

From *Da'wa* to State:
Castles and the Formation of the Nizari Isma'ili State in Quhistan, Iran

by

Syedhamed Yeganehfarzand

B.A., Tabriz Islamic Art University, Iran, 2006

M.A., University of Tehran, Iran, 2010

M.A., University of Victoria, 2014

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Department of Art History and Visual Studies

© Syedhamed Yeganehfarzand, 2022

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This dissertation may not be reproduced in whole or in part,
by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

We acknowledge and respect the lək'wəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the
university stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical
relationships with the land continue to this day.

From *Da'wa* to State:
Castles and the Formation of the Nizari Isma'ili State in Quhistan, Iran

by
Seyedhamed Yeganehfarzand

B.A., Tabriz Islamic Art University, Iran, 2006

M.A., University of Tehran, Iran, 2010

M.A., University of Victoria, 2014

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Marcus Milwright, Supervisor
Department of Art History and Visual Studies

Dr. Evanthia Baboula, Departmental Member
Department of Art History and Visual Studies

Dr. J. Geoffrey Kron, Outside Member
Department of Greek and Roman Studies

Abstract

The present research concerns the network of Nizari Ismaʿili castles and the concept of Nizari Ismaʿili state in Iran during the so-called Alamut period (1090-1256). The research discusses various roles of the castles in the Nizari Ismaʿili state in the course of that period. Focusing on the Quhistan region, one of the major Nizari Ismaʿili territories in the northeast of Iran, the dissertation provides a detailed architectural study of 13 castles in the region. The treatment of the castles in the research, however, moves beyond the study of the castles as isolated defensive structures.

Through a detailed examination of the architectural remains of the castles and the available primary sources, the research discusses several other non-defensive roles that the castles played during the Alamut period. The castles were an important component of the Nizari Ismaʿili offensive expansionist strategy; they were used as residences for the garrisons and the Ismaʿili elite; they were the centers of Nizari Ismaʿili intellectual activities; and they had symbolic significance during that period. In addition, the analysis of the distribution of the castles in Quhistan suggests that the Nizari Ismaʿilis consciously used their castles as means of territorial control.

These roles were not fixed in the castles and would have changed over time depending on the political situation and the extent of the stability of the Nizari Ismaʿili power in each region. This multidimensional character of the castles supports the complex nature of the Nizari Ismaʿili presence in their territories and the notion of statehood of the Nizari Ismaʿili polity during the Alamut period.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	vii
Acknowledgements.....	xii
Note Concerning Transliteration and Dating	xiii
Introduction	1
Review of Literature.....	8
Methodology.....	23
Chapter 1. The Isma'ili in Iran and Quhistan: a brief history.....	31
The Early Isma'ili <i>da'wa</i> in Iran before the Alamut period	32
Pre-Alamut period Isma'ili activities in Quhistan.....	37
Phase 1: From the capture of Alamut castle to the death of Hasan-i Sabbah (1090-1124)	39
Phase 1 in Quhistan: From the advent of Husayn-i Qa'ini to the death of Hasan-i Sabbah	43
Phase 2: Consolidating the Isma'ili power: after the death of Hasan-i Sabbah to the reign of Hasan II (1124-62).....	48
Phase 2 in Quhistan: After the death of Hasan-i Sabbah to the reign of Hasan II.....	50
Phase 3: The period of resurrection (1162-1210).....	54
Phase 3 in Quhistan: the period of resurrection.....	57
Phase 4: "Rapprochement with Sunni Islam" (1210-56)	61
Phase 4 in Quhistan: after resurrection to the end of Alamut period.....	68
Concluding notes	76
Chapter 2. The concept of the Nizari Isma'ili state	80
State in the context of medieval Muslim societies.....	80
Isma'ili activities in Iran in the eyes of non-Isma'ilis.....	84
Isma'ili perceptions of their organization and the nature of their presence in Iran during the Alamut period	90

Concluding notes	104
Chapter 3. The Quhistan region, its geography and economy	106
The Boundaries of the Quhistan region	106
Climate of Quhistan and the sources of water	109
The economy of Quhistan during the medieval period	112
Travelling through Quhistan, main routes	116
Concluding notes	121
Chapter 4. Case studies: Architectural remains of the Isma'ili castles	124
Mu'minabad castle	126
Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in	131
Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun	137
Hasan-Abad castle.....	143
Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan.....	146
Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih	148
Castle of Darrih	152
Qal'ih Qala' of Ark	157
Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf	159
Castle of Shahanshah (Shah-Dizh)	164
Qal'ih Zari	170
Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab	172
Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask (Tabas-i Masina).....	176
Concluding notes	179
Chapter 5. Defensive characteristics of the Isma'ili castles in the Quhistan region.....	181
Surface pottery sherds in the castles.....	182
Material, masonry, and construction techniques.....	187
Main "Defensive" Elements of the Isma'ili Castles.....	192
Positioning / Lack of moats and glacis	192
Multi-layer defenses /curtain walls	194
Gateways.....	200
Towers.....	202
Arrow loops.....	205
Food and water provision	205

Concluding notes	210
Chapter 6. Isma'ili castles beyond defensive functions	212
Castles as means of territorial expansion	213
Castles as residences and the centers of intellectual activities	219
Power and Religious symbolism in the Isma'ili castles	225
Network of the castles and the control of resources in Quhistan	231
Concluding notes	238
Conclusion	241
Bibliography	251
Primary sources	251
Secondary sources	253
Figures	266

List of Figures

Figure I-1: The approximate location of the main Ismaʿili regions in Iran and Syria (11th -13th Century).

Figure 1-1: The approximate location of Quhistan region and its main towns during the Alamut period.

Figure 1-2: Map of the distribution of the Ismaʿili castles in Quhistan.

Figure 1-3: Different branches of Islam.

Figure 1-4: A view from the east to the upper part of Alamut Castle.

Figure 2-1: Remains of the Qurʿanic inscription in the southern dome of the Friday Mosque of Isfahan.

Figure 2-2: Gold coin (*dīnār*) struck under Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg-Ummid (r. 1138-62).

Figure 2-3: Gold coin struck under Jalal al-Din Hasan III (r. 1210-21).

Figure 2-4: Gold coin struck under ʿAlaʿ al-Din Muhammad III (r. 1221-54).

Figure 2-5: Silver coin struck under ʿAlaʿ al-Din Muhammad III (r. 1221-54).

Figure 2-6: Silver coin struck under ʿAlaʿ al-Din Muhammad III (r. 1221-54).

Figure 3-1: The *qanāt* canals, castles, and villages around Gunabad.

Figure 3-2: The *qanāt* canals, castles, and villages around Raqqih.

Figure 4-1: Layout of the castles discussed in the dissertation on the same scale.

Figure 4-2: Layout of Muʿminabad castle.

Figure 4-3: Muʿminabad castle viewed from the south.

Figure 4-4: Muʿminabad castle, the remains of the building known as *ghūrkhānih*.

Figure 4-5: Muʿminabad castle, the large round cistern in the middle part of the castle.

Figure 4-6: The eastern wing of Muʿminabad castle, viewed from the western wing.

Figure 4-7: The broken pieces of decorative bricks from Muʿminabad castle.

Figure 4-8: Qalʿih-Kuh viewed from the city of Qaʿin.

Figure 4-9: Low-level oblique view to the northeast of Qalʿih-Kuh of Qaʿin.

Figure 4-10: Layout of Qalʿih-Kuh of Qaʿin.

Figure 4-11: The barracks building in the northeast of Qal'ih-Kuh after the recent reconstructions. Buzarjumihr's tomb is seen in the background.

Figure 4-12: The barracks building before the recent reconstructions (ca. 1923).

Figure 4-13: Central section of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, looking to the north.

Figure 4-14: Upper section of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, looking to the south.

Figure 4-15: Architectural remains from the upper section Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in (ca. 1923).

Figure 4-16: The small cistern to the south of Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun.

Figure 4-17: Layout of Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun.

Figure 4-18: Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun's main gateway viewed from the north.

Figure 4-19: Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, the main structures in the south of section B, viewed from the extreme south of A.

Figure 4-20: Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, the western part of section B viewed from the top of the outcrop.

Figure 4-21: Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, the eastern part of section B viewed from the north.

Figure 4-22: Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, the circular pit inside DB.

Figure 4-23: Hasan-Abad castle viewed from the east. One of the river courses is seen in the foreground.

Figure 4-24: Hasan-Abad castle viewed from the south.

Figure 4-25: The remains of the main gateway of Hasan-Abad castle.

Figure 4-26: Layout of Hasan-Abad castle.

Figure 4-27: Hasan-Abad castle, panoramic view of section A viewed from the northwest.

Figure 4-28: Hasan-Abad castle, panoramic view of section B viewed from the southwest.

Figure 4-29: The outcrop on top of which Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan is located, viewed from the west.

Figure 4-30: Layout of Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan.

Figure 4-31: The remains of Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan's northeastern curtain wall.

Figure 4-32: A fragment of a wall remained from the pre-Alamut period phase of construction at Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan.

Figure 4-33: Plain of Sarayan viewed from the top of Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan.

Figure 4-34: Asiyab-i Dahanih viewed from the south.

Figure 4-35: Layout of Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih.

Figure 4-36: Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih, section A viewed from the north.

Figure 4-38: Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih, the western wall of section D, viewed from section C.

Figure 4-39: The castle of Darrih, viewed from the north.

Figure 4-40: Layout of the castle of Darrih.

Figure 4-41: Castle of Darrih, section A, viewed from BA. City of Birjand is seen on the top right.

Figure 4-42: Castle of Darrih, Hawz-i Ghulam-Kush in section A, viewed from the southeast.

Figure 4-43: Castle of Darrih, section C viewed from the top of section B. Note the large cistern in the middle.

Figure 4-44: Qal'ih Qala' of Ark viewed from the north.

Figure 4-45: Layout of Qal'ih Qala' of Ark.

Figure 4-46: The southern flank of Qal'ih Qala' of Ark where the gateway was located.

Figure 4-47: Qal'ih Qala' of Ark, view to the northeast of the castle. Ark village and agricultural fields are seen in the background.

Figure 4-48: The bricks that were used in the vaults of the rooms in the northeastern area of Qal'ih Qala' of Ark.

Figure 4-49: Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf, viewed from the northeast.

Figure 4-50: Layout of Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf.

Figure 4-51: Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf, the large cistern in section B, viewed from the northwest.

Figure 4-52: Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf, section C's western curtain wall, viewed from section B.

Figure 4-53: The rock engravings remained in the northeast of Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf.

Figure 4-54: The castle of Shah-Dizh, viewed from the north.

Figure 4-55: Layout of the castle of Shah-Dizh.

Figure 4-56: The castle of Shah-Dizh, the pavement of the gateway in section B.

Figure 4-57: The castle of Shah-Dizh, the northwestern part of section B, viewed from the south.

Figure 4-58: The castle of Shah-Dizh, the structures in the interior of the upper story of the fort in section B.

Figure 4-59: Qal'ih Zari viewed from the south.

Figure 4-60: The gigantic grooves remained from the historical mining activities at Qal'ih Zari mine.

Figure 4-61: Layout of Qal'ih Zari.

Figure 4-62: Northern flank of Qal'ih Zari. Note the traces of plaster remained on the walls.

Figure 4-63: Inside Qal'ih Zari, view to the western wall.

Figure 4-64: Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab viewed from the south.

Figure 4-65: Shurab village and agricultural fields viewed from the top of building CB.

Figure 4-66: Layout of Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab.

Figure 4-67: Section A of Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab viewed from the north.

Figure 4-68: Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab, the central part of section B viewed from the top of the building CB. The remains of the building CA are seen on the top right.

Figure 4-69: Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab, building CB viewed from the top of the building CA.

Figure 4-70: Qal'ih Kafaran (left) and Qal'ih Musalmanan (right) viewed from Gurask village.

Figure 4-71: A view to the southeastern flank of Qal'ih Kafaran.

Figure 4-72: A view from the western part of Qal'ih Kafaran to the southeast.

Figure 4-73: Layout of Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask.

Figure 4-74: The main gateway of Qal'ih Kafaran viewed from the exterior.

Figure 4-75: A view to the eastern part of Qal'ih Kafaran.

Figure 5-1: Drawings of unglazed pottery sherds with incised decoration from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in.

Figure 5-2: Drawing of an unglazed ware with applied and incised decoration from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in.

Figure 5-3: Unglazed molded pottery kashkul (dervishes' bowl), twelfth century, probably Nishabur.

Figure 5-4: Unglazed pottery sherds with circular applied decoration from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in and Castle of Darrih.

Figure 5-5: Glazed pottery sherds from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in.

Figure 5-6: Fragment of a luster-painted bowl from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in.

Figure 5-7: Luster-painted bowl, Milan, Private Collection.

Figure 5-8: Surface pottery sherds from Mu'minabad castle.

Figure 5-9: Surface pottery sherds from Hasan-Abad castle.

Figure 5-10: Surface pottery sherds from Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan.

Figure 5-11: Surface pottery sherds from Qal'ih Qala' of Ark.

Figure 5-12: Surface pottery sherds from Castle of Darrih.

Figure 5-13: Surface pottery sherds from Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf.

Figure 5-14: Surface pottery sherds from Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask.

Figure 5-15: Surface pottery sherds from Castle of Shahanshah.

Figure 5-16: Surface pottery sherds from Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab.

Figure 5-17: Different types of stonemasonry in the Isma'ili castles of Quhistan.

Figure 5-18: Mosque of Afin, built during the Timurid period.

Figure 5-19: The remains of mudbrick structures in the castle of Darrih.

Figure 5-20: A square brick of common size (24 x 24 x 4.5) in Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf.

Figure 5-21: Drawing of typical stone pointed barrel-vaults with and without a course of brick at the springing line.

Figure 5-22: Stone pointed barrel-vault built on a course of brick at the springing line, Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf.

Figure 5-23: Stone pointed barrel-vault without a course of brick at the springing line, Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun.

Figure 5-24: Drawing of a typical pitched-brick vault (*tāq-i zarbī*).

Figure 5-25: Remains of a pitched-brick vault (*tāq-i zarbī*) in the upper section of Hasan-Abad castle.

Figure 5-26: A circular pit (about 4 m in diameter and at least 3.5 m in depth) in the highest section of Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih.

Figure 5-27: Remains of a wall from an interior structure with mixed use of material in the north of the highest part of Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun.

Figure 5-28: Furg castle, the remains of the mud-brick battlements and the narrow walkway (allure or wall-walk).

Figure 5-29: The two types of arrow loops in the studied cases. Type A is a simple rectangular arrow loop built commonly in all the castles. Type B is built in a large round tower in the Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun.

Figure 6-1: Castle of Girdkuh in Qumis.

Figure 6-2: Castle of Lambsar in Alamut.

Figure 6-3: The remains of the space known as *mawlā-sarā* (the lord's court) in Alamut castle.

Figure 6-4: Details of the brickworks on the northeastern corner of *mawlā-sarā* in Alamut castle.

Figure 6-5: Schematic map of possible historical routes and the distribution of the castles in the Quhistan region.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not be completed without the generous support that I have received from several individuals and organizations. First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Marcus Milwright for his consistent encouragement and guidance throughout my PhD study and research. I would also like to thank my supervisory committee, Dr. Evanthia Baboula and Dr. J. Geoffrey Kron for their insightful comments on the earlier drafts of this dissertation.

The writing of this dissertation was made possible through doctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), and travel grants from the Graduate Student Society and the Department of Art History and Visual Studies at the University of Victoria.

My fieldwork in Quhistan was not possible without the help of my friend, Dr. Kazem Mukhtarnia. I would also like to thank the staff of the Southern Khurasan Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, Mrs. Aqdas Karampur, Mr. Alireza Nasrabadi, and Mr. Mohammad Ali Bozorgmehr for their warm hospitality and assistance during my fieldwork in Iran.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Atri, for her unconditional support during my several years of graduate studies and for her help during my fieldwork. Writing this dissertation would have not been possible without her continuous love and encouragement.

Note Concerning Transliteration and Dating

The transliteration of the Persian and Arabic vocabulary in the present research follows the guidelines of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. I have, however, imposed some minor standardization. Personal names and toponyms are given without the dotted consonants and the macrons over the long vowels. ‘Ayns (‘) and hamzas (‘) have been maintained through the text. All the Persian and Arabic terms are italicized with the exception of personal names, toponyms, and the words that are in use in English (such as hajj, imam). When the Persian silent (◌) is final, it is given as (ih). For example, *khānih* is preferred to *khānah* or *khāna*; *Zafarnānih* is preferred to *Zafarnama*. Similarly, the Persian form is preferred for the words that is used both in Persian and Arabic. Thus, *qal‘ih* is preferred to the commonly used Arabic form, *qal‘a*.

For a more fluid reading of the text, almost in most cases the name Isma‘ili is used instead of the longer name Nizari Isma‘ili. It is implied in the context if “Isma‘ili” refers to the wider Isma‘ili community. The dates are all given according to the Common Era, unless otherwise mentioned. *Hijrī* dates are sometimes given in the translation of the primary sources and the inscriptions.

Introduction

The history of the Nizari Isma'ilis of the so-called Alamut period is intertwined with a large number of the mountain castles that they occupied, restored and refortified, or built in the remote regions of the present-day Iran and Syria. The Alamut period begins in 1090 with the capture of a major castle in the north of Iran, Alamut castle, and ends in 1256 with the destruction of several castles in different parts of Iran by the Mongols. Various Arabic and Persian terms are used interchangeably in the primary sources in reference to the Isma'ili fortified structures, including *qal'ih* (or *qal'a*), *dizh* (or *diz*), *hiṣār*, *hiṣn*.¹ The English term that is preferred in the present dissertation is castle, which refers to any type of architecture that has defensive look and served a combination of defensive and non-defensive functions.² Each fortification discussed in the present research is referred to as an "Isma'ili castle." This combination of term (castle) and designation (Isma'ili) is not meant to be understood in an exclusive sense. It is used only to point to the fact that all the castles somehow served the Isma'ilis during the Alamut period. Otherwise, it is quite likely that some of the castles were built before the Alamut period or were occupied by others after that period. The term Alamut period refers specifically to the particular section of the history of the Isma'ilism when the Alamut region was considered the headquarters of the Nizari Isma'ilis. The period is part of the more commonly known chronological term, Middle Islamic period (c. 1100-1650). The term

¹ For an overview of the Islamic defensive structures, see Milwright, "Fortress, in the Middle East," 134-9.

² The English term castle, derives from the Latin "Castrum." Other Arabic and Indo-Persian terms such as Qasr, Qusur, Qalat and Qala, have possibly the same origin. See Ibid, 135. A discussion on terminology also provided in Pradines, "The Mamluk Fortifications of Egypt," 57-8.

Alamut period was first introduced by Wladimir Ivanow and is now a standard term in the field of Isma'ili studies.

During the Alamut period, the Isma'ilis, under the leadership of Hasan-i Sabbah (1050s-1124) and his successors, succeeded in capturing, reinforcing and erecting more than 200 large and small castles³ in different parts of Iran (including Rudbar, Alamut, Taliqan, Qumis, Quhistan, and Arrajan) and the mountainous region of Jabal al-Bahra in Syria (Fig. I-1). They also stabilized their power and achieved political autonomy in their territories (a brief history of the Isma'ilis during the Alamut period is provided in chapter 1).

Most of the castles were possibly initially occupied by the Isma'ilis during the early phases of the Alamut period and remained an integral part of the Isma'ili territories until the end of that period. The castles are today the only known architectural evidence of the life of the Isma'ilis in their regions. Therefore, any understanding of the network of their castles has a direct impact on our perception of the nature of the Isma'ili presence in Iran during the Alamut period.

Considering defense to be the only function of the castles, one could simply assume that the Isma'ilis were a community of rebel castle-dwellers whose only relationship with their environment was to prevent it from being controlled by others. This assumption is particularly prevalent in the works of the Orientalists of the nineteenth century who provided the earliest scientific studies of the Isma'ilis (see the review of literature below).

³ This number is based on the list of the castles, provided by Peter Willey. For details, see Peter Willey, *Eagle's Nest: Isma'ili Castles in Iran and Syria*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005, 270-6.

The study of the historical sources, however, suggests that the Ismaʿilis had a more complex presence in their regions. Likewise, the castles played a more diverse set of roles in the Ismaʿili life in those regions during the course of the Alamut period. These ideas are reflected almost in all the existing scholarship, which is based on a more detailed and comprehensive study of the primary sources and aimed to paint a nuanced picture of the Ismaʿilis during that period.

Today, the consensus among the scholars of Ismaʿili history is that attaining territorial control and founding an autonomous Ismaʿili state was a goal for the Ismaʿilis of the Alamut period, and that they were able to achieve it at certain times and in certain regions. Sporadic information about this so-called “Nizari Ismaʿili state” or “Alamut state” is found in most of the existing studies. None of them, however, presents a focused discussion on the particulars of the Nizari Ismaʿili state as a concept. Similarly, some insights concerning the non-defensive function of the Ismaʿili castles have been suggested in the existing studies (discussed in the review of literature below). Nevertheless, all the existing studies primarily focus on the defensive function of the Ismaʿili castles, and often do not elaborate on the other non-defensive aspects.

This dissertation contributes to both discussions on the Ismaʿili state and the Ismaʿili castles as interrelated subjects that are worth elaboration. The research, first and foremost, aims to provide a detailed discussion of the architectural remains of the castles. The castles, however, are not seen in isolation from the other aspects of the life of the Ismaʿili community during the Alamut period. Rather they are discussed as the Ismaʿili archaeological evidence that reveal the complex nature of the Ismaʿili presence in Iran and support the claim for the statehood of the Ismaʿili polity during that period. Castles are the most important architectural

remains of the Isma‘ilis’ activities during the Alamut period. They are also the only available architectural remains that could be used for the examination of the extent to which the Isma‘ilis engaged in the governance and management of their territories.

The study of the Isma‘ili castles of Iran is relatively undeveloped. Particularly, little has been published on the castles in the regions other than the Alamut region. The dissertation, therefore, focuses on the Quhistan region, one of the main Isma‘ili territories in the northeast of Iran, and discusses the remains of thirteen castles as case studies. What we know about the Isma‘ili castles of the Quhistan region is limited to a handful of publications and a monograph on one of the major castles in Qa‘in⁴ (see below for a more detailed review of the literature). These publications provide very brief descriptions of the castles that often do not suggest a clear picture of their location and architecture. In the case of several other castles of the Quhistan region, even such basic descriptions are not available. Thus, providing detailed discussions of the architectural remains of some of the Isma‘ili castles in the region is a primary objective of the present study (see chapter 4). The discussion of the architectural remains of the castles in the research is mainly based on the author’s observations during the fieldwork conducted in the Quhistan region in the summers of 2017 and 2018.

The treatment of the castles in the present research moves beyond the defensive aspects of the castles. The dissertation discusses several non-defensive roles of the Isma‘ili castles during the Alamut period through a detailed investigation of the available primary

⁴ Two of the primary publications on the castles of Quhistan that are cited frequently in the present research are Willey, *Eagle’s Nest*; and ‘Alireza Nasrabadi, *Qal’ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi Khurāsān-i Junūbī* [The Historical Castles in Southern Khurasan]. Tehran: Fikr-i Bīkr, 2012. For the monograph, see Sa‘id Sultani, *Ṭarrāhī-i Hifāzat va Sāmāndihī-i Qal’ih-Kuh-i Qā’in* [The Conservation Planning of Qal’ih-Kuh of Qa‘in], Birjand: Intisharat-i Quhistan, 2011.

sources combined with an analysis of the architectural remains of the case studies in Quhistan. In addition, the castles are not merely studied as isolated structures in Quhistan. Presence of a large number of Ismaʿili castles in Quhistan raises the question of how these castles were connected to their geopolitical and economic context as a group of multifunctional structures, and whether they had any role in the management and development of the Ismaʿili territories. To address this question, the present study explores the potential relationship between the distribution of the castles and the economic resources of Quhistan to understand the extent of the Ismaʿilis' involvement in the exploitation and management of their environmental resources.

The organization of the chapters in the dissertation follows a conventional pattern for the analysis of archaeological evidence of this nature. The first chapter lays out briefly the historical trajectory of the rise and fall of the Ismaʿili power in Iran from 1090 to 1256. The history of the Ismaʿilis during the Alamut period has been discussed in great detail elsewhere (see the next section for a detailed review of literature). Nevertheless, providing a general history of the Ismaʿilis and the gradual process of the expansion of their power in Iran is necessary for a better understanding of the nature of the Ismaʿili polity and the possible roles of the castles during the Alamut period.

Building upon a four-phase division of the history of the Ismaʿilis during the Alamut period the first chapter also provides a detailed discussion of the dynamics of the Ismaʿili presence in the Quhistan region in that period. Along with mentioning the major historical events, the discussion suggests a rough estimation of when the Ismaʿilis dominated different parts of the region and the time of the capture or establishment of some of the major castles.

Chapter 2 investigates the concept of the Nizari Ismaʿili state. This concept is often mentioned in the secondary sources without any detailed discussion of its relevance.⁵ The chapter, therefore, scrutinizes the existing textual evidence as well as the inscriptions on the Ismaʿili coins of the Alamut period in order to work out how the Nizari Ismaʿili polity was perceived outside the Ismaʿili domain as well as by the Ismaʿilis themselves. The study of the Ismaʿili coins as an important means of communication and identification are useful in assessing the changes in the ways in which the Ismaʿili leaders represented themselves during Alamut period.⁶

The third chapter focusses on the Quhistan region. The first section of the chapter discusses the boundaries of the region as reflected in the primary sources and the impact of Ismaʿili activities on the expansion of the historical boundaries of the region during the Alamut period. The last two sections then provide an overview of the economy of Quhistan and the main trade routes that passed through the region during the medieval period. The chapter, therefore, highlights the possible resources that would be worthy of control by any power that dominated the region. The possible relationship between the castles and these resources will be discussed in the final chapter.

⁵ See, for example, Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Secret Order of Assassins*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press (originally published in 1955 under title: *The order of assassins based on the author's thesis in University of Chicago*), 2005, 99. The term state is commonly used in almost all the later publications. See Farhad Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis: Their History and Doctrines*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 335; Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 19; Jamal, *Surviving the Mongols*, 2.

⁶ On the communication of ideology and political claims through Islamic coins, see Wasserstein, "Coins as Agents of Cultural Definition in Islam." 303-22; Bacharach, "Material Evidence and Narrative Sources," 17-29. This aspect of coins is evident, for example, in the coinage of Abd al-Malik in the early Islamic period. See Bacharach, "Signs of Sovereignty," 1-30. A similar use of coinage by the Fatimids is discussed in Anwar and Bacharach, "Shi'ism and the Early Dinars of the Fāṭimid," 259-78.

A detailed description of the architectural remains of thirteen Ismaʿili castles in the Quhistan region is presented in chapter 4. The description includes a discussion of the architectural and structural features of each castle, their topography, locations around them, adjacent roads, natural resources, and any available historical information about the castles, mentioned in the primary sources.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine the various roles that the Ismaʿili castles potentially played in the Quhistan region. Chapter 5 provides an overview of the findings from the study of the cases introduced in chapter four. Comparing all the cases together, the chapter analyzes the defensive qualities of the castles and discusses the general characteristics of the Ismaʿili fortifications in the Quhistan region. The discussion particularly reveals the limited extent of improvement or changes in the design and construction of the castles in Quhistan during the Alamut period.

Like many other medieval castles, the Ismaʿili castles were not built merely to be defensive structures. The non-defensive roles of the castles are discussed in the last chapter. Studying these roles leads to a better understanding of the architectural remains of the castles as well as the multidimensional nature of the presence of the Ismaʿilis in their territories during the Alamut period. Through a detailed examination of the historical sources, chapter 6 elaborates on the roles of the castles as means of territorial expansion, the residential aspects of the castles, the importance of the castles as centers of intellectual activities, and the possible symbolic significance of the castles during the Alamut period. Eventually, the last section of the chapter focuses on the possible role of the network of the castles in the control of the

economic resources of Quhistan through an analysis of the relationship between the distribution of the castles and the economic environment of the region.

The dissertation concludes by proposing that the castles were not merely defensive tools in the strategy of the Nizari Ismaʿilis in Iran. These castles played several other non-defensive roles during the Alamut period. These roles were not fixed in all cases and would change over time depending on the political situation and the extent of the stability of the Ismaʿili power in each region. This multidimensional character of the network of the castles supports the complex nature of the Ismaʿili presence in their territories. As the natives of their regions, the Ismaʿilis were certainly aware of the potential resources in their territories and actively engaged in the exploitation and the management of these resources like any other medieval territorial power. This in turn supports the notion of the statehood of the Ismaʿili polity during the Alamut period that is suggested by the examination of the primary sources.

Review of Literature

What follows is a brief survey of the primary historical texts and the secondary sources that are instrumental in any study of the Ismaʿili history during the Alamut period and have been consulted in the present research.⁷ Among all the available historical sources, four of them are more notable for the study of the Ismaʿili history and their castles in Iran. The first is the *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā* (The History of the World-Conqueror)⁸ by ʿAlaʾ-al-Din ʿAta-Malik Juvayni (d. 1283),

⁷ The primary sources in the present research are in either Arabic or Persian. In all cases, I have consulted both the original texts and the English translations if available. For the sources which their English translations are available, I have often quoted the translated texts with slight modifications. If no translated edition is cited, the quotes from the primary sources are translated by the present author.

⁸ ʿAlaʾ-al-Din ʿAta-Malik Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā* [The History of the World-Conqueror]. 3 Volumes, Edited by Mirza Muhammad Qazvini. Tehran: Dunya-yi Kitab, 2006. The text is translated to English by J. A. Boyle. See ʿAlaʾ-

who accompanied the Mongol prince, Hülegü (r. 1256-65), during his campaign against the Isma'ilis. Juvayni inspected the library of the Alamut castle, by the permission of Hülegü, and took some of its books and burned the rest that, according to him, were "related to their (i.e., the Isma'ilis) heresy and error."⁹ Juvayni undoubtedly consulted some of these books when writing his account of the Isma'ili history. He particularly cites the *Sargudhasht-i Sayyidinā*, a now lost biography of the life and activities of Hasan-i Sabbah.¹⁰

In addition to the history of the Isma'ilis, Juvayni provides a relatively detailed account of Hülegü's campaign against the Isma'ilis, the negotiations with the Isma'ili leaders, and the siege of some of the main castles in Alamut. He visited Alamut castle in person and wrote the only available contemporary description of the architecture of the castle that is invaluable for the study of the Isma'ili castles.

The other substantial source for the study of the Isma'ili history is the fourteenth century account of the historian and great vizier of the Ilkhanids (1256-1335), Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah Hamidani (d. 1318) in his well-known chronicle the *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* (The Universal History).¹¹ In addition to Juvayni's *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Rashid al-Din made use of the genuine

al-Din 'Ata-Malik Juvayni, and J. A. Boyle, *Genghis Khan, The History of The World Conqueror*. UK: Manchester University Press, 1997.

⁹ "As for the remaining books, which related to their heresy and error and were neither founded on tradition nor supported by reason, I burnt them all. And although the treasuries were copious and gold and silver goods without limit, I recited over them the words: 'O yellow, be yellow and O white, be white!' and magnanimously shook my sleeve upon them." See Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 719-20; For the Persian text, see Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 270.

¹⁰ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 666; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 186-7. For a detailed discussion of the main primary sources for the study of the history of the Isma'ilis during the Alamut period, see Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 304-10.

¹¹ Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah Hamidani, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān* [Universal History, The History of]. Edited by Muhammad Rushan. Tehran: Miras-i Maktub, 2007. See also Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah Hamidani. *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* [Universal History]. 4 Volumes. Edited by Muhammad Rushan and Mustafa Musawi. Tehran: Alburz, 1984.

Persian Isma'ili sources from the Alamut period. He specifically mentions a certain *Kitāb-i Buzurg-Ummid* (The Book of Buzurg-Ummid), a narrative by a certain 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Ali, and a now lost chronicle by the Isma'ili poet and scribe, Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib (d. 1247).¹² Therefore, in some cases Rashid al-Din provides us with a more detailed account of the Isma'ili history in comparison with Juvayni's *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*.

Another important source on the history of the Isma'ilis during the Alamut period is the *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh* by Jamal al-Din Abu'l-Qasim Kashani (d. after 1324)¹³, an associate of Rashid al-Din in the Ilkhanid court. Other than some details, the content of Kashani's book is identical to that of Rashid al-Din. The fourth of these sources is the *Zafarnāmiḥ* (The Book of Victory) by Hamdallah Mustawfi (d.1349)¹⁴, again an official of the Ilkhanid state and an associate of Rashid al-Din. The book is in verse form and contains useful detailed information about some of the major castles in the Alamut region (including Alamut, Lambsar, and Maymun-Dizh) and the siege of the castles by the Mongols.

Not essentially related to the Isma'ili history, but still significant for the purpose of this research, are two books by the contemporary Sunni chroniclers, 'Izz al-Din ibn al-Athir (d. 1233) and Minhaj-i Siraj Juzjani (d. after 1266). Ibn al-Athir's *al-Kāmil fi'l-Tarīkh* (The Complete History)¹⁵ contains some valuable records of the events and particularly the Isma'ili-Seljuq conflicts in the Quhistan region. Other additional information about the Isma'ilis of Quhistan is

¹² Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 141 and 151.

¹³ Jamal al-Din Abu'l-Qasim Abd Allah b. 'Ali Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh: Bakhsh-i Fātimīyān va Nizāriyān*. 2nd ed. Edited by Muhammad Taqi Danishpazhuh. Tehran: Muassisiy-i Matbuat va Tahqiqat-i Farhangi, 1987.

¹⁴ Hamdallah Mustawfi, *Zafarnāmiḥ* [The Book of Victory]. Introduction by Nasrullah Purjavadi, and Nusratullah Rastgar. Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Danishgahi-yi Iran, 1999.

¹⁵ 'Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil fi'l-Tarīkh* [The Complete History]. Translated to Persian by 'Abbas Khalili and Abulqasim Halat. Tehran: Muassisiy-i Matbuat-i Ilmi, 1992.

found in Juzjani's *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāsirī* (Nasirid Generations).¹⁶ Juzjani visited the region three times between 1224 and 1226, and briefly related the reasons of his journeys, the routes he took, and the people he visited, and some of the stories he had heard when he was in the region.

While the works mentioned above represent a valuable resource for the Isma'ili studies, they should be read with an awareness of potential biases in the representation of the Isma'ilis by non-Isma'ili and Sunni chroniclers. In addition to these sources, there are two surviving Nizari Isma'ili texts by Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib (d. after 1242)¹⁷ from the Alamut period, the *Haft Bāb* (Seven Chapters)¹⁸ and the *Dīvān-i Qā'imīyāt* (Poems of the Resurrection).¹⁹ These works compiled in Alamut and concern the Isma'ili theological narratives and the doctrine of the Resurrection (*qā'imīyāt*) in main. However, one can also find occasional valuable information about the Isma'ili territories and the castles through a detailed reading of these texts.

The secondary sources on the Isma'ilis could be divided in two main sub-categories: first, the study of the history and religious beliefs and intellectual activities of the Isma'ilis and, second, the study of their castles and archaeological remains. There are many publications in

¹⁶ Minhaj-i Siraj Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāsirī, yā, Tārīkh-i Īrān va Islām* [Nasirid Generations, or, the History of Iran and Islam]. 2 Volumes, Edited by Abdul-Hayy Habibi. Tehran: Dunya-yi Kitāb, 1984. This is translated to English by H. G. Raverty. See Minhaj-i Siraj Juzjani, and H. G. Raverty (tr.), *Ṭabakāt-i Nāsirī: A General History of the Muhammadan Dynasties of Asia*. 2 Volumes. London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1881.

¹⁷ Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib or Hasan-i Salah-i Munshi was an Isma'ili poet, scribe, and theologian from the Alamut period. He was contemporary with at least three of the Isma'ili imams of that period. He acted as a scribe in the court of the Isma'ili rulers of Quhistan before moving to Alamut where he stayed until his death.

¹⁸ Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib, e.d. S. J. Badakhchani, *Spiritual Resurrection in Shi'i Islam: an Early Ismaili Treatise on the Doctrine of Qiyāmat: a New Persian Edition and English Translation of the Haft Bāb by Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib*. London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2017.

¹⁹ Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib, *Dīvān-i Qā'imīyāt* [Poems of the Resurrection]. Edited by S. J. Badakhchani. Tehran: Markaz-i Pizhūhishī-i Mīrās-i Maktūb, 2011.

the first category that completely revise the nineteenth-century orientalist misrepresentation of the Nizari Isma'ilis during the Alamut period.

Two primary examples of these orientalist studies are “Mémoire sur La Dynastie des Assassins, et sur L'étymologie de leur Nom” (Memoir on the Dynasty of the Assassins, and on the Etymology of their Name) by Silvestre de Sacy (d. 1838) and the *Die Geschichte der Assassinen* (The History of the Assassins) by Joseph Von Hammer-Purgstall (d. 1856). The latter and its English translation were particularly circulated as a standard account of the Nizari Isma'ilis of the Alamut period at least until 1930s. In these works, the Isma'ilis are represented as a mysterious eastern sect whose members were living in the mountain castles, were intoxicated by a drug called *hashish* and were ready to make self-sacrifice and to carry out dangerous mission to assassinate their enemies by the order of their leader, known as 'Old Man of the Mountain.'²⁰

The erroneous depiction of the Isma'ilis mentioned above, changed dramatically by the initiation and progress of modern scholarship on the sect. Pioneering work of Wladimir Ivanow was undoubtedly instrumental in this change. During his life, Ivanow translated and edited a couple of valuable genuine Isma'ili primary sources. In addition, he published a catalogue of Isma'ili Arabic and Persian manuscripts in the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.²¹ The book introduced several sources Isma'ili sources that were unknown to the scholars at the time. The

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of the orientalist studies on the Nizari Isma'ilis, see Farhad Daftary, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Isma'ilis*. London: Tauris, 1995. An English translation of Silvestre de Sacy's *Mémoire* by Azizeh Azodi is published as an appendix to Daftary's work. For the English translation of Hammer-Purgstall's book, see Joseph Von Hammer-Purgstall, *The History of the Assassins*. Translated by O. C. Wood. London: Smith and Elder, 1835.

²¹ The first edition of this work appeared in 1933. A revised edition was published later in 1963. See Wladimir Ivanow, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliographical Survey*. 2nd ed. Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1963.

new sources provided invaluable evidence about the pre-modern Ismaʿili history and beliefs, which substantially contributed to the growth of the field of Ismaʿili studies.²²

The first considerable study on the Ismaʿilis of the Alamut period is *The Order of Assassins*, by Marshall G. S. Hodgson.²³ Hodgson offered one of the earliest reliable accounts of the Nizari Ismaʿilis history and beliefs through a detailed examination of primary sources. His book was also instrumental in introducing the term “Ismaʿili” instead of “Assassin” that has been common in the western scholarship for referring to that branch of Muslim communities.²⁴ Not as detailed as Hodgson’s work, but still providing accurate narratives of the Ismaʿili history are *The Origins of Ismaʿilism: A Study of The Historical Background of The Fatimid Caliphate*²⁵ and *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*,²⁶ both by Bernard Lewis. The primary importance of these early publications is in their revision of the commonly accepted orientalist picture of the Ismaʿili history represented by the nineteenth-century scholars. It was in these publications that the concept of “Nizari Ismaʿili state” or “Alamut state” was introduced, and the events of the Alamut period were reconfigured as the history of an independent medieval state.²⁷

²² On Ivanow’s contribution to the study of Ismaʿili history and a list of his publications see Daftary, “Anjoman-e Esmāʿīlī,” 84.

²³ Hodgson, *The Secret Order*.

²⁴ A few examples of the use of the term Assassin in the book titles are *The Valleys of The Assassins and other Persian Travels* by Freya Stark, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* by Bernard Lewis, *The Castles of the Assassins* by Peter Willey. All these books are introduced in the present review of literature.

²⁵ Bernard Lewis, *The Origins of Ismāʿilism; A Study of the Historical Background of the Fāṭimid Caliphate*. Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1940.

²⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*. New York: Basic Books, 1968.

²⁷ For a detailed review of the early publication on the Ismaʿilis, see Daftary, “The Study of the Ismailis,” 47-66.

In addition to these early publications, many other scholars have contributed to the first category of the Isma'ili studies since the late twentieth century.²⁸ Listing all of them is beyond the scope of the present review. However, it is worth mentioning two works by Farhad Daftary. Daftary is the most prolific author in this area of study and has published several books and articles on the history of the Isma'ilis and Isma'ilism. His major work, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*²⁹ discusses in detail the history of the Isma'ilis from the emergence of the sect to the modern period. The book is a primary reference for any research about the Isma'ilis including the present dissertation. Daftary's other work, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of The Isma'ilis*³⁰ deals with the origins and early development of the legends about the Isma'ilis in the orientalist scholarship.

In contrast to the considerable number of publications on the Isma'ili history and beliefs, there are relatively few studies concerning their castles and archaeological remains.³¹ The first substantial publication about the Isma'ili castles in Iran is Wladimir Ivanow's *Alamut and Lamasar: Two Mediaeval Isma'ili Strongholds in Iran*.³² As reflected clearly in its title, the

²⁸ See, for example, Walker, *Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani*; Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis*; Jamal, *Surviving the Mongols*; Daftary, *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies*; Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages*; Daftary, *A Modern History of the Ismailis*; Mir-Kasimov, *Intellectual interactions*; Lakhani, *Faith and Ethics*.

²⁹ Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*.

³⁰ Daftary, *The Assassin Legends*.

³¹ There are abundant publications on the Islamic Fortifications in different parts of the Islamic world. These publications provide an opportunity for a comparative study of the fortifications in Iran during the Islamic period. See for example: Kennedy (ed.), *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: from the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*; Raphael, *Muslim Fortresses in the Levant: Between Crusaders and Mongols*; Creswell K. A. C. 1955. *Fortification in Islam Before 1250 A.D.* See also the following works by Pradines. Pradines (éd.), *Ports & Fortifications in the Muslim World. Coastal Military Architecture from the Arab Conquest to the Ottoman Period*; Pradines, "From the Ribats to the Fortresses, the Fāṭimid Period of Transition in Muslim Military Architecture," 493-514; Pradines, "The Mamluk Fortifications of Egypt," 57-110, Pradines, "Identity and Architecture: The Fatimid Walls in Cairo," 104-45.

³² Wladimir Ivanow, *Alamut and Lamasar: Two Mediaeval Ismaili Strongholds in Iran, an archaeological study. Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1960.* Ivanow's work, however, was not the earliest study of the Isma'ili castles. In the 1930s, two articles were published in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* by W. Monteith and J. Shiel,

book mainly concerns the study of two major castles in the Alamut region (Alamut and Lambsar castles). In both cases, Ivanow provides a detailed description of the location and the architectural remains of the castles. In addition to these castles, Ivanow discusses the references in the historical texts to the Isma'ili castle of Maymun-Dizh,³³ and introduces a castle in the north of Garmarud village to be the possible historical Maymun-Dizh. Ivanow's discussion is limited to the defensive function of the castles. He points to the consolidation of Alamut region by the Isma'ilis to form an "independent miniature state."³⁴ However, he does not offer any discussion on the possible role of the castles in the Isma'ili state other than their defensive roles.

In 1959, Peter Willey visited the Alamut region for the first time. This visit was the beginning of his several expeditions and fieldworks conducted in different Isma'ili regions over a forty-year period. The result was numerous articles and two books on the Isma'ilis and their castles. His first book, *The Castles of the Assassins*³⁵ provides a detailed account of his efforts to find the location of Maymun-Dizh and a few castles in the regions of Rudbar, Alamut, and

who were officers of British army in Iran. These articles aimed to determine the location of Alamut castle. However, both of them failed in determining the real location of the castle. *The Valleys of The Assassins and other Persian Travels* by Freya Stark is another early publication containing a chapter on the Isma'ili castles of the Alamut region. This book is essentially a travel account and do not suggest a systematic study of the castles. Nevertheless, its publication motivated further studies in the area of Isma'ili military architecture by providing information about the Alamut valley and locations of some of the castles. See Freya Stark, *The Valleys of the Assassins and other Persian Travels*, N.Y.: Dutton & Co, 1934.

³³ Maymun-Dizh was one of the most important Isma'ili castles and the residence of Rukn al-Din Khurshah (d.1257), the last Nizari Isma'ili leader in the 'Alamut period.' The name of castle is mentioned in the most of historical sources which deal with the history of Nizari Isma'ilis. However, the exact location of the castle is still unknown.

³⁴ Ivanow, *Alamut and Lamasar*, 22.

³⁵ Peter Willey, *The Castles of the Assassins*. London: G.G. Harrap, 1963.

Qumis in the north of Iran.³⁶ Generally, the book is a travel account in main with some descriptions of the archaeological sites. Nevertheless, it is still valuable because of the firsthand description of the Alamut region and some of the Ismaʿili castles, including the Alamut castle and the cave-castle in the north of Shams-Kilayih village, identified as the lost Maymun-Dizh by Willey.

Willey continued his research in the following years, seeking more evidence of Ismaʿili fortifications in the other regions. The result was the *Eagle's Nest: Ismaʿili Castles in Iran and Syria* a more detailed and inclusive version of his previous work on the Ismaʿili castles, which covers most of the Ismaʿili regions in Iran and Syria.³⁷ The book is divided in two parts. The first part provides a brief account of the Ismaʿilis history and their activities from their early history to the end of the Alamut period. This historical account is essentially a summary of modern scholarship on the Ismaʿili history. However, there are also some additional discussions on the issues relating to the organization of the Ismaʿili state, life inside the Ismaʿili territories, and the possible role of the castles in the Ismaʿili state.

Willey makes several assumptions on these issues. For example, he points to the importance of the castles as administrative and especially cultural centers, minting the silver coins for commercial transaction in the Ismaʿili regions, development of agricultural infrastructures by the Ismaʿilis, and the existence of a sophisticated system of

³⁶ In an appendix added to the Persian translation of *The Castles of The Assassins* (1996), Changiz Sheykhali questions the location of Maymun-Dizh that Willey identified for the first time. See Sheykhali, "Tawzihātī Darbārihi-yi Shams-kilāyih," 339-410. Enayat Majidi addresses this issue and suggests a new location for this castle in Majidi, *Maymūn-Dizh-i Alamut*.

³⁷ Willey, *Eagle's Nest*. The book also contains a chapter on Badakhshan and Hunza (i.e., regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan). This chapter is mostly a personal travel account that includes a very brief description of the castle of Baltit.

intercommunication between different parts of the Isma'ili state via a group of subsidiary forts and watchtowers.³⁸ These assumptions are not necessarily incorrect. However, most of them are left unexplained, and there is no examination of the architectural and archaeological evidence in the rest of the book to support these assumptions.

The second part of the book is devoted to the architectural description of the castles and the geographical features of the main Isma'ili regions. The main problem in the second part of the book is the inconsistency in the provision of the necessary information on the castles. In a few cases (mostly in the case of the castles in the Alamut valley), full descriptions of the architectural remains are provided, while the text lacks a systematic architectural analysis of the castles in most of the other cases specially the castles in the Quhistan region. The other problem of the book is the paucity of detailed and informative illustrations to aid the reader in understanding Willey's written description of the Isma'ili castles.

Willey was the first scholar who pointed to the possibility that the Isma'ili castles could be understood as a network. Briefly discussing the strategic and tactical considerations of the Isma'ilis in choosing a location for the establishment of a castle, he simply suggests that the castles were a "chain" or "line" of formidable structures that defended the borders of the Isma'ili state.³⁹ Although he did not expand on the idea in the book, he clearly emphasizes the defensive aspects of the castles as bordering points that collectively created a linear boundary around the Isma'ili regions.⁴⁰ This idea about the network of castles is not limited to the Isma'ili

³⁸ See for example, *Ibid.* 27, 53, and 99-101.

³⁹ Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 89 and 95.

⁴⁰ This idea is reflected in other works on the Isma'ili castles. See Wolfram Kleiss, "Assassin Castles in Iran." In *The Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia* (Proceeding of a Symposium held in Edinburgh in 1982). Edited by Robert Hillenbrand, 315-20. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1994, 316; Choubak, "Alamut, Bakhsh-i Duvvum," 120-5.

fortifications. For example, modern scholarship on the Crusader history suggests a similar idea about the distribution of the castles and their role in the protection of the Crusader boundaries.

Ronnie Ellenblum, in *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*, criticizes the models suggested by previous scholars such as Emmanuel G. Rey, Hans G. Prutz and Paul Deschamps and their interpretation of the spatial distribution of the Crusader castles. Generally, these models considered all the castles to be part of a defensive system that separated the Crusader settlements from their enemies by means of a linear border.⁴¹ Ellenblum believes that the development of well demarcated border lines was a product of the establishment of modern states and influenced by the growth of the modern disciplines of geography and cartography. Examining the concepts of borders and frontiers in the medieval historical sources, he suggests that the notion of “linear border” was meaningless to medieval people. Therefore, he refutes the idea of the existence of a linear connection between the Crusader castles in the protection of the frontiers of the Crusader states.⁴²

In common with the network of the Crusader castles, there was possibly little connection between the castles as an integrated “chain” or “line” for defending the borders of the Isma‘ili regions. As is discussed below in chapter 6, the historical evidence suggests that in some phases of the Alamut period the castles were used as means of territorial expansion rather than being just defensive elements. In addition, the study of the distribution of the castles in Quhistan (see chapter 6) shows little connection between the castles as a “line” of defensive elements encircling the region.

⁴¹ Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*, 105-10.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 134-45.

Despite its shortcomings, *Eagle's Nest* is undoubtedly the best available study of the Isma'ili castles in English language. Willey provides short descriptions for seven of the castles in the Quhistan region, including Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, Qal'ih Hasan-Abad, Castle of Darrih or Ghulam-Kush, Furg, Mu'minabad, and Shahanshah or Shah-Dizh. Of special importance are the book's appendices that include a review of research expeditions led by the author, a list of the castles and their locations, and a catalogue of the Isma'ili coins from the Alamut period. The list of the castles has been instrumental in creating a distribution map of the castles in Quhistan in the present research.

In addition to Willey's works, there are two articles by Wolfram Kleiss that suggest some discussion on the Isma'ili fortifications in Iran. In "Assassin Castles in Iran"⁴³ he discusses the area of Isma'ili influence through the distribution of castles in different parts of Iran. In Kleiss' view, the Isma'ili castles were a "network" of defensive structures that protected the Isma'ili centers. He suggests a schematic model of the relationship between the castles in different regions by displaying the location of only twenty castles on a map of Iran, and the arrows connecting the Isma'ili regions together. According to this model, Alamut castle was the political, military and religious center of the Isma'ilis that was linked to the other regions via a group of castles distributed in each region. For example, he considers the castles of Amamih and Firuzkuh as two links in the chain of castles towards the east, from Alamut to Khurasan, or the castle of Savih as a key connection towards the south, from Alamut to Isfahan and Fars.⁴⁴

⁴³ Kleiss, "Assassin Castles in Iran." Wolfram Kleiss, "Assassin Castles in Iran." In *The Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia (Proceeding of a Symposium held in Edinburgh in 1982)*. Edited by Robert Hillenbrand, 315-20. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1994.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 316.

Furthermore, he mentions the possible relationship between Alamut and the Syrian castles through sites in the Azerbaijan region, such as the castles called Qal'ih Zahhak and Qal'ih Dukhtar.

Although Kleiss' model is relatively vague and needs more detail to become persuasive, it clearly reveals his approach to the castles as a line of structures built only for defensive purposes. Later in an entry on castles in the *Encyclopedia Iranica*, he expresses this view of the Isma'ili castles more explicitly by asserting that: "it is clear that the Assassins' castles were in no sense residences for the gentry but were rather purely military installations with barracks for the garrisons."⁴⁵ The textual and historical evidence shows that this was not true for all the Isma'ilis castle, as it is discussed in the following chapters. Being the residence of the Isma'ili imams, a castle like Alamut was possibly more than a merely defensive structure. It is also worth noting that Kleiss does not use the term state in referring to the Isma'ili territories. However, since he does not suggest any detailed discussion of the Isma'ilis' activities, it is difficult to say whether he deliberately avoided the application of the term Isma'ili state.

Some valuable works on the Isma'ili castles have been published in Persian language by Iranian scholars. A book that exclusively deals with the study of the Isma'ili strongholds is the *Qilā'-i Ismā'īlī-i dar Rishtih Kūh-hā-yi Alburz* (Isma'ili Castles in the Alburz Mountain Range) by Manuchihr Sutudih.⁴⁶ The book provides a description of the current state of some of the Isma'ili castles in the northern mountains chain of Iran. Furthermore, the existing information in

⁴⁵ Wolfram Kleiss, "Castles." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. V, Fasc. 1 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1990): 65-70, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/castles>, accessed January 11, 2018.

⁴⁶ Manuchihr Sutudih, *Qilā'-i Ismā'īlī-i dar Rishtih Kūh-hā-yi Alburz* [Isma'ili Castles in the Alburz Mountain Range]. Tehran: Gulshan, 1966.

the primary sources is compiled separately for each case. There are also two monographs about the individual castles, which were temporarily occupied by Isma'ilis during the Alamut period: *Shāh Dizh-i Isfahan* (Shah Dizh of Isfahan)⁴⁷ by Caro Owen Minasian and *Dizh-i Ustunāwand* (Ustunawand Castle)⁴⁸ by Sutudih and others. Both works contain valuable information about the history and architecture of the castles of Shah Dizh near Isfahan and Ustunawand in the Qumis region.

There are only a few publications focusing on the Isma'ili castles in Quhistan as the main subject. These books are all in Persian and are written and published by the local scholars and publishers in the last two decades. The earliest of these works is the *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān* (The History of Quhistan's Isma'ilis), by Muhammad Faruq Furqani.⁴⁹ The book is essentially a historical study of the Isma'ilis of Quhistan from their early presence in the region to the modern time. A chapter of the book, however, is allocated to brief discussions of the present conditions of some of the Isma'ili castles in Quhistan.⁵⁰

Two more recent publications on the castles of the Quhistan region are the *Ṭarrāhī-i Hifāẓat va Sāmāndihī-i Qal'ih-Kuh-i Qā'in* (The Conservation Planning of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in) by Sa'id Sultani and the *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi Khurāsān-i Junūbī* (The Historical Castles in Southern Khurasan) by 'Alireza Nasrabadi.⁵¹ The former is a monograph that proposes a comprehensive

⁴⁷ Caro Owen Minasian, *Shāh Dizh-i Isfahan* [Shah Dizh of Isfahan], Edited by Hishmat Allah Intlkhabi, Isfahan: Naghsh-i Mana, 2008.

⁴⁸ Manuchihr Sutudih, Muhammad Mihryar, and Ahmad Kabiri, *Dizh-i Ustunāwand* [Ustunawand Castle], Gilan: Jahangiri Cultural Institute. 1988.

⁴⁹ Muhamad-Faruq Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān* [The History of Quhistan's Isma'ilis]. Tehran: University of Tehran Publications, 2002.

⁵⁰ The discussion includes Qal'ih-Kuh Duruh, Mu'minabad, Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, Qal'ih-Dukhtar Shurab, Qal'ih-Dukhtar Gavij, Qal'ih-Dukhtar Mazar, Qal'ih-Dukhtar Qa'in, Qal'ih-Rustam Khusf, and Qal'ih-Zari.

⁵¹ Sultani, *Ṭarrāhī-i Hifāẓat*; Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*.

conservation plan for Qal'ih-Kuh, a major Isma'ili castle in Qa'in. The first chapter of the book deals with an architectural study of Qal'ih-Kuh and some of the other Isma'ili castles in the region. The discussion of the other castles is essentially based on the information already suggested by the previous scholars. Sultani, however, provides valuable architectural drawings as well as useful description of different parts of Qal'ih-Kuh.

Nasrabadi's work is a gazetteer of the mountain castles in the modern-day province of Southern Khurasan. Thus, the castles in the vicinity of Gunabad, Turshiz, Zuzan, and Tabas-i Gulshan that are located out of the boundaries of the province are not covered in the book. The book is the result of an archaeological survey in the province undertaken by the author in the 2000s. Most of the castles discussed by Nasrabadi were occupied by the Isma'ilis during the Alamut period. For each case, he provides a brief discussion of the location and the architectural remains of the castle. A major problem of the book is the lack of maps and sufficient illustrations to paint a clear picture of the castles. In addition, the book does not suggest a discussion of the common features of the castles and the typology of the Isma'ili castles in the province. Generally, Nasrabadi's book provides the most comprehensive survey of the castles in the province that constitutes a major part of the historical Quhistan region. This book alongside Willey's *Eagle's Nest* are the primary references for further research on the Isma'ili castles in Quhistan and have been extensively used in the discussion of the architectural remains of the castles in the present research (chapter 4).

Methodology

The present research benefits greatly from the types of analysis that is used commonly in Historical Archaeology, a sub-discipline of archaeology. Historical Archaeology has been largely accepted as a distinct field of archaeology since 1950s. It can be defined in two different ways: the first, simply, is the archaeological study of any past culture that produced textual evidence.⁵² The second, which is dominant in the North American scholarship, refers to the archaeological study of the “modern world” or the world from the so-called “discovery of America” by Columbus in 1492 to present. Regardless of which definition we accept, the purpose of historical archaeology is to reconstruct the past through an analysis of the material evidence in conjunction with the textual evidence.⁵³

Since the archaeological artifacts and textual records are the result of essentially different processes of production, they report on different aspects of the past events. Hence, the fusion of information, attained from these sources, could lead to a more complex narrative of history. A crucial point here is that neither of the archaeological and textual evidence should be assumed to be essentially more credible than the other and gain a dominant position in the interpretation of the historical events.

The methodological approach in the present research is similar to those of Historical Archaeology according to the first definition of the discipline mentioned above. In fact, understanding the material remains of the Isma‘ilis from the Alamut period would not be

⁵² This definition of the discipline is often given in the works of European scholars. For example, see Andr n, *Between Artifacts and Texts*, and Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, 2001.

⁵³ Orser, *Encyclopedia*, xvi-xviii. See also Orser, *Historical Archaeology*, 3-11. More discussions on the applying the methods of Historical Archaeology in various contexts can be found in Gaimster and Majewski, *International Handbook*; Archer and Bartoy, *Between Dirt and Discussion*.

possible without studying the extant primary textual sources. The approach is adopted with an awareness of the general methodological challenges in synthesizing the textual and material evidence.⁵⁴ The information provided by these two sources of evidence do not always complement or confirm each other. The cases of discrepancy between the archaeological remains and the historical accounts could be often observed. In those cases, finding explanations for the discrepancies could lead to alternative reconstruction of the history.⁵⁵

Another general challenge in using archaeological and historical data as complementary sources of evidence is that these two types of evidence are not necessarily always independent, in the epistemic sense. The independent evidence as defined by Kosso is an “evidence that is not itself influenced by or collusion with the claim it is supposed to support.” Therefore, an analysis of the formation process of the evidence and how they made available to us is necessary in determining the epistemic independence of the physical and textual evidence.⁵⁶

Apart from the general methodological challenges that face any other study of this kind, employing both archaeological and historical evidence in this research presents difficulties of its own. Currently, because of the lack of systematic archaeological excavations in most of the castles, our understanding of the architecture of the castles is limited to severely damaged structures that remained above the ground. In many cases, the limitation prevents a clear understanding of the function of the various spaces inside the castles and the spatial relationship between them. Likewise, the phasing of the structures cannot often extend beyond

⁵⁴ For detailed discussion on the methodological issues in the application of historical and material evidence in the interpretation of the past, see Kosso, *Knowing the Past*. See also Andr n, *Between Artifacts and Texts*, 145-77.

⁵⁵ Some examples of the discrepancies between the archaeological and historical evidence are discussed in Little, *Historical Archaeology*, 29-31 and 80-5.

⁵⁶ For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Kosso, “Epistemic Independence,” 177-96.

rough estimations because of the lack of the archaeological evidence. Therefore, in most cases we do not know whether the castles were initially built by the Isma'ilis or were pre-Alamut period structures that were captured and reinforced by the Isma'ilis during the Alamut period. Unfortunately, the common non-intrusive dating methods such as masonry phasing and the study of surface pottery sherds are not helpful enough for the exact dating of the castles. A common method like Building Archaeology is not particularly fruitful in the study of the castles. This is specifically because of the extent of destruction in these sites. The other reason is the consistency of construction techniques in all the remaining structures. Mixed use of material is seen occasionally in some of the castles. However, it is not possible to differentiate between various phases of construction and connect a specific material of building technique to a particular phase of construction in the castles.

Pottery sherds also cannot form a substantial piece of material evidence in the present research. This is mainly due to the paucity of surface pottery sherds in the castles. The surfaces of all the castles studied in the present research are usually covered by the soil and debris from the destruction of the vaults and walls and only a small number of sherds are still visible above the ground. In addition, there is no comprehensive survey of historical pottery and ceramic sherds in the region to allow typo chronology of the sherds and the discussion of importations versus local production (pottery sherds and masonry are discussed in detail in chapter 5).

The dating of the Isma'ili castles using the textual sources has also its own share of limitations. Except for a few cases, there is no mention of most of the castles in the primary sources. Even in the cases that the castles are mentioned, there is often no information regarding the dating of the castles. Even if such information is available, the Persian or Arabic

terms that are used do not essentially refer to the establishment of the castles by the Ismaʿilis. Except for the term *sākhtan* that could be comfortably translated to “build,” other terms such as *banā kardan* and *imārat kardan* would either refer to “build” or “restore.” To emphasize this uncertainty about the vocabulary, the original terms are always mentioned in the translation of the primary accounts in the present research.

The other limiting factor in this research is the paucity of genuine Ismaʿili sources from the Alamut period. Except for general historical texts, some of which mentioned in the review of literature above, there is no available Ismaʿili administrative document, such as cadastral records or endowment deeds, from the period. Documents of this nature could provide us with invaluable information about economic activities and day-to-day existence of the Ismaʿilis in their territories. Fortunately, there are other primary sources that could be helpful in the study of the economic context of the region.

The most notable of these sources are the accounts provided by historical geographers and travelers on various aspects of the Quhistan region (e.g., communication routes, trade commodities, centers of population and production). The examples are the *Sūrat al-Ard* (The Face of the Earth)⁵⁷ by Ibn Hawqal (d. c. 978), the *Kitāb al-Masālik wa l-Mamālik* (The Book of Roads and Kingdoms)⁵⁸ by al-Istakhri (d. 957), the *Muʿjam al-Buldān* (Dictionary of Countries)⁵⁹ by Yaqut al-Hamawi (d. 1229), the *Safarnāmiḥ* (Travelogue)⁶⁰ by Nasir-i Khusraw (d. 1088), and

⁵⁷ Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-ʿArdh* [The Face of the Earth]. 2 Volumes. Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1938.

⁵⁸ al-Istakhri, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Farisi, *Masālik al-Mamālik* [Routes of the Realms]. Cairo: al-Hiyat al-Amma li-Qusur al-Thiqafa, no date.

⁵⁹ al-Hamawi, Yaqut ibn ʿAbd Allah, *Muʿjam al-Buldān* [Dictionary of Countries]. 7 Volumes. Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1995.

⁶⁰ Nasir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāmiḥ* [Travelogue]. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zawar, 2001.

the *Nuzhat al-Qulūb* (Pleasure of the Hearts)⁶¹ by Hamdallah Mustawfi. Although these texts are not directly related to the Isma‘ili history, they are helpful in understanding the environmental context in which the Isma‘ilis operated.

Another method that has been employed in the present research is spatial analysis that is often used in the discipline of Spatial Archaeology. Spatial Archaeology deals with space as a product of human influence on the environment and analyses the human use of space through the identification of patterns. Spatial Archaeology investigates the relationship between the human activities at every scale and space, from the small pieces of artifacts left by human communities to the large-scale interventions by them in their environments.⁶² These relationships usually are shown on distribution maps.

The maps represent various aspects of environment and humanities by means of different abstract elements. Some general criteria for the elements on the distribution maps are suggested by Clarke. First, “elements on maps have distributions which may be statistically summarized.” This is especially important in the study of distribution of potteries and shards in the archaeological sites. Second, “elements on maps have qualitative and quantitative values.” Third, “elements on maps have qualitative and quantitative values.” Third, elements on maps may have a specific structure.” For example, their distribution follows geometric or mathematical patterns. And finally, “elements on maps may have associations or correlations with other sets of elements within and beyond the system at hand.”⁶³

⁶¹ Mustawfi, Hamdallah, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb* [Pleasure of the Hearts]. Edited by Sayyid Muhammad Dabirsiyaqi. Qazvin: Hadis-i Imruz, 2002.

⁶² Clarke, *Spatial Archaeology*, 9. See also Hodder, “Spatial Studies in Archaeology,” 33-64.

⁶³ Clarke, *Spatial Archaeology*, 10.

Considering the Quhistan region to be a space in which the Ismaʿilis were active, one can investigate the quality of the Ismaʿili presence in this region through the lens of Spatial Archaeology. The study of the spatial elements in the present study corresponds more to the last criteria mentioned above. The castles are the most prominent material remains of the Ismaʿili life during the Alamut period and the only available structures for the examination of the nature of the Ismaʿili presence in Quhistan. Therefore, the castles constitute the primary spatial elements for the purpose of the present research. Analyzing the relationship between the distribution of the castles and the other environmental elements of Quhistan, such as routes, sources of water, and agricultural and other production centers, could lead us to a better understanding of the extent of the Ismaʿili involvement in the exploitation of the resources in their territory.

All the maps in the present dissertation are made using Google Earth satellite photos. The layouts of individual cases were based on the satellite views of the sites and drawn by AutoCAD software. The location of the architectural elements and details of structures inside the castles were revised during the fieldwork in the region and on-site visits of the castles. The present layouts are detailed enough for the purpose of the present research. However, more detailed measurements and documentation of the structures would be necessary for possible future excavations and conservation of the remaining structures in the castles.

The approaches of Landscape Archaeology have also potential to provide important insight into how the Ismaʿili castles functioned and how was the life of the Ismaʿilis in the Quhistan region during the Alamut period. As defined by Bruno and Thomas, Landscape Archaeology “is an archaeology of place, not just as defined in a set of physical nodes in space

but in all its lived dimensions: experiential, social, ontological, epistemological, emotional, as place and emplacement concern social identity, as much as they concern the economic and environmental aspects of life.”⁶⁴ Pioneered by T.J. Wilkinson, the landscape approach in the recent scholarship has already lead to innovative interpretations of the relationship between rural settlements and medieval fortified structures in other contexts.⁶⁵ The present research only touches on the kind of analysis that is often used by landscape archaeologists. This is mainly because the present research focuses primarily on the architecture of the castles and the fieldwork carried out by the present author was essentially concentrated on the castles themselves. This has been a mainly a practical choice in the present study. Currently, the castles are the only structures in Quhistan that could be easily attributed to the Isma‘ilis according to the historical sources at least. For that reason, any investigation of the physical evidence of the Isma‘ili presence in the region should begin with the study of the castles which is presently underdeveloped. A detailed study of the castles, therefore, is an inevitable choice prior to any future extensive investigation of the landscape of Quhistan during the Alamut period.

The paucity of published archaeological surveys in the Quhistan region is the other reason for not attempting to provide a detailed landscape analysis of the region in the present study. Different parts of Quhistan have been studied in a number of archaeological field surveys carried out by Iranian archaeologists from the Southern Khurasan Cultural Heritage

⁶⁴ David and Thomas, “Landscape Archaeology: Introduction,” 38. For an overview of the development of Landscape Archaeology, see Kluiving and Guttman-Bond, *Landscape Archaeology Between Art and Science*, 11-5.

⁶⁵ Wilkinson, *Archaeological Landscapes of the Near East*. See for example Eger, *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*; Walker, *Jordan in the Late Middle Ages*; Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*.

Organization (SKCHTO) since 1990s.⁶⁶ Most of these studies remain unpublished and were not accessible to the present author.

The only available published example is the archaeological surveys at the district of Sarbishih.⁶⁷ Examining that example suggests that the main purpose of these surveys was to create an inventory of historic monuments and sites in the region. Therefore, a short description and some illustrations are provided for every historic site or building in the region. The descriptions also include a discussion of ceramic evidence for the archaeological sites. The discussion of the ceramics, however, are too general and the suggested dating of the sites are not often based on detailed analysis of the surface evidence. In most cases the sites are dated roughly to “the Middle Islamic period” or “from the Seljuq to Ilkhanid periods.” It is, therefore, difficult to distinguish the sites that were occupied or developed during the so-called Alamut period. At any rate, the surveys are of special importance and their possible future publication would provide a great opportunity for more in depth study of the archaeological landscape of the Quhistan region.

⁶⁶ For a list of archaeological surveys in Quhistan and Khurasan, see Labaf-Khaniki, “Murūr-i Fa’āliyatha-yi,” 137-58; Zari’i and Surush, “Pazhūhishha-yi Bāstānshinākhtī-yi,” 137-58.

⁶⁷ Farjami, *Barrisī-yi Bāstānshinasī-yi Shahrīstān-i Sarbishih*.

Chapter 1. The Ismaʿilis in Iran and Quhistan: a brief history

A discussion of the history of the Ismaʿilis during the so-called Alamut period appears in the work of several other scholars. The most notable of these works are the detailed studies of Hodgson and Daftary, which are frequently cited in the present chapter.¹ This chapter provides a general history of the Ismaʿilis in Iran and the expansion of their power during the Alamut period. The history of the Ismaʿilis' activities in Iran and in Quhistan before the Alamut period is discussed briefly in the first two sections.

The other sections focus on the Ismaʿili history during the Alamut period. Generally, the history of the Ismaʿilis of Iran during the Alamut period could be divided into four phases based on the changes in their internal and external policies as well as the nature of the interrelationship between them and the outside world.² These phases are: from the capture of Alamut castle to the death of Hasan-i Sabbah (1090-1124), after the death of Hasan-i Sabbah to the reign of Hasan II (1124-62), the period of "resurrection" (1162-1210), and the period of "rapprochement with Sunni Islam" (1210-56).

The available primary sources provide us with limited information regarding the Ismaʿili activities in the Quhistan region. Nevertheless, one can still gain a general understanding of the process of expansion of the Ismaʿili power in the Quhistan region through a careful examination of this information. Analyzing the available sporadic historical data, the sections on Quhistan discuss the gradual nature of the Ismaʿili dominance over the region, the frequently changing

¹ See Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*.

² Daftary divides the Alamut period into three primary phases, discussing the rulership of Hasan-i Sabbah and his two successors as one phase. This division is more based on the religious dimensions of the Ismaʿili history during the Alamut period considering that the three rulers before Hasan II were not the Ismaʿili imams. This is discussed in detail in chapter 2.

Isma'ili offensive and defensive policies in their borders and the transfer of the Isma'ilis' headquarters in each phase. The discussion will also help us to estimate roughly the date of the acquisition of some of the major castles of the region by the Isma'ilis during the Alamut period (Fig. 1-1 and 1-2).

The Early Isma'ili *da'wa* in Iran before the Alamut period

Isma'ilism is one of the several religious branches of Islam, which emerged as a distinctive Shi'i sect in 765 following the death of imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (Fig. 1-3). In 909, the Isma'ilis officially established a Shi'i state in modern Tunisia, known as the Fatimid caliphate, which later became one of the major political powers of the medieval Islamic world.³ The Fatimids benefited from a systematic method of political-religious propaganda designed to extend their power and rule over the Muslim communities in other parts of the Islamic world. This method was called *da'wa* (call, summon, or invitation). The *da'wa* organization was composed of a network of missionaries, called *dā'ī* (caller or summoner). The *dā'īs* disseminated the religious and political beliefs of the Fatimid Isma'ilis, known as *al-da'wa al-hādiya* (the rightly guiding mission) or *da'wat al-ḥaqq* (the summons to the truth), not only within the Fatimid dominions but also in the other parts of the Islamic world. The Fatimid imam was at the top of the hierarchy of *da'wa* organization. Under the imam was ranked the *bāb* (Gate) or *dā'ī al-du'āt*, a higher-ranking *dā'ī* who was in fact the executive head of the organization. The *bāb* was responsible for appointing

³ For the history of the Fatimid state and its religious and political program, see al- Nu'man b. Muhammad, *Founding the Fatimid State*; Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids*; Brett, *The Fatimid Empire*. For a brief overview of the Fatimid history, see Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 144-255, Jamal, *Surviving the Mongols*, 22-31.

the chief local *dā'īs* (called *ḥujja*) who operated in different parts of the world, known as *Jazīra* (literally, island, plural, *Jazā'ir*).⁴

One of these *Jazā'ir* in which the Fatimid *dā'īs* (including a *ḥujja* and other subordinate *dā'īs*) operated was al-Daylam, covering the northern, northwestern, and central regions of Iran. Khurasan was possibly considered a *Jazīra* by itself or was included in the larger *Jazīra* of al-Hind (India).⁵ Some biographical information is available about a few of the prominent *dā'īs* of pre-Alamut period, including Abu 'Abd Allah al-Khadim, Abu Sa'id al-Sha'rani, Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani, Ahmad b. Ibrahim al-Nishaburi, Hamid al-Din al-Kirmanī, al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi, and Nasir-i Khusraw.⁶ However, nothing is known about most of the other subordinate *dā'īs* who operated within the Iranian territories. This was possibly because of the clandestine nature of *dā'īs'* activities to avoid persecution by the local authorities.

By the late 11th century, the number of converts to Isma'ilism in different regions of Iran had grown as a result of the activities of several *dā'īs* operating in Isfahan, Rayy, Fars, Daylam, Adharbayjan, Sistan, Khurasan, and Transoxania. Most of the new converts were previously the followers of other branches of Islam.⁷ The Fatimid *da'wa* was particularly successful in the

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the organization of the Isma'ili *da'wa* under the Fatimids, see Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 212-21. See also Halm, *The Fatimids*, 56-70.

⁵ Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 217-8. Various numbers and names are mentioned for the *Jazā'ir* in the primary sources. According to al-Qadi al-Nu'mān, there were twelve *Jazā'ir* in which the Fatimid *dā'īs* operated. See al-Nu'mān, *Ta'wīl al-Da'ā'im*, Vol. 2, 74, and Vol.3, 48-9.

⁶ A detailed discussion of the *da'wa* activities and the prominent *dā'īs* in the Iranian lands during the Fatimid period is provided in Daftary, *Ismaili History and Intellectual Traditions*, 185-94. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 203-7.

