IV

THE ISMĀʿĪLITES AND THE ASSASSINS

The death of the prophet Mohammed created something in the nature of a constitutional crisis in the infant Moslem community. It was solved by the appointment of Abū-Bakr, one of the leading converts, as "deputy" (Arabic, *khalīfah*) of the prophet, and the creation, almost incidentally, of the great historic institution of the caliphate. There was at the very beginning of the caliphate a group of people who felt that ʿAlī, the son-in-law and cousin of the prophet, had a better title to the succession, some of them perhaps from legitimist scruples, most of them for the reason, far more congenial to the Arabian mind, that ʿAlī was the best man for the job. This group came to be known as the *shīʿatu ʿAlī*, the party of ʿAlī, and then simply as the *Shīʿah*. In the course of time it gave rise to the major religious schism of Islam. In its origins,

Detailed studies on the Assassins in Syria will be found in E. Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," *Fundgruben des Orients*, IV (Vienna, 1814), 339–376; C. Defrémery, "Nouvelles recherches sur les Ismaéliens ou Bathiniens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, 5th series, III (1854), 373–421, and V (1855), 5–76; S. Guyard, "Un Grand Maître des Assassins au temps de Saladin," *Journal asiatique*, 7th series, IX (1877), 324–489; B. Lewis, "The Sources for the History of the Syrian Assassins," *Speculum*, XXVII (1952), 475–489. On the parent sect in Persia see J. von Hammer, *Geschichte der Assassinen aus morgenländischen Quellen* (Stuttgart, 1818; English translation by O. C. Wood, *The History of the Assassins*, London, 1835); C. Defrémery, "Documents sur l'histoire des Ismaéliens ou Bathiniens de la Perse," *Journal asiatique*, 5th series, XV (1860), 130–210. For an annotated bibliography of works on the Ismāʿilite and Fāṭimid movements in general see J. Sauvaget, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'orient musulman* (Paris, 1943), pp. 136–139. Among the numerous writings of W. Ivanow on Ismāʿilite doctrine and history mention may be made of his article "Ismāʿīliya," *Encyclopaedia of Islām*, supplement, and his book *A Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism* (Leyden, 1952). While many Ismāʿīlite works have come to light and been published in recent years, there is very little of Syrian provenance. Some religious texts were published and translated by S. Guyard in "Fragments relatifs à la doctrine des Ismaélis," *Notices et Extraits*, XXII (1874), 177–428. A legendary and anecdotal Syrian Ismāʿīlite biography of Sinān was published, translated, and examined in S. Guyard, "Un Grand Maître...." The Arabic inscriptions of the Syrian Ismāʿīlites were edited and discussed by M. van Berchem, "Épigraphie des Assassins de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, 9th series, IX (1897), 453–501. The main sources for events in Syria are the general Arabic historical works which are examined in B. Lewis's article, cited above, in *Speculum*. Further bibliographical information, including editions, etc., will be found in C. Cahen, *La Syrie du nord à l'époque des croisades* (Paris, 1940), pp. 33–93. The whole problem of the Assassins will be treated at greater length in a book which is now being written by the author of this chapter (Bernard Lewis).

however, the Shīʿah was purely political, consisting only of the adherents of a political pretender, with no distinctive religious doctrine and no greater religious content than was inherent in the very nature of Islamic political authority.[1]

The vast expansion of the Arabs under the early caliphs brought into the Islamic fold great numbers of imperfectly Islamized converts who carried with them from their Christian, Jewish, and Iranian backgrounds many religious and mystical ideas unknown to primitive Islam. These new converts, though Moslems, were not Arabs, and the inferior social and economic status imposed on them by the ruling Arab aristocracy created a sense of grievance which made them a rich recruiting ground for messianic and revolutionary sects. The great increase in numbers among the Arabs during the first century of Islam brought important social differentiations among the conquerors, and many of the Arabs themselves, especially among the sedentarized or semi-sedentarized southern tribes, began to share the resentments of the non-Arab converts. Most of these had traditions of political and religious legitimism, the latter exemplified in the Judaeo-Christian Messiah of the house of David and the Zoroastrian *Saoshyant* of a God-begotten line through which the divine light is transmitted from generation to generation. Once converted to Islam, they were readily attracted by the claims of the house of the prophet as against the ruling caliphs, who were associated for them with the existing regime of Arab aristocratic hegemony. All new faiths need their martyrs, and the emergent Shīʿite heresy was watered with blood by the murder of ʿAlī in 661 and the dramatic slaying of his son Ḥusain and his family at Kerbela in 680.

The fusion between the pro-ʿAlid party and the nascent heresies did not take long. In 685 one Mukhtār, a Persian Moslem of the Arab garrison city of Kufa, led a revolt in favor of an ʿAlid pretender, and after the disappearance and reputed death of the latter, preached that he was not really dead but was in concealment, and would in course of time return and establish the rule of justice on earth. Here for the first time we find a clear statement of the characteristic Shīʿite doctrine of the *Mahdī*, the divinely guided one, a messianic personage who, after a period of concealment, will manifest himself and initiate a new era of righteousness and divine law. With Mukhtār and his followers Shīʿism develops from a party to a sect.

During the early years of its development the Shīʿite heresy

[1] See above, chapter III, pp. 83 ff.

was extremely fluid, both in doctrine and in organization. Innumerable pretenders appeared, claiming with varying plausibility descent from the prophet or authority from one of his descendants, and, after enriching the description of the awaited Mahdī with some new detail, followed one another into eschatological concealment. Their doctrines varied from moderate, semi-political opposition resembling that of the original pro-ʿAlids to the most extreme forms of religious heterodoxy, often reflecting gnostic, Manichaean, and even Indian ideas. In different parts of the empire vigorous local variants appeared, crystallized out of Shīʿism by the action of earlier local beliefs. The nominal leadership of the Shīʿah was transmitted from father to son through a series of ʿAlid pretenders known to their adherents as imams (Arabic singular, *imām*). These were descended from ʿAlī in several different lines. The most active in the Umaiyad period was the line of Muḥammad ibn-al-Ḥanafīyah (d. 700/701), a son of ʿAlī by a wife other than Fāṭimah. It was this group that gave rise to the ʿAbbāsid revolution and perished in the hour of its victory. More important in the long run were the imams of the line of ʿAlī and Fāṭimah, the daughter of the prophet, through their son Ḥusain (d. 680). How far the Fāṭimid pretenders of this time were themselves associated with their more extreme followers is not known. Their relative freedom from molestation by the caliphs and the frequent denunciation of the extremist leaders in the traditions of the imams suggest that the connection was not close.

The first half of the eighth century was a period of intensive activity among the extremists. Countless sects and subsects appeared, especially among the mixed population of southern Iraq and the coasts of the Persian Gulf. Their doctrines varied widely, often recalling the wilder speculations of earlier Near Eastern mysticism, and in the fluid state of the sects transition was easy and frequent from one doctrine and leader to another. The Moslem sources name many heretical leaders of the time who led revolts and were put to death, and attribute to some of them doctrines which were later characteristic of the Ismāʿīlites. One group practised the strangling of opponents with cords as a religious duty — an obvious reflection of Indian Thuggee, and a foreshadowing of the "assassinations" of later centuries.[2]

The decisive split between extremists and moderates occurred after the death in 765 of Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq, the sixth Fāṭimid imam

[2] See G. van Vloten, "Worgers in Iraq," *Feestbundel . . . aan Dr. P. J. Veth* (Leyden, 1894).

of the line of Ḥusain. Ja'far's successor by primogeniture would have been Ismā'īl. For reasons which are not quite clear, and probably because of his association with the more extreme elements, Ismā'īl was disinherited, and a large part of the Shī'ah recognized his brother Mūsâ as seventh imam. The line of Mūsâ continued until the twelfth imam, who disappeared about 873, and is still the "awaited imam" or Mahdī of the great majority of the Shī'ah at the present day. The followers of the twelve Imams, usually known as *Ithnā'asharī* or Twelver Shī'ah, represent the moderate branch of the sect. Their difference from the main body of Sunnite Islam is limited to a certain number of points of doctrine, which in recent years have become ever less significant.

Around Ismā'īl and his descendants a sect was formed which by its cohesion, organization, and intellectual maturity far outstripped its competitors. In place of the chaotic speculations of the early heresiarchs, a series of distinguished theologians elaborated a system of religious doctrine on a high philosophic level, and produced a literature that is only now beginning to achieve recognition at its true worth. Ismā'īlite doctrine is eclectic, drawing especially on Neoplatonism. Extraneous ideas were introduced into their Islam by means of the so-called *ta'wīl al-bāṭin*, esoteric interpretation, which was one of the characteristic features of the sect and gave rise to the term Bāṭinite, by which it was often known. The Koran (Arabic, *Qur'ān*) and all religious precepts were believed to bear two meanings, one literal and exoteric, the other allegoric or esoteric, and known only to the initiate. After the creation of the world by the action of the universal mind on the universal soul, human history falls into a series of cycles, each begun by a "speaking" imam, or prophet, followed by a succession of "silent" imams. There were cycles of hidden and of manifest imams, corresponding to the periods of persecution and success of the faith. The imams — in the current cycle the heirs of 'Alī through Ismā'īl — were divinely inspired and infallible, and commanded the unquestioning obedience of their followers.

The intellectual influence of Ismā'īlism on Islam was very great indeed. During the heyday of its expansion poets, philosophers, theologians, and scholars flocked to the Ismā'īlite centers and produced works of a high order. Owing to the anti-Ismā'īlite reaction that followed the fall of the Fāṭimids, most of them are preserved only among the Ismā'īlites themselves, and have only recently begun to come to light. A few works of Ismā'īlite inspiration have, however, for long been widely known, and many of

the great Arabic and Persian classical authors show at least traces of Ismāʿīlite influence. The famous "Epistles of the Sincere Brethren", an encyclopedia of religious, philosophic, and scientific knowledge compiled in the tenth century, is saturated with Ismāʿīlite thought, and exercised a profound influence on the intellectual life of Islam from Persia to Spain.

