The Philosophical Prophetology of Ismā‘īlism in the Eleventh Century¹

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The Ismā‘īlīs introduced Neoplatonism into their doctrine between the tenth and eleventh centuries. This resulted in a serious conflict between rational philosophy and revealed religion. The main objective of this study is to examine the conflict between these two positions from the theory of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 1020), who served Fāṭimid Imām al-Ḥākim (d. 1021), by studying the prophetology in his *Rāḥa al-‘aql*.

Al-Kirmānī adopted al-Fārābī’s theory on the active intellect (*‘aql fa‘āl*) and his prophetic doctrine explicated by the active intellect regards the *nāṭiq* as the top of the sublunar world in his philosophical cosmology and thus, justifies the authority of the *nāṭiq*. Like al-Fārābī’s philosopher-king, al-Kirmānī’s *nāṭiq* has conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the active intellect and accepts the illumination from it in the imaginative stage of his soul. However, al-Kirmānī rejected the acceptance of the illumination in the stage of the acquired intellect (*‘aql mustafād*), the highest level of the human intellect, while al-Fārābī believed that the philosopher-king attained the stage of the acquired intellect before accepting the illumination in his imaginative stage. If al-Kirmānī had allowed human beings other than the *nāṭiq* to attain the stage of the acquired intellect, an ordinary man could have had the same capacity as the *nāṭiq*. Therefore, he rejected al-Fārābī’s acquired intellect and the possibility of a philosopher reaching the *nāṭiq*’s level by himself. However, he used philosophy to justify Ismā‘īlī prophetology. Al-Kirmānī thought that only the *nāṭiq* reached the transcendental position. Thus, he considered the *nāṭiq*’s guidance and Ismā‘īlī *da‘wa* as absolute, and explained his doctrine using rational philosophy.

Keywords: Ismā‘īlism, al-Kirmānī, al-Fārābī, prophetology, active intellect

Introduction

Ismā‘īlī thinkers like Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 971) are known to have

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introduced Neoplatonism into their thoughts from the tenth century onwards. The Neoplatonization of Ismāʿīlism reached its peak by Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 1020)² in the first half of eleventh century. Al-Kirmānī was active as a *dāʿī* (missionary) in Iraq and completed philosophical Ismāʿīlism by incorporating the philosophy of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950), the foremost representative of Islamic philosophy in the tenth century. Imported Greek philosophy sent shock waves through the Islamic world, bringing about theological-philosophical controversies in the Ismāʿīlī communities as well as among non-Ismāʿīlīs. We notice a confrontation between philosophy and religion, *i.e.* between reason and revelation there.

The Ismāʿīlīs have not been free from this sort of confrontation, although they are said to have eclectically introduced various thoughts and harmonized them in their own framework. We observe a dispute among Persian Ismāʿīlī thinkers in the tenth century, such as Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 942), Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 933-4) and al-Sijistānī, with respect to the philosophical interpretation of their doctrines, and also a deep-rooted inconsistency in their eclectically combined doctrines. I am sure that an investigation into such a confrontation will help clarify the essential elements which can not easily be discriminated owing to the eclecticism of Ismāʿīlism.

In this paper, I will examine the influence of al-Fārābī's philosophy on the prophetic theory of al-Kirmānī, who accomplished the Neoplatonization of Ismāʿīlism, and I will point out the decisive difference between Islamic philosophy and Ismāʿīlism. To understand the relations between the Ismāʿīlī thinkers before al-Kirmānī and Islamic philosophy, attention should be paid to the works of Paul E. Walker, Hans Daiber and Shin Nomoto. Walker studied the discordance between reason and revelation seen in al-Sijistānī's thought (Walker 1993, 145-156). Daiber maintained that the theory of Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, a precursor of al-Sijistānī, on *ẓāhir/bāṭin* and prophecy had influenced the prophetic theory of al-Fārābī (Daiber 1991, 143-150); however, the similarity between the two pointed out by him is partial and he did not philologically demonstrate the purported influence by al-Rāzī. Nomoto analyzed al-Rāzī's attitude toward the philosophized Ismāʿīlism (Nomoto 1999) with an objective similar to that of this study. We have to bear in mind, however, that al-Rāzī's thought is very different from al-Kirmānī's.

