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**The Syrian Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs after the Fall of Alamūt.
Imāmate's Dilemma**

Abstract

The collapse of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs' state with its centre in Alamūt and the elimination by the Mongols of Rukn ad-Dīn Ḥuršāh, the last Ḥudāwand of their state and imām, in 655/1257, meant breaking away by the Syrian Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs with the Iranian tradition of their movement. Therefore, as professor Daftary notices: "The news of the execution of Rukn ad-Dīn in Mongolia (...) must have dealt another demoralizing blow to the confused and displaced Nizārīs who had been accustomed to having access to their imām or his local representatives." Now the imām was gone or at least nothing was known of his temporal existence. Referring to ideas from the times of Rašīd ad-Dīn Sinān, the most famous Nizārī leader in Syria, it can be assumed that in the face of collapse of Persian Nizārīs' state and Ḥuršāh's death, Raḍī ad-Dīn Abū al-Maʿālī, the chief daʿī of Syrian Nizārīs, started to aspire to obtain imām's charisma. His cooperator and then successor, Naḡm ad-Dīn Ismāʿīl acted in a similar way. There are certain reasons which support the thesis that in the face of the end of the Alamūt centre and annihilation of Rukn ad-Dīn Ḥuršāh, the imām of Alamūt, Naḡm ad-Dīn acknowledged himself as "a visible imām" of the Nizārīs. A certain suggestion indicating caliph-imām aspirations of the leaders of Syrian Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs can be found in Naḡm ad-Dīn's letter which was sent to Manfred, the king of Sicily, towards the end of 1265. This letter, published by professor H.M. Schaller in a fairly indirect Latin translation, points to caliph-oriented, which for the Ismāʿīlīs was synonymous with imām-oriented, aspirations of the issuer. The hypothesis arising from this article cannot be considered as a decisive one, since only yet unknown (or not used) medieval Arabic sources could be considered as such.

When Rukn ad-Dīn Ḥuršāh, the last imām of Alamūt surrendered to Hülegü-Khan's Mongols towards the end of the year 1256, he ordered his followers to hand over the fortresses which were remaining in their possession to the Mongolian conquerors. His order referred first of all to Nizārī centers on the territory of Iran, in the mountains close to the Caspian Sea and in the Quhistan province.¹ Ḥuršāh himself accompanied Hülegü-Khan to his camp (*ordu*), which was pitched in the region of Hamadan, as wrote the Persian historian 'Aṭā' Malik Ḡuwaynī: "[he] sent two or three trusted men to the castles in Syria together with the King [i.e. Hülegü] elchis in order to fetch the commanders, take an inventory of the treasures and guard those castles as subjects of the King (...).² Rukn ad-Dīn Ḥuršāh's call was answered by governors of four castles in the Ḡabal Bahra area, including the Masyāf.³

With the victory over the Mongolian army in the battle of 'Ayn Ḡālūt, on September 3, 1260 (25 Ramaḍān 658), the direct Mongolian threat to the Syrian Nizārī Ismā'īlīs was over, or at least obviated. After the defeat of the Mongols, the Mongolian governor left Masyāf. The Ismā'īlī commanders of fortresses who had surrendered to the Mongols, probably ordered to do so by representatives of imām Rukn ad-Dīn Ḥuršāh, were executed. Baybars, first the comrade in arms of Quṭuz, the victor of the battle of 'Ayn Ḡālūt, and then his murderer and successor, restored control over Syria to Egypt and deprived Crusaders of a considerable part of Palestine.⁴ Similarly to Nur ad-Dīn Zangī and Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn a century before, Baybars, acted ostentatiously as a zealous supporter of sunnism, which must have raised concern of heretical Nizārīs. Raḍī ad-Dīn and Naḡm ad-Dīn, his co-ruler and then his aged successor, tried to retain their domain's independence. Notes in Arab chronicles from the Mamlūk period, which in the most part are Sunni-oriented, prove consistent resistance against submitting to Baybars on the part of the leaders of the sect in Syria (*aṣḥāb ad-da'wa*).⁵

Let us now return to the fate of Rukn ad-Dīn Ḥuršāh himself, the imām of all Nizārīs, also the Syrian Nizārī Ismā'īlīs, refraining from the Ismā'īlī doctrine of the imāmate with reference to the Nizārīs.⁶ As soon as most of Iranian pockets of resistance of the

¹ F. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs. Their History and Doctrines*, Cambridge 1990, pp. 427–428; B. Lewis, *The Assassins. A Radical Sect in Islam*, London 1985, pp. 93–94.

² 'Ala-ad-Dīn 'Ata-Malik Juwaynī, *Tar'ikh-i jahan gusha*, Eng. trans. J.A. Boyle, *The History of the World – Conqueror*, Manchester, 1958, vol. II, p. 722. The same information can be found in: Raṣīd ad-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, *Ḡāmī' at-tawārīḥ*, Baku 1957, vol. III, ed. A.A. Alizade, Persian text p. 37, Russian trans. p. 30. In modern works see Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, p. 428.