⁷ Among these new converts to Isma'ilism were possibly some small groups of the followers of the pre-Islamic religious traditions in Iran such as Manichaeism and Mazdakism. The available primary sources particularly mention the conversion of a group of Mazdakites, known as Parsiyan, to Isma'ilism during the life of Hasan-i Sabbah through a certain *dā'ī*, Dihkhuda Kiykhusraw. See Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 147-50; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 186-9; Madelung, *Religious Trends*, 9-12; Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 318.

regions with Shi'i population (from different branches) as well as the regions that had already a considerable Isma'ili population because of the activities of the *dā'īs* of Qarmati branch, such as Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Nasafi, Abu Hatim al-Razi, and 'Abd al-Malik al-Kawkabi.⁸

Another catalyst in the success of the Fatimid *da'wa* in the Iranian lands was the widespread perception of socio-economic injustices caused by the administrative policies of the Seljuq Turks. The Seljuqs were not the first Turkish dynasty to dominate the Persian lands. Prior to them, two other Turkish dynasties, namely Ghaznavids (977-1186) and Qarakhanids (999-1211), were able to take control of some parts of Persia. Nationalist and anti-Turk sentiments increased among some Persian social classes since the rise of these dynasties to power. These Turkish dynasties were considered aliens in Persia who pose a threat to the Persianized Islamic culture that was advocated by the previous dynasties such as Saffarids (861-1003), Samanids (819-999), and Buyids (934-1062).⁹

The anti-Seljuq sentiments in Persia had also economic dimensions. The Seljuqs expanded the system of *iqṭā'* or allotted land that allowed the Seljuq local *amīrs* who held different localities as their *iqṭā'* to impose taxes on the people who lived in the places under their jurisdiction. It appears that the arbitrary nature of the taxes levied on people in different locations by the Seljuq *amīrs* led to a "virtual subjugation of the Persian peasantry" as discussed

⁸ On the initiation of the Isma'ili *da'wa* in Persian territories and the activities of the *dā'īs* of Qarmati branch see, Daftary, *Isma'ili History and Intellectual Traditions*, 183-9. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*, 189-233. See also Nizam al-Mulk, and Darke. H. (tr.). *The Book of Government*, 208-18 and 220-25. For the Persian text, see Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyār al-Mulūk*, 289-95 and 297-305.

⁹ Daftary, *The Isma'īlis*, 316. It is reported that Hasan-i Sabbah said that the Turks were not human beings and were *jinn* (supernatural creatures created from fire) and ruled over the world before Adam. See Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib and S. J. Badakhchani, *Spiritual Resurrection*, 78. Similar sentiments against the Turkish rulers are reflected in *Dīvān* of Nasir-i Khusraw. See Tetley, *The Ghaznavid and Seljuk Turks*, 18-9.

by Daftary.¹⁰ It was in such an environment of conflict that Hasan-i Sabbah, the founder and the charismatic leader of the so-called Nizari Isma'ili state, began his career as an Isma'ili *dā'ī* and launched his revolutionary movement against the Seljuq state.

Some information about the life of Hasan-i Sabbah is remaining in the works of Juvayni, Rashid al-Din, and Kahani who quoted the now lost biography of Hasan-i Sabbah, *Sargudhasht-i Sayyidinā*. Hasan-i Sabbah was born to a Twelver Shi'i family. He was introduced to Isma'ilism while living in Rayy, by certain local Isma'ilis, Amira Zarrab and Bu-Najm Siraj. Hasan officially converted to Isma'ilism at the age of seventeen by pledging the oath of allegiance to the Isma'ili imam through the intermediary of a certain Mu'min. Mu'min was a lower ranking local *dā'ī* who got the permission to *da'wa* from the then chief *dā'ī* of 'Irāq al-'Ajam,¹¹ 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Attash. While staying in Rayy in 1072, 'Attash recognized Hasan's talents and appointed him as the deputy of *da'wa* (*niyābat-i da'wa*) and dispatched him to Egypt to receive special training at the court of the Fatimid imam, al-Mustansir (r. 1036- 94). In 1078, after a long journey, Hasan arrived in Egypt where he stayed about three years. Little is known about Hasan's life in Egypt. It is known, however, that at some point he came into conflict with al-Mustansir's vizier and military commander and the chief *dā'ī* (*dā'ī al-du'āt*), Badr al-Jamali (d. 1094), over the potential successor of al-Mustansir. Hasan supported the succession of Nizar (d. 1095), the oldest son of al-Mustansir, while Badr al-Jamali favored the accession of al-Mustansir's

¹⁰ Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 317. On the Seljuq's economic policies and their implementation of system of *iqṭā'* or allotted land, see Bertels, *Nasir-i Hosrov i Ismailizm*, 21-54. See also Durand-Guedy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers*, 117-22.

¹¹ 'Irāq al-'Ajam was a medieval name given to the large area covering most of the provinces in the central and western parts of Iran.

youngest son, Ahmad, known as al-Musta'li Billah (r. 1094-1101).¹² Hasan was banished from Egypt by Badr al-Jamali, and eventually returned to Iran in around 1081.¹³ At this point, he officially began his mission as an Isma'ili *dā'ī* in Iran.

Hasan travelled extensively in the service of *da'wa* for nine years in different parts of Iran, including Isfahan, Kirman, Khuzistan, Qumis, Qazvin, and the regions of Daylam. During this time, he was seeking an appropriate region and opportunity to establish his new movement. Eventually, he went to a place adjacent to Alamut, called Andij-Rud. During the course of his stay in Andij-Rud, a large number of local people converted to Isma'ilism, including the bulk of garrison in the Alamut castle (Fig. 1-4). The Alamut castle was initially built (*sākht*) by a Justanid ruler (ca. 791-895), al-Da'i ilal-Haq Hasan ibn Zayd al-Baqiri, in 860;¹⁴ and at the time was a property of the Seljuq sultan, Malikshah (r. 1072- 92), and was held by a certain Zaydi 'Alid called Mahdi.¹⁵

The Alamut castle is located about 220 m above the ground, on the summit of an isolated rock to the north of a village known today as Gazurkhan. Hasan obtained the control of

¹² On the succession crisis of Nizar-Musta'li, see Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 241-2; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 61-6. See also Walker and Walker, "Succession to Rule in the Shiite Caliphate," 248-58.

¹³ On the conversion of Hasan and his journey to Egypt, see Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 311-3; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 41-61. See also Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 667-9; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 187-91; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 98-102; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 134-8.

¹⁴ Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 103. No archaeological evidence in support of this claim have been found in the recent excavations at the Alamut castle. The date, however, seems likely. Surface pottery evidence from the castles of Kangilu, Markuh in the mountains of Mazandaran province, just to the north of the Alamut region, suggest that all of the sites were occupied at least from the 8th century. Other castles such as Marun-i Parchikila, castles of Amrih, Divchal-i Takam, Kafar- Qal'ih dated back to the pre-Islamic period. A relatively similar structure from the Sasanian period is Qal'ih-Dukhtar near Firuzabad, Fars. See Surtiji, *Qilā'-i Bāstānī-yi Māzandarān*; Kleiss, "Castles."

¹⁵ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 669-70; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 191-5; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 102-4; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 138-42. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 313-6; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 41-61.

the castle in 1090, and reinforced it as the headquarters of his open revolt against the Seljuq government. The seizure of the Alamut castle marks the beginning of the so-called Alamut period. The castle remained an important center of the Isma'ili power in Iran until the Mongol invasion in 1256 that puts an end to the Alamut period. The history of the Isma'ilis in Iran and in Quhistan during the Alamut period is reviewed in separate sections below. Prior to that, it will, however, be necessary to discuss briefly the pre-Alamut period activities of the Isma'ilis in the Quhistan region.

Pre-Alamut period Isma'ili activities in Quhistan

The geographical conditions of Quhistan made it a historically inaccessible region and a favorable refuge for religious minorities and ideal for the growth of local powers. The region was a refuge for Zoroastrians for much of the early Islamic period. In the early Abbasid period, it was a center for the anti-'Abbasid movement of Hamza b. Adharak (d. 828).¹⁶

Occupation of the mountainous and upland regions as the centers of religious and social minorities or deemed bandits, insurgents, and rebels is seen in other contexts as well. There were, for example, monastic communities in Syrian Jibal or Christian communities in Rough Cilicia (the mountainous coastal region along the south coast of modern Turkey). These communities shifted to the upland regions in late Roman period and continued occupation of those regions in the early Islamic period.¹⁷

¹⁶ Bosworth, "The Isma'ilis of Quhistan," 221. For Hamza b. Adharak's movement, see Bosworth, "Ḥamza b. Ādrak," 648. See also Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Isma'iliyān-i Quhistan*, 166-70.

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of the occupation of upland sites in *thughūr* (frontier regions), see Eger, *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, 191-4, and 202-6. On highland communities of Rough Cilicia, see Shaw, "Bandit Highlands and

As a hardly accessible mountainous region Quhistan was a potentially ideal location for the activities of the subordinate Ismaʿili *dāʿīs* who were dispatched by the chief *dāʿīs* operating in Khurasan and Sistan.¹⁸ Ismaʿilism was introduced to Khurasan in the second half of the ninth century by a certain *dāʿī* called Ghiyath. While in Khurasan, Ghiyath managed to convert a powerful Samanid *amīr*, al-Husayn b. ʿAli al-Marwzi who later became a *dāʿī* himself and had major influence in the mass conversion of people living in his domain in Khurasan, particularly the districts of Taliqan, Maymana, Herat, Gharjistan, and Ghur.¹⁹

Later in early tenth century, al-Marwazi's successor, Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Nasafi (d. 943) converted the Samanid ruler *amīr* Nasr II b. Ahmad (r. 914-43). Enjoying the support of the Samanid ruler, the Ismaʿilism could spread much faster in different districts of Khurasan, including Quhistan. The Ismaʿilis' fortune, however, reversed by the death of Nasr II b. Ahmad and the accession to power of his son, Nuh I (r. 943-54), who turned away from his father "unorthodoxy." Nuh I ordered the Ismaʿilis to be persecuted, and al-Nasafi, and his associates were executed at Bukhara in 943.²⁰

During the Samanid period, the Quhistan region was in the hands of the Simjurids, a family of Turkish origin who hold the region as their *iqṭāʿ* by the confirmation of the Samanid sultans. The historical evidence suggests that the Simjurids were possibly sympathetic towards

Lowland Peace," 237-70. The impact of monastic communities on creation of a kind of Christian literature of resistance in the early Islamic period is discussed in Sahner, *Christian Martyrs Under Islam*, 212-6.

¹⁸ Little is known about the Ismaʿili penetration in Khurasan and Quhistan and the details of the conversion of the local population. What is presented here is based on a few available primary sources that provides us only a general picture of the process of the spread of Ismaʿilism in Quhistan.

¹⁹ Stern, *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism*, 195; Stern, "The Early Ismāʿīlī Missionaries," 60-1. See also Daftary, *Ismaili History and Intellectual Traditions*, 183-4.

²⁰ Stern, *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism*, 220. See also Daftary, *Ismaili History and Intellectual Traditions*, 186; Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 113; Furqani, *Tārikh-i Ismāʿīliyan-i Quhistān*, 179-80.

the Ismaʿilis. The Simjurids had generally friendly relationship with some of the Shiʿi dynasties of the Caspian region. According to Minhaj-i Siraj, the Simjurid ruler, Abu ʿAli al-Mozaffar (d. 997) intended to recite the *khutba* in the name of the Fatimid caliph, al-Mustansir, after the completion of the congregational mosque at Nishapur. This probably never happened due to the domination of the Ghaznavids (977-1186) over the Greater Khurasan.²¹

The Ismaʿili *dāʿīs* possibly had more freedom in their activities during the rule of the Simjurids in Quhistan. The subordinate *dāʿīs* in the region were appointed by the successors of al-Nasafi, such as his son Masʿud, the *dāʿī* Abu Yaqub al-Sijistani, and perhaps later by Nasir-i Khusraw (d. 1088), who were active in the neighboring regions.²² No information is available about the local *dāʿīs* and their operation in Quhistan before the Alamut period. It is known, however, that the chief local *dāʿī* in the years prior to the Alamut period was a certain *khwaja* Adib Muhammad Tahir-i Sajzi.²³ Quhistan had possibly a considerable Ismaʿili population as a result of the activities of these local *dāʿīs*. Therefore, it was considered an ideal region for the spread of Hasan-i Sabbah's movement in the Alamut period.

Phase 1: From the capture of Alamut castle to the death of Hasan-i Sabbah (1090-1124)

Immediately after the capture of Alamut castle, Hasan-i Sabbah started a comprehensive fortification program in the castle, making it prepared for the forthcoming attacks. From his

²¹ Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.1, 213. See also Gardizi, *Zayn al-Akḥbār*, 370-5; Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismāʿīliyān-i Quhistan*, 185-9.

²² For Abu Yaqub al-Sijistani, see Walker, "ABŪ YAʿQŪB SEJESTĀNĪ." See also Stern, *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism*, 221-2 and 308-9. For Nasir-i Khusraw, see Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 205-7; Bertels, *Nasir-i Hosrov i Ismailizm*, 149-256.

²³ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyān*, 107; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 144. See also Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismāʿīliyān-i Quhistān*, 211.

center at Alamut, he then dispatched several *dā'īs* to various regions to extend his movement in the other parts of the Seljuq's domain. One of these regions was Quhistan, which had already a considerable Isma'ili population (see below). Meanwhile, Hasan was expanding his power over the area adjacent to Alamut castle through the conversion of the local community or by sending military forces to take control of the villages and other castles in that region. The Isma'ilis' increasing activities in the Alamut region provoked a reaction from a certain Seljuq *amīr*, Yurun Tash, who was the *iqṭā'* (land-grant) holder of the district of Alamut. Yurun Tash constantly attacked the foot of Alamut and massacred and plundered the inhabitants of the area.²⁴ He was not, however, able to capture the Alamut castle and stop the progress of Hasan Sabbah's followers. Consequently, the Isma'ili movement became a matter of concern for the Seljuq's central government.

In 1092, Malikshah, on the advice of his great vizier Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092), sent two armies against the Isma'ilis to Alamut and Quhistan, led by *amīr* Arsalan Tash and Qizil Sarigh respectively. The campaign of the two Seljuq *amīrs* lasted for about a couple of months. Nevertheless, Hasan-i Sabbah and his followers resisted the Seljuq army's attacks. Eventually, the Isma'ilis received support from the outside of the castle and managed to defeat Arsalan Tash's army by launching a surprise attack against them.

On 14 October 1092, Nizam al-Mulk was assassinated allegedly by a certain Isma'ili *fidā'ī* (literally, devotee), Abu Tahir Arrani. *Fidā'īs* were self-sacrificing devotees that were sent on mission to assassinate the prominent religiopolitical adversaries of the Isma'ilis during the

²⁴ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 671-4; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 195-200; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 105-7; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 142-4. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 318-9; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 72-4.

Alamut period.²⁵ Juvayni and Rashid al-Din suggest that Nizam al-Mulk was the first victim of the Ismaʿili *fidāʿīs*. Other contemporary sources, however, state that Nizam al-Mulk assassination was approved by Malikshah or the sultan's wife Terken Khatun, who were worried about the power and influence of the grand vizier. The latter version has usually been regarded as most credible in the modern scholarship on the Seljuq history.²⁶ Shortly after Nizam al-Mulk, Malikshah himself died in November 1092. Consequently, the army of his other *amīr*, Qizil Sarigh, dispersed and the Ismaʿilis survived the first major Seljuq assault of their history.²⁷

The dispute among Malikshah's sons over the Seljuq throne led to a long civil war, giving the Ismaʿilis a tremendous opportunity to stabilize their position.²⁸ The Ismaʿili power particularly grew during the unstable reign of Malikshah's eldest son, Barkyaruq (r. 1092-1105). During these years, the Ismaʿilis took the control of several castles in different regions including the major castles of Lamsar²⁹ in the western Alamut, Girdkuh in Qumis, and Shahdiz near the

²⁵ For the Ismaʿili *fidāʿīs*, see Daftary, "FEDĀ'Ī."

²⁶ Bosworth, "The Political and Dynastic History," 99-102; Hillenbrand, "1092: A Murderous Year," 281-96; Bowen and Bosworth, "Nizām Al-Mulk." Yavari, *The Future of Iran's Past*, 96-9. There is also the following version of the story by the Shi'i scholar, Muqatil ibn 'Atiyyah, suggesting that Nizam al-Mulk was assassinated by the order of the "stubborn" Sunni scholars: "But some sunni ulema that insisted on the falsehood remained on their creed like God said (became as rocks, or worse than rocks, for hardness, 2:74). And they started to plot against the king and Nizam Al-Mulk and blamed him for that because he was the planning mind for the land, until the dirty hand got him -by the orders of those stubborn sunnis- and they assassinated him in the 12th of Ramadan, year 485AH, and after that they assassinated Malikshah Saljuqi (Malikshah I). We are to God and we shall get back to Him. They were killed on the way of God and for the truth and faith, so congratulations to them and to everyone that gets killed on the way of God and for the truth and the faith." See Muqatil ibn 'Atiyyah and Taher Al-Shemaly (tr.), *Mu'tamar 'Ulamā' Baghdād*. [The Conference of Baghdad's Ulema], available at <https://cupdf.com/document/baghdad-ulema-conference.html>, accessed May 8, 2022.

²⁷ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 674-8; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 201-6; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 107-13; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 144-9. See also Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 319-20; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 74-5.

²⁸ For a brief discussion of the succession crisis after the death of Malikshah, Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, 72-80.

²⁹ Alternatively known as Lamsar, Lambasar, Lanbasar.

Seljuq capital, Isfahan. Alarmed by the growing influence of the Isma'ilis, Barkyaruq came to an agreement with his half-brother, Ahmad Sanjar (r. 1118-53) the ruler of Khurasan, in 1101 to send armies in order to eliminate the Isma'ilis from their territories.³⁰ Despite the assaults and massacre made by the Seljuq forces, no serious damage was done to the structure of the Isma'ili power. In addition, Hasan-i Sabbah managed to reduce the pressure on the Isma'ilis by making a peace deal with Ahmad Sanjar around 1103 (discussed in chapter 6).³¹

Barkyaruq died in 1105 and was succeeded by Muhammad Tapar (r. 1105-18). Immediately after establishing himself as the undisputed head of the Seljuq state, Muhammad Tapar launched a series of major campaigns against the Isma'ilis. In 1107, he successfully captured the castle of Shahdiz and killed Ahmad ibn 'Attash, the Isma'ili commander of the castle and the son of 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Attash, the former chief *dā'ī* of Iran. Later the Seljuq forces captured the other Isma'ili castles around Arrajan, to the south of Isfahan. Muhammad Tapar then directed his attention to the headquarters of the Isma'ilis in Alamut. He assigned several of his *amīrs* to the mission of seizing the major castle of Alamut and Lambsar. In 1109, *atabeg* Anushtagin Shirgir, the governor of Savih, began a prolonged war of attrition against the Isma'ilis of Alamut by systematically destroying the crops of the region for eight consecutive years and besieging the Isma'ilis in their castles. Despite the harsh condition caused by the paucity of food and water inside the castle, the Isma'ilis did not surrender. The Seljuqs were on the verge of victory in 1118. However, receiving the news of Muhammad Tapar's death,

³⁰ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 678-9; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 207-9; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 113-20; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 149-56 and 157-8. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 320-5 and 329-31; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 84-9.

³¹ On the peace deal between Sultan Sanjar and Hasan-i Sabbah, see Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 122.

Shirgir's forces withdrew from the siege, and the greatest Seljuq offensive against the Isma'ilis was ended.³²

After the death of Muhammad Tapar, the Seljuqs entered another period of civil war that prevented them from launching any serious campaign against the Isma'ilis. In addition, the Isma'ilis were in peace with Ahmad Sanjar that was considered the *de facto* head of the Seljuq state after Muhammad Tapar. The Isma'ilis, therefore, obtained an ideal opportunity to recover from several years of Seljuq's offensive and to stabilize their power in their scattered regions. It seems that the peace was equally important for Sultan Sanjar; directly after the death of Muhammad Tapar- an event that would drastically change the political milieu- Sanjar dispatched Ibrahim-i Sahlavi to Alamut to renew his peaceful arrangements with Hasan-i Sabbah.³³ The peace, however, was not stable and further conflicts arose later after the death of Hasan-i Sabbah.

Phase 1 in Quhistan: From the advent of Husayn-i Qa'ini to the death of Hasan-i Sabbah

The Alamut period phase of the Isma'ili activities in Quhistan started in 1091-2 when Hasan-i Sabbah dispatched Husayn-i Qa'ini as a *dā'ī* to the region, to lead the new Isma'ili movement.³⁴ Ibn al-Athir reported an attack by the Isma'ilis to "a great caravan going from Kirman to Qa'in"

³² Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 680-1; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 211-3; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 120-1 and 123-30; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 156-7 and 160-7; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.24, 32-8. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 335-8; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 95-8.

³³ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 130. Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 167; and Hafiz Abru, *Majma' al-Tawārīkh*, 217.

³⁴ Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 318.

as early as the beginning of Husayn's operation in the Quhistan region.³⁵ Under the leadership of Husayn-i Qa'ini, the Isma'ilis embarked on a more offensive strategy in the region. Following the expansionist model that was already in progress in Alamut by Hasan-i Sabbah, the Isma'ilis of Quhistan began also capturing and establishing strong fortifications in different parts of the region.

As mentioned above, the increasing Isma'ili activities in Alamut and Quhistan provoked the immediate response of the Seljuq Sultan, Malikshah. Two armies were sent to Alamut and Quhistan. The campaign against Quhistan was led by a certain Seljuq *amir*, Qizil Sarigh.³⁶ Supported by the troops of Khurasan and Sistan, Qizil Sarigh besieged the Isma'ilis in the castle (*hiṣār*) of Duruh, in the extreme southeast of Quhistan, which was the only Isma'ili fortification in the region at the time. The siege lasted for about five months, but made no progress. Eventually, the Qizil Sarigh's army dispersed upon receiving the news of Malikshah's death in November 1092.³⁷

In common with the other regions, the years after the death of Malikshah gave the Isma'ilis of Quhistan an opportunity for expansion. Enjoying the support of a certain al-Munavvar, who was a respected local chief and a descendant of the Simjurid *amirs*,³⁸ the Isma'ilis gained the control of Tabas-i Masina, some 60 km to the north of Duruh, around

³⁵ Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.23, 288.

³⁶ Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 319.

³⁷ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 107; Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 675-6; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 202-3; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 144-5; Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, 386.

³⁸ On the Simjurids, see Treadwell, "Simjurids."

1092.³⁹ This is perhaps the time when the Ismaʿilis occupied the castles of Kafaran and Musalmanan (see chapter 4) to the east of Tabas-i Masina.

From Duruh and Tabas, the Ismaʿilis extended their territory towards the north, northwest, and west, quickly seizing control of the main towns in the region, including Khur and Khusf, Zuzan, Qaʿin, and Tun.⁴⁰ Although it is not explicitly mentioned in the primary sources, one can imagine that many of the castles near these towns were possibly captured by the Ismaʿilis during this time. The Ismaʿilis also attempted to expand their southern frontier by attacking Nih (or possibly the Castle of Shahanshah) in the north of Sistan as early as 1095. However, their army was confronted and defeated by the army of Sistan that chased after the Ismaʿilis to a district called Mukhtaran (some 60 km to the southeast of Khusf).⁴¹ This suggests that by 1095 the area beyond this point and perhaps the castles like Qalʿih- Qalaʿ of Shadan, Qalʿih-Duktar of Nasrabad, Qalʿih-Qalaʿ of Chahkand, and Qalʿih-Dukhtar/Pisar of Rubiyat were under the control of the Ismaʿilis.

In 1100, the Ismaʿilis of Quhistan were organized enough to send an army of 5,000 foot soldiers to help Amirdad Habashi in the battle against Sultan Sanjar and *amīr* Bazghash. Despite receiving help from the Ismaʿilis, Habashi's army was defeated in the battle.⁴² Nothing is known

³⁹ See Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.23, 292.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, 388. Later in 1101, the Ismaʿilis attacked another location in Sistan called Darq and killed a certain scholar (*dānishmand*) bul-Hasan Qazi. See Ibid., 389. See also Bosworth, "The Ismaʿilis of Quhistan," 224.

⁴² This battle occurred in Buzhgan, a medieval city close to modern day Turbat-i Jam. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.23, 271. See also Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismaʿiliyān-i Quhistan*, 222. In a letter to Sharaf al-Din ʿAli ibn Tirad, the vizier of the Abbasid caliph Al-Mustarshid Billah, Sultan Sanjar mentioned an exaggerated number of 30,000 for the Ismaʿili foot soldiers who helped Amirdad in this battle. See Iqbal, *Vizārat*, 308-9.

about the process of the organization of the Isma‘ili army. It is likely that the Isma‘ili army mainly consisted of the local Isma‘ilis who were trained in the castles throughout the region.

Sanjar, who was concerned about the Isma‘ilis’ fast progress in Quhistan, dispatched *amīr* Bazghash to the Isma‘ili localities (*bilād-i Ismā‘iliyya*). According to Ibn al-Athir, Bazghash destroyed and plundered the region and killed many of the Isma‘ilis. “He laid siege to Tabas (i.e., Tabas-i Masina) and put them (i.e., the Isma‘ilis) in a tight spot, and destroyed a large section of the town’s rampart by throwing arrows and stones from catapults. Eventually Bazghash ended the siege when the Isma‘ilis became weak and sent him many presents (*rishvat*).”⁴³

The battle referred to above is mentioned also in Sultan Sanjar’s letter to *Sharaf al-Din* ‘Ali ibn Tirad, the vizier of the Abbasid caliph al-Mustarshid Billah (r.1118-35), with a possibly exaggerated number of 10,000 Isma‘ilis killed in the battle. In this letter, Sanjar notes another battle between his *amīr* Taj al-Din Farrukhshah and Badar Munavvar in which 2,000 Isma‘ilis were killed.⁴⁴ No date is mentioned for the latter battle and there is no reference to it in other historical sources, but it possibly occurred sometime before 1103 when *amīr* Bazghash invaded Quhistan for the second time. Tabas was besieged again in this second invasion and its surrounding regions were plundered by the Seljuq army and many Isma‘ilis were killed. Eventually the siege was ended by advice of “Sanjar’s associates (*yārān*)” because of the peace deal made between Sultan Sanjar and Hasan-i Sabbah⁴⁵ (the terms of the deal is discussed in chapter 6). The fact that Bazghash attacked and besieged Tabas in both of the occasions above

⁴³ Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.23, 298.

⁴⁴ Iqbal, *Vizārat*, 308-9.

⁴⁵ Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.23, 352.

suggests that Tabas was perhaps the headquarters of the Isma'ilis of Quhistan in the early years of the Alamut period.

It seems that the Isma'ilis were more successful in the expansion of their territories in the northern parts of Quhistan in the beginning of the twelfth century. At this time, they probably managed to capture or build a few castles near Turshiz and Biyhaq to the south of Nishabur and actively threaten the local government in those areas. According to the local historian Abulhasan Biyhaqi (ca. 1097-1169), the Isma'ilis raided the village of Shishtamad in 1103 and killed 21 people including the chief of the village. People asked the help of the governor (*ra'īs*) of Biyhaq, Abu al-Hasan 'Ali,⁴⁶ against the Isma'ilis. He carried out any action that was required for defending the people during this time. Eventually, in retaliation for the Isma'ili attack, he gathered a large army and besieged the Isma'ili castle of Biyar (about 180 km to the northwest of Quhistan) in 1107. The siege was ended in less than two months when Abu al-Hasan 'Ali was assassinated by an Isma'ili *fidā'ī*. Consequently, the Isma'ilis launched extensive attacks to the district of Biyhaq and partially dominated the strategic town of Turshiz (or Tarthith) and its surrounding regions in the north of Quhistan.⁴⁷

Except for the two events mentioned above, there is no report of any major conflict between the Isma'ilis of Quhistan and the Seljuq forces after the peace deal between Sanjar and the Isma'ilis. Probably the Isma'ilis of Quhistan used this opportunity to stabilize their position in the places that was already under their control. However, within two years of the

⁴⁶ His full name is Ziyān al-Ma'ali Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn al-Muzafar ibn al-Hasan.

⁴⁷ Biyhaqi, *Tarīk-i Biyhaq*, 97. Rashid al-Din, Kashani, and Ibn al-Athir mention the assassination of chief of Biyhaq under the events of 498 A.H./1104 that is not accurate. See Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyyān*, 121; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 158; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.23, 366.

death of Hasan-i Sabbah, the Quhistan region again became an arena of major conflicts between the Isma'ilis and the Seljuqs.

Phase 2: Consolidating the Isma'ili power: after the death of Hasan-i Sabbah to the reign of Hasan II (1124-62)

Hasan-i Sabbah died in 1124 and was succeeded by Kiya Buzurg-Ummid (r. 1124-38) who was formerly the commandant (*kūtvāl*) of the Lambsar castle in the western Alamut. As is mentioned in the available primary sources, within less than two years of the accession of Kiya Buzurg-Ummid, the Seljuqs launched a series of anti-Isma'ili campaigns in Alamut and Quhistan. This was perhaps with a false perception of weakness in the leadership of the Isma'ilis after Hasan-i Sabbah.⁴⁸ The Seljuqs were also assisted by the local Caspian rulers who carried out several raids to the Isma'ilis in Alamut. All these campaigns, however, ended with limited success.⁴⁹ At this time, the Isma'ili military forces were possibly more organized than the early years of their movement and their castles were better supplied to withstand the sieges. Kiya Buzurg-Ummid followed the expansionary policy of his predecessor in the borders of the Isma'ili regions despite the renewed Seljuq offensives. During his reign, the Isma'ilis expanded their military activities and extended the borders of their territories and acquiring several new castles in different regions (discussed in chapter 6).⁵⁰

⁴⁸ This possibility is also raised by Hodgson. See Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 101.

⁴⁹ For the primary sources that discuss the reign of Kiya Buzurg-Ummid, see Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 683-5; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 216-21; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 136-43; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 172-83. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 344-53; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 100-4.

⁵⁰ Hodgson suggest that the Nizari state had reached its territorial limits by the end of Kiya Buzurg-Ummid's reign. However, as discussed it the present chapter, the Isma'ilis continued expanding their territories during the reign of Kiya Buzurg-Ummid's successors. See Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 143.

The raids of the Seljuq *amīrs* and other local rulers to the Isma‘ili regions continued in the following decades during the reign of Muhammad the son and successor of Kiya Buzurg-Ummid, known also as Muhammad I (r. 1138-62). The Alamut region was particularly raided by the Seljuq governors of Rayy and Qazvin, who felt the threat of the Isma‘ilis’ progress to the borders of their domain.⁵¹ These raids, however, were relatively minor in comparison to the earlier anti-Isma‘ili campaigns. A major campaign against Alamut during this time was launched from the north by the Bawandid ruler of Tabaristan and Gilan, Shah Ghazi Rustam (r. 1142-65), whose son, Girdbazu, had been assassinated by the Isma‘ili *fidā’īs* in 1142. Shah Ghazi massacred a large number of the Isma‘ilis of Alamut. However, the Isma‘ilis did not lose any part of their territory during Shah Ghazi’s campaign.⁵²

The historical accounts suggest that the Isma‘ilis enjoyed the highest level of military power since the beginning of the Alamut period during the reign of Muhammad I. As stated by Rashid al-Din, under Muhammad I, the Isma‘ilis “did a lot of work and built many fortresses.”⁵³ Among these castles are the castle of Mubarak-kuh, Qustinlar, Darband, and the fortress of Arzhang (see chapter 6). By the death of Muhammad I in 1162, the Isma‘ilis were a totally established territorial power following the policies shaped during the rule of Hasan-i Sabbah. However, a significant shift in the religious policies of the Isma‘ilis, was about to occur after the accession of Muhammad I’s successor, Hasan II (1162-66), to power.

⁵¹ For the account of the reign of Muhammad I, see Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 685-6; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 221-2; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh, Ismā‘īliyān*, 144-58; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 183-99. See also Daftary, *The Isma‘ilis*, 355-8.

⁵² Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 27, 15. See also Marashi, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān va Rūyān*, 17-8.

⁵³ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh, Ismā‘īliyān*, 155.

Phase 2 in Quhistan: After the death of Hasan-i Sabbah to the reign of Hasan II

As in Alamut, the Isma'ilis of Quhistan were faced with the renewed Seljuq offensives soon after the death of Hasan-i Sabbah. In 1127, Abunahr Ahmad Ibn-i Fazl, the "special vizier" of Sultan Sanjar, began a major campaign against the Isma'ilis.⁵⁴ According to Ibn al-Athir, Abunahr "ordered the Isma'ilis to be killed, their properties to be plundered, and their women to be enslaved wherever they are and wherever they are accessible." He sent two armies to Tarthith (i.e., Turshiz), that was held by the Isma'ilis, and Biyhaq, a dependency of Nishapur.⁵⁵ Our historical sources particularly report on the attack of the Seljuq *amir*, Arqash Khatuni, to the village of Tazar in the district of Bayhaq. On this occasion a large number of people were massacred, the village was destroyed, and the local chief of the Isma'ilis, Hasan-i Simin, committed suicide by throwing himself down from a tower (*minār*) in the village.⁵⁶ In the aforementioned letter to Sharaf al-Din 'Ali ibn Tirad, Sultan Sanjar noted that about 10,000-15,000 Isma'ilis were killed in these attacks and armies were sent to all the fortifications (*hiṣār*) of Khurasan.⁵⁷ There is, however, no mention of the capture of any of the Isma'ili castles by the Seljuq forces.

The Isma'ilis were possibly able to restore the destruction caused by the renewed Seljuq campaign in the following years and to rebuild their presence in the northern parts of Quhistan. Supporting a local governor of Turshiz, Mas'ud ibn-i Mansur-i Zurabadi, against the Seljuq Turk

⁵⁴ Furqani suggests that the vizier main reason for this campaign was possibly exonerate himself from the accusation of believing in Shi'ism as well as to take booty from the Isma'ilis. See Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Isma'iliyān-i Quhistan*, 230. Ibn al-Athir mentioned this campaign under the events of 520 A.H. (1126). The year 521 A.H. (1127), mentioned by local historian, Abulhasan Biyhaqi, is probably more accurate.

⁵⁵ Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.25, 83-5.

⁵⁶ Ibid., see also Biyhaqi, *Tārīkh-i Biyhaq*, 271 and 276.

⁵⁷ Iqbal, *Vizārat dar 'Ahd-i*, 310.

forces, the Ismaʿilis retrieved their influence in the district of Turshiz later around 1135.⁵⁸ The increased influence of the Ismaʿilis, as can be expected, was confronted by the occasional raids of the local Seljuq *amīrs*. The two following events are reported by the local historian, Biyhaqi:

“Coming of *amīr* Qajaq-i Sultani to the region and destroying the village of Tazar and killing a number of people of castles and coming of *amīr* Aq-Sunqur to Mazinan in the months of the year 535 A.H. (1140).”

And

“Coming of Aq-Sunqur from the army of *amīr* Ruspah-i Sultani and killing the people of Tarthith in Mij village in the late Ramadan of 536 A.H. (1141).”⁵⁹

It does not appear that these raids prevented the Ismaʿilis from extending their dominance to the north and northwest of Quhistan. In 1150, ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad, the son of Mas‘ud ibn-i Mansur-i Zurabadi, ordered the people to wear black clothes (that was a symbol of the Abbasids) in the congregational mosque of Turshiz and the sermon to be pronounced in the name of the Abbasid caliph. This decision caused outrage in the audience who broke the pulpit and killed the preacher. ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad fled to Nishabur and the Ismaʿilis gained an absolute control over the Turshiz district.⁶⁰

The Ismaʿilis, now, were seeking an opportunity to extend their territory in the northeastern side of Quhistan. In 1153, Sultan Sanjar was defeated by the Ghuzz Turks in Balkh and was taken captive for about three years.⁶¹ The Ghuzz Turks then launched extensive raids to the main centers of the Seljuqs in Khurasan including, Merv and Nishabur. This was perhaps

⁵⁸ al-Hamawi, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, Vol.4, 33.

⁵⁹ Biyhaqi, *Tarīkh-i Biyhaq*, 276.

⁶⁰ Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.26, 187-8; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyān*, 88. Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 158. A more detailed account is provided by al-Hamawi, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, Vol.4, 33.

⁶¹ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Tārīkh-i Al-i Saljuq*, 66.

the best time for the Ismaʿilis to try their luck in the northeastern part of Quhistan. They gathered a great army of 7,000 cavalry and infantry and attacked Khaf and its surrounding districts in the early years of 1154. A local *amīr* Farukhshah Ibn-i Mahmud-i Kashani went into battle with them but withdrew as soon as he realized that he does not have the power to resist them. He then sought the help of a great Seljuq *amīr* Muhammad Ibn-i Anar. With the help of Anar's army, eventually, the Ismaʿilis were defeated and forced to pay tribute to Ibn-i Anar that probably continued until 1159. Ibn al-Athir believed that many of the Ismaʿili castles were left unprotected during this event and the Seljuqs could easily capture them if they were not engaged in other battles with Ghuzz Turks.⁶²

It appears that most of the Ismaʿili activities in this phase (1124-62) were focused on the northern districts of Quhistan. There is, however, evidence of some sporadic attacks to the southern districts in order to control Sistan and perhaps to capture the great castle of Shahanshah near the town of Nih. The anonymous author of *Tarīkh-i Sīstān*, for example, mentions an attack by the army of Mulaḥidih (i.e., the Ismaʿilis) in 1128.⁶³ In any case, the Ismaʿilis were not successful in dominating Sistan and did not capture the castle of Shahanshah until sometime around the first Mongol invasion to Iran in 1219.

Unfortunately, the available historical sources barely provide us with any detailed information about the castles that were captured or erected by the Ismaʿilis in the Quhistan

⁶² Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.26, 285-6. A passing reference to this event without mentioning Ibn-i Anar's help is provided by Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 90. According to Ibn al-Athir, in 1159, the Ismaʿilis attacked the corps that was sent by Ibn-i Anar to collect the tax that has been assigned to the Ismaʿilis, and killed most of them. They also took Qaybih, the commander of the corps who was Ibn-i Anar's son in law, captive for a couple of months. Eventually Qaybih was released when his daughter married to a certain Ismaʿili chief, *raʿīs* Ali ibn Hasan. See Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.27, 66.

⁶³ Anonymous, *Tarīkh-i Sīstān*, 391.

region. The available accounts of the events in the Alamut region, however, mention that in the years 1124 to 1162 a large number of castles were built or captured by the Isma'ilis in their territories in the northern regions of Iran (discussed above). It is likely that there was a similar situation in Quhistan and several new castles were erected by the Isma'ilis during this phase of the Alamut period. It was perhaps in this phase that the headquarters of the Quhistan region was transferred from Tabas-i Masina to Mu'minabad castle.

According to Rashid al-Din, on 30 July 1160 (24 Rajab 555 A.H.) *ra'īs* Muzaffar al-Din was appointed as the head of the castles in Quhistan by Muhammad ibn-i Kiya Buzurg-Ummid (1138-62), the commander in Alamut.⁶⁴ It is known that the same *ra'īs* Muzaffar al-Din was the commander of the Mu'minabad castle where he held the ceremony of the proclamation of the *qiyāma* (resurrection) later in 1164.⁶⁵ The fact that Mu'minabad was the only castle after Alamut in which this important ceremony happened, suggests that it was the headquarters of the Isma'ilis in Quhistan. It is, therefore, possible that the castle was already the headquarters of Quhistan in 1160, when *ra'īs* Muzaffar al-Din was dispatched to the region. The importance of Mu'minabad castle as the headquarters of the Quhistan region is evident also in the architectural remains of the castles. Several pieces of decorative bricks on the surface of the castle suggest that there was possibly a highly decorated elite space inside Mu'minabad. The space was possibly comparable to the spaces in the Alamut castles. The architectural similarity between the two castles is discussed with more detail in chapter 6.

⁶⁴ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 154; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 196.

⁶⁵ Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 229-30. For the English translation, see Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 690-91. Rashid al-Din provided similar information in *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*. See Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 162; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 202.

Phase 3: The period of resurrection (1162-1210)

Within about two years of the reign of Hasan II, or as he is referred to in the Isma'ili sources, Hasan 'alā dhikrihi'l-salām (on whose mention be peace), the most important event of the Alamut period happened at the foot of Alamut castle. It was the proclamation of the *qiyāma* (resurrection) on the 17 Ramadan 559 A.H. (8 August 1164).⁶⁶ Juvayni provides the following account of the event in *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*:

...And in Ramadan of the year 559 [July-August 1164] he ordered a pulpit (*minbar*) to be constructed on an open space at the foot of Alamut, positioned in a way that it was faced towards the *qibla* in contrast to the Islamic traditions. And when the 17th of Ramadan [8th of August] came round he commanded the inhabitants of his provinces (*vilāyāt*), whom he had summoned to Alamut, to assemble on that open space. Four great standards with the four colors, white, red, green and yellow, which had been produced for that purpose, were attached to the four pillars of the pulpit. Then mounting the pulpit, he indicated to those bewildered wretches, who under his misguidance were proceeding in the direction of prediction and destruction, that from their reprobate leader, that is the imaginary Imam, who was non-existent, someone had come to him in secret bringing, to use their language, a *khuṭba* and a scroll (*sijill*) regarding the observance of their corrupt faith. And standing on that wrongly placed pulpit he delivered a discourse on the subject of his own false and distorted beliefs. Their Imam, he said, had opened the door of mercy and the gates of his compassion to the Muslims and to them also and had sent them [a token of his] pity; he had summoned his special chosen servants and had relieved them of the duties, burdens and charges of the *sharī'a* and brought them to the *qiyāma* (resurrection). He then read out a *khuṭba* ... The purport of the *khuṭba* was as follows: 'Hasan, son of Muhammad, son of Buzurg Umid, is our Caliph, *ḥujja* and *dā'ī*. And our sect (*Shi'a*) must obey and follow him in all spiritual and temporal matters, and regard his command as binding, and deem his word our word, and

⁶⁶ For the account of the life and the reign of Hasan II in the primary sources, see Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 686-97; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 222-39; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 159-66; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 199-208. For a detailed discussion of the declaration of the *qiyāma* and its implications for the Nizari Isma'ilis, see Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 358-63; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 148-80.

know that the *mawlānā* (our lord), (*dust in their mouth!*) has had pity on them, and called them to his mercy, and brought them to God.⁶⁷

Juvayni's and other similar accounts of the event suggest that at the foot of Alamut Hasan II was merely introduced as the representative of the Nizari Isma'ili's hidden imam. However, some two months later in another similar ceremony in Quhistan, Hasan II took a step further and claimed to be the imam of the Nizari Isma'ilis (see below for the account of the ceremony of proclamation of the *qiyāma* in Quhistan). The proclamation of the *qiyāma* and recognition of Hasan II as the long awaited Isma'ili imam was undoubtedly considered a revolutionary change in the Nizari Isma'ili doctrine of the Alamut period. It could also potentially have a dramatic effect on the Isma'ilis perception of their presence in Iran. Now, the head of the Isma'ilis in Alamut was not just a deputy of the hidden imam, but the awaited imam himself, whose presence in Alamut was perceived a divine promise (discussed in chapter 2).

Unfortunately, because of the lack of contemporary historical sources, it is not known how the proclamation of the *qiyāma* affected the Isma'ilis' policies in different regions. It had, apparently, a crucial impact on the leadership structure of the Isma'ilis by re-activating the *da'wa* organization. By the emergence of the imams as the spiritual leaders of the community, the position of the chief *dā'ī* was emerged in Alamut. The chief *dā'ī*, known as the *dā'ī* of Daylam or the *ḥujja* of the imam, was in fact the head of *da'wa* organization who provided central leadership from Alamut and appointed the local *dā'īs* of other Isma'ili regions.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 688-9, slightly modified by the present author. For the Persian text, see Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol. 3, 226-8.

⁶⁸ For more information on the re-emergence of the *da'wa* organization after the proclamation of the *qiyāma*, see Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 365-6.

Almost a year and half after the proclamation of the *qiyāma*, Hasan II was stabbed and killed by a brother-in-law, Hasan ibn Namavar, who was originally from a Shi'i Buyid family and who opposed Hasan's claims and policies.⁶⁹ Hasan II was succeeded by Nur al-Din Muhammad II (r. 1166-1210) who is said to have been a prolific writer. Muhammad II spent his long reign to elaborate systematically the doctrinal aspects of his father's religious policies, known to community as *da'wa* of *qiyāma*.⁷⁰

Generally, the examination of the available historical sources suggests that after the proclamation of the *qiyāma*, the Isma'ilis were, to a large extent, busy with the internal affairs of their territories, and did not launch any major campaign to their neighboring regions for about three decades.⁷¹ Meanwhile, because of the power vacuum caused by the death of Sultan Sanjar in 1157, the outside world was the scene of a series of extensive conflicts between different local *amīrs*.⁷² Eventually, it was the Khwarazmshahs (1077-1221) *amīrs* who dominated the scene of power and took most of the Sanjar's dominion under their control in 1190s during the reign of Sultan Tekish ibn-i Arsalan (r. 1172-1200).⁷³

⁶⁹ Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 363. Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 159. See also Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 697; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 239.

⁷⁰ For the history of the Isma'ilis during the reign of Muhammad II, see Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 697-99; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 240-42; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyyān*, 167-70; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 208-14. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 363-74. Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 160-209.

⁷¹ Daftary describes the three decades of this phase of the Isma'ili history as a "rather uneventful" period and suggests that the "announcement of the *qiyāma* was in fact a declaration of independence from the larger Muslim society and, at the same time, an admission of the failure of the Nizari struggle to take over that society, for this *qiyāma* now rendered the outside world as essentially irrelevant." See Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 360 and 367.

⁷² For the final years of Sanjar and the Seljuq Empire, see Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, 107-21. See also Basan, *The Great Seljuqs*, 138-9.

⁷³ On the history of Khwarazmshahs, see Bosworth, "Khwarazmshahs i." On Tekish ibn-i Arsalan see Bosworth, "TEKIŞ B. IL ARSLĀN."

Following the lead of other Sunni Muslim dynasties, enmity with the Isma'ilis became a component of the Khwarazmshahs' policy. The Alamut region was occasionally raided by the local Khwarazmshah *amīrs*. In 1199, Tekish attacked the Isma'ili districts in the vicinity of Qazvin and captured the castle of Arsalangusha after a four-month siege.⁷⁴ A major campaign was also led later by Tekish's son against the Isma'ilis of Quhistan. In addition to the Khwarazmshahs, the Ghurid (879-1215) sultans, Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad (r. 1163-1203) and Shihab al-Din Muhammad (r. 1173-1206), who dominated the northeast of Khurasan, raided the Quhistan region several times around this time (see below). The renewed conflict between the Isma'ilis and their Sunni neighbors continued until the death of Muhammad II in 1210. The situation, however, changed dramatically during the reign of Muhammad II's son and successor, Jalal al-Din Hasan or Hasan III (r. 1210-21).

Phase 3 in Quhistan: the period of resurrection

The third phase of the Alamut period, for the most part, was a time of relative peace and stability in Quhistan. There is no mention of any assault on the Quhistan region by the external forces for almost three decades, except for a possibly minor attack by *amīr* Muhammad Ibn-i Anar in 1164. According to Ibn al-Athir, in that year Ibn-i Anar conducted a surprise raid on "the cities of the Isma'ilis in Khurasan and killed a group of them and enslaved a group of men, women, and children, and plundered their properties."⁷⁵ This raid was perhaps in relation and

⁷⁴ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 312-3; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.2, 43; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol. 30, 219; al-Rawandi, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, 399. See also Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 211-4.

⁷⁵ Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.27, 201.

in response to the Isma'ilis refusal to pay the tax levied on them and killing of the corps that was sent by Ibn-i Anar earlier in 1159 (discussed above). In any case, the raid did not have any major impact on the Isma'ilis who, by now, had a relatively stable territory in Quhistan.

In the same year (i.e., 1164), the proclamation of the *qiyāma* by Hasan II occurred at the foot of the Alamut castle. A ceremony similar to that of Alamut was held in Quhistan at the foot of Mu'minabad castle on the 28 Zul-Qa'da 559 (17 October 1164). Juvayni provides the following account of this event in Quhistan:

On the 28th of Zul-Qa'da, 599, in the castle that was the fountain-head of their infidelity and heresy and which was called Mu'minabad, the *ra'īs* Muzaffar set up a pulpit directed away from the direction of righteousness and toward the quarter of iniquity, just as his disgraceful Imam had done in Alamut. Then mounting this pulpit, he read out the *khutba*, scroll and discourse that had been sent to him, after which Muhammad, the son of Khaqan, ascended on to the second step of the pulpit and delivered Hasan's oral message, which was to this effect: 'Mustansir formerly sent a message to Alamut that God Almighty always had a representative (*khalīfa*) amongst men and this representative had his own representative. He, Mustansir, was then representative and Hasan-i Sabbah was his representative. If the people would obey Hasan and follow him, they would have obey him, Mustansir. And now today I, Hasan, say that I am representative of God on the face of the earth and this *ra'īs* Muzaffar is my representative. You must obey his command and consider whatever he says to be your duty.'⁷⁶

The most striking difference between the account of the ceremony of the *qiyāma* in Quhistan and Alamut is in the clear self-proclamation of Hasan II as the Isma'ili imam. In addition, the relation between Hasan II and *ra'īs* Muzaffar is compared to that of the Fatimid caliph, al-Mustansir and Hasan-i Sabbah in the early stages of the Alamut period. Therefore, the position of *ra'īs* Muzaffar as the head of the Isma'ilis in Quhistan was upgraded in the Nizari

⁷⁶ Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 691. Boyle translated the term *khalīfa* to vicar. This is changed to representative by the present author since the term vicar has a Christian overtone. For the Persian text, see Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 230. See also Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 161-2; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 202.

Isma'ili *da'wa* organization. At this point, *ra'īs* Muzaffar was the imam's *ḥujja* and could exercise both temporal and religious authority in Quhistan on behalf of the imam. The existing primary sources mention nothing about the activities of *ra'īs* Muzaffar in the Quhistan region. We know also little about the socio-political condition of Quhistan after the proclamation of the *qiyāma*. Generally, it appears that in common with the other regions, the Isma'ilis of Quhistan were busy with their internal affairs and enjoyed about three decades of peace and security during the period of resurrection.

This relatively peaceful episode of the Alamut period in the Isma'ili territories did not last long. The conflicts between the Isma'ilis and their neighbors resumed once again in the last seventeen years of Nur al-Din Muhammad II's reign, the son and successor of Hasan II. The Isma'ilis of Quhistan were, however, in different positions in the south and north of their borders. In the south, they followed an offensive policy towards the northern parts of Sistan that was under the control of the Maliks of Nimruz or the Nasrids⁷⁷ (1029-1225) which were experiencing a period of weakness after the dissolution of the Seljuqs. In the beginning of Rajab 590 A.H. (22 June 1194), an Isma'ili army attacked a village of Sistan, called Huraq, and killed a certain Adib Baja'far. On the fifteenth of the same month, the army of Sistan went to Quhistan and was defeated soon on the twenty-second of the month. The Isma'ilis once again attacked Sistan, this time to the village of Ranjan and took a certain Qadi Tahir and Qadi Mas'ud on 5 Jumada al-Akhir 591 A.H. (17 May 1195).⁷⁸

⁷⁷ This is different from the Nasrids who ruled in Andalusia, Spain (1230-1492). Maliks of Nimruz or the Nasrids of Iran were a branch of the Saffarid (861-1003), who ruled mainly in Sistan from 1092 to 1225.

⁷⁸ Anonymous, *Tarikh-i Sīstān*, 391. See also Bosworth, "The Isma'ilis of Quhistan," 225.

In the north of Quhistan, however, it was a different situation and the Isma'ilis were more in a defensive position. The Khwarazmshah sultan, Tekish, designated his son Malik Qutbuddin (later known as 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad Khwarazmshah) to attack the Isma'ilis' territories, beginning from Quhistan. Qutbuddin besieged Turshiz for four months. Meanwhile, Tekish, who was gathering an army to join Qutbuddin, died of quinsy (*khunnāq*) on 3 July 1200 (19 Ramadan 596 A.H.). Receiving the news of Tekish's death, eventually, Qutbuddin made peace with the people of Turshiz (*arbāb-i Turshiz*) who "provided him with many services and agreed to pay him an additional 100,000 *dīnārs*."⁷⁹

A few months after the death of Tekish, the Ghurid sultans, Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad and Shihab al-Din Muhammad attacked Khurasan and captured some of its major cities. Shihab al-Din also raided the region of Quhistan where he first killed the residents of an unknown Isma'ili village and plundered their properties. He then besieged Gunabad (also recorded as Junabid) which was an Isma'ili town. Becoming aware of this situation, the head of the Isma'ilis in Quhistan sent a message to Ghiyath al-Din complaining about Shihab al-Din, and reminding him of their peace deal. Meanwhile, the Isma'ilis of Gunabad surrendered and were allowed to leave the town. Shihab al-Din delegated the town to one of the Ghurid *amīrs*⁸⁰ "to hold the Islamic law and prayer there." He then left Gunabad and besieged another Isma'ili castle. This time however, he left the siege soon after Ghiyath al-Din ordered him to do so.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 314-5; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.2, 46-7. See also Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.30, 220.

⁸⁰ According to Juvayni this person was a certain Qadi Tulik. See Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 317; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.2, 49.

⁸¹ Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.30, 250-51.

The Ghurids launched a greater campaign against the Ismaʿilis of Quhistan later in 1204-1205. This campaign led by ʿAlaʿ al-Din Muhammad Ibn-i Abu ʿAli, “the custodian of the cities of Ghur,” with the help of the army of Sistan as well as the ruler of Zuzan, who resigned from the service of Khwarazmshah. According to Ibn al-Athir, ʿAlaʿ al-Din started by besieging the Ismaʿili city of Qaʿin and made its people suffer. The siege continued until he received the news of Shihab al-Din’s death. He, therefore, made peace with the Ismaʿilis in exchange for the payment of 60,000 *dīnār-i ruknī* (pure gold coin) and left. He then attacked the castle of Kakhak (*dizh-i Kakhak*) and captured the castle, killed those who had fought with him and enslaved their women and children. At this point, he finally left Quhistan, went to Herat and thence to Firuzkuh.⁸²

It is likely that the Ismaʿilis transferred their headquarters to Qaʿin or one of the castles in the north of Quhistan around the late twelfth century. This explains why the city of Qaʿin was targeted in the last campaign of the Ghurids against the Ismaʿilis of Quhistan. In any case, the events of the following years indicate that in the last four decades of the Alamut period, Muʿminabad castle was no longer the center of Quhistan, and the headquarters of the region was always a castle in its northern parts.

Phase 4: “Rapprochement with Sunni Islam” (1210-56)

The last phase of the Alamut period is known as the time when the Nizari Ismaʿilis reached a rapprochement with “Sunni Islam” or “Sunnism” as stated by Daftary and Hodgson.⁸³ This

⁸² Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.31, 15. See also Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 317; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.2, 49.

⁸³ Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 375; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 210.

phase began with a surprising shift in the approach of the Ismaʿilis' headquarters in Alamut towards the Sunni world outside the Ismaʿili territories. Upon his accession to power, Jalal al-Din Hasan repudiated the manners of his predecessors and ordered the Ismaʿilis to observe the Sunni form of the Islamic *Shariʿa* possibly according to the *Shāfiʿī madhhab* (school). He also began to normalize his relationship with other Muslim rulers by sending messengers to them to announce his reforms.⁸⁴

It is not clear that what led Jalal al-Din Hasan III to introduce such bold religious reforms. Most of the modern scholars believe that Jalal al-Din Hasan's reforms were merely a political maneuver. They explain Hasan III's reforms as a re-imposition of *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation of true religious beliefs) to end the self-imposed isolation of the community from the rest of the Islamic world during the period of the *qiyāma*, provide an opportunity for development in his territory, and to reduce the threats posed by the local Sunni rulers to the Ismaʿili regions.⁸⁵ This explanation is totally in line with the Ismaʿilis' own later interpretation of the reforms during the reign of Hasan III's successor, 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad III (r. 1221-55). Hodgson, however, suggests that Hasan III was possibly sincere in his conversion to Sunnism and in implementation of his reforms.⁸⁶

In any case, the genuineness of Hasan III's reforms was believed by the Muslim rulers, and particularly the Abbasid caliph at Baghdad, and the Ismaʿilis were accepted as part of the

⁸⁴ For the history of the Ismaʿilis during Jalal al-Din Hasan III's reign, see Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 699-703; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 243-8; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyān*, 171-5; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 214-7. See also Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 375-7; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 210-25.

⁸⁵ See for example, Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 376; Jamal, *Surviving the Mongols*, 41-2.

⁸⁶ Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 222-5.

greater Muslim community. According to the later Persian chroniclers of the Mongol court, Hasan III became known as the “new Muslim” (*naw-Musalmān*) by his contemporaries.⁸⁷ Hasan III’s reforms obviously had a dramatic effect on the political conditions of the Isma‘ili domains. Generally, the time of Hasan III is characterized by a relative peace, stability, and territorial security in the Isma‘ili territories.

Perhaps the most important political event of Jalal al-Din Hasan III’s reign was the Mongol invasions to Khurasan and other parts of Iran from 1219 to 1221. The Isma‘ili territories, however, remained almost intact during the invasions because of Hasan III’s prompt response by sending emissaries to the Mongols and coming to terms with them as soon as their army crossed the Oxus.⁸⁸ The Mongols defeated the Khwarazmshah sultan, ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad Khwarazmshah (r. 1200-20) and conquered most parts of Persia. ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad was succeeded by his eldest son Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah (r. 1220-31). Jalal al-Din began a series of campaigns against the Mongols to retain the control of his ancestral Kingdom. He was eventually defeated by the Mongols in 1221 and escaped to India, where he spent about three years.⁸⁹

Jalal al-Din Hasan III died in 1221 and was succeeded by his nine-year old son, ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad III. The political affairs of the community were now in the hands of a previously

⁸⁷ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 700; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 243; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh, Ismā‘īliyān*, 172; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 215.

⁸⁸ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 703; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 243; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh, Ismā‘īliyān*, 175; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 215.

⁸⁹ For Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah see Bosworth, “JALĀL-AL-DIN K̲YĀRAZMŠĀH (I).” For a more detailed account of the Khwarazmshahs and the Mongols dynamic, see Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, 75-94.

appointed vizier of Hasan III.⁹⁰ It appears that the Ismaʿilis followed the external policies of Hasan III in the early years of ʿAlaʾ al-Din Muhammad III's reign. Internally, however, they gradually revised Hasan III's policies and revived the former norms of the *qiyāma* period. The continuous struggles of Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah against the Mongol armies provided the Ismaʿilis the opportunity to expand their territories in different parts of Iran and seized a number of fortresses in Qumis, Tarum, and Zagros mountains.⁹¹

Perhaps the most significant threat to Ismaʿili territory in the years following the Mongol invasion was Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah who was trying to restore the lost lands of his dynasty after his return to Persia from India. In 1227, "Jalal al-Din with his army raided the Ismaʿili towns, extended from around Alamut to Girkuh in Khurasan, and destroyed all of them and killed their people and plundered their properties." Ibn al-Athir mentions that this raid was due to the assassination of a great *amīr* of Jalal al-Din in Ganja. The main reason was perhaps the increasing activities by the Ismaʿilis to extend their power in the neighboring regions. Ibn al-Athir ends his account: "The Ismaʿilis had become impudent and greedy since the Mongol raid on the Islamic cities until this time, their harassments were raised and their harms were increased."⁹² In any case, it appears that the Ismaʿilis did not lose any castle or any part of their

⁹⁰ According to al-Nasawi the vizier was a person named ʿImad al-Din Muhtasham. See al-Nasawi, *Sīrat-i Jalal al-Din*, 185.

⁹¹ For the events of the reign of Muhammad III, see Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 703-9; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 249-57; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyān*, 176-81; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 218-23. See also Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 377-92; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 250-62.

⁹² Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, V.33, 79-80.

territory in this event, because they soon reached a peace treaty with Jalal al-Din and accepted to pay him an annual tribute.⁹³

In 1231, Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah was murdered in a Kurdish village in the eastern Anatolia.⁹⁴ The event dramatically affected the fragile peace between the Isma'ilis and the Mongols. The Isma'ilis were now considered the only organized and autonomous power standing in the way of the Mongol conquest of all of Persia. According to Juvayni, two of the former governors of Quhistan, Muhtasham Shihab and Muhtasham Shams al-Din, were dispatched to central Mongolia as the envoys of Alamut to attend the enthronement ceremony of the third Great Khan of the Mongol Empire, Güyük Khan (r. 1246-8), in 1246. Güyük Khan, however, "dismissed them with contempt and disdain; and the reply to the memorandum they had brought was couched in correspondingly harsh language."⁹⁵ He also dispatched one of his generals, Ilchiktay (Eljigetei/Eligidei) with a large army to attack and conquer the "West" beginning from the territories of the Isma'ilis.⁹⁶

It appears that Ilchiktay did not get the chance to carry out any significant raid to the Isma'ili territories, perhaps because of the early death of Güyük Khan in 1248. In any case, the Mongols remained determined to bring the Isma'ili domain and all the western Asia under their control. Upon his accession to power, Güyük's successor, Möngke Khan

⁹³ On this treaty and the interrelations between the Isma'ilis and Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah, see al-Nasawi, *Sīrat-i Jalal al-Din*, 163-66; Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 386; Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān*, 260-62.

⁹⁴ al-Nasawi, *Sīrat-i Jalal al-Din*, 212-3. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 387.

⁹⁵ Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 250 and 258; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.1, 205 and 213. See also Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 805. Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 388.

⁹⁶ Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 256; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.1, 211-12.

(r. 1251-9) designated his brother, Hülegü, to conduct the mission. Hülegü immediately dispatched his Nestorian Christian general, Kit-Buqa (d. 1260) with an advanced army of 12,000 men to begin the campaign against the Isma'ilis.⁹⁷

The Mongols' advanced army raided different Isma'ili regions for about three years. The Isma'ilis were therefore under constant pressure by the Mongols in the final years of Muhammad III's reign. According to the historical sources, at some point Rukn al-Din Khurshah (r. 1255-6), the eldest son of Muhammad III and his later successor decided to take charge of the state's affairs and start peace negotiations with the Mongols. However, he could not follow his plans because of some serious illness that made him confined to his bed.⁹⁸

Muhammad III was murdered in December 1255, allegedly by his favorite companion, a certain Hasan-i Mazandarani. It appears that soon after accession to the power, Rukn al-Din Khurshah made some effort to improve his relationship with the neighboring powers as well as the Mongols.⁹⁹ It was, however, too late for reaching an agreement with the Mongols. Hülegü at the head of main Mongol forces crossed the Oxus in January 1256. After a short stay in the meadows of Shafurqan, he entered Persia in April 1256, and was determined to seize the control of the Isma'ili regions. After a

⁹⁷ Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 596; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 72; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 976. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 388 and 391.

⁹⁸ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 708; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 254; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, *Ismā'īliyān*, 180. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 391-2.

⁹⁹ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 712-3; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 259-60; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, *Ismā'īliyān*, 183; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 224. See also Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 392; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 265-6.

series of negotiations with the Ismaʿilis, Hülegü eventually decided to launch full assault against the Ismaʿili center at Alamut.

In November 1256, Hülegü's army arrived in Alamut and laid a siege to the castle of Maymun-Dizh, where Rukn al-Din Khurshah was staying. The Mongol forces attacked the castle by using mangonels and ballistae for a few days.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, the negotiations for the submission of Rukn al-Din Khurshah were in process. Finally, Khurshah came down from the castle with his family and surrendered to the Mongols. He then issued orders to the garrisons of the other castles to destroy the fortifications and surrender. It appears that Rukn al-Din Khurshah was treated respectfully by Hülegü. After a few months, at his own request, Khurshah with a group of Mongol guards set out on a journey to Mongolia to meet Möngke Khan. Möngke, however, refused to meet Khurshah, allegedly because the two major castles, Lambsar and Girdkuh, were not submitted yet. Eventually, Khurshah was murdered by the Mongols on his return journey to Iran and a large number (12,000 people according to Juvayni) of the Ismaʿilis were massacred by the Mongols in different regions.¹⁰¹ Evidently, the Ismaʿili community survived the Mongols assault.¹⁰² However, the fall of Alamut and the death

¹⁰⁰ As mentioned in the introduction, the exact location of Maymun-Dizh is now unknown. No trace of this weaponry has been mentioned in the reports of the excavations in the Alamut castle. A comprehensive report of all the excavation seasons has been archived in the Alamut cultural heritage office and has been consulted in the present research.

¹⁰¹ For details of Hülegü's campaign against the Ismaʿilis and the fate of Rukn al-Din Khurshah, see Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 712-25; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 260-78; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyān*, 183-91; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 224-33. See also Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 392-8; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 265-70.

¹⁰² For the survival of the Ismaʿili community after the Mongol conquest of 1256, see Jamal, *Surviving the Mongols*.

of Khurshah put an end to the political golden age of the Nizari Isma'ili presence in Iran during the Alamut period.

Phase 4 in Quhistan: after resurrection to the end of Alamut period

Hasan III started his reign with a major reform in his father's religious and external policies and made a rapprochement with the Sunni world (discussed in detail in chapter 2). The rapprochement brought a period of peace and stability in the Isma'ili regions, including Quhistan, and put an end to the Ghurids and Khwarazmshahs assault on the Isma'ili territory. Only two attacks to the Quhistan region are mentioned in the historical sources during this time, both by Yamin al-Din Bahram Shah ibn Harb (r. 1213-21), the seventh Nasrid *malik* of Sistan. Unfortunately, our sources do not expand on the details of these attacks. According to *Iḥyā' al-Mulūk*, on one occasion Yamin al-Din raided Qa'in and killed some of the Isma'ilis in Nufirist, Gask, and Mask.¹⁰³ Since the three places are all small villages located 100 km to the south of Qa'in, the attack did not possibly have any major impact on the Isma'ilis. It is likely that these attacks were in response to some unreported raids to Sistan by the Isma'ilis, who were still following an expansionist policy in the south of Quhistan.

In common with the other Isma'ili regions, the Quhistan region was exempted from the Mongol raids to Iran during the years 1219 to 1221. The Mongol invasions even provided the Isma'ilis the opportunity to finally extend their power to the northern part of Sistan and buy the castle of Shahanshah from the nephew of Yamin al-Din Bahram Shah (r. 1213-21), the son of

¹⁰³ Malik Shah Husayn, *Iḥyā' al-Mulūk*, 75.

Nasir al-Din 'Uthman.¹⁰⁴ It is likely that the Isma'ilis seized the castle of Qal'ih-Rustam of Taq around this time. Yamin al-Din sent a messenger to the Isma'ilis later in 1221 and asked them to submit the castle; otherwise, he would send an army to take it by force. The Isma'ilis did not submit the castle. Instead, they dispatched four *fidā'īs* and killed Yamin al-Din in the middle of bazaar in Zarang. By the death of Yamin al-Din, the Isma'ilis gained an upper hand in Sistan for a while, and were able to interfere in the internal affairs of the province and even choose their candidate as the successor of Yamin al-Din.¹⁰⁵

The expansion of the Isma'ili territory in Quhistan continued after the death of Jalal al-Din Hasan III and the accession of 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad III to power. At this time, the Isma'ilis of Quhistan were possibly more active in the northern parts of the region and seized the control of some of the villages and towns there. Other than that, the Isma'ilis of Quhistan probably used this period of stability to consolidate their fortifications and improve the infrastructures of their domain.

The following account of the journey of Minhaj-i Siraj, a jurist and historian of the Ghurid's court, provides us with invaluable information about the contemporary situation in the Quhistan region.¹⁰⁶

This votary, who is Minhaj-i Siraj, the writer of this *Tabaqāt*, and author of this history has traveled to that region three times on an envoy mission. The first occasion was from the fortress (*hiṣār*) of Tulak, in the year 621 A.H. (1224), after Khurasan had become cleared of the Mongol army, and on account of the scarcity of clothing, and dearth of some requisites, which had run out in consequence of the irruption of the infidels; and people were distressed for necessaries of life. At the request of Malik Taj al-Din Hasan Salar-i Kharpuṣt, the

¹⁰⁴ Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.1, 282.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., see also Anonymous, *Tarīkh-i Sīstān*, 393; Malik Shah Husayn, *Ihya' al-Muluk*, 75. See also Bosworth, "The Isma'ilis of Quhistan," 225-6.

¹⁰⁶ On the life and works of Minhaj-i Siraj see Bosworth, "MENHĀJ-e SERĀJ."

author proceeded from the fortress of Tulak to Isfizar, in order to open the route for caravans; and from Isfizar to Qa'in, and from that place to the castle of Sartakht, and Javashir; and the commander (*farmāndih*) of the lands of the Quhistan, at that time was Muhtasham Shihab-i Mansur-i Abu al-Fath. I found him a person with infinite knowledge of science, *hikma*, and philosophy, so that I had not seen a philosopher and *hakim* like him in the lands of Khurasan. He was extremely beneficent to strangers, and the Muslims of Khurasan who took refuge to him... such as *Imam* of the Age, Afzal al-Din Bamiani ... and other scholars (*'ulamā*) of Khurasan who went to him. He had treated all of them with honor and showed them much kindness, to the extent that it was said that, during those first two or three years of anarchy in Khurasan, one thousand rich garments, and seven hundred horses, with trappings, had been received from his abundant treasury by *'ulamā* and poor strangers. As the kindness and benefactions towards, and association and conversation of that Muhtasham with the Muslims became frequent; the group of Mulaḥidih (i.e., the Isma'ilis) sent those accounts to Alamut, that 'very soon the Muhtasham Shihab will give the entire property of Da'wat-Khānih to the Muslims; [consequently,] from Alamut a decree were given to him to go to Alamut, and Muhtasham Shams al-Din Hasan-i Ikhtiyar was sent to be the commander of Quhistan. When this servant of the victorious government, returned from the presence of the Muhtasham Shihab, he (i.e., the author) went to the city of Tun, for purchasing the necessary clothing, and from that place to Qa'in and Isfizar, and returned to Tulak.¹⁰⁷

As the account above suggests, the years following the first Mongols invasion was considered a period of security, stability and prosperity in the Isma'ili territories and particularly Quhistan. The Isma'ilis not only were in control of the caravan routes but also the shortage of required goods after the invasion could have given the Isma'ilis the opportunity to export trade commodities to the neighboring regions (see chapter 3). A number of Muslims and particularly religious scholars (*'ulamā*) from the other regions, affected by the Mongols invasion, took refuge to Quhistan. The most renowned of these scholars was Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201-74), the Persian polymath, who settled in Quhistan sometime around 1227.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Juzjani and Raverty, *Ṭabakāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.2, 1197-98; slightly modified by the present author. For the Persian text, see Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.2, 182-3.

¹⁰⁸ Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 378.

The presence of these scholars in Quhistan would have encouraged the development of the intellectual activities and production of secular and religious literature under the patronage of *muhtashams* of Quhistan. As stated by Minhaj-i Siraj, Muhtasham Shihab's lavish treatment of the outsider refugees, eventually, resulted in his replacement by Muhtasham Shams al-Din who was sent from Alamut to be the commander of Quhistan. It is, however, likely that the change in the leadership of Quhistan had a more complex reason related to the changing policies in Alamut.

Minhaj-i Siraj mentions the castle of Javashir as the place of his meeting with Muhtasham Shihab. Javashir was located close to Gunabad according to Mustawfi.¹⁰⁹ This suggests that by the time, the Isma'ilis were able to retain the control of the town of Gunabad and its surrounding villages which had been lost to the Ghurids in 1200. It is also likely that some of the castles in the vicinity of Gunabad were restored or newly built during the governance of Muhtasham Shihab. Some three kilometers to the southwest of village of Ziybud in Gunabad there is a mountain castle that is still locally known as Qal'ih Shihab.¹¹⁰

Later in 1225, Minhaj-i Siraj makes a second trip from Khaysar¹¹¹ to Quhistan at the request of Malik Rukn al-Din Muhammad-i Uthman-i Marghni (d. 1245), the local governor of Herat and Ghur, again in order to negotiate for "opening of the caravan routes." This time he took a different route to Quhistan. Beginning from Khaysar he went to Farah, then to Qal'ih-yi Kah of Sistan, then to fortification (*hiṣār*) of Karah, and to Tabas-i Masina and to the castle of

¹⁰⁹Mustawfi, Hamdallah, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 207.

¹¹⁰ On Qal'ih Shihab, see Zamani, "Siḥ Athar-i Tārīkhī." 11-9.

¹¹¹ Alternatively pronounce as Khisar. It was a frontier city between Ghazni and Herat. See al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Vol.2, 412.

Mu'minabad, and finally to Qa'in. He visited Muhtasham Shams al-Din Hasan-i Ikhtiyar, who is described as "a man of the military profession," in Qa'in and returns to Khaysar. It is likely that Minhaj-i Siraj used this second trip as an opportunity to make himself familiar with the geography of the Isma'ili territory and the location of their castles; because he took a detour going to the castle of Mu'minabad on his way from Tabas-i Masina to Qa'in. His meeting with Muhtasham Shams al-Din possibly took place in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. We do not know whether Muhtasham Shams al-Din was only temporarily in Qa'in or he had shifted the headquarters of the region to Qal'ih-Kuh. It was possibly the former. Considering the fact that Muhtasham Shams al-Din was "a man of the military profession," it is likely that he was using his time overseeing the affairs of the castles and their garrisons; or perhaps preparing for his forthcoming campaign against Malik Taj al-Din Inaltigin (or Binaltigin, d. 1228), who had risen to power in Sistan and seized the county (*vilāyat*) of Nih.¹¹²

Minhaj-i Siraj went to Quhistan for the third time in 1226, at the request of Inaltigin who was then defeated by the Isma'ilis in a battle over the castle of Shahanshah, and ran away to Farah. Minhaj-i Siraj's mission was to accompany the son of Malik Rukn al-Din (mentioned above) as an envoy to make a peace treaty between the Isma'ilis and Inaltigin. The army of the Isma'ili was before the town of Nih when Minhaj-i Siraj arrives in Quhistan. He, therefore, went to Nih and made peace between Inaltigin and Muhtasham Shams al-Din. Upon his return to Farah, he was requested again by Inaltigin to go to Quhistan for a second time to demand a war from the Isma'ilis. Minhaj-i Siraj, however, refused to take this order and was detained in a

¹¹² Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.1, 285.

castle in Sistan.¹¹³ It is not known whether there was any battle between the Isma‘ilis and Inaltigin after this event, but it is likely that the Isma‘ilis remained in control of the castle of Shahanshah until the end of the Alamut period.