To understand the relation between al-Kirmānī and the Islamic philosophers, the works of D. De Smet and P. E. Walker are significant. De Smet investigated in detail the influences of non-Ismāʿīlīs on al-Kirmānī's cosmology and metaphysics, and set a high valuation on the originality of al-Kirmānī upon

evaluating al-Fārābī's effect on him (De Smet 1995, 282-283). Waker compared al-Fārābī's theory on imamate and instruction with that of al-Kirmānī (Walker 1999, 120-122). In this paper, I will compare al-Kirmānī with al-Fārābī by analyzing their theories regarding the relation between prophecy and intellect. This topic is important not only because neither De Smet nor Walker discussed it in detail. Further, the confrontation between philosophy and revelation in Ismā'īlism is essential to ascertain whether or not the representative of philosophized Ismā'īlism gives a religious prophet precedence over a rational philosopher.

In al-Kirmānī's thought, unlike that of al-Sijistānī's and al-Rāzī's, the active intellect (*'aql fa'āl*) acts as a mediator between philosophy and revelation. It ties philosophical cosmology and theory on intellect to the Ismā'īlī theory on *nāṭiq* (speaking-prophet), and explains the existence of *nāṭiq* philosophically. I will elucidate the connection of the active intellect with this world and the *nāṭiq*, and analyze the meaning of the revelation explained by the philosophical terms. On the basis of the analyses in three chapters, I will evaluate, in the conclusion, the limitations of the rationalism of the most philosophized Ismā'īlism.

I. The Active Intellect

In al-Kirmānī's cosmology, which resembles that of al-Fārābī, the active intellect plays the same role as the universal soul (*naḥs kullīya*) of al-Sijistānī, who defines it in his Plotinian cosmology as the mediator which connects human beings with the transcendental world (Walker 1993, 67-142). This is important not only for the cosmology but also for the prophetology. Therefore, it is useful to examine the role played by al-Kirmānī's active intellect in this world and with respect to the *nāṭiq*, and compare his theory with al-Fārābī's theory on the active intellect.

Al-Fārābī was the first philosopher to define the active intellect as the last of the ten heavenly separate intellects and make it correspond to the sublunar world (Walzer 1985, 363-365). In his *Kitāb ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, al-Fārābī only refers to the epistemological function of the active intellect, by which the human intellects are transferred from potentiality to actuality (*Ārā'*, 102-103; Davidson 1992, 47-48). On the other hand, in his *Risāla fī al-'aql*, he refers not merely to the epistemological function of the active intellect but maintains that it gives forms (*ṣuwar*, sg. *ṣūra*) to materials in the sublunar world; however, it is said that the heavens give birth to material existents (*Risāla*, 24-27, 33-34; Davidson 1992, 47-48). He ascribes the material cause of the

sublunar world not to the active intellect but to heavenly materials and celestial bodies, in accordance with the Aristotelian tradition.

Al-Kirmānī, in his masterpiece, *Rāḥa al-‘aql*, also ascribes the material cause of the sublunar world to the celestial world and the formal cause to the active intellect.³ His opinion is similar to that of al-Fārābī’s rather than that of Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), who ascribes both the material and the formal causes in the sublunar world to the active intellect; with respect to material causes, al-Fārābī is thought to be more faithful to the Aristotelian tradition (Davidson 1992, 74-83). In this respect, al-Kirmānī’s theory on the active intellect is supposed to have developed under the influence of al-Fārābī’s works like *Ārā’ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* and *al-Risāla fī al-‘aql*, and not influenced by his contemporary Ibn Sīnā.

Al-Kirmānī as well as al-Fārābī defines the active intellect as the last of the ten heavenly intellects, which corresponds to the sublunar world (*Rāḥa*, 113-138). Regarding the relation between the active intellect and the sublunar world, al-Kirmānī states:

The influence of the tenth intellect is confined to that which is located under the sphere of the moon, composed of the changeable and generatable materials and the tenth intellect is similar to the tenth rank [of the *da’wa*], *mukāsir*⁴, in that his concern is directed to the souls and his only task is attracting them to the truth . . . The tenth intellect is only concerned with drawing the souls in the natural world to the sphere of the worship (*‘ibāda*) for their ascent in the stages. By the fact that it is suchlike, it is made clear that the tenth of the existents in the world of the intellect is the limit of emanating intellects from which the forces (*al-quwā*) are radiated in the materials, for the material natural creatures (*al-mawālīd al-jusmānīya*) are composed from them and the tenth intellect becomes the limit where the emanations come to stop. The tenth intellect is only concerned with the world of generation and corruption (*‘ālam al-kawn wa al-fasād*), the combination (*muwāṣala*) with what is ready for the reception in it, and the support of it, like the tenth of the lower hierarchies that is only concerned with the souls, attracting them to the worship and the obedience (*tā’a*). (*Rāḥa*, 137-138)

