.

The Evolving Biography of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ: A Study in Textual Fluidity and Transformation

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KEYWORDS

Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ; Nāṣir-i Khusraw; Nizari Ismailis; *daʿwa* literature; historiography; heresiography; *Sarguẕasht* (biography)

The *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā* (biography of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ), presents a compelling case study of the malleability of historical narratives and demonstrates how biographical constructions have served as contested sites of memory, ideology, and textual authority in Islamicate historiography.[1] Episodes of biographical information about Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (r. 1090-1124)—the founder of Nizari Ismailism and the first ruler of the Nizari polity in Iran (fl. 1090-1256)—are found in non-Ismaili writing consisting of *taʿrīkh* (historiography), *firaq* (heresiography), and *radd* (refutation) literature and in Nizari *daʿwa* (summons) literature. His biography has been shaped by contextual discourses, and has continued to be reformulated and repurposed over the past eight centuries.

Based, in part, on the writings of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, the *Sarguẕasht* was preserved at Alamūt until its library was destroyed by the Mongols in 1256. ʿAṭā Malik Juwaynī's (d. 1283) selective preservation and destruction of texts from this library, demonstrates how knowledge preservation is an act of editorial judgment; this destruction and multitudes of other book-burnings exemplify the vulnerability of material and manuscript culture to political violence.[2] Knowledge preservation has a political dimension and dynamics of how the

[1] This chapter synthesises portions of my doctoral research and research for my forthcoming books: *Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and the Emergence of Nizari Ismailism* and *Concealment and Manifestation: Early Nizari Ismaili treatises on Eschatology and Soteriology*. A substantial part of further research was done while I was the Alwaleed Postdoctoral Fellow in Islamic Studies at Harvard University and Postdoctoral Fellow in the Transcendence and Transformation Initiative of the Center for the Study of World Religions. I am grateful to Dr. Wafi Momin and the organising team for the invitation to participate in the Rethinking Texts and their Contexts in Muslim Societies Conference at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in October 2023. Special thanks also to all conference colleagues for their thought-provoking papers and invaluable feedback.

[2] ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭā Malik Juwaynī, Mīrzā Muḥammad b. ʿAbduʾl-Wahhāb-i Qazwīnī, ed. Taʾrīkh-i jahān-gushā Vol. 3: Mangū Qāʾān, Hūlāgū and the Ismāʿīlīs. (London: Luzac & Co (HII-etext), 1958 (original edition 1912-1937)). 86-87 and 270 tr.: ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭā Malik Juwaynī, The History of the World-Conqueror. trans. John Andrew Boyle (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958). 666 and 719. The only extant text from the library of Alamūt is the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris as BnF Arabe 5968. Cf. also: Eva

"powerful" shape collective memory through selective transmission. Processes of textual transmission reveal the fragility of sources and the fluid nature of historical narrative.

Following Juwaynī, Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh (d. 1318), and Abūʾl-Qāsim Qāshānī (d. after 1337) moulded the plundered Nizari *daʿwa* literature into their dynastic chronicles.[3] The fragmentary survival of Nizari texts in hostile chronicles illustrates the persistence of Ismaili voices within non-Ismaili frameworks and necessitating a double narrative analyses.[4] Arabic historiography produced at distances of time and space has also been important in shaping the image of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. Many modern scholars have rejected the *Sarguẕasht* as an unreliable source since it is hagiographic and fictive in parts; however, these Arabo-centric perspectives readily ignore the many non-factual, fictional and creedally antagonistic reports and implications of the internal inconsistencies in Arabic historiography.[5]

I. Portraits of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ

Portrayals of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ have followed two opposite trajectories: Sunni and Ithnāʿsharī authors have construed him as a scheming arch-heretic and deceiver, while Nizari writings depicted him as a sanctified forebear and eschatological figure. Both intertwine legend and history so much so that his biography is more the product of the biographers' imagination than veritable past actualities. I examine the diverse trajectories of the image of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ in four layers:

- in Sunni *taʿrīkh* (historiographic) and *firaq* (heresiographic) texts before 1256
- in Ilkhanid era chronicles which used Nizari *daʿwa* literature acquired from Alamut
- in derivative historiography after the destruction of the Nizari polity
- in a selection of Nizari *daʿwa* literature

In these analyses we will explore the cumulative impacts of knowledge production,

Orthmann, and Petra G. Schmidl, eds. Science in the City of Fortune: The Dustūr al-munajjimīn and its World (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2017).

[3] Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā v3*. 86-87 and 270 tr.: Juwaynī, *HWC*.; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, and Muḥammad Mudarrisī Zanjānī, eds. Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh: qismat-i Ismāʿīliyān wa Fāṭimiyān wa Nizāriyān wa Dāʿīyān wa Rafīqān. (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjama wa Nashr-i Kitāb (HII-etext), 1960).; Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī Qāshānī, Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, ed. Zubdat al-tawārīkh: bakhsh-i Fāṭimiyān wa Nazāriyān. (Tehran: Muʾassasah-yi Muṭālaʿāt wa Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1987).

[4] Shiraz Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut: New Approaches to the Study of the Qiyāma and the Nizari Polity in Iran," diss., University of Chicago, 2019). 14, 40 and 292ff

[5] Cf. Shiraz Hajiani, Concealment and Manifestation: Early Nizari Ismaili Treatises on Eschatology and Soteriology. (London: Institute of Ismaili Studies and Bloomsbury Publishing, Forthcoming). Treatise III

dissemination and consumption, and probe the fragility and fluid notions of the "text".

II. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ in Pre-Ilkhanid Era Writing

Before the Mongol decapitation of the Nizari polity, writing about Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ was misinformed, misinforming and antagonistic to the Ismailis. Here is a brief outline of a century and a half of such writing in different genres: Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) wrote six treatises attacking the Ismailis particularly repudiating their doctrine of *taʿlīm* (authoritative teaching of the imam).[6] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm Shahrastānī (d. 1153) preserved the *Four Propositions* of *taʿlīm* (*Chahār faṣl*, *al-Fuṣūl al-arbaʿa*), one of the most significant extant texts attributed to Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. In his heresiographic taxonomy, Shahrastānī characterised Ḥasan's insistence on *taʿlīm* incorrectly as an abandonment of *taʾwīl* (allegorical interpretation), cyclical history and Neoplatonic themes which had become hallmarks of Ismaili thought. He called Ḥasan's teaching the "new summons" (*al-Daʿwat al-jadīda*)—a neologism which has persisted into modern scholarship.[7] Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201), the Baghdadi Hanbali scholar construed Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ as a dangerous, manipulative, and subversive figure—an archetype of the heretical rebel leader. He recounted Ḥasan's demonstration of power by commanding two *fidāʾī*s (devotees, operatives) to commit suicide—one cut his own throat, another jumped off a parapet. These types of anecdotes became part of the repertoire of stories about Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ reflecting the fears of the Nizari *daʿwa* and the military threat of their polity—particularly of their asymmetric warfare.[8]

Aḥmad b. Yūsuf b. al-Azraq al-Fāriqī (d. after. 1176) in his regional history, the *Taʾrīkh Mayyāfāriqīn wa Āmid* (*History of Mayyāfāriqīn and Āmid*) provides a different image. He wrote that Ḥasan both gave his daughter in marriage to Nizār—whose descendants lived and died in

[6] The key texts are: Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, "Faḍāʾiḥ al-Bāṭiniyya wa faḍāʾil al-Mustaẓhiriyya (The Infamies of the Bāṭinis and the Virtues of the Mustaẓhiris)," in *Freedom and fulfillment: an annotated translation of al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl and other relevant works of al-Ghazālī by Richard McCarthy* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980).; Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, "al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl (The Rescuer from Error)," in *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).; Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, Maḥmūd Bijou, ed. Al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm (The Just Balance). (Damascus: Al-maṭbaʿa al-ʿilmiyya, 1994).

[7] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, Muḥammad b. Fatḥ Allāh Badrān (original edition 1955), ed. Kitāb al-milal waʾl-niḥal. (Qumm: Al-Sharif al-Razi (etext), 1985). 225-235; Tr: Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, Muslim Sects and Divisions: the Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-milal waʾl-niḥal. trans. A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn (London; Boston: Kegan Paul International, 1984). 163-170; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, The Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs Against the Islamic World. ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1955). 325-328

[8] Abūʾl-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, and D. S. Margoliouth, "The Devil's Delusion of Ibn al-Jawzī, a Translation of his 'Talbīs iblīs'," *Islamic Culture* 4 (1935). 556.

Egypt—and gave Nizār sanctuary at Alamūt, thereby transferring the imamate to Iran. Carole Hillenbrand has noted that al-Fāriqī's work is disordered; nevertheless, his text is perhaps the earliest non-Ismaili source to discuss the transference of the Nizari imamate to Iran, suggesting that by the 1160s–1170s diverse and competing narratives of Ḥasan's role in that transference were already in circulation—he may have received and recorded the contradictory information from Nizari interlocutors.[9]

ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr's (d. 1233) *al-Kāmil fīʾl-tārīkh* (*The Complete History*) repeats several narratives about the Ismailis from Ibn al-Jawzī.[10] Following Shahrastānī, Ibn al-Athīr reported that in an audeience with the Fatimid imam-caliph al-Mustanṣir, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ asked, "Who is the imam after you?" and the imam indicated his son Nizār. When he returned to Iran he took Alamūt by evicting its ruler. "Hearing this news, Nizam al-Mulk sent an army to the castle of Alamut. They besieged it and blockaded the roads to it. Ibn al-Sabbah suffered from the siege, so sent men to assassinate Nizam al-Mulk. After he was killed the army withdrew from Alamut."[11]

A century after his death, the hostile and fanciful images of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ proliferated in non-Nizari writing. Adding to the caricatures of Ismailis in early refutations, Shahrastānī's account and Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn al-Athīr's depictions of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ became the bases for later, especially Arabic sources such as Ibn Muyassar (d. 1278) and al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442) and were adopted by modern scholarship which continues to privilege Arabic sources.

III. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ in the Ilkhanid Era Chronicles

1. Digital Analyses

Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ is depicted very differently in the chronicles of Juwaynī (1260, siglum J-TJG), Rashīd al-Dīn (1314, siglum R-JT), and Qāshānī (1317, siglum Q-ZT) because they drew from

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[9] al-Fāriqī, Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Azraq, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Badawī, ed. Tārīkh al-Fāriqī. (Cairo: al-Maṭābiʿ al-Amīrīyah, 1959). 267-269; Carole Hillenbrand, A Muslim Principality in Crusader Times: The Early Artuqid State. (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Institute Istanbul, 1990). 6, 12

[10] ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, Carl Johan Tornberg, ed. Al-kāmil fīʾl-taʾrīkh. (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir (HII-etext), 1965 (original edition 1851-1876)). X:312-325 Tr: ʿʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fīʾl-taʾrīkh. trans. D. S. Richards (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006). I:39-48

[11] Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*. X:317 Tr: Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil-Crusading Period*. I:42. cf. Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā v3*. 190; Juwaynī, *HWC*. 668; R-JT 101; Q-ZT 137. The army withdrew after Malikshāh's death not on the killing of Niẓām al-Mulk. cf. Shiraz Hajiani, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and the Emergence of Nizari Ismailism. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U. P., forthcoming). ch. 3; Idem. "Niẓām Al-Mulk." In Encyclopaedia of the Ismailis, edited by Farhad Daftary, forthcoming.

Nizari *daʿwa* literature plundered from Alamūt for their dynastic histories. Each history is divided into eight regnal accounts. To analyse these accounts down to the lexical level, I adapted the TAMS Analyzer software designed by Matthew Weinstein for ethnographic and discourse research, as a coding and segmentation tool.[12] Breaking each narrative into content and sentiment categorised segments, and combining this with account lengths, word-frequencies, and term correlations, revealed the distinct frameworks and focalisations operative in each text. Some of the data is presented here.[13]

The R-JT (24850 words) account of the entire Nizari polity is 1.35 times longer than J-TJG (15965 words); Q-ZT (28983 words) is similarly 1.45 times longer than J-TJG and 15% longer than R-JT. Juwayni referred only to the *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā* as a source; Rashid al-Din and Qashani indicated four different Nizari sources—none of which are known to be extant. Rashid al-Din and Qashani, at the beginning and end of their regnal account of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ indicated their use of the *Sarguẕasht*.[14]

The three chroniclers devote disproportionate attention to Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's reign: though his thirty-four years represent roughly 20% of the Nizari polity's 166-year span, they account for 27% of J-TJG, 41% of R-JT, and 37% of Q-ZT by word count. The table and chart below detail the length of each regnal account across all eight rulers, along with the sources each chronicler drew upon.

Table 1: Word Length vs. Reigns of Nizari Rulers and Sources

Ruler	J-TJG	R-JT	Q-ZT	Reign	Sources Used
Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ	4373	10272	10761	34	*Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā* Starts: J-TJG 187; R-JT 97; Q-ZT 133 Ends: J-TJG n/a; R-JT 134; Q-ZT 168
Buzurg Ummīd	704	1911	2934	14	*Kitāb-i Buzurg Ummīd* Starts: Ends: J-TJG n/a; R-JT 144; Q-ZT 182
M. b. Buzurg Ummīd	202	3763	4327	24	*Eyewitness Account of ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAli* Starts: J-TJG n/a; R-JT 144; Q-ZT 182 Tārīkh-i Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (Ṣalāḥ Munshī) Ends: J-TJG n/a; R-JT 161; Q-ZT 198
Ḥasan ʿalā dhikrihi'l-salām	3072	2117	2764	4	?

[12] Available at https://tamsys.sourceforge.io

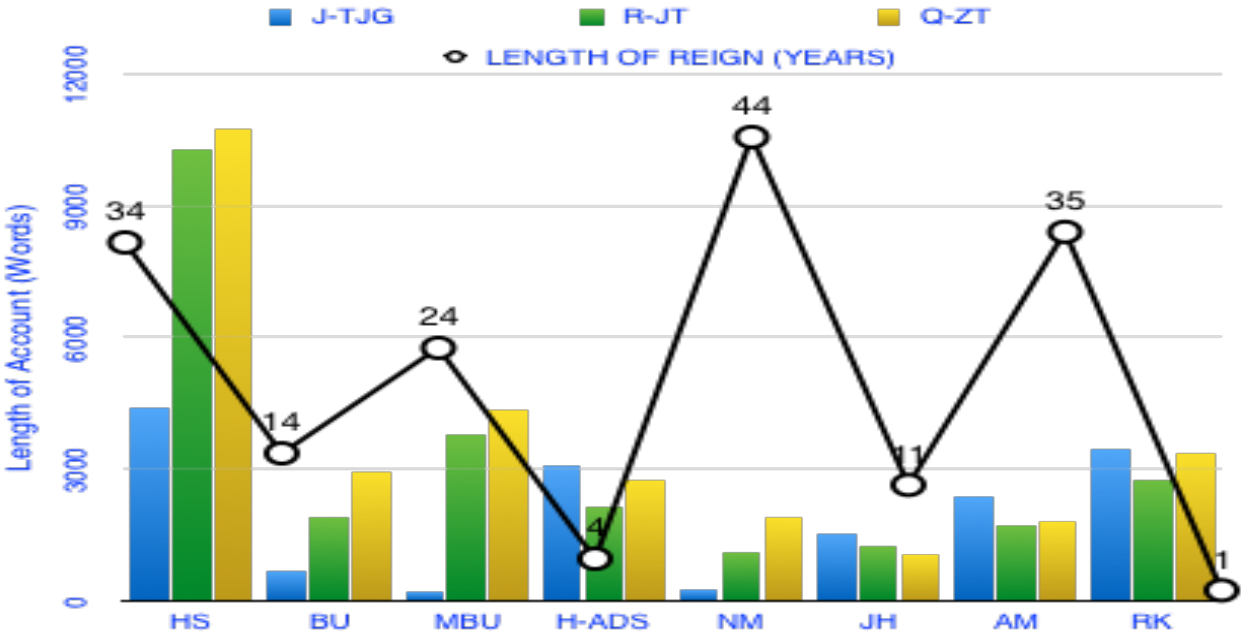
[13] Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." 186-236. This section is drawn from my dissertation chapter entitled "Structure and Content of Ilkhanid Histories of Nizari Ismailism".

[14] R-JT 97 and Q-ZT 133; 23 R-JT 134 and Q-ZT 168

Nur al-Din Muḥammad	279	1082	1918	44	R-JT 173: "Whatever this feeble one learnt from accounts, reports and history of predecessors is [that which has been mentioned]"
Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan	1508	1247	1074	11	?
ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad	2371	1731	1826	35	?
Rukn al-Dīn Khūrshāh	3456	2727	3379	2	?
Totals	**15965**	**24850**	**28983**	**167**	

J-TJG = *Taʾrīkh-i jahān-gushā*; R-JT = *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh*; Q-ZT = *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*

Figure 1: Account Length (Words) vs. Reigns (Years) of Nizari Rulers



A. Structural Analyses of Source Texts

The eight regnal accounts in the three chronicles total 69,798 words and over 7,000 unique terms. The conjunction و (*wa*, and) found 7890 times is of little useful analytical value. The datasets have therefore been filtered to eliminate non-substantive terms. The fifteen most frequently occurring substantive terms are tabulated below—they reveal authorial pre-commitments and focalisation at the lexical level.

