The Philosophical Prophetology of Ismāʿīlism in the Eleventh Century

Tatsuya KIKUCHI*

The Ismāʿīlis 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 Hamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 1020), who served Fatimid Imam al-Ḥākim (d. 1021), by studying the prophetology in his Rāḥa al-ʿaql.

Al-Kirmānī adopted al-Fārābī’s theory on the active intellect (ʿaql faʿāl) 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 (ʿaql 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 Ismāʿīlī prophetology. Al-Kirmānī thought that only the nāṭiq reached the transcendental position. Thus, he considered the nāṭiq’s guidance and Ismāʿīlī daʿwa as absolute, and explained his doctrine using rational philosophy.

**Keywords:** Ismāʿīlism, al-Kirmānī, al-Fārābī, prophetology, active intellect

**Introduction**

Ismāʿīlī thinkers like Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 971) are known to have

---

* Associate Professor, Kanda University of International Studies
introduced Neoplatonism into their thoughts from the tenth century onwards. The Neoplatonization of Isma‘īlism reached its peak by Ḥamid al-Din al-Kīrmānī (d. after 1020)² in the first half of eleventh century. Al-Kīrmānī was active as a ḍā‘ī (missionary) in Iraq and completed philosophical Isma‘īlism 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 Isma‘īlī communities as well as among non-Isma‘īlīs. We notice a confrontation between philosophy and religion, i.e. between reason and revelation there.

The Isma‘īlīs 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 Isma‘īlī 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 Isma‘īlism.

In this paper, I will examine the influence of al-Fārābī’s philosophy on the prophetic theory of al-Kīrmānī, who accomplished the Neoplatonization of Isma‘īlism, and I will point out the decisive difference between Islamic philosophy and Isma‘īlism. To understand the relations between the Isma‘īlī thinkers before al-Kīrmānī 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 Isma‘īlism (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-Kīrmānī’s.

To understand the relation between al-Kīrmānī 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-Isma‘īlīs on al-Kīrmānī’s cosmology and metaphysics, and set a high valuation on the originality of al-Kīrmānī 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‘al) 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 (nafs kulliya) 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-faḍila, 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 fi al-‘aql, he refers not merely to the epistemological function of the active intellect but maintains that it gives forms (ṣūwar, 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-ʿaql, 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 Arāʾ ahī al-madīna al-fāḍīla and al-Risāla fi al-ʿaql, 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 daʿwa], mukāṣir⁴, 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 (ʿibāda) 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-mawālid al-jusmāniya) 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 (ʿalam al-kawn wa al-fasad), 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 (ṯāʿa). (Rāḥa, 137-138)

In Rāḥa al-ʿaql, the cosmology, which begins with the first intellect (al-ʿaql al-awwal), is elaborated in correspondence (muṭābaqa) with hierarchies
The Philosophical Prophetology of Ismā‘īlism in the Eleventh Century

(ḥudūd) of the Ismā‘īlí 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 minerals, plants and animals (composed and organized by four elements) in the right direction, like a mukāsir guides a newcomer (mustajib) 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 (nafs) 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-Farābī’s al-Risāla fi al-‘aql, which gives forms to objects in the sublunar world.

‘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 fist perfection, is in that they have acquired kamāl thanī (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-wahda) 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 linker the heavenly world, the nāṭiq and the Ismā‘īlí 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
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’ (*_argvā*, 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-anfūs al-sharīfa*) receive the divine lights (*al-anwār al-ilāhiya*) 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-ʿaql 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 (*ḥissi*) 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*
The Philosophical Prophetology of Ismā‘īlism in the Eleventh Century