In *Rāḥa al-‘aql*, the cosmology, which begins with the first intellect (*al-‘aql al-awwal*), is elaborated in correspondence (*muṭābaqa*) with hierarchies

(*ḥudūd*) of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* (mission, religio-political propaganda). As the first intellect corresponds to the *nāṭiq* at the top of the *da'wa*, the role of the tenth intellect (active intellect) corresponds to that of the *mukāsir* at the bottom of the *da'wa*. The active intellect guides natural creatures like minerals⁵, plants and animals (composed and organized by four elements) in the right direction, like a *mukāsir* guides a newcomer (*mustajīb*) in the *da'wa* to the truth (*Rāḥa*, 253-257). As the last of the ten intellects, it mediates between the intellectual world and the sublunar world and gives natural creatures life (*ḥayāt*), which is called *kamāl awwal* (the first perfection) and originates from the first intellect. The active intellect's act of giving life, which is form (*ṣūra*)/soul (*naḥs*) for living things, deviates from its epistemological function seen in Aristotle's *De Anima*, by which the active intellect actualizes the human receptive intellects. Rather, it is similar to the active intellect in al-Fārābī's *al-Risāla fī al-'aql*, which gives forms to objects in the sublunar world.⁶

'What is ready for the reception in it' in the above quotation refers to the soul of the *nāṭiq*, the noblest man in this world. The potential intellect of the *nāṭiq* becomes actualized through the conjunction with the active intellect. With respect to the actualization of the first, al-Kirmānī states:

The trait of souls of the *nāṭiq*—may the God bring peace upon them—, which constantly change their conditions by the force of *ta'yīd* (guidance) extending to them, although they were originally only life and power as the first perfection, is in that they have acquired *kamāl thānī* (the second perfection) by ascending in the degrees of comprehension and knowledge and attaining to the actuality until the lights of the oneness (*anwār al-waḥda*) spread in them by comprehending their preceding essences and connecting with them universally. So the second perfection takes places in them as the secondary condition. (*Rāḥa*, 83)

By conjunction with an intellect, through the guidance received from the heavenly ten intellects through the active intellect, 'the lights of the oneness' spread through the *nāṭiq*'s soul enduringly and his potential intellect becomes actualized. As mentioned further on, the guidance (*ta'yīd*) received by the *nāṭiq* plays the important role of linking the heavenly world, the *nāṭiq* and the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* in this world.

'Their preceding essences' refer to the essence of the ten separate intellects, which attain the second perfection in addition to the first perfection (De Smet

1995, 151-159; Kikuchi 2005, 162-167). The first intellect, the first cause for the universe and the unmoved mover, has the first perfection, *i.e.* life (*ḥayāt*), as the central attribute. When other nine attributes are added to the first perfection, it is called the second perfection. Essence and attributes are unified in the first intellect as well as in the other nine separate intellects. The ultimate goal for the existents which have received life as the first perfection from the first intellect is to become the actualized intellect by acquiring the second perfection, for this means becoming homogenized with the ten separate intellects. Therefore, *nāṭiq* add the second perfection as ‘the secondary condition’ to the inborn first perfection. Al-Kirmānī’s *nāṭiq*, his character being transcendental,⁷ attains the second perfection and becomes nearly equalized with the separate intellects, though Fārābī ‘rejects the possibility of the human intellect’s becoming completely one with the active intellect’ (*Ārā*’, 105; Davidson 1992, 54-55; Rahman 1958, 12).

As *nāṭiqs* live in the world of generation and corruption, the effects of the separate intellects on them must occur through the active intellect which governs that world. Al-Kirmānī is obviously different from al-Fārābī with respect to the way of the conjunction with the active intellect. With respect to this problem, al-Kirmānī states:

When the noble souls (*al-anfus al-sharīfa*) receive the divine lights (*al-anwār al-ilāhīya*) in their suchlike way of existence, they are not in the rational stage, although philosophers argue that only the rational soul, namely the acquired intellect (*al-‘aql al-mustafād*), receives the emanation (*fayḍ*) from the active intellect. Rather, something like the soul of Muḥammad—may the God bring peace upon him—[receives the emanation] in the sensory (*ḥissī*) and imaginative (*takhayyul*) stage. (*Rāḥa*, 403)

Although al-Kirmānī’s theory on intellect adopts many terms from Islamic philosophy, what he believes to have conjunction (*muwāṣala*, *ittiṣāl*) with the active intellect is clearly different from the belief of the Islamic philosophers. He rejects the conjunction with the active intellect in the stage of the acquired intellect and insists on the *nāṭiq*’s soul being conjunct with the active intellect in the stages of sensation and imagination rather than the stage of rationality.

