



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

The Eagle Returns: Evidence of Continued Isma‘ili Activity at Alamut and in the South Caspian Region following the Mongol Conquests

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None of that people should be spared, not even the babe in its cradle.

-Edict of Chingiz Khan and Mangu Qa’an¹

It is generally believed that the fall of the castle of Alamut in A.H. 654 (A.D. 1256) marks the end of the Ismaili influence in Gilan. This is a great mistake.

-Hyacinth L. Rabino²

The catastrophic Mongol incursions into the heart of the Muslim world during the thirteenth century left a path of death and destruction in their wake. Though the assaults succeeded in vanquishing Baghdad, toppling the Muslim caliph himself, it is notable that the famous contemporary historian, ‘Ata-Malik Juwayni, does not describe this as the pinnacle of Mongol conquest. Rather, for this Sunni historian, the zenith and culmination of the Mongol invasion is the obliteration of the tiny rival enclave of the Isma‘ilis, a Shi‘i community centred at the mountain fortress of Alamut. It is to this singular event that Juwayni dedicates the concluding one-third of his *History of the World Conqueror*.³

Ibn al-Athir and later historians record a charming anecdote about this fortress. Apparently, Wahsudan b. Marzuban, one of the Justanid rulers of Daylam, was on a hunting expedition when he saw a soaring eagle alight on a rock. Noticing how strategically ideal the site was, the ruler decided to build a castle there that was henceforth called *Aluh amu [kh]t*, which may mean “the eagle’s teaching,” *ta‘lim al-‘uqab* in Ibn al-Athir’s rendering. The name, later simplified to Alamut, is significant in at least two ways. As noticed by a number of historians, in the traditional *abjad* system of alpha-numeric correspondence, the name is a chronogram for the year 483 AH, corresponding to AD 1090, the very year that Hasan Sabbah, the champion of the Nizari Isma‘ili cause, came into possession of the fortress. From then on, it became the home of the Nizaris, the *ta‘limiyya*, as they came to be known, reflecting their emphasis on the need for

¹ ‘Ala al-Din ‘Ata-Malik Juwayni, *Ta’rikh-i Jahangushay*, ed. Mirza Muhammad Qazwini, 3 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1912-37), 3: 275; trans. John A. Boyle, *The History of the World Conqueror*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), 2: 723.

² Hyacinth Louis Rabino, “Rulers of Gilan,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1920): 293-94. Juwayni himself was suitably impressed by the fortifications of the castle, and describes the immense difficulty of destroying it, *Ta’rikh-i Jahangushay*, 3: 272-73; tr. Boyle, 2: 720-21.

³ For a discussion of Juwayni’s possible motivations for this unusual treatment, see David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), and Carole Hillenbrand, “The Power Struggle between the Saljuqs and the Isma‘ilis of Alamut, 487-518/1094-1124: The Saljuq Perspective,” in *Mediaeval Isma‘ili History and Thought*, ed. Farhad Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 214.

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authoritative instruction (*ta'lim*) and reminiscent of this delightful story about the *ta'lim al-'uqab*, the eagle's teaching.⁴

The Mongols sought a complete destruction of Alamut and the extermination of the Isma'ilis. Many of the Persian historians, led by Juwayni, believed that they were successful in this endeavour. Until recently, the complete extermination of the Isma'ilis in the face of the Mongol behemoth was also accepted as fact in Western scholarship. Perhaps the first person to draw attention in orientalist circles to the continued existence of the Isma'ilis as well as to their local traditions and literature was Jean Baptiste L. J. Rousseau (d. 1831), who was the French consul-general in Aleppo from 1809 to 1816 and a long-time resident of the Near East. He came across the Nizaris in Syria and highlighted their sorry plight after their 1809 massacre at the hands of the Nusayris. He was also much surprised, during his participation as a member of an official French mission sent to the court of the Persian monarch Fath 'Ali Shah (d.1834), to find that the community flourished in Iran as well. He wrote a letter about his findings to the famous Parisian scholar, A. I. Sylvestre de Sacy, who quoted it at the end of his pivotal study "Mémoire sur la dynastie des Assassins, et sur l'étymologie de leur Nom."⁵

However, this information was scarcely noticed in orientalist circles. It was only with the pioneering efforts of Wladimir Ivanow in the following century that the community finally emerged from academic obscurity. While its continued survival had now become clear, what has hitherto been largely underestimated, if not often unnoticed, is the fact of continued Isma'ili activity in the regions of Gilan, Daylam, and Mazandaran, including at the fort of Alamut itself, in the wake of the Mongol invasions. This was first suggested by Hyacinth Louis Rabino (d. 1950), the British vice-consul in Rasht whose writings contributed significantly to scholarship on the south Caspian region.⁶ Little use was made of Rabino's findings in this regard until Farhad Daftary revisited the issue briefly in his work, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*.⁷ Slightly later, Maryam Mu'izzi contributed new insights in her M.A. thesis, completed at Firdawsi University in Mashhad.⁸

In this article it is maintained that Isma'ili activity in the region in the aftermath of the Mongol invasions was even greater than previously suspected. Inconsistencies and exaggerations in Juwayni's testimony; a correction of his narrative based on other historians, including Rashid al-Din; and the evidence of regional

⁴ 'Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir, *Ta'rikh al-Kamil* (Cairo, 1303/1885), 10: 110-13. Cf., for example, Juwayni, *Ta'rikh-i Jahangushay*, 3: 194; tr. Boyle, 670. Hamd Allah Mustawfi Qazwini, *Nuzhal al-Qulub*, ed. Guy Le Strange, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat al-Qulub* (Leiden-London, 1915-19), 61, trans., 66; Muhammad b. Khwandshah Mirkhwand, *Rawdat al-Safa'*, 10 vols. (Tehran, 1338-39/1960), Am. Jourdain, "Histoire de la dynastie des Ismaéliens de Perse," *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits* 9 (1813): 208, trans. 154. Mirkhwand gives an alternative translation of Alamut as "the eagle's nest" (*ashyana-yi 'uqab*), which is etymologically less convincing. Wladimir Ivanow felt that these medieval attempts were "absurd" and that it was impossible to reconstruct the etymology of a word from an unknown language. See Ivanow, *Alamut and Lamasar* (Bombay: The Ismaili Society, 1960), 1. Rashid al-Din's dating is different from the above, being based on the chronogram of Alamut, rather than the older version of the name. See Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah Tabib, *Jami' al-Tawarikh*, ed. B. Karimi (Tehran, 1338/1959), 2: 697, tr. 2: 486.

⁵ In *Mémoires de l'Institut Royal de France* 4 (1818): 1-84; trans. Azizeh Azodi, "Memoir on the Dynasty of the Assassins and on the Etymology of their Name by Silvestre de Sacy," in *The Assassin Legends*, ed. Farhad Daftary (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994), 182.

⁶ See, for example, his "Les Dynasties du Mazandaran," *Journal Asiatique* 228 (1936): 472-73, "Les Dynasties locales du Gilan et du Daylam," *Journal Asiatique* 237 (1949): 315-18, *Les Provinces Caspiennes de la Perse : Le Guilan* (Paris, 1917), 281, 402-5, 409-10, and "Rulers of Gilan," 293-95.

⁷ Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990; in particular, 448-51.

⁸ "Isma'iliyyan-i Iran" (M.A. thesis, Danishgah-i Firdawsi, 1371-72 S), esp. 193-237.



histories, geographical tomes and inscriptions clearly point to sustained Isma‘ili presence in the region. This evidence is further supported by the fifteenth-century *Nasai‘ih-i Shah-Rukhi*, a hostile Khurasani source that clearly indicates that Alamut was a centre of the Isma‘ili *da‘wa* to which community funds were sent. The testimony of the *Nasa‘ih* is supported by that of the *da‘wa* literature of the Indian subcontinent, which provides very suggestive evidence that the residence of the Imam Islam Shah was Alamut. From this, it becomes clear that the south Caspian region continued, perhaps sporadically, as an important centre of the Isma‘ili community for over a century after the Mongol irruption. The eagle had, so to speak, returned.

A Corrective to ‘Ata-Malik Juwayni’s Narrative

The Mongol invasions were undoubtedly a singular event in Islamic history. The cataclysmic proportions of this catastrophe moved contemporary writers to predict the imminent end of the world.⁹ Ibn al ‘Athir, who himself had witnessed the destruction wrought by the marauding invaders, prefaced his account of the conquest as follows:

I have been avoiding mentioning this event for many years because I consider it too horrible. I have been advancing with one foot and retreating with the other. Who could easily write the obituary of Islam and the Muslims? For whom could it be easy to mention it? Would that my mother had not given birth to me, would that I had died before it happened and had been a thing forgotten. However, a group of friends urged me to record it since I knew it first-hand. Then I saw that to refrain from it would profit nothing. Therefore, we say: this deed encompasses mention of the greatest event, the most awful catastrophe that has befallen time. It engulfed all beings, particularly the Muslims. Anyone would be right in saying that the world, from the time God created humans until now, has not been stricken by its like. Histories contain nothing that even approaches it.¹⁰

As Morgan convincingly argues, it was not mere coincidence that Juwayni makes the Mongol conquest of Alamut the culmination of his *History of the World Conqueror*. As a staunch Sunni Muslim, he could scarcely celebrate the devastation of his co-religionists by his own heathen patron whose service he had entered during his youth. He was therefore at pains “to discern some silver linings in the Mongol clouds.”¹¹ What better way than to celebrate his patron’s victory over the “arch-heretics,” something the Saljuqs had never been able to accomplish?¹² Though he was an eyewitness to the Mongol invasions, Juwayni selectively reports what suits his aim. Numerous authors from the time of d’Ohsson in the early 1880s to David Ayalon more recently have vigorously censured Juwayni for “extravagant flattery” of the Mongols, castigating him for being “servile”- even “nauseating.”¹³ Edward Granville Browne is

⁹ For example, Minhaj al-Din ‘Uthman b. Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, ed. ‘Abd al-Hayy Habibi, 2nd ed. (Kabul: 1342-43/1963-64); trans. Henry G. Raverty, *The Tabakat-i-Nasiri: A General History of the Muhammadan Dynasties of Asia* (London, 1881-99). Though he was an old man living safely in the Delhi Sultanate when he wrote his book, he himself had witnessed the horrors of Chingiz Khan’s invasion forty years earlier.

