



Inside the Immaculate Portal: A History from the Fatimid Archives (Ismaili Texts and Translations)

Mansur al-Azizi al-Jawdhari

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The author of this work, Abu Ali Mansur al-Azizi al-Jawdhari, was a private secretary of Jawdhar, a confidant of the first four Fatimid caliph-imams who ruled in North Africa (from 297/910 to 361/972). Mansur had easy access to archives held by Jawdhar, including letters he had received from the imams, and was also privy to secrets that Jawdhar confided to him. After Jawdhar's death in 362/973, the Fatimid caliph-imam al-Muizz appointed Mansur to succeed him. The author cherished the memory of his mentor and wished to preserve his memory. With this end in view, he compiled the *Sirat al-Ustadh Jawdhar*, edited and translated here as *Inside the Immaculate Portal*. The work presents not only a biographical account of one of the most prominent statesmen of the early Fatimid period, but, more importantly, it brings together oral statements, correspondence and other archival material from the period spanning over sixty years of Fatimid rule.

The *Sirat al-Ustadh Jawdhar* was written during the time of al-Muizz's successor al-Aziz bi-Allah (r. 365–386/975–996). It is divided into two parts. The first part contains an account of the life and career of Jawdhar, from his entering the service of the Fatimids under al-Mahdi to his death sixty years later during the reign of al-Muizz. The biography is interspersed with some sermons and correspondence of the imams with Jawdhar on a variety of subjects, both personal and political. The second part is largely a documentary collection of 86 letters, directives, recorded conversations and letters of the Fatimid caliph-imams addressed to Jawdhar. Altogether, this publication provides a unique insight into the private world and political ethos of one of the major Muslim dynasties of the medieval era.

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