Extremist Shīʿism in its origins was, as we have seen, closely connected with the revolt of those elements which, for one reason or another, were opposed to the established order. Serious and sustained opposition to the theocratic state tended to take the form of heresy against the dominant faith. This was not because scheming men used religion as a cloak or mask for material purposes, but because, in an age when the problems of faith and worship took first place in men's minds, and when the state itself was conceived to be an instrument of the divine law, religion provided the necessary and inevitable expression, in terms of both doctrine and action, of all major differences and discontents. With its strong stress on social justice and reform, its belief in a Mahdī — no vague, eschatological figure, but a rebel leader waiting to strike and to "fill the earth with justice and equity as it is now filled with oppression and tyranny" — Ismāʿīlism appealed especially to the growing and discontented urban population. Orthodox polemicists against Ismāʿīlism made it quite clear that they regarded the menace of the sect as social no less than religious. Several orthodox sources assert that the Ismāʿīlites preached and practised communism of property and women. There is no record of this whatever in Ismāʿīlite sources, and, while perhaps true of some of the earlier extremist heresies, it is quite out of keeping with the general tenor of Ismāʿīlite thought in the developed stage. There is on the other hand strong reason for believing that the Ismāʿīlites were closely associated with the early development of the Islamic craft-guilds, which they attempted to use as an instrument of organization and propaganda.[3]

Another element ready to welcome the new preaching was the nomadic Arab tribes of Arabia and more especially of the Syrian and Mesopotamian border-lands. By the ninth century these had lost the position of power and privilege they had once held in the Islamic state, and were suffering more and more from the consequences of the establishment of Turkish military rule in the cen-

[3] See L. Massignon, articles "Ṣinf," "Shadd," in the *Encyclopaedia of Islām*, and "Guilds (Islamic)," *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences;* B. Lewis, "The Islamic Guilds," *Economic History Review*, VIII (1937), 20–37.

ters of civilization. A doctrine which impugned the legitimacy and justice of the regime that had ousted them and which gave them a rallying cry for an attack upon it, could count on their willing acceptance.

For the first century and a half of the existence of the sect the imams of the line of Ismāʿīl remained hidden, and were protected from the attention of the authorities by a series of devices. The organization of the sect was run by a hierarchy of missionaries (Arabic singular, *dāʿī*), who preached allegiance to the hidden imams and the newly elaborated doctrine and built up centers of Ismāʿīlite strength in widely separated parts of the Islamic empire. As might be expected, they achieved special success in those places, like southern Iraq, the Persian Gulf provinces, and parts of Persia, where the earlier forms of Shīʿite extremism had already won a following. At the end of the ninth century a branch of the sect known as the Qarmaṭians, or "Carmathians" — their precise relationship with the main Ismāʿīlite body is uncertain — was able to seize power in Bahrain (the Hasa coast of Arabia), establish a republic, and conduct a series of raids on the communications of the ʿAbbāsid empire. A Qarmaṭian attempt to seize power in Syria at the beginning of the tenth century failed, but the episode is significant and reveals some local support for Ismāʿīlism even at that early date.

The final success of the sect came in another quarter. An Ismāʿīlite mission in the Yemen had achieved considerable success by the end of the ninth century, and was able to send missionaries to a number of other countries, including North Africa, where they succeeded so well that in 909 the hidden imam was able to emerge from hiding and establish a Fāṭimid caliphate, challenging the ʿAbbāsids of Baghdad for supremacy in the Islamic world.[4] After a period of incubation in Tunisia, the new empire swept eastward, and in 973 al-Muʿizz, the fourth Fāṭimid caliph, established his new capital of Cairo. The Fāṭimid caliphate at its height included Egypt, Syria, the Hejaz, the Yemen, North Africa, and Sicily, and commanded the allegiance of countless followers in the eastern lands still subject to the ʿAbbāsids of Baghdad. The great college mosque of al-Azhar, founded by the Fāṭimids as the intellectual center of their faith, turned out innumerable missionaries and agents who, under the aegis of the chief daʿi, the head of the religious hierarchy in Cairo, went out to preach and to organize in Iraq, Persia, Central Asia, and India.

[4] On the Fāṭimid caliphate, see above, chapter III, pp. 85 ff.

The Fāṭimid threat to Baghdad was economic as well as religious. The European commercial connections formed by the North African caliphs were retained and extended by the rulers of Cairo. Fāṭimid control of both shores of the Red Sea and of the ports of the Yemen opened the way for Fāṭimid trade and propaganda in India, and deflected a large part of the vital Near Eastern transit trade from Persian Gulf to Red Sea ports.

The very successes of the Fāṭimids brought Ismāʿīlism its first serious internal conflicts. The needs and responsibilities of an empire and a dynasty necessarily involved some modifications in the earlier doctrine, and in the elaboration and reorganization of the Ismāʿīlite religious system that followed the establishment of the Fāṭimid caliphate, the last links with the old extremist heresies were cut. From the beginning purists were not wanting to complain against the alleged corruption of the faith. The spearhead of resistance was formed by the Qarmaṭians of Bahrain, who, after first supporting the Fāṭimids, turned against them and fought unsuccessfully against the armies of al-Muʿizz in Syria and Egypt. At a later date the Qarmaṭians seem to have returned to the Fāṭimid allegiance and the sect sank into oblivion as a separate entity.[5]

Another schism occurred after the disappearance, in obscure circumstances, of the caliph al-Ḥākim in 1021. A group of Ismāʿīlites preached the divinity and "concealment" of al-Ḥākim and, refusing to recognize his successors, seceded from the main body of the sect. The Druzes (Arabic, Durūz), as they are known, after their leader ad-Darazī, made a determined effort to win over the Ismāʿīlite sectaries in Syria, and they are still to be found in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel at the present day.[6]

It was during the long reign of the caliph al-Mustanṣir (1036 to 1094) that Ismāʿīlism suffered its greatest internal schism. The Fāṭimid empire in its heyday was administered by a civilian bureaucracy, presided over by a civilian vizir (Arabic, *wazīr*),and under the supreme control of the religious and spiritual imam. Since the death of al-Ḥākim, however, the military had been steadily increasing its power at the expense of the caliph and the civil administration. This process of transfer of the center of power was completed in 1074, when the Armenian general Badr al-Jamālī

[5] See M. J. de Goeje, *Mémoire sur les Carmathes du Bahrain et les Fatimides* (Leyden, 1886); B. Lewis, *The Origins of Ismāʿīlism* (Cambridge, 1940); W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Tradition concerning the Rise of the Fatimids* (Oxford and Bombay, 1942).

[6] On the Druzes see Silvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1838), and above, chapter III, p. 92.

came with his army from Syria to take control of affairs in Egypt. Henceforth the real ruler of Egypt was the *amīr al-juyūsh*, commander-in-chief, a military autocrat ruling through his troops, and the army was the final repository of authority in the state. Just as the ʿAbbāsid caliphs of Baghdad had become the helpless puppets of their own praetorians, so now the Fāṭimids became mere figureheads for a series of military dictators. The military domination of the emirs, some of them not even Ismāʿīlite, and the shrunken stature of the Fāṭimid caliphs were clearly incompatible with the ecumenical ambitions of the Ismāʿīlite sect and organization. Soon the world-wide ambitions of the Ismāʿīlite mission were abandoned, and the descendants of al-Muʿizz became a local Egyptian dynasty — secularized, militarized, and in decay.

Such a change inevitably awoke widespread discontent and opposition among the more active and consistent of the sectaries, the more so since it coincided with a period of extraordinary activity among the Ismāʿīlites in the newly created Selchükid empire in Asia, where, under the leadership of al-Ḥasan ibn-aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ (Persian, Ḥasan-i-Ṣabbāḥ), a veritable Ismāʿīlite renaissance was taking place. Al-Ḥasan was a Persian and, according to an old legend, a fellow student of Omar Khayyám (ʿUmar al-Khaiyām) in the academy of Nishapur. In 1078, already a prominent figure among the eastern Ismāʿīlites, he visited Cairo, where he made contact with the leaders of the sect. Between the future leader of the Assassins and the military autocrat there can have been little in common. The two men soon came into conflict, and, according to some sources, al-Ḥasan was deported from Egypt.

The replacement of Badr al-Jamālī by his son al-Afḍal made little change in the state of affairs, and when, by the death of al-Mustanṣir, al-Afḍal was confronted with the need to choose a successor, his choice was not difficult. On the one hand was Nizār, an adult, already appointed heir by al-Mustanṣir, known and accepted by the Ismāʿīlite leaders; on the other, his brother al-Mustaʿlī, a youth without allies or supporters, who would consequently be entirely dependent on al-Afḍal. It was certainly with this object in mind that al-Afḍal arranged a marriage between his own daughter and al-Mustaʿlī. In choosing al-Mustaʿlī, al-Afḍal split the sect from top to bottom, and alienated, perhaps intentionally, almost the whole of its following in the eastern lands of Islam. Even within the Fāṭimid boundaries there were movements of opposition; the eastern Ismāʿīlites, under the leadership of al-Ḥasan ibn-aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ, refused to recognize the accession of

al-Mustaʿlī, and, proclaiming their allegiance to the deposed Nizār and his line, broke off all relations with the attenuated Fāṭimid organization in Cairo. Thus the divergence between the state and the revolutionaries, the first open expression of which was the conflict between al-Muʿizz and the Qarmaṭians at the time of the conquest of Egypt, was complete. It is significant that even those Ismāʿīlites who had remained faithful to al-Mustaʿlī broke away a little later. In 1130, on the death of the caliph al-Āmir at the hands of the Assassins, the remaining Ismāʿīlites refused to recognize the new caliph in Cairo, and regarded al-Āmir's infant son Ṭaiyib as the hidden and awaited imam. The last four Fāṭimid caliphs in Cairo were not recognised as imams, and did not even themselves claim this title. The final extinction of the dynasty at the hands of Saladin can have made little difference to the Ismāʿīlites in the east.[7]

While the Mustaʿlīan branch stagnated in the remoter outposts of Islam, the Nizārites on the other hand began a period of most intensive development, both in doctrine and in political action, and for a while played a vital role in the history of the Near East.

In the eleventh century the growing internal weakness of the Islamic world was revealed by a series of invasions, the most important of which, that of the Selchükid Turks, created a new military empire from Central Asia to the Mediterranean.[8] Social upheaval in such a period of change was inevitable. The new ruling caste of Turkish soldiers replaced or subjugated the Arab and Persian landowners, traders, and bureaucrats who had been the dominating element in earlier times. The military power of the Turks was unchallengeable. But there were other methods of attack, and to the many malcontents of Selchükid Persia Ismāʿīlism, in its new form, once again brought a seductive doctrine of revolution, now associated with a new and effective strategy of attack.

[7] See C. Cahen, "Quelques chroniques anciennes rélatives aux derniers Fatimides," *Bulletin de l'institut français d'arch. or.*, XXXVII (1937), 1–27; S. M. Stern, "The Succession to the Fatimid imam al-Āmir, the Claims of the Later Fatimids to the Imamate, and the Rise of Ṭayyibī Ismailism," *Oriens*, IV (1951), 193–255. After the break with Egypt the main center of the Mustaʿlian branch was in the Yemen, where many of its followers still live. Many of the Indian Ismāʿīlites refused to accept the "reformed" Ismāʿīlism of al-Ḥasan ibn-aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ, and, reinforced from the centers in the Yemen, developed into an important community. They are known at the present day as Bohras. Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlism, often known as the "old preaching", to distinguish it from the "new preaching" of the Assassins, continued in the main doctrinal traditions of the Fāṭimid period, and it is among the Mustaʿlians of the Yemen and India that most of the Fāṭimid classics have been preserved. With the disappearance of the Mustaʿlian imams after the break with Egypt on the death of al-Āmir, the leadership of the sect passed to the hereditary chief daʿis, resident in the Yemen and later in India.