¹⁰ Ibn al-Athir, *Ta’rikh al-Kamil*, 12: 358; translated in “Preface” to Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah Tabib, tr. Wheeler M. Thackston, *Jami‘u’t-tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ., 1998), xi.

¹¹ Morgan, *The Mongols*, 17-18.

¹² In fact, Carole Hillenbrand suggests that Juwayni intentionally inflated the number of failed Saljuq forays against the Isma‘ilis in order to bring into relief the Mongol success. See Hillenbrand, “The Power Struggle between the Saljuqs and the Isma‘ilis of Alamut,” 214.

¹³ See David Morgan, “Persian Historians and the Mongols,” in *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds*, ed. D. Morgan (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, Univ. of London, 1982), 114; David Ayalon, “The Great Yasa of Chingiz Khan: A Re-examination,” *Studia Islamica* 33 (1971): 133.



somewhat more forgiving, noting that his circumstances “compelled him to speak with civility of the barbarians whom it was his misfortune to serve.”¹⁴

Undoubtedly, the most glaring omission in his tome of the Mongol conquests is his neglecting to mention the fact that the Mongols sacked Baghdad and murdered the last ‘Abbasid caliph in 656 AH/1258 CE, unceremoniously rolling him up in a carpet and trampling him to death with elephants.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the downfall of the tiny Nizari Isma‘ili state is given great prominence and is the pinnacle of his narrative.¹⁶ Juwayni himself composed the *fathnama* or proclamation of victory on this occasion.¹⁷ We must wonder, though, if Juwayni’s own immense distaste for the Nizari Ismailis was shared to the same degree by his patron. In fact, Hulagu’s own attitude appears ambiguous at times. There are instances when he seems to

¹⁴ Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols. (rpt. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997), 2: 473.

¹⁵ This is the most generally credited account. See John Andrew Boyle, “The Death of the Last ‘Abbasid Caliph: A Contemporary Muslim Account,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 6 (1961): 160. Another equally uncomplimentary, though perhaps less creditable version, is that of Marco Polo and others, which has him shut up in a tower surrounded by his treasures and starved to death. See Aldo Ricci, trans., *The Travels of Marco Polo* (New York: Viking Press, 1931), 27.

¹⁶ The following passage illustrates this penchant for drama:

In that breeding-ground of heresy in the Rudbar of Alamut the home of the wicked adherents of Hasan-i Sabbah and the vile followers of the practice of *ibaha* [sic, *ibaha*], there remains not one stone of the foundation upon another. And in that flourishing abode of innovations (*bid‘at*) the Artist of Eternity Past wrote with the pen of violence upon the portico of each one [’s dwelling] the verse: ‘*These their houses are empty ruins* [Qur’an 27: 53].’ And in the market-place of those wretches’ kingdom the muezzin Destiny has uttered the cry of ‘*Away with the wicked people!*’ [Qur’an 23:43]” Their luckless womenfolk (*haram u harim*), like their empty religion, have been utterly destroyed. And the gold of those crazy, double-dealing counterfeiters which appeared to be unalloyed has proved to be base lead. Today, thanks to the glorious fortune of the World-Illuminating King, if an assassin (*kard-zan*) still lingers in a corner, he plies a woman’s trade; wherever there is a *da‘i* there is an announcer of death; and every *rafiq* [sic, *rafiq*] has become a thrall. The propagators of Isma‘ilism have fallen victims to the swordsmen of Islam. Their *maulana* [sic, *maulana*] to whom they addressed the words: ‘O god, our Protector (*maulana*), -dust in their mouths!-(and yet ‘*the infidels have no protector* [Qur’an 47:12]’) has become the serf of bastards. Their wise Imam, nay their lord of this world, of whom they believed that ‘*every day doth some new work employ him* [Qur’an 55:29]’, is fallen like game into the net of Predestination. Their governors (*muhtasham*) have lost their power and their rulers (*kiya*) their honour. The greatest among them have become as vile as dogs. Every commander of a fortress has been deemed fit for the gallows and every warden of a castle has forfeited his head and his mace. They have been degraded amongst mankind like the Jews and like the highways are level with the dust. *God Almighty hath said: ‘Vileness and poverty were stamped upon them* [Qur’an 13:25].’ ‘*These, a curse awaiteth them* [Qur’an 2:58].’ The kings of the Greeks and Franks, who turned pale for fear of these accursed ones, and paid them tribute, and were not ashamed of that ignominy, now enjoy sweet slumber. And all the inhabitants of the world, and in particular the Faithful, have been relieved of their evil machinations and unclean beliefs. Nay, the whole of mankind, high and low, noble and base, share in this rejoicing. And compared with these histories, that of Rustam the son of Dastan has become but an ancient fable. The perception of all ideas is through this manifest victory, and the light of the world-illuminating day is adorned thereby. ‘*And the uttermost part of that impious people was cut off. All praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds!* [Qur’an 6:45].’
Juwayni, *Ta’rikh-i Jahangushay*, 3: 139-42, tr. 2: 639-40.

¹⁷ He appends this document to one of the chapters in *ibid.*, 3: 114, tr. 2: 622.



have treated the Isma‘ili Imam with great deference, viewing him with “attention and kindness,” and even bestowing lavish gifts on him.¹⁸

For the same reasons that Juwayni seriously downplays the desolation of the Sunni Muslim world, he revels in the Mongol victories over the Isma‘ilis. Asserting that the “sons and daughters, brothers and sisters and all of [the] seed and family” of the last Isma‘ili Imam of Alamut, Rukn al-Din Khwarshah, were “laid on the fire of annihilation,”¹⁹ he triumphantly declares in concluding his history, “He and his followers were kicked to a pulp and then put to the sword; and of him and his stock no trace was left, and he and his kindred became but a tale on men’s lips and a tradition in the world.”²⁰ While there can be little doubt that the community was devastated - we know independently from the *Tarikh-i Tabaristan*, for example, that Khurasan especially was flooded with captive Isma‘ili women and children, sold as slaves - this devastation was not total.²¹

Rashid al-Din informs us that the fortress of Girdkuh managed to hold out under extreme siege conditions for almost twenty years, falling only in 669 AH/1270 CE, over a decade after Alamut’s capitulation.²² In the same year, an attempt, ascribed to the Nizaris, was made on the life of ‘Ata-Malik Juwayni himself, who had written them out of existence scarcely a decade earlier. This strongly suggests that contemporary witnesses still viewed the Isma‘ilis as a force to be reckoned with and were not at all convinced of their extirpation by the Mongols.²³

Both Hamd Allah Mustawfi (d. 750 AH/1349 CE) and Fasih Khwafi (b. 777 AH/1375 CE) inform us that shortly after Girdkuh fell, a group of Isma‘ilis, led by the “son of Khwarshah” whose title was “Naw Dawlat” or “Abu Dawlat” managed to recapture Alamut in 674 AH/1275 CE.²⁴ The subjugation of the fortress by this son of the Imam Rukn al-Din Khwarshah, in league with a descendant of the Khwarazmshahs, led H. L. Rabino to assert, “It is generally believed that the fall of the castle of Alamut in AH 654 (1256 CE) marks the end of the Isma‘ili influence in Gilan. This is a great mistake. Either the

¹⁸ — — 3: 274, tr. 2: 722. This surprisingly warm reception was also noted by Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), 93.

¹⁹ Juwayni, *Ta’rikh-i Jahangushay*, 3: 276, tr. 2: 723.

²⁰ — — 3:277, tr. 2: 724-25.

²¹ Ibn Isfandiyar and anonymous continuator, cited by Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins* (New York: AMS Press, 1980), 270.

²² *Jami‘ al-Tawarikh*, 2: 695, 766, tr. 2: 485,3:535-56. See also Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, 2:186, tr. 2: 1206-11. Here he states that the garrison of Girdkuh, reduced to one or two hundred men, was still holding out against the Mongols in 658 AH/1260 CE, at the time he was writing. Also cited in Daftary, *The Isma‘ilis*, 429, 698 n. 242. Daftary provides some of his own observations concerning the situation of Girdkuh.

²³ Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, 3:25.

²⁴ Hamd Allah Mustawfi Qazwini, *Ta’rikh-i Guzida*, ed. ‘Abd al-Husayn Nawa’i (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1362 S), 592; E. G. Browne, *The Ta’rikh-i Guzida: or, ‘Select History’* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1910-13), ed. 583, tr. 143. “Khwarazmshah” in the manuscript used by Browne must be amended to “Khwarshah.” Ahmad b. Jalal al-Din Muhammad Fasih Khwafi, *Mujmal-i Fasihi*, ed. Mahmud Farakh (Mashhad, 1340 S), 2: 344; L. Lockhart, “Alamut,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1999; rpt. CD-ROM ed.), 1: 352 mistakenly gives the date as 673. Cf. Rashid al-Din, “Back on this front, as soon as Khwarshah was set on the road, his kith and kin, including men and women down to babes in cradles, were all put to death between Abhar and Qazwin, with no trace remaining,” *Jami‘ al-Tawarikh*, 2: 697, tr. 2: 486. Clearly, this must refer only to the family members who had accompanied him on the journey.



destruction of Alamut cannot have been as complete as reported by the Persian writers, or the castle was rebuilt.”²⁵

This event involving the son of Imam Khwarshah forces us to dismiss Juwayni’s assertion that the Mongols had killed the entire family, “to even the babe in its cradle.” A careful examination of the *History of the World Conqueror* further reveals inconsistencies and lapses in Juwayni’s testimony, particularly with regards to a parenthetical remark that Imam Rukn al-Din Khwarshah had but a single son - “he sent out his son, *his only one*, and another brother called Iran-Shah with a delegation of notables, officials and leaders of his people.”²⁶

Prior to this pivotal assertion, Juwayni had mentioned a young son of the Imam Rukn al-Din who was sent together with a number of his chief officials to the service of Hulagu. As the historian tells us, the Mongol leader suspected that he had been tricked and that a decoy of the same age had been sent in place of the real son, despite assurances to the contrary. It seems rather more probable that the misgivings were Juwayni’s, not Hulagu’s. The Mongol conqueror treated the child kindly and allowed him to return on the agreement that one of the imam’s brothers, Shiran Shah, would take his place.²⁷ Rashid al-Din, narrating the same incident, doesn’t share Juwayni’s doubts about the identity of the boy.²⁸ His testimony regarding this event seems more reliable. Juwayni is convinced that even Imam Khwarshah’s ministers and advisers had been duped and were unaware that it was not the real son, which is scarcely a possibility.²⁹ Both Juwayni and Rashid al-Din record that the child was seven or eight years old.³⁰ If indeed this were a decoy, it would have been quite foolhardy to send such a youngster, who would have easily blurted out the truth of his identity under questioning.