³ Ibn Muṣassar, *Tāj al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ali, Akhbār, Miṣr*, ed. H. Massé, Cairo 1919, p. 68; in scientific historiography see Ch. Defrémery, *Nouvelles recherches sur les Ismaéliens ou Bathiniens de Syrie*, Journal Asiatique, Janvier 1855, ser. 5, vol. V, p. 48; F. Daftary, p. 430; N.A. Mirza, *Syrian Ismailism. The Ever Living Line of the Imāmate, AD 1100–1260*, Richmond 1997, p. 55.

⁴ Ch. Defrémery, p. 49; Daftary, p. 431.

⁵ 'Izz ad-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ali b. Ibrāhīm b. Shaddād, *Ta'rikh al-Malik al-Zahir*, ed. A. Huta y t, Wiesbaden, 1983, pp. 268–269, 323; Al-Maqrīzī, *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks*, Paris 1840, vol. I, part. 2, pp. 79–80, 99–100 and 112–113.

⁶ For an interesting remark on this topic refer to: W. Ivanow, see his Introduction to the Kalāmi Pīr, *A treatise on Ismaili Doctrine*, also (wrongly) called Haft-Babī Shah Sayyid Nasir. Islamic Research Association

Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs were handed over to the Mongols, Rukn ad-Dīn became useless to the victors, and consequently the Mongolian leaders in Qazwīn received orders from their headquarters to kill imām's family and his household members.⁷ At his request, Rukn ad-Dīn was permitted to go to the capital city of the great khan in Qara-Qorum. The khan, however, refused to receive him. "Why should he have taken such a long journey?," said the khan to all Mongols, "after all, our laws are well-known."⁸ When he was on his way back to Persia, he was slain on the slope of the Khangay Mountains (Central Mongolia) by the escort which had been allotted to him. Taking under consideration the length of the route taken by him from Qazwīn to Qara-Qorum and back, to the mountain pass in the Khangay Mountains, it must have taken place still in 1257. The Mongolian administrators of Iran did not conceal information about his death, which could have reached the Nizārī enclaves in Syria as early as in 1258.⁹ In effect, the dependence of the Syrian Nizārīs on the centre in Alamūt ceased to exist. There are no written sources which would provide information about the doctrinal formula adopted by the Syrian Nizārīs concerning the person of the imām. Did they content themselves with the formula of the "concealment period" (*ad-dawr as-satr*), after which the imām would reveal himself again? The contemporary interpretation of the history of nizārism assumes the continuity of the line of imāms derived from Rukn ad-Dīn.¹⁰ Rukn ad-Dīn's son or nephew, Šams ad-Dīn Muḥammad, known as Šams ad-Dīn Tabrizi and linked sometimes with Šams-i Tabrizī, who was the famous teacher of Ġalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, would be the successor of the imāmate.¹¹ Šams ad-Dīn Muḥammad was working in that time as a humble craftsman (Zarduz or an embroiderer) in Azarbaijan, impersonating a teacher of Sufism.¹² It is certain that he was not known to the Syrian followers of nizārism.

Referring to ideas from the times of Rašīd ad-Dīn Sinān, the most famous Nizārī leader in Syria, it can be assumed that Raḍī ad-Dīn started to aspire to obtain imām's charisma, which, however, had to take a very cautious form, at least due to Sunni orthodoxy of sultan Baybars. On the part of Raḍī ad-Dīn, it would have been a propaganda-doctrinal practice *pro foro interno*. Baybars himself, who had to overcome political particularism of Syrian lands, showed certain respect to the leader of Syrian Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs, though he did not acknowledge him as a spiritual leader in the Sunni or even Shi'ite-Imāmīte dimension.

No. 4, Bombay, 1935 especially pp. XXXVIII–XLIV; Christian Jambet, *La Grande Résurrection d'Alamūt. Les formes de la liberté dans le shī'isme ismaélien*, Lagrasse 1990 especially pp. 95–100, pp. 295–353.

⁷ Juwayni, *The History of the World-Conqueror*, pp. 723–724; Rašīd ad-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, *Ġāmi' at-tawārīḥ*, text p. 37, translation p. 30; Daftary, p. 428.

⁸ Juwayni, op. cit., p. 724.

⁹ F. Daftary writes: "The news of the execution of Rukn al-Dīn Khurshāh in Mongolia in 655/1257 must have dealt another demoralizing blow to the confused and displaced Nizārīs who had been accustomed to having access to their imām or his local representatives", p. *Ismāʿīlīs*, p. 444.

¹⁰ Daftary, op. cit., pp. 437 seq., see: the letter of the Nizārī's Imām, p. 553.

¹¹ See a critical note: *Dějiny perské a tádžické Literatury*, ed. J. Rypka, Praha 1963, p. 203, note 69.

¹² F. Daftary, *Shams al-Dīn Muhammad*, EINE, vol. IX, Leiden 1977, p. 296; F. Daftary, *Ismāʿīlīs*, especially pp. 444–448, 451–452.