Al-Fārābī also believes the conjunction of the prophet with the active intellect to happen in the stage of imagination (*mutakhayyila*). He assumes that there are two levels to this conjunction. In the lower level, called *nubūwa*

(prophecy), which happens to the man whose intellect has not been perfected fully, he has visions of incidents in a remote place or sees the future in his dream. The higher level is called *waḥy* and happens to those, including the prophets, who attain to the acquired intellect. Hence, the man who has experienced conjunction with the active intellect in the stages of both of imagination and rationality is not only considered a philosopher but also a prophet, having the capacity to rule the perfect state (*al-madīna al-fāḍila*) as a philosopher-king (*Ārā'*, 108-116; *Siyāsa*, 79-80; Davidson 1992, 58-63). Al-Fārābī and al-Kirmānī are similar in that they both assume the prophet's conjunction in the imaginative stage; however, the former does not assume the conjunction in the sensory stage.

Al-Kirmānī's *nāṭiqs* at the top of the religious world (*'ālam al-dīn*) correspond to the first intellect and their intellects have been actualized as the pure intellects (*'uqūl maḥḍa*). Therefore, they are at the ultimate rank of the intellects (*Rāḥa*, 99), as is the case with al-Fārābī's philosopher who reaches the stage of the acquired intellect. In this respect, al-Kirmānī's *nāṭiq* seems to be equivalent to al-Fārābī's philosopher-king. However, al-Kirmānī clearly denies the human intellect being conjunct with the active intellect in the stage of the acquired intellect.

Why does the conjunction of the *nāṭiqs* with it happen in the sensory and imaginative stages, first of all? Secondly, why is the phased development denied, in which the human intellect becomes actualized by attaining the acquired intellect by way of the sensory and the imaginative stages? We will deal with this issue from the viewpoints of the epistemology and the revelation in the next chapter.

II. The Actualization of the Human Intellect and the Revelation

Al-Kirmānī gives the following explanation regarding the transfer of souls from the sensory to the rational stage. Human souls perceive forms of the sensible objects (*maḥsūsāt*) by the five sensations (*ḥawāss*) which occur through sense organs. Even though fire and iron do not resemble each other in themselves, iron gets hot and red when struck with fire as a result of the form of fire being received. In the same manner, the soul becomes actualized as the subject of sense (*ḥāssa*) in consequence of the resemblance between the subject of sense and the sensible objects (*Rāḥa*, 314). The forms of sensible objects received by the soul through such resemblance become abstract, cut off from matter.

However, its abstracted form disappears soon, as it does not accompany the sensible object with matter. It is preserved as memory by the imaginative action

(*takhayyul*), which acts on the form abstracted from the matter of the sensible object in the soul without the help of sensations, practicing memory (*ḥifẓ*) and thinking (*fikr*). The imaginative action and sensation arise simultaneously in the soul and keeps the form in the soul (*Rāḥa*, 314-315). The form thus preserved in the soul becomes the intelligible object in potentiality.

The ultimate soul, immediately before its becoming a rational soul and being actualized as the intellect, is called '*aql hayūlānī* (material intellect).⁸ When a human soul works intelligence on the intelligible object that originates from the sensible object, it moves from the stage of the sensory soul to the rational one. In this stage, the sensible materials are not needed and the intelligible object becomes completely separate from matter. Although the soul does not resemble the intelligible object in potentiality before working intelligence, after doing so, the former resembles the latter (*Rāḥa*, 324).

In this stage the object of intelligence is the same as the heavenly separate intellects that work intelligence on themselves. When this object is formed in the rational soul, the soul becomes actualized as the subject of intelligence that is similar to its object, *i.e.* the separate intellect (*Rāḥa*, 324). Al-Kirmānī calls the actual intellects, which act as the intelligible objects for human intellects, 'the separate intellects that are the nearby angels' (*al-'uqūl al-mufāriqa allatī hiya al-malā'ika al-muqarrabīn*: *Rāḥa*, 325), 'the actual separate intellects above the soul' (*mā fawqa-hā min al-'uqūl al-mufāriqa al-qā'ima bil-fi'l*: *Rāḥa*, 325), and 'the eternal intellects' (*al-'uqūl al-sarmadīya*: *Rāḥa*, 334).