[8] On the Selchükids, see below, chapter V.

According to Ismā'īlite tradition Nizār and his son were murdered in prison in Egypt, but an infant grandson was smuggled out to Persia and there brought up by al-Ḥasan ibn-aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ to found a new line of Nizārite imams. Al-Ḥasan and his two successors in the grand-mastership of the Ismā'īlites in Persia, Kiyā Buzurg-Umīd (1124–1138) and Muḥammad (1138–1162), claimed only to be emissaries of the imam, but the fourth grand master, known as al-Ḥasan 'alâ-Dhikrihi-s-Salām (1162–1166), proclaimed himself to be the son of the infant brought from Egypt, and the first of a new cycle of open imams. Nizārite doctrine differs in some particulars from the unreformed Fāṭimid system. The esoteric element is given greater stress at the expense of the exoteric, while the imamate increased in status, under the influence of old oriental "light" beliefs. The imam is a hypostasis of the divine will, which is transferred, from father to son, through the line of imams.

Of greater significance to the outside world was the adoption by the Persian Nizārites of the procedure that has come to be known, after them, as "assassination". Murder as a religious duty was not new to extremist Shī'ism, and was practised as early as the eighth century by the strangler sects of southern Iraq. After the suppression of the stranglers by the Umaiyad authorities nothing is heard of religious as distinct from private or political murder in the Near East until the appearance of the Assassins. Here too, murder clearly has a religious, even a sacramental value. It is significant that the Assassins always used a dagger; never poison, never missiles. Some sources even speak of the grand master's consecrating the daggers of Assassins setting out on a mission. The Ismā'īlites themselves use the term *fidā'ī*, or *fidāwī*, devotee, of the actual murderer, and an interesting Ismā'īlite poem has been preserved praising their courage, loyalty, and pious devotion.[9] The use of this term for the sectaries as a whole, it may be noted in passing, is an error. The name Assassin, by which the sectaries are known in both Moslem and western sources, is now known to be a corruption of *ḥashīshī*, taker of hashish, or Indian hemp, which the sectaries were believed to use in order to induce ecstatic visions of paradise and thereby fortify themselves to face martyrdom. The stories told by Marco Polo and other eastern and western sources of the "gardens of paradise" into which the drugged devotees were introduced to receive a foretaste of the eternal bliss that awaited them after

[9] W. Ivanow, "An Ismaili Ode in Praise of Fidawis," *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, n. s., XIV (1938), 63–72.

the successful completion of their missions are not confirmed by any known Ismāʿīlite source.

The open history of the sect begins in 1090, when al-Ḥasan ibn-aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ, by a combination of force and guile, seized the castle of Alamut, in an impregnable fastness south of the Caspian, some two days' march northwest of Kazvin. The adjoining provinces of Dailam and Azerbaijan had long been centers of extremist heresy, and offered a ready recruiting ground from which al-Ḥasan formed his corps of fida'is, the fanatical and utterly devoted instruments of his war of terror against the Selchükids. The numerous Ismāʿīlite followers and sympathizers scattered through the Selchükid realms facilitated their task, and before long the Assassins were able to seize other castles in Iraq, in the neighborhood of Isfahan, and in other parts of Persia. By the end of the eleventh century al-Ḥasan commanded a network of strongholds all over Persia and Iraq, a tried and tested corps of devoted murderers, and a "fifth column" of unknown size in all the camps and cities of the enemy. In Alamut, which remained the headquarters of the sect until its capture by the Mongols in the thirteenth century, the grand master presided over a hierarchy of Assassins, propagandists, and lay brothers, and directed the policies and activities of the sect in all areas. Selchükid attempts to capture it and stamp out the menace at its source were unavailing, and soon the daggers of the faithful were claiming many victims among the generals, governors, and princes of the Selchükid states. The comprehensive nature of the Assassin threat to Islamic society was well realized by the Selchükid authorities, who took steps to protect the minds of their subjects from Ismāʿīlite sedition. In this they were in the long run more successful than in protecting the persons of their servants against the Ismāʿīlite reign of terror. In Baghdad and later in other cities great theological colleges (Arabic singular, *madrasah*) were founded, to formulate and disseminate orthodox doctrine and to counter the Ismāʿīlite propaganda that came, first from the colleges and missions of Fāṭimid Egypt, later in a more radical form from the emissaries of the Nizārites.

It was at the beginning of the twelfth century that the Persian Assassins seem to have begun to extend their activities to Syria. The terrain was favorable. Between 1070 and 1079 the Selchükids had conquered Syria, carrying with them many of the problems that had made Persia so excellent a field for Assassin propaganda. The irruption of the crusaders at the end of the century completed

the political fragmentation of the country begun by the dissensions of the Selchükid princes. Among the native population of the country extremist Shī'ism already had a hold. Since the fall of the Umaiyads and the transfer of the capital to Iraq, Syria had been a discontented province, unreconciled to its loss of metropolitan status, severed by mutual distrust from the government in the east. The first Shī'ite pretender appeared in Syria only a few years after the fall of the Umaiyads, and by the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth the hidden imams of the Ismā'īlites could count on sufficient local support to make Syria the seat of their secret headquarters and the scene of their first bid for power. The spread of the Fāṭimid empire eastwards from North Africa brought Syria under intermittent Ismā'īlite rule in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, and opened the country to the free dissemination of Ismā'īlite propaganda. Here and there were sects which, though not actually Ismā'īlite, were near enough to Ismā'īlism in outlook to encourage the emissaries of Alamut. The Druzes in Mount Lebanon had only recently broken away from the main body, and had not yet developed that ossified exclusiveness that distinguished them in later times. The Nuṣairīs, an offshoot of the Twelver Shī'ah, much influenced by extremist doctrine, were powerful in the hill-country east and northeast of Latakia, and perhaps also in Tiberias and the Jordan district. The ignominious weakness of the Fāṭimid state under the successors of al-Mustanṣir would incline many Ismā'īlites in Syria, threatened by both Turks and crusaders, to transfer their allegiance to the more active branch. Even among the Turkoman tribes migrating into Syria there were many who had been affected by extremist Shī'ite propaganda in the east. Some of the Shī'ites in Syria remained faithful to their old several allegiances. Many, if not the majority, rallied to the Assassin emissaries, who seemed to offer the only effective challenge to the invaders and rulers of the country.[10]

The first Assassin leader in Syria of whom we hear is the personage known as al-Ḥakīm al-Munajjim, "the physician-astrologer," who appeared in Aleppo at the beginning of the twelfth century. Aleppo was a city with an important Shī'ite population, and was conveniently near to the Shī'ite strongholds in the Jabal as-Summāq and Jabal Bahrā'. Its ruler, the Selchükid prince Riḍvan, was disposed to favor the sectaries, possibly in the hope of win-

[10] Ivanow, *Ismaili Tradition concerning the Rise of the Fatimids*, pp. 158ff.; Keuprulu [Köprülü] Zadé Mehmed Fuad, *Les Origines du Bektachisme* (Paris, 1926), *passim*.

ning support among the Shīʿites, more probably in the hope of compensating for his military weakness as against his rivals in Syria. A few years earlier Riḍvan had not scrupled to proclaim Fāṭimid allegiance for a short time when it suited him, and then to return as easily to political orthodoxy. In the lax religious atmosphere of the time, he had no hesitation in supporting even the Assassins when it seemed politically expedient. Riḍvan allowed the Assassins full freedom in the practice and propagation of their religion. Of special importance was the opportunity to establish a *dār ad-daʿwah*, "house of propaganda," and to use the city as a base for further activities. That Riḍvan, as some sources suggest, himself inclined to Ismāʿīlism is uncertain and on the whole unlikely.

Riḍvan's policy paid quick dividends. On May 1, 1103, Janāḥ-ad-Daulah, the ruler of Homs and a rival of Riḍvan, was stabbed to death by three Persians in the great mosque. The assassins, who were dressed as sufis (Arabic singular, *ṣūfī*), acted on a signal from a shaikh who accompanied them. A number of Janāḥ's officers were killed with him and, significantly, most of the Turks in Homs fled to Damascus. The assassins themselves were killed. Most sources agree that the murder was instigated by Riḍvan.[11]

Two or three weeks after the murder of Janāḥ-ad-Daulah, the physician-astrologer himself died, and was succeeded in the leadership of the Syrian Assassins by another Persian, abū-Ṭāhir aṣ-Ṣāʾigh, the goldsmith. From that time until the accession of the famous Rāshid-ad-Dīn Sinān in, or shortly after, 1162,[12] the main efforts of the Syrian mission were directed to the seizure and consolidation of castles in country inhabited by sympathetic populations, to be used after the Persian model. The leaders as far as they are known to us were all Persians, sent from Alamut and operating under the orders of al-Ḥasan ibn-aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ and his successors. The endeavor to win strongholds falls into three main campaigns. The first, conducted from Aleppo and directed by abū-Ṭāhir, was concentrated on the Jabal as-Summāq and ended with the death of abū-Ṭāhir in 1113 and the reaction against the Ismāʿīlites in Aleppo after the death of Riḍvan. The second, conducted from Damascus by the chief daʿis Bahrām and Ismāʿīl al-ʿAjamī, was aimed at Banyas and the Wādī-t-Taim, and ended in

[11] Lewis, "The Sources for the History of the Syrian Assassins," pp. 485–486, and "Three Biographies from Kamal ad-Din," *Mélanges Köprülü* (Ankara, 1953), pp. 325–326, 329–332. Cf. Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, III, 377.

[12] Guyard, "Un Grand Maître," p. 35 (cited from a reprint); Lewis, "Three Biographies," p. 328.

failure and death by 1130. The third, conducted from unknown bases by a number of chiefs of whom only a few are known by name, succeeded between 1132 and 1151 in winning and consolidating a group of strongholds in the Jabal Bahrā' (now called the Jabal Anṣārīyah after its Nuṣairī population).