Both Juwayni and Rashid al-Din mention that when the castle of Maymundiz was conquered in 654 AH/1256 CE, Rukn al-Din Khwarshah sent another son to Hulagu together with the imam’s brother Iran Shah and various notables and dignitaries.³¹ This son was clearly not the same person as the child sent earlier, as Juwayni is confident of his identity.³² Rashid al-Din provides the important additional detail that the name of this son was Tarkiya.³³ Thus, Imam Khwarshah had at least two sons. This is further supported by Juwayni himself who contradicts his testimony about a single son, by writing about Rukn al-Din Khwarshah’s “sons and daughters, brothers and sisters”³⁴ in one instance, and again about his “brothers, children, domestics and dependents”³⁵ in another.

Whether the son of Imam Khwarshah who reconquered Alamut, named Abu Dawlat or Naw Dawlat in our sources, was this Tarkiya, the child sent with Iran Shah, or some other offspring is not possible to determine without more information. If he was either Tarkiya or the child sent with Iran Shah, he would

²⁵ “Rulers of Gilan,” 293-94. Juwayni himself was suitably impressed by the fortifications of the castle, and describes the immense difficulty of destroying it; see *Ta’rikh-i Jahangushay*, 3: 272-73, tr. 2: 720-21.

²⁶ *Ta’rikh-i Jahangushay*, 3: 267, tr. 2: 717, emphasis added.

²⁷ — 3: 111, tr. 2: 620.

²⁸ *Jami’ al-Tawarikh*, 2: 694, tr. 2: 484.

²⁹ *Ta’rikh-i Jahangushay*, 3: 264, tr. 2: 715. It is equally inexplicable how he was somehow able positively to identify as false a child whom even the imam’s most intimate associates thought to be his son.

³⁰ This seems in keeping with the fact that Imam Rukn al-Din Khwarshah was also quite young at this time, his youth being mentioned in the *Fathnama* of Alamut. See *ibid.*, 3: 116, 124, tr. 2: 624, 628.

³¹ — 3: 133, tr. 2: 634.

³² — 3: 267, tr. 2: 717, *Jami’ al-Tawarikh*, 2: 685, tr. 2: 485.

³³ *Jami’ al-Tawarikh*, 2: 685, tr. 2: 485.

³⁴ *Ta’rikh-i Jahangushay*, 3: 276, tr. 2: 723.

³⁵ — 3: 134, tr. 2: 635.



have been in his late twenties when he led his people to victory. Regardless of which of these offspring he was, it is likely he was quite young at the time as Rukn al-Din Khwarshah himself was only in his late twenties when the Mongols attacked, his youthfulness being alluded to in numerous places.³⁶

In the Shadow of the Ilkhanids and Beyond

However, the earlier political power of the Isma‘ilis had been broken, and the fortress was once again seized from “the son of Khwarshah” by Abaqa Khan (d. 680 AH/1282 CE), Hulaga Khan’s eldest son and successor to the throne of the Ilkhanids.³⁷ The Mongols did not stay to rule, though. Gilan was never properly conquered by them and, until the time of Uljaytu Khan (d. 716 AH /1312 CE), was left relatively undisturbed due to its inaccessibility.³⁸ In fact, we find the area scarcely mentioned in the earlier chronicles of the Mongol period.³⁹ Thus, the Nizaris were probably able to retain some sort of autonomy in Daylam, just as other groups ruled relatively independently in the surrounding areas. Indeed, Hulagu’s great-grandson, Ghazan Khan, who succeeded to the Ilkhanate in 694 AH/1295 CE, refers to the continued presence of Isma‘ilis in his time “who have been in these lands from long ago,” noting that they had a practice of concealing their beliefs.⁴⁰ This state of relative independence continued until, hungry for the taxes of the Gilani *amirs* and power over the silk of that region, Uljaytu brought in his army in 706 AH/1307 CE.⁴¹ His foray into Daylam was marked by plunder and killing.⁴² Most of the Daylamites fled to take refuge in the jungles of the area, and the Mongols took women and children as prisoners.⁴³ Uljaytu’s victory was not entirely one-sided, though. Hafiz Abru informs us that it was a hard fight, with both sides experiencing heavy casualties.⁴⁴ A local chief by the name of Shiru, unidentified but whose defiance and area of activity suggest the possibility of his being an Isma‘ili, resisted the onslaught and managed to plunder the Mongol baggage train, which had been held up by the difficult terrain.⁴⁵ Though this Mongol incursion into Gilan was successful, it was, as J. A. Boyle correctly recognised, “at most a Pyrrhic victory.”⁴⁶ Even if they managed to maintain some residual authority over the region after this expedition, it would have evaporated with the death of Abu Sa‘id (735 AH/1335 CE), Uljaytu’s successor and the last great Mongol Ilkhan. Henceforth, there was no central rule or strong government in the region, a circumstance that would have allowed any remaining Isma‘ilis in the area a respite from the ravages of the previous decades.

This is supported by the *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, written in 740 AH/1340 CE, which mentions that the lands of Ashkavar, Daylaman, Talish, Kharaqan, and Khastajan, the great mountainous districts between (Persian)

³⁶ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 3: 124, tr. 2: 628.

³⁷ Qazwini, *Ta’rikh-i Guzida*, 1: 583, 2: 143.

³⁸ Hamd Allah Mustawfi, *Zafarnama*, lithograph of British Library MS Or. 2833, 2 vols. (Tehran: Markaz-i nashr-i danishgahi-i Iran, 1999), 2: 1426; Ahmad-i Tabrizi, *Shahanshahnama*, MS British Library Or. 2780, fol. 116ro, cited in Charles Melville, “The Ilkhan Oljeitu’s Conquest of Gilan (1307): Rumour and Reality,” in *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*, ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 84.

³⁹ Melville, 117.

⁴⁰ *Jami‘ al-Tawarikh*, 2: 984, tr. 3: 676.

⁴¹ Melville, “Ilkhan Oljeitu’s Conquest,” 105.

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⁴³ ‘Abd Allah b. Lutf ‘Ali al-Bihdadini Hafiz Abru, *Dhayl-i Jami‘ al-Tawarikh* (Tehran: 1317 S/1938), 73.

⁴⁴ Cited in Melville, 105, 197 n. 122 from a manuscript of the *Dhayl-i Jami‘ al-Tawarikh* that contains sections not found in the edited version.

⁴⁵ Jamal al-Din Abu al-Qasim ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Ali Kashani, *Ta’rikh-i Uljaytu*, ed. M. Hambly (Tehran: 1348/ 1969), 67. Also cited in Melville, 105.

⁴⁶ Boyle, “Dynastic and Political History of the Il-Khans,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), 5: 401.



Iraq and Gilan, were under the control of independent governors, each of whom considered himself to be an independent king. The work further goes on to state that the people of many of these areas were Isma'ilis.⁴⁷ It seems that during this period of respite, the community managed to regroup and within a few decades was able to eliminate some of its opponents, such as Malik Bisutun, a local ruler in Taliqan, in 787 AH/1385 CE.⁴⁸

Despite his clear hostility and stylised diatribes, we are forced to rely on Zahir al-Din Mar'ashi's (d. 892 AH/1486 CE) testimony, as he is our only major source for the Isma'ilis of Daylam in this period. This author dedicated a whole section of his *Tarikh-i Gilan wa Daylamistan* to the history and doctrine of the Isma'ilis, a section to which he repeatedly refers but which, unfortunately, is absent in the sole surviving manuscript of the work. In itself, the attention of this author, who lived two centuries after the Mongol destruction of Alamut, is testimony to the Isma'ili community's enduring presence and influence in the region.⁴⁹

By 770 AH/1368-69 CE, the whole of Daylaman seems once again to have come under Isma'ili rule and was governed by Kiya Sayf al-Din of the Kushayji family. While the Isma'ili religious tendencies of the Daylamites and their leaders were suspected, they do not appear to have been proclaimed openly. Adminstrating from his residence in Marjikuli (modern day Mirjankuli), this leader received a hostile letter from the neighbouring Zaydi ruler, Sayyid 'Ali Kiya b. Amir Malati, who would later go on to found the Caspian Zaydi dynasty of Amir Kiya'i *sayyids* that would endure until the Safawids subdued Gilan in 1000 AH/1592 CE. In his letter he severely denounced the *malahida-i isma'ili* and prevailed upon Kiya Sayf al-Din to rid his territories of the hated sectarians. The Isma'ili leader replied indignantly to the messenger, declaring his family's religion openly, "My ancestors followed the religion of Muhammad, upon whom be peace, and were followers and believers in the *sayyids* of the line of Isma'il b. Ja'far. Nobody has a right to order us in this manner."⁵⁰ The stinging rejoinder moved 'Ali Kiya to prepare his troops for battle. When Kiya Sayf al-Din heard of these preparations, he immediately readied his own Daylami troops. The two parties clashed in 779 AH/1377-78 CE.

In the battle, Kiya Sayf al-Din's troops were routed and this Isma'ili leader was forced to flee. Sayyid 'Ali Kiya quickly set about to "repulse and obliterate the path of impiety and depravity [of Isma'ilism] that the people of that realm had adopted for some years."⁵¹ If indeed Isma'ilism had only recently been accepted by the people, as Mar'ashi implies, it is an indication that efforts at conversion were being made. However, given the traditional Isma'ili associations of the area, it is perhaps more likely that extremely difficult circumstances had forced the sectarians underground and it was only in the less hostile environment permitted by an Isma'ili ruler that they became bolder in asserting their identity. 'Ali Kiya's new lieutenant, Amir 'Ali, pursued Sayf al-Din, eventually capturing and beheading him. The head was sent forthwith to 'Ali Kiya.

