

# I SMAILIS



THROUGH

# II ISTORY

**Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali**

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**Islamic Book Publisher  
P.O. Box No. 5315  
Karachi, Pakistan**

**A Profile : Mr. Sadruddin Noorani**

Lives of great men all received us. We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us. Footprints on the sands of time  
(Longfellow)

It is indeed a unique occasion to introduce to the readers a personality of great distinction and respect.

**Mr. Sadruddin Noorani**, whose zeal to serve the communities with distinction is a "Reflect-o-Prospect" traditionally carried over from his ancestors. **Mr. Noorani's** grandfather, **Mr. Wali Muhammad Badalpara** had left behind a shining footprint to be emulated. He was known to have carried brick by brick on his shoulders to build a boarding school at Malia Hatina in District Junagadh, India. Over the years, the building has become a significant landmark as **His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan** would invariably stay at that building whenever he visits this historic city. The tradition of this noble services was carried over in same vein by **Mr. Noorani's** father, **Mr. Rajabali Badalpara** who also ventured in many meaningful welfare projects. His sterling contribution in A 60-Unit Housing Project at Mymensingh, Bangladesh is yet another glaring example of this family's resolve to serve the mankind.

**Mr. Sadruddin Noorani** has also retained the torch with the same breath as a gleaming beacon. His dedicated service to the Asian American Community and other civic contribution in U.S.A., has procured him an exceptional commendation and recognition from the Governor, State of Illinois, the Mayor, city of Chicago and many other notable offices of the United States of America. By virtue of being the only Muslim, who is elected for the fourth consecutive term as a member of Chicago's Local School Council, **Mr. Noorani** has been effectual in securing many notable progress towards:-

- \* *The "Observance of Muslim Holidays and Festivals" In Chicago public schools;*
- \* *Elimination of serving pork for school lunch;*
- \* *Efforts are underway to Introduce Islamic Curriculum in 560 Chicago public schools;*
- \* *Significant stride has been made towards "Bride Building" for Islam with many ethnic, local, mainstream American Communities and the government;*
- \* *Inclusion of articles in Chicago schools newsletter which explain the "Salient Features" of different Islamic observances and festivals.*

We are confident that the admirable role of **Mr. Sadruddin Noorani** towards the community welfare shall be remembered and appreciated for a long time to come. We pray from the core of our hearts for his longer life and prosperity. (Amen)

P.S. - Some portion of this article is published through the kind courtesy of **"Unity Times International - U.S.A."** (February, 1996, Issue No. 66, Vol. IX)



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# HISTORY



Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali



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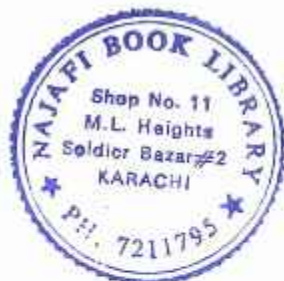
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First Edition

Jan., 1997



**Islamic Book Publisher**  
**P.O. Box No. 5315**  
**Karachi, Pakistan**



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## FORWARD

**ISMAILI** historiography was connected with the beginning of orientalism when French scholar A.I. Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) wrote his famous *"Exposé sur la religion des Druzes"* (1838). But this was only a compilation of Sunni sources which were in general very hostile. That is why the real Ismaili historiography begun indeed under Sultan Muhammad Shah, the Aga Khan III at the very beginning of 20th century. A Persian scholar, Fidayi Khurasani was invited by the Imam in Bombay where he was able to achieve around 1902 his *"Hidayat-i Mu'minin"*. But this work was not really realized from a scientific point of view. The author included some miracles of the Imams even in modern times. With scholars like W. Ivanow (1886-1970) or L. Massignon (1883-1962), Ismaili studies growth but curiously, if the knowledge and the understanding of the Ismaili literature and doctrine increased, historiography was forsaken. However, in 1936, the editor of the review *"Ismaili"*, A.J. Chunara wrote the famous *"Noorum Moobin"* in Gujrati. It was the very first attempt in historiography from an Indian point of view. The book became very popular and it was reprinted; until now, most of the Khoja families possess it. A few years later, in 1940, A.S. Picklay produced the first synthesis in English. In 1964, a Libanese scholar, M. Ghalib, published the first attempt in the Arabian world. Since that period, F. Daftary published in 1990 his masterly *"The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines"*. Next year, in 1991, the Syrian scholar, Arif Tamir proposed his *"Tarikh al-Ismailiya"*. The first one embraced all the Ismaili community all over the world; the second is more involved into Arabic Ismailism.

**TODAY**, in 1995, a Pakistani Ismaili from Karachi, Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali published *"Ismailis through History."* I work in collaboration with him since many years. He allowed me to obtain very important Ismaili documents and arranged talks in National Tariqah Board when I was in Karachi, February, 1995. Mumtaz Ali Tajddin is well known for different works published in reviews or as separate booklets. For instance, there are *"Pir Shahabud Din Shah al-Rusayni"* in A.R. Kanji (ed.), *"Great*

*Ismaili Heroes*", Karachi, 1973; *"Imam Shamsud-din Mohammad"*, Ilm, London, March-June, 1981, vol. 6, no. 4; *"Satpanth Literature"*, Ilm, London, vol. 7, no. 1 and 2, July-November, 1981; *"Sayyida Bibi Imam Begum"*, Hidayat, Karachi, 1989; *"The Genealogy of the Aga Khan"*, Islamic Book Publishers, Karachi, 1990; *"Lawfulness of Imam's Photograph in Prayer-Hall in Islam: Tradition of Ismaili Muslims examined and elucidated"*, Karachi, 1990.

**THIS** new history is especially focused on the Ismaili Imams. Of course, some books about that topic have ever been written by Ismailis. But Mumtaz Ali Tajddin's one is important because it is the first one which is based on a scientific method. As a matter of fact, the author compares systematically different sources about a specific problem, and by way of rationality, he comes to a conclusion. The work is divided into six parts:- 1) *The Arabian period* 2) *Syrian period* 3) *North African and Egyptian period.* 4) *Alamut period* 5) *Post-Alamut period,* and 6) *The Aga Khans period.* All these parts form a blameless synthesis. Mumtaz Ali Tajddin quotes his sources but above the scientific outlook, the reading is very attractive because it allies successfully a living style and a strong analysis of the interaction of all the different factors which build history. Another important fact is that Mumtaz Ali Tajddin knows how to choose the right quotation. For instance, about the death of Sultan Muhammad Shah, he quotes the famous words of his son Prince Aly Khan; according to him, the last Aga Khan passed away repeating a verse of the Koran.

**IT** is important to note that Mumtaz Ali Tajddin is well acquainted with all the numerous literature about Ismaili studies. On the other hand, he uses often brand new sources. It is especially true in the modern times. Every reader can be sure to learn new informations. For instance, the author founded a document narrating Imam Ali Shah's funeral. According to one Mukhi Kassim Musa (d. 1314/1896), the journey from Bombay to Najaf lasted 25 days. Above all, this document teaches us how respected was the Imam even in the countries like Iraq. At the port of Kazimayn, 500 soldiers paid tribute to him with musket shootings. A crowd of over 15 thousand people turdged with the bier until Kerbala. Last but not least, Mumtaz Ali



Tajddin is able to indicate fields of research in Ismaili studies. His last words are an injunction to study Aga Khan IV's activities especially his various projects for the Shia Ismaili Muslim communities of different countries. **TWO** years ago, in February, 1993, I met Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan in Geneva, Switzerland. He asked me the question:- "What do you think about the future of the Ismaili community?" May be there was some preoccupation in his interrogation. I do not think that I gave a very good answer because in fact it is lost in my memory. On the other hand, I know quite well what I should answer now. The Ismaili community is well organized under the protection of Imam Shah Karim. The institutions developed in such a way as to integrate, after the fall of communism, the Central-Asian communities. Moreover, the spirit of Ismailism is alive and it is evident that it will never die. Because Ismaili tradition always produced - and then always will produce people like Mumtaz Ali Tajddin. Ismaili institutions let the research freely develop. Mumtaz Ali Tajddin is in the continuity of Ismaili scholar who, since oldest times, transmitted from generations to generations the essence of Ismailism: the quest of knowledge. Mumtaz Ali's works is an undeniable proof that Ismaili mind is characterized by an unextinguishable craving for understanding. That is why I am convinced that each Ismaili family will own the book very soon. By way, Mumtaz Ali will realize the Koranic injunctions to understand as well as Sultan Muhammad and Shah Karim's ones.

*Michel Boivin*

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**November, 1996**

## **PREFACE**

The object of this volume is to afford the history of the Ismaili Muslims and their Imams. This small tract however does not pretend to be a comprehensive treatise, but it is an attempt to view the Ismaili history through the windows of accessible primary, secondary and modern traces. In deference to this atomic age when leisure is scarce and time more fleeting than ever, I have merely tried to recapture in thought and sketched the early historical factors which played a determining and instrumental role down to the present phases of Ismailism. I have endeavoured that this simple narration should provide at a glance, as it were, a general picture of Ismaili history, in the hope that it might induce the readers, particularly the young to dwell thought-fully on this picture and to make its features a subject for further study and contemplation. If but a single reader is thus persuaded and benefited by this labour of love, I should be amply rewarded.

The present essay does not claim to be an original study in a field hitherto unexplored, but it simply aims at bringing together in accessible form materials which will be of service to the intending students to reconstruct an order, keeping in view that the out-moded thought conched in old myths can no longer a little sense in this age.

Without the generous collaboration of several colleagues in the country and abroad, this volume would not have been possible. I wish to express my deep gratitude to the pioneer efforts of the individuals and institutions. Above all, I owe a debt of love to my elder brother, **Mr. Feroz Ali Tajddin**, who had laboured to give me secular education. I am indebted to **Miss Farida Allana** for suggesting me to prepare short notes for the students on Ismaili history, which ultimately prompted me to compile this volume. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my friend, **Dr. Michel Boivin**, who during his short visit to Karachi in February, 1995, has inspected the draft, and prepared a Forward for the book. I am highly thankful to the world renowned senior Ismaili missionary, **Abu Aly A. Aris** of Canada for his timely guidance and valuable remarks on this volume. A special debt of gratitude is owed to **Mr. Zulfikar R. Meghani** and **Miss Nabila Hashwani**, who

contributed tireless hours in computer works during last four years with zeal and interest. I acknowledge my indebtedness to **Mr. Shaukat Sabzali**, whose advices and aids were of inestimable value to this project, and with him the kind cooperation of **Mr. Salim L. Ladhe** shall also be remembered. Acknowledgement is also due to **Mr. Kassim Ali Kurban Sadiwalla** of Bombay for encouraging in this project from time to time. I am highly grateful to **Mr. Mehr Ali Ashiq Ali** of Karachi for financing and helping from time to time. Lastly, I am thankful to **Mr. Aziz Ali Muhammad Jiwani**, **Mr. Noor Ali Valliani** of Hyderabad, **Mr. Sultan Ali Aswani** and **Mr. Farid Fazal Punjwani** for their timely help and encouragement.

I am not an authority in Ismaili history. This is also not a doctoral dissertation, but an output of an arduous work, labour and interest of one individual. Of its many errors, alike in plan and execution, I am fully conscious, no doubt, my attention will soon be called.

**Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali**  
**Karachi. (Pakistan)**



**PROPHET MUHAMMAD (571-632 A.D.)**

Progress made by humanity in the Near East and Europe suffered a severe setback after the fall of the Roman empire, and the 6th century saw Europe almost relapse into barbarism once again. Hardly could any Christian read or write; the priestly class enforcing on their followers the motto of Pope Gregory that "*ignorance is the mother of devotion*", demanded blind obedience to their dogmas. Likewise in Asia, the Hinduism, Buddhism and other cults had deteriorated, becoming mere bundles of outward forms and ceremonial worship. It was at this juncture that the greatest reformer Muhammad, the son of Abdullah bin Abdul Muttalib arose in Arabia. Through his love of knowledge and reverence for learning, mediaeval Europe once more was to become acquainted with art and science and the way was to be paved for the Renaissance. Stanwood Cobb, founder of the Progressive Education Association, states in similar vein:- "Islam, impinging culturally upon adjacent Christian countries, was the virtual creator of the Renaissance in Europe." (vide "*Islam's Contribution to the World Culture*", World Order, 6:202,9/40)

**The origin of the word "Arab"**

Hitherto, the first actual use of the word **Arab** in history is to be found in an Assyrian inscription of 853 B.C., commemorating the defeat of a mutinous chieftain, called **Gindibu the Aribi** during the reign of king Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.). Arabs are then mentioned quite often, until the 6th century B.C. as **Aribi** or **Arabu** that indicates a vassalage to the Assyrians. The first Greek who is accredited to have acquired some geographical knowledge was Homer, who flourished in 1000 or 800 B.C. He has referred to the Syrians under the name **Arimi** (the Biblical, **Aram**) and the Arabs under the name of **Erembi**. The place-name **Arabia** occurs for the first time in Greek writings. Herodotus (484-425 B.C.), followed by most other Greek and Latin writers, extended the term **Arabia** and **Arab** to the whole peninsula and everything in it, even including the eastern desert of Egypt between the Red Sea

and the Nile. References to the Arabs, in addition, are also found in the anonymous "**Periplus of the Erythraean Sea**" (between 95 A.D. and 130 A.C.). The word *Saracen*, first used in Greek literature too, is a transcription of an Arabic word meaning "easterner." As for the Arabs' use of the word, it occurs for the first time in the ancient epigraphical material originating in southern Arabia, where it is clearly used for Bedouin. In the north, the word is used firstly in the 4th century A.D., in one of the oldest surviving records of the language that became classical Arabic.

Further account of the Arabs comes in the 10th chapter of Genesis of the Old Testament, which names the descendants of Noah, whose elder son, Shem is regarded as the ancestor of the Hebrews, Arabs and Armaens, - the speakers of Semitic language. But the term *Arabs* is not explicitly mentioned in Genesis. It is however suggested that the "mixed multitude" (Hebrew, *erev*) mentioned in Exodus (xii, 38) as having accompanied the Israelites into the wilderness from Egypt may be for Arabs. According to "**Dictionary of the Bible**" (ed. by James Hastings, New York, 1898, 1st vol., p. 135), "The employment of the name Arab for an inhabitant of any portion of the vast peninsula known to us as Arabia, begins somewhere in the 3rd century B.C., though the only trace of it in Old Testament is in the 2 ch., 21, where the Arabians that are near the Ethiopians' would seem naturally to refer to the neighbours of the Habasha, whence there are grounds for placing in the extreme south of Yamen." The word *arabia* is expressly given to this country in the Old Testament (I Kings x. 15) when describing the visit of the Queen Sheba to Sololmon, which took place 1005 B.C. We also find the word *arabah* in Deut. i. 7 and ii. 8. Some writers hold that the village called *Arabah*, situated near Tehama, may be the name for the whole peninsula, an opinion scarcely deserving the least notice.

In the Bible, the name *Arab* is the first word used in the second book of Chronicles (xvii, 11) to refer to nomads from the east bank of the Jordan river in the time of king Jehosophat (900-800 B.C.), such as "...and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats."

The word *arab* or *arabah* is probably derived from a Semitic



root related to nomadism. In the Arabic language, the word **arab** (derived from *i'rab*), means "those who speak clearly" as contrast with **ajam** (those who speak indistinctly). In Holy Koran, the word **arab** has never used for the country of Arabia, but characterised the residence of Ismail, the son of Abraham as an "**uncultivated land.**" In the time of Ismail his place of residence had no name, therefore, it was given the name of an "**uncultivated land.**" In the Old Testament, the word **midbar** is used for Ismail's home, meaning a **desert** or a **barren land**, which closely corresponds to the Koranic description.

The peninsula was divided by the ancient geographers into **Arabia Petraea**, **Arabia Felix** and **Arabia Deserta**. The Arabia Petraea corresponded to the present Hijaz and eastern Najd. Arabia Felix to Yamen and Hazarmawt and Arabia Deserta comprised the rest of the country. Arab Peninsula (**jazirat al-Arab**) is situated in south-west Asia, embosomed with sea waters on its three sides, i.e., the Red Sea in the west, the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman in the east, and the Arabian Sea in the south; is considered to be a largest peninsula in the world with an area of about 1,230,000 sq. miles, i.e., about one third of Europe, or almost six times bigger than France, ten times that of Italy and eight times bigger than Switzerland. Geographically it is an extension of the Sahara desert. It is divided into various parts of which Hijaz, Najd, Yamen, Hazarmawt and Oman are most important. The whole land is almost barren. The climate is extremely hot in summer and the coastal tracts are among the most torrid regions.

### **Ancestry of Muhammad**

The historians traced the genealogy of Muhammad from Ismail, the son of Abraham. Ismail was born in 1910 B.C., and Muhammad in 571 A.D., therefore, the time elapsed between these two personages was almost 2480 years. During this period, there were seventy generations from Ismail to Muhammad. The most ancient and authentic of all the traditions of Arabia have been acknowledged without the least hesitation that the temple of the Kaba at Mecca had been constructed in 19th century B.C. by Abraham, who was assisted in his work by his son Ismail. The original name of the temple was **Beth-el** (House of God), but it received



the general appellation of **Kaba** as being of a cubical form. At the time of its erection, the temple of Kaba remained in possession of Ismail, after whose death his descendants became the supreme guardians of the sacred building. His descendants for the most part, migrated to different portions of the peninsula. After another considerable interval of time, the Amalekites became the sole owners of the Kaba. On this occasion, the Ismailites and the Jorhamites united together in driving out their common foe, the Amalekites, and having succeeded in so doing, the Jorhamites became the masters of the hallowed edifice.

Ismail had 12 sons, one of them being Kaidar by name whose progeny spread over the Arabian province of Hijaz. Again, it is concurred on all hands among the Arabs that Adnan, to whom Muhammad traced his descent, was also a scion of Ismail in about the fortieth generations. Further down, in the ninth descent from Adnan, there followed Nadzr bin Kinana. Another descent in the genealogical scale and then comes in the ninth place, one, Qassi by name. The supreme charge of the sacred temple then fell into the hands of Qassi in due course. Qassi established a consultative body, its meetings were held in the Kaba for decisions to be taken with regard to war, trade, tribal affairs etc. Qassi collected the scattered tribe, which gave him the title of **Qoraish**, the word is derived from **taqreish** means one who brings together to the clans. Qassi died probably in 480 A.D., and from him the charge of the Kaba descended to his eldest son, Abdul Dar, from whom the chief offices held by him were transferred to his brother, Abd Munaf.

It must be known that the principal offices in connection with the Kaba were five altogether:- 1st, **Sicaya** and **Rifada**, the exclusive privilege of supply water and food to the pilgrims; 2nd, **Kiyada**, the command of the army in time of war; 3rd, **Siva**, the right of becoming standard bearer; 4th, **Hijaba**, the guardianship of the temple of Kaba, and 5th, **Nadwa**, the right of presidency of the council. After the death of Abd Munaf, a family strife arose among his sons, on which account the offices were divided in the following order:- Hashim was invested with the charge of **Sicaya** and **Rifada**, while the descendants of Abdul Dar retained the custody of the Kaba, the presidency of the council and the right of becoming standard bearer.

When Hashim was installed to the offices, he was proved a capable and generous. He married a girl from his own family and she gave birth to his son, Asad, who in due course became the maternal grandfather of Ali bin Abu Talib, as Asad's daughter, Fatima bint Asad was Ali's mother. Hashim's second marriage actualised with a girl of Banu Najjar being noble from both sides. She gave birth to a son, called Abdul Muttalib, who later rose to be a man of great nobility and fame. Hashim died in 510 A.D., who left his dignities to his elder brother, Almutallib, after whom his nephew, Abdul Muttalib, the son of Hashim, succeeded to his paternal offices.

The Zamzam, which is a well at present in Kaba, was in days of yore, a small rill of water flowing from one of the neighbouring hills, it being the same fountain which Hagar, the mother of Ismail had discovered in the desert, and where she and her son settled. After a time, however, the water ceased gushing from its mountain source, and the little stream completely dried up. A considerable time afterwards, Abdul Muttalib had a well dug on the very spot where the spring originally was in extant. It was also in the time of Abdul Muttalib that the Yamenite king, called Abrahah invaded Mecca, but was discomfited in his attempt and compelled to make a disgraceful retreat. Since Abrahah's army had come on elephants which the Arabs had never seen before, therefore, they named the year of the event as *amul feel* (the year of elephant). Abdul Muttalib died in the height of his glory and left indelible marks of his greatness. Abdullah was one of the sons of Abdul Muttalib, who married to Amina bint Wahab. To this noble couple was born Muhammad, but before he was born his revered father died while on a journey.

From this land originated a great revolutionary wave called ISLAM, in the 7th century - a period of darkness when the sun of Islam rose on the horizon of the Arabian peninsula. Mecca (the Greek's *Macoraba* or *Rahba*), a town in the Arab peninsula, has been celebrated through the ages because it encircles the House of God (*ka'batullah*), an ancient sanctuary sacred to the Arabs.

### Pre-Islamic conditions

Demoralised state is perhaps the most comprehensive phrase through which the pre-Islamic world can be concisely



picturised. The whole world lay in the fast grip of paganism, savagery, debauchery, anarchy and other vices. Autocracy and despotism prevailed at an extreme in every religion. The poor were trampled down and persecuted by the rich and humanity groaned under the curse of inhumanity. Under this heavy incubus of religious was Arabia groaning when Islam suddenly and unexpectedly appeared.

The period preceding the advent of Muhammad has been designated the Dark Age by the Koran (vide 33:33 & 48:26), which epitomizes in two words. Virtually, the whole Arabia was enjoying complete independence, and the neighbouring empires of Byzantine and Iran paid no attention to Arabs who were thought to be barbaric, poor and hungry. There was no central government to enforce law and order in the peninsula. The whole Arabia was rent into innumerable petty states, each clan forming a separate and independent political unit. Each tribe had a chief of its own who would lead it in battle against a hostile tribe to vindicate its rights. Tribal prejudice was common and small incidents would lead to bitter feuds which continued for generations. But there was no law whatsoever, binding the tribe to the nation. The whole peninsula was thus like a hornet's nest.

The daily life of a Bedouin was nothing more than that of a shepherd, obtaining their livelihood from the rearing of animals, pitching their tents within certain limits and wandering in quest of water and pasture. Some, however, being more disposed to a settled life, congregated together, formed villages and the number of these still further increasingly grew into towns and cities. Their time was occupied in tillage, in the cultivation of palm tree and of other trees and plants whose fruits sustained their life.

The social condition of Arabs was deplorable as it was steeped in immorality. Human sacrifice was commonly practised. Ancient Arabs literature is stunk with wine and other strong liquors, containing a treasure of its expressions. During a state of drunkenness, acts of the most shameless vice and profigacy were indulged in by the whole assembly. Rum-shops were well decorated. Gambling was the next favourite pastime for them. Adultery was

another vice to which the whole of Arabia was hopelessly wedded. The enemies were burnt alive, pregnant women had their bellies slashed, innocent babes and children were massacred. Usuary was in vogue. The women, having no right and no social respect, were the worst sufferer in the society. They were regarded as chattels and were looked with bitter contempt. A man was free to marry any number of women and could divorce as he wished. Women were deprived of the right of inheritance. The Arabs were embarrassed at the birth of daughters and sometimes, the fathers buried them alive in spite of soul-harrowing cries. It was a custom for the eldest son to take as a wives his father's widows, inherited as a property with the rest of the estate. Slavery was another curse having a firm hold on the Arab society. The masters possessed the authority of life and death over them. The worst type of obscene language was used in expressing sex-relations. Stories of love and illicit relationships were narrated proudly and with utter want of shame in verses of the most indecent kind. In sum, women were accorded no better treatment than lower animals. Robbery, pillage and murder were also of common occurrence; human blood being almost daily shed without remorse or horror. On the death of any person, the custom was to tie his camel to his tomb and suffer it to be starved to death, and this camel they called *baliyah*. Nevertheless, the Arabs possessed certain natural virtues that marked them out in the post-Islamic age. They were the most eloquence nation, plain of speech, strong of memory, firm of determination, superb horsemen, loyal and trustworthy.

Religiously the Arabs were idolatrous. There were separate god and goddess for each city, tribe and locality and were figured according to the fancy of worshippers. The Kaba alone was housed with 360 idols, each personifying a representative deity of its respective tribe. *Lat* was a idol fixed at Taif as the deity of Thaqif tribe. *Uzza* was the god of Qoraish and Kanna tribes in Mecca, and the *Manat* was the deity of Aws and Khazraj tribes in Medina. Among them, *Hubal* was regarded as a biggest, and it stood on the summit of the Kaba. Within the Kaba was placed the images of Abraham, having arrows, called *arlam* in his hand, and a lamb standing beside him; as well as of Ismail in the same position painted on the walls of the temple. Either a statue of Mary, having Jesus Christ in her lap, was placed on the walls of temple, or her likeness in that position was painted on the walls. Besides, the Humayr of



Yamen were the sun worshippers and the Kanna worshipped the moon. Human destiny was associated with the movements of the stars. Phenomena of nature affecting the fortunes of man for good or evil were attributed to their influence.

The Jews migrated and settled in Arabia probably in 5th century B.C. They gained their foothold at Khaibar and began to propagate their faith. About the 3rd century B.C., the king of Yamen, Dhu-Nawas by name, embraced Judaism. This added fresh momentum to the Jewish movement, and in the course of time Judaism won considerable ascendancy in Arabia. But the Arab nation as a whole remained addicted to its ancestral religion of idol-worship.

The Christian missionaries also began pouring into Arabia in the 3rd century A.D., and settled in Najran. Their activities were supplemented a good deal by the political influence of the two Christian powers in the neighbourhood of Arabia, the Abyssinian to the west and the Roman empire to the north. Beyond this Christianity could make no headway and had a very little impact on the rotten society of the Arabs.

Unlike the rest of the Arabs, only the Hashimite family, the descendants of Abraham, adhered to their ancestral faith of monotheism, known as the *Hanif*. It was a small band of earnest men who discarded idolatry.

The corrupt morale of the Arabs reached its zenith, rather to a catastrophe of their ethical death. The whole Arab society was submerged in social evils, and life had no worth to them, neither was their conduct governed by any ethical code. Wine, gambling, slaughter and all inhuman indulgences were just synonymous to the very name of Arab.

### **Birth of Muhammad**

Abdullah, the son of Abdūl Muttalib, and the father of Muhammad, was then 24 years of age, affianced to Amina bint Wahab. Briefly was the wedded life of Abdullah and Amina. Shortly after the marriage her husband set out on a mercantile expedition to Yathirab, leaving the young pregnant wife who was destined to see him no more. It was their first and last parting, for on the return journey,

Abdullah sickened and died before his wife was delivered. He was buried in Dar-i Nabigha, among the Banu Najjar. For the support of his widow, Abdullah left behind him no richer legacy than four camels, a flock of goats and a slave girl. Muhammad was therefore destined to be a posthumous.

Under the rocks of the Abu Kobeis, which rise eastward of Mec̄ca over the narrow valley, stood the house of Amina, the birthplace of her only son. On the morning of Monday, April 22, 571 A.D., a grandson was born to Abdul Muttalib, who named him **Muhammad** (the extolled one). He gave a banquet in honour of his grandson to which he invited a number of Qoraish tribesmen and peers. When they inquired from him why he had chosen to name **Muhammad**, thus changing the tradition of using the ancestors' names, Abdul Muttalib answered, "I did so with the wish that my grandson would be praised by God in heaven and on earth by men."

"To the Arab nation" writes Thomas Carlyle in **"Heroes and Hero-Worship"** (London, 1850, p. 101), "it was as a birth from darkness into light; Arabia first became alive by means of it. A poor shepherd people, roaming unnoticed in its deserts since the creation of the world; a Hero-Prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe." John William Draper also writes in **"History of the Intellectual Development of Europe"** (London, 1875, 1st vol., p. 329) that, "Four years after the death of Justinian, 571 A.D., was born at Mecca, in Arabia, the man who, of all men, has exercised the greatest influence upon the human race." According to **"The Life of Mahomet"** (London, 1930, p. 171) by Dermenghem, "Muhammad appeared on the scene at one of the darkest periods in all history, when all the civilizations, from Merovingian Gaul to India, were falling to ruin or were in a state of troubled gestation."

Mecca, also known as **Umm al-Qura** (mother of towns), about forty miles from the Red Sea, lay in an arid valley, embosomed with torrid rocks. The streets were narrow and piled high with dirt and garbage. The air was heavy in Mecca and the children there grew up pale, weak and sickly. All about and around Mecca was desert, whose air was limpid. For this reason, it was a custom among the Arab gentry and nobility that the mother did not nurse



their children. They would give their suckling infants into the charge of Bedouin women shortly after birth to suckle and nourish them. Abdul Muttalib assigned his grandson into the nursing care of Halima al-Sadiyyah, the daughter of Abu Dhuayb, belonging to the clan of Sa'd, near Mount Taif, situated to the east of Mecca. The little Muhammad's five years of life spent in the tents of this wandering tribe. Having nurtured for a period of five years, the wet nurse Halima gave him back to his mother, Amina, who also died after one year. Henceforward, Abdul Muttalib was both mother and father to the orphaned child. But this was not to be for long either. The old man died when Muhammad was eight. The dying Abdul Muttalib had already consigned the guardianship of Muhammad to his son, Abu Talib, who discharged the trust kindly and faithfully. His fondness for his charge equalled that of Abdul Muttalib. He made him sleep by his bed, eat by his side, and go with him wherever he walked. Tor Andrae writes in "**Mohammed the Man and his Faith**" (London, 1936, p. 48) that, "It is said of Abu Talib that he loved Mohammed greatly. He would not sleep unless the lad were at his side, and he never cared to go out without him. He noticed also that a blessing accompanied the future prophet. When Mohammed was not present, Abu Talib's family could not eat." This tender treatment was continued until his nephew emerged from childhood. In the twelfth year of age, Muhammad travelled with his uncle in a trade-caravan to Syria. It was during this journey that Muhammad is said to have met a Christian anchorite, called Bahira. Beholding the boy, so goes the story, he could discern in his face marks of the future greatness and he advised Abu Talib to take good care of him, for he would some day be the recipient of Divine call.

Muhammad took part in the battle at the age of twenty, between the Qoraish and the Qais which goes under the name of *Harb al-Fijar*, i.e., a war of transgression, so called because it was fought in the sacred months when warfare was forbidden. But his part in it was not that of actual fighting, but only of handing over arrows to his uncles. After that, he participated in the alliance known as *Hilf al-Fudsul*, formed to vindicate the rights of the weak and the oppressed against tyranny. Each member of the alliance was bound in honour to defend the helpless against all manner of oppression. The credit of taking the lead in the formation of this humanitarian organisation was due to Muhammad and his family, Banu Hashim. His early

inclinations to render help to the distressed go to show that human sympathy was implanted in his very nature.

At this early age, Muhammad's integrity had already won household fame in the town of Mecca. He was commonly known as *al-Amin*, the trustworthy. The epithet does not imply honesty alone, but is all-comprehensive, denoting righteousness in every form. Whosoever happened to have any dealings with him at this period, never ceased to praise him all his life. It was about this time that the necessity arose for the reconstruction of the Kaba. The requisite material being all provided, the Qoraish jointly undertook the work. In the course of construction a serious dispute arose as to who should have the proud privilege of laying the Black Stone. This might have resulted in the outbreak of inter-tribal feuds, when there rose a hoary-headed man with his elderly advice to refer the matter to an arbitrator. Whoever, he suggested, should be the first to appear at the Kaba the following day, should be accepted as a judge to decide the point at issue. The proposal was unanimously agreed to. All were eagerly awaiting the next morning, when lo, to the satisfaction of all it was a personage no other than Muhammad. "Here is al-Amin! Here is al-Amin!" all shouted in one voice. And the general confidence in him was fully justified. Taking a sheet of cloth he placed the Black Stone thereon with his own hands, and then he invited principal men from every clan to hold the sheet by the four ends and thus equally shared in the honour of lifting the stone to its position.

### **Marriage of Muhammad**

A high-placed widow, Khadija, who had acquired in pre-Islamic days, by her virtue the titles of *Tahira* (the virtuous) and *Saiyyadah-i Qoraish* (the princess of the Qoraish), hearing of the righteousness of Muhammad, entrusted to him the sole charge of her business. He accepted an office in the service of Khadija and was immediately placed at the head of a caravan and sent to Syria accompanied by Maysara, one of the slaves of Khadija. Before long much profit accrued to her through his honest dealings. The personal attributes and moral grace in Muhammad attracted the attention and won the admiration of Khadija. So honestly Muhammad did transact the widow's trade that she caused a proposal of marriage,



which met the approval of Abu Talib. Thus was he married, at the age of twenty-five, to a widow, fifteen years older than himself.

### **Beginning of Ministry**

Always tormented by and concerned with the sinful and blasphemous pursuits of his native fellows, Muhammad kept pondering over the reforms of their ethnic beliefs and savage character. Even when his people were steeped in vices and immoralities of the worst type, he was straight with pure and stainless soul. His soul could not be satisfied with its milieu. Thomas Carlyle writes, "From of old, a thousand thoughts, in his pilgrimages and wanderings, had been in this man: What am I? What is this unfathomable thing I live in, which men name universe? What is life; what is death? What am I to believe? What am I to do? The grim rocks of Mount Hira, of Mount Sinai, the stern solitudes answered not. The great heavens rolling silent overhead, with its blue-glancing stars, answered not. There was no answer. The man's own soul and what of God's inspiration dwelled there, had to answer" (Ibid. pp. 63-4). It was indeed the spiritual self of Muhammad that solved all the problems which his thinking and inquisitive soul put to him. He had prepared his soul by years of exercises, introspection, and communion to give the answer.

For years after his marriage, Muhammad would frequently take a provision of dates and oatmeal for food and retire for days into a cave he had found at the top of a cone-shaped mountain, called Hira, some three miles from Mecca. He used to spend night after night in that solitary cave far away from all the worldly turmoils. Here he eagerly pondered and contemplated in long and lonely vigils to search after One and Only God. His periods of loneliness became more frequent and his vigils lengthened. He prayed ardently, opening his whole heart to his Creator Whom his soul longed to meet. He became so fully absorbed in the ecstasy of his devotions that he would remain for days in the mountain cavern. Often his beloved wife brought him food. This went on for a considerable length of time, till at last, in his fortieth year, a great unseen was revealed to him. The light of God was fully reflected in Muhammad. He had reached the stage of

self-elevation when duality becomes non-existent and only One remains.

The earliest sources relate that the moon on that day of the eve of Ramadan enwrapped Hira. The birds were still in their nests and not a sound or movement disturbed this heavy quiet. It was though as everything were pegged to its place and nothing existed save the heavens and the earth. Tonight, a few roaming shepherds had seen Muhammad go there. Now there was no one else, only the sky and the earth and the crescent moon between them, rising sometimes aloft and sinking to the edge of the horizon. Stricken with panic Muhammad came home from Hira on that morning, strangely troubled, his great eyes dilated in wonder. "Cover me up, Khadija, cover me up!" he said in feverish agitation. After a while, he became calmer and spoke thus, "A strange vision appeared to me in the cave of Hira tonight. The vision said, 'I am the angel Gabriel, sent by God.' Then he asked me to read. 'I am unlettered', I said. Upon this he clasped me to his bosom and held me firmly. Then he let me go and asked me to read. I gave the same answer. He clasped me once again, and asked once again to read. And embracing me the third time, he chanted, 'Read! in the name of thy Lord, Who created; He created man from a clot. Read! full of magnificence is thy Lord Who made the pen the vehicle of knowledge and taught man what he knew not.' Suddenly the words came alive to me; my limbs were all atremble." Khadija was sorely worried at first, but soon regained her composure and comforted him. "Fear not, my noble one", she said, "but rejoice. God will not forsake you in this affair nor expose you to shame. For you are good and kind and truthful. You are hospitable to the passing stranger, you aid and comfort the poor and the lowly, and support the virtuous in righteous deeds."

Waraqah bin Naufal was Khadija's cousin. Wearying of idolatry he was on the look-out for a true faith and had at length embraced Christianity. Probably she had heard him talk of the appearance of the Promised Prophet, the Comforter whose advent had been foretold by Jesus. As soon as she found Muhammad called to that office, she took him to her cousin, out of sympathy, of course, for the latter who had lost his eyesight and was unable to move. No sooner did Waraqah hear what inspiration Muhammad had received and how, than he spontaneously exclaimed: "This is the very angel Gabriel that God sent down to Moses."



Hence, the foremost to profess faith in the truth of Muhammad's mission was his wife Khadija.

Edith Holland writes in "The Story of Mohammed" (London, 1914, p. 18) that, "It was in the desert that Abraham, journeying by the guidance of the stars, came to the knowledge of all-powerful God, far above the vain idols of man's imaginings. Moses, during his long sojourn in the wilderness, never doubted the near presence of a mighty God, a sure help in time of trouble. In later years the Prophet of Arabia, wandering among the barren hills of his native lands, saw in the wonders of nature sure signs of the greatness of the Creator, and there came upon him the conviction that "God is One, the Eternal", that there is none like unto Him."

We must pause here for a while to focus a key point that no formal prayers had been instituted then, no month of fasting was ordained then. The law of Islam itself had not been promulgated. The Islamic *Shariah* was not yet enforced. But Muhammad had reached to that lofty stage of spiritual evolution that his soul had acquired eternal bliss. His soul had realized the Truth for itself. When the evolution of his spirituality had reached a high stage by self-abnegation and self-surrender, he was chosen by God to be His messenger to His people with the message of Islam. He was commissioned to set the best example to humanity.

#### **Cessation of revelation**

After the first revelation, Gabriel did not visit Muhammad for some time. This is known as the period of *fatrat al-wahy* or the cessation of revelation. There is great divergence of opinion as to the duration of this period. With some it was two or three years long. But the version of Ibn Abbas that it lasted but for a short time, is more reliable and corroborated by historical evidence. The story that during this period, Muhammad would go out to the tops of mountains to hurl himself headlong is sheer nonsense. According to the established criteria of the authenticity of reports, this is not reliable, for Zuhri, from whom the report has come down, belonged to a later generation. In truth, the Divine Light, after which Muhammad had been so eagerly seeking, disappeared no

sooner than it had flashed upon his mind. This made him all the more restless. All the more did his heart long to hear once again the word of God. It was thus in search of what was so dear to his heart that he would go out to mountains.

At length, there came an end to the period of cessation. To Muhammad, the period looked unusually long; for it was a period of separation from One he loved with all his heart. The number of Muslims continued to grow and the conversion of some prominent men from among the Qoraish added to the strength of the small brotherhood. At the outset, the opposition of the Meccans to the message of Islam took the form of sneering and jeering at Muhammad. They did not attach much importance to the mission, thinking that it would die out in due course. It was treated with contempt and indifference unworthy of any serious attention. Resort to violence was not yet thought necessary. When they passed by the believers, they would laugh and wink at them by way of derision. Sometimes they would call Muhammad an idle visionary, given to poetic fancies, destined to come to nought as a matter of course. There was something wrong with his brain, they would say. Once, when Muhammad was saying his prayers in the Kaba, lying prostrate, Abu Jahl placed the dirty foetus of a she-camel on his neck. As he used to go out of his house for prayers at early dawn, one way adopted to annoy him was that branches of prickly shrubs were strewn on his way, so that owing to darkness he should become entangled in them. Sometimes dust was thrown at him; sometimes he was pelted with stones. One day a number of the Meccans fell upon him. One, Uqba bin Abi Mu'ait threw his mantle around his neck and twisted it till he was on the point of getting strangled. But the brunt of the oppression had to be borne by those not coming of some family of note among the Qoraish, especially by the slaves, male as well as female. These were subjected to the most cruel tortures. Bilal, the Abyssinian, was tortured in a most heartless manner by his master to make him renounce Islam. His oppressor would make him lie flat on burning ground under the scorching heat of the sun at midday. Heavy slabs of stone were then placed on his chest, so that he could scarcely breathe. He lay gasping for breath and writhing with agony under the weight of the heavy stone. Notwithstanding such extremely painful torments he would loudly repeat in a state of senselessness, **Ahad** (One), i.e., there is but One God. Ammar's father, Yasir, and his



mother, Sumayya, were persecuted in a most barbarous way. The story of their afflictions makes one's hair stand on end. Yasir's legs were tied to two camels and the beasts were driven in opposite directions. He was brutally torn to pieces. Sumayya was killed in a similar brutal but far more disgraceful manner. Lubaina was the hand-maid of Umar. The latter used to go on beating her in his pre-conversion days till he would get tired. Then he would say: "I leave you now, not because I pity you, but because I am tired of beating you."

For the first three years, Muhammad kept his missionary activities underground. Neither the rancor of Arab chiefs nor the antagonism of other opponents in Qoraish prevented the underground secret mission of Islam. This period of Muhammad's life is one of the noblest and greatest pages of human history. To those who did harm him, Muhammad prayed for guidance, for liberation from the yoke of vile paganism. The more they persecuted, the more patience and resolve Muhammad showed in his mission. One must not forget the deep-rooted faith of the handful Muslims at a time when the new religion was not even complete and the Holy Koran was not yet fully revealed.

But in the fourth year, Muhammad received a divine command to preach his mission to the public. In compliance, he invited his kinsmen to a feast exclusively arranged for them. Tabari (d. 310/922) in "*Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l Muluk*" (ed. de Goeje, Leiden, 1879-1901, 2nd vol., p. 63) and Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845) in "*Kitab at-Tabaqat*" (ed. E. Sachau, Leiden, 1905, 1st vol., p. 171) write that after the feast was over, Muhammad addressed the participants, "Friends and Kinsmen! I hereby declare that I have brought unto you a blessing in this world and in the world to come. I do not think there could be anyone else throughout the whole of Arabia, to come out with a better and more precious offer towards this nation than that of mine. I am commanded by my Lord to invite you all towards Him. Tell me! who amongst you will come forward to help me and to be my vicegerent? The spell of hush prevailing over the audience, was broken by impatient courage of Ali, the son of Abu Talib, who responded with enthusiasm and said, "O Prophet of God! I am the youngest of all here, yet I beg to offer myself to stand by you and to share all your burdens and earn the great privilege of being your vicegerent." Muhammad caused Ali to sit down. Again he put the question to the assemblage. All remained silent but

Ali rose for a second time to repeat his fidelity, and was again ordered to sit down. When Muhammad repeated the same question to the congregation the third time, he got no response. Ali again stood up and repeated his fidelity on which Muhammad remarked, "You are my brother, my collateral and vicegerent." This evoked the hostility of the Qoraish tribe towards Muhammad and his followers. They leapt angrily to their feet and walked out, and their murmurings and protests echoed back into the house as they passed through the courtyard into the street.

On the following day, when Muhammad went to the Kaba, he was greeted with scornful gestures. "This is the man who claims to bring us messages from the heaven," they shouted and began to joke at him.

### Migration to Abyssinia

When the sufferings and tribulations of the Muslims at the hands of the Meccans reached to its extreme in 615 A.D., Muhammad directed that those of them who could afford it should migrate to Abyssinia across the Red Sea, whose kings were known as the Negus (*Najashi*). As-Hama, the then Negus was a Christian king. Under the direction of Muhammad, eleven men and four women from among the Muslims migrated to Abyssinia. When the Meccans came to know of their migration, they were much upset and sent some men after them in pursuit, but the Muslims had a long start and could not be overtaken. This infuriated the malicious ones among the Meccans. They formed a deputation under Abdullah bin Rabi and Amr bin A'as, who went to Abyssinia with handsome presents to persuade the king to deliver the emigrants into their hands. In due course, this deputation stood in the presence of the king and listened to their representation. Then he sent for the refugees and asked them what they had to say.

Jafar, nick-named *Taiyar* (the flying), the son of Abu Talib and brother of Ali, acting as spokesman for the Muslims, stood forth and made reply, "O'king, we belong to a people steeped in ignorance. Our fathers and grandfathers worshipped idols. They ate carrion and other things unclean. They gambled and fornicated and indulged in other sins. They knew no pity, nor compassion nor human sympathy. They oppressed and persecuted the weak and the helpless. They robbed and killed without compunction. For



centuries our people lived thus and then God in His mercy sent us the light. From among these cruel and headstrong people, He deputed a man to be His prophet and His messenger. This man was already known to his people as the trusted one and everyone bore testimony to the purity of his conduct, the goodness of his ways and the nobility of his birth. This man spoke to us of One God and appealed to us to worship no one but Him. We listened to his appeal and accepted it. We vowed that we would renounce all false deities and idols and worship the One True God. He taught us to be honest, kind, compassionate and just, and we obeyed his teachings. This so angered our countrymen that they persecuted and tortured us in many fearful ways. These people demanded that we should renounce our new faith and once again revert to idolatry. We refused to give up our new faith and our enemies refused to give up their persecutions. When their brutalities exceeded all limits and our lives were in peril, reluctantly, we bade farewell to our mother land, and decided to emigrate."

The king was greatly impressed, and returned the gifts brought by the leaders of Mecca, and said, "I will not hand over to you these innocent men and women who have come to me for shelter." Nevertheless, the disappointed Meccans hit upon another plan. Next day, they tried to incite the king, by telling him that the heretics did not believe in the divinity of Jesus. But in this too their hopes were frustrated. The Muslims confessed on the basis of Koranic verse that they did not look upon Jesus as God but as a prophet of God. The king picked up a straw and pointing to it said, "Jesus is in fact not even this much more than the Muslims have described him to be." Empty-handed and humbled the deputation from Mecca returned home and the leaders of Qoraish gnashed their teeth in anger.

Gradually, the number of emigrants increased in Abyssinia. Only a few days had passed in peace, when a rumour reached them that the Meccans had finally embraced Islam. On hearing this, most of the Muslims decided to return to Mecca. When they reached the city, they came to know that the report was false. The Meccans began to persecute even more severely those persons who had returned from Abyssinia. In spite of this, however, about a hundred Muslims managed to leave Mecca and settled in Abyssinia. The Meccans however did their utmost to check the tide of emigration, but all in vain.



The Abyssinian emigration gave the Meccans a conclusive proof that the Muslims were ready to run all risks, and undergo every form of hardship in the cause of Islam. They would shrink from no danger in the path of God. The Meccans did their utmost to check this tide of emigration, but all in vain. It was not until seven years after Muhammad's flight from Mecca that they rejoined their Muslim brethren at Medina.

### Social Boycott

Having failed in all their attempts to impede the progress of Islamic mission, the Qoraish of Mecca called a summit conference and pledged themselves to a policy of social boycott of the Hashimites on a large scale. This implied the severance of all social, matrimonial and commercial ties of Meccans with Hashimites. The decree was written by Mansur, the son of Akrama and the scroll hung up on the wall of Kaba, which reads: "It has been agreed that henceforth no one in Mecca shall have any dealings or transact any business with Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, his family or his followers. No one shall sell food to them nor visit them, nor converse with them. This ban will continue until Muhammad's people hand him over to us to be treated as he deserves."

On hearing of this, Abu Talib was thereby obliged to shift alongwith the entire family of Hashimites to a secluded valley fastness, known as *shib* (quarter) of Abu Talib, on the eastern skirts of Mecca, cut off by rocks from the city except for one narrow gateway. Abu Jahl spared no pains to keep a vigilant watch to ensure that the blockade was strickly observed. When Hakim bin Hazam tried to supply some provisions to Khadija, who was closely related to him, Abu Jahl offered obstruction. But never throughout these trying times did the Hashimites waver in their resolution.

The provisions which they had carried with them were soon exhausted. For days they went without food; water was scarce; infants and children almost died of hunger. The sick and the infirm breathed their last painful breath without succour or sustenance. There was much weeping and wailing in the Muslim camp but there were no betrayers. The pressure of hunger had reached its climax to such an extreme that Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas relates, "One night I was

coming out of the valley in such a condition that I was about to exhaust all my faculties. Suddenly I saw a dried hide of a camel. I picked it up, washed, baked and ground it. I kneaded its powder with some water and used it for three days." The severity of the action of the Qoraish however did not diminish the great patience and fortitude of the Muslims.

The pitiable condition of the Hashimites continued for a period of three years, till, at length, the Qoraish were awakened to a sense of remorse on their dealings with the Hashimites. All at once it was discovered that the parchment in the Kaba, on which the decree had been written, was eaten up by termite and only the words, "In the name of the Lord" (with which the Qoraish commenced their writings) had survived. The decree was, therefore, declared to be annulled, and was torn off, and approaching Abu Talib, the Meccan leaders requested him to come back to his original abode. Abu Talib accepted to resume his civic life alongwith all members of Hashimites. During the period Muhammad was shut up in the Shib of Abu Talib, Islam virtually made no progress outside.

#### **The Year of Grief**

In the year 619 A.D., not long after annulment of the social boycott, Muhammad suffered a great loss of Abu Talib and Khadija, who followed each other to meet their deaths within a short interval, which was a severe blow. With the death of Khadija, the lamp of Muhammad's home was extinguished. One protected him with the influence that derived from his noble rank, while the other guarded him with her material and wealth. After the death of Abu Talib and Khadija, Muhammad was immersed in deep grief, and that is why, this year is called *aam-ul-huzn* (the year of grief). The bereavement of his uncle and wife cast a gloom over Muhammad's life. The tragedy coincided with so many afflictions and animosities of his enemies that Mecca had become a bed of thorns for Muhammad by now onwards.

#### **Precautionary dissimulation of Abu Talib**

If we may have a cursory glance on the biography of Abu Talib, we will find that he supported Muhammad for full 40 years, and displayed sacrifice during last ten years of



his life. The only factor which kept him so steadfast was his strong faith, which he had to keep secret in Mecca, exercising strict *taqiya* (precautionary dissimulation). According to "*Sirat-i Halabiya*" (1st vol., p. 390), Abu Talib said to his children at the time of his death that, "I recommend Muhammad to you, because he is the trusted one of Qoraish and truthful one of Arabia and possesses all the virtues. He has brought a religion, which has been accepted by the hearts, but the tongues have chosen to deny it on account of fear of taunts. Whosoever follows him becomes prosperous of his faith. If death had given me some more time, I would have warded off all the dangers that came to him."

Imam Jafar Sadik, according to "*Usul-i Kafi*" (p. 244) had said: "Abu Talib was like the People of the Cave, who had faith in their hearts but pretended to be polytheists." In one laudatory poem about his nephew, Abu Talib had said, as quoted by "*Majma'ul Bayan*" (7th vol., p. 36) that, "Don't you know that we consider Muhammad to be a Prophet of Allah like Musa bin Imran and read about him in the earliest book." In sum, it is quite true that Abu Talib had never publicly announced to embrace Islam, and this is the principal cause that the historians have doubted his faith. When a mention was made about Abu Talib, Imam Zayn al-Abidin is reported to have said, "I wonder why people doubt the faith of Abu Talib, when a woman cannot continue her matrimonial alliance with a non-Muslim husband after she has embraced Islam, and Fatima bint Asad was amongst those women who embraced Islam at a very early stage and still remained his wife till he breathed his last."

### **Al-Isra and al-Miraj**

It was during this period that *al-Isra* and *al-Miraj* had taken place. *Al-Isra* means the night journey when Muhammad was reported to have taken from Mecca to the Mosque of Aqsa, the distance mosque of Jerusalem. *Al-Miraj* means Muhammad's ascension to heaven and his visit to paradise and hell. On the night of *al-Isra*, Muhammad was staying in the house of his cousin, Hind, daughter of Abu Talib, who was also called Umm Hani. Hind relates that the Prophet of God spent the night in my quarters. He recited the night prayers and went to sleep. Just before dawn, the Prophet of God awoke us and we all prayed the dawn prayer



together. When the prayer was through, he said, "O Umm Hani, I prayed with you the night prayer in this place; then I went to Jerusalem and I prayed there, and as you see, I have just finished praying with you the dawn prayer." I answered, "O Prophet of God! do not tell this to the people, for they will belie you and harm you." He said, "By God, I shall tell them."

Those who claim that *al-Isra* and *al-Miraj* of Muhammad had taken place spiritually rather than physically, have based their arguments on the aforesaid report of Umm Hani. They also refer to another report of Aisha which says, "The body of the Prophet of God was never missed from his bed. Rather, God caused him to travel in soul alone." Whenever Muawiya bin Abu Sufian was asked about it, he used to answer, "It was a true vision from God." Those who share such a view confirm their claim with the Koranic verse, "The vision which We have shown you is but a trial to the people" (17:60). According to the other view, *al-Isra* from Mecca to Jerusalem took place in body. In confirmation of this, they mention that Muhammad had related what he saw in the desert on the way hither and add that his ascension to heaven was in soul. Other hold that both *al-Isra* and *al-Miraj* were in body. As a result of this great divergence of opinion, thousands of volumes have been written on the subject.

### **Muhammad in Taif**

Weighed down by the loss of his venerable protector and of his cherished wife, Muhammad determined to turn to some other field for the exercise of his ministry, because the Meccans had rejected the words of God. Taif was about 75 miles south-east of Mecca, and a famous home of Banu Tha'qif. Accompanied by Zaid, he arrived in Taif, and invited at first the three brothers of Umayr family to adore One God. His words caused a storm of indignation and his voice was drowned by clamours. He was wounded by stones thrown at him, and which the faithful Zaid endeavoured in vain to ward off. They incited to ruffians of the town to ridicule him. The ruffians drove him from the town, and the rabble and the slaves too followed, hooting, reviling and pelting him with stones for a distance of three miles, until the evening, when they quitted Muhammad to pursue his way alone. Blood flowed

from his both legs. He, wearied and mortified, took refuge in one of the numerous orchards, and rested under a vine.

#### **Guardianship of Mutim bin Adi**

On his return to Mecca during the night, Muhammad arrived at Nakhlah, and thence he moved to Hira. According to Ibn Sa'd (1st vol., p. 212), Muhammad sent words to Mutim bin Adi that he desired to return to Mecca, if he was assured protection. Mutim, although a non-believer, was a gentleman. He not only assured Muhammad of his protection according to Arabian custom, but called all of his sons who went to Kaba and remained on guard till he finished his religious obligations. Mutim also declared in Mecca that Muhammad was under his protection.

He was sorely stricken in heart and lived in Mecca for some time, retired from his people, preaching occasionally, but confining his mission mainly to the strangers who congregated in Mecca and its vicinity during the season of the annual pilgrimage.

#### **Pledge of Aqaba**

A ray of hope beamed in the interim in the north. At a distance of about 250 miles from Mecca was a town then known as Yathirab, and later as Medina. Its population was divided into two groups, the Jews and pagans. The pagans had two clans, Aws and Khazraj, who were generally at loggerheads with each other. Every year in the month of Rajab, the Arabs swarmed like locusts into Mecca. One day in Mecca, whilst sadly but yet hopefully working among the half-traders and half-pilgrims, Muhammad came upon a group of six men who were of Khazraj. Meeting them perchance, Muhammad led them to a declivity and recited to them the verses from Koran, enumerated the blessings of a good and pious life and beckoned them to the fold. Struck by his earnestness and the truth of his words, they embraced Islam. When they returned to their native Yathirab, they spread the news, with lightning rapidity that a Prophet had arisen among the Arabs in Mecca. The town was soon agog with stories of the new faith and its wonderful leader. So the ensuing year another twelve pilgrims came to Mecca and made their vows at the same spot which had witnessed the conversion of the former six. This is called



the first pledge of Aqaba, from the name of the hill on which the conference was held. The following year, 622 A.D., the Yathirabites who had adopted the new religion repaired to Mecca. In the stillness of night, when all inimical elements appeared slumbering, these seventy-two pioneers of the new faith met under the same hill. Muhammad appeared among them, and vividly described to them the risk they incurred by adopting Islam. They replied with one voice that they adopted the religion fully conscious of the dangers that surrounding them. Thus was concluded the second pledge of Aqaba.

### **Migration to Yathirab**

It was the 13th year of Muhammad's mission when the clouds had gathered fast. The Meccan chiefs centred in their Council Hall (*darun-nadwa*), a chamber inside Kaba, to deliberate over what might be done with Muhammad. Stormy was the meeting, for fear had entered their hearts. Imprisonment for life, expulsion from the city, each was debated in turn for Muhammad. They decided then on a final and desperate remedy, namely to murder Muhammad. Murder by one man would have exposed him and his family to the vengeance of blood. The difficulty was at last solved by Abu Jahl, who suggested that a number of courageous men, chosen from different families, should sheathe their swords simultaneously in Muhammad's bosom, in order that the responsibility of the deed might rest upon all, and the relations of Muhammad might consequently be unable to avenge it. The proposal was accepted, and forty youths were selected for the sanguinary deed. As the night advanced, and it was against the Arab sense of chivalry to kill any one within the four walls of his house at night hour. Hence, the assassins posted themselves round the Muhammad's dwelling, and watched all night long, peeping now and then through a hole in the door to make sure that Muhammad still lay on his bed. In order to keep the attention of the assassins fixed upon the bed, Muhammad put his own green coverlet upon Ali, and bade him to lie on his bed; so as to foil the scheme of his enemies, and himself escaped.

Muhammad had guessed exactly what would be the reactions of the Meccans when they found he had gone. He had, therefore, not started for Yathirab with camel. He had gone on foot with Abu Bakr to Mount Thaur, about one



hour's walk from Mecca. They reached Mount Thaur while it was still dark and concealed themselves in the innermost recess of a cave in the rocky hillside. A tracking party, following the footprints of the fugitives, reached the mouth of the cave. Abu Bakr, hearing the sound of their footsteps, grieved within himself. It was a critical moment when the sword of the blood-thirsty enemy was hanging on their heads. Muhammad quieted the fears of Abu Bakr with the words: "Do not be grieved, for surely God is with us." For full three days, Muhammad remained in the cave.

On the third night, they came out with two camels. Quickly Muhammad mounted and followed by Abu Bakr, rode into the desert night. They took a certain Abdullah bin Uraiqi, a non-Muslim as their guide. In order to avoid the main caravan tracks, they struck a diagonal course northwest toward the Red Sea. For nearly a week the journey continued over the parched, barren, mournful wasteland. No living creatures, not even vultures or snakes, inhabited this wilderness. They first had proceeded parallel to the Red Sea until they reached a place called Usfan. From here they turned a little inland and travelled for some distance along the foot of Mount Amaj. Then they followed a route parallel to the usual route. They went past Qudayda, al-Kharrar, Thanniya al-Marrah and Liqfa, and crossed the territories of Banu Madlijah and Banu Aslam, where they alighted for a while. Here Muhammad hired a camel to relieve his own which was exhausted by the long non-stop journey. Before they entered Kuba, they passed through such places as al-Araj, Thanniya al-Ghair and the valley of Ri'm. On the seventh morning after the start of the flight, the oasis of Kuba, a few miles from Yathirab, was sighted. This flight of Muhammad from Mecca to Yathirab (Medina) is called the *Hijrah* and when Muhammad entered Kuba, with it commenced the Islamic era on 1st Muharram (lunar month) of the Hijrah, or on the date corresponding to July 16, 622 C.E. in the Julian calendar. In English this is usually abbreviated in the Latin form AH (*Anno Hegirae* i.e., "in the year of the Hijrah"). This Islamic calendar was introduced after 17 years during the caliphate of Umar.

On the other side in Mecca, Ali slept fearlessly whole night on Muhammad's bed. R.V.C. Bodely writes in "**The Messenger**" (London, 1946, p. 113) that, "The morning breeze whispered over the desert. The dawn came mauvely

from the east and showed the assassins braced to strike. As the first white rays of the rising sun hit the flat roofs of Mecca, the door of Muhammad's house opened. The men stood ready to spring. They then held back as their astonished eyes rested on the burly figure of Ali standing on the threshold carrying Muhammad's cloak over his arms." The assassins at first thought of killing him, but when they found him ready to defend himself, they gave up the idea and dispersed in search of Muhammad. Discomfited and unhappy, they immediately dispatched their best riders in pursuit of the fugitive. Up and down they hunted over all the tracks and passes leading out of Mecca, but found no trace of Muhammad.

Ali stayed three days at Mecca and handed back all the articles which were entrusted to Muhammad for safe custody, mostly by his enemies, secured their receipts and quitted the city in broad daylight. Ali was also assigned for safe transport of Muhammad's daughter Fatima, the daughter of Hamza, another Fatima, his own mother, Fatima bint Asad, and his aunt, that was the daughter of Abdul Mutalib, a fourth Fatima. On account of scarcity of mounts, Ali had to travel on foot, and reached Kuba with bleeding feet. Muhammad embraced him, and dressed his feet. Muhammad stayed with the clan of Umar bin Auf at Kuba for 14 days, and during which time he laid foundation of the first mosque (Arabic *masjid*, the English *mosque* through the Italian *moschea*) of Islam. It is of this mosque that Koran (9:109) speaks as "the mosque founded on piety."

The news of Muhammad's arrival at Kuba soon reached Yathirab and the city had been in eager expectation of his arrival. Each morning some people would go out on the outskirts to watch the appearance of their revered master. The tedious hours of impatient expectancy were at last over, and the illustrious visitor appeared on the horizon of Yathirab. At last the great day arrived. News was brought to Yathirab that Muhammad was on his way. He entered the city on September 22, 622. Yathirab was wearing to look of jubilation all round. People came out to greet Muhammad, clad in their gayest attire. Women climbed to the tops of their houses and sang in chorus to welcome their noble guest. Syed Waheeduddin writes in **"The Benefactor"** (Lahore, 1964, p. 33) that, "The Banu Najjar led the welcoming crowds in full armour, their weapons glistening in the sun. The whole of Yathirab lined



the road in orderly rows. Young girls played on their tambourines and sang songs of welcome." There was an unprecedented merry-making, and when Muhammad came to the group of Umar bin Awf Najjari, the well-dressed girls came out of seclusion, danced and sang to the tune of music the following ballad:

*Nahno jowarun min bani Najjarin,  
Janadan Muhammad min Jarin.*

"We belong to the clan of Najjar, (we are) Muhammad's soldiers from the Jari."

Each tribe, which Muhammad passed through in the city, very eagerly desired the honour of his presence and requested him to take up his abode with them. He, refusing all these offers, said that the camel, which he rode on, was inspired and would take him to the proper quarter. The camel proceeded on to the eastern quarter, and knelt down in the open courtyard of the Banu Najjar, near the house of Abu Ayub Ansari. He took up his temporary residence in his house for about seven months, until a mosque with proper quarters for himself was built in Medina.

#### **Construction of the Mosque**

After Muhammad's arrival in Medina, the first thing to be done was to build a cathedral mosque. It was constructed on the plot of two orphans, Sohal and Sohail, whom Abu Ayub Ansari paid the price. The ground of the plot was levelled and a mosque, 54 yards width and 60 yards in length was built over it with unbaked bricks and mud, and was roofed with palm-wood rafters. This mosque became known as the "Prophet's Mosque" (*Masjid-i-Nabwi*) was free from all kinds of artificialities and was a monument of simplicity. Its walls were made of mud bricks, the roof supported by trunks of palm-trees and covered over with the leaves and twigs. The floor was strewn with gravel. In the corner of the courtyard, a sort of a platform with a shed was raised to accommodate those having no home or family. Those who lived there were known as the residents of the *Suffa* or Platform. This was, so to speak, a kind of seminary attached to the mosque, for these people devoted their whole time to the study of religion. Adjoining the mosque were erected two apartments for the household of Muhammad.



## **Bond of Brotherhood**

Five months after his arrival in Yathirab (the *Jathrippa* in Ptolemy and Stephan, or *Jathrb* in Minaean inscriptions. The old word *Yathirab* is found only once in the Koran, 33:13), now known as Medina, it was Muhammad's next task to find shelter and livelihood for the men who had accompanied him from Mecca. In their own home-town many of them were prosperous, but now they were all equally destitute. As a preliminary step, Muhammad enjoined the Muslims of Medina, now known as *Ansar* (the helpers) to adopt as brothers their co-religionists from Mecca, now known as *Muhajir* (the refugees), to share with them like their own kith and kin whatever they possessed, in prosperity and in want. He thus created in Anas's house a bond of brotherhood, known as "Fraternization" (*muwakhah*), comprising forty-five (or according to another authority, seventy-five) pairs between the *Ansars* and *Muhajirs*. This was intended to prove that religion was a firmer basis for brotherly community than membership of the same tribe. These mandates thus resulted in a considerable extension of the Muslim community.

So strong, in short, was this new tie that it surpassed even the relationship of two real brothers.

## **Covenant of Medina**

Another important task before Muhammad was to determine and clarify the relations between the various tribes and the Muslims in Medina. The Jews were a considerable power in Medina. It appears that they were Arabs by descent, but formed a distinct unit by reason of their adoption of Judaism. They were subdivided into three clans, the Banu Qainuqa, Banu Nazir and Banu Quraiza. The other inhabitants of the town were the Aws and Khazraj, always at war with each other. Of the two chief clans of the Jews, the Quraiza were the allies of the Aws, while Banu Nazir joined the Khazraj. Now it so happened that the major portion of the Khazraj and Aws embraced Islam. So Muhammad concluded a pact with the Jews, known as the "Covenant of Medina" (*mithag-i-Medina*), whose terms were as follow:- Firstly, the Muslims and Jews shall live as one people. Secondly, each one of the parties shall keep to

its own faith, and neither shall interfere with that of the other. Thirdly, in the event of a war with a third party, each was bound to come to the assistance of the other, provided the latter were the party aggrieved and not the aggressors. Fourthly, in the event of an attack on Medina, both shall join hands to defend it. Fifthly, peace, when desirable, shall be made after consultation with each other. Sixthly, Medina shall be regarded as a sacred by both, all bloodshed being forbidden therein. Seventhly, Muhammad shall be the final court of appeal in cases of dispute.

James A. Michener writes in "**Islam: The Misunderstood Religion**" (New York, 1955, p. 68) that, "Muhammad thus became head of the state and the testimony even of his enemies is that he administered wisely. The wisdom he displayed in judging intricate cases became the basis for the religious law that governs Islam today."

### **The hypocrites**

Though emigration to Medina had given Muhammad a certain amount of respite, it increased opposition to his cause tenfold. While at Mecca, the malice of the Qoraish found vent in tormenting the Muslims, but now it was bent on the latter's destruction. The Bedouin tribes, who had so far been mere spectators of the Muslims's persecutions were also stirred at the growth of Islam in Medina. The Jews, being at a distance, were also quiet so far, but now that the Muslims were their next door neighbours in Medina, they could not watch the steady growth of Islam without a sting of jealousy and they rose in opposition. Distinct from all these, and of a singular nature, another wave of opposition set in, in the camp, known in the Islamic phraseology as that of the hypocrites. These were the men who had not the pluck to come out into the open. So they joined the faith with an object of undermining it from within. A certain man, Abdullah bin Ubay, was at their head. Before the immigration of Muhammad, both Banu Aws and Khazraj, wearied by their long drawn-out mutual hostility, which had often erupted into fighting and had exacted a heavy toll of life, had decided to put an end to this state of affairs and to set up a form of administration in Medina which should have the support of both tribes and should also be acceptable to the three



Jewish tribes. For this purpose, it had been agreed that Abdullah bin Ubay bin Salul, chief of the Khazraj, should be elected king of Medina. This plan had not yet been put into effect when Muhammad was invited to come to Medina. But Muhammad's presence eclipsed his personality, and he dwindled into a nonentity. He was deeply chagrined at the loss of a crown. At the outset, he offered some opposition, but beholding the rapid growth of Islam, he thought hypocrisy would be a best tool of revenge. Thus he put on the mask of Islam, and thenceforward till his last breath, he left no stone unturned to bring Islam into trouble.

### **Battle of Badr**

Muhammad had hardly breathed a sigh of relief in Medina when he was confronted with the series of military expeditions against the fronts of the heathen Meccans. Attack was apprehended every moment from without and treachery from within. Small detachments of the Qoraish of Mecca used to go out on marauding expeditions and scour the country right up to the outskirts of Medina. Once, one such party lifted camels from the very pastures of the town.

From the start of Ramadan, a report reached to Medina that a large trading caravan of Qoraish was returning to Mecca from Syria under the leadership of Abu Sufian bin Harb, one of the most astute men, accompanied by a fifty armed guards. It has been pointed out that this richly loaded caravan constituted a grave threat to the security of Medina, therefore, Muhammad dispatched Talha bin Ubaidullah and Saeed bin Zaid, to gather intelligence about the caravan and to report back. Abu Sufian, apprehending the blockade by the Muslims, sent a fast rider to Mecca in advance to explain the situation to the Qoraish and bring adequate force for the safeguarding of the caravan.

In the interim, Muhammad dispatched small reconnaissance parties to keep an eye on the movements of the enemy as well as to approach certain tribes to secure their neutrality. It so happened that one such party of eight persons was sent out under Abdullah bin Jahash. They were given sealed instructions by Muhammad, requiring them not to open the cover, until two days had passed. When opened



as directed after two days' march, it was found to contain the orders that the party should proceed to Nakhlah, between Mecca and Taif, and there keep track of the movements of the Qoraish. The party arrived at Nakhlah, and after few days, they encountered a small caravan of Qoraish on its way from Taif to Mecca. They attacked the four persons, who were in charge of the caravan, of whom one Amr bin Hadharmi, was killed, two were captured and the fourth escaped. The scouting party took over the merchandise of the caravan and made haste to return to Medina. When news reached Muhammad, he was severely reprimanded Abdullah bin Jahash for transgressing his express commands.

It may be pointed out that the sealed orders of Muhammad to Abdullah bin Jahash contained the word **tarassadu**, meaning "to keep a watch" and not to lay an ambush. Margoliouth, Dr. Zwemer and other European scholars have gloated over this incident and have made it a handle for attack. But might they know that, firstly, it was against the expressed orders of Muhammad, and, secondly, even if Muhammad would have ordered Abdullah to do so, his act would have been justified by the modern international law of the West, which reads:- "From the moment one state is at war with another, it has, on general principles, a right to seize on all the enemy's property of whatsoever kind and wheresoever found, and to appropriate thus to its own use, or to that of the captors." (vide, **"Elements of International Law"** by Henry Wheaton, London, 1936, p. 419). The death of Amr bin Hadharmi, however, provoked Qoraish and stimulated their hostile designs against the Muslims. According to Tabari, the murder of Amr bin Hadharmi was the root cause of the battle of Badr.

On the other side, when the emissary of Abu Sufian arrived in Mecca, and reported to the Meccans, a preparation was at once made to invade on Medina. Within three days, a well-armed force of over a thousand warriors set out from Mecca under the command of Abu Jahl. When they reached at Jahfah, a little half-way to Badr, an emissary of Abu Sufian brought the news that the caravan had passed through the danger zone safely and that it was not necessary to march towards Medina. On hearing this, some of them counselled that they should go back, but Abu Jahl and his party rejected the suggestion violently and proceeded towards Badr.

Badr is the name of a celebrated well and a market-place of Arabia, and is so named after a certain Badr bin Qoraish bin Mukhlad bin an-Nadr bin Kananah, who hailed from the clan of Ghaffar. The first battle thus fought between the Muslims and the Meccans about 80 miles from Medina was that of Badr. The date given for the battle is 17th, 19th or 21st Ramdan, 2 A.H./March 13, 15 or 17, 624 A.D. The Muslims, who were unprepared for the engagement, numbered only 313 men who had only three horses, seventy camels and a few swords. This small force was marshalled out of Medina, and took suitable position near a stream of fresh water at Badr. The Meccans under the command of Abu Jahl, were a thousand with 300 horses and 700 camels. Numerically the Muslim force was hardly one-third of the Meccans. Besides, the latter were composed of skilled veterans, while the Muslims had recruited even inexperienced youths.

The two ill-matched armies collided on the morning of Friday, the 17th Ramdan. Sword clashed against sword and lance broke against lance. The men confronting each other in mortal combat were no strangers. Brother fought against brother, father against son, son against father. And when the battle was at its height, Muhammad prostrated himself before his God and prayed, "O'God, if this handful band of men perish, there will be no one left to pronounce Your word to worship You truly and selflessly. Your true faith will be destroyed. Come to the aid of Your devotees, my Lord, and give them victory."

At the taunt of the Meccans, Ali bin Abu Talib dashed out of the Muslim ranks, glittering in breastplate and helmet. He was closely followed by Ubaida bin Harith, a paternal cousin of Muhammad, and Hamza, who wore an ostrich feather on his cuirass. They performed such outstanding feats of bravery against Shiba, Walid and Atba in a single combat, who were considered the cream of the Qoraishite power. Hamza killed Shiba, while Ali killed Walid. Ubaida was mortally wounded but, before he fell, Ali and Hamza were able to come to his rescue. Hamza hurled at Atba and, with a sweep of his sword, cut off his head. This single combat was an ominous start for the pagans, as thereby they lost three of their best warriors and commanders in the very first phase of the battle. After a fierce and dreadful fighting, the Meccans army broke up and fled in a hurly-burly manner before the Muslims. Seventy of the bravest warriors of the Qoraish were slain, and forty-five



taken prisoners. Their commander, Abu Jahl had also fallen in the battle. On the Muslim side, fourteen men were killed.

This was the first opportunity of the Muslims after their long and bitter sufferings at the hands of the Meccans to wreak vengeance on them, if they chose. But how were they treated is well illustrated by the following incident. There was one among the captives, possessed of a remarkable force of eloquence which he used to exercise unsparingly while in Mecca, to arouse opposition against Islam. He was brought before Muhammad, and it was suggested that two of his teeth should be knocked out, as an appropriate punishment, to incapacitate him from stirring agitation against Islam. "If I disfigure any of his limbs," replied Muhammad, "God will disfigure mine."

Before Muhammad returned Medina with the Muslim warriors, Zaid bin Harith and Abdullah bin Ka'b had galloped through the city on their horses, and announced the victory, mentioning the names of fallen idolaters in the field. The Muslims rejoiced to hear it and gathered in the streets, acclaiming this great victory.

#### **Battle of Uhud**

In Mecca, the news of their defeat preceded the subdued army, and proclaimed their resolve for vengeance. The aggressions of the Meccans reached their climax. The traders among them set aside a portion of their profits for the expenses of war. In 3/625, three thousand Meccan warriors, of whom 700 were clad in armour, bore down on Medina under the command of Abu Sufian. Their women accompanied them in front to applaud the brave and to chide the craven-hearted. Three miles to the north of Medina, the Meccans encamped at the foot of a hillock, called Uhud. It is a massive feature lying three miles north of Medina, and rising to the height of about 1000 feet above the level of the plain. The entire feature is 5 miles long. In the western part of Uhud, a large spur descends steeply to the ground, and to the right of this spur, as seen from the direction of Medina, a valley rises gently and goes up and away as it narrows, at a defile about 1000 yards from the foot of the spur. At the mouth of this valley, and at the foot of this spur, Muhammad took the position.



Against the enemy force of three thousand entrenched below Uhud, Muhammad mustered barely a thousand men. Of this number, three hundred were led by the traitor Abdullah bin Ubay, who marched with them only a little way and then deserted. This left only 700 men, of whom only 100 were mailed combatants. Muhammad went forth to command his force. To protect his rear against a surprise attack from the pass in the Uhud hills, he selected about fifty archers to cover this pass under the command of Abdullah bin Zubayr. According to Ibn Hisham (d. 218/833) in "**Kitab Sirat-i Rasul Allah**" (ed. F. Wustenfeld, Gottingen, 1860, 2nd vol., pp. 66-7), Muhammad told to the archers, "Use your arrows against the enemy cavalry. Keep the cavalry off our backs. As long as you hold your position, our rear is safe. On no account must you leave this position. If you see us winning, do not join us; if you see us losing, do not come to help us."

It was the morning of Saturday, 7th Shawal, 3/March 23, 625 - exactly a year and a week after the battle of Badr. The Meccans again made first inroad and once again the rout began a good number among them fled the field with the Muslims in hot pursuit. This would have been another consequent victory, but the Muslim archers posted on the adjoining mound, neglecting the injunctions of Muhammad, rashly left their places to join them in the pursuit of plunder, leaving a critical gap in Muhammad's defence. Muhammad had commanded them never to leave their position regardless of whether the Muslims plunged into the enemy camp and won, but the archers violated the orders in greed of spoils of war. The Meccan general Khalid bin Walid at once perceived their error, who made the best of this opportunity. He wheeled his squadron and launched a reinforced attack on the rear of the Muslims, causing a great havoc. This turned the scales against them and the Muslims began to flee before the Khalid's lancers, who certainly took a heavy toll of Muslim lives. M.H. Haykal writes in "**The Life of Muhammad**" (Karachi, 1989, p. 265) that, "Muslim morale plunged to the bottom, and Muslim soldiers fought sporadically and purposelessly. This chaos was responsible for their killing of Husayle bin Jabir Abu Hudhayfah by mistake, as everyone sought to save his own skin by taking flight except such men as Ali bin Abu Talib whom God guided and protected."

Muhammad was also embosomed with the enemies, until his front teeth were broken. Ali hurled himself into the fray, and shielded Muhammad and dashed the raiders. The Meccans, tired out by a long and gruelling day, began to retreat, and in their retreat vented their rage on the Muslims dead in the field mutilating the corpses. With a final taunt to the Muslims, Abu Sufian ordered withdrawal, and both the fighting men and the baggage train moved off. For a time it seemed that they might lay another ambush the town of Medina, but they left it alone and headed for Mecca. The Meccans lost twenty eight in the battle, while seventy men were killed among the Muslims. Among the slain, the body of Hamza was found mutilated, who had been laid low by a spear thrust which pierced him. The fiend Hinda, wife of Abu Sufian, had cut open his body, and took a piece of his liver and gnawed it to quench her thirst for the vengeance of her father, Atba who was killed by Hamza in Badr. Because of this, Muawiya, the son of Hinda was called the **"son of the liver eater."**

On his return to Medina, Muhammad directed a small body of the disciples to pursue the retreating Meccans, and to impress on them that the Muslims, though worsted in battle, were yet unbroken spirit. Abu Sufian, hearing of the pursuit, hastened back to Mecca. He however sent a message to Muhammad, saying that he would soon return to exterminate him and his people.

Shortly after the battle of Uhud, a famine broke out in Mecca and its environs. When Muhammad heard of their hardships, he immediately appealed the Muslims for help. Donation poured in and when a sizable amount was collected, he sent it to Mecca. This gracious gesture made little impression on his foes, who accepted the help but refused to soften their hearts or to relent in their opposition.

The Muslims were still beleaguered on all sides by their enemies, the Jews, the Bedouin tribes and the traitors from Medina. They kept nagging the Muslims with constant raids which were stoutly repelled and petty machinations which were effectively countered. The Jewish tribes had been expelled from Medina because of their inimical and treacherous behaviours, entrenched themselves in a place called Khaibar.



## Battle of Ditch

The enemies of the Muslims this time created a united front. This culminated in a solemn pact of alliance among the five principal tribes. When the news of this tremendous mobilization reached the Muslims in Medina, it struck them all with panic. It was Monday, the 1st Shawal, 5/February 24, 627 when a gigantic army under the command of Abu Sufian besieged Medina. The number of this invading force is variously estimated at something between ten and twenty-four thousands, the largest single army ever mustered on Arabian soil. The Muslims had fortified Medina from three sides, but it was exposed from one side. Salman al-Faras, who knew far more of the techniques of warfare than was common in the Peninsula, advised the digging of a dry moat around Medina and the fortification of its buildings within. Following the idea of Salman al-Faras, Muhammad ordered the trenches to be dug in that open end of the city, and thus it is called the battle of Ditch (*Khandaq*). The word *khandaq* is, no doubt, regarded as the Arabicized version of the Persian word *kandah* (dug-up). The ditch ran from Sheikhein to the hill of Zubab, and thence to Jabal Banu Ubaid. All these hills were included in the area protected by the ditch, and on the west the ditch turned south to cover the left flank of the western of the two hills, known as Jabal Banu Ubaid. Once the digging of the ditch was completed within six days, the Muslims established their camp just ahead of the hill of Sila'a. Their total strength was 3000 which included hypocrites whose fighting value and reliability were uncertain.

The invading force fell on Medina like an avalanche, where they found an impassable ditch surrounding the whole city, thus they failed to subdue the besieged. The Muslims, after transferring their women and children to securer places, manned their fortifications so well that the siege continued for over a month. Food ran out, essential supplies were exhausted, and when the pang of hunger became unbearable, the besieged warriors stilled them by tying stones to their empty stomachs. The armies were effectively separated by the trench around Medina, but known champions in arms occasionally challenged each other to single combat. One of them was a famous Arab wrestler, named Amr bin Abdud-wudd. He found a point where the ditch was narrow, and succeeded in entering it on a fast jumping horse. He strutted forth haughtily and dared the Muslims

to send a man against him. Ali rode out at once and laid him low with a single stroke. Made with anger the invaders launched another furious attack to storm the trench, but were thrown back as before. Winter was approaching; the supplies of the besiegers were also running short and murmurs of discontent arose among their hordes. One night the wild wind terribly rose and soon gathered into a storm. It uprooted their tents, scattered their provisions, scared their mounts, and, what with the dark and unusual cold, spread so much terror and confusion in the camp that when the day dawned, the siege had been lifted and the invaders withdrew from the field. Each man carried as little as his camel, horse, or shoulders could bear and began to move while the storm continued to rage. The encounter at the battle of Ditch was the last time that the town of Medina ever faced an invader. After this battle, the strength of her enemies was for ever broken.

#### **Treaty of Hudaibia**

In 6/628, Muhammad marched from Medina with 1400 Muslims for the purpose of performing pilgrimage in Mecca. They went unarmed, clad in the ritual dresses. When this peaceful caravan approached its destination, tidings came that the Meccans were bent on mischief, and might stop their entry into the town by force. So, Muhammad halted his followers at a place, called Hudaibia, and his men encamped round a well. From here he sent a message to the Qoraish of Mecca, saying that, "We have come on a peaceful and religious mission. We have come only to perform the sacred pilgrimage. We desire neither bloodshed nor war, and we shall be glad if the Meccans agree to a truce for a limited period." When the Muslim messenger was sent to Qoraish, he failed to return, so another was dispatched. The enemies killed his mount and he did not return either. Finally, Muhammad sent one of his companions, Uthman to negotiate with the Qoraish. He too was detained and to provoke the Muslims, the Qoraish engineered a rumour that he had been slain.

So Muhammad collected all his followers and asked them to swear that if God demanded of them the supreme sacrifice they would lay down their lives without demur. One by one they came and touched his hand and swore, to die willingly, if such was the will of God. This oath or pledge became famous in the annals of Islam as the **Bai'at-**



**ur-Ridwan** (the pledge of God's pleasure). The Meccans heard of this and were afraid. Instead of directly attacking the pilgrim party as they originally intended, they now sent a messenger, a man named Suhail, to negotiate with Muhammad. He presented him with four demands on behalf of the Qoraish, as follows:- (a) The Muslims should return to Medina without performing pilgrimage. (b) They would be permitted to perform pilgrimage in the following year, but would not be allowed to stay in Mecca beyond three days with their traveller-arms, namely, their swords in sheathes. (c) They would not take any Muslim resident of Mecca with them to Medina nor forbid any Muslim from taking up his residence in Mecca, if he so desired. (d) If any Meccan went to Medina, then Muslims would return him to Mecca, but if any Muslim went to Mecca, he would not be returned to Medina.

The Meccans deliberately made their terms as rigorous and provocative as they could, but Muhammad refused to be provoked. As always he wanted peace not bloodshed, therefore he accepted all the terms with all the hardships and all the humiliation they implied. This treaty is known as the Treaty of Hudaibia. It was one of the most outstanding events in the life of Muhammad. According to R.V.C. Bodley in **"The Messenger"** (London, 1946, p. 257), "In point of fact, that the treaty was Mohammad's masterpiece of diplomacy. It was a triumph." Tor Andrae writes in **"Mohammed the Man and his Faith"** (London, 1936, p. 229) that, "The self-control which Mohammed revealed at Hodaibiya, his ability to bear occasional humiliation in unimportant issues, in order to achieve an exalted goal, shows that he was a person of unique ability."

This pact was the product of profound political wisdom and farsightedness. It was the first time after several wars that the Meccans acknowledged that Muhammad was an equal rather than a mere rebel or a runaway tribesman. It was the first time that Mecca recognised the Islamic state that was rising in Arabia. With it was terminated the struggle between the Muslims of Medina and the Qoraish of Mecca, which had extended over nineteen years, and had, after the migration, assumed the character of an armed conflict. By virtue of the truce, peace had at last been established, and the major difficulty in the way of peaceful propagation of Islam had been removed. Henceforward, Islam began to spread rapidly in the greater part of Arabia. Some estimate of the rate of this progress might be made

on the basis of the number of Muslims who were present with Muhammad at Hudaibia, which was just short of 1400, and the number that accompanied him two years later during the conquest of Mecca, which was 10,000. This is eloquent testimony that the attraction of Islam lie in its spiritual power and not in armed conflict.

As soon as this pact was solemnly concluded by the two parties, the tribe of Khazao entered an alliance with Medina and that of Banu Bakr with the Meccans.

### **Battle of Khaibar**

In 7/629, about six weeks after Muhammad's party returned from Hudaibia, they learnt that the Jews in Khaibar were planning to make an inroad on Medina. To forestall these moves, the Muslims marched on Khaibar, about 92 miles from Medina, with 1600 men, and covered the distance in three forced marches and reached the enemy territory before dawn on the fourth morning. The two armies met at first at Natat and fought each other strongly. When Sullam bin Mishkam, the chief of the Jews was killed, Harith bin Abu Zaynab took over the leadership, and charged from the fortress of Naim, but he was soon repulsed. Five strongholds at Khaibar were reduced one by one with the exception of the strongly fortified and impregnable al-Qamus, which was under the command of Marhab, who was like Goliath of Goeth. The Muslim champions failed to conquer it despite untiring efforts. Ali was finally given the charge, who proceeded the front, and valiantly put Marhab and other Jewish champions to sword. The casualties of the Muslims in this battle did not exceed twenty, while ninety-three were killed on Jewish side.

### **Invitation to the Rulers**

The time had now arrived for the Islamic mission to travel beyond the confines of the Arabian peninsula. So Muhammad dispatched his messengers to all the kingdoms known to his people, to the Roman Caesar, and the emperor of Iran, the governor of Egypt and the Negus of Abyssinia, the king of Ghassan, and the chief of Yamama. The message was identical to them all and neither political nor diplomatic expedients dictated either the choice or the status of the powers addressed. Each epistle bore the impression of



Muhammad's seal, with the words *Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah*. At the top came *Allah* and the bottom *Muhammad* and between the two *Apostle*. Hence, the epistle established also the fact that Muhammad looked upon Islam as a cosmopolitan religion. In case of Christianity, universality was never claimed. Jesus himself laid no claim to such a position. He clearly said that he had come for the lost sheep of Israel. Muhammad however claimed from the inauguration of his dispensation that it was meant for the whole mankind.

### **Conquest of Mecca**

The Treaty of Hudaibia had been now nearly two years in force. Acting on the discretion allowed by the treaty, Banu Khazao and Banu Bakr, inhabiting Mecca and its neighbourhood, the former had become the allies of Muhammad, the latter had entered into an alliance with Qoraish. These two rival tribes had been fighting among them for a long time. Aided by a party of Qoraish, Banu Bakr attacked by night an unsuspecting encampment of Banu Khazao, and slew several of them. The Khazao were forced to take refuge in the Kaba, where they were also persecuted. A deputation of forty men from the injured tribe, mounted on camels, hastened to Medina, and spread the wrongs of Banu Bakr before Muhammad, and pleaded that the treacherous murders be avenged. Muhammad sent a messenger to Qoraish, offering three alternatives:- a) Blood-money for all the men killed be paid. b) The Qoraish should withdraw their help for the Banu Bakr. c) It should be announced that the treaty of Hudaibia, has been abrogated.

Qaratah bin Umar, on behalf of Qoraish, said that only the third alternative was acceptable. After the departure of the messenger, the Qoraish regretted their reply, and sent Abu Sufian as their ambassador to get the treaty of Hudaibia renewed. Abu Sufian came to Medina, but he got no reply, and returned back to Mecca unsuccessful. Muhammad was therefore impelled to march with a force of ten thousand Muslims. The move of the army started from Medina on 10th Ramadan, 8/January 1, 630. Having no courage to resist, the Meccans laid down their arms. Muhammad triumphantly entered Mecca at the head of a formidable force after a banishment lasting for years, on 20th Ramadan, 8/January 11, 630. Many had lost their nearest

and dearest at the hands of the people now completely at their mercy. All of them carried in their hearts bitter memories of cruelty, persecution and pain inflicted by their now humble enemies. Yet none thought of vengeance or retribution, and none raised his arm against a defenseless foe. Stanley Lane Poole writes in **"The Speeches and Table-Talk of the Prophet Mohammad"** (London, 1882. p. 47) that, "It was thus Mohammad entered again his native city. Through all the annals of conquest there is no triumphant entry comparable to this one."

As soon as Mecca was occupied, Muhammad went to Kaba, and circumambulated the House of God seven times. Ibn Hisham (2nd vol., p. 412) writes that Muhammad soon turned and looked at the Qoraish. There was a hushed silence as the assembled populace gazed at him, wondering what their fate would be. "O Qoraish!" called Muhammad, "How should I treat you?" "Kindly, O noble brother, and son of a noble brother!" the crowd replied. "Then go! You are forgiven." Muhammad now entered Kaba with Ali and saw the idols and deities arranged along its walls. In and around the Kaba, there were 360 idols which had long polluted its sanctity; being carved of wood or hewn out of stone, including a statue of Abraham holding divining arrows. Muhammad smashed these idols to pieces. When the task was finished, he felt as if a great weight had been lifted off his shoulders. The Kaba had been cleansed of the false gods; now only the true God would be worshipped in the House of God. The conqueror of Mecca ordered no celebration mark his glorious victory. Instead, the Muslims bowed themselves in genuflections of prayer and gave thanks to God.

### **Battle of Hunain**

After the conquest of Mecca, the Muslims stayed in the city for two weeks when a news soon broke out that a big army had been mobilized in the valley of Hunain to attack Mecca and to undo the victory of the Muslims. This time Muhammad assembled a force of twelve thousand warriors, which included two thousand non-Muslim Meccans. Muhammad was forced to make necessary preparations for defence. He felt the necessity of borrowing money for provisions and war supplies, therefore, according to **"Masnad"** (Cairo, 1895, 4th vol., p. 36) by Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 241/855), "He took a loan of 30,000 dhiraams from Abdullah bin



Rabiah, a step-brother of Abu Jahl, who was very rich." He also wanted from Safwan bin Umayyah, who had not yet accepted Islam, to lend him the weapons of war. Safwan offered one hundred coats of mail together with their accessories. On 6th Shawal, 8/January 27, 630, Muhammad marched to Hunain to crush the powers of the four savage tribes, viz. Thaqif, Hawazin, Sa'd and Jasam. In order to reach the fertile valley of Taif, they had to pass through a narrow defile, called Hunain. It is a name of a valley running from Shara'il-ul-Mujahid, which is 11 miles east-north-east of Mecca, to Shara'i Nakhlah which is 7 miles and then runs north towards Zeima. Between the Shara'i the valley is quite wide, about 2 miles in most places, but beyond the old Shara'i it narrows down to between a quarter and a half-mile, and as it approaches Zeima, it gets narrower still. It is this second portion of the Hunain valley which is a defile, and the defile is narrowest near Zeima. Beyond Zeima the Taif route winds into the Wadi Nakhlat-ul-Yamaniyya.

When the Muslim army entered the narrow defiles overlooking the valley, Hawazin sharp-shooters, securely hidden; sent forth a murderous rain of arrows, causing havoc among the Muslims ranks, who took to a wild flight, and only a handful were left with Muhammad. At this critical moment, writes Ibn Hisham (2nd vol., p. 444), Muhammad raised his voice in a great cry, "O Muslims! I am here! I am the Prophet of God, and no one dare doubt my word. I am Muhammad, the son of Abdul Muttalib." But his cries were of no avail. The leading elements of Hawazin got to the place where Muhammad stood, and here Ali brought down the first infidel to fall at Hunain - a man mounted on a red camel, carrying a long lance at the end of which flew a black pennant. This man was chasing the Muslims as they fled. Ali pursued the man, and cut the tendons of the camel's hind legs with his sword. The man fell with the camel. Muhammad now moved towards the right with his handful companions and took shelter on a rocky spur. He turned to Ibn Abbas and ordered him to call the Muslims to rally around him. Ibn Abbas was of large stature who had very resonant voice, which according to some accounts, could be heard long away. He shouted: "O'people of *Ansars*! O'people of the Tree (those who had taken oath of allegiance at Hudaibia)" No sooner did this inspiring call reach the ears of the retreating Muslims than they rallied again, and made a counter-attack. The

tide turned at once, and the unbelievers took to flight and dispersed.

It must be known that the Muslims had counter-attacked with such reckless courage that the enemy's ranks were broken and their forces split into two. One half fled widely from the field and retreated to their homes, the other half took refuge in their fortress of Taif. Thus, the Muslims pursued the fleeing enemy to the city wall of the fortified Taif, about 75 miles from Mecca by the old route, and laid siege to the city which lasted for a month or so. It is reported that the Muslims had used for the first time the advanced siege appliances of the day, such as the *dababah* (a wheeled structure made of brick and stone to provide a constant cover to besiegers) and the *minjanig* (ballista, a wooden structure to hurl large stones to break through fortifications) newly acquired from the Jews of Khaibar. They caused considerable loss of life to the besiegers by the advanced defensive unit of shooting arrows with fire balls of bitumen as warheads against the wooden ballista. Later, Muhammad raised the siege on the advice of a wise Bedouin. Meanwhile, the defeated Hawazin sent six of their chiefs to seek peace and beg for mercy, which was accepted. This is called the battle of Hunain, in which the enemies lost seventy of their bravest. Six thousand captives including women and children, forty thousand sheep and goats, four thousand ounces of silver and twenty four thousand camels formed the booty of Hunain.

Returning from Taif, Muhammad halted at Je'raanah, a place beyond the outskirts of Mecca, where the entire booty of Hunain had been collected for distribution. In the division of the spoils, a large proportion fell to the share of the newly converted Meccans than to the people of Medina. Some of the Medinite *Ansars* looked upon this as an act of partiality and thus, there were whispers of dissatisfaction. Some of them said: "The Prophet had rewarded the Meccans and deprived us of our share, although the blood of the Meccans is still dripping from our swords." Other said: "We are remembered in moments of difficulties while booty is given to others." When their discontent reached the ear of Muhammad, he assembled the disheartened Medinite *Ansars* together and spoke, "O' men of *Ansar*, is it not true that you were in the dark and through me God guided you towards light?" The *Ansar* replied, "Verily, God and His Prophet did us a great



favour." Then he said, "Were you not torn by enmities and hostilities among yourselves and did I not give you unity and peace?" They said, "Verily, we are indebted to you for many favours." Then he said, "Were you not poor and God through me made you rich?" They said, "Verily, God and His Prophet have been kind to us." Then he said, "*O' men of Ansar, why you disturb your hearts because of the things of this life? Would you not prefer that the other people return to their homes with the goats and camels, while you go back to your homes with me in your midst?*" On hearing his words, the *Ansar* wept and said that they wanted only Muhammad and nothing else.

### **Mauta Expedition**

When Muhammad summoned the nations the message of Islam, one of his letters was addressed to the governor of Ghassan, Shurahbil bin Amr, who was the ruler of this region and was the vassal of Caesar of Rome. The letter of Muhammad was carried by Harith bin Umayr, who had been killed at a place called Mauta, a village not far from Balka in Syria. The murder of the Muslim envoy by a feudatory of the Roman empire, was an outrage which could not be passed over in silence. It would have been unwise to allow the enemy any leisure to muster huge forces to fall upon the Muslims, therefore, an army of 3000 strong was forthwith mustered at the command of Zaid bin Harith to avenge the blood of his envoy Harith bin Umayr against the Ghassanid ruler in 8/629.

The Muslims suddenly found themselves in the presence of a force several times more numerous than themselves, near the village of Mauta. Zaid bin Harith seizing the banner which Muhammad had entrusted to his hands, led the charge of the Muslims, plunging into the midst of the enemy ranks until he fell transfixed by their spears. Jafar Taiyar, seized the banner from the dying Zaid and raised it aloft to command the Muslim force. The enemy closed in on the heroic Jafar, who was soon covered with wounds. When both his hands were cut off gripping the banner, he still stood firm holding the staff between his two stumps, until the Byzantine soldiers struck him a mortal blow. Immediately, the banner was caught up by Abdullah bin Rawaha, who also met death. Khalid bin Walid, newly converted to Islam, assumed control at this moment of defeat. Then, by

retiring methodically, the survivors, under Khalid's leadership, withdrew from the field. When the defeated Muslims approached Medina, Muhammad and the people went out to receive them.

### **Tabuk Expedition**

With the conquest of Mecca, Islam marched with galloping speed throughout the length and breadth of Arabia. The neighbouring Christian states, especially the Roman empire, were watching this unprecedented, triumphant march with a great concern and anxiety.

The fate of the Muslims in the battle of Mauta also emboldened the Arabs and Romans of the frontier regions to enhance their mischief-mongering towards the Muslims. Thus, to restore the loss of prestige and to teach lesson, Muhammad marched with an army of thirty thousand from Medina to Tabuk, a well known place about midway between Medina and Damascus. He on that very occasion, appointed Ali as his caliph in Medina, and as a result, Ali did not take part in the battle of Tabuk. In the mid-Rajab, 9/late October, 630, the Muslims set out for Tabuk. This was the largest army that had ever mustered under the command of Muhammad. The army drawn up for the battle of Tabuk, known as the *Jaish al-Ushrah* (the army of difficulty). So called because in the first place the journey had to be undertaken in the scorching heat of the summer and secondly, it was the time of reaping the harvest and ripening of fruit which made it very difficult to proceed.

Reaching the field of Tabuk, Muhammad encamped his army, where he came to know that the Romans in Jordan had withdrawn to Damascus, and dared not to come to arms with the Muslims, and therefore, Muhammad returned to Medina after a couple of days. This was the last campaign commanded by Muhammad.

### **Farewell Pilgrimage**

When peace and order had been restored throughout the Muslim realm and the period of warfare was over and the people joined Islam in multitude, till in the course of some two years, there was one and but one religion - *Islam* - throughout the vast Arabian peninsula with a few Jewish



and Christian exceptions here and there. The cry of **Allah-u-Akbar** resounded on all sides. Now it took Muhammad but two brief years, not only to bring the whole of Arabia under the banner of Islam, but at the same time to work a mighty transformation, sweeping away all corruptions and uplifting the nation to the loftiest height of spirituality.

In 10/632, Muhammad set forth with a large concourse of Muslims, ranging in strength between ninety to one lac and twenty thousand bound on a farewell pilgrimage to Mecca. On his arrival at Mecca, and before completing all the rites, he addressed the assembled multitude from the top of the Jabal-ul-Arafat in words which yet live in the hearts of all Muslims. H.G. Wells writes in "**The Outline of History**" (London, 1920, p. 325) that, "A year before his death, at the end of the tenth year of the Hegira, Muhammad made his last pilgrimage from Medina to Mecca. He made then a great sermon to his people....The reader will note that the first paragraph sweeps away all plunder and blood feuds among the followers of Islam. The last makes the believing Negro the equal of the Caliph....they established in the world a great tradition of dignified fair dealing, they breathe a spirit of generosity, and they are human and workable. They created a society more free from wide-spread cruelty and social oppression than any society had ever been in the world before." In the terminology of Hadith, this historical journey is called **hajjatul wida** (the farewell pilgrimage) and at times it is also named **hajjatul balagha** (the pilgrimage of the delivery of message). On 18th Zilhaja, 10/March 16, 632, Muhammad after performing farewell pilgrimage, halted at the plain of Ghadir Khum, where he declared Ali bin Abu Talib as his successor.

#### **Osama bin Zaid**

At about the middle of the month of Safar, in the 11th A.H., on Monday, Muhammad ordered his followers to make speedy preparations for an expedition against the people of Mauta, in the Byzantine territory, and the sources go to say, to avenge the massacre of the soldiers, who had fallen in recent skirmishes. The next day, on Tuesday he appointed Osama to the command of the army. Osama was the son of Zaid bin Harith, who had been slain at Mauta, and

was a youth of 17 or 18 years. On Wednesday, a violent inroad of headache and fever seized Muhammad, but the next morning of Thursday, he found himself sufficiently recovered to prepare a flag-staff, with his own hands, which he made over to Osama. The camp was then erected at Jorf, three miles from Medina on the route to Syria. He ordered all his followers at Medina to join it at once, not excepting even the renowned companions to join it at once. Only Ali, who was required to remain with him at Medina, was exempted. The malady, although gaining ground, did not confine Muhammad entirely to his house. He used to move into the mosque, through the door of his apartment, to lead the prayers. After about a week of his summoning the men to the Syrian expedition under Osama, he perceived that the progress to join the camp at Jorf was very slow and poor, therefore, he once again addressed the people to join the Syrian expedition. The sickness of Muhammad was increasing every day, and the Syrian expedition, weighed upon his mind, and continued saying to those around him, "Send off quickly the army of Osama." According to the Shiites, Muhammad was really reprimanding his companions for not joining the expeditionary force. Knowing that Muhammad's end was near, the companions were reluctant to leave Medina at such a critical time and fearful that, if they absented themselves, Ali might step uncontested. In sum, the army of Osama could not depart from Medina during the time of Muhammad.

According to the Sunni historians, the expedition under Osama was ordered by Muhammad for taking revenge of Osama's father, Zaid bin Harith who had been killed at the hands of the Byzantine force in the battle of Mauta. This view however seems hardly plausible, because the battle of Mauta took place in the year 8/629 and there is no reason why the idea of revenge did not occur earlier 2 two years and 7 months' after that event. Secondly, Zaid bin Harith was not the only notable martyr of that battle. Muhammad's cousin, Jafar Taiyar was also killed in the same battle and if the expedition under Osama had been for avenging the blood of Osama's father, Zaid bin Harith, it should as well be for avenging the blood of Jafar Taiyar. But, it is learnt that not only Jafar's real brother, Ali but all other members of Banu Hashim had been expressly detained from joining the expedition under Osama. This indicates clearly that the expedition was not for avenging any one's blood. The critical examination of the sources leads to the conclusion that Muhammad aimed at keeping Ali and his



faithfuls in Medina and to keep all others away from the city, so that in the event of his death, Ali could establish himself as the successor of Muhammad without opposition.

### **Demise of Muhammad**

Muhammad was seriously taken ill for several days. At noon on Monday (12th Rabi I, 11/June 8, 632), whilst praying earnestly in whisper, the spirit of the great Prophet Muhammad took flight to the "blessed companionship on high." So ended a life consecrated from first to last to the service of God and humanity. H.M. Hyndman writes in "**The Awakening of Asia**" (London, 1919, p. 9) that, "...this very human prophet of God had such a remarkable personal influence over all with whom he was brought into contact that, neither when a poverty-stricken and hunted fugitive, nor at the height of his prosperity, did he ever have to complain of treachery from those who had once embraced his faith. His confidence in himself, and in his inspiration from on high, was ever greater when he was suffering under disappointment and defeat than when he was able to dictate his own terms to his conquered enemies. Muhammad died as he had lived, surrounded by his early followers, friends and votaries: his death as devoid of mystery as his life of disguise." His apostleship lasted for 23 years, 2 months and 21 days; or 9 years, 9 months and 8 days in Mecca and 13 years, 5 months and 13 days in Medina.

Muhammad was an embodiment or rather an institution by himself of many ethical code. No doubt, when a fair-minded person studies various aspects of the life of Muhammad as a man, head of family, a member of the society, a judge, an administrator, a teacher, a military commander and a guide, he comes to the conclusion that his all round perfection is a definite proof of his being a Divine Messenger. Muhammad made wonderful contributions for the welfare of humanity at large. First, he himself acted upon the divine message and then he asked to follow him. He established the rights of the people when rights were being usurped; he administered justice when tyranny was rampant everywhere; he introduced equality when undue discrimination was so common; and he gave freedom to the people when they were groaning under oppression, cruelty and injustice. He brought a message which taught man to

obey and fear God only, and seek help from Him alone. His universal message covers all the aspects of human life, including rights, justice, equality and freedom. Edward Gibbon writes in **"The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire"** (London, 1848, 5th vol., p. 487) that, "More pure than the system of Zoroaster, more liberal than the law of Moses, the religion of Mahomet might seem less inconsistent with reason than the creed of mystery and superstition which, in the seventh century, disgraced the simplicity of the gospels."

The European criticism seems to have lost the sense to deal with Muhammad justly. All rules of that criticism seem to be subject to the one consideration that whatever is unfavourable and damaging to Muhammad's reputation must be accepted as true. The negative views of the Europeans for Islam and Muhammad need here sufficient space to examine from its root. The readers may refer in this context a separate write-up, entitled **"The Image of Islam and Muhammad"**, vide Appendix I.

#### **Muhammad and Education**

The tribe of Qoraish, and especially that branch of it called the clan of Sa'd, among whom Muhammad spent his childhood near Mount Taif, situated to the east of Mecca, were renowned in Arabia for the purity and eloquence of their language. William Muir writes in **"The Life of Mohammad"** (London, 1923, p. 7) that, "His speech was formed upon one of the purest models of the beautiful language of the peninsula." Such milieu could not fail to make him a man of some refinement and good taste; and no doubt it was this which enabled him to attract to himself men much more learned than he. Muhammad preached of an inestimable value of knowledge, and brought his followers out of the darkness of ignorance to the light.

It is recounted that a man came to Muhammad and asked, "What is *ilm*?" He replied, fairness (*insaf*). The man asked again, "And what more?" He replied, listening (*istims*). The man asked, "And what more?" The Prophet said, keeping in mind (*hifs*). The man asked, "And what else?" He replied, acting (*amsal*) in accordance with knowledge. Then the man asked, "And what more?" Muhammad replied, spreading it (*nashru-hu*).



Muhammad's interest in education can also be judged from the tradition as quoted by Ibn Sa'd in "**Tabaqat**" that among the Meccan prisoners taken in the battle of Badr, there were many who could not pay for their liberty; and the literate among them however were ordered by the Prophet to teach at least ten illiterate Muslim children as a ransom. Zaid bin Thabit, who later one became famous as one of the scribes of the Koranic revelations, learned reading and writing in this way. It is also worthwhile to mention that Muhammad encouraged the learning of foreign languages, and thus Zaid bin Thabit is also reputed to have learnt Persian, Greek, Ethiopian, Aramaic and Hebrew. According to H.E. Barnes in "**A History of Historical Writings**" (Oklahoma, 1937, p. 93), "In many ways the most advanced civilization of the Middle Ages was not a Christian culture at all, but rather the civilization of the people of the faith of Islam."

The Holy Koran is no barren in this context. In Koran alone there are 704 verses in which either the word *ilm* or the words of the same derivation are used in the following order:- *a'lam* 49 times, *al-ilm* 80 times, *a'lamu* 11 times, *alim* 162 times, *a'lim* 13 times, *ilman* 14 times, *i'lamu* 27 times, *ma'lum* and *ma'lumat* 13 times, *ya'lamun* 85 times, *ya'lamu* 93 times, *ta'lamun* 56 times. Pen and books are essential aids of knowledge, and for them, the *qalam* occurs 2 times and *al-kitab* 230 times. In addition, a number of words related to writing, like *kataba*, *katabna*, *kutiba*, *katib*, *yaktubu*, *naktubu* are used in a number of verses. The total number of the Koranic verses using the words related to *writing* is 319, and the word *kitab* for the Koran is used on 81 different occasions. This is enough to show to what extent knowledge and the means of its acquisition are emphasised in the Koran, that had been excellently elaborated in the precious sayings of Muhammad.

Hence, it may be remembered that the advanced civilization in the Middle Ages originated by the Muslims was solely the outcome of the Koranic teachings and the recorded sayings of Muhammad in acquisition of education. Few fragments of Muhammad's teachings are also given below:-

\* *Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.*

- \* *The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of martyr.*
- \* *The acquisition of knowledge is a duty incumbent on every Muslim, male and female.*
- \* *He does not die, who takes learning.*
- \* *The worst of men is a bad learned man, and a good learned man is the best.*
- \* *To listen to the words of the learned and to instil into the lessons of science is better than religious exercises.*
- \* *Acquire knowledge; it enables the possessor to distinguish right from wrong; it guides us to happiness; it sustains us in misery; it is an ornament among friends, and an armour against enemies.*
- \* *Go in search of knowledge even into China.*
- \* *Excessive knowledge is better than excessive praying.*
- \* *Whoso honours the learned, honours me.*
- \* *One learned man is harder on the devil than a thousand ignorant worshippers.*
- \* *The superiority of a learned man over an ignorant worshipper is like that of the full moon over all the stars.*
- \* *People are like mines of gold and silver. The more excellent of them in Islam are those who attain knowledge.*
- \* *Knowledge is maintained only through teaching.*



- \* *The learned ones are the heirs of the prophets. They have knowledge as their inheritance; and he who inherits it, he inherits a great fortune.*
- \* *The only cure for ignorance is to ask.*
- \* *One scholar has more power over the devil than a thousand devout men.*

**ALI BIN ABU TALIB (11-40/632-661)**

Abul Hasan Ali, or Ali (Lofty, Exalted), the son of Abu Talib and the cousin of Muhammad was born on Friday, the 13th Rajab in the 28th year of *amul feel* (the year of elephants), or 600 A.D. inside Kaba in Mecca. His mother Fatima bint Asad stayed in Kaba for three long days and as the fourth day approached, she stepped out, carrying her gem in her arms. He was brought up under the subtle care and affection of Muhammad. Ali himself cherished the memory of his childhood by saying: "The Prophet brought me up in his own arms and fed me with his own morsel. I followed him, wherever he went, like a baby-camel which follows its mother. Each day a new aspect of his character would beam out of his noble person and I would accept it and follow it as commanded."

Ibn Abid Hadid (d. 655/1257) quotes Ibn Abbas as relating in his "*Sharh Nahj al-Balagha*" that Muhammad and Ali loved each other intensely. Muhammad was so fond of Ali that once when Ali was a young boy, he sent him out on some errand, and Ali took long time to return; he started getting worried and prayed to God, "O'Lord, do not let me die unless I behold Ali once again."

Ahmad bin Hanbal writes that, "There are not as many verses and traditions in the praise of any other companion of Muhammad as there are in the praise of Ali bin Abu Talib." Ibn Abbas says that, "There have not descended as many verses about anybody as have revealed about Ali." On another occasion Ibn Abbas narrates, "Three hundred verses of the Holy Koran have been revealed in favour of Ali." Abdullah bin Ayyash bin Abu Rabi'ah says, "Ali's knowledge and insight were perfect and he was the first to embrace Islam and he has the honour of being the son-in-law of the

Messenger of God. He alone had perfect ability to understand the traditions. He was very brave in fighting and very generous in charity."

Regarding the first man to profess faith in the prophetic mission of Muhammad, the early historians seem to have created a debating issue. Ibn Hisham (1st vol., p. 245), Tabari (2nd vol., p. 56) etc. however write that Ali bin Abu Talib was the first male to accept Islam at the hands of Muhammad. While Nuruddin Ali bin Ibrahim Shafayee writes in "**Sirat-i Halabiya**" that, "Ali was like a son unto Muhammad, therefore, his faith from very start was the faith professed by the Prophet." Masudi (d. 346/958) writes in his "**Muruj adh-Dhahab**" (2nd vol., p. 283) that, "The general conscientious of opinion amongst the Muslim historians and theologians is that Ali was never a non-Muslim or prayed before idols, therefore, the question of his embracing Islam does not and cannot arise."

In 614 A.D. about four years after his divine call, Muhammad proceeded to summon his close relatives. Thus he prepared a banquet, a lamb, and a bowl of milk for the entertainment of forty guests of the Hashimite. When Muhammad asked the assembly, who will assist him in his mission, no answer was returned. It was only Ali on that occasion stood up to offer his services for the cause of Islam to Muhammad. Thomas Carlyle writes in "**Heroes and Hero-worship**" (London, 1850, p. 77) that, "Nevertheless, it proved not a laughable thing; it was very serious thing! As for this young Ali, one cannot but like him. A noble minded creature, as he shows himself, now and always afterwards; full of affection and fiery daring."

During the night of Muhammad's migration from Mecca, it was indeed a most dangerous moment for Ali, when he volunteered to sleep fearlessly in Muhammad's bed. The task entrusted to him was not a small undertaking for a young man of 22 or 23 years old, but the way in which he carried it out, Ali showed an unflinching fidelity. He was called upon to deputise Muhammad at the risk of his own life, for it was highly probable that the assassins, furious at being foiled of their chief objective would kill Ali in his stead. Historian Tabari writes that, "Ali's willingness to sacrifice his life for Muhammad is unique in the history of mankind." Shibli Nomani writes in his "**Sirat al-Nabi**" (tr. by Fazlur Rahman, Karachi, 1970, p. 247) that, "It was a very critical moment. Ali knew



that the Quraysh had planned to assassinate the Prophet, and fully realized that his bed that night was to be turned into a place of murder, but, for the Victor of Khaybar it was a bed of roses." On that occasion a Koranic verse revealed in favour of Ali, which reads: "And among men there is he who would sell himself to seek the pleasure of God, and God is Compassionate to His servants." (2:207)

During the 2nd year of migration, Ali's betrothal took place with Muhammad's daughter Fatima, which had been actualized in the month of Ramadan, but the nuptial ceremonies were performed two months later in Zilhaja very simply without pomp and ostentation. Abu Muhammad Ordoni writes in **"Fatima the Gracious"** (Qum, 1992, p. 131) that, "The Prophet asked for a jug of water; he sipped a small amount of the water and after gargling with it, placed it back in the jug. He then called for Fatima and sprayed her head and shoulders with that water and did the same thing to Ali." According to some sources, Ali at the time of marriage was 21 years, 5 months and 15 days old, while Fatima was 15 years, 5 months and 15 days old.

Ali is said to have taken part in all the holy wars with the exception of the expedition of Tabuk, when he was left as a governor of Medina, and during that occasion, Muhammad said, "O Ali, you are to me as Aaron was to Moses." (**"Ma'nat"**, 1st vol., p. 174) His dauntless courage, fortitude and unflinching loyalty made him the main hero of all these campaigns. It was the valour of Ali and the strength of his arms that turned the table at critical juncture on the battlefield, and it was the victories won by him that ensured the triumph of Islam over polytheism. At the battle of Badr, as had been customary in all Arabian battles since pre-historic times, the champions of each force came out of the ranks before commencement of operations. With Hamza and Obaida, Ali fought duel with the Meccan champions. In the battle of Uhud, Ali stood steadfast to shield Muhammad when the Muslims had fled from the field.

Ali's dauntless courage and valour was further seen when he killed Amr bin Abdu-wudd in the battle of Ditch, ensuing the triumph of Islam. During the battle of Khaibar, five strongholds of the Jews had been reduced with the exception of al-Qamus, whose commander was Marhab. Muhammad at first assigned Abu Bakr to lead the

Muslim army to besiege the fort. R.V.C. Bodley writes in "The Messenger" (London, 1946, p. 271) that, "Into this Abu Bakr led a heroic attack, but he was driven back. Then Umar tried, but while he reached the mouth of the breach, he had to retire." Thus, Muhammad declared, "Tomorrow, I will hand over the banner of Islamic army to such a person who is an impetuous warrior and not an absconder; he befriends God and His Apostle and is also befriended by them. God is sure to grant victory on his hands." The next morning, Ali had been given the charge to lead the assault and to fight till the Jews acknowledged submission. Ali, clad in a scarlet vest over which was buckled a cuirass of steel, proceeded to the front. He put Harith, a man of gigantic stature to the sword. To revenge the death of his brother, the Jewish champion Marhab stepped forward from Jewish lines, and challenged Ali to single combat. "I am Marhab", he cried, "as all Khaibar know, a warrior bristling with arms in a furiously ranging war." Ali advanced from the Muslim ranks in response to his vainglorious challenge, saying "I am he whom his mother named Haidar, a lion of the wilderness; I weigh my foes in a gigantic balance." As both closed, Marhab made a thrust at Ali with his three-pronged lance, which Ali dexterously warded off, and before he could recover himself, Ali dealt him a blow with his irresistible sword, which divided his buckler, passed through his doubled turban, cleaving his head went down to his chest. Marhab fell lifeless to the ground. The Muslim warriors rushed forward in a body, and captured the citadel and the victory was decisive.

During the battle of Hunain, the Muslim army was unable to withstand the volley of arrows of the foe. Some of them shattered but Ali faced the situation boldly. He put numerous opponents to death with his sword.

Ali acted as the scribe for writing the treaty of Hudaibia. He wrote Muhammad as Messenger of God. The infidels objected to it. They wanted him to write Muhammad, the son of Abdullah. The Prophet consented to do so for the sake of peace, but Ali did not like to delete those words with his own hands. To him it was sacrilege and against the spirit of reverence. Muhammad however did so with his own hand.

Ali spent his youth in the shadow of the sword and his early manhood in wielding it. On several occasions, he fought single-handed against overwhelming odds and emerged



out victorious. In the battle of Siffin, he penetrated into the front ranks of the Syrian forces, dressed only in a cotton uniform and without any protective armour. For much the same reason, Ali wore protective armour on the front part of his body only, while his back lay open and unprotected. Someone asked him, "Are you not afraid that you will be attacked from behind?" "God forbid", was Ali's reply, "that I may live to see the day when an enemy would have the dexterity to attack me from the rear." Once a soldier asked Ali why he preferred mule to a horse when going into action. Ali replied, "A horse can gallop at a great pace, but a mule only ambles along, faltering little in its slow and steady pace. As I have neither to chase one who flies from the battlefield nor any inclination to seek safety in flight myself, I prefer a mule to horse." His behaviour at the battles also illustrates his adherence to his code he imparted. While fighting a duel in a battle, Ali had thrown his opponent on the ground and had drawn his sword to cut off his head, when the latter spat on his face. Ali then left his enemy and sheathed his sword. Asked why he left such a dangerous foe alive, Ali said, "I would have killed him in the way of God, but when he spat on my face, I lost my temper and his death at that juncture would have been caused from motives of retaliation rather than in the spirit of holy war."

During the conquest of Mecca, Muhammad entered Kaba and removed 360 idols. The Meccans looked on aghast while Muhammad, with a stroke of stick held in hand, smashed the idols which lay in the lower cavities of the walls. To break those idols which were placed higher up, out of reach of either hand or stick, in particular the idol most treasured by the Meccans, that of Hubal, like a giant statue; Muhammad solicited the help of Ali. Ibn Sa'd (3rd vol., p. 13) and other compilers of Hadiths, like Tirmizi (2nd vol., p. 299) and Ibn Majah (p. 12) write that Muhammad said, "Ascend on my shoulders and then shatter with this stick all the idols which are placed up above." Ali placed his feet on the shoulders of Muhammad and completed the great purge. He cast down all the idols, relics of the age of ignorance, also climbed to the top of the Kaba and pulled Hubal from its place and threw it down.

In the year 9/631, Islam was firmly established throughout Arabia. There remained, however, certain isolated pockets of resistance, therefore, Muhammad next turned his

attention to the large Christian community of Najran in Yamen, and invited them to accept Islam. Their response was to conduct a **mubahila** (imprecation), which was an old custom much used by the ancient prophets. Each of the disputant parties was required to swear a solemn oath that they were on the side of the truth, calling on God to wreak His vengeance on them if they lied. In short, **mubahila** was a custom to invoke the curse of God on the liar. Hence a deputation of sixty Christian priests, headed by Abu Harith bin Algamah, the grand bishop of Najran, Abdul Massih and Ayham arrived in Medina. Muhammad had taken with him Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Hussain, making themselves as **panj-tan** (the blessed Quincunx), and when the Christians saw their radiant faces, they were dismayed and overwhelmed. The bishop of Najran changed his mind, and went to Muhammad, informing their inability to proceed with the **mubahila**, and agreed to come to the terms.

The Muslim scholars unanimously concur with the fact, says, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal in his "**Masnad**," "that not one of the companions of the Prophet was ever praised by God and His Prophet for his virtues and estimation as was Ali." On one occasion when four of the Muslims complained to Muhammad concerning something that Ali had done, Muhammad was displeased and said, "What do you want from Ali? Ali is from me and I am from Ali. He is the guardian of every believer after me." (**Tirmizi**, 2nd vol., p. 298) On another occasion, Muhammad is reported to have said, "Ali is my brother, my executor and my successor. You obey him." (**Tabari**, 2nd vol., p. 63)

#### **Muhammad's successor**

The succession to Muhammad is the key question in Shiite Islam, and a principal factor separating them from the Sunni majority. It is seen that Muhammad had nominated Ali bin Abu Talib as his successor by rule of **nass** (investiture) and **nass wa-ta'iyin** (explicit investiture). During the period of the Prophethood, the designation was made by **nass** from time to time, whose main term was **wali** (helper, friend, lover, guardian or attorney), as it is said in Arabic: **wali amru'l raiyya** (the guardian of the subject), or **wali ahad** (one who succeeds to the office). In addition to the **wali**, different terms were used on different occasions for the succession of Ali bin Abu



Talib in Holy Koran, such as *Noor*, *Imam-i Moobin*, *Rasikhul fi'l Ilm*, *Ulil Amr*, *Ilmul Kitab* etc. While the most frequent words used in Hadiths, denoting Ali's succession were *hujjatullah* (God's proof), *Sayedu'l Muslimin* (leader of the Muslims), *Shabih Harun* (like Aaron), *Sahibu'l Iawa* (the master of the standard), *Sahibu'l hanz* (master of Kauthar pool), *Babu'l Ilm* (gate of the knowledge) etc.

The *nass wa-ta'vin* was made after the farewell pilgrimage of Muhammad. Accordingly, on Monday, the 20th Zilkada, 10, Muhammad received following revelation:-

***"And you proclaim to the people for pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and lean camel, coming from every remote place." (22:27)***

Due proclamation was made among the Muslims to join the pilgrimage, and Muhammad himself left Medina on Saturday, the 25th Zilkada, 10 which was his farewell pilgrimage. He reached Mecca on Wednesday, the 7th Zilhaja, 10, and performed the pilgrimage. He delivered a historical sermon at the plain of Arfat. He left Mecca on 14th Zilhaja, 10 after performance of pilgrimage. His caravan reached a little before noon to a pond (*ghadir*), known as Khum, on 18th Zilhaja, 10/March 16, 632. It is situated about 3 miles north-west of Mecca in the heart of the desert, called Sahara'i Huja, about 3 miles from the town, al-Jahfa. Here, Muhammad received the following Koranic revelation:-

***"O' apostle! deliver what has been revealed upon you from your Lord, and if not, you have not delivered His message. And surely God will protect you from men." (5:67)***

The town al-Jahfa was a junction from where the routes for Medina, Egypt, Syria and Iraq radiated in different directions. On its border is a pond (*ghadir*) with a vast open plain, embosomed with trees and bushes, which had been swept off. Under the shade of two trees, a big pulpit for Muhammad was erected with the camel-saddles. He mounted it and placed Ali on his right. He then delivered a sermon, thanking God for His bounty and stated that he felt that he would die soon. He repeated that he would be leaving two **heavy weights** i.e., Holy Koran and his Ahl-al-

Bait, with them. The two were inseparable. If people held both fast they would never go astray. Muhammad then asked his audience if he was not superior to the believers. The crowd answered in the affirmative. He then declared: "Whose Master (*mawla*) I am, this Ali is his Master (*mawla*)." He then prayed, "O God, be the friend of him who is his friend, and be the enemy of him who is his enemy." After the sermon, Muhammad dismounted and retired to his tent. He asked Ali to accept the people's congratulation and allegiance.

It must be known that the word *mawla* means master, lord, guardian or one who deserves superior authority. As the words *ana swla* (I am superior) indicate that *mawla* means *swla* (superior). What Muhammad meant by this sentence was, God is superior in right and might to him and he is superior in right and might to the faithful and Ali is superior in right and might to all those to whom Muhammad is superior.

The most earliest source of the event of Ghadir'i Khum is Asma bint Umayy (d. 38/658), the wife of Jafar Taiyar bin Abu Talib. Her report has been documented in "*at-Tarikh*" (Beirut, 1960) by the historian Yaqubi (d. 284/898). Hassan bin Thabit (d. 40/661), a famous poet had vividly versified the event in his *Diwan* of 228 poems. Suleman bin Qays al-Hilali (d. 82/701) also is ranked among the earliest authorities. Kumyt bin Zaid (60-126/680-744) however has been considered as the most earliest authority by the German scholars, Horovitz and Goldzier. Among the prominent Companions, who had related the event of Ghadir'i Khum are Abuzar Ghafari (d. 32/653), Huzaifah al-Yameni (d. 29/650), Abu Ayub Ansari (d. 50/670), Ammar bin Yasir (d. 37/657), Salman al-Faras (d. 36/657), Abdullah bin Abbas (d. 86/705) etc. etc. Among the earliest Umayyad historians, the most famous were Ibn Shihab az-Zuhari (50-125/670+744) and Ibn Ishaq (d. 152/769).

The historians and compilers of the Hadiths between 10/632 and 300/912 were mostly under pressure of the ruling powers of Umayyads and the Abbasids, therefore, they avoided to refer the event, such as Ibn Hisham (d. 218/833), Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845) and Tabari (d. 310/922). Nevertheless, Nisai (d. 151/768), Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 241/855), Tirmizi (d. 279/893), Ibn Majah (d. 283/897), Abu Daud (d. 276/890) and Yaqubi



(d. 284/898) had demonstrated their impartiality, whose bold assertion lends colour to this historical event. In sum, Hussein Ali Mahfuz, in his researches, has recorded with documentation in "**Tarikh ash-Shia**" (Karbala, n.d., p. 77) as quoted by Dr. S.H.M. Jafri in "**Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam**" (London, 1979, p. 20) that the tradition of Ghadir'i Khum has been narrated by at least 110 Companions, 84 tabi'un, 355 ulema, 25 historians, 27 traditionists, 11 exegesists, 18 theologians and 5 philosophers.

It must however be remembered that the Arabs of Northern and Central, of whom the tribe of Qoraish was dominant in Mecca. The people of South Arabian origin, Banu Aws and Banu Khazraj had settled in Medina. There had been many differences among the Arabs of North and South, socially, culturally, economically, geographically and religiously. The leader in the North was elected on a principle of seniority in age with administrative ability. In South, the Arabs were accustomed to hereditary succession in leadership. In the face of these facts, the South Arabian tribes of Aws and Khazraj had presented a healthy atmosphere for Islam in Medina. The majority of Northern Arabs were nomads, and understood Islam at least at the first stage of their acceptance of it as social-political discipline, as the Holy Koran says: "The wandering Arabs are harder in disbelief and hypocrisy and more likely to be ignorant of the limits which God has revealed to His Prophet" (9:97). These Arabs of North have been also called "most obdurate in hypocrisy" (9:101). Conversely, the tribes of Aws and Khazraj had understood Islam as basically religious discipline coupled with a socio-political movement, and were more sensitive to religious affairs. When the Holy Prophet died in 10/632, the issue of his succession was understood to combine it both political and religious leadership. To some it was more political than religious, to others it was more religious than political. The majority who accepted Abu Bakr as their leader, had laid more emphasis on the socio-political side, disregarding the religious principle and the idea of hereditary sanctity of a certain house. This assumption is strongly supported by the words of Umar bin Khattab, who in reply to Ibn Abbas, said: "The people do not like having the Prophethood and Caliphate combined in the Banu Hashim" (**Tabari**, 1st vol., p. 2769). Hence, Muhammad did not designate Ali explicitly in the start owing to the Northern Arabian custom of leaving the

selection of a leader to the people. The Holy Koran however says that Muhammad's family had a prerogative over others. Neither Banu Taym bin Marra, the clan of Abu Bakr, nor Banu Adi bin Ka'b, the tribe of Umar Khattab had ever been regarded with esteem on any religious ground. But, those who laid stress on the religious principle could not accept them as candidates for succession to Muhammad. It was from Banu Hashim, and among them was only Ali bin Abu Talib for the succession.

There was an assembly hall (*sageefa*), about 5 miles from Medina, belonging to Banu Sa'd, where the Arabs used to discuss their mutual problems. Upon the death of Muhammad, the *Ansars* and *Muhajirs* of Medina, numbering about 300 to 325, had assembled at Sageefa Banu Sa'd to choose their leader. There was not a single man from Banu Hashim. Abu Bakr and Umar bin Khattab also rushed the spot during the time when the people were about to take an oath of allegiance from Abu Ubaida as their caliph. The proceeding stopped and a hot argument started among them. Historian Tabari (3rd vol., p. 198) writes, "The *Ansars* or some were arguing that they would never take oath from anybody except Ali". When the swords were about to unshield, Umar bin Khattab asked Abu Bakr to raise his hand, and took his *bayt*, then it was followed by Abu Ubaida and the rest of people.

Sir Thomas W. Arnold writes in "The Caliphate" (London, 1924, p. 30) that, "The Prophet had been at one and the same head of the state and head of the church. The paramount control of political policy was in his hands; he received the ambassadors who brought the submission of the various Arab tribes, and he appointed officers to collect dues and taxes. He exercised supreme authority in military matters and the dispatch of military expeditions. He was at the same time supreme legislator, and not only promulgated legal status, but set in judgement to decide cases, against his decision there was no appeal. In addition to the performance of these offices of administrative and political order as ruler, general and judge, he was also revered as the inspired Prophet of God and the religious dogmas he enunciated were accepted by his followers as revelations of divine truth, in regard to which there could be no doubt or dispute. At the same time he performed the highest ecclesiastical functions, and as Imam led the prayer in public worship at the canonical hours in the mosque of Medina. In all these respects, Abu



Bakr was a successor of the founder of the faith - with the exception of the exercise of the prophetic function." In sum, Muhammad administered both temporal and spiritual powers in Islam, and after his death, the temporal power came to the hands of Abu Bakr in the form of *Caliphate*, while the spiritual power was inherited by Ali bin Abu Talib and his descendant in the form of *Imamate*.

During the period of Abu Bakr's caliphate, whatever initial support there may have been for Ali's candidature melted away in the face of Ali's own refusal to advance the temporal claim. Ali reverted to leading a quiet life, almost confined to the four walls of his house. He had no choice but to reconcile himself with the existing order, since he had considered that any action would lead to the destruction of infant Islam. His compromise with the political order can be well asserted from the fact that he did not demonstrate any sort of opposing attitude publicly and continued to live in Medina. If he had quitted Medina for elsewhere, his followers supporting his cause, must have followed him, which Ali most probably did not like.

Tabari (3rd vol., pp.203-4) writes that Abu Sufian bin Harb, who endeavoured to instigate Ali with the words: "What! It is the limit that in your presence, one of the lowliest families of Arabia should have gained the upper hand. By God, if you so desire I would fill the streets and lanes of Medina with mounted soldiers to aid you." Ali gave him short shift reply that, "By God, you have always been an enemy of Islam and of the Muslims." This demonstrated how firmly Ali was resolved to place the collective interests of the community and solidarity of Islam. In spite of maintaining his passive attitude, Ali did occasionally help the caliphs. He was a valued counsellor of the caliphs, and dominated by his heroic love and sense of sacrifice for the faith and saved the caliphs from committing the serious mistakes. Umar is thus often reported to have said: "Had there not been Ali, Umar would have perished." (vide "*Kitab al-Isti'ab*" by Ibn Abd al-Barr, 3rd vol., p. 1104)

#### **Fourth Caliph of Islam**

Accordingly, Abu Bakr was elected at the age of 60 years, adopting the title of *khilafat rasulillah* (Vicegerent of the Messenger of God), a title which was soon simplified

to *khalifa* (whence the word *caliph* was coined in western languages). Abu Bakr died in 13/634 after ruling for 2 years, 3 months and 10 days. He nominated Umar, whose age at that time was 52 years, ruled for 10 years, 6 months and 4 days; and died in 23/644. The third caliph Uthman was selected at the age of 70 years, who was assassinated in 35/656 after ruling for 11 years, 11 months and 14 days. Wardi writes in "*Wu'az al-Salatin*" (p. 217) that, "It was the Umayyads who engineered the murder of Uthman, with Muawiya instigating the murder and Marwan working out the death." Immediately after the murder of Uthman, a crowd rushed to Ali in the mosque, urging him to accept the caliphate. Eventually, Ali consented and became the fourth caliph. This implies that the temporal and spiritual powers once again joined together in Islam just 24 years, 8 month and 28 days after the death of Muhammad. Dr. Gustav Weil writes in "*History of the Islamic Peoples*" (New Delhi, 1914, p. 88) that, "Still from credible sources it is clear enough that Ali surpassed not only Muawiya but even Abu Bakr and Umar in his unflinching love of righteousness, in bravery and eloquence."

It can be said that Ali's succession to the caliphate was approved by the vast majority of Muslims in Medina, and also in most of the provinces of the state. He was however placed in a difficult time, and the dice of fate appears to have been loaded against him. The period of four caliphs were subdivided into four distinct periods. It falls to the lot of Ali that he should pilot the bark of Islam in times of the most dangerous internecine dissensions. To maintain a proper hold of state administration under such conditions was a difficult as to keep a boat steady on stormy waters. Nevertheless, Ali displayed a high example of affection and sympathy for brother-Muslims which is without parallel.

During Uthman's caliphate, all the important governorships of the Muslim states were in the possession of the unworthy members of the Umayyad family. Ali firstly dismissed them in the state, but Muawiya the governor of Syria revolted, demanding "revenge for the blood of Uthman". Ali promptly announced that the names of the assassins should be reported, so that they could be executed. He had also started enquiries, but the only witness to the assassination was Uthman's widow, Naila, who deposed that Uthman had been killed by two persons whose names she did not know. Abul Ala Mawdudi writes in



his "**Khilafat wa Mulukiyat**" (Rampur, 1974, 3rd ed., pp. 115-17) that, "With due respect to Aisha, Talha, Zubayr and Muawiya, one could not help saying that legally their position was untenable. It was only during pre-Islamic days that tribes started wars of vengeance. Only Usman's relatives, who were alive at the time, had the right to demand reparation. If the ruler delayed arresting the criminals, then justice could be demanded by anyone. No law or *Shariah* permitted the people to declare the government illegal, because of its failure to redress grievances. If Ali's enemies did not consider him the legally elected caliph, their demand for vengeance against Ali was meaningless." Criticizing Aisha, Talha and Zubayr, who recruited an army and marched from Mecca to Basra against Ali, crying for vengeance for Uthman's blood, Mawdudi remarks that, "This act was illegal as they should have gone to Medina, where Ali, the criminals, and Uthman's heir lived. The war they provoked led to the slaughter of 10,000 people for the blood of one. Even more illegal was the position of Muawiya, who rebelled against the central government when he took revenge for Usman's blood. He did not make this claim in his private capacity, but in his official position as the governor of Syria. He misused the resources of his government in that cause. He was not satisfied with demanding that Ali prosecute and punish the assassins, but urged that they be handed over to him, so that he himself might execute them." Mawdudi goes on to say that, "Muawiya's relationship with Usman was a private matter, the governorship was not involved. He had no right to claim vengeance as a governor against the caliph to whom allegiance had been given by all the provinces except those governed by himself. Rebellion against the central government by a provincial army meant the revival of pre-Islamic tribal laws."

After Ali had taken over as caliph, exactly what he had anticipated took place. Muawiya exercised the motives of old enmity and opposition towards Ali. The charge of Uthman's murder was trumpeted up against Ali and afforded Muawiya's excuse enough to unfurl the standard of revolt against him. Muawiya incited the Syrians against Ali to a feverish pitch by indoctrinating them with a belief in the false charge against Ali. "In order to discredit Ali further" writes Prof. N.A. Faris in "**Development in Arab Historiography**" that "the Umayyads made the Shiite movement a conspiracy against Islam, engineered by the

Jewish convert Abdallah bin Saba, who was alleged to have been an ardent follower of Ali. Both Taha Husayn and Wardi, marshalling a great deal of impressive historical evidence, deny the existence of Ibn Saba and make him the creation of Umayyad propaganda." (cf. "Historians of the Middle East", ed. Bernard Lewis, London, 1962, p. 441).

In the cathedral mosque at Damascus, a meeting to mourn the murder of Uthman had been convened, his blood-stained shirt was exposed to the general view from the pulpit. According to Tabari (5th vol., p. 163), "It was during these bouts of mourning that the Syrians were told that they had to avenge Uthman's blood." Hence, Uthman was the symbol and slogan of Umayyad aspiration in contrast to Ali, and in order to solidify his rule in Syria, he got fabrication of many hadiths. For instance, it was propagated that "Syria is the chosen country of God and He sends those of His servants there whom He prefers to all others. O confessors of Islam, press forward towards Syria because God has chosen this country as His favourite amongst the countries of the whole world" (cf. *Yaqut*, 3rd vol., p. 242).

#### **Battle of Camel**

Aisha had long hated Ali, and wished that, when the aged Uthman died, her own kinsman, Zubayr, should become caliph. When Uthman was assassinated, she was not in Medina, having gone to Mecca a few weeks previously to perform the pilgrimage. The news of Uthman's murder reached her when she was on the way back. She returned immediately to Mecca and incited the citizens against Ali. The fiery address set a match to the smouldering fire of discontent. The first to respond to Aisha's call was Abdullah bin Amur, the Uthmanid governor of Mecca. Those Umayyads who had fled from Medina after the ghastly murder of Uthman now also joined Aisha, and when Talha and Zubayr came over to Aisha, many more of the Qoraish clamoured to join in the rebellion. Aisha advocated march on Basra. Throwing off the veil ordained, Aisha now took command of the army. The money to equip it came from Yamen treasury, brought to Mecca by the governor whom Ali had deposed. It is however clear from the sources that in the battle between Ali and Aisha, the triumvirate was fighting for personal reason rather than for the blood of Uthman, which was a timely and convenient pretext for them.



Ali had been obliged to abandon the Syrian campaign against Muawiya, deciding instead, to use his small force against Aisha, who had hatched a rebellion. Realizing, however, that his army was by no means adequate for the task in hand, he pitched his camp at Rabaza. In the interim, Aisha occupied Basra in 35/656. Ali was a seasoned commander, born and bred in wars and famous for his skill as tactician. His ascetic life had not chilled his martial fervour and at the advanced age of sixty, he still retained the vigour of a much younger man. He took to war after a recession of 25 years only taught that the demands of duty only should be determined action and inaction, and that in matters concerning principles and duties, the importunities of emotions and claims of age should alike find no place. He was however anxious to avoid the shedding of Muslim blood by Muslims. Of his desire and pacific intention, William Muir writes in **"The Caliphate, its Rise, and Fall"** (London, 1924, p. 247) that, "But Ali's thoughts were for peace if possible. He was a man of compromise and here he was ready, in the interest of Islam, magnanimously to forget the insult offered him."

The two armies eventually encamped in the Wadi-us-Saba (Valley of the Lion) near the village of Khuraiba outside Basra, facing each other. Aisha, on the advice of some of her followers, went so far as to mount her camel, al-Askar and that this battle is called the Battle of Camel, which took place on 10th Jamada II, 35/December 4, 656. The battle began and reached a critical stage. Ali ordered his men not to take offensive unless the enemy began to onset. He gave further stringent orders that no wounded should be slain, no fugitive pursued, no plunder seized nor the privacy of any house violated. The showers of arrows were pouring in from the Aisha's side, Ali forbade his soldiers to return the shot and bade them wait. Wherever the camel of Aisha stood, there the battle was waged most fiercely. As long as that animal was standing, Ali realized, would the battle continue. He therefore deputed one of his men to cut off its legs. The warrior slipped behind the camel, did as he was bidden, and the camel thudded to the ground. Within a very short time the bugle sounded the end of the battle.

After the battle, Ali repaired to Aisha's camp, where he treated her with greatest deference, "For," said he, "respect must be shown to her because she is the spouse of

the holy Prophet." In the care of her brother, and under the command of his own two sons, Ali then sent Aisha to Medina. She was shown every deference and given forty hand-maids. Ali himself accompanied her retinue on foot for a short distance, before bidding her farewell. "It befits your dignity", Ali said to her, "to remain in your house and not to meddle in politics or to share the rough life of the battlefield, nor to join any party in future which may tarnish the glory of your name, or become the authoress of a second rebellion." To this Aisha replied, "By God! there existed no enmity between Ali and me, save a few petty domestic squabbles." On her return to Medina, Aisha led a life of seclusion. She is said to have died in 59/678 at the age of 66 years.

The loss in the battle was very great. Some historians say that 16,796 men of Aisha's forces, and 1,070 of Ali's army were killed. During the encounter, the people of Aisha were known as *asahab al-jamal* (the companions of the camel), but Ali called them *an-nakisun* (those who broke oath), which is the derivation of Koran (48:10), wherein the word *naksa* means "*bayt*" or an oath of allegiance. The supporters of Ali, however, became known after the battle of Camel as *Shiat'i Ali* (the followers of Ali).

#### **Kufa - a new capital**

Ali's stay in Basra was not long. Having appointed Abdullah bin Abbas as the governor, Ali repaired to Kufa in 36/657 and made it the seat of his government and the capital. The word *kufa* means, a spot where pebbles and sand are found in admixture, and as the site answered to this description. It will be worthwhile to mention that Kufa in Iraq was founded in the year 17/638, about three years after caliph Umar bin Khattab assumed the caliphate at Medina. It was used as a garrison town during Umar's time, where different contingents from distant places could stay and should be readily available in an emergency. The city was organised into seven tribal contingents divided into seven military districts. This grouping continued for 19 years until it underwent another change in 37/657, when Ali came to Kufa. So great was Umar's interest in Kufa that he described it as "tower of Islam" (*qubbat al-Islam*), and "the head of the people of Islam" (*ras ahli al-Islam*). In describing the settlers of



Kufa, he according to Ibn Sa'd (6th vol., p. 7) said, "They are the lance of God, the treasure of faith, the cranium of the Arabs, who protect their own frontier forts and reinforce other Arabs." It may be pointed out that these epithets of honour and distinction were not accorded to any other city, such as Damascus or Basra. The selection of Ammar bin Yasir as the governor of Kufa, and Abdullah bin Masud as deputy governor to the leadership of Kufa reveals Umar's intention to replace tribal claims with Islamic claims. After Umar's death, Uthman appointed Walid bin Uqba as a governor of Kufa in 25/646. Apprehensive of Muawiya's designs against him, Ali considered Kufa suitably situated to check any encroachment in Iraq, therefore he made it his capital, as topographically it was in the centre of his dominions.

### **Battle of Siffin**

In Syria, disorder and incitement to commotion continued unabated. Uthman's shirt, besmeared with his blood and the chopped-off fingers of his wife, Naila, were exhibited from the pulpit. In this manner, Muawiya raised the entire country of Syria against Ali. Ultimately, both the parties, opposed to each other, converged on Siffin where their armies pitched their camps in 37/657. Even at this stage, Ali sent three men, viz. Bashir bin Amr bin Mahz Ansari, Saeed bin Qais Hamdani, and Shis bin Rabiee Tamini to Muawiya to induce him to settle for union, accord and coming together. According to Tabari (5h vol., p. 243), Muawiya replied that, ***"Go away from here, only the sword will decide between us."***

With an army of some 80,000 strong, mainly recruited from Iraq, Ali set out from Kufa, planning to march through upper part of Iraq and invade Syria from the north. Ali, then pushed on to Raqa, on the left bank of the Euphrates. Here his troops came across the Syrian vanguard but it withdrew without engagement. The next problem was how to cross the river. Ali wanted to construct a bridge of boats, but the people of Raqa were hostile. It was only after Ali's general, Ashtar, had threatened them with death that they consented to help in building the bridge which was completed under the great difficulties. Ali's men then advanced along the right bank of the river in the direction of Aleppo. At Sur-Rum they had a brief skirmish

with a Syrian outpost before they reached the plain of Siffin, where they found Muawiya's forces drawn up in strength and waiting for them.

Ali soon discovered that the Syrian positions controlled the water supply of the whole valley, and that there was no access to the river for his men. Muawiya obviously intended to use thirst to drive Ali's men to surrender. Muawiya had, however, underestimated the calibre of Ali's troops. Ali, however wrote a letter to Muawiya, which reads: "You have fore-stalled me in pitching the stables for the horses of your cavalry. Before I could declare war on you, you have declared war on us. It was bad move on your part to cut off our supply of water. It behoves you to allow us the natural supply of water. Failing this, we will be reluctantly forced to fight with you." On receiving this letter, Muawiya conferred with his advisers, who urged him not to yield up the advantage he had gained. Ali was therefore left with no alternative but to attack at full gallop and inflicted a crushing defeat on Muawiya's forces, and took charge of water supply. Now it was the turn of Ali's counsellors to urge control of the water supplies and for the soldiers of Muawiya to suffer the rigours of extreme thirst. But Ali ordered his men to allow the Syrians free access to the river, saying: "Our religion and ethical code does not permit us to stop water supply, and so pay our enemy back in his own coin. I do not want to follow the way of the ignorant people."

Ali's next step was, as usual, to try and come to a peaceful settlement. He deputed Bashir bin Amr, Sa'id bin Qais and Shabus bin Rabi, but Muawiya declined the offer to the delegates. Ali still did not give up hope but a second delegation, consisting of Adi bin Hatim, Yazid bin Qais, Ziyad bin Hufza and Shabis bin Rad, also failed to persuade Muawiya to come to an amicable settlement. For the next three months, Zilhaja, Muharram and Safar 36/May, June and July, 657, the armies remained in camps at Siffin, facing each other neither at war nor at peace. This period of negotiations lasted 110 days, during which time, the Arabian chroniclers maintain that Ali made as many overtures for peace as there were days. There was much heat in the discussions with Muawiya, and finally Ali was obliged once again to resort to arms on 8th Safar, 36/July 26, 657.



Historian Yaqubi (2nd vol., p. 188) writes that Ali had 80,000 men, including 70 Companions who participated in Badr, 70 Companions who took oath at Hudaibia, and 400 prominent *Ansars* and *Muhajirs*; while Muawiya had 1,20,000 Syrians.

During the 110 days of negotiations, no fewer than 90 skirmishes were fought. Almost every day one tribal column would engage an enemy in combat, sometimes two or more engagements would be fought in one day. Heart-broken at the amount of Muslim blood that had already been shed in vain, Ali made one last bid for peace with Muawiya, at the start of the new year, but of no avail. At long last, Ali decided on a general engagement, and thus the battle of Siffin broke out on 8th Safar, 36/July 26, 657. A fierce battle was fought between them on the whole day, and it even continued in the darkness of that night, which is known as *laila'tul harir* (the night of clangour). William Muir writes in "**The Caliphate, its Rise and Fall**" (London, 1924, p. 261) that, "Both armies drawn out in entire array, fought till the shades of evening fell, neither having got the better. The following morning, the combat was renewed with great vigour. Ali posed himself in the centre with the flower of his troops from Medina, and the wings were formed, one of the warriors from Basra, the other of those from Kufa. Muawiya had a pavilion pitched on the field; and there, surrounded by five lines of his sworn body-guards, watched the day. Amr with a great weight of horse, bore down upon the Kufa wing which gave away; and Ali was exposed to imminent peril, both from thick showers of arrows and from close encounter. Reproaching the men of Kufa for their cowardice, the Caliph fought bravely, his unwieldy figure notwithstanding, sword in hand, and manfully withstood the charge. Ali's general Ashtar, at the head of 300 readers of (the Koran) led forward the other wing, which fell with fury on Muawiya's **Turbaned** body-guard. Four of its five ranks were cut to pieces, and Muawiya, bethinking himself of flight, had already called for his horse, when a martial couplet flashed in his mind, and he held his ground."

The following morning, the battle started up again. Edward Gibbon writes in "**The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire**" (London, 1848, 3rd vol., p. 522) that, "The Caliph Ali displayed a superior character of valour and humanity. His troops were strictly enjoined to wait the first onset of

the enemy, to spare their flying brethren, and to respect the bodies of the dead, and the chastity of the female captives. The ranks of the Syrians were broken by the charge of the hero, who was mounted on a piebald horse, and wielded with irresistible force, his ponderous and two edged sword."

Appalled by the carnage, Ali sent a message to Muawiya and challenged him to single combat, saying that whoever won should be the Caliph. In Gibbon's words, "Ali generously proposed to save the blood of the Muslims by a single combat; but his trembling rival declined the challenge as a sentence of inevitable death." Muawiya had indeed lost his nerve, and was about to flee from the field, a trick of his accomplice Amr bin al-A'as saved them from destruction.

At length, Muawiya made his mercenaries tie copies of Holy Koran to their lances and flags, demanding for the decision of arbitration. Tabari (6th vol., p. 46) writes that, "The defeat started Muawiya in the face. Amr bin al-A'as, however, had a trick up his sleeve for this emergency, and it was the raising of the Koran aloft on spear-heads, and announcing, **"Brethren, this Book of God alone will decide between you and us."** It will be recalled that even before the commencement of the battle, Ali had invited Muawiya by sending his three men to turn to the Koran for a decision, but his offer was declined by telling, **"Go away from here, only the sword will decide between us."** (Tabari, 5th vol., p. 243). And now they sought the intercession of the Holy Koran to escape the unpleasant consequences of an ignominious defeat. At this Ali came forward and expostulated his soldiers, saying, "It is an infamous stratagem and a nefarious device of Amr and Muawiya to cloak their defeat. Beware of the trick which they are playing. You should fight to a finish." But Ali's men refused to fight. Ali, with a great expectation of victory in sight, was therefore impelled to call a retreat.

Ali's supporters during the battle of Siffin were called **ahel-i Iraq**, or **Shiat'i Ali**, while his opponents became known as **ahel-i Sham**, or **Shiat'i Uthman** and **Shiat'i Muawiya**. But Ali called them **al-kasitun** (those who act wrong), a word derived from the Holy Koran that: "And as for the deviators, they shall be for the hell, a fuel."



(72:15), wherein the word **al-kasitun** means the fuel of hell-fire.

### **Appointment of Arbitrators**

It was decided that the Syrians and the residents of Kufa should nominate an arbitrator each to decide between Ali and Muawiya. The Syrians choice fell on Amr bin al-A'as who was the rational soul and spokesman of Muawiya. Ali wanted one of his sincere followers like Malik Ashtar or Abdullah bin Abbas to be appointed as an arbitrator for the people of Kufa, but the men of his own army strongly demurred, alleging that men like these two were, indeed, responsible for the war and, therefore, ineligible for that office of trust. They nominated Abu Musa al-Ashari as their arbitrator. Ali found it expedient to agree to this choice in order to ward off bloody dissensions in his army. According to "**Asadul Ghaba**" (3rd vol., p. 246), Ali had, therefore, taken care to personally explain to the arbitrators, "You are arbiters on condition that you decide according to the Book of God, and if you are not so inclined you should not deem yourselves to be arbiters."

When the arbitrators assembled at Daumat-ul-Jandal, which lay midway between Kufa and Syria and had for that reason been selected as the place for the announcement of the decision, a series of daily meeting was arranged for them to discuss the matters in hand. When the time arrived for taking a decision about the caliphate, Amr bin al-A'as deluded Abu Musa al-Ashari into entertaining the opinion that they should deprive both Ali and Muawiya of the caliphate, and give to the Muslims the right to elect the caliph. Abu Musa al-Ashari also decided to act accordingly. As the time for announcing the verdict approached, the people belonging to both parties assembled. Amr bin al-A'as requested Abu Musa to take the lead in announcing the decision he favoured. Abu Musa al-Ashari agreed to open the proceedings, and said, "We have devised a solution after a good deal of thought and it may put an end to all contention and separatist tendencies. It is this. Both of us remove Ali as well as Muawiya from the caliphate. The Muslims are given the right to elect a new caliph in their places as they think best." As soon as he sat down after giving his award, Amr bin al-A'as sprang to his feet and addressing the gather said, "You have heard Abu Musa who represents Ali. He has

deposed Ali from the caliphate. As the representative of Muawiya, I agree with him in the deposition of Ali, but I install Muawiya as the caliph." Here, an disorderly scene ensued in which Abu Musa al-Ashari cursed Amr bin al-A'as. The Syrians hailed the trick played by Amr bin al-A'as as a great diplomatic triumph. It should be noted that the above judgement, the arbitrators did not quote any authority of the Koran or *Sunnah* to justify deposing Ali.

### **Battle of Naharwan**

The name *Khariji* (pl. *Khawarij*) has been held to mean, "seceder" or "deserter." They are those who have "gone out against" (*kharaja 'ala*) Ali, or "went out" and "made a secession" from the camp of Ali in the sense of rebelling against him. Ali's decision to submit the fate of the battle of Siffin to Arbitration did not meet with the approval of his Iraqi soldiers, and about 12,000 of whom deserted and rebelled against him on the march back to Kufa, known as the Kharijis. They also came to be known as *Harurites* from the place where they were first encamped. Ali referred to them as *al-marigun* (those who missed the truth of religion).

Seething with unrest, the Kharijis encamped at Harura, taking as their watch-word *la hukma illa lillahi* (The decision of God, the word of God alone), a phrase which, ever since it was first coined, has become a favourite with public agitators. The original separatists had three great leaders, namely Shabath bin Ribī al-Riahi, Abdullah bin Kauwa al-Yeshkuri and Yazid bin Qais al-Arhabi from the three principal tribes of Banu Tamim, Banu Bakr and Banu Hamdan. Anxious to prevent another outbreak of fighting, Ali deputed his cousin Ibn Abbas to negotiate a compromise. The Kharijis insisted that Ali should march forthwith against Muawiya, a demand with which Ali could not possibly comply, as he had given his word to abide by the decision of the arbitration. Months later, when Ali having been deposed off by the umpires of arbitration, he sought to raise an army against Muawiya, and expected the Kharijis to flock to his standard, but they made no attempt to join him. Repeated attempts on Ali's part to urge the Kharijis to join him met with total failure. Instead they decided to raise their own independent



standard and went into camp at Naharwan, under the leadership of Abdullah bin Wahab al-Rasibi.

Naharwan was a township, situated on a canal of the same name, a few miles east of the Tigris near Madain and between Baghdad and Wasit. Here the Kharijis made extensive preparations for war. Meanwhile, Ali had managed to muster an army for a renewed campaign against Muawiya, and while he was on his way to Syria, a news of the latest outrages by the Khariji fanatics reached him. They had murdered Abdullah bin Khabbab, cutting him down in cold-blood, alongwith his wife and children. Three women of the Banu Taiy had also been put to death in a similarly cruel manner. Pregnant women had been ripped up with the sword, and the aged and impaired cruelly tortured to death.

Ali decided to relinquish Syria for a while and to take field against the yoke of the Kharijis at Naharwan. Arriving near Naharwan, Ali followed his usual method of first exploring the possibilities of a peaceful settlement, but their leader Abdullah bin Wahab al-Rasibi resolved to fight to a finish. In 37/658, Ali marshalled his forces and led the final assault against the Kharijis in the memorable battle of Naharwan, which took place in Shaban, 38/January, 659. With the battle cry, the Kharijis rushed on Ali's troops. All save nine of Abdullah's men were killed and he himself also perished. "A little before this fight" says Simon Ockley in "**History of the Saracens**" (London, 1870, p. 326), "Ali had foretold to his friends what would be the event. "You see" says he, "these people who make profession of reading the Quran, without observing its commandments, will quit the profession which they make of their sect, as quick arrows fly from the bow when they are shot off."

### **Muawiya occupied Egypt**

When Ali assumed caliphate, he had deposed the Egyptian governor, Abi Sarah in favour of the famous **Ansar** chief, Qais bin Sa'd bin Ubaida. This seasoned warrior of Islam, proud of his lineage and sincerely devoted to the Hashimites, was famed for his wisdom and diplomacy, qualities which were to stand him in good stead during his governorship. Muawiya tried to take Qais bin Sa'd to his side, but failed. Thus, Muawiya spread a rumour that Qais

had joined the party of Muawiya. Ali had full trust on Qais, but his men wanted to appoint another governor in Egypt. Ali then appointed Muhammad bin Abu Bakr as the governor of Egypt. The ground in Egypt had certainly been prepared well in advance by Muawiya's propaganda. In the meantime, Muawiya sent 6000 soldiers in command of Amr bin al-A'as in Egypt. Realising the failure of Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, Ali now sent hasty orders to Ashtar in Iraq, appointing him the new governor of Egypt. Muawiya bribed the chief of Qulzum in whose house Ashtar would almost stay on the way to Egypt, to poison the general. So Ali lost his most staunch of all his supporters, Ashtar, not on the battlefield, but at the table of a man whose loyalty had been bought by Muawiya and who had poisoned the honey which he offered his guest. Ali had no alternative but to ask Muhammad bin Abu Bakr to continue in the office and to hang on as best he could. Ali was yet able to send 2000 crack troops under the command of Tujibite Kinana by way of reinforcement. Other authorities maintain that once again, the Kufans would do nothing to help Ali and that, after fifty days of haranguing them from the pulpit, Ali still had managed to muster only 200 volunteers. These he is said to have sent to Egypt, but the long delay had already proved fatal. Hardly had they left Kufa when the news came of the total defeat of Muhammad bin Abu Bakr's forces and his ugly death. Having fled from the battlefield, Muhammad took shelter in some nearby ruins where he was discovered by Muawiya bin Hudaija, who dragged him out and slain. His corpse was wrapped in an ass-skin and burned. The ignominious end of Muhammad bin Abu Bakr sealed the fate of Egypt for Ali. Muawiya occupied Egypt and appointed Amr bin al-A'as as his lieutenant to rule it in his name, and the newly conquered country, with its immense rich resources became incorporated in the Syrian empire.

When Egypt was lost, in one of his sermons to the Kufans, Ali summed up the loss in these words: "O ye people! In the hour of need you have kept aloof from me, like a restive camel when it casts its burden. Lo and behold! The son of Abu Bakr falls, and with him, Egypt too." Things hence became bleak and dreary. Alarmed by the news of Ali's depressive state of mind, his cousin Abdullah bin Abbas, the governor of Basra, set out for Kufa, hoping to rally Ali's spirit. Muawiya immediately took advantage of Ibn Abbas's absence from Basra to send an expedition of 2000 horses under the command of Ibn Hadrami. The then



deputy governor of Basra, Ziyad bin Abihi, found himself unable to oppose the invader and took to flight, seeking refuge with the neighbouring tribe of Banu Azd. From here he wrote to Ali, asking for aid. Ali sent such troops as he could muster, and with this reinforcement, Ziyad was able to give battle to the Syrians, near Basra, where he routed the enemy. Basra thus reclaimed for Ali, who reappointed Ibn Abbas as governor, but Ali's hold over the city remained precarious. The expedition to Basra was Muawiya's first attempt at invading Ali's territory and although the defeat inflicted on Syrian forces was decisive the victory for Ali was to prove only a temporary one.

In the same year of 37/659, a section of the Kharijis hatched rebellion against Ali, led by Khirrit bin Rashid of Banu Najiya. Ali attempted to appease the new rising by inviting Khirrit to come and discuss the matters with him, but Khirrit and his followers left the town in disgust and fled to Ahwaz. Here he incited the Iranians, the Kurds and the Christians to withhold payment of taxes to Ali's government. Other disgruntled warriors soon joined him and in a short time he had raised a considerable army, which invaded and occupied Fars, defeating the Alid governor who sought safety in flight. Ali now sent his Kufan general Muqil bin Qais al-Tamimi against Khirrit, who was subdued at Ramhurmuz. In all, Ali was forced to send Muqil against Khirrit twice more. In the third and last encounter, Khirrit and the 170 soldiers, who made up his personal force, were wiped out to a man. Ali appointed Ziyad, the deputy governor of Basra, to rule over Fars.

Grown fat on the resources of Egypt, the Syrians now began to cast covetous eyes on Iraq. Muawiya accordingly deputed Noman bin Bashir to ravage Ayn Tamr, Sufian bin Awf to attack Hit and Anbar, Abdullah bin Masada al-Fazari to invade Taima and Dahhak bin Qais to subdue Qutqutana. According to Yaqubi (d. 284/898) in "*at-Tarikh*" (Beirut, 1960) and Waqidi (d. 207/822) in "*Kitab al-Maghazi*" (ed. von Kremer, Calcutta, 1856), Muawiya himself came out with these troops to lead them towards Iraq, going as far as Tigris, before returning to Damascus. Apparently these were plundering expeditions, their ostensible aim was to harass Ali. Ali went forth himself into the field almost unattended. On this the men of Kufa, partly from shame, partly lured by promise of increased stipends, marched to the defence of their frontier. One of Ali's commanders,

with a flying column, pursued the raiders back into the heart of Syria as far as Balbek; and thence turning northward, escaped by Rakka again into Iraq. On the other side, Muawiya made an incursion right across Iraq, and for some days remained encamped on the banks of Tigris. After leisurely inspecting Mosul, he made his way back to Damascus unmolested.

### **Syrians' entry into Hijaz and Yamen**

From the start of 40/660, Muawiya sent an expedition under the command of Busr bin Artat, to ravage the Hijaz. The main objective of this enterprise was to seize the important cities of Mecca and Medina, and so prepare the way for penetration into Yamen. Medina at this juncture, was governed by Ali's deputy, Abu Ayub Ansari, who at the approach of the Syrian invaders, could not offer any resistance, and fled from the capital. The entire city swore allegiance to Muawiya. Leaving Abu Hurrera to govern Medina, Busr bin Artat advanced to Mecca, which was at that time governed by Ibn Abbas. The inhabitants offered no resistance, and Ibn Abbas fled from the city. The Meccans like the Medinites, swore allegiance to Muawiya in a body.

From Hijaz, Busr went on through the southern parts of the Arabian peninsula until he reached the borders of Yamen. Ubaidullah bin Abbas, attempted to defend the province on Ali's behalf, but the small army which was all that he had been able to raise, was routed. At the approach of Busr, Ibn Abbas made a precipitate retreat, leaving the hazard of repelling the incursion to his deputy, Abdullah Harithi, who fought a pitched battle with Busr. Abdullah was defeated and killed. To oppose Busr in Yamen, Ali mustered 4000 men under the command of Jariah bin Kedaumah and Wauhib bin Masud, the Thaqafite from Kufa. It was now the turn to Busr to flee for his life. Scarcely had the Alid army reached the borders of Yamen, when Busr made his escape to Syria.

At this juncture, Egypt and Syria were under the occupation of Muawiya. In 40/660, Muawiya was however in Jerusalem, where he proclaimed himself the caliph of the Islamic empire. Ali was so staggered by Muawiya's claim of powers that he began to make huge preparations for an



inroad on Syria, but in the interim, he had been assassinated in Kufa.

### Death of Ali

Many of the Kharijis, after the battle of Nahrawan, had gone to Mecca, where they had frequent political meetings in the holy sanctuary, devising plans to avenge their relatives who had fallen in Nahrawan. Here too, they planned the murder of Ali and Muawiya, adding a third name to the list of Amr bin al-A'as. The three Meccan Kharijis, Abdur Rahman bin Muljam al-Sarimi, Burk bin Abdullah, and Amr bin Bakr volunteered to come forward. Abdur Rahman agreed to kill Ali, Burk to Muawiya, and Amr to murder Amr bin al-A'as, now the governor of Egypt. The morning of Friday, the 17th Ramdan was fixed for the execution. The three assassins poisoned their swords and separated. Abdur Rahman took the route of Kufa, Burk that of Damascus and Amr that to Egypt. The chosen day arrived and Burk bin Abdullah, in Damascus, attacked Muawiya while he was in the mosque, and wounded him in the loins. He was arrested. Muawiya ordered his men to cut off the feet of Burk and take out his tongue. He was then dragged to be further tortured and put to a cruel and ignominious death. In Egypt, Amr bin Bakr went to the mosque on the morning of 17th Ramdan to assassinate Amr bin al-A'as. In his stead, his deputy, Kharja bin Huzafa was in the mosque. Amr bin Bakr, who had never seen either of them before, slew Kharja with one stroke of his sword. He was arrested and was forthwith put to a cruel death.

Of the three assassins, it was Abdur Rahman who had the easiest task for Ali. He went to the cathedral mosque of Kufa just before the break of dawn, where he took up his position in the narrow passage leading to the mosque and waited for Ali to enter. The moment Ali set foot in the mosque, while it was still dark, the assassin attacked with the sword, but missed his aim. When Ali was in prostration, Abdur Rahman struck Ali the point of his poisoned sword and fled away. Shortly afterwards the congregation began to assemble in the mosque for the dawn prayers, and there they found Ali lying wounded on his prayer mat. Abdur Rahman was soon arrested, but no antidote could be found for the poison and Ali's condition rapidly deteriorated, and died on 21st Ramdan, 40/January

29, 561 at the age of 63 years, and bequeathed the office of Imamate to his son Hussain.

The period of Ali's caliphate lasted for 4 years and 9 months, and the period of his Imamate since the death of Muhammad was for 29 years. John J. Pool writes in "**Studies in Mohamadanism**" (p. 62) that, "The death of Ali was an epoch-making event. We come now to the parting of ways. Henceforward, the Commander of the Faithful ceased to be elected by the votes of the people of Medina or Mecca. Arabia was no longer to be the seat of temporal power. For the future, in Islam might was to take the place of right."

### **Wives and children**

His first wife was Fatima, the only daughter of Muhammad, during whose lifetime, he did not marry any other lady. By Fatima, he had three sons, Hasan, Hussain and Mohsin, who died in infancy; and two daughters, Zainab and Umm Kulsum. By his wife, Ummul Banin bint Hizam, Ali had four sons, viz. Abbas, Jafar, Abdullah and Uthman. By Layla bint Masud, he had Ubaidullah and Abu Bakr. By Asma bint Umyas, he had Yahya and Muhammad Asghar. By Umm Habiba bint Rabia, he had one son, Umar and a daughter, Ruqaiya. By Amama bint Abil Aas, he had a son, named Muhammad al-Awasat. By Khawla bint Jafar bin Qais al-Hanafiya, he had Muhammad Akbar, who was known as Muhammad ibn Hanafiya. By Umm Sa'id bint Urwa bin Masud, he had Ummul Hasan and Ramla.

It is difficult to design a portrait of the qualities and merits of Ali bin Abu Talib, for he was a paragon of virtues and fount of knowledge. He was indeed a living encyclopaedia of learning. The Sufis traced their esoteric chains back to Ali. Abu Nasr Abdullah Sarraj writes in "**Kitab al-Luma fi't-Tasawwuf**" (ed. Nicholson, London, 1914, p. 129) that when Juna'id Baghdadi (d. 298/910) was asked about Ali's knowledge in esoteric field, he said, "Had Ali been less engaged in wars, he might have contributed greatly to our knowledge of esoteric things for he was one who had been vouchsafed *ilm al-ladunni* (i.e., spiritual knowledge direct from God)."

Ali taught to his followers that Islam is the only religion which is in harmony with intellect in its



objectives and agrees with nature in its commands and prohibitions. The great revolution which Islam brought about in the domain of religion was obviously stimulated by the attitude which it adopted in regard to the supremacy of reason. He called upon the people to accept the sovereignty of intellect, and invited them to reflect and ponder over the natural phenomenon. According to Ali, Islam before everything else is the religion of reason, and not a path of blind faith, and accordingly, it requires its adherents to be wise, able and intelligent, in possessing of penetrating insight; so that they might always act in accord with the dictates of justice and truth, and build sound character. For these, Ali raised the dignity of knowledge (*ilm*) through his various sermons and speeches. It infers from his teachings that knowledge covers all branches, and it is not confined to the religious knowledge, otherwise, the Arabs would have stopped at the boundaries of theology alone.

Ali is attributed with having been the founder of the study of Arabic grammar through his disciple, Abdul Aswad al-Dulai; and the originator of the correct method of reciting Koran. His works have been collected by Sharif al-Razi Zul Hussain Muhammad bin Hussain bin Musa al-Musawi (d. 408/1015) into a vast compendium, called "**Nahjul Balagha**" (Course of Eloquence), an anthology of his sermons, letters, discourses, exhortations, advices, judgements on penal, civil and commercial law, proposed solutions of fiscal and economic problems. It represents the best early example of Muslim writing on philosophy, theology, science and ethics. In its sanctity, the work is regarded by the Shiites as second only to the Koran.

While studying his discourses, we will know that many modern scientific theories had been expounded by Ali 1300 years ago. Shaikh Ali bin Ibrahim al-Qummi of 3rd century writes in "**Wassaffat**" that once in a moon-lit night, Ali said: "The stars that you see in the sky, all of them, contain cities like the cities of our earth, and each city is tied to a perpendicular of light, and the length of the perpendicular is a distance of two hundred and fifty years' journey in the sky." The French scholar Mons. Xion was so impressed upon these words that he was constrained to advance his remarks that, "A person who gave such information a thousand years ago without having recourse to any instrument or material means, cannot be having merely human eye or mind, but must have been endowed with

divine knowledge, and with such a religious guide and leader, Islam must be a true heavenly religion, which stands proved by the fact that the successor of its founder possessed super human intelligence and knowledge."

It is related that Ali asked an Egyptian astrologer, called Sarsafil, "Tell me what is the relation of venus to the satellites (*tawabi*) and fixed stars (*jawami*)?" Sarsafil could not return answer for he knew only Greek astronomy. The Arabic word for satellites is *tawabi* means "followers", and truly a satellite is a follower of the planet round which it revolves. Similarly, the word for fixed stars is *jawami* means "gatherers" and truly a sun, or fixed star keeps all the planets revolving round it gathered together. How accurate were the terminologies of Ali?

Once a person asked Ali, "What is the distance between earth and the sun?" Ali said, "Suppose a horse runs day and night without any break from earth to sun, it would take 500 years to reach the sun." While making its calculation, it should be known that the speed of an Arabian horse is normally 22 miles per hour. The horse thus would cross 95,040,000 miles in 500 years, indicating a distance between earth and the sun. It must be remembered that the same distance between the earth and sun was commonly accepted in Europe during Renaissance. The western scientists expounded the same distance during 18th century under another notion, that if a jet plane flies from earth at the speed of 10,000 miles per hour, it would reach the sun in 11 years. This method also indicates the distance of 95,040,000 miles, vide **"The Book of Knowledge"** (ed. by E.V. McLoughlin, New York, 1910). The modern science however shows that when the earth is closest to the sun in the early January, the distance from earth becomes 91,400,000 miles, and when the earth is farthest in early July, the distance becomes 95,040,000 miles. It is therefore safe to conclude that the person would have asked the above question to Ali most possibly in the month of early July.

Philip K. Hitti writes in **"History of the Arabs"** (London, 1949, p. 183) that, "Valiant in battle, wise in counsel, eloquent in speech, true to his friends, magnanimous to his foes, Ali became both the paragon of Muslim nobility and chivalry and the Solomon of Arabic tradition, around whose name poems, proverbs, sermonettes and anecdotes



innumerable have clustered." William Muir was one of the admirers of Ali, who says in his **"The Caliphate, its Rise, and Fall"** (London, 1924, p. 288) that, "In the character of Ali, there are many things to commend. Mild and beneficent, he treated Basra, when prostrate at his feet, with a generous forbearance. Towards theocratic fanatics, who wearied his patience by incessant intrigues and insensate rebellion, he showed no vindictiveness." R.A. Nicholson writes in **"A Literary History of the Arabs"** (Cambridge, 1953, p. 191) that, "He was a gallant warrior, a wise counsellor, a true friend and a generous foe. He excelled in poetry and in eloquence; his verses and sayings are famous throughout the Muhammadan East though few of them can be considered authentic." "As the chief of the family of Hashim" writes Charles Mills in **"A History of Muhammadanism"** (London, 1817, p. 84), "and as the cousin and son-in-law of him, it is apparently incredible that Ali was not raised to the caliphate immediately on the death of Muhammad. To the advantage of his birth and marriage, was added to the friendship of the Prophet. The son of Abu Talib was one of the first converts to Islam and Muhammad's favourite appellation of him was, the Aaron of a second Moses. His talent as an orator, and his intrepidity as a warrior, commended him to a nation in whose judgement courage was virtue and eloquence was wisdom." According to **"History of Arabia and its People"** (London, 1852, p. 307) by Dr. Andrew Crichton, "This prince united the qualifications of a poet, an orator, and a soldier, for he was the bravest and most eloquent man in his dominions. A monument of his wisdom still remains in a collection of precepts or sentences of which 169 have been translated by Ockley." Thomas Carlyle writes in **"Heroes and Hero-worship"** (London, 1850, p. 77) that, "As for this young Ali, one cannot but like him. A noble minded creature, as he shows himself, now and always afterwards; full of affection, of fiery daring. Sometimes chivalrous in him, brave as a lion, yet with a grace, a truth and affection worthy of Christian knighthood."

Despite his engagements in the civil wars during his caliphate, Ali however made many reformations in the state. He was the first to realize land revenue from peasants. He exempted taxes on horse-trade to promote its trade. He included forests as a source of revenue for the first time, and necessary tax was imposed on it. He reserved a specific part in poor-rate for the poor. He

codified Islamic laws for the judges, and set up courts in every province. Ali was the first to make metalled roads in the state, and constructed many forts, notably Astkhar fort. He reorganised the army, and erected military posts everywhere. He was the first to build a strong bridge on river Euphrates.

Ali's period is also acclaimed for the promotion of education, and he was the first caliph to patronise education, and as a result, about 2000 students in Kufa got free scholarship.

#### **HUSSAIN BIN ALI (40-61/661-680)**

Abu Abdullah Hussain bin Ali was born on the 3rd Shaban, 4/January, 626 in Medina. When the news of his birth reached to Muhammad, he came to his daughter's house, and took the newly-born child in his arms affectionately, and named him Hussain. He spent his early life in the godly lap of Muhammad, who loved him too much. Among the numerous sayings of Muhammad concerning Hussain is the one to this effect that, "I owe my being to Hussain, and Hussain owes his being to me." (*Ibn Majah*, 1st vol., p. 33). It is further related that once, while sermoning in the mosque, Muhammad was interrupted all of a sudden by the cry of a boy, whose voice resembled that of Hussain. He asked to a person to enquire whether Hussain was weeping. Muhammad was soon reported that the weeping boy was a student, whose teacher had punished him due to negligence to his lesson. Muhammad sent for the teacher and said, "Please do not punish this boy so much that causes him to weep, as his voice resembles that of my child Hussain."

Hussain was 6 years old during the demise of Muhammad and his mother. He was married to Shahr Banu, the daughter of Yazdigard, the last Sassanid king of Iran.

Hussain's self-control and patience must indeed have been remarkable, for once when a slave-girl spilled a dish of thick soup all over the Imam's head and neck, he refrained from reprimanding her, but on the contrary, he graciously gave her freedom.



The sources acknowledge in the face of the facts that Hussain was the superlative genius of his age in learning and knowledge. "The traditions indicating his profound knowledge," writes Abdullah al-Alaili, "are more than one can count. There were many complicated cases in which his judgement were astonishing even to the learned and distinguished scholars, till Abdullah bin Umar commented that Hussain was the source of inspiration of knowledge." During his living in Medina, since the death of his father, Hussain was mostly engaged in the intellectual pursuits with his followers. It infers from the collection of his saying, as recorded by Kulaini (d. 329/941) in his "**Usul al-Kafi**" that Hussain highly stressed on the application of intellect in religion. For instance, his few saying to this effect are given below:-

- \* *Intellect is a guide to every believer. ("al-Kafi", p. 60)*
- \* *The lack of intellect and faith in no case can be overlooked and forgiven. Being without faith and religion is equal to being without peace and security. (Ibid. p. 64)*
- \* *A person devoid of intellect cannot be conceived except as a corpse. (Ibid.)*
- \* *One who has intellect has a faith. And he who has faith has a peace in paradise. (Ibid. p. 27)*
- \* *The reasoning potentiality is the chief pillar of human existence. It is a fountain spring of sagacity, comprehension, memory and knowledge. It is through reason one knows who guides him and who misguides him. (Ibid. p. 60)*

#### **Hasan bin Ali bin Abu Talib**

Abu Muhammad Hasan, or Hasan (Handsome), the elder brother of Hussain was born in 3/625 in Medina. He was also brought up with Hussain in the household of Muhammad until the latter's death when Hasan was about 7 years old. It emerges from the extant traditions that Muhammad had a

great fondness for his two grand-children. Hasan and Hussain, whom he referred to as the "chief of the youths of paradise." Another tradition relates, "Both Hasan and Hussain are for me the fragrance in the world." ("**Masnad**", 2nd vol., p.85)

Hasan was 37 years old when his father fell at the hands of the assassin at Kufa. Qais bin Sa'd was the first to swear allegiance to Hasan on the day when Ali died, and then it was followed by 40,000 Kufans, acclaiming Hasan as the fifth caliph. Tabari (2nd vol., p. 5) writes that the oath of allegiance taken by those present stipulated that, "They should make war on those who were at war with Hasan, and should live in peace with those who were at peace with Hasan." This sharply suggests that the oath sworn by the Kufans was purely political. Thus, as we have discussed, the temporal power that had been with Muhammad, had joined with the caliphate of Ali about 24 years, 8 months and 28 days after the death of Muhammad. When Ali died, the same powers, though remained with the Ahl-al-Bait, were separated once again. The temporal authority had gone to the hands of Hasan, and the spiritual authority was inherited by Hussain and in his Hussainid progeny.

Hasan's acclamation as caliph by the Kufans was a great cause of alarm to Muawiya, who had been working for the office since the death of Uthman. He dispatched many of his agents and spies to arouse the people against Hasan in Yamen, Hijaz, Iran and Iraq. At length, he began preparations for war and summoned all the commanders of his forces in Syria, Palestine and Trans-Jordan to join him. Not longer after, the Syrian leaders marched against Hasan with an army of 60,000 men. Muawiya's purpose of this prompt action was twofold. Firstly, by demonstration of arms and strength, he intended to force Hasan to come to terms; and secondly, if that course of action failed, he would attack the Kufan forces before they had time to consolidate their position. It was for the first reason that Muawiya moved towards Iraq at a very slow pace, while sending letter after letter to Hasan, asking him not to try to fight and urging him to come to terms. If Hasan was defeated, this would give Muawiya only power and authority; but if Hasan abdicated, this would provide Muawiya with a legal base and legitimize his authority as well. This was what Muawiya was actually trying to achieve.



Soon after, Hasan left Kufa with his main force and reached Madain, where he pitched his camp in the outskirts of the city. Qais bin Sa'd and his vanguard had already reached Maskin, facing Muawiya's army. The Syrian governor tried to bribe Qais by offering him a million dhirams if he would defect from the ranks of Hasan and join him. Yaqubi (2nd vol., p. 214) writes that Qais rejected the offer, saying: "You want to deceive me in my religion." Muawiya then made a similar offer to Ubaidullah bin Abbas, who accepted it and went over to him with 8000 soldiers. Qais was thus left only 4000 soldiers, waiting at Maskin for the arrival of Hasan.

While Hasan himself faced a serious situation at Madain. Some of his troops hatched rebellion against him, plundered his tent, and fell upon him. Different versions of this rebellion are given in the sources. According to Yaqubi (2nd vol., p. 115), "As soon as Hasan reached Madain, Muawiya sent Mughira bin Shuba, Abdullah bin Amir and Abdur Rahman bin Umm al-Hakama to Hasan as his mediators. After they talked to Hasan privately, and while leaving his camp, they spread the news that Hasan had agreed to relinquish the power in favour of Muawiya, whereupon Hasan's soldiers fell upon him and plundered his tent." Yaqubi also records that Muawiya sent his men to Hasan's camp to spread the news that Qais had made peace with Muawiya at Maskin and had come over to his side, while simultaneously he spread the rumours in the army of Qais at Maskin that Hasan had made peace with Muawiya. In this case, again, Muawiya's machinations are responsible for the mutiny in Hasan's army. Another reason of rebellion is given by Dinawari (d. 276/889) in his "**Kitab al-Akhbar at-Tiwal**" (Cairo, 1960, p. 216) that when Hasan left Kufa, he reached Sabat, in the outskirts of Madain, and discerned that some of his troops were showing fickleness, lack of purpose and withdrawn attitude to the war. Hasan therefore halted at Sabat for a while, and made a following speech:-

"O people, I do not entertain any feeling of rancour against a Muslim. I am as much an overseer over yourselves as I am over my own self. Now, I am considering a plan; do not oppose me in it. Reconciliation, disliked by some of you, is better than the split that some of you prefer, especially when I see that most of you are shrinking from the war and are hesitant to fight. I do not, therefore,

consider it wise to impose upon you something which you do not like."

When his people heard the above speech, they silently looked at each other, reflecting their suspicions. Dinawari continues to write that those among them who were of Kharijite persuasion said: "Hasan has become infidel as had become his father before him." They suddenly rushed upon him, pulled the carpet from under his feet, and tore his clothes from his shoulder. Hasan called for help from among his faithful followers from the tribes of Rabia and Hamdan, who rushed to his assistance and pushed the assailants away from him. The disheartened and shaken Hasan found it dangerous to stay in the army camp. He rode away with his trusted men towards the White Castle of Madain, the residence of his governor, Sa'd bin Masud. He was however wounded on his way by Jarrah bin Sinan Asadi with a dagger. Hasan, bleeding profusely, was carried to the White Castle, where he was cared for by his governor.

Qais at Maskin was facing Muawiya's army and waiting for Hasan's arrival. When he heard of the attack on Hasan, Qais thought it wise to engage his soldiers in battle with the Syrians, so that they should not have a chance to brood over the situation, and become more demoralized. Thus, an encounter between the two armies took place, resulting some losses on both sides. According to Ibn Atham (d. 314/926) in "**Kitab al-Futuh**" (4th vol., p. 156), the envoys of Muawiya then came forward in the battlefield and addressed Qais, saying: "For what cause are you now fighting with us and killing yourself? We have received unquestionable word that your leader has been deserted by his people and has been stabbed with a dagger and is on the verge of death. You should therefore refrain from fighting until you get the exact information about the situation." Hence, Qais was forced to stop fighting and had to wait for the official news about the incident from Hasan himself. But by this time, his soldiers began defecting to Muawiya in large number. When Qais noticed this large scale desertion, he wrote to Hasan about the gravity of the situation. When Hasan received the letter from Qais, he lost his heart, and immediately summoned the Iraqi leaders and nobles and addressed them, according to Ibn Atham (4th vol., p. 157) in dejection and disgust as under:-



"O people of Iraq, what should I do with your people who are with me? Here is the letter of Qais bin Sa'd, informing me that even the nobles from among you have gone over to Muawiya. By God, what shocking and abominable behaviour on your part! You were the people who forced my father to accept arbitration at Siffin; and when the arbitration to which he yielded (because of your demand), you turned against him. And when he called upon you to fight Muawiya once again, then you showed your slackness and lassitude. After the death of my father, you yourself came to me and paid me homage out of your own desire and wish. I accepted your homage and came out against Muawiya; only God knows how much I meant to do. Now you are behaving in the same manner as before. O people of Iraq, it would be enough for me from you if you would not defame me in my religion, because now I am going to hand over this affair to Muawiya."

Soon after his plausible speech, Hasan sent word to Muawiya, informing him of his readiness to abdicate the rule. When the news reached to Qais officially, he told to his soldiers that, "Now you must choose between the two, either to fight without a leader or to pay homage to the misled." They replied that, "Paying homage is easier for us than bloodshed." Hence Qais withdrew from the field alongwith those who were still with him, and left Maskin for Kufa.

Hasan sent Abdullah bin Nawfal bin Harith to Muawiya at Maskin for the terms. Hearing this, Muawiya took a blank sheet of paper, affixed his signature and seal, and said to Abdullah to take it to Hasan and ask him to write on it whatever he wanted. Ibn Atham (4th vol., p. 159) writes that when the blank sheet had been presented to Hasan, he called his secretary, and asked him to write: "These are the terms on which Hasan bin Ali bin Abu Talib is making peace with Muawiya bin Abu Sufian, and handing over to him the state or government of Amir al-Mominin Ali:- 1) that Muawiya should rule according to the Book of God, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, and the conduct of the righteous caliphs. 2) that Muawiya will not appoint or nominate anyone to the caliphate after him, but the choice will be left to the *shura* of the Muslims. 3) that the people will be left in peace wherever they are in the land of God. 4) that the companions and followers of Ali, their lives, properties, their women, and their children, will be guaranteed safe conduct and peace. 5) that no harm or

dangerous act, secretly or openly, will be done to Hasan bin Ali, his brother Hussain, or to anyone from the family of the Prophet." This agreement is witnessed by Abdullah bin Nawfal, Umar bin Abu Salama and so and so.

The agreement having been concluded, Hasan returned to Kufa where Qais joined him. Soon afterwards, Muawiya entered the city with the full force of his army. He held a general assembly, and different groups of people, one after the other, paid him homage. The speech of Hasan in Kufa delivered at the insistence of Amr bin al-A'as and Muawiya is worth noting. Abul Faraj quotes the speech in his "**Maqatil**" (p. 72) which reads: "The caliph (**khalifa**) is one who dedicates himself to the way of God and the **Sunnah** of His Prophet, and not the one who is an oppressor and aggressor; the latter is only a king (**malik**) who rules a kingdom (**mulk**), whose enjoyment is little, and whose pleasure is short-lived, leaving behind only a trace of it. I do not know if this is a trial for you and a grant of livelihood to you for a period." It is interesting to note that if this quotation is historically correct, it might be the origin of the use of the word **mulk** (king) instead of **khalifa** (caliph) for Muawiya and his successors, used by the historians from the earliest times. There are however numerous instances, where Muawiya is recorded as saying, in reference to himself, "I am the first king of Islam." (vide "**Bidayya wa'n Nihaya**" by Ibn Kathir, Cairo, 1939, 8th vol., p. 135). Thus, Muawiya grabbed the power and founded the Umayyad rule in Syria. He lived on a scale of royal splendour comparable only to the pomp and pageantry of the Byzantine emperors.

The extant sources specify the causes of Hasan's renunciation as love for peace, distaste for politics and its dissensions, and the desire to avoid widespread bloodshed among the Muslims. He relinquished the power in 41/661 after ruling for 6 months and 3 days, and the year of his abdication became known as the "Year of the Community" (**am al-jama'a**). Tabari (2nd vol., p. 199) quotes a tradition to this effect, attributed to the Prophet, who is reported as saying: "This son of mine is a lord (**sayed**) and he will unite two branches of the Muslims."

Hasan had certainly prevented a bloody military solution of the conflict by abdicating in favour of Muawiya. His



abdication had far-reaching consequences for the later development of Shiism. Now the wheel turned on reverse side, as the Uthmaniya branch, with Muawiya its head, became the central body, while the Shiat-i Ali was reduced to the role of a small opposition party.

Hasan, after his abdication in 41/661, quitted Kufa and retired to Medina and led a quiet life. His attitude could be understood from the fact that during his journey back to Medina, at Qadisiya, according to Baladhuri (d. 279/892) in "**Ansab al-Ashraf**" (ed. M. Hamidullah, Cairo, 1955, 4th vol., p. 138), he received a letter from Muawiya, asking him to take part in a campaign against a Khariji revolt which had just erupted. Hasan replied that he had given up fighting in order to restore peace, and that he would not take part in a campaign at his side.

Muawiya's ambitious plans to perpetuate the caliphate in his own house and nominate his son Yazid as his heir-apparent, were not so possible, because of the terms on which Hasan had abdicated to Muawiya. To carry out his plan, Muawiya had to remove Hasan from the scene. The sources admit that the cause of Hasan's death was poison administered by one of his wives, Juda bint al-Ash'ath. Muawiya is reported to have suborned her with the promise of a large sum of money and of marrying her to his son Yazid. After she had completed the task, Muawiya paid her the promised sum of money but refused to marry her to Yazid, saying that he valued the life of his son. Thus, the death of Hasan took place in 49/669 at the early age of 46 years.

#### **Nomination of Yazid**

After the abdication of Hasan, Muawiya became an absolute ruler of the Islamic state, which he diplomatically acquired on the ground of *Revenge of Uthman's blood*, and it must be pointed out that when he became absolute ruler, neither he investigated the assassin of Uthman, nor he did care for this issue. It was mere a pretext to remove Ali from his caliphate. In sum, he succeeded to establish the Umayyad rule in Syria.

Perhaps the most important event in the history of the development of the Shiite passion was Muawiya's nomination of his son Yazid to succeed him. He could not act in this

direction as long as Hasan lived, and it is significant that immediately after the news of Hasan's death, Muawiya began actively on the project that would fulfil his long desire of perpetuating the rule of his family. This was however not an easy task, and he had to move with great caution and use all devices: diplomacy, generous gifts, bribes, and finally threat and oppression.

The early Arabic traces of the first century of Islam are rich in information, mostly tinged with legends and miracles. We may safely divide the sources into two groups. The one is the *Nasibi* sources i.e., official Umayyad reports and sayings of their partisans, circulated chiefly during the reigns of Abdul Malik and Hisham. The second one is supported with the sayings of Umm Salmah, some companions of Muhammad and the traditions transmitted by descendant of Hussain. This version was first recorded by Abu Mikhnaf (d. 157/774), who was the author of about 32 works. Tabari (d. 310/922) provides the fullest account; the narrative of Baladhuri (d. 279/892) and Ibn Atham al-Kufi al-Kindi (d. 314/926) are almost as full. It is worth mentioning that these three historians all utilized the earlier histories of Abu Mikhnaf, (d. 157/774), Madaini, Ibn al-Kalbi, Awana bin al-Hakim and Waqidi (d. 207/822). Tabari however relies almost entirely on the narrative of Abu Mikhnaf, whose importance lies in the fact that he uses the accounts of eye-witnesses such as Hamid bin Muslim al-Azdi, al-Shabi and Abdur Rahman bin Abil Kanud. We have therefore derived our informations mostly from the source of Tabari in relating the forthcoming tragedy of Karbala.

Muawiya died in 60/680 after ruling for 19 years and 3 months. With his death, his son Yazid issued orders to his governor of Medina, Walid bin Utba, to exact homage from Hussain and Abdullah bin Zubayr. In his letter to the governor, he gave strict orders that they should not be allowed to delay. Walid bin Utba accordingly summoned them in his palace. Abdullah bin Zubayr did not go and fled to Mecca. Hussain went to the palace alone. Walid read to him Yazid's letter and asked for immediate recognition of the new caliph. Hussain replied uncommittedly that the oath, in order to be valid, must be made in public and that the governor should arrange a public gathering in the mosque where he would also be present. With this reply, Hussain rose to leave the palace. Walid bin Utba paid for his



lenient attitude towards Hussain, he was shortly thereafter dismissed from his post of governor of Medina.

### **Invitation of the Kufans**

Abdullah bin Zubayr, who reached Mecca before Hussain, had gathered people around him against Yazid, and he is reported to have been harbouring secret ambitions for the caliphate himself. But as soon as Hussain arrived in the city, the influence for Abdullah bin Zubayr's candidature melted away. The people abandoned Abdullah bin Zubayr and gathered around Hussain. In Kufa, as soon as the people received a word of Muawiya's death, they held a series of meetings expressing their support for Hussain. They sent out numerous letters and a succession of messengers, urging Hussain to come in Kufa to guide them, and release from the tyranny and oppression of the Umayyads.