A year after Minhaj-i Siraj’s third trip to Quhistan, the leadership of the region changed for some obscure reason, and Muhtasham Shams al-Din was replaced by Nasir al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahim b. Abi Mansur (d. 1257), also known as Nasir al-Din Muhtasham. Nasir al-Din remained the commander of the region until the end of the Alamut period, and chose the castle of Sartakht (perhaps Kuh-Qal‘ih of Tun, see chapter 4), close to the city of Tun, as his headquarters. He probably spent the early years of his rule fortifying his domain in the northern part of Quhistan and restoring the destructions caused by the raids of Jalal al-Din as well as the deputy of Urkhan, the *iqṭā’* holder of Khurasan.¹¹⁴ The construction of one of these buildings is commemorated in the following extant ode from a contemporary poetical work, known as *Dīvān-i Qā’imīyāt* by Hasan Mahmud-i Katib (d. after 1243), the Isma‘ili scholar, poet, and scribe who served both in Quhistan and Alamut.

During the reign of a man who is obeyed by mankind,
Lord Muhammad, son of [Hasan] *‘alā dhikrihi’l-salām*
Eternally, he is the aspiration of existence in its quest for perpetuity and good
order;
That Resurrector, who out of bounty and generosity,
Has stood firm, seeking betterment for all people
At the time when his message is reaching everyone,
O mankind, the *qiyāma* has been proclaimed.
On an auspicious sign was laid the foundation
And in three month this building (*banā*) was finished with the support of God;
On the *Hijrī* calendar it was *kāf* and *bā*, seventeen days elapsed from the month
of Ramadan [i.e., 17 Ramadan 628 A.H./ 19 July 1231].
May the building survive forever and bring good omen for its inhabitants,

¹¹³ Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.2, 184-5.

¹¹⁴ The raids of the deputy of Urkhan to Quhistan, Tun, and Qa’in is mentioned in al-Nasawi, *Sīrat-i Jalal al-Din*, 117.

And may all its inhabitants be servants of the imam of the time
 Peer of the faithful and lord of the people with certainty
 Son of Hasan, Muhammd, beloved of everyone
 Divine shadow, the truthful light, whose eternal grace may forever bless his
 servants
 To serve him his pure blessing and absolute fortune, for anyone blessed to be
 honored by it.
 This humble servant, who there is no lower creature than him in the whole world
 Dust in the path of his servants, namely 'Abd al-Rahim
 When he laid the foundation of this building (*banā*), in his blessed name,
 He was saying O God, May this position and place
 Be the abode of the good people and May it be protected from the evil eye,
 peace be upon you!¹¹⁵

This ode was probably composed by Nasir al-Din Muhtasham as suggested by the
 name 'Abd al-Rahim in the eighteenth verse. Badakhchani suggested that the poem was
 engraved on the foundation stone of the castle of Tun, probably referring to Kuh-Qal'ih.
 There is no mention of the function of the building in the verses. However, based on the
 content of the ode as well as the time of the completion of the building (1231), it is
 likely that the building was a large-scale structure like a castle. If the building was a
 newly founded castle, it is also more probable that it was the castle of Hasan-Abad, built
 by Nasir al-Din Muhtasham as a subsidiary castle to Kuh-Qal'ih to guard the city of Tun
 from the north (see the discussion of Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun and Qal'ih Hasan-Abad in
 chapter 4). The fortification projects carried out during Nasir al-Din Muhtasham's
 governorship were undoubtedly effective in resisting the Mongols assaults on the city of
 Tun later from 1251 to 1253 (discussed below).

¹¹⁵ Hasan Mahmud-i Katib, *Dīvān-i Qā'imīyāt*, 13-14 and 275. The translation of the verse 9 and 12 as well as the
 last 6 verses are modified by the present author. The original translation of the verse 9 is "And in three month this
 castle was built." The verse 12 is "May the castle survive forever..." However, there are no equivalents for the term
 "castle" in the Persian text of the two verses.

By the death of Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah in 1231, the Quhistan region became the front line of the conflict between the Ismaʿilis and the Mongols. The first major assault by the Mongols to the Ismaʿili positions in Quhistan was in 1253 when the Mongol general, Kit-Buqa, initiated the great anti-Ismaʿili campaign of Hülegü in Persia. Kit-Buqa crossed the Oxus in March 1253 (early Muharram 651 A.H.) and raided the Quhistan region and captured some of the towns (*vilāyāt*) in that region. He then proceeded to the west and laid a siege to the castle of Girdkuh and Mihrin in the Qumis region. He also led and ordered a series of attacks to the castles in other regions including, the castle of Shah-Dizh in Qasran, and the castle of Alih-Nishin and Mansuriyya in Tarum and Rudbar. Later Kit-Buqa returned to Quhistan, and the Mongols “drove the herds of Tun and Turshiz and Zirkuh;” and in July 1253 seized Tun and Turshiz that must have been walled cities at the time.¹¹⁶

The Ismaʿilis were probably able to retain the control of the city of Tun and restore its fortifications. Juvayni relates that after entering Persia in April 1256, Hülegü made the capture of Tun, which “had apparently not yet been humbled and still persisted in its former benightedness,” his priority. Hülegü could not personally lead the attack due to some unspecified incident that occurred upon his arrival in the district of Zavih and Khaf.¹¹⁷ He, therefore, delegated the task to his generals Köke-Ilgei and Ket-Buqa. They laid a siege to the city and captured it in a week according to Juvayni, and in

¹¹⁶ On the operations of the Mongols advanced army under the command of Ket-Buqa, see Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 391-2. For the primary sources, see Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 610; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 94-5; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 981-2.

¹¹⁷ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 984; Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 615; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 102.

twelve days (19 Rabi II 654/16 May 1256) according to Rashid al-Din. Sometime around this time (or possibly after) Nasir al-Din Muhtashan (who had already received Hülegü's envoy, Malik Shams al-Din-i Kart (r.1245-1278), in the castle of Sartakht) presented himself before Hülegü with his gifts. Hülegü gave him a decree (*yarlīq*) and a tablet of authority (*pāyza*) and granted him the governorship of Tun.¹¹⁸

The castle of Sartakht nevertheless remained in the hands of the Isma'ilis; and when Hülegü asked Nasir al-Din Muhtasham why he had not brought down the residents of the castle; he replied: "their *pādishāh* is [Rukn al-Din] Khurshah and they only listen to his commands." The situation was possibly the same in many other castles of Quhistan. However, after Rukn al-Din Khurshah's surrender in November 1256 and the fall of Alamut, most of the castles in the Quhistan region were destroyed by the Mongols one after another, and the Isma'ilis' control over the region was ended forever.¹¹⁹

Concluding notes

The condition of the Isma'ili state during so-called Alamut period was fluid. The Isma'ilis were not always in defensive position against their Sunni neighbors. They experienced several years of relative peace in their regions that would provided them an opportunity for stabilizing their

¹¹⁸ On the capture of Tun and the meeting between Nasir al-Din Muhtasham and Hülegü see Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 983-4. See also Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 615-6; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 102-3.

¹¹⁹ The Hülegü's campaign against the Isma'ilis and Rukn al-Din Khurshah's surrender and the end of Alamut period is discussed in detail in Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 392-402. For the primary sources, see Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 618-640 and 712-25; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 106-143 and 259-278; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 984-92; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, *Ismā'īliyān*, 182-92; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 224-33.

power. The Alamut period also witnessed radical shifts in the religious policies announced by the Isma'ili leaders at Alamut. These shifting religious policies and the changes in the relationship between the Isma'ili state and the outside world certainly impacted on how the Isma'ili community perceived their presence in Iran during the course of the Alamut period. It is also likely that the castles played different roles depending on the precise political situation in each phase of the Alamut period.

Unfortunately, the information about the history of the Isma'ilis of Quhistan in the available primary sources is mainly concerned with clashes between the Isma'ilis and their neighbors during the Alamut period. Despite this major limitation, the study of these historical events gives us some idea about the expansion of Isma'ili power and the general religious and political condition of the Isma'ili community in the region. As discussed above it is clear that the dominance of the Isma'ilis over the Quhistan region was a process that happened gradually over the course of the Alamut period. Beginning from only one castle in the southeast of the region (castle of Duruh) in the extreme southeast of Quhistan, the Isma'ilis quickly captured several other castles and gained the control of the major towns in the internal parts of the region. In the northern and southern frontiers, however, the Isma'ilis continued their struggles with their opponents for a long time. It was only in the last phase of the Alamut period that the Isma'ilis stabilized their presence in the northern districts of Gunabad and Turshiz, and captured the great castle of Shahanshah in the south of Quhistan, in the vicinity of Nih.

Depending on the political environment outside of their territory as well as changing policies in Alamut itself, the Isma'ilis of Quhistan experienced different conditions in terms of the frequency and the scale of the clashes with their enemies. The Isma'ilis were not always in a

defensive position during the Alamut period. They also did not always follow an offensive policy in the borders of their territory. In fact, as suggested by the historical accounts, the Quhistan region also witnessed some phases of stability and peace during the Alamut period. Any analysis of the Isma'ili activities and the network of their castles in the Quhistan region, therefore, would not be accurate if it did not take into consideration the dynamic nature of the Isma'ili presence in the region.

The examination of historical accounts also suggests that the Isma'ilis changed the location of their headquarters in Quhistan at least three times during the Alamut period. During the last phase of this period, the Isma'ilis' headquarters in Quhistan was always in a castle in the northern parts of the region. While the northern parts of the region were more resourceful, they were more exposed to the attacks by the powerful northern enemies of the Isma'ilis. From a defensive point of view, the northern parts of the region were not ideal for the placement of the headquarters of the region. It is, therefore, possible that the relocation of the Isma'ilis' headquarters did not happen only for defensive reasons; rather the changes could be seen as evidence of the Isma'ilis' intention to better exploit the resources of the region in order to form a kind of territorial power in Quhistan.

The next step is to investigate the extent to which the archaeological and architectural evidence supports this interpretation of the historical accounts. Study of the castles as crucial components of the Isma'ili territories will provide us with invaluable information regarding the various aspects of the Isma'ili life and the various roles of the castles in the so-called Nizari Isma'ili state during the Alamut period. The next chapter deals with the concept of the Nizari Isma'ili state as it would have been perceived by the contemporaries in that period. Focusing on

the Quhistan region and thirteen of the Ismaʿili castles in that region, the following chapters elaborate on the roles of the castles in the Nizari Ismaʿili state.

Chapter 2. The concept of the Nizari Isma‘ili state

As mentioned in the introduction, the concept of the Nizari Isma‘ili state is largely accepted by the scholars of the Isma‘ili history. The purpose of the present chapter is to elaborate on the concept and to suggest supporting evidence for the statehood of the Isma‘ili polity during the Alamut period. As a prerequisite for the discussion of the Isma‘ili state, this chapter commences with a general introduction to the concept of state in the context of medieval Muslim societies. The introduction is mainly based on the Patricia Crone’s *God’s Rule, Government and Islam*. The book offers a comprehensive synthesis of the works on politics and government produced by medieval Islamic philosophers, historians, religious scholars, Islamic jurists, and political advisors.

Analyzing the existing textual evidence, the last two sections of the present chapter discuss the nature of the Isma‘ili presence in Iran during the Alamut period as perceived by the non-Isma‘ilis and the Isma‘ilis themselves.

State in the context of medieval Muslim societies

The medieval Islamic notion of state was fundamentally different from the modern understanding of the concept of state. “State” in the modern understanding of the term, as is defined by Crone, refers either to “a set of governmental institutions which constitute the supreme political authority within a given territory,” or to “a society endowed with such institutions, that is a politically organized society or polity.” For example, when we talk about Anarchism and the idea of abolition of the state, we are applying the former meaning of the

term, and in the expression “nation state” we are referring to the latter meaning.¹ No matter which sense of the word we are referring to, the “state” has some principal elements. These elements are nation (or community or people), governmental institutions, constitution (or system of law), sovereignty (independence), and territory. In fact, the common notion of statehood for contemporary polities depends on the existence of these elements.²

The study of medieval Islamic political thoughts shows the term “state” as we understand it in the modern day had no equivalent in the vocabulary of medieval Muslims. The term *dawla* (*dawlat* in Persian and *devlet* in Turkish) that is currently used for talking about the modern states had a totally different pre-modern usage. In the writings of the medieval Muslims, the term *dawla* refers to the turn of fortune for a particular dynasty or king. It was also used as an equivalent for the word *mulk* (kingship).³ The only term in the works of medieval scholars that has a meaning close to the term state in the second sense is *madīna*. It literally means city and was borrowed from the western concepts of *polis* and *civitas*. This usage of the term *madīna* is, however, limited to the philosophical works and is barely used in other Muslim writings.⁴

The modern concept of state is strongly connected to a set of governmental institutions. This is true even for the states in which a few individuals have a lot of authority. However, the medieval Muslims perception of government was essentially relied on one individual rather than a set of institutions. Therefore, medieval Muslims would speak of a *khalīfa* (caliph), imam,

¹ Crone, *God's Rule*, 3-4.

² These elements are discussed in detail in Marume et al., “An Analysis of,” 24-8.

³ Akhavi, “Dawlah.” See also Crone, *God's Rule*, 3-4.

⁴ Crone, *God's Rule*, 4. See for example the discussion of al-Farabi's theory of government in Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 316-25.

malik, sultan or *pādishāh* (king) instead of modern state in the first sense of the word. And the society under the control of that individual, that is almost similar to what we call state in the second sense of the word, was identified as *umma* (nation or community) or *milla* (a religious community). With the expansion of the Islamic territories from 657 onwards, the Muslims developed a body of political ideas built upon pre-Islamic tribal Arab tradition, Hellenistic and pre-Islamic Persian theories of state. These political ideas were gradually evolved during the course of Muslim history and were modified by the Muslim scholars. For the Muslims the main function of an ideal state is to guarantee the implementation of the pre-existing and eternal law of God, the *sharī'a*, on earth. In the medieval Muslim's view, Muhammad was one the few prophets like Moses, David, and Solomon who united the prophethood and kingship and acquired worldly power. After his emigration (*hijra*) to Medina he formed a community (*umma*) there and gained the power to execute God's law as the leader of the community.⁵

One of the primary questions in the Muslim political theory is about the person and functions of the head of the community after the prophet. The question has been answered differently by various Muslim groups. In fact, the major Shi'i-Sunni schism is rooted in a dispute over the answer to this question. The Sunnis and Shi'is both used the title imam (his office is known as *imamate*) for the successor of the prophet and the religious head of the community.⁶ Nevertheless, they had different views about who the imam is and how he was chosen. The Sunnis believed that the imam is chosen by consensus, designation by a council, or by the

⁵ For a detailed discussion on the fundamental Islamic ideas about the concept of state see, Crone, *God's Rule*, 3-31. See also Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, xiv-20.

⁶ The other titles like *amīr al-mu'minīn* and *khalīfa* were often used by the Muslims when referring to the prophet's successors as temporal heads of the community.

previous imam. The Shi'is, however, hold that the imam is a divinely guided infallible person who is chosen only by God and cannot be subject to election or designation by regular people. The rise to *imamate* for each imam was only possible through designation (*naṣṣ*) by the prophet or the previous imam as the manifestation of the divine will.⁷

Regardless of its Sunni or Shi'i definition, the imam was considered the religious head of the community and, theoretically, the only legitimate person to lead and manage the temporal affairs of the Muslim community and the state. Nevertheless, in practice the temporal power was barely in the hands of the imams or caliphs from the tenth century onward. Instead, there were military rulers, sultans or *pādishāhs*, who had the power to exercise functional authority. The Fatimid caliphate in Egypt is considered an exception, where the Isma'ili imams held the power until the fall of the Fatimid state. In the other cases, however, the imams/caliphs retained their symbolic role as the religious head of the community whose confirmation remained the principal source of legitimacy for the sultans. The sultan's authority was also justified actively in the political theories of the medieval Muslims.⁸

Although medieval Muslims did not have the same perception of the "state" as we do today, their political structures were made of similar elements to those of modern states. They also had governmental institutions that conform more or less to the definition of state in the first sense of the term mentioned above. Accordingly, the territories controlled by those

⁷ The issue of *imamate* and leadership in various Islamic traditions is discussed in detail in Crone, *God's Rule*, and Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, xiv-20. See also Hayrettin Yücesoy detailed discussion of the medieval Sunni thoughts on the necessity of the *imamate* (*wujūb al-imāma*) in Yücesoy, "Justification of Political Authority," 9-33.

⁸ For a detailed discussion on the medieval literature on the rule of the sultans, see Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, xiv-20, 114-51. See also Crone, *God's Rule*, 145-64.

institutions can be identified as state in the second sense. Therefore, it would not be wrong to use the modern term state in reference to medieval Islamic polities such as Fatimid state, Seljuq state, or Isma'ili state. The same is true about the use of the term empire which sometimes is used for talking about the larger scale polities of the Fatimids or Seljuqs.⁹ With this general introduction on the concept of state in medieval societies, we may now discuss the Isma'ili polity during the Alamut period and how it was perceived by the outside world and the Isma'ilis themselves.

Isma'ili activities in Iran in the eyes of non-Isma'ilis

In common with most of the divergent sects that are rejected by the mainstream religious communities, the Isma'ilism was barely accepted as a proper branch of Islam by the two major Muslim communities, Sunnis and Twelver Shi'is, during the medieval period. Particularly in the case of the Nizari Isma'ilis in Iran, the general reaction of the non-Isma'ilis was either ignoring and rejection or conflict and suppression. By the end of the eleventh century, when Hasan-i Sabbah started his movement in Iran, the Isma'ilis had already established the Fatimid state in Egypt. Therefore, a new wave of their activity in Iran could potentially pose a serious threat to the Seljuq state, and the formation of an active branch was not tolerated in the Sunni Iran of the time (see the discussion of the first phase of the Alamut period in chapter 1). To prevent the expansion of the Isma'ili power, the official voices of the Seljuq state fundamentally rejected the Isma'ili belief system. The Isma'ilism was condemned in the works of the Sunni historians and religious scholars and the Isma'ilis were introduced as *malāḥida* (heretics). It is

⁹ For a detailed discussion on the difference between empire and state, see Colomer, "Empires Versus States."

likely that these works were used to feed the preachers who disseminated the anti-Ismaʿili polemics to the public.

Perhaps the most celebrated of these anti-Ismaʿili voices was the great vizier of the Seljuq state, Nizam al-Mulk Tusi (1018-92). In an appendix to the *Siyār al-mulūk* or *Siyāsat-nāmiḥ* (Counsel for Kings or the Book of Government), a political treatise on kingship, Nizam al-Mulk attacks the Ismaʿilism as a new form of heresy rooted in the pre-Islamic tradition of Mazadak and then Khurrami uprising of Babak. Referring to the Ismaʿilis, Nizam al-Mulk writes:

Never has there been a more sinister, more perverted or more iniquitous crowd than these people, who behind walls are plotting harm to this country and seeking to destroy the religion. Their ears are alert for the sounds of sedition and their eyes are open for signs of the evil eye. If in any way (we take refuge with Allah!) through some celestial accident any misfortune should befall this victorious empire (*dawlat-i qāhiriḥ*), may Allah The Mighty strengthen it, these dogs will emerge from their hiding places, and will revolt against this empire (*dawlat*). They claim to be Shiʿi and most of their strength and reinforcement comes from the Rafidis and Khurrama-dins, and as far as they can, they will leave nothing undone in the pursuit of vice, mischief, murder and heresy.¹⁰

Nizam al-Mulk clearly viewed the Ismaʿilis as a potential danger to the Seljuq state. He, therefore, warns against their increasing activities in Iran and their infiltration inside the Seljuq court. Nizam al-Mulk's warning was not limited to his writings. In an inscription in the southern dome of the Friday Mosque of Isfahan, built under the auspices of Nizam al-Mulk, he publicly stated his concern about the Ismaʿili movement in Iran. Choosing some verses from the *sura* Al-Mu'minun (The Believers, 23) to be inscribed on an easily visible location of the dome, Nizam al-

¹⁰ Nizam al-Mulk and Darke, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, 188. For the Persian text see, Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyār al-Mulūk*, 254-5.

Mulk implicitly warns against the Ismaʿili propaganda and introduces himself as the Noah of the time whose warnings were not listened (Fig. 2-1).¹¹

In addition to Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyāsāt-nāmih* that attacks the Ismaʿilis from a historical point of view, several polemical works were produced by religious scholars and legists in refutation of the Ismaʿili doctrine. One of the most influential of these works was the *Fadāʾih al-Bātiniyya wa Fadāʾil al-Mustazhiriyya* (The Infamies of the Batiniyya and the Virtues of the Mustazhiriyya), commonly referred to as *al-Mustazhiri*, commissioned by the Abbasid caliph al-Mustazhir (r. 1094-1118) and written by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111), the most renowned contemporary Sunni theologian, jurist, and philosopher. In *al-Mustazhiri*, Ghazali questions the foundations of the Ismaʿili religion, especially the immaculacy of the imam and his authoritative instructions (*taʿlīm*), and suggests that the Ismaʿilis are personally apostate and should be subjected to the death penalty if they do not repent.¹²

The anti-Ismaʿili polemics provided a proper context for constant attacks by the Seljuq troops to the Ismaʿili regions in Isfahan, Alamut, and Quhistan. The Sunni chroniclers often refer to these attacks as *jihād* or *ghazwa*, holy wars waged on behalf of Islam against infidels. The Seljuqs were not able to use their entire military power against the Ismaʿilis because of the succession dispute among Malikshah's sons. In any case, the Ismaʿilis resisted the Seljuq attacks and even extended their territories. The Seljuqs, therefore, had no choice but accepting the

¹¹ This observation is suggested in Durand-Guédy, "The Ismailis of Isfahan," 239-42. The inscription was covered by later modifications in the building and was discovered in 1970 by the Italian archaeological team. The inscribed verses read as follows: "Prosperous are the believers who in their prayers are humble and from idle talk turn away and at almsgiving are active and guard their private parts save from their wives and what their right hands own then being not blameworthy." (Qur'an, XXIII, 1-6).

¹² Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 123-33. See also Daftary, *The Assassin Legends*, 25. For a detail study on *al-Mustazhiri*, see Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis*.

Isma'ilis' existence in the political scene of Iran. Despite the peace deal between Hasan-i Sabbah and the Seljuq sultan, Sanjar, it appears that the Seljuqs never accepted the Isma'ili polity as an independent state within the Seljuq territories and used every opportunity to eliminate the Isma'ilis from their regions. This is evident, for example, in the Seljuq anti-Isma'ili campaign after the death of Hasan-i Sabbah (see chapter 1 for a history of the first and second phases of the Alamut period).

Seljuq pressure on the Isma'ilis was tremendously reduced by the death of Sanjar in 1157, and subsequently with the fall of the Seljuq state. It appears that the elimination of the great Seljuq state allowed a much smaller state like that of the Isma'ilis to be gradually regarded a territorial power by the other Muslim rulers. From this point, the Isma'ilis were faced with occasional attacks by local rulers, such as *amir* Muhammad Ibn-i Anar, or newly emerged powers in their neighborhood, the Ghurid and the Khwarazmshahs. Most of these attacks were, however, to the margins of the Isma'ili territory, and the Isma'ili capital in Alamut remained to a large extent safe and secure. The Isma'ilis were also able to retain the integrity of their territory as well as their independence by paying tribute to their powerful opponents.

The reign of Jalal al-Din Hasan III (r. 1210-21) opened a new chapter in the interrelationship between the Isma'ilis of Iran and the outside world. The reform of Hasan III and his "rapprochement with Sunni Islam," as Daftary puts it,¹³ provided the ground for a symbiotic relationship between the Isma'ilis and the Sunni rulers of the Islamic world. The Sunni rulers were now able to use the military potentials of the Isma'ilis against their enemies, while

¹³ Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 375.

the Ismaʿilis enjoyed a period of security and peace in their territories.¹⁴ Juvayni's account of the reign of Jalal al-Din Hasan III suggests that Hasan III was treated like the head a normal Islamic state by most of the Sunni rulers.

Juvayni mentions that Hasan III gave orders for the building of mosques (mosques and bathhouses according to Rashid al-Din) in his territory (*vilāyāt*).¹⁵ As yet, there is no archaeological evidence to suggest that particular mosques or possibly bathhouses were built under Hasan III. It is likely that Juvayni mentions the order by Hasan III just to emphasize his determination to represent himself as a proper Muslim ruler. There are certain architectural elements such as mosque, marketplace, and bathhouse that were often considered essential elements of Muslim settlements. Developing those structures was, therefore, a responsibility of a proper Muslim ruler. Umayyad caliphs, for example, developed mosques and marketplace complexes in order to Islamicize towns in Bilad al-Sham.¹⁶

Hasan III seems to have had particularly close relationship with the Abbasid caliph, al-Nasir (r. 1180-1225), who “showed all manner of favors to him and issued a decree confirming his conversion to Islam.” The caliph also granted permission to the nobility of Gilan, to the north of Alamut region, to allow Hasan III's marriage with four of their daughters. Hasan III's mother went on the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1213 accompanied by ceremonial offerings (*sabīl*)

¹⁴ One of the longest campaigns of Hasan III outside of the Alamut region was in alliance with Muzaffar al-Din Ozbeg (the last Eldiguzid ruler of Arran and Adharbayjan, 1210-25) against the Ozbeg's rebel lieutenant in 'Iraq-i 'Ajam. See *Ibid.*, 377. See also Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 701-2; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 245-7; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 173-4; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 216-7.

¹⁵ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 364 and 699-702; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.2, 96 and Vol. 3, 243-7; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 171-3; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 216.

¹⁶ See Foote, Rebecca M. “commerce, Industrial Expansion, and Orthogonal Planning,” 32-38. For Islamic urbanism see Milwright, *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology*, 75-96.

from Hasan III. In Baghdad, Hasan III's mother was treated with honor and respect and his offerings and standards were placed in front of those of the other rulers including the powerful Khwarazmshah sultan, 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad II (r. 1200-20).¹⁷ Generally, it appears that the caliph's confirmation and support was instrumental in the recognition of the Isma'ili state as such by the outside world. In addition, Hasan III made every effort to win the trust of the Sunni rulers and religious scholars, and to get on friendly terms with them. It was also for the first time during the reign of Hasan III that a Nizari Isma'ili leader adopted the title of sultan, as suggested by the contemporary Isma'ili coinage (discussed below).

It appears that the recognition of the Isma'ili state by the other Muslim rulers during the reign of Hasan III remained unchanged until the end of the Alamut period. The Isma'ilis, however, needed to pay tribute both to the Mongols and to Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah, two main powers of the time, to maintain the stability of their territories. In his *Sīrat-i Jalāl al-Din*, Shahab al-Din Muhammad al-Nasawi (d. c. 1250), who was sent as an envoy of Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah to Alamut, refers to 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad III as *pādishāh-i Ismā'īliyah* (the king of the Isma'ilis) among other titles, including *ṣāhib-i Alamut* (possessor of Alamut) and *dārāy-i Alamut* (owner of Alamut).¹⁸ *Sīrat-i Jalāl al-Din* is the only available historical text by a non-Isma'ili author that uses the title of *pādishāh* in reference to a Nizari Isma'ili leader from the Alamut period. It is, therefore, difficult to jump to any conclusion about how the position of the Isma'ili leaders were perceived by the outsiders based on this one example. However, the marked contrast between the title of *pādishāh* and the other titles that are usually used by the

¹⁷ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 364 and 699-702; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.2, 96 and Vol. 3, 243-7; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 171-3; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 216.

¹⁸ al-Nasawi, *Sīrat-i Jalāl al-Din*, 140, 183, and 184.

non-Ismaʿili chroniclers for the Ismaʿili leaders is undoubtedly significant. This suggests a major shift in how the position of the Ismaʿili leaders and the nature of the Ismaʿili presence in their territory was perceived by the outside world from the beginning to the end of the Alamut period.

Ismaʿili perceptions of their organization and the nature of their presence in Iran during the Alamut period

As discussed above, the Alamut period witnessed a dramatic shift in the outside world's perception of the nature of the Ismaʿili presence in Iran. Likewise, the Ismaʿilis' own view of their organization and activities was not static during that period. What became later the Nizari Ismaʿili state was, in its earlier stages, just an open political and ideological revolt by the Ismaʿili community in Iran against the Seljuqs, masterminded by Hasan-i Sabbah. This is reflected in the following account of Hasan's encounter with a certain *raʿīs* Abu'l-Fazl, from the anonymous biography of Hasan-i Sabbah, *Sargudhasht-i Sayyidinā*, quoted later by Juvayni and Rashid al-Din:

... In Isfahan, he [i.e., Hasan-i Sabbah] entered the house of the *raʿīs* Abu'l-Fazl, a secret convert of his, where he remained for some time; and whenever this *raʿīs* came in to him they would talk together and discuss their troubles. One day, whilst bemoaning his lot and speaking of the fanatical attitude of the Sultan [Malikshah] and his ministers, Hasan-i Sabbah heaved a sigh and said: 'Alas! Had I but two men of one mind with me I should turn this realm upside down.' The *raʿīs* Abu'l-Fazl concluded that from much thought and fear and the undertaking of dangerous journeys Hasan had been attacked with melancholia, otherwise how could he imagine that with two persons of one mind he could turn upside

down the realm of a monarch, in whose name the *khuṭba* was recited and coin struck from Egypt to Kashgar...¹⁹

It appears that the account of the encounter between Hasan-i Sabbah and *raʿīs* Abu'l-Fazl had a central position in the Nizari Ismaʿili narrative of the beginning of their movement in Iran. The same account with more details has been included in another untitled Ismaʿili manuscript known as *ʿAhd-i Sayyidinā*, kept in the special collection of the Institute of Ismaʿili Studies in London.²⁰

As suggested by the account above, Hasan's plan seemed unrealistic even in the view of an Ismaʿili convert like *raʿīs* Abu'l-Fazl. The events, however, turned in favor of Hasan-i Sabbah, and under his leadership, the Ismaʿilis acquired the control of several castles and villages in Alamut and Quhistan. Nevertheless, Hasan-i Sabbah maintained his relationship with the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt. He was the representative (*ḥujja*) of the eighth Fatimid caliph, al-Mustansir Billah (r. 1036-94) and he owed his legitimacy to lead the Ismaʿilis of Iran to the Fatimid caliph. Therefore, in the early years of the Alamut period, the Ismaʿilis were seen their activities in Iran to be an extension of the Fatimid Shi'i state. The connection to the Fatimid state was possibly more ideological rather than physical. It was only the Ismaʿili imam who had legitimacy to establish a state. The power of the local *dāʿīs* was essentially justified through their connection to the Fatimid center at Cairo. Other than that, the local *dāʿīs* enjoyed some flexibility in their strategies. Perhaps for that reason, there is no material evidence, such as coins or inscriptions to suggest that there was some kind of physical connection between the

¹⁹ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 677; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 205. A Similar account is mentioned in Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyān*, 111-2; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 148-9. See also Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 321; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 138.

²⁰ Javan, "ʿAhd-i Sayyidnā."

Isma'ilis of Iran and the Fatimid state in the early years of the Alamut period (see the discussion of the Isma'ili coins below). At any rate, the situation changed dramatically after the death of al-Mustansir and the succession crisis of Nizar-Musta'li in Egypt in 1094.

In contrast to the majority of the Isma'ilis, Hasan-i Sabbah and his followers supported the leadership (*imamate*) of Nizar; and cut off their relationship with the Fatimids. It was perhaps at this point that the Isma'ilis perceived their organization in the form of an independent state, named by the modern scholars as Nizari Isma'ili state. Meanwhile, Nizar fled to Alexandria, where he received the support of the city's governor, Nasir al-Dawla Aftakin, and revolted against the Fatimid establishment in Cairo. However, as early as 1095, Alexandria was besieged by the Fatimid forces and Nizar was defeated, imprisoned and eventually immured with no apparent successor.²¹

The absence of an accessible imam after Nizar could potentially diminish Hasan's legitimacy to lead the Isma'ili community and consequently, jeopardize the newly formed Nizari Isma'ili state in Iran. The Nizari Isma'ili community, nevertheless, compared the situation to the pre-Fatimid concealment of the imams, when the community was awaiting the appearance of hidden imams after the death of the seventh Nizari Isma'ili imam, Muhammad ibn Isma'il (*imamate* c. 765-813). The community held the belief that Nizar had a male progeny whose identity will be unknown to the community until the proper time arrives. In addition, it was believed that by the reason of the divine plan, the abode of *imamate* was to be transferred from Egypt to the land of Daylam (the region in the north of Iran whose center was Alamut

²¹ On the Nizar-Musta'li schism of 1094 and its subsequent events in the North Africa see Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 241-2; Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 61-6. See also Walker and Walker, "Succession to Rule in the Shiite Caliphate," 248-58.

during the Alamut period) and the hidden imam was going to appear in Alamut.²² This belief was probably supported by a saying attributed to the first Shi'i imam, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), quoted in the Nizari Isma'ili doctrinal works produce during the Alamut period (discussed below).

The Nizari Isma'ilis re-adopted the pre-Fatimid concept of *ḥujja* (proof, guarantor) as the representative of imam during the "period of concealment" (*dawr-i satr*). In the Fatimid's *da'wa* organization, the *ḥujjas* were the chief local *dā'īs* who operated outside the Fatimid domains and were appointed by *bāb* (Gate) or *dā'ī al-du'āt*. For the Nizari Isma'ilis, however, the *ḥujja* had the highest rank in the *da'wa* hierarchy and was the direct intermediary between the hidden imam and the Isma'ili community.²³ Hasan-i Sabbah was, therefore, the deputy of *imam* and the legitimate head of the Nizari Isma'ili state on behalf of the imam.

Like Hasan-i Sabbah, his two successors Kiya Buzurg-Ummid and his son Muhammad were possibly considered the *ḥujjas* of the imam by the community.²⁴ There is, however, no reference to their position as *ḥujja* in the available historical sources. Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg-Ummid was the first lord of Alamut who attempted to organize a coinage in his territory, as suggested by the extant coins from the Alamut period.²⁵

²² Juvayni, and Boyle, Genghis Khan, 692; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 232; Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 163; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 201.

²³ On the concept of *ḥujja* in the Isma'ili thought, see Daftary, *Isma'ili History and Intellectual Traditions*, 127-36. See Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 220. The alternative meaning of *ḥujja* in the twelver- Shi'i tradition is discussed in Walker and Walker, "Succession to Rule in the Shiite Caliphate," 244.

²⁴ Daftary suggests that Hasan-i Sabbah's two successors were definitely *ḥujjas*. See Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 301-2.

²⁵ The discussion of the coins in the present research is mainly based on the detailed catalog of the Isma'ili coins from the Alamut period in Hamdan and Vardanyan, "Isma'ili Coins," 288-307.

The coins struck under Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg-Ummid are all gold coins (Fig. 2-2). In fact, all the existing Nizari Isma'ili coins before the reign of 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad III (i.e., before 1221) are gold.²⁶ In addition to the name of Muhammad ibn Buzurg-Ummid, the Islamic proclamation of faith (*shahāda*) is struck on obverse side of the coins. On the reverse, the proclamation is completed with the Shi'i formula, "Ali is the friend of God" as well as the name and honorific title of the imam, "*al-Muṣṭafā li-dīn Allāh, Nizār* (Nizar, the chosen for the religion of God)." The name of Nizar is followed by the marginal legend, *amīr al-mu'minīn ṣalawāt Allāh 'alayhī wa 'alā abā'ihī al-ṭāhirīn wa abnā'ihī al-akramīn* (the Commander of the Faithful the blessings of God be upon him and upon his ancestors, the pure ones; and upon his descendants, the most honorable ones). The marginal legend on the observe side of the coins bears the dates and name of the mint that is usually *kursī al-Daylam* that is the honorific name of the Alamut castle. The other epithet of the castle, *baladat al-Iqbāl* (the town of good fortune) appears also on some of the coins of the later Alamut period.

Organizing coinage by Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg-Ummid was possibly a political act and a symbolic manifestation of power and statehood. It is highly likely that the early Isma'ili gold coins, minted in Alamut, were donative or commemorative, especially because of their high quality of craftsmanship.²⁷ There is no trace of any Isma'ili silver or copper coins for more practical purposes and facilitating trade, before the reign of 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad III. Nevertheless, one cannot completely dismiss the possibility of minting copper coins in Alamut.

²⁶ Hamdan and Vardanyan, "Ismaili Coins," 289 and 294-7.

²⁷ According to Hamdan and Vardanyan the early gold coins are of high purity. Comparing to the coins minted in the later phases of the Alamut period, the early coins have also much complex design that supports their donative use. See Hamdan and Vardanyan, "Ismaili Coins," 289 and 294-307.

The lack of silver coins is seen, however, elsewhere in Greater Iran and most of the eastern Islamic world from the early eleventh century to the first quarter of thirteenth century.²⁸

Traditionally in medieval Islamic states, coins were regarded an important prerequisite of territorial control and effective tool for declaration of sovereignty of the sultans and ruling caliphs by disseminating their names.²⁹ It is, therefore, not surprising that a powerful ruler like Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg-Ummid organized a mint to claim spiritual and political authority on behalf of imam Nizar and his successors. The coins struck at Alamut not only challenged the authority of the Fatimid caliph as suggested by Paula Sanders,³⁰ but also introduced a Shi'i alternative to the Sunni Abbasid caliphate as well as the Seljuq state. The use of the official name of the Alamut castle on the Isma'ili coins is clearly reminiscent of the use of the formal names of Baghdad (*Madīnat al-salām*) and Samarra (*Surra man ra'a*) on the Abbasid coins.³¹

The minting of coinage within Isma'ili territory was possibly equally important internally as a declaration of stability and a reminder of the Isma'ili community's divinely guided leaders. One could imagine the sense of hope and accomplishment that someone from the community could feel by seeing the coins minted in Alamut. After a long period of clandestine activity, the Isma'ilis could see the name of their imam on a well-circulated object such a coin. Generally, it appears that during the reign of Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg-Ummid the Isma'ilis were able to achieve everything they needed to be regarded as a stable state. The only defect of their state in comparison with the Fatimid or the Abbasid states was the absence of their ultimate spiritual

²⁸ On the so-called "Silver famine" referring to the disappearance of the silver coins from eleventh to thirteenth century, see Album, *Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 13. See also Deyell, *Living without Silver*, 235-48.

²⁹ Grabar, "Introduction," 6. See also Album and Bates, "Coins and Coinage."

³⁰ Sanders, *Ritual, Politics*, 85.

³¹ This point has been noted by Hamdan and Vardanyan, "Ismaili Coins," 290.

and political leader from the eyes of the community. The defect was soon resolved by Hasan II's proclamation of the *qiyāma* and his self-proclamation to be from Nizar's progeny and the awaited imam.

The account of the ceremony of the proclamation of the *qiyāma* is the most important event of the reign of Hasan II, mentioned in every historical chronicle dealing with the history of the Isma'ilis during the Alamut period (see chapters 1 and 3). Almost all these chronicles were written after the Alamut period, by the historians of the Mongol courts. It appears that Juvayni's *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā* was the main source of the other later chroniclers in writing the events of the reign of Hasan II. It is, therefore, not known how exactly the ceremony of the proclamation of the *qiyāma* was narrated by the Nizari Isma'ilis themselves. Nevertheless, considering that Juvayni had access to the genuine Isma'ili sources from the Alamut castle's library, he possibly made use of those sources in writing his account of the ceremony of the proclamation of the *qiyāma* (discussed in the review of literature in the Introduction).

One of the most intriguing aspects of Juvayni's account of the ceremony is the emphasis that is put on the setting of a pulpit (*minbar*) at the foot of the Alamut castle and later Mu'minabad castle. The pillars of the *minbar* were decorated with four great standards with the four colors, white, red, green, and yellow. It was also "positioned in a way that it was faced towards the *qibla* in contrast to the Islamic traditions" or "directed away from the direction of righteousness and toward the quarter of iniquity" as Juvayni puts it.³² Mentioning these details

³² Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 226 and 230. For Bolye's English translation of the text, see Juvayni, and Boyle, Genghis Khan, 688 and 691. Rashid al-Din also notes that the *minbar* was faced towards the *qibla*. See Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 161.

about the *minbar* was not possibly merely because of its practical function as a place for delivering a sermon to the audience.

Traditionally in the Islamic societies, the *minbar* was a symbol of spiritual, political, and caliphal authority, and where the oath of allegiance (*bay'a*) to a new caliph was sworn. In addition, it was known as the ultimate platform for the promotion of ideology.³³ The contemporary Isma'ilis and the later Sunni chroniclers were undoubtedly aware of the symbolic significance of the *minbar* as a vehicle of political authority. In their views, therefore, the proclamation of the *qiyāma* was more than just a shift in the Nizari Isma'ili ideology and had certain political implications. At this point, the Isma'ili state was by definition a caliphate rival to that of Baghdad. The head of Isma'ili state, however, was an Isma'ili imam rather than a caliph.

According to Juvayni, some of the inhabitants of the Isma'ili territories did not accept Hasan II's claims and religious policies. Consequently, a group of these people immigrated to the neighboring lands, particularly from Qhistan to Khurasan.³⁴ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Hasan II's claims were repeated by his son and successor, Muhammad II. Muhammad also actively participated in the elaboration of the doctrine of the *qiyāma* that was introduced by his father.

It appears that Muhammad II's primary internal challenge was to consolidate his position as the present imam and a descendant of Nizar. This is reflected in the *Haft Bāb* (Seven Chapters), a contemporary Nizari Isma'ili treatise written by the Isma'ili poet and scribe, Hasan-i

³³ On the symbolic functions of the *minbar* and its introduction as an architectural element to early mosques, see Mostafa, "The Early Mosque Revisited," 6-9. See also Schacht, "An Unknown Type of Minbar and Its Historical Significance," 149-173.

³⁴ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 696-7; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 238-9.

Mahmud-i Katib (d. 1247) in 1199. Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib dedicated a chapter of his work to a discussion on who the contemporary imam is, where he stays and what his name is.³⁵ One of the main pieces of evidence he suggests to support his argument in favor of the *imamate* of Hasan II and his successor Nur al-Din Muhammad II, is a saying/sermon (*khuṭba*) attributed to ‘Ali, the first Shi‘i imam:

... Now in a sermon *mawlānā* ‘Ali, prostration and prayer be upon mention of him, said: ‘I will set up the pulpit in Egypt. In Damascus, I will shatter its stones into pieces. Then I will wage war against the land of Daylam and proceed further beyond, subduing its inhabitants. I will demolish its mountains and will cut down its trees.’ By saying so, he meant that he, exalted and high, will appear and conquer those lands and bring its inhabitants under his obedience and servitude. Then, he adds: ‘From there I will wage war against India and China.’ In the *khuṭba-yi mubāarak*³⁶ (Blessed Sermon), it is mentioned that a servant asked [‘Ali]: ‘will you return to do all these things yourself?’... he [‘Ali], exalted and high, responded: ‘One of my children will do so; it will be as I have done it.’³⁷

There are, undoubtedly, real historical elements in the saying above that were easily recognizable by the Isma‘ili community, namely the establishment of the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt as well as their conquest of Damascus. Building upon these historical facts, Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib suggests later in the text:

Now, when *mawlānā* ‘Ali said ‘I will set up the pulpit in Egypt,’ he did that; and ‘I will conquer Damascus,’ he did that; then ‘I will go to remote places in Daylam,’ he did that too. But one needs an eye to see him and not oneself. There has not, and there has never been inaccuracy in his sayings and all his words are correct.³⁸

³⁵ Hasan-i Mahmud Katib. *Spiritual Resurrection*, 60-72, from the English translation.

³⁶ The original Persian term mentioned in the text is *faṣl-i mubāarak*. Badakhchani mistakenly replaced the original term with *khuṭba-yi mubāarak* and explained in the footnote that the “*khuṭba-yi mubāarak* is the sermon of the *Qiyāmat* delivered by Hasan ‘alā dhikrihi’l-salām.

³⁷ Hasan-i Mahmud Katib. *Spiritual Resurrection*, 63-4, from the English translation.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib, therefore, explicitly states that the presence of the imam in Daylam/Alamut is a step of a semi-divine plan, proclaimed by imam 'Ali. The saying was probably also mentioned in the epistles (*fuṣūl/sing. faṣl*) of Hasan 'alā dhikrihi'l-salām, to support the idea of imam's transition to Alamut. The saying must have been central to Nizari Isma'ili polemics because it not only connects them to a legitimate past but also gives them a sense of purpose and an ultimate goal for their present being. Therefore, on the one hand they viewed their rule in the Iranian regions as a continuation of their former state in Egypt, and on the other as a prelude to extend their power to the furthest known parts of the world, India and China. This view was perhaps influential in the later increasing activities of the Nizari Isma'ilis in Transoxiana and Indian subcontinent.³⁹

As mentioned in the chapter 1, the reign of Muhammad II's successor, Jalal al-Din Hasan III, witnessed a dramatic shift in the Isma'ili religious policies as well as the interrelationship between the Isma'ilis and the rest of the Islamic world. The shift is seen clearly in the Isma'ili coinage of Hasan III's reign. The Shi'i formula and therefore the name of 'Ali has been omitted from the proclamation of the faith on the coins. In addition, Nizar's name has been replaced with the name and the caliphal title of the Abbasid caliph, al-Nasir li-Din Allah and he has been introduced as the commander of the faithful (*amīr al-mu'minīn*). The other interesting change is the adoption of the worldly title of *al-sultān al-a'zam* (the supreme sultan) by Hasan III. This is sometimes replaced with the lower ranking title *al-sultān al-mu'azzam* (the great sultan), a

³⁹ The exact date of the introduction of the Nizari Isma'ilism to the Indian subcontinent is not known. It was probably occurred sometime around the first half of the thirteenth century. See Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 385-6.

fluctuation which is believed to be of little importance.⁴⁰ Hasan III probably adopted the title sultan as a bold manifestation of his rivalry with the Khwarazmshahs. Even his honorific title, *Jalāl al-dunyā wa al-dīn Abū abu al-Faṭḥ*, appears to be an adaptation of Muhammad II of Khwarazm's (1200-20) title, *'alā' al-dunyā wa al-dīn Abū abu al-Faṭḥ*. Therefore, regardless of the actual extent of his power, the numismatic evidence suggests that Hasan III saw himself in a position equal to that of the Khwarazmshahs sultans, or at least styled himself as being in such position.⁴¹

Despite all of the changes in the Isma'ili religious policies introduced by Hasan III, the Nizari Isma'ili community retained their belief in his *imamate*. This is evident in the use of the religious title of *al-mawlā* (the lord) for him in one of the few surviving coins of his time (Fig. 2-3). The title was specifically used by the community in reference to the person of imam. The use of the title on the coin was possibly viewed as a discreet way of addressing the Isma'ili community. As an infallible imam, Hasan III had the ability to interpret the divine's orders and provide the community with the best practice of *Shari'a* considering the conditions of the time. Therefore, it appears that his orders followed by the community with no serious objection. His proclaimed reforms, as was explained later, were perceived as a re-imposition of *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation of true religious beliefs) which had been lifted during the time of the *qiyāma*. His time was also depicted as a new period of concealment (*dawr-i satr*) as opposed to the period of manifestation (*dawr-i kashf*) that was proclaimed by his grandfather

⁴⁰ Hamdan and Vardanyan, "Ismaili Coins," 290-1.

⁴¹ For examples Khwarazmsha's coinage, see Broome, *A Handbook of Islamic Coins*, 86; see also Numista, "Coins from the Khwarezmian Empire," available online at <https://en.numista.com/catalogue/khwarezmian-empire-1.html>, accessed May 16, 2021.

Hasan II. This was done by suggesting a new interpretation for the meaning of the two periods of concealment and manifestation. According to this new interpretation, elaborated in al-Tusi's *Paradise of Submission (Rawda-yi Taslīm)*, the *dawr-i satr* was when the true spiritual reality of the imam was concealed. Therefore, there could be a period of concealment even if the person of the imam was present but his reality as the manifestation of the unveiled truth was hidden to public. This was essentially different from the early Nizari Isma'ili understanding of the *dawr-i satr* when the persons of Nizar's successors were hidden to the public eyes.⁴²

Theoretically, the period of concealment continued during the reign of Hasan III's successor, 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad III. In practice, however, the reign of Muhammad III witnessed a dramatic shift in Isma'ili religious policies and a relative return to the norms of the *qiyāma* period. The continuation of Hasan III's policies in the early years of Muhammad III's reign is evident in a rare surviving coin issued in 1221, the year of Muhammad III accession to power (Fig. 2-4).⁴³ The inscription on the obverse of the coin contains the Sunni proclamation of faith and cites the Abbasid caliph, al-Nasir li-Din Allah, as the commander of the faithful (*amīr al-mu'minīn*) following the minting practice under Hasan III. On the reverse, the inscription is quite extraordinary, reading as *al-Imām al-a'ẓam, al-muẓaffar al-mu'aẓẓam, Muhammad bin*

⁴² Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 376, and 380-2. Hodgson, *The Secret Order*, 225-34. See Tusi's own discussion of the doctrine of *satr* in Tusi, *Paradise of Submission*, 134-65 and 169-98 (from the Persian text) and 109-32 and 136-57 (from the English text). On the concept of *dawr*, see Daftary, *Isma'ili History and Intellectual Traditions*, 137-43; Daftary, "Dawr."

⁴³ No publication is available on this coin. The images of the coin and some primary information are available online at SIXBID, AUCTION #37, LOT 816, Stephen Album Rare Coins, <https://www.sixbid.com/en/stephen-album-rare-coins/7370/islamic-atabegs-contemporaries/6025101/assassins-at-alamut-muhammad-iii>, accessed January 5, 2021.

Hasan, naṣr-i amīr al-mu'minīn (the supreme imam, the victorious the great, Muhammad the son of Hasan, the supporter of the commander of the faithful).

The use of the title imam for the caliph have been common practice in the coins production during the Fatimid caliphate and the late Abbasid caliphate (particularly during the reign of al-Nasir), and is seen on the coins struck under Hasan III.⁴⁴ The Nizari Isma'ilis, however, barely used the designation of imam for the lords of Alamut on the coins. This particular coin is in fact the only available example of the use of this title for the Nizari Isma'ili imams of the Alamut period. It is likely that the use of the title *al-Imām al-a'zam* instead of the sultanic title *al-sultān al-a'zam* (seen on Muhammad III's later coins and the coins of Hasan III), was the Isma'ilis' subtle way of announcing the accession of Muhammad III to *imamate* without violating their peace with the Abbasid caliphate.

The historical evidence suggests that in the later years of Muhammad III's reign, Hasan III's orthodox religious policies relaxed gradually and the Isma'ili community expressed its distinctive religious characteristics more openly. This is also supported by the contemporary numismatic evidence. A major change in the coins issued in the latest years is the omission of the Abbasid caliph's name and the addition of the Shi'i phrase, "*Alī walī Allāh* ('Ali is the friend of God)" to the proclamation of the faith. Furthermore, the name of Nizar barely appears on the coins from this period, perhaps because Muhammad III's lineage and his position as the imam was not a matter of question to the community anymore. In common with his father, Muhammad III adopted the sultanic title, *al-sultān al-a'zam*, as well as a title similar to that of

⁴⁴ For examples see the coins published in Broome, *A Handbook of Islamic Coins*, 26, 48-56, 89, 91-3; Wilkes, *Islamic Coins and Their Values*, 46-7. Other examples are published in Morton and Eden, *Important Coins of the Islamic World*, Number 107, 147, 148, and 155.

Khwarazmshahs, *'alā' al-dunyā wa al-dīn*. In contrast to his father, however, his Isma'ili religious title, *al-mawlā al-a'zam* (the supreme lord), appears frequently on the coins of this period (Figs. 2-5 and 2-6).⁴⁵

The dual position of the imam as the ultimate spiritual as well as the temporal and political leader of the community is discussed briefly in *Rawda-yi Taslīm* by al-Tusi. In a chapter on prophethood and *imamate*, al-Tusi suggests that:

The meaning of the terms 'imam' and 'qā'im' (resurrector) are the same, but people use the name Qā'im to refer to that Imam who introduces some great change in the religious law (*sharī'at*). When the Qā'im manifests himself in physical form, that is, when he propagates his mission by way of deeds but not [yet] in words, he is called the 'lord of the necks' (*mālik al-riqāb*); and when he manifests himself spiritually, that is, when he spreads his mission through both word and deed, he is called the 'lord of hearts and necks' (*mālik al-qulūb wa al-riqāb*).

Since in all periods and all times the welfare of mankind depends on what he - may salutations ensue upon mention of him - orders, he sometimes finds it advisable to occupy a throne, or possess dominion, wealth, an army and a great treasury. [At such times] he opens the door of his summons, which is the greatest mercy to all mankind, to all the world's inhabitants. He treats everyone with forbearance, kindness and tolerance, and under his great reign everyone prospers and is happy.

At other times, however, he avoids the outer paraphernalia and luxuries of royalty and power, leaning people to suffer the afflictions and perplexities of [divine] tribulations...⁴⁶

According to al-Tusi the form and the extent of the observation of *sharī'a* by the community and the style of the manifestation of imam's political power, all depends on the imam's interpretation of the exigencies of his own time. This view would simply explain the different and seemingly contradictory religious and external policies adopted by the Isma'ili

⁴⁵ For a catalog of the coins issued during Muhammad III's reign, see Hamdan and Vardanyan, "Ismaili Coins," 300-7.

⁴⁶ Tusi, *Paradise of Submission*, 127-8 (from the English translation) and 158-9 (from the Persian text).

leaders during the reigns of Hasan II, Muhammad II, Hasan III, and the early and later phases of Muhammad III's reign.

Rukn al-Din Khurshah's reign was too short, and he did not get the chance to establish his specific policies. He was however concerned about the Mongol raids and tried to come to friendly terms with the Mongols and his Sunni neighbors soon after succeeding his father. In the long term, he would possibly have followed policies similar to that of Hasan III. In which case, the Isma'ilis would have experienced a period of *satr* while the person of imam was present. In any case, with the Hülegü's conquest of the Isma'ili state and the subsequent murder of Khurshah by the Mongols, the Nizari Isma'ilis entered another period of the concealment of the person of imam from the eyes of his community.

Concluding notes

A detailed study of the textual sources discussed above, suggests that the common application of the title of state for referring to the Isma'ili polity during the Alamut period could be easily supported by the existing historical data. The Isma'ili polity consisted of the necessary elements for being recognized as a proper medieval state as discussed earlier in the present chapter. It was formed of an organized community that lived independently in a particular territory. The community had its own system of law and a supreme religious-political leader.

The Isma'ilis began to see themselves in the form of an independent state in the early years of the Alamut period as soon as they cut off their relationship with the Fatimid regime in 1094. It took, however, longer for the other Muslim rulers to accept the Isma'ilis as a territorial power and deal with their leaders like the heads of other independent states. The question is

now whether the archaeological and architectural evidence support the notion of the statehood of the Isma'ili polity. It has been argued above that the archeological and architectural remains are particularly important for assessing the extent to which the Isma'ilis engaged in the process of territorialization and the exploitation of the resources in their environment. Castles, as the only known architectural remains of the Isma'ilis' activity in Iran, are significant for examining the nature of the Isma'ilis' presence in Iran and the extent of their involvement in the management of the resources in their territories. Focusing on the Quhistan region, the following chapters deal with the study of the castles as well as investigation of the various roles they might play during the Alamut period.

Chapter 3. The Quhistan region, its geography and economy

As discussed in chapter 2, one of the principal elements of a state is territory. Territory is the geographical area in which the states exercise their power. The present chapter focuses on the Quhistan region as one of the major Isma'ili territories in Iran during the Alamut period. The first section discusses the medieval boundaries of the Quhistan region and the possible impact of the Isma'ilis on the expansion of the boundaries of the region. The following section deals with the climate of Quhistan and the importance of access to water in the establishment of the settlements. The last two sections provide a brief diachronic survey of the economy of Quhistan and the main trade routes that passed through the region during the medieval period according to the available accounts by medieval travelers and geographers. This information contributes to a better understanding of the economic context in which the Isma'ili castles were distributed. Building upon this discussion, the relationship between the distribution of the castles and the economic resources of the Quhistan region will be analyzed in the last section of chapter 6.

The Boundaries of the Quhistan region

Quhistan or Kuhistan (literally, mountainous country) is the medieval name of a region that covers an extensive area of the southern part of modern-day province of Khurasan in Iran. The boundaries of the region were roughly the hinterlands of Nishapur to the north, the great

desert of central Iran (Dasht-i Kavir and Dasht-i Lut) to the west, the Sistan province to the south, and the border of Afghanistan to the east.¹

The tenth-century Muslim geographer, Ibn Hawqal (d. c. 978), gives the earliest known description of the location of Quhistan. He refers to Quhistan as a “region of Khurasan in the Fars desert that has no city with the same name; and its *qaṣaba* (capital or a large town) is Qa’in; and it has the cities of Yunabiz [i.e. Gunabad] and Tabasiyn, known as Kari, and Khur and Tabas, known as Tabas-i Masinan...”² Similarly, the anonymous author of the *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam* names Qa’in as the *qaṣaba* of Kuhistan (Quhistan) and mentions the names of some of the towns in the region, including Bunabid (Gunabad), Tun, Kuri, Tabasiyn, Tabas-i Masinan (or Masina), Khur and Khusb (Khusf).³ The names of these towns in Quhistan also appear in the *Ashkāl al-‘Ālam*, a tenth-century geography book by Abu’l-Qasim ibn Ahmad Jiyhani. In comparison to other tenth-century geographers, al-Muqaddasi (d. 991) provides greater detail on the geographical attributes of the region and its towns. He describes Quhistan as a quite extensive region “measuring probably eighty *farsakhs*⁴ by eighty (about 475 km), though the greater part of it consists of mountains and desert areas, inhospitable and treeless.” In addition to Tun, Junabid (Gunabad), Tabas-i ‘Unnab (Masina), Khur, Khwast (Khusf), Kuri, Tabas al-Tamar (Tabas-i Gulshan), mentioned in other contemporary sources, al-Muqaddasi names al-Raqqih as a major but small town of the Quhistan region.⁵

¹ On historical geography of Quhistan and some of its major cities, see Le Strange, *The Lands*, 352-63; Kramers, “Ḷūhistān (p.) or Ḷuhistān.” See also Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Isma‘īliyān-i Quhistan*, 35-70.

² Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-‘Ardh*, Vol. 2. 445-6.

³ Sutudih, *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam*, 90-1. See also Minorsky, *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam*, 326-27.

⁴ *Farsakh* is an archaic Persian measure of distance. It represents various range of distances in different times and regions. A *farsakh* during the medieval period would be a distance of about 5.94 km. See Hinz, “Farsakh.”

⁵ al-Muqaddasi, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 265 and 283-84.

As is discussed in chapter 1, the north of Quhistan was the main scene of the Isma‘ilis’ conflicts with their opponents during the Alamut period. Eventually, the Isma‘ilis not only successfully consolidated their presence in Gunabad in the extreme north of the region, but also extended the boundaries of Quhistan further to include the district of Turshiz in their territories. This is reflected in the accounts of the contemporary geographer Yaqt al-Hamawi (1179-1229). In his major geographical work, the *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, composed between 1224 and 1228, he writes: “...these mountains (i.e., Kuhistan/Quhistan) are all today in the hands of al-Mulahida from the sons of al-Hasan ibn al-Sabbah.” Quoting a certain al-Rahni, Yaqt mentions the disagreement among the locals on whether the area beyond the Ispid-Rustaq (or Dasht-i Bayaz, some 50 km to the north of Qa‘in) and the district of Gunabad are part of Quhistan or not. In addition, in his entry on Junabiz (Gunabad) he defines it as a district of Nishabur, while mentioning, “most people say that it is one of the districts of Quhistan.” On the other hand, referring to the description of Quhistan by al-Bashari (i.e., al-Muqaddasi), Yaqt includes Turshiz in the list of the major towns of the region along with Qa‘in, Tun, Junabiz, Tabas al-‘Unnab, and Tabas al-Tamar.⁶

The impact of the presence of the Isma‘ilis on the boundaries of Quhistan is echoed more clearly in the works of post-Alamut period geographers. For example, Mustawfi (1281-1349) in the *Nuzhat al-Qulūb* mentions Turshiz among the sixteen districts of Quhistan, including Turshiz, Kishmar, Tun, Tanjah (probably Bijistan), Gunabad, Dasht-i Bayaz, Birjand, Khusf, Shakhin, Zirkuh, Khur, Tabas-i Masinan (Masina), Tabas-i Gilaki (Gulshan), Qa‘in, Qalih

⁶ al-Hamawi, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, Vol.2, 165; and Vol.4, 416.

Darrih, and Mu'minabad.⁷ Almost a century later the Timurid historian, Hafiz Abru (d. 1430), provides the following account of the region:

Quhistan is a lengthy and wide province (*vilāyat*); its circumference is around 100 *farsakh* or more. To its east are *vilāyat*-i Khaf and the desert located among Khaf and Farah and Sistan. To its west is the desert located between Fars and Kirman. To its north is Nishabur and Sabzivar; and to its south are the dependencies of Sajistan (Sistan) and Kirman's desert; and Quhistan contains several large *qaṣabas*; and in the period when *mulhidān* (heretics, referring to the Isma'ilis) became dominant and their capital was Alamut, their *dā'īs* captured [the region of Quhistan] and it was in their possession for a while, until the time when the world conqueror king, Hülegü khan ibn Tuli ibn Genghis khan, came to Khurasan, and captured all their castles in the year 655 [A. H.](1257)⁸. And their districts are as follows: Junabiz, Zirkuh, district of Birjand, district of Bijistan, Tun, Tabas-i Gilaki and Raqqih Tabas, Niharjan, district of Mu'minabad and district of Turshiz, Qa'in and district of Shakhin, Fasharud, Tabas-i Masina, Khusf.⁹

Except for minor differences in the names of major districts, the extent of Quhistan is defined almost similarly by Hafiz Abru and Mustawfi. Hafiz Abru explicitly mentioned that the region was entirely in the hands of the Isma'ilis before being captured by Hülegü. As discussed in chapter one the Isma'ili dominance over this territory occurred gradually during the course of the so-called Alamut period.

Climate of Quhistan and the sources of water

Quhistan has, generally, a hot and dry climate with little rainfall during the year. The average annual temperature in the region is about 17.5° C and the average annual precipitation is about

⁷ Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 206-8.

⁸ The correct year as recorded by other historians is 654 A.H./1256.

⁹ Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Isma'iliyān-i Quhistan*, 36, quoted from a manuscript of Hafiz Abru's Geography from the Malek National Library, Iran. A similar account with a slight difference in the districts' names could be found in Hafiz Abru. *Jughrāfiyā-yi Hāfiz Abru, Qismat-i Rub'-i Khurāsān*, introduction, 35-7.

134 mm. There is no year-round river in the whole region. The traces of small seasonal streams, however, can be detected in different parts of Quhistan. Traditionally, the region relied on the underground water drawn from aquifers for drinking and agriculture. The underground canals (*qanāts*), therefore, have been scattered all around the region. The use of *qanāts* for agriculture is mentioned almost by all the medieval geographers.¹⁰ Many of these canals are still in use and their traditional management system is still active.¹¹

More complex networks of *qanāts* are located in proximity of major towns. Near Gunabad, for example, is a network of *qanāts* known as Qanat-i Qasabih (Fig. 3-1). Qanat-i Qasabih has one primary canal and six subsidiary canals. Altogether, the canals are 33,113 m long and have 472 vertical shafts. The deepest or the main shaft (*mādar-chāh*) has a depth of around 280 m.¹² A similar network of *qanāts*, albeit in a much smaller scale, is also seen near Raqqih (Fig. 3-2). Raqqih is a small village today. However, it was one of the main towns in the Quhistan region during the Early and Middle Islamic periods. Many of the *qanāt* canals in Raqqih are destroyed today, although the general formation of the canals is still preserved. In Raqqih, the subsidiary canals lead to a major canal (*shāh-jūy*) extending west-east from the north of Raqqih to the city of Boshrouyeh. The major canal conducts the water to the farms and gardens to the east of the town. There are also the remains of seven watermills built over the major canal.¹³ There is no evidence suggesting that when the mills were built or whether they were all active at the same period. Nevertheless, the existence of seven mills in the small

¹⁰ For example, see Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-'Ardh*, Vol. 2. 446-7; Nasir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāmiḥ*, 170; al-Muqaddasi, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 283-84; al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Vol.4, 416; Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 206-9.

¹¹ For the current management of the *qanāts* of Tun, for example, see Mukhtarniya, *Āb-i Baladih-yi Tun*.

¹² On Qanat-i Qasabih, see Papuli Yazdi, *Qanāt-i Qaṣabih*; Labaf-Khaniki, "Barrisī va Shināsāyi-i," 271-98.

¹³ On the watermills of Raqqih, see Papuli Yazdi, "Āsiyābha-yi ki," 18-22.

district of Raqqih indicates a relatively high level of productivity of grains in the surrounding areas.

Little is known about the exact dates of the development of the *qanāts* in different parts of Quhistan. Labaf-Khaniki mentions the finding of pottery sherds similar to those of the Achaemenid site of Dahana-yi Gholaman, in one of the canals of Qanat-i Qasabih.¹⁴ This suggests that some of the canals could date to the pre-Islamic periods. The earliest historical mention of the *qanāts* of Gunabad is by the Ismaʿili *dāʿī*, Nasir-i Khusraw in 1052.¹⁵ This suggests that by the eleventh century, the *qanāts* of Gunabad were magnificent enough to catch the attention of Nasir-i Khusraw.

Currently, there is no material evidence above the ground to help in the dating of the water canals or the watermills in Raqqih. Nasir-i Khusraw, stayed in Raqqih for about ten days in 1052 and briefly describes it as follows:

When we came twelve *farsang* from Tabas, there was a town (*qaṣaba*) that was called Raqqih; it had running waters, and farms and trees and wall (*bārū*) and Friday mosque and complete villages and agricultural dependencies.¹⁶

Although the layout of the present village has dramatically changed over the centuries, one can still find the traces of the historical Raqqih described by Nasir-i Khusraw. In the extreme east of the village is an historical mosque that is either the afore-mentioned Friday mosque, or more probably a later building erected upon the remnants of the eleventh-century

¹⁴ Labaf-Khaniki, "Barrisī va Shināsāyi-i," 271-98. For Dahana-yi Gholaman, see Gnoli, "DAHAN-E ĠOLĀMĀN," 582-5.

¹⁵ Nasir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāmiḥ*, 170-1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

mosque. In addition, the remains of a complex network of *qanāts* testify the existence of thriving farms and gardens in that place.

It appears that *qanāts* were already developed in different parts of the region before the period of Ismaʿili dominance over Quhistan. Building and maintenance of the *qanāts* and the agricultural activities continued during the Alamut period. According to Juvayni, to rebuild the city of Khabushan (present-day Quchan, 140 km to the north of Nishapur) in 1256, the Mongol prince, Hülegü, ordered the *qanāt* builders (*muqanniyān*) and farmers (*dahāqīn*) to be moved from Quhistan to that city.¹⁷ This suggests that those skills were readily available in the Quhistan region under the Ismaʿilis during the Alamut period.

Generally, in Quhistan, access to the sources of water was particularly crucial and determined the location, size, and importance of settlements. As suggested by the two cases of Gunabad and Raqqih, all the larger towns in the region are located in the places where water was more accessible. Most of the major castles in the region, in turn, were positioned in the immediate vicinity of the larger towns. Being close to these towns could create an opportunity for the Ismaʿilis to use their castles as administrative centers for the control of their nearby settlements and economic resources. This aspect of the castles will be explored more below in chapter 6.

The economy of Quhistan during the medieval period

The primary sources provide us with invaluable information about the geographical condition and the resources of Quhistan. The available primary geographical accounts were written in

¹⁷ Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 105.

different premodern periods. Nevertheless, considering the slow pace of change in the nature of agricultural, craft, and trade activities during the medieval period, it would be reasonable to assume that the situation in Quhistan during the Alamut period was rather similar to what has been described in the available accounts. Using these primary geographical sources for reconstructing the historical economic geography of the regions has some limitations. Not all the available accounts were written based on the first-hand observation of the places in Quhistan. In some cases, the authors relied on the older sources that were not necessarily up-to-date in a later period. Furthermore, the medieval authors occasionally confused the names or the locations of the places they were describing. The following discussion is based on the information that is reported consistently in different sources.

As mentioned above, Quhistan has a dry climate with a low average annual precipitation of about 134 mm. In the pre-modern period, the region relied extensively on the water from the underground canals (*qanāts*) for agriculture. This limited the agricultural produce in most districts of the region to crops that would be generally traded in localized networks. Turshiz, however, was an exception. The district of Turshiz is greener and has more resources in comparison to the other parts of the region, and was possibly the only district to export its products beyond the region. Al-Muqaddasi describes Turshiz as a populous town with a mosque “that is not inferior to the mosque of Damascus, being wealthier than it, handsome and well-kept.” Although al-Muqaddasi’s statement about the mosque of Turshiz being wealthier than the mosque of Damascus, as one of the wonders of medieval Islamic world, was perhaps just a figure of speech, it clearly reflects the wealth and prosperity of Turshiz. Al-Muqaddasi also mentions that Turshiz was “the port (*furḍa*) of Fars and Isfahan, [and] the storehouse of

Khurasan.”¹⁸ According to Mustawfi, the products of Turshiz were “abundant grains, fine fruits, grapes, fig, extremely fine pomegranate, and silk (*abrīsham*).” He names four strong castles in the district of Turshiz and mentions that grain and fruit were exported from that place to Nishabur and Sabzivar to the north of Quhistan.¹⁹

The primary export commodities of the Quhistan region were rugs and fabrics of various types, particularly silk.²⁰ References to the fabrics of Quhistan are found in several medieval historical sources. For example, Tabari mentions the Quhistani shirt and garment worn by a member of Umayyad family, ‘Amr ibn Said ibn al-‘As (d. 689).²¹ Writing in the first half of the tenth century, the Muslim geographer Istakhri (d. after 952) refers to various kind of cottons (pl. *karābīs*, sing. *karbās*), carpet strips (pl. *nakhakh*, sing. *nakhkh*), and rag rugs (pl. *misuḥ*, sing. *mishḥ*) as the main products of Quhistan, exported to different parts of the world.²² Similarly, al-Muqaddasi states that “white clothing resembling that of Nishabur, rugs, and fine prayer rugs (*thīyāb tashāba al-Nisaburiyya, bayḍ wa baṣṭ muṣallīyyāt ḥasana*)”²³ were produced in the region. He particularly names Qa’in and Tun as the two cities in which a great population of weavers lived.²⁴

¹⁸ al-Muqaddasi and Basil A. Collins (tr.). *Aḥsan al-Taḳāsim*, 280; al-Muqaddasi, *Aḥsan al-Taḳāsim*, 318. In this context, the term port (*furḍa*) refers to a place where the commodities of other regions were traded.

¹⁹ Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 206. The four castles are, Bardarud, Mikal, Mujahidabad, and Atashgah Castle. Only the location of the last one is known to us today (for the location of Atashgah Castle see Fig. 1-2).

²⁰ Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā‘īliyyān-I Quhistān*, 71.

²¹ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Tabari*. Vol.8, 3448.

²² al-Istakhri, *Masālik al-Mamālik*, 155.

²³ The city is also known as Nishapur. al-Muqaddasi and Basil A. Collins (tr.). *Aḥsan al-Taḳāsim*, 286; al-Muqaddasi, *Aḥsan al-Taḳāsim*, 324.

²⁴ al-Muqaddasi and Basil A. Collins (tr.). *Aḥsan al-Taḳāsim*, 283.

Muqaddasi's statement about the quality of the fabrics produced in Quhistan is evident in a later account by Abul-Fazl Bayhaqi (d. 1077) noting that the Persian vizier of the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (r. 999-1030), Ahmad Maymandi (d. 1032) usually wore the turbans from Nishabur or Qa'in.²⁵ Nasir-i Khusraw, who visited the city of Tun in 1052, mentions that there were a large number of about 400 cotton-rug (*zīluw*) weaving workshops in the town.²⁶ Unfortunately, Nasir-i Khusraw do not provides us with more details about the workshops and the features of the *zīluws*. Nor he mentions anything about the network of production and trade of these rugs.

Being made of cotton and with simple blue and white designs, *zīluws* are essentially cold floor coverings and more suitable for the dry climate of desert areas and mostly used in those regions. There is almost no trace today of any *zīluw* from Tun or any other cities in the Quhistan region. All the remaining *zīluws* today are the product of the cities in the central part of Iran. Nevertheless, the production of *zīluws* in Quhistan as suggested by Nasir-i Khusraw is likely. Cotton was cultivated in Quhistan, and indigo (the dye) was easily available in the region.²⁷ The cotton fields are still visible in some parts of Quhistan, for example, in Ark village to the north of Qal'ih Qala' of Ark.

We can conjecture that the production and export of fabric in the major cities of Quhistan was continued during the Alamut period. The export of "a lot of fabrics (*bazza kathir*)" from Qa'in is mentioned in *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, a contemporary book of geography by Yaqut al-

²⁵ Bayhaqi, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī*, Vol. 1, 205.

²⁶ Nasir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāmiḥ*, 170.

²⁷ On *zīluw* weaving in Iran (alt. zīlu), see Tanavoli, *Persian Flatweaves*, 258-69.

Hamawi.²⁸ Yaqut account, however, is possibly based on al-Muqaddasi's work, not his own observation. A more reliable evidence for this is the Minhaj-i Siraj's account of his 1224 journey in the Quhistan region (discussed in Chapter 1). He mentions that before returning to Tulak he went to Tun to buy the necessary clothing (*māyaḥtaj-i Jāmhā*).²⁹ This suggests that there were still active weaving workshops at the city of Tun.

Fabrics remained the main product of Quhistan even after the Alamut period. The descriptions of the fourteenth-century historian and geographer, Hamdallah Mustawfi, shows that fine silk (*abrīsham-i nīkū*) was produced in most parts of the Quhistan region, including Turshiz, Tun, Junabid (Gunabad), and Zirkuh.³⁰ These products were possibly exported extensively to the other regions. According to the fifteenth-century historian Mu'in al-Din Isfizari, the clothing of the people of Herat was usually from the fabrics of Quhistan such as Malih (khaki) and Khudrang (a kind of khaki).³¹ The exportation of the goods from Quhistan relied on a network of trade routes passing through the region and connecting the major neighboring cities lied all around the region.

Travelling through Quhistan, main routes

Quhistan is located among some of the major medieval provinces, including Khurasan to the north and northeast, Sistan to the south, and Kirman, Fars, and Isfahan to the southwest.

Historically, therefore, the access from each of these provinces to the other was made possible

²⁸ al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Vol. 4, 301.

²⁹ Juzjani and Raverty, *Ṭabakāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.2, 1198; Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.2, 183.

