximately contemporary with the Jewish thinker we would have further evidence – this time drawn from esoteric sources – of the circulation of similar ideas in Muslim and Jewish contexts and between the Muslim East and al-Andalus⁴³, despite the differences in their approaches to the issue of the primordial letters⁴⁴. Biblical influence on the Arabic text is also demonstrated by some scriptural references in it, such as

⁴³ Abulafia is also indicated as “a preacher of a new Kabbalah to both Jews and Christians [...] producing [...] writings, which would contribute substantially to both the Jewish and the Christian cultures.” (Idel 2011a, 31).

⁴⁴ Two more elements are introduced *ex novo* in the Arabic text: the allusion to the practice of *taqīyya*, and the sin of the *imām* when he breaks the silence and reveals what should have not been revealed. Note, however, that in the *Epistle on the seven ways*, Book II, 2 the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (that is in truth the Tree of Death) are mentioned. [Abulafia] 2008, 62. They are, I assume, proper to the Ismā’īlī milieu in which the addition was probably added to the text of the epistle; therefore, their presence do not affect the legitimacy of my comparison.

the emphasis given to Eve's role in the story of the fall of Adam and the allusion to her derivation from one of Adam's ribs, which are not found in the Qur'an⁴⁵.

The influence of the Bible and of Jewish religious culture and thought would not be disproved if the Arabic addition were older than the thirteenth century. Its anonymous author(s) may well have known the *Sefer Yeşirah*.

There is another issue with regard to this point, about which I can here offer only a brief remark. Besides the one by the abovementioned Sa'adiah Gaon, among the most renowned commentaries on the *Sefer Yeşirah* in Arabic or Judaeo-Arabic there are those by Dunash ibn Tamīm (the Arabic Abū Sahl, b. ca. 885, d. after 955, according to other sources 900-960)⁴⁶ and Shabbatai Donnolo (b. Oria ca. 913, d. not before 982)⁴⁷.

Clear resemblances with the encyclopaedia of the Ikhwān al-Şafā' are evident in these commentaries. Both of them develop comparisons between the stars and other parts of creation, and between the stars and parts or organs of the human body. Donnolo develops in his commentary a parallel between macrocosm and microcosm (Mancuso 2001, 18 and 80 ff.), stating that man was created not in the image of God but in the image of creation (Mancuso 2001, 67 ff.): the human being has very few characteristics that could be compared with those of the Lord (Mancuso 2001, 78).

Ibn Tamīm's medical practice at the Fāţimid court of Qayrawān may have made possible his acquaintance with the Ikhwānian epistles⁴⁸. The case of Donnolo is more problematic, though the Fāţimids played a role in his life as well. When on 4 July 925 Oria was conquered by amir Ja'far ibn 'Ubayd in the name of the caliph 'Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī, Donnolo was made prisoner and many of his teachers were executed. Later, he was redeemed by his parents in Taranto. His parents were deported to Palermo and later to Africa. From his works (that contain the most part of the data available on his biography) we know that he never moved from southern Italy, where Apulia and Calabria were territories of the Byzantine empire. Here he studied medicine and astronomy with numerous scholars. Besides Hebrew, Donnolo was educated in Greek and Latin, but he did

⁴⁵ "The two versions of the creation story have often been compared to Mesopotamian prototypes." (Paul 1971, 1061); "The second creation story, too, has Near Eastern prototypes [...] e.g., the Gilgamesh Epic [...] and the creation of woman from a rib may reflect a Sumerian motif (see Kramer)." (*ivi*, 1062).

⁴⁶ Mancuso 2001, 9-10.

⁴⁷ Fiaccadori 1992. The commentaries of Sa'adiah Gaon and Ibn Tamīm are counted among the non-less than seven Arabic commentaries; Jospe 1990.

⁴⁸ Vajda remarks that Ibn Tamīm develops his parallels grounding himself on the *De usu partium* of Galen, a work widely known in the Arabic milieu (Vajda 2002: 13 and 148). See *ivi*: 154 on the legendary identification of Galen with the patriarch Gamliel (more probable the identification with Gamliel VI).

not know Arabic that was spoken nearby in Sicily. Scholars also remark that no traces of Arabic medicine or pharmacopoeia are found in his works; and it is not even sure whether he knew the works of his contemporary Sa'ādiah Gaon (Fiaccadori 1992). Whence, then, could he become acquainted with the doctrines of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'?

Were these doctrines counted among the Platonic and Neoplatonic issues thoroughly studied by the tenth century Jewish communities in Byzantine or Latin areas? Or might Donnolo have been taught about them by the Eastern scholars with whom he was studying? In Donnolo's autobiography we read:

Perciò, io mi sono sforzato di conoscere, indagare e investigare la scienza (Qo 7,25) dei Greci, la scienza degli Ismaeliti, la scienza dei Babilonesi e degli Indiani: e non mi diedi pace finché non ebbi (tra)scritto i libri dei sapienti di Grecia. (Lacerenza 2004, 50)⁴⁹

Lacerenza, however, remarks how

nonostante l'iniziale riferimento anche alla 'scienza degli Ismaeliti' ossia arabo-islamica, Donnolo poi non dichiara [...] di aver adoperato opere di autori musulmani. Il dato non è del tutto inatteso, essendo ancora a venire [...] la stagione delle prime traduzioni in Occidente della letteratura scientifica in lingua araba [...] E nondimeno, il fatto che egli non si sia servito direttamente di testi arabo-islamici, non significa che nell'opera di Donnolo siano assenti [...] riferimenti a concetti o a terminologie mutate dal mondo musulmano: il cui probabile snodo è [...] ricercabile nell'ultima fonte della sua Sapienza [...] i suoi compagni di studio, le sue guide e i suoi maestri. (Lacerenza 2004, 59-60)

It is probable that cultural exchanges accompanied the struggles between Byzantines and Fāṭimids in Southern Italy⁵⁰. So far, I have been unable to find a source common to the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', Ibn Tamīm and Donnolo apart from the *Sefer Yeširah* itself. With regard to the reciprocal similarities, a thorough study is necessary to establish who influenced whom⁵¹. But if the encyclopaedia can be in some way related to Ibn Tamīm and Donnolo, the most recent hypothesis that it was completed no later than the first decades of the tenth century and the relationship of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' with the Fāṭimids can be confirmed.

⁴⁹ An older survey on Donnolo's biography in [Donnolo] 1880, 5-6.

⁵⁰ See Daftary 2007, 143-145.

⁵¹ On the possible relationships between Donnolo and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' see Lacerenza 2004, 62, to which he adds that: "un raffronto puntuale fra le *Rasā'il*, in particolare i libri II-III, e gli scritti di Donnolo, resta interamente da compiersi". (*ivi*, 63: note 71).

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