

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

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Abstract

This treatise, possibly written between 541-557/1147-1162, illuminates the perspectives of a subaltern group persecuted by the Nizari Ismaili hierarchy for their agitation to bring about the manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) of their *imām*. Ismailis in Iran awaited the manifestation of a descendant of Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir who was killed in Cairo in 488/1095 after a failed attempt to succeed his father as the Fatimid *imām-caliph*. In 559/1164, the fourth ruler of the Nizari polity, proclaimed the *Qiyāmat-i buzurg* (the Great Resurrection) and was subsequently recognised as the Nizari *imām*. This text records how its author construed the transference of *imamate* from Egypt to Iran. It structured continuities between the Fatimid and Nizari *da'wa* (summons) and between communities of followers of Nāṣir-i Khusraw and Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, the founder of the Nizari Ismaili polity. If the dating is correct, then the *Ḥikāyat* is one of the earliest known Nizari texts and is a very early exemplar of the Nizari appropriations of Nāṣir-i Khusraw.

Keywords

Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir; Nāṣir-i Khusraw; Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ; Nizari Ismailis; Fatimids; *Qiyāmat-i Buzurg* (the Great Resurrection); *imamate*; succession

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Locating the *Ḥikāyat-i Nāṣir-i Khusraw*

This undated treatise with no information of authorship or provenance is a rare and unique witness to a factional group of early Nizari Ismailis known only through brief mentions in the Ilkhanid (fl. 654-735/1256-1335) chronicles. In order to locate it historically and within the Nizari Ismaili *da'wa* literature, passages from the treatise have been mapped to Nizari doctrinal works and known chronologies from the chronicles to elucidate the authorial purposes, the functions of the text, its possible understandings within the community in which it was produced and the relevance of this text in the study of early Nizari Ismailism. This paper begins with a brief outline of how reliance on specific historical sources has influenced phases of modern scholarship followed by the historical background of the succession crisis which led to the establishment of Nizari Ismailism. The description of the text is followed by historical and theoretical analyses to locate and date the writing and to identify doctrinal factionalism among the early Nizaris revealed by the text.

Introduction

Modern study of early Nizari Ismailism can be divided into three phases correlated to the sources used by the scholars. The first phase began with nineteenth and early twentieth century studies¹ which predominantly relied on the polemical Jamā'ī-Sunni centric histories of Muḥammad b. Khwāndshāh Mīrkhwānd, Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī and 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭā

¹ Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, and Azizeh Azodi (tr), "Memoir on the Dynasty of the Assassins," in *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Isma'ilis*, ed. Farhad Daftary (London; New York: Tauris, 1994).; M. J. de Goeje, *Mémoire sur les Carmathes du Bahraïn et les Fatimides* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1886).; Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *The History of the Assassins Derived from Oriental Sources*, trans. Joseph Wood, and Oswald Charles (London: Smith and Elder, 1835).; C. Defrémery, "Documents sur l'histoire des Ismaéliens ou Batinien de la Perse, plus connus sous le nom d'Assassins," *Journal Asiatique sér. 5*, t. 15 (1860).; Edward Granville Browne, *A Literary History of Persia Vol. 2—From Firdawsi to Sa'di (1000-1290)* (Bethesda, Md.: Iranbooks, 1997).; Vasily Vladimirovich Bartold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, trans. Clifford Edmund Bosworth (London: Luzac, 1968).

Malik Juwaynī (hereinafter: Juwaynī).² As a result, these studies construed Ismailism as an extreme Shi'i heresy which sought the destruction of Islam from within or imported an array of un-Islamic doctrines and practices from ancient Iranian religious traditions.³ The second phase began in the twentieth century with the pioneering work of Wladimir Ivanow followed by Henry Corbin, Samuel Stern, Marshall Hodgson, Bernard Lewis, Wilferd Madelung, Christian Jambet, Delia Cortese, Farhad Daftary and Seyyed Jalal Badakhchani whose studies⁴ were

² Muḥammad b. Khwāndshāh Mīrkhwānd, *Ta'rikh-i rawḍat al-ṣafā'* (Tehran: Aṣāṭir, 2001). French Tr: Muḥammad b. Khwāndshāh Mīrkhwānd, *Notice de l'histoire universelle de Mirkhond: intitulée Le jardin de la pureté, suivie de l'Histoire de la dynastie des Ismaéliens de Perse*, trans. Jourdain Bréchillet, Amable Louis Marie Michel (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1812).; Hamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī, *Ta'rikh-i guzīda* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1985). French tr: Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī, and Charles François Defrémery (Tr.), "Histoire des Seldjoukides et des Ismaéliens ou Assassins de l'Iran," *Extrait du Journal Asiatique* (1849). 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik Juwaynī, *Ta'rikh-i jahān-gushā of 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik Juwaynī* (Leyden; London: E.J. Brill; Luzac & Co., 1912-1937). tr: 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik Juwaynī, *The History of the World-Conqueror*, trans. John Andrew Boyle (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958).

³ Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). p. 23

⁴ A selection of studies are listed here: Wladimir Ivanow, *Alamut and Lamasar* (Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1960).; Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis* (London; Boston: Kegan Paul International in association with Islamic Publications Ltd., 1983).; Henry Corbin, "The Ismaili Response to the Polemics of Ghazzali," in *Mediaeval Ismā'īli History and Thought*, ed. Farhad. Daftary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).; Samuel M. Stern, "The Succession to the Fatimid Imam Al-Āmir, the Claims of the Later Fatimids to the Imamate, and the Rise of Ṭayyibī Ismailism," *Oriens* 4 (1951).; Samuel M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism* (Jerusalem : Leiden: Magnes Press, Hebrew University; E.J. Brill, 1983).; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *A Dissident Community in Medieval Islam: A General History of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs in the Alamut Period*. (1951).; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizārī Ismā'īlīs Against the Islamic World* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1955).; Marshall G S. Hodgson, "The Ismaili State," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Vol 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed. John Andrew Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).; Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967).; Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany, N.Y.: Persian Heritage Foundation, 1988).; Wilferd Madelung, "Das Imamāt in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre," *Der Islam* 37 (1961). tr: Wilferd Madelung, "The Imamate in Early Ismaili Doctrine," *Shii Studies Review* 2 (2018).; Christian Jambet, *La grande résurrection d'Alamūt: Les formes de la liberté dans le shi'isme ismaélien* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1990).; Delia Cortese, "Eschatology and Power in Mediaeval Persian Ismailism," diss., University of London - SOAS, 1993).; Daftary, *Ismailis*.; Farhad Daftary, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Ismā'īlīs* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994).; Idem, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines*.; 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).

facilitated by their increasing reliance on the account of the Nizari polity in the *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* (Compendium of Chronicles)⁵ compiled under the aegis of the Ilkhanid *wazīr* Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh (hereinafter: Rashīd al-Dīn) and more importantly, as a result of access to Nizari doctrinal texts. The edition, translation and publications of the meagre collection of surviving Nizari *da'wa* literature begun by Ivanow has been consolidated into five volumes through the efforts of Jalal Badakhchani. In common with the study of pre-modern periods in other areas, the thoughts and actions of high functionaries—the *imāms* and *dā'īs*—dominate the understandings of the emergence and early development of Nizari Ismailism; the chronicles focus on accounts of rulers, great leaders and the powerful elite. The analyses of this rare treatise, the *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw*, is part of the beginnings of a new phase of Ismaili studies in which scholarship must also focus on the beliefs, actions and agency of the non-elite marginal and marginalised constituencies. The subdued voices and neglected perspectives of the populace which are rarely recorded in the pre-modern sources need also to be retrieved and refracted alongside the thoughts and actions of the leaders so as not to treat the emergence and development of religious movements, in this case of Nizari Ismailism, simply as monolithic endeavours of religious leadership and the elites. To place this text in its context we will begin by detailing the historical background of the emergence of early Nizari Ismailism.

Background

⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Faṣlī az Jāmi' al-tawārīkh: Sarguzasht-i Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ wa jānishīnān-i ū yā Tārīkh-i firqah-i Rafīqān wa Ismā'īliyān-i Alamūt* (Tehran: Kitābkhānah-i Ṭahūrī, 1958).; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh: qismat-i Ismā'īliyān wa Fāṭimiyān wa Nizāriyān wa Dā'iyān wa Rafīqān* (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjama wa Nashr-i Kitāb (HII-etext), 1960).; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh: Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān* (Tehran: Mīrās-i Maktūb (HII-etext), 2008). I have based my translations on the Dānishpazhūh edition, which has more useful *aparatus criticus* than the 2008 Rawshan edition, and the British Library MS 7628 transcribed for Shāhrukh b. Tīmūr (r. 779-850/1377-1447) in 837/1443-44

Just as the Fatimid Empire reached its territorial zenith in the reign of the *imām*-caliph al-Mustanşir (r. 427-487/1036-1095), his death precipitated a succession crisis. The powerful *wazīr* and *de facto* ruler of the Empire, al-Afdāl b. Badr al-Jamālī (d. 515/1121) enthroned the youngest prince, his brother-in-law, with the regnal title al-Mustaʿlī (r. 487-495/1095-1101).⁶ Al-Mustanşir's eldest son, Nizār (r. 487-488/1095) claimed to have received the *naşş* (specific designation) from his father and rejected the purported deathbed designation of his youngest brother. He, himself, was proclaimed *imām*-caliph in Alexandria.⁷ A year later, Nizār was captured, taken to Cairo and killed.⁸ The Ismailis loyal to the Nizari polity in Iran (fl. 483-654/1090-1256), founded and ruled by Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ (r. 483-518/1090-1124), awaited the manifestation (*kashf*, *zuḥūr*) of the *imām* in the line of Nizār. On 17 Ramaḍān 559/15 August 1164, Ḥasan (r. 557-561/1162-1166), the fourth ruler of the polity, declared the *Qiyāmat-i buzurg* (the Great Resurrection) and was subsequently recognised as the *imām* descended from Nizār bringing an end to the era of *satr* (concealment).⁹ This castellan polity which linked over a hundred and fifty installations was annihilated by the Mongols in 654/1256 and the library of their legendary fortress of Alamut was burned.

Daʿwa (proselytic summons) literature plundered from this library was used by Ilkhanid era

⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmiʿ*. pp. 78ff; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (Cairo: National Library and Archives Press, 2002). pp. 243-246; Abūʿl-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary—Kitāb wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, trans. William MacGuckin de Slane (Paris: Oriental translation fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842-1871). “al-Mustaʿlī” Vol I:160-161 fn 7.