The population of the Jabal as-Summāq had long been affected by Ismā'īlism and related doctrines. The hidden imam had stayed there for a while in the late ninth century, and in 1036/1037 al-Muqtanâ, the Druze missionary, addressed a special epistle to the Ismā'īlites of that area exhorting them to join the Druzes. He asked them to draw up lists of reliable men and to meet secretly in various places in groups of from seven to nine men.[13] From the beginning the emissaries of Alamut seem to have been able to call on local support in Sarmīn and other places, and may even have controlled a few localities. At an unknown date they seized Kafarlāthā, which however they lost to Tancred, prince of Antioch, by 1110.[14] The first documented attempt came in 1106, in Apamea. Its ruler, Khalaf ibn-Mulā'ib, had been expelled from Homs by the Turks in 1092, and had sought refuge in Egypt. When a request for a ruler came to Cairo from the Ismā'īlite inhabitants of Apamea, Khalaf was sent to take over as Fāṭimid representative. In 1096 he seized the town from Riḍvan and embarked on a career of brigandage. Though a Shī'ite and presumably an Ismā'īlite, Khalaf was apparently unwilling to throw in his lot with the Assassins, and on February 3, 1106, he was killed by emissaries acting under the orders of abū-Ṭāhir in Aleppo. These were assisted by an Assassin from Sarmīn residing in Apamea, called abū-l-Fatḥ.[15] After the murder and the seizure of the citadel and town abū-Ṭāhir himself arrived to take charge, nominally on behalf of his patron Riḍvan. But this attempt, despite its promising start, did not succeed. Tancred, who had already occupied much of the surrounding country, now attacked Apamea, possibly at the request of the Christian population, who feared Assassin rule. After a first inconclusive siege, he returned and in September received the capitulation of the town. Abū-l-Fatḥ was put to death by torture, while abū-Ṭāhir ransomed himself from captivity and returned to Aleppo.[16]

[13] De Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes*, I, dviii. The text is in MS. Marsh, 221 (Bodl.), folios 179–180.

[14] Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, III, 387; Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," *Fundgruben des Orients*, IV, 342.

[15] This is a more probable reading than the form abū-l-Qinj given by some sources.

[16] Lewis, "Three Biographies," pp. 326, 329, 332–336; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, III, 380–384; Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," *op. cit.*, p. 342. On Tancred, see below, chapter XII, p. 392.

Another attempt was made in 1113/1114, to seize Shaizar from its holders, the Banū-Munqidh, by a group of Assassins from Apamea, Sarmīn, Maʿarrat-an-Nuʿmān, and Maʿarrat-Miṣrīn. After an initially successful surprise attack the men of Shaizar recovered, and were able to defeat and exterminate the attackers.[17]

In the same year, 1113, the Syrian Assassins achieved their most ambitious coup to date — the murder in Damascus of Maudūd, the Selchükid emir of Mosul and commander of the eastern expeditionary force to Syria. Most sources are agreed that the Assassins performed the deed. Contemporary gossip, as recorded by Ibn-al-Athīr and William of Tyre, suggests that Tughtigin, the regent (Turkish, *atabeg*) of Damascus, had a hand in it. Along with the other independent Moslem rulers of Syria, Tughtigin might well have feared an increase in Selchükid power and influence among them, and his later dealings with the daʿi Bahrām show that he did not disdain such allies. But Maudūd's position as commander of an eastern Selchükid army would alone have sufficed to mark him down as a dangerous enemy of the Assassins, and in this respect it is significant that the Assassins of Aleppo rallied to the support of Riḍvan when, in 1111, he closed the gates of Aleppo against Maudūd and his army.[18]

The danger to the Assassins of eastern Selchükid influence became clear after the death of their patron Riḍvan on December 10, 1113. Assassin activities in Aleppo had made them increasingly unpopular with both the Sunnite and the moderate Shīʿite townsmen, and in 1111 an unsuccessful attempt on the life of one abū-Ḥarb ʿĪsâ ibn-Zaid, a rich Persian from Transoxiana and a declared anti-Ismāʿīlite, was followed by a popular outburst against the sectaries. After Riḍvan's death the storm burst. His son Alp Arslan at first followed his father's policy, even ceding them a

[17] Ibn-al-Qalānisī, *Dhail taʾrīkh Dimashq* [*Continuation of History of Damascus*] (ed. H. F. Amedroz, Leyden, 1908), pp. 190–191 (extracts tr. H. A. R. Gibb, *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*, London, 1932, pp. 147–148); Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, III, 395–397 (based on Ibn-al-Athīr). Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," p. 348, following Ibn-al-Furāt, puts this ten years later.

[18] Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, III, 389–391; C. Cahen, *La Syrie du nord*, p. 267; Ibn-al-Qalānisī, p. 187 (tr. Gibb, pp. 140–141); al-ʿAẓīmī, *Taʾrīkh*, (ed. C. Cahen, "La Chronique abrégée d'al-ʿAẓīmī," *Journal asiatique*, CCXXX [1938]), p. 382; anonymous, *Bustān al-jāmiʿ* (ed. C. Cahen, "Une Chronique syrienne du VIe–XIIe siècle: le Bustān al-Jāmiʿ," *Bulletin d'études orientales de l'institut français de Damas*, VII–VIII [1937–1938]), p. 117; Ibn-al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil fī-t-taʾrīkh* (ed. C. J. Tornberg, *Chronicon*, 14 vols., Leyden-Upsala, 1851–1876), X, 347–348; *Taʾrīkh ad-daulah al-atābakīyah mulūk al-Mauṣil* (*RHC, Or.*, II, part. 2; cited as *Atābeks*), p. 36; Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī, *Mirʾāt az-zamān* (ed. J. R. Jewett, Chicago, 1907), p. 31 (*RHC, Or.*, III, 551); Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography* (ed. and tr. E. A. W. Budge, 2 vols., Oxford, 1932), p. 246; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* (ed. and tr. J. B. Chabot, 4 vols., Paris, 1899–1910), III, 216; William of Tyre, XI, 20. On the episode at Aleppo see Ibn-al-Qalānisī, pp. 159–160.

castle outside Bālis on the Aleppo-Baghdad road. But the reaction soon came. Kamāl-ad-Dīn, the historian of Aleppo, tells of a letter from the Selchükid sultan Muḥammad to Alp Arslan warning him of the Assassin danger and urging him to make a clean sweep. The main initiative in Aleppo came from Ṣā'id ibn-Badī', the prefect (Arabic, *ra'īs*) of the city and commander of the militia, who adopted a series of vigorous measures. Abū-Ṭāhir and other leaders were put to death, and about two hundred of their followers killed or imprisoned. A number escaped and fled to various parts, including, according to Ibn-al-Qalānisī, the lands of the Franks. Ḥusām-ad-Dīn ibn-Dumlāj, who commanded the Ismā'īlite levies in Aleppo, fled to Raqqa and died there, while his henchman Ibrāhīm al-'Ajamī (the Persian), who had held the castle of Bālis in the Ismā'īlite interest, fled to Shaizar.[19]

Despite this setback, and their failure to secure a permanent castle-stronghold so far, the Persian Ismā'īlite mission had not done too badly during the tenure of office of abū-Ṭāhir. They had made contacts with local sympathizers, winning to the Assassin allegiance Ismā'īlites of other branches and extremist Shī'ites of the various local Syrian sects. They could count on important local support in the Jabal as-Summāq, the Jazr, and the Banū-'Ulaim country — that is, in the strategically significant territory between Shaizar and Sarmīn. They had formed nuclei of support in other places in Syria, and especially along their line of communication eastwards to Alamut. The Euphrates districts east of Aleppo are known as centers of extremist Shī'ism in both earlier and later periods, and although there is no direct evidence for these years, one may be certain that abū-Ṭāhir did not neglect his opportunities.

Even in Aleppo itself the Assassins, albeit weakened, held on for a while. In 1119 their arch-enemy Ṣā'id ibn-Badī' was expelled from the city by the shiftless Alp Arslan, and fled to Il-Ghāzī in Mardin, to beg him to return to Aleppo. On his way he was attacked by two Assassins at Qal'at Ja'bar (Dausar), on the Euphrates, and killed, together with his two sons.[20] In the following year they were again strong enough in Aleppo to demand the small

[19] Ibn-al-Qalānisī, pp. 189–190 (tr. Gibb, pp. 145–146); Ibn-al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, 349 (*RHC, Or.*, I, 291); Ibn-ash-Shiḥnah, *Ad-durr al-muntakhab fī ta'rīkh mamlakat Ḥalab* (ed. J. Sauvaget, *Les Perles choisies*, Beirut, 1933), p. 27; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, III, 387–395; Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," *op. cit.*, pp. 342–343; Cahen, *La Syrie du nord*, p. 268.

[20] Kamāl-ad-Dīn, *Zubdat al-ḥalab fī ta'rīkh Ḥalab* (*RHC, Or.*, III), p. 616; al-'Aẓīmī, p. 386; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, III, 398–399; Quatremère, *op. cit.*, pp. 345–346.

citadel (Qalʿat ash-Sharīf) from Il-Ghāzī. He, unwilling to cede it to them and afraid to refuse, resorted to the subterfuge of having it hastily demolished and then pretending to have ordered this just previously. Ibn-al-Khashshāb, who conducted the demolition, was "assassinated" in 1125.[21] The end of Ismāʿīlite power in Aleppo seems to have come in 1124, when Belek, having seized the city, arrested the agent of Bahrām, the chief daʿi, and ordered the expulsion of the sectaries, who sold up their property and departed. In the following year the Ismāʿīlites of Amida (Diyarbakr) were set upon by the local population and several hundred of them killed.[22]

In 1124 it was the agent of the chief daʿi, and not the chief daʿi himself, who was arrested as leader of the Assassins in Aleppo. After the death of abū-Ṭāhir the chief daʿis no longer resided in that city. His successor, Bahrām, transferred the main activities of the sect to the south, and was soon playing an active part in the affairs of Damascus. Like his predecessors, Bahrām was a Persian, the nephew of an Assassin leader executed in Baghdad in 1101 by order of the Selchükid sultan Berkyaruk. He fled to Syria, and appears to have succeeded to the headship of the sectaries after the debacle in Aleppo in 1113. For a while, in the words of Ibn-al-Qalānisī, "he lived in extreme concealment and secrecy, and continually disguised himself, so that he moved from city to city and castle to castle without anyone being aware of his identity."[23] He almost certainly had a hand in the assassination of Aksungur al-Bursukī in Mosul on November 26, 1126. Al-Bundārī, the chronicler of the Selchükids, suggests that the assassination was arranged by Qiwām-ad-Dīn Nāṣir ibn-ʿAlī ad-Dargazīnī, the vizir of the Selchükid sultan and a secret Ismāʿīlite. Some at least of the murderers came from Syria. Ibn-al-Athīr mentions Sarmīn as their place of origin, while Kamāl-ad-Dīn tells an interesting story of a youth from Kafr Nāṣiḥ, in the neighborhood of ʿAzāz, who was the sole survivor of the expedition. On his return home in safety his aged mother, who had previously rejoiced on hearing of his mission, was unhappy and ashamed at his survival. The death of al-Bursukī freed the Assassins from a redoubtable enemy.[24]

[21] Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, III, 399–401; Quatremère, *op. cit.*, p. 346; Cahen, *La Syrie du nord*, pp. 347–348.