The first letter Hussain received on 10th Randaan, 60/June 15, 680; it was signed by Suleman bin Surad al-Khuzai, Al-Musayyab bin Najaba, Rifa bin Shaddad, Habib bin al-Muzahir, and Muslim bin Awsaja on behalf of the Kufans, and according to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 233), it reads:- "We thank God for casting down the tyrannical rule of your enemy, who had usurped the power to rule this community without any right, allowed the possession of God to pass into the hands of the powerful and the rich, and killed the best men while allowing the worst of the people to remain alive. We invite you to come to Kufa, as we have no Imam to guide us; and we hope that through you, God will unite us on the path of truth. We do not go to Friday congregational prayers to pray with Noman bin Bashir, the governor of Kufa, nor do we assemble with him at the occasion of the Id. If we hear that you are coming to us, we will oust the governor from our city. Peace and mercy of God be upon you."

Both eastern and western research alike do not lose sight of the fact that Hussain had no political ambition. His action, however, shows that from start to end his strategy was aimed at a much higher goal than simply accession to the caliphate. There is no evidence that he tried, while at Mecca, to enlist active supporters from among the people who gathered around him, or to propagate his cause among the mass of people who congregated in Mecca for the pilgrimage. There is also no evidence that he attempted to

depute his emissaries to stir up any rebellion in provinces such as Yamen and Iran, which were sympathetic to the house of Ali. It must be pointed out to this effect that Hussain never mustered even a small force against the Umayyads which was an easy for him. And above all, had he acted promptly on the invitation of Kufans, while the governorship of the city was in the hands of the weak Noman bin Bashir, he might have had a fair chance of success. His speedy arrival would not only have forestalled any effective action on the part of the Umayyad government, but would also have stirred real enthusiasm among the Kufans. This was emphasized by the leaders of Kufa, when, according to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 234) they wrote, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate; to al-Hussain bin Ali, from his Shia, the faithful Muslims: Further make haste, for the people are awaiting you, as they have no Imam other than you! So haste, and again haste! Peace." In response to all these approaches, however, Hussain sent only one letter in reply. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 235), it reads:- "From Hussain bin Ali to the believers and Muslims. Hani and Sa'id came to me with your letters, they being the last among your messengers and delegations to come to me. I have understood what you said and that you have invited me to come to you because you have no Imam to guide you; and that you hope my arrival there will unite you in the right path and in the truth. I am sending my cousin and the trusted one from my family to report to me about your affairs. If his report conforms with what you have written, I will soon come. But you must be clear about the fact that the Imam is only one who follows the Book of God, makes justice and honesty his conduct and behaviour, judges with truth, and devotes himself to the service of God. Peace."

In spite of repeated appeals and hundreds of letters sent by the Kufans, Hussain did not take a hasty decision, and as a precaution, he sent his cousin, Muslim bin Aqil, to Kufa as his emissary with instructions to ascertain the truth of these representations, and report back of his survey. As soon as Muslim bin Aqil arrived in Kufa, there was held in the house of Suleman bin Surad a meeting, which for the sake of secrecy, was attended only by the leaders of Kufa. Very soon, Muslim bin Aqil quickly gathered thousand of pledges of support, and the number of people who registered their names and swore allegiance to Muslim bin Aqil in the name of Imam Hussain is variously



given as 12,000 and 18,000. Soon the movement became so widespread that Muslim bin Aqil was able to preside over the public meetings from the pulpit in the cathedral mosque of Kufa. Confident of Kufan support, Muslim bin Aqil consequently wrote to Hussain to come to Kufa and assume spiritual leadership of the people. His letter was sent to Hussain by Abis bin Habib ash-Shakiri. Having been assured of the extent of Kufan enthusiasm, Hussain decided to go to Iraq.

Receiving word of Muslim bin Aqil's activities in Kufa, Yazid no longer trusting the mild-tempered governor of the town, Noman bin Bashir, and appointed his strong man Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, the then governor of Basra, to take charge of Kufa. Fully aware of the insurrection in Kufa in favour of Hussain, Ibn Ziyad rode into the city in disguise, wearing a black turban, covering his face, and surrounding himself with a small band of horsemen. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 241), the Kufans who were expecting Hussain's arrival, mistook Ibn Ziyad for the former, and gathered all around his horse, greeted him enthusiastically, and shouted: "Hail to you, O son of the Prophet; we have been awaiting you." Ibn Ziyad, quietly observing the people's enthusiasm for Hussain, entered the mosque along with the crowds, mounted the pulpit, and then suddenly tore the veil from his face. He delivered a terrifying speech, declaring death and unprecedented punishment for the sympathizers of Hussain, while making tempting promises for those who would prove their loyalty to Yazid. The Kufans were stricken by awe and fear, completely lost hearts, and ultimately abandoned Muslim bin Aqil. He was captured and beheaded together with Hani bin Urwa, in whose house he had stayed. This attitude of the Kufans once again demonstrated the weakness of their character and disloyalty.

#### **Hussain's departure from Mecca**

While Hussain was making preparations for departure from Mecca, things took a reverse turn for him in Kufa. He however left Mecca on 8th Zilhaja, 60/September 10, 680, the same day Muslim bin Aqil had been killed in Kufa. It was the season of pilgrimage when various tribes from Iraq, Yamen, Taif and other lands were pouring in Mecca, while Hussain was going out of the town with his family. While he was heading towards Iraq, Ibn Ziyad had made Kufa

a scene of terror and horror, and imposed strict martial law. He made a declaration that anyone suspected of supporting Hussain, would be hanged without trial, his house would be set on fire, and his property would be confiscated. At the same time, Ibn Ziyad blockaded all the roads leading from Mecca to Kufa, and gave strict orders forbidding anyone from entering or leaving the territory of Kufa. Hussain learned of all these strict measures from the Umayyads, but continued his journey undeterred.

Imam Hussain continued his journey till he reached Taneem, a few miles from Mecca and encamped there. He thence started and effected a junction at a place called Sifah, where according to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 242) he met the poet Farazdaq, and inquired about the conditions in Kufa. Farazdaq replied, "Their hearts are with you, but their swords are with your enemies." Hussain resumed his journey and reached Salabia, which he left very soon and arrived in Wagesia, where his follower Zuhair bin Qayn, alongwith his wife joined the caravan. Khuzaimia was the fifth resting place, and thence he advanced and alighted at Zubala. When he reached Ath-Thalibiya, he received word from some travellers of the executions of Muslim bin Aqil and Hani bin Urwa at Kufa. After leaving it, Hussain reached Batn Aqiq, a place few stages from Kufa; and upon learning of the strong military force stationed at Qadisiya, he changed his route to enter Kufa from another direction. Hussain bin Numayr, the Umayyad commander at Qadisiya, was informed of Hussain's change of route, and sent a detachment of one thousand troops under the command of Hur bin Yazid at-Tamimi to intercept him. When they appeared on the horizon, Hussain ordered his people to pitch their tents at a nearby place called Dhu Husm. The army of Hur soon reached Hussain. The day was very hot and Hur's army had run out of water. Hussain immediately ordered his men to give water to the Umayyad troops and their horses. Hur had a certain regard for the Imam, and even when four of the leading Kufans, who had managed to escape from the city and joined Hussain at this point, Hur did not dare to use force. Hussain explained to his adversaries the reason which had caused him to set out. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 298), Hussain said: "O people of Kufa! you sent to me your delegations and wrote me letters saying that you had no Imam and that I should come to unite you and lead you in the way of God....But if you have changed your minds, have become ignorant of our rights, and have forgotten your delegations and



repeated appeals to me to come for the sake of your religion, I shall turn back."

Then Hussain showed Hur two sacks full of letters sent by the Kufans to him, but Hur said that he knew nothing, and that he had come with the orders of Ibn Ziyad to arrest him and his party. Hussain refused to submit, but still Hur did not use force against him. It was however agreed that Hussain should keep on travelling along the Euphrates in the opposite direction from Kufa until fresh orders arrived from the governor, and that Hur would follow Hussain closely.

### **Hussain at Karbala**

When they reached the district of Ninawa, a horseman arrived from Kufa, and gave a letter to Hur from Ibn Ziyad, ordering him not to allow Hussain to make halt except in a desert place without fortifications of water. Hussain, therefore, advanced a bit turning to the left when Hur's contingent stopped him from moving further and asked him to alight, adding that the Euphrates was not far from there. Hussain said, "This is the stage of distress (*karb*) and trial (*bala*)" and got down from his horse. (vide *Tabari*, 2nd vol., p. 232). This place henceforward became known as **Karbala**, about 25 miles north-west of Kufa; where Hussain pitched his tents when it was 2nd Muharram, 61/October 2, 680.

On the 3rd Muharram, the situation deteriorated as Umar bin Sa'd arrived with the fresh Umayyad force of 4,000 men and assumed overall command on the field. Ibn Sa'd learned that Hussain now intended to return to Medina, but Ibn Ziyad, on receiving word of this development, ordered that all the "rebels" should render homage to Yazid. On 7th Muharram, an embargo was placed on the water supply to the Imam's camp, and for that Ibn Sa'd stationed a force of 500 cavalry on the road to the river, and for three days before the massacre on the 10th Muharram, Hussain and his party suffered terribly from thirst. A daring sortie led by Abbas, the brother of Hussain, however, managed to reach the river, but succeeding in filling only a few waterskins.

Ibn Sa'd was still trying to persuade Ibn Ziyad to find some peaceful solutions to avoid shedding the blood of the

grandson of the Prophet, but all in vain. Ibn Ziyad sent his final orders to Ibn Sa'd through Shimar bin Dhul Jawshan, either to attack Hussain immediately or to hand over the field command to the army of Shimar. Soon after receiving these fresh orders on the evening of 9th Muharram, Ibn Sa'd advanced with his forces towards the camp of Hussain, who sent Abbas to request for a respite of one night, which was granted. On this juncture, Hussain assembled his relatives and followers and induced them to abandon the field to his fate. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 319), he said:- "I give praise to God, Who has honoured us with the Prophethood, has taught us the Koran, and favoured us with His religion. I know of no worthier companions than mine; may God reward you with all the best of His reward. I think tomorrow our end will come. I ask you all to leave me alone and to go away to safety. I free you from your responsibilities for me, and I do not hold you back. Night will provide you a cover; use it as a steed. You may take my children with you to save their lives."

The relatives and followers of Hussain refused to leave or survive after him, and demonstrated in the same vein an unshakable devotion to the Imam, and said, "By God, we will never leave you alone until all of us are killed and our bodies are torn to pieces. By this we will have fulfilled our duties to you." (vide **Tabari**, 2nd vol., p. 322) Thus, the whole night was spent in prayer, recitation of Koran, and worship and meditation. The borrowed night ended, and the fateful morning of 10th Muharram brought with it the summons of the tragic result of the family of Ali bin Abu Talib and its handful supporters. Hussain drew up in front of the tents his small band of 72 men: 32 horsemen and 40 foot soldiers of varying ages ranging from 70 years old Muslim bin Awsaja to the 14 years old Kassim bin Hasan bin Ali. The rear of the tents was protected by setting on fire the heaps of wood and reeds. Zuhayr bin Qayn was given command of the right wing, Habib bin Mazahir al-Asadi of the left, and Abbas bin Ali was entrusted with the standard of the Hashimite house.

Tabari (2nd vol., p. 268) writes that Hussain rode on his camel, and came before his enemies and praised God and His Prophet, and related the dignity of Ahel-al-Bait, and said in conclusion, "Tell me! do you want me killed to avenge the death of one of you whom I have killed? Or because of property belonging to you which I have expropriated? Or to



avenge some wound which I have inflicted upon you?" Hussain then spoke the names of the persons, who were now in the army of Umayyads, and said to them, "Did you not write me letters, inviting me to come in Kufa?" But they refused to accept it at that moment. Hussain soon returned to his camp.

Shortly before the fateful battle began, Hur bin Yazid, the Umayyad commander, the first who confronted Hussain and forced him to halt at Karbala, was himself now confronted by his own conscience and feelings. A great conflict arose in his mind. He suddenly spurred his horse towards Hussain's camp, and threw himself at Hussain's feet, and exclaimed: "O son of the Prophet! here is the man who did you great injustice in detaining you at this place and causing you so much trouble. Is it possible for you to forgive a sinner like me? By God, I never imagined that these people would go so far as to shed the blood of the grandson of their Prophet. I only thought that they would accept one of three options you offered; and thus some sort of reconciliation would ultimately prevail, and in this way I would be able to retain my rank and position. But now, when all hopes for peace are gone, I cannot buy hell for this worldly gain. Forgive my mistake and allow me to sacrifice myself for you. Only by doing this I can redeem myself in the eyes of God for my sin against you." (*Tabari*, 2nd vol., p. 333). Hussain embraced Hur and said, "You are as free-born and noble (*hur*) as your mother named you." Hur then spurred his horse towards the Umayyad army and condemned their sacrilegious action against Hussain. He said to Ibn Sa'd and his men, as describes by Washington Irving in his "**Lives of the Successors of Mahomet**" (London, 1905, p. 211) that: "Alas, for you, men of Cufa! you have invited the descendant of the Prophet to your city, and now you come to fight against him. You have cut off from him and his family the waters of the Euphrates, which are free even to infidels and the beasts of the field, and have shut him up like a lion in the toils." Hur then attacked with his single power and was killed. He had thus enlisted in history as the protomartyr of Karbala.

#### **Battle of Karbala**

Ibn Sa'd shot an arrow into the Hussainid camp, calling all to witness that he struck the first blow, marking an

outbreak of the battle. Hence, a skirmish ensued, but the men of Hussain kept within their camp, where they could only be reached by the archers. From time to time there were single combats in defiance. It began in the morning and ended shortly after noon as both parties desisted from the fight at the hour of noontide prayer. It was in the afternoon that the battle became fiercer, and Hussain's handful supporters one after the other fell fighting in front of him, and finally it was the turn of his relatives to perish. The first to be killed was Ali Akbar, the son of Hussain, followed in quick succession by the son of Muslim bin Aqil, the sons of Aqil, three brothers of Abbas bin Ali, then Kassim, the son of Hasan; and eventually there remained only two: Hussain and his half-brother Abbas bin Ali. With broken hearts and distressed, both brothers went together and fell upon the enemy. The enraged Abbas penetrated deep into the ranks of his foes, became separated from Hussain, and was killed some distance away. Alone and weary, Hussain returned to his tents to console the terrified women and children, and to bid them farewell for the last time, and to consign spiritual authority of Imamate to his son, Ali Zayn al-Abidin. Exhausted and wounded, Hussain sat in front of the main tent, sheltering the women and children. Yet nobody dare to attack him, until Shimar ended the delay. He caused Hussain to separate from the tent, and several soldiers fell upon him and killed him, with 33 thrusts and 34 cuts to the body. Sinan bin Anas bin Amr raised his sword to make the final blow on Hussain, and cut off his head in front of the tent. Khawali bin Yazid al-Asbahi took the head into his custody. It was on the 10th Muharram/October 10, on a Friday that the pathetic tragedy in the history of Islam ended, known as the Battle of Karbala. Edward Gibbon remarks in his **"Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire"** (London, 1848, 5th vol., p. 391) that, "In a distant age and climate, the tragic scene of the death of Husayn will awaken the sympathy of the coldest readers."

On 12th Muharram/October 12, however, when the Umayyad forces left Karbala, the people of Banu Asad from the nearby village of Ghadiriya came down and buried the bodies of Hussain and his companions on the spot where the massacre had taken place.



## **Wives and children**

Hussain had concluded five marriages, by which he had four sons and two daughters. His first wife was Shahr Banu, who was the mother of Ali Zayn al-Abidin. By Layla, Hussain had one son, Ali Akbar, or Ali Asghar. His third wife belonged to the clan of Kaza'a, who gave birth of a son, Jafar. By Rabab, he had a son, Ali Asghar, or Abdullah Asghar; and a daughter, Sakina. By Umm Isac, he had one daughter, Umm Fatima.

## **ZAYN AL-ABIDIN (61-94/680-713)**

Abu Muhammad Ali bin Hussain, known as Zayn al-Abidin (ornament of the pious) and also by the titles of *as-Sajjad* (the prostrator) and *az-Zaki* (the pure), was born in Medina on 38/658. Dhahabi (d. 748/1348) writes in "*Tadhkiratul Huffaz*" that Imam Muhammad Bakir narrated, "Whenever my father mentioned any blessing of God, or whenever any worldly trouble was averted, or whenever he reconciled two quarrelling persons, or whenever he finished any prayer - on such occasions he used to offer prostration (*sajda*), therefore, he was called as *Sajjad*." As for the title *az-Zaki* (pure), it is said that he had left to involve into worldly turmoils, and led a pious life in Medina. He would feed the hungry persons at night, from one to three hundred families; and in daytime, he would have a hundred sheep a day killed for meat, which would be distributed to the needy people. Much of his time he spent sitting on an old piece of matting, fasting all day, or eating a little barely bread. D.M. Donaldson writes in "*The Shiite Religion*" (London, 1933, p. 110) that, "One day, he claimed to get nourishment from merely the smell of food."

It was the year of Zayn al-Abidin's birth that the edifice of Islamic solidarity was rudely shaken by a band of seceders from Ali's army, known as the Kharijis. Zayn al-Abidin was 2 years old during the martyr of Ali bin Abu Talib, and about 22 years and 6 months old during the event of Karbala. In his personal appearance, Zayn al-Abidin is described as much like Ali. He was about the same height, had reddish hair, a white face and neck, and a large chest and stomach.

Shah-i Zanan, al-Sulafa, or Harar, better known as Shahr Banu, the mother of Zayn al-Abidin was the daughter of the last Sassanid emperor Yazdigard (d. 31/652) of Iran. Tradition has it that during the caliphate of Ali bin Abu Talib, his governor at Fars, Hurais bin Jabir had sent two daughters of Yazdigard as captives to Medina, one of whom was married to Imam Hussain, called Shahr Banu, and other to Muhammad bin Abu Bakr. The popular legend relating the presence of Shahr Banu at Karbala is quite untrue, and cannot be ascertained from any known source. She however is reported to have died soon after the birth of her son, Zayn al-Abidin. In memory of his mother, Zayn al-Abidin used to utter these words: "I am the son of the two chosen stocks (*ibn al-Khairatain*). The Prophet was my grandfather, and my mother was the daughter of Yazdigard."

Imam Hussain had expressly appointed Zayn al-Abidin as his successor. The most commonly reported tradition in this connection, according to "*Bihar al-Anwar*" (11th vol., p. 7) by Muhammad Bakir Majlisi, is that Hussain, before leaving for Kufa, entrusted Umm Salmah bint Abu Umayyah Suhail, the widow of the Muhammad, who outlived all the wives and died in 63/682; with his will and letters, enjoining her to hand them over to the eldest of his male offspring in case he himself did not return. Zayn al-Abidin was the only son who came back and so he was given his father's will and became his nominee. According to "*Usul al-Kafi*" (1st vol., p. 149), "Verily, al-Hussain bin Ali, leaving for Iraq, entrusted the book and his will (*istawda al-kitab wal wassiya*) to Umm Salmah, and when his son Ali bin al-Hussain returned to Medina, she handed these over to him." Another tradition relates (vide Kulaini's "*Usul al-Kafi*", 1st vol., p. 353) that Hussain nominated Zayn al-Abidin as his successor and the next Imam of the house of the Prophet just before he went out to meet the Umayyad forces for the last encounter at Karbala.

With the exception of few incidents, the life of Zayn al-Abidin is shrouded in the political intrigues. He had however witnessed the rule of the six Umayyads caliphs, viz. Muawiya bin Abu Sufian (40-60/661-680), Yazid I (60-64/680-683), Muawiya II, Marwan bin Hakam (64-65/683-685), Abdul Malik (65-86/685-705) and Walid (86-96/705-715). He had also seen the reigns of Abdullah bin Zubayr and Mukhtar Thaqafi, but kept himself out of the vortex of politics.



### Zayn al-Abidin in Kufa

When the blood-thirsty soldiers of Yazid were bent on destroying Hussain and his dear ones at Karbala, sparing neither old nor young, the survival of Zayn al-Abidin was nothing but a miracle. His severe illness had prevented him from taking up arms, and confined him to bed. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 367), "The only surviving male of the line of Hussain, his son, Zayn al-Abidin, who because of serious illness did not take part in the fighting, was lying on a skin in one of the tents. The skin was pulled from under him and Shimar would have killed him, but he was saved when Zainab covered him under her arms and Ibn Sa'd restrained Shimar from striking the boy." But the morning of 12th Muharram saw a peculiar procession leaving Karbala for Kufa. Tabari (2nd vol., p. 369) writes that, "Seventy-two heads were raised on the points of the lances, each of them were held by one soldier, followed by the women of the Prophet's family on camels and the huge army of the Umayyads." After reaching Kufa, the captives were presented to Ibn Ziyad. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 371), Zaid bin Arram, an old companion of the Prophet was present in the court, who was stricken by shock and grief to see the captives. He quitted the court of Ibn Ziyad, and the people heard him saying outside that, "O people of the Arabs, after this day you have made yourselves home-born slaves and cattle. You have massacred the son of Patima and your ruler, Ibn Marjana (*kunya* of Ibn Ziyad), who will now keep on killing your best men, and force you to do the most hateful things. You must now be ready for the utmost disgrace."

### Zayn al-Abidin in Damascus

It is however not quite clear how long the captives were detained in Kufa, but it seems that before long they had been sent to Damascus at Yazid's court. The reaction of Yazid is reported to have been different from that of Ibn Ziyad, and he regretted the haste with which his governor had acted. This seems to be contrary to all those reports which describe Yazid's explicit orders to his governor in Medina and then to Ibn Ziyad, in which he clearly ordered them to either exact homage from Hussain or behead him without delay. Ibn Kathir (d. 774/1373) writes in "*Bidaya wa'n Nihaya*" (8th vol., p. 203) that, "If Yazid had really

felt that his governor had committed a serious mistake in dealing with Hussain, he would have taken some actions against him. But, Yazid did not dismiss Ibn Ziyad from his post, did not punish him in any way, or even write a letter of censure for exceeding his orders."

### **Sermon in the mosque**

One Friday in Damascus when the congregation in the cathedral mosque, accustomed to listen to the curse on Ali bin Abu Talib and his family, requested Zayn al-Abidin to address them. Taking Yazid's permission, the Imam delivered a sermon thus:- "O people! beware of the temptation of the world which is transitory. The nations of antiquity who were stronger than you and lived longer are no more. Do you think you will live for ever? Certainly not, so try to live a virtuous life before you are removed from your house to the grave and reduced to dust. Remember, you will have to stand before God to give an account of your deeds. Woe to the wicked whose disappointment will know no bound. Woe to the proud tyrant whose repentance will then be of no avail. O people! listen I am the offspring of him on whom God showered His blessings, whom God appointed as intercessor, bestowing on him *kauthar* and power of showing miracles; praiseworthy, and generous sayeds, true to his words - the great Apostle of God, whose son Hussain my father, has been massacred at Karbala with inhuman atrocities and on whom angels are shedding tears. Verily, it is God's trial." The congregation was moved - some heaved sighs, some wept when suddenly Yazid beckoned the *muazzin* to call for the prayers.

### **Zayn al-Abidin in Medina**

Yazid thought it advisable not to keep Hussain's family in his capital, and finding that Zayn al-Abidin preferred a quiet and virtuous life, he made arrangement for them to return to Medina. When they reached Medina, the citizens came out for condolence. Zayn al-Abidin in a short touching speech addressed them thus:- "Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds. High above the highest heavens and nearer to us than to our jugular veins, knowing our inner most secrets. Verily, He has tested us by tribulations calamitous to Islam for they killed Hussain and took



captive his family. Is there any one who will approve this murder? Lo! we are God's and unto Him we are returning. He will reward us for what we have suffered."

### Reactions of the Muslims

A storm of grief and anger raged in every heart in the Muslim world because of the tragical event of Karbala, putting great deal of thrill of horror. It caused rise to a universal feeling of revulsion against the tyrants. From the start of 62/681, the people of Medina unitedly turned out the Umayyad governor, and beleaguered the Umayyad ashes in the town. Ibn Athir (d. 630/1234) writes in "**Kamil fi't Tarikh**" (Beirut, 1975, 1st vol., p. 186) that Marwan bin Hakam, the sworn enemy of Ahl-al-Bait was also unable to stay safely in the city. The only person he could find to offer protection to his wife was Zayn al-Abidin, who sent her safely to Taif escorted by one of his sons. Yazid sent an army under Muslim bin Aqba to suppress the rising in Medina. According to Tabari (7th vol., pp. 6-7), "He ordered that for three days on end, Medina should be given over to rapine and murder, and that the army might appropriate to its own use whatever it might capture including the prisoners of war." Dinawari writes in "**Akbar at-Tawal**" (p. 260) that the instructions to Muslim bin Aqba were given that, "If you obtain victory over the people of Medina, plunder the town for three days without break." The orders were carried out on the 28th Zilhaja, 63 and for three full days and nights, Medina was given over to plunder. The Umayyad forces gained such ascendancy that the remaining citizens of Medina avowed allegiance specifying that they would be the slaves of Yazid who would possess plenary powers over their lives, properties and dependents, but Zayn al-Abidin and his family were left unmolested, and when the citizens of Medina were forced to take oath of allegiance of Yazid, the Imam was exempted.

The Meccans too had been aroused against Umayyads. Abdullah bin Zubayr, the son of Asma bint Abu Bakr, who had long yearned to secure the office of caliph for himself, considered it an opportune moment to advance his interest, delivered a forcible speech, decrying the inconstancy of the Kufans, and paying rich tributes to Hussain. The Meccans became alienated from Yazid and agreed to pledge their allegiance to Abdullah bin Zubayr.

After the savage massacre and ravage of Medina, Yazid's commander, Muslim bin Aqba advanced on Mecca as ordered by Yazid. On his way to Mecca in 64/683, he was picked up by death. Before his death, he had made Haseen bin Namir the head of the army. Thus, Haseen invaded Mecca and laid siege to the Kaba. Our chronicler Tabari (7th vol., p. 14) writes that, "Not only stones but also live wood were catapulted at Kaba which caught fire." This was Yazid's last operation after which he died in 64/683 after ruling for 3 years and a half.

After Yazid's death, the pent up feelings of revulsion entertained by the people of Iraq against Ibn Ziyad were released with such a violence that he had to flee from Basra. The climax in the exertion of disgust with Yazid was reached when his son and successor, Muawiya bin Yazid, who had been accepted as the ruler, mounted the pulpit and delivered speech. He then retired into the palace and forty days later, he left this world. Thus the office of caliph was lost to the descendants of Abu Sufian for ever, and in Syria, the old Marwan bin Hakam received the pledge of allegiance, and the office of caliph of the Umayyads was for long held by his progeny.

As soon as Yazid died, the people of Mecca rose once again, and began to hunt the Umayyad soldiers in the city. Thus, it was difficult for Haseen bin Namir and his forces to move from Mecca to Syria. They started their journey from Mecca in secret, and meanwhile they felt acute need of fodder for their horses. Tabari (7th vol., p. 342) writes that when Zayn al-Abidin knew the difficulties of the Umayyad forces, he came down from Medina with grass and foods and rescued them from starvation. Haseen bin Namir was highly impressed with the generosity of the Imam, and offered him to accept the caliphate of Damascus with his all supports. Zayn al-Abidin did not answer him, and went away after casting a smile.

### **Origin and rise of the Tawwabun**

The tragic event of Karbala stirred religious and moral sentiment, particularly among those of the Kufans who had so zealously invited Hussain to Iraq to guide them on the path of God. But when Hussain came to Iraq they did not stand with him in the hour of trial. Soon after the event of Karbala, the Umayyad governor Ibn Ziyad returned



to Kufa from his camp at Nukhayla, the Shiites, according to Tabari (7th vol., p. 47), "were stung with shame at their faint-heartedness. They took to mutual recrimination as they painfully realized the enormity of neglecting to go to Hussain's help, and thereby leading him to his death in their close neighbourhood, since he had come to Iraq only to their invitation." They thought that they must make similar sacrifices to obtain God's forgiveness. They believed that they could only prove their real repentance by exposing themselves to death while seeking vengeance for the blood of Hussain. Hence they named themselves as the **tawwabun** (the penitents).

The movement of the Tawwabun began under the headship of five of the oldest trusted associates of Ali, with a following of a hundred diehard Shiites of Kufa. The five leaders of the Tawwabun, Suleman bin Surad al-Khuzai, Al-Musayyab bin Najaba al-Fazari, Abdullah bin Sa'd bin Nufayl al-Azdi, Abdullah bin Walin at-Taymi, and Rifa'a bin Shaddad al-Bajali; had always been in the forefront of all Shiite activities in Kufa. At the end of 61/680 they held their first meeting in the house of Suleman bin Surad. According to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 498), the first to speak was Al-Musayyab bin Najaba al-Fazari, who said: "We invited the son of the daughter of our Prophet to come to Kufa to guide us on the right path, but when he responded to our call, we became rapacious for our own lives until he was killed in our midst. What excuse would we have before our Lord, and before our Prophet when we must meet him on the day of resurrection, while his most beloved son, family and progeny were massacred in our midst. By God, there is no other way for us to expiate ourselves for the sin except to kill all his murderers and their associates or be killed. Perhaps by doing so our Lord may forgive our sin. You must, therefore, now select someone from among you as your leader, who can organize and mobilize you under his command and proceed with the plan of seeking God's forgiveness by taking the action which has been proposed."

Finally, Suleman bin Surad had been chosen as their leader, who also made a forceful speech in the meeting, and said: "We used to crane our necks eagerly in looking for the arrival of the members of the Prophet's household, but when they arrived, we acted with such indifference and laxity that in our land and not far from us, the Prophet's son was put to the sword. When he raised his voice in

demanding justice and help, there was none to respond to him to say, 'Here I am, standing in thy service'. The man of sin made him the target of their arrows and spears, and killed him. Now if you wish to get up, rise! God's wrath has been stirred. Resolve here and now not to return to your wives and children till you have taken steps to win God's pleasure. Now that you consider sinners, prepare yourselves for sacrifice. Sharpen your swords, and straighten your spear-heads." (Tabari, 7th vol., p. 48) He then entered into correspondence with Shiite leaders in other cities, namely Sa'd bin Hudhayfa al-Yamen in Madain and Al-Muthanna bin Mukharriba al-Abdi in Basra. The movement of Tawwabun, however, went on secretly for three years, increasing in number and strength, and waiting for an appropriate time. In the interim, Yazid died in 64/683, encouraging the Tawwabun to come out in the open. They succeeded in gaining support of 16,000 Kufans. Suleman started final preparations for action, and the penitents embarked upon a course of direct action against Yazid's rule.

In the interim, Mukhtar also spurred his horses towards Kufa, and tried to bring the Tawwabun in his mission. The main body of Tawwabun, however, refused to join Mukhtar, though at least 2,000 of these had registered their names with Suleman bin Surad did switch over to him. According to their plan, the Tawwabun raised their call for "revenge for the blood of Hussain" (*la latha'rat al-Hussain*) in 65/684, and gathered at Nukhayla, a suburb of Kufa, from where they had to march against the forces of Ibn Ziyad, the Umayyad governor who had been responsible for the massacre of Karbala upon the instructions of Yazid. Only 4,000 out of 16,000 enrolled members of Tawwabun assembled at Nukhayla, where their supporters from Madain and Basra yet not arrived. Meanwhile, another 1,000 out of 4,000 had left the field. Thus Suleman led the remaining 3,000 and marched to Karbala to the grave of Hussain, where they mourned. They then proceeded to the village of Qarqisiya, the fifth stage of Karbala, and ultimately reached Ayn al-Warda, and engaged the twenty thousand Umayyad horsemen fiercely, shouting: "Paradise! Paradise! for the Turabites." The battle lasted for three days, in which Suleman bin Surad was killed. Finally, Rifa bin Shaddad, advised the survivors to return, and brought them to Qarqisiya after getting defeat.



An exhaustive scrutiny of the earliest sources suggests that the small number of Tawwabun survived the battle of Ayn al-Warda, went over to Mukhtar and accepted Ibn al-Hanafiya as their Imam. This is confirmed even by Imam Muhammad Bakir in one of his traditions quoted by Kashi, who said: "After the death of Hussain, all the people apostatised except three, viz. Abu Khalid al-Kabuli, Yahya bin Umm at-Tiwal and Jubayr bin Mutim, and only later did other join them and their number increased." ("**Marifat Akhbar ar-Rijal**", p. 123) These Kufans, who formed the backbone of Mukhtar's movement, called themselves *Shiat al-Mahdi*, *Shiat al-Haqq* or *Shiat al-Muhammad*. Consequently, a sect emerged with the name of *Kaysaniya*. The power of Mukhtar soon ended by his being killed with the majority of his followers, Kaysaniyas. These sectarians, some of who lived as far away as Khorasan, continued to recognize Ibn al-Hanafiya as their Imam Mahdi, who died in 81/700, who believed in his concealment and return, while the majority accepted the eldest of his sons, Abu Hashim as the next Imam, who himself also claimed to have inherited the scrolls of his father.

The famous Umayyad poet, Kuthayyir bin Abd Rehman Azza (24-105/644-723) was first to propagate that Ibn al-Hanafiya was alive on the Mount Radhwah, that he was being guarded by a lion and a tiger, that he had two rich springs of water and honey, and that he would reappear to fill the world with justice, vide his "**Diwan**" (ed. by Ihsan Abbas, Beirut, 1971). Kashi also records a story about two men from the entourage of Imam Jafar Sadik, viz. as-Sarraj and Hammad bin Isa, who were known to believe that Ibn al-Hanafiya was still alive. Jafar Sadik reproached them and pointed out that Ibn al-Hanafiya was seen being buried, and his property had been divided and his widow had re-married. (Ibid)

### **Mukhtar Thaqafi**

Mukhtar Thaqafi comes from a leading family of Thaqif of Banu Hawazin at Taif. His father, Abu Ubaida Thaqafi was the commander of the army during the invasion of Iran at the time of caliph Umar, and died in the battle of Marva in 13/634. Mukhtar was born in the first year of Hijra in Taif, 622 A.D. In his youth, spent in Medina after the death of his father. Mukhtar was known to be an Alid

sympathiser. Yet, according to Tabari (2nd vol., p.520) there is a story which depicts him as anti-Shiite, based on the advice he gave to his uncle, Sa'd bin Masud at the time when Hasan, the son of Ali bin Abu Talib, was carried wounded to the White Castle in Madain. The advice was that Hasan be handed over to Muawiya to win the latter's favour. His uncle refused this advice and cursed Mukhtar.

The first man to pay homage to Muslim bin Aqil in Kufa was Mukhtar, but the tradition relates that he was imprisoned by Ibn Ziyad during the event of Karbala. He appeared in Kufa as a revenger of Hussain's blood. His mission was the same as that of the Tawwabun (the penitents) insofar as the revenge of Hussain's blood, but differed in that he intended to achieve political authority through a more organised military power. Mukhtar, therefore, tried to persuade the Tawwabun not to take any hasty action and to join him for a better chance of success. The Tawwabun refused to join Mukhtar, as they had no wish to participate in any doubtful adventure. Mukhtar also tried to propagate in Kufa that Suleman bin Surad, the leader of the Tawwabun, did not know how to organise the military warfares, nor did he has any knowledge of diplomacy.

Mukhtar then turned to Zayn al-Abidin to seek his support to this effect. Baladhuri writes in "**Ansab al-Ashraf**" (5th vol., p. 272) that, "Mukhtar wrote to Zayn al-Abidin to show his loyalty to him, asking if he could rally the Kufans for him. He sent with the letter a large sum of money. Zayn al-Abidin refused this offer and declared Mukhtar publicly to be a liar who was trying to exploit the cause of Ahl-al-Bait for his own interests." Ibn Sa'd (5th vol., p. 213) also describes that Zayn al-Abidin had publicly denounced Mukhtar's mission. Mukhtar lost all hopes of winning Zayn al-Abidin, he then turned to Ibn al-Hanafiya, the third son of Ali from a Hanafite woman. On his part, Ibn al-Hanafiya did not repudiate Mukhtar's propaganda for his Imamate and Messianic role; he nevertheless, maintained a carefully non-committal attitude and never openly raised his claims to the heritage of Hussain. Baladhuri (5th vol., p. 218) writes that, "Ibn al-Hanafiya gave Mukhtar only a non-committal reply. He neither approved nor disapproved of Mukhtar's intention to avenge Hussain, and only warned him against bloodshed." In the event, however, the hesitation and political inactivity of Ibn al-Hanafiya emboldened Mukhtar more and more to exploit his name for his own interest.



Mukhtar propagated that Ibn al-Hanafiya was the Mahdi, and he himself was his minister (*vizir*) and commander (*amir*).

Abdullah bin Zubayr proclaimed his caliphate in 61/680 and established his power in Iraq, southern Arabia and in the greater part of Syria. When the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik wished to stop the pilgrimages to Mecca because he was worried lest his rival Abdullah bin Zubayr should force the Syrians journeying to the holy places in Hijaz to pay him homage, he had recourse to the expedient of the doctrine of the vicarious *hajj* to the Qubbat al-Sakhra in Jerusalem. He decreed that the obligatory circumambulation (*tawaf*) could take place at the sacred place in Jerusalem with the same validity as that around the Kaba ordained in Islamic law. The famous theologian al-Zuhri was given the task of justifying this politically motivated reform of religious life by making up and spreading a saying traced back to the Prophet.

Abdullah bin Zubayr was at last killed in a battle against Hajjaj bin Yousuf in 73/692 after ruling for almost nine years. On the other hand, Mukhtar seized possession of Kufa in 56/686 and captured Mesopotamia and some parts of the eastern provinces from the Umayyads mainly in the name of the blood of Hussain. In Kufa, he continued his mission in the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya. Thus, the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya appeared for the first time four years later, when the Tawwabun were almost ready for the action. The Shiites of Kufa, especially the *mawali* among them, wanted an active movement which could relieve them from the oppressive rule of the Umayyads. They found an outlet only under the banner of Mukhtar, and saw a ray of hope in the Messianic role propagated by him for Ibn al-Hanafiya.

It must be pointed out here that the Shiites from Iran were not granted equal status by their Arab co-citizens in the social system of Kufa, and thus they were called *mawali* (sing. *mawla*) means "clients", a term to indicate inferior social standing, or second-class citizens. The expression *mawla* at the latest stage of its evolution means the people descended from foreign families whose ancestors, or even they themselves, on accepting Islam, have been adopted into an Arab tribe, either as freed slaves or free-born aliens. Juridically there were three classes of *mawali*: *mawla rahim* (blood relation), *mawla atafa* (freed man) and *mawla'l aqd* (free Arab who becomes

a member of a tribe to which he belongs neither by birth nor by previous affiliation as slave). Of these the first is conceivably a way of incorporating matrilineally related persons into a patrilineal society; the second type is the freedman who would often, be freed born but enslaved through capture in war; while the third type is the man who by compact or covenant voluntarily accepts the position of "client" to a "patron".

One week after Mukhtar's arrival in Kufa, Abdullah bin Zubayr sent Abdullah bin Yazid al-Khatmi as governor of Kufa. While, after the departure of Suleman bin Surad, Mukhtar's activities aroused the suspicions of the nobles of Kufa, who reported the new governor to warn him against the movement, saying that it was more dangerous than of Suleman bin Surad, for Mukhtar wanted to revolt against the governor in his own city. Mukhtar was hence imprisoned, where he remained until the return of the remnant of Suleman bin Surad's followers from the battle of Ayn al-Warda. He was however released only after the request of his brother-in-law, Abdullah bin Umar and other ten influential men, on the condition that he would not engage in any subversive activities against the governor of Kufa as long as he was in power. Abdullah bin Zubayr, considering the danger of Mukhtar and his movement, appointed a new governor for Kufa, Abdullah bin Muti in 65/685, and presumably ordered him to be more cautious and prudent than his predecessors. Meanwhile, Mukhtar became enough capable and began to prepare to seize Kufa in 66/685. He stationed near Dair Hind in the Sabkha, and his army contained about five hundred soldiers. To counter him, the governor sent Shabath bin Rabi al-Tamimi with three thousand soldiers to Sabkha, and Rashid bin Iyas with four thousand soldiers from Shurta. Mukhtar sent his nine hundred men in command of Ibrahim to meet Rashid, and three hundred men in command of Nuaim bin Hubaira against Shabath. In this battles, Mukhtar succeeded and captured Kufa. Nevertheless, the circumstances eventually changed when Abdullah bin Zubayr proclaimed himself caliph in 64/683, Ibn al-Hanafiya and Abdullah bin Abbas, with their followers, refused to pay him homage on the grounds that he had not yet been unanimously recognised as caliph. In 66/685, Abdullah bin Zubayr detained Ibn al-Hanafiya and his family and threatened them with death if they did not pay homage within a specified time. Ibn al-Hanafiya sent a letter to Mukhtar, apprising him of his perilous condition. Thus, Mukhtar marshalled out four thousand men



and managed to liberate to Ibn al-Hanafiya, who left Mecca for Taif. In 67/686, Mukhtar subdued Ibn Ziyad and killed him. He also hunted down the other murderers of Hussain and his followers, and slaughtered. At length, Kufa was brought under an incursion by Musab bin Zubayr with a huge army, in which Mukhtar was killed in Shawal, 67/April, 687.

### **Poet Farazdaq and Hisham**

The most instrumental role in boosting the dignity of Zayn al-Abidin was played by a famous poet, Farazdaq (d. 112/730). He composed numerous verses to propagate the cause of Zayn al-Abidin, the most renowned of which was his encomium (*qasida*) in praise of the Imam. It was the season of pilgrimage when Hisham (d.125/743), the son of the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik and Zayn al-Abidin were trying to reach the Black Stone in the crowded Kaba. The people gave way to the Imam with respect, but Hisham had to cut a way through the crowds. This deeply offended Hisham, and in a sarcastic manner he inquired who was the person to whom the people gave preference. Poet Farazdaq, present at the scene, upon hearing this remark, spontaneously composed his famous ode, and recited it, addressing to Hisham bin Abdul Malik, which begins as follows:-

*This is he whose footprint is known to the valley of Mecca.*

*He whom the Kaba knows and the most frequented sanctuary.*

*This is the son of the best of all the servants of God.*

*This is the pious, the elect, the pure, the eminent.*

*This is Ali, whose father is the Prophet, and it was through the light of his guidance, that the darkened road changed into the straight path.*

*This is the son of Fatima, if you are ignorant of him; and with his great-grandfather the Prophethood came to an end.*

Farazdaq, however, had to pay for his praise, and was imprisoned by the order of Hisham. When Zayn al-Abidin heard the misfortune of the poet, he sent him a gift of

12,000 dhirams, but Farazdaq refused to accept it, arguing that he had composed the poem purely from his religious zeal. Zayn al-Abidin, however, urged him to accept it for he could not take back what he had already given away.

Towards the end of his life in Medina, Zayn al-Abidin seems to have succeeded in gathering round himself a small group of his adherents. Among them, apart from Yahya bin Umm at-Tiwal and Muhammad bin Jubayr bin Mutim was also Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari, a famous companion of Muhammad, who took part in the pledge of Aqaba and in the oath of allegiance during the treaty of Hudaibia. Another important figure was the Kufan Sa'id bin Jubayr, a *mawla* of Banu Asad. The greatest Medinese jurist, Sa'id bin Musayyab regarded the Imam with highest esteem. Another great jurist, Az-Zuhri was also a great admirer and the honorific title **Zayn al-Abidin** (the ornament of the pious) was invested to the Imam by him.

Zayn al-Abidin died at the age of 57 years in 94/713. He lived 34 years after the event of Karbala. Ibn Hajar (d. 852/1449) in his "**Sawaik'l Muhriqah**" quotes a tradition from Ibn Ishaq that there were many men in Medina, who knew nothing who provided them rations secretly, but they knew all about after the death of Zayn al-Abidin, who used to say, "Secret alms-giving turns away divine wrath." He used to carry on his back at night time sacks, full of loaves of bread for the poor. The traces of carrying burden were discovered on his back when his dead body was being washed for burial.

#### **Wives and children**

Zayn al-Abidin had seven wives by which he had 11 sons and 4 daughters. His first wife was Fatima bint Hasan bin Ali, who gave birth of Muhammad al-Bakir. His other sons were Abdullah, Zaid, Umar, Hasan, Hussain Akbar, Hussain Asghar, Abdur Rahman, Suleman, Ali Jawad and Asghar. His daughters were Khadija, Fatima, Umm Kulsum and Aliya.

His collection of prayers is known as "**Sahifa-i Kamilah**" (the book of perfection), or also called "**Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya**" (the scroll of Sajjad). Its collection was made by his sons, Muhammad al-Bakir and Zaid. Out of 75 prayers, 11 were lost and 8 are considered as apothyphal



owing to anachronisms. In its present form, now consists of 71 prayers, and have been designed on the pattern of the Pslams of David containing 150 songs, and therefore, it is also named as "Psalms of Ahl-al-Bait." The prayers of "Sahifa" also contains the notion of astronomy, the cosmos, the secrets of navigations etc. Examining the 43rd prayer, which the Imam had invocated while looking at the new moon, we will find the theory of "rotation of moon", which reads as under:-

*O thou, the obedient, toiling quick creature, who passeth through the fixed stages and moveth in the appointed orbit I believe in Him, Who illuminated with thee the darkness, and enlightened by thee the ambiguities, and instituted thee one of the signs of His sovereignty, and one of the emblems of His authority.*

Once an astrologer went to Zayn al-Abidin, when Imam told him: "I shall introduce you to a **person** whose journey, during the interval taken by you in coming to me, has extended to fourteen universes, of which each universe is three times as bigger as our earth, and all this has happened in spite of the fact that the **person** has not moved from his place." The astronomer thereupon asked: "Who is this personage?" Imam replied: "It is I. If you wish I can tell you what you ate today at home, and what lies in your house." In this tradition, however, those universes are referred to, every one of which is bigger than our earth, that is, of course nothing but our Solar System.

#### **MUHAMMAD AL-BAKIR (94-114/713-733)**

Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Ali, known as al-Bakir was born on 1st Rajab, 57/October 15, 677. He was about two years and half old during the event of Karbala, and assumed Imamate at the age of 37 years. He was noted for his generosity, devotion in piety and was peaceful by nature. He possessed extensive knowledge in religion matters, and because of that, according to Yaqubi, he was nicknamed **al-Bakir** (split open, or revealer of secret science), as it is

said, "*tabaqqara al-rajulu fi'l aw fi'l mal*" means "the man became abundant in knowledge" or "he enhanced himself in knowledge." But according to Ibn Khallikan (1211-1282), he was so called because he collected an ample treasure or fund (*tabaqqar*) of knowledge. Thus, he was also called *Baqir al-ulum* (opener of the knowledge). Many jurists attracted by the fame of his learning. Among them were Muhammad bin Minkadir, Abu Hanifah an-Noman, Qatada bin Diama, Abdullah bin Muammar al-Laythi and Nafi bin Azraq etc.

The period of Muhammad al-Bakir is noted for the rule of the Umayyad caliph Suleman (96-99/ 715-717), Umar bin Abdul Aziz (99-101/ 717-720), Yazid II (101-105/720-724) and Hisham (105-125/724-743). He did not take part in the politics and passed most part of life calmly in Medina.

#### **Estate of Fadak and Umar bin Abdul Aziz**

Fadak was a fertile tract in the vicinity of Khaibar under the Jewish occupation, just three miles from Medina, now the modern village of Howeyat. After the victory of Khaibar, Prophet Muhammad thought to destroy the strength of the Jews of this area, who were threat to Islam, therefore, he sent his envoy, Muhit to Yusha bin Nun, the chief of the village Fadak. The chief of the Jews preferred peace and surrendered to fighting. A peace treaty was concluded between Muhammad and the local Jews on the terms that 50% yield of Fadak would be surrendered to Muhammad each year by the Jews. It was a gift, and not a booty of war, and according to Islam, the areas which are conquered through wars are the property of all the Muslims, and the lands which fall into the hands of the Muslims without any military operation pertain to the personal property. When the Koranic verse: "Give the kinsman his due, and the needy, and the wayfarer...." (17:26) was revealed, Muhammad called his daughter and made over Fadak to her. Suyuti writes in "*Dhurr'i Manthur*" (4th vol., p. 176) that, "Muhammad had bequeathed the ownership of the property of Fadak to his daughter, Fatima, and also executed a deed of gift in her favour, and her two sons."

When Abu Bakr assumed the caliphate, he forfeited Fadak from Fatima. When she was informed of the usurpation of Fadak, she appeared before him and produced a legal deed



of trust, and also produced the witnesses of Ali and Umm Aiman, which were totally disapproved by Abu Bakr. The confiscation of Fadak was perhaps one of the burning issues between the Shiites and Sunnites. The Umayyad caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz, the Marcus Aurelius of the Arabs, a virtuous ruler and a God-fearing Muslim, finally handed over the property of Fadak to Muhammad al-Bakir as the sole heir of Fatima.

### **Origin of the Zaidiyya**

Like his father, Muhammad al-Bakir was politically quiescent and refrained from openly putting forward any claim. During his time, there was a rival claimant for the allegiance of the Shiites. This was his half-brother, Zaid, who advocated a more politically active role for the Imam and was prepared to accommodate to a certain extent the view-point of the majority of Muslims by acknowledging the caliphates of Abu Bakr and Umar.

Zaid had asserted a claim to the Imamate on the basis that it belonged to the descendant of Ali and Fatima, who must come forward publicly for his claims for Imamate and Caliphate. He believed that if an Imam wanted to be recognized, he had to claim his right with a sword in hand. Thus, the first Alid of the Hussainid line who rose against the Umayyads was Zaid.

The popularity of Zaid's movement overshadowed Muhammad al-Bakir's efforts to attacking only the friends and followers of Zaid. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to contest Zaid's claim. However, al-Bakir and Zaid quarrelled over this point, for when the latter asserted that an Imam must rise against the oppressors, the former remarked: "So you deny that your own father was an Imam, for he never contested the issue." The disagreement between al-Bakir and Zaid had arisen when the latter incorporated the teachings of a Mutazilite, Wasil bin Ata. In the course of time, al-Bakir succeeded in winning back some of those who had gone over to Zaid. The most important of them were Zurara bin Ayan, his brother Humran, and Hamza bin Muhammad bin Abdullah at-Tayyar etc.

Zaid, by adhering to Wasil bin Ata and his doctrines, gained good support of the Mutazilites, and his acceptance of the legitimacy of the first two caliphs earned him the

full sympathy of the traditionalist circles. Finally, Zaid's revolt against the Umayyads took place in Safar, 122/December, 740 when he came forward and summoned the people to espouse his cause. Zaid was warned by his brother, Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussain, not to put any reliance on the people of Kufa, but Zaid did not notice his brother's warning and led the Kufans in a vain rebellion. This occurred in the reign of caliph Hisham. Yousuf bin Umar Thaqafi, the governor of the two Iraks, dispatched Abbas al-Murri with an army against Zaid. He was struck by an arrow, and died of his wound. Zaid's son Yahya fled to Khorasan and led an uprising after three years. He too was overcome, and killed in 125/743 and met the same fate as his father. Later on, the Zaidiyya recognized no designation for the Imamate, nor any strict hereditary principle. Thus the movement of Zaid however ended in failure, paved the way for other claimants and offered ready ground for a more effective revolt.

Muhammad al-Bakir was the first to establish the start of legal school of Ahl-al-Bait in view of the prevalent milieu. Kashi records for us an important tradition in his "Rijal" (p. 289) that, "Before the Imamate of Muhammad al-Bakir, the Shias did not know what was lawful and what was unlawful, except what they learned from the people; until Abu Jafar (al-Bakir) became the Imam, and he taught them and explained to them the knowledge (of law), and they began to teach other people from whom they were previously learning." This tradition clearly indicates that until the time of Muhammad al-Bakir, there were hardly any differences in legal practices among the Shiites of Medina, Kufa and elsewhere. This was an earliest move in the formation of the Shiite jurisprudence.

#### **Imam in Damascus**

Ibn Taus related that once caliph Hisham bin Abdul Malik visited Mecca on pilgrimage. On that occasion, Muhammad al-Bakir and his son Jafar Sadik were in Kaba, where the latter delivered the following speech:-

**"I thank God Who conferred the honour of Prophethood on Muhammad and made all of us august through him. We are therefore the chosen and**



*elected caliphs of God on earth. He who follows us is blessed. He who opposes us is unfortunate."*

Hisham's brother communicated the words of the above speech to Hisham, who at that time remained silent. He returned to Damascus and wrote to his governor of Medina to send al-Bakir and his son. Thus, both father and son went to Damascus, where they had to wait for three days in the city, and were summoned at the court on fourth day. Hisham was sitting on his throne, and there was staged a platform for arrow shooting (*rami al-nushshab*) in the middle. Hisham asked al-Bakir to shoot arrows, but the latter wanted to be excused on the ground that he was too weak and incapable for it. When Hisham insisted repeatedly, al-Bakir took the arrow and bow and shot. It hit the bull's eye with the first arrow. He then shot another arrow at the first arrow's target, and process continued nine times one after another. Hisham exclaimed: "O' Abu Jafar! what a good shooting performance it is? I have never seen a perfect archer like you." Thereupon, a religious deliberation was held between al-Bakir and Hisham, and in the course of which the former quoted authorities from the Koran and the traditions, and the caliph was silenced. Both father and son at last retired in the court and took their way back to Medina.

#### **Conversion of the Christian saint**

After leaving Damascus, they saw a huge crowd on the way to Medina. On enquiring, it was known that a crowd of Christian priests and monks had assembled to have a glimpse of a great saint. When the saint's eyes fell on Muhammad al-Bakir, he asked him whether he was one of them or not. Imam replied that he belonged to the blessed nation of Prophet Muhammad. The saint asked him many questions, which were replied to him. Muhammad al-Bakir told him that, "The religion of Jesus Christ is true, but it is too old. While the religion of Muhammad is fresh. As the fresh food is essential for the body, so is the fresh religion for the soul." The tradition has it that it deeply impressed the saint, who is said to have embraced Islam.

## **Hatred of the people of Madain**

Hisham had issued a public circular to his officials that none should host al-Bakir and his son on their way to Medina, as they were the magicians from the progeny of Abu Turab. When both of them reached Madain, about seven leagues below Baghdad, occupying both banks of the Tigris; they found the people full of hatred towards them. Both of them went from one end of the town to the other, but none showed them any courtesy or sold anything to them, and closed the doors in their face. Muhammad al-Bakir soon ascended the hillock near the town, and recited loudly the verses of the Koran (11:84-95), revealed in connection with Prophet Shu'aib, and declared, "O people, now we alone are the recipients of Divine Mercy on the face of the earth."

It must be known on this juncture that Shu'aib was among the descendant of Abraham, who was deputed by God to guide the people of Madain and Alikah. Besides the other vices, the people were notorious in two things, in which every one of them was involved. Firstly, they were professional highway robbers. Secondly, they used to take more while measuring and gave less to the wayfarers. Shu'aib preached amendments to their evil habits and wickedness in character, but of no avail. The whole habitation was finally ruined by death and destruction.

The people of the town went up to their house-tops and listened the words of Muhammad al-Bakir. One of them was an old man, who shouted, "Beware of the Divine wrath. This man is standing at a place, where Shu'aib stood and cursed the people, and were chastised by God." The people were much afraid and opened their doors and apologized for their mistake.

## **Beginning of Islamic coinage**

Caliph Abdul Malik is credited to have regulated monetary system in Islamic states. By putting together the evidence from a variety of sources, one sees that an attempt had already been made during the caliphate of Ali bin Abu Talib to start the Islamic coins, which could not be continued due to the then political cataclysm in the Islamic state. Maurice Lombard writes in **"The Golden Age of Islam"** (Netherlands, 1975, p. 110) that, "The Caliph Ali was the first to attempt a reform, at Basra in 660, by



introducing a Muslim *dhiram* with the inscriptions in Kufic script, but this attempt failed. Forty years later it was again introduced and this time it succeeded."

The Roman gold dinar and the Iranian silver dhiram had been in circulation in the Arabian regions. One dinar weighed 4.25 grams, inscribed with the Christian symbol of cross; while a dhiram weighed 1.40 grams. The Muslim kingdoms had no currency for their own, and were entirely dependent on the foreign currency for their transactions. Abdul Malik was perplexed by the situation and called for a meeting of the grand consultative assembly, in which Muhammad al-Bakir was also invited. The proposal for minting Islamic coins had been accepted in the meeting, but when the question of its inscription arose, al-Bakir recommended for the Islamic legends on both sides of the coin, which had been also approved. Thus, the first Islamic coin was struck in 76/695 in the mint installed at Damascus. The gold coin was dinar, the silver coin called dhiram, and the copper coin was named fals. These bore Islamic inscriptions, and were standardized both in weight and metal.

#### **Survey of the persecutions**

It is said that al-Bakir summed up the persecutions since the demise of Prophet Muhammad to his period in these words: "Since the death of the Prophet, the Ahl-al-Bait have continued being humiliated, inflicted with pains, maltreated, put under trials, deprived of their rights, murdered, frightened. We did not find any security for our own blood and for our friends. The liars and deniers of our rights found a good pretext for their lies in order to be in the good books of their masters and bad judges and governors in every town. They told them fabricated traditions and reported of us those things which we never said nor had we done, in order to instigate people against us. The reign of Muawiya after the death of Hasan was prime period for such activities. In every town, our friends were killed; their hands and feet were amputated on mere doubt. Whoever mentioned our names with love was imprisoned, his property confiscated and his house pulled down. These calamities got severer and increased during the rule of Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, the murderer of Hussain. Then came Hjjaj. He killed them in cold blood and arrested them on doubt. So much so that the man who

declared a pagan or *kafir* was dearer to him than the one who called himself a friend of Ali." (*"Ad-Darajat-ur-Rafiah fi Tabaqatil Imamiya min Shiah"* by Sayed Ali Khan, cf. *"Shiite Encyclopaedia"* by Hassan al-Amin, 1st vol., p. 29).

### **Imam's reply to Hisham's question**

In 106/725, caliph Hisham visited Mecca on pilgrimage when Muhammad al-Bakir was also in the city. Hisham found al-Bakir sitting among his followers, therefore, he sent one amazing question in the presence of al-Bakir, so that he might not give its answer and become discredited before his followers. Hisham's question was "What will the people eat and drink on the day of judgement, till the time their reckoning is finished?" Imam replied that, "There will be abundance of fruits and rivers on that place, from which they shall continue to avail till such time as their reckoning is finished." Hisham had intended thereby to bring censure on al-Bakir in the open assembly. He was mighty gratified at this answer, thinking that it would provide him with an excuse for his designs. He therefore sent a counter-question that, "Due to the fear of their accounts, how it is possible that the people will have the sense of eating." Imam said, "Go, and tell to Hisham that the sense of eating and drinking will be also among those people, who had been already cast into the hell. Does Hisham not read the Koranic verse, in which it is mentioned that, "And shall call the inmates of the (hell) fire unto the inmates of the garden (of paradise), saying: Pour on us of the water or of what God hath provided you with; They shall say: Verily, God hath forbidden both to the infidels." (7:50) On hearing this, Hisham was dumb founded and in his mind he had to admit the merits of al-Bakir.

Al-Bakir articulated the implication of the doctrine of *taqiya* in Shiism, and we may attribute the rudiments of its theory to him. But it was left to his son and successor, Jafar Sadik to give it a final form and make it an absolute condition of the faith.

Many leading jurists used to visit al-Bakir to discuss the legal problems. Among them were Muhammad bin Minkadir, Abu Hanifah an-Noman, Qatada bin Diama, Abdallah bin Mu'ammir and al-Laythi etc. He greatly emphasised also on the



importance of knowledge and its promotion. Kulaini quotes in **"al-Kafi"** (1st vol., p. 89 and 104) that he said, "Acquire knowledge and adorn it with forbearance and reverence. Be humble to those whom you give knowledge and also to those from whom you acquired it. Never be among the harsh tempered scholars. Lest you should forfeit your title because of your wrong and harsh demeanour." He also said, "The divine tax on knowledge is to teach it to God's creatures."

Mirkhwand (d. 903/1498) writes in **"Rawzatus Safa"** that, "Neither the pen can write, nor the tongue can describe the merits and the traditions of al-Bakir." Shibli Nomani writes in **"Sirat-i Numan"** (Lahore, 1972, p. 28) that, "Abu Hanifah sat for a long time at Imam Baqir's feet and acquired from him much valuable knowledge of fiqh and hadith not available anywhere else. Shiah and Sunnis are agreed that Abu Hanifah derived much of his learning from Baqir."

Muhammad al-Bakir died in 117/735, and was buried in the Baqi cemetery near his father's grave.

#### **Wives and children**

Muhammad al-Bakir had four wives, the first being Umm Farwa bint Kassim bin Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, who gave birth of Jafar Sadik and Abdullah al-Fatah. The second wife, Umm Hakeem bint Asad bin Mughira Thaqafi had two sons, Ibrahim and Abdullah. The third wife was Layla, who gave birth of Ali and Zainab. While Umm Salma was the daughter being born by the fourth wife.

Ibn Hajar writes in his **"Sawaik'l Muhriqa"** (p. 120) that, "Imam Muhammad Bakir has disclosed the secrets of knowledge and wisdom and unfolded the principles of spiritual and religious guidance. Nobody can deny his exalted character, his God-given knowledge, his divinely-gifted wisdom and his obligation and gratitude towards spreading of knowledge. He was a sacred and highly talented spiritual leader and for this reason he was popularly titled **al-Bakir** which means **the expounder of knowledge**. Kind of heart, spotless in character, sacred by soul and noble by nature, the Imam devoted all his time in submission to God. It is beyond the power of a man to

count the deep impression of knowledge and guidance left by the Imam on the hearts of the faithfuls. His sayings in devotion and abstinence, in knowledge and wisdom and in religious exercise and submission to God are so great in number that the volume of this book is quite insufficient to cover them all."

Much has been recorded about Muhammad al-Bakir's person and extraordinary qualities. Once he said, "The height of perfection is excellence in the understanding of the religion" and "The scholar who derives benefit from his knowledge is better than seventy thousand devotees." He strove to impress people by his extensive knowledge on religion as well as science. Himself a student of science had once said: "Air contains a combustible energy, and if it is isolated, and comes in our hand in its purest form; it will cause a big combustible energy that can even melt away an iron." Firstly, he indicates an existence of oxygen in air, which constitutes approximately 20% of the atmosphere. Oxygen was first isolated by a clergyman and chemist, Joseph Priestly (1733-1804) in 1774, and independently by Karl Scheele (1742-1786) at about the same period, and it was recognised as **fire-air** to be the promoter of combustion. But Lavoisier (1743-1794), a French chemist was the first to demonstrate the true nature of combustion as an oxidation reaction and to give oxygen its modern name. Secondly, Muhammad al-Bakir indicates its power to melt an iron. There are some 40 variants of melting an iron. The oxy-acetylene Gas is a dominant process for welding and melting an iron, and therefore, the oxyacetylene torch was invented in 1901 by Edmund Fouché.

#### **JAFAR SADIK (114-148/733-765)**

Abu Abdullah Jafar bin Muhammad was born, according to Yaqubi (2nd vol., p. 381) in 80/699 at Medina. Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 327) and others also determine his birth from the event of **Ann al-Juhaf** (the year of the flood) in Mecca, which according to Tabari (2nd vol., p. 320) occurred in 80/699.

According to the Arabic lexicon, **jafar** means "stream". His father had referred to him "the best of all mankind" and "one in charge of the family of Muhammad" (**qaim al-**



**Muhammad**). He is also known by the titles of **al-Sadik** (trustworthy), **al-Sabir** (patient), **al-Tahir** (pure one) and **al-Fazil** (excellent one).

For the first 14 years of his life, he was brought up under the care of his grandfather, Zayn al-Abidin. He observed the latter's acts of clarity, his love for long series of prostrations and prayers as well as the withdrawal from politics. He spent 23 years under his father, and assumed the Imamate at the age of 34 years.

His fame for religious learning was great. According to Yaqubi, it was customary for scholars, who related anything from Jafar Sadik, used to say: "**the Learned One informed us**". Even Malik bin Anas (d. 179/795), the famous jurist of Medina, is reported to have said when quoting Jafar Sadik's traditions: "The **thiqa** (truthful) Jafar bin Muhammad himself told me that ..." Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767) is also reported to have been Imam's pupil for two years. Shibli Nomanî writes in "**Sirat-i Numan**" (pp. 28-29) that, "Abu Hanifah learned a great deal from Imam Baqir's son, Jafar Sadik also, which fact is generally mentioned in the history books. Ibn Taimiyyah, however, denies this on the ground that Abu Hanifah and Jafar Sadiq were contemporaries and equals, which ruled out the probability of the former being the latter's pupil. But I consider this sheer impudence and lack of comprehension on Ibn Taimiyyah's part. For all his greatness as an original thinker and master of fiqah, Abu Hanifah could not compare in learning with Imam Jafar Sadiq. The Ahl-al-Bait were the fountain-head of Hadith and fiqah and, in fact, all religious learning. '**The master of the house knows best what is in it**', to quote a well-known Arabic saying." Abu Hanifah also attended many lectures of Jafar Sadik. In spite of many differences of opinion with the Imam, he was deeply influenced by him. Donaldson goes even beyond saying that he was one of Jafar Sadik's pupils, vide "**The Shiite Religion**" (London, 1933, p. 132)

The house of Jafar Sadik in Medina took a real shape of a regular academy, where a galaxy of talented scholars of jurisprudence, traditions, philosophy, exegesis and theology attended the studies. It was perhaps the first academy in Islam in respect of Islamic ideology which Jafar Sadiq founded in Medina. The concourse of the varied

minds in Medina gave an impetus to the cultivation of science and literature, where a stream of unusual intellectual activity flowed towards other Islamic states, and soon led to the growth of philosophical tendencies among the Muslims.

The period of Jafar Sadik saw the most crucial time of Islamic history, both in political and religious spheres. We will cast a rapid glance at the political upheavals of the period under review. Jafar Sadik witnessed 3 years of the rule of Abdul Malik, the Umayyad ruler, 9 years and 8 months of Walid bin Abdul Malik, 3 years and 3 months of Suleman, 2 years and 5 months of Umar bin Abdul Aziz, 4 years and 1 month of Yazid bin Abdul Malik, 10 years of Hisham bin Abdul Malik, 1 year of Walid bin Yazid and 6 months of Yazid bin Walid; till finally the empire of the Umayyads ended in 132/750 by the Abbasids. It implies that the period of Jafar Sadik may be said to consist of two parts. During the first part, while the Umayyads were in power, the Imam was engaged in teaching quietly at home in Medina. During the second part, the Abbasids were in power after the fall of the Umayyads of Damascus in 132/750. The Umayyad empire was overthrown by the huge upheaval lead by Abu Muslim Khorasani, and the Abbasid caliphate came into existence with Abul Abbas as-Saffah as the first caliph. Hence, Jafar Sadik also witnessed the rule of as-Saffah (132-136/750-754) and Mansur (136-158/754-775). In sum, Jafar Sadik absolutely remained away from political arena.

### **The origin of the Kaysaniyas**

Heretofore, we have examined that Mukhtar Thaqafi appeared in Kufa as a revenger of Hussain's blood after the event of Karbala. He failed to win support from Imam Zayn al-Abidin in his movement. He then turned to Ibn al-Hanafiya, whom he declared as an Imam and a promised Mahdi. Ibn al-Hanafiya did not repudiate Mukhtar's propaganda, and maintained a non-committal attitude, but his name became slogans for Mukhtar to gain public supports. Mukhtar was killed in 67/687, and the death of Ibn al-Hanafiya also took place in 81/700. Abu Hashim, the eldest son of Ibn al-Hanafiya however continued the mission originated by Mukhtar, and his followers then became known as **Kaysaniyas**. Various explanations are given to this name, but the **Kaysan** in question was almost certainly the man



with the *kunya* Abu Amra, who was the most distinguished of the *mawali* supporting Mukhtar. The name was widely given to men of Alid sympathies during the later part of the Umayyad rule and was presumably a pejorative nickname first applied by opponents in order to discredit the group. Abu Hashim was poisoned by the Umayyad caliph Hisham, but before his death in 98/718, he quickly rushed to Humayma, and bequeathed his right to the caliphate and charge of the Kaysaniya sect to Muhammad bin Ali as he had no son.

### **The origin of the Abbasids**

Abbas, the uncle of Holy Prophet had a son, Abdullah, who never tried to establish his own caliphate. Abdullah and his son, Ali bin Abdullah resided in Humayma. It was the latter's son, Muhammad bin Ali to have taken the charge of Kaysaniya sect from the dying Abu Hashim. Thus, the house of Abbas inherited the party and organisation of Abu Hashim along with his claims. Muhammad bin Ali led the Kaysaniya sect, and propagated in the name of Ahl-al-Bait, declaring that the caliph should be from Alid descent and the Umayyads had no right to rule. It was mere an ostensible slogan to procure wide supports of the Alids and nourish future political ambition. Muhammad bin Ali died before attaining his objective and handed on his claims to his son, Ibrahim. He began to dispatch emissaries, starting with Khorasan, where the bulk of the Kaysaniya faction resided.

In the meantime, the newly acclaimed Umayyad caliph Marwan sought to strike at the centre of the whole movement by arresting Ibrahim. He is said to have strangled him as Yaqubi writes, by having his head put into a bag of lime until he died. But Ibrahim had two brothers, Abul Abbas and Abu Jafar Mansur, both of whom escaped to Khorasan. And very soon these two brothers returned, supported by Abu Muslim's victorious troops, to lead the insurgents in their final struggle in the West. Their way had been prepared for them in Kufa by propaganda that had been carried on for more than twelve years.

### Abu Salama's offer

In Kufa, the local representative Abu Salama Hafs, the Kaysaniyan follower of Abu Hashim, known as *Wazir-i Al-i Muhammad* was very popular figure. Tabari (3rd vol., p. 27) writes that, "When the news of the death of Ibrahim reached Kufa, Abu Salama on the suggestion and advice of some other Shias of Kufa, intended to establish the Imamate of Alids." Accordingly, he wrote letters to Imam Jafar Sadik, Abdullah al-Mahd and Umar bin Ali Zayn al-Abidin, asking each one of them in turn to come to Kufa in person and he would support their claims of Imamate. The messenger was instructed first to contact Jafar Sadik, and only if he refused, then to go to Abdullah al-Mahd, and in case of his refusal, to Umar bin Ali Zayn al-Abidin. When the messenger presented the letter first to Jafar Sadik, the latter called for a lamp, burned the letter and said to the messenger, "Tell your master what you have seen" (vide Ibn Tigtaga's *"al-Fakhri fi'l Adab as-Sultaniya"*, Cairo, 1966, p. 109). The messenger then came to Abdullah al-Mahd, who readily accepted the offer.

### Foundation of the Abbasid Caliphate

Meanwhile, things took a reverse turn for the Abbasid family. The army commanded by Abul Abbas and Abu Jafar Mansur, had come from Khorasan to Kufa, where they found the city decorated in black, the accepted colour of the Abbasids, and the people who crowded to the mosque also wore black clothes and black turbans with black banners planted in hands. Abu Salama led the prayers, after which he announced that Abu Muslim had now made it possible for the world of Islam to shake itself free from the Umayyads, and declared that it was to this end that he called upon them to recognize Abul Abbas, the brother of the murdered Ibrahim, as their rightful Imam and Caliph. Abul Abbas mounted the pulpit and made his inaugural speech, in which he named himself as *as-Saffah* (blood-shedder) and "identified the glory of God with his own interest and those of his house. He named the Abbasids as the Ahl-al-Bait from whom uncleanness was removed, and denied that the Alids were more worthy of the caliphate." (vide Tabari, 3rd vol., p. 29). His speech was followed by a speech from his uncle, Daud bin Ali, who also emphasized that the rights of the Abbasids were legally inherited and



there were but two legal caliphs in Islam: Ali bin Abu Talib and Abbas as-Saffah. He added that the caliphate would remain in the hands of the Abbasids until they passed it over to Isa bin Marium. (vide **Tabari**, 3rd vol., p. 31; **Yaqubi**, 2nd vol., p. 350 and **Masudi**, 3rd vol., p. 256). The excited crowd expressed their approval and gave their allegiance to Abul Abbas as the first caliph of the Abbasid caliphate in 132/750.

### **Fall of the Umayyads**

Marwan, the Umayyad caliph was at that time advancing towards Kufa with a huge army. He encountered the army from Khorasan at a point on the greater Zab river, and the battle of Zab lasted for two days. It was closely contested struggle, and the day was turned when Marwan's horse ran away without its rider. He managed to escape, but was eventually discovered and killed.

So fell the last of the Umayyads in 132/750. The total duration of the Umayyad rule till the time when Abul Abbas assumed the power of the Abbasid rule was 90 years, 11 months and 13 days.

### **The risings of the Alids**

The Alids were totally disappointed while seeing the Abbasids taking power in the name of Ahl-al-Bait. The first task before Abbas as-Saffah therefore was to break the alliance with the Alids who were yet strong and could be dangerous. During his short rule of less than four years, he was kept fully occupied in meeting numerous insurrections and in ruthlessly killing those Alids who were suspected. The first to pay his life was Abu Salama. Abul Abbas died in 136/754, during which period, the Alids in Medina, disorganized by the frustration of their hopes, kept quiet. But when Abu Jafar Mansur, the brother of Abul Abbas as-Saffah assumed the caliphate, the Alids embittered by the usurpation of their rights by the house of Abbas, began to voice their complaints. An-Nafs az-Zakiyya, the son of Abdullah al-Mahd openly refused to take oath of allegiance to Mansur. The traditionalists circle of Medina supported him and upheld his cause. According to **Tabari** (3rd. vol., p. 200), "Malik bin Anas

declared that the oath sworn to the Abbasids was no longer binding as it had been taken under compulsion."

Soon afterwards in 137/755, Abu Muslim was lured to Iraq and murdered. In 141/758, Mansur massacred a group of the Rawandiyya who besieged his palace. Caliph Mansur thus had to face the most threatening opposition from the Alids to the newly established authority of his house. He firstly concentrated his efforts on two basic points. The first was to justify the rights of his house on religious ground. The second was to gain for his caliphate the acceptance of the Muslims. The sources agree to mention that caliph Mansur also persecuted Imam Jafar Sadik many times, but the latter retained his equanimity.

The Abbasids had also adopted a very cruel policy towards the Umayyads, and many members of the family were ruthlessly executed. Some Umayyads, however, escaped and sought refuge among the nomadic tribes, one of them being Abdur Rehman (138-173/756-788), the grandson of Hisham. He escaped to Rah, near Euphrates, where he began to prepare for the long journey to Africa, where few other Umayyad princes had already taken refuge. On 1st Shawal, 138/March 8, 756, he entered Archidona, the capital of Regio, where he was declared an **amir**. Hence, he became the king of the Umayyads in the southern districts of Spain.

Returning to the thread of our main narratives, it is recounted that Jafar Sadik died in 148/765 in Medina after the Imamate of 34 years and 7 months. Upon his death the Imamate devolved upon his elder son, Ismail.

#### **Wives and children**

Jafar Sadik had seven sons and four daughters. His first wife was Fatima. For the first 25 years he had only two sons by his first wife, Ismail and Abdullah and a daughter Umm Farwa. His second wife was Hamida, the mother of Musa Kazim and Muhammad. Besides, Abbas, Ali, Asma and Fatima were also the children of Jafar Sadik.

The butchery of Karbala and the sack of Medina had almost led to the closing of the lecture-room of the Imams in Medina. With the appearance of Jafar Sadik as the head of Muhammad's descendants, it acquired a new lease of life.



Abu Amr Muhammad al-Kashani writes in "**Marifat Akhbar ar-rifal**" (p. 249) that once Jafar Sadik was pointed out by his disciples for wearing fine apparel, a variant of clothes from Marw, while his ancestors had worn rude and simple garments. He replied that his ancestors had lived in a time of scarcity, while he lived in a time of plenty, and that it was proper to wear the clothing of one's own time.

Extremely liberal and rationalistic in his teachings, Jafar Sadik was also a scholar, a poet, and a philosopher, well grounded in some of the foreign languages; he impressed a distinct philosophical character on the Medinite school. W. Ivanow (1886-1970) writes in "**Ismailis and Qarmatians**" (JBBRAS, Bombay, 1940, p. 54) that, "Jafar Sadik chiefly emphasized the tendency of moderation and sobriety in religious beliefs, i.e., exactly the qualities which strike us so much in early Ismailism."

### **Jabir bin Hayyan**

And Jafar Sadik was a scientist besides. We cannot but invite attention to a fact that Jabir bin Hayyan (103/721-200/815), known as *Geber*, the father of modern chemistry, worked with the materials gathered by Jafar Sadik in Medina, who referred to his Lord in his writings as "*My Master*" and "*A mine of wisdom.*" The intellectuals in Renaissance in Europe greatly took benefits from the treatises of Jabir bin Hayyan, and these were translated into Latin, German, French and English. He is world-famed as the father of *Arabic Alchemy*. The word *al-kimiya* is usually said to be derived from the Egyptian *kam-it* or *kem-it* (the black), or some have thought, from the Greek *chyma* (molten metal).

According to "**The Cultural Atlas of Islam**" (New York, 1986, p. 328) by Ismail al-Faruqi and Lois al-Faruqi that, "In response to Jafar al-Sadik's wishes, he invented a kind of paper that resisted fire, and an ink that could be read at night. He invented an additive which, when applied to an iron surface, inhabited rust and when applied to a textile, would make it water repellent." Jabir bin Hayyan defined chemical combination as union of the elements together in small particles too small for the naked eyes to see without loss of their character, as John Dalton

(1766-1844), the English chemist and physicist was to discover ten centuries later. He was however first to describe the processes of calcination and reduction, improved the methods of evaporation, sublimation, melting and crystallisation; prepared acetic acid, sulphuric acid, nitric acid and the mixture of the last two, in which gold and silver could be dissolved; discovered several chemical compounds, and separated antimony and arsenic from the sulphides.

One of the renowned titles of Jafar Sadik was *kashiful haqiq* means "one who reveals mysteries", and also *muhqiq* means "researcher." The reason for investing him such titles was that he had disclosed many wonderful scientific theories then unknown to the Arab world. For instance, it is related that once Jafar Sadik said: "God has created a planet with cold water on the seventh heaven, and other six planets have been created with hot water." This is an explicit discovery of a planet, called **Pluto**. Clyde Tombaugh however discovered it photographically on January 21, 1930 at the Lowell Observatory in Arizona. The word *seventh heaven* signifies the *most distant* planet in the solar system, as its distance is 3.67 billion miles (5.9 billion km.) from the sun. Being remote in distance, the rays of the sun reach very mild, resulting the temperature as low as 360 degree F (or -218 degree C), and thus it remains frozen. On account of its coldness, Jafar Sadik expounded the creation of Pluto with cold water. He was therefore the first to report the very existence of Pluto.

In Arabic astronomy, *kawakib* is the general term for the luminous heavenly bodies, and thus the word *al-kawakib al-sayyarah* means "the planets as opposed the stars" or it is known as *al-kawakib al-thabitah*. Only five planets (*kawakib*) were known to the Arabs in pre-Islamic period, known as *al-kawakib al-khamsa* or *al-mutahayyira*. When the Greek science had been translated (between 133/750 and 287/900) in the Arabian peninsula in the time of Jafar Sadik, the Arabian astrologers accepted the theory of six planets by adding *subul* (Saturn) in their study. Thus, the three planets below the sphere of the sun were known as "the lower planets" (*al-kawakib al-sufliyah*) viz. Venus (*shurah*), Mercury (*utarid*) and the Moon (*qamar*). While the other three planets beyond the sphere of the sun were called "the high planets" (*al-kawakib al-ulwiyah*) viz.



Saturn (*zuhul*), Jupiter (*mushtari*) and Mars (*marikh*). The credit therefore, for reporting the existence of Pluto for the first time goes to Jafar Sadik when the instrument observing the heavenly bodies was not then invented.

There is also another astronomical discovery by Jafar Sadik, who once asked a Syrian astrologer, "How much is the light of *sukainah* less than that of Venus (*zuhrah*)?" The astrologer said, "I swear upon God that I never heard until today even the name of this planet." This tradition most unambiguously indicates the very existence of one another planet which was also unknown then, but it had been discovered with the help of telescope by the English astronomer, William Herschel in 1781, known as *Uranus*. The Arabic word *sukainah* is derived from *sukun* means "rest", and how appropriate a name it is for Uranus, which would appear from the slow and restful way in which it completes its revolution round the sun, and as a result it is called a "fainter planet". Jafar Sadik spoke in the same breath of two such different planets as Venus and Uranus, the former being bright and rapid, and the latter a very faint, slow moving orb.

Jafar Sadik is said to have propounded few other important scientific theories in his discourses. For instance, he once said: "The visual rays of an object enter in our eyes, whose only one part flashes in our eyes, resulting our inability to perceive an object so easy which is far from us. The rays of an object lying at a distance can be totally entered in our eyes and we can see it very closely, provided an instrument is invented, through which the rays of a farthest object can enter in the eyes, and then the camels in the desert, grazing at a distance of 3000 yards, will be seen at a distance of 60 yards. It means that the grazing camels will be seen 50 times nearer." This is perhaps the first correction of the theories of "sight rays" as expounded by Euclid (330-226 B.C.) and Ptolemy (9-168 A.D.), which were supposed to radiate out of eyes onto object. Later on, the theory of Jafar Sadik had been accepted after many experiments by the renowned scientist of Fatimids period, called Ibn al-Haytham (354-429/965-1039), known as *Alhazen*. His acclaimed treatise on optics, namely "*Kitab al-Manazir*" was translated into Latin under the title "*Opticae Thesaurus Alhazeni*" in 1270 by Witelo. Afterwards, it was published by Frederick Risner at Basel in 1572. According

to Ibn al-Haytham, "It is not a ray leaving the eyes that causes sight! It is far more the form of the perceived object that radiates onto the eye and is converted by its transparent body."

Jafar Sadik further recommended for an invention of an instrument to watch an object of a remote distance 50 times nearer. Hence, the European scientist, Roger Bacon (1220-1292) had also proposed for such instrument, bringing an object 50 times near to our sight. Later on, the Italian scientist Gailileo (1564-1642) was destined to invent the suggestive instrument, that is, **telescope** in 1610; whose functions absolutely based on the theory of Jafar Sadik, bringing an object visible 50 times closer to its actual distance.





**ISMAIL BIN JAFAR SADIK (148-158/765-775)**

Abu Muhammad Ismail, surnamed al-Wafi was born in Medina between 100/719 and 103/722. Ismail (Listening by God) is also known as an absolute Lord (*az-azbab-i itlaq*). He was born by the first wife of Jafar Sadik, named Fatima. According to "*Sharhu'l Akhbar*" (comp. 350/960), the mother of Ismail was Fatima bint Hasan bin al-Hussain bin Ali, but Ahmad Inaba (d. 825/1422) writes in "*Umadatau't-talib*" that she was Fatima bint al-Hussain al-Athram bin al-Hasan bin Ali. Shahrastani (1076-1153) writes in his "*Kitab al-milal wa'l nihai*" that during the lifetime of Fatima, Jafar Sadik never got another marriage like Muhammad with Khadija and Ali with Fatima.

Hatim bin Imran bin Zuhra (d. 498/1104) writes in "*al-Usul wa'l Ahakam*" that, "Ismail was the most perfect, the most learned and the most excellent of the sons of Jafar as-Sadik." He is also reported to have well steeped in the esoteric interpretation of the Koran.

Ismail was declared many times by his father as his successor, and said on an occasion, while Ismail was present, according to "*Asraru'n-Nutaqa*" (comp. 380/990) that "He is the Imam after me, and what you learn from him is just the same as if you have learnt it from myself." It is also related that when the health of Imam Jafar Sadik became impaired, he summoned the most trusted amongst his followers, and those members of his family who were alive, and did what his predecessors had done, i.e., he handed over the authority of Imamate to Ismail. It must be known that the most trusted followers of Imam Jafar Sadik had supported Ismail, notably Abu Hamza Thabit bin Abu Sufiyya Dinar as-Samali (d. 150/767), a *mawla* (freed slave) from Kufa. Jafar Sadik is reported to have said that Abu Hamza was in his time like Salman al-Faras in his own time (*Abu Hamza fi zamani'hi mithl Salman fi zamani'hi*).

The early biography of Ismail is not traceable except few fragmented records. Our authority "*Asraru'n-Nutaqa*" adds, "When Ismail completed 7 years of age, the Lord of

religion (Jafar Sadik) declared him the master of religion and his heir-apparent, as his next in descent. He guarded him from his other sons, kept him away from the contact with the public, and his education went on under his own supervision." According to "**Marifat Akhbari'r-Rijal**" (comp. after 280/890) that in the absence of his father from Medina, Ismail acted on behalf of his father as the head of family. It is also narrated in "**Uyun'l-Akhbar**" (comp. 842/1438) that Mualli bin Khunyas, a wealthy Iranian and a famous narrator was killed and his property was confiscated by the order of the Abbasid governor of Medina, Daud bin Ali. Masudi (d. 346/958) also asserts in his "**Kitab al-Tanbih wal Ishraf**" (ed. de Goeji, Leiden, 1894, p. 329) that Daud bin Ali had killed many persons by order of Abul Abbas, the first Abbasid caliph and the number of victims was about eighty persons. While in the matter of Mualli bin Khunyas, however, Jafar Sadik was absent from Medina, therefore, the dispute was solved by Ismail in the year 133/751.

The Abbasid caliphate founded in 132/750 by uprooting the Umayyads. They were the bitterest foes of the Alids, and did everything to stamp out their propaganda. They had gained power by the Alids support, and started sweeping their accessible ashes. Mansur, the second Abbasid caliph, according to Tabari (d. 310/922) in "**Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l Muluk**" (ed. de Goeje, Leiden, 1879-1901, 3rd vol., p 426), spread news everywhere that the Abbasids were the Ahl-al-Bait and minted many fabricated Hadiths for his cause. He said of himself, "**Innama an sultan Allah fi ardihi**" i.e., "Verily! I am the authority of God on earth." He also claimed that "the rule is God's shadow on earth, all those troubled find refuge in it" (**al-sultanu zillu'llabi fi'l ardi ya'wi ilayhi kullu malhufin**).

Ibn Jawzi (d. 597/1200) writes in "**Sifat al-Safwa**" that, "Jafar Sadik was quite aloof altogether from the state affairs because of his pre-occupation with devotional observances." He was however marked by caliph Mansur as one of his opponents. This time the Abbasids had firmly determined to expunge the Alids from the state, and were bent upon an utter annihilation of the institution of Imamate with the death of Jafar Sadik, pitching deadly opposition to them. Under such policies, Mansur was closely watching to know the name of the successor of Jafar Sadik to motivate his objective. He tried to harass



the Imam through various means. Ibn Jawzi writes in "**Sifat al-Safwa**" (2nd vol., p. 96) that Mansur was also worried about the *khums* which used to be paid as a religious dues to Jafar Sadik by his followers and had asked many questions to the Imam on the matter when he visited Medina in 147/764.

In 141/758, caliph Mansur appointed Ahd al-Jabbar al-Azadi as the governor of Khorasan with an order to watch Alid activities as well as the followers of Jafar Sadik. Riyah bin Uthman al-Murri, the Abbasid governor in Medina from 144/761 at first attempt, burnt the house of Ahl-al-Bait. Even Ismail was decided to be killed being an expected successor of Jafar Sadik. Ahmad bin Ali Najashi (d. 450/1058) writes in his "**Kitab al-Rijal**" (Bombay, 1917, pp. 81-2) that once caliph Mansur summoned Jafar Sadik and his son Ismail to Iraq, where he found no chance to kill them, and thus their lives were spared, but only Bassam bin Abdullah al-Sayrafi was executed instead. Muhammad Hussain al-Muzzafari quotes Jafar Sadik as saying in his "**al-Sadik**" (2nd vol., p. 119) that, "Ismail was planned two times for killing, but I prayed for his life, and God protected him."

The succession issue of Jafar Sadik has become a mystery in the extant traces. We are faced with fact as with legend and myth; conjecture and hypothesis; the passions and prejudice of the historians. Committed in the heat of strife and argument by the early Shiite authors, they were continuously repeated by those who followed them. And finally, all this was inherited by the modern orientalist, who, after relying too much on these crumbs, accepted and endorsed many of these errors. Some elements of the traditions are quite fictitious, and exist only in the ingenious guesses and conjectures of the Shiite authors, on which the conclusions of the modern writers are based. The derogatory conclusions of the Sunnis sources from the hotchpotch, who lacked the concept of Imamate, have also created unnecessary complications. They assailed the Ismailis in view of their own sense of propriety in opprobrious words. It is highly probable that the early Ismailis, living in an extremely hostile milieu, did not produce any substantial volume of literature, preferring instead to propagate their doctrines. In analysing the accessible materials, therefore, the scholars will have to exercise a careful selection.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes in **"Ideals and Realities of Islam"** (London, 1966, pp. 165-6) that, "The question of the successor to the Imam (Jafar Sadik) having been made particularly difficult by the fact that the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur had decided to scourge to death whoever was to be chosen officially by the Imam as his successor thereby hoping to put an end to the Shiite movement." Caliph Mansur began to hatch animosity with Jafar Sadik, whose activities were closely watched. He moreover invested his successor, Muhammad (158-169/775-785) with the epithet **al-Mahdi** to turn the attention of his subjects from the Alid family and attract them towards the house of Abbas. Under these circumstances, different traditions had been contrived and many ideas were constructed in determining the real successor of Jafar Sadik. Farhad Daftary writes in **"The Ismailis: their History and Doctrines"** (London, 1990, pp. 93-4) that, "According to the majority of the available sources, Jafar al-Sadiq had designated his son Ismail as his successor, by the rule of the **nass**. There can be no doubt about the authenticity of this designation, which forms the basis of the claims of the Ismailiyya and which should have settled the question of al-Sadiq's succession in due course."

W.Ivanow (1886-1970) writes in **"Ismailis and Qarmatians"** (**JEBRAS**, Bombay, 1940, p. 57) that, "According to the overwhelming majority of the available sources, both sectarian and of their opponents, Imam Jafar appointed as his successor his eldest son Ismail, by his first wife, a highly aristocratic lady, great grand-daughter of Hasan." W.Montgomery Watt writes in **"The Formative Period of Islamic Thought"** (Edinburgh, 1973, p. 271) that, "The Ismailites derive their name from the fact that they consider that the Imam after Jafar as-Sadik was his son Ismail and not Musa al-Kazim." Nawbakhti (d. 310/912) however admits in his **"Kitab Firaq al-Shia"** (comp. 285/899) that Musa Kazim was not the heir-apparent.

The historians quote the tradition that Ismail had died during his father's lifetime, but the followers of Ismail refused to believe the rumours of his death. Shahrastani (1076-1153) writes in **"Kitab al-milal wa'l nihal"** (tr. by A.K. Kazi and J.G. Flynn, London, 1984, p. 144) that, "Some of them (followers of Ismail) say that he did not die, but that his father had declared that he had died to save him from the Abbasid caliphs; and that he had held a



funeral assembly to which Mansur's governor in Medina was made a witness." This tradition, most possibly familiar in Iraq, however could not solve the complications in a question.

Thanks to the new evidence in this context, shrouded behind an impenetrable veil for centuries, has been delved recently from one anonymous manuscript in Khwabi, which perhaps is a key to solve the complications hitherto remained unsolved. It is written in the manuscript of "**Kitab Fusul wa'l Akhbar**" by Nuruddin b. Ahmad (d. 233/849). This manuscript was copied mostly by the end of 17th century at Khwabi, Syria and the scribe had described a tradition in it regarding Ismail bin Jafar Sadik. It relates that Abdullah, surnamed al-Aftah, or al-Aflah and Ismail were the twin brothers in the house of Jafar Sadik, which was unknown to the people in Medina. Its veracity however cannot be substantiated from any other sources. Nevertheless, it cannot be brushed aside as untrue, especially when contemporary evidence is absent or scant. Whether literally true or not, the story seems to contain certain germs of truth, revealing some interesting insights about this important period. Its clues however can be judged from "**Asraru'n-Nutaqa**" (comp. 380/990) that Ismail was brought up at home, and the same source also mentions at another place that Abdullah was also brought up at home. The historians write that Ismail predeceased his father in 145/762 at Medina. But, our above Syrian tradition goes on to unmask in relating that in the year 145/762, it was the death of **Abdullah** in reality and not that of **Ismail**. It further relates that both Abdullah and Ismail almost resembled each other physically, and none among those present could perceive the death of Abdullah due to an likeness among the identical twin and therefore, the **death** was considered that of Ismail. On that juncture, Jafar Sadik was constrained to remain silent, since the Abbasids had conspired to kill Ismail and therefore, it became a mystery, making Ismail publicly death during his father's time, but in reality he was not dead. Abul Fawaris Ahmad bin Yaqub writes in his "**ar-Risala fi'l Inama**" (comp. before 408/1017) that, "Ismail died during his father's life time is not substantiated, nor can it be proven without some clear evidence that reliable person saw the face of (actual) Ismail at his interment. This is untrue and impossible".

The Syrian tradition has it further that Ismail had been sent stealthily out of Medina on the night when Abdullah was expired on Ramdan, 145/November, 762. Thus, the tradition of a mock funeral came to be originated to this effect among the group, whom Nawbakhti and al-Qummi have regarded as "pure Ismailis" (*al-Ismailiyya al-Khaliss*). It is quite possible that the people were unaware of the physical resemblance of two brothers as well as the death of Abdullah, resulting the coinage of a story of mock funeral. W.Ivanow writes in *"Ismailis and Qarmatians"* (*JBRAS*, 1940, p. 57) that, "On the whole, this story seems to be very strange, especially because it seems really old. As it is narrated in one and the same version, it is quite probable that it was invented and put into circulation by someone at a very early time, and was ever since repeated in the absence of any other material referring to Ismail in general literature." The mock funeral stood on the face of the tradition, while its other side seems to have been unveiled in the above Syrian tradition. W.Ivanow was unaware of the above Syrian tradition, therefore, his doubt seems correct to this effect that, "Although how this could be a ruse, and how a complete likeness was achieved in the substitute for a successful disguise, is not explained" (*Ibid*).

The Syrian tradition lastly attests that the dead body of Abdullah, being publicly known that of Ismail's was interred in Janat al-Baqi in Medina, and it was attended by a huge multitude. Henceforward, it became to be known that Ismail's grave existed in Medina. Hasan bin Nuh Broachi (d. 939/1533), the author of *"Kitabu'l Azhar"* had visited Medina in 904/1498 and described that the grave of Ismail was situated within the city's walls, near the Baqi's gate. In reality, it was the grave of Abdullah being visited by Hasan bin Nuh Broachi provided the above Syrian tradition is genuine. By then onwards, Ismail assumed the name of Abdullah, and our Syrian tradition also relates that Abdullah had also assumed the name of Ismail before 145/762 in some cases to protect his brother. The fact of which also sounds in a letter of the Fatimid Imam al-Mahdi, written around 308/921 to Yamen, vide *"Kitab al-Fara'id wa Hudud ad-Din"* (pp. 13-19) by Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen. In his letter, Imam al-Mahdi curiously discloses that: *"Ismail was substituted for Abdullah"* and also *"Abdullah bin Jafar, who was styled Ismail."*



Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) writes in **"Zahru'l-ma'ani,"** that Abdullah predeceased his father. While **"Asraru'n-Nutaqa"** makes him to have died many years after his father. Similar discriminations are also narrated for Ismail, but in view of our Syrian tradition, the death of Abdullah had taken place in 145/762. It must be noted that a sizable faction in Kufa believed Abdullah as their Imam, known as Fathiyya. Ali bin Hasan was an eminent follower, who according to Najashi (d. 450/1058) in **"Kitab al-Rijal"** (p. 196), had compiled **"Kitab ithbat Imamati Abd Allah"** in affirmation of the Imamate of Abdullah.

The rule of the first Abbasid caliph, Abdullah as-Saffah lasted for 4 years and 9 months, during which period the Alids in Medina kept quiet and affairs remained stationary. But when Mansur assumed the caliphate in 136/753, the Alids embittered by the usurpation of their rights, began to voice their complaints. Thus, an-Nafs az-Zakia, the son of Abdullah al-Mahd refused to take the oath of allegiance to Mansur. The traditionalist orbits of Medina wholeheartedly supported his cause. It was the month of Ramadan, 145/December, 762 when the Abbasid commander Isa bin Musa spurred his horses towards Medina to crush the uprising of an-Nafs az-Zakia. It was very critical moment, and many families evacuated the city to avoid persecution. On that juncture, Ismail also managed to leave Medina privily with the outgoing caravans. Tabari (3rd vol., p. 226) and Baladhuri (d. 279/892) in **"Ansab al-Ashraf"** (5th vol., p. 617) write that, "On 12th Ramadan, 145 (December 4, 762), Isa bin Musa camped at al-Jurf, where he entered into correspondence with many notables of Medina, including some Alids. Many of them left the city with their families and some even joined Isa, a move which created a sense of insecurity and led to a large scale evacuation of Medina." When the veritable fighting took place with the Abbasids, an-Nafs az-Zakia was left with only a small number of his followers, mainly drawn from the tribe of Juhayna and Banu Shuja. Tabari (3rd vol., p. 249) writes that, "His followers took to flight, and he himself was killed on the 14th Ramadan, 145 (December 6, 762)." His brother, Ibrahim, wandering from Medina to Aden, Syria, Mosul, Anbar until he finally settled in Basra in 145/762 to propagate for his brother. He also rebelled two months after his brother's revolt, and seized control of Basra.

Tradition has it that Ismail went to Basra after leaving Medina, but it seems improbable as after the defeat of an-Nafs az-Zakia in Medina in 145/762, his brother Ibrahim mustered a large army in Basra, hatching a massive revolt against the Abbasids, where the political condition was alike Medina, therefore, Ismail must have hidden himself elsewhere in Arabia, and when the condition had become congenial, he would have harboured himself in Basra. Abul Faraj Ispahani writes in "**Maqatil al-Talibiyyin**" (Tehran, 1949, p. 365) that, "Abu Hanifah, Sufian al-Thawri, Masud bin Kudam and many others wrote to Ibrahim, offering him to their city and issued fatwa favouring his cause." It is to be noted that Muhammad bin Hurmuz, Muhammad bin Ajlan and Abu Bakr bin Abu Sabra also sympathized with an-Nafs az-Zakia and Ibrahim.

Ibrahim had left Basra for Kufa after some time, but was killed in a battle at Bakhamri, about halfway between Wasit and Kufa. His rebellion lasted for 2 months and 25 days. "After the end of these revolts" according to "**Tarikh-i Baghdad**" (13th vol., p. 380), "Mansur ordered Malik bin Anas to be flogged, and considered Abu Hanifah as an enemy so dangerous that he imprisoned him until his death." After these revolts in 145/762, there was a gap of 24 years until the next attempt to overthrow the Abbasids in 169/786.

The critical examination of the extant traces suggests that the Abbasids had added a twist to this puzzle after few years with the help of the predeceased tradition for Ismail, broadcasting everywhere that Jafar Sadik had changed the **nass** (investiture) in favour of his another son, Musa Kazim. This newly contrived theory enjoyed its early nourishment among the people who absolutely lacked the concept of the Imamate. The later sources, trusting on it, however mention three different reasons for the **change of nass** i.e., Ismail's indulgence in drink in 138/755, Ismail's intriguing in the extremists circles in 143/760, and his death during his father's life time in 145/762. It deserves to note here that some florid and bombastic stories of Ismail's indulgence in drink and his alleged association with the extremists have been added, which had been condemned by many historians. Mufazal bin Umar as-Sayrafi however relates that Jafar Sadik, in view of his son's piety had already warned the people in Medina that, "Do not wrong Ismail" (**la tajafu Ismaila**). The later



sources however firmly cling to their idea in the predeceased tradition.

Caliph Mansur, however, had not yet exhausted in his plan, for he had yet another card to play, and there is a reason to suppose that the story of *change of nass* had been concocted in the Zaidite orbits by the orders of caliph Mansur. It was however rolled publicly most probably after the death of Jafar Sadik in 148/765, otherwise the Imam himself would have refuted it. It aimed to force Ismail to expose from concealment to repudiate the claim of Musa Kazim. But, as we have heretofore seen that Ismail had tenaciously determined not to expose himself as it was a diplomacy of the Abbasids to arrest him. As a result, the predeceased tradition became all alone unchallengeable and authentic in the historical works. Ismail's exposition would have also given free rope to the Abbasids to upbraid Jafar Sadik, who is said to have produced a document to caliph Mansur, bearing signature of the persons, testifying the alleged death of his son.

It should be recalled that the Abbasids had gained power on the slogans of the Alids. Later, their slogans took a political shape to the right of caliphate in the house of Abbas on religious ground. Abbas as-Saffah, the founder of the Abbasid dynasty, was to be succeeded by his son like the tradition of the Imamate in the house of Ali bin Abu Talib from father to son. Conversely, Abbas as-Saffah was succeeded by his brother, Mansur. He also boosted to legitimize the line of Banu Abbas on religious ground, and determined to have a same effect in the house of Ali bin Abu Talib, that a brother could succeed by a brother. He diplomatically seems to have rolled a tradition of *change of nass* in the house of Jafar Sadik by bringing Musa Kazim to the line of Imamate. Thus, in the theory of *change of nass*, the Abbasids gained more than one benefit. The Shiite orbits, who had acquired the knowledge of the doctrines of Imamate from Imam Muhammad Bakir and Imam Jafar Sadik, however, ruled out the theory of *change of nass*.

The landmark principle of Shia Islam is that the Imamate can only be passed on from one Imam to the next in succession by the divinely-inspired investiture (*nass*). It is a divine ordination and a cardinal article of Shiism. This principle is sometimes referred to the covenant (*ahd*)

from father to a son. According to "**Basa'ir ad-Darajat**" by as-Saffar (vide **BA**, vol., 23, p. 73), Imam Jafar Sadik had said: "Each Imam knows the Imam who is to come after him, and so he appoints him as his successor." It implies therefore that the three different reasons shown by the aggressive historians for **change of nass** in favour of Musa Kazim, seem to have been fabricated, challenging the spiritual knowledge of Jafar Sadik. According to Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina in "**Islamic Messianism**" (New York, 1981, p. 153), "It implied God's change of mind (**bada**) because of a new consideration, caused by the death of Ismail. However, such connotations in the doctrine of **bada** (change of mind) raised serious questions about the nature of God's knowledge, and indirectly, about the ability of the Imams to prophesy future occurrences."

Jafar Sadik is also reported to have said: "**Inlillah fi kullo shain bida illah imamah**" means, "Verily, God makes changes in everything except in the matter of Imam." It tends, however, to prove one thing that once Ismail had been designated as an Imam, the **spiritual power** inherited by Jafar Sadik, came to the hands of his real successor. On that juncture, the status of Jafar Sadik becomes same as he was before acquiring spiritual power from his father. This point merits further indication that Jafar Sadik had no power to cancel, revoke or alter the first **nass** in favour of Ismail, and therefore, the tradition of **change of nass** carries no historicity. The European scholar Marshall Hodgson writes in "**The Order of the Assassins**" (Netherland, 1955, p. 63) that, "Such a withdrawal (of **nass**) evidently was not historical." Nawbakhti (d. 310/912) writes in "**Kitab Firaq al-Shia**" that, "Yet another version is that by appointing his son, Ismail, as an Imam, Jafar Sadik thus resigned. Ismail was therefore a real Imam, and after him, the Imamate has to pass to his son, Muhammad." Shahrastani (1076-1153) also writes in "**Kitab al-milal wa'l-nihal**" (p. 144) that, "Designation (**nass**), however, cannot be withdrawn, and has the advantage that the Imamate remains in the descendants of the person designated, to the exclusion of others. Therefore, the Imam after Ismail is Muhammad bin Ismail." According to "**Dabistan al-Mazhib**" (comp. 1653, vide English tr. by David Shea and Anthony Troyer, Paris, 1843, p. 332), "The appointment does not return by retrocession; and a convention reversed from whence it came is



impossible. Jafar was not likely to appoint, without traditional credentials from noble ancestors, one from among his distinguished descendants, and to be uncertain and unknown is not suitable to an Imam." Granted for a while that Ismail predeceased his father, then he must have declared his successor before his death according to the ruling of the principle of *nass*, since the authority to appoint the next Imam was in the sole hands of Ismail and none else. Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406), for instance, accepting the predeceased tradition, has however ruled out the theory of *change of nass* by saying in his "Muqaddimah" (tr. Franz Rosenthal, London, 1958, 1st vol., p. 412) that "Ismail died before his father, but according to the fact that he was determined by his father as his successor, means that the Imamate should continue among his (Ismail's) successors." Among the modern writers, H. Lammens remarks in "Islam Beliefs and Institutions" (London, 1929, p. 156) that, "The Ismailis, more logical in their Alid legitimism, claim that his (Ismail's) title (of Imamate) must have passed to his son Muhammad."

While inspecting the later Shiite sources, it appears that the theory of *change of nass* became an only tool for the later Twelvers to justify the claim of Musa Kazim. The theory of *change of nass* however contradicts the reports of Imam Jafar Sadik, being selected by the Shiite scholar, Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Yaqub al-Kulaini (d. 329/940) in his "Usul al-Kafi" (Tehran, 1972). Regarding the new Imam and his successor, Kulaini cites the alleged reports of Imam Jafar Sadik, whose few examples are as under:

**Imam is created in the best shape and form.  
(11:6)**

***Before conception, the preceding Imam is sent through an heavenly syrup which he drinks. (93:3)***

**Imam is born pure and circumcised. (93:5)**

***Imam's mother experiences light and noises before the birth of the Imam. (93:5)***

***Imam is created from sublime water and his spirit is created from a matter above that. (94:1)***

**The Imam hands over the books, knowledge and weapons to his successor. (59:1)**

These are the qualities of the Imam's successor theorized by the later Twelvers. The average Shiite and Sunnite sources unanimously concur that Jafar Sadik had declared Ismail as his successor by rule of *nass* (investiture), suggesting quite clearly that Jafar Sadik must have found above qualities in his son Ismail, and not in other sons. Granted that he had changed the *nass* in favour of Musa Kazim, then how it can be possible that **both sons** had qualified the above merits at a same time for succession?

Besides the preceding, Kulaini has devoted space about the knowledge of an Imam, whose few examples are given below:

**Imam is the treasure of God's knowledge in the heavens and earth. (11:2)**

**Imam is informed by God what he intends to know. (46:3)**

**He inherited the knowledge of future events. (48:1)**

**He is learned than Moses and al-Khidr, who possessed the knowledge of the past only. (48:1)**

**His knowledge is from three directions: past, present and future. (50:1)**

**He can inform about what is going to happen the next day. (62:7)**

**He is endowed with a secret from the secrets of God, knowledge from the knowledge of God. (102:5)**

Granted that Ismail predeceased his father, it will mean that Jafar Sadik had no knowledge of the future, or he was unknown with the death of Ismail during his life time. Nothing prevents us in concluding therefore, that Ismail had not died during his father's time, and the theory of



*change of nass* was absolutely an Abbasid fabrication to motivate their inimical objectives, which also became a tool of the later Twelvers.

In sum, the Abbasids brought Musa Kazim to claim for his right on one side, and made an intensified search of Ismail on other, indicating to understand that Ismail was a legitimate Imam in the eyes of the Abbasids. W. Ivanov writes in **"Ismailis and Qarmatians"** (JERRAS, Bombay, 1940, p. 58) that, "Musa apparently was recognized by the secular authorities as the legitimate successor of Imam Jafar in his position, so far as it was concerned with the outer world." W. Montgomery Watt also writes that the political moderates had preferred Musa Kazim, vide **"The Formative Period of Islamic Thought"** (Edinburgh, 1973, p. 271). We have to admit that the Abbasids mustered a large following for Musa Kazim in Medina, and the snares of spies were also planted to watch signs of disloyalty emanating from him. It was also a policy to gather the scattered Shiites at Medina under the leadership of Musa Kazim, and strike a final blow upon them to get an end of the belief of the Imamate among the Shiites.

It must be noted that Medina and Mecca were the nerve-centres of the Muslims since the advent of Islam. Medina was in particular the city of the Hashimites of whom many were descended from Abu Talib. Medina had been the headquarters of the previous Imams since beginning, and after Jafar Sadik, a tradition almost began to be hatched among the Shiites to adhere one who claimed for Imamate at his base in Medina, and as a result, Musa Kazim could procure a large following in Medina with the virtual hands of the Abbasids.

It is also worth mentioning that Musa Kazim never condemned the claims of Ismail in Medina. He was being watched without harassment from 148/765 to 158/775, during which time, the Abbasids failed to reach their seminal objectives. When the Abbasids found that Musa Kazim was being seriously adhered as an Imam, or another line of Imamate was about to emerge in the house of Jafar Sadik, their harassment reached a climax during the rule of Harun ar-Rashid. He arrested Musa Kazim and brought him to Baghdad in 177/793, where he died in prison in 183/799. Even more serious was the bifurcation among the followers of Musa Kazim after his death. Abu Hatim ar-Razi (d. 322/934) writes in **"Kitabu'z-Zina"** that the Waqifiya

and Mamtura sects believed in the immorality of Musa Kazim, claiming that he would return as a Mahdi before dooms-day. They also rejected the claim of his son, Ali ar-Rida. Aside from this schism, the Qati'a sect believed in the death of Musa Kazim and the claim of his son upto Ali bin Muhammad al-Askari. W.Ivanow writes in **"Early Shiite Movements"** (JEBRAS, 1941, Bombay, p. 20) that, "This was the atmosphere in the family of the descendants of Imam Jafar as-Sadik, the line of his son Musa, who lived in the full light of publicity at the court of the Abbasids. It is therefore easy to understand that many of their devout supporters might easily lose all respects for them, and come over to support the elder line, of Ismail b. Jafar, who lived in the impenetrable mystery of concealment, and about whom the public could know only what their *dais* were authorised to tell them."

### **The line of Musa Kazim**

The successor of Musa Kazim (d. 183/799) was his son Ali ar-Rida, who also died in 203/818. He was succeeded by Muhammad at-Taki (d. 220/835) and the latter by Ali al-Naqi (d. 254/868). His son Hasan al-Askari (d. 260/874) had married to a Christian slave-girl, named Narges Khatoon. There however are few controversial accounts for his son, Muhammad Mahdi. J.R.I. Cole writes in **"Roots of North Indian Shiism in Iran and Iraq"** (New Delhi, 1989, p. 17) that, "Several schism occurred, with some groups saying that Imam Hasan al-Askari had left no heir. Others, especially wealthy Shiis close to the Abbasid court, proclaimed that the Imam had a small son, who supernaturally disappeared and who would one day return to restore the world to justice."

Jafar, the brother of Hasan al-Askari is also reported to have been asked about the boy, and he said that he did not know who the boy was. For this reason, Jafar has been vilified by the Shiite sources as *Kadhdhab*, means "liar." Moojan Momen writes in **"An Introduction to Shi'i Islam"** (London, 1985, p. 162) that, "Jafar remained unshakable in his assertion that his brother (Hasan al-Askari) had no progeny." Mohammad Manzoor Nomani further writes to this effect that, "As for the truth or correctness of the whole thing, anyone with a little commonsense will conclude that



it was a ruse played by a few artful persons to deceive the people" (Ibid. pp. 108-9).

Mohammad Manzoor Nomani, the author of "**Iranian Revolution**" (Karachi, 1988, p. 105) writes that, "Traditions relating to the birth, disappearance and the concealment of the twelfth Imam are given in several chapters of "**Usul al-Kafi**," such as, from pages 202 to 207, and 333 to 342. A perusal of them will convince that the whole "case" is fabricated and even that has not been done skillfully and well, and the version of Imam Hasan Askari's brother and other family members appears to be correct and worthy of belief."

W.Ivanow however writes in "**Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism**" (Holland, 1952, p. 6) that, "The fourth Imam (Hasan al-Askari) after Musa Kazim died childless in 260/874, but his relatives, to prevent the sequestration of his property by the state, invented a story of a posthumous male child being born to him. The mysterious baby, however, as they said, became concealed in a cellar in Samarra, a town north of Baghdad, where he is supposed to be still living to come in glory as the promised Mahdi on the judgement day." W.Ivanow concludes his remarks in these words: "If an Imam dies without leaving a son as his successor, it can only mean that not only he personally, but the whole line of his ancestors were not the true Imams. Thus the discontinuation of the line of the Twelvers proved that at least the last several of them were not genuine." (Ibid. p. 9).

At Samarra, is a mosque under which there is a cave (*sirdab*). The end of one of the chambers of the cave is partitioned off by a gate, and the area behind the gate is called the "chamber of the occultation" (*hujrat al-ghayba*), and in the corner there is a well, known as the "well of the occultation" (*bi'r al-ghayba*) down which the twelfth Imam of the Shia Twelvers is supposed to have disappeared.

The following of Jafar Sadik henceforward bifurcated into two branches - the *Ismailis*, the followers of Ismail, and the *Musawite*, the supporters of Musa Kazim, who later on came to be known as *Twelvers*, or *Ithna Asharites*. J.R.I. Cole writes, "The end of the line of Imams came as a powerful shock to the Twelver community. Early Shii

thinkers living after the occultation, or disappearance, of the Imam felt leaderless. In the absence of the infallible Imam, they believed that no one could conduct Friday congregational prayers, lead believers in an aggressive holy war, or collect certain types of land taxes. In short, they felt a profound alienation from the world and generally adopted a quietest political policy." (op. cit., p. 17)

It is further worthwhile to ponder at a focal point that the average Shiite sources concur that Ismail predeceased his father, therefore, Jafar Sadik changed the *name* and nominated his another son, Musa Kazim as his successor. Granted that Ismail predeceased his father, then it sharply indicates that Ismail was in reality an Imam for few years or months between the period of his nomination and death. If so, the lineage of the Twelvers's Imams should have run as follows:- **Jafar Sadik, Ismail, Musa Kazim** and so forth. It is curious beyond measure that the Twelvers do not include the name of Ismail between Jafar Sadik and Musa Kazim as per their ruling in the list of their Imams!

#### **Abul Khattab**

Abul Khattab Muhammad bin Abi Zaynab Maqlas al-Asadi al-Kufi (d. 167/783), surnamed Abul Khattab was an eminent disciple of Jafar Sadik. He was first to have preached the Shiite doctrines tinged with esoteric interpretation. For quite some time, he was closely associated with Jafar Sadik, who had commissioned him as his chief *dai* in Kufa. Kashi narrates that once Imam put his hand on Abul Khattab's breast, and said: "You know the mystery (*ghayb*)." This may be linked with Nawbakhti's expression that Imam revealed to him a solemn word (*ism-i azam*), and also called him the "*casket of our knowledge, the lodging place of our secrecy, the one who is trusted with our people's life and death.*" One can thus easily judge the status of Abul Khattab before Jafar Sadik.

Soon afterwards, it is related that Jafar Sadik disliked his so called habit of never transmitting intact and unaltered the tradition which he heard, causing his relation with the Imam strained, and was excommunicated in about 138/755. This is perhaps an earliest glaring example



of *taqiya* in Jafar Sadik's time, revealing outwardly a rupture between him and the Imam, to which some historians hazarded wrong opinion and concocted false stories around it. This sort of a *taqiya* seems to have intended to make the Shiite to dissociate themselves from Abul Khattab, and to make the Abbasids to implant in minds a consideration that there was no relation between Abul Khattab and Jafar Sadik. Abul Khattab's faith however was deep-rooted that had been never wavered for a single moment.

It is related that when Ismail had been in Iraq, he adopted the title of **Abul Khattab** most probably after 151/769 for exercising *taqiya*. Granted that Abul Khattab was not a secret follower of Jafar Sadik, then why Ismail assumed his name? Ismail henceforward, became known as **Abul Khattab** among the small group in Kufa, while Abul Khattab hid his identity. Nawbakhti in "**Kitab Firaq al-Shia**" (ed. Ritter, Istanbul, 1931, pp. 60-61) and al-Qummi (d. 300/912) in "**Kitab al-Maqalat wa'l-Firaq**" (ed. M.J Mashkur, Tehran, 1963, p. 83) write that the followers of **Abul Khattab** (i.e., Ismail) became known as **Khattabiyya**, believing that "the divine light had transferred from Jafar Sadik into Abul Khattab, and on the death of the latter, it passed into Muhammad bin Ismail." The term **Abul Khattab** here in reality was the epithet of Ismail. In Central Asia, a treatise "**Umumi'l-Kitab**" is preserved among the Ismailis in which the Khattabiyyas are mentioned as the founders of Ismailism. It states further that the Ismailism was founded by the children of Abul Khattab, who gave their lives for the love of Ismail.

It is related that seventy followers of Abul Khattab had assembled in the mosque at Kufa, who had been killed by order of the governor. Abul Khattab was also captured and crucified. It is impossible to confess the notion advanced by the historians that his death took place in 138/755 or 145/762. He was killed most possibly in 167/783.

### **Al-Mubarak**

Besides, it is also known that Ismail had to assume the pseudonym of **al-Mubarak** in certain cases to protect his life. Al-Mubarak was a servant of Ismail in Medina, and a potential *dai* too. Very little is known about him. He was however hailed from Hijaz and an expert in Arabic

calligraphy of the type known as *mugarmat*. In all probability, al-Mubarak was also the epithet of Ismail. More evidence of the application of the name al-Mubarak to Ismail have now come to light, lending strong support to W. Ivanow's hypothesis, vide **"The Alleged Founder of Ismailism"** (Bombay, 1946, pp. 108-112), describing that, "I have happened upon such clear and unequivocal testimony concerning al-Mubarak. The fact that it was in reality the surname of Ismail b. Jafar is revealed in at least four different passages in the early Ismaili esoteric work, **"Sullamu'n-Najjat"** by Abu Yaqub as-Sijistani" (p. 111). It can be also ascertained from another work of Abu Yaqub as-Sijistani, entitled **"Ithbat al-Nubuwwat"** (ed. Arif Tamir, Beirut, 1966, p. 190). Farhad Daftary also writes in **"A Major Schism in the Early Ismaili Movement"** (*Studia Islamica*, Paris, LXXVIII, 1993, p. 127) that, "It has now become evident that the name Mubarak (the blessed) was the epithet of Ismail himself and it was applied as such to him by his followers."

Hence, another small following of Ismail became known as **Mubarakiiyya**. The Fatimid Imam al-Mahdi had routed a letter in Yamen after 308/921, which is reproduced by Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen in **"al-Fara'id wa Hudud ad-Din"** (pp. 13-19), in which the Imam has also disclosed that the Imams descending from Jafar Sadik wished to resuscitate the true *dawat*, and feared the treachery of hypocrites, therefore, they assumed names other than their own, and used for themselves esoterically names denoting the rank of proofs (*hujjats*) and styled themselves as Mubarak, Maymun and Sa'id because of the good omen in these names.

The terms **Mubarakiiyya** and **Khattabiyya** therefore, were the original names of the nascent Ismailism, as well as the regional identifications of the followers of Ismail, who, on the whole, merged into the main fold of **Ismailism** in the time of Imam Muhammad bin Ismail. Concluding his judgment, al-Mutawakkil (532-566/1137-1170) writes in his **"Kitab Haqa'iq al-Marifa"** as quoted by Bernard Lewis in **"The Origins of Ismailism"** (London, 1940, p. 35) that, "The Ismailiyya are the Mubarakiiyya and the Khattabiyya."

Returning to the thread of our main narrative, it is seen from the scrutiny of the historical traces that Ismail mostly lived in Salamia, and then moved to Damascus. Mansur knew his whereabouts, and wrote to his governor to



arrest Ismail, but the latter quitted Damascus for Basra. Ismail's presence in Basra had been noticed by the people in 151/769. According to "**Tarikh-i Jhangusha**", "A paralytic begged alms of him. Ismail took him by the hand and he was healed; and rising to his feet he departed in his company. Ismail also prayed for a blind person and he recovered his sight."

### **The doctrine of taqiya**

We have heretofore noted that Imam Muhammad al-Bakir had articulated the implication of the doctrine of **taqiya** in Shiism, and we may attribute the rudiments of its theory to him. But it left to his son, Jafar Sadik to give it a final form abreast of time and make it an absolute condition of the faith.

Looking the changing condition radically then prevailing in the Arab society, it was a wise move by Imam Jafar Sadik to broach his followers the doctrine of **taqiya** (precautionary dissimulation), and made it the Shiite article of faith. He is reported to have said that, "**Taqiya** is of my religion and of the religion of my forefathers. One who does not keep **taqiya** he has no religion." He also said on another occasion that, "Fear for your religion and protect it with **taqiya**." He further said, "Our belief concerning **taqiya** is that it is obligatory and he who forsakes, it is in the same position as he who forsakes prayer."

Jafar Sadik had certainly worked out that an open **dawat** based on esoterism in the line of Ismail would mean a sure doom in the powerful Abbasid regime. It was, of course, risky for the Imams and their followers to openly propagate their minoritarian beliefs then onwards, therefore, the secret mission system was introduced with the help of **taqiya**, which could also avoided great deal of persecution. Farhad Daftary writes in "**The Ismailis: their History and Doctrines**" (London, 1990, p. 85) that, "The practice of **taqiya** conveniently protected the Shi'is, especially the later Ismailis, from persecution, and served in the preservation of their sectarian existence under hostile circumstances."

The word **taqiya** is derived from the root **taqat**, means "conceal" or "hide". It is also suggested that it is rooted from **wagga**, means "keep or guard from someone". The Koranic term **tauggat** is also taken in the meaning of **taqiya**, to which divergence of opinions have been advanced. Baidawi (d. 685/1286) writes in his "**Awwar al-Tanzil**" that, "The **qirah** of Imam Yaqub (d. 205/820) contains the word **taqiya** instead of **tauggat**." Similar word is also traced in the meaning of **taqiya** in **Bukhari** (vide "**Kitab al-Iqrah**", 28:50). Ibn Hajar (d. 852/1449) also admits in "**Fateh al-Bari**" (28:50) that **tauggat** and **taqiya** are same in meaning. Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144) in "**Tafsir al-Kashshaf**" (Cairo, 1953, 2nd vol., p. 16), Raghīb Ispahani (d. 502/1108) in "**Tafsir al-Gharab al-Moran**" (Cairo, 1894, 1st vol., p. 313), Baidawi (d. 685/1286) in "**Awwar al-Tanzil**" (Beirut, 1958, 1st vol., p. 153) and Fakhruddin Razi (d. 606/1209) in "**Tafsir al-Kabir**" (Cairo, 1890, 2nd vol., p. 646), etc. have concurred the doctrine of **taqiya** permissible in Islam in the light of the Koranic verse, which reads:- "**Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends rather than believers, and whoever does this, he shall have nothing of God, except when you have to guard yourselves against them for fear**" (3:27).

Another Arabic word **kitman** is also used for **taqiya**. The Arabic lexicons however render the meaning of **taqiya** as "to arrange for protection." In sum, **taqiya** is a practice permissible in Islamic jurisprudence. It is a doctrine allowing the disciples to conceal their faith during the time of trouble. According to "**Urdu Encyclopaedia of Islam**" (6th vol., p. 581), "The Shiites were suspected in some matters in non-Shiite rules, therefore, the doctrine of **taqiya** exercised special importance among them."

Imam Jafar Sadik also then seems to have realized the significance of a tight, well-knit and secret organisation to face the emerging challenges in Arab society. For that purpose, he employed his Iranian client (**mawla**, named Maymun al-Qaddah, who had a skill for organising the vast network of an underground mission. The Arabs, it must be noted, were not traditionally and temperamentally suited for secretive and underground functionings. They had always lived in an open and free society in the desert



without the paraphernalia of state and political intrigues. Comparatively, the character of the Abbasid empire at the same time, was also different from that of the Umayyads in as much as it was an empire of neo-Muslims of which the Arabs were only a part. It was mainly due to the support and strategy of the non-Arabs sections of people of Iran that the Abbasid succeeded in establishing their empire, chiefly by Abu Muslim Khorasani, who did much to bring the Abbasids to power.

### **Maymun al-Qaddah**

Maymun al-Qaddah was born in Ahwaz in Iran. He belonged to the Makhzumi clan and was the *mawla* (freed slave) of Imam Muhammad Bakir and Imam Jafar Sadik. His surname "**al-Qaddah**" is usually taken to mean "oculist", which seems extremely doubtful. It is a word connected with **al-qidah** i.e., an ancient Arab play or a form of divination with the help of arrows. Tusi (d. 460/1068) in "**Tahdhibul Ahkam**" while dealing with Maymun al-Qaddah, explains the word as "a man who practises the game of qidah (**yabra'ul qidah**). Thus, he was a specialist in divination with the help of arrows.

Maymun al-Qaddah was a very pious man of ascetic life. Because of his close association and faithfulness, he was chosen for the task of stimulating the secret Ismaili mission, and became the primary architect in articulation of the Ismaili mission.

It also appears that the activities of Maymun al-Qaddah had been exaggerated by the Arabs because of being an Iranian. The derogations of his Arab enemies can be judged from their baseless propaganda that he and his son, Abdullah bin Maymun were against the Islamic tenets, and had planned to blow it up, and broadcast that the Ismailism was typically an Iranian. Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) therefore, is inclined to make his judgement curiously in his "**Expose de la Religion des Druzes**" (Paris, 1838, p. 31) that the Ismaili doctrine is typically Iranian, and later E.G. Browne in "**A Literary History of Persia**" (New York, 1902, 1st vol., p. 405) also advanced same views. Being influenced with the Arab propaganda, the orientalisists adopted the theory that the Ismailis were of Iranian origin, which has been however

falsified by W. Montgomery Watt, vide **"Islamic Philosophy and Theology"** (Edinburgh, 1985, p. 126). This idea led the other scholars to theorize the Ismailism not merely an anti-Arab movement, but more so an anti-Islamic revolution; but the recent researches have ruled out such groundless propaganda.

Allegorical interpretation (**tawil**) of the Holy Koran was in vogue among the people of all walks of life, attempting the evolution of a religious philosophy. The Ismaili **dais** had purified the Islamic **Shariah** polluted by the ignorants. The draining off the adulterated tenets through the agency of **tawil** by Maymun al-Qaddah and his son was violently opposed and misinterpreted by the Arabs, who were basically against the philosophical approaches. Most of the historians tried to project Maymun al-Qaddah as an enemy of Islam, planning to destroy it from within by founding the Ismaili movement and evolving its doctrines in such a way as to present Zoroastrian or Manichean teachings in the Islamic garb. These historians want us to believe that Maymun al-Qaddah had nothing but contempt for Islam and fierce hatred towards the Arabs and that they conceived the idea of a secret society which should be all things to all men, and which, by playing on the strongest passions and tempting the inmost weaknesses of human nature, should unite malcontents of every description in a conspiracy to overthrow the then existing Abbasid regime. These are fantastic allegations levelled with a calculated purpose to discredit the Ismailis in the eyes of orthodox Muslims. Many eminent orientalist like de Goeje, R.A. Nicholson, etc., have erred in taking this story from the prejudiced historians.

Evincing their utter ignorance, the philosophy was officially banned in the orthodox orbits, propagating that it was the tool used by the Ismaili **dais** to undermine Islam. Syed Abid Ali Abid writes in **"Political Theory of the Shiites"** (cf. **"A History of Muslim Philosophy"** ed. by M.M. Sharif, Germany, 1963, 1st. vol., p. 740) that, "The orientalist - nay even such an erudite Iranian scholar as Muhammad Qazwini, the editor of **"Tarikh-i Jhangusha"** by Ata Malik Juvaini - were misled by the voluminous Abbasid propaganda, hostile commentary of the orthodox Shiites, and the specious argument of those opposed to the Ismailites, into thinking that Maimun and his son Abd Allah were opposed to the tenets of Islam or were inspired



by the hatred for the Arabs." J.J. Saunders also advanced his doubts in this context, vide **"A History of Medieval Islam"** (London, 1965, p. 128). Besides, Maymun al-Qaddah is shown as a real founder of Ismailism, which is starkly a fabrication, and it was apparently a "brain-wave" on the part of Ibn al-Razzam, whose historical character is yet doubtful.

Maymun al-Qaddah was canonised in the rank of *hijab* (screen), whose function was in addition to screen the real Imam from his enemies, and was thus the *hijab* of Imam Ismail and his son. According to W. Ivanow in **"The Rise of the Fatimids"** (Calcutta, 1942, p. 56), "The idea of the *hijab*, or a dignitary, whose duty was to pretend to be the Imam, thus sheltering the real holder of the office."

It must be known that the functions of the *hijab* in pre-Fatimid period was the same as the *hujjat*. The *hijab* was the most trusted, tested, devoted and reliable dignitary who was ostensibly assigned with high religious authority, posing as an Imam to the ordinary people, accepting oath of allegiance on behalf of the concealed Imam.

According to **"Kashfu'l-Asrar"** by Jawbari, quoted by L. Massignon, Maymun al-Qaddah died in 210/825, leaving behind two sons, Aban and Abdullah.

De Lacy O'Leary writes in **"Short History of the Fatimid Khilafat"** (London, 1923, p. 25) that, "The Ismailians alone have inherited the accurate knowledge of secret mysteries bequeathed by Jafar as-Sadik to his son Ismail." W. Ivanow writes in **"Ismailis and Qarmatians"** (JBRAS, Bombay, 1940, p. 59) that, "The successors of Ismail were therefore compelled to pay more attention to the other aspect of Imam Jafar's heritage - the philosophical and esoteric theories, which were more in demand here. This probably defined the further course of the evolution of Ismailism, which though it never gave up its strictly Islamic substance, had, nevertheless, to reconcile it with the philosophy of the time."

### Death of Ismail

Ismail lived for the most part in Salamia, where he died after bequeathing the office of Imamate to his son

Muhammad. According to "**al-Usul wa'l Ahakam**" by Hatim bin Imran bin Zuhra (d. 498/1104) that, "Ismail had sent his **dais** to all parts and ordered him (Muhammad) to administer the oath in his name according to the custom of all preceding Imams. When his death drew near, he appointed as his heir, his son Muhammad who showed great perfection."

The predeseased tradition assigns Ismail's death in 145/762, but "**Dustur al-Munajjimin**" (comp. 450/1056) places it in 152/769. According to the Ismaili tradition, Ismail died in 158/775, and was interred in Salamia. Besides Muhammad, he had a son called Ali, who was born in 130/748 and a daughter, Fatima.

### **MUHAMMAD BIN ISMAIL (158-197/775-813)**

Abu Abdullah Muhammad, surnamed ash-Shakir was born in 122/740 in Medina. He passed his early life with his grandfather for 24 years and 10 years with his family in Medina. He however kept himself silent (**samit**) so long as he lived in Medina. He most probably left Medina soon after the death of his grandfather in 148/765.

The Abbasid caliph Mansur also died in 158/775 and was succeeded by his son Mahdi, who according to Ignaz Goldziher in "**Muslim Studies**" (London, 1971, 2nd vol., p. 106), "was listed by Ibn Adi as an inventor of hadiths." He also died in 169/785 after ruling for 22 years, and was succeeded by his son, Hadi. He died in 170/786, and then his brother, Harun ar-Rashid became the next ruler till 193/809. He was also succeeded by his son, Amin.

The inimical opposition of the Abbasids against the Ismaili Imams was vigorously in continual. Abul Faraj Ispahani writes in "**al-Aghani**" (12th vol., p. 17) that, "Harun al-Rashid demanded of his poets that they combine his own praise with refutation of the claims of Ali's descendants and with attacks against the latter." Abul Faraja further writes that, "Harun ar-Rashid permitted himself to be glorified with things by which the prophets were praised; he did not disapprove of it and did not refuse it." (Ibid. 12th vol., p. 18)



The most earliest description of Muhammad bin Ismail is found from the work of Tabari (3rd vol., p. 2218), and in the Ismaili sources summed up in the 4th volume of "Uyun'l-Akhbar" (comp. 842/1438). Accordingly, Muhammad bin Ismail resided in Medina from where he sent his *dais* not only to spread Ismailism, but to search for a land of refuge where he could live unscathed. When Harun ar-Rashid learnt news of it, he sent his officials to arrest and bring the Imam to his court. When the caliph's men came to the house to carry out the orders, Muhammad bin Ismail entered an underground passage he had constructed inside his house and remained concealed until they had left. When the search for him had abated, he started on his journey, leaving behind his two sons. His whereabouts had been kept a closely guarded secret only the few specially privileged being acquainted with it and even they being pledged to the strictest secrecy.

It has been heretofore discussed that Musa Kazim had been staged as an Imam by the Abbasids on the ground of the fabricated theory of *change of nass*. The Abbasids had instituted an intensive search for Ismail, because they were well aware that Musa Kazim was not the true successor, otherwise he would have been executed very soon. They however failed to trace out Ismail and his son Muhammad. On the other side, the Abbasids noticed its reverse effect in Medina, where Musa Kazim was being truly adhered as an Imam. In the time of Harun ar-Rashid, finally Musa Kazim was arrested, who died in prison in 183/799. He should have been arrested and executed in 148/765, had he been truly succeeded his father.

Cyril Glasse writes in "The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam" (London, 1989, p. 197) that, "The followers of Ismail, whose conception of the Imam was more absolute than that of the other Shiites, maintained on the contrary that the next Imam should be Ismail's son."

### **The Qaddahid theory**

Admittedly, it is learnt that after leaving Medina, Muhammad bin Ismail made his way towards Iran and Syria accompanied by Maymun al-Qaddah. The bitterest of the Abbasids' enmity was daily growing in intensity. Apprehending lest the enemies should resort to some violent measures against him, Muhammad assumed the name of

Maymun al-Qaddah to elude discovery. Thus, the name **Maymun al-Qaddah** came to be used by two characters at one time. It was also resolved, if the real identity of the Imam be traced, Maymun al-Qaddah was to come forward as Muhammad bin Ismail to sacrifice his own life in order to protect the line of Imamate from extinction.

Henceforward, Muhammad bin Ismail had also a sobriquet of Maymun al-Qaddah to conceal his identity. In fact, Maymun al-Qaddah had a son, named Abdullah (d. 260/874), while Muhammad bin Ismail had also a son at the same time, called Abdullah (d. 212/828), surnamed al-Wafi Ahmad. With the passage of time, Muhammad became known as Maymun al-Qaddah in the places he resided, while Maymun al-Qaddah was treated as Muhammad bin Ismail in the regions he propagated Ismailism. Abdullah, the son of Maymun al-Qaddah was consequently considered as the son of Muhammad bin Ismail in the regions where the Imam had assumed the title of al-Qaddah. It therefore gave rise to the contrivance of a story that Abdullah (al-Wafi Ahmad) was the son of Maymun al-Qaddah on one hand, and Abdullah (bin Maymun al-Qaddah) was the son of Muhammad bin Ismail on other. Later on, it became an instrument for the anti-Fatimid propagandists, notably Ibn Razzam to join the lineage of the Fatimid Imams with that of Abdullah bin Maymun al-Qaddah instead of Abdullah (al-Wafi Ahmad) bin Muhammad bin Ismail. This is known as Qaddahid theory and became a weapon of the later Abbasids to discredit the Fatimid origin in 401/1010.

In the face of these facts, the Ismaili Imams had assumed the titles of the **dais** in one or more time during the veiled period, which is also sounded expressly in the letter of the Fatimid Imam al-Muizz (341-365/953-975), written in 354/965, addressing to his **dai** in Sind, called Jaylam bin Shayban. This important letter is well preserved by Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) in the 5th volume of "**Uyun'l-Akhbar**" (comp. 842/1438). It reads:-  
".... These people have arbitrarily limited (the period of Imamate) by (the death of) Muhammad bin Ismail; and when he died, they said about him all what was said by them. They (also) thought that he entrusted the Imamate to some one who was not his son. And that his successor (similarly) entrusted the Imamate (to his own) successors, whose number has (also) reached the number of seven. They thought that the first (of these pseudo-Imams) was Abdullah bin Maymun al-Qaddah. All this is preached in



order to prove their theory that there was no Imam after him (i.e., Muhammad bin Ismail), and that those who succeeded him were ordinary people. Thus they have cut what God ordered to be continuing (the line of Imams), opposing the command of God, given in the Koran (47:27). "...and We have made a word to remain after him." The cause of this requires explanation. When the preaching in favour of Muhammad bin Ismail has spread, the Abbasid usurpers tried to lay their hands upon him, i.e. the person whose rights were claimed. Therefore (he and other) Imams went into concealment. Their *dais* used to refer to them under allegorical names, in accordance with the principle of *taqiya*, alluding to what they possessed and what was appropriate to them. They used to say, for instance, that the Imam, the son of Muhammad bin Ismail was Abdullah. And this was true. And with regard to his being the son of Maymun al-Qaddah, it was true that he was the son of *Maymunu'n naqibat*, i.e. of the "Divinely blessed with success in his affairs," *of al-Qaddah* (the flint) "striking the sparks of guidance", i.e. "lighting the light of the Divine wisdom". Similar allegorical expressions were applied also to other Imams after him, at their own orders and instructions given to their *dais*. When such allegorical expressions reached those who know nothing about their real implications, and only took them literally, as we mentioned above, they fell into an error, and made others err after them, straying from the straight path. But if they would only do what God has ordered them to do, rallying around the Imams, they surely would know those who were otherwise hidden from them. Just as you know them now. But the blind, who has no one to lead him, or a stick in his hand, falls into an abyss from which no one can save him. The self-conceited fall into sin and error. So beware of thinking that God ever abandons humanity to itself. No, He does not abandon them even for a moment, leaving them without an Imam from the descendants of the Prophet. And the Imams can come to their office only by the commandments relating to Imamate...."

In addition, Hatim bin Imran bin Zuhra (d. 498/1104) writes in his "*al-Usul wa'l-Ahkam*" that, "The *dais* used their own names as nick-names for the Imams in order to protect them from persecution; some people were misled by this to such a degree that they said that the Imam, descendant of Muhammad bin Ismail was Abdullah bin Maymun

al-Qaddah." According to Arif Tamir in "**al-Qaramita**" (p. 87), "When Muhammad bin Ismail fled from the east and established in Palmyra in Syria, the centers of his activities; he called himself Maymun al-Qaddah." Syed Abid Ali Abid writes in "**Political Theory of the Shiites**" (cf. "**A History of Muslim Philosophy**", ed. by M.M. Sharif, Germany, 1963, 1st. vol., p. 740) that, "As a matter of fact, as the latest research has established beyond any doubt, Maimun was the name adopted by Imam Muhammad when he went into concealment. In other words, during the period of concealment those who were in his confidence knew Imam Muhammad to be a Maimun." Husayn F. al-Hamdani (1901-1962) writes in his "**On the Genealogy of Fatimid Caliphs**" (Cairo, 1958, p. 18) that, "It is likely that Muhammad b. Ismail, who did not, and could not, according to accounts, live a settled life at one place, went underground during his wanderings by assuming the name of Maymun."

Before bidding goodbye to his ancestral abode, Medina, Muhammad had secretly convened an assembly of his *dais*, inviting them from all the regions. When caliph Harun ar-Rashid came to know the secret assembly, he resolved to arrest Muhammad bin Ismail in Medina. In the meantime, Zubeda, the wife of Harun ar-Rashid and a secret follower of the Imam, managed to send her trusted servant towards the Imam in Medina, informing him the plan of the caliph. Thus, Muhammad bin Ismail had to make his footing out of Medina at once.

Tradition however has it that Muhammad first went to southern Iraq, where he acquired the epithet of **al-maktum** (veiled one), and then at Nishapur in disguise, where he lodged for some times. Nishapur was one of the most important of the four great cities of Khorasan. The word "**Nishapur**" is derived from **New-Shapur**. In Armenian it is called **Niu-Shapuh**, then became **Nishapur**, finally **Nishapur**. It is situated on the east side of a plain surrounded by hills. To the north and east of the town lies the ridge of Binalud-Kuh, which separates it from the valley of Mashhad and Tus. It was divided into 42 wards, 1 farsakh in length and breath. Muhammad afterwards proceeded towards Ray (the ancient **Ragha**), a town in Media, about 15 miles from Tehran. Ray was situated in the fertile zone which lies between the mountains and the desert. The Abbasids rebuilt and surrounded it by a ditch. Harun ar-Rashid was also



born in Ray and used often to recall with pleasure his native town. In 195/810, caliph Mamun's general Tahir bin Hussain won a victory over caliph Amin's troops near Ray.

#### **Sacrifice of Ishaq bin al-Abbas**

Ishaq bin al-Abbas al-Farsi, the Abbasid governor of Ray privily professed Ismaili doctrines. Muhammad betrothed to Fatima, the daughter of Sarah, sister of Ishaq bin al-Abbas; who gave birth to a son, who was named Abdullah, also known as Wafi Ahmad. When the news of Muhammad bin Ismail's stay at Ray reached the ears of Harun ar-Rashid, he wrote to Ishaq bin al-Abbas, ordering to arrest Muhammad and send him to Baghdad. Upon receipt of caliph's letter, he showed it to the Imam and replied to the caliph that he found no trace of Muhammad, and would send as soon as he was arrested, and thus he tried to put the caliph off the scent. But the spies planted by Baghdad were vigilants and reported to the caliph that Muhammad bin Ismail not only was living at governor's house, but that he was directing his mission from there. Upon this, the caliph wrote another letter to Ishaq bin al-Abbas, impugning him to come in person with his forces if his orders were not obeyed forthwith. The governor however made his usual reply.

Meanwhile, the complaints about Ali bin Musa bin Mahan, the governor of Khorasan reached the point where Harun ar-Rashid could no longer ignore them. With the intention of deposing his governor and to make a search of the Ismaili Imam, Harun ar-Rashid adopted a militant stance. In 189/805, he marched towards Ray with a detachment of his army, and after searching for the Imam through a tracking party, ordered the arrest and torture of Ishaq bin al-Abbas. He however did not give away any clue of the whereabouts of the Imam. Ishaq died as a result of severe and cruel torture that was inflicted upon him, and was rigorously flogged till death. He did not waver and stood firm in spite of excruciating tortures. In spite of the gloomy situation, however, his faith remained unshakable.

#### **Muhammad bin Ismail in Nihawand**

Muhammad selected Hurmuz as a chief *dai* of the mission, and then had made his footing at the fortified city of

Nihawand, where he stayed with the governor, Mansur bin Jowshan, who had close ties with Ishaq bin al-Abbas. He allotted the Imam a piece of land in the district of Sarha, where he led a peaceful living.

Nihawand was a town, lying about forty miles south of old province of Hamdan. It lies on the southern road, which coming from Kirmanshah, leads into Ispahan. The district of Nihawand was formerly called Mah-Bahrajan or Maha-Dinar. Among the products of Nihawand the Arab historians mention willow-wood which was used for polo-sticks (*sawalija*), aromatic reeds (*kasbat al-dharira*) to be used for *hanut* (a kind of perfume).

#### **Muhammad bin Ismail in Khuzistan**

It is related that Muhammad was traced out on one day in Sarha by the Abbasid agent, named Muhammad bin Ali al-Khorasani, who surprised the Imam in a mosque. He was greatly impressed to behold the Imam, and lost courage to arrest him, and permitted the Imam to escape. Thence, Muhammad went to Azar in Khuzistan, a province of south-western Iran. It was bounded on the west by the Iran-Iraq border; on the north by Luristan, on the south by the Persian Gulf; and on the east by the river Hindiyan. Muhammad thence proceeded to Shapur. Disguised as a merchant, he stayed in Shapur with a certain Qamas bin Nuh, whose daughter Rabta, he married. Shapur (Arabic **Sabur**), the **Shapurgird** of Firdusi; became an unscathed place for the Imam for some times.

#### **Muhammad bin Ismail in Farghana**

When the Abbasids intensified their search for the Ismaili Imam to its extreme, Muhammad had to travel out of Iran and reached as far as the valley of Farghana, which was a large, prosperous and pleasant region. Farghana was known as the "**Gate of Turkistan**" and now it is in Uzbekistan and partly in Tajikistan. It must be however noted that the history of Tajikistan is bound up with that of Uzbekistan in Central Asia, for the two countries are not only contiguous, but have often been governed by the same rulers and subject to the same invasions. The dominant tradition has it that Muhammad bin Ismail had taken refuge at Farghana valley, situated mainly in the eastern



Uzbekistan and partly in Tajikistan and Kyrgstan, covering an area of 8500 sq. miles. The old city of Faghana, however, is in Uzbekistan, spread over 2750 sq. miles with ancient ruins, wherefrom Muhammad bin Ismail seems to have dispatched his *dais* in the Pamir, the highland region of Central Asia, which is centered in the Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan.

It is necessary here to remark that the Ismailis in upper Oxus were reportedly deep-rooted in their faith, but unfortunately we do not have details of the Ismaili mission during the veiled era in Central Asia. These Ismailis however retained a specific literary tradition by preserving and transmitting from generation to generation an anonymous treatise, entitled "**Ummu'l-Kitab**" that had certainly exercised a sole source of their religious inspiration for about three hundred years till the arrival of Nasir Khusaro in this region.

"**Ummu'l-Kitab**" consists of the discourses of Imam Muhammad al-Bakir in response of his disciples and the famous narrators of the traditions, such as Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari, Jabir al-Jufi and Muhammad bin al-Mufazzal bin Umar. It was composed originally in Arabic and was translated into Persian in later period. W. Ivanow assigns its compilation before the beginning of the 5th/11th century, while Henry Corbin (1903-1978) places its origin in 2nd/8th century.

"**Ummu'l-Kitab**" remained wrapped in mist for a long period. In 1898, A. Polovtsev, a Russian official in Turkistan, who was interested in the study of Ismailism and later became the Russian Consul-General in Bombay, while visiting the upper Oxus, he discovered a copy of "**Ummu'l-Kitab**". In 1911, its another Persian version was unearthed from Wakhan by the Russian official, called J. Lutsch. The photocopies of both these manuscripts were deposited in the Asiatic Museum of the Imperial Russian Academy of Science at St. Peterburg. Carl Salemann, the director of the Museum was editing its text, but his death in 1916 prevented the task. Later on, W. Ivanow was destined to edit and publish the text of "**Ummu'l-Kitab**" in 1936. He however based his edition on the copy which was obtained by Ivan I. Zarubin (1887-1964) in 1914 at Shagman. "**Ummu'l-Kitab**" is a volume of 210 pages and was also

translated into Italian by Pio Filippini-Ronconi in 1966 from Naples.

After some times, Muhammad returned to his ancestral abode, Salamia and died in 197/813. He left behind six sons, viz. Jafar, Ismail, Ahmad, Ali, Hussain and Abdullah. He had also a son named Yahya.

#### Organisation of Ismaili Dawa

The word *dawa* (pl. *du'at*) is derived from *du'a* means to call, invite or summon, and thus the term *dai* denotes, "he who summons", whose corresponding term in English is "*missionary*" (derived from the Latin, *mittere*). The word *dawa* is also used in the sense of prayers, such as *dawat al-mazlum* (prayer of the oppressed), or *dawa bi'l shifa* (prayer of the health). The word *dawat* virtually originated in the time of Imam Jafar Sadik, and Abdullah bin Maymun had founded the Ismaili *dawa* organisation in Basra.

T.W. Arnold writes in "*The Preaching of Islam*" (Aligarh, 1896, p. 277) that, "The Ismailis were the master of organisation and tactics at the time of Abdullah bin Maymun." W. Ivanow writes in "*Collectanea*" (Holland, 1948, p. 20) that, "The only branch of Islam in which the preaching of religion, *dawat*, was not only organised but even considered of special importance, was Ismailism." According to "*The Encyclopaedia of Islam*" (Leiden, 1965, 2nd vol., p. 168), "The word *dawat* is well known as applied to the wide-spread Ismaili propaganda movement, appealing to Muslims to give their allegiance to an Imam descended from Ismail bin Jafar Sadik."

Soon afterwards, Salamia became the headquarters of Ismaili *dawat* after Basra, while Yamen later on became the *dai* generating hub. Indeed, very little is known about the actual mission (*dawa*) system of early Ismailism, but it is however certain that the Ismaili mission was brisk and pervasive throughout the Islamic regions. In the broadest terms, it seems that Muhammad bin Ismail was represented by twelve *huffats* in different regions, and beneath the *huffats*, a hierarchy of missionaries (*dais*) conducted the different tasks of initiation and instruction. The Ismaili



*dais* stimulated a network of the mission in many parts of the Abbasid empire and there was plenty of its activity even outside it. They fully exploited the socio-economic conditions of the weaker sections of society to attract them towards the mission on one hand, and the philosophical interpretations of the teachings of Islam to attract the thinking sections of the society on the other.

For purposes of mission, the world was divided into twelve parts, each being called *jazira* (usually translated as an island), known as the island of the earth (*jazira al-arad*). It is difficult to say whether *jazira* really meant an island. One can broadly agree with W. Ivanow when he says: "It appears that in this sense *jazira* does not mean the island, as it usually means, but is taken here in its basic sense, from the root *j-z-r* = to cut off, and therefore means a slice, cutting, or a part, a section. Therefore the expression *12 jazair* should be translated as the 12 sections of the world population. They are: Arabs, Turks, Berbers, Negroes, Abyssinians, Khazras, China, Daylam, Rum and Saqaliba. Thus this classification is partly based on geographical, and partly on ethnographical principle, and plainly belongs to the fourth/tenth century." (vide "The Rise of the Fatimids", Calcutta, 1942, p. 21)

#### Zubaida - wife of Harun ar-Rashid

Most of the adherents of Ismaili faith during the period under review are hardly known due to the practice of *taqiya*. But, the Ismaili *dais* had best records of it, who became the source of informations for the later Ismaili authorities. Among the secret followers, the name of Zubaida, the wife of caliph Harun ar-Rashid is a significant. She was the daughter of the Abbasid caliph Mansur's elder son, Jafar; and her mother was Salsal, the sister of Harun ar-Rashid's own mother, named Khaizuran. Zubaida was thus the cousin of Harun ar-Rashid, and professed *batini tariqah* of the Ismailis secretly. Her marriage with Harun ar-Rashid took place in 164/781. Zubaida, in middle life, built herself a palace of her own, surrounded by a very large garden. She had employed a large staff of secretaries and agents to manage the properties she had acquired in all over the empire. She also undertook projects for the digging of canals for

irrigation and water supply. She was famous for the extensive engineering works which she had carried out in Mecca, to bring water sufficient for the increasing number of pilgrims. One of the most of her projects was the improvement of the pilgrim road across 900 miles of desert from Kufa to Medina and Mecca, which still in south Kufa is known as Darb Zubaida. She died in 226/841, about 32 years after her husband's death. It appears that she advocated Ismaili faith before her marriage in 164/781 and used to inform Imam Muhammad bin Ismail in advance the measures of Harun ar-Rashid through her trusted agents. It also appears that her close link with the Imam had ceased after the death of Muhammad bin Ismail.

According to "*Zahru'l-ma'ani*", "Muhammad spread religious knowledge, explained esoteric doctrines, and revealed to the chosen ones the great mystery, so much of these as never was revealed by any Imam before him."

Some sources state that after the massacre of Abul Khattab and his followers in Kufa, the remnants joined al-Mubarakdiyya, and that out of this union arose a group who preached that Muhammad bin Ismail was the last Imam, anticipating his return. It was however this group who was the predecessors of the later Qarmatians, who refused to accept the death of Muhammad bin Ismail, who, according to them remained alive and would return in the imminent future as the promised Mahdi or Qaim. The main loyalist branch of Ismailism however traced the Imamate in the progeny of Muhammad bin Ismail.

The period of Muhammad bin Ismail also saw an early growth of the Sufism in Islam. The eminent Sufis who flourished in the period under review were Hasan Basri (d. 110/728), Ibrahim bin Adham (d. 160/776), Abu Hashim Kufi (d. 160/775-6), Rabia Basri (d. 185/801), Shaiq Balkhi (d. 194/810), etc.

#### **Muhammad b. Ismail - *al-Imamu'n Natiq***

It is worth mentioning that the Sunni historians had no basic idea of the Shiite concept of Imamate and arrayed hostility with the Ismailis in the light of their own sense of propriety. They championed in dressing up the baseless stories in their notion, and then used it a tool to defile Ismailism in aggressive and hyperbolic words.



Under such derogatory attitude, Muhammad bin Ismail is accused of claiming the prophethood and abolishing the *Shariah* of the Prophet.

The institution of the Imamate is a cornerstone and paramount position in Ismaili *tariqah*, and according to their theory, the seven millennial periods (*adwar'i azam*) form a part of a great cycle of 360,000 years. At its end, during the last period of 7000 years, there were six *natiqs* (speakers, pronouncers or law-givers), viz. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, the last Prophet. They are the seven law-givers. Each great period is started by the introduction of a new religion. This religion, exercising great influence upon mankind at the outset, but lost its original force with the passage of time. It is ultimately replaced by a new system to retain its originality and make it forceful then onwards. Each *natiq* lays down the *Shariah* for his period, and appoints an *asas* (base, foundation or executor). The *asas* lays the foundation of hidden knowledge (*ilm al-batin*), who is also called *wasi*, organizing the dissemination of the hidden knowledge among the faithfuls only. The *asas* is followed by a chain of Imams, who stimulate the mission on the basis of hidden teachings. The period (*dawr*) of one *natiq* comprises six ones and the seventh one becomes another *natiq*, who either proclaims another *Shariah* setting aside the earlier one, or cancelling (*tatil al-shariah*) its manifestation, and gives it a new interpretation on the ground of hidden secrets (*asrar'i batin*). The Prophet Muhammad was preceded by five *natiqs*, each *natiq* had cancelled his predecessor's *Shariah*. With this cycle, the Prophet stands as the sixth *natiq* who appointed his son-in-law Ali as his *wasi*, and there followed after him six Imams, bringing the Prophet's period (*dawr*) to a close. The seventh Imam, Muhammad bin Ismail was the *seventh natiq* in the new heptad. Muhammad Bakir Majlisi quotes a Hadith in his "Biharu'l Anwar" (13th vol., p. 156) that, "The next expected (*natiq*) Imam would be "the son of six" (*ibn sitta*), means the next *natiq* would be preceded by six Imams." Since there was no *Shariah* after the Prophet, Muhammad bin Ismail was not to announce a new religious law. Instead, he would reveal the esoteric truths concealed behind all the preceding messages. He abrogated the adulterated parts of the *Shariah* by explaining the hidden meaning of the true *Shariah* and

revealing its purpose. The Islamic **Shariah** had lost much of its pristine purity, and many unhealthy practices crept into the religion, therefore, the **tawil** was applied to protect its dynamic force.

Abrogation of the **Shariah**, therefore, by every seventh **natig** encompasses the meaning of the law only, not its exoteric or practical and ritualistic aspects. The Prophet was **ar-Rasulu'n-Natig**, whereas Muhammad bin Ismail was **al-Imamu'n-Natig**. The former was the **natig** in the capacity of the Prophethood, and the latter was the **natig** in the role of Imamate. Thus, Muhammad bin Ismail had never repudiated or suspended the **Shariah** for his followers. Arif Tamir writes in "**al-Qaramita**" (pp. 86-87) that, "The Imamate of Muhammad bin Ismail was the beginning of a new era in the history of the Ismaili movement. We go even further to say that he came with some new teachings, setting aside some exoteric teachings which preceded. He was in fact the first Imam to have done away with the trouble of manifestation and gave call for **tawil** and esoteric meaning, and for spreading his mission, he relied on his **huffat** and great **dai**, Maymun al-Qaddah." Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) writes in "**Zahru'l-ma'ani**" that, "Muhammad bin Ismail was named the seventh **natig**, because he rose to preach by the command of God, incorporating in himself all the virtues which are to be crowned in him. He is neither the Revealer of the final religion, nor the Apostle of God, but he is in a class by himself, of a unique rank."

It must be noted that the period of Muhammad bin Ismail was a turning point in the history of the Ismaili mission. The Abbasids revolution had been consolidated, and the Iranian influence in particular and Greek influence in general were being applied in the intellectual field. In a century that followed, the wave of Muslim conquest reached upto Samarkand, beyond the Oxus. With the extension of Muslim territory, there cropped up a number of new problems neither contained in Koran, nor anticipated by the Prophet. Hundreds of schools of jurisprudence appeared to mould the Muslim system of laws, but none could crystallize into definite system, acceptable by all. "Some five hundred schools of jurisprudence" writes Adam Mez in "**The Renaissance of Islam**" (London, 1937, p. 212), "are said to have disappeared at or about the beginning of the 3rd/9th century."



The *Schools of Law* represented by Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767), Malik bin Anas (d. 179/795), al-Shafi (d. 204/819) and Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 241/855) also emerged prominently in this period. The major collections of Hadiths also were done mainly by Bukhari (d. 256/870) and Muslim bin al-Hajjaj (d. 261/875).

The problem however was to find a correct balance among all these developments when the Islamic world was undergoing radical changes. Islam had to keep pace with, and adjust to, the fast changing world and the growing of new trend. Muhammad bin Ismail had to impart the true Islamic teachings through *tawil* (the allegorical interpretation) based on reason to his followers. It was thus absolutely a false propaganda of the historians that Muhammad bin Ismail - he being the seventh *natiq* had claimed for his apostleship or cancelled the *Shariah* of the Prophet. P.J. Vatikiotis writes in "*The Fatimid Theory of State*" (Lahore, 1957, p. 90) that, "Abrogation of the *Shariah* by every Seventh *natiq*, as for example Muhammad b. Ismail, encompasses the meaning of the law only, not its *zahir* or practical and ritualistic aspect. Muhammad b. Ismail did not abolish anything of the formal worship and law of the *Shariah*; on the contrary, he strengthened it, and ordered everyone to act according to it. What Imam al-Muizz meant by the expression *al-shariah uttilat*, or the *Shariah* of Muhammad was purified by his mission, refers to his explaining its meaning and clarifying its hidden points. *Tatil* of *Shariah*, then, means its purification through *tawil*. A revelation of the external truths behind the *Shariah* to the closest initiates in the *dawa* constitutes Fatimid abrogation of law. It is not an abrogation that overthrows accepted legal ritual in the Quran, but rather the reconciliation of such law with religious philosophy."

It should also be known that the mis-interpretation of the theory of Muhammad bin Ismail as the Seventh *natiq* by the Sunni historians had engendered the coinage of the name "Seveners" (*sabiya*) for the Ismailis, which is a glaring instance, sounding their misconception in the Ismaili belief of Imamate. The Muslim knowledge of the Ismailis in the field of *tawil* had not progressed much beyond what they had transmitted on the subject. They knew little and broadcast more, and the field therefore continued to be

dominated by the fanciful impressions and fictitious hodgepodge.

#### **WAFI AHMAD (197-212/813-828)**

Abdullah bin Muhammad, surnamed ar-Radi, Nasir or al-Wafi (True to one's word) was also known as ar-Radi Abdullah al-Wafi or Wafi Ahmad, was born in 149/766. The tradition relates that Wafi Ahmad was locally known as *attar* (druggist) in Nishapur and Salamia as well, a surname he earned after his profession in drug and medicine as a protection against his real position. He was however represented by his *hujjat*, Abdullah bin Maymun (d. 260/874). It is also learnt that he was called Muhammad bin Ismail among the Ismailis, who lived at remote distance and had not seen the Imams. He, being the son and successor of Imam Muhammad bin Ismail is admittedly asserted in the work of Tabari (3rd vol., p. 2218). His mother was Fatima, the daughter of Sarah, sister of Ishaq bin al-Abbas.

The Abbasid caliph Amin (193-198/809-814) was murdered after ruling for 4 years and 8 months, thereupon, his foster brother, Mamun Rashid (198-218/814-833) became the next caliph, who transferred his capital to Khorasan in early period of his rule, and as a result he followed a mild attitude with the Alids. After coming to Baghdad, Mamun Rashid changed his mind, and followed the doctrines of Mutazilite. He was however a bitterest foe of the Ismailis.

#### **Beginning of *Dawr-i Satr***

The word *satr* (pl. *satur*) is derived from *astar*, meaning hide, cover or shield. As it is said, *masatra* (he concealed enmity), or *tastir* (to hold within a curtain). According to "**Arabic-English Lexicon**" (New York, 1872, 4th vol., p. 1304) by Edward William Lane, the word *satr* means to veil, conceal or hide a thing. The early Ismailis had employed the term *satr* with regards to those periods in their history when the Imams were hidden from the eyes of their followers. When the animosity of their enemies reached to its extreme, the Ismaili Imams had to hide



themselves to elude discovery. On that juncture, the *bujjats* represented the Imams in the community. Thus, the *bujjat* was himself a living proof, acting as the custodian until the time of the Imam's reappearance. This period is called *Dawr-i Satr* (period of concealment) in Ismaili history. In contrast, the period following the concealment is known as an unveiling (*Dawr-i Kashf*), or the period of manifestation (*Dawr-i Zuhur*), when the Imams publicly made their appearance.

With the death of Jafar Sadik in 148/765, Ismail (d. 158/775) and Muhammad (d. 197/813), the gravity of brutal persecutions of the Abbasids had considerably increased. The Abbasids left no chance to grind the Ismailis under the millstone of cruelty. The Ismaili Imams were impelled to thicken their hiding, therefore, the first *Dawr-i Satr* came into force from 197/813 to 268/882, wherein the Imams were known as *al-A'imatu'l masturin* i.e., the concealed Imams. Achilles des Souza writes in "**Mediation in Islam - an Investigation**" (Rome, 1975, p. 35) that, "For the first century and a half after the death of Ismail, the Ismaili Imams remained hidden and little is known. This period could be characterised, as we have seen earlier, as the period of the quietists."

And here we cannot but call attention to a fact that the doctrine of *ghayba* among the Twelvers should not be confounded with that of the concept of *satr* among the Ismailis. Seyyed Hossain Nasr writes in this context in his "**Ideals and Realities of Islam**" (London, 1966, p. 159) that, "The idea of being hidden (*mastur*) must not, however, be confused with the occultation (*ghayba*) of the twelfth Imam (of the Twelvers). The first implies simply being hidden from the eyes of the crowd and from public notice, while the second means disappearance from the physical world."

Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) writes in "**Zahru'l-ma'ani**" (p. 59) that, "He (Wafi Ahmad) was the first of the three concealed Imams by the order of God and His inspiration." Hamiduddin Kirmani (d. 412/1021) also admits in his "**ar-Risalat al-Wai'za**" (comp. 408/1017) that, "Muhammad bin Ismail became *qaim*, and after him, the concealed Imams (*aima'i masturin*) succeeded to the Imamate, who remained hidden on account of the persecution of the tyrants, and

these were three Imams, viz., Abdullah, Ahmad and Hussain." Hatim bin Imran bin Zuhra (d. 498/1104) writes in "**al-Usul wa'l Ahakam**" that, "When Muhammad bin Ismail died, his authority passed to his son, Abdullah bin Muhammad, the hidden one, who was the first to hide himself from his contemporary adversaries." According to Hasan bin Nuh Broachi (d. 939/1533) in "**Kitab al-Azhar**" (comp. 931/1525) that, "The three hidden Imams were Abdullah bin Muhammad, Ahmad bin Abdullah, surnamed at-Taqi and Hussain bin Ahmad." The fact that the **Dawr-i Satr** virtually came into force in the time of Wafi Ahmad has been also asserted by the modern scholars, such as W. Ivanow, Dr. Sami Nassib Makarem, Sir Johj Glubb, Husayn F. al-Hamdani, etc.

Shahrastani (1076-1153) writes in "**Kitab al-milal wa'l nihal**" (p. 164) that, "Then begins the era of the hidden Imams, who went about secretly but sent out emissaries, who appeared openly on their behalf. They hold that the world can never be without an Imam who is alive and a **qaim**, either visible and manifest, or hidden and concealed. When the Imam is manifest it is possible for his **hujjat** (proof) to be hidden, but if the Imam is hidden it is necessary for his **hujjat** and emissaries to be manifest."

On account of the strictness of Imam's concealment, when his **hujjats** were accepting on his behalf the oath of allegiance from neophytes, they used to tell them that they should obey the Lord of the Time (**Sahib al-Asr** or **Waliyul Asr**) without pronouncing the name of the Imam. This practice was in use among the neophytes through the whole period of the concealment of the Imams.

Summing up the condition of the hidden Imams in the veiled period, Ibn Khaldun writes in his "**Muqaddimah**" (1st vol., pp. 44-5) that, "These people (Imams) were constantly on the move because of the suspicions various governments had concerning them. They were kept under observation by the tyrants, because their partisans were numerous and their propaganda had spread far and wide. Time after time they had to leave the places where they had settled. Their men, therefore, took refuge in hiding, and their (identity) was hardly known, as the poet says: 'If you would ask the days what my name is, they would not know, and where I am, they would not know where I am.'"



Wafi Ahmad settled in Nihawand, and betrothed to Amina, daughter of Hamdan, son of Mansur bin Jowshan, who was from Kazirun. By this wife, the Imam had a son, Ali bin Abdullah, surnamed al-Layth, and a daughter, Fatima. The brother of Wafi Ahmad also married here and had a posterity.

Meanwhile, the Abbasids intensified their operations, thus Wafi Ahmad made his son as the chief of the Ismaili mission, and himself went from the knowledge of the people, so that none of his followers and other knew where he was. It is however known from the fragment of the traditions that he had gone to Syria and lived in the castle of Masiyaf for some time.

### **Wafi Ahmad in Salamia**

The Ismaili *dais* in search of a new residence for their Imam came to Salamia and inspected the town and approached the owner, Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Saleh, who had transformed the town into a flourishing commercial centre. They told him that there was a Hashimite merchant from Basra who was desirous of settling in the town. He readily accepted and pointed out to them a site along the main street in the market, where existed a house belonging to a certain Abu Farha. The Ismaili *dais* bought it for their Imam and informed him about it. Wafi Ahmad arrived to his new residence as an ordinary merchant. He soon pulled down the old building and had new ones built in its place; and also built a new wall around it. He also built a tunnel inside his house, leading to the desert, whose length was about 12 miles. Money and treasures were carried on camels to the door of that tunnel at night. The door opened and the camels entered with their loads inside the house.

Salamia was a small town in Syria in the district of east of the Orontes, and is located at a distance of 32 kilometers to the south-east of Hammah, or 44 kilometers to the north-east of Hims. It lies in a fertile plain, about 1500 feet above the sea level, south of the Jabal al-A'la and on the margin of the Syrian steppe, standing on the main entrance of the Syrian desert.

It is an ancient *Salaminias* or *Salaminias* of the Greek, which flourished in the Christian period. According to Yaqut in "Mudjam" (3rd vol., p. 123), the town was

originally called *Salam-miyyah* (a hundred safe) after the hundred surviving inhabitants of the destroyed town of al-Mutafika, who migrated to this town, which they built and the expression was changed with the years until it became *Salamia*. There is a foundation inscription of a mosque on a stone at the entrance to the citadel, dating 150/767 founded by the local Hashimites and was destroyed by the Qarmatians in 290/902. It will be perhaps appropriate to say that the modern *Salamia* in Syria was prospered by the Ismailis. According to "The Encyclopaedia of Islam" (Leiden, 1995, 8th vol., p. 921), "The fact that *Salamiyya* was the centre of an important branch of the Hashimids and the isolated position of the town perhaps account for its important role in the early history of the Ismaili movement as the secret headquarters of the pre-Fatimid Ismaili *dawa*."

The adherents and *dais* began to rush privily to *Salamia*. Like in Nishapur, Wafi Ahmad was also known locally as *attar* (druggist) in *Salamia*.

#### **Ahmad bin al-Kayyal al-Khasibi**

It is related that during the Abbasid campaign of energetic search for Wafi Ahmad, the *huffat*, *dais* and the followers demonstrated matchless example of their firm faith. But one of the *dais*, called Ahmad bin al-Kayyal al-Khasibi had deviated from Ismailism. He had acquired Ismaili teachings from Imam and was well steeped in esoteric doctrines (*Kalimat ismiyya*), but concocted his own theories that were contrary to the Ismaili faith. When Wafi Ahmad was informed about his negative propaganda, his having created confusion in the community, he excommunicated him, ordering his followers to separate from him. When Ibn al-Kayyal learnt the severe actions of Wafi Ahmad against him, he publicly renounced his allegiance and proclaimed himself first an Imam, and later on the promised Mahdi on earth to establish peace. Shahrastani also writes in "*Kitab al-milal wa'l-nihal*" (p. 17) that, "Ibn al-Kayyal had claimed the Imamate for himself and asserted that he was the promised Qaim on earth." He founded a sect called after him *Kayyaliyya*, who incorporated different heretical ideas in their doctrines. Ahmad bin al-Kayyal was however executed by his own followers in 207/822 who depended upon him, when they understood his impiety and his idea to



spread trouble in the world. With the end of Ahmad bin al-Kayyal, the Kayyaliyya sect also disappeared and its handful followers reverted to their original faith of Ismailism.

Wafi Ahmad further on repaired to Daylam with his 32 trusted *dais*, where he got married with an Alid lady in the village of Ashnash, and had a son by her, whom he named Ahmad, who later on became known as Taqi Muhammad. The adoption of strict *taqiya*, and moving from one to another place, forced Wafi Ahmad to assign the mission works to his brother, Hussain bin Muhammad. He ordered his followers to obey his brother, saying: "One who obeys him, he obeys myself, and one who disobeys him, he disobeys me." Hussain bin Muhammad with a party, disguised as merchants, went on pilgrimage to Mecca. He then arrived in Ahwaz from Samarra. A certain *dai* started preaching in favour of Hussain bin Muhammad, stating that Wafi Ahmad appointed him instead of himself. When Hussain heard about this, he went to the place where the *dai* resided, collected the concerned people, and declared that he was not the Imam, but a lieutenant of his brother, his servant and his slave. When the people heard this, their allegiance to the Imam increased.

#### **Martyrdom of Imam's son and brother**

Ali al-Layth, the elder son of Wafi Ahmad had also converted a multitude of people. He was a generous and brave soldier, and fond of hunting and raised a small force of about two thousand men. Once he was on a hunting excursion with his friends in woods, where they were raided by the Abbasids force sent from Ray. He had a handful men with him, but fought valiantly until an arrow struck him in his throat and fell from his horse. He was arrested and beheaded and his head was sent to the Abbasid governor at Ray.

Hussain bin Muhammad was busy with his correspondence and the affairs of the community on other side. He was much frightened when the news about the murder of Ali al-Layth reached him. He decided to emigrate a safe place together with his associates. They were also ambushed by the Abbasids in the hills of Nihawand. Hussain bin Muhammad performed outstanding feats of bravery, and after a heroic

resistance, he was killed with his associates with their families.

Ali al-Layth had a son, called Ahmad bin Ali al-Layth, a learned and highly talented. When his father was killed, his nurse concealed him and saved from the enemies. He took refuge in the village called Mahdi kad-gah in Khuzistan. With him there were those of his relatives from among the sons of Hussain bin Muhammad. When he grew up, he resolved to take revenge of his father's murder from the people closely involved. Hence he gathered around him those of the Shiites, who were supporting him. Thus, he is said to have mustered four thousand men around him. He proceeded with them and pitched his tents at Shaliba, near Damawand, where he posed himself as an Abbasid commander. He summoned the local inhabitants, assuring them to read an official letter received from the government for his commandership. When the people came, he, with his Shiite supporters, slaughtered them all. It is recounted that they were the people who had killed his father and Hussain bin Muhammad. After taking revenge, Ahmad bin al-Layth repaired to Asak, a village in the district of Ramhurmuz in Khuzistan.

Ahwaz (the **Elymais** of the Greeks) was a province in Abbasid realm, whom the Iranians coined in the form of **Susiana**. Ahwaz is an Arabic name (pl. of the sing. **Huz**, corresponding with Syriac **Huzaye**). It was bounded by Iraq on the west side, by the province of Faras, on the east and south, and on the north by the part of the province Jabal (now Luristan). Its capital was Suk al-Ahwaz (market of Ahwaz) and hence simply as al-Ahwaz.

It is most possible that Wafi Ahmad lived in Suk al-Ahwaz for a short period. When he received news of the misfortunes that befell his brother and son, he left Ahwaz, which was so far an unscathed place for him.

Wafi Ahmad next moved to Samarra with his son, Taqi Muhammad. Samarra lies on the east bank of the Tigris, half way between Takrit and Baghdad. The original form of the name is probably Iranian, and in this context, the following etymologies have been proposed: **Sam-rah**, **Sai-Amorra** and **Sa-morra**. The last two meaning the place of payment of tribute. On the Abbasid coins, it was written as **Surra man ra's** (delighted is he who sees it). Samarra was founded in 221/836 by the Abbasid commander, Ashnas,



two *parsangs* south of the village of Karkh-Fairuz. Between 221/836 and 276/889, seven Abbasid caliphs lived in Samarra. It seems that Wafi Ahmad found no proper respite at Samarra, therefore, he ultimately settled in Salamia, where he built a house and resided in the cloak of a local merchant.

There lived many eminent Hashimites in Salamia. Most of them belonged to the posterity of Agil bin Abu Talib, but some of whom were related to the Abbasids. So Wafi Ahmad pretended to be one of these, and was regarded as one of the Hashimites. He however kept in secret his own real name and the name of his son.

### Search of the Imam

The constant change of the Imam's abode made the Ismailis and *dais* a complete loss of the trace of Wafi Ahmad, making them to remain in great confusion. *Dai* Hurmuz and his son Mahdi, *dai* Surhaf bin Rustam and his son Inran finally came forward to institute a search of the Imam. They collected four thousand dinars in cash from the donations of the faithfuls. They started on their journey, dispersing everwhere, each of them carrying with him a description of the appearance and characteristic features of the Imam. They travelled in guise of wandering hawkers, carrying with them on their donkeys different wares, such as pepper, aromatic plants, spindles, mirrors, frankincense and different kinds of millinery that find demand amongst women. Among themselves they agreed to meet on a fixed date at a certain place, selected in every province, different districts of which were allotted to every one of them to be toured. Whenever children and women came around them, they would ask these whether there was in their locality a person, bearing such features. At length, they came to the district of Hims in Syria. They appointed a mosque of that town as their meeting place. So it happened that the Imam also was in the same district, namely in the hills of Jabal as-Sumnaq, in "the monastery of sparrows" (*dayr asfurin*), near Kafrabhum. As usual, they were shouting for the items for sale in the Jabal as-Sumnaq. Some women and children came out to them, and they, as usual, asked whether there was amongst them a man, having such and such appearance. To their utter surprise, a boy and a woman demanded from them as a price from their goods, promising to show them where the person

answering their description could be found. They offered to them mastic, frankincense and other things. The woman and child told them that when just a short while ago they were passing near the monastery of sparrows, where they had seen the person with his pages. At length, they succeeded after hard searching for a year to find the Imam with great relief and jubilation.

### Incomparable sacrifices

During the period of concealment (*dawr-i satr*), it is known that the Ismailis had offered great sacrifices for the cause of their faith, the detail of which is not accessible. They had been severely domineered and tortured by the Abbasids, the equal of which is hardly seen in other period. Suffice it to elite here one instance: a Syrian daily news, "*al-Baath*" on October 28, 1966 highlighted a report that a team of workers had discovered human skulls beneath the earth while digging a location to lay a pipeline, about 150 miles north of Salamia. The exhumation was immediately suspended, and the experts were summoned from Damascus for investigation. During the excavation, about 382 human skulls were exhumed, pitching with small iron nails, emanating a trembling story of severe torture and maltreatment. One skull, for instance was pierced with 151 nails. The matter was referred to the archaeological department, and after a minute examination of two months, it had been discovered that the above location originally was an old Ismaili cemetery, belonging to the period between 150/777 and 275/900. These Ismailis had to live in the teeth of very bitterest opposition, and were tortured with heartless during brutal persecutions, who could not escape the snares of the Abbasids. Being ingrained in their faith, they would not recant even under hardest trials.

Wafi Ahmad is known to have summoned his most trusted *dais*, called Abu Jafar and Abu Mansur at Salamia before his death, and said in presence of his son, Taqi Muhammad that: "I bequeath the office of Imamate to this my beloved son. He is your Imam from now onwards. You take an oath of allegiance from him, and must remain faithful with him in the manner you have been with me, and obey his orders." It is said that shortly before his death, Wafi Ahmad retired into solitude and died in Salamia in the year 212/828.



Wafi Ahmad had two sons, Ahmad surnamed Taqi Muhammad and Ibrahim. Nothing is virtually known about Ibrahim, save the fact that his posterity was still living at the time of Imam al-Mahdi in Salamia and were slain by the Qarmatians in 290/902.

According to Ibn Athir (10th vol., p. 184), Khalaf bin Mulaib al-Ashhabi (d. 499/1106) had captured Salamia in 476/1084 and acknowledged the Fatimid suzerainty. There is an evidence of this in an inscription in Kufic character, dated 481/1088, on the door beam of a mosque in Salamia. In the inscription, studied extensively by Rey, Hartmann, van Berchem and Littmann, Khalaf bin Mulaib says that he has erected a shrine on the tomb of Abul Hasan Ali bin Jarir. But, the Syrian Ismailis however have traditionally regarded this tomb as that of Imam Wafi Ahmad (Abdullah bin Muhammad), calling the mausoleum locally as *Makam al-Imam*. Later on, Prof. Heinz Halm studied and reinterpreted the aforesaid inscription in 1980, lends support to the local Syrian Ismaili tradition by holding that the mausoleum was in all probability originally erected, about 400/1009, over the tomb of Imam Wafi Ahmad by the Fatimid commander, called Ali bin Jafar bin Falah, known as *qutb ad-dawla* (magnate of the state), who, after subduing the rebellion of Mufraj bin Dagfal al-Jarrah Taiy, had seized Salamia for the Fatimids and whose name also appears in the inscription, and that Khalaf bin Mulaib merely repaired the site, some four decades later, vide "*Les Fatimides a Salama*" (*Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, LIV, 1986, pp. 133-149) by Heinz Halm.

#### **TAQI MUHAMMAD (212-225/828-840)**

Ahmad bin Abdullah, Muhammad al-Habib, or Abul Hussain, surnamed at-Taqi (God-fearing), also called Taqi Muhammad, was born in 174/790 and ascended in 212/828. He lived secretly with his followers as a merchant at Salamia. He is also called *Sahib al-Rasail* (Lord of the epistles). He however retained the services of Abdullah bin Maymun (d. 260/874) as his *hujjat*.

W.Ivanow writes in "Ismailis and Qarmatians" (*JEBRAS*, Bombay, 1940, p. 73) that, "The second hidden Imam, the author of the Encyclopaedia of the *Ikhwanu's Safa*, or

*Sahib al-Rasail*, as he is usually referred to in the Ismaili theological works, is also known definitely as Ahmad."

Taqi Muhammad was known as an eminent Hashimite trader, making the people to flock at his residence. It suspected the Syrian governor, who communicated its report to caliph Mamun Rashid, who issued order to arrest Taqi Muhammad, but the latter had quitted Salamia in advance for few years.

#### **Abu Tirmizi in Abbasid court**

Abu Sa'id Tirmizi, known as Abu Tirmizi was an Iranian Ismaili *dai*. He seems to have been active in the villages of Iraq. Tradition has it that he once happened to visit Baghdad and joined the philosophical deliberations of the Mutazalites in the Abbasid court. It is recounted that someone informed caliph Mamun that Abu Tirmizi was an Ismaili *dai*, whereupon, he summoned him in a separate chamber. Mamun treated him tactfully, pretending that he was too a secret follower of Taqi Muhammad and said, "I am an ardent lover of the Imam. I cherish a desire to hand over my caliphate to the Imam when I behold him and will serve him whole-heartedly." Abu Tirmizi delighted on Mamun's words, but did not divulge his identity and left the court. He resided in Baghdad for few months and when he found that nobody followed him, he made his way towards Salamia and visited Imam's residence. During the course of discussion, he said to Taqi Muhammad that, "Mawla! caliph Mamun feels himself ashamed in his actions against us. He is ready to abdicate the temporal power in your favour, therefore, you manifest publicly and assume the caliphate." Taqi Muhammad said, "O' Tirmizi! you have not yet known the deceitful trick of the Abbasids. The heart of Mamun is full of animosity. He is a liar and hypocrite. His heart is harder than stone." Abu Tirmizi however continued to insist, whereupon the Imam said, "I allow you to go once again to Mamun's court if you have still trust on his words and claim yourself as if an Imam. He will swiftly hand over you his caliphate if he is truly a follower. If so, you let me know, so that I may manifest publicly." Abu Tirmizi said, "Mawla! Mamun is very clever and will persecute me if I fail to show him the signs of Imamate if asked." Taqi Muhammad replied, "The time itself will favour you. He will be surprised through my



light and you will surely pass through his trials. But remember, Mamun is not a faithful and he will execute you."

Abu Tirmizi returned to Baghdad and managed to see caliph Mamun once again and said, "O'caliph! I am an Imam on earth. I have concealed my legitimate claim during our first meeting due to your fear. You must trust me, as I am indeed an Imam." Upon hearing, Mamun discoursed with him on religious matters and asked many questions. When he became satisfied, he ordered his soldiers, who brutally beheaded Abu Tirmizi in the court. It is also said that caliph Mamun was made known that he had executed an Ismaili *dai* and not the Imam, therefore, he ordered to find whereabouts of Imam Taqi Muhammad.

### **Trend of philosophy in Islam**

To understand the meaning of philosophy in Islam, it is best to examine the use of the terms *falsafah* and *hikmah* in various traditional sources. The term *hikmah* appears in several places in the Holy Koran, of which perhaps the most often cited is, "He gives wisdom (*hikmah*) to whom He wills, and he to whom wisdom is given" (2:269). It also appears in the hadith literature that "The acquisition of *hikmah* is incumbent upon you. Verily the good resides in *hikmat*" and according one another hadith, "Speak not of *hikmah* to fools" (*alaika bil hikmati fa-innal ghair*).

After the rise of the Abbasids, the Iranian who excelled the Arabs in learning and scholarship, became associated with their empire. In fact they were the intellectual cream of that society, being greatly inclined towards philosophy, for which the Arabs had no taste. It was for this reason that during the Umayyad period in Damascus, known as the Arab national rule, the intellectual discipline like philosophy never acquired popularity. But during the Abbasid rule, because of the close association of the Iranians, the Greek philosophy acquired great currency. Thus in those days, it was the Muslim intellectuals who kept the torch of Greek philosophy burning. They realized that the old religious ideas must not be taken in their literal meaning, imparting that the mystical philosophy of esotericism owed its distinct origin to the words of Koran. The Mutazalites were in

front to see Islamic teachings on the scale of philosophy. Baghdad became not only the metropolis, but also an important centre at that time.

The function of philosophy is nothing more than speculating on the beings and considering them in so far as they lead to the knowledge of the Creator. The Holy Koran exhorts man to this kind of rational consideration (*i'tibar*) in many a verse such as: "Consider, you who have vision." Thus *al-i'tibar* is a Koranic term which means something more than pure speculation or reflection (*nazar*). M.M. Sharif writes in "**Philosophical Teachings of the Quran**" (cf. "**History of Muslim Philosophy**", Germany, 1963, 1st vol., p. 137) that, "The Quran claims to give an exposition of universal truths with regard to these problems - an exposition couched in a language and a terminology which the people immediately addressed, the Arabs, with the intellectual background they had at the time of its revelation, could easily understand, and which the people of other lands, and other times, speaking other languages, with their own intellectual background could easily interpret. It makes free use of similitude to give a workable idea of what is incomprehensible in its essence."

According to "**al-Kafi**" (Tehran, 1978, p. 76) by Kulaini (d. 329/941), Jafar Sadik once said: "It is obligation on you to gain sound comprehensions of the religion of God and not to be like the rustic Bedouin Arabs, since God on the day of judgement, will neither cast even a glance at nor will He purify the deeds of a person who has developed no understanding of the religion." The Arabs with scarce means and resources at their disposal in the desert, had no tradition of speculative philosophy. They could not achieve intellectual sophistication, and therefore, they were both physically and intellectually very simple people. Islam too bore this imprint, and its teachings were comparatively simple and speculative thought having an emphasis on external observations. The situation had changed drastically during the Abbasid period. Islam was no longer a simple faith it used to be believed in the Arabian desert. It was a Semitic religion universalized to embrace non-Semitic elements. The Iranians who embraced Islam had intuitive and speculative minds, and they saw Islam with such minds. In sum, the Iranians were so more cultivated, both in education and tradition, that the ordinary Arabs were looked down upon as coarse ruffians



and uncouth barbarians. Nor did the Arabs have anything special to point to in self-defence against such sneers, except their priority as a cradle within the Islam. In sum, the Arabs were only in exceptional cases mystically minded, who were generally content with the literal and the way to God along extrinsic lines had been enough for them. The cultivation of philosophical trend therefore, had been strongest among the Muslims in non-Arabs lands.

The Mutazalites came forward to apply the criterion of reason in presenting Islamic teachings. Tools of Greek philosophy and its terminologies were now being freely employed for explaining Islamic faith. Even the Asharites who were fanatically opposed to see Islam in the light of Greek philosophical aspects had to employ those very tools to refute such attempts by their opponents. Mysticism too, grew side by side with this trend. The mystics were influenced by Neo-Platonism. Ibn Sina writes in "al-Isharat" that, "Philosophy is the exercise of intellect, enabling man to know Being as it is in itself. It is incumbent upon man to do this by the exercise of his intellect, so that he may ennoble his soul and make it perfect, and may become a rational scientist, and get the capacity of eternal bliss in hereafter." During the time of new philosophical approach, the orthodox circles had two options open before them; either to adopt a rigid stance, or to assimilate the trend. The orthodox orbits, however, tenaciously reacted against this pattern.

It must be noted that the legacy of Greek philosophy had ended with the school of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), but it reappeared blended with Oriental thought under the name of Neo-Platonism (*al-afletuniyat al-muhdathah*), propounded by Plotinus (207-270 A.D.). He was succeeded by his pupil, Porphyry (233-305), who made certain modifications. Proclus (411-485) was the last great schoolman, who had left it in a form in which it was taken up by the Muslim thinkers.

The Ismaili *dawa* was yet in the cradle during that period, who opted the philosophical course, and provided an ideal climate for the new philosophical tendency with the ever living role of the Imams. The Ismaili *dais* were well aware of the intellectual trend, who sincerely desired to creatively apply Neo-Platonism in the teachings of Islam. What is known as *tawil* in Ismaili jargon was nothing but the esoteric explanation of the exoteric teachings and

practices of Islam. This assimilation attracted a number of eminent persons towards Ismailism. The Neo-Platonism readily found a congenial home for itself within the world of Shiism. It was for this principal cause that the orthodox theologians vehemently opposed the rational interpretation, and wrongly accused Ismailism of having suspended the operation of the Islamic *Shariah*. The Ismaili Imams however never allowed their followers to disregard the observance of the outward injunctions, but imparted the hidden meaning of the Koranic verses. They had nothing to do with political opportunism and remained away from its vortex and clung fast to their doctrines.

### Origin of the Mutazalism

The account of the origin of Mutazalism given by Shahrastani is widely accepted as the standard one. According to his account, once Hasan Basri (d. 110/728), one of the earliest Sufis, was imparting instructions to his pupil in a mosque. Before the lessons were finished, someone turned up and asked, whether they should regard the grave sinner as a believer or an unbeliever. Hasan Basri was on the point of giving a reply to this query when a long-necked pupil, Wasil bin Ata (d. 131/748), burst into discussion with the assertion that the perpetrator of grave sins is neither a complete unbeliever nor a perfect; he is placed midway between unbelief and belief - an intermediate state, i.e., *mansila bayn al-manzilatayn* (a position between the two positions). Having spoken he strode to another pillar of the mosque followed by a number of those in the circle. Hasan Basri shot a swift glance at him and said that, "He has withdrawn (*i'tazala anna*) from us." From this remark originated the name, *Mutazila* or *Mutazalite*, i.e., the Withdrawers or Secessionists. Other versions have a similar story, but the man who withdraws is not Wasil bin Ata but Amr bin Ubaid (d. 144/761). About the same time as al-Khayyat Ibn Qutayba wrote of Amr that he held the doctrine of Qadar and made propaganda for it; and he and his followers withdrew (*i'tazala*) from Hasan Basri and were called the Mutazila. Ibn Munabbih says that the title of Mutazila came into vogue after the death of Hasan Basri. When Hasan passed away, Qatada succeeded him and continued his work. Amr bin Ubaid and his followers avoided the company of



Qatada, therefore, they were given the title of al-Mutazila.

The material so far examined shows a divergence of view on whether the leader was Amr or Wasil. Yet other considerations, however, suggest that the originator of the sect in the form in which it became famous was neither of these men but Abul Hudhayl and his generation. The statement of Ibn Hazm shows that the Mutazalites were a group of rationalists who judged all Islamic beliefs by theoretical reason and renounced those that related to all that lay beyond the reach of reason. They raised the problems of freewill and determinism, the attributes of God, the nature of the soul, the createdness of the Koran, etc. In sum, an endless chain of polemics was started by them in the Muslim society to such extent that Islam began to be assailed both from inside and outside. The situation was fraught with great danger for the faith. When the various forces arrayed themselves against the extremism of the rationalists, the orthodox **ulema** also reacted against them negatively.

#### **The Rasail Ikhwan as-Safa**

The Abbasid caliph Mamun (d. 218/833) also patronized philosophy and professed Mutazalism. It was an interesting trend among the educated elite to drift towards Greek philosophy and ultimately a bulk of the contradictions raised among the Muslims in interpreting Islamic practices. It must be known on this juncture that the intellect is an indispensable faculty in man, but despite this, its power of penetration has a definite limit. It may enjoy apparent supremacy and mastery in certain fields, but there are many things which are baffling and incomprehensible to it. The intellect cannot grasp a thing as a whole and its entirety. Its range of operation is limited, and therefore a true spiritual master is needed to guide a proper method.

When the independent philosophical trend was perceived a threat to the Islamic **Shariah** from liberal sciences, a knot of earnest thinkers began to flock in a house in Basra at a fixed season to reconcile the philosophy and religion. They were the **Ikhwan** most probably an agency or organ of the Ismaili mission. They tried to evolve a new synthesis in order to save Islamic teachings from being swept away by the new flood of knowledge. Sayed Amir Ali

writes in **"The Spirit of Islam"** (London, 1955, p. 432) that, "It was at this epoch of travail and sorrow for all lovers of truth that a small body of thinkers formed themselves into a Brotherhood to keep alive the lamp of knowledge among the Muslims; to introduce a more healthy tone among the people, to arrest the downward course of the Muslims towards ignorance and fanaticism, in fact, to save the social fabric from utter ruin. They called themselves the Brothers of Purity, **Ikhwan-as-Safa**."

The Arabic phrase **"Ikhwan as-Safa"** has been variously translated by orientalist as **"Brethren of Purity"** (R.A. Nicholson), **"The Pure Brethren"** (H.A.R. Gibb), **"Sincere Brethren"** (W. Montgomery Watt), **"Sincere Friends"** (G.E. Von Grunebaum), **"die lauterer Bruder"** (C. Brokelmann), **"die treuen Freunde"** (ibid), **"die aufrichtigen Bruder und treuen Freunde"** (G. Flugel), or **"les Freres de la Purete"** (A. Awa). The full name of the association was **Ikhwan al-Safa wa Khullan al-Wafa wa Ahl al-adi wa abna al-Hamd** (i.e., "The Brethren of Purity, the Faithful Friends, the Men of Justice and the Sons deserving praiseworthy Conduct"), a name which was suggested to them by the chapter of the **"Ring-Necked Dove"** in **Kalimah wa Dimnah**. Different explanations are offered for the appellation, **Ikhwan as-Safa**. Nicholson and Levy write on the authority of Ibn Qifti (d. 646/1248) that its title is derived from their declaration that the Islamic **Shariah** in their time had become defiled with ignorance and adulterated with errors, and the only way to purify it was by means of philosophy. Tibawi rather than Goldziher was therefore closer to the truth when he observed that the name **"Ikhwan as-Safa"** was chosen as an imitation of the Sufi tendency to associate their name with **safa** (purity).