Led by a certain Dabbaj Bahadur, the members of the Kushayji family and their followers regrouped in Qazwin. They managed to exact revenge and did away with Amir 'Ali. Numerous Isma'ilis then sought refuge in Qazwin, from where they made forays into Daylaman. Writing just a few decades earlier, Hamd

⁴⁷ *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, 60-61, tr. 65-67.

⁴⁸ Zahir al-Din Mar'ashi, *Ta'rikh-i Tabaristan wa Ruyan wa Mazandaran*, ed. Husayn Tasbihi (Tehran: 1361 S/[1983]), 147.

⁴⁹ See Rabino, "Les Dynasties locales du Gilan et du Daylam," 314.

⁵⁰ Zahir al-Din Mar'ashi, *Ta'rikh-i Gilan wa Daylamistan*, ed. M. Sutuda (Tehran: 1347/1968), 67; Rabino, "Rulers of Gilan", 295.

⁵¹ *Ta'rikh-i Gilan wa Daylamistan*, 67.



Allah Mustawfi, himself a native of Qazwin, had remarked that though the city was encompassed by Isma'ilis, its population remained largely Sunni of the Shafi'i school, "extremely bigoted in matters of religion."⁵² However, the inhabitants of nearby Taliqan, just to the east of Qazwin, while declaring themselves Sunnis, were known to incline to Isma'ilism.⁵³ In 781 AH/1378 CE, Sayyid 'Ali Kiya's commander of Ashkawar and Rudbar, Khwaja Ahmad, drove these refugees out of Qazwin. The Kushayji family then fled to Sultaniyya to join some of their co-religionists who had been ordered there by Tamerlane.⁵⁴ Just over a decade later, Tamerlane's troops were also to massacre the Isma'ilis in Mazandaran,⁵⁵ and shortly afterwards those of Anjudan as well.⁵⁶

'Ali Kiya sought to enlist the support of Khudawand Muhammad's forces in his efforts to dominate the region. He therefore sent an emissary bearing a message proclaiming, as Mar'ashi informs us, that "the Almighty God's gate of repentance and penitence was open" and that the way to it was for the imam "to forsake the corrupt beliefs" of his forbears and ancestors.⁵⁷ The message is further supposed to have proclaimed:

Your folk have ruled over Daylamistan for a number of years, but due to abounding iniquity, the evil of impiety, and wicked beliefs, you have witnessed what you have witnessed [apparently a reference to the downturn of Isma'ili political fortunes]. If you turn away from the path reviled by the leaders of religion and companions of certainty, and adorn and bedeck yourself in the garb of faith and certitude, accepting our merciful counsel, we will show compassion and mercy to you and bestow the land of Daylamistan upon you.^{58 58}

The highly stylised account then has Khudawand Muhammad hastily beating a path to Lahijan where Sayyid 'Ali Kiya enlists his support to overcome Kiya Malik Hazaraspi of Ashkawar with whom he had fallen out, despite the earlier allegiance of Kiya Malik's ancestors. This was clearly the real purpose of his original communication. Mar'ashi's narrative then has Khudawand Muhammad abjure the beliefs of his ancestors before the "religious scholars, jurists, and judges" of the land.⁵⁹ There followed, in the year 776 AH/1374 CE, a mighty battle in which the forces of Kiya Malik were routed by the combined efforts of Khudawand Muhammad and Sayyid 'Ali Kiya's brother, Sayyid Mahdi Kiya. Kiya Malik fled and took refuge at Alamut.⁶⁰

However, rather than assigning Daylamistan to Khudawand Muhammad for his support as had been promised, Sayyid 'Ali Kiya double-crossed him, instead entrusting this area to his own brother, Mahdi

⁵² *Ta'rikh-i Gilan wa Daylamistan*, 67.

⁵³ — — 65, tr. 70.

⁵⁴ *Ta'rikh-i Gilan wa Daylamistan*, 69-70; see also below.

⁵⁵ Nizam al-Din Shami, *Zafarnama*, ed. F. Tauer (Prague, 1937-50), 1: 168; Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, ed. M. 'Abbasi (Tehran, 1336/1957), 1: 412; Mirkhwand, *Rawdat al-Safa'*, 6: 207. This attack occurred in 794/1392, when Nizam al-Din Shami was actually present; see Shami, *Zafarnama*, 1: 128.

⁵⁶ Shami, *Zafarnama*, 1: 136; Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, 1: 443-44; Mirkhwand, *Rawdat al-Safa'*, 6: 211-12; Ghiyath al-Din b. Humam al-Din Khwandamir, *Habib al-Siyar*, ed. W. M. Thackston, *Habibu's-Siyar*, vol. 3: *The Reign of the Mongol and the Turk* (Cambridge, Mass.: Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard Univ., 1994). With regard to the *Habib al-Siyar*, reference should be made to the section quoted in Ibrahim Dihgan, *Karnama* (n.p.: Chapkhana-i Musawi, 1345), 47-49, which includes passages that do not appear in Thackston's critical edition and translation. The attack on the Isma'ilis in Anjudan occurred just a year after the attack in Mazandaran.

⁵⁷ *Ta'rikh-i Gilan wa Daylamistan*, 54.

⁵⁸ — —

⁵⁹ — — 55

⁶⁰ — — 56, 58



Kiya.⁶¹ Realising he had been deceived, Khudawand Muhammad stole away by night to Alamut, where he formed an alliance with the defeated Kiya Malik. In turn, Kiya Malik promised that Alamut would be entrusted to the imam if he helped him to regain Ashkavar. As Mar'ashi narrates, upon seeing Khudawand Muhammad, the Isma'ilis of Alamut and Lamasar immediately rallied about him, joined the forces of Kiya Malik, and converged on Ashkavar. The combined forces inflicted heavy losses on the Gilani army of Sayyid Mahdi, whose dead and wounded totalled close to two thousand, while many others were taken prisoner by the Isma'ilis.⁶² Sayyid Mahdi Kiya was himself taken captive and sent to the court of the Jalayirid ruler of Azarbayjan, 'Iraq and Kurdistan, Sultan Uways (r. 757-76 AH/1356-74 CE), whose dynasty had been one of the successors of the Mongol Ilkhanids in Persia.⁶³ An accompanying letter written by Kiya Malik stated that a group of *rafidis* had made common cause with Sayyid Mahdi Kiya to subjugate Daylamistan and 'Iraq, and hence he was being sent to the court.⁶⁴

Mahdi-Kiya remained incarcerated for a period of a year and six months, during which time, oddly enough, his brother made no attempt to have him released. It was only with the intercession of Taj al-Din Amuli, one of the Hasanid Zaydi *sayyids* of Timjan, and the proffering of numerous gifts that he was freed.⁶⁵ When appealing to Sultan Uways, Taj al-Din explained that Kiya Malik was in cahoots with the Isma'ilis of Alamut (*malahida-i Alamut*). Apparently the sultan required no further explanation. Even away in Tabriz, he seems to have been well aware of the continued existence of the Isma'ilis in Daylam and their survival of the Mongol depredations.

Soon after his brother was released, 'Ali Kiya set out to displace Kiya Malik from Ashkavar once again. Kiya Malik was bested in the ensuing struggle and fled to Alamut, where Khudawand Muhammad wanted nothing to do with him. He thus took refuge with Tamerlane. Meanwhile, the army of 'Ali Kiya, which had pursued Kiya Malik right up to Alamut, decided to besiege the fort. Khudawand Muhammad refused to capitulate. However, dwindling resources forced him to surrender the castle. He was granted safe conduct and also made his way to the camp of the Turkic conqueror.⁶⁶

'Ali Kiya wrote a letter to Tamerlane about the collusion of Kiya Malik and the Isma'ili imam, prevailing upon him to take the appropriate measures. Upon receipt of this letter, the ruler sent Kiya Malik to Sawa, while Khudawand Muhammad was sent to confinement in Sultaniyya. Mar'ashi writes that the imam's descendants continued to reside there until his own days, that is to say, until the late fifteenth century.⁶⁷

'Ai Kiya's death in 791 AH/1389 CE allowed Kiya Malik Hazaraspi to return to Daylaman from Sawa. There he received help from the locals to regain Alamut and Lamasar from the Amir Kiya'i *sayyids*.⁶⁸ He was, however, murdered by his own grandson, Kiya Jalal al-Din, who then succeeded him and who, we are informed, was hated by the Daylamites. Amidst this confusion, Khudawand Muhammad reappeared in the area, and the Isma'ilis of the region, who apparently resided at Alamut, gave the fortress to him.

⁶¹ — — 58

⁶² — — 59

⁶³ On this dynasty, see J. M. Smith, Jr., "Djalayir, Djalayirid", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2: 401

⁶⁴ *Ta'rih-i Gilan wa Daylamistan*, 59.

⁶⁵ — — 60-61

⁶⁶ — — 63-64

⁶⁷ — — 65. Maryam Mu'izzi, while also forwarding this interpretation, correctly comments that the meaning of the phrase *wa awlad-i an jama'at aknun niz inja and* [this reads *anja and* in Sutuda's edition] is equivocal. See her "Isma'iliyyan-i Iran", 229 n. 28.