After Raḍī ad-Dīn's death in 1262 (660), leadership over the community of Syrian Nizārīs was taken over by Naḡm ad-Dīn, who was distantly related to his predecessor, at least due to marrying his daughter off to Šā rim ad-Dīn Mubārak, Raḍī ad-Dīn's son.¹³ Naḡm ad-Dīn was almost eighty years old in that time. His *nisba*: Aš-Ša'rānī, derives from a place, which may point to his descent from territories of an enormous Aš-Šām region (most likely from today's Lebanon) and from one of Arab tribes settled there.¹⁴ There are certain reasons which support the thesis that in the face of the end of the Alamūt centre and annihilation of Rukn ad-Dīn Ḥuršāh, imām of Alamūt, Naḡm ad-Dīn acknowledged himself as "a visible imām" of the Nizārīs. Posing as the imām of the Nizārīs, that is, through Nizar, the successor of the caliphate heritage of the Fatimids, he could not accept any limitations on his apparently sovereign power. Therefore, when in February 1270 (Ġumādā II 668 H.) Baybars was going to Ḥiṣn al-Akrād, situated close to the lands of Nizārī Ismā'īlīs, Naḡm ad-Dīn, as opposed to other emirs ruling the neighboring lands (between Hama and Tortosa), did not appear before the sultan to render allegiance to him. Baybars felt deeply offended by the conduct of the Nizārī leader, and in effect he decided to remove him from power, disregarding the ideas of Nizārī sectarians. When soon afterwards Naḡm ad-Dīn sent his son-in-law, Šārim ad-Dīn, having custody of the Al-Ullayqa fortress, to Baybars in order to negotiate reduction in the amount of tribute paid to the Mamlūks by the Nizārīs, the sultan did not show anger to the sect's envoy, but trying to set the community of Syrian Nizārī Ismā'īlīs at variance, acted in a similar way like soon after 1261, when he acknowledged Ġamāl ad-Dīn Ḥasan Ibn Tābit, the emissary of the Syrian Nizārīs, as their leader, though it was Raḍī ad-Dīn, who was the legitimate "imām."¹⁵ Also in this case, Baybars nominated the prominent Nizārī envoy to be the leader of their community, despite the fact that in the light of the Shi'ite-Ismā'īlī doctrine, such an action could never be accepted. The sultan made Šārim ad-Dīn virtually the emir of the main Nizārī fortresses in Ġabal Bahra, with the exception of the Masyāf fortress, which he intended to give as a sort of a fief (*tablkhana*) to one of his leaders. Šārim ad-Dīn, who was entrusted with the task of managing the Nizārī fortresses as the plenipotentiary of Baybars, set about performing tasks granted to him at the end of February and beginning of March 1270 (Ġumādā II – Raḡab 668). At first the elderly Naḡm ad-Dīn tried to oppose his son-in-law,¹⁶ but he finally acquiesced, probably having been given a guarantee from Šārim ad-Dīn that his position of the imām will be respected.

¹³ N.A. Mirza, *Syrian Ismailism*, pp. 58, 125 note 5; Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, p. 431.

¹⁴ Al-Maqrīzī instead of *nisba* Ša'rānī introduces mistakenly the name-derived element: 'Shaghrāt', Maqrīzī, French trans. E. Quatremère, vol. I, part. 2, p. 79: 'Schagrat,' which must have been the copyist's mistake.

¹⁵ Casus Ġamāl ad-Dīn's see Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rikh al-Malik az-Zahir*, Ed. A. Hutayt, pp. 268–269; Moufazzal Ibn Abil-Faza'il, *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks. Texte arabe publié et traduit en Français par E. Blochet*, Patrologia Orientalis, vol. XII, Paris, 1919, pp. 433–434 (the name of that person is not given there), Ibn ad-Dawādārī, *Kanz ad-Durar*, ed. U. Harman, Cairo 1971, vol. VIII, pp. 84–85.

¹⁶ F. Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, 432.

Certain suggestion indicating caliph-imām aspirations of the leaders of Syrian Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs can be found in Naǧm ad-Dīn's letter sent to Manfred, the king of Sicily and natural son of the emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen, towards the end of 1265.¹⁷ This letter, which is included both in the Latin *Cosmography* code of the University Library in Basilea from the first half of the 15th century and in *Itinerarium Syriacum* written by Francesco Petrarca,¹⁸ was discovered by Hans Lieb (Zurich), who made a German medievalist, professor Hans Martin Schaller, the historian researching the Hohenstaufen period, interested in the matter. The latter published the Latin text of the letter together with an extensive commentary in 1965.¹⁹ In my opinion, the analysis of the content of the letter made by H.M. Schaller, together with the critical edition of the letter itself, is excellent and still relevant today. Therefore, I will take the liberty of referring to the basic findings of the German scholar. Due to its unique form, the letter was qualified by the librarian Carl Roth in 1910 as a work connected with mathematics and natural history and as such it was entered into the catalogue of manuscripts of the Library in Basilea with the title *De re geometria*.²⁰ Schaller has certain grounds to suspect that the Latin text of the letter was an indirect translation from the Arabic language through a translation into Greek. It could be proved by unique Greek name forms of the authors of the letter, i.e. Eleasar as the "Old Man of the Mountain," his son Cleopatras and Bucifalus, the younger brother of assassins' leader, mentioned in the narration. Proper names of Assassins' leaders (Syrian Nizārīs), though a bit peculiar in this form, refer to real people, as it was proved by the German scholar, e.g. to Naǧm ad-Dīn, the leader of Syrian Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs, to his son Šams ad-Dīn and to Šārim ad-Dīn Mubārak, the son-in-law of the former and the brother-in-law of the latter, who was co-ruling with them.²¹