Table 2: Most Frequently Occurring Substantive Terms in the Accounts of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ

	ALL 3		F	J-TJG		F	R-JT		F	Q-ZT		F
1	حسن	Ḥasan	302	حسن	Ḥasan	116	سلطان	*sulṭān*	122	محمد	Muḥammad	127
2	سلطان	*sulṭān*	294	پادشاه	*pādishāh*	57	محمد	Muḥammad	107	سلطان	*sulṭān*	120
3	الموت	Alamūt	250	الموت	Alamūt	56	قتل	*qatala*	98	علی	ʿAlī/ʿAlā	115
4	محمد	Muḥammad	238	رکن	Rukn	54	حسن	Ḥasan	89	سیدنا	Sayyidnā	115
5	قتل	*qatala*	227	سلطان	*sulṭān*	52	سیدنا	Sayyidnā	89	الموت	Alamūt	113
6	قلعه	*qalʿa*	208	قلعه	*qalʿa*	42	قلعه	*qalʿa*	87	قتل	*qatala*	110
7	سیدنا	Sayyidnā	204	دعوت	*daʿwat*	42	رفیقان	Rafīqān	82	رفیقان	Rafīqān	101
8	رفیقان	Rafīqān	184	علاء	ʿAlāʾ	40	الموت	Alamūt	81	حسن	Ḥasan	97
9	علی	ʿAlī/ʿalā	174	صباح	Ṣabbāḥ	39	پادشاه	*pādishāh*	60	قلعه	*qalʿa*	79
10	پادشاه	*pādishāh*	170	محمد	Muḥammad	37	کیا	Kiyā	60	کیا	Kiyā	79
11	دعوت	*daʿwat*	159	امام	*imām*	32	الله	Allāh	57	السلام	al-Salām	74
12	بزرگ	Buzurg	144	جلال	Jalāl	32	علی	ʿAlī/ʿAlā	56	قزوین	Qazwīn	70
13	کیا	Kiyā	141	بزرگ	Buzurg	30	بزرگ	Buzurg	56	دعوت	*daʿwat*	62
14	قزوین	Qazwīn	124	اسلام	Islām	26	دعوت	*daʿwat*	55	بزرگ	Buzurg	58
15	امام	*imām*	123	امید	Umīd	25	قزوین	Qazwīn	47	پادشاه	*pādishāh*	53

Columns: ALL 3 = all three chronicles combined; F = frequency of occurrences

The segment-sentiment analyses illustrate that the chroniclers focussed fifty percent of their accounts on warfare and religious discourses.[15] The fifteen terms highlight five major categories: 1) Terms of Religious Discourse; 2) Terms of Territory and Place; 3) Terms and Names of People (Ismailis; Opponents of Nizaris; Either Group); 4) Terms of Conflict; and 5) Terms of Governance. In many instances, the categorisations may overlap—for example *shaykh* placed in the "Terms of Religious Discourse" can also be placed in the "Terms and Names of People" category; however, the choices are sufficient for the demonstrative

[15] Ibid. 225-227

purposes of this analysis. These terms allow a reading of the texts, essentially, without the vowels. The correlations of terms reveals how the building blocks were structurally arranged in the narrative. Let us elaborate on a few terms.

B. Sample Analyses

The honorific, *Sayyidnā,* for Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, the seventh most frequent term in the combined accounts, is not found in J-TJG. Harold Bowen noted that Juwaynī could not bring himself to apply the sacred honorific *Sayyidnā* (our Master) for Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ whom he considered to be the arch-heretic.[16] He referred to the *dāʿī* by his name or by pejoratives such "the accursed". *Sayyidnā* is the fifth (R-JT, 103 times) and fourth (Q-ZT, 72 times) most frequent occurring term in the other two chronicles. Similarly, Juwayni did not use *Rafīqān* (friends, comrades) for the Nizari Ismailis, preferring pejoratives such as *malāḥida* (heretics), whereas Rashid al-Din and Qashani, in almost all instances, referred to the Nizaris as *Rafīqān*: R-JT, (82 times) and Q-ZT, (101 times) making it the eight most frequently occurring term across the three chronicles. The term *qatala* (to kill) is the fifth most frequent term in the combined accounts and third and sixth in R-JT and Q-ZT respectively while it does not appear in J-TJG. The latter two accounts, in Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh's editions, include lists of forty-seven and forty-eight assassinations respectively which add to the frequency of the term.[17]

Lexematic analyses have only been done for concordances in the study of scripture; however, with the availabilities of digitised texts and use of qualitative and quantitative analysis software, 21st century philologists can look at their texts at the super-structural levels to apprehend authorial focalisation and pre-commitments. Digital methodologies, novel analytical approaches and the use of artificial intelligence models are revolutionising the processes and results of textual analyses![18]

2. Two Narrative of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ in the Ilkhanid Chronicles

Let us continue our analyses at the narrative level of the Ilkhanid accounts of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. The three chronicles follow a common outline from Ḥasan's birth to death—his early life to the assassination of Niẓām al-Mulk in 1092 is presented in two narratives.

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[16] Harold Bowen, "The Sar-gudhasht-i Sayyidnā, the "Tale of the Three Schoolfellows" and the waṣāyā of the Niẓām al-Mulk," *JRAS* 4 (1931).

[17] Manuscripts of the *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* do not have long lists of assassinations. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh's editions compiled these from listings in Qashani's *Zubdat al-tawārīkh* Tehran University MS 9067 copied Muharram, 989/February-March 1581

[18] Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." 236

A. The Chronological Narrative

The first narrative in all three accounts follows a common arc: Ḥasan's origins; his adoption of Ismailism; his journey to Cairo; his return to Iran and *daʿwa* activities culminating in the acquisition of Alamūt; the doctrine of *taʿlīm*; propagation of the *daʿwa* south of the Caspian Sea and in Qūhistān; and the conflict with the Saljuqs; assassination of Niẓām al-Mulk. Juwaynī, however, omits a number of episodes relating to Ḥasan's adoption of Ismailism and the details of his Egyptian route that appear in R-JT and Q-ZT.

B. The "Three School Fellows Story"

The second narrative reverts to Ḥasan's childhood with the "three school fellows story," which ends with Ḥasan—betrayed by Niẓām al-Mulk—fleeing the Saljuq court to seek refuge with a Raʾīs Abū al-Faḍl. There he exclaimed: "Oh alas! if I had two men of the same mind and direction with me I would give an answer to that Turk and this peasant."[19] The Raʾīs thought it impossible to bring down the Saljuq Empire with just two comrades and quietly began to treat Ḥasan for melancholia. Grasping the Raʾīs's attitude, Ḥasan departed for Egypt and after his return, commenced his revolt.

Juwaynī omitted this story entirely, displacing the Raʾīs Abū al-Faḍl incident to Ḥasan's return from Egypt—a repositioning Bowen attributed to chronological ordering and Juwaynī's reluctance to elevate Ḥasan by associating him with the illustrious wazīr and renowned poet.[20] That Juwaynī then rejoined the arc found in R-JT and Q-ZT confirms common sourcing across all three chronicles. They all conclude this second narrative by again recording the killing of Niẓām al-Mulk and alluding to suspicious circumstances surrounding Malikshāh's death a month later.

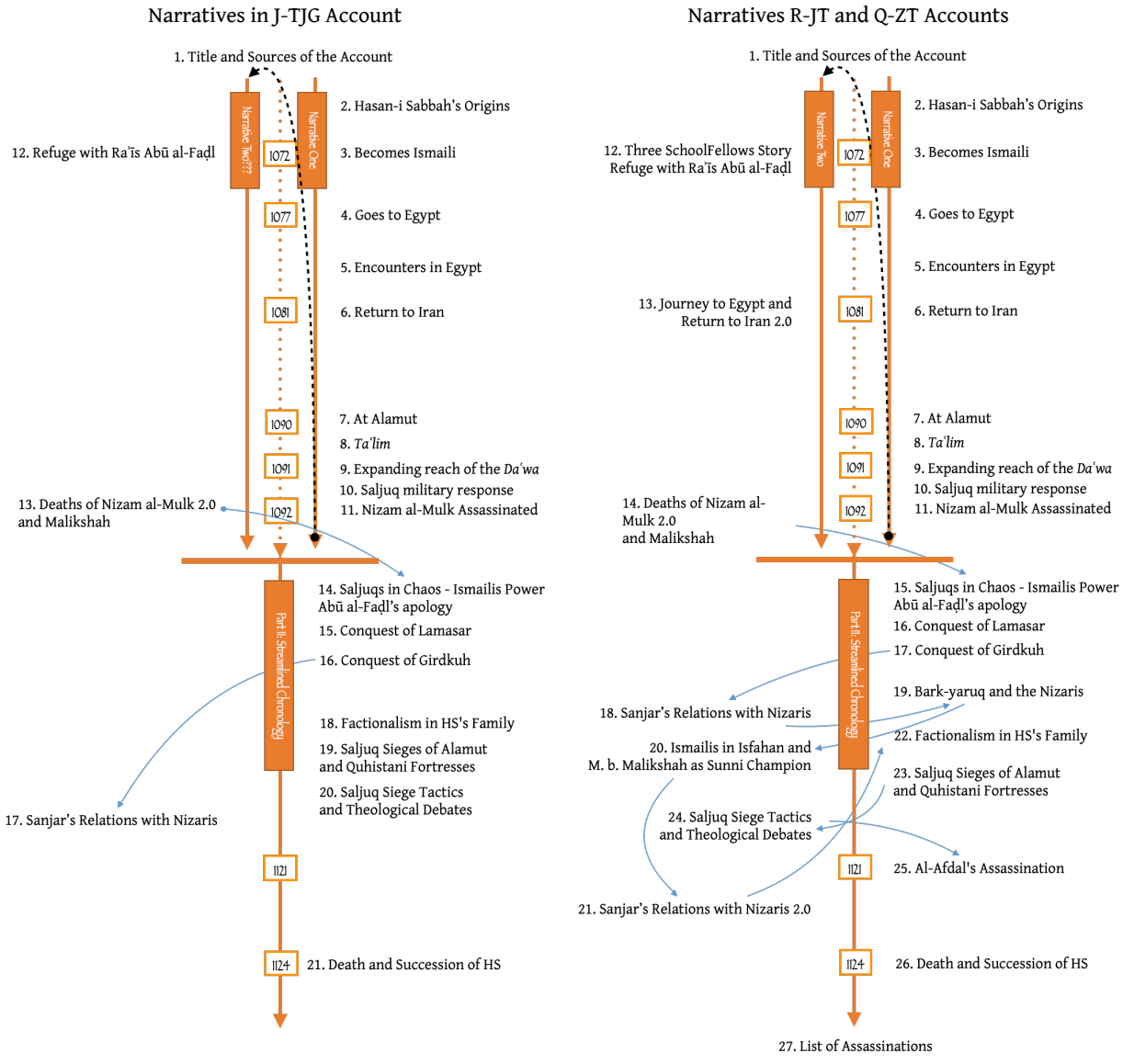
C. Outlines of the Account of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ

[19] Ironically, while rejecting the "three school fellows" story as spurious, many scholars have read this sentence as a basis for "Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ revolt" and an expression of anti-Turk "Persian 'national' sentiment". cf. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, *Jāmiʿ*. dībācha p. 11ff; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, Muḥammad Dabīr Siyāqī, ed. Faṣlī az Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh: Sarguẕasht-i Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ wa jānishīnān-i ū yā Tārīkh-i firqa-yi Rafīqān wa Ismāʿīliyān-i Alamūt. (Tehran: Nashr-i Alburz, 1987). dībācha p. 3ff; Farhad Daftary, The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). 361; David Durand-Guédy, Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers a History of Isfahan in the Saljuq Period. (London; New York: Routledge, 2010). 163; Peter Willey, Eagle's Nest: Ismaili Castles in Iran and Syria. (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005). 208. It is to avoid this type of back-projection of 20th century ethno-nationalisms that I avoid the term "state" and instead use "polity"

[20] Bowen, "Sar-gudhasht."

Figure 2 depicts Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's biography, divided in two parts. The first part from his childhood to the death of Niẓām al-Mulk consists of the two narratives. The second part follows a near-linear chronology in Juwayni's account whilst the two longer accounts are chronologically discontinuous as indicated by the blue arrows.

Figure 2: Narrative Outlines of J-TJG, R-JT and Q-ZT Accounts



In the second part, the plot and time sequences become haphazard tending to towards thematic rather than chronological presentation. As an example, R-JT and Q-ZT record the

following order of events: a) the Nizari acquisition of Girdkūh; b) Sanjar's relations with the Nizari commander Raʾīs Muẓaffar at Girdkūh; c) then Bark-yāruq's relations with them; d) massacre of Ismailis in Isfahan; and e) the capture of Shāhdiz outside of Isfahan by Muḥammad b. Malikshāh. These events are dated: a) 1096; b) ca 1105; c) earlier part of the reign of Bark-yāruq 1094-1104; d) ca 1100-1101; and e) 1107.[21]

I have traced the R-JT and Q-ZT accounts of the Saljuq capture of Shāhdiz fortress from the *dāʿī* Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAṭṭāsh (d. 1107) to the *Saljūqnāma* of Ẓahīr al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī and Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil*. Its absence from Juwaynī points to a gap in the *Sarguẕasht*—likely deliberate, since Aḥmad's prominent role leading the Iranian *daʿwa* would have overshadowed the hagiographic focus on Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ.[22] Juwayni maintained his chronological flow by not mentioning Bark-yāruq and the events at Isfahan. The Nizari sources used by Rashid al-Din and Qashani recorded the friendly relations and diplomacy of the Nizaris with Bark-yāruq and Sanjar during the reign of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. In addition to avoiding anachronism, Juwayni's account also avoided any question of Saljuq disinclinations toward Sunnism.[23]

Juwaynī's *Taʾrīkh-i jahāngushā*'s regnal accounts of the eight rulers of the Nizari polity became a template for later dynastic histories. The more extensive content of Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh*, especially the "three school fellows" story became more prominent in later writing. After Juwayni, Rashid al-Din and Qashani, there is no indication that the Nizari *daʿwa* literature from Alamūt was available to later historians. Yet the biography of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ continued to be embellished.

IV. Derivative Historiography after the Destruction of the Nizari Polity

Later chroniclers followed the Ilkhanid paradigms; however, beginning with Qazwīnī's *Taʾrīkh-i guzīda* the "three school fellows" story became the primary narrative of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's life-history such that the chronological (auto)biographical narrative was overshadowed by this legendary anachronistic narrative. For centuries after the demise of the Nizari polity, Ḥasan's biography served as a contested site of memory, ideology, and textual authority, and has continued to be reformulated within the socio-political and religious discourses of the author's times.

A. ḤAMD ALLĀH MUSTAWFĪ QAZWĪNĪ

[21] R-JT 116ff; Q-ZT 139ff

[22] Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." 320-322 and 332ff

[23] Ibid. 369-384

The late Ilkhanid chronicler, Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī (d. ca. 1344), in his *Taʾrīkh-i guzīda* (1330) departs significantly from the earlier chronicle accounts of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. He foregrounded the "three school fellows" story and introduced a "cowhide deception" in which Ḥasan negotiated to purchase land the size of a cowhide, then he cut the cowhide into strips to encircle the entire fortress, and thereby deceived ʿAlawī Mahdī into surrender of Alamūt for a draft of 3,000 dinars.[24]

Several elements of Qazwīnī's account are historically anomalous or unparalleled:

- Ḥasan went not to Fatimid Egypt but to Syria in 1079, where he anachronistically propagated the *daʿwa* in favour of Nizār while al-Mustanṣir was still imam-caliph, and returned to Iran bearing Nizār's son.
- By privileging the "three school fellows" narrative and largely bypassing the chronological first narrative, Qazwīnī reduced Ḥasan's conversion from an intellectual-spiritual quest to an act of political expediency.
- Where the earlier chronicles imply the marginalisation of women by noting that Ḥasan sent his womenfolk to safer fortresses in wartime, Qazwīnī inverted this: Ḥasan's wife seduced a royal concubine to plant a dagger in Sanjar's (r. 1118-1157) bedchamber, after which Ḥasan sent the sultan a message—that the dagger in the floor could just as easily have been in his "soft breast"—inducing Sanjar to cease hostilities and establish a tribute.[25]
- Doctrinal discussion is minimal, confined to an elegiac closing paragraph in which Ḥasan is said to have devised *taʾwīlāt* (allegorical interpretations) of the *uṣūl* and *furūʿ* of the *madhhab* (roots and branches of the creed), turning the *ẓāhir* (exoteric) of the *sharīʿa* (interpretation of Divine Law) into *bāṭin* (esoteric) and then *bāṭin* into *bāṭin* again—from which, Qazwīnī concluded, the name "*Bāṭinī*" derived.[26]

Some of Qazwīnī's divergences from Juwaynī and Rashīd al-Dīn are attributable to abridgement, but the unique material he introduced raises broader source questions. Living in Qazwīn—some sixty miles from Alamūt—he was plausibly in contact with Nizaris, their opponents, and others preserving variant oral traditions about the polity. Narrative analysis of his accounts suggest that he did not have access to Nizari *daʿwa* literature but privileged oral reports over the written chronicles. Whether he accurately recorded these reports or partially (mis)remembered them,

[24] Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī, ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī, ed. Taʾrīkh-i guzīda. (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1985). 519

[25] Ibid. 520. This intensifies Juwayni's disdain for Sanjar's relations with the Nizaris. Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā v3*. 214-215 Tr: Juwaynī, *HWC*. 682

[26] Qazwīnī, *Guzīda*. 522

several of his narrative innovations became central to later historiography on the Nizaris.

B. Reformulations of Ilkhanid Paradigms

The Tīmūrid historian, Muḥammad b. Khwāndshāh b. Maḥmūd Mīrkhwānd (d. 1498), wrote the most polemical reformulation of the account of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. It begins with a refutation of Ḥasan's ancestry and origins based on the so-called "*waṣāyā*" (*Testament*) of Niẓām al-Mulk.[27] In his version of the "three school fellows" story, Mīrkhwānd stated that Ḥasan's father was accused of unbelief and impiety (*kufr wa zandaqa*, lit.: unbelief and dualism), he claimed Arab descent stating that "I am descended from Ṣabbāḥ Ḥimyarī; my father came from Kūfa to Qumm and from Qumm to Rayy." Niẓām al-Mulk said that the "people of Khurāsān, especially of Ṭūs rejected this and said: 'his forefathers came from the villages of this region.'" In the Ilkhanid chronicles, it was Ḥasan—not his father—who claimed Ṣabbāḥid Ḥimyarī descent. The family had come from Kūfa to Rayy via Qumm. In Mīrkhwānd's account they were from the east. Below we will analyse why this was significant.

C. New Paradigms

Mirkhwānd's grandson, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwāndamīr (d. 1535) wrote about the Nizaris in three texts. The earliest was the *Maʾāthir al-mulūk* (*Impediments to the Rulers*, 1498) contains very brief biographic sketches of the rulers of the Nizari polity. In his *Dastūr* al-*wuzarāʾ* (*The Illustrious Wazīrs*, 1509), he collected biographies of famous *wazīr*s and included that of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ which is identical to Mirkhwānd's account.[28] His most important work is the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* (*Beloved Biographies,* ca 1529), a general history from the earliest times to the end of the life of the founder of the Safawid Empire, Shāh Ismāʿīl I (d. 1524), includes an account of the Fatimid and Nizari rulers which also bears great similarity to the account in *Rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ* particularly in its reformulations of the account of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāh.

