

colossal monuments of Pharaonic Egypt but also those of the Islamic era and the contemporary lifestyles of elite and middle-class groups as well as the peasantry. To these Westerners, “Eastern” Egypt was an exotic and magical place that successfully fused the past with the present, ancient times with modernity. Most of these producers could easily have been diagnosed with Egyptomania.

In her comprehensive treatment of the subject, Banas returns to well-known actors and texts such as the gigantic *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–1828), the monumental work of Edward Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), *The Oriental Album* (1845–1848), and so forth. While many scholars have already relied upon these texts in their representations of Egypt, Banas presents them anew, with original and innovative insights. No less important is her diligent examination of the individual creators such as David Roberts, Edward Lane, Robert Hay, John Frederick Lewis, or, in a different vein, John Murray’s publishing house. Banas’s deep textual analysis is supported by dozens of black and white as well as color images, which characterize the country and demonstrate her ability to portray Egypt’s landscape in a realistic and lively fashion.

One of the most commonly-held and recent paradigms in the discussion of visual Egypt is Orientalism, inspired by Edward Said’s development of the concept. This paradigm represents the illustrative endeavor as an integral part of the imperial colonial European project to dominate the East (of which Egypt is an integral part). In this process of domination, the West creates the East as an orientalist discourse that it can use for political and cultural power, leveraging this scientific and artistic knowledge to solidify the West’s superiority over the East’s inferiority. Banas did not avoid this inherent power dynamic as she describes the visualization of Egypt. Yet she seems to go beyond Orientalism to systematically explore the visualizing project through the emerging apparatus of *l’histoire du livre*, offer-

ing a comprehensive examination of the book industry, its marketing, and its commercialization, based on the growth of new print media and print culture. Banas reconstructs the dramatic development of the complex and multi-vocal poly-system of the relationship between the writer/producer, the printing, the selling, the dissemination, and distribution of the products, as well as their reception and assimilation, tracing how this new publishing industry inspired the shape of the visual project, both theoretically and practically. This is, in Banas’s intervention, a heterogeneous network of European illustrative commercialization and advertising. Indeed, for her, these new forces are responsible for offering visual Egypt to the growing audiences of European and global consumers, as well as locals. The contested dynamic between the printing project, its market, and its consumers was also a major factor in accelerating and changing the production of illustrative texts and visual commodities representing Egypt.

Banas’s industrious treatment of the publishing industry is indeed the book’s major contribution. She locates this printing project within the materialistic context of technological innovations and new capitalist mechanisms of commerce amid Europe’s rapid development in communication, train travel, sea travel, and popular tourism as represented, for example, in John Gardner Wilkinson’s *The Handbook for Travellers in Egypt* (1847). Simultaneously, Banas analyzes the rapid-fire modernization (“Westernization”) of Khedival Egypt itself, which opened the country up to droves of European visitors interested in the Land of the Nile, who in turn created these multi-vocal visual images of the country. All in all, the summation of these processes in both Europe and in Egypt is responsible for exponential production of visual Egypt.

To summarize, Banas’s *Visualizing Egypt* is an excellent study that will interest anybody curious about modern Egypt and the Ottoman-Arab Middle East and, more generally, the global history of the visual.

The Early Nizārī Ismailis and Their Neighbouring Powers: Politics in the Caspian Provinces. By Miklós Sárközy. Ismaili Heritage Series, 16. London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2024. Pp. xvi + 240. £75 (cloth), £24.99 (paper).

REVIEWED BY SHIRAZ HAJIANI, *Harvard Divinity School*

The death of the Fatimid imam-caliph al-Mustansir bi’llāh (r. 1036–1095) precipitated a succession crisis in which the ruler’s youngest son, Aḥmad al-Musta’lī

bi’llāh (r. 1095–1101) was enthroned in Cairo by his brother-in-law, the powerful *wazīr* and military commander, al-Afdāl b. Badr al-Jamālī (d. 1120). The ruler’s

oldest son, Nizār al-Muṣṭafā li-Dīn Allāh (r. 1095) asserted that he was designated to succeed his father and was proclaimed imam-caliph in Alexandria. Within a year, Nizar's side was defeated and he was killed. The Ismaili *da'wa* (summons) in Iran, however, rejected the deathbed *naṣṣ* (designation) claimed for al-Musta'li and remained loyal to Nizar, severing ties with the Fatimid Empire (fl. 909–1171). This movement coalesced into the Nizari polity (fl. 1090–1256) which lasted until its destruction by the Mongols led by Hūlāgū (Hülegü) b. Tuluy b. Chingiz Khān (r. 1256–1265).