³⁰ Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 206-8.

³¹ Isfizari, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, Vol. 1, 327.

by several north-south and east-west routes passed through the region. A brief description of these routes is provided in the accounts of medieval geographers. Below is a discussion of the main routes in the region (Fig. 3-3).³²

Isfahan to Khurasan: This route began in Na'in, a city located about 130 km to the east of Isfahan, and led to Bunih, thence to Jurmaq (Garmih), thence to Nawjay (Nukhani). It bifurcated in Nawjay, one way went to the east to Ribat-i Khwaran, thence a village (*qarīyya*) called Atashgahan, then Tabas-i Gulshan. The other way went to the northeast to Diskiran, thence Bun, thence Turshiz which was five stages (*manzil*)³³ away from Nishabur.³⁴

Kirman to Khurasan: Istakhri mentions three routes from Kirman to Khurasan. The first route was Rah-i Shur (Shur's road). This was a south-north route that passed by a salty (*shūr*) source of water in the desert, located close to a small village, called Bira. From Bira there were some stages before reaching to Kari (or Karit) in the south of Tabas-i Gulshan.³⁵ The second route was also a south-northeast route. This route went to Ravar (or Zavar), and then to a place called Darkujiry which was some stages away from Nayband. From Nayband the route continued two stages to a place called Birshak, thence one stage to Khur. Khur was two stages away from Khusf to the west of Birjand.³⁶

³² A brief discussion of some of these routes is provided by Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān*, 81-3; Labaf-Khaniki, Bakhtiyari, and Nimati, *Cārvānsarāhā-yi Khurāsān*, 363-6, 421-5, 441-4.

³³ The locations of caravan halts, where the caravans stopped on the way to their final destination were called *manzil* or *marḥala* in the historical texts. These terms were used also as a measure of distance between two locations. For more information, see Elisséeff and Andrews, "Manzil."

³⁴ al-Istakhri, *Masālik al-Mamālik*, 135-6.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. 136.

The third route to Kirman was known as Rah-i Khabis (Khabis Road). This route began from Khabis, a small town located some 60 km to the east of Kirman. The route went to the north to a place called Darvazaq (one stage away from Khabis), then to Rud-i Shur, Barisk, Nimih, Hawz and Sarchishmih, and after one stage to Kukur which was two stages away from Khusf.³⁷ In addition to these three routes, there was two other ways for accessing Khurasan through the province of Sistan. One led to Nih in the extreme north of Sistan, the other to Zaranj.³⁸ The route from Sistan to Quhistan and Khurasan is discussed below.

Fars to Khurasan: This route began from Yazd, a large city in the extreme northeast of the medieval province of Fars. From Yazd, the route went to Anjira, Khazanih, Tal-i Siyah and Sifid, Saghand, Ribat-i Pusht-i Badam, Ribat-i Muhammad, Rig, Mulhab, and finally Ribat-i Khwaran.³⁹ From Ribat-i Khwaran the route was more or less similar to the road of Na'in, and led to Tabas-i Gulshan and Karit in the east or Turshiz in the northeast. A similar route from Shiraz (in Fars) to Nishapur (in Khurasan) is mentioned in Ibn Khurdadbih's *Masālik wal-Mamālik* (The Roads and The Kingdom). According to Ibn Khurdadbih, from Yazd the route went to Anjirih, Khazanih, Saghand, Ribat-i Muhammad ibn Yazdad, Khan-Ushturan, Habaik, Jawaran (possibly Khwaran), Tamharhan, Tabasiyn (possibly Tabas-i Gulshan), Dihkadih Muhammad ibn Kharzad, Sarkhadh, Afridun, Zanji and then Tarthith (Turshiz).⁴⁰ Some of the *manzils* mentioned by Ibn Khurdadbih are different from those of al-Istakhri's book. However, the route was generally the same route and entered the Quhistan region from Tabas-i Gulshan.

³⁷ Ibid. 136-7.

³⁸ The route that led to Nih is mentioned by al-Istakhri as "the new road". See Ibid. 138.

³⁹ Ibid., 137-8.

⁴⁰ Ibn Khurdadbih, *Masālik wal-Mamālik*, 51-2.

Sistan to Khurasan: The main road from Sistan to Khurasan was the route that led to Duruh in the extreme southeast of Quhistan. According to al-Istakhri, Duruh was 7 days away from Sistan.⁴¹ From Duruh there were two roads: one went to the east and led to Farah, thence Herat; the other went to the north and led to Tabas-i Masina, thence Qa'in. From Qa'in the travelers continued nine stages to the north to Nishabur, or eight stages to the east to Zuzan, Khaf, and finally Herat.⁴² In addition to this route, there was another route that began from Nih in the north of Sistan and led to Birjand and Qa'in.

The northern routes from Khurasan to Quhistan: All the main routes from Khurasan usually led to four main destinations in Quhistan: Turshiz, Bardiskan, Gunabad, and Qa'in. From these cities, the routes continued to the other parts of Quhistan region and eventually the other neighboring provinces. The route from Nishabur to Quhistan often led to Turshiz and, then Gunabad. There were other routes to Quhistan that began from Sangbast, to the east of Nishabur, or Bayhaq (Sabzivar) to the west.

The route from Sangbast went to the south to Zavih (near Turbat-i Haydariyya).⁴³ From Zavih there were three ways to Quhistan. The first way led to Turshiz and continued to the west to Bardiskan and Darunih, then to the south to Tabas-i Gulshan. The other two ways went to the south: one led to Gunabad⁴⁴ and then to Qa'in to the southeast, the other went to southwest to Fayzabad and after some stages to Bijistan, and then to Tun. From Tun the route

⁴¹ Ibid., 158.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ The main stage in the road from Sangbast to Zavih were: Rubat-i Sifid, Rubat-i Sang, and Rubat-i Shur Hisar. See Labaf-Khaniki, Bakhtiyari, and Nimati. *Cārvānsarāhā-yi Khurāsān*, 263-4.

⁴⁴ The road from Zavih to Gunabad consisted of the following stages: Mehnih, Rubat-i Zar Nuh, Rubat-i Kamali, Omrani, and Ghuzhd. Ibid., 366.

continued to the southwest and led to Tabas-i Gulshan.⁴⁵ There was also another route from Fayzabad to Tabas-i Gulshan. This route led to Marandiz and then Fakhrabad to the north of Bijistan. From Fakhrabad, it continued to the southwest and led to Tabas-i Gulshan through the desert to the west of Bijistan and Tun.⁴⁶ The route from Bayhaq, to the east of Nishabur, passed Bardiskan and Bijistan and led to Gunabad or Tun.

There were also two other routes that entered Quhistan from the northeast. These routes began from Khaf, Sangan and Zuzan and led to Gunabad or Qa'in. Nasir-i Khusraw took the route from Qa'in to travel to Sarakhs in 1052.⁴⁷ According to Istakhri, the distance between Sangan to Gunabad was two days, and between Zuzan and Qa'in was three days.⁴⁸

In addition to the major routes mentioned above, there were other less important, local roads used for traveling inside the region. The trade and military campaigns, however, relied on the major routes and the local roads were used only by the locals and small groups of travelers. Trade was an important part of the economy of the cities that were located on the way of the major caravan routes. For example, al-Muqaddasi describes the city of Qa'in in Quhistan as "the export point of Khurasan, the source of supply of Kirman."⁴⁹ Similarly, Birjand was located on

⁴⁵ For the details of this route that is taken by Afzal al-Mulk, the historian and traveler of the Qajar period, in 1903 for going from Zavih to Kirman, see Afzal al-Mulk, *Safarnāmiḥ Khurāsān va Kirmān*, 132-189. There was also a route from Qa'in to Tabas-i Gulshan. This route is described in the travel account of Mirza Khanlarkhan. The route began from Qa'in and led to Rum. From Rum it went to Sidih, Saqi, Pashtuk, Birjand, Niqab, and Khusf. From Khusf it continued to Dastjird, Khur, Arababad, Dihuk, Asfak, Kurit, and finally Tabas-i Gulshan. See I'tisam al-Mulk, *Safarnāmiḥ*, 180-224.

⁴⁶ This route is taken by Mirza-Ali-Khan Na'ini in 1882. For details, see Na'ini, *Safarnāmiḥ Ṣafā al-Saltāna Nā'inī*.

⁴⁷ Nasir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāmiḥ*, 171-2.

⁴⁸ al-Istakhri, *Masālik al-Mamālik*, 159.

⁴⁹ An alternative version of *Aḥsan al-Taḳāsīm* states that Qa'in and Turthith (Turshiz) "are the two river-ports of 'Uman, the two entrepôts of Kirman, the two treasuries of Khurasan." See al-Muqaddasi. *Aḥsan al-Taḳāsīm*, 283. A similar to what is mentioned above is made by Yaquṭ. See al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Vol. 4, 20 and 301.

the intersection of some of the major trade routes and, as stated by Hafiz Abru, the people of that district were mostly merchants.⁵⁰ Another example is Tabas-i Masina, which was on the route from Sistan and Kirman to Herat and Nishabur. As mentioned by Isfizari, the people of the district of Tabas often traveled for trade.⁵¹ The possible relationship between the location of the Isma'ili castles and the major trade routes and cities in the Quhistan region will be discussed in the last section of chapter 6.

Concluding notes

The Isma'ilis never acquired the control of the large medieval cities such as Rayy, Qazvin, Nishabur, or Isfahan. Their settlements were usually villages and small cities or towns, often with a population of mixed religion. In comparison to the other Isma'ili regions, the urban centers in Quhistan were larger and better known by the medieval travelers. Tabas-i Gulshan, Tabas-i Masina, Tun, Qa'in, Birjand, Gunabad, Khusf, and Turshiz are the major towns that are often mentioned by medieval geographers.

The economy of Quhistan essentially relied on limited agricultural resources, scattered in different parts of the region. Most of the agricultural produce of the region was consumed locally. Fabrics and silk were also considered significant trade commodities of Quhistan and were exported beyond the borders of the region. Because of its location among the major medieval provinces, Khurasan, Sistan, Kirman, and Isfahan, several caravan routes passed through Quhistan. All the major towns of Quhistan were located on the way of these routes,

⁵⁰ Hafiz Abru. *Jughrāfiyā-yi Ḥāfiz Abru, Qīsmat-i Rub'-i Khurāsān*, 35 from the introduction.

⁵¹ Isfizari, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, Vol. 1, 328.

and trade activity was common among their residents. One would imagine that the local governors could also impose road toll on some of the main caravan routes passing through the region. There is, however, no historical evidence to support this idea.

There are limited historical references to the nature of the relationship between the Ismaʿilis and the environment of the Quhistan region. *Dīvān-i Qāʿimīyāt*, the contemporary work of an Ismaʿili scribe, Hasan Mahmud-i Katib, contains some information about two buildings that were constructed during the Alamut period. The first of these buildings was a large-scale structure and was possibly the castle of Hasan-Abad to the northwest of Tun (see chapter 1). However, there is no explicit mention of the function of the building in the book. The second one, as stated clearly by Hasan Mahmud-i Katib, was a cistern (*birkih-Khānih*), built in Sarab (probably a village) near Birjand. Hasan Mahmud-i Katib wrote some verses about it at the request of the architects. These verses were inscribed on the cistern.⁵²

Unfortunately, the location of the cistern is not known today, and, thus, cannot be employed as a source of reference for a comparative examination of other structures in the region. Nevertheless, the mere mention of it by Hasan Mahmud-i Katib reveals that the Ismaʿili building projects in the Alamut period were not limited to fortifications.

In the absence of the available primary documents, the study of the architectural and archaeological remains would provide us with an alternative means to study the relationship of the Ismaʿilis to their environment and the extent of their involvement in the exploitation of the resources in their territory. At present, the castles and what is found in them are the only available architectural and archaeological evidence of the Ismaʿili presence in the Quhistan

⁵² Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib, *Dīvān-i Qāʿimīyāt*, 156.

region. The study of the castles and their possible roles in the Isma'ili state is, therefore, the only way for investigating the life of the Isma'ilis in Quhistan and possibly other regions. The next chapter deals with the architectural remains of some of the castles in the Quhistan regions as case studies. The following chapters then discuss both defensive and non-defensive roles that the castles played in the Isma'ilis state during the Alamut period.

Chapter 4. Case studies: Architectural remains of the Ismaʿili castles

According to the primary historical sources, the Ismaʿilis captured and built a large number of strongholds in the Quhistan region during the Alamut period. The mountainous topography of the region provided an ideal place for the erection of hardly accessible castles on the summits of the mountains. Medieval historians recorded the number of the castles in the region differently. Juvayni, an official at the Mongol court who accompanied the Mongol prince Hülegü during his campaign against the Ismaʿilis, mentions that the Mongols demolished more than fifty Ismaʿili castles in the Quhistan regions.¹ In another account Juzjani, historian of the Ghurid court, reports a total number of 105 castles in the Ismaʿili regions (*Bilād-i Mulḥidistān*), seventy castles in Quhistan and thirty-five in “the mountains of the west called Alamut.”² A rather similar number is mentioned by Rashid al-Din stating that the Mongols captured a hundred Ismaʿili castles in Quhistan, Rudbar, and Qumis.³

A regional archaeological survey, carried out by a group of archaeologists from the Southern Khurasan Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (SKCHTO) in 2004-5, lists 37 mountain castles only within the boundaries of the modern day Southern Khurasan province.⁴ Building upon this invaluable survey and using Google Earth satellite photos, I have been able to identify the exact locations of fifty-six of these fortifications in the Quhistan region (Fig. 1-2). It is quite likely that most of these structures were occupied by the Ismaʿilis during the Alamut

¹ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 637; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 137.

² Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.2, 186; Juzjani and Raverty, *Ṭabakāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.2, 1205-6.

³ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 989.

⁴ The goal of the survey was providing an inventory of all the historical sites and buildings from all the periods in the Southern Khurasan province. A list of the castles visited in this survey is published in Soroush, Nasrabadi, and Zafaranlu. “Darāmadī bar Muṭālīʿāt-i,” 119. The final report of the archaeological survey above is published in Nasrabadi, *Qalʿihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi Khurāsān-i Junūbī* and is cited frequently in the present dissertation.

period. The exact date of the construction of the castles, however, is not clear. The fifty-six number is almost close to the number recorded in the historical sources. Nevertheless, the possibility of discovering more Ismaʿili structures through further survey work in the region should not be overlooked.

Except for a few cases, most of the Ismaʿili castles in the Quhistan region bear the names of the villages or the cities in their proximity. In some places, the locals use the name Qalʿih-Kuh or Kuh-Qalʿih (both mean mountain-castle) to distinguish the castles from any other fortifications in those places. In several cases, the castles are known as Qalʿih-Dukhtar (The Maiden Castle). The name is used for several places in Quhistan and other parts of Iran. The local legends often refer the origins of the name in different places to the use of the castle as refuge for a girl or some girls in some uncertain historical event. However, the name was possibly used literally to reflect the inaccessibility of the castle. It has been also suggested that the castles known as *dukhtar* (the maiden) were pre-Islamic structures that had some religious function related to the veneration of the Anahid, a female divinity in Zoroastrianism.⁵

A detailed study of all the Ismaʿili fortifications in Quhistan demands an extensive fieldwork beyond the scope a PhD research project. Therefore, for the purpose of the present research I have selected only thirteen of them as case studies. The selected case studies include all the major castles in the region that were mentioned directly or indirectly in the historical sources. I have also included smaller castles of various sizes from different parts of the region to create a more balanced cluster of the castles that could potentially offer more information

⁵⁵ For a review of existing hypotheses about the places known as Qalʿih-Dukhtar, see Mudarrisi and Siyfi, "Qalʿih-Dukhtar," 223-45. See also Nasrabadi, *Qalʿihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 34-6; Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismāʿīliyyān-i Quhistān*, 356-8. For a detailed discussion of the Anahid, see Boyce, Chaumont, and Bier, "ANĀHĪD."

about the characteristics of the Isma'ili castles in Quhistan (Fig. 4-1). Focusing on the thirteen case studies, I have discussed the architectural and structural features of each castle, their topography, locations around them, adjacent roads, natural resources, and the available historical information relevant to the castles in the primary sources.

Mu'minabad castle

Mu'minabad castle is located on the southeast of the Quhistan Region on top of a northwest-southeast mountain range, known as Mu'minabad or Minabad. It is to the west of the villages of Taghandik, Sarshabad⁶ and Nasrabad and about 30 km to the south of the town of Asadiyya. The locals call the castle Kal-i Hasan-i Sabbah or Kalbad-i Sabbah. *Kal* means nest in the local dialect⁷ and sometimes refers to the flat areas on the top of mountains. It is hard, on historical grounds, to believe that Hasan-i Sabbah had any direct role in establishing this castle. According to the historical sources, Hasan-i Sabbah never left Alamut region during his lifetime after the capture Alamut castle in 1090. However, the influential Isma'ili presence in the region during the Alamut period is evident in the naming of the castle by the locals endured throughout the history.

The castle stands on three U-shaped adjoining hills some 2,500 m above the sea level and 200 m from the foot of the hills (Fig. 4-2). It is accessible from the south through a deep valley, overlooked by the wings of the U-shaped plan that are the eastern and western parts of the castles (Fig. 4-3). The valley leads to a steep slope that goes up to the middle part of the

⁶ Willey recorded these two villages as Karandi and Shamsabad respectively. See Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 198.

⁷ Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān*, 352.

castle. The path to the castle is covered by the stones from the curtain walls. The broken pieces of building and decorative bricks, and shards of glazed and unglazed potteries are also visible on the surface. The main gateway was probably located at the south of the middle part of the castle. Willey, who visited the castle in 1967-8, has mentioned a gateway that was “flanked by two great stone-dressed towers.”⁸ There is no trace today of such gateway. The remains of a round stone tower, however, are still visible. The tower is 2.5 m in diameter and was perhaps part of the fortifications of the main entrance.

The castle occupies an area of about four hectares. Following the topography of the hills, the castle has a U-shaped layout that comprises three main parts. The architectural remains of the middle part are in better condition in comparison with the other parts of the castle. Some 5 m to the west of the main gateway is a rectangular building, formed of five long rooms (Fig. 4-4). The locals call the building *ghūrkhānih* that is an archaic term for armory. The building’s rooms are 6 m in length and 3 m in width and are connected to each other through arched openings. Pointed barrel vaults, built masterfully of stone and gypsum mortar, still cover some parts of the rooms. The building was originally two-storied but almost the whole upper story has collapsed into the lower rooms. The building must have been part of a more complex structure in the middle section of the castle. These structures probably served as barracks for the garrison living inside the castle.⁹

⁸ Willey, *Eagle’s Nest*, 199.

⁹ Willey suggested that this building was part of what he calls “high citadel.” He possibly believed that the middle part was the headquarters of the castle. However, he did not expand on what he means by that and what was the role of “high citadel” in Mu’minabad castle. See *Ibid.*, 199-200.

Some 8 m to the southwest of *ghūrkhānih* there is a large round cistern partially filled with the rocks and soil from the mountain as well as the debris from its possibly domed ceiling (Fig. 4-5). The compound plaster (*sārūj*) coating of the cistern's wall is still visible in the depth of 6 m. Willey estimated that the cistern was 12 m deep. However, it is impossible to measure the exact depth of the cistern without excavation. Willey has also written about "two underground tunnels led to fresh springs in a little valley to the north of the castle some two kilometers away."¹⁰ Furqani also mentions of a tunnel carved into the rock in the middle section of the castle.¹¹ There is no trace now of such a tunnel in the middle part of the castle. However, the remains of an underground space, covered by brick vaults, are visible through the holes dug by the looters. The size of the bricks is 12 x 24 cm with a width of about 5 cm. Without further excavation, it is difficult to say that whether this is the tunnel mentioned by Willey and if it is actually 2 km long to able access to a fresh spring. It is most likely that it was part of some underground storerooms.

There is a long narrow passage on the mountain just beside these underground spaces. The passage provides access to the western part of the castle that stands about 20 m above the middle part. The traces of the external curtain walls and the bases of the towers are still visible on either side of the passage. The locals call this part of the castle Qal'ih-Dukhtar or Arih-Kuh. The structures in this part have been destroyed and nothing is remaining above the ground except for the traces of the external wall and extremely ruined towers. There are also the remains of two cisterns, carved in the rock and positioned masterfully to gather the rain and

¹⁰ Ibid., 200.

¹¹ Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān*, 353.

melt water from annual snowfall. Willey suggests that this part of the castle was possibly where a mosque could be located.¹² He, however, does not provide any evidence for his suggestion. There is no indication that the Isma'ilis ever built a mosque inside their castles.¹³ During the several years of excavations at the Alamut castle, which was the center of the Isma'ilis for most of Alamut period, no mosque has been found inside the castle walls.¹⁴ Thus, it is unlikely that they have built a mosque at Mu'minabad. Rather, it is more probable that this part of the castle was covered by residential units used by either garrisons or lay people who resided inside the castle.

The eastern wing of the U-formation is the widest part of the castle that covers an area of about 2.5 hectares. It was perhaps the headquarters of the castle and the best defended part of it (Fig. 4-6). A line of adjoined rocks connects this part to the middle part of castle. The remains of towers and stone walls are still visible on the top of the rocks. These towers and walls provided an additional line of defense to prevent any easy access to the eastern part. The whole of this area is covered with the ruins of architectural units including residential chambers and storerooms. In addition, sporadic remains of the external curtain wall are still visible around this area. Down to the southeast, there are two towers called *āsīā* (mill) by the local people. The reason for this naming would be the existence of a mill in this part of the castle. There is an isolated millstone down at the foot of the castle just before entering the

¹² Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 200.

¹³ This does not mean that the Nizari Isma'ilis did not build a mosque in their villages or towns. Several mosques were built under the Fatimids. Therefore, it is highly likely that the Nizari Isma'ilis built mosques in their regions. However, no historic mosque is known to date, that could be attributed to the Nizari Isma'ilis.

¹⁴ A comprehensive report of all the excavation seasons has been archived in the Alamut cultural heritage office and has been consulted in the present research.

valley that leads to the castle. This stone could be from the mill mentioned above, fallen down to the valley for some unknown reason.

Perhaps the most interesting archaeological remains in the eastern part of the castle are the broken pieces of decorative bricks scattered on the ground (Fig. 4-7). They were possibly used in the decoration of a kind of ceremonial hall, similar to the *mawlā-sarā* in the Alamut castle (discussed in chapter 6). Mu'minabad castle was one the most important Isma'ili castle in Quhistan during the Alamut period. It was the only castle after Alamut that witnessed the public announcement ceremony of the proclamation of the *qiyāma* (the Resurrection) on the 28th of Zul-Qa'da 559 (17 October 1164). Juvayni mentions that a person named *ra'īs* Muzaffar was the commandant of the castle and the governor of Quhistan at the time.¹⁵

There is no mention of the castle in the historical texts prior to the fourteenth century. In a short entry on Mu'minabad, Mustawfi writes: "there is a sturdy castle in that country that Mulahidih (i.e., the Isma'ilis) built it and it is extremely strong."¹⁶ Almost a century later Mu'in al-Din Muhammad Isfazari mentions the castle and writes that it is completely ruined.¹⁷ We do not know if the castle was an original Isma'ili establishment or it was an earlier structure, captured and re-fortified by the Isma'ilis. As discussed in chapter 1, according to Rashid al-Din, in 1092, the Isma'ilis did not have any refuge at their disposal in Quhistan other than the fortification (*hiṣār*) of Duruh.¹⁸ Therefore, the Isma'ilis must have occupied Mu'minabad castle

¹⁵ Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 691. For the Persian text, see Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 230. See also Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyyān*, 161-2; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 202.

¹⁶ Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 209.

¹⁷ "Mu'minabad is one of the castles that is attributed to Hasan-i Sabbah and his followers; and now it is more ruined than their graves." See Isfazari, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt*, Vol. 1,328.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

sometime after 1092, and it was the headquarters of the Ismaʿili activities in Quhistan at least until 1164.

Qalʿih-Kuh of Qaʿin

Qalʿih-Kuh stands on an isolated rock from the mountain of Abazari (or Imam Jafari) about 3 km to the southeast of Qaʿin (Fig. 4-8). Some 800 m to the northeast of the rock, there is a tomb attributed to Buzurmgmehr-i Qaʿini (or Buzarjumih-r-i Qaʿini), a poet who served as a courtier under Mahmud (r. 998 – 1030) and Masʿud of Ghazni (r. 1030–1040). The tomb is, however, a much later construction, perhaps from the fourteenth century. In the lowest part, the rock is about 100 m in height. The easiest access to the summit of the castle was through a narrow ravine that lies to the east of the rock. The south of the ravine was perhaps a weak spot as Furqani mentions an additional stone wall, built in the mouth of the ravine to defend this spot.¹⁹ Unfortunately, nothing is left of this wall except for fragments of its base. The castle is accessible today via a track that lies to the north of the rock. The track leads up to the east, where a stairway, built about a decade ago by Southern Khurasan Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (SKCHTO), provides access to the summit of the rock. The stairs end in an opening in the curtain wall of the castle's lower section. The main entrance, however, was some 20 m to the west of this opening and was located in the corner of a large round tower (Fig. 4-9).

The architectural remains of Qalʿih-Kuh are in a better condition in comparison with most of the Ismaʿili castles in Quhistan. It might be because of the restoration and building

¹⁹ Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismāʿīliyān-i Quhistān*, 355.

activities in the castle sometime after the Alamut period. The castle covers an area of about 1.5 hectares and consists of three sections (Fig. 4-10). The entrance tower is about 7 m in diameter and opens to the south of the castle's lower section. An additional inner curtain wall separates the lower section from the central section. The castle's gateway is particularly controlled by another round tower from the inner curtain wall that dominates the entrance tower. The lower section of the castle covers a small area of about 700 m². The spatial organization of this section is almost clear because of four excavation seasons and debris removal, carried out by SKCHTO between 2005 and 2009.²⁰ In addition, some of the structures in this part have been reconstructed during this time including, the towers, parts of the curtain walls, and the stone-vaults of a building on the northeast of the lower section.

This building was originally a two-story structure with two towers adjacent to it. It is placed on a rock that projects out about 20 m to the southeast (Figs. 4-11 and 4-12). The lower level consists of six rooms (each 2.5 x 3.5 m) and a corridor about 2 m wide. The towers are about 5 and 6 m in diameter and open to the corridor. The plan of the upper level, with a double row of six rooms and a corridor in the middle, is slightly different from the one below. Some of the walls were built awkwardly on the crown of the lower vault and are in discord with the structural logic of the building. Therefore, the design of the upper level could be related to a later occupation of the castle.

²⁰ Detailed reports of the excavation seasons at Qal'ih-Kuh have been archived at SKCHTO's library. The findings, however, have partially published elsewhere. The present research relies on the secondary publications that used the excavation reports.

Willey described only the architecture of the upper level and introduced the building as a stable.²¹ This could not be the original function of the building, however. Considering the architecture of the building, it was possibly part of the barracks for the garrisons in the lower section of the castle. The other evidence for this function is the remains of an underground storage pit as well as the large potteries, buried into the rooms' floor. These features have been uncovered during the excavations several years after Willey's visit of the castle.²² Standing on the top of this building, the castle's defenders had a dominant position over the surrounding environment and could provide covering fire to the main gateway. Just beside the barracks building, there is a large cistern that is located strategically below a steep rocky slope that could easily direct the rainwater to the cistern. The cistern was covered by a brick vault as suggested by the remains of a squinch on its northeastern corner. It was perhaps the largest cistern in the castle (5.5 m width, 7 m length, 6 m depth) and could easily catch the natural precipitation, as well as the overflowing water from the cisterns above it.

The central section of the castle was accessible through a bent gatehouse located to the west of the main entrance. This section is the largest part of the castle where the domestic quarters and workshops were located. Unfortunately, all the structures in this section have been demolished except for small fragments of the curtain walls and towers as well as a couple of rooms in the southern part. The eastern external wall is in better state of preservation in comparison to the western walls. Rectangular loopholes at intervals of about 2 m are still visible on the eastern curtain wall. The external wall was fortified by round towers of various sizes.

²¹ Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 173.

²² Farjami, "Qal'ih-Kuh-i Qa'in," 106-7. See also Sultani, *Ṭarrāhī-i Hifāzat*, 70.

There is a small hole at the foot of some of the towers suggesting that they might have served as washrooms. The exterior side of the curtain walls was possibly coated with plaster. The plaster coating not only reinforced the walls, but also provided the castle a magnificent white look.

Archaeological excavations on the northwest corner of the castle, uncovered a dense complex of rooms, cisterns and storerooms as well as domestic artifacts including potteries, hand-mill stones, waterskins, and a pair of leather shoes.²³ An interesting space in this part is a circular room (about 5 m in diameter) with six openings that provide access to the structures in all directions. It was perhaps a domed room in the lower part of a tower. The tower overlooked the western side of the castle. A path provides access to the south of the central section. The path was originally like an alley, flanked by a row of rooms (Fig. 4-13). These rooms were possibly the residences of garrisons and lay people. There is a large outcrop in the west of the central section. The traces of two rooms (possibly watchtowers) and two small cisterns are still visible on the top of the rock.

The remains of a round structure stand some 35 m to the southwest of the outcrop. The structure could be either an isolated watchtower, or part of an additional wall that divided the central section in two parts. Just to the south of the tower, is a room built into the eastern curtain wall. It was possibly the upper level of a two-story building. A door in the southern wall connects the room to another space adjacent to a large semi-circular tower. The room's interior walls were coated in a thick layer of stucco some parts of which are still remained on the wall.

²³ On leather artifacts from Qal'ih-Kuh-I Qa'in, see Koochakzadeh, et al., "Charm-sāzī-yi Aṣr-i Saljūqi," 53-65. See also Koochakzadeh, "Barrisī-yi Taṭbīqī-yi," 77-110. On excavated potteries from Qal'ih-Kuh, see Farjami and Chamanara, "Barrisī-yi Gūnihā-yi Sufāl-i"; and Farjami, et al. "Gūnih Shināsī-yi Sufāl-hā-yi."

There are three oblong niches in the eastern wall. The traces of a possibly decorative frieze running below the ceiling are still visible on the top corner of the room's western wall.

Generally, the architectural features of the room suggest that it served a function other than a simple residence for the garrisons. In addition to the structures of the central section inside the castle, the remains of a wall and at least three towers are still visible some 15 m down the western curtain wall. These additional defensive elements were built possibly to overlook the narrow valleys around the rock.

The upper section of the castle covers an area of about 4,000 m² in the southern part of the rock. The access to this section is through a bent entrance with a large tower on the south. Standing about 30 m higher than the main entrance, the tower overlooks the middle and lower sections of the castle. The bent entrance opens to a corridor flanked by the remains of rooms and possibly storerooms built into the curtain walls (Figs. 4-14 and 4-15). The corridor leads to the southern part of the upper section where the remains of a rectangular structure is located. The rectangular structure could be a courtyard around which the rooms were arranged. The last visible structures in this part of the castle are a cistern as well as a round tower projected from the southwest of the castle's wall. Generally, the upper section of the castle has a more organized layout in comparison with the other sections. It was perhaps the headquarters of the castle and had a more residential character.

Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in is one the strongest and most important Isma'ili castles in the Quhistan region. The castle is rarely mentioned in the historical sources. As discussed in the previous chapter, in *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* (Nasirid Generations), Juzjani provides a brief account of his trips to

Quhistan in the years 621, 622, and 623 A.H. (1224, 25, 26).²⁴ In his second trip, he met the governor of Quhistan, Muhtasham Shams al-Din Hasan-i Ikhtiyar, in Qa'in. Juzjani did not mention any information regarding their meeting location. However, it is most likely that they met in Qal'ih-Kuh.

Some information about the existing of a castle in Qa'in is mentioned in the primary sources. In an entry on Qa'in, al-Muqaddasi mentions a lofty castle known as "the Great Ba'man."²⁵ Unfortunately, he does not expand on the features of the castle and the origin of its naming. But the castle that he mentions was possibly Qal'ih-Kuh as suggested by the use of the adjective "lofty". Yaqut al-Hamawi quotes the same information from al-Muqaddasi's work in *Mu'jam al-Buldān*. However, he recorded the castle's name as "the Great Nu'man."²⁶ The latest mention of Qal'ih-Kuh by medieval writers is found in a short description of Qa'in in *Jughrāfiyā-yi Ḥāfiz Abru*. Hafiz Abru writes: "Qa'in is an old city and there was great mansions; and it has a strong castle..."²⁷ In common with most medieval historians, Hafiz Abru does not mention any further details about the castle's features. Thus, it cannot be said with certainty that the castle mentioned by Hafiz Abru was Qal'ih-Kuh.

²⁴ Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāširī*, Vol.2, 182-5.

²⁵ al-Muqaddasi, *Aḥsan al-Taḳāsim*, 321. Collins translated it in error as "...and its name is well-known in 'Umān." See al-Muqaddasi and Basil A. Collins (tr.). *Aḥsan al-Taḳāsim*, 283.

²⁶ al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Vol.4, 301.

²⁷ Hafiz Abru, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Ḥāfiz Abru*, *Qismat-i Rub'-i Khurāsān*, 36-7 (introduction part).

Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun

Kuh-Qal'ih lies on a lofty outcrop 12 km to the south of the historical city of Tun, known today as Ferdaws.²⁸ The altitude of the castle is about 2,000 m. The castle has a commanding view of the Gunabad- Tun- Tabas road. There is a watercourse some 1 km to the south of the castle. The watercourse is dry today, but it was possibly an important sources of water for the castle's residence during the Alamut period. There is a small cistern (locally called *hawz-anbār*) to the north of the watercourse. According to its inscription, the cistern was built recently in 1978 (Fig. 4-16). Several other cisterns of this type, built to collect natural precipitation, could be seen along the route from Ferdaws to Kuh-Qal'ih. Just beside the cistern, a track leads to a small valley to the south of the outcrop. Mouth of the valley was blocked by a long stone wall. In addition to being a defensive element, the wall functioned as a dam for collecting the runoff water.

Access to the castle is through a pathway on the east side of the valley. In the west of the pathway, there was a short stone wall, only small section of which are still visible. The remains of several stone structures are still visible on either side of the valley. These were possibly observation posts or guardrooms, built to defend the castle against any assault through the southern valley. The pathway leads to a slope to the east of the outcrop. Most the curtain walls and towers are in a good state of preservation in Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun. The structures of the castle cover an area of about 1.5 hectares. The castle has four fortified sections (Fig. 4-17). There were, however, at least six lines of defensive walls in the southwest side of the

²⁸ Peter Willey provided a brief description of the architectural remains of Kuh-Qal'ih in his book. However, he refers to the castle as "Qal'eh Dokhtar." For details, see Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 179-81. A brief discussion of the castle could also be found in Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 85-90.

outcrop. The castle's main gatehouse is located in the eastern external wall. The gateway, however, faces towards the north and is positioned masterfully in an angle in the wall. The gateway is about 3.5 m wide, and was covered by a pointed barrel-vault about 6 m in height. It is made of stone and is decorated by a layer of plaster and lines of projected brick. There are two severely damaged round towers on the either side. The towers are also coated with plaster (Fig. 4-18).

The gateway opens to the lower section (A) of the castle through a guardroom about 3.5 m wide and at least 3 m long. The room was possibly covered by a low pointed arch. Section A is the smallest part of the castle. The only visible structures in this section are the lower parts of the exterior walls as well as a possibly two-story building at the extreme south of the castle. The building dominates the southern side of the castle and overlooks the pathway that leads to the eastern side. It is a rectangular structure with four small towers in its corners and a tower in the middle of the southern wall. In common with most of the Isma'ili castles in Quhistan, the lower section of Kuh-Qal'ih was possibly the garrison's living area. The two-story building was, thus, part of a barracks complex. The remains of rooms built into the curtain walls are still visible on both sides. There was perhaps a cistern beside the western wall that is now completely filled with debris and soil.

The access to the upper section (B) is through a short ramp just to west of the main entrance. The ramp leads to a bent gatehouse that is located beside a large round tower. Section B is the largest part of the castle and extends to the north and west of the gatehouse (Fig. 4-19). Access to the western part was possibly through the round domed tower. The tower overlooks the lower section and the main entrance to the castle. There are five rectangular

loopholes in the tower's wall that command a view of the castle's southern flank. The traces of plaster coating are still visible inside the tower's wall. There is a complex of some interconnected structures in the southern corner of section B. They were possibly occupied by the garrisons. The best-preserved part of these structures is a large rectangular building some 5 m to the west of the tower. It was probably a two-story building. Nothing remains of the upper story except for fragments of the southern wall's lower part. The lower story is formed of two parallel long rooms measuring about 3.5 x 16 m. The rooms were covered by round barrel-vaults that are now collapsed. The rooms open to a large tower, located in the northwestern corner of the building. There is also an arched opening in the southern end of each room. The openings provide access to a couple of rooms and a tower, built into the castle's southern curtain wall.

Section B extends about 170 m on a steep slope to the west of the two-story building (Fig. 4-20). The domestic quarters and workshops were possibly located in this area. The whole area is covered by piles of debris from the structures built on the sloping ground. The southern curtain wall is still in a fair state of preservation. The wall is strongly built of stone and is fortified by semi-circular towers and bastions at intervals of about 10 m. The remains of several rooms and galleries are still visible all along the wall. Some 40 m to the north of the curtain wall, there is a high rock outcrop on top of which the sections C and D are located. Immediately below the outcrop, there are two large cisterns built into the ground. The cisterns were possibly covered by brick vaults that are now collapsed. Fragments of an additional defensive wall are still visible some 5 m above the cisterns. This wall extends to the east of the outcrop where it dominates the eastern part of section B.

The eastern part of section B is relatively narrower than the western part (Fig. 4-21). The main structures in this part are a row of possibly interconnected rooms built into the external wall. Nothing remains of these structures above the ground except for a rectangular building located almost in the middle of the wall. It probably had two levels. On the interior, the building's walls were coated in stucco. The lower level almost filled with the debris and soil. The ceilings of both levels are collapsed now. The lower level was possibly consisted of four northwest-southeast elongated rooms covered by barrel vaults. The upper level, however, had a different layout as the remaining structures suggest. There are two rectangular stone columns in the middle of the upper level. Springing stone on these columns indicate that the upper space was covered by cupolas rested on rib arches and pendentives. Just to the west of this building, there are two huge cisterns, measuring about 6 x 16 m and 6 x 12 m. The only evidence that suggests that these cisterns were covered by some sort of brick vault are the remains of two courses of brick on the top of the cisterns' western wall.

Section B ends to a fortified building in the extreme northeast corner of the castle. The building is directed east-west just beside a large round tower. It was possibly a guardroom that controlled the access to section C. It was at least partially a two-story structure. The lower level is filled with debris from the destruction of the walls and ceilings. There was possibly a now ruined gate just to the west of the tower. There is also a postern gate in the northern wall. Nothing remains of the upper level of the building except for some fragments of the wall in the west of the building. This level has commanding view to section B through possibly four narrow windows in the south.

Section C stands about 12 m above section B. The cliffs, not the walls, are the front line of defense in section C. A strong inner curtain wall with three round towers guards the southeast of section C. The remains of a couple of rooms built into this wall are still visible above the ground. The structures in this section are built on very steep slopes to the northeast and southwest of section D. Unfortunately, the advanced state of destruction obscured most of structures in section C. Nothing remains of the buildings in the northeastern part of section C, except for a couple of small cisterns in the extreme northwest as well as fragments of the castle's northern external wall. The southwestern area is covered by the remains of a complex of dense fortification. In addition to the external curtain wall, there are at least three lines of defensive walls in this area. The walls are built in different levels in front of a complex of possibly interconnected rooms and galleries. They were covered by stone barrel and brick cross vaults, as the fragmentary remains of the ceilings indicate.

Section D is located just above C on a northwest-southeast ridge in the highest part of Kuh-Qal'ih. In common with the other Isma'ili castles, this highest enclosure was perhaps the headquarters of Kuh-Qal'ih. The main buildings in this section are two rectangular structures (DA and DB) built in the southeast and northwest. The distance between the two buildings is about 50 m. DB stands some 12 m above DA. A series of inter-connecting rooms form a corridor that connects the two buildings. The walls of these rooms are extant only at the foundation level. The remains of some galleries and two external walls on either side of the corridor are still visible. The access to section D was possibly through a gate positioned in the northern external wall of the corridor just beside DA. DA is a strong two-story building fortified by small semicircular towers. Five rectangular loopholes open in the northern wall. The lower level

possibly consisted of five elongated rooms, three of which have remained above the ground. The building had a different layout in the upper level. There was perhaps a courtyard in the middle and several rooms around it. The courtyard was probably connected to the corridor that leads to DB. There is a large rectangular cistern some 5 m to the south of DB. The cistern was covered by brick vault that is now collapsed.

DB is smaller and more ruined than DA. It was possibly a single-story building. There is a large circular pit inside DB (Fig. 4-22). The pit's wall is covered by at least two fine layers of compound plaster, suggesting that the pit was used for storing oil or grains. In the northwest, there is a two-story gallery from which only a section of thick stone wall with an oblong arched window is remaining. The window commands a view of Tun to the north. Part of the lower level's brick vault is still extant. The upper level was covered by a brick vault too, as discussed by Willey who visited the castle in 1967.²⁹ Unfortunately, nothing has left from the vault perhaps because of the earthquake of 1968. Section D extends to the west and south of DB. The whole structures in this area have been destroyed and covered by a layer of rubble.

There is no reference to Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun in the available historical sources. However, in *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* (Nasirid Generations), Juzjani mentions a castle known as Sartakht that was located between Qa'in and a place called Javashir.³⁰ According to Mustawfi (d.1349), Javashir was a castle in the vicinity of Gunabad to the north of Tun.³¹ Thus, Sartakht was located somewhere between Qa'in and Gunabad (in the northeast of Tun). Sartakht is also mentioned by Rashid al-Din in the following account on Hülegü's invasion to Quhistan:

²⁹ Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 179.

³⁰ Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, 183.

³¹ Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 207.

Hülegü Khan dispatched Malik Shams al-Din-i Kart as envoy to castle of Sartakht before Nasir al-Din Muhtasham. And he was old and weak at the time, obeyed the order and in companionship of Malik Shams al-Din *with various rarities and presents* entered in the servitude of his majesty... Hülegü Khan gave him a decree (*yarlīq*) and tablet of authority (*pāyza*) and dispatched him to governorship of Tun...³²

According to Rashid al-Din's account, Sartakht must be located nearby the city of Tun.

Therefore, it is highly probable that the castle known today as Kuh-Qal'ih is the same castle that is mentioned as Sartakht in the historical sources. In addition, it was perhaps the headquarters of Quhistan where the contemporary chief of Quhistan, Nasir al-Din Muhtasham, resided.

Hasan-Abad castle

Hasan-Abad castle³³ stands on a rocky hill about 10 km to the northwest of the historical city of Tun and 1 km to the southwest of Hasan-Abad village (Fig. 4-23). The hill has an altitude of 1289 m and a height of about 100 m over the surrounding plain. There are two dry seasonal river courses between the castle and Hasan-Abad village. The easiest way to reach the castle is to walk across the river courses and then enter a small valley that leads to the south of the hill. From the south, the castle is easily accessible by about 30 minutes hiking (Fig. 4-24). About half of the way up the hill, the traces of a man-made pathway are still visible. The pathway leads to the castle's main gateway that is located in a bent in the southern external wall. The gateway is about 2 m wide and flanked by two towers remained to the height of about 3 m. Both towers and the gateway's walls were possibly covered by plaster on the outside (Fig. 4-25).

³² Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 983.

³³ Brief discussions on this castle are provided in Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 180-1; and Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 65-8.

The castle is built in three fortified sections that occupy the entire summit of the hill (Fig. 4-26). The lower section (A) covers an area of about 1200 m². The main structures in this section are mainly defensive elements built in the south, including, a guardroom just beside the gateway, the curtain wall, and three round towers. The guardroom was a two-story building as its remaining walls suggest. Immediately adjacent to the curtain wall, there were perhaps a couple of rooms that are now ruined (Fig. 4-27). There is no indication that there were any other buildings other than these defensive structures in section A. This section was possibly just an additional line of defense to protect the southern flank of the castle.

The access to the middle section of the castle (B) is just to the north of the guardroom where a small part of section B's southern wall has collapsed. There was probably another gateway in this part. Section B is the largest part of the castle, covering an area of about 1 hectare (Fig. 4-28). Almost the entire circuit wall of the castle in this section is extant. Most buildings inside the circuit wall are totally collapsed. The best-preserved structures are the walls of four elongated rooms (BA) built into the southern external wall. These rooms were possibly part of a larger two-story building occupied by the garrisons. The traces of several other rooms are still visible in the north and west of BA, as well as besides the southern and western curtain wall.

There are three large cisterns, possibly vaulted, in the west and northwest of section B, measuring about 6 x 5, 8 x 7, and 10 x 7 m. It is impossible to measure the depth of the cisterns because all of them are filled with debris and soil. They are the only visible cisterns in Hasan-Abad castle. However, there were perhaps some other cisterns in the east of section B, that are entirely covered by soil now, just below a gentle slope of the hill. In the northeast of section B,

there are the remains of several vaulted rooms built into the northern curtain wall. The rooms were possibly two-storied as the sizable volume of rubbles indicates.

The headquarters of the castle was located in section C to the extreme north of the castle. This section was enclosed by an inner curtain wall. Some 15 m from the eastern wall is still remained to the height of about 3.5 m. Just as the other parts of the castle, most of the architectural details of section C are obscured due to the advanced state of destruction. The access to this section was possibly through a gate in the eastern wall that is now collapsed. The main part of section C is a courtyard surrounded by several elongated rooms in two levels. There was possibly an underground cistern below the courtyard. Except for one half-empty room in the east of the courtyard, all the other lower rooms are filled with debris from the upper structures. The half-empty room is covered by a stone pointed barrel-vault and was possibly the entrance to the courtyard.

A significant feature of Hasan-Abad is the substantial number of broken bricks scattered all over the castle. The bricks are about 25 x 25 x 4.5 cm. Half-bricks were used extensively in the building of the vaults. Some 15 m to the northeast building BA, the remains of a ruined circular stone structure is still visible on the ground. There is also a high density of pottery shards and kiln material in this area suggesting that the circular structure was possibly part of a brick or pottery kiln. In addition, the small pieces of clear and greenish glass suggest that there was perhaps a glass-making furnace in this part of the castle.

Generally, Hasan-Abad castle is an excellent example of a medium-size Isma'ili castle, and was perhaps considered a subsidiary castle to Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun. The primary sources do not suggest any explicit information about this castle. However, as discussed in chapter 1, it is

likely that Hasan-Abad castle is the building that the text of its foundation stone is available in Hasan Mahmud-i Katib's *Dīvān-i Qā'imīyāt*. The castle could accommodate a garrison of considerable size, and was probably established by the Isma'ilis to guard the city of Tun from the north.

Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan

Qal'ih Qala' crowns an isolated conical outcrop located about 12 km to east of city of Sarayan, and 1.5 km to the northeast of a small village called Hambu (Fig. 4-29).³⁴ The village is accessible by a rough dirt track that forks off from Sarayan-Darrihbaz road. From Hambu, the castle can be reached by hiking northeast for about an hour over a steep trail. The trail leads to a roughly flat area to the northeast of the outcrop. This area has been used as a cemetery by the castle dwellers perhaps during the Islamic period, as is suggested by the orientation of the graves. Qal'ih Qala' stands about 15 m above this area. The outcrop on which the castle stands is extremely steep and inaccessible on all sides except for the northeast, where the castle's entrance is located.

Qal'ih Qala' covers an area of about 3,200 m², and is divided in two roughly concentric sections, each protected by a strong circuit wall (Fig. 4-30). The northeastern external wall of the castle is extant to the height of about 1 m. The remains of the castle's gateway are still visible in the middle of the wall (Fig. 4-31). The gateway is flanked by two round towers. The

³⁴ Willy has discussed this castle in his book. However, he misheard the names of the castle and the village as Qal'eh Gholam and Yanbu. See Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 178. A brief description of the castle is also provided by Nasrabadi. See Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 81-4.

southern tower is larger and was possibly connected to a gatehouse that is now collapsed. Immediately to the west of the northeastern external wall, lies the curtain wall of the inner section. The wall is fortified by two large U-shaped bastions dominating the northeastern flank of the castle. The bastions are about 5 m in diameter and are built adjacent to each other. This arrangement is not seen in other Isma'ili castles. The northern bastion is extensively damaged, while the southern one has remains to the height of about 3.5 m. The bastions were possibly covered with plaster on the interior as the traces of plaster on their walls indicate. The entrance to the inner section was possibly located in the corner of the southern bastion.

The castle's inner section (A) occupies a small area of about 1,000 m². All the structures in this section are totally ruined. However, almost the entire outline of the circuit wall of this section is still visible. The whole surface is covered by pieces of stone and brick remained from the destruction of the buildings. A few pieces of unglazed as well as green and turquoise glazed pottery shards could also be seen on the ground. Most of the walls are made of undressed stone. In the west of the section A, there is a fragment of a wall made of roughly dressed stones (Fig. 4-32). There is no trace of this type of masonry in other castles. It is therefore likely that the wall is a relic of the pre-Alamut period phase of the occupation of the outcrop. Bricks were possibly used mainly in the construction of the vaults. The bricks are varying in size. The most common are standard square bricks (24 x 24 x 4.5 cm) as well as large rectangular bricks (30 x 15 x 5.5 cm), which are similar to those found in Qal'ih-Rustam (discussed below).

Almost nothing remains of the buildings in the castle's lower section (B). To the northeast and northwest, section B occupies a narrow area of the outcrop. Most of the structures were possibly built in the western and southern part of this section. The traces of

two cisterns are visible in the northeast as well as the southwest. The cisterns are now filled with debris and soil. In the southeast the fragments of the external curtain wall and a couple of rooms built into the wall are still extant. The rooms were covered by stone barrel-vaults that are mostly collapsed now. To the north of the southern external wall, the steep slope of the outcrop is terraced with stone walls in order to create flat surfaces for the construction of other rooms.

There is no mention of Qal'ih Qala' in the available historical sources. Qal'ih Qala' was not definitely as important as major castles, such as Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun and Hasan-Abad castle. Qal'ih Qala' is smaller in size and less complex in design. However, it is still one of the most inaccessible structures in Quhistan because of its strategic location. The castle stands about 600 m above the plain of Sarayan to the west and overlooks the historical route that connects Birjand to Sarayan and Tun (Fig. 4-33). It could also easily communicate with Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun to the west as well as Qal'ih Qala' of Ark and castle of Shushud to the southeast by means of light, fire or smoke signals.

Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih

Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih³⁵ stands on a small outcrop located about 12.5 km to the west of city of Boshrouyeh and 4.5 km to the northeast of Raqqih village. The outcrop has an altitude of about 1,170 m and rises from the flat surrounding landscape to a height of 70 m providing an excellent view over the region. Some 700 m to the south of the outcrop is a watermill locally known as Asiyab-i Dahanih (Fig. 4-34). Asiyab-i Dahanih is one of the seven watermills built over

³⁵ A brief description of the castle is provided also in Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 41-3.

a major water canal (*qanāt*) extending west-east from the north of Raqqih to Boshrouyeh.³⁶

There is a deep dry seasonal river course about 50 m to the north of Asiyab-i Dahanih. The river course is bridged over now, but historically it could function as a natural moat preventing easy access to the outcrop from the south. Some 100 m to the south of the outcrop are the remains of a cemetery scattered with a couple of holes dug by looters. The locals believe that the cemetery has a pre-Islamic origin and call it Gabri.³⁷ However, the exact dating of the cemetery is not possible due to the paucity of surface evidence.

The easiest access to the castle is from the south of the outcrop by hiking up a relatively steep slope. The castle had perhaps four distinct fortified sections (Fig. 4-35). All the structures in the lower section (A) are destroyed except for a rectangular cistern with stone walls built into the ground (Fig. 4-36). The cistern is about 9 x 6 m and at least 5 m deep. It was possibly covered by a brick vault that is collapsed now. An outline of the castle's external wall can still be seen in the extreme west of this section. Some 8 m to the southwest of the cistern are the traces of two guardrooms built into a rock that has been scarped in the west and east. There was perhaps a curtain wall in the south of section A from which nothing is remaining today.

Some 25 m to the north of the cistern is the entrance to the other sections of the castle. Almost the entire circuit wall is still visible all around these sections. The wall is made of rubble stone and fortified by several round towers of various sizes. On the exterior the wall and towers were coated with plaster, as indicated by the fragments of plaster remained on them. The access to section B was possibly through a now ruined gateway located between two large

³⁶ On the watermills of Raqqih, see Papuli Yazdi, "Āsiyābha-yi ki," 18-22.

³⁷ Gabri means related to Gabr. The term is commonly used in reference to the buildings or sites with a perceived pre-Islamic origin. For the meaning of Gabr, see Shaki, "Gabr," 239-40.

towers in the southeast. Section B is almost rectangular covering an area of about 600 m. The main structure here is a two-story rectangular building occupying the western half of this section. There is a corridor between the building and the castle's external wall in the north, west, and south, allowing easy movement of the defenders along the curtain wall. Attached to the southern side of the building are the remains of a mudbrick wall that was possibly built in a later phase of repair in the castle. Nothing remains of the building's upper story except for fragments of its external walls in the west and south. The walls were pierced by several small rectangular openings (about 30 x 40 cm), only two of which are still extant. The lower story consists of five elongated east-west galleries (about 3 x 7 m) covered by stone barrel-vaults. The galleries are filled by debris from the destruction of the vaults and upper structures. They all open to a south-east pathway that extends from the gateway to the northern curtain wall.

Section C occupies the outcrop slopes in the west and east of section D. This section is almost completely in ruins, and is covered with rubble and broken bricks. However, the remains of several galleries built into the southern and northern curtain wall are still visible. There are also a few glazed and unglazed pottery shards on the ground. The eastern part of section C is extremely steep and hardly accessible. The only remaining structures in this part are the external curtain wall, as well as three elongated galleried overlooking the eastern flank of the castle. The wall is built of stone and is heavily fortified by several semi-circular towers (Fig. 4-37). Section D stands just above section C. The structures in section D are in better state of preservation in comparison with other parts of the castle. The entrance to this section was possibly next to the large tower located in the middle of its western fortifications (Fig. 4-38). The tower is fortified with a series of small arrow-loops arranged in a diamond pattern. The

tower is attached to a couple of interconnected rooms in the south. The rooms were possibly covered with stone vaults that are now collapsed into them.

Immediately to the northeast of the tower is an elongated single-story building aligned roughly northwest-southeast. The building is covered with a pointed barrel-vault. Its western wall is fortified by three round towers, two of which are pierced with single rectangular loopholes. The walls between the towers are also fortified with four rectangular loopholes positioned in a diamond arrangement. Just above the building there is another curtain wall defending the western flank of section D. In the east of the wall, there were several galleries that are now collapsed and filled with soil and debris. The wall is fortified by two large round towers. The southern tower is now ruined. The northern tower is about 4.5 m in diameter, and is extant to the height of 5 m. Several small arrow-loops open in the tower's wall.

Attached to the southern end of the wall is a guardroom that controlled the access to the highest part of section D. The highest part was probably the headquarters of the castle. This part is covered with the remains of a compact complex of structures including cisterns, storerooms, and residential units. Some of the buildings were two-storied, as indicated by the remained walls. The main structure in this part was perhaps the roughly square building (DA) that crowns the summit of the outcrop. The building was possibly where the small residence of the castle's commander was located. It is about 12 x 12 m, and is fortified by four solid towers on each corner. Its layout consists of a north-south corridor in the middle, flanked by two rooms on either side. The southeastern room was in fact a small storeroom covered by two thick layers of compound plaster. The rooms and the corridor were vaulted as indicated by the springing stones remained on top of the walls. A series of rectangular loopholes at intervals of

about .5 m open in the rooms' external walls. Immediately to the south of the building are a couple of storerooms of various sizes and shapes dug into the rock. The largest one is circular, about 4 m in diameter and at least 3.5 m in depth, and was covered by a brick dome that is now collapsed. These storerooms were possibly used for storing oil, flour, or grain as indicated by fine layers of compound plaster on their walls.

The medieval town of Raqqih is mentioned in the primary sources. There is, however, no mention of the castle. Al-Muqaddasi refers to Raqqih as a small town located close to the desert, and its people were Shi'i.³⁸ Being of Shi'i persuasion, the dwellers of Raqqih and its surrounding villages were more sympathetic to the Isma'ilism, and it is plausible that Raqqih had a considerable Isma'ili population during the Alamut period. The town is also mentioned in the travel account of the Isma'ili *dā'ī*, Nasir-i Khusraw (discussed in chapter 3). As noted by Nasir-i Khusraw, Raqqih lay on the caravan route from Tabas-i Gulshan to Tun.³⁹ Therefore, it is likely that, in addition to controlling the town, one of the main functions of the castle was controlling the traffic passing through Tabas-i Gulshan- Tun route.

Castle of Darrih

Castle of Darrih stands on lofty outcrop from the Baghiran mountain range about 2.5 km to the southern edge of Birjand city (Fig. 4-39). The castle is also referred to as Hawz-i Ghulam-Kush Castle. Immediately to the north of the outcrop, there is a historical dam known as Band-i Darrih. The present dam is claimed to be a nineteenth-century construction built on the

³⁸ al-Muqaddasi, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 236, 265, 285.

³⁹ Nasir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāmih*, 170.

remains of a much earlier structure.⁴⁰ On an isolated rock, about 300 m to the west of the dam, are the remains of a small stone building known as Qal'ih-Dukhtar by the locals. The building was possibly a pre-Islamic fortification, or just a watchtower.⁴¹

Castle of Darrih has an altitude of 1,860 m and is about 170 m higher than the Band-i Darrih. It has a commanding view of Birjand as well as the strategic east-west road from Tabas-i Gulshan to Tabas-i Masina. The castle is accessible from both the north and south sides of the outcrop. The remains of a pathway are still visible in the northeastern flank of the castle. The pathway possibly led to the castle's main gateway. The advanced state of destruction, however, has obscured the location of the gateway and a substantial part of the castle's eastern external wall.

The castle is divided into at least three separate sections (Fig. 4-40). Section A constitutes the largest part of the castle covering an area of about 2 hectares (Fig. 4-41). Almost the entire circuit wall in this section has collapsed. However, the traces of the western curtain wall and some of the towers are still visible. Most of the buildings in section A are destroyed. The whole of this area is covered with the ruins of stone walls as well as bricks from the vaulted spaces. Furqani mentions some small pieces of plasterwork in this section similar to those in Mu'minabad castle.⁴² There is also a scanty amount of glazed and unglazed pottery shards on the ground. Almost at the center of section A are six elongated rooms made of undressed stone. The rooms are about 2 x 8 m, and are connected by an arched gallery in their eastern

⁴⁰ On the history of Band-i Darrih, see Musavi, "Band-i Darrih," 8-9.

⁴¹ Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 110. See also Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān*, 349.

⁴² He possibly refers to decorative bricks in Mu'minabad that he misidentified as plasterwork. See Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān*, 350.

end. The remains of two cisterns are visible immediately to the east of the rooms. The cisterns are located below a steep slope and could easily gather the natural precipitation. The lower cistern is about 20 x 10 m, and is surrounded by a thick wall in the northeast and the mountain rocks in the other sides. The upper cistern is smaller and was probably built into a defensive wall. The cisterns do not appear to be vaulted.

The best-preserved building in the castle is an almost rectangular structure in the extreme northwest. The building known as Hawz-i Ghulam-Kush by the locals (Fig. 4-42). It was possibly a large cistern as its location immediately below a slope of the hill indicates.⁴³ The slope functioned as a water catchment area directing the runoff down to the building. The thick exterior wall of the castle forms the northeast and northwest flank of the building. In the southeast and southwest, however, the building is limited to mountain's rocks. There are ten rectangular pillars of different size inside the building. The smallest one is about 1 m by 0.75 m.

The largest pillar that supported a now collapsed three-way arch is about 2 m by 1.25 m and about 6 m high. The pillars are made of a stone core with a layer of brick around. The core is also layered with a course of brick in every 60 cm. The pillars are not all arranged in a standard grid especially those in the northeast and northwest part of the building. The springing bricks and stones on top of the walls and pillars indicate that the building was vaulted in all four sides. There is no indication, however, that there was a dome in the middle of the space. Willey suggests that it was perhaps open in the middle.⁴⁴ On the interior, all the walls

⁴³ The architectural details of building's interior are more complex than the architecture of a simple cistern. Therefore, it is quite likely that it might have served a different un-known function.

⁴⁴ Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 191.

and pillars were covered with several layers of compound plaster (at least four layers on the northeast and northwest walls). There is a small hole with no apparent function on the lower corner of the northeastern wall. The hole connects to a larger tunnel about 1 m wide, 1.2 m high, and 1.5 m in length. It is not clear whether the hole and tunnel are part of the original design of the building or are the result of illicit digging.

Section B stands on an outcrop about 17 m above section A. It is the best-defended part of the castle and was presumably the castle's headquarters where the residence of the commander of the castle was located. The structures in this section are built in two levels covering an area of about 3500 m². The upper level (BA) consists of a complex of rooms with two strong external walls in the southeast and northwest. All rooms are entirely collapsed now. In addition to brick and stone, mudbrick is extensively used in the construction of the rooms. To the northwest of BA, nothing remains of the buildings of the lower level except for two round towers from the external wall. To the southeast, however, the remains of a large bastion as well as a couple of rooms built into the external wall are still visible.

To the southeast of section B, lies section C (Fig. 4-43). This section was possibly occupied by workshops and perhaps some residential units. There is no trace of a curtain wall in this section perhaps due to the advance state of destruction. However, it is likely that the northeast and southwest flanks were fortified by a line of defensive walls. The only visible structure in this section is a rectangular cistern built into the ground. The cistern is about 14 m by 11m and at least 6 m deep. In the northeastern side there is a staircase descending to the bottom of the cistern. The remains of brick transverse arches are extant on the northwestern and southeastern walls. There were probably three rectangular pillars in the middle supporting

the transverse arches and the brick vaults. There were possibly a couple of rooms just to the northeast of the cistern as the remnants of a brick pavement suggest. The bricks that used for the pavement are square and about 20 x 20 x 3 cm. About 10 m further to the northeast, there is a large amount of broken bricks on the ground indicating the existence of several other rooms in this part of the castle.

Some 150 m to the southeast of the cistern, there was a watermill from which only a penstock tower (*tanūrih*) has remained. Immediately above the penstock, the traces of a narrow ditch cut in the rock are still visible. The ditch served to convey the water from a now dried spring in the southeast of the watermill.⁴⁵ After passing through the mill, the water was possibly piped to the large cistern in the northwest through clay tubes and channels cut into the ground. Furqani claims that the water was also piped to the large cistern known as Hawz-i Ghulam-Kush.⁴⁶ There is, however, no evidence today to prove his claim.

Castle of Darrih is not mentioned in any of the available primary sources. Some modern scholars misidentified this castle to be the castle of Duruh (in the extreme southeast of Quhistan) because of the similarity between the two names in Persian writing.⁴⁷ The castle must have been a major Isma'ili castle during the Alamut period as its architectural remains suggest.

⁴⁵ The location of the spring is called Hawzān as mentioned by Furqani. See Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān*, 350.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ For example, see Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 191.

Qal'ih Qala' of Ark

Qal'ih Qala' stands on a large outcrop known as Atashgah (the place of fire) located some 500 m to the south of Ark village (Fig. 4-44). Immediately to the north of the outcrop are the agricultural fields and a dried river course. The northern flank of the outcrop is almost vertical and extremely difficult to climb. The best way to reach the fortress is by entering the steep valley in the east of the outcrop and hiking towards the southern flank where there is an easier climb to the summit. Generally, Qal'ih Qala' of Ark seems to have been less fortified in comparison to most of other Isma'ili castles in Quhistan. This is probably for two reasons: first, the remote location of the fortress and its distance from the major roads and towns; second, the strategic formation of the outcrop and the existence of huge rocks and cliffs almost in all sides. The fortress probably did not have a circuit wall around it. The wall and towers appear to have been built only at the more vulnerable positions to improve the outcrop's natural defensive qualities. This practice is seen in some of the other castle such as castle of Shahanshah, Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask, and Qal'ih-Dukhtar Shurab (all discussed below).

The castle's main gateway was possibly in the middle of the southern flank, where the remains of external wall fortified by round towers are visible. The gateway has an altitude of about 1705 and stands some 70 m above the village. Almost all the structures inside the castle are ruined. There is no trace of any inner curtain wall and internal fortified divisions. Several stone-structures are built sporadically in different parts of the summit of outcrop in an area of about 1.2 hectares (Fig. 4-45). There are the remains of several rooms built into the external wall on either side of the gateway (Fig. 4-46). The rooms were vaulted, and their walls were covered by plaster on the interior, as indicated by the small sections that are still visible above

the ground. About 10 m above the gateway to the west are the remains of a large building built on the highest part of the outcrop. Unfortunately, most of the architectural details of the building are obscured because of the advanced state of destruction. However, the outline of its external wall as well as the rooms built into the wall are still traceable. Some 50 m to the north of the gateway is a large rectangular cistern (about 6 x 9 m) built into the rock. It is impossible to measure the depth of the cistern as its bottom is now filled with rubble. However, it was definitely more than 3 m deep, as indicated by the height of its eastern wall. Just to the west of the rectangular cistern are the remains of another smaller cistern that is now filled with soil and rubble.

The area in the northeast of the outcrop was perhaps its most occupied part. This part is also in ruins. However, the outlines of some of the buildings are still visible above the ground. About 20 m to the northwest of the cistern is a small plateau upon which the traces of a rectangular structure are recognizable (Fig. 4-47). The structure was possibly covered with brick vaults as indicated by several pieces of brick on the surface. The lowest part of the fortress is an elongated southwest-northeast area located immediately to the south of the small plateau. This area is covered with remains of several stone structures. Its northern and eastern flanks were protected by a strong curtain wall that is extant to the height of about 1 m. Almost in the middle of the area, the remnants of four collapsed rooms are still visible. The rooms had stone walls and roofed by brick vaults. The visible bricks are of uncommon size measuring about 30 x 16 x 3.5 cm (Fig. 4-48).

The Ark village is mentioned in a seventeenth-century poem as one of the villages of the Quhistan region in which an Ismaʿili *dāʿī* resided.⁴⁸ Therefore, the village possibly had an Ismaʿili population even after the Alamut period. Nevertheless, there is no mention of Qalʿih Qalaʿ of Ark in any of the available historical sources. Based on the toponymy of the outcrop, Nasrabadi suggests that the castle was possibly a pre-Islamic fortified fire temple that was modified and strengthened by the Ismaʿilis during the Alamut period.⁴⁹ However, there is nothing on the surface today to prove this suggestion.

Qalʿih-Rustam of Khusf

Qalʿih-Rustam stands on an isolated mountain about 2,210 m above the sea level (Fig. 4-49). The castle lies about 15 km to the east of the historical city of Khusf, and about 1 km to the southwest of a Gunj village. Gunj is a small village with only a couple of mudbrick houses. Gardens and agricultural fields are located to the north and west of the houses. Several small farm-dams are visible among the fields. These dams were built to catch the rainfall runoff to be used in agriculture. This kind of dam appears to be common in the region during the history. There are two dry seasonal river courses in the north and south of the village. Some 600 m to the north of the houses there is the outlet (*mazhar*) of a *qanat* that is now the village's main source of water.

From the village the castle's main entrance- located in the southeast of the mountain- is accessible by about 30 minutes hiking. The castle consists of three fortified sections (Fig. 4-50).

⁴⁸ Moezi, "Qāsim-Shāhiyān," 171.

⁴⁹ Nasrabadi, *Qalʿihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 70.

The lowest section (A) is about 190 m higher than Gunj village. Most structures in this section are totally collapsed. The whole surface is covered by the ruined buildings' rubble as well as stones detached from the mountain as a result of the natural erosion. The traces of the castle's outer wall and possibly a gate are still visible in the south of section A. There are also the remains of a couple of rooms some 30 m to the northwest of the castle's entrance. The rooms were probably part of the barracks for the garrison who lived in this section of the castle. Section A extends at least 60 m to the northwest of the rooms. The remains of the external curtain wall and towers are extant in the east and north of this section. Part of the external wall may have functioned as a dam collecting the runoff water.

Section B is protected by sheer cliffs on all sides. The only access to section B is by a steep zigzag stairway located in the west of section A. The stairs either were made of rubble or were cut into the rock. Being covered by the debris from the ruined walls, the stairway is now quite narrow, slippery, and difficult to climb. About halfway up the stairs, the remains of a guardroom are visible in the south. It was possibly covered by a stone vault that is collapsed now. The stairs end about 30 m above section A, where a large rectangular cistern is located. The cistern is about 9 x 15 m, and about 8 m deep (Fig. 4-51). It was possibly filled by snow and rainwater. There is no indication today that the cistern was covered by a vault. It is surrounded by thick stone walls from all sides. The fragments of at least two layers of compound plaster (*sārūj*) are still visible on its southeastern wall.

Section B lies about 25 m above the cistern. This is the largest part of the castle covering an area of about 1 hectare. Nothing remains of the curtain wall around the section B except for some fragmentary traces on the ground. Almost all the structures in this section have entirely

collapsed and covered by rubble. The walls of five elongated rooms are extant in the extreme southeast. The rooms were possibly occupied by the garrisons. The remains of several other structures built on the sloping ground are still visible in the western part of section B.

Section C covering an area of about 3,700 m² stands about 15 m above section B. Unfortunately, this section has been extensively dug by looters looking for valuable artifacts. A large amount of broken bricks of different size scattered all over the surface. Two different types of bricks are easily recognizable. The first type is roughly square measuring around 25 x 25 x 4.5 cm. Half bricks of this type could be also found on the site. The second type is about 29 x 15 cm and about 6 cm thick. The bricks of the latter type (locally known as *ājur-i gabrī*) were a common building material in the pre-Islamic structures of the region.⁵⁰

Almost in the middle of this section, there is a large pit that may have served as a cistern. The traces of several rooms are still visible all around the pit.⁵¹ Some 16 m to the northwest of the pit there were a series of rooms from which only fragments of the walls have remained. Parallel to these rooms, are the remains of at least seven west-east galleries. The galleries are about 7 x 3 m. There were other structures immediately above the galleries, that are now ruined. Except for one at the extreme north, the galleries' entrances are blocked by debris from the upper structures. The galleries are covered by stone pointed barrel-vaults built on a course of brick at the springing line. All the galleries open to a corridor just behind section C's western curtain wall. The wall is fortified by three round solid towers that are still extant to

⁵⁰ Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Qūhistān*, 263. See also Mustawfi, "Āthār-i Pīsh az Islām," 77.

⁵¹ Nasrabadi has mentioned a tunnel in this part of the castle. The tunnel is filled by soil and debris now. According to Nasrabadi, the tunnel goes down vertically for about 7 m, and then extends horizontally to the east. See Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 71.

the height of about 1.5 m (Fig. 4-52). There were possibly similar towers on the other sides of the section C's circuit wall that are now collapsed.

A short additional curtain wall with three projecting semi-circular towers stands about 8 m below the northwestern corner of section C. These towers are the only parts of the castle that are visible from the village below. The towers have been positioned very close to each other, which is uncommon in other Isma'ili castles in the region. It is, therefore, likely that the towers were part of an earlier structure that has been incorporated into the new Isma'ili fortification scheme. Immediately to the north of the towers, is the castle's external wall located atop a sheer cliff. From a defensive point of view, building such strong towers in this part of the castle does not appear to be necessary. Thus, one might assume that the towers were more decorative rather than being defensive elements.

Traces of several inscriptions, engraved on the surface of a rock, are still visible some 100 m to the northeast of the mountain. Unfortunately, all the inscriptions are now illegible except for three of them (Fig. 4-53). The first one is a date (reads as the year 895 [*Hijrī*]) engraved just beside another illegible inscription that appears to be the main text. The other two inscriptions are not dated. However, it is likely that they were engraved earlier during the Alamut period. One of them is just a name that reads as Mawlānā Muhammad. The other one is an engraving of a hand/palm with a name (reads as Mardanshah Salah) and a small cross (or swastika) below it. The engravings were perhaps made by two different people as the different handwriting suggest (this is particularly evident in the slight difference in the combination of lām-alif in the two inscriptions). According to contemporary sources, Mawlānā Muhammad (Our Lord Muhammad) has been the title of two of the Isma'ili imams, Nur-al-Din Muhammad II

and ‘Ala’ al-Din Muhammad III.⁵² Therefore, it is likely that the engraving of the name was done by someone of Isma‘ili persuasion perhaps as a personal act of devotion to the Imam.⁵³

Handprint is a common motif in the Iranian rock-arts since the prehistoric period.⁵⁴ The image of hand, however, was loaded with different symbolic meanings in different times.

During the Islamic period, the hand has been mainly associated with Shi‘ism.⁵⁵ In common with many other Shia communities, the Isma‘ilis of Quhistan region possibly regarded the palm as a symbolic sign. Unfortunately, we know nothing about the identity of Mardanshah Salah.

However, the name Salah is reminiscent of the name of the Isma‘ili poet, Hasan-i Salah-i Munshi (or Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib). Considering the similarity between the two names, it is possible to suggest that Mardanshah Salah might have lived during the Alamut period.

Khusf has been frequently reported in the historical sources as one the centers of the Isma‘ilis during the Alamut period. However, there is no mention of Qal‘ih-Rustam in the primary sources. The existing architectural remains, such as the large size bricks and to closely built towers, suggest that Qal‘ih-Rustam was possibly a pre-Alamut period stronghold. Standing about 300 m above its surrounding environment, the castle has a commanding view of the plain of Khusf to the west, plain of Mazhan to the south, and one of the main east-west highways in

⁵² For example, see Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib, *Dīvān-i Qā‘imīyāt*, 101, 157, 163, 177, 208, 224, and 328.

⁵³ No evidence of similar engravings is found in the other Isma‘ili sites.

⁵⁴ Several other similar rock engravings have been reported in different part of Khurasan. Handprints with a small swastika could be seen in Lakh-Mazar some 50 km to the east of Khusf. An example of Handprints with a name below it could be found in Jorbat in northern Khurasan. On Lakh-Mazar see Labaf Khaniki and Bashash, *Silsilih Maqālāt-i Pashūhishī*. On Jorbat’s rock-engravings, see Vahdati, “A Preliminary Report,” 177–87. See also Rashidi-Nezhad, Zulfani, and Mustafazadih, “Mu‘arrifi Sang-Nigārih-yi Jorbat,” 166-74.