These narratives add another layer to the "three-school-fellows" story and yet another

[27] Muḥammad b. Khwāndshāh Mīrkhwānd, Jamshīd Kiyānfar, ed. Taʾrīkh-i rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ. (Tehran: Aṣāṭīr, 2001). Volume IV: Dynasties contemporary with the ʿAbbāsids; Edward Granville Browne, A Literary History of Persia Vol. 2—From Firdawsi to Saʿdi (1000-1290). (Bethesda, Md.: Iranbooks, 1997). II:191-192, 212. The *Rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ fī sīrat al-anbiyāʾ waʾl-mulūk waʾl-khulāfāʾ* (*Garden of Purity Containing the Biographies of Prophets, Kings and Caliphs*) was written in the reign of Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bāyqarā (r. 1469-1470; 1470–1506/873-875; 875-911) in Herat.

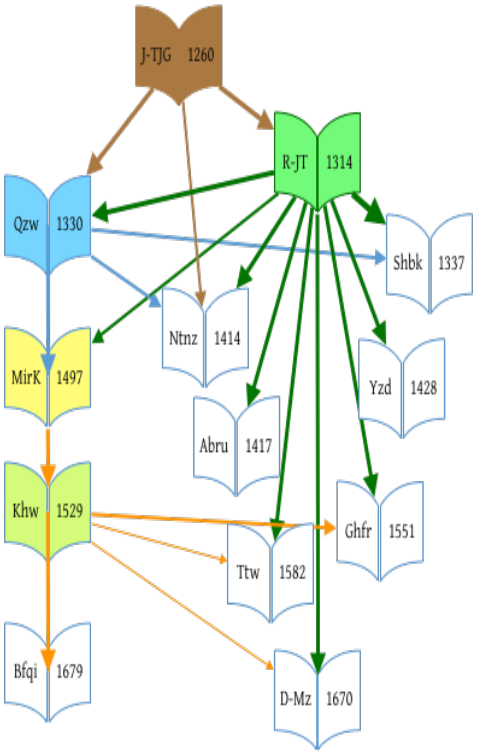
[28] Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwānd Amīr, Saʿīd Nafīsī, ed. Dastūr al-wuzarāʾ: shāmil-i aḥwāl-i wuzarā-yi Islām tā inqirāḍ-i Taymūrīyān. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Iqbāl, 1976). 169-178 the text exactly matches the entry on Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ in Sarguẕasht-i Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. Persian ms Majmūʿa no. 901. Library, Museum and Document Center of the Iranian Parliament. Tehran 21-29. See further discussion below.

spurious episode to Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's life. Later histories of the Nizaris emulated Mirkhwānd and Khwāndamīr's accounts.

D. Genealogies of Texts

Numerous other authors also participated in these genealogies of texts drawing on paradigms developed since the Mongol destruction of the Nizari polity. All such historical writing telescoped back to the accounts of Rashīd al-Dīn and ultimately, of Juwaynī. The embellishments of the "three-school-fellows" and other narratives were invented by author-historians as part of the religio-political discourses of their times with Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ as a stand-in for heretical socio-political disrupters.

Figure 3: Paradigms of Historical Writing on the Nizaris



J-TJG = Juwaynī d. 1283 ***Taʾrīkh-i jahāngushā* (1260)**
R-JT = Rashīd al-Dīn d. 1318 ***Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* (1314)**
Qzw = Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī d. ca 1344 ***Taʾrīkh-i guzīda* (1330)**; *Ẓafarnāma* (1334); *Nuzhat al-qulūb* (ca 1340)
Shbk = Shabānkāraʾī d. 1358 *Majmaʿ al-ansāb* (1337)
Ntnz = Muʿīn al-Dīn Naṭanzī d. c15 Muntakhab al-tawārīkh (1414)
Abru = Ḥāfiẓ-i Abru d. 1430 *Majmaʿ al-tawārīkh* (1417-18)
Yzd = Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī d. 1454 *Ẓafarnāma* (ca 1428)
MirK = Mīrkhwānd d. 1498 ***Rawẓat aṣ-ṣafāʾ* (1497)**
Khw = Khwāndamīr d. ca 1535 *Maʾāthir al-mulūk* (pre 1498); ***Dastūr al-wuzarāʾ* (ca 1509)**; ***Ḥabīb al-siyar* (1529)**
Ghfr = Aḥmad b. M. Ghaffārī d. 1567-68 *Taʾrīkh-i Nigāristān* (1551)
Ttw = Aḥmad Tatawī Qazwīnī d.1587? *Taḥrīkh-i alfī* (ca. 1582)
D-Mz = Anonymous c17 *Dabistān-i madhāhib* (1670)
Bfqi = Muḥammad Mufīd Mustawfī Bafqī d. c17 *Jāmiʿ-i Mufīdī* (1679)

The arrows and thicknesses indicate dependencies and the vectors of sources

V. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ in Nizari *Daʿwa* Literature

The portrait of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ in Nizari *daʿwa* literature has also undergone many transformations over time. We find elements of the image in fragments of Nizari writing embedded in the Ilkhanid chronicles; in the teachings and writings attributed to Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and in later doctrinal texts. Since the narratives of the *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā* and the

"three school fellows" story were not widely known until the Ilkhanid chroniclers accessed them after the capture of Alamut, it is safe to assume that they were prepared for internal purposes. These *sīra* (biography) and *manāqib* (excellences, virtues) texts may have been used for teaching and training of functionaries of the *daʿwa* and to foster communal unity, conformity and identification with heroic leaders. Through careful analyses, it is possible to separate story from discourse—what was recorded and why and how it was recorded—in the Ilkhanid accounts, then a second layer of analyses is needed to excavate story and discourse in the embedded (auto)biographical narratives from the Nizari sources. In this manner, let us examine the execution of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's two sons.

A. Executions of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's Sons

All three chronicles, drawing on the Sarguẕasht, record that Ḥasan executed his son Ustād Ḥusayn for complicity in the murder of the *dāʿī* Ḥusayn Qāʾinī. A year later, a Zaydī ʿAlid who had been promoting himself as imam was found to be the actual instigator and executed. A second son, Muḥammad, was put to death on charges of wine-drinking. Ḥasan cited both executions as proof that he had never conducted the *daʿwa* for personal or dynastic ends[29]—a claim prefaced by Juwaynī and Qāshānī that Ḥasan founded his cause on asceticism and the enjoining of righteousness (Q3:110),[30] and that during his thirty-five years at Alamūt no one drank wine openly.[31]

Why did Ḥasan's Nizari biographers preserve this material? *Prima facie*, the executions affirm Ḥasan's exclusive loyalty to the imamate, but closer reading exposes fractures beneath the surface. Ustād Ḥusayn's execution was premature: the Zaydī claimant identified a year later as the real instigator casts serious doubt on the son's complicity. As for Muḥammad, Ḥasan's strict adherence to *sharīʿī* precepts would have permitted the *ḥadd* punishment of flogging; resort to execution instead suggests that wine-drinking was a pretext and as in the case of Ustād Ḥusayn, Muḥammad represented antinomian opposition requiring extirpation rather than mere correction.

The Nizari author's inclusion of these troubling episodes—handled with deliberate circumspection—signals they were too consequential to omit. They warn against disloyalty to

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[29] Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." 360-368. cf. Juwaynī, *HWC*. 643 fn 13: Ismaili b. Jafar was labelled as a drunkard — he had in fact participated in a "seditious" enterprise that Jafar disapproved of.

[30] from Q3:110: "enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong"

[31] Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā v3*. 209 tr.: Juwaynī, *HWC*. 679; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, *Jāmiʿ*. 123-124; Qāshānī, *Zubdat*.159

the imamate. Yet the very loudness of that declaration of loyalty points to the subdued factionalism at the heart of the Nizari polity. The *Sarguẕasht*, in common with much Ismaili writing, thus performs multiple functions at once: hagiography, political warning, and negotiation between patron expectation and wider reception and their different readings.[32]

B. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and Nāṣir-i Khusraw

The narrative of Ḥasan's executions of his sons is also found in the *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw*, an undated treatise with no information of authorship or provenance which I have dated between 1147-1162.[33] This subaltern text, perhaps, produced by a community of Nizaris persecuted by the Nizari high-command for their desire to end the era of concealment (*satr*) of the imam, memorialised Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ as a sanctified forebear. The text begins with an anachronism that Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ told the *Rafīqān* (Nizaris) a story that Nāṣir-i Khusraw had told him. The two never met—this association would be reformulated in later texts. Second, based on a conversation with the recently arrived imām, Hādī b. Nizār (r 1095-?) who lived in concealment at the foot of Alamūt, Ḥasan understood that his four (not two) sons would turn out to be seditious so he executed them. The treatise construes Ḥasan as prophesying the Qāʾim (the messianic Resurrector). Twenty-five years after his death, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ was no longer just a pious, austere leader; now he was construed as an eschatological actor.

C. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ as Ḥujja of the Qāʾim

Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib (d. after 1243) in his *Haft Bāb* (Seven Chapters, 1200), one of the most important near-contemporary accounts of the doctrine of the *Qiyāmat-i buzurg* (the Great Resurrection) declared at Alamut on 17 Ramaḍān 559/15 August 1164, recorded that

> From the cycle of the *Qiyāmat* which was prior to the cycle of our Adam, up to the present cycle in which we are - although the *Qiyāmat* is perpetual (*hamīshagī*) but recurring in relation to the *sharīʿat* - all the good and pious people have identified the supreme *ḥujjat* (proof) of the Qāʾim and have given the glad tidings about him. They have said: 'The position of the *ḥujjat* in relation to the Qāʾim is similar to that of the vicegerents (*awṣiyāʾ*) to the Prophets with

[32] Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." 360-368.