After a century and a half of rule of the central Islamic domains by Shi'i dynasties of the Fatimids and Buyids (fl. 945–1055), the Saljuqs (fl. 1040–1194) began to unravel vestiges of Shi'ism by their patronage of Ḥanafī Sunnism. This would foster what scholars have called the “Sunni revival” after the end of the “Shi'i centuries.” It was in this context that the Nizari Ismaili polity in Iran was founded by the *dā'i* (summoner) Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (r. 1090–1124). In their warfare, the Nizaris retaliated against the Saljuq sieges and massacres with asymmetric warfare for which they gained notoriety as the “assassins”—a defamatory pejorative that some scholars unthinkingly continue to use in the twenty-first century! By the middle of the twelfth century, with the devolution of the Saljuq Empire, Nizari relations with the Khwārazmshāhs (fl. 1097–1231) became significant. Following the Chingizid invasions of Islamic domains in 1219–1221, the last three decades of the Nizari polity were characterized by their alliance with the Mongols. In time, relations declined so much that the Mongol Great Khan Möngke (r. 1251–1259) ordered an expedition to uproot the Nizaris. By 1270, the Mongols in Iran and the Mamluks (fl. 1250–1517) in Syria had destroyed the Nizari polity. These trans-regional interactions coincided with regional competitions between the Nizaris and their neighbors—the subject of the present volume.

The early history and thought of the Nizaris and their polity is preserved predominantly in three Ilkhanid (fl. 1256–1335) era chronicles written by court officials and in the meager collection of extant Nizari *da'wa* literature. The Ilkhanid authors molded *da'wa* literature plundered from the library at Alamut to write their dynastic chronicles. The historiography is generally antagonistic towards the Nizaris and their doctrine, retrospectively construing the declaration of the *Qiyamāt-i Buzurg* (the Great Resurrection) in 1164, when the Nizari imamate became manifest in Iran, as outright heresy.

This volume is the first substantive monograph publication on Nizari history in over twenty years. In addition to the Ilkhanid chronicles and Nizari *da'wa* literature, Miklós Sárközy has drawn on regional histories, Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, and Zaydī sources to reconstruct the political, social, and economic histories of the Nizari Ismailis and their neighbors. The book consists of eight chapters, a conclusion, and three appendices, which include maps, a translation of excerpts of the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt* (Collection of Poems of the Resurrection), and dynastic charts. The introductory chapter provides a detailed discussion of sources and a brief pre-Nizari history of the Caspian regions. Subsequent chapters address the political history, local interactions, and socio-economic conditions of the Nizari polity and its neighbors, culminating in its destruction by the Mongols. In this review, I analyze several topics to give a flavor of this new addition to the studies of the early Nizari Ismailis and the dynasties of the Caspian region.

Sárközy's syntheses of three local histories illuminate complex relations between the predominantly Ithnā'asharī Bāwandid (fl. 651–1349) rulers of south-eastern Ṭabaristān, the mostly Zaydī Bādūspānid (fl. 665–1598) rulers of Ruyan in the western part of Ṭabaristān near Nizari-controlled Rūdbār, and various other Zaydī rulers in Daylamān and Gīlān, interacting with the Nizaris as the latter expanded their territories in the region. The authors wrote in different contexts and times: the Ithnā'asharī Bāwandid courtier Ibn Isfandiyār's (d. 1216) *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* was begun in 1205 and completed by a continuator in the 14th century; Awliyā Allāh Āmulī (d. after 1262), who was a court historian of the Bādūspānids, wrote the *Tārīkh-i Rūyān*, which followed the outlines of Ibn Isfandiyār's history, concentrating for the most part on the local affairs of Rūyān; and the Ithnā'asharī scholar Ṣahīr al-Dīn Mar'ashī (d. 1489) wrote the *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān va Rūyān va Māzandarān* and towards the end of his life wrote the *Tārīkh-i Gīlān va Daylamistān*. According to Charles Melville, these “works generally cover the characteristics, special merits (*fazā'el*) and foundation legends of the districts concerned, together with dynastic history and contemporary affairs.”¹ In Sárközy's chapters, there is a staccato of names, events, and dates which could be overwhelming even for someone familiar with the history of the region—readers would do well to chart chronologies of events and

¹ Melville, “Mongol and Timurid Periods,” 182.

genealogies of key protagonists. Such charts at the beginning of each chapter would have helped the reader assimilate and keep up with the author's narration of the complex histories.