⁷ al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*. pp. 243-244; Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāz al-ḥunafāʾ bi-akḥbār al-aʿimma al-khulafāʾ* (Cairo: National Library and Archives Press, 2016). III p. 438; Paul E Walker, “Succession to Rule in the Shiite Caliphate,” *Journal of the American Research Center In Egypt* 32 (1995). pp. 248ff republished: Paul E Walker, “Succession to Rule in the Shiite Caliphate,” in *Fatimid History and Ismaili Doctrine* (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate/Variorum, 2008). p. 2:12-13

⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmiʿ*. p. 78

⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmiʿ*. pp 164ff

author-historians, with avowed antipathies towards the Ismailis, to write the dynastic history (*ta'rikh*) of the Nizari Ismaili polity. Only six Nizari doctrinal treatises from the seventy-year foundational period before the declaration of the *Qiyāma* have been retrieved and brought to publication.¹⁰ The *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw* (*Story of Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw*), analysed here, despite several anachronisms and doctrinal quandaries, allows a rare window into the beliefs of this group of *zuhūrists* (those who sought the urgent manifestation of the *imām*)¹¹ which was persecuted by the Nizari *da'wa* hierarchy for their agitation to end the era of concealment (*satr*) and to bring about the manifestation (*zuhūr*) of their *imām*. In the text we find, perhaps, the earliest example of the appropriation by the Nizaris of the Central Asian poet, philosopher and Fatimid Ismaili *dā'ī* (summoner) Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. after 465/1072-73). We also find the

author's explanation of the transference of imamate from Egypt to Iran. Textual and narrative

¹⁰ Among these are: Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, "Al-fuṣūl al-arba'a," in *Kitāb al-milal wa'l-niḥal*, ed. Muḥammad b. Faṭḥ Allāh Badrān (original edition 1955) (Qumm: Al-Sharīf al-Rāzi (etext), 1985). pp. 232-235, tr: Hodgson, *Order of Assassins*. pp. 325-328 and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions: the Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-milal wa'l-niḥal*, trans. A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn (London; Boston: Kegan Paul International, 1984). pp. 168-170; Seyyed Jalal Badakhchani, "Shahrastānī's Account of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's Doctrine of Ta'līm," in *Islam: Identité Et Altérité: Hommage À Guy Monnot, O.p.*, ed. Guy Monnot, and Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). pp. 27-55; I have edited and translated a purported letter of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ to the 'ulamā' of Qazwīn: Shiraz Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut: New Approaches to the Study of the Qiyāma and the Nizari Polity in Iran," diss., University of Chicago, 2019). pp. 651-660 tr: pp. 661-664; another purported letter of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ in reply to the Saljuq sultan, Malikshāh b. Alp Arslān (r. 465-485/1072-1092) was published Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, "Jawāb-i Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ bi ruq'a-yi Jalāl al-Dīn Malik Shāh Saljūqī," in *Hasht maqāla-yi ta'rikhī va adabī*, ed. Naṣr Allāh Falsafī (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tehran, 1951). tr: Jawad al-Muscātī, *Hasan Bin Sabbah*, trans. Abbas H. Hamdani (Karachi: Ismailia Association Pakistan, 1958). pp. 29-36; Shafique N. Virani, and, "Early Nizari Ismailism: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of Khwajah Qasim Tushtari's Recognizing God," *Iran* 57, no. 2 (2019).; Anonymous, *Dustūr Al-Munajjimīn* (Tehran: Mīrās-i Maktūb, 2019). This publication consists of a facsimile of MS. Paris, BN Ar. no. 5968. It has been partially edited: Muḥammad Karīmī Zanjānī Aṣl, *Tārīkh-i wa ta'wīl bi riwāyati Dastūr al-munajjimīn (Die Geschichte und ihre Interpretation zufolge dem Dastūr al-munajjimin)* (Bonn: Goethe & Hafis Buchhandlung und Verlag, 2013). The full edition and translation remain to be published.

¹¹ I use the "*zuhūrists*" and "*satrists*" as analytical categories to distinguish between factions which sought the urgent manifestation of the *imām*—often espousing soteriological, salvific and eschatological conceptions in Shi'i thought (*zuhūrists*) versus those who would persevere in the era of *satr* (concealment) of such an *imām* (*satrists*). Cf. Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." pp. 558ff

analyses suggest that the *Hikāyat* was written between 541/1147 and 557/1162 and might even have been an unattributed ultimate source, in part, for the Ilkhanid chronicle accounts of the Nizari polity in Iran.

Witnesses of the Hikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw

The translation and critical edition based on three witnesses of this undated treatise has recently been published.¹² In the early twentieth century, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ghufrānī copied the text as part of a *majmūʿa* (compilation) of some 62 treatises labeled Persian MS 5 ff. 114b–118b in the Institute of Ismaili Studies collection (*siglum*: IIS5).¹³ Another witness is located in a *majmūʿa* in the Wazīrī collection at Tehran University listed as Tehran-Markazī MS-F 2835

¹² Shiraz Hajiani, “Manifesto of the Resurrection: A critical edition and translation of the Hikayat-i Sayyid Nasir-i Khusraw, a newly discovered Nizari Ismaili treatise written before the declaration of the Qiyāmat-i Buzurg (the Great Resurrection) in 559/1164,” *Iran* (forthcoming).; The reader is encouraged to consult the critical edition and translation in that publication. In these analyses, naturally, there is overlap from the earlier publication. I originally edited and translated the *Hikāyat* using the first two witnesses, namely IIS5 and Tehran MS-F 2835. Hajiani, “Reconstructing Alamut.” pp. 666–675. I am grateful to John Woods, Nazeer Lotfi Fard, Fatemeh Mazaheri and Zubair Saifi for patiently reviewing my translation. Many thanks to Paul Walker and Hermann Landolt for their comments on the text and translation. Thanks also to Sunatullo Jonboboev of the University of Central Asia and Quدراتbek Elchibekov at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Dushanbe for checking to see if any copies of this tract exist in the collections in Tajikistan.

¹³ The manuscript was formerly designated Per-MS-32. Karim Javan, *Catalogue of Ismaili Persian Manuscripts, the Collection of the Institute of Ismaili Studies (Unpublished)* (London: Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2012). p. 67 tentatively shows the copyist to be Ishāq Ghufrānī; however, Jalal Badakhchani noted that the MS was in fact copied by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ghufrānī. See: 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. 40. I am grateful for the University of Chicago Humanities Division Research Travel Grant and to Dr. Farhad Daftary and Professor Eric Ormsby for kindly permitting me to have access to the digitised manuscripts at the Institute of Ismaili Studies. My grateful thanks also to Shah Hussain, Assistant Librarian at IIS for his help, support and time and for making certain MSS scans available to me during my research trip at the Institute in 2013.

(*siglum*: TU2835).¹⁴ In this witness, the title is given as *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw*, *rahmat'llāh 'alaihi* (*The Story of Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw, God have mercy on him*) and the colophon written perpendicular to the main text on f. 92b named a certain Shāh Murād b. Muḥammad as the copyist.¹⁵ Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh located a third "witness" at the University California Los Angeles in a MS he listed as MS-M140/1 (*siglum*: UCLA140). He believed this MS to be a copy of TU2835. Dānishpazhūh was searching for the *Sarguzasht-i Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ* (*Biography of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ*). He referenced Poonawala's catalogue which successively lists the *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw* and the *Sarguzasht-i Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ* in TU2835. Dānishpazhūh noted that

in the *majmu'a* of Āqā-i Ḥasan-i Āmūzgārī-yi Riḍawī, the microfilm of which is housed at [Tehran] University (2835/9s835:1), the late scholar Riḍawī, in the biography of [Naṣir al-Dīn] Ṭūsī, has mentioned what appeared to be both biographical accounts [of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ]; however, at present, we do not see the *Sarguzasht-i Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ* (*Biography of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ*) in the film. From the listing of UCLA MSS (Publication of the University Press 739: 11 and 12) in MS-M140/1, I found, possibly, that very biography (*bāyad hamīn Sarguzasht bāshad*). I believe this to be the MS of Āmūzgārī-yi Riḍawī.¹⁶

The *Sarguzasht* was also not among the scanned folios of the TU2835 made available to me. In his search for the *Sarguzasht*, it appears, Dānishpazhūh overlooked the *Hikāyat* in TU2835. The titles, colophons and several features of the *Hikāyat* in TU2835 and UCLA140 are identical and thus corroborate his surmise that the UCLA140 may be a copy of TU2835. He edited the treatise based only on UCLA140 in his introduction to the second edition of Qāshānī's *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*; however, he erroneously posited that this text may, in fact, be the *Sarguzasht-i Ḥasan-i*

¹⁴ Tehran-Markazī MS-F 2835; Ismail K Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature* (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1977). p. 353 no 281. I am grateful to the late Dr. Janis Esots for kindly securing a scan of this MS for me from the University of Tehran collection. The scans of 92 folios of the MS were made available and the *Hikāyat* is the last tract on ff. 88b-92. It is written by a distinctly different hand from the rest of the MS.

¹⁵ This person has not been identified.

¹⁶ Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī Qāshānī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh: bakhsh-i Fāṭimiyān wa Nazāriyān* (Tehran: Mu'assasah-yi Muṭāla'āt wa Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1987). p. xxv. The UCLA Special Collections team provided a scan of MS-140 from the Minasian collection of Near Eastern manuscripts, circa 1100-1899 Box 23; However, it appears the catalogue numbers may have changed since Dānishpazhūh's work on the UCLA collections and the *Hikāyat* was not located in the supplied MS.

Ṣabbāḥ.¹⁷ Let us now turn to the text.

Content of the *Ḥikāyat*

The *Ḥikāyat* does not conform to the structures and contents typical of Ismaili *da'wa* literature. It does not begin with an invocation of God or with praise and prayers in the name of the prophet and *imāms*, and it does not quote or discuss doctrinal material from the Qur'an, *aḥādith* (reports of prophetic sayings and actions) or *akhbār* (accounts) of the *imāms* found in Ismaili *da'wa* literature. Doctrines and theology are only tangentially alluded to in the narrative. The *Ḥikāyat* reads like a dramatic script with a series of analepses and prolepses, and the prominent characters enter and exit the stage with the progression of the narrative. I have divided the text into twenty-one paragraphs and sixteen episodes which will be examined in greater detail below. The events in the text, if tied to historical chronology, would have taken place in 440/1048-49 [episodes 1-2; paras. 1-4]; in the next five episodes [paras. 5-9] the time-scale shifts to 487-488/1095, with a *terminus ante quem* of 557/1162 for the remainder of the text [episodes 8-16; paras. 10-20].

Outline of the *Ḥikāyat*

[paras. 1-4] The first two episodes are narrated in Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's voice as he recounted to the *Raḥīqān* (friends, comrades, a term used for Nizari Ismailis), the *ḥikāyat* (story) from Nāṣir-i Khusraw of how al-Mustaṣṣir appointed him to carry out the *da'wa* in Balkh, Kabul and Badakhshan. Nāṣir leaves the stage and the narrator and audience become anonymous.

[ep. 3-4; paras. 5-6] In the next episode the ageing al-Mustaṣṣir divided the Fatimid realm between his sons Nizār and al-Musta'li. After their father's death, al-Musta'li moved to push aside his brother.

