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THE DUTY OF BEING CHARITABLE IN KNOWLEDGE: THE ZAKĀT IN AL-SIJISTĀNĪ'S *KITĀB AL-IFTIKHĀR*

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MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

According to the Quran:

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity ...¹

Explicitly connected in the Quran to the other primary acts of belief, such as the "pillars of faith", the alms-tax is considered also, as it is well known, one of the principal obligation of Islam (the "pillars of Islam").

The different semantic connotations of the word² involved in time a variety of interpretations in Muslim thought and practice. As for the Isma'ilis, they considered the alms-tax not only a formal act of communal solidarity but also a significant spiritual deed,³ as the present study intends to show.

¹ See Q 2:177. For the translation of the Quran, see *The Holy Qur'an*, translated by Yusuf Ali, Hertfordshire, 2001 (revised edition).

² The word is etymologically linked to the verb *zakā* that means "to be pure" but it also suggests the idea of growth so as to emphasize that the individual donating, which is doing so for the benefit of the society, aims at the growth of the community as quoted in the Quran (9:103): "Take [o Muhammad] from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase ...".

³ Al-Qāḍī al-Nūmān (10th century AD), who is considered the founder of the Isma'ili jurisprudence, in his *Da'ā'im al-islām* says that: "alms-tax (*zakāt*) and charity (*ṣadaqa*) are two names utilized to indicate the amount of goods bestowed for the cause of God who made the almsgiving obligatory as well as voluntary. In the majority of cases the tax levied on metals (silver and gold) as well as on seeds planted for food is called *zakāt*, but also *ṣadaqa* while the tax levied on camels, cattle and sheep is called *ṣadaqa* but also *zakāt*. At the beginning the *zakāt* was considered obligatory and the *ṣadaqa* voluntary." The quotation is taken from al-Qāḍī AL-NŪMĀN, *Da'ā'im al-islām* I, p. 240, quoted in Abū Ya'qūb AL-SIJISTĀNĪ, *Kitāb al-iftikhār*, ed. and comm. I. POONAWALA, Dār al-gharb al-islāmī, Beirut, 2001, p. 422, ll. 2-7 (the translation is mine). As for the *najwa*, a Quranic term referring to a voluntary contribution to the Prophet Muḥammad, the Isma'ilis regarded it as a due that was paid by

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