⁶⁸ *Ta'rih-i Gilan wa Daylamistan*, 89, 121



However, this was soon lost once again to Malik Kayumarth b. Bisutun, one of the Gawbara rulers of Rustamdar.⁶⁹

Later, the fortress was taken over by ‘Ali Kiya’s son, Radi Kiya (d. 829 AH/1426 CE). This ruler perpetrated such massacres in Daylam that in the year 819 AH/1416 CE, in the words of Mar‘ashi, “the waters of the White River (*Safidrud*) turned red with the blood of those killed.”⁷⁰ Among those done away with were many Isma‘ili leaders, including some descendants of the Isma‘ili Imam Khudawand ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad. However, it seems that even this terrible massacre did not completely end Isma‘ili activities in the area. While it would appear that the Isma‘ili imams now abandoned the region, perhaps in favour of Anjudan, there is epigraphic evidence of continued Isma‘ili activity in the area of Gilan. The tombstone of the Zaydi ruler of Lahijan, Muhammad Kar Kiya b. Sayyid Nasr Kiya, dated 883 AH/1478 CE boasts that for forty years he battled against the innovations of the Isma‘ilis (*bid‘a mulhidiyya*).⁷¹

In his *Ta’rikh-i Mazandaran*, written in 1044 AH/1634 CE, Mulla Shaykh ‘Ali Gilani reports Isma‘ili activities in the region as late as the end of the tenth/sixteenth century, that is to say even into Safawid times. Above, we have mentioned that Khudawand Muhammad had lost Alamut to Malik Kayumarth b. Bisutun, one of the Gawbara rulers of Rustamdar. When this ruler died in 857 AH/1453 CE, his territories were divided between his two sons, Kawus and Iskandar, the former ruling from Nur and the latter from Kujur. In 957 AH/1567 CE, Sultan Muhammad b. Jahangir, a Nizari Ismaili, succeeded his father to the leadership of the Iskandari line. Gilani expresses his distaste for this ruler, but reports that he was tremendously popular amongst his subjects. With the help of his adoring citizenry, he spread his creed throughout Rustamdar and established his suzerainty over Nur and other areas of Mazandaran, even as far as Sari. When his eldest son Jahangir succeeded him in 998 AH/1589 CE, he continued his father’s religious policies. The south Caspian region could not remain free from Safawid hegemony for long, however, and after Shah ‘Abbas I subjugated much of the area in 1000 AH/1591 CE, Jahangir hastened to his court. Shortly after returning to Rustamdar, he was captured by a force under the command of the shah’s local lieutenant, sent to Qazwin, and executed there in 1006 AH/1597 CE.⁷² This is the last we hear of Isma‘ili political activities in the area. Some faint whisperings of the possibility of the community’s continued habitation in this region, however, are found in a verse of the Isma‘ili poet, Khaki Khorasani, who flourished in the first half of the seventeenth century, which refers *diyar al-marz* and Mazandaran.⁷³ This single allusion may represent the last vestige of Isma‘ilism in the south Caspian region.

⁶⁹ — — 123. Cf. Daftary, *The Isma‘ilis*, 450. Also note the observations in Mu‘izzi, “Isma‘iliyyan-i Iran,” 199, on the possibility of there having been more than one Khudawand Muhammad

⁷⁰ *Ta’rikh-i Gilan wa Daylamistan*, 129.

⁷¹ Manuchihr Sutuda, *Az Astara ta Astarabad*, 10 vols. (Tehran, 1366/1987), 2: 343, 346-48; Hyacinth Louis Rabino, *Mazandaran and Astarabad* (London: Luzac, 1928), 60.

⁷² Mulla Shaykh ‘Ali Gilani, *Ta’rikh-i Mazandaran*, ed. M. Sutuda (Tehran, 1352/1973), 88-89, 99-100. Maryam Mu‘izzi, while admitting the possibility that these rulers were Isma‘ili, expresses some reservations as they are referred to simply as *malahida* in our sources: “Isma‘iliyyan-i Iran,” 212-14. While this derogatory epithet does indeed have broader applications, it is most commonly used of the Isma‘ilis, particularly in the South Caspian region, though certainly elsewhere as well. See, for example, W. Madelung, “Mulhid,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 7: 546. Gilani’s statement in reference to Sultan Muhammad b. Jahangir, that “he renewed the influence of the deviation (*ilhad*) of [the Isma‘ili Imam Hasan] ‘Ala Dhikrihi al-Salam in the land of Rustamdar,” however, is fairly explicit about the religious leanings of this ruler.

⁷³ Imam Quli Khaki Khorasani, *Diwan*, ed. Wladimir Ivanow, *An Abbreviated Version of the Diwan of Khaki Khorasani* (Bombay, 1933), 69.



After Alamut's capitulation to the Mongols, while the community had continued its activities in the area for an extended period, and tenuously and sporadically tried to reassert its control over the fort,⁷⁴ repeated reversals of fortune eventually led to its disappearance from the area. Command over all the fortresses formerly under Isma'ili suzerainty eventually passed into the hands of the Amir Kiya'i *sayyids* who used them as prisons until the Safawid conquest.⁷⁵

An interesting question arises here about the identity of Khudawand Muhammad, who played such a central role in rallying the Isma'ilis of the area. As mentioned above, Mar'ashi records that people in Daylaman, Rudbar, Padiz, Kushayjan, and some of the regions of Ashkawar owed their allegiance to this figure, a descendant of the imam 'Ala' al-Din "Mulhid". This lineage, Mar'ashi's description, and the title "Khudawand" all indicate that he was considered the imam by his followers. The confusion arises because of the existence of evidence, first brought to light in a seminal article by Ivanow published in 1938, indicating the possibility that the Nizari Isma'ilis split into two sects in the fourteenth century, the followers of Qasim Shah and the followers of Muhammad Shah.⁷⁶ Further evidence from Muhammad Shahi sources was later provided by the Syrian scholar 'Arif Tamir in his "*Furu' al-shajarat al-Isma'iliyya*"⁷⁷ and *al-Imama fi al-Islam*.⁷⁸

While a discussion of the split is beyond the scope of this study, it should be mentioned that scholars have cautiously identified Khudawand Muhammad with Muhammad Shah b. Mu'min Shah (d. 807 AH/1404 CE) of the Muhammad Shahi line, on the basis that there was no contemporary imam of the Qasim Shahi line with the name Muhammad.⁷⁹ However, new evidence in a work entitled *Haft Nukta*, associated with the Qasim Shahi Imam Islam Shah, may suggest a different identification.⁸⁰ While the Muhammad Shahi line is never explicitly mentioned in this work, there is an allusion to rivalry in the family. This source specifies that the author's rival had influence in four areas, Badakhshan, the fort of Zafar, Egypt and Narjawan. Daylam is not mentioned at all, and we may therefore assume that it remained loyal to the imams of the Qasim Shahi line. This would significantly reduce the possibility of the earlier identification of Khudawand Muhammad. Given that the first of the Qasim Shahi imams named Islam Shah was also known as Ahmad,⁸¹ and that the names Ahmad and Muhammad are often interchangeable (as in the case

⁷⁴ Cf. W. Madelung, "Isma'iliya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 4: 198

⁷⁵ Zahir al-Din Mar'ashi, *Ta'rikh-i Gilan wa Daylamistan*, ed. Hyacinth Louis Rabino (Rasht, 1330/1912), 86-87, 216.

⁷⁶ "A Forgotten Branch of the Ismailis," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1938).

⁷⁷ 'Arif Tamir, "Furu' al-shajarat al-Isma'iliyya," *al-Mashriq* 51 (1957): 581-612.

⁷⁸ 'Arif Tamir, *al-Imama fi al-Islam* (Beirut, n.d. [1964?]), 157-58, 169-78, 192ff.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 449; Delia Cortese, "Eschatology and Power in Mediaeval Persian Ismailism" (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1993), 204.

⁸⁰ This work is not mentioned in Ivanow's *A Guide to Isma'ili Literature* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1933), or *Isma'ili Literature: A Bibliographical Survey*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1963), or Ismail K. Poonawala, *Bibliography of Isma'ili Literature* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1977). Details may be found in Shafique N. Virani, "Seekers of Union: The Isma'ilis from the Mongol Debacle to the Eve of the Safavid Revolution" (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 2001), 103-4. The text itself contains no explicit indication of authorship; however, the compiler of the volume in which it appears, Haji Qudrat Allah Beg, attributes it to "Mawlana Islam Shah." See Imam Islam Shah, "Haft Nukta," in *Kitab-i Mustatab-i Haft Bab-i Da'i Abu Ishaq*, ed. Haji Qudrat Allah Beg, *Kitab-i Mustatab-i Haft Bab*, pp. 115-24. Its attribution to an imam is also suggested by an introduction to the work that appears in Persian MS 43 at the Institute of Ismaili Studies. This preamble refers to the work as the *kalam-i sharif*, "the noble words," an expression that one would scarcely expect to be used of an author of little consequence. It further prevails upon the believers to carry the spiritual message of the aphorisms in their hearts and not to divulge their contents to the uninitiated. We can therefore provisionally accept the attribution to the imam Islam Shah, acknowledging, of course, that there were three Qasim Shahi imams known by this title.

⁸¹ See, e.g., Pir Shihab al-Din Shah al-Husayni, *Kitab-i Khitabat-i 'aliya* (Tehran, 1963), 45.



of the Prophet himself), it is possible to suggest cautiously that Khudawand Muhammad may be identifiable with Imam Islam Shah b. Qasim Shah. In view of the fact that the Nizari tradition of the Indian Subcontinent, which is discussed below, identifies the residence of Imam Islam Shah as Alamut, this is conceivable. As far as we can tell with the limited information available to us, there is no parallel tradition among the Muhammad Shahis of Syria identifying a place of residence for the imam Muhammad Shah b. Mu'min Shah. In the absence of further information, though, the question of Khudawand Muhammad's identity must remain open.

The material outlined above clearly indicates that the Isma'ilis continued their activities in the south Caspian region, perhaps sporadically, through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This hypothesis finds further support in sources from both Khurasan and India.