Contests for the throne among the sons of Saljuq sultan Malikshāh b. Alp Arslān (r. 1073–1092) resulted in factionalism among the nobility and shifting alliances with regional powers. While the Saljuqs imposed vassalage on the Bāwandids, at the death of Malikshāh, the latter ejected Saljuq governors over the region. For a time, the Bāwandids even formed alliances with their rivals, the Nizaris, to counter Saljuq attacks.

In due course, the local rivalries would reignite (p. 30). Sárközy has proposed two periodizations based on such shifts in policies, alliances, and conflict in the region. The first is focused on the parallel rise of the Nizari polity and the resurgence of the Bāwandids during the reign of Shahriyār b. Qārin, Ḥusām al-Dawla (r. 1074–1114). He demarcates three sub-periods: 1094–1105, emergence of the Bāwandid and Nizari polities and their successes against the Saljuqs; 1105–1120, Saljuq counter-attacks; and after 1120, consolidation when the Nizaris and Bāwandids respectively started restoring and extending their influence (p. 30). The second periodization, more focused on the Nizaris, demarcates 1090–1140 as the period of their successful territorial expansion, followed by 1140–1210 in which they engaged in wars with the Bāwandids and suffered territorial setbacks, and lastly 1210–1257, a new expansionist period in which lost territories were recaptured (Appendix I, pp. 184–85). This is a departure from Marshall Hodgson and Farhad Daftary's periodizations, which are based on a mix of Nizari-Saljuq conflict and Nizari doctrinal developments. Historians often choose arbitrary factors to distinguish contiguities and turning points. Sárközy's two periodizations overlap and are somewhat contradictory; however, the first of these is useful in apprehending phases of regional geopolitical developments—especially for Chapters 3–5 which cover the local power in the Caspian region (pp. 48–53) and Nizari-Bāwandid competition (pp. 54–79) and confrontation (pp. 80–114). This conceptualization is also perhaps central to one of the most important arguments of the book: that the Nizaris under Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ and Kiyā Buzurg Umīd (r. 1124–1138) and the Bāwandids under Shahriyār b. Qārin followed parallel policies and trajectories, albeit the former movement was undergirded by the vigorous Ismaili and then Nizari *da'wa* whilst the latter's Ithnā'asharī Shi'ism did not carry politico-military force (pp. 29–47).

A second key argument of the book is that the Nizaris pragmatically formed coalitions and alliances with their trans-regional and regional adversaries. Within the Caspian region, the Nizaris maintained close ties with the Bādūspānids and, for some time, allied with the Bāwandids against the Saljuqs. They developed peaceful relations with the Saljuq sultan Sanjar b. Malikshāh (r. 1118–1157); as Saljuq power dissipated, they developed relations with the Khwārazmshāhs to the extent of accepting vassalage and invoking them in the *khutba* (sermons during congregational prayers). Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan (r. 1210–1221), the third imam-ruler of the Nizari polity, reportedly adopted the Sunni interpretation of Islam, recognizing 'Abbasid suzerainty and issued coinage with his own title as sultan and the 'Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh's (r. 1180–1225) name along with the honorific *amīr al-mu'minīn* (commander of the believers). He fought alongside the Īldigūzid ruler of Azerbaijan, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Uzbak (r. 1210–1225), when Nāṣir al-Dīn Minglī, his governor of northern 'Irāq and western Iran, rebelled and gave allegiance to the Khwārazmshāhs. When Chingiz Khan (r. 1206–1227) crossed the Amū Daryā (Oxus River), the Nizaris were the first polity to ally with the Mongols. Our author points out that these shifts were a "tactic of supporting the enemies of their enemies" (p. 115, similarly p. 145).