(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 wahy 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-faḍila) 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 nātíqṣ 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 mahdā). 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 nātíq 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 nātíqṣ 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 (maḥṣūsāt) by the five sensations (ḥawāṣṣ) 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 (ḥāṣṣa) 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 hayulani (material intellect). 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 intelligents 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-‘uqul al-mufāriqa allati hiya al-malā‘ika al-muqarrabin: Rāḥa, 325), ‘the actual separate intellects above the soul’ (mā fawqa-hā min al-‘uqül al-mufāriqa al-qā‘ima bil-fi’il: Rāḥa, 325), and ‘the eternal intellects’ (al-‘uqül al-sarmadiyā: 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 Āra’, 101-104). It is less complicated than that of Ibn Sinā (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 (Āra’, 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 Āra’, 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-ʿaql, the human intellect is not defined as the receptive intellect (ʿaql munfaʿil) 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-ʿaql, 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 daʿwa. 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 daʿwa 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 daʿwa, 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-ʿaql al-khārij al-muwakkal bil-anfus) keeps acting on the soul and stays connected with it (yuwaṣīlu-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 (rawiya) 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’yıd (guidance), which is the key concept in Ismā’īlism (Walker 1996, 32-39). For al-Sijıstanı, nāṭiqs receive ta’yıd from the universal intellect and, as the deputy of the (universal) intellect (khalıfa al-‘aql), promote the ascent of human souls (İthbatı, 127). He identifies ta’yıd with jadd, fath and khayal which appear in the gnostic myth of early İsmā’īlism. The universal intellect gives this ta’yıd to the nāṭiq, who passes it down through the hierarchy of the da’wa. Thus, the ta’yıd is considered the ultimate origin of its authority for the nāṭiq and the da’wa that follows him.

Al-Kiırmanı as well as al-Sijıstanı identifies ta’yıd with jadd, fath and khayal. Al-Kiırmanı believes that the revelation (wahy) 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 (där al-quds), 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 khayal. 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 tawḥıd 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). Khayal is understood as the transmission (ırsāl) 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 shari`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’īl, 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 tawhīd, 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’ili 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 nātiq. 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 taʿyīd 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-dhahābiya, in which he criticizes Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakariyā’ 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 nātiq’s taʿyīd. 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‘lim) 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. (Aqwal, 29)

For Ismā‘īlis, 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 transcendent realm and become nearly divine, while the other people are denied the possibility to have conjunction with the transcendent 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 Ismāʿili doctrine of taʿayyid identified with jadd, fath and khayāl.

Al-Kirmanī’s doctrine adopted al-Farābī’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 Ismāʿili religious doctrines. Those elements in al-Farābī’s philosophy which were dangerous to the essential doctrines of Ismāʿīlism, such as prophetology and imamology, were excluded or modified.

It is true that the Neoplatonization of Ismāʿīlism reached its peak with al-Kirmānī; however, the decisive difference between Ismāʿīlism 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 Ismāʿīlī Philosophical Prophetology in the 11th Century,” (in Japanese), The World of Islam 52 (1999), 1-19.
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-maʿdhun al-mahdud, the tenth hierarchy of the daʿwa. He practices the dispute (mukāsira) so as to guide the community to the good, and endeavors to direct Ismāʿīlī newcomers’ souls to the truth. See Hamdani 1976, 92-93; De Smet 1995, 365.
5 Like Ikhwan al-Ṣafāʾ, al-Kirmānī also regards the minerals as living things which have souls. See Nasr 1978, 91.
6 Al-Farābī 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 intelligents. See Rāḥa, 70-71.
8 ‘Aql hayūlānī is also used by al-Farābī, having nearly the same meaning as the potential intellect. See Ārāʾ, 101-103; Rāḥa, 324; Walker 1999, 101-102; Walzer 1985, 402-403.
9 Jadd, fath and khayāl are also identified with the three angels, Jibraʿil, Mīkāʿīl and Isrāʿīl, and are often seen in the earlier Ismāʿīlī texts of the tenth century as the mediators between the heavenly world and the daʿwa; for example, the text of Abū Ḥasan 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 (bayan) by which obscure parts of al-Qurʾān 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 Tuhfas, 15-16; Corbin 1983, 169; Stern 1983, 21-22, 27-28; Halm 1978, 67-74.
The Philosophical Prophetology of Ismāʿīlism in the Eleventh Century

Bibliography

[Primary Sources]
al-Fārābī 1993: Kitāb al-siyāsā al-madāniya, ed. by F. M. Najjar, Beirut. [Siyāsā]
al-Kirmanī 1952: Rāḥa al-ʾaql, ed. by M. K. Hūsayn and M. M. Hīlmi, Cairo. [Rāḥa]

[Secondary Sources]
Haji, H. 1998: A Distinguished Dāʾī under the Shade of the Fatimids: Ḥamd ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. circa 411/1020) and his Epistles, London.

Vol. XLIV 2009