Testimony of the Nasa'ih-i Shah-Rukhi

Our most important source for the Isma'ilis of Quhistan after the Mongol invasions is the *Nasa'ih al-Muluk* or *Nasa'ih-i Shahrukhi* by a fourteenth/fifteenth-century author and inveterate enemy of the Isma'ilis by the name of Jalali Qa'ini, a resident of Harat. The work is contained in a hitherto unpublished manuscript in Vienna, and its contents regarding the Isma'ilis are only accessible to us through the writings of Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall and Delia Cortese, both of whom were able to consult the original.⁸²

It appears that the last of the great Ilkhanids, Abu Sa'id Bahadur Khan (d. 735 AH/1335 CE), was concerned that much of the province remained dedicated to the tenets of Isma'ilism. This is certainly a possibility. Just decades earlier, recalling the ubiquity of the Isma'ilis in the area, Juzjani opprobriously dubbed Quhistan, *Mulhidistan*, "the land of the (Isma'ili) heretics."⁸³ Indeed, in his verses, the Isma'ili poet Nizari Quhistani rails against those who would call him a *mulhid*:

⁸² Jalali's *Nasa'ih al-Muluk* is item 163 in the Imperial Library of Vienna. My repeated attempts to secure a copy of this manuscript from the Imperial Library have been unsuccessful. A summary of the contents of the whole work is given in Gustav Flügel, *Die Arabischen, Persischen und Türkischen Handschriften der Kaiserlich-königlichen Hofbibliothek zu Wien* (Vienna, 1867), 3: 289-91. See also *Codices Arabicos, Persicos, Turcicos, Bibliothecae Caesareo-Regio-Palatinae Vindobonensis*, ed. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (Vindobonae, 1820), n. 163 *Nasa'ih-i Shah Rukhi*, Persian MS 1858 (cf. Flügel), folio 302a. Reference to the *Nasa'ih* here is through von Hammer-Purgstall, *The History of the Assassins* (London, 1835), 204-10 and Cortese, "Eschatology and Power," 195-97. Cortese's treatment of it is much fuller than that of von Hammer-Purgstall. She gives the work an alternate title, *Nasa'ih-i Shahrukhi*. Some cautionary notes on von Hammer-Purgstall's scholarship are sounded in Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 20-21, and Lewis, *The Assassins*, 12-13. Regarding anachronisms in the reporting of the text, see Virani, "Seekers of Union," 114-15. Recently, much light has been shed on the author of this treatise by Maria Eva Subtelny and Anas B. Khalidov; see Subtelny, "The Sunni Revival under Shah-Rukh and its Promoters: A Study of the Connection between Ideology and Higher Learning in Timurid Iran," in *Proceedings of the 27th Meeting of Haneda Memorial Hall Symposium on Central Asia and Iran: August 30, 1993* (Kyoto: Institute of Inner Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1994), 16-21; and Subtelny and Khalidov, "The Curriculum of Islamic Higher Learning in Timurid Iran in the Light of the Sunni Revival under Shah-Rukh," *JAOS* 115 (1995): 217-22.

⁸³ Juzjani's testimony is not to be taken lightly. In 1224, he himself was sent to the Isma'ili ruler Abu al-Fath Shihab al-Din Mansur on an embassy via Qa'in. Despite his dim view of the community in general, he seems to have been quite taken by this Abu al-Fath, and praises him lavishly for his sagacity and wisdom, as well as for his courtesy to visitors, poor wayfarers and refugees fleeing from the Mongols. See Charles E. Bosworth, "The Isma'ilis of Quhistan and the Maliks of Nimruz or Sistan," in *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought*, ed. Farhad Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 226.



If I am a heretic, then where is this “Muslim?” Who is he?!⁸⁴

And again:

Why do you say “heretic” to one who has established his faith with a hundred proofs from the Qur’an and the Hadith?

When you understand he who attains the perfect *ma‘rifa* [gnosis], then by knowing him, you will confess your own ignorance.⁸⁵

In concert with Shah ‘Ali Sijistani, the lieutenant of Quhistan, the Ilkhanid ruler sent a mission to the area to effect a mass conversion to Sunni Islam in 718 AH/1324 CE. At the head of the mission was the author’s grandfather, a certain Shaykh Imad al-Din Bukhari, a distinguished jurist who had fled Bukhara for Quhistan when that city was destroyed. ‘Imad al-Din was accompanied by his two sons, Husam al-Din and Najm al-Din Muhammad, as well as four other learned men. The details of this expedition were related to our author by his father, Najm al-Din, whose presence on the mission makes this testimony very valuable. The efforts of the group were directed primarily at Qa’in, said to be the chief seat of the Isma‘ilis. Apparently the group’s efforts bore fruit. When Tamerlane’s son and successor, Sultan Shah-Rukh (r. 807-50 AH/1405-47 CE), sent Jalali to the province to snuff out Isma‘ilism there many decades later, he found that Sunnism had made inroads already. The *‘ulama* were said to be zealous Sunnis who were accused of *rafd* and *ilhad* if they showed any weakness. However, while the lords of Junabad and perhaps some of the Mutasayyid lords of Siyawahan (but “only God knows whether they were free from *rafd* or not”) appeared to be pure Sunnis, all the other lords of Quhistan were charged with Isma‘ilism. If these figures were indeed Isma‘ilis, they must have been practicing dissimulation (*taqiyya*) in order to avoid the purges. Jalali notes that Isma‘ilis occupied important positions in the political administration (*diwan*), thereby seeking to avert the persecution of their coreligionists. According to our author, with the exception of most of the princes of Tabas and Zir-i Kuh, the remaining princes of Quhistan were possibly leaning towards *rafd* and *ilhad*, i.e., towards the Isma‘ili faith. Pleased, Jalali writes that Far‘an, Tijarar, Makhzafa, and Sa’ir were free of the taint of Isma‘ilism.

Most noteworthy for our purposes, though, our author writes that some of the Isma‘ilis returned to Alamut after the death of Imam Rukn al-Din Khwarshah. Yet more significant, Jalali states that even in his own time the Isma‘ilis of Quhistan would send their religious dues (*wajibat*) to Alamut, a practice that had existed since the time of Hasan Sabbah. There can be no reason for this *modus operandi* other than the continued existence of the *da‘wa* structure, if not the imam’s own residence, in that region. Jalali’s testimony inspires confidence as his investigation was quite thorough. In the space of eighteen months⁸⁶ he travelled the length and breadth of Quhistan on his mission.

Testimony of the Da‘wa Literature of the Indian Subcontinent

Further evidence of continued Ismaili activity in the region of Alamut comes to us in the form of what are sometimes called “unintentional” historical sources—that is, sources that were not composed with the

⁸⁴ Nizari Quhistani, *Diwan-i Hakim Nizari Quhistani*, ed. Mazahir Musaffa (Tehran: Intisharat-i ‘ilmi, 1371), 1:84

⁸⁵ Translated in Faquir M. Hunzai, *Shimmering Light: An Anthology of Ismaili Poetry* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 87. *Ma‘rifa* is glossed (144 n. 72) as “a technical expression used primarily in Sufism for spiritual knowledge derived through an intuitive and illuminative cognition of the divine. In Ismaili thought, the term also signifies the spiritual recognition of one’s own soul which is tantamount to the recognition of God.”

⁸⁶ Cortese’s account differs from von Hammer-Purgstall’s testimony, making Qa’ini’s investigation last eleven months. See Cortese, “Eschatology and Power,” 196.



express intention of recording history but which nevertheless may serve a historical purpose, particularly where writings with an expressly historical intent are wanting. With the destruction of the Isma‘ili state at Alamut and the devastation of Iranian lands by the Mongols, literary activity among the Ismailis was stymied. As would be expected under the circumstances, no chronicles of Isma‘ili activities written by members of the community are known to have been composed in this volatile period, despite a tradition of historical writing in Fatimid and Alamut times.⁸⁷

While the Mongol onslaught decimated the Iranian regions, the Indian subcontinent was largely spared these depredations. Accordingly, we find testimony in the Isma‘ili literature of the subcontinent as to the continuation of *da‘wa* activities in the area and, most notably for our purposes, to continued connections with Alamut.⁸⁸ Hitherto, however, there has been no thorough study of the textual transmission of this literature, which goes by the name *Ginan*, derived from a Sanskrit word meaning gnosis. As the name suggests, the subject matter of this corpus is often esoteric, with a predominance of didactic, mythic, and allegorical motifs. Historical references, while they certainly exist, may sometimes be understood symbolically. Furthermore, the texts have suffered from a long period of transmission, both oral and written, occasionally resulting in anachronisms. While we can be certain that at least a few manuscripts dating back to the sixteenth century survived until recent times,⁸⁹ the oldest manuscript currently preserved in an institutional collection dates to 1736.⁹⁰ Bearing these factors in mind, however, as it has survived, the Isma‘ili literature of the subcontinent perhaps preserves memories of this most obscure period of history.

The ancient mausoleum of the Isma‘ili savant, Pir Shams of Multan, which likely dates to the thirteenth century, witnesses the community’s presence in the region at the time of the Mongol invasions.⁹¹ Traditional accounts, preserved both in the *Ginans* as well as in later, non-Isma‘ili sources, maintain that the son and grandson of Pir Shams, Pir Nasir al-Din, and Pir Shihab al-Din (or Sahib al-Din, as his name often appears) respectively, assumed the leadership of the Isma‘ilis in the subcontinent from the late thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth century.⁹² The *Ginans* confirm that religious dues continued to be submitted to the imam in this period and that propagation activities were conducted in secret.⁹³ Procedural details provided in these accounts give us greater reason for confidence in the testimony. Of the sum collected, twenty percent was for local use, while the remaining eighty percent was dispatched to the imam who, we are informed in the *Ginanic* account, resided in a fortress by the name of “Mor”. Juzjani

⁸⁷ In this regard, see Farhad Daftary, “Persian Historiography of the Early Nizari Isma‘ilis”, *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 30 (1992): 91-97.

⁸⁸ The best introduction to the history of Isma‘ilism in the subcontinent, known as *Satpanth*, remains Azim Nanji, *The Nizari Isma‘ili Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1978). The later history should be supplemented with Shafiqe N. Virani, “The Voice of Truth: Life and Works of Sayyid Nur Muhammad Shah, A 15th/16th Century Ismaili Mystic” (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1995). The earliest period has been studied in Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1995).

⁸⁹ In this connection, see Nanji, *The Nizari Isma‘ili Tradition*, 10-11.

⁹⁰ See Zawahir Moir, “A Catalogue of the Khojki MSS in the Library of the Ismaili Institute” (unpublished typescript, 1985), 1.

⁹¹ This unique artifact reflects the architectural features of the equally ancient tombs of Baha‘u‘d-Din Zakariyya and Shadna Shahid. See Kamil Khan Mumtaz, *Architecture in Pakistan* (Singapore: Concept Media, 1985), 42-43.