Sárközy uses the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt* along with Armenian and Chinese sources to deepen the analyses of the Nizari-Mongol alliance and its deterioration found in Ilkhanid era chronicles. He cites verses from several *qasidas* (odes) that indicate that the Nizari authors saw the emergence of the first Mongol ruler, Chingiz Khan, and the destruction of the Khwārazmshāhs as an eschatological unfolding of the *Qiyāma* declared in 1164. In the *Rawḍat al-Taslīm* (Paradise of Submission), an important doctrinal source on the *Qiyāma*, written in 1243 by the Nizari *dā'ī*, philosopher and polymath, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, there is a prophecy that "the Nizārī Imam will first conquer the Caspian provinces, after taking Daylamān. Following the conquest of Māzandarān, Gīlān and Mughān, the Imam will continue on his way to Hind, Rūm and Chīn" (p. 132). Sárközy suggests that the "expansionist aspirations of the Ismailis are reflected in the *Rawḍat al-Taslīm* and other contemporary sources, all suggesting that the enormous political changes created by the Mongols provoked a great reaction among the Nizārīs comparable to the atmosphere of Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ's time" (p. 146). This synthesis points to the enthusiasm

among the Nizaris regarding their relations with the Mongols; however, “passages [of the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt*] relating to the second generations of Chingizids, *Chingiz-i thānī* (referring to Ögedei [r. 1229–1241]) and a certain Chaghtāy instead see the Mongols as the enemy” (p. 136). This is the first monograph publication to use the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt* to illuminate Nizari perspectives on their relations with the Mongols.

This is only a sampling of the complex sets of multipolar relations over the 167 years of the Nizari polity presented in the volume. Let us now focus on some of the issues in this expansive study. The death date of Nizār b. al-Mustanşir and therefore the beginning of the independent Nizari *da'wa* and polity should be 488/1095 not 490/1097 (p. 30). The use of endnotes instead of footnotes is perhaps beyond the author's control since academic publishers have used aesthetic and cost arguments for their preference of endnotes. I have never heard from any reader—academic or not—complaining about footnotes! The facilities of modern typesetting software make the cost argument a fig leaf, especially since many authors produce print-ready manuscripts. Sárközy's narration is interrupted and diminished by the reader-researcher having to turn to the end of the volume multiple times while reading the text. Like Hume's recommendation in a letter to Gibbon's publisher, William Strahan, to move the endnotes to the margins or the bottom of the page, this comment is directed at the publishers!²

The author has used very few direct quotes from the sources. These would provide the reader a pause in following the narration and allow them to see how the author analyzes the sources, especially where they are complementary or diverge on a given circumstance. The appendix containing translations of the *Dīwān-i Qā'imīyyāt* is a boon, but again, the reader-researcher has to turn to the end of the volume multiple times to read the passages. Integration of relevant verses into the section on Nizari-Mongol relations would have enriched the narration. The principle of “show, don't tell” is apt for this type of study.

The second and third maps in Appendix I provide little information and the repetition three times of the listing of sixty fortresses is redundant. The cartographer is challenged to represent movements over time and space in static maps. Integration of smaller, more mean-

ingful vector-graphic maps in relevant chapters would have been more useful.

Sárközy mentions seven categories of primary sources relied on for the study (p. 1)—this list erroneously includes “studies” (p. 12); while secondary literature can be studied as primary sources, there is no evidence for such analyses in this work. The list also includes “numismatic sources” (p. 11) and the bibliography lists seven numismatic studies (pp. 223–30); however, other than one mention of coins minted between 1108–1111 where the Bādūspānid ruler styled himself as *ustāndār*, a Sassanid era title for provincial governor, the remaining references to coinage are incidental (pp. 144, 146, 152, 199). Comparative numismatic studies would have been useful to explain modes of dynastic legitimation and even for matters of trade and economy.

The last chapter, on “The Economy and Social Structure of the Nizāri Ismaili State,” shifts away from the political and military “great man history” of the previous chapters. Here, Sárközy analyses the sources to offer a provisional reconstruction of the socio-economic conditions of the Nizari polity. This builds on the earlier studies of Hodgson and Daftary and ought to be a springboard for many more studies to attempt to retrieve the histories of wider societies, not just the elites focused on in the sources.

In conclusion, Miklós Sárközy's *The Early Nizāri Ismailis and Their Neighbouring Powers* is a meticulously researched and thoughtfully argued study that fills a notable gap in the scholarship on the medieval Caspian region. Its careful source criticism, regional focus, and use of previously unavailable Nizari *da'wa* sources opens new perspectives on the relations and conflicts of the Saljuqs, Khwārazmshāhs, and Mongols with the Nizari Ismailis and, within the Caspian region, with the Bāwandid and Bādūspānid dynasties. While some limitations remain due to the dearth of sources, Sárközy's book will be an essential reference for scholars of Nizari Ismailism, Iranian studies, and the history of Islamicate communities of the early Middle Period.

Works Cited

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² Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History*, 102–03.