It is said that the members of the **Ikhwan as-Safa** formed a sort of Masonic Lodge, who lived in the Lower Mesopotamian river port of Basra; debating on literature, religion, philosophy and science. The association or club kept their proceedings concealed, and none were admitted. They were classed into four grades according to their moral and age, rather elevation of soul. The first grade consisted of young men between 15 and 30 years of age, who were initiated into complete obedience to their teachers. The second grade included men between 30 and 40 years, who were given secular education and awareness of philosophy



as well. To the third grade belonged men between the ages of 40 and 50 who had a more adequate knowledge of divine law working in the universe. The fourth grade comprised men over 50 years, who were supposed to have an insight into the reality of things. Their philosophical meetings took place three evenings each month at the start, middle and sometimes between 25th and the end of the month. They also celebrated three major feasts in the year, and both the meetings and feasts were closely related and coincided with the entry of the sun into three Zodiacal Signs of the Ram (*Aries*), the Scorpion (*Cancer*) and the Balance (*Libra*). These feasts were also co-related with the Islamic feasts of Id al-Fitr, Id al-Adha and Id al-Ghadir. They also held special gathering (*majlis*), each one on every twelve days. This secret association has left behind a standing monument of its achievements in an encyclopaedia, known as "*Ikhwan as-Safa*", comprising of 52 epistles (*rasail*) with the following topics:-

- 14 epistles on Mathematics.
- 17 epistles on Natural Sciences.
- 10 epistles on Psychological and Rational Sciences.
- 11 epistles on Theological Sciences.

It also classified the science in three major groups as under:-

- a) **Mathematics:** includes theory of number, geometry, astronomy, geography, music, theoretical and practical arts, ethics and logic.
- b) **Physics:** includes matter, form, motion, time, space, sky, generation, minerals, planets, animals, human body, senses of life and death, microcosm, pleasure, pain and language.
- c) **Metaphysics:** divided into psycho-rationalism and theology.
  - i) psychics, rationalistic, being, macrocosm, mind, love, resurrection and causality.



- ii) belief, faith, divine law, prophethood, etc.

The Epistles of the *Ikhwan* occupy a place in the first rank of Arabic literature. It is also the great treasure house of Sufic thought. For example, it says: "Know, O brother, that your soul is potentially an angel, and can become One in actuality if you follow the path of the prophets and the masters of the divine laws." (*Rasail* 4th vol., p. 122), and also "All creation will ultimately return to Him since He is the source of their very existence, substance, immortality and perfection" (*Rasail* 3rd vol., p. 285).

The Epistles were distributed in various mosques of Baghdad. It played an important role by attempting a creative synthesis of Greek philosophy and the doctrines of Islam, giving a new dimension to the religion. It attracted the best intellectuals of its time and saved Islam from the heretical inroads that were preying upon it. It aimed to impart that if the *tawil* is carefully studied similarities with philosophical tools, the essence of the Islamic teachings can be easily discovered logically. It must be known that it greatly impacted the rationalists and after 270/850, even the Mutazalites became more and more a small coterie of academic theologians cutt off from the masses of the people and exercising no more influence on the further course of Islamic thought.

The compiler of *Ikhwan as-Safa* concealed his identity so skillfully that modern scholarship has spilled much ink in trying to trace the members of group. Using vivid metaphor, the members referred to themselves as "sleepers in the cave" (*Rasail* 4th, p. 18). In one place they gave as their reason for hiding their secrets from the people, not fear of earthly rulers nor trouble from the common populace, but a desire to protect their God-given gifts (*Rasail* 4th, p. 166). Yet they were well aware that their esoteric teachings might provoke unrest, and the calamities suffered by the successors of the Prophet were a good reason to remain hidden until the right day came for them to emerge from their cave and wake from their long sleep (*Rasail* 4th, p. 269). To live safely, it was



necessary for their doctrines to be cloaked. Ian Richard Netton, however writes in **"Muslim Neoplatonists"** (London, 1982, p. 80) that, "The Ikhwan's concepts of exegesis of both Quran and Islamic tradition were tinged with the esoterism of the Ismailis." Strangely enough, in dealing with the doctrines of Qadariya and Sabaeans of Harran, the Epistles do not mention the Ismailism. Yet it was the Ismailis, perhaps more than any other, which had the most profound effect on the structure and vocabulary of the Epistles. Almost the average scholars have attempted to show that the *Ikhwan* (brothers) were definitely Ismailis. A.A.A. Fyzee (1899-1981), for instance, writes in **"Religion in the Middle East"**, (ed. by A.J. Arberry, Cambridge, 1969, 2nd vol., p. 324) that, "The tracts are clearly of Ismaili origin; and all authorities, ancient and modern, are agreed that the Rasail constitute the most authoritative exposition of the early form of the Ismaili religion." According to Yves Marquet, "It seems indisputable that the Epistles represent the state of Ismaili doctrine at the time of their compositions" (vide, **"Encyclopaedia of Islam"**, 1960, p. 1071) Bernard Lewis in **"The Origins of Ismailism"** (London, 1940, p. 44) was more cautious than Fyzee, ranking the Epistles among books which, though "closely related to Ismailism" may not actually have been Ismaili, despite their *batini* inspiration. Ibn Qifti (d.646/1248), reporting in the 7th/13th century in **"Tarikh-i Hukama"** (p. 82) that, "Opinions differed about the authors of the Epistles. Some people attributed to an Alid Imam, proffering various names, whereas other put forward as author some early Mutazalite theologians."

Tibawi in **"Ikhwan as-Safa and their Rasail"** (p. 37) has aptly linked their content to the draft of deliberations by a learned society composed by a well educated secretary, and this could be very close to the truth. It is certainly possible that the Epistles could be the work of one author only, for there are significant lapses from the usual plural mode of address into the first person singular. It also appears that the Epistles were not completely authored by a specific person, but it was the outcome of the intellectual deliberations of the learned thinkers inspired from the close directive of the specific person. It may also be possible that the specific author had been referred the deliberations in writing for approval, who had edited and deleted the irrelevant

portions, and projected into different Epistles. When the Epistles had been circulated widely, the secret club founded in Basra and its branches were liquidated with a view that their secret mission had been accomplished.

Among the Syrian Ismailis, the earliest reference of the Epistles and its relation with the Ismailis is given in "**Kitab Fusul wa'l Akhbar**" by Nurudin bin Ahmad (d. 233/849). Another important work, "**al-Usul wa'l-Ahakam**" by Abul Ma'ali Hatim bin Imran bin Zuhra (d. 498/1104), quoted by Arif Tamir in "**Khams Rasa'il Ismailiyya**" (Salamia, 1956, p. 120), writes that, "These **dais**, and other **dais** with them, collaborated in composing long Epistles, fifty-two in number, on various branches of learning." It implies the Epistles being the product of the joint efforts of the Ismaili **dais**.

Among the Yemenite traces, the earliest reference of the Epistles is found in "**Sirat-i Ibn Hawshab**" by Garar bin Mansur al-Yamen, who lived between 270/883 and 360/970, and writes, "He (Imam Taqi Muhammad) went through many a difficulty and fear and the destruction of his family, whose description cannot be lengthier, until he issued (**ansa'a**) the Epistles and was contacted by a man called Abu Gafir from among his **dais**. He charged him with the mission as was necessary and asked him to keep his identity concealed." This source not only asserts the connection of the Epistles with the Ismailis, but also indicates that the Imam himself was not the sole author (**sahib** or **mu'allif**), but only the issuer or presenter (**al-munsi**). It suggests that the text of the philosophical deliberations was given a final touching by the Imam, and the approved text was delivered to Abu Gafir to be forwarded possibly to the **Ikhwan** in Basra secretly. Since the orthodox circles and the ruling power had portrayed a wrong image of Ismailism, the names of the compilers were concealed. The prominent members of the secret association seem to be however, Abul Hasan al-Tirmizi; Abdullāh bin Mubarak, Abdullāh bin Hamdan, Abdullāh bin Maymun, Sa'id bin Hussain etc. The other Yemenite source connecting the Epistles with the Ismailis was the writing of Ibrahim bin al-Hussain al-Hamidi (d. 557/1162), who compiled "**Kanz al-Walad**." After him, there followed "**al-Anwar al-Latifa**" by Muhammad bin Tahir (d. 584/1188), "**Tanbih al-Ghafilin**" by Hatim bin Ibrahim (d. 596/1199), "**Damigh al-Batil wa haft**



**al-Munazil**" by Ali bin Muhammad bin al-Walid al-Anf (d. 612/1215), "**Risalat al-Wahida**" by Hussain bin Ali al-Anf (d. 667/1268) and "**Uyun'l-Akhbar**" by Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) etc.

Virtually, nothing is known in detail about the Ismailis during the veiled era, and it seems that most of the renowned Ismailis had adopted **taqiya**. According to "**Ikhwan as-Safa**" (**Rasail** 21st., p. 166), "Know, that among us there are kings, princes, khalifs, sultans, chiefs, ministers, administrators, tax agents, treasurers, officers, chamberlains, notables, nobles, servants of kings and their military supporters. Among us too there are merchants, artisans, agriculturists and stock breeders. There are builders, landowners, the worthy and wealthy, gentlefolk and possessors of all many virtues. We also have persons of culture, of science, of piety and of virtue. We have orators, poets, eloquent persons, theologians, grammarians, tellers of tales and purveyors of lore, narrators of traditions, readers, scholars, jurists, judges, magistrates and ecstasies. Among us too there are philosophers, sages, geometers, astronomers, naturalists, physicians, diviners, soothsayers, casters of spells and enchantments, interpreters of dreams, alchemists, astrologers, and many other sorts, too many to mention."

The preceding inventory suggests that the Ismaili faith had been penetrated privily in the people of all walks of life. Joel Carmichael writes in "**The Shaping of the Arabs**" (London, 1969, p. 386) that, "The Ismaili sect seems to have elaborated its doctrines in such a way as to attract a great part of the social discontent into its own channels and to have had immense appeal for the common people who were suffering so much from the social afflictions of the period. Beginning with the substantial peasant support and gradually infiltrating the urban workers, especially the craftsmen, with their revolutionary ideas, the Ismailis seem to have created some of the Islamic craft guilds."

During **dawr-i satr**, the Ismaili **dais** preached that an Imam in the descent of Jafar Sadik would manifest in near future as a promised Mahdi. The fragment of this prediction is also sounded in "**Ikhwan as-Safa**" (2nd vol., p. 290) that: "We hope that there will appear from our

community the Imam, the Mahdi, who is the expected one (*al-muntazar*) from the house of Prophet Muhammad."

Prof. Masudul Hasan writes in "**History of Islam**" (Lahore, 1987, 1st vol., p. 486) that, "Al-Habib (Taqi Muhammad) had his headquarters at Salamiah near Hims in Syria, and from there he sent missionaries in all directions to propagate the Ismaili creed and enrol adherents."

The period of Taqi Muhammad is also noted for the several skilled exponents of Sufi thought, such as Harith Muhasibi, Dhun al-Nun Misri (d. 243/859), Bayazid Bustami (d. 260/874), Junaid Baghdadi (d. 298/910), etc.

Taqi Muhammad exercised *taqiya* during the period of his Imamate to escape the snares of the Abbasids. A rhetorical reference to him is found in "**Rasail Ikhwan as-Safa**" (*Rasail* 4th, p. 199), indicating that the veiled Imam was apparent in reality.

Taqi Muhammad is reported to have died in 225/840 in Salamia after bequeathing the office of Imamate to his son, Hussain surnamed, Radi Abdullah. His another son, Muhammad surnamed Sa'id al-Khayr, whose posterity were living in Salamia and killed at the hands of the Qarmatians in 290/902.

#### **RADI ABDULLAH (225-268/840-881)**

Hussain bin Ahmad or Abu Abdullah, surnamed az-Zaki, known as Hussain ar-Radi, or Radi Abdullah (Servant of God who is satisfied and content), was born in 210/825 and assumed the Imamate in 225/840. He is also called Muhammad and al-Muqtada al-Hadi. His also kept his identity secret being represented by his *huffat*, Ahmad, surnamed al-Hakim.

Tabari (3rd vol., p. 2232) refers to his son, al-Mahdi under the name of Ibn al-Basri (the son of Basra), emphasising the connection of Radi Abdullah with southern Mesopotamia and the adjoining province of Khuzistan.

The Abbasid caliph al-Mutasim (218-227/833-842) was followed in succession by al-Wasik (227-232/842-847), al-Mutawakkil (232-247/847-861), al-Muntasir (247-248/861-



862), al-Mustain (248-252/862-866), al-Mutaz (252-255/866-869), al-Muhtadi (255-256/869-870) and al-Mutamid (256-279/870-892).

Radi Abdullah is celebrated in devoting time to complete the task of his father, his teachings and institutions. In his time, the faith of the Ismailis spread by leaps and bounds with galloping speed through out the length and breath of Arabia.

Radi Abdullah was an erudite scholar and is celebrated to have epitomised "**Ikhwan as-Safa**" into an instructive synopsis (**al-Jamia**). Its full name was "**ar-Risalat al-Jamia**" (the comprehensive epistle). It served as a substitute for the Epistle of "**Ikhwan as-Safa**" and was intended for private circulation among the more advanced members of the groups. The **al-Jamia** is the backbone of the Epistles, which was further summarized in "**Risalat al-Jamiat al-Jamia an al-Zubdah min Rasail Ikhwan as-Safa**" (the condensation of the comprehensive epistles, or the cream of the epistles of Ikhwan as-Safa).

It must be known that the monograph of "**ar-Risalat al-Jamia**" was awarded the first **Howard Bliss Prize** by the American University of Beirut in 1929, and was subsequently published serially in the Journal of that institution, vide "**al-Kulliyat**" (vol. xvii, 1930-1).

#### **Ahmad bin Abdullah bin Maymun**

He was born in 204/828 and had joined the Ismaili mission at youth. He conducted his activities in Iran and Iraq. His father had sent him with a deputation to make a survey in Yamen, where he collected the informations for the headquarters and also travelled as far as Bahrain. After his father's death in 260/874, he returned to Salamia, where Radi Abdullah promoted him to the rank of **hujjat**. He was known in Salamia as Ahmad al-Hakim, and died in 275/888. He was a man of great ability and is credited with having surveyed the above regions for forthcoming mission works.

## Mission of Ibn Hawshab in Yemen

Radi Abdullah had dispatched his *dais* in all directions, the most acclaimed among them was Abul Qassim Hasan bin Farah bin Hawshab, generally known by the epithet, *Mansur al-Yamen* (the victorious one of the Yamen). Ibn Hawshab was originally a Twelver, and is said to have spent most of time in a secluded spot on the bank of Euphrates. In such state, he is reported to have met Radi Abdullah and discoursed with him on religion. Imam left him after promising to see him again. Ibn Hawshab was impressed by his chance meeting with the Imam, and was eager to further meeting. After an anxious wait for several days, the Imam did not appear again, thus he became restless and began to search him. Despite his frantic efforts to locate the Imam's whereabouts, he could not trace him. After sometimes, he accidentally met the Imam's deputy, and through him, Ibn Hawshab eventually succeeded in reaching the Imam's presence. Radi Abdullah answered his queries to his satisfaction and assuaged his doubts, and at length he espoused Ismailism. Radi Abdullah imparted him the knowledge of Islamic creed, tenets and esoterism.

When the Imam found that Ibn Hawshab was firmly grounded in Ismaili faith and groomed enough for the responsibility of its promulgation, he jointly entrusted him and his colleague, Ibn Fazal, with the task of Ismaili mission in Yamen. Before they set off on their venture, Radi Abdullah summoned them in a private audience and urged to respect each other, and avoid any sort of religious difference. He also entrusted Ibn Hawshab with a voluminous tome which comprehensively dwelled upon the exoteric and esoteric aspects of Ismaili faith. Thus, being equipped with verbal as well as written guidances, both of them set forth on their mission to Yamen in 266/880. Mecca was their first destination, and accosted the pilgrim caravan from Yamen. They proceeded at last to Yamen, and after reaching, both of them separated. Ibn Hawshab headed towards the southern region, and focused his mind on the village of Adanla'a, thickly populated by the Shiites. He married to a local woman and settled down in Adanla'a under strict *taqiya*. He succeeded to convert the inhabitants. When he found the time appropriate to reveal his identity, he discreetly started his mission, inviting the people to the Ismaili fold and accepting oath of allegiance on behalf of Radi Abdullah and his successor. On other side, Ibn Fazal also



followed similar tract, and succeeded in winning the sympathy and adherence of the people of Saroyafoa.

Ibn Hawshab had managed to take possession of a stronghold constructed on a hillock and made it his headquarters. He arranged military training for his followers. He also took possession of Jabal al-Jusaysah and Jabal al-Maswar. Ibn Hawshab however assured the people that his campaigns were neither after booty nor personal glory, but these were meant to promulgate true Islamic message through Ismailism. Finally, he conquered Sana'a, the capital of Yamen, and exiled the ruling tribe of Banu Laydir, and established Ismaili authority in Yamen.

The Ismaili mission reached the apex of its influence in Yamen, from where Ibn Hawshab dispatched many *dais* to the farthest corners. Thus, Yamen became a vital zone and an important hub of Ismaili *dawa*. In the time of Radi Abdullah, Abu Abdullah al-Shi'i had embraced Ismailism, who was sent to Yamen for further training. Ibn Hawshab was loyal to the Imam till his last breath and died in 302/914. While reading his biography, we will greatly move the streak of intellectual honesty which ran through his very nature.

#### **Khalaf al-Hallaj**

Abdullah bin Maymun (d. 260/874) is reported to have also sent a *dai* called Khalaf al-Hallaj, the cotton-dresser to Ray in about the middle of the third century with the instructions: "Go to Ray, because there are many Shias in Ray, Aba, Qumm, Kashan and the provinces of Tabaristan and Mazandaran, who will listen to your call." Khalaf went to the neighbourhood of Ray and resided in the district of Fashafuya, in a village called Kulin. He examined the local situation and started his secret mission. His secret activities however attracted attention, therefore he moved to nearby city of Ray, where he died. He is remembered as the founder of Ismaili *dawa* in Iran, and the converted people locally became known as Khalafiyya. He was succeeded by his son Ahmad, whose chief disciple was Ghiyath from the village of Kulin.

Radi Abdullah continued his peaceful living in Salamia, associating the local Hashimites. He also kept on good terms with the local governor. He seems to have been

active in scholarly matters without a bearing in the politics. He was rolling in plenty; yet he contented himself with plain dress and simple food. He was humble in disposition and very hospitable. He is said to have granted allowances from his wealth to the poor and disabled persons in Salamia without discrimination between the Ismailis and non-Ismailis. Tradition has it that he was fond of horsing, shooting, hunting and archery, which had been also a favourite pastime of the Hashimites in Syria.

When Radi Abdullah felt that the shadows of his death were closing upon him, he consigned the office of Imamate to his son, Muhammad al-Mahdi, saying, according to Ibn Khaldun that: "You are the promised Mahdi. You would take refuge in a remote land after my death, where you would have to submit to hard trials." (vide "Tarikh", Karachi, 1966, 5th vol., p. 93).

Radi Abdullah died in 268/881 at Salamia while he was travelling in the vicinity, appointing before his death as his trustee his own brother, Muhammad bin Ahmad, surnamed Sa'id al-Khayr as the guardian of his son, al-Mahdi. His death in 268/881 remarkably marks the termination of *dawr-i satr* (concealment period) in the Ismaili history.

#### Hidden Imams in *Dawr-i Satr*

It is worth mentioning that the most important aspect of the Ismailism, which deserves serious treatment is to keep everything secret under the garb of *taqiya* connected with their faith, tending their enemies to contrived baseless stories and myths against them. The veiled period (*dawr-i satr*) thus became benign climate for them to cultivate different wrong genealogies of the Imams. Thus, the ancestry of the Fatimids has confounded the students of history due to divergent accounts given by the historians, which had been developed round the persons of the "hidden Imams" (*aima'i masturin*) during concealment period. The widespread Abbasid propaganda, the derogatory attitude of Sunnite and Shiite authors make difficult to decide one way or the other about the legitimacy of their claim. In the light of the Fatimid policy, we are inclined to believe that the Fatimids deliberately seem to have avoided discussing the matter of their ancestry. It



emerges from this a safe conclusion that it was a preconceived plan of the Fatimids to keep their genealogy a top secret, owing to the intricate and dark passages it passed through and due to contradictions involved in the adoption of assumed names by the hidden Imams.

The variety of lineages suggested by the writers amounted to several hundreds, and the lineage between Wafi Ahmad and Radi Abdullah alone has been altered in no less than fifty ways. Since the hidden Imams had assumed different names in various regions to outsiders, in order to evade the vigilance of the Abbasids, the historians derived their informations on hearsay. The Ismaili Imams of that period were too cautious to disclose their true names; instead they assumed names, other than their own and used for themselves the names of their *dais*. The hidden Imams, for the most part, could not pass the settled lives in specific places, but were known by names other than their own, sometimes by names of their *dais* and *hujjats* as a precautionary measure designed to ward off the danger of their persons being discovered.

The absence of detailed biographies of the three hidden Imams is also the result of their having lived in strict disguise. This seems quite probable, if one realizes the situation very seriously. What in fact would the popular memory preserve about the Imams when these were living ostensibly as local merchants, carrying on their business, associating with friends, directing their followers through secret agency of mission, marrying, educating their children, etc. The memory of these traditions is very meagre, retaining only reminiscences of the most important names and events. Similarly, the Ismaili *dais* also disguised as pious merchants of slightly lower standing, also left behind very trivial traces. Thus the leaving of any trace of their activities in writing was obviously avoided as much as possible. W. Ivanow writes in "The Rise of the Fatimids" (Calcutta, 1942, pp. 43-44) that, "Thus the long blank period in the story of the Imams, living in such conditions, cannot reasonably be taken as valid proof of the falsity of their claims to continuous succession from their original ancestor, Ismail b. Jafar."

Even though the period of concealment and fear of the Abbasids were no longer in existence, the Fatimids were insistent not to divulge the names of their earlier three

hidden Imams, the link between Imam al-Mahdi and Imam Muhammad bin Ismail. It seems quite possible that these Imams had assumed names for more than one time, and hid their true names, and were too complicated to be clarified. The followers also seem to have given much priority on the Imam of the time, descending from Muhammad bin Ismail. This secrecy however led too much confusion and made it too hard to locate the real names of the hidden Imams. It is also a striking feature that these three hidden Imams are not mentioned by the early renowned Ismaili scholars, viz. Abu Hatim ar-Razi (d. 322/934), Qadi Noman (d. 363/974), Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen (d. 365/975) and other authors of 4th/10th century.

Commenting the aggressive attitude of the historians, Ivanow writes in **"The Rise of the Fatimids"** (Calcutta, 1942, p. 29) that, "With their predominantly hostile tendency, each author vie with the others in inventing something more humiliating and scandalous for the dynasty." The diversity of the names of the three hidden Imams can be judged from the following list of some special surname and epithet, whose implications were intelligible only to the trusted followers, indicating a causative factor of the contradictions in the sources:

<b>ABDULLAH</b>	:	Radi, Ahmad, Abu Muhammad, <b>al-Wafi</b>
<b>AHMAD</b>	:	Wafi, Muhammad, Abul Hussain, <b>at-Taqi.</b>
<b>HUSSAIN</b>	:	Muhammad, Taqi, Ahmad, Abu Abchillah, az-Zaki, al-Muqtada al-Hadi, <b>ar-Radi.</b>

The fact about the Imams assuming the above code names in one or more times can be derived from the letter of Imam al-Muizz (341-365/953-975), which he routed in 354/965 to his **dai** in Sind, named Jaylam bin Shayban, which is preserved in the 5th volume of **"Uyun'l-Akhbar"** by Idris Imaduddin. According to **"Expose de la Religion des Druzes"** (Paris, 1838, p. 252) by de Sacy, "These men (hidden Imams) obliged to seek concealment, took sometimes one name and sometimes another, in order to shelter from the pursuit of their enemies." John Nicholson also writes in **"Establishment of the Fatemide Dynasty in Northern Africa"** (1840, p. 12) that, "They themselves have taken different names at different times in order to elude discovery."



According to "an-Naqdu'l-Khafi" by Hamza (cf. "Exposé de la Religion des Druzes" by Silverstre de Sacy, Paris, 1838, p. 74) that the Fatimid Caliph, al-Muizz had once said: "I am the seventh in the second heptad." As is well known, al-Muizz was the 14th Imam in the second heptad. The Imams of the first heptad were seven and the seventh one was Muhammad bin Ismail, and the Imams followed after him were also seven to make al-Muizz as the 14th Imam. Hence, the 13th Imam was al-Mansur, the 12th was al-Qaim and 11th was al-Mahdi. It therefore emerges conclusively that there must have been **three Imams** between al-Mahdi and Muhammad bin Ismail, whose names were Abdullah (**Wafi Ahmad**), Ahmad (**Taqi Muhammad**) and Hussain (**Radi Abdullah**) from 8th to 10th in the sequence. W. Ivanow writes in "Ismailis and Qarmatians" (**JEBRAS**, Bombay, 1940, p. 74) that, "Being the fourth Fatimid Caliph, al-Muizz was the seventh Imam after Muhammad bin Ismail. Thus this formally rejects the theory of the Fatimids descending from Abdullah bin Maymun."

The statement of al-Muizz however does not contain the explicit names of the "**three hidden Imams**", but before that, it is known that al-Mahdi had sent a letter in Yamen, which reached there after his arrival in Mahdiya in 308/921. Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen (d. 365/975) had quoted the letter in his "**al-Fara'id wa Hudud ad-Din**" (pp. 13-19), wherein the names of the **three hidden Imams** have been mentioned, viz. Abdullah, Ahmad and Muhammad. Dr. Sami Nasib Makarem writes in "**The Hidden Imams of the Ismailis**" (**al-Abbath**, 21, 1969, p. 24) in this context that, "If al-Mahdi's letter is authentic, it is one of the oldest documents that have come to light until now, and, consequently a most reliable document, especially because it was written by the Caliph al-Mahdi himself."

Among the later Ismaili historians, Ahmad bin Muhammad an-Naysaburi, the author of "**Istitaru'l-Imam**", compiled under Imam al-Aziz (365-386/975-996) seems first to have mentioned the names of the **three hidden Imams**. Later on, such references appear in the works of Hamiduddin Kirmani (d. 408/1017), in his "**Tanbihu'l-Hadi wa'l-Mustahdi**" and "**ar-Risalat al-Wa'iza**". Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) in "**Uyun'l-Akhbar**" and Hasan bin Nuh Broachi (d. 939/1533) in "**Kitabu'l Azhar**", had also advanced brief biographies of the three hidden Imams.

In sum, R. Strothmann writes in **"Gnosis-Texte der Ismailiten"** (Gottingen, 1943, p. 59) that, "The three Imams followed by Muhammad bin Ismail were in concealment: Abdullah al-Rida, Ahmad al-Wafi and Hussain al-Taqi, and finally the beginning of the Fatimid dynasty with al-Mahdi."





**MUHAMMAD AL-MAHDI (268-322/881-934)**

He was born on Monday, the 12th Shawal, 260/July 31, 873 in the town, called Askar-i Mukram (or *Askar wa Makrum*), situated between the rivers of Masrukan and Shushtar. It is to be noted that Askar-i Mukram took its name from the camp (*askar*) of Mukram, an Arab commander sent into the Khuzistan by Hajjaj bin Yousuf.

His name was Abdullah al-Mahdi and assumed the Imamate at the age of 8 years. His father, Radi Abdullah had assigned the control of organization to his uncle, Sa'id al-Khayr. By the time al-Mahdi became young, and married a daughter of his uncle, who died after some time. On that juncture, al-Mahdi was at the age of discernment to take over complete control of organization in his own hands.

The first thing that al-Mahdi did was to summon *dai* Abul Hussain bin al-Aswad and insisted him to stay in the town of Hammah, and said to him, "I appoint you to be the head of all *dais*; whomsoever you make a headman, he shall be the headman, and whomsoever you make a subordinate, he shall be a subordinate. You shall reside on the road to Egypt." With this new mandate, *dai* Abul Hussain reorganised the mission at his disposal.

Jafar bin Ali, the chamberian of the Imam's household, has left behind a memoirs, entitled "*Sirat-i Jafar*" (comp. 346/957), and it can be seen from it that al-Mahdi was known in Salamia as a wealthy prince. He lived in the town in a huge building which had an underground passage dug underneath. This secret passage covered a distance of twelve miles and opened out at an unscathed distance from the gate of the town, its entrance at the other end being always kept covered with earth. The subterranean passage was intended for the *dais* and other followers in the confidence of al-Mahdi, and the entrance was opened to them at night only.

The backward Katama Berber land of the farther west of North Africa was the land of the lost cause of Islam, where Imam Jafar Sadik is reported to have sent his two

missionaries, Halwani and Abu Sufiani, who laid the foundation of the Ismaili *dawa* in North Africa, and promulgated among the aboriginal Berbers in the territory covered by modern Tripoli and Tunisia. Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406) writes in his "*Tarikh*" (5th vol., p.89) that, "Jafar Sadik sent his missionaries to Maghrib, saying that it was a barren soil and that it ought to be watered in expectation of the person who would come to sow the real seed." We must not lose a sight of the fact that it was a prediction for al-Mahdi, who made an extensive journey and manifested in Maghrib, where he founded the Fatimid Caliphate.

#### **Abu Abdullah al-Shi'i**

Abu Abdullah al-Hussain bin Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Zakariya, commonly known as Abu Abdullah al-Shi'i was hailed from Kufa, where he had been an inspector of weights and measures, and was also an ascetic of Shiite inclinations, having been converted along with his brother, Abul Abbas bin Ahmad to Ismailism by *dai* Firuz. Realizing his potential, Imam Radi Abdullah had sent him to Ibn Hawshab in Yamen for further training in Ismaili esoteric doctrines as well as affairs of the state. Abu Abdullah stayed in Yamen with Ibn Hawshab for a year.

The Ismaili mission had its roots in the era of Imam Jafar Sadik. As early as the year 145/762, the two *dais*, called Halwani and Abu Sufiani had been dispatched to the Maghrib. They settled among the Berbers in the land of Katama and summoned the local populace to the cause of Ahl-al-Bait, and converted a bulk of people to their doctrines. Abu Sufiani died a few years later, but Halwani lived for a long time. Knowing the death of Halwani and Abu Sufiani in Maghrib, Ibn Athir (d. 630/1234) writes in "*Kamil fi't Tarikh*" (Beirut, 1975, 8th vol., p 31) that Ibn Hawshab told to Abu Abdullah: "Our missionaries have thoroughly ploughed the land of Maghrib, making it arable. None is capable except you after them. You prepare yourself now for Maghrib."

Abu Abdullah set out from Yamen in 279/892, accompanied by another *dai* Abdullah bin Abul Malahif. He arrived in Mecca during pilgrimage, where he contacted the Katama pilgrims of Maghrib lodging at Mina, and impressed them with his



vast knowledge about the merits of Ahl-al-Bait. The pilgrims were gladdened to know that Abu Abdullah was heading towards Egypt, which was on their route to the Maghrib. While travelling with them, Abu Abdullah inquired at great length about their country in order to judge the suitability of his mission. He, thus gained the admiration of his fellow-travellers. After a short stay in Egypt, he reached Maghrib in the Katama homeland on 14th Rabi I, 280/June 3, 893.

The name *maghrib* (the land of sunset) was given by the Arabs to that virgin part of Africa, which European have called *Barbery* or *Africa Minor*, (the French *Afrique du Nord*), and then North Africa. In north it is bordered by the Mediterranean, and in the south by the Sahara desert. In the west it is extended as far as the Atlantic Ocean, and in the east it extends as far as the borders of Egypt. The *jazirat al-maghrib* i.e., "the island of the setting sun," consists of that part of the North Africa, which includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Cyrenaica, and Tripolitania.

The word *Berber* is derived from Latin *barbari*, an appellation equivalent to the English "barbarian", which the Romans used to call peoples who spoke neither Latin nor Greek. The social organisation of the Berbers or Katama Berbers had been tribal from the earliest known period of their history. Ibn Khaldun distinguished three major divisions among the Berbers, i.e., the Zanata, Sanhaja and Masmuda. The Zanata, whose original home was in Tripolitania and southern Tunisia, were predominately nomadic. The Sanhaja were as widely dispersed in the Maghrib as the Zanata. The Sanhaja were split into two main branches: the Kabylia Berbers, who were sedentary, and the nomadic Zanaga, whose traditional home had been the western Sahara desert. The Masmuda were the sedentary Berbers of Morocco. Hence, it must be known that the Katama Berbers had embraced Ismailism and took prominent part towards the foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate in Maghrib.

Abu Abdullah established his base in Ikjan (the *Tzajjan* of the Romans) near Satif, a mountain stronghold that dominated the pilgrimage route, where he spent seven years in propagating the cause of Ahl-al-Bait among the old people as well as the youths of the Berber tribes. Very soon the tribesmen in the vicinity began to trek to Ikjan.

He completely swayed a large body of Berber tribesmen amongst whom the Katama tribe was very prominent and powerful. Abu Abdullah, however, had to face many vicissitudes, sometimes meeting with success and sometimes facing defeats, but he never wavered in his resolve.

In the interim, the report of the tremendous popularity of Abu Abdullah began to filter through to the Aghlabid ruler, Ibrahim bin Ahmad, who wrote to his governor of Meila to subdue Abu Abdullah, but of no avail. Meanwhile, Abu Abdullah, feeling full confident of his strength, began to wave of conquests. Ibrahim bin Ahmad dispatched a large army in 289/901 under his grandson, who made success to some extent. A number of Katama leaders, wary of Aghlabid inroads into their country, sought to banish Abu Abdullah and in the ensuing battle, he gained upper hand. Ibrahim bin Ahmad died in 291/903 and was succeeded by his son, Ziadatullah, a man indolent and entirely devoted to pleasure. Abu Abdullah captured Tahirt and his followers built living quarters around it. Immediately, he set on laying the foundations of administration for his principality and divided the Katama into seven units, each with its own army with wide powers. After consolidating his position in the Katama country, Abu Abdullah embarked on his second phase of conquests. He advanced on Meila which surrendered after a brief resistance. He then marched on Satif. With the conquest of this city, Abu Abdullah openly declared the purpose of his mission that:- "I am propagating for God, the Almighty, the Exalted, for His Book and for Imam al-Mahdi from the progeny of the Apostle of God."

Abu Abdullah's success in overcoming the major internal opposition movements as well as conquering one territory after another at last awakened Ziadatullah from his slumber. He sent a large force to curb Abu Abdullah's power. The two armies met at Billizma. This new encounter resulted in two more cities, Billizma and Tubna, falling into the hands of Abu Abdullah.

Abu Abdullah was now feeling confident that the mission organisation as well as the basic framework of the state were clearly emerging with good result. He, therefore, deputed some prominent leaders of Katama tribe led by his brother, Abul Abbas in Salamia, and sent an invitation to al-Mahdi for Maghrib to take over the reigns of government.



## Journey of al-Mahdi

Scanning the narrative of "Istitaru'l-Imam" by Ahmad bin Ibrahim an-Naysaburi, who lived under Imam al-Aziz (d. 386/996), it appears that a certain **dai** Abu Muhammad died at Kufa in 285/898, had left three sons, viz. Abul Kassim, Abu Mahzul and Abul Abbas. Abul Kassim himself took over the charge of the mission in Kufa, but Abul Hussain bin al-Aswad, the chief **dai** had dismissed Abul Kassim from the post and the latter, together with his two brothers, was furious. They wrote to al-Mahdi, complaining that Abul Hussain deprived them without any serious reason, but al-Mahdi sent no reply to them. The three brothers then conspired, making a sworn pact between themselves, to make a sudden attack on Salamia, and to kill Ibn Basri, who empowered Abul Hussain to commit such an offence on them. They also wanted, if possible, to kill Abul Hussain; if impossible, they intended to report to the government of Syria. News about this transpired to the **dai** Hamid bin Abbas and Ibn Abd residing at Baghdad. Some Hashimites also wrote to al-Mahdi, informing him that the sons of Abu Muhammad had conspired to kill him with his family. "If you are sitting" as they wrote, "then get up. The three brothers have already started, intending to kill you. If they do not succeed, they will expose you to Ahmad bin Tulun. They say that you are the enemy of the religion, and they want to expose your affairs. Do everything to save yourself without wasting a moment."

Apprehending lest the sons of **dai** Abu Muhammad and the Qarmatians would resort to the violent and stormy operations, al-Mahdi gave orders to prepare for a journey. He took with him only his son Abul Kassim, Jafar bin Ali, the Chamberlain, Ibn Barka and Tayyib, the tutor of Abul Kassim. He abandoned his residence with all that it contained: precious carpets, clothing, property, servants and also the family of his uncle and brother, male and female. He entrusted all his wealth, with his house, wares and granaries, to Hasan bin Mu'adh.

Hence, al-Mahdi quitted Salamia in a thick of insecure milieu in 286/899. He relinquished his house at the time of the evening prayer, unnoticed by any one and travelled the whole night escorted by an Arab and thirty other horsemen. He arrived at Hims in the morning. Sending back the Arab escort from Hims, al-Mahdi's caravan first left

for Damascus when Haroon bin Khamruya bin Ahmad bin Tulun (283-292/896-904) was the then governor of Syria. They continued to travel whole of that day and the next and arrived in Tiberias on the third. The long journey from Syria was beset with great perils, therefore he continued without a halt in Tiberias and went to Palestine and alighted in Ramla, and putting up with the governor, who was his devout follower.

Ramla was a town, 25 miles from Jerusalem and on the road between Syria and Egypt, covering an area of a square mile. Its chief gates were Darb Bir al-Askar, Darb Masjid Annaba, Darb Bait al-Makdis, Darb Bila, Darb Ludd, Darb Yafa, Darb Misr and Darb Ajun. Ramla was rich in fruits, especially figs and palms. It was famous for comfortable baths, commodious dwellings and broad streets.

In Ramla, al-Mahdi received the news that the three sons of Abu Muhammad had reached Salamia and were vainly searching for him. The three brothers continued searching for al-Mahdi for a whole year. In the interim, one of the brothers, Abul Abbas had returned to Iraq but Abul Kassim and Abu Mahzul remained in Salamia. They often visited Hammah stealthily, trying to find out from *da'i* Abul Hussain the informations about al-Mahdi and returning again to Salamia. When they realized that it was futile to find out anything from Abul Hussain, and that they could not trace al-Mahdi, who was lost for them, Abul Kassim, a real cheat, left, while Abu Mahzul continued to stay in Salamia.

Abul Kassim went to the tribe of Qasiyyun, giving them preference over other tribes. He brought them to his favour, such as Banu Malik, Banu Murid, Banu Hujayna, Banu Balwa, Banu Fakhdash, Banu Hudhayl and Banu Ziyad. These tribes swore allegiance to Abul Kassim and rose in rebellion. They marched against Tughuch bin Juff (283-293/896-906), the new governor of Syria, whom they defeated near the village, called Mazzatul Abai. The insurgents inflicted heavy loss on his force and besieged Damascus.

In the meantime, Abu Mahzul quitted Salamia and betook himself to Ramla, while his brother Abul Kassim remained before Damascus, repelling the attacks every day. In Ramla, he incidently met Jafar bin Ali in the market, while he was purchasing provisions. A man accompanied Abu



Mahzul identified Jafar bin Ali. He followed Jafar and entered the house with him, and sat in the entrance porch, bidding Jafar to convey his greetings to the Imam and to tell him that he must have an interview with him. If not, he would at once cry out and reveal the identity of the Imam to the public. So Jafar entered before al-Mahdi and told him what had happened. To this al-Mahdi replied, "Now that he has seen you and discovered us, better bring him in, as otherwise he may expose us." Abu Mahzul was brought before al-Mahdi. He bowed before the Imam and the latter received him kindly. Then Abu Mahzul said, "O my Lord, verily we left our houses, searching after you. Now praise be to God Who helped us to find you. My brother came with a force which besieges Damascus. I left him when he was on the point of taking it. Come back, because your position is so strong now. All purpose of our campaign was to satisfy you and to appease your anger, which was provoked by the machinations of Abul Hussain, who stirred up us against each other. And if you do not wish to come personally, write a letter to my brother, to appease him, as he is angry with me."

Imam al-Mahdi wrote a letter to his brother, asking him to forgive Abu Mahzul, and not to punish him in any way. In short, the sons of Abu Muhammad were impostors and had assumed the girdle of the Ismailism, and there came soon their end. About all these events, al-Mahdi who was staying in Ramla, was well informed. Tayyib, the tutor, was travelling between Salamia and Ramla, carrying the news. So al-Mahdi could see from Ramla what was going on with Abu Mahzul, and what he did after his retreat from Damascus to Salamia.

Jafar narrates in "*Sirat-i Jafar*" that, "I was waiting on al-Mahdi, together with Tayyib and Abu Yaqub at the table, at which al-Mahdi, the governor, al-Qaim, and Firuz were taking their food, when there entered a messenger, the same who had been sent to Damascus, carrying orders from Baghdad about our arrest, accompanied by the name and description of the appearance of al-Mahdi. The governor read the orders, and handed the paper to him. When the Imam read it also, the governor knelt before him, crying and kissing his feet, and al-Mahdi said to him: 'Keep quiet, do not cry. He, in whose hands my life is, will never permit them to catch us.'" So the governor of Ramla wrote to the governor of Damascus in reply to his above letter that no man answering the description had been

seen, and it was not known whether he had already passed the town. In case he had not yet passed, a watch would be kept for him on all roads.

Al-Mahdi had to prolong his stay in Ramla for about 2 years on account of the intensive searching of the Abbasids. Ibn Hammad (d. 628/1230) writes in his **"Akhbar al-Muluk Bani Ubayd wa Siyaratihim"** (Paris, 1927, p. 12) that, "The Abbasids were looking for al-Mahdi, sending letters to all the provincial capitals with his name and description, ordering that he be arrested as soon as he was discovered."

During one night in Ramla, according to **"Sirat-i Jafar,"** there was a shower of shooting stars, so al-Mahdi and his son, the governor and many other people ascended the roof of the house to look at the phenomenon. The town was filled with the shouts of the people. Al-Mahdi pressed with his hand the hand of the governor, and said that the phenomenon was a testimony of his high mission, and one of the signs of his success.

Al-Mahdi resumed his journey and effected his junction in Egypt, where he met **dai** Abu Ali al-Hussain bin Ahmad bin Daud bin Muhammad (d. 321/932), who had been made the chief of the treasury (**sahib bayt al-mal**) after the foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate in Maghrib. Imam told him not to accommodate him in his own house, or in the house of any one who was known as being connected with the Ismaili mission, but to arrange for him a place with a trusted outsider. Abu Ali al-Hasan therefore, caused the Imam to lodge with a certain Ibn Ayyas. The governor, Abu Musa Isa bin Muhammad Nushari had received a letter from the Abbasids for the arrest of al-Mahdi. He therefore, summoned Ibn Ayyas, and inquired about the **strange person** living with him. Ibn Ayyas, according to **"Sirat-i Jafar"** (p. 113) replied that the person staying with him, by God, was not suspicious in any way. He was a nobleman, a Hashimite, an important merchant, known by his learning, piety and wealth. And with regard to the man who was sought for, news had come that he had left for Yamen long before the arrival of Abbasid letter. The governor trusted what Ibn Ayyas said about his guest.



## Journey towards Maghrib

In Egypt, al-Mahdi abandoned the likely choice to go to Yamen as expected by his entourage. This turned out to be a very wise decision, since in Yamen he would have risked the Abbasid confrontation and the menace of the rebellious Qarmatians. On the eve of his departure from Egypt, al-Mahdi revealed his intention of going to Maghrib, and few persons who accompanied him had registered disappointment, notably *dai* Firuz. W. Ivanow (1886-1970) writes in "Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism" (Holland, 1952, pp. 13-14) that, "Before his move to the remote West, al-Mahdi, according to the Ismaili tradition, had the choice of going to the Yamen where Ibn Hawshab, his able *dai*, had great success. But al-Mahdi was a clever and talented politician who could realize that the Yamen was nothing but a backwater. He therefore preferred the more risky, yet more promising Maghrib, i.e., N.W. Africa. Here the diplomatic and political talent of the Fatimids was severely tested in their dealings with the Berber tribes. As with all nomads everywhere, these people had their own mentality, their own world of ideas."

While the caravan of al-Mahdi was stirring between Egypt and Tahuna, they were attacked by the Berbers, who looted the caravan and took away some baggages of Imam's books belonging to the Holy Koran, interpretations, history etc. It grieved al-Mahdi much more than other things. When later on, al-Qaim marched in his first campaign against Egypt in 301/913, he brought the brigands and recovered the lost books. According to "Iftitahu'd-Dawa" (comp. in 346/957), al-Mahdi said on that occasion: "Even if this campaign had been undertaken merely to regain these books, this would have been worth while."

The caravan of al-Mahdi went to Tripoli, whose governor made an unsuccessful attempt to arrest him. Al-Mahdi thus divided his caravan into two groups. He sent forward Abul Abbas towards the Katama tribe to gauge the situation as well as to make an advance tidings of his arrival. Abul Abbas reached Kairwan (old *Kairouan*, now in Tunisia) when the Aghlabid ruler, Ibrahim bin Ahmad had died in 291/903 and was succeeded by Zaidatullah. Abul Abbas was not able to escape suspicion, and was ultimately arrested and tried. He denied all connection with al-Mahdi, insisting that he was an ordinary merchant. He was, nevertheless, imprisoned and the news about this reached to al-Mahdi.

Al-Mahdi went to Kastilla province after knowing the arrest of Abul Abbas and made a junction for few days at Tuzar. When he made sure that there was no possibility of Abul Abbas getting free, he changed his route and went as a merchant to Sijilmasa, the capital of the Midrarite Berber, and stayed in a house hired from a certain Abul Habsha.

Sijilmasa (the old *Silmasa*) was an ancient town of Morocco, the capital of Tafilalat. It was built about 200 miles of Fas, on the outskirts of the Sahara and on the left bank of the Wadi Ziz. It was founded in 140/758 and beginning with 155/771, the town and its territory were governed by the Miknas dynasty of the Midrarite. Sijilmasa was situated in the middle of a plain with fertility, because of well watered and was surrounded by gardens and orchards which stretched along the Wadi Ziz. It grew in abundance the most delicious varieties of grapes and dates. Among the crops included cotton, cumin, carraway and henna which were exported into the whole Maghrib.

In Sijilmasa, al-Mahdi procured his friendship with the governor, al-Yasa bin Midrar (883-910). When the governor received a letter of Ziadatullah, he put al-Mahdi under house arrest in his sister's residence for about 5 years.

### **Conquest of Maghrib**

Abu Abdullah, on the other hand, conquered almost whole Maghrib within 15 years in 296/909 and routed the Aghlabid rule of 112 years. He decisively subdued the Aghlabids near Laribus, and established supremacy over the Aghlabid empire and got an end of the Abbasid suzerainty over it in Maghrib. Six days later he entered the Aghlabid capital, Raqada which was about six miles south of Kairwan with a covered area of 6 square miles, on 1st Rajab, 296/March 26, 909 and relieved Abul Abbas in Tripoli. He started the Fatimid *Khutba* and the Shiite formula was used in the call to prayer.

Makrizi writes in his "*al-Khitat*" (Cairo, 1911, 1st vol., p. 350) that Abu Abdullah had coins struck bearing the legends "*the proof of God has arrived*" on the obverse and "*the enemies of God are dispersed*" on the reverse. Conserved in the Musee du Bardo in Tunis is a rare gold



*dinar* minted in Kairwan in 297/910 that bears precisely the preceding legend, vide *"Monnaies fatimites du Musee du Bardo"* (cf. *Revue Tunisienne*, 1936: 343-44, cat. no. 1 and pl. no. 1). It is a typical Aghlabid type of *dinar*, except that the legends occupy the space which would normally have held the ruler's name. Since the ruler (al-Mahdi) had not yet been revealed, these two appropriate phrases filled the void. Ibn Hammad (d. 628/1230) writes in *"Akhbar al-Muluk Bani Ubayd wa Siyaratihim"* (Paris, 1927, pp. 7-8) that the slogans were also inscribed on banners, weapons, trapping and seals. On banner: *"Soon will their multitude be put to flight and they will show their backs"* (Koran, 54:45); on weapons: *"Multitudes on God's path;"* on trapping: *"Dominion is God's;"* on Abu Abdullah's personal seal: *"Put your confidence in God and you are on the path of manifest truth"* (Koran, 27:79); on his official seal: *"The orders of your Lord have been accomplished in truth and justice. His words are immutable. He is the Hearer and the Knower"* (Koran, 6:116).

Abu Abdullah remained there for about 3 months to set the administrative machinery in motion.

### **March towards Sijilmasa**

After setting a new fabric of administration, Abu Abdullah made preparations to finally march to Sijilmasa. He appointed his brother Abul Abbas and Abu Zaki Tamnam bin Muarik as deputy leaders and marched with a large army, having been joined by innumerable tribes who had hitherto withheld their support. He reached Sijilmasa after an arduous and dangerous journey from the remotest route. The situation at Sijilmasa was rather tricky, since al-Mahdi had been imprisoned there and any wrong move by Abu Abdullah might have endangered the life of Imam. Thus, he sent a peace mission to the governor, asking to release al-Mahdi. The governor killed the messenger, therefore, Abu Abdullah had no choice but to engage in warfare. However, after a brief battle, the governor fled and his army dispersed. Abu Abdullah then triumphantly entered Sijilmasa and liberated al-Mahdi, his son, entourage and pages.

Abu Abdullah saw his Imam for the first time, whom he had never seen before. As soon as al-Mahdi made his

appearance, Ibn al-Muttalibi said to Abu Abdullah that, "Lo, this is my master and yours and the master of all the people." There was immense rejoicing amongst the troops while beholding al-Mahdi. The faithful followers crowded around the horses of al-Mahdi and his son, al-Qaim and Abu Abdullah walked in front. Abu Abdullah dismounted, and so did Ibn al-Muttalibi and the troops. According to "Iftitahu'd-Dawa" (p. 245), Abu Abdullah was overjoyed and said to the people: "This is the Lord, mine and thine, and your Wali al-Amr, your Imam-i Zaman and your Mahdi, on whose behalf I preached you. God has fulfilled His promise about him, and assisted his supporters and troops. He is your Ulul Amr."

Al-Mahdi remained for 40 days in Sijilmasa to restore peace and finally, he embarked for Raqada via Ikjan with his son and their whole entourage, along with Abu Abdullah and his companions. An interesting account is given in "Sirat-i Jafar" that, "Al-Mahdi marched at the head of a huge army, such as no king before him could ever muster, and ultimately reached the Katama country. I remember, said Jafar, that when we were passing through the Sanhaja country, and were marching near the place in which (later on) was founded the town of Ashir, al-Mahdi asked the name of the hills that appeared before him. He was told that the name of the range was Jabal Sanhaja. And he said that a treasure was buried in these mountains."

Ashir (French, **Achir**) is an ancient fortified town in Algeria, and was founded by Ziri bin Manad, the chieftain of the Sanhaja in the mountains of Titeri about in 324/945. From Ashir, the ranges of Jabal Sanhaja, or Jabal Chelia, about 7638 feet high from sea-level are seen. Before over a thousand years, al-Mahdi had foretold that these mountains were rich with hidden treasures. In Jabal Chelia including Mount Aures and Mount Titeri in Algeria, the petroleum was discovered in 1956, and natural gas in 1980. It is estimated that the natural gas fields are among the world's largest known reserves at 35 trillion cubic feet, and estimate of oil reserves runs as high as 12 billion barrels.

#### **Foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate**

Al-Mahdi rode into Raqada in triumph wearing dark silk clothes with a matching turban. Riding behind him, his son



wore a similar ensemble in organge silk. Abu Abdullah wore mulberry-coloured clothes, a linen tunic, a turban and a scarf. The caravan of al-Mahdi arrived in Raqada on 20th Rabi II, 297/January 6, 910 and laid the foundation of the **Fatimid Caliphate**. All the notables, both Arabs and non-Arabs without exception and many other people came out to receive him. He took oath of allegiance from them. He assumed power and ordered his name mentioned in the *Khutba* and inscribed on coins. He began to develop the barren land of Maghrib he dominated. He imposed the Islamic laws, enforcing strictly in the prohibition of forbidden food and drink, and punishing severely those who tried to practice freedom in it.

### **Rebellion of Abul Abbas**

During the first few months of his rule, al-Mahdi began to consolidate all powers to himself and made drastic changes, especially the financial cells. Previously, Abu Abdullah reserved the gains for the Katama soldiers, but al-Mahdi stripped the fortunes they had gained in the battles. Abul Abbas, the brother of Abu Abdullah, however did not acquiesce but began to criticize al-Mahdi's actions and even did not like the whole power in the hands of al-Mahdi. Qadi Noman states that when Abul Abbas had been made a deputy leader at Raqada, he had acquired a taste for power and was therefore resentful of being compelled to surrender his authority to al-Mahdi and to be merely his subordinate. He exploited the discontent of the Katama chiefs who were losing power under the new administration of al-Mahdi. He also began to instigate his brother, Abu Abdullah and eventually convinced him to some extent to confront al-Mahdi.

It is recounted that once Abu Abdullah dared to suggest al-Mahdi to sit aside with all honours, while he would run the affairs of his state for him in a way that was suitable to the people, for he had known the people for a long time and was aware of their needs and how they should be treated. This gesture warned al-Mahdi of the change that had taken place in Abu Abdullah's character and stand. He however pretended to confess his advice and gave him a gentle answer. When Abu Abdullah wavered in his absolute loyalty, al-Mahdi did not waste much time in eliminating him. Al-Mahdi had his spies planted where both brothers met, and ultimately, both of them were killed on

15th Jamada II, 298/February 18, 911. Al-Mahdi offered the funeral service of Abu Abdullah to glorify his outstanding services and said: "Abu Abdullah was caught in delusion. The real traitor was Abul Abbas."

The executions of Abu Abdullah and Abul Abbas were soon followed by a riot of the Katama tribe which took place immediately after the funeral. Al-Mahdi was not at all frightened and mounted his horse, boldly rode out among the excited crowds and with that personal courage and valour characterized him, told to the rioters, according to "Iftitahu'd-Dawa" (p. 267) by Qadi Noman that: "O'people, you know the status of Abu Abdullah and Abul Abbas in Islam, but satan misguided them, resulting them being deserved for killing. I give you all the security of lives." After hearing this, the people dispersed.

Dr. Zahid Ali (1888-1958), who is not favourably deposed towards the Fatimids, writes however, about al-Mahdi in his "**Tarikh-i Fatimiyyin Misr**" (Karachi, 1963, 2nd ed., 1st. vol., p. 134) that, "If al-Mahdi had not acted wisely and determinedly at that time to quell revolt of Abul Abbas and Abu Abdullah, the Fatimid state would have disappeared for ever. It was he who made the foundation of the Fatimid dynasty so strong that it could last for nearly two hundred and fifty years. He did not remain content with the territory he got, he expanded its frontiers upto the Black Sea by conquering other parts of Africa. He vanquished the Idrisids and also tried to conquer Egypt but did not succeed. He strengthened his naval fleet thereby increasing the Fatimid marine power so much that it could compete with Byzantine, the strongest naval power of that period. He devised proper administrative measures for every department which resulted in peace in every corner of his country."

### **The origin of the Qarmatians**

It has been observed that a group of Mubarakiiyya in Kufa among the Ismaili orbit believed in the Mahdism of Imam Muhammad bin Ismail, anticipating his return, which had never been promulgated by the official *dawa*. Granted that it was the propaganda of the Ismaili *dawa*, there would hardly be a place left for the Imams for them in the line of Muhammad bin Ismail. This small Ismaili group was expecting the return of the Imam, and a *dai* Hussain



al-Ahwazi had also a leaning towards them. He had gone to southern Iraq for propoganda and procured large converts.

Nuwayri (677-732/1279-1332) writes in "*Nihayat al-Arab*" (ed. M. Jabir A. al-Hini, Cairo, 1984, p. 189) that, "Hussain al-Ahwazi also converted Hamdan bin al-Ash'ath al-Qarmati to Ismailism in 261/874." Hamdan al-Qarmat started to reveal Ismaili doctrines and the return of Muhammad bin Ismail to the villagers and brought them in the fold of Ismailism. When Hussain al-Ahwazi died, Hamdan al-Qarmat continued his mission with his brother-in-law Abdan bin al-Rabit as his deputy. He increased his influence among the Arab and Nibati tribes in Kufa and appointed Abdan bin al-Rabit and Zikrawayh bin Mihrawayh as his assistants.

The southern Iraqi term *karmitha* or *karmutha*, unknown to Arabic elsewhere, implied an agriculturist or a villager. Later on, it was arabicised into *qarmat* or *qarmatuya* which has different meanings. In Arabic the root *qarmat* means "to walk" or "make short steps" and thence "to write closely" etc. Another view suggests that it was an Aramaic nickname, meaning "short-legged" or "red-eyed", since Hamdan possessed both peculiarities, therefore, he was widely known as Hamdan al-Qarmat. The converts of Hamdan al-Qarmat also became known as "*Qarmatians*" - a regional identity of a group of the Ismailis in southern Iraq.

Hamdan al-Qarmat maintained correspondence with the Ismaili *dais* at the headquarters in Salamia, and was quite unknown about the hidden Imams of the era of concealment. In 286/899, Hamdan received a direct letter from Imam al-Mahdi from Salamia, suggesting certain changes. He became surprised to receive a letter from an *Imam*, and consequently, he sent his envoy Abdan to Salamia to investigate. It was only at Salamia that Abdan found that al-Mahdi had succeeded to the Imamate, following the death of Imam Radi Abdullah. Abdan interviewed with the Imam without procuring result. He returned back and reported to Hamdan al-Qarmat that instead of the Mahdship of Muhammad bin Ismail, the new leader claimed the Imamate for himself in the line of Muhammad bin Ismail.

Hamdan, thus considered it as drastic deviations, and assembled his subordinate *dais*, and renounced his allegiance from the central leadership of Salamia and

officially abjured Ismailism. He also ordered his *dais* to suspend the mission in their respective districts. Soon afterwards, Hamdan went to Kalwadha, near Baghdad and was never heard of again. Abdan was also murdered in 286/899 at the instigation of Zikrawayh. Soon, however, Isa bin Musa, a nephew of Abdan, rose to lead the Qarmatians, and they were subdued by the Abbasid commander, Harun bin Gharib.

Finally, the leadership came to the hands of Zikrawayh, who dispatched his three sons, viz. Yahya, Hussain and Ali to Syria. They seized Hams, Hammah etc., and marched towards Salamia, where Imam al-Mahdi resided. Tabari (d. 310/922) in his "*Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l Muluk*" (ed. de Goeje, Leiden, 1879-1901, 3rd vol., p. 2226) simply writes the rise of Zikrawayh around 289/901 and their massacre in 290/902. They killed many relatives of the Imam and sacked the town, taking away treasures of the Imam. Al-Mahdi had left Salamia before the coming of the Qarmatians. Finally, the Abbasid forces reached Salamia and subdued their rising. Yahya and Ali had been killed in the encounter, and Hussain was taken prisoner and beheaded in Baghdad. When Zikrawayh knew the death of his sons, he proceeded towards Kufa and captured Basra, and threatened the Abbasids near Baghdad. He was also repulsed in 294/906, causing an end of the Qarmatian power in Iraq and Syria.

### **The Qarmatians in Bahrain**

The Qarmatians also penetrated into Bahrain by the efforts of Abu Sa'id al-Hasan bin Bahram al-Jannabi, who was born in Jannaba on the coast of Fars. He was trained by Abdan in Kufa, and Hamdan al-Qarmat sent him to Bahrain in 281/894. By 286/899, with the support of the clan of Rabi of Abdul Qafs, Abu Sa'id had brought under submission a large part of Bahrain and also captured Qatif. According to Ibn Hawakal, the leader of the Qarmatians in Bahrain, Abu Sa'id al-Jannabi took the part of Hamdan al-Qarmat and Abdan. In 287/900, the Qarmatians acquired control of Hajar, the seat of the Abbasid governor. The Abbasid caliph Mutadid (d. 289/902) sent an army of 2000 men against them, but were defeated. In 290/903, Hajar was finally subdued after a long siege laid by Abu Sa'id. He established his headquarters at al-Ahsa (or al-Lahsa), which became the capital of the Jannabid rule of the Qarmatians of Bahrain in 314/926.



Bernard Lewis, writes in "The Origins of Ismailism" (London, 1940, p. 76) that, "The Carmathians of Behrain seem, according to the accounts of most of our sources, to constitute a separate movement, differing in several important aspects from other sections of the Ismaili *dawa*. They had separate leaders of their own, a distinct local tradition and history." Abu Sa'id was killed in 301/914 after ruling for fifteen years. He was succeeded by his son, Abul Kassim, who ruled for three years, and was killed by his younger brother Abu Tahir in a revolt in 304/916. Abu Tahir was a deadly enemy of the Abbasids, therefore, he started his political correspondence with the Fatimids in Maghrib. He executed a verbal undertaking with the Fatimids, which was absolutely a political pact. Accordingly, when al-Qaim, the son of Imam al-Mahdi launched a campaign of Egypt in 307/919 from Maghrib, the Qarmatians were to reach opposite direction of Egypt to put a pressure on the Egyptian army. Before the arrival of Abu Tahir at that location, al-Qaim had returned from his place to Maghrib after getting loss. Abu Tahir however reached late and returned to Bahrain. Henceforward, the above political pact between them practically became annulled.

In 317/929, the Qarmatians had spread down in Hijaz, and flooded Mecca and Kaba with the blood of pilgrims under the command of Abu Tahir. They made it a scene of fire, blood and repine for 17 days. It must be known that the Qarmatians had been severely and rigorously condemned by the Fatimids for not complying with the pact and reached late at the Egyptian border. In reprisal, the Qarmatians moved to discredit the Fatimids and recited the Fatimid *khutba* in place of the Abbasid in Hijaz during their horrible operations, so as to misguide the Muslims that their barbarian operations were directed by the Fatimids. The Qarmatians choked up the sacred spring of Zamzam, the door of the Kaba was broken open, the veil covering the Kaba was torn down, and the sacred Black Stone was removed from the Kaba and taken to their headquarters at Hajar. The Fatimid Imam al-Mahdi was highly shocked to hear this sacrilegious operation and wrote a reproachful letter to Abu Tahir, reprehending him severely for his evilish conduct. Reproaching Abu Tahir, al-Mahdi had written a letter to him. According to "*al-Mufudh al-Fatimid fi bilad al-Sham wa'l Iraq*" (Cairo, 1950, p. 36), the letter reads: "It is a contemptible matter that you have committed a grave sin under my name. Where did you commit? You have

committed in the House of God and its neighbours. This is a sacred place, where the murder was unlawful even in the age of ignorance; and the defamation of the people living in Mecca is considered inhuman. You have violated that tradition, and even rooted out the Black Stone, and brought it to your land; and now you expect that I may express my gratitude? God curse you, and be again accursed and execrable. May peace be upon him (Prophet Muhammad), whose sayings and deeds are the source of the integrity of the Muslims, who may be ready to answer hereafter what they have committed today." It must be pointed out that the letter of al-Mahdi as cited by Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 427) is absolutely distorted and interpolated for the purpose of throwing the odium of sacrilege on al-Mahdi too.

In the meantime, Begkem (d. 326/941), the *amir* of Baghdad offered the Qarmatians a reward of 50,000 *dinars* to restore the sacred stone, which was refused. But the letter of al-Mahdi was more effectual than Begkem's proffered ransom. Abu Tahir apologized and promised to return the Black Stone to its original place in Kaba. It however remained in Hajar for 22 years, and was returned in 339/950 by the then Qarmatian chief, Ahmad bin Mansur. When they restored the Black Stone, they first carried it to Kufa and hung it up in the mosque for public inspection; and then they bore it to Mecca. Nasir Khusaro (d. 481/1088) had visited al-Ahsa in 443/1051 and relates the above event in his "*Safar-nama*" (tr. by W.M. Thackston, New York, 1986, pp. 88-89) that, "One of the rulers (of al-Ahsa) attacked Mecca and killed a number of people who were circumambulating the Kaba at the time. They removed the Black Stone from its corner and took it to Lahsa. They said that the Stone was a "human magnet" that attracted people, not knowing that it was the nobility and magnificence of Muhammad (peace be on him) that drew people there, for the Stone had laid there for long ages without anyone paying any particular attention to it. In the end, the Black Stone was brought back and returned to its place."

Abu Tahir died in 332/944 and had made a will of succession for his elder brother, Ahmad Abu Tahir. Some also supported Sabur, the son of Abu Tahir; therefore, it was mutually resolved that Ahmad Abu Tahir would rule with Sabur as his successor. Sabur however rebelled in vain against his uncle in 358/969; but himself was arrested and



executed. Ahmad Abu Tahir was poisoned in 359/970, and his elder brother Abul Kassim Sa'id also died after ruling for two years. In 361/972, Abu Yaqub Yousuf, the brother of Ahmad Abu Tahir began to rule until 366/977. Henceforward, the Qarmatian state of Bahrain came to be ruled jointly by six grandsons of Abu Sa'id, known as *al-sada al-ru'asa*.

### **Decline of the Qarmatians**

Meanwhile, Hasan al-A'sam, the son of Ahmad Abu Tahir and a nephew of Abu Tahir, had become the commander of the Qarmatian forces, who was usually selecting to lead the Qarmatians in their military campaigns outside Bahrain. In 357/968, Hasan al-A'sam had taken Damascus after defeating Hasan bin Ubaidullah bin Tughj, the Ikhshidid governor of Syria. The Qarmatians also sacked Ramla and took vast riches and returned to Bahrain. About three months following the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, a Qarmatian force, commanded by al-A'sam's cousin, again came to Damascus and defeated Hasan bin Ubaidullah, the Ikhshidid governor of Syria. Finally, a peace treaty had been concluded between them, and according to which, the Ikhshidid agreed to pay an annual tribute to the Qarmatians.

In 359/970, a large Fatimid force commanded by Jafar bin Falah was sent to conquer Syria. The Ikhshidid governor, Hasan bin Ubaidullah sought necessary help from the Qarmatians. Jafar bin Falah attacked at full gallop and defeated the joint forces of the Ikhshidid and the Qarmatians near Ramla. Hasan bin Ubaidullah was taken prisoner. The Fatimid conquered Syria, resulting the loss of the tribute to the Qarmatians being paid to them previously by the Ikhshidids. This is cited as the main cause for the invasion of the Qarmatians on Syria next year.

In 360/970, being helped by the Buwahid Izz ad-Dawla Bakhtiyar (356-367/967-978) and the Hamdanid Abu Taghlib of Mosul, the Qarmatian commander, Hasan al-A'sam captured Damascus and Ramla, having defeated the Fatimids and killed Jafar bin Falah in battle. Hasan al-A'sam, who had also allied himself with the Abbasids, proclaimed the suzerainty of the Abbasids in Syria and had Imam al-Muizz cursed in the mosques of Damascus.

In 361/971, Hasan al-A'sam marched towards Egypt and reached near the gates of Cairo, but he was turned back by the Fatimids, and was obliged to retreat to al-Ahsa, but Damascus remained in the hands of the Qarmatians. In 363/974, after coming to Cairo, Imam al-Muizz wrote a letter to Hasan al-A'sam, stating the dignity of Ahl-al-Bait and his own excellence. He also recalled the early relations of the Qarmatians with the Ismailis, and also warned him to refrain from his attacks. Hasan al-A'sam took no heed of al-Muizz's reproach, and made his letter public and denounced the Fatimids. He entered Egypt in 363/974 for the second time, and went as far as Ayn Shams and besieged Cairo, and took possession of the moat. The defeat of the Fatimid force on that occasion would have been inevitable had al-Muizz not won over to his side one of the allies of the Qarmatians, named Hasan bin Jarrah, who abandoned in the thick of the fight. Hasan al-A'sam was defeated and retreated, and died at Ramla in 366/977. His cousin Jafar took charge of the Qarmatians. In 368/978, Imam al-Aziz himself took field and subdued Iftagin and the Qarmatians near Ramla. The Qarmatians agreed to a peace. Henceforward, the Qarmatians of Bahrain were reduced to a local power. Most of the Qarmatians reverted to their original Ismaili faith, and left Bahrain and settled as isolated families in Oman, Muscat, Gwadar and Makran. The rest of the power of the Qarmatians declined when the Buwahids inflicted two heavy defeats in 375/985. In 378/988, the Qarmatians' suffered another humiliating defeat at the hands of al-Asfar, the chief of the clan of Muntafiq, and after that, the Qarmatians almost disappeared from history. Silvestre de Sacy writes in his **"Memoir on the dynasty of the Assassins"** (Paris, 1818, p. 5) that he had learnt from books of the Druze that the Qarmatians were still ruling in al-Ahsa in 422/1031. We also learn from the **"Safar-nama"** (pp. 87-89) of Nasir Khusaro (d. 481/1088), who was at al-Ahsa in 443/1051 that the Qarmatians were ruling under a council of six descendants of Abu Sa'id, assisted by six vizirs, in the line of Ibn Sanbar. He also writes that the Friday prayers and other rites such as fasting were not observed at al-Ahsa, where all mosques had been closed. Around 450/1058, a certain Abul Bahlul al-Awwam of the tribe of Abdul Qays, aided by his brother Abul Walid Muslim, rebelled against the Qarmatian governor of Uwal. In the following year, the rebels defeated a Qarmatian fleet, and Qatif was snatched from them very soon. The Qarmatians were then threatened by Abdullah bin Ali al-Uyuni, the



chief of the clan of Mura bin Amir of Abdul Qays, who rose against them in 462/1070 and defeated the Qarmatians and laid siege over al-Ahsa for seven years. Assisted by a force of Turkoman horsemen sent from the Abbasids, Abdullah bin Ali al-Uyuni seized al-Ahsa in 469/1076. He decisively subdued the Qarmatians in 470/1077, putting a definite end to the Qarmatian state of Bahrain, and founded a local rule of the Uyunids in eastern Arabia.

### **The Ismailis and the Qarmatians**

It must be known that some historians have tried to establish as fact that the Qarmatians and the Ismailis constituted one and the same movement, and some have tried to prove the contrary. Ibn Rizam, an anti-Ismaili pamphleteer of the first half of the fourth/tenth century had wrongly woven stories of the Ismailis and Qarmatians, to which S.M. Stern writes in **"Studies in Early Ismailism"** (Jerusalem, 1983, p. 295) that, "One might regard this account which derives after all from a pamphleteer whose aim was to blacken the reputation of the Fatimid, with some suspicion." Historian Nuwayri (d. 732/1332) also poured unbelievable stuff, whose primary purpose was to provide entertaining reading and cared less than anything for the truth. It is however curious to note a general tendency in the Sunnite and Shiite sources, when referring to the Ismailis, often erroneously call them Qarmatians without perception of the distinction between them. The Qarmatians have been discredited invariably as the extremist and opportunistically nihilist, and their extreme activities have been wrongly conflated with the Ismailis. Syed Abid Ali writes in **"Political Theory of the Shiites"** (cf. **"A History of Muslim Philosophy"**, ed. by M.M. Sharif, Germany, 1963, 1st. vol., p. 738) that, "The Carmathian sect is not confused with the Ismailites, as the latest research has established beyond any doubt: it is the term "Ismailite" which is indicative of the true origin of the sect, other appellations being either misleading or based on hostility to this sect in general and to orthodox Shiites in particular." He also writes, "At this juncture, it is perhaps expedient to state in the most explicit terms that the Carmathians were not associated with the Ismailis; nor were they identical with them as it is sometimes wrongly supposed." (Ibid., p. 741). S.M. Stern also writes in **"Studies in Early Ismailism"** (Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 289-290) that, "It is

true that the movement to which both names (Ismailis and Qarmatians) are applied was at one moment in its history broken by a schism, and that the name "**Qarmatian**" was predominantly used in respect of the Qarmatians of Bahrayn, who were at variance with the main body of the Ismaili movement; yet even then the term "**Qarmatian**" was not exclusively reserved for them and was often used - usually in a derogatory sense - to denote any Ismaili.... The early Ismailis were seldom so denominated by their contemporaries, being called instead by such names as Qarmatians or Batinis. They themselves seem to have designated their movement simply by the name "the mission", *al-dawa*, or more formally "the right-guided mission", *al-dawa al-hadiya*; thus "to be converted to Ismailism" would be rendered by them as "to enter the mission", *dakhala'l-dawa*. (Ibid. pp. 289-90)

Returning the thread of our narrative, it is seen that al-Mahdi had to deal with the Berber tribes who were enraged by the death of Abu Abdullah. He also invaded Morocco in 309/921 and got an end of the Idrisid dynasty. He also captured Sicily and extended his rule throughout North Africa.

#### **Fatimids influence in Sicily**

Sicily (Italian *Sicilia*) is an island, covering an area of 9830 square miles. It is separated from Italy by the narrow strait of Messina, wherefrom it is about 2 miles from the toe of the Italian mainland. On the south-east it is about 90 miles from Cape Bon in Tunisia. Being a triangular in shape, it was given the name of *Trinacria* or *Triquetra* in ancient times. Following the fall of the Roman empire in 476 A.D., Sicily was occupied by the Ostrogoths. By the middle of the 6th century, it came under the rule of the Byzantine emperor. In 212/827, the Muslims captured the island, which became their cultural centre.

The Aghlabids had seized Sicily from the Byzantines in 264/878, which was inherited by the Fatimids. The Byzantines however had continued to retain the occupation of Calabria in southern Italy. Sicily was thickly populated by Lombards, Greeks, Arabs and Berbers. The first reported Fatimid governor of Sicily was Ibn Abil



Fawaris. Soon afterwards in 297/910, he was replaced by Hasan bin Ahmad, also known as Ibn Abi Khinzir. He raided the southern Italian coasts in 298/911 and also in the following year against the pirates and brought rich booty. In 299/912, the Arabs and the Berbers rebelled against him in Palermo and Girgenti due to his severity. It was al-Mahdi to have suppressed the uprisings diplomatically and appointed Ali bin Umar al-Balawi. The Sicilians opposed the new appointment and chose Ibn Qurhub as their own governor. Ibn Qurhub was against the Fatimids and declared his support to the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-932). Later, the Berbers of Girgenti, joined by the inhabitants of other parts of Sicily, revolted against Ibn Qurhub, who was taken prisoner and sent to al-Mahdi, who had him executed. After this short interval of political cataclysm, Sicily again reverted to the Fatimid domain, though the political troubles continued to erupt on the island.

#### **Expedition against Italy**

The early Fatimid used Sicily as a base for launching raids against the coastal towns of Italy and France, including the islands of the western Mediterranean; and also continued to be engaged in war and diplomacy with the Byzantines.

The first reported raid against the south of Italian peninsula took place in 306/918. The Fatimid troops captured Reggio. The second incursion was launched from Mahdiya in the summer of 310/922. With a fleet of 20 galleys, the Fatimid officer Masud bin Ghalib al-Wusuli took possession of the fortress of St. Agatha. Two years later, Jafar bin Ubaid, known as Suluk, led the third expedition, with Palermo as his starting point. He captured Bruzzano and Oria and returned to Mahdiya with vast riches. The resounding success of this campaign had the effect of inducing the Byzantines to conclude a treaty with the Fatimids. But the annual tribute agreed for Calabria was slow to reach Mahdiya and hostilities resumed in 315/927. Continuing until 318/930 under the command of Sabir, the Fatimid incursions proceeded victoriously against Tarento, Salerno, Naples and Termoli. Eventually the tribute was paid and the treaty resumed in force until the death of al-Mahdi. According to *"The Encyclopaedia of Islam"* (Leiden, 1986, 5th vol., p. 1244), "Byzantium

allowed the Fatimid sovereign to subjugate Apulia and Calabria and to reinforce the supremacy of Islam in Sicily."

### **Expeditions against Egypt**

The period under our review is noted for the Ismaili *dais* to have launched a brisk and pervasive mission in Egypt, where most of the officials and nobles had espoused Ismailism and entered into correspondence with al-Mahdi in Maghrib. Hence, Egypt offered an easier prey and to invade it was indubitably a less perilous enterprise. In 301/913, a powerful force commanded by his son, al-Qaim had been dispatched by land, and a fleet of 200 ships under Hubasa bin Yousuf against Alexandria. The Egyptian governor could not resist and acquired reinforcement from the Abbasids. Initially, the course of the expedition proceeded in al-Qaim's favour, but after capturing Alexandria, he failed before Fustat, and not being capable confronting the Egyptian army reinforced from Baghdad under the command of Munis, he retracted his steps towards Maghrib.

In 307/919, al-Mahdi returned to the attack with a second expedition commanded again by his son. This project at first progressed favourably as the preceding with the capture of Alexandria and the occupation of Fayyum. But when the Fatimid fleet encountered disaster at Rosetta due to the shortage of supplies, and the battles before Fustat turned to the advantage of the troops of Munis, al-Qaim was forced for the second time to retreat and returned to Maghrib. This time the Abbasid ships were manned by experienced Greek mariners. In sum, both invasions procured no result, but Barqa remained however in Fatimid's occupation.

Al-Mahdi seems to have organised, shortly before his death, a third expedition against Egypt. In fact, this third attempt took place in 323/935 at the beginning of the reign of his successor, al-Qaim.

### **Foundation of al-Mahdiya**

In 301/914, al-Mahdi founded a new city on the coast near Kairwan and gave to it the name of al-Mahdiya, that served



as the Fatimid capital for some generations. The site selected on the Gulf of Gabes, between Susa and Sfax on a small peninsula with a narrow neck just into the sea for nearly a mile in length and less than 500 yards in breadth, which terminates the cape of Africa. It was the "**town of Africa**" of the European historians of the Middle Ages. The landscape of the new city was like a hand stretching out onto the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. There were only two entrances of castles, mosques, fortresses and warehouses and the fortification along the shore consisted of a thick wall barrier. The reflection of light and the imagery of waves on the rocks are unimaginable. There were 16 towers of which 8 belonged to the original foundation and another 8 were added in a later period.

The official inauguration of the new capital was pushed forward to 8th Shawal, 308/February 20, 921. Ibn Idhari al-Marrakushi composed a poem in 308/921 in "**Bayan al-Maghrib**" (Leiden, 1948, 1st vol., p. 184) for al-Mahdi to celebrate his arrival in the new capital, whose few couplets are given as under:-

*Congratulations, O magnanimous prince,  
For your arrival on which time smiles.  
It is al-Mahdiya, the sacred, the protected,  
Just as the sacred places are in Tihama.  
As if your footprints make it,  
The Maqam Ibrahim when there is no maqam (station).  
O Mahdi, Dominion is itself a servant to you,  
Served by time itself.  
The world is yours and your progeny's wherever you are.  
In it all of you will always be Imam.*

The population soon grew rapidly, therefore, a second city had to be built nearby, to which al-Mahdi gave the name of Zawila.

Mahdiya retained its originality with eye-catching architecture for over 600 years, but it had been decayed by the European ruler. The Spanish historian L. del Marmol Carajal, who was present when the entire fortifications were blown up by Charles V in 1553, vide "**Descripcion general de Affrica**" (Granda, 1573, 2nd vol., p. 270).

### **Fatimids ship-building**

Al-Mahdi also built an impressive shipyard which soon enabled the Fatimids to create a powerful fleet. The Fatimid set up ship-building factory, and yards were opened in Tunis. In 303/915, a big dock was constructed by digging out a hill on the coast of the Mediterranean, making a surface area of about 8250 square meters, so that 200 battle ships might be kept in reserve there. These ships were called *shini* and were so big that one of them required 143 cars to move it. It had a gate and a lock that could be closed.

To maintain the stability of the empire, connecting with different parts by sea-routes, the Fatimid gave due attention in the nautical progress. Yaqut (575-626/1179-1229) writes in "**Mu'ajam al-Buldan**" (comp. 625/1228) that, "The most renowned port of Maghrib was Mahdiya. Its dock was cut out of solid rock. It was a capacious dock, and could harbour thirty ships at once. On both sides of the port there lay big chains, which were opened when a ship came in." Makrizi (1363-1442) writes in his "**al-Khitat**" (3rd vol., p. 320) that the Fatimids were the first to start mock fights at sea in the world. The Fatimid admirals also developed the techniques of attacking ships with fire-throwers which the English employed five centuries later when they routed the Spanish Armada.

### **Mission in Khorasan**

The Ismaili mission was carried on in Khorasan around the last decade of the 3rd century/903-913 by Abu Abdullah al-Khadim, who stayed in Nishapur as the first chief *dai* of Khorasan. He was executed during the governorship of Abu Bakr bin Muhtaj (321-327/933-939), and was succeeded around 307/919 by Abu Sa'id al-Sha'rani, who was sent by al-Mahdi from Maghrib. He was followed by Hussain bin Ali al-Marwazi, who transferred his seat from Nishapur to Marw al-Rudh.

The Ismaili *dawa* was so pervasive in Khorasan that Nizam al-Mulk, an anti-observer, in fact, noticed that there existed an identifiable **Ahl Khorasan** among the Ismailis. Al-Marwazi is reputed in the annals of the Samanid dynasty, and during the rule of Ahmad bin Ismail



(295-301/907-914), he commanded the Samanid forces in Sijistan in 298/910. In 300/913, al-Marwazi led the Samanid forces in Sijistan for the second time, and returned to Bukhara in the same year. Abu Zaid Balkhi (235-322/850-934) compiled his "**Suwar al-Aqalim**" in 308/920, and makes mention of Hussain bin Ali al-Marwazi and his brother Muhammed Suluk, when the author visited his birthplace, Balkh in 301/914. Abu Zaid Balkhi also writes his close relation with al-Marwazi and the regular material assistance he acquired from him.

It is said that al-Marwazi hoped to be appointed governor of Sijistan due to his valuable services, but was disappointed. After the death of Ahmad bin Ismail and the accession of Nasr bin Ahmad in 301/914, al-Marwazi paid his allegiance to Mansur bin Ishaq, the cousin of Ahmad bin Ismail in Herat. Al-Marwazi extended his influence in Nishapur, but soon he had to return to Herat, and subsequently he again went to Nishapur and captured it. The Samanid commander, Ahmad bin Sahl (306-307/918-919) was sent against him, who took Herat and gave battle to al-Marwazi before Marw al-Rudh in 306/918. This time al-Marwazi was defeated due to shortage of supplies, and was taken prisoner to Bukhara, where he was imprisoned. He was released with the intervention of vizir al-Jayhani. After being pardoned and spending some time at Samanid court, he returned to Khorasan to organize the mission works, where he spent rest of his life.

### **Turbulences in Yamen**

Yamen was an original plant and a vital zone of the Fatimid mission under the able and loyal headship of Ibn Hawshab. In 291/904, however, his close associate, Ali bin Fazal al-Jadani had shown signs of disloyalty, and in 299/911, he publicly renounced his allegiance to al-Mahdi. It must be noted that in Egypt, when al-Mahdi decided to go to Maghrib instead of Yamen in 291/904, the *dai* Firuz also gave up Ismaili faith and fled to Yamen, and instigated a revolt. He won the support of Ali bin Fazal. Subsequently, Firuz was killed and Ali bin Fazal endeavoured unsuccessfully to coerce the collaboration of Ibn Hawshab. The death of Ibn Hawshab took place in 303/914, and had made a will to his son Abul Hasan Mansur and his pupil Abdullah bin Abbas al-Shawiri to administer the mission in Yamen till an official appointment of a new

chief **dai** by al-Mahdi. Upon his death, al-Shawiri had sent a letter to al-Mahdi, reporting the death of Ibn Hawshab, and requesting for any chief **dai** instead. In a reply, al-Mahdi confirmed the post of al-Shawiri as a chief **dai**. Jafar, the son of Ibn Hawshab was alone among his brothers to demonstrate his loyalty to the Fatimids, but his elder brother, Abul Hasan Mansur, who was expecting to succeed his father, had defected from the mission, and returned to his castles in Miswar, where he was joined by his brothers. Jafar, noticing the inimical intentions of his brothers towards al-Shawiri, tried to persuade that a quarrel would only lead to impair the Ismaili influence in Yamen. In spite of this warning, Abul Hasan Mansur waited for his opportunity, and killed al-Shawiri and took the dominions. Jafar immediately went to Maghrib, where he reached when al-Mahdi had expired in 322/934. Imam al-Qaim charged him the mission work in Maghrib, where he also served Imam al-Mansur and Imam al-Muizz, and was commonly known as Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen.

It must be known that Ishaq bin Imran, known as Summ Sa'a, a pioneer physician-philosopher had introduced high standard of medical education and practice at the beginning of the Fatimid period. In view of his great ability, intelligence and independent spirit, he influenced professional development through out Maghrib. His widely known and eloquent student was Abu Yaqub bin Suleman, who managed to become the personal physician of Abu Abdullah and continued his service at the Fatimid court with al-Mahdi, and died in 320/932 at Kairwan. His medical works were among the first to be translated into Latin, the task being accomplished by Constantine the African about 1080. His works exercised much influence on western medieval medicine, and were still being read in the 17th century. Robert Burton (1577-1680) quotes them freely in his "**Anatomy of Melancholy**." Ibn Suleman's medical works included "**al-Rummayat**" on fevers, which was translated into Latin and Hebrew in Europe. His another work "**Aqawil fi taba'i al-Aghdhiya wal Adwiya**" deals on diet and drug. And above all, his treatise on urine dominated medicine for many centuries. Very remarkable is his small tract, extant in Hebrew translation only, called "**Guide for Physicians**." It shows a high ethical conception of the medical profession.



The medico-pharmaceutical contribution in Maghrib under al-Mahdi reached their highest expression in the works of Abu Jafar bin al-Jazzar (905-984) in Kairwan. He was the student of Ibn Suleman. He used to go to Manastir, a town in Tunisia, where, next to his regular clinic, he erected a cabin as an apothecary shop, wherein he kept his syrups, electuries etc. His chief work, "**Provision for the Traveller**" was early translated into Latin as the "**Viaticum**", Greek "**Ephodia**" and Hebrew.

#### **Death of al-Mahdi**

Having laid a firm foundation for Fatimid rule in Maghrib, extending from Morocco to the borders of Egypt, al-Mahdi died on 15th Rabi I, 322/February 22, 934 at the age of 61 years, 5 months and 3 days. F. Dachraoui writes in his article in "**Encyclopaedia of Islam**" (1985, 5th vol., p. 1244) that, "Mahdi had the skill and energy to conduct moderate but firm policies within his provinces, and to wage tireless warfare beyond his frontiers to affirm the right of the descendants of Fatima to lead the Muslim world. Thus, under his rule, the Fatimid empire embarked successfully on the first phase of its long history."

#### **AL-QAIM (322-334/934-946)**

He was born in 280/893 in Salamia. His name was Muhammad Nizar, surnamed al-Qaim bi-Amrillah (Firm in the ordinances of God). He married to Umm Habiba, the daughter of his uncle, and ascended in 322/934.

#### **Expedition against Egypt**

It may be remembered that al-Qaim had commanded the Fatimid naval forces in 301/913. The Fatimid fleet sailed from Mahdiya towards the northern coast of Egypt and returned to Raqada after conquering Tripoli. In the following year Hubasa bin Yousuf set off east and conquered Surt and Ajabiyya on 7th Rajab, 301, February 6, 914 he entered Barqa. On Thursday the 14th Zilhaja, 301/July 7, 914 al-Qaim followed him from Raqada with a large army. Contrary to his orders, Hubasa, without waiting for his arrival, pushed further east and invaded

Alexandria on 2nd Safar, 302/August 27, 914. Al-Qaim arrived there on Friday the 14th Rabi II, 302/November 4, 914. The Abbasids succeeded to prevent the Fatimid's entry in Egypt. At his withdrawal from Egypt, al-Qaim however left a garrison in Barqa.

In 307/919, the second attempt had been conducted at the command of al-Qaim. He set out eastward on Monday the 1st Zilkada, 306/April 5, 919. On Friday the 8th Safar, 307/July 9, 919 the vanguard of the army arrived in Alexandria. This time the Fatimid forces made an advance right upto the Egyptian capital before they were repulsed. These two invasions were launched during the period of Imam al-Mahdi. After his succession, al-Qaim made a third attempt in 323/935 under the command of Raydan. Muhammad bin Tughj al-Ikhshidid (323-334/935-946), the then governor of Egypt, repelled this attack, forcing the Fatimid forces to withdraw to Barqa. Nothing was gained in these three campaigns, but it made a way open for the next period to the Fatimid to occupy Egypt.

#### **Abu Hatim ar-Razi**

One of the most eminent Ismaili *dais* during this period was Abu Hatim ar-Razi, the *hujjat* of Ray. He was born near Ray around 260/874. He conducted the mission with great efficiency and promptness. He was a remarkably learned *dai*, and studied Ismaili doctrines, but also Arabic poetry, the religious science of Islam, comparative religion and indeed the natural and mathematical sciences of the day. He succeeded to bring the ruler of Ray, Ahmad bin Ali (307-311/920-924) to the Ismaili fold, who was formerly aggressive to the Ismailis. Abu Hatim also deputed his subordinate *dais* in Tabaristan, Ispahan, Azerbaijan and Jurjan; resulting a large conversion, including Mardav ad-Daylami, the governor of Tabaristan; Yousuf bin Abi'l Saj, the governor of Azerbaijan, and Asfar bin Shroya. Abu Hatim was a great philosopher, orator and writer. W. Ivanow writes in "A Creed of the Fatimids" (Bombay, 1936, p. 5) that, "Abu Hatim ar-Razi surely was one of the most erudite authors that Ismailism, and generally, Islam has ever produced." Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes in the introduction of "A'lam al-Nubuwwah" (ed. by Salah al-Sawy, Tehran, 1977, p. 1) that, "He is one of the most outstanding theologians and philosophers



of Islam and a major figure in that galaxy of exceptional thinkers, such as Hamid al-Din Kirmani, Nasir-i Khusraw and Qadi Numan, who produced the Ismaili philosophy of the Fatimid period."

The most acclaimed of his works is **"Kitab az-Zina"** designed as an encyclopaedia of Islamic terminologies with a large store of useful informations. Idris Imaduddin (d. 872/1468) writes in the 5th volume of **"Uyun'1-Akhbar"** that it was greatly admired by Imam al-Qaim when it was presented to him, and he gave it to his son, al-Mansur in a gift, commanding to keep it secret.

Abu Hatim left Ray in 311/924 and sided with Asfar bin Shroya (d. 319/931). He acquired many converts in Daylam and Gilan, including Asfar bin Shroya's deputy, Mardawij bin Ziyar (d. 323/935). According to Hamiduddin Kirmani in **"al-Aqwal al-Dhahabiyya"** (Tehran, 1977, pp. 2-3), "The famous disputation between Abu Hatim and the physician-philosopher, Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Zakaria ar-Razi (251-313/865-925) took place in Mardawij's presence." The discussion concerning prophethood is given in his **"A'lam al-Nubuwwah."** He answered the questions of Zakaria ar-Razi that how he necessiated that only one nation would be favoured and given superiority over others. He also argued that his conception regarding the eternity of five principles, namely God, Soul, Matter, Space and Time was absurd. He also discussed logically the questions relating to blind faith, analogy, miracles etc.

Mardawij at first supported Abu Hatim, but started enmity against the Ismailis. Thus Abu Hatim returned to Ray, thence he proceeded to Azerbaijan and took refuge with a local ruler called, Muflih. He died in 322/934 in Daylam, and after him, the Ismailis of Khorasan and Transoxania became disordered, and finally their leadership came to the hands of Abdul Malik al-Kawkabi, who resided in Girdkuh, the future stronghold of the Nizari Ismailis.

#### **An-Nasafi and Abu Yaqub as-Sijistani**

Abu Hatim ar-Razi was followed by Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad an-Nasafi and Abu Yaqub as-Sijistani staying at Ray. An-Nasafi operated the mission mostly in Khorasan and Bukhara, and gained great success in converting the Sunni ruler, Nasr bin Ahmad, who had given allegiance to Imam

al-Mahdi and paid him an annual tribute of 119 thousand **dinars**. Nasr bin Ahmad also entered into correspondence with al-Qaim in Maghrib.

The renowned poet and intellect, Abu Abdullah bin Jafar bin Muhammad bin Hakim bin Abdur Rahman bin Adam ar-Rudaki ash-Shair as-Samarkandi, known as Rudaki (d. 329/940) also found an opportunity of espousing Ismaili faith in this period. Some historians sought to explain the term **Rudaki** by saying that he was so called because he could play on **rud** (harp), which is an erroneous view. The poet himself adopted his pen-name, **Rudaki** because he hailed from a village in the district of Rudak. He was a court poet of the Samanids, and composed many verses in praise of the Fatimid Imams. In one place, Maruf of Balkh, one of the earliest Samanid poets, says: "I have heard the king of poets, Rudaki as saying, 'do not give allegiance to anyone save the Fatimids.'"

The Abbasids took notice of the rapid conversion of the Ismailis in Khorasan, notably Nasr bin Ahmad, and insinuated Nuh bin Nasr (331-343/943-954), the son of Nasr bin Ahmad; against his father and the Ismailis. Nuh bin Nasr dethroned his father and conducted a barbarous massacre of the Ismailis in 331/942, known in the Ismaili history as **al-msinat al-uzama** (great calamity) in Khorasan and Transoxania. An-Nasafi and his chief associates were also executed in the wild operations at Bukhara in 332/943. For this reason, Nasir Khusaro called him **Khwaj-i Shahid** and **Shaikh al-Shahid**. It resulted a setback in Ismaili mission, but was resumed under an-Nasafi's son, Masud, surnamed Dihqan and Abu Yaqub as-Sijistani. An-Nasafi is considered a leading Ismaili philosopher among the early Ismailis. He produced a major work, entitled "**Kitab al-Mahsul**" (Book of the Yield). Paul E. Walker writes in "**Abu Yaqub al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary**" (London, 1996, pp. 17-18) that, "So influential were al-Nasafi and this one book that, throughout the rest of the century, writers both in and outside the Ismaili fold referred to it as if it represented the intellectual heart of Ismailism."

It is generally agreed upon by the scholars that as-Sijistani was not executed with an-Nasafi in 331/942. The mistake however arose from misreading of al-Baghdadi's statement in "**al-Firaq bayn al-Firaq**," stating that both



an-Nasafi and as-Sijistani were executed. In the introduction of both "**Risalat al-Mawazin**" and "**Risalat al-Mabda wal Ma'ad**," he himself mentions the name of Imam al-Hakim, who acceded to the throne in 386/996. Thus, it implies that he was still alive in 386/996. His death, therefore, could be placed between 386/996 and 393/1003. He had managed to escape the widespread massacre, and continued the mission in Bukhara.

Abu Yaqub Ishaq bin Ahmad as-Sijistani, nicknamed "**cotton-seed**" (Iranian, **panba-dana**, Arabic **khayshafuj**) was born in 271/883 and was trained in Yemen. He was a great philosopher and scholar and considered to be one of the major Ismaili thinkers whose share in the development of the Ismaili system of thought is considerable. Paul E. Walker writes, "Yet, from the prominence of his books and the profoundly impressive intellectual contribution they (Ismailis) represent, we discover a truly significant mind and voice - one that deserves recognition as an outstanding figure in the Ismaili past and as a major force in Islamic thought in general" (op. cit., p. 13). He was executed by Khalaf bin Ahmed (363-393/964-1003), the Saffarid ruler of Khorasan. The period of as-Sijistani saw many prominent Ismaili thinkers, such as Abul Haytham Ahmad bin Hasan al-Jurjani, an Ismaili philosopher-poet from Gurgan, who composed many poems on Ismaili doctrines. His Ismaili disciple was Muhammad bin Surkh al-Nishapuri.

### **Expeditions against Italy**

In 323/935, the Italian pirates raided the coastal regions of the Fatimid, therefore, al-Qaim turned his attention towards Europe, and dispatched a strong squadron of 20 sailing vessels under the command of an Arab **Amir al-Bahr** (the European, **Admiral**), Yaqub bin Ishaq al-Tamimi, who made a successful attack on Italy, the south of France, and the coast of Genoa and Calabria, and a part of Lombardy was also brought into subjection. During the Italian raids, the Fatimid forces used mangonels (**arradas** or **dabbabas**), an engine missiling the heavy stones on target, which was the then most advanced weapon. Maurice Lombard writes in "**The Golden Age of Islam**" (Netherlands, 1975, p. 86) that, "Fatimid currency was in use throughout southern Italy. **Dinars** and particularly quarter **dinars** (**rub**) were in circulation and were initiated (**tarin**) a

phenomenon similar to that observed in the Christian kingdoms in northern Spain and the country of Barcelona which, in the eleventh century, initiated the Muslim gold currencies in use in the south of the peninsula."

The Fatimid fleet was unfortunately called back, according to "Islam in Africa" (Lahore, 1964, p. 87) by Prof. Mahmud Brelvi, "just at the moment when Qaim's navy was about to conquer the whole Italy". It was due to the domestic rebellion of Abu Yazid. Syed Zakir Hussain writes in "Tarikh-i Islam" (Delhi, 1935) that, "If Abu Yazid had not staged a massive revolt against the Fatimids, al-Qaim would have probably conquered the whole of Europe, resulting a loss of a great Islamic victory." R. Brunschvig also admitted the loss of Europe in the campaign, vide "Encyclopaedia of Islam" (1934, 4th vol., p. 850). The Fatimid fleet, returning to Mahdiya, also occupied islands of Sardinia, Corsica, Malta, Crete and Cyprus for a short while. And here we cannot but call attention to a fact that the Fatimids were the masters of the entire Mediterranean, and their fleets operated freely throughout its length and breadth.

Al-Qaim had to meet more serious rebellions hatching in the west. The principle revolt took place amongst the Zanata tribe, south of Katama territory, who were the Kharijis under the leadership of Abu Yazid. In 332/943, he marched northwards and took Baghai, Tabassa, Mermajenna and Laribus. The Fatimid forces tried to prevent his advance upon Baja, but were repulsed. Abu Yazid marched towards Kairwan, but this time he suffered defeat. He soon rallied, and took Raqada, and then pressed on to Kairwan and captured it. Mahdiya put up a vigorous resistance for almost a year, repelling Abu Yazid's repeated attempts to storm the capital. Ziri bin Manad, the *amir* of the tribe of the Sanhaja sent a new reinforcement to the Fatimids, who was a fervent Ismaili. It must be noted that in recognition of his outstanding services, al-Qaim had granted permission to Ziri bin Manad to rebuild and fortify the town of Ashir in the central Maghrib, on the western borders of the Sanhaja territory.

In 334/945, Abu Yazid ordered for massacre and plunder, and captured Tunisia. The Fatimid forces were able to regain the whole Tunisia next year. But, after an interval, Abu Yazid rallied and laid siege to the town of Susa.



We see that al-Qaim was an experienced soldier and an able commander who could lead his forces to victory. Unlike his father, he used to participate in military expeditions. He was bold and courageous, and his activities were not confined to his military operations only. He was not harsh towards his opponents and was tolerant. Prof. Mahmud Brelvi writes in **"Islam in Africa"** (Lahore, 1964, pp. 86-87) that, "Qaim was a great warrior, and was the first of the Fatimid Caliphs who created a powerful fleet in the Mediterranean. After re-establishing his authority in Mauritania, he turned his attention towards the continent of Europe. His ports had been harassed by the Italian pirates from the Ligurian coast, from Pisa and other places. In reprisal, Qaim overran Southern Italy as far as Gaeta, and his ships of war captured Genoa. A part of Lombardy was also brought into subjection. Unfortunately, the pent-up wrath of the people at the excesses of the savage Berbers, the allies of the Fatimids, burst into a furious flame just at the moment when Qaim's navy was about to conquer the whole Italy. The revolt was headed by a Khariji, named Abu Yazid."

In 325/937, Khalid bin Ishaq, the governor of Sicily laid foundation of a new city, called Khalisa, near Palermo. Its structure and design almost resembled the city of Mahdiyya. The chiefs of Sicily and other officials mostly lived in Khalisa, where most of the administration was controlled.

Prof. Masudul Hasan writes in **"History of Islam"** (Lahore, 1987, 1st vol., p. 492) that, "Al-Qaim ruled for eleven years. He was a man of courage, and did not lose nerves even in the face of great difficulty. He lost most of his territory to Abu Yazid, and was besieged in his capital Mahdiyya. In spite of a very difficult situation, he preserved, and out of the civil war which lasted for several years, the Fatimids ultimately emerged victorious. This civil war changed the course of history. But for this civil war, al-Qaim would have occupied a greater part of Italy, and that would have served a base for the conquest of Europe."

Al-Qaim died on 14th Shawal, 334/May 19, 946 at the height of Abu Yazid's rebellion, who at that time had sieged over Susa. His age was 59 years, 6 months and 27 days and the period of the Imamate and Caliphate lasted for 12 years, 6 months and 27 days.

### **AL-MANSUR (334-341/946-952)**

He was born in 302/914 in Kairwan, the first Fatimid Imam to be born in Maghrib. His name was Ismail and *kunya* was Abu Tahir, surnamed al-Mansur bi-Amrillah (Victorious by the command of God). He acceded the throne on 334/945 during the time when Abu Yazid had laid a seige over Susa.

It may be known that *kunya* is a part of the Arab personal name, being an appellation consisting of **Abu** (father of) or **Umm** (mother of) and followed by a name, usually that of the bearer's eldest son.

### **Abu Yazid Khariji**

Abu Yazid Khariji, or Abu Yazid Makhlad bin Kaydad, traced his tribal origin to the clan of Ifran, one of the leading branches of the Zanata. He was a schoolmaster at Taharat, and had a leaning towards the doctrines of the Kharijis. He learnt the doctrines from Abu Ammar al-A'ma. Abu Yazid had been elected then the leader of the Kharijis, and became more interested to acquire political power. After spending sometime in Taharat, he returned to Qastilia, where he started his anti-Fatimid agitation in 316/928 and soon procured a large following. With the Berbers moving quickly to his side, Abu Yazid engineered his revolt against the Fatimids in 332/944, and swiftly conquered almost all the southern regions, and seized Kairwan in 333/944. Abu Yazid advanced and laid a seige over Susa when al-Mansur ascended. Ibn Khallikan (1211-1282) writes in "**Wafayat al-A'yan**" (1st. vol., p. 219) that, "Al-Mansur was charged by his father (al-Qaim) to wage war against Abu Yazid, who had revolted against his authority. Abu Yazid Makhlad bin Kaidad belonged to the sect of Ibadites; he made an outward show of rigid devotion, but was in reality an enemy of God; he never rode but on an ass, nor wore any dress but woollen."

The first task of al-Mansur was to relieve Susa. He himself commanded the forces and inflicted a severe defeat on Abu Yazid, and drove him back to Kairwan, then he went to Sabta. Al-Mansur reached Kairwan and helped the suffered people. Al-Mansur had been warmly received in



Kairwan, and he also personally conducted a close chase, defeating Abu Yazid near Tubna and then around Masila. In 336/947, al-Mansur assisted by his general Ziri bin Manad, inflicted a final defeat on the Khariji Berbers in the mountains of Kiyana, where the rebels had entrenched themselves in a fortress, called Qalat Bani Hammad. According to Ibn Khallikan (1st Vol., p. 219), Abu Jafar al-Marwaruzi narrates the following anecdote: "I went forth with al-Mansur on the day he defeated Abu Yazid, and as I accompanied him, he dropped from time to time one of the lances which he bore in his hand; so I picked it up and wiped it, and gave it to him, pronouncing it to be a good omen, and quoting to him the following verse:

*'She threw away her staff, and a distant land  
became the place of her abode; (yet, she felt)  
as the traveller on his return, when his eyes  
are delighted (by the sight of home)'*

On which, al-Mansur replied: *"Why did you not quote what is better and truer than that: 'And We spoke by revelation to Moses, saying, 'throw down thy rod'. And behold, it swallowed up that which they had caused falsely to appear. Wherefore the truth was confirmed, and that which they had wrought vanished. And they were overcome there, and were rendered contemptible' (7:114-116). To this I said: 'O, my Lord! you, who are the son of God's Apostle, utter that knowledge of which you are the sole possessor."*

Abu Yazid was suppressed and taken prisoner, but was died of his wounds. Jafar bin Mansur (d. 365/975) is the contemporary authority, who had also composed few poems about the revolt of Abu Yazid and the marvellous actions of al-Mansur. Ibn Athir (7th vol., p. 171) tells us that, "Al-Mansur personally took charge of the military operations and put an end to Abu Yazid's menace. Had al-Mansur failed in checking this menace, it is probable that the Fatimid empire would not have survived long. With all this, al-Mansur behave generously with his implacable foe. He came to Kairwan in 334/945 and gave protection to the family of Abu Yazid who had despaired of life. He even granted his wives and children monthly allowances. He also granted Abu Yazid's request to restore his wives and children to him on condition that he would not wage war. But Abu Yazid soon broke his promise and tried to launch another insurrection."

Fazal, the son of Abu Yazid continued the revolt in the Awras for a few months until he, too, was subdued and was brought to Mahdiya by Batit bin Ya'la bin Batit in 336/948. Other sons of Abu Yazid fled to Spain and took refuge under the Umayyads. The rebellion of Abu Yazid, however, had sucked away the resources of the state, forcing the Fatimids to pay a heavy price.

"The failure of Abu Yazid's rising," writes H.U. Rahman in **"A Chronology of Islamic History"** (London, 1989, p. 153), "left the Fatimids far stronger than before and with a much firmer grip on the rein."

When al-Mansur was subduing Abu Yazid's revolt, a report reached to him about a petty uprising of Hamid Bazaltain, the chief of the Maghrib, who had laid a siege over Tahrat soon after announcing his loyalty with the Umayyads of Spain. After crushing the revolt of Abu Yazid, al-Mansur focused his attention at the new rising, and himself commanded his army. He inflicted a defeat to Hamid and appointed Yala bin Muhammad, the chief of Banu Ifran in Maghrib.

### **The Kalbids in Sicily**

Al-Mansur was unable to pay attention towards Sicily during the revolt of Abu Yazid, where Ibn Ataf was an inefficient governor. Taking advantage of his weakness, the Byzantines stopped the payment of the tribute to the Fatimids. In the meantime, the inhabitants of Sicily also rose against Ibn Ataf, who hid himself in the old castle of Palermo.

Confronted by the chaotic situation caused by the rebellious at Palermo and Agrigento in Sicily against the Fatimid **amirs**, al-Mansur deemed it logical and sensible to entrust Sicily's administration to those whose fidelity was proven beyond doubt, and who, moreover, could maintain a neutral stand, therefore, al-Mansur appointed Hasan bin Ali al-Kalbi as the governor of Sicily in 336/946.

Hasan bin Ali al-Kalbi belonged to an influential Kalbid family, stemming from the tribe of Kalab bin Wabara of Banu Abil Hussain. Under the Aghlabids rule, the Kalbid family began to decline from public notice; but they became the main prop and stay during the Fatimids period,



and swiftly found a milieu favourable to their rise, and became a governing element of Muslim Sicily by the middle of the 4th/10th century. Ali bin Ali al-Kalbi, one of the first dynasts of the family and son-in-law of Salim bin Abi Rashid, the then Fatimid governor of Sicily, from 305/917 to 325/936, died at the siege of Agrigento in 326/938. His son Hasan bin Ali al-Kalbi, who had distinguished himself in the campaigns waged by Imam al-Qaim and Imam al-Mansur against Abu Yazid, was the first of a succession of Kalbid governors in Sicily, a kind of hereditary emirate under the Fatimids which lasted until the middle of 5th/11th century.

In Sicily, Hasan bin Ali al-Kalbi finished the internal uprisings and restored peace. He also solidified his army, forcing the Byzantine emperor to resume the payment of the tribute to the Fatimids. On al-Mansur's death in 341/952, Hasan bin Ali returned to Mansuria, leaving behind the government of the island in the hands of his son, Ahmad bin Hasan (342-358/953-969), the second Kalbid governor of Sicily.

The new Fatimid policy led to the origination of the semi-independent dynasty of the Kalbids, which ruled over Sicily for almost a century on behalf of the Fatimids, having considerable autonomy. Hasan, called al-Samsan (431-445/1040-1053) was the last Kalbid governor of Sicily. The Norman Count Roger captured Messina in 1060, and Palermo, the capital of the island fell to them in 1072. The Normans also occupied Syracuse in 1085 and by 1091 the whole of the island came to the possession of the Normans. That was the end of the Muslim rule in Sicily.

The Kalbid era was one of the most prosperous periods in the history of Muslim Sicily. The island developed vital trade and played an important role in the transmission of Islamic culture into Europe. In Sicily, the schools, colleges, mosques and hospitals were also built, the agriculture was promoted and the new industries were set up. It is interesting to note that the medical institution of Palermo was far better than that of Baghdad and Cordova. According to "Encyclopaedia of World Art" (Rome, 1958, 12th vol., p. 459), "The oldest examples of silk weaving are from southern Italy, particularly Sicily, where the first looms were probably put into operation by the Saracens in the 9th century."

The Fatimid art had certainly influenced the Italians through Sicily, and left behind many traces. A number of important pieces of gold and silver works, scattered in south Italy belonged to the Fatimids. The products of this workshop are characterized by a special technique of filigree work arranged in spirals or in vermiculated designs and by simply encased ornamented enamels in Fatimid style. According to "Encyclopaedia of World Art" (Rome, 1958, 12th vol., p. 459), "The influence of Fatimid art is seen in the two lions, each devouring a camel, that entirely cover the mantle of Roger II (1095-1154) almost as if it were half of an enormous orb. The lions are separated by a very stylized palmette. Also Fatimids are the palmettes decorating the edges of the sleeves and the hem of the dalmatic. To this were added the clearly Islamic motif of ornamental scripts - in this case, Naskhi letters, which flow elegantly to form a border."

It may be noted that the magnetic instrument indicating the direction was known as *qutb-numa* (mariner compass), which came to be used by the navigators of the Mediterranean Sea, from Sicily to Alexandria for the first time. Idrisi (494-548/1100-1154), who compiled his geographical treatise in Sicily, however, is reported to have made an earliest description of the mariner compass. The Egyptians called it *samia*, because their terms were separate from those of the navigators of the high sea. It is beyond doubt that the Europeans were indebted to the Muslims for the mariner compass, which, they knew most probably after 5th century.

### **Expedition against the French**

In 340/951, al-Mansur was reported that the emperor Constantine VII (913-959) of France was about to invade the Fatimid territories, thus a naval forces was dispatched under Faraj Saqali. Hasan bin Ali al-Kalbi, the governor of Sicily and Faraj jointly invaded Kaloria and defeated the French forces. The French emperor was obliged to send tributes and a peace-negotiating embassy to the Fatimid court. On their way back to Maghrib, the Fatimid naval forces conquered Reggio and built there a mosque, the ruins of which have been unearthed recently.

In 335/947, al-Mansur ordered yet another new capital built a short distance southwest of Kairwan, called Mansuria. It served a new Fatimid capital after Mahdiya.



Al-Mansur died in 341/952. F.Dachraoui writes in "Encyclopaedia of Islam" (1990. 6th vol., p. 434) that, "Mansur's personality shines with an unparalleled brilliance under the pens of the Ismaili authors, who, as also the Sunni chroniclers, show great wander in relating his exalted deeds and who dwell at length on giving accounts of the battles, rebellions and other bloody events. According to their accounts, he possessed only good qualities: he was generous and benevolent, level-headed and perspicacious, above all possessing a brilliant eloquence; since his youth, he had devoted himself to piety and study, and was deeply conscious of his high calling as impeccable Imam and of his grandeur as a monarch."

#### **AL-MUIZZ (341-365/952-975)**

His name was Ma'd, and *kunya* was Abu Tamim, surnamed al-Muizz li-din'allah (Fortifier of the religion of God). He was born in Mahdiya in 319/931 when Imam al-Mahdi was alive, who had predicted that al-Muizz would be man of great glory. He was very intelligent from his infancy. Qadi Noman writes in "al-Majalis wa'l Musayarat" (2nd vol., pp. 616-617) that al-Muizz recalled his infancy that: "I am reminiscing about the day I was a small child. The day I was taken into his (al-Mahdi) presence, I had been weaned and I could understand and remember that what happened. He reached for me and kissed me and took me into his robe. He seated me by his side and ordered something for me to eat. A gold and silver platter was brought, containing apples, grapes etc. He put it before me. I did not eat anything from it. He then took it and gave it to me and said: "Go and eat what is in it and give the platter to such and such woman." I told him: "No, I will keep the platter and give the fruits to her." (Al-Mahdi) laughed and wondered at my perception. He prayed for me and said: "You will have a glorious future."

Al-Muizz ascended in 341/952, and his Caliphate is noted for the extension of the Fatimid domination from Maghrib to Egypt and Syria. His Caliphate is also acclaimed for the progress of learning and arts. He himself was a learned philosopher, scientist and astronomist. His court always remained full of jurists, traditionists, poets and historians. The heart of al-Muizz was set on the conquest

of Egypt, the great dream ever present before his father and grandfather, which seemed now coming within the bounds of possibility.

### War with the Byzantines

In 345/956, the Fatimid naval fleet inflicted a major defeat on the Byzantines in Italy, following several minor entanglements and forcing the emperor Constantine VII (913-959) to pay tribute and send a peace-negotiating embassy to al-Muizz in 346/957. In 351/962, Ahmad bin Hasan, the second Kalbid governor of Sicily had staged war against the eastern part of the island and captured Taormina, whose name was changed to **al-Muizzia** in honour of Imam al-Muizz. In 354/964, following the accession of the emperor Nicephorus II Phocas (963-969), who had deliberately stopped the customary tribute to the Fatimids, the Byzantines were severely defeated on land and sea by the joint Fatimid and Kalbid forces, and occupied Rametta, the last ashes of the Byzantium; and the simultaneous victory at sea known as the **wak'at al-majaz** (battle of the straits), which is celebrated in a turgid **qasida** of Ibn Hani (d. 362/973), vide his "**Diwan**" (Cairo, 1271 A.H., no. 40, pp. 540-59). In 356/967, a peace treaty was concluded between the Fatimids and the Byzantines, and accordingly, the Muslims sought the right to impose **jaziya** on the Christian inhabitants of Sicily. This defeat of the Byzantines was indeed celebrated with pomp through out the Islamic world.

### Jawhar as-Siqilli

Abul Hasan Jawhar bin Abdullah traced his origin from his country of birth, Sicily in Italy. Imam al-Muizz had given him the **kunya** of Abul Hasan, and was also called al-Katib (secretary) and al-Qaid (general). He was born most probably between 298/911 and 300/913 in Sicily, the then island under occupation of the Byzantines, and died most probably in 381/992.

During the period of Imam al-Mansur, Jawhar was brought as a slave to Kairwan and was presented before the Imam. Realizing his potential, he was made as a personal attendant of Imam al-Mansur, and soon rose to prominence.



In 341/932, al-Muizz appointed him as his Katib and since then, he became known as Jawhar al-Katib. In 347/958, he was made the commander-in-chief of the Fatimid forces, and was assigned to subdue the remaining parts of the Maghrib. In 347/958, Jawhar led the Fatimid forces westwards and defeated near Tahrat, a large army of the Zanata Berbers commanded by Yala bin Muhammad, the chief of the Banu Ifran, and an ally of the Umayyads of Spain, who had rebelled against the Fatimids. Yala, who ruled the central Maghrib from Tahrat to Tangier was killed and thus the Ifranid influence in the central Maghrib came to an end.

He further proceeded towards Sijilmasa, then ruled by the Midrar tribe and killed its chief, Muhammad bin al-Fath in a fierce fighting. Jawhar marched against Fas after spending a year in the eastern Morocco. In 349/960, he besieged the strongest fortress of the Umayyads. He took possession of Fas and arrested its Umayyad governor. Jawhar proceeded towards the far west, and continued conquering one after another city till he reached the Atlantic ocean. He ordered some fish to be put in a pot with water, and sent it to al-Muizz to let him know symbolically that whichever cities he had crossed, he conquered them as far as the Atlantic ocean.

### **Conquest of Egypt**

We have heretofore noticed that the Fatimid attempt to conquer Egypt began early in their reign. Al-Muizz, however, with a comprehensive and more cautious policy in the Mediterranean and the Muslim world, was able to succeed where his predecessors failed. Having completely subjected the Maghrib to his control, he was able to rally the Katama tribe under the capable leadership of Jawhar for impending expedition against Egypt.

Egypt was under the rule of the Ikhshids from 323/935 to 358/969 before the advent of the Fatimids. It was a Turkish dynasty under the Abbasid suzerainty. Muhammad Ikhshid, the founder of the rule, died in 355/966 and his two minor sons, Abu Kassim and Ali ruled after him in succession as the nominal rulers, and the virtual authority was held by an Abyssinian, called Abul Misk Kafur (camphor, the father of musk). He was an able governor, and died in 357/968 after ruling for 22 years. Kafur's death left Egypt in a state of confusion. It was a

time of acute disorders and anarchy. Famine broke out as a result of scarcity of water in Nile and it was also followed by plague. The soldiers had their pay diminished, their gratuities were in arrear. The whole administration failed to relieve the people from distress due to lack of capable governor.

Kafur was succeeded by a twelve years old Abul Fawaris Ahmad. Under his rule, there had started an animosity between the vizir Abu Jafar bin Furat and Yaqub bin Killis, the treasurer. Yaqub was imprisoned, but was relieved soon by the intervention of Sharif Muslim al-Hussain, a great grandson of Imam Hussain. Yaqub bin Killis had gone to al-Muizz in Maghrib and informed the chaotic condition of Egypt. He also requested the Imam to take possession of Egypt. On the other hand, the Abbasids also neglected Egypt because of their internal wars. The people of Egypt ultimately knocked the door of Maghrib and wrote several letters to al-Muizz, inviting him to get rid of calamities. Al-Muizz confessed the offer and ordered for the preparation of large army to conquer Egypt. According to Ibn Khallikan (5th vol., p. 226), "The preparations for expedition against Egypt are a fair witness to the efficiency of the Fatimid logistics." Four months provisions were patiently amassed at the Qasr al-Ma, near Mansuria. Wells were dug and rest-houses built along the route between Tunisia and Egypt in 354/966, about three years before the invasion.

Al-Muizz determined to entrust the invasion of Egypt to his general, Jawhar, who had already proved his efficiency in the reduction of the western provinces, but just about this time, Jawhar fell ill, that no hopes were entertained of his recovery. In this state, he was visited by al-Muizz, who according to Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 341) declared that Jawhar would not only escape from death, but make the conquest of Egypt. The health of Jawhar was restored soon. Al-Muizz attended with his court to bid him farewell and according to Makrizi (1st vol., p. 378), he said: "We are in need of your bodies and minds. Be it known to you that if you act on what we say, we can hope that God will ease our attack of the eastern countries, as he did of the western parts with your cooperation." He further said, "By God, if Jawhar goes alone to conquer Egypt, he will be able to take hold of it. You people will enter Egypt within remaining in your veils without offense, and will land at the ruins of the Tulunids, where



a city shall be built, whose name shall be al-Qahira, which shall dominate the world." (Ibid.)

Thus, al-Muizz made his farewell speech to Jawhar's troops on the eve of their departure from the Maghrib in which he greatly emphasised the political and religious policy to be followed in the new dominion. He admonished his troops that **"justice was the basis of the state, not oppression."** If this principal were to be observed by all, he thought, the Katama warriors would eventually conquer the East as easily as they had conquered the West.

With the conclusion of his *khutba*, al-Muizz formally ordered Jawhar to set out, and ordered his princes to dismount and give Jawhar the salutation of departure; and this also obliged the great officers of the empire to dismount. Jawhar kissed the hand of al-Muizz, and mounted his horse and put his army on march.

Jawhar's march started from Kairwan with a huge army on 14th Rabi I, 357/February 4, 969. Ibn at-Tiqtaga in his **"al-Fakhri"** (comp. 701/1302) quotes the poet, named Muhammad bin Hani Maghribi (d. 362/973) as follows: **"No army before the army of Jawhar trotted and walked its charges by files of tens"**. Jawhar's army consisted of Arabs, Saqaliba, Rum and Berber tribes of whom the Katama was the largest. Ibn Khallikan (5th vol., p. 377) estimated at more than a hundred thousand men, and Nuwayri (d. 732/1332) writes in **"Nihayat al-Arab"** (ed. M. Jabir A. al-Hini, Cairo, 1984, p. 44) that it was later augmented by two hundred thousand men. The cost of the expedition is also given for 24 million *dinars*. More than a thousand camel loads of gold were also placed under Jawhar in order to meet extra expenses. With all his forces, Jawhar reached Barqa, whose governor, Aflah received him with honour. Jawhar directed his forces towards Alexandria, and conquered it without much opposition. When the people of Fustat learned the fall of Alexandria, they sent their deputation, who met Jawhar in a village, called Taruja on Rajab, 358/June, 969. Jawhar promised them for safe-conduct in writing. On 11th Shaban, 358/June 30, 969, the Fatimid general Jawhar overwhelmed the last feeble resistance of the Ikhshid forces near Jiza, and entered Fustat by crossing the Nile. He landed at the ruins of the Tulunid dynasty (254-292/868-905) on 15th Shaban, 358/July 4, 969 where he was received with honour.

In the same year, Jawhar dispatched a messenger towards Maghrib in presence of al-Muizz with the glad tidings that Egypt had fallen to the Fatimids. Ibn Hani, ready on the spot, recited a *qasida* which began:-

*The Abbasids are saying, "Has Egypt been conquered?"  
So say to them, "The matter has been decided!"*

*Jawhar has already passed Alexandria:  
The heralds have announced it, and victory is his!*

It seems that Jawhar preferred to follow very closely the policy designed by al-Muizz. In his proclamation (*ahd al-aman*) to the Egyptian populace in 358/969, Jawhar outlined a sagacious policy of religious toleration, reform, justice, tranquillity, security and peace. He was there to execute Fatimid policy which was aimed at pacifying Egypt in order that it might serve as a potential centre.

#### **Building of Cairo**

It would be more accurate to describe the site of Fustat as a low-lying bank consisting of a plain and series of alluvial terraces stretching as far as the advanced spurs of the Jabal al-Muqattam, known as Jabal Yashkur. The Greeks named it Babylon, then it was known as Fustat, founded after the conquest by Amr bin al-Aas in 20/641, in the form of a camp, to the north of the ancient city. The name *Fustat* (*fistat*, *fussat* or *fissat*) means either a "military tent" or more probably, a "defensive moat" (Roman *fossaton* and Latin *fossatum*). In 258/872, Ibn Tulun, the chief of Egypt had built a huge palace at the foot of Jabal al-Muqattam and a great mosque in 261/875.

Jawhar encamped his army at the northern plain of Fustat, almost away from the crowded parts of the city. Prof. Hitti writes in "*Capital Cities of Arab Islam*" (London, 1973, p. 111) that, "The victor lost no time in laying the foundation of his new capital. The site he chose excelled that of Baghdad in the number and importance of its forerunners, and the region around the site vied with that of the earlier capital."



On 17th Shaban, 358/July 6, 969, Jawhar drew the lines of the new city, and on the same night, he laid the foundation of a new city, named *al-Qahira al-Muizzia*, or *al-Qahira* (whence *Cairo* through Italian). It is related that a lot of about 1200 yards square was marked by poles with ropes extending from one pole to the other. Mattocks in hand, labourers stood waiting for the sound of bells strung on the ropes, while the astrologers were busy calculating the most favourable conjunction of the planets to give the signal for starting digging. But a raven darted down, perched on the rope, and set the bells jingling. Down went the diggers mattocks. Mars (*qahira al-aflak*) was then at its zenith, therefore, the name of the new city was given *al-Qahira*, or *al-Qahira al-Muizzia*. It should, however, be noted that Masudi (d. 346/958) tells more or less the same story about the foundation of Alexandria by Alexander. Still from credible sources, it seems that al-Muizz had designed a plan of the city before Jawhar's departure and had selected its name as expressed in his speech.

The new city was built on a rectangular plan. Its width was about 1200 metres and spread on 340 acres of land, out of which 70 acres were occupied by the big palace. A large area was reserved for gardens and parks, and about 200 acres were distributed among the soldiers. The city was strongly fortified on all sides with iron-gates to protect from the invaders. In its north was the gate of Nasr, in south the gate of Zwellah, in east the gate of Barqiya and the gate of Mahruk, and on its west were the gates of Saadat, Faraj and Khokhal.

John J. Pool writes in "*Studies in Mohammedanism*" (London, 1892, p. 165) that, "Cairo, in the time of her real greatness, in the days when the Fatimites ruled, must have been a capital to be proud of. And not only was the city famous for her unique situation and grandeur, but she earned renown in the East, as Cordova did in the West, for her encouragement of learning." Dr. T.J. De Boer writes in "*The History of Philosophy in Islam*" (New York, 1967, pp. 5-6) that, "For a short time Aleppo, the seat of the Hamdanids, and for a longer time Cairo, built by the Fatimids in the year 969, - have a better claim to be regarded as the home of intellectual endeavour than Baghdad itself."

Jawhar ordered that all mention of the Abbasid caliph in the Friday prayers must be expunged from all official records and the Fatimid *khutba* be recited. Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 344) writes that these words were added in the *khutba*:- "*O my God, bless Muhammad the chosen, Ali the accepted, Fatima the pure, and al-Hasan and al-Hussain, the grandsons of the Apostle, whom Thou hast freed from stain and thoroughly purified. O my God, bless the pure Imams, ancestors of the Commander of the faithful.*" Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 345) further writes that, "Jawhar disapproved however of prayers (of *khutba*) being made for himself, and said that such was not in the direction given by his master." One of Jawhar's first acts in Egypt was to strike the Fatimid coins, bearing the name of al-Muizz. He sent a sack of coins to al-Muizz in Mansuria as a symbol of his conquest. It is recounted that al-Muizz's faithful retainer, Abu Ali Mansur al-Jawhar al-Azizi (d. 363/974) was near death due to illness on that time, therefore, al-Muizz sent him some of these Egyptian coins, and said, "I hope that God will prolong his life, so that he may make the pilgrimage with us (towards Egypt)."

The preachers in the mosques were forbidden to wear the black garment usual under the Abbasids, and were ordered to use white instead. It was also ordered that every Sunday a court should be held for the inspection of complaints for hearing of petitions against the officials. Jawhar introduced financial reforms and accelerated the economical conditions, and the peace and prosperity were restored very soon in Egypt.

Jawhar's first step after laying down the city wall with four gates was to start on the two major projects: the Imam's palace and the mosque. The palace complex occupied the central area of 116,844 square yards. It was large enough to accommodate the imperial household and servants and to provide offices for government officials and army officers. In course of time it came to have 4000 rooms.

Close by the palace rose the mosque, extending to the foot of Jabal al-Muqattam, named *Jam-i Azhar*, on 24th Jamada I, 359/April 4, 970, where a big library and school were erected. Since the title of Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad and the wife of Ali, was *Az-Zohra* (the bright) and in her honour, it was named Al-Azhar, being the



masculine form of *Az-Zohra*. Philip K. Hitti writes in *"Capital Cities of Arab Islam"* (London, 1973, p. 114) that, "It took two years (970-972) to build. Its name *al-Azhar* (the most resplendent) recalls Ali's wife and Muhammad's daughter, *Fatimah al-Zahra*." It was built with 76 pillars of marble, facing each other. The roof was made of strong wood. The first service was performed in the mosque on Saturday, the 7th Ramadan, 361/June 22, 971. Makrizi writes in *"Khitat"* (2nd vol., p. 273) that the dome above the arches was decorated with the following inscriptions:-

*"In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate; according to the command for its building, from the servant of Allah, His governor Abu Tamim Ma'ad, the Imam al-Muizz li din Allah, Amir al-Mominin, for whom, and his illustrious forefathers and his sons may there be the blessings of Allah: By the hand of his servant Jawhar, the Secretary, the Siqilli, in the year 360."*

De Lacy O'Leary writes in *"A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate"* (London, 1923, pp. 110-11) that, "In 378/988, the following caliph al-Aziz, devoted it especially to the learned, and from this it gradually become the leading university of Islam." "Reputed to be one of the world's oldest universities", writes John L. Esposito in *"Islam, the Straight Path"* (New York, 1991, p. 48), "al-Azhar has remained an internationally recognized centre of Islamic learning, training students from all over the Islamic world and issuing authoritative religious judgements on major issues and questions."

The students in al-Azhar were called *mujawir* (learners) and *talib al-ilm* (seekers after knowledge). The teachers and professors took pride in using the modest title *khadim al-ilm* (servants of knowledge). The relationship between the teacher and pupil was patriarchal. The students showed their tutors the great respect, kissed their hands and carried their shoes. An inspector (*nazir*) at the head of the al-Azhar was to be chosen from the high officials of the state, also known as *shaikh al-umum*, who may be

compared to the Rector of the German universities, and the office of the Rector was called *mashyakha*.

When one enters the Jama-i Azhar in Cairo through the door *bab al-muzayyinin*, the inscription on this gate will bedevil and attract his attention. It says: "*Inna' l-a'mala bi'l-niyyati wa-li-kulli mara'in ma nawa*" (verily, actions are judged by their intention and every man has what he has intended). This saying of the Holy Prophet is considered to be one of the most important principles of Islam. As such it is mentioned as one of the four basic doctrines around which Islam revolves (*maḍar al-islam*).

Syed Ameer Ali writes in "*The Spirit of Islam*" (London, 1955, pp. 336-7) that, "The Fatimides of Egypt were grand supporters of learning and science....They established colleges, public libraries, and scientific institutes, richly furnished with books, mathematical instruments, to which were attached numerous professors and attendants. Access to, and the use of, these literary treasures were free to all, and writing materials were afforded gratis. The Caliphs frequently held learned disputations at which the professors at these academies appeared, divided according to the different faculties, -logicians, mathematicians, jurists and physicians, dressed in their *khala*, or doctoral mantles. The gowns of the English universities still retain the original form of the Arabic *khala* or *kaftan*." It must be noted that *khala* (robes of honour) generally consisted of a set of clothes: an *imama* (turban), a *qamis* (shirt), *taylasan* (piece of material worn over the shoulders), a *qaba* (a kind of sleeved, close-fitting coat) or a *durra'a* (a loose outer garment). While, the *kaftan* was regarded as a characteristic dress of the Turks. It was a kind of sleeved, close-fitting coat, generally reaching the middle of the calf, divided down the front and made to overlap over the chest.

It must be known that the first university was founded in Europe on 1150 at Paris, whose grade of university was declared in 1208. The Oxford was founded in 1168 and the Cambridge in 1231, therefore, al-Azhar University, no doubt, is the first oldest University in the world. In July, 1969 more than 4,000,000 people crowded into its 83 square miles in Cairo to celebrate its thousandth anniversary with pomp and jubilation.



## Al-Muizz in Egypt

Jawhar also conquered Syria, and then he invited his master, al-Muizz in Egypt. After making necessary appointments in Maghrib, al-Muizz departed from Mansuria on 21st Shawal, 361/August 15, 972 with his family and notable persons. His caravan reached Alexandria on 23rd Shaban, 362/May 29, 973. Abu Tahir Muhammad bin Ahmad, the **qadi** of Egypt, accompanied by the chief men, offered al-Muizz their salutations. Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 379) writes that, "He (al-Muizz) held a sitting near the light-house, in order to receive them and, addressing to them a long speech, he said that he had come to Egypt, not for the purpose of augmenting his dominions and his wealth, but of maintaining the true faith, protecting pilgrims and making war against the infidels. He declared his resolution to close his life in the exercise of good works and to act in conformity with the orders he had received from his ancestor, the Prophet Muhammad. He then preached to them and made a long exhortation which drew tears from some of those who were present; after which, he arrayed the **qadi** and other persons of the assembly in robes of honour, made each of them a present of a horse, ready harnessed, and dismissed them." Towards the end of the month of Shaban, al-Muizz left Alexandria and, on Saturday, the 2nd Ramdan, 363/June 6, 973, he stopped at Mina, the wharf of Egypt. He was warmly greeted by Jawhar in Jazira. Al-Muizz entered Qahira, or Cairo, henceforward, it became the capital of the Fatimids. Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 380) writes that, "On arriving at Cairo, he went to the castle and entered a hall of audience where he fell prostrate in adoration of Almighty God. He then said a prayer of two **rakats** (i.e., the genuflections of prayer)."

Jawhar continued to govern Egypt with absolute power till the arrival of his master; he preserved his high rank, dignity and authority till 364/974. He however continued in the government of Egypt for 4 years and 20 days.

The capital was placarded with al-Muizz's name and the praises of Ali. He was acclaimed by the people, who crowded to his first public audience. He was presented precious gifts by the prominent noblemen, in which the present offered by Jawhar was splendid and eye-catching. Stanley Lane Poole writes in "**History of Egypt**" (London, 1914, p. 98) that, "It includes 500 horses with saddles

and bridles encrusted with gold, amber and precious stones; tents of silk and cloth of gold, borne on Bactrian camels; dromedaries, mules, and camels of burden; filigree coffers full of gold and silver vessels; gold-mounted swords; caskets of chased silver containing precious stones; a turban set with jewels, and 900 boxes filled with samples of all the goods that Egypt produced."

The reign of al-Muizz was one of the most glorious ever recorded in Egyptian history. He displayed judgement and justice in the management of his mixed subjects. He did not allow his troops to interfere with the people. He was well disposed towards the Copts. His land revenue reforms were highly admired, which he was ably assisted by his vizir Yaqub bin Killis. Al-Muizz divided the provinces into districts and were placed under capable officers. The army was organized with a standing force and a militia to be summoned in times of war. A naval fleet was also organized to protect the coastal trade and commerce from pirates. Makrizi writes in "**al-Khitat**" (1st vol., p. 444) that, "The Franks were employed as craftsmen, making weapons for the navy and other services in Cairo." The Fatimids built a big dockyard (**dar al-sina'a**) at Alexandria and Damietta, inside the country on the Nile at Maks near Cairo and Aydhab near Sanga on the Red Sea opposite to Jeddah. The Arabic word **dar al-sina'a** for a dockyard is still current in the European languages as **arsenale** or **arsenale** in Italian and **arsenal** in Spanish, French and English. In the dockyard, more than 600 ships were built - the largest fleet that Egypt had ever seen since the Arab conquests. The commander of the naval force was called **Amir al-Bahr** (the chief of the sea), which came to be used in the European languages, such as **Amiralh** (Portuguese), **Amiral** (French) and **Admiral** (English).

One of the wonders of Alexandria was the erection of lighthouse in the shape of a towering minaret, near the shore at dangerous zone, measuring 175 hands. On the minaret were fire pans, in which a fire was kindled when the watchman saw the ships at a distance.

"Egypt under the Fatimids" writes H.U. Rahman in "**A Chronology of Islamic History**" (London, 1989, p. 160), "enjoyed an era of great prosperity; trade with India, Italy, the western Mediterranean and even, at times, with the Byzantine empire flourished. The tolerant attitude of



the regime created great intellectual vitality in the country."

It must be known on this juncture that Jawdhar (d. 363/974) was a very faithful servant of al-Muizz and never involved himself in any sort of achievement in Egypt. The *Dar al-Tiraz* (state textile factory), for instance, producing reed mats and inscribed prayer rugs as well as articles of clothing continued to flourish under al-Muizz. In 354/965, al-Muizz ordered Jawdhar to have a prayer rug made. The weavers included in it not only the text the Imam wished to have, but also the usual reference to Jawdhar: "*from among the works made under the supervision of Jawdhar, client of the Commander of the Believers.*" When Jawdhar saw his name embroidered in gold thread, he was mortified, supposing that the Imam might think him guilty of self-aggrandizement. Al-Muizz, however, praised the rug as being of "*extreme beauty and perfect manufacture,*" and paid no attention to the inscription.

One of the most interesting products of the Fatimid workshops of this period must have been a "*map of the world*" woven in blue *tustari qurqubi* silk on which the climate, mountains, seas, cities, rivers and roads of the earth were shown. Included was a clear representation of Mecca and Medina. Every feature on it was identified in gold and silver, or silk writing. Across the bottom, the legend read: "*Among the things ordered by al-Muizz li-din Allah, longing for the Sanctuary of God (Mecca), and proclaiming the landmarks of His messenger, in the year 353/964.*" It is reported to have cost twenty-two thousand *dinars* to make, vide Makrizi's "*al-Khitat*" (1st vol., p. 417).

The Fatimid Caliphs combined both, the religious as well as secular powers in their persons, and were more respected than the Umayyad or Abbasid caliphs. The Caliphs wore a religious halo. Hussain Ibrahim Hasan and Taha Ahmad Sharf write in "*al-Muizz li-din'allah Maktaba al-Mahda al-Miriyya*" (Cairo, 1947, p. 139) that, "The personality of al-Muizz was clothed in the clean robes of holiness and majesty. The Fatimid Caliph was not, like his Umayyad and Abbasid rivals, a tyrant in running the affairs of the state. Neither was al-Muizz over-indulgent about pleasures. His subjects and helpers held him in high esteem as he belonged to the progeny of the Prophet."

According to Theodore Noldeke in **"Sketches from Eastern History"** (Beirut, 1963, p. 90), "After their conquest of Egypt, the Fatimids were the most powerful princes of Islam, and it seemed at times as if even the form of power had passed from the Abbasids. The Fatimids, moreover, governed excellently as a rule, and brought Egypt to a high peak of prosperity."

One of the greatest figures in this period was the physician - therapist, called Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Sa'id al-Tamimi, who hailed from Palestine. He went down to Egypt in 360/970 and practised medicine at Cairo. Soon afterwards, his fame began to spread and was welcome at the Fatimid court. He compiled several medico-pharmaceutical books. His best extant work is **"al-Murshid ila Jawahir al-Aghdhiya wa quwa al-Mufradat min al-Adwiya"** on drug origins and properties including mineral and botanical simples. He mentions the use of finely powdered white sulphur in the manufacture of safety matches - an interesting reference to its wide use at the time - made from sulphur found in abundance in the Dead Sea area. This is over five centuries before the German scientist, Georgius Agricola (1494-1555), known as **the father of mineralogy**, mentions sulphur matches (**sufuratis ellyehniis**) for use with flint and steel. Sami Hamarneh writes in **"Medicine and Pharmacy under the Fatimids"** (cf. **"Ismaili Contribution to Islamic Culture"** ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Tehran, 1977, p. 182) that, "It seems therefore appropriate to state that the manufacture of safe sulphur matches was propagated and utilized early in the Islamic civilization centuries before it was used in Europe."

Mention should also be made of the old Egyptian **mummies**. The Arabic word **mumiyah** (Persian, **mumiya'i**) means bitumen or a mineral tar, whose earliest indisputable evidence dates from about 2600 B.C. It is interesting to note that Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Sa'id al-Tamimi seems to be an earliest reporter about these **mummies** in detail in his above work. He thought that the origin of the North African **mummy wax** (**mm** or **mumia**) is the sea which throws it to its shores. He recalls, "Abul Hasan al-Basri (al-Haytham) informed me that a large piece of it was thrown on the sea-shore near Katama (Tunisia) during the reign of Caliph al-Muizz. At a first glance, it was thought to be an ambergris (a grey substance from sperm whale's



intestines). This piece was presented to the Caliph's treasury. Upon testing it, it was found dry and brittle and of the same texture as the old *mummies* found in the graves of the ancient Egyptians." Tamimi further adds, "This suggested to me that during the time of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs and nobles, as a part of honouring their dead and preserving their corpses with normal bone structure against decay, they employed skilled people to do the embalming. They took the viscera from abdomen and bowls as well as the brain and their internal liquids and filled in their places with this already heated and melted *mumia*. Then they left it to solidify, joining the ribs and the spinal vertebra tightly together. In addition they anointed the outer skin for its preservation before laying the corpses in tombs dug in the rock with cover inscribed within and without with their full life histories. Thus they are well kept from deterioration in their burial places for good. The grave diggers in our time find great amounts of this *mumia* sticking to the bones and ribs of corpses. They removed it to sell. But I do not approve of its therapeutic use by our people."

Another notable person of this period was Musa bin Ali'azar al-Israili, the author of a book on the culinary art, which he dedicated to Imam al-Muizz, entitled "**al-Kitab al-Muizzi**." He compiled another, on the therapy of coughing and chest ailments and a third, a formulary, all of which are not accessible.

#### **Qadi Noman**

Qadi Abu Hanifah an-Noman bin Abi Abdullah Muhammad bin Mansur bin Ahmad bin Hayyun at-Tamimi was a renowned Ismaili jurist in the Fatimid court. He espoused Ismaili faith early in life at Kairwan. His association with the Fatimids however began with his entry into the services of Imam al-Mahdi since 313/925. During the period of Imam al-Qaim, he concentrated mainly in the study of history, philosophy and jurisprudence and composed numerous works. Prior to the death of Imam al-Qaim in 334/945, he was appointed as a *qadi*. His status was further promoted during the time of Imam al-Mansur when he was granted the rank of Chief Qadi (*Qadi'l-qudat*). He however reached his zenith in the time of al-Muizz. Qadi Noman was greatly impressed by al-Muizz's appearance and writes that he was

struck by "the refulgence of the Imamate from his countenance."

When al-Muizz ascended, Qadi Noman had felt his post dwindled and wrote a letter to the Imam about it. He got Imam's reply, which he had quoted in his "**al-Majalis wal Musayarat.**" It reads: "O, Noman, may God protect you. I have read your letter. I regret that you are not sure of my patronage, and are trapped in fear unnecessarily. You have no reason to fear any adverse change in my attitude towards you. Instead, you should entertain greater hopes and aspire for a higher position. I know every thing about you. My well-wishers ought to look upon you as a model. Your friend will envy your lot and your enemies will feel jealous of you. May God help you and keep you straight on true path. With regard to the position you occupied with my predecessor, nothing is hidden from my notice. We, the Imams are the roots and branches of the same tree. If my father has died physically, the line of Imamate shall continue for ever. The souls of the Imams are joined like the hooks of a chain. If your patron has gone, your Imam is present. Thank God and have a trust upon Him for your affairs. Write to me about your needs, and you will be given what you want."

When al-Muizz came to Egypt, he also brought Qadi Noman with him as his own **qadi**. He however allowed Qadi Abu Tahir Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Abdullah to remain as the **qadi** of Cairo. Abu Tahir, however, always consulted Qadi Noman and asked him to revise his verdicts. Qadi Noman was not formally appointed to a higher official position, his rank as a judicial officer was however superior than that of Abu Tahir.

Qadi Noman was a man of great talent, learning and accomplishments, diligent as a scholar, prolific as a writer and upright as a judge. He was the founder and exponent of Ismaili jurisprudence. He died in 363/974 at Cairo and al-Muizz led the funeral prayers. He was a erudite and versatile author and the name of 44 of his works have survived. Of these 20 are totally lost, and 18 are wholly, and the rest are preserved in the private collection.



### **Jafar bin Mansur al-Yamen**

It has been discussed heretofore that Jafar bin Mansur, the son of Ibn Hawshab was greatly distressed by the internal quarrels in which his brother, Abul Hasan Mansur played a conspiracy in killing Abdullah bin Abbas al-Shawiri in Yamen. Jafar bin Mansur was deadly against his brother and went to Maghrib at the Fatimid court. He reached Maghrib when Imam al-Mahdi had died in 322/934. He was however well received by Imam al-Qaim and his services were amply rewarded and was given the charge of mission. He was held in great esteem for his learning and ability. He also served whole heartedly to Imam al-Mansur and Imam al-Muizz.

Jafar bin Mansur was first to be invested the title of **Bab al-Abwab** by al-Muizz in Cairo, for which a separate mission cell was constituted. The residential palace of al-Muizz and Jafar was nearby. He always remained close to the Imam in Maghrib and Egypt as well. He rose to such a great extent that he had been given superiority over Qadi Noman, which can be judged from an event that one day, the health of Qadi Noman became impaired, therefore many visitors excluding Jafar bin Mansur came to see him. When Qadi Noman recovered, he went to see al-Muizz, who asked him as to who had come to see him while he was sick. Qadi Noman thereupon complained that many persons came except Jafar. Al-Muizz got annoyed at him and after a short while, he took out a book and gave it to Qadi Noman to read. Qadi Noman was highly astonished at the ability of its author. Al-Muizz asked him to imagine the name of its author. Qadi Noman said, "There could be no one else except the Imam himself who could write so well." And al-Muizz replied, "You have mis-judged, for the book is written by Jafar bin Mansur." Qadi Noman admitted his mistake with an apology and went to the house of Jafar to pay his respect.

Jafar bin Mansur was a prolific writer and instituted the interpretation for the school of Ismaili writings. His main works are twelve, whose few manuscripts are preserved in the University Library of Leiden. Suffice it to say that the period of al-Muizz would be barren without the intellectual, philosophical and mystical achievement of Jafar bin Mansur, who died in 365/975.

It must be known on this juncture that Abu Ali Mansur al-Jawdhar al-Azizi was the secretary of Jawhar from 350/961. He continued in his service until the death of Jawhar, then joined the services of al-Muizz and then al-Aziz, and died in 363/974. He was a prolific writer and compiled "**Sirat al-Ustadh Judhar,**" containing important biography of Jawhar. It also contains the decrees (*manshur*) issued to him from al-Mansur and al-Muizz and the letters written to them by him. It was edited and published by M. Kamil Hussain and Dr. M. Abd al-Hadi Shaira from Cairo in 1954.

Abul Fawaris Ahmad bin Yaqub (d. 413/1022) writes in "**Ar-Risala fi'l Imama**" (comp. 408/1077) that Imam al-Muizz said in a speech he delivered on the day of fast-breaking in Cairo that: "O'people, God has chosen a Messenger and Imams. He has made them superior and favoured them. He has accepted them as the guides to His creatures. He sent down His revelation upon them, and made them speak with His wisdom. They are like luminous stars: if one of them sets, another one shining, glittering and fully radiant with illumination. It is out of mercy upon those who are guided and prefer the life to come to the present life. It is in retribution to him 'who cries, lies and turns his back', and who favours the present life, and in retaliation against him who deviates from the path of guidance. God accepts from no one his deeds or his offerings, his admonition or his pursuit, except through them. He must surrender to their command, and acknowledge their bounty and their Imamate. He must surrender to them in obedience, follow their guidance and seek mercy from their part. May God bless them all."

Writing on the then Islamic empires, Robert Payne observes in "**The Holy Sword**" (London, 1959, pp. 182-3) that, "There were now three Muhammadan empires: the Umayyad caliphs ruled over Spain, Iraq and Persia remained in the hands of the Abbasids and North Africa, Egypt, Syria and Arabia were in the hands of the Fatimids."

The Ismaili mission in the period under review also penetrated to Sind and Hind, where a Fatimid state had been founded by Jaylam bin Shayban. It was dislodged by the onslaught of the Ghaznavid power in Sind, but was followed by other major principality of the mission in Mansurah, which was short-lived. The Ismailism, however, continued to remain a force that grew stronger in Sind, for it was patronised by the Sumra dynasty. For its detail



account, vide *"Ismaili Rule in Sind and Hind," Appendix No. III.*

Having considerably enhanced the power and territorial extent of the Fatimid Caliphate, al-Muizz died in 14th Rabi II, 365/December 21, 975 at the age of 44 years, after the Caliphate and Imamate of 23 years and 6 months. He ruled 20 years in Maghrib and 3½ years also in Egypt. Philip K. Hitti writes in *"Capital Cities of Arab Islam"* (London, 1973, p. 119) that, "Under the reign of the first caliph to commence his rule in Egypt, Cairo had become not only a formidable rival of Baghdad, but its superior. It had become the leading Moslem state in the eastern Mediterranean."

Stanley Lane Poole writes in *"History of Egypt"* (p. 98-99) that, "With the fourth caliph, however, al-Moizz, the conqueror of Egypt, the Fatimid entered upon a new phase. He was a man of politic temper, a born statesman, able to grasp the conditions of success, and to take advantage of every point in his favour. He was also highly educated, and not only wrote Arabic poetry and delighted in its literature, but studied Greek, mastered Berber and Sudani dialects, and even said to have taught himself Slavonic, in order to converse with his slaves from eastern Europe. His eloquence was such as to move his audience to tears. To prudent statesmanship he added a large generosity, and his love of justice was among his noblest qualities."

The famous poet, Ibn Hani (d. 362/973) had composed many verses, glorifying al-Muizz, whose few examples are given below:-

*"You are Ma'ad, the heir of all the world, and this destiny is finally declared." (vide, "Diwan", Cairo, 1271 A.H., p. 7)*

*"God's knowledge is not veiled from you, whereas it is screened from all people" (Ibid. p.8)*

*"He who named you the best Caliph, is subjecting fate to your desire." (Ibid.)*

**"O'Fatimids, you are the friends of God and you are His kin. In His world you are His righteous agents."**  
(Ibid. p. 63)

**"He inherited the world from two fathers: Muhammad and Ali."** (Ibid. p. 150)

#### **AL-AZIZ (365-386/975-996)**

He was born on 14th Muharram, 344/May 10, 955 in Mahdiya. His name was Nizar Abu Mansur, surnamed al-Aziz bi-Allah (August by the grace of God). He assumed the Imamate and Caliphate on 14th Rabi II, 365/December 21, 975. He was tall, broad shouldered, with reddish hair and large eyes having a dark blue colour. He was fond of sports and showed a marked interest in literature and learning.

It was owing to his generous patronage that the University of al-Azhar could maintain itself as a unique and distinguished seat of Islamic learning. He also created an almshouse in it for 35 men. Al-Azhar contained a huge library. The royal library of al-Aziz itself contained 200,000 rare manuscripts and an equal number of manuscripts were kept at al-Azhar. It also contained 2400 illuminated copies of Holy Koran. Later, in 436/1045 a new catalogue had been prepared in al-Azhar, listing 6500 volumes of astronomy, architecture and philosophy. When Nasir Khusaro visited Cairo, he had found 317 professors and as many as 9758 students engaged in the study of various subjects in al-Azhar. Marshall W. Baldwin writes in **"A History of the Crusades"** (London, 1958, p. 102) that, "The intellectual influences of Ismailism on Islam was very great indeed. During the heyday of its expansion, the poets, philosophers, theologians and scholars flocked to the Ismailite centres and produced works of a high order."

Al-Aziz was also known for his paternal care of the people and introduced many financial reforms in the country. He introduced the system of paying a fixed stipends for services to the official and household servants and also used to give them robes and mules to ride on. Among his outstanding reforms, the most significant was that he put down bribery and corruption with a firm hand in Egypt.



Writing in the year 372/982, the anonymous writer of "Hudud al-alam" (tr. by V. Minorsky, London, 1937, p. 151) describes that, "Egypt is the wealthiest country of Islam, and in it lies numerous towns, all prosperous, flourishing, wealthy, and extremely favoured by nature in many respects. It produces textiles, handkerchiefs, and robes of various kinds, than which there are none more precious in the whole world - such as Egyptian woollen goods and textiles, and handkerchiefs made of *dabiqi* (silk brocade or linen drapes) and *khazz* (tissue of silk and wool). And in this country, good asses are found of great price. Fustat is the capital of Egypt. It is the wealthiest city in the world, extremely prosperous and very pleasant. It lies to the east of the river Nile."

### Conditions of the Maghrib

It must be remembered that before embarking on his historic journey from Maghrib to Egypt in 361/972, Imam al-Muizz had appointed Buluggin bin Ziri, the *amir* of the Sanhaja tribe, as the governor of Maghrib, and invested him the honorific name, *Abul Futuh Yousuf*. He was vested with the governorship of all the Fatimid dominions in the west, except for Kalbid Sicily and for Tripoli. Later on, Buluggin moved from Ashir to Kairwan, where he founded the Zirid dynasty (361-543/972-1148). He was succeeded by his son, Mansur (373-386/984-996), who fought with the Katama tribe and began to detach from the Fatimids. He also expelled the persons from different key posts being appointed by al-Aziz in Maghrib. It is related that al-Aziz deputed a *dai* Abul Fahm Hasan bin Nasr in Maghrib to collect the informations and report him back. Mansur arrested and put him to death. Al-Aziz however tried to cope with the situation of the Maghrib very politely. The Zirid ruler Mansur was succeeded by his son, Badis (386-406/996-1016), who had procured his close ties with Imam al-Hakim. The fourth Zirid ruler, al-Muizz bin Badis had however renounced the suzerainty of the Fatimids in 436/1044.

Jawhar conquered Syria in 359/969, making Jafar bin Falah as a governor. When al-Muizz was in Cairo, a Turkish commander Iftagin, under the Buwahids defeated the Fatimid governor of Damascus, and started the Abbasid *khutba*. Al-Muizz had offered him to come in Cairo, but Iftagin

declined it, and as a result, al-Muizz took field against him, but died at Balbis. Iftagin sacked Syria, thus al-Aziz sent his general, Jawhar. He besieged Damascus on 22nd Zilkada, 365/July 22, 976 for two months. Meanwhile, the Qarmatians led by Hasan al-A'sam came to the help of Iftagin. Jawhar lifted the seige, because his supplies were running short, and went to Ramla, then returned to Cairo and reported to al-Aziz. This time al-Aziz himself commanded his forces and attacked enemies with all his might at Ramla, and forced them to retreat. Iftagin and Hasan al-A'sam took their heels. Al-Aziz announced a reward for one lac *dinar* for capturing Iftagin. Ironically, Iftagin was caught by one of his friends and brought before al-Aziz. He, keeping with his nature, behaved very politely with Iftagin, and returned to him all his personal belongings and included him among his door-keepers (*hajib*), a high grade in the hierarchy of the Fatimid court. His behaviour with Iftagin was so remarkable that Iftagin himself admitted: "I blush to mount my horse in the presence of our Lord al-Aziz. I did everything to oppose him, but he did not seek revenge, and I dare not to look at him because of the gifts and favours with which he overwhelms me." The Qarmatian leader, Hasan al-A'sam was forced to flee from Ramla, and lost his influence in Damascus.

When Iftagin fought with the Fatimid at Ramla, he had left behind Kassam Sharrab in Damascus. When al-Aziz defeated Iftagin, he sent Fazal bin Saleh and Suleman bin Jafar Falah, one after another, but none could capture Damascus. Fazal bin Saleh retreated to Palestine and held a series of talks with the Hamdanid Abu Taghlib, who had been expelled from Mosul by the Buwahid Adud ad-Dawla (367-372/978-983). Abu Taghlib had also failed to occupy Damascus, therefore, he aspired to obtain at least its governorship from the Fatimid Imam al-Aziz. Abu Taghlib gave his words to Fazal bin Saleh in the campaign to conquer Damascus, but the latter had already allied himself with the Jarrahid leader, Mufraj bin Dagfal bin Jarrah of Palestine. In sum, Mufraj defeated Abu Taghlib in 369/979 and took possession of the whole territory of Palestine. His cooperation with Fazal bin Saleh was however short-lived, as he had shaken his hand with Kassam Sharrab, the chief of Damascus.

In 373/983, Imam al-Aziz sent Balaktagin, a Turkish commander of the Fatimid forces against these two rebels.



He defeated Mufraj bin Dagfal in Palestine, who managed to flee to Antioch, where he took refuge with the Byzantines. Thence, Balaktagin proceeded to Damascus and defeated Kassam, and appointed Akhlaj as a governor, who was followed by Bekjur in 373/983.

Bekjur was a slave of Sa'd ad-Dawla (356-381/967-991), the Hamdanid chief of Aleppo. When Balaktagin had taken field against Kassam Sharrab in Damascus, Bekjur had provided necessary provisions to the Fatimid forces from Aleppo, and therefore, he was made the governor of Damascus after Akhlaj in appreciation of his aids. In the meantime, Bekjur sought permission from al-Aziz to conquer Aleppo, and soon afterwards, he besieged Aleppo. Sa'd ad-Dawla, the chief of Aleppo sought reinforcement from the Byzantine, forcing Bekjur to lift the siege and retreat to Damascus.

Al-Aziz however retained Bekjur's governorship in Damascus, but was expelled later in 378/988. He persuaded al-Aziz to assign him with the command of a new expedition against Aleppo. He however acquired little help from the local Fatimid forces, but was defeated and killed in 381/991 by Sa'd ad-Dawla, who was aided as usual by the Byzantines.

Few years later, al-Aziz once again turned his attention to conquer Aleppo. This time the Fatimid forces besieged Aleppo in 385/995 for several months at the command of Manjutagin. Meanwhile, the Byzantine emperor Basil II (975-1025) himself came with a large force to help Sa'd ad-Dawla's son, Sa'id ad-Dawla (381-392/992-1002) and saved Aleppo from going into Fatimid hands.

In spite of political differences between the Fatimids and the Umayyads of Spain, there had been cultural and commercial transactions between the two Muslim empires. During al-Aziz's period, the relations between him and Umayyad caliph al-Hakam II (350-366/961-976) were improved and there had been diplomatic correspondence between them as is learnt from a letter of al-Aziz, vide "**Nihayat al-Arab**" (p. 58) by Nuwayri (d. 732/1332). Their relations can also be ascertained from the fact that the Umayyad Prince Muhammad bin Abdul Malik bin Abdur Rehman al-Nasir composed few verses in praise of Imam al-Aziz.

## **Military reforms**

During the Fatimid expansion into Syria, the Fatimids were confronted with armies superior to their own which was mainly composed of Berber forces. In the Byzantine and Muslim armies which the Fatimids fought in Syria, the archers played prominent role. The Katama Berbers in general did not make use of the bow as a weapon. The absence of archers among the Fatimid ranks hindered their military performances. The only possible way for al-Aziz to overcome the military inferiority of his Berber troops was to incorporate ethnic groups skilled in archery into his army. This policy was inaugurated following al-Aziz's victory over an anti-Fatimid coalition in Palestine headed by Iftagin. Thus, the Turks and Iranians were introduced for the first time in the Fatimid army, who were skilled as mounted archers, while the Berbers were the horsemen carrying lances and shields.

In Egypt, these new elements were enlisted in the Fatimid army as professional soldiers and given special accomodation areas in Cairo, known as **harat al-Atrak** (barrack of the Turks), and **harat al-Daylam** (barrack of the Iranians). This new fighting element sponsored by al-Aziz, grew rapidly and before long its chiefs were appointed as commanders. In 381/991, the command of the Fatimid army was given to one of these men, called Manjutagin, with the title **amir al-juyush al-mansura** (commander of the victorious armies). He was charged to put down the disturbances in Syria, strike at the Byzantines in the north and bring Aleppo under the direct control of the Fatimids.

It must also be known that the Katama Berbers enjoyed special privileges in the Fatimid army since beginning and were exempted from taxation. In Egypt, they began to dominate almost in all state affairs and wielded political influences. They were known in Egypt as **Maghriba** (the westerners). In contrast, the Turks and Iranians were called as **Mashriqa** (the easterners), who were also a counterpoise against the growing influence of the Berbers.

In 380/990, al-Aziz also erected an army corp named **al-Azizia**. In 385/995, **al-Azizia** together with other corps, was dispatched to reinforce the Fatimid contingents in Syria.



## Ismaili mission

The Ismaili *dawa* was brisk in this period through a network of the *dais*. In 385/995, Abul Jabbar Hamdani, the Mutazalite chief Qadi of Ray (325-415/936-1025) gives a list of the *dais*, who visited Cairo in his "**Tathbit Dala'il Nubuwwat**" (p. 180) as follows:- Abu Jabala Ibrahim bin Ghassan, Jabir al-Manufi, Abul Fawaris al-Hasan bin Muhammad al-Mimadhi, Abul Hussain Ahmad bin Muhammad bin al-Kumayt, Abu Muhammad al-Tabari, Abul Hasan al-Halabi, Abu Tamim Abul Kassim al-Bukhari, Abul Wafa al-Daylami, Ibn Abi'l Dibs, Khuzayma bin Abi Khuzayma and Abu Abdullah bin al-Naman. These all *dais* belonged to Cairo, Tyre, Acre, Askalan, Damascus, Baghdad and Central Asia. Abul Jabbar also writes that, "At the court of the fifth Fatimid Imam al-Aziz, there are many visitors from Khwarizm and Multan, and other countries, carrying money and presents."

It must be known that the initial slip of employing the *dais* with officials and regular payment appeared during al-Aziz's reign. Makrizi writes in "**Khitat**" (2nd vol., p. 273) that, "In 378/988, the vizir Yaqub bin Killis employed 35 men and provided them with accomodation near the mosque of al-Azhar. From thence the idea developed and in Imam al-Hakim's period, the services of the *dais* became a full time and well remunerated profession.

## Yaqub bin Killis

Abul Faraj Yaqub bin Yousuf, known as Ibn Killis was born in a reputed Jewish family of Baghdad on 318/930. When he grew young, he came with his father to Egypt and began his political career at the court of Abul Misk Kafur. Very soon, he secured key position in the court because of being intelligent, honest and efficient. He embraced Islam in 357/968 and Kafur too died in the same year. The new vizir Abu Jafar Furat had imprisoned him in enmity, but was relieved soon by the intervention of Sharif Muslim al-Hussain. He finally quitted Egypt and entered into the Fatimid services in Maghrib. Imam al-Muizz had assigned him the tasks of accelerating the economy of Maghrib, which he discharged efficiently. He also accompanied Imam al-Muizz to Egypt and was handed over the administration

in 363/974. He was a man of great ability and is credited with having organised the fiscal and administrative system.

Imam al-Aziz appointed him as *Vizir al-Ajall* (chief minister) in 367/977 and became the first Fatimid vizir. Qalqashandi (d. 821/1418) writes in "*Subh al-A'asha*" (3rd vol., p. 483) that, "The first man to be addressed as vizir during the Fatimid Caliphate was Yaqub bin Killis, the minister of al-Aziz." He created different cells for the administration of the state, and promoted the output of agriculture, reformed trade and stabilized currency, causing increase of state revenue. In 373/983, he had fallen from his office because he is said to have ill-treated with one of the court prisoners of al-Aziz whom the Imam had promised all honours. Thus, al-Aziz penalised him with the fine of 200,000 *dinars* and after one year, he was reinstated in the office.

One can well judge the status of Yaqub bin Killis in the eyes of the Imam, when he fell seriously ill in 380/991. Al-Aziz visited him and said, "O Yaqub! if your recovery is to be gained through spending wealth, then I am prepared to give away the whole wealth of the state. If your life is saved by sacrificing any life, I am ready to sacrifice my own son."

Yaqub bin Killis died in 380/991 and his death was mourned through out Egypt and all the people assembled in the street leading from the citadel to his house. His shroud was decorated with 50 pieces of clothes of which 30 were embroidered with gold threads. Al-Aziz came forth, evidently much afflicted; he was mounted on a mule, and, contrary to his usual custom when riding out, no parasol was borne over him. He offered the funeral service over him; and said, "O vizir! how long shall I grieve for you." Ibn Khallikan writes that hundred of poets composed lamenting stanzas and every poet earned his reward from al-Aziz. In Cairo, a place was named *al-Barat al-Viziria* in his memory.

During the festival of *Id al-nahr*, the principle celebration took place at the open praying ground outside Cairo. The Imam used to go there in a splendid procession to perform prayer and deliver sermon. Upon his return to the palace, the people were repasted with delicious meals. Makrizi writes in "*Khitat*" (2nd vol., p. 220) that, "Al-



Aziz introduced an innovation by building in Cairo a special house (*dar al-fitra*), in which meals were served during the festival of *Id al-Fitr*."

The period of al-Aziz on the whole was one of peace and prosperity. He also patronised scholars and encouraged learning. His generosity became so popular that the common people were comparatively happier in his regime. The trade flourished to such extent that the industry of Cairo produced such a fine cloth that a whole robe could be passed through a finger ring. In 365/976, al-Aziz built the first market in Cairo alongwith the first bathhouses.

One of the famous persons during al-Aziz's period was Abul Hussain Ali bin Qadi Noman, who attained a high rank of chief justice (*qadi al-qudat*) after the death of Qadi Abu Tahir in 367/977. His appointment was proclaimed at the summit of the mosque of al-Azhar and Jam-i'l Atiq in Cairo. He was also assigned with the supervision of cases of inheritance, the mint and the quality of gold and silver coins. He appointed his brother, Muhammad bin Noman as his deputy and the *qadi* of Mediterranean towns of Farama, Tunnis and Damietta. Qadi Abdul Hussain Ali was a prolific writer, upright as a judge, talented in Arabic literature and well steeped in poetry. He died on 5th Rajab, 374/December 3, 984 in Cairo, and al-Aziz had offered his funeral prayer.

After the death of Qadi Abul Hussain Ali bin Noman, al-Aziz wrote to his brother, Abu Abdullah Muhammad to take over the charge of the office of *qadi al-qudat* to fill the gap of his brother. In 382/992, Qadi Abdullah Muhammad had established a juridical office in the old mosque to give legal opinion according to the Fatimid law. He was also a man of great talent, skilled in the system of jurisprudence and diligent as a scholar. He died on 4th Safar, 389/January 25, 998 in Cairo. Imam al-Hakim led his funeral prayer.

Joel Carmichael writes in "*The Shaping of the Arabs*" (London, 1969, pp. 242-3) that, "The Fatimid age was one of great prosperity, with a thorough awareness of the vital importance of commerce, both economically and politically, for the extension of Fatimid political influence. Egyptian trade before the Fatimids had been quite limited in scope, but under the impulse of the financial administration founded by Ibn Killis whole

plantations and industries were developed in the countryside and Egyptian products began being exported in quantity, while at the same time an extensive network of trade relations evolved both with Europe and with India. The Fatimids, while still based in Tunisia, had had lively trade relations with southern Europe, and when they got to Egypt their business connections with Italy, especially Pisa, Amalfi and Venice, were resumed and extended. Egyptian ships and traders, based at two great harbours, Alexandria in Egypt and Tripoli in Syria, went as far west as Spain. Indeed, the whole of the eastern Mediterranean was dominated by the ships of the Fatimid regime."

Hamilton A.R. Gibb writes in "Studies on the Civilization of Islam" (Boston, 1962, p. 20) that, "The significance of the Fatimid movement in the Islamic Renaissance is not to be measured only by the contributions of its professed adherents or sympathizers, but by the encouragement which it gave to intellectual activities of all kinds, even among its political or religious opponents, and its influence long survived the fall of the Fatimid Caliphate in 1171. It spread a spirit of free enquiry, individuals endeavour, and interaction of ideas, which expressed itself in the works of almost all the outstanding writers of Persia and Iraq in the fourth century, and most notably in Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and found echoes even in Muslim Spain, in spite of the restrictive tendencies of the orthodox Maliki school and the Almoravid rulers."

It should be known that a rare pear-shaped ewer made of rock crystal, bearing a Kufic inscription with the name of al-Aziz, represents one of the finest achievements of Islamic rock-crystal carvings. It is decorated with two seated lions confronting a tree of life, which is preserved in the treasury of St. Mark's in Venice.

It will be interesting to note that Makrizi quotes in his "Khitat" (1st vol., p. 121) an Egyptian poet, Abdul Wahab bin al-Hajib (d. 387/997) speaking of the two gigantic pyramids in his time in the following words:-

*"Tis as though the country, parched with thirst, had bared her two towering breasts, invoking God's help; like a woman bereft of her child. And then the Almighty made her a gift of the Nile, which supplies a copious draught to her."*



In 375/985, one Muhallabi drew up an itinerary for the Fatimid Imam al-Aziz which, for the first time, gave accurate information about the Sudan of which the other geographers of that century knew very little. His book was named, "**al-Aziz**" which he dedicated to al-Aziz, and had become the main source of Yaqut (d. 626/1229) for the Sudan.

Ibn Taghri Birdi (4th vol., p. 152) writes that al-Aziz had signed a truce for seven years with the Byzantine emperor in 377/987, stipulating three terms:- the release of 5000 Muslim prisoners captured by the Byzantines, the recitation of the Fatimid **khutba** in the grand mosque of Constantinople and the supply of the merchandise needed for the Egyptians.

Yaqub bin Killis was followed in rapid succession by six vizirs. In 380/991, al-Aziz appointed a Coptic Christian, Isa bin Nestorius (d. 387/397) as his vizir, and the latter appointed a Jew, Manasseh bin Ibrahim al-Kazza' as his deputy in Syria and Palestine. The vizir began to favour the Christians in Egypt and his deputy to the Jews in Syria and Palestine. When the Muslims made the complaints, al-Aziz at once dismissed them in 385/995 and seized 300,000 **dinars** from Isa bin Nestorius and a large sum from Manasseh bin Ibrahim.

In 382/992, Abul Darda Muhammad bin al-Musayyib Uqayti (d. 386/996), the governor of Mosul, declared his loyalty to al-Aziz and recited the Fatimid **khutba** in Mosul.

In 386/996, al-Aziz had personally set out to command the Fatimid armies against the joint forces of the Hamdanids of Aleppo and the Byzantines, but he at once fell ill at Bilbis, the first junction on his route to Syria. When al-Aziz felt that the shadows of his death were closing upon him, he summoned Ibn Ammar and Qadi Muhammad bin Noman and declared to them his son, al-Hakim as his successor. Both are said to have sworn loyalty and obedience to al-Aziz's command. On 28th Ramadan, 386/October 14, 996, al-Aziz met sudden death, from a stone in the kidney in the town of Bilbis.

Philip K. Hitti writes in "**Capital Cities of Arab Islam**" (London, 1973, p. 119), "Before his (al-Aziz) death at the age of forty-one, his name was cited in the Friday sermons from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, from southern Yemen to

northern Syria, and at least once in northern Iraq." According to Sayyid Fayyaz Mahmud in **"Short History of Islam"** (Karachi, 1960, p. 214), "The Fatimid power reached its peak in the days of the fifth Caliph, Nizar al-Aziz, whose dominions were greater in area than those of the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad. There was inevitably keen rivalry between the two, and no love was lost between them either, for they divided the Muslim world into two halves, the Sunni East and the Shiite West of the Fatimids." Rom Landau writes in **"Islam and the Arabs"** (London, 1958, p. 63) that, "During the reign of the fifth Fatimid Caliph, Nizar al-Aziz, the dynasty reached its highest point in power, prosperity and extent. The development of trade, the building up of plantations and the encouragement of industry so increased the power of this dynasty that it was able to exert its influence in Syria, Arabia, much of North Africa, and, on one occasion, even in Baghdad." Dr. Amir Hasan Siddiqui writes in **"Cultural Centres of Islam"** (Karachi, 1970, pp. 61-62) that, "The Caliph al-Aziz was himself a poet and lover of learning. It was he who made the Azhar mosque and academy. He also built dwellings for a large number of professors and students, who were paid salaries and stipends respectively."

The famous poet, al-Amir Tamim bin al-Muizz (d. 375/985) in his **"Diwan al-Amir Tamim"** (Ms. in the private collection of Dr. Kamil Hussain) had composed many verses in praise of al-Aziz, whose few examples are given below:-

**"Surely, you are the chosen Caliph by obedience to whom we become nearer to God." (p. 23)**

**"Without al-Aziz, the deputy of God, I would not have dared to resort to God or seek His help." (p. 51)**

**"You alone of the kings of the world have a divine soul in a mortal body." (p. 52)**

**"You are the chosen of God from among all his creatures, and you are the visible aspect of the majesty of God." (p. 61)**

**"You are the God's sign which sheds light among us and you possess the treasure of knowledge." (p. 63)**



**"Those who sin and doubt and commit inequity, you lead in the path of righteousness." (Ibid.)**

**AL-HAKIM (386-411/996-1021)**

He was born on 23rd Rabi I, 375/August 14, 985 in Cairo, and was the first Fatimid Imam born on Egyptian soil. His name was al-Mansur Abu Ali, surnamed al-Hakim bi-Amrillah (He who governs by the orders of God). In 383/993, he was however declared as a successor of his father, following the death of his brother Muhammad. On that occasion, a traditional procession to al-Azhar was used for a public proclamation in this context. Al-Hakim acceded the throne in 386/996 at the age of 11 years, 5 months and 6 days.

Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 525), Ibn Muyassar (p. 51) and other chroniclers quote Musabbihi as narrating the incident of succession as related by al-Hakim himself that:- "My father called be before his death. His body was naked except for bandages and pieces of cloth. He hugged me and kissed me and said, 'I am grieved about you, O my heart's love.' His eyes were full of tears, then he said, 'Go dear and play, I am all right.' I went out and occupied myself as children do when they play until God transferred al-Aziz to Him. Barjawan came to me while I was at the top of a sycamore tree which was in the yard of the house. He said, 'Descend, may God be with you.' I dismounted; he put the diamond turban on my head, kissed the ground before me and said, 'May peace be upon you, Amir al-mominin, God's mercy and blessings.' He took me out to the people and they all kissed the ground before me and greeted me as Caliph."

Makrizi writes in "Itti'az" (p. 386) when al-Hakim assumed Imamate and Caliphate that, "On the following morning the dignitaries assembled in the Grand Hall to await the new Caliph. Al-Mansur, wearing the diamond turban, entered the Hall and walked to the golden throne, the assembly bowing to the ground meanwhile. They greeted him with the *baya* as Imam and the title *al-Hakim bi-Amrillah* by which he was thereafter known." Upon the termination of the ceremony, Qadi Muhammad bin Noman went to the cathedral mosque, led the prayer and delivered the *khutba* in the name of *al-Hakim bi-Amrillah*.

Al-Hakim, however assumed full power of the empire at the age of fourteen, and thus it does not appear to have affected his early education. He had a good command of Arabic tongue, and a fine knowledge of poetry at an early age. Makrizi writes in "Itti'az" (p. 387) that, "Al-Hakim had skillfulness in the knowledge of poetry which no other man had in Egypt. At his court, the poets would gather to recite their poetry, while he would listen carefully and ask for the repetition of every verse which held exceptional meaning. Each of them would receive gifts of money in accordance with the quality of his works." He was a mere twelve years of age when he gained this reputation. The astronomy was also included in his course of studies. Antaki (d. 458/1065) writes in "**Tarikh-i Antaki**" (Beirut, 1909, p. 217) that, "He appears as a pleasant man with a sense of humour, and often exchanged jokes with those to whom he spoke in the streets." Antaki also writes, "Al-Hakim would frequently pause in the streets of his capital to exchange greetings or answer questions from his poor subjects." (Ibid. p. 200) Marshall Hodgson writes in "**The Venture of Islam**" (London, 1974, 2nd vol., p. 26) that, "Al-Hakim wished, above all, to be the perfect ruler; widely generous, enforcing strict good order, and absolutely just to all the people. Personally, he avoided all luxury and mounted a simple donkey for his excursions."

Al-Hakim is described as generous and brave by the chroniclers. His clothes were simple, made chiefly of wool, and chose to ride on an ass. He disliked diamond turban and wore plain white scarf. His food was simple, and that too cooked by his mother only. He was an impressive figure, tall and broad-shouldered with a powerful voice. His large eyes were dark blue and flecked with deep reddish gold.

Abul Fawaris Ahmad bin Yaqub (d. 413/1022) writes in "**Ar-Risala fi'l Imama**" (comp. 408/1077) that Imam al-Hakim delivered his first speech from the pulpit of a mosque in Cairo on 386/996 and said: "O'people, surely God has made us superior by the word of Imamate. He has eternalized it in us, so that it may last until the day of doom. The one of us receives it from the other and the son inherits it from the father. This is the bounty of God, He gives it to whomever He wishes, and God is of bounty abounding."



### Clash between *Maghriba* and *Mashriqa*

The Berbers dominated the Fatimid army, known in Egypt as *Maghriba* (the westerners). Al-Aziz had introduced the Turkish and Iranian soldiers in the army, known as *Mashriqa* (the easterners), as a counterpoise against the fast growing influence of the Berbers. Only two days after the death of Imam al-Aziz, the *Maghriba* faction in the army began to raise and stipulated that no one but Ibn Ammar should be the *wasita* (chief minister). Ibn Ammar negotiated with them, securing their goodwill in exchange for increased payment. Al-Hakim capitulated and responded to their demands, and appointed Ibn Ammar with a title of *amin ad-dawla* (trustee of the state).

Ibn Ammar intended to establish a purely Berber government in Egypt. His rule, indeed, was characterized by unmasked favourism of the *Maghriba*. Rudhrawari (d. 488/1095) writes that, "The aim of the *Maghriba* was to abolish the institution of the Fatimid Imam and build an empire of their own. Ibn Ammar's friends advised him to kill al-Hakim. Ibn Ammar, who intended to follow their advices, but dissuaded later on because al-Hakim was too young and harmless." (cf. "*Tajarib al-Umam*" by Miskawayh, p. 222). The Berber tribe of Katama, known as *Maghriba* appears to have been the centres of this change, as they considered that they had been the conquerors of Maghrib and of Egypt, and why should the fruits of this conquest be laid at the feet of an Arab dynasty in the progeny of Ali. Immediately after his appointment, Ibn Ammar began to allocate high positions to his supporters. He dismissed the Turkish and Iranian soldiers, known as the *Mashriqa*, from the high posts, and restored the power of the Berbers. He also curtailed the power of Abul Futuh Barjawan, the regent of the Imam, and confined him as a tutor of al-Hakim in the palace. The chiefs of *Mashriqa* thus had been dismissed and some of their supporters were even executed. Annual allowances to them were stopped, and many of them fled from Egypt fearing being killed.

On the day when Ibn Ammar was proclaimed *wasita*, every *Maghriba* received 20 *dinars*, and each was promised an additional 64 *dinars* annually. On one occasion, he gave 1500 horses to Katama supporters.

## Downfall of Ibn Ammar

Barjawan allied himself with the Turkish commander called, Manjutagin, who himself was a great force in Syria. He readily espoused to Barjawan's faction, and formed an alliance with some of the Bedouin chiefs and left Damascus at the head of six thousand troops to march towards Egypt. Ibn Ammar mobilized his troops under the leadership of Suleman bin Falah and provided him with the large sums of money to be used in diverting the loyalty of the Bedouin chiefs against Manjutagin. The two armies clashed between Ramla and Askalan, and after three days of minor encounters, they fought the final battle. Manjutagin was subdued and taken prisoner and sent captive to Cairo. The battle resulted in victory for the *Maghriba*, but impugned a dangerous problem to the state, a fast growing opposition between the *Maghriba* and *Mashriqa* in Egypt. The defeated *Mashriqa* arrived in Cairo and threatened Ibn Ammar's rule, while the majority of *Maghriba* were in Syria with Suleman bin Falah. To overcome the problem, Ibn Ammar planned to increase his supporters and at the same time adopted a moderate line of policy towards *Mashriqa*, and pardoned Manjutagin. Suleman bin Falah also followed a similar policy in Syria and tried to convince its inhabitants that his plans were for peace and security. He dismissed Jaysh Ibn Samsama from the governorship of Tripoli and replaced him with his own brother Ali.

Thus, Jaysh, a powerful Katama chief, went to Cairo to revenge himself by attempting to overthrow Ibn Ammar. He made an alliance with Barjawan and the chiefs of *Mashriqa*. Barjawan's opportunity to gain power came with the presence of Jaysh in Egypt. He provoked riots and disturbances in Cairo and threw the blames on Ibn Ammar and his supporters. Ibn Ammar invited them to his palace under the pretext to discuss the riots between Berbers and Turks, but secretly had planned their executions. However, Barjawan, who had planted many spies in Ibn Ammar's palace, was informed of this and formed a counterplan. He and his supporters decided to accept the invitation. They planned to foil the attack by retreating among them, thus exposing Ibn Ammar's treasonable intentions. Barjawan's plan succeeded and he and his allies returned to the royal palace, declared Ibn Ammar to be a traitor and prepared to fight. With as many supporters as he could muster, Ibn Ammar left Cairo and camped in the desert. Barjawan



followed him and in a battle which lasted half a day, Ibn Ammar was defeated, and fled. By the overthrow of Ibn Ammar in 387/997, Barjawan assumed the office of *wasita* (chief minister) after Ibn Ammar had held office for a little less than eleven months. Barjawan took out al-Hakim in public to demonstrate his loyalty towards the Fatimids.

Barjawan pardoned Ibn Ammar and granted him the same monthly allowances and supplies that he had received during the period of Imam al-Aziz.

#### **End of Abul Futuh Barjawan**

With his accession to power, Abul Futuh Barjawan had to face a number of problems. He however handled the situation, and endeavoured to get an end of it, or at least to lessen the rivalry between *Maghriba* and *Mashriqa*. In the appointment of key posts, he tried to create equality which would satisfy the average persons of both groups. He appointed Ismail bin Fahl al-Katami, a *Maghriba* chief as the governor of Tyre and Bushara al-Ikshidi, a *Mashriqa* chief as the governor of Damascus. For the governor generalship of Syria and the supreme command of the Fatimid forces stationing there, he chose Jaysb ibn Samsama, a powerful *Maghriba* chief. He made an efficient Christian, Fahl bin Ibrahim al-Katib as his personal secretary and invested him the title of *al-Rais* (the master).

Barjawan now governed the state with unbounded authority. In 388/998, he gave his friends key posts: Khawad was made the head of the police in Egypt; Malik as the chief of navy, Maysur as the governor of Tripoli in Syria; Yamim, his own brother, as the governor of Askalan and Qayd as the chief of the police department in Cairo. He now began to take major decisions without Imam's consent. He wanted to make the Imam merely an ornamented figure in the palace, and bring him out to grace only in the state functions. He treated al-Hakim, even after his succession to the Caliphate, in the same manner in which he did previously, overlooking the fact that he was no longer a child. He treated al-Hakim as helpless child and did not allow him even to ride on horseback. Makrizi writes in "*Itti'az*" (p. 390) that al-Hakim once said, "Barjawan was extremely ill-mannered. I summoned him one day while we

were riding on horseback. He came, putting his foot on the neck of his horse, and while I was speaking to him, the sole of his shoe was turned towards my face and he did not seem to think it was wrong. Incidents like this were so many that it would take a long time to mention them." Ibn Muyassar in "**Akhbar al-Misr**" (p. 56) and Makrizi in "**Khitat**" (2nd vol., p. 4) consider such treatment as dictatorship (*istibdad*), causing al-Hakim's resentment which resulted his death.

Ibn Qalanisi (p. 51) writes that, "Abul Fazal Raydan, the bearer of the royal parasol (*mizalla*), once said to al-Hakim, 'Barjawan is planning to emulate the career of Malik Kafur (d. 357/968) and purposes to deal with you as Malik Kafur dealt with Ikhshidi's son by isolating you and eliminating your power. The right thing to do is his immediate murder and administer your state alone.' Al-Hakim replied, 'If this is your opinion and advice, then I need your help.'"

Barjawan was finally slain on 16th Rabi II, 390/March 25, 1000 by Abul Fazal Raydan, who carried out the murder with his associates in a place called Bustan Duwayrat al-Tin, a garden near the royal palace where Barjawan was walking with al-Hakim. Barjawan held his office for 2 years, 7 months and 29 days. In terms of wealth and power, Barjawan was typical of the top echelon of the ruling circles. Ibn Bassam (d. 542/1148) writes in "**al-Dhakhira fi Mahasin al-Jazira**" (Cairo, 1945, p. 232) that after the death of Barjawan, an officer of central treasury found in his house: one hundred scarves (*mandil*) of different colours, one hundred another kind of scarves (*sharabiya*), one thousand pairs of trousers (*sirwal*), one Armenian silk (*takka*), an uncountable quantity of clothes, jewels, gold, perfumes and furniture, three hundred thousand *dinars*, one hundred and fifty horses and mules in his personal stable, three hundred pack horses and mules and a hundred and fifty saddles, twenty of which were pure gold.

Henceforward, Imam al-Hakim took over the power into hand at the age of fourteen years. Barjawan's execution provoked some apprehension among the people, but al-Hakim skillfully navigated the storm. He went out to the people and declared: "I have been informed of an intrigue which Barjawan made against me, and for that I caused him to be executed." Makrizi writes in "**Itti'az**" (2nd vol., p. 27)



that al-Hakim speaking before an assembly next day of state dignitaries (*shuyukh ad-dawla*), the leaders of Katama and Turks, said: "Barjawan was my slave and I employed him. He acted in good faith and I treated him with favours. He then began to misbehave, so I killed him." The death of Barjawan marks the beginning of the second period of al-Hakim's reign.

The period between 390/1000 and 396/1007 was critical because of famine and economical distress. There was also a general deterioration of economic and social life between 395/1004 and 411/1021 when most of the royal decrees (*manshur*) covering religious and social legislation were issued by al-Hakim. Vatikiotis writes in **"The Fatimid Theory of State"** (Lahore, 1957, pp. 152-3) that, "Although such legislation may have appeared maniacal to al-Hakim's contemporaries, it is astounding how modern historians, who could have conducted a more dispassionate investigation, have accepted such verdict. His forbidding extravagant spending in entertainments when the Nile was exceptionally low in 398/1008 and his fight against profiteering from high prices during the famine crisis are examples of sensible legislation for the public welfare. For example, his handling of thieves and vagrants was amazing and probably very effective at the time. A spy system to report thieves to the "man" inside the "sphinx" statue is commendable, if that were a way to stop hooliganism. In the evening, al-Hakim would hold open forum, where the merchants would report to the "sphinx" the missing items from their stores. The latter would, through previous information, deliver the name of the robber. This seems an interesting and brilliant method of coping with vagrant thieves rampant in a period of depression. Al-Hakim no doubt understood the psychological power of miracles and their effect upon the masses."

Hence, al-Hakim had to take drastic measures by pressure of circumstances. On account of his extreme measures to meet the challenges, he became a controversial figure. Historians have held different opinions for him. Abul Fida, Ibn Athir and Ibn Khallikan depict him as an heretic and wily tyrant. Prof. Hitti, on the other hand, defends him, and writes in **"The Origins of the Druze People and Religion"** (New York, 1928, p. 27) that, "The fact that al-Hakim introduced many reforms regulating weights and measures, fought immorality with police ordinances ....

amidst a hostile milieu indicates that he was not the kind of maniac or fool whose biography these early writers have left us."

It must be noted that Antaki and Ibn al-Sabi's records discrediting al-Hakim's personality should be treated with a degree of caution since both historians were aggressive to al-Hakim and lived in distant countries. Al-Hakim's so called cruelty may have been the result of the circumstances rather than the acts of a sadist, or were perhaps exaggerated according to the view of the hostile historians. He ascended when he was still a child and witnessed fierce struggle and rivalry for power among the high officials of his state. This may have created a sense of insecurity which led him to resort to so called cruelty as a tool of maintaining his power. Ibn al-Futi, who is quoted by Makrizi in "**Itti'az**" (p. 411) suggests that, "al-Hakim's cruelty was both part of his policy to abolish the corruption resulting from his father's great tolerance, and vengeance against those who oppose the Islamic law of the state." In "**The Encyclopaedia of Islam**" (Leiden, 1971, 3rd vol., p. 80), M. Canard writes that, "It cannot, however, be said that his reign was particularly unfortunate for Egypt."

Muhammad Abdullah al-Inan writes in his "**al-Hakim bi-Amrillah wa Asrar al-Dawa al-Fatimiya**" (Cairo, 1937, p. 173) that, "We are however unable to understand different political enigmas of al-Hakim, but it is beyond doubt that the ordinances and injunctions he imposed were not against the Islamic traditions to a little extent. These were also not the result of the whimsical thoughts, but based on the ordinary reformations of the state, therefore, the wisdom and strategy motivated behind them can never be ruled out." Dozy also writes in the same vein in "**Essai sur l'histoire de l'Islamisme**" (Leiden, 1879, p. 148) that, "We fail to know the enigmatic personality of the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim, therefore, it is not plausible to draw a conclusion that these were the outcome of whimsical thoughts."

#### **Policy towards the wasita**

It must be remembered however that the constant struggle for power between the two elements in the Fatimid's army



presented al-Hakim with a very serious problem. His position was also threatened by the growing influence of *mudabbir ad-dawla* (the administrator of state affairs), better known as *wasita* (the mediator, executor of the Caliph's orders or chief minister), simply an intermediary between the Imam and the people. Both Ibn Ammar and Barjawan had forcefully seized power and became themselves as *wasitas*, and misused the office. This was the first crack in the political structure. In the face of this trend, al-Hakim's attitude towards each successive *wasita* during the last twenty years of his Caliphate, was well and carefully planned to control his exercise of power. He did not abolish the institution of *wasita*, but restricted its power. Makrizi writes in "Itti'az" (p. 390) that, "After the appointment of al-Hussain bin Jawhar as *wasita* in 390/1000, he was ordered not to receive or deal with petitions in his own house or in public streets; those who had cases of complaints should be told to deliver them to him only at the office in the palace." Hussain bin Jawhar together with his secretary, Fahd bin Ibrahim, would come early to the palace, receive the petitions, study them and carry them to the Imam for final judgement. Except for Hussain bin Jawhar and Ali bin Falah, none of the *wasita* had a military background. None was powerful tribal chief nor a chief of any element of the army. Most of them were from poor class. No *wasita* was allowed to remain in office for a long period. In the course of his twenty years of rule of al-Hakim, more than fifteen *wasita* were employed, some held office for as little as ten days. Severity was the prominent feature in al-Hakim's attitude towards his *wasitas*, and the majority of those who occupied that office were executed. Thus, Ibn Hammad (d. 628/1230) writes in "Akhbar al-Muluk Bani Ubayd wa Siyaratihim" (p. 57) that al-Jarjara'i, a high official who had lost both hands by the command of al-Hakim, would tell those who remarked upon such treatment that: "This was a punishment which I deserved for betraying amir al-mominin's orders." According to Marshall Hodgson in "The Venture of Islam" (London, 1974, 2nd vol., p. 27), "He was merciless to any of the great who, he thought, took advantage of their position."

Historians have generally shown al-Hakim's attitude as a tyrant and blood-thirsty. Such commitments, however, do not seem to be quite accurate, and many have been hastily arrayed without a thorough investigation. P.J. Vatikiotis

writes in **"The Fatimid Theory of State"** (Lahore, 1957, p. 149), that, "These presentations have been hastily arrayed without a genuine investigation of al-Hakim's reign." This part of al-Hakim's policy cannot be described as blood-thirsty or insane.

Al-Hakim was extremely engaged in a deadly struggle of retaining the Fatimid Caliphate. He was not fighting only the secular tendencies of political power groups, but also attempting to rally the fast disintegrating Fatimid ranks in the face of impending danger.