[22] Kamāl-ad-Dīn (*RHC, Or.*, III), p. 640; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, III, 408; Quatremère, *op. cit.*, pp. 348–349. On the massacre in Amida, see Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī (ed. Jewett), p. 69. See also Ibn-al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, 441; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, III, 405; Cahen, *La Syrie du nord*, p. 348, note 2.

[23] Ibn-al-Qalānisī, p. 215 (tr. Gibb, pp. 179–180).

[24] Ibn-al-Qalānisī, p. 214 (tr. Gibb, p. 177): al-ʿAẓīmī, p. 397; Kamāl-ad-Dīn (*RHC, Or.*, III), pp. 654–656; Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī (ed. Jewett), p. 71, with the date A. H. 519; Ibn-al-

As early as 1126 Assassin militia from Homs and other places joined the troops of Tughtigin in an unsuccessful attack on the Franks. Towards the end of 1126 Bahrām appeared openly in Damascus with a letter of recommendation from Il-Ghāzī. He was received with honor and given protection, and soon acquired a position of power in the city. In pursuance of the usual Assassin policy he sought to obtain a castle which he could fortify as a stronghold, and the atabeg Tughtigin ceded him the frontier-fortress of Banyas. Even in the city itself the Ismā'īlites received a building as headquarters, variously described as a "palace" and a "house of propaganda". Ibn-al-Qalānisī, the chronicler of Damascus, places the main blame for these events on the vizir abū-'Alī Ṭāhir ibn-Sa'd al-Mazdagānī who, though not himself an Ismā'īlite, was the willing agent of their plans and the evil influence behind Tughtigin's compliance. Tughtigin, though strongly disapproving of these proceedings, tolerated them for tactical reasons and bided his time until an opportunity offered to strike against the Assassins. Ibn-al-Athīr on the other hand, while recognizing the role of the vizir, places the blame squarely on Tughtigin, and attributes his action in large measure to the influence of Il-Ghāzī, with whom Bahrām had established relations while still in Aleppo.

In Banyas Bahrām rebuilt and fortified the castle, and embarked on a course of military and propagandist action in the surrounding country. "In all directions," says Ibn-al-Qalānisī, "he dispatched his missionaries, who enticed a great multitude of the ignorant folk of the provinces and foolish peasantry from the villages and the rabble and scum. . . ." From Banyas, Bahrām and his followers raided extensively, and may have captured some other places. But they soon came to grief. The Wādī-t-Taim, in the region of Ḥāṣbaiyā, was inhabited by a mixed population of Druzes, Nuṣairīs, and other heretics, who seemed to offer a favorable terrain for Assassin expansion. Baraq ibn-Jandal, one of the chiefs of the area, was captured and put to death by treachery, and shortly afterwards Bahrām and his forces set out to occupy the Wādī. There they encountered vigorous resistance from Ḍaḥḥāk ibn-Jandal, the dead man's brother and sworn avenger.

Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, 446–447 (*RHC, Or.*, I, 364); *Atābeks*, p. 58; *Bustān* (ed. Cahen), p. 120; *Anonymous Syriac Chronicle*, in *Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium, Scriptores Syri*, series III, vol. XV; tr. A. S. Tritton with notes by H. A. R. Gibb, "The First and Second Crusade from an Anonymous Syriac Chronicle," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1933, pp. 69–101, 273–305; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, III, 408–411; Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," p. 351; Cahen, *La Syrie du nord*, p. 304.

In a sharp engagement the Assassins were defeated and Bahrām himself was killed.[25]

Bahrām was succeeded in the command of Banyas by another Persian, Ismāʿīl, who carried on his policies and activities. The vizir al-Mazdagānī continued his support. But soon the end came. The death of Tughtigin in 1128 was followed by an anti-Ismāʿīlite reaction similar to that which followed the death of Rîdvan in Aleppo. Here too the initiative came from the prefect of the city, Mufarrij ibn-al-Ḥasan ibn-aṣ-Ṣūfī, a zealous opponent of the sectaries and an enemy of the vizir. Spurred on by the prefect, as well as by the military governor Yūsuf ibn-Fīrūz, Böri, the son and heir of Tughtigin, prepared the blow. On Wednesday, September 4, 1129, he struck. The vizir was murdered by his orders at the levée, and his head cut off and publicly exposed. As the news spread, the town militia and the mob turned on the Assassins, killing and pillaging. "By the next morning the quarters and streets of the city were cleared of the Bāṭinites and the dogs were yelping and quarrelling over their limbs and corpses." Among the victims was a freedman called Shādhī, a disciple of abū-Ṭāhir and, according to Ibn-al-Qalānisī, the root of all the trouble. The number of Assassins killed in this outbreak is put at 6,000 by Ibn-al-Athīr, 10,000 by Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī, and 20,000 by the author of the *Bustān*. In Banyas Ismāʿīl, realizing that his position was untenable, surrendered the fortress to the Franks and fled to the Frankish territories. He died at the beginning of 1130. Ibn-al-Athīr's story of a plot by the vizir and the Assassins to surrender Damascus to the Franks is not confirmed by other sources, and is probably an invention of hostile gossip.[26]

Böri and his coadjutors took elaborate precautions to protect themselves against the vengeance of the Assassins, wearing armor and surrounding themselves with heavily armed guards; but without avail. The Syrian mission seems to have been temporarily disorganized, and it was from the center of the sect in Alamut that

[25] Ibn-al-Qalānisī, pp. 215, 221–222 (tr. Gibb, pp. 179–180, 187–191); Ibn-al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, 445–446, 461–462 (*RHC, Or.*, I, 366–368, 383–384); al-ʿAẓīmī, pp. 397, 400–401; *Bustān*, pp. 120–121; Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī, p. 72; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* (ed. J. B. Chabot, 4 vols., Paris, 1899–1910), III, 239–240; *Anonymous Syriac Chronicle*, tr. A. S. Tritton, pp. 98–99; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, p. 411; Quatremère, *op. cit.*, pp. 348 to 351; Cahen, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

[26] Ibn-al-Qalānisī, pp. 223–224 (tr. Gibb, pp. 192–194); Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī, p. 80 (abridged in *RHC, Or.*, III, 567); Ibn-al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, 461–463 (*RHC, Or.*, I, 384–385); *Bustān*, p. 121; William of Tyre, XIV, 19; Bar Hebraeus, p. 254; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, III, 413–414; Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," pp. 350–351; Cahen, *La Syrie du nord*, p. 348. On the surrender of Banyas and the plot concerning Damascus, see below, chapter XIII, p. 430.

the blow was struck. On May 7, 1131, two Persians, who, disguised as Turkish soldiers, had entered the service of Böri, struck him down. The assassins were at once hacked to pieces by the guards, but Böri himself died of his wounds in the following year. Despite this successful coup the Assassins never recovered their position in Damascus, and indeed, in so rigidly orthodox a city, can have had but little hope of doing so.[27]

During this period the Assassins were fighting another enemy besides the Turks. The supporters of the Nizārite line of imams had not yet given up hope of installing their own candidate in place of the, to them, usurping Fāṭimid caliph in Cairo. During the first half of the twelfth century more than one pro-Nizārite revolt broke out and was suppressed in Egypt, and the government in Cairo devoted much attention to countering Nizārite propaganda among their subjects. The caliph al-Āmir issued a special rescript defending the claims of his own line to the succession and refuting the Nizārite case. In an interesting appendix to this document the story is told how, when the Fāṭimid emissary read it to the Assassins of Damascus, it caused an uproar and so impressed one of them that he forwarded it to his chief, who added a refutation in the blank space at the end. The Nizārite read this refutation to a Fāṭimid meeting in Damascus. The Fāṭimid emissary asked the caliph's aid in answering it, and received a further statement of the Musta'līan arguments. These events may be connected with the murder by an Assassin in Damascus in 1120 of a man alleged to have been spying on the Assassins for the Fāṭimid government.[28]

The Assassins also used stronger and more characteristic arguments against their Fāṭimid rivals. In 1121 al-Afḍal, the commander-in-chief in Egypt and the man primarily responsible for the dispossession of Nizār, was murdered. Though Ibn-al-Qalānisī dismisses the attribution of this crime to the Assassins as "empty pretense and insubstantial calumny", and lays the blame on al-Āmir's resentment of al-Afḍal's tutelage, it is not impossible that the Assassins were involved in a murder so much to their advantage. There is no doubt at all about the murder of al-Āmir himself in 1130, by ten Assassins in Cairo. His hatred of the

[27] Ibn-al-Qalānisī, p. 230 (tr. Gibb, pp. 202–204); Ibn-al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, 471–472; Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī, p. 83; al-'Aẓīmī, p. 404; *Bustān*, p. 122; *Anonymous Syriac Chronicle*, p. 273; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, III, 240; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, III, 416; Quatremère, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

[28] S. M. Stern, "The Epistle of the Fatimid Caliph al-Āmir," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1950, pp. 20–31. Cf. Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, III, 402–403; Quatremère, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

Nizārites was natural and well-known, and it is related that after the death of Bahrām, his head, hands, and ring were taken by a native of the Wādī-t-Taim to Cairo, where the bearer received rewards and a robe of honor.[29]

Little is known of Assassin relations with the Franks in this period. Stories in later Moslem sources of Ismāʿīlite collaboration with the enemy are probably a reflection of the mentality of a later age, when the holy war for Islam filled the minds of most Near Eastern Moslems. At this time, the most that can be said is that the Assassins shared the general indifference of Moslem Syria to religious divisions. No Frankish victims to the daggers of the fida'is are known, but on at least two occasions Assassin forces came into conflict with the crusading armies. On the other hand, Assassin refugees from both Aleppo and Banyas sought refuge in Frankish lands. The surrender of Banyas to Frankish rather than Moslem rulers, when it had to be abandoned, was in all probability merely a matter of geography.