[ep. 5; para. 7] Nizār sought out Ḥasan-i Sa'id, a slave of al-Mustaṣṣir, asked for the letter given to him by al-Mustaṣṣir. This letter in the imām-caliph's own hand affirmed Nizār as his designated successor (*farzand-i manṣūṣ*).

[ep. 6; para. 8] Nizār set out from Cairo with his two sons and Ḥasan-i Sa'id. They stopped for

¹⁷ Qāshānī, *Zubdat 2nd Ed.* pp. xxvi-xxxi. The edited text is included in the *dībācha* (preface) to the second edition of the *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*.

some days at the home of a hermit who had received an *iqṭā'* (tax farm) from al-Mustaṣṣir and had been ordered to expect the party on that specific day and time. The hermit affirmed Nizār's status and offered his services as commanded by al-Mustaṣṣir.

[ep. 7; para. 9] Al-Musta'li discovered that Nizār and his companions had moved to Baghdad so he sent threatening demands to the 'Abbasid caliph for their return. Nizār secretly sent his designated successor along with Ḥasan-i Sa'īd to Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ at Alamūt and himself returned to Cairo where he was killed.

The remaining episodes of the story take place at Alamūt:

[ep. 8-10; paras. 10-13] The true identity of the *imāms* descended from Nizār (Hādī, Muhtadī and Qāhir) was known only to rulers of the Nizari polity, namely, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ and after him Buzurg Ummīd (r. 518-532/1124-1138). The *imāms* wrote treatises and covertly directed the *da'wa*, to the extent that Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ executed his own four sons based on a conversation with the *imām* in which he understood that the sons would turn out to be seditious.

[ep. 12; para. 15] The third ruler of the polity Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd, unaware of and opposed to the imamate, killed the *imām*, Qāhir and his eighteen companions. He took the *imām*'s pregnant wife into his residence ordering that if the child were male, he would be killed. Miraculously, his own pregnant wife gave birth to a daughter on the same day as *imām*'s wife birthed her son.

[ep. 13; para. 16] The former substituted her daughter in place of the *imām*'s son thus saving the child's life.

[ep. 14-16; paras. 17-21] As time went on, Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd noticed that two of Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ's three prognostications about the *Qā'im* had become manifest in his purported son. As he discussed this with the *Raḥiqān*, the third prognostication came true. The narrative culminates with the son crushing the head of the ruler of the Nizari polity. He was then acknowledged as the manifest *imām* (*zuhūr-i khudāwand*) and the *Raḥiqān* organised a celebratory feast.

The lack of introductions of key individuals and events of the narrative to exemplify their significances and import as well as the absence of features typical of Ismaili *da'wa* literature suggests its previous orality within the *ḥikayāt* and *dāstān* (story) traditions where the audience might have been familiar with the contexts, events and individuals.¹⁸ The narrator would draw his listeners into the story by embellishing related narratives, adding pious invocations and commentary and teaching doctrine. Factuality was secondary to the tellability.¹⁹ Commitment to writing suggests that the author wished to extend the reach of the ideas beyond the

¹⁸ Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*. (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968). pp 642ff

¹⁹ Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). p. 18

immediate groups of listeners of the oral narrations—in distances of both space and time. In the next section, we will examine a number of historical anomalies and doctrinal issues correlating episodes of the *Ḥikāyat* with the three Ilkhanid chronicle accounts of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Aṭā-Malik b. Muḥammad Juwaynī (d. 681/1283), Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh (d. 718/1318) and Abū al-Qāsim Qāshānī (d. after 738/1337) to date the text.

Analyses of the *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid-i Nāṣir-i Khusraw*

The chronicles used writings housed at the most eminent of Nizari libraries which may have constituted "authorised" texts to write their histories.²⁰ In 654/1256, as the Mongols dismantled the defences of the soon to be decapitated Nizari polity, Juwaynī was given permission by Hūlāgū b. Tuluy b. Chingiz Khān (r. 654-663/1256-1265) to plunder the library and treasury of Alamūt. He took some texts for the Ilkhanid treasury and torched the library.²¹ He used these texts to write the earliest, most complete available account of the Nizari polity.²² Rashīd al-Dīn, the Ilkhanid *wazīr* who was born in a Nizari fortress, followed the paradigm set by Juwaynī.²³ Abū al-Qāsim Qāshānī who was part of Rashīd al-Dīn's team wrote a work similar if not more detailed than Rashīd al-Dīn, yet the tenor is closer to that of Juwaynī's treatment of

²⁰ Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." pp. 188ff

²¹ ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Aṭā Malik Juwaynī, *Ta’rīkh-i jahān-gushā Vol. 3: Mangū Qā’ān, Hūlāgū and the Ismā’īlīs* (London: Luzac & Co (HII-etext), 1958 (original edition 1912-1937)). p. 186 tr. 666

²² Barthold, V., and J.A. Boyle. "Djuwaynī". In P. Bearman (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition Online (EI-2 English)*, (Brill, 2012) doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_2131 Accessed 7 July, 2023

²³ Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." pp. 162-172; The *Jāmi’ al-tawārīkh* was completed in 710/1310; however, the section on the Ismailis may have been added at a later date. The colophon of the *Jāmi’ al-tawārīkh: qismat-i Ismā’īliyyān wa Fāṭimīyān wa Nizāriyān wa Dā’īyān wa Rafiqān* states that it was completed at the end of Jumādā al-ākhirā 714/19 October, 1314. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi’*, 1960, p. 195

the Nizaris.²⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn and Qāshānī, both indicated their sources for each of the regnal accounts of the Nizari rulers; however, neither mentioned *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw*. This early Nizari Ismaili text, as the analyses will show, belonged to a silenced subaltern voice which resonated far beyond its marginality at the time.

The episodes in the *Ḥikāyat* do not match historical accounts. Nāṣir-i Khusraw and Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ never met; the Fatimid realm was never divided by al-Mustanshir between Nizār and Musta'li; there is no evidence of Nizār going to Baghdad and Musta'li's threat to the 'Abbāsid caliph is fanciful. Based on the *Sarguzasht-i Sayyidnā* (Biography of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ), the Ilkhanid chronicles report that he executed two sons not four and the circumstances of their killings are very differently recorded. Also, in the *Ḥikāyat*, why was the third ruler of the Nizari polity in Iran, Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd (r. 532-557/1138-1162), not entrusted with the secret of the concealed *imām*? This question is pertinent to the accounts of the latter's succession in the Ilkhanid chronicles. The text enumerates two of the three reports in the Ilkhanid chronicles of how the *imām*, ended up in the household of the ruler of Alamūt—namely, the role of Ḥasan-i Sa'īd in conveying the putative *imām* to Alamūt and then, decades

²⁴ Qāshānī, *Zubdat 2nd Ed.* Following Edgar Blochet, recent studies of Stefan Kamola, Jonathan Brack and Osamu Otsuka have argued that Qāshānī actually authored a world-history called the *Jāmī al-tawārīkh* and that Rashīd al-Dīn not only copied the text but also appropriated the title. My analyses of the chapters on the Ismailis in Rashīd al-Dīn and Qāshānī's chronicles suggest that this hundred year-old debate of Qāshānī's precedence of Rashīd al-Dīn needs more examination. While both authors were positively inclined toward Shi'ism, Qāshānī's account of the Ismailis exhibits the tenor to Juwaynī's antipathy whereas Rashīd al-Dīn is less vitriolic towards the Nizaris, amongst whom he grew up and may have reported events from his own life-time. E Blochet, *Introduction à l'histoire des Mongols de Fadl Allah Rashid ed-Din* (London: Luzac, 1910). pp. 132-140; Stefan Kamola, "Rashīd Al-Dīn and the Making of History in Mongol Iran," (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2013). pp. 244ff;

pp. 95-103; Jonathan Brack, "Mediating Sacred Kingship: Conversion and Sovereignty in Mongol Iran," diss., University of Michigan, 2016). pp. 322ff; Osamu Otsuka, "Qāshānī, the First World Historian: Research on his Uninvestigated Persian General History, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*," *Studia Iranica* 47, no. 1 (2018).

later, a substitution of the descendent of the *imām* for a child of the *dā'ī*.²⁵

Interleaving segments from the *Ḥikāyat* and the three Ilkhanid chronicles, I examine several questions: Since the meeting between Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ and Nāšir Khusraw is ahistorical then why does the text mention Nāšir-i Khusraw? Why is Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd, the third *dā'ī*-ruler of the Nizari polity, cast as a negative character? What theological questions does the text illuminate and what understandings of post-prophetic authority and imamate does it reveal among early Nizari Ismaili communities? What was the audience for the text? What was the function of the text? When might the *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāšir-i Khusraw* have been written?

Nāšir-i Khusraw and Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ

The first episode of the *Ḥikāyat* establishes linkages between Nāšir-i Khusraw and Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ [para 1-4]. Ḥasan retold a story (*ḥikāyat*) told to him by Nāšir-i Khusraw. Nāšir told him "I had been in Egypt for six months²⁶ but had not been able to see Mustanšir bi'llāh"; a friendly shopkeeper told him that *imām*-caliph was more approachable during the festival of Nawrūz. He waited two months and tried to catch a glimpse of the *imām*-caliph at the procession. He was apprehended by Fatimid officials and when he was brought to al-Mustanšir, he observed a self-anointment by the *imām*-caliph

Mawlānā Mustanšir, peace on his mention, arrived; he seemed to me tired of the duties of sultanate and kingship. He went to the door of the shop of an oil-seller (*rafiq-i rawgangar*). Stretched out on the horse he ordered the rafiq: "Bring me a container of oil." ... He poured that container of oil on the blessed head and the royal robes he had worn for Nawrūz were covered in oil; the riders and people who were in the procession were covered in oil. Most of the army withdrew from him and the hypocrites called him mad (*dīwāna*). After that when he came to the house, he called for, praised and gave an edict (*manshūr*) for this servant, Nasir, to carry out the *da'wa* in the regions of Balkh, Kabul and Badakhshan. [para 3-4]

²⁵ Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. pp 231ff especially p. 232, Juwaynī, *HWC*. pp 691ff especially p. 692.