[33] Shiraz Hajiani, "Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw: Analyses of a subaltern Nizari Ismaili Text Written before the Declaration of the Qiyāmat-i buzurg (the Great Resurrection) in 559/1164," *Iranian Studies* 58, no. 1 (2025); Shiraz Hajiani, "Manifesto of the Resurrection A critical edition and translation of the Hikayat-i Sayyid Nasir-i Khusraw, a newly uncovered Nizari Ismaili treatise written before the declaration of the Qiyamat-i Buzurg (the Great Resurrection) in 559/1164," *Iran* (2026).; cf also Hajiani, *Concealment and Manifestation*. Treatise VII.

> resolution (*anbiyāʿ-i ulūl ʿaẓm*).[34] All the good and pious people of our time also admit that Sayyidnā Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, may God sanctify his soul and bless us with his meditation (sic, should be mediation) (*shafāʿat*), was the chief *ḥujjat* of the *Qāʾim* of the *Qiyāmat* and the Messiah of the cycle of the *Qiyāmat* who manifested the work of his father (*kār-i pidar āshkārā kard*).[35]

Jalal Badakhchani in a footnote to the translation stated that *ḥujjat,* in general Shiʿi usage has the connotation of "proof" or "evidence" of God, in Fatimid usage it signified the most senior dignitary of the *daʿwa* and in Nizari usage it refers to the chief representative of the Imam.[36] However, this chapter of the *Ḥaft Bāb* discusses the transcendent manifestation of the *Qāʾim* who would raise the believers into the paradisiacal presence of God. In this passage, the *ḥujja* is equated to the imams following the *nuṭaqāʾ* (sing. *nāṭiq*, "speaking prophets" who initiated new dispensations). Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ is thus elevated to the stature of the imams; however, the sentence: *ḥujja-yi akbar qāʾim-i qiyāmat būda wa ʿĪsā-yi dawr-i qiyāmat būd wa kār-i pidar āshkār kard* can be translated: "he was the great *ḥujjat* of the Great Resurrector and the Jesus of the era of the Resurrection who manifested the endeavour of his Father". This adaptation of Christology represents the high status accorded to Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. In this context, the *ḥujjat-i akbar-i Qāʾim-i Qiyāmat* (the great *ḥujjat* of the Great Resurrector) is no mere temporal or religious leader but rather the messiah.[37]

D. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ as Harbinger of the Resurrection

Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1274) in the *Rawḍat al-taslīm* (*Paradise of Submission,* 1243) also construed Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ as a messianic figure. He began the section discussing *taʿlīm* with a description of Ḥasan's rank

> Sayyidnā, (our master) - may God sanctify his soul - who was the supreme *ḥujjat* of our lord the Resurrector of the Resurrection (*ḥujjat-i aʿẓim-i mawlānā qāʾim al-qiyāmat*), the Messiah of the Cycle of Resurrection, the one who blew the first blast of the trumpet of Resurrection (*nāfikh-i ṣūr-i awwal*), made his appearance in the year 500 after *Hijra*. He set out in search of this pure and unique religion, betaking himself to the sacred presence of our lord Mustanṣir - may salutations ensue upon mention of him - and was specially favoured with a vision of the lights of divine assistance (*anwār-i taʾyīd*). By the command of the latter, he came forth and proclaimed openly the rightly-guided mission (*daʿwat-i hādiyya*) - may God so confirm it! Upon the first blast of the trumpet of the holy mission, he announced the call, asking if knowledge of God is to be attained with or without the guidance of a person. He asked 'Does reason suffice

[34] That is, the six great Prophet-Messengers from Adam to Muḥammad (also called *natiq*, 'speaker', pl. *nutaqā*, in Ismaili cosmology), each of whom inaugurates a new dispensation, thus perfecting the religious law of the previous millennial cycle.

[35] Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib, Spiritual Resurrection in Shiʿi Islam: An Early Ismaili Treatise on the Doctrine of Qiyāmat: Haft Bāb. trans. S. J. Badakhchani (London: I.B.Tauris, 2017). p. 25 Tr: pp 67-68

[36] Ibid. p. 67 fn 191

[37] Ibid. p. 25.

[as a guide to God] or not?'[38]

The continuity with the *Ḥaft Bāb* is obvious; however, Ṭūsī changed ʿĪsā (Jesus) to *Masīḥ* (Messiah) and added that Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ blew the first blast of the trumpet of Resurrection which refers to the Qurʾanic verse: "The Trumpet will be blown, and all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will fall dead, except whom God wills. Then it will be blown again, and at once they will be standing, looking on" (Q39:68). Ḥasan's encounter with the Fatimid imam, al-Mustanṣir and his inauguration of the rightly-guided mission (*daʿwat-i hādiyya*) suggests reliance on Shahrastānī's *K. milal waʾl-nihal*. In Ṭūsī's elaboration of soteriology, the temporal *ḥudūd-i dīn* (hierarchy of the *daʿwa*) resonates with the eschatological Nizari Ismaili Neoplatonic schema of return and Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ occupied a position second only to the Eschatological Redeemer.

E. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ as the Parousia

Doctrinal writing after the destruction of the Nizari polity by the Mongols in 1256, continued these construals of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. The *Ḥaft Bāb-i Abū Isḥāq,* written in the fifteenth century by Abū Isḥāq (d. after 1498), describes Ḥasan drawing from many of the images we have surveyed. Explaining the transference of the imamate from Egypt to Iran, he wrote that

> after al-Ḥākim became Mawlā-nā Ẓāhir, and after him, Mawlā-nā Mustanṣir Maʿad, Ḥākim Nāṣir-i Khusraw travelled from Balkh to Cairo, was presented to his Majesty, and was appointed the *dāʿī* of Khurāsān and Badakhshān. Sayyid-nā (Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ) also came to pay his respects to him. Complete help was meted out in his (Sayyid-nā) affairs, and the son (or descendant) of Mawlā-nā Nizār to whom *naṣṣ* of Imamat had been made was entrusted to the charge of Sayyid-nā who was appointed the *ḥujjat* of Daylamān, Ṭārum and adjacent localities.[39]

There is close resonance here with the account of Qazwīnī. Describing the continuity of imamate in Ismaili notions of cyclical history, Abū Isḥāq wrote that

> at the time of Jesus, *Mawlā-nā* was called Maʿadd, and at the time of Muṣṭafā—ʿAlī. And when Jesus said that he was going to return and take up the task of the *Qiyāmat*, showing God to people, he referred to Sayyid-nā. All signs have become manifested in him, from that date and until his, Sayyid-nā's, appearance. And Muṣṭafā said that ʿAlī ibn Abi Ṭālib,—may God beautify

[38] Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ṭūsī, Paradise of Submission (Rawḍat al-taslīm): a Medieval Treatise on Ismaili Thought. trans. Seyyed Jalal Badakhchani (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005). 195-196 Tr: 158 slightly modified

[39] Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Quhistānī, Wladimir Ivanow, ed. Haft bāb, or Seven Chapters. (Bombay: The Ismaili Society, 1959). 23 Tr 23

his countenance![40]—on the day of Resurrection will raise the banner of the *Qiyāmat* single-handed.[41]

Contrasting Sunni construals of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ; in this arc, we have seen him portrayed by Nizari authors—through the screen of Ilkhanid chroniclers—as a zealous socio-political leader and increasingly as an eschatological figure culminating in Abū Isḥāq's construal of him as the *parousia*, the second coming of Christ!

F. Manuscripts of the Sarguẕasht

Let us conclude this survey with the *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā*. The Library, Museum and Document Center of the Iranian Parliament houses a manuscript entitled *Sarguẕasht-i Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ*.[42] The manuscript includes the biographies of many notables including Niẓām al-Mulk. The fly leaf gives a titular notation: "Letters (*munshaʾāt*) and Accounts (*aḥwāl*) of some Wazīrs and the Importance of Certain Matter (*khawāṣṣ-i baʿżī ashiyāʾ*), together with the Treatise on the 'Beginning and End' (*Āghāz va anjām*) of Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, may mercy be upon him". The entry on Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ is actually from Khwāndamīr's *Dastūr al-wuzarāʾ* and is identical to the regnal accounts of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ in *Taʾrīkh-i ḥabīb al-siyar* and Mirkhwānd's *Rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ*; unfortunately, this is not the *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā*.[43]

There are two manuscripts (nos. 162 and 177) in the Persian Manuscript Collection of the Institute of Ismaili Studies entitled *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā*.[44] Delia Cortese has provided a detailed study of the correlations between MS-177 and the Ilkhanid accounts. Miklós Sárközy has postulated that these manuscripts evidence "the survival of hitherto unknown parts of texts dating to the Alamūt period."[45] MS-177 was completed on Sunday, 22 October 1916 in

[40] This pious invocation upon the imam-caliph, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib is unusual in Ismaili *daʿwa* literature.

[41] Ibid. 40 Tr 40

[42] *Sarguẕasht-i Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ*. Persian ms Majmūʿa no. 901. Library, Museum and Document Center of the Iranian Parliament. Tehran. 21-29; Delia Cortese, "Lost and found: the Sarguẕasht-i Sayyid-nā. Facts and fiction of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's travel to Egypt vis-à-vis the political and intellectual life of 5th/11th century Fāṭimid Cairo," in *Science in the City of Fortune: The Dustūr Al-Munajjimīn and Its World*, ed. Eva Orthmann, and Petra G. Schmidl (Berlin: EBVerlag, 2017).