It is a common method which most rulers used to adopt to silence opposition and prevent threats to their own powers. There is no evidence suggesting that, at any time, al-Hakim ordered the execution of someone just for the sake of killing. His bursts of killing, as M.G.S. Hodgson says in **"al-Darazi and Hamza in the Origin of the Druze Religion"** (JAOS, 82, 1962, p. 14), "were most obviously turned against the great and the proud, the holders of positions and those ambitious to be such." There were more precisely against those from whom al-Hakim anticipated danger or considered a threat to his power. A comparative study of his attitude towards **qadi al-qudat** (chief judge) with the manner in which he treated the **wasita** and military chiefs illustrates this point. It was only **Qadis** who opposed his policy who were executed; others were treated quite normally. During his entire reign, al-Hakim employed five persons to that post of **Qadi al-qudat**. Muhammad bin Noman died in 389/998 and al-Hakim himself led the prayer at his funeral. His successor, Hussain bin Noman served until 395/1004 when he was executed after being found guilty of theft. Muhammad bin Yousuf al-Kindi (d. 330/951) writes in **"Kitab al-Umra wa'l Kitab al-Qudat"** (London, 1912, p. 608) that, "Hussain bin Noman stole twenty thousand **dinars** from an orphan whose father entrusted the money to him. His trial was personally conducted by al-Hakim." Abdul Aziz bin Noman succeeded until 399/1008 when he was dismissed, and two years later executed for opposing al-Hakim and supporting Hussain bin Jawhar. Malik bin Sa'id al-Fariqi served for 6 years, 9 months and 10 days (399/1008 to 405/1014) and was executed for opposing al-Hakim's policy for imposing Islamic laws. In 405/1014, al-Hakim appointed Muhammad bin Abi'l Awwam as **Qadi al-qudat** and Khatgin as a **Dai al-qudat**,



and both remained in office until the end of al-Hakim's rule because of their loyalty with the rules imposed.

### **Jaysh ibn Samsama**

Barjawan was able to overcome the chronic problems in Syria, and appointment of Jaysh ibn Samsama as a governor general and the commander of the Fatimid forces, indicates a shrewd policy. Jaysh was a powerful **Maghriba** leader and was also a popular figure among the **Mashriqa**. Initially, he had four major problems to be confronted when he reached Syria: the rebellion in Tyre, the rebellion of Mufraj bin Dagfal, the unrest in Damascus and the Byzantine invasions into the Fatimid territory.

Jaysh at first moved into the action to subdue the rebellion in Tyre, an important port on the Mediterranean coast; whose inhabitants, supported by the Byzantines, had rose against the Fatimid suzerainty during the clash between Barjawan and Ibn Ammar. Their leader, a sailor called Ullaqah had declared Tyre an independent, and issued new coinage with the slogan, "Dignity and plenty instead of humility and poverty. Amir Ullaqah" (**uzzun ba'da faqah al-amir Ullaqah**). Jaysh appointed Abu Abdullah al-Hussain and Ibn Nasir ad-Dawla al-Hamdani to lead the expedition against Tyre, and himself stayed with the rest of the forces in Palestine, preparing another expedition against Mufraj bin Dagfal. He also ordered the governors of Tripoli and Sidon to join together with their warships in the forthcoming fighting against Tyre. In the ensuing battle, the Fatimid forces ravaged the Byzantine ships, and at length, Tyre fell before the onslaught of the Fatimid forces. The Fatimid troops entered the city and declared immunity (**aman**) and safe-conduct for all who remained in their homes. Ullaqah was arrested and sent to Cairo.

After suppression of rebellion in Tyre, Jaysh proceeded towards Palestine, where Mufraj bin Dagfal was plundering the towns and attacking the pilgrim caravans. When confronted with the big army of Jaysh, Mufraj capitulated and sent a delegation, asking for safe-conduct and promised to advance his loyalty to the Fatimids. Jaysh, who was pressed by more serious problems in northern Syria, accepted the offer of Mufraj and pardoned him, and withdrew his army to the north.

Jaysh thence advanced towards Damascus, and as soon as he entered the city, according to Ibn Athir (9th vol., p. 50), he declared that his prime objective was to wage war against the Byzantine and establish peace and security in Damascus. He also announced the death penalty for any one, whether his soldiers or other citizens, who proved guilty of disturbing the peace in the city. Jaysh then moved towards Hims, where the governor of Tripoli and his troops and a number of volunteers, augmented Jaysh's army in his fight against the Byzantines, who had besieged Afamiya at that time.

Jaysah arrived at Afamiya during the hour when the city was in great distress and about to fall into the hands of Byzantines. In the ensuing battle lasted for a few days, Jaysh faced defeat in the beginning. In the interim, a Muslim soldier managed to kill the Byzantine commander, causing demoralization among the Christian troops. The Byzantine troops were defeated, who took wild flight from the field. Jaysh followed the defeated Byzantines as far as Antioch and besieged the city for a few days, but he at once lifted the siege and returned to Damascus.

It must be remembered that Ibn Ammar had instituted a group of the young men (*ahdath*) from among the *Maghriba* in Damascus against the *Mashriqa*. The *Ahdath*, an urban militia, commanded by *al-Rais* (master) or *al-Rais al-Bilad*, whose influence exceeded that of the *gadi*. As armed and pugnacious men of the native-born population, the *Ahdath* had constituted in face of the political authorities. The *Ahdath* had assumed the principal power and were the main cause of the troubles in Damascus. Jaysah tried to cope with these elements and finally decided to eliminate them once and for all. During his early arrival in Damasus, he delayed his plan owing to the raids of the Byzantines on northern Syria. After suppression of the Byzantine influence in Tyre and the troubles created by Mufraj bin Dagfal, he returned to Damasus to strike a final blow on the *Ahdath*. According to Qalanisi (p. 51), he invited the chiefs of *Ahdath* to his camp which he had pitched outside the city, and had them killed. He at once besieged the city and sent his troops inside to search and kill the remaining ashes of *Ahdath*. This operation clean-up cost the death toll of 1200 persons and brought fear to the inhabitants, but Jaysh declared for their safe-conduct and promised security and



peace under the suzerainty of the Fatimids. This was of course a bloody operation, but at the same time it was a last resort and the only effective solution to solve the problems of Damascus, where peace was restored for a long time. In sum, the major threat to the suzerainty of the Fatimids in Damascus was avoided.

During the first three years of al-Hakim's rule, two major anti-Fatimid uprisings occurred in Damascus. It was the untiring efforts of Jaysh ibn Samsama that these rebellions had been subdued in 388/998. Al-Hakim's aim was to win the loyalty, therefore, he paid due attention to the welfare of Damascus and appointed considerable governors, some of whom were recalled after only a few months. Thus, 21 governors are reported to have been appointed in Syria during the 22 years of al-Hakim's rule. He did not hesitate to dismiss any governor who exceeded his authority or caused discontent among the inhabitants.

Jaysh ibn Samsama died on 390/1000 at Damascus. His son went to Cairo with a paper on which his father had written his will and a detailed statement of all his property: all this, he declared, belonged to al-Hakim; his children had no rights. The property thus valued was estimated at 200,000 pieces of gold. His son brought all this before al-Hakim, who said, "I have read your father's will and the statement of the money and goods of which he has disposed by his will. Take it, and enjoy it in tranquility and for your happiness."

### **Condition of Aleppo**

The Fatimid Imam al-Hakim had also contemplated to extend his authority to Aleppo, the greatest centre of northern Syria. The last Hamdanid ruler, Sa'id ad-Dawla had been killed in 392/1002 by the conspiracy of his minister, called Lulu; who abolished the Hamdanid dynasty in Aleppo and established his own. The real power behind Aleppo was however the Byzantines, who used to be called when their help needed to the rulers. Thus, al-Hakim made a non-aggression pact (*hudna*) with Basil II, the emperor of Byzantine and weakened the reliance of Aleppo on Byzantine help.

There appears different of views as to the negotiation of non-aggression pact (*hudna*) between the Muslim and Christian empires. Ibn Qalanisi (p. 54) writes that in 390/1000, Barjawan moved first by sending a friendly letter through his Christian secretary, Fahd bin Ibrahim al-Katib, expressing the Fatimid desire for the pact. Antaki (p. 184) however states that the Byzantine emperor, Basil II took the initiative by deputing his two envoys to negotiate peace with the Fatimids. In sum, the agreement was initially for a period of ten years, but it remained enforced through out al-Hakim's period, and the relations between them were strengthened. Envoys and presents were exchanged between the two rulers and trade and commercial activities continued uninterrupted except for a brief period.

The events which occurred in Aleppo after the death of its ruler, Lulu in 399/1008 facilitated al-Hakim's policy and assisted him to achieve his goal. Lulu's son Mansur, succeeding his father, was faced with numerous enemies, including Abul Hayja, the Hamdanid prince who came from Byzantium with Byzantine support to restore the rule of his ancestors. Mansur received investiture from al-Hakim and virtually became a Fatimid vassal. Al-Hakim supported Mansur against Abul Hayja, who had taken field and defeated.

In 406/1016, Mansur was defeated in a battle by Saleh bin Mirdas, the chief of the Banu Kilab. Mansur took refuge with the Byzantines after leaving a citadel under the control of a certain Fath, who was secretly in contact with al-Hakim. Thus, al-Hakim granted the title of **Asad ad-Dawla** (lion of the state) to Saleh bin Mirdas and **Mubarak ad-Dawla** (blessed of the state) to Fath. On the other hand, al-Hakim commanded his troops encamped in Syria to move towards Aleppo to prevent any pact between Saleh and Fath against the Fatimids. In 407/1017, the first Fatimid governor appointed by al-Hakim entered Aleppo, called Fatik, bearing the title of **Aziz ad-Dawla**. Ibn al-Adim (d. 660/1262) writes in "**Zubdat al-Halab fi Tarikh Halab**" (Damascus, 1951, 1st vol., p. 214) that al-Hakim issued an edict addressing to the inhabitants of Aleppo that, "When **Amir al-mu'minin** learned of the tyranny and ill treatment you suffered from those in powers, burdening you with taxes and harsh imposts out of all proportion to the ways of Islam, he, may God strengthen



his power, ordered supplies to be sent to you from the state's stores and to exempt you from the *kharaj* until the year 407. By this you will know that the light of righteousness has risen and the darkness of tyranny has been dispelled."

The Byzantine emperor however opposed the Fatimid foothold in Aleppo, but did not break the non-aggression pact (*hubna*) with the Fatimids. He put restrictions upon the trade with Aleppo and cemented his close ties with the Mirdasids in order to employ them against Fatik. The remote distance of Cairo, the threats and offers of his Byzantine contacts and his personal ambition, made it easy for Fatik to show his back to the Fatimids. Soon afterwards, Fatik began to rule as an independent ruler in Aleppo and dismissed the officials appointed by al-Hakim and employed men of his own choice.

On this juncture, al-Hakim realized that a demonstration of the Fatimid arm forces was necessary to maintain his authority in Aleppo, therefore, he ordered his governor in Syria to prepare for a quick expedition against Fatik. On the other side, the troops of the Byzantine also came into action and started moving from the north to the south to support their interests. It was only the sudden death of al-Hakim that had prevented the two empires from breaking peace which had lasted between them for more than 20 years.

### **Condition of Maghrib**

We have heretofore discussed that al-Muizz had vested Buluggin bin Ziri (d. 373/984) with the governorship of all the Fatimid dominions in the Maghrib except for the Kalbid Sicily and Tripoli in 361/972. Later on, Buluggin asked Imam al-Aziz to give him rule over Tripoli as well. His request was granted and from 365/975, Tripoli began to be ruled by the Zirids. Buluggin appointed Tamsulat bin Bakkar as the *amir* of Tripoli, who governed the province for 20 years. In 386/996, after the death of Mansur, the second Zirid ruler, the relation between Tamsulat and Badis (d. 406/1016), the third Zirid ruler were strained. Tamsulat wrote to Cairo, asking Barjawan to send a new *amir* for Tripoli. Barjawan's error was that without the consent of Badis, he appointed Yanis as the *amir* of

Tripoli in 388/998, who was then the *amir* of Barqa. Badis wrote a letter to Yanis, asking for an explanation of his move from Barqa to Tripoli, but he received no satisfactory reply. Realizing the danger that Yanis represented, Badis sent his troops into battle against him. In the ensuing battle, Yanis was killed and his forces retreated to Tripoli, where they barricaded themselves awaiting help from Cairo.

The above military actions of Barjawan in Tripoli supported no decree from al-Hakim. It however affected the relations between the Fatimids and the Zirids. In addition, Tripoli, over which the dispute had begun, was occupied neither by the Fatimids nor by the Zirids, but it came in the hands of the enemy of both, i.e., the Banu Zanata. Fulful (d. 402/1011), the chief of Zanata tribe had taken an opportunity and proceeded towards Tripoli. He entered the city and declared his support against the Zirids and proclaimed his loyalty to the Umayyads of Spain.

Hence, the Fatimids lost Tripoli for about ten years (390-400/999-1009). After restoration of peace in Egypt, al-Hakim turned his attention towards Tripoli. He dispatched his forces at the command of Yahya al-Andulusi as a new *amir* of Tripoli, and commanded Raydan at Tripoli to give Yahya a sum of money for expenses. Raydan, who most probably appropriated the money, instead gave Yahya a signed order to collect money from Barqa. When Yahya reached Barqa, he found the state treasury depleted. Most of the soldiers in his troops belonged to Banu Qorra, whom he had promised generous payment. Thus, Yahya faced difficulties in the field. Banu Qorra not only deserted Yahya, but they also raided his camps in angry and pillaged whatever they found and returned to their territory. Henceforward, Yahya entered Tripoli with the remaining troops. He was overpowered by the Zanata chief, Fulful, who humiliated him and took control of Tripoli, proclaiming his loyalty to the Umayyads of Spain. On other side, al-Hakim did not send any reinforcement to regain Tripoli, and as a result, the Fatimids lost their suzerainty in Maghrib. Their relations with the Zirids also deteriorated, and the Sanhaja tribe ruled there independently. Later on, the Fatimid *khutba* was also removed.



## Revolt of Abu Raqwa

In 395/1004, al-Hakim faced the most serious challenge to his authority against the rebellion that shook and rocked the foundation of his state. This was the rebellion of Abu Raqwa, an Umayyad prince who united the forces of Berbers of Zanata with those of the Arab tribe of Banu Qorra to lead them against the Fatimids. Little is known of Abu Raqwa's background. Most of the historians gave his name as Walid bin Hisham, and Abu Raqwa was his nickname given him by the Egyptians. The word **raqwa** means "leather bag", in which travellers, especially the Sufis, carried water during journey. He was an Umayyad prince from the line of Marwan bin Hakam. In his twenties, he fled from Spain when Mansur bin Amir took over power and began persecuting members of the Umayyad family. He travelled to Maghrib, Egypt, Yamen, Mecca and Syria; testing the possibility of creating a group strong enough to support the Umayyad cause. At length, he succeeded to generate a large following in Maghrib and proclaimed himself as an **amir**.

Besides the rooted opposition of Zanata and the dissatisfaction of Banu Qorra with the Fatimids, the economic factors also appears to have been the main cause behind the rebellion of Abu Raqwa. The province of Barqa in Maghrib was very poor, and its treasury was even insufficient to supply the needs of the small army which al-Hakim sent in 391/1000 to restore Fatimid suzerainty in Tripoli. Its commercial life was limited and its income depended upon its limited agricultural output. The whole of Maghrib preceding the rebellion was caught with economic crisis, resulting a sort of catastrophe in 395/1004. Ibn Idhari (d. 712/1312) writes in "**Akhbar al-Andalus wa'l Maghrib**" (1st. vol., p. 256) that, "In 395/1004, there was a catastrophe in Africa. The poor died and the money of the rich vanished. Prices rose and food became impossible to find. The people of Badia left their homes. Houses became empty and there was no one to occupy them. With all this there was a plague of cholera." Abu Raqwa understood the difficulties of the tribesmen, their overwhelming desire to solve their problems, and therefore, he concentrated his effort to this point. The situation turned in his favour as an effective tool of his rebellion. When the people agreed to follow his rebellious leadership, the first pact he executed with the people concerning the booty and gains resulting from war.

It was resolved to divide the booty into three shares: one for each tribe and one third to be retained under Abu Raqwa's control in order to form a treasury to help during the war. He also promised to give the chiefs the palaces and houses of the Fatimid state in Cairo and other fertile regions in Egypt.

After being assured himself of sufficient support from the two principal tribes, Abu Raqwa canvassed neighboring districts, where he delivered speeches about Islam in a revolutionary manner. The tribesmen were fascinated by his eloquence, and assembled under his leadership against the Fatimids. Sandal, the Fatimid chief of Barqa had immediately reported to al-Hakim and asked permission to campaign against him. According to Ibn Athir (9th vol., p. 82), "Al-Hakim, who apparently did not realize the urgency of the problem, neither gave permission nor sent help but recommended diplomacy, not militant stance as a solution." Sandal's action failed, and Abu Raqwa with his troops swiftly marched to invade the city of Barqa. Sandal and his troops met them outside the city, and was subdued after a fierce fighting. Sandal retreated and barricaded himself inside the city. Sandal also contacted Ibn Taybun, the chief of the Berber tribe of Lawata, who came to the rescue and forced Abu Raqwa to break the siege, but failed to defeat him. Abu Raqwa then inflicted a heavy defeat on Lawata's forces and got the loss of many fighters including Ibn Taybun. The inhabitants of Barqa with their chief Sandal took advantage of Abu Raqwa's temporary withdrawal from their city, and strongly fortified its walls, digging huge trenches around them and storing as much food and supplies as they could. When Abu Raqwa returned to the siege, he found the city in a much stronger position to defend than before. Several months of siege, he failed to convince Sandal to surrender. Meanwhile, al-Hakim sent an army of five thousand men under the leadership of Yanal to relieve Barqa. Yanal had to cross considerable stretch of desert before he reached Barqa, and Abu Raqwa sent a body of cavalry across the route to fill in the wells. He then waited at the point farthest from Egypt to meet Yanal's forces, who arrived tired, exhausted and thirsty. Yanal was defeated and was scourged to death. Abu Raqwa sacked his all equipments and supplies, and returned to Barqa. Sandal, together with his family, fled to Cairo. In the month of Zilhaja, 395/October, 1005, Abu Raqwa captured Barqa, and declared himself *amir al-mominin*, and adopted the title of *al-Nasir*



**ii-Dinillah** (the assistant of God's order). This was struck on the coinage too, and the **khutba** was read in his name and the Sunni law was declared. Al-Musabbihi (d. 420/1029) writes that Abu Raqwa's supporters regarded him as a caliph.

About a year after his occupation of Barqa, Abu Raqwa was driven out by the threat of famine and plague. He and his supporters left Barqa as if they were migrating from one land to another, and proceeded towards Alexandria. Al-Hakim began his preparations to quell the rebellion, and appointed Fazal bin Saleh to arrange a large force to meet Abu Raqwa in the field. Meanwhile, a news arrived of Abu Raqwa's movement towards Alexandria. Fazal sent a detachment at the command of Qabil to intercept the rebels, and prevent them from reaching the city. The two armies met in Dhat al-Hamam in Alexandria, where Abu Raqwa won a victory over Qabil. Thence, Abu Raqwa resumed his march towards Alexandria. He besieged it for several months, provoking extreme alarms in Cairo, and a large force had been dispatched from Cairo in command of Fazal bin Saleh. Abu Raqwa failed to capture Alexandria, so he turned towards Cairo. He reached at Payyum and camped to plan the final blow against the Fatimids. Al-Hakim raised reinforcement of four thousand horsemen at the command of Ali bin Falah to Jiza to prevent Abu Raqwa's troops from raiding areas close to Cairo. Knowing this, Abu Raqwa sent a division of his troops which ambushed Ali bin Falah, killed many of his men. Skirmishes between the two forces continued until they finally met at Ra's al-Barqa in Fayyum district.

It should be noted that a secret pact between Abu Raqwa and the Bedouin chiefs in the Fatimid forces had stipulated that when he would attack, they would withdraw from Fazal bin Saleh's side to create fear and confusion. Fazal was fully aware of this, and on the day of the battle, he summoned all the Bedouin chiefs to his tent. When the attack took place, the Bedouin chiefs, being the prisoners virtually in Fazal's tent, were unable to play their part in accord with the pact with Abu Raqwa, and their troops, unaware of their masters' pact with Abu Raqwa, fought fiercely. Expecting a victory, the troops of Abu Raqwa were easily ambushed and defeated, and he himself fled to the south, and then to Nubia, a large country stretching from Aswan to Khartoum, and from Red Sea to the Libyan desert. Abu Raqwa reached at Dumgula, the

capital of Nubia, where he pretended to be an ambassador of the Fatimid at the court of the Nubian king. Fazal followed close behind to the Nubian frontier and managed to find out Abu Raqwa, and took him prisoner in 397/1004. He was brought to Cairo, and was paraded through the streets. Ibn Qalanisi (d. 555/1160) writes in "**Tarikh-i Dimashq**" (p. 65) that Abu Raqwa had written a poetical letter to al-Hakim, begging him for mercy, but al-Hakim refused pardon. But al-Musabbihi (d. 420/1029) as quoted by Makrizi in "**Itti'az**" (p. 396) however refutes it and suggests that al-Hakim intended to pardon Abu Raqwa as al-Hakim had personally told him while talking about Abu Raqwa, "I did not want to kill him and what happened to him was not of my choosing." Ibn Athir (9th vol., p. 84) writes that, "Abu Raqwa died from humiliation and the cruel treatment during the parade, but was not executed." It transpires that al-Hakim did not wish to execute him and was waiting the termination of the parade to grant him mercy, but he was died.

The rebellion of Abu Raqwa lasted for two years, which almost sucked away the national economy and depleted the royal treasury. In 398/1005, the Nile rising only 16 yards and 16 fingers flow with the result that there was a great rise in prices and hardship. The single bread (**al-khubz**) became so dear that it could be obtained with great difficulty. It was followed by disease and plague together with malnutrition. Al-Hakim immediately exempted the taxes and formulated strict measures to cope with the situation and instituted death penalty for those who inflated prices or hoarded commodities, which produced the desired effect very soon.

### **Rebellion of Mufraj bin Dagfal**

Created by Arab tribes in Palestine, headed by Mufraj bin Dagfal al-Jarrah Taiy, al-Hakim had to face another rebellion hatched in 397/1004, which lasted for about three years. This was the rebellion of the tribe of Banu Jarrah, a part of the Yameni tribe, called Taiy, who had settled in southern parts of Palestine in the Balqa region. Unlike the revolt of Abu Raqwa, Mufraj's rising was not influenced by religious teaching, nor was it a serious threat to the Fatimids. He began to plunder the pilgrims, and planned to occupy Palestine to establish his family rule. In 400/1009, al-Hakim appointed his general



Yarkhtagin to Aleppo to suppress the rebellions, but Mufraj intercepted him at Askalan and raided. Mufraj sacked his materials and captured him. The rebels also occupied Ramla.

Mufraj went to Hijaz and swore allegiance to Hasan bin Jafar (d. 430/1038), surnamed Abul Fatuh as an *amir*, and brought him to Ramla. Thus, Mufraj dominated both in Palestine and Hijaz, and started coinage in the name of Abul Fatuh. Al-Hakim was much alarmed by these events in his state and tried to suppress the rebellion before it assumed serious proportions. He wrote a letter of remonstrance to Mufraj and offered him a sum of 50,000 *dinars* in return for the safety of Yarkhtagin. Al-Hakim also threatened him with severe consequences if he harmed his general. Soon afterwards, the Fatimid general Yarkhtagin had been executed.

To discredit Abul Fatuh in Mecca and regain Hijaz, al-Hakim communicated with another in Mecca, known as Ibn Abu Tayyib and helped him, resulting re-occupation of Hijaz by the Fatimid. Al-Hakim wrote to Mufraj, promising him estates and other gifts if he would cease from rebellion. Mufraj resolved to abandon Abul Fatuh, who returned to Hijaz. Meanwhile, Mufraj accepted the offer of al-Hakim and took his money. He however retained his mastery over Palestine and continued to menace the peace and security. The pilgrims from Egypt could no longer travel to Hijaz to perform *hajj* as their caravans were used to be sacked.

At length, al-Hakim was impelled to take field against Mufraj. In 404/1013, he sent 20,000 horsemen under Ali bin Falah, whom he invested the title *qutb ad-dawla* (magnate of the state), and ordered the chief of Damascus to join the campaign. Meanwhile, Mufraj died and his supporters scattered. Ali bin Falah captured Ramla and restored law and order.

### Reforms of al-Hakim

After suppression of revolts, al-Hakim's administration became very liberal. The rebellions and the risings during his period had badly shaken the commercial life in Egypt by the fluctuation of the *dhiram*. In 395/1004, the market value of one *dinar* became equal to 26 *dhirams*. In

397/1006, the same problem occurred and one *dinar* valued equal to 34 *dhirams*. To cope with the monetary problem, new *dhirams* had been minted for circulation and the old ones withdrawn. The official value of a new *dhiram* was fixed at the rate 18 pieces to the *dinar*. The people were given three days to exchange the coins. This method controlled the monetary system to great extent.

In Egypt, the prices of merchandise, like units of measures and weight were not under direct control of the ruler. This resulted price inflation and the people were at the mercy of the shopkeepers and merchants, profiteering high prices, therefore, al-Hakim stabilized the units of weight and measure and fixed the price under government control. In 395/1004, an ordinance was issued to this effect, commanding the stabilization of the units and threatening those who deliberately mishandled them. In 397/1006, the prices of certain commodities were fixed. Severe punishment was inflicted upon the shopkeepers and merchants, who infringed these rules and also paraded in the streets who disobeyed these ordinances.

The relaxation in tax appears to have been an important feature in al-Hakim's reformations. During the years of low Nile which affected agriculture, the land-owners were exempted from paying imposts and taxes. Sometimes, certain areas were declared tax-free zones and at other times it covered the whole country. All the important commodities were relaxed from taxation along with local industries, such as silk, soap and refreshments.

The agriculture in Egypt used to be a target of the scanty of water during bad Nile and the loss of cattle from epidemics, therefore, al-Hakim had taken important measures to reduce the problem as much as possible. He ordered water courses and troughs to be cleaned regularly. In 403/1013, he expended 15,000 *dinars* for the cleaning of the canal of Alexandria. He also employed Ibn al-Haytham, a famous engineer from Basra to solve the problem of low Nile. To ensure the supply of cattle for agriculture purpose, al-Hakim ordered that cows should not be slaughtered except on occasions of religious festivals or if they were unfit to pull the plough. Ibn Taghri Birdi (d. 874/1470) writes in "*al-Nujum al-Zahira fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahira*" (Cairo, 1929, 4th vol., p. 252) that, "His food laws like the slaughtering of safe and healthy cows,



which was limited to perpetuate the cattle breed, and the killing of all dogs in the country were promulgated for sanitary purposes."

Al-Hakim also granted most of the state land to his subjects and it was not only officials and friends who benefited the facility, but any person who petitioned for his aids. He also curtailed the expenses of the palaces and confiscated most of the properties of his family members, notably of his mother and sisters and added them to the state treasury in 399/1009.

Al-Hakim's forbidding extravagant spending in entertainments when the Nile was exceptionally low and his fight against profiteering from high prices during the famine crisis are examples of sensible legislation for the public welfare. Ibn Taghri Birdi also discusses at some length al-Hakim's charitable and university endowments; his leniency with taxation, depending on the ability of people and commensurate with the prosperity of Egypt over a particular year (op. cit., 4th vol., p. 180).

There are also other noteworthy reforms of al-Hakim in Egypt. "Nudity in public baths" says Makrizi in his *"Itti'az al-Hunafa"* (Cairo, 1948, p. 391), "was prohibited and people were ordered to wear towel around the waist." In 397/1006, Makrizi adds, a decree (*manshur*) was read, commanding the fixation of prices of bread, meat and other commodities. According to *"The Renaissance of Islam"* (Patna, 1937, p. 399), "The Caliph al-Hakim, who sought to restore the original Islam, enacted stringent measures against wine-drinking. When his Christian physician, Ibn Anastas prescribed wine and music for his melancholy, the people reverted with joy to the old vice. But the physician soon died and the Caliph became a yet greater opponent of alcohol. He even forbade the sale of raisins and honey and destroyed the casks wherein wine was kept."

Makrizi further writes in his *"al-Khitat"* (Cairo, 1911, 2nd vol., p. 285) that, "He enforced an Islamic law forbidding the making, selling and drinking of wine. A total and complete enforcement of this law never exercised by any Muslim caliph but al-Hakim was determined to enforce it." In 402/1012, al-Hakim had forbidden the use of beer under a decree (*manshur*), and according to Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 450), "The usual law against wine was strictly enforced. Now he forbade the sale of dried

raisins because they were used by some for making wine. He forbade their importation into the country, and ordered all found in stores to be destroyed, in consequence of which some 2340 boxes of dried raisins were burned, the value being put at 500 pieces of gold. He next forbade the sale of fresh grapes, exceeding four pounds at a time; in any markets, and strict prohibition was made against squeezing out the juice. The grapes found on sale were confiscated, and either trodden in the street or thrown into the Nile. The vine at Gizeh were cut down and oxen employed to tread the fruit into the mire. Orders were issued that the same was to be done throughout the provinces. But honey as well as grapes can be used in preparing fermented liquor, so the Caliph's seal was affixed to the stores of honey at Gizeh, and some 5051 jars of honey were broken and their contents poured into the Nile, as well as 51 cruises of date honey."

De Lacy O'Leary quotes an example to this effect in "**A Short History of the Fatimid Khilafat**" (London, 1923, pp. 165-6) that a certain merchant had all his money invested in the prohibited fruit, and lost everything by the seizure and destruction of his goods. He appeared before the *qadi* and summoned al-Hakim to appear and make good the destruction caused by his officials. The Caliph appeared to answer the charge preferred against him, the *qadi* treating him like any other citizen against whom complaint had been lodged. The merchant asked for compensation to the amount of 1000 pieces of gold. Al-Hakim in his defence said that the fruits destroyed were intended to be used in the preparation of drinks forbidden by the law of Holy Koran, but that if the merchant will answer that they were not intended for this purpose, but only to be eaten he was willing to pay their price. The merchant swore that the fruit was intended only for eating. He then received the money and gave the Caliph a formal receipt. When the case was concluded, the *qadi*, who had upto this point treated both parties as ordinary suitors, rose from his seat and gave the Caliph the salute customary at court. Al-Hakim admired the *qadi*'s conduct, and made him valuable presents in recognition of his treatment of the case.

The historians concur that the life of frivolity in Egypt seems to have been against the principles of al-Hakim, and according to Antaki (p. 202), "He banned the profession of singers and dancers in Egypt." He also forbade unveiled



women to follow a funeral, prohibiting the weeping and howling and procession of mourning women with drums and pipes. Thus, the tearing of clothes, the blackening of faces and clipping of hair were forbidden and women, employed for lamenting the dead, were imprisoned. O'Leary writes that, "No doubt the nocturnal festivities of Cairo, well suited to the pleasure loving character of the Egyptians, led to many abuses, and so in 391/1001 a strict order was issued, forbidding women to go out of doors by night, and a little later this was followed by a general order prohibiting the opening of the shops by night." (op. cit., p. 133)

In sum, al-Hakim always protected the Islamic interest like his ancestors. Ibn al-Muqaffa in "**Tarikh Batarikat al-Kanisa al-Misriyya**" (2nd vol., p. 125) and Bar Hebraeus in "**Chronographia**" (London, 1923, p. 184) state that al-Hakim threatened those who did not follow Islam and honoured those who did. Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 451) writes that, "In 408/1017, al-Hakim forbade the kissing of the ground in his presence and annulled the prayer made for him in the *khutba* and in the writings addressed to him. Instead of that prayer, they were ordered to employ these words: **Salutation to the Commander of the Faithful.**"

#### **The famous decree of al-Hakim**

According to "**Tarikh**" (4th vol., p. 60) by Ibn Khaldun, "**Tarikh-i Antaki**" (p. 195) by Antaki and "**Khitat**" (2nd vol., p. 287) by Makrizi, al-Hakim issued his famous ordinance in 399/1008, which was read on the pulpit of the mosque of al-Azhar as under:-

"This is to inform that **Amir al-mominin al-Hakim bi-Amrillah** recites the verse of God's manifest Book before you that: **"There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right path is now distinct from error. He that renounces idol-worship and puts his faith in God, he indeed has laid hold on the firmest handle, which shall not break off, and God is Hearing and Knowing."** (2:256)

Yesterday passed away in prosperity and today came up with its necessities. O'multitude of Muslims! I am an **Imam** and you are the **Ummah**. Verily, all Muslims are brothers with

one another, therefore, you seek unity with the brothers and fear God. It is hoped that you shall be graced with mercy. One who confesses the **tsuhid** (Unity of God) and **risalat** (Prophethood of Muhammad), and one who does not boost disunity between the two persons, they all are included in the bond of Islamic Brotherhood. God saved those who had saved themselves through it. And those whom were to stop, they were stopped from all unlawful things, i.e., from slaughter, means and materials, and the forbidden women. Best understanding and the following on the true path are good and excellent. The quarrels and dissensions are not good. The past events should not be repeated and given up as extremely harmful for the present time. It should not be remembered what occurred in the past, notably those events and occurrences being taken place during the rules of my ancestors. Who they were? They were Mahdi billah, Qaim bi-Amrillah, Mansur billah, Muizz li-dinillah and other (i.e. al-Aziz), who adopted the true path. The condition of Mahdiya, Mansuria and Kairwan is quite apparent, not hidden from any one, nor even it is secret.

The fast-keepers may keep fast and break in accordance with their rites. One should have no objection with the person who keeps and breaks fast (according to his own belief). Those who offer five obligatory prayers, they must continue it. No one should restrict or forbid one who offers the **salat al-dus** and **tarawih** (prayers in the month of Ramadan). Those who recite five **taqbir** (act of extolling greatness of God) on the funeral prayers, they should do so, and no person should forbid to those who offer four **taqbir**. The **muzin** should recite "**haiya ala khair al-amal**" (come to the best work) in the call to prayer. One should not be however teased who does not recite these words in the call to prayer.

No ill words should be uttered to revile the Companions of the past, and one should have no objection against the eulogies being extolled for them. Let him oppose who is against them. Each Muslim **mujtahid** is responsible for himself in the decision of religion matters. Verily, he has to return to God. He has his own book of deeds, whereupon depend his accounts.

O'God's servants! you follow the injunctions of above decree being enforced today. No Muslim should hemper into the faith of other Muslims, and no person should oppose



the beliefs of his friends. *Amir al-mominin* has written down all these points for you (explicitly) in his decree. Nay, God says, "O'believers! you are accountable for none but yourselves; he that goes astray cannot harm you if you are on the right path. You shall all return to God, and He will declare to you what you have done" (5:106). May peace be upon you and the divine grace."

In Egypt, al-Hakim thus is reported to have removed the differences of the Shia and Sunni Muslims. Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., p. 450) writes that, "He gave orders that the persons who uttered curses against the Companions should be flogged and paraded ignominiously through the streets." Antaki (p. 195) writes that, "He publicly praised the Companions of the Prophet and commanded his subjects to do the same." In sum, the Sunni and Shia enjoyed toleration and equal rights. Many Sunni jurists were also employed in the Dar al-Hikmah and the appointment of a Sunni *gadi*, called Abul Abbas bin Awam Hanbali is best example in this context. In 400/1009, al-Hakim also established a school of law offering instructions in the Malikite rite, whose incharge was Abu Bakr Antaki.

In sum, al-Hakim restored peace and prosperity in the country, attracting the Muslims of Baghdad and Cordova to settle in Cairo. He brought the Fatimid rule to its zenith. Dr. G. Kheirallah writes in "**Druze History**" (Detroit, 1952, p.160) that, "During the life and reign of al-Hakim, the Fatimite Egypt reached its highest position of influence and prestige - no other state could then vie with Egypt for power, wealth or enlightenment; the Arabian art and crafts were at their zenith, and affluence and ease became the lot of the Egyptians". According to Antaki (d. 458/1065) in "**Tarikh-i Antaki**" (Beirut, 1909, p. 206), "Al-Hakim provided such kind of justice that his subjects had never known before. They slept in their homes secured in the possession of their properties." Ibn Ayyas (d. 930/1524) writes in "**Bada'i al-Zuhur**" (Cairo, 1896, 1st vol., p. 52) that, "His justice became the favourite theme of both writers of story and myth as well as poets. Much of their works, praising and picturing al-Hakim as the champion of justice, shows the impression his rule left on people's imaginations." Al-Hakim adopted severity in observance of Islamic law, which enormously helped to reduce crimes. Ibn al-Zafir (d. 613/1216) writes in "**al-Duwal al-Munqatia**" (p. 59) that, "At times of prayers, the

shopkeepers would have their shops open and unguarded without fear of theft." Ibn Ayyas (op. cit., p. 54) reports a story of a man who lost his purse full of money in the street of Cairo, and when, after few days, he passed the same street, he found it untouched. None dare to touch it for fear of al-Hakim's punishment. In sum, there is an Egyptian fragment of Hebrew writing, evidently from al-Hakim's period, praising and eulogizing his unparalleled justice with sincerity, vide Dr. A. Neubauer's "Egyptian Fragment" (FQR, IX, pp. 24-6).

#### The problems of *Ahl Dhimma*

According to Islamic law, the non-Muslims inhabited in the Islamic state were called *ahlu dh-dhimmati* (people of protection) or simply *al-Dhimma* or *dhimmis*. They included the Christian, Jewish, Magian, Samaritan and Sabian. *Ahl Dhimma* were prohibited in the Muslim state from holding public religious ceremonies, from raising their voices loudly when praying and even from ringing their church bells aloud. All schools agree that it is not allowed to build new churches, synagogues, convent, hermitage or cell in towns or cities of *Dar al-Islam* (Muslim lands). When these injunctions were disobeyed, the Muslim leaders were authorized to treat the offenders as dwellers in *Dar al-Harb* (non-Muslim lands) and not as *Ahl Dhimma* in *Dar al-Islam* (Muslim lands), vide "Subh al-A'asha fi Sina'at al-al-Insha" (Cairo, 1922, 13th vol., p. 356) by Qalaqashandi (d. 821/1418).

When the Fatimids arrived in Egypt, the need for a stable financial administration provided an opportunity to the talented minorities of *Ahl Dhimma* (Christians and Jews) to find employment in state offices. They were massively employed from low to high ranking posts in the state. In return, the policy of the Fatimid Caliphs towards them was of great toleration. The Fatimids granted land to churches. The Jewish religious institutions, such as the Jerusalem Yeshiva was also financially supported by the Fatimid authorities. As time passed their influences grew so rapidly through out the state that they became almost a threat to the Fatimids. Most of the high officials of finance departments, the deputies and staffs were remarkably non-Muslims, who also became a source of tension for the Muslims. When Imam al-Aziz dismissed and



arrested his vizir Yaqub bin Killis in 373/983, the functioning of the administration became almost frozen, impelling al-Aziz to release and restore Yaqub bin Killis to his former office. Al-Aziz is also reported to have reappointed few other dismissed officials, confirming the foothold of the non-Muslims in the Fatimid dominion.

Wustenfeld writes in "**Geschichte der Fatimiden Chalifen**" (Gottingen, 1881, 2nd vol., p. 64) about Isa bin Nestorius, a Christian vizir of the Fatimids that, "He was hard-hearted and an usurer who grasped for himself every lucrative business, and agumented very much the taxes. He favoured his co-religionists and placed them in the important offices of state, while removing the former Muslims secretaries and tax-collectors. As his chief deputy in Syria he chose a Jew, Menasse bin Ibrahim, who showed there the same regard for the Jews as Isa did for the Christians in Egypt, by reducing their taxes and appointing them as officials. Thus the followers of these two religions ruled the state. This caused great indignation amongst the Muslims."

The **Ahl Dhimma**, mainly the Christians, were thickly populated in Egypt. They were rich, powerful, influential and dominated in the political and social orbits. Ibn Athir (9th vol., p. 48) quotes Hasan bin Bishar of Damascus, who made mention of the growing influences of the Christians in the Fatimid empire in his poetry that:-

*Be Christian (as) today is the time of Christianity.  
Believe in nothing, but in the holy trinity.  
Yaqub is the father, Aziz is the son.  
And for the holy ghost, Fazal is the one.*

The people roused to anger against the poet and situation gradually exploded in civil disturbances. When the people clamoured for the punishment of the poet, al-Aziz demonstrated a big heart and told to Yaqub bin Killis and Fazal bin Saleh to expel the poet from the city as soon as possible.

Towards the end of al-Aziz's reign, the antagonism had reached its climax. The policy of assigning high administrative offices to Christians and Jews was

basically in the line with the religious toleration adopted by the Fatimids. It however appears that al-Aziz went further than his predecessors, and the non-Muslims exceeded to take its unnecessary advantage. In a letter purported to have been delivered to al-Aziz, the writer accused him as saying, "By the Lord who honoured the Christians through Isa bin Nestorius, and the Jews through Menasse bin Ibrahim al-Kazzaz and humiliated the Muslims through you." (vide "**Khitat**", 2nd vol., p. 195). On that juncture, the Fatimid Imam kept patience and did not take any action against the non-Muslims.

The fast growth of the influences of the Christianity and Judaism began to menace the Islamic interest in the Fatimid state. Even the continued hatred and rivalry between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Fatimid dominion also necessitated that the Imam should find a solution, and thus al-Hakim was destined to come into the actions.

According to al-Musabbihi (cf. "**Khitat**", 2nd vol., p. 195), about five naval ships together with their equipment were burnt in 386/995. The Christians, who lived near the port, were accused of purposely causing the fire. Thus, the Muslims sailors attacked them and killed 107 persons and threw their dead bodies into the streets, and pillaged their houses. The vizir Isa bin Nestorius, representing al-Aziz in his absence, brought a police force to the area. He investigated the incident and arrested large number of the Muslims. He crucified 20 Muslims and severely punished the other. The death toll of this riot indicates a large number of the people, and the reason however given to this effect was the fire caught accidentally in the ships. But, the manner in which the Muslims behaved, according to the description of al-Musabbihi, confirms that the hatred and animosity was at the very root of the riot.

Like the Christians, the Jews had also wielded their influence in Egypt with the help of Menasse bin Ibrahim. Jacob Mann writes in "**The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs**" (London, 1919, 1st vol., pp. 20-21) that, "Menasse was a general like Joab bin Seruyah and his banner shone with royal splendour. His name was 'healing and life' to his people (i.e., the Jews), who greatly rejoiced at his dignity....A number of Arab tribes were humiliated by him. But he looked after the interests of his co-religionists....Menasse's brief management of



Syria and Palestine must have been beneficial to the Jews."

The foothold of the Jews can be gauged from the fact that Suyuti (d. 911/1505) writes in *"Rusn al-Muhadara fi Akhbar Misr wa al-Qahira"* (Cairo, 1909, 2nd vol., p. 129) that a poet said of them during the Fatimid Caliphate that:-

*The Jews of our times reached the summit of their goal  
and have become aristocrates.*

*Theirs is the dignity, theirs the money!*

*Councillors of the state and princes chosen among them  
O'People of Egypt! I give you advice: Become Jews for  
the heaven has become Jewish.*

Under these curious circumstances in the Islamic state, al-Hakim had no alternative but to take drastic actions against *Ahl Dhimmas*. The prime reason to impose certain restrictions upon the *Ahl Dhimma* was to curtail their growing influence and distinguish them from Muslims as well. The policy of al-Hakim appears to have been an attempt to solve a problem which has menaced his rule. On one hand was *Ahl Dhimma* being a large minority with their vital importance to the progress of the financial administration of the state, and on the other was the Muslim population which resented their pressure and the policy that prolonged their influence in the state affairs or social life. If al-Hakim dismissed all non-Muslims from the offices of state, his financial administration would have suffered a severe blow and weakening the treasury. If he had adopted tolerance, he would have endangered his popularity amongst the Muslims. *Ahl Dhimma* were rich, powerful and influential, therefore, the Muslim community was unwilling to further tolerate them. Thus, al-Hakim found the solution to his dilemma in the subjugation of *Ahl Dhimma* to Muslim law. "In general" writes M. Canard in *"The Encyclopaedia of Islam"* (Leiden, 1971, 3rd vol., p. 78), "this policy had the approval of the Muslims, who hated the Christians because of acts of misappropriation and of favourism by the Christian financial officials."

During the first ten years of al-Hakim's reign (386-395/995-1004), the Jews and Christians enjoyed the immunity and even the privileges which they had obtained

during the tolerant rule of Imam al-Aziz. When the wheel turned to reverse side, menacing his empire, al-Hakim had to curtail a part of the freedom of *Abi Dhimma* with drastic hands.

The first decree of al-Hakim in this context issued in 395/1004, ordering the Jews and Christians to wear the *ghiyar* (garment) only when they appeared in public. When this order was disobeyed, the punishment was followed. Wearing the *ghiyar* was soon found as not enough, therefore, a distinctive religious symbol was ordered. He made Christians wear a distinctive badge hung round their necks - a cross for the Christians and the wooden images of a calf for the Jews.

The non-Muslims however resented any kind of restriction affecting their prestige. The ensuing enforcement of the new laws was a grave challenge to their position. It abolished their towering fame and even curtailed a part of their freedom. The information in the extant sources appears to indicate that these incidents resulted from circumstances and not from a planned policy to attack the religious communities.

The Christians and Jews began to wear the prescribed religious symbols made of gold or silver and used the saddles with richly coloured trappings while riding on horses. Then al-Hakim ordered the cross to be of wood, five *rotls* in weight, and made the Jews wear billets of wood of the same weight, shaped like the clapper of a bell.

In addition, the Christians and Jews alike were prohibited from riding horses and only allowed donkeys or mules for their transport. Their saddles had to be plain, with stirrups of sycamore wood and reins of black leather. If they transgressed any of these rules they were punished with banishment. He also forbade Jewesses and the Christian women to wear Arabian shoes, and made them wear footwears with legs (*sarmuz*), one red and one black. This was also ignored, therefore, next strict order came into force in 398/1007, ordering the Jews to wear a bell and Christians a cross when in public baths. Boats manned by Muslim crews were also prohibited for them. He also forbade slaves to be sold to them, and to employ Muslim servants and to take Muslim girls as concubines.



The repetition of the orders sharply indicates that they were not properly obeyed. M. Canard writes in "**The Encyclopaedia of Islam**" (Leiden, 1971, 3rd vol., p. 78) that, "It should be mentioned that these measures were perhaps not always strictly enforced, otherwise it would not have been necessary to repeat them." When continued disobedience was reported, al-Hakim permitted the Muslims in 403/1012 to spy upon **Ahl Dhimma** and report offenders to the police. At length, the **Ahl Dhimma** began to obey the orders of al-Hakim. Later, the severity of the measures was lifted. It is striking feature worthy of noting that there is no indication which suggesting that a group of **Ahl Dhimma**, was punished for transgressing these orders when it however was confirmed that such violation had actually occurred.

The historians have advanced different reasons motivated in al-Hakim's measures. Uthman al-Nabulsi (d. 532/1235) in his "**Tajrid Sayf al-Himma Lima fir Dhimmati Ahl al-Dhimma**" (p. 139) suggests they were political, that al-Hakim feared the prosperity of **Ahl Dhimma**, their growing influence both in state affairs and in the society, might encourage them to overthrow his empire. Antaki (d. 458/1066) in "**Tarikh-i Antaki**" (Paris, 1909, p. 207), Ibn al-Muqaffiq in "**Tarikh-i Batarikat al-Kanisa al-Misriyya**" (Cairo, 1948, 2nd vol., p. 124) and Bar Hebraeus (d. 684/1286) in "**Chronographia**" (London, 1932, p. 184) suggest the reasons for al-Hakim's policy was to force the Christians and Jews to accept Islam, which seems extremely doubtful. It must be known that during the years of al-Hakim's greatest pressure upon the **Ahl Dhimma**, the majority of officials in his services were non-Muslims and that he never dismissed any of them on religious ground. The **Dhimmi**s or Muslims received equal titles (**alqab**) and grants. Antaki (p. 207) further writes that the majority of his staff were **Ahl Dhimma** and too numerous to be replaced by Muslims. He made his measures so severe that he could force them to accept Islam.

The historians concur that al-Hakim respected the personal beliefs of his subjects and did never force them to subscribe to a particular religion. Musabbihi, the contemporary historian quotes al-Hakim as saying, "When I appointed Salih bin Ali as Qa'id al-Quwad, I asked Ibn Surin to write a decree and make him sworn on the Bible not to tell anyone before the time was due." (cf.

"Itti'az", p. 398). Thus, force does not seem to have been al-Hakim's method of conversion, rather he preferred arguments and discussions and his famous decree of 399/1008 begins with the Koranic verse: "*la ikraha fi al-din*" (no compulsion in religion) is an ample evidence in this context. O'Leary writes in "*A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*" (London, 1923, p. 133) that, "In his conduct generally al-Hakim was tolerant, as his predecessors had been, towards the Christians and Jews as well as towards the Muslims who did not embrace the peculiar tenets of the Shia sect." The reports of many historians make it obvious that the obedience to Islamic law, not the adoption of Islam, was al-Hakim's prime purpose, vide Ibn al-Zafir, p. 63, Ibn Athir, 9th vol., p. 131, etc.

The first edict of al-Hakim, ordering all Jews and Christians not to appear in public unless they wore a black *ghiyar* (garment) with black belts, however, was not new to *Ahl Dhimma* in Islamic state. It dates back to the time of Caliph Umar, who had made certain conditions for them, and one of them was that non-Muslims were to wear a distinctive over-coat (*al-ghiyar*), vide Qalqashandi's "*Subh al A'asha fi Sina'at al-Insha*" (13th vol., p. 356), Nabulsi's "*Tajrid Sayf al-Himma*" (*BIFAO*, 1958-60, p. 139). It is to be noted that the Abbasid caliph Harun ar-Rashid, according to Tabari (3rd vol., p. 712) had issued an ordinance in 191/807 for *Ahl Dhimma* living in Baghdad to the effect that they should distinguish themselves from the Muslims in their dresses and mounts. Tabari (3rd vol., p. 1419) writes that in 235/850, the Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil issued a decree, ordering the Christians to wear honey-coloured hoods (*taylasan*), and the Jews the black-belts (*zunnar*) and also two buttons on their caps. In 239/854, another ordinance was imposed, ordering the Christians to wear *durra'a* and *qaba* (tunics) with two yellow *dhira* (sleeves) and forbidding them to ride horses.

The distinctive garments which the *Ahl Dhimma* had to wear during the period of al-Hakim was the *ghiyar* means "distinction", which was a piece of cloth having a patch of stipulated colour placed on the shoulder.

It must be however known that the destruction of the churches in 392/1002 in Cairo was not by the order of the



Imam. It was the result of an attack by a group of anguished Muslims. Antaki (p. 186) writes that, "The Christian Jacobites began rebuilding a ruined church in the area of Rashida, where a group of Muslims attacked them and destroyed the building and two other churches which were nearby."

Ibn Abi Tayy, who is quoted by Makrizi, suggests that, "Since Muslim laws does not allow *Ahl Dhimma* to build new churches in *Dar al-Islam*, therefore, the Muslims were angered by the rebuilding of the church, an act they interpreted as a challenge to their law." Ibn Abi Tayy further states that both Christians and Muslims complained to al-Hakim. The former said that the church existed before the Muslim conquest, and the latter argued that it was newly built. (cf. "*Khitat*", 2nd vol., p. 283)

As a matter of reconciliation, al-Hakim at length ordered his mosque to be built in the area and gave permission for the Christians to build their new churches in another area which was known as al-Hamra. This, as Antaki (p. 186) and Ibn Abi Tayy (cf. "*Khitat*", 2nd vol., p. 283) state, "was a compensation for the three churches destroyed in Rashida."

It is to be noted that such actions were never directed against the Jews, and the revenues of their synagogues were not confiscated nor were they ever destroyed by official order. Jacob Mann, a harsh Jewish critic writes in "*The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*" (London, 1920, 1st vol., p. 33) that, "No details are given either by Lane Poole or by Wustenfeld about the destruction of the Jewish synagogues." Qalqashandi (25th vol., p. 73) however writes that, "In Cairo the district of Jaudarriya was thickly inhabited by Jews till al-Hakim was informed that they oppressed the Muslims, reviled the Islam and sang defamatory verses. In 403/1012, al-Hakim ordered one night to close their gates and had them burnt in the quarter. The Jews afterwards inhabited the street of al-Zuwaila in Cairo."

The sequestration of church revenues however had been directed against the widespread corruption which was gaining increasing momentum even among high officials. Ibn al-Muqaffa himself a bishop, affirms that, "The corruption had reached to its extreme among the Christian officials and the Patriach Inba Zakharin sold bishops and

priesthoods to anyone rich capable to pay the price thereof. Yunis, a certain priest intended to become a bishop, but the Patriarch refused him, because he was not so rich. Yunis therefore submitted a petition to al-Hakim against the then prevalent practice of bribery rife in ecclesiastic orbits. Al-Hakim arrested the Patriarch and gave the supervision of the revenues of the church to the state *diwan*. (op. cit., 2nd vol., p. 127)

Antaki (p. 194) writes that the confiscation included only the revenues of the churches in Egypt. He also adds (p. 219) that the church revenues were not included in the state treasury, but put under al-Hakim's name in the state *diwan*, which were later restored without any loss to the church officials.

In 398/1007, the Christians further dared to violate the orders when their multitude flocked in Jerusalem to celebrate Easter in public. Antaki (p. 194) however provides some curious informations about the manner in which the Christians celebrated their annual festivals. "They continually ignored prescribed rules for *Ahl Dhimma* and opposed a number of al-Hakim's orders regarding their rituals. He thus prohibited their public parade during Easter and Epiphany."

Hatred between Muslims and non-Muslims became strong to its extreme and reacted in public, and at last a riot took place which resulted in the destruction of the Qiyamah, a famous church of the Christians in Jerusalem in 400/1015.

Ibn Kathir (d. 774/1373) in "*al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*" (11th vol., p. 339) and Dhahabi (d. 748/1348) in "*Kitab al-Ibar*" (3rd vol., p. 67) concur that the practices of the monks and a disgrace to Islam were the root causes of the destruction of Qiyama. Antaki (p. 195) writes that, "The Muslims stirred hottest agitation and expressed their hatred of Christians by pulling down their churches and pillaged their property." Makrizi also writes in "*Khitat*" (2nd vol., p. 512) that al-Hakim warned the Muslims to refrain from such indecent actions. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsha writes in "*The Renaissance of Islam*" (Patna, 1937, p. 56) that, "This Hakim never intended or wished to be done and he stopped it as soon as he heard of it."



In conclusion, P.J. Vatikiotis writes in "**The Fatimid Theory of State**" (Lahore, 1957, p. 153) that, "His (al-Hakim) persecution of Christians and Jews and the legislation enacted for that purpose between 395/1004 and 411/1020 seem to have been a policy with a justifiable purpose."

### **Construction of mosques**

Dr. Sadik Assad writes in "**The Reign of al-Hakim bi-Amrallah**" (Beirut, 1974, p. 86) that, "Al-Hakim also built more mosques than any of his predecessors and perhaps, more than any other Muslim caliph." He extended his benefactions to all the existing mosques, and was responsible for the building of many more. The mosque near the Bab al-Futuh, commenced by his father in 380/990 had been left incomplete. Al-Hakim completed it and made it the second congregational mosque of Cairo, known as al-Anwar. Making no distinction between public treasury and personal funds, he made lavish gifts to the mosques of Fustat and Cairo. He furnished the mosque known as Hakim's Mosque with lamps, mats and other requirements at a cost of 5000 pieces of gold. He presented to the old mosque at Fustat a candlelabrum with 1200 lights which weighed 100,000 *dhirams*. So huge was his grant that in carrying it to the mosque, the road had to be dug, and the upper part of the door had to be removed to carry it into the mosque. This present was taken in a procession with the commander-in-chief in the front with drums and trumpets and amidst shouts of *tehlil* (no might save God) and *takbir* (God is great). He also presented the mosque 1290 copies of Holy Koran, some of which were written in letters of gold. He also built a huge mosque near the Mugattam hills and presented to it carpets, curtains and lamps. He also furnished various mosques the items like the copies of Holy Koran, silver lamps, mats, curtains etc." Makrizi also writes in "**Itti'az**" (2nd vol., p. 96) that al-Hakim generously allocated 9220 *dhirams* each month for the upkeep of the mosques.

### **The Fatimid genealogy**

The Abbasid caliph Kadir billah (d. 422/1031) got his rule dwindling before his eyes. He saw Baghdad yielding its

position of prestige as the seat of culture and science to Cairo, and he found himself a virtual prisoner of the Buwahids, while the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim was ruling powerfully and absolutely. Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597/1200) writes in "**al-Muntazam fi Tarikh al-Muluk**" (Hyderabad, 1840, 7th vol., p. 237) that, "The Shia of Iraq had looked to al-Hakim as their desired Caliph in 398/1008 in Baghdad, and during a quarrel with the Sunnis, they shouted slogans, **Ya Hakim, Ya Mansur** in favour of al-Hakim."

In 401/1010, Mutamad ad-Dawla Qirwash bin Maqallid (d. 444/1052), the chief of the Uqayl tribe and governor of Mosul, Madain, Anbar and Kufa acknowledged the Fatimid Caliphate instead of the Abbasids, and started the Fatimid **khutba** and coinage. In the same year, Ali bin Mazid Asadi (d. 408/1018), the chief of the Asad tribe also proclaimed his loyalty to al-Hakim and had the Fatimid **khutba** read in Hilla and the districts he governed.

The Abbasid caliph Kadir billah alarmed over the prosperity of Egypt and growing influence of the Fatimids inside his empire, therefore, he attempted to combat with al-Hakim by another cowardice tool. He gathered a number of Shia and Sunni theologians and jurists to his court in 402/1011 and ordered them to prepare a forged manifesto that the Fatimid claim of Alid descent was false. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) writes in "**Muqaddimah**" (tr. Franz Rosenthal, London, 1958, 1st vol., pp. 45-6) that, "The judges in Baghdad eventually prepared an official statement denying the Alid origin (of the Fatimids). The statement was witnessed by a number of prominent men, among them the Sharif ar-Radi and his brother al-Murtada, and Ibn al-Bathawi. Among the religious scholars were Abu Hamid al-Isfarayini, al-Quduri, as-Saymari, Ibn al-Akfani, al-Abiwardi, the Shia jurist Abu Abdullah bin an-Numan, and other prominent Muslims in Baghdad. The event took place one memorable day in the year 402/1011 in the time of (the Abbasid caliph) al-Qadir. The testimony was based upon heresy, on what people in Baghdad generally believed. Most of them were partisans of the Abbasids who attacked the Alid origin (of the Fatimids). The historians reported the informations as they had heard it. They handed down to us just as they remembered it. However, the truth lies behind it. Al-Mutadid's letter concerning Ubaydallah (al-Mahdi) to Aghlabid in al-Qayrawan and the Midrarid in Sijilmasah, testifies most truthfully to the correctness



of the origin (of the Fatimids) and proves it most clearly. Al-Mutadid was better qualified than anyone else to speak about the genealogy of the Prophet's house." Ibn Taghri Birdi (d. 874/1470) writes in his "**al-Mujum al-Zahira fi Muluk wa al-Qahira**" (Cairo, 1929, 4th vol., p. 236) that, "The Abbasid caliph hired theologians and paid them large sum of money to write books condemning the Fatimid cause and their doctrine."

We have three accredited Sunni historians, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), Abul Fida (1273-1331) and Makrizi (1363-1442), who were not under the pressure or influence of either the Abbasids or the Fatimids. These historians concur that the Fatimids of Egypt were the direct descendants of Ali and Fatima. The Abbasid false propaganda, however, discrediting the Fatimid lineage has been falsified through accredited sources and arguments, vide "**Genealogy of the Aga Khan**" by Muntaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali, Karachi, 1990.

#### **Foundation of Dar al-Hikmah**

Amid the surging splendour, al-Hakim emerges as an unusual personality judged by any standard. He founded **Dar al-Hikmah** (House of Wisdom), also known as **Dar al-Ilm** (House of Knowledge) in 395/1004, where the sciences including astronomy, logic, philosophy, mathematics, history, theology, languages and medicines were taught and the Shiite esoteric interpretation propagated. Qadi Abul Aziz bin Muhammad bin Noman was its first supervisor. This academy was connected with the royal palace, enriched with a huge library, and distinct conference rooms and chambers. Scholastic activities were conducted by the scientists, philosophers, professors, theologians, scholars etc. Staff of clerks and servants were employed for the upkeep of the institution. Scientists, professors and learned men were employed as lecturers. Wustenfeld writes in his "**Akademien der Araber**" (Gottingen, 1837, p. 67) that, "It was in reality the first Lay University, where also Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine and Methaphysics were taught."

The Dar al-Hikmah was founded to facilitate the working of the Ismaili mission too, and became rapidly a cultural centre. It attracted the students from all parts of the

Muslim world, where the Imam would himself often visit the lecture-halls, joining debates and granting generous gifts to encourage notable proficiency. The lectures delivered by the *dais* were known as *majalis* and were given at different levels according to the intellectual capacity of the audience. Some were designated as *majalis al-khassa* (sessions for the selected) and others as *majalis al-amma* (sessions for the public). From the picture drawn by Musabbihi and Ibn Tuwayr, both quoted by Makrizi in his "*Khitat*" (1st vol., p. 391), it would appear that the *majalis al-khassa* were attended only by the Ismailis. In the others, the lectures read were merely explanations of the doctrines which concerned the meaning of *Imam*, the theological differences between the Shia and Sunni laws and their historical background. In al-Hakim's time, the *majalis* expanded in an endeavour to reach every group of people including even visitors to the country and women. Special meetings were divided into two. One was for the high officials and learned men and was known as *majalis al-awliya* and the other was for the ordinary officials and the branch of it was specially for women of the palace. The public sessions were divided into three - one for men of the general public, one for the women and one for the visitors to the country.

By the end of the 4th/10th century there were also regular assemblies on every Thursday and Friday for the reading of *majalis al-hikmah* (lectures on wisdom), which was flourished to its zenith. Makrizi quotes in his "*Khitat*" (1st vol., p. 391) al-Musabbihi (d. 420/1029) as giving some details of these *majalis*. According to him, "The *dai* gave many lectures in the palace, lecturing separately to the adepts, the members of the court, the common people and strangers. To women, he lectured in the Jam-i Azhar, where a separate chamber was allotted to the women of the court. The *dai* prepared the lecture in his house, after being presented its text to the Caliph, a neat copy of the lecture was prepared. The contributions (*najwa*) of the Ismailis were also collected during these lectures, which were called *majalis al-hikmah*." The fixed monetary contribution (*najwa*) was collected from the individual Ismailis during the *majalis al-hikmah*, and the lists of the contributors were kept by a special secretary (*katib al-dawa*) appointed by the chief *dai*. Makrizi writes that the wealthy Ismailis made substantial voluntary donations.



It should be noted that the term *najwa* evidently refers to the Koranic verse (58:12), which reads:- "Ye faithful! If you have something confidential to discuss (*najaytum*) with the envoy, then prior to your confidential discussion (*najwakum*) pay some aims in anticipation." So the *najwa* was a fee that the followers had to pay for being introduced into the secret assembly.

Ibn al-Tuwayri (d. 617/1220) describes the preparation of the text of the *majalis* differently. According to him as quoted by Makrizi (Ibid.), "The Ismaili theologians, housed in Dar al-Hikmah, met on Monday and Thursday and agreed on the text of a booklet called *majalis al-hikmah*. A clean copy was brought to the Chief Dai, who after checking it, presented it on to the Caliph. If possible, the Caliph read it; at any rate he put his signature on it. The Chief Dai then read the lectures in the palace in two different places - for men, sitting on the chair of the *dawat* in the great hall, for women, in his own audience-chamber. After the lecture the believers came up to kiss the hand of the Chief Dai, who stroked their heads with the booklet, so that the signature of the Caliph touched their heads."

It must be known that the *majalis al-hikmah* were interrupted in 400/1010 for some reasons. It was reopened very soon, but cancelled once again in 401/1010. It was again interrupted for the third time at the end of the year 405/1015 after the nomination of Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Awam as a *chief qadi*. Heinz Halm however writes in "The Ismaili Oath of Allegiance and the Sessions of Wisdom in Fatimid Times" (cf. "Mediaeval Ismaili History and Thought" (New York, 1996, p. 107) that, "We fail to learn precisely what the reasons were, but this closure seems to be connected with the Druze trouble, which began about this time." Al-Hakim however bestowed the title of chief *dai* on Khuttakin al-Dayf, entrusting him with the control of the room, so that it was used for the customary proceedings. Later, he also granted him the title of *al-Sadiq al-amin*. Ibn Muyassar writes in "Akhbar al-Misr" (pp. 166-7) that, "Khuttakin al-Dayf subsequently proved to be the most embittered opponent of the Druzes. When the followers of Hamza and those of Khuttakin met, they cursed each other."

Heinz Halm concludes that, "So it is quite possible that al-Hakim had the *majalis* closed either in agreement with the Ismaili *dais* or yielding to their pressure, in order to forestall the appearance of the Druze dissidents among them" (Ibid).

### **Ibn al-Haytham**

Sami Hamarneh writes in "Medicine and Pharmacy under the Fatimids" (cf. "Ismaili Contribution to Islamic Culture" ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Tehran, 1977, p. 163) that, "It seems plausible to speculate that the generosity of al-Hakim towards scholars and scientists had attracted the migration to Fatimid Egypt of eminent figure, Abu Ali Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin al-Haytham (Latin *Alhazen*) of Basra in southern Iraq."

Ibn al-Haytham (354-429/965-1039), the greatest physicist was born in Basra, and was originally appointed to a civil post at Basra. He was avidly consumed by the desire to learn mathematics and philosophy, for which he could not get spare time in his post, therefore, he feigned madness and was dismissed as a result from the post. Our informations about his pre-Egyptian days are deficient, but according to a few accounts of his life, it is known that he managed to leave Basra in order to proceed to Egypt, where he had been invited by the Fatimid Imam al-Hakim.

It must be known on this juncture that in the summer following the rainy reason, the Nile river and the canals overflow with water, causing millions of tons of fertile silt, containing phosphoric acid, potash and nitrogen. But in the winter, the level of water fell down, making the cultivation of the crops impossible, and in annual inundation it used to cause devastation of life and property. With his brilliant mind, the famous physicist and the founder of the science of optics, Abu Ali Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin al-Haytham came to the conclusion in Iraq that if some of the surplus water available immediately after the rains, could be stored, not only could it be used in the dry season for more cultivation of land, but it would also help to prevent the periodic flood inflicting heavy damage. According to Ibn Abi Usaibia (d. 668/1270) in his "Uyn al-Anba fi tabakat al-Attiba" (2nd vol., p. 91), Ibn al-Haytham had also claimed that, "Had I



been in Egypt I could have done something to regulate the Nile, so that the people could derive benefit at its ebb and flow." Thus, he prepared a plan to build a three-way embankment dam near Aswan for harnessing the Nile waters, and sent his report to al-Hakim. He even suggested for a site near Aswan where the river emerged from a gorge into the flat country. Haidar Bammate writes in **"Muslim Contribution to Civilization"** (Lahore, 1981, p. 21) that, "Al-Haytham was the first to advocate the construction of a dam at Aswan to raise the level of the Nile."

Al-Hakim was deeply impressed when he received the outline of the project and sent one of his emissaries with adequate funds to Ibn al-Haytham in Basra and invited him to Cairo. He readily accepted the royal invitation and after a short stay in Cairo, he was sent up the river with a large sum of money and retinue of workers. He undertook the journey to Aswan, which is situated at a distance of over 400 miles to the south of Cairo as the crow flies. He inspected the site at Aswan and came to the conclusion that such a colossal scheme of works was not feasible under the working conditions. According to Ibn Abi Usaibia, "He saw the pyramids at first glance and became awed by the engineering and geometrical skills of the ancients. Had it been possible he thought, the ancient Egyptians must have done it before." (op. cit., 2nd vol., p. 91). Having realized the enormous magnitude of the project, he failed to execute it with the technical means he had at his disposal. Instead therefore of undertaking the start-up of the projected dam, he returned to Cairo and confessed to al-Hakim his sheer inability to go ahead with the proposed plan.

Al-Hakim assigned him some office pertaining to revenue, but he is said to have feigned madness, and retired to a place near al-Azhar university. Different stories have been advanced to discredit the personality of al-Hakim in this context. Prof. Abdul Ghafur writes in **"Ibn al-Haitham"** (cf. **"Ibn al-Haitham"**, Karachi, 1970, pp. 111-2) that, "From this, it should be obvious that, even after Ibn al-Haitham's inability to go ahead with the plan for construction of the dam at Aswan, al-Hakim had considerable respect for Ibn al-Haitham. It might be that there were monetary difficulties involved in the implementation of the scheme or some other snag. However, the reputation of Ibn al-Haitham remain unscathed in this affair. The plea of insanity was not new to Ibn al-

Haitham. He had used this subterfuge once before at Basra. It is therefore plausible to assume that he adopted this ruse in order to devote himself to studies. Qifti, Baihiqi and Ibn Abi Usaibia unanimously held that Ibn al-Haitham was a self-contented person and devoid of avarice or worldly self-aggrandizement."

Baihiqi however wrongly narrates in his "**Timat al-Sawan al-Hikmat**" that Ibn al-Haytham stealthily left Cairo at the dead night and lived in Syria. This narration contradicts the established fact that he lived in Cairo till his death. The story of the flight of Ibn al-Haytham from Cairo for fear of execution by al-Hakim is the fabrication of the historians. Had he known of his murder, he would have fled from Aswan and never come to Cairo. He however spent the last 19 years of his life in scientific pursuits and experimental research under the shadow of the domes and arches of al-Azhar university, and composed almost 209 books on mathematics, astronomy, physics, philosophy and medicine of which the most celebrated is his "**Kitab al-Manazir**" (treatise on optics), which was translated into Latin by Witelo in 1270 and published by Frederick Risner in 1572 at Basel. This was the first comprehensive treatise on optics in the world and immensely influenced the writings of Witelo, Peckham, Roger Bacon, Leonardo de Vinci and John Kepler. He is the first to have discussed the anatomy of the eye. He also discussed the propagation of light and colours, optic illusions and reflection, with experiments for testing the angles of incidence and reflection. Theoretically he had almost discovered magnifying lenses through his experiments, which came into existence in Italy three centuries later. For the first time Ibn al-Haytham offered a correct explanation for the apparent increase in the size of the sun and the moon when near the horizon. His another remarkable achievement is his employment of the camera obscura.

Another notable figure was Ali bin Yunus, the great mathematician and astronomer, who invented pendulum and the sun-dial, for whom al-Hakim had the observatory built on Jabal al-Muqattam.

Hence Dar al-Hikmah became a leading academy of Islamic learning for the intellectualists. Dr. Amir Hasan Siddiqui writes in "**Cultural Centres of Islam**" (Karachi, 1970, p. 62) that, "Al-Hakim was personally interested in astrological calculations; he built on al-Muqattam an



observatory to which he often rode before dawn on his grey ass. An informant of the contemporary historian Ibn Hammad (d. 628/1230) saw the astrolabe-like copper instrument erected by al-Hakim on two towers and measured one of its signs of the Zodiac, which was three spans in length."

It is also learnt that al-Hakim had stroke his interest in collecting the old relics. Zakir Hussain writes in "**Tarikh-i Salatin Fatimiyya**" (Jabalpur, 1938, p. 87) that, "In 400/1010, al-Hakim sent Hamiduddin Kirmani to Medina with instructions that he should there find a house, which had belonged to his ancestor, Jafar Sadik, and to dig up in it some arms and books dealing with Shiite doctrines, and to bring them to him. This he did, and found a Holy Koran, a bed and some household goods."

According to "**Encyclopaedia of World Art**" (Rome, 1958, 5th vol., p. 367) that, "Rice correctly read the Arabic text carved on it, which does not simply banal good wishes to the owner of the ewer as was previously thought, but says that the ewer was made for the personal use of al-Hakim's commander."

It will be further interesting to note that Abul Kassim Ammar bin Ali al-Mausili was the most important eye-surgeon in Cairo, and acquired great prestige under the patronage of al-Hakim. He compiled "**al-Muntakhab fi ilm al-Ayn wa Mudawatiha bi'l Adwiya wal Hadid**" in 400/1010. It deals the anatomy and physiology of the eye, its diseases and treatment by drugs and surgery. To avoid the dangers of using a breakable glass tube referred to in Greek writings, Ammar invented a hollowed metallic needle used successfully in cataract operations.

### **The origin of the Druzes**

In 407/1016, an Iranian *dai*, named Muhammad bin Ismail Nashtakin ad-Darazi came in Egypt, who professed the transmigration of souls. He also preached the divinity of al-Hakim. He came from Bukhara to Cairo in 408/1017. Finding no response he moved to Wadi al-Taymun, at the foot of Mount Hermon in Lebanon and Jabal as-Summaq in Syria. He was first in the public eyes being the founder of the Druze sect. In 410/1019, the Turks soldiers of the Fatimids gathered and moved towards the houses of ad-Darazi and his followers and surrounded them. Ad-Darazi

and those with him, fortified themselves in a house, fighting the besiegers from the roof and the wall. The besiegers ravaged the house and killed about forty people with az-Darazi.

About the same time, another Iranian from Farghana, named Hasan al-Akhrām also appeared as using his influence to propagate the deity of al-Hakim, and found a Druze sect about in 409/1018. He was also killed in his house just eight days following his declaration.

The most famous however among them was Hamza bin Ali bin Ahmad, born in 375/985 in Zawzan in Iran, whom the Druzes regard as their real founder. He made public declaration of his doctrines in 408/1017, which is also considered the **Era of Hamza**. He established himself in a mosque outside the Nasr Gate of Cairo, inviting the people to confess his teachings and sent out his missionaries to various parts of Egypt and Syria. The extreme to which the followers of Hamza were prepared to go also increased.

Ibn Zafir (d. 613/1216) writes in "**al-Duwal al-Munqati'a**" (Cairo, 1972, pp. 52-3) that on 12th Safar, 410/June 19, 1019, a group of Hamza's followers entered the congregational mosque of Amr in Fustat on horseback and approached the Qadi Ibn Abi al-Awwam, who belonged to Hanbali school of law. They handed him a letter from Hamza which began with these formula:- "In the name of al-Hakim, Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate." The provocation at the most important religious centre of Fustat cost Hamza's followers their lives; they were killed by the people at the mosque.

In sum, both Hamza and ad-Darazi preached the divinity of al-Hakim according to their own interpretations, but Hamza seems to have cautious, intending to build a disciplined organisation. But, ad-Darazi created such a stir that his name was affixed to the movement at large. He has been given a title of "guide of the faithful" (**hadi al-mustafibin**) in the Druze epistles.

The Druze historical accounts were written primarily to explain theological and religious issues rather than to record history. The Druze accounts were however written at a much later date, i.e., in the 16th and 17th centuries, such as "**Majra az-Zaman**" by Taqi ad-Din Zayn al-Abidin Abdūl Gaffar in 16th century, and "**Umdat al-Arifin**" by Abdul Malik al-Ashrafani in 17th century.



Following Hamza in rank and authority was Ismail bin Muhammad al-Tamimi, the successor of Hamza. Then followed Muhammad bin Wahab al-Qoraishi, Salma bin Abdul Wahab al-Samuri and finally came Ali bin Ahmad al-Sammuqi. The five leaders embodied the five cosmic principles, and their teachings were considered irrevocable and final. According to Philip K. Hitti, the Druzes were a mixture of Iranians, Iraqi's and Persianised Arabs, vide **"The Origin of the Druze People and Religion"** (New York, 1928, p. 23). Martin Sprengling, after analyzing each argument of this theory, criticised Hitti's speculative assumption, and concludes that the Druzes were mixture of stocks in which the Arabs component largely predominated, onto which was grafted an original mountain population of Aramaic blood, vide **"The Berlin Druze Lexicon"** (*American Journal of Semitic Language*, 56, 1939, pp. 391-8).

The Druze movement became a main tool of the aggressive historians to discredit al-Hakim and contrived baseless stories around it. He had however tried to control the Druzes in Egypt and Syria with drastic measures, but most of them had migrated in the mountains of Lebanon.

Ibn al-Qalanisi (d. 555/1160), who usually follows the reports of Ibn al-Sabi (d. 448/1056), does not mention any relation between al-Hakim and the Druze leaders, nor al-Hakim's so called desire for divinity. Makrizi also does not suggest that the Druze leaders were at any time emboldened by al-Hakim. Makrizi however condemns Ibn Abi Tayy (d. 630/1232), who seems to have been influenced by the account of Ibn al-Sabi by saying, "This is extreme hostility which not one of the Egyptian historians has mentioned." (**"Itti'az"**, p. 411) Ibn Khaldun writes in his **"Tarikh"** (4th vol, p. 60) that, "These are allegations which no man of intellect would contemplate." From Ibn al-Sabi comes the statement that al-Hakim desired to claim divinity and employed a man, named al-Akhrum to declare it. A contradiction of this sharply appears in his own work when he says that al-Hakim prohibited his subjects from prostrating before him or from kissing the ground or his hand when they saw him. Kais M. Firro writes in **"History of the Druzes"** (London, 1992, p. 15) that, "In fact, however, neither the historical personalities of Hakim and the unitarian *dais* nor the history of the Fatimid Caliphate as such have any importance for the Druzes." Kais Firro further writes, "Others, comparing the

several versions given in the different chronicles, conclude that Hakim had no wish to be considered divine and did not support or encourage the unitarian *dais*." (Ibid)

Al-Hakim was anxious to promulgate Ismailism throughout the Muslim world and to convince the Muslims that he was the rightful Imam-Caliph. If this was a difficult, it would be even more so to convince them that he was an incarnation of the Divinity to boost his alleged claim. Al-Hakim's belief is seen in a personal letter which he wrote to one of his officials: "I fear no one; beg from no one except my God to whom I submit and from whom I receive all bounties. My Prophet is my grandfather; my Imam is my father and my religion is sincerity and justice." ("*Itti'az*", p. 403) Makrizi writes in his "*Khitat*," p. 286) that in 403/1012, al-Hakim had engraved on his seal these words: "By the help of God, the Almighty and Protector, the Imam Abu Ali is the victorious."

Besides the preceding, if al-Hakim had supported the Druze movement, he must have chosen one or both of the Druze leaders as official members of the Ismaili *dawa* to emphasize their authority. The Druze teaches that al-Hakim had no father or son. Contrary to it, al-Hakim claimed publicly that his father was al-Aziz and himself a direct descent from Prophet Muhammad, vide "*Itti'az*" (p. 386) by Makrizi. There is no evidence that al-Hakim had forced the Muslims to pay *jaziya* being levied upon the non-Muslims. But according to Druze teachings as mentioned in "*Bud al-Tawhid*" (pp. 41-42) that all the Muslims would have to pay *jaziya* if they refused to pay their creeds. The Druzes claimed that al-Hakim had written many *sijils* (treatises), but it has been to us a source of surprise that each *sijil* begins with the phrase: "*From the slave of God*" and ends with "*By the assistance of God.*"

The Druze literatures however affirm that Hamza was supported by al-Hakim and approved his teachings. But as A. Najjar in "*Mazhab al-Druze wa al-Tawhid*" (Cairo, 1965, p. 103) pointed out, "there is no substantial evidence to support such claims." According to Antaki (d. 458/1065), "When al-Hakim was informed about Druze's preaching, he was very much angry." (vide "*Tarikh-i Antaki*," p. 222) In Hamza's own writings there is a passage in which he states that some of the people refused to accept his teaching



unless Al-Hakim's own signed mandate commanded them to do so." (vide "*al-Rida wa al-Taslim*", p. 20)

The impartial readers should judge conclusively how it is possible that a pious Imam-Caliph al-Hakim had made a claim for divinity after reading the following descriptions of the Sunni historian Makrizi who writes in his "*Khitat*" (pp. 286-7) that, "He gave orders that no one was to kiss the ground in front of him, nor kiss his stirrup nor his hand when greeting him in public processions, because bowing to the ground before a mortal was an invention of the Greeks; that they should say no more than "Greeting to the Commander of the Faithful, and the mercy and blessings of God be upon him;" that in addressing him, whether in writing or in speech, they should not use the formula "May God pray for him," but that in writing to him they confine themselves to these words, "The peace of God, His favour and the abundance of His blessings upon the Commander of the Faithful;" that only the customary invocation should be used for him, and no more; that the preachers at the time of the Friday prayer should say no more than "O God, bless Muhammad Your Chosen One, give peace to the Commander of the Faithful Ali Your Well-beloved. O God, give peace to the Commanders of the Faithful the forebear of the Commanders of the Faithful. O God, give Your most precious peace to Your servant and deputy (*khaliifa*)."  
He forbade them to beat drums or to sound trumpets around the palace, so that they marched around without drums and trumpets. On the Id al-Fitr, al-Hakim rode on horseback to the place of prayer without adornment, sumpter animals, or any pomp, save only ten led horses with saddles and bridles adorned with light white silver, with plain flags and with a white parasol without any golden adornment. He was dressed in white without embroidery or gold braid; there were no jewels on his turban and no carpets on his pulpit. He forbade people to curse the first Muslims and had those who disobeyed flogged and publicly reviled. He prayed on the Feast of Sacrifice, as he prayed on the Id al-Fitr, without any pomp. Abd al-Rahim bin Ilyas bin Ahmad bin al-Mahdi performed the sacrifice for him. Al-Hakim often rode to the desert outside the city. He wore plain sandals on his feet and a cloth on his head." Thus, if al-Hakim had supported Hamza or ad-Darazi, not doubt, it must have been sounded in his personal life and in his activities as a ruler.

In the interim, al-Hakim wrote an urgent letter in 400/1009 to Hamiduddin Kirmani in Iraq with necessary instructions, so as to suppress the Druze propaganda. His letter is cited in "**Damigh al-Batil**" by Ali Muhammad bin al-Walid (d. 612/1215), whose few lines read:- "Keep up all my prescriptions to you concerning the service of God. Keep alive the tradition of our ancestor the Messenger of God, through the *dawat* to true *tawhid*. Urge the believers to remain attached to all the obligations of religious practices, to all the other obligations of their allegiance, and to the loyalty which is incumbent upon them and which is written in the book of their deeds. And know that our protection extends only to those who put into practice the Book of God and the Tradition of the Messenger of God, and who serve God through their devotion to us. Teach this to all of our friends (*awliya*) as our word."

Thus, in refuting the Druze propaganda, Hamiduddin Kirmani wrote several tracts. Addressing the Druze leader, Hasan al-Akhram al-Farghani, he said, "**Amir al-mominin al-Hakim bi-Amrillah is no more than a servant of God, obedient and subservient to Him. God has preferred him over the rest of His creatures. And how can he be worshipped while he is of body and a spirit endowed with necessary powers of eating and walking. He denies what you and your followers ascribe to him. Nay, only God is worshipped to whom Amir al-mominin bows in prayer.**" (vide "**al-Risala al-Waiza**", Cairo, 1951, pp. 21-28). Kirmani also quoted the Koranic verses (41:33, 37 and 3: 178-9) in support of his arguments.

It is also necessary to mention that the official *dais* of the Ismaili mission in Egypt declared that al-Hakim never supported or authorized Hamza or any other extremist to preach such teaching. Special literature and even official decrees (*manshur*) were circulated throughout the state to emphasize this. For instance, "**al-Risala al-Waiza**", "**al-Mabasim wa al-Bisharat**" and "**al-Risala al-Duriya**" etc. were written and circulated to condemn the Druze propaganda. Al-Musabbihi and Antaki says that immediately after the death of al-Hakim, his son az-Zahir issued a decree (*manshur*) denouncing the claims of the extremists.



### **Hamiduddin Kirmani**

Ahmad bin Abdullah al-Kirmanī, or Hamiduddin Kirmani was the *huffat al-Iraqin* (*huffat* of Iraq and western Iran) during this period. His family hailed from Kirman as his name indicates, but it is not known where he was born. Through out the period of his mission activities, he kept in close touch with Kirman as is shown in two of his letters dated 399/1008. In his work, "**Kitab al-Kafiyah**" he also refers to Kirman and its vicinity.

He exercised some important mission works in Baghdad and Basra. In 380/990, his mission was able to gain support of the Uqayti princes of Mosul, known as al-Musayyib. He passed most part of his life as a *dai* in Iraq and was expressly summoned in Cairo on 400/1009 for the purpose of refuting the Druzes who propagated the divinity of al-Hakim. His fame does not stem only from being a pioneer *dai*, but also from being one of the most distinguished philosophers and writers of the Ismaili mission. He returned back to Iraq, where he completed his principal work, "**Rahat al-Aqal**" in 411/1020, where he died. The exact date of his death is unknown; but it appears that he was still living in 412/1021 and died soon. He also compiled some 39 important books on different subjects. In his "**Al-Aqwal al-Dhahabiyah**" (ed. Salah al-Sawy, Tehran, 1977, p. 1), Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes in its introduction that, "Hamid al-Din was a very prolific writer who must be considered as one of the most outstanding philosophers not only of Ismailism but also of Islam in general, a figure whose works have been singularly neglected until now by the world of scholarship in general and even by specialists of Islamic philosophy and theology." In sum, Kirmani has been called "**the Shaikh of Ismaili philosophers**", vide the introduction of Kamil Hussain and Mustapha Hilmi to "**Rahat al-Aqal**" (Cairo, 1952, p. 17).

### **Death of al-Hakim**

Al-Hakim had installed an astronomical observatory on Jabal al-Muqattam, near Cairo for Ibn Yunus. According to Ibn Khallikan, al-Hakim went out late in the night of 27th Shawal, 411/February 13, 1021 to Jabal al-Muqattam and did not return to the palace. A tracking party was

sent out, who found an ass on the top of the hill with its forelegs hacked off. Blood marks on the ground led to a spot, where they found al-Hakim's clothes pierced by daggers and buttoned up, and as such his death was officially declared on 10th Zilhaja, 411/April 4, 1021. The Druzes however believed that al-Hakim did not die but disappeared, anticipating his return on dooms-day.

He died at the age of 36 years and 7 months after the Imamate and Caliphate of 25 years and 1 month. Makrizi (2nd vol., p. 290) quotes one other tradition about al-Hakim's death on the authority of Abul Mahsin that in 415/1025, a man from Imam Hussain's family had been arrested after raising up rebellion in the southern part of upper Egypt. He confessed that it was he who had killed al-Hakim. He said that there were four accomplices of the crime, and that they afterwards fled to different parts. He also showed a piece of cotton with which he had been clothed.

Imam al-Hakim had two sons, al-Harith (395-400/1004-1009) and Ali Abul Hasan, surnamed az-Zahir. He had also a daughter, Sit al-Misr (d. 455/1063).

Muhammad bin Ali as-Suri (d. 488/1095) praises al-Hakim in his poem (vide "*al-Qasida as-Suriyya*," ed. Arif Tamir, Damascus, 1955, p. 68) in the following words:-

*The perfect resides wholly in the ninth (Imam). In him the parturition is accomplished, the coming to light is done.*

*And the conceal and hidden appear.*

*In al-Hakim God established His Will in the world, and the wisdom of the Just was realized.*

#### **AZ-ZAHIR (411-427/1021-1036)**

He was born on 20th Ramdan, 395/June 4, 1005. His name was Ali Abul Hasan, or Abu Ma'd, surnamed az-Zahir la-azaz dinallah (Assister in exalting the religion of God). His mother Amina was the daughter of Abdullāh, the son of Imam al-Muizz. He acceded on the throne of Fatimid Caliphate and Imamate on 411/1021 at the age of 16 years. On the



occasion of his coronation, a special payment in excess (*fadl*) of 20 *dinars* was granted to each soldier.

A black eunuch Midad began his career in the service of Sit al-Mulk, the aunt of az-Zahir. She employed him as a teacher of az-Zahir. On Friday, the 18th Safar, 415/May 1, 1024, az-Zahir invested Midad the honorific title and named him Abul Fawaris. Later on, Midad was assigned the administration of the affairs of the soldiers according to a long edict read publicly in the palace.

### **Sit al-Mulk**

Az-Zahir began his career under the tutelage of his aunt, Sit al-Mulk (the lady of the state), also known as Sif al-Nasr, who was born in 359/980. During the first four years of az-Zahir's rule, the whole power was in the hands of his aunt. The personnel of Sit al-Mulk in the administration included both men and women. Abul Abbas Ahmad bin a-Maghribi, for example, served as her agent, who was a man of laudable character and had already served the mother of Sit al-Mulk in the same capacity. She also employed a slave girl of her mother, named Takarrub, was her confidante. She also served as her informant and handled the petitions submitted to her.

It is said that at the beginning of her regency, she managed to summon Abdul Rahman bin Ilyas bin Ahmad, the great-grandson of Imam al-Mahdi and the cousin of Imam al-Hakim, who had hatched rebellion against the Fatimids at Damascus, and is reported to have made his contact with the Jarrahids of Palestine to help him in his action. Sit al-Mulk made vizir Khatir al-Mulk, Ammar bin Muhammad write a letter to Abdul Rahman. He had been arrested in Cairo and imprisoned for some four years, then fell ill and died just three days before Sit al-Mulk herself died in 416/1026.

Thus, she is reported to have wielded great influence over the masses and directly participated in the state affairs, and remained quite influential until her death in 416/1026. Ibn Khallikan (8th vol., p. 130) writes that, "She showed exceptional ability, especially in legal matters, and made herself loved by the people."

During these four years, the chief ministers changed in quick succession and thus the administration could not acquire stability. After the death of Sit al-Mulk, the principle power passed into the hands of a trio from among the court nobles, who paid daily visit to the Imam for getting decision on all important matters.

#### **Fatimid decree against the Druzes**

It appears from several Druze writings that Hamza and his followers had contacted the chiefs of the Fatimid army and the tribal chiefs, asking them to depose az-Zahir and declare Hamza as the successor of al-Hakim, vide "**Risalat al-Arab**" (p. 561) and "**Taqlid Bani al-Jarrah**" (p. 484). Another Druze work, "**al-Ghaya wa al-Nasiha**" (pp. 71-2) in this context makes az-Zahir as an imposter who usurped the rights of Hamza. On the other hand, Makrizi speaks of a Katami named, Ahmad bin Tatawa who arrived in Egypt in 415/1024 and claimed to have come from Kufa where he had been in the company of al-Hakim (vide "**Itti'az**", p. 415). He also claimed that al-Hakim had sent him as a messenger to warn the people of their evils. Makrizi also mentions that a black servant named Anbar, who worked as a porter in al-Hakim's court, met az-Zahir and tried to convince him that his father was still alive and would return very soon. It is also known that a certain person, called Suleman whose resemblance to al-Hakim encouraged him to make an attempt to take power from az-Zahir. He entered the royal palace with his men, declaring himself as the returning Imam. His attempt was however foiled and was executed. In sum, the Druze propaganda of al-Hakim's divinity appears to be merely a mean leading to the abolition of the hereditary tradition of the Imamate, and open the door for non-Fatimids to become Imams. It also led the other individuals to mint groundless tales for al-Hakim. Before the time, the propaganda became congenial for the growth of the ambitions of the extremists, az-Zahir immediately issued an official decree (**manshur**), calling for the extermination of the extremism with iron hands from Anioch to Alexandria and Egypt. Yaacov Lev writes in "**State and Society in Fatimid Egypt**" (London, 1991, p. 36) that, "He (az-Zahir) condemned (in the official decree) those who adopted extreme views regarding the position of the Imam, and those who went beyond the pale of Islam were cursed. The regime took action against



those who adhered to the view of God being incarnated in al-Hakim; they were imprisoned and put to death."

Accordingly, the *amir* of Antioch, aided by the *amir* of Aleppo, suppressed the group of the Druzes in the Jabal as-Summaq in 423/1032, which mostly included the peasants. In Alexandria, al-Mukana tried to maintain Hamza's authority and encouraged the extremists in the Jabal as-Summaq after their defeat. At length, al-Mukana himself also withdrew in 425/1034.

#### Reopening of *Majalis al-Hikmah*

It has been hitherto discussed the closure of the *majalis al-hikmah* during the period of Imam al-Hakim. But it was evidently reopened by his successor, az-Zahir. He conferred the office of the *qadi* and the mission in the royal palace (*bab al-khalifa*) to *Qadi* Kassim bin Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad bin an-Noman in 418/1027, ordering to take charge of the mission and the proper guidance of the readings of the *majalis al-hikmah* and the spread of the science of *tawil* among the followers. He also sent an edict in this context to all his followers and also ordered the *dais* to read it out explicitly to the faithful in their respective regions. According to "*Uyun'1-Akhbar*" (6th vol., p. 315), the edict of az-Zahir of 5th Shaban, 417/September 21, 1026 reads:- "The gate of wisdom was open until our Lord al-Hakim bi-Amrillah thought it right to close it because of the prevailing circumstances and on political grounds (*bi-siyasti'1 jumbur*). But now, continues the edict, the conditions that Commander of the Faithful has ordered the chief *dai*, Kassim bin Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad bin an-Noman to open the gate of wisdom to those who long for it, and to read the *majalis* again in the palace of the Caliphs as has been customary there before."

S.M. Stern has published a letter found in the Geniza of the synagogue in Fustat, in which a certain *dai* addresses congratulation to Kassim bin Abdul Aziz.

## Hasanak and the Fatimid *Khilat*

Abu Ali Hasan bin Muhammad bin Abbas (d. 423/1032), known as Hasanak had been in service of Mehmud of Ghazna since his childhood. He had gradually risen to the position of a *ra'is* in Nishapur. In 414/1023, Hasanak went on pilgrimage and allowed himself to be persuaded to return via Cairo and there to accept a robe of honour (*khil'a*) from the Fatimid Imam az-Zahir. This so offended the Abbasid caliph Kadir that he denounced him as an Ismaili and demanded his execution. After his return to Ghazna, the Abbasid caliph insisted Mehmud that he should have been executed. Mehmud clearly regarded the accusation as unfounded, and went so far as to appoint Hasanak as his vizir in 416/1025 and appeased the Abbasid caliph by sending the robe of honour, and presents received by Hasanak from the Fatimids, which had been burnt in Baghdad. During the last six years of Mehmud's reign, Hasanak exerted a remarkable influence over him, but seems to have opposed his son Masud and supported the descendants of Masud's brother, called Muhammad. This brought about his downfall after Mehmud's death in 421/1030. Hasanak was thus immediately banished to Herat, accused of offending against Masud, and mainly as a result of efforts by the finance minister, Abu Sahl Sawsani, tried on the old charge of being an Ismaili. The Abbasid caliph Kadir also, evidently offended that his wishes in 415/1024 had not been complied with, again interfered. After a long trial, Hasanak was strangled in 423/1032 and his head given in derision to his chief opponent Sawsani; his corpse remained tied to a pillory for seven years.

Meanwhile, a terrible famine broke out in Egypt as a result of a series of bad Niles, and the resultant distress lasted all through 416/1026 and 417/1027. In many cases the starving villages took to brigandage. Even the pilgrims on their way through Egypt were attacked. Regulations were passed to prevent the slaughter of cattle. The camels were scarce as many were killed because it was impossible to provide them with food, and poultry could hardly be procured. The royal treasury was practically depleted, for it was impossible to collect taxes.

Imam az-Zahir once on that perilous time was passing through Fustat when going to one of his palaces. Everywhere he encountered starving, shouting people who



cried out: "Hunger, - O' Amir al-mu'minin! hunger. Neither your father nor your grandfather did such things to us. In the name of God, to God we entrust our affair." These cries reflected the feeling that the regime had mishandled the situation. The Imam took its serious notice on the spot, and arranged to distribute food for them, and assured the people to take actions. On the same day, Ibn Dawwas, the market inspector was summoned to the palace; he was accused of causing the famine and blamed for bringing the town to the verge of violent outburst. The people rebuked him and said: "A document in your handwriting is evidence on your part, which serves against you that you undertook upon yourself to provide the town with bread and wheat until the time of the new harvest." Following this conversation, the millers were permitted to buy wheat from granaries (*mataazin*) at a fixed price of one *tillis* (one *tillis* was equivalent to 67.5 kg.) for 2.5 *dinars*, and the price of a load of flour was determined at 4 *dinars*. The price of bread was fixed at two and half *ratls* for *dhiram*. The prices established by the market inspector were considerably lower than those of the free market. The same was applied to bread, following the sealing of the granaries, two *ratls* of black bread were sold for 1.5 *dhiram*. These swift measures brought great deal of relief. Further punitive actions were taken by the market inspectors against several flour merchants (*qannahun*), including a prominent member of the trade.

Later in a year, however, there was a good inundation, called *ziyadat al-nil* (the plentiude of the Nile) and this restored plenty, so that the country was once more under normal conditions and order was restored.

### Fatimid decrees

During the period of az-Zahir, the Fatimid chancery (*diwan al-insha*) issued two decrees (*manshur*) dated 415/1024 to the monks and the Karaite Jewish community, in Cairo, reflecting the Fatimid diplomatic and chancery practice. In the first decree, az-Zahir granted privileges to the fresh petition (*ruqa*) of the monks, confirming the former decrees of Imam al-Muizz, Imam al-Aziz and Imam al-Hakim, dated Muharram, 415/March-April, 1024. This decree was published by Richard J.H. Gottheil in the Festschrift for A. Harkavy in 1908., whose Arabic text and translation is

published by S.M. Stern in "Fatimid Decrees" (London, 1964, pp. 15-20), and it runs as under:-

*"You, the Copt monks, have submitted to the Commander of the Faithful a petition in which you enumerated the privileges granted to you in the past, namely that your cultivation, and there should be exacted from you no...assistance in war, or going out...; that those of your monks, who go out to your estates in order to obtain there their livelihood and transact the business of those of you whom they have left behind, be dealt with honourably; that you should not be obliged to pay, in respect of supplies carried by Christians and other similar things, customs and fines, little or much; that you safely enjoy your fields, crops and working-beasts; that if a monk of yours dies outside your monasteries while he is travelling in the Rif or elsewhere on your business, all his property which he leaves be not interfered with but revert to his brethren in monachal life with the exclusion of relatives and blood-relations other than they; and that the Imam al-Muizz li-Din Allah and the Imam al-Aziz billah and the Imam al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah had ordered the writing of decrees confirming all this to you. You then asked for the writing of a decree to renew all that the Imams had granted to you, to confirm the protection which they had extended to all of you and to observe these bonds and engagements due to you. The Commander of the Faithful has therefore ordered that this open decree, to deal with you according to that text and in conformity with the explanation which you have penned, be written and that it remain in your hands as a proof thereof, lasting through the passing of days and periods, so that no one dare interfere with you by way of measures imparting the efficacy of this bounty or invent an interpretation for it to turn it away from its intention; and that there be kept away from you.*

*Let all-our friends, governors, financial and taxation officials and all the other servants and employees of the empire according to their different states and several ranks who read this, or to whom this is read, take cognizance of this order and command of the Commander of*



*the Faithful and act accordingly and in conformity with it, if God wills. Written in Muharram, the year Four hundred and Fifteen.*

*May God bless our ancestor Muhammad, the seal of the prophets and lord of the messengers, and his pure family, the right-guided Imams, and give them peace. God is sufficient for us; how excellent a Keeper is He."*

Another like decree of az-Zahir concerning the Karaite and Rabbanite Jews, dated 415/1024 is also published by S.M. Stern, vide pp. 24-28.

In 418-9/1028-9, az-Zahir was able to make a treaty with the Greek emperor, Costantine III. It was agreed that the Fatimid Caliph should be prayed for in the *khutba* in every mosque in the Byzantine dominions, and permission was granted for the restoration of the mosque at Constantinople, which had been ruined in retaliation for the destruction of the church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. Az-Zahir on his part agreed to permit the rebuilding of the church at Jerusalem.

In the meantime, the attacks which the Sicilian launched on the Byzantine coasts were reinforced by the Fatimids. The Byzantine force commanded by the general George Maniaces was badly defeated. In his negotiations with the Fatimid Imam az-Zahir in 423/1032, the emperor Romanus III Argyrus (968-1034) however expressly demanded that the Fatimids should not aid the *Sahib Sikilliyya* in the campaign against Byzantine.

Sicily became virtually independent of the Fatimids. The Kalbid governors' confined themselves to accepting retrospective investiture from Cairo. They have cemented their close ties with the Zirids, whose suzerainty the Sicilian recognized in 427/1036. Until the time of az-Zahir and even under his successor, the Sicilian coins however bore the name of the Fatimid Caliph.

The Fatimid power in Syria was seriously impugned at the time of az-Zahir's accession, but it was soon altered by the ability and enterprise of Anushtagin ad-Dizbiri. His first important action was against Saleh bin Mirdas, the

Arab chieftain who had taken Aleppo from Murtada and had now established himself as an independent prince.

In the interim, the Jarrahid Hassan bin Mufraj was once again on revolt in 415/1024 and executed a pact of new alliance with the Kalbid Sinan bin Suleman and the Kilabid Saleh bin Mirdas. According to this pact, Damascus was given to Sinan bin Suleman, Aleppo to Saleh bin Mirdas and Palestine to Hassan bin Mufraj. These allies at first defeated the Fatimid forces at Askalan. After the death of Sinan bin Suleman, the Kalbids rallied to the side of the Fatimids, enabling the Fatimid commander Anushtagin ad-Dizbiri to inflict defeat to the joint forces of Hassan bin Mufraj and Saleh bin Mirdas at Ughuwana in Palestine in 420/1030. Saleh bin Mirdas had been killed in the encounter, and Hassan bin Mufraj took refuge amongst the Greeks. Due to an effectual effort of Anushtagin, the rebels were subdued and Aleppo had been captured from the Mirdasids in 429/1038, thus the Fatimid domination was restored in Syria.

#### **Sulayhid dynasty in Yamen**

Yamen was the original base of the Fatimid propaganda, where Ibn Hawshab had formed an Ismaili state in 268/882. Long after his death, the political power slipped away from the hands of the Ismailis, but their mission continued actively. During the period of az-Zahir, the headship of the Yamenite mission had come to be vested in a certain dai Suleman bin Abdullah al-Zawahi, a learned and influential person residing in the mountainous region of Haraz. He made a large conversion and wished to re-establish the political power of the Ismailis in Yamen. It is said that a certain Hamdani chieftain, named Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi, the son of the *qadi* of Haraz, once came to lead the pilgrim caravans to Mecca, and had learnt much about Ismaili doctrines from Suleman and espoused Ismailism. Ali took a leading part in the mission works in Yamen and became the assistant of Suleman, who chose him as his successor. Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi generated his close contact with az-Zahir and the mission headquarters in Cairo.

In 429/1038, during the period of Imam al-Mustansir billah, Ali bin Muhammad captured Mount Masar in Haraz to the north of Yamen, and fortified it, whom he made his



centre. This marked the foundation of the Sulayhid dynasty, which ruled over Yamen as a vassal of the Fatimids for almost a century until 532/1138. He obtained support from the Hamdani, Humayri and other petty tribes of Yamen and instituted the Fatimid *khutba* everywhere. His further detail will run hereinafter.

We have discussed previously that Fatik, the governor of Aleppo had declared himself as an independent ruler on the eve of the death of Imam al-Hakim. Later on, Fatik admitted his mistakes and apologized from az-Zahir and Sit al-Mulk. In 413/1022, Badr, the commander of the stronghold of Aleppo had killed Fatik. In the following year, az-Zahir expelled Badr from Aleppo and appointed Abdullah bin Ali bin Jafar al-Katami as the governor of Aleppo and Safi ad-Dawla to administer the command of the stronghold.

During the later part of az-Zahir's rule, the Fatimid influence had become supreme in Palestine and Syria, save only in the few northern districts which remained subject to the Greek empire. It seemed indeed to be the triumph of the Fatimids.

Ali bin Suleman was a pioneer physician, philosopher, mathematician and an astronomer, who died during the early part of the Imamate of az-Zahir. Unfortunately, his works are lost; these included two important compendiums mentioned by their titles in the literature: a synopsis of "**Kitab al-Hawi fi'l Tibb**" by Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Zakaria ar-Razi (d. 313/925) of Iran, and a book on professional aphorism, ethics, experiences, anecdotes and properties of natural products compiled from the writing of the ancient sages. Ibn Abi Usaibia (d. 668/1270) explains in "**Uyun al-Anba fi tabakat al-Attiba**" (2nd vol., pp. 89-90) that he had seen a copy of this latter work in four volumes, wherein the author mentioned that he started this compilation at Cairo in 391/1000.

In Cairo, Abu Sa'ad Ibrahim (d. 440/1048) was a famous Jewish dealer in very rare and precious things and made long journey to acquire them. Imam az-Zahir used to be a frequent customer of Abu Sa'ad, from whom he bought antiques for his personal collections.

It should be remembered that the Fatimids made great contribution in the rock-crystal works in various forms,

mostly developed during the time of Imam az-Zahir, such as ewers, bottles, cups, saucers, boxes, chessmen and flasks of different shapes. One of these interesting piece is preserved in crescent shape work in the Germanisches National Museum in Nurnberg. It was originally used as an ornament for one of the horses of az-Zahir, whose name is inscribed on it. There are also another rock-crystal mugs in the collections of Lourvre, Venice, Vienna and Prague; belonging to the period of Imam az-Zahir.

The period under review is also noted for an Ismaili scientist, Abu Ali Ibn Sina, whose biography has been given in **Appendix II**.

It must be remembered on that juncture that it was az-Zahir who, in 421/1030 and again in 424/1033 rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem which had collapsed following an earthquake. He was also responsible for rebuilding the Aqsa Mosque and the repair of its mosaics.

In 427/1036, az-Zahir was detained some time by sickness. He was taken to Maks, then the port of Cairo, where he died on the 15th of Shaban, 427/June 13, 1036, leaving the Caliphate and Imamate to his son, al-Mustansir, then a child of seven years of age.

#### **AL-MUSTANSIR (427-487/1036-1095)**

He was born in Cairo on 16th Jamada II, 420/July 2, 1029, who eight months afterwards was declared to succeed his father. His name was Ma'd Abu Tamim, surnamed al-Mustansir billah (Imploring the help of God). He ascended on 15th Shaban, 427/June 13, 1036 at the age of 7 years. During the early years, the state affairs were administered by his mother. His period of Caliphate lasted for 60 years, the longest of all the caliphs, either in Egypt or elsewhere in Islamic states.

Ali bin Ahmad Jarjarai, an able vizir, whose period was one of the prosperity in Egypt, died in 436/1044. He was followed by Ibn al-Anbari and Abu Mansur Sadaqa, but none of them were competent. In 442/1050, there came forward a capable vizir Abu Muhammad Hasan bin Abdur Rehman Yazuri, who held the office for 8 years, and was an earnest reformer. He was followed by about 40 vizirs one after



another during 15 years (450-466/1058-1073), but none equated him, because they squandered the royal treasury.

Between 457/1065 and 464/1072, the famine made the condition of Egypt from bad to worse. Meanwhile, in 454/1062 and again in 459/1067, the struggle between the Turkish and Sudanese soldiery deteriorated into open warfare, ending in a victory for the Turks and their Berber allies. The Berbers in lower Egypt deliberately aggravated the distress by ravaging the country, destroying the embankments and canals, and seeking every way to reduce the capital and the neighbouring districts by sheer starvation. Makrizi sees in this incident the beginning of the crisis in Egypt, which he refers by the appellations, disorder (*fitna*), civil war (*al-shidda al-mashhura*), corruption of state (*fasad ad-dawla*) and days of calamity and dearth (*ayyam al-shidda wal ghala*).

In al-Mustansir's stable where there had been ten thousand animals there were now only three thin horses, and his escort once fainted from hunger as it accompanied him through the streets. As long as the calamity lasted, al-Mustansir alone possessed a horse, and, when he rode out, the courtiers followed on foot, having no beast to carry them. The condition of the country deteriorated with the protracted famine that followed by plague, and the whole districts were absolutely denuded of population and house after house lay empty.

Meanwhile, the Turkish mercenaries had drained the treasury, the works of art and valuables of all sorts in the palace were sold to satisfy their demands; often they themselves were the purchasers at merely nominal prices and sold the articles again at a profit. Emeralds valued at 300,000 *dinars* were bought by one Turkish general for 500 *dinars*, and in one fortnight of the year 460/1068 articles to the value of 30,000,000 *dinars* were sold off to provide pay for the Turks. The precious library which had been rendered available to the public and was one of the objects for which many visited Cairo was scattered, the books were torn up, thrown away, or used to light fires. At length, the Turks began fighting amongst themselves. Nasir ad-Dawla, the Turkish general of the Fatimid army, had attacked the city which was defended by the rival faction of the Turkish guard and, after burning part of Fustat and defeating the defenders, he entered as conqueror. When he reached the palace, he found al-

Mustansir lodged in rooms which had been stripped bare, waited on by only three slaves, and subsisting on two loaves which were sent him daily by the daughters of Ibn Babshand, the grammarian. The victorious Turks dominated Cairo, held the successive vizirs in subjection, treated al-Mustansir with contempt, and used their power to deplete the treasury by enhancing their pay to nearly twenty times its former figure. After this victory over the unhappy city, Nasir ad-Dawla became so over-bearing and tyrannical in his conduct that he provoked even his own followers, and so at length he was assassinated in 466/1074. But this only left the city in a worse condition than ever, for it was now at the mercy of the various Turkish factions which behaved no better than troops of brigands. In sum, the condition of Egypt continued to rage with unabated violence.

Mention should be made on this juncture of the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX Monomachus (1042-1055), who had maintained a friendly relation with al-Mustansir and had provided Egypt with wheat after the above mentioned famine.

#### **Arrival of Badr al-Jamali**

At this desperate juncture when these troubles were brewing, al-Mustansir was roused to action and sent a message to Badr al-Jamali, the then governor of Acre, inviting him to come to Egypt and take control. Badr al-Jamali responded swiftly. Originally an Armenian slave of the Syrian *amir*, Jamaluddin bin Ammar, he had a successful career as soldier and governor in Syria. His Armenian soldiers were loyal and reliable and he insisted on taking them with him to Egypt. Sailing from Acre in the mid-winter, he landed at Damietta and entered Cairo on 28th Jamada I, 466/January 29, 1074. Badr al-Jamali took the charge and dealt the state affairs efficiently. The swift and energetic actions of Badr al-Jamali brought peace and security to Egypt, and even measure of prosperity. The annual revenue was increased from about 2,000,000 to 3,00,000 *dinars*. It is true that his efforts were greatly assisted by the fact that the year 466/1074 saw an exceptionally good Nile, so that prosperity and abundance once more reigned through the land.



The foremost priority being given by al-Mustansir was to rebuild the library devastated by the Turks. De Lacy O'Leary writes in "A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate" (London, 1923, p. 207) that, "It is interesting to note that the Khalif set himself to the formation of a new library at Cairo as one of his first tasks; it helps us to realize that the Shiites were then as always the friends of learning."

In sum, Badr al-Jamali was invested the triple title, viz. *Amir al-Juyush* (commander of the army), *Sadi al-Dust* (director of the missionaries) and the *Vizir*. It is however by the first of these three titles that he is usually known.

### **Fatimid *khutba* in Baghdad**

In 447/1055, the Turk, Tughril Beg was recognized in Baghdad as the sultan and lieutenant of the Abbasid caliph. He drove away the Iranian soldiers from Baghdad to Syria. They assembled round Abu Harith al-Basasari, who was propagating the Fatimid mission. Meanwhile, Ebrahim Niyal rebelled in Mosul against Tughril Beg, who himself set out to crush the revolt. The absence of Tughril Beg from Baghdad gave a chance to al-Basasari to advance and capture Baghdad, which he did successfully in 450/1058 and recited the Fatimid *khutba* in the cathedral mosque of Baghdad. He also sent the royal throne, robes, pulpit and the staff to al-Mustansir in Cairo. The expelled Abbasid caliph took refuge with an Arab *amir* for one year.

After subduing the rising of his brother, Tughril Beg turned back to Baghdad with a large army. When he reached near Baghdad, al-Basasari did not come into confrontation, and began to evacuate the city on other side with his close associates. Tughril Beg thus entered the city without any opposition and reinstated the Abbasid caliphate after a year on 6th Zilkad, 451, December 14, 1059. He sent a detachment to pursue al-Basasari, who was slain in the ensuing fighting.

Maghrib was the original abode and the base of the foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate, whose chief in the time of al-Mustansir was al-Muizz bin Badis, the fourth Zirid ruler. He was a Malikiite and persecuted the Shiites. It is also related that the relations between him and the

Fatimid vizir were strained, whereupon in 436/1044, al-Muizz bin Badis proclaimed Malikism in Maghrib, and recited the Abbasid *khutba* from 440/1048, resulting the whole Maghrib gone away from the Fatimid occupation in 442/1050.

It is related that al-Muizz bin Badis returned briefly later on in 446/1055 to the allegiance of the Fatimids. In the meantime, the vizir Yazuri had convinced al-Mustansir that he would punish the disloyal al-Muizz bin Badis. Thus, the vizir encouraged a number of bedouin tribes to advance towards Maghrib. The bedouins at the command of Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym, took possession of Barqa and proceeded into the territories of the Maghrib. They inflicted defeat to the Zirids in 443/1052 and pillaged the towns and gained rich booty. These bedouins, being reinforced by new arrivals, gradually penetrated Maghrib, whose operation is known as the Hilali Invasion. In 449/1057, al-Muizz bin Badis had to evacuate his capital, Kairwan and sought refuge in Mahdiya, then governed by his son, Tamim bin al-Muizz (454-501/1062-1108). In sum, the Zirids were divided into petty rules in Maghrib. The last Zirid ruler, al-Hasan bin Ali was driven out of Mahdiya in 543/1148 by Roger II, the Sicilian emperor.

It must be known that the Karakhanid dynasty sprang from the ruling house of the Karluk Turks who originally belonged to the steppes of Central Asia, and whose founder was Satuk Bughra Khan. He embraced Islam and assumed the Islamic name Abdul Karim. He reigned from Kashghar and Talas over the western wing of his people. His grandson Hasan Bughra Khan occupied for a while the Samanid capital of Bukhara, which was taken over by Ilig Nasr of Ozkend in 389/999. The Fatimid *dais* had continued their mission in Bukhara, Samarkand and western Farghana. In 436/1045, a bulk of the converted Ismailis, who recognized the Imamate of al-Mustansir, had been killed in the territories of the Karkhanid rule, impelling the *dais* to adopt strict *taqiya*.

In 482/1089, Ahmad Khan bin Khizr (473-482/1081-1089), another Karakhanid ruler of Bukhara, Samarkand and western Farghana, was accused by the Sunni zealot, called Abu Tahir bin Aliyyak, of having embraced Ismailism. He had been deposed and executed due to the hootest opposition of the *ulama*.



### **Al-Muayyad fid-din ash-Shirazi**

Al-Muayyad fid-din Abu Nasr Hibatullah bin Abi Imran Musa bin Daud ash-Shirazi was an outstanding *dai*, orator, prolific writer, poet and politician. He was born in 390/1000 at Shiraz. His father, tracing his link from a Daylami Ismaili family was also a *dai* with some influence in the Buwahid orbits of Pars. In one of poems he narrates in his "*Diwan al-Muayyad*" (poem no. 4) that, "I wish I should get a chance to offer my life as a sacrifice for you, O my Lord. My forefathers and myself have been living in comforts under your patronage and we have never swerved an inch from our devotion to you."

In 429/1037, when al-Muayyad was 39 years old, he received quick promotions in his service as a chief *dai* of Shiraz and then the *hujjat* for the whole Iran. He joined the service of the Buwahid Abu Kalijar al-Marzuban (d. 440/1048) at Shiraz. He soon converted Abu Kalijar and many of his Daylami troops. It resulted in court intrigues and a harsh Sunni reaction against him. The Abbasids also insisted on his exile from Iran. Al-Muayyad was therefore obliged to migrate from Shiraz in 438/1046 and reached Cairo next year. He came into the contact of the chief *dai* al-Kassim bin Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad bin Noman, the great-grandson of Qadi Noman. He had his first audience with al-Mustansir in Cairo a few months later in Shaban, 439/February, 1048. He also procured his close ties with vizir Yazuri, who entrusted him with a section of the Fatimid chancery (*diwan al-insha*) in 440/1048. He gives the following description of his visit to the Imam in "*as-Sirat al-Muayyadiyah*" that, "I was taken near the place wherefrom I saw the bright light of the Prophethood. My eyes were dazzled by the light. I shed tears of joy and felt as if I was looking at the face of the Prophet of God and of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali. I prostrated myself before the one who is the fittest person to bow to. I wanted to say something but I was awe-struck."

Al-Mustansir deputed him in 447/1055 on a mission to the Syrian *amirs*, and notably to Abu Harith al-Basasari with an army of 3000 Arab troops. Al-Muayyad wrote an impassioned *qasida* on the occasion of the Fatimid occupation of Baghdad. He returned to Cairo in 449/1058, shortly before al-Basasari finally captured Baghdad and had the Fatimid *khutba* recited.

Al-Muayyad's status before al-Mustansir was as high as that of Salman al-Fars before the Prophet Muhammad. In one of his poems he says:-

*Iaw kuntu asartu al-nabiyyi Muhammadan  
ma kuntu uqassiru an mada Salmanihi  
wa la qala anta min ahli-i-baiti mu'linan  
qawlan yakshifu an wuduhi bayanihi*

"Had I lived in the days of the Prophet, my position before him would have been, in no way less important than that of Salman. He would have said to me in unequivocal terms, **you are a member of my family**" (Ibid. poem no. 38).

He was elevated as the head of the mission, **Bab al-Abwab** in 450/1058, and later the supervisor of Dar al-Hikmah in 454/1062. He lodged in the chamber of Dar al-Hikmah and directed the affairs of the Fatimid mission, and was in close contact with the *dais* as far as in Yamen and India. The learned divines of his time who had left behind the treasures of their masterly works on Ismailism were his pupils. Even the great genius of the type of Nasir Khusaro and Hasan bin Sabbah were his pupils. Nasir Khusaro speaks of al-Muayyad in the following words:- "O Nasir, God has opened a new world of wisdom for you through the teaching of Khwaja al-Muayyad. When he stood on the pulpit to deliver his sermon to the people, intellect was ashamed of its insignificance. He turned my dark nights into bright days by his illuminating arguments. I picked up a particle from his vast wealth of knowledge and I found the revolving heaven under my feet. He showed me in myself both the worlds visible and invisible. I saw the guardian of paradise who said to me, **Lo, I am the pupil of al-Muayyad.**" (vide "Diwan", ed. Nasrullah Taqavi, Tehran, 1928, p. 313)

He also regularly gave lectures at Dar al-Hikmah. The "**Majalis**" of al-Muayyad, comprised of 8 volumes of one hundred lectures, deal with various theological and philosophical questions, reflecting high watermark of the Ismaili thoughts. He died in 470/1078 at Cairo and was interred inside Dar al-Hikmah, where he resided. Al-Mustansir himself led the funeral rites.



## Nasir Khusaro

Hamiduddin Abu Muin Nasir bin Khusaro bin Harith al-Qubandiyani was a celebrated poet, philosopher and traveller. He is ranked as the *Real Wisdom* of the East. He was born in 394/1003 and came in Egypt in 439/1047, where he aboded for about three years, until 441/1050, during which time he had his audience with al-Mustansir. He was appointed as the *hujjat* of Khorasan and Badakhshan. It is certainly due to his tireless endeavours that there are millions of Ismailis in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, China, Chitral, Hunza, Gilgit, Pamir, Yarkand etc. He spent the rest of his life in the bleak valley of Yamghan, where he died in 481/1088. In the introductory note of "*Wajh-i Din*" (ed. by Ghulam Reza Aavani, Tehran, 1977, p. 1), Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes, "He is one of the greatest Islamic philosopher and deserves to be studied as a major intellectual figure of Islam in general and of Ismailism in particular."

Besides being a great thinker and erudite writer, Nasir Khusaro was also an eminent traveller. The distance he traversed from Balkh to Egypt, and thence to Mecca and then to Fars via Basra, and ultimately back to Balkh, not counting excursions for visiting shrines and so on, was about 2220 parasangs (each one about 3¼ miles). His journey began in 437/1045, accompanied by his brother Abu Sa'id, an Indian servant and some pack-animals. He travelled first to Merv to tender his resignation from government service, and then proceeded to Nishapur where he visited the shrine of the Sufi poet, Bayazid Bistami. From there he took the overland route via Tabriz to Syria and Palestine. He thereafter visited Mecca, where he made up his mind to visit Egypt. He arrived in Cairo by way of Damascus and Jerusalem in 439/1047. As he entered the city, Nasir Khusaro felt instinctively that "here it is where you should seek for what you need."

His "*Safar-nama*" gives a lively picture of the great splendour of the Fatimid empire in vivid words during the time of al-Mustansir, with its royal palaces, gates, gardens, shops and the normal living of the people, as well as the uncountable wealth of Egypt. Writing on the city of Cairo, Nasir describes: "I estimated that there were no less than twenty thousand shops in Cairo, all of which belong to the sultan (al-Mustansir). Many shops are

rented for as much as ten *dinars* a month, and none for less than two. There is no end of caravanserais, bathhouses and other public buildings - all property of the sultan, for no one owns any property except houses and what he himself builds. I heard that in Cairo and old Cairo there are eight thousand buildings belonging to the sultan that are leased out, with the rent collected monthly. These are leased and rented to people on tenancy-at-will and no sort of coercion is employed." (p. 45) He further describes: "In the midst of the houses in the city are gardens and orchards watered by wells. In the sultan's *harem* are the most beautiful gardens imaginable. Water-wheels have been constructed to irrigate these gardens. There are trees planted and pleasure parks built even on the roofs. At the time I was there, a house on a lot twenty by twelve ells was being rented for fifteen *dinars* a month. The house was four stories tall, three of which were rented out....These houses are so magnificent and fine that you would think they were made of jewels, not of plaster, tile and stone! All the houses of Cairo are built separate one from another, so that no one's trees or outbuildings are against anyone else's walls. Cairo has four cathedral mosques where men pray on Fridays. One of these is called al-Azhar, another al-Nur, another, the Mosque of al-Hakim and the fourth the Mosque of al-Muizz. This last mosque is outside the city on the banks of the Nile. When you face the qibla in Egypt, you have to turn towards the ascent of Aries." (p. 47)

Describing the markets of Cairo, Nasir Khusaro writes: "The merchants of old Cairo are honest in their dealings, and if one of them is caught cheating a customer, he is mounted on a camel with a bell in his hand and paraded about the city, ringing the bell and crying out, 'I have committed a misdemeanor and am suffering reproach. Whosoever tells a lie is rewarded with public disgrace.' The grocers, druggists, and peddlers furnish sacks for everything they sell, whether glass, pottery, or papers; therefore, there is no need for shoppers to take their own bags with them. Lamp oil is derived from turnip seed and radish seed and is called *sayt harr*. Sesame is scarce, and the oil derived from it is expensive, while olive oil is cheap. Pistachios are more expensive than almonds, and marzipan is not more than one *dinar* for ten maunds. Merchants and shopkeepers ride on saddled donkeys, both coming and going to and from the bazar." (p. 55) Nasir also adds: "The security and welfare of the people of



Egypt have reached a point that the drapers, moneychangers and jewellers do not even lock their shops - they only lower a net across the front, and no one tampers with anything." (p. 57)

"In the year 439/1047" writes Nasir Khusaro, "the sultan ordered general rejoicing for the birth of a son: the city and bazars were so arrayed that, were they to be described, some would not believe that drapers' and moneychangers' shops could be so decorated with gold, jewels, coins, goldspun cloth, and embroidery that there was no room to sit down. The people are so secure under the sultan's reign that no one fears his agents, and they rely on him neither to inflict injustice nor to have designs on anyone's property. I saw such personal wealth there that were I to describe it, the people of Persia would never believe it. I could discover no end or limit to their wealth, and I never saw such ease and comfort anywhere." (p. 55)

The signs of the Fatimid presence in Jerusalem were uncountable. Nasir Khusaro was impressed by some of them, such as silver lamp donated to the Dome of the Rock, on which the name of al-Mustansir was inscribed in gold letter around the bottom. The Fatimid governor of Palestine also built in the area of the Haram; their inscriptions were admired by Nasir Khusaro. The Fatimid presence was no less visible at the shrine of Abraham in Hebron; which was enlarged and redecorated.

Nasir Khusaro compiled many books besides the "Diwan" and "Safar-nama." The famous among them are "Rawshana'i-nama" (Book of Light), "Wajh-i Din" (Face of Religion), "Gushayish wa Rahayish" (Release and Deliverance), "Zad al-Musafarin" (Provision for the Road), "Jami al-Hikmatayn" (Harmonization of the Wisdom), etc. Gholam Reza writes in "Nasir-i Khusraw" (Tehran, 1977, p. 14) that, "Of course, Nasir does eulogise one person: the Caliph al-Mustansir. For him, however, the Caliph is not the representative of worldly rule or secular power, but rather the spiritual master of masters, representative of the Holy Prophet, the Pole of the Age. These eulogies are not mere poetic effusions, but deeply felt songs of devotion."

Among other eminent *dais*, Abdul Malik bin Attash was also a refined literary personality. He was the chief of Ismaili mission in Fars, mainly in Ispahan. He was a great diplomat and expert in winning over the hearts of people. He was also a great military leader, and died in 500/1107.

Hasan bin Sabbah was also a renowned Ismaili *dai*. He came in Egypt in 471/1078 and had his audience with al-Mustansir. He stayed 18 months in Cairo, and being ascertained the name of Nizar as the successor personally from al-Mustansir, he quitted Cairo and reached Ispahan in 473/1081 and thence proceeded to Qazwin, and took possession of the fort of Alamut in 483/1090 and founded Nizari Ismaili state.

### The Sulayhids of Yamen

In Yamen, Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi had established the Sulayhid rule and introduced the Fatimid *khutba*. In 450/1058, he succeeded to expel the Zaidis from San'a, and made it his capital. In 452/1060, he captured Zabid after killing Sa'd bin Najah, the founder of the Najahid dynasty and appointed his brother-in-law, Asad bin Shihab as the governor of Zabid. In 454/1062, he conquered Adan, where he allowed Banu Ma'n to rule for sometime as tributaries of the Sulayhids. Later, in 476/1083, the Sulayhids granted the governorship of Adan to two Hamdani brothers, Abbas and Masud bin Karam, who founded the Ismaili dynasty of the Zurayids in Adnan from 476/1083 to 569/1173. In sum, Ali bin Muhammad subjugated all of Yamen in 455/1063 and also extended his influence from Mecca to Hazarmaut. Umara bin Ali al-Hakami (d. 569/1174) writes in "*Tarikh-i Yamen*" (tr. Henry C. Kay, London, 1892, pp. 24-5) that, "None of its plains or its hills, of its lands or of its waters remained unsubdued. No parallel case can be found of so rapid a conquest, either in the days of ignorance or in the days of Islam." One of the greatest achievements of Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi was his success in establishing peace in Mecca on behalf of al-Mustansir.

In 454/1062, Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi desired to meet al-Mustansir, therefore, he sent Lamak bin Malik al-Hammadi, the chief *qadi* of Yamen to Cairo to discuss his prospective visit.



In 454/1062, Nasir ad-Dawla had begun to ravage Egypt, therefore, **qadi** Lamak had to stay with al-Muayyad at the Dar al-Hikmah. Lamak remained in Cairo for five years and at length he had an audience with al-Mustansir. On the other hand, Ali bin Muhammad set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 459/1067 at the head of 2000 horsemen of whom 160 were the members of his household. Unfortunately, he was killed with a number of his relatives in a surprise attack by the sons of Sa'd bin Najah in reprisal of his father's death. His son Ahmad al-Mukarram was declared the head of Yamen by al-Mustansir. The rule which Ali bin Muhammad al-Sulayhi founded would have fallen to the ground if his son Ahmad al-Mukarram had not come to its rescue and restored it.

In one of the rare extant letters from Yamen to al-Mustansir, Ahmad al-Mukarram, after giving an account of the death of his father and the following events, reports that the envoys of the **dai** of India have brought him a letter, asking that permission be granted to them to pass from verbal propaganda to the use of force. It shows that there were preparations for a rising on the western coast of India, presumably in Gujrat, ruled by the then Hindu Chaulukya dynasty and establish there a Fatimid enclave. In his letter dated 461/1068, the Imam replied to the question of the **dai** Yousuf bin Hussain and left it to him to judge whether the plan was feasible. Nothing seems to have come of it. In 468/1075, Yousuf bin Hussain died in India, therefore, Ahmad al-Mukarram was commissioned to choose his successor. Yousuf's son Ahmad was proposed by him, which the Imam agreed and sent the appointment letter, adding that the country in question, i.e., the administration of its mission, was in the charge of the Sulayhid, who was also ordered to make some arrangements for Oman, which had at that time no mission. In 469/1076, the Sulayhid is charged with the government of the city of Oman. In 476/1083, the Sulayhid suggested appointment of Marzuban bin Ishaq in India and Ibrahim bin Ismail in Oman, which al-Mustansir billah agreed. In 481/1088, Marzuban died and his son Ahmad was recommended. In Oman, Ibrahim turned to commerce and neglected the mission, thus Hamza was recommended to succeed him.

Ahmad al-Mukarram died in 484/1091 and his wife Sayyida Hurrat al-Malika Arwa (477-532/1084-1130) then began to govern on behalf of Mukarram's minor son, Ali Abd al-Mustansir. When he too died, Sayyida Arwa took up the

reins of administration of the state and mission, and remained loyal to al-Mustansir. She however supported the Mustalian line after the death of al-Mustansir.

The Fatimid vizir Badr al-Jamali died in 487/1095, and was succeeded by his son, al-Afdal as vizir. The administration of Badr al-Jamali was especially associated with a great development of building and with the construction of new walls and gates round Cairo.

The longest Caliphate of Muslim history for 60 years and 4 months closed with the death of al-Mustansir on the 18th Zilhaja, 487/January 6, 1095 at the age of 67 years and 5 months. The Fatimid *dai*, al-Muayyad fid-din ash-Shirazi had composed a "Diwan" (Cairo, 1949), in which he versified few couplets in favour of al-Mustansir as under:-

*"I offer my soul to al-Mustansir billah for redemption, who wins victories with the help of the hosts of heaven." (p. 201)*

*"It is by him only that the Koran can be explained and interpreted." (p. 273)*

*"I confess that you are the countenance of God by which the servants' countenances are radiant." (p. 201)*

#### **AL-NIZAR (487-490/1095-1097)**

Abu Mansur al-Nizar, surnamed al-Mustapha al-dinillah (the chosen for God's religion), was born in Cairo on 437/1045. He assumed the Imamate on 18th Zilhaja, 487/January 6, 1095 at the age of 50 years. He had been however proclaimed as a successor in 480/1087 before the notables in the court by his father. His participation in state affairs is scant. In 454/1062, during the perilous period of Egypt, al-Mustansir had however sent him to the port of Damietta with the Fatimid army to execute few assignments.

One remark at least should not be omitted that *Nizar* is a Persian word, and according to "Persian-English



**Dictionary**" (London, 1892, p. 1396) by F. Steingass, it means thin, slim, slender, lean, spare or weak. As it is said "**kilki nizar**" means "a slender reed or pen." The Iranian name given to the elder son by Imam al-Mustansir billah tends to the fact that he had perceived the forthcoming bifurcation in the Ismailis, and that his real successor would be supported in the Iranian society than in the Arabian. It therefore seems that al-Mustansir had chosen the name **Nizar** to cohere him and his descendants with the Iranian culture. It may also be noted that the cause of the Nizarid was supported by the Iranian missionaries, notably Hasan bin Sabbah, Nasir Khusaro, Abdul Malik bin Attash etc.

We have seen that Imam al-Mustansir ascended at the age of seven years in 427/1036, therefore, the state was governed by his mother. The Fatimid vizir, Ali bin Ahmad Jarjarai was an able administrator, who died in 436/1044. He was subsequently followed by Ibn al-Anbari and Abu Mansur Sadaqa, but none of them proved successful. In 442/1050, Abu Muhammad Hasan bin Abdur Rehman Yazuri became the vizir for eight years. He was a great reformer, but died in 450/1058. Hence, about 40 new vizirs had been installed during the next 15 years (450-466/1058-1074), but none among them was so capable to administer the state affairs. Finally, al-Mustansir invited an Armenian, called Badr al-Jamali, who reached Cairo in 466/1074 with his Armenian troops, and took charge of the Fatimid vizirate. He efficiently dealt the state affairs and restored peace.

When Hasan bin Sabbah was yet in Cairo in 471/1078, De Lacy O'Leary writes in "**A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate**" (London, 1923, p. 209) that, "At the time, it appears, the court was divided into two factions over the question of the succession, the one party holding to the Khalif's elder son Nizar, the other to a younger son named Musta'li. In one place Nasir-i Khusaro says that the Khalif told him that his elder son Nizar was to be his heir, and the succession of the older son would be in accordance with the doctrines of the sect as already proved by their adherence to Ismail, the son of Jafar as-Sadiq. But Badr and the chief officials were on the side of the younger son Musta'li."

Badr al-Jamali thus expected the succession of Musta'li but he died in 487/1095, a month before the death of Imam al-Mustansir. The latter appointed Lawun Amin ad-Dawla as

a new vizir, but after few days, al-Afdal, the son of Badr al-Jamali managed to obtain office of vizirate when the Imam was almost on death-bed, and also became **amir al-juyush** (commander of the army). After the death of al-Mustansir, the year 487/1095 marks the triumph of vizirial prerogative over caliphal authority in the structure of the Fatimid empire. Al-Afdal however, was fearing of being deposed by Nizar, so he conspired to remove him. There is one other story purporting his enmity with Nizar. If the story quoted by Charles Francois Defremery (1822-1883) in "**Histoire des Ismaeliens ou Batinien de la Perse**" (JA, ser. 5, XV, 1860, p. 154), is genuine, it illustrates how a little, rather a trifling thing determines great events. Al-Afdal, so the account goes, was once mounted on his horse in the passage leading from the golden gate to the entrance of the palace when Nizar passed by. Al-Afdal did not dismount to honour the Prince according to the royal custom. Nizar called out, "Get down from your horse, O'Armenian slave! How impolite you are?" Dr. Zahid Ali is of an opinion that it was a bone of contention and since that day, al-Afdal became an enemy of Nizar, vide "**Tarikh-i Fatimiyyin Misr**" (Karachi, 1963, p. 294). In sum, Nizar fell a victim to the jealousy of al-Afdal.

Makrizi also quotes the above incident, vide "**Itti'az**" (3rd vol., p. 12). It must be remembered that the phrases **al-adab fil salam** and **adab al-khidma** designated in the broadest sense in the protocol (**adab**) to be observed in the Fatimid court. It was the custom for the vizirs to ride into the palace through the golden gate (**bab al-dhahab**) and dismount at a designated spot, called "the passage of the vizirate" (**maqta al-vizara**), but al-Afdal exceeded the limit and treated impolitely with al-Nizar.

Aiming to retain the power of the state in his own hands, al-Afdal favoured the candidacy of al-Mustansir's youngest son, Abul Kassim Ahmad, surnamed Musta'li, who would entirely depend upon him. Al-Musta'li was about 20 years old, and already married to al-Afdal's daughter. Al-Afdal moved swiftly, and on the day following al-Mustansir's death, he placed the young prince on the throne with the title of al-Musta'li-billah. He quickly obtained for al-Musta'li the allegiance of the notables of the court. He also took favour of al-Mustansir's sister, who was prepared to declare a fabricated story that al-Mustansir had changed the **nass** in favour of Musta'li at very last



hour in presence of the *qadi* of Egypt, but the cause of *change of nass* was not given at all. Marshall Hodgson writes in "The Order of Assassins" (Netherland, 1955, p. 63) that, "Nizar's right to the Egyptian succession by sectarian principles was very strong. The Sunni historians assume him to have been designated heir-apparent. This "*first nass*" would clearly give him claim to Ismaili allegiance against any later nominee on the analogy of Ismail himself, whose claim could not be set aside for his brother Musa."

The Egyptian historian, Nuwayri (677-732/1279-1332) writes in "*Nihayat al-Arab*" that, "When al-Mustansir billah died, his son al-Nizar, who was the *wali'l-ahd*, took his seat on the throne and desired homage to be done to himself; but al-Afdal refused, through dislike to al-Nizar, and he had a meeting with a member of *amirs* and men of rank, to whom he said, that Nizar was come to the age of manhood, and they could not hope to escape his severity; so the best thing to be done was to do homage to his youngest brother Musta'li. This plan was approved of by all except Muhammad Ibn Massal al-Maliki". The extant sources recount that al-Afdal hastened to proclaim Musta'li and on the next day, al-Afdal sent for the other sons of al-Mustansir, bidding them to come quickly. Al-Nizar and his brothers, Abdullah and Ismail as soon as entered the palace, and saw the younger brother seated on the throne, at which they were filled with indignation. Nuwayri writes in "*Nihayat al-Arab*" that al-Afdal said to them: "Go forward and kiss the earth in the presence of God and of our lord al-Must'ali billah! Do him homage, for it is he whom the Imam al-Mustansir billah has declared as his successor to the caliphate." To this al-Nizar answered: "I would rather be cut in pieces than do homage to one younger than myself, and moreover I possess a document in the handwriting of my father by which he names me successor, and I shall go and bring it." He, thus withdrew from the court in haste.

It implies that al-Nizar and his brothers were summoned in the palace under usual manner. He must have brought the written document with him, had he known the enthronement of Musta'li. Another outstanding feature of Musta'li was that he was silent on the whole, and himself did not ask his brothers to pay him homage. It was only al-Afdal to deal the proceeding all alone. Musta'li was planned to enthrone with the firm hold of the vizir. According to

"Religion in the Middle East" (London, 1969, 2nd vol., p. 321) ed. by A.J. Arberry, "Both Ibn al-Athir and Ibn Khaldun agree that Nizar was the duly appointed heir apparent whose claims were overlooked by the energy and diplomacy of al-Afdal."

### Al-Nizar in Alexandria

Al-Nizar seems well aware of the domination of al-Afdal, who had a vein of animosity in his character for him. It is possible that he thought it futile to produce the written document in the palace, because according to Ibn Khaldun (4th vol., p. 139) the sister of al-Mustansir had falsely witnessed in the court the story of *change of nass*, therefore, he did not come back to the palace and quitted Cairo. Soon afterwards, al-Nizar appeared at Alexandria, supported by his brother, Abdullah and an *amir*, Muhammad ibn Massal al-Maliki. Nasir ad-Dawla Iftagin at-Turki, the governor of Alexandria swore allegiance to al-Nizar and proclaimed his support. Jalal ad-Dawla bin Ammar, the *qadi* of Alexandria also supported the cause of al-Nizar. In Alexandria, al-Nizar promulgated the Nizarid Ismaili mission and adopted the title of *al-Mustapha li-dinillah* (the chosen for God's religion).

Nasir Khusaro and Hasan bin Sabbah were promulgating the Nizarid Ismaili mission in Badakhshan and Iran in accordance with the directions they had personally received from al-Mustansir when they had been in Cairo. Granted that the theory of *change of nass* was a genuine, then these missionaries must have been intimidated by the Fatimid authority, but it was produced only in the court as a tool to make al-Musta'li enthroned.

Al-Afdal feared the growing power of al-Nizar in Alexandria, where he spurred his horses in 488/1095, but suffered a sharp repulse in the first engagement, and retreated to Cairo. According to Ibn Athir and Ibn Khallikan, al-Nizar also got favour of the nomad Arabs and dominated the northern area of Egypt.

Al-Afdal once again took field with huge army and besieged Alexandria. He tempted the companions of al-Nizar, and fetched them to his side. Ibn Massal was the first to have deserted the field from the thick of fight, and fled with



his materials by sea towards Maghrib. It is related that Ibn Massal had a dream that he was walking on horseback, and al-Afdal was walking in his train. He consulted an astrologer, who remarked that he who walked on the earth was to possess it. On hearing this, Ibn Massal collected his wealth and fled to Lakk, a village near Barqa in Maghrib. This defection marked the turning point of al-Nizar's power. In addition, the long siege resulted great fortune to al-Afdal, wherein many skirmishes took place. Al-Nizar and his faithfuls fought valiantly, but due to the treachery of his men, he was arrested and taken prisoner with Abdullah and Iftagin to Cairo.

Iftagin was executed in Cairo. According to Ibn Khallikan, al-Nizar was immured by his brother al-Musta'li's orders and al-Afdal had him shut up between two walls till he died in 490/1097. According to John Alden Williams in "*Islam*" (New York, 1967, p. 218), "The followers of al-Nizar in Abbasid territory refused to accept this and took Nizar's son to one of their mountain fortress, Alamut."

The Ismaili missionaries spread the Nizari Ismailism since the time of al-Mustansir by leaps and bounds. Hasan bin Sabbah had operated the Nizarid mission freely throughout its length and breadth and established the Nizarid rule at Alamut in Iran. Henceforward, the centre of the Nizari Imamate with a large following in Iran, Syria and Central Asia, transferred from Egypt to Iran.

Muhammad bin Ali al-Suri, the Fatimid *dai* in Syria, who died few months after al-Mustansir billah in 488/1095, had enumerated the Imams in a long Arabic poem, vide "*al-Qasida al-Suriyya*" (ed. Arif Tamir, Damascus, 1955, pp. 41-71). He is said to have given his full supports to the cause of al-Nizar in Syria and propagated to this effect in his region.

According to Ibn Khallikan, Ibn Massal received a letter from al-Afdal, inviting him to return to Egypt, which he did, and was honourably received in Cairo.

Al-Musta'li remained a puppet in the hands of al-Afdal throughout his short reign (1094-1101), during which the Crusaders first appeared in 490/1097 in the Levant to liberate the holy land of Christendom. The Crusaders easily defeated the local Fatimid garrison, and occupied Jerusalem in 492/1099. By 493/1100, the Crusaders had

gained their footholds in Palestine, and founded several principalities based on Jerusalem and other localities in Palestine and Syria. In the midst of the Fatimids' continued attempts to repel the Crusaders, al-Musta'li died in 495/1102, who made no personal contribution to the Fatimid rule. He was entirely without authority in the state, and came out only as required by al-Afdal at the public functions.

W.B. Fisher writes in **"The Middle East and North Africa"** (London, 1973, p. 243) that, "After the death of al-Mustansir, the six succeeding caliphs had no power". After Musta'li's death, al-Afdal proclaimed al-Musta'li's five year-old son, Abu Ali al-Mansur, surnamed al-Amir (d. 524/1130).

#### **Death of al-Afdal**

We have seen heretofore that al-Afdal was an absolute master of the Fatimid empire for 27 years and was murdered in 515/1121. Ibn Qalanisi writes in **"Tarikh-i Dimashq"** (tr. H.A.R. Gibb, London, 1932, p. 163) that, "It was asserted that the Batinis (Ismailis) were responsible for his assassination, but this statement is not true." Yaacov Lev writes in **"State and Society in Fatimid Egypt"** (London, 1991, p. 55) that, "On 30 Ramdan 515/12 December 1121, al-Afdal was assassinated and his twenty-seven years of military dictatorship were brought to an end. Although one of the assassins was captured, who masterminded the plot remains unknown. From reading the sources one receives the impression that the Nizari Ismailis perpetrated the killing. However, judging by the subsequent events, al-Amir must have been involved in the plot."

Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., pp. 613-4) writes that, "It was al-Afdal who, on the death of al-Musta'li, placed al-Amir, that sovereign's son on the throne; he then took the direction of public affairs into his own hands, and having confined the prince in his palace, he prevented him from indulging his passion for pleasure and amusements. This treatment induced al-Amir to plot against his vizir's life, and on the evening of Sunday, the 30th Ramdan, 515, as al-Afdal rode forth from his habitation in the imperial palace, he was attacked by the conspirators and slain while proceeding towards the river."



Al-Afdal was virtually a king of the Egyptian empire and squandered the royal treasury. According to Ibn Khallikan (1st vol., p. 614), "Al-Afdal left after him such a quantity of wealth as was never heard of before. The author (Jamaluddin Abul Hasan Ali bin Abi Mansur Tahir al-Azdi) of "**Dual al-Munkatia**" (comp. 623/1126), states that it consisted of six hundred millions of *dinars*; two hundred and fifty bushels of *dhirams*, all of full weight and coined in Egypt; seventy-five thousand satin robes; thirty camel-loads of perfume boxes in Irak gold; a gold inkhorn mounted with a precious stone valued at twelve thousand *dinars*; one hundred gold nails, each weighing one hundred *dinars*, ten of which were in each of his ten sitting rooms; and on each nail was hung a turban ready folded and embroidered in gold; each of these turbans was of a different colour, and he selected from among them whichever he was inclined to wear; he possessed besides five hundred chests of clothing for the persons in his service, all of the finest stuffs which Tennis and Damietta could produce: as for the horses, slaves, mules, saddles, perfumes, ornaments for the person, and furniture which he left after him, God alone knew their quantity. Besides all that, were cows, sheep, and buffalos in such an incredible number that no person would dare to mention it; their milk was farmed out, and in the year of his death it brought in thirty thousand *dinars*. Among his effects were found two large trunks containing gold needles for the use of the female slaves and the women."

#### **The line of Musta'li**

W. Ivanow writes in "**Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism**" (Holland, 1952, pp. 15-16) that, "The next two puppet rulers, Musta'li and Amir, had some claims to the title of the Imam. But when Amir was assassinated in 524/1130, leaving no male issue, al-Hafiz ascended the throne with the title of the mustawda Imam, i.e., acting as a regent on behalf of the supposed infant heir. A story was put into circulation to the effect that the baby was sent to Yamen. The faithful Musta'lians take this legend quite seriously." De Lacy O'Leary on the other hand writes in "**A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate**" (London, 1923, p. 222) that, "The Khalif al-Amir left no son, but at the time of his death, one of his wives was pregnant, and it was possible that she might give birth to an heir."

Makrizi writes in "Itti'az" (3rd vol., p. 137) that, "It was stated that Hafiz was acting as guardian for al-Amir's son to be born by one of al-Amir's pregnant women." Thus, Hafiz, the uncle of al-Amir took the power as a ruler.

Henceforward, the Fatimid rule embarked on its rapid decline. The supposed infant son of al-Amir is named, Tayyib, about two and half years old, but De Lacy O'Leary holds however that when al-Amir's wife was delivered, her child was a daughter (op. cit., p. 223). Anyhow, the chief guardian of Tayyib was Ibn Madyan, who is said to have hidden the minor Tayyib in a mosque called Masjid ar-Rahma. Makrizi tells that the infant son of al-Amir was carried in a basket after wrapping it up and covering it over with vegetables. Here in the mosque, a wet nurse cared for him. And all of this was done without Hafiz knowing anything about it. Makrizi also writes that Tayyib was arrested and killed. The followers of Tayyib in Yamen however believed that he was hidden in 524/1130 and his line exists even today in concealment.

#### **The Hafizids and Tayyibids**

Looking the situation ideal for himself, Hafiz claimed the Imamate after two years in 526/1132, resulting the Yamenite Musta'lians split into two factions, i.e., the Hafizids and the Tayyibids. In a bold move, Hafiz declared himself an Imam. Ibn Muyassar (p. 63) writes that, "Hafiz rode in the attire of the caliphs from the Festival Gate (*bab al-id*) to the Golden Gate (*bab al-dhahab*), and ordered that the following *khutba* be pronounced from the pulpit: 'O'God! bless the one through whom you have fortified your religion after your enemies tried to destroy it. Our lord and master, the Imam of our age and of our time, Abdul Majid Abul Maymun.'"

The Tayyibid group in the Musta'lians do not recognize the last four rulers including Hafiz. According to S.M. Stern in "The Succession to the Fatimid Imam al-Amir" (cf. "Orient", no.4, 1951, p. 202), "The last four Fatimid caliphs of Egypt were not regarded as Imams even by themselves and the *khutba* was read in the name of al-Qaim, the promised Imam who will come on the last day." Hafiz's vizir was Hizbar al-Mulk, but the army tenaciously recommended the office for Abu Ali Ahmad, the son of al-



Afdal. Caliph Hafiz had to appoint him in place of Hizbar al-Mulk. Immediately after assuming office, the new vizir Abu Ali Ahmad introduced a strange phenomenon in Fatimid history by announcing the religion of Ithna Ashari as an official creed of the state. This was absolutely against the very character of the Fatimid Caliphate. According to Ibn Muyassar in "**Tarikh-i Misr**" (p. 75), "He also dropped the mention of Imam Ismail bin Jafar Sadik from whom the Ismailis derive their name." Hafiz died in 544/1149, was succeeded by his son Zafir. Instead of devoting himself to the administration, Zafir exceedingly inclined to a life of pleasure. He perished at the age of 22 years in 549/1154, and was succeeded by his five years old son, Faiz. The entire power however remained with vizir Abbas. Whilst in an epileptic fit, Faiz died in 555/1160 at the age of eleven years. He was succeeded by nine years old Adid, the son of Yousuf, one of the murdered brothers of Zafir.

#### **End of the Fatimid Caliphate**

The Ayyubid ruler Saladin (d. 589/1193) at length, put an end of the Fatimid rule in 567/1171, and had the *khutba* read in Cairo in the name of Abbasid caliph al-Mustadi (d. 575/1180), thus proclaiming Abbasid suzerainty in Egypt. The helpless Adid, the last Fatimid ruler, died a few days later following an illness. Saladin had a vein of jealousy in his character for the Fatimids, and therefore, "**The Encyclopaedia of Islam**" (Leiden, 1936, 3rd vol., p. 353) writes that, "He had all the treasures of the palace, including the books, sold over a period of ten years. Many were burned, thrown into the Nile, or thrown into a great heap, which was covered with sand, so that a regular "hill of books" was formed and the soldiers used to sole their shoes with the fine bindings. The number of books said to have disposed of varies from 120,000 to 2,000,000." Thus, the Fatimid Caliphate founded in Maghrib in 297/909, embodying the greatest religio-political and cultural success of Shia Islam, had come to an end after 262 years, in which they ruled Egypt for 191 years.

## Review of "al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya"

Caliph al-Amir appointed al-Mamun al-Bata'ihī to the vizarate, who reopened the Dar al-Hikmah in Cairo, which had been closed by al-Afdal in 513/1119, where he immediately learnt many professions supporting the cause of Imam Nizar. Meanwhile, there raised violent reactions in other parts of the Fatimid dominion to this effect, mostly in Syria and Iran. The vizir al-Mamun feared the Nizari Ismaili influence once again penetrating in Egypt, therefore, he arranged for a grand public assembly to publicize the claims of al-Musta'li and refute the rights of Nizar. This meeting was held in 516/1122 at the great hall of the palace and was attended by numerous Fatimid princes and distinguished dignitaries, including Abu Muhammad bin Adam, the head of the Dar al-Hikmah. The Egyptian historians, such as Ibn Muyassar (1231-1278) in "Tarikh-i Mier" (ed. Henri Masse, Cairo, 1919, pp. 66-67) and Makrizi in "Itti'az" (Cairo, 1948, 3rd vol., pp. 87-88) have provided a detailed account of the proceedings. In the course of the assembly, various episodes were referred to justify the claims of al-Musta'li. Most significantly, Nizar's full sister, sitting behind a screen in an adjoining chamber, testified that al-Mustansir, on his death-bed, had designated al-Musta'li as his successor, divulging the *change of nass* to his own sister (Nizar's aunt). At the conclusion, vizir al-Mamun ordered Ibn al-Sayrafi (d. 542/1147), a secretary at the Fatimid chancery, to compile an epistle (*siyill*) in favour of al-Musta'li, to be read publicly from the pulpits of the mosques in Egypt. This epistle is known as "al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya" (the advices of al-Amir), or "ar-Risalatul-'l-Amiriyya" (the epistle of al-Amir), which had been written about 28 years after the Nizari-Musta'lian schism. Its copies were also circulated in Syria, where it caused an uproar amongst the Nizari Ismailis in Damascus. The matter was referred to the Nizari Ismaili chief, who immediately wrote a refutation of it. This refutation was read at a meeting of the Musta'lians in Damascus, whose *dais* forwarded its copies to al-Amir in Cairo, asking him for further guidance. Soon afterwards, al-Amir sent a reply in 517/1123 to his Syrian *dais* through an epistle under the bombastic title of "Iqa Sawa'iqā al-irgham" (the fall of the lightning of humiliation), which is treated as an appendix to "al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya". The original epistle reached in Syria on Thursday, the 27th Zilhaja, 517 A.H.



"*Al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya*", or in full, "*al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya li-Mawlana al-Amir fi ithbat Imamat Mawlana al-Musta'li wa'r-radd ala'n Nizariyya*", is attributed to the authorship of al-Amir quite incorrectly. It was compiled by al-Sayrafi, and the text was read over and approved by al-Amir. It is almost a bombastic, full of stylistic tricks and void of historical facts, and alludes here and there.

Asaf A.A. Fyzee (1899-1981) published the Arabic text of "*al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya*" from Calcutta in 1938 with its introduction and comments, whose few examples are given below:-

1. In the course of his argument, the author of "*al-Hidayat al-Amiriyya*", has to admit the most important fact that Nizar had been officially proclaimed the heir-apparent of his father, and that the provincial agents of the state were duly informed about it (cf. p. 21, 1.12). He further states that the appointment was first cancelled by the subsequent nomination of Nizar's younger brother, Abdullah, and later on by the *nass* to Musta'li in the last hour of al-Mustansir's life (cf. p. 18, 1.7). Fyzee comments that, "This nomination at the moment of expiring made under very suspicious circumstances, as we have seen, does not seem very convincing." (p. 5)
2. The author further emphasizes the alleged fact that Nizar and Abdullah were both given the title of *wali ahdi'l-muslimin*, while only Musta'li was called the *wali ahdi'l-mu'minin*. Fyzee writes in this context that, "The matter seems to be somewhat dark, although the difference between *islam* and *imam* in Muslim theology, and particularly in Ismaili doctrine, is well known. It is difficult to generalize whether this difference in title, even if it was real, implied any material distinction." (p. 5)
3. The most amazing thing in all this is the fact that the author quite earnestly admits, and even emphatically defends, the principle of revocation of the *nass*. Fyzee writes, "As is known, Ismailism itself came into existence as an independent sect

of Islam in circumstance closely resembling the case of Nizar, and the immediate cause of the split of the Shiite community was exactly the defence of the dogma of the irrevocability of the *nass*. The sect was formed by the followers of Ismail, the son of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq who refused to recognize the legality of the second *nass*, to Musa al-Kazim." (p. 6) He further adds, "It is difficult to believe that in its case the later *will* could cancel the preceding one, as the author tries to prove. Especially strange would it be to claim that it should be cancelled by the alleged *nass fi daqiqati'l-intiqal*, i.e. the nomination (made by the Caliph) at the moment of his death, to which the author refers several times, in view of the rather doubtful circumstances which accompanied it." (pp. 6-7) Fyzee also comments, "Though the author often refers to this last moment's *nass*, he never mentions who really was the witness of such an important act. From what is known, it is quite obvious that Nizar and his party were not represented at the moment of the Caliph's death." (f.n., p. 7)

As Musta'li was only just over 18 years of age, or according to Ismaili historians, 20, at the time of al-Mustansir's death, it is obvious that his wedding could not have been celebrated more than seven years before his father died, i.e. when he was about 13 years of age. It is quite probable that in reality it took place much later. Thus it would appear that during the exceptionally long reign of al-Mustansir, something like 55 years, there was no heir-apparent, until the Caliph, at the memorable wedding, in a rather elusive way, appointed Musta'li, by bestowing upon him the title of *wali ahdi'l-mu'minin*. Fyzee remarks, "All this sounds very improbable." On page 20, l.2, the author, obviously conscious of this difficulty, goes so far as to say that the *nass* to Nizar, and later on to Abdullah, was made by al-Mustansir only as a concession to the public impatience, in order to placate his followers. Fyzee writes, "He apparently does not notice that this implies insincerity of the Imam in his actions." (p. 7)



With regard to the memorable occasion of the wedding of Musta'li, which plays the key role in the argument of the author, it provides, in addition to the bestowing of the title mentioned above, yet another sign of the elevation of the young prince above his brothers, namely his being seated on the right hand of his father, while all other princes had to sit on the left side. Fyzee writes, "It is difficult to find in this decisive indication as to whether such arrangement constituted something extraordinary from the point of view of the Fatimid court etiquette. As Musta'li was the centre of the celebration, the hero of the day, perhaps he might have been specially honoured on the occasion, without any prejudice to the rights and dignity of his elder brothers." (p. 8)

5. A very interesting story is given by the author (p. 14) in which he mentions the testimony of Nizar's sister. The latter, as the author narrates, in the presence of witnesses publicly denounced the claims of Nizar to the Imamate, and condemned his attitude, invoking curses upon all those who supported him. She said that on several occasions her father, the last Caliph al-Mustansir, gave her to understand that it was his intention to appoint Musta'li his heir-apparent. She added further that her brother Nizar, on the memorable occasion of Musta'li's wedding to the daughter of al-Afdal, came to her, and said that till then he still cherished the hope of being his father's successor. But after seeing the ostentation with which his father showed his favour towards the youngest prince, by giving him precedence over his elder brothers, he had to give up all hope. Thus, as she said, Nizar was quite conscious that he was acting wrongly when he rose in rebellion. Fyzee writes, "This story is really interesting in its implications: it is quite possible that a certain estrangement did take place between the father and his elder son, as may happen in any family, of high or low position. This certainly could easily be exploited for their own ends by al-Afdal and his party, whom the ascension of Nizar threatened to dislodge from their high position. But at the same time from the words of Nizar quoted by his sister, it appears that until the fateful wedding there was

no official act by which Nizar was deprived of his position as heir-apparent." (p. 9)

6. The author claims that Nizar and Abdullah swore allegiance to Musta'li on his accession (cf. p. 22, 1.12). Fyzee writes, "But there are other historians, and they are far from being pro-Nizar, who nevertheless relate that when Nizar was summoned to the palace only to find that his father was dead, and Musta'li was enthroned by the commander-in-chief, he protested, saying that he had a written document concerning his appointment as the heir. He said that he was going to fetch it, left the palace, and then escaped to Alexandria. Thus there is no certainty as to the circumstances of the alleged swearing of allegiance." (pp. 10-11)
7. Another decisive argument which the author uses against Nizar is the alleged extinction of his house (cf. p. 23, 1.11), which, according to Ismaili ideas, definitely proves the futility of a person's claims to the Imamate. Fyzee comments, "As is quite natural to expect, he refuses to believe in the fact that descendants of Nizar continue in Persia." (P. 11)





**HASAN BIN SABBABH AND NIZARI ISMAILI STATE IN ALAMUT**

Hasan bin Sabbah was born in a Shiite family on 428/1034 at Qumm. His father, Ali bin Muhammad bin Jafar bin al-Hussain bin Muhammad bin al-Sabbah al-Himyari, a Kufan of Yamenite origin was a learned scholar. From early age he acquired the rudiments of formal education from his father at home. When he was still a child, his father moved to Ray and it was there that Hasan bin Sabbah pursued his religious education. In his autobiography, entitled "**Sar Guzash-t-i Sayyidna**" (Incidents in the life of our Lord), he tells his own story that, "From the days of my boyhood, from the age of seven, I felt a love for the various branches of learning and wished to become a religious scholar; until the age of seventeen I was a seeker and searcher for knowledge, but kept to the Twelver faith of my father."

Hasan bin Sabbah was an intelligent and proficient in geometry and astronomy. He learnt the Ismaili doctrines from a Fatimid **dai**, Amir Dharrab, who expounded him the doctrine of the Ismailis. Soon he was reading Ismaili literature, which so stirred him that when he became dangerously ill, he began to fear that he might die without knowing the truth. When he recovered, he approached an Ismaili for further clarification of the doctrines. Convinced that Ismailism represented ultimate reality, he embraced Ismailism at the age of 35 years in 464/1071 and afterwards, he came into contact with a Fatimid **dai** Abdul Malik bin Attash in Ispahan.

Hasan bin Sabbah writes in "**Sar Guzash-t-i Sayyidna**" that, "In the year 464/1071 Abdul Malik bin Attash, who at that time was the **dai** in Iraq, came to Ray. I met with his approval, and he made me a deputy **dai** and indicated that I should go to His Majesty in Egypt, who at that time was al-Mustansir. In the year 469/1077, I went to Ispahan on my way to Egypt. I finally arrived in Egypt in the year 471/1078." In sum, Hasan moved from Ray to Ispahan in 467/1074. Later on, when al-Muayyad was the chief **dai** at Cairo in 469/1077, he set out from Ispahan for Egypt. He travelled at first to northern Azerbaijan, thence to

Mayyafariqin, where he held religious deliberations with the Sunni theologians and denied the right of Sunni *muftis* to interpret religion, that being the prerogative of the Imam. As a result, he was expelled by the town's Sunni *qadi*. He proceeded to Mosul, Rahba and Damascus. He sailed through Beirut, Sidon, Tyre, Acre, Caesarea and finally reached Cairo in 471/1078. Imam al-Mustansir gave him audience and honoured him. Hasan asked him as to who would be the Imam after him. Al-Mustansir replied that it would be his son Nizar. He is reported to have stayed 18 months in Cairo, enjoying the patronage and favour of his master. He also learnt latest tactics of the *dawa* in Dar al-Hikmah, which was in those days the biggest learning centre of Islam. Hasan, thus profited much by his journey to Egypt. It is possible that he had a meeting also with al-Nizar in Cairo. Laurence Lockhart writes in "*Hasan-i Sabbah and the Assassins*" (BSOAS, vol. v, 1928, p. 677) that, "Hasan was well received at Cairo, and was treated with marked favour by the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir. It is said by some writers that Hasan received so many benefits at the hands of the Caliph that the courtiers became jealous, and eventually forced him to leave the country." Badr al-Jamali, the Fatimid vizir however was the foremost to breed suspicion, when he knew that Hasan was the supporter of al-Nizar bin al-Mustansir, therefore he got Hasan imprisoned in the fortress of Dumyat. The strong walls of the fortress collapsed one day, enabling him to escape. He boarded a vessel at Alexandria with a group of Franks for western waters, but the stormy winds tossed his vessel on the shores of Syria and he alighted at the port of Acre. Then onwards, he toured many cities; studied the economic, social and religious conditions of the people. He reached Ispahan in 473/1081 and began to propagate Ismaili faith in Yazd and Kirman for a while. He spent three months in Khuzistan before proceeding to Damghan, where he stayed about three years.

There was plenty of mission activity, pervasive throughout its length and breath in Iran under the control of Abdu Malik bin Attash. In about 480/1088, Hasan bin Sabbah seems to have chosen the remote castle of Alamut in Daylam as the base of his mission. He sent from Damghan, and later, from Shahriyarkuh, a number of trained *dais*, including Ismail Qazwini, Muhammad Jamal Radi and Kiya Abul Kassim Larijani to different districts around Alamut valley to convert the local inhabitants. Hasan, at length



was appointed a *dai* of Daylam. In the meantime, the Seljukid vizir, Nizam al-Mulk (408-485/1018-1092), a well known implacable foe had ordered Abu Muslim, the governor of Ray to arrest him. Hasan however managed to proceed to Daylam in hiding. He then reached Qazwin (also called Qasbin or Qashwin), and inspected the fort of Alamut in Rudhbar. He remained in worship within the fortress, and also converted the local people. He took possession of the fortress of Alamut in 483/1090 and established an independent Nizari Ismaili state.

### **The fortress of Alamut**

The Justanid dynasty of Daylam was founded in 189/805, and one of its rulers, called Wahsudan bin Marzuban (d. 251/865) is reported to have built the fortress of Alamut in 246/860. The tradition in this context has it that once the ruler, while on hunting had followed a manned eagle which alighted on the rock. The king saw the strategic value of the location and built a fort on the top of a high piercing rock and was named *aluh amut*, which in the Daylami dialect, derived from *aluh* (eagle) and *amut* (nest), i.e., "eagle's nest" as the eagle, instead of following the birds, had built its nest on that location. According to "*Sar Guzasht-i Sayyidna*", the term "Alamut" is *aluh amut* i.e., the eagle's nest, and an eagle had its nest there. Ibn Athir (d. 630/1234) relates another tradition in his "*Kamil fi't Tarikh*" (Beirut, 1975, 10th vol., p. 110) that the eagle had taught and guided the king to this location, therefore, it was named *talim al-aqab* (the teaching or guidance of an eagle), whose rendering into Daylami dialect is *aluh amut*. The word *aluh* means "eagle" and *amut* is derived from *amukhat* means "teaching". The people of Qazwin called it *aqab amukhat* (the teaching of eagle). Thus, the term *aluh amut* (or *aqab amukhat*) later on became known as *Alamut*. The Iranian historians have drawn attention to the curious fact that, if one gives to each letter in the full name of *Aluh Amut*, its numerical value in Arabic, the sum total amounts to 483, which represents the year in which Hasan bin Sabbah obtained possession of Alamut.

Afterwards, the Musafirid dynasty, also known as Sallarids or Kangarids (304-483/916-1090) founded by Muhammad bin Musafir (304-330/916-941), who ruled from the fortress of

Shamiran in the district of Tarum at Daylam and Azerbaijan. Later on, Mahdi Bin Khusaro Firuz, known as Siyahchashm, retained the occupation of Alamut in his hands. He was however defeated by the Musafirid ruler, Ibn Musafir in 316/928 and henceforward, there is no historical indication about the fate of Alamut following the death of Ibn Musafir in 319/931. It must be noted on this juncture that most of the sources write that Mahdi bin Khusaro Firuz had embraced Ismailism, which is quite an erroneous view. He had however espoused the doctrines of the Qarmatians, not that of Ismailis.

When Hasan bin Sabbah arrived in Iran from Egypt, the fortress of Alamut was in possession of an Alid, called Hussain Mahdi, who had it as a fief from the Seljuq sultan Malikshah. Hasan Mahdi was a descendant of Hasan bin Ali al-Utrush (d. 304/916), one of the Alid rulers of Tabaristan, also known as al-Nasir li'l-Haq, who had established a separate Zaidi community in the Caspian Sea. It is related that a *dai* Hussain Qaini, working under Hasan bin Sabbah had created his friendship with Hussain Mahdi. The Ismaili *da'is* also converted a bulk of the people around the territory, and became powerful to some extent. These Ismailis also began to come in the fortress. Knowing this, Hussain Mahdi expelled them and closed its doors. Finally, Hussain Mahdi was compelled to open the doors owing to the multitude of Ismailis in the vicinity.

Hasan bin Sabbah moved to Ashkavar and then Anjirud, adjacent to Alamut, and on Wednesday, the 6th Rajab, 483/September 4, 1090, he stealthily entered the castle of Alamut. He lodged there for a while in disguise, calling himself Dihkhuda and did not reveal his identity to Hussain Mahdi, but as the days rolled away, the latter noticed that he was no longer obeyed, that there was another master in Alamut. The bulk of Alamut's garrison and a large number of the inhabitants had embraced Ismailism, making Hussain Mahdi powerless to defend himself or make their expulsion, but himself eventually left the fortress. Thus, Alamut was occupied without any massacre and was taken to be known as *Daru'l Hijra* (place of refuge) for the Ismailis in a congenial atmosphere.

Ata Malik Juvaini (1226-1283) had seen the fortress of Alamut when it was being shattered in 654/1256. He writes in "*Tarikh-i Jhangusha*" (tr. John A. Boyle, Cambridge, 1958, p. 719) that, "Alamut is a mountain which resembles



a kneeling camel with its neck resting on the ground." It was situated in Daylam about 35 km. north-west of Qazwin in the region of Rudhbar. It was physically a large towering rock, with steep slopes hardly negotiable on most sides, but with a considerable expanse at its top where extensive building could be done. Situated in mountainous terrain, it approaches could be guarded with relative ease. Its present location lies about 100 k.m. north-west of Tehran, and situated in the high peak of Elburz mountain. **Alburz** generally was pronounced as **Elburz**, is the name given to great mountain range, dividing the high plateau of Iran from the low lands of Caspian Sea. The original Iranian word **Alburz** is derived from two Zand words, signifying the **high mountain**. The fortress of Alamut is 600 feet high, 450 feet long and 30 to 125 feet wide and is partly encompassed by the towering Elburz range. The rock of Alamut is known at present as **Qal'ai Guxur Khan**.

Hasan bin Sabbah's immediate concerns, however, were to refortify Alamut, provide for it food and water supply, construct cisterns and store-rooms for provisions, irrigate the field in the vally, acquire adjacent castles, erect forts at strategic points, institute economic and social reforms, unite the Ismailis by bonds of fraternity, and make every Ismaili feel himself a responsible member of the community and inseparable from it.

### **The origin of the Seljuqs**

The Seljuqs were the ruling military family of the Oghuz Turkoman tribes, which ruled over wide territories in Central and Nearer Asia from 11th to 13th century. Among them, the following dynasties were sprouted:- The Great Seljuqs (429-552/1038-1157), the Seljuqs of Iraq (511-590/1118-1194), the Seljuqs of Kirman (433-582/1041-1186), the Seljuqs of Syria (471-511/1079-1117) and the Seljuqs of Asia Minor (571-702/1077-1302). The Seljuq had originated as chieftains of nomadic bands in Central Asian steppes, and appeared first in Transoxiana and Khorasan in the 5th/11th century. Mahmud Kashghari writes in "**Diwan lughat al-Turk**" (comp. 466/1074) that, "The leading tribe of the Oghuz, from whom the Seljuq rulers sprang, was Qiniq. The Seljuq family belonged to the Qiniq." Another report indicates that the progenitor of the Seljuq family

was a certain Dugaq, which in Turkish language means "iron bow", a man of resources, discernment and competence, who alongwith his son Seljuq, served Yabghu. Eventually, Yabghu became jealous of Seljuq's power, and the latter was forced to flee with his flocks to Jand. In the last decade of the 10th century, the Seljuq family embraced Islam, and then turned to raiding against the pagan Turks. Some Russian scholars have expressed an opinion that the Seljuq family accepted Islam through Christianity, because of the Biblical names of his sons, Mikail, Musa and Israil. Over the next decades, Musa, Mikail and Arslan Israil, the three sons of Seljuq moved southwards for pasture for their herds. Soon afterwards, Mikail's two sons, Chaghri Beg and Tughril Beg occupied Khorasan in 431/1040, and extended their influence in Iran, and founded rule of the Great Seljuqs. Henceforward, the Seljuq chiefs became the territorial rulers instead of a wandering band. Tughril Beg was the founder of the Seljuq rule, who adopted title of **Sultan al-Muazzam** (an exalted ruler). The Abbasids of Baghdad recognised the Seljuq rule in 447/1055. Tughril Beg was succeeded by Alp Arslan, the son of Chaghri Beg in 455/1063. He was also succeeded by his son, Malikshah (d. 485/1092), the contemporary of Hasan bin Sabbah.

#### **Seljuqid operations against Alamut**

When the news of Alamut fallen to Hasan bin Sabbah reached to the court of the Seljuq sultan Malikshah (455-485/1063-1092) and his vizir Nizam al-Mulk (408-485/1018-1092), they became highly perturbed, and began to hatch animosity against Hasan bin Sabbah. Malikshah held a series of meetings with his courtiers, and sent his deputation to Alamut, insisting Hasan bin Sabbah to confess the supremacy of the Seljuqids. Hasan bin Sabbah received the deputation with consideration and when they glorified the power and pomp of Malikshah and asked him to accept their supremacy, he told to them, "We cannot obey the orders of others except our Imam. The material glory of the kings cannot impress us." The deputation left Alamut of no avail, and at that time, Hasan bin Sabbah told to them last words, "Tell to your king to let us live at our cell in peace. We will be compelled to take arms if we are teased. The army of Malikshah has no spirit to fight with our warriors, who do not give importance to this little



span of life." Thus, Malikshah and his vizir did not dare to attack on Alamut for two years.

Soon, Alamut came to be raided by the Seljuq forces under the command of the nearest military officer, and the governor of Rudhbar district, called Turun Tash. Von Hammer (1774-1856) writes in **"History of the Assassins"** (London, 1935, p. 78) that, "No sooner had Hasan Sabbah obtained possession of the castle of Alamut, and before he had provided it with magazines, than an **amir** (Turun Tash) on whom the sultan had conferred the fief of the district of Rudhbar, cut off all access and supplies." Since the stronghold could not be reduced by storm, the amir Turun Tash besieged it, devastated the fields and butchered the Ismaili converts. Within Alamut, the supplies and provisions were inadequate, its occupants were reduced to great distress, suggesting to abandon the fortress. There were some who looked upon it as a great hardship, thinking that they were being thrust into the very jaws of death. Hasan, however, persuaded the garrisons to continue resisting, declaring to have received an express and special message of Imam Mustansir billah from Cairo, who promised and portended them good fortune, and this is the cause that Alamut is also called **Baldat al-Iqbal** (the city of good fortune). Surrounded by a thick mist of disappointing circumstances, Hasan's eyes could yet perceive a ray of hope. Turun Tash directed many serious raids but shortly died. The starving garrisons, however, held out and the siege was broken. This was the first inimical operation against the Ismailis.

Malikshah, on getting the news of the rout of Turun Tash's armies completely lost his balance. In 484/1091, he visited Baghdad, which was his second visit after 479/1087, where he discussed with the Abbasids the measures of extermination of the Ismailis. He was bent upon striking the Ismailis at their very existence. His vizir Nizam al-Mulk, an ardent and ruthless enemy of the Ismailis, infused him to dispatch two big armies, one to Rudhbar, and the other to Kohistan. Thus, Malikshah made a determined effort to root out the Ismailis and launched an expedition early in 485/1092.

In the meantime, the vizir Nizam al-Mulk began to incite the people and employed the pens of theologians against Hasan bin Sabbah and his followers. He compiled **"Siyasat-nama"** (Book of the art of Politics), showing the strong

anti-Shiite tendencies. Besides being what its title says, is also a valuable, though biased source for studying the history and doctrines of the Ismailis. Indeed the Shiite resentment was the principal cause of Nizam al-Mulk's murder in 485/1092. "It is said" writes Ibn Khallikan in his "**Wafayat al-A'yan**" (1st vol., p. 415) "that the assassin was suborned against him by Malikshah, who was fatigued to see him live so long, and coveted the numerous fiefs which he held in his possession." Ibn Khallikan also writes that, "The assassination of Nizam al-Mulk has been attributed also to Taj al-Mulk Abul Ghanaim al-Marzuban bin Khusaro Firuz, surnamed Ibn Darest; he was an enemy of the vizir and in high favour with his sovereign Malikshah, who, on the death of Nizam al-Mulk, appointed him to fill the place of vizir."

The Rudhbar expedition, led by Arslan Tash, reached Alamut in Jumada I, 485 and had a siege for four months. At the time, Hasan bin Sabbah had with him only 70 men with little provisions, and was on the verge of being defeated; when a seasonable succour of 300 men from Qazwin enabled him to make a successful sally. It was **dai** Didar Abu Ali Ardistani, who brought 300 men in Qazwin, who threw themselves into Alamut, bringing adequate supplies. The reinforced garrison routed the besiegers in a nocturnal assault on their camps at the end of Shaban, 485/October, 1092, forcing them to withdraw from Alamut. It must be known that the Seljuqs forces were well equipped with skilled veterans, while Alamut had recruited those young *fidais* who were not yet experts in warfare. Neither in respect of number, nor in that of strength and skill, were the Ismailis a match for their enemy. It indeed kindled the flame of enthusiasm that glowed hidden in the hearts of Hasan's followers. The spirit of deep-rooted faith and the directions of Hasan bin Sabbah, provided them a resistible fillip before such large hosts. Thus, the designs of their enemy were frustrated. This operation against Alamut dealt on the one hand a smashing blow to the Seljuqs, while on the other, it strengthened the root of Ismailism at Alamut. It is also said that Arslan Tash continued the siege for four months and did not see any Ismaili resident of the fortress at all except one day when his army sighted on the top of the fortress a man clad in white clothes, who watched the army for a while and disappeared.



On other hand, the Kohistan expedition under Qizil Sariq had concentrated to capture the Ismaili castle of Dara. Malikshah died shortly afterwards at the end of 485/1092, about 35 days after the murder of Nizam al-Mulk; resulting the pending Seljuq plans for further expeditions abandoned. At the same time, the expedition of Kohistan, which had absolutely failed to capture Dara, withdrew in the field.

Upon Malikshah's death, the Seljuq empire was thrown into civil war and internal wrangles, which lasted for more than a decade, marked by disunity among Malikshah's sons. The most prominent one was the eldest son Barkiyaruq, while Malikshah's four years old son Mahmud had immediately been proclaimed as sultan. Barkiyaruq was taken to Ray where he was also placed on the throne. Mahmud died in 487/1095, and the Abbasids recognized the rule of Barkiyaruq, whose seat of power was in Western Iran and Iraq. He fought a series of indecisive battles with his half-brother Muhammad Tapar, who acquired much help from his brother Sanjar, the ruler of Khorasan and Turkistan since 490/1097. The intestine Seljuq quarrels gave the Ismailis a respite to make Alamut as impregnable as possible. Hasan bin Sabbah strengthened the fortifications and built up a great store of provisions. He held a number of fortresses in Daylam besides Alamut and controlled a group of towns and castles in Kohistan extending north and south over 200 miles. The Ismailis occupied the fortresses of Mansurakuh and Mihrin to the north of Damghan, and Ustavand in the district of Damawand. They also took possession of one of the most important strongholds, Girdkuh in Qumis. Girdkuh, the old Diz Gunbadan (the domed fort) and its district was very fertile, known as Mansurabad. In 489/1096, the fortress of Lamasar was conquered under the command of Kiya Buzrug Ummid.

It is a point worth consideration that "**Kitab al-Naqd**" by Nasiruddin Abdul Rashid al-Jalil, speaking of the radical situation after the death of Malikshah in Ispahan that the *manaqib-khwans*, a group of Shiite singers who extolled the virtues of Ali and his descendants in the streets. To counterbalance the *manaqib-khwans'* influence, the Sunnite regime employed *fada'il-khwans* (singers of virtues), who exalted the virtues of Abu Bakr and Umar and insulted the Shiites. This created religious agitations in the Seljuqid empire.

According to "Seljuk-nama" (Tehran, 1953, p. 41), which was compiled in 580/1184 by Zahiruddin Nishapuri, "In 486/1093, the people of Ispahan apparently moved by a rumour that a certain Ismaili couple had been luring passers-by into their house and torturing them to death, rounded up all the Ismaili suspects and threw them alive into a large bonfire in the middle of the town." There are few other incidents that had been curiously coloured against the Ismailis in the Seljuqid sources. Carole Hillenbrand writes in "The Power Struggle between the Saljuqs and the Ismailis of Alamut" that, "The Sunni sources of the 6th/12th and 7th/13th centuries generally try to inflate the Saljuq achievement against the Ismailis of Alamut. This is especially the case with sultan Muhammad." (cf. "Mediaeval Ismaili History and Thought" ed. Farhad Daftary, New York, 1966, p. 216)

The sources at our disposal suggest that the sons of Malikshah, with the exception of Muhammad did not like to continue fighting with the Ismailis, but were compelled to do that in order to avoid the accusation of being conciliatory to the Ismailis. When Barkiyaruq bin Malikshah ascended in 487/1095, he did not show any enthusiasm for fighting with the Ismailis. On one occasion in 493/1100, when Barkiyaruq was fighting with his brother, he is said to have recruited 5000 Ismaili warriors into his army. The mob and the theologians accused Barkiyaruq of favouring the Ismailis, therefore he purged them from his forces, and at the end of his reign, he evoked harrowing persecution. In 494/1101, Barkiyaruq in Western Iran and Sanjar in Khorasan came to an agreement to regard the Ismailis as a threat to Seljuq power, and to act against them. He died in 498/1105 and Muhammad Tapar became the undisputed sultan, and Sanjar remained at Balkh as his viceroy in the east. With the advent of Muhammad, the dynastic disputes ended and the Seljuqs made greater headway against the Ismailis. He turned fiercely towards the Ismailis in 500/1107 to capture the fort of Shahdiz, lying on a mountain about 8 km. to the south of Ispahan, the capital of the Seljuq empire. In 494/1101, *dai* Ahmad bin Abdul Malik bin Attash had occupied the fort of Shahdiz and converted 30,000 persons in Ispahan, and made Shahdiz as the Ismaili mission centre for Fars as Alamut was the centre in Khorasan. When the fort of Shahdiz was stormed, the Ismailis were massacred mercilessly. He held out with about 80 men in what remained standing of the largely



demolished fortress Shahdiz, who fought bravely and were killed. His wife, decked in jewels leaped over the wall to death, but did not submit. *Dai* Ahmad bin Abdul Malik was taken prisoner and paraded through the streets of Ispahan. He was mocked, pelted with stones and flayed alive. His son was also scourged to death. Another Ismaili fort, named Khanlanjan, about 30 k.m. south of Ispahan was also razed by the Seljuqs.

In 501/1108, Sultan Muhammad sent a military expedition to Alamut under the direction of his vizir, Ahmad bin Nizam al-Mulk. The fortress of Alamut was stormed, but the attack fissiled out and could not attain its end. But sultan Muhammad continued to be inimical to Ismailis. According to Bernard Lewis in "**The Assassins**" (London, 1967, p. 56), "The capture of Alamut by direct assault was clearly impossible. The sultan therefore tried another method - a war of attrition which, it was hoped, would weaken the Ismailis to the point where they could no longer resist attack." In 503/1109, the reduction of Alamut, therefore, was charged to Anushtagin Shirgir, the then governor of Sawa. He destroyed the crops in Rudhbar and besieged the fort of Lamasar and other castles for eight consecutive years. He also laid a siege over Alamut, inflicted a severe hardship on the Ismailis, forcing Hasan bin Sabbah and many others to send their wives and daughters to Girdkuh, where they were to earn their keep by spinning. He never saw them again, nor did he thereafter permit women to enter the castle. Hasan bin Sabbah had to ration the food among his men to a bread and three fresh walnuts for each person. Anushtagin Shirgir got regular reinforcement from the Seljuqid *amirs* of various districts. In 511/1118, when Anushtagin reared mangonels and was on the verge of reducing Alamut, whose garrison was almost exhausted by bombardment, and the provision was about to dwindle in three days, the news at once arrived of the death of sultan Muhammad. Hence, the Seljuq armies were obliged to lift the siege and left Rudhbar, paying no attention to Anushtagin's pleas to fight longer. He was also obliged to abandon his siege of Alamut, and lost many men while retreating. The Ismailis came into possession of all the supplies left behind by the Seljuq armies. Bundari compiled "**Zubdatu'n Nasrah wa Nakhbatu'l Usrah**" (ed. M.T. Houtsma, Leiden, 1889) in 623/1226 and writes that the Seljuqid vizir Qiwamuddin Nasir al-Dargazini, a secret Ismaili, may have played a seminal role in preventing the Seljuqid victory and in

procuring the withdrawal of Anushtagin Shirgir's army from Rudhbar.

Sultan Muhammad's death was followed by another period of internal disputes in the Seljuqid empire, which provided the Ismailis a respite to recover from the severe blows and hardships inflicted upon them during last eight years. Sultan Muhammad was succeeded by his son Mahmud in Ispahan, who ruled for 14 years (511-525/1118-1131) over western Iran. He had to face with other claimants for the throne. In time, three other sons of sultan Muhammad, viz. Tughril II (526-529/1132-1134), Masud (529-547/1134-1152) and Suleman Shah (555-556/1160-1161), as well as several of his grandsons, succeeded to the sultanate in the west. Mahmud's uncle Sanjar, who controlled the eastern provinces since 490/1097, now became generally accepted as the head of the Seljug family. In this capacity, Sanjar exercised a decisive role in settling the succession disputes. At the outset, Mahmud had to face an invasion by Sanjar, who defeated Mahmud at Sawa. But in the ensuing truce, Sanjar made Mahmud his heir, while taking from him important territories in northern Iran, Sanjar continued to dominate these territories. Meanwhile, Mahmud's brother Tughril rebelled and occupied Gilan and Qazwin.

As the power of Alamut increased, the hostility of the Seljuqs augmented in virulence, therefore, Sanjar also continued to follow footprints of his predecessors. He dispatched troops against them in Kohistan and himself moved against Alamut with a strong force. Hasan bin Sabbah tried sundry times to dissuade the sultan from his designs with much persuasion, appealing for peace, but all in vain. The menace and insolence of the Seljuqs forced Hasan bin Sabbah to order one of his *fidais* to fix a dagger on the side of the sultan's bed with a note around its hilt, which reads: "Let it not deceive you that I lie far from you on the rock of Alamut, because those whom you have chosen for your service are at my command and obey my direction. One who could fix this poniard in your bed could also have planted it in your heart. But I saw in you a good man and have spared you. So let this be a warning to you." The sultan took fright having filled with great awe. He ordered the raising of the siege, and desisted from his inimical designs and concluded a pact of peace with Hasan bin Sabbah in 516/1123, recognizing an independent state of the Nizari Ismailis, and concluding to Hasan the right of collecting revenues of Qumis and its



dependencies. It also granted to the Ismailis the right to levy toll on the caravans of traders passing beneath Girdkuh. Other terms of the treaty were that the Ismailis should not build new castles; should not any more buy armaments and should not enlist any new convert to their faith after the date of signing the treaty.

### Ismaili Mission in Syria

Salamia, the city of Syria had been an original plant for Ismaili mission since pre-Fatimid period. During the Fatimid Caliphate, the Ismaili mission remained active in Syria. Later on, the Syrian Ismailis accepted the Imamate of al-Nizar during Alamut rule. Al-Hakim al-Munajjim Asad bin Kassim al-Ajami, the physician astrologer was the first Nizari *dai* to have come from Alamut to Aleppo. Bernard Lewis writes in "A History of the Crusades" (ed. Kenneth M. Setton, London, 1st vol., p. 111) that, "The leaders (*chief dais*) as far as they are known to us were all Persians, sent from Alamut and operating under the orders of al-Hasan ibn-as-Sabbah and his successors."

Al-Munajjim was able to generate his friendship with the Seljuq ruler Ridwan bin Tutus, who allowed the propagation of the Nizari Ismailis in Aleppo. A few years earlier in 490/1097, the Fatimid vizir al-Afdal had sent a messenger to Ridwan with lavish gifts and an offer to provision, equip, and enlarge his army if he would change allegiance from the Sunnite Abbasid caliph in Baghdad to the Shiite Fatimid caliph of Egypt. Robert W. Crawford writes in "Ridwan the Malignant" (London, 1960, p. 138) that, "Ridwan accepted in principle and the *khutba* was changed in Aleppo on Friday, August 18, 1097, and was read in the name of al-Musta'li of Egypt followed by the names of al-Afdal and Ridwan." He however recognised the suzerainty of the Fatimids only for four weeks. Soon afterwards, he permitted the Nizari Ismaili *dais* to use Aleppo as base for their activities, and also helped them to build a mission house (*darul dawa*). In sum, Ridwan had not scrupled to proclaim Fatimid allegiance for a short time when it suited him. In the lax religious atmosphere of the time, he had no hesitation in supporting the Ismailis when it seemed expedient. Another tradition relates that *dai* al-Munajjim had embraced Ismailism in Aleppo, where he

recited the *khutba* of the Imams of Alamut. He however died in 496/1103.

The next *dai* in succession was Abu Tahir al-Saigh, the goldsmith; who had been deputed from Alamut in the time of *dai* al-Munajjim. He also cemented close ties with Ridwan, and helped him during the Crusades. He captured the fort of Afamiya in south of Aleppo on 24th Jamada I, 499/February 3, 1106, whose Arab chief, Khalaf bin Mulaib al-Ashhabi (1089-1106) had seized the town from Ridwan on 8th Zilkada, 489/October 28, 1096. Afamiya was the first Nizari Ismaili stronghold in Syria, but was short-lived. In 500/1106, a certain Musbih bin Mulaib urged Tancred (d. 506/1112), the Frankish prince of Antioch, to seize the fort of Afamiya. Tancred had already occupied the surrounding districts, therefore, he marched thither, encamped before the town and blockaded it. He lifted his initial siege in return of a tribute from the Ismailis. Tancred returned and forced Afamiya to surrender on 13th Muharram, 500/September 14, 1106. Abu Tahir and a number of his associates managed to ransom themselves from captivity and returned to Aleppo. This was most probably the first encounter between the Ismailis of Syria and the Crusaders. In 504/1110, the Ismailis lost Kafarlatha to Tancred, in the Jabal as-Summaq. In Aleppo, Abu Tahir was in search of suitable stronghold. In 505/1111, Mawdud, the Seljuq ruler of Mosul came with his army to fight the Crusaders, Ridwan closed the gates of Aleppo, and the armed groups of the Ismailis rallied to Ridwan's side. Ridwan however, seems to have retracted from his pro-Ismaili position in his final years. In 505/1111, an unsuccessful attempt on the life of a certain Abu Harb Isa bin Zaid, a wealthy merchant and the enemy of the Ismailis from Transoxiana, led to a popular outburst against the Ismailis, which Ridwan was obliged to condone. Ridwan died in 507/1113, and was succeeded by his 16 years son, Alp Arslan. He was yet immature, and became a tool of the enemies of the Ismailis. The fortune of the Ismailis ran on reverse side. He massacred the Ismailis, in which *dai* Abu Tahir and his son, *dai* Ismail, brother of al-Munajjim and some 200 Ismailis were killed. Thus, the early period of the Ismaili activities in Syria badly suffered due to the failure to secure a firm foothold in the country. Very soon, they won large converts in Jabal as-Summaq, the Jazz and the territory of the Banu Ulaym, between Shayzar and Sarmin. They however retained their influence and procured friendly relations with Najamuddin Ilghazi, the Artuqid





rebuilt and fortified the castle, and embarked on a course of his mission in the surrounding region. He dispatched his *dais* in all directions, who attracted a great multitude of the people. The Wadi al-Taym, in the region of Hasbayya to the north of Baniyas and on the western side of Mount Hermon, offered a fertile milieu for the promulgation of Ismailism. Inhabited thickly by Druzes and Nusairis, this region attracted the attention of Bahram. In 522/1128, he set out from Baniyas with Ismaili forces to take possession of Wadi al-Taym. He however had to face the challenge of Dahhak bin Jandal, the head of Wadi al-Taym; who engaged him in a fierce battle and caused the death of Bahram in 522/1128.

The next who followed Bahram was *dai* Ismail (d. 524/1129) in Syria, who pursued the same course and retained the possession of the fort of Baniyas. He also maintained close relation with Tughtigin, who died at the end of 522/1128. Abu Sa'id Buri, the son and successor of Tughtigin, known as Taj al-Mulk and Majd ad-din was however the bitterest foe of the Ismailis, and had ordered for their massacre on 17th Ramdan, 523/September 4, 1129. The number of the Ismailis executed in this outbreak is put at 6,000 by Ibn Athir (d. 630/1234), 10,000 by Ibn Jawzi (d. 597/1200), and 20,000 by the author of "*Bustan al-Jami.*" Ismail surrendered the fortress of Baniyas to the Franks, who were advancing on Damascus, and fled with his associates to the Frankish regions. Fearing reprisals, Buri never left the palace unless mailed and with a heavy guards. Buri became the victim of the two Ismaili *fidais*, who came from Alamut and secretly joined the team of his guards and struck him with a sword on 5th Jamada II, 525/May 7, 1131 at the gate of his palace in the citadel of Damascus. Wounded in neck and hip, Buri lingered on and died a year later in 526/1132. Ismail also died in 524/1130 in exile among the Franks.