²⁶ Ḥakīm Abū Mu'īn Nāšir-i Khusraw, *Nasir-i Khusraw's Book of travels*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2001). 51. Nasir-i Khusraw arrived in Cairo on 7 Safar, 439/9 August, 1047. Six months after his arrival would mean that the conversation took place in Ramadan, 449/February, 1048

Historically, after three years in Cairo, Nāṣir returned to Central Asia. Many sources suggest, he was appointed *ḥujja* (proof).²⁷ There is no mention of this in the *Ḥikāyat*. His elevation, in the text, took place some eight months after his arrival in Cairo which does not accord with Nāṣir's biography. Other than *sayyid*, no honourifics and eulogies, common in Badakhshani Ismaili writings, are attached to his name;²⁸ however, this is consonant with several mentions of him by Rashīd al-Dīn and Qāshānī in the accounts of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ which were based on the latter's biography, the *Sarguzasht-i Sayyidnā*.²⁹ UCLA140 and the copyist of TU2385, who given his name, Shāh Murād b. Muḥammad, may have been from Central Asia, simply appended the pious supplication "may God have mercy on him" (*rahmatu'llāh 'alaihi*) to Nāṣir-i Khusraw's name in the title. Nāṣir's invocation without elaborate eulogisation suggests that the text was written within the community of followers of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. While the text's audience would have already been familiar with the memory of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, the juxtapositioning with Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ elides their sanctity and legacies for the communities of followers.³⁰

Fatimid and Nizari Continuities

The text also intimates Fatimid and Nizari continuities between the *imāms*: al-Mustanṣir, Nizār

²⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. p. 97; Daftary, *Ismailis*. p. 206; Alice C. Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw, the Ruby of Badakhshan: A Portrait of the Persian Poet, Traveller and Philosopher* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000). p. 250. In his *Divan* 26:37 refers to himself as "*ḥujja* of Mustanṣir". *Ḥujja* was the second highest rank, after *imām*, in the hierarchy of the *da'wa* (*ḥudūd al-dīn*). See also: Anonymous (attributed to Khayrkhawāh-i Harātī), *Kalāmi pīr: a Treatise on Ismaili Doctrine, also (wrongly) called Haft-bāb-i Shāh Sayyid Nāṣir*, trans. Wladimir Ivanow (Bombay: Islamic Research Association, 1935). p. xviii; Daftary, *Ismailis*. pp. 360-361

²⁸ In addition to *Sayyid*, Nāṣir-i Khusraw's name is, with few exceptions, preceded by *Shāh* or *Pīr* and followed by pious invocations such as *quddisa sirr-hu* (may his secrets be sanctified) or *qaddasa Allāh rūḥ-hu* (may God sanctify his spirit)...

²⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. p. 77 and 97; Qāshānī, *Zubdat 2nd Ed.* p. 113 and 133

³⁰ The two never met nor exchanged any information; however, beginning with incidental mentions of Nāṣir-i Khusraw in the *Sarguzasht*, their biographies became intertwined and even their chronologies reversed in later Nizari writings. See for example: Anonymous (attributed to Khayrkhawāh-i Harātī), *KP*.

and his successors whom it places in Iran [para 5-14]. In the text, Nizār's succession was legitimised by the letter in al-Mustanşir's hand given to Ḥasan-i Saʿīd

Mawlanā Nizār went home and called Ḥasan-i Saʿīd who was a royal slave (*āz khādimān-i khāṣṣ*) of Mawlanā Mustanşir, peace be on his mention, and was now in his service. He asked: “Mawlanā Mustanşir, peace be on his mention, on a certain date and day had written a letter, put his seal on it and had given it to you. Do you have it?”

He replied: “Yes.” He (Nizār) commanded: “Bring it.” Ḥasan-i Saʿīd brought the letter to Mawlanā Nizār. He (Nizār) tore open the letter and gave it back. Mawlanā Mustanşir, peace be on his mention, had written in his own blessed hand: “My designated son (*farzand-i manşūṣ*) is Nizār. Whoever wishes for the path of Truth (*rāh-i Ḥaqq*) should obey him.”

Ḥasan-i Saʿīd prostrated before him and said: “I obey and am at your command in whatever you order.” [para 7]

Nizār's position was also affirmed by a hermit

His Lordship along with his two sons and Ḥasan departed from Cairo towards the Nile and arrived at the house of a hermit (*rāhib*). The hermit came out and said: “Are you Mawlanā Nizār?” He replied: “Yes.” The hermit asked: “With two children?” He replied: “Yes.” The hermit said: “Is Ḥasan-i Saʿīd with you?” He replied: “Yes.”

The hermit went into the house; [Nizār] asked him: “How did you come to know that I am Nizār with my children?” The hermit replied: “Mawlanā Mustanşir had given part of this district as an *iqtāʿ* (tax farm) to me and had instructed me that: ‘on a certain night Mawlanā Nizār with his children and Ḥasan-i Saʿīd will come to your place; do not hesitate in obeying him!’ I have been waiting this evening to this hour. If you had not come, I would have become suspicious. Now whatever you command I will obey.” [para 8]³¹

The *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* (*Canon of the Astronomers*), written at Alamūt in Arabic during the lifetime and reign of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, between 488-512/1095-1118, records Nizār's meeting with a hermit. The *Dustūr* contains nine chapters dealing with astronomy and astrology and a lengthy historiographic chapter divided into tables containing brief biographic notes on each *imām*. The table on Nizār is the last of these and the very brief notes contain a reference to his

³¹ Paul Walker, in examining Fatimid succession postulated an interesting concept of *mustawadaʿ* of *naṣṣ* (of the proof of designation). Ḥasan-i Ṣaʿīd and the hermit acted as such without knowledge of the bequest they safeguarded; rather, it was Nizār's agency which brought these confirmations to light. Walker, “Succession-Rev.” pp. 2:12-13

encounter with a hermit.³² In the *Dustūr*, the hermit regularly visited a particular monastery at a specific time awaiting Nizār and rather than confirming the latter's designation by al-Mustanşir, he was converted to Islam by the *imām*. The passage reads:

The story of the hermit (*al-rāhib*) with whom he (Nizār) stayed on the day of his flight (*yawm al-hijrat*) is well known; as well as the conversation he had with him, *peace be upon him*. It is related from our elders (*aslāfnā*) that the son of the Greek (*Ibn al-Rūmīya*) would go down to a particular a monastery, on a particular day, at a particular time, and that he was of such and such a character. Then [after meeting Nizār] he professed Islam by his (Nizār's) hand (*aslāmahu ʿala yadihi*) and bore witness to him during the battle, God have mercy on him.³³

While some elements—the hermit, his anticipation of Nizār's arrival—are similar, the thrust of the episode is different here which suggests that the *Dustūr* and the *Ḥikāyat* drew from different versions of oral hagiographic narratives of Nizār.

Nizār's departure from and fatal return to Cairo in the *Ḥikāyat* echoes his departure from the enthronement of al-Mustaʿlī in Mamluk era chronicles. He left the enthronement of al-Mustaʿlī to retrieve the letter from his father in which he claimed that he had been designated as the legitimate successor.³⁴ Al-Mustaʿlī discovered that Nizār had fled to Baghdad and demanded that the ʿAbbāsid caliph return him to Cairo. Nizār "sent Mawlānā Hādī, who was his actual son (*farzand-i ḥaqīqī*), with Ḥasan-i Saʿid, who accompanied him to the fortress of Alamūt to Sayyidnā, God sanctify his soul, and himself went to Cairo" [para 8-9]. The events and time-line suggest that the author of the *Ḥikāyat* was heedless of the chronology, contexts and even geography—Nizār's return from Baghdad is construed through Khūzistān, a province in Iran. The paramount focus of the text was to explain the transference of the progeny of Nizār to Iran.

³² BNF MS Arabe 5968 f. 343v; M. Casanova, "Un Nouveau Manuscrit de la Secte des Assassins," *Journal Asiatique* (1922).126-135; Eva Orthmann, and Petra G. Schmidl, eds. *Science in the City of Fortune: The Dustūr al-munajjimīn and its World* (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2017). pp. 13-31; pp 84-113, esp. p. 102 and pp. 175ff

³³ BNF MS Arabe 5968 f. 343v; Casanova, "Un Nouveau Manuscrit." p. 129

³⁴ Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāz*. III:6; Walker, "Succession-Rev." p. 28

The three Ilkhanid chronicles also record the role of Ḥasan-i Saʿīd in secretly conveying a descendant of Nizār to Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ at Alamūt in 488/1095.³⁵ However, their explanations of how the *imām* from the line of Nizār ended up in the ruling house at Alamūt are bewildering and warrant careful unpacking. Juwaynī, discussing the lineage of the *imām*, Ḥasan ‘alā

dhikrihi’l-salām, states that the grandson of Nizār who came from Egypt or

his son who was born in the neighbourhood of Alamut - for they [the Nizaris] are not informed of the truth of the matter - committed adultery with the wife of Muhammad, the son of Buzurg-Umid, and she became pregnant with Hasan by the Imam. And when his ill-omened birth occurred in the house of Muhammad, the son of Buzurg-Umid, both Muhammad himself and his followers thought him to be Muhammad's son, whereas he was actually an Imam and the son of an Imam.³⁶

Rashīd al-Dīn, did not include this salacious story, instead he recounted that the belief of the people of the region of Alamūt is

that Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd, at the castle of Alamūt, had a child. On that very day, Ḥasan was given birth by his mother, [the wife of] the supposed *imām* in the village at the foot of Alamūt. After three days a woman went up to the castle of Alamūt and into the house (*sarāy*) of Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd. She had something hidden under [her clothing]. She came to the place where the child of Muḥammad Buzurg Ummīd was sleeping; at that hour by the command of Divine Wisdom (*ba-ḥukm-i ḥikmat-i Ilahī*) no one else was present. This woman put the son of the *imām* in the place and took away the child of Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd under her mantle (*chādar*).³⁷

Juwaynī also recorded this narrative but ironically found the explanation to be "even more discreditable than the first - that a strange woman should enter a king's palace, where there was no one about the king's child".³⁸ The fortress of Alamūt could, at most, accommodate a population of about three hundred people and at the time these events might have occurred, Buzurg Ummīd (r. 518-532/1124-1138) was the ruler and not his son. Muḥammad b. Buzurg

³⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi’*. p. 166; Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. p. 231; Juwaynī, *HWC*. p. 692; Qāshānī, *Zubdat 2nd Ed.* p. 202. Reading as Saʿīd (happy) from *Ḥikāyat* in place of Ṣaʿīdī in the chronicles.

³⁶ Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. p. 232, Juwaynī, *HWC*. p. 692. How did Juwaynī come to know of this secret over a hundred years after the fact?

³⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi’*. pp. 166-167

³⁸ Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. p. 234, Juwaynī, *HWC*. p. 694

Ummīd's quarters would have been more accessible than Juwaynī suggested. Following these earlier patterns, half a century later, Qāshānī reported both the adultery and substitution narratives. Uncharacteristically, he stated that "according to the disdainful thought of the Sunnis (*za'm-i anūf-i ahl-i sunnat wa jamā'at*)" it was the grandson of Nizār who committed adultery with the *dā'ī*'s wife.³⁹

The *Hikāyat* explains that Ḥasan-i Sa'īd brought Hādī the son of Nizār to Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ [para 10-11] and after him, his son, Muhtadī and grandson, Qāhir clandestinely lived at the foot of Alamūt and administered the *da'wa*. Only the rulers of the polity, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ and after him, Buzurg Ummīd were aware of the *imām*'s true identity [para 10-14]. Unfathomably, Buzurg Ummīd's son and successor was not apprised of this secret. The text construes Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd as not only ignorant about but also opposed to the imamate; so much so that he killed the *imām*, Qāhir and his eighteen companions

Some of the *Rafīqān* knew that the *imām* is Mawlānā Qāhir. Kiyā Muḥammad had not heard this matter (*ma'nī*) such that he was ignorant of him. He was by nature opposed to the essence of the *imām* (*zāt-i imām*). He was suspicious of the *imām* such that one day when Mawlānā with eighteen companions came out of the valley; that unfortunate, along with a group of the accursed (*malā'in*), pursued and martyred His Majesty and the eighteen companions who were with him [para 15].