Al-Kirmānī's description of the human soul's ascent to the rational stage through the stages of sensation and the imagination is similar to that of al-Fārābī's description in many respects, though there are some differences between the two (see *Ārā'*, 101-104). It is less complicated than that of Ibn Sīnā (Davidson 1992, 83-102). However, we observe a great gap between al-Kirmānī and al-Fārābī with respect to the actualization of human intellects.

Al-Kirmānī's actual separate intellects, which are considered angelic and eternal above human souls, are nothing but the ten heavenly intellects, which correspond to the ten celestial spheres and supervise them (*Rāḥa*, 136-138). The actual intellects al-Kirmānī thinks to be intelligible objects for human beings are always expressed in the plural form (*'uqūl*). Therefore, in contrast to al-Fārābī's interpretation of the Aristotelian active intellect (*Ārā'*, 123-126), the intelligibles are not confined only to the active intellect. Al-Kirmānī does not consider the acquired intellect as the ultimate stage for the human receptive intellect (for al-Fārābī's acquired intellect, see *Ārā'*, 124-125; *Risāla*, 22-24). He refers to the similarity between the human intellect and the separate intellects as intelligibles,

but does not clearly explain about their conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) in comparison with the case of the human intellect and the active intellect in al-Fārābī's thought (Davidson 1992, 53-55). Moreover, in *Rāḥa al-'aql*, the human intellect is not defined as the receptive intellect (*'aql munfa'il*) and it is not said that the active intellect (or the separate intellects) acts on human intellects in general, transferring them to the actuality. As a result, we can not find, at least in the precise descriptions of *Rāḥa al-'aql*, any evidence that al-Kirmānī supposes a relation between the receptive intellect and the active intellect, which originates from Aristotle's *De Anima* 3: 3-5.

Al-Kirmānī's intention was as follows. An ordinary person is never able to obtain more than a similarity to the separate intellects, and what enables him to do so is nothing but the *da'wa*. Only charismatic persons such as the *nāṭiq*, the *asās* who instructs the esoteric meanings of the sacred books like 'Alī, and the *imāms* who follow the two, are equalized to the separate intellects through the conjunction with the active intellect. If an ordinary person hopes to improve the level of his soul and attain the stage of the actualized intellect, he can not do so only by the reasonable speculation. Instead, he must participate in the *da'wa* stratified under the summit of a charismatic person, who is connected with the active intellect and receives 'the lights of the oneness,' so as to cultivate his soul. It is possible for the intellect of an ordinary person without charisma to be actualized through the activities in the *da'wa*, but he can never reach the stage of the acquired intellect, because his intellectual development has a certain limit beneath the control of a charismatic person. An ordinary person can neither reach the stage of the acquired intellect nor be directly illuminated by the active intellect.

Regarding the conjunction of the *nāṭiq* with the active intellect at the sensory or imaginative stages, (not the reasonable one), al-Kirmānī states:

The sensory soul receives the emanation of lights as a sense in the imaginative stage; thus, the separate intellect responsible for the souls (*al-'aql al-khārij al-muwakkal bil-anfus*) keeps acting on the soul and stays connected with it (*yuwāṣilu-hā*), as was the case with the soul in Ādam, who was instructed only by the sublime God, and the soul is sometimes bestowed the universal or particular intelligibles. Such incidents occur without thought (*fikr*) and consideration (*rawīya*) and this is the highest stage of the revelation (*wahy*). (*Rāḥa*, 404)

The illumination of the active intellect occurs as the revelation into the

nāṭiq's soul in the sensory and the imaginative stages. Thereafter, the visions received in the revelation become abstracted and accept the action of intelligence (as mentioned above), so that the unusual revealed visions are transformed into the theorized doctrines. As the intellect acting on the *nāṭiq*'s soul takes the singular form (*'aql*) and it has influence on the soul in the sublunar world, it must be the active intellect, the same intellect mentioned in the third quotation of the Chapter I. The *nāṭiq*'s rational soul stays in conjunction with the active intellect after the first conjunction with it, receives the lights of the oneness from it and leads the *da'wa*.