The above details suggest that the Nizari Ismailis used to be the victims of their enemies from time to time in Syria. Despite the repressions and debacles, the Ismailis' fortune continued to rise in Syria during the turbulent years. After the last massacre of Buri, they however did not loose courage, but failed to recover their position in Damascus. In sum, the endeavour to win strongholds falls into three main campaigns. The first, conducted from Aleppo and directed by Abu Tahir, was concentrated on Jabal as-Summaq and ended with the death of Abu Tahir in



507/1113. The second, conducted from Damascus by Bahram and Ismail, was aimed at Baniyas and the Wadi al-Taym, and ended in failure in 524/1130. The third, conducted from an unknown base by a number of chiefs between 527/1132 and 546/1151, in winning a group of strongholds in the Jabal al-Bahra. In 527/1132-3, the fort of Qacmus in Jabal Bahra was purchased from Saiful Mulk bin Amrun. Soon afterwards, Musa bin Saiful Mulk sold Kahf to the Ismailis. In 531/1136, the Frankish occupants of the fortress of Khariba were driven out by the local Ismailis. In 535/1140 the most important stronghold of Masiyaf came to their hands, by killing Sungur, who occupied it on behalf of the Banu Munqidh of Shayzar.

Masiyaf is a town of central Syria on the eastern side of the Jabal al-Nusairia, situated at 33 miles to the east of Baniyas and 28 miles to the east of Hammah. The pronunciation and orthography of the name varies between the form, *Masyad, Masyaf, Mayat, Masyath, Masyab, Masyah* and *Messiat*. The stronghold of Masiyaf lies to the north-east of the settlement, at the foot of the Jabal al-Bahra. It was an Arab citadel, perched on a rocky limestone block. Like an impregnable fort of Alamut, Masiyaf was atop a projecting, almost perpendicular rock. It was the chief among the Ismaili castles, a veritable eagle's nest, perched on a scarcely accessible peak, and commanding a desolate ravine.

The leadership of Ismaili *dawa* at length came to the potential hand of Rashiduddin Sinan, during whose time the Ismailism spread by leaps and bounds throughout its length and breadth, and we shall revert to this subject later.

#### **Ismaili Mission in Gujrat, India**

The mission in Gujrat goes back to the period of Jaylam bin Shayban, who had established a Fatimid rule in Multan and extended his influence as far as Gujrat, whose informations are scant. Later on, in 461/1068, Ahmad bin Mukarram, the second ruler of the Sulayhid dynasty in Yamen, had written a letter to Imam al-Mustansir in Cairo, when there was certain missionary activities in Gujrat. He reported in his letter that the envoys of the *dai* of India had brought him a letter, asking that permission be granted to them to pass through verbal propaganda to the use of force. It indicates that there were preparations

for a rising on the western coast of India, presumably in Gujrat, ruled by the then Hindu Chalukya dynasty and establish there a Fatimid enclave. It however appears that there had been no such operation in Gujrat.

~~ca. 943, Prithviraj I (960-985),~~ Chalukya prince of Kalyani founded an independent dynasty, known as Chalukya of Anahilapataka or the Solanki dynasty. He is famous for building the great temple of Rudramahalya at Sidhpur. He was succeeded by his son Chamundaraja, and he in turn was succeeded by his son Vallbaraja, who died after a short reign of six months. His son Durlabharaja (1009-1021) ruled for 12 years and was succeeded by his nephew Bhima I, who is well known in the annals of Gujrat. It was Mehmud of Ghazna who plundered the temple of Somnath in 416/1026 during the reign of Bhima I. Mehmud killed the people at large number who happened to come in his passages and destroyed their fortifications and smashed idols in pieces. The temple of Somnath was built upon 56 pillars of teakwood coated with lead. The principal idol itself was in a chamber. According to Ibn Athir (1st vol., p. 97), "Mehmud seized it, part of it he burnt, and part of it he carried away with him to Ghazna, where he made it a step at the entrance of the grand mosque." Gold and jewels worth 2 million dinars, and the stone phallic emblem of the god were transported to Ghazna, and the number of the slain exceeded fifty thousand. During the fierce operations of Mehmud, Bhima I had fled from his kingdom and sought refuge in Kutchh. After the departure of Mehmud, Bhima I recovered his country and rebuilt the temple of Somnath. He died in 1063 and was succeeded by his third son Karna I, who had subdued the Kolis and Bhils in his dominions. His successor was Jaysinha, surnamed Sidhraj, who ascended in 1094 as the 7th ruler of the Solanki dynasty. He was one of the most remarkable kings of Gujrat, who inflicted a crushing defeat on the ruler of Malwa and annexed it to his dominions, and assumed the title of "King of Avanti". He was a just, kind and sagacious ruler and extended his patronage to learned men. It is said that Pir Satgur, a famous Ismaili *dai* had arrived in Gujrat during his period. Hemacandra Suri (1088-1172) was a contemporary Jain sage and a prolific writer, who had rapidly acquired a great reputation for learning and was much patronaged by Jaysinha Sidhraj and his successor, but he did not mention any missionary activity of Pir Satgur in Gujrat. The most important account mostly gleaned from the *ginans* and the traditional



materials, tracing the advent of Pir Satgur in the reign of Jaysinha Sidhraj (1094-1143). Accordingly, he is said to have come to India from *Setar Depa* via the city of *ahildi* and proceeded to Patan in Gujrat.

Pir Nuruddin, who assumed the title, *Satgur* (true master), or *Satgur Nur* (light of the true master), had made a large proselytism at Patan in Gujrat among the low castes of Kharwa, Kanbi and Kori. He cultivated the seeds of proselytism entirely with peaceful penetration, and there is no instance where force was employed. Pir Satgur gained success by adapting himself to the local cultural conditions and by leading a simple and pious life. It must be borne in mind that the new converts recognized Islam through Ismailism in early stage in the name of *Satpanth* (true path). Hence, he had planted the seeds of the *Satpanth Ismailism* in India, which was a quietistic, meditative and mystically oriented in the embryonic stage.

The historicity of Pir Satgur is blanketed mistily in tales and miracles in florid and bombastic style absolutely bereft of historical value. He is however said to have betrothed to the daughter of king Surchand, the chief of Navsari, and nothing else is known for historical purpose. We may safely conclude that the prime objective of his preaching was the conversion of Hindu rather than the attraction of Muslims to the Ismaili fold. The narratives of later sources provide some divergent account of the period of mission he represented in Gujrat. The weakness of the later sources, indicating however, a remote possibility, not a strong one, that he was sent by Imam Mustansir (d. 487/1095) from Cairo. Some placed his period much later during the time of Imam Hasan Ala Zikrihi's Salam (d. 561/1166) from Alamut. According to the *ginans* (hymns), he came from Daylam, an epithet of Iran. It is however, much nearer to reasonable possibility that he had arrived in Gujrat when *dai* Abdul Malik bin Attash (d. after 494/1101), was active in Ismaili mission in central and western regions of Iran, with a headquarters at Ispahan. The tombstone of the shrine of Pir Satgur, the oldest monument of the Khoja Ismailis in India, located at Navsari, near Surat, places his death on 487/1095. It is also possible to draw an inference on this juncture that Pir Shams (d. 757/1356) arrived in Uchh Sharif almost in 727/1328, and he writes in his one *ginnan*

(no. 64:2) that he reached there about 240 years after the death of Pir Satgur, and therefore, it is almost in conformity with the date inscribed on the tombstone.

It is worth stressing on this juncture that the ~~Sanskrit~~ (refined or cultivated), a classical literary language of India, came into existence probably with the outset of the Christian era. It is a scholarly language with a status similar to that of Latin in medieval Europe. It is an old Indo-Aryan tongue from which the Prakrit evolved during 11th century. The Prakrit is the mother of Marathi, Hindi and Gujrati languages. In its early stage, the Gujrati was known as an *apbrunsh* (corrupted) dialect during 12th century, representing an original imprint of the Prakrit. After having different transformations, the present Gujrati evolved with its full swing during the 14th century. Keeping all this in mind, it is safe to conclude that the language of Gujrati was yet in the cradle in a crude form during the period of Pir Satgur. It is therefore deserves notice that the extant Gujrati *ginans* attributed to Pir Satgur are the later compositions, reflecting modernity in its style.

Pir Satgur is said to have emphasized the new adherents on the practice of tithe, or religious dues; the observation of religious ethics and attendance in religious assembly. He did not introduce new rites, and as a result, no peculiar religious lodge was erected. The practice of *zikr* was however remained into practice as the milestone of the *Satpanth*. The new converts thus became known as the *Khojas* for the first time.

Let us pause for a moment to examine the origin of the word *khoja*. The new converts became known as *khoja* - a title firstly came to be originated during the time of Pir Satgur. Sayed Imam Shah (d. 926/1520) describes in his "*Moman Chetamani*" (no. 198-199) that, "Pir Satgur Nur had converted them, and consigned a path to be protected. He made them *Khojas* after conversion, and gave the essence of the path. The *Satpanth* started since then with a practice of tithe." Thus, it is not difficult to determine with exactitude that the term *khoja* came to be known from the time of Pir Satgur.

The word *khoja* is supposed to have derived from *koh-cha* means "small mountain", and later on, it was changed to



*kauja* or *kohja*. This derivation is almost irrelevant, rather not convincing. Most of the modern scholars however hazard an opinion that it is a corrupt form of *khwaja* (lord or master), which also seems incorrect. It must be borne in mind that Sayed Imam Shah used both the word *khoja* in "*Moman Chetamanni*" (stanza 199) and *khwaja* (stanza 122) as well, where the question of the corruption itself becomes annuled, and therefore, the modern theory suggesting its root from *khwaja* seems almost doubtful. It should also be known that the Ismaili Pirs in India had never introduced any foreign terminology during the early stage of conversion. The above assumption seems to have grown in Sind, where the Iranian terminologies were in vogue in the Sindhi language. In Sind, the word *khoja* is also pronounced with the corresponding prevalent word *khwaja*, and it has probably constrained the scholars to attest its derivation from *khwaja*.

The early extant records indicate that the term *khoja* stands in its original form without being corrupted. An inscription, for instance, is discovered at Patan, Gujrat by Col. Tod, vide his "*Travels in Western India*" (p. 506), belonging to the year 662/1264. This inscription is found in the temple of Harsata, which was originally a mosque in the time of Arjundeva (1262-1274), the second king of Vaghela line of the Solanki dynasty of Anhilvad. It reads that a ship-owner, called *Khoja* Abu Ibrahim had donated a piece of land, an oil-mill and two shops; and from its income, a mosque had been built. *Khoja* Abu Ibrahim was an Indian and living in Hormuz in Iranian Gulf. From this antique record, it is difficult to surmise that the above inscribed term *khoja* should have been *khwaja* prior to the period of 662/1264. While examining further earliest records, it is known that Kiya Buzrug Ummid (d. 532/1138), the second ruler of Alamut had dispatched his envoy, called *Khoja* Muhammad Nassihi Shahrastani to the Seljuq court, where he had been murdered in 523/1129. The later records suggest that Pir Mashaikh (d. 1108/1697) compiled about 16 books in 1092/1680, in which he has also used the term *khoja* like Sayed Imam Shah. Virji Premji Parpiya had translated one of the Persian manuscript of his forefather, called *Khoja* Ibaloo (d. 1208/1794), entitled "*Khoja Iblani Vansh'nu Vratant*" (Bombay, 1917), who begins the account of his forebear, called *Khoja* Bhaloo (d. 1016/1607) during the time of Pir Dadu (d. 1005/1596). It

also contains frequent usage of the term *khoja*. Captain Alexander Hamlet reports in 1140/1728 that the wealth of a certain merchant, called *khoja* Muhammad Hirji of Bombay was more than that of East India Company. The balance of argument tends to sound that the *khoja* is an unswerving word since its origin without being adulterated even in later period.

The *khoja* is a Hindi word, its verb being *khoj*, means to search. According to "Encyclopaedia Asiatica" (Delhi, 1982, 5th vol., p. 564), the Hindi word *khoja* means information or search. The Persian prof. Kassim Sumar Thariani of Elphinstone College of Bombay, also ruled out its origin from *khwaja*, and writes that, *khoja* is a word derived from Hindi word *khoj* means to dig out, or search in such a sense that it turns to mean, one who is engrossed in search of truth in religion." (cf. "*khoja Gnanti'nu Gorav*" by V.N. Hooda, Bombay, 1927, p. 118)

The local low castes were simply converted in the time of Pir Satgur without being loaded with rituals, and after their admission they were consigned the Sufic practice of *zikr*, for which they were mastered in their former cults; and were instructed to "get absorbed" (*kho'ja!*) in deep contemplation. This phrase purporting *kho'ja* (get absorbed) gradually became a significant phrase among the absorptive initiates, rather it became a distinctive title, or identification among local people. In sum, the new converts first embraced Ismaili faith, and then became *khoja* (the absorptive ones), which also sounds the notion of "*Maman Chetamanni*" (stanza 198-199) of Sayed Imam Shah.

#### Death of Hasan bin Sabbah

Hasan bin Sabbah is one of those few great leaders, who are very rarely born in the world. By virtue of his exemplary character, he could establish the Ismaili state amidst the teeth of very bitterest opposition and harsh theological storms. He was a great military leader, organizer and a devoted missionary. He had a rare ability to keep his mind fixed steadily on the distance horizon, and at the same time concentrated his whole effort on what was practically possible. In chastity and integrity, Hasan bin Sabbah was as firm as a mountain. He had a penetrating and analytical mind. Force of character, prodigious



capacity for hard work and concentrated effort and firm and patient adherence to the religion distinguished him from his contemporaries. When he decided to accomplish something, he seldom gave up its pursuit and waited patiently, perhaps for years. Hasan bin Sabbah was ambitious, but it was not personal ambition. He fought for his faith not for own sake. In his administrative framework, he was seen a creative, bold, courageous and of strong nerves. Dr. Farhad Daftary writes in *"The Ismailis, their History and Doctrines"* (London, 1990, pp. 366-7) that: "Hasan-i Sabbah was indeed a remarkable man. An organizer and a political strategist of unrivalled capability, he was at the same time a thinker and writer who led an ascetic life. Several examples of his asceticism and harshness have been cited by our Persian historians. He was evidently equally strict with friend and foe, and highly uncompromising in his austere and Islamic life style which he imposed on the Nizari community, especially in Rudhbar. In particular, he insisted on the observance of the Islamic religious duty of *amr bil ma'ruf wa nahy az munkar* (commanding the good and prohibiting the evil). During all the years spent at Alamut, Hasan evidently never descended from the castle, and he is said to have left his living quarter only twice to mount the roof-top. During that period, nobody drank wine openly in Alamut, and the playing of musical instruments was also forbidden. Hasan sent his wife and daughters to Girdkuh where they earned a simple life by spinning, never having them returned to Alamut. He also had both his sons, Ustad Husayn and Muhammad, executed. Muhammad's guilt was wine-drinking, while Ustad Husayn had been suspected of complicity in the murder of the *dai* Husayn Qaini in Quhistan."

Giving an example of Hasan's strictness against music, Charles E. Nowell writes in *"The Old Man of the Mountain"* that, "A man who frivolously disturbed the puritan austerity of Alamut with flute-playing was expelled from the fortress for ever." (cf. *"Speculum"*, vol. xxii, no. 4, 1947, p. 502). He left no male issue behind him, the two sons he had, as referred to above, having been sentenced to death. Juvaini (p. 680) writes that, "Hasan bin Sabbah used to point out to the execution of both his sons as a reason against any one's imagining that he had conducted propaganda on their behalf and had had that object in mind." According to *"Unity and Variety in Muslim*

**Civilization**" (ed. by G.E. Von Grunebaum, New York, 1956), "The severity of Hasan-i Sabbah against the peccadilloes of his sons is a proof of the moral discipline which reigned at Alamut." He had numerous opportunities to arrogate the powers of religious leadership to himself, but he always made himself sub-servient to the cause of the Imam. Once his few followers wrote up a genealogy for him in the usual elegant style, he, according to Marshall Hodgson in **"The Order of Assassins"** (Netherland, 1955, p. 51), "said to have thrown it into the water, remarking that he would rather be the Imam's favoured servant than his degenerate son." E.G. Browne also writes in **"A Literary History of Persia"** (London, 1964, 2nd vol., p. 20) that Hasan had said, "I would rather be the Imam's chosen servant than his unworthy son." In view of Jorunn J. Buckley, "Hasan's followers were called **the party of the truthful**, adhering to Hasan's total authority as supreme teacher. Of course, this party's **real** leader was the Imam, hidden to mortal eyes. Hasan did not try to be recognized as the Imam, rather, his role was that of the **hujja**, who, as noted, demanded full obedience in the occultation period." (vide **"Stvdia Islamica,"** Paris, LX, 1984, p. 141).

"The use of wine was strickly forbidden to the Ismailis," writes John Malcolm in **"The History of Persia"** (London, 1815, 1st vol., p. 401)) "and they were enjoyed the most temperate and abstentious habits." Sayed Amir Ali also writes in **"The Spirit of Islam"** (London, 1955, p. 340) that, "Hasan bin Sabbah himself was a strict observer of all the precepts of religion, and would not allow drunkenness or dancing or music within the circuit of his rule."

According to **"Jamiut Tawarikh"** (p.134), "The rest of the time until his death, Hasan bin Sabbah passed inside the house, where he lived; he was occupied with reading books, committing the words of **dawa** to writing, and administrating the affairs of his realm, and he lived an ascetic, abstemious and pious life."

Hasan bin Sabbah took up his residence in the tower of Alamut. His quarters were a bedroom and library. It is said that only two times during his residence did he find time to emerge from his modest lodgings into the open air. Yet it was here, in his modest quarters that he supervised



the stern training of his ardent young *fidais*. Coarsely attired, consuming simple fare, abjuring wine under penalty of death, devoting their lives to the acquisition of the physical and intellectual skills needed for the accomplishment of their missions, these *fidais* were intensely loyal to him.

Hasan bin Sabbah fell ill in the month of Rabi II, 518/May, 1124. When he felt that the shadows of death were closing upon him, he summoned his lieutenant at Lamasar, Kiya Buzrug Ummid, and designated him as the next ruler of the Nizari Ismaili State. He also appointed three seniors for assisting Kiya Buzrug until such time as the *Imam* himself came to head his realm. These advisors were Didar Abu Ali Ardistani, Hasan Adam Qasrani and Kiya Ba Jafar (d. 519/1125). Hasan bin Sabbah died towards the end of Rabi II, 518/middle of June, 1124 at the age of 90 years, and ruled the Alamut and other fortresses for 35 years.

### **The Doctrines of *Talim***

It appears that the early Nizari Ismailis showed a particular interest in the doctrine of the Imamate and concentrated their doctrinal investigations. Thus, Hasan bin Sabbah broached the doctrine of *talim* (authoritative teaching) to the Ismailis. The Sunni observers developed a distinct impression that the Ismailis of Alamut reflected a "new teaching" (*al-dawa al-jadida*). The new teaching of *talim* did not however, entail the formulation of any sect of new doctrines, it was, rather, the reformulation of the fundamental principle of Shia Islam embodied in the doctrine of *ilm* imparted by Imam Jafar Sadik. Ibn Tughri Birdi (d. 874/1470) writes in his "*al-Nujum al-Zahira fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahira*" (Cairo, 1929, 4th vol., p. 77) that, "During the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, al-Muizz and later, al-Mustansir had utilized the principle of *talim* to the fullest extent."

Hasan bin Sabbah, thus did not originate the doctrine of *talim*, but elaborated and interpreted the doctrine of *ilm* of Shia Islam abreast of the time. According to "*The Cambridge History of Iran*" (ed. by J.A. Boyle, Cambridge, 1968, 5th vol., p. 433), "But observers got the impression that there was a "new teaching" associated with the movement which could be contrasted with the old and thus would not be surprising. If there was, however, it was not a wholly new system but a new emphasis and development of

a doctrine of long standing among Ismailis and indeed among Shiis generally: the doctrine of *talim*, authoritative teaching." According to Marshall Hodgson, "It was this doctrine of *talim* which was especially developed by Hasan-i Sabbah; he turned it into a sharp intellectual tool in keeping with his whole life and demeanor." (op. cit., p. 53)

Hasan bin Sabbah compiled a theological treatise in this context, entitled "*Fusul-i Arba'a*" (the Four Chapters), which was an Ismaili thesis and in its fully developed form, the doctrine of *talim* was expounded by him in an Iranian essay. Several writers have mentioned, notably summarized by Shaharistani. In the doctrine of *talim*, Hasan bin Sabbah consistently emphasized the role of the Imam, with the Prophet having been a link in the logical chain from God to Imam. It became so central to the Ismailis thought that its followers in Khorasan came to be known as the *Talimiyya*. Many Sunni writers assailed the doctrine of *talim* in view of their own sense of propriety in opprobrious words. The Abbasids also reacted and hired the famous theologian, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111), who tried to refute it in his "*Kitab fada'ih al-Batiniyya wa fada'il al-Mustazhiriyya*" and other treatises. According to Wilferd Madelung in "*Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*" (New York, 1988, p. 102), "In itself Hasan-i Sabbah's teaching was hardly a radical challenge to Islam. Like Fatimid Ismailism, he insisted on the validity and strict application of the *Sharia*."

#### **The Ismaili *fidais***

The history of the Ismailis of Alamut has been always grossly misunderstood in a hideous form. Most unfortunately, it is exactly about this period that we possess almost no genuine Ismaili sources. Most of the extant sources have come down to us from the aggressive camps, who based their informations from the illusive bits and shreds. They seem to take informations on its face-value without trying to verify the truth thereof. But history, as distinct from fiction, proves otherwise. Our earliest source, for instance, is the bitterly anti-Ismaili text of Juvaini, who is responsible to distort the genuine Ismaili traditions. Unfortunately, the scholars follow the stories designed by Juvaini without closely



realizing his inimical attitude towards the Ismailis. W.Ivanow (1886-1970) writes in **"Alamut and Lamasar"** (Tehran, 1960, p. 26) that, "There are scholars who are perfectly satisfied with what he (Juvaini) says, showing their utter ignorance."

One of the allegations on the Ismailis is the character of the *fidais* (the devotees), the self-sacrificing warriors; who had been spoken in spreading terrorism by daggers, and are termed **Assassins** by the Western authorities of Crusades period. When the Crusades spoke of the Assassins, they originally referred to the Syrian Ismailis. Later, the term was also commonly affixed with the Iranian Ismailis by European travellers and chroniclers. According to W.Ivanow, "This subject has been as much hackneyed and surrounded by legends or fairy tales, as almost everything in connection with Ismailism." (Ibid. p. 21)

Hasan bin Sabbah hated war and avoided commotion that would rob of him of peace and disturb his life of seclusion. He objected unnecessary shedding of blood, but his sworn enemies hurled in the fire of war, so that they might thereby obtain and retain their power and kingdom. Thus, Hasan bin Sabbah resorted to removing the root causes and killing the germs of mischief that infected the selfish rulers. He killed few of them and saved the Muslims from fighting, which was necessary and justifiable. The Ismaili *fidais* did not kill anyone out of hatred or rancour but out of desire to save a number of Muslims who would otherwise have been skinned alive. Bosworth writes in **"The Islamic Dynasties"** (cf. **Islamic Survey**, series no. 5, Edinburgh, 1967, p. 128) that, "The Ismailis played a significant role in three-cornered struggle with the Franks and the Sunni Muslims. Since the Ismailis were comparatively few in number, assassination of prominent people often served as a substitute for direct military action."

We must not lose sight of the fact that the enemies of the Ismailis did not like an independent Nizari Ismaili state and reacted violently to it. They launched attacks one after another with vast overwhelming forces, accompanied by destruction of crops, cutting of fruit trees and other wrecking tools to damage the economy of the Ismailis. The general picture emerging from it suggests that the Ismailis were comparatively less to meet the danger

hovering upon them, therefore, an armed unit of the *fidai* warriors seems to have been trained, who adopted an upheaval method of guerilla warfare for defensive purpose. Some scholars regard the Ismaili struggle a *revolt*, but it was positively a *struggle for survival*. It was a technique of the limited warriors to force the gigantic and colossal military machine to turn back by spreading awful milieu in their camps, which has been woven inimically in fictions. W.Ivanow writes, "In proper perspective, *fidaiism* was a local form of guerilla warfare, ... it would be decidedly idiotic and dishonest to see in it something like the most prominent organic feature of the Nizari Ismaili doctrine, as is done by some ignorant but pretentious scholars." (Ibid. p. 21) W.Montgomery Watt in his "*Islam and the Integration of Society*" (London, 1961, p. 69) and Edward Mortimer in "*Faith and Power*" (London, 1982, p. 48) also admit that the method of the *fidais* was no other than that of the *guerilla warfare*. Bernard Lewis writes in "*The Assassins*" (London, 1967, p. 130) that, "Hasan found a new way, by which a small force, disciplined and devoted, could strike effectively against the overwhelmingly superior army." Guerilla warfare is an irregular unit of fighters, not so popular in those days, therefore, the misnomer, *Assassins* to the Ismailis in the Western sources became an easy coinage. This method however is very common in modern age, which is also termed as *terrorism* by the westerners.

#### Genesis of the word "*Assassin*"

The Nizari Ismailis, an seminal branch of Shia Islam, are designated with a misnomer, *Assassins* in mediaeval Europe. This is an abusive term that had been given a wide currency by the Crusaders and their occidental chroniclers, who had first come into contact with the Syrian Ismailis in the Near East during the early decades of the 12th century. Charles E. Nowell writes in "*The Old Man of the Mountain*" that, "In the early years of the twelfth century, as the Christians spread their conquests in the holy land and Syria, they made the acquaintance of the Ismailis. Many of their historians had something to say about the sect, and what they gave was usually a mixture of information and misinformation" (cf. *Speculum*, vol. xxii, no. 4, 1947, p. 503).



mixture of information and misinformation" (cf. *Speculum*, vol. xxii, no. 4, 1947, p. 503).

The Ismailis were not a band of terrorists, but their fighting against their oppressors was a *struggle for survival*. Mediaeval Europeans, who remained absolutely ignorant of Muslim beliefs and practices, had transmitted a number of tales, and produced a perverted image of the Ismailis. Rene Dussaud writes in "*Histoire et Religion des Nosaires*" (Paris, 1900) that, "One of the very few Europeans who have appreciated the good points of this remarkable sect and who is of opinion that the judgements pronounced by western scholars are marked by an excessive severity. It is certainly wrong to confound as do the Muslim doctors, in one common reprobation. And the Old Man of the Mountain himself was not so black as it is custom to paint him." In more recent times, too, many western scholars have continued to apply the ill-conceived term *Assassins* to the Nizari Ismailis without being aware of its etymology or dubious origin. Paul E. Walker makes his comments in his "*Abu Yaqub al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary*" (London, 1996, p. 1) that, "Until recently, however, the Ismailis were studied and judged almost exclusively on the basis of the evidence collected or fabricated by their enemies, including the bulk of the mediaeval Sunni heresiographers and polemicists who were hostile towards the Shi'is in general and the Ismailis among them in particular. These Sunni authors in fact treated Shi'ite interpretations of Islam as expressions of heterodoxy or even heresy. As a result, a 'black legend' was gradually developed and put into circulation in the Muslim world to discredit the Ismailis and their interpretations of Islam. The Christian Crusaders and their occidental chroniclers who remained almost completely ignorant of Islam and its internal divisions, disseminated their own myths of the Ismailis, which came to be accepted in the West as true descriptions of Ismaili teachings and practices. Modern orientalisists, too, have studied the Ismailis on the basis of hostile Sunni sources and the fanciful occidental accounts of medieval times. Thus, legends and misconceptions have continued to surround the Ismailis through the twentieth century."

Benjamin of Tudela, the Spanish Rabbi of 12th century, who was the first European traveller to approach the frontiers of China (between 1159 and 1173). He is one of the early

Europeans to have written about the Ismailis. He visited Syria in 562/1167, and described in his "**The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela**" (tr. by Marcus N. Adler, London, 1907) the Syrian Ismailis under the term of *Hashishin*. Next extant description is found in a diplomatic report of 570/1175 of Burchard, an envoy sent to Egypt and Syria by the Roman emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1152-1190), in which he has used the word *Heyssezzini* (in Roman, *segnors de montana*) for the Ismailis of Syria. William (1130-1185), archbishop of Tyre, is the first historian of the Crusades to have described the Ismailis of Syria in 581/1186 with the name *Assissini* in his "**History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea**" (tr. by Babcock and Krey, New York, 1943, 2nd vol., p. 390), but also admits that he does not know the origin of this name, and by no means states that it was unknown to the Muslims. The German historian, Arnold of Lubeck (d. 610/1212) used for the Ismailis of Syria the term *Heissezzin* in his "**Chronica Slavorum**" (1869, 21st. vol., p. 240). James of Vitry, the Bishop of Acre (from 1216 to 1228), was perhaps the best informed occidental observer of Muslim affairs after William of Tyre. He produced his "**Secret Societies of the Middle Ages**" (London, 1846), wherein he applied the term *Assasini* for the Syrian Ismailis. William of Rubruck (1215-1295), who had completed his visit of China in 653/1255, seems to have been amongst the first Europeans to have designated the Iranian Ismailis as *Axasins* and *Haccasins*, hitherto used only for the Syrian Ismailis. The eminent French chronicler, Jean de Joinville (1224-1317) produced a most valuable "**Histoire de Saint Louis**", (comp. 1305) relates the Syrian Ismaili ambassadors, who had come to see King Louis IX (1226-1270) at Acre. Joinville referred to the term *Assacis* for the Ismailis. Marco Polo (1254-1324) has also used the word *Ashishin* in his travelogue.

Different etymologies of the modern word *Assassins* are given in the occidental sources, such as *Accini*, *Arsasini*, *Assassi*, *Assassini*, *Assessini*, *Assessini*, *Assissini*, *Heyssezzini* etc. Thomas Hyde in "**Veterum Persarum Religionis Historia**" (Oxford, 1700, p. 493) opines that the word *Assassin* must be the word *hassas*, derived from the root *hassa*, meaning, to kill or exterminate. This opinion was followed by Menage and Falconet. De Volney also adopted this etymology in his "**Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie**" (1st. vol., p. 404) without citing any evidence.



Historian Abul Fida (d. 732/1331) writes that Masiyaf, a town that was the headquarters of the Syrian Ismailis, is situated on a mountain, called *Jabal Assikkin* (Jabal al-Sikkin). The word *sikkin* means knife or dagger, and the name of this mountain may thus mean, "the mountain of the knife." This seems to be some analogy of the coinage of the above westerners, reflecting the view in Falconet's "*Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*" (17th vol., p. 163); who called it, *la montagne du Poigard* (mountain of the dagger). Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) however suggests that *sekkin* in this case is the name of a man, so that we should translate it "the Sekkin's Mountain" (*la montagne de Sekkin*). Michel Sabbagh of Acre suggests the origin of *al-Sisani*. Instead of *al-Sisani*, the word often used is *al-Sasani*, means "the family of Sasan." This term is used by the Arabs to indicate an adventurer. Simon Assemani (1752-1821), the professor of oriental languages in Padua, used the word *Assissana* in his "*Giornale dell' Italiana Letteratura*" (1806, pp. 241-262), and according to him, it is a corrupt form of *Assissani* in connection with the Arabic word *assissath* (*al-sisa*), meaning rock or fortress, and as such, *Assissani* (*al-sisani*) refers to one who dwells in a rocky fortress.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the name *Assassin* received a good deal of attention from western scholars, who threw a flood of theories to explain its origin and significance. The mystery was finally seems to have solved by Silvestre de Sacy, who discovered that the word *Assassin* was *Hashishiyya*, i.e., the users of *hashish*.

The Muslims, having exhausted all their resources of condemnation, now restored to designate the Syrian Ismailis by different religious terms, such as *Batiniyya* and the *Talimiyya*. The Ismailis were also branded as *Malahida* (or *Mulhidun*) by their sworn enemies. Much less frequently, the Ismailis of Syria were called by other abusive term, such as *Hashishiyya*, i.e., the users of *hashish*. It seems that the oppressors had foiled in their attempt to extirpate the Ismailis and eventually made a last vehement strike upon them.

The earliest reported application of the term *Hashishiyya* to the Ismailis occurs in the anti-Ismaili polemical epistle issued in 517/1123 by the then Fatimid regime in

Cairo on behalf of the caliph al-Amir (d. 524/1130), entitled "*Iqa Sawa'iq al-irgham*". This epistle contains the term *Hashishiyya* for the Syrian Nizari Ismailis for two times, vide pp. 27 and 32. It must be known that the well-known event of *qiyama* celebrated at Alamut in 559/1164 became a main tool of the enemies of the Ismailis to discredit them. The orthodox Muslims waged a bitter propaganda, and uttered all the prevalent abusive terms for them. The dead term *Hashishiyya* once again was given a life, and it came to be used almost for the first time in the Seljuqid literatures. The earliest known Seljuqid chronicle is "*Nusratu'l Fatrah wa Usratu'l Fatrah*" (comp. 578/1183) by Imadudin Muhammad al-Katib Ispahani (d. 597/1201), which is now extant only in an abridged version compiled by Fateh Ali bin Muhammad al-Bundari in 623/1226, entitled "*Zubdatu'n Nasrah wa Nakhbatu'l Usrah*" (pp. 169, 195). Imadudin begins his chronicle from 485/1092, and did not put his work into its final form until 578/1183 when he had already been in Syria for 15 years. He seems first Seljuqid writer to have used the term, *Hashishiyya* for the Syrian Ismailis. Ibn Muyassar (d. 677/1278) simply states in his "*Tarikh-i Misr*" (p. 102) that in Syria, the Ismailis are called *Hashishiyya*, in Alamut; they are known as *Batiniyya* and *Malahida*; in Khorasan as *Talimiyya*. Abu Shama (d. 665/1267) also used *Hashishiyya* for the Syrian Ismailis in his "*Kitab al-Rawdatayn fi Akhbar al-Dawlatayn*" (1st. vol., pp. 240 and 258). Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406) writing after 13th century, mentions in "*Muqaddima*" (1st. vol., p. 143) that the Ismailis of Syria, once called as *al-Hashishiyya al-Ismailiyya*, were known in his time as the *Fidawiyya*. All this sounds from the extant sources that the term *Hashishiyya* was commonly applied for the Syrian Ismailis between 11th and 12th centuries by the Muslims, and were ceased to be used since 13th century.

It however must bear in mind that Juvaini and Rashiduddin do not use the term *Hashishiyya* for the Ismailis of Iran, as the term was not prevalent during their time in Iran. W. Madelung has however recently discovered in his "*Arabic Texts Concerning the History of the Zaydi Imams of Tabaristan, Daylaman and Gilan*" (Beirut, 1987, pp. 146 & 329) that the Ismailis of Iran too were named *Hashishiyya* in some contemporary Zaidi sources compiled in the Arabic



language at the Caspian region during the first half of the 13th century. The Zaidi Shiites were the closest rivals of the Ismailis in northern Iran and had prolonged military confrontations with them in the Caspian region, had launched their own anti-Ismaili literary campaign. This tends to reveal that these Arabian sources had referred to the Iranian Ismailis under the misnomer prevalent in their region for the Syrian Ismailis.

**Hashish** or **Hashisha** is the Arabic word for hemp, which is latinized *cannabis sativa*. Its variety is Indian hemp or Cannabis Indica, have been known and used in the Near East since ancient times as a drug with intoxicating effects. The earliest express mention of the word **hashish** contained in "**at-Tadhkirah fi'l Khilaf**" by Abu Ishaq ash-Shirazi (d. 476/1083). The use of **hashish** grew in Syria, Egypt and other Muslim countries during 12th and 13th centuries among the inferior strata of society. Numerous tracts were compiled by Muslim authors, describing that the use of **hashish** would effect on the users' morality and religion. Consequently, the users of **hashish** qualified for a inferior social and moral status, similarly to that of a **mulhida**, or heretic in religion. Neither the Ismailis of Syria nor the contemporary non-Ismaili Muslim texts, which were rigorous towards the Ismailis, ever attested to the use of **hashish** among the Nizari Ismailis.

**Hashish**, a narcotic drug was a common usage in the Sufic orbits in Damascus since 11th century, and they were subjected to the hatred of the theologians. Franz Rosenthal writes in "**The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Muslim Society**" (Leiden, 1971, p. 53) that, "The use of **hashish** by Sufi fraternities and their presumably large role in the spread of **hashish** use can be accepted as a fact in view of all the later evidence pointing in this direction." The Sufi initiates were called **Hashishiyya**, and it was commonly known among them as **Hashish al-Fuqara** (the herb of the faqirs). Among them, the other titles for **hashish** were "digester of food" (**hadim al-aqwat**), "rouser of thought" (**baithat al-fikr**), "queen of insanity" (**sultanat al-junun**), "the green one" (**al-akhdar**), "daughter of cannabis" (**ibnat al-qunbus**) etc.

Nuruddin Ali bin al-Jazzar writes in his "**Qam al-Washin fi dhamm al-barrashin**" (comp. before 991/1583) that the

accursed **hashish** "was originated by some group around the five hundreds" (*ahdathaha ba'd fi'ah fi nahw qarn al-khams mi'ah*). According to Franz Rosenthal, "The word *fi'ah* (group) is used here for the sake of the rhyme and thus may very well mean Sufis, rather than sectarians or soldiers." (Ibid. pp. 53-4) Thus, it seems possible that **hashish** had been discovered around 500/1106 by the wandering Sufis, who qualified the title of *mulhida*, or heretic in religion, and the term *Hashishiyya* became a common abuse in the society. Az-Zarkashi (745-794/1344-1392) in "*Zahr al-arish fi ahkam al-hashish*" and al-Ukbari (d. 690/1291) in "*Kitab as-Sawanih*" however write that it was believed that a Sufi Shaikh Hyder (d. 618/1221), the founder of Hyderi Sufi Order, discovered **hashish** in the province of Nishabur around the year 550/1155. This seems almost imponderable version. Franz Rosenthal writes to this effect that, "The use of the drug became common among Haydar's followers only years after his death. Therefore, the Khurasanians ascribed the introduction of the drug to him who was completely innocent of it." (Ibid. p. 45) Others also connected the introduction of **hashish** with a certain Sufi Ahmad as-Sawaja. In sum, **hashish** seems to have been discovered by the Sufis around 500/1106, but its propaganda to use and the special way of preparing it to use was introduced by the followers of Shaikh Hyder after his death. The Turkish poet, Fuzuli (885-963/1480-1556) writes in his poem, "*Layla Megnun*" (p. 167) that, "*Hashish* can claim to be the friend of dervishes and to be available in the corner of every mosque and among all kinds of scholars." **Hashish** also enjoyed particular favour in the Sufic poems, such as Ibn Kathir (13th vol., p. 314) quotes the following verses:-

*Hashish contains the meaning of my desire.  
 You dear people of intelligence and understanding.  
 They have declared it forbidden without any  
 justification on the basis of reason and tradition.  
 Declaring forbidden what is not forbidden is forbidden.*

Al-Badri quotes a poem of a certain Muhammad bin Makki bin Ali bin al-Hussain al-Mashhadi, which reads:-



*The use of hashish is censured by all silly persons,  
weak of mind, insensitive,  
To the censure coming from stupid and envious  
individuals.  
Share hashish with a goodly young man firm.  
In the preservation of friendship and appointments.  
Is it not a relaxation for the mind? Thus enjoy  
It, all you sensible men!*

Consequently, the Sufis using *hashish* had been rigorously condemned. Ibn ash-Shihnah (d. 815/1412) composed a couple of verses that:-

*I am surprised to find a Shaikh who commands people to  
be pious.  
But himself never heeds the Merciful One or shows piety  
towards Him.  
He considers it permissible to eat hashish as well as  
usury. And (says that) he who studies truly the  
Sahih (Bukhari) is a heretic.*

The Muslim jurists also condemned the use of *hashish* and demanded severe punishment, declaring it dangerous to Islam and society. Gradually, the word *Hashishiyya* became an abusive term mostly in Syria. One who was hated, he was branded as *Hashishiyya* in the society, and thus, the Syrian Ismailis were also labelled with the same misnomer by their enemies.

Running parallel with this, it is worth keeping in mind that the Syrian Ismailis too called themselves as *al-sufat* (the pure, or sincere), resembling the term *sufi*. According to "*Bustan al-Jami*" (comp. 561/1165), the Ismailis in Syria called themselves as *al-Sufat*. Ibn al-Azim (d. 660/1262) however writes in his "*Zubdat al-Balab*" (comp. 641/1243) that a faction of the Syrian Ismailis at Jabal as-Summuq called themselves *al-Sufat*. Both Ismailism and Sufism are similar in a way, but it should be known that, *Every Ismaili is a Sufi, but no every Sufi is an Ismaili*. Ismailism is an esoteric *tariqah* as well as a social system with its own rules and

characteristics, while Sufism is an individual concern. The Ismailis however never allowed themselves to be submerged totally into the general esoteric medley, and their form of Shiite Sufism remained quite distinctive from other mystical orders of Islam. The Ismailis were the main target of the Sunni Muslims, who used all misnomers and abusive words to discredit them. Incorporating the Ismailis with the Sufis due to their potential affinity, the Sunni Muslims and others had designated the Ismailis too with the same term. Franz Rosenthal writes, "It is worthy of note that attacks on the Ismailiyah accusing them of being *hashish* eaters were apparently not made very often, although this would have been an effective verbal slur." (op. cit., p. 43) Paul Johnson writes in his "**Civilizations of the Holy Land**" (London, 1979, p. 211) that, "Much nonsense has been written about this sect, which had nothing to do with *hashish*." Curiously enough, the term seems to have become so specific for the Syrian Ismailis that the Sufi circles using *hashish* had been ignored to be designated alike. After the schism of Nizari and Musta'lian, the influence of the Musta'lians in Syria was less than the Nizaris, and therefore, the Musta'lian faction also shifted this misnomer on the rival group. It is not surprising that when people cannot find the solution of a difficulty in the natural manner, they concoct a supernatural explanation, just as when they like or dislike a thing, they go to extremes, invent and contrive superstitious tales and give vent to credulous stories tinged with different misnomers.

The Musta'lian group was designated by the Nizari Ismailis in Syria as *Jamat al-Amiriyya*, and the latter were labelled by the former as *Jamat al-Hashishiyya* as the Musta'lian group did not like that the rival group be known as *Jamat al-Nizaris*. Soon afterwards, the Musta'lian group disappeared almost from Syria in 524/1130, but they left behind the name *Hashishiyya* in their sources, and thus, it became a general usage for the Nizari Ismailis in Syria since 517/1123.

The occidental chroniclers, travellers and envoys to the Latin East borrowed the term *Hashishiyya* for the Ismailis of Syria, whom they pronounced as *Hashishin*, *Heyssessini* or *Haisasins*. Silvestre de Sacy delivered a lecture entitled "**Memoirs on the Dynasty of the Assassins and the origin of their name**" on May 19, 1809 in the Institute of



France, which was a landmark in the relative study. In addition to the few oriental sources published or referred by previous scholars, de Sacy was able to draw on the rich Paris collection of Arabic manuscripts, and states that, "Nor should there be any doubt, in my opinion, that the word *hashishi*, plural *hashishin*, is the origin of the corruption *heissessini*, *assassini*, and *assissini*. It should not surprise us that the Arabic *shin* was transcribed by all our writers who used the Latin language by an *s*, and in the Greek historians by a sigma. They had no choice. It should, moreover be observed that the *shin* is pronounced less strongly than *ch* in French. What can rightly be asked is the reason why the Ismailis or Batinis were called *Hashishis*."

After picking up the word *Hashishiyya* for the Syrian Ismailis, the Crusaders attested further fabrications. The daring behavior of the Ismaili *fidais*, who usually carried their mission - a struggle for survival, had exceedingly impressed the Crusaders, who would rarely endanger their own lives for other than worldly rewards. The Crusaders failed to compete with the valour of the Ismaili *fidais*, therefore, they propagated that they were using *hashish* before fighting, but they forgot to understand that the drunkenness caused by *hashish* merely consists of a kind of quiet ecstasy, rather than a vehemence apt to fire the courage to undertake and carry out daring and dangerous missions. Franz Rosenthal writes in "*The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Muslim Society*" (Leiden, 1971, pp. 42-3) that, "It has been pointed out that *hashish* does not have the properties that would ordinarily make it a serviceable stimulant for anyone being sent on a dangerous mission of assassination." The editors of "*Encyclopaedia Britannica*" write in "*The Arabs*" (New York, 1978, p. 94) that, "Stories of the terrorists' use of *hashish* before setting out to commit murder and face martyrdom are doubtful." Bosworth also writes in "*The Islamic Dynasties*" (cf. *Islamic Survey*, series no. 5, Edinburgh, 1967, p. 128) that, "The story related by Marco Polo and others, that hallucinatory drugs were used to stimulate the assassins to bolder efforts is unconfirmed in any of the genuine Ismaili sources." The Muslim authors, unlike the western authors, did not fantasize about the real spirit of sacrifice of the *fidais* in defending their faith around aggressive milieu. Instead of

knowing their struggle, they branded them with the then prevalent abusive term, *Hashishiyya*. Hence, the misnomer *Hashishiyya*, picked up by the Crusaders in the beginning of the second half of the 12th century, mainly through oral channels, came to be pronounced as *Hashishin*, *Heyssessini* or *Haisasins*. It further underwent corruptions, and evolved as *Axasin*, *Accini*, *Assassini*, *Assacis*, *Ashishin*, *Assassini*, and finally resulted the modern genesis of the English word, *Assassin*. It later was coloured by spurious and extravagant fables, smacking exaggeration in western popular lore and literature.

It deserves notice, however, that Henry, Count of Champagne (d. 593/1197) had visited the Syrian Ismaili territories in 590/1194, where he had personally alleged to have witnessed the falling down of the two Ismaili *fidais* from a lofty turret upon the signal of the Ismaili leader to demonstrate an example of obedience. This event became famous in the occidental sources bluntly by the end of 13th century without perception of the spirit of sacrifice of the *fidais*. Thus, in the West, the Ismailis have been the subjects of several hotchpotch of legends, and were portrayed in different terms, so as to designate them ultimately as *Assassins*. Farhad Daftary writes in "*The Assassin Legends*" (London, 1994, p. 84) that, "In sum, mediaeval Europeans learned very little about Islam and Muslims, and their less informed knowledge of the Ismailis found expression in a few superficial observations and erroneous perceptions scattered in Crusader histories and other occidental sources."

### **The Legend of Paradise**

Examining a critical and analytical approach of the sources, it is almost possible to clarify that the fortress of Alamut was situated in rocky and infertile region, and its physical condition during occupation was very much rough and coarse. It was embosomed with swamps and muddy tracts, accounting unhealthy atmosphere. Hasan bin Sabbah immediately embarked on the task of renovating the castle, which was in great need of repairs, improving its fortifications, storage facilities and water supply sources. He also improved and extended the system of irrigation and cultivation of crops in the Alamut, where many trees were planted. Thus, a fertile spot emerged out,



tending an eye-catching scene in the barren ranges of Elburz mountain. The fertile tracts of the valley radically began to appear as if an oasis in the desert.

Whenever, the Alamut was threatened, the enemies had to come from Ispahan to Rudhbar after passing through the tedious and barren regions, and pitched their camps at the pastures of Alamut. While retreating, the frustrated forces took their revenge by mutilating and cutting down the luxuriant crops and devastated the smiling fields in order to quench the thirst of hatred and passion. Their temper was also crystallized into romantic stories. Firstly, it was rumoured that the valley of Alamut had been transformed into the gardens of paradise, but it proved an ineffectual among the local people. Instead, the enemies contrived another florid story that so called paradise existed inside the fortress. Since it was difficult to ascertain the story by the local people, it received a less credence in some quarters, whose bits and shreds were sorted out by the later writers to embellish a tale in exaggeration. Thus, the failure to eliminate the Ismailis, begot in its turn the idea of myths and tales. Round a trafing thing has thus grown up a crop of fables, making it a curious hodgepodge. According to **"Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics"** (London, 1958, 2nd vol., p. 140), "Hasan bin Sabbah caused the land surrounding his fortress to be carefully cultivated, and this may have led to the legend of paradise." It was the Venetian traveller Marco Polo (1254-1324) to have heard from the villagers and narrated in his book. He was accompanied by his father and uncle and embarked on his journey to the court of Kubilai Khan (1260-1294). Marco Polo started from Acre in 1271, and passed through Iran in 1272, about 15 years after the reduction of Alamut when it was almost a heap of ruins. He committed his itinerary to writing through a scribe in 1298 and related what he had heard in Iran concerning the tale of paradise in Alamut. His ridiculous account however cannot be credible. It is inferred that he would have never crossed near the ruins of Alamut, and the description of the castle in Marco Polo's book was either the stronghold of Girdkuh near Damghan, which was finally surrendered to the Mongols in 1270, about two years before he crossed Khorasan into northern Afghanistan; or, more probably, some fortress in eastern Kohistan. There he evidently had seen a ruined castle of the Ismailis. His itinerary however did not take him to Alamut, which appears to be the castle alluded to

in his account. He had heard from some local informants, which he admits in the beginning, and therefore, his account is admittedly not based on personal observation. It also cannot be denied that Marco Polo's account bears a distinctly occidental imprint, reflecting the influences of different reports which are ultimately traceable to Burchard of Strassburg, Arnold of Lubeck and James of Vitry. It is therefore possible that Marco Polo had knowingly conflated the information he had acquired some 30 years earlier in Iran, with the legends then prevalent in Europe for the Ismailis of Syria. All this sounds to the conclusion that Marco Polo could not have heard his account in its entirety from his informants in Iran.

Marco Polo applied the term *Ashishin* (or *Assassin*) for the Ismailis. It has been asserted that the term *Assassin* had originally acquired currency in Crusader circles in reference to the Ismailis of Syria, and it was neither originated or prevalent in Iran, and therefore, Marco Polo could not have heard the term *Assassins* from his informants in Iran. His curious application of the title of *Old Man of the Mountain* (*Vetus de Mountain*, or *Viel de la Montaigne*) to the ruler of Alamut; also suggests a doubtful description. This title has been coined by the Crusaders for the chief of the Ismailis of Syria, and it was never in usage among the Ismailis of Iran. It is therefore, safe to infer that Marco Polo would have never heard the title of *Old Man of the Mountain* in Iran, but he used in the light of the then informations prevalent in Europe for the Syrian Ismailis. It will be interesting on this juncture to quote the description of Marco Polo about the secret garden of paradise. He narrates:-

*"So he had fashioned it after the description that Mahomet gave of his paradise, to wit, that it should be a beautiful garden running with conduits of wine and milk and honey and water, and full of lovely women for the delectation of all its inmates..He kept at his court a number of the youths of the country, from 12 to 20 years of age, such as had a taste for soldiering, and to these he used to tell tales about paradise, just as Mahomet had be wont to do, and they believed in him just as the Saracens believe in Mahomet.. The prince would then ask whence he came, and he would reply that he came from*



*paradise* and that it was exactly such as Mahomet had described it in the law."

It is important to bear in mind that it was the tendency of the occidental sources to propagate that the Holy Koran was not a heavenly revealed book, but it was designed by the Prophet Muhammad, and whatever the misconception of Islam was popular in Europe at that time, is evidently echoing in the narration of Marco Polo. It gives further gravity to the conclusion that Marco Polo could not have heard such tendency from his Iranian informants. Peter de Venerable (1094-1156) had the Holy Koran translated for the first time from Arabic into Latin. Peter de Cluny (d. 551/1156) and Robert of Ketton also produced the Latin translation of Holy Koran in 538/1143, and it was followed by the translation of Mark of Toledo (1190-1200) under the title of **"Alcorani Machomati Liber."** Joinville and Pedro de Alfonso and other followed them in the 12th century, had dwelled polemically on the hedonistic delights of the Islamic **garden of paradise**. Pedro de Alfonso's account became much popular, and was treated, according to **"Islam and the West"** (Edinburg, 1960, p. 148) by Norman Daniel, "the standard mediaeval version of the Quran's promised paradise, that is, a garden of delights, the flowing waters, the mild air in which neither heat nor cold could afflict, the shady trees, the fruits, the many-coloured silken clothing and the palaces of precious stones and metals, the milk and wine served in gold and silver vessels by angels, saying, 'eat and drink in joy'; and beautiful virgins, 'untouched by men or demons'." Norman Daniel also adds, "In spite of the enormous influence of the **"Liber Scalae"**, it must be said that the Quran itself was the chief source of the picture of the Islamic paradise familiar to so many mediaeval writers." (Ibid.)

The most famous writers in Europe who produced a colourful tale of the Islamic garden of paradise were Pedro de Alfonso, San Pedro, Marino Sanudo, Varagine, Higden, Simon Simeon, Ricoldo da Monte Croce, William of Tripoli, John Mandeville, Jacques de Vitry, Alan of Lille, Sigebert, Guido, etc. In time, the European conceptions of the Islamic paradise, based on the Koranic description in a literal sense, were incorporated into the alleged paradise of Alamut, culminating in Marco Polo's detailed account to this effect. Norman Daniel further writes, "It must be said that it was usual for Christians to allow themselves

a rather purple rendering of the gardens and precious metals of paradise, though usually not of the virgins so beloved of later romanticism." (Ibid.) Farhad Daftary also writes in **"The Assassin Legends"** (London, 1994, p. 116) that, "And this garden, not found in any earlier European source before Marco Polo, was essentially modelled on the Quranic description of paradise then available."

Thus, Marco Polo enhanced a further lease of life to the anti-Ismaili propaganda in Europe. Later on, the account of Friar Odoric of Pordenous (d. 731/1331), who visited China during 1323-27, is perhaps the earliest occidental account of the Ismailis, based entirely on Marco Polo, on his homeland journey to Italy in 1328. Odoric passed through the Caspian coast land in northern Iran, and heard there about the Ismailis, but his description almost resembles the account of Marco Polo. Charles E. Nowell writes in **"The Old Man of the Mountain"** (cf. *Speculum*, Mass., October, 1947, vol., 12, no. 4, pp. 517-8) that, "It is easy to understand how some parts of the Marco-Odoric legend were started. Various eastern historians say that the original Old Man, Hasan Sabbah, for purely economic and strategic reasons, had conduits built and encouraged planting around Alamut. This give rise to the stories of the garden and the fountains of wine, milk and honey."

Mirza Muhammad Saeed Dehlvi writes in **"Mazhab aur Batini Talim"** (Lahore, 1935, pp.296-7) that, "Whenever, the villagers looked the view of the beautiful gardens, green fields and heaths from the surrounding walls of Alamut, they thought it a model of a paradise of the Nizari Ismailis on the ranges of mountain. It is possible that the legend of paradise must have been originated by the illiterate and narrow-minded villagers from whom Marco Polo had heard and recorded it during his journey."

It is also a striking feature that not a single Muslim source, notably Ata Malik Juvaini had ever mentioned about the legend of paradise, who was very aggressive in his narratives and was in search of such stories against the Ismailis. Marshall Hodgson writes in the **"The Order of the Assassins"** (Netherland, 1955, p.135) that, "Juvaini, when investigating the history of Alamut on the spot after its fall did not look for such a garden as Polo heard tell



of." Farhad Daftary also writes in **"The Assassin Legends"** (London, 1994, pp. 114-5) that, "The watchful Juwayni, who visited Alamut in 1256 shortly before that fortress was partially demolished by the Mongols, did not find any sign of Marco Polo's garden there; nor is the existence of any such Ismaili garden in Persia attested by Rashid al-Din or any other Muslim source. However, Juwayni was greatly impressed by the water conduits, cisterns and storage facilities which he did find at Alamut."

The modern scholars express great doubts as to the historicity of the stories of paradise narrated by Marco Polo. Carl Brockelmann writes in **"History of the Islamic Peoples"** (London, 1959, p. 179) that, "What the Venetian world traveller Marco Polo reported, who some two hundred years later (1271 or 1272) passed through the territory of Alamut, may be mere a legend." Dr. Abbas Hamadani writes in **"The Fatimids"** (Karachi 1962, pp. 50-51) that, "A myth was circulated in much later times to the effect that Hasan used to give *hashish*, an intoxicating drug, to his followers, and in their state of unconsciousness they were transferred to a false paradise. The legend of paradise was circulated by the European traveller Marco Polo, and it is obviously false." Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi writes in **"Iran - Royalty, Religion and Revolution"** (Canberra, 1980, p. 72) that, "The romantic stories of the order of assassins and of the Old Man of the Mountain are familiar to Western readers through the pages of Marco Polo, but the legends surrounding events in Alamut, although fascinating, are far from truth." According to **"The Arabs"** (by the editors of **Encyclopaedia Britannica**, New York, 1978, p. 94) that, "Stories of the terrorists' use of *hashish* before setting out to commit murder and face martyrdom are doubtful, and there is no Ismaili source to confirm tales of an artificial paradise into which drugged members were taken as a foretaste of eternal bliss." Duncan Forbes also writes in **"The Heart of Iran"** (London, 1963, p. 29) that, "It is difficult to believe that the Alamut valley, austere and rocky as it is today, ever contained the delicate gardens described in the Middle Ages." Lastly, in falsifying the tale of paradise, William Marsden writes in **"The Travels of Marco Polo"** (London, 1818, p. 117) that, "We may affect to smile at his (Marco Polo's) credulity."

It must be borne in mind that a less informed Ismaili historian, called Dehkhoda Abdul Malik bin Ali, who was appointed the commander of the fortress, later on became known as the Maimundiz in Rabi I, 520/April, 1126; gives few important details under the year 536/1142, as cited by Rashiduddin's "**Jamiut Tawarikh**" (ed. B. Karimi, Tehran, 1959, pp. 149-163), and Abul Kassim Kashani's "**Zubdat al-Tawarikh**" (ed. M.T. Danishpazhuh, 1964, pp. 171-4) that the Khurramiya, a sect of the Kaysania, had greatly borrowed the teachings of the Mazdakites and Zoroastrians. To sum up, by Khurramiya one means the whole wide movement which operated through out Iran, with a possible focus in Azerbaijan and Tabaristan. The very meaning of **Khurramiya** appears uncertain to the authors dealing with it. It is usually related to the meaning of the Iranian term **Khurram** (joyful, delightful or pleasing), so as to stigmatise the movement as "licentious" and justify its dependence on Mazdakism, which was considered as too tolerant from the point of view of ethics. This dependence, however, was occasionally related to Mazdak's wife, **Khurrama**, held to have given her name to Mazdak's followers after his death. There is also a geographical explanation of the name from a village, called **Khurram**, which is the least likely interpretation.

It appears that most of the followers of Khurramiya espoused Ismailism in Jabal al-Badain at Azerbaijan, and asserted that: "this is the true faith, we accept it." Hasan bin Sabbah deputed Dehkhoda Kaykhosrow, who had formerly belonged to them; to teach them the true Ismaili doctrines. When the latter died in Muharram, 513/May, 1119, his sons Abul Ala and Yousuf took his place as their **dais**. Both were greedy of wealth and power, and in pursuit, they neglected their newly faith of Ismailism. Hasan bin Sabbah exhorted and warned them, but to no avail. After Hasan bin Sabbah's death in 518/1124, a weaver named Budayl arose among them, and renounced Ismaili faith. He taught his followers that: "**The law of the Shariah is only for those adhering to the exterior of religion. There is no reality to what is declared lawful or forbidden in religion. Prayers and fasting must therefore be abandoned.**" Curiously, Budayl also taught them that: "**Woman were the water of the house. Dowry and marriage contract had no meaning. Daughters were lawful for their fathers and brothers.**" Hence, they thought all forbidden things licit, and believed that the paradise and



hell were on earth and that every one who recognizes the divinity of Abul Ala and Yousuf would return to earth in human shape, while those failing to do so would return in the form of wild beasts. In sum, these were the people whose doctrines consisted in rolling up the carpet of obligations of the *Shariah*, so as to render men free to follow all their pleasures and passions in permitting freedom of sexual relations and declaring as permitted all sorts of things prohibited by the religious laws.

When these became erroneously known publicly as the teachings of Hasan bin Sabbah, the Ismailis seized some of the heretics. Abul Ala and Yousuf then were apprehended on 9th Rabi II, 537/October 31, 1142 during the period of Imam al-Mohtadi, and were scourged to death. Within a year, the rest of the heretics were searched and executed.

It would be therefore, absurd to believe that the doctrines of the Khurramiya sect, whose one group embraced Ismailism and then reverted to their former cults; may be attributed to the teachings of Hasan bin Sabbah. It is a landmark point worth consideration that the aggressive sources have blindly mixed up the doctrines of the Khurramiya sect with the teachings of the Ismailis and their baseless and capricious narratives were used to discredit the Ismailis.

### **Kiya Buzrug Ummid**

The word *Kiya* means lord or ruler, as he was the second *bufta* and ruler after Hasan bin Sabbah, who most probably was born in 455/1062 in the peasant family of Rudhbar. He passed most of his childhood in Rudhbar in cultivation of the land of his father. He was not, however, related by marriage to the local Caspian rulers, as is mentioned in few sources. In reality, it was a sister of a Zaidi ruler of Daylam, called Kiya Buzrug al-Da'i ila'l-Haq bin al-Hadi (d. 551/1156); and not Kiya Buzrug Ummid's sister, who is recorded as being the wife of Hazarasf bin Fakhr ad-Dawla Namavar, the Baduspanid ruler of Rustamdar and Ruyan. The latter's son Kayka'us (d. 560/1164), who adhered to Zaidism and ruled for 37 years, was the sworn enemy of the Ismailis. Hazarasf's grandson, Hazarasf bin Shahrnush (d. 586/1190), however, procured close relation with the Ismailis. It must also be remembered that a certain Kiya Buzrug, and not Kiya Buzrug Ummid, had

married a daughter of Shah Ghazi Rustam bin Ala ad-Dawla Ali, who later became the Bawandid ruler of Mazandaran and Gilan between 534/1140 and 558/1163. The Bawandid was an Iranian dynasty who reigned from 45/665 to 750/1349. Shah Ghazi Rustam was an enemy of the Ismailis, and fought with them on numerous occasions with the help of the Seljuqids. His daughter was however married to the Baduspanid ruler, Shahrnush bin Hazarasf bin Namavar, who cemented cordial relations with the Ismailis.

Kiya Buzrug Ummid had been a handsome young page, whom Hasan bin Sabbah had converted before almost 480/1087. He played a leading role during the possession of Alamut in 483/1090. He was an outstanding organizer, talented *dai* and an able administrator. Hasan bin Sabbah had sent him with a troop to conquer the fortress of Lamasar in 489/1095. He thus defeated a certain Rasmusuj and took possession of Lamasar, also known as *Rudhbar-i Alamut*.

According to "*Jamiut Tawarikh*" (pp. 27-8), "The fort of Lamasar was situated on a rotten hill, with a few decayed houses on it, with no vegetation nearby. The climate of the place was very hot. Kiya Buzrug Ummid fortified the castle and cut the rocks to build a canal from a point on the Nine-rud, two and a half farsakhs away, which could supply water to the fort. The fort was thus irrigated. Water reservoirs were made and trees were planted and the fort began to look a royal rest house (*Khushk*) in a garden. It was put in charge of Kiya Buzrug Ummid." Since then, he controlled the affairs of Lamasar till the death of Hasan bin Sabbah, and thereafter, he was summoned in Alamut to take charge of the Nizari Ismaili state in accordance with the orders of the Imam.

Kiya Buzrug was confronted with the animosity of the local *amirs* as soon as he assumed the power. In 518/1124, some 700 innocent Ismailis had been butchered mercilessly near the Postern gate (*bab as-sirr*) at Amid (the Roman *Amida*) in Diyar Bakr.

It appears that sultan Sanjar had refrained from launching further operations, possibly due to his pact with Alamut. When Alamut came to be governed by Kiya Buzrug, sultan Sanjar took militant stance to test the capability of the new leadership of the Ismailis. In 520/1126, he sent a large army at the command of his vizir against Turaythith in Kohistan, as well as Bayhaq and Tarz in the district of



Nishapur, with orders to massacre the local Ismailis and sack their properties. This expedition sent from Khorasan had been fissioned of no result. The expedition sent in the same year by sultan Muhammad to Rudhbar at the command of Asil, the nephew of Anushtagin Shirgar was repulsed by the Ismaili warriors. Another Seljuq attack in the same year was also foiled by the Ismailis of Rudhbar, who captured one of the enemy's **amirs**, Tamurtughan. He was taken prisoner to Alamut for some months. Tamurtughan was however released upon the request of sultan Sanjar.

During the rule of Kiya Buzrug, several other fortresses were seized, including Mansura and others in Taliqan, while a few castles were built, such as Sa'adatkuh and Mansura in 521/1127.

In 523/1129, the sultan Muhammad entered into peace negotiations with the Ismailis, and for this purpose, he invited Alamut to send an envoy to Ispahan. Kiya Buzrug dispatched Khoja Muhammad Nassihi Shahrastani. But the discussions proved abortive as the Ismaili emissary and his colleagues had been killed by some of the town people while they were leaving the Seljuq court. The sultan disclaimed the responsibility, also rejecting to punish the assassins. Thus, the Ismaili forces, in reprisal attacked Qazwin, killing 400 persons and taking away much booty.

Sultan Muhammad executed another unsuccessful raid at Alamut district; while an army was also sent from Iraq in 525/1131 against Lamasar with 30,000 soldiers, but of no avail. Meanwhile, Sultan Muhammad died and his army retreated, and after that the fortress of Lamasar was never invaded.

By the end of Kiya Buzrug's reign, the Ismailis had clearly established an independent state of their own. This state primarily consisted of two areas in Iran, namely Rudhbar and a large tract of Kohistan, as well as the southern part of the Jabal Bahra in Syria. At the same time, there were non-Ismailis, including Sunnis, Ithna Asharis, Zaidis and Nusairis living in the areas dominated by the Ismailis. The Nizari state had its own mint as an accepted territorial rule. Kiya Buzrug's adoption of the role of a territorial ruler and his acceptance by others as such, are strikingly demonstrated by the flight to Alamut in 530/1136 with his followers of a certain Seljuq

**amir** Yaranqush, an old enemy of the Ismailis. He was dislodged from his *iqta* (an administrative grant of land) by Khwarazmshah and took refuge at Alamut. According to "Jamiut Tawarikh" (p. 142), the Shah asked for his surrender, arguing that he had been a friend of the Ismailis, while Yaranqush had been their enemy. Kiya Buzrug refused to deliver him to Khwarazmshah, saying: "I cannot reckon as an enemy anyone who places himself under my protection." This reflects indeed a chivalrous and greatness of Kiya Buzrug.

Kiya Buzrug Ummid excelled in his works that Hasan bin Sabbah had reposed in him. He died on 26th Jumada I, 532/February 9, 1138 after ruling for 14 years, and was buried next to the tomb of Hasan bin Sabbah. He was succeeded as the third ruler by his son Muhammad bin Kiya, whom he designated only three days before his death according to the order of the Imam. According to "Rawzatus-Safa" (4th vol., p. 78) that, "The enemies of Kiya Buzrug became joyful and insolent, but they were made soon to realize that their hopes were vain."

#### **Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug Ummid**

Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug was born in 490/1097 probably in the fortress of Lamasar. He was given training by his father, and proved an able and competent administrator. He was assisted by his one young brother Kiya Ali, who led many expeditions and died in 538/1144. In the early part of Muhammad bin Kiya's reign, the area under the control of Alamut was extended in Daylam and Gilan, where several new castles were taken or constructed, such as Sa'adatkuh, Mubarakkuh and Firuzkuh. These castles were acquired chiefly through the efforts of an Ismaili commander, called Kiya Muhammad bin Ali Khusaro Firuz. The Ismailis are also reported to have extended their mission to Georgia, and penetrated their influence in an entirely new region, Ghor (also called Ghoristan), to the east of Kohistan, between Ghazna and Herat in central Afghanistan, around 550/1155 during the period of the Ghorid ruler Alauddin (544-556/1149-1161). His son and successor Saifuddin Muhammad (d. 558/1163) was a deadly enemy of the Ismailis, and conducted a massacre of the Ismaili *dais* and the new converts in 557/1162 at Ghor. Henceforward, it became a tradition of the Ghorids to hunt and kill the



Ismailis in Afghanistan and India. Ghiasuddin (d. 599/1203), the nephew of Alauddin ascended the throne, who appointed his brother, Muhammad to the government of Ghazna with a title of Shihabuddin. After the death of Ghiasuddin, his brother Shihabuddin Muhammad rose to the power, assuming the title of Muizzuddin instead of Shihabuddin, who made several military operations in India.

Meanwhile, the northern Iranian Ismailis were confronted with Shah Ghazi Rustam bin Ala ad-Dawla Ali (534-558/1140-1163), the Bawandid ruler of Mazandaran and Gilan. It is recounted that Shah Girdbaz, the son of Shah Ghazi, was sent to Khorasan to serve at the court of Sanjar, but he had been killed by the Ismailis in 537/1142, and in another attempt, Shah Ghazi himself was rescued. The sources at our disposal admit that the Bawandid ruler Shah Ghazi shook his hand with the Seljuqs and fought the Ismailis on numerous occasions, and also invaded Alamut, which remained foiled all the times. He however seized the castles of Mihrin and Mansurakuh from the Ismailis in Qummis. On one occasion, Shah Ghazi attacked on the Ismaili inhabitants of Rudhbar and devastated their properties. He had reportedly killed a large number of the Ismailis and erected towers of their heads.

In 535/1141, the Ismailis are said to have killed their deadly enemy Jawhar, the Seljuqid commander in Sanjar's camp in Khorasan. Abbas, the Seljuq *amir* of Ray, had slaughtered a large number of the Ismailis in reprisal. He also raided the Ismaili localities near Alamut. His terrible operations remained continued, therefore, the Ismailis sent an emissary to sultan Sanjar in 541/1146, asking his intervention in this context. It appears that Abbas did not refrain from his hostilities despite several attempts of Sanjar. He was however killed on his way to Baghdad, and the Seljuqs sent his head to Alamut.

The Seljuqid sultan Sanjar once arrived in Ray, where he had been misinformed the doctrines of the Ismailis. He sent his messenger to Alamut to know the creeds of the Ismailis. The Ismailis gave a reply to the messenger that, "It is our principle to believe in the grandeur and greatness of God, to obey His ordinances, to act on the *Shariah* as shown by God in Koran and by His Prophet, and to have a faith in dooms-day, reward and punishments of deeds. No one is authorized to alter these ordinances at

his will." The messenger was further told, "Tell to your king that these are our beliefs. It is well if he is satisfied, otherwise send his scholar, so that we may discuss with him." It appears that Sultan Sanjar refrained from his inimical attitude towards the Ismailis after getting above reply. Juvaini (p. 682) writes that, "I saw several of Sanjar's firmans which had been preserved in their (Ismailis) library (of Alamut) and in which he conciliated and flattered them; and from these, I was able to deduce the extent to which the sultan connived at their actions and sought to be on peaceful terms with them. In short, during his reign they (the Ismailis) enjoyed ease and tranquillity."

The promising time for Ismaili Imam's appearance from *dawr-i satr* (concealment period) was very near, therefore, Imam al-Kahir bin al-Mohtadi bin al-Hadi bin al-Nizar took over the power of Nizari state from Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug in 554/1159 and designated him as his vizir.

Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug died on 3rd Rabi I, 557/February 20, 1162 and was buried next to the tombs of Hasan bin Sabbah and Kiya Buzrug Ummid. He governed as a ruler for 22 years, and 2 years as a vizir of al-Kahir.

Hitherto, the Nizari Ismaili rule in Alamut had been governed by the following three *hujjats* as the territorial rulers:-

1. Hasan bin Sabbah : 483-518/1090-1124
2. Kiya Buzrug Ummid : 518-532/1124-1138
3. Muhammad bin Kiya : 532-554/1138-1159

Henceforward, the Ismaili Imams themselves began to govern both the political and religious affairs in Alamut, and before that, there were three Imams in concealment. It must be known that in the veiled era, according to the Ismailis, the Imam would have to be represented by his *hujjat* among his followers. Thus, the *hujjat* was himself a living proof, acting as the custodian until the time of the Imam's reappearance. In sum, when the Imam is concealed, his *hujjat* must be visible to act as a link between the Imam and the followers. The extant sources



however admit that Hasan bin Sabbah, Kiya Buzrug Ummid and Muhammad bin Kiya had executed themselves as the *hujjats*, which is one of the strongest evidences to admit that one Imam in every time indeed existed in Alamut. The term *hujjat* in the Ismailis was ample to understand the existence of the Imam in concealment; known only to his *hujjat*.

The brief biographies of the three concealed Imams are given below:-

**AL-HADI BIN AL-NIZAR (490-530/1097-1136)**

Abu Ali Hasan, or Ali, surnamed al-Hadi was born in Cairo in 470/1076. He was about 17 years old on the eve of the death of Imam al-Mustansir, and 20 years during assumption of Imamate in 490/1097. Henceforward, the seat of Imamate transferred from Egypt to Iran owing to the bifurcation among the Ismailis, where Hasan bin Sabbah had founded the Ismaili state in the fortress of Alamut.

Imam al-Nizar is reported to have been killed in Cairo, most probably in 490/1097 in imprisonment. Hafiz Abru (d. 833/1430) writes in his "*Majma al-Tawarikh-i Sultaniyya*" (p. 242) that, "Only one of al-Nizar's sons was arrested with him, and the other son disappeared in Alexandria, who was neither arrested nor recognised." This seems an erroneous account, as the arrested sons were Abu Abdullah al-Hasan and Abu Abdullah al-Hussain, who were prominent figures in the Fatimid court. The third son under shadow was Ali al-Hadi, who had managed to escape from Alexandria.

After the death of al-Nizar, there appeared no Nizari Ismailis opposition in Egypt against the ruling Fatimid empire. Certain influences of the Nizari Ismailis however have been known in Egypt, whom according to "*Tarikh-i Misr*" by Ibn Muyassar, Hasan bin Sabbah is said to have sent material aids in 518/1123-4. It is reported that al-Afdal closed down the Dar al-Hikmah where he found many professions supporting the cause of al-Nizar. Ibn Zafir (d. 613/1216) states in "*Akhbar ad-Dawla al-Munqatia*" (pp. 97-111) that the two sons of al-Nizar rebelled in turn after escaping from prison. Abu Abdullah al-Hasan rebelled against al-Hafiz (524-544/1131-1149) in 528/1133,

while Abu Abdullah al-Hussain rose against al-Adid (555-567/1160-1171). in 557/1161, assuming the title of al-Muntasir billah. These rebellions ultimately were suppressed due to having handful supporters, but it most possibly forced the Fatimid authority to focus their attention upon the handful followers of al-Nizar in Egypt, resulting al-Nizar's third son, al-Hadi to escape from their notice.

It appears from the historical report that al-Nizar had managed to send away his son and successor al-Hadi in Maghrib before his submission through his most confident follower, named Abu'l Hasan as-Sa'idi. It is almost certain that they boarded a vessel from Alexandria for Meila, and after crossing Mount Bouiblan and Muluya river, they reached at Rissani, near Erfoud and stayed in the house of al-Nizar's aunt in Sijilmasa. Ali bin Yousuf (480-500/1087-1106), the Almoravid ruler had captured Sijilmasa in 450/1056 and dominated it when al-Hadi had been there. Al-Hadi however kept his identity completely secret in Sijilmasa.

The narrative of al-Nizar, however, in "**Kitab al-Akhbar wa'l Athar**" by Muhammad Abu'l Makrem is absolutely inaccurate and far from the truth. It recounts that the escaping Imam from Alexandria was al-Nizar himself, who came in Sijilmasa, and then made his way to the castle of Alamut. This narrative is most probably spurious as it does not occur in any well-established sources. Ibn Khallikan, Ibn Athir, Ibn Khaldun and Makrizi are the accredited authorities on Fatimid history, and they also admit that al-Nizar was taken prisoner to Cairo, and was killed in the prison. De Lacy O'Leary is an outstanding European scholar, who had investigated the primary sources of Fatimid period, and writes in "**The Short History of the Fatimid Khilafat**" (London, 1923, p. 212) that, "Nizar's subsequent life is totally unknown. He was either imprisoned in absolute secrecy, or put to death: stories were told of both these ends, but nothing was ever known for certain." It seems that the entire matter was over in the beginning of 489/1096, because al-Musta'li had intimated the whole story to the governors of his realm through a letter dated 8th Safar, 489/February, 1096.

Granted for a while that al-Nizar had escaped from Alexandria, then it is most possible that al-Afdal had not returned to Cairo and had made an intensive search.



Besides the preceding, his most confident supporter, Iftigin had also accompanied him, had al-Nizar made his secret way out of Alexandria. It is therefore, not possible to value the doubtful version of Muhammad Abu'l Makrem.

The Nizari Ismaili influence also penetrated in the Maghrib, and we are told that some of the followers of al-Nizar in Berber tribe had engineered revolts against the later Fatimid rulers from their base in the Maghrib, which was not in the Fatimid control since 442/1050.

It seems probable that Abu'l Hasan as-Sa'idi had moved from Sijilmasa with Imam al-Hadi after the death of al-Musta'li in 495/1095. After a long and tedious journey, they alighted in the vicinity of Rudhbar, the chief city of Daylam in Iran after crossing the ranges of Mount Taliqan. Since Alamut was immured and stormed ceaselessly by the Seljuqs at that time, al-Hadi had to conceal either in the villages of Rudhbar, or in some remote place. He was taken to the vicinity of Alamut after restoration of peace, which was only known to Hasan bin Sabbah and none else. He caused Imam's dwelling in a village at the foot of Alamut. Abu'l Hasan as-Sa'idi is said to have stayed about six months, and then he returned to Egypt. Imam al-Hadi finally made his footing in the castle of Alamut after the death of Hasan bin Sabbah in 518/1124.

The period under review denotes the second *dawr-i satr* of the Ismaili history (490-559/1097-1164), wherein three Imams lived in concealment during about 70 years, viz. al-Hadi, al-Muhtadi and al-Kahir. During the period of *satr*, the Ismaili *hujjats* governed the Nizari state, viz. Hasan bin Sabbah, Kiya Buzrug Ummid and Muhammad bin Kiya.

The tradition widely famous about al-Hadi's arrival in Iran consists of very meagre details. The Ismaili tradition is cited in the later sources, namely "**Dabistan al-Mazahib**" (comp. in 1653), "**Janat al-Amal**" (comp. in 1886), "**Athar-i Muhammadi**" (comp. in 1893) etc. It reads:- "It is recounted by the Ismailis of Rudhbar and Kohistan that during the time of Hasan bin Sabbah, Abu'l Hasan as-Sa'idi, one of the confident persons, came in Alamut and brought a son of al-Nizar bin al-Mustansir, who was a legitimate Imam. Nobody except Hasan bin Sabbah knew about this secrecy. Hasan bin Sabbah treated Abu'l Hasan as-Sa'idi with honour and consideration and caused the Imam

to dwell in a village at the foot of Alamut. Abu'l Hasan as-Sa'idi was allowed to return back after six months. Imam remained engaged in divine worship in seclusion, and then betrothed to a woman in that village, who bore a son, named al-Mohtadi."

It ensues from a careful examination that the whole story of about 10 years has been packed and summed in the above single tradition. Al-Hadi was brought from Maghrib through the routes of Egypt, while the tradition simply indicates his arrival from Egypt to Iran. Secondly, it admits that this tradition was widely known among the Ismailis of Rudhbar and Kohistan, which must have been famous possibly long after the departure of al-Hadi from those places. Thirdly, Hasan bin Sabbah caused the living of al-Hadi at the foot of Alamut, which was only known to him, gives further clue to understand that the existence of al-Hadi around Alamut was also kept secret. Fourthly, it speaks al-Hadi's marriage in that village and the birth of his son. It transpires that al-Hadi would have been in the village till 500/1106 when his son al-Mohtadi was born. Fifthly, Ata Malik Juvaini has quoted the last will of Hasan bin Sabbah, whose concluding lines run:- **"And he charged, until such time as the Imam came to take possession of his kingdom"** (p. 682). It also indicates that al-Hadi was yet in the vicinity of Alamut when Hasan bin Sabbah died in 518/1124. These narratives conclusively seem to show that al-Hadi had come in the castle after 518/1124. He must have inspected the administrative fabric and the Ismaili mission from Kiya Buzrug, and then had gone to live in the castle of Lamasar most probably after 526/1132.

Another less reliable story relates that the Imam brought from Egypt to Alamut was al-Mohtadi, the grandson of al-Nizar. This story seems to have been prevalent in the orbits, who believed that al-Nizar had only two sons and were imprisoned with him. It has been heretofore discussed that the whereabouts of al-Hadi had not been exposed in Cairo, and instead, the two other sons of al-Nizar were familiar in the court of Egypt. These sons had been also taken prisoners in Alexandria, which was enough for their opponents to cultivate a report that they had also arrested all the sons of al-Nizar. The age of al-Hadi was about 16-17 years during the ascension of al-Nizar, and those who definitely knew him, had spoken of him as the **minor son** of al-Nizar, which was a term continued to be



employed for al-Hadi till his arrival in Alamut after 518/1124 when he was about 50 years old. On that juncture, the scholars seem to have drawn the conclusion that the arriving *minor son* of al-Nizar in Alamut should have been the son of al-Hadi, who was also 17-18 years old at that time. The theory of *minor son* thus became specific for al-Mohtadi, making him born in Egypt too. There is probably much truth in the traditional view, according to which the marriage of al-Hadi was actualised in the village at the foot of Alamut, and his son al-Mohtadi was the first Nizari Imam to be born in Iran, and therefore, the above assumption, purporting the arrival of al-Mohtadi seems doubtful and indecipherable.

It must be noticed that the major part of the life of al-Hadi passed in the shadow of the striking personalities of Hasan bin Sabbah and Kiya Buzrug Ummid. Abu Muhammad al-Iraqi in his "*al-Firaq*" (Ms. 791 in the library of Sulemaniyya mosque, Istanbul) compiled soon after the fall of Alamut in 654/1256, and Zakariya Qazwini (1203-1283) in "*Athar al-Bilad wa-Akhbar al-Ibad*" (comp. in 661/1263) admit the very presence of al-Hadi in Alamut. The Egyptian historian Ibn Muyassar (1231-1278) writes in "*Tarikh-i Misr*" (p. 68) that, "Hasan bin Sabbah introduced an Imam to his successors during his death-bed."

Imam al-Hadi continued to guide his followers in the religious matters through Kiya Buzrug from Lamasar without making public appearance. The fragments of the traditions inform nothing for him. It is however sparsely recorded that there had been an open ground inside the castle of Lamasar, where he used to take interest in horse-riding and its breeding. It is also said that al-Hadi used to visit several times in the vicinity of Lamasar at night on horse in seclusion, and distributed foods and clothes to the poor villagers.

Imam al-Hadi died in 530/1136 at the age of 60 years, after bequeathing the office of the Imamate to his son, al-Mohtadi, when Kiya Buzrug was governing the Ismaili state in Alamut.

Muhammad bin Ali, surnamed al-Mohtadi is reported to have born in 500/1106 in the fortress of Lamasar. He was the first Ismaili Nizari Imam to be born in Iran. He is also called Muhtab and Muhammad I.

The Seljuq sultan Sanjar was ruling in Iran, while Iraq was under the control of sultan Masud. Sultan Malikshah III (547-548/1152-1153) was followed by Sanjar, and then Muhammad II (548-555/1153-1160). In Baghdad, the Abbasid caliph Rashid (529-530/1135-1136) had been dethroned by sultan Masud, and Muktadi had been placed on the throne, who ruled till 555/1160. He was harsh against the Ismailis, and caused the manuscripts of "**Ikhwan as-Safa**" burnt in Baghdad, alongwith the writings of Ibn Sina in 545/1150. In Egypt, the Fatimid empire was in the hand of Abdul al-Hafiz (524-544/1130-1149), succeeded by al-Zafir (d. 549/1154) and al-Faiz (d. 555/1160).

Al-Mohtadi is said to have reorganized the Ismaili mission from his base in Lamasar. In 530/1136, he deputed **dai** Zayn bin Abi Faraj in Syria with a sealed letter. This letter is preserved in the manuscript of a **dai** Ibrahim bin Abi'l Fawaris, who copied it on 16th Shawal, 890/1502, in which al-Mohtadi addressed to his Syrian followers that:

*"Verily, I am your Mawla Muhammad bin Ali bin Nizar. May God curse one who denies to believe the truth and covers it. We have charged dai Zayn ibn Abi Faraj ibn Abi'l Hasan ibn Ali with this pledge to make the truth cleared for you for the manifestation of the truth...."*

In this letter, al-Mohtadi traces his lineage from al-Nizar for four times, and concludes that, "After the termination of the 40th time (*dawr-i arb'in*), and (then) also after passing away of the 70th period (*mudatu's sab'in*), the time will be approaching for the appearance of the manifest truth (*haq-i mubin*) that will cause all the matters to obliterate and the earth will be glorified with the light of faith. The truth with His word (i.e., Imam) shall manifest in near future in the hearts of the seekers of gnosis."



The above letter had been written as soon as al-Mohtadi assumed the Imamate in 530/1136, describing the passing away of 40 years of *dawr-i satr* (concealment period) from 490/1097. He also foretold the appearance of an Imam in his descent after completion of 70 years on the whole. It was a prediction most probably for the Great Resurrection (*qiyamat-i qubra*) celebrated by Imam Hasan II, the grandson of al-Mohtadi, in 559/1164.

Kiya Buzrug had laid a firm foundation of the Nizari state for an independent territorial rule, and also minted the Nizari coin. He died in 532/1138 after ruling for 14 years. Al-Mohtadi appointed his son Muhammad bin Kiya as the third *hujjat* and ruler.

#### The Nizarid coinage at Alamut

In 1966, the American Numismatic Society, New York acquired a great rarity of a coin, minted in 553/1158. It was illustrated in the American Numismatic Society's Annual Report for 1966 (pl.III,2). George C. Miles gave its detail in "Coins of the Assassins of Alamut" (*Orientalia Lovaniensa Periodica*, 3-5, 1972-74, pp. 155-162). Its size is 14 mm., weighing 0.635 gm. Its obverse side bears the name, "Muhammad bin (Kiya) Buzrug Ummid" and in the marginal legend, the name of the mint, *Kursi al-Daylam* and the date 553 A.H. (1158 A.D.) have been clearly inscribed. The reverse area begins with the Shiite formula: "Ali is the friend of God" and the next three lines read: "*al-Mustapha li dinillah, Nizar*" (*Nizar, the chosen for the religion of God*). These three lines are followed by the marginal legend: "*amir al-mo'minin, salwat Allah alayhi wa-ala aba'ih al-tahirin wa-abna'hi al-akramin*" (*the blessings of God be upon him and upon his ancestors, the pure ones; and upon his descendants, the most honourable ones*).

George C. Miles reproduced the photographs of the following six coins:



There are few other coins minted at *kursi al-Daylam* with the same legends, differing only in dates.

It implies that the six coins from above had been struck during the Imamate of al-Mohtadi (530-552/1136-1157), and the two coins during the period of his successor, al-Kahir (552-557/1157-1162). It must be remembered that the early Imams in Alamut lived in concealment. They could show their slight appearances, but not whereabouts. None among them had taken power of the Nizari state at that time, and therefore, the name of the ruler, *Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug* (532-557/1138-1162) was struck in the coins for governing the state. Paula Sanders however remarks in his *"Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo"* (New York, 1994, p. 85) that, "The authority of the Fatimid caliph was challenged by the coins struck by the Nizaris at Alamut in the name of Nizar."

The above coins however bear the benedictory words, invoking the prayers for al-Nizar, his ancestors and his descendants. This antique and numismatic evidence further concludes that the descendants of al-Nizar in fact existed in Alamut, and rules out an idea of the historians, purporting the discontinuation of the Nizarid line. Ibn Khallikan (1211-1282) writes in his *"Wafayat al-A'yan"* (tr. de Slane, Paris, 1868, 1st vol., p. 160) that, "Nizar is the person from whom the Ismaili princes (Imams), the possessors of the fortress of Alamut and other castles in Persia; trace their descent."



Meanwhile, the Seljuq sultan Daud, who had severely domineered on the Ismailis in Azerbaijan and was becoming a major threat. In 538/1143, four Ismaili *fidais* had to kill him at Tabriz to avoid further massacres.

#### **Analysis of the fictitious story in "Athar-i Muhammadi"**

Muhammad Taqi bin Ali Reza compiled "Athar-i Muhammadi" in 1310/1893, dealing with the history of the Ismaili Imams. It relates one incredible story that Kiya Buzrug Ummid had made a will to his son, Muhammad bin Kiya that he must give up the power in favour of al-Mohtadi when he grew young. One day, when Muhammad bin Kiya asked about it to al-Mohtadi, the latter said, "This is the task of my son Hasan after our death." Muhammad bin Kiya feared to hear it, since al-Mohtadi had no male issue at that time. When al-Mohtadi was at death-bed, he summoned Muhammad bin Kiya, and said, "My wife is expecting a child. You take her to your house after me and do not make a little snag in her treatment. She will bear a son, whom you name "Hasan", because he will be like his forefather in beauty, virtue, knowledge, ethic, fame and grandeur. You must consider him as your own son, and deliver him the power." Thus, Muhammad bin Kiya acted upon these instructions.

Granted that the above story is historically genuine, then it implies that al-Kahir would have been born in 552/1157 immediately after the death of his father, al-Mohtadi. It determines the age of al-Kahir for five years when he died in 557/1162, which is absolutely false.

Secondly, the above story indicates the name of the son of al-Mohtadi as "Hasan" instead of al-Kahir, brushing off the historicity of al-Kahir. Granted for a while that the son of al-Mohtadi was Hasan, then it means that Hasan (or Hasan II) was hardly nine years old during his death in 561/1166, which is also unbelievable. In sum, the story of "Athar-i Muhammadi" referred to above is quite fictitious and contrary to the Ismaili traditions.

Al-Mohtadi was also taking care of the horses bred by his father in the fortress of Lamasar. He is also reported to have taken visits of surrounding castles in Rudhbar. He died in 552/1157 at the age of 52 years. He had vested the office of Imamate in his elder son, al-Kahir.

**AL-KAHIR BIN AL-MUHAMMAD (552-557/1157-1162)**

Hasan bin Muhammad bin Ali, surnamed al-Kahir bi-Quwatullah, or al-Kahir bi-Ahkami'l was born in 520/1126. His official name with Alamut's records was Hasan bin Muhammad, also known as Hasan I.

In Baghdad, the Abbasid caliph Muktafi (d. 555/1160) was ruling at that time, and was succeeded by caliph Mustanjid (d.566/1170). In Iran, the Seljuq sultan Muhammad I (d. 555/1160) was succeeded by Suleman Shah (d. 556/1161) and Arslan (d.571/1176). In Egypt, the Fatimid ruler al-Faiz (d.555/1160) was followed by al-Adid (d. 567/1171), the last ruler in the Fatimid descent.

The period of al-Kahir was very peaceful, because Seljuq had waged not a single war against the Ismailis. The Nizari state had been recognized by the neighbouring rulers, and the Nizari coinage was also in circulation. The *dawr-i satr* was almost on the verge of completion, therefore, al-Kahir pre-arranged its celebration in his own period. It appears that he intended few major changes in Alamut, and therefore, he resolved to take over the power from Muhammad bin Kiya. In 554-5/1160, al-Kahir moved to Alamut, and caused a small gathering of the faithfuls, and took the charges from Muhammad bin Kiya in a simple indoor ceremony. He also received a ceremonial oath of allegiance from Muhammad bin Kiya and the followers. He declared Muhammad bin Kiya as his vizir and hailed his valuable services. Al-Kahir made a trip round the valley of Alamut on a horse with his new vizir to inspect the administration. The Nizari state entered henceforward into a new era when an Imam began to govern both religious and temporal powers. John Malcolm writes in "History of Persia" (London, 1815, 1st vol., p. 402) that, "Muhammad (bin Kiya Buzrug) probably gave up the name of power, as he constituted himself the vizir of the prince (Imam), whom religious consideration had led him to raise to the dignity of chief ruler."

Most of the extant sources have come down to us from hostile orbits, who have drawn the conclusion that Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug was the third ruler till 557/1162, which is not in affirmity with the Ismaili traditions. Muhammad bin Kiya held the office till 554/1160 as a third ruler, and then al-Kahir himself became the fourth ruler. Muhammad bin Kiya continued his



services as a vizir from 554/1160 till his death in 557/1162.

Mustapha Ghaleb writes in "*A'lam al-Ismailiyya*" (Beirut, 1964. p. 244) that, "Imam al-Kahir executed the affairs of *dawa* and state together with great deal of intelligence and skill, whom he dealt by his own excellent hands. He issued official orders in all the Ismaili territories, informing Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug as his *hujjat* and the supervisor in political and martial affairs as well." Al-Kahir also announced that, "Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug is my *dai*, *hujjat* and special representative. Those who adhere to our doctrines should obey him unitedly in the worldly matters, and comply with his orders, and consider his instructions as if the divine revelation. None should disobey his orders, and remain steadfast therewith, and enforce it as if they are acting for me."

It is learnt that Hasan bin Sabbah had sent some *dais* in Iraq, but owing to the incessant raids of the Seljuq, the Ismailis of Iraq lost their contact with Alamut. The local disputes of the *dais* in Iraq also caused the mission inactive. According to "*A'lm al-Ismailiyya*" (p. 245), "Imam al-Kahir deputed his cousin and a confident *dai*, Abu'l Hasan Sinan bin Suleman bin Muhammad towards Basra, with an instruction to reorganize the mission works. He blessed him with guidance and advices that proved potential in complying the assignment." *Dai* Abu'l Hasan swept off the internal dissensions, and brought the mission of Basra under the Syrian *dais*.

Zahiri Faryabi was also an eminent Ismaili *dai*, who had been sent by al-Kahir to a chief *dai*, Kamaluddin Kohistani for his further training. He was then appointed for the Ismaili mission at Daylam.

Imam al-Kahir died few months after the death of Muhammad bin Kiya at the end of 557/1162 after consigning the Imamate to his son, Hasan II.

It is worthwhile to write that when al-Kahir took power in 554/1160, some misconception took place among the people residing at remote regions, mostly the non-Ismaili Muslims of Qazwin, who cultivated two false theories in the lineage of the Ismaili Imams, which are examined as under:

1. The original name of al-Kahir was *Hasan bin Muhammad bin Ali* and simultaneously, the son of Muhammad bin Kiya also bore the name, *Hasan bin Muhammad*. Both were familiar and close to the people in the vicinity of Alamut. When Muhammad bin Kiya died in 557/1162, it seems that the ignorants considered al-Kahir as his son because of knowing him as *Hasan bin Muhammad*. Besides the preceding, the death of al-Kahir and Muhammad bin Kiya in the same year had been regarded as the death of one character, and that too for Muhammad bin Kiya. This distorted theory had shadowed the historical character of al-Kahir, making him Hasan, the son of Muhammad bin Kiya. When this theory became annulled and ineffectual, it was brushed aside by another following theory.
2. In the second theory, the historicity of al-Kahir has been totally ignored, making his real son, *Hasan Ala Zikrihi's Salam* (or Hasan II) as the son of Muhammad bin Kiya. This theory makes Hasan bin Muhammad bin Kiya and Hasan, the son of al-Kahir as one and same person.

The zealots had designed the history of Alamut almost from the bits and shreds of above imponderable fictions, and contrived the theory of one Hasan, and that too not the son of al-Kahir, but the son of Muhammad bin Kiya, which are in essence against the Ismaili doctrines. It is seen that few historians have lost sight of the right picture in the genuine Ismaili traditions, and nobody tried to shift the truth, but continued to repeat the fictions, whose historicity are highly doubtful.

When an Imam and his successors offically took charge of the Alamut's rule, most of the people and the ruling powers in Iran amplified their bitter propaganda, fearing that the rulers of Alamut in Alid descent would attract a large following in Shiites Iran, and their political influence would also be threatened. The ruling powers did not need to issue any decree against the Imams, but minted a theory that Imam Hasan II was the son of Muhammad bin Kiya, incorporating it with prevalent rumours and tales. Ata Malik Juvaini's objective was to adulterate and pervert the history of the Imams, therefore, he also derived his informations from such forged accounts, and ignored the genuine Ismaili traditions. He designed quite a doubtful history at his full liberty after the



destruction of genuine Ismaili works and documents by the Mongols. This is a sharp weakness of the later and modern sources, indicating a remote possibility, not a strong one.

#### **HASAN ALA ZIKRIHI'S SALAM (557-561/1162-1166)**

Hasan Ali, or Abu'l Hasan, surnamed Zikrihi's Salam (peace be on his mention) was born in Alamut. He is reported to have born in 539/1145, but according to another tradition, he was born in 536/1142.

His other titles were Maliku'r riqab (Lord of the slaves), Maliku'l qulub (Lord of the hearts), Malik as-Salam (Lord of peace), Hasan-i Kabir (Hasan, the great) and Qaim al-Qiyama (Lord of resurrection). Among the Iranian sources, he is widely known as Hasan Ala Zikrihi's Salam, and in the Syrian sources, he is called Aqa dhikrihi al-Salam. Mustapha Qazwini writes in "**Tarikh-i Quzida**" (ed. by Nicholson, Leiden, 1910, p. 523) that, "He was also known as Kura Kiya (Lord of the villages) in Qazwin, a fact which suggests that the people of Qazwin were especially acquainted with him."

The historians call him Hasan II with a view to count Hasan bin Sabbah as Hasan I in the series of Alamut's rulers, while other make his father, al-Kahir as Hasan I and Hasan II to him in the list of Alamut's Imams.

To understand the Muslim world, we must cast a rapid glance over contemporary period that the Abbasid caliph Mustanjid (d. 566/1170) was ruling in Baghdad at that time. The Seljuq sultan Arslan (d. 571/1176) was reigning in Iran. In Egypt, the last ruler of the Fatimid empire was al-Adid (d. 567/1171). The Muslim rules were submerging in declination, therefore, none among them had a courage to attack on Alamut.

According to "**Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period**" (ed. by Young, Latham and Ser Jeuit, London, 1990, p. 245), "Al-Hasan bin Sabbah's two *dai* successors were followed at Alamut by the Imam al-Hasan bin Qahir bin Muhtadi bin Hadi bin Nizar."

Ata Malik Juvaini (1126-1283) compiled "**Tarikh-i Jhangusha**" in 658/ 1260 which stands an early source material. He and later historians are responsible to distort the historical fact and produced an incredible image of the Ismaili history and doctrines. Juvaini's work, to quote W. Barthold in "**Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion**" (London, 1928, p. 40), "has not yet been valued at his deserts." Barthold further writes, "Juvaini is not completely master of his materials; in his narrative there are sometimes flagrant contradictions to be found." (Ibid.) According to "**Historians of the Middle East**" (London, 1962, p. 136), "Juvaini's sources appear to have been purely oral." Sir John Glubb also writes in "**The Lost Centuries**" (London, 1967, p. 271) that, "Juvaini served under Halagu in Persia and was thus perhaps obliged to flatter him." Henry H. Howorth remarks in his "**History of the Mongols**" (London, 1876, 1st vol., pp.20-21) that, "His position prevented Juvaini from being anything but a panegyrist of the Mongols, whose conquests he excuses, and whose western campaign he argues was providentially arranged, so that by their means the religion of Islam might be widely disseminated." D'Ohsson was the first European to have examined the work of Juvaini critically, and accused him of extravagant flattery of the Mongols, vide "**Histoire des Mongols**" (Amsterdam, 1834, 1st vol., p. 20). In the words of Marshall Hodgson, "Juvayni read records in the Alamut Nizari library after its capture, before ordering its destruction. He wrote an account based on these sources, but altered in form to suit an anti-Nizari taste, and decked with curses." (op. cit., p. 26). It is therefore, difficult to determine any exactitude in the hyperbolic words of Juvaini as Marshall Hodgson also regards him, "a special enemy of the Ismailis." (op. cit. p. 274)

Juvaini emphasised in placing Imam Hasan Ala Zikrihi's Salam (Hasan II) as the son of Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug, in a doubtful manner. His objective was to connect the lineage of the Imams with Muhammad bin Kiya. Juvaini and the later historians however had to admit that when Imam Hasan II made his appearance before his followers, thronged at Alamut, none opposed or considered him as the son of Muhammad bin Kiya. If there had been a little doubt, it is possible that they, or a faction must have opposed without taking oath of allegiance, as it is a corner-stone of the Ismaili doctrines that an Imam must be



a son of the Imam. No person can dare or venture on that occasion to claim for Imamate, and if it was true, it must have been claimed in other region, and not inside the castle, where his life was most possibly fraught in danger.

According to "**Dabistan al-Mazahib**" (comp. in 1653, p. 237), "Only the enemies of Hasan Ala Zikrihi's Salam considered him the son of Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug." Dr. Nassih Ahmed Mirza writes in "**Syrian Ismailis at the time of the Crusades**" (an unpublished dissertation, University of Durham, 1963, p. 191) that, "During his (Hasan II) reign, his enemies spread false rumours that he was not a genuine descendant of Nizar, but these slanders were received by his followers with disgust and dissatisfaction. As for the Imam himself, he paid no attention to such slanders, but continued to send orders to his governors and **dais** under his seal and signature which include his family trees, thus ignoring the propaganda of his calumniators."

Juvaini and other attempted to equate Imam Hasan II with Hasan, the son of Muhammad bin Kiya, making them one character, and tried to brush aside the historicity of Hasan II. In sum, Juvaini emphasised from beginning to end that Hasan, the son of Muhammad bin Kiya had impersonated as an Imam. The undeniable thing in the face of facts however reveals that these two persons, each known as Hasan at one time were two separate characters. Dr. Mustapha Ghaleb in "**The Ismailis of Syria**" (Beirut, 1970, pp. 73-74) has appended an important letter of Imam Hasan II, which had been circulated among the Ismailis in 558/1163. This letter itself asserts that both Hasan II and Hasan, the son of Muhammad bin Kiya were two separate persons at one time. It reads:- "Our deputy, al-Hasan bin Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug is our **dai** and **hujjat**. All those who follow our doctrine have to obey him in the religious and civic affairs, and to execute his orders and consider his speeches as ours. We hope that they will not disobey; but be abided by it and act as if it was issued by us."

It must, of course, be borne in mind that there had been three hidden Imams (**al-a'imma al-masturin**) between al-Nizar and Hasan II during the period of **dawr-i satr** in Alamut, whose historicity had been also stamped in the work of Juvaini.

One important Syrian manuscript has been discovered, whose author and date of writing are unknown. The copyist gives his date of writing in 1263/1846. According to Dr. Nassih Ahmed Mirza, "The only clues that can be obtained are from the literary style and from the biographical works of the Imams. These suggest that the date (of the above Ms.) may be taken as sometimes during the second half of the 14th century A.D." (p.176). On pp. 249-250, the author of this Ms. gives the genealogy of Imam Hasan II as "Hasan Ala Zikrihi's Salam bin al-Qahir bin al-Mohtadi bin al-Hadi bin al-Nizar." Dr. Nassih Ahmed Mirza concludes his remarks that, "This is the only available Syrian manuscript which gives the same genealogical tree of the Nizari Imams as the one accepted by the modern Aga Khani Ismailis." (p.176).

Muhibb Ali Qunduzi compiled his "**Irshadu't-talibin di dhikr A'immati'l-Ismailiyya**" in 930/1523 and asserts that there were three hidden Imams between Hasan II and al-Nizar, viz. Hadi, Mohtadi and Qahir. Ghiyasu-din bin Humami'd-din Khondamir (d.941/1534) compiled "**Habibu's-Siyar**" (Bombay, 1857, 3rd vol., p. 77) in 935/1528, also admits that there were three generations between Hasan II and al-Nizar, i.e., Hadi, Mohtadi and Qahir. Abu Ishaq Kohistani, who died in the beginning of the 16th century also writes in "**Haft Bab**" (tr. by W. Ivanow, Bombay, 1959, p. 23) that, "Mawlana Mustansir was succeeded by Mawlana Nizar, Mawlana Hadi, Mawlana Mohtadi, Mawlana Qahir and Mawlana Hasan Ala Zikrihi's Salam."

Among the modern scholars, John Norman Hollister writes in "**The Shia of India**" (London, 1953, p. 314) that, "Nizarin records are scarce having been largely destroyed in the period of Hasan's grandson, or by Halagu Khan when the fortress of Alamut was taken, but the traditions of the sect indicate that there were three Imams during this period: Hadi, son of Nizar, Mahdi or Muhtadi, and Qahir." According to Margoliouth in "**Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics**" (Edinburg, 1974, 2nd vol., p. 141) that, "Hasan II though supposed to be the son of the governor of Alamut, was in reality the heir of this Nizar." W. Ivanow also states in "**Ismailitica**" (Calcutta, 1922, p. 71) that, "The version that Hasan was a lineal descendant of Kiya Buzrug Ummid naturally cannot be of sectarian origin, even should it be true."



## Hasan bin Muhammad bin Kiya Buzrug

Hasan, the son of Muhammad bin Kiya belonged to the peasant family of Rudhbar. Historian Kamaluddin (d. 660/1262) writes in "*Bugyat al-talab fi tarikh al-Halab*" that, "Muhammad bin Kiya had two sons, called Hasan and Hussain, whom he put in school with Rashiduddin Sinan, and gave these three an exact treatment that are needed for supporting the children." Hasan was a learned orator and eminent *dai*. With the courtesy of manner and eloquence words, he won over the greater part of the Ismailis in Rudhbar and Kohistan. He was a famous scholar, and wrote several books on Ismaili doctrines. It is related that a group of persons, failing to distinguish between Imam al-Kahir (also known as Hasan bin Muhammad) and Hasan, the son of Muhammad bin Kiya (also known as Hasan bin Muhammad), began to think the latter as their Imam. When his father Muhammad bin Kiya learnt the story, he assembled the followers of his son and said:- "This Hasan is my son, and I am not the Imam, but one of his *da'is*." According to Marshall Hodgson in "*The Order of Assassins*" (Netherland, 1955, pp. 147-8), "His father at length had to refute this idea at a public meeting, showing that an Imam must be son of an Imam, which Hasan was not."

Muhammad bin Kiya is reported to have taken strict action to finish the rising faction propagating the imamate of his son and put 250 persons to death and expelled about same number of persons from the valley of Alamut. According to Farhad Daftary, "Eventually, Muhammad b. Buzurg-Ummid, who like his predecessors was rigid in his observance of the *Shariah* and the conduct of the *dawa* on behalf of the Imam, was obliged to take drastic action against the radical Nizaris who followed Hasan and believed in his imamate." (op. cit., p. 386).

Hence, Hasan also became apprehensive, and compiled treatises, asserting his innocence of such charge publicly. It seems improbable that once Hasan had asserted, then again would have claimed as an Imam after few years, since his assertions were not only verbal but in writing, which exercised as most trenchant source for a long time. Granted that Imam Hasan II was the son of Muhammad bin Kiya, then he must have refuted the treatises he had written in his father's time. His important treatises however, asserting that he was not an Imam, had been also destroyed with Alamut's library, making the

field open for Juvaini to alter the history at his disposal.

It has been known that Hasan was not present during the celebration *qiyamat-i qubra* in Alamut in 559/1164 as he had been delegated to Syria by Imam Hasan II in 557/1162 as his *hujjat*, and where he is reported to have been killed in 560/1165 at Masiyaf.

#### *Qiyamat-i Qubra in Alamut*

*Qiyamat-i qubra* or *qaim al-qiyama* was a famous occasion commemorated in Alamut on 17th Ramdan, 559/August 8, 1164 when Imam Hasan II came out publicly upon the termination of *dawr-i satr*. In his speech, he announced himself a legitimate Imam in the descent of Imam al-Nizar. Edward G. Browne writes in "*A Literary History of Persia*" (London, 1964, 2nd Vol., p. 454) that, "This Hasan boldly declared himself to be, not the descendant of Kiya Buzrug Ummid, but of the Fatimid Imam Nizar bin al-Mustansir."

The term *qiyama* literally means, "rising" of the dead, and allegorically, it implies an idea denoting the rising to the next spiritual stage, and *qiyamat-i qubra* (great resurrection) means an attainment of the highest degree when a man becomes free from the ties of external laws, whom he shackles and transfigures into spiritual substance, which rejoins its divine sources.

Before we proceed, one pivot point needs to be touched upon. It is seen that Qadi Noman (d. 363/974) wrote in "*Sharhu'l Akhbar*" that, "The religion of Islam will triumph under al-Mahdi and his descendants, so that the present order will end, and the *qiyama* will come under one of his successors." Hamiduddin Kirmani (d. 412/1021) also writes in "*Kitab ar-Riyad*" on the authority of "*Kitabu'l Mahsul*" that, "This *qiyamat al-qubra* is going to arrive when the gates of *talim* will be closed, and the *dawa* suspended by the Imam of the *qiyamat al-qubra*, because by that time the *dawa* will attain its completion." Qalqashandi (d. 812/1418) writes in "*Subh al-A'sha fi Sina'at al-Insha*" (13th vol., p. 245) that, "Hasan bin Sabbah preached the doctrine that the appearance of the *qaim al-zaman* was imminent and that the revelation of the



Imam and his creed were about to take place." The situation of Alamut was not that of the past, therefore, the Imam of the time was to appear before his followers for their spiritual guidance. Marshall Hodgson writes, "No doubt men hoped increasingly that time was near when the Imam himself would return from his hiding, and bring his blessing among them again, as it has been among them in the days of Egyptian glory." (op. cit., p. 147)

Rashiduddin writes in "**Jamiut Tawarikh**" (comp. in 310/1310) that, "On 17th Ramdan of the year 559, he (Imam Hasan II) ordered the people of his territories, whom he had caused to be present in Alamut at that time, to gather together in those public prayers grounds at the foot of Alamut. They set up four large banners of four colors, white, red, yellow and green; which had been arranged for the affairs, at the four corners of the pulpit." Abu Ishaq Kohistani also gives details in his "**Haft Bab**" (pp. 41-2) that, "The followers from Khorasan stood on the right, the followers from (Persian) Iraq on the left of it, and the Daylamites with the followers from Rudhbar stood right opposite. In the middle a chair was placed, facing the minbar (pulpit), and faqihi Muhammad Busti was ordered to mount it. The Khudawand Ala Dhikrihi's Salam, clad in a white garment with a white turban on his head, descended from the fortress about noon and mounted the minbar from the right, in the most perfect manner. Then he pronounced three times the "salam" - first addressing the Daylamites, then turning to the right, and then turning to the left. Then he squatted for a while, then rose and holding his sword..." According to Jorunn J. Buckley in "**The Nizari Ismailites**" (*Studia Islamica*, Paris, 1984, LX, p. 143) that from the top of the pulpit, Hasan II presented a clear and eloquent epistle, and at the end of the address he said, "The Imam of the Time sends you blessings and compassion, calling you his specially selected servants."

Imam Hasan II made his sermons in Arabic. The jurist Muhammad Busti stood up, and translated the Imam's sermons into Persian for those present. It was followed by the ceremony of an oath of allegiance from the cheering followers.

It is a worth consideration to touch here another key point that Imam al-Hadi bin al-Nizar was born in Cairo in 470/1076 and his mother tongue was Arabic. He and his

successors, al-Mohtadi and al-Kahir lived within the domestic environs in Iran in the fortress of Lamasar. They did not come in touch of the outside Iranian society and culture for a long time. It is therefore evident that these three Imams spoke Arabic at home, since their home tongue was in all cases Arabic, and Imam Hasan II was also brought up with the prevalent domestic environment. He, as a result delivered his sermons into Arabic, which is concurred by the historians. Granted that he was the son of Muhammad bin Kiya, who was an Iranian by birth, then he must have delivered his sermons into Persian, and not into Arabic. Secondly, Hasan, the son of Muhammad bin Kiya was hailed from Rudhbar, where he and his forebears were very familiar. The people of Rudhbar during the *qiyama* stood right opposite the pulpit and Hasan II also mounted the pulpit from that side; who could easily see the Imam without distance. Granted that the Imam on the pulpit was Hasan, the son of Muhammad bin Kiya, then it is most likely that the people of Rudhbar had closely perceived him. Since there happened nothing, which affords a further proof that the people of Rudhbar had certainly perceived Hasan II as a son and rightful successor of Imam al-Kahir, and not Hasan, the son of Muhammad bin Kiya, whom they knew well, therefore, one can hardly deny the logic springs from the above arguments. According to the Shiite doctrines, the Imamate cannot be altered or changed in any other descent. Nasiruddin Tusi (1201 -1274) in his "Rawdatu't-Taslim" (ed. and tr. by W. Ivanow, Leiden, 1950, p. 130) quotes Imam Hasan II as saying: **"Know that this Imamate is true, will never go astray, became changed or altered. It was always preserved in the posterity of Mawlana (Ali), and will never become dissociated from them, either in appearance, or in meaning, or reality."** W. Ivanow remarks on the phrase: **"Know that this Imamate is true, will never go astray"** that, "This may mean that the Imamate can never pass to someone, who is not a legitimate successor in the line of Imams." (Ibid) For further study about the genuine lineage of Hasan II, vide **"Genealogy of the Aga Khan"** by Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali, Karachi, 1990.

Most of the Ismaili *dais* of that period had described the above event in their treatises, notably the *fasl* of Hussain bin Abdul Malik, Qadi Masud, Amir Hyder Masud etc., but none is survived. Hitherto, however, one ocular-witness of *qiyamat-i qubra* has been unearthed, who



had not identified himself. He was a *dai* in Qazwin and compiled "**Haft bab-i Baba Sayyid-na**" in 597/1200. His original text is edited by W. Ivanow, vide "**Two Early Ismaili Treatises**" (Bombay, 1933). Marshall Hodgson has rendered its English translation, vide "**The Order of Assassins**" (Netherland, 1955, pp. 279-328). Hasan bin Sabbah, according to the above treatise had foretold the advent of *qiyamat-i qubra*, and said, "When the *qaim* appears, he will sacrifice a camel, and bring forth a red standard" (p. 21). The author further writes, "And all these (signs) I have actually seen in Imam Ala Zikrihi's Salam." (p. 21) He also writes, "Sayyidna Hasan bin Sabbah had sent Hamid as a messenger to Ala Zikrihi's Salam in service and submission, and asked forgiveness of him." Giving his comments on this very passage, Marshall Hodgson writes, "This message from Hasan-i Sabbah to Hasan II must be conceived of in the manner of the traditional greeting of the Prophet to his great-great-grandson, the Imam: he asked one of his young companions to greet the child when it should be born." (op. cit., p. 302)

After the proclamation of the *qiyama*, Hasan II, in his epistles (*fusul*) and addresses, hinted palpably that he himself was the Imam of the Age, the son of an Imam from the progeny of Imam Nizar bin al-Mustansir billah.

Writing on *qiyama*, W. Ivanow says in "**Alamut and Lamasar**" (Tehran, 1960 p. 29) that, "It is quite possible that the period of about 75 years, from the installation of Hasan-i Sabbah in Alamut, a period of continuous hard struggle, have so much matured their spirits that they could be regarded as quite fit to discard the usual external forms of worship, and carry on by their internal spiritual discipline."

In sum, the *qiyama* was interpreted to mean the manifestation of the unveiled truth (*haqiqat*) in the person of the Imam. Thus, the believers were now capable to comprehend the truth. According to this interpretation, the believers could come to know God and the mysteries and realities of creation through an Imam, the epiphany (*maṣḥar*) of God on earth. The *qiyama* also represented an attempt by an Imam to give an interpretation to the *Shariah* abreast the times. The Imam, henceforward, had began to stress the spirituality and the inner meaning of the religious commandments.

Ten weeks later, a token ceremony of *qiyama* was commemorated at the fortress of Muminabad, to the east of Birjand in Kohistan, where Hasan II had sent his messenger, Muhammad Khaqan to Rais Muzaffar, his deputy who headed the Ismailis of Kohistan since 555/1160. It was festivated in the fortress of Muminabad on 8th Zilkada, 559/September 18, 1164, where the written sermons of Hasan II were read. In Syria too, the *qiyama* was announced, evidently a while later in 560/1165.

It appears that the Ismailis began to apply since then the term *ala zikrihi's salam* (peace be on his mention) with the name of Hasan II, making him known as Hasan Ala Zikrihi's Salam (Hasan, peace be on his mention), and evidently, such benedictory term cannot be pronounced for any *dai* like Hasan, the son of Muhammad.

Hasan II rose as an absolute ruler and Imam, and the *Dawr-i Satr* was replaced by *Dawr-i Kashaf*. It must be remembered that it was the second *dawr-i satr*, and the first occurred in pre-Fatimid period. According to "Cambridge History of Iran" (London, 1968, 5th vol., p. 474), "The term *satr* had originally referred to those periods when the whereabouts of the Imam was unknown to the world at large, or even, at times, to the faithful, as had been the case among Ismailis before the rise of the Fatimids and again after the death of Nizar." Dr. Farhad Daftary also writes in "The Ismailis: their History and Doctrines" (London, 1990, p. 411) that, "Earlier Ismailis had used the term *satr* in reference to those periods in their history when the Imams were hidden from the world at large, or even from their followers, as had been the case with the period in early Ismailism between Muhammad bin Ismail and Ubaydullah al-Mahdi and again with the period of *satr* in Nizarism between Nizar and Hasan II." The same author further writes (p. 392) that, "On the basis of the genealogy subsequently circulating amongst the Nizaris, there were three generations between Hasan II and Nizar, Hasan being represented as the son of al-Qahir bin al-Muhtadi bin al-Hadi bin Nizar. Once Hasan II and his son Muhammad II were recognized as Nizarids Imams, the breach with the preceding period of *satr* in early Nizari Ismailism when the Imam was hidden from his followers and there were only his *hujjats* and *dais* at Alamut, was complete." Dr. Aziz Ismail and Dr. Azim Nanji write in their write-up, namely "The Ismailis in History" (cf.



"**Ismaili Contributions to Islamic Culture**" ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Tehran, 1977, p. 248) that, "Ismaili tradition speaks of the Imam as having been secretly brought into Alamut by Hasan-i Sabbah, who emphatically made it clear that he was acting only on behalf of the Imam. In this respect, the situation was analogue to the period before the rise of the Fatimids, which was known as the *dawr al-satr*, as the Imams were then believed to be in a state of occultation."

In sum, according to "**Kalam-i Pir**" (ed. and tr. by W. Ivanow, Bombay, 1935, p. 63), "At the period of the hidden (*mastr*) Imams, during the first period of *satr*, which arrived soon after the death of the Prophet and of his Wasi, the *hujjat* was Abdullāh Qaddah, and in the second period of *satr*, the *hujjat* was Baba Sayyid-na (Hasan bin Sabbah). And the eternal Light, Mawlana Hadi was he whose mysteries were known to Baba Sayyidna."

Let us return to the contemporary narrative that Muhammad bin al-Hasan ibn Isfandiyyar writes in "**Tarikh-i Tabaristan**" (comp. 613/1216) that Ustandar Hazarasf bin Shahrnush (560-586/1164-1190), the Buduspanid ruler of Rustandar and Ruyan procured close ties with the Ismailis of Rudhbar, and gave them few castles in his territories. In the meantime, Husam ad-Dawla Ardashir (567-602/1172-1206), the Bawandid Ispahbad of Mazandaran raided the territories of Ustandar Hazarasf, who took refuge at Alamut. With the help of Ismaili forces, he took field and invaded his former territories. He killed an Alid who ruled over Daylaman. He was however captured by Ardashir, who killed him in 586/1190.

Meanwhile, the Ismailis had for some time not a single entanglement with the Seljuqids, whose power was rapidly on the decline. In 560/1165, however, during the time of the Seljuq sultan Arslan (556-571/1161-1176), the Ismailis who had then built a new fortress outside Qazwin, besieged that town without availing approval from Alamut. The Ismailis however lifted the siege when sultan Arslan's big force came to the help of the people of Qazwin. In about 561/1166, the Seljuq *amir* Muhammad bin Anaz attacked on the Ismaili localities at Qazwin in reprisal and killed some of them and taken away rich booty.

A year and a half after the declaration of *qiyama*, on 6th Rabi I, 561/January 9, 1166, Imam Hasan II was stabbed in the castle of Lamasar by his brother-in-Law, Hasan bin Namavar, who belonged to a local Daylami branch of the Buwahid line, which had ruled in western Iran as a Twelve Shiite dynasty. Hasan II was succeeded by his 19 years old son, Ala Muhammad.

The sayings of Imam Hasan II reflect in the treatises of the contemporary *dais*, which have been sorted out as under:-

- \* *I am the hujja of God, and cause of the non-existence of the people.*
- \* *In the qiyama whoever arrives at God arrives for eternity, and whoever falls from the Lord falls from eternity.*
- \* *Righteousness is nearer to God, when you are nothing, He is all. Do not desire a closer nearness than this.*
- \* *Take care, you who pilgrimage to the house of haqiqa of God, strive today which is the day of qiyama.*
- \* *Whoever is a man of haqiqa, possesses both the worlds.*
- \* *Whoever wishes to see the person of righteousness and the person of eternal paradise, he must look at the man who calls the people to God, and knows God, and does not covet in religion.*

#### ALA MUHAMMAD (561-607/1166-1210)

Nuruddin Muhammad, surnamed Ala, also called Ala Muhammad or Muhammad bin Hasan, was born around 550/1155 or 553/1158 in Alamut. He is also known as Muhammad II, and sometimes as Ziaruddin Muhammad. His mother related to the Buwahid family. Immediately upon his accession, he arrested Hasan bin Namavar and his relatives and sentenced them to death.



Bernard Lewis writes in **"The Assassins"** (London, 1967, p. 95) that, "Hasan was succeeded by his son Muhammad, who proceeded to confirm that his father and therefore he himself were descendants of Nizar, and Imams. He is said to have been a prolific writer, and during his long reign, the doctrine of the Resurrection was developed and elaborated." B. Hourcade writes that, "Hasan's son, Nur al-din Muhammad II (d. 607/1210), consolidated the work of his father, whom he pronounced the true Imam, the secret son of a descendant of Nizar who had hidden at Alamut." (cf. **"Encyclopaedia of Iran and Islam"** ed. by Yarshater, London, 1982, p. 800).

Ala Muhammad was greatly engaged in his interest on philosophy and esoteric doctrines. His literary output was voluminous and had compiled several books on Koranic exegesis to broach the doctrines of the Ismailis. He was well steeped in Arabic and composed many proverbs and poetry in Arabic, whose fragments had been into the memories of the Muslims in Qazwin. Few misconception had started among the Muslims during his period about the **qiyama** in Iran and Syria, therefore, Ala Muhammad wrote several tracts to justify the doctrines of **qiyama**. In his elaboration of the doctrine of **qiyama**, he also assigned as usual a central role to the Imam. It further implied a complete personal transformation of the Ismailis who henceforth were expected to see nothing but the Imam and the manifestation of the divine truth in him. The Imam was defined in his essence as the epiphany (**mazhar**) of God on earth.

The period of Ala Muhammad was longer, in which there had been no war between the Ismailis and neighbouring rules. It is possible that the Abbasid and Seljuq powers were at their downfall, and were incapable to attack the Ismaili castles.

Meanwhile, an important political change took place in Iran and other eastern lands. The Seljuqs disintegrated after Sanjar's death in 552/1157, being replaced by the Turkish **amirs** and generals. It must be remembered that Tughril Beg (d. 455/1063) had founded the Seljuqid empire in 447/1055 and was declined in 590/1194. This dynasty produced 15 rulers belonging to seven generations.

Towards the end of the twelfth century a new power emerged in the east. South of the Aral sea lay the land of Khawaraz in Central Asia, the seat of an old civilization, whose hereditary rulers assumed the old title of the kings as the Khwarazmshahs. In about 586/1190, the Khawarazmshah Alauddin Tekish (d. 596/1200) occupied Khorasan, thus becoming master of eastern Iran. The Khawarazmians soon came to have an impressive empire of their own, stretching from the borders of India to Anatolia. The Seljuq dynasty came to an end everywhere except in Anatolia when Alauddin Tekish defeated Tughril III at Ray in 590/1194. The triumphant Khawarazmshah was the obvious ruler to fill the vacancy created by the Seljuqs, and in the following year, the Abbasid caliph Nasir (d. 622/1225) invested Alauddin Tekish with the sultanate of western Iran, Khorasan and Turkistan.

We come across an instance of Ustandar Hazarasf bin Shahnush (560-586/1164-1190), the Baduspanid ruler of Rustandar and Ruyan, who had harboured himself at Alamut. According to "*Jamiut-Tawarikh*" (pp. 170-173), Hazarasf had cemented his close relation with the Ismailis residing at Rudhbar and granted them few castles in his territories. When his relation deteriorated with his superior, Husam ad-Dawla Ardashir (567-602/1172-1206), the Bawandid Ispahbad of Mazandarn, he took refuge at Alamut as a result. In due course, Hazarasf raided his former territories with the help of the Ismaili *fidais* and killed an Alid ruler of Daylaman. He was at last arrested and killed by Ardashir in 586/1190.

The hostile Sunni rulers had maintained the tradition of occasionally massacring the Ismailis. It is reported, for instance, according to Ibn Athir (12th vol., pp. 76-7) that a bulk of people accused of Ismailism were killed in lower Iraq in the year 600/1204.

#### **Allama Farkhruddin Razi**

According to "*Jamiut Tawarikh*" (pp. 170-3), the Sunni theologian Fakhruddin Razi (543-606/1149-1209), in his lectures to theological students in Ray harshly reviled the Ismailis. He used to say in his lectures that, "This is against the Islam. May God curse and disgrace them." Hearing such unbearable words, a *fidai* was sent from Alamut to have it stopped. There he enrolled himself as a



student, and attended Fakhruddin's lectures daily for seven months, until he found an opportunity of seeing him alone in his room. The *fidai* brandished a dagger and menaced him. Fakhruddin jumped aside, and said: "What do you want?" The *fidai* replied: "I want to slit your belly from the breast to the navel, because you have cursed us from the pulpit at each mention." After a tussle, the *fidai* hurled him to the floor and sat on his chest with his poniard at his throat. The terrified theologian promised to repent, and to refrain from such attacks in future. The *fidai* allowed him to be persuaded, and accepting a solemn undertaking from Fakhruddin to mend his ways, produced a bag containing 365 gold dinars with two Yemenite garments, being the first payment of a pension that the Imam granted for him, and assured him for a similar amount of grant for every year if he kept his promise. Henceforth, Fakhruddin Razi took good care to avoid expressions offensive to the Ismailis. One of his students, noting this change, asked, why he no longer assailed the Ismailis. The theologian replied: "It is not advisable to curse the Ismailis, for they have both weighty and trenchant arguments." It may be noted that Fakhruddin Razi had truly changed his attitude, and condemned one Sunni theologian, who tried to refute the Ismaili doctrines with fanatical and ill-informed abuse, and praised another for correctly citing an Ismaili text. His point, of course, was that the theological controversy must be based on correct information and an intelligent understanding of an opponent's point of view. Fakhruddin Razi received the annual grant from Alamut for five years through Rais Muzaffar until he was in Ray.

### **Rashiduddin Sinan**

Abu'l Hasan bin Suleman bin Muhammad, known as Rashiduddin Sinan was born in 529/1133 at Agr al-Sudan, a village in the district of Basra. He was handsome, of middle height, had dark eyes and was acute, learned, eloquent and quick-witted. He was brought up in Basra, where he became a schoolmaster and was converted to Ismailism. Subsequently, he went to Alamut where he was well received, and indoctrinated with Ismailism. He also studied theology, philosophy and the doctrines of philosophers and *Ikhwan as-Safa*. Soon after his ascension in 557/1162, Imam Hasan II had sent him to Syria as a

deputy of *dai* Abu Muhammad. A historian quoted by Kamaluddin (d. 660/1262) reports a contemporary's description of a visit to Sinan, and a conversation with him, in the course of which Sinan is quoted as giving this account of his journey to Syria: "He (Hasan II) delegated me to Syria....He had given me orders and provided me with letters. I arrived in Mosul and stayed at the mosque of the date-sellers. Thence I went to Raqqa. I had a letter to one of our comrade there, and when I delivered it to him, he furnished me with provisions and lent me a mount to carry me to Aleppo. There I met another to whom I gave a letter, and he lent me a mount and sent me on al-Kahf, where I was ordered to stay. I stayed there until Shaikh Abu Muhammad, who was in command, died in the mountains." Sinan therefore became the chief of the mission in Syria after the death of *dai* Abu Muhammad in 558/1163. Benjamin of Tudela, who travelled there in 558/1163, about the time Sinan arrived, reported that the Ismailis had been at war with the Franks.

Sinan was not only an outstanding personality but also an efficient administrator. Once well established, his first task was to consolidate his realm. He made Masiyaf as his headquarters and rapidly swept off the internal dissensions of the community. It was within the Ismaili territory that Sinan did his great work. In order to meet the dangers from outside, Sinan began reorganising his men and choosing the most eligibles, and devoted to form the corps of the *fidais*. He had his *fidais* trained in various languages and in the art of collecting secret information from the courts of kings and princes. He organised an elaborate communication system, making use of carrier pigeons, or the pigeon post, and coded messages by which the commanders of the various Ismaili strongholds were kept informed about the news of brewing trouble, his plans or the possible threats to any of the widely scattered Ismaili fortresses. These messenger birds proved beneficial, which could fly unscathed back to their lofts from distant lands.

How Sinan could resist successfully before internal intrigues and external menaces is a mystery to many writers, and the history, as distinct from fiction, proves otherwise. The outstanding secrecy of his success appears to lie in his extraordinary ability to foresee trouble and nip it in the bud. He has established a perfect espionage system which covered not only his territory but that of



his enemies as well. According to "The Encyclopaedia of Islam" (Leiden, 1936, 3rd vol., p. 1123), "The stories connected with Sinan chiefly centre around his organisation of *fidais*, which he used as an instrument for removing his political opponents by assassination. Undoubtedly, there are some grain of truth in these stories; but it is obvious that excited bazar rumours greatly exaggerated them, wrongly attributing to him and his organisation many exploits for which they were not responsible."

Sinan also renovated and repaired the fortress of Rusafa, 40 miles from Masiyaf; and the fortress of Khwabi, 4 miles from Kahf. He also occupied the fort of Alike, just 8 miles away from the Frankish fortress of Marakab. With the taking of these fortresses, the Ismailis in Syria had however carved out their own niche in the aggressive orbits. He certainly brought the Ismailis to the peak of their power and fame, and was in close contact with the ruling Imams of Alamut for necessary directions.

In Syria, the Sunni rulers and the Crusaders were a constant threat to the Ismailis, and therefore, Sinan concentrated his due attention on the Sunni rulers, who were extending their hegemony over Syria. Nuruddin (541-569/1146-1174), the Zangid ruler of Aleppo, and Salauddin Yousuf bin Ayyub (d. 589/1193), known as Saladin in the occidental chronicles of the Crusades, who put an end of the Fatimid rule in 567/1171 and proclaimed Abbasid suzerainty in Egypt by establishing the Ayyubid dynasty; were at the height of their power. They led the holy war against the Crusaders, and were potentially greater enemies than the Franks for the Ismailis.

Being a shrewd strategist and diplomatic minded, Rashiduddin Sinan followed suitable measures in dealing with the outside world in defending the Ismaili state in Syria. He established peaceful relations with the Crusaders, who had been fighting the Ismailis for several decades over the possession of certain strongholds. Most of the strongholds which the Ismailis seized at Jabal Bahra in Kahf had previously been in the hands of the Crusaders, and many important Frankish castles were situated very close to the Ismaili strongholds. In 537/1142, the chief of the Tripoli gave to the Hospitaller order the fortress, called Hisn al-Akrad, 25 miles south of Masiyaf, and a few years later there are reports of

fighting between the Ismailis and the Franks over the fortress of Maynaqa. Realizing the danger of being nearly surrounded by both Muslim and Frankish hostile forces, Sinan attempted to reach a settlement with the Frankish Templar order, and agreed to pay them a yearly tribute. Sinan sent an embassy in 569/1173 to Amalric I (1163-1174), the king of Jerusalem, hoping to be absolved from paying the yearly tribute to the Templars. King Amalric agreed that the tribute to the Templars should be cancelled. The Templars however disapproved this negotiation, and when the Ismaili embassy started for the homeland journey, Sinan's emissaries were killed by a Templar knight, Walter of Mesnil. Amalric took punitive action against the Templar knight, but was died in 570/1174, and as a result, the negotiations between Sinan and the Franks of Jerusalem became fruitless.

Nuruiddin Zangi was also a great threat in Syria and was planning a major expedition against the Ismailis just before his death, when he exchanged unfriendly correspondence with Rashiduddin Sinan. Ibn Khallikan (3rd vol., pp. 340-1) quotes a letter of Sinan, which he copied from the works of Abdur Rahim bin Ali al-Baysani al-Qadi al-Fazil al-Misri (529-596/1135-1200), which is in reponse of the harsh and threatening letter of Nuruiddin Zangi, it reads:- *"We have examined your letter in sum and in detail, and have well appreciated the words and deeds with which it threatens us. Admire the fly buzzing at the ear of the elephant! and the gnat which is counted as an emblem (of littleness). Already, before you, other people have held a similar discourse, but we hurled destruction upon them, and they had none to assist them! Do you mean to oppose the truth and uphold falsehood? They who act perversely shall know the fate which awaits them! As for your words, that you will cut off my head and tear my fortresses from the firm mountains which sustain them, know that these are delusive thoughts, vain imaginations; for the substance is not destroyed by the disparition of its accidents, neither is the soul dissolved by the maladies of the body. How wide the difference between strong and weak, between noble and vile!.....In a common and current proverb it is said: 'Is a goose to be threatened with (being cast into) the river?' Prepare therefore a tunic against misfortune and a cloak against affliction; for evils of your own doing shall prevail*



*against you ; you shall feel convinced that they proceeded from yourself, and that you were like the animal which scraped with his hoof till it found its death, and like him who cut off his nose with his own hand...."*

In the meantime, Nuruddin Zangi died in 569/1174, it gave an opportunity to Saladin to emerge as a champion of the Muslims to lead them in the holy war against the Crusaders. Saladin strove towards incorporating Arabia, Iraq and Syria into his nascent Ayyubid empire. With the height of his power, he was a most dangerous enemy of the Ismailis, rather more than the Franks. On that juncture, the Ismailis of Syria and the Zangids of Aleppo were induced to formulate a joint bloc against their mutual enemy Saladin, who had entered Damascus in 570/1174. He also marched northward, and after capturing Hims, he laid a siege to Aleppo. Meanwhile, Gumushtigin, the ruler of Aleppo and Rashiduddin Sinan mutually decided to kill Saladin in order to save their states from being destructed by the Ayyubid power. Thus, a *fidai* was dispatched, who penetrated Saladin's camp, but missed to kill him in 570/1175. Next year, when Saladin besieged Azaz, north of Aleppo, the *fidai* failed in his second attempt to kill him in 571/1176, but Saladin escaped with only slight injuries. Shortly after this event, Saladin in a vengeful move, invaded the Ismaili territory and besieged Masiyaf. Lane Poole writes in "**Saladin**" (Beirut, 1964, p. 149) that, "When Saladin laid siege to Masyaf, Sinan was absent, and the king's summons to surrender reached him at a village near Kadmus. He told the messenger that he must have a personal interview with Saladin; and then, since access to Masyaf was blocked by the leaguer, he retired with only two companions to the top of a neighbouring mountain, whence he looked down upon the siege and awaited the event."

It is said that Sinan summoned Shihabuddin Mahmud bin Takash, the governor of Hammah and the maternal uncle of Saladin, and told him that unless the siege was raised, Saladin and himself and other nobles would get an unpleasant taste of Ismaili swords. Thus the siege was lifted very soon on the mediation of Shihabuddin Mahmud bin Takash. According to another reports, Saladin woke up suddenly to find on his bed a leaf of paper on the top, pinned by a dagger. There were verses on the paper that:-

*By the Majesty of the Kingdom! what you possess will escape you, in spite of all, but victory remains to us We acquaint you that we hold you, and that we reserve you till your reckoning be paid.*

Saladin gave a great and terrible cry and the guards and the officers rushed in the tent. He showed them the letter. According to Lane Poole, Saladin said, "Go to this man and ask him for a self-conduct, and pray him not to punish me for my past action" (Ibid. p. 150). The messenger went to seek Sinan on the mountain; but he made answer that there could be no warranty for the king's life so long as he continued the siege. Saladin therefore withdrew himself, in such haste that he even left his artillery behind him; and at the Bridge of Ibn Munkidh, he received the self-conduct."

Thus, Saladin sought peace with Sinan and concluded a truce with him. The overt hostilities between Sinan and Saladin came to an end as a result. Henceforward, the Syrian Ismailis seem to have thrown their weight on the side of Saladin in his wars against the Franks in the historic battle of Hittin, near Tiberias in 583/1187. The reason for this was that the rigorous attitude of the Frankish terrorists orders, namely Templars and Hospitallers towards the Ismailis, left Sinan with no alternative other than to ally himself with Saladin. It is therefore, asserted that the Ismailis had played prominent role during the third Crusade (1189-1192), and became to be discussed in the occidental chronicles.

In 570/1175, according to Ibn Jawzi, the Ismailis had been menaced by the Nubuwiyya, a terrorist band of the Sunni based in Iraq, and their ten thousand horsemen attacked on Bab and Buza'ah. They slaughtered 13000 local people, including a heavy toll of the Ismaili lives and carried off much booty and captives. The Nubuwiyya order once again attacked in 572/1176, forcing the Ismailis to evacuate the region. The Spanish traveller Ibn Jubayr, who passed through Bab in 580/1184, relates the above event occurred about eight years before his arrival, in a harsh and derogatory manners, vide **"The Travels of Ibn Jubayr"** tr. by R.J.C. Broadhurst, London, 1952, pp. 259-60.



## **Ismailis in Hungary**

The Ismaili *fidais* were struggling on one hand against their ardent enemies in Syria, and their *dais* were penetrating into the Frankish lands as far as Hungary on the other. The word *Hungary* is derived from the Turkish *On Ogur*, meaning "ten arrows" or "tribes," almost referring to the ethnic people of Hungary, called Magyars. It is a small landlocked state in central Europe. In 1000 A.D., Hungary achieved the status of an independent kingdom, and adopted the Roman form of Christianity. The Ismailis were the first to introduce the message of Islam in Europe and entered into Hungary most probably during the time of different kings, such as St. Stephen (1000-1038), Ladislas I (1077-1095), Kalman (1095-1116), Geza II (1141-1162), Bella III (1172-1173), Imre (1196-1204), Laszlo (1204-1205), Andreas II (1205-1235) etc.

Dr. Ismail Balic writes in "**Traces of Islam in Hungary**" that, "Islam was first brought to Hungary by the Ismailites (in Izmaelitak or Boszormenyek). These were parts of the Turkish Polk of Chevalison and of the Volga Bulgarians who had emigrated during the 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th centuries and formed an important political, military, financial and commercial factor. The first Islamic author to speak of this Muslim community was Yaqut al-Hamawi (575-626/1179-1229)." (cf. "**The Islamic Review**", London, Feb., 1950, 38th vol., No.2). Yaqut writes in his famous geographical dictionary, "**Mi'ajam al-Buldan**," (comp. 625/1228, vide also Wustenfeld's edition, Leipzig, 1866, 1st vol., p. 469) about his meeting with Ismaili youth in Syria who were studying Islam there and brought some details of the history and life of their people in Hungary. D.M. Donaldson in "**The Shiite Religion**" (London, 1933, pp. 292-3) also admits that the Crusaders came to know about Shiism through the Ismailis. N.A. Daniel writes in "**Islam and the West**" (Edinburgh, 1960, p. 318) that, "It has been pointed out that it was in Ismaili form that the Crusaders knew Shiism."

Rashiduddin Sinan enjoyed unprecedented popularity in the Syrian Ismaili community, and it seems that he had been given liberty from Alamut to deal the political affairs in Syria at his disposal. He died in 589/1193 in the castle of Kahf, and was buried at Jabal-i Mashhad in Masiyaf, where he had passed his life in worship and study of

astronomy. Sibt ibn Jawzi (d. 654/1256) describes Sinan in his "Mirat al-Zaman" (p. 269) as "a man of knowledge, statecraft and skill in winning men's hearts." Sinan left the Ismailis of Syria straddling a frontier between the Franks and the Muslims. Religiously, Rashiduddin Sinan used to hold various lectures on Islam and Ismailism, whose few intellectual products are given below:-

"If the sea was the ink for the words glorifying my God, it will be consumed before the consumption of my God's words. The Imam can hear the words of God, by his heart and his sense of hear; secretly or loudly at any time he wants, i.e., when he chooses to hear. And the Imam is he, who would never be missed on earth, any hour, or moment. Understand these facts, and you will be rightly guided by the will of God."

Returning the thread of our narrative, it is recounted that Qais bin Mansur al-Dadikhi was known to have visited Alamut during the period of Imam Ala Muhammad. He was born in Dadikh, a town in the district of Aleppo. He lived till the time of Ala Muhammad and returned to Aleppo in 648/1250, where he died in 655/1257.

#### **Poet Rais Hasan**

The celebrated Ismaili poet hailed from Khorasan, called Rais Hasan had visited Alamut around 587/1191, and glorified Ala Muhammad in his poem, vide "An Old Ismaili Poem" tr. by W. Ivanow (cf. "Ismaili", March, 1940, pp. 7-8). It was also a sort of prayer for seeking forgiveness for a breach of the mission rules in the Syrian community, and arrived in Iran to behold the Imam without the consent of the community authority. Its few couplets however reads:-

*We have come here without obtaining the consent  
of our jamat.*

*As there is very little sense of unity and  
internal peace, so much needed in the  
community.*

*We have come here, violating the rules and  
commandments of the dawlat. We have come full  
of the sense of shame and repentance.*



*For having not honoured and respected the commandment  
of the guidance.*

*We have come to pray endlessly, in thousand  
ways, to forgive us these faults of our  
behaviour.*

In Alamut, the period of Ala Muhammad was noted for learning and prosperity. Taylor writes in "*The History of Mohammedanism and its sects*" (London, 1851, p. 187) that, "He was a diligent student himself and wrote several treatises on philosophy and jurisprudence which are valued highly even by those who were enemies of his order." Rais Hasan had glorified the Imam in his poem, as referred to above. Its few couplets are given below:-

*O Thou, Holy One, we have come to Thee from Khorasan,  
we have arrived before Thee to fall prostrate in  
our obedience.*

*We have come to Thee not for begging for money, gifts  
or honours, we have not come to beg for the grant  
either of horses, or saddles, coats, caps or robes  
of honour.*

*We have come to Thee as the source of help and purity  
of religion.*

*Be kind, and quench our thirst with water of life,  
because we have come to Thee in great thirst for  
mercy.*

It has been heretofore discussed that the Ismailis disliked wars to cause unnecessary blood-shed with their enemies. But when their sworn enemies hurled in the fire of war to extend their influence, threatening the Ismaili power, the Ismaili *fidais* only killed the germs of mischief to avoid wars. Thus, Kizil Arslan (582-587/1186-1191), the Ildenizid ruler of Azerbaijan made a plan to extend his power, and constant wars in Mazandaran, brought him ultimately in inimical touch with the Ismailis in Alamut. On that juncture, Muzaffar bin Muhammad, the chief Ismaili *dai*, sent three Ismaili *fidais* belonging to Southern Khorasan on secret a mission to kill Kizil Arslan, who had become not only a threat, but a root cause of breaking peace in the region. These three *fidais* were

Husam of Avizi, Hasan of Tun and Mansur of Chahak. The mission was dangerous and difficult as well. Kizil Arslan at that time was accompanied by three horsemen, two among them fled in fear, one towards the rocks, and other hid himself in a cave; and one was killed. It appears that the king managed to reach his palace, where he had been killed on one night in Shawal, 587/November, 1191. Ibn Athir writes that his murderers remained unknown, but Qazwini narrates that the Ismailis were suspected. Rais Hasan, who had come in Alamut from Khorasan, had composed a poem in praise of these Khorasani *fidais*, whose few couplets are given below:-

*Praise, glory and thousands of benedictions be upon  
the three heroes, the brave swordsmen, capturers of  
kings!*

*Upon those victorious warriors on the path of the  
religion, out of fear and fright for whom the world  
prays for mercy!*

*The Ildigiz, through his perversion and wickedness,  
had chosen, at the bidding of his fate, the path of  
arrogance*

*All three came back, with the help of the Qaim,  
(bringing) victory and happiness to all sides.*

*Every one who thinks of opposing the Lord of the  
Universe, is punished by the fate by violent death.*

*The chosen prophets preached and warned people about  
this from the beginning, that such is the promised  
punishment.*

*The king, who possesses more than a hundred thousand  
cavalry, would be frightened by a single warrior.*

*Did not today the sun of the Great Resurrection rise  
from behind the loftiness of the preaching of  
Mustansir, and of the prayer of Nizar?*

*Is not it so that whoever has no respect for Him,  
indulging in these terrible acts of tyranny, he*



*will on the day of judgement be rejected by God,  
helpless as if drowning in mud?*

During the last 16 years of Ala Muhammad's Imamate and reign, the Iranian Ismailis were engaged once again in petty warfare with their close neighbours. The Ismailis of Rudhbar had certain disputes with Mazandaran, and they had actually given refuge to Bisutum, the ruler of Ruyan who had engineered rebellion against the Bawandid Husam ad-Dawla Ardashir. In the meantime, the Ismailis began to spread their influences in Mazandaran and killed Rukn ad-Dawla Qarin, the younger brother of the Bawandid Shams al-Mulk Shah Ghazi Rustam II (602-606/1206-1210).

In the interim, the Ismailis of Rudhbar were confronted with the Khwarazmian general, who had replaced the Seljuqs in western Iran and were expanding their influence in Daylam. In 602/1205, Miyajiq, a Khwarazmian general, trickled and murdered a bulk of the Ismailis from Alamut and thereupon the Khwarazmian troops made themselves as the friends of the Qazwin, the traditional enemies of the Ismailis, and made raids from time to time on Rudhbar.

Imam Ala Muhammad died on 10th Rabi I, 607/September 1, 1210 after the longest rule of 46 years. He had two sons, of whom the elder, Jalaluddin Hasan was succeeded to the Imamate.

#### **JALALUDDIN HASAN (607-618/1210-1221)**

Hasan, surnamed Jalaluddin was born in 583/1187. He is also called as Hasan III. During his childhood, his father had designated him as his successor. According to John Malcolm in "History of Persia" (London, 1815, 1st vol., p. 405), "He is celebrated in Persian history for the kindness and generosity of his disposition; and we are informed that this prince of the Ismailis was the handsomest man for his age".

#### **Misconception of the doctrine of Qiyama**

Culling up the different narratives, it appears that few Ismailis in northern Syria had misinterpreted the notion

of the *qiyama* among the orthodox Muslims, who also in turn, ignored its inner Islamic substance and devised a derogatory imputation and engineered anti-propaganda in hyperbolic and opprobrious words. Dr. Nassih Ahmed Mirza writes that, "Among the Syrian Ismailis who lived far away from Alamut in a different environment, the teachings of the *qiyama* were probably not fully understood by all." (Ibid. pp. 156-7) Under these difficult circumstances, the basic teachings of the *qiyama* was bound to have been different in northern Syria from what was in Iran. Between 559/1164 and 607/1210, the orthodox machine sprouted out from all directions in Iran and Syria, reviling that the Ismailis had violated the Islamic *Shariah*. Dahalbi (d. 748/1348) writes in "*Zubat at-talab fi Tarikh-i Halab*" that, "The proclamation of *qiyama* in Iran was obvious, the more so since the Syrian historians clearly know nothing of the event of Alamut." Such episodes had possibly furnished further weighty excuse for the Muslim opponents of the Ismailis to accuse them of the outright abandonment of the Islamic law. One can judge from the imponderable and starkly fictitious accounts of the contemporary diplomats and travellers, about the nature of the rumours spread against the Ismailis. In a diplomatic report of 570/1175 of an envoy, Burchard of Strassburg, who had been sent to Syria by the Roman king Frederick I Barbarossa (1152-1190), indicates that Burchard had been ill-informed by the local Muslims about the Ismailis during his visit to Syria in 570/1175, which he produced in his report in a distorted form. He writes, "The Heysessini live without law; they eat swine's flesh against the law of the Saracens, and make use of all women..." Ibn Jubayr, the Spanish traveller had also passed through the Syrian Ismailis territories on Friday, the 18th Rabi I, 580/June 29, 1184 and describes what he learnt through oral channels that, "On their slopes are castles belonging to the heretical Ismailites, a sect which swerved from Islam and vested divinity in a man (Sinan)... He bewitched them with these black arts, so that they took him as a god and worshipped him. They abased themselves before him, reaching such a state of obedience and subjection that did he order one of them to fall from the mountain top he would do so, and with alacrity that he might be pleased." (vide "*The Travels of Ibn Zubayr*" tr. by R.J.C. Broadhurst, London, 1952, p. 264). All this sounds that the unrealistic and incredible image of the Ismailis was portrayed in Syria. Dr. Nassih Ahmed Mirza continues to



write: "This misunderstanding of the spiritual aims of the *qiyama*, which very likely were only understood by the most learned *dais*, may together with political consideration have been the factor which prompted the grandson of Hasan Ala Dhikrihi al-Salam to reinstate the observance of the ordinary rituals of the *Shariah*." (Ibid. pp. 158-9).

And here we cannot but call attention to the fact that the *qiyama* involved an emphasis on the *batin* along with its counterpart, the *zahir*, was present in Ismailism from the earliest times. It is irrational judgement of some historians that the *qiyama* involved an abrogation of the *shariah*, since the Ismailis had seldom deprecated it. Thus, Jalaluddin Hasan restricted his followers not to preach the doctrine of *qiyama*. The most obvious inference from this action emerges that the esoteric teachings of Islam was privatized, and the tradition of the Sufic *khanqah* (cloister) came into existence in the Ismailis to observe the esoteric practices in solitude.

Jalaluddin Hasan also cemented cordial relations with the Muslims rulers, so that the Ismailis living in the mountains for many years, can accelerate their economical conditions in the different cities. There are indications that at least some of the Ismailis were becoming increasingly weary of their isolation from the outside world. To make this possible, there had to be at least a measure of outward conformity. For generating friendship with the rulers, Jalaluddin Hasan greatly needed first to make the people known that the Ismailis had never abrogated the Islamic *Shariah*. He ordered the building of mosques and public baths. He invited the Muslim theologians from Iraq and Khorasan. According to "The Cambridge History of Iran" (London, 1968, 5th vol., p. 476), "From the time of Hasan III, the Ismailis attracted to their libraries and to their learned patronage a large number of scholars from the outer world. Such scholars were free to maintain their prior religious convictions." Ibn Wasil (d. 697/1298) writes in "Mufarriid al-Kurub" (p. 211) that the Syrian Ismailis were also subsequently informed in 608/1211 to follow the policy of the Imam.

Jalaluddin Hasan sent his envoys to the Abbasid caliph Nasir, Muhammad Khwarazmshah, the rulers of Iraq and Azerbaijan to notify them of his religious policy, making them informed that the Ismailis were the true Muslims.

Very rapidly, the Ismailis restored the lost prestige and began to spread in the Muslim cities. The Abbasid caliph Nasir also issued a decree in Baghdad in Rabi I, 608/August, 1211, proclaiming his close ties with Alamut. It is curious that the decree indicates that the Ismaili Imam had embraced Sunnism, which apparently is the addition in the original text by the later Sunni writers.

Some historians have curiously inflated in their narratives that Jalaluddin Hasan had accepted the suzerainty of the Abbasids, which is quite incorrect. Granted that the Alamut had recognized the supremacy of Baghdad, then the Abbasid *khutba* should have been recited in the territories governed by Jalaluddin Hasan, which, of course did never occur. Secondly, if Alamut had been made the Abbasid's enclave, the rulers of Alamut followed by Jalaluddin Hasan should have been directly appointed from Baghdad according to the prevalent custom, which also never took place. Jalaluddin Hasan had actually cemented his friendly ties with the Abbasids and other Muslim rulers to restore the prestige of the Ismailis.

Jalaluddin Hasan thus was held in high esteem and accepted as a chief amongst other chiefs, and his rights to the territories he dominated were officially acknowledged by the Abbasids. His mother went on the pilgrimage to Mecca in 609/1213 under the patronage of caliph Nasir, who received her with great pomp and deference. On that occasion, according to **"A Short History of the Khwarzamsahs"** (Karachi, 1978, pp. 72 and 207) by Prof. Ghulam Rabbani Aziz that the Abbasid caliph placed the flag of Khwarazamshah behind that of Jalaluddin Hasan, the ruler of Alamut, in the caravan of the pilgrims. She gave great amounts in charity, and had many well dug.

The improved relations were naturally beneficial to the Sunni Muslims as well. For instance, at the end of Jalaluddin Hasan's rule, many Muslims including prominent scholars who were fleeing from the Mongolian strikes in Khorasan, found asylum in the Ismaili towns of Kohistan.

It is seen that the reforms of Jalaluddin Hasan have been taken into a wrong sense by Juvaini and other historians, tincturing with dubious stories. Juvaini claims that Jalaluddin Hasan had given up the creeds of his forefather (p. 698) and professed Sunnism (p. 699). He seems to make a dogmatic difference between the Imam with the previous



Imams of Alamut. Granted that Jalaluddin Hasan had deserted the creeds of his forefather and embraced Sunnism, then why he retained with him till death the spiritual authority of Imamate, and nominated his son as the next Imam in accordance with the fundamental concept of Shiism? Secondly, it is unlikely to confess the notion advanced by the historians that an Imam had adhered to the Sunnism on one hand and his followers continued to profess Shi'ism of an Ismaili *tariqah* on other. Jalaluddin Hasan was therefore absolutely an Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, therefore, the opinions of the historians are utterly irrational and unrealistic. According to "**The Cambridge History of Iran**" (London, 1968, 5th vol., p. 470) that, "From an Imamate point of view, he (Jalaluddin Hasan) was undeniably the Imam: he had received the irrevocable designation by the preceding Imam and whatever he ordered was to be received in faith". Suffice it to say that the Syrian scholar, Arif Tamir cited a letter of Jalaluddin Hasan, in which he claims his Imamate and traces his descent from al-Nizar through Hasan II, vide "**Sinan Rashid-ad-Din aw Shaikh al-Jabal**" (al-Adib, 23rd vol., May, 1953, p. 45). It is also a matter worth consideration that his actions were not rejected by his followers, and he was also able to leave Alamut fearlessly and visited in foreign lands for 18 months and returned with no difficulty or mishap. W. Montgomery Watt writes in "**Islam and the Integration of Society**" (London, 1961, p. 77) that, "For the Ismailis, too, the Imam was an absolute autocrat, whose decrees had to be accepted. However strange his new decision might seem, a loyal follower could not question it, since he was bound to regard the Imam as knowing better than himself. In fact the community seems to have followed al-Hasan III without hesitation. He himself may genuinely have believed that he was acting in the best-interests of the community."

Jalaluddin Hasan also procured close relation with the ruler of Gilan, and in 608/1212, he betrothed to the four women of Gilan. One among them was the sister of Kai'kaus bin Shahanshah, the ruler of Kutum, who bore Imam's successor, named Alauddin Muhammad.

### **Jalaluddin Hasan in Azerbaijan**

Jalaluddin Hasan developed close relation with Muzaffaruddin Ozbek bin Pahlawan Muhammad (607-622/1210-

1225), the sixth and last Ildenizid ruler of Arran and Azerbaijan. When Ozbek decided to deal with Nasiruddin Mengli, his deputy in Irak-i Ajam who had rebelled, he sought help from Alamut. Jalaluddin Hasan departed from Alamut under command of his army in 610/1214 to Azerbaijan, where he stayed at Ozbek's court. He remained for sometimes in Bailaqan with Ozbek, whence they sent joint ambassadors to Baghdad, Syria and other lands, seeking reinforcement in expelling Mengli from Irak-i Ajam. The Abbasid sent their army in command of Muzaffaruddin Wajh Sabu and an army was likewise sent from Syria. In 611/1215, a battle was fought near Hamdan, whereupon Mengli was defeated. After the victory, Jalaluddin Hasan was granted the provinces of Abhar and Zanjan.

During the year and a half that Jalaluddin Hasan was in Azerbaijan, Muzaffaruddin Ozbek treated him with great consideration and that was a brotherly feeling between them. Ozbek used to send him abundant supplies of provisions and excessive quantities of money, so much so that after meeting the requirements of Jalaluddin Hasan in the way of rations of every kind and after dispensing the gifts and robes of honours which he showered not only upon his great officers but also upon the generality of his troops he would still every day send 1,000 gold dinars to his treasury for current expenses.

### **Emergence of the Mongols**

The beginning of 7th/13th century was a terrible age for the whole Islamic rulers of Central Asia when the Mongol hordes emerged from Mongolia and began to threaten the Islamic world. The Mongols were a people of the Siberian forest who came from north into the slippers of Mongolia. They lived in a wild and primitive state of society, and their invasion inflicted more suffering on the human race than any other incident recorded in history of mankind. The monstrous hosts indiscriminately annihilated populations, pillaged towns and cities, wreaked special vengeance upon those who dared to resist them, and to whom they had promised immunity, converted the rich and smiling fields into deserts, and left behind the smoke of burning towns. Ruthlessly exterminating young and old, male and female, they obliterated cities and towns with their denizens, their schools, their mosques, their palaces,



their libraries, their art treasures, largely nomadizing the region.

The Mongol empire, carved out at the expense of the Chi'n dynasty in North China, and the Sung in South China, was founded by Temujin (1162-1227), who assumed the name of Chinghiz Khan. He united the Mongol tribes and was acclaimed paramount Khan of the Mongols by an assembly (*quriltai*) of Mongol chiefs in 602/1206 at Karakorum. Beginning with campaigns in 601/1205, 603/1207 and 605/1209, he led the Mongols to destroy the rules of western Asia. Late in 625/1219 he advanced towards the Jaxartes. In 626/1220, he crossed Jaxartes and marched straight on Bukhara, whose cultural heritage, the accumulated intellectual wealth of centuries were obliterated in plunder, bloodshed and arson.

It must be remembered that the Ozbek's war with Mengli ended in 14 to 15 months, but Jalaluddin Hasan prolonged his stay in Azerbaijan for 18 months. He was well kept with the terrible storms of the Mongols in Iran, therefore, he at once sent his envoys to Chinghiz Khan in Karakorum on 616/1219. The ambassadors of the Imam met Chinghiz Khan in the spring of 618/1221 at Balkh. He was the first among the Muslim rulers to send messages of good will to the Khan. His another precaution seems to reveal from his prolonged stay in Azerbaijan, where he had possibly selected a most suitable region to repair during emergency for himself or for his son, or grandson or any other. It seems that he had mapped out in this context an unscathed route from Alamut to Azerbaijan.

In 618/1221, Jalaluddin Hasan attended a banquet, where his enemies poisoned him. His vizir, who was the tutor of his successor, accused Imam's Sunni wives of Gilan in the conspiracy. It however resulted his death of dysentery in Ramdan, 618/November, 1221. His period of Imamate and rule lasted for 11 years, and was succeeded by his only son Alauddin Muhammad, who was then nine years old.

#### **ALAUDDIN MUHAMMAD (618-653/1221-1255)**

Alauddin Muhammad, or Muhammad III was born in 609/1213. He was succeeded by his father at the age of 9 years. The administration of the state affairs had been governed by

his gifted mother for about six years, which was the first instance when a woman administered at Alamut.

The period of six years (618/1221 to 624/1227) was very peaceful in Alamut, during which time the Imam's mother seems to have deposed many incapable governors in Rudhbar and Kohistan. It seems that some governors and officers had misused their powers in that period. In 624/1227, Alauddin Muhammad took the power upon death of his mother at the age of 15 or 16 years, and dealt iron-handed with the persons misusing the powers. Most of them turned against him and went to live in Qazwin. In order to cover the story of their defalcations, they started to spread rumours against the Imam in bitter sarcasms. Some of them went on to propagate that the brain of Alauddin Muhammad had been affected few months before 624/1227 when a physician operated him, causing waste of excess blood. The oppositions were however surmounted very soon.

A cursory glance of the contemporary rules indicates that the Abbasid caliph Nasir had died in 622/1225, and was succeeded by Zahir (d. 623/1226), Mustansir (d. 640/1242) and Mustasim (d. 656/1258), the last of the dynasty. Jalaluddin Khwarazmshah (617-628/1220-1231) was however absolutely ruling in Central Asia.

#### **Sacrifices of the *fidais***

The relation of the Ismailis with the Abbasids and Khwarazmshah had already been improved. The relations of Khwarazmshah with the Abbasids and Ismailis were however strained in due course. Meanwhile, Jalaluddin Khwarazmshah had been defeated by Chenghiz Khan in 618/1221 on the bank of the Indus, and he had to spend three years in India. The impact of the ceaseless Mongolian invasions forced the Khwarazmins of Bukhara and Samarkand to escape, and most of them took refuge in the Ismaili territory in Kohistan. The Ismailis helped them with all provisions. About this time, the Ismailis occupied Damghan (the Arabs, *ad-Damghan*), the capital town of the province of Kumis near Girdkuh. In the meantime, Jalaluddin Khwarazmshah tried vainly to restore his broken kingdom in 622/1225. He charged Nishapur to his officer, Orkhan, who subsequently entrusted it to his one deputy, who massacred the Ismaili settlements in Kohistan. It seems that after some initial hostilities, a peace treaty was negotiated in 624/1227



between the Ismailis and Khwarazmshah. According to the truce, the Ismailis were allowed to retain their hold on Damghan in return for the payment of an annual tribute of 30,000 dinars. Orkhan however continued his enmity, therefore, three Ismaili *fidais* once fell upon him and killed him outside the city in a reprisal for raids against the Ismaili settlements in Kohistan. The three *fidais* were arrested and killed. Muhammad Nasawi (d. 645/1250) writes in "*Sirat-i Jalaluddin*" (ed. Mujtaba Minovi, Tehran, 1965, p. 232) that the three *fidais* with their last breaths, shouted: "We are sacrifices for our Lord Alauddin."

It was at this time that Badruddin Ahmad, the envoy of Alamut, was on his way to see Jalaluddin Khwarazmshah. Hearing of these occurrences, he wrote to vizir Sharf al-Mulk, asking his advice on whether to continue his journey or turn back. The vizir, fearing for his life, was too happy to welcome the Ismaili envoy. He therefore urged the envoy to join him and promised to do all he could to help him in his mission. The two now travelled together. When they reached the plain of Serat, in a moment of abandon at an eating session, Badruddin said: "Even here in your own army, we have our *fidais*, who are well established and pass as your own men." Sharf al-Mulk insisted eagerly on seeing them, and gave him his kerchief as a token of safe-conduct and immunity. Badruddin thereupon summoned five *fidais*, and when they came one of them, an Indian, said to Sharf al-Mulk: "I would have been able to kill you, I did not do so, because I had not yet received orders to deal with you." When Sharf al-Mulk heard these words, he cast off his cloak and sat before them in his shirt and said: "I am the slave of Alauddin as I am the sultan Jalaluddin's slave, and here I am before you. Do with me as you will." Words of this reached the Jalaluddin, who at once sent orders to burn the five *fidais* alive. It seems that the Ismaili envoy, Badruddin cut down his way and returned to Alamut, while the vizir pleaded for mercy for them, but of no avail, and was forced to comply with sultan's orders. A great fire was kindled at the entrance of his tent, and the five *fidais* were thrown into it, and the name of Alauddin Muhammad was on their lips with their last breaths.

In Alamut, the Ismailis took serious notice of the above event, and resolved to confront once for all with

Jalaluddin Khwarazmshah in reprisal, but Alauddin Muhammad efficiently tackled the situation. He sent his envoy, Salauddin to vizir Sharf al-Mulk at Bardha'a. Nasawi (d. 645/1250) personally witnessed the aftermath and writes, "I was with Sharaf al-Mulk at Bardha'a, when an envoy called Salauddin came to him from Alamut and said: "You have burnt five of our *fidais*. If you value your safety, you must pay a bloodwit of 10,000 dinars for each of them." These words appalled and terrified Sharaf al-Mulk, so that he became incapable of thought and action. He favoured the envoy all others with generous gifts and splendid honours, and ordered me to write him an official letter, reducing by 10,000 dinars the annual tributes of 30,000 dinars which they were supposed to bring to the sultan's treasury. Sharaf al-Mulk then affixed his seal to the document." (op. cit., pp. 163-6)

#### **Muhammad Nasawi in Alamut**

On one occasion, Muhammad Nasawi was sent as an envoy of Jalaluddin to Alamut to demand the balance of the tribute that was owing for Damghan, and to settle other points of dispute. He succeeded to have his nice meetings with Alauddin Muhammad and his vizir Imaduddin at Alamut.

Nasawi described his mission with satisfaction in his "*Sirat-i Jalaluddin*" (pp. 232-3) that, "Alauddin Muhammad favoured me above all the other envoys of the sultan, treating me with great respect and beauty. He dealt generously with me, and gave me twice the usual amount in gifts and robes of honour. This is an honourable man. Generosity to such a man is never wasted. The value of what was bestowed on me, in cash and in kind, was near 3000 dinars, including two robes of honour, each consisting of a satin cloak, a hood, a fur and a cape, one lined with satin and the other with Chinese crepe; two belts of 200 dinars weight; 70 pieces of cloth; two horses with saddles, bridles and harness and pommels; a thousand dinars in gold; four caparisoned horses; a string of Bactrian camels; and thirty robes of honour for my suite."

From the narratives of Muhammad Nasawi, it appears that he obtained only a compromise solution during his meetings, He however, describes his mission with extreme satisfaction.



The Ismailis acquired new regions in Gilan and entered Ruyan. The Baduspanid ruler, Fakhr ad-Dawla Namavar bin Bisutun, who had succeeded his father shortly before 620/1223 was obliged to leave Ruyan. On the other hand, the relation between the Rudhbari Ismailis and the Qazwinis had finally become peaceful.

According to "*Jamiut Tawarikh*" (p. 181), Alauddin Muhammad procured a close association with a Sufi Shaikh of Qazwin, Jamaluddin Gili (d. 651/1253) and sent him an annual grant of 500 gold dinars; who according to "*Dabistan al-Mazahib*" (1st vol., p. 265), had privily espoused Ismailism. The attitude of the Muslims of Qazwin in this context became more aggressive, therefore, Alauddin Muhammad had to warn them that, "If the abode of Shaikh Jamaluddin was not in Qazwin, I would have not spared even the dust of your town."

#### Count Henry in Kahf

In Syria, Rashiduddin Sinan had been succeeded in 589/1193 by an Iranian *da'i* Abu Mansur bin Muhammad. William of Tyre describes in 582/1186 the visit of Henry, Count of Champagne (d. 593/1197), the ruler of Jerusalem, and the husband of the widow of Conrad of Montferrat, who passed on his way from Acre to Antioch, near the territories of the Syrian Ismailis in 590/1194. Abu Mansur bin Muhammad sent deputies to welcome him, and to invite him to visit his fortress of Kahf on his return. Count Henry accepted the invitation. Abu Mansur received him with great honour. He took him to several castles and fortresses and brought him at last to one having very lofty turrets. On each look-out stood two Ismaili guards, dressed in white uniforms. Abu Mansur told the Count that these *fidais* obeyed him better than the Christians did their princes; and giving a signal, two of them instantly leaped from the top of the tower, and were dashed to pieces at its foot. "If you desire it," said Abu Mansur to the astonished Count, "all my *fidais* shall throw themselves down from the battlements in the same way." Count Henry declined and confessed that he could not expect such obedience in his servants. The spirit of self-sacrificing demonstrated before Count Henry purported to dissuade him from contemplating any ill design against the Ismailis. The historicity of this incident is doubtful. Nevertheless, it

had become quite famous in occidental sources by the end of the 13th century in Europe. It is cited in the Latin history of Marino Sanudo Torsello and Francesco Pipino of Bologna. Arnold of Lubeck presents the event as a customary demonstration of loyalty in the Ismailism. Georgius Elmacin (d. 671/1273) however, erroneously transposed the event to the Iranian Ismailis of Hasan bin Sabbah.

The names of several chief **dais** who led the Syrian Ismailis, are known to us from the inscriptions at Masiyaf, Kahf and other strongholds, vide "**Epigraphie des Assassins de Syrie**" (JA, 9 series, ix, 1897, pp. 453-501) by Max van Berchem (1863-1903). According to an inscription in the inner gate of the castle, a building was restored by Kamaluddin al-Hasan bin Masud. Another inscription reads that a **dai** Majduddin received the ambassadors of Frederick II in 624/1227, bringing gifts worth almost 80,000 dinars. The descriptions of **dai** Sirajuddin Muzaffar bin al-Hussain are found in the year 625/1228 and 635/1238. Tajuddin Abul Futuh bin Muhammad, an Iranian **dai** from Alamut came in 637/1240, who built the city wall of the Masiyaf and its south gate in 646/1249 when the commander of the fortress was Abdullah bin Abil Fazal bin Abdullah. Ibn Wasil (d. 697/1298), the author of "**Mufarriid al-Kurub**," a native of central Syria, was also personally acquainted with Tajuddin Abul Futuh.

An important happening in this period relates to the dealings between Tajuddin Abul Futuh bin Muhammad, the chief **dai** in Syria and the French king Louis IX (1226-1270), who led the seventh Crusade (1249-1250). Jean de Joinville (1224-1317), the king's biographer in his "**Histoire de Saint Louis**" (comp. 1305) makes a record for the year 648/1250 that king Louis came in Acre in 1250 and stayed four years in Palestine after his early defeat in Egypt. The Ismaili chief **dai** sent the French king: "a very well made figure of an elephant, another of an animal called giraffe, and apples of different kinds, all of which were of crystal. With these he sent gaming boards and sets of chessman. All these objects were profusely decorated with little flowers made of amber, which were attached to the crystal by delicately fashioned clips of good fine gold, a shirt and a ring." The Ismaili envoys told the king: "Sir, we are come back from our chief, who informs you that as the shirt is the part of dress nearest



to the body, he sends you this, his shirt, as a gift, or a symbol that you are the king for whom he has the greatest affection, and which he is most desirous to cultivate; and, for a further assurance of it, here is his ring that he sends you, which is of pure gold, and has his name engraved on it; and with this ring our chief espouses you, and understands that henceforth you be one of the fingers of his hand."

The Ismaili envoys asked the king either to pay tribute to them or at least release them from paying tribute to the Templars and Hospitallers. The French however did not pay tribute to the Ismailis of Syria, who continued to pay their own tribute to the Templars and Hospitallers. Desiring to procure close ties with the Syrian Ismailis, the king Saint Louis responded to their peace initiative by sending his ambassadors with gifts to the Ismaili chief. This Frankish mission also included an Arabic-speaking friar, Yves the Breton. It was in the course of his meetings with the Ismaili chief Tajuddin Abul Futuh, held at Masiyaf, that Yves asked the articles of the Ismaili faith and reported back to the king as he understood. It is curious that Yves the Breton wrongly reported the king the Ismaili beliefs in nonsense, incredible and baseless colouring.

#### **Muslim refugees in Kohistan**

In 624/1227, Chenghiz Khan conquered eastern region of Iran, but the Ismailis of Kohistan were unaffected by the initial phase of the operations and continued to enjoy their prosperity. On that juncture, an increasing number of the Sunni Muslim refugees, including numerous *ulama* of Khorasan, had ferruled asylum in the Ismaili towns of Kohistan. The Ismailis welcomed the flood of the refugees, and assisted them with their own resources. In Kohistan, the Ismailis maintained an island of prosperity and stability from which all benefited. The visiting Sunni jurist and historian, Minhaj Siraj Juzjani (d. 685/1286), who spent his earlier years in the services of the Ghorid dynasty in India. He visited Kohistan three times between 621/1224 and 623/1226. He writes in his "*Tabaqat-i Nasiri*" (comp. 658/1260) that Shihabuddin bin Mansur Abul Fateh, the learned Ismaili governor of Kohistan was lavish in his treatment to these Sunni refugees in his mountain fastnesses. He further writes in "*Tabaqat-i Nasiri*" (tr.

by Ghulam Rasul Maher, Lahore, 1975, 2nd vol., pp. 230-31) that, "I found him a person of infinite learning with wisdom, science, and philosophy, in such wise, that a philosopher and sage like unto him there was not in the territory of Khorasan. He used greatly to cherish poor strangers and travellers; and such Muslims of Khorasan as had come into proximity with him he was wont to take under his guardianship and protection. On this account his assemblies contained some of the most distinguished of the **ulema** of Khorasan; and he had treated all of them with honour and reverence, and showed them much kindness. They stated to this effect, that, during those first two or three years of anarchy in Khorasan, one thousand honorary dresses, and seven hundred horses, with trappings, had been received from his treasury and stables by **ulema** and poor strangers."

It is however recounted that the local Ismailis of Kohistan lodged complaints to Alamut about the negative effects of the generous hospitality from the state treasury. Thus, Shihabuddin was summoned at Alamut, and a new governor, Shamsuddin Hussain Ikhtiyar was appointed instead. The latter also came to be equally admired by the Muslim refugees because of the similar lavish treatment, which evidently implies that the principal cause of the replacement was not the lavish treatment, but was summoned for some other task. Shihabuddin himself was also a learned scholar, and his one scribe in Kohistan, called Ra'is al-Hasan bin Saleh Munshi Birjandi, had compiled the Ismaili history which was used by Rashiduddin in "**Jamiut Tawarikh**."

#### **War with Sistan**

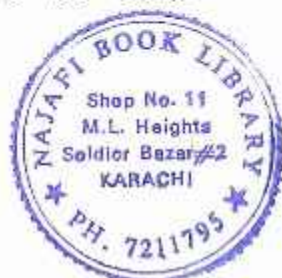
The arrival of Shamsuddin Hasan at Kohistan marked with the outbreak of new conflicts between the Ismailis and their Sistan neighbours. Yaminuddin Bahram Shah bin Taj al-Din Harb (610-618/1213-1221), the local Nasrid chief of Sistan, had previously waged two wars against Alamut during the time of Imam Jalaluddin Hasan; and his nephew had sold the fortress of Shahanshah near the town of Nih to Alamut. Yaminuddin demanded from the Ismailis of Kohistan to give up the claim of the fortress, and threatened to capture it by force. Before the invasion of Yaminuddin on Kohistan, the four **fidais** had killed him on 5th Rabi II, 618/May 29, 1221 at Zarang.



It was followed immediately by the succession issue in Sistan among the sons of Yaminuddin. The Ismailis of Kohistan supported Ruknuddin against his younger brother Nusratuddin, whom the notables placed on the throne. Like his father, Nusratuddin continued his claim on the fortress of Shahanshah. Soon afterwards, Ruknuddin gained the throne of Sistan with the help of the Ismailis in 619/1222. In the meantime, the Mongols invaded Sistan without staying there, and Ruknuddin had also been killed by his slave. The notables of Sistan put on the throne Shihabuddin bin Harb and his brother Ali, to the dissatisfaction of the Ismailis, who again had their own candidate, Uthman Shah bin Nasiruddin Uthman. They acquired support from Khwarazmian commander, called Tajuddin Yinaltagin, who was then stationed at Kirman, for the rights of Uthman. Yinaltagin arrived in 622/1225 at Sistan with his troops, and defeated the forces of Sistan. Instead of placing Uthman on the throne, Yinaltagin retained this power with him for almost a decade.

Thus, Shamsuddin, the Ismaili governor of Kohistan commanded his forces in a battle against Yinaltagin, and inflicted a defeat to him in 623/1226. It was after this battle against Yinaltagin, who deputed Minhaj Siraj Juzjani as his envoy to conduct diplomatic negotiations with the Ismailis of Kohistan. Minhaj Siraj concluded a truce with Shamsuddin at Nih on behalf of Yinaltagin, and as a result, the Ismailis pursued an independent policy in its local affairs, and developed important trade route with other regions, which were the source of acceleration of their economical conditions. When Minhaj Siraj returned to Sistan after negotiations, Yinaltagin forced him to go once again to Kohistan to declare a war against the Ismailis, but he did not consent to set out on a second journey, as he had determined upon undertaking a journey into India. This refusal did not meet with the approval of Yinaltagin and he commanded to detain him for 43 days in the fort of Safhad of Sistan and prohibited his going beyond the walls.

In the meantime, Alamut gave refuge to Ozbeg's son, Malik Khamush, and to Jalaluddin's brother Ghiasuddin, who were dismissed from their posts by the Khwarazmshah in 625/1228. The Ismailis helped Ghiasuddin despite the Khwarazmian blockade of Rudhbar, but he was there murdered.



In 625/1228, while the Ismaili envoy Badruddin was travelling east across the Oxus to Mongol court, Jalaluddin Khwarazmshah ordered at once to stop all the caravans in that direction, pretending that a Mongol envoy was on his way to Syria in the company of some Ismailis. In compliance, his vizir Sharaf al-Mulk put to death in Azerbaijan a westward Syrian Ismaili caravan of seventy merchants. Hence, Alamut sent an emissary to the Khwarazmshah, demanding successfully retrieval of the goods taken from the murdered Syrian Ismailis. In the meantime, Ghiasuddin took flight from Alamut which had enraged Jalaluddin Khwarazmshah.

### **Nasiruddin Tusi**

Nasiruddin Tusi was born in Tus, Khorasan in 597/1202. In his youth, about in 624/1227, he entered the service of Nasiruddin Abdu Rahman bin Abu Mansur (d. 655/1257), the Ismaili governor in Kohistan. During his long stay at Qain and other strongholds in Kohistan, Nasiruddin Tusi procured his close friendship with the Ismaili governor, to whom he also dedicated in 633/1235 his famous work on ethics, entitled "**Akhlaq-i Nasiri**". He went to Alamut and espoused Ismaili faith. In his "**Sayr wa Suluk**" (pp. 38-42), he narrates how, after his initial dissatisfaction with scholastic theology and philosophy, he came to realize the necessity of following an infallible Imam who would guide reason to its perfection. In all probability, Nasiruddin Tusi willingly embraced Ismailism during the time of Imam Alauddin Muhammad. According to Farhad Daftary in his "**The Ismailis: their History and Doctrines**" (London, 1990, p. 408), "There is no evidence suggesting that these outside scholars were detained in the community against their will or that they were forced to embrace Ismailism during their stay amongst the Nizaris." He enjoyed the patronage of Alauddin Muhammad and his successor, until the collapse of the Alamut rule in 654/1256. The Mongol chief Halagu made him his trusted advisor, and built a great observatory for him at Maragha in Azerbaijan. He was a most voluminous writer too, and died in 672/1274. His "**Rawdatu't-Taslim**" and other short treatises bear an Ismaili imprint. Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes in "**Science and Civilization in Islam**" (Mass., 1968, p. 322) that, "The universality of Nasir al-Din's genius, which some have quite erroneously taken for lack of principles, is shown by the fact that, while in the



service of the Ismailis, he was able to master their doctrines and even wrote several works which contain some of the clearest expositions of Ismailism. Among these, the "Rawdat al-taslim" is particularly notable, as a simple exposition of the basic doctrines of this important branch of Islam."

#### **Muslim delegation in Europe**

The pact between Imam Jalaluddin Hasan and the Mongols, as hinted by Juvaini and explicitly described by Rashiduddin, became impaired afterwards. In 635/1238, Alauddin Muhammad dispatched an embassy, in cooperation with the Abbasid caliph al-Mustansir (d. 640/1242) to Louis IX (d. 1270), the king of France, and Henry III (d. 1272), the king of England, to report the incoming stormy inroads of the Mongols, and to evaluate possibility of an alliance with the Christian West against the Mongols. Mathew Paris (d. 1259) has written in his "Chronica Majora" (ed. by Henry R. Luard, London, 1876, 3rd vol., pp. 487-9) the account of this embassy in England. The Bishop of Winchester, who was present at the audience, interrupted the envoy's appeal with harsh words, reflecting the hostile policy of the church against the Muslims.

#### **Muslim delegation in Mongolia**

After this rebuff by the West, the Ismailis made their final approach to the Mongol's court. In summer of 643/1246, on the enthronement of Guyuk (1246-1248), the next new Mongol's chief; Alauddin Muhammad, along with the Abbasid caliph al-Mustasim (640-656/1242-1258) and many other Muslim rulers, sent a mission in the Khangai mountains in Central Mongolia. The Ismaili ambassadors, Shihabuddin and Shamsuddin, the former governors of Kohistan delivered a memorandum to Guyuk. Neither they nor the Abbasid ambassador were well received, and on that juncture, the Mongol demonstrated a negative attitude towards the Muslim rules.

## Beginning of the Mongol operations

Soon afterwards, Guyuk dispatched Eligidei to Iran at the head of reinforcements for the Mongol armies already stationing there, with instructions to assume supreme command in reducing the Muslim holds, beginning with Alamut. Guyuk intended to follow after, but his death prevented the operations, which was charged some six years later, to his nephew and successor Mongke (1251-1259), who appointed his brother Halagu (1256-1265) to command an army to Iran, Iraq and Egypt according to the resolution of the Mongol National Assembly (*quriltai*) held in 649/1251. Halagu did not reach Iran before the beginning of 654/1256, but had dispatched an advance army of 12,000 men from Mongolia in 650/1252 in command of Ket-Buqa to join with the Mongol garrison already camping in Iran. Ket-Buqa crossed the Oxus in 651/1253 and soon afterwards, attacked the Ismaili strongholds in Kohistan. His troops drove off the cattle of the people of Tun, Turshiz and Zir-kuh and slaughtered and pillaged throughout that region. The towns of Tun and Turshiz were however captured, but the Ismailis recovered Tun very soon. Ket-Buqa also reached at the foot of Girdkuh with 5,000 men, where he constructed elaborate siegeworks, digging a trench around the castle, and erecting a wall around the trench. The men then formed a ring behind that wall, and a second wall and a trench were constructed around the men, so that they were apparently left secure in the middle with no possibility of attack from either side.

Leaving his officer, Buri with the charge of siege at Girdkuh, Ket-Buqa proceeded to attack the castle of Mihrin, near Girdkuh and Shahdiz. In Shawal, 651/December, 1253, the Ismaili garrison of Girdkuh made a valiant nocturnal assault on the Mongols, killing a hundred of them, including Buri. The siege however continued and in the interim, the disease of cholera broke out in the summer of 652/1254. It was reported to Alamut that most of the garrisons were perishing and the castle was on the verge of falling. Alauddin Muhammad immediately supplied reinforcements, including his three officers at the head of 110 men, each carrying a load of two maunds of *henna* (Latin *Lawsonia inermis*, Arabic *hinna*, the shrub) and three maunds of salt. The garrison's stock of salt had been exhausted, and as for the *henna*, we are told by the author of "*Jamiut-Tawarikh*", himself a physician, that there had not been prescribed in the books of medicine



that **henna** was a drug against cholera. The people of Girdkuh had an experience however that once water being scarce, some of them had drunk that **henna** water and were cured. It was for this reason that they had asked for **henna** from Alamut. The 110 men forced their way through the ranks of the besiegers, suffering only a single casualty; one of them fell into the trench and dislocated his leg; his comrades lifted him on to their shoulders and carried him into the castle. The garrison, thus restored to its full strength, and continued its resistance until 659/1270.

Halagu was yet in Samarkand and was about to cross Oxus on the eve of the death of Alauddin Muhammad, who, according to Peter Brent, might have been strong enough to resist for a long time against the Mongols, vide "**The Mongol Empire**" (London, 1976, p. 135)

#### **Construction of Maimundiz**

According to "**Jamiut Tawarikh**" (p. 122), the construction of the fortress of Maimundiz began in 490/1097, but Kashani (d. 738/1338) determines in 497/1103 in his "**Zubdat al-Tawarikh**" (p. 144). Juvaini (2nd vol., p. 627) however writes that it had been built in the time of Alauddin Muhammad. It seems that the location had been selected earlier, where a small fortress was built, known as Maimundiz. In the time of Alauddin Muhammad, the site had been freshly chosen and projected for a stronghold. His officers and ministers had surveyed the heights and summits of the mountains during 12 years until they chose a lofty peak, and built there a castle, and provided it with ample supply of water.

The site of Maimundiz, located to the north of presently village of Shams Kilaya and westward from Alamut. Because of the great altitude, the cold was so extreme as to make it impossible for beasts to find a home or live in that location from the beginning of autumn until the middle of spring. The family of Alauddin Muhammad and his attendants were shifted from Alamut to Maimundiz.

The site of Maimundiz was identified in 1960 by an expeditionary party organised at Oxford University for exploring the Ismaili castles of northern Iran, vide "**The**

**Castles of the Assassins** (London, 1963) by Peter Willey. Dr. M. Sutude in **"Qila-i Ismailiyya"** (Tehran, 1966, pp. 108-122), who is well grounded with the geographical area, rejected the identification of Maimundiz made by Peter Willey's expedition.

Shamsuddin bin Ahmad al-Tayyibi (592-652/1195-1254) was an eminent Ismaili poet in Syria. He travelled excessively in Iran and visited Alamut during the period of Alauddin Muhammad, where he served as a court-poet. His poetical works are not accessible. He left Alamut most probably after the death of Alauddin Muhammad, and returned to Syria, where he died.

Alauddin Muhammad's rule was long and prosperous. It was a period of both intellectual and political activity. The glory of his rule was the patronage of science and learning, attracted a bulk of scholars from outside. He was fond of shepherding and used to visit the villages to help the people in their dairy products, and the cattle breedings. His old enemies conspired through his close advisor, Hasan Mazandaran, who killed the Imam on 29th Shawal, 653/December 1, 1255. His body was found at midnight in a wooden hut, near his sheep-fold in the village of Shirkuh in the western part of the district of Alamut. Alauddin Muhammad had many son's whose detail is not accessible. It is however known from Juvaini that Shahanshah, Shiranshah and Iranshah were his sons, and the elder one was Ruknuddin Khurshah, who was consigned the office of Imamate.

#### **RUKNUDDIN KHURSHAH (653-655/1255-1257)**

Ruknuddin Hasan, surnamed Khurshah was born in 627/1230. He is also known as Kahirshah. When he was still a child, his father had declared him as his successor. Juvaini tried to adulterate the Nizarid line of Imamate, but at one place he curiously writes (p. 663), "And today, the leader (Ruknuddin Khurshah) of the heretics (the misnomer used for the Ismailis) of Alamut traces his descent from this son (of Nizar).

His father, Imam Alauddin Muhammad had taken due care of rudiments of his formal education at home under personal care. When he grew young, his father designated him his



deputy to investigate few cases of disorders in some castles, with an instruction to obey his orders as his own. In 653/1255, before his father's death, he is reported to have visited Syria with a letter of his father. Strict protection had been given to Ruknuddin, and wherever he went, a small unit of armed men accompanied him as security guards. It is related that he stayed more than a year in the castles of Rudhbar and Kohistan for making fresh administrative fabric, and thus the enemies of the Ismailis smacked of exaggerations that his relation had been deteriorated with his father.

Three days later, having assumed the Imamate, Ruknuddin sent an army which his father had ordered against Shal-Rud in the district of Khalkhal. The Ismaili forces occupied the castle after a small fighting.

### **Decline of the Khwarazmshahis**

The Ismailis continued to retain good relation with the Abbasids and Khwarazmshah. Alauddin Khwarazmshah (d. 617/1220) and Jalaluddin Khwarazmshah (d. 628/1231) were very proud of their wealth and grandeur and their relations with the Abbasids and the Ismailis became deteriorated and fell into a swift decline. The Mongol routed the empire of Khwarazmshah in 628/1231 with no difficulty, because no Muslim power came to help them. It must be noted that the kingdom of Khwarazmshahis was founded by Anushtagin (1077-1097). This dynasty ruled for 153 years from 471/1079 to 628/1231 and produced 8 rulers belonging to seven generations.

Hence, only two big powers remained in existence in Islamic world, i.e., the Abbasids and the Alamut.

### **Negotiations with the Mongols**

One of the first acts of Ruknuddin's reign was to send an envoy to Yasa'ur Noyan, the Mongol commander camping at Hamdan (the ancient *Ecbatana*, the Arabs *Hamadhan*). Yasa'ur replied in this context that Ruknuddin should present himself in person before Halagu, whose arrival was now imminent. This was the first of a long series of messages exchanged in 654/1256 between the Ismailis and the Mongols.

In Zilhaja, 653/January, 1256, Halagu crossed the Oxus and passed the winter in the meadow's of Shafurqan to the west of Balkh. The Russian orientalist Wilhelm Barthold has computed the army of Halagu at about 129,000 men and a thousand Chinese artificers, who were skilled in the construction of military machines and in preparing and using every species of inflammable substances for attacking walled towns and fortified strongholds. Halagu entered Iran through Khorasan in Rabi I, 654/April, 1256 and conquered Tun and proceeded towards Tus. During the Mongol operations, the Ismailis are said to have occupied about 360 mountain castles and strongholds.

In Jamada I, 654/May, 1256, Ruknuddin Khurshah had sent his brother, Shahanshah with a delegation to announce his submission to the Mongols. They met Yasa'ur near Qazwin, and Ruknuddin delegated his own son to accompany the Ismaili mission thence to Halagu. Nine days later, Yasa'ur not only detained Shahanshah, but also invaded the Rudhbar without any reason to demonstrate Mongol's power and attacked the Ismaili forces on a mountain top behind Alamut, but he was forced to withdraw after a short while. He then vacated the whole region upon instructions from Halagu, who had now received Ruknuddin's embassy at Quchan. Halagu professed his satisfaction with Alamut's embassy and his own ambassadors reached Ruknuddin at the end of Jamada II/July and delivered a decree, full of encouragement and benevolence, insisting to demolish his castle and come in person. Ruknuddin did in fact destroy some castles. He also demolished the gates coated with lead and removed the battlements and turrets of Alamut, Lamasar and Maimundiz. The Mongol ambassadors, accompanied by Ruknuddin's envoy Sadruddin returned to report the situation to Halagu. Ruknuddin is said to have asked a year's grace before presenting himself. In the beginning of Shaban/September, the Mongol envoy came with a new proposal that the Ismaili Imam should immediately present before Halagu, and in his absence a Mongol, named Tukel Bahadur would act as a caretaker governor in Rudhbar. Ruknuddin sent his reply through an embassy led by his vizir, Shamsuddin Gilaki and Saifuddin Sultan Malik, who accompanied the Mongol ambassador and reached Halagu on 17th Shaban/September 9, asking for a year's grace and exemption of Alamut and Lamasar from the demolition order, but the Mongol demonstrated their impatience.



Halagu now set out from his encampment near Bastam to launch his assault on the Ismaili strongholds in Rudhbar. The main Mongol force proceeded from different directions. The right wing of Halagu forces led by Buqa Taymur and Koke-Ilgei advanced by way of Mazandaran. The left wing under the Chaghatai prince Teguder and Ket-Buqa proceeded through Simnan and Khuvar. While Halagu himself with the principal army, followed parallel route leading through Firozkuh, Damavand and Ray. He alighted at Damavand for a while and sent yet another message to Ruknuddin. The Imam was asked to come at once to Damavand, and were he to be delayed upto five days by his preparations, he was to send his son in advance. Ruknuddin dispatched his son on 17th Ramdan/October 8. Halagu returned the boy and suggested that if Ruknuddin could not come till later, he should send another brother to relieve Shahanshah. On 5th Shawal/October 26, Ruknuddin sent out his brother Shiranshah with 300 men, who arrived at Halagu's camp two days later.