He took the dead *imām*'s pregnant wife into his own household and ordered that if her child would be male, he was to be killed

The Lady of the *Qiyāmat* (*Khātūn-i Qiyāmat*) was pregnant at the time; that unfortunate (*badbakht*) took the Lady to his own house and said: "When the pregnant Lady delivers if the child is male he is to be killed."⁴⁰ In that house, his own wife was also pregnant. By destiny and Divine decree (*qaḍā wa chunīn taqdīr shud*) the pregnant Lady and his wife both gave birth at the same time. The pregnant Lady carried that very Lord (*ham-ān khudāvand*) who became manifest (*ki zūhūr*

³⁹ Qāshānī, *Zubdat 2nd Ed.* p. 203 The Shi'i historian is critical, here, of Juwaynī's vitriolic Sunni account of the Ismailis.

⁴⁰ Danishpazhuh's reading چون حمل خاتون پسر آید is grammatically unsound; the meaning of the sentence is sensible reading the phrase as چون حمل خاتون بسر آید. Why would he take the imam's pregnant wife into his home? He is construed as opposed to the imamate and killed the *imam* so why does he hesitate in wiping out the whole family?

farmūdand) and the wife of that unfortunate had a daughter. Since she was a believer, she brought her own daughter and gave her to (Lit. placed her next to) the Lady and His Majesty was given to the woman. That unfortunate was informed that the Lady gave birth to a girl and His Majesty was portrayed as his own son [para 16].

Here, the *Ḥikāyat* introduces what may, in all probability, be the original substitution narrative preserved in the Ilkhanid chronicles. The *dā'ī*'s wife and the *imām*'s wife, both, gave birth at the same time. Being a believer, the *dā'ī*'s wife substituted her daughter for the *imām*'s son, thus saving the child's life and placed the future *imām* in the ruling house [para 16].

Juwaynī reported that

after the birth of the child, Muhammad, the son of Buzurg Umid realized that it was not his and that the person whom this misguided sect supposed to be the Imam had committed adultery with his wife; and he secretly put that person to death on this supposition. Muhammad, the son of Buzurg-Umid, killed the Imam.⁴¹

A century later, how could Juwaynī have come to know of such a secret liaison and killing? Did Juwaynī, in his antipathy towards the Ismailis, adulterate the narrative he found from the *Ḥikāyat*? Was his twisted version the disdainful Sunni thought Qāshānī referred to?

As a thought exercise some of these elements in the *Ḥikāyat* can be construed within remote bounds of historicity by very cautiously correlating the narrative to historical chronology. At the time of Ḥasan's birth, which according to the Ilkhanid chronicles, occurred in the year 520/1126-7, the secret of the imamate would have been known only to the ruler, Buzurg Ummīd. His son would not have had any knowledge of the *imām*, Qāhir's identity. In this context, is it logical that the *amīr*, Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd, would have sought to eliminate the challenge of a man living below the main fortress of the polity who was gaining a following and acclaimed to be the Nizari *imām*? The growing popular followership, of course, contradicts the notion of secrecy of the identity of that *imām*. However, had such a killing taken place, the Nizari *da'wa* literature would have recorded it and its consequences, and this

⁴¹ Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. p. 235; Juwaynī, *HWC*. p. 694

would have carried through into the Ilkhanid chronicles as is the case with the reports of several other controversial incidents. There is no evidence that Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd killed the Nizari *imām*, so why is the *dā'ī*-ruler portrayed negatively in the *Ḥikāyat*?

Negative Portrayal of Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd

The seven-decade-long realm of the *dā'īs* (483-559/1090-1164) established by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and after him, ruled by Buzurg Ummīd and his son Muḥammad, struggled to maintain doctrinal unity as the Nizaris differentiated from Fatimid Ismailism and countered the ideological attacks from the Sunni '*ulamā*'. Even the Ilkhanid chroniclers, based on Nizari sources, acknowledged that these three rulers maintained strict enforcement of adherence to the *sharī'a*—central to the Ismaili precepts of Islam—in part, this was to distinguish what the chroniclers would label as the commencement of heresy in the subsequent reign of Ḥasan '*alā dhikrihi*'*l-salām*.⁴² According to the chronicles, the *dā'ī*-rulers maintained constant vigilance against religio-political threats to their polity and ruthlessly suppressed doctrinal opposition. The execution of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's two sons is indicative of such challenges to the authority of their father and perhaps, their opposition to his doctrines.⁴³ The *Ḥikāyat* claims that Ḥasan executed four of his sons based on an admonition of the *imām*, Hādī b. Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir. In both the *Ḥikāyat* and the Ilkhanid chronicles, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ proudly declared his filicide to be an act of loyalty to the concealed Nizari *imām*!

Similarly, the Ilkhanid chroniclers enumerate harsh treatment of other doctrinal opponents. In 526/1131, Buzurg Ummīd's forces defeated Bā Ḥāshim 'Alawī, a Zaydī who proclaimed himself as the *imām* in the Caspian region and Khurāsān. When they captured him, "they

⁴² Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. pp. 163-165

⁴³ Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." pp. 360-368

produced much proof against him and burnt him.”⁴⁴ This movement persisted into the reign of Muḥammad; in 526/1131, Kiyā Hādī b. Bā Hāshim ‘Alawī, was captured and taken to Alamūt.⁴⁵ In the same year, there was a plot to betray the Nizaris in the village of Sarim in Daylamān; two *amīrs* (military commanders) and their three co-conspirators were made to confess their error and imprisoned.⁴⁶ Eight years later, according to the chronicles, the Nizaris attacked Rayy and captured ‘Abd al-Malik Qaṣrānī, the chief (*ra’īs*) of the city and his son, and there “was another group who lived in hypocrisy and subterfuge. They captured all of them and killed them after they had admitted their crimes and offences.”⁴⁷

During the reign of Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd, Rashīd al-Dīn recorded a lengthy account of a Mazdakī revolt, among the people who called themselves Pārsīs. The Nizari *dā’ī*-author through the screen of the Ilkhanid chronicles recounted their beginnings in the teachings of Mani (fl. 216-276 CE) and then Mazdak (d. ca. 528 CE) who along with his followers was killed by the Sassanid ruler, Anushīrwān (r. 531-579 CE).⁴⁸ Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ had sent a *dā’ī*, Dihkhudā Kaykhusraw, to these Pārsīs and after he died in 530/1135, his sons ‘Abu al-‘Alā’ and Yūsuf succeeded him. Rashīd al-Dīn recounted that when Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ passed away,

a man named Jūlahi-yi Badīl in Azarbāyjān proselytised the Pārsīs and said: “God (*Ḥaqq*) is with the Pārsīs and the Ismailis are *ẓāhirīs* (exoterists) and the *bāṭin* (esoteric) is that Abū al-‘Alā’ and Yūsuf are in place of Muḥammad and ‘Alī. Muḥammad, ‘Alī and Salmān, all three are divine; at one time they manifest in one person, sometimes two and sometimes three. The laws of the *sharī’a* are for the *ẓāhirīs* and they (the Pārsīs) do not have to comply with the permitted and forbidden, and the establishment of prayer and fasting should be removed. He said that for Bu al-‘Alā’, all that is forbidden is permitted. Women are reservoirs of water, whoever is thirsty can drink; what then are the dowry and marriage? Girls are permissible to their fathers and brothers. In short, everything that is forbidden he made permissible.

⁴⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi’*. p. 141

⁴⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi’*. p. 157

⁴⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi’*. p. 148

⁴⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi’*. p. 148

⁴⁸ Abū ‘Alī Ḥasan b. ‘Alī Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: the Siyāsat-nāma or Siyar al-mulūk*, trans. Hubert Darke (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978). pp. 190ff; Firdawsī, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis (Penguin Classics, 2016). pp 787ff

They said: "Heaven and hell are here not elsewhere; and whoever knows Abū al-ʿAlāʾ and Yūsuf as god, through metempsychosis (*tanāsukh*) will return in the human form otherwise when they die, will return in the form of beasts (*sabuʿ*)."⁴⁹

In 537/1142 the leaders of the movement were arrested, tortured and Abū al-ʿAlāʾ and Yūsuf were killed and burnt for their "heresy"; and for a year their followers were hunted down. Five years later, Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd secretly ordered the killing of "the chief (*rāʾis*) of Hamadan, Dihkhudā [Abū al-Faḍl Burujirdī] who was the *dāʾī* of Hamadan and that region."⁵⁰

What this scan of events indicates is that during the period of *satr* (concealment) of the *imāms*, several individuals led movements antithetical to the Nizari *daʿwa*. Each of these agitators challenged the authority of the *dāʾī*-rulers of the Nizari polity in favour of Zaydī, neo-Mazdakī and other claims of religious authority, some seeking urgent manifestation of their soteriological saviour. In addition to eradicating these divergent movements, Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd also had to suppress the followers of his own son, Ḥasan. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, the *Rafīqān* began to think that Ḥasan, who was knowledgeable, eloquent and charismatic, was the *imām* promised by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ. Muḥammad said to these people: "Ḥasan is my son and I am not an *imām*; in fact I am a *dāʾī* from among the *dāʾīs* of the *imām*. Whoever listens to and affirms other than these words is an infidel and irreligious." He punished those accused of believing in the imamate of his son and "on one occasion he put two hundred and fifty of them to death at Alamūt and bound their corpses to the backs of two hundred and fifty others who were implicated in this way and evicted them from the castle."⁵¹ Qāshānī added that "Kiyā Muḥammad placed his own son, Ḥasan, in prison to remain there till

⁴⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmiʿ*. pp. 151-152. Ironically, this is the group whose antinomianism is attributed to the Nizaris in Sunni historiography and this passage is the source of the antinomian motto attributed to Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ that "everything that is forbidden he made permissible".

⁵⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmiʿ*. pp. 151-152

⁵¹ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmiʿ*. p. 163; Qāshānī, *Zubdat*, 200

his death. Ḥasan pled his innocence from this accusation and resorted to tricks of diplomacy until his father put aside such thoughts."⁵² In contrast, when Ḥasan was twenty-years old Rashīd al-Dīn reported that

on 7 *Ramaḍān* [5]41/17 February 1147 Kiyā Muḥammad [b. Buzurg-Ummīd] appointed his son Ḥasan as his deputy at Alamūt and himself went to Lār and came [back] to Alamūt. At the beginning of *Shawwāl*/March he went in the direction of Daylamān by way of Filāmrūd and from there he came to Daylamān and built the fort of Alikā.⁵³

Such an important deputisation would not be placed on someone accused of heresy.