⁵⁵ There are different interpretations of what the palm represents symbolically. Some believe that it refers to the hand of Fatima, the Prophet’s daughter. Others maintain that it is the symbol of *Ahl al-Kisa* or people of the mantle (the five persons who gathered under the mantle of the Prophet, namely, Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn). Yet others believe that it refers to the hands of *Abbas*, Imam Husay’s half-brother whose hands were cut off in the battle of Karbala’. See Zaidi, “Religious Iconography is Islam,” 84-97.

the Quhistan region. The Isma‘ilis, therefore, might have recognized the strategic location of the castle and modified and expanded it according to their needs.

Castle of Shahanshah (Shah-Dizh)

Castle of Shahanshah or Shah-Dizh⁵⁶ covers the entire summit of an isolated outcrop located about 6 km to the east of Nihbandan (or Nih) and 2 km to the south of Khansharaf village (Fig. 4-54). Standing about 200 m higher than its surrounding environment, the castle has a commanding view of the whole area around it. Shah-Dizh is situated at the intersection of two main east-west and north-south historical routes that connect the regions of Kerman and Sistan to Quhistan and Khurasan. Immediately to the south of Khansharaf is a dirt track that goes to the north of the outcrop. The castle can be easily reached from the foot of the outcrop by hiking over a steep pathway that leads to the gateway located in the west of the castle.

The large area to the west of the outcrop (A) is covered by the remains of several stone structures (Fig. 4-55). The locals call this area Kharbandan, and believe that it was where the castle dwellers kept their cattle and pack animals. The area, however, appears to be an outer enclosure added to the main enclosure located on top of the outcrop. To the extreme northeast of the area are the ruins of a long northeast-southwest wall built along the edge of the hill. The traces of several structures built into the wall are still visible on the surface. The wall was

⁵⁶ The locals also call the castle Shah-Duzd (Thief-King). Legend has it that the castle was controlled by a certain Shah-Duzd. He received tribute from the people of Sistan until Rustam (the most celebrated mythical hero in *Shahnamih*) grew up and killed him in a battle. The legend is mentioned in more detail in Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia*, 414.

possibly extended to the west and south to form a defensive line around the area. The western part of the wall could also function as a dam to collect the natural precipitation.

Unfortunately, nothing remains of the western part of the wall perhaps because it is being gradually washed out by the flow of water. The traces of southern wall, however, are still visible on the ground. Almost in the middle of the outer enclosure are the ruins of a compact complex of small stone rooms. Sykes describes these rooms as *sangar* (trench), a term he possibly heard from his local guide. However, the rooms were perhaps small residential units used by the garrison or lay people.⁵⁷ Just beside the rooms are a couple of large holes dug into the rock. The holes are almost filled with rock and debris, and it is impossible to measure their depth without excavation. Immediately to the east of the rooms is the upper half of the pathway that goes to the top of the outcrop. This part of the pathway roughly overlays the historical access to the castle, and is defined by a short stone wall re-built recently by Southern Khurasan Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (SKCHTO). The traces of historical stairs made of rubble stone are still sporadically visible on the pathway.

Shah-Dizh's upper section (B) covers an expansive area of about 7 hectares. This section is accessible through a gatehouse located almost in the middle of its western curtain wall. The gateway is about 2.5 m wide and opens to an east-west corridor paved by large pieces of stone and flanked by small rooms of various sizes (Fig. 4-56).

The rooms are paved by either brick or stone. The bricks are square with a side length of 25 cm and thickness of about 4.5 cm. The rooms' walls are extant to the height of about 2 m.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 414. Various functions have been suggested for these structures by modern scholars assuming that the lower section was un-walled and outside of the castle. See Elahahizadeh and Sadesi, "Ravābiṭ-i Siyāsī-Madhhabī," 91. See also Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 78-9.

The walls are made of stone with a few sporadic courses of brick that were possibly added during a phase of repair in the castle. The rooms and the corridor were possibly covered by stone vaults. Their walls were coated with plaster, as the extant fragments of plaster indicate. The corridor is about 9.5 m long and ends in a room attached to a large cistern measuring 8 m by 3.5 m and about 5 m in depth. Immediately in front of the room is a north-south corridor that connects the gatehouse to a path that provides access to the other parts of section B. The altitude at the gatehouse is 1,352 m while at the highest point of the outcrop (the northeast) it is 1,415 m.

The whole section is surrounded by a massive stone-wall. The wall is fortified by several round towers of various sizes in the west and north sides. The towers were added perhaps because these sides were most vulnerable to attack. The outcrop is limited to sheer cliff to the east and south; thus, there was no need for defensive towers in these sides. Unfortunately, nothing remains from most of the structures in the castle but mere mounds of rubble. There is no trace of an inner curtain wall in the castle. The buildings appear to be organized into a couple of distinct residential complexes, like small quarters of a town. Each complex consisted of a cluster of small rooms built adjacent to a major fortified building and at least one cistern. A network of paths and steps carved in the rock, connect the complexes to each other.

The entire lower half of this section is occupied by the ruins of a large number of stone structures built on the sloping ground. Stone was definitely the main building material. Brick was also used in a limited manner in the construction of some of the structures. Except for two rooms in the northwest of the outcrop, the ceilings of all other structures have been collapsed. The rooms of the major buildings were possibly covered by stone barrel-vaults. The other small

rooms, however, had probably flat roofs supported by wooden poles as joist holes remained in some of the walls indicate. A significant feature of Shah-Dizh is the large number of cisterns scattered in different parts of the outcrop. The cisterns were perhaps the castle's only water supply. Nine of them are still visible in the castle.⁵⁸ However, there were possibly other cisterns, now filled with soil and debris, in the southwestern quarter of the outcrop.

The spatial organization of the buildings in the northwestern part of the outcrop is almost clear because of the debris removal operations that have been carried out by SKCHTO since 2007.⁵⁹ Part of the western curtain wall as well as the walls of some of the rooms have been reconstructed to a varying height of between 1 to 2 m (Fig. 4-57). The best-preserved structure in the castle is a small fort located in this part of the outcrop. The traces of at least two distinct phases of construction are visible in the fort. Sykes compared it to the fort of Qal'ih Zari (discussed below).⁶⁰ However, the two forts appear to be similar only in terms of size and building material. The fort in Shah-Dizh is rectangular and partially two-storied. The fort's western wall is fortified by three solid towers, two in the corners and one in the middle. Two stone buttresses have been recently built against the wall by SKCHTO to prevent it from further destruction.

The lower story consists of two elongated north-south rooms measuring 14 x 2.5 m, located in the western half of the fort. Both rooms are covered by stone pointed barrel-vaults.

⁵⁸ Willey mentions twelve cisterns in the castle. However, only nine cisterns are visible today. He also refers to a "brick *qanat* or aqueduct 40 in length and 3 m deep, built into the walls of high citadel." There is no trace now of such a water system in Shah-Dizh. See Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 201-2.

⁵⁹ Unfortunately, nothing has been published on the possible archaeological findings during these activities in the castle.

⁶⁰ Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia*, 413.

There are two narrow doorways (about 1 m in width and 2.40 m in height) in the north and south of the western room. The eastern room opens only to the north. Inside the room, there is a small stone platform built along the eastern wall.

The fort's upper story was possibly originally a square pillared hall that has been later divided into smaller rooms (Fig. 4-58). The hall is about 14 x14 m in size and is accessible through a doorway in the southern wall. Inside the hall are three rows of round columns. There are the remains of four columns in each row. The columns are about 50 cm in diameter. They are made of rubble stone and covered by a layer of plaster. Two rows of the columns on the west are built right on top of the wall of the lower rooms. The spaces between the pillars of the third row are filled with short stone walls. Nothing remains of the hall's roof, but it was probably covered by small cupolas rested on rib arches. The original access to the hall was probably through a doorway in the eastern wall that has been blocked in the later periods. Attached to the eastern wall, just below the blocked doorway, there are nine sections of short walls with no apparent function.

The upper half of the outcrop is considerably less occupied in comparison with the lower half. Most of the structures in the upper half were built into the external wall. The main structure in this part is probably the vast courtyard building located in the middle of the eastern external wall. The western flank of the building was possibly fortified by a couple of solid towers two of which are still extant. The courtyard is about 7.5 x 19 m. Several elongated rooms are built around the courtyard. At least the eastern rooms were covered by stone vaults, as is indicated by the large mound of debris. There are three cisterns carved in the rock immediately to the north of the building. To the west of the building is a large part of sloping ground that

has not been built over. This part could serve as a catchment area that conveyed the runoff water to the cisterns located in the lower half of the outcrop.

Shah-Dizh is one the largest Ismaʿili castles in the Quhistan region that could accommodate a large population. It is perhaps because of its oversize scale that Willey described it as a “castle-city.”⁶¹ Some scholars even suggested that it was the ancient city of Neh (Nia) reported by Greco-Roman geographer, Isidore of Charax, in the *Parthian Stations*.⁶² The recent excavation in the citadel of Nihbandan indicates that the history of the city dates back at least to the Parthian period. Therefore, it is most likely that the ancient city of Neh is where the citadel is located.⁶³ There is no apparent indication that Shah-Dizh is a pre-Islamic castle. However, it was definitely not initially built by the Ismaʿilis as the historical sources suggest. The castle is mentioned in some of the sources dealing with the history of interrelationships between the Ismaʿilis of Quhistan and the Maliks of Nimruz (1029-1225). According to Juzjani, the Ismaʿilis bought the castle from the nephew of Yamin al-Din Bahram Shah (r. 1213-21), the son of Nasir al-Din ʿUthman, sometime around the first Mongol invasion to Iran (c.1219).⁶⁴ Shah-Dizh was still held by the Ismaʿilis in 1226 when the Ismaʿilis defeated Taj al-Din Inaltegin (r. 1225-30 or 35) in a battle over the control of the castle (discussed in chapter 1).⁶⁵

⁶¹ Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 201.

⁶² Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia*, 413. Gabriel has mentioned the idea in his book while casting doubts on its validity. See Gabriel, *Durch Persiens Wüsten*, 318. For the name of Neh in Isidore of Charax's book, see Isidore of Charax, *Parthian Stations*, 32.

⁶³ Dana, Nasrabadi, and Sharifan, “Qal'ih-yi Nihbandān,” 37-56.

⁶⁴ Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol. 1. 282.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2. 184.

Qal'ih Zari

Qal'ih Zari (Golden Castle) is a small fort that crowns the summit of a rocky hill immediately to the southeast of a small village with the same name (Fig. 4-59). The closest major city to the village is Khusf about 100 km to the north. Some 3.5 km to the south of the village, is the mine of Qal'ih Zari. The main product of the mine is copper, while a small amount of gold and silver are also produced in Qal'ih Zari mine. The history of mining activity in the area dates back to the pre-Islamic period.⁶⁶ Several gigantic wells and huge grooves, cut in the rock, attest the continuity of historical mining in the site over an extended period of history (Fig. 4-60). Small heaps of slag next to the mining area indicates the existence of on-site smelting furnaces. A large part of the extracted ore was also transported to the smelting workshops located in the vicinity of Qal'ih Zari for further processing.

The remains of several smelting furnaces as well as a large amount of slag dumps are visible to the south and northwest of the hill on top of which the fort is located. There were also a number of rectangular stone structures that are entirely collapsed now. The mine was abandoned in the nineteenth century when Nikolaï Khanykov (d. 1878) and Percy Sykes (d. 1945) visited the region.⁶⁷ However, the smelting workshops in the village were still active seasonally (after the harvest) by re-smelting of older deposits of slag. The annual production of

⁶⁶ There is no serious archaeological study on Qal'ih Zari mine. Brief information is provided by the company that has been active in the area since 1975. See Minakan Co., *Qaleh Zari Copper- Gold deposit*, 3. A brief discussion of Qal'ih Zari and the mine is provided in Hallier, "Qual'eh Zari, Ein Prä-Islamisches Fort," 189-96. For other examples of historical copper mining and smelting in the southern Khurasan region, see Hashemi and Taqavi "Pazhūhishhā-yi Bāstānshināsī-yi Ma'ādin-i Kuhan," 145-170. See also Hashemi et al., "Archaeological Investigation of Metal Smelting," 1092-1104.

⁶⁷ Khanykov, *Mémoire sur la partie méridionale*, 184. For Sykes' description of the fort and mine, see Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia*, 412-3.

copper was reported to be about 2,700 kg.⁶⁸ That quantity is quite significant considering the primitive and limited nature of smelting activities at the time. According to Sykes, the smelting operations ceased forever after a tax increase by the local governor, and consequently migration of many smelters to work at the copper mine in Sabzevar.

The fort stands about 12 m above its surrounding environment. It has a square plan, measuring about 14 x 14 m, with four round towers in the corners and an entrance tower in the middle of the northwestern wall (Fig. 4-61). The towers are about 5 m in diameter and pierced with simple rectangular loopholes in the height of 2 m. The fort's gateway is about 1 m wide, and is located in the eastern corner of the entrance tower. Immediately to the north of the gateway are the traces of a couple stone structures with no apparent function.

The fort's walls are in a fair state of preservation. The walls are about 1 m in width and remained to the height of 6 m. On the exterior the walls and towers were possibly coated with plaster as the traces of plaster mortar on the walls indicate (Fig. 4-62). The interior layout of the fort is obscured due to the complete collapse of the inner structures. The surface is entirely covered by debris and soil. A few pieces of broken bricks as well as tiny glazed pottery shards relating to the Middle Islamic period are visible on the ground. The gate is framed on the interior with a pointed arch made of stone. The gateway possibly opened to a small courtyard in the middle with a couple of rooms around it. The small joist holes in the western wall suggest that the rooms inside the fort were possibly covered by flat wooden roofs (Fig. 4-63).

⁶⁸ This number is the equivalent of 6,000 pounds mentioned by Sykes. See Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia*, 413.

There is no mention of the fort or the mine in the available historical sources, perhaps because of their remote location from the main cities and caravan routes in Quhistan. It is difficult to say when the fort was originally erected. Sykes mentions that the fort was also known as Qal'ih Gabr by the locals, a title that is commonly used in reference to the buildings or sites with a perceived pre-Islamic origin.⁶⁹ The fort was definitely in use during the middle Islamic period as indicated by the existing surface evidence. It is highly possible that the fort was also occupied by the Isma'ilis during the Alamut period. The Isma'ilis who built a large number of castles in the region had probably the logistic ability to run the mining and smelting operations in the area and dispatch the gold or copper to their main centers in the north of Quhistan.

Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab

Qal'ih-Dukhtar covers the entire summit of a roughly crescent-shaped mountain located about 16 km to the northeast of city of Gunabad, and some 700 m to the north of Shurab village (Fig. 4-64). Immediately to the northeast of the village is a dirt track that goes to the foot of the mountain in the southwest. The highest part of the mountain has an altitude of 1,095 m and lies about 90 m above the village (Fig. 4-65). The castle appears to be consisted of three distinct fortified sections (Fig. 4-66). The lowest section (A) is located on a north-south part of the mountain, covering an area of about 1,300 m². This section was perhaps the garrison's living area as indicated by the remaining structures. It was protected by a massive stone-wall on the south, east, and west. The wall is now visible to a varying height of between 0.5 to 3 m (Fig. 4-

⁶⁹ Ibid., 412. On the meaning of Gabr, see Shaki, "Gabr," 239-40.

67). The section is limited to sheer cliff to the east. Therefore, there was no need for defensive towers in the eastern flank. The western flank, however, is fortified by three strong stone towers. The southern tower is the largest one measuring about 6 m in diameter. The other two are smaller and semi-circular. The middle tower is in fact section A's gateway. The traces of a couple of stairs are still visible in the north and south of the tower.

All the structures inside section A are flattened. In the extreme south are the remains of at least four ruined east-west galleries that opened to a corridor beside the section's western external wall. The galleries were covered by stone-vaults that are collapsed now. Immediately to the north of the galleries are the traces of some other structures built just next to the eastern external wall. The northeastern part of the section is occupied by a short outcrop. The outline of the external curtain wall and small rooms are still visible in the east of the outcrop. Immediately to the west of the outcrop are the traces of some stone structures, possibly archer's galleries, built into the western wall. Zamani, who published the only available article on the castle, suggests that the stone structures are the remains of a long vaulted corridor connected to the northern part of the mountain.⁷⁰ There is now no indication that the section A and B were connected through a vaulted corridor.

Just to the north of section A is section B covering an area of about 5,500 m². The southern side of section B was protected by huge rocks and at least three lines of strong defensive walls. The castle's main gateway appears to be in this side. The gateway is faced to the west preventing a direct access from the south. Nothing remains of the structures to the

⁷⁰ Zamani, "Qal'ih-Dukhtar-i Shurab-i Gunabad," 388-404. Citing Zamani the castle is also discussed by Furqani in Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Qūhistān*, 358-60.

north of the gateway except for fragments of the walls and the remains of a small cistern built in the southern curtain wall (Fig. 4-68). The surface is covered by a large amount of stones that was the main building material. Unglazed pottery shards as well as small pieces of broken bricks are also visible in this section. There are also some turquoise glazed shards, a few of which have black ink under glazed designs. A few pieces of vitrified brick are also visible on the surface suggesting that there was possibly some kind of kiln in this part of the castle.

From the entrance, the section B extends about 100 m to the west and about 40 m to the east. The western part is about 20 m lower than the entrance area and was accessible through a corridor between the southern curtain wall and a huge outcrop in north. Almost all structures in the western part of section B are destroyed. The traces of some north-south walls are still visible on the slope of the outcrop, but the layout of the structures is unclear. There were possibly several rooms just beside the external walls of the castle. The traces of a rectangular space, possibly a cistern, is still visible above the ground. The western curtain wall is remaining to the height of about 1.5 m and is fortified by three round towers. The southern tower is particularly massive measuring about 12 m in diameter. Generally, it appears that the section B was the general living area of the castle, where the garrisons and lay people lived.

Just to the north and northeast of the section B stands section C. Section C is the highest part of the castle and consists of two separate small fortified buildings, CA and CB. These buildings were possibly more private and were the residence of the castle's commander. Both buildings are totally ruined and their interior layout is obscured. The building CA covers an area of about 500 m². The southern external walls of the building are still remaining to the height of about 2 m. The southern wall is fortified by three small solid towers. The entrance to the

building was possibly from its western side. The traces of some north-south galleries are visible on the ground. These galleries were possibly covered by brick vaults that are collapsed now. Attached to the northern side of the building is an elongated rectangular gallery measuring about 10 x 4 m. This gallery was possibly accessible through the other rooms in CA. The main source of water for the building was the rectangular cistern on its southeastern corner. The cistern is about 5.5 x 3 m and was possibly un-covered.

Building CB covers the entire northeastern corner of the mountain (Fig. 4-69). The building was possibly accessed through an L-shaped corridor on its southern corner. Nothing remains of the structures inside the building. On the east, it was guarded by two large round towers. Just to the north of the building are the remains of a rectangular cistern measuring about 2.5 x 6.5 m. The cistern is limited to the rocks on the eastern side. All the other sides were surrounded by brick walls, covered by a thick layer of compound plaster. The bricks are about 30 x 30 x 6, similar to the large-size bricks used in some of the other castles in Quhistan.

There is no explicit reference to Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab in the primary sources. In his short entry on Gunabad (Junabid), Mustawfi mentions that there are two castles on either side of the city; one was called Javashir and the other Durjan.⁷¹ Thus, Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab is possibly one of these castles that are mentioned by Mustawfi.

⁷¹ Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 207.

Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask (Tabas-i Masina)

Qal'ih Kafaran is one of the two castles located about 4.5 km to the east of Tabas-i Masina.⁷²

The castles are about 1 km away from each other. The northern castle is locally known as Qal'ih Kafaran (castle of the infidels) and the southern castle is called Qal'ih Musalmanan (castle of the Muslims) or Qal'ih Quchu (Fig. 4-70). Some 1 km to the west of the castles is a small village called Gurask. Both castles probably worked together during the Alamut period. Generally, Qal'ih Musalmanan is more similar to other Isma'ili castles in terms of its location on the summit of a mountain and the spatial organization of its interior spaces. The other castle is Qal'ih Kafaran that is easier to access and is located in an almost saddle shaped area surrounded by three high rocks on the north, south, and west. The architectural layout of Qal'ih Kafaran is different from other Isma'ili castles in the region. The difference makes Qal'ih Kafaran a significant case study.

The access to Qal'ih Kafaran is through a small pathway that goes up the high rock on the south of the castle. The pathway is defined by a short stone wall from which only small section are remaining. The pathway continues for about 200 m to the southeast and leads to a flat area located about 120 m higher than Gurask village. From the flat area, there are two ways. One way goes to the southeast and leads to the north of Qal'ih Musalmanan. The other one goes to the north and leads to the east of Qal'ih Kafaran where the castle's main gateway is located (Fig. 4-71). Some 350 m to the east of the pathway, on the western side of the mountain, in the height of about 270 m, are the remains of a ditch built into the rock (Fig. 4-72).

⁷² Qal'ih Kafaran is briefly discussed in Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 101-106; and Farjami, "Mu'arrifi-yi Chand Qal'ih-yi Ismā'iliyyih," 319-326. Kleiss mentioned Qal'ih Musalmanan as the castle of Tabas-i Masina in Khurasan and provided a sketch of the castle's layout in Kleiss, "Castles."

The ditch conveyed the water of a now dried spring to the south, to be reserved in the cisterns of Qal'ih Musalmanan.

Qal'ih Kafaran covers an expansive area of about 15 hectares. However, rocky slopes of the mountain that provided a natural line of defense for the castle occupy most of this area. Unlike the other Isma'ili castles, there is no trace of any separate fortified sections inside Qal'ih Kafaran (Fig. 4-73). Unfortunately, most of the structures in the castle are totally ruined. The traces of several buildings scattered in different parts of the castle are still visible. Most of these buildings are rectangular in plan and are built of stone. It appears that brick was also used in the construction of the buildings as indicated by a few remaining pieces of brick. A small number of pottery shards are seen in different parts of the castle. Most of them are unglazed pottery. There are also a few turquoise glazed pieces of pottery similar to those seen in the other Isma'ili castles in the region.

The entrance to the castle was through a now ruined gateway on its southeastern flank. The gateway is about 1.6 m wide and is faced directly to the outside. There are two strong walls on either side of the gateway (Fig. 4-74). The gateway was possibly about 4 m in height and was covered by a pointed arch as suggested by the remaining springing stones on the southern wall of the gate. On the northern side of this wall is a rectangular niche measuring about 40 x 20 cm. The niche is about .5 m deep and was possibly used for barricading the castle's door by a wooden beam.

Just to the west of the gateway is the strong southeastern external wall of the castle. The wall was also functioned as a dam that collected the runoff water. This was possibly the main source of water for the castle's residents. The upper part of the wall has a thickness of

about 80 cm. The lower part of it, however, is much thicker measuring about 1.70 m. About 75 m to the northwest of the gateway are the remains of a large rectangular building. The building is formed of four small rooms that were separated by stone walls. Some 15 m to the west of this building are the traces of some other rooms (possibly six rooms) built just beside the outcrop on the extreme west of the castle. No particular function could be attributed to these rooms. It is likely that they were used as the residences for the garrison or the people who lived inside the castle.

The eastern part of the castle that includes the area just to the east and north of the gateway was possibly the most occupied part of the castle (Fig. 4-75). The entire area is covered by the debris from the ruined buildings. The external wall in the southern part of this area is remaining fragmentally. Several galleries are built just beside the wall. These galleries dominate the pathway that leads to the main gateway. The galleries could be used by archers during the siege to control the attacks to the gateway.

On the eastern side, the castle limits to a huge rock that is almost impenetrable from the outside. Thus, the exterior wall is built in small sections on this side of the castle only in the vulnerable positions. The longest section of wall is on the extreme north of the castle and is fortified with two large round towers. Some 80 m to the west of this wall are two small cisterns. The cisterns are shaped by building two small sections of wall that placed strategically on the rock to gather the snow and rainwater.

The best preserved structures in the castles are the external curtain wall of the area on the southwest of the gateway. A few narrow rectangular loopholes are still remaining on the wall. Just beside the wall are the remains of several galleries that are now destroyed. In

common with the galleries in the eastern area of the castle, these galleries are located strategically to dominate the pathway that leads to the main gateway. There are the traces of a few other individual structures with no apparent function in the western part of the castle.

The castle is limited to sheer cliff to the west. There are the traces of a now destroyed curtain wall on this side of the castle. On this side, the castle overlooks the Gurask village, Tabas-i Masina, and the south-north route that connects Duruh to Tabas-i Masina. There is no mention of either Qal'ih Kafaran or Qal'ih Musalmanan in the available primary sources. Tabas-i Masina, however, is mentioned as a major Isma'ili town in Quhistan that was attacked by a certain Seljuq *amir*, Bazghash, in 1100 and 1103 (discussed in chapter 1).⁷³ The two castles were possibly occupied by the Isma'ilis at the time and used as a refuge for the people of Tabas-i Masina and the surrounding villages during these attacks.

Concluding notes

Unfortunately, none of the structures of the castles discussed above can be precisely dated because of the lack of inscriptions on the sites. The surface archaeological evidence suggests, however, that they all were occupied during the Alamut period (discussed in the first section of chapter 5). Since all the castles are located in the Isma'ili territory, one can suggest that at least part of (if not all of) the remaining structures reflect Isma'ili design and building scheme.

As discussed above some of the castles known as the Isma'ili castles show evidence of occupation and construction phases before the Isma'ilis took control of them. Upper fortifications of Qal'ih-Kuh of Tun, Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf, Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan, Qal'ih-

⁷³ Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.23, 298, 352.

Dukhtar of Shurab, all present great similarity to pre-Islamic fortifications in Iran.⁷⁴ There are also some pieces of brick of large size suggesting that there were some kind of pre-Islamic structure on these sites (See the discussion of Material, masonry, and construction techniques in the next chapter). In these cases, probably the Isma'ilis modified and strengthened the castles, based on their requirements.

Building upon the discussion of the individual cases above, the next chapter deals with the study of the architectural characteristics and defensive qualities of the Isma'ili castles of the Quhistan region. It is then followed by a discussion of other possible non-military roles that the Isma'ili castles had during the Alamut period.

⁷⁴ On pre-Islamic fortifications in Iran, see Kleiss, "Castles;" Huff, "QAL'A-YE DOKṬAR;" Surtiji, *Qilā'-i Bāstānī-yi Māzandarān*.

Chapter 5. Defensive characteristics of the Ismaʿili castles in the Quhistan region

This chapter provides an overview of the findings from the study of the castles, discussed in the previous chapter. The first two sections focus on the surface pottery and the masonry and the construction techniques in the castles. The discussion reflects the present challenges of dating and masonry phasing in the Ismaʿili castles of Iran.

Castles are defensive architecture in nature. Analyzing the various “defensive” elements of the castle is the conventional approach to the study of the castles. A great body of literature exists on the study of the architectural elements as well as the evolution of the castle’s design and construction in the Europe and the Levant.¹ There is, however, a paucity of scholarship dealing with the architecture of the Ismaʿili fortifications in Iran. Building on the existing convention in the “castle studies,” the last section discusses the various architectural elements of the Ismaʿili castles.

The changes and developments in the defense strategies and the practice of fortification are often seen as a direct result of the changes in attack strategies and the techniques of siege warfare. As suggested by Hugh Kennedy, the castles are the product of “a continuing dialectic between attack and defense.”² Therefore, on the one hand, the study of the “defensive” elements of the Ismaʿili castles helps us to understand if there were any changes or developments in the defensive strategy of the Ismaʿilis during the Alamut period. On the other,

¹ See, for example, Foss and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*; Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *The Medieval Fortress*; Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*; Edwards, *The Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*; Gravett, *The History of Castles*; Spiteri, Stephen C. *Fortresses of the Knights*; Pringle, *Churches, Castles and Landscape*.

² Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*, 98. A detailed discussion of the interrelationship between the development of the Crusader castles and the changes in the siege techniques is provided in Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*, 217-30.

this study gives us some information about the nature of the attacks to the Ismaʿili territories and their castles and the extent to which that defense was a priority for the Ismaʿilis during the 166 years of that period.

Surface pottery sherds in the castles

Pottery sherds are possible sources of information to estimate the various phases of occupation of the castles in Quhistan. The study of the sherds from these castles, however, has its own specific challenges. The primary challenge is the paucity of surface pottery sherds in the castles. All the castles studied in the present research are severely damaged and their surface is usually covered by the soil and debris from the destruction of the vaults and walls. The other considerable challenge is the lack of a comprehensive survey of historical pottery and ceramic sherds in the region. There is, therefore, no comprehensive reliable pottery database to help us in more accurate dating of the remaining surface sherds in the castles through comparative analysis.

As discussed in the introduction (see the section on methodology), several archaeological surveys and some excavations have been carried out by the Southern Khurasan Cultural Heritage Organization (SKCHTO) in the region during the last three decades. The result of some these surveys and excavations are partially published. Most of them, however, remain unpublished to date. Undoubtedly, the publication of these surveys in future could provide a great opportunity for the study of the pottery consumption and production in the region and would help in a more accurate dating of some of the historical sites in Quhistan.

Of special importance for the present research are the systematic excavations in a small section of the eastern part of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in (discussed in chapter 4).³ Fortunately, two articles concerning the potteries that were found in the excavations of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in have been published in Persian.⁴ The articles present the different types of ceramic sherds that were found during the excavations and provide a general discussion of the possible dating of the sherds. Unfortunately, no discussion of the possible production centers in the region is presented in the articles. The pieces are also broadly attributed to the Middle Islamic period which covers an extensive span of about four centuries. At any rate, the study of the sherds from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in will be useful as a source of reference for understanding the possible range of the pottery sherds that could be found in other castles through possible systematic excavations in the future (Figs. 5-1, 5-2, 5-5, and 5-6).

Due to the above reasons, pottery cannot form a substantial piece of material evidence in the present research. What follows is, thus, a brief discussion of the pottery in the studied castles based on the available secondary sources as well as the observations of the present author during walking the sites. The images of the sherds from the castles in the present research are put together from sherds that have not been collected but seen and photographed on the surface (Figs. 5-8 – 5-16).

Generally, the surface pottery in the castles studied in this research can be split into two basic types: unglazed and glazed pottery. The majority of the pottery sherds could not be exactly dated but they generally belong to the group of ceramic wares produced in Iran from

³ The excavations carried out by the local archaeologists from Southern Khurasan Cultural Heritage Organization (SKCHTO) between 2005 and 2009.

⁴ See Farjami and Chamanara, "Barrisī-yi Gūnihā-yi Sufāl-i", and Farjami, et al. "Gūnih Shinasī-yi Sufālā-yi."

early eleventh century to the mid-fourteenth century (Seljuq, post-Seljuq, and Ilkhanid periods) as suggested by their design and color of glaze.⁵ Unglazed pottery sherds, either undecorated or decorated, are found more frequently in the castles. Incised decorations are seen in several pieces of sherds uncovered during the excavations in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. Pottery wares of this kind are common in the other sites of Quhistan and Khurasan that were occupied during the Seljuq period.⁶ Similar pottery sherds are among the surface evidence from Castle of Darrih, Mu'minabad castle, Qal'ih Qala' of Ark, and Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask.

Perhaps the most significant type of unglazed pottery sherds in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in are the fragments of wares with applied and incised decoration (Fig. 5-2). Small semi-hemispherical pieces of clay added to the outer surface of these wares have been decorated with molded geometrical, figural, and animal motifs. These motifs are seen commonly on the objects of the Seljuq period. The pair of birds motif on the unglazed ware in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, for example, is similar to the design on an unglazed molded pottery *kashkul* (dervishes' bowl) made probably in the twelfth century at Nishapur (Fig. 5-3).⁷ Unglazed pottery sherds with similar complex decorations are not found on the surface of the other castles studied in the present research. There is, however, a piece of pottery with simpler circular applied decoration among the

⁵ For a brief discussion of the ceramics of Islamic period in Iran between the eleventh to fifteenth century, see Grube, "CERAMICS xiv. The Islamic Period, 11th-15th centuries." For more detailed discussions, see Fehérvári, *Ceramics of the Islamic World*, 81-129 and 217-241; Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands*, 253-391.

⁶ This type is seen for example in the pottery findings of Kahnik (to the south of Sarbishih), Khayrabad of Halvan, Qal'ih-Kuhnih of Halvan (to the northwest of Tabas-i Gulshan), and Malin (to the north of Khaf). See Farjami and Mahmudinasab, "Kāvush-i Muhavvaṭi-yi Kahnik," 108.

⁷ The *kashkul* was sold at Christie's auction in 2007. The images and some information are available online at <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-4892293>, accessed May 24, 2022. For other examples of the pair of birds motif, see Fehérvári, *Islamic Pottery*, PLATE 21, No. 40; Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands*, 263.

surface sherds observed by the author in the Castle of Darrih. Parts of pottery wares with similar designs have been also uncovered in the excavations of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in (Fig. 5-4).

Glazed pottery sherds are the second type of the surface potteries that is found almost in all castles. These sherds are often more useful for dating of the Islamic sites of in Iran. A wide range of glazed pottery sherds has been found during the excavations at Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. Most of the sherds probably belong to the occupation of the castle from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.⁸ Pieces of turquoise wares, either monochrome or with black underglaze painting are the most common type of glazed wares in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. Similar tiny pottery sherds observed by the author on the surface of other castles studied in the present research. According to the published field survey of the district of Sarbishih, turquoise pottery sherds are also visible on the surfaces of Qal'ih-Kuh of Duruh, Qal'ih-Kuh of Sarbishih, and Qal'ih-Qala' of Chahkand.⁹ This type of glazed sherds thus could be considered as diagnostic of the occupation of the castles at least during the so-called Alamut period. There is also a piece of cobalt blue glazed ware in the findings from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. This type is often found in the sites that were occupied during the Seljuq or post-Seljuq periods. A small sherd of this type is also observed by the present author in Hasan-Abad castle.

Among the pottery sherds in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in is a fragment of a blue-and-white fritware. Blue-and-white wares are well-known as the diagnostic of the Timurid period in Iran (ca. 1370-1505). Nishabur has been generally suggested as the main source of this type of

⁸ Farjami and Chamanara, "Barrisī-yi Gūnihā-yi Sufāl-i," 12-9; Farjami, et al. "Gūnih Shinasī-yi Sufāl-hā-yi," 92.

⁹ Farjami, *Barrisī-yi Bāstānshinasī-yi Shahrīstān-i Sarbishih*, 80-4, 184-8, 385-6.

ware.¹⁰ The fragment of the blue-and-white is, therefore, important evidence of the occupation of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in during the Timurid period and the possible connections to the Nishabur.

Perhaps the most interesting type of pottery sherds that has been uncovered in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in are the sherds of luster-painted bowls. No sherds of luster wares are seen on the surface of other castles studied in the present research. The remaining sherds of this type at Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in are from the so-called miniature painting style category. The general design of the bowl in Qa'in is similar to another bowl of this type that is now kept in a private collection in Milan (Fig. 5-7).¹¹ As suggested by comparable examples, these luster wares were made in Rayy or Kashan. The similarity between the paintings on these bowls with the *mina'i* wares and the miniature paintings of the manuscripts (i.e., *Warqa and Gulshah* and the small *Shahnama*) from the Seljuq period suggests that the luster wares were possibly related to the Isma'ili phase of occupation of the castle.¹²

Generally, as is evident in the remaining range of the pottery sherds on the surface of the studied cases, all the castles were occupied during the so-called Alamut period. There is, however, nothing specifically "Isma'ili" about these pottery sherds. As suggested by Rosalind A. Wade Haddon, in her short essay on the Isma'ili pottery from the Alamut period, the current lack of distinguishable pottery from that period does not necessarily mean that the Isma'ilis did not manufacture a diagnostic ware of their own. It is known that there was an active pottery center in the village of Andej in the Alamut region during the Alamut period.¹³ It is quite likely

¹⁰ Grube, "CERAMICS xiv. The Islamic Period, 11th-15th centuries." See also Golombek, Mason, and Bailey, *Tamerlane's Tableware*.

¹¹ Curatola, *Persian Ceramics*, 107 and 176.

¹² Ibid. See also Grube, "CERAMICS xiv. The Islamic Period, 11th-15th centuries."

¹³ Haddon, "Isma'ili Pottery from the Alamut Period," 277-87; Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 141-4.

that pottery centers were also active in Quhistan and other Ismaʿili regions in that period. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect that future archaeological excavations in the castles will provide more information about the contribution of the Ismaʿilis to the art of pottery and ceramic making in the Middle Islamic period.

For now, the assumption that the castles studied in the present research were controlled by the Ismaʿilis is thus on the basis of the primary textual evidence and the fact that the castles are located in the region that is believed to be the territory of the Ismaʿilis. Unfortunately, the surface pottery sherds do not also help us in determining whether the castles were original Ismaʿili foundations or were existing structures that were captured, fortified, and expanded by the Ismaʿilis during the so-called Alamut period.

Material, masonry, and construction techniques

This section provides a brief description of building materials, focusing most on stone masonry and the challenges of dating the structures in the Ismaʿili castles on the basis of the construction techniques. Generally, the limited standing structures in the castles studied in the present research employ broadly comparable masonry and construction techniques.

The primary building material in the Ismaʿili castles is stone, which was easily accessible in the surrounding area. Quarries were, in fact, the mountains on top of which the castles were being built. The stones were carved out directly from the limestone bedrocks and used as building material as indicated by the similarity between the stones that used in the walls and the stone from the bedrocks. The holes that were created in the bedrock were then transformed to cisterns for collecting water from rain and snow. The walls in all the Ismaʿili

castles are made of undressed stone. In some cases, the stones are held together by only mud mortar. In all the major castles (such as Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, Mu'minabad castle, Hasan-Abad castle), however, a large amount of gypsum mortar was used in the construction of the walls. A kind of lime-based mortar, known as *sārūj*, is also used commonly for the coating of the interior walls of the cisterns.

Gypsum and lime were possibly produced locally. There are known reserves of gypsum and limestone near the cities of Qa'in, Sarayan, and Sarbishih. The remains of lime and gypsum kilns are still visible in Shirkuhak near Duruh and Kalat-i Sulayman village to the southeast of Birjand.¹⁴ There were possibly similar kilns in the other parts of the region. The primary fuel for the kilns was probably desert plants and trees as well as the wood from the gardens in the surrounding villages.

There is no difference between the stones used in the core and the internal and external faces of the walls of the castles. The long curtain walls are often leveled by a course of stone in roughly every 1 m of the height of the wall (Fig. 5-17, a). This technique, however, is not used in remaining curtain walls of Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask and the shorter sections of the walls of interior spaces of other castles (Fig. 5-17, b). In Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan, there is a small section of a wall made of roughly hewn stones (Fig. 5-17, c). This type of masonry is not seen in other castles suggesting that particular section of wall was possibly related to a period of occupation of the castle other than the so-called Alamut period.

The castles presented in this research all show similar types of masonry following the local tradition of construction with undressed stone that is seen in various buildings throughout

¹⁴ Farjami, *Barrisi-yi Bāstānshināsi-yi Shahrīstān-i Sarbishih*, 90-1 and 408-9.

the region during the Islamic period. Stone is often used in the construction of infrastructure buildings such as mills, cisterns, dams, water canals, and bathhouses. There are, however, rare cases such as the mosque of Afin (built during the Timurid period) in which stone is used as dominant construction material in the lower parts of the building (Fig. 5-18).

Brick and mudbrick are the primary construction material for most types of non-military structures in the region. Mudbrick is barely used as a construction material in the castles studied in the present research. The highest section of castle of Darrih (discussed in chapter 4) is the only place that shows evidence of construction with mudbrick (Fig. 5-19). It is, therefore, likely that the mudbrick structures in the castle of Darrih are related to the post-Alamut phases of construction and occupation of the castle.

Bricks are also used as a construction material in most of the Ismaʿili castles. The bricks are varying in size (Figs. 5-20 and 4-48). The most common are square bricks of about 24 x 24 x 4.5 cm and 25 x 25 x 4.5 cm. Half-bricks of the rectangular shape (12 x 24 x 4.5 and 12 x 25 x 4.5 cm) were also used particularly in the building of the vaults. No trace of brick kilns close to the castles have been found during the fieldwork of the present research. However, the remains of brick and tile kilns excavated at the foot of the Alamut castle (in Alamut region) provides some reason to believe a similar practice of local manufacture was followed in Quhistan.¹⁵

The remains of larger bricks measuring about 30 x 15 x 5.5 cm and 29 x 15 x 6 cm were found in some of the castles discussed in chapter 4 (Qalʿih-Rustam of Khusf, Qalʿih-Dukhtar of Shurab, Qalʿih Qalaʿ of Ark, Qalʿih Qalaʿ of Sarayan). These bricks (*ājur*) are known as *ājur-i gabrī*

¹⁵ For the kilns at the foot of the Alamut castle, see Sutudih, *Qilāʿ-i Ismāʿīlī*, 98; Kabiri, “Ashʿār-i Fārsī-yi,” 13, 14, and 20.

by the local people. The term *gabrī* or *gabr* is often used by the locals for the sites, objects, or building material with a perceived pre-Islamic origin.¹⁶ The bricks of larger size were a common building material in the pre-Islamic and early-Islamic structures in Quhistan and other parts of Iran.¹⁷ Nevertheless, in the absence of pre-Islamic/early Islamic surface pottery sherds, one should not jump to any conclusion about the occupation of the four afore-mentioned castles in those periods, merely based on the size of the bricks. Future archaeological excavations in the castles would possibly help in better dating of the castles.

The spaces in most of the castles were covered by vault or dome, some of which are remaining. Flat roofs were possibly used in the castle of Shahanshah and Qal'ih Zari as suggested by the remaining joist holes in some of the walls in these two cases (discussed in the previous chapter). Pointed barrel vaults, built of stone and gypsum mortar are used frequently to cover elongated galleries. In some cases, the stone pointed barrel-vaults are built on a course of brick at the springing line (Figs. 5-21 – 5-23). The use of bricks helped the masons to start the foot of the vault on the same level, thus improving the stability of the vaults. Building stone vaults with or without a course of brick at the springing line possibly depended on the choice of masons and the availability of bricks. Both styles were probably used by the masons during the Alamut period.

Brick was also used for construction of the vaults and domes in the castle, in a more limited manner, however. The brick barrel-vaults are all pitched-brick vault (*ṭāq-i żarbi*), a

¹⁶ On the meaning of *Gabr*, see Shaki, "Gabr," 239-40.

¹⁷ For *ājur-i gabrī* and the use of the bricks of larger size in pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods in Quhistan and Iran, see Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān*, 263; Mustawfi, "Āthār-i Pīsh az Islām," 77; Memarian, *Niyārīsh-i Sāzihā-yi Tāqī*, 18-9; Azarpay, Guitty. "BRICK."

construction technique that has been used in most parts of Iran since the pre-Islamic period (Figs. 5-24 and 5-25).¹⁸ Brick domes are used for covering circular pits that functioned as cisterns or a storeroom for oil or grains (Fig. 5-26). Brick domes are built of *girdchīn* technique in which concentric courses of bricks are laid at an angle that gradually increases from the bottom to the top ring. The technique is again commonly used in Iran for building the domes and could not be attributed to any specific region or period.¹⁹

The Isma‘ili communities that lived in different regions of Iran were not outsiders to those regions and were familiar with vernacular architectural designs and construction techniques in Iran. Unfortunately, other than the castles there is no other type of building that could be easily labeled as “Isma‘ili.” In addition, no specifically Isma‘ili architectural remains, such as inscription or decorations, are known to date. Therefore, the limited structures standing above the ground in the castles do not reflect any particular features that could be attributed merely to the construction phases of the so-called Alamut period.

Another challenge in the phasing of masonry in the castles is the consistency of construction techniques in all the remaining structures. In other words, there are no clear signs of the period of repairs or different phases of construction in any of the structures in castles that still stand above the ground and no archaeological or previous architectural survey has pointed to this. Mixed use of material is seen occasionally in some of the castles. For example, in the north of the highest part of Kuh-Qal‘ih of Tun is a section of thick wall that is built of stones of different shapes in its lower and upper parts. On top of the stones are five courses of

¹⁸ Pirniya, *Chafdhā va Taqhā*, 48-53.

¹⁹ Pirniya, *Gunbad dar Mi‘mārī-yi Irān*, 113-4.

brick on top of which a short stone wall stands (Fig. 5-27). It is not, however, possible to determine on the basis of existing evidence whether the wall is the result of one, two or more phases of construction. With the present amount of available masonry evidence, therefore, it would be sufficient to conclude that the castles reflect an integrated use of construction material and techniques with some degree of flexibility based on the specific limitations in each locality.

Main “Defensive” Elements of the Isma‘ili Castles

Positioning / Lack of moats and glacis

A basic characteristic of most of the Isma‘ili fortifications is their location on the top of the high rocks and mountains, which naturally are separated from their surrounding environment and are usually accessible from only one side. This positioning provided a passive defense for the castle and was the principal defensive strategy of the Isma‘ili fortifications. The potential defensive quality of these structures during the Alamut period is reflected in the following statement from the contemporary work of Fakhr-i Mudabbir (c. 1157-1236), a Persian author who served in the court of the Ghurid and early Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) rulers:

...and there are several types of fortifications (*hiṣār*). One type is those made of underground tunnels; and pathways have been built from it; and its holes have been opened to a riverside or gully or grove, in order to flight through those holes and vacate the castle (*qal‘ih*) without anyone noticing; and the *mulḥidān* [i.e., the Isma‘ilis] build these fortifications, to flight in the case of failure; and the other type is those that the fortification is located on the ground; that can be under-tunneled and can wage a war if desired (*bi murād jang tavān kard*); and the third type is those that although is located on the ground but it has a moat and cannot be under-tunneled; and the fourth type are those that are located on the top of the mounds and summit of the mountains and if the fortification is equipped with men and other [requirements], it can be hardly captured; should

make a peace with it... and the kings should not go to the bottom of these fortifications [i.e., the fourth kind]...²⁰

The statement above shows that, as perceived by the contemporaries, most of the Isma'ili castles in Iran had the primary condition of strength, being located on the top the high mountains. To make formidable castles, the Isma'ilis, therefore, only needed to provide their castles with required resources from the manpower and military equipment to enough food and water (discussed in detail below) in order to withstand long sieges.

Surprisingly in Fakhr-i Mudabbir's statement, the Isma'ilis are mentioned as the builders of the first type of fortifications which were made of underground tunnels. The fortifications of this type were perhaps more common in the Ghur and Sind-Multan regions, where the Isma'ilis did not have enough resources to build mountain castles.²¹ A few of these complexes of underground refuges are still visible in different parts of the Southern Khurasan province (for example in Rajang village and Nig village, 40 km to the north and 22 km to the south of Qa'in respectively). It demands, however, more extensive research to determine whether the Isma'ilis actually built or occupied these complexes or not.

Except for Qal'ih-Zari, all the other cases in the present study are located on the summit of the rocks with a height of more than 70 m. There is no trace of a moat around these castles. This might be because of the high position as well as the solid rocky base of the castles that made building a moat all around the castles impossible or unnecessary from a defensive point of view. No glacis are also seen in the studied cases. It is possible that the architects of the

²⁰ Fakhr-i Mudabbir, *Ādāb-i al-Harb*, 427-28.

²¹ For the history of the early Isma'ilis activities in the Sind-Multan region, see Khan, "Isma'ilism in Multan and Sind."

Ismaʿili castles were unfamiliar with this defensive element. Glacis are rather scarce in any other fortified structure built in the region. Considering the location of the Ismaʿili castles, however, there was in fact no vulnerable location that its protection demanded construction of the glacis.

Multi-layer defenses /curtain walls

Curtain walls are the main defensive elements that mark the border between inside and outside of the castle. The walls of the castles in Quhistan are built of various thickness. The inner walls are between 75 cm to 1 m. The exterior walls are a bit thicker, ranging from 1 to 1.5 m. In terms of the thickness of the exterior walls, the Ismaʿili castles are relatively similar to their Armenian counterparts in Cilicia.²² These walls are, however, fairly thin in comparison with the curtain walls of major the medieval European as well as the Crusader and the Muslim castles in the Levant.²³ There was possibly no need for such thick walls in the Ismaʿili castles because of their strategic location. Since the Ismaʿili castles are located on the summit of the mountains, they were generally less vulnerable to the attacks by battering rams and catapults.

There was also absolutely no possibility of undermining by enemies because the walls were constructed on solid bedrock. Therefore, the Ismaʿilis never built preventive architectural elements such as taluses to make the base of the walls thicker. It is also worth mentioning that the curtain walls were not necessarily built in all sides. If there was a sheer cliff on a side of a

²² For a catalogue of the Armenian castles, see Edwards, *The Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, 51-276.

²³ For the plans of the Crusader and Muslim castles in the Levant, see Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*; Gaube, "A History of the Citadel of Aleppo," 73-102; Gonnella, "Introduction to the Citadel of Aleppo," 103-38; Grandin, "Introduction to the Citadel of Salah al-Din," 139-80; Hasan, "Introduction to the Citadel of Masyaf," 181-216. For European castles, see Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *The Medieval Fortress*.

castle and the defense was provided by natural topography and massive rocks, that side was fortified only at the most vulnerable places. For example, there was possibly no continuous curtain wall in the southeastern and northwestern flanks of Qal'ih Qala' of Ark.

Unfortunately, the curtain walls in all the castles are in ruins today, and there is no remaining sample of the details of the ending of the top of the walls. We do not know, therefore, whether the curtain walls had battlements or not; and how was the architecture of the battlements. The only extant example of the battlements in the mountain castles of the region is found in Furg castle, possibly built in eighteenth century.²⁴ The battlements in Furg are about 1.2 and made of mudbrick. They are crenelated and pierced with rectangular arrow loops. Right behind the battlements there is a narrow walkway (allure or wall-walk) that allowed the defenders to line up and move on the top of the walls (Fig. 5-28). It is not evident whether these mudbrick battlements were employed in the architecture of the Isma'ili castles. The possibility of the existence of similar battlements in the Isma'ili castles, however, should not be overlooked because of the great similarity between the architecture of Furg castle and the Isma'ili castles. This similarity is seen in the construction techniques and material, design of the towers, and the general layout of the Furg castle.

A salient characteristic of the Isma'ili castles in the region is their multiple curtain walls and their multi-layer defense system. This is not, however, a characteristic peculiar to the Isma'ili castles. Multiple curtain walls are used by the Crusaders in the Greater Syria, the

²⁴ The building date is 1747 (1160 A. H.) according to Darmiyani, *Dīvān-i Lāmi'*, 88. For a brief description of the architectural remains of the castle, see Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 115-22. Willey suggests that the current structures are built over an earlier Isma'ili castle. However, he does not provide any evidence for his claim. See Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 195-7.

Armenians in Cilicia, and many European castles. Although building the castles in multiple sections, was not merely for defensive reason, it had undoubtedly an important defensive function: the inner walls were vantage points for archers, firing down at the besiegers; furthermore, if the besiegers were to breach the lower/outer section of the castle, the defenders could continue the battle by retreating to the upper/inner section.

The Ismaʿilis were, undoubtedly, aware of the above simple logic behind building multiple walled sections. The division of the castles into separate fortified sections is reflected in the accounts of the siege of the major Ismaʿili castles in the Alamut region by medieval chroniclers. On the capture of Maymun-Dizh castle, for example, Juvayni writes:

... Then the Mongol army entered and began to destroy the buildings, brushing away the dust thereof with the broom of annihilation. Some of the more fanatical *fidāʿīs*, sacrificing their lives in the cause of Error and Ignorance, leapt up again and seeking death with their hearts opened their wings like ants and flew up on to the summit of the bulge of the lofty palace (*qullih-yi qubbih-yi qasr-i mashīd*), which was the seat of the rulers of the kingdom, nay of those who were ill-fated both spiritually and temporal... And here they stretched their arms to battle. On the part of the victorious army, mangonels were directed against those purblind, crooked-hearted unbelievers, and there was a brisk discharge of swiftly flying stones and arrows... For three days and nights, they resisted in this manner, but on the fourth day the snake-like warriors and valiant stalwarts of the army scaled the lofty and majestic peak and utterly crushed those serpent-like miscreants...²⁵

Similarly, in Mustawfi's account of the capture of the Lambsar castle, the capture of the second wall/bailey marks the end of the battle:

They (i.e., the Mongol army) besieged that castle; there was fight all day and night. A year and half passed; that region got in panic entirely because of the

²⁵ Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 635-6. The translation of the underlined phrase is mine. Boyle translated it as "the dome of the stout palace." For the Persian text, see Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, 135.

troops. Eventually, the garrison in the castle dwindled; [and] the *mulhid* (i.e., the Isma'ilis) spoiled the second *faṣīl* (wall/intervallum).²⁶

Mustawfi's account continues with more details on the conquest of the castle that are worth mentioning here:

The first *faṣīl* got empty of the garrison; the men of the battle day left. The castle had a hidden door; that was called Anjih-kin. The door was guarded only by a woman; there were no men there. Mihtar-Ruspidar (probably a Persian commander of the Mongol army) went there in the dark night and acted bravely. He threw a lasso and went to the castle; like tigers stalked and strutted. Forty of his assistants went also to the castle with hearts full of hatred. They killed that woman guard, promptly; then opened the castle's door. His (i.e., Mihtar-Ruspidar's) army climbed up that slope; they went all to that lofty castle (*hiṣn*). When the sun rose up above the mountain (i.e., in the morning); the skillful hero (i.e., Mihtar-Ruspidar) went to the top of the wall. He told the Mongols that I got the castle from this community by valiancy. The second *faṣīl* is [still] held by the enemy; [but] you know that its capture is my job. When I gain it by valiancy; I will defeat these malevolent [group]. [Then] I will entrust this country to you; [because] I do not want anything from this inauspicious folk. Then he went to fight with the enemies, [and] spend three days on that. On the fourth [day] defeated that place; the enemy's courage and fortune burnt...²⁷

The accounts above show, clearly, how the building of multiple curtain walls and separate defensible levels in the castle allowed the defenders to resist the enemy more days in the event of the downfall of the outer curtain wall. This additional defensive opportunity could be particularly effective if the defenders expected to be backed up by external auxiliary forces. This was probably the case in the Isma'ilis' defensive strategy in which every major castle could be supported by nearby smaller forts during the siege time.

²⁶ Mustawfi, *Zafarnāmiḥ*, 1188.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Mustawfi's account is also notable in terms of terminology. He applies the term *faṣīl* in reference to each of these separate fortified sections. The term *faṣīl* is treated differently in the contemporary historical sources. It is commonly used for talking about the walls or outworks of a town or a castle. This is seen particularly in *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*. In his description of the fortifications of Samarqand, for example, Juvayni writes:

...And in addition to all this, the citadel had been greatly strengthened, several lines of outworks (*faṣīl*) had been drawn around it, the walls (*dīvār*) had been raised to the Pleiades (*Thurayyā*)...²⁸

In some of the other sources, however, the term *faṣīl* conveys the entire protected space behind the wall of a fortification, which is similar to its usage by Mustawfi. A good example of this is found in the following account of the restoration of Girdkuh castle in *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*:

... in this year, *ra'īs* Muzaffar cut out a three hundred [*gaz*]²⁹ deep well in the solid rock in the *faṣīl* of Girdkuh.³⁰

Considering the latter meaning of the term, one can suggest that *faṣīl* was probably the equivalent of what is known as bailey in the European and the Crusader castles. This usage of the term *faṣīl* is similar to the Arabic term *fāṣīl* (intervallum) that is used in reference to the open area between the gateway and palace complex in the early Islamic citadels.³¹

²⁸ Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 117. For the Persian text, see Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.1, 91. See also the use of the term *faṣīl* in the pages 83, 92, 94, 99, 104. The same term appears in Mustawfi, *Zafarnāmiḥ*, 106, 107, and 118. The common Medieval Persian term for the castle's wall is *dīvār* or *bārū*.

²⁹ A *gaz* is a unit of length equivalent to 104cm.

³⁰ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 118.

³¹ See Milwright, "Fortress, in the Middle East," 135.

All cases studied in this research (Qal'ih Zari remains an exception) are divided into separate fortified sections or baileys/wards. The plans of these sections follow the contours of the terrain and, therefore, do not have any predetermined geometric form. The access to inner/upper ward is provided through the outer/lower wards. However, the inner was not necessarily nested inside the outer wards. In Mu'minabad castle, for example, the three sections of the castle are located on three U-shaped adjoining hills; or in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in the sections are arranged in a line on the summit of the mountain. In some cases, the more vulnerable flanks were protected by a number of additional ascending curtain walls. These flanks are often where the castles' main entrances were located (this is best seen in Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun and Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab).

Most of the studied cases consist of three fortified sections. The lowest sections are usually the smallest part of the castles. They were the castles' first line of defense and were possibly occupied only by the garrison. The largest parts are usually the middle section where the domestic quarters, cisterns and storerooms, barracks for the garrisons, and workshops were located. The third sections are usually the highest part of the mountains and the most inaccessible parts. These last sections were possibly the headquarters of the castles and where the residences of the commandant and the elite were located (see Juvayni's description of the upper part of Maymun-Dizh castle above). It was also the last refuge for the defenders during the attacks to the castle. Therefore, a large area of the highest section is usually covered by large cisterns and storerooms.

Since the layout of the castles always conforms to the natural configuration of the mountains, in most cases the above-mentioned spatial organization has been modified in

accordance with the conditions of the terrain. For example, in Mu'minabad castle, the headquarters of the castle is located in the largest section in the proximity of the domestic quarters, and possibly workshops. This is seen also in the castle of Shahanshah.

Gateways

Gateways are a critical part of the medieval castles, making a connection between the inside and outside of the castles. They were considered potentially vulnerable places in the castles; and their protection demanded particular arrangements in design. The most common scheme in the design of the gateways is the so-called "bent entrance" design. The bent entrance delayed the movement of the attackers to the inside of the castle and gave the defenders an opportunity to push the attackers back to the exterior of the gateway.

Unfortunately, the gateways are severely damaged in most of the cases in Quhistan; and do not provide us with any detailed information regarding their design. In Mu'minabad castle, the castle of Darrih, and Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih, even the locations of the gates are completely obscured. In other cases, however, the lower parts of the gates are still visible and provide insight into the general layout of the entrance space in the Isma'ili castles. There were probably no elaborate bent entrances in the Isma'ili castles similar to those built in the castles of the Levant such as the citadel of Aleppo, Krak des Chevaliers, or Belvoir. However, the architects of the Isma'ili castle were, undoubtedly, aware of the defensive benefits of bent entrance scheme and incorporated it in their design as indicated by the remaining archaeological evidence (see chapter 6, for a discussion of the symbolic dimensions of gateways and possible connection to Fatimid architecture).

Generally, two types of gateways are built in the studied cases. In most of the castles, the entrance was through an elongated arched room functioning as the gatehouse. There are commonly a number of guardrooms attached to the gatehouse. In the three castles built in the northwest of the region, Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, Qal'ih Hasan-Abad, and Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab, the gatehouse extends parallel to the outer wall and the gate opens to a side other than the side towards which the castle is approached. Therefore, there is a need for at least a 90-degree turn before entering the gatehouse in these cases. This prevented any direct assault to the entrance and exposed the attackers to the fire of the defenders lined up on the top of the curtain walls. The bent entrance scheme appears to be implemented with more detail in the design of the gateway of the upper section of the castle of Shahanshah. Here entering the castle was possible only through a second turn to another corridor opened to the northern wall of the gatehouse.

In the smaller and more remote castles such as Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan and Qal'ih Qala' of Ark, the main gates appear to be faced directly to the outside. In these cases, however, the gates are placed in an elevated location and were possibly accessible only by ladders. None of the above-mentioned defensive qualities is seen in the design of the main gateway in Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask. In this castle, there was a path leading directly to the gateway that could be easily accessed even by a mounted soldier. This might be because of the functional nature of Qal'ih Kafaran as a walled settlement rather than a strong military stronghold.

The second type of gateways in the studied cases are those incorporated into a round tower. These "gate-towers" are seen in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, Qal'ih Zari, and the entrance to the inner section of Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan. In Qal'ih-Kuh the access to all the three sections was

through “gate-towers.” In Qal’ih-Dukhtar of Shurab, however, this type of gateway was used only in the eastern section of the castle. It is difficult to determine with certainty whether the “gate-towers” were part of the Isma’ili design or not. However, since the first type of the gateways are more common in the castles it is possible that the “gate-tower” entrances were a pre-Isma’ili design that was reused by the Isma’ilis in some of the castles that they occupied during the Alamut period.

Towers

Towers are an integral part of the design of a strong and well-defended castle. Towers have been built in various forms all around the world. The changes made to the architecture of the towers in a particular region to some extent reflect the changes in the defense and attack strategies as well as the general function of the castles in their environment. In the case of the Crusader castles in the Levant, for example, the shift from building square projecting towers to round flanking towers is often explained to be a result of the development of the siege engines and mining under the towers. This was perhaps because of some defensive advantages of the round towers. The rounded walls of the towers proved to be more resistant against the projectiles and mining. Furthermore, the round towers did not leave unprotected corners and dead areas and gave the archers a better view of the outside of the castle.³² Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing here that the different shapes of towers should not be seen in a kind of

³² See Kennedy’s discussion on the towers in the case of Crusader castles. Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*, 113-5. See also Kaufmann and Kaufmann, *The Medieval Fortress*, 25-9.

evolutionary process. Both round and square towers have been built into castles in different parts of the world since Antiquity.³³

There is no sign of any dramatic change in the architecture of the towers in the Isma'ili castles during the Alamut period. The towers are all rounded in all the cases studied in this research. A cursory look at the other Isma'ili fortifications throughout Iran shows that the polygonal or square towers never used in these fortifications. It was perhaps simply because a round tower could more easily follow the natural form of the rocks. It could be also because of the defensive qualities that the round towers offered. The Isma'ili castles do not have great isolated towers, Keep or Donjon that is seen in the European and the Crusader castles. Rather, they often have an inner small fortifications like citadels that were the headquarters of the castle. While there were possibly some functional similarities between the inner fortifications of the Isma'ili castles and keeps/donjons in the European castles, they should not be considered essentially the same structures. Keeps and donjons are rooted and developed in a different tradition of castle building in the medieval Europe and Greater Syria, and thus, are not totally transferable to other contexts. For example, the symbolic meaning of building a great defensive tower in a castle or in a given territory was not possibly understood in the context of medieval Iran.

There are various types of round towers in the studied cases. Small solid semi-circular towers functioned as buttresses and fortified the curtain walls from the outside. The larger towers are also often semi-circular and were connected to the galleries that built along the curtain walls. The interiors of the towers are usually between 3 to 4m in diameter. A few larger

³³ This is discussed in detail in France, "Fortifications East and West," 293-4.

towers with the interior diameter of 5 to 6 m are also seen in most of the castles. Three-quarter towers are commonly used at the corners. Large U-shaped towers with long sides were usually built in the extreme corners of the curtain walls. This gave the defenders a panoramic view of the outside environment and allowed them to provide a more extensive covering fire for the walls on either side.

In most cases, there are no arrow loops in the walls of the towers. In a few cases, the towers have at most two or three arrow loops that are commonly located on the sides of the tower to allow covering fire for the curtain walls. The exceptions are found in Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun and Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih. In Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun there is a large round tower with a row of five rectangular loopholes providing view to the southern flank of the castle. Despite its unique design, the tower appears to be an original Isma'ili structure as indicated by its construction technique. Small rectangular arrow loops used extravagantly in a decorative manner in two of the remaining towers in Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih. This decorative use of arrow loops is seen only in Furg castle. This suggests that some of the fortifications of the highest section of Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih are possibly built much later than Alamut period.

In common with other spaces in the castles, the towers are usually covered with a layer of plaster on the interior. In Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, there is a small hole at the foot of some of the towers suggesting that they might have served as washrooms. This is not seen in other castles and was possibly a part of the changes happened during a later phase of occupation of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in.

Arrow loops

The walls of medieval castles were often pierced by arrow loops enabling the archers to launch arrows without being exposed to the attackers. Arrow loops of various sizes and designs, which could accommodate different types of weapons, are found in the castles all around the world. The remaining arrow loops in the Ismaʿili castles are mostly simple rectangular apertures in the wall lacking any specific detail. In many cases, they were barely practical defensive elements and possibly functioned as small windows and simple decorative elements. The five arrow loops open into a large round tower in the Kuh-Qalʿih of Tun (see above) are more elaborate in design. In these five arrow loops, the wall behind the loop is cut away at an oblique angle to provide the archers a wider view of outside (Fig. 5-29).

The Nizari Ismaʿilis probably never developed a sophisticated design for arrow loops as indicated by the remaining examples.³⁴ This was perhaps because the defense was done mostly from the top of the curtain walls. The rooftop of the galleries built into the curtain wall created an appropriate place for the defenders to line up and move quickly along the curtain walls.

Food and water provision

The provision of food and water was of great significance for the residents of the castles particularly during the siege. Fakhr-i Mudabbir mentions the paucity of water and food as one

³⁴ We do see elaborated arrow loops in the Fatimid fortifications in Cairo. That was a totally different context for the design and development of fortified structures. Currently, there is no evidence suggesting that the Nizari Ismaʿilis used Fatimid models in their designs.

of the main causes of the surrender of the fortifications.³⁵ The Isma'ilis were aware of the importance of providing their castles with enough supplies and, therefore, large storerooms and cisterns were always an integral part of their fortifications. Juvayni, an eyewitness of the Alamut castle after its surrender to the Mongols, provided us with the following valuable information regarding the supplies in the castle:

... and in the cavities of these rocks they had constructed several long, wide and tall galleries (*sābāt*) and deep tanks, dispensing with the use of stone and mortar, as in the verse: '*And hew out houses in the hills.*' So too they had dug magazines and tanks for wine, vinegar, honey and all sorts of liquids and solids ... Most of these stores of liquids and solids, which they had been laying down from the time of Hasan-i Sabbah, that is over a period of more than 170 years, showed no sign of deterioration and this they regarded as a result of Hasan's sanctity. The remainder of the description of the implements of war and stores is more than can be inserted in a book without tedium.³⁶

Although there is some exaggeration in Juvayni's description of the castle, the account above is, undoubtedly, a reflection of the extensive amount of food and water stored in the castle. The remains of galleries and deep tanks similar to those described by Juvayni are found in most of the Isma'ili fortifications in the Quhisan region. Both in the upper section of Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun and Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih are large circular pits that fine layers of compound plaster cover their walls. These pits could be used for storing oil or flour. Archaeological excavations on the northwest corner of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in shows that foods were also stored inside the potteries of various sizes buried into the ground or installed into the walls.³⁷

³⁵ Fakhr-i Mudabbir's account reads as follow: "... Fortification cannot be retained for these reasons; [because of] the depletion in the fortification, or unavailability of the weapon, or the paucity of water and food and straw and firewood, or discord among the people in the fortification." See Fakhr-i Mudabbir, *Ādāb-i al-Harb*, 426.

³⁶ Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 720-21.

³⁷ Farjami, "Qal'ih-Kuh-i Qa'in," 106-7. See also Sultani, *Ṭarrāhī-i Hifāzat*, 70.

The provision of water was the other major concern for the residents of these castles. Building wells, cisterns, and water channels was certainly considered a crucial aspect of the fortification program in the castles established or restored by the Ismaʿilis. The following Rashid al-Din's reference to the large amount of money spent to make two wells in Girdkuh castle (in the Qumis region) stresses the significance of this issue:

... in this year (i.e., 493 A.H. /1100), *raʿīs* Muzaffar cut out a three hundred [*gaz*] deep well in the solid rock in the *faṣīl* of Girdkuh... and Raʿīs spent 36,000 *dīnār* in the cause of Nizariyyah *daʿwa* in addition to all properties and supplies and rare and luxury goods that he had sent to Alamut. He sent 12,000 *dīnār* cash to Alamut; and spent 12,000 *dīnārs* on the commandant's residence (*sarāy-i riyāsat*); and spent 12,000 *dīnārs* to build two wells [in Girdkuh castle], apart from the price of Alamut that he had given [to Alavi].³⁸

It is not clear to us what is the Rashid al-Din's source for the account above and whether the mentioned numbers are real. The account, however, reflects clearly that the provision of water was a major part of the re-fortification program of the castle; and a significant investment went into building the wells.

Different methods of water supply were used in the Ismaʿili castles of the Quhistan region. The most common one was the collection of rain and melt water in several cisterns of various sizes dug into the rock. The cisterns are commonly rectangular and sometimes circular in shape. The smaller cisterns are often built beside the curtain wall so that the wall forms one side of the cistern. The larger cisterns are usually located below a broad catchment area with a

³⁸ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyyān*, 118.

steep slope in order to collect the maximum possible amount of runoff water. In many cases the cisterns were covered by brick vaults that are demolished now.

The second method of water supply was piping the water from a natural source (such as rivers and springs on the adjacent hills) to the castles through clay tubes and channels cut into the ground. Juvayni provides a brief description of the application this method in the Alamut castle that reads as follow:

... And from the river Bahru they had brought a conduit to the foot of the castle and from thence a conduit was cut in the rock halfway round (*bar madār-i nīmih*) the castle and ocean-like tanks (*ḥuzhāy-i daryā āsā*), also of rock, constructed beneath so that the water would be stored in them by its own impetus and was continually flowing on.³⁹

Likewise, Rashid al-Din mentions the construction of similar water supply system in Lambsar castle:

...Sayyidinā (i.e., Hasan-i Sabbah) ordered [his men] to restore it (i.e., Lambsar castle); and they cut out channels in the rocks and conducted water from Bonihrud, which was two and half *parasangs*⁴⁰ away, to the top of the castle; and built mills, gardens, water rice huller (*dang*), and icehouse inside the castle...⁴¹

Unfortunately, there is no reference in the textual sources to this type of water supply system in other castles. However, the remains of the channels as well as the fragments of clay tubes found in other places such as Navizar-Shah (in Alamut region) and Girdkuh (in Qumis region) suggest a wider usage among the Ismaʿili castles.⁴²

³⁹ Juvayni and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 720-21.

⁴⁰ The *parasang* is a historic Iranian unit of distance. It could be an equivalent of 6.24km or 5.4km. In any case, there is possibly some exaggeration in the distance mentioned in the Rashid al-Din's account.

⁴¹ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyān*, 114.

⁴² On Navizar-Shah castle, see Willey, *The Castles of the Assassins*, 233-39. On Girdkuh, see Pazuki Tarudi, *Īstihkāmāt-i*, 193-206.

Similar water channels were applied in some of the major castles studied in the present research. Some 400 m to the southeast of Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask is a long channel (about 1 km) that conducted the fresh water from a spring on top of the mountain to the north of the other castle known as Qal'ih Musalmanan (see the discussion of Qal'ih Kafaran in chapter 4). There are also the traces of a narrow ditch cut in the rock in the southeast of the castle of Darrih. In the latter case, the remaining penstock tower (*tanūrih*) suggests that there was a watermill in the proximity of the castle. After passing through the mill, the water could also be piped to fill the large cistern in the southeastern section of the castle (discussed in chapter 4).

Providing a safe access to the nearby water sources through underground tunnels was another method of water supply for the castles, particularly during long sieges. Willey and Ivanow have mentioned the remains of this kind of tunnel in Lambsar castle in the Alamut region.⁴³ Built around five centuries after Alamut period, Furg castle is the only castle in the Quhistan region within which an underground access to the water is still visible. Willey has written about the existence of a tunnel in the middle section of Mu'minabad castle providing access to a spring some two kilometers away.⁴⁴ The tunnel, however, is filled with soil and debris today. The locals believe that there was a similar tunnel in Hasan-Abad castle, which was temporarily uncovered after an earthquake in 1969. There is no trace now of such a tunnel in Hasan-Abad. Perhaps future archeological excavations could offer more information on this method of water supply in Hasan-Abad and other castles in the region.

⁴³ Ivanow, *Alamut and Lamasar*, 74; and Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 132.

⁴⁴ Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 200. Furqani also mentions of a tunnel in this part of the castle without speculation about its function. See Furqani, *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īliyān-i Quhistān*, 353.

Concluding notes

The survey of the defensive characteristics of all the individual castles studied in the present research suggests that the defense of all the castles (except for Qal'ih Zari) relied on two factors in the main: first, the location of the castles, and second, providing the castles with adequate food and water supplements to allow the defenders of the castles to resist long sieges. All the cases discussed above are located on the summit of the mountains that could not be easily attacked by the enemies of the Isma'ilis. Furthermore, in all the cases large parts of the castles are covered by the spaces related to collecting water and storing food inside the castles.

The location of the castles, however, reduced the ability of the garrison inside the castle to intervene quickly in the surprise attacks on the surrounding lands. Perhaps for that reason the settlements in the vicinity of the castles were an easier target for the Isma'ili enemies. As discussed in chapter 1, on most occasions the reported attacks to the Quhistan region targeted the Isma'ili towns or villages rather than the castles. Therefore, from a defensive point of view, the Isma'ili castles were more effective as a safe refuge for the Isma'ili community who lived in the surrounding settlements. This was particularly essential in the early phases of the Alamut period when the Isma'ilis were not fully dominated Quhistan, and the region was constantly raided by the Seljuq forces.

Due to the current lack of reliable dating evidence in the castles, one could not study the possible progression of design and building techniques in the Isma'ili castles of Quhistan during the course of Alamut period. At present, the examination of the remaining structure above the ground reflects minor differences in the design of the "defensive elements" of the castles. Generally, it appears that the Nizari Isma'ilis never developed complex defensive

elements similar to those of the almost contemporary Crusader castles or the European ones. The Ismaʿilis probably did not feel the need to innovate in their defensive architecture because they were not exposed to the new siege methods encountered during the Crusader phase in Greater Syria. Textual sources indicate any attack on the Ismaʿili castles basically relied on long sieges, leading to the surrender of the defenders. Because of the remote location of the castles, the Ismaʿilis possibly felt immune to any other possible attack techniques.

The lack of changes in the design of the “defensive elements” in the Ismaʿili castles could also be a sign of less defensive role of the castles in the latest phases of the Alamut period. As discussed in chapter 1, the Ismaʿilis were able to gradually expand their power over the different parts of Quhistan and enjoyed several years of relative peace in most parts of the region during the last two phases of the Alamut period. The Ismaʿilis, therefore, did not need to invest in the defensive aspects of the castles and possibly used the same building techniques during the entire Alamut period. It is likely that there was a totally different relationship between the castles and their surrounding settlements and their dwellers during the peace time. These non-defensive roles are particularly evident in the case of Qalʿih Zari (discussed in chapter 6). The next chapter focuses on the non-defensive roles of the Ismaʿili castles during the Alamut period.