Meanwhile, the vizir Shamsuddin Gilaki had returned from Girdkuh and brought its governor, the Qadi Tajuddin Mardanshah, before Halagu, while Girdkuh still held out. Shahanshah was relieved and sent back to Rudhbar with the message that if Ruknuddin demolished the castle of Maimundiz and presented himself in a person before Halagu, he would be received with honour and and given immunity. By this time, the Mongol armies entered Rudhbar from all sides. Halagu set out from his base at Piskildara on 10th Shawal/October 31 and advanced towards Rudhbar through Taliqan.

#### **Reduction of Maimundiz**

On 18th Shawal/November 8, Halagu encamped on the hilltop opposite Maimundiz. The Mongol armies began to prepare for a siege. The Ismaili forces gained initial victories and rained down stones from their own mangonels upon the besiegers. The Ismaili warriors using the mangonels, were made with a pole of hard wood raised in a slanting position, supported by a strut at a point a quarter of its height from the top, and fixed in the ground at some distance from the main pole so as to support it. At the top of the pole was the emplacement for the axle to which the shaft was attached.

On the second day of fighting, the Mongols brought into a play a Chinese ballista with a range of 2,500 paces. The garrisons of Maimundiz now ceased fighting and asked for truce, which was granted. Meanwhile, on 25th Shawal/November 15, the Mongols resumed their bombardment on Maimundiz on large scale. The Ismailis strained every nerve to meet the situation and the danger hovering on their door, but they found themselves utterly helpless in the face of these nomadic hordes that poured down into the Ismaili territories like ants and locusts. At length, Ruknuddin asked for a *yarligh*, granting him self-conduct. He first sent down his son and another brother Iranshah with a delegation of nobles and on Sunday, the 29th Shawal, 654/November 19, 1256, he himself dismounted from the castle, embosomed with a group of dignitaries including Nasiruddin Tusi, Khwaja Asiluddin Zuzani and the vizir Muayyaduddin. He was however well received by Halagu.

#### Reduction of Alamut

At Halagu's request, Ruknuddin sent his representatives with the Mongol envoys to all the castles in Rudhbar, instructing for their destruction. Some forty castles were thus demolished. Halagu proceeded to the foot of Alamut, whose Ismaili commander was Muqadinuddin. Leaving Balaghai behind to besiege Alamut with a large force, Halagu then set out for Lamasar. After a few days, the garrison of Alamut dismounted. Berthold Spuler writes in *"The Muslim World"* (London, 1969, 2nd vol., p. 18) that, "The fortress Alamut offered a desperate resistance to the onslaughts of the Central Asian hordes and only succumbed after a prolong siege." Towards the end of Zilkada, 654/December, 1256, all the persons in Alamut came down with all their goods and belongings and after three days, the Mongols climbed up to the castle and seized whatever those people had been unable to carry off. They also plundered freely whatever they found in the castle, and then set fire to its building and its library. Meanwhile, Ata Malik Juvaini, who had accompanied Halagu to the foot of Lamasar, had been granted permission to inspect the library. He saved a number of choice books, including some Ismaili works, as well as certain astronomical instruments, before consigning the library to flames. Thus, the accumulated literary treasure of about two centuries was consumed to ashes. Juvaini himself writes,



"I burnt them all" (*basukh tam*). Edward G. Browne termed it, "world's renowned library." Arif Tamir writes in "*Khams Rasail Ismailiyya*" (Beirut, 1956, p. 195) that, "The Mongol destroyed the Ismaili library containing one and one half million volumes."

As for the Alamut, Juvaini writes, "It was a castle whereof the entries and exits, the ascents and approaches had been so strengthened by plastered walls and lead-covered ramparts that when it was being demolished, it was as though the iron struck its head on a stone, and it had nothing in its hand and yet resisted. And in the cavities of these rocks they had constructed several long, wide and tall galleries and deep tanks, dispensing with the use of stone and mortar....And from the river, they had brought a conduit to the foot of the castle and from thence a conduit was cut in the rock half way round the castle and ocean-like tanks, also of rock, constructed beneath so that the water would be stored in them by its own impetus and was continually flowing on. Most of these stores of liquids and solids, which they had been laying down from the time of Hasan-i Sabbah, that is over a period of more than 170 years, showed no sign of destruction, and this they regarded as a result of Hasan's sanctity. (2nd vol., pp. 720-1) Juvaini goes on to tell how a large body of Mongol soldiers were employed in demolishing the castle: "Picks were of no use: they set fire to the buildings and then broke them up, and this occupied them for a long time." (Ibid.)

Meanwhile, at Lamasar, Halagu had failed to induce the surrender despite the services of Ruknuddin as intercessor. He left Dayir Buqa to beleaguer it with an army, but it did not surrender until 1258. He quitted Rudhbar on 13th Zilhaja, 655/January 4, 1257 and reached his encampment at Hamdan. On 22nd Zilhaja/January 13, Ruknuddin's family and servants were billeted in Qazwin, but he himself accompanied Halagu. From here, on Halagu's request, Ruknuddin sent his emissaries to the Ismaili castles in Syria, instructing them to guard the castles as subjects of Halagu until such time as he himself should arrive there.

### **Imam in Mongol's camp**

Ruknuddin Khurshah is reported to have married a Mongolian woman at the encampment of Halagu in Hamdan. He remained with Halagu for about 3 months and 23 days after the fall of Maimundiz. In the beginning of March, 1257, Halagu sent an embassy to the Abbasid caliph Mustasim, asking for submission. It seems probable that Ruknuddin must have conceived the forthcoming terrible onslaught of the Mongols against the Abbasids, and therefore, he intended to quit the company of Halagu before the operations. Since Lamasar and Girdkuh had not been surrendered, therefore, Ruknuddin was continued to be treated with honour. Ruknuddin sought permission from Halagu to see Mongke in Karakorum. He must have been taken to their operations against the Abbasids, had he not quitted the company of Halagu at Hamdan, and it would have led the enemies of the Ismailis to cultivate another story that the operations against Baghdad had been launched on the directions of the Ismaili Imam. Ruknuddin however succeeded to leave Hamdan for Karakorum.

### **Imam on way to Karakorum**

On 1st Rabi I, 655/March 9, 1257, Ruknuddin Khurshah set out from Hamdan with nine companions and a group of Mongols led by Bujrai. On the way, when they arrived at the foot of Girdkuh, which was not yet surrendered, Ruknuddin tried once again to bring down the castle's garrisons. He was however suspected that he had told them secretly not to surrender, and as a result, he was not treated well henceforward by his escorts. Our sources do not give the route leading to Karakorum, but it seems that they alighted at Bukhara and proceeded about 150 miles to the east for Samarkand, and thence reached to Karakorum.

It is worthy of note from the accounts of "**The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World**" (tr. William W. Rockhill, London, 1900, p. 222) that King Louis IX (d. 1270) of France had tried to secure an alliance with the Mongols against the Muslims. In pursuit, he had sent William of Rubruck (1215-1295), a Flemish Franciscan on a diplomatic mission under the garb of church, at the court of Mongke (d. 1257) in the year 1253. William of Rubruck reached Karakorum on December 25, and visited the court of Mongke on January 4, 1254. He noticed strict



security measures in the court, because it had been informed to Mongke, possibly a rumour that was going about that forty Ismaili *fidais* had entered the city to kill him. It is, however, much nearer to reasonable possibility that the detention of Ruknuddin in Karakorum would have proved a good hand to Mongke, to force the so called forty hiding *fidais* to surrender. Why Mongke did not detain Ruknuddin and also refuse to see him? It is most likelihood that Mongke was yet unaware of his arrival. It is, of course, possible to draw some inferences that the so called messenger from Mongke was forged by Bujrai according to a pre-arranged policy, informing Ruknuddin that Mongke did not wish to see him, which sounds in "**Jamiut Tawarikh**" (p. 37) that, "When the news reached Mongke that Ruknuddin was coming, he said, 'why is he being brought and why are post horses being tired unnecessarily?' He sent a messenger with instructions that he should be made away." In contrast, it is very dissimilar with Juvaini's account that Ruknuddin actually reached Karakorum, and Mongke remarked, "It is unnecessary to bring him on so long a journey." He refused to accept his present and dismissed with the charge: "Seeing that you claim to be *fi* (friend), why have you not destroyed certain castles such as Girdkuh and Lamasar? You must go back and when you have dismounted those castles, you shall again have the honour of *tikishmishi*" i.e., an audience with a ruler at which one hands over presents (2nd vol., p. 724). Juvaini was in Baghdad at that time, therefore, he seems to have derived his informations from oral channel, and with this the description of "**Jamiut Tawarikh**" (p. 37) cannot be convincing. Under any circumstances, it is difficult to determine with any exactitude that Mongke was aware of Ruknuddin's arrival in Karakorum. The resistance of the garrisons of Girdkuh, including Bujrai's suspicion on Ruknuddin seem to have been reported secretly back to Halagu at Hamdan. It is therefore, possible that Halagu had changed his mind later when Ruknuddin had passed through Girdkuh for Karakorum, and had routed his immediate instructions to Bujrai not to arrange Ruknuddin's meeting with Mongke. Since Ruknuddin had been granted a self-conduct which was operative within the territories of Iran only, therefore, his murder out of Iran became validated for Halagu.

### **Massacre of the Ismailis**

When Ruknuddin had left Iran for Karakorum, there had taken place a wild massacre of the Iranian Ismailis, who were in Mongol's custody. His family and dependents detained at Qazwin were also put to the sword by Qaraqai Bitikchi. Another cruel Mongol commander, called Otegu, summoned the Ismailis of Kohistan to throng at one place, and butchered some 12,000 of them. W. Montgomery Watt however writes in his "Islamic Philosophy and Theology" (Edinburgh, 1985, pp. 153-4) that, "The fall of Alamut to the Mongols in 1256 was followed by massacres, but many Ismailites survived and the son of the last Imam was preserved safely in hiding." When Halagu had finished his merciless operations, he decided to kill Ruknuddin out of Iran, through his envoy Bujrai.

### **Murder of Ruknuddin Khurshah**

Ruknuddin Khurshah started his homeland journey from Karakorum after failing to see Mongke. His party, after travelling for about 400 kilometers, reached at the Khangai mountain, one of the three major mountain belts in the north of Mongolia, called also as Hangayn or Changai. On the edge of Khangai, where the route for Samarkand radiated, Ruknuddin and his companions were dismounted and led away from the road, on the pretext of going to a Mongolian feast, and were killed in brutality.

Ruknuddin had also taken his Mongolian wife with him as it was not possible to leave her alone in Hamdan, or send at Qazwin, where his family members were detained. Moreover, the presence of a Mongolian wife would have procured an impression upon Mongke as a token of friendship. The isolated chains of later traditions may have been embellished by narrators, but in essence it seems to be true that she had been spared and left alone. The Mongol party fled to Samarkand after killing Ruknuddin and his companions. They also pillaged the treasures of Ruknuddin and took a wild flight after leaving her alone. She had a small caravan of few horses and with them, she wandered and loitered all alone. It was yet danger to follow the tract leading to Samarkand, therefore, she proceeded south-east region, and finally landed at the mountaineous regions of Pamir inside the Gorno-Badakhshan, and nothing else is known about her. It seems fairly certain that her



caravan must have been loaded with important documents or literary materials that most possibly remained with Ruknuddin Khurshah. It is more likely that the important historical documents and the manuscripts retained with Ruknuddin Khurshah unscathed, would have been in the Pamirs in Tajikistan. This however cannot be accepted as conclusively proven, but it does appear to be at least a likelihood. We do not pursue the matter any further here, but it deserves close examination.

Ruknuddin Khurshah remained as a ruler of Alamut for one year, and lived for another year, means the period of his Imamate was for two years. Thus, the Nizari Ismaili rule lasted for about 170 years in Alamut. Ruknuddin Khurshah was succeeded by his son, Shamsuddin Muhammad, who had been privily sent away in Azerbaijan.

Summing up the accounts of the Ismaili state, Dr. Farhad Daftary remarks in his **"The Ismailis: their History and Doctrines"** (London, 1990, p. 382) that: "The Nizari community of the Alamut period, comprised of highlanders and mountain dwellers, villagers and urban groups living in small towns, maintained a sophisticated outlook and placed a high value on intellectual activities, encouraged by the local sense of initiative in the main Nizari territories. In Alamut, Quhistan, and Syria, the Nizaris established impressive libraries, containing not only religious literature of all sorts, including Ismaili works, but also scientific tracts and equipments. The Nizaris seems to have been interested in different branches of learning, and the vitality of their community was reinforced by the continuing arrival of a certain number of outsiders into their centres."

The post-Alamut is the longest period in the Nizari Ismaili history, and so is most obscure and dark owing to the dearth of historical informations. The task to go through the period is also difficult due to the extreme paucity and the total absence of reliable contemporary records. It almost covers 560 years to 18 Imams, who flourished in different villages and towns in Iran, i.e., from Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad (655-710/1257-1310) to Imam Shah Khalilullah II (1206-1233/1792-1817).

Farhad Daftary writes in **"The Ismailis: their History and Doctrines"** (p. 435) that, "The first five centuries of this period represents the darkest phase in Nizari history and constitute the longest obscure period in the history of the Ismaili movement." Dr. Syed Mujtaba Ali also writes in **"The Origin of the Khojabs and their Religious life today"** (Bonn, 1936, p. 27) that, "The period between Rukn al-Din, the last grand master of the Ismailis of Alamut and the great grandfather of the Aga Khan is entirely dark and we know absolutely nothing about the religion of the Ismailis of this period." Another scholar, Hamid Algar states in **"The Revolt of Agha Khan Mahallati and the Transference of the Ismaili Imamate to India"** (cf. **"Studia Islamica"**, XXIX, Paris, 1969, p. 55) that, "Among the many periods of obscurity and uncertainty in the history of Ismailism, the first five centuries following the reduction of the stronghold at Alamut are possibly the darkest. Between the death of Rukn ud-Din Khurshah, the last grand master, and the appearance of the Agha Khans as a part of the imperial establishment in British India, lies a gap as yet unfilled by historical investigation. The tradition of the Nizari Ismailis presents, however, an unbroken chain of succession to the Imamate, and its historicity is not lightly to be dismissed. It is true that of many of the links in this chain, little or more is known than their names, and that those whose existence can be confirmed by material and literary evidence are shadowy figures whose precise sphere of activity and influence can only be conjectured."

The first period of post-Alamut is so barren that nothing in detail is known about the Imams, who indeed succeeded one another by rule of **nass** under an unbroken line of



Imamate. It is followed by the middle period - an era of renaissance in Ismaili thought and *dawa*, also a revival in literary activities. At the last stage, the Imams are reported to have acquired political prominence to some extent. Culling up the accessible details, it appears that 10 Imams flourished under the Shiite garbs during about 250 years, 2 Imams lived under Sufic cloaks during about 75 years, and other 6 Imams exercised their appearance incognito in the mantles of Shiite and Sufic during about 235 years. This further leaves us to sum up that 13 Imams during about 367 years practised *taqiya* in Shiite cloaks and other 5 Imams during about 193 years adopted mantles of the Sufis. It implies that the Ismaili Imams had to make their ostensible appearances in pursuant of the variant political and religious cataclysm in Iran.

#### SHAMSUDDIN MUHAMMAD (655-710/1257-1310)

Muhammad, surnamed Shams al-Din, the elder son of Imam Ruknuddin Khurshah is said to have born probably in 646/1230 in the fortress of Maimundiz during the time of Imam Alauddin Muhammad. He was known as Agha Shams in Syria, and Shah Shams in India. He is also known as Shamsu'l Haq in few Iranian poems. Poet Nizari Kohistani (d. 720/1320) called him Shamsuddin Shah Nimroz Ali and Shah Shams. He is also said to have been known as Shams Zardozi owing to residing in the village, called Zardozi in Azerbaijan, but another tradition suggests that he had adopted profession of embroidery and silk to sustain his family, therefore, the term *zardoz* (embroiderer) became his title.

The butchery of the Ismailis conducted by the Mongols in Qazwin and Rudhbar following the reduction of Alamut, is taken by Ata Malik Juvaini conclusively as an end of the Ismailis and the unbroken line of the Imamate as well. There appears however vacuous reports for the descendants of Ruknuddin Khurshah and his followers in the work of Juvaini. He writes in his "*Tarikh-i Jhangusha*" (tr. J.A. Boyle, Cambridge, 1958) that, "Ruknu-ad-Din now saw what he had to expect and realize that he could not resist. The next day (November 16, 1256), he sent out *his son, his only one*, and another brother called Iran-Shah with a delegation of notables, officials and leaders of his

people" (p. 717). This was Juvaini's first narrative when Alamut was being reduced, but while describing the brutal massacre of the Ismailis after about a year, he writes, "And Qaraqai Bitikohi went to Qazwin with the order that Rukn-ad-Din's **sons and daughters**, brothers and sisters and all of his seed and family should be laid on the fire of annihilation" (p. 723).

Juvaini writes in the first phrase, "**his son, his only one**" (*pesr khudra ki hama'n yak pesr*), and then writes in contrast in the second phrase, "**sons and daughters**" (*banin wa bannat*). It implies clearly that Juvaini contradicts his own account, as he had no knowledge of an exact figure of the sons of Ruknuddin Khurshah. Moreover, Juvaini was not present during the fall of Maimundiz on November 19, 1256 where the family of Ruknuddin Khurshah resided, and therefore, his account cannot be trustworthy and reliable. It is however, known from few Iranian manuscripts that Shamsuddin Muhammad had stealthily escorted out of the fortress of Maimundiz most probably on 11th Shawal, 654/November 1, 1256; and the Mongols reached there on 17th Shawal, 654/November 7, 1256; while Juvaini himself joined the Mongol after 12th Zilkada, 654/December 2, 1256. The extermination of the descendants of Ruknuddin Khurshah, as boasted by Juvaini is not to be trusted.

According to Bernard Lewis in "**The Assassins**" (London, 1967, p. 63), "The extirpation of the Ismailis in Persia was not quite as thorough as Juvaini suggests. In the eyes of the sectarians, Rukn al-Din's small son succeeded him as Imam on his death and lived to sire a line of Imams." Marshall Hodgson also writes in "**The Order of Assassins**" (Netherland, 1955. pp. 270 and 275) that, "Juvaini assures himself that every Ismaili was killed; yet even if all the members of garrison were in fact killed, a great many other will have escaped." He further adds, "but their spirit was more nearly indomitable; as it is from among them that the great future of Nizari Ismailism sprouted again. It is said the child Imam was carried to Adharbayjan, where the Imams lived for some time." According to W. Montgomery Watt in "**Islam and the Integration of Society**" (London, 1961, p. 77), "In 1256, Alamut was surrounded, and was destroyed and in the following year the Imam met his death and there was a widespread massacre of the Nizaris. It may be further mentioned that, despite this catastrophe and the fact that



it has never since had a territory of its own, the community was not exterminated and the line of Imams was maintained unbroken." In the words Farhad Daftary, "The Nizaris of Persia, contrary to the declarations of Juwayni and later historians, did in fact survive the destruction of their state and strongholds at the hands of the Mongols. Despite the Mongol massacres, the Persian Nizari community was not starkly extirpated during 654-655/1256-1257, and significant numbers escaped the Mongol debacle in both Rudbar and Quhistan. And while Rukn al-Din Khurshah was spending the last few months of his life amongst the Mongols, the Nizari leadership evidently managed to hide his son and designated successor, Shams al-Din Muhammad, who became the progenitor of the Nizari Imams of post-Alamut period. The Nizari Imamate was thus preserved." (Ibid. p. 435)

It may be surmised in a question that Nasiruddin Tusi was the only person in the fortress of Maimundiz, from whom the internal affairs during the reduction of the Alamut can be well expected. It seems that he divulged nothing about it, suggesting his strictness in *taqiya*. Halagu however, included him in his forthcoming operations, impelling some scholars to draw a conclusion that he had given up Ismailism. Granted that Nasiruddin Tusi had abandoned, the Mongols must have known the trace of Shamsuddin Muhammad from him, but it cannot be ascertained. It appears almost conclusively that the prime objective of Halagu was to reduce the Ismaili powers, and the family members he had seen with Ruknuddin Khurshah dismounting from Maimundiz was enough for him to understand them as an entire family. It is however worth noting that Shahanshah, Iranshah and Shiranshah; the brothers of Ruknuddin Khurshah had personally come into the contact of Halagu during negotiations, and the whole family members later on were detained at Qazwin, where Shahanshah was significantly absent as he had fled with Shamsuddin Muhammad. No investigation had been made for Shahanshah, which transpires that the Mongols aimed mainly on the reduction of the Ismaili powers without taking notice of the descendants of Ruknuddin Khurshah. To summarize briefly, the Mongols were quite unknown with the other side of the coin.

Scanning the meagre chains of few anonymous manuscripts, and the sparsely records of the traditions, it seems fairly certain that after leaving the fortress, Shamsuddin

Muhammad arrived safely in Daylam with his uncle Shahanshah in eastern Gilan. The famous Ismaili *dai* Pir Shams (d. 757/1356) had seen him in his early life at Daylam, which he has recounted in his "**Chandrabann**" (p. 40).

It has been indicated in the previous chapter that Imam Jalaluddin Hasan (d. 618/1221) was quick to diagnose the gushing forth of the Mongol storms in Iran, and therefore, he had taken few precautionary measures. He had commanded his army and gone to Arran and Azerbaijan to help Muzaffaruddin Uzbek, the Ildenizid ruler to fight against Nasiruddin Mengali in 610/1214. Jalaluddin Hasan seems to have prolonged his stay deliberately for 3 to 4 months, and selected most suitable zone to seek refuge for himself, or any other Imam in his descent during the time of Mongol's massacres. It seems probable that he had designed a safe route from Alamut to Azerbaijan. His great grandson, Shamsuddin Muhammad was finally destined to repair in Azerbaijan, most possibly on the tract mapped out in 611/1215.

Shamsuddin Muhammad would have arrived in Daylam before fall of Alamut, and thence he is reported to have stayed in the house of Kai-Ka'us bin Shahanshah at Kutum, a district of Gilan lying to the west of Safid-Rud. Kai-Ka'us was the brother of the wife of Imam Jalaluddin Hasan, and the hereditary ruler of Kutum, who lived till 658/1260. It seems likely that Shamsuddin Muhammad had been well treated at Kutum before resuming his onward journey.

Shamsuddin Muhammad further moved to Ardabil and in the surrounding towns. It is said that he also lived in Ahar, lying about 150 miles west of Ardabil. He is reported to have lived also in Tabriz, which he most possibly evacuated in the early months of 1257 as Halagu invaded Tabriz on July 26, 1257. He seems to have been known as Shams Tabriz by the local Sufis in Tabriz. Pir Shihabuddin Shah (d. 1884) writes in "**Khitabat-i Aliya**" (Tehran, 1963, p. 42) that, "Shamsuddin Muhammad who lived in Tabriz, was compared by the local people to the sun, because of his handsome countenance, and thus he came to be called *Shams* (the sun) of Tabriz. This gave rise to the confusion between him and Shams Tabrizi, the master of Jalaluddin Rumi, but they were always in reality two different persons."



It is also related that he passed considerable time in Angoda, lying on the old route linking Ispahan and Hamdan. In sum, the accessible fragments suggest that Shamsuddin Muhammad most probably lived from one to another place under different mantles in the province of Azerbaijan. The veritable locality of his residence, however, has not been substantiated. Azerbaijan was a big province spread over 104000 square kilometers, bounded on the south-east by Jibal, on the south-west by the eastern Jazira, on the west by Armenia, on the north by Arren, and on the east by shore-lands of the Caspian Sea and Gilan. The most famous towns in Azerbaijan were Tabriz, Ardabil, Ahar, Angoda, Urmiya, Marand, Khwai, Dilman, Miyana, Taruj, Laylan, Julfah, Nakjawan, etc. The north-eastern part of the province was thickly populated by the Turkomans, and the south-western was inhabited by the Kurds. Azerbaijan was a fertile land for the growing Sufi circles, and Shamsuddin Muhammad had settled in northern region with his family, where he professed in silk and embroidery works, for which the region was noted at that time. Abul Fida (d. 732/1331) writes in "*Taqwin al-Buldan*" that, "The northern region of Azerbaijan was rich with the products of silk and embroidery works. The silkworms fed on the oak trees and that the women went out to gather it up, and afterwards dried it in an oven on brass pans."

Summing up the travel of Shamsuddin Muhammad from Maimundiz to Azerbaijan, it seems certain that there were hardly four to five main stations where he had effected junctions during the whole journey. He seems to have left behind at least two trusted *dais* at each station before he embarked, so that the necessary information be communicated from one to another station. It is most certain that poet Nizari Kohistani (d. 720/1320) had reached the residence of Shamsuddin Muhammad at Azerbaijan after getting information very privily from the above *dais* at any station, most probably at Tabriz. It was however most difficult for him to trace out the hidden Imam in a big province, had he not known the clues.

The period under review is noted to have left the Ismaili mission in disarray and it appears that in many regions, it was conducted passively and that too very secretly in accordance with the directives of the elder persons. However, the period between 1257 and 1265 was possibly barren for the *daws*, but was noted for the Ismailis in searching peaceful regions. They had absolutely lost their

contact with the Imam. The Syrian Ismailis seem to have acquired few clues of Imam's whereabouts, and some of them had travelled towards Azerbaijan by taking routes of Jazira and Mosul in the cloaks of the Sufis or traders. The deprivation of regular guidance from the Imam had compelled the surviving Ismailis to observe strict *taqiya* by taking a flood of inspiration and fillip from the events of their past history.

After Alamut operations, Halagu marched on Baghdad and reached on January 18, 1258. On January 30, the Mongols opened a heavy bombardment. On the morning of Wednesday, February 13, 1258, the Mongols entered Baghdad. The citizens were mercilessly massacred, and the city was plundered and then set on fire. Thus, Baghdad, the proud capital of the Abbasids, was razed to dust, groaning under the pagan heels of the Mongols. Diyarbakri (d. 982/1574) writes in "**Tarikh-i Khamis**" that, "The massacre continued in Baghdad for 34 days during which 1,80,000 persons were put to the sword. For four days, the blood ran freely in the streets and the water of Tigris was dyed red for miles." The savage massacres can be further judged from the example quoted by Steven Runciman in "**A History of the Crusades**" (London, 1954, p. 303) that, "One Mongol found in a side-street forty new born babies, whose mothers were died. As an act of mercy, he slaughtered them, knowing that they could not survive with no one to suckle them." The victorious army pursued and attacked at full gallop. The 37th Abbasid caliph al-Mustasim (640-656/1242-1258) was destined to be the last caliph, and was beaten to death on Halagu's orders, and according to another version, trampled on by horses. Abul Faraj writes in "**Tarikh Mukhtasar al-Duwal**" (pp. 445-6) that, "The Abbasid caliph al-Mutasim was devoted to entertainment and pleasure, passionately addicted to playing with birds, and dominated by women. He was a man of poor judgement, irresolute, and neglectful of what is needful for the conduct of government. When he was told what he ought to do in the matter of the Tatars, either to propitiate them, enter into their obedience and take steps to gain their goodwill, or else to muster his armies and encounter them on the borders of Khorasan before they could prevail and conquer Iraq, he used to say, 'Baghdad is enough for me, and they will not begrudge me if I renounce all the other countries to them. Nor will they attack me when I am in it, for it is my house and my residence.' Such baseless fancies and the like prevented him from taking proper



action, and so he was stricken by calamities which he had never imagined."

In sum, Prof. Masudul Hasan writes in **"History of Islam"** (Lahore, 1987, 2nd vol., p. 192) that, "The gravest fault of the Abbasid caliphs was that they suffered the state to be fragmented thereby weakening the power structure and exposing the state to foreign attack. Thus our value-judgement is that the Abbasid caliphs were themselves responsible for their fall." According to Vladimir Minorsky in **"Iran: Opposition, Martyrdom and Revolt"** (Chicago, 1955, p. 192), "Ata Malik Juvaini sheds tears over the misfortunes of the Muslims, and at the same time attributes to his infidel masters the role of those of whom God said: 'They are My troops through whom I take My vengeance upon the rebels.'"

Halagu's third major campaign was directed against the Ayyubids in Syria. He seized Aleppo in 658/1260, while his commander, Ket-Buqa made his triumphal entry in Damascus on Rabi I, 658/March, 1260. It was the same year that four Ismaili strongholds, including Masiyaf were surrendered to the Mongols. Halagu had to return to Iran upon hearing the news of Mongke's death in 657/1259. On 25th Ramadan, 658/September 3, 1260, the Mongols suffered a drastic defeat at Ayn Jalut (Goliath's Spring) near Nazareth in Palestine at the hands of the Mamluk armies of Egypt. Ket-Buqa was taken prisoner and scourged to death. Ayn Jalut was one of the world's decisive battles. The Muslim Asia seemingly on the verge of ruin, made a surprising recovery. Ayn Jalut destroyed the Mongol power and kept the pagan hordes out of Egypt and the Maghrib. Soon afterwards, the Mongols were expelled from all of Syria, where the Mamluk sultan Baybars rapidly emerged as the ruling power, and became an unchallenged ruler of Egypt and Syria. The Ismailis evidently collaborated with the Mamluk sultan and other Muslim rulers in repelling the Mongols from Syria, and after the battle of Ayn Jalut in 658/1260, they recovered their four strongholds.

If a balance sheet of the merciless massacres is drawn up, the most modest estimate reveals that the Mongols during the period between 1228 and 1260 had slaughtered at least eight million Muslims in cold blood for the establishment of their political authority over the Muslim lands.

## Foundation of Ilkhanid dynasty

The great Khan Kubilai (1260-1294), absorbed in the administration of China, had lost interest in the western provinces and was happy that Iran should be governed by his brother Halagu (1256-1265), on whom he bestowed the title of *Il-Khan* (tribal khan, local khan or subordinate khan), which all the descendants of Halagu were to assume. Halagu thus founded in Iran the Il-Khanid dynasty (1265-1335). He died in February 8, 1265 and was succeeded by his seven successors one after another, namely Abaqa (1265-1282), Takudar (1282-1284), Arghun (1284-1291), Gaykhatu (1291-1295), Ghazan (1295-1304), Uljaytu (1304-1316) and Abu Sa'id (1317-1334). With the death of Abu Sa'id the Ilkhanid dynasty in Iran virtually came to an end. One key aspect of the Mongol conquest however was that for the first time, Iran and other large areas of the Muslim world founded themselves governed from 1221 to 1295.

The fall of Alamut must have had a tremendous impact upon the Syrian Ismailis, and greatly impaired their morale. They were now deprived of the leadership and occasional practical guidance formerly given to them from Alamut. The Mongols had constituted befalling and perennial distress to the Ismailis in Syria. During the Mongol's incursion in Syria, the Ismailis were under the leadership of *dai* Radi al-Din Abul Ma'ali (d. 659/1261), who had punished the Ismaili chiefs who had surrendered their castles to the Mongols. Ibn Muyassar (1231-1278) writes in "*Tarikh-i Misar*" (p. 68) that, "Radi al-Din had become the chief *dai* in Syria in 656/1258, and before succeeding to that office, he had gone to Mamluk Egypt as an Ismaili envoy in 655/1257." The Syrian Ismailis established friendly relations with sultan Baybars (658-676/1260-1277). Ibn Abd al-Zahir (d. 692/1293) writes in "*Sirat al-Malik al-Zahir*" (pp. 138-9) that, "In 659/1261, sultan Baybars granted rights to the Ismaili territories to al-Malik al-Mansur (642-683/1244-1285), the Ayyubid prince of Hammah." Meanwhile, the Syrian Ismailis sent an embassy to sultan Baybars, demanding successfully the privileges they had enjoyed under the Ayyubids. Baybars appointed Jamaluddin Hasan bin Thabit as the head of the Ismailis in place of Radi al-Din, which was evidently opposed and scourged to death. Radi al-Din died and the aged Najmuddin Ismail bin al-Sharani (d. 672/1274), who was probably above 80 years



old, became the head of the Syrian mission in 660/1262. He was later on assisted by his son Shamsuddin and his son-in-law Sarimuddin Mubarak, the son of Radi al-Din. The Syrian Ismailis continued to hold possession of eight strongholds, namely, Masiyaf, Qadmus, Kahf, Khwabi, Rusafa, Maynaqa, Ulayqa and Qulaya.

In 661/1263, when sultan Baybars was engaged in his campaign against the Franks, an Ismaili deputation under Shamsuddin and Sarimuddin is reported to have come to the sultan with gifts. According to "*Sirat al-Malik al-Zahir*" (comp. in 663/1264) by Ibn Abd al-Zahir (d. 692/1293), "Ambassadors of the Ismailis arrived with presents, and the two sons of the rulers, who were the commanders of the Ismailis, also came; the sultan treated them with kindness, after which they departed." In 664/1265, however sultan Baybars ordered the collection of taxes on the gifts being sent to the Ismailis by the Frankish kings and the ruler of Yamen. Soon afterwards, the Ismailis began to pay tribute to Baybars, following the truce concluded in 664/1266 between the Mamluk sultan and the Hospitallers, the terms of which stipulated that the latter must renounce the tribute hitherto they used to levy upon the Ismailis and other Muslim rulers in the districts of Hammah and Hims. In 665/1267, the Ismailis became tributaries of Mamluk sultan, paying him what was paid previously to the Hospitallers.

In 669/1271, when sultan Baybars was besieging the Frankish castle of Hisn al-Akrad, two Ismaili *fidais* from Ulayqa were alleged to have joined hands with Bohemond IV of Tripoli to kill sultan Baybars. Thus, Baybars took swift action, and ordered that the stronghold of Ulayqa should be besieged. Ulayqa and Rusafa were reduced at first, and Khwabi, Qulaya, Maynaqa and Qadmus also capitulated in 671/1273. Only the garrison of Kahf mustered some resistance. Having taken the control of the Ismaili territories, sultan Baybars, however tolerated the Ismailis and did not eliminate them. The Ismailis were allowed to exist as loyal subjects of the Mamluks.

Indeed, there are however, some historical reports that sultan Baybars and his successors used to employ the services of the Ismaili *fidais* against their own enemies, whose benefit was acquired by the Mamluks, and the defanations were put on the Syrian Ismailis. Hence, the Ismaili *fidais* had been used as an instrument to threaten

the enemies of the Mamluks. The historians however have painted it in gloomier colours than it merits. The Mamluk sultan Baybars (d. 676/1277) subjugated the Ismailis since 671/1273, making them devoid of any political significance, and existed as the loyal subjects of the Mamluks and later the Ottoman of Turkey. In sum, with the surrender of Kahf, the last Ismaili castle, on 22nd Zilhida, 671/July 10, 1273 and the elimination of the Ismaili power in Syria, sultan Baybars I completed what Halagu Khan had began in Iran in 654/1256.

The Ismailis in Khorasan and Badakhshan including upper Oxus were relatively not accessible to the Mongol sword during the turbulent period. They continued to develop a distinctive tradition of their own and played prominent role in preserving the Nizari Ismaili literature. It is important to note that the Ismailis of the upper Oxus considered Aziz Nasafi as a co-religionist. He was a celebrated Sufi master and a prolific writer in Central Asia, who later emigrated to Iran and died there around 661/1262. His famous Sufic treatise, "**Zubdat al-Haqaiq**" (Quintessence of Metaphysical Truth) is preserved still in Badakhshan being an Ismaili work, which was lithographed in Tehran in 1903.

The Indian Nizari Ismailis, designated chiefly by the term **Khoja** since the time of Pir Satgur Nur, also continued to retain their own traditions under the leadership of local elders in Gujrat until they merged with the growing Ismaili community in India.

The Ismailis in Iran, however, became absolutely disorganized and disoriented immediately with the destruction of their state. Despite the repressions and debacles, the Ismailis' fortune continued to rise gradually in Iran during the turbulent years. Those who managed to survive the Mongol massacres in Rudhbar and Kohistan, had entered a new era of their history. They mostly had taken refuge in obscurity, cloaked by the forms of a Sufi **tariqah**, and most of them referred to their spiritual leader not as an **Imam** but as a **Pir** for many years. The underground existence of the Ismailis in whole Iran did not attract the attention of the historians, who did not have any direct link or approach with them and who, like Juvaini, also wrote that the Mongols had completely extirpated the Nizari Ismailis in Iran. It however appears that many of them had escaped the main



brunt of the Mongol onslaughts and did exist in Kohistan, Daylam, Rudhbar etc. A facsimile of a manuscript dating 690/1290 composed by Wahid al-Muluk, unearthed by Sir E. Denison Ross (cf. *Royal Asiatic Society*, London, 1931, 2nd vol., p. 202), indicating that, "In Persia, the Ismaili communities were decimated by massacre, but survived after the surrender of Alamut and other fortresses in Daylam and Kohistan." Poet Nizari Kohistani (d. 720/1320) very watchfully describes the survival of the Ismailis in Kohistan, Birjand, Rudhbar etc. in his "Kulliyat", a manuscript in the Institute of Language and Literature of the Academy of Science of the Tajik. Mustapha Qazwini compiled his "Nuzhat al-Qulub" in 740/1340 also gives a condensed account of Rudhbar in Mazandaran, whose inhabitants were Ismailis. The Ismailis also lived in Gilan, probably in the mantle of the local Sufis. H.L. Rabino writes in "Rulers of Gilan" (*JRAS*, 1920, vol., III, p. 294) that, "It is generally believed that the fall of castle of Alamut in 654/1256 marks the end of the Ismaili influence in Gilan. This is a great mistake. Either the destruction of Alamut cannot have a complete as reported by the Persian writers, or the castle was rebuilt."

Yet, Lamasar held out for another year before cholera broke out and killed the bulk of garrison. The few who survived the epidemic had no alternative but to surrender in 655/1258. The valiant garrison of Girdkuh however continued to resist its Mongol besiegers for 13 years after the reduction of Alamut. In the biography of Kuo K'an, the Chinese officer in Mongol forces, it is recorded that Girdkuh was situated on the top of the mountain Tanchan (i.e., Damghan), and was only accessible by ladders, which were guarded by the most valiant troop, vide "Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources" (London, 1888, 1st vol., p. 122) by E. Bretschneider. In another Chinese source, "Hsi Shin Chi", we find a record of the journey of a Chinese envoy, Chang Te, sent by Halagu in 1259; wherein it is described Girdkuh as a mountain fortress "on a very steep rock, which could not be reached by arrows or stones. The rock was so steep that when one looked up, his cap fell off." Haythorn however writes in "Flos Historiarum Terrae Orientis" that, "Tigado (Girdkuh) was an impregnable castle, well furnished with all necessaries, and was so strong that it had no fear of attack on any side." At length, the garrison came down not due to starvation, but it was the

lack of adequate clothing against the severe winter cold that ultimately broke their spirits. The final surrender reported to have taken place on 29th Rabi II, 669/December 15, 1270.

It has been learnt that when Halagu quitted Iran for his operations against Baghdad, the Ismaili commanders at remote distance had also surrendered their castles upon receipt of official orders without knowing veritable picture. Few among them are reported to have treked in Rudhbar after the massacre of the Ismailis in 656/1257. They made an intensive search of the succeeding Imam after being known locally that Ruknuddin Khurshah had been also killed. With the help of few local *fidais*, the Ismaili commanders obtained possession of Alamut around 674/1275, about five years after the fall of Girdkuh. The fortress underwent temporary construction and renovation. The reason for re-occupation, as we have been informed, was to give an inkling to the hiding Imam and the Ismailis to come out of concealment. If this version certainly embodies grain of truth, it implies that the Ismailis of Rudhbar were not yet acquainted with the whereabouts of the Imam. According to "*Tarikh-i Guzida*" (1st vol., p. 583), "They retained Alamut for almost one year before they were dislodged by a force sent against them by Halagu's son and successor Abaqa (d. 680/1282)." It is also related that the Ismaili *dais* of Rudhbar had communicated a report to some unknown *dais*, and the latter had transmitted it onwards till it reached to the Imam. Shamsuddin Muhammad is reported to have instructed his Iranian followers to observe *taqiya* and adjust themselves in pursuant of the conditions of their localities. Henceforward, the Iranian Ismailis came to know of Shamsuddin Muhammad as their Imam.

Virtually, nothing else is known about the activities of Shamsuddin Muhammad in northern Azerbaijan. Certain allusions in the still unpublished "*Safar-nama*" of poet Nizari Kohistani indeed indicate that Shamsuddin Muhammad and possibly his successor lived in concealment in Azerbaijan, or southern Caucasus.



## Post Nizari Kohistani

Naimuddin bin Jalaluddin bin Muhammad Nizari Kohistani was born in Birjand in 645/1247. He got the rudiments of his formal education at home from his father, who was also a poet himself and a devout Ismaili. Later on, Nizari attended school in Birjand and Qain, and studied Persian and Arabic literature. His father was a land-lord in Birjand, but lost his estate during the Mongol onslaught in Kohistan and subsequently, Nizari had to serve at the court of Shamsuddin Muhammad I (643-684/1245-1285), the founder of the Kurt dynasty of Herat; and became a court-poet.

Nizari travelled excessively for supervising the revenue and expenditure of Azerbaijan and Arran. He set out from Khasp in Birjand on a long journey with a certain Tajuddin Amid in Shawal, 678/February, 1280. He fell ill in Tabriz, and resumed his journey in Safar, 679/June, 1280 with a certain Shamsuddin Juvaini, who was also travelling there for same purpose. Nizari visited Azerbaijan, Arran, Georgia, Armenia and Baku, which lasted for two years (678-679/1280-1281). Muqaddasi had reported earlier in "**Kitab al-Akalin**" (comp. in 375/985) that Azerbaijan, Arran and Armenia formed part of a single province, which he designated as **Iklm ar-Rihab** (the region of high plains). It was during this journey that Nizari did see Shamsuddin Muhammad and his successor. He recounted the account of his journey in his "**Safar-nama**" in **mathnawi** form, comprised of 1200 verses. Nizari has termed the Ismailis significantly as "**Ikhwan as-Safa**".

After his return, Nizari got married and entered the service of Kurt rulers, who had penetrated their influence in Afghanistan and Khorasan. His enemies aroused the Kurt ruler and was dismissed and his properties were confiscated. He composed "**Munazara-i Shab-i Rauz**" (conflict of day and night) wherein he described the troubles he had faced. Nizari took up agriculture during retiring life and died in Birjand in 720/1320 during the reign of Ghiasuddin (d. 729/1328). He also composed "**Mathnawi Azhar-u-Mazhar**" in 700/1300, narrating the terrible operations of the Mongols in Iran. His another famous work, "**Dastur-nama**" (book of rule) which he composed for his son, reflecting the doctrines of Sufism and Ismailism. According to Daulatshah (d. 900/1494) in

"Tazkertu'sh Shu'ara" that, "This is a book to be treasured by gifted and intellectual minds." In "Mathnawi" (verse 43), Nizari Kohistani writes eloquently in praise of Shamsuddin Muhammad that:-

*"He is the prince of the universe, the crown of the faith. He is the son of Ali, who is the light of the eyes of the great king (Muhammad). He (Shamsuddin) Muhammad is the father of spiritualism, and the sweetest fruit of the eternal garden of creation."*

One can hardly paint a true picture of the condition under which the Ismailis lived in different regions after an end of their power. The overt hostility of the general Muslims continued to be unchanged in all corners on one side, and the Mongol sword was hunting them on other. The survived Ismailis were forced to exist in various cloaks, that had made the ostensible appearances so conclusive as if there had been not a single Ismaili on the surface. The underground existence of the Ismailis had become congenial condition for the contemporary historian, like Juvaini (1226-1283) and the traveller, like Marco Polo (1254-1324) to shift the fictions and cheap stories to the account of the Ismailis to win the hearts of their pagan masters. Hence, Iran for the most part became a breeding ground of fictions for bigoted historians. Henceforth, whatever was salvaged of various types of Ismaili works came to be preserved secretly and in private collections. As a result, the history of the Ismailis and doctrines came almost exclusively from the pens of Sunni historians who, as a rule, were hostile towards the Ismailis. Thus, numerous distortions and negative biases are contained in the tracts of these chroniclers.

Previously indicated that in the time of Imam Alauddin Muhammad (d. 653/1255), the Mongols were spurring to their operations against Alamut. Shamsuddin, the chief Qadi of Qazwin had also lodged false allegations against Alamut at the court of Mongke (1251-1258) in Mongolia. Halagu therefore had been charged the main Mongol expedition across Central Asia to Iran, where he did not arrive before 654/1256. But already in 650/1252, he had dispatched an advance army of 12000 men under the command of Ket-Buqa, who reached Iran in 651/1253 and began his onslaught on the Ismaili strongholds in Kohistan; and sent



raiding parties into Rudhbar and Tarum. On other side, Shamsuddin, the chief Qadi of Qazwin, immediately after returning from Mongolia, assailed in bitter sarcasms against Alamut in Qazwin and the surrounding regions, giving also high tidings for the coming of the Mongols in Iran. The scrutiny of the sources indicates that a bulk of the frightened Muslims calmly began to evacuate the vicinity of Rudhbar and Kohistan during the period of Alauddin Muhammad to escape the main brunt of the Mongols. The stampede of the Muslims had also carried away with them the then latest report that **"Alauddin Muhammad is the ruler of Alamut, and the Mongols are about to come to reduce Alamut."** These Muslims ultimately settled down in Qazwin, Daylam and Tabriz; where they came to know the fall of Alamut. On that juncture, they seem to have generalized an image in minds that the Alamut's fall would have been taken place in the time of Alauddin Muhammad, incorporating the then report they had brought from their villages. This tradition received credence in some circles, ignoring palpably the one year rule of Ruknuddin Khurshah followed by Alauddin Muhammad. When the Mongol storms diffused in Iran, the historicity of Ruknuddin Khurshah itself began to be floated. But, it seems that the above idea continued to remain prevailed many years in Qazwin, Daylam and Tabriz, making Alauddin Muhammad as the last ruler of Alamut, which also curiously sounds in the account of Marco Polo (1254-1324), who had most possibly heard these fantastic stories from these orbits in 671/1272. For instance, Marco Polo narrates: **"I will tell you his story just as I Messer Marco, have heard it told by many people.... The Shaikh was called in their language Alaodin.... So they were taken, and the Shaikh, Alaodin, was put to death with all his men."** (vide **"The Travels of Marco Polo"** by Ronald Latham, London, 1958, pp. 40-42).

When Shamsuddin Muhammad had been in Tabriz once or more times, he became known as **Shams Tabriz**. There had been another Shams-i Tabriz, the master of Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 672/1273) in the same period, who was not tracable after 645/1247 in Koniya. It is therefore possible that Shamsuddin Muhammad had chosen to cloak his identity in Tabriz for some times under the name of the master of Jalaluddin Rumi in the Sufic circles. Rida Quli Khan (d. 1872) writes in **"Majmau'l Fusaha"** that, "Shaikh Abu Hamid Awhadu'ddin Kirmani had seen and met Shams-i Tabriz in

Tabriz." To this we must add the likelihood that Shaikh Abu Hamid had veritabily seen Shamsuddin Muhammad in the mantle of Shams-i Tabriz. When Shamsuddin Muhammad was identified as the *"son of the last ruler of Alamut"*, he was ultimately considered as the *"son of Alauddin Muhammad,"* incorporating him in the above tradition.

A cloud of mystery has surrounded the life of another contemporary Shams-i Tabriz, the master of Jalaluddin Rumi after 645/1247. Shamsuddin Aflaki, who wrote in 754/1353 that the death of Shams-i Tabriz took place in Koniya in 645/1247. It seems that a group of the Sufis had cultivated a story that after leaving Koniya, Shams-i Tabriz had gone to Tabriz, and there Shamsuddin Muhammad, known as Shams Tabriz had been identified as same Shams-i Tabriz after few years. Thus, Shamsuddin Muhammad began to be equated with that of Shams-i Tabriz, and henceforward, two Shams Tabriz at one period were confounded.

When the people conclusively identified Ruknuddin Khurshah as the last ruler, most probably after 671/1272, one another tradition seems to have been originated to distinguish these two characters. Shamsuddin Muhammad had been deleted from that story from being the son of Alauddin Muhammad, but Shams-i Tabriz was made known as the son of Alauddin Muhammad instead. Being influenced with this tradition, Daulatshah (d. 900/1494) was the first to show Shams-i Tabriz, the master of Jalaluddin Rumi as the son of Alauddin Muhammad, in his *"Tazkertu'ah Shu'ara"*. A question then arises, who was Shams-i Tabriz? He indeed was an Ismaili, the master of Jalaluddin Rumi, but not the son of Alauddin Muhammad. As to the early life of Shams-i Tabriz, we are yet in dark. Shamsuddin Aflaki (710-754/1310-1354) in *"Manaqibu'l Arifin"* and Abdur Rahman Jami (d. 898/1493) in *"Nafhatu'l Uns"* concur that Shams-i Tabriz was the son of a certain Muhammad bin Ali bin Malikad. Rida Quli Khan (d. 1872) in his *"Majmau'l Fusaha"* also relied on Aflaki and Jami. According to *"Silsilatu'ad-Dhahab"*, it is wrong to allege Shams-i Tabriz to have been the son of Alauddin Muhammad. It was only Daulatshah (d. 900/1494) who made him the son of Alauddin Muhammad being influenced by the wrong tradition. Prof. Muhammad Iqbal of Punjab University, who prepared the Lahore edition of Daulatshah's work, makes his remarks that: "...it is evident that Daulatshah has not written historical facts carefully in his book. He has accepted



all sorts of traditions, right or wrong, owing to which several errors have crept into his work." Edward G. Browne writes in **"A Literary History of Persia"** (3rd vol., p. 436) that, "This is an entertaining but inaccurate work, containing a good selection of historical errors."

It is also worthy of notice, however, that Daulatshah quoted another tradition of parentage of Shams-i Tabriz that, "Some people say that he was originally a native of Khorasan and belonged to the town of Bazar. His father had settled in Tabriz for the purpose of doing business in cloth." It is probable that Shams-i Tabriz was the son of Muhammad bin Ali bin Malikad according to Aflaki and Jami, and he seems to be a native of Khorasan as per another tradition cited by Daulatshah. Nurullah Shustari (d. 1019/1610) in his **"Majalis al-Mominin"** (6th vol., p. 291) states that Shams-i Tabriz descended from "Ismaili headman" (*da'iyani Ismailiyya budand*). His father had settled in Tabriz, and was a cloth merchant. Shams-i Tabriz was indeed an Ismaili like his father, but it needs further scholarly scanning to trace his biography.

There is also a reason to believe that Jalaluddin Rumi must have been known both Shams-i Tabriz and Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad, but did not described palpably in his **Diwan**. He however addresses Shams as the *heir of the Prophet* (verse no. 2473) and compares him to Ali (verse no. 1944), which seems to have been referred only to the Imam.

Shamsuddin Muhammad is reported to have betrothed to a Sufi lady at Daylam in 675/1276, or next year. His sons, Momin Shah and Kiya Shah penetrated Ismaili *dawa* as far as Gilan. Momin Shah also travelled in Syria and served many years as a *hujjat* of the Imam. When he returned to Gilan, a section of the Syrian Ismailis, considered him the Imam's successor, who later on, became known as the Momin-Shahis. Muhibb Ali Qunduzi however writes in **"Irshadu't Talibin"** (comp. in 929/1523) that, "The schism took place after the death of Momin Shah in 738/1338." The descendants of Momin Shah mostly lived in Khwand, a village in Qazwin, where they became known as *Sadat-i Khwandia*.

Shamsuddin Muhammad died in 710/1310 in Azerbaijan after vesting the office of Imamate in Kassim Shah.

It appears that the Ismaili sources have designed the history of the Imams in a sequence of **father to son**, emanating each succeeding Imam being the son of the preceding Imam. We have been told in this context that Kassim Shah was the **son** and **successor** of Shamsuddin Muhammad. But, the scrutiny of the sources and the fragments of the traditions, reveals starkly a different story, suggesting that Kassim Shah was the **successor**, but not a **son**, rather a **grandson** of Shamsuddin Muhammad. In other words, he was Kassim Shah bin Momin Shah bin Shamsuddin Muhammad. The chronicles of Momin Shahi sect, such as "**Irshadu't Talibin**" (comp. 929/1523) by Muhibb Ali Qunduzi and "**Lamat al-Tahirin**" (comp. 1110/1698) by Ghulam Ali bin Muhammad; contain variations in the names of the descendants of Shamsuddin Muhammad. "**Tarikh-i Firishta**" (comp. 1015/1606) by Muhammad Kassim Firishta, and few other sources also offer a diverse account of the sons of Shamsuddin Muhammad. These sources however divulge some traces that Shamsuddin Muhammad was succeeded by his grandson, Kassim Shah bin Momin Shah. It is worthwhile that "**Haft Bab**" of Abu Ishaq Kohistani, who died in the beginning of the 10th/16th centuries, places Momin Shah in the list of Imams, making him the successor of Shamsuddin Muhammad, and Kassim Shah as the successor of Momin Shah. It ensues from the episode that Abu Ishaq Kohistani must have identified Kassim Shah being the grandson of Shamsuddin Muhammad in his period, and had inserted the name of Momin Shah between them, to adjust the succession list in an order, and to give coherence to the traditional notion.

Later on, it seems that the Ismailis, after knowing Kassim Shah being followed by Shamsuddin Muhammad, had omitted the name of Momin Shah in the list to distinguish themselves from Momin Shahi sect. It resulted possibly the historicity of a **grandson** transformed into a **son**, and one can find the like effect in India in "**Satveni'ji Vel**" by Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah (d. 940/1534).

In sum, it ensues that Shamsuddin Muhammad seems to have succeeded by his grandson, Kassim Shah. Besides, the tradition of the succession of a grandson can be seen equally potent in the famous Will of the Aga Khan III, who has unmasked the succession of the grandson in the light of the past tradition while appointing his grandson to succeed him. It reads: "**Ever since the time of my ancestor**



*Ali, the first Imam, that is to say over a period of thirteen hundred years, it has always been the tradition of our family that each Imam chooses his successor at his absolute and unfettered discretion from amongst any of his descendants, whether they be sons or remote male issue....*" This would thus tend to be a safe conclusion that the appointment of a **grandson** (the remote male issue) was enforced in view of the tradition of last 1300 years, and thus it was not a new effect in this age. It unveils in a question that a like effect most probably had been taken place in the line of Shamsuddin Muhammad, who seems to have been succeeded by his grandson, Kassim Shah bin Momin Shah. W.Ivanow (1866-1970) and Farhad Daftary and other modern scholars have also shown almost pertinent possibility. The ardent students must investigate this field to unearth further historical truth.

#### **KASSIM SHAH (710-771/1310-1370)**

Kassim Shah, known as Sayed Kassim Muhammad was most probably born in Daylam. He is said to have lived shortly in Armenia and Anatolia in the orbit of Bekhtashahis, a growing Sufi order among the Kurds and Turkomans.

The tradition most possibly of later period indicating that Kassim Shah had flourished a small village in Azerbaijan, called Kassimabad, seems almost doubtful. It is however probable that the village, in which Kassim Shah either resided, or where he used to see his followers, had been customarily termed, **Kassimabad** by the Iranian followers. It is also believed that when his son, Islam Shah had arrived at Kahek in Iran in 798/1396, the Iranian Ismailis had also termed **Kassimabad** being an abode of the embarking place of the Imam, or the abode of Islam Shah's father.

Ghazan Khan (1295-1304), the sixth Ilkhanid ruler had embraced Islam, and restored peace in Iran. He was succeeded by his brother Uljaytu (1304-1316), who professed Christianity like his mother. He invaded Gilan, Mazandaran and Khorasan, putting many Ismailis to sword. He at last became a Shia Muslim, and was succeeded by his twelve years son, Abu Sa'id (1316-1334). The Mongols became so weak that their principal power was divided into

their generals. Finally, Amir Hussain founded the Jalayirid dynasty at Tabriz in 736/1336, which also ended practically in 812/1409. In Ispahan and Shiraz, Muzaffaruddin Muhammad, the son of Sharafuddin Muzaffar (d. 754/1353) founded the Muzaffarid dynasty in 713/1313, which lasted till 795/1393. The Kurts of Herat also rose in 643/1245, and Taymurlame belonged to this place, also became a powerful ruler in 783/1381 by conquering Iran.

In India, the three centuries of Muslim rule (603-933/1206-1526), generally known as the Sultanate period, witnessed the rise and fall of five dynasties, namely the Slaves (603-690/1206-1290), the Khaljis (690-720/1290-1320), the Tughlaqs (720-816/1320-1413), the Sayeds (816-855/1414-1451) and the Lodhis (855-933/1451-1526). Then, the Mughal empire was founded in India in 933/1526. Like the Mamluke sultanate at Cairo, the Delhi sultanate grew out of the tradition of slave soldiery during 13th century, who slaughtered many Ismailis in Delhi between 607/1230 and 634/1236. Alauddin Khalji (695-715/1296-1316) did not tolerate in India the very interference of the *ulemas* class in the state affairs, but gave them in his reign a free rope and licence to massacre the innocent Ismailis. Maulana Isami writes in "*Futuhu's-Salatin*" (Madras, 1948, p. 201) that, "The Sultan Alauddin ordered the heads of the residents of Alamut to be cut down through saw." It ensues the bitterest attitude of the Khalji ruler towards the Ismailis, and one can understand from it that few Ismailis of Iran had migrated as far as India, where the bigoted rulers gave them no respite. The Tughlaq ruler was followed by the Khalji in 720/1320, and Firuz Khan Tughlaq (1320-1388) had a merit to have killed many innocent Ismailis in 752/1351 in India. The Tughlaq ruler, Muhammad Shah III (d. 795/1393) is reported to have sent his forces in command of Zafar Khan to conquer Gujrat in 793/1391. He established an independent Sultanate of Gujrat in 810/1407, and was the first Muslim ruler of Gujrat to suppress Shiism in his domains. It was under Ahmad I (d. 846/1442) that the Ismailis began to be severely domineered, and were forced to observe *taqiya*.

Towards the end to 13th century, an *akhi* movement had united the Turks in Anatolia, and at last Uthman bin Ertoghrul (1288-1326) succeeded as a chief of a semi-nomad Turkish clan in the valley of Kara Su. In the first phase of his career, he extended the cradle of his power to the north. The second phase in his career is that in which



from his base at Yeni Sheir, he continued his conquests in the western towards Brusa and in the north towards Iznik. The third phase is that in which he no longer took part personally in the military expeditions, but his commanders continued the expansions. During his 38 years of leadership, he increased his dominion from its very narrow limits at Sugut and Yeni Sheir to a territory extending thence northward to the Bosphorus and Black Sea, a distance of about 125 miles by an average breadth of 60 miles. At length, Uthman established the Turkish empire in Turkey in 700/1300.

The scattered Ismailis slowly began in settling down in the towns and villages of Iran. Few among them in northern area had concentrated their efforts at Daylam, one of the largest districts of Gilan. Daylam was occupied and ruled by Kiya Saifuddin Kushayji in 760/1360 at Marjikuli. He was deep-rooted in Ismaili faith like his forefathers since the period of Imam Alauddin Muhammad. He was however forced to abandon Ismailism by the Zaidi Sayed Ali Kiya, the neighboring ruler. Kiya Saifuddin totally declined the proposal, therefore, a force of Gilan was dispatched against him in 779/1378 by Sayed Ali Kiya bin Amir Kiya Malati, the chief of Biyapish in eastern Gilan since 769/1368. Sayed Ali Kiya occupied Daylam, and founded the Zaidi dynasty of Amir Kiya'i Sayeds, and extended his influence in Ashkavar, Kuhdum and as far as Tarum and Qazwin. The lieutenant Amir Ali of Sayed Amir Kiya had domineered the Ismailis in Daylam, and the local theologians also chimed in and started their customary propaganda. In 781/1379, Sayed Ali Kiya chased the Ismailis in Qazwin, and retained control of that region for seven years until 788/1386, when he was compelled to surrender Qazwin, Tarum and its castle to Taymurlame (771-807/1370-1405), the founder of the Taymurid dynasty in Iran and Transoxiana.

It appears from the fragments of "*Risala-i Dilgusha*" by Ubayd-i Zakani (1300-1372) that the trends in the hostile Muslims in Qazwin against the Ismailis of Daylam and Gilan remained continued, and it reflected also in the local novels.

## The Trakhan dynasty in Central Asia

In Gilgit sub-region, the Trakhan was the leading dynasty of local rulers, and it was the main branch, from which the rules of Nagar and Hunza radiated during the mediaeval period. The rulers of Yasin, Punial and Chitral had also close ties with them, and the tribal regions of Gor, Darel, Chilas, Tangir and Herban, including Nuristan on the west had their origin and history linked with the Trakhan dynasty.

The extant traditions sound more romantic than real for the historical purpose. Summing up the accessible materials, it is however known that during the second period of the Trakhan dynasty (387/997 to 640/1241), Shah Mirza, also known as Mirza I, was formally enthroned in 521/1127 and ruled until 602/1205. He is said to have died at the age of 109 years, and was succeeded by his son Tartorra Khan at the age of 31 years. He had two queens, one of his own royal family, and another hailed from Darel. The first queen Shah Begum gave birth to Torra Khan, and the second gave birth to Shah Rais. Torra Khan was brought up in the valley of Hodur under the care of a local chief. While Shah Rais had several maternal uncles in Darel, who being supported with his mother, intended Shah Rais to be the next ruler; but the king preferred Torra Khan. This succession wrangle led to trouble. The Darel queen and her brothers conspired against the king and the prince. Once upon a time, they invited Tartorra Khan at Darel for playing polo. The king won the game and caused all the seven brothers executed when he was assailed. The Dareli queen became forlorn, and poisoned the king in 635/1236, and herself took the power. She intended to kill Torra Khan, but his step-father, who was the chief of Hodur, sent Torra Khan away in Khanberi and hid him in an unknown place. The queen made all arrangements to pass on the throne to her own son, Shah Rais. In the meantime, she died in 640/1241, and it was followed by a war of succession between the two brothers. The local people ultimately confessed Torra Khan (1310-1335) as their ruler.

Henceforward, the name **Torra Khan**, or **Trakhan** was applied to this dynasty after his name. Before him, the dynasty was known as **Kisra** or **Kiyani**. During his rule, his cousin Raja Rais Khan had left Gilgit and took refuge in Badakhshan with an Ismaili **dai**, Taj Mughal, the son-in-law



of the ruler. According to Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani in "History of Northern Areas of Pakistan" (Islamabad, 1991, p. 170), "Taj Mughal is said to be a follower of Ismaili sect and very ardent in its propagation. He received Raja Shah Rais Khan with great pomp and made him stay in an elegant place. Shah Rais is said to have accepted Ismaili faith alongwith his followers." Shah Rais Khan also married to the daughter of Taj Mughal, and after some years, he persuaded Taj Mughal to invade Gilgit. Preparations were made for one full year. First Chitral was conquered and annexed, and then the regions of Yasin, Koh Ghizr and Puniyal were subdued and finally entered in Gilgit ruled by Torra Khan, who at length accepted Ismailism. He also made necessary arrangements to preach Ismailism in Gilgit. The rule of Torra Khan had been restored, and Shah Rais Khan was made the ruler of Chitral, where he founded the Raisia dynasty, and promulgated the Ismaili faith.

It was at this time that the Ismaili faith penetrated in Gilgit and Hunza with the proselytizing mission of Taj Mughal. He is said to have built a *Mughlai Tower* at Jutial, and another on the way to Hunza, near Thol. Taj Mughal is said to have proceeded to Sikiang through Pamir, and thus he dominated most of the prominent regions of Central Asia. The historians place an extensive territory under his domination. On the north greater part of Turkistan, on the west the whole area including the city of Herat, and on the south-east right upto the border of Chitral. The biography of Taj Mughal is shrouded in mist, and nothing else is known. He died most probably in 725/1325. It seems likely that Gilgit had been ruled by the local Ismaili rulers from 710/1310 to 973/1565, and they remained in close contact with the Ismailis of Badakhshan.

#### **Mission of Pir Shams Sebzewari in India**

Pir Shams was born most probably at Sebzewar, a town in Khorasan, lying 64 miles west of Nishapur. His father Sayed Salauddin had been deputed in Baltistan by Imam Kassim Shah, who most probably came into the contact of Taj Mughal in Badakhshan. Kamaluddin Mujahri of Sebzewar writes in "*Malfuz-i Kamalia*" that Pir Sayed Muinuddin Hasan of Sebzewar of Ajmer had a meeting with Sayed Salauddin in Sebzewar in 560/1165. It is recounted that

Pir Shams had gone to Badakhshan with his father at the age of 19 years, and thence he proceeded to Tibet and returned back to Sebzewar.

It is said that after the death of Sayed Salauddin, Imam Kassim Shah had commissioned Pir Shams as the *hujjat* of Sind and Hind at Daylam for the Indian mission, and he also refers to the Imam that: "Adore sincerely the true guiding light manifested in the person of Kassim Shah, the Lord of the time." (vide "**Garbi**", 5:17).

The earliest description of Pir Shams is found in the treatise of the biographies of Sufis, entitled "**Nafahat al-Uns**" (comp. 883/1478) by Nuruddin Abdur Rahman Jami (817-898/1414-1492), the last classic poet of Iran. Nurullah bin Sharif Shushtari (d. 1019/1610) in his "**Majalis al-Mominin**" (comp. 1013/1604) traces his ancestry back to the Ismaili root. Some details are also found in "**Tarikh-i Firishta**" (comp. 1015/1606). The great Sufi saint Bulleh Shah (1680-1758) also referred to Pir Shams in his Sufic poetry.

It is indeterminate point in the modern sources, when Pir Shams was born? The extant materials however do not allow one to draw a safe conclusion. His death in 757/1356 however is indisputable, based on the plaque at the mausoleum in Multan. The most confusing and unsolved point is to locate his date of birth. Most of the scholars concur in his age for 115 years, but it however seems that Pir Shams had lived to an advanced age beyond 115 years. Sayed Bawa Ahmad Ali Khaki writes in his "**Dar-i Khuld-i Bari**" (Ahmadabad, 1905, p. 123) on the basis of an old manuscript that the span of Pir Shams's life was for 171 years. If the date of his demise in 757/1356 may be considered genuine, it means that his birth would have been taken place around 580/1175 during the period of Imam Ala Muhammad (561-607/1166-1210). The genealogy of Pir Shams given in the "**Shajara**" which is preserved in the shrine at Multan, indicates the birth of Pir Shams in 570/1165, which also gives close support to this view.

Before we proceed, it must be noted that in India, there are many instances of the persons having long life-span in that period. The western scholars however should not surprise to know Pir Shams having lived to an advanced age of 171 years. The examples of long span of human life are



also recorded in the annals of Europe. For instance, Catherine, the countess of Desmond, who died in 1604 at the age of 140 years. Thomas Parr died in 1635 at the age of 152 years. Henry Jenkins died in 1670 at the age of 169 years. Another documentation is that of Jacobsen Drakenberg (1626-1772), whose age was 145 year and 325 days. Prof. E. Metchnikoff, an eminent biologist also admits 185 years age of St. Mungo of Glasgow. For further details, vide "**The New Encyclopaedia Britannica**" (1990, 15th ed., 20th vol., p. 428) and "**Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics**" (1959, 4th ed., 1st vol., p. 182). The readers may refer "**Akhbar al-Akhayar**" (comp. 998/1590), in which the life-spans of Shaykh Shahi Mu'itab (d. 658/ ), Sayed Shamsuddin Zahir (d. 741/ ), Alaluddin Qoraishi (d. 730/ ), Makdum Jiv Qadri (d. 1000/ ), etc. have been mentioned above 150 years.

We will however touch here the contemporary activity of Pir Shams. He arrived from Daylam to Badakhshan, where he is said to have brought many followers of Momin Shahi sect into the Ismaili fold. He visited Gilgit and proceeded to Tibet and as far as the ranges of the Himalayas. He came back to Ghazna, where he deputed the local converted prince to Badakhshan on mission work.

Pir Shams also converted a bulk of the Hindus during their **Dasera** festival after singing 28 **garbis** (songs) in a temple for ten consecutive nights. According to the **ginans**, Pir Shams had sung the **garbis** in a village, called Analvad. W. Ivanow places its location in Gujrat, called Anilvad, not far from Ahmadabad. In fact, it is Anhilvad and not Anilvad, situated about 66 miles to the north of Ahmadabad. It is also recounted that the village was Anwalvad, named after a Jat clan, Anwal in Multan, whose glaring festival of **Dasera** was famous in Punjab. The **garbis** had been composed in Gujrati style, reflecting the culture of Gujrat, and therefore, the location of the village in Multan seems almost doubtful.

He had also visited Kashmir in 715/1316 and converted the Chak and Changad tribes, thence he proceeded to Multan in 725/1326 for the first time. Zakaria Qazwini writes in his "**Asar al-Bilad wa Akhbar al-Ibad**" (comp. 661/1263) that, "Multan is a large, fortified and impregnable city, with a temple which is to the Hindus a place of worship and pilgrimage as Mecca for the Muslims. The inhabitants are

the Muslims and Hindus, but the government is in the hands of the former. The chief mosque is described as being near the temple."

In Multan, many miracles of Pir Shams are reported, but these are not potential for historical value. It is therefore difficult to penetrate through the mist of legends, which formed even during the lifetime of Pir Shams and thickened rapidly after his death. The most popular miracle was the bringing down of the sun on earth, which earned him an epithet of *taparez* (burning) in Punjab. The word *Taparez* is so coherence with that of *Tabriz* that the former began to be pronounced as *Tabriz*, contriving a wrong theory to merge these two into one. Since Pir Shams and Shams-i Tabriz were proximate to each other in time, it is probable that Pir Shams, also known as *Shams Taprez* had been confounded with that of *Shams-i Tabriz*. It has been heretofore discussed that Shams-i Tabriz, the master of Jalaluddin Rumi was died in Koniya on 645/1247, engendering to the rise of a false tradition of *Koniya to Multan*, i.e., Shams-i Tabriz had gone to Multan. In sum, the *nut* of Koniya and the *bolt* of Multan had been patched to contrive a new tradition indicating these two figures same and one, which is absolutely untrue.

It however seems that Pir Shams visited lower Sind, and travelled through the riverline belt of the Indus, and reached Uchh Sharif most probably in 727/1328, which was his mission centre. He deputed many *dais* in China, Tibet, Badakhshan, Kashmir and Gujrat. His mission was mobile, and is said to have gone as far as Nepal, known among the Indian Buddhists as *Chinab-Nagari*, designating the northern India as a part of China.

Pir Shams also visited Rajasthan, and according to his one *ginan* (no. 70), he embarked from Uchh with his two disciples, Vimras and Surbhan. He alighted at Gudi Vilod, near Gujrat, and thence proceeded to a forest, and preached a bulk of the untouchables. He identified himself as *Satgur Shams* and the *Light of Pir Satgur* to give coherence to his mission, where the name of Pir Satgur was almost familiar. He then arrived in a barren land and reached in the middle of Malwa, where he initiated the servile caste and the Abheras and Bhils. Pir Shams also converted the Hindu Bhambi, and spread his mission as far



as Ganges. The oral tradition tells us that a certain Ransi, whose family adhered Pir Satgur, also became a disciple of Pir Shams. His son, Ajmal (or Ajay Singh), the father of Ramdeo, continued to revere Pir Shams. After visiting Junjala, Jaitgarh and Karel, Pir Shams proceeded to Bichun and Sakhun in Jaipur-Ajmer region. After having initiated Khiwan and Ransi, he went back to Multan. The Myariya (perhaps Nizaria) of Rajasthan still claim that they originated from Multan and regard Pir Shams as their master (*guru*). In the 15th century, the Sirvi caste of the Jaitaran, Bilara, Pali region, had accepted the teachings of a female saint, known as Jiji Devi, who was also a disciple of Pir Shams. The Prahlad panthi in Jodhpur, Nagaur and Bikaner as well as the Jasnathi in Bishnoi have a devotional literature, showing the Ismaili traits and seal (*chhap*) of Pir Shams and Pir Sadruddin etc.

The Ismaili *dawa* in Rajasthan is almost blanketed in mist. The French scholar, Dr. Dominique Sila Khan of Jaipur, however, is working on the Ismaili *dawa* in Rajasthan, and gathered very useful historical clues. It is hoped that her labour shall procure worthy informations, and throw a possible flood of light. Meanwhile, the readers may refer her write-up, entitled, "Ramdeo Pir and the Kamadiya Panth" (cf. "Folk, Faith and Feudalism" ed. by N.K. Singhi, Jaipur, 1995, pp. 295-327), and "L'Origine Ismaelienne du culte Hindou de Ramdeo Pir" (cf. "Revue de L'Histoire des Religions", Paris, 1993, ccx-1, pp. 27-47). The most prominent among them was Ramdeo of the low castes. Being influenced with the teachings of Ismaili *Pirs*, he preached in Gujrat the doctrines of *Satpanth* (true path), but due to a setback in the mission, the followers of Ramdeo retraced their steps towards the fold of their former creed, or cultivated a different cult in India. For details, refer "Ramdeo Pir: A Forgotten Ismaili Saint" (*Sind Review*, Hyderabad, vol. 32, April, 1995, pp. 24-29) by Mumtaz Ali Tajddin S. Ali.

The influx of Muslim immigrants into India increased greatly as a result of the Mongol incursions on the Islamic world. We hear of large colonies of these Muslim migrants in different quarters. With the settlement of the Muslims in India, conciliation and concord between the various culture-groups was not only a moral and intellectual demand, but an urgent social necessity. The Muslim conquerors had established their political

supremacy, but they could not continue to rule while the majority of their subjects differed from them in race, language, religion and culture. The *ulema* class rarely appreciated the change in the moods of time and seldom tried to reconstruct their religious tendencies according to the needs of the hour. The Muslim mystics, however, rose to the occasion and released syncretic forces which liquidated social, ideological and linguistic barriers between the various culture-groups of India. The mystics adopted an attitude of sympathy and understanding between all cults and creeds. This broad outlook helped in breaking that spirit of mistrust and isolation which honeycombed relations between the various culture-groups of India and paved way for reapproachment at all levels. The mystics looked upon all religions as different roads leading to the same destination and never approved of any discrimination or distinction in human society which was one organism for them. The use of large number of Indian words, phrases, idioms and similes in the contemporary literature indicates the extent to which social contacts had developed. Prof. Gibb writes in "An Interpretation of Islamic History" (cf. "Journal of World History", 1st vol., no. 1, p. 59) that, "From the 13th century, Sufism increasingly attracted the creative social and intellectual energies within the community, to become the bearer or instrument of a social and cultural revolution." Perhaps in no other country were the effects of this social and cultural revolution so marked and so far reaching as in India.

The early Indo-Muslim mystics believed in a pacific and non-violent approach towards all problems of human society. Forces, they said, created more problems than it solved. They tried to impress, both by precepts and examples, upon the minds of their followers the fact that a true mystic should always strive for creating love and affection in the hearts of men. "**Placate your enemies,**" was the advice which Shaykh Farid gave to his disciples. "**Do not give me a knife,**" he once told a visitor, "**Give me a needle. The knife is an instrument for cutting and the needle for sewing together.**" Ziauddin Barani thus very significantly remarks in his "**Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi**" (p. 344) that as the result of the teachings of these mystics, "vices among men had been reduced." Hence, the eagerness of the Muslim mystics to establish closer



relations with the Hindus, had facilitated a fertile ground for the Ismaili *dais* to propagate their faith in India.

Among the Sufis, there existed four principal orders in India, viz. Chisti, Qadari, Suharwardi and Naqashbandi. The period of Pir Shams was thus noted for the several skilled exponents of Sufi thought, therefore, he launched his brisk and pervasive mission during the eve of the growing Sufi circles in Punjab. In the villages of Punjab, he mostly converted the Aror or Rohra, a leading caste in south-western part of the Punjab, i.e., of the lower reaches of the five rivers and below their junction, extending through Bahawalpur into Sind. They were mostly cultivators, and their large portion on the lower Chinab were purely agricultures, while in the western Punjab, they were mostly tailors, weavers of mats and baskets, makers of vessels of brass and copper and goldsmiths. Pir Shams appointed *musafir* (one who travels) in different regions to collect the religious dues, and also built prayer-halls (*khana*) and appointed their *mukhis* (derived from *mukhis* means "foremost"). He also introduced certain rituals, and his followers mostly in Punjab and Kashmir recognised themselves as *gupti* (secret ones).

Pir Shams passed away in 757/1356 and was buried at Multan. His mausoleum is located about half a mile to the east of the fort site, on the high bank of the old bed of the Ravi river. His shrine was built by his grandson and was rebuilt by one of the Ismailis in 1718. The tomb is square, 300 feet in height surmounted by a hemispherical dome. It is decorated with ornamental glazed tiles.

Pir Shams is acclaimed as a great preacher and composed many *ginans* in different Indian dialects. It is also possible that his local disciples had received the first hand marrow of his teachings in few plates, and transformed them creatively into the *ginanic* form. These are the rich reservoir of religious teachings and great treasure house of Sufi thought, giving a very comprehensive idea of the prodigality of Sufi symbolism. He used with supreme skill the languages of the country folk and employed them to interpret ideas of natural beauty and of religious philosophy. In fact, Pir Shams was a man steeped in an understanding of the mystical teaching of Islam. The recent diligent research has brought to light that he was the most earliest, rather the first

Punjabi poet, and also made rich contribution in the growth of Urdu language during its infancy. He had a faculty of expressing the truth in the local languages with appropriate turn of phrase and picturesque metaphor.

After Pir Shams, his son Pir Nasiruddin (625-764/1228-1362) continued the mission mostly in Punjab and died in Uchh. He was followed by his son Pir Sahib'din (650-775/1212-1373), who lived in the garb of a Hindu saint, and made a large proselytism. He had seven sons, viz. Pir Sadruddin, Sayed Ruknuddin, Sayed Badruddin, Sayed Shamsuddin II, Sayed Nasiruddin, Sayed Ghiasuddin and Sayed Nasiruddin Qalandar Shah.

Returning the thread of our narrative, it appears that Kassim Shah passed a *darwish* life in the mountainous regions of Azerbaijan. He was fond of hunting in the woods, and used to travel in different towns and villages, sometimes for a long time. Upon his death, most probably in 771/1370, the Imamate devolved upon his son, Islam Shah.

#### **ISLAM SHAH (771-827/1370-1423)**

Sayed Ahmad Islam Shah was also known as Islam Shah and is called as Salam Shah and Shri Islam Shah in the *ginans* of the Indian *Pirs*. Islam Shah assumed the Imamate in 771/1370 in Azerbaijan, ruled by Sultan Uways (757-776/1356-1374), the Jalayirid ruler. It seems that during the early 25 years of his Imamate in Azerbaijan, he visited Daylam several times in disguise, where he had erected a temporary mission centre for different regions.

Summing up the sparsely recorded fragments of the *ginans*, it appears that Islam Shah was a man of middle height, radiant face having piercing eyes. He was a gifted man of sweet disposition and engaging manner. His mole on right cheek was an eye-catching mark. He was a generous, fond of hunting and passed sometimes a few months in woods on hunting excursion.

The Mongol power ended with the death of Abu Sa'id, the last Ilkhanid ruler on November 30, 1335, and some months later, Taymur was born in Samarkand on April 8, 1336. It is said that Taymur had received an arrow wound while



fighting in Sistan in 1363, making him permanently lame and accounted for his nickname **lung** (lame), or **Taymur-lung** (Taymurlame). He solidified his powers as an **amir** in Samarkand at the age of 30 years and conquered few regions of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan and India. He had a vein of cruelty in his character, and so were his soldiers. Taymur's example so filled his soldiers with courage that, with one wild cheer, they made a desperate charge, rushed on the besieged and broke their lines. Wherever they went a crimson streak marked their trail and cultural centres were practically wiped out of existence, reducing them into shapeless ruins. As a matter of fact, greed together with avarice seems to have been the ruling passion of Taymur's life.

From 735/1335 when Abu Sa'id died to the year 782/1380, Iran was left to its own device in 45 years, and was divided into four to five petty rules. Taymur spurred his horses to Iran in 783/1381 and launched several terrible expeditions as if an engine of destruction like Halagu. He invaded Azerbaijan in 787/1385 when Imam Islam Shah was probably in Daylam. Taymur crushed the Muzaffarid of Ispahan and cost the lives of about 70,000 of its inhabitants, whose heads were piled in pyramids.

The Ismailis had hardly set up their livings that the Taymurid danger began to loom large on the Iranian horizon. He attacked Mazandaran, Sistan and Fars in 794/1392 and conducted bloody massacres of the local Ismailis. John Malcolm writes in "**History of Persia**" (London, 1815, 1st vol., p. 18) that, "Taymur had the merit of extirpating a band of Ismailis with which the north-western provinces of Persia were infested." In 795/1393, Taymur swept the thick population of the Ismailis in Amul, the principal town of Tabaristan, lying along the south coast of the Caspian Sea; and also Astrabad, the city of Jurjan provinca to the north frontier of Mazandaran.

During his campaign in Iran in Rajab, 795/May, 1393 while going to Hamdan from Ispahan, Taymur spent few days in Anjudan inhabited by the poor Ismailis. His soldiers wildly butchered many Ismailis and pillaged their properties. According to Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi (d. 858/1454) in "**Zafar-nama**" (1st vol., p. 577), "The Ismailis of Anjudan attempted to seek protection in their underground tunnels but they mostly lost their lives when

they were flooded out by the Taymur's soldiers." Finally, Taymur returned to Samarkand in 798/1396 and died in 807/1405. His Taymurid empire divided into petty rules, but Turkey, Iraq and India restored their rules he devastated. Iran and Afghanistan however were dominated by the Taymurids, but their internecine strife had badly hit the Iranian economy.

In India, the Tughlaqs gained their power after Taymur's death, which ultimately had fallen to the hand of the Sayeds (816-855/1414-1451) and the Lodhis (855-933/1451-1526). The Ottoman empire became powerful once again after Taymur's death and spread their influence in Islamic countries. The Mamluks of Egypt and Syria were dragged into their internal disputes. When Taymur invaded Turkey and Syria, the rule of Mamluks was confined only to Cairo. After Taymur, the Turkish ruler occupied Egypt.

### **Islam Shah in Kahek**

After a long series of bloody expeditions in Iran, Taymur had gone to Samarkand on July 18, 1396 and Iran once again breathed peacefully. Islam Shah, in the meantime, also began to trek from Azerbaijan to Kahek in Iran. Pir Hasan Kabiruddin (d. 853/1449) writes in his *ginan* that: "It was Vikram Samvat 1452, the 17th of Ashad (or July 2, 1396) when Imam Islam Shah arrived in Kahek."

The village of Kahek, situated in the north of Ispahan on the road linking to Hamdan. The arrival of Islam Shah took place when Taymur had been in Samarkand, marking the transference of Imam's headquarters from Azerbaijan to Kahek. It appears from the fragments of the *ginans* that Pir Sadruddin (d. 819/1416) and his son Pir Hasan Kabiruddin (d. 853/1449) had been in Daylam to see Islam Shah, where they received an inkling to proceed to Kahek and wait there for Imam's arrival. Many Ismailis already lived in Kahek and the surrounding villages had been in eager expectation of Imam's arrival. The tedious hours of impatient expectancy were at last over when their revered master appeared on the horizon of Kahek.

Pir Hasan Kabiruddin has portrayed in his *ginan* the Imam's arrival at Kahek in elegant words. It reads:- "**The Lord arrived in Irak-i Ajam (Iranian Irak), wearing an**



attractive cap. His attires looked vivid on either side. He had girdled with a curved dagger on the waist, buckled with a sword bearing two points. The strips were wound up on the legs, embodied the appearance elegant. The attractive footwears on the legs have further enhanced his personality. The hanging shawl (garment worn on body) of four yards on the shoulder was indeed an eye-catching. Thus, the Imam, the apparent guide, riding on a horse made his footing in Kahek."

#### **Kahek - a new headquarters**

It is recounted that Islam Shah had made long journey in Iran to examine the region most suitable, and had finally selected Kahek and Shahr-i Babak for his residence, the fertile tract surrounded by rocky hills, where the horses of the enemies could hardly penetrate. The hilltops of the villages appears to have been guarded by the young *fidais* of Kohistan, who used to keep close watch on the travellers passing through the tracks. It was an ideal place for the Imam's foothold in Iran. Sayed Imam Shah (d. 926/1520) had visited Kahek in 854/1450, whom he described in his one *ginan* that, "Kahek looked extremely beautiful, but the towering mountainous ranges looked terrible and the cool breeze of the snow blew severely."

Different names of Imam's residence however have been described in the *ginans*. For instance, *Irak-i Ajam* (the Iranian Irak) has been named *Irak Khand*, a term in vogue for Iran among the Indians. The broad mountain region, which the Greeks called Media, stretching across from the Mesopotamian plains on the west to the great desert of Iran on the east; was known to the Arab geographers as *al-Jabal* (the mountain). This name afterwards fell out of use, and during 6th/12th century under the later Seljuqs, the province came by a misnomer to be called *Irak-i Ajam* (Iranian Irak) or *Bilad al-Jabal* (the province of mountain), being so named to distinguish it from the older Irak of the Arabs, which was lower Mesopotamia. The term *ajam* or *ajami* is the name originally applied by Arabs to a foreigner, or non-Arabs. Since the Iranians were the first foreigners with whom the Arabs came into contact, the term *ajam* or *ajami* soon became specific to mean "the Iranian foreigners."

The term *Sheter deep* seems to have been used for the northern continent, as the northern region of Iran geographically looked like the sheter fruit (mulberry), referring most probably to Azerbaijan. The term *Himpuri* means "village of snow" suggests the village of Kahek. Besides, the term *Vircha* means "highland" most possibly refers to Shahr-i Babak, a village near Kahek. Shahr-i Babak was known as the city of Babak or Papak, the father of Ardashir, the first Sassanian monarch. According to Mustawfi, the corn, cotton and dates grew in Shahr-i Babak abundantly. It also seems that Islam Shah had visited Anjudan, which is situated 35 kilometers from Kahek, and condoled the bereaved Ismailis, whose family members had been killed by Taymur in 795/1393. It may be possible that he had brought a bulk of the Ismailis from Anjudan to Kahek.

#### **Muhammad Shah bin Momin Shah**

The Iranian Ismailis lived peacefully in Fars, Khorasan, Kahek, Anjudan, Rudhbar etc. Meanwhile, Muhammad Shah, the son of Momin Shah bin Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad is reported to have appeared in Daylam, but his contact with the Imam is historically shrouded in clouds. He is however said to have joined Kiya Malik, the Hazaraspid ruler for taking the possession of Ashkavar. Muhammad Shah mustered the local Ismailis and formed his force, and subdued Sayed Mahdi Kiya with the help of Kiya Malik. Sayed Mahdi Kiya was arrested and sent to Tabriz in the court of sultan Uways (757-776/1356-1374), the Jalayirid ruler of Azerbaijan, Iraq and Kurdistan. Kiya Malik reinstated his rule in Ashkavar, and granted the hold of Alamut and its locality to Muhammad Shah in 776/1374. It is known that Sayed Mahdi Kiya succeeded to release from imprisonment in 778/1376 with the influence of Tajuddin Amuli, the Zaidi Sayed of Timjan, who had been made the governor of Ranikuh by his brother, Sayed Ali. Soon afterwards, Sayed Ali took field against Ashkavar and defeated Kiya Malik, who fled to Alamut in the hope of being assisted once again by Muhammad Shah, but failed, therefore, he took refuge with Taymur. Meanwhile, the forces of Sayed Ali had laid siege to Alamut while pursuing Kiya Malik, and took possession of Alamut. Muhammad Shah had been given self-conduct, and was sent to Taymur, who is reported to have sent him in Sultaniyya, where he died in 807/1404. His descendants



escaped from the prison and started their living in Sultaniyya.

In 813/1410, Sayed Radi Kiya (798-829/1395-1426), the son of Sayed Ali, and a powerful ruler of Lahijan, had expelled the Hazaraspid and Kushayji *amirs* from Daylam. He also stroke a severe blow to the local Ismailis during his operations, and killed a few of the descendants of Imam Alauddin Muhammad.

Jalali bin Najmuddin of Qain writes in "**Nassih al-Muluk**" that, "In the period of my grandfather, Amadid-din in the first part of the 14th century, Kohistan, Rudhbar etc. were thickly inhabited by the Ismailis, resulting the Sunni preachers to face difficulties to convert them." Jalali further writes that in his own period, in early 15th century, the bulk of the population was the Sunnis, though he had been assured that there were many Ismailis near Kohistan. It seems that Kohistan was populated by the Ismailis before Taymur's arrival in 794/1392, impelling them to move elsewhere during the time of Jalali from Kohistan and Rudhbar. According to "**Siyasat al-Muluk**" that the officers of Kohistan were more or less suspected by Shah Rukh (1405-1407). "**The Encyclopaedia of Islam**" (1927, 2nd vol., p. 550) also asserts that few soldiers, Sayeds or *darwish* of Qain in the time of Shah Rukh were suspected being the Ismailis.

It must be remembered that the Mongols had demolished some 70 castles of the Ismailis in the province of Kohistan, and after that, Turshiz a city of Kohistan recovered its importance, though partly in decay probably during this period where the Ismailis lived in the ruins of four castles in Turshiz? namely, Kalah Bardarud, Kalah Mikal, Mujahidabad and Atisgah. These castles finally had been demolished by Taymurlame in 783/1381, and since then, Turshiz disappeared from the map.

Kamaluddin Abdur Razzak (1413-1482), the son of Jalaluddin Ishaq Samarkandi had visited Kirman on May 21, 1441. He compiled "**Matla'us Sa'dain wa Majmu'ul Bahrain**" in 874/1470, but makes no mention of the Ismailis. Islam Shah lived in Kahek in obscure, and did not attract the historians to make his mention. Sayed Imam Shah (d. 926/1520), who had been in Kahek in the province of Kirman in 854/1450 writes in "**Motto Das Avatar**" (verse no,

10:141) that, "Imam Islam Shah resides in Kahek, but the ruler and people do not know him." Nuruddin bin Lutafullah (d. 834/1430) compiled "**Tarikh-i Hafiz Abru**" in 829/1425, however gave but a trivial account of the Ismailis during the time of Islam Shah in Iran.

The Syrian Ismailis lived in peace during the period under review in Hims, Aleppo, Hammah, Masiyaf, Qadmus etc., and had generated a close contact with Islam Shah through the local **dais**. Muhammad bin Sa'd bin Daud (790-859/1378-1455), surnamed ar-Rafnah was a gifted **dai** in Syria. He is reported to have visited Kahek few months before the death of Islam Shah in 827/1423. He also attended the ascension ceremony of Imam Muhammad bin Islam Shah. He was a prolific writer and wrote "**Rasail al-Shifa**", refuting the claims of the Momin-shahis. He also wrote "**Khams Rasail Ismailiyya**". Nuruddin Ahmad (d. 849/1445) was another **dai** of high fame in Syria, who had travelled widely in Syria, Iraq and Arabia. His "**Fusul wa-Akhbar**" deals the history of the Ismailis in Syria. Abul Ma'ali Hatim bin Imran, eminently known as Ibn Zahra also flourished in the period under review, who compiled "**al-Ahkam wa'l Fatarat**" and "**al-Mabda wa'l Ma'ad**".

The Ismailis of upper Oxus seems to have been unknown about the reduction of Alamut until the time of Islam Shah due to residing at farthest region. Their communication with the Iranian Ismaili Imams collapsed for over 150 years during the operations of Halagu and Taymur. Shagnan, the district of upper Oxus was the chief Ismaili centre in Central Asia. The early Arab geographers refer to Shagnan by the name, **Shikinan** and **Shikina**, while the Chinese writers call it **She-ki-ni** i.e., "the kingdom of the five **She-ni**" (gorges). Sayed Malang Shah is reported to have come here from Alamut, and converted a large number of the local inhabitants. He solidified his power and extended his influence and won over Farhad Rew, the chief of Shagnan. Sayed Malang Shah was followed by a young **dai** Sayed Khamush Shah Shirazi. Sir Thomas Douglas Forsyth (1827-1886) in "**Report on a Mission to Yarkand, Calcutta, 1875**", puts his date at 665/1266. Sayed Khamush Shah lived longer, and converted the Mongol tribes in upper Oxus. His tomb is at Kal'ai Barpanj. His descendants ruled Shagnan as hereditary Mirs during the time of Islam Shah, who penetrated the Ismaili **dawa** for the first time in China,



including Yarkand and Pamir. It is a striking feature that the Ismailis of upper Oxus maintained that Islam Shah resided in India. Most of the Imam's *dais* followed route of Shagman through Indian territory, and it is possible that they had constructed an idea that the Imam's residence was in India.

### Mission of Pir Sadruddin in India

Pir Sadruddin, one of the best known and revered *hujjats* in Indian traditions, was born in Sebzewar probably in 700/1300. His name was Muhammad, the son of Pir Sahib'din bin Pir Nasiruddin bin Pir Shams Sebzewari. His early education followed customary lines at home. He was a man steeped in a thorough understanding of the mystical teaching and the Islamic science of *tawil*. He also visited Mecca several times on pilgrimage, and seems to have acquired a good command in Arabic. Pir Sadruddin is said to have visited India in 734/1335, and joined the mission of Pir Shams. He studied various religious traditions and tendencies of different cults, social customs of the inhabitants and mastered the local languages, and finally immersed in the Indian tradition.

Brief mention must be made of the political cataclysm of Sind, which was the centre of the Ismaili mission down to the 18th century. After the end of the Sumra rule in Sind around 762/1361, the field was open for the Sammahs, who took possession of Sind and raised their chief, called Unar to the throne with the title of Jam. He died most probably in 768/1367 and was succeeded by his nephew, Jam Tamachi. He was followed by Jam Khairuddin, then Jam Babinah. Soon afterwards, Firuz Khan Tughlaq (1320-1388) invaded Sind after subjugation of Gujrat and some other parts of India. He defeated Jam Babinah, thus Sind fell into the hands of Firuz Khan. The Sammah rule ended in Sind in 926/1519, when Shah Beg Arghun (d. 928/1521) defeated Jam Firuz, the last ruler of the Sammah in 926/1519 and established Arghun dynasty in Sind.

The Arghun dynasty lasted till 961/1554, when their second ruler passed away during the war of succession. It was followed by a new dynasty of Central Asian origin; they were the Trakhans, whose monuments are still visible in Makli Hill. A certain Mirza Essa Trakhan (d. 974/1566) being the first ruler, took the reign in 961/1554. In

1000/1592, the Mughal emperor Akbar's friend, Abdur Rahim defeated Mirza Jani Beg Trakhan and annexed Sind to the Mughal empire. The trade from Afghanistan and Central Asia to the subcontinent was mainly in the hands of Hindu merchants in Shikarpur. This town was founded by Daudpotra in 1025/1616, a family who had assumed power in a large area of upper Sind. The Daudpotras were then defeated by another clan, the Kalhora. The first man to be known from this family was Adam Kalhora, who was executed in Multan in 965/1558. In the meantime, the British East India Company began to establish trade with Sind between 1045/1636 and 1073/1662. In 1112/1701, Yar Muhammad Khan Kalhora seized Shikarpur and the Mughal emperor Aurengzeb also granted the family large areas in Sind. He was succeeded by Nur Muhammad in 1131/1719, whose territory extended from Multan to Thatta. In the interim, the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1152/1739 proved as severe blow to the Kalhoras as it was to the Mughals. Nur Muhammad had to give up Shikarpur and Sibi and the Afsharids of Iran kept the whole western bank of the Indus. About fifteen years later, Ahmad Shah Durrani invaded Sind in 1167/1754, but, although Nur Muhammad was driven out from Jaisalmer, his son Muhammad Murad Yar Khan gained the kingdom. His brother Ghulam Shah founded Hyderabad in place of the old Nerankot in 1181/1768. The Kalhora period was important for the development of Sindhi literature, though its economic condition rapidly deteriorated towards the last quarter of the 18th century. The minister of the last Kalhora prince, Mir Bijar was killed in 1196/1781 after having defeated the invading Afghans near Shikarpur. Mir Bijar belonged to the Baluch clan of the Talpurs who were the disciples of the Kalhora, but after his death, fight between the two groups ensued and in 1197/1783, the Talpur Mir Fateh Ali defeated the last Kalhora, Abdun Nabi. The rule of the Talpur Mirs was divided among the branches of the family, therefore, the Talpurs were seated in Hyderabad, Mirpur and Khairpur. The Talpurs were plain blunt shepherds, who mostly relied on the power of their Baluchi clans to maintain order. The battle of Miami in 1259/1843 with the British India finally got an end of the rule of the Talpur Mirs in Sind.

Returning the thread of our narrative, the scrutiny of traditions suggests that Pir Sadruddin started his proselytizing mission between 757/1356 and 798/1396 under Pir Shams. Judging from bits and shreds of the accessible traditions, it is known that he selected twelve gifted



surrogates from different tribes to assist him in his mission. He seems to have travelled from Uchh to the lower part of Sind as far as the regions adjoining the Indian ocean, and around the locality of present Karachi. The tradition has it that he hired a camel in that locality to travel into the interior Sind, and converted the owner of camel at first. Pir Sadruddin seems to have launched his brisk mission in the district Thatta, and converted a bulk of the Lohana and Bhatia castes. From lower Sind, he proceeded to the middle, and also visited Kutchh with a group of *dais*. His mission also penetrated in Gujrat and the regions between northern India and Deccan. He also tried to bring the lower castes into the Ismaili fold, who revered Ramdeo, wherein he cloaked his identity, assuming the name of Nizar - a familiar term among the followers of Ramdeo. It must be known that he composed few *ginans* bearing the name *Nizar* for the followers of Ramdeo. His mission also influenced other parts of Gujrat and Kathiawar.

Pir Sadruddin visited Iran in 798/1396 to report Imam Islam Shah the outcome of his endeavours. He was designated as the *huffat* of Sind and Hind, or the *pir* according to the Indian tradition. With fresh directions, he returned to India and established prayer-halls (*khana*) and appointed *mukhi* (derived from *mukhia* means "foremost"), the headman at Sind. Each community was administered by its headman (*mukhi*), who was an executive head and his office was no longer hereditary as he was periodically selected. His powers and duties were explicitly defined in the *ginans*. In small villages the executive powers were vested in the *mukhi*, and it was only on important matters that he summoned a meeting of the elders.

Pir Sadruddin also visited Punjab and Kashmir to build prayer-halls for the followers of Pir Shams, and also built a mausoleum of Pir Shams in Multan. His next visit to Patan, Gujrat was noted for giving a new life to the early unknown Khojas converted by Pir Satgur, whose condition since the time of giving up the Hinduism was yet unchanged. He breathed a new life into the dead class of these Khojas and brought them within the fold of new emerging Khoja community. It must be known that the new converts during the period of Pir Satgur were yet crude in their knowledge on Islam and Ismailism. No Ismaili *dai* is

reported to have continued the mission after him during pre-Muslim era in Gujrat. The setback was due to the split of the Nizaris and the Must'aliens in Egypt, resulting the Indian mission ignored for more than two centuries. Pir Sadruddin was the next *dai* to have launched his fresh mission in Gujrat when two to three generations of the original converts of Pir Satgur had passed away, and the third generation was almost more Hindus and less Muslims. They were getting the inspiration of the *Satpanth* from the old legends and miracles. Pir Sadruddin visited the different villages in Gujrat and also initiated them afresh on his own method and gave them a new lease of life and included them in the new emerging Khoja community.

Pir Sadruddin returned to Sind after a long journey. His principal area of activity certainly radiated from a base at Uchh, where he supervised the mission works.

#### Method of Pir Sadruddin's mission

Muhammad Umar writes in "Islam in Northern India" (Aligarh, 1993, p. 371) that, "Perhaps one factor which greatly contributed to the popularity of Islam among the Hindus was that the Muslim mystics did not ask the newly converted Hindu to renounce their former customs and rituals. They presumed that the converts themselves would renounce the un-Islamic practices in due course. As such we find references about the Hindus, who had embraced Islam but still practicing the traditional beliefs and customs even after conversion." Likewise, it ensues from the kernel of the *ginans* and traditions that the landmark of Pir Sadruddin's mission was the gradual conversion into at least three processes. The method he employed was based on a special missionary framework.

In the embryonic stage, the disciples were given the ethical and moral teachings with a simple understanding of the *Satpanth* (true path). Local symbolic terms in native dialects were employed in the sermons and *ginans*, such as *alakh nirinjan* (Ineffable God), *guru bharna* (Muhammad), *nar naklan* (Ali), *nar* (Imam), *guru* (Pir), *harifan* (devotees), *gat* (assembly), *gat ganga* (prayer-hall), *gatpat* (holy water), *jaap* (invocation) etc. The vocabulary, similes and technical terms were confined to the prevalent social customs. Special *ginans* were composed



with supreme skill in the languages of the country folk for the disciples, providing them the flavour of the traditional *bhajan* (song), wherein Pir Sadruddin identified himself with the appellations of *Gur Sahodeva* and *Gur Harichandra*. These poetical hymns were tinged with mythological ideas, social customs and folklores. Hence these *gjnans* were paraphrased purely into Indian languages, a procedure that proved extremely beneficial on several counts. The emphasis was placed on making the transition from Hinduism to Islam as easy and as smooth as possible. He did not insist on the adoption of traditional form of Muslim rituals, which, in any case, were in language foreign to the converts, therefore no hard and fast rule had been imposed upon them. It may however be pointed out that the new converts possessed crude notions of meditation, but their practice in gnostic was restricted within a narrow compass. He imparted them gradually the practice of *sikr* (remembrance) into a positive Sufic style, called *jaap*, and watched every moment of the disciples' spiritual growth. The disciples were also afforded liberty to retain their traditions, social customs and culture. Ali Ahmad Brohi writes in "**History on Tombstones**" (Hyderabad, 1987, p. 132) that, "The main attraction that the Ismaili faith had was the freedom to continue ancient local beliefs and customs without causing any break with the old social order."

In the second stage, the disciples were entrusted the solemn word (*guru mantra*, or *sat shabada*) to mutter it privately on every midnight. Pir Sadruddin sorted out and imparted the common analogical elements from Islam and Hinduism. He found analogies in their philosophical ideas, and placed the greatest value upon the inner aspects, and put aside the external formalism. Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi writes in "**History of Sufism in India**" (New Delhi, 1978, 1st vol., p. 109) that, "The Ismaili missionaries were enthusiastic, who unhesitatingly modified their esoteric system to suit their converts." Hence, this stage offered the disciples to pick up the refined teachings linked in Islamic essence with no hard Arabic shell under the theory of *Das Avatars*. The disciples were imparted that the tenth incarnation of Vishnu was manifested at *salmal deep* (Arabia) as *nakiantik* (Ali), who was then in the dress of *Shri Salam Shah* (Imam Islam Shah), residing at *Irak Khand* (Iran). In this way, Pir Sadruddin reformulated, within the Hindu framework the Shiite doctrine of the Imamate as

the Divine Epiphany. The doctrine of the Imamate thus was integrated into the mission within the framework of Vaishnavite ideas, who were a dominant stream of Hinduism in northern India. In sum, the new converts saw in *Satpanth* a completion of their old faith, and through this orientation, they also found Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali coherence in their own tradition.

True indeed it is, that Pir Shams was first to propound the theory of *Das Avatara*, which was more concise, but Pir Sadruddin initiated it elaboratively in his small treatise, entitled "*Das Avatara*". It is to be noted that Sayed Imam Shah had also produced an amplified version on it.

Few other *ginans* were also composed in the second stage, differing little with the composition of preceding stage. Henceforward, the loan words and vocabulary drawn from the languages of Arabic and Persian were permeated in the *ginans*, wherein Pir Sadruddin identified himself as *Pir Sahodeva*, *Pir Harichandra*, or *Pir Sadruddin*.

After being mastered, the disciples were given pure Sufic teachings with certain rituals in the third stage simply on Shiite pattern. Emphasis was continued to be given in getting absorbed in meditation, which ultimately bore them the titular appellation of *khoja* (get absorbed) in the same manner as we have discussed in the period of Pir Satgur. It however seems that the trading class of Lohana in Sind was the first to have emerged as the *khojas* publicly due to their dealings with outside circles. As a result, the people from all walks of life, had rendered its meaning as *merchant* or *nobleman* which was fairly irrelevant rendering in essence. This title however became a replacment for the original Hindu Lohana title *thakur* or *thakkar*, meaning lord, master.

The new converts ultimately emerged as the *khojas* were now capable to receive devotedly whatever they had been initiated. Pir Sadruddin indeed islamized the faith of the people mildly and never hampered in their culture, and the Hindus in masses absorbed the best of Islamic thought more Indian than foreign in character. Pir Sadruddin then began to censure the new converts for their Hindu rites, condemning under logical expressions, such as caste distinction, idol-worship, ritual bathing, the authority



of the six schools of Hindu philosophy, and the traditions of asceticism and abstraction from the world, whose few examples are given below from the book of his *ginans*:-

- \* You will never attain salvation in worshipping pebbles and stones. (142:2)
- \* You have designed the idol with lime after burning the pebbles and stones. How can it be called Lord Krishna? (142:3)
- \* You go to Kasi to take bath in the Ganges. What is this water-pilgrimage? If liberation is availed in bathing, then the fish in it can attain salvation. The fish in the Ganges remains in it, being stunk all the times. (183:4-6)
- \* O'careless ones! why do you adore stone? Why do you designate it as your deity, which does not bend or speak by itself. (203:2)
- \* The Vedas are being listened bereft of purpose. How the sins be obliterated through its listening? (167:8)
- \* The pandit says, 'I do not eat meat.' O'pandit! let me know, wherefrom the curds and milk are procured? (123:5)
- \* The Yogi adores Gorakh-Nath, while the Brahmin to Shiva and the Ascetic worships Paras-Nath. These three ones have gone astray in this world. (96:3)

Hence, he consciously safeguarded his followers' Islamic root and identity. Eventually, the boundaries between the Muslims and Hindus were well defined in the *ginans*. He formed a symbolical bridge between Islam and Hinduism analogically - a landmark characteristic of his mission.

Summing up the peculiar missionary method of Pir Sadruddin, Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi writes in "The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent" (Karachi, 1977, pp. 41-2) that, "There are several instances on record where an Ismaili missionary posed as a Brahmin or a

Hindu priest and instead of flatly contradicting the doctrine of the faith, he sought to subvert, he confessed its basic assumptions and introduced some of Ismaili beliefs in a disguised form and thus slowly and gradually paved the way for total conversion. Lack of total adherence has never worried the Ismailis, because they are fully confident that the convert will ultimately accept the faith fully. This kind of conversion is achieved in a peculiar manner. At the outset, the appeal is not on the basis of dogma or beliefs, but an attempt is made to convince the potential convert of the spiritual greatness of some persons. In the early days, the missionary himself was a man of exemplary character. Very often Ali was depicted as an incarnation of Vishnu among the Vaishnavites. In short, after some personal loyalty had been created, the disciple was taken through various stages into full-fledged belief in the teaching of Ismaili Islam."

It is however, much nearer to reasonable possibility to assert that the mass conversion took place in the proselytizing mission of Pir Sadruddin in Sind, Kutchh, Gujrat and Kathiawar. He seems to have discarded the old rituals introduced in the former missions, and gave them palpable shapes. "In this way," says Ansar Zahid Khan in his "**History and Culture of Sind**" (Karachi, 1980, p. 275), "Sadr al-Din was responsible for providing the final touches to the Nizari Ismaili sect." He also commissioned **vakils** (deputies) in different places to collect religious dues to be deposited at the main treasury in Uchh. He also started three times prayers in a day in Indian language tintured with Koranic verses. He is reputed to have articulated a **Communal Bond** among the Indian Khoja Ismailis. Earlier, the isolated followers could hardly know their co-religionists, residing in other places due to the lack of coordination. This communal bond is also sounded at present as a living force in the Ismaili world.

Pir Sadruddin summoned big assemblies of the Khoja Ismailis many times in Sind and Kathiawar, inviting the local and neighboring followers to participate, to bind them together under a community bond, since their linkage fulfilled not merely a fraternal, but also a communal function. On such occasions, special **ginans** were composed, which had been couched in different dialects. Writing on the mission of Pir Sadruddin, Ali Ahmad Brohi says in "**History of Tombstones**" (Hyderabad, 1987, pp. 133-4) that,



"Anyone who embraced Ismaili *dawa* was free to practice his traditional cult and even retain his previous names, caste, identity with the additional declaration of faith in Imam and veneration for *Pirs* and descendants of Ali. By the adoption of such liberal attitude a great many powerful tribes, such as Langah, Soomras and Lohanas, were attracted to the Ismaili *Satpanth*."

Pir Sadruddin passed his later period of life in Jetpur in the vicinity of Uchh, a town in Bahawalpur State, situated on the south bank of the Satlaj river. It was also called *Uchha*, *Osa*, *Askalinda*, *Deogarh* or *Chachpur*, and the Arabs named it *Basmad*. The tradition relates that Raja Chach had built a tank near Uchh, known as Rani Tank, and ordered a town to be built at the spot, and named it *Chach*, which later corrupted as *Uchh*. It was an old seat of Muslim learning. Its graveyards and the tombs of saints silently reflect an story that the place must have been very famous during the Muslim regime. It seems that Uchh provided great respite and peace to the Muslim saints. Pir Sadruddin also made it his headquarters, and lived in the nearby village called, Sadarhu, and this may be more likely cause that he became to be revered locally as *Sadar Shah*. He built his small residence at Jetpur for his family. During his residency at Uchh, he had created a close relation with the local eminent persons, notably a certain Niyab bin Kamal of Bahawalpur, who eventually became his follower. It is related that once he was in the house of Niyab bin Kamal, where he was stricken by his last illness. Niyab wept profusely when he found that his *Pir* was about to depart from the world. Pir Sadruddin made a will to bury his body in his house. Thus, Pir Sadruddin died in 819/1416 and was interred in the house of Niyab bin Kamal, which had been converted to a shrine in 1058/1648 by the local people. He had five sons, viz. Sayed Zahir al-Din, Sayed Salauddin, Pir Tajuddin, Sayed Jamaluddin and Pir Hasan Kabiruddin.

Pir Sadruddin was a great Ismaili preacher, philosopher and dialectician. He indeed towers like an Everest, with no Alps around. It ensues from his *ginans* that he was the first poet of Gujrati and Sindhi languages. Writing about the *ginans*, Prof. Annemarie Schimmel remarks in "*Pearls from the Indus*" (Hyderabad, 1986, p. 14) that, "It is possible that the mystically tinged songs (*ginans*) and religious instructions used by the Ismaili missionaries

constitute the oldest extant example of Sindhi literature." The author further adds that, "It seems that the oldest extant documents of Sindhi religious literature are found in some Ismaili texts of the 14th century, written in Khojki script" (Ibid., p. 55). Sarah F.D. Ansari writes in "**Sufi Saints and State Power**" (Cambridge, 1992, p. 17) that, "The *ginans* or mystical writings of the Ismailis display considerable parallelism of thought with Sufism as well as with the Hindu Bhakti tradition, sharing markedly similar themes and motifs."

Pir Sadruddin was also well steeped in the knowledge of astronomy, astrology and physiology. He also mastered in Indian pharmacy, and used to treat the local people. He also assisted the poor in Uchh and ministered to the sick and travellers, thus he won great applause.

#### **Mission of Pir Hasan Kabiruddin in India**

Pir Hasan Kabiruddin, the son of Pir Sadruddin was generally known as Sayed Hasan Shah, Pir Hasan Shah, Sayed Sadat, Gur Pir Hasan al-Hussain, Makdum Sayed Kabiruddin Shah etc. He is however known in Uchh Sharif as Hasan Dariya. Since his lineage traced back to Imam Jafar Sadik, therefore, he is also known as al-Husayn. He was born in Uchh Sharif in 742/1341 and was the first Indian *pir* to be born in India. He was edowed from birth with deep spiritual insight and strong common sense combined with sympathy and love for his fellow beings, and was also noted for his piety since childhood.

When Pir Sadruddin visited Iran for the second time, Pir Hasan Kabiruddin eagerly desired to join him. Owing to tedious journey, he was not taken to Iran. Being become forlorn, Pir Hasan Kabiruddin started his most famous petition, and prepared a turban for the headgear of Imam Islam Shah. It is known that he also managed to reach Kahek. Islam Shah was rejoiced to see his devotion, and invested him with the mantle of a *hujjat*, or *pir* to be effective after his father.

Pir Hasan Kabiruddin continued to follow the tract of his father's mission, and procured few tasks of the incomplete mission of his father. His association with the Indian Sufis is also well known. Like his father, he also composed *ginans*. He was a strict vegetarian and his dress,



living and food were characterised by a rare simplicity. He was a man of quiet and unassuming disposition completely immersed in the interpretation of the ideas which absorbed the greater part of his attention and concentration. He was contemplative, thoughtful and fond of loneliness. The tradition has it that he had all the times a bowl of coconut husk with him from which he ate and drank frugally. It is also said that shortly before his death he retired into solitude. He died in 853/1449 in Uchh Sharif, and was buried in his own house, which became a famous shrine in Uchh Sharif. Shaikh Abdul Haq Mohadis Dehlvi (1551-1642) writes in his "**Akhbar al-Akhayar**" (comp. in 998/1590) that, "The greatest miracle of Pir Hasan Kabiruddin is that he converted sizable infidels to Islam. One has no courage to disobey him and embraced Islam in a trice whom he preached, making the non-believers to flock at him in masses." (pp. 372-3)

The period followed by Pir Satgur Nur was noted as an era of pre-Muslim in Gujrat. The 7th Solanki ruler, Jaysinha Sidhraj (d. 1143) died childless and was succeeded by Kumarapala (1143-1173), a descendant of Karna, the third son of Bhima I, who seized the throne by force. He was succeeded by his nephew, Ajavapala, whose period saw the declination of the Solanki dynasty. His successor Mulraja II was too weak. The next Solanki ruler Bhima II also proved incapable to govern his empire, and the last ruler was Tribuvanpala, from whom the power was snatched by the Vaghela branch of the Solanki in 1243. The new dynasty produced six kings who were constantly troubled by the Muslim invaders. The last king was Karna, who had been overpowered by Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan, the generals of Alauddin Khalji in 697/1298. In 700/1300, Alauddin Khalji appointed Malik Sanjar, surnamed Alp Khan (1297-1317) as a governor of Gujrat and the old Hindu capital Anhilvad became the seat of the governor. Zafar Khan, surnamed Muzaffar Khan (d. 813/1403), one of the trusty nobles of Firuz Khan had been sent from Delhi as the governor of Gujrat in 793/1391. He established an independent Sultanate of Gujrat in 810/1407, and was the first Muslim ruler of Gujrat to suppress Shiism in his domains. His son Tatar Khan, surnamed Muhammad Shah (d. 846/1442) ascended the throne of Gujrat in his father's lifetime. He wanted to capture Delhi, but his father opposed him, thereupon, he imprisoned his father in 803/1403 atawal. He ruled for 32 years in Gujrat and twice (816/1414 and 824/1420) made fierce attempt to force the Hindus to adopt Islam. He

was succeeded by his son, Ahmad I (d. 846/1442), who brought under his control the whole land of Gujrat and its adjoining territories. He too severely domineered the Ismailis. He was followed by Ghazan Khan, surnamed Tajuddin Sultan Muhammad Shah, but he died soon afterwards. In the meantime, Muhammad Khan bin Nimat Khan, the vizir captured the throne and assumed the title of Alauddin Muhammad Shah. It will be appropriate to infer that during the Muslims occupation of Gujrat and its political turmoil, Pir Sadruddin and Pir Hasan Kabiruddin had exercised strict *taqiya* during their missionary activities in Gujrat.

Pir Hasan Kabiruddin had eighteen sons and one daughter, viz. Sayed Awaliya Ali, Sayed Kasiruddin, Sayed Ali Gohar Nur, Sayed Alam Shah, Sayed Rehmattullah Shah, Sayed Adil Shah, Sayed Jafar Shah, Sayed Israil Tayyar Ghazi, Sayed Shahbaz Ghazi, Sayed Sabe Ali, Sayed Islam Shah, Sayed Imam Shah, Sayed Farman Shah, Sayed Ismail, Sayed Nur Muhammad, Sayed Darwish Ali, Sayed Lal Shah, Sayed Bala Shah Buland Ali, and a daughter Bai Budhai.

With the indescribable efforts of Pir Sadruddin and Pir Hasan Kabiruddin, a large proselytism had been resulted in Sind, Punjab, Kutchh, Kathiawar and Gujrat by leaps and bounds during the period of Islam Shah. Sayed Imam Shah admits in his "*Janatpuri*" (verse, 89) that, "Ismailism promulgated rapidly in India during the time of Imam Islam Shah." The trading class among the Ismaili Khojas gradually began to visit Kahek to see the Imam. Unfortunately, none among the pilgrims had left the historical accounts of the journey. W.Ivanow writes in "*Collectanea*" (Holland, 1948, p. 54) that, "How precious would have been such an original and unpretentious account of the journey to Persia by an intelligent Khoja traveller of the end of the fifteenth century if it had been preserved in the community." Nevertheless, a manuscript of thirty pages has been discovered in 1977, belonging to a certain Rahim Bhimani (d. 1841) of Ahmadabad. It contains a meagre, rather a historical description of a certain Bhimani family. Rahim Bhimani derived his information from the manuscript of Sheith Jan Muhammad Tharu'ani in 1834. It indicates that a certain Nardas alias Bhimani (d. 824/1420) lived in the time of Dhani Sarcar Nar Islam Shah. He visited Iran with a few Ismailis of Kutchh, and their caravan returned to India via port Hormuz.



We are reviewing the period which absolutely suffers with historical documents, and therefore, many prominent characters, professing Ismailism, had not been identified by the historians. Poet Kassim Anwar is worthy of notice to this effect. His name was Ali bin Nasir bin Harun bin Abdul Kassim al-Husayn at-Tabrizi. He was born in 757/1356 in Sarab, near Tabriz. He studied Sufism in his early life, and reported to have embraced Ismaili faith at the age of 40 years, but had to adopt strict *taqiya*. He lived in Gilan and Khorasan and at last settled in Herat. Kamaluddin Abdur Razzak (1413-1482) writes in "*Matla'us Sa'dain wa Majma'ul Bahrain*" that, "In 830/1426, Shah Rukh (1409-1447), the Taymurid ruler, having being stabbed in the mosque of Herat by a certain Ahmad Lur, Kassim Anwar was charged by Mirza Baysunqur with having harboured the intended assassin, and was obliged to leave Herat and repaired to Samarkand. He returned, however, some years later to Khorasan, and took up his abode in Kharjird, a town in the district of Jam, where he died in 835/1431." His *Diwan's* pieces are composed in Gilani and Turkish. His other works are "*Anisu'l Arifin*" (Gnostics of familiar) and "*Anisu'l Ashiqin*" (Lovers' familiar) - both deal mysticism in prose and poetry. W.Ivanow also traced his "*Risala dar Duniya wa Akhirat*" (Treatise on world and hereafter). Jami (1414-1492) writes in his "*Baharistan*" (Bombay, 1913, p. 66) that, "Kassim Anwar was a learned philosopher and perfect elocutionist."

It seems that Islam Shah used to send his guidances regularly to the Indian followers, whose fragments are sounded in the *ginans*. Few advices of Islam Shah inserted in the *ginans* are as under:-

- \* *Come to the prayer-hall, purifying yourselves and keep up the traditions of the true religion.*
- \* *Why do you miss the heavenly blessings? Do as those believers, who did in the past.*
- \* *Only when you swim across the ocean-like world, then alone you will achieve emancipation from this worldly tangles.*
- \* *He who duly pays tithe and follow the religion strictly, will never be affected even by fire.*
- \* *He is not a faithful who does not lead a life of piety.*

- \* *Slander is the root-cause of deficit in agricultural output.*
- \* *Get rid of deception of followership and mastership.*
- \* *Wake up at midnight to adore God, and keep a fair dealing with the religion.*
- \* *One who sleeps (whole night) will cry sorrowfully.*
- \* *The root of faith is the path of religion.*

Imam Islam Shah mostly lived in Kahek, and sometimes in Shahr-i Babak. It is also said that the Ismailis in these villages had built few dens in the upper hills to seek protection during emergency. The period of Islam Shah however passed in peace, and he died in 827/1423. He consigned the office of Imamate to his elder son, Muhammad.

#### MUHAMMAD BIN ISLAM SHAH (827-868/1423-1463)

Muhammad or Mehmud Shah, generally called Muhammad bin Islam Shah is believed to have been born in Daylam. He was almost ten years old when his father arrived in Kahek in 798/1396. If this is a genuine tradition, it implies that he was born possibly in 788/1386, and was about 17 years old while assuming the Imamate. He mostly resided in Shahr-i Babak in Kirman.

The Iranian Ismailis began to revert to their former settlements in different villages. Most of them engaged in agriculture in Kohistan, Qain, Birjand, Nishapur, Khorasan, Sirjan, Jabal-i Bariz, Mahallat and Yazd.

Muhammad bin Islam Shah seems to have started communications from his headquarters to different Ismaili communities, and also accepted the gifts of the pilgrims. It is said that the Indian Ismaili pilgrims were invested the title of "darwish" (*daras*).

Taymur designated his grandson Pir Muhammad as his heir, who was about 22 years old in 807/1405. But, his cousin Khalil Sultan occupied Samarkand and was proclaimed as sultan. He was overthrown in 811/1409. Meanwhile, Shah Rukh (1409-1447), the fourth son of Taymur, the then



governor of Herat, ascended as the next Taymurid ruler of Iran and Central Asia. He died in 851/1447 and was succeeded by his son Olugh Beg (1447-1449), who was in turn followed by Abu Sa'id (1451-1469).

One seminal point should not omitted here in discussion that the office of the *hujjat* or *pir* in India from Pir Shams (d. 757/1356) to Pir Hasan Kabiruddin (d. 853/1449) was almost hereditary, and then the office seemed to be revered like the hereditary office of the Imams, and therefore, an effect was necessary to enforce in the line of the *pirs* before the time it might become an ingrained belief. Thus, after the death of Pir Hasan Kabiruddin, Imam Muhammad bin Islam Shah designated his brother Pir Tajuddin, as a next *hujjat* or *pir* for Hind and Sind instead of any son, and one can hardly deny the logic springs from such designation.

#### Mission of Pir Tajuddin in India

Pir Tajuddin was most possibly born in 796/1394 in Uchh Sharif, and got his early education from his elder brothers. He was about 33 years old when designated as the next *hujjat*, or *pir* for subcontinent. The tradition relates that he used to put the bud of flower on his robe, making him familiar with the title of *shah turrel* (the lord of the *tura* or bud). He made Lahore as his centre because Uchh Sharif had become the ground of quarrel by his opponents. He had also an opportunity at Lahore to direct the descendants of Pir Shams in the mission works. He seems to have sent few *dais* in Afghanistan and Central Asia, whose detail is not accessible. Pir Tajuddin also preached in Sind, and once he had notably converted one Lohana family of 20 men, 18 women and 40 sons near Uchh Sharif, whose family head was Seith Lakhimal. Pir Tajuddin seems to have known as Prahlad among the Hindus of Sind because of his betrothal with a lady of Sodha tribe of Umartot, and his descendants became also known as Prahlad, or Perraj. He seems to have composed some *ginans*, but only one is extant.

### Mission of Sayed Imam Shah in India

Sayed Imam Shah was a prominent **dai** in India. His name was Imamuddin, surnamed Abdur Rahim. He was born in Uchh Sharif in 834/1430, and was the younger son of Pir Hasan Kabiruddin. The tradition has it that when Pir Hasan Kabiruddin died, his all sons were present at Uchh Sharif with exception of Sayed Imam Shah. The tradition attests that he reached late during the interment of his father's body. Many traditions are recounted for his dissatisfaction, but all are legendary in character.

Sayed Imam Shah resided at Uchh Sharif with his sister called Bai Budhai, where he received a letter of Imam Muhammad bin Islam Shah through a certain Khoja Devasi Chandan. Hence, he started his journey for Kahek in 854/1450. Muhammad bin Islam Shah is said to have consigned him the mission for Gujrat. He returned and converted a bulk of Hindus in Gujrat. He got married to the daughter of Shah Muhammad Bakhri, who gave birth of Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah (d. 940/1534). Sayed Imam Shah died in 926/1520 and was buried in Pirana, situated ten miles south-east of Ahmadabad. It is said that he abjured Ismailism because of not succeeding his father, but it is not in conformity with the genuine traditions. Weighing up the extant evidences, it appears that he was ingrained in Ismailism and demonstrated unswerving loyalty to the Imams till his death, and never took any other route to goal his so called ambition. According to **"The Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam"** (Leiden, 1961, p. 167), "As far as it is possible to ascertain, he cannot be regarded as the founder of a new sect, as he remained loyal to the Imam of his time." He wrote many **ginans** which are recited by the Ismailis. He had four sons, viz. Sayed Alam Shah, Sayed Ali Shah, Sayed Bakir Shah and Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah, and a daughter called Shams Khatoon.

Returning to the thread of our main narrative, it appears that there are certain indications of the meeting between Muhammad bin Islam Shah and Shah Nimatullah (d. 834/1431), the chief of the Nimatullahis in Kirman. We have however no traces to confirm or contradict the above meeting.

Imam Muhammad bin Islam Shah died in Kahek in 868/1463, and was succeeded by his elder son, Mustansir billah II.



## MUSTANSIR BILLAH II (868-880/1463-1475)

Ali Shah, surnamed Mustansir billah, also known as Jalaluddin was born in Kahek. He seems to have known as Shah Qalandar among the Iranian mystics. He too resided in Kahek and sometimes in Shahr-i Babak. In "*Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi*", we also find different terms for the Imam that became vogue among his followers, viz. *Imam-i Zaman* (Imam of the time), *Imam-i Hazar* (the apparent Imam), *Sahibu'z Zaman* (the master of the world), *Ali Zaman* (the Ali of the time), *Sahibu'l Amr* (the master of authority), *Hazar Jama* (the present bearer of light), and simply as *Hasrat-i Mawlana Mustansir billah*.

### Death of Pir Tajuddin

The Indian tradition goes to relate that Pir Tajuddin decided to visit Iran in 870/1466. He embarked from Sind, where a certain Ismaili jamat accorded him a warm honour, and gave him a precious piece of cloth of Sindhi design to be presented to the Imam. He reached Kahek, and presented the cloth with other offerings. When Pir Tajuddin started his homeland journey, Mustansir billah gave him the same cloth as a gift, since none in Iran wore the dress bearing Sindhi design. It is recounted that Pir Tajuddin arrived in Sind and prepared a robe from that cloth and wore it. He also visited the jamat who had given him that very cloth for the Imam. The tradition relates that a few community members suspected and accused Pir Tajuddin of embezzling the gift of the Imam. They encircled Pir Tajuddin with the flood of questions with rigorous arguments and insulted him. He was highly shocked which resulted his sudden death, possibly by heart attack in 872/1467, and was buried near Tando Bagho, where a splendid shrine had been erected in 889/1484.

Mustansir billah appears to have known the sad news after a year, which caused his displeasure, and suspended to depute any other *pir* in India.

### Mission of Kadiwal Sayeds

The Sayeds in the line of Sayed Imam Shah (1430-1520) were known as *Pirana Sayeds* and the Sayeds of the mainstream of the community in the descent of Sayed Rehmatullah Shah were called *Kadiwal Sayeds*. There are different versions for the appellation of the word *Kadiwal*. It is related that Sayed Rehmatullah Shah, the son of Pir Hasan Kabir and his family members shortly lived in the village, named Kadhi, between Uchh and Multan, and then he had gone to live in a village, Kadi in the northern Gujrat on the route to Junagadh. Thus, his descendants became known as *Kadhiwala*, or *Kadiwala*. Another tradition suggests that the male members of the family of Sayed Rehmatullah Shah used to wear an iron band (*kadi*) round their arms, and therefore, they earned the title of *Kadiwal* (the people of iron band). It is also said that his descendants used to recited a couplet (*kadi*) of the *ginan* before the new converts, who called them as *Kadi'wala* (reciters of couplet). One oral tradition however indicates without a mark of veracity that Sayed Rehmatullah Shah, or his descendants had lived in the village called, Kaliyanwala, about 5 miles from Hafizabad in Punjab. This village was also pronounced as Kadiwala instead of Kaliyanwala, and thus, they were called *Kadiwala Sayeds*. It is also interesting to note that there is one village, about 15 miles from Gujranwala on the way to Dakhanmandi in Punjab, whose inhabitants were the followers of Pir Shams. It has been frequently described that Sayed Rehmatullah Shah had gone to live in a village, named Kadi in Kutchh, and became known as *Kadiwal Sayeds*. Culling up the accessible oral traditions, it seems however nearer to the possibility that Sayed Rehmatullah Shah and his descendants lived in a village, called Kadi in Gujrat. The Bohra community in Gujrat is known under the four regional terms, i.e., Patani Vohras, Charotar Vohras, Suratī Vohras and Kadiwal Vohras. Likewise, the Ismaili Sayeds also became known most probably as *Kadiwal Sayeds* due to residing in Kadi, Gujrat.

The Kadiwal Sayeds carried on the mission in India for about 250 years. Some of them had retained their contact with the Imams in Iran, but some discontinued, and conducted the mission independently. Sayed Rehmatullah Shah mostly preached in Gujrat and Kutchh. Sayed Nurbaksh



(1446-1504), the grandson of Pir Hasan Kabiruddin, also known as Sayed Mitha Shah in Punjab, is said to have preached in Jammu and Kashmir. He was assisted by his son Mir Shamsuddin II. Sayed Nurbaksh also visited Badakhshan, Kohistan, Tibet, Gilgit, Yarkand and Iskardu. His son was also active in Kashmir, and his followers became known as Shamsi, who migrated towards Punjab during 14th century. They preached Ismailism in the Sufic mantle and their Sufic *tariqah* became known as Nurbakhshia, also existed in Kohistan.

It appears fragmentarily that Mustansir billah had taken serious notice of the impairing economy of the Ismailis of Iran, Syria, India, Badakhshan and other parts of Central Asia. He emphasised his followers to assist one another, and thus he said: "The real believer is one who assists and helps his brother in religion, who shares with him his food, his sorrow and joy, never admitting into his heart any malice or enmity, being one with him in word and deed. If one satisfies his hunger, the other's hunger must also be satisfied. If one remains hungry, the other should remain hungry too. If one eats something, the other should also partake of everything that his friend has eaten." (vide "*Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi*," p. 56)

Badiuddin Khwaja Kassim was an eminent *huffat* in Anjudan, who served as the chief of the Ismaili mission from the period of Mustansir billah to Gharib Mirza.

Mustansir billah was a good horseman and hunter and stayed in Anjudan as his summer villa, where a small number of his followers inhabited. He died in Kahek in 880/1475, but was buried in Anjudan, most probably in pursuant of his will. Later on, a mausoleum was erected in Anjudan. The mausoleum of Imam Mustansir billah II is the oldest surviving Nizari Ismaili monument in Anjudan; which is an imposing octagonal building with a dome, appearing conical from outside. In the middle of the chamber, there is a wooden-coffer, exquisitely carved. On its top is written:- "The pure, sacred and luminous grave of Shah Mustansir billah. By the order and care of Abdus Salam." A broad panel at the top edge on all sides is beautifully carved with the text of Sura Yasin of Holy Koran. At the bottom, there is written:- "Wrote this the humble slave Abdul Jalil in 885/1480". This tends to the conclusion that the wooden box was erected by the order of Abdus Salam, the

son and successor of Mustansir billah, most probably five years after latter's death.

#### **ABDUS SALAM (880-899/1475-1493)**

Mahmud Shah, surnamed Abdus Salam or Salam Shah, whose exact date of birth is not known. But the evidence is in favour of his having been born in 859/1456 in Shahr-i Babak, where he mostly passed early life. He is also called Shah Salamullah. He ascended to the office of Imamate at the age of 21 years. It is related that he was a pragmatic scholar and had gleaned historical informations from his father and the elders of the community, notably the period stretching from the reduction of Alamut to his time. Nothing is however known whether he compiled any work in this context.

It seems that Imam Mustansir billah II and his successor, Abdus Salam had strictly advised the Ismailis in Iran, Central Asia and India not to refer or divulge the name of the Imam of the time in presence of the ignorants, and adopt *taqiya*. For instance, it is written in "**Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi**" (p. 56) that: "O, truly-faithful believers, Mawlana Shah Mustansir bi'l-lah says: do not mention myself and the name of your Imam, Shah Abdu's-Salam Shah, in the presence of the ignorant and unbelieving people who have an innate hatred of the Prophetship and Imamate. You must, however, appeal to him in your heart and with your tongues. Conceal my whereabouts (*sirr'i ma'ra*) from the irreligious people of today (*ghayr din'i samana*), so that you may for this attain the perfect reward and a righteous life. God the Bountiful will be pleased by you, the people of sincere faith, and your hearts will be enlightened, shining, and full of joy."

W. Ivanow comments on "**Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi**" that, "The book, or its greater part, was compiled under Shah Abdu's-Salam who succeeded Imam Mustansir bi'l-lah and thus really was the Imam of the time when the compiler was engaged in writing. The enigmatic passage on p. 56 may be easily explained if we suggest that Mustansir bi'l-lah told his followers not to disclose his own identity to outsiders, nor of the Imam of one's time generally. And as the Imam of the time at the moment when the compiler



was writing was Shah Abdu's-Salam, he automatically mentioned his name."

The Ismailis used to visit Kahek, where they were lodged and such facility was also created in Shahr-i Babak. It is said that the Indian Ismailis were granted the titles of *Varas* and *Raf*. Some Sufi sounding *khanqahs* (cloisters) had been also built in Shahr-i Babak. The Indian and Syrian pilgrims were lodged in different taverns, where they were looked after by some Ismaili guards, who also escorted them during their departure. Some escorts also joined the pilgrims to track them over the safe route.

In Iran, the descendants of Taymur have founded their own petty rules. The Ottoman empire in Turkey became powerful, and sultan Suleman; the Magnificent had captured Istanbul in 1453, making a door open into Europe. The Mamluk kingdom in Egypt was impaired due to internal wars.

The Christianity continued to be dominated by the tradition of Popes in Europe. It must be noted on this juncture that the first Pope to claim superiority over the European Christendom was Innocent I (402-417). The temporal power of the papacy was not, however, established until the 8th century, when Pepin le Bref and Charlemagne conferred estates on the Pope. Charlemagne was crowned by Leo III in 800 A.D., this being the first act indicative of the Pope's temporal power. Under Innocent III (1198-1216) and his immediate successors, the papacy reached the summit of its greatness. The right of papal election first however vested in the cardinals in 1059.

The *Crusades* or *al-hurub al-salibiyya* (wars of the cross) between the Muslims and Christians had began in 488/1095 and lasted for about two centuries, in which eight major battles were fought till 690/1291. During these periods, the Islamic philosophy, physics, chemistry and other arts and science had greatly influenced the Christians in Europe. Many notable works of the Muslim philosophers and scientists had been translated into European languages. The works of Ibn Sina and others were taught in the leading western universities. The new research was made upon the theories and experiments suggested by the Muslim scientists. R. Briffault writes in "**The Making of Humanity**" (London, 1928, p. 191) that, "What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the methods

of experiment, observation, and measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs." The Europe entered thereupon into a new epoch, resulting ultimately to the age of Renaissance.

So long as the Muslims were in the vanguard of knowledge, they led the civilized world in culture, science and philosophy. But as soon as they lost interest in independent inquiry, they ceased to exist as a dynamic force. Science was discredited by the orthodox minds on the plea that it led to materialism, and philosophy was opposed as intellect debarred from entering the portals of divine knowledge. The **reason** became the target of attack and even an object of ridicule. Science and philosophy were absolutely condemned. What remained was a fairy tale, very comforting stuff to the ignoramus but extremely injurious to the nation as a whole. The Muslim countries thus witnessed a terrible decline not only in their intellectual and cultural life, but also in their political status soon after the awakening of Europe from a long slumber - an awakening which was the result of western intellectual, scientific and philosophical movements - a way paving to the Renaissance in Europe. The Muslim powers were at the lowest ebb due to mutual wars - a force which worked negatively for them. The Ottomans of Turkey, the Safavids of Iran and the Mughals of India however had increased their influences, but could not be helpful to save the decline of the Islamic thought and culture.

It has been heretofore referred that the tradition of the **pir** for the Indian community had been suspended in the time of Imam Mustansir billah after the death of Pir Tajuddin in 873/1467. The Indian tradition relates that a certain Nizamuddin Kapur, known as Kamadia Kapur or Kapura Lohana, whose tomb is near the Bhambari village, about eleven miles from Tando Muhammad Khan; had visited Iran with an Indian deputation, and humbly urged Abdus Salam to send next **hujjat**, or **pir** in India. He insisted that the whole Indian community should not be punished for the misconduct of one jamat of Sind. Abdus Salam is reported to have said: "I cannot revoke the decision of my father." Kamadia Kapur and his team lodged in Shahr-i Babak for some months and craved devotionally to win the heart of the Imam. One day, Imam summoned him at his residence and



said: "My father has suspended the tradition of *pir* for India, which will not be revoked in my period. I, however, appoint a *samit* (silent) *pir* instead." The Imam thus gave him a book, namely "**Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi**" with an instruction to obey its advices as if a *natiq* (speaking) *pir*. The tradition further relates that the Imam had taken a word from Kamadia Kapur that the name of the *jamat*, who misbehaved with Pir Tajuddin in Sind, would not be divulged in other Ismaili *jamats*, so as to retain the unity of the Indian communities.

"**Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi**" (maxims of fortitude) is a collection of the advices of Imam Mustansir billah, which had been compiled in the time of Abdus Salam when Kamadia Kapur was in Shahr-i Babak. The word *pandiyat* is the plural of *pand* means "advice", and *jawanmardi* means "manliness". In other words, it contains the advices (*pandiyat*) for the true believers (*mumins*) and to those seeking to attain the exemplary standards of manliness (*jawanmardi*). It is factorized into three sections, viz. *Pandiyat great*, *Pandiyat small* and *twelve Jawanmardi*, also contains few *farmans* of Abdus Salam. It deals with the advices to the believers on ethics, humanity, behavior, etc. The Ismailis are referred to by the Sufic sounding terms as *ahl-i haqq* and *ahl-i haqiqat* (the people of the truth), while the Imam himself is termed as *pir*, *murshid* and *qutb*. It is venerated as if an authorized *pir* or *huffat* in India, and is being read in Yarkand, Gilgit, Hunza, Chitral, Badakhshan, and Iran.

Abdus Salam also wrote "**Panj Sukhan-i Hazarat-i Shah Abdus Salam**", the instructive advices for the believers in 30 pages. It is another small collection of the advices followed most probably by the compilation of "**Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi**", otherwise it would have been most possibly incorporated in it.

In one extant *qasida*, the Imam says:-

*Kanun Abdusalam man vali az hangnan gamgin,  
azin majalas bakhvahan raft wa digar baar baar a'ayam*

means, "I am Abdus Salam at present, but not happy with the people of assembly. I will depart from this assembly, and will appear next time in another dress."

It is known that a group of Momin-Shahis adhered Raziuddin, the father of Shah Tahir Hussain Dakkani (d. 956/1549) as their Imam in Badakhshan. Abdus Salam sent his three *farmans*, instructing the erring group to revert to the fold of the legitimate line. These *farmans*, found in a "*Maj'mua*" in Kirman, bearing the signature of the Imam with a date of 895/1490.

Sayed Suhrab Wali Badakhshani flourished in this period. He was hailed from Herat and passed his life in Badakhshan and Kabul as a local missionary. In his writing, he writes the date 856/1452 which suggests that he lived in the time of Imam Muhammad bin Islam Shah (d. 868/1463), Imam Mustansir billah (d. 880/1475) and Imam Abdus Salam (d. 899/1493). It appears from his "*Nur-nama*" that he was most possibly influenced with the teachings of the *dais* of Pir Shams in Badakhshan to some extent. He however, continued to preach the teachings of Nasir Khusaro. He was followed by Sayed Umar Yanghani, whose descendants and followers continued Ismaili mission around Badakhshan, and propagated as far as Hunza, Gilgit, Chitral and Ghazar.

After Taymur's death, for some time neither his son Shah Rukh in the east, nor the Ottomans in the west were able to extend their influences in western Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Mesopotamia. Here the Turkomans were the strongest tribe until the rise of the Safavids in 905/1500. These Turkomans had founded their dynasties, known as Kara-Koyunlu (780-874/1378-1469) and Ak-Koyunlu (780-908/1378-1502). The death of Uzun Hasan (872-883/1467-1478), the founder of Ak-Koyunlu dynasty in Azerbaijan had gladdened the wandering Turkomans, and they imagined that Azerbaijan, Iran and Fars were their ancestral kingdom. Aba Bakr Beg Begtash, the son of sultan Abu Sa'id commanded the Turkomans and Chaghatays with a hope to find a new kingdom. So by way of Sistan and Bam, they marched on Kirman in 883/1478. Fazalullah bin Ruzbihan Khunji (925/1520) compiled his "*Tarikh-i Alam-Ara'yi Amini*" in 896/1490 (abridged translation made by V. Minorsky, entitled "*Persia in A.D. 1478-1490*", London, 1957, p. 43) that, "The amir-zada Ali Jahan (son of Jahangir) was a respected ruler of Kirman and Sirjan, but he was frightened by this multitude (of the Turkomans and Chaghatays) and, without fighting and in utter terror, retreated to Shahr-i Babak. So the whole of Kirman and Sirjan fell into the hands of the Chaghatays and



Turkomans. Under the guise of *na'l-beha* (an arbitrary levy imposed as a compensation for the horse-shoes which have become worn out) and homage, they looted rich and poor." (pp. 93-95)

On hearing this, Abul Muzaffar Yaqub Khan (883-896/1478-1490), the son of Uzun Hasan sent against the aggressors a numerous army under the command of Sufi Khalil Beg. They were reinforced by Baysunqur Beg. The Chaghatays and Turkomans sent their families and baggages into the stronghold of Sirjan, while they themselves took their stand in Kirman, determining to put up a strong fight. The forces of Sufi Khalil Beg first went to the stronghold of Sirjan and captured it in the first inroad, and their enemies fled to Jurjan and Tabaristan. Having razed to the ground the strongholds of Sirjan and Kirman, the Ak-Koyunlu commander returned to Azerbaijan.

We do not have any detail of the Imam and the Ismailis in the contemporary sources, but it ensues from sparsely traditions that Imam Abdus Salam had most possibly evacuated Shahr-i Babak in early period of 883/1478 with the Ismailis before the roaring march of the Chaghatays and Turkomans, and after their suppression, he returned to Shahr-i Babak.

In the contemporary work, Abdus Salam is glorified as under:-

Gah piru gah tiflu gah burna mishawad.  
Gah dar miraj rafta gah andar chah shud.  
Gar ba-sad surat bar ayad mardī manira ohi gham.  
Gah Mustansir shudu gahi Salamullah shud.

*"Sometimes he (appears as) an old man, or a child, or a youth. Sometimes he goes in a miraj, sometimes he goes into an abyss. Why should the knowing one worry about, even if he comes up in a hundred forms. Sometimes as Mustansir, and sometimes as Salamullah."*

Imam Abdus Salam died in 899/1493 in Shahr-i Babak, and with his death the Imamate devolved upon his son, Gharib Mirza.

It has been a source of utter surprise that the European knowledge of the Syrian Ismailis had not progressed much beyond what the Crusaders and their chroniclers had transmitted, and the field continued to be dominated by the old myth, fanciful impressions and fictitious narratives. For instance, Felix Fabri, who visited Jerusalem twice in 1480 and 1484, mentions the Ismailis among the peoples of the region in the same vein. In his "**The Book of the Wanderings of Brother Felix Fabri**" (tr. by Stewart, London, 1987, 2nd vol., p. 390), he writes for the Ismailis that they "are exceedingly obedient to their own captain (the local chief), for they believe that it is by obedience alone that they can win happiness hereafter. Their captain causes their young men to be taught diverse languages, and sends them out into other kingdoms to serve the kings thereof, to the end that, when the time requires it, each king's servant may kill him by poison or otherwise. If after slaying a king the servant makes good his escape to his own land, he is rewarded with honours, riches and dignities; if he is taken and put to death, he is worshipped in his own country as a martyre." This is an ample instance to understand how the enemies of the Ismailis bring and then adjust the old myths down to their own period as if a contemporary account.

#### **GHARIB MIRZA (899-902/1493-1496)**

Abbas Shah, surnamed Shah Gharib or Gharib Mirza, was also known as Gharibu'l-lah and Mustansir billah III, and assumed the Imamate in 899/1493. !

#### **Anjudan - a new headquarters**

Gharib Mirza seems to have left Shahr-i Babak few months after assuming Imamate. He seems to have repaired for about one year out of Shahr-i Babak, leaving behind his **hujjat**, called Badiuddin Khwaja Kassim, and at length settled down in Anjudan, most possibly in 900/1494. Pir Shihabuddin Shah (d. 1884) also writes in his "**Khitabat-i Aliyya**" (pp. 42-43) that, "The thirty-fourth Imam Abbas Shah (Gharib Mirza) was obliged to live for some time away from his ancestral home (**watn-i maluf**), i.e., Shahr-i Babak." The reason of his absence was that the rambling



bands of Chaghatays and Turkomans had once again gushed from Jurjan and Tabaristan after being suppressed in 883/1478 by the Ak-Koyunlu commander, Sufi Khalil Beg. They plundered the surrounding localities of Kirman and Sirjan.

Anjudan (*Injudan* or *Anjidan*) is situated at the foot of relatively low rocky range, about 37 kilometers east of Arak (former Sultanabad) and about the same distance westward from Mahallat in central Iran. It is separated 35-40 kilometers with Kahek by a number of shallow ranges, and is also close to Qumm and Kashan. The Ismailis had begun their settlements slowly in Anjudan most probably during the time of Imam Mustansir billah II, and had taken there agriculture. It was the cradle land of the Ismaili mission in post-Alamut era. The Syrian Ismailis called Anjudan as "the abode of the faithfuls" (*dar al-mu'minin*). It was simply walled to protect the populace in times of insecurity.

Gharib Mirza at length shifted to Anjudan and kept himself completely out of the vortex of politics, and passed a life of *darwish*, where he became known as Gharib Mirza i.e., "an unknown stranger." Earlier, he was generally known as Abbas Shah. He also applied the name *Gharib Mirza* in his writing in Anjudan. His eloquent power was impressive and sweet, and was highly respected among the local non-Ismaili orbits. He was a man of affable temperament and wide human sympathies which made him a popular figure in the locality. An anonymous manuscript dating about 1196/1782 cites the anecdote of a certain peasant, whom the Imam had gifted a piece of land in Shahr-i Babak, who in turn said, "Sayed Gharib Shah is a generous like his ancestor, Imam Jafar Sadik." He thus had set an example to the local people by an act of humanity and generosity which created a salutary effect upon his fellow-citizens.

#### **Organisation of Mission**

It appears that the *dawa* system after the fall of Alamut was organised systematically in Anjudan period. According to the new system, the Imam was followed by a single *hujjat*, known as *hujjat-i azam* (the great proof), who generally resided at headquarters. The *hujjat* administered

the framework of the mission and served as an assistant of the Imam. Next, there was a single category of *dai* at large, being selected from among the educated classes. The *dais* remained close in contact with the headquarters. The next lower rank was that of *mu'allim* (teacher), the head of the mission activities in a particular region. He was appointed by the *huffat*. He was further assisted by *ma'dhum-i akbar* (the senior licentiate), who was empowered to make conversion at his disposal and judgement. Another assistant of the *mu'allim* was called *ma'dhum-i asghar* (junior licentiate), who held the lowest rank and could discharge his assignments only on receiving official permission from the *mu'allim*. The ordinary initiates (*murids*) were referred to as *mustajib* (respondent). On acquiring adequate training, a *mustajib* could be appointed by the *mu'allim* to the rank of *ma'dhum-i asghar*. It must be remembered that the aforesaid mission system was enforced in Iran, Badakhshan and Central Asia. In Hind and Sind, the tradition of the *vakil* had been retained, corresponding to the office of the *mu'allim*.

In Central Asia, the *ma'dhum-i akbar* gradually became known as the *pir*, and *ma'dhum-i asghar* was known as *khalifa*. They stressed on the practice of *zikr-i jalli*, recitation of the *qasida* and the esoteric poems of Nasir Khusaro among the new converts.

In addition, the Ismailis held that the true essence of the Imam could be known at least to a few advanced followers in the community, and the *huffat* or the *pir* was, indeed, held to be almost the same essence as the Imam. Hence, the *huffat* or *pir*, by virtue of his miraculous knowledge (*mu'jiz-i ilmi*), knew the true essence of the Imam, and was the revealer of the spiritual truth. Furthermore, the Ismailis recognized three categories of people in the world. Firstly, the opponents of the Imam (*ahl-i tadadd*). Secondly, the ordinary followers of the Imam (*ahl-i tarattub*), also known as *ahl-i haq*, who were also divided into the strong (*qawiyān*), comprised of the *dais*, *mu'allims* and *ma'dhums*, and the weak (*da'ifān*), restricted to the ordinary members of the community. Thirdly, the followers of union (*ahl-i wahda*), also called as the high elite (*akhass-i khass*).



## The origin of the Safavids

The Safavid family was active in making ground to emerge as a new power in Iran, tracing descent from Musa Kazim. The prominent head at that time was Shaikh Safi, or Safiuddin Abul Fath Ishaq Ardabili (1252-1334), who founded a Sufi order, known after him as the *Safaviya* at Ardabil in Azerbaijan. He died in 735/1334 and his order was continued by his son, Sadruddin Musa (1334-1391), and then by another son, Khwaja Ali (1391-1427). They deeply influenced most of the Mongol rulers and *amirs*. Ibrahim (1427-1447), the son of Khwaja Ali also continued the Sufi order founded by Shaikh Safi, but Junayd (1447-1460), the son of Ibrahim acquired some political power and introduced the doctrines of the Twelvers at the time of his death in 1460. He fought several times with the rulers of Kara-Koyunlu, but was killed at Shirwan. His followers continued to gain religious and political leads in Iran. Junayd's son married to Martha, a Greek princess, who bore Sultan Ali, Ibrahim and Ismail. His another son, Hyder (1460-1478) was killed, and other sons were arrested. Thus, only Ismail was survived, because Sultan Ali was also killed and Ibrahim had died very soon. Hence, the events continued to boost the rising of the Safavids during the time of Ismail. Gilan was the centre of the Safavid family. Ismail collected a small force and occupied Baku and Shamakha. He defeated Alwand, the prince of Ak-Kuyunlu dynasty, and captured Tabriz. He also inflicted defeat to the Mongolian ruler and was proclaimed as Shah Ismail and founded the Safavid dynasty in 905/1500 in Iran.

Nuruddin Shah, the younger brother of Gharib Mirza is said to have built a small village near Anjudan after his name, called Nurabad. He also built a defensive post and few small buildings. He erected a Sufi *khanqah* (cloister) of Abbas Shahi tradition for the local Sufis.

The Ismailis had continued their flocking at Anjudan, where Gharib Mirza confessed their offerings and blessed them with written guidances, bearing his signature and seal. It has since become a tradition in India to celebrate the day of rejoice with great pomp by commonalty and gentry alike when the pilgrims returned unscathed to their homeland.

While examining the traditions congealed around the adherents, it appears that the Ismaili history abounds with the instances of great sacrifices of the daring devotees. For illustration, a best-known Syrian tradition relates a touching anecdote that once a caravan embarked from Khwabi for Anjudan to see Gharib Mirza. At that time, the Safavids were emerging in Iran, therefore, the routes were insecure and the time was not ideal for travellers. When Gharib Mirza knew about the arriving caravan from Syria, he decided to send them back. The time was so critical that no messenger could carry any written order with him. Gharib Mirza at once sought the service of a *fidai*, who was made lain on the ground without a shirt. Imam got his official orders carved by a dagger on backside of his body with the help of a servant, addressing the Syrian Ismailis to return back at once. The heated copper seal of the Imam was stamped at the concluding part. The young *fidai* tolerated the pain patiently, and put on a black shirt. He spurred his horse at full gallop for an errand being fraught with danger and gave an ostensible impression of an ordinary man to the people. He succeeded to reach the caravan, whom he transmitted the Imam's orders verbally at first. When he was asked its veracity, he took off his shirt, stuck with the congealed blood, and turned around and made them read the orders of the Imam carved on his backside that, "*la ta'tu hazi'his sanh wa lakin fis sanh'til qadema la bud'd alaikum an ta'tu*" i.e., "you do not come this year, and come next year." Looking the *fidai* who displayed a rare prodigies example of valour at great risk, tears welled up in their eyes and returned back soon with sad hearts.

Abu Ishaq Kohistani was a learned *dai* around this period. His name was Ibrahim, was from the district of Mominabad-i Kohistan in the province of Birjand. Nothing is known about his activities. He was however a writer, and it appears from his writings that he had studied the accessible literature of Alamut period. His famous work, "*Haft Bab-i Bu Ishaq*" deals the recognition of the Imam with philosophical arguments on Ismaili *tariqah*. His another work, "*Tarikh-i Kohistan*" is not traceable.

It is related that Gharib Mirza mastered the botanical field, and with his knowledge, the village of Anjudan was turned into a fertile tract. He mostly passed his whole life in Anjudan, and died in 902/1496. In Anjudan, near



the mausoleum of Imam Mustansir billah II, there exists an old burial ground in the garden, the middle of which stands the mausoleum of Gharib Mirza. The wooden box (*sandug*) contains Sura Yasin of Holy Koran. In one place, it is clearly written:- ***"This is the wooden box (sandug) of Shah Mustansir billah (i.e., Gharib Mirza), the son of Shah Abius Salam. Written on the 10th of Muharram, 904/August 29, 1498."*** From this one can conclude that this wooden box was erected about two years after the death of Imam Gharib Mirza.

#### **ABUZAR ALI (902-915/1496-1509)**

Muhammad Abuzar Shah, surnamed Abuzar, was also called Nuruddin. He is also known as Shah Nuruddin bin Gharib Shah in the Syrian works. Like his father, he also passed a *darwish* life in Anjudan. He had however advised his followers to exercise precautions in view of new religious tendency and political cataclysm in Iran.

The village of Anjudan considerably accelerated on account of ample water supply, therefore, the new protective walls with fortifications were built around it during the early time of Abuzar Ali's Imamate. It caused the old enclosure itself to play the part of a sort of citadel. Some craftsmen, blacksmiths, potters tanners and dyers had come from outside, and possibly built their workshops on the outskirts.

#### **Rise of the Safavids**

In 904/1499, Shah Ismail had decided that the time was ripe for the supreme bid for power. He prepared a colossal army, and began to conquer the Iranian territories in 905/1500 including Iraq and founded the Safavid empire. In Iran, he absolutely dominated in Hamdan, Mazandaran, Shirwan, Khorasan, Yazd etc. He tried to extend his influence in Afghanistan, Balkh and Bukhara. The Ottoman empire evidently opposed the growing power in Iran. The Uzbek rulers of Bukhara however checked the advance of the Safavids. Thus, the Safavids considered their two borders insecure for the empire.

Shah Ismail's first action on his accession was the proclamation of the Shiism as the state religion of Iran, differentiating from the Ottoman of Turkey, who were the Sunnis. Shah Ismail however failed to impose Shiism in many Iranian regions. Many people are reported to have been executed, and other migrated. The Sunni theologians went to Herat, India and Bukhara. Under such rigorous policy, one renowned Ismaili scholar, Shah Tahir Hussain Dakkani also fled from Kashan, and repaired to India. The Sufis were also not spared in Iran, who began to live under the cloak of the Twelvers.

The strict Shiite tendency in Iran had certainly forced the Ismailis to assume the mantle of the Twelvers to get rid of the executions. Weathering these storms, it seems that Imam Abuzar Ali had gone into hiding for about seven years between 905/1500 and 912/1507, which can be ascertained also from the version of Khayr Khwah Herati's "**Tasnifat**" (ed. W.Ivanow, Tehran, 1961, p. 52). Before leaving Anjudan for an unknown place, he had most possibly left behind his **huffat** to act as a link between the Imam and the followers.

#### **The line of Momin Shah**

It must be recollected that Momin Shah, the son of Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad was the **huffat** in Syria. Since he was an elder son, therefore, a small section in Syria had considered him as his father's successor. It is related that he returned from Syria and settled down in a village called Khwand in Qazwin, bordering Gilan too. He preached the esoteric teachings of Ismailism on Sufic pattern. Momin Shah built a small **khangah** (cloister) in Khwand, where he and his descendants had been revered as the "Saints of Khwand" (**sadit-i khwandis**) due to their piety and learning. Momin Shah died in 738/1337 and remained faithful to the line of Kassim-Shahi. None among them had ever claimed for Imamate, or visited Syria to nourish that small growing group, who later on became known as Momin-Shahis. It must be noted that the trivial section of Momin-Shahis was neither a **forgotten branch** of the Ismailis, nor a schism of great importance.

Imam Mustansir billah II (d. 880/1475) mentions in "**Pandiyat-i Jewamardi**" (p. 45) that: "At the time of my



great ancestor, Shah Husayn, some followers gave him up and accepted Muhammad ibn Hanafiyya. At the time of Shah Zaynu'l-abidin, some gave up the real Imam, and accepted Zayd as an Imam. At the time of my ancestor, Shah Jafar as-Sadiq, some followers gave up the real Imam, following Musa Kazim. Some followed Abdu'l-lah. Similarly, at the time of my ancestor, Shah Mustansir bi'l-lah, some gave up the real Imam, and followed Musta'li." One can judge from the above version that the Imam had referred to both the major and minor branches of the Shiism, but did not mention a single word for the Momin-Shahis; tending to show that it was not a serious schism, but was a group anticipating the Imamate of Momin Shah. They used to call the Syrian Ismailis as the Kassim-Shahis to distinguish themselves from them. Later on, the local disputes between them had created some sorts of isolation. Some Momin-Shahis are reported to have gone in Badakhshan for business purpose, and propagated the line of Momin Shah. It seems that they were also responsible to cultivate different names and titles of the Imams in the line of Kassim Shah and Momin Shah.

Muhammad Shah (d. 807/1404), the son of Momin Shah became the next saint (*sadat*) of their *khangah* in Khwand, who also acquired few powers in the locality of Daylam. He was succeeded by his son, Raziuddin I (d. 833/1429), who in turn was succeeded by his son Muhammad Tahir Shah (d. 867/1462). His son Raziuddin II (d. 915/1509) had gone to Badakhshan from Sistan in 913/1508 for mission. He established his rule over a large part of Badakhshan with the help of the Ismailis during the time of a certain Taymurid *amir* called Mirza Khan (d. 926/1520). Raziuddin II was killed in the local tribal fighting in 915/1509. Mirza Khan then executed many Ismailis in Badakhshan.

#### **Shah Tahir Hussain Dakkani**

After the tragic death of Raziuddin II, his son Shah Tahir Hussain Dakkani continued the tradition of the *khangah* in Khwand, where the Sufis from Egypt, Bukhara, Samarkand and Qazwin flocked. It also influenced the local rulers and noblemen. The Safavid Shah Ismail became apprehensive of Shah Tahir's growing fame, therefore he invited him to join the Safavid scholars in his court at Sultaniyya. He joined the Safavid court in 926/1520 in the garb of the Twelver. It seems almost certain that it was a wise

decision, and if Shah Tahir had not joined the court, Shah Ismail would have conducted a massacre of the Ismailis in Iran. According to "Ibrat-i Afza", "The widespread massacres of the Ismailis had been avoided due to the *taqiya* of Shah Tahir Hussain."

After some times, it seems that the rivals of Shah Tahir stirred up suspicions of Shah Ismail, so he left the court and moved to Kashan, where his followers once again thronged in large number. The local Shia *ulema* reported to Shah Ismail, accusing of leading the Ismailis and of corresponding with foreign rulers. Shah Ismail ordered his military commander to hasten to Kashan and eliminate Shah Tahir Hussain, but Mirza Shah Hussain Ispahani, a dignitary of the Safavid court, and an Ismaili, had informed Shah Tahir secretly of the king's intention. Shah Tahir left Kashan for Fars at once in Jamada I, 926/April, 1520. He fortunately boarded a ship sailing to India at Jarda, and reached Goa after eight days. When his ship anchored the port of Oman, he had an opportunity to convert Shah Qudratullah and his followers.

Shah Tahir went to Bijapur from Goa, where he was ignored by Ismail Adil Shah (915-941/1510-1534), the ruler of Bijapur. He left Bijapur for Gulbarga, and moved to Pareda. Khwaja Jahan, the governor of Pareda urged him to stay there for few more times. Thus, Shah Tahir resided at Pareda as a teacher and became famous for his learning. Meanwhile, Pir Muhammad Sherwani, the teacher of Burhan Nizam Shah (914-961/1508-1553) of Ahmadnagar, arrived in Pareda. He was so impressed by Shah Tahir's scholarship that he stayed there for one year, and learnt the system of astronomy and trigonometry. On his return to Ahmadnagar, Pir Muhammad Sherwani reported to Burhan Nizam Shah about Shah Tahir's knowledge. Finally, Shah Tahir was invited in Ahmadnagar, who reached there in 928/1522 and was feted a royal welcome. He rendered valuable services to the Nizam Shahi dynasty of Ahmadnagar in Deccan. Gradually, Shah Tahir became Burhan's principal counsellor. His diplomatic and financial administrative duties however did not prevent him from dedicating himself to teaching, lectures and religious polemics. Shah Tahir did not disclose his Ismaili identity. Burhan Shah built a seminary for him in the fort, where Shah Tahir delivered lectures twice a week, and all the *ulema* and Burhan Shah himself attended.



In 944/1537, Burhan's son Abdul Qadir fell seriously ill. The Muslim and Hindu physicians failed in their treatment, but was healed at length by Shah Tahir. This event marked deep impression and regard in the heart of Burhan Shah, who embraced Ismailism under the garb of Twelvers. Sayyid Ahmadullah Qadri writes in "Memoirs of Chand Bibi" (Deccan, 1938, p. 102) that, "In 928/1522 when Shah Tahir, passing through Bijapur and Parenda, came to Ahmadnagar, Burhan Nizam Shah I, adopted the Ismailia religion in 944/1537. With the exception of Ismail Nizam Shah, who became Mahdi for a short time, all the rulers were Ismaili Shi'ahs." Burhan Shah also proclaimed Shiism as a state religion in Ahmadnagar. Pir Muhammad Sherwani and other Sunni *u'lama* became jealous towards the religious success of Shah Tahir, who agitated against the proclamation. They were however arrested, but Shah Tahir spared the life of Pir Muhammad Sherwani for his past services, and was imprisoned. Pir Muhammad had been released after four years at Shah Tahir's appeal and his former office was restored to him.

Sayed Ali Tabatabai writes in "Burhan'i Ma'asir" (Hyderabad, 1936, p. 260) that Shah Tahir had adopted *taqiya* and did never tell of his real faith. Sayed Zakir Hussain also writes in "Tarikh-i Islam" (Delhi, 1918, 1st vol., p. 386) that Shah Tahir came from Iran and converted Burhan Shah to Shiism, and adopted *taqiya* in the court.

In 950/1543, Burhan Nizam Shah sent Khurshah bin Qubad al-Hussaini, a close relative to Shah Tahir as an ambassador in Iran at the court of Shah Tahmasp, who received him at Qazwin. Shah Tahmasp sent a letter to Shah Tahir in appreciation with many gifts for the endorsement of Shiism in Nizam Shahi state in Ahmadnagar. In return, Shah Tahir's son Shah Hyder was also sent from Ahmadnagar to Iran on a goodwill mission; who was yet in Iran when Shah Tahir died in Ahmadnagar in 956/1549 during the time of Imam Nuruddin Ali (d. 957/1550).

Shah Tahir had four sons and three daughters, in which Shah Hyder was an elder being born in Iran, and rest in India, namely Shah Rafiuddin, Shah Abul Hasan and Shah Abu Talib. Shah Tahir's brother Shah Jafar was also persecuted violently by the Safavids in Iran, who also came in India and attached with the administration of the state. The mission in guise of Shah Tahir had been continued by his successors, viz. Hyder bin Shah Tahir (d. 994/1586),

Sadraddin Muhammad bin Hyder (d. 1032/1622), Muinuddin bin Sadraddin (d. 1054/1644), Atiyyatullah bin Muinuddin (d. 1074/1663), Aziz Shah bin Atiyyatullah (d. 1103/1691), Muinuddin II bin Aziz Shah (d. 1127/1715), Amir Muhammad bin Muinuddin II (d. 1178/1764), Hyder II bin Muhammad al-Mutahhar (d. 1201/1786) and Amir Muhammad bin Hyder al-Bakir, whose biography is not known. The modern writers of Momin-Shahis however makes Amir Muhammad bin Hyder al-Bakir as their last fortieth Imam in the line of Momin Shah (d. 738/1337). It is learnt that the Syrian Momin-Shahis, after sending in vain in India to locate the descendants of Amir Muhammad bin Hyder in 1304/1887, the bulk of them transferred their allegiance to the Imam of Kassim-Shahi line.

It should be remembered that being a learned Ismaili preacher, Shah Tahir's method differed starkly with the usual *dawa* system. If he was a Twelver, he certainly needed nothing to leave Iran, where he had good opportunity at the Safavid court. Farhad Daftary writes in "**The Ismailis: their History and Doctrines**" (London, 1990, p. 489) that, "One must bear in mind, however, that Shah Tahir and other Nizari leaders of the period were obliged to observe *taqiya* very strictly. It is certain that Shah Tahir propagated his form of Nizari Ismailism in the guise of Twelver Shiism, which was more acceptable to the Muslim rulers of India who were interested in cultivating friendly relations with the Twelve Shi'i Safavid dynasty of Persia."

Imam Abuzar Ali is said to have returned to Anjudan in 912/1507 after getting congenial atmosphere. He maintained his cordial ties with the local *amirs*, elites and the Safavids. Abuzar Ali is said to have betrothed to Sabira Khatoon, the daughter of Shah Ismail, and was granted the title of *Amir al-Umra* (chief of the chiefs). This matrimonial relationship suggests a close tie of the Imam with the ruling power in the mantle of the Twelver.

Imam Abuzar Ali died in 915/1509 and was buried in Anjudan. The Russian scholar W. Ivanow had visited Anjudan in 1937 to collect the details from the inscriptions of then existing graves and mausoleums of the Ismaili Imams. He failed to locate the grave of Abuzar Ali in Anjudan. But, before him, Muhammad Taqi bin Ali Reza, who compiled "**Athar-i Muhammadi**" in 1893 had visited Anjudan before the migration of Imam Aga Hasan Ali Shah in 1842. He had



discovered the grave of Abuzar Ali, and writes, "Imam Abuzar Ali had been invested the honorific title of *Amir al-Umara*, whose description is still preserved on the marble slab of Imam's grave" (pp. 65-66). It tenaciously corroborates to the fact that the grave of the Imam in Anjudan had been decayed before the visit of W.Ivanow, and it is, of course, possible that the same would have been happened with the grave of Imam Murad Mirza.

#### **MURAD MIRZA (915-920/1509-1514)**

Ali Shah, surnamed Shah Murad or Murad Mirza lived in Anjudan. He had also retained his close relations with Shah Ismail cemented by his father. His mode of living, his dress and food were characterised by a rare simplicity.

The Ottoman sultan Salim (1512-1520) began his long march to northern Azerbaijan after putting 40,000 Shias to death in his dominions. He reached the plain of Chaldiran and the outbreak of war occurred in 920/1514. He inflicted a defeat to Shah Ismail. The Ottoman firepower, consisting of 200 cannon and 100 mortars was brought into play with devastating effect. After suffering heavy casualties, the Safavid artilleries were forced to break off the engagement. When Shah Ismail left the battlefield, sultan Salim did not pursue him. Later, he marched to Tabriz, the Safavid capital, which he occupied in 922/1517. Caterino Zeno, the Venetian ambassador writes in "**Travels in Persia**" (p. 61) that, "If the Turk had been beaten in the battle of Chaldiran, the power of Ismail would have become greater than that of Tamerlane, as by the fame alone of such a victory he would have made himself absolute lord of the East." Later, the Mamluks of Syria and Egypt similarly remained wedded to their cavalry, and were also defeated by the Ottomans.

The effect of the Safavid defeat at Chaldiran was the loss of the province of Diyar Bakr, which was annexed to the Ottoman empire in 921/1516. Shah Ismail went into mourning after his defeat. During the remaining ten years of his reign, he never once led his troops into action in person. He did not devote his attention to the affairs of the state as in the past. On the contrary, he seems to have tried to drown his sorrows by wine. His abdication of

his responsibilities in regard to the personal direction of the affairs of state gave certain officials the opportunity to increase their own power. The clash between the Kizilbash and the Iranian soldiers began to be a threat to the Safavid kingdom.

Kizilbash were the Turkomans, who were distinguished for wearing red pointed caps, which they had begun to wear in the time of Shaikh Hyder (1456-1488), the father of Shah Ismail; and thus they became known as *Kizil-Bash* (red heads), and in its Iranian form, *Qizilbash*, or Red Heads. They shaved their beards but let their moustaches grow. The Kizilbash constituted the backbone of the Safavid army. It seems probable on that juncture that Shah Ismail had generated a close tie with the Ismaili Imams in Anjudan, and granted them the title of *Amir al-Umra*. There is its another reason that the Ismailis had joined the Safavid army in Khorasan, who had repulsed the aggressive advance of the Uzbeks in 916/1510. Shah Ismail had most possibly planned to seek the martial aids from the Khorasani Ismaili warriors to crush the uprising in his military if required. He therefore, maintained cordial relation with the Imams of Anjudan. Shah Ismail however died in 930/1524.

It is said that the Muharram was an ideal month for the Ismaili pilgrims visiting Anjudan. They carried usually a small *taziyah* (replica of Imam Hussain's tomb), and placed it in front of the caravan and passed through the teeth of the bitterest and aggressive places in the Shiite garbs. They put the *taziyah* at the entrance of Anjudan, and took it again while leaving the town.

Imam Murad Mirza died in 920/1514 in Anjudan and was succeeded by his son Zulfikar Ali.

#### **ZULFIKAR ALI (920-922/1514-1516)**

Zulfikar Ali, known as Khalil or Khalilullah, was born most probably in 900/1394, and resided in Anjudan. Sayed Imam Shah (d. 926/1520) described the name Shah Khalil in his *ginans* most possibly for Zulfikar Ali.



Zulfikar Ali used to visit different villages to see his followers, and sometimes stayed with them for few months. It is related that when he had been in the village of Dizbad in Khorasan, the parents of Khaki Khorasan, a renowned Ismaili poet and philosopher, used to go late in the night to see the Imam, after ensuring that their child was sleeping well. The daily absence of the parents aroused the curiosity of Khaki Khorasani, who was then hardly seven years old. On one night, he followed his parents without their knowledge, upto the secret place. He did not enter the house and hid behind the door. He however could watch inside the house his parents and other Ismaili elders. He could not understand the religious ceremonies being solemnized, but his heart palpitated with inner joy, because he just saw the Imam sitting before the congregation. At the end of service, the food offerings brought by the faithfuls were shared. Zulfikar Ali told to a person to share it to each one. When he finished, he was asked to see outside. The person stepped out the house, and found a tired child watching the proceedings. He also got his share, and since then Khaki Khorasani cultivated a love and devotion towards his Imam.

It seems that the Imam was also in close contact with the Syrian Ismailis, and sent his letters from time to time. One like letter is discovered in Syria, which had been sent through a *dai* Shamsuddin bin Daulatshah. It was read in the Syrian community in presence of the local Ismaili Qadi Shihabuddin bin Ibrahim al-Mainaqi (872-937/1467-1532). This letter reads:-

*My spiritual children,*

*Thanks be to God Who had dignified whom He wanted by His obedience, and reviled whom He wanted due to His disobedience. And prayer be on His Prophet who made all His nations equal, and called them for His obedience and worship.*

*You must know that the knowledge of the Imam is one of the principles which should be accepted. As the Imam is permanent and an ever existing truth, the world could not be vacant of him for a single hour. And he, who does not know the Imam of his time, he would die a pre-Islamic death.*

*The Imams are ever existing and permanent. They are continuous dynasty coming out the one from the other. The Imam is known from his original nucleus. If he has nominated and appointed for the post of Imamate, any one of his sons, he should be considered the right Imam.*

There are a few other Syrian Ismailis of high repute in the period under review, whose biographies are however not accessible, such as Muhammad bin al-Jazirah, Abu Mansur al-Yameni al-Shadili, who wrote "**Kitab al-Bayan**"; Muhammad Abul Makrim, Muhammad bin al-Fazal bin Ali al-Baza'i etc.

**Dai** Abu Firas is one of the most eminent figures in Syria. His name was Abu Firas Shihabuddin bin al-Qadi Nasr bin al-Jawshan bin al-Hussain al-Daylami al-Maynaqi. His father was a native of Daylam, who migrated to Syria in 859/1455, and settled down in the fortress of Maynaqa. **Dai** Abu Firas was born at Maynaqa in 872/1468. He acquired his education in Aleppo and served the Syrian community to great extent. He became a chief **dai** of Syria, and died in 947/1540 at Maynaqa. He was a prolific writer, and his "**Qasidat al-Nasab**" deals the lineage of the Imams. He had a son, called Ibrahim Abu Firas, who died during his lifetime.

The Ottoman emperor Salim (1512-1520) inflicted a defeat to the Mamluks in a battle at Marco Dabik, near Aleppo on August 24, 1516. After occupation of Aleppo, the Ottomans captured Hammah on September 19, and Damascus on September 27, 1516. Thus, Syria yielded to the Ottomans, who had prepared the first survey of the land and population duly record the **qila al-dawa** (castles of the mission). The district of Masiyaf in the province of Hammah, and for the group of districts were called **qila al-dawa** in the province of Tripoli in Syria, including Khwabi, Kahf, Ulayqa, Qadmus and Maynaqa. The above survey indicates that these places were inhabited by peaceful Ismailis, and used to pay special tax to the rulers.

Khayr Khwah Herati most probably lived in this period. His name was Muhammad Reza bin Sultan Hussain Ghuriyan Herati. His pen-name was however Gharibi. He was born in Herat at the end of 15th century. His father Sultan Hussain was a native of Ghuriyan in Afghanistan, where he served as an Imam's **vakil**. Being summoned by the Imam through a messenger Mir Mahmud, he started his journey along with



Khwaja Kassim Kohistani, but was killed by brigands in Khorasan. His son Khayr Khwah, who was then 19 years old had been taken in his father's place despite the objection of some community elders, because of his young age. Khayr Khwah visited Anjudan and saw the Imam. He describes in his "Risala", how the different *huffats* arrived during the fortnight he spent in Anjudan. He had been given due training of Ismaili mission, and was sent to Mashhad for learning Arabic. Finally, he was made the chief *dai* in place of his father in Afghanistan. He was a man of great ability and a potential *dai*. He died most probably after 960/1553.

It appears from the fragments of different traditions that few Ismaili *fidais* had been commissioned risky task, whose complete details are not accessible. It is however learnt that during the operations, many of them did not return to Anjudan and had lost their lives. Examples of such unknown *fidais* are found in the time of Imam Murad Mirza, who had taken whole responsibilities of the family members of these *fidais*. We have a report that Zulfikar Ali had provided substenances to about twelves families, whose young men had been deputed on any unknown mission, some of them returned or died.

Fidai Khorasani (d. 1342/1923) has compiled in 1320/1903 his famous work, "*Kitab-i Hidayat al-Mu'minin al-Talibin*" (ed. by A. A. Semenov, Moscow, 1959), and quotes a poem in praise of Zulfikar Ali by an Ismaili poet, Azizullah Qummi who lived in the time of Zulfikar Ali (vide pp. 136-8), whose translation runs as under:-

*There will have been not a single sign of the creature on earth, had the world remained without the existence of an Imam.*

*He, the Imam is apparent and hidden, and shall remain so all the times, and will be perpetual for ever. The compass of the universe is revolving under his command,*

*None can recognize God in person and even cannot perceive God with his physical eyes, be he talented like Ibn Sina in knowledge and excellence.*

Acquire the recognition of God through the hujjat and mu'allim for they are the seekers of the path of the tariqah.

If you recognized the Imam, it means you have recognized God (through his channel), otherwise you will be caught in hell-fire.

Seek the recognition of Shah Zulfikar, the Imam of the Age for he is the dipository of glories.

He is like (an ordinary) man among the people, and sends the seekers of the path of religion towards God.

May I disclose you the interpretation of the "Mahdi in the cave?" (It means that) the reality of the Imam is concealed in the cave of his heart from the hypocrites.

He is manifest by rule of nass (investiture), which is like a point, and all the affairs are in motion on the way to that point.

Sometimes, he appears as a father, or a son. Sometimes he is seen engaged in the polemics of knowledge like the orthodox people.

Sometimes, he sits on the throne, governing as a sovereign. Sometimes, he is like a darwish, an emperor or as a Lord of the lords.

No changes takes place in his person (dhat), therefore, you ponder over the world of reality from the physical world.

The prophets had foretold the (advent of the) Imam of the Age according to their understanding to all the young and elder ones.

He is apparent and hidden in his form and shall remain so henceforth. They (the believers) had accepted for Ali with pure hearts.



The seekers are acquainted with his person (dhat), who were in search of the truth. For illustration, Nasiruddin (Tusi), Nasir (Khusaro), (Jalaluddin) Rumi, (Shaikh) Sanai and (Fariduddin) Attar.

You recognize the Imam of the Time and adore him. Do not deny (his merits) provided you are among the people of faithful.

Do not speak (a single word) to the hypocrites and illiterates after listening the secret of the truth, otherwise you will have to be crucified like Khwaja Mansur (Hallaj).

Fidai Khorasani also cited the verses of another poet, called Niazi, who also lived during the period of Zulfikar Ali. The translation of few couplets are as under:-

O'soul! put your step into the true path sincerely, and avoid the path of untruth and do not distress yourself.

Do not be heedless (in dealing) with the Lord of the world and religion. Do not sit calmly and glorify his merits.

Go and adore Mawlana Zulfikar Ali, otherwise you will be repented hereafter.

Invoke his name with tongue all the times and get it focused in your soul. Do not utter anything except the excellence of his holy existence.

The earth never exists without his presence. Remember (in this context) the hadith of earth and creation all the times.

Imam Zulfikar Ali died in 922/1516, and was succeeded by his son Nuruddin Ali.

## NURUDDIN ALI (922-957/1516-1550)

His name was Nur-Dahr (the light of the faith), and was also known as Nur-Dahr Khalilullah. His name however in the official list of the Imams appears as Nuruddin Ali. According to another tradition, he was also called Nizar Ali Shah. He mostly resided in Anjudan, and betrothed to a Safavid lady.

Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavids in Iran died in 930/1524, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Tahmasp, who was ten years and three months old. The Kizilbash took over control of the state and usurped the authority of the new king for a decade. In 940/1533, Shah Tahmasp executed Hussain Khan Shamlu, the most powerful Kizilbash leader, and took over the power. The civil war in Iran had critically paralysed the state and given an unexpected opportunity to the two most formidable enemies of the Safavid state, the Ottoman Turks in the west and the Uzbeks in the east, to strike deep into Safavid territory. Between 1524 and 1538, the Uzbeks, led by the vigorous and martial Obaidullah Khan, launched five major invasions on Khorasan. Even more dangerous were the four full-scale invasions of Iran between 1533 and 1553 by the Ottomans, then at the height of their power under the great sultan Suleman (900-974/1494-1566), known as *The Lawgiver*, and to the West as *The Magnificent*. The remarkable thing is not that the Safavids suffered serious losses of territory as a result of these onslaughts, but that they were not overwhelmed. Shah Tahmasp, struggling against discord and disloyalty and treachery in high places, both on the part of Kizilbash chiefs and on the part of his own brothers, managed to hold the Safavid state together for more than half a century.

The Ottoman sultan Suleman launched his incursion in Azerbaijan in 940/1533 against the Safavids. At this critical juncture, a heavy snowfall blanketed the plain of Sultaniyya, where the Ottomans were encamped, and many Turkish soldiers perished from exposure. Sultan Suleman, unable to return on the route by which he had come, because no supplies were to be had in Azerbaijan, and was forced to withdraw through Kurdistan. He however occupied Baghdad. The second round of the Ottoman offensive opened the following year, and was directed by sultan Suleman from Baghdad. A number of engagements were fought at various points between Kurdistan and the Armenian



highlands. The third Ottoman inroad occurred in 955/1548, and like the first, was on a massive scale. Shah Tahmasp made his usual preparations to meet the new onslaught. He had the entire area between Tabriz and the Ottoman frontier laid waste, so that no trace of grain or blade of grass remained. The Ottomans once again occupied Tabriz, but their forces soon began to suffer acutely from lack of provisions. When their pack-animals began to die like flies, sultan Suleman again beat the retreat. Shah Tahmasp had already transferred his capital from Tabriz to Qazwin. The fourth and last onslaught by the Ottomans during the reign of sultan Suleman was conducted in 960/1553. Peace was finally signed at Amasya in 962/1555, and Iran obtained a much needed respite from Ottoman inroads.

The Mughal dynasty was begun by Babar, a Chaghatai Turk who originally sought to establish his own state in his native Central Asia. Blocked in Central Asia by the Uzbeks, he established himself in Kabul, and invaded India in 932/1526 from his base in Afghanistan. He thus founded the Mughal empire, and died in 937/1530. He was succeeded by Humayun, who had been repelled by Sher Shah Suri (947-952/1540-1545). Humayun had to take refuge in Iran with Shah Tahmasp. With the aids of Shah Tahmasp, Humayun finally restored his Indian domains after 15 years. Shah Tahmasp spread his influence in India, and tied his relation with Burhan Nizam Shah and Shah Tahir Hussain of Ahmadnagar.

The Ismailis had mostly joined the Safavid army in Khorasan, some of them held high posts. The Safavid retained their relation with the Imam. Nuruddin Ali however advised his followers to be very watchful, because Shah Tahmasp was a man of great cruelty.

Like his father, Nuruddin Ali also used to visit different villages to see and guide his followers. It is related that in Dizbad, once the Ismaili women assembled in a house to weave cotton with Khaki Khorasani, who was yet a boy. Nuruddin Ali happened to come there and entered the room to see his followers. He then went out and mounted his horse. Khaki Khorasani urged the Imam reverently to take him along, but the Imam said, "When you will be able to pass a comb through your beard, then I will take you with me." The child made the gesture to touch his beardless face. Nuruddin Ali however took him along, and rode together towards the end of the village, where today

from a rock, gushes a spring of Nohesar. They had an intimate conversation, and in the course of which the Imam advised his young disciple to work on the path of God if he would like to achieve his goal for salvation. This incident marked the outset of the poetical and missionary career of Khaki Khorasani.

#### Poet Kassim Amiri

Abul Kassim Muhammad Kuhpayai, known as Amiri Shirazi, or Kassim Amiri was a famous Ismaili scholar and poet. He was born possibly in 953/1545 in Kuhpayai, a village in the vicinity of Ispahan. He served Shah Tahmasp in the Safavid court for 30 years, then fell into disfavour. It is recounted in the native tradition that a court theologian, Hilli Hasan bin Yousuf aroused the king against him. Shah Tahmasp arrested him for alleged impeachment being an infidel, and blinded him in 973/1565. He was imprisoned in Shiraz, and was executed by Shah Abbas in 999/1591. He passed a tragic life, and none dared to quote or collect his poetical works. His poems are accessible almost disorderly, in which few historical events are composed, dating around 987/1579. In his "**Ash'ar-i Amiri**", he eulogized Imam Murad Mirza and Imam Nuruddin Ali. It sounds from his poems that being an Ismaili, he had to face troubles, therefore, he had presented his religious feelings very carefully. Abu Baqi Nihawand writes in "**Ma'athir'i Rahimi**" (Calcutta, 1931, 3rd vol., p. 1506) that the poems of Kassim Amiri were collected by his nephew Maulana Dakhli, who later on migrated to India.

The tradition of **vakil** in Hind and Sind was retained by Nuruddin Ali. The term **vakil** was a short form of **vakil'i shah** (vicegerent of the Lord) or **vakil'i nawla** (vicegerent of the Imam), and the term **vakil'i nafs'i nafs'i humayun** (vicegerent of the Imam in both his spiritual and temporal capacities) was used in Iran for the Indian **hujjat**, or **pir**. While in Badakhshan, the tradition of **numainda** (representative) had been retained, and the local chiefs were selected for the office. Nuruddin Ali began to appoint the **vakil**, **numainda** or **hujjat** from his family members, and the local chiefs were directed to work under them. This newly system gave a gravity to the Ismaili mission. The names of many other **vakils** in Central Asia



are found without their biographies, and it is difficult to locate their periods.

### Growth of the Imam-Shahis

The Ismailis in Kashmir, Punjab and Sind were ardent and fervent followers, but the mission in Gujrat suffered a setback due to the negative propaganda of Nur Muhammad Shah (d. 940/1534), the son of Sayed Imam Shah. He however had renounced his allegiance with the Iranian Imams, but it is doubtful that he had ever claimed Imamate for himself.

Among the Imam-Shahis, a theory had been cultivated, equating Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad with Pir Shams as one and the same person. This theory has it that Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad had abdicated the Imamate in favour of Imam Kassim Shah and himself took up the mantle of the Pir and started mission in India. This "**abdication theory**" is also sounded in the "**Satveni'ji Vel**" of Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah, which had been inserted in later period. The modern scholars curiously speculate that this theory was the creation of Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah to legitimate his alleged claim to the Imamate that would have served his self-interest to endorse a genealogy, tracing his father back to the Ismaili Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad. It should be however noted that the "**Satveni'ji Vel**" had been in private collection of the Imam-Shahis in Pirana, containing 200 stanzas with endless errors and interpolations, whose 150 stanzas were printed in 1906 at Bombay into Khojki script for the Ismailis. The remarks of the modern scholars in favour of the alleged claim of Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah are based solely on the printed text of 1906.

W. Ivanow writes in his "**The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujrat**" (*JBRAS*, XII, 1936, p. 32) that, "As he (Nur Muhammad Shah) surely could not pretend to be a son of an Imam, he had to invent a theory of his descent from the line of the Imams, and the coincidence in the names of his ancestors, (Pir) Shamsuddin, with the name of Shamsuddin the Imam, offered an easy opportunity." Being inspired with the comment of W. Ivanow, Dr. Azim Nanji writes in "**The Nizari Ismaili Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent**" (New York, 1978, pp. 63-4) that, "Since he (Nur Muhammad Shah)

claimed to be an Imam, it was necessary according to standard Ismaili belief that he should want to establish a direct lineage from the Imams in order to authenticate his claims. By making Pir Shams and Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad one and the same person, and by claiming direct descent from Pir Shams, he could thus substantiate his own right to the Imamate." In sum, it seems that the scholars have not gone through the "**Satveni'ji Vel**" as thorough as required. The "**abdiction theory**" making an Imam to degrade to the office of the Pir is the creation of later period, when a part of the *ginans* including "**Satveni'ji Vel**" were in the possession of the kakas in Pirana, who were responsible to distort the *ginans* and inserted "**abdiction theory**" to suit the flavour of their beliefs. It is therefore not justifiable to cultivate any doubtful idea for Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah, charging him to have incorporated such theory in his work to boost his alleged claims.

It is beyond the province of our study to evaluate the veracity of "**Satveni'ji Vel**" of Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah, but we will discuss the alleged claims in the light of the few verses derived from the printed text as under:-

- "Both authorities of Imamate and Pirship were with Imam Shams" (78: 9)
- "Shah Shams arrived in India and made his public appearance" (79: 1-2)
- "Pir Shams then proceeded to Punjab after consigning Imamate to Kassim Shah. It was Samvat 1366 (1310 A.D.) when Kassim Shah assumed the Imamate. Hence, the office of the Pir was retained by Pir Shams and that of the Imamate by Kassim Shah" (94: 1-6)

It ensues from above verses that Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad had come to India, and when he intended to proceed to Punjab, he relinquished his office of Imamate to Kassim Shah, and retained the office of the Pir with him. In other words, Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad henceforth came to be known as Pir Shams in India. It however implies that the Imamate remained with Kassim Shah and his descendants, while the office of the Pir with Pir Shams and his descendants. It is therefore crystal clear to judge that any claim of Imamate being advanced in the descent of Pir Shams cannot be validated, since he was then not an Imam, but a Pir. According to the fundamental belief of the Ismailis that an Imam is the sole authority to commission



any person in his absolute discretion to the post of Pir, and thus the "**Satveni'ji Vel**" does not claim that Imam Kassim Shah had appointed or declared Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad as a Pir and therefore the "**abdiction theory**" cannot be historically true, but it was the causation of the later Imam-Shahi kakas, whose beliefs used to be changed from time to time, who needed to interpolate the notion of the *ginans*.

While going through the old manuscripts of the *ginans*, one can find an indication that the original work of "**Satveni'ji Vel**" should have been projected for 100 stanzas, dealing with the history of the Imams and the Pirs. It was compiled between 922/1516 and 926/1520 when Sayed Imam Shah (d. 926/1520) was most probably yet alive, therefore, it seems impossible that the "**abdiction theory**" had been inserted to boost his alleged claim by Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah during the period of his father. There is another point to touch that Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah was admittedly well grounded in Ismaili history and known that an Imam should be the son of the Imam, therefore, his alleged claim to the Imamate is highly doubtful.

Sayed Imam Shah is said to have composed "**Moman Chetamani**" in which he also admits that, "Shamsuddin was the son of Pir Salauddin, who embarked from Tabriz, and he was Pir Shamsuddin to spread the religion" (no. 204). "He showed Kassim Shah, the Lord of the age" (no. 362). Among the Imam-Shahis, the "**Jannat-nama**" is a famous work of Sayed Imam Shah, which reads:- "Recognize Pir Satgur Nur, who is (in the same authority) that of Salauddin, His son was Pir Shamsuddin and Pir Nasiruddin was from the latter." (no. 77). It further ensues from these verses that the "**abdiction theory**" did not exist in the time of Sayed Imam Shah and his son, but was coined in later period. It may be known that the original manuscript of the "**Satveni'ji Vel**" is being unearthed to bring further light on the subject in near future.

It is further suggested that Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah had used the word *nar* for himself in the *ginans* to boost his alleged claim, which is another layer of confusion added in the modern sources. While dismissing this theory, we will have to seek the reasons. It has been observed that the reciters of the *ginans* used to pronounce the word *nar* instead of *nur* in many cases and gradually they found

coherence in the two words, and seem to have ignored the distinction between them. They found striking parallels between these two words, and being Indians by origin, the reciters preferred to pronounce the Hindi word *nar* instead of the foreign word *nur* in many *ginans*.

The scrutiny of the old manuscripts also throws a flood of light that the scribes had transmuted the word *nur* (light) for *nar* (Lord), resulting the rendering of *Nur Muhammad Shah* to *Nar Muhammad Shah* in the old manuscripts. The modern writers, without examining the transcriptional error, hazard to theorize that Nur Muhammad, an alleged aspirant to the office of the Imamate had claimed as *nar* (Imam) for himself. Given that he had applied the term *nar* for himself in his *ginans*, composed almost during his father's time, then it seems improbable that his claim originated when his father was alive. His extant *ginans* also do not sound to this effect a little likelihood. Summing up all these materials for evidence, it is worth stressing that the reliance on the key term, can do great injustice to its interpretation and even to larger tradition, and research must cross many barriers of old tradition and poor thinking in order to stand within another world view.