In the *Ḥikāyat*, as Muḥammad recounted to a gathering of *Raḥīqān* that he had seen two of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's prognostications of the *Qā'im* (the Eschatological Redeemer) in his son. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, according the *Ḥikāyat* had foretold that

By order and direction of Mawlānā, I have heard, that I must appoint Kiyā Buzurg Ummīd in my place; however, I will give you indications of who the *Qā'im* is. First, when he will enter the library, he will urinate (*chūn ba kitābkhāna dar āyad zahrāb pāshad*). Second, during a hunt he will split two animals in half with a single stroke of a sword. Third, during the controversy of Kiyā Muḥammad (*dar ḥāl-i nizā'-yi Kiyā Muḥammad*) he will be wearing boots and have an orange in his hand and will be throwing the orange from one hand to the other [para 17-18]

Muḥammad told a gathering of the *Raḥīqān* that at the age of ten, his son came into the library and urinated on the books; two years later he killed two animals with one stroke of a sword—his quarry was a pregnant onager. The *Raḥīqān* retorted: "This not your son!" At that very moment, the young boy entered wearing boots and throwing an orange from one hand to the other. Seeing this, the third prognostication, come true, Muḥammad realised that this was the *imām* (*har chi hast ishānand*). He fell to the boy's feet and asked for mercy. Because he had killed the previous *imām*, the boy's father in actuality, he crushed Muḥammad's head with his booted foot. According to the text, the boy would have been around twelve years old [Ep. 14-15].

⁵² Qāshānī, *Zubdat 2nd Ed.* p. 200; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. p. 163; Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. pp. 224-225.

⁵³ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. p. 155

The Ilkhanid chronicles give the date of Muḥammad's death as Tuesday 4 Rabīʿ al-awwal 557/28 February 1162. Rashīd al-Dīn wrote that "Kiyā Buzurg Muḥammad [b. Buzurg Ummīd] passed from this world. He governed for 25 years; during his reign, they (*Rafīqān*) had many attainments and erected many forts. Previously he had designated Kiyā Buzurg Ḥasan as his successor (*qā'im-i maqāmī*) and heir (*walī 'ahd*)."⁵⁴ Ḥasan would have been thirty-five years old at the time. Again, the *Ḥikāyat* does not correlate with historical chronology. In the next section, from passages of the *Ḥikāyat* correlated with known chronologies from the chronicles we propose possible dating of the treatise.

Dating the *Ḥikāyat*

Sometime after 541/1147, is it possible, that the clamour grew around Ḥasan, so much so that Muḥammad had to take drastic repressive actions against those who believed his son was the *imām*? Even if the numbers were exaggerated five-fold, the execution and banishment of such large numbers would have been extreme. There are no reports of this purge in contemporary non-Nizari sources. This information was recorded by the Nizari author and preserved in the Ilkhanid chronicles.

Was the *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw* penned by and for victims of this persecution and violent repression? Was the text a manifesto to reconstitute the faction after many of their number had been killed and exiled from the Rūdbār region? Did this group coalesce in eastern Iran where the Ismaili followers of Nāṣir-i Khusraw might have been more numerous? Was the *Ḥikāyat* part of an effort to consolidate this marginal faction and draw more Ismailis into their *ẓuhūrist* circle? Mindful of the perils of *argumentum ex silentio*, tentative positive answers to

⁵⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. p. 159; Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. pp. 222; Qāshānī, *Zubdat 2nd Ed.* p. 181

these questions open vantages onto a subaltern Nizari community. There would be no reason for later Nizaris to construe a leader of the *da'wa*, the head of the polity, in such negative terms. This group wished Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd dead. He had not only anathematised their hopes and beliefs but had massacred and exiled many of theirs. If the text was authored by this marginalised and persecuted community, the earliest possible date for the *Ḥikāyat* would be after 541/1147 when Ḥasan's father deputised him to govern Alamūt. What was the function of the narratives in the *Ḥikāyat* and for whom?

Doctrine and Theology in the Ḥikāyat

The author, probably an educated person, did not write a theological tract. Doctrines and theology are only tangentially alluded to in the narrative. With the exception of Ḥasan Sa'īd and Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd, there is no introductory information about any protagonists and there is a marked absence of explanatory significance of events. This suggests that the immediate audience might have been aware of the personalities in the narratives and familiar with the meanings attached to the events in the story. In the following sections, the conceptions of the doctrines of *naṣṣ* (specific designation), *ta'līm* (authoritative teaching of the *imām*), *satr* (concealment) and *kashf* (manifestation) of the *imām*, and eschatology are extracted from the *Ḥikāyat*.

A. Naṣṣ (Specific Designation of Succession)

The *Ḥikāyat* alludes to the doctrine of *naṣṣ* in calling Nizār the designated son of al-Mustanṣir (*farzand-i manṣūṣ*) [paras 5 and 7]. This first instance is a declarative statement in the narrative during the lifetime of al-Mustanṣir whilst the second is an affirmation of Nizār's designation by the latter in a hand-written note that the *imām* had given to his servant for safe keeping. The encounter with the hermit similarly reveals that Nizār was the designated successor of al-

Mustanşir. In both cases the guardians of the *naşş* were unaware of the nature of the trust they guarded.⁵⁵ The agency for bringing the *naşş* to light fell to the designee, and then only the protagonists and the audience of the *Ḥikāyat* were privy to the designation of Nizār. The doctrine is referenced again in the discussion of Ḥasan-i Şabbāḥ's filicide [para 12]. The Ilkhanid chronicles documented that Ḥasan executed two of his sons, the first based on an accusation of killing a leading *dā'ī*;⁵⁶ and the second for consuming alcohol.⁵⁷ I have argued that these executions should be read as responses to threats against the authority of Ḥasan-i Şabbāḥ and possibly his doctrine.⁵⁸ The *Ḥikāyat*'s portrayal of Ḥasan-i Şabbāḥ's execution of his four sons acting on a conversation with the *imām* points specifically to doctrine of *naşş*. Ḥasan called on the Nizaris to look to "the son of Mawlānā who is the true *imām* (*imām-i ḥaqq*) and should not go astray" [para 12].

B. *Ta'lim* (Authoritative Teaching of the Imām)

The doctrine of *ta'lim* (authoritative teaching of the *imām*) is also referenced in several passages. When Hādī b. Nizār arrived at Alamūt, the text states that "Sayyidnā acted in accord with his commands and decrees (*amr wa farmān*)" [para 11]. In turn, the Nizaris acted in accord with Ḥasan-i Şabbāḥ's teaching. Ḥasan without hesitation or question followed the *imām*'s teaching to the extent that he executed his own sons [para 12]. The populace was told that the *imāms*, clandestinely living near Alamūt, were teachers: Hādī had proclaimed "I have come to instruct Sayyidnā"; his successor, Muhtadī said: "I am a teacher" and wrote treatises to guide the functionaries of the *da'wa*. The text states that Qāhir declared "I am the *ḥujja* of the *imām*"

⁵⁵ Walker, "Succession-Rev." p. 13

⁵⁶ Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. pp. 209-210; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. pp. 123-124

⁵⁷ Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. p. 210; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. p. 124

⁵⁸ Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." pp. 360-368

[para 14].⁵⁹

Ta'lim and specifically, the *'ilm* (knowledge) of the *imām*, are also symbolised in Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's prognostication of the Qā'im. This consisted of three elements; the first was that when the Qā'im "will enter the library, he will urinate (*chun ba kitābkhāna dar āyad zahrāb pāshad*)" and the second that "during a hunt he will split two animals in half with a single stroke of a sword" [para 17]. A possible exegesis of these metaphors is that the young son's urination on books symbolises the rejection of book-learning and the splitting of two animals symbolises the *imām*'s capacity to dissect both the material and spiritual realms where the pregnant animal represents the manifest (*ẓāhir*) and the foetus the inner (*bāṭin*). Symbolically then, it is the *imām*'s *'ilm* and *ta'lim* which transcend book-learning as well as the exoteric and esoteric understandings of the revelation and the world, that lead to *ḥaqīqa* (Truth).

C. Imamate: *satr* (concealment) and *kashf* (manifestation)

The central Shī'ī concept of imamate permeates the entire text from the claimed rightful designation of Nizār to the culmination in the *zuhūr* of the unnamed *imām*. In addition to the doctrines of imamate, *naṣṣ* and *ta'lim*, there are a number of important historical and doctrinal details in the text which are worthy of note. First, the *Ḥikāyat* states that after the killing of Nizār, factions appeared in Cairo which is also resonates with Maqrīzī's account mentioned above;⁶⁰ the *Ḥikāyat* calls these supporters of Nizār "the just for the right of the family (*'ādil-i ḥaqq al-āhl*)" [para 9]. For half a century, these factions and some of the populace in Egypt rose up against the Fatimid caliphate in the name of Nizār.

⁵⁹ *Hujja* was the highest rank in the hierarchy of the *da'wa* second only to the *imām*. Daftary, *Ismā'ilis*, p. 364

⁶⁰ Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*. III:12

Second, in the reported speech of Nāṣir-i Khusraw no honourifics or pious invocations are attached to the two mentions of the *imām*-caliph, al-Mustanṣir bi'llāh; thereafter *Mawlānā* (our Lord) precedes the regnal title and in several instances is followed by the pious invocation "peace on his mention" (*li-dhikrihi'l-salām*). The mentions of Nizār are preceded by *Mawlānā*; in four instances are followed by "peace be on his mention" and in three instances of direct speech, the name is unadorned. The Fatimid *imām*-caliph al-Ḥākim and the Nizari *imāms*, Hādī, Muhtadī and Qāhir's names are preceded by *Mawlānā*; the first of the two mentions of the latter are also followed by "peace be on his mention" and the third calls him "His Majesty" (*ḥaḍrat*). Ḥasan 'alā' dhikrihi'l-salām (r. 557-561/1162-1166) the *imām* of the *Qiyāma* is not mentioned by name; he is referred to as the Qā'im in Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's prediction [para 17]; as "Lord" (*Khudāvand*) [para 16, 19, 20], His Majesty [para 16, 18]; *imām* [para 19] and our Lord (*Mawlānā*) [para 18, 19].