From the typically "geometrical" arenga of the letter it can be deduced that Eleasar, "the Old Man of the Mountain" and his son Cleopatras make a promise to Manfred, the king of Sicily to help him in his struggle with the pope and Charles of Anjou. H.M. Schaller assumed rightfully as *terminus post quem* of issuing the letter the date 28 June 1265, when Clemens IV granted the Kingdom of Sicily to Charles of Anjou to hold in fee, and as *terminus ante quem* early spring of 1266, or the time before the news of the battle of Benevent (26 February 1266) and of the death of king Manfred reached Syria.²² It can be deduced from the letter that it was issued before 1 February 1266 (*infra Kalendas Februarii*).²³ Manfred was offered aid in the form of potential

¹⁷ For the text of this letter see: H.M. Schaller, *König Manfred und die Assassinen*, in: „Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters“, 1965, vol. XXI, pp. 192–193.

¹⁸ Schaller, p. 175, see U. Ganz-Blättler, *Andacht und Abenteuer: Berichte europäischer Jerusalem- und Santiago-Pilger (1320–1520)*, Tübingen 2000, pp. 166–167.

¹⁹ Schaller, op. cit., pp. 173–193.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

²¹ Schaller, p. 179, see also F. Daftary, *Ismāʿīlīs*, pp. 431–433.

²² Schaller, op. cit., p. 178.

²³ Lat. text. p. 192 Schaller's commentary p. 180.

elimination by the assassins' commando unit led by Bucifalus (Šārim ad-Dīn?) of two major opponents of Manfred, i.e. the pope Clemens IV and Charles of Anjou, who had been designated by him as the king of Sicily.²⁴ It is hard to establish how serious the leader of Syrian assassins was in his declarations, but I do not intend to elaborate on this topic here. Eleasar (Nağm ad-Dīn) wants to be perceived here as a powerful ruler (or leader), which was expressed in the Latin translation by the New Testament formula: *rex regum, et Dominus Dominantium* (the King of kings and the Lord of lords).²⁵ It is important to notice that in the inscription from the Masyāf fortress, dated to c. 1223 (620 H.?), Muḥammad Ibn Ḥasan, the imām of Alamūt is referred to as an omnipotent lord, the king of kings, with the addition of *laqab* 'Alā' ad-Dunyā wa-ad-Dīn, and his Syrian "delegate", Al-Ḥasan Ibn Mas'ūd, has a *laqab* Kamāl ad-Dunyā wa-ad-Dīn. Dā'ī Ḥusayn is mentioned here as *ṣaḥib*, which means "master".²⁶ Another inscription, dated to Ramaḍān 635 H. (February 1237) mentions Muẓaffar Ibn al-Ḥusayn as the builder of a bath house. He is referred to as *mawla* and *ṣaḥib*, with the addition of a honorary title Sirāğ ad-Dunyā wa-ad-Dīn, which, combined with the formula *a'azza Allāh ansārahu* ("may God reinforce his victories"), may, at first glance, indicate a leader from Syria. Furthermore, he has honorary titles *al-'ālim* and *al-'ādil*.²⁷ This record points to special respect paid to the leader of Syrian Nizārīs. When Max van Berchem was interpreting these titles, he did not attach any special significance to them, believing that they were quite common.²⁸ I do not share his view. Were it not for the fact that it is known that Muẓaffar Ibn al-Ḥusayn was formally delegated by the imām of Alamūt, it could be assumed that this title was attributed to him.²⁹

A clear depreciation of the position of Nizārī leaders in Syria can be noticed in the inscription on the wall by the entrance to a mosque in Qadmūs, which was still legible in Van Berchem's times. This mosque was erected or rather renovated by mentioned

²⁴ A little earlier the pope Urban IV (1261–1264) announced that a certain apostate monk from the Order of Saint James of Altopascio (Ordine di San Jacopo di Altopascio, Lucca, founded towards the end of 11th century as a branch of Santiago de Compostella) called Cavalcanti set off to France with two assassins, provided with five different types of poisonous substances, to kill Charles of Anjou, see J. Hauziński, *Muzułmańska sekta asasynów w europejskim piśmiennictwie wieków średnich* (in Polish, English Summary), Poznań 1978, p. 145. Al-Maqrīzī, who might have been influenced by these rumours, wrote under the month of Ġumādā I 664 H. (8.II.1265–9.III.1265) that envoys of Manfred and king Alfonso of Castile (don Pedro or Jaime I of Aragon might be referred to here) sent to the leader of Syrian Assassins, reached Egypt, see Makrizi, *Histoire*, vol. I, part 2, p. 24, French trans. E. Quatremère. Arab. text of the work Al-Maqrīzī's, *Kitab as-sulūk*, ed. M.M. Ziyāda, was unavailable for me.

²⁵ The Revelation of St John the Divine, 19,16, 1.Tim.6,15.

²⁶ Max van Berchem, *Épigraphie des Assassins de Syrie*, J.A., IX, série 9, 1897, p. 482 (Arab passage).