[43] Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." 388-389

[44] Sarguẕasht-i Sayyid-nā. Persian mss 162 and 177. Library of The Institute of Ismaili Studies. London. I am preparing an edition and translation for a forthcoming publication.

[45] Miklós Sárközy, The Early Nizari Ismailis and Their Neighbouring Powers: Politics in the Caspian Provinces. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024). 2. in the preceding paragraph he states: "The actual author of this work remains unknown, but it is seen as a very popular work since the second part survived the destruction of Alamūt both as an independent manuscript and in paraphrase as part of the chronicles by Juwaynī, Rashīd al-Dīn and Kāshānī, the main Ilkhanid historians to write about the Nizārī Ismaili state." It is unclear if "independent manuscript"

Bombay by Akbar Khwāja Muʾmin; MS-162 which appears to be copy is full of errors has no information of authorship or dating. A comparison of narrative elements we have surveyed in this chapter illustrates not only the author's sourcing but his framing of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ within the discourse of his time.

Table 3: Comparison of narrative elements in MS-177 with Ilkhanid chronicles and Qazwīnī's *Tārīkh-i guzīda*

Narrative Element	Ilkhanid Chronicles (J-TJG / R-JT / Q-ZT)	Qazwīnī (*Tārīkh-i guzīda*)	MS-177 (IIS, 1916)
Ḥasan's genealogy	Ṣabbāḥid Ḥimyarī (rulers of Yemen) descent; migrated Kūfa → Qumm → Rayy	Ṣabbāḥid Ḥimyarī descent	Descended from Imām Muḥammad Bāqir; father was an Ismaili; migrated Kūfa → Qumm → Rayy
Father's religious identity	Ithnāʿasharī	No mention of HS' father	Pious, learned Ismaili
Impetus for "conversion"	Intellectual-spiritual quest	conversion reduced to political expediency in "three school fellows" story	Dream revelation from God and the Prophet; encounter with luminous being (*shakhṣī-yi nūrānī*)
"Three school fellows"	R-JT and Q-ZT: in Second life-story of HS; J-TJG omits it; "weak" conversion narrative	Foregrounded as the primary narrative framework	Ḥasan fled Malikshāh's court after he was betrayed and sultan was angry
Relations with ʿAṭṭāsh	HS deputised by ʿAṭṭāsh (R-JT and Q-ZT)	Became a Shiʿa by words of ʿAṭṭāsh	HS studied philosophy with ʿAṭṭāsh in Rūdbār
Route Egypt to Iran	Via Syria → Iraq → Iranian cities	returned from Syria → Iran (no journey to Egypt)	Aleppo → Baghdad → "Khwāristān" → Isfahan
Acquisition of Alamūt	Seized and purchased from ʿAlawī Mahdī for 3000 dinars (less juridical framing)	"Cowhide deception"; ʿAlawī Mahdī had no power to resist; (no juridical framing)	"Cowhide purchase"; formalised before a *qāḍī*; ʿAlawī Mahdī defeated by his own *sharʿī* argument (juridical)
Ascent to Alamūt	483/1090	483/1090	484/August–September 1091
Role of women	HS sent womenfolk to safer fortresses (marginalisation implied)	HS's wife seduced a royal concubine to plant a dagger in Sanjar's chamber; HS sent threatening message → Sanjar established tribute	Silent

refers to the IIS manuscripts. Cf also. Miklós Sárközy, "Alamūt and Badakhshān: Newly Identified Sargudhasht-i Sayyidnā Manuscripts and their Background," in *Texts, Scribes and Transmission: Manuscript Cultures of the Ismaili Communities and Beyond* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2022).

Concealed imam at Alamūt	Hādī b. Nizār arrived at Alamūt with Ḥasan-i Saʿīd (R-JT and Q-ZT)	Nizār gave one of his sons to HS [in Syria?] who brought him to Iran and nurtured him	Hādī b. Nizār arrived; asked to remain in concealment

What are we to make of this? Are MSS 162 and 177 witnesses of the "original" *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā*? I am inclined to suggest otherwise.[46] As the tabulation shows, the author of MS-177 was clearly drawing from the repertoire of narratives of Ḥasan's biography from *daʿwa* literature and non-Ismaili historiographic sources and introduced several flaws in the treatise. The author was apparently not fully conversant with geography—Alexandria is not on the route from Iran to Aleppo and Khwāristān may be mistaken replacement of Khūzistān. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ took control of Alamūt in 1090 not a year later as in the text.

Let us briefly examine some theories of biographical studies that apply to this research and then we will conclude our analyses of this eight-hundred year-long biographical discourse we have mapped.

VI. Life-narrative and the Text

The autobiographical act is a declarative effort by the author to foreground aspects of their life experiences to embellish certain of images of their portrait. Such portraits often are retrospective and self-aggrandising and attempt to fix meritorious images for present and future audiences. While the author may draw upon evidentiary sources, ultimate authority rests in the narration of their own lived experiences. The biographical act, on the other hand, is a constructive effort in which the biographer assembles a range of evidence either to lionise or discredit their subject. They may have recourse to different types of sources, recall of the contemporaries and even the authorities of experts. In both cases "the usefulness of evidence for their stories lies in the ways in which the authors employ that evidence to support, supplement, or offer commentary on idiosyncratic acts of remembering."[47]

Both the self-life-narrator and the biographer engage in several intersecting "rhetorical acts: justifying their own perceptions, upholding their reputations, disputing the accounts of others, settling scores, conveying cultural information, and inventing desirable futures, among others." Their interpretations of past actualities narrow the aperture to sharpen targeted images; however, the wider contexts become blurred in the background. Reducing

[46] I am preparing the edition, translation and analyses of IIS-MSS 162 and 177 for a forthcoming journal article.

[47] Sidonie Smith, and Julia Watson, Reading Autobiography Now: An Updated Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives, Third Edition. (U of Minnesota Press, 2024). 12

the narrations "to facticity strips them of their rhetorical, literary, ethical, political, and cultural dimensions."[48] The autobiographical act ceases once the narrative has been produced and certainly with the death of the self-life-narrator. The biographic act has no such limitations in that commentaries and formal biographies can continue to reformulate the subject's life-narratives.

A. Biographic Discourse

Our four surveys have demonstrated that Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's (auto)biography, after it was first recorded, underwent repeated revisions. Friedrich Schleiermacher developed the concept of the "hermeneutic circle" which was further elaborated by Hans-Georg Gadamer in which understanding of the particular deepens the understanding of the universal and greater understanding of the universal deepens that of the particular—the cyclicality leads to ever expanding apprehensions of the text within its context.[49] The centuries-long biographical discourse we have surveyed operates in a very different manner. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's past actualities have receded into hagiographical accretions or antagonistic stereotyping of the repurposed images such that past actualities remain only as distant resonances.[50] Over this time, he has become identified with the causes of his renown and as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue, the "events for which the subject becomes renowned determine what the biographer selects to interpret as formative."[51]

This literary production has been performative and not representational; "instead of trying to represent a person's life and therewith the past accurately, the authors fictionalize something of major symbolic significance from an actual life in order to project into existence a new, better, and more socially just way of thinking and being in the authorial present and for the indefinite future".[52] In historiographical texts the narrative is anchored in collective time whereas in biographical texts the subject's temporal framework governs the narrative. In the repurposed biographical texts; however, there is a reversal in that the author imposes collective time—often their own—on to the life-narration. Such reversal is

[48] Ibid. 9

[49] Friedrich Schleiermacher. Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts, Translated by Heinz Kimmerle. (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for the American Academy of Religion, 1977). p. 113; Gadamer. Truth and Method. pp 267ff

[50] Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." 124ff

[51] Smith, and Watson, *Reading Autobiography Now: An Updated Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives, Third Edition*. 10

[52] Ibid. 14. While the authors might have considered their depictions of the Nizaris through the repurposing of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's biography as socially just, it is more apt to label these antagonistic texts as inciting and virulent towards their subject devoid of any notion of social justice.

not explicit and is discerned only through careful analyses. Let us conclude by mapping the biographical discourse of the *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā* over the past eight hundred years and assess what our study reveals about the nature of the "text".

The chronological (auto)biography fragmentarily surviving in the Ilkhanid chronicles was embellished with the "three school fellows" story. In the 1330s Qazwīnī tarnished Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's characterisation as pious loyal and God-fearing by adding the "cowhide deception" to his purchase of Alamūt. Qazwīnī wrote his account as some Nizaris were trying to recapture Alamūt.[53] In his account, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's killing of the "original owner" of Alamūt and taking back the purchase price may invoke discourses of Qazwīnī's time.

Similarly, around 1497, Mirkhwand quoted the apocryphal *waṣāyā* (testament) of Niẓām al-Mulk to cast Ḥasan as a heretical liar and a threat to society. Following the attempted assassination of Shāhrukh b. Timūr (r 1370-1447) in February 1427 by a Ḥurūfī activist, intellectuals beyond Ḥurūfī circles were purged.[54] Many Ḥurūfīs—along with the Nuqṭawīs—theologically rooted in Nizari Ismailism and a host of messianic movements were active at the time.[55] In 1501, Shāh Ismāʿīl supported by his Qizilbash disciples founded the Safawid Empire. During this time, the Ismailis around Anjudān and later in Herat began periods of cultural and literary efflorescence.[56] Muʿīn al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Zamachī al-Isfizārī writing in Herat around the same time noted that "it is well known that even now from several places, the *kharāj-i Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ* is separated and sent to his grave. To the extent that it is said some old women, from every ten skeins of yarn they spin, set aside one skein as the *ʿushr-i Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ* (tithe of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ)—whom they call *imām* (sic)".[57] Viewed in this tumultuous religio-political context, Mirkhwand's polemical reworking of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's biography can be seen as part of the repetitive pattern of warning of socio-political disruption caused by the heretics (*malāḥida*).