⁹² See Nanji, *The Nizari Isma‘ili Tradition*, 70. A late lithograph source by ‘Isan Shah and Sayyid Muhammad Muluk Shah, *Ta’rikh-i Gulzar-i Shams* (n.p., nd.), gives the death of Nasir al-Din as 682/1283, p. 366, and the death of Shihab al-Din as 750/1349, p. 377.

⁹³ Nur Muhammad Shah, *Sat Varani Moti* ([Mumbai ?]: [Mukhi Lalajibhai Devraj ?], n.d.), cantos 190-97, Pir Nasir al-Din, “Hun balahari tame shaha raja,” in *100 Ginanani Chopadi*, vol. 2 (Mumbai: The Recreation Club Institute Press, 1993 VS/1936), no. 66; Sayyid Imam Shah, *Janatpuri* (n.p.: n.d.), v. 83.



informs us that prior to the Mongol invasions the Isma‘ilis were in possession of seventy forts in Quhistan and thirty-five in the Alamut region.⁹⁴ Whether this particular fort was one of these is difficult to ascertain. Regardless, according to this *Ginanic* testimony, emissaries, known as *rahis*, travelled from Uch to Mor to convey the funds to the imam, who was in concealment (*alop*). Such a system of delivering religious dues is presumed in the *Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi* of the fifteenth-century imam Mustansir bi’llah.⁹⁵ Similarly, the sixteenth-century Isma‘ili author, Muhammad Rida b. Sultan Husayn, known as Khayrkhwah Harati, also refers to the comings and goings of Isma‘ili dignitaries from various places, including India, to see the imam as well as to submit religious dues.⁹⁶

A striking feature of the literature attributed to the Indian Isma‘ili leadership in this period is the candour with which it speaks of the imam’s continued residence in Daylam, or even the fort of Alamut itself. A work attributed to Pir Sahib al-Din that alternates between addressing the disciples and the imam states:

Come hither! O assembly of vassals
That the King may fulfil your desires

We are sinful, paupers, slaves
O King! Succour us

In serving your court, no other comes to sight

The four aeons have run their course
O chivalrous ones
Perform deeds of virtue

Brother, build a raft of truth
Believer, steady your heart

For in the land of Daylam
The Great King, my Lord has descended

O King, the earth’s nine continents are your vassalry

You are our lord, the Mahdi
O Lord Islam Shah, the granter of boons

Be pleased, O great Mahdi
O King, bestow on the faithful salvation, deliverance and your beatific vision

How blessed is the region of Alamut

⁹⁴ *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, 518, tr. 1205-6. Bernard Lewis feels this number to be rather high; *The Assassins*, 94.

⁹⁵ Imam Mustansir bi’llah [= Gharib Mirza?], *Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi*, ed. Wladimir Ivanow, *Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi or ‘Advices of Manliness’* (Leiden: E. J.Brill, 1953), 2, 11, 17, 21, 34, 60, 63-64, 70, 78, 82, 88-89, tr. 2, 8, 11, 13, 21, 37, 39, 43-44, 48-49, 51, 54-55. Regarding this text, see also Virani, “Seekers of Union,” 139-44.

⁹⁶ Such references are found scattered in Muhammad Rida b. Sultan Husayn Khayrkhwah Harati, *Risala*, ed. Wladimir Ivanow, *Tasnifat-i Khayrkhwah Harati* (Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1961); see, e.g., 23, 39, 55, 60-61; also Muhammad Rida b. Sultan Husayn Khayrkhwah Harati, *Qit‘at*, ed. Wladimir Ivanow, *Tasnifat-i Khayrkhwah Harati* (Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1961), 105-7.



Where you have established your physical residence!⁹⁷

Most remarkably, Alamut or Daylam are mentioned in no less than twelve of the compositions attributed to Shihab al-Din's son and successor, Pir Sadr al-Din.⁹⁸ Under the able leadership of this fourteenth-century luminary, perhaps the most prolific of the Isma'ili authors in the region at this time,⁹⁹ the community in the subcontinent experienced something of a renaissance. He was a contemporary of the imam Islam Shah whose name is often mentioned in his compositions.¹⁰⁰

While we have mentioned the need for a proper study of the textual transmission of the *Ginanic* corpus, and the attendant necessity for prudence in deriving historical data from it until such a study is completed, there is remarkable consistency in the testimony of the *Ginans* in this particular instance. Not only do we have repeated reference in the *Ginans* of Pir Sadr al-Din to Daylam as the residence of the imam Islam Shah, but association of the residence of the imam with this locale completely disappears in the compositions attributed to the successors of this Pir. There is not a single *Ginanic* composition attributed to any figure who lived after Pir Sadr al-Din that mentions Alamut or Daylam as the current residence of the Isma'ili imam in any of the over six hundred works consulted.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Pir Sahib al-Din, "Ao gatiure bhandhe," in *100 Ginanani Chopadi*, vol. 3 (Mumbai: The Recreation Club Institute Press, 1991 VS/1935), no. 74, vv. 1-10. The translation of *tura* in verse 5 as "raft" is tentative. This word is not found in any of the various dictionaries consulted. The tentative translation is based on the semblance of this word to the word *tulahari* in verse 8 of the *garabi* of Pir Shams, "Bhulo bhulo te bhul bhamarado re lol," in *Ginane Sharif Bhag Pahelo: 105 Ginan*. (Mumbai: Ismailia Association for India, 1978) in which it seems to mean a boatman or an oarsman, and on verse 7 of Pir Sadr al-Din, "Bhair bhanga ma tado," in *100 Ginanani Chopadi*, 3: no.81. All these words appear to be based on the Sanskrit word *tari*, meaning any seafaring vessel

⁹⁸ These are Pir Sadr al-Din, "Sansar sagar madhe van apana satagure noriyanre," in *100 Ginanani Chopadi*, vol. 1 (Mumbai: The Recreation Club Institute Press, 1990 VS/1934), no. 68; "Shahake hek man anhi sirevo," in *102 Ginanaji: Chopadi*, vol. 4 (Mumbai: Mukhi: Lalji: Bhai: Devaraj: dhi: khoja: sindhi: chhapakhanun, 1968 VS/ [19121], no. 48; "Juga jug shaha avataraj dharea [a.k.a. Sen Akhado]," in *100 Ginanani Chopadi*, 2: no. 26; "Ashaji sacho tun alakh nirinjan agam agochar," in *102 Ginanaji: Chopadi*, 4: no. 4; "Yara anant kirodie vadhaiun' in *102 Ginanaji: Chopadi*, 4: no. 29; "Payalore nam sahebajo vado lije," in *102 Ginanaji: Chopadi*, 4: no. 82; "Dhan dhan ajano dadalore ame harivar payaji," in *100 Ginanani Chopadi*, vol. 5 (Mumbai: The Recreation Club Institute Press, 1990 VS/1934), no. 42; "Thar thar moman bhai koi koi raheseji," in *100 Ginanani Chopadi*, 5: no. 50; "Des delama me shaha hari avatareo," in *100 Ginanani Chopadi* vol. 6 (Mumbai: The Recreation Club Institute Press, 1989 VS/1933), no. 29. To these may be added Pir Sadr al-Din, "Aj sabi mahadin bhujo bhev," in *Mahan Ismaili Sant Pir Sadaradin Rachit Ginano no Sangrah 1* (Mumbai: Ismailia Association for Bharat, 1969), which is not recorded in the six-volume Khojki set, but may be found in this Gujarati recension.

⁹⁹ Hundreds of *Ginans* attributed to Pir Sadr al-Din are found both in published form as well as in Isma'ili manuscripts. See Ali Sultaan Ali Asani, *The Harvard Collection of Ismaili Literature in Indic Languages: A Descriptive Catalog and Finding Aid* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1992); Moir, "A Catalogue of the Khojki MSS"; and Zawahir Nooralay, "Catalogue of Khojki Manuscripts in the Collection of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan (draft copy)" (Karachi: Ismailia Association for Pakistan, 1971)

¹⁰⁰ The *shajara* discovered by Ivanow gives his dates as 1290-1380; see "The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujrat," *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* n.s. 9 (1933): 34. Both the *Gulzar-i Shams* and Pirzada Sayyad Sadaruddin Dargahvala, *Tavarikh-e Pir*, 2 vols. (Navsari, Gujarat: Muslim Gujarat Press, 1914, 1935) gives the dates 650/1252-770/1368. It is interesting that Ivanow does not mention any dates from the *Manazil al-Aqtab* in connection with this Pir. On Pir Sadr al-Din, see Nanji, *The Nizari Isma'ili Tradition*, 72-77.

¹⁰¹ This compelling consistency is important to note in light of the theory advanced in Ali Sultaan Ali Asani, "The Isma'ili ginans: Reflections on Authority and Authorship," in *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought*, 265-80. See also Azim Nanji, "The Ginan Tradition among the Nizari Isma'ilis: Its Value as a Source of their History" , in *Actes du XXIXe Congrès international des Orientalistes* (Paris: L'Asiathèque, 1975), 3: 143-46., All *Ginans* in the six-volume set published in Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj were consulted. The class of *Ginans* known as *granths*, however, was not used for the present study and should be examined as it may contain valuable information. There is a



While this concentration of references to the residence of the imam at Alamut or Daylam in the works attributed to Pir Sadr al-Din, to the exclusion of works attributed to later authors, is in itself compelling evidence to argue for the authenticity of the traditional attribution of authorship, the argument does not rely on this ascription. There is a consensus among scholars that in the event that particular compositions are incorrectly ascribed to their purported authors, the provenance of these compositions must, in all events, be later than that attributed to them, and hence after the Mongol invasions. This is fairly compelling evidence that at some time after the Mongol invasions, an Isma‘ili imam, almost certainly one of those named Islam Shah, again took up residence in Daylam.

The fact that no author after Pir Sadr al-Din mentions Alamut as the imams’ residence strongly suggests that the imams must have moved their base at some point during his lifetime. That the imam’s residence was in the Alamut region at the time when the imam Islam Shah succeeded his father, Imam Qasim Shah, is implicit in the Sindhi *Ginan shahake hek man anhi sirevo*, in which the audience is assured that Imam Islam Shah, the light (*nur*) of Imam ‘Ali, is none other than Imam Qasim Shah himself, established at the fort of Alamut.¹⁰² This kind of statement would most likely have been made at the outset of Imam Islam Shah’s reign.