²⁷ Van Berchem, p. 488 (Arab passage), commentary p. 489.

²⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 489.

²⁹ These must be elements of titles indicating power, which may derive from the Fatimid chancery, with the title of the spiritual leader: *mawlana*. The chancery procedures of the Fatimid government are analyzed in the fundamental study of S.M. Stern, *Fatimid Decrees: Original Documents from the Fatimid Chancery*. London 1964.

here Nağm ad-Dīn himself, the leader of Syrian Nizārīs and of fortresses belonging to them for some time, together with adjoining properties. As we have seen, Baybars was gradually restricting the scope of power of that elderly man and of his son, Šams ad-Dīn, whose name is often mentioned next to the name of his father; it happened especially when pressure occurred on the part of the sultan of Egypt. They hold in the inscription considered here the titles of *mawlā* and *ṣāḥib*, given in the plural.³⁰ Due to the fact that the inscription is not dated, it could be assumed that it comes from the times of breaking independence of the Syrian enclave of nizārism by Baybars, namely from c. 1270.

Arabic sources from late Middle Ages contain basic information referring to breaking Nizārī enclaves in Syria, which involved resistance on the part of local Ismā'īlī leaders.³¹

Already in 1264/664 H. Baybars strictly forbade the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs to take tributes and forced gifts which were sent to the Nizārīs by various Frankish rulers and by the king Yaman, the gifts which were transferred through Egypt.³² He considered himself a seigneur of all Syrian princes, including the Nizārī leaders. Old Nağm ad-Dīn, who wanted to be perceived by his community as an imām and in a way also as a caliph, avoided showing obedience to Baybars officially.³³ When in February 1270 (Ġumādā II 668) the sultan was encamped at the foot of the Kurd's Castle belonging to the Hospitallers (Ḥiṣn al-Akrād, Krak des Chevaliers), local feudal lords, such as prince Hama and the ruler of Saḥyūn, made a personal appearance, to pay him homage. Nağm ad-Dīn did not follow their example, but he sent a messenger, asking to reduce the tribute paid every year into sultan's treasury, in place of the one which the sect had paid before to Christian feudal lords.³⁴ Baybars felt offended by Nağm ad-Dīn's behavior and he decided to replace him with somebody else on the position of the leader of Syrian Nizārīs, disregarding in this point ideas of Ismā'īlī sectarians. During negotiations regarding the amount of the tribute paid to the Mamlūks by the "men of the mission" (Nizārīs), the Sultan nominated Šārim ad-Dīn Mubārak, the son-in-law of the old imām, as the leader of their community.³⁵ Baybars recognized in Šārim ad-Dīn his plenipotentiary, and he

³⁰ Van Berchem, op. cit., p. 495 and pp. 497–498 note 1.

³¹ Ch. Deffrémery, *Nouvelles recherches*, pp. 48–65; Van Berchem, op. cit., pp. 496, seq.; M.G.S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, pp. 272–275; F. Daftary, op. cit., pp. 428 seq.; P. Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt. Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. P.M. Holt, London 1992, pp. 147, 176, 201–203.

³² Al-Maqrīzī, *Histoire*, vol. I, part 2, p. 24, and Badr ad-Dīn Aynī, *Iqd al-ğumān*, extracts in RHC HO, vol. II, part 1, p. 233, see also Ch. Deffrémery, *Nouvelles recherches*, pp. 50–52, F. Daftary, p. 432, Ibn al-Furāt, *Ayyubids, Mamelukes and Crusaders. Selections from the Tarikh al-Duwal wa'l-Mulūk of Ibn al-Furāt. Text and translation by U. and M.C. Lyons*, Cambridge, t. I–II Cambridge 1971, T. I, Arab text p. 106, trans. p. 83.

³³ Al-Maqrīzī, *Histoire*, vol. I, part 2, pp. 32, 40 and 42, Ibn al-Furāt, p. 106, trans. 83.

³⁴ Al-Maqrīzī, *Histoire*, vol. I, part 2, p. 79, see also Ch. Deffrémery, p. 57.

³⁵ Abu al-Fida, *Al-Mukhtasar fi ta'rikh al-bashar*, in RHC HO, vol. I, Paris 1872, p. 153, Al-Maqrīzī, *Histoire*, pp. 79–80, see also F. Daftary, *Isma'ilis*, p. 432, N.A. Mirza, *Syrian Ismailism*, p. 62.

entrusted to him the custody of Nizārī fortresses. The sultan demanded from the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs handing over the Masyāf fortress.