The next twenty years are taken up with the third, and successful, attempt of the Assassins to secure fortress-bases in Syria, this time in the Jabal Bahrā', just to the northwest of the scene of their first endeavor, in the Jabal as-Summāq. Their establishment followed an unsuccessful attempt by the Franks to win control of the area. In 1132/1133 Saif-al-Mulk ibn-ʿAmrūn, lord of al-Kahf, sold the mountain fortress of al-Qadmūs, recovered from the Franks in the previous year, to the Assassins. A few years later his son Mūsâ ceded them al-Kahf itself in the course of a struggle with his cousins for the succession. In 1136/1137 the Frankish garrison in Kharībah was dislodged by a group of Assassins, who succeeded in regaining control after being temporarily dislodged by Ibn-Ṣalāḥ, the governor of Hamah. Maṣyāf, the most important of the Assassins' strongholds, was captured in 1140/1141 from Sungur, a governor appointed by the Banū-Munqidh, who had purchased the castle in 1127/1128. The other Assassin castles of al-Khawābī, ar-Ruṣāfah, al-Qulaiʿah, and al-Manīqah were all probably acquired about the same period, though little is known of the date or manner of their acquisition.[30]

[29] On the murder of al-Afḍal, see Ibn-al-Qalānisī, p. 203 (tr. Gibb, p. 163); Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī, p. 64; Ibn-al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, 416; Ibn-Muyassar, *Akhbār Miṣr* (ed. H. Massé, *Annales d'Égypte*, Cairo, 1919), p. 63; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, III, 403–405. On that of al-Āmir, see al-Maqrīzī, *Al-khiṭaṭ* (2 vols., Būlāq, 1853/1854), II, 182; *Ittiʿāẓ al-ḥunafā'*, MS. Saray 3013, Istanbul (ed. Jamāl-ad-Dīn ash-Shaiyāl, Cairo, 1948), folio 132a of MS; Ibn-Ḥammād, *Akhbār mulūk Banī-ʿUbaid* (ed. and tr. M. Vonderheyden, Algiers and Paris, 1927), pp. 60, 92; Ibn-Muyassar, p. 72; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, III, 415–416.

[30] Cahen, *La Syrie du nord*, pp. 353–354, where the main sources are reviewed.

During this period of quiet consolidation, the Assassins made little impression on the outside world, and in consequence little is heard of them in the historians. Very few of their names are known. The purchaser of al-Qadmūs is named as abū-l-Fatḥ, the last chief da'i before Sinān as abū-Muḥammad. A Kurdish Assassin leader called 'Alī ibn-Wafā' coöperated with Raymond of Antioch in his campaign against Nūr-ad-Dīn, and perished with him on the battlefield of Inab in 1149. Only two assassinations are recorded in these years. In 1149 Ḍaḥḥāk ibn-Jandal, the chief of the Wādī-t-Taim, suffered the vengeance of the Assassins for his successful resistance to Bahrām in 1128.[31] A year or two later they murdered count Raymond II of Tripoli, at the gates of that city — their first Frankish victim.[32]

Of the general policy of the Assassins in these years only the broadest outlines can be seen. To Zengi and his house they could feel only hostility. The Turkish rulers of Mosul had always been the most powerful of the atabegs. Lying across the Assassin line of communication with the Persian centers and in friendly relations with the Selchükid rulers of the east, they offered a constant threat to the position of the Assassins, aggravated by their recurrent tendency to spread into Syria. Maudūd and al-Bursukī had already been assassinated. The Zengids were more than once threatened. After the Zengid occupation of Aleppo in 1128 the danger to the Ismā'īlites became more direct. In 1148 we find Nūr-ad-Dīn abolishing the Shī'ite formulae used hitherto in the call to prayer in Aleppo.[33] This step, which aroused intense but ineffectual resentment among the Ismā'īlites and other Shī'ites in the city, amounted to an open declaration of war against the heretics. In the circumstances it is not surprising to find an Assassin contingent fighting beside Raymond of Antioch, the only leader in Syria at the time who could offer effective resistance to the Zengids.

Meanwhile the greatest of all the Assassin chiefs of Syria had taken command. Sinān ibn-Salmān ibn-Muḥammad, surnamed Rāshid-ad-Dīn, was a native of 'Aqr as-Sudan, a village near Basra, on the road to Wāsiṭ. He is variously described as an alchemist, a schoolmaster, and, on his own authority, as the son of one

[31] Ibn-al-Qalānisī, p. 303. On Raymond of Antioch, see below, chapter XVII, p. 533.

[32] Ibn-al-Furāt, *Ta'rīkh ad-duwal wa-l-mulūk* (vols. VII–IX ed. C. K. Zurayk, 4 vols., Beirut, 1936–1942), VIII, 79; William of Tyre, XVII, 19; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, III, 421; Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," pp. 352ff. On Raymond II, see below, chapter XVII, p. 535, where the assassination is dated 1152.

[33] Ibn-al-Qalānisī, p. 301. On Zengi and Nūr-ad-Dīn, see below, chapters XIV and XVI.

of the leading citizens of Basra. An early interest in extremist Shīʿism led to his abrupt departure from home, and a sojourn in Alamut, where he was well received by the grand master Kiyā Muḥammad, and well indoctrinated with Ismāʿīlite theology and philosophy. After Kiyā Muḥammad's death in 1162, his successor sent Sinān to Syria as delegate of Alamut. A historian quoted by Kamāl-ad-Dīn reports a contemporary's description of a visit to Sinān, and a conversation with him, in the course of which Sinān is quoted as giving this account of his journey to Syria: "He [the grand master] 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 comrades 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 to al-Kahf, where I was ordered to stay. I stayed there until Shaikh abū-Muḥammad, who was in command, died in the mountains." Sinān then describes a dispute as to the succession, and his own eventual accession by order of Alamut. The main points of this narrative are confirmed by other sources, and amplified by the Ismāʿīlite biography of Sinān, which gives his period of waiting at al-Kahf as seven years.[34]

Once established, Sinān's first task was to consolidate his new realm. He rebuilt the fortresses of ar-Ruṣāfah and al-Khawābī, and rounded off his territory by capturing al-ʿUllaiqah by means of a stratagem and refortifying it. According to a narrative reproduced by Kamāl-ad-Dīn, the grand master of Alamut feared his power and independence, and sent a number of emissaries to kill him, all of whom were foiled by the watchfulness of Sinān. This has been taken to mean that Sinān, alone among the Syrian Assassin leaders, threw off the authority of Alamut and pursued an entirely independent policy. For this view there is some support in the doctrinal fragments bearing his name, preserved into modern times among the Syrian Ismāʿīlites. These make no reference to Alamut, its grand masters, or its Nizārite imams, but acclaim Sinān himself as supreme leader and incarnation of divinity. This claim is also mentioned by Syrian Moslem sources and by the Spanish Arab traveller Ibn-Jubair, who visited the area in 1184/1185. Some of his followers went too far even for

[34] On Sinān see Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, V, 5ff.; Guyard, "Un Grand Maître;" Ivanow, "Rāshid ad-Dīn Sinān," *Encyclopaedia of Islām*; Lewis "Three Biographies," pp. 327–328, 336–344.

Sinān. In 1176/1177, says Kamāl-ad-Dīn, the people of the Jabal as-Summāq, declaring that Sinān was their God, "abandoned themselves to all kinds of debauchery and iniquity. Calling themselves 'the Pure', men and women mixed in drinking sessions, no man abstained from his sister or daughter, and the women wore men's clothes. One of them stated that Sinān was his God." Al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ sent the army of Aleppo against them, and they took to the mountains, where they fortified themselves. Sinān, after making an inquiry, disclaimed responsibility, and, persuading the Aleppans to withdraw, himself attacked and destroyed them. Other sources speak of similar groups of ecstatics in these years.[35]

Our information about the policies of the Assassins under Sinān deals principally with a series of specific events in which they were involved: the two attempts on the life of Saladin (Ṣalāḥ-ad-Dīn), followed by his inconclusive attack on Maṣyāf; the murder of Ibn-al-'Ajamī in Aleppo; the fire in Aleppo; and the murder of Conrad of Montferrat. Apart from this there are only vague accounts of threatening letters to Nūr-ad-Dīn and Saladin, and a reference by Benjamin of Tudela, in 1167, to a state of war between the Assassins and the county of Tripoli. The rise of Saladin as the architect of Moslem unity and orthodoxy and the champion of the holy war (Arabic, *jihād*) won him at first the position of chief enemy of the Assassins, and inevitably inclined them to look more favorably on the Zengids of Mosul and Aleppo, now his chief opponents. In letters written to the caliph in Baghdad in 1181/1182, Saladin accuses the rulers of Mosul of being in league with the heretical Assassins and using their mediation with the infidel Franks. He speaks of their promising the Assassins castles, lands, and a house of propaganda in Aleppo, and of sending emissaries both to Sinān and to the count, and stresses his own role as defender of Islam against the threefold threat of Frankish infidelity, Assassin heresy, and Zengid treason.[36] The author of the Ismā'īlite biography of Sinān, himself affected by the jihad mentality of later times, depicts his hero as a collaborator of Saladin in the

[35] Ibn-Jubair, *Riḥlah* (ed. William Wright, rev. by M. J. de Goeje; Leyden and London, 1907), p. 255; tr. by R. J. C. Broadhurst, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr* (London, 1952), p. 264. *Bustān*, p. 136, alone puts these events in A. H. 561. See also Kamāl-ad-Dīn, MS 193b (Blochet, *ROL*, IV [1896], 147–148); Lewis, "Three Biographies," p. 338; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, V, 8–9; Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," pp. 354–355; Cahen, *La Syrie du nord*, p. 377.

[36] Abū-Shāmah, *Kitāb ar-rauḍatain* (2 vols., Cairo 1871, 1872), II, 23–24; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, V, 29–30; B. Lewis, "Saladin and the Assassins," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XV (1953), 239–245. See also below, chapter XVIII, p. 576.

holy war against the crusaders. As we shall see, both statements may be true for different dates. Though Saladin's account of the degree of collaboration among his opponents is probably exaggerated in order to discredit the Zengids, it was natural enough to begin with that his various enemies should concentrate their attacks on him rather than on one another. The curious story told by William of Tyre of an Assassin proposal to embrace Christianity may reflect a genuine rapprochement between Sinān and the kingdom of Jerusalem.[37]

The first Assassin attempt on Saladin's life occurred in December 1174 or January 1175, while he was besieging Aleppo. According to the biographers of Saladin, Gümüshtigin, who governed the city on behalf of the Zengid child who was its nominal ruler, sent messengers to Sinān, offering him lands and money in return for the assassination of Saladin. The appointed emissaries penetrated the camp on a cold winter day, but were recognized by the emir of Abū-Qubais, a neighbor of theirs. He questioned them, and was at once killed. In the ensuing fracas many people were killed, but Saladin himself was unscathed. In the following year Sinān decided to make another attempt, and on May 22, 1176, Assassins, disguised as soldiers in his army, attacked him with knives while he was besieging ʿAzāz. Thanks to his armor Saladin received only superficial wounds, and the assailants were dealt with by his emirs, several of whom perished in the struggle. Some sources attribute this second attempt also to the instigation of Gümüshtigin. After these events Saladin adopted elaborate precautions, sleeping in a specially constructed wooden tower and allowing no one whom he did not know personally to approach him.