Chapter 6. Ismaʿili castles beyond defensive functions

The medieval castles are often known as types of defensive architecture, built to protect anything that was behind their high walls. Recent studies, however, show that the castles played several other roles in various communities during the medieval period.¹ They were residences for the elite, tools of conquest, symbols of authority and power, and centers for administration and social services. In many cases, these functions played a crucial role in the establishment and design of the medieval castles. In common with other medieval castles, the Ismaʿili castles were not merely defensive elements in the strategy of the Ismaʿilis during the Alamut period as suggested by the available historical and archaeological evidence. The present chapter investigates the non-defensive aspects of the Ismaʿili castle in Iran.

Alamut region was the headquarters of the Nizari Ismaʿilis during the entire Alamut period. Consequently, most of the primary sources focus on the events and conditions in that region. As mentioned in chapter 1, in comparison to Alamut, the available information about the Ismaʿilis of Quhistan in the primary sources is often focused on the events of the raids to the Ismaʿili locations or the attacks by the Ismaʿilis to their neighboring regions. For that reason, the non-defensive aspects of the castles discussed here are based in the main on the available information about Alamut. It is likely that Quhistan presented similar conditions. Therefore, the concluding parts of each section below review the evidence from Quhistan, as presented in chapter 4.

¹ See for instance, Liddiard, *Castles in Context*; Coulson, *Castles in Medieval Society*; Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes*; Mol, *Hidden Complexities of the Frankish Castle*; Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*; Milwright, *The Fortress of the Raven*; Ehrlich, "Crusaders' Castles-the Fourth Generation;" Yovitchitch, "The Tower of Aybak in Ajlun Castle;" Rabbat, "The Militarization of Taste."

Analyzing the available historical accounts, the first section discusses the possible role of the Ismaʿili castles as means of territorial expansion. It will be also argued that in several cases the capture and establishment of a castle was considered a way of imposing the authority of the Ismaʿilis on their surrounding areas. The following two sections will explore some of the other non-military aspects of the castles including, the function of the castles as residences for the garrisons and the Ismaʿili elite, the role of the castles as the centers of intellectual activities, and the symbolic significance of the castle during the Alamut period.

Finally, the last section analyses the distribution of the castles in Quhistan and the possible relationship between the location of the castles and the resources of the region discussed in chapter 3. In the absence of any other known Ismaʿili structures in the region, the study of the relationship between the castles and the economic resources in the region would provide us with an alternative means to study the extent of the Ismaʿili involvement in the exploitation of the resources in their territory. This study in one hand, improves our understanding of the roles of the castles during the Alamut period, and on the other, sheds some light on the nature of the wider Ismaʿili presence in the Quhistan region.

Castles as means of territorial expansion

The examination of the historical texts suggests that despite their primary defensive function, the castles were used by the Ismaʿilis as means of territorial expansion during the Alamut period. Erecting the castles to accommodate their garrison and to dominate a territory was in fact the Ismaʿilis' primary strategy since the capture of Alamut castle by Hasan-i Sabbah. This is reflected in the following account of Juvayni in *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*:

Hasan [-i Sabbah] exerted every effort to capture the places adjacent to Alamut or in that vicinity. Where possible he won them over by tricks of his propaganda (*da'wa*) while such places as were unaffected by his blandishments he seized with slaughter, ravishment, pillage, bloodshed and war. He took such castles as he could and wherever he found a suitable rock worthy of building (*sangī miyāft ki banā rā mīshāyist*); he built a castle upon it.²

Unfortunately, Juvayni did not expand on the Hasan's reasons for building the castles, or what were the features of a "suitable rock" that was worthy of establishing a castle. However, the fact that the castle building was a crucial part of Hasan's expansionist policy is mentioned implicitly in the text.

The role of the castles as means of territorial expansion is also echoed in Rashid al-Din's account of the peace deal made between Sultan Sanjar and Hasan-i Sabbah:

... the Sultan became inclined to make peace with them (i.e., the Isma'ilis) and said "I will conciliate them with three conditions: first, they should not build castles anymore, second, they should not buy weapons and tools of war anymore, and third, they should not call (*da'wa*) the people to their beliefs."³

As mentioned earlier in chapter 1, Sultan Sanjar accepted to make a deal with the Isma'ilis after a series of abortive raids by the Seljuq forces on the Isma'ili regions.⁴ In fact, one of the aims of this deal was to prevent the Isma'ilis from extending their territories and expanding their influence in the Seljuq domain. Mentioning the castles along with buying weapons and tools of war and calling people to the Isma'ilis beliefs,

² Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 637-8; slightly modified by the present author. For the Persian text, see Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 199. See also Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 106.

³ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 122.

⁴ On the Seljuq-Isma'ili struggles in the early years of Alamut period, see Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 335-42; and Hillenbrand, "The Power Struggle," 205-11.

implies the offensive function of the castles and their active role in the extension of the Ismaʿili territories.

In fact, as suggested by the sporadic historical accounts, capturing or building a castle provided the Ismaʿilis with the opportunity to seize and dominate the settlements located in the vicinity of that castle. For example, the Ismaʿilis dominated the people of the district of Lambsar (in the Alamut region) and seized all of its surrounding villages after Kiya Buzurg-Ummid captured and fortified the castle of Lambsar in 1096.⁵ Similar strategy was adopted later on, particularly during the rule of Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg-Ummid or Muhammad I.

Quoting some of the Ismaʿili chroniclers of the Alamut period, Rashid al-Din provides us with brief accounts of the gradual process of the expansion of the Ismaʿili power to the northern and southern parts of the Alamut region. In addition to mentioning the names of a few of the castles, some of these extant accounts clearly reflect the role of the castles as means of territorial expansion and control during the Alamut period. An interesting example is the following account of the expansion of the Ismaʿili power in the plain of Diylaman in the north of Alamut region and the capture of the district/city of Gurjiyan (or Kurjiyan).⁶

... and in *Rajab* of the year 536 A.H. (1142) *Rafiqān* of Alamut went to the plain of Diylaman, and burned Sijan, and built (*ʿimārat kardand*) the castle and filled it with supplies. And appointed Kiya Muhammad ibn-i ʿAli Khusraw Firuzkuhi as the

⁵ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyān*, 114-15.

⁶ Daftary read the name Gurjiyan as Gurjistan (Georgia); and suggests that the Ismaʿilis were able to “extend their influence to Georgia (Gurjistan), where they carried on some *daʿwa* activities as well.” However, considering the other geographical locations mentioned in the account Gurjiyan was the same as Kurjiyan, which according to Mustawfi was a “large city” in the province of Gilan (Jilanat). See Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 356; and Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 231.

commander of Sa'adat-Kuh. And *Rafiqān* dispatched an army to Gurjiyan every so often and besieged there, to the point that there was no way of entering and exit for their chiefs. From one side *Rafiqān* raided [on Gurjiyan], and from the other people of Sa'adat-Kuh; and there was no way for the people of Kuh-i Gurjiyan to help the Gurji. The circumstances became difficult for Gurjiyan. *Amīr* Tarasif ibn-i Malikshah-i Gurji turned back to his brother Garshasf and went to *Rafiqān*. Garshasf was in a position that was not safe even for a second...He made a deal with them (i.e., *Rafiqān*) ...and *Rafiqān* restored (*'imārat kardand*) [the castle of] Mar-kuh and named it Mubarak-kuh; and gave that [castle] to Kiya Muhammad ibn-i 'Ali Khusraw Firuzkuhi too. And when *Rafiqān* got the task of [capturing] Gurjiyan done, returned to Alamut.⁷

The account clearly states that the Isma'ilis built two castles during the process of conquering Gurjiyan. No name is mentioned for the first castle. It was built immediately after the Isma'ilis attacked the plain of Diylaman, and burned Sijan. In addition to being a manifestation of the Isma'ili dominance over this area, the castle was used as a military base to launch a series of attacks to the western flank of the district of Gurjiyan. The eastern flank of Gurjiyan was also attacked by the Isma'ilis of Sa'adat-Kuh, in which a castle had been built by order of Kiya Buzurg-Ummid in 1126.⁸ Using the forces of the garrisons of the two castles, the Isma'ilis blockaded and eventually conquered the district of Gurgian. In common with what they did in the plain of Diylaman, the main operation of the Isma'ili forces after conquering Gurjiyan was the restoration of the castle of Mar-kuh in that district.

The offensive capacity of the castles and their importance for the expansionist strategy of the Isma'ilis, was understood by their enemies in the neighboring regions. Therefore, any Isma'ilis' attempt to erect a new castle in the borders of their territory would be resisted

⁷ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān*, 145.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

severely by the local governors of those regions. This is reflected, for instance, in the following accounts of the construction of the castle of Qustinlar and the fortress of Arzhang in the southern parts of Alamut and Taliqan regions:

... and in 19 Rabī' al-'Ākhir of the year [5]38 (31 October 1143) Qutluq Ubih, the governor (*vālī*) of Qazvin, with an army decided [to attack] *Rafīqān* (i.e., the Isma'ilis), and they fought intensively, and a large group were killed from both sides. The enemies (i.e., Qutluq Ubih's troops) returned. *Rafīqān* went to Lar and constructed a strong castle which is located close to Sarbashm of Qazvin. Qutluq Ubih who was one of the noblemen of Iraq requested assistance to prevent *Rafīqān* from building the castle. A well-armed troop, consisting of soldiers from Khargam, Tarum, Abhar, Zangan, Kharagan, Abih, Savih, Damavand, Damghan, Gurgan, and near Nishabur was brought there to fight against *Rafīqān*. They tried but could not defeat *Rafīqān* and just seized their sheep and herds and returned. The castle was finished in that winter. Kiya 'Ali ibn-i al-Kiya al-Kabir became the commander of the castle in *Sha'bān* of this year. In 539 A.H. (1144) a group of *Rafīqān* attacked Qazvin but they returned without any act of aggression ...⁹

... and in Muharram of the year 544 (May 1149), [Muhammad ibn] Kiya Buzurg[-Ummid] with an army went to Taliqan, and they were busy with building (*'imārat*) the fortress of Arzhang. In the fourth of Safar (13th of June), Aqsunqur Firuzkuhi, the governor (*vālī*) of Rayy with the army of the West (*Iraq*) came to the foot of the fortress of Arzhang. *Rafīqān* raided and killed a group [of them], and the rest returned harmed and disappointed...and Sultan Mas'ud (Ghiyath al-Din Mas'ud, c.1108-1152) and Sultan Muhammad Shah ibn-i Mahmud (1128-1159) ...agreed on repulsing the Isma'ilis; and decided [to attack] the fortress of Arzhang. And in the sixteenth of Rabī' al-'Ākhir they came to the foot of Arzhang, and installed the catapults; and the war was going on for a month. The army's commander *amīr* Khumartash [sent] a message to Alamut saying that 'give up the castle (i.e., Arzhang), and we will lift the siege.' They (i.e., the Isma'ilis) did not obey. When they (i.e., the Seljuq army) realized that they were wasting their time, they returned with failure.¹⁰

Both accounts above suggest a similar narrative of the immediate reaction of the local Seljuq *amīrs* to the erection of a castle by the Isma'ilis in the vicinity of their territory. The construction work of the fortress of Arzhang was possibly completed when the Seljuq *amīr*,

⁹ Ibid., 151-52.

¹⁰ Ibid., 152-3.

Aqsunqur Firuzkuhi, arrived. The Ismaʿilis, therefore, easily broke the siege that was laid to the castle by his army. However, in the case of Qustinlar, Qutluq Ubih attacked the Ismaʿilis while they were in the process of building the castle. Nevertheless, the Ismaʿilis were powerful enough to withstand the Seljuq’s “well-armed troop” and finished the construction of the castle in a few months.

The Ismaʿilis built several other castles in the southern part of Alamut and its neighboring regions during the rule of Muhammad I. As an experienced military commander, Muhammad I was personally involved with the construction of some of these castles. According to *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh*, he went on a journey to investigate the fortresses (*bar sabīl-i mutālīʿiyi dīzh-hā*) in 1150. “He first went to Darband castle that they had built recently, thence went to Karim castle, thence to Mansurabad castle, thence went to Sarbashm-i Kihur, thence to the gate of Rayy, and the district (*vilāyat*) of Bar (possibly Khar-i Rayy) came into sight.”¹¹ The exact location of some of these castles is obscure today. However, considering the route taken by Muhammad I, they were all located in the southern part of Alamut and Taliqan region close to the Seljuq territory. Interestingly, immediately after the accounts of the construction of these castles, Rashid al-Din mentions a series of raids by the Ismaʿilis to Qazvin and the villages of Rayy, two major Seljuq centers in the south of Alamut and Taliqan.¹²

Therefore, according to these historical accounts, castle building was not necessarily a defensive strategy for the Ismaʿilis. At least in some phases of the Alamut period, the castles were considered as offensive structures, which assisted the Ismaʿilis in extending their territory

¹¹ Ibid., 153. Here ‘the gate of Rayy’ refers to the area close to the city of Rayy.

¹² Ibid., 154-5.

and expanding their influence. Unfortunately, there is no mention of the construction of castles by the Isma'ilis in the Quhistan region during the early phases of the Alamut period in the available primary sources. Rashid al-Din quotes a now lost book of history by the Isma'ili scribe, Hasan Mahmud-i Katib, in a substantial section of the Isma'ili history during the rule of Muhammad I.¹³ It is, therefore, likely that there were similar accounts of the castles built by the Isma'ilis and their conflicts with their enemies in Quhistan. In any case, it appears that the castles played similar role in the Quhistan region as suggested by the gradual expansion of Isma'ili power in the region, discussed in Chapter 1.

Castles as residences and the centers of intellectual activities

One of the most essential functions of the castles was to provide a dwelling for those who resided in them. To serve any other functions (i.e., symbolic, religious, administrative, and military functions) the castles should provide some residential spaces for any group of people that used the castle. Therefore, some of the most basic questions about any given castle are: How many people could be housed inside the castle? What groups of people lived inside the castle and for how long? What kind of activities happened inside the castle and how was the quality of life in the castle during the peacetime? The answer to these questions varies depending on the size and location of the castle, the *raison d'être* of the castle as well as the community that were served by the castle.

Using the notes from his water survey group of the 1972 expedition in the Alamut valley, Peter Willey estimates the minimum number of men and livestock that could have been

¹³ This is mentioned in *Ibid.*, 151.

accommodated in three castles: Alamut, Lambsar, and Bidilan (Shirkuh). Based on the calculation of the capacity of cisterns in the castles, the numbers are as follows: “8,000 men and 900 horses and mules” in Alamut, “150 men and only a few mules inside the castle perimeter” in Bidilan, and “500 men and 50 horses and mules” in Lambsar.¹⁴ Unfortunately, because of the paucity of historical and archaeological data, it is difficult to objectively evaluate these numbers. Nevertheless, as indicated by Willey, it is unlikely that a castle like Alamut had a large garrison of 8,000 men residing inside the castle. Moreover, considering the fact that some of the castles had access to unlimited water resources (i.e., well or spring), the amount of reserved water did not essentially determine the number of the people who lived in the castles. Nevertheless, the availability of food and water was undoubtedly essential during the siege time when the castles were more populated.

Most of the Isma‘ili castles were located close to the Isma‘ili towns and villages and were used as the places of refuge for the Isma‘ilis during the attacks. This is reflected in the following account of *ra‘īs* Abul-Fazl taking refuge to Alamut castle, from an untitled manuscript known as *‘Ahd-i Sayyidinā*:

...Sayyidinā, *qaddas Allahu rūḥahu* (may Allah sanctify his spirit), ordered the division of the rooms of the fortress into two-three meters and five or four meters for the refugees; and because *ra‘īs* [Abul-Fazl] was wealthy, old, and fragile he ordered to leave an entire room for him and designated a man with daily ration to take care of him. *Ra‘īs* [Abul-Fazl] wept and lamented saying kindly to Sayyidinā that I have not come from Isfahan to blockade Sayyidinā and his people (*jamā‘at*). It is obvious how much space each person can have on this fortress, whenever I occupy a room solely for myself, I would pose blockade on everybody; and on the issue of the man assigned to my care, I take refuge to God for having a servant of *mawlānā* in my service with *mawlānā*’s cost of food and

¹⁴ Willey, *Eagle’s Nest*, 145.

clothes. If I do this, I will be *mawlānā*'s antagonist and not his servant, I expect that my space should be the same as others...¹⁵

The account is a rather vivid illustration of the difficult living condition inside the Alamut castle in the early years of Alamut period, when the castle was under siege during the reign of the Seljuq sultan, Muhammad Tapar (discussed in chapter 1). The situation was possibly similar in other castles during the long sieges. In some cases, the castles retained their function as refuges for the residents of the nearby settlements even after the Alamut period. In Qal'ih-Nasiri of Alqur village (about 25 km to the northeast of Birjand), there is a partly legible inscription, engraved on the surface of a rock that reads as follows:

... and Husayn 892 (or 822, i.e., 1486 or 1419) coming of the people to the castle because of the *turkamānān* (Turkmens).¹⁶

Nothing is known about the historical event mentioned in the engraving, or the identity of the engraver and the "Turkmens." It is, however, clear that the castle was used as a refuge by the villagers at least in that occasion.

Although the available historical and archaeological data do not help us to estimate objectively the number of residents in the Isma'ili castles, they still provide us with valuable information regarding the different groups of people who lived inside the castles. The primary residents of the Isma'ili castles were undoubtedly the garrisons. Almost in all of the castles are the remains of barrack complexes consisting of a corridor flanked by elongated rooms. This arrangement of spaces is seen in the Isma'ili castles of the other region as well.¹⁷ In Quhistan, these barrack complexes are seen in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, Hasan-Abad castle, Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun,

¹⁵ Quoted from the translation of the text by Javan, "Ahd-i Sayyidnā."

¹⁶ Nasrabadi, *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi*, 57.

¹⁷ Kleiss, "Castles."

Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask, Mu'minabad castle, and Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf (see chapter 4). The garrisons could be also housed in a series of rooms that were built along the curtain walls of the castles. In addition to the garrisons, a number of specialized and skilled workers lived inside the castles. For example, there were possibly mint workers in the Alamut castle as suggested by several coins from the Alamut period struck in the castle.¹⁸ Furthermore, the remains of bread ovens in the Alamut castle or domestic artifacts including potteries and hand-mill stones in Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, suggest that there were also a number of household staff living in the castles.

It is worth mentioning that in addition to men and soldiers there were undoubtedly women and children among the residents of some of the Isma'ili castles. In this regard, the following section from the account of Hasan-i Sabbah's life in *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā* is insightful:

In conformity with this law (*nāmūs*) it happened on another occasion, at the time of the siege, that he sent his wife and two daughters to Girdkuh and wrote to the *ra'īs* Muzaffar: 'Since these women work the spindle on behalf of our *da'wa* (summon), give them their needs as wages therefore.' And from that time onwards their governors (*muhtasham*), so long as they held that office, would have no women with them... In their castles, there was a great famine and the people lived on grass; and it was for this reason that they sent their wives and children elsewhere and he too sent his wife and daughters to Girdkuh.¹⁹

The account suggests that women and children resided inside the castles at least in the early years of the Alamut period, when the Seljuq forces frequently attacked the Isma'ili regions. However, the larger castles such as Girdkuh in Qumis (Fig. 6-1), Lambsar in Alamut (Fig. 6-2), and Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask in Quhistan, which had access to enough resources to form self-sufficient dwellings, had women and children residents during the entire Alamut period.

¹⁸ On the Isma'ili coinage during the Alamut period see Hamdan and Vardanyan, "Ismaili Coins," 288-307.

¹⁹ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 680; see also Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 210-12.

The contemporary historical evidence suggests that in addition to the garrisons and lay people, the major Ismaʿili castles were also residences for the gentry; although not in a sense that some of the medieval castles were in Europe or the Greater Syria.²⁰ The Ismaʿili leaders and their family, the governors of the regions including Quhistan, and the commanders of the castles were all living inside the castles. The major castles were also the places where official state meetings happened. For example, al-Nasawi (d. c. 1250), the envoy of Sultan Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah met with the Ismaʿili imam, ʿAlaʿ al-Din Muhammad III, and his vizier ʿImad al-Din Muhtasham, “on the top of a lofty mountain” (probably Maymun-Dizh).²¹ In Quhistan, Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi met the governor of the region, Muhtasham Shihab, in the castle of Girdkuh some years before embracing the Ismaʿili faith.²² Around the same time, Minhaj-i Siraj, as the envoy of the local governors of Hirat and Ghur, met with Muhtasham Shihab in the castles of Javashir; and later with Muhtasham Shams al-Din (Shihab’s successor) probably in Qalʿih-Kuh of Qaʿin.²³

It must be always borne in mind that the Ismaʿilis were more a religious community rather than a military organization. The castles were, therefore, potentially the Ismaʿilis’ centers of educational and intellectual activities apart from their military and defensive functions. In

²⁰ This contrasts with Kleiss’s observation claiming that the Ismaʿili castles were “purely military installations with barracks for the garrisons.” See Kleiss, “Castles.”

²¹ See al-Nasawi, *Sīrat-i Jalal al-Din*, 185.

²² The Persian text reads as *maḥrūsa-yi muʿazzama-yi [Gird]kuh ḥamāh Allah Taʿālā* (the great castle of [Gird]kuh, may God almighty protect it). Tusi, *Contemplation and Action*, 31 and 6 (the Persian pagination). This castle was possibly not the famous Girdkuh castle in the vicinity of Damghan in Qumis region. Zamani suggested that what is mentioned in the historical sources as Girdkuh of Khurasan is possibly the castle that is located close to Mazar village some 6 km to the southwest of Bijistan. See Zamani, “Qalʿih Dukhtar-i Mazar,” 262. See also Tabandih, *Tārīkh va Juḡhrāfiyā-yi Gunabad*, 196.

²³ Juzjani, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Vol.2, 182-4.

some cases, the governors of the regions and commanders of the castles were themselves respected scholars and enjoyed the company of other scholars, poets or chroniclers. The most known of these scholars are Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and Hasan Mahmud-i Katib who produced some of their works during their residence in the Isma'ili castles, both in Quhistan and Alamut.²⁴ Therefore, it is likely that there were spaces related to the Isma'ili intellectual activities in some of the major castles. In the Alamut castle, for example, was a library that is briefly described by the Persian historian, Juvayni as follows:

Alamut is a mountain which resembles a kneeling camel with its neck resting on the ground. Now when I was at the foot of Lammasar, being desirous of inspecting the library, the fame of which had spread throughout the world, I suggested to the King (i.e., Hülegü) that the valuable books in Alamut ought not to be destroyed. He approved my words and gave the necessary orders; and I went to examine the library, from which I extracted whatever I found in the way of copies of the Koran and [other] choice book after the manner of '*He brought forth the living from the dead.*' I likewise picked out the astronomical instruments such as *kursīs*,²⁵ armillary spheres, complete and partial astrolabes, and others that were there...²⁶

Unfortunately, Juvayni do not give us any details about the architectural attributes of the library space in the Alamut castle. It was possibly a regular chamber in the castle for keeping books and scientific instruments, with no specific and recognizable architectural feature. In any case, the account above suggests that the intellectual activities were considered

²⁴ On the life and works of Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, see Tusi, *Contemplation and Action*, 1-19. On Hasan Mahmud-i Katib, see Hasan Mahmud-i Katib, *Divān-i Qā'imīyāt*, 10-12; and Hasan Mahmud Katib. *Spiritual Resurrection*, 2-3.

²⁵ *kursī* (throne) is the top part of an astrolabe. It was often decorated and was used for orienting and suspending the instrument. Here Juvayni is referring to the entire circular bottom part of the astrolabe which is attached to the throne.

²⁶ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 719. The transliterations of the non-English terms are copied from the original source. For the Persian text, see Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 269-70.

an important aspect of life inside the Alamut castle and perhaps major castles in other regions, including Quhistan.

Power and Religious symbolism in the Ismaʿili castles

An important non-military aspect of the castles during the medieval period is their symbolic significance in the medieval society. Recent studies reveal that in many cases throughout the medieval world, power or religious symbolism played a crucial role in the establishment and design of the castles. The historical evidence suggests that various forms of power and religious symbolism, to some extent, are reflected in the practice of castle building by the Ismaʿilis during the Alamut period. However, because of the close connection of the politics and religion in the Ismaʿili community of that period, it is difficult to draw a clear border between the power and religious symbolism in the Ismaʿili castles.

Juvayni mentions the maintenance of the castles as one of the Hasan's most important injunctions to his followers, quoting probably the lost Ismaʿili work on Hasan-i Sabbah's biography, *Sargudhasht-i Sayyidinā*.²⁷ Such a recommendation by Hasan as the deputy (*hujja*) of the Ismaʿili imam, lends support to the notion that the castles had a symbolic value in addition to their militaristic values in the Ismaʿili strategy. This is particularly evident in the Ismaʿili tradition of using honorific titles for referring to some these castles. The tradition probably began by giving the Alamut castle the title of *baladat al-Iqbāl* (the town of good fortune) during

²⁷ Juvayni mentioned Hasan's advice in his account of the surrender of Rukn al-Din Khurshah to Hülegü. Juvayni's words reads as follow: "...and convert the injunction of Hasan-i Sabbah: 'It is obligatory for you to [maintain] the castles (*'alaykum bil-qilā'*)' into It is obligatory for you to get parted from them." Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 124-5. For Boyle's translation see, Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 628-9.

the rule of Hasan-i Sabbah.²⁸ The title was given to the castle in the early years of the Alamut period, during the siege of the Alamut castle by a certain Seljuq *amīr*, Yurun Tash (see Chapter 1). Since the castle lacked sufficient provisions, its occupants were reduced to a state of great distress. They decided to leave the castle and hand it over to only a few men. However, Hasan claimed that he has received a message from the Ismaʿili imam, Mustansir (r. 1036-94), asking them to stay in the castle because good fortune awaited them there. The Ismaʿilis, therefore, resisted and called the castle *baladat al-Iqbāl* from then on.²⁹

Similar titles were given to other Ismaʿili castles, built or restored in the early phases of the Alamut period. The most famous one of these castles is Maymun-Dizh (auspicious castle), the seat of the last lord of Alamut, Rukn al-Din Khurshah, before being captured by Hülegü. In some cases, the new titles given to the castles after the Ismaʿilis seized and restored them. For example, the Ismaʿilis renamed the castles of Qalaj-Kuh and Mar-kuh to Saʿadat-Kuh (mountain of felicity) and Mubarak-kuh (blessed mountain) respectively.³⁰ These cases suggest that for the Ismaʿilis the castles were more than mere military structures or the places of refuge that could protect them against their enemies. They also viewed the castles as symbols of Ismaʿili power and signs of the realization of divine promise and a promising future for the Ismaʿili religion.

²⁸ It appears that in this context the term *baladat* should not be perceived literally. *Baladat* (town), *Shahr* (city, Persian), *Madīna* (city, Arabic), or similar terms could have meanings referring to a location in general or sometimes the entire situation where something is happening.

²⁹ Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 199-200; Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 674. See also Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 318. The use of honorific titles for the castles is somehow similar to the practice of giving honorific titles to the cities or palaces built by the Islamic rulers. Baghdad, for example, was known as *Madīnat al-Salām* or *Ḥiṣn al-Qādisiyya* (the Fortress of Qādisiyya), built by the Abbasid Caliph, Harun al-Rashid (r. 786-809) was also known as, *Mubārak al-Qādisiyya*. See Wheatley, *The Places Where Men Pray*, 491.

³⁰ Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyyān*, 137 and 145.

During the Alamut period, the symbolic dimensions of the Ismaʿili castles became more prominent in a few of the castles, particularly the Alamut castle, because of their close association with the Ismaʿili leaders. The contemporary Ismaʿili scribe, Hasan Mahmud-i Katib, mentions Alamut castle in *Dīvān-i Qāʿimīyāt* as the blessed seat of the imam, by using honorific titles like *ʿalā shahr-i mawlānā* (our lord’s supreme city), *dār ul-salām-i mawlānā* (our lord’s abode of peace), *dār ul-qarār-i mawlānā* (our lord’s abode of constancy), and *dār ul-baqāy-i mawlānā* (our lord’s abode of everlasting existence).³¹

The symbolic character of the Alamut castle is clearly reflected in its architectural remains, uncovered during the recent archaeological excavations. Perhaps the most important space of the castle within the scope of our discussion is a roughly cruciform hall (*chahār ṣuffih*), located in the upper part of the castle (Figs. 6-3 and 6-4).³² The hall is about 5 m by 7 m at the center. The arms of the cross are different on each side, about 1 m to the south, 3.5 m to the east, 2.5 m to west, and 2.5 m to the north. The hall was probably covered by a brick dome that is demolished now. Unfortunately, in common with the other parts of the castle, this space is severely destroyed because of the systematic destruction by the Mongols as well as the later phases of demolition and construction in the castle. However, the large amount of the brickwork and glazed-tile fragments suggests that the hall was originally a lavishly decorated space.³³

³¹ Hasan Mahmud-i Katib, *Dīvān-i Qāʿimīyāt*, 47, 53, 60, 64, 70, 219.

³² The cruciform hall (*chahār ṣuffih*) is not a specificity of Ismaʿili design. The design is commonly used in different parts of Iran during the history. Comparative spaces could be seen the diwan of the citadel of Cairo, and the castle of Saladin in Sahyun. Both of these palaces have cruciform audience halls with four *iwans* (monumental niches). In both cases, the halls were not military, but residential and ceremonial. See Grandin, “Introduction to the Citadel of Salah al-Din,” 139-80; Rabbat, *The Citadel of Cairo*.

³³ A comprehensive report of all the excavation seasons at Alamut castle are available in the archives of Alamut Cultural Heritage Office and has been consulted by the present author. The findings of these excavations and the

The hall is roughly oriented towards the *qibla*, the direction of the Muslim prayer. However, the absence of a *mihrab* (prayer niche) indicates that the building could not have functioned as a mosque. Nevertheless, the extent of decoration in this hall suggests that this space would have had symbolic or religious significance in the castle, and certainly did not serve any military or defensive purposes. The fourteenth-century historian and geographer, Hamdallah Mustawfi, provides a brief account of the architectural features of the Alamut castle in his verse chronicle *Zafarnāmiḥ* (the Book of Victory). In addition to the defensive features of the castle, Mustawfi gives a description of a space inside the castle, called *mawḷā-sarā* (the lord's court).

Mustawfi was an official of the Mongols court, compiling his book in about eighty years after the end of the Alamut period. Therefore, his writings should be read with an awareness of his potential biases in the representation of the Isma'īlis and possible errors in his description of the castle.³⁴ Mustawfi was born and lived most of his life in the city of Qazvin, to the south of the Alamut region. He must have been, therefore, quite familiar with the history and geography of the region. There is no evidence indicating that the description of the Alamut castle is based on Mustawfi's own observations. It is, however, likely that he relied on first-hand oral sources in his account on the architecture of the castle and the following description of *mawḷā-sarā*.

...There was a pavilion in that place; which was loftier than the dome of sun and moon.

It had a forty by forty courtyard (*ṣaḥn* and *sarāy*); [there were] about ten to twelve smaller courtyards (*sarāchih*) beside it.

hall in the Alamut castle are discussed briefly in Choubak, "Alamut Castle," 15-19, and Choubak, "al-Mulk Allāh," 267-73. See also Choubak, "Alamut, Bakhsh-i Duvvum," 123-5.

³⁴ On the life and works of Mustawfi, see Melville, "Ḥamd-Allāh Mustawfi," 631-4.

There were four vaulted spaces (*chahār ṣuffih*) in it;³⁵ it was better than the paradise and heaven.
 The caliph sent countless bricks from Baghdad to that place.
 It was all decorated in the style of Baghdad brickworks.
 All the faces of brick were painted by the pen nib of the painter.
 Its ceiling was all decorated with *muqarnas*; All sorts of endeavor were made to [make] it.
 The painter has drawn beautiful images on it[s walls]; it has been decorated like the garden in the spring.
 The wise master built a pleasant portal up to the moon for that place.
 No one has seen such a great portal; No one has access to something like that.
 [There was] a space close to the great portal; that was the sitting place of the grandees.
 The wicked heretic (*mulhid*) called that pavilion *mawlā-sarā*...³⁶

Mustawfi's description of *mawlā-sarā* corresponds clearly to the architectural remains of the cruciform hall in the upper part of the Alamut castle. There are, undoubtedly, some elements of exaggeration and error in the details given by Mustawfi. The symbolic or religious importance of *mawlā-sarā* might have been because of its function as the place of meeting with the Isma'ili imams. *Mawlā* is the title that was commonly used by the Isma'ilis in reference to their imams during the Alamut period, and it is still used by the Isma'ilis for their present imam.³⁷

The other interesting point about the hall is the considerable space devoted to its huge and richly decorated portal. The portal can be interpreted in relation to a famous saying (*ḥadīth*) by the Prophet often reported by the Shi'i Muslims: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate." It is likely that the *mawlā-sarā*'s portal was understood as a reference to the Shi'i concept of Imam 'Ali to be a gate to knowledge as well as the symbolic representation of the

³⁵ *Chahār-ṣuffih* or *chahār-iwān*, is a common cruciform plan in the history of Persian architecture, comprising of a central space surrounded with four semi-open vaulted spaces known as *iwān* or *ṣuffih*.

³⁶ Mustawfi, *Zafarnāmiḥ*, 1187.

³⁷ The religious title of the present Nizari Isma'ili leader is Mawlana Hazar Imam.

Ismaʿili imams as a gate, mediating between earthly and heavenly realms, or, outside and inside of the *mawlā-sarā*. Unfortunately, no inscription has remained from the building to indicate whether the builders of the hall actually intended to convey this meaning by building a great portal for *mawlā-sarā*. However, it is known that building monumental portals, as an architectural expression of divinely status of the imams or Shiʿi rulers, was a common practice supported by Shiʿi patrons across the Islamic world. From the Fatimid period, for example, we see the presence of this kind of monumental portals in the Great Mosque of Mahdiya (Tunisia, built in 916) and al-Aqmar Mosque (Cairo, built in 1125).³⁸ These portals also appear later during the Safavids (1501-1722) in several places such as, the tomb of Harun-i Vilayat in Isfahan, and the lofty portals (ʿĀlī Qāpū) in the *maydāns* of Qazvin and Isfahan.³⁹

Alamut castle is a good example showing how a structure with highly defensive significance in the beginning of the Alamut period, can obtain a symbolic character during the course of time. Alamut castle was possibly not an isolated case during the Alamut period. In the account of Hülegü's campaign against the Ismaʿilis, Juvayni mentions that on one occasion Rukn al-Din Khurshah dispatched a certain prudent vizier, Kiyqubad, along with other emissaries to negotiate the terms of Rukn al-Din's surrender. Kiyqubad undertook

... to demolish their castles and dwelling-places (*ribāʿ*); and asked that Rukn al-Din might be exempted from coming out for the space of one year and the castles of Alamut, Lam[b]sar, and Lal, which were their ancient home (*khānih qadīm*), might be saved from destruction. Rukn al-Din would surrender the other castles and would carry out any order that was issued.⁴⁰

³⁸ On monumental portals of the Fatimid mosques see Bloom, "The Mosque of al-Ḥākim," 24-8.

³⁹ On these buildings see Hillenbrand, *Studies in Medieval Islamic Architecture*, 471-4; and Babaie, "Building on the Past," 27-47.

⁴⁰ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 619. For the Persian text, see Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol.3, 108.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the account above is Rukn al-Din's request to exempt the three castles of Alamut, Lambsar, and Lal from destruction because of being *khānih qadīm*. This was not, undoubtedly, because these castles were old or ancient. The term *khānih qadīm* is a literary combination referring to the significance of these castles because of their association with Rukn al-Din's ancestors. Therefore, it could be suggested that regardless of their military importance, these castles had some kind of dynastic value for the Isma'ilis. Mu'minabad castle in the Quhistan region probably possessed similar symbolic dimensions during the Alamut period. The castle possibly owed its symbolic significance, in the main, to the public announcement ceremony of the proclamation of the *qiyāma*, held at the foot of the castle in 1164 (see Chapter 1). There was possibly a ceremonial hall in Mu'minabad, similar to the *mawlā-sarā* in Alamut castle, as suggested by several broken pieces of decorative bricks found in the castle. However, making any conclusion and studying the architectural details of the hall requires systematic archaeological excavation in the eastern part of the castle (see chapter 4).

Network of the castles and the control of resources in Quhistan

Controlling the trade routes and traffic in any given context was a potential role of many of the medieval castles in various parts of the world. The available evidence suggests that the same role was played by several Isma'ili castles, particularly in Quhistan (the routes and resources in Quhistan discussed in chapter 3). The only textual evidence in support of this function of the Isma'ili castles is found in Juvayni's *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā* in reference to the castle of Girdkuh in the Qumis region. Girdkuh were located close to a major trade route that connected Khurasan

to Rayy. After mentioning the Ismaʿili threat to assassinate Sultan Sanjar and the subsequent truce between the Sultan and Hasan-i Sabbah (discussed above), Juvayni writes:

... Sultan [Sanjar] took fright and from then on inclined towards peace with them (i.e., the Ismaʿilis) ... He allowed them a pension (*idrār*) of 3,000 *dīnārs* from the taxes on the lands belonging to them in the region of Qumish (or Qumis) and allowed them to levy a small toll on travelers passing beneath Girdkuh, a custom which has survived to this day.⁴¹

There is no explicit reference in the historical sources to the control of the routes and collection of tolls in the case of the Ismaʿili castles in the Quhistan region. Nevertheless, some of the events mentioned in the available sources suggest that the Ismaʿilis were aware of the strategic importance of controlling the roads, and proximity to the main trade routes was an influential factor in the location of the castles.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the first offensive activity of the Ismaʿilis in the Quhistan region was an attack to a caravan that was going from Kirman to Qaʿin.⁴² Similar attacks to other caravans are attributed to the Ismaʿilis in Quhistan and other regions. Ibn al-Athir mentions an attack by the Ismaʿilis on a group of hajj caravans that were traveling from Transoxiana, Khurasan, India and all halted in Khwar, a city to the east of Rayy, in 1104.⁴³ A rather similar event in Quhistan is an attack to a caravan of Turkmen near Tabas-i Gulshan (also called Tabas-i Gilaki) in December 1160. The Turkmen were from Fars and were returning home after selling their sheep in Nishabur. According to Ibn al-Athir, the Ismaʿilis descended from

⁴¹ Juvayni, and Boyle, *Genghis Khan*, 682; Juvayni, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, Vol. 3, 214. See also Rashid al-Din, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Ismāʿīliyān*, 122; Kashani, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 159.

⁴² Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.23, 288.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 366. Ibn al-Athir also mentions another attack to a hajj caravan near Bastam in 1155. See Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, Vol.27, 16-7.

their castles, killed most of the Turkmen and took their belongings before returning to their castles.⁴⁴

It seems that by the first half of the thirteenth century, the Isma'ilis achieved absolute control over the trade routes passing through the Quhistan region. This is evident in Minhaj-i Siraj's account of his visits of the region, as the envoy of the local rulers of eastern provinces, between 1224 and 1226. According to Minhaj-i Siraj, the main reason for two of his visits was "to negotiate for the opening of the caravan routes" (discussed in chapter 1).

The sporadic historical evidence of the control of trade by the Isma'ilis in the Quhistan region during the Alamut period could be supported by the examination of the relationship between the trade routes and the distribution of the castles in the region. The distribution map of the fortifications, overlaid with the map of the main routes in the Quhistan region, confirms that several castles are located near these routes and have a clear view of the traffic passing through them (Fig. 6-5).

One of the earliest fortifications that the Isma'ilis acquired in Quhistan region was a castle located close to Duruh in the extreme southeast of the region (see Chapter 1). Soon after the castle of Duruh, the Isma'ilis captured the castles of Kafaran and Musalmanan in the east of Tabas-i Masina. Both Duruh and Tabas-i Masina are located on the way of a major caravan route from Kirman and Sistan to Nishabur and Herat. Various factors were undoubtedly taken into consideration by Husayn-i Qa'ini and his followers before capturing and rebuilding the three castles. One of these factors was possibly the advantage of dominating the caravan routes that passed Duruh and Tabas-i Masina.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 122-3.

Similarly, being in the proximity of the caravan routes was influential in the location of several other castles that were captured or erected by the Isma'ilis in Quhistan, later during the Alamut period. In the extreme north of the region, Atashgah Castle and Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Drunih are located close to the routes that entered the region from the north and northwest and led to Turshiz. Some 100 km to the south, are Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab, Qal'ih Shihab, and Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Mazar that could control the routes from Turshiz and Zavih to Gunabad and Bijistan. The road from Gunabad to Tun and to Qa'in were guarded by Furud Castle and Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Khug respectively.

The other routes that entered the region from the east and northeast and led to Qa'in, were controlled by Qal'ih-Kuh of Abiz, Qal'ih-Kuh of Isfadan, Qal'ih-Kuh of Zardan, and eventually Qal'ih-Dukhtar and Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. Any other entrance to the region from the east was controlled by the Hasanbaykhan Castle, Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Chilunak, Ahangaran Castle, Patang Castle, and Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Gavij.

Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in also overlooked the road that connected Qa'in to Birjand (some 100 km to the south). In the southern end, this road and the west-east road that connected Birjand to Khusf (to the west) and Nihbandan (to the southeast) were controlled by the castle of Darrih. The west-east road was overlooked also by Qal'ih-Rustam and Qal'ih-Kuh Mud. To the north and northwest of Birjand, the castle of Shushud, Qal'ih-Kuh of Chadih, Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan and Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun controlled the road from Birjand and Qa'in to Tun.

In the west of the region, there was the castle of Kharv that overlooked all the routes that led to Tabas-i Gulshan and continued to the other destinations in the region. In the south, the road from Nih to Birjand controlled by the castle of Shahanshah (Shah-Dizh) and the castle

of Sarbishih. Other castles such as Qal'ih-Duktar of Nasrabad, and Qal'ih-Dukhtar and Pesar of Rubiyat were closed to Dasht-i Mazhan, and dominated the northwest-southeast route that connected Nih to Khusf and Khur.

Therefore, as discussed above, one of the primary functions of the network of the castles in Quhistan was the control of the trade routes and traffic passing throughout the region. However, not all the castles necessarily served this function. Several other castles not mentioned above are located at a considerable distance from the main caravan routes. Qal'ih Qala' of Ark, Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Bidisk, castle of Shakhin, Qal'ih-Kuh of Afin, castle of Nughab Anik, Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Jaznan, and Khund Castle are some notable examples. These examples suggest that beyond the control of the main routes, the Isma'ili castles were distributed in Quhistan to also control the other kinds of resources in the region.

Quhistan is a dry region with very limited resources for the development of towns and villages. As discussed in chapter 3, access to water was of special importance for the expansion of settlements. Almost all the larger towns in Quhistan are located in the proximity of complex networks of *qanat*. Most of the major castles in the region, in turn, were positioned in the vicinity of the large towns. Nevertheless, the major castles and the towns were not close enough to have the kind of upper citadel-lower town relationship that is commonly seen in the Muslim and the Crusader castles in the Near East (the distances mentioned in the discussion of the case studies in chapter 4).⁴⁵

⁴⁵ See for example the case of Shyzar discussed in Tonghini, "The Case of Shyzar: Castle or Fortified Town?," 207-20.

Other than towns, many small villages developed in the places where water and other resources were accessible. These places were not necessarily close to the main roads in the region. Nevertheless, we are still witnessing the presence of the castles in those places. It seems that clusters of small villages in different parts of Quhistan, each formed small administrative units that were under the control of the castles near them. The population inside the castle were possibly fed by the agricultural production in the nearby villages. For example, Qal'ih Qala' of Ark could control a small fertile valley in which several little villages are located. Qal'ih-Kuh Afin was located in a district (*vilāyat*) called Zirkuh that according to Mustawfi consisted of three villages (*qaṣaba*). Grains, cotton, and silk were the main products of the district. Similarly, castle of Nughab Anik and Shakhin lay in the district of Shakhin that, as mentioned by Mustawfi, was formed of "a number of small villages and the district (*bulūk*) of Fasharud as well as some other places."⁴⁶

The Isma'ilis active engagement in the exploitation of the resources in Quhistan is also evident in the (re)building of Qal'ih Zari some 100 km to the south of Khusf. The castle is located in a remote area just next to the desert that lies in the south and southwest of Quhistan. As mentioned in the discussion of Qal'ih Zari in chapter 4, about 3.5 km to the south of the castle, are the remains of a copper mine that was possibly in use during the Alamut period.⁴⁷ Adjacent to the castle are the remains of smelting furnaces as well as a large amount of slag heaps. The archaeological evidence suggests that the castle was occupied during the

⁴⁶ Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 208.

⁴⁷ There is no systematic archaeological study about this mine. The dating of the mine is based on the surface pottery shards on the site. Brief information about the mine is available in Minakan Co., *Qaleh Zari Copper- Gold deposit*, 3; Hallier, "Qual'eh Zari, Ein Prä-Islamisches Fort," 189-96; Khanykov, *Mémoire sur la partie méridionale*, 184; Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia*, 412-3.

Alamut period. In comparison to the other castles in the region, Qal'ih Zari is much smaller, and lacks any considerable defensive qualities. Therefore, it is possible that more than being a functional defensive structure, the castle was a symbolic building displaying the control of the Isma'ilis over that area.

The term control used above in its broadest sense. Unfortunately, there is no available textual or archaeological evidence to date, to show the exact relationship between the castles and villages or towns and how the castles helped the Isma'ilis in the administration of their territories in Quhistan and of other Isma'ili regions. As discussed in the first chapter, from the beginning, the Isma'ili movement was against the *iqṭā'* system that was in place under the Seljuqs.⁴⁸ Thus, it is highly likely that the Isma'ilis abandoned that system and introduced a new administrative system of their own. Was this new system still a taxed based system with the direct involvement of the state in the expansion of agricultural infrastructures? Or was it a communally based system of administration with a strong involvement of rural community on a local scale in a process of self-protection and exploitation of the resources? The latter is seen, for example, in al-Andalus during the Nasrid dynasty (1230-1492) and in the fortifications developed in that region.⁴⁹ In case of the Isma'ili castles, it is impossible to answer these questions with presently available historical and archaeological data. Nevertheless, as suggested by the distribution pattern of the castle discussed above, it is highly likely that there was a strong relationship between the castles and management of the resources in Quhistan.

⁴⁸ See Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, 317; Bertels, *Nasir-i Hosrov i Ismailizm*, 21-54. See also Durand-Guedy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers*, 117-22.

⁴⁹ For the relationship between the state and royal communities in Al-Andalus, see the essays in Fábregas and Sabaté, *Power and Rural Communities in al-Andalus*.

Concluding notes

The unbalanced focus of the available primary sources on the events of attack to the Ismaʿili regions by their better-known enemies, the Seljuqs, Khwarazmids, Ghurids, and the Mongols, superficially highlighted the defensive importance of the castles during the Alamut period. However, a detailed study of the historical and archaeological data suggests that although defense was an essential function of the Ismaʿili castles, these castles were not significant merely because of their defensive qualities. At least in the early phases of the Alamut period, the role of the castles as means of territorial expansion was considered as essential as defensive function of the castles. This is particularly important for understanding the relationship between the castles and the landscape of the Ismaʿili regions.

Considering the offensive role of the castles as means of gradual territorial expansion, one can reject the frequently repeated idea in the modern scholarship that the Ismaʿili castles were part of an integrated defensive scheme to create a fortified linear boundary that protected the Ismaʿili regions from invasion.⁵⁰ As discussed in this chapter, in several cases the castles, built in the borders of the Ismaʿili regions, were, in fact, components of a step-by-step expansionist strategy rather than an integrated defensive scheme.

In addition to their military functions, the Ismaʿili castles had other non-military significance during the Alamut period. Therefore, a complete understanding of the castles would not be possible without considering their non-military aspects. There is no doubt that

⁵⁰ This is mentioned in Willey, *Eagle's Nest*, 89 and 95; Kleiss, "Assassin Castles in Iran," 316; Choubak, "Alamut, Bakhsh-i Duvvum," 120-5.

the non-military aspects of the castles were not equally important in all of the Ismaʿili structures throughout their regions. However, the major castles in different regions were possibly used in a similar manner during the Alamut period. Adopting a balanced approach that takes into account both the defensive and possible non-defensive aspects of the Ismaʿili castles helps us to have a more nuanced understanding of the architecture of the castles as well as the Ismaʿili social and political life during the Alamut period. The various non-defensive roles of the castles are not only the indicators of the complex interrelation between the castles and their surrounding landscape, but also reflect the complex nature of the Ismaʿili presence in their territories.

The analysis of the distribution of the castles in Quhistan suggests that controlling the resources of Quhistan was one of the primary roles of the network of the castles in the region. The Ismaʿilis were, therefore, actively engaged in the management of the available resources in their environment and consciously used their castles as means of territorial control. As discussed in chapter 1, in the last phase of the Alamut period the Ismaʿilis moved their headquarters in Quhistan from Muʿminabad castle to the northern part of the region, most probably to the castle of Sartakht (perhaps Kuh-Qalʿih of Tun) near the city of Tun. It is possible also that for short periods of time the headquarters of the region was one of the castles near Qaʿin (possibly Qalʿih-Kuh) or Gunabad (possibly Javashir). There is no doubt that from a defensive point of view, Muʿminabad castle was more strategically located in comparison to any of the other three castles mentioned above. It was located on the top an isolated mountain in a remote valley, far away from the enemies of the Ismaʿilis to the north, and surrounded by several other inter-visible strong castles. Therefore, the Ismaʿilis of Quhistan did not relocate

their headquarters only for defensive motives. Most of the resources as well as the major towns were on the northern part of the region. Thus, the change of their headquarters would provide them with a better position for the exploitation and management of the resources of the Quhistan region.

Conclusion

The 166 years of the Alamut period were quite eventful. The Isma'ilis experienced dramatic changes both internally and in their external milieu during that period. Internally, they began their activities as a religion-based revolutionary movement against the Seljuq administration. The movement was seen in connection to the Fatimid state in Egypt. However, it took less than five years for the Hasan-i Sabbah and his followers to cut off their relationship with the leadership of the Fatimid state and support the newly emerged Nizari branch of Isma'ilism. Operating independently, Hasan-i Sabbah and his two successors, Kiya Buzurg-Ummid and Muhammad I, successfully stabilized the Isma'ili power in different regions of Iran and in the region of Jabal al-Bahra in Syria.

The reign of Muhammad I's successor, Hasan II, began with a truly unique event in the history of Muslim communities, the proclamation of the *qiyāma*. Hasan II was introduced as the long awaited Isma'ili imam. The Isma'ilis now were living in a period of manifestation (*dawr-i kashf*) in which the imam was present and had the absolute religious and political power as the head of the community. This phase of the Isma'ili history was known as the period of resurrection. This phase, however, lasted less than fifty years. Immediately after his accession to power, Hasan II's grandson, Jalal al-Din Hasan III, announced his adherence to the Sunni form of the Islamic Shari'a and came into friendly terms with the other Muslim rulers. This bold announcement by Hasan III was explained later as a re-imposition of *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation of true religious beliefs), a religious policy that adopted by the imam to guarantee the wellness of the community. This policy was changed again later during the reign of Hasan III's son, Muhammad III, and the former norms of the *qiyāma* period were revived.

As discussed in chapter one, the Alamut period witnessed also drastic changes in the political milieu outside the Ismaʿili regions. In the early years of the period, the Seljuq Sultan, Malikshah, died and his powerful vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, was assassinated by an Ismaʿili *fidāʿī*. It was the beginning of the deterioration of the Great Seljuq Empire and resulted to the elimination of the Seljuq power from Iran. Consequently, two other powerful dynasties, Khwarazmshahs and the Ghurids, emerged to the scene of power and dominated most of the Seljuq territory in Iran. Both dynasties were short-lived and were affected by the Mongol invasions to various parts of Iran in the first half of the thirteenth century. The final major event of the Alamut period was Hülegü's campaign to the west that put an end to the Ismaʿili power in Iran.

The Ismaʿilis' perception of their presence in Iran was certainly affected by the internal and external changes mentioned above. Immediately after cutting off their relationship with the Fatimids, the Nizari Ismaʿilis of Iran began to see themselves in the form of an independent state. A state that was ruled by the deputy of imam (*ḥujja*) during the absence of the imam or as it was known the "period of concealment" (*dawr-i satr*). The proclamation of the *qiyāma* and Hasan II's self-proclamation to be the awaited imam had an immense impact on this image of the Ismaʿili state as perceived by the Ismaʿili community. Now the Ismaʿilis had all the structures that were recognized at the time as the conditions of statehood.

The Ismaʿilis even tried to represent themselves as a Shiʿi alternative for the caliphate in Baghdad. This is evident in the account of the ceremony of the proclamation of the *qiyāma* in the available primary sources. The ceremony happened around an important centerpiece, a pulpit (*minbar*) that was carefully set for that occasion. As discussed in chapter two, the *minbar*

was considered a symbol of spiritual, political, and caliphal authority in the Islamic societies. The *minbar* was also the traditional location where the oath of allegiance (*bay'a*) to a new caliph was sworn. It is, thus, likely that the ceremony of the proclamation of the *qiyāma* was not merely an occasion for announcing the shift in the Nizari Isma'ili ideology. It had certain political implication and was designed to officially announce the emergence of a Nizari Isma'ili version of a caliphate rival to that of Baghdad.

The recognition of the Isma'ili polity as an independent state by the Sunni world, however, happened in the last phase of the Alamut period. Two events were particularly influential in that. The first was the death of Sanjar and the fall of the unified Seljuq state which provided the context for the creation of new and smaller territorial powers that would potentially accept the territorial independence of the Isma'ilis. The second and the most important event was Jalal al-Din Hasan III's reforms that led to a peaceful relationship between the Isma'ilis and the Sunni rulers. Hasan III was successful in attaining the confirmation and support of the Abbasid caliph, al-Nasir, in particular. The caliph's approval had, undoubtedly, a major impact on the recognition of the Isma'ili state as such by the other Sunni rulers.

Generally, as suggested by the historical evidence, although in the early years of their movement in Iran the Isma'ili leaders were mainly preoccupied with surviving the attacks from the Seljuqs, the stabilization of their state and management of their territories was their primary concern for the rest of the Alamut period. This is also supported by the study of the Isma'ili castles in the present research.

The castles are today the only known Isma'ili sites from the Alamut period. As discussed in chapter 5, the examination of the surface ceramics in the castles confirms the occupation of

the castles during the Alamut period. Although the exact dating of most the castles is not still feasible. The surface ceramics do not provide us with any clear information about the possible date of the construction of the castles and whether they were initially built by the Isma'ilis or were pre-Alamut period castles that were captured and restored by the Isma'ilis. This difficulty of dating is mainly because, as suggested by the surface evidence, the Isma'ilis followed the local traditions of pottery making and did not create a distinguishable Isma'ili design or pottery making technique.

The study of the limited standing structures in the castles, discussed in chapter 4, do not help in the dating of the castles any more than the surface ceramics do. The castles all show broadly comparable material, design, and construction techniques following the local tradition of construction with brick and undressed stone that is seen in various buildings throughout Quhistan during the Islamic period. Only in the case of Mu'minabad castle are the remains of decorative brickwork that are comparable to the brickworks in the buildings from eleventh to thirteenth century in Iran. In other words, no sign of an "Isma'ili" building type is found in the castles. Therefore, the attribution of the remaining structures in the castles to the Alamut period is essentially based on the existing surface ceramic and primary textual sources.

The existing "defensive architectural elements" in the Isma'ili castles still remain an important source of information about the nature of Isma'ili activities and the roles of the castles in the Isma'ili state during the Alamut period. As discussed in chapter 5, in comparison with the almost contemporary Crusader or the European castles, there is no sign of development in the design of the "defensive elements" of Isma'ili castles in Quhistan during the course of Alamut period. This could be on the one hand because the Isma'ilis were not exposed

to the new siege methods encountered during the Crusader phase in Greater Syria. On the other, this lack of change in the design of the “defensive elements,” could be a sign of less defensive role of the castles particularly in the last two phases of the Alamut period.

Architecturally, castles are defensive structures in nature. Nevertheless, they played several other non-defensive roles in different medieval states. This is also true in the case of the Nizari Isma‘ili state in Iran. It is hard simply to believe that the castles had merely a defensive function during the 166 years of the Alamut period. The changes in the Isma‘ili religious policies as well the political changes outside the Isma‘ili territory were definitely influential on the roles that different castles would play in the course of that period.

There is no doubt that the defensive aspects of the castles were more dominant in the early years of the Nizari movement. Under the leadership of Hasan-i Sabbah the Isma‘ili *da‘wa* was manifested more publicly. Hasan was aware of the hostile environment and used the defensive quality of the castles in remote regions for protecting his followers. However, it did not take long for the Isma‘ilis to recognize the potential use of the network of castles as means of territorial expansion. Therefore, some of the castles, built in the borders of the Isma‘ili regions, were in fact offensive structures in a step-by-step expansionist strategy rather than being a link in a chain of defensive structures to create a linear border around the Isma‘ili regions.

The use of the castles as offensive structures was not limited to the Isma‘ili castles and is seen in other medieval contexts. The Normans in Europe and the Crusaders in the Levant used the castles in a similar fashion in the early years of the expansion of their power. In addition, there are several castles in these two contexts that were not built to serve any military

function. The recent scholarship on the European and the Crusader castles suggest that in most cases the castles should be considered as a part of local community and in connection to a feudal lifestyle. Although ease of defense was a significant factor in the location of the castles, when local conditions permitted, the other considerations such as the social and geographical conditions, the available natural resources, and the aspirations as well as financial abilities of the individual lords were more influential in the location of the castles.¹

In common with other pre-modern settings, the role of the castles in the Nizari Isma'ili state was not limited to military activities. As discussed above a detailed analysis of the historical and archaeological data sheds lights on some of the non-military aspects of the castles. Therefore, not all the structures inside the castles were built to serve a defensive need. There is historical evidence suggesting that some of the major castles were used as permanent dwellings for the Isma'ili elites, the governors of the regions and the commanders of the castles.

The highest sections of most of the castles studied in the present research are small fortified structures that were possibly the headquarters of the castles and where the commanders of the castles resided. In some cases, the rooms in these sections are organized around a courtyard which gives them a more domestic and private character (for example, (Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, Hasan-Abad castle, Shah-Dizh). These sections have often access to small cisterns that are located inside their circuit walls. Remains of decorative

¹ On the Norman castles, see Pounds, *The Medieval Castle*, 54-71; Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes*, 35-50; Theotokis, "The Norman Invasion of Sicily," 395-6. On the Crusader castles, see Abate, "Military Strategy," 169-71. Morton, *The Crusader States*, 20-40; Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*, 105-10.

bricks in Mu'minabad and the castle of Darrih suggest that in some cases were better decorated spaces in the highest sections of the castles.

According to the primary historical accounts, some of the Isma'ili governors and commanders were themselves respected scholars and were patrons of other scholars, poets or chroniclers. Therefore, as discussed in chapter 6, the castles could potentially function as the Isma'ili centers of educational and intellectual activities. Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and Hasan Mahmud-i Katib are two known figures that produced some of their works while residing in the Isma'ili castles in Quhistan and Alamut. It is likely that the spaces that were allocated to these activities did not have any specific architectural features that make them distinguishable from other regular chambers in the castles.

A crucial dimension of the Isma'ili castles, which is often ignored in the existing scholarship, is their role as symbols of Isma'ili power and religion. As discussed in the last chapter, the available primary sources contain sporadic information that points to this aspect of the castles. Particularly, the Isma'ili tradition of using honorific titles for referring to their castles suggests that beyond their military functions the castles were viewed as symbols of Isma'ili power and signs of the realization of divine promise and a promising future for the Isma'ili community. Some of these titles are *baladat al-Iqbāl* (the town of good fortune), Maymun-Dizh (auspicious castle), Sa'adat-Kuh (mountain of felicity), and Mubarak-kuh (blessed mountain). These symbolic dimensions became prominent in a few of major castles, particularly in Alamut castle and Mu'minabad because of their close association with the Isma'ili leaders. Both castles witnessed the public announcement ceremony of the proclamation of the *qiyāma* in 1164.

There is no doubt that the non-military roles of the castles varied depending on their size and location, as well as the political situation through the Alamut period. These non-defensive roles were more dominant in the major castles in comparison to the smaller castles such as Qal'ih Qala' of Ark, Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan, and Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab. Furthermore, the castles that were located in the borders of the Isma'ili territory had a more military role because they were closer to the territories of the enemies of the Isma'ilis. Nevertheless, the non-military roles of the castles, even if they were limited only to the major castles, are indicators of the complex nature of the Isma'ili social and political life in their territories during that period.

This brings to the fore the question about the nature of the Nizari Isma'ili presence in Iran during the Alamut period and the extent to which the statehood of the Isma'ili polity is supported by the archaeological and architectural evidence from that period. As discussed in chapter 2, a state as we understand it today consists of five primary elements: community, governmental institutions (or an individual equivalent for that), system of law, independence, and territory. This means that a polity cannot be considered a state without engaging in the process of territorialization and exploitation of the resources in the environment under its control. This engagement is often manifested in the building projects or infrastructures developed in the territory of the states. The castles are the only known buildings that could be securely attributed to the Isma'ilis and, therefore, the only available archaeological and architectural evidence to examine whether the Isma'ilis were engaged in the exploitation of the resources in the Quhistan region.

As seen in the last section of chapter 6, examining the distribution of the Ismaʿili castles in the Quhistan region suggests that there was a strong relationship between the location of the castles and the environmental resources in the region. As the natives of Quhistan, the Ismaʿilis of Quhistan were definitely aware of the economic resources of the region in which they lived in. This is also true in the case of other Ismaʿili regions. One of the primary roles of the network of the castles in each region was, therefore, the control and exploitation of these resources. The Ismaʿilis were not merely a community of rebel castle-dwellers whose major concern was military activities. They engaged in the process of territorialization and exploitation of the resources in their environment during the Alamut period; and the castles were a part of this process. In other words, the castles could help the Ismaʿilis in the administration of their territories. This corresponds to the notion of a medieval state and supports the statehood of the Ismaʿili polity during the Alamut period.

The castles discussed in the present research are only a few number of many Ismaʿili castles restored or built by the Ismaʿilis during the Alamut period. There is no doubt that the study of more cases in Quhistan and other Ismaʿili regions would lead to a better understanding of the architectural characteristics of the Ismaʿili castles. Perhaps the first step, and the most feasible step, in the development of the present research is the study of a larger cluster of the castles in different regions.

The general lack of systematic archaeological excavations and more accurate chronological data in these castles, however, would be still a major challenge. Without this type of information any study of the Ismaʿili castles would be limited to stylistic comparisons of severely damaged architectural element of the castles. Archaeological excavations are generally

considered destructive interventions and should be avoided where possible. However, understanding the chronology of the phases of construction in most of the Ismaʿili castles would not be possible without excavation. Therefore, future systematic archaeological excavations in some of these castles would drastically increase our knowledge of the building techniques and phases of construction in the Ismaʿili castles. These excavations would also shed light on the various aspects of life inside the castles and the possible non-military roles that the castles might have played in the Ismaʿili state during the Alamut period. This in turn would contribute to a better understanding of the Ismaʿili history during the Alamut period that is currently heavily reliant on the historical data in the few available primary sources.

Bibliography

Primary sources

- Anonymous. *Tarīkh-i Sīstān* [The History of Sistan]. Edited by Malik ul-Shuara Bahar. Tehran: Padidih Khavar, 1988.
- Afzal al-Mulk, Ghulamhussayn Khan. *Safarnāmih Khurāsān va Kirmān* [Travelogue, Khurasn and Kirman]. Edited by Qudratullah Rushani. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Tus, no date.
- Biyhaqi, Abulhasan ‘Ali Ibn-i Zayd. *Tārīkh-i Biyhaq* [The History of Biyhaq]. Edited by Ahmad Bahmanyar. Chapkhanih Islamiyyah, no date.
- Bayhaqi, Abul-Fazl. *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* [Bayhaqī’s History]. 3 Volumes, 4th ed. Edited by Khalil Khatib Rahbar. Tehran: Mahtab, 1995.
- Darmiyani, Muhammad Rafi Ibn-i Abd al-Karim. *Dīvān-i Lāmi’* [Poems of Lāmi’]. Eited by Mahmud Rafi’i and Mazahir Musaffa, Tehran: Mahmud Rafi’i, 1985.
- Fakhr-i Mudabbir. *Ādāb-i al-Ḥarb va al-Shujā’a* [The Mores of War and Courage]. Edited by Ahmad Sohili-Khansari. Tehran: Iqbal Publication, 1967.
- Gabriel, Alfons. *Durch Persiens Wüsten* [Through Persia’s Deserts]. Translated to Persian by F. Najd-i Sami’i. Mashhad: Āstān-i Quds, 1992.
- Gardizi, Abu Sa’id ‘Abd-al-Hayy ibn Zahhak b. Mahmud. *Zayn al-Akhhār* [Ornament of Histories]. Edited by ‘Abdul-Hayy Habibi. Tehran: Dunya-yi Kitab, 1984.
- Hafiz Abru. *Jughrāfiyā-yi Ḥāfiz Abru, Qismat-i Rub’-i Khurāsān, Herat* [Hafiz Abru’s Geography, Khurasan Section, Hirat]. Edited by Mayil Heravi. Tehran: Intisharat-i Buntad-i Farhang-i Iran, 1971.
- al-Hamawi, Yaqut ibn ‘Abd Allah. *Mu’jam al-Buldān* [Dictionary of Countries]. 7 Volumes. Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1995.
- Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib, e.d. S. J. Badakhchani. *Spiritual Resurrection in Shi’i Islam: an Early Ismaili Treatise on the Doctrine of Qiyāmat: a New Persian Edition and English Translation of the Haft bāb by Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib*. London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2017.
- Hasan-i Mahmud-i Katib. *Dīvān-i Qā’imiyāt* [Poems of the Resurrection]. Edited by S. J. Badakhchani. Tehran: Markaz-i Pizhūhishī-i Mīrās-i Maktūb, 2011.
- Ibn al-Athir, ‘Izz al-Din. *al-Kāmil fi’l-Tarīkh* [The Complete History]. Translated to Persian by ‘Abbas Khalili and Abulqasim Halat. Tehran: Muassisi-yih Matbuat-i Ilmi, 1992.
- Ibn Hawqal. *Surat al-‘Ardh* [The Face of the Earth]. 2 Volumes. Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1938.
- Ibn Khurdabih, *Masālik wal-Mamālik* [The Roads and The Kingdom]. Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1889.
- I’tisam al-Mulk, Mirza Khanlarkhan. *Safarnāmih Mirza Khanlarkhan I’tisam al-Mulk* [Mirza Khanlarkhan I’tisam al-Mulk’s Travelouge]. Edited by Manuchihr Mahmudi. Tehran: 1973.
- Isfizari, Mu’in al-Din Muhammad Zamchi. *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt fī Awsāfi Madīna Herāt* [Meadows of Gardens in the Attributes of the City of Herat]. 2 Volumes, Edited by Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Imam. Tehran: Danishgah-i Tehran, 1960.

- Isidore of Charax, *Parthian Stations*, ed. Wilfred H. Schoff. Philadelphia: The Commercial Museum, 1914.
- al-Istakhri, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Farisi. *Masālik al-Mamālik* [Routes of the Realms]. Cairo: al-Hiyat al-Amma li-Qusur al-Thiqafa, no date.
- Jiyhani, Abu'l-Qasim ibn Ahmad, *Ashkāl al-Ālam* [The Shapes of the World]. Translated by 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Islam-i Katib. Edited by Firuz Mansuri. Mashhad: Astan-i Quds, 1989.
- Juvayni, 'Ala'-al-Din 'Ata-Malik. *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā* [The History of the World-Conqueror]. 3 Volumes, Edited by Mirza Muhammad Qazvini. Tehran: Dunya-yi Kitab, 2006.
- Juvayni, 'Ala'-al-Din 'Ata-Malik and Boyle, J. A. *Genghis Khan, The History of The World Conqueror*. UK: Manchester University Press, 1997.
- Juzjani, Minhaj-i Siraj. *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāširī, yā, Tārīkh-i Īrān va Islām* [Nasirid Generations, or, the History of Iran and Islam]. 2 Volumes, Edited by 'Abdul-Hayy Habibi. Tehran: Dunya-yi Kitab, 1984.
- Juzjani, Minhaj-i Siraj, and Raverty, H. G. (tr.). *Ṭabakāt-i Nāširī: A General History of the Muhammadan Dynasties of Asia*. 2 Volumes. London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1881.
- Kashani, Jamal al-Din Abu'l-Qasim 'Abd Allah b. 'Ali. *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh: Bakhsh-i Fātimīyān va Nizāriyān*. 2nd ed. Edited by Muhammad Taqi Danishpazhuh. Tehran: Muasisiy-i Matbuat va Tahqiqat-i Farhangi, 1987.
- Khanykov, Nikolai V. *Mémoire sur la partie méridionale de l'Asie centrale* [Memories of the Southern Part of Central Asia], translated to Persian by Aqdas Yaghmayi and Abulqasim Bigunah. Mashhad: Astan-i Quds, 1997.
- Malik Shah Husayn ibn Malik Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad. *Iḥyā' al-Mulūk* [The Revival of the Kings]. 2nd ed. Edited by Manuchihr Sutudih. Tehran: Intisharat-i Ilmi va Farhangi, 2004.
- Marashi, Zahir al-Din, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān va Rūyān va Māzandarān* [The History of Tabaristan and Ruyan and Mazandaran]. Edited by M. Husayn Tasbihi. Tehran: Muasisiy-i Matbuati-yi Sharq, 1966.
- Minorsky, Vladimir (tr.). *Hudūd al-Ālam, the Regions of the World, a Persian Geography, 372 A.H.-982 A.D.* London: Luzac, 1937.
- al-Muqaddasi. *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm* [The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions]. Cairo: Madbuli, 1990.
- al-Muqaddasi and Basil A. Collins (tr.). *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm* [The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions]. UK: The Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilizations and Garnet Publishing Limited, 1994.
- Muqatil ibn 'Atiyyah and Taher Al-Shemaly (tr.). *Mu'tamar 'Ulamā' Baghdād* [The Conference of Baghdad's Ulema]. Kuwait, 2007. Available at <https://cupdf.com/document/baghdad-ulema-conference.html>, accessed May 8, 2022.
- Mustawfi, Hamdallah. *Zafarnāmih* [The Book of Victory]. Introduction by Nasrullah Purjavadi, and Nusratullah Rastgar. Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Danishgahi-yi Iran, 1999.
- Mustawfi, Hamdallah. *Nuzhat al-Qulūb* [Pleasure of the Hearts]. Edited by Sayyid Muhammad Dabirsiyaqi. Qazvin: Hadis-i Imruz, 2002.
- Na'ini, Mirza-'Ali-Khan, *Safarnāmih Ṣafā al-Saltāna Nā'inī* [Safa al-Saltana Na'ini's Travelogue], Edited by Muhammad Gulbun, Tehran: Intisharat-i Ittila'at, 1987.

- al-Nasawi, Shahab al-Din Muhammad. *Sīrat-i Jalāl al-Din Minkubirni* [The Life of Jalal al-Din Minkubirni], Anonymous Persian trans. 3rd ed. Edited by Mujtaba Minuvi. Tehran: Intisharat-i Elmi va Farhangj, 2005.
- Nasir-i Khusraw. *Safarnāmih* [Travelogue]. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zawar, 2001.
- Nizam al-Mulk, Abu 'Ali al-Hasan. *Siyār al-Mulūk* (or *Siyāsat-nāmih*) [Counsel for Kings (or the Book of Government)]. Edited by. H. Darke. Tehran: Bungah-i Tarjumih va Nashr-i Kitāb, 1969.
- Nizam al-Mulk, Abu 'Ali al-Hasan, and Darke. H. (tr.). *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, 2nd ed. London, Henley, Boston.
- al- Nu'man b. Muhammad, al-Qadi abu Hanifa, and Hamid Haji. *Founding the Fatimid State: the Rise of an Early Islamic Empire: an Annotated English Translation of al-Qādī al-Nu'mān's Iftitāḥ al-Da'wa*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2006.
- al- Nu'man b. Muhammad, al-Qadi abu Hanifa, *Ta'wīl al-Da'ā'im* [Esoteric Interpretation of the Pillars]. Edited by M.H. al Azami. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1967-72.
- Tusi, Nasir al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad, and Badakhchani, S. J. (tr.). *Paradise of Submission: A Medieval Treatise on Ismaili Thought*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005.
- Tusi, Nasir al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad, and Badakhchani, S. J. (tr.). *Contemplation and Action: The Spiritual Autobiography of A Muslim Scholar*. London: I.B. Taurus in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1998.
- Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah Hamidani. *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Ismā'īliyān* [Universal History, The History of]. Edited by Muhammad Rushan. Tehran: Miras-i Maktub, 2007.
- Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah Hamidani. *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* [Universal History]. 4 Volumes. Edited by Muhammad Rushan and Mustafa Musawi. Tehran: Alburz, 1984.
- Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah Hamidani. *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, Tārīkh-i Al-i Saljuq* [Universal History, The History of the Seljuq Dynasty]. Edited by Muhammad Rushan. Tehran: Miras-i Maktub, 2006.
- al- Rawandi, Muhammad b. 'Ali. *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr* [A Comfort for the Heart]. Edited by M. Iqbal and M. Minuvi. 2nd ed. Tehran: Amirkabir, 1985.
- Sutudih, Manuchihr (ed.). *Ḥudūd al-Ālam min al-Mashriq ilal-Maghrib* [The Boundaries of The World from The East to the West]. Tehran: Tahuri, 1983.
- Sykes, Percy M. *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia or Eight Years in Iran*. London: Murray, 1902.
- al-Tabari, Muhammad ibn Jarir. *Tārīkh al-Tabari* [al-Tabari's History]. 16 Volumes. 5th ed. Translated to Persian by Abul-Qasim Payandih. Tehran: Asatir, 1996.

Secondary sources

- Abate, Mark T. "Military Strategy: Did the Crusaders have a Coherent Military Strategy for Securing the Holy Land?" In *The Crusades, 1095-1291*, edited by Mark T. Schipper, 167-175. Vol. 10 of *History in Dispute*. Detroit, MI: St. James Press, 2003.