The process of the revelation, from the sensory and imaginative illumination of the active intellect to the establishment of the theorized doctrines, is expressed as *ta'yīd* (guidance), which is the key concept in Ismā'īlism (Walker 1996, 32-39). For al-Sijistānī, *nāṭiqs* receive *ta'yīd* from the universal intellect and, as the deputy of the (universal) intellect (*khalīfa al-'aql*), promote the ascent of human souls (*Ithbāt*, 127). He identifies *ta'yīd* with *jadd*, *fath* and *khayāl* which appear in the gnostic myth of early Ismā'īlism.⁹ The universal intellect gives this *ta'yīd* to the *nāṭiq*, who passes it down through the hierarchy of the *da'wa*. Thus, the *ta'yīd* is considered the ultimate origin of its authority for the *nāṭiq* and the *da'wa* that follows him.

Al-Kirmānī as well as al-Sijistānī identifies *ta'yīd* with *jadd*, *fath* and *khayāl*. Al-Kirmānī believes that the revelation (*waḥy*) is divided into two parts. The first does not need the sensory medium and the second is perceived by the medium of sensation. The former, called *jadd*, is superior to the latter and happens in the *nāṭiq*'s soul through 'the lights' of the holy world (*dār al-quḍs*), composed of the ten separate intellects (*Rāḥa*, 409-410). *Jadd* occurs as a kind of vision in sleep or as an awakening and is something like a foreseeing dream (*Rāḥa*, 412).

The latter part of the revelation, which needs the sensory medium, consists of *fath* and *khayāl*. *Fath*, or 'what speaks to one beyond a veil' (*al-khiṭāb min warā' ḥijāb*), first urges the *nāṭiq* to think about the sensibles that the God originates (*abda'a*) and guides him to the understanding of the angels, namely the separate intellects. Finally, the *nāṭiq* gets to consider the separate intellects as neither the originator (*mubdi'*) nor his ultimate goal. Therefore, he attains the *tawḥīd* of the God, the real originator, which means recognizing that the principle of causality finally reaches the first intellect as the first cause and that the transcendental God is 'unknowable,' free from causality (*Rāḥa*, 413). *Khayāl* is understood as the transmission (*irsāl*) of the revelation to the messenger, identified with Jibrā'il. It means talking (*yukhāṭibu*) with the separate intellect as

an angel, and is related to the arrival of the revelation and the abolition of the preceding revelation (*Rāḥa*, 416-417).

We can interpret al-Kirmānī's theory on *ta'yīd* as follows. *Jadd* is the essence of *ta'yīd* and the vision without the sensory medium. *Fath* guides the *nāṭiq* to the reasonable speculation of the worlds. *Khayāl*, as a communication with the angel, is concerned with the abolition of prior *sharī'a* and the establishment of the new cycle (*dawr*). The illumination from the active intellect in the stage of imagination (*takhayyul*), as defined by al-Fārābī, may be similar to *jadd* and *khayāl*, whose derivation is the same as *takhayyul*. *Jadd*, given to the *nāṭiq* as a dreamlike vision, is thought to be the first contact with the active intellect, while *khayāl*, concerned with the religious practices of the *nāṭiq*, is thought to be the subsequent communication with the angel Jibrā'il, a direct transmitter of the revelation which may be identified with the active intellect. Unlike *jadd* and *khayāl*, which are related with images, sensation and imagination, *fath* is thought to be the intelligent action. With *fath* as intelligence, the *nāṭiq* realizes the existents in the worlds and comprehends the first intellect as the origin of existence. He also comprehends his inability to grasp the God beyond existence. The *nāṭiq* acquires the abstract speculation about the existents and the real *tawḥīd*, which means a negative recognition of the transcendence of the God. With the introduction of *jadd*, *fath* and *khayāl*, the philosophical thinking about the *nāṭiq* and the active intellect becomes the Ismā'īlī religious doctrine. On the other hand, *jadd*, *fath* and *khayāl* are possessed exclusively by the privileged religious and are never given to ordinary people including wise men like philosophers. Similarly, *ta'yīd* becomes the basis of a religious charisma and offers privileges to the *nāṭiq* and the charismatic leaders following him.