One of the most striking facts that emerges from a reading of Pir Sadr al-Din’s compositions is that he himself made a pilgrimage to the Imam’s residence at Alamut. This is suggested in the following emotive verses:

Blessed, blessed is this day
For we have attained the Supreme Lord
Effaced are the sins and misdeeds of the four cosmic ages
Gather in the assembly of love with the True Guide
Gather in the assembly of hearts with Pir Sadr al-Din
The Savior of the hundred and twenty million souls¹⁰³
Forsake this deceitful world
Cross the vast ocean of the deceptive world
With the Name of the Imam
Work deeds of righteousness in the world

The imam has descended in the garb of a human being¹⁰⁴
At the fort of Alamut, the capital of the land of Daylam

reference to Daylam in the *Ginan* of Sayyid Imam Shah, “Vela pohoti ne ved vicharo,” in *100 Ginanani Chopadi*, 1: no.14, v.7, by the later Isma‘ili da‘i, Sayyid Imam Shah, but this is merely a statement that in the fourth aeon, the Imam appeared in Daylam, not that he was residing there in the author’s time. Another *Ginan*, Sayyid Muhammad Shah, “Sacho tun moro sanhia,” in *102 Ginanaji: Chopadi*, 4: no. 67, v. 8 asserts that the imam has established his throne in the land of Daylam. However we do not know the dates of this Sayyid Muhammad Shah. The fact that this composition is in Sindhi largely precludes the possibility of his being any of the figures named Muhammad Shah who lived after Imam Shah and are known to have composed *Ginans*, as their compositions are very influenced by Gujarati and Hindustani.

¹⁰² Sadr al-Din, “Shahake hek man anhi sirevo,” in *102 Ginanaji: Chopadi*, 4: no. 48, vv. 15-16.

¹⁰³ The expression *bar gur* refers to Pir Sadr al-Din as the leader of twelve crore (a sum of 120,000,000) souls who are to be saved in the last age of the world. On this concept, see Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, Univ. of London, 1992), 89, 169. A portion of this explanation is corrected in Virani, “The Voice of Truth,” 130-31 n. 82.



I scaled towering mountains and negotiated treacherous passes
Now I await the Light of the True Guide

How base are lofty trees without leaves
How the human soul wanders lost without gnosis of the Guide.¹⁰⁵

The reference to scaling the difficult mountain passes of Daylam is redolent of the arduous journey that would have confronted believers making the trek to see the imam from far-off places. That it was Imam Islam Shah whom Pir Sadr al-Din met is expressed elsewhere:

We received the lord Islam Shah
Who bestowed on us the mysteries of faith
We recognised him in his indescribable form
And he fulfilled all our desires.¹⁰⁶

Yet another composition mentions the author's departure from Alamut:

Brothers, Pir Sadr al-Din, the true guide, departed from the fort of Alamut
The capital of the land of Daylam.¹⁰⁷

Extremely noteworthy is an exultant Sindhi composition that suggests that proselytisation was once again set afoot from Alamut:

The Imam's herald travels throughout the world
Blessings be upon the Imam, the Pir and the community
For the Imam has appeared in the fortress of Alamut

Brother, we are perpetually blissful
By God, he has arrived, the community enjoys its fortune
Hail the advent of the Lord 'Ali in the West!

Recognise the Supreme Man, Lord of Light
Friends, know the Pir to be he
Who has led you to the recognition of the Lord of Twelve Splendours¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ The word *shah*, translated here as imam, is one of the most commonly occurring terms in the *Ginans* used to refer to the imam. Gulshan Khakee notes that *shah* is the most frequently used noun in the tenth chapter of Sayyid Imam Shah's *Das Avatar*, occurring an astounding 147 times. See Gulshan Khakee, "The Dasa Avatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis and the Imam Shahis of Indo-Pakistan" (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1972), 14. Similarly, the word *shah* is one of the most common appellations for the imam in the *diwan* of Khaki Khurasani (and, we may extrapolate, for Persian-speaking Isma'ilis in the mid-1600s). See Ivanow's *An Abbreviated Version of the Diwan of Khaki Khorasani* (Bombay, 1933), 10.

¹⁰⁵ "Dhan dhan ajano dadalore ame harivar payaji," 5: no. 42, vv. 1-5.

¹⁰⁶ "Sirie salamashaha amane maliya," in *100 Ginanani Chopadi*, 5: no. 10, v. 1. The second line may also be translated as "Who bestowed the kingdom of religion upon us."

¹⁰⁷ "Alamot gadh patan dalam des bhaire," in *100 Gindnani Chopadi*, 2: no. 39, v. 1.

¹⁰⁸ The twelve splendours (*bar kala*) refer to the sun, perhaps because it passes through twelve signs of the zodiac on its celestial rounds. It is contrasted with the moon of sixteen splendours (*sol kala*), which has sixteen digits and is representative of the Pir. The term, admittedly a difficult and infrequently used *Ginanic* concept, is mistranslated in Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia*, 89, 169, where the notion of *barkala* is confused with that of *bar*



Serve none other than that very Lord, my brother
Friend, never doubt in this
Hail the advent of the Lord
As glorious as the risen sun!¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

Upon examination of the evidence, it becomes immediately apparent that even after the Mongol onslaught, Isma'ili activity continued in the south Caspian region.

Juwayni's omission of any reference to the destruction of Baghdad and the murder of the Sunni caliph, and his making the subjugation of the Isma'ilis of Alamut the climax of his narrative of the Mongol conquests had definite political motives. The historian wished to celebrate the great service his pagan patron had rendered to the Islamic world by destroying this "community of infidels." He could scarcely dwell on the depredations visited upon the rest of the Muslim world by the Mongols, and certainly not the destruction of the Sunni caliphate. He thus had to overstate the iniquities and the political significance of this minority group, emphasising how the Seljuqs and others had failed to subdue them. He also had to exaggerate the extent of their defeat and stress their absolute and complete extermination. Anything less than a total annihilation would have been seen as failure on the part of his patron. As all future Persian historians drew on Juwayni's testimony for their narratives of the Isma'ili community, they accepted his conclusions.

However, we know that after their initial subjugation in 654 AH/1256 CE the Isma'ilis attempted several times to recapture the fortress of Alamut, and were often successful. Within five years of the fall of Girdkuh, the son of the imam Rukn al-Din Khwarshah had already managed to rally the Isma'ilis of the area and retake their chief fortress. However, the blows they had sustained at the hands of the Mongols had seriously undermined their strength, and it was soon lost once again. The Mongols, though, did not maintain a strong presence in the area, and it is likely that the Isma'ilis resided there unmolested until Uljaytu Khan entered Gilan with his army in 706 AH/1307 CE. However, once again, this attack was short-lived.

After the departure of these forces, Daylam and the surrounding areas likely reverted to their semi-independent status. Certainly, after the death of the last great Mongol Ilkhan, Abu Sa'id, in 735 AH/1335 CE, there was no strong central rule or government in the region. This gave the remaining Isma'ilis a respite from the ravages of the previous decades. At this time, the great mountainous districts between Persian 'Iraq and Gilan were controlled by independent governors. We are informed by contemporary accounts that much of the region remained dedicated to Ismailism in this period. By 770 AH/1368-69 CE, the whole of the Daylaman seems once again to have come under the Ismaili rule of a certain Kiya Sayf al-Din Kushayji. However, he did not openly proclaim his identity until provoked by a Zaydi rival, Sayyid 'Ali Kiya.

Sayyid 'Ali Kiya extended his control over the region, ousting this Isma'ili leader. Nevertheless, the population in Daylaman, Rudbar, Padiz, Kushayjan and Ashkawar remained Isma'ili and was dedicated to an imam by the name of Khudawand Muhammad. This Khudawand Muhammad was intricately involved

karod, mentioned above, which refers to the twelve crore (120,000,000) disciples who are initiated into the mysteries of the *Satpanth* in the last age of the world.

¹⁰⁹ "Jugame phire shahaji muneri", in *102 Ginanaji: Chopadi*, 4: no. 3, vv. 1-4.



with the political struggles of the area and managed to reoccupy Alamut for a spell. At this time a certain Taj al-Din Amuli was able to discuss the Isma‘ilis of Alamut (*malahida-i Alamut*) with the Jalayirid ruler, Sultan Uways (r. 757-76 AH/1356-74 CE) without having to explain who they were. Clearly the continued presence of the Isma‘ilis in their ancestral centre was known even at the court of Tabriz. That Alamut, or at least the region of Daylam, remained an important centre of the Isma‘ili community in this period is testified to by Khurasani and Indian sources. These make it clear that after Hulagu conquered the region, the Isma‘ilis returned and religious dues continued to be delivered to this area. There is even testimony, albeit from sources whose history of transmission has yet to be fully studied, that the imam Islam Shah lived at the fort of Alamut itself.

Though the Isma‘ilis continued to inhabit Alamut and the south Caspian for much of this period, their former political power had been broken. No longer were their activities the stuff of fantastic legends woven by Christians passing through the region as they had been at the time of the Crusades, nor was their history of particular interest to Muslim chroniclers. Henceforth, at least politically, the Isma‘ilis were of minor, regional significance. Soon enough, in 819 AH/1416 CE, they were subject to yet another massacre in which “the waters of the White River (*Safidrud*) turned red with the blood of those killed.”¹¹⁰ Among those done away with were many Isma‘ili leaders, including some descendants of the Isma‘ili imam Khudawand ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad. It must have been around this time, about one and a half centuries after Alamut first capitulated to the Mongols, that the Isma‘ilis gave up all hopes of regaining the fortress as their centre. While Isma‘ili activity continued in this region, the imams appear to have moved away to safer, more politically quiescent surroundings, ushering in an era that has been dubbed the “Anjudan Period” of Isma‘ili history.

¹¹⁰ *Ta’rikh-i Gilan wa Daylamistan*, 129.