It is however certain that Nur Muhammad Shah had violated the communal disciplines, engendering the principal cause of the split after 926/1520, and he was the real renegade to have abjured Ismailism. In "*Manazil al-Aqtab*", Nur Muhammad is made responsible for separating his followers from the main Ismaili stock. W. Ivanov writes on the basis of "*Manazil al-Aqtab wa Basati'nul Ahbab*" (comp. 1237/1822) that a certain Mukhi Kheta was the head of 18000 converted Hindus during the time of Pir Hasan Kabiruddin. He was commissioned to collect religious dues in a tithe wallet (*jholi*) in Gujrat and send the accumulated funds back to the main treasury in Sind. Not only this practice followed during the time of Sayed Imam Shah, but it was carried on even under Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah himself. The tradition has it that immediately after the death of his father, Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah had ordered Mukhi Kheta that the accumulated funds of Gujrat should henceforth be deposited in Pirana, instead of being sent to Sind. Mukhi Kheta emphatically refused it, which was more likely a bone contention of the defection. The religious dues at that time was collected by the



authorized *wakils*, and deposited at Sind, and thence the whole lot was to be remitted to Iran.

It seems that a large conversion had been resulted in the time of Sayed Imam Shah in Gujrat and Kathiawar, where Mukhi Kheta used to collect the religious dues since the time of Pir Hasan Kabiruddin, procuring there more funds than that of Kutchh, Sind and Punjab. It is therefore most probable to speculate that Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah had desired the main treasury to be shifted gradually from Sind to Pirana, so that he might use the funds at his liberty. It should also be noted that between the year 926/1520 and 931/1525, the tradition of venerating the shrines of the Sayeds had largely developed among the followers who had supported Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah. It also seems that he had planned to make Pirana a centre of veneration more attractive than that of Uchh in Sind. In pursuit, he naturally needed huge funds, which he could only generate from the main treasury, and that is why he desired to transfer it from Sind to Pirana. He however instructed his followers to deposit their religious dues and offerings in Pirana.

Mukhi Kheta seems to be a regular and faithful in his duties. In the absence of any official orders, he could not comply with the instructions of Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah. Since Sind was near Iran than that of Pirana in making remittance of the whole funds to the Imam, therefore, it was immaterial to transfer the main treasury from Sind to Gujrat. In sum, the refusal of Mukhi Kheta and the opposition of Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah, had marred the relations of the Ismailis of Sind and Gujrat, and it was an early brick of the schism, making the Indian Ismailis bifurcated into the two branches, i.e., the *Khojas Ismailis* and the *Imam-Shahis*.

After being disappointed, Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah came up openly to misguide the Ismailis in India. All this had been brought to the notice of Imam Nuruddin Ali in Iran, who at once outcast him from the community with a express command, and instructed the faithful Ismailis to refrain from their association with the Sayeds of Pirana. Thus, Sayed Muhammad Shah and his followers defected from the Ismaili community, and laid the foundation of their own sect, known as the Imam-Shahis. The schism took place in the emotionally charged climate around 931/1525. W. Ivanov writes in "*The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujrat*" (*JBRAS*, XII,

1936, p. 45) that, "The split, caused by Nur Muhammad Shah's pretensions, has done incalculable harm to his sect. Instead of being followers of Ismailism, the ancient and highly philosophical branch of Islam, with its great cultural traditions and the mentality of a world religion, they have become nothing but a petty community of "Piranawallas", a kind of inferior Hindus, and very doubtful Muslims. Anyhow, orthodox Muslims do not regard them as Muslims, and orthodox Hindus do not regard them as Hindus." In sum, the Imam-Shahi sect lost all its cultural elements and rapidly sank deeper and deeper, with no prospect of early regeneration. It is now a hodgepodge of Hindu and Islamic elements.

Bibi Khadija, the wife of Sayed Imam Shah seems to have played a seminal role in the schism. She extended her support to Nur Muhammad Shah and repudiated the recognition of the Imam in Iran. She seems to have declared Nur Muhammad Shah as the successor of Sayed Imam Shah and the dissociated group became known as the *Imam-Shahis*, making Sayed Imam Shah as the founder. She summoned Sayed Rehmattullah Shah, the son of Pir Hasan Kabiruddin at Pirana to win his support, but he refused to throw off his allegiance to the Imam in Iran. He stayed at Pirana for few months, and returned after marrying with a Sayed lady. It is recounted that Sayed Rehmattullah propagated among the Ismaili circles in India through his messengers that he had nothing to do with the Sayeds of Pirana. He also arranged to sent a large amount of religious dues through two persons in Iran. Khayr Khwah Herati (d. after 960/1553) also confirms the visit of two Indian Ismailis, the followers of Sayed Rehmattullah Shah, who had come to Khorasan on their way to search for the Imam to present religious dues, vide his "*Tasnifat*", edited by W.Ivanow, Tehran, 1961, p. 54.

Sayed Rehmattullah is said to have visited Badakhshan and Anjudan and reported whole story to the Imam. He finally settled down in a village, called Kadi in Gujrat.

Hence, a large conversion of Sayed Imam Shah in Gujrat suffered a great reverse and the half-baked adherents of Islam were dragged into the most furious blasts of hostile winds. This alarmed a group of the adherents, inducing them to retrace their steps towards the fold of Hinduism, but most of them remained faithful to Ismailism. But, a major group in Pirana dissociated at the head of Nur



Muhammad Shah, became known as the **Imam-Shahis**, who followed the mixed rituals of Islam and Hinduism, like Hussaini Brahmin, Shanvi and Bad Khwans. They propagated that the successor of Pir Hasan Kabiruddin was Sayed Imam Shah, who was followed by Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah. The schism also effected the **Satpanth Literature**, i.e., the **ginans**. It is most certain that the **ginans** of Sayed Imam Shah had been adjusted at Pirana to suit the flavour of the Imam-Shahis. The mainstream of the community, known as the Khojas in Sind, Kutchh, Kathiawar and Gujrat continued to adhere to the Imam, and protected the accumulated **ginans** to great extent from being interpolated.

#### **The line of Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah**

Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah died on 940/1534 and was buried in the mausoleum of his father in Pirana, the necropolis of the Imam-Shahi sect. He had several sons, the oldest being Jalaluddin and Mustapha. Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah had however appointed one of his younger son as his successor, called Sayed Miran Khan, surnamed Sai'duddin. Several stories are recounted about the cruelty of the brothers of Sayed Miran Khan, who was exiled from Pirana. In sum, the shrine of Sayed Imam Shah remained in the custody of Jalaluddin and his descendants for about a century, while the pirs in the descent of Sayed Miran Khan were moving about the country. Sayed Miran Khan rambled as a successor of his father in Surat, Burhanpur and the towns of the Deccan.

Mention must be made on this juncture about the institution of the **kakas** in Imam-Shahi sect that had taken root in Pirana. This institution was the headman of the converted Hindus. The kaka was the Imam-Shahi cleric and his duty was to settle the petty disputes and collect religious taxes. This institution had been introduced at an early period in petty village communities, and then gradually penetrated into Pirana. The immediate cause of the final legalisation of the status of the **kakas** at Pirana was the rivalries and quarrels of the sons of Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah, who is said to have introduced the tradition of the **kaka** (headman) to collect religious taxes and offerings. The kaka was appointed for life and had to take vow of celibacy and received food and clothing as remuneration. The number of the early prominent **kakas** was

twenty-five, from Kaka Shanna to Kaka Lakhman. The institution of the kaka had a furtive character. For details, vide "**Pirana Satpanth'ni Pol**" (Falsehood of the **Satpanth** of Pirana), by Patel Narayan Ramji Contractor, Rajkot, 1926.

After the exile of Sayed Miran Khan, the kaka began to dominate at Pirana in all affairs and proved to be an inexhaustible source of intrigue and misery to the community, which ultimately brought about the complete ruin of the Imam-Shahi sect. Most of the old literature of the *ginans* remained in possession of the kakas, who were responsible to interpolate them. It must be noted that the theory of equating Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad with Pir Shams was most probably floated in these interpolations. The word **Pir** and **Imam** also began to be added frequently in their *ginans* for Sayed Imam Shah and Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah. Many other terminologies of the Hindus and their deities were added in the *ginans*. Henceforward, Pir Satgur Nur was identified in their newly *ginans* attributed to the authorship of Sayed Imam Shah, with the Brahma, Sayed Imam Shah as the incarnation of Indra and Nur Muhammad Shah was exalted to a station equivalent to Vishnu. One legendary book had been compiled in the name of Sayed Imam Shah, namely "**Dashtari Gayatri**", in which the genealogical details are mentioned, but no mention is made of the line of the Ismaili Imams. Another bombastic work was also created, entitled "**Chetamani of Pir Imam Shah**" where the descent is however traced to "Sayed Satgur Patra Brahma Indra Imam Shah" and "Adi Vishnu Niringan Nur Ali Mahomed Shah." Thus, they enjoyed considerable autonomy to institute a number of fictitious theories and ceremonials

Meanwhile, a deputation arrived to invite Sayed Miran Khan to Pirana, which he accepted and returned to his native place, where he died in 980/1572 and was succeeded by Sayed Abu Ali Hashim, who was hardly 12 to 13 years of age. It must be added that Sayed Saleh (984-1021/1576-1612), another son of Sayed Miran Khan is said to have a strong proclivity towards Ismailism, who also composed few *ginans*.

The shrine of Sayed Imam Shah was in charge of the descendants of Jalaluddin, therefore, Sayed Abu Ali Hashim had to procure a strong following in Pirana, who, at length took its charge and died in 1021/1612. He was



succeeded by his 15 years old son, Abu Muhammad Hashim, who decided to renovate the graves of his father and grandfather and erect a splendid mausoleum for them, near the shrine of Sayed Imam Shah. Nur Shah, the son of Mustapha, the brother of Sayed Miran Khan, was at that time the official keeper of the shrine of Sayed Imam Shah. He and his brother, Walan Shah fiercely opposed the plan. Their opposition rose to armed obstruction and in a pitched battle between the two parties, the supporters of Nur Shah were defeated. The enmity and hatred between them were going on unabated, but the majority remained faithful to Abu Muhammad Hashim, who died in 1045/1636. He was succeeded by his 12 years old son, Muhammad, also known as Muhammad Shah Dula Burhanpur. He left Pirana and went to Burhanpur in Khandesh and left behind his son, Abu Muhammad Shahji Miran in Pirana. He however died in 1067/1657 and was buried in Burhanpur. His successor Abu Muhammad Shahji Miran came to a tragic end due to the intolerance of the Mughal emperor Aurengzeb. According to "Mirat-i Ahmadi" (comp. 1174/1761), certain officials with an armed escort were sent to Pirana with the express summon of the emperor to arrest Shahji Miran. The sickly old man refused to go. Then, being dragged by force, he poisoned himself on the way to the city and died not far from Pirana, where he was brought back to be interred. This event took place in 1103/1692. His son and successor was 12 years old Sayed Muhammad Shah, who wandered from Burhanpur to Pirana and the towns of the Deccan, and died in Ahmadnagar in 1130/1718. His infant son, Sayed Muhammad Fazal Shah had been brought up for 12 years in Ahmadnagar.

Meanwhile, a deputation of 200 persons from Pirana was sent to Ahmadnagar to invite the young pir to come back. Hence, Sayed Muhammad Fazal Shah was taken to Pirana, where he was met with great pomp. He however gave up all hopes of settling in Pirana owing to the strong influence and foothold of the kakas, who were adamant. He therefore went to Champanir, where he died on 1159/1746. Sayed Sharif then succeeded, who returned to Pirana in 1885/1771, where his father had failed. In Pirana, he discovered that his life was insecure, therefore he tried to settle in Cambay, about 20 miles distant from Pirana. His temporary absence brought about some ugly development in Pirana. The kakas, by bribes, arranged with the local authorities to take hold of the old historical house of the pirs and pulled it down. When the news of sacrilege reached to Sayed Sharif, he rushed back, only to find that

it was too late. Curses followed between them and the atmosphere of Pirana remained as tense as ever. The guardian of Sayed Imam Shah's shrine at that time was Karamullah bin Jafar, who gave his daughter to Sayed Sharif in marriage. Sayed Sharif however died in 1209/1795 and was succeeded by his son, Badruddin, also known as Bara Miyan. He continued the policy of his father to reduce the power of the kakas in Pirana. He also died in 1243/1827 and was succeeded by his son, Bakir Shah, the last pir of the Imam-Shahi sect in Pirana. He also died most probably in 1251/1835 without leaving any successor. Thus, the old line of Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah (d. 940/1534) came to an end. The disciples of the Imam-Shahi sect are found in Ahmadabad, Kheda, Cambay, Baroda, Bhavanagar, Surat, Khandesh and Kutchh.

Previously, it is indicated that Humayun (1530-1556), the Mughal emperor, was dethroned by Sher Shah Suri (947-952/1540-1545) on May 17, 1540. Humayun led a life of homeless loitering in Sind for three years, and finally repaired to Iran in 1544 in the time of Shah Tahmasp. Humayun embraced Shiism in Iran, and with the help of the Safavids, he reinstated the Mughal empire in India in 962/1555 after fifteen years. The Indian Ismaili pilgrims, who visited Anjudan by road, seem to have been advised by Nuruddin Ali to travel by sea. It is possible that between 947/1540 and 962/1555, Sher Shah Suri had planted his agents in Sind to search Humayun, resulting the roads insecure between India and Iran for the travellers. Humayun embarked from Sistan with 12,000 horsemen in 952/1545 and seized Kandhar and Kabul. He also conquered Badakhshan in 954/1547, and then entered India and captured Delhi in 962/1555. It is also probable that the routes between Iran and Badakhshan were insecure from 952/1545 to 962/1555, therefore, Nuruddin Ali had also directed his followers in Badakhshan not to travel for Iran for few years.

One unknown manuscript of Iran of 929/1523 is unearthed, containing 24 quatrains in glorification of the Imam of the time, whose few couplets are given below:-

*Pesh az man baaisam tuhi mowlana,  
bi tu che tasrafum rasd dar du jahan.*

*"O'Lord! you existed before me, therefore you created me.*



What I may take away in the two worlds except to desire  
for you.

Gar kohana wa gar navim ya mowlana,  
bi rai'i to marqsada nadaarim digar.

"We may be either young or old, but there is no aim of  
our lives without your remembrance."

Aiy'i rahat baksh'i ruh ya mowlana,  
har yad'i to mikunand dar alam'i showk.

"O'Lord! you are peace giver to the mankind. When love  
gushes, the lovers remember your name."

It seems possible that the above unknown poem belonged to the then known Ismaili poet Mahmud Ali, who hailed from Mominabad. Dr. Farhad Daftry has also discovered his poems from the Ismaili leaders in Khorasan, which have not been listed in "A Guide to Ismaili Literature" (London, 1933) by W. Ivanow and in "Bibliography of Ismaili Literature" (California, 1977) by Ismail K. Poonawala. In his one long poem, Mahmud Ali names the Ismaili *dais*, *mu'allims* and lesser functionaries in numerous localities in Khorasan, Kohistan, Irak-i Ajam, Kirman, Afghanistan, Badakhshan, Turkistan and the Indian subcontinent, including Multan, Lahore and Gujrat.

Imam Nuruddin Ali consigned the office of Imamate to his son, Khalilullah Ali, and died in 957/1550 in Anjudan. The details of his other five sons are inaccessible.

#### **KHALILULLAH ALI I (957-993/1550-1585)**

Mirza Khalil, mostly known as Khalilullah Ali I was born in Anjudan. It is related that Imam Nuruddin Ali had nominated him as his successor in presence of the Indian and Syrian Ismaili pilgrims at Anjudan.

Khalilullah Ali is said to have examined the economical conditions of the poor Ismailis residing in Iran, India, Syria, Badakhshan and Central Asia, and sent necessary

aids through his family members. He also reviewed the then system of Ismaili mission of different regions, and caused vital changes specifically in the religious practices in India.

Between 947/1540 and 960/1553, the Safavid Shah Tahmasp waged four expeditions in the Caucasus, and brought a large number of Georgian, Circassian and Armenian prisoners in Iran, including women and slaves. There had been a serious struggle in acquiring power in the principal posts between the Iranians and the Turks, known as Kizilbash. The prisoners of Caucasus hence had been introduced as *ghulaman'i khassa'yi sharifa* (the slave of the royal household), and were given military training as the "third force" of the empire. Thus, the introduction of the Tajik element changed the character of the Safavid society. They proved very loyal to the empire until the death of Shah Tahmasp. When he fell ill in 972/1574 for about two months, there was a recrudescence of dissension among the Kizilbash chiefs. The Tajik women in the royal **harem** also jumped into the political intrigue to advance the claims of their respective sons to the succession. The nine sons of Shah Tahmasp were familiar in the different military units, and each unit came up to support the respective sons of Shah Tahmasp for the next ruler. Muhammad Khudabanda, the elder son was ill. The second son Ismail was in prison for twenty years since 1556. The other seven sons belonged to Circassian or Georgian mothers, each was expecting the throne for their own sons. Shah Tahmasp died in 984/1576. The Georgian made an unsuccessful attempt to place Hyder on the throne, and his supporters raided the capital city, but failed and Hyder was killed. Finally, about thirty thousand Kizilbash thronged at the prison, and released Ismail and crowned him at Qazwin as Shah Ismail II on August 22, 1576 at the age of 40 years.

Shah Ismail II first of all executed and blinded those princes, who were responsible for his long punishment, including his five brothers. He abandoned the doctrines of Twelver and banned the practice of **tabarra**, reviling Abu Bakr and Umar. The Kizilbash generals began to realize that Shah Ismail II was not a sort of ruler they had expected. They got him killed with the help of his sister, Pari Khanum by poison in 985/1577. The Kizilbash crowned Muhammad Khudabanda, the elder brother of Shah Ismail II. He was one among those persons, who had been



ordered by Shah Ismail II for execution, but was survived owing to some sorts of delay. He had been in Herat during the death of Shah Ismail II, and reached at Qazwin from Shiraz. It implied that the Safavid throne remained without a king for three months. Finally, Muhammad Khudabanda assumed power in 985/1578. He was a mild, and his eye-sight was so weak that he was virtually blind. He took no interest in state affairs, and remained in composing poems under the pen-name of Fahmi. His wife Mahd-i Ulya however governed the state by a council of the Kizilbash officers, whom she ignored, and replaced by the Iranian officers. She had planned to make her own son to succeed her husband, and conspired to remove the capable son of Muhammad Khudabanda, called Abbas being born to other wife. Abbas was in Herat and thus, he escaped from the conspiracy.

The Ottoman sultan Murad III (1574-1595) invaded Azerbaijan and Georgia with one lac soldiers in 986/1578. The Safavid forces suffered a long series of defeat. On the other side, the dispute between Mahd-i Ulya and Kizilbash officers had shaken the foundation of the empire. She had been killed by Kizilbash, and the whole power came with the military. The army of Ustajlu-Shamlu in Khorasan, the Afshars in Afghanistan, and the Kizilbash in Qazwin and northern region were divided among themselves. They began to fight one another and violated the law and order in supporting the different sons of Muhammad Khudabanda. The notable princes being supported by the above three military groups were Hamza, Abu Talib and Abbas. Hamza was killed in 1586, therefore, the Kizilbash turned their support to Abu Talib. Under such fratricidal disputes for the throne, Shah Muhammad Khudabanda had been forced to abandon the throne in favour of Abbas in 996/1586, who was about 17 years old. Murshid Quli Khan, the leader of Ustajlu-Shamlu in Khorasan supported him, who had been invested the title of *vakil* of the supreme *diwan*. The new king Shah Abbas negotiated a peace treaty with the Ottoman sultan in 1589, and also began to repel the Uzbek inroads from eastern side.

The internal dissensions in the Safavid armies and disorders in Iran had sucked away the peace. The bulk of the people is said to have been perished by a great drought which afflicted the country, resulting spread of disease. The theft and robbery had terrorized the highways

so frequently that the travellers feared to make journey inside Iran.

In India, after the death of the Mughal emperor Humayun in 963/1556, his son Akbar (1556-1605) succeeded at the age of 13 years, therefore, his teacher Bahram Khan administered the state affairs. It was Bahram Khan to inflict a defeat to the Suri dynasty at Panipat, and saved the throne of Delhi. He was a Shia, and thus the Sunni *ulemas* aroused the emperor to retire him. Akbar was 18 years at that time, and took the power from Bahram Khan, and then conquered Gujrat, Bengal, Ahmadnagar, Deccan, Bihar, Kashmir and northern regions, where he posted his generals, and put his empire on a sound footing, making coalitions with regional Hindu elites. Akbar held a liberal policy in religion, and invented a new religious cult, known as *Din-i Illahi* or *Mazhab-i Haq*, which combined elements of Islam, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism, which also perished with his death.

Khalilullah Ali is said to have held a conference of the *dais* and missionaries of different regions in Anjudan to review the mission activities. He made few vital changes in the system in Syria and India, and issued necessary orders abreast of time in various regions.

Khalilullah Ali seems to have organised a best system of his contacts with the Ismailis of Iran, Syria, Badakhshan and India. He had employed in this context a certain Zayn al-Abidin bin Hussain bin Khushnam Angawani (d. 961/1554), who understood many languages. He had been assigned to write letters, bearing official seal to the Ismaili communities as per the instructions of the Imam.

The Nusairi zealots had raided and pillaged the Ismaili villages in Syria in 1569. They captured the strongholds of Masiyaf and Qadmus, which was informed to the Imam by the Syrian pilgrims. It is related that Khalilullah Ali dispatched an embassy to the Ottoman authority in Latakia, and as a result, the Nusairis withdrew from Masiyaf and Qadmus after three years.

The Iranian Ismailis mostly professed in agriculture. Later on, few among them are reported to have ventured into the local trade, and became leading merchants in Kirman. Their rapid progress can be judged from the records that the Ismaili merchants of Kirman dominated the



trade at port Hormuz around 1580. They mostly carried their trade with the Portuguese, and then with the English East India Company in 1610. There are certain indications that the Khoja Ismaili traders also started their commercial activities between port Hormuz and Kutchh.

### **Mission of Pir Dadu in India**

Sayed Dadu, or Pir Dadu was an acclaimed and gifted *vakil* in Sind. He traced his descent from a well-known *vakil*, Bawa Hashim, who was one of the attendants of Imam Islam Shah in Kahek. Bawa Hashim's son Gul Muhammad was the man who had arranged a meeting of Sayed Imam Shah with the then Imam. Gul Muhammad, known as Harichandra in Indian orbits, had a son, Mahr al-Din, known as Moriya. His son was Khair al-Din, known as Kherraj. His son was Aasar, known as Jesar. Aasar had three sons, viz., Aas al-Din, Jamr al-Din and Daud, known as Dadu, or Pir Dadu, who was born about in 879/1474. He visited Anjudan when he was 80 years old, where Imam appointed him his *vakil* for Sind and Kutchh in 961/1554.

Culling up the fragment of traditions, it seems that in accomplishing their mission with the maximum impact, the Ismaili *dais* in India had lowered the linguistic and cultural barriers to conversion to great extent. What was commonly known in India that the term Khoja designated not religious identity, but affiliation to a caste of petty traders. Neither the orthodox Muslims nor Hindus would claim the Khoja Ismailis as co-religionists. The mixed character of Khoja Ismailis' rituals and the Hindu elements in their society was such an index by which the Islamic character among them became hard to judge at that time. Their reverence towards the first Imam Ali, the commemoration of the event of Karbala however placed them among the Shiite Muslims, while the tributes they offered to the Iranian Imams signified their affiliation to the Nizari Ismaili branch. In matter of marriages and funeral ceremonies, they had to knock the door of the Sunni *mullas*. In consideration of these conditions, Pir Dadu had laid much emphasis in enhancing the sense of their belonging in Islam, and tried to define a sharp position of the Khoja Ismailis. He first reviewed the religious practices for the first time after Pir Sadruddin with the instructions of Khalilullah Ali. He also revised the old

daily prayer (*dua*), and removed the old unnecessary practices and *ginans*. With a fresh mandate, he also conducted a brisk mission activities and converted a large number of Lohana tribe of Hinduism, notably the family of Khoja Bhaloo (d. 1016/1607) in 961/1554.

The early Sumra rulers in Sind were the Ismailis, but the later Sumra adhered Sunnism. The Sumra dynasty in Sind ended almost before 762/1361. Henceforward, the local feudal chiefs descended from the Sumra rulers were also known as the Sumras among the Sunnis. Pir Dadu arrived in Sind in 961/1554 and resided at Fateh Bagh. When he came in Sind, Shah Hasan the last ruler of the Arghun dynasty had died in 961/1554, and a certain Mirza Essa Khan Trakhan took the reign of Sind.

In Fateh Bagh, the local chief Muhammad Sumaro was deadly against the Ismailis, whom he used to grind under the millstone of cruelty. He therefore violently persecuted Pir Dadu. Under the vehement agitation of the bigoted *Qadi*, Aas al-Din and Jamr al-Din, the brothers of Pir Dadu were arrested, paraded in the streets and beheaded. Pir Dadu's life was also insecure, therefore he immediately wrote to Jam, the ruler of Jamnagar in Kutchh for seeking refuge, which had been granted. At length, he repaired to Jamnagar with forty families in 994/1587 along with the sons of his brothers, where he was feted honours. Soon afterwards, another batch of forty to fifty families was also invited from Sind. A plot of land near the town was assigned to them, which had been fortified with walls, one of its gate is still known as Dadu's Gate.

Pir Dadu then reported to have moved to Bhuj, the capital of Kutchh in the reign of Rao Bharmal I (1585-1631). He procured cordial ties with the local ruler, and continued his mission in Kutchh and sent his representative in other parts of India. He also visited Kathiawar, where he converted a bulk of the Hindu Lohana tribe. Pir Dadu died at the age of 120 years in 1005/1596 at Bhuj, where his mausoleum still exists. The Imams continued to appoint the subsequent *vakils* in the descendant of Pir Dadu. The best known among them was Sayed Sadik, who had visited Iran, and had been consigned the office of *vakil* for Kutchh. His grandsons were twin born and were named Bawa Saheb al-Din and Bawa Salam al-Din. The former preached in Halar, Sind and the latter remained active in Kutchh.



## Ismaili Influence in Deccan

Lack of material does not enable us to give a detailed account of the Ismaili influence after the death of Shah Tahir Hussain Dakkani on 956/1549 in Ahmadnagar, India. We do not have explicit details, whether his descendants continued the Ismaili mission in the cloak of Shiism or not. There are however certain indications that a lady ruler, named Chand Bibi was secretly an Ismaili, but her faith is shrouded in her political activities. She was born in 957/1550 and died in 1006/1599, which implies that she was the contemporary of both Hyder bin Shah Tahir (d. 994/1586) and Sadruddin Muhammad bin Hyder (d. 1032/1622). Her father was Hussain Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar, and mother was Khonza Humayun. Chand Bibi got married to Ali Adil Shah (1558-1580) of Bijapur at the age of 14 years in 970/1562. Ali Adil Shah was killed in 988/1580 when she was about 28 years old. She had no child, therefore, the nephew of her late husband aged 10 years, Ibrahim Adil Shah I was crowned in Bijapur, and herself ruled as a regent with great prudence and intelligence till the young king came of age. When order was restored in Bijapur kingdom, Chand Bibi went back to her motherland Ahmadnagar when she was about 35 years old. When Murtada Shah, the ruler of Ahmadnagar died at a moment when the foreign relations of the state were strained to breaking-point and was imminent, she returned to Bijapur, and mustered some reliable troops in consideration of the defence of Ahmadnagar fort against the mighty army of the Mughals led by their able general.

It was a question of saving the whole Deccan from Mughals, so Bijapur and Golconda kingdoms sent contingents. The Mughal force commanded by Prince Murad (d. 1007/1599) took field against Ahmadnagar. The three tunnels were dug in the fort, two of them were discovered and the third one was repaired in a night. At length, the Mughals were severely repulsed. Murad was compelled to negotiate truce, and recognized the rule of Ahmadnagar. It was the first time that Ahmadnagar was recognized by the Mughals out of the five states of Deccan. Accordingly, the Birar was to be retained with the Mughals and Ahmadnagar would rule independently. After this great defence, Chand Bibi came to be known as **Chand Sultana**. After some times, once again the opponents of Chand Bibi made approach to Prince Daniel (d. 1013/1604), the third son of emperor Akbar, who attacked Ahmadnagar with 30,000 men, and a terrible fight

took place in the plain of Sonipat near the bank of Godawari river. The Mughals succeeded to turn the troops of Chand Bibi and had a siege over Ahmadnagar in 1008/1599. This time, emperor Akbar himself rushed to Deccan and pitched his tents outside the city. Chand Bibi became desperate and resisted the Mughal attacks with such courage that the invaders were repelled at many places. At length, Hamid Khan, the traitor allowed the Mughal force to enter Ahmadnagar, and entered the palace of Chand Bibi to kill her. At that moment of disaster, Chand Bibi came out of her apartments and fought bravely and was killed, and thus, Ahmadnagar was captured by the Mughals in 1009/1600.

### Trakhan dynasty of Central Asia

It appears that the Ismaili ruler of Gilgit, Raja Trakhan (1310-1335) was succeeded by Raja Somul (1335-1390). The third ruler was Raja Khusaro Khan (1390-1435), then Raja Hyder Khan (1435-1480), Raja Chalis Khan (1480-1515) and Raja Nur Khan (1515-1565). It means that the Ismailis ruled Gilgit absolutely for about 255 years. But, the seventh ruler Raja Mirza Khan (1565-1600) was invaded by Ali Sher Khan Anchan (1595-1633), the ruler of Skardu. Raja Mirza Khan took flight to Baltistan and lived as a refugee with the Magpon ruler, Raja Ghazi Mir (1565-1595), who had died a month later. Raja Mirza married to the daughter of the ruler, and became a Twelver. He took field against Gilgit with colossal means and materials he acquired from the new ruler, Raja Ali Sher Khan (1600-1632), and subdued Ali Sher Khan Anchan at Gilgit, and reinstated his rule. Henceforward, he forced the inhabitants to follow the doctrines of the Twelver. The Ismailis observed strict *taqiya*, and were also known as the Mughli.

Imam Khalilullah Ali I died at Kahek in 993/1585, but he was buried in Anjudan. It seems that the Ismailis were thickly populated in Anjudan, therefore, it was resolved to settle few families in Kahek in Kirman. According to another tradition, the Twelvers and Nuqtawiyas also lived in Anjudan and its locality, therefore, the governor of Hamdan had appointed a certain Shia leader, called Sayed Khalilullah as the *amir* of Anjudan after Imam's departure from the village in 992/1584. An epigraph discovered by Farhad Daftary at Anjudan is allegedly collated with the



preceding move. It reproduces the text of a royal edict issued by Shah Abbas II in Rajab, 1036/March-April, 1627 addressing to **amir** Khalilullah Anjudani, for the exemption of certain taxes, wherein the Anjudani Shias are explicitly regarded as the Twelvers. Farhad Daftary however identifies **Amir Khalilullah Anjudani** as **Imam Zulfikar Ali**, who was also known as Khalilullah. The balance of arguments points that it is almost a tentative speculation, and nothing to do with historical fact.

It is worth mentioning that the "**Tarikh-i Alfi**" (the Millennial History) was compiled in India by several authors at the request of Mughal emperor Akbar in 1000/1592, whose one part was chronicled by Jafar Beg Asif Khan (d. 1021/1612), describing a rebellion hatched by a certain Murad under the year 982/1575 and the domineering of the Ismailis in Anjudan by Shah Tahmasp (d. 984/1576). More details of the same episode is described under the year 981/1574 by the Safavid historian, Qadi Mir Ahmad Munshi al-Qummi (d. after 1015/1606) in his "**Khulasat al-Tawarikh**" (1st vol., pp. 582-4). Both sources relate that a certain Murad had numerous followers also in India, sending him large sums of money from Sind and Makran. Murad was engaged in political turmoil outside Anjudan, having acquired supporters in Kashan and elsewhere in Central Iran. Being alarmed by his activity, early in 981/1574, Shah Tahmasp ordered the Kizilbash governor of Hamdan, Amir Khan Mawsil'lu, to take field against Anjudan and arrest Murad. Amir Khan executed a bulk of the Ismailis in Anjudan and its locality and took much booty from them, but Murad, who was stayed at a fortress in the district of Kamara near Anjudan, managed to escape. Soon afterwards, Murad had been arrested and imprisoned near the royal quarters. In Jamada II, 981/October, 1573, Murad escaped from prison with the help of Muhammad Muqim, a high Safavid official who had come under Murad's influence. Murad fled to the vicinity of Kandhar, getting help on the way from his followers in Fars, Makran and Sind. A few months later, he was arrested in Afghanistan by the Safavid guards. He was brought before Shah Tahmasp, who had him executed along with Muhammad Muqim.

Farhad Daftary bluntly hazards to identify above certain Murad with Imam Murad Mirza (d. 920/1514), which seems that he is explicitly divorced from reality. The most important aspect of the story which deserves serious treatment is the stark difference between these two

persons for about 60 years. Secondly, it is neither warranted in the Ismaili traditions, nor there is a single example, connoting the Imams to have involved in the political arena while living in Anjudan, and therefore, the alleged rebellion of the Imam Murad Mirza is highly doubtful. Thirdly, it would be absurd to believe that the Imam Murad Mirza had vainly stirred up a revolt with handful supporters and fled, putting behind his followers into the millstone of cruelty in Anjudan. Fourthly, *the remittance of religious dues to the Imams by the Indian followers* was an practice in vogue, which can be incorporated to suit the notion of any anecdote for the Ismailis. Fifthly, the above story places the rebellion in 982/1575, which is veritably the period of Imam Khalilullah Ali (957-993/1550-1585), the last Imam of Anjudan era. We would, however, venture the opinion that the whole story embodies elegance and rhetoric rather than a factual picture, and that Mirza in the story was in reality the leader of the Nuqtawiya sect in the time of Imam Khalilullah. He mustered a handful supporters for engineering a ground of rebellion against the Safavids. The followers of the Nuqtawiya were inhabited in the vicinity of Anjudan, and their uprising under their leader, Murad cannot be attributed to the Ismailis. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Imam Murad Mirza was that of a rebellious Murad.

It must be added on this juncture that several extremist movements with Shiite tendencies sprouted in Iran. For instance, the Hurufi movement was founded by a certain Fazalullah Astrabadi (740-796/1340-1394) in about 780/1378. His followers became known as *Hurufis* due to emphasizing the hidden meaning of the letters (*huruf*). Anatolia was the main foothold of the Hurufism. Later on, the Hurufism vanished in Iran, and several petty groups split off from it, notably the Nuqtawiya. It was founded by Mahmud (d. 831/1428) around 800/1398, who was the disciple of Fazalullah Astrabadi in Gilan. Mahmud taught to his followers the significance of the point (*nugta*) as the building brick of his symbolical system. Thus, his group became known as the *Nuqtawiya* (pointism) and his followers as the People of the Point (*ahl-i-nugta*). The Nuqtawiya gradually found their foothold in the Caspian region and the villages of Qazwin, Kashan, Ispahan and Shiraz. Mahmud died in 831/1428 on the border of



Azerbaijan and Arran. His followers however continued his mission in Iran and India.

Our sources as cited above also relate a revolt under the year 983/1576 by the followers of Mahmud against the Safavids in the village surrounding the city of Kashan. This major revolt occurred in conjunction with an uprising in Anjudan led by the Nuqtawiya leader, called Murad. "**Tarikh-i Alfi**" admits specifically that the revolt stirred in Anjudan by Murad was that of the Nuqtawiya order.

We also find a vogue tendency in the Iranian sources to conflate the Hurufis and Nuqtawiya wrongly with the Ismailis. The instance of an Ismaili poet, Kassim Amiri is ample in this context, who was lynched in 999/1591. He is considered erroneously as the follower of the Nuqtawism in the Iranian sources. Ahmad bin Nasrullah Qadizada Tatawi, whose father had taken part in suppressing the Kashan revolt, was vague about the connection between the two revolts, suggesting explicitly that the followers of Mahmud were collaborating with the Ismailis of Anjudan, vide "**Nuqtawiyān ya Pisikhanīyān**" (Tehran, 1941, p. 36) by Sadik Kiya.

The balance of argument tends to show in concluding this critique that Imam Murad Mirza had nothing to do with the above rebellion of the Nuqtawiya.

#### **NIZAR II (993-1038/1585-1628)**

Nizar was born in 982/1574 in Anjudan, and ascended at the age of 11 years. He is known as Shah Ataullah among the Iranian mystics. His father had brought him in Kahek in 992/1584, and henceforward, Kahek became the next headquarters. It took few years to the Ismailis to settle in Kahek and its locality. He also founded a village near Kuhubandi, known as Kahek of Aqa Nizar, then became known as **Bagh-i Takhat**. The colony of the farmers in this village was also known as Nizarabad.

The Ismaili merchants of Kirman are said to have built a small palace for Nizar in Kahek, which became known as **Kahak-i Shah Nizar**, where a small marble platform had been erected in a garden, facing the palace. It is said that

the Imam would sit on this platform, which was surrounded by water, when giving audience. His guests would be placed amid flower beds on the other side of the water. Kahek, or Kiagrak is situated about 35 kilometers northeast of Anjudan and north-west of Mahallat.

From the extant *qasida*, it appears that Imam Nizar was physically weak. He was of a middle height like his ancestor Ali bin Abu Talib. In his *qasida*, he however says:-

*Har chand ke man dar nazar'e khalq nizaram,  
Sad shukar ke dar alam'e tahaqiz nazaram.*

means, "Although I am looking weak in the eyes of the people, but it is a matter of thank that I am watching the world of reality."

*Gar pustam wa gir'rai hakiram na chunanam,  
Kaz rah'e jalal'e nasab akbaraz'e kibaram.*

means, "Physically, I am looking weak and small in size, but I am not so in reality. Because of the dignity of my (illustrious) lineage, I am greater than the greatest ones."

The Safavid Shah Abbas ruled Iran from 995/1588 to 1038/1628. He restored peace with severe actions. He reduced the number of provincial governors to curb the power of Kizilbash, and took punitive action against them for their disloyalty. Shah Abbas also turned to the third force, which Shah Tahmasp had introduced into the state, and created their regiments which constituted the nucleus of a standing army. He also took the power of collecting revenue from the Kizilbash, and demanded accounts of expenditure from his governors. The chief of the Ustajlu faction in Khorasan, Murshid Quli Khan, was a powerful Kizilbash leader, who was responsible for placing Shah Abbas on the throne; had assumed that, as in the past, he would be able to bend the king to his will. Shah Abbas had him executed in 996/1589. Hence, the Uzbeks overran the province of Sistan, and invaded Mashhad, but it had been repulsed. In 1005/1598, Shah Abbas transferred his capital from Qazwin to Ispahan. He expanded his influence in Herat and defeated the Uzbeks, and annexed Balkh in his



state. In 1014/1605, he attacked on the Turks and recovered Tabriz.

Shah Abbas is noted as a great builder, and so was very cruel. In 1024/1615, he executed his son, Muhammad Bakir, the then governor of Khorasan. His another son Hasan predeceased him. In 1030/1621, when he fell ill, his third son Muhammad prematurely celebrated his death. When Shah Abbas recovered, he blinded Muhammad. In 1035/1626, he blinded his only surviving son, Quli Mirza. Hence, he had no male issue to succeed him. He died in 1038/1629 after ruling for 42 years, and was succeeded by his grandson, Sam Mirza, surnamed Shah Shafi, the son of Muhammad Bakir.

The Ottoman empire was sunk into the internal disputes after sultan Suleman, and lost many regions from the Safavids. Unemployment, poor exports and the worsening condition of the peasants had badly paralysed the economy of Turkey. Earlier, the Europe and United States imported silver from Turkey for minting coins, but now they began the coinage with other cheap metal, causing heavy loss of mine business in the country. The Safavid Shah Abbas used to export the silken costumes and carpets to Europe through the port of Turkey, but it was stopped because of the newly formed Port Abbas in Iran, resulting another heavy crack in the tax-income of Turkey. In sum, the Ottoman empire began to come in its ebb.

Bayazid Ansari (1525-1581), known as Pir-i Rawshan originated a Roshaniyya cult in Kabul and Kashmir. His works, "*Khayr al-Bayan*", "*Maksud al-Muminin*", "*Surat-i Tawhid*", "*Fakhr*", "*Hal-Nama*" etc. were rigorously opposed by the Sunni *ulemas*. The Mughals persecuted his followers and executed many of them. It must be known that the Ismaili mission had no relation with the Roshaniyya sect, but Bayazid Ansari seems to have been influenced with the esoteric doctrines of the Ismailis in Kandhar. Nevertheless, a bulk of the Ismailis were also scourged to death in Kashmir during the Mughal operations, forcing the surviving Ismailis to migrate to Punjab, where they emerged under the name of the Shamsi.

The Shi'ism dominated in Iran with the foundation of the Safavid kingdom and brought forth many eminent scholars and theologians, viz., Mulla Muhammad Amin Astrabadi (d. 1033/1623), known as Mir Damad, who compiled many works on Shiite jurisprudence, and founded a thought,

known as **Akhbari** against those Shias, who professed the doctrines of **Ijtihad**. The Akhbari group adhered only to Holy Koran, Hadith and the sayings of twelve Imams being the source of authority. In contrast, the other Shias, known as **Usuli** believed in Holy Koran, Hadith and **Qiyas**. They used to debate each other, and their polemical writings had become a major industry in Iran. This period is also noted for the introduction of **marziya** (mourning songs) and the commemoration of the **rawda-khani** (recital of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain) during Muharram.

In addition, the **ilm al-kalam** (theology), **hikmat** (wisdom), **irfan** (gnosis) and the Sufic thought also accelerated. Iran was a fertile land to nourish philosophy and wisdom, and gave birth of prominent scholars, viz., Ibn Turka Ispahani (d. 835/1431), Sayed Hyder Ali Amuli (11th/16th cent.), Mir Dad (d. 1041/1631), Muhammad Bakir Majlisi (d. 1110/1699), Mulla Sadra (d. 1050/1640), Mohsin-i Fayd Kashani (d. 1091/1680), Abdur Razzak Lahiji (d. 1072/1661), Rajab Ali Tabrizi (d. 1080/1699) etc.

Roger Savory writes in "**Iran under the Safavids**" (New York, 1980, p. 91) that, "We have seen the period from the establishment of the Safavid state in 1501, upto the accession of Shah Abbas I in 1588, was one of change and experiment. An attempt was made to incorporate the original Sufi organization of the Safavid Order in the administrative structure of the state." Thus, under Shah Abbas, the Sufism came to life once again.

### **Origin of the Nimatullahis**

It deserves notice, however, that the Nimatullahi order of Sufism also surfaced out in Iran. It was founded by Amir Nuruddin Nimatullah Kirmani, who traced his descent from Ismail bin Jafar Sadik. He was born in 730/1328 in Aleppo, and died in 834/1431 at Mahan in Kirman. Shah Nimatullah designated his son Burhanuddin Khalilullah (d. 860/1456), who migrated to Deccan for ever, but left his son Shamsuddin at Mahan to supervise the affairs of the Iranian followers. Nimatullahi order thus, existed both in Iran and India under two leaderships. Owing to the rigid religious policy of the Safavids between 906/1501 and 995/1588, the detail of the order is not accessible. It



was not an hereditary order, but continued under different saints.

### Ataullahi Ismailis

When Shah Abbas I tolerated Sufism in Iran, the tide also turned in favour of the Ismaili mission, providing benign climate to the *dais* to propagate Ismailism. Imam Nizar is thus reported to have gone to Khorasan in 1014/1606 with few *dais*, where he concealed his identity, and assumed a Sufi sounding name, *Shah Ataullah* among the Nimatullahis. He became the *qutb* (pole) of the Nimatullahis most probably in Nishapur, Marw, Herat, Balkh and Sebzewar in Khorasan province. Nizar was probably the first Ismaili Imam to become the spiritual master of the Nimatullahis. Nasrollah Pourjavady and Peter Lamborn Wilson write in their write-up, "Ismailis and Nimatullahis" (*Studia Islamica*, vol., XLI, 1975, Paris, p. 117) that, "Shah Nizar is the first Ismaili Imam whose ties with the Nimatullahi order are probably definite."

It seems that many Nimatullahis, the followers of Nizar known as Ataullahis had privily adhered Ismailism in Khorasan. When Nizar left Khorasan for Kirman, some of them also joined him. It appears from one extant *qasida* that Nizar had composed few *qasida* for them.

The Ismailis in Iran mostly resided in Khorasan, Kirman, Fars and Anjudan. The Ismailis, known as Ataullahis lived in Kirman as the peasants. The Ismailis in Fars were nomadic tribesmen, who were also called as Ataullahis. It is related that a number of slaves of Abayssinia had escaped from being sold at Port Abbas, and took refuge in Kirman and embraced Ismailism. They were very faithful warriors and rendered their services to Nizar as guards.

Mulla Shaikh Ali Gilani writes in "*Tarikh-i Mazandaran*" (comp. in 1044/1634, pp. 88-89) that, "Sultan Muhammad, the Banu Iskandar ruler of Kujur, who succeeded his father in 975/1567 was an Ismaili. He openly emboldened the propagation of Ismailism in Rustamdar. He seized Nur and other localities in Mazandaran and spread Ismaili creed as far as Sari. He died in 998/1590, and was succeeded by his eldest son Jahangir, who was also deep-rooted in Ismailism. He was obliged to go to the court of the

Safavid Shah Abbas I, following the latter's conquest of Gilan and other Caspian provinces in 1000/1592. Later, Jahangir returned to Rustamdar, but he was arrested by the local lieutenant of Shah Abbas I, who had led a large force against him. Jahangir was sent to Qazwin, where he was executed in 1006/1598."

The Safavid king Abbas I (d. 1038/1629) had tolerated Sufism in Iran with the exception of the Nuqtawiya sect. Their leading leader, Khusaro was tied by the neck to a camel's saddle and dragged along the streets of Qazwin in 1000/1592. In the ensuing wave of persecution and mass killing, a large number of the leading Nuqtawiya leaders were slain in 1002/1594 in Kashan, Ispahan, Istahlanat in Fars and Qazwin. Their another leader, called Yousuf was stripped from the garb of life and fell from the seat onto the mortuary board. The fate of another prominent leader, Suleman Sawuji, a physician from Sawa, was put to death and the king Abbas I regarded his elimination equal to a pilgrimage to Mecca. Likewise, Mir Sayed Ahmad Kashani was arrested in the village of Nasrabad in the vicinity of Kashan, was cut in half by king's own sword. Since the followers of Nuqtawiya sect thickly populated in the villages of the Ismailis, and were also collaborated with each other, it is possible that the Ismailis had taken necessary measures to ward off the hovering danger.

In Syria, the inroads of the bigoted Nusairis recurred on the Ismaili villages in 999/1591, and pillaged their properties. This time, the Ismailis repelled the band of Nusairis from their territories with their own resources.

#### **Sayed Abdul Nabi**

Kahek had been made the new headquarters in Kirman after Anjudan. Sayed Abdul Nabi was an Indian *wakil*, who visited Kahek. He was rejoiced to behold Nizar in the garden, facing the palace, which he relates in his *ginan* that:-

*"I enjoyed a trip with the Imam,  
when my Lord was in the garden."*

Sayed Abdul Nabi's another *ginan* also gives condensed account that:-



*"The everlasting Lord resides in Kahek in the very form of Ali. The apparent Imam Nizar is the 77th epiphany of God, and the 40th Imam."*

Sayed Abdul Nabi mostly preached in Gujrat. In Surat, he came into the close contact of the Gupti Momna Ismailis. He used to organise a weekly religious gathering, known as *satsang* (the pious congregation) in which the local Hindu families were also invited, notably the Laiwala, Naginawala and Jamiatram families. Sayed Abdul Nabi died in Surat, and his mausoleum is situated at Kankara Khadi, near Surat, which is venerated by the Muslims.

### **Kadiwal Sayeds in India**

In India, the Kadiwal Sayeds continued the tradition of Ismaili mission despite several impediments. Fourth in the line of Sayed Mashaikh bin Sayed Rehmatullah Shah bin Pir Hasan Kabir, was Sayed Fazal Shah; who operated proselytizing mission in north Gujrat with a tremendous effect upon the local peasants. His disciples islamized their names and forsook irrelevant customs. He is said to have visited Iran in 1035/1625 during the period of Imam Nizar and was appointed as a *vakil*. The tradition relates that Nizar also sent with him his one relative, called Pir Kassim Shah. Both of them not only conducted the proselytism afresh, but also accelerated the economical condition of the Ismailis. It appears that their secret mission was closely noticed by Aurengzeb at Gujrat. In the meantime, Sayed Fazal Shah died in the village of Jetral in 1068/1659, and left behind two sons, Sayed Hasan Shah and Sayed Mashaikh Shah II (1060-1108/1650-1697). Sayed Hasan Shah, known as Hasan Pir (1062-1126/1652-1715) became next *vakil* and continued to work with Pir Kassim Shah in place of his father. It is however related that Sayed Mashaikh Shah had strong proclivity towards Sunnism, and renounced his allegiance to the Imam. He is said to have visited the Mughal emperor Aurengzeb in the Deccan, and reviled the faith of his forbears to win the heart of the emperor.

Aurengzeb, who knew the Ismaili activities in Gujrat, had sent a certain Mir Shamsuddin in Gujrat with a troop when Pir Kassim Shah and Hasan Pir were on a trip of Kathiawar.

Mir Shamsuddin read the royal decree before the Ismailis, impugning them to forsake Ismailism and espouse Sunnism, otherwise they would be beheaded with their children, and their properties would be confiscated. Sayed Mashaikh Shah also tried to convince them to give up Ismaili faith, and as a result, many Ismailis embraced Sunnism, but other 500 Ismaili families flatly refused, who became known as *mominas* or later on *mominas*. The seceders were called, *chilia* in Gujrat. The *momina* Ismailis were imprisoned at Patan. In the meantime, Pir Kassim Shah and Hasan Pir rushed to Ahmadnagar, and filed suit before the chief judge, who, after the proceeding of three days, exculpated the Ismailis, declaring the Ismailis as true Muslims. This may be perhaps the first legal verdict in India if the tradition is genuine. Pir Kassim Shah and Hasan Pir came in Patan and relieved the Ismailis. Henceforward, the Ismailis broke their relation with the *chilia*, the followers of Sayed Mashaikh Shah, who died in 1108/1697 in Ahmadabad, and his followers later quarrelled as to whether he had been a Sunni or Shia, causing further internal splits. Pir Kassim Shah took about 250 Ismaili families to different villages of Gujrat, and other 250 families were flourished in Kathiawar by Hasan Pir. Pir Kassim Shah died around 1121/1710, and was buried at a village, called Mudana, two miles from Sidhpur. Thus, Hasan Pir had to administer the mission all alone in Gujrat and Kathiawar, and died probably in 1126/1715. Hasan Pir was revered as the saint of the *Momina* Ismailis. In addition to his mausoleum in Thanapipli, near Junagarh, the local Ismailis built a shrine in 1128/1717 at Ganod, Gujrat as a tribute to Hasan Pir. His shrine is flocked by the multitude of visitors, and one like visit is noteworthy that of Mahomed Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan, who as a child was taken from Karachi by his parents.

After the death of Pir Kassim Shah and Hasan Pir, the *Momina* Ismailis were severely in trouble without any other *vakil* for many years. The Mughal governors seem to have continued the tradition of Aurengzeb, and the circumstances did not allow the Ismailis to divulge their faith or perform prayers in thier prayer-hall. In Surat, the *Momina* Ismailis were yet tinged with the Hindu social customs and had to live sometimes under Shiite garbs. It seems that the Mughal authorities had made the Hindus and the Shias as their main target, and as a result, the *Momina* Ismailis had to face problems on either side. It is



said that they built a secret prayer-hall in Surat, where both the Muslim-Hindu styles were significantly employed at two main entrances. The first entrance facing the Hindu locality, was ornamented like a temple. The second entrance lying at the street of the Shia Muslims, imitated the design of a mausoleum. The premises was known simply as *Vada Bhuvan* (big mansion). The Ismailis used secret codes at the entrances before admission. When the enemies hunted the Shia Muslims in their locality, the entrance in that area was to be closed, and another was opened instead. And if the Hindus were persecuted in their locality, the gate lying in that street was to be shut, and other was opened for the service. This was a sort of *taqiya* that could avoid the Ismailis from being domineered. In the middle of premises, there was a big hall, whose underground chamber was used for prayers. It must be noted that a like tradition of two exterior faces of the secret prayer-hall is reported to have been employed in Surat once again in the middle of 19th century, known as *Dada'nu Qhar* (house of the grandfather).

It must be noted on this juncture that Sayed Buzrug Ali, the son of Sayed Mashaikh Shah II (d. 1108/1697) is said to have settled in Tando Muhammad Khan in Sind, and died between 1153/1740 and 1158/1745. His son Sayed Hashim Ali Shah was the father of Sayeda Imam Begum, the last composer of the *ginans* in India.

Imam Nizar died in Kahek in 1038/1628 and was entombed in his small palace, which had been made a domed sepulcher. It is an eye-catching building in Kahek, consisting of different chambers. It also accommodated the graves of Imam's close relatives, but the dates inscribed in the graves are concocted. The mausoleum was renovated in 1805 by the Syrian pilgrims, who stayed in Kahek for many months, and it was again rebuilt in 1966 by the local Ismailis.

It is parenthetically worth mentioning that the dates of the Ismaili Imams of the early post-Alamut period are well recorded in the "*Satveni'ji Vel*" by Sayed Nur Muhammad Shah (d. 940/1534), down to the period of Imam Nuruddin Ali (d. 957/1550). It also prompted the Indian Ismailis to write down the dates of the following Imams. The Russian scholar W. Ivanow visited Iran in 1937 and noted the dates of Imams' death from the plaques on the existing mausoleums. While collating the dates of the inscriptions

with the traditional records, it seems that the dates of few early Imams are almost in agreement, but other dates are in fair contrast, making a layer of confusion to reconcile them. For instance, the death of Imam Nizar is placed 1038/1628 in the traditional records, but the inscription of mausoleum places 1134/1722, indicating a discrimination of about 94 years. It is, however, much nearer to reasonable possibility that the Indian Ismailis had been in close contact with the Imams after Pir Sadruddin's time in Iran, and they had treasured up the traditional records in their memory with the same tendency which they had employed in learning the *ginans*, and therefore, the traditional dates cannot be ruled out. Besides, there is another testimony equally potent that Pir Sadruddin is said to have composed a daily prayer (*dua*) for the Indian followers, wherein the names of the Imams from Hazrat Ali down to the Imam of the time were recited. When an Imam died, the name of his successor was inserted in the daily prayer as the Lord of the Light (*noor-shah*). Under such practice, the traditional records seem more credible than that of the inscriptions. It seems probable that most of the mausoleums and their inscriptions existed long after the death of the Imams, and none can assert that the scribes had either written the actual dates, or the dates of their own time, or written on guess work. Take it for granted that the inscriptions provide true record, then one would have to brush aside few names of the Imams from the official list, so as to adjust the history with the dates of inscriptions. It also deserves notice that the Indian pilgrims most possibly had visited the mausoleums of the Imams and seen the inscriptions, had these really existed during their time. In spite of reading the extant inscriptions, the Indian pilgrims of later period seem to have clung with their own dominant records, which is ample to judge that they had discarded the uncertain dates of inscriptions. In all this, what should have become abundantly clear is that the dates of the inscriptions are not to be trusted.

It is related that some scholars in the Nimatullahi Sufi order had ignored the Sufic teachings of Imam Nizar in Khorasan. In his sayings, Nizar is reported to have addressed them as under:-

*Amruz baman pi nabrad aqeel wa farda,  
sajada'i umid kund luh'i mazaram.*



"The talented does not try to take benefit from me. When I will depart from the world, he will prostrate before the slab of my tomb as the source of accomplishing hopes."

It seems that the above *qasida* was preserved with the Nimatullahis in Khorasan of no avail. When Nizar returned to Kirman and died, many Nimatullahis began to realize its worth after a long time. They seem to have flocked at Kahek when the seat of the Imamate had been transferred from that village, and venerated the mausoleum of Nizar. It is also possible that they had either built Nizar's mausoleum, or had given the present shape to it most possibly in the period of Imam Kassim Ali (d. 1143/1730).

There are many folklores attributed to Nizar. One among them however relates a touching anecdote that Nizar was once sitting at the top of his house at night. Suddenly he heard the gallop of horses, and saw the Safavid horsemen approaching near Kahek, who were loitering for foods and provisions. They spurred their horses on the slopy tract of the village for taking a night respite. For a while, Nizar found himself between the horns of a dilemma. He did not like the hoof of a single horse be entered in Kahek and also avoided to check them through his sleeping guards. He came down at speed and relieved a bulk of lambs from the fold, directing them to make a stampede downwards to impede the mounting horsemen. The lambs jumped down like an advancing column. The horsemen angerily brandished their swords to cut their way in the lines of dashing lambs. The exhausted horsemen were at length forced to come down to the main tract and took flight. Nizar watched the occurrence from the roof, and did not sleep until morning. He however found that all the lambs were brutally killed. Suddenly, he saw a wounded lamb coming calmly from downwards. Nizar came down and took it with his arms lovingly, and made its bandages. The wounded lamb also died at the same moment. This story depicts the services of the lambs, and therefore, the lamp is customarily burnt in the mausoleum of Nizar, fed only with the oil of lamb's fat. It may be remarked as strange that the lamp bearing the oil other than the lamb's fat, it becomes extinguished at once.

It will perhaps be well at this stage to glance that the first western monograph devoted entirely to the subject of the Ismailis seems to be that of Denis Lebey de Batilly, a French official at the court of Henry IV in Europe. The

author had become deeply concerned about the revival of political murders in Europe, after the stabbing of Henry III of France at the hands of a Jacobin friar in 1589. He set out in 1595 to compile a short treatise on the true origin of the word **assassin**, which had acquired a new currency in France.

#### **SAYED ALI (1038-1071/1628-1660)**

Sayed Ali was born most probably in Shahr-i Babak, where he passed his early life with his mother. He also came in Kabek after his father's arrival from Khorasan. He was also known as Shah Ataullah II among the Nimatullahi Sufi order. He was a popular figure as an **amir** in Shahr-i Babak and Kirman among the elites. He is also known as **Rais al-Kirman** (Lord of Kirman), an honour which ultimately promoted him to the governorship of Kirman. He was also a leading landlord, and had acquired many lands in Shahr-i Babak and Sirjan. He built many streets in Kirman, known after his name, none of them existed during the Qajarids period.

Shah Abbas I was on the verge of death when he had no son to succeed him. He died in 1038/1629, and was succeeded by his grandson, Sam Safi, known as Shah Safi. Sir John Chardin, who was visiting Iran in 1077/1666 had remarked in his "**Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse**" (Paris, 1811, 3rd vol., p. 291) that: "**D\_s que ce grand et bon prince eut cessé de vivre, la Perse cessa de prospérer**, i.e., "When this great prince (Shah Abbas) ceased to live, Persia ceased to prosper." Under Shah Safi, the conversion of "state" to "crown" provinces was extended. His vizir Sadru Taqi put forward an argument which the new king found attractive, since the Safavid state was now relatively secure from its external enemies, he said, there was no point in allowing a large part of Safavid territory to remain in the hands of Kizilbash governors, who remitted little to the royal treasury. Thus, the provinces of Qazwin, Gilan, Mazandaran, Yazd, Kirman, Khorasan and Azerbaijan were all brought under the administration of the crown except in time of war, when Kizilbash governors were reappointed.



Shah Safi died at the early age of 32 years, as he was making preparations for an expedition to recover Kandhar from the Mughals. There seems to be general agreement that he was addicted to opium, and, according to some, was prescribed alcoholic drinks by his physicians to counteract the evil effects of the opium. He was succeeded by his son, Abbas II, who came to the throne in 1052/1642 at the age of eight and a half. As already mentioned, the system of converting "state" to "crown" provinces was carried on by Shah Abbas II on a large scale, with the result that almost the whole country was brought under the direct administration of the crown except in time of war, when adhoc military governors were appointed to strategically important frontier provinces. Ann K.S. Lambton writes in "Landlord and Peasant in Persia" (London, 1953, p. 108) that, "Shah Abbas II, continuing his father, Shah Shafi's policy, abolished provincial governments in the interior of the kingdom wherever there was no danger of war, as in Qazwin, Gilan, Mazandaran, Yazd, Kirman, Khurasan and Azarbayjan". We may be well assured that the Ismailis in these provinces, had acquired respite in the absence of political turmoil. Shah Abbas II managed to preserve the frontier of the empire intact, and even recaptured Kandhar from the Mughals in 1058/1648 and repulsed three subsequent attempts by the emperor Aurengzeb to recover it.

The Mughal emperors in India at that time were Jahangir (1605-1627) and Shah Jehan (1627-1658). Jahangir invaded Kandhar and included it in Mughal dominion, but it was re-occupied by Shah Abbas II in 1648, resulting a dispute between Iran and India.

Captain William Hawkins was the first English to have visited the court of Jahangir in 1608 and took permission of trade facility and the opening of a factory in Surat. Sir Thomas Roe arrived in India in 1617 for opening other new factories. The entry of the British gradually in India resulted their political ambition. Having secured a sound foothold, the British began interfering in the internal affairs of the state under one pretext or another. Ultimately, because of their cleverness, superior military strategy and latest weapons, they wiped off all the forces contending for supremacy on the Indian soil and became the undisputed masters of the sub-continent for one century and half.

Heretofore, we have discussed that Shah Abbas I had attempted to incorporate the Sufi elements in the administrative structure in 1588, and as a result, many Kizilbash embraced Sufism in Iran. The Ismaili *dais* began to preach in the cloak of Sufis, and there are certain indications that many Kizilbash had privily come under the yoke of Ismailism in the time of Imam Nizar. Thus, Imam Sayed Ali also assumed among them the Turkish sounding name, Sayed Abul Hasan Beg.

The liberal policy towards the Sufism declined in Iran with the death of Shah Abbas in 1038/1629. The Sufis began to be persecuted and killed, and their *khanqahs* (cloisters) were demolished. Roger Savory writes in "Iran under the Safavids" (New York, 1980, p. 237) that, "After the death of Shah Abbas I, the status of the Sufis continued to decline, and in the 17th century, less than two hundred years after, Sufi zeal and devotion had brought the Safavids to power, the mujtahid Mohammad Bakir Majlisi denounced Sufism as the foul and hellish growth." The Sufis were searched from all corners and scourged to death as an act of religious services. The Nimatullahi Sufi order was also not spared, and before the massacre of the Ismailis, known as Ataullahis in Khorasan and Kirman, Imam Sayed Ali ordered them to join the royal army at once, which avoided the danger of massacre. It is known that a small regiment of Ataullahis in the Safavid army, was also created in Khorasan and Kirman.

### **Khaki Khorasani**

He was a famous Ismaili poet, and his name was Imam Quli (slave of Imam), with a pen-name *Khaki*. Being a native of Khorasan, he became known as Khaki Khorasani. He was born in Dizbad in Khorasan. His parents were small land-owners in Dizbad, and most probably possessed some flock of goats and cows. He received his religious education at home. His biography is also shrouded in mist like others. It is however probable that he had composed his poems between 1037/1627 and 1056/1645, making description of Imam Zulfikar Ali (d. 922/1516) and Imam Nuruddin Ali (d. 975/1550).

His extant *Diwan* is still familiar among the Iranian Ismailis. His "*Tulu-us-Shams*" or "*Tawali-us-Shams*" in a



*mathnavi* form is comprised of 1300 poems in seven parts. His two *qasida*, "*Nigaristan*" and "*Baharistan*" are also accessible. It ensues from his works that he also studied Holy Koran, having good command on Arabic and Turkish. He had identified himself as an old and sad, and described the trouble he faced during the Uzbek raids in Khorasan. He has shown the Ismaili doctrines very watchfully in his works. His works contain the mention of Anjudan, Sultanabad, Iraq etc. He however names Anjudan the place where he had an audience of the Imams. He also describes the influence of the Ismailis in Khorasan, Irak-i Ajam as well as Multan and Hind. About the Imamate, he says:-

Dar har zamano waqt badanid bud'east, zaati ke hast  
jailun fil arz wa sama. (verse: 1507)

*"In all ages and all times, one Dhat is present. Be it known that his (Imam) designation has been made in the earth and heavens."*

The Safavids did not spare Khaki Khorasani and imprisoned him till death. His date of death cannot be ascertained, but it seems that he died most probably around 1056/1646. His tomb is in Dizbad which stands in white amidst the green orchards, bearing no inscription.

Khaki Khorasani left a son, Ali Quli (slave of Ali), poet as himself, but of lesser talent, and is better known under the pen-name of *Ragqami*. His "*Qasidat-i Dhurriat*" is well known among the Iranian Ismailis, giving the list of the Nizari Ismaili Imams. It was published at Leningrad in the Journal of the Russian Oriental Society (*L'Academie des Sciences De'Urs*), Iran, 2nd vol., pp. 8-13 by Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Semenov (1873-1958). It must be noted that A.A. Semenov was a Russian pioneer in Ismaili studies from Tashkant and had acquired a small collection of Ismaili manuscripts from the western Pamir district of Shagman and Rushan in 1901 for the Asiatic Museum like Ivan I. Zarubin (1887-1964).

The Ismaili mission in India was continued in peace, and the appointed *vakils* were in close contact with the Imams in Iran. Sarah F.D. Ansari writes in "*Sufi Saints and State Power*" (Cambridge, 1992, p. 17) that, "Many of the *dais* were continuing a trend developed by Nizari Ismaili Imams in Iran during the later Safavid period of

cautiously expressing their ideas within a Sufi framework, and so entered the subcontinent already carrying within their repertoire a strain of mysticism rooted in Ismailism but tinged with the Sufi terminology of the time. Also important in relation to bridging the gap was the legacy of love and respect for the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad left by the Ismailis."

Mir Amir was an Ismaili ruler of Navahi, the district of Shagnan in Upper Oxus. He was also a scholar and well steeped in Ismaili history and doctrines, and was one of the sources of Mohsin Fani (1615-1670), the author of "**Dabistan al-Mazahib**" (comp. in 1064/1653). It is also said that Mir Amir had desired to see the Imam, but died on his way to Iran due to illness. His father, Mir Shah Amir Beg was a powerful ruler of Shagnan.

Imam Sayed Ali was made the governor of Shahr-i Babak by the Safavids because of his popularity. He had also a small army of Ataulahis. He died in 1071/1660 in Kirman after bequeathing the Imamate to his son, Hasan Ali.

#### **HASAN ALI I (1071-1106/1660-1694)**

Hasan Ali I, also known in Iranian orbits as Bakir Shah, was born in Kahek. He had also gone to the city of Kirman with his father, but returned to Kahek after assuming the Imamate. In 1085/1674, he betrothed to a Safavid lady, and soon afterwards, there is a likelihood that the Imam had taken certain interest in the political arena. In 1105/1693, he was made the governor of Kirman.

The cursory glance of the Iranian empire reveals that Shah Abbas II had died in 1077/1666. John Malcolm writes in "**History of Persia**" (London, 1815, 1st vol., p. 582) that, "The love of wine, in which this prince often indulged to excess, was the cause of all the evils of his reign. It was in his moments of intoxication alone that he was capricious, cruel and unjust." Shah Abbas II was succeeded by Shah Suleman. Henceforward, the Safavid kingdom took a rapid march towards decline. Under weak and ineffective king, the **ulema** tended to reassert their independence of the political institution, and were at the height of their power. The mujtahids fully reasserted their independence of the Shah, and reclaimed their prerogative to be the



representatives of their hidden Imam. The mujtahids moved gradually towards a position of actually controlling the king. Some sources suggest a direct religious rule by means of a concourse of mujtahids above the monarch. The *ulema* consequently pressed forward to obtain a dominant position in the state, heedless of the fact that by so doing they were helping to destroy it. The foreign observer, such as Sir John Chardin had noted in his "*Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse*" (Paris, 1811, 5th vol., p. 249) that, "The *ulema* were saying that these immortal Safavid kings were not worthy of kinship and that the mujtahid is the real ruler as representative of the hidden Imam."

The Russian ambassador visited Iran during the period under review to conclude a truce, and as a result, Mazandaran, Jurjan etc., went into the pocket of Russia. The Ottoman sultans in Turkey were also so weak that the whole empire had been isolated in different states. They however marched in Europe, near Vienna, but the Russians were devouring the Turkish territories behind the door.

In India, after the reign of Shah Jehan (1627-1658), the Mughal princes fought for the throne. Finally, Aurengzeb (1658-1707) ascended and ruled till 1118/1707. He fought with prince Dara Shikou, who was associated with the Qadri Sufi order. Aurengzeb was strict orthodox, intending for the Islamic rule in India. After his death, the Mughal empire was torn apart by the incessant strugglers of rival claimants to the throne.

Imam Hasan Ali directed the Ismaili mission in view of the changing situation of Iran. The names of few Ismaili *dais*, viz., Pir Mihrab Beg, Pir Ali Asghar Beg and Pir Ali Akbar Beg are however located, but nothing is known about them. The Turkish word *beg* in their names however sounds that they should have preached in the Iranian regions inhabited by the Turkomans, or more possibly, had come into the close contact of the Kizilbash circle in Iran.

It is learnt that in 1868 at Bombay, an unknown Ismaili scholar had composed a long poem to glorify the Ismaili Imams, tinged with brief accounts and advices of the Imams. It tells that Imam Hasan Ali I, had warned the Indian jamats the coming of a storm of foreign religious dogma that would convulse the poor people. He also emphasised his followers to adhere strictly to the faith

of their forbears. It appears that the above unknown scholar would have derived his informations from the old manuscripts. The timely guidance of Hasan Ali however may be verified from the fast moving activities of the Christian missionaries hovering over India in the poor class. W.H. Sharp writes in "**Selections from Educational Records**" (1st vol., p. 3) that, "In 1659, the Court of Directors in England stated that it was their earnest desire by all possible means to spread Christianity amongst the people of India and allowed missionaries to embark on their ships." Thus, the evangelical zeal found due support in England, and steps had been taken for the propagation of the Gospel in India in the poor class. The British East India Company was primarily a commercial concern, but it also launched in the campaign in fostering proselytising and educational activities in India. In 1698, the famous missionary clause was included in the Charter of the Company by British Parliament, directing the Company to maintain ministers of religion at their factories in India, and to take a Chaplain in every ship of 500 tons or more. It was not the Company's educational enterprise as stated by some, but a systematic campaign to the activities of the Christian missionaries. On that juncture, it is possible that Imam Hasan Ali I had appropriately warned his Indian followers about the incoming storm of the Christian dogma from Europe.

In the flourishing liberty of the Shiite mujtahids in Iran, the latent differences came readily to the fore. Two major schools of theological thought emerged in Shiite society. The majority stressed constant reference to the first principles, to all the sources (*usul*) of law: these were Holy Koran, reports about the Prophet and the Imams. They became known as the *Usuli*. But a vigorously protesting movement arose, which threw doubt on the validity of reason as an independent basis of law; it stressed the massive use of reports (*akhbar*) were available from Prophet and the Imams, and they were known as the *Akhbari*. One of the most important features of this period is the greatly enhanced influence of the religious classes as a whole, as they freed themselves from political control apart from the internal differences of the *Usuli* and *Akhbari* groups. Powerful theologians emerged, of whom a typical example is Muhammad Bakir Majlisi (1037-1110/1628-1699), who held the office of



**Shaikh al-Islam** from 1687, and then as **Mulla-beshi** (head of the **mullas**) until his death.

It is a significant point that the Usuli and Akhbari Shiite groups jointly made the Sufis as their victims. Under these circumstances, the Ismailis had to change their Sufic mantles to the Shiite. It appears that Imam Hasan Ali also followed the similar **taqiya** in Kirman, and adopted the Shiite sounding name, Bakir Shah few years before becoming the governor of Kirman in 1105/1693. It is also said that he had purchased some estates in Baghdad, Basra and Kazamain Sharif. The last will of the Imam, indicating his burial in Najaf also suggests a sort of **taqiya** in Shiite garb.

The Safavid Shah Suleman is reported to have used the fortress of Alamut as a state prison for the rebellious persons from among his courtiers, **amirs** and relatives. At that time, only a few Ismaili families resided in the lower Caspian region.

Imam Hasan Ali I executed the governorship of Kirman for one year, and died in 1106/1694, and his body had been taken to Najaf for interment.

#### **KASSIM ALI (1106-1143/1694-1730)**

Kassim Ali was born most probably in 1086/1675. He was also known as Sayed Aga Jafar, or Sayed Jafar. His mother related to a Safavid **amir** of Kirman. According to the later sources, Imam had married to one of the daughters of Shah Tahmasp II (d. 1145/1732).

His period of Imamate witnessed several vital cataclysm in Iranian kingdom, therefore, the Ismaili mission exercised great care. It seems that Kassim Ali also took part in the politics like his father, and was also the governor of Kirman. He had however come to reside in Mahallat during the ending period of his Imamate.

It is known that in 1115/1703, the Nusairis tribe of Raslan, known as al-Rasalina fiercely attacked on the Ismaili villages in Syria, and took hold of Masiyaf for about eight years. The Ottoman authorities at Latakia,

finally assisted the Ismailis to recover their castle. One Syrian Ismaili caravan is however reported to have repaired to Kirman in this context between 1117/1705 and 1120/1708.

It also appears from the fragment of the traditions that during the occupation of Masiyaf by the Nusairis for eight years, some Ismaili families moved towards the northern Syria and began to live in the mantles of the Druzes at Jabal al-A'la, the mountain of Keftin, where their number increased considerably after few decades. Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815), the famous German traveller had been invited in 1760 to join the Arabian expedition being sent out by Frederick V of Denmark. He writes in "**Voyage en Arabie et en d' austres pays circonvoisins**" (tr. from German, Amsterdam, 1870, 2nd vol., p. 348) that he was not certain whether the inhabitants of this district were indeed the Druzes. He was reportedly told that there were more than forty villages populated by Druzes; however, he suspected their veracity because, he said, the people looked like the Ismailis.

In Syria, the Ismailis also resided in peace in the town of Masiyaf. Abdul Ghani al-Nabulusi, a famous mystic and traveller had passed through Masiyaf in 1106/1693-4, and describes in his "**al-Hakika wa'l majaz fi rihlat al-Sham wa Misr wa'l Hijaz**" about a certain Ismaili, called Suleman Tanukhi as a chief of the town.

The Ismailis lived in peace in India, but the Ismailis of Kashmir had to follow precaution because of a curious religious tendency. Khwaja Muhammad Azam Didah-mari writes in "**Waqi'at-i Kashmir**" (comp. 1160/1747) that the Shaikh al-Islam of Kashmir, Muhtavi Khan, alias Mulla Abdul Nabi, demanded in Kashmir that the Hindus should not ride on horses, put on caste-marks on their foreheads and not wear turbans. He made an attempt to prevail upon Mir Ahmad Khan, the deputy governor of the province, to support him in this mission. Mir Ahmad Khan did not agree, whereupon the Mulla incited the Muslims and created a communal commotion in Srinagar in 1130/1720. A year later Mulla Muhtavi Khan was put to death by Khwaja Abdullah Khan Deb Bedi.

The Safavid Shah Suleman died in 1105/1693, and was succeeded by his son Shah Hussain, who ruled till 1135/1722. Shah Hussain soon abandoned his austere way of



life and, like his father took to drink. He became so luxurious that the size and magnificence of his *harem* was a serious drain of the exchequer. Like his father, he had no interest in state affairs, which was distressing and ultimately disastrous aspect of the empire. Within the empire, this lack of interest signalled increasing corruption and inefficiency in provincial government. Insecurity on the highways was widespread. Often travellers were robbed by the very officials who were supposed to protect them.

According to Rida Quli Khan in "*Raudat al-Safa'i Nasiri*" (Tehran, 1853) that, "After the accession of Shah Hussain in 1105/1693, the signs of decline (*inhibitat*), nay, rather, of extinction (*inqirad*) of the life of the dynasty became from day to day manifest." By the time of Shah Hussain, the bureaucratic centralization of the state structure was weakened through incompetence, and cloven by bigoted in high places. The military weakness of the state was thrown into sharp relief in 1110/1698 when a band of Baluchi tribesmen raided Kirman, almost reached Yazd and threatened Port Abbas. Shah Hussain turned to the Georgian prince Giorgi XI, who happened to be at the Safavid court, for help in repelling the Baluchis. Giorgi was made governor of Kirman in 1111/1699 and defeated the invaders. Ten years after the Baluchis incursion, the military feebleness of the Safavid empire and, in particular, the defenseless state of the eastern frontier, was demonstrated again, and this time with more serious consequences for the state. In 1121/1709, the Gilzay Afghans under their leader, Mir Vays, seized Kandhar and killed Giorgi. After Mir Vays's death in 1127/1715, his brother Abul Aziz succeeded him as chief of the Gilzay Afghans. In 1128/1716, Mehmud, the eldest son of Mir Vays, became the chief of Gilzay Afghans and attacked Kirman. Shah Hussain had to leave Ispahan for Qazwin, therefore, Mehmud took chance to march ahead, and subdued a small military unit and occupied Ispahan in 1134/1722.

In 1127/1715, the Tzar Peter the Great, sent Artemii Petrovich Volynsky as an ambassador to Shah Hussain; he was to conclude a commercial treaty with Iran. He also collected secrecy of Iranian resources and important communication. Volynsky reported that the general situation in Iran was so disturbed, and the army so demoralized and inefficient, that the country could easily be conquered by a small Russian army. By 1133/1721, if not

before, the Tzar had decided to invade Iran. He showing of the flag in the Caspian coastal provinces in 1134/1722 had occasioned great alarm in Istanbul, and there was a flurry of diplomatic activity as the possibility of war between Russia and Turkey became stronger or receded. The outcome was the Russo-Ottoman Treaty for the partition of Iran's north-west provinces, dated June 24, 1724. The dismemberment of Iran was short-lived. Six Russian battalions landed in Gilan in 1135/1723, and another Russian forces captured Baku. Hence, Iran's Caspian provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran and Astrabad had gone in the Russian pocket. On the other side, the European merchants started their dominion on the principal sea-ports of the Muslim countries.

Imam Kassim Ali was made the governor of Kirman in 1106/1694, but when the Baluchi tribesmen had raided Kirman in 1110/1698, the military control was assigned to the Georgian prince Giorgi XI by making him the governor of those parts of Kirman which had been affected by the invaders.

In Kirman, the village land was factorized into six shares (*dang*), each of which comprised one-sixth of the village water supply together with the land watered thereby. Imam Kassim Ali was the governor of the three villages, viz. Shahr-i Babak, Kahek and Mahallat. The Safavid authority accorded him due permission to create an Ataullahi regiment in the Safavid military for security against the Baluchi invaders.

In 1134/1722, an appalling drought reduced the inhabitants of Kirman and Ispahan to the last extremity. It was so severe that hundreds of rotting corpses clogged the streets. At least 80,000 people are said to have perished from starvation and disease. It is learnt that a bulk of the Ismaili from Fars with the governor started from Ispahan to help the affected persons, but Mehmd, the chief of Gilzay Afghans had occupied Ispahan on December 25, 1722 and was proclaimed as a ruler, therefore, the Ismailis could not enter the city.

### **Decline of the Safavids**

Shah Tahmasp II, the son of Shah Hussain ascended in 1134/1722 at Qazwin. He fled to Tabriz when Qazwin was



shakened by the Afghans. The people of Qazwin repelled the Afghans. Mahmud however put to death many high officials and nobles, notably 3000 Kizilbash guards; cracking down the very backbone of the Safavid military. Thus suddenly was the whole fabric of the Safavid kingdom, bringing to an inglorious end. Mehmud was overthrown by his 26 years old cousin, called Ashraf in 1137/1725. At the time of his accession, Ashraf found himself in possession of Ispahan, Persian Irak, Fars, Kirman, Sistan, Qumis and western Khorasan. Shah Tahmasp II was the ruler of Qazwin and Mazandaran. In 1141/1729, Ashraf attacked the Safavids, but was defeated by Nadir Quli Beg, or Nadir Shah of Khorasan, the Safavid commander. He took possession of Ispahan and reinstated the Safavid monarchy by placing Shah Tahmasp II on the throne. Nadir then also drove away the Abdalis of Khorasan, and at last, he was made the chief commander of the Safavid military. These were the first outward signs that the tide had at last turned in Tahmasp favour, but a great deal had yet to be done.

In 1144/1732, just over two and a half years after Shah Tahmasp II had mounted the throne as a result of the restoration of the Safavid monarchy, he was forced by Nadir to abdicate in favour of his infant son Abbas III. Hence, Shah Tahmasp II spent the remainder of his unhappy and frustrated life in captivity. In 1148/1736, Shah Tahmasp II was joined by his son Shah Abbas III in prison when Nadir deposed him and captured the throne himself. Four years later, Shah Tahmasp II and his two sons Shah Abbas III and Ismail were put to death. Thus, Nadir Shah proclaimed the foundation of the Afsharid dynasty in 1148/1736.

Shah Ismail (1500-1524) had established the Safavid empire in Iran in 905/1500, which came to an end in 1148/1736 after a rule of about 236 years, from the time of Imam Abuzar Ali. (d. 915/1509) to Imam Abul Hasan Ali (d. 1206/1792).

Imam Kassim Ali remained as a governor of Kirman for some times, and he came to Mahallat in 1204/1790. In Mahallat, he purchased many estates for his family, where he was very popular. In Mahallat, it is related that the Imam frequently arranged convivial parties at his residence. He used to invite the nobles and officials on every year during the celebrations of Eid-i Ghadir and Navroz. He

died in Mahallat in 1143/1730 and was buried there. He had many sons, but the prominent among them were Abul Hasan Ali, the successor and Mirza Muhammad Bakir.

It must be noted that the first important move in the study of Ismailism had appeared in Europe in 1697, with the posthumous encyclopaedic work of a French scholar, Barthelemy d'Herbelot de Molainville (1625-1695). He was more accurately able to identify the Ismailis in Europe.

#### **ABUL HASAN ALI (1143-1206/1730-1792)**

Abul Hasan Ali was also known as Sayed Shah Muhammad Hasan Shah, Hasan Beg and Abul Hasan Ali Shah. He was born in Shahr-i Babak in Kirman. The Iranian sources named him, Abul Hasan Kaheki, a name mostly was popular among the inhabitants of Kahek, whom he generously helped for about two times. One of the ways he utilised his wealth was to serve delicious dishes strewn with ample varieties of food to the hungry and needy while he himself would seldom taste it.

Abul Hasan was the governor of Kirman during the Afsharid and Zand periods. It seems almost appropriate to mention that Abul Hasan Ali was the first Ismaili Imam after the fall of Alamut in emerging slowly from obscurity. He was highly learned and a friend of the local Sufis. He had also patronized the local artists. Few chambers of the Imam's residence are reported to have been decorated with the rare collection of the Iranian paintings.

He was a prominent land-owner (*Sahib amlak wa raqabat*) in Kirman. According to "*Athar-i Muhammadi*" (p. 70), "When the Afghans had launched terrible raids in Iran, Imam Abul Hasan Ali had laid the foundation of a strong edifice of the fort in Kiab on the shore of Hibala and Depine, lying between Rugan and Jinjan, where he lodged after its completion."

#### **The rise of the Afsharids in Iran**

Nadir, the last great Asiatic conqueror was born in 1102/1688 in Afshar tribe of Khorasan. The word *afshar* (derived from Turkish *awshar*) means "one who promptly



finishes an affair." He was the son of a certain Imam Quli, and was tending flocks after his father's death. He and his mother were carried off by a raiding band of Uzbek of Khiva in 1114/1702, where four years later, his mother died in slavery. Nadir escaped and returned to Khorasan, and became a leader of the plundering band. He entered into the service of Baba Ali Beg, the chief of Abivard, and married to his daughter. After the death of Baba Ali Beg, Nadir became the chief of Abivard. In 1138/1726, the Safavid Shah Tahmasp II learnt his valour, and acquired his help to repel the Gilzay Afghans from Iran. Nadir readily responded the call and came with his troop of 5000 Kurd and Afshar warriors. He was hailed and honored, and was granted the title of **Tahmasp Quli Khan**. Nadir took field against the Gilzay Afghans by commanding the Safavid army, and inflicted them a defeat. Shah Tahmasp II rejoiced on Nadir's role, and appointed him a chief commander (**qurchi-bashi**). In 1144/1732, Nadir deposed Shah Tahmasp II and crowned the latter's son Shah Abbas III. In 1148/1736, Nadir also deposed Shah Abbas III, and assumed the power, and thus he got the declination of the Safavid empire. He established the Afsharid rule in Iran, and fought with the Afghans and dominated Iran like Taymurlame. He also fought with the Turks and captured Iraq and Azerbaijan. Nadir was a brave and so was cruel and fierce like Chinghiz Khan and Taymurlame. Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi writes in "**A Socio-Intellectual History of the Isna Ashari**" (Lucknow, 1986, 2nd vol., p. 51) that, "Nadir Shah, as a fierce fighter and ruthless restorer of law and order, can be compared with Jinghiz and Timur."

It appears that Abul Hasan Ali had also maintained his best of ties with Nadir, and the seat of his governorship in Kirman coming from the period of the Safavids, remained intact during the Afsharid rule. When Nadir had been in Kirman in 1160/1747, according to "**Athar-i Muhammadi**" (p. 73), "Imam invited him at his residence and presented many valuable gifts." After Nadir, his successor Shah Rukh also retained his relation with Imam. John R. Perry writes in "**Karim Khan Zand**" (Chicago, 1979, pp. 135-6) that, "Abu'l-Hasan enjoyed the respect of all the leading citizens and even the provincial warlords and would seem the perfect choice for beglerbegi (governor-general) now that Kirman was relatively settled. On his appointment, therefore, Mirza Hosayn, Mortaza Qoli Khan, and the other local rulers meekly handed over their provinces to him. No details of his administration are recorded; he probably

re-allocated the regions to several local khans and used his moral rather than military authority to check injustice. He remained on good terms with the leading men of the bureaucratic class, consulting them readily in matters of government." John R. Perry also adds, "After Nader's death, Sayyed Abu'l Hasan took a winter residence in Kirman itself, retaining his house at Babak for the summer. Shahrokh Khan accorded him great respect, even marrying his son Lotf Ali Khan to the Sayyed's (Imam's) daughter." (Ibid. p. 135)

Nadir, as previously stated, was a fierce ruler, grinding the people in the millstone of cruelty, which can be judged from his massacres in Kirman in 1160/1747. L. Lockhart writes in "**Nadir Shah**" (London, 1938, p. 259) that, "On 10th Moharram, 1160/ January 23, 1747, Nadir left Ispahan for Yazd and Kirman; wherever he halted, he had many people tortured and put to death, and had towers of their heads erected. He was particularly severe in Kirman, because of the revolt that had occurred there in the previous summer. Captain Passiet, a member of Prince Mikhail Mikhailovich Golitzin's mission to Persia, who had travelled on in advance and was in Kirman at that time, saw two lofty towers of heads there."

### **Nadir's operations against India**

In India, after the death of emperor Aurengzeb in 1707, the next Mughal rulers who followed him one after another were Bahadur Shah (1707-1712), Jahandar Shah (1712-1713), Farukh Siyar (1713-1719) and Muhammad Shah (1719-1748), in whose time, Nadir had conducted his expedition to India. Nadir set out from Nadirabad for Ghazna on May 21, 1738 and crossed the Indian frontiers with a gigantic army. He crossed Khyber Pass and reached Peshawar, and left it on January 6, 1739 for Lahore after passing through Wazirabad and Jhelum. He set off from Lahore on February 6, 1739 and proceeded to Sirhind, where he heard that the Mughal king Muhammad Shah had reached Karnal with 3 lac soldiers and 2000 elephants with a large deposit of cannon. Nadir ordered Nasrullah Mirza on February 24, 1739 to march from Janna for Karnal, and he himself advanced in between Janna and Ali Mardan Canal.

The tradition relates that Imam Abul Hasan Ali had also accompanied Nadir during the operations, but it cannot be



substantiated in the Indian sources. We may safely infer that Abul Hasan Ali would have joined the regiment of Nasrullah Mirza in the operations of Karnal, had he accompanied.

The Khokar tribe in Punjab were originally the Ismailis, who thickly resided in Hazara, Rawalpindi, Attock and Jhelum districts at that time. Marikala, modern Marigala, situated in a pass of the low hills between Attock and Rawalpindi, a few miles to the east of Hasan Abdal, was the main foothold of the Khokars. Mukarrab Khan, the chief of Khokar tribe did not fight with the army of Nasrullah Mirza, and joined him in the battle of Karnal in 1152/1739. As a reward of his useful services, Mukarrab Khan had been confirmed with the hold of the fort of Pharwala, and upon his return to Kabul on November 24, 1739, Nadir had invested him the title of *Nawab*.

Nadir finally entered Delhi without opposition on March 20, 1739 and pillaged the accumulated treasure of the Mughal empire till it depleted. He took away huge money, jewels, diamonds and gold for the worth of about 70 crore of rupees, including the famous pea-cock throne and Koh-i Noor diamond. James Fraser in "*History of Nadir Shah*" (London, 1742, p. 193) and Abdul Aziz in "*The Imperial Treasury of the Indian Mughals*" (Lahore, 1942, p. 554) write that, "Nadir carried away the treasure to the value of 70 crores (87,500,000 sterlings) in jewels and other effects; and his officers and soldiers 10 crores (12,500,000 sterlings)." He departed from Delhi on May 16, 1739 and reached Kabul on December 2, 1739. The Delhi was attacked in its archilles heel and collapsed as thoroughly as a heap of cards. Thus, Nadir left the Mughal empire *bleeding and prostrate* under his heels. Sir Alfred Lyall writes in "*History of India*" (1893, 8th vol., p. 78) that, "Nadir Shah added one more massacre to the blood-strained annals of that ill-fated city, wrenched away from the imperial crown all its possession west of the Indus and departed home leaving the Mughal empire which had received its death blow in a state of mortal collapse."

Nadir quitted Kabul on December 9, 1739 and entered India once again to plunder Sind. He reached Dera Ismail Khan on January 5, 1740 and at Larkana on February 12, 1740 and pillaged gold, jewels and pearls amounting over one crore rupees from the ruler of Sind. Nadir left Sind on April 10, 1740. To this we must add the likelihood that Abul

Hasan Ali had availed chance to see his followers privily in Sind, provided the tradition of his company is genuine. If so, he should have seen his followers when Nadir was hunting booty between January and April, 1740.

Nadir thus dominated Iran, Afghanistan and India. In Iran, he tried to solve differences of *Usuli* and *Akhbari* groups and also endeavoured to have the Jafari *fiqah* accepted as a fifth *fiqah* in the Sunni framework of the four schools of law. He also tried to overcome the Sunni theologians. Nadir was a brave campaigner, and so was cruel and proud, and had executed a large number of innocent people. He was at last killed in his tent near Mashhad in 1160/1747.

Immediately after the murder of Nadir, the Afghan and Turkoman leaders in Afsharid military collided each other for the treasures pillaged in India. Ahmad Shah Abdali (1747-1773) lastly succeeded to take away the whole lot to Kandhar and established the Dhurrani rule in Afghanistan in 1160/1747. In Iran, the southern Caucasus and Azerbaijan had been captured by the Afghan general called, Azad Khan. Another leader, Ali Mardan Khan occupied Ispahan, and Karim Khan Zand took Fars and Laristan.

Ali Quli Khan was the second Afsharid ruler, known as Adil Shah (1747-1748), the nephew of Nadir Shah; who ruled Khorasan. His brother Ibrahim (d.1161/1748) became the third ruler for few months. Shah Rukh, the son of Nadir escaped from prison at that time, and attacked on Khorasan, and became the fourth ruler for few months. He was deprived of his sight by his own Khorasani chiefs, and Murad Khan had been proclaimed as the fifth ruler. Murad Khan was also blinded, and once again the blind Shah Rukh was placed on the throne, who ruled till 1210/1795.

### **Rise of the Zands**

In sum, Iran was dominated by three rules at that time. Muhammad Hussain Qajar possessed northern region. The southern area was under the control of Karim Khan Zand, and Khorasan on eastern area was ruled by the Afsharids. Muhammad Hussain Qajar had been killed, and Karim Khan Zand took over the power of whole Iran, including Khorasan; and founded the rule of Zand dynasty in Iran in 1163/1750.



Karim Khan Zand (1163-1193/1750-1779) had a friendly relation with Imam Abul Hasan Ali and his brother Pir Mirza Muhammad Bakir. Mirza Hussain Khan, the governor of Kirman treated the Imam with great respect, who charged certain towns and districts of Kirman under the control of the Imam. Later on, Karim Khan Zand appointed the Imam as the Beglarbegi of Kirman in 1170/1756. According to "**The Cambridge History of Iran**" (London, 1991, 7th vol., p. 85), "Eventually, Karim Khan appointed as beglerbegi an Ismaili Sayyid, Abul Hasan Ali Shah Mahallati, well respected locally for piety and generosity. His moral authority overrode the petty squabbles of the regional military governors, and his ample private income precluded any necessity for extortion or peculation."

The title *beglarbegi* means "Governor General", a term derived from Turkish *beylerbeyi* means "chief of the chief." In Iran, the Beglarbegi governed three subordinate governors of a province, including deputy governor and lesser officials.

Karim Khan Zand died in 1193/1779, and Iran once again disintegrated. His brother Zaki Khan declared Muhammad Ali, the second son of Karim Khan, and his son-in-law as the second ruler of the Zands. Afterwards, Abul Fateh Khan, the elder son of Karim Khan was made a joint ruler with Muhammad Ali.

Meanwhile, a certain Aga Muhammad Khan Qajar escaped and reached to Mazandaran, and took charge of his tribe in Astrabad, and declared his rule in 1193/1779 immediately after the death of Karim Khan Zand. Zaki Khan dispatched his forces in command of his nephew, called Ali Murad Khan against Aga Muhammad Khan. Instead of fighting with Aga Muhammad Khan, he himself rebelled against the Zands, and captured Ispahan. He levied high taxes on the landlords and put to death who refused. He also tortured many persons, and once he is said to have thrown out 18 persons from his window to a ditch. The people in Ispahan rebelled, and killed Zaki Khan. Meanwhile, his brother Sadik Khan came in Shiraz and tore the eyes of Abul Fateh Khan from their sockets, and occupied Shiraz. In the succession disputes following Karim Khan Zand's death, the Imam is said to have lent his support to Sadik Khan, who was assisted in raising an army in Kirman. Sadik Khan restored the governorship of the Imam in Kirman. Imam's timely support to Sadik Khan had also avoided a massacre

of the Ismailis. Meanwhile, the border region between Kirman and Afghanistan, including Narmashir, was raided by the Afghan and Baluchi troops of Azam Khan, an *amir* from Kandhar. Azam Khan was subdued by the Imam's forces, consisted of 7000 soldiers in command of Mirza Sadik, the cousin of the Imam. Later on, Azam Khan ravaged the districts of Kirman from Narmashir and reached as far as the entrance of the city of Kirman. This time, Abul Hassan Ali himself commanded his forces from Shahr-i Babak and inflicted a defeat to Azam Khan outside Kirman.

Ali Murad Khan raided Shiraz and killed Sadik Khan, the brother of Zaki Khan in 1195/1781. Then followed Jafar Khan (1779-1785), the son of Sadik Khan, who defeated Aga Muhammad Khan Qajar many times. His son Lutf Ali Khan, the last ruler of the Zand dynasty attacked the rising power of the Qajarids in Ispahan in 1205/1790, but his advisor, Haji Ibrahim abandoned his side and joined Aga Muhammad Khan. Lutf Ali Khan proceeded to Sirjan, intending to occupy Shahr-i Babak and the stronghold of the Imam, guarded by the Ataullahi Ismailis. Abul Hasan Ali had fortified and well-provisioned fortress in Shahr-i Babak under the command of Mirza Sadik. Lutf Ali Khan failed to gain Shahr-i Babak, and committed massacres of the Ismailis in the localities. He advanced to the city of Kirman. On that junction, Abul Hasan Ali refused to allow his entry in the city, and reinforced the city's defence and prepared to withstand a long siege. After one day of the siege, the inhabitants of the city sent out the *Qadi* and *Shaikh al-Islam* to the camp of Lutf Ali Khan with an offering of 20,000 tumans, imploring him to raise the siege and postpone the occupation of the city.

Hasan-i Fasai compiled his "*Farsnama'yi Nasiri*" in 1314/1896 (tr. by Heribert Busse, London, 1972, pp. 37-8), who writes, "Lutf Ali Khan, however, was full of pride and said that he would not raise the siege before Seiyed Abu'l Hasan Khan Kaheki, the governor of Kirman, and all the nobles and aldermen had come out of the city to the encampment. When the qazi and Shaikh al-Islam returned unsuccessful to the city, Abu'l Hasan Khan took greater care in the defence of the fortress than he had done before. When the winter came and roads and paths were blocked by snow and rain, the camp was cut off from provisions. For some time the people in the camp were satisfied with eating the meat of horses and donkeys, and patiently endured snow and rain. When things, however,



became unbearable, the soldiers folded their tents and moved off. Lotf Ali Khan could not but do the same, and in the month of Jomadi I of that year (1205/January, February, 1791), he returned to Shiraz."

#### **Decline of the Zands and Rise of the Qajarids**

In Shiraz, Lutf Ali Khan also sought no entry due to the hold of Aga Muhammad Khan. He fought next year with the Qajars, and defeated them in 1206/1792. In 1209/1794, Lutf Ali Khan captured Kirman. Aga Muhammad Khan besieged it for six months. It is said that Pir Mirza Muhammad Bakir had given a shelter to Lutf Ali Khan in a fort, who was seriously injured and sought mercy. Lutf Ali Khan finally managed to escape from Kirman, to which Aga Muhammad Khan, while entering Kirman, had accused the local people to have helped in escaping Lutf Ali Khan. By the vengeance he was wreaking on the inhabitants of Kirman, and issued orders to deprive all the adult males of their life, or of their eyesight; and the females and children, to the number of twenty thousand, were granted as slaves to the soldiers. G.R.G. Hambly writes in **"Aga Mohammad Khan and the establishment of the Qajar Dynasty"** (*JRAS*, vol. L., January, 1963, p. 166) that, "Kerman was systematically ravaged for three months. Twenty thousand women and children were handed over to the army or sold as slaves. For the male population a different punishment was reserved and tradition relates that 7,000 eyes were brought to the conqueror, who personally counted them, informing the officer in charge of the operation: "Had one been missing, yours would have been taken!" As a memorial to the downfall of the Zand dynasty, a pyramid of skulls was erected in Bam on the spot where Lotf Ali Khan had been captured. Six hundred prisoners were executed in Kerman and their heads were carried to Bam by a further three hundred who were decapitated when they reached their destination. According to Henry Pottinger, this monument was still standing in 1810."

Lutf Ali Khan was arrested when he was about 25 years old. His eyes were torn from their sockets according to the tradition in Iranian kingdoms, and was executed in 1209/1794. With his death, the Zand dynasty had been declined in Iran, and Aga Muhammad Khan (1193-1212/1779-1797) founded the Qajarids empire.

In India, after the departure of Nadir, the Mughal empire in the time of Muhammad Shah (1719-1748) had absolutely become crippled. The constant expeditions of Ahmad Shah Abdali between 1161/1748 and 1181/1767 not only had broken down the backbone of the Mughal army, but also left the country economically collapsed. The next Mughal rulers on the throne of Delhi were Ahmed Shah (1748-1754) and Shah Alam II (1759-1806).

In upper Oxus, the Ismaili ruler in Shagnan, Mir Shah Amir Beg was a powerful ruler in Central Asia. He had left behind an inscription at Khorog, dating 1779 or 1780. His son Shah Wanji Khan had exiled the fire-worshippers from Shagnan, and extended his influence in Badakhshan and Chitral. His son Kubad Khan is reported to have violently harassed the local Ismailis followed by some disputes. He had been however driven out by his brother, Yousuf Ali Shah, the grandson of Kubad Khan, and became the next ruler in 1814. He also ruled the banks of Nahr Jaryab or Panj river.

In India, it may be noted that Multan had been a centre of the Shamsi Ismailis of Kashmir and Punjab, where the descendants of Pir Shams had served as the *vakils* of the Imam. In Sind and Kutchh, the descendant of Pir Dadu also worked as the *vakils*. While, the Kadiwal Sayeds were active in Kutchh and Sind, in which Sayed Ghulam Ali Shah, or Sayed Ghulmali Shah was most prominent. He initiated a bulk of the Hindus during the reign of Maharao Godmalji in Kutchh. Many other Indian *dais* and *vakils* are reported to have lived in the period under our review, whose names are known only through their *ginans*, viz., Sayed Fateh Ali Shah, Sayed Miran Mahdi, Sayed Miran Muhammad Shah, Sayed Ladha Shah, Sayed Kutabuddin, Sayed Aal-i Imam, Sayed Hussain etc.

During the time, a certain Mukhi Mehr Ali was an influential merchant in Sind. He visited Iran two times. It is said that he used to hospitalise the Indian pilgrims. He is also noted for renovating the shrine of Pir Shams in Multan in the time of Makhdum Jiwan Shah of Uchh in the year 1193/1779.

The Mughal emperor Aurengzeb (d. 1707) is reported to have persecuted the Ismailis in Gujrat and Sind, and most among them had taken refuge in Iran. Some among them returned afterwards, but many other settled in Kirman and died



there, whose graves still exist, giving dates in Khojki character. The grave of Aga Nihal, possibly a Kashmiri Ismaili, bears the date of 1722 and Kamadia Muhammad dates 1725. One unknown grave indicates the date of 1742. In Mahallat, the graves of Khoja Peeru and Kamadia Bhalu of Sind bear the date of 1705 and 1711 respectively.

It seems that Abul Hasan Ali had moved to Shahr-i Babak in Kirman, most possibly in 1158/1745, situated about 180 kilometers southwest of the main city of Kirman. The decision seems to have been motivated for the security of the Indian pilgrims, since the Bakhtiyari tribesmen committed banditry on the roads, terrorizing the highways. Ahmad Ali Khan Viziri (d. 1295/1878) writes in "**Tarikh-i Kirman**" (Tehran, 1973, p. 542) that, "During the chaotic conditions of Iran after the downfall of the Safavids, the Indian Ismailis who regularly travelled to Anjudan and Mahallat regions for seeing their Imam and remitting to him their religious dues, were often plundered and killed between Nain and Yazd by the Bakhtiyari tribesmen."

The Imam thus, had to move to Shahr-i Babak, a location closer to the Iranian Gulf ports and the main pilgrimage route. He acquired extensive properties in Shahr-i Babak, also erected a winter residence in the city of Kirman, where his daughter, Fakhru'z-Zaman died in 1170/1756. He is also reported to have spent generously colossal money for the benefit of the people of Kirman, which enhanced his popularity. His fame in Kirman can be estimated from the fact that he was able to continue his governorship of Kirman when the Zand dynasty disintegrated upon Karim Khan's death in 1193/1779, and henceforth, the Imam ruled over Kirman independently.

Sayed Fateh Ali Shah (d. 1212/1798), an Indian *wakil* had visited Shahr-i Babak to see the Imam, and made its brief description in his one extant *ginan* that: "*The Lord resides in the western land as an Iranian. He speaks Persian in northern Iran (sheter deep). His residence is in Shahr-i Babak, and his name is Shah Abul Hasan Ali in elegant form.*"

Sind was noted for the great Sufi saint at that time, called Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (1102-1165/1688-1751), who stood at the parting of the ways between the rule of the Mughals and that of the Kalhora dynasty. When emperor

Aurengzeb died, Shah Abdul Latif was a youth of 18 years of age, and saw the rise of the early Kalhora to power. He was about 50 years old when Nadir Shah sacked Delhi and made Sind tributary to Iran. The collection of his Sufic poetry is called "**Risalo**". There are certain features of the poems of Shah Abdul Latif, which make it desirable to consider the possible influence of the *ginans* of Pir Saḍruddin upon him. His ancestors in the fourth generation before him was the famous mystic, Sayed Abdul Karim, who is also known to have been influenced with the teachings of the Ismaili Pir. The sayings of Sayed Abdul Karim had a great impact on the mind of Shah Abdul Latif, who himself fed on the poetry of his great forbear and many verses of his poems are included in his poetry.

When Abul Hasan Ali had left for Shahr-i Babak in 1158/1745, he had been succeeded as a governor of Kirman by his cousin, Mirza Sadik. In 1206/1792, Aga Muhammad Khan seized Shiraz and sent his nephew, Fateh Ali to conquer Kirman. Fateh Ali occupied Kirman, and replaced Mirza Sadik, and himself became the governor of the provinces of Fars, Kirman and Yazd.

When Aga Muhammad Khan had massacred a large number of the local inhabitants in Kirman, the Ismailis were however spared in the operation. The Ismaili Sayed families and the relative of the Imam, living in Shahr-i Babak were allowed to repair to Kahek, where Aga Muhammad Khan gave them new pieces of land to compensate for what they had left behind in Kirman city; and assigned them according to the rank emoluments (*wazifa*) and pay (*mostamarri*).

Imam Abul Hasan Ali's first historical debut in the Iranian sources is recorded from the event of the seize of Kirman by Lutf Ali Khan in 1205/1791. His death is also recorded in the contemporary sources as 1206/1792 under the name of Sayed Abul Hasan Ali Shah Mahallati Kaheki. He had however passed his whole life in Shahr-i Babak, but his death took place in Mahallat on May 23, 1792, and was interred in Najaf.



## **KHALILULLAH ALI II (1206-1233/1792-1817)**

Khalilullah Ali II was born in 1153/1740 in the city of Kirman. His upbringing in Mahallat began under the care of his uncle, Mirza Muhammad Bakir at the age of two years, and got rudiments of his formal education at home.

### **Bibi Marium Khatoon**

In 1157/1744, a daughter Bibi Marium Khatoon, was born at his uncle's home, known as Bibi Sarcar Mata Salamat, with whom the marriage of Khalilullah Ali was solemnized, who gave birth of Hasan Ali Shah. She was a good orator and visited India about at the age of 85 years in 1245/1829 with Mirza Abul Kassim to remove the internal strifes of the community. She went to live at Kera in Kutchh in 1246/1830, where she breathed her last in 1248/1832. She had been interred in Najaf, but her memorial still exists in Kera. It must be known that during his visit to Kera on December 2, 1903, the Aga Khan III had told to his followers to perpetuate the memory of the place where she laid her feet and breathed her last.

The second marriage of Khalilullah Ali had been actualized in Yazd with the sister of Aga Imam Khan Farahani in 1231/1816.

Khalilullah Ali ascended in 1206/1792, which he intimated in writing to his Indian followers. E.I. Howard had delivered his speech in the Bombay High Court in June, 1866, where he presented a few letters of Imam Khalilullah Ali, vide **"The Shia School of Islam and its Branches"** (Bombay, 1906, p. 85). In pursuant, on 23rd May, 1792, when assumed the Imamate, he wrote a letter, addressed to the community of Bhavnagar, stating that he had been so fortunate as to have assumed his seat on the throne of the Imamate, and directed them to remit the religious dues to him to the care of the jamat at Muscat. Another letter dated July, 1794 also addressed to the jamats of Sind, Kutchh, Surat, Bombay, Mahim, Bhavnagar etc.

Khalilullah Ali was a brave and generous. It is related in **"Athar-i Muhammadi"** (pp 76-77) that a *darwish* asked something from Imam, and he was given a costly horse. Hunting was a favourite pastime of the noblemen in Iran. Khalilullah Ali also used to go out on regular hunting

trips in the woods with his retainers and pages, preferably during the festives of Navroz and Eid-i Ghadir. He had many lands in Mahallat, Kahek and Shahr-i Babak, procuring large earnings. His followers from India, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan and Central Asia used to flock at Mahallat, whom he granted the title of *darwish*. Sometimes, he gave them the letters for the jamat. Some pilgrims are reported to have died in Iran, whose graves exist in Kahek. For instance, Kamadia Datardina Wandani of the darkhana jamat died in 1217/1803 and a certain Rai Pareo Janguani died in 1224/1810. Khalilullah Ali had acquired few pieces of land in Yazd for the Iranian Ismailis, and himself also moved to Yazd in 1230/1815.

Sayed Karamali Shah was an Iranian Ismaili, who lived in Mahallat. He mostly remained in the company of Mirza Muhammad Bakir, who taught him the esoteric doctrines of Ismailism. Sayed Karamali had been sent to Badakhshan and Chitral, where he launched pervasive mission. He also went to Yasin, whose ruler was Raja Khushwaqt I (1640-1700), the founder of Khushwawaqt dynasty. Sayed Karamali had devoted his life in the Ismaili mission and died in Yasin.

Aga Muhammad Khan Qajar had founded the Qajarid dynasty in Iran and made Tehran as his capital in 1210/1796. He concluded a truce with the Russians, and accordingly, the Qajarid retained the occupation of Jurjan and Taghlas. In 1206/1792, Aga Muhammad Khan seized Shiraz and sent his nephew, Fateh Ali to conquer Kirman. Fateh Ali replaced Mirza Sadik, the cousin of Imam Abul Hasan Ali, and himself became the governor of the provinces of Fars, Kirman and Yazd.

Aga Muhammad Khan then turned to the Afsharids of Khorasan, and invaded Mashhad in 1210/1796 and defeated them. Meanwhile, the Russians once again attacked the northern region of Iran, therefore, Aga Muhammad Khan had to take field, where he was killed by his own two slaves in 1211/1797, when he was about 57 years old. He ruled over a great part of Iran for a period of 18 years and 10 months, and was succeeded by his nephew, Fateh Ali Shah, who was engaged in expelling his enemies at that time, such as Russia, Turkey, the Uzbeks and Afghans. France and England had also attacked the Iranian ports and borders for extending their influences.



## The Perso-Russian Wars

The most marked instance of the political involvement of the Shia *ulema* during this period was in the case of the first Perso-Russian War (1804-1813) in the Caucasus, which had been intermittent from about 1804, and resumed in 1811. Abbas Mirza, the son of Fateh Ali Shah was conducting the campaign, turned to the *ulema* of Iraq and Ispahan to issue *fatwa*, declaring the encounter against Russia to be holy war (*jihad*). Many of the prominent *ulema*, such as Shaikh Jafar Kashiful Gitta (d. 1227/1812) and Ahmad Naraqi (d. 1245/1829), responded to this appeal and stirred up hootest agitation. In 1812, the Iranian army defeated the Russians at Qarabagh. Russian forces were reinforced, crossed the Aras river, and defeated the Iranians at Aslanduz.

The first Perso-Russian War was consequently ended in defeat of Iran, and the Treaty of Gulistan in 1228/1813 stripped Iran of all the Caucasian provinces, such as Georgia, Darband, Baku, Shirwan, Shaki, Ganja, Qarabagh, Mughan and part of Talish. This war had considerably depleted the resources of Iran. A number of disorders broke out; and the Afghans also engineered a rebellion in Khorasan in 1813. There was also repeated chaotic condition on the Turkish frontier, but war did not break out until 1821. It however lasted until 1823 when it was concluded by the treaty of Erzurum.

The *ulema* class however continued to employ effectively the tactics of obstructionism in the Iranian politics, and emphatically agitated for another holy war against Russia. In 1825, the Russian governor-general of Georgia occupied Gokcheh, the principal disputed district with a military force. Fateh Ali Shah was reluctant but when in 1826 he set out for his summer residence in Sultaniyya, he was followed there by Aqa Sayed Muhammad Tabataba, Ahmad Naraqi (d. 1245/1829), Muhammad Taqi Baraghani (d.1230/1847) and other prominent *ulema*; demanded that Fateh Ali Shah should declare war on Russia. They threatened to take control of the affairs of government if Fateh Ali Shah would refuse to declare holy war. They issued *fatwas*, declaring the war to be obligatory and opposition to it a sign of unbelief (*kufir*).

The king was pressed into acquiescing, and the war broke out in 1826. Iran gained initial success, recovering most of the territories ceded by the treaty of Gulistan. The Russian forces were reinforced with latest weapons. The *ulema* imparted to the Iranian soldiers, who had inferior weapons, to recite Sura Yasin of Holy Koran in the battlefield, to cause their enemies blind. The Russians inflicted a series of severe defeats on the Iranian army. They advanced rapidly and Tabriz was first to be fallen, and various discontented leaders in Azerbaijan went over to the Russian side. The outcome of this second Perso-Russian War was as disastrous as the first. Negotiations for peace began in November, 1827, and a treaty was signed on February 21, 1828 at Turkomanчай. As the result of the Treaty of Turkomanчай, Erivan and Nakhchivan and a large indemnity were ceded by Iran. Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi writes in "**Iran - Royalty, Religion and Revolution**" (Canberra, 1980, p. 95) that, "Thus the war-mongering bureaucrats forced upon Iran a war with Russia which ended with the even more humiliating treaty of Turkomanчай in 1828."

The state over which Fateh Ali reigned had much in common with the earliest kingdoms of the Seljuqs, the Ilkhanids, the Taymurids and the Safavids. After the Perso-Russian Wars, Fateh Ali lost large part of the Iranian territories.

In India, the Mughal empire was declining, and the British dominated the whole country. After Shah Alam II (1759-1806), the next rulers were Akbar Shah (1807-1837) and Bahadur Shah II (1837-1857), the last ruler, who had taken part in the Independence War of 1273/1857, the last struggle on the part of the masses in India to throw off the foreign yoke. But it failed miserably and, on the charge of engineering revolt, the last Mughal ruler was exiled by the British to Rangoon, where he died in extreme penury on 1278/1862. Neither the Muslims nor the Hindus were destined in India to build lasting kingdom on the ruins of the Mughal empire.

#### **Khalilullah Ali in European sources**

Khalilullah Ali resided in Mahallat. He came to live in Kahek after assumption of the Imamate in 1206/1792 where he stayed for about 23 years. The Ismailis of Syria, Iran



and India flocked in Mahallat, and then in Kahek. His uncle Mirza Muhammad Bakir also lived in Mahallat.

Some contemporary European travellers have reported the whereabouts of Khalilullah. L.J. Rousseau (1780-1831), a French Consul in Aleppo from 1809 to 1816, was the first person to draw the attention of the Europeans to the existence of the contemporary Ismailis and their living Imam. He writes in **"Memoire sur les Ismaelitis et les Nosairis de Syrie"**, (Vol. XIV, 1811, Paris, pp. 279-80) that, "There were still many Ismailis in the country who owed allegiance to an Imam of the line of Ismail. His name was Shah Khalilullah, and he resided in a village called Kehk near Qumm, half-way between Tehran and Isfahan."

Sir John Macdonnell Kinnear (1728-1830) about the year 1813 also described in his **"Topographical History of Persia"** that, "In the district of the Persian highlands especially near the ruins of Alamut, are still to be found a remnant of the Ismailis, who go by the name of Hooseinis ... the Ismailis of Persia recognize (Shah Khalilullah) as their chief and Imam, dwelling near Kehkt whose descent they deduce from Ismail, the son of Jaffir Sadick."

The Scottish tourist, James Baillie Fraser (1783-1856), who in the course of his journey through Iran had seen the Ismailis. "Shah Khuleel Oollah", he writes in his **"Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan"** (London, 1825, p. 376), "was a person of high respectability and great influence, keeping an hundred gholaams of his own in pay; but he was put to death by the inhabitants of Yezd, in a riot...."

Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838), an eminent orientalist of the 19th century in his **"Memoir sur la dynastie des Assassins"** (Paris, 1818, p. 84) quotes an excerpt of a letter of Rousseau's son wrote to him from Tehran on June 1, 1808. It reads: "The Ismailis even today have their Imam, or pontiff, descending, as they claim, from Jafar Sadiq, the chief of their sect, and residing at Kehk, a village in the districts of Qom. He is called Sheikh Khalil Allah.... This person, whom his people grace with the pompous title of caliph, enjoys a great reputation and is considered to have the gift of performing miracles."

In Syria, the Ismailis faced certain local troubles around 1209/1795 due to the constant raids of the bigoted Nusairis of Raslan. Most of the Ismaili families led by the chief *dai*, Suleman bin Hyder (1143-1212/1731-1798) were obliged to leave Masiyaf and settled down in Hims, Hammah, Aleppo and Damascus. In 1222/1808, the Nusairis at the command of Shaikh Mahmud also killed an Ismaili chief of Masiyaf, Mustapha Mulhim and his son, alongwith 300 inhabitants, and their inroads continued till 1223/1809. This event also reflects in the hyperbolic writings of Simone Assemani (1752-1821) in the year 1214/1806. L.J. Rousseau (1780-1831) had also underlined the miserable conditions of the Syrian Ismailis in his "Memoirs" (Paris, 1811). The inhabitants, who had sought refuge in flight, applied for protection to Yousuf Pasha, the governor of Damascus. He sent a punitive expedition of 5000 soldiers against the Nusairis. At length, Masiyaf had to be surrendered by the Nusairis after three months' stubborn resistance, and the Ismailis returned to the town after restoration of peace in the beginning of 1224/1810.

Sayed Ghulam Ali Shah, or Ghulmali Shah from the Kadiwal family was a prominent missionary in Sind, Kutchh and Kathiawar. He had converted many Hindus. He composed few *ginans*, and died in Karachi in 1207/1792 and was buried in Kera in Kutchh. He was followed by Sayed Muhammad Shah in Kutchh, who died in 1228/1813 and was buried in Bombay. He was the last *vakil* in India to be sent from Iran. He was not married, therefore, he was honoured the epithet of *dullah* (bridegroom).

It appears that two persons, called Mehr Ali and Saniya in Kutchh had claimed as the incarnations of Chandrabhan and Surban, the famous *dais* during the time of Pir Shams. They preached the doctrines of Imam-Shahi sect. Khalilullah Ali is said to have summoned them in Mahallat and warned to refrain from their activities. Few years after their return from Iran, they once again misguided the Ismailis in Kutchh and pretended as dumbs. They started to talk after few months, claiming to have been granted the vocal power by Sayed Imam Shah. The Ismailis of Kutchh sent a report of their activities to the Imam, and as a result, they had been ex-communicated.

Sayed Fateh Ali Shah (1733-1798) was an eminent *dai*, whose grave exists near Jiraq in Sind. His pen-name was Shamsi,



also known as Sayed Shamsi. He was hailed from Kadiwal family. Imam Abul Hasan Ali had given him mantle of *vakil* for India. He seems to have visited Iran for two times, and lastly in 1210/1795, during the time of Khalilullah Ali, where he stayed about for eight months. He arrived in Mahallat on the day of Navroz and his mind became forlorn when he learnt that the Imam had gone on a hunting expedition in the woods to the north of Mahallat. He relates his quest for the Imam which ultimately led to his meeting. His two *ginans* are accessible, wherein he makes mention of the Imam that:-

*"Shah Khalilullah enjoys his stay in the fort of Mahallat, and mercifully summoned Sayed Fateh Ali, and accomplished his immense desires, where Mawla Ali appeared in an absolute glory."*

#### **Khalilullah Ali in Yazd**

Yazd in early times had been known as *Kathah*, and this name, when the town came to be called more particularly *Yazd*, had passed to its district, otherwise known as the *Esmanah*, or *Jumah* (of Yazd). It is situated between Ispahan and Kirman on the route leading to Baluchistan and Sind. It was well fortified city, with two gates.

In 1230/1815, Khalilullah Ali moved to Yazd. On moving to Yazd, he left behind his wife and children in Kahek to live on the proceeds from the lands in the Mahallat. In 1231/1816, Khalilullah Ali betrothed to the sister of Aga Imam Khan Farahani. Khalilullah Ali also tied his close relation with Haji Zaman Khan, the governor of Yazd. The Ismaili pilgrims henceforward began to trek in Yazd to behold their Imam.

In 1233/1817, a dispute took place between the Ismailis and the local shopkeeper at the main market, and the latter violently lodged complaint to Nawab Mirza Sayed Jafar, the chief of Yazd, who summoned the Ismailis for punishment. These handful Ismailis had taken shelter in Imam's residence. In pursuit, Nawab Mirza demanded to arrest them, but Imam refused, saying, "They have sought asylum at my residence, therefore I cannot remove them from my protection."

Mulla Hussain Yazdi was a cruel and fanatical Shia in Yazd. His friends had created chaotic conditions in Tehran. They had made a mosque in Tehran as a centre of their evil activities. Their objective was to harass the innocent citizens, and relieved through bribes, had they arrested. It seems that Fateh Ali Shah was in need of funds through different means, therefore, he had given liberty to these elements. Many eminent persons had become the victims of the gang of Hussain Yazdi and the event of Yazd also reflects a part of his derogatory activities.

Hussain Yazdi instigated the people and stormed the Imam's residence with a terrorist gang, who pelted stones heavily and broke down its walls. They managed to enter the residence and fought with Imam's handful followers and servants. In the collision, Khalilullah Ali was seriously wounded, resulting his immediate death. The terrorists also gutted the house and took flight.

The news of the death of the Ismaili Imam rapidly spread all over the country within couple of days. In reprisal, the Ismailis took arms and the country was likely being blanketed with the darkest hour, but the emperor Fateh Ali Shah turned the tide. He at once ordered Haji Zaman Khan, the governor of Yazd to arrest Hussain Yazdi and his partisans. The governor soon afterwards arrested them while they were about to flee from the city, and sent them chained in Tehran. Hussain Yazdi was whipped and his friends were imprisoned, who relieved themselves through bribes after restoration of peace.

Khalilullah Ali's body had been taken to Mahallat under the protection of the Qajarid soldiers. His bier was soon taken to Najaf for interment. He had four sons, viz. Hasan Ali Shah, Taki Khan, Sardar Abul Hasan Khan and Sardar Muhammad Bakir Khan; and two daughters, viz. Shah Bibi and Gohar Taj.

With the death of Khalilullah Ali II in 1233/1817, the *taqiya* practice in the Iranian Ismailis being in force for over five hundred years came to an end, and they came up as a leading Shiite branch of Islam in Iran.



**HASAN ALI SHAH AGA KHAN I (1233-1298/1817-1881)**

Hasan Ali Shah, known as Muhammad Hussain al-Hussaini Mahallati was born in Mahallat on 1219/1804, and assumed the Imamate at the age of 13 years in 1233/1817. His most renowned title was *Aga Khan*. Jafar Rahimtoola writes in "*History of the Khojas*" (Bombay, 1905, p. 234) that his name was documented with Bombay Government as *His Highness Aga Khan Mahallati*. His name however in the Bill of 1830 had been written as *Pirsada* i.e., the son of a saint.

His mother Bibi Sarcar Mata Salamat was the daughter of Pir Mirza Muhammad Bakir. On moving to Yazd, Imam Khalilullah Ali had left his wife and children at Mahallat to live on the proceeds of the family holdings in Mahallat and Kahek. When she found herself insecure in Mahallat, she had gone to Qumm with his son and made necessary arrangement for his elementary schooling, where his tutor was Ali Muhammad Qummi. Hasan Ali Shah, the Aga Khan was a keen scholar in Islamic studies and Sufism was his favourite subject. He had also collected the works of the eminent Sufis of Iran, which he brought in India.

**The title of AGA KHAN**

The governors of Mahallat and Qumm were inimical to the family of Imam Khalilullah Ali because of the regular thronging of the Indian pilgrims at his residence. According to "*Ibrat-i Afza*", an autobiography of Hasan Ali Shah, "The fortunes of the family were at low ebb when Imam Shah Khalilullah was killed in Yazd." Hence, Bibi Sarcar Mata Salamat came to the court at Tehran with his son to seek justice. Her pleadings were immediately successful. Shah Fateh Ali ordered his governor of Yazd, Haji Muhammad Zaman Khan to arrest Hussain Yazdi and his gang. Not content with this retribution, he also invited Hasan Ali Shah at his palace and gave him due honour. Ahmad Mirza Adud'ud Dawla writes in "*Tarikh-i Adudi*" (Tehran, 1908, p. 69) that, "Finally, as conclusive sign of honour, Fateh Ali Shah gave one of his daughters, Sarvi Jahan Khanum, in marriage to Hasan Ali Shah, allotting

23,000 tumans of wedding expenses." Hasan Ali Shah had been also invested the honorific title of "**Aga Khan**" in 1234/1818, including the governorship of Mahallat and Qumm.

It seems that the ceremony to award the title had taken place in Qasr-i Qajar in Tehran. J.M. Tancoigne had been in the palace in 1807, describing its location four miles north of Tehran, vide "**Narrative of a Journey into Persia**" (London, 1820, p. 180). William Price also visited Tehran in 1817 and writes in "**Journal of the British Embassy to Persia**" (London, 1925, pp. 38-9) that, "The Takht-i Kajar, or Palace of Kajar, is a noble pile of building situated on an eminence, about half-way between Tehran and Sherman surrounded by beautiful gardens, to which an aqueduct conveys water from the mountains. The beauties of nature and art, richly blended, make this one of the most delightful residence in Persia." Sir Robert Ker Porter (1777-1842) had also visited Qasr-i Qajar in 1818 when Hasan Ali Shah was being crowned the title. He was full of admiration and writes in "**Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia**" (London, 1821, p. 335) that, "It stands on an eminently pleasant point of the adjoining mountains, being built on a detached and commanding hill, on the great slope of the Elborz. The edifice is lofty, and when seen from a distance, presents a very magnificent appearance."

In 1246/1834, the Syrian Ismailis received a devastating blow from an Ottoman expedition at the command of Ibrahim Pasha, who caused heavy damage to the Ismaili castles and villages. After a decade, an Ismaili chief amir Ismail bin Muhammad of Qadmus succeeded in restoring his authority over the large part of the Ismaili community. He procured close ties with the Ottoman authorities in the time of Sultan Abdul Majid I (d. 1277/1861). In 1843, amir Ismail bin Muhammad petitioned the Ottoman authorities to allow the scattered Ismailis to restore Salamia for their permanent settlement, which was granted. In 1850, the Ottomans also exempted the Ismailis from military service.

Nothing more is virtually known about the Aga Khan I between 1234/1818 and 1250/1834 except a few fragments. A glimpse of the Indian Ismailis of Kutchh in 1234/1818 can be however seen from a description of Captain James Macmurdo, the resident at Anjar, who writes in his "**Bombay**



**Literary Transactions**" (2nd vol., p. 232) that, "The Khoja is a Mohammaden cultivator, and frequently make a pilgrimage to a spot eight days march to the north-west of Ispahan, where they worship a living Peer or Saint (the Imam) to whom they pay an annual tax on their property." The Aga Khan seems to have been in close contact with the Indian Ismaili communities as is gauged from his different letters. One letter dated December 27, 1820 addressing to the jamats of Sind, Bombay, Kutchh, Surat and other places, stating that the Kamadia would deliver this letter to the jamats. Another letter on records of the Bombay Jamatkhana indicates a permission to build a new Jamatkhana at Bombay in 1820. There are few other letters of March, 1824, October 1825 and November, 1825 relating to the community affairs.

Hasan Ali Shah, the Aga Khan I led a peaceful life in Mahallat, and enjoyed honour at the Qajarid court until the death of Shah Fateh Ali. On 19th Jamada I, 1250/October 23, 1834, Shah Fateh Ali suddenly fainted and fell to the ground in his palace and died. He ruled 38 years, 5 months and 29 days. He was succeeded by his grandson, Muhammad Shah (1250-1264/1834-1848). The Aga Khan attended the coronation of Muhammad Shah in Tehran on January 31, 1835, where he happened to see Major Henry Rawlinson (1810-1895), vide George Rawlinson's **"Memoir of Sir Henry C. Rawlinson"** (London, 1892, p. 52). The new king Muhammad Shah had consulted with his chief minister, Qaim-maqam Farahani (d. 1251/1835) and appointed the Aga Khan as the governor of Kirman in 1251/1835.

The Aga Khan returned back to Mahallat, and upon his arrival, the celebrated Qajarid penegyrist Habib, known as Qa'ani (1807-1854), composed a *gasida* of fifteen lines, praising the excellences of the Imam, vide his **"Diwan"** (Tehran, 1957, pp. 180-1), whose opening lines run as under:-

***"Eternal life in the world were necessary,  
to sing one tenth of the Aga Khan's praise."***

The province of Kirman was then in the hands of the rebellious sons of Shuja al-Saltana, a pretender to the throne, and it was also regularly raided by the Afghans and Baluchis. The Aga Khan diplomatically restored order in Kirman with his own resources. Both Bam and Narmashir

held for a long time by the rebellions, were also taken back. The Aga Khan sent a report of his victories to Tehran, but he obtained no appreciative words due to the rumours that he was extending his influence in southern Iran. The Aga Khan had paid half the expenses incurred in the campaign upon the words of the prime minister, Mirza Aqasi that he might recoup himself from the revenues of that province, but the Aga Khan did not touch the revenues and made his claim in the aforesaid report. Despite his valuable services, his governorship was short-lived in Kirman.

In 1252/1837, about twenty months after his arrival in Kirman, the Aga Khan was replaced by another governor, Firuz Mirza Nusrat ad-Dawla, and was recalled to Tehran. Trusting on the rumours, Muhammad Shah also took field against the Aga Khan in command of Suhrab Khan. Instead of making an investigation, the king's militant stance had been a source of surprise to the Aga Khan. He had no other alternative but to take arms for defensive measures. The fortress of Bam near Kirman was then in the hands of the king's artillery men, who had betrayed their chief. The Aga Khan was able to occupy this fort without difficulty in September, 1937. He refused to withdraw with his forces from the citadel of Bam until the principal cause of the court intrigues followed by his dismissal was not shown to him. The Iranian empire turned a deaf ear to him. Rather, his defensive actions were branded a rebellion. Obviously, the accusations branded upon him were highly exaggerated. The Iranian chronicler, Rida Quli Khan Hidayat, for instance in "**Raudat-us-Safa'i Nasiri**" (Tehran, 1922, 10th vol., p. 260) has labelled the actions of the Aga Khan as an act of revolt. An important analyst of the fact will be able to judge how much truth there was in the biographical work, "**Ibrat-i Afza**" (Tehran, 1946, p. 20) of the Aga Khan, in which he disclaimed any desire for temporal power and said: "Through the grace of God and the blessing of my immaculate forefathers and ancestors, I am able, from the wide and lofty expanse of darwishhood, to disdain and despise all monarchy." In sum, the Aga Khan was driven to desperate straits and had to take up arms in self-defence. He had however a large and substantial following in Iran. Had he chosen, he could have mustered a big army to shake the Qajarid throne, but he was loath to fight with the king for whom he had a regard.



The Aga Khan's dismissal from the governorship of Kirman is also occasioned by the rivalries for the headship of the Nimatullahi order in Iran. It is said that Muhammad Jafar, known as Majdhub Ali Shah (d. 1239/1823), the 38th **qutb** of the order was succeeded by Zain al-Abidin Shirwani, known as Mast Ali Shah (1196-1253/1782-1837). Once the Aga Khan, during Fateh Ali Shah's rule had given refuge to Mast Ali Shah in the village of Daulatabad, near Mahallat, who had escaped the violent persecution of the Shia **ulama** of Fars. During the coronation of Muhammad Shah, Mast Ali Shah, who had been enjoying the Aga Khan's hospitality at Mahallat, accompanied a certain Ismaili friend to Tehran. Muhammad Shah too, had certain Sufic loyalties, and joined the Nimatullahi order before his coronation. Soon afterwards, Mast Ali Shah came to know Haji Mirza Agasi, the prime minister (*sadr'i azam*), as his powerful rival, who as Nimatullahi aspired to the leadership of the order. Muhammad Shah also accepted him as the **qutb** of the Nimatullahi order. It resulted Mast Ali Shah to incur the disfavour of the king, and was driven from the court. Since Aga Khan had continued to support his friend, Mast Ali Shah, he arose the enmity of Mirza Agasi, who intrigued against him and caused his removal from the governorship of Kirman.

It is also said that a certain Abdul Muhammad Mahallati had demanded one of the daughters of the Aga Khan in marriage to his son, which was not accepted. Thus, Abdul Muhammad Mahallati, initially in the service of the Aga Khan, had risen to a high position in the service of Mirza Agasi in Tehran, aroused him against the Aga Khan. In sum, Mirza Agasi, the prime minister was responsible to have stirred up Muhammad Shah, the Qajarid king against the Aga Khan. E.G. Browne in his "**A Literary History of Persia**" (London, 1930, 4th vol., pp. 147-9) also admits the bone of contention between the Aga Khan and the Iranian king due to the arrogant behaviour instigated by Mirza Agasi, and concerning whom many ridiculous anecdotes are still current in Iran. However, kings are guided generally more by the prime ministers than by personal judgements, therefore, Mirza Agasi being an old tutor of the king wielded more influence over him.

In the meantime, Rida Quli, the grandson of Fateh Ali Shah, had taken refuge with the British in Baghdad, reported alleged details of news to Palmerston through the British resident Col. Taylor, claiming that the Aga Khan

had formed an alliance and mutual league with the people of Sistan and the army of Baluchis. This further gave weight upon the rumours to the so called rebellion of the Aga Khan.

In a letter to Viscount Falkland (1803-1884), the governor of Bombay, the Aga Khan had also disclosed on April 18, 1851 that, "The cause of my having been blamed before was the hot disposition of Haji Mirza Aqasi who had obliged me to leave the Persian court." According to Mohsin Saei in "H.R.H. Prince Aga Khan's Visit to Iran 1951" (Karachi, 1953, p. 4), "Haji Abdul Muhammad, out of treachery and meanness, poisoned the ears of some of the court ministers against Aga Hasan Ali Shah, who was ultimately constrained to migrate to India in 1841." It must be remembered that Aga Khan III, the grandson of Aga Khan I had visited Iran in 1951 to attend the marriage of King Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi with Queen Sorayya, and during that occasion, the Iranian newspapers had highlighted the historical relation of the Aga Khan I with the Iranian empire, but none of them had referred to the term *rebellion* for the Aga Khan I. For instance, the daily "Iqleem" of February 12, 1951 wrote: "The wicked designs of Haji Mirza Aqasi, the then prime minister of Iran, proved an obstacle in promoting the relations of this glorious family with the royal family of Qajar. Not being inclined to perpetuate the struggle and thereby causing bloodshed, Aga Hasan Ali migrated to India."

It is an undeniable fact beyond a least doubt that the Iran was an arena of the bigoted Shia *mulla* and theologians at that time, where an Ismaili Imam hardly rule the country in peace for a long time, and as such, the notion advanced by the authors that the Aga Khan I had revolted for capturing the Qajarid throne is absolutely untrue.

The animosity of the Qajarids became more and more virulent, therefore, the Aga Khan at once recalled his brother Sardar Abul Hasan Khan from Baluchistan, where he was conducting military campaigns, and his another brother Muhammad Bakir Khan from Rawar. He prepared to resist the royal forces. He was besieged 14 months at Bam, a town in the province of Kirman, about 120 miles south-east of the city of Kirman on the western edge of the great salt desert, Dasht-i Lut.



In a dispatch to Palmerston, the British minister Sir J. McNeill (1838-1841) from Tehran reported on September 28, 1837 that, "The Aga Khan continues to hold out in the fortress of Bam, near Kerman, and had made some successful sorties against the besieging force", vide "**Correspondence Relating to Persia and Afghanistan**" (London, 1839, p. 64). In January, 1938 the Aga Khan moved slightly in the south and occupied the fort of Kaheen, half way between Bam and Kirman. During the encounter, Muhammad Bakir Khan was seriously wounded and taken prisoner. On Faridun Mirza's intercession, who was then the governor of Fars, the Aga Khan emerged from the citadel of Bam, but he was arrested and his possessions had been sacked. He and his family members were transferred to the city of Kirman, where they remained for 8 months.

Thus, the Aga Khan was detained to house-arrest in Kirman, and during which time, he continued to see his followers of Badakhshan, Khorasan and India. H.B.E. Frere (1815-1884) cites an account of the Indian pilgrims in "**The Khojas: the Disciple of the Old Man of the Mountain**" (MacMillan Magazine, vol. 34, 1876, p. 432) that, "One witness in the Bombay trial gave a narrative of the pilgrimage of this kind that he made in 1836-37 to Kirman, where the Aga Khan at that time happened to be residing. The witness, his father and mother, a brother and two sisters, with a party of about 100 other Khoja pilgrims, sailed from Bombay to Bunder Abbas, a port on the Persian coast, near the outlet of the Persian Gulf. They had offerings with them, in money and rich stuffs, to the value of about 2000 sterling. They stayed some time at Bunder Abbas, waiting for other Khojas to collect them from other quarters before starting on their tedious and somewhat perilous journey of 21 days across the mountain ranges of southern Persia from Bunder Abbas to Kirman. At length, about 500 Khojas having collected from all parts at Bunder Abbas, the caravan was formed and they made their way to Kirman. There they were lodged, at the expenses of the Imam, in a large rude building, built round three sides of a great open court. They stayed in Kirman about a month or six weeks, during which period, having first made their offerings, they were admitted ten or twelve times to the presence of the Imam." The Aga Khan, says the witness, "sat on his *musnud* (seat), we beheld his face, kissed his hand, and retired."

### **Mission in Yasin and Punial**

It is recounted that an Ismaili *dai*, Sayed Shah Zahur, the son of Sayed Karamali Shah visited Kirman from Yasin, and reported the Imam the services rendered by his father in Yasin and Punial. The Aga Khan I granted him a sealed letter, authorizing him to continue the mission after his father. Hence, he returned to Yasin, whose ruler was Mihtar Suleman Shah. With his untiring effort and efficiency, a large number of the people embraced Ismailism in Yasin and Punial. He was followed by his son, Sayed Bakir Shah during the rule of Gohar Aman (d. 1860), who was deadly against the Ismailis. His relation with Sayed Bakir Shah was also strained, therefore, the latter had to migrate Shagnan in 1829. Sayed Bakir Shah however continued his mission in Shagnan and Yarkand. Mir Shah, the ruler of Shagnan, however, stemmed his mission and killed him and his son, Sayed Karim Hyder, known as Sayed Shah Kalan. Both had been interred in Badakhshan.

### **Mission in Gilgit and Hunza**

It appears from different traditions that the virtual penetration of the Ithna Asharism in Gilgit took place around 955/1548, and we have observed hitherto that Raja Mirza Khan (1565-1600), the 7th ruler of Trakhan dynasty in Gilgit, had espoused Ithna Asharism. Later on, Mir Ayesho Khan II assumed the power and married to Shah Khatoon, the daughter of Abdal Khan of Skardu and Baltistan. Thus the matrimonial tie engendered close relation and communication between the people of Hunza and Baltistan. From the time of Mir Ayesho Khan II down to the period of Mir Saleem Khan II, the inhabitants of Gilgit and Hunza adhered to the Ithna Asharism for about 300 years. Mir Saleem Khan II is reported to have embraced Ismailism by the hands of a certain Ismaili *dai* of Badakhshan, called Sayed Shah Ardbil. Mir Saleem Khan however did not divulge his new faith and exercised *taqiya* for some political reasons until his death in 1240/1823. His son and successor, Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan is said to have invited another Ismaili *dai* from Badakhshan, called Sayed Hussain Ardbil, the son of Sayed Shah Ardbil, so that the Ismailism could be thoroughly penetrated in Gilgit and Hunza during his period.



In 1255/1838, Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan dispatched his emissary, Akhund Turab Ali to Badakhshan to bring Sayed Hussain Ardbil in this context. He also sent his vizir, Zinat Ali Shah to receive Sayed Hussain with great pomp at the outskirts of Hunza. The tradition has it that Zinat Ali Shah feted warm welcome to the Ismaili *dai* and became the first convert publicly. It however reprobated Akhund Turab Ali, who rushed back to Hunza quietly and aroused Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan that the ruler should be enlisted as a first convert. Thus, Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan did not embrace Ismailism and restricted the missionary activities of the Ismaili *dai* in his region. Sayed Hussain found the atmosphere not congenial, therefore, he quietly returned to Badakhshan.

In the meantime, Sayed Yaqut Shah, the son of Sayed Shah Abdur Rahim visited Kirman to see the Aga Khan I. His ancestors had propagated Ismailism in Badakhshan for considerable period, and some of them also ruled Wakhan and Zebak. Sayed Yaqut Shah disclosed a plan of his proselytising mission in Gilgit and Hunza, which met the approval of the Imam. At length, he arrived in Hunza in 1254/1838 after passing through Herat, Kokand and the valley of Sirikol. This time, Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan treated the Ismaili *dai* with due consideration and embraced Ismailism. He was followed by his attendants and the inhabitants of Hunza. Sayed Yaqut Shah strode a brisk mission at full swing. Since his mission was spread over the territories of Turkistan, Badakhshan and Chitral, he was unable to prolong his stay in Hunza, and after 25 days of his arrival, he returned to his native land. He had however left behind some responsible elders in each village, known as the *khalifa*, who imparted the cardinal principles of the Ismaili doctrine to the new converts.

Meanwhile, Sayed Ghulam Ali Shah, the son of Sayed Hussain Ardbil also arrived in Hunza and joined the mission work spread by Sayed Yaqut Shah. He was also followed by other well-known *da'is*, such as Khwaja Shah Talib, Mirza Ismail, Khwaja Shahid, etc.

Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan died in 1281/1864 and was succeeded by his son, Mir Muhammad Ghazan Khan I, whose successor Mir Safdar Ali Khan had to take refuge in Shagnan during the British invasion in 1308/1891. The British commissioned his half-brother, Mir Muhammad Nazim Khan as the ruler of Hunza. He was followed by Mir Muhammad Ghazan

Khan II and then Mir Muhammad Jamal Khan, the last Ismaili ruler of Hunza, who died in 1976. It must be known on this juncture that the entire area, including Gilgit, Hunza and Baltistan was known as Gilgit Agency till 1947. Sandwiched between the high peaks of Hindukush and Karakorum on the north and those of western Himalaya on the south, is called now the **Northern Areas of Pakistan**, which might also be called the **Trans-Himalaya Districts of Pakistan**. It covers an expanse of about 27,188 square miles, thickly populated by the Ismailis.

#### **Meeting of the Aga Khan with Muhammad Shah**

Meanwhile, Muhammad Shah returned from his unsuccessful campaign against Herat in 1254/1838, therefore, the Aga Khan was allowed to proceed to Tehran towards the end of 1254/1838. He presented his case before the king with innumerable evidences of his loyalty. T. MacKenzie, the British envoy, however, reported from Kharrak to the Secret Committee that, "The Aga Khan was induced to surrender himself under solemn promises which were shamefully violated by the Persian government, and instead of being restored to his government, he was kept a prisoner at Tehran at the king's camp." Finally, the Aga Khan was made free provided he retired peacefully to his family lands at Mahallat. It should be known that **Mahallat** means **mahallas** (quarters) of a town, which consisted of three separate villages. After a brief stay in Qum, he did retreat to Mahallat, where he built a large fortified residential compound for his family and numerous dependents and pages.

Assured of his safety, the Aga Khan however found that he was being socially ostracised by the orders of his implacable enemy, Mirza Aqasi, and had to fight even for food. This fresh provocation embittered the situation. In the meantime, once again the cloud of rumours began to thicken in Tehran that the Aga Khan had built a palace with a huge army to extend his influence in southern Iran. It was exaggerated and ultimately took the shape of a report that the Aga Khan intended to rebel against the Qajarids. The Aga Khan, however, led a tranquil life at Mahallat for about 2 years following his dismissal from the governorship in Kirman. Early in 1256/1840, Muhammad Shah himself went to Dalijan near Mahallat on the pretence



of recreation, to verify the truth of the rumours. At that time the Aga Khan was out of Mahallat for hunting. He however, sent his messenger to Mirza Agasi, requesting for royal permission to proceed to Mecca for pilgrimage. Permission was granted and a first batch of Aga Khan's family including his mother and son were sent to Iraq. He himself then moved from Mahallat for ever in Rajab, 1256/September, 1840 with his brothers, nephews, and a number of relatives, dependents and followers.

The Aga Khan reached Yazd after leaving Mahallat. It is reported in Riach's diary of September 25, 1840 that, "Bakhsh Ali Khan from Shiraz came to siege the Aga Khan, but he was defeated by the followers of the Aga Khan. Muhammad Shah, the king who was at that time in Ispahan, also sent two messengers to arrest the Aga Khan. The Aga Khan ordered both hands of one of them to be cut off which was done, the other by entreating mercy was not injured." When the Aga Khan was on the borders of Kirman and Yazd, Bahman Mirza Baha ad-Dawla, the governor of Yazd, and the brother of the king, attacked with the royal force on Aga Khan's caravan, but was defeated in his incursion. Robert Grant Watson writes in "**History of Persia**" (London, 1866, p. 333) that, Bahman Mirza had divided his force into three parts and thus gave an opportunity to the Aga Khan to defeat each detachment in detail. Among the first troops of Bahman Mirza, there were many who secretly held the tenents of Ismailis, the rest was that in the action which ensued, they went over in a body to Aga Khan, and their leader Isfendiar, was killed.

Several other skirmishes were also won by the Aga Khan before he arrived in Shahr-i Babak with the help of the local Ismailis. The citadel of Shahr-i Babak was in the hands of Kuhindil Khan of Kandhar, the governor of Shahr-i Babak, who had sought refuge in Iran in 1839 after the British invasion of Afghanistan. The Aga Khan, reinforced by a bulk of Ataulahi Ismailis, besieged Shahr-i Babak, forcing the Afghans to surrender.

By the end of 1840, the southern Iran had become a bed of hatching rebellions. It was however rumoured that an Iranian prince Suleman Mirza, residing at Baghdad, had arrived in Kirman to assist the Aga Khan. Even Ali Shah, the king's uncle, who was spreading his influence in the mountains of Fars, was also in contact to this effect with the Aga Khan. Muhammad Taki Khan, the chief of the

Bakhtiyari tribe, and the governor of Khuzistan, also generated close ties with the Aga Khan with a view to help him against the Iranian empire. Meanwhile, Muhammad Shah failed to get his revenue in advance from Muhammad Taki Khan, and accused him of having supplied the Aga Khan with his means and resources, therefore, he was replaced by Ali Naqi Khan to the governorship. A.H. Layard, on the other hand writes in **"Early Adventures"** (London, 1887, p. 322) that, when he was in the mountains, he received news that the Aga Khan was also supported by the British government. In sum, there is no foundation to believe that the Aga Khan had ever acquired aids from the rebellions of the southern Iran, or the British authority to engineer the so called rebellion against the Iranian empire. In December 31, 1841 after resuming his office in Tehran, the British agent McNeill had written to Aberdeen that, "It may be almost unnecessary for me to add that the charges brought against the British government or its agents, of having secretly aided the Aga Khan, are without foundation, and the Persian government must have been deceived by its informants."

#### **The Aga Khan I left Iran**

The Aga Khan sent his brother Muhammad Bakir to Sirjan to acquire provisions, and himself retreated to Rumni, a village near Shahr-i Babak. After four days, a message arrived from Muhammad Bakir Khan that he had been encircled in the fortress of Zaydabad at Sirjan by a large Qajarid force under the command of the beglerbegi of Kirman, Fazal Ali Khan Qarabaghi. The Aga Khan set out at once and succeeded to relieve his brother.

In 1257/1841, the Aga Khan defeated the royal forces of 4000 at the command of Isfandiyar Khan, the brother of Fazal Ali Khan near Dashtab. In the interim, Fazal Ali Khan had collected a force of 24000 to compel the Aga Khan to flee from Bam to Rigan on the border of Baluchistan and followed the Aga Khan close upon his heels like a shadow, and blockaded the way to the Bunder Abbas. The Aga Khan found himself between the horns of a dilemma on that juncture and finally decided to move to southern Khorasan to Afghanistan. Starting at Rawar, he transversed the arid Dasht-i Lut to Qain. In June, 1841 Muhammad Shah sent Abdullah Khan, the commander of his artillery from Tehran with orders to burn and demolish the towns and villages



that were suspected of assisting the Aga Khan. He also sent Khan Ali Khan, the governor of Lar against the campaign. In the meantime, Habibullah Khan, the governor of Yazd also came out to fight with the Aga Khan, with eight guns and a body of troops. Thus, the Aga Khan had been embosomed on all sides by his enemies. In a battle with Khan Ali Khan, he was repulsed, and had to fly to the mountains of Baluchistan. During the night, however, the Aga Khan returned the mountain with reinforcements and surprised the troops of Khan Ali Khan in ambushing upon them at full gallop and turned them back.

Accompanied by his brothers and many soldiers and servants, the Aga Khan proceeded eastward, and after having adventured on a long perilous journey through central Iran, he crossed the borders, and arrived at Lash in Afghanistan in 1257/1841, marking an end of the longer Iranian period of Ismaili Imamate. In sum, after facing heavy odds and finding himself out-numbered, the Aga Khan I forced his way through the king's army and reached Afghanistan. Naoroji M. Dumasia writes in "**The Aga Khan and his Ancestors**" (Bombay, 1939, pp. 27-28) that, "His exile from Persia was a loss to that country, but Persia's loss was the gain of the British Empire, and his comradeship in arms with the British army cemented the ties of friendship....The part which the Aga Khan played as an ally of the British in that disastrous war was in every way worthy of the heroic deeds of the great martyrs of Islam whose blood flowed in his veins."

### **The Aga Khan I in Afghanistan**

The British had grown to be a paramount power in India in the course of the 18th and early 19th century. About the time that the Aga Khan was having troubles in Iran, the British were deeply involved in Afghanistan, and their efforts were aimed at establishing in Kabul a rule that would be friendly to Britain, and prevent the Russian influence penetrating the borders of India, that would possibly threaten the existence of British empire. The First Anglo-Afghan War, or First Afghan War (1255/1838 to 1258/1842), which is called for heavy sacrifices and untold hardship and suffering, was undertaken partly to counter the Russian advance in Central Asia and partly to place on the throne at Kabul the dethroned ruler, Shah Shuja, in place of Dost Muhammad (1791-1863). Thus, the

British occupied Afghanistan on August 7, 1839, and placed Shah Shuja (1780-1842), the amir of Sadozai tribe on the throne of Kabul and Kandhar. Sir William MacNaghten (1839-1891) was designated as the British envoy at the court of Shah Shuja.

By the end of 1840, the signs of revolts among the Durrani and Gilzay tribes became apparent against the presence of the British in Afghanistan, and the puppet rule of Shah Shuja. Yar Muhammad Khan, the ruler of Herat also contemplated an attack on Kandhar, and had sent a secret mission to the Iranian governor of Mashhad for acquiring aids to expel the British from Afghanistan. Thus, the position of the British envoy, Major Elliliott D'arcy Todd (1808-1845) became impaired in Herat in spite of the treasures he had given to the ruler. In January, 1841 Yar Muhammad demanded further money which, Major Todd knowing his intrigues, refused to pay a penny more until Yar Muhammad gave him guarantee of good conduct, such as admitting a British garrison to Herat. Yar Muhammad refused and insisted on payment of the British subsidy as usual. Thus, Todd himself withdrew from Herat on February 10, 1841, resulting the British mission to Herat ended in failure. The internal risings in Kandhar however were put down by the British commander, General Nott in consultation with Major Henry Rawlinson (1810-1895). The British position in Kandhar, nevertheless, was yet insecure.

Inside Afghanistan, the Aga Khan began to trek from Girishk to Kandhar. On August 6, 1841 the intelligence from Girishk reached Rawlinson, reporting the arrival of the Aga Khan and his hundred horsemen. Rawlinson in turn informed to MacNaghten of the Aga Khan's influence and of his importance as an Iranian refugee in Afghanistan. Henceforward, a close relation developed between the Aga Khan and the British. From Girishk, the Aga Khan had reported his arrival to Muhammad Taymur, the British appointed governor of Kandhar, and also to Major Henry Rawlinson. Soon after his arrival in Kandhar, the Aga Khan sent a letter on October 21, 1841 to Sir William MacNaghten (1839-1891), the British envoy at Kabul, expressing his reasons for leaving Iran that, "Since the conduct of the Iranian government has been so opperssive that all the respectable people and nobles of Iran, particularly those of Iraq, Fars and Kirman have been reduced to vexatious misery, the whole body of the learned



men, governors and chiefs induced to throw off the yoke of the Iranian allegiance and protect the wretched people." The Aga Khan stayed on as a guest of Muhammad Taymur at Kandhar. He lived very extravagantly in a large house with all his horsemen and servants, and received his allowances monthly from the Afghan revenues, that is 500 rupees for himself and 25 rupees for his each horseman. The number of horsemen he had brought with him was hundred, but later on the number was increased to three hundreds.

The internal revolts in Kandhar were put down by October, 1841 by Nott, in which Akram Khan, the chief of Durrani tribe was executed, resulting a disaffection among the other tribes, and a very serious outbreak took place at Kabul too in November, which gradually spread to Kandhar. The British position became critical and in the ensuing struggle, the Aga Khan as the ally of the British, was necessarily involved. Rawlinson also made use of the Aga Khan's influence among the Shiite group, to bring about the success.

In November, 1841, the eastern Gilzays broke into revolt near Kabul in protest against the reduction of their allowances, and occupied the passes on the road to Jalalabad, plundered and cut off the communications of Kabul. On November 2, the insurrection broke out in Kabul and Sir Alexander Burnes (1805-1841), MacNaghten's deputy was murdered. The British lost control of Kabul. MacNaghten tried to negotiate with the raiders, but on December 23, he was too murdered and the condition of the British at Kabul became very critical.

The insurrection spread slowly towards Kandhar. Muhammad Ata Khan was sent by the Kabul party to win the Durrani, and thereby raised an insurrection in Kandhar. To encounter this move, Rawlinson also tried to win the favour of the Durrani against the rebel Barakzais. But on December 27, a force of Janbas murdered their British officer, Lieut. Colding at Kandhar. Meanwhile, Safdar Jang, a brother of Muhammad Taymur also joined the Durrani. To put down the rising, William Nott (1782-1845) on January 12, 1842 fought with the rebels and defeated them. The Aga Khan had also joined Nott and Rawlinson in the skirmish of Killashek with his 100 horsemen. One of the Aga Khan's men was killed and few others were wounded. Rawlinson, in his report on the Aga Khan mentioned, regarding the event of January 12, that, "On this

occasion, Agha Khan, having volunteered the services of his hundred men, was present and was engaged in skirmishing with the enemy."

After two months, the rebel group near Kandhar, prepared for a big incursion under the direction of Mirza Ahmad. The British were in a difficult state. Money was scarce and so was fodder for the cattle. There were no medicines for the wounded in the camp. On March 7, 1842, Nott resolved to give a severe blow to the rebels. On this occasion, Rawlinson in consultation with Nott formed a Parsiwan troop, with the horsemen of the Aga Khan and other Shia chiefs, Nabi Khan and Mirza Ibrahim and placed altogether 300 cavalry under the command of the Aga Khan. Nott with his forces marched out of Kandhar in pursuit of the enemy and some small skirmishes took place on March 9. On the following day, Nott continued his onwards marching. Captain Neill, an eye-witness, in his book, **"Recollections"** (p. 179) mentioned, "A small body of cavalry, commanded I believe, by Meerza Ahmed, who was kept out to employ and deceive us, molested our rear for a short time; they were, however, driven back by Aga Khan, a Persian refugee Prince, who with about two hundred (it was 300) followers, had accompanied our force from Candahar, and rendered our rearguard some very valuable assistance." Rawlinson in his report, dating December 20, 1842 to Governor General, also mentioned that the services at that time of the Aga Khan were such consequence, "that the general thought him deserving of special notice in the report that was forwarded to the government on the occasion." As the year 1258/1842 progressed, the state of Afghanistan still remained more critical. In July, Kandhar and Jalalabad were still under the British advanced posts, and the intervening valleys and defiles were in the hands of the Afghans.

Meanwhile, Lord Ellenborough (1841-1844), the Governor-General had arrived in India in succession to Auckland and he decided that the British troops should evacuate Afghanistan. In July, 1842 the Aga Khan too learned the evacuation programme of the British. Nott with his troops retreated via Ghazna, Kabul and Jalalabad, and the remaining troops were to return to India via Quetta and Sukkur. The charge of Kandhar was left in the hands of Safdar Beg. The Aga Khan also proposed to accompany the forces retiring to India.



## The Aga Khan I in Sind

After the departure of the British forces from Kandhar on August 9, 1842 for Quetta, the Aga Khan stayed on in Kandhar for about six weeks with Sardar Sherdil Khan. Rawlinson who sympathised with him, had advised him to retreat to India. Hence, the Aga Khan reached Quetta on October 5, 1842 and then went to stay with the Khan of Kalat, Mir Shahmawaz Khan for more than a month. Before he left, he had been given a letter of recommendation to Sir Charles Napier (1782-1853) by MacNaghten. By the end of November, the Aga Khan reached Sukkur and met Sir Charles Napier, who had been commissioned a general officer to the supreme civil, political and military control of both upper and lower Sind by Lord Ellenborough on August 26, 1842. In January, 1843, the Aga Khan went with Napier to the British camp at Bhiria and then to Hyderabad with his sixty horsemen. In Hyderabad, he was employed in the British service during the battles of Miami and Dubba.

Sind, about 50,000 square miles in extent, had a population of little over a million in the time of the Mirs. H.T. Lambrick writes in **"Sir Charles Napier and Sind"** (London, 1952, p 14) that, "The great majority of concurred in the opinion that Sind was crushed by the oppressive government of the Mirs, a selfish, ignorant, and bigoted despotism, deliberately calculated to prevent that development of the country which its great natural resources deserved." During the Anglo-Afghan War, the Mirs of upper and lower Sind had allowed the British forces to pass through their territories. In 1840, James Outram was appointed as the British political agent to the Mirs of lower Sind in place of Henry Pottinger. Outram was also made political agent of upper Sind in place of Ross Bell in 1841. Sir Charles Napier held many meetings in December, 1842 and January, 1843 with the Mirs for the negotiations. However, on January 11, 1843, Napier stormed the deserted fortress of Inamgarh. The Baluchi tribes of one of the Mirs were embittered and on February 14, 1843, attacked the British residency in Hyderabad. On February 17, Napier marched with his forces on Hyderabad and defeated the Mirs of Hyderabad, Khairpur and Mirpur in the battle of Miami. The Mirs of upper and lower Sind surrendered except Mir Sher Muhammad of Mirpur. On March 26, 1843, at the battle of Dubba, Napier defeated Sher Muhammad, and the annexation of Sind to the British territories was formally announced on August, 1843. In

Sind, the Aga Khan placed his cavalry at the disposal of the British, and tried to convince Nasir Khan, the then Talpur amir of Kalat, to cede Karachi to the British. Nasir Khan refused to cooperate, the Aga Khan disclosed his battle plan to James Outram. As a result, the British camp was saved from a night attack. For his valuable services, the Aga Khan was granted an annual pension of £ 2,000 from Charles Napier with a title of *His Highness*.

#### **The Aga Khan I in Jerruk**

After the conquest of Sind in 1259/1843, the British attempted to subjugate neighbouring Baluchistan, in which the Aga Khan again helped them militarily and diplomatically. From Jerruk, where the Aga Khan was staying after February, 1843, he contacted the various Baluchi chieftains, advising them to submit to the British rule. He also sent his brother Muhammad Bakir Khan together with a number of his horsemen to help the British against Mir Sher Khan, the Baluchi amir. Soon afterwards, the Aga Khan I was given a post in Jerruk to secure the communications between Karachi and Hyderabad. Charles Napier writes in his diary on February 29, 1843 that, "I have sent the Persian Prince Agha Khan to Jherruk, on the right bank of the Indus. His influence is great, and he will with his own followers secure our communication with Karachi. He is the lineal chief of Ismailians, who still exist as a sect and are spread all over the interior of Asia."

H.T. Lambrick writes in "**Sir Charles Napier and Sind**" (London, 1952, p. 157) that, "Bands of Baluchis had plundered most of the wood and coal stations on the Indus, interrupted the mail route to Bombay via Cutch, and also the direct road to Karachi, whence supplies and artillery had been ordered up. With a view to reopening communications with Karachi, Sir Charles sent the Agha Khan to take post at Jherruk with his followers, some 130 horsemen." On March 23, 1843, the Aga Khan and his horsemen were attacked by the Jam and Jokia Baluchis, who killed some 70 to 72 of his followers, and plundered 23 lacs of rupees worth of the Aga Khan's property. Napier, in April and May, 1843, sent warnings to the Jam and Jokia Baluchis, asking to return the plunder of the Aga Khan and surrender. In May, 1843, Napier ordered his commander at



Karachi to attack and recover the property of the Aga Khan, which was done.

The encounter of Jerruk had been equated by the Aga Khan I, according to the native informations, with that of the event of Karbala. In Jerruk, some 70 to 72 Ismaili *fidais* had sacrificed their lives in fighting with the enemies of their Imam, and their dead bodies were buried on that spot. According to the report of "**Sind Observer**" (Karachi, April 3, 1949), "Seventy dead bodies of Khojas buried 107 years ago at Imam Bara in Jherruck town, 94 miles by road north-east of Karachi, were found to be fresh on being exhumed recently in the course of digging the foundation for a new mosque for the locality, a Sind government official disclosed on Saturday. The bodies which lay in a common grave were again interred another site selected for the mosque. The Khojas were believed to have been murdered in a local feud 107 years ago according to local tradition in Jherruck."

It was with the approval of the British government that in 1260/1844, the Aga Khan sent Muhammad Bakir Khan to capture the fortress of Bampur in Iranian Baluchistan. Later, he also sent his other brother, Sardar Abul Hasan Khan, who finally occupied Bampur and won other successes in Baluchistan, while Muhammad Bakir had been relieved to join the Aga Khan in India.

The Aga Khan built his residence at Jerruk, resembling the style that of the Mahallat. Jerruk, a town about 89 miles and 2 furlongs from Karachi via Gharo, Thatta and Soonda; is 150 feet high from the Indus level, having two hills blanketing the town from two sides. About 300 to 350 Ismailis lived in Jerruk, and the Aga Khan I made it his headquarters.

Meanwhile, the Aga Khan quitted Jerruk, and proceeded to Kutchh via the port of Karachi on Ramdan, 1260/October, 1844, which was his first marine trip. Maharao Shri Deshalji, the ruler of Kutchh feted him with due consideration at Kutchh Mandvi, and took him to Bhuj and gave him a state bungalow for his stay. The Aga Khan then moved to Kathiawar, where Jam Saheb Shri Ranmalji received him in Jammagar. For a year, thereafter, he travelled through Kathiawar and came to Bombay via Surat and Daman on December 16, 1845 and was well received with the

cordial homage of the whole Ismaili population of the city and its neighbourhood.

### **The Aga Khan I in Calcutta**

Soon after his arrival in Bombay, the Iranian government demanded Aga Khan's extradition from India, citing the Anglo-Persian Treaty negotiated between Iran and India on November 25, 1814, which reads: *"Should any Persian subject of distinction showing signs of hostility and rebellion take refuge in the British Dominions, the English Government shall, on intimation from the Persian Government, turn him out of their country, or, if he refuses to leave it, shall seize and send him to Persia."* The British India was placed on the horns of a dilemma. It could not, on the one hand, risk a breach of the friendly relation established with Iran, and on the other, surrender to his enemies one who regardless of personal losses and risk of life, had stood by the British as a faithful ally in their greatest hour of trial. At length, however, through the intervention of the British envoy, it was agreed that the Aga Khan should be allowed to remain in India provided he stayed at Calcutta from where he could not be a menace to the Iranian government as from Sind. The government of India wrote to Superintendent of Mysore Princes and ex-Amirs of Sind, a letter which reads:- "It having been determined upon political considerations that the Persian nobleman Aga Khan Mahallati, shall be required to reside for the present in Bengal. I am directed to inform you that the President in Council considers that it will be expedient to fix the Aga's residence in the vicinity of Calcutta and to place him under your care. Aga Khan of Mahallati is a nobleman of high rank and allied to the royal family of Persia. He is in the receipt of an allowance of Rs. 3000 per mensem from the British government for services rendered in Afghanistan and in Sind."

Thus, the Aga Khan was naturally reluctant to go to Calcutta on April 19, 1847 with his 52 followers. After crossing Poona, Ahmadnagar and Khandesh, he reached Indore on June 1, 1847. The British railway had not yet come to India and the journey from Bombay to Indore was overland. The Aga Khan's men suffered terribly; three died on the way to Indore. Seven arrived at Indore with severe fever



and two died there. The Aga Khan also underwent an eye operation at Indore, and left it on June 18, 1847 for Agra, where he procured boats for Calcutta, and reached there some time in August.

Sir Orfeur Cavenagh (1821-1891) had arranged for a house at Dumdum (where the city's airport is now) in Calcutta under the care of Bengal Presidency. The Aga Khan I was however in a new city surrounded by strangers. In June, 1848, the Aga Khan I fell ill, and was sent to hill station, and in July, the residence of the Aga Khan was shifted to Chinsurah in Calcutta. He had to stay in Calcutta for 18 months until the death of Muhammad Shah in 1264/1848. He learnt of this after one month, and immediately approached Maddock, that he should be allowed to return to Iran. The reason for enforcing his detention was now virtually at end. The Aga Khan I desired to be furnished with facilities to return to Bombay. On December 6, 1848, the Indian Government agreed to send the Aga Khan to Bombay. He quitted Calcutta on December 8, 1848 with his wife and a suite of 40 retainers, in the Peninsular and Oriental Steamer, *Lady Mary Wood*, which sailed from Calcutta and reached Bombay on December 26, 1848.

#### **The Syrian Ismailis**

In the meantime, Amir Ismail bin Ahmad of Kadmus, the local Ismaili leader in Syria, had been permitted by the Ottoman authorities to settle permanently with his people in an area east of the Orontes river. These arrangements were evidently confirmed by a decree of Sultan Abdul Majid I (1255-1277/1839-1861), dated Shaban, 1265/July, 1849. Amir Ismail bin Muhammad chose the ruins of Salamia as the site of his new Ismaili settlement. In 1266/1850, the Ottomans granted a further favour to the Ismaili settlers and exempted them from military conscription and taxation. An increasing number of Ismailis from the western mountains gradually joined the original settlers in Salamia, attracted by the prospect of receiving free land in a district where they would furthermore be neither taxed nor conscripted. By 1277/1861, it had become a large village.

## Permanent Residency of the Aga Khan I

On arriving in Bombay, the British made a fresh effort to win permission for his return to Iran, while the Aga Khan had also written a letter about it to the new Iranian king, Nasiruddin Shah's chief minister, Amir Kabir, who proved less responsive than his predecessor, insisting that the Aga Khan would be arrested at the borders as a fugitive. After the execution of Amir Kabir in 1268/1852, the Aga Khan made a final plea to return to his homeland, and sent Nasiruddin Shah an elephant and a giraffe as gifts. He also sent gifts to Amir Kabir's successor, Mirza Aqa Khan Nuri, who was a personal friend of the Aga Khan. Some of the Aga Khan's family estates in Iran were then restored to the control of his relative, but the new minister was unable to arrange for his return. Meanwhile, the Bombay Government approached the Aga Khan to get a definite answer regarding his stay. On September, 1850, the deputy Secretary in the Iranian Department of Bombay personally asked the Aga Khan, who stated that he was willing to stay in Bombay. The members of the India Board also approved it on January 22, 1851. In April 17, 1851, the Bombay Government apprized the Aga Khan of the decision of the court directors. The Aga Khan on April 18, 1851 wrote a letter to Bombay Government, expressing his gratitude.

In India, the Aga Khan retained his close relation with the British empire. On a rare occasion, the Aga Khan was visited in his Bombay home, the Aga Hall, by the Duke of Edinburgh, the future king Edward VII (1901-1910), as Prince of Wales, during a state visit to India, and held a long talk with him. The two sat in front of a portrait of Shah Fateh Ali, the emperor of Iran, whose daughter the Aga Khan had married. The Prince of Wales inspected the Aga Khan's cups won on the Indian turf and his son's trophies of the Indian chase, and talked over some of the events of a life as varied and adventurous as that of the Aga Khan's ancestor, who seven centuries ago wrote to Leopold, Duke of Austria, urging the release of Richard Coeur de Lion, then a prisoner in the hands of Leopold at the time of the Crusades. In sum, it was an honour which, with the exception of the leading ruling princes, was accorded to no other nobleman and was acknowledged of his princely birth and the admirable services he had rendered to the British government. Writing on the historic visit, Sir Bartle Frere said, "There can be little doubt that the



visit has been described and discussed in many a meeting of the Aga Khan's followers in India, Persia and Arabia - on the remote shores of Eastern Africa, and in still more inaccessible valleys of Central Asia, and it will doubtless find a place in the annals of this singular sect for many centuries to come."

The Aga Khan thus received government protection in British India as the spiritual head of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, which solidified his position and helped him in the exercise of his authority. During three decades of residency in Bombay, he exerted a great deal of direct control over the Ismaili community, and organised the community more progressive under the network of leaders and officers.

Kutchh in the meantime, reported to have gripped in a dust bowl, followed by a terrible famine, and as a result, a retinue of ten thousand Ismailis tracked down in Sind. On the instructions of Governor General, Sir Charles Napier granted them permission to settle down at Mullah Khatiar (Matli), and most of the Ismailis also migrated to Karachi.

#### **Sayeda Imam Begum**

Bibi Tahira, commonly known as Sayeda Imam Begum was the last known member of the Kadiwal family during the period under review in India. She was born most probably on 1199/1785 in Kera, Kutchh. She made her first public appearance when Bibi Sarcar Mata Salamat (1744-1832) visited India in 1245/1829 and is reported to have joined her from Karachi to Jerruk and Bombay. Sayeda Imam Begum at length chose to settle in Bombay in 1246/1830. She used to organise the gathering of the Ismaili women in the jamatkhanas to discuss on the *ginans*. She also visited Kutchh and Sind around 1253/1837 and resided at Karachi. She is also reported to have visited Bombay in 1257/1841 and had an audience of the Aga Khan I in 1261/1845. It is recounted that she again came to Karachi in 1276/1860, where she died in 1282/1866. Sayeda Imam Begum was famous for her piety and learning and composed many *ginans*, and was the last among the *ginan* composers in India. For further detail, vide "*Sayyida Bibi Imam Begum*" ("*Hidayat*", Karachi, July, 1989, pp. 16-21) by Mumtaz Ali Tajddin S. Ali.

## The Aga Khan Case - 1866

The Aga Khan I had to face periodical troubles from certain dissident members of his community. In 1243/1827, while the Aga Khan was in Iran, a group led by Habib Ibrahim in Bombay refused to pay tithe and forced others to do so. The leaders of the Bombay jamat made a report to the Aga Khan in Iran about it at the end of 1244/1828. The Aga Khan, in order to overcome this opposition, sent to Bombay as his agent, Mirza Abul Kassim, who was accompanied by the Aga Khan's mother, Bibi Sarcar Mata Salamat (1744-1832) in 1245/1829. It was in the course of these proceedings that Mirza Abul Kassim filed a suit on behalf of the Aga Khan against the dissidents in Bombay High Court. The suit, however, was not processed and withdrawn on July 22, 1830. The recusants were summoned in the jamatkhana, which proved no responsive, and as such, Habib Ibrahim and eleven other persons had been outcast from the community in 1246/1830, who were then known as **Bar Bhai** (twelve brethren). After five years, in 1251/1835, they were re-admitted conditionally, who had however laid a root of a dissident group.

The Aga Khan arrived in Bombay on December 16, 1845. He had to leave Bombay for Calcutta, and returned to Bombay on December 26, 1848. Consequently, the Aga Khan's absence for 18 months emboldened the dissident gang to engineer propaganda against him. When the Aga Khan was yet in Calcutta, a fresh litigation, known as **Sajan Mehr Ali Case** was carried in 1263/1847, in which the question of the rights of female inheritance among the Ismailis was brought before the Supreme Court of Bombay. Sir Erskine Perry (1821-1893), the Chief Justice presided over the **Khoja Inheritance Case** of a certain Hirbai and Sonabai. In this case, the Aga Khan was represented by his brother, Muhammad Bakir Khan (d. 1296/1879), who endeavoured to uphold the rule of inheritance according to the Holy Koran. The dissident group, Bar Bhai was active in supporting the argument of the defendant. This case led to fresh feuds among the community. The Bar Bhai group began to broadcast aggressive propoganda against the Aga Khan, and in view of their unwillingness to acknowledge the Aga Khan's spiritual authority, they had been ex-communicated in 1264/1848. Henceforward, the basic issue of the tithe originated in 1243/1827 became submerged by the petty quibbles. The other issues challenged the Aga Khan's



authority, and claimed themselves as the Sunni Khojas, stressing that the Ismaili Khojas had been Sunnis since their conversion to Islam by Pir Sadruddin. They also built their own separate prayer-hall and grave-yard in 1266/1850.

On November 13, 1850, a tragic event arose between the Ismailis and the Sunni Khojas in the prayer-hall in Bombay. On the last day of the commemoration of Muharram, four Sunni Khojas were killed, 19 of the Ismailis were tried in the criminal court and four were hanged on December 18, 1850.

On October 20, 1861, when the dissenting Khojas publicly joined the Sunni fold, the Aga Khan issued a decree in which he expressed his desire to bring the Ismailis to conform to the practices of the Shia Imami Ismaili creed of his holy ancestors, regarding marriage ceremonies, ablutions, funeral rites etc. The decree ended thus, "He who may be willing to obey my orders shall write his name in this book that I may know him." Copies of the decree were kept at the house of the Aga Khan's son in Bombay for signatures and were circulated in Sind, Kathiawar, Kutchh and Zanzibar. Except for a handful persons in Bombay and Kathiawar, an almost unanimous acceptance was received from the Ismailis. The loyalty of the Ismailis for their Imam can be gauged from the reaction of the Bhuj jamat at Kutchh, who sent a letter dated January 2, 1862 in reply to the communication sent by the plaintiffs as illustrated by E.I. Howard to the Hon'ble Court. It reads: "We are upon the right side, but should His Lordship Aga Khan ask for the signatures, we are ready to give thousand times a day. Whatever order comes from him, we are bound to obey." Observing the above letter, Justice Sir Joseph Arnold (1814-1886) remarked: "This is a very decided letter; at any rate, there can be no mistake about that." (cf. **"The Shia School of Islam and its Branches"**, Bombay, 1906, p. 93).

In the meantime, Mukhi Alarakhia Sumar and Kamadia Khaki Padamsi (d.1877) called a meeting in Bombay Jamatkhana on August 16, 1862. Habib Ibrahim and his son Ahmad Ibrahim and few others were also summoned, but none of them attended the meeting. Thus, a notice of 21 days was served to them, effective from August 23, 1862 but of no avail. At length, they all had been expelled from the Khoja Ismaili community for ever.

The seceders formed a group, called *The Reformers' Society*, who refused to acknowledge the Aga Khan as their religious head and tried to withhold from his properties dedicated to him by his followers, and finally filed a suit in April, 1866 against the Aga Khan, in the Bombay High Court. This case, generally known as *The Aga Khan Case* or *The Khoja Case* was heard by Sir Joseph Arnold (1814-1886). The Plaintiff of the case were Daya Mahomad, Mahomad Saya, Peer Mahomad Kassim and Fazal Ghulam Hussain with H.M's Advocate General as nominal complainant. The Defendants were the Aga Khan I, Mukhi Alarakhia Sumar, Kamadia Khaki Padamsi, Mahomad Peer Bhai, Nur Mahomad Rajpal, Ali Bhai Jan, Habib Ibrahim, Muraj Premji, Dharamsi Punja, Aasu Gangji, Dossa Ladak, Nanji Alloo and Mahomad Yousuf Murgay, Qadi of the Mahomadans of the Town and island of Bombay. The court's proceedings lasted for 25 days after which the Judge settled down to examine and study the mountain of evidences and seek enlightenment in history. Sir Joseph Arnold had indeed a hard task sifting the evidence, separating facts from a lot of legal chaff. On November 21, 1866, Justice Arnold rendered a detailed verdict against the plaintiffs. The result was a lengthy and well argued judgment which decided, once for all, that the Khoja community "is a sect of people whose ancestors were Hindu in original, which was converted to, and has throughout abided in, the faith of the Shia Imami Ismailis, which has always been and still is bound by ties of spiritual allegiance to the hereditary Imams of Ismailis." This judgement unequivocally confirmed the Aga Khan as the spiritual head of the Khoja Ismaili community and legally established the Islamic root and identity of the Shia Ismaili Muslims.

During the Aga Khan case at Bombay, some eminent Ismailis had rendered valuable services to the community in all affairs, the most prominent among them were Ismail Kherraj, Sharif Gangji, Mukhi Alarakhia Sumar, Kamadia Khaki Padamsi etc. The Aga Khan I recognised them as *Ismaili fidais* and *Ismaili soldiers*. They were known as the *Panje Bhai* (one who shakes hand) to distinguish them from the *Bar Bhai* (twelve brethren) and originated the tradition of *Panje Bhai Club* in the community.

The Aga Khan I seems to have left behind his memoirs in Persian, entitled "*Ibrat-i Afza*", relating to the events of the youth and his encounters with the Qajarid regime in



Iran, also covering his migration to Afghanistan and then to India down to the period of 12th Safar, 1262/January 29, 1846. According to W.Ivanow (1886-1970), it was actually written on behalf of the Aga Khan I by Mirza Ahmad Wiqar Shirazi (1820-1881), the son of the famous poet Visal (d. 1262/1846), who stayed briefly with the Aga Khan in Bombay in 1266/1850. It was lithographed in Bombay in 1278/1862, and reprinted with the numerous typographical errors by Bawa Nazar Ali Karimdad, who got its translation into Urdu, and made its Gujrati translation in 1281/1865. The unedited Persian text was published by Hussain Kuhl Kirmani at Tehran on 1325/1946, and was also published in **"Aga Khan Mahallati wa firqa'i Ismailia"** by M. Sa'i in Tehran in 1329/1950. Hence, the originality of the book seems to have been completely lost due to the alterations made by the partisans of Nimatullahi order, and the accessible printed copies attributed of being a genuine work of the Aga Khan I is the remotest.

The fact that the Aga Khan I had a large following outside India was brought to light by Sir Thomas Douglas Forsyth (1827-1886) in **"Report on a Mission to Yarkand, Calcutta, 1875"**, who in the time of Lord Richard Southwell Bourke Mayo (1822-1872), had led a deputation from Lahore to Yarkand in 1869, and he was also sent to the mission of Kashgar in 1873. The members of Sir Douglas Forsyth's mission ascertained that these Ismailis formed the whole of the sparse population in many of the valleys leading down from the Pamir, the elevated "roof of the world", on the banks of the higher Oxus, and its affluents - in Chitral, Gilgit, and in remote valleys between Kafristan and Badakhshan.

The Aga Khan I spent his final years peacefully in Bombay, with seasonal stay in Poona, and sometime in Banglore. While on visits to Banglore, he had formed a friendship with the then ruler of Travancore, and subsequently represented that important state in Bombay. He used to visit the Indian communities all over India. He invariably attended the Jamatkhana every morning at Bombay and lectured on the moral and religious precepts they should follow. He used to recite some passages of the Holy Koran in Arabic and then explain them in Persian. Next to him would stand a man who understood Persian but also knew Sindhi, who would translate the Imam's words into Sindhi. With a taste for oriental splendour, he established an

imposing residence on Malabar Hill overlooking the sea and installed his family in equally sumptuous houses around him. The affairs of the community were conducted from Aga Hall, a magnificent palace with separate library and staff quarters, set in fine parkland and enclosed by a high wall.

Apart from his three wives, four sons and six daughters, the Aga Khan I also looked after a thousand or more relatives and retainers who had come with him from Iran. His elder son was Aqa Ali Shah, who succeeded him. The second son was Aqa Jhangi Shah (d. 1314/1896), whose sons were Zayn al-Abidin Shah, Shamsuddin Shah and Shah Abbas; and Haji Bibi and Shahzadi Begum were his daughters. The third son of the Aga Khan I was Aqa Jalal Shah (d. 1288/1871), who had two sons, viz. Muchul Shah and Kuchuk Shah, and two daughters, Shah Bibi and Malek Taj Begum. Akbar Shah (d. 1322/1905) was the fourth son, whose two sons were Shah Rukh Shah and Furukh Shah.

The Aga Khan I died in the night of April 12, 1881. He was buried at Hasanabad on Mount Road, Mazagon, on the site of the Eden Hall, where a splendid mausoleum was built at the cost of rupees three lacs. His funeral was attended by thousands of the Indians and Europeans, and all the communities, including the Consuls for Iran and Turkey and high officials of the government. The Aga Khan I was succeeded by his son, Aqa Ali Shah, the Aga Khan II.

His wife Sarv-i Jahan Begum, the daughter of Shah Fateh Ali also died in the following year at Bombay.

#### **AQA ALI SHAH AGA KHAN II (1298-1302/1881-1885)**

Aqa Ali Shah, His Highness Aga Khan II was born in 1246/1830 at Mahallat, where he spent the first decade of his age. In the outset of 1256/1840, Aqa Ali Shah had been taken to Iraq, where he stayed a few years with his mother. Under the instruction of Iranian and Arab teachers, eminent for their piety and learning, he had been taught the oriental languages, and he achieved a reputation as an authority on Persian and Arabic literature, as a student of metaphysics and as an exponent of religious philosophy. He mostly spent his time at Baghdad and Karbala in hunting expeditions with the



Iranian princes, notably in company with Zill al-Sultan, the eldest son of Shah Fateh Ali, who ruled for forty days in Iran.

During the late 1256/1840, Aqa Ali Shah had been permitted by the Qajarid regime to take up temporary residence in Iran. His first marriage actualized with Marium Sultana in Iraq, which had been opposed by certain local *ulema*, but the Aga Khan's close friend, called Safi Ali Shah (d. 1316/1898) had made the marriage possible after winning the approval of the *ulema*. From Karbala they had gone to Baghdad where they had a friendly meeting with Major Henry Rawlinson (1810-1895), the then British political agent in Turkish Arabia. He decided to take the Aga Khan's family under his protection.

Aqa Ali Shah and his mother Sarv-i Jahan Khanum (d. 1299/1882) and his wife Marium Sultana, joined Hasan Ali Shah Aga Khan I in Bombay in 1268/1852. The old book of Bombay Jamatkhana records an entry that he attended the marriage of a certain Ismaili on June 17, 1852 at Bombay and was given a cash prize. Henceforward, Aqa Ali Shah regularly visited different Ismaili communities in Sind, Kutchh and Kathiawar, and lived for some time in Karachi. He had been appointed a member of the Commission in 1874 which was constituted to submit proposals for amendments of law relating to the Ismaili community.

On succeeding to the Imamate in 1298/1881, Aqa Ali Shah Aga Khan II maintained the friendly relation with the British India that had been cemented by his father. He was granted the title of *His Highness* by the British government, which was officially informed to him by the then governor of Bombay on August 9, 1882 on behalf of the Governor General.

The Qajarid king of Iran, Nasiruddin Shah (d. 1313/1896) had sent a message of condolence and sympathy to the Aga Khan II on the occasion of his father's death. Later on, a robe of honour and the emblem of Iranian crown studded with diamonds were sent by the king to the Aga Khan in Bombay as a sign of his relationship with the Aga Khan's family.

He was appointed to the Bombay Imperial Legislative Council from 1880 to 1885, when Sir James Fergusson (1808-1886) was the governor of Bombay. According to Naoroji M.

Dumasia in "**The Aga Khan and his Ancestors**" (Bombay, 1939, p. 61), "The nomination to the Council in those days was a rare distinction bestowed only on men of outstanding ability and high social position." He discharged his responsibilities and onerous duties in a manner which drew admiration of all. He was also the President of **Mohammadan National Association** at Bombay, and an honorary patron of the Western India Turf Club.

During Lord Ripon's regime a peculiar case arose in 1882, when Sir Courtney Ilbert framed and introduced a Bill, known as Ilber Bill. It intended to invest district magistrates and sessions judges with a limited jurisdiction to try European British subjects, and to empower local government to extend the powers to other officials of certain specified classes. The Ilbert Bill was opposed by the Indians, and a public meeting was held on August 27, 1883, with the participation of the Aga Khan II and other eminent persons. In the history of the nation-building of India, this meeting on the Ilbert Bill was justly regarded as most important, and indeed an epoch making event. In its resolution, a body of distinguished citizens was made in a deputation to Sir C. Baring to present the public opinions. This deputation included the Aga Khan II, Badruddin Tyab Ali (1844-1906), Feroz Shah, Telang, Mandlik, Sir Mangaldas Nathubhai and Premchand Roychand. The storm round the Bill however continued, and at length, the Bill had been amended and was passed on January 25, 1884.

He was also well concerned about the welfare of the Ismailis in India, and assisted the needy followers in Sind, Kutchh and Kathiawar. Recalling the events of his childhood, his son and successor the Aga Khan III once said: "My first recollection is of camping in tents and of travelling with my father. We went through Kutchh, Kathiawar and Sind, and I can never forget the memories of those days when we had to halt every two or three hours in order not to tire the horses and mules and donkeys and camels that carried our luggage. Now, looking back, it seems to me that we led the life of gipsies; we were almost a gipsy family. We carried our food about, as very often we could not get it at the places through which we passed. Even water for drinking was brought, sometimes from Bombay or Karachi, in the form of soda water."



### The first Khoja Ismaili School

It seems that the British Parliament almost lost the interest in Indian education between 1854 and 1902, and as a result, the education could not secure liberal and ever-increasing grant. In 1882, however, the Indian Education Commission was appointed by the orders of the Central Government, but it procured no sound result. The population of British India was about 200 million in 1882, in which at 15% the number of school-going children was hardly 300 lacs. It is also remarkable that in 1882, only 1.17% of funds were used by the Municipalities of Bombay from its income. Thus, the Aga Khan II came forward to open *The Khoja Ismaili School* for the first time at Bombay and elsewhere in 1882. It was perhaps a veritable beginning of a renaissance in Indian Ismaili community, whose tradition is continued upto now in the world.

The Aga Khan II also generated his close contact with the Ismaili communities in Upper Oxus districts, Badakhshan, Samarkand, Burma and East Africa. The growing prosperity of the Ismailis and his own towering position, earned his prestige among the Muslim population of India. He promoted educational and philanthropic institutions for the Indian Muslims with the cooperation of a certain Rahimtullah Muhammad Sayani, a most enlightened member of the community. He spared no pains in raising the social status of his followers. Destitute members of the community received generous help from time to time at his hands.

It must be remembered on this juncture that Abdul Hadi bin Abdul Attash (1320-1383), whose *kunya* was Jamiyal Shah with the titles, *Aga* and *Datar*, known as *Aga Jamiyal Shah Datar*, was an eminent Sufi saint in India. He mostly preached the Hindus in Girnar at Junagadh. He is said to have retired in the mountain of Girnar, known as the "*Mount Datar*" (*datar'no pabad*). He converted a large number of the Hindus of the Aghori tribe. His shrine is located in Junagadh, which is visited by the Muslims and Hindus. It is said that a group of the Ismailis also venerated the saint and visited his shrine. During his visit to Junagadh in 1882 after assuming the Imamate, the Aga Khan II had warned his followers not to visit the shrine of Jamiyal Shah, saying that there was no *Aga* (Lord) and *Datar* (Bestower) on earth except the Imam of the Age. Since then, the Aga Khan II is also called as *Aga*

**Ali Shah Datar** (Lord Ali Shah, the Bestower) in the Ismaili orbits.

The Aga Khan II used to visit interior Sind, notably in district Thatta. He liked the climate of Karachi, where he lived in Honeymoon Lodge, lying on the hill near the railway workshop, called Honeymoon Hall. It was bought by the British India in 1859 on the account of the Kolahpur State as a residence for Cheema Saheb, the former Raja of Kolahpur. The government sold it to Mr. Noonan in 1860, and he afterwards sold it to the Aga Khan I, who used it as his residence, known as **tekari** (hill). After his marriage with Lady Ali Shah in 1867, the Aga Khan II moved to Karachi most probably in 1871-72, where his son and successor was born in 1877. The Aga Khan also built a palace for his another residence at Karachi in garden zone, known as **pir'ji wadi** (the fertile tract of the **pir**), which was converted to **Aga Khan Gymkhana** in 1940 by the Aga Khan III. The palace faced the park, then known as Government Garden, and later it came to be known as Mahatama Gandhi Garden. He sought permission from Heavy Napier Bruce Erskine, the Commissioner in Sind (1879 to 1887) to build a gate of the park in 1882. The Aga Khan II bore its cost, where an existing plate indicates the donation of the space for the gate by him.

Like his father, the Aga Khan II was closely associated with the Nimatullahi Sufi order. Before going to India, he had generated close ties with Rahmat Ali Shah, the head of the Nimatullahis, who had been the guest of the Aga Khan I in Mahallat in 1249/1833. Subsequently, the Aga Khan II maintained his relation with Rehmat Ali Shah (d. 1278/1861). He also maintained relations with Munawwar Ali Shah (d. 1301/1884), the uncle and the successor of Rehmat Ali Shah. The Aga Khan II also entertained several notable Iranian Nimatullahis in Bombay, including Rehmat Ali's son, Muhammad Masum Shirazi, Naib al-Sadr (d. 1344/1926), the author of the "**Tara'iq al-Haqa'iq**", who visited Bombay in 1298/1881 and stayed with the Aga Khan for one year. Safi Ali Shah (d. 1316/1898), an eminent Nimatullahi also enjoyed the Aga Khan's hospitality in 1280/1863.

The Aga Khan II had wedded with Marium Sultana in Iraq, who died at Bombay after leaving behind two sons, Pir Shihabuddin Shah (1268-1302/1851-1885) and Aga Nur Shah (1272-1302/1855-1885). These two sons had been brought up



in Hasanabad at Bombay. Aga Nur Shah, aged 30 years, was a good sportsman. He once fell down from his horse while riding, and sustained serious injuries, which proved fatal, and his death took place three months before the death of his elder brother. The Aga Khan II had appointed his elder son, Pir Shihabuddin Shah as a *pir* on 1299/1882. He was a learned scholar, a good philosopher, and is best known for his piety. He died at the age of 33 years on December 15, 1885 due to chest disease at Poona, and was buried at Karbala. "On the day he heard of the death of my elder half-brother, Aga Shihabuddin Shah," says the Aga Khan III while recollecting his memory of childhood, "my father was terribly shaken and, though he tried to hold his own, as a man in his position would do, so great was his grief that I think it led to his early death a few weeks later. I honestly believe that it was the death of my two half-brothers that brought about my father's end when he was apparently in good health." For his further biography, the readers may refer "**Pir Shahabu'd-Din Shah al-Husayni**" (cf. "**The Great Ismaili Heroes**", Karachi, 1973, pp. 100-1) by Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali.

The second wife of the Aga Khan II belonged to a Shirazi family, and after her death, the third marriage was solemnised with Shamsul Mulk Lady Ali Shah, the mother of the Aga Khan III.

The Aga Khan II was a skillful rider and great sportsman. He was very fond of hunting, but never made use of shelters in the hunting field for big game. Standing exposed to danger he took a sure and steady aim at wild animals. In this way he had bagged no less than forty tigers.