Chronology of these events, recorded only in the chronicles of Baybars's reign and in compilations of Egyptian history from late Middle Ages, is not clear enough. What is more, for the date of assuming the position of sultan's administrator of "the country of heretics" (*bilād ad-da'wā*) by Šārim ad-Dīn, the sources mention the month Ġumādā II 668 H. (26.01.–23.02.1270).³⁶ Nağm ad-Dīn could not accept the decision taken by an external factor. Regarding himself as a legitimate leader of Syrian assassins (Nizārīs), Šārim ad-Dīn, residing in the Al-Ullayqa fortress was trying to create a fast stronghold in "the country of the mission," which was to be achieved by capturing the Masyāf fortress. He stormed the fortress on his own initiative in mid-Rağab 668 (c. 10 March 1270), he killed his opponents staying in the fortress (both supporters of Nağm ad-Dīn's imāmate and advocates of compromise with Baybars) and he recognized himself as a leader independent from Baybars.³⁷ Baybars issued an unequivocal edict demanding handing over to him Ismā'īlī centers (Nizārī/Assassins) in *bilād ad-da'wā*. Šārim ad-Dīn did not hold out in Masyāf for long, and he left it probably in early April 1270 (27 Ġumādā II 668), which would mean that he surrendered voluntarily. It seems more probable, however, that the imām-junior of the Nizārīs was driven from the Masyāf fortress by Ayyubid Al-Malik al-Manšūr, the emir of Hama, and he sent him as prisoner to Cairo, where, after some time, he departed this life.³⁸

After the deposition of Šārim ad-Dīn, Baybars restored old Nağm ad-Dīn as the "lord of the mission" in Syria and he kept by his side his son, Šams ad-Dīn, as the guarantor of imām's loyalty. In the first days of the siege of Ḥiṣn al-Akrād, at the end of February and beginning of March 1271, Baybars's people captured two members of the sect, who had been sent as envoys from Ullayqa to Bohemond VI, the senior of Tripoli.³⁹ According to Ibn al-Furāt, the latter persuaded them to kill the sultan.⁴⁰ Šams ad-Dīn, who was staying with Baybars in the time covered by the agreement of his father with Baybars, was accused of plotting with the Franks. Nağm ad-Dīn took the blame upon himself and he admitted that he was responsible for sending those emissaries of death, but he added that they could be useful in another matter, after hearing which Baybars set them free.⁴¹ Soon afterwards Šams ad-Dīn went to the Al-Kahf fortress to put affairs in order, reputedly to the sultan's advantage. He promised not to stay there longer than twenty days.⁴² In the meantime, Šams ad-Dīn's father accompanied the sultan in his journeys. He was present when Al-Qurayn was captured, and afterwards he got to Egypt, where Šams ad-Dīn was to join him. After his return to Egypt, Baybars received letters,

³⁶ See also Ch. Defrémery, *Nouvelles recherches*, p. 58.

³⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *Histoire*, p. 80; Ch. Defrémery, p. 59; F. Daftary, *Isma'ilis*; N.A. Mirza, p. 62.

³⁸ Ch. Defrémery, op. cit., p. 60; F. Daftary, op. cit., p. 433; N.A. Mirza, op. cit., p. 63.

³⁹ Defrémery, p. 61; Daftary, op. cit., p. 433.

⁴⁰ Ibn al-Furat, *Ayyubids, Mamelukes and Crusaders*. vol. I Arab text p. 185, vol. II, trans. p. 146.

⁴¹ Defrémery, op. cit., p. 61; Daftary, op. cit., p. 433.

⁴² Abu al-Fida, op. cit., p. 158; Defrémery, op. cit., p. 62.

in which he was informed that his governors attacked Ar-Ruṣāfa, the castle belonging to the Ismāʿīlīs.⁴³

Since Šams ad-Dīn, like his brother-in-law Šārim ad-Dīn Mubārak before, showed disobedience to the sultan by trying to retain command over the Ismāʿīlī fortresses, Baybars sent letters to his emirs with the order to perform military operations. On 23 May 1271 (11 Šawwāl 669), his commanders stormed and overran fortifications of the Al-Ullayqa fortress, and in less than three weeks afterwards, on c. 10 June 1271 (late Šawwāl), they captured the Ar-Ruṣāfa fortress.⁴⁴ In the same year the garrison of Al-Ḥawābī and its Nizārī inhabitants were persuaded to surrender to the Mamlūk administrators by two prominent “Assassins” (*wālī ad-daʿwā* and *nāẓir*), who had been arrested in Sarmina by Baybars’s commanders.⁴⁵ Šams ad-Dīn was determined to retain Nizārī assets, but due to pressure put on him by the Mamlūk administration he appealed to his followers to surrender Al-Kahf. Despite the fact that he encountered opposition on their part, finally, on 3 August 1271 (26 Šafar 670), he surrendered to the sultan.⁴⁶ Maneuvering, he was faking submissiveness towards Baybars, but in fact he intended to protect his community’s independence and his sect’s assets. Referring to what was said above, I assume that he was that *admirallus* (also: *almirallus*) of the Saracens who established relations with prince Edward, first on his own initiative to continue later on the orders of the sultan.⁴⁷ In the latter case, he promised to send his people to kill Edward.