While it is by no means impossible that, in organizing these two attempts on Saladin's life, Sinān was acting in concert with Gümüshtigin, it is unlikely that Gümüshtigin's inducements were his primary motive. What is far more probable is that Sinān, acting for reasons of his own, accepted the help of Gümüshtigin, thus gaining both material and tactical advantages. The same may be said of the statement contained in a letter sent by Saladin to the caliph from Cairo in 1174, that the leaders of the abortive pro-Fāṭimid conspiracy in Egypt in that year had written to Sinān, stressing their common faith and urging him to take action against Saladin. The Nizārite Ismāʿīlites of Syria and Persia owed no allegiance to the last Fāṭimids in Cairo, whom they regarded as

[37] William of Tyre, XX, 29–30; Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," pp. 353–354. See below, chapter XVII, note 23.

usurpers. That Fāṭimid elements sought the aid of the Syrian Assassins is likely enough — some half century previously the Fāṭimid caliph al-Āmir had attempted to persuade them to accept his leadership. But the Nizārites had refused, and al-Āmir himself had fallen to their daggers. It is not impossible that Sinān, again for tactical reasons, may have been willing to collaborate with the Egyptian conspirators, though it is unlikely that he would continue to act in their interests after the definitive crushing of the plot in Egypt. A more likely immediate cause for Sinān's action against Saladin is to be found in a story told by Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī, though not, oddly enough, by the contemporary chroniclers. In 1174/1175, according to Sibṭ, ten thousand horsemen of the Nubuwīyah, an anti-Shī'ite religious order in Iraq, raided the Ismā'īlite centers in al-Bāb and Buzā'ah, where they slaughtered 13,000 Ismā'īlites and carried off much booty and many captives. Profiting from the confusion of the Ismā'īlites, Saladin sent his army against them, raiding Sarmīn, Ma'arrat-Miṣrīn, and Jabal as-Summāq, and killing most of the inhabitants. Sibṭ unfortunately does not say in what month these events took place, but if, as seems likely, Saladin's raid was carried out while his army was on its way northward to Aleppo, it may serve to explain the hostility of the Assassins towards him. Even without this explanation, however, it is clear that the emergence of Saladin as the major power in Moslem Syria, with a policy of Moslem unification, would mark him down as a dangerous adversary.

In August 1176 Saladin advanced on the Assassin territories, in search of vengeance, and laid siege to Maṣyāf. There are different versions of the circumstances of his withdrawal. 'Imād-ad-Dīn, followed by most of the other Arabic sources, attributes it to the mediation of Saladin's uncle Shihāb-ad-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn-Takash, prince of Hamah, to whom his Assassin neighbors appealed for intercession. Ibn-abī-Ṭaiyī adds the more convincing reason of the Frankish attack on the Biqā' valley, which urgently required Saladin's presence elsewhere. In Kamāl-ad-Din's version it is Saladin who invokes the mediation of the prince of Hamah, and asks for peace, apparently as a result of the terror inspired by Assassin tactics. In the Ismā'īlite version, Saladin is terrified by the supernatural antics of Sinān, and the prince of Hamah intercedes on his behalf with the Assassins, to allow him to depart in safety. Saladin agrees to withdraw, Sinān gives him a safe-conduct, and the two become the best of friends. The Ismā'īlite account is obviously heavily overlaid with legend, but seems to contain this element of

truth, that some sort of agreement was reached. Certainly we hear of no overt acts by the Assassins against Saladin after the withdrawal from Maṣyāf and there are even some hints of collusion.[38]

The next murder, on August 31, 1177, was of Shihāb-ad-Dīn abū-Ṣāliḥ ibn-al-ʿAjamī, the vizir of the Zengid al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ in Aleppo, and former vizir of Nūr-ad-Dīn. This assassination, which was accompanied by unsuccessful attempts on two of the vizir's henchmen, is attributed by the Syrian historians to the machinations of Gümüshtigin, who had forged the signature of al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ on a letter to Sinān requesting this action. The authority for this story is the confession of the Assassins, who claimed, when questioned, that they were only carrying out the the orders of al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ himself. The truth came out in subsequent correspondence between al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ and Sinān, and Gümüshṭigin's enemies seized the opportunity to bring about his downfall. Whatever the truth of this story, the death of the vizir and the ensuing discord and mistrust cannot have been unwelcome to Saladin. The breach between Aleppo and Sinān continued. In 1179/1180 al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ seized al-Hajīrah from the Assassins. Sinān's protests producing no result, he sent agents to Aleppo who set fire to the marketplaces and wrought great damage. Not one of the incendiaries was apprehended — a fact which suggests that they could still command local support in the city.[39]

Although it will carry us beyond the terminal date of the present volume, which closes on the eve of the so-called Third Crusade, it seems best to continue with, and in this chapter to conclude, the history of the Assassins. On April 28, 1192, they brought off their greatest coup — the murder of the marquis Conrad of Montferrat in Tyre. Most sources agree that the murderers disguised themselves as Christian monks and wormed their way into the confidence of the bishop and the marquis. Then, when an opportunity arose, they stabbed him to death. Bahā'-ad-Dīn, whose account is based on the exactly contemporary report of Saladin's envoy in Tyre, says that when the two Assassins were put to the question they confessed that the king of England had instigated the murder. In view of the testimony of most of the oriental and some of the occidental sources, there seems little doubt that some such confession was indeed made. Richard's obvious interest in the disappearance

[38] On the two attempts on Saladin and the attack on Maṣyāf, see Lewis, "Saladin and the Assassins." Cf. also below, chapter XVIII, pp. 567, 570.

[39] Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, V, 20–25; Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," pp. 355–357; Lewis, "Saladin and the Assassins," n. 21.

of the marquis, and the suspicious speed with which his protégé count Henry of Champagne married the widow and succeeded to the throne of the Latin kingdom, lent some color to the story — and one can readily understand that it found widespread credence at the time. But whether or not the Assassins were telling the truth when they confessed is another question. Ibn-al-Athīr, for whose dislike of Saladin due allowance must be made, mentions the attribution to Richard simply as a belief current among the Franks. He himself names Saladin as the instigator, and even knows the sum of money paid to Sinān for the work. The plan was to kill both Richard himself and the marquis, but the murder of Richard proved impossible. The Ismā'īlite biography attributes the initiative to Sinān, with the prior approval and coöperation of Saladin; but here too allowance must be made for the author's obvious desire to present his hero as a loyal collaborator of Saladin in his holy war. He adds the unlikely information that, in reward for this deed, Saladin granted the Assassins many privileges, including the right to set up houses of propaganda in Cairo, Damascus, Homs, Hamah, Aleppo, and other cities. In this story we may perhaps discern an exaggerated recollection of some definite recognition accorded to the Assassins by Saladin in the period after the agreement at Maṣyāf. 'Imād-ad-Dīn, on the other hand, tells us that the murder was not opportune for Saladin, since Conrad, though himself one of the leaders of the crusaders, was an enemy of the more redoubtable Richard, and was in communication with Saladin at the time of his death. Richard, aware of this, himself inclined to negotiation and peace. But the murder of Conrad freed him from anxiety and encouraged him to resume hostilities.[40]

This and the preceding murder raise an important general issue in the history of the Assassins. Of a score of murders recorded in Syria between 1103 and 1273, almost half are attributed by one or another source to the instigation of third parties. Sometimes the story is based on an alleged confession by the actual murderers. Yet it must be remembered that the Assassins were no mere band of hired cut-throats, but the fanatically devoted adherents of a religious sect, dedicated ultimately to the achievement of nothing less than the establishment of a new Fāṭimid empire over all

[40] Bahā'-ad-Dīn, *An-nawādir as-sulṭānīyah*, p. 165; abū-Shāmah, II, 196; 'Imād-ad-Dīn, *Al-fatḥ al-qussī* (ed. C. de Landberg, *Conquête de la Syrie...*, Leyden, 1888), pp. 420 to 422; Ibn-al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, XII, 51 (*RHC, Or.*, II, 58–59); Bar Hebraeus, p. 339; Nicetas Choniates, *Historia* (*RHC, Grecs*, I), p. 318; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, V. 25–30; Quatremère, *op. cit.*, p. 357; Lewis, "Saladin and the Assassins," n. 23.

Islam, under the rule of the imams of the house of Nizār. Though Sinān may have permitted himself some deviations from this ideal, and though some of the murders may have been arranged with the temporary allies of the sect, it is in the highest degree unlikely that in this period of their prime the daggers of the fida'is were for hire. Even when murders were politically or otherwise arranged, it is still more unlikely that the actual murderers would know the identity of the instigator or ally concerned. But the Assassin setting forth on a mission might well have been given what in modern parlance would be called a "cover story", implicating the likeliest character on the scene. This would have the additional advantage of sowing mistrust and suspicion in the opposing camp. The murders of Ibn-al-ʿAjamī and of Conrad of Montferrat are good examples of this. The suspicion thrown on Gümüshtigin in Aleppo and on Richard among the Franks must have served a useful purpose in confusing the issues and creating discord.

The murder of Conrad was Sinān's last achievement. In 1192/1193 or 1193/1194 the redoubtable Old Man of the Mountain himself died, and was succeeded by a Persian called Naṣr.[41] With the new chief the authority of Alamut seems to have been restored, and remained unshaken until after the Mongol conquest. The names of several of the chief daʿis at different dates are known to us from literary sources and from inscriptions in the Ismāʿīlite centers in Syria; most of them are specifically referred to as delegates of Alamut. They are, with the dates of mention: Kamāl-ad-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn-Masʿūd (after 1221/1222); Majd-ad-Dīn (1226/1227); Sirāj-ad-Dīn Muẓaffar ibn-al-Ḥusain (1227 and 1238); Tāj-ad-Dīn abū-l-Futūḥ ibn-Muḥammad (1239/1240 and 1249); Raḍī-ad-Dīn abū-l-Maʿālī (1256 ff.).[42]

About 1211 the sources record a curious episode that is worth considering. In that year, the Persian sources tell us, the grand master of Alamut, Jalāl-ad-Dīn al-Ḥasan III, decreed a return to orthodoxy. He renounced the heretical teachings of his predecessors, burnt their books, restored orthodox religious practices, and, most significant of all, recognized the ʿAbbāsid caliph an-Nāṣir, from whom he received a diploma of investiture. Because of these changes he received the Persian sobriquet *Nau-Musulmān*, New Moslem. The Syrian historians also report these events, and add that he sent messengers to Syria, ordering his Syrian

[41] *Bustān*, p. 151; Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī, p. 269; Bar Hebraeus, p. 343; Lewis, "Three Biographies," pp. 338–339; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, V, 31.