- Andrén, Anders. *Between Artifacts and Texts: Historical Archaeology in Global Perspective*, trans. A. Crozier. New York: Plenum, 1998.
- Anwar, Sherif and Jere L. Bacharach. "Shi'ism and the Early Dinars of the Fātimid Imam-Caliph Al-Mu'izz Li-Dīn Allāh (341-365/952-975): An Analytic Overview." *Al-Masaq* 22, no. 3 (2010): 259-278.
- Archer, Steven N., and Kevin M. Bartoy. *Between Dirt and Discussion, Methods, Methodology, and Interpretation in Historical Archaeology*. New York: Springer, 2006.
- Akhavi, Shahrough. "Dawlah." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*. Oxford Islamic Studies Online, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0183> (accessed Dec. 30, 2021).
- Album, Stephen. *Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 3rd edition. California: Stephen Album Rare Coins, 2011.
- Album, Stephen, Michael L. Bates, and Willem Floor. "Coins and Coinage." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. VI, Fasc. 1 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1992): 14-41, available online at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/coins-and-coinage->, accessed Dec. 26, 2021.
- Azarpay, Guitty. "BRICK." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. IV, Fasc. 4-5 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1990): 447-9, available online at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/brick-blocks-of-tempered-mud>, accessed February 31, 2022.
- Babaie, Sussan. "Building on the Past: the Shaping of Safavid Architecture, 1501-76." In *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran, 1501-1576*, edited by Jon Thompson and Sheila R. Canby, 27-48. Milan: Skira, 2003.
- Bacharach, Jere L. "Material Evidence and Narrative Sources: Teaching and Studying Numismatic Evidence." In *Material Evidence and Narrative Sources: Interdisciplinary Studies of the History of the Muslim Middle East*, edited by Daniella J. Talmon-Heller, and Katia Cytryn-Silverman, 17-29. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014.
- Bacharach, Jere L. "Signs of Sovereignty: The Shahāda, Qur'anic Verses, and the Coinage of 'Abd Al-Malik." *Muqarnas* 27, no. 1 (2010): 1-30.
- Basan, O.A. *The Great Seljuqs: A History*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Bertels, A. E. *Nasir-i Hosrov i Ismailizm* [Nasir Khusraw and Isma'ilis]. Translated to Persian by Yahya Aryanpur, Tehran: Bunyad-i Farhang-i Iran, 1967.
- Bianca, Stefano (ed.). *Syria, Medieval Citadels Between East and West*. Italy: Umberto Allemandi & C for Agha Khan Trust for Culture, 2007.
- Bloom, Jonathan. "The Mosque of al-Ḥākīm in Cairo." *Muqarnas*, Vol. 1 (1983): 15-36
- Bowen, H., and Bosworth, C.E. "Nizām Al-Mulk." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, P.J. Bearman (Volumes X, XI, XII), Th. Bianquis (Volumes X, XI, XII), et al. Accessed May 12, 2022. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5942.
- Bosworth, C. Edmund. "MENHĀJ-e SERĀJ." *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Online edition (2010) available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/menhaj-seraj>, accessed March 20, 2021.
- Bosworth, C. Edmund. "Khwarazmshahs i. Descendants of the Line of Anuštigin." *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Online edition (2009) available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/khwarazmshahs-i>, accessed June 19, 2020.

- Bosworth, C. Edmund. "TEKIŠ B. IL ARSLĀN." *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Online edition (2009) available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tekis-b-il-arslan>, accessed March 20, 2021.
- Bosworth, C. Edmund. "JALĀL-AL-DIN K̄VĀRAZMŠĀH (I) MENGÜBIRNI." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. XIV, Fasc. 4 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 2003): 404-5, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jalal-al-din-kvarazmsahi-mengbirni>, accessed March 20, 2021.
- Bosworth, C. Edmund. "Ĥamza b. Ādrak," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 6 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 2003): 648, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hamza-b-adarak>, accessed July 2, 2019.
- Bosworth, C. Edmund. "The Ismaʿilis of Quhistan and the Maliks of Nimruz or Sistan." In *Mediaeval Ismaʿili History and Thought*, edited by Farhad Daftary, 221-9. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Bosworth, C. E. "The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000–1217)." In *Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 5*, edited by J. A. Boyle, 1-202. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008 (online ed.). <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1017/CHOL9780521069366>.
- Boyce, M., M. L. Chaumont, and C. Bier, "ANĀHĪD." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. I, Fasc. 9 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1989): 1003-1011, available online at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/anahid>, accessed January 5, 2022.
- Brett, Michael. *The Fatimid Empire*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.
- Brett, Michael. *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Broome, Michael. *A Handbook of Islamic Coins*. London: Seaby, 1985.
- Choubak, Hamideh. "al-Mulk Allāh (Takhtgāh-i Alamūt) [al-Mulk Allāh (The Throne of Alamut)]." In *Mafākhir-i Mirāth-i Farhangī-yi Iran: Jashnvārih Dr. Sadiq Malik Shahmirzadi* [Iran's Cultural Heritage Honorables: Festschrift for Dr. Sadiq Malik Shahmirzadi], edited by Murtiza Hisari, 262-74. Tehran: Pazhuhishgah-i Sazman-i Mirath-i Farhangi, 2015.
- Choubak, Hamideh. "Alamut Castle (Eagle's Nest): Hassan Sabbah Stronghold." *Intl. J. Humanities* 16, no. 2 (2009): 1-29.
- Choubak, Hamideh "Alamut, Bakhsh-i Duvvum [Alamut- Part II]." *Mirās-i Millī*, no.3 (2009): 120-125.
- Clarke, D.L. *Spatial Archaeology*. London: Academic press INC., 1977.
- Colomer, Josep M. "Empires versus States." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. 28 Jun. 2017; Accessed 26 Dec. 2021. <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-608>.
- Coulson, Charles. *Castles in Medieval Society: Fortresses in England, France, and Ireland in the Central Middle Ages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Creighton, O.H. *Castles and Landscapes*. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Creswell K. A. C. *Fortification in Islam Before 1250 A.D.* London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press. 1955.
- Crone, Patricia. *God's Rule: Government and Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Curatola, Giovanni. *Persian Ceramics: From the 9th to the 14th Century*. Milan: Skira, 2006.

- Daftary, Farhad. *Ismaili History and Intellectual Traditions*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Daftary, Farhad. "The Study of the Ismailis: Phases and Issues." In *The Study of Shi'i Islam*, edited by Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda, 47-66. London, NY: I.B. Tauris Publishers in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2014.
- Daftary, Farhad. *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community*. London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011.
- Daftary, Farhad. *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Daftary, Farhad. *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005.
- Daftary, Farhad. "FEDĀ'Ī." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. IX, Fasc. 5 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1999): 468-70, available online at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/fedai->, accessed April 6, 2019.
- Daftary, Farhad. *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Isma'ilis*. London: Tauris, 1995.
- Daftary, Farhad. "Dawr." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. VII, Fasc. 2 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1994): 151-3, available online at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/dawr-1>, accessed July 3, 2019.
- Daftary, Farhad. "Anjoman-e Esmā'īlī," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. II, Fasc. 1 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1985): 84, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/anjoman-e-esmaili-ismaili-society-a-research-institution-founded-on-16-february-1946-in-bombay-india-under-the-patronage-of-the-third-aqa-khan-q>, accessed Sep. 17, 2020.
- Dana, Muhsin, 'Alireza Nasrabadi, and Hadi Sharifan. "Qal'ih-yi Nihbandān: Shavāhidī az Dawri-yi Ashkānī dar Sharq-i Iran [Castle of Nihbandan: Evidence from the Parthian Period in the East of Iran]." *Muṭāliāt-i Bāstānshināsī*. no. 1 (2016): 37-56.
- David, Bruno, and Julian Thomas. "Landscape Archaeology: Introduction," In *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology*, edited by Bruno David and Julian Thomas, 27-43. Walnut Creek: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.
- Deyell, John S. *Living without Silver: The Monetary History of Early Medieval North India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Durand-Guedy, David. *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Isfahan in the Saljuq Period*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2020.
- Durand-Guédy, David. "The Ismailis of Isfahan. A reassessment." In *Science in the City of Fortune: The Dustūr al-munajjimīn and its World*, edited by Eva Orthmann and Petra G. Schmidl, 223-61. Berlin: EB-Verlag Dr. Brandt, 2017.
- Edwards, Robert W. *The Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1987.
- Eger, A. Asa. *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier: Interaction and Exchange among Muslim and Christian Communities*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2015.
- Ehrlich, Michael. "Crusaders' Castles-the Fourth Generation: Reflections on Frankish Castle-Building Policy During the 13th Century." *Journal of Medieval History* 29 (2003): 85-93.
- Elahahizadeh, Muhammadhasan, and Muhammadriza Sadesi. "Ravābiṭ-i Siyāsī-Madhhabī Nizāriyān-i Qal'ih-yi Shahanshāh va Malik-i Nīmrūz (610-650 A.H.) [Political-Religious Relations Between the Nizaris of the castle of Shahanshah and the Maliks of Nimruz (610-650 A.H.).]" *Tarikh va Farhang*, No. 90 (2013): 10-87.

- Ellenblum, Ronnie. *Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*. Cambridge, GBR: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Ellenblum, Ronnie. *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Elisséeff, N., and P. A. Andrews. "Manzil." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. First published online: 2012, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0672>Consulted online on Jan.1, 2022.
- Fábregas, Adela, and Flocel Sabaté. *Power and Rural Communities in al-Andalus: Ideological and Material Representations*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2015.
- Farjami, Muhammad, et al. "Gūnih Shinasī-yi Sufālḥā-yi Naqsh-Afzūdiḥ-yi Qal'ih-Kūh-i Qa'in [Typology of Potteries with Applied Decoration from Qal'ih-Kūh of Qa'in]." *Hunarha-yi Ziba-Hunarha-yi Tajassumi*, 24, 4 (2021): 89-100.
- Farjami, Muhammad, and A. A. Mahmudinasab. "Barrisī va Tahlīl-i Yāftihā-yi Bāstānshināsī-yi Fasli-i Chahārum-i Kāvush-i Muhavvaṭi-yi Kahnīk, Shahrīstān-i Sarbīshīh [Analyzing the Finding of Season Four of the Archaeological Excavations at Kahnīk Site, Sarbīshīh County]." *Mutaliat-i Bastānshīnāsī*, 4, 14 (2020): 101-23.
- Farjami, Muhammad. *Barrisī-yi Bāstānshīnāsī-yi Shahrīstān-i Sarbīshīh* [The Archaeological Survey of Sarbīshīh County]. Birjand: Chahar Derakht, 2017.
- Farjami, Muhammad. "Mu'arrifi-yi Chand Qal'ih-yi Ismā'ilīyyih dar Shahrīstān-i Darmiyān (Qilā'i Kal-i Hasan-i Sabbah, Musalmānān va Kāfarān-i Gurask), Markaz-i Ismā'ilīyyih dar Quhīstān [Introducing Some of the Ismaili Castles in Darmiyān County (Castles of Kal-i Hasan-i Sabbah, Musalmanan and Kafaran of Gurask), the Isma'ili Center in Quhīstān]. In *Arjnamih-yi Dr. Mahmud Rafi'i* [Festschrift for Dr. Mahmud Rafi'i], edited by Muhammad Husayn Qurayshi, et al., 305-27. Birjand: Rizqi, 2016.
- Farjami, Muhammad, Hadi Chamanara. "Barrisī-yi Gūnihā-yi Sufāl-i Duri-yi Saljūqī, Nimūni Murīdī: Qal'ih-Kūh-i Husayn-i Qa'ini [Studying the Seljuqs' Potteries, Case Study: Qal'ih-Kuh of Husayn of Qa'in]." *Proceeding of Islamic Art Conference in Birjand* (2011), Unpublished.
- Farjami, Muhammad. "Qal'ih-Kuh-i Qa'in [Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in]." *Farhang-i Khurasan-i Junubi* No.5 (2010): 97-124.
- Fehérvári, Géza. *Ceramics of the Islamic World: in the Tareq Rajab Museum*. London ;: I.B. Tauris, 2000.
- Fehérvári, Géza. *Islamic Pottery: A Comprehensive Study Based on the Barlow Collection*. London: Faber and Faber, 1973.
- Foote, Rebecca M. "commerce, Industrial Expansion, and Orthogonal Planning: Mutually Compatible Terms in Settlements of Bilad Al-Sham during the Umayyad Period." *Mediterranean Archaeology* 13, (2000): 25-38.
- Foss, Clive, and David Winfield. *Byzantine Fortifications: an Introduction*. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1986.
- France, John. "Fortifications East and West." In *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria*, edited by Hugh Kennedy, 281-94. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2006.
- Furqani, Muhamad-Faruq. *Tārīkh-i Ismā'īlīyān-i Quhīstān* [The History of Quhīstān's Isma'ilis]. Tehran: University of Tehran Publications, 2002.

- Gaimster, David, and Teresita Majewski. *International Handbook of Historical Archaeology*. London: Springer, 2009.
- Galdieri, Eugenio. *Işfahān: Masġid-i Ğuma. The Āl-i Būyid Period*. 1973.
- Gaube, Heinz. "A History of the Citadel of Aleppo," In *Syria, Medieval Citadels Between East and West*. Edited by Stefano Bianca, 73-102. Italy: Umberto Allemandi & C for Agha Khan Trust for Culture, 2007.
- Gnoli, Gherardo. "DAHAN-E ĞOLĀMĀN," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. VI, Fasc. 6, (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1993): 582-5, available online at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/dahan-e-golaman-or-according-to-walther-hinz-p>, accessed July 5, 2022.
- Golombek, Lisa., Robert B. Mason, and Gauvin A. Bailey. *Tamerlane's Tableware: a New Approach to the Chinoiserie Ceramics of Fifteenth-and Sixteenth-Century Iran*. Costa Mesa, Calif., U.S.A: Mazda Publishers in association with Royal Ontario Museum, 1996.
- Gonnella, Julia. "Introduction to the Citadel of Aleppo." In *Syria, Medieval Citadels Between East and West*. Edited by Stefano Bianca, 103-38. Italy: Umberto Allemandi & C for Agha Khan Trust for Culture, 2007.
- Grabar, Oleg. "Introduction." In *Centuries of Gold: The Coinage of Medieval Islam*, 6. London: Zamana Gallery, 1986.
- Grandin, Thierry. "Introduction to the Citadel of Salah al-Din." In *Syria, Medieval Citadels Between East and West*. Edited by Stefano Bianca, 139-80. Italy: Umberto Allemandi & C for Agha Khan Trust for Culture, 2007.
- Gravett, Christopher. *The History of Castles: Fortifications around the World*. Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2001.
- Grube, Ernst J. "CERAMICS xiv. The Islamic Period, 11th-15th centuries," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. V, Fasc. 3, (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1985): 311-27, available online at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/ceramics-xiv>, accessed May 24, 2022.
- Haddon, Rosalind A. Wade. "Ismaili Pottery from the Alamut Period," In *Eagle's Nest: Isma'ili Castles in Iran and Syria*, Peter Willey, 277-87. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.
- Hallier, Ulrich W. "Qual'eh Zari, Ein Prä-Islamisches Fort in Ostpersien." In *Archaeologische Mitteilungen Aus Iran* 6. 189-96. Berlin: Verlag Von Dietrich Peimer, 1973.
- Halm, Heinz. *The Fatimids and Their Traditions of Learning*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Isma'ili Studies, 1997.
- Hamdan, Hussein, and Aram Vardanyan. "Ismaili Coins from the Alamut Period," In *Eagle's Nest: Isma'ili Castles in Iran and Syria*, Peter Willey, 288-307. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.
- Hammer-Purgstall, Joseph Von. *The History of the Assassins*. Translated by O. C. Wood. London: Smith and Elder, 1835.
- Hasan, Haytham. "Introduction to the Citadel of Masyaf." In *Syria, Medieval Citadels Between East and West*. Edited by Stefano Bianca, 181-216. Italy: Umberto Allemandi & C for Agha Khan Trust for Culture, 2007.
- Hashemi, Hasan, 'Ali Zareie, Taiebe Beige Harchegani, and Mohammad Farjami. "Archaeological Investigation of Metal Smelting In Eastern Iran, Case Study: Mesgaran Area, One of the Most Ancient Metal Smelting Plants in South Khorasan," *Int. J. Rev. Life. Sci*, no.5 (2015): 1092-1104.
- Hashemi, Hasan, and Abed Taqavi. "Pazhūhishhā-yi Bāstānshinasī-yi Ma'ādin-i Kuhan dar Khurasan-i Junūbī, Muṭālī'i-yi Muridī-yi Nawyāftihā-yi Marākiz-i Kuhan-i Zub-i Filiz-i

- Shusef Nihbandan [Archaeological Investigation of Ancient Mines in South Khurasan, Case Study: New Discoveries in Ancient Smelting Sites of Shusef Nehbandan].” *Mutaliat-i Farhangi Ijtemai-i Khurasan*, no.25 (2012): 145-170.
- Hillenbrand, Carole. “The Power Struggle Between the Saljuqs and the Ismailis of Alamut, 487-518/1094-1124: The Saljuq Perspective.” In *Mediaeval Ismaili History and Thought*, edited by Farhad Daftary, 205-219. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Hillenbrand, Carole. “1092: A Murderous Year.” *The Arabist, Budapest Studies in Arabic*, 15–16 (1995), 281–296.
- Hillenbrand, Robert. *Studies in Medieval Islamic Architecture*. Vol. 2. London: Pindar, 2006.
- Hinz, W. “Farsakh.” In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. First published online: 2012. Consulted online on November 05 2021 <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_2299>
- Hodder, Ian. “Spatial Studies in Archaeology.” *Progress in Human Geography* 1, no. 1 (1977): 33-64.
- Hodgson, Marshall G. S. *The Secret Order of Assassins*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press (originally published in 1955 under title: The order of assassins based on the author's thesis in University of Chicago), 2005.
- Huff, Dietrich. “QAL‘A-YE DOḲṬAR,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2006. Available online at <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/qala-ye-doktar>, accessed Dec. 17, 2022.
- Iqbal, Abbas. *Vizārat dar ‘Ahd-i Salātīn-i Buzurg-i Saljūqī* [Ministry in the Time of the Great Seljuq Sultans]. Tehran: University of Tehran, 1960.
- Ivanow, Wladimir. *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliographical Survey*. 2nd ed. Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1963.
- Ivanow, Wladimir. *Alamut and Lamasar: Two Mediaeval Ismaili Strongholds in Iran, an archaeological study*. Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1960.
- Jackson, Peter. *The Mongols and the Islamic World: From Conquest to Conversion*. London, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.
- Jamal, Nadia Eboo. *Surviving the Mongols: Nizārī Qūhistānī and the Continuity of Ismaili Tradition in Persia*. London: I.B, 2002.
- Javan, Karim. “‘Ahd-i Sayyidnā: A New Treatise on the Consolidation of Nizārī Da‘wa in Alamūt.” In *The proceedings of the Symposium on Manuscript Collections Housed at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, Before the Printed Word: Texts, Scribes and Transmission*. Unpublished, 2017. A video recording of the proceedings is available online at <https://www.iis.ac.uk/events/printed-word-texts-scribes-and-transmission>, accessed March 23, 2021.
- Kabiri, Kambiz. “Ash‘ār-i Fārsī-yi Kāshihā-yi Qal‘ih-yi Alamut [The Persian Poems of the Alamut Castle’s Tiles].” *Archaeological Topics on Islamic Art, Culture, and Civilization* (Proceeding of a Symposium held in Tehran in 2013), unpublished.
- Kaufmann, J. E., and H. W. Kaufmann. *The Medieval Fortress: Castles, Forts, and Walled Cities of the Middle Ages*. Conshohocken, PA: Combined Pub, 2001.
- Kennedy, Hugh (ed.). *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: from the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Kennedy, Hugh. *Crusader Castles*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

- Kleiss, Wolfram. "Assassin Castles in Iran." In *The Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia (Proceeding of a Symposium held in Edinburgh in 1982)*. Edited by Robert Hillenbrand, 315-20. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1994.
- Kleiss, Wolfram. "Castles." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. V, Fasc. 1 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1990): 65-70, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/castles>, accessed January 11, 2018.
- Koochakzadeh, 'Alireza, Husayn Ahmadi, Muhsin Achachluyi. "Charm-sāzī-yi Aṣr-i Saljūqi dar Qūhistān-i Khurāsān (Shināsāyi-i Nu'ī-i Pūst va Āmil-i Dabbāghi-yi Āthār-i Charmī-yi Makshūfi az Muhavvati-ye Tārīkhī-yi Qal'ih Kūh-i Qa'in [Leather Making in Khurasan During the Seljuq Period]." *Khurasan-i Buzurg*, no.7 (2012): 53-65.
- Koochakzadeh, 'Alireza. "Barrisī-yi Taṭbīqī-yi Nuqūsh-i Charmhā-yi Qal'ih-Kūh-i Qa'in bā Naqsh-māyiha-yi Sāmānī, Saljūqī, Ilkhānī va Gilīmhā-yi Imrūzīn-i Qa'in [Comparative Study of the Motifs of the Leathers from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in]." *Mutaliat-i Farhangi Ijtemai-i Khurasan*, no.25 (2012): 77-110.
- Kosso, Peter. *Knowing the Past: Philosophical Issues of History and Archaeology*. Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2001.
- Kosso, Peter. "Epistemic Independence Between Textual and Material Evidence," In *Methods in the Mediterranean: Historical and Archaeological Views on Texts and Archaeology*, edited by David B. Small, 177-97. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995.
- Kramers, J.H. "Ḳūhistān (p.) or Ḳuhistān." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on December 20, 2019. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0537
- Labaf-Khaniki, Rajabali, Mahmud Bakhtiyari, and Bihzad Nimati. *Cārvānsarāhā-yi Khurāsān* [Khurasan's Caravanserais]. Tehran: Pazhuhishgah-i Miras-i Farhangi, 2013.
- Labaf-Khaniki, Rajabali. "Murūr-i Fa'āliyathā-yi Bāstānshinākhtī-yi Khurāsān az Aghāz tā Kunūn" [Reviewing the Archaeological Activities in Khurasan from Beginning to Present]. In *Majmū'ih Maqālāt-i 80 Sāl Bāstānshināsī-yi Iran* [Articles on 80 Years Archaeology of Iran], Vol. 1. 137- 58. edited by Yusuf Hasanzadīh and Sima Miri. Tehran: Nashr-i Parinih. 2012 (1391).
- Labaf-Khaniki, "Barrisī va Shināsāyi-i Qanavāt-i Gunābad [Survey of Qanāts of Gunabad]." *Guzarishha-yi Bastanshinakhti*, 1 (1997): 271-98.
- Labaf-Khaniki, Rajabali, and Rasoul Bashash. *Silsilih Maqālāt-i Pazhūhishī 1, Sang-Nigārih-yi Lakh Mazar-i Birjand* [Research Articles, The Archaeology of Ancient Inscriptions: Rock Carvings of Lakh-Mazar, Birjand]. Tehran: Cultural and Heritage Organization of Iran, 1994.
- Lakhani, M. Ali. *Faith and Ethics: the Vision of the Ismaili Imam*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, 2018.
- Lambton, Ann K. S. *State and Government in Medieval Islam: an Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: the Jurists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Le Strange, Guy. *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*. Cambridge: the University Press, 1905.
- Lewis, Bernard. *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*. New York: Basic Books, 1968.
- Lewis, Bernard. *The Origins of Ismā'īlism; A Study of the Historical Background of the Fāṭimid Caliphate*. Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1940.

- Liddiard, Robert. *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism and Landscape, 1066 to 1500*. Macclesfield: Windgather Press, 2005.
- Little, Barbara J. *Historical Archaeology: Why the Past Matters*. Walnut Creek, Calif: Left Coast Press, 2007.
- Madelung, Wilferd. *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*. Albany, NY: The Persian Heritage Foundation, 1988.
- Majidi, Enayat. *Maymūn-Dizh-i Alamut, Barrisī-yi Tārīkhī va Juqhrāfiyāyī* [Alamut's Maymun Dizh, Historical and Geographical Survey]. Tehran: Bunyād Muqfāt-i Doctor Iraj-i Afshar. 2006.
- Marume, S.B.M., R.R. Jubenkanda, C.W. Namusi, and N. C. Madziyire. "An Analysis of Essential Elements of the State." *International Journal of Engineering Science Invention* 5, no. 3 (2016): 24-8.
- Melville, Charles. "Ḥamd-Allāh Mustawfi," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 6 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 2003): 631-34, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hamd-allah-mostawfi>, accessed September 5, 2018.
- Memarian, Ghulamhusayn. *Niyārish-i Sāzihā-yi Tāqī dar Mimari Islami-yi Iran* [Building Vaulted Structures in the Iranian Islamic Architecture]. Tehran: Danishgah-i Elm va Sanat, 1989.
- Minakan Co. *Qaleh Zari Copper- Gold deposit*. 2011. Available online at <http://qalehzarimine.com/images/copper.pdf/qalehzariminakan.pdf>, accessed February 12, 2018.
- Mir-Kasimov, Orkhan. *Intellectual interactions in the Islamic world: the Ismaili thread*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2020.
- Mitha, Farouk. *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis: A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001.
- Milwright, Marcus. "Fortress, in the Middle East," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 3rd ed., Vol. 3 (2015): 134-9.
- Milwright, Marcus. *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.
- Milwright, Marcus. *The Fortress of the Raven: Karak in the Middle Islamic Period (1100 -1650)*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Moezi, Maryam "Qāsim-Shāhiyān dar Sh'ir-i Mahmud [Qasim-Shahi Community in Mahmoud's Poem]", *Mutali'at-i Tarikh-i Islam* [Studies of Islamic History], No. 26 (2015): 151-75.
- Mol, Eva. *Hidden complexities of the Frankish Castle: Social Aspects of Space in the Configurational Architecture of Frankish Castles in the Holy Land, 1099-1291*. Netherlands: Leiden University Press, 2012.
- Moreland, John. *Archaeology and Text*. London: Duckworth, 2001.
- Morton, Nicholas. *The Crusader States and their Neighbours: A Military History, 1099-1187*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Morton and Eden. *Important Coins of the Islamic World, To Be Sold by Auction at Sotheby's, Auction73, 23 April 2015*. Available online at <https://www.mortonandeden.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/73.pdf>, accessed May 16, 2021.
- Mostafa, Heba, "The Early Mosque Revisited." *Muqarnas*, Vol. 33 (2016): 1-16.
- Mudarrisi, Fatimih, and Siyfi, "Qal'ih-Dukhtar," *Mutaliat-i Irani*, 11, no. 21 (2012): 223-45.

- Mukhtarniya, Kazem. *Āb-i Baladīh-yi Tun (Firdaws)* [Āb-i Baladīh of Tun (Firdaws)]. Firdaws: Paygah-i Miras-i Jahani-yi Qanat-i Baladīh, 2016.
- Musavi, Hamid "Band-i Darrih." *Kitāb-i Pāzh* 4, no. 18 (1992): 8-9.
- Mustawfi, Ahmad. "Āthār-i Pīsh az Islām [Pre-Islamic Sites]." *Guzārīsh-hāyi Jughrāfiyā-yi* [The Geographical Reports]. no. 8 (1973) 61-78.
- Nasrabadi, 'Alireza. *Qal'ihā-yi Tārīkhī-yi Khurāsān-i Junūbī* [The Historical Castles in Southern Khurasan]. Tehran: Fikr-i Bīkr, 2012.
- Numista, "Coins from the Khwarezmian Empire," available online at https://en.numista.com/catalogue/khwarezmian_empire-1.html, accessed May 16, 2021.
- Orser, C.E., Jr. *Historical Archaeology*. 3rd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Orser, C.E., Jr., ed. *Encyclopedia of Historical Archaeology*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Owen Minasian, Caro. *Shāh Dizh-i Isfahan* [Shah Dizh of Isfahan], Edited by Hishmat Allah Intlkhabi, Isfahan: Naghsh-i Mana, 2008.
- Papuli Yazdi, Muhammad-Husain, et al. *Qanāt-i Qaṣabih Guābād, Yik Ustūrih* [Qanāt-i Qaṣabih of Gunabd, A Myth]. Mashhad: Intisharat-i Papuli, 2010.
- Papuli Yazdi, Muhammad-Husain. "Āsiyābha-yi ki bā Qanāt Kār Mīkunand [Windmills that Work with Qanāt]," *Justārha-yi Adabī*, no.68 (1986): 3-30.
- Pazuki Tarudi, Nasser. *Īstihkāmāt-i Difā'ī dar Iran-i Duriy-i Islāmī* [Defensive Fortifications of Iran in the Islamic Period]. Tehran: Cultural Heritage Organization, 1998.
- Peacock, A. C. S. *The Great Seljuk Empire*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2015.
- Pirniya, Muhammadkarim. *Gunbad dar Mi'mārī-yi Irān* [Dome in the Iranian Architecture], *Athar* 20. Tehran: Intisharat-i Miras-i Farhangi, 1990.
- Pirniya, Muhammadkarim. *Chafdhā va Taqḥā* [Archs and Vaults], *Athar* 24. Tehran: Intisharat-i Miras-i Farhangi, 1993.
- Pounds, Norman John Greville. *The Medieval Castle in England and Wales: a Social and Political History*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Pradines, Stéphane (éd.), *Ports & Fortifications in the Muslim World. Coastal Military Architecture from the Arab Conquest to the Ottoman Period*. Le Caire: Ifao, 2020.
- Pradines, Stéphane. "From the Ribats to the Fortresses, the Fāṭimid Period of Transition in Muslim Military Architecture." *Journal of Islamic Research*. 2020;31(3): 493-514.
- Pradines, Stéphane. "Identity and Architecture: The Fatimid Walls in Cairo." In *Earthen Architecture in Muslim Cultures*, edited by Stéphane Pradines, 104-45. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Pradines, Stéphane. "The Mamluk Fortifications of Egypt." *Mamluk Studies Review MSR* XIX (2016): 57-110.
- Pringle, Denys. *Churches, Castles and Landscape in the Frankish East*. Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate Variorum, 2013.
- Rabbat, Nasser. "The Militarization of Taste in Medieval Bilad al-Sham." In *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, edited by Hugh Kennedy, 84-105. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Rashidi-Nezhad, Masud, Maysam Zukfani, and Nargis Mustafazadih. "Mu'arrifi Sang-Nigārih-yi Jorbat, Shahrīstān-i Jajarm [Introducing Rock Carvings of Jorbat, Jajarm County]." *Pazhuhishha-yi Bastanshinasi-i Mudarris*. no.1 (2009): 166-74.

- Raphael, Kate. *Muslim Fortresses in the Levant: Between Crusaders and Mongols*. Vol. 23. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Sahner, Christian C. *Christian Martyrs Under Islam: Religious Violence and the Making of the Muslim World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Sanders, Paula. *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- Schacht, J. "An Unknown Type of Minbar and Its Historical Significance." *Ars orientalis* 2 (1957): 149–173.
- Shaki, Mansour. "Gabr." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. X, Fasc. 3 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 2000): 239-40, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gabr->, accessed July 20, 2021.
- Shaw, Brent D. "Bandit Highlands and Lowland Peace: The Mountains of Isauria-Cilicia." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 33, no. 3 (1990): 237-270.
- Sheykhali, Changiz. "Tawzihātī Darbārih-yi Shams-kilāyih [Some explanation about Shams-Kilayih]." In *The Castles of the Assassins*, Peter Willey, tr. to Persian by Ali Saki, 339-410. Tehran: Elmi Publication, 1996.
- SIXBID, AUCTION #37, LOT 816, Stephen Album Rare Coins, <https://www.sixbid.com/en/stephen-album-rare-coins/7370/islamic-atabegs-contemporaries/6025101/assassins-at-alamut-muhammad-iii>, accessed January 5, 2021.
- Soroush, Mohammad Reza, 'Alireza Nasrabadi, and Roqiyyih Zafaranlu. "Darāmadī bar Muṭālī'āt-i Bāstānshināsī-yi Qilā'i Ismā'ili-i Quhistan [A Prelude to the Archaeological Study of the Quhistan's Isma'ili Castles]." *Athar*, no.42 and 43 (2008):112-28.
- Spiteri, Stephen C. *Fortresses of the Knights*. Sliema [Malta]: Book Distr. Lmt, 2001.
- Stark, Freya. *The Valleys of the Assassins and other Persian Travels*, N.Y.: Dutton & Co, 1934.
- Stern, Samuel M. "The Early Ismā'īlī Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurāsān and Transoxania." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 23, 1 (1960): 56-90. doi:10.1017/S0041977X00148992
- Stern, Samuel M. *Studies in Early Ismā'īlism*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1983.
- Sultani, Sa'id. *Ṭarrāhī-i Hifāzat va Sāmāndihī-i Qal'ih-Kuh-i Qā'in* [The Conservation Planning of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in], Birjand: Intisharat-i Quhistan, 2011.
- Surtiji, Saman, *Qilā'-i Bāstānī-yi Māzandarān* [Ancient Castles of Mazandaran], Tehran: Sazman-i Miras-i Farhangi, 2002.
- Sutudih, Manuchihr, Muhammad Mihryar, and Ahmad Kabiri, *Dizh-i Ustunāwand* [Ustunawand Castle], Gilan: Jahangiri Cultural Institute. 1988.
- Sutudih, Manuchihr. *Qilā'-i Ismā'īlī-i dar Rishtih Kūh-hā-yi Alburz* [Isma'ili Castles in the Alburz Mountain Range]. Tehran: Gulshan, 1966.
- Tabandih, Sultan Husayn. *Tārīkh va Jughrāfiyā-yi Gunābād* [Gunabad's History and Geography]. Tehran: Haqiqat, 2nd ed. 2000.
- Tanavoli, Parviz. *Persian Flatweaves: A Survey of Flatwoven Floor Covers and Hangings and Royal Masnads*. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2002.
- Tetley, G.E. *The Ghaznavid and Seljuk Turks: Poetry as a Source for Iranian History*. Routledge, 2008. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.4324/9780203894095>.

- Theotokis, Georgios. "The Norman Invasion of Sicily, 1061-1072: Numbers and Military Tactics." *War in History*, 17, no. 4 (2010):381-402. doi:10.1177/0968344510376463
- Tonghini, Cristina. "The Case of Shyzar: Castle or Fortified Town?." In *Proceedings of the 6th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East 3*, ed. Paolo Matthiae, 207-220. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010.
- Treadwell, Luke. "Simjurids." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2006. Available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/simjurids>, accessed December 18, 2019.
- Vahdati, 'Aliakbar. "A Preliminary Report on a Newly Discovered Petroglyphic Complex near Jorbat, the Plain of Jajarm, Northeastern Iran." *Paléorient* 37 (2011): 177–87.
- Virani, Shafique N. *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Walker, Bethany J. *Jordan in the Late Middle Ages: Transformation of the Mamluk Frontier*. Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2011.
- Walker, Paul E. *Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary*. London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1996.
- Walker, Paul E. and Walker, Paul. "Succession to Rule in the Shiite Caliphate." *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 32, (1995): 239-264.
- Walker, Paul E. "ABŪ YA'QŪB SEJESTĀNĪ." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. I, Fasc. 4 (NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1983): 396-398, an updated version is available online at <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/abo-yqub-sejestani>, accessed on January 31, 2021.
- Wasserstein, David J. "Coins as Agents of Cultural Definition in Islam." *Poetics Today* 14, no. 2 (1993): 303-322.
- Watson, Oliver. *Ceramics from Islamic Lands*. New York, N.Y: Thames & Hudson in association with the al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait National Museum, 2004.
- Wheatley, Paul. *The Places Where Men Pray Together: Cities in Islamic Lands, Seventh Through the Tenth Centuries*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Wilkes, Tim. *Islamic Coins and Their Values Volume 1: The Mediaeval Period*. London: Spink, 2015.
- Wilkinson, T. J. (Tony J.). *Archaeological Landscapes of the Near East*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003.
- Willey, Peter. *The Castles of the Assassins*. London: G.G. Harrap, 1963.
- Willey, Peter. *Eagle's Nest: Isma'ili Castles in Iran and Syria*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.
- Yavari, Neguin. *The Future of Iran's Past: Nizam Al-Mulk Remembered*. London: Hurst & Company, 2018.
- Yücesoy, Hayrettin. "Justification of Political Authority in Medieval Sunni Thought." In *Islam, the State, and Political Authority*, edited by A. Afsaruddin, 9-33. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. https://doiorg.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1057/9781137002020_2
- Yovitchitch, Cyril. "The Tower of Aybak in Ajlun Castle: An Example of the Spread of An Architectural Concept in Early 13th-Century Ayyubid Fortification." In *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, edited by Hugh Kennedy, 225-42. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Zaidi, Sarover. "Religious Iconography in Islam: Some Motifs from the Shi'a context in India." *IIC Quarterly*, 43, no. 2 (2016): 84-97.

- Zamani, Abbas. "Siḥ Athar-i Tārīkhī dar Ziybud-i Gunābād [Three Historic Monuments in Ziybud of Gunabad]." *Barrisiha-yi Tarikhi* 7, no. 4 (1973) 45-66.
- Zamani, Abbas. "Qal'ih Dukhtar-i Mazār, Bijistān-i Gunābād [Qal'ih Dukhtar-i Mazar, Bijistan of Gunabad]." *Barrisiha-yi Tarikhi* 7, no. 6 (1973): 251-71.
- Zamani, Abbas. "Qal'ih-Dukhtar-i Shurab-i Gunabad. [Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab in Gunabad]." *Barrisiha-yi Tarikhi*, Special Issue (1971): 388-404.
- Zari'i, Ali, and Muhammadriza Surush. Pazhūhishha-yi Bāstānshinākhtī-yi Junūb-i Khurāsān. In *Majmū'ih Maqālāt-i 80 Sāl Bāstānshināsī-yi Iran* [Articles on 80 Years Archaeology of Iran], Vol. 1. 159-69. edited by Yusuf Hasanzadih and Sima Miri. Tehran: Nashr-i Parinih. 2012 (1391).

Figures



Figure I-1: The approximate location of the main Isma'ili regions in Iran and Syria (11th -13th Century). 1-Rudbar, 2- Alamut, 3- Taliqan, 4- Qumis, 5- Quhistan, 6- Arrajan, 7- Jabal al-Bahra. Credit: Google Earth, Google, Cnes/Spot2012 Data SIO, NOAA, U.S.Navy, NGA, GEBCO. Image U.S Geological Survey.

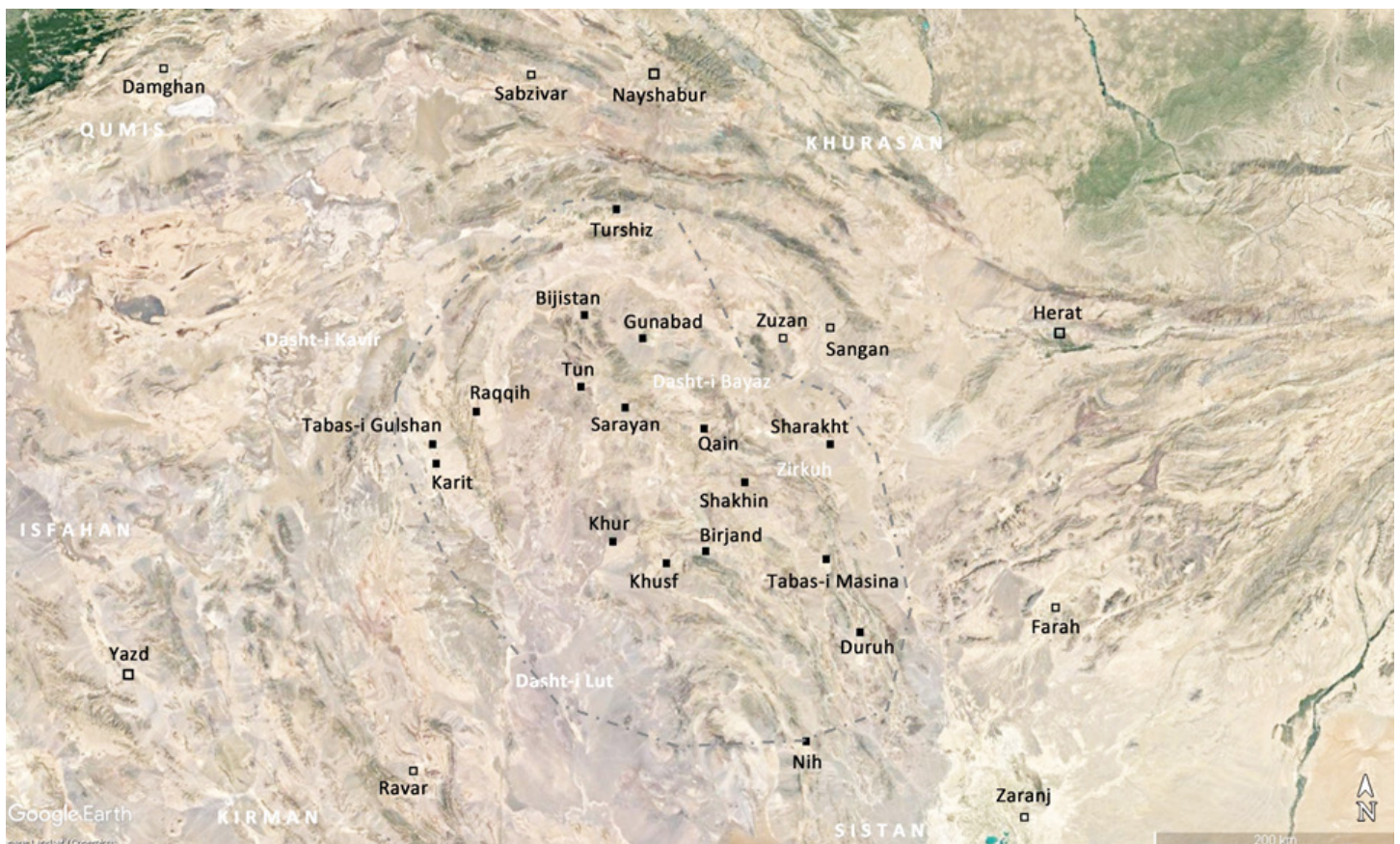


Figure 1-1: The approximate location of Quhistan region and its main towns during the Alamut period. Credit: Google Earth, modified by Author.

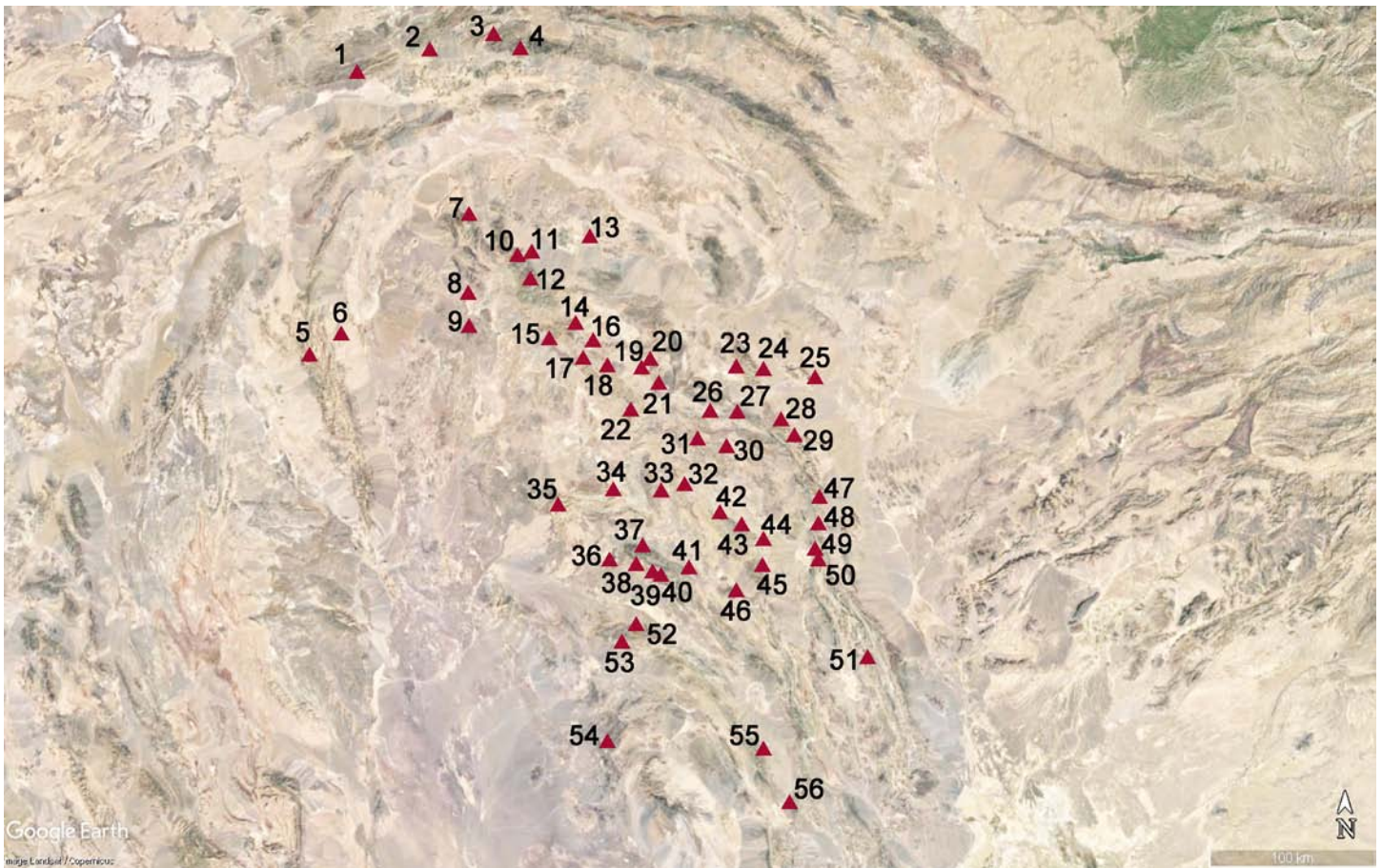


Figure 1-2: Map of the distribution of the Isma'ili castles in Quhistan. Furg castle (no.44) is not an Isma'ili castle. Credit: Author.

1	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Darunih	16	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Grimunj	31	Qal'ih-Kuh of Shakhin	46	Qal'ih-Kuh of Sarbishih
2	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Burjak	17	Khund castle, Bihud	32	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Bidisk	47	Patang Castle (Gazik)
3	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Khushab	18	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Jaznan	33	Qal'ih-Nasiri of Alqur	48	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Gavij
4	Atashgah castle	19	Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in	34	Qal'ih Qala' of Shushud	49	Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask
5	Castle of Kharv	20	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Qa'in	35	Qal'ih Qala' of Ark	50	Qal'ih Musalman of Gurask
6	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih	21	Qal'ih Imam-Ja'fari	36	Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf	51	Qal'ih-Kuh of Duruh
7	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Mazar	22	Qal'ih-Kuh of Chadih	37	Castle of Darrih	52	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Nasrabad
8	Hasan-Abad castle	23	Qal'ih-Kuh of Isfadan	38	Qal'ih-Qala' of Chahkand	53	Qal'ih-Qala' of Shadan (or Kamar-Dukhtar)
9	Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun	24	Qal'ih-Kuh of Abiz (Aviz)	39	Qal'ih-Pisar of Rubiyat	54	Qal'ih Zari
10	Qal'ih Shihab	25	Hasanbaykhan castle	40	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Rubiyat	55	Qal'ih-Rustam of Taq (Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shusf)
11	Qal'ih Ziybud	26	Qal'ih-Kuh of Zardan	41	Qal'ih-Kuh of Mud	56	Castle of Shahanshah (Shah-Dizh)
12	Furud castle	27	Qal'ih-Kuh of Afin	42	Qal'ih-Kuh of Misk		
13	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab	28	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Chilunak (Ardakul)	43	Qal'ih-Kuh of Nawzad		
14	Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Khug	29	Ahangaran Castle	44	Furg castle		
15	Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan	30	Castle of Nughab Anik	45	Mu'minabad castle		

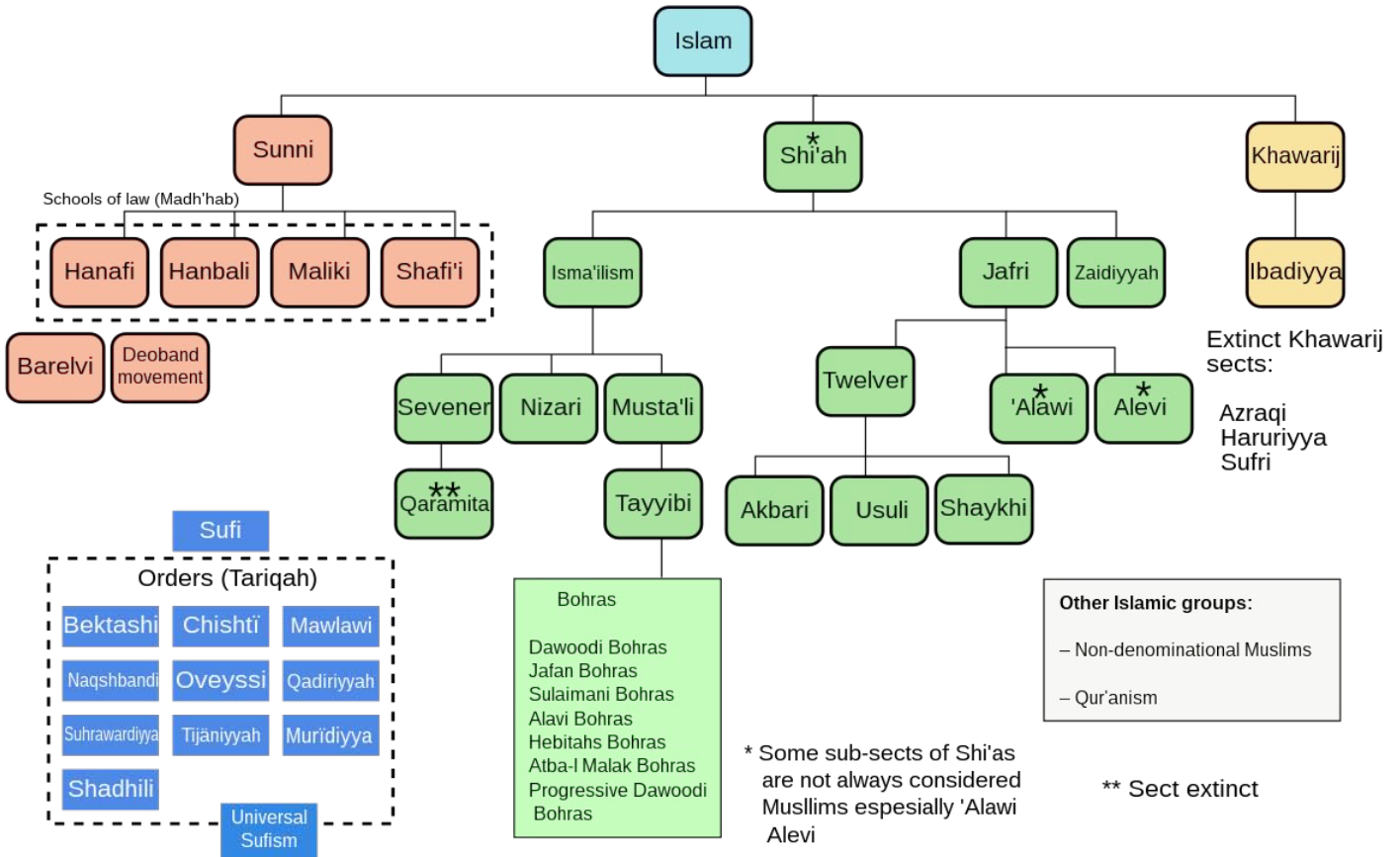
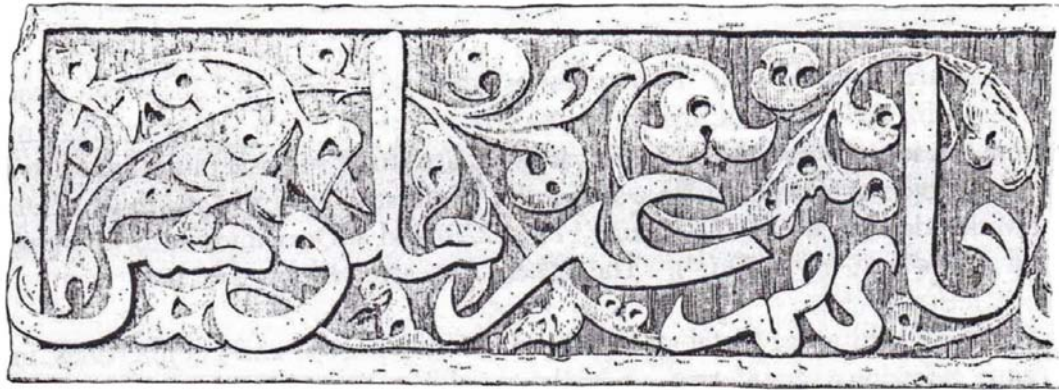


Figure 1-3: Different branches of Islam. Credit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Islam_branches_and_schools.svg.



Figure 1-4: A view from the east to the upper part of Alamut Castle. Credit: Author.



فا نهم غير ملومين

Figure 2-1: Remains of the Qur'anic inscription in the southern dome of the Friday Mosque of Isfahan. *Sura Al-Mu'minun* (The Believers, 23). Credit: Galdieri, *Isfahān: Masğid-i Ğuma*.



Figure 2-2: Gold coin (dīnār) struck under Muhammad ibn Kiya Buzurg-Ummid (r. 1138-62). Obverse: *Lā ilāh / illā Allāh / Muḥammad / rasūl Allāh*; To right and left: *Muhammad ibn Buzurg-Ummid*; Marginal legend: *Bismillāh ḡuriba hādhā al-dinār bi-Kursī al-Daylam sanat sitt wa thalathīn wa khamsmī'a* (542 A.H.). Reverse: *Alī walī Allāh / al-Muṣṭafā / li-dīn Allāh / Nizār*. Marginal legend: *Amīr al-mu'minīn ṣalawāt Allāh 'alayhī wa 'alā abā'ihī al-tāhirīn wa abnā'ihī al-akramīn*. Credit: Numisbids.com, <https://www.numisbids.com/n.php?p=lot&sid=2495&lot=118>, accessed Jan 16, 2022; Hamdan and Vardanyan, "Ismaili Coins," 296, no.8.



Figure 2-3: Gold coin struck under Jalal al-Din Hasan III (r. 1210-21). Obverse: *Lā ilāh illā Allāh / Muḥammad rasūl Allāh / [al]-Nāṣr li-dīn Allāh / amīr al-mu'minīn*; Marginal legend: *Bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm ḍuriba hādihā al-dīnār bi-Kursī [al-Daylam] al-hijra*. Reverse: *Al-sultān al-a'zam / Jalāl al-dunyā wa / al-dīn Abū al-Faṭḥ / al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad*; Marginal legend: *Bismillāh huwa al-ladhi arsalahu rasūlahu bi'l-huda wa dīn al-ḥaqq liyuzhirahu 'alā al-d[īn]*. Credit: Hamdan and Vardanyan, "Ismaili Coins," 299, no.23.



Figure 2-4: Gold coin struck under 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad III (r. 1221-54). Obverse: *al-Imām al-a'zam / al-muẓaffar al-mu'aẓẓam / Muhammad bin Hasan / naṣr-i amīr al-mu'minīn*. Reverse: *Lā ilāh illā Allāh / Muḥammad rasūl Allāh / al-Nāṣr li-dīn Allāh / amīr al-mu'minīn*. Credit: SIXBID, AUCTION #37, LOT 816, Stephen Album Rare Coins, <https://www.sixbid.com/en/stephen-album-rare-coins/7370/islamic-atabegs-contemporaries/6025101/assassins-at-alamut-muhammad-iii>, accessed January 5, 2021.



Figure 2-5: Silver coin struck under 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad III (r. 1221-54). Obverse: *Lā ilāh illā Allāh / Muḥammad rasūl A / llāh*. Reverse: *Muḥammad / al-sultān al-a'zam / 'alā al-dunyā wa al-dīn / al-Ḥasan*. Credit: <https://ismailignosis.com/2016/07/09/the-aga-khans-direct-descent-from-prophet-muhammad-historical-proof/>, accessed January 5, 2021.



Figure 2-6: Silver coin struck under 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad III (r. 1221-54). Obverse: *Al-mawlā / al-a'zam*. Reverse: *'alā al-dunyā / wa al-dīn*. Credit: SIXBID, AUCTION #107, LOT 89, https://www.sixbid.com/deme/morton-and-eden/7200/iran-and-the-east/5894658/batinite-ruler-of-alamut-temp?term=BATINITE%20RULER%20OF%20ALAMUT&orderCol=lot_number&orderDirection=asc&priceFrom&displayMode=large&auctionSessions=&sidebarIsSticky=false, accessed January 10, 2021.



Figure 3-1: The *qanāt* canals, castles, and villages around Gunabad. Credit: Author.

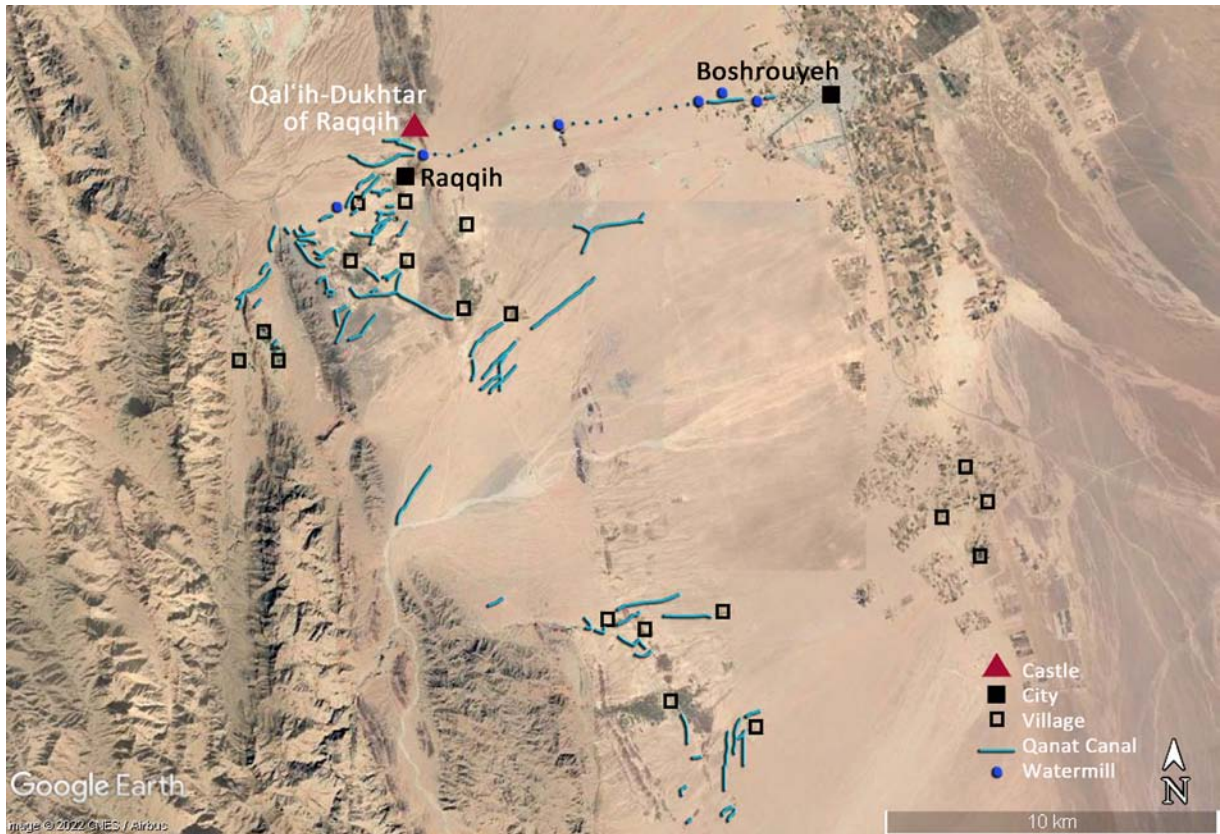


Figure 3-2: The *qanāt* canals, castles, and villages around Raqqih. Credit: Author.

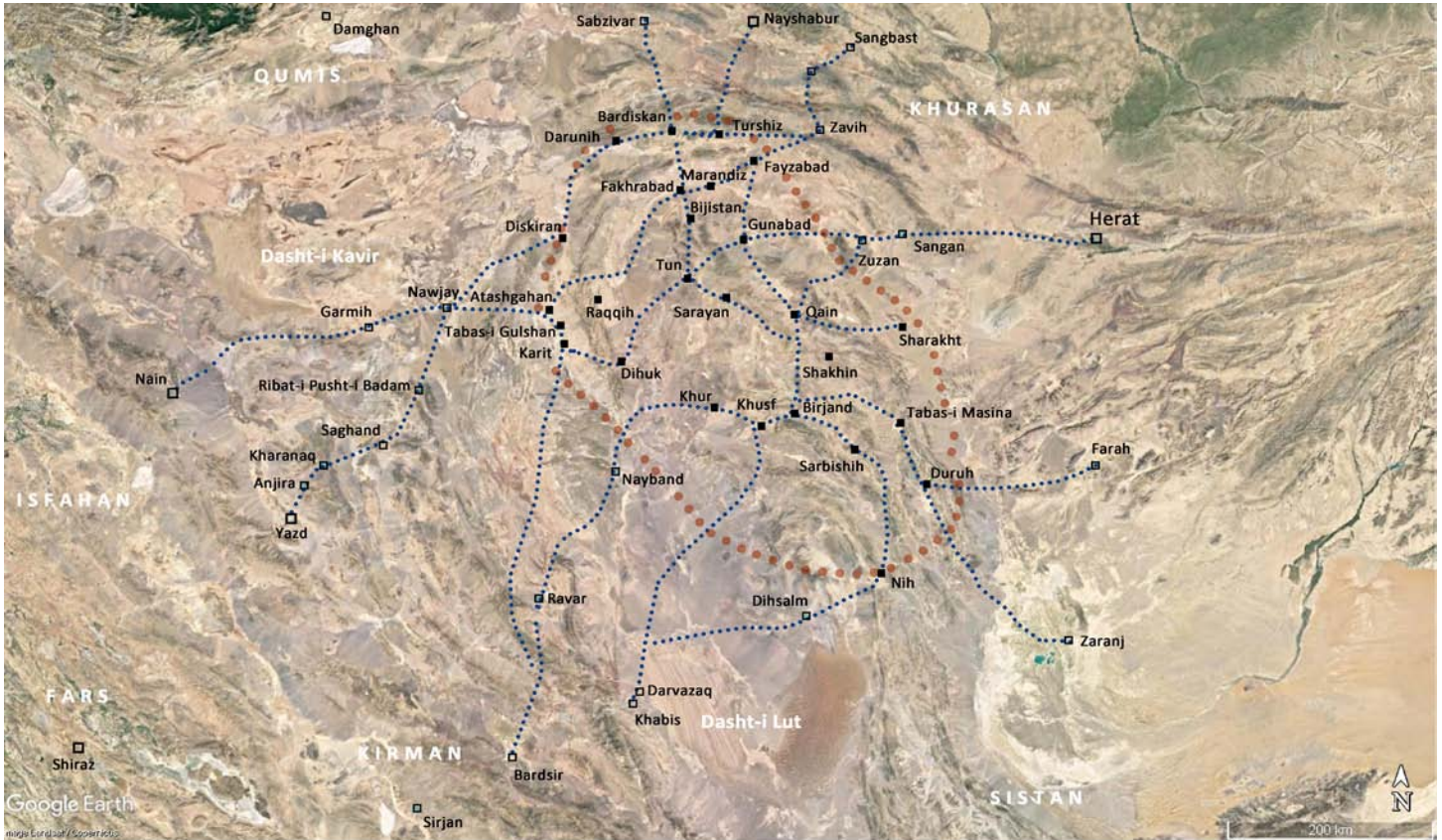


Figure 3-3: Schematic map of possible historical routes passing through the Qhistan region. Credit: Author.

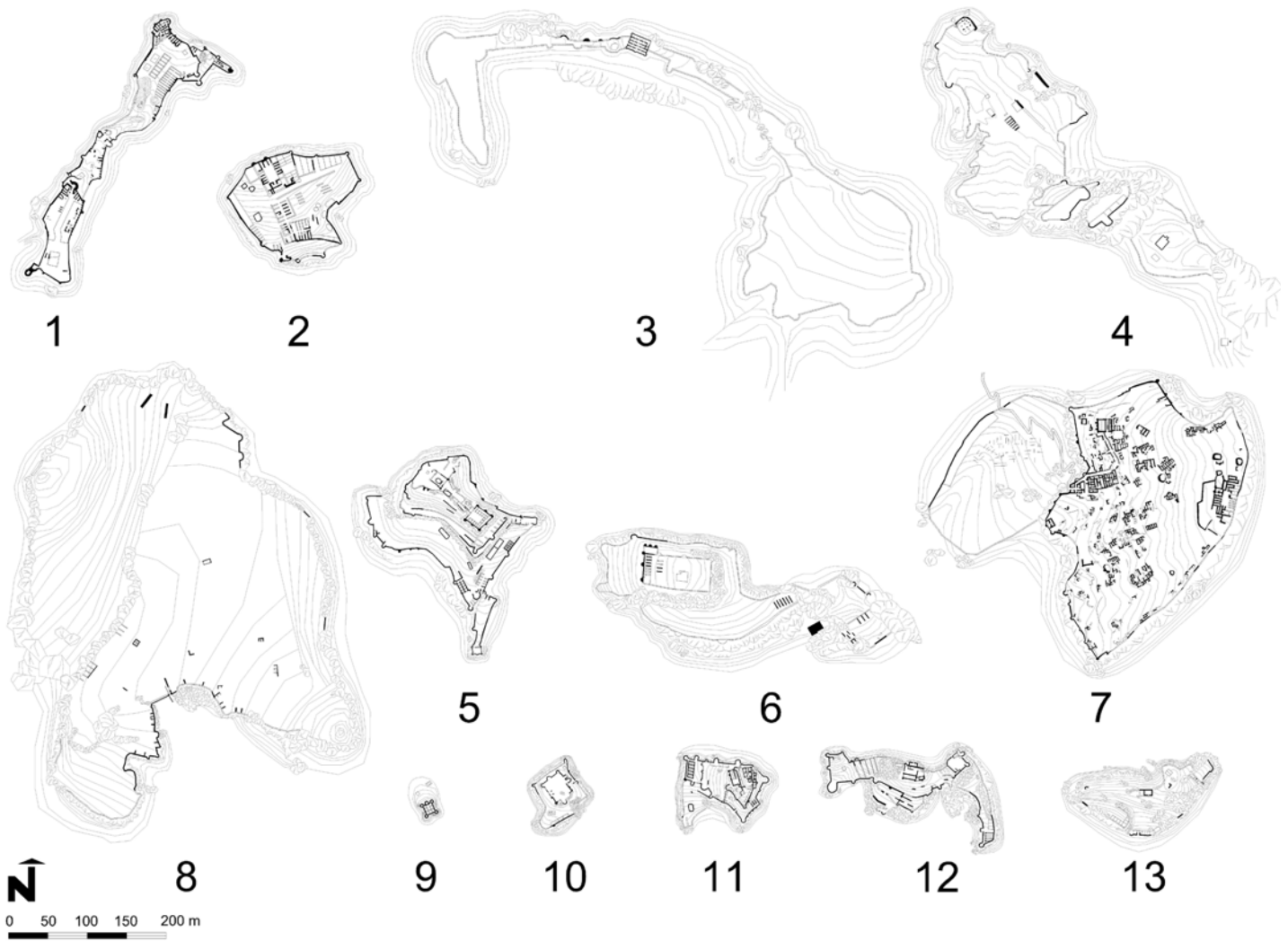


Figure 4-1: Layout of the castles discussed in the dissertation on the same scale.
Credit: Author.

1. Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, 2. Hasan-Abad castle, 3. Mu'minabad castle, 4. Castle of Darrih, 5. Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, 6. Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf, 7. Castle of Shahanshah, 8. Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask, 9. Qal'ih Zari, 10. Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan, 11. Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih, 12. Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab, 13. Qal'ih Qala' of Ark.

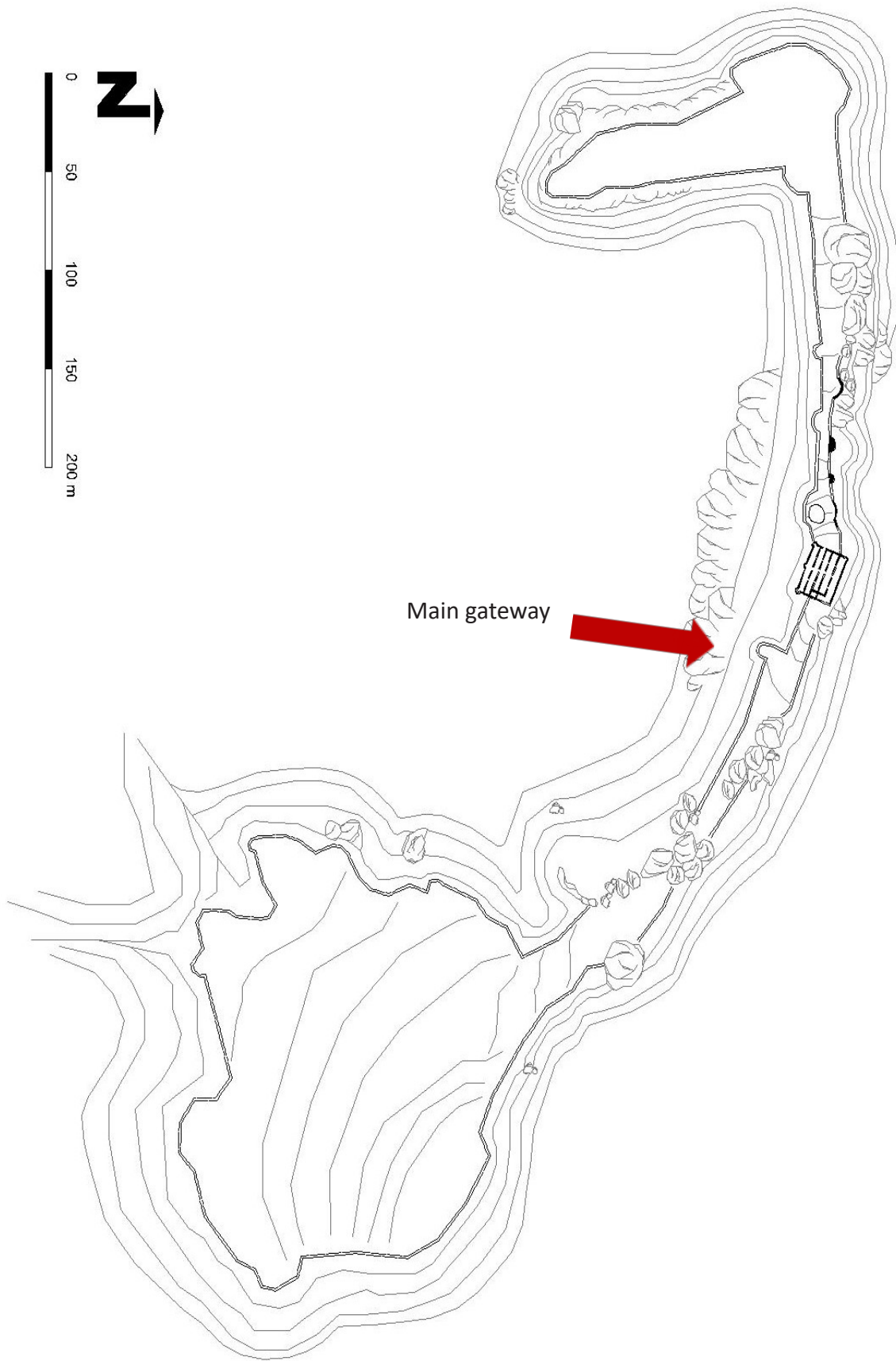


Figure 4-2: Layout of Mu'minabad castle. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-3: Mu'minabad castle viewed from the south. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-4: Mu'minabad castle, the remains of the building known as *ghūrkhānih*. View to the west. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-5: Mu'minabad castle, the large round cistern in the middle part of the castle. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-6: The eastern wing of Mu'minabad castle, viewed from the western wing. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-7: The broken pieces of decorative bricks from Mu'minabad castle. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-8: Qal'ih-Kuh viewed from the city of Qa'in. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-9: Low-level oblique view to the northeast of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. Credit: SKCHTO's archive.

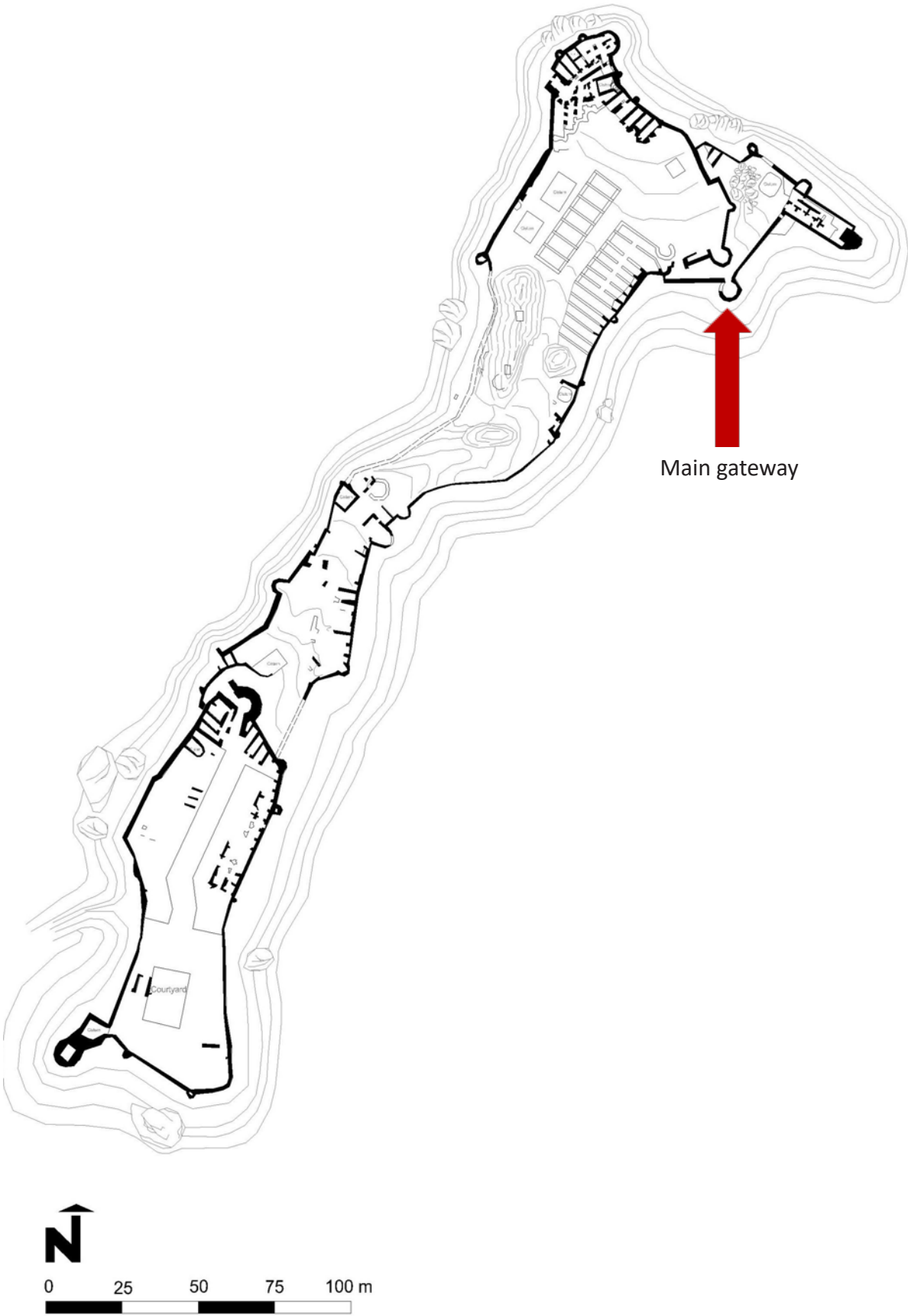


Figure 4-10: Layout of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. Credit: Author, , based on the map provided by SKCHTO.