Al-Kirmānī does not deny the philosophers' theory that gives priority to the reasonable speculation over the imagination. However, he gives *jadd*, an unreasonable illumination, precedence over *fath*, the reasonable speculation. The *nāṭiq* as well as a philosopher has the ability to reason. However, its object is a vision exclusively bestowed on the privileged. Al-Kirmānī's prophetology does not greatly contradict that of al-Fārābī, in that the *nāṭiq*, whose intellect is fully perfected, receives the illumination not only in the imaginative stage but also in the higher one. However, by characterizing a special religious vision as the highest level of the revelation, al-Kirmānī assures the precedence of the prophet with religious charisma over a philosopher, in spite of his acceptance of the prophetology of an Islamic philosopher.

III. The Rejection of Philosophical Intellectualism

For al-Fārābī, a philosopher-king also receives religious visions in his imagination, which come from the active intellect. In this regard, he does not differ so much from al-Kirmānī's *nāṭiq*. However, in al-Fārābī's thought, the reasonable speculation as a philosopher takes priority over the prophetic revelation (Rahman 1958, 30; Davidson 1992, 61-62; *Ārā'*, 146-148), and a prophet-philosopher must be a philosopher, first of all. On the other hand, for al-Kirmānī, permitting an ordinary man the faculty to obtain the conjunction with the active intellect by himself through his own reasoning would amount to allowing a human being without religious charisma to become equivalent to an Ismā'īlī charismatic leader, or a philosopher-king from the philosophical aspect in a sense. Therefore, he must deny ordinary people, including wise philosophers, the possibility to match the religious leader, whose charisma is guaranteed by *ta'yīd* composed of *jadd*, *fath* and *khayāl*. At the same time, he must also reject the probability that the religious messages become only symbols or metaphors of the objective truth that can be attained by reasoning.

The rejection of the philosophical intellectualism is apparent in al-Kirmānī's *al-Aqwāl al-dhahabīya*, in which he criticizes Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyā' al-Rāzī (d. 925 or 935). Al-Rāzī maintains that human beings' intellects are God-given and can be perfected at the highest level, and therefore they must obey their intellects (*Rasā'il*, 17-19; al-Rāzī 1950, 20-21). However, al-Kirmānī argues that, without another person's guidance, human beings cannot obtain the knowledge that differentiates them from animals, as a man brought up like an animal cannot attain the intellectual stage (*Aqwāl*, 24-25). To assert the highest stage of intellect monopolized by the charismatic leaders, al-Kirmānī states: 'If it is correct and certain that there are, among us, people favoured with the intellect, which is the best grace bestowed by the sublime and powerful God, and by which we acquire benefits in this world and in the afterlife, their intellects are not ours but the prophets'—may the God bring peace upon them—' (*Aqwāl*, 27). The prophets can comprehend knowledge so fast that 'they continue to accept the emanation (*fayḍ*) from the holy world, which means the word of the sublime God, called the revelation' (*Aqwāl*, 30).

As a result, human beings 'must esteem, respect, honour, exalt, acquire [something] from, be guided by and imitate the *sunna* of the intellect, who is bestowed the revelation, the nobleness, the prophethood and the dignity of imamate' (*Aqwāl*, 31-32). An ordinary man cannot obtain the illumination from the active intellect; therefore, if he desires his intellect to be actualized, he must participate in the *da'wa* which maintains the *nāṭiq*'s *ta'yīd*. Al-Kirmānī regards

philosophy as merely one of the means of ascribing the true knowledge only to the charismatic leaders; in this respect, he differs from the philosophers. Walker (1993) and Nomoto (1999) arrive at the same conclusions about al-Sijistānī and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī respectively.

Criticizing the intellectualism of Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, al-Kirmānī states:

It is impossible for human beings to reach the transcendent (*al-muta'ālī*)—the praise be to him—and there is no relation between the transcendent and human beings. Therefore, the prophet is entrusted with the guidance and the teaching (*ta'līm*) of them; he is able to communicate with human beings and show himself to them, which is impossible for the transcendent, because it is absurd to assume that the transcendent behaves as such. Thus, the one who teaches them on behalf of the transcendent and plays his role of guide to human beings is required. (*Aqwāl*, 29)

For Ismā'īlīs, God is the transcendent that has no continuity with the creatures. Presupposing such a God, they reject the possibility for men to communicate with him and have relations with him. In place of the transcendent God, the first intellect functions as the Qur'ānic God in some ways. For al-Kirmānī, the *nāṭiq* corresponds to the first intellect and his actualized intellect is essentially equal to the first intellect, although it lacks the creative and ontological capacity. Therefore, in this world, the *nāṭiq* plays the role similar to that of the first intellect, in that he actualizes the potential intellectual power of the others in the world. By this definition, only the *nāṭiq* and those who succeed his religious charisma are qualified to communicate with the transcendental realm and become nearly divine, while the other people are denied the possibility to have conjunction with the transcendental existents and are required to obey the teaching of the religious privileged.