#### **Death of the Aga Khan II**

He died on August 17, 1885 of pneumonia contracted in a day's hunting near Poona. Writing the causes of the death of the Aga Khan II, his son and successor states in "**The Memoirs of the Aga Khan**" (London, 1954, p. 11) that, "My father's death was occasioned not by any mishap when he was out after tiger, but by a long day's water-fowling near Poona in August 1885. There were several hours' heavy rain, the going underfoot was heavy and wet, and my father was soaked to the skin. He caught a severe chill

which turned swiftly and fatally to pneumonia. He was dead eight days later."

### **Interment in Najaf**

The body of the Aga Khan II was brought to Bombay by train and shipped for interment in Najaf. Mukhi Kassim Musa (d. 1314/1896), the then estate agent, was entrusted its responsibilities from Bombay to Najaf. He left behind a very important description of 25 days' journey, and his manuscript was copied by Itmadi Hussain Ali Kassim Ali Javeri of Surat. The narrator describes that the ship **Mobalo** of the Persian Navigation Co. carrying the coffin of the Aga Khan, sailed from Bombay on October 28, 1885 with 50 persons belonging to Aga Khan's family headed by Mukhi Kassim Musa and Nur Muhammad Ratansi. The ship anchored at Karachi, Gwadar, Port Abbas, Linga, Bushire and Basra. The caravan proceeded from Basra to Kazamain by a steamboat. The Turkish authority issued a special order that the bier must be accorded royal salute and honour at the port of Kazamain, and accordingly, about 500 soldiers paid tribute with musket shootings. Tajmah, the Aga Khan's sister had also come at the port with her people. The Iranian ambassador of Baghdad also attended with his staff. The processional crowd of over 15 thousand people trudged with the bier, and pursued the road leading to Karbala. A huge multitude of people flocked from the opposite side and joined the procession at a distance of five miles from Karbala. The narrator writes that the bier began to sail as if a vessel on the heads of the people. Prince Aryn, the nephew of the Aga Khan also joined with his sons in Karbala. The narrator describes that he had seen a school in Karbala, conducted with the funds of the Aga Khan for the education of the poor Sayed children, who got free scholarship and provision. The students and other people of Iraq also joined the procession. They alighted at Karbala for seven days, and the bier was placed in the shrine of Hazrat Abbas, then of Imam Hussain and finally it was carried to the courtyard of the tomb of Aga Khan's son, Aga Nur Shah, where the funeral service was offered. Thence, the caravan proceeded for Najaf, accompanied by a thousand people and 300 Turkish soldiers. Tajmah, the father-in-law of Pir Shihabuddin Shah, the people of Sayed Jawad Mutawali and Aga Mustapha Khan also joined the caravan. When they alighted at the vicinity of Najaf, a huge crowd dashed all of a sudden to receive the bier



alongwith the guardians and Mujtahid of Najaf. The funeral rites were offered at the outskirts of Najaf. The narrator mentions that the whole business and transaction in Najaf were totally closed, where the multitude was more than that of Karbala. The bier was placed in the vault of Pir Shihabuddin Shah's shrine, and afterwards was buried with great honour. Writing about the shrine of the Aga Khan, the narrator adds that it had been built in advance. It was walled by the Chinese moulds with golden grating and a dome. The local cupolas and chandelier were hung in the middle, and the floor was fully matted with the Iranian carpets. It resembled the shrine of Imam Hussain and surmounted by an elegant workmanship. The narrator also describes the shrine of Hazrat Ali and its workmanship. He also describes a list of the graves of Aga Khan's relatives, such as Bibi Sarcar Mata Salamat, Shah Abul Hasan Shah, Imam Shah Khalilullah Ali, Aga Shuja, the brother of the Aga Khan, Pir Shihabuddin Shah and his mother and Sardar Aga Abul Hasan Shah etc. Mukhi Kassim Musa concludes his travel-account in these words: "We tarried for 25 days in Najaf and made secret charity of the bags of gold and silver coins in the name of Aga Ali Shah. About 30,000 townfolk were repasted on the last day. Rs.70,000 incurred from Bombay to Najaf, and we returned after a voyage of 25 days."

#### **Shamsul Mulk Lady Ali Shah**

Shamsul Mulk, the daughter of Mirza Ali Muhammad Nizam ad-Dawla, the grandson of Muhammad Hussain Khan Ispahani, the Prime Minister of Shah Fateh Ali Qajar (d. 1250/1834) of Iran; was born in Ispahan. Khurshid Kulah, the mother of Shamsul Mulk was the daughter of Shah Fateh Ali through one of his queens, Taj ad-Dawla Ispahani by name. Lady Ali Shah was thus related to the Iranian royal family through her mother. Queen Taj ad-Dawla was educated under the care of Motamid ad-Dawla Abdul Wahab Khan Nishat Ispahani, an eminent scholar of her time and her daughter and granddaughter were equally recipients of a select and high education.

The Aga Khan II had married Shamsul Mulk in 1867, who became known as Lady Ali Shah. Soon afterwards, they came to Karachi, where their son, Aga Khan III was born in 1877. She used to give names to the newly born babies in the Jamatkhana mostly in Karachi. It is worthwhile to

illustrate that on December 25, 1876 a child was born in Karachi in Poonja family. The parent took him to Lady Ali Shah, who held court in the Kharadhar Jamatkhana. In keeping with Ismaili norms, Lady Ali Shah blessed the newly born child with the name of **Mahomed Ali** by alphabetizing the two words in English in the anglicised form. He was Mahomed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, who, throughout his lifetime, adopted the same spelling of his name that was on the record of the Jamatkhana. Lady Ali Shah had been in Bombay in 1881 with her son on the death of the Aga Khan I, and then made her residency at Poona.

Lady Ali Shah took the reins of the Ismaili community affairs during the time his son ascended as 48th Imam, and she administered the affairs efficiently through a Council, consisting of the prominent members of Kutchh, Kathiawar, Gujrat and Sind, until the Aga Khan III attained puberty in 1893.

Lady Ali Shah was indeed a benevolent woman, and famous for her charity and generosity, and her fame reached the fringes of the Muslim lands. In 1880, she had established a school in Karbala for the education and welfare of poor orphans of Sayed families. She also donated a land of 3000 square meters and constructed a building for the Iranian residents at Kazamain. In 1905, she had gone on pilgrimage to Mecca, and on that occasion, she was lavishly charitable that the people forgot all that they had heard of the charities of persons of high rank.

Lady Ali Shah gave a historical evidence in the Bombay High Court during the proceeding of Haji Bibi Case of 1908 before Justice Louis Pitman Russell, who was greatly struck by her evidence. As he observed in his judgement, she displayed an extraordinary memory.

While the Aga Khan III was away from India during the World War (1914-1919), Lady Ali Shah was tremendously active in his stead. Reference has already been made to her command and ability for organization; she now developed this to the fullest extent by adding to her work of keeping in touch with the Ismaili community. She also placed her services at the disposal of Lord and Lady Willingdon, and under her direction, the Ismaili and Iranian ladies rendered great services to the wounded soldiers brought to Bombay from Iraq during the first



World War. Under her inspired leadership, the community was able to collect large funds and procured necessary supplies. She kept in constant correspondence with the ruler of Hunza and the influential Iranians, advising them to help the Britain during War. Her nephews and relatives fought on the side of the Allies in Iraq, and one of them notably was Aga Hamid Khan, who was ranked C.I.E.

In 1917, His Majesty, the King was graciously pleased to grant Lady Willingdon the *Order of the Crown of India*. On that occasion, the historic house of the Aga Khan at Nesbit Road, Bombay was the scene of a very influential and picturesque gathering of the Muslim ladies, when an address of congratulation was presented to Lady Willingdon under the leadership of Lady Ali Shah. It was a unique gathering when she read the address to Lady Willingdon in Persian. She also had a nice meeting with Lady Wilson on February 9, 1924.

On the recommendation of Lord Willingdon, the honour of the *Imperial Order of the Crown of India* was conferred upon Lady Ali Shah in 1932. She visited Beirut in the same year for treatment, where she was well received by the Syrians. She had also gone to Palestine, Damascus and other holy cities, and returned to Bombay on October 3, 1930. On November 30, 1930, she inaugurated the conference being presided by Lady Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah at Poona, being attended by the Muslim ladies of Bombay and Sind.

Being an ardent Iranian scholar and well grounded in oriental history, Lady Ali Shah was a woman of great piety. She was universally respected through the Muslim world. In 1934, she visited Syria with her grandson, Prince Aly S. Khan. When she had visited Iran, Reza Shah Pahlavi was the vizir and commander-in-chief. By his order, she was accorded warm welcome befitting a granddaughter of Shah Fateh Ali. He presented her two Iranian carpets, which she gifted to His Highness of Dharampur.

Lady Ali Shah encouraged the Ismaili girls to take education and it was through her influence that the social reforms were introduced in the community. So profound was her wisdom and so great the confidence in the soundness of her opinion that several Indian princes sought her advices. The Begum of Bhopal was an intimate friend of Lady Ali Shah. She also came in close contact with Lord

Reay and other governors and their wives, and also with the Earl of Dufferin and the Countess of Dufferin, who entertained a very high opinion of her. In 1934, she intended to visit Iran after meeting with Lord and Lady Willingdon at Karachi, but her sudden illness prevented her to make tour, and under medical advice, she made a second visit to Europe. Despite her impairing health, she continued to serve the community. She had an honour to inaugurate the **All India Golden Jubilee Committee** on October 16, 1935 at Bombay.

Lady Aly Shah was taken seriously ill in November, 1937. The Aga Khan III hurried to India by air and landed at Jodhpur, and after greeting His Highness Maharaja Umedsinhji, he left for Bombay by train. As doctor had anticipated, his presence acted as a tonic on Lady Ali Shah and she recovered from the serious illness. She left for Iraq in January, 1938. She proceeded to Baghdad via Karachi and Basra by S.S. **Vasna** which sailed from Bombay on January 27, 1938. She, realizing that her end was near, told to Kamadia Khan Bahadur: "Send my love to all the members of the Ismaili community. I may not return to India, but wherever my spirit be I will eternally watch their peaceful progress and prosperity, as I have done all my life." The Aga Khan III had made every arrangement for his mother's comfort at Baghdad, and for that reason, he took with him Kamadia Khan Bahadur's son, Hussain Ali, by air to Basra, where, under Aga Khan's instructions, he made all possible arrangements for a quiet landing. A saloon car was ready to convey Lady Ali Shah from Basra to Baghdad, where a bungalow, belonging to her nephew, Aga Hamid Khan, was placed at her disposal. She arrived at Baghdad on February 4, 1938 at 1 pm. True indeed it is, that the Aga Khan III's association with the West increased, causing his longer stay away from India. His mother had felt the pangs of this separation, and once she said to her son: "Death is inevitable, but if it comes to me in your absence, it will be unendurable." The Aga Khan's reply brought her great solace, who said: "Do not worry. You will breathe your last with your head in my lap." Consequently, the Aga Khan III and his wife reached Baghdad by air from Cairo on February 5, 1938 at 3 pm., and Lady Ali Shah passed away at 5.15 pm on the same day, breathing her last in the lap of her son. She was buried on the evening of February 6, 1938 at Najaf next to the tomb of her husband as per her will in presence of thousands of people. Her death occasioned deep grief not



only among the Muslims, but in all other communities in India among whom she was very popular. Reference to her death was made at the meeting of Bombay Municipal Corporation on Monday, the February 7, 1938 and as a mark of respect to her memory, the House adjourned without transacting any business.

In the course of an intimate sketch of her life, the "Daily Mail" of London published the following description of her, only a few days before her death.

"For all her burden of years, she is still one of the most vital personalities in India; clear thinking, forth-right, imperious - a strict warden of the past, who sees little that is worthy or desirable in the fruits of the present."

"I do not mingle with the world of today, but I am not ignorant of it," she has often said.

"Her physical vitality has been as remarkable as her strength of mind. In her home she wears always the silken trousers and soft draperies such as the women of Persia wore centuries ago. And although that home is a palace famed for its splendour, her way of life has been as simple as that of the humblest of the Prophet's followers. Her fare is frugal, her drink water. She fasts."

The Aga Khan III was deeply affected by the death of his dear mother. "In this difficult and saddest moment of my life", wrote the Aga Khan to a friend, "the consolation I have is that the sadness and sorrow is tempered by the fact that she lived to be, at least 90 years of age. She had a large and happy family and very happy grand-children whom she always wanted. She died where she wanted to die. She had the satisfaction of seeing her grand-children happy and prosperous in day when prosperity is getting rare. But all this does not reconcile me to losing her. She had been to me more than father and mother combined, since I lost my father at the age of 8. No loss, not even that of my son who died in infancy which was a terrible blow to me as a father, has been quite so terrible as this." Such was the deep affection between the Aga Khan and his mother. To mark his devotion, he had heretofore dedicated his book "India in Transition" to his beloved mother in 1918.

### SULTAN MUHAMMAD SHAH AGA KHAN III (1302-1376/1885-1957)

His name was Muhammad Sultan, also known as Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, the Aga Khan, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., G.C.M.G., LL.D., was born at Honeymoon Lodge in Karachi on Friday, the 25th Shawal, 1294/November 2, 1877 at 5:30 pm. When the news of his birth was routed to the Aga Khan I in Bombay, he said: "Name him Muhammad Sultan. He would be a Sultan (emperor) in the world. His period would see wonderful events, and would earn distinguished position in the world."

He grew up under the subtle care of his mother. His father had declared him as his successor for the first time in Kamod, a village near Ahmadabad in 1884 before the local Ismailis. About three months before his death, it is learnt from the old manuscript of a certain Khoja Hansraj Sunderji that on May 14, 1885, the Aga Khan II had said to the Bombay jamat that: "You adore Aga Sultan Muhammad same as you adore me. There is no difference between me and him. We both are from one light (*noor*), and you believe it as one, so that your worship be accepted in dooms-day. Do not consider us different, both are from one light."

After his father's death, the Aga Khan III ascended the throne of Imamate at the age of 7 years, 9 months and 16 days on 6th Zilkada, 1302/August 17, 1885. The British empire awarded him the title of *His Highness* in 1886 in the time of Lord Reay, the then governor of Bombay. On that occasion, the Iranian king had sent him a sword and an ivory stick as presents.

The Aga Khan III as a child, almost from the time he could walk, took a keen interest in various games. He also showed an extraordinary affection for animals and was in the habit of feeding dears, stags and ponies in his home park, often leading them about with a string round their necks. He took great pleasure in riding a wooden horse.

Until the age of 18 years, the Aga Khan III received education in Bombay and Poona. He was deeply indebted to his learned and wise mother, Lady Ali Shah, to whom he owed his liberal and extensive education. Though deprived of the paternal solicitude of his father at the age of 8 years, his mother took abundant parental interest in his education. Besides oriental languages like Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Hindi, he also developed command over



English, French and Germany. Alongwith Islamic education, he also studied western thought, sciences, metaphysics, astronomy and mathematics from his three European tutors. Like his mother, he also took interest in the poetical works of Rumi, Hafiz, Sa'adi, Firdausi and Umar Khayyam. Recollecting memory of his childhood, the Aga Khan once said: "As a child I was very much interested in philosophy and poetry, because anyone who knows Persian literature is naturally inclined to those subjects by the wonderful power, charm and grace of our Persian poets. I came under the influence of Hafiz, Maulana Rumi and others at an early and impressionable age, and they opened my eyes to the wonders of the universe and to the need of constantly keeping abreast of scientific and philosophic speculation and discovery. I have never since lost my interest in these subjects and have tried, as far as one can in the midst of a busy life, to read all the most recent theories and the arguments on which they are founded."

The Aga Khan III was fortunate to have a gifted and farsighted mother, Lady Ali Shah, who engaged best scholars to teach him Koran, Hadith and oriental languages. She also played a seminal role in the administrative affairs of the Ismaili community through a council. Dr. G.W. Leitner writes in "**Legends, Songs and Customs of Dardistan**" (London, 1889, pp. 250-1) that, "His Highness, Agha Sultan Muhammad Shah is the present hereditary spiritual head. His authority extends from the Lebanon to the Hindukush and wherever else there may be Ismailians, who either openly profess obedience to him, as do the Khojahs in Bombay; or who are his secret followers in various parts of the Muhammadan world in Asia and Africa. The present young, but enlightened, Chief is, as his father and grandfather, likely to exert his influence for good."

The Aga Khan III started visiting the Ismaili communities outside Bombay in 1312/1894. He made his debut as an educational reformer, and visited The Mohammadan Anglo Oriental College in Aligarh (high fort), about 79 miles south-east of Delhi, on November 22, 1896 and had a productive meeting with Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), who was a great educationist and socialist. Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan had founded the Aligarh College on November 1, 1875, and was the vice-President of the College Fund Committee as well as its Honorary Secretary. Qayyum A. Malick quotes in his "**Prince Aga Khan**" (Karachi, 1954, p.

47) Sir Muhammad Yaqub as saying: "I happened to see His Highness for the first time in 1896, when the young Khoja leader started his public career by making a pilgrimage to the M.A.O. College Aligarh, the great symbol of Muslim renaissance, and made his acquaintance with the founder of the institution, the late Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan, who was then the foremost Muslim leader of the day. It was perhaps this inspiring inauguration of the Aga Khan's public life which kindled in his heart an unabating fire for the service of his community. The late Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk, who arranged this historic meeting, had already perceived the germs of great talent in His Highness, and brought him closer to the Aligarh movement, and the Aga Khan soon appeared on the horizon." Willi Frischauer also writes in "The Aga Khans" (London, 1970, pp. 56-7) that, "How wonderful if Aligarh could become a full university to bring up a generation of young leaders and advance the cause of Islam. Here was a chance to follow in the footsteps of his ancestor who had founded al-Azhar, the first Muslim university, which greatly appealed to the young Aga Khan. He decided to put up money for the cause and persuaded wealthy friends to contribute. It was a long struggle but he missed no opportunity to plead for this cause and when Aligarh finally became a university two dozen years later, it was more to Muslims than a seat of learning. In retrospect it was recognised as the intellectual cradle of independent Pakistan and the Aga Khan's enthusiasm and support which made it possible earned him a place among Pakistan's founding fathers."

In 1315/1897, a terrible famine had badly shaken the Bombay Presidency, therefore, the Aga Khan III supplied food and seed, cattle and agricultural tools to the needy people, and in order to provide job opportunities, he started the construction of his Yarroda Palace at Poona. In Bombay, a large camp was pitched at Hasanabad, where thousands of people were daily fed at his expense; and to those who were ashamed openly to participate in this hospitality, the grain was provided to them privately for about six months. The famine was followed by the epidemic of bubonic plague and the superstitious people of India refused to be vaccinated against the disease. The Aga Khan III obtained the service of an eminent bacteriologist, Dr. Waldemar Mordecai Wolff Haffkine, the Director-in-Chief of the Government Plague Research Laboratory, Bombay. The Aga Khan was a crusader against meaningless superstitions and traditions, when soon after famine came plague, the people



were in a panic and there was a hue and cry against inoculation with anti-plague serum. He therefore collected the people at his Khusaro Lodge, where the doctor was staying and addressed meetings explaining the benefits of inoculation. In front of this gathering he got himself inoculated, so as to dispel their superstitious fears, and strengthen their confidence in scientific methods of cure. This prompted others to follow and many lives were saved as a result. In the meantime, it had been proposed to give a public dinner to the Aga Khan III in Bombay in view of his outstanding services. When he had been informed of it, he wrote to the Secretary of the Reception Committee a letter, which showed his innermost feeling evoked by the distress of the poor people. He wrote: "I cannot accept any entertainment when thousands of people are dying of starvation. It is almost wicked to waste money on rich food when thousands of people are starving. I would urge that every rupee that could be spared should be given for the relief of sufferers by famine instead of wasting it on the entertainments."

#### **First visit of Europe**

In 1316/1898, the Aga Khan III set out from Bombay on his first journey to Europe, and visited France and Britain, where he had an audience with Queen Victoria at Windsor Palace. In the state banquet at Windsor Palace, he was sitting next to the Queen on her right side. No ruling prince from India who held great temporal power would have been treated with greater honour and respect like the Aga Khan. He was invested the honourable title of **Knight Commander of the Indian Empire** (K.C.I.E.). He also met the future king Edward VII. The "**Saint Gazette**" (London, dated July 22, 1898) published the following report to this effect:-

"Her Majesty Queen Victoria had held a Levy, which was attended by Consuls of all countries, and His Highness the Aga Khan was also invited at the occasion. When the Aga Khan went there, the Queen herself went to receive him at the door and welcomed him with great respects and made him sit on the Throne of their Pope. As soon as the Aga Khan sat on the Throne, the Queen said to all the Consuls, "What is the reason of your surprise, and what you all are thinking of?" The Consuls replied, "Upto now, many Indian Kings have come to Europe, but you have given more honours

to Aga Khan, and even made him sit on the Throne of our Pope; what is the reason of this?" The Queen in reply said, "**You are all wise, prudent and learned, and you know better than I the reason of this. In short, I must tell you that we have never seen our religious leader Jesus Christ, and without doubt, the Aga Khan is our same leader, and considering this, I have made him sit on our Pope's Throne.**" On hearing this, all Consuls were greatly surprised, and wired to their respective countries about the above fact. Consequently, the Rulers of France, Germany, Italy, Belgium etc. sent telegrams to Aga Khan from all over, requesting him to give them honour of visiting their countries, which the Aga Khan accepted."

### **First visit of East Africa**

The Aga Khan III paid his first visit to East African countries in 1317/1899, where the Sultan of Zanzibar granted him the title of **Brilliant Star of Zanzibar**. On his second visit to Europe in 1900, the Aga Khan III held a meeting with Muzaffaruddin Shah Qajar (1313-1324/1896-1907) of Iran in Paris, who awarded him the title of **Shamsul Hamayun** or **Star of Persia**. He had also a meeting with Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid II in Istanbul, who granted him the title of **Star of Turkey**. The German emperor Kaiser William II also awarded the title of **First Class Prussian Order of the Royal Crown** at Potsdam.

On January 22, 1901, the Queen Victoria expired, therefore, the Aga Khan III attended the funeral at London on February 2, 1901. He was the personal guest of emperor Edward VII at his coronation in August 2, 1902, who promoted the Aga Khan from the rank of Knight (K.C.I.E.) to that of **Grand Commander of the Order of Indian Empire** (G.C.I.E.). He returned to India in November, 1902. The viceroy of India, Lord Curzon appointed him to a seat of his Legislative Council of India.

### **Movement of Aligarh University**

The Aga Khan believed that the root cause of Muslim backwardness in India was illiteracy, and therefore, education was the panacea for their ills. He thought that education should be a medium of service to others and a



tool for modernization. He also considered the aim of education to be character building. According to Islamuddin in "The Aga Khan III" (Islamabad, 1978, p. 22), "It was he, who, translated the dream of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan into reality, by raising the status of Aligarh College into a great Muslim University." Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah states in "The Prince Aga Khan" (London, 1933, p. 65) that, "It was Sir Syed Ahmed who founded Aligarh College, but it was the Aga Khan, an ardent enthusiastic promoter of the ideal of education, who has been mainly responsible for the raising of its status to that of a University."

After the death of Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan in 1316/1898, the Aga Khan III advised Mohsin al-Mulk (1837-1907), the Secretary of Aligarh College, to tour India to procure public opinion for the cause of Muslim University. His interest in the Aligarh College dates from the time when he was called upon to preside at an Educational Conference held at Delhi at the time of Lord Curzon's proclamation Durbar in 1319/1902. He used the platform of Muslim Educational Conference to bring home to the Muslims, the importance of education, and Muslim University at Aligarh. In his Presidential address to the Muslim Educational Conference, the Aga Khan said: "If, then, we are really in earnest in deploring the fallen condition of our people, we must unite in an effort for their redemption and, first and foremost of all, an effort must now be made for the foundation of a University where Muslim youths can get, in addition to modern sciences, a knowledge of their glorious past and religion and where the whole atmosphere of the place, it being a residential University, nay, like Oxford, give more attention to character than to mere examinations. Muslims of India have legitimate interests in the intellectual development of their co-religionists in Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, and the best way of helping them is by making Aligarh a Muslim Oxford .... We are sure that by founding this University we can arrest the decadence of Islam, and if we are not willing to make sacrifices for such an end, must I not conclude that we do not really care whether the faith of Islam is dead or not? .... We want Aligarh to be such a home of learning as to command the same respect of scholars as Berlin or Oxford, Leipzig or Paris. And we want those branches of Muslim learning, which are too fast passing into decay, to be added by Muslim scholars to the stock of the world's knowledge." (vide "Khutbat-i Aliyah", Aligarh, 1927, Part I, p. 206).

Addressing the annual session of Muslim Educational Conference in 1904 at Bombay, the Aga Khan III said: "The farsighted among the Muslims of India desire a University, where the standard of learning should be the highest and where with the scientific training, there shall be that moral education, that indirect but constant reminder of the eternal difference between right and wrong, which is the soul of education . . . . I earnestly beg of you that the cause of such a University should not be forgotten in the shouts of the market place that daily rise amongst us."

The plan for the Muslim University had by 1910 taken on the complexion and force of a national movement. The session of the All India Muslim Educational Conference at Nagpur in December, 1910 gave the signal for a concentered, nation-wide effort to raise the necessary funds for the projected University. In moving the resolution on the University, the Aga Khan III made a stirring speech. He said, "This is a unique occasion as His Majesty the King-Emperor is coming out to India. This is a great opportunity for us and such as is never to arise again during the lifetime of the present generation, and the Muslims should on no account miss it...We must make up and make serious, earnest and sincere efforts to carry into effect the one great essential movement which above all has a large claim on our enegery and resources...If we show that we are able to help ourselves and that we are earnest in our endeavours and ready to make personal sacrifices, I have no doubt whatever that our sympathetic government, which only requires proper guarantees of our earnestness, will come forward to grant us the charter. 'Now or never' seems to be the inevitable situation."

To make a concerted drive for the collection of funds, a Central Foundation Committee with the Aga Khan III as Chairman with Maulana Shaukat Ali (1873-1938) as his Secretary; and prominent Muslims from all walks of life as members was formed at Aligarh on January 10, 1911. The Aga Khan III accompanied by Maulana Shaukat Ali, who was still in government service and had taken a year's furlough, toured throughout the country to raise funds, visiting Calcutta, Allahabad, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Lahore, Bombay and other places. According to Willi Frischauer in "**The Aga Khans**" (London, 1970, p. 76), "His campaign for the Aligarh University required a final big heave and, as Chairman of the fund raising committee, he went on a



collecting tour through India's main Muslim areas: 'As a mendicant', he announced, 'I am now going out to beg from house to house and from street to street for the children of Indian Muslims.' It was a triumphal tour. Wherever he went, people unharnessed the horses of his carriage and pulled it themselves for miles."

The response to the touching appeal of the Aga Khan III was spontaneous. On his arrival at Lahore, the daily "Peace" of Punjab editorially commented and called upon the Muslims "to wake up, as the greatest personality and benefactor of Islam was in their city." The paper recalled a remark of Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan prophesying the rise of a hand from the unseen world to accomplish his mission. "That personality" the paper said, "was of the Aga Khan III." On that day, the "London Times" commenting upon the visit, regarded him as a great recognised leader of Muslims. The significant aspect of the Aga Khan's fund collection drive was not the enthusiastic welcome accorded to him, but the house to house collection drive. Qayyum A. Malick writes in "Prince Aga Khan" (Karachi, 1954, p. 64) that once the Aga Khan on his way to Bombay to collect funds for the university, the Aga Khan stopped his car at the office of a person, who was known to be his bitterest critic. The man stood up bewildered and asked, "Whom do you want Sir?" "I have come for your contribution to the Muslim university fund," said the Aga Khan. The man drew up a cheque for Rs. 5000/-. After pocketing the cheque, the Aga Khan took off his hat and said, "Now as a beggar, I beg from you something for the children of Islam. Put something in the bowl of this mendicant." The man wrote another cheque for Rs. 15000/- with moist eyes, and said, "Your Highness, now it is my turn to beg. I beg of you in the name of the most merciful God to forgive me for anything that I may have said against you. I never knew you were so great." The Aga Khan said, "Dont worry! It is my nature to forgive and forget in the cause of Islam and the Muslims." The drive received further great fillip from the announcement of a big donation by Her Highness Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal. The Aga Khan III was so moved by her munificence that in thanking her, he spoke the following words: *Dil'e banda ra zinda kardi, dil'e Islam ra zinda kardi, dil'e qaum ra zinda kardi, Khuda'i ta'ala ba tufail'e Rasul ajarash be dahad* means, "You put life in the heart of this servant; you put life in the heart of Islam; you put life in the heart of the nation."

**May God reward you for the sake of the Prophet!"** In sum, the Aga Khan collected twenty-six lacs of rupees by July, 1912 in the drive and his personal contribution amounted to one lac rupees.

On October 20, 1920, the Aligarh University was granted its official Charter. In spite of several obstacles, the Aga Khan continued his ceaseless efforts for the Muslim University, and further announced his annual grant of Rs. 10,000/- for Aligarh University, which was subsequently raised. The Ismaili individuals also made their generous contributions to Aligarh University. For instance, Mr. Kassim Ali Jairajbhoy gave Rs. 1,25,000 to found chairs of Philosophy and Science in the Aligarh in memory of his father.

It must be noted on this juncture that in January, 1857, Lord Canning (1856-1862) had passed the Acts of Incorporation in India which provided for the establishment of universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The fourth university was then established in 1882 by a Special Act of Incorporation in Pujnab and the fifth was that of Allahabad University in 1887. Thus, by the end of 1902 there were five universities in India, and Aligarh University was the sixth one.

It will remain as a historical reminder of the fact that the Aga Khan gave continuity to the traditions of his ancestors as pioneers of education in Egypt and elsewhere - traditions associated with the foundation of Al-Azhar, the oldest existing university in the world, which to this day is crowded with students from all parts of the globe. The Aga Khan III instituted the **Aga Khan Foreign Scholarship** programme for the promising students. It is worth mentioning here that Dr. Ziauddin was one of the students of the Aga Khan in the sense that the Aga Khan paid for his years of study at Cambridge. Among other great Muslim scholars, who benefited from the munificent help were Dr. L.K. Hyder, the well known economist, Mr. Wali Muhammad, a great physicist, Dr. Zafarul Hasan, a learned theologian, and Dr. Zaki etc. "The Movement of establishing a Muslim University" writes Mumtaz Moin in his **"The Aligarh Movement"** (Karachi, 1976, p. 184), "is an important chapter of our history. Initiated by Waqar al-Mulk it soon became a live issue under the patronage of the Aga Khan." Islamuddin writes in **"Aga Khan III"** (Islamabad, 1978, p. 27) that, "Thus it would not be an



exaggeration to say that without Aga Khan, there would have been no Aligarh University, and without Aligarh, Pakistan would have been a near impossibility." The Aga Khan himself said in his "Memoirs" (London, 1954, p. 36) that: "We may claim with pride that Aligarh was the product of our own efforts and of no outside benevolence and surely it may also be claimed that the independent sovereign nation of Pakistan was born in the Muslim University of Aligarh."

The Aga Khan III paid another visit of Europe in 1904, and for the second time, he went to see his followers in East Africa in the following year.

In 1324/1906, the Aga Khan III liquidated the traditional jurisprudent committee, known as *justi* in the community. In replacement thereof, he founded the Council in Bombay, and appointed the Mukhis and Kamadias and other 20 persons as members. In 1327/1910, the Aga Khan III promulgated a legally drafted Constitution for the Shia Imami Council and ordained it under his personal seal. Ibrahim Muhammad Rawji had been appointed as its first president.

The Aga Khan III highly abhorred injustice and fought actively for both human and civil rights at a time when it was hardly a fashionable pursuit. He resigned from the exclusive St. Cloud Golf Club near Paris when some members objected to Sugar Ray Robinson, the black boxer playing on the links. In Aix-les-Bains, one day, he rebuffed the pompous head waiter of the Hotel Splendide who refused to seat a large group of Senegalese students and promptly invited them to a three-star lunch. The Aga Khan III was also deeply shocked by the ruthless and arrogant discrimination practised by whites in United States, India and China. During his brief visit to China in 1906, he remarked: "Within the foreign settlements the general attitude towards the Chinese was little short of outrageous. All the better hotels refused them entry. From European clubs they were totally excluded. We hear a great deal about the colour bar in South Africa today. In China, in the early years of this century, the colour bar was rigidly imposed - not least offensively in discrimination against officials of the very government whose guests, under international law, all foreigners, were supposed to be. Is it any wonder that the China intelligencia long retained bitter memories of this attitude?"

## Foundation of All-India Muslim League

The year 1324/1906 marks the cleavage and culmination of Muslim politics in the subcontinent, when the Aga Khan III led the Muslim delegation and met Lord Minto (1845-1914), the Viceroy of India from 1905, at Simla to demand the political rights of the Muslims of India. Simla was 1170 miles away from Calcutta, in the hills of northern India, above Delhi. It was the Anglo-Indian Olympus, where the British had been coming every summer since 1860, and by 1906 there were more than 1400 European dwellings, built on a series of ridges with the native town. At the centre of this was the Viceregal Lodge, five storeys high, furnished by Maples of Tottenham Court Road.

The deputation to the Viceroy consisted of the most influential leaders, such as Mohsin al-Mulk, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Sir Ali Imam, Sir Muzammallah Khan, Sir Rafiquddin Ahmad, Sir Muhammad Shafi, Sir Abdul Rahim, Sir Salimullah, Justice Shah Din, etc. Syed Razi Waste writes in **"Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement 1905-1910"** (Lahore, 1976, pp. 69-70) that, "Minto received the Muslim Deputation on October 1, 1906. Thirty-five prominent Muslim leaders from all over India gathered in the Ball Room of the Viceregal Lodge at Simla. Their leader was a young man of twenty-nine years, H.H. Aga Sir Sultan Mohamed Shah Aga Khan from Bombay, who besides being the head of the rich Ismaili sect of Muslims had close and friendly relations with prominent British people." Accordingly, a memorandum was submitted to the Viceroy, insisting that the position accorded to the Muslim community in any kind of representation direct or indirect, and all other ways affecting their status should be commensurate not merely with their numerical strength but also with their political importance. Lord Minto gave them a patient hearing, assuring that their political rights and interests as a community will be safeguarded in any administrative organisation. The Aga Khan realized that the Muslims should not keep themselves aloof from politics because the Congress was already proving incapable in representing the Indian Muslims. At length, the demands of separate electorate and weightage in number in representation to all elected bodies were accepted by the Viceroy Lord Minto, and incorporated in the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909.



On October 24, 1906, the Aga Khan wrote a letter to Mohsin al-Mulk regarding a need to form a Muslim organisation what had been achieved at Simla. The letter reads: "It may well be that provincial associations should be formed with the aim of safeguarding the political interests of Muslims in various portions of India and similarly some central organisation for the whole." In the meantime, The All-India Muslim Educational Conference met at Dacca on December 30, 1906 and the letter of the Aga Khan was circulated among the delegates. The Conference unanimously resolved that a political association styled as the All-India Muslim League be formed to promote among the Muslims the loyalty to the British government, to protect and advance the political rights and interests of Muslims, and to prevent the rise among Muslims of India of any feeling of hostility towards other communities. The Aga Khan III was thus elected permanent President of the **All-India Muslim League** and Sayed Hussain Bilgrami was made the Honorary Secretary. M. Abdul Aziz writes in "**The Crescent in the Land of the Rising Sun**" (London, 1941, p. 140) that, "It is well known that His Highness the Aga Khan was the first President of The All-India Moslem League and the way in which he took a keen and sympathetic interest in the organisation and development of the League, is shown from his letter of appreciation in his capacity as its first President." According to "**The Foundations of Pakistan**" (ed. by Sayed Sharifuddin Pirzada, Dacca, 1969, 1st vol., p. 33), "In tracing the origins of Pakistan, some commentators give decisive importance to the separate electorates secured by the Muslim Deputation which was received by the Viceroy Lord Minto at Simla on October 1, 1906. The event has been described in the Diary of Lady Minto as 'an epoch in Indian history.'" According to "**The Encyclopaedia Americana**" (U.S.A., 1980, 1st vol., p. 327), "The delegation established the Muslim League, which carried the seeds of Muslim separation and eventual creation of Pakistan." Aziz Ahmed also writes in "**Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan**" (London, 1967, p. 66) that, "One of the chief promoters of this design of Muslim separatism in subcontinent was the Agha Khan."

At the sixth annual session of Muslim League held on March 22-23, 1913 at Lucknow, the Aga Khan resigned from the presidency. He hinted a numerous reasons, but did not propose to cut himself away from the League. "Resignation" he said, "frees me from that necessarily judicial

character that attaches to the presidency. The League does not need a leader but leaders." According to "Encyclopaedia of Asian History" (ed. Ainslie T. Embree, London, 1988, 1st vol., p. 47), "The Ismaili leader, Agha Khan, who presided over the League's destiny from 1906 to 1913, and resigned on November 3, 1913." On the seventh session of the League at Agra, held on December 30-31, 1913, Sayed Wazir Hasan (1874-1947), the Secretary of League from 1912 to 1929, announced the resignation of the Aga Khan in the meeting, expressing, according to the "Foundations of Pakistan" (Dacca, 1969, 1st vol., p. 323) that, "it would be a calamity for Muslims when His Highness resigned." Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah appealed to the Aga Khan not to place his resignation in their hands today and to continue as President till the rules of the League were altered. The Aga Khan said that he would remain President for the time suggested. He said also that in no case, it would sever his connection with the League as Vice-President. In a meeting of the Council of the League, held on February 25, 1914, the Aga Khan was declared the Vice-President of Muslim League, and Sir Ali Muhammad Khan (1879-1931), the Raja of Mahmudabad was elected as the second President of Muslim League in the eight session at Bombay on December 30, 1915.

#### **Haji Bibi Case of 1908**

While the Aga Khan III was on tour of East African countries, a suit was filed against him at Bombay High Court on 1st Muharram, 1326/February 4, 1908 by Haji Bibi, the daughter of Aga Jhangi Shah and the widow of Muchul Shah (d. 1321/1903) with her son Samad Shah and Kutchuk Shah and 13 others. They claimed rights from the property of the Aga Khan I. Haji Bibi demanded for monthly allowance, servants salaries, fooding, furniture, maintenance and car along with Rs. 9010/- per year at the rate of 6%. The court started the proceeding from January 4, 1908. The statements of the renowned persons had been recorded by court, and the history and the doctrines of the Ismailis were investigated to ascertain whether Pir Sadruddin and the early Khoja Ismailis were Ithna Asharis or not as had been claimed by them, and thus, almost 128 issues to this context had been examined. The statement of the Aga Khan was also taken in the court on July 28, 30 and 31, 1908. Justice Louis Pitman Russell ruled against the plaintiffs on September 3, 1908, confirming the Aga



Khan's rights to the estate of his grandfather and to the offerings made to him by his followers. The ruling also established that the Nizari Ismailis were distinct from the Shias of the Ithna Ashari school.

From 1325/1907 onwards, the Aga Khan III visited Europe almost every year, therefore, he established his chief residency in Europe. In 1330/1911, emperor George V visited India and invested him the title of **Grand Commander of the Order of Star of India** (G.C.S.I.). In 1332/1914, the British government is reported to have offered the Aga Khan two times to become the king of Egypt in place of the dethroned king Khedive Abbas II Hilmi (1892-1914), but he disregarded the offer. In 1332/1914, the Aga Khan went to Europe and offered his services to the British government during the First World War (1914-1919), urging his followers to help the British authorities in their regions. He was given an eleven gun salute in 1916 in Britain for his contribution towards the Allied War efforts, which was a rare occurrence in diplomatic history. He was also accorded the status of a **First Class Ruling Prince of Bombay Presidency**. Suffering from illness, the Aga Khan took rest more than 18 months in Switzerland under the treatment of Dr. Kocher, and then proceeded to Paris for further medical examination from Prof. Pierremarie.

In 1339/1920, the Aligarh University came into existence with the untiring efforts of the Aga Khan, and he was appointed its first Vice Chancellor in 1340/1921.

#### **Foundation of Recreation Club Institute**

In 1330/1912, an enthusiastic group of the young Ismailis had formed **The Young Ismaili Vidhya Vinod Club** (or **V.V. Club**) at Bombay for literary, missionary and other communal activities. In 1337/1919, it wanted to add certain tinge of manliness to its activities. Thus, Lt. Col. Itmadi Pirmahomed V. Madhani (1916-1919), Major Abdullah Jafar Lakhpati, Major Alijah Rehmattullah V. Charnia, Abdullah Ismail Modi and Kassim Ali Muhammad Dawoodani, alongwith four other prominent members held a meeting and had thought of adding the aspect of heroism and bravery, and as a result, the V.V. Club inaugurated an organisation of disciplined Volunteer Corps from among the

youths of the community, known as *The Young Ismaili Vidhya Vinod Corps* under the presidentship of Lt. Col. Itmadi Pirmahomed V. Madhani. The Aga Khan III changed its name as *H.H. The Aga Khan's Young Volunteer Corps* in 1920. With these changes, the literary activities of V.V. Club were also handed over to the newly formed *The Recreation Club* in 1919-20 under the headship of Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Rehmatullah Mecklai (1894-1971).

In its embryonic stage, the activities of the Recreation Club were carried on in a house at Dhupelia Building, near Bhindi Bazar, Bombay. *The Khoja Ismaili Missionary Mandal* established in 1910 under the headship of Bhagat Juma Bhai Ismail of Karachi was also merged with it. They were asked to discuss such subjects as religion, history, education, social and cultural affairs of the community. With this new mandate, the name of the *Recreation Club* was changed to the *The Recreation Club Institute* on February 10, 1921 under the Presidentship of H.W. Ali Muhammad (1922-1935), with the Chief Secretary Alijah Hasan Lalji Devraj (1922-1934). It was given the name of Recreation Club Institute, said the Aga Khan to the members, "so that you can work for the world at day time, and for the religious at night honour." Later, they were authorized to train regular missionaries, waezeens and religion teachers. Many eminent missionaries joined the Institute, some as paid, and some as honorary, such as the Chief Missionary Hussain Pir Mohammad, Pir Sabzali Ramzan Ali, Ibrahim Jusab Varteji, Alidina Mamoo, Muhammad Murad Ali Juma, Ali Bhai Nanji, Jamal Virji, Manji Bhai Lalji Nayani, Muhammad Abdullah, Abdul Hussain Bachal, Khuda Bakhsh Talib, Hakam Ali Ishaq Ali, Jafar Ali Gokal, Haji Muhammad Fazal, Muhammad Jamal Babwani, Ghulam Hussain Gulu and many others.

The Aga Khan III took his first visit in the Recreation Club Institute on August 5, 1923 and inspected its activities. He also wrote a Persian verse in the diary of Ali Muhammad Mecklai with his own hand, the only known verse written by the Aga Khan III, which is as under:-

*Aatish bejan afrokhtan, az bahree jaanan sukhtan,  
Az man baist amukhtan, en karha karee man ast.*

means, "How to kindle a fire in the soul and burn oneself for one's beloved, should be learnt from me as this is one of my jobs."



The Aga Khan III also visited the Institute on November 24, 1923 and February 23, 1924 and was satisfied while inspecting its working and donated one lac rupees. During his next visit on March 12, 1924, he said in presence of about 900 members as under:-

**Gentlemen,**

*I spoke here last year when I had given as a motto a well known Persian verse which I am sure you have not forgotten. Today I will give you a small motto and that is "work no words." Labour for the welfare of other is the best way of improving oneself, because its results are sure and certain. If you work for yourself, you are never happy. This is not the new idea but this is an outcome of the experience of thousand years of history. Gentlemen, come and take interest in this Institute; give your ideas, advice, and help to this Institute more especially to its Industrial Department which will bring bread and butter and happiness to many and will be an enjoy big many of you. With these few words, I will ask the President to announce the gifts made by different persons to this Institute."*

The Recreation Club Institute launched a **Subjects Committee** during a grand missionary conference on September 28, 1923 and passed a resolution that the missionaries should be taught the doctrines of world religions. It also framed a syllabus to this effect. It was also resolved that the test of the missionaries would be taken in every year and then their grade would be fixed. In its 7th resolution, it was decided to give training to the young boys of 14 years.

The Recreation Club Institute also started the publication of the well-known weekly magazine, "**Isma'ili**." The first issue of the "**Isma'ili**" came out on Sunday, the 25th Safar, 1342/October 7, 1923 both in English and Gujrati into 12 pages. Valibhai Nanji Hooda was appointed as its organiser and Wazir Ali Mahomed Jan Mahomed Chunara as the editor under its Educational Department. The Institute also started its own printing press on January 1, 1924 under Hussain Sharif, Rehmatullah Virji and Abdullah Kassim Mewawala of the Press Department. The Institute provided the missionaries in different quarters of India, and

helped the new converts under its Industrial Department, and gradually became a leading institution in the community. On November 22, 1923, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulavi Hakim Sayed Abul Yousuf Ispahani took visit of the Recreation Club, and it was followed by the visits of Maulana Muhammad Ali on November 24, 1923, Maulana Azid Subhani on April 21, 1924, the Palestinian Delegation on May 1, 1924, Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Bari Firangi Mahl Lucknowi on May 21, 1924, etc.

The old records reveal that the well-known paid missionaries in 1923 in the Institute Club were Hussain Pir Muhammad and Alidina Mamu (for Bombay district), Jamal Virji (for Bhaizalavad district), Khuda Bakash Taleb (for Burma), Hamir Lakha (for Sind division), Hakim Ali Ismail and Ghulam Hussain Hashim (for Punjab and North-west Frontier), Ibrahim Yousuf Varteji (for Kathiawar), Din Muhammad Dayal (for Gujrat district), and Thavar Ghulam Hussain, Abdul Hussain Bachal, Nur Muhammad Javair, Hyder Kassim Ali etc. Besides, Pir Sabzali Ramzan Ali (Karachi), Moloo Kanji (Jamnagar) and Bande Ali Juma Bhagat (Bombay) were prominent honorary missionaries.

During the new appointments on April 1, 1924, the Institute created new cells, such as Mission, Finance, Foreign, Provincial, Home, Publicity and Literature, Industrial and Commerce, General, Press, Audit, Educational, Gnan Mandal, Suburb, Helping, Hall and Office, Cloth Sales, Library, Employment and Refreshment departments. Each department was looked after by an Incharge, secretary and members. Besides, Ghulam Ali G. Merchant was made the legal advisor, Abdullah B. Pir Muhammad as honorary engineer and Ali Muhammad Juma Jan Muhammad as honorary doctor.

In sum, the Institute Club covered major fields in the orbit of the then available resources.

In 1936, Rai Ismail Muhammad Jafar as a President and Itmadi Rehmatullah Virji as Chief Secretary rendered their services for one year in the Recreation Club. H.W. Ali Muhammad Mecklai was appointed once again as the President in 1938 until 1946, with Itmadi Rehmatullah Virji (1935-37), Alijah Ghulam Hussain Virji (1937-1941), Alijah Rajab Ali Muhammad Dandawala (1941-42), Itmadi Rehmatullah Virji (1943-45), Kassim Ali F. Thanawala (1945) and H.M. Yousuf Ali E. Dossa (1946-48) and Rai Abbas Ali Muhammad as Chief



Secretaries. In view of his long selfless services, the Aga Khan III granted the titles of **Huzur Wazir** (minister in attendance) and **Commander in Chief** to H.W. Ali Muhammad Rehmattullah Mecklai, who was followed by Itmadi Abdullah Sumar Shivji as the President from 1946 to 1948.

In 1940, the **Recreation Club Institute** was given a new name of the **Ismailia Association**. During the Mission Conference in Dar-es-Salaam on July 21, 1945, the Aga Khan III had said that, "You must establish an Ismailia Association that of Bombay. Mr. Mecklai, the President of Ismailia Association in Bombay has too much served the community, and spread the light of the Ismaili faith. His name shall be ever remembered in history on account of his services." In the following year, the Ismailia Association came into existence in Nairobi.

During his visit to the African countries in 1948, the Aga Khan III declared a new constitution of the Ismailia Association, and accordingly, H.W. Ali Muhammad Rehmattullah Macklai was appointed as **World Head** of the Ismailia Association for India, Pakistan, Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. Huzur Wazir Mecklai died at the age of 77 years on Wednesday, the July 21, 1971 at Bombay. In appreciation to his long and illustrious services, the Aga Khan IV had sent a telegram to the Ismailia Federal Council for India, in which, after bestowing blessings for his soul and prayer for his eternal peace and sympathy to his family in their great loss, said: **"Wazir Mecklai's devoted service to the jamat will always be remembered by my jamat and by myself and he will be deeply missed by all."**

Speaking at the audience to the Ismailia Association for Pakistan at Karachi on January 25, 1958, the Aga Khan IV said: **"You as my chief spiritual children should go through your own history and try to understand the development which has happened, so that you can explain to your children what is the meaning of Imam and what is the meaning of Faith."** In a message to the Ismailia Association for Madagascar on May 28, 1958, he said: **"Remember that you have most heavy duties - duties that must be fulfilled intelligently and carefully."** In a letter to the President of the Ismailia Association for India on September 25, 1964, the Aga Khan IV said: **"I am**

sure you will never forget that our faith is based on thousands of years of history, and that we should learn from history and not to think that our past is of no use to us now and that it can therefore be rejected, abbreviated or altered." In a special message sent to the Ismailia Association for Pakistan at Dacca on December 5, 1964, the Aga Khan IV said: "I do not want my spiritual children to have faith against logic. Islam is the only religion where there is reconcilable."

Finally, the name of the *Ismailia Association* had been changed to *The Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board* in accordance with the new Constitution effective from July 11, 1986, whose primary architect was the *Recreation Club Institute*.

### **Khilafat Movement**

In 1341/1923, the Aga Khan III took a leading part in the Khilafat Movement with the Indian Muslims, and raised his voice through articles in newspapers and letters to British authorities. This was indeed a critical time that his loyalty to the West and his unbounded love for Islam directly clashed, but the Aga Khan decidedly championed the cause of Islam. He wrote a historic letter in association with Right Hon'ble Sayed Ameer Ali (1849-1928), a member of the Privy Council of England, addressed to Ghazi Ismet Pasha, the Prime Minister of Turkey on November 24, 1923, insisting not to liquidate the symbol of Islamic unity, and pleading that the matter of Turkey be given considerable hearing at the conference table. This letter was published in "*The Times*" (London) on December 14, 1923. Aziz Ahmed writes in "*Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*" (London, 1967, p. 138) that, "The letter influenced and possibly precipitated the decision of the Turkish National Assembly taken on March 3, 1924 to abolish the caliphate and to exile Abd al-Majid. This marked the end of a centuries-old institution and of an era in the history of Islam."

For a decade after First World War (1914-1919), the Aga Khan III stayed away from the international and Indian political affairs, devoting mainly to the affairs of the Ismailis. Having established permanent homes in



Switzerland and the French Riviera, he now visited India every year.

His global popularity as a man of peace found expression in a resolution moved in the Indian Council of State on February 5, 1924, recommending the government of India to convey to the Norwegian Parliament the view of the House that, "His Highness Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, the Aga Khan is a fit and proper person to be awarded the Noble Prize for Peace in this year, in view of the strenuous, persistent and successful efforts that he had made to maintain peace between Turkey and the Western Powers since the armistice."

In 1928, the Aga Khan III presided over the All-India Muslim Conference held in Delhi, where more than 600 delegates represented all provinces of India.

### Round Table Conferences

The Aga Khan III led the Muslim delegation to the first Round Table Conference, held in St. James Palace in London on November 12, 1930, to consider the future of India. There were 57 members of the British Indian delegation, representing all the Indian parties except the Congress. The Muslim Delegation was led by the Aga Khan III and other eminent members, like Mahomed Ali Jinnah, Sir Mohammad Shafi, Maulana Mohammad Ali, Dr. Shafat Ahmad, Sir Zafrullah, Nawab Chhatari and Fazl-ul-Haq. Prominent among the princes were the Maharajas of Bikaner, Alwar and Bhopal, and among the eminent Hindu leaders were Sir Tej Bahadur Supru, Jayakar, Shashtri, Dr. Moonje and others. The Conference was presided over by Lord Sankey. In the deliberations of the Conference, the Aga Khan played a dominating role. At the second Round Table Conference, the British government was keen to secure the co-operation of the Congress, and the Viceroy proposed to nominate Dr. Ansari and Sir Ali Imam. As both were staunch supporters of the Nehru Report, therefore, Sir Fazl-i-Husain (1877-1936) protested and averted all possible dangers to the unity of the Muslim Delegation. The Aga Khan III, as its leader, held at the members together and prevented disruptive tendencies from growing up among the Muslims. Azim Husain quotes a letter of Sir Fazl-i-Husain, addressing to Dr. Shaffat Ahmad Khan on July 28, 1931 in "Fazl-i-Husain" (Bombay, 1946, pp. 251-2), which reads:

"Whatever lionising may take place of Gandhi in London, you Muslim members of the Delegation, if you played your cards well, would have a pull over all other communities in as much as you have the Aga Khan, who stands pre-eminently in English public life, and no more popular figure, whether English or Indian, exists there. So, if you held together and acted under the Aga Khans's guidance, no harm could possibly come to you."

The Aga Khan III was better suited than any other Muslim leader for the negotiations that were to ensue. The second Round Table Conference opened on September 7, 1931 and it was attended by the Congress. The distinguished group of newcomers included Gandhi, Sir Mohammad Iqbal, Dr. S.K. Datta, G.A. Birla, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mrs. Naidu and Sir Ali Imam. M. Abdul Aziz writes in his **"The Crescent in the Land of the Rising Sun"** (London, 1941, p. 146) that, "The Round Table Conference in London have happily shown us the way how to deal with problems which appeared at first sight to be insoluble, and, in this connection, I desire - and I am sure every Muslim in India desires with me - to pay a tribute to the great services which His Highness the Aga Khan has rendered during the deliberations of the Round Table Conference and the sessions of the Joint Parliamentary Committee to the cause of the Muslims in India."

After the termination of the conference, the British parliament took its turn to consider the question of the future government of India. Thus, a strong parliamentary committee was set up to go over the matter. The committee was in almost unbroken session of 18 months, holding 159 meetings. The striking feature of this committee was the presence in it of some of the delegates from India, who took part in the examination of 120 witnesses and in the committee's private discussion. The Aga Khan III headed the list of 21 key leaders whom the committee consulted at every step. Under the wise and able leadership of the Aga Khan, the Indian Muslims came up with flying colour from the Round Table Conference. He had piloted the ship with skill and courage and brought it safely into harbour. He played his cards remarkably well and with his inimitable tact. The Aga Khan III had also a meeting with Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) in London. This conference continued until 1934, marked the climax of the Aga Khan's involvement in Indian politics.



Writing his congratulations to the Aga Khan III, Sir Abdullah Haroon had routed a telegram to London on December 27, 1932 that:- "On behalf of Sind please convey my heartiest thanks to all Round Table Delegates especially Muslim Delegation whose labours crowned with success. Sind and Muslims of India never forget Your Highness services which you are rendering. May Allah reward you." (vide "**Haji Sir Abdoola Haroon**" by Al-Haj Mian Ahmad Shafi, Karachi, 1939, pp. 85-6). In addition, Shafaat Ahmad Khan wrote a letter to Sir Abdullah Haroon on January 17, 1932 from Allahabad, wherein he describes, "Aga Khan is our greatest Muslim leader in Asia, and Jinnah is also a man of extraordinary vision." (Ibid. p. 100)

The Aga Khan III had served as India's delegate at the Disarmament Conference since 1932. During the successive sessions of the Assembly of the League of Nations started on February 2, 1932 in Geneva, he had submitted his proposals of peace between China and Japan. In 1934, the British government appointed the Aga Khan as a *Privy Councillor*, which entitles one to apply the word *Right Honorable* with his name.

### Separation of Sind

To separate Sind from the Bombay Presidency was a colossal problem. It loomed so large on the political horizon that it eclipsed all others, because Sind separation assumed a communal colour. Long and bitter were those days of uncertainty for Muslims. In 1935, the Aga Khan III was appraised of the benefits that would accrue to Sind after separation. He gave the problem a close and careful consideration. The Muslims of Sind were convinced that their cause was in safe hands. Then came that day of rejoicing when Sind separation was accepted in principle and subsequently confirmed by the Paliament and thus the provincial independence was won for the Muslims of Sind. Muhammad Hashim Gazdat urged the Aga Khan that, "We people of Sind will be happy and proud if you may arrive in Sind as a first governor." The Aga Khan replied that, "My friend, I have no desire to be a governor, but I am a governor-maker."

It is difficult to sum up the services of the Aga Khan III hitherto he rendered for the cause of the Indian Muslims.

K.K. Aziz however writes in his "History of the Idea of Pakistan" (Lahore, 1987, 1st vol., p. 94) that, "He played an important part in the elevation of the Aligarh College to the status of a Muslim university; his role in the Muslim struggle for winning separate representation was vital and extended from the 1906 Simla deputation to the working of the 1935 reforms; his exertions in the direction of uplifting the community were generous, commandable and sincere; his sustained and anxious efforts to extract safeguards for the Muslims from the British government were often successful and brought much security to the community. These are valuable services which every prejudiced historian will acknowledge gladly and readily."

In this year, the Aga Khan was made the *Pre-Chancellor* of Aligarh University, and attended its convocation in 1938.

### **President of League of Nations**

At the end of the First World War in 1918, a Paris Peace Conference had been formulated by the Allies in 1919, being composed of four leading statesmen, viz. Lloyd George representing Great Britain, M. Clemenceau France, Signor Orlando Italy and President Wilson, the United States; and finally *The League of Nations* was founded in Geneva in January, 1920 and M.P. Hymans of Belgium was appointed the first President. The Aga Khan led the Indian delegates in Geneva, and attended the Disarmament Conference, where he delivered a stirring speech on February 19, 1932. He also attended the Third Disarmament Conference and made a speech on February 2, 1933. During the 15th session of the League of Nations, the Aga Khan also gave his speech to the assembly on September 27, 1934. He also addressed the League of Nations in Geneva during its 17th session on September 29, 1936. In sum, the Aga Khan's interest in international affairs in Geneva culminated in his election in the session of July, 1937 as the President of League of Nations in place of the former President, M.P. Van Zeeland of Belgium, and all the 49 votes cast in a secret ballot were found to be in his favour.

Aligarh was in special jubilant at the election of the Aga Khan as President of League of Nations. Dr. Ziauddin Ahmad, the then vice-chancellor remarked that it was a great honour to the Aligarh Muslim University, which owed



much of its development and extension to the zealous efforts of the Aga Khan. He further said that towards making Aligarh the greatest Islamic centre of learning in the world, the Aga Khan had made a magnificent contribution. Writing about the Aga Khan III, Mushir Hosain Kidwai of Gadia, Bar-at-Law says: "In the League of Nations, in the presence of so many learned persons who claimed to represent nations scattered all over the world, but whose mentality was mostly materialistic, stood up a man - a responsible, thoroughly educated, well-experienced, well travelled, well polished man, a gentleman, a nobleman, respected by one and all, - and he proclaimed at the top of his voice that he was proud to belong to the Glorious Brotherhood of Islam. It was indeed thrilling. The bold announcement was thrilling. The occasion when it was made was thrilling. What a slap it was on the face of those cowards who felt shy at the name of Islam. The Aga Khan's words raised the prestige of Islam in an assembly which was almost prejudiced against it. I was overjoyed. I am a man hard to bend before anybody - not even before a king. But I would gladly bow before a man who spoke from his heart those thrilling words."

The Aga Khan made his first presidential speech in the League of Nations on September 13, 1937 during its 18th session. Thus, Sir Samuel Hoare, the ex-Secretary of State of India was compelled to remark that, "The Aga Khan does not belong to one community or one country. He is a citizen of the world par excellence."

During the Second World War (1939-1945), the Aga Khan once again urged his followers to support the British cause in the war. The Aga Khan presided over the convocation of Aligarh University in 1938, and in its conclusion, he put his resignation from Pro-Vice Chancellorship in favour of Nawab of Rampur. The University was keen to have him associated, therefore, he was elected the Rector of the University. On June 16, 1945, the Aga Khan III presided over the first East African Muslim Public Workers Conference, and also held an historical *Mission Conference* of the Ismailis in Dar-es-Salaam.

On December 17, 1948, the Aga Khan III completed 65 years, 3 months and 9 days of his Imamate which is the longest record in the history of all the 48 Imams.

In 1949, the Aga Khan III was declared an Iranian citizen and was awarded the distinguished title of Hazratwala, i.e. *His Royal Highness* by His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran. He also visited Pakistan for the first time after independence on February 2, 1950 and was awarded an honorary degree of LL.D. from the Dacca University in 1951. On March 3, 1951, the Syrian government invested him the title of *Order of Omayyad*. In 1951, the Aga Khan III paid his first visit to Iran to attend the marriage of the Iranian king with queen Sorayya. Arriving in Tehran, he looked up at the sky and the land-scape and exclaimed: "What a lovely and beautiful country I have. I had been cherishing for years the desire to visit my beloved native land." On February 11, 1951, one day before the wedding ceremony, His Majesty the King had awarded the *Order of the Crown First Class* to the Aga Khan. During his visit to Iran, he also went to see Mahallat. Thousands of people lined the roads for a glimpse of one whose ancestors had been the revered and benevolent rulers of the area.

#### **Islamic services**

The Aga Khan used to raise his voice in the defence of Islam, whenever it was under inroad. In October, 1951, the "*London Times*" made some unfair allegations against Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. In a spirited reply to the "*London Times*" on October 22, 1951, he said that, "Islam was not only tolerant of other faiths but most respectful and indeed fully accepted the divine inspiration of all theistic faiths that came before Islam." He further said: "If there has been violent reaction against the West in some Muslim countries, the reason is to be found in the attitude and behaviour of the westerners, their ignorance and want of respect for the faith and culture of Islam, of which the reference to that faith in your leading article is a typical and usual example."

His illustrious and outstanding services for the cause of Islam were not confined to newspapers only. As a patron of Western Islamic Society, London, he worked for the educational and social uplift of the Muslims. He built and maintained many mosques, one of them is the Aga Khan Mosque at Cardiff. He had also given Rs. 75,000/- for the repairing of al-Aqsa Mosque, and Rs. 25,000/- for the Nairobi Mosque. He also established the Aga Khan



Construction Fund to repair Badshahi Mosque in Lahore. In 1936, the Muslims of Sind had formed a committee led by Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah to erect a memorial for the services of the Aga Khan towards the creation of Sind province. It was decided to build a Grand Mosque and name it after the Aga Khan. When he was informed the plan, the Aga Khan agreed to contribute on rupee by rupee basis for the proposed mosque fund, but said: "Why name the mosque after me?" He prevailed upon the committee to name it as Muhammad Jamia Masjid. This clearly shows that he did not wish to bask in the sunshine of acclamation and praise. What he wanted was the greater glory of Islam.

Stating about the Aga Khan's uncontrollable love for Islam, Mushir Hosain Kidwai of Gadia quotes an event of an early twenties that: "When a deputation from India consisting of His Highness the Aga Khan, late Messrs. Chotani and Hasan Imam was selected by the Government of India, and later on Dr. Ansari, and on the most particular insistence of His Highness himself, I was also included in it by Mr. Montague, on our arrival in England, to plead for the return of Thrace and Syrna to Turkey before the British Cabinet. After our spokesman, Mr. Hasan Imam, had put the case, the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, pertinently asked: "Now that the Greeks are in military possession of Thrace who will turn them out from there." Mr. Hasan Imam did not answer. He was in fact given no time to speak. None of us could speak. It was His Highness who enthusiastically jumped up and with a raised finger said: "Well, Mr. Prime Minister, old though I am, I will go sword in hand and turn them out. We will charter ships. We will do everything. Leave them to us." Mr. Lloyd George was thunderstruck. He could not give a reply except murmuring: "No, no, we cannot do that." My sensitive mind was greatly impressed by the words and the way the Aga Khan spoke. Every word cut deep into my heart. I remember every word upto this day. I confess I wished those words had come out of my mouth so spontaneously as they did from that of His Highness. They revealed the love, sincere and intense love for Islam with which the heart of the man who spoke out his mind. It was wonderful. For that remark he was a true Muslim overpowered by the love of Islam. He was nothing else. The blood of the Prophet in his veins made him speak out those words. They indicated that he was ready, sincerely ready to give up his wealth, his position, his very life, for Islam - yes for Islam, not

particularly for that sect or school of which His Highness personally was the highest head."

The above few instances are only a few drops in the splendid stream with which the Aga Khan III has watered the garden of Islam. Ever green leaves, fragrant flowers and sweetest fruits have come into existence, and Muslim world, while thanking this great champion of Islam shall never forget his noble and outstanding contributions.

During his long Imamate period, the Aga Khan III devoted much of his time and resources in consolidating and organizing the Ismaili community, especially in India and East Africa. He was notably concerned with introducing the socio-economic reforms, transforming his followers into a modern, self-sufficient community with high standard of education and welfare. The development of a new communal organisation thus, became one of the Aga Khan's major tasks.

In 1956, Queen Elizabeth of Britain conferred upon the Aga Khan the title of *Grand Cross of the Saint Michael and Saint George* (G.C.M.G.).

#### **The Aga Khan III as a writer**

The Aga Khan III was a prolific writer, and compiled "**India in Transition**", published by Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd. in 1918, which he dedicated to the loving memory of his mother. It deals the future political affairs of India. According to "**Muslims in India**" (Lahore, 1985, 1st vol., p. 56), "It contained an elaborate scheme of references for India, urging a federal constitution. He envisaged a great south Asiatic Federation of which Delhi would be the centre." On October 29, 1952, he declared in an interview with "**New York Herald Tribune**", Paris for compiling his autobiographical work, and began to write it on January 3, 1953. It was published in 1954, entitled "**Memoirs of Aga Khan**". Besides, there is a large collection of his speeches, articles and interviews



### **Marriages of the Aga Khan III**

The first marriage of the Aga Khan took place in 1314/1897 with Shahzadi Begum, the daughter of his uncle Aga Jhangi Shah, at Poona. In 1908, he married to Mlle Theresa Maglioni (d. 1926) in Cairo, who bore Prince Aly Salomone Khan on June 13, 1911 at Turin in Italy. She had visited India with his son in 1923, and died on December 2, 1926 at Paris at the age of 37 years. In 1929, the Aga Khan had married his third wife, Mlle Andree Carron, who bore his second son, Sadruddin on January 17, 1933.

On October 9, 1944, the Aga Khan married his fourth and last wife, Mlle Yvette Labrousse, known as Umm Habiba, the Begum Aga Khan. She was the third to be awarded in 1954 a rare title of "**Mata Salamet**" during last 13 centuries. "The Aga Khan wants to sleep in the hot sand overlooking the waters of the Nile," explained the Begum Aga Khan 40 years ago, "and when I die I want to lie beside him. We do not want to be parted." In her interview of 1953, she said, "I always appreciated beauty, but he (the Aga Khan) taught me how really to enjoy a lovely sunset, moonlight, to know the stars, the colours and scents of flowers, to like music, ballet and opera, to appreciate everything that is beautiful in life. Most important, he taught me to love Islam."

Recently, the Begum Aga Khan celebrated her 90th birthday at Aswan in Upper Egypt on February 15, 1996.

### **Jubilee celebrations**

Donning the mantle of Imamate in 1302/1885, the Aga Khan III had completed 50 years of his spiritual leadership in 1935. His devoted followers, long looking forward to the auspicious day, got feverishly busy to pay a memorable tribute to their Imam, who had so happily guided their destinies through all these years, knit them into a progressive community, and taken them to enviable heights of moral and material glory. Hence, the Ismailis decided that the Golden Jubilee of their Imam should be fitly celebrated by weighing him against gold, and making a present of the gold to him as a mark of their love and gratitude. Bombay was the venue for the Golden Jubilee in India in 1936, and to this great city flocked the Ismailis from all over the subcontinent, from Burma, Ceylon,

Malaya, Africa and the Middle East. Finally, on January 19, 1936, the Golden Jubilee of the Aga Khan was celebrated with great pomp at Hasanabad in Bombay, where a crowd of over 30,000 Ismailis was thronged. Among the special guests who also attended were a number of ruling princes, leading government officials, judges of the High Court, foreign diplomats, business magnates, and the elites of the city. His Excellency the Governor performed the ceremony of weighing. The total weight of the Aga Khan III was found to be 3200 ounces valued at about 23,000 British pounds. In sum, the Golden Jubilee was a splendid and memorable occasion in the life of the community. It was most impressive and picturesque ceremony, simple in its nature, but a rare novelty in the life of many a man.

The second Golden Jubilee was celebrated on March 1, 1937 at Nairobi amid extraordinary jubilations and scenes of enthusiasm. Once more the precious metal was presented to the Aga Khan III by his followers as a token of their love and affection, and once more it was given back to them with his blessings. Some 30,000 Ismailis had assembled to receive his blessings on his jubilee.

Sixty years of his benevolent rule as spiritual father gave his grateful community a chance to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of his Imamate by weighing him against diamonds. In a special message to the community in January 14, 1946, the Aga Khan III said: "This unique occasion should be for my spiritual children all over the world a starting point in the heart and conscience of each and every one to further know, understand and obey the history and spiritual doctrines of the Ismaili faith." The first Diamond Jubilee was held on March 10, 1946 in Brabourne Stadium at Bombay. Over 100,000 Ismailis from various parts of the world had come to see this magnificent spectacle unusual event for Bombay which had witnessed many a scene of pomp and glory. The huge multitude present at the ceremony included fourteen ruling princes, among them the Maharajahs of Kashmir and Baroda and the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar. There were messages of goodwill from King Farouk of Egypt, the King of Afghanistan, the Shah of Iran and other world personalities including Mr. Gandhi. The value of the diamonds was 640,000 British pounds.

The second Diamond Jubilee had been celebrated in the sports ground of the Aga Khan Club at Dar-es-Salaam on August 9, 1946. It was attended by 70,000 Ismailis,



including the governors of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. This time the value of the diamonds was 684,000 British pounds. The sum value of the diamonds at each place was again an absolute gift to the Imam from his jubilant followers. This vast sum was again invested by him in a trust meant to enrich the life of the community in the educational and commercial spheres

The platinum jubilee celebration, marking the 70th anniversary of the Imamate of the Aga Khan III was festivated at Karachi with great pomp on February 3, 1954. The celebration culminated in the weighing of the Imam against platinum. On the day of the ceremony, the specially built stadium was packed with 60,000 people, and all the roads leading to it were filled with crowds who could not gain admittance. After the recitation from the Holy Koran, the Aga Khan rose and raised his hands in prayer before resuming his seat. The funds collected at the celebration was used for the implementation of multi-purpose socio-economic projects.

In an article entitled, "The Aga Khan: from Curzon to Hitler, A Man always at the Centre of History," Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan writes, "For my father, education was understandably a priority and his community exemplifies the success of his policies. Ismaili men and women, the latter among the first to shed the veil, are well equipped in this respect. Ismaili institutions have provided a network of social, economic and cultural amenities which are unrivalled in many developing countries. These were made possible to a great extent by the wise administration of funds raised in connection with the traditional jubilee weighing ceremonies." (vide "The Times" newspaper, November 5, 1977)

#### **Death of the Aga Khan III**

Sultan Muhammad Shah, the Aga Khan III, the 48th Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims died at his villa in Versoix, near Geneva on 12th Zilhaja, 1376/ July 11, 1957. His son Prince Aly Khan recalling the last days of his father, said: "Often he would ask me to play the gramophone records containing recitation of the Holy Koran. With the recitation of the Koran, I could see his lips move in silence, repeating the verse of the Koran." He was buried in a permanent mausoleum at Aswan, overlooking the Nile in

Egypt. Labib Habachi writes in "Aswan" (Cairo, 1959, p. 76) that in 1947, the Aga Khan III visited Aswan, and decided to live some time each year in Aswan, choosing it as his last resting-place. The Begum Aga Khan, in her interview to "Al-Ahram" (Cairo, April 23, 1992) had however said that, "We had been coming in Aswan since 1935 when the place was not a touristic location. He (the Aga Khan III) used to say that Egypt was the flag of Islam, and he wanted to be buried there."

In accordance with his last will, his grandson, Karim was succeeded to the Imamate as the 49th Imam. A fitting tribute was paid to him by daily English "Dawn" of Pakistan on July 12, 1957 that, "With the passing away of the Aga Khan, we witness the end of an era." According to "New York Times" (July 12, 1957), "The Aga Khan III's death leaves our contemporary world just a little less colorful than it was."

#### PRINCE KARIM AGA KHAN IV (1376/1957....)

He was born in Geneva on 28th Ramdan, 1355/December 13, 1936. Lady Ali Shah (d. 1938) had given his name, Karim. He was born in the wake of cataclysm in the world. From the age of four years, he acquired the rudiments of formal education from Miss Doris Lyon, the governess and a friend of his family.

During the Second World War (1939-1945), when his father, Prince Aly Salomone Khan had offered his services to the Allies, the Aga Khan IV with his brother Prince Ameen Muhammad, accompanied by his mother, Princess Joan Aly Khan, had gone to Beirut, and thence to Nairobi on May 27, 1941 via Cairo, where they lived for four years. By the time, the Aga Khan IV was seven years old, he had been well versed in religious education under the tutorship of Missionary Kaderali B. Patel. In 1943, the Aga Khan IV led the Eid al-Fitr prayer amidst a large congregation of the Ismailis in the Jamatkhana, situated at Government Road in Nairobi. On that occasion, his mother remarked: "A great accomplishment for such a small boy." In 1944, he also visited Dar-es-Salam with his mother and brother.

At the end of the World War, the Aga Khan IV went back to Europe on May, 1945, where he joined the Le Rosey School,



situated in Rolle, Switzerland. His classmates included numerous Europeans, including the Duke of Kent, the future king Baudoin of Belgium, the Prince Victor Emanuel of Italy, etc. Besides the prescribed education, the Aga Khan IV was taught Arabic, Urdu and Islamic History at home by Mustapha Kamal of Aligarh University. At the end of seventeen years, the Aga Khan's school days came to an end and proceeded to United States, where he enrolled as an undergraduate at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he studied with great interest. His style of living at Harvard was quite frugal. His one roommate was highly amazed to discover that he had only two suits and one pair of shoes in his closet. He even did not own a car.

Richard T. Gill, the Allston Burr Senior Tutor of Leverett House at Harvard University gives his views in these words:- "His Highness was a good student at Harvard and a young man of exceptionally fine personal qualities. He took his studies seriously and yet found time for many extra-curricular activities, including the Islamic Association, the French Club and a variety of sports such as crew, hockey, soccer and skiing. These activities were vigorously pursued but they were not allowed to interfere with the fundamental, academic objectives of the college. In his last term at Harvard, His Highness's record won him the academic distinction of Dean's List standing. The general impression His Highness made on both Faculty and students here was an excellent one. He was completely at home with students of every background and did not in any way set himself apart from the general life of the college. He impressed those who knew him as a young man of great sensitivity and understanding who possessed both the mental and moral stature for leadership. His basic outlook was serious but he was at the same time a relaxed, pleasant companion with an amiable sense of humour. He was in the deepest sense, an outstanding citizen of the Harvard community." (cf, "**Fatimi Sitaro**" by Kadarali B. Patel, Bombay, 1958, pp. 13-4)

Initially, the Aga Khan IV studied mathematics, chemistry and general science. Soon afterwards, he started study of Islamic history and had an occasion to mix with the eminent professors, like H.A.R. Gibb, Philip K. Hitti etc. Besides his paper on "**Islamic Sects and Mysticism**", his paper, "**Rise of the Nizaris and the Beginning of Dawa in Indo-Pakistan**" was highly appreciated by his professors.

He however could not finish his another paper on "Free Will and Predestination in Islam" when he had to leave the University. During his stay at Harvard, he was also a member of the Hasty Pudding Club and the Islamic Association.

In 1954, the Aga Khan IV, under the instructions of his grandfather, paid a short visit to the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and East African countries with his brother. During the death of the Aga Khan III on July 11, 1957, his family members were in Geneva. Otto Giesen, a solicitor with the firm of Slaughter and May, brought the Will of the Aga Khan III to Geneva from Lloyds Bank, London, and read it at Barkat Villa before the Imam's family that:-  
*"Ever since the time of my ancestor Ali, the first Imam, that is to say over a period of thirteen hundred years, it has always been the tradition of our family that each Imam chooses his successor at his absolute and unfettered discretion from amongst any of his descendants, whether they be sons or remote male issue and in these circumstances and in view of the fundamentally altered conditions in the world in very recent years due to the great changes which have taken place including the discoveries of atomic science, I am convinced that it is in the best interest of the Shia Muslim Ismailia Community that I should be succeeded by a young man who has been brought up and developed during recent years and in the midst of the new age and who brings a new outlook on life to his office as Imam. For these reasons, I appoint my grandson Karim, the son of my own son, Aly Salomone Khan to succeed to the title of Aga Khan and to the Imam and Pir of all Shia Ismailian followers."*

Raymond Brandy Williams writes in "Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan" (New York, 1988, p. 190) that, "The Nizaris are the only Ismailis who claim an Imam for this time in a line that is traced to Ali: Prince Karim Shah, Aga Khan IV, is followed as the forty-ninth Imam with the designation (*nass*) traced back to Muhammad."

Upon his accession to the Imamate in 1957 at the age of twenty, he interrupted his undergraduate studies at Harvard for a year to visit to the various Ismaili communities, during which time he was installed to the Imamate in a number of enthronement ceremonies held in Dar-



es-Salaam, Nairobi, Kampala, Karachi and Bombay. Having toured for 18 months, the Aga Khan IV returned to Harvard, where he worked twice as hard, studying as well as guiding the community. He took eight courses instead of four and wrote thesis on relation between Druze and Maronites in Lebanon from 1829 to 1835. He was awarded the degree of M.A. on July 11, 1959 at Harvard, and thus, he remained about 23 months as a student of Harvard University during his Imamate period. He also granted 50,000 dollars worth scholarships for students from the Middle East, Africa, Pakistan, India, Iran and Afghanistan. Already, a large sum had been donated to introduce the Aga Khan Chair of Islamic Studies at the Harvard and Beirut Universities.

### **Takhat Nashini Celebrations**

The first ceremonial Takhat Nashini of the Aga Khan IV commemorated in Dar-es-Salaam on October 19, 1957 amid great pomp and splendour, and was attended by 30,000 Ismailis. The next Takhat Nashini took place in Nairobi on October 22, 1957 in presence of 18,000 Ismailis. Willi Frischauer gave a brief account of the event in his **"The Aga Khans"** (London, 1970, p. 222) that, "On a smaller scale, the Nairobi Takhat Nashini was a repetition of the Dar-es-Salaam ceremony. In the grounds of the Aga Khan Club the lone figure of the young new leader seated on the throne set high amid his people was strangely appealing. The red robes and gold turbans of the Ismaili dignitaries who invested him with robe, pagri, sword, chain and ring made a vivid picture such as Kenya had not seen before. The dais, a mass of flowers, red, blue, white and yellow, and the throne, flanked by great vases of roses, stood out against the background of flags fluttering gently in the slight breeze. A thousand people of all races gathered at the social function that evening to greet the Aga Khan who arrived with the Governor of Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring. There was dancing to a regimental band and sumptuous dinner."

The third ceremonial Takhat Nashini took place in Kampala on October 25, 1957 among 15,000 Ismailis and other dignitaries and high officials. The next Takhat Nashini was celebrated at Karachi on January 23, 1958 in National Stadium, where a mammoth gathering was recorded to be over 1,50,000. Willi Frischauer writes, "The sound of trumpets heralded the arrival of the Aga Khan by the side of

Pakistan's President - Prime Minister Malik Firoz Khan Noon and his cabinet were already in their seats. The brief act of installation was no different from the East African ritual except for the three hundred year old copy of the Holy Quran which was presented to the Aga Khan, a rare example of Arab calligraphy written in Medina by a Haji from Bokhara." (Ibid, pp. 225-226) The fifth Takhat Nashini was celebrated in Dacca on February 12, 1958 amongst 30,000 Ismailis, and the sixth one held in Bombay on March 11, 1958 at Walla Bhai Patel Stadium, witnessed by 80,000 Ismailis.

### **Prince Aly Salcmone Khan**

Prince Aly Salomone Khan was born at Turin in Italy on June 13, 1911. Because he was a delicate child, his father, the Aga Khan III decided against sending him to experience the rigours of an English boarding school. He was entrusted to the care of a private tutor, Mr. C.M. Waddington, the former Principal of Mayo College for the sons of Princes in India. He finished his education at Lincoln's Inn, London, though he was not called to the bar. He was fluent in a number of European and Oriental languages. He spoke English in the right Oxford accent, and talked and gave speeches in French with rich fluency.

Prince Aly Khan visited India with his mother in 1923. The Aga Khan III sent his son in Syria in 1930 and again in 1931 where he inaugurated a school at Khawabi. He also visited India on November 21, 1931, and during the year 1932 he had been deputed to India as a representative of his father and made historical visit of Bombay and Calcutta. He also had gone to Pinang, Singapore and Rangoon. Prince Aly S. Khan was granted an honour of J.P. (Justice of Peace) by British India on November 1, 1934. His first marriage took place at Paris with Joan Guinness, known as Joan Aly Khan on May 18, 1936, who gave birth of the Aga Khan IV on December 13, 1936 and Prince Aryn Muhammad on September 12, 1937. This marriage, however, did not last long. Then on May 27, 1948, he married the famous Hollywood actress Ritta Hayworth. This marriage was not fated to go well. There was a divorce in 1953. Through this marriage, Prince Aly Khan had a daughter, Yasmin, who was born in December 20, 1949.



Prince Aly Khan obtained an aeroplane pilot's license in 1937 when he was about 26 years old, and was flying regularly. He was equally enthusiastic about motor racing and skiing. He was great at taking risks. He broke his legs three times skiing and nearly broke his neck many a time while motor racing and flying. In a biography of Prince Aly Khan, entitled "**Golden Prince**" (London, 1955, p. 15), the British author Gordon Young says, "He has always looked like a man restlessly - searching for a happiness which for most of the time seems to have eluded him like a shadow. His life has been rich but it has never seemed incomplete."

The East Africa saw Prince Aly Khan for the first time in February, 1939 when he visited every large town and met Ismailis who were struck by his captivating youth and charm. One glaring instance is the Prince Aly Khan War Fund which he inaugurated in East Africa and which raised for the Allies a very handsome amount.

His life has been a headline parade. He was an outstanding social figure, a darling of the international set - equally at home in the West and in the East, an international sportsman, philanthropist, soldier and an able diplomat. Unfortunately, the social gossip column writers took keen interest only in his social occupations and painted him as a playboy in florid and bombastic words. Prince Aly Khan had played a key role in the Ismaili communities and directed the different institutions from time to time. He inaugurated **Aly Nursery** at Bombay on February 23, 1944 and since then the opening of the nursery schools began in the community in different places.

He had rendered an outstanding military services to the Allies in the World War II (1939-1945) and joined one of the toughest fighting forces in the world - the French Foreign Legion. He saw service in the Middle East under General Waygand. In 1940, he joined the British forces in the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry. He was promoted to Lt. Col. on October 10, 1944. Later, he was decorated for distinguished service with the U.S. Army. In an operation, aided by a British officer and two Ismaili irregulars, he captured a tank in the desert of Syria. From the French he received both the **Legend of Honour** and the **Croix de Guerre** with palms on August 15, 1944 at Paris. In 1951, he opened **Kibuli Mosque** at Campalla.

In November, 1957, he met President Iskander Mirza of Pakistan and was offered a service as the country's permanent spokesman in the United Nations, whose formal announcement was made on February 6, 1958. He put over Pakistan's viewpoint admirably. His Assistant at the Pakistan Mission to the U.N., Mr. Agha Shahi said: "He sometimes worked till 10 or 11 in the night. He did not smoke, and at cocktail parties, he just ordered tomato juice for himself." He was elected Vice-President of the U.N. General Assembly on September 17, 1958 and was also the Chairman of the Peace Observation Committee.

The tragic death of Prince Aly S. Khan took place in a car accident near Paris on the night between May 12 and 13, 1960. Field Marshall Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan said in his tribute that: "I am deeply shocked at the sudden tragic death of Prince Aly Khan. His statesmanship, his friendliness and his personal charm will be remembered by thousands of his friends and admirers. Pakistan has lost a diplomat of the high calibre and value."

Prince Aly Khan had expressed his wish to be buried at Salamia among Syrian Ismailis he knew and loved so well. In the meantime he was to be interred in the grounds of the Chateau de l'Horizon where a grave was dug in the lawn by the side of his study. Starting on the sad journey to the South of France, chanting and praying Ismailis carried the coffin which was covered with the red and green Ismaili flag and put it on a special train. In the coach ahead were the Aga Khan IV, Prince Sadruddin and Prince Ayn Muhammad in their compartment. Regular trains taking precedence, the trip took twelve hours and it was midnight before they arrived. Next day, at the open grave, the Aga Khan IV, palms turned skywards, recited the funeral prayers. Then Prince Aly Khan was put to rest in the temporary grave.

On Monday, the 27th Jamada I, 1392/July 10, 1972 the final burial ceremony of late Prince Aly Khan took place in Salamia, Syria according to his will. It was participated by the leaders of the community from Pakistan, India, East Africa, Europe, United States and South East Asia, including 36 delegates and four guests. Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan and Prince Ayn Muhammad were also present in the ceremony. The remains of late Prince Aly Khan was transported from Nice to Damascus by an Air France chartered Boeing on July 10, 1972 at 7.00 a.m., and it was



interred in the main Jamatkhana compound with great honour. In his speech, Ahmad Nasir al-Hayek, President of H.H. The Aga Khan's Salamia Council said: "Salamia, this town which is situated at the edge of the desert, and patiently faced many natural disasters, is very proud to have within its humble existence this selected gathering on this very sad occasion. The occasion of the Prophet's sacred family; His Serene Highness Prince Aly Khan, son of late Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah and the beloved father of the present Imam of the Ismailis.....The late Prince Aly Khan had loved Salamia and its inhabitants. To whom they represented the Arab tradition which are well known for their pride, integrity, bravery and hospitality. In this patch of our Arab land his imagination took him back, through our Islamic and Arabian history, to see his great ancestors travelling through the Arabs land to Africa, and Europe to spread Islamic ideas and Arab civilization. His great ancestors played a major role in the establishment and spreading of such civilization. As it is also well known that he in person had served Islam and Arab affairs internationally and particularly in United Nations. And as a symbol of his love and admiration he made his will to be buried here in Salamia which is loved by every Ismaili, because our glory started from its soil, and also in this soil rest the bodies of a number of his ancestors as it will have now his own."

Mata Salamata Umm Habiba, the Begum Aga Khan recently observed her 90th birthday at Aswan in Upper Egypt on February 15, 1996. She told in an interview to "Hello" (February 24, 1996) that, "He (Prince Aly Khan) was a very big-hearted man and not only did he not mind being displaced by his son, he was proud of him. Aly Khan was phenomenally alive."

Returning to the thread of our narrative, we will quote Malise Ruthven as writing in "Islam in the World" (New York, 1991, p. 218) that, "The Aga Khan's spiritual authority has enabled him to impose religious and legal obligations on his followers which have allowed them to adjust to modern conditions without loss of religious faith - something which Sunni Islam, with its legalistic and literalistic traditions, has found much harder to achieve. The Ismailis have become the world's most prosperous Islamic community outside the oil regions; it is a community, moreover, whose prosperity has been

achieved as a result of its own efforts under a succession of astute and capable living Imams."

The Aga Khan IV continued and extended the modernization policies of his grandfather, and closely supervised the religious and temporal affairs of his followers, through their councils, and paying regular visits to them. He has shown a particular interest in improving the socio-economic and educational conditions of the Ismailis. In the field of education, he has encouraged the Ismailis to acquire specialized and technical skills, and providing numerous scholarship in western institutions for eligible students. Currently, he supports a network of some 300 educational institutions and programmes in India, Pakistan, Kenya, Tanzania and elsewhere.

On February 4, 1971, the foundation stone was laid for the Aga Khan Hospital with a medical college and nursing school at Karachi, and its nursing school was inaugurated in 1981, which was graded to the University. In sum, the Aga Khan University and the University Hospital were built at an estimated total commitment of 300 million dollars. The University's Faculty of Health Sciences consists of a School of Nursing which began classes in October, 1980 and a Medical College commissioned in September, 1983. The School of Nursing graduated its first class of nurses in December, 1983 and is programmed to educate 110 skilled nurses each year. The 721-bed Aga Khan University Hospital located on a Campus. The Medical Complex represents both a link to the great Islamic traditions of the past, and a bold progressive action aimed at addressing the health needs of the Third World.

The Aga Khan Health Services consist of an elaborate network of about 200 health programmes, including six general hospitals in different Asian and African countries. The Aga Khan Health and Education services are available to all people regardless of their caste and creed. Many new projects in these fields were launched during 1982-3 when the 25th anniversary of Silver Jubilee of his Imamate was celebrated.

Being keenly concerned with the administrative and economic efficiency of his programme, the Aga Khan promotes and finances many of his different projects in the field of health, education, rural development and social welfare through the Aga Khan Foundation.



established in 1967. With headquarters in Geneva and branches in several countries, the Aga Khan Foundation now collaborates with more than thirty national and international organisations for the implementation of numerous programmes in the third world.

For the realization of his economic programmes, the Aga Khan set up the Industrial Promotion Services (I.P.S.) in 1963, operating in several Asian and African countries including Canada. It has launched more than one hundred projects in the field, ranging from textiles to modern enterprises in tourism, providing employment for ten thousand persons. All the Aga Khan's existing projects and institutions relating to the economic activities, are now absorbed into the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development. The Fund, established in 1984 seeks to promote economic projects in the third world.

Being a modern Muslim leader with an international outlook, the Aga Khan has shown a profound interest in promoting a better understanding of Islam and its cultural heritage. W. Montgomery Watt writes in **"Islamic Philosophy and Theology"** (Edinburgh, 1985, p. 154) that, "Under the leadership of recent Imam, the Ismailites have given other Muslims an example of how Islamic faith may be adapted to the modern world and may lead to effective action in it." In pursuit, he has established a number of specific institutions and programmes. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (A.K.T.C.), formed in Switzerland in 1988, promotes and focuses attention on contemporary expressions of the Islamic humanistic tradition. Its objectives are universal, perpetuating what is valuable from the past and to identify directions for the future.

The Aga Khan Award for Islamic Architecture, established in 1976, seeking to encourage architectural excellence for the Islamic world, declaring its prize like a noble prize on every three years from 1980. It includes five prizes to be awarded during 15 years, each prize will cover one lac dollars. Akbar S. Ahmed writes in **"Living Islam"** (London, 1993, p. 54) that, "In particular his (the Aga Khan IV) propagation of Islamic Architecture has allowed him to provide a lead and draw in Muslims in all over the world. The combination of tradition and modernity has generated a global feeling of Muslim pride and identity." The students from different Islamic countries also continue to benefit from the Aga Khan Program for Islamic

Architecture, established in 1979 at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Its mandate is to educate new generations of architects, planners, teachers and researchers. Harvard was chosen because it is a major centre of scholarship in Islamic art and architecture, and MIT because of its expertise in high technology architecture. In the long term, the Program's graduates, two thirds of whom are from the Islamic world, will serve as designers, and teachers of designers of a built environment that meets the needs of societies in transition.

In 1974, the Aga Khan IV called a meeting at Nairobi, being participated by the distinguished scholars and members of the eleven Ismailia Associations. It was followed by a Paris Conference in 1975, where an **International Co-ordinating Committee** was formulated under the Ismailia Association for Kenya, and also the formation of **Institute of Ismaili Studies** had been finalized to promote Islamic studies. Finally, the Aga Khan announced the formation of the **Institute of Ismaili Studies** to the world Ismaili jamats through a written message on November 25, 1977, during his birth-day celebration, which was held before three days due to the Muharram on December 10, 1977. He said: "It gives me great happiness to inform my jamat of the formal inauguration in London of the Institute of Ismaili Studies. As my spiritual children are aware, not since the Fatimid period has there been in existence a research centre for Ismaili studies, manned especially by outstanding Ismaili men and women scholars. This is therefore a significant step in making it possible for my jamat to secure the fruits of Ismaili scholarship in the history, philosophy, theology and literature of Ismailism and Islam by virtue of an academic institution created by our own efforts and resources."

#### **Titles and Honours**

None equals the selfless and valuable services of the Aga Khan IV in the world, which can be gauged from the face of the facts that he has been invested many titles to appreciate his illustrious services. The Queen of England has awarded him the title of **His Highness** on July 26, 1957. On August 12, 1957, the Sultan of Zanzibar invested the title of **Brilliant Star of Zanzibar**. During his visit to Iran for ten days, the king of Iran awarded him the



title of *His Royal Highness* on October 24, 1959. He visited Goa for the first time, where the Portuguese government conferred the title of *Grand Cross of the Order of Prince Henry* on October 27, 1960. The President of Ivory Coast decorated the Aga Khan with the title of *Grand Cross of the National Order* on August 4, 1965. On his way to Europe, the Aga Khan alighted at Ugadaught, the capital of Upper Volta in West Africa, when the President awarded him title of *National Order* on August 5, 1965. He arrived in Tananarive, the capital of Malagasy, where the President awarded him the title of *Grand Cross of the National Order of Malagache Republic* on November 15, 1966. The President of Comore Island, Sayed Muhammad Shaikh awarded the Aga Khan the title of *Grand Cross of the Green Crescent* on November 20, 1966. It was his first visit to Pakistan with his wife when the President of Pakistan granted the title of *Nishan-e-Imtiaz* on January 15, 1970. The Prime Minister of Italy, Guilio Andreotti had personally received the Aga Khan on December 8, 1977 at the Palazzo Chigi, and awarded Italy's highest national award, namely *Order of the Knight of the Grand Cross* in recognition of his role in the development of Sardina's economy. The Aga Khan was also honoured the title of *Gran Croce Della Repubblica Italiana* by the government of Italy in 1978. His Majesty King Hasan II of Morocco conferred the grand cordon of *Ouissam al-Arch*, the highest Moroccan honour upon the Aga Khan on November 26, 1986 at Rabat at a dinner hosted to him at the royal palace. Dignitaries like His Royal Highness Prince Bender bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, the Prime Minister of Morocco, Azeddina Laraki etc. were also present in the ceremony. On October 26, 1988, the Italy's President Francesco Cossiga invested the Imam the title of *The Order of the Cavaliere del Lavoro* at Rome, and he was the first Muslim to be so honoured in Italy. On November 7, 1990, the French President Francois Mitterand, awarded the Aga Khan at Paris, the highest national honour of *Commander of the Legion d'Honneur*, established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802.

The World Monuments Fund recently honoured the Aga Khan IV with its prestigious *Hadrian Award* for his vigorous and fruitful efforts to preserve and revitalise historic cities in Islamic world on October 28, 1996 at New York.

The Aga Khan IV, the present 49th Hazar Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims has been responsible not only for guiding a progressive community of Shia Ismaili Muslims scattered all over the world, but he has also managed a vast complex of administrative, social, economical and cultural enterprises in the world today. In 1976, he moved his headquarters from Switzerland to Aiglemont, Gouvieux, near Paris.

The Aga Khan married Lady James Crichton-Stuart, nee Sarah Crocker-Poole; known as Begum Salima in Paris on October 28, 1969. The Aga Khan's first child, Princess Zahra was born on September 18, 1970. The second child, Prince Rahim was born on October 12, 1971 and the third son, Prince Husayn was born on April 10, 1974.

The separation of the Aga Khan with his wife, Begum Salima through a divorce took place at the end of 1994. The Aga Khan asked his lawyers in this context to start divorce proceeding against his wife on September 30, 1994. The divorce was officially pronounced on March 23, 1995 by a Swiss court.

On May 26, 1996, the Aga Khan IV was specially invited to address at Brown University, where he delivered the baccalaureate address to the Class in the Meeting Home of the First Baptist in United States, near the Brown University Campus. Hence, the Aga Khan was the first Muslim ever to give the Baccalaureate address at a Brown commencement in the school's illustrious 232-years history. In his speech, Mr. Vartan Gregorian, President of Brown University, said that the Aga Khan embodied the ecumenical spirit that links the three great monotheistic religion: Islam, Christianity and Judaism. He went on to say that as a major activist for civilized humanity and universal values, the Aga Khan's leadership has brought about flourishing systems for welfare, learning, housing and culture. Equally vital are his faith in education and his ability to tap the resources of European, Asian and American institutions of higher learning to enhance the well-being of human kind. *"To see how well these enlightened actions succeeded, you need only visit the Aga Khan University and the Aga Khan Hospital in Karachi, where people of different faiths, races and classes receive the same high quality education and care - for*



**that University and that Hospital are the best in the region."**

In his Baccalaureate address, the Aga Khan sought to correct the misperceptions about Islam and its followers which exist in the collective consciousness of most Western cultures. He stressed the great need for increase mutual understanding between the Islamic World and the West. He said that such understanding is more essential today because the Muslim World is one of the only two potential geo-political forces, vis-a-vis the West, on the world stage: the other being the East Asian Tigers, and also because in the wake of the Cold War, violence and cruelty are becoming rampant around the world. The Aga Khan also said that **"violence is not a function of faith"** but rather an effect of demographic economic and political problems in the Muslim World leading to civil unrest and discontent. The Aga Khan further said that **"universities in the West"** can help **"build a bridge across the gulf of knowledge which separates the Islamic World from the West."** This bridge, he said could be built upon a common Abrahamic monotheistic tradition and common ethical principles, founded on shared human values. It could help to adapt proven Western method of development to the specific contexts of Islamic countries.

On May 27, 1996, Brown University of Providence, Rhode Island, USA conferred the degree of **Doctor of Laws** upon the Aga Khan for "service to Islam and all human kind.

In Hunza, the northern area of Pakistan, the Baltit Fort Project, a 800-year old landmark of Islamic architecture has been brought back to its former splendid by the Historic Cities Support Programme (HCSP) of The Aga Khan Trust for Culture. The Fort is restored at a total cost of \$. 2.15 million by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. Getty Grant Programme and the Norwegian bilatered aid programme, NORAD, committed \$. 200,000 and \$. 450,000 respectively to the restoration project. The restoration work was completed in about five years. Accordingly, an inauguration ceremony of Baltit Fort took place in presence of President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari of Pakistan and the Aga Khan in presence of 350 guests and delegates from all over the world. In his speech, the Aga Khan said, "As the prime historic landmark of Hunza, the fort is a major tourist attraction and a potential source

of income for the local community. It can, therefore, be expected that the restoration project itself will act as a dynamic factor of change."

On October 17, 1996, the Aga Khan delivered a keynote address in The Commonwealth Press Union Conference at Cape Town, South Africa. Other speakers at the Conference included South Africa's Executive Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, former President and Leader of the National Party, F.W. De Klerk, and Britain's Leader of the Opposition, Tony Blair.

Being the founder and principal shareholder of Nation Printers and Publishers in Kenya, East Africa's leading publishing group, the Aga Khan said in his address that, **"The media can help prevent cultural conflicts arising out of the communication revolution of 21st century."** He spoke of a spirit of "creative encounter" that the media would need to engender if "the growing demand for cultural integrity was to be reconciled with the dazzling rise of the global village." Explaining to an audience of 300 representatives of the media from some 40 countries of the Commonwealth that the communications revolution was **"a two-edged sword, opening doors to the future, but also threatening cultures and traditional values."**

Recently, The World Monuments Fund honoured the Aga Khan IV with its prestigious **Hadrian Award** for his vigorous and fruitful efforts to preserve and revitalize historic cities in the Islamic world on October 28, 1996 at New York. In his keynote speech at the presentation ceremony, Cyrus Vance, a former US Secretary of State spoke of the Aga Khan's commitment to "the preservation and renewal of societies," noting that **"the Aga Khan has laboured through out his career....to bridge divisions between the Muslim world and other communities, reminding us that we cannot regard Islamic society as separate from the larger community of nations."** It was an endeavour which, he said "is especially vital today, as we face conflicts between nations and cultures." Acknowledging the honour, the Aga Khan expressed the hope that his **"efforts for cultural rehabilitation in Islamic societies through architecture will, due to the very diversity of their world address such a wide spectrum of issues, covering such a large number of peoples and places that the lessons learned will**



*in many cases be both universal and replicable for other societies and their inherited cultures."*

It must be known that the previous recipients of the *Hadrian Award* include Prince Charles, David Rockefeller, Dominique de Menil, Paul Mellon, and Marella and Giovanni Agnelli. The Aga Khan is the first Muslim leader ever to receive the *Hadrian Award*.

"Currently" writes Sami G. Hajjar and Steven J. Brezezinski in "*The Nizari Ismaili Imam and Plato's Philosopher King*" (cf. "*Islamic Studies*", vol. XVI, 1977, p. 304) that, "The sect is led by Prince Imam Karim Aga Khan IV, the 49th Imam of the sect. He is descendant of Nizar, the eldest son of the Fatimid Caliph-Imam al-Mustansir Billah, who himself descends from al-Husayn, the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad."

The Ismailis are spread almost in every corner of the world at present under the spiritual leadership of the Aga Khan. Most of the Ismailis live in their countries with their old traditions. About four distinct traditions are prevalent in the world Ismailis. In Syria, the Fatimid tradition is practised. In Central Asia, the tradition of Nasir Khusaro is in operation. The Khoja Ismailis adhered to the tradition of the Indian *pirs*, and the Ismailis of Iran mostly attached to the Alamut tradition. Above all, the fundamental principle of these Ismailis is to recognize the Imam of the Age. During his first visit to Moscow, the Aga Khan said to his followers on January 29, 1995 that:- "*First, let me remind you, that for all murids of the Imam, whether they are from Central Asia, from India, from Pakistan, from the Western World, the fundamental principle is the recognition of the Imam of the Time. It is he who interprets the faith. It is he who guides the jamat in the interpretation of its faith at any time during its lifetime. It is he who supports the jamats in various parts of the world, to seek, with the jamat and others, to improve the quality of life of the murids wherever they may be.*"

In sum, the fundamental principle of the Ismaili Muslims is that the Imamate must be handed down in perpetuity in direct lineal descent, which has been maintained

uninterruptedly for fourteen centuries, ever since Hazrat Ali, who succeeded to the Imamate. His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV is recognised as the 49th Imam in a lineal descendant of Hazrat Ali through Bibi Fatima.

Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan had once said, *"The future of the Ismaili faith rests in the hands of the youths of your age and mine. Are we to follow the example of those, who in Egypt, Iran and Sind raised the flag of Ismaili Imams high enough for the world to see its glory? I say, "yes." We should not fail where our ancestors achieved glorious success"* (vide "Ilm", London, vol. 8, nos. 2-3, Dec., 1982, p. 11).

*We shall say while terminating these pages with a conclusion, that a full account of Aga Khan IV's activities, including a detailed description of his various projects for the Shia Ismaili Muslim communities of different countries, still needs to be written.*





## APPENDIX I

### IMAGE OF MUHAMMAD & ISLAM IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

*"At the present time there is substantial misperception in much of the western world about Islam. And I do not want that my jamat should be concerned by this misperception because it is my deepest conviction that this is a passing phase; it is not a permanent misperception. And each one, by remaining strong on the path of our faith, can contribute to correcting the misperception about Islam generally in the western world."*

*: The Aga Khan IV (London: July 5, 1983)*

Islam originated from monotheism, it conceived idolatry as its real enemy and acted with the purpose of subduing it first in the Arabian peninsula, and then throughout the world. The Muslims marched northward into Syria, defeated the army of Heraclius at Yarmuk, and captured Jerusalem and Damascus. They went eastward into Iraq, defeated the Iranian at Seleucia. They further went westward and occupied Egypt away from the Byzantine empire. "In all this expansion" writes T.C. Young in **"Near Eastern Culture and Society"** (New Jersey, 1951, p. 100), "there was no forcible conversion of Jews or Christians to the Muslim religion. There was freedom for the people of the book to continue in their own beliefs and practices."

The Koran accepts Christianity and Judaism as divinely revealed religions, therefore, it did not instigate any struggle against them. Christianity first however conceived of Islam as a competitor and, therefore, attacked it directly. Since iconoclasm of Islam was against their frame of mind, the Christianity started a crusade against Islam, and their reaction in the East and West took different forms. The Christians tried to distort the very image of Islam through their propaganda machinery. John of Damascus (675-749) in his book, **"De Haeresibus"** considered Islam as heresy. The first Byzantine writer who referred to Muhammad was Theophanes the Confessor (d. 202/817), attacked Islam as wildly as John. Guilbert de Nogent (d. 518/1124) criticised on the fact that wine and pork were tabooed in Islam. Guillaume de Tripoli's work during 12th and 13th century was based with extreme hate and was most offensive. Raymond Lull (d. 716/1316) studied Arabic and Muslim philosophy in Tunis, and suggested to the then Pope to start a moral crusade against Islam. Marco Polo spoke of the Muslims as the worshippers of

Muhammad. Renan wrote that Muhammad invented a new religion to revenge himself on his brethren. Roger Wendover (d. 635/1237) and John Maundeville (d.757/1356) attained mastership in cultivating quite senseless and baseless stories for Muhammad. Saint Eulogius also applied savage language for Islam to its extreme. Diceto followed Sigebert (1030-1112) to describe that the Muslims offered Muhammad the worship of Godhead. Edward Herbert (1583-1648) wrote that Muhammad preached against Pope Boniface's usurpation of the title of Universal Bishop. Pedro de Alfonso wrote that Muhammad attempted to become king under the veil of religion on the model of David and Solomon. Fantastically, du Pont mentioned that Muhammad not only allowed every male to have ten wives, but every woman ten husband. Thus, in the fabulous writings, a fairly consistent picture of Islam was designed in the western countries. The blind and fictitious literary aggression in Europe, however, continued for a long period without any break. They knew the historical fact less, but propagated more on the basis of fairy tales, which can be gauged from the report of a Latin author, Joinville (1224-1317), who was quite unknown with the relationship of Muhammad with Ali, making the latter as the uncle of the former. Lemons made Aisha as the first wife of Muhammad. Pedro wrote that Muhammad's father Abdullah was known as Habedileth, that is, "slave of the idol Leth." When mentioning Muhammad's name, Hottinger says: "at the mention of whom the mind shudders." Thus, in view of H. Reland, "No religion has been more calumniated than Islam in western literature." Curiously enough, Peter Heylyn wrote in 1621, a geographical treatise, "**Mikrokosmos**", wherein he describes, "Deprived of both his parents when but two years old, Muhammad was left unto the care of an uncle, who not able to give him education, sold him at 16 years of age to the Ismaelites, by whom exposed to sale in the open markets; he was bought by a certain Abdalmutaliffe, a wealthy merchant. On his master's death, Muhammad falls heir to his wealth by marrying his widow."

During the early part of the Middle Age, Muhammad was mostly pronounced in the occidental literature as **Bafum, Maphomet, Mammet, Mahound** or **Mawmet**. The western poets, romancers and composers of plays also rendered the terms of **Mahoune, Mahown, Mahoun, Mahon, Macon** or **Maho**. Muhammad was also described as **Saint Mahoun, Lord Mahown** or **Sir Mahown**. During 12th century, the usage of **Mawment** ultimately passed to **Mahomet**, and was also latinized as **Machumat, Machomet, Magmed** and **Moomethes**. The negative approach of the westerners can be seen further from their writings, in which the Muslims had been termed with different misnomers, such as **Infidels, Miscreants, Paynims, Pagans, Heathens, Heathen hounds, Enemies of God, the Turks, Allophilli,**



*Hagarebes, Ishmaelites, Canes, Moabites, Aliens, Gentiles*, etc., and occasionally *Goths* and *Vandals* in the poetical works. The most popular term, however, was the *Saracens*.

The crooked approach towards Islam can be judged from the fantastic prophecies of Sansovino and countless others, limiting the life of Islam to a millennium. According to "**Flowers of History**" (Bonn, 1849, 2nd vol., p. 515), the astronomers of Toledo record that, "Within seven years from the year of 1229, a doubt will spring up amongst the Saracens, they shall abandon their mosques and embrace Christianity." Emperor Leo of Constantinople predicted that Islam would be destroyed by a light-haired family! In the reign of the Empress Theodora, a prophecy was announced about the end of the Muslims on the whole by the Macendonians.

During the early part of the Middle Ages, when Islam and Christianity were arrayed against each other as opposing camps, and often there was an open war, all sorts of blasphemies were invented further against Islam. Peter the Venerable (1094-1156) had the Koran translated for the first time from Arabic into Latin, whose purpose was to refute Islamic mission. Another Koranic translated brought forth by Robert of Ketton in 1143. It was followed by the translation of Mark of Toledo (1190-1200) under the title, "**Alcorani Machometi Liber.**" The same period produced Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) and Raymond Lull (1232-1316), whose writings were absolutely unreliable and untrue. Ranulf Higden (d. 1364) and John Mandeville (1300-1372) quoted once again the legends of 11th and 12th centuries about Muhammad. Further, the Crusades according to Calverley poured out false informations for several centuries to all people of Europe, and the false reports brought back by the Crusaders, filled the west with popular misinformation that western mass education has not yet able to remove.

In spite of the fact that the Renaissance became possible only through profiting by Muslim works on science and philosophy, and their translations thereof for centuries, the attitude of some western people, who were hostile to the very civilization that created these works indicates how deep-rooted the religious, political and racial prejudices were. Europe remained ignorant of Islam for a considerably long time, and when it tried to get it know, it was suffering from strange notions - caluminous as well as whimsical. The writings of John Bale (1495-1563) and Henry Smith (1560-1591) however indicate an unchanged thinking of the westerners about Islam. Between 1572 and 1575, many traditional predictions also poured out in Europe against Islam. An Abyssinian prediction relates that, "Mecca and Medina shall be destroyed

soon." The prophecy of the wandering Jews, uttered at Astrakhan in 1676, assigned the year 1700 for the breakdown of the Turks and Islam.

During the later period of the Middle Ages, and the early and later periods of the Modern Age, the original sources almost came to the hands of the European scholars, giving rise to the scholarly and creative spirit in Islamic study, and a humanistic turn began to appear in western thought. With the establishment of the *College de France* in 1500 at Paris, the oriental language had been included in its curriculum, and Guillaume Postel was the first from this college to compile Arabic grammar in 1560. The French king Henry III (1551-1588) established a chair of Arabic in this college in 1587. Soon afterwards, in 1613, a chair of Arabic was created at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. In England, a chair was created at Cambridge in 1632 and one in Oxford in 1634. Pope Gregory (d. 1591) also founded a printing press at Rome to publish books in Arabic characters, and the "*al-Qanun fi't Tibb*" of Ibn Sina was its first publication. Louis le Dieu also put forth a Persian grammar in 1639 at Holland. Golius (d. 1667), Arpineus, Edward Peacock and Hattinger studied the translated Arabic works, but they mostly referred to the translated Arabic works of those Christian writers who lived in Islamic countries, such as Sa'id bin Bitriq (877-941), the Patriarch of Alexandria; Ibn al-Amind al-Makin (d. 1237), the courtier of the Egyptian kings, and Abul Faraj ibn Ibrī Malati (d. 1286), the Christian scholar in Egypt. The period under review, however, was not quite barren in attacking the Islam. The noteworthy work is Pierre Bayle's "*Mahomet*" (Rotterdam, 1697), in which he described Muhammad as a "false prophet" and the "arch-enemy of Christianity."

It will perhaps be well at this stage to glance at "*Bibliothèque Orientale*" produced by Barthelmi D'Herbelot (1620-1695) in that period in France, which is undoubtedly the original forebear of the modern "*The Encyclopaedia of Islam*" (1908), whose titles have been compiled by the non-Muslim scholars.

During the later period of the Modern Age, it appears that the western aggressive propaganda had continued, but this period is remarkably noted also for bringing forth few eminent scholars on Islamic studies. H. Roland, the Dutch scholar and Utrecht professor of theology, who in the beginning of the 18th century, frankly and warmly recommended the application of historical justice towards Islam in his short Latin sketch of Islam, entitled "*H. Relandi de religione Mohammedica libri duo*" (Utrecht, 1704). He also recommended the Muslim authorities and sources to speak for themselves, and wrote, "Let the Moslems themselves describe their own religion for us; just as the Jewish and Christian religions are falsely represented by the



heathens, so every religion is misrepresented by its antagonists. We are mortals, subject to error, especially where religious matters are concerned, we often allow ourselves to be grossly misled by passion." Jacob Ehrhart is famous for publishing a short examination of the charges made against Muhammad and Islam in 1731. The translation of Koran by Edward Sale (1697-1736) came out in 1734, who matched Muhammad in his preface, with Theseus and Pompeius, and praised his mission. Boulainvilliers in "**Life of the Prophet**" tried to prove Islam superior to Christianity in rationalism and realism. Savory's Koran appeared in 1783, making Muhammad as "one of the marvellous persons." Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) also admired Islamic mission in his "**La Religion dans le Limites de la simple raison.**" Goethe's "**Mahomet**" published in 1770, who put high remarks on Islamic mission. Turpin's "**The Life of Mohammad**" in 1773 also contained excellent regards to Muhammad.

In the present period of the Modern Age and onward, the diligent research spirit in the European countries freshly came up, and the collection of rare Islamic documents began to be unearthed. The Arabic teaching had been also included in the leading universities, and mass literature on Islam began to pour out to such extent that it became difficult to compile a list of bibliography of Muhammad. D.S. Margoliouth (1858-1940) remarked, "The list of Muhammad's biographers is inexhaustible, but it is a matter of pride to find a place in it." The most famous works published in England were "**Beamton Sermons**" (1800) by Dr. White, "**Life of Mohammad**" (1815) by Dr. G.E., "**Apology for Mohammad**" (1829) by Godfrey Higgins, "**Life of Mahomet**" (1849) by Washington Irving, "**Life of Mahomet**" (1861) by William Muir, "**Mohammad and the Rise of Islam**" (1905) by Margoliouth, etc. Germany produced "**Islamism**" (1830) by Dr. J.A. Muller, "**Muhammad der Prophet**" (1845) by Dr. G. Weil, "**Life of Mahomet**" (1851) by Dr. Sprenger, "**History of Mohammad's Campaigns**" (1856) by Von Kramer, "**Muhammadsen Studies**" (1890) by Ignaz Goldziher, etc. Among the French publications, the most famous are "**Islam and Quran**" (1831) by Garcin de Tassy, "**History of Arabia**" (1847) by M. Caussin de Perceval, "**History of the Founder of Islam**" (1874) by Julius Charles, "**Historie de Arabes**" (1877) by Sedillot, "**Views on Islam**" (1894) by Henry de Casteri, etc. Holland also brought forth, "**Histoire des Musulmanes**" (1861) by Dozy, "**Mohammad**" (1894) by H. Grimme, "**Das Leben Muhammeds**" (1905) by F. Buhl, etc.

The most organised research however took place with the foundation of *Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes* in 1795 at Paris. Modern orientalism began with this school, founded by Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838). The Paris Asiatic Society was founded in 1821, and in 1823 it

launched its own periodical, *Journal Asiatique*. In 1834, there appeared the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. But, it is not until nearly a century after the foundation of the Paris school in 1795 that we see the establishment of the *Oriental Studies* in German universities, the opening of the *Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen* at Berlin in 1887, the introduction of the study of Oriental languages at the Cambridge university and later the founding of the *School of Oriental Studies* at London in 1906. In Russia, an Oriental department had been organised by foreign specialists in the University of Kazan in 1804, and next one in 1854 in the University of St. Petersburg. The first *International Congress of Orientalists* held also in 1873 at Paris. It was subsequently followed in 1874 at London, in 1876 at St. Petersburg, in 1878 at Florence, in 1881 at Berlin, in 1883 at Leiden, in 1886 at Vienna, in 1889 at Stockholm, in 1894 at Geneva, in 1899 at Rome, and in 1902 at Hamburg. In 1916, the *School of Oriental Studies* was founded in the University of London, which came to be known as *School of Oriental and African Studies* in 1938. Holland was the first to establish *Asiatic Society* in 1778. The English founded one in Calcutta on January 15, 1784 with the untiring efforts of Sir William Jones (d. 1794), and another in 1795 at France. In 1839, a regularly produced journal, the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* took place in India of the *Asiatick Researches* of William Jones's group. In 1841, the Bombay branch issued its own journal. The year 1842 was the founding of the *American Oriental Society* along with its own periodical. In 1849, the *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* was launched in Leipzig. It was published by the *German Oriental Society*, which had been formed two years earlier. From 1804, the teaching of oriental languages at university level was extended at Kharkov and, above all, to Kazan in Russia. Thus, the oriental languages like Arabic, Persian and Turkish began to be studied, enabling the scholars to inspect the original source materials. Such was the origin of Orientalism. The term *Orientalist* occurred in England towards 1779, and *Orientaliste* in France in 1799. *Orientalisme* found a place in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* in 1838.

From the 18th century on, the attitude of western free thinkers took a truly humanistic turn. It evoked a strong reaction in Voltaire, who finds much to commend in the precepts of Islam, and was an admirer of Koran, vide "*Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations*" (Paris, 1858). Turpin's work, "*The Life of Mohammad*" described Muhammad as a "great prophet", "powerful mind", "true believer" and the "founder of natural religion." Goethe was captivated by the personality of Muhammad, and writes, "I could never see Muhammad as an imposter", vide his "*Dichtung und Wahrheit*." The English historian Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) writes in "*Rise and Fall of the*



**Roman Empire"** (1848) magnificent pages in defence of the merits of Muhammad. Dieterici, Sedillot, E. Quatremere (1782-1852), Horton, de Boer, Masson Oursel, Goichon, Gardet, Louis Massignon (1883-1962), Rene Guenon, Asin Palacios, E.G. Browne (1862-1926), Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), Wustenfeld (d. 1899), R.A. Nicholson (1868-1945), Hamilton Gibb (1895-1971) etc. are among those who get rid of their prejudice views, and knew how to take fact seriously through scientific research.

It must be admitted that the events of the life of Muhammad were first reduced to writing almost a hundred years after his death, and therefore, the writers had no written sources to fall back upon except memorized reports and traditions. The oral reports that have been in circulation for over a century, cannot be possibly well-knit in structure. The historical fictitious and stories were given no floral touches at that time, and were put into writing, and as a result, the most reliable works are also incorporated with such reports that are too weak and doubtful. In a similar situation, when facts have to be recorded long after their occurrence, people generally pick up all sorts of street-gossip, without caring to quote the names of the reporters. This worthless non-historical collection evidently passed for a piece of interesting historical stuff, and the western literature on Islam during and after 18th century is the outcome of such type of materials. The Muslim reporters did not give their first care to the narrations they had sorted out, and the occidental scholars found these collection from the sources, influencing greatly to their writings.

With the pace of scholarly study in Europe on Islam, it is however learnt the old baseless myths and legends minted almost during 11th and 12th centuries came to be condemned in the light of original materials, resulting the charges on Muhammad to a less number. Bosworth Smith writes in **"Mohammad and Mohammadanism"** (New York, 1857, p. 63) that, "We cannot imagine what the Muslims will say on hearing all those stories and songs about Islam in vogue in Europe during the mediaeval ages. All these stories and poems are filled with jealousy and enmity due to the ignorance of the religion of the Muslims." Oswald Carlyle in **"Heroes and Hero-worship"** (London, 1928, p. 35) also referred to these false accusations, and condemned that, "This kind of opinion is shame on us."

While examining the western books bank, it appears that the charges yet are being repeated despite several literary efforts of the learned Muslim scholars. Thus, the western writers can be classified safely into three groups: Firstly, those who do not understand Arabic and original sources. Secondly, those who know Arabic, but have no idea of the sources; and thirdly, those who

know Arabic and original sources. The scholars therefore, like E.H. Palmer (1840-1882) and D.S. Margoliouth (1858-1940) may be placed in the above third group, and their status may be termed in the words: "***I see everything, but understand nothing.***" Among the accusations, however, there are few which the European scholars have not yet removed, and continued to repeat, i.e., the spread of Islam by force and sword, the plurality of wives by Muhammad, the approval of slavery, the kingship in Medina etc. Among these charges, the charges of the spread of Islam by sword and the plurality of wives are such that have been stuck in the occidental chronicles since 11th and 12th centuries. There are however, many western scholars who do not accept these derogatory charges.

### **Islam spread not by sword**

Muhammad waged wars is certain as he was compelled, but never a sword was drawn but as a last resort to defend human life and secure safety to it. Invaded on all sides by his enemies, Muhammad had to take field or send men to meet aggression, which cannot be treated as a crusade. Islam regards war as an abnormal and destructive activity, to which recourse can be had only in the last resort. The Koran describes war as a conflagration, and declares that it is God's purpose to put out such conflagration whenever it erupts, meaning that when war becomes inevitable, it should be so waged as to cause the least possible amount of damage to life and property, as is said: "Whenever they kindle a fire for war, God extinguishes it. They strive to create disorder in the earth, and God loves not those who create disorder." (5:65) Fighting is permissible only to repel or halt aggression. But even in the course of such fighting, Muslims are not permitted any transgression; as is said: "Fight in the cause of God against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely God loves not the transgressors." (2:191) Thus, the war was permitted as a measure of self-defence and to put a stop to religious persecution.

It was at the Council of Nicea that Constantine invested the priesthood with that power whence flowed the most disastrous consequences, as the following summary will show: the massacres and devastations of nine mad crusades of Christians against unoffending Turks, during nearly two hundred years, in which many millions of human beings perished; the massacres of the Anabaptists; the massacres of the Lutherans and Papists, from the Rhine to the extremities of the North; the massacres ordered by Henry VIII and his daughter Mary; the massacres of St. Bartholomew in France, in which above 500 persons of rank, and 10,000 of inferior condition perished in Paris alone,



besides many thousands who were slaughtered in the provinces. The then Pope Gregory XIII, not only granted a plenary indulgence to all who were concerned in the massacres, but also ordered public rejoicing to celebrate the event; the forty years more of other massacres between the time of Francis I and the entry of Henry IV into Paris; the massacres of the Inquisition, in which the aggregate number of victims burnt from 1481 to 1808 was 34,024; which are more execrable still as being judicially committed, to say nothing of the innumerable schisms, and twenty years of popes against popes, bishops against bishops, the poisonings, assassinations, the brutal rapines and insolent pretensions of more than a dozen popes, who far exceeded a Nero or a Caligula in every species of crime, vice and wickedness; and lastly, to conclude this frightful list, the massacre of twelve millions of the inhabitants of the new world, executed Crucifix in hand. "It surely must be confessed" writes John Davenport, "that so hideous and almost uninterrupted a chain of religious wars, for fourteen centuries, never subsisted but among Christians, and that none of the numerous nations stigmatized as heathen, ever spilled a drop of blood on the score of theological arguments." (Ibid. pp. 146-7)

It must however be remembered that Muhammad's wars however differed essentially from those of Moses in not being wars of extermination, because the prime objectives of the former were to unite Arabian tribes, to reclaim them from idolatry and impart them in the worship of One and Only God. One must judge the motive of Muhammad's wars with the following episodes of the Old Testament:-

*"And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, put, every man, his sword by his side, and go in and out throughout the camp, and slay, every man, his brother, and, every man, his companion, and every man, his neighbour."* (Exodus, xxxi.27)

*"Now go (said Samuel to Saul) and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."* (I Samuel, xv.3)

*"Joshua smote all the countries and all their kings, he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord of Israel had commanded."* (Joshua, x.40)

On the contrary, the European writers stigmatized Islam as a religion of sword, which is absolutely wrong with its fundamental teachings. Muhammad commanded in battle, but scrupulously refrained from personally shedding

blood. His strategy was always designed to reduce loss of life and human suffering to the minimum. During eight years of fighting, punctuated with pitched battles and numerous pre-emptive expeditions, the total loss of life suffered by his enemies was hardly 759, and that suffered by his own people was no more than 259 during the total 101 expeditions, in which 27 were commanded by Muhammad himself, and the remaining 74 expeditions were led by other persons nominated by Muhammad. It is also a matter of notice that during the 27 expeditions commanded by Muhammad, there were only 8 battles, in which actual fighting took place.

"Westerners associate force with the spread of Islam. Their conception of Jihad or holy war is distorted beyond recognition. They picture the Saracens with the Quran in one hand and the sword in the other. This is clear case of mistaken identity. The Christians, not the Muslims, were the chief offenders in this respect. In Spain, during the Inquisition, two million Muslims were threatened with death unless they accepted a particular brand of Christianity. It may be stated categorically that the wars of Muhammad were purely defensive in nature. Had they not been waged, the Muslims would have perished - with what dire results for the future of civilization one can only imagine." ("**Muhammad the Educator**" by Robert L. Gulick, Lahore, 4th ed., 1975, p. 47)

"Mohammad received generously and with open arms all who would submit to his law; he, indeed, put the obstinate to death, but he ever spared the innocent blood of women, maidens and infants. In short, he strictly commanded his followers never to molest, but to treat as brethren, all who would accept and obey the Koran." ("**An Apology for Muhammad and the Koran**" by John Davenport, London, 1869, p. 142)

"It is vulgar opinion that Mahomet propagated his doctrine by the sword." ("**Rise and Progress of Mahometanism**" by Henry Stubbe, London, 1911, p. 192)

"When the Christian priests maintain that the doctrine of Mahomed was indebted solely to the sword for its success, they evidently put the cause for the effect. The sword is of no value without a hand to use it; and it was the enthusiasm of the persons who used it which gave them the victory; and this enthusiasm was produced by a lively faith in the truth of Mahomed's doctrine." ("**Apology for Mohamed**" by Godfrey Higgins, London, 1829, p. 164)



"It is a common error to attribute the spread of Muhammadanism to the agency of force." ("**History of the Moorish Empire in Europe**" by S.P. Scott, Lippincott, 1904, 1st vol., p. 120)

"These stupendous conquests which laid the foundation of the Arab empire, were certainly not the outcome of a holy war, waged for the propaganda of Islam, but they were followed by such a vast defection from the Christian faith that this result has often been supposed to have been their aim. Thus the sword came to be looked upon by Christian historians as the instrument of Muslim propaganda." ("**The Preaching of Islam**" by T.W. Arnold, London, 1896, p. 46)

"History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslim sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of sword upon conquered races is one of the most absurd myths that historians have ever repeated." ("**Islam at the Crossroads**" by De Lacy O'Leary, London, 1923, p. 8)

"The widespread tradition that the early Muslims came pounding out of the desert with the Quran in one hand and the sword in the other, converting the infidels by force, is a manifest superstition and adjunct of traditional Christian polemics." ("**The Shaping of the Arabs**" by Joel Carmichael, London, 1969, p. 144)

### **Plurality of wives**

Another calumny that is persistently levelled at Muhammad is that in his later life he became licentious. That is an enormity that has only to be contemplated to be immediately rejected as utterly incompatible with his life and character. In this context it should be remembered that in none of the great religious systems has polygamy been forbidden. The Jewish prophets, including the great lawgiver Moses, had a plurality of wives. No one has ever alleged that because of this they could be accounted as leading virtuous lives. It should be noted that polygamy is not compulsory in Islam. It is permissible under very strict limitations, the principal one being the maintenance of complete equality between wives, as is said: "But if you should apprehend that you may not be able to deal justly between your wives, then marry only one." (4:4)

Polygamy was a custom general throughout the East, so long as the days of Abraham, and which, it is certain, from innumerable passages in Scripture,

some of which we shall quote, could not in those purer ages of mankind, have been regarded as sinful. Polygamy was permitted among the ancient Greeks, as in the case of the detachment of young men from the army, mentioned by Plutarch. It was also defended by Euripides and Plato. The ancient Romans were more severe in their morals, and never practised it, although it was not forbidden among them; and Marc Antony is mentioned as the first who took the liberty of having two wives. From that time it became pretty frequent in the empire till the reigns of Theodosius, Honorius and Arcadius, who first prohibited it by an express law in 393 A.D. After this the emperor Valentinian permitted, by an edict, all the subjects of the empire, if they pleased, to marry several wives; nor does it appear from the ecclesiastical history of those times, that the bishops made any objection to its introduction. Valentinianus Constantius, son of Constantine the Great, had countless wives. Clotaire, King of France, and Heribartus and Hypericus his sons, had a plurality also. Add to these, Pepin and Charlemagne, of whom St. Urspergensus witnesses that they had several wives, Lothaire and his sons, as likewise Arnolphus VII., Emperor of Germany (888 A.D.), and a descendant of Charlemagne, Frederick Barbarossa and Philip Theodatus the King of France. Among the first race of the Kings of the Franks, Gontran, Caribert, Sigebert and Chilperic had several wives, at one time. Gontran had within his palace Veneranda and Mercatrude and Ostregilde, acknowledged as his legitimate wives; Caribert had Merflida, Marconesa and Theodogilda. Father Daniel confesses the polygamy of the French Kings. He denies not the three wives of Dagobert I, expressly asserting that Theodobert espoused Dentary, although she had a husband, and himself, another wife, named Visigelde. He adds, that in this he imitated his uncle Clotaire, who espoused the widow of Creodomir, although he had already three wives. After the emergence of the Protestant school of thought, Philip of Hesse and Frederick William II of Prussia, were permitted by the Protestant Church to contract bigamous marriages. In 1650, the Frankish Kreistag at Nuremberg passed a resolution, allowing everybody to marry two wives. The Anabaptists openly preached that a true Christian must have several wives; and the Morgans regard polygamy as a divine institution.

The Arab social fabric was passing through a serious crisis at the advent of Islam. Inter-tribal wars had destroyed a large part of the male population of Arabia. The very large number of women left destitute and likely to resort to prostitution had to be provided for. In the battle of Uhud, about 70 Muslims fell martyrs, rendering half the Muslim women in Medina widows. The surviving males were directed to marry the widows to alleviate their sufferings. Under these circumstances, Muhammad resorted to polygamy. He restrained polygamy by limiting the maximum number of contemporaneous marriages,



and by making absolute equity towards all obligatory on the man. It is worthy of note that the clause in the Koran which contains the permission of contract four contemporaneous marriages, is immediately followed by a sentence which cuts down the significance of the preceding passage to its normal and legitimate dimensions. The passage runs thus, "You may marry two, three, or four wives, but not more." The subsequent lines declare, "**but if you should apprehend that you may not be able to deal justly between your wives, then marry only one**" (4:4) Thus, taking into consideration, Islam permitted a limited polygamy, but the aggressive critics try to make out that polygamy is an institution ordained by Muhammad.

If we may have a look at the following episodes of the Old Testament, we will find a levish approval of polygamy:-

**"There in Jerusalem, David married more wives and had more sons and daughters." (1 Chronicles, 14:3)**

**"Solomon married 700 princesses and also had 300 concubines in his empire." (King, 11:3)**

**"The king is not to have many wives, because this would make him turn away from the Lord." (Deuteronomy, 17:17)**

As to the lawfulness of polygamy, it will be known that it was not only approved but even blessed in the Old Testament. For instance, *Genesis, xxx, v.22; Exodus, xxi, v.11; 1 Samuel, i, v.1.2.11, 20; 1 Samuel, xxv, v.42, 43; 2 Samuel, xii, v.8; 2 Samuel, v., v. 13; Judges, viii, v. 30; Judges, x, v.4; Judges, xii, v.9, 14, etc.*

"Muhammad's married life must not be looked at from an occidental point of view or from that set by Christian conventions. There is no reason why the codes of America and Europe should be considered superior to those of the Arabs." ("**The Messenger**" by Rev. V.C. Bodley, London, 1946, p. 202)

"Mohammad, therefore, did but legalize a practice not only honoured but even blessed by God Himself, under the old dispensation, and declared to be lawful and honourable under the new one; and, consequently, he must be exonerated from the charge of having sanctioned polygamy, and thereby encouraged licentiousness." ("**An Apology for Mohammad and the Koran**" by John Davenport, London, 1869, p.159)

"In domestic life the conduct of Muhammad is exemplary. As a husband his fondness and devotion were entire. As a father he was loving and tender. In his youth he lived a virtuous life; and at the age of twenty-five he married to a widow forty years old, during whose lifetime for five and twenty years he was a faithful husband to her alone." ("**Life of Muhammad**" by William Muir, London, 1858, p. 514)

"Enemies of Islam have insisted in depicting Muhammad as a sensual individual and a dissolute man, trying to find in his marriages evidence of a weak character not consistent with his mission. They refuse to take into consideration the fact that during those years of his life when by nature the sexual urge is strongest, although he lived in a society like that of the Arabs, where the institution of marriage was almost non-existent, where polygamy was the rule, and where divorce was very easy indeed, he was married to one woman alone, Khadija, who was much older than himself, and that for twenty-five years he was her faithful, loving husband. Only when she died and when he was already more than fifty years old did he marry again and more than once. Each of these marriages had a social or political reason, for he wanted through the women he married to honour pious women, or to establish marriage relations with other clans and tribes for the purpose of opening the way for the propagation of Islam. With the sole exception of Aisha, he married women who were neither virgins, nor young nor beautiful. Was this sensuality?" ("**An Interpretation of Islam**" by Prof. Vaglieri, Washington, 1957, pp. 67-8)

"Looked at from outside, most of the Prophet's marriages had, moreover, a political aspect - politics having here a sacred significance connected with the establishing on earth of a reflection of the city of God -, and, finally, Muhammad gave enough examples of long abstinences, particularly in his youth, when passion is considered to be most strong, to be exempt from superficial judgement on this account." ("**Understanding Islam**" by Frithjof Schuon, London, 1963, pp. 88-9)

"Polygamy, although allowed, is far from being recommended by the majority of theologians in Islam. Many of them even dissuade men capable of mastering their passion from marriage in general, and censure a man who takes two wives if he can live honestly with one." ("**Mohammedanism**" by C.S. Hurgronji, New York, 1916, p. 126)

*"Today in the occident, the Muslim world is deeply misunderstood by most. The west knows little about its diversity, about the religion or the*



*principles which unite it, about its brilliant past or its recent trajectory through history. The Muslim world is noted in the west, North America and Europe, more for the violence of certain minorities than for the peacefulness of its faith and the vast majority of its people. The word "Muslim" and "Islam" have themselves come to conjure the image of anger and lawlessness in the collective consciousness of most western cultures. And the Muslim world, has, consequently, become something that the west may not want to think about, does not understand, and will associate with only when it is inevitable. Not only is this image wrong, but there are powerful reasons that we cannot overlook, for which the west and the Muslim world must seek a better mutual understanding."*

*(The Aga Khan IV's speech delivered in the Brown University, U.S.A. on May 26, 1996)*



## APPENDIX II

### ABU ALI IBN SINA (Avicenna)

Abu Ali al-Hussain bin Abdullah bin Sina, generally known as **Ibn Sina** or **Avicenna** (a Latin distortion from Hebrew **Aven Sina**), also known in the West as *Prince of Physicians*, was an encyclopedist, philosopher, physiologist, physician, mathematician, astronomer, logician and poet. His early life is known partly through his autobiography, covering the first 21 years and the remaining part of his life is recorded by his pupil Abu Ubaid al-Juzjani and quoted by Ibn Qifti (d. 646/1248) in "**Tarikh al-Hukamah**" (Leipzig, 1903) and Ibn Abi Usaibia (590-668/1194-1270) in "**Uyun al-Anba fi tabakat al-Attiba**" (Cairo, 1882), and finally through the observations made by various historians.

Ibn Sina was born in 370/980 in the village of Afshana near Bukhara. The sage who was also to become the most influential of all figures in the Islamic arts and sciences and was to gain the titles of "**Shaikh al-Ra'is**" (leader among the wise men) and "**Hujjat al-Haq**" (proof of God), displayed a remarkable aptitude for learning from an early age. His father Abdullah hailed from Balkh and was in the service of the Samanid court. During the rule of Nuh bin Mansur (366-387/976-997), Abdullah was posted to Bukhara as a revenue collector. He can be described a very gifted child prodigy and learnt Holy Koran at the age of 10 years, and also mastered the logic and mathematics. Next he embarked upon the fields of physics, metaphysics and medicine, and at the age of 16 years he was well steeped in all the sciences of his days.

At about this time, through out Iran, particularly in the vicinity of Bukhara and the eastern regions, the Ismaili mission and proselytism were at their height and a considerable men of high scholarship and learning and officials were being attracted towards Ismailism. Abdullah and his sons also embraced Ismailism and their residence had become the rendezvous of the Ismaili mission. It must be known that Ibn Sina learnt logic and mathematics from his teacher an-Natili, mysticism from Ismail al-Sufi and medicine from Isa bin Yahya, but it cannot be ascertained who had taught him philosophy. Dr. Abdul Muid Khan, however, writes in "**Some Aspects of the Arabian Writings of the Philosopher Ibn Sina**" (cf. "**Islamic Culture**", Deccan, vol. xxv, Oct., 1951, pp. 28-9) that, "His teachers in philosophy are not known to us. His contact with the preachers of Ismaili doctrine then in full swing in Persia, seemed to have attracted the study of philosophy. When one reads his epistles on metaphysics, he appears no more than a Muslim scholastic



with tendencies of Ismailites." Ibn Sina himself also writes in his autobiography that, "My father was one of those who had responded to the Egyptian propagandists (the Fatimids); he, and my brother too, had listened to what they had to say about the Spirit and the Intellect, after the fashion in which they preached and understand the matter. They would therefore discuss these things together, while I listened and comprehended all that they said."

At the age of 17 years, Ibn Sina was invited to treat the ailing Samanid ruler, Nuh bin Mansur. The ruler was lying seriously ill and the court physicians had given up all hope for his recovery. Ibn Sina was able to cure him. On his recovery, Nuh bin Mansur wished to reward him, but the young physician only desired permission to use his uniquely stocked library. Thus he obtained the privilege of access to the royal library. Ibn Sina writes, "Many books the very titles of which were unknown to most persons, and other which I never met with before nor since." Soon after this, it unfortunately happened that this magnificent library was destroyed by fire, and Ibn Sina's enemies accused him of having purposely set fire to it, so that he might be the sole depository of the knowledge which he had gleaned from some of the rare books which it contained. A.J. Arberry writes in "**Avicenna on Theology**" (London, 1951, p. 5) that, "No doubt (the library was destroyed) by those Sunni zealots who did not scruple to whisper that the torch which fired the treasury of learning was lit by the philosopher himself, jealous to keep to himself knowledge he had there imbibed - contained many manuscripts of Greek science not available elsewhere." (p. 5)

It must be remembered that in 332/943, a widespread massacres of the Ismailis had been launched during the time of Nuh I bin Nasr II (331-343/943-954), impelling the local Ismailis to exercise strict *taqiya*. Hence, Ibn Sina also had to take the mantle under constraint and did not divulge his faith explicitly. Since his father and brother were publicly known as the adherents of the Ismailism, therefore, he felt nothing wrong to show them as the Ismailis in his autobiography, but exercised strict *taqiya* for himself. He however had to face many troubles. Dr. T.J. Boer writes in "**The History of Philosophy in Islam**" (London, 1961, p. 148) that, "From the very first, of course, he had many enemies, and they were more noisy in their demonstration than his friends. Poets cursed him; theologians either chided in with him, or tried to refute him."

His achievements therefore would have been shrouded into mist had he divulged his inclination towards Ismailism. A.J. Arberry writes that, "Even during his lifetime Avicenna was suspected of infidelity to Islam; after his

death accusations of heresy, freethought and atheism were repeatedly levelled against him." (op.cit., p. 6) According to "Avicenna Commemoration Volume" (Iran Society, Calcutta, 1956, p. 8) that Ibn Sina was tolerant and liberal in his religious pursuit. Even in his own time, the people questioned Ibn Sina's faith and considered him a heretic. He condemned such an imputation in a well-known Persian quatrain:-

*Kufar chun mani ghazaf wa asman nabud,  
Mohakam tar az iman man iman nabud.  
Dar dahr chun man yaki wa aw ham kafar,  
Pas dar hama dahr yak musalman nabud.*

"It is not so easy and trifling to call me a heretic. No belief in religion is firmer than mine own. I am the unique person in the whole world. And if I am a heretic, then there is not a single Muslim anywhere in the world."

During the reign of the Mamunid kings of Khawarazm, the city of Gorganj was noted for the high calibre of its scholars and intellectuals. Thus, after the collapse of the Samanid rule in 389/1001, Ibn Sina left Bukhara for Gorganj, where, according to Thalibi, he frequented the society of the Ismaili thinkers, and cultivated friendship with the scholars and learned men. In the interim, Mehmud of Ghazna was spreading his conquests and was eager to add Ibn Sina to the galaxy of talented and learning to illustrate his court. He wrote to the ruler of Khawarazm, demanding the intellectuals to be sent to his court. Ibn Sina preferred to throw in his lot with the Iranian princes rather than risk the capricious patronage of the fanatical ruler.

His first refuge was Gorgan in northern Khawarazm, which was in the principality of Qabus bin Washmgir (366-371/976-981), the Zayrid prince of Tabaristan. He became busily engaged in treating the sick and teaching as well as composing books. He also went to Ray in 405/1014 when Iran was dominated by the Buawahid dynasty, various members of which ruled over the different provinces of the country. Ibn Sina spent some time at the court of Fakhr ad-Dawla (387-420/997-1029) in Ray and then set out for Hamdan to meet another member of this dynasty, called Shams ad-Dawla (d. 412/1022). Ibn Sina also treated him and became so great favourite at the court that he was promoted to the rank of vizir, a position he efficiently administered for several years until the ruler's death in 412/1022.

Henceforward, his fortune took a reverse turn and upon his refusal to continue to work as a vizir, he was consigned to prison. He however



managed to escape by taking advantage of a siege of Hamdan and then incognito in the mantle of a darwish. During his hiding and wandering, he proceeded farther afield in Ispahan, where he came to the attention of Ala ad-Dawla, the ruler of Ispahan. According to Ibn Athir, when Ala ad-Dawla was defeated in a battle by the troops of Ghazna in 425/1034, the books of Ibn Sina were also carried off by them as part of their plunder, and were placed in one of the libraries of Ghazna, until they were destroyed by fire in the sack of that city by Hussain (d. 556/1161), the king of Ghor, who was known as **Jahan-ruz** (the world-burner). In sum, Ibn Sina enjoyed a long period of respite and peace in Ispahan which lasted for 15 years.

Ibn Sina died in 428/1037 of colic of which he had been a specialist and was buried at Hamdan. With the brief span of 58 years, Ibn Sina was able to produce an astounding number of works, relating to logic, medicine, physics, mathematics, astronomy, theology, psychology, ethics, politics, mysticism etc. He was a man of enormous energy and some of his works were actually dictated on horseback while accompanying the ruler in the battles. His great efficiency in writing can be judged from the fact that he composed his one book in a single night.

His influence in the West started penetrating palpably since the time of Albert the Great, the famous saint of St. Thoman Aquinas. Domenico Gundisalvi (d. 545/1150) had written "**De Anima**" which is richly a wholesale transposition of Ibn Sina's doctrines. M. Gilson writes in this context that, "The **De Anima** attributed to Gundisalvi marks the point of insertion of Avicennism into the Christian tradition," (cf. "**The Legacy of Islam**" ed. J. Schacht, London, 1974, p. 382). Similar is the case with the medieval philosophers and scientists, Rober Grosseteste and Roger Bacon. Duns Scotus and Count Zabarella, the late medieval commentators of Aristotle, also bear testimony to Ibn Sina's enduring influence. Dr. S. van den Bergh in his "**Averroes Tahafat al-Tahafut**" (London, 1954) had traced the influence of the ideas of Ibn Sina down to the modern times. In sum, the influences of Avicennism got stronger in the West than Augustinism.

It is generally believed that Ibn Sina was the author of no less than 238 works. Of his works the best known masterpiece is first "**al-Qanun fi't-Tibb**" (Canons of Medicine), the epitome of Islamic medicine, compiled in about a million words. Sir W. Osler regards it as "medical Bible for a longer period than any other book," vide "**Evolution of Modern Medicine**" (Yale University Press, 1921, p. 98). William Harvey puts him in the same category as Aristotle and Cicero. It was translated into Latin by an Italian Gernard of Cremona (1114-1187) at Toledo. Its Arabic text was published in Rome in

1593. This comprehensive treatise continued to be a text-book of Medicine in the Universities of St. Louis and Montpellier, until 1657. It appears that for well over 600 years no medical book ever written had been studied so thoroughly over such a long period. At Montpellier, a great centre of medical studies, the treatise of Ibn Sina included in the official syllabus set in 1340 for medical degrees. At the Universities of Leipzig and Tubingen as early as 1481, the medical curriculum included the **Canons of Medicine**. Ferriar in his text-book of medicine quoted Hippocrates 140 times, ar-Razi and Galen 1000 times while he quoted Ibn Sina 3000 times. The course of studies at the University of Vienna in 1592 and the University of Frankfurt-on-Oder were mainly based on the **Canons**. Thus, Ibn Sina held his own at Montpellier and Louvain down to 1657.

The second is his monumental encyclopaedia, "**Kitab al-Shifa**" (Book of Healing). It marks the high point of Peripatetic philosophy in Islam and contains important chapters on logic and mathematical and natural sciences. It was translated into Latin during 6th/12th century under the title of "**Sufficiencia**." It contains a logic of which only twelve folios out of one hundred and sixty-nine, have been translated; physics including the natural sciences, psychology, cosmology and finally metaphysics. In 1951, the Egyptian government and the Arab League set up a committee in Cairo to edit "**Kitab al-Shifa**". Some parts of it have already been published.

George Sarton writes in "**Introduction to the History of Science**" (Baltimore, 1927, 1st vol., p. 709) that, "Avicenna is the most famous scientist and philosopher of Islam and one of the greatest of all races, places and times."

In addition, Ibn Sina also wrote a treatise on Remedies for the Heart, and a certain number of poems about medicine. His pharmacopoeia comprised about 760 drugs. He is said to have guessed the existence of bacteria in the spread of epidemic as early as the 5th century. Dr. Amini Asad Khairullah writes in "**al-Tibb al-Arabi**" (pp. 147-157) that, "His diagnosis of the symptom of pneumonia and pleurisy and kidney stones was supposed to have been so perfect that nothing new could be added by the modern science. The application of the ice-bag to the head of the sick was also said to have been his invention."

Under the patronage of the King of Iran, the Minister of Education and the President of the Society for the Preservation of National Monuments, the Avicenna Millenary was celebrated in Tehran and Hamdan for 10 days from the 21st to 30th April, 1954 with great pomp and grandeur befitting the great philosopher-physician Ibn Sina (370-428/980-1037). Orientalists and scholars



from different parts of the world had participated in the function. The Millenary was also celebrated at Calcutta by the Iran Society, which published a commemoration volume in 1956, containing contributions in different languages by outstanding scholars. G.M. Wickens also edited six papers read at the Millenary symposium and published them in 1952 under the title of "Avicenna: Scientists and Philosopher."

Ibn Sina's influence in Europe even in comparatively recent times can be judged from the fact that during the two years (1899 and 1900), four theses were submitted to the University of Berlin by J. Cueva, Paul Uspensky, Elias Michailowsky and Th. Bernikov. The portrait of Ibn Sina, which even today adorns the main hall of the Medical School at the University of Paris, bears an eloquent testimony to the reverence in which the great Galen of Iran is held by modern Europe.

During the commemoration of the silver jubilee of the Aga Khan IV, the 49th Imam of the Ismailis, in 1983 a gift of a Chair at the Aga Khan University was offered by the President of the National Council for Pakistan, Vizir Ashiqali on behalf of the Ismailis of Pakistan. The Aga Khan IV graciously accepted the gift on behalf of the Aga Khan University and said, *"I want to express to my jamat of Pakistan, my deepest gratitude for the nazrana of a Chair at the Aga Khan University. And I would like you to know that this nazrana gives me the very greatest happiness. You know that I am proud of our history, I am proud of the great philosophers, of the great scientists, the great thinkers that have marked our history like lights in the night. And I would like that this Chair should be named after one of those great philosophers or scientists, so that his memory may be kept alive in an academic institution of higher learning today. I would therefore recommend to the Board of Trustees a name of a great man in our history, in our tariqah and I hope that when that Chair is named, the professor that holds that Chair will always do honour to the name the Chair bears and to the students that must be educated for the future. (Karachi: November 13, 1985)*

At length, the Aga Khan IV named this Chair of Professorship of Medicine after the great Ismaili philosopher, physician and scientist, *Abu Ali Ibn Sina* in November, 1988. In addition, during his visit to Pakistan, the Aga Khan IV said to his followers that, *"I would like to take this occasion also to say how happy and grateful I am for the endowment which you and the jamat of Pakistan has offered for the Ibn Sina Professorship at the Aga Khan University. This is a wonderful gesture on behalf of the jamat of*

*Pakistan to support and to sustain this young new important institution in the jamat" (Karachi, March 21, 1989)*

Dr. O. Cameron Gruner writes in "**A Treatise on the Canons of Medicine of Avicenna**" (London, 1930, p. 2) that, "The place for Avicenna in modern thought is gained when it is agreed that he shall be viewed as one who entered this world, entrusted with a mission independently to express for that age, by mean of those various tools which he then found in it, the wisdom which is unchanging and impersonal."

Indeed, the Islamic world needs dedicated scientists of Ibn Sina's ilk.





## THE ISMAILI RULE IN SIND AND HIND

It may be remembered that the Abbasid caliph al-Mutarnid (d. 279/892) had handed over the charge of Sind to the Saffarid chief, Yaqub bin Layth, in order to divert his intentions from attacking Iraq. As a result, Yaqub bin Layth acquired the power of Sind, Balkh and Tabaristan. He however recited the Abbasid khutba, and was simultaneously responsible to spread Shiism in the territories he governed. He died in 265/892, and with his departure, the Muslim territories in Sind had been divided into two main states, i.e., the State of Multan and Mansurah. In 279/892, the State of Multan passed into the hands of an Arab dynasty, called Banu Samah, founded by the clan of Asad.

Meanwhile, Ibn Hawshab had sent al-Haytham in 270/884 from Yamen to Sind for Ismaili propaganda. He originated there the Ismaili mission that remained continue considerably under the charge of different *da'is*. The early accounts are so meagre that nothing can be known about the missionary activities of the Ismailis in Sind. It is however possible that they had spread in the State of Multan during the period of Samah rule. Qadi Noman (d. 363/974) writes in "*Iftitah al-Dawa*" (comp. 346/957) that, "The mission in Sind goes back to the early days of the Ismaili movement. Abul Qassim bin Hawshab, well-known under the name of Mansur al-Yamen, sent his cousin, al-Haytham, as a *dai* to the country of Sind, the latter converted many of its inhabitants and his mission is still existing in Sind." It suggests that the Fatimid mission in Sind was in operation from 270/884 to 346/957. During the time of Imam al-Muizz (d. 365/975), it is reliably known that a certain unknown *dai*, who had generated close relations with the ruling Samah dynasty, had neglected in his duty, and acted contrary to the policy of the mission. Qadi Noman writes to this effect in his "*Kitab al-Majalis wa'l Musayarat*" (comp. 351/962) that, "In the time of al-Muizz in 347/958, there was in charge of the mission in Sind a *dai*, whose views and conduct were utterly at variance with the Ismailism taught by the Imam and his close associates. Not only did he adopt a latitudinarian attitude towards those members of his flock who had made a direct passage from their old religion to Ismailism; whom he allowed to keep many of the un-Islamic practices of their former religion, but he even relaxed certain statutes of Islam for those who had been Sunni Muslims before joining Ismailism."

This further suggests that the Ismaili faith penetrated among the non-Muslims and the Sunni Muslims in Sind, but the retention of certain practices of their former cults had been seriously noticed in Egypt. This unknown *dai* was ultimately killed in a riding accident in 348/959, and according to the statement of Qadi Noman, another next *dai* called Jaylam bin Shayban was recommended by al-Muizz to the headquarters of Yamen. Jaylam bin Shayban most probably proceeded to Sind via Khorasan, and seized Multan after overthrowing the ruling dynasty, and he finally founded a Fatimid vassal state in Upper Indus Valley in 349/960. In another passage quoted by "Uyun'l-Akhbar" (6th vol., p. 222), Qadi Noman summarizes the Ismaili mission in Sind as follows:- "The mission of the ruler of the epoch (*wali al-zaman*) has emerged victoriously in Sind, his faithful followers earned glory; his *dai* there conquered the ruler of the kingdom of Sind who was a Zoroastrian, killed him and his men and destroyed the idol which they used to worship and made a mosque of the temple in which the idol used to stand." It implies that there had been a firm foot-hold of the idoltrous in Sind, most possibly the Hindus, not Zoaroastrians, and their domination throughout Sind was like their rule in Sind, which was wiped out by the Fatimid *dais*, but the actual destruction of the rule in Sind was practically the Samah dynasty. It also suggests that Jaylam bin Shayban had faced challenges of both the Hindus and Samah dynasty.

Ibn Hawakal is generally quoted to have narrated the existence of the Samah rule in 358/968, and after him Maqadisi reported the Fatimid rule in Multan in 375/985. With the accounts of Ibn Hawakal and Maqadisi, the scholars almost determined the Fatimid foothold in Multan between 375/985 and 358/968, which seems unlikely. It must be noticed that Ibn Hawakal started his famous journey from Baghdad in 331/943, and returned back in 358/976, and was in the African lands in the following year, and since 361/972 he had been in Sicily. The years of the termination of his work, according to Barthold, is held to be 367/978. With all this in mind at now, it is quite possible that the narration of Multan given by Ibn Hawakal cannot be dated as 358/968. Istakhri (d. 404/1014) also gives the details of Multan for the year 340/951 when he met Ibn Hawakal at Indus Valley. While examining the extracts of these two travellers, we will safely arrive to the conclusion that Ibn Hawakal had derived his informations of Multan from Istakhri in 340/951, and himself was not in Multan in the year 358/968. It transpires that the account of Ibn Hawakal regarding Multan relates to the year of 340/961 he had actually taken from Istakhri. According to Barthold (vide Barthold's Preface in "*Hudud al-Alam*", tr. by Minorsky, London, 1937, p. 20), Ibn Hawakal was in Mosul in 358/968, and writes, "The manuscript, which Sir W. Ouseley took for a copy of the translation of Ibn Hawakal and edited as such was found to be an



abridged version of Istakhri's book." It suggests beyond any doubt that the account of the ruling Samah dynasty in Multan reported by Ibn Hawakal in 358/968 relates to the year 340/951, and the product of De Geoji's research to this effect also testifies our views. Sir H.M. Elliot's "The History of India" (Lahore, 1976, 1st vol., p. 26) also describes that, "Istakhri was a little anterior in point of time to Ibn Haukal, but these two travellers met in the valley of the Indus, and exchanged observations. A comparison of the extracts will show how Ibn Haukal availed himself of his contemporary writings, and made them the basis of his own work."

The Fatimid foothold in Multan therefore existed almost between 358/968 and 340/951. The early accounts are too vague as regards the period under review to permit of any solid inference concerning an exact influence of the Fatimid in Multan. We however come to know from a rare letter of Imam al-Muizz written in 354/965 addressing to Jaylam bin Shayban, the then Ismaili ruler of Multan, in which he acknowledged the report of Multan's occupation. It further transpires that the Fatimid vassal state was founded in Multan before 354/968. The anonymous geographical work, entitled "**Hudud al-Alam**" (The Regions of the World) compiled in 372/982, giving also the accounts of Multan, and its source of information is also Istakhri and Ibn Hawakal. The author however admits the existence of the Fatimid rule in Multan during the period he compiled his work in 372/982. It writes that, "Its governor is a Quraishite from the descendants of Sam. He lived at a camp half of farasang (from Multan) and reads the khutba in the name of the Western One (*bar Maghribi*)." In this context, the author of "**Hudud al-Alam**" shows the Samah dynasty as the rulers of Multan, suggesting that he had extracted from Istakhri and Ibn Hawakal. While his expression "bar maghribi" (Western One), according to Minorsky (Ibid. p. 246) refers to the Fatimids; also suggesting a report of his own period he had known. It may also be possible that the author of "**Hudud al-Alam**" had known in his time that the rulers of Samah dynasty recited the khutba of the Fatimids instead of Abbasids, making Jaylam bin Shayban, as the then Samah ruler.

In sum, it has been indicated previously that the Fatimid *dai* Jaylam bin Shayban founded the Ismaili rule in the State of Multan in 349/960. It may be remembered that the State of Multan does not mean the present location of the city, but it was a big state, including whole Punjab and the region of Sind. Jaylam bin Shayban had solidified his hold and extended his power. His immediate neighbours in the north were the Hindu Shahis, who ruled the territory from Lamghan to the river of Chinab and from the hills of southern Kashmir to the frontier kingdom of Multan. He established friendly relations with the Hindu Shahis. He is reported to have demolished the famous Suraj

Temple and smashed the highly venerated idol, called Aditya (sun-god), and built a big mosque in the city. Writing for Jaylam bin Shayban, al-Biruni (d. 430/1039) writes that, "He broke the idol into pieces and killed its priests. He made his mansion, which was a castle built of bricks on an elevated place." (vide "**Alberuni's India**" tr. by Edward C. Sachau, Lahore, 1962, 1st vol., p. 157). It is also reported by al-Biruni that when Muhammad bin Kassim conquered Multan, he inquired how the town had become so flourishing and huge treasure had there been accumulated, and then he found that this idol was the cause, for there came pilgrims from all sides to visit it. He thought it best to have the idol where he was. According to Istakhri in "**Kitab al-Masalik wa'l Mamlik**" (comp. 340/951), "The temple of the idol is a strong edifice, situated in the most populous part of the city, in the market of Multan, between the bazar of the ivory dealers and the shops of the copper-smiths. The idol is placed under a cupola in the midst of the building, and the ministers of the idol and those devoted to its service dwell around the cupola. The idol has a human shape, and is seated with its legs bent in a quadrangular posture on a throne made of brick and mortar, and its hands resting upon its knees, with the fingers closed. Its whole body is covered with a red skin like Morocco leather, and nothing but its eyes are visible, made of precious gems, and its head is covered with a crown of gold."

Jaylam bin Shayban started the new coinage in the State of Multan, known as *Qahirya* minted in Egypt in the name of the Fatimids. It was equivalent in weight to five Iraqi dhirams. He also started the Fatimid khutba to be read in the mosques. He was in close contact with Imam al-Muizz, and reported the progress he made during his operation. According to "**Uyun'l-Akhbar**" (6th vol., p. 214), "There arrived a letter from him (Jaylam bin Shayban), in which he mentioned the victory which God has granted him in the jazira of Sind and the dominion which the "Friends of God" had acquired there. He mentioned that he had broken the idol for the destructions of which he had previously asked the Imam's permission. He addressed to the Imam certain questions concerning the restoration of religion and abolition of the changes introduced by the former wicked *dai*, who had wandered upon the path of transgressors. He also consulted the Imam about several matters concerning the laws (fiqh) and permitted and prohibited things (*al-halal wa'l haram*) and about problems of allegorical interpretation (*tawil*), the knowledge of which has been given by God to the "people of meditation" (*ahl al-dhikr*), Imam after Imam. The Imam answered him by a *sijill* which is very famous and well known and is written down in the pages of the books." The reply of Imam al-Muizz to the letter of Jaylam bin Shayban is cited in "**Uyun'l-Akhbar**" (6th vol., p. 219) which reads: "Referring to what you have written that God has granted you a victory over those who had attacked you and wanted to oust



you from your place; that terrible battles have been fought between you, till God gave you the victory, by His help and assistance and you exterminated them completely; that you destroyed their idol and built a mosque on its site. What a great favour, what manifest and palpable excellence and lasting glory is that from God! We would be very much pleased if you could send us the head of that idol; it would accrue to your lasting glory and would inspire your brethren at our end to increase their zeal and their desire to unite with you in a common effort in the cause of God. The realization of God's promise to us, which used to seem so remote, has, indeed, become imminent...." In the concluding lines, Imam al-Muizz writes: "We have sent you some of our banners, which you can unfurl in case of need. Whenever they are unfurled over the heads of the believers, God increases their glory by the banners and hails them with His assistance; on the other hand, when they are unfurled over the heads of the unbelievers, the banners humiliate their pride and overwhelm them by the power of God, Who is our Benefactor....Written on Sunday, the 19th Ramdan, of the year 354.\*

After getting directions from his spiritual master, Jaylam bin Shayban attained both religious and political achievements in the State of Multan. No further details are accessible from the contemporary or later sources. It is however known from the fragments of the sources that the Abbasids assisted the remains of the clan of Munabbah in the State of Multan against the Fatimid ruler. Before the time the movement might threaten the Fatimid foothold, Jaylam bin Shayban took field against them in 373/983 and destroyed the remaining ashes of the Munabbah dynasty. Maqadisi was in Sind in 375/985 and writes in his "**Ahsan al-taqasim**" (p. 485) that, "In Multan the khutba is recited in the name of the Fatimid and all decisions are taken according to his commands. Their envoys and presents go regularly to Egypt. He (Jaylam) is a powerful and just ruler." Maqadisi further adds: "Multan is smaller than Mansurah in size, but has a larger population. Fruits are not found in plenty; yet they are sold cheaper.....Like Siraf, Multan has wooden homes. There is no bad conduct and drunkenness here, and people convicted of these crimes are punished by death or by some heavy sentence. Business is fair and honest. Travellers are looked after well. Most of the inhabitants are Arabs. They live by a river. The place abounds in vegetation and wealth. Trade flourishes here. Good manners and good living are noticed everywhere. The government is just. Women of the town are modestly dressed with no make-up and hardly found talking to anyone in the streets. The water is healthy and the standard of living high. There is happiness, well-being and culture here. Persian is understood. Profit of business is high. People are healthy, but the town is not clean. Houses are small. The climate is warm and arid. The people are of darkish complexion." (Ibid. pp. 481-2) Jaylam bin

Shayban died probably in 376/986. "It may be summarized" says Dr. Ahmad Nabi Khan in his "**Multan, History and Architecture**" (Lahore, 1983, p. 38) "that his rule was benevolent and the people prospered under him." He was succeeded by his son, Shaikh Hamid, who ruled till 387/997. In 385/995, Shaikh Hamid is reported to have sent a deputation from Multan to Cairo to meet Imam al-Aziz alongwith presents. Abu Jabbar Hamdani (d. 415/1025) also confirmed the arrival of such deputation from Multan in 385/995 at Cairo in his "**Tathbit Dala'il Nubuwwat**" (p. 180).

Alaptagin (d. 352/963) had founded the kingdom of the Ghaznavids in Afghanistan, and was succeeded by his son, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim (d. 355/966). Bilkatagin (d. 364/974), the slave of Alaptagin rose to the power as the third ruler. Piritagin (d. 366/977), another slave of Alaptagin ascended as the fourth ruler, and the fifth ruler was Sabatagin (d. 387/997), and his son and successor, Mehmud (d. 421/1030) had seized Ghazna and made it his capital. In 381/991, Sabatagin, the fifth Ghaznavid ruler had raided Multan, and concluded a truce with Shaikh Hamid, since the Ismaili ruler of Multan served a buffer state between the rising Turkish power of Ghazna, and the old Hindu Shahis. After the death of Sabatagin, his son Mehmud, known as Mehmud of Ghazna; the sworn enemy of Ismailism, had violated the above truce, and invaded Multan in 395/1005.

In 391/1001, Mehmud debouched from the snow-clad hills along the north-western frontier of India, marched through the Khaibar Pass and swooped down upon India. Between 391/1001 and 421/1030, he invaded India no fewer than 12 times. When he was returning from his expedition to Bhatinda in 395/1005, Abul Fateh Dawood bin Nasr, the grandson of Shaikh Hamid is said to have resented the passage of his army through the province of Multan, and as a result, Mehmud is supposed to have invaded Multan in 396/1006. Utabi however writes in "**Kitabu'l Yamini**" (comp. 411/1020) that, "Abul Fateh Dawood's adherence to the Ismailism was the root cause of Mehmud's invasion." Mehmud laid a seige over Multan, and exhausted with the seven days seige of the town due to the shortage of supplies, Abul Fateh Dawood was forced to pay a large sum of ransom to him, and it was also concluded that the reign of Multan facing the Indus River would remained under the Ghaznavid occupation.

In 401/1010, Mehmud once again spurred his horses towards Multan through opposite route, and crossed Khyber with a view to invade Multan after passing through Lahore. Anandpal, the son of Jaypal (d. 393/1002), the king of Hindu Shahis at Lahore did not allow Mehmud to pass through his territory, and himself commanded his army to block Mehmud at Peshawer, but was



swept away before the mighty forces of the invaders. Mehmud entered Multan via Bhatinda, and launched a terrible massacre. Besides being greedy of wealth in plundering, Mehmud was a fanatical and cruel, and a special fierce enemy of the Ismailis. His aggressive operation is attested by al-Baghdadi (d. 429/1037), who writes in "**Kitab al-Firaq**" (p. 277) that, "The Ismailis of Multan were massacred in thousand by Mehmud." Historian Gardizi writes in "**Zainu'l Akhbar**" (comp. 441/1048) that, "Mehmud arrested the majority of the Ismailis, who lived in Multan, killed and chopped off the hands of some and punished them severely." According to "**Tarikh-i Firishta**" (comp. 1015/1606) that, "A large number of the Ismailis were slaughtered. Hands and feet of a large number of them were ruthlessly amputated." Muhammad bin Mansur writes in "**Adabu'l Muluk wa Kifayatu'l Mamluk**" (comp. 615/1228) that Mehmud put so many Ismailis to the sword by himself that, "a stream of blood flowed from the Lohari Gate in Multan, which was on the western side of the town, and that the hand of Sultan Mehmud was stuck fast to the hilt of the sword on account of congealed blood, and has to be immersed in a bath of hot water before it could be loosened." In sum, after a bloody slaughter and savage persecution, Mehmud gained a booty of two crore dinars from the local citizens as a price of refraining from further horrible massacres. Thus, Multan was annexed to the Ghaznavid dominions. Abul Fateh Dawood, the then Ismaili ruler was taken prisoner and was imprisoned in the fort of Ghurak, about 50 miles northwest of Kandhar, and died there around 406/1015. So came to an end of the Fatimid rule in the State of Multan. It lasted for over a half century. The *da'is* in Multan constituted a dynasty of three rulers and were of Arab race.

Before long, however, the Ismaili power again revived in Multan by the descendant of Abul Fateh Dawood. In 572/1176, Shihabuddin Ghori (d. 602/1206) in his bid to revive Mehmud's tradition, had captured Multan. The tiny Ismaili state of Multan could not withstand the onslaught of the mighty military machine of the Ghorids, and according to "**Tabaqat-i Nasiri**" (comp. 658/1260), "The sultan snatched away Multan from the hands of the Ismailis in 572/1176." The underground organisation of the scattered Ismailis however continued the mission for a long time without having direct contact with the Imams.

It must be remembered that during the Fatimid rule in Multan, there existed one Sunni rule below Multan in Mansurah, known as the Habbarids, belonging to the Arab clan of Asad. Umar Habbar bin al-Asad (d. 270/884) had founded the Habbarid rule in 247/861 at Mansurah. Masudi writes that Mansurah was about 75 farasangs (each farasang in India consisted 8 miles) from Multan. It was a main city of Sind, about a mile long and mile broad; but

the whole State of Mansurah comprised of three lac small villages, extending from Shahdadpur to the coast of Makran, Gawadar and Muscat with a large hinterland of Baluchistan. It also included the eastern delta of the Indus, extending from lower Sind to Aror. The State of Mansurah was famous for having a city and port, called Daibal.

It is also worthwhile to be known that the Fatimids had taken serious notice of the brutal massacre of the Ismailis in Multan, and intended to prevent further terrible operations. Ibn Jawzi (d. 597/1200) writes in "*al-Muntazam*" (7th vol., p. 262) that, "In 403/1012, the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim made his contact with Mehmud of Ghazna, asking him to join the Fatimid mission, and declare his loyalty." Since Mehmud had been granted the titles of Yaminud-Dawla, Aminul-Millat and Sultan by the Abbasid caliph Kadir billah (d. 422/1031), one of the sworn enemies at the throne of Baghdad, therefore, Mehmud does not appear to have accepted the offer. Being a devout orthodox ruler, he refused al-Hakim's proposal. Mehmud sent the record of communication, after tearing them up, to the Abbasid court to demonstrate his loyalty. Mehmud had committed slaughters in 396/1006 and 401/1010 at Multan, and thus the rise of the vigorous Ghaznavid regime had become a threat to the Ismailis even in Iran. Imam al-Hakim may, therefore, have endeavoured to win Mehmud's friendship, if not loyalty, to ensure the interest of the Ismaili mission. To ensure the Abbasids that he had not acknowledged the Fatimids over the Abbasids, Mehmud proceeded to intensify his hostile operations against the Ismailis. He conquered Ray in 420/1029, and severely persecuted the Ismailis in Iran. According to Ibn Athir (9th vol., p. 262), "Thousands of them were gibbeted, stoned to death or carried in chains to Khorasan to languish in captivity. In Ray, their houses were searched and all books dealing with their doctrines were cast into flames. Fifty-camel loads of books are said to have burnt under the trees on which the Ismailis were gibbeted. While of such books as remained after this act of wanton vandalism, Mehmud transported a hundred loads to Ghazna."

The Habbarid dynasty at Mansurah recited the Abbasid khutba. Under the rule of Yaqub bin Layth, a bulk of the Shiites seems to have flourished in Mansurah. During the massacres of the Ismailis in 401/1010 at Multan, the surviving Ismailis fled to Mansurah, and began to live there at first under the garb of the Shiites. Gradually, the Ismaili influence reverberated in Mansurah. The foothold of the Ismailis can be judged from the report that the last Habbarid ruler, Amaduddin Khafif had espoused Ismailism. It is seen that the descendants of the *dai* al-Haytham were active in Multan as far as Mansurah. Thus, like Multan, Mansurah emerged as an Ismaili State soon to be wiped out by the sworn enemy of Ismailism. Mehmud turned his mighty forces



towards Mansurah, and destroyed the Habbarid rule in 416/1025. Farruk Sistani (d. 429/1038), the contemporary writer and poet at the court of Mehmud, writes in his "*Diwan-i Farrukhi*" (p. 74) that, "Khafif, the last ruler had a large military resource, nevertheless, he did not fight and fled to the jungles, and was followed by the Ghaznavid soldiers." It seems probable that the army of Amaduddin Khafif comprised of the Sunni Muslims in large number, therefore, he did not rely upon them, and avoided to fight. He however acquired support of the Jats and Med tribes, inhabiting near the Indus river, and fought a guerilla war against his enemies. He was at length arrested and drowned into the river. The Ismailis who escaped Mehmud's sword, had gone underground in Sind and Punjab. It also seems that many Ismailis of Mansurah fled to Kutchh in Bahawalpur State, whose chief was Anag Pal, the relative of Shaikh Ibn Sumar Raja Pal. The scattered Ismailis in Sind however retained their close contact with the Imams in Egypt. It appears that the Fatimid Imam az-Zahir had formulated a new policy for Sind. Instead of sending the *dais* from Yemen, one reputable and notable person was chosen in Sind to become the leader of the Ismailis; and as a result, the leading tribe of Sumra in Sind had been preferred in this context.

### **The Rise of the Sumra Dynasty in Sind**

Ismailism remained a force in Sind and emerged stronger, for it was patronised by the Sumra tribe, who were the Ismailis. Sind had been entirely conquered by Mehmud, and was annexed to the Ghaznavid regime. It remained so during the time of his son, Masud (d. 432/1041), and latter's son Abdur Rashid (d. 444/1051). Henceforward, the Ghaznavid became weak in Sind. Delhi and its environs had been snatched from them by the rising power of the Ghorid, and Sind became an independent of them under the Sumra tribe.

The Sumra were the local Sindi Hindu tribe, converted to Islam in the time of the first Aarb conquest. They lived mostly on the banks of Indus, in the big cities of Janani and Sehwan. The Sumra embraced Ismailism by the *dais* staying at Multan. In 445/1052, the Sumra came up as an influential power, and mustered strength at Thari, a sandy tract in the district of Thatta, where their chief had been proclaimed. They however came to power after defeating Abdur Rashid bin Masud bin Mehmud of Ghazna, and dominated the whole Sind soon afterward.

Abul Hasan Ali bin Ahmad at-Taly, known as Bahauddin al-Muqtana was one of the personages to have resumed the Druze mission in 418/1027. He wrote

letters to several regions, summoning the rulers to embrace the Druze faith. His collection of letters are preserved in the Druze sacred book, entitled "**Risall al-Hikmah**" or "**al-Hikmah al-Sharifa**". It is learnt from the letters of Bahauddin al-Muqtana that he had also written one to a certain Shaikh Ibn Saumar Raja Pal in 425/1034, inviting him to espouse his faith. The text of the letter, according to "**Risalat al-Hind**" (p. 36) reads:- "O'illustrious Raja Bal, arouse your family, the unitarians, and bring back Dawood the younger into the true religion; for Masud only delivered him from prison and bondage, that you might accomplish the ministry with which you were charged, against Abdullah, his nephew, and against all the inhabitants of Multan, so that the disciples of the doctrines of holiness, and of the unity might be distinguished from the party of bewiternent, contradiction, ingenuity, and revellion."

It may be noted that Shaikh Abul Fateh Dawood had left behind a son, called Dawood Asghar (younger). He was arrested by Masud, the then Ghaznavid ruler, and relieved him in about 423/1032. Abdullah Abul Fateh was the maternal grandson of Dawood Akbar (elder) and nephew of Dawood Asghar, whom the people of Multan wanted to make their amir. During the time of Masud (d. 432/1041), the Sumra tribe rebelled against the Ghaznavids in Sind, and brought on the throne a leader, named Sumra. It is probable that this Sumra of "**Tuhfat al-Kiram**" (comp. 1187/1773) was no other than that of Shaikh Ibn Saumar Raja Pal (d. 446/1053) of the above Druze letter. He had been proclaimed at Thari in 445/1052 as the chief of Sumra dynasty. It is however reliably known that he did not respond to the letter of Bahauddin al-Muqtana, and remained firm with Ismaili faith. He married the daughter of a rich Arab landlord, called Sa'd and got a son by her, named Asamuddin, surnamed Bhongar; who ruled for 15 years till 461/1069. His son Asam ad-Dawla, sumamed Duda I (d. 485/1092) ruled for about 24 years, who was a brave soldier, and extended his power as far as Las in Baluchistan. He was succeeded by his infant son, Sanghar (d. 515/1122), and thus, his elder sister Zainab Tari ruled on his behalf. Dr. Abbas H. al-Hamdani's "**Ismaili Dawa in Northern India**" (Cairo, 1956) gives some interesting accounts of the Sumra rulers, from which we borrow the following summary.

Sanghar was a bold ruler, and extended his power in the West including Makran. He ruled for 15 years, and had no son, therefore his wife Himu, who held the fort of Adak, took her two brothers, Khafif and Unar in possession of Tor and Thari who ruled together. Khafif ruled for 33 years and Unar for 40 years. They were contemporary to Shihabuddin Ghorī, who annexed Multan and Uchh in 571/1176 and had violated the territory of Sind in 578/1182.



Duda II assumed the leadership of Sumras. He marched from his fortress of Wahka against the brothers of Himu and killed them. With the advance of the Ghorid influence in Sind, the Sumra capital changed from Thari to Daibal when Muhammad Ghorid occupied Daibal in 578/1182, the Sumra ruler Duda II and his successor Patho seem to have existed as powerless somewhere in Sind. Under the next ruler Ghanra I, the Sumra rule was confined to Thatta. He died in 634/1237 and was succeeded by Muhammad Tor, who ruled for 15 years and died in 649/1251. The next ruler, Ghanra II was dethroned by his foster brother, Duda III. Ghanra II acquired military aids from the Muslim ruler of Delhi, but failed to overthrow Duda III. Henceforward, it appears that the Sumra rulers began to profess Sunnism in Sind. The next Sumra rulers however were Tai, Chinsar, Bhungar II, Khafif II, Duda IV, Umar, Bhungar III and Hamir.

Ibn Batutta (d. 779/1377) came to India through Sind in 734/1333 during the ruler of Sumra, who owed allegiance to the kings of Delhi. Ibn Batutta writes in his "Aja'ib al-Asfar" that, "Then I arrived at Janani which is a large and handsome town on the banks of the river of Sind and which has lovely bazars. The inhabitants are called Samirah who settled down here, as historians have written, at a time when Sind was conquered during the time of Hajjaj...The name of the ruler at this time is Wanar (possibly Umar)...In this town live the Samirite amir Wanar and amir Qeysar Rumi, and both are under the supremacy of the sultan (of Delhi). Both had 18,000 horsemen...."

It appears that the ruling Sumra tribe had embraced Sunnism before the visit of Ibn Batutta in 734/1333. The kernel of the extant traditions however suggests that the Sumra family was converted to Sunnism by Sayed Jalaluddin Bukhari (707-785/1308-1384), also known as Makhdam-i Jahaniyan. In sum, the rule of Sumra dynasty came to an end almost before 762/1361.

### **The Ismailis after Sumras**

Following the reduction of the Ismaili power in Mansurah in 416/1025, the surviving Ismailis disappeared in different safe places in India. In lower Sind, the local Ismailis emerged as the Sumra rulers in 445/1052 as discussed above, while in Punjab the Ismailis, known as the Khokars inhabiting in Hazara district and part of the district of Rawalpindi, Attock and Jehlam; also rose as a local tribal force.

Khokar, the war-like soldiers, descended from Anushirwan and Yazdigard, claimed the title of Kayani; and their eponym is said to have been one Sultan Kaygawhar (later corrupted into *Khokar*), a native of Kayan in Ispahan. According to another view, the Khokars are said to derive their name from *koh* (mountain) and *gir* (holder), because they once took an impregnable mountain fortress.

It is certain that some Ismailis of Multan had taken refuge in the territories of the Khokars and returned to their abode most probably between 525/1131 and 535/1141 and gradually they had gained a local domination. Shihabuddin Muhammad (d. 602/1206), also known as Muizzuddin, who was the real founder of the Muslim empire in India; the Ghorid ruler of Ghor and Ghazna in Afghanistan, had invaded India in 571/1175. He marched through Baluchistan and made Multan his first prey and conducted a merciless massacre of the local Ismailis and captured their stronghold. His policy can be constructed to be a continuation of the trend of rooting out the Ismailis wherever they were found in India. Khusaro Malik, the last Ghaznavid ruler in India had secured help from the Khokars and laid siege to the fort of Sialkot. In 578/1186, Shihabuddin Ghori came India and directed his attack against Lahore, and defeated Khusaro Malik. Henceforward, the Ismailis took underground shelter and some of them are reported to have fled to Iranian Gulf and Alamut. One like Indian Ismailis can be traced from the five *fidais*, who were burnt alive by the order of Jalaluddin Khwarazmshah (d. 628/1231) soon after 624/1227 in the time of Imam Alauddin Muhammad.

The Ghorid regime gave the Ismailis no respite and Shihabuddin Ghori once again spurred his horses in the region of the Khokars. The Ismaili warriors fought valiantly against their overwhelming army, commanded by Qutbuddin Aibak (d. 607/1210) and were retreated in a battle near the ford of Jehlam. Sadruddin Muhammad bin Hasan Nizami, the contemporary writer has described the above event in his "*Taj al-Ma'athir*" (comp. 626/1228) and admits that the Khokar *fidais* were deep-rooted in Ismaili faith. It is also suggested that the chiefs of Khokars, namely Bakan and Sarki were the only among the Indian Ismailis to have procured a close contact with Alamut in Iran, whose details are not accessible.

Shihabuddin Ghori returned to Ghazna in 588/1192 after charging the command of the conquered territories of India to his faithful general, Qutbuddin Aibak. The later conquered Delhi in 590/1194 and finally he founded the Slave dynasty in India in 602/1205. After his death in 607/1210, the nobles raised Aram Shah, who soon proved inefficient ruler and therefore, the nobles invited Iltutmish (d. 633/1236), the son-in-law of Qutbuddin Aibak



to ascend the throne of Delhi Sultanate. According to Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi in "**The Muslim Community in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent**" (Karachi, 1977, p. 46), "The establishment of Sunni rule in the Panjab by itself could not uproot the Ismaili doctrine, because we find the Ismaili missionaries active even when the Sultanate of Delhi had been well established."

Jalaluddin Khwarazmshah was repulsed by Chingiz Khan in 618/1211 on the banks of the Indus and has subsequently spent three years in India. He soon came to Lahore, where he was defeated by the forces of Iltumish. So he rushed forth to Sind and occupied Thatta, the main foothold of the Sumra rulers.

In 633/1235, we hear that Iltumish mounted an expedition against the Khokars and took heavy toll of lives with devastation of properties. Iltumish died on April 29, 1236. His sons were incompetent to rule. He had however an able daughter, called Razia Sultana, but the Turkish nobles opposed the succession of a woman. Iltumish's son Ruknuddin Firuz ascended the throne however with the support of the commanders, but he proved incapable. When his supporters were spoiling the power, his sister Razia Sultana made a bold bid for the throne. Clad in red, she appeared before the people gathered for Friday prayers in the cathedral mosque of Delhi, and appealed them in the name of Iltumish to give her a chance to show her worth. It evoked ready response and she became the real successor of Iltumish. She ruled for 3 years and 6 days.

### **Myth of Maulana Nur Turk**

According to Minhaj Siraj (d. 685/1286) in his "**Tabaqat-i Nasiri**" (tr. Major H.G. Raverty, Calcutta, 1881, 1st vol., pp. 646-7), "Among the events which happened in the beginning of Razia Sultana's (634-637/1236-1240) reign, the one was that the *Qarmītah* and *Mulāhida* heretics of India, incited by a person, a sort of learned man, named Nuruddin, a Turk, whom they used to style Nur Turk, collected together at Delhi, from different parts of the territory of India, such as Gujrat, Sind and the parts of Ganga. They fixed Friday, the 6th Rajab, 634/March 5, 1237 for the rising against Delhi, numbered about one thousand. They divided themselves into two parties. One party entered the grand mosque from its northern gateway, and the second party passing through drapers' market entered into the gateway of Muizzi seminary, presuming that it was the congregational mosque. From both directions, they began to slaughter the Muslims. A large number of people were killed by them, and quite a big number died in stampede. As soon as the soldiers

came to know the riot, their leaders, some well armed and horsemen entered into the mosque and put them to sword. The Muslims from the roof of the mosque pelted them with brick bats and stones."

The curious tale of Minhaj Siraj attributing the revolt of Nur Turk (d. 692/1293) should be taken with a grain of salt. The following points to this effect however deserve careful consideration:-

- a) This story contains mere one thousand persons mustered, intending to capture the throne of Delhi, which seems almost insufficient number for the incursion. However, even if this be granted, then it must be directed to the palace or fort, not at the mosque.
- b) It is difficult to believe that half of the persons, who are hown the residents of Delhi, could not distinguish between the congregational mosque and the Muizzi seminary.
- c) The story does not sufficiently establish the motives for Nur Turk's coup. He was not so naïve as to believe that the act of killing some members of *ulema* class and the members of congregation, would overthrow the rule of Razia Sultana. His reputation as a pious would have very easily escalated him to higher echelons of government, had he truly wished to seize the power.
- d) It is recounted that Razia Sultana held deep regard for Nur Turk, and once she is reported to have sent a large quantity of gold as a gift to him, but Nur Turk refused to accept it. He hit the gift with his stick in hand and said, "What is this? Take it away." It ensues from this account that Nur Turk disliked wealth or power, therefore, the alleged revolt against the Delhi Sultanate is far from the truth.
- e) The whole story contains the expression of the terms, *Qarnitah* and *Mulahida*. It is difficult to believe that Nur Turk had led them jointly.
- f) The weakness of the story can be gauged from the fact that it is not borne out by any other evidence. Granted that the *ulema* ere attacked in the mosque, it would have inflamed a hootest agitation of the Muslims at least in Delhi, which also cannot be ascertained from any trace.
- g) This story does not establish conclusively that Nur Turk was an Ismaili leader or had led the Ismailis to hatch a plot.



- h) Minhaj Siraj belonged to the *ulema* class and it was a common practice of the zealots to call *Mulahida* or *Qarmitah* to the non-Sunni Muslims while condemning them. It is evident from the story that he had a personal enmity with Nur Turk, whom he tried to slander, accusing him of leading the heretics to engineer revolt against the Delhi Sultanate.

Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya (d. 725/1325) very feelingly asserts that Nur Turk was purer than the rain water and the charges against him were maliciously cooked by Minhaj, vide "*Fawaidul Fu'ad*" (p. 199). A saint belonging to the Ismaili faith could not have been reverentially mentioned by scholars like Shaikh Amir Khurd and Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhadis as *Maulana Nur Turk*. Shaikh Abdul Haq had never included Nur Turk in his calendar of the subcontinent saints if he had been associated with Ismailism. If Nur Turk had been an Ismaili saint, Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj Shakar (d. 663/1265) would never have gone to attend his sermons.

All this evidently sounds that Nur Turk was a famous for his learning and piety in the eyes of the Muslim scholars, not in the sense that he was an Ismaili. It is therefore probable that the renowned Muslim scholars had never admired Nur Turk, had they known his leaning towards Ismailism.

A man of austere and simple ways as he was, Nur Turk did not like the habits of the *ulema* whom he found wallowing in the dirty waters of politics. He condemned them roundly for their greed of gold and glory. He opposed the *ulema* of Shafite and Hanafite, calling them *Murji* and *Nasibi*. Minhaj Siraj was chagrined on this criticism which applied to him as much as to other *ulema* and retaliated by painting him in lurid colours. He contrived a curious story that Nur Turk led the heretics and attacked the mosque, so as to arouse the Muslims against him, which sounds explicitly in the story. Hasan Sijzi, the disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya writes in "*Fawaidul Fu'ad*" (comp. 718/1318) that, "*Ulema* of Delhi had made hostile statements against Nur Turk's faith. He used to assail the *ulema* and condemn them as *Nasibi* and *Murji*. He was hostile to the *ulema* of the town because they were sunk in materialism and their enmity was responsible for their false allegations against Nur Turk."

We have observed that the Sunni *ulema* always became the target of the Sufis, because of their worldly attractions. Instead of improving themselves, they aroused the Muslims by calling them the infidels, or *Mulahida* - a common abusive term applied in their rulings. Most of the eminent Sufi Shaikh in India had been called *Mulahida* by the *ulema*, which does not

mean that they were the Ismailis. *Mulahida* or *Qarmitah* were the abusive terms for the persons who acted contrary to Islam, and not specific for the Ismailis. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami writes in "*Salatin-i Delhi'ki Mazahabi Rujatat*" (Delhi, 1958, p. 138) that, "I am inclined to believe that Maulana Minhaj Siraj has fabricated an allegation on Maulana Nur Turk being a *Mulahida*. Maulana Nur Turk used to criticise the conduct and behaviour of the *ulema* publicly of his period. Thus the *ulema* charged him as a *mulahida* in reprisal, so that he could not escalate his reputation among the Muslims."

Minhaj Siraj is the only source of information to make Nur Turk as the leader of the *Qarmitah* and *Mulahida*, impelling the modern scholars to hazard an idea that he was an Ismaili, because the Ismailis were also wrongly branded with such pejorative minomers. There is not a single contemporary trace attributing Nur Turk as an Ismaili, therefore his association with the Ismailis is highly doubtful.

Khan Bahadur Fazalullah Lutfullah in his "*Gujrat Population*" (*Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Bombay, 1899, vol., IX, part II, p. 38) tries to identify Nur Turk with that of Pir Satgur Nur, which is quite incorrect as the Indian Ismaili Pirs did never feel called upon to act as the crusaders. Dr. Mujtaba Ali writes to this effect in his "*Origin of the Khojas and their Religious life today*" (Bonn, 1936, p. 40) that, "It is also to be noted that the Ismaili missionaries never tried to obtain success by force; their method as described already was of peaceful penetration through observance of pious life. The present writer, therefore, finds no reliable argument by which Nur Turk and Nur Satgur could be considered as the same person."

If the tradition that Pir Satgur was sent by Imam Hasan II be true, it seems rather improbable that Nur Turk of Delhi was Pir Satgur. Imam Hasan II died in 561/1166 and the alleged riot of Delhi is placed in 634/1237. Taking Pir Satgur to be at least 20 years at the death of the Imam, he must have been 91 years old when he is supposed to have led the alleged riot in Delhi, and such activity can hardly be expected from an oriental of that age.

In sum, whatever the aim of Minhaj Siraj must be in applying the words *Qarmitah* or *Mulahida* for the followers of Nur Turk, it does not belong to the Ismailis in the story. It seems that Nur Turk had a following in Sind, Gujrat and at the banks of Ganges and he himself was a Sufi Shaikh. He was deadly against the *ulema*, and as a result he fell a victim to the jealousy of Minhaj Siraj. In order to discredit him in the eyes of the Muslims, a story had been put into circulation by calling him the leader of the heretics. The later historians who used to label the Ismailis with the same misnomer, had blindly



interpreted the terms, *Mulahida* and *Qarmitah* of the story of Minhaj Siraj for the Ismailis, and have painted it in gloomier colours than it merits. Nur Turk therefore was neither an Ismaili nor his association with the Ismailism, if any.



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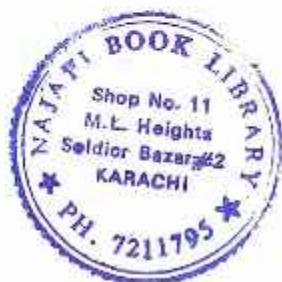
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*To make good use of life, one should have in  
youth the experience of advanced years, and  
in old age the vigour of youth (Stanislaus)*

**Wazir Kurban Ali Mohammad Ali Sadiwala** of Bombay, India is a dedicated and renowned person in the world Ismaili communities. He was born in Bhavnagar, Gujrat on November 14, 1926. His selfless services in the Ismaili community are beyond enumeration and count.

It is the matter of immense happiness that **Vazir Kurban Sadiwala** has continued his valuable services to the world Ismaili communities with the same breath and vein as a special mission, with unwavering devotion, also assisted by his sons. May God give him longer life and health to serve the community devotedly, Amen.

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*Deeds, not stones, are the true  
monuments of the great (Motley)*

**Huzur Mukhi late Mohammad Ali Bhai Jafar Poonawala** was one of the most outstanding figures in the Ismaili community of Poona, who had rendered illustrious services with distinction during his whole life. His dedicated services in establishing Religious Night School and the Diamond Jubilee School will be ever remembered. He also took leading part in many meaningful welfare projects during the time of the Aga Khan III. He is acclaimed as a loving person among the Ismailis of Poona.

His wife **late Nurbanu Bai Muhammad Ali Jafar Poonawala** had also rendered valuable services. She was famous for her piety and generosity.

May God rest the souls in eternal peace, Amen.

**Mahdi Mohammad Ali Jafar Poonawala**

**"This is a book worth reading by every scholar of the Ismailia sect of Islam under the guidance of their illustrious Imams, for their noble contribution to the history of Islam and mankind.**

**This is a book worth studying by those who wish to know about the background of the successful Ismaili movement in the politics of Islam in North Africa and Iran and elsewhere, particularly between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries.**

**The author of "*ISMAILIS through HISTORY*", Mr. Mumtaz Ali Tajddin S. Ali, deserves commendation for his efforts to bring every important event of the history in its limited space.**

**Abu Aly A. Aziz (Vancouver, Canada)  
the author of "A Brief History of Ismailism"**