Many data-points can be added to our charting of the biographical discourses by interlacing our surveys with historical events. Let us turn back to Khwāja Muʾmin's *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā.*

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[53] Daftary, *Ismailis*. 410-411

[54] Ilker Evrim Binbaş, "The Anatomy of a Regicide Attempt: Shāhrukh, the Ḥurūfīs, and the Timurid Intellectuals in 830/1426–27," *JRAS* 23, no. 3 (2013).

[55] Peter Jackson, and Laurence Lockhart, The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 7:the Timurid and Safavid Periods. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968). 623ff; 644ff.

[56] Daftary, *Ismailis*. 422ff

[57] Muḥammad Isfizārī, and Muḥammad Kāẓim. Imām, Muḥammad Kāẓim Imām, ed. Rawḍāt al-Jannāt fī Awṣāf-i Madīnat-i Hirāt: Dar Waṣf-i Maʿarifat al-Arḍī wa Jughrāfiyā-yi Tārīkhī. (Tihrān: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1959). 307

He wrote in the wake of the Aga Khan (1866) and Ḥājjī Bībī Cases (1908) in which the legitimacy and authority of the Nizari imams, Ḥasan ʿAlī Shāh, Aga Khan I (r 1817-1881) and Sulṭān Mahomed Shāh, Aga Khan III (r 1885-1957) were contested in the British colonial courts.[58] This was a time when schisms tore apart the Khoja community in India into Sunni, Ithnāʿasharī and Ismaili branches—the latter remained loyal to the Nizari imams. Around the time, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's biography was deployed in the sectarian polemics. In 1915, Edalji Dhanji Kaba (d. 1925), a prolific Ithnāʿasharī Khoja author, published a monograph in entitled *Ḥasan bin Ṣabbāh yāne Alamaut-nā (sic, Alamut-nā) Shaykh al-Jabal nu Jīvan Charitr* (Guj.: Ḥasan b. Ṣabbāḥ: the Life and Character of Alamūt's Old Man of the Mountain) in which he assembled an array of attacks on Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ from pre-modern sources to delegitimise the Ismailis of his time. A year later, Alimamed Janmamed Chunara, a Nizari Ismaili scholar, replied with *Alamot no Yoddhā yāne Ḥasan bin Ṣabbāh* (Guj.: The Warrior of Alamūt: Ḥasan ibn Ṣabbāḥ) and in a prefaratory letter attacked Dhanji Kaba's claims. The latter followed up with an even longer text entitled *Ḥasan bin Ṣabbāḥ par Uḍtī Najar* (Guj.: A Glance back to Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ) in 1920 where he doubled down on his anti-Ismaili claims.

In this context, Khwāja Muʾmin cast Ḥāsan as a descendant of both Himyārī and ʿAlid genealogies. In the sectarian milieu, the author avoided associating Ḥasan's father with the creeds he would have considered schismatic; namely his Ithnāʿasharī origin in the Ilkhanid chronicles nor the "devout yet misguided man with corrupt beliefs" according to the apocryphal "*waṣāyā*" of Niẓām al-Mulk in Mirkhwand and Khwandamir's accounts.[59] According to a purported letter of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ to Malikshāh, his father was "a follower of the Shāfiʿī creed".[60] In this twentieth century *Sarguẕasht*, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's father became a pious and learned Ismaili.

In this iteration of the *Sarguẕasht*, Ḥāsan set out on his Hero's journey prompted by a revelation from God and the prophet not on the instructions of the *dāʿī*, Ibn ʿAṭṭāsh, found in the Ilkhanid chronicles.[61] The dream sequences and encounters with luminous beings resonate with interactions between Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and Nāṣir-i Khusraw and their mystical journeys with al-Mustanṣir found in several Badakhshanī *daʿwa* treatises.[62] Our author strung

[58] Daftary, *Ismailis*. 475-476 and 481, 491

[59] Mīrkhwānd, *Rawḍat Al-Ṣafāʾ*. 3070; Khwānd Amīr, *Dastūr al-wuzarāʾ: shāmil-i aḥwāl-i wuzarā-yi Islām tā inqirāḍ-i Taymūrīyān*. 169.

[60] Nasr Allah Falsafy, ed. Hasht Maqāla-Yi Taʾrīkhī Wa Adabī. (Tehran: 1951). 209

[61] Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[62] Shaftolu Gulamadov, "The Hagiography of Nāṣir-i Khusraw and the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshān," diss., University of Toronto, 2018). 243 and 440; Hajiani, *Concealment and Manifestation*. Treatise VII

together and repurposed episodes from the Ilkhanid chronicles to revise Ḥasan's career. In the "cowhide purchase" narrative in Qazwīnī's account, Ḥasan was a cheat and a deceiver. In Khwāja Muʾmin's account, Ḥasan became a learned exegete who bested ʿAlawī Mahdī in the adherence and interpretation of the *sharīʿa*. In Khwāja Muʾmin's text, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and Nāṣir-i Khusraw acted as witnesses to the declaration of *naṣṣ* for Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir and Ḥasan laboured to secure the Nizari imamate. This treatise narrated in the voice of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ ends by affirming Ḥasan's obedience to the imam not to divulge his identity; however, this narration itself is a breach. If, as Khwāja Muʾmin would have us believe, the text was authored by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, then act of writing this purported *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā* would have revealed the identity of the concealed imam!

B. Ismaili Life-Narrative Tradition

I have argued that Ismailis did not to write *taʾrīkh*, history qua history, and that the predominant form of historical writing they produced was *sīra* (pl: *siyar* biography, in Persian: *sarguẕasht*) and *manāqib* (sing: *manqabat* virtues, glories) reports embedded in longer texts in *daʿwa* literature. The purpose of these multi-faceted texts was not primarily for recording past actuality; rather ritual, homiletic, proselytic, didactic, legitimatory and hortative functions were important. Out of about ten published (auto)biographies of prominent Ismaili *dāʿī*s, only the life-narratives of Nāṣir-i Khusraw and Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ have become part of long-standing biographic discourses.[63]

Ron Sela has examined a sequence of legendary battles between Nāṣir-i Khusraw and Timūr produced in the early eighteenth century. In the preface to the section he wrote that "Interestingly, there are several narratives in the work about false prophets and, for reasons that are unclear to me at the moment, they all put forward the Ismāʿīlīs as the symbols of false prophethood."[64] Perhaps the answer lays in the work of his student, Daniel Beben, who argued that Nāṣir-i Khusraw was effectively reappropriated by the Ismailis as they sought to extend their *daʿwa* in Badakhshan in the eighteenth century.[65] While a causal relationship is hard to pinpoint, the authors of the legendary biographies of Timūr, were intentionally or unconsciously recasting the biographies of Timūr and Nāṣir-i Khusraw to address developments in their own time.

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[63] Daniel Beben, "The Legendary Biographies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw: Memory and Textualization in Early Modern Persian Ismāʿīlism," diss., Indiana University, 2015).; Gulamadov, "Hagiography of Nāṣir-i Khusraw.";

[64] Ron Sela, The Legendary Biographies of Tamerlane : Islam and Heroic Apocrypha in Central Asia. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). 113

[65] Beben, "Legendary Biographies of Nāṣir-I Khusraw." vi

Similarly, the multiple reformulations and repurposing of the *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā* were produced because Ḥasan became a symbol and stand-in for the doctrine of *taʿlīm* and revolutionary Nizari Ismailism which was construed as socio-politically disruptive and theologically an abomination in Sunni *taʾrīkh* (historiography), *firaq* (heresiography) and *radd* (refutation) literature. Whenever the Nizaris or similar movements became active, their detractors reinvoked and reformulated the biography of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ to bring attention to the potential threat of "heresy" in their society.

The original biography of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ is not known to be extant. The elusive *Saguẕasht-i Sayyidnā* has been identified several times but in each instance it has been shown to be something else.[66] A text, categorically, is a witness to the recording of subjective memory; it is extremely fragile and malleably subject to reformulation. Each successive iteration becomes a witness not only of the past it records but more-so the present in which it was formulated. Past scholarship has rejected narratives because of their anachronisms; we need instead to ask: why was the text written in the way we received it and what contextual factors led to its constructions? It would therefore be appropriate to rethink the fragility of the text into the fluidity of the biographical discourse. Epistemologically, this is a shift away from the fixity of the written word towards the fluidity of the text as a site of memory, ideology, and contested processes of (re)interpretations over time.

[66] *Sarguẕasht-i Sayyidnā* identified by Ismail Poonawala is not to be found in the manuscript Ismail K. Poonawala, Biobibliography of Ismāʿīlī Literature. (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1977). 253. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh published a treatise believing it was the Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's biography Qāshānī, *Zubdat*. xxvi-xxi. See my analyses of the text in Hajiani, "Analyses of the Ḥikāyat."

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