Conclusion

Al-Kirmānī's prophetology adopts al-Fārābī's theory on prophecy, but denies ordinary men, including philosophers, conjunction with the active intellect. For him, the active intellect is to be monopolized by religious leaders. Although his *nāṭiq* is similar to al-Fārābī's philosopher-king in many ways, a philosopher is rejected the possibility to attain the level of charismatic leaders; the acceptance of such a possibility would bring about crisis in the authority of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*. The authority of the *da'wa* originates in the charisma of the *nāṭiq*, which

is explained by the philosophical theory on the prophecy and the active intellect, and the Ismā'īlī doctrine of *ta'yīd* identified with *jadd*, *fath* and *khayāl*.

Al-Kirmānī's doctrine adopted al-Fārābī's philosophy, which was quite influential in his time, in order to construct the rationalized and systematic thought. However, Islamic philosophy was only a tool for systematizing Ismā'īlī religious doctrines. Those elements in al-Fārābī's philosophy which were dangerous to the essential doctrines of Ismā'īlism, such as prophetology and imamology, were excluded or modified.

It is true that the Neoplatonization of Ismā'īlism reached its peak with al-Kirmānī; however, the decisive difference between Ismā'īlism and Islamic philosophy, which allows human's free thinking, appears most definitely in his thought in the eleventh century.

Notes

- ¹ This is a revised and updated version of my paper "The Ismā'īlī Philosophical Prophetology in the 11th Century," (in Japanese), *The World of Islam* 52 (1999), 1-19.
- ² For the life and works of al-Kirmānī, refer to De Smet 1995, Walker 1999, and Haji 1998.
- ³ The constant rotary movement of celestial bodies brings about heat which causes fire. Thereafter, air, water and earth are gradually given birth to. Thus, four elements and four dispositions are formed in the sublunar world. The combination of four elements brings into being three natural creatures which have life, *i.e.* minerals, plants and animals. See *Rāḥa*, 253-257.
- ⁴ It means *al-ma'dhūn al-mahdūd*, the tenth hierarchy of the *da'wa*. He practices the dispute (*mukāsira*) so as to guide the community to the good, and endeavors to direct Ismā'īlī newcomers' souls to the truth. See Hamdani 1976, 92-93; De Smet 1995, 365.
- ⁵ Like Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', al-Kirmānī also regards the minerals as living things which have souls. See Nasr 1978, 91.
- ⁶ Al-Fārābī does not explicate the precise manner in which the objects that are given forms. He merely refers to the active intellect's general action upon materials in the sublunar world. On the other hand, the influence of al-Kirmānī's active intellect seems to be limited to living things; he does not generalize its action to the sublunar materials.
- ⁷ Al-Kirmānī thinks that the first intellect, the highest existents, and *nāṭiq*'s intellect are the same in that they are the actualized intellects. See *Rāḥa*, 70-71.
- ⁸ '*Aql hayūlānī*' is also used by al-Fārābī, having nearly the same meaning as the potential intellect. See *Ārā'*, 101-103; *Rāḥa*, 324; Walker 1999, 101-102; Walzer 1985, 402-403.
- ⁹ *Jadd*, *fath* and *khayāl* are also identified with the three angels, Jibrā'il, Mikā'il and Isrāfīl, and are often seen in the earlier Ismā'īlī texts of the tenth century as the mediators between the heavenly world and the *da'wa*; for example, the text of Abū 'Īsā al-Murshid. According to al-Sijistānī, *jadd* is synonymous with good luck (*bakht*). Receiving it from the higher world gives the *nāṭiq* power and makes him a ruler; he guides his *umma* and attains good luck in this world and the next. *Fath* means proof (*bayān*) by which obscure parts of al-Qur'ān are made clear. The *nāṭiq* has the power to find his executor and trusts his rule to him. *Khayāl*, the third divine favor, means imagination. The *nāṭiq* imagines the future of his *umma* after his death and finds the *imām* who will govern after him. See *Tuḥfa*, 15-16; Corbin 1983, 169; Stern 1983, 21-22, 27-28; Halm 1978, 67-74.

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