Figure 4-11: The barracks building in the northeast of Qal'ih-Kuh after the recent reconstructions. Buzarjumihir's tomb is seen in the background. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-12: The barracks building before the recent reconstructions (ca. 1923). Credit: Ernst Herzfeld Papers. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Gift of Ernst Herzfeld, 1946.



Figure 4-13: Central section of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, looking to the north. The remains of a corridor flanked by a row of rooms are seen on the left of the image. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-14: Upper section of Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in, looking to the south. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-15: Architectural remains from the upper section Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in (ca. 1923). Credit: Ernst Herzfeld Papers. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Gift of Ernst Herzfeld, 1946.



Figure 4-16: The small cistern to the south of Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun. The castle is seen on the top left. Credit: Author.

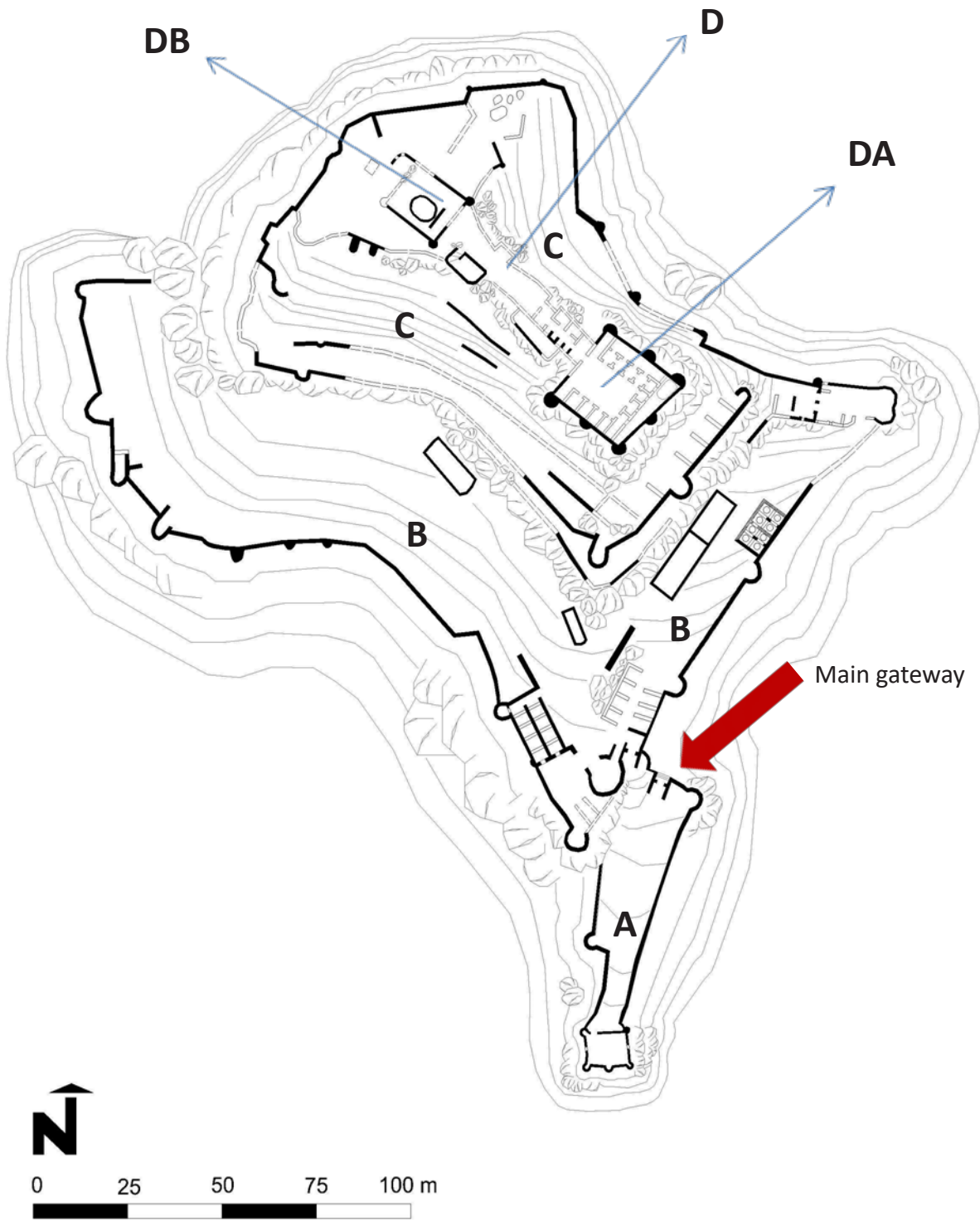


Figure 4-17: Layout of Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-18: Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun's main gateway viewed from the north. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-19: Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, the main structures in the south of section B, viewed from the extreme south of A. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-20: Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, the western part of section B viewed from the top of the outcrop. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-21: Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, the eastern part of section B viewed from the north. The remains of the rectangular building are seen on the lower left. One of the cisterns is visible on the right. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-22: Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun, the circular pit inside DB. View to the east. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-23: Hasan-Abad castle viewed from the east. One of the river courses is seen in the foreground. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-24: Hasan-Abad castle viewed from the south. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-25: The remains of the main gateway of Hasan-Abad castle. Credit: Author.

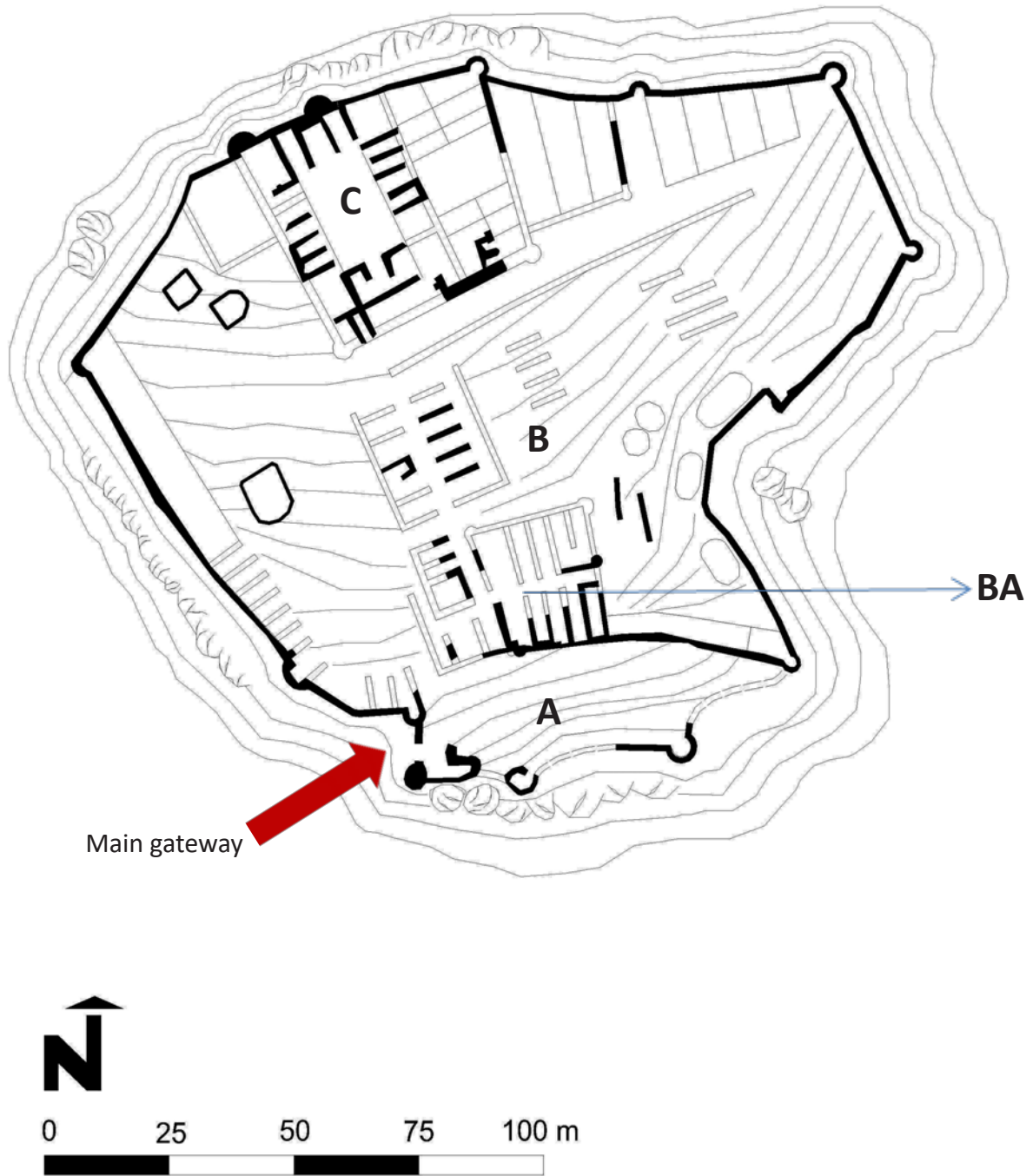


Figure 4-26: Layout of Hasan-Abad castle. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-27: Hasan-Abad castle, panoramic view of section A viewed from the northwest. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-28: Hasan-Abad castle, panoramic view of section B viewed from the southwest. BA is on the right. On the left is the western curtain wall. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-29: The outcrop on top of which Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan is located, viewed from the west. Credit: Author.

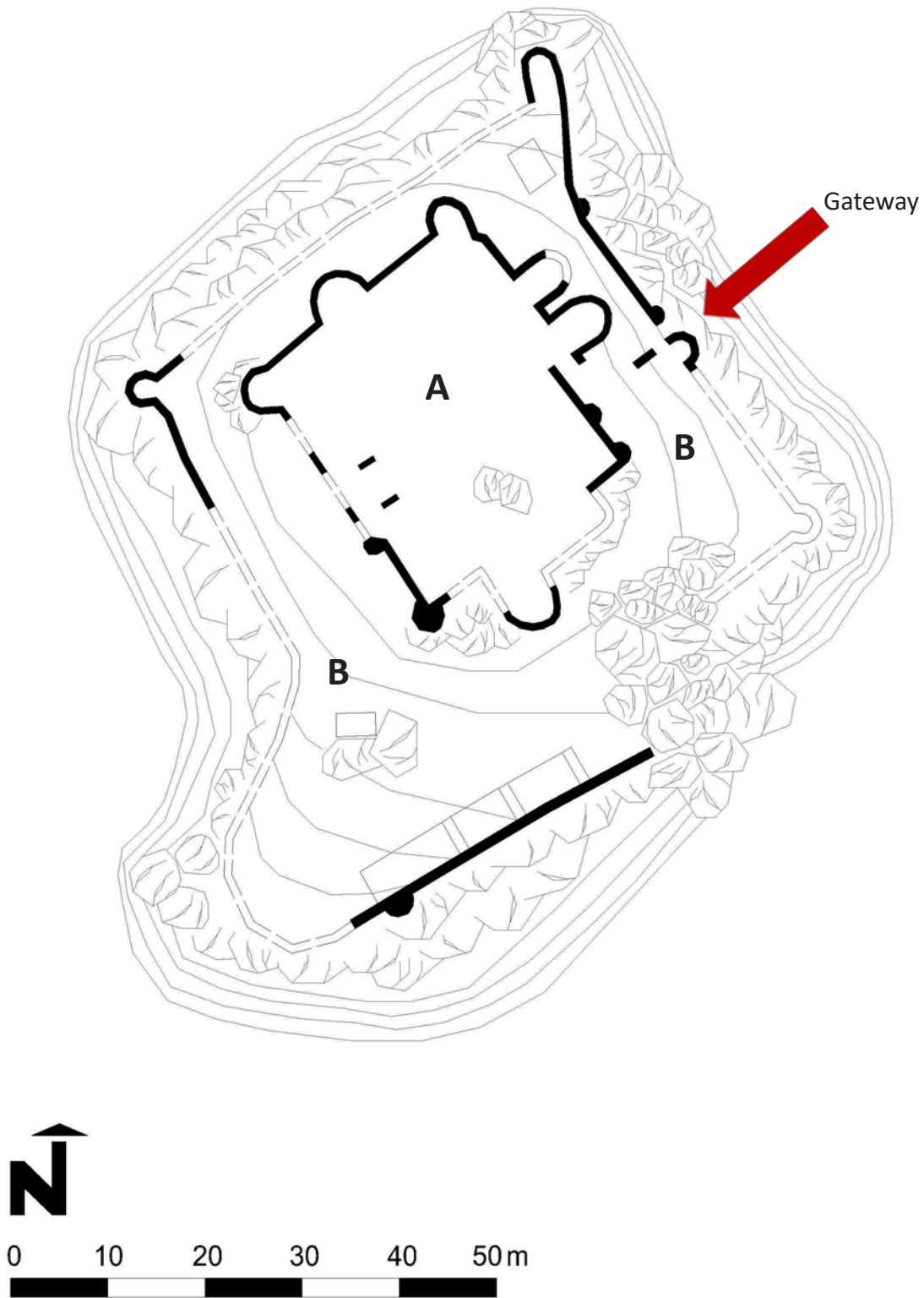


Figure 4-30: Layout of Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-31: The remains of Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan's northeastern curtain wall. Note the large bastion and the castle's gateway in the middle of the wall. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-32: A fragment of a wall remained from the pre-Alamut period phase of construction at Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan. Credit: Author.

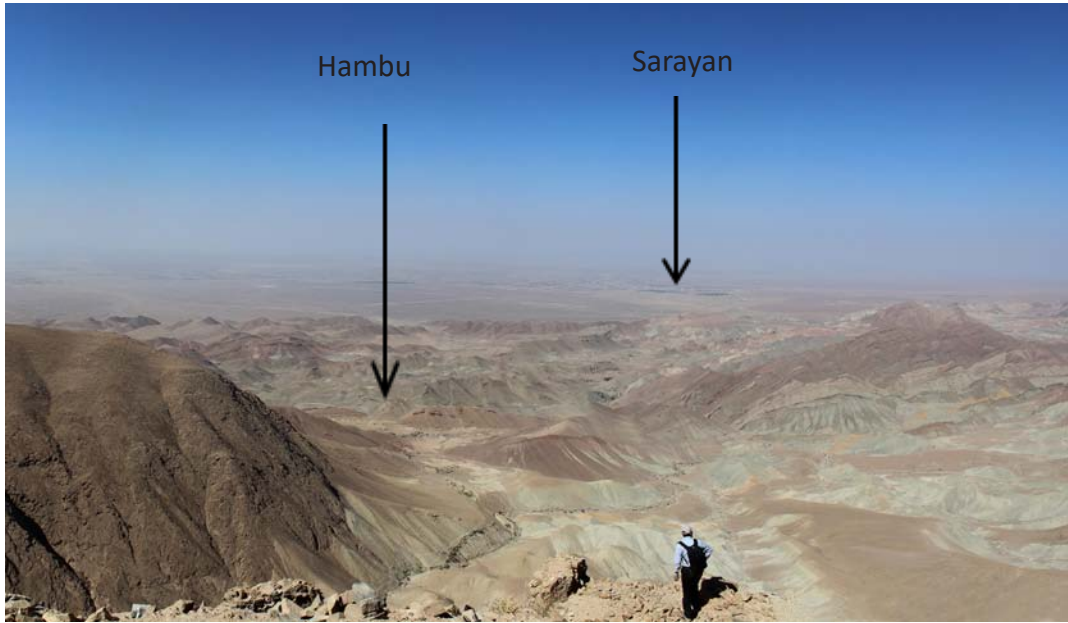


Figure 4-33: Plain of Sarayan viewed from the top of Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-34: Asiyab-i Dahanih viewed from the south. Note Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih in the background. Credit: Author.

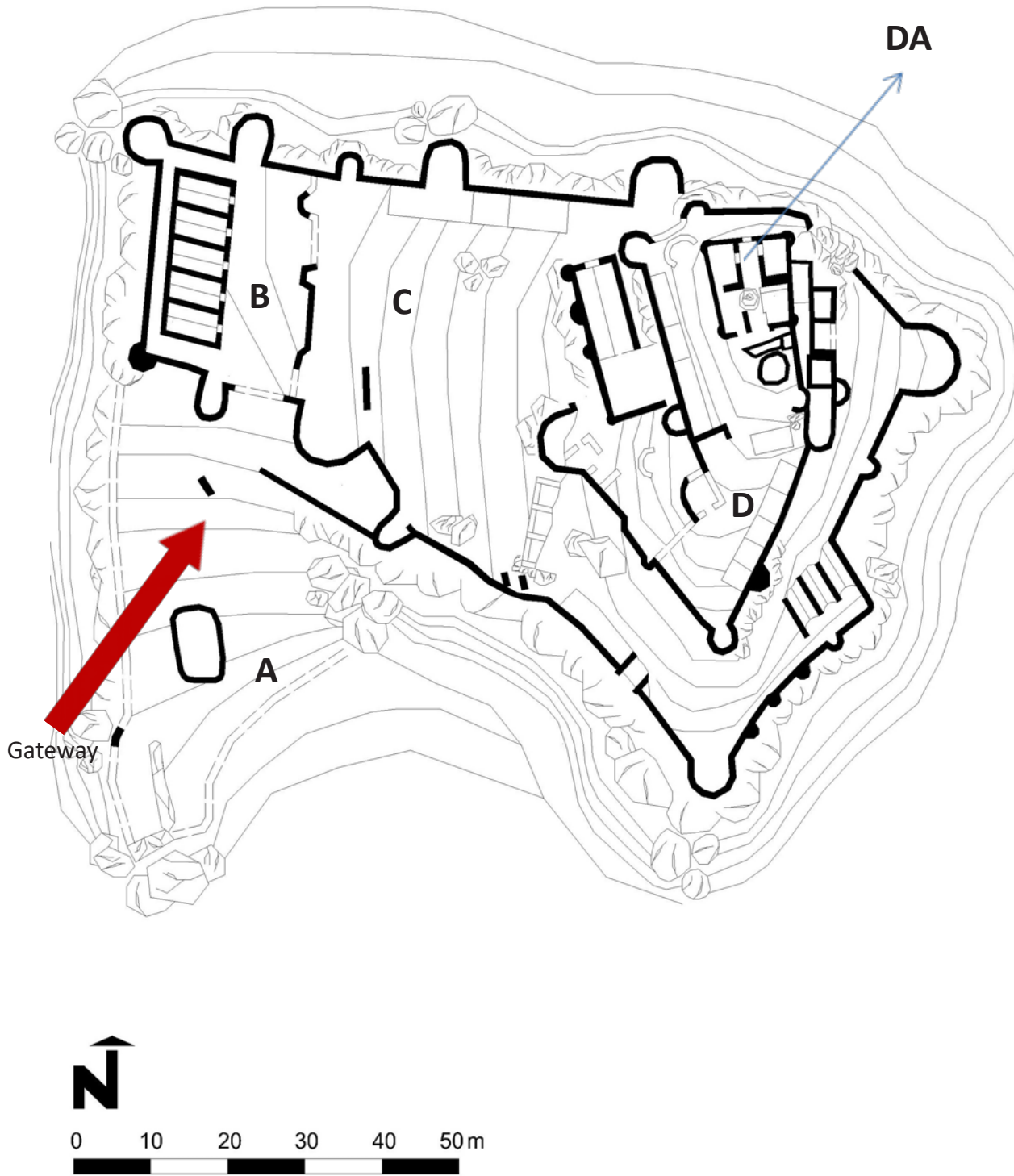


Figure 4-35: Layout of Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqah. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-36: Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih, section A viewed from the north. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-37: The eastern curtain wall of Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih, viewed from the south. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-38: Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Raqqih, the western wall of section D, viewed from section C. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-39: The castle of Darrih, viewed from the north. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-40: Layout of the castle of Darrih. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-41: Castle of Darrih, section A, viewed from BA. City of Birjand is seen on the top right. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-42: Castle of Darrih, Hawz-i Ghulam-Kush in section A, viewed from the southeast. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-43: Castle of Darrih, section C viewed from the top of section B. Note the large cistern in the middle. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-44: Qal'ih Qala' of Ark viewed from the north. Credit: Author.

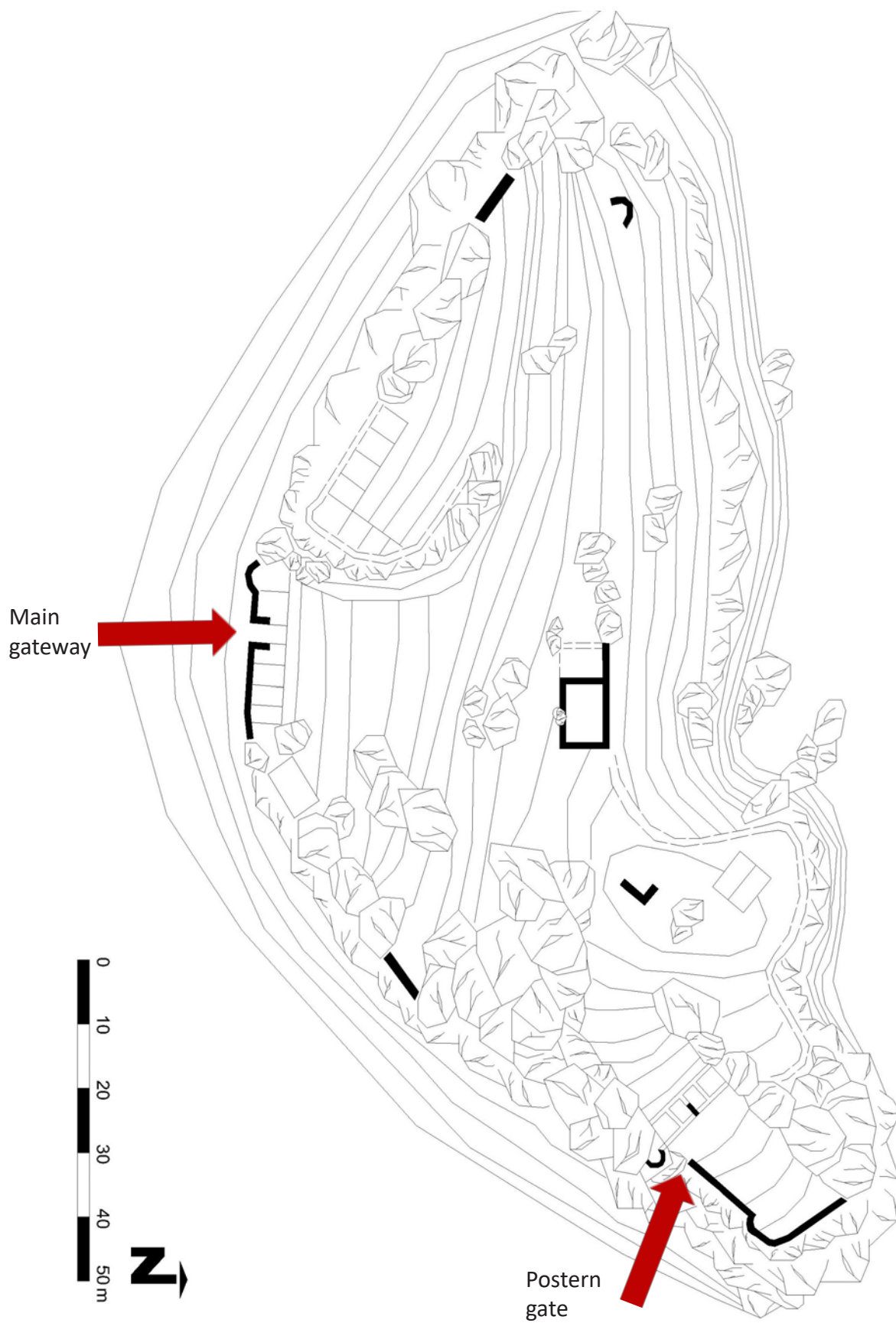


Figure 4-45: Layout of Qal'ih Qala' of Ark. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-46: The southern flank of Qal'ih Qala' of Ark where the gateway was located. View to the west. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-47: Qal'ih Qala' of Ark, view to the northeast of the castle. Ark village and agricultural fields are seen in the background. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-48: The remains of *ājur-i gabrī* in Qal'ih Qala' of Ark. The scale is divided into the sections of 20 cm. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-49: Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf, viewed from the northeast. Credit: Author.

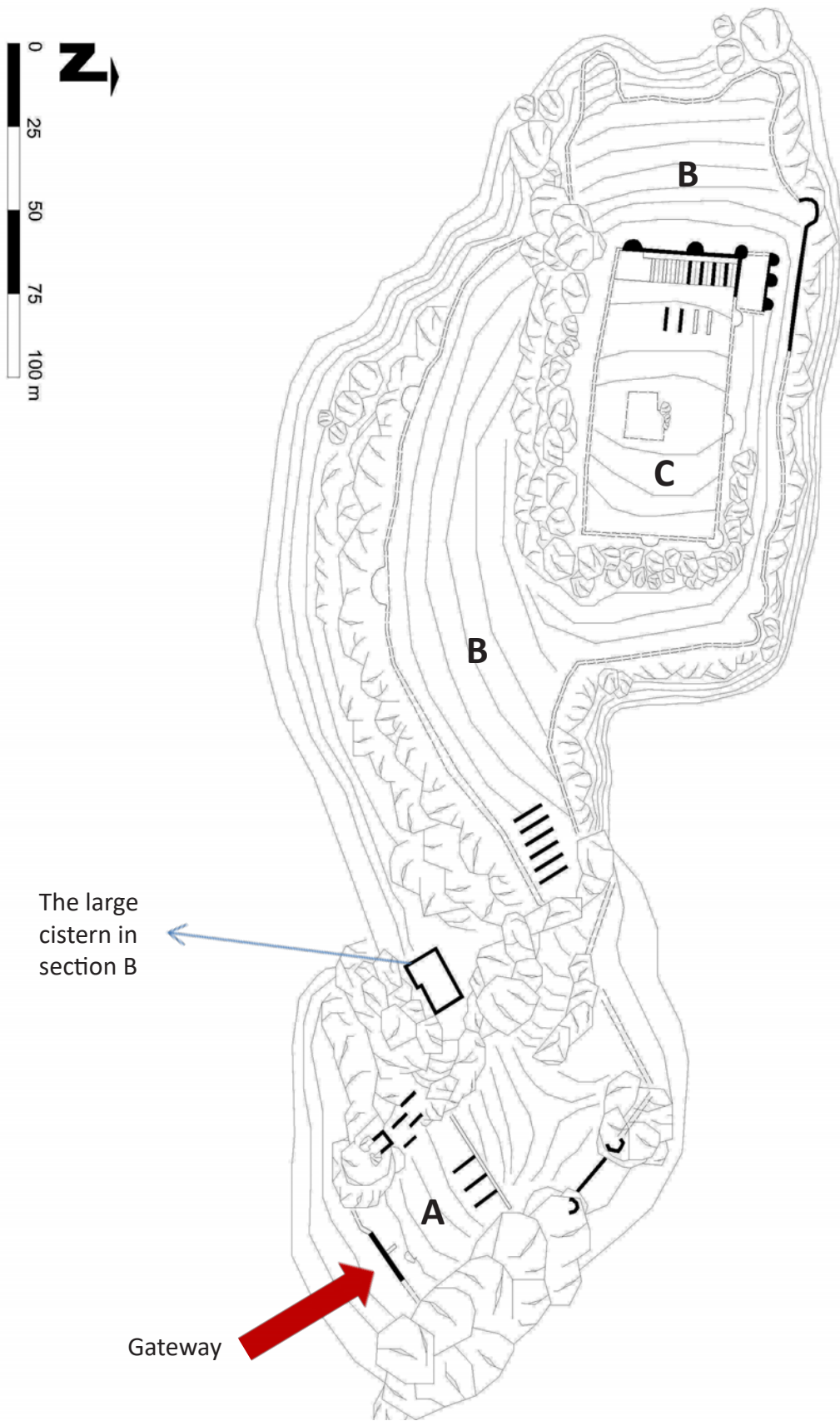


Figure 4-50: Layout of Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-51: Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf, the large cistern in section B, viewed from the northwest. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-52: Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf, section C's western curtain wall, viewed from section B. Credit: Author.

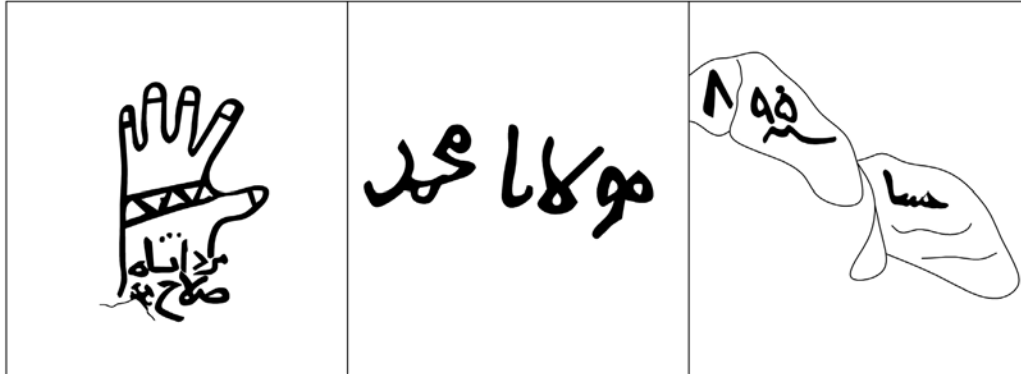


Figure 4-53: The rock engravings remained in the northeast of Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-54: The castle of Shah-Dizh, viewed from the north. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-55: Layout of the castle of Shah-Dizh. Credit: Author, based on the map provided by SKCHTO.



Figure 4-56: The castle of Shah-Dizh, the pavement of the gateway in section B.
Credit: Author.



Figure 4-57: The castle of Shah-Dizh, the northwestern part of section B, viewed from the south. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-58: The castle of Shah-Dizh, the structures in the interior of the upper story of the fort in section B. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-59: Qal'ih Zari viewed from the south. Credit: Author.

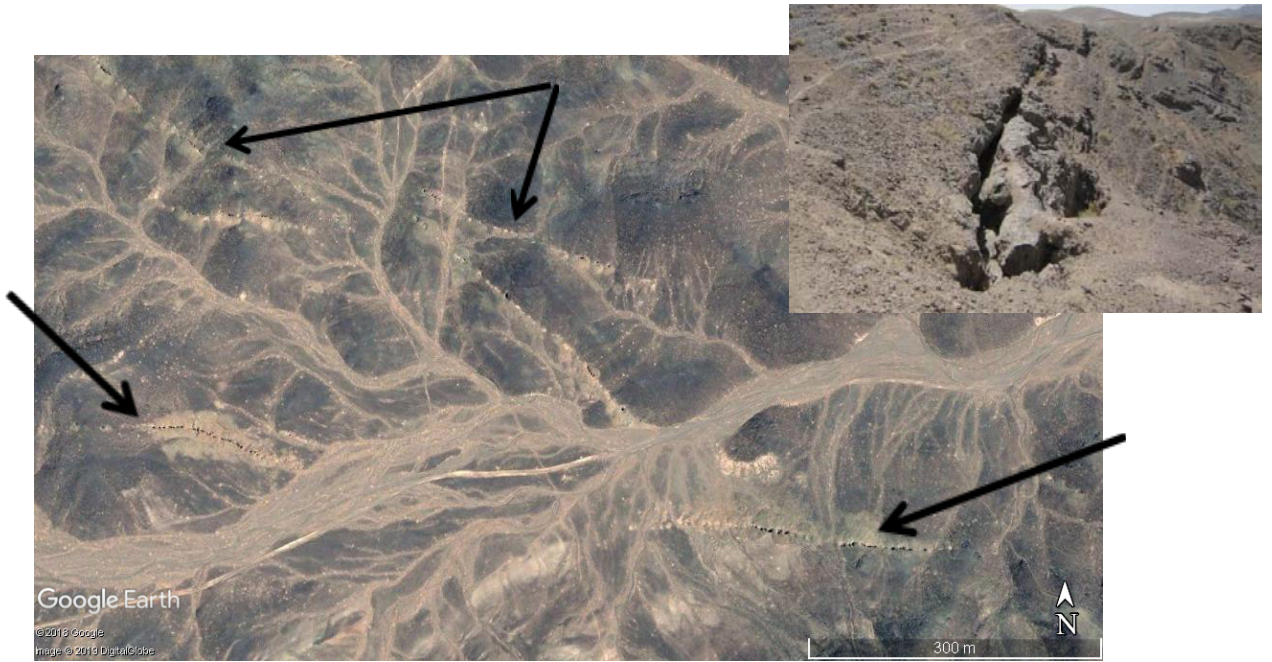


Figure 4-60: The gigantic grooves remained from the historical mining activities at Qal'ih Zari mine. Credit: Google Earth, modified by Author.

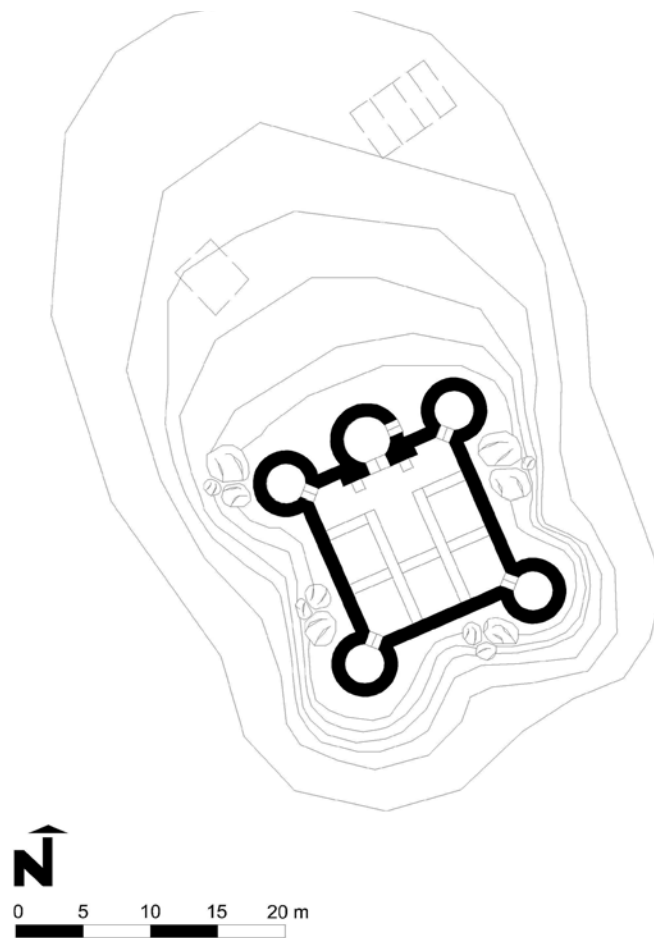


Figure 4-61: Layout of Qal'ih Zari. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-62: Northern flank of Qal'ih Zari. Note the traces of plaster remained on the walls. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-63: Inside Qal'ih Zari, view to the western wall. Note the small joist holes in the upper half of the wall. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-64: Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab viewed from the south. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-65: Shurab village and agricultural fields viewed from the top of building CB. Credit: Author.

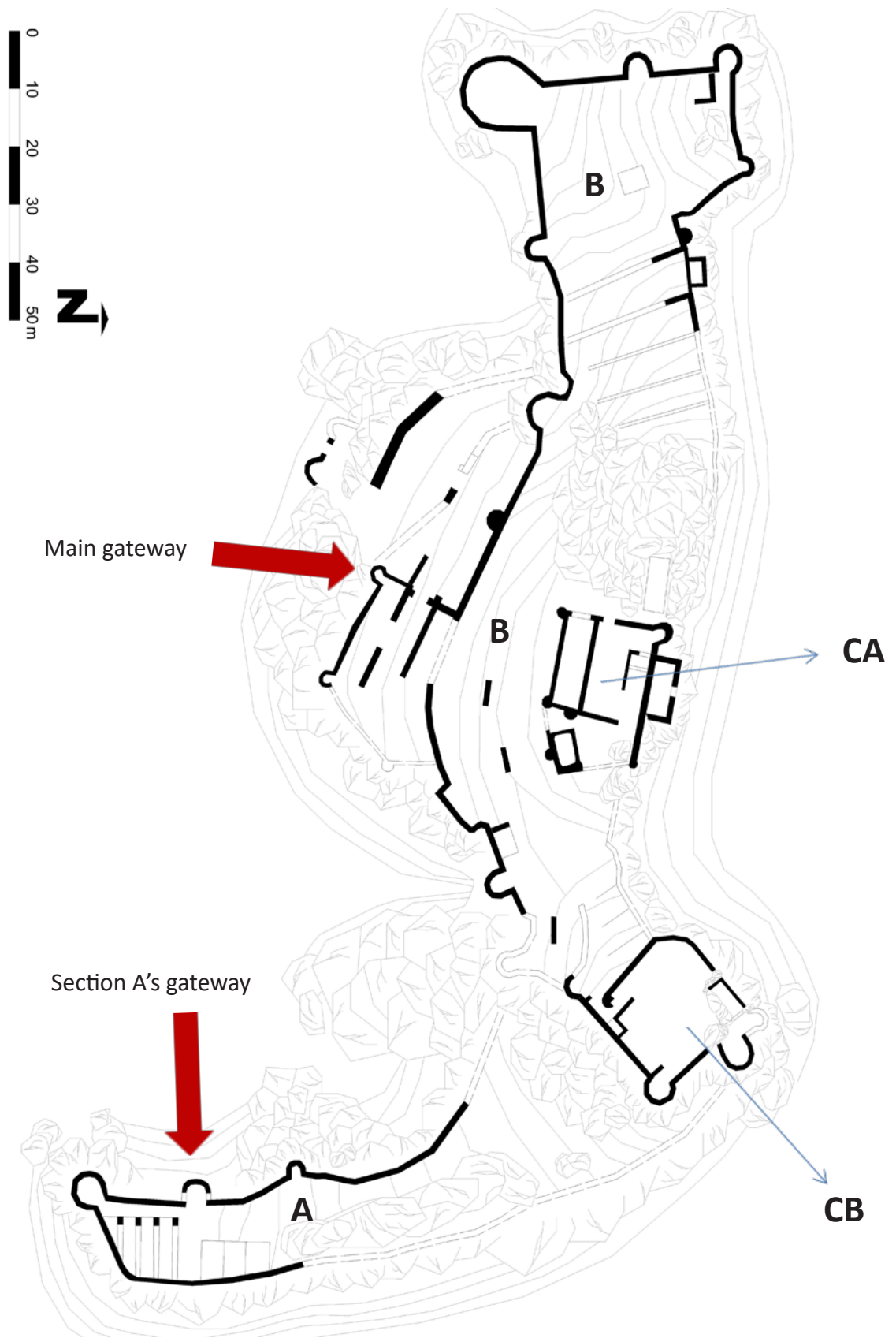


Figure 4-66: Layout of Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-67: Section A of Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab viewed from the north. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-68: Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab, the central part of section B viewed from the top of the building CB. The remains of the building CA are seen on the top right. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-69: Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab, building CB viewed from the top of the building CA. The cistern in the southeast corner of CA is seen on bottom right. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-70: Qal'ih Kafaran (left) and Qal'ih Musalmanan (right) viewed from Gurask village. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-71: A view to the southeastern flank of Qal'ih Kafaran. The arrow indicates the location of the main gateway. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-72: A view from the western part of Qal'ih Kafaran to the southeast. The arrow on the left indicates the remains of the ditch that conducted the water to Qal'ih Musalmanan on the right of the image. Credit: Author.

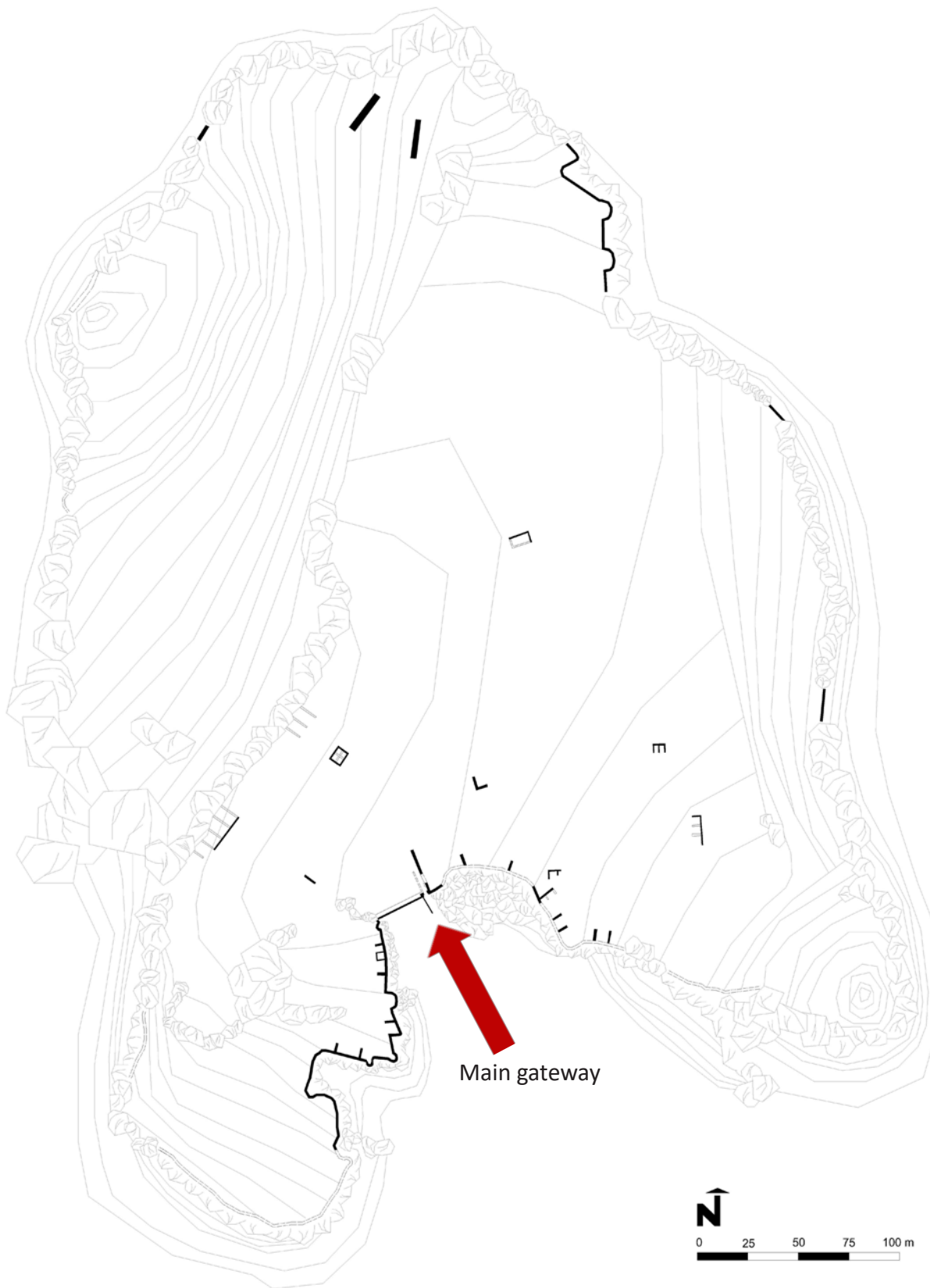


Figure 4-73: Layout of Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-74: The main gateway of Qal'ih Kafaran viewed from the exterior. Credit: Author.



Figure 4-75: A view to the eastern part of Qal'ih Kafaran. The arrow indicates the location of the main gateway. Credit: Author.

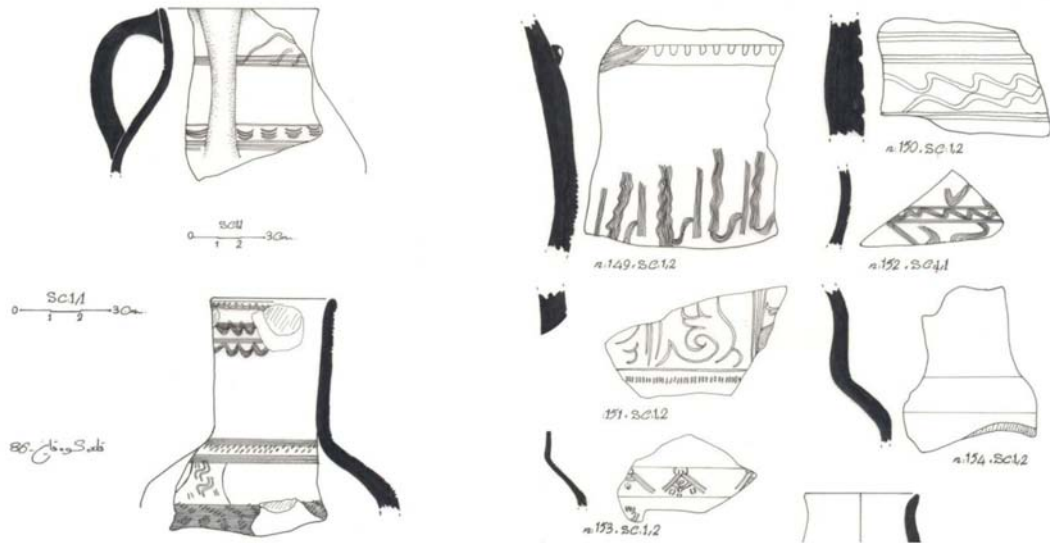


Figure 5-1: Drawings of unglazed pottery sherds with incised decoration from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. Credit: Farjami and Chamanara, "Barrisī-yi Gūnihā-yi Sufāl-i," 5.

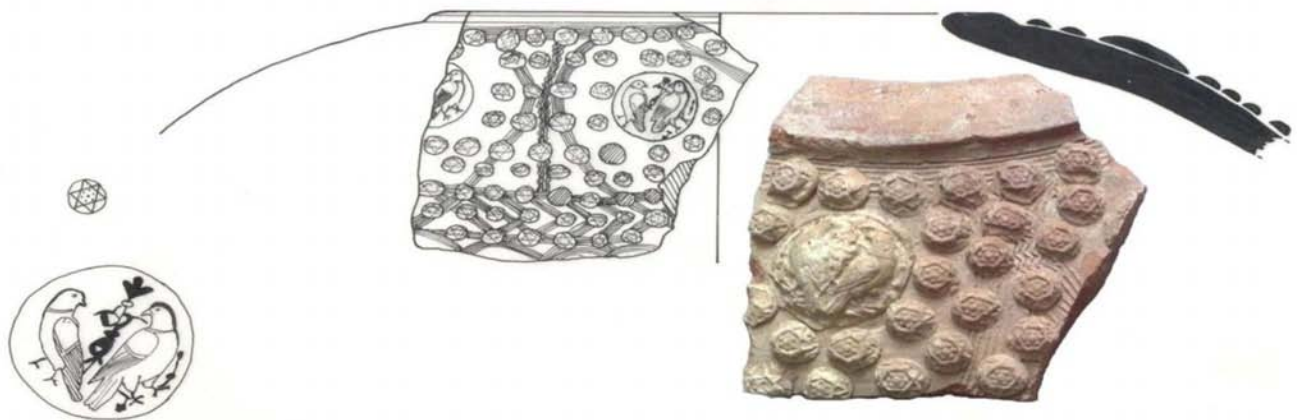


Figure 5-2: Drawing of an unglazed ware with applied and incised decoration from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. Credit: Farjami and Chamanara, "Barrisī-yi Gūnihā-yi Sufāl-i," 7.



Figure 5-3: Unglazed molded pottery kashkul (dervishes' bowl), twelfth century, probably Nishabur. Credit: Christie's auction 7389, Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds 2007, Lot 38. <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-4892293>, accessed May 24, 2022.

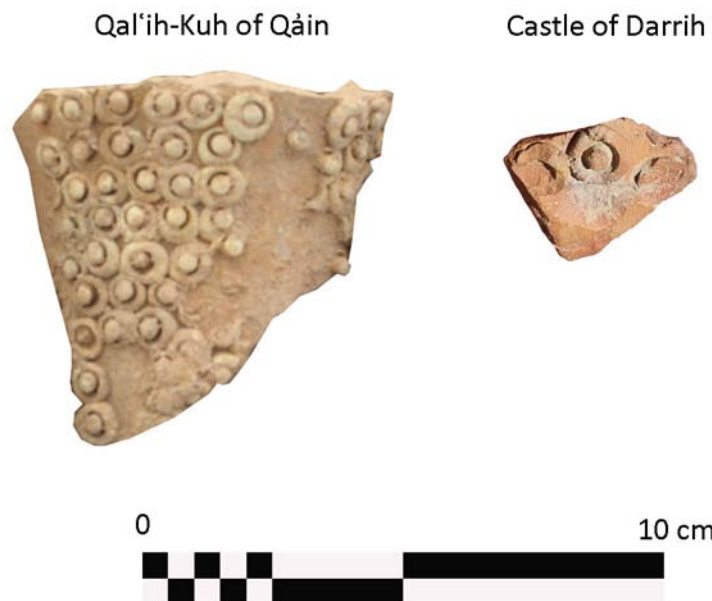


Figure 5-4: Unglazed pottery sherds with circular applied decoration from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in and Castle of Darrih. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-5: Glazed pottery sherds from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. Credit: Farjami, et al. "Gūnih Shinasī-yi Sufālhā-yi," 92.



Figure 5-6: Fragment of a luster-painted bowl from Qal'ih-Kuh of Qa'in. Credit: Farjami and Chamanara, "Barrisī-yi Gūnihā-yi Sufāl-i," 14.



Figure 5-7: Luster-painted bowl, Milan, Private Collection. Credit: Curatola, *Persian Ceramics*, 107.



Figure 5-8: Surface pottery sherds from Mu'minabad castle. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-9: Surface pottery sherds from Hasan-Abad castle. Credit: Author.

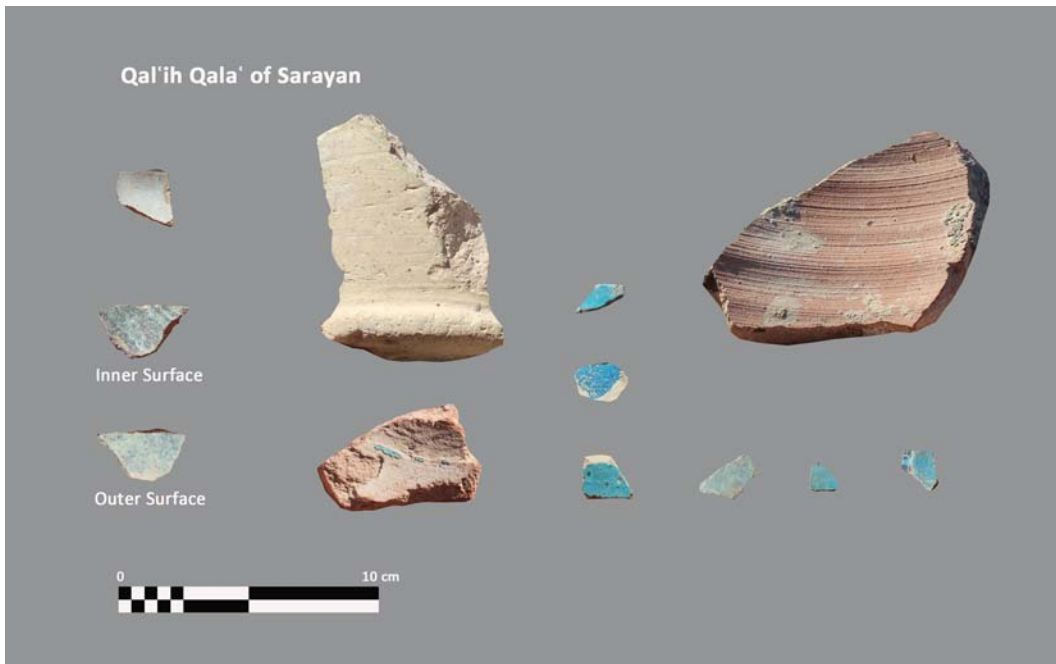


Figure 5-10: Surface pottery sherds from Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan. Credit: Author.

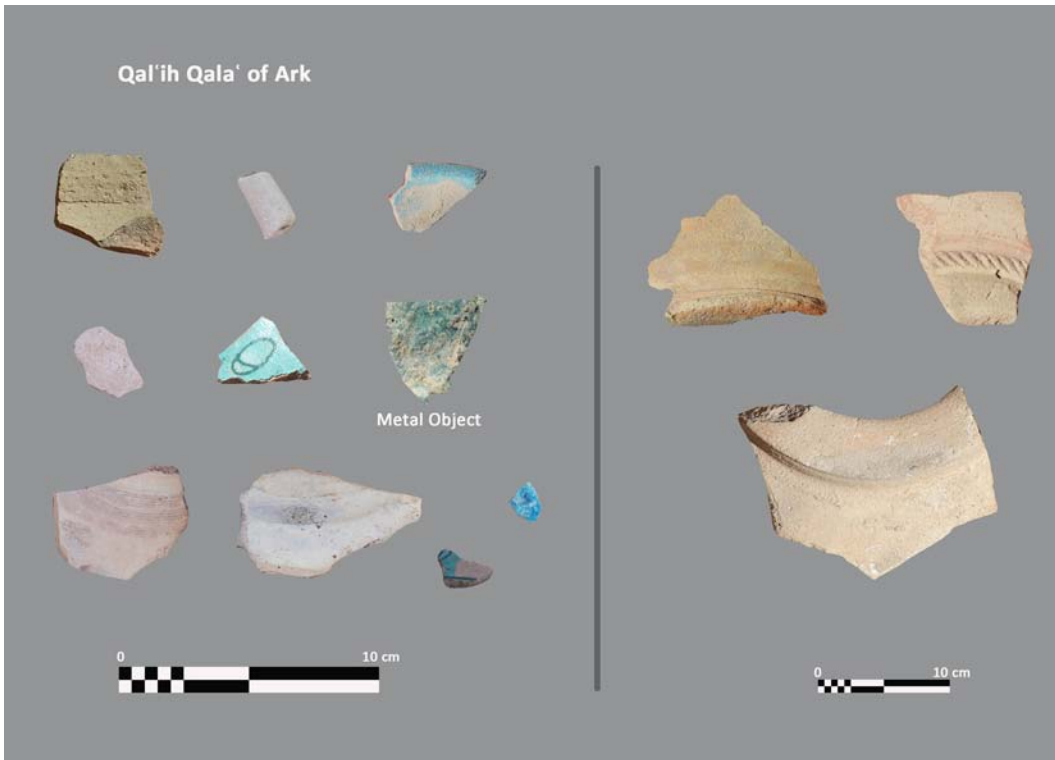


Figure 5-11: Surface pottery sherds from Qal'ih Qala' of Ark. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-12: Surface pottery sherds from Castle of Darrih. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-13: Surface pottery sherds from Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf. Credit: Author.

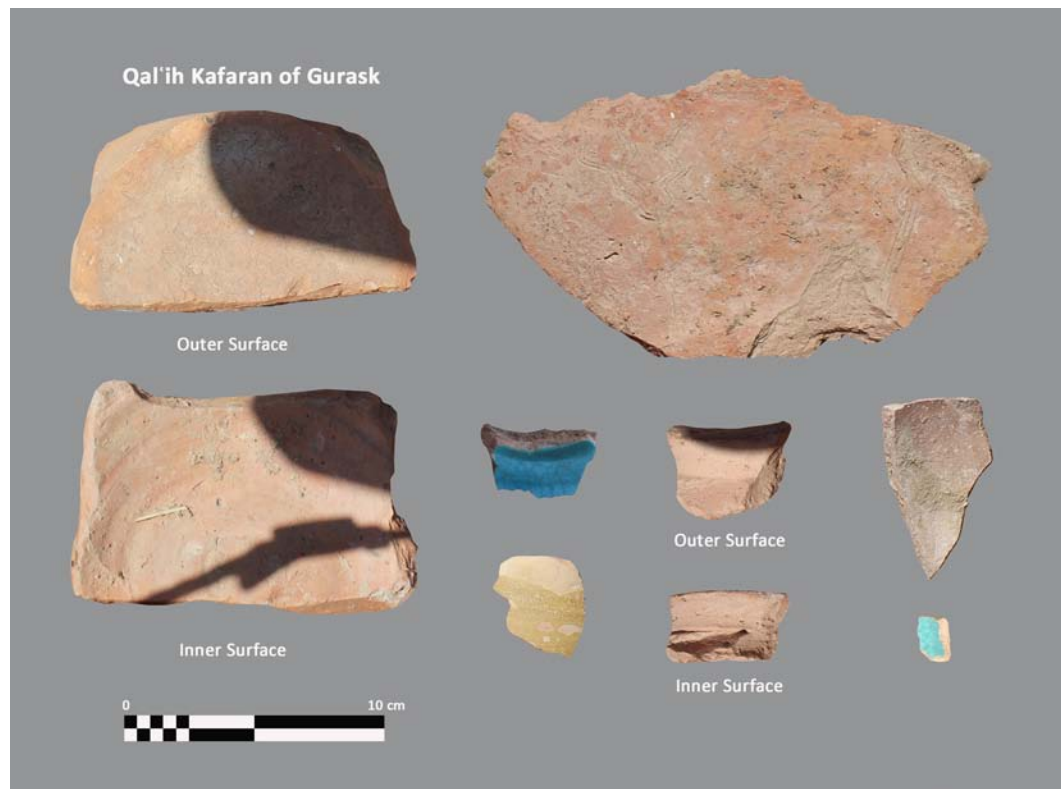


Figure 5-14: Surface pottery sherds from Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-15: Surface pottery sherds from Castle of Shahanshah. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-16: Surface pottery sherds from Qal'ih-Dukhtar of Shurab. Credit: Author.

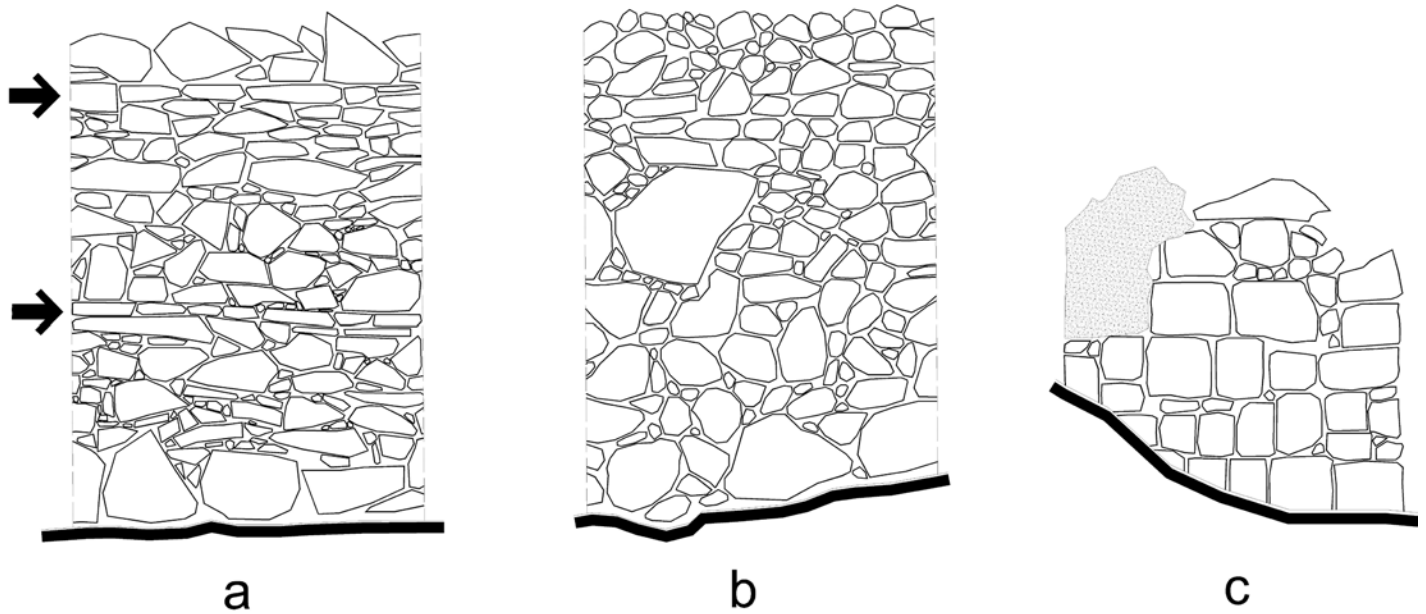


Figure 5-17: Different types of stonemasonry in the Isma'ili castles of Quhistan. Type a is seen commonly in the construction of curtain walls. Type b is seen in Qal'ih Kafaran of Gurask and the shorter sections of the walls of interior spaces of other castles. Type c is seen only in a fragment of a wall at Qal'ih Qala' of Sarayan. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-18: Mosque of Afīn, built during the Timurid period. Credit: Saeed Kazemi, <http://www.shabestan.ir/detail/News/517135>, accessed June 20, 2022.



Figure 5-19: The remains of mudbrick structures in the castle of Darrih. The city of Birjand is seen in the background. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-20: A square brick of common size (24 x 24 x 4.5) in Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf. The scale is divided into the sections of 20 cm. Compare with figure 4-48. Credit: Author.

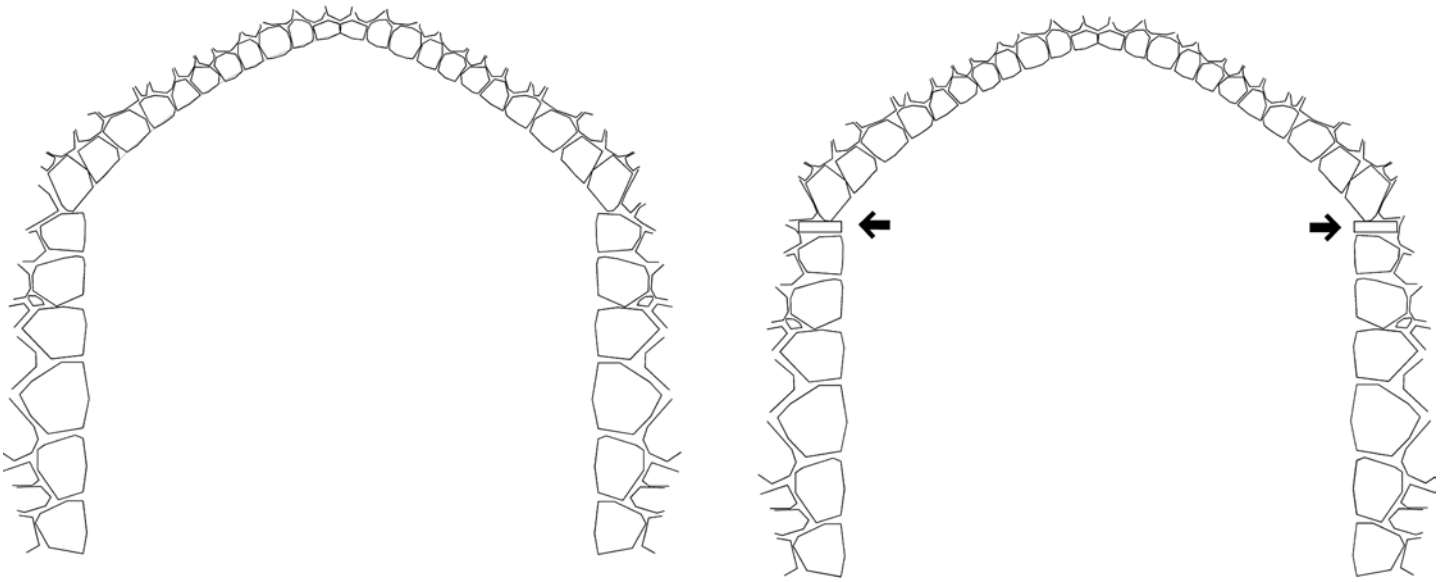


Figure 5-21: Drawing of typical stone pointed barrel-vaults with and without a course of brick at the springing line. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-22: Stone pointed barrel-vault built on a course of brick at the springing line, Qal'ih-Rustam of Khusf. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-23: Stone pointed barrel-vault without a course of brick at the springing line, Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun. Credit: Author.

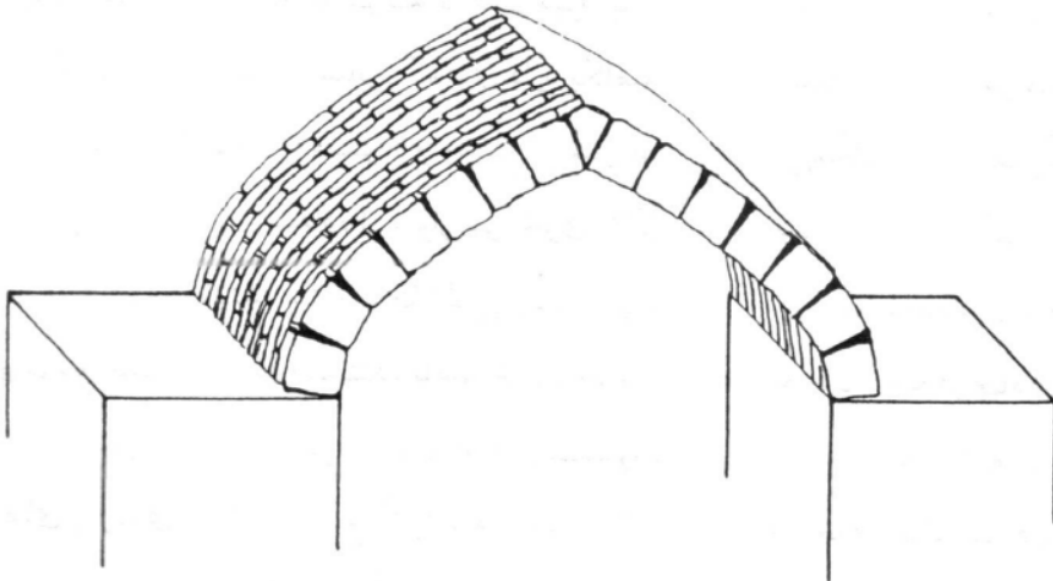


Figure 5-24: Drawing of a typical pitched-brick vault (*ṭāq-i żarbī*). Credit: Pirniya, *Chafdhā va Ṭaqhā*, 48.



Figure 5-25: Remains of a pitched-brick vault (*tāq-i zarbī*) in the upper section of Hasan-Abad castle. Credit: Author.



Figure 5-26: A circular pit (about 4 m in diameter and at least 3.5 m in depth) in the highest section of Qal'eh-Dukhtar of Raqqih. The pit was covered by a brick dome built of *girdchīn* technique as suggested by the remaining two courses of bricks.



Figure 5-27: Remains of a wall from an interior structure with mixed use of material in the north of the highest part of Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun.



Figure 5-28: Furg castle, the remains of the mud-brick battlements and the narrow walkway (allure or wall-walk). Credit: Author.

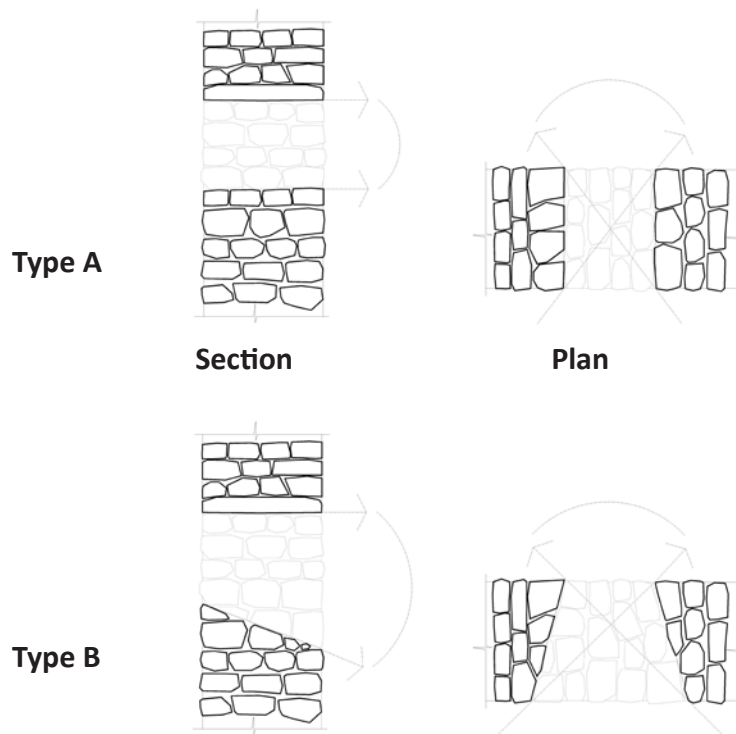


Figure 5-29: The two types of arrow loops in the studied cases. Type A is a simple rectangular arrow loop built commonly in all the castles. Type B is built in a large round tower in the Kuh-Qal'ih of Tun. Credit: Author.



Figure 6-1: Castle of Girdkuh in Qumis. Credit: Author.



Figure 6-2: Castle of Lambsar in Alamut. Credit: Author.



Figure 6-3: The remains of the space known as *mawlā-sarā* (the lord's court) in Alamut castle. Unfortunately, the scaffoldings prevent capturing a broader view of the space. Credit: Author.



Figure 6-4: Details of the brickworks on the northeastern corner of *mawlā-sarā* in Alamut castle. Credit: Author.

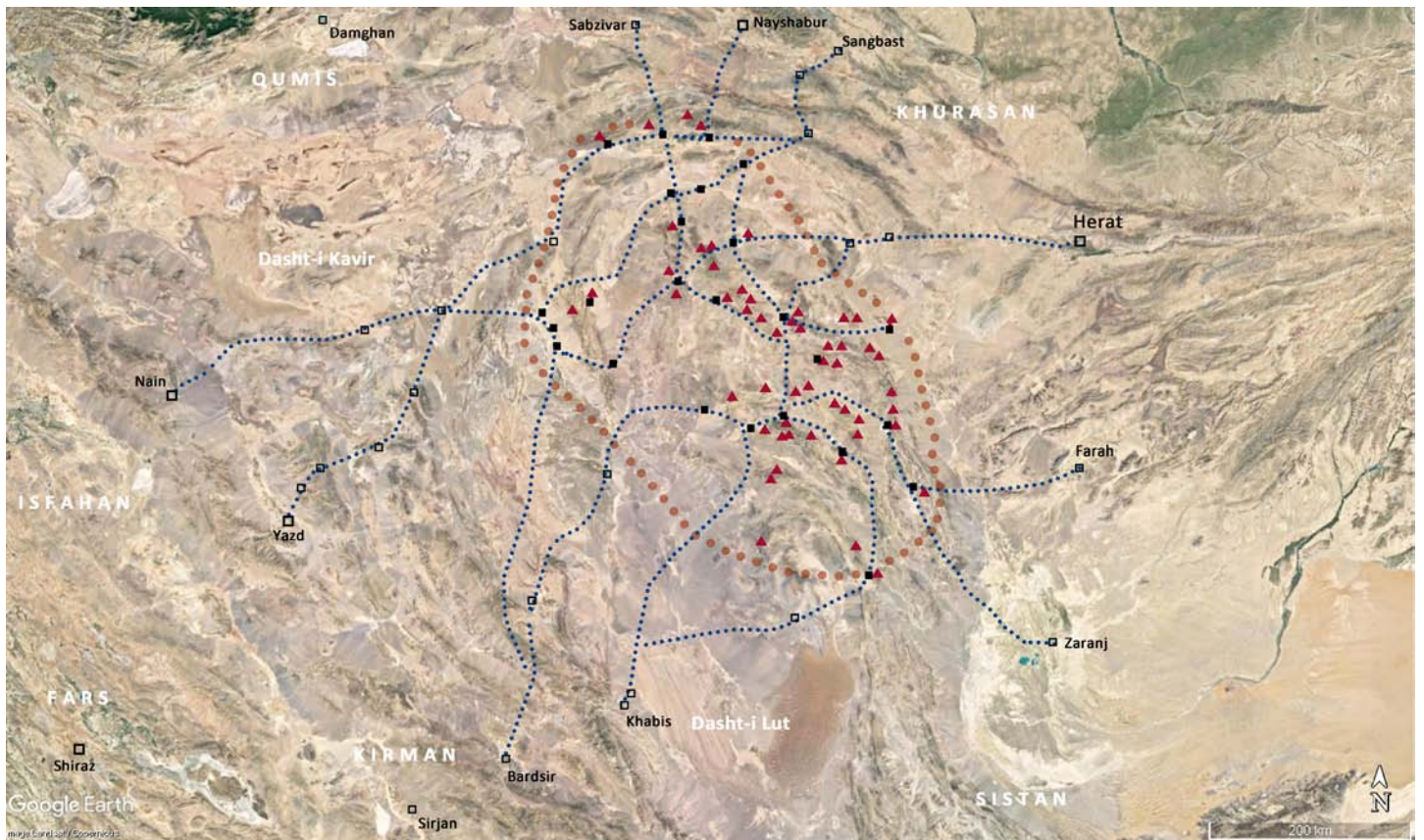


Figure 6-5: Schematic map of possible historical routes and the distribution of the castles in the Quhistan region. Credit: Author.