Submitting of Shams ad-Dīn to the sultan did not mean surrendering the Al-Kahf fortress, which put up resistance for almost twenty one months (October 1271–July 1273). In May 1273 (Dū al-qaʿda 671) Al-Ḥawābī, Qulayʿa, Manīqa and Qadmūs surrendered to the sultan. Finally, on 10 July 1273 (22 Dū al-ḥiġġa 671) the garrison of Al-Kahf, the last bridgehead of independence of the mini-state of Syrian Nizārīs, capitulated.⁴⁸ Baybars, before the final subjugation of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī lands in Syria, started to use their *fidawīs* against his enemies from crusaders’ camp. He followed this tactic when he decided to have Philip of Montfort, the seignior of Tyr, assassinated (17 August 1270), and when he organized the attempt on the life of prince Edward, the English heir to the throne (16 June 1272), which was mentioned above. Also, the attempt on the life of Bartholomew, the ruler of Maraclea (Marqiyya), in October 1271 proved to be unsuccessful, as he had

⁴³ On capturing Al-Ullayqa see Al-Maqrīzī, *Histoire*, p. 87, also in Abu al-Fida, op. cit., pp. 153–154, see also Defrémery, op. cit., p. 62.; F. Daftary, op. cit., p. 433.

⁴⁴ Ibn Abd az-Zahir, *Sirat al-Malik az-Zahir*, p. 174; see also Defrémery, op. cit., p. 62; Daftary, op. cit., p. 433.

⁴⁵ Defrémery, op. cit., p. 64; Mirza, op. cit., p. 64.

⁴⁶ Defrémery, op. cit., p. 63. However, the garrison of Al-Kahf still put up resistance, which was finally broken in July 1273 (Dū al-ḥiġġa 671), see Daftary, op. cit., p. 433, Defrémery, op. cit., pp. 64–65.

⁴⁷ J. Hauziński, *The Attempt on the Life of Prince Edward of England in the light of the unfinished account in Chronicon of Melrose* (in Polish; in press).

⁴⁸ Ch. Melville, ‘Sometimes by the sword, sometimes by the dagger’: The role of the Ismaʿilis in Mamlūk-Mongol relations in the 8th/14th century, in: *Medieval Ismaʿili History and Thought*, ed. F. Daftary, Cambridge 1996, p. 247; N.A. Mirza, *Syrian Ismailism*, p. 65 notified as 9 July AD 1273; P. Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt*, pp. 201–203.

fled to the Mongols.⁴⁹ What is more, Charles Melville clarified the political context of the Ismā'īlī assassination operation inspired by the Mamlūk sultan An-Nāṣir Muḥammad against Qarasunqūr, the Mamlūk emir, who went over to the Mongol side.⁵⁰

The Nizārī Ismā'īlīs, however, did not restrict their activity to acts of terrorism in the service of early Mamlūk sultans. They were still practicing their religious beliefs, and their intellectual elite was writing theological treaties, most of which were later destroyed during conflicts with Nusayris.⁵¹ They were allowed to stay in old centres, such as Masyāf, Qadmūs, Al-Kahf. They also formed small communities in urban areas in Central and Northern Syria.⁵² They organized themselves into communities which resembled tariqas of the Sufis. It is likely that there were some people among the local leaders who claimed to be the sayyds (descendants of Al-Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib), aspiring to the rank of imāms, reputedly by Alids descent.

One can raise a question whether it is possible in the case of Nizārī ṣayḥs (*du'ā'*) of Ġabal Bahra to make the rank of local Ismā'īlī leader equal with the concept of imām? It is a well-known fact that in Fatimid Ismā'īlism the imāmate doctrine came second to cosmological considerations and to philosophy of existence, while in Iranian Ismā'īlism (Nizārism) this doctrine, based on the ta'lim paradigm, reached its full form.⁵³ However, the past of Ismā'īlism in its general historical aspect proves that the concept of imām was subject to various transformations and modifications.⁵⁴ Already at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries, clear divisions occurred in the outlook on imāmate in the Ismā'īlī community of the Middle East. In the times of the Fatimids further fluctuations and controversies arouse which resulted in the creation of the Druze movement, whose initial assumptions remain vague.⁵⁵ Next, after a split into mustalis and Nizārīs (1094/95), after 1130, further division within mustalis Ismā'īlism occurs into branches of Ḥāfiziyya and Ṭayyibiyya. The latter referred to traditional thought of the early Fatimid period and to Iranian philosophers from that period, especially to A l - K i r m ā n ī.⁵⁶

I will restrict my considerations here to the general outlook on the evolution of the imāmate doctrine in the Nizārī community. In 1164/558 H., Ḥasan II Ibn Muḥammad (1162–1166), the current *ḥuġġat* of the imām and the leader of all Nizārīs, proclaimed the beginning of Mahdi era and he informed his followers that due to the order of

⁴⁹ See Melville, op. cit., pp. 247–248.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 248–259.

⁵¹ Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, p. 532.

⁵² N.N. Lewis, *The Ismā'īlīs of Syria today*, "Royal Central Asian Society Journal" 1952, XXXIX, pp. 69–77.

⁵³ Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, pp. 349–350, 368–370, 389–395 (in the *qiyāma*).

⁵⁴ *The Fatimids and their Traditions of learning*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London–New York 1997, esp. pp. 1–2; W. Madelung, *Imāma*, EINE, t. III, H-IRAM, 1986, pp. 1167–1169.

⁵⁵ Ph.K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Druze People and Religion*, AMS PRESS, New York 1966 (first ed. 1928), pp. 11–20; M.G.S. Hodgson, *Al-Darazī and Hamza in the Origin of the Druze Religion*, "JAOS" 1962, LXXXII, pp. 5–20.