[42] Van Berchem, "Épigraphie des Assassins," *passim*.

followers to follow his example. The circumstances of this episode are obscure, but it is certainly connected with the policies of the caliph an-Nāṣir, the last ʿAbbāsid to pursue an independent line. He was himself known as a Shīʿite sympathizer, and sought whatever allies he could find in his struggle against the Mongols and other enemies.[43]

The "reform" seems to have had little permanent effect on the religious beliefs of the Ismāʿīlites in either Persia or Alamut, though it may have affected their practice. It is striking that in Syria, in the presence of the enemies of Islam, no further assassinations of Moslems are recorded, though several Christians were still to fall. The first of these was Raymond, son of Bohemond IV of Antioch, who was killed in the church in Tortosa in 1213. His father, thirsting for vengeance, led an expedition against the Ismāʿīlite fortress of al-Khawābī. The Ismāʿīlites, who were now clearly on good terms with the Aiyūbids, appealed for help to Aleppo, the ruler of which, al-Malik aẓ-Ẓāhir, sent a force to relieve them. Aẓ-Ẓāhir's forces suffered a set-back at the hands of the Franks, and he appealed to al-Malik al-ʿĀdil in Damascus, who sent an army which compelled the Franks to raise the siege and withdraw in 1215/1216.[44]

About this time the Assassins became tributary to the Knights of the Hospital. In the year 1226/1227, according to the author of the *Taʾrīkh al-Manṣūrī*, the chief daʿi Majd-ad-Dīn received envoys from the emperor Frederick II, bringing gifts worth almost 80,000 dinars. On the pretext that the road to Alamut was too dangerous because of the rampages of the Khorezmians, Majd-ad-Dīn kept the gifts in Syria and himself gave the emperor the safe-conduct he required. In the same year the Hospitallers demanded tribute from the Assassins, who refused, saying: "Your king the emperor gives to us; will you then take from us?" The Hospitallers then attacked them and carried off much booty. The

[43] Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jauzī, p. 363; abū-Shāmah, *Tarājim rijāl al-qarnain* (ed. Muḥammad Zāhid, Cairo, 1947), pp. 78, 81; al-Juvainī, *Taʾrīkh-i-Ǧahān-Gushâ*, vol. III (ed. Mirzā Muḥammad Qazvīnī, Leyden and London, 1937), 243–248; Bar Hebraeus, p. 366; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, V, 38–40; J. von Hammer, *History of the Assassins*, pp. 141 ff.; van Berchem, "Épigraphie des Assassins," p. 27, note 1, 28 (cited from a reprint).

[44] Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, V, 40–45; Cahen, *La Syrie du nord*, pp. 620 to 621. This version of the Frankish withdrawal from al-Khawābī is based on Kamāl-ad-Dīn, MS. 235v–236r (Blochet, *ROL*, V [1897], 48–49). A somewhat different version is given by Ibn-al-Furāt (Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," p. 358), according to which al-Malik aẓ-Ẓāhir himself led his army to relieve the Ismāʿilites. The Franks raised the siege on hearing of his approach. Aẓ-Ẓāhir then reinforced al-Khawābī, and warned the Franks against attacking the Ismāʿīlites. This version is also to be found in the manuscript of Ibn-Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī-Aiyūb* (Cambridge, *Or.* 1079, pp. 538–539), with whom it probably originates.

text does not make it clear whether the tribute to the Hospitallers dates from this event or was already in existence.[45]

An interesting indication of how far the Assassins had become a recognized and even an accepted part of the Syrian political scene is given by Ibn-Wāṣil, under the year 1239/1240. In that year, says Ibn-Wāṣil, who was himself a native of central Syria, the qāḍī of Sinjar, Badr-ad-Dīn, sought and obtained refuge among the Assassins from the anger of al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ ʿImād-ad-Dīn. The chief of the Assassins was then a Persian called Tāj-ad-Dīn, who had come from Alamut. Ibn-Wāṣil does not hesitate to add that he knew him personally and was on terms of friendship with him. The same Tāj-ad-Dīn is named in a Maṣyāf inscription dated Dhū-l-Qaʿdah 646 (February or March 1249).[46]

Only one group of events remains to be recorded before the political extinction of the Assassins — their dealings with St. Louis. The story of an Assassin plot against St. Louis while he was still a youth in France can, like all the other stories of Assassin activities in Europe, be dismissed as a product of over-vivid imaginations. But the account in Joinville of St. Louis's dealings with the Assassins after his arrival in Syria is of a different order, and bears every mark of authenticity. Emissaries of the Assassins came to the king in Acre, and asked him to pay tribute to their chief, "as the emperor of Germany, the king of Hungary, the sultan of Babylon [Egypt], and the others do every year, because they know well that they can only live as long as it may please him." Alternatively, if the king did not wish to pay tribute, they would be satisfied with the remission of the tribute which they themselves paid to the Hospitallers and the Templars. This tribute was paid, explains Joinville, because these two orders feared nothing from the Assassins, since, if one master was killed, he would at once be replaced by another as good, and the Assassin chief did not wish to waste his men where nothing could be gained. In the event, the tribute to the orders continued, and the king and the chief daʿi exchanged gifts. An interesting addendum is the story of the Arabic-speaking friar Yves le Breton, who accompanied the king's messengers to the Assassins and discussed religion with their chief. Through the mists of ignorance and prejudice one can faintly discern some of the known doctrines of Ismāʿīlite religion.[47]

[45] Amari, *Biblioteca arabo-sicula*, Appendix II, 30–31.
[46] Van Berchem, "Épigraphie des Assassins," p. 19 (cited from a reprint).
[47] Joinville (ed. Wailly), pp. 88, 162, 246ff.; Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal*

The end of the power of the Assassins came under the double assault of the Mongols and of their deadliest enemy, the Mamlūk sultan Baybars. In Persia the Mongol general Hulagu succeeded where all Moslem rulers had failed, and captured the Assassin castles one by one, with surprisingly little difficulty. In 1256 Alamut itself fell, and the last grand master Rukn-ad-Dīn Khūr-Shāh was compelled to surrender himself. He was hanged shortly thereafter. The remaining Assassin strongholds in Persia were soon subjugated, and their treasures dispersed.

In Syria, as one would expect, the Assassins joined with the other Moslems in repelling the Mongol threat, and sought to win the good graces of Baybars by sending him embassies and gifts. Baybars at first showed no open hostility to them, and, in granting a truce to the Hospitallers in 1266, stipulated that they renounce the tribute they were receiving from various Moslem cities and districts, including the Ismā'īlite castles, whose tribute is given by al-Maqrīzī as "1,200 dinars and a hundred *mudd* of wheat and barley." The Ismā'īlites prudently sent emissaries to Baybars offering him the tribute which they had formerly paid to the Franks, to be used in the holy war.

But Baybars, whose life-work was the liberation of the Moslem Near East from the double threat of the Christian Franks and the heathen Mongols, could not be expected to tolerate the continued independence of a dangerous pocket of heretics and murderers in the very heart of Syria. As early as 1260 his biographer Ibn-'Abd-aẓ-Ẓāhir reports him as assigning the Ismā'īlite lands in fief to one of his generals. In 1265 he ordered the collection of taxes and tolls from the "gifts" brought for the Ismā'īlites from the various princes who paid them tribute. Among them the sources name "the emperor, Alfonso, the kings of the Franks and the Yemen". The Assassins, weakened in Syria and disheartened by the fate of their Persian brothers, were in no position to resist. Meekly accepting this measure, they themselves paid tribute to Baybars, and soon it was he, in place of the departed grand master in Alamut, who appointed and dismissed them at will.

In 1270 Baybars, dissatisfied with the attitude of the aged chief Najm-ad-Dīn, deposed him and appointed in his place his more compliant son-in-law Ṣārim-ad-Dīn Mubārak, Assassin governor of al-'Ullaiqah. The new chief, who held his office as representative of Baybars, was excluded from Maṣyāf, which came under the

asiatique, V, 45–46; Quatremère, "Notice historique sur les Ismaëliens," p. 262; van Berchem, *op. cit.*, pp. 30–32 (reprint).

direct rule of Baybars. But Ṣārim-ad-Dīn, by a trick, won possession of Maṣyāf. Baybars dislodged him and sent him as a prisoner to Cairo where he died, probably poisoned, and the now chastened Najm-ad-Dīn was reappointed, conjointly with his son Shams-ad-Dīn, in return for an annual tribute. They are both named in an inscription in the mosque of al-Qadmūs, of about this date.

In February or March 1271 Baybars arrested two Ismāʿīlites sent from al-ʿUllaiqah to Bohemond VI of Tripoli and, according to Ibn-al-Furāt, suborned to assassinate Baybars. Shams-ad-Dīn was arrested and charged with intelligence with the Franks, but released after his father Najm-ad-Dīn had come to plead his innocence. The two Ismāʿīlite leaders, under pressure, agreed to surrender their castles and live at Baybars' court. Najm-ad-Dīn accompanied Baybars. He died in Cairo early in 1274. Shams-ad-Dīn was allowed to go to al-Kahf "to settle its affairs". Once there, he began to organize resistance to Baybars, but in vain. In May and June 1271 Baybars' lieutenants seized al-ʿUllaiqah and ar-Ruṣāfah and in October, Shams-ad-Dīn, realizing his cause was hopeless, surrendered to Baybars and was at first well received. Later, learning of an Ismāʿīlite plot to assassinate some of his emirs, Baybars deported Shams-ad-Dīn and his party to Egypt. The blockade of the castles continued. Al-Khawābī fell in the same year, and the remaining castles were all occupied by 1273.[48]

With the fall of al-Kahf on July 9, 1273, the last independent outpost of the Assassins had fallen. Henceforth the sect stagnated as a minor heresy in Persia and Syria, with little or no political importance. In the fourteenth century a split occured in the line of Nizārite imams. The Syrian and Persian Ismāʿīlites followed different claimants, and from that date onward ceased to maintain contact with one another.[49]

The Mamlūk sultans in Egypt were quick to realize the possible uses of their once redoubtable subjects. As early as April 1271 Baybars is reported as threatening the count of Tripoli with assassination. The attempt on prince Edward of England in 1272 and perhaps also the murder of Philip of Montfort in Tyre in 1270 were instigated by him. Later chroniclers report several instances of the use of Assassins by Mamlūk sultans against their enemies,

[48] Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *op. cit.*, V, 48–65; Quatremère, *op. cit.*, pp. 363–365; van Berchem, *op. cit.*, p. 47 (reprint); Cahen, *La Syrie du nord*, p. 719.

[49] W. Ivanow, "A Forgotten Branch of the Ismailis," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1938, pp. 57–79.

and Ibn-Baṭṭūṭah, in the early fourteenth century, gives a detailed description of the arrangements adopted.[50]

In Persia the sect survived in rather greater numbers. A son of the last grand master Rukn-ad-Dīn was hidden while still a child, and lived to sire a whole series of imams, about whom unfortunately little is known. In the nineteenth century the imam migrated from Persia to India, where the majority of his followers were by then to be found. His grandson is well known as the Aga Khan.

[50] Defrémery, "Ismaéliens de Syrie," *Journal asiatique*, V, 65–74.

Basil II, "the Bulgar-Slayer"