Third, there is no satisfactory explanation in the *Ḥikāyat* nor in other texts of Nizari *da'wa* literature as to why the *imāms* of this period had to be concealed when they settled in Iran. Granted that Alamūt and other Nizari fortresses were under Saljūq attack; however, from the latter part of the Sultan Bark-yāruq b. Malikshāh's (r. 487-498/1094-1105) tumultuous reign, especially given his positive inclination towards the Nizaris, they had secured many fortresses and their polity had become formidable.⁶¹

Fourth, the secrecy around the identity of the *imām*, who was not known to Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd, the head of the polity and yet he had acquired a large following is incredulous. Furthermore, Muḥammad's killing of Qāhir would have amounted to regicide, coming close

⁶¹ Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." pp. 315ff; Peter Willey, *Eagle's Nest: Ismaili Castles in Iran and Syria* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005). pp. 270-276. Lists 152: installations of the Nizari polity.

even to decide in Nizari thought of the time. Such an act could not have been suppressed in Nizari writing and his subsequent vilification would have been sensationalised in the Ilkhanid chronicles as in the cases of the killing of the *imām* ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan (r. 618-653/1221-1255) attributed, in the chronicles, to his son Rukn al-Dīn Khūrshāh (r. 653-657/1255-1257).⁶² Since there is no evidence for the killing of the *imām* by Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd, the *Ḥikāyat* and its functions have warranted this careful analysis of the narrative.

Fifth, another major incongruity in the text is the substitution narrative. It makes no sense that Muḥammad killed the *imām*, Qāhir and then hesitated to kill his pregnant wife. If, as the *Ḥikāyat* claims, he was opposed to the imamate, a swift action would have been to wipe out the entire family and lineage. Moreover, Shī‘ī thought has adhered to the notion that the world can not exist without an *imām* and particularly since the occultation (*ghayba*) in 260/874 of the twelfth *imām* of the Ithnā‘asharī Shī‘ī community, the Ismailis have held that the *imām* must be present (*ḥāḍir*) and living, in normal human life-cycles.⁶³ The narrative of the *Ḥikāyat* breaches this doctrine in that after the purported killing of Qāhir, his son, the future *imām*, existed, for a time, only as a foetus in the mother’s womb.

D. Eschatology

In their understandings of history, the Ismailis construed heptadic helical eras of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and the last most complete and perfect one of Muḥammad and Islam. At the culmination of each cycle a messenger (*nāṭiq*, enunciator) would enunciate another cycle and bring a new *sharī‘a*, abrogating or transcending the previous dispensation. Each of these

⁶² Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. pp. 258-259; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi‘*. pp. 183-185; Qāshānī, *Zubdat 2nd Ed.* pp. 206-207; Hajiani, “Reconstructing Alamut.” pp. 610-611

⁶³ Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects*. p. 165

law-giving prophets was succeeded by his *waṣī* (legatee) and his explicitly designated (*manṣūṣ*) descendants as *imāms* (referred to as *ṣāmit*, silent) until the seventh would rise up as the new *nāṭiq*. Prophet Muḥammad had proclaimed that after him there would be no further messenger and therefore the next *nāṭiq* would bring a culmination in the *Qiyāma*. To this effect, Ḥasan ‘alā *dhikrihi*’l-*salām* taught that

in the era of the *sharī’a*, if a person did not obey and worship, but complied with the commands of the Resurrection that is he did not consider obedience and worship as spiritual, that person was chastised, punished, tormented, and stoned; if in the period of the Resurrection a person complied with the commands of the *sharī’a* and was meticulous in worship and material practice, it would be licit to chastise, torment, stone and execute that person.⁶⁴

Eras of concealment and manifestation (*dawr-i satr* and *dawr-i kashf*) of the *imāms* are central to Ismaili theology and the conceptions of prophetology, imamate, sacred history and time. The eras of *satr* were periods of uncertainties when the *da’wa* was clandestine and the safety and security of the imamate and its communities of followers were tenuous.

The *dawr-i satr* which began at the death of the *imām*, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (r. 114-148/732-765) gave rise to a number of communities which sought the manifestation of the *Mahdī* (salvific redeemer)—this *imām* would establish justice and equality in place of injustice and inequity of the world and as the Eschaton, would perfect the world to its end. Several *dā’īs* made predictions of the emergence of such an *imām*. Failed predictions of the emergence of the *Mahdī* resulted in untoward consequences from the rulers and local populace against the Ismailis, especially the *dā’īs*. Often, the *da’wa* dissipated and turned back to covert activities among clandestine communities. The manifestation (*zuhūr*) of the *imām*, ‘Abd Allāh al-Mahdī (r. ca 268-322/ca 881-934) and the precipitation of the Ismailis out of *taqiyya* (dissimulation) in

⁶⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi’*. p. 169

the Fatimid realm was cast as an event of cosmological proportions.⁶⁵ Similarly, the period after the death of Nizār is also construed as a *dawr-i satr* with some marked differences. For the most part, the communities of Nizari Ismailis, living in or near their fortresses, were overt in their religious affiliation; however, for seven decades, it was the *imāms* who were in concealment. The *Ḥikāyat* is a manifesto of a *zuhūrist* movement which vied for the manifestation of their candidate for the Nizari imamate.

Conclusions

In 1945 a shepherd discovered some thirteen codices buried in a sealed jar near the town of Nag Hammadi in Egypt. For fifteen hundred years, these Coptic tracts had been known mostly through the refutations of the Church Fathers. These texts reveal Gnostic communities which espoused alternate Christianities. The Gospel of Thomas, for instance, dated as early as 80 CE, preserves "wisdom sayings (proverbs), parables, eschatological sayings (prophecies), and rules for the community" but does not mention the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁶⁶ The people who buried the codices at Nag Hammadi, were never able to return to retrieve what they had hidden. As a result of impositions of orthodoxy, these communities no longer exist. The significance of the *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw*, in many ways, is comparable to that of the Nag Hammadi Library. The *Ḥikāyat* gives rare insights into a previously unknown marginalised pre-modern collective. Traces of this community may be read from the Ilkhanid chronicles. The Ismailis, generally, have been written about and treated as subalterns in Islamicate historiography; however, the *Ḥikāyat* was a product of a factional group within this marginalised community. The author from this group, persecuted and exiled by the Nizari

⁶⁵ Abū ʿAbdallāh Jaʿfar Ibn al-Haytham, *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shiʿi Witness: An Edition and English Translation of Ibn al-Haytham's Kitāb al-munāẓarāt*, trans. Wilferd Madelung, and Paul E. Walker (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000). pp. 119-120 tr: pp. 166-167

⁶⁶ James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English: Revised Edition* (HarperOne, 1990). p. 124 Introduction to the Gospel of Thomas by Helmut Koester

Ismaili *da'wa* hierarchy founded by Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ, formulated continuities between the latter and Nāṣir-i Khusraw, perhaps, to attract adherents of the Central Asian Fatimid *dā'ī*. In addition to eliding their sanctities, legacies and communities, the mention of Nāṣir-i Khusraw served the purpose of recalling the Fatimid past and the succession of al-Mustanšir. In the text, this *imām* was construed as burdened by duties of kingship and in his sacral state—after he anointed himself—the hypocrites thought him mad. As he departed from the stage, his son, al-Musta'li usurped the throne and killed the rightful *imām*, Nizār, whose legitimacy was affirmed by the letter of al-Mustanšir in the custody of Hasan-i Sa'īd and the hermit. The function of each of the *dramtis personae* was to set the scene and explain the transference of the imamate from Egypt to Iran.

Aligning the text with the Ilkhanid chronicles, I have shown that the *Hikāyat* does not conform nor purport to be a synchronic account of past actuality. It operates within a paradigm of Persian historical writing Ehsan Yarshater described in which “no distinction was made between the factual, the legendary, and the mythical. All three are blended in a unified whole and presented as a continuous narrative of events.”⁶⁷ The paramount objectives of this manifesto of the *ḡuhūr* were to explain how the imamate transferred from Egypt to Iran and that the era of concealment (*dawr-i satr*) must end with the manifestation of the *Qā'im*. Its purpose does not appear to be to win over new converts, rather its functions appear to be homiletic and didactic towards kindred collectives the author was trying to reach and to which they may have belonged.

While Nāṣir-i Khusraw is mentioned without honourifics and eulogies, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ is

⁶⁷ Ehsan Yarshater, ed. *The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 3: The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968). 3.1:366

revered as a sacred authority who prophesied the nature of the *Qā'im*. This is consonant with the tangential mentions of Nāṣir-i Khusraw in the Ilkhanid chronicle accounts which were sourced from Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's hagiographic biography the *Sarguzasht-i Sayyidnā*.⁶⁸ This text written by a follower of the *da'wa* of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ is, perhaps, one of the earliest exemplars of the Nizari appropriation of Fatimid *dā'ī* Nāṣir-i Khusraw and his teachings.

In the period when the *imāms* descended from Nizār were believed to be in concealment (*satr*), many groups of Ismailis agitated to bring about the manifestation (*zuhūr*) of their *imām*. During Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's reign the *zuhūrists* were insignificant and brushed aside or dissipated by the removal of their leaders. Half a century later, their numbers grew. Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd tried to stem the tide, going even so far as imprisoning his own son and persecuting his followers. The writers of the *Ḥikāyat* and its audience, like many other beleaguered movements in history, in their narratives construed an ultimate apocalyptic victory. This manifesto of *zuhūr* cast the *dā'ī*-leader of the *da'wa* of *satr* as the enemy. Their victory would come about when the *imām* would put an end to life of this arch-enemy and manifested his full glory in the era of *kashf*. Several tracts from later Badakhshānī Ismaili *da'wa* literature contain segments and in one case, almost the complete narrative of the *Ḥikāyat*.⁶⁹ The negative constructions of the Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd in these treatises stem from the historic events detailed here. There would be no logical cause for defamation of early Nizari leadership in later times.

⁶⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. p. 97. states: "Even though before him (Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ), Nāṣir-i Khusraw the *hujjat* of Khurāsān, was not able accomplish much..."; similarly cf. Qāshānī, *Zubdat 2nd Ed.* p. 120

⁶⁹ Shaftolu Gulamadov, "The Hagiography of Nāṣir-i Khusraw and the Ismā'īlīs of Badakhshān," diss., University of Toronto, (2018). pp. 249-252. At the time of writing of this paper, access to Manuscripts from Badakhshan was limited. I will examine these texts in a future study.

This evidence we have examined allows the writing of the *Ḥikāyat* to be placed between 541/1147, when Ḥasan was deputised by his father to govern Alamūt, after which their relations declined, and before 557/1162, when Ḥasan, himself, became the ruler of the polity. No reference is made in the *Ḥikāyat* to the *Qiyāma* other than in the name, Lady of the *Qiyāma* (*Khātūn-i Qiyāmat*), the mother of the *imām* [para 16] and in Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's prognostication of the *Qā'im* [para 17]. The text does not name the *Qā'im*, the *imām* who brought about the end of the era of concealment and is silent about the momentous events of the declaration of *Qiyāmat-i Buzurg*.⁷⁰ This suggests that the *Ḥikāyat* was written before the declaration of the *Qiyāmat-i buzurg* in 559/1164 after which Ḥasan 'alā' *dhikrihi*'-*salām* began to be recognised as the *imām*.