⁵⁶ Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, p. 291; idem, *A Short History of the Ismailis. Traditions of a Muslim Community*, Edinburgh 1998, p. 113.

Imām-Mahdi, opening a new era, shari'a ceased to be valid.⁵⁷ It was expressed symbolically by the faithful by turning back to Mekka during *ḥuṭba*. Ḥasan II, who at first refrained from pointing at himself as Imām-Mahdi, finally "revealed himself," which could be the reason of his elimination. However, his son and successor, Muḥammad II (1166–1210) sustained Ḥasan II's revelations, claiming that his father was indeed Imām-Qā'im and that he (Muḥammad) is also somebody like that. During his reign philosophical writing in the spirit of qiyama and in the doctrine of Nizārī imāmate proliferated.⁵⁸ It was particularly important there to emphasize the unique role of the current imām, who exceeded his predecessors, as he was the epiphany (*al-maẓhar*) of the word of God.

During the reign of Ḥasan III (1210–1221), Muḥammad II's son and successor, the *Qiyāma* doctrine was concealed – the "era of concealment" (*dawr as-satr*) followed and return to orthodoxy (virtually to shari'a) was officially proclaimed. 'Alā' ad-Dīn Muḥammad III Ibn Ḥasan, who went next in the line of Nizārī imāms, after reaching maturity interpreted the attitude of his father as a matter of *taqiyya*, hiding one's views to avoid persecution, and he openly returned to the theory of Imām-Qā'im, personified by himself.⁵⁹

Imāmate was inherited from his murdered father by Rukn ad-Dīn Ḥuršāh (December 1255), but being overthrown by the Mongol incursion, he did not manage to develop any theoretical assumptions. However, both him and his supporters had no doubts concerning inalienability of his imāmate. It was also accepted that from the Fatimid Nizār and his descendants, and next by Ḥasan II, 'alā *dikrihi as-salām* Ḥuršāh is a legitimate heir to imāmate on a *nass* basis. This rule was not applied, however, after his elimination and after the fall of the state of Ismā'īlīs of Alamūt in the case of Syrian Nizārīs.

Wilferd Madelung elucidates the fate of sources concerning the history of Syrian Nizārism after their independence was broken by the Mamlūks: "Syrian Nizārī literature, written in Arabic, developed independently of the Persian literature, even during the Alamūt period. Persian works were not translated in Arabic or vice-versa. The Syrian community preserved a substantial selection of Fatimid religious literature, partially different from those preserved by the Ṭayyibīs. Even though the *Qiyāma* was proclaimed apparently with some delay, in Syria, the *Qiyāma* doctrine had practically no impact there. The scholarly doctrine continued mostly in the Fatimid tradition. Syrian doctrinal works, while concentrating on the traditional cosmology and cyclical history, virtually ignored the current imām, the central figure in the Persian Alamūt and post-Alamūt doctrine. In religious literature of a popular type Rašīd ad-Dīn Sinan is extolled as a saintly hero and his cosmic rank is described in terms appropriate to the imām. Much of the Syrian Ismā'īlī literature was destroyed later during the feuds with neighboring communities."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ala ad-Din Ata Malik Juwaini, *Ta'rikh-i jahān-gushāy*, English trans. John A. Boyle, *The History of the World-Conqueror*. Cambridge, Mass., vol. II, 1858, p. 696; Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, pp. 389–391, 395.

⁵⁸ Daftary, op. cit., pp. 393–394; W. Madelung, *Ismā'īliyya*, EINE, vol. IV, EI, Leiden 1978, p. 205; Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, p. 160; Lewis, *Assassins*, p. 75.

⁵⁹ Madelung, *Ismā'īliyya*, p. 205.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 206.

It must have been reflected also in religious ideas of the community of Syrian Nizārīs, which survived through next centuries. Syrian theoreticians of nizārīsm referred to the doctrinal heritage of Rašīd ad-Dīn Sinān, which has not survived to the present day. However, some writings in legendary tone glorificating Sinān are known.⁶¹ In that tradition, which was partially transmitted orally, he is presented as imām, sayyid Muḥammad Ibn Ḥusayn.⁶² After Al-Kahf was captured (1273) by troops of Baybars, the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs continued to maintain their identity and the foundations of their *da'wā*, in spite of coming under the rule of the Sunni Mamlūks. When Ibn Baṭṭūṭa passed through Syria in 1326/726, he reported that the Ismā'īlīs controlled several fortresses, which they were allowed to keep by Mamlūk authorities.⁶³ Historical sources, however, are silent about religious leaders of the Syrian branch of Ismā'īlīs. It could be assumed that another cycle of concealment began for them. During the later part of the Ottoman rule in Syria “intense rivalries between the two ruling Nizārī families centred at Masyāf and Qadmūs further weakened the Nizārī community of Syria.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, pp. 196, 199; Daftary, *Ismaili Literature. A Bibliography of Sources and Studies*, London–New York 2004, p. 57.

⁶² 'Arif Tāmīr, *Al-Imāma fī'l-Islām*, Dār al-Kātib al-'Arabī, Bayrūt 1964, pp. 197–198.

⁶³ Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismaili*, pp. 168–169.

⁶⁴ Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, p. 531.