The analogous account of the hermit found in the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* which has been dated to Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's reign attests the existence of episodes of the *Ḥikāyat* among early Nizari Ismaili communities. In its assertion of the legitimacy of Nizār as successor to al-Mustanṣir, the *Ḥikāyat* is the earliest known text which enumerates the line of *imāms* in later Nizari reckoning. The lineage in the text, the *Qā'im* (Ḥasan 'alā' *dhikrihi*'-*salām*) b. Qāhir b. Muhtadī b. Hādī b. Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir, connecting the Nizari *da'wa* and imamate to Fatimid origins. Most significantly, the treatise illustrates the elevation of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ into the sanctified forebear of early Nizari Ismailism.

The author's primary aim was to explain how the young child, who was construed to be the *imām*, came to be in the household of the arch-enemy of the community of the text [para 15-19]. The substitution narrative was probably created to dissociate the *dā'ī* from the putative *imām*. The literary device enabled the young boy to be genealogically differentiated from *dā'ī*-

⁷⁰ Hodgson, *Order of Assassins*. pp. 148ff; Daftary, *Ismailis*. pp. 358ff; Hajjani, "Reconstructing Alamut." pp. 573ff

ruler Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd.⁷¹ The narrative read without these analytic lenses raises glaring doctrinal problems. As suggested above, Juwaynī did just that and used his quill to turn the literary device of the substitution into a salacious narrative of the adulterous liaison.⁷² Juwaynī's renditions suggest that he may have read the narrative in the *Ḥikāyat* and twisted it; and that the *Ḥikāyat* may be an unattributed source of the Ilkhanid chronicle accounts of the Nizaris.⁷³ The possibilities that Juwaynī used the *Ḥikāyat* become further apparent in his writing that Muḥammad, the *dā'ī*-ruler, killed the *imām* for the illicit liaison with his wife and he expounded that

as we have previously mentioned Muhammad had tightened the belt of rigour and severity in enforcing the customs of Islam and applying the principles of the Shari'at to the creed of Hasan-i-Sabbah, which is the essence of ignominy. [On this account] they (the Nizaris) were ill disposed towards him and most of them cursed him; and they would allow no pilgrimage to his grave, which lay next to those of Hasan-i-Sabbah, Buzurg Umid and Bu-'Ali of Ardistan.⁷⁴

Juwaynī emphasised that Ḥasan, who declared the *Qiyāma* and was recognised as the *imām*, "in actual fact was the son of Muhammad, the son of Buzurg-Umid, because on the gates of their castles and fortresses, in the inscriptions on the walls and in the titles of his writings he everywhere used to write: 'Hasan, son of Muhammad, son of Buzurg-Umid.'"⁷⁵

Later Nizari writings intimate that two different Ḥasans existed, each from the lines of the *imāms* and the *dā'īs*, and assert that Ḥasan 'alā *dhikrihi*'l-*salām* was the son of the previous

⁷¹ Hajiani, "Reconstructing Alamut." pp. 585ff

⁷² Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. p. 232

⁷³ Osamu Otsuka, "The *Dustūr Al-Munajjimīn* as a Source of Early Ismaili History," in *Science in the City of Fortune: The Dustūr Al-Munajjimīn and Its World*, ed. Eva Orthmann, and Petra G. Schmidl (Berlin: EBVerlag, 2017). pp. 173 ff. Suggests that Juwaynī may have used the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn* though only noted the *Sarguzasht-i Sayyidnā* as his source. Rashīd al-Dīn and Qāshānī have named their sources at the end of each regnal account of the Nizari polity.

⁷⁴ Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. p. 235 tr.: p. 694. The accuracy and reliability of Juwaynī's information is uncertain given his antipathies and tendency to bend the facts to suit his narrative thrust.

⁷⁵ Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. pp. 228-229 tr.: p. 690

imām.⁷⁶ Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib observed that in an epistle (*faṣl*) from Ḥasan ‘alā dhikrihi’l-*salām*

addressed to Amīr Ḥaydar Mas‘ūd, may God grant him peace and Paradise, he [Ḥasan ‘Alā Dhikrihi al-Salām] says: "One should consider the story of the son of Muḥammad in the same manner because, he, may God be pleased with him, was the deputy and judge (*qā'im maqām wa qāḍī*) of my religion, and so was his son Ḥasan after him." And this is a secret which cannot be divulged at this time. Exoterically (*bi-ḥukm-i ṣāḥib*), the pure birth of the lord (*khudāwand*) Ḥasan, may his name be sanctified, happened a number of years after this.⁷⁷

The *Haft Bāb* (*Seven Chapters*) completed in 596/1200 construed Muḥammad b. Buzurg Ummīd and his son Ḥasan as the *qā'im maqām* and *qāḍī* successively, in service of the *imām*, Ḥasan ‘alā dhikrihi’l-*salām*. These variant narratives explain how Ismailis of Iran sought to explain the relocation of the imamate from Cairo to Alamūt and fitted the *imāms* of the second *dawr-i satr* (period of concealment) into the line of the Ismaili imamate. In the genealogy of the *imām* Rukn al-Dīn Khūrshāh (r. 653-655/1255-1257), the final ruler of the Nizari polity in Iran, Rashīd al-Dīn placed the sequence of *imāms* between Nizār and Ḥasan ‘alā dhikrihi’l-*salām*, found in the *Ḥikāyat*, in the genealogy of *imāms* linked back to the first *imām*-caliph ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib:

He was Rukn al-Dīn al-Ḥasan known as Khūrshāh b. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Nūr al-Dīn known as ‘Alā dhikrihi’l-*salām* b. al-Qāhir bi-Quwat Allāh b. al-Muhtadī Billāh b. al-Hādī Ilā Allāh b. al-Muṣṭafā li-Dīn Allāh Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir Billāh b. al-Ṣāḥib li-I‘zāz Dīn Allāh b. al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh b. al-‘Azīz Billāh [b. al-Mu‘izz Billāh] b. al-Manṣūr bi-Nuṣrat Allāh b. al-Qā'im bi-Amr Allāh b. al-Mahdī Billāh b. al-Taḳī b. al-Naḳī b. al-Raḍī b. Muḥammad al-Sāba’ b. Ismā‘īl b. Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq b. Muḥammad al-Bāqir b. ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn b. al-Ḥusayn al-Shahīd b. Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon them, b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.⁷⁸

This genealogical line—distinct from the line of *imāms*—is remarkable as it connects the generations in a continuity across six centuries back to the *imām*-caliph, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’s grandfather.

⁷⁶ Cortese, “Eschatology and Power.” p. 133: and p. 156 fn17 explains that Fidā’ī’s work was a pious hagiography and not a sound history.

⁷⁷ Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib, *HB*, p. 27 Tr. pp 69-70. Slightly modified. The Amīr Ḥaydar Mas‘ūd is not otherwise known.

⁷⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi‘*, p. 185: gives the name of the Prophet and ‘Alī’s grandfather as ‘Abd al-Ṭālib. Corrected from Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi‘*, p. 125 and British Library MS-7628 f. 305v. For explanations of several remarkable anomalies in this listing of the lineage cf. Hajiani, “Reconstructing Alamut.” pp. 588ff.

The early Christian communities who had produced and buried the Nag Hammadi texts in the fifth century CE no longer exist; however, the community of the *Ḥikāyat* prevailed. Two years after becoming the ruler of the Nizari polity in Iran, Ḥasan declared the *Qiyāmat-i buzurḡ*.

Rashīd al-Dīn wrote that on 17 Ramaḍān 559/15 August 1164, Ḥasan

mounted the *minbar* which was facing the *qibla*. To the *Raḥīqān* it seemed that from the leader, that is the supposed *imām*, whose whereabouts were unknown, someone had arrived in secret. He had brought a *khuṭba* to explain to them the manner of their traditional belief. Atop the *minbar* he delivered an eloquent and rhetorical oration and at the end of the *khuṭba* said: "The *imām* of the time sends you greetings and mercy; and has summoned you his exceptional chosen servants and has removed the toil of the *sharīʿa* from you and has delivered you to the *Qiyāma* (Resurrection)."⁷⁹

The *khuṭba* named Ḥasan not only as the *imām*'s *dāʿī*, *ḥujja* (proof) and *khalīfa* (deputy) but he was to be followed in all spiritual and temporal matters, and his word was that of the *imām*'s. Subsequently, Ḥasan, himself, was regarded as the *imām* descended from Nizār b. Mustanṣir. and the messianic epithet '*alā dhikrihi*'*l-salām* (peace be on his mention) was attached to his name. The desideratum of the *Ḥikāyat* was attained. The *Qā'im* of the *Qiyāma* was manifested.

The majority of available Nizari writings about the *Qiyāma* date from the 7th/13th century onwards. Most of them date after the reign of the *imām* Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan (r. 607-618/1210-1221), who had declared himself to be a Sunni.⁸⁰ In such writings of Ḥasan-i Ṣalāḥ-i Munshī and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), they advocated for the restitution of the teaching and doctrine of the *Qiyāma*.⁸¹ Daftary has lamented that "no contemporary Nizārī sources have survived from that period, it is very difficult to know precisely how the *qiyāma* was actually perceived by the rank and file of the Nizārī community, who were scattered in remote areas with diverse socio-economic and cultural as well as rural-urban

⁷⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. p. 164

⁸⁰ Juwaynī, *Jahān-gushā* v3. pp. 241ff Tr. pp. 698ff; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi'*. p. 174

⁸¹ Ḥasan-i Maḥmūd-i Kātib, *HB.*; Ṭūsī, *Paradise of Submission*.

characteristics."⁸²

If the dating of the *Ḥikāyat* proposed here is valid, then we have in our hands, the writing and kernels of the thought of a subaltern Nizari community. In Islamicate historiography, as in all pre-modern world historical writing, factional voices have been silenced in time by the hegemony of authorised doctrinal literatures and accounts of past actualities. The *Ḥikāyat-i Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw* is a rare witness of non-elite beliefs and voices of some early Nizari Ismailis. Unlike the communities of users of the Nag Hammadi texts, the author of the *Ḥikāyat* and his audience were persecuted and marginalised by the *da'wa* establishment, yet after the declaration of the *Qiyāma*, their aspirations became dominant. The era of *satr* was brought to an end and Ḥasan 'alā' dhikrihi'l-salām was regarded as the eschatological redeemer. In time, the narrative of this *Ḥikāyat* was eclipsed by the literature produced by luminaries of the *da'wa* who elaborated the teachings of the *Qiyāma* and sought their restitution. Despite its many incongruities, it has survived since scribes, over the centuries, continued to copy it because in it evoked the sanctified memories of the poet, philosopher and Fatimid *dā'i*, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, and of the founder of Nizari Ismailism, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ as well as of the *imām* of the *Qiyāma*, Ḥasan 'alā' dhikrihi'l-salām. This newly recovered subaltern text opens doors for greater understanding of the socio-political and religious discourses not just of authorised texts of the powerful but also of subdued voices and wider factional collectives in Nizari, Ismaili, Shi'i, Islamicate and Persianate histories. The text speaks for itself and we have ventured to locate it in its context by these analyses of its narratives.

⁸² Daftary, *Ismailis*. p. 362

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