

Miklós Sárközy

Indigenous versus International? The Role of “Preislamic” Identity and Shi‘i Islam in the Clashes of the Bāwandid Kingdom with the Nizārī Ismā‘īlīs in Northern Iran

Introduction

Northern Iran, the region south of the Caspian Sea, had a very particular role in the Mediaeval Iranian culture and history. Its geographical isolation, mountainous regions, thick forests and the often intolerable sub-Mediterranean climate caused many difficulties for the various Muslim conquerors from the 7th century AD on. Until the rise of the Şafawids in the 16th century, geographical and climatic patterns caused many difficulties for the rulers of the Iranian plateau to conquer northern Iranian areas, making it nearly impossible to incorporate these provinces into major empires of the Saljūqs, Ilkhānids and other central Iranian kingdoms.

The conservatism and relative isolation of the peripheral areas of Northern Iran generated a twofold political rule in the course of history. This meant both the tenacious, centuries-long survival of local elites and traditions which had become extinct in other areas of mediaeval Persia, but on the other hand, various persecuted religious groups were absorbed into this region and used Ṭabaristān, Daylamān and Gilān as an refuge.

The local elites of Ṭabaristān and Gilān consisted of two main groups. The first were the local petty princes with a possible Sasanian background,

who, as their various titles suggest, were governing these Northern areas at the time of the collapse of the Sasanian empire. Such names as *išpahbad* or *bādūspān*, which had been well known administrative ranks in the late Sasanian empire, became royal titles in the Early Islamic Ṭabaristān. This suggests that these ruling families of Northern Iran were very much attached to some pre-Islamic traditions. It cannot be proved conclusively that dynasties of the Dābūyids, Bāwandids or Bādūspānids were direct descendants of earlier Sasanian aristocracy, but their perseverance to preserve many archaic manners shows their commitment to local cults and traditions and is highly significant in terms of pre-Islamic traditions. The newly discovered Pahlawī documents from a local archive of Ṭabaristān, recently published in the *Res Orientales* by Philippe Gignoux and Rika Gyselen (Gignoux 2012, Gysele- n2012a, Gyselen2012b), also attest to the existence of a local Caspian culture with remarkable Sasanian background well into the Early Islamic centuries. The second local subgroup of these Northern Iranian traditionalists were local families from Gilān and Daylamān, who belonged mostly to the Daylamites. The Justānids, the Musāfrids, the Ziyārīds, the Buwayhids etc. all descended from the native inhabitants of the late Sasanian Empire (Vasmer-Bosworth, Rabino di Borgomale, Madelung 1975; Bosworth, 1968; Melville 2000; Madelung 1984).

As far as the immigrant religious groups are concerned, their settlement in the Caspian areas has proved to be an unbroken process from the late Sasanian period, when Mazdakites took shelter in Northern Iran, until the 19th century, when significant Bahai groups settled in these provinces.

The early Islamic period witnessed various religious Shiʿi movements, as the Shiʿis fled to Gilān and Ṭabaristān, took shelter and settled there since the beginnings of Islam. The Zaydīs, different branches of Ismāʿīlīs and the Twelver Shiʿi groups formed a significant group of refugees in the history of the Caspian provinces since the 9th century. Although the ʿAbbāsids also made significant efforts for supporting the case of Sunni Islam in Ṭabaristān and Gilān, it was eventually the Shiʿis and not the Sunnis who had the upper hand in this region and so, from the 9th century onward, the local population who had been adherents of local variants of Zoroastrianism and other local cults were much more attached to the various branches of Shiʿi Islam than to the Sunnis. The influence the Zaydī, the Twelver Shiʿi and later the Ismāʿīlī groups exerted on the population of the Caspian provinces once again reinforced its independent politico-cultural stance within the greater Iranian *oikumene* (Madelung 1985; Madelung 1987, 153-154; 323. Stern. Kasrawī, 36-120; Bosworth 1968, 30-32; Minorsky 1993, 655-57; Bosworth 1996, 148-49; Minorsky-Bosworth, 2000. Bosworth 2013).

By the second half of the 9th century, all of the local post-Sasanian dynasties who due to their often inaccessible geographical position successfully preserved their positions as vassals of major powers had officially embraced Islam, but their conversion to Islam almost certainly coexisted with their strong adherence to their own 'native' pre-Islamic traditions. So far, not much is known about the Islamization of these kingdoms; it must have been a longer process, however. The Middle Persian Pahlawī language and script which represents the paramount continuity of the pre-Islamic culture was still in use as late as the mid-11th century in the Bāwandid court. Politically, however, these old post-Sasanian families who themselves followed mainly Twelver Shi'ī or Zaydī Islam were forced to divide their power over the Caspian areas with various newly arrived Shi'ī rulers.

The first religious kingdoms were founded by the Zaydīs in the 9th century. The Zaydīs were especially influential in Gīlān and Daylamān in the 9th to 11th centuries, but even later their presence is attested to until the 16th century. The Zaydī rulers lacked any kind of pre-Islamic background and until the emergence of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī state they were involved in serious conflicts with the old post-Sasanian families. The post-Sasanian families, first of all the Bāwandids, preferred the Twelver Shi'ī Islam to their own *mazhab* because of their conflicts with the major Sunni and local Zaydī powers. Thus, their religious and cultural identity expressed their political sympathies. Therefore, the pre-Islamic heroic traditions and Twelver Shi'ī beliefs created a twofold identity for the post-Sasanian kingdoms in Ṭabaristān.

When the Nizārī Ismā'īlī state was founded at the end of the 11th century AD, the situation was much the same as a few decades before. The Nizārī Ismā'īlī state established by Ḥasan Sabbāḥ swiftly replaced the Zaydīs who by the end of the 11th century had become very fragmented. In fact, the centre of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī state, the fortress of Alamūt and its neighbouring areas in Rūdbār, must have belonged to the Zaydīs before 1090 AD.

After eliminating the local Zaydī resistance and defending itself against the Saljūqs, the Nizārī Ismā'īlī state successfully emerged as a local power which gained significant international fame and influence due to its political and military prowess. On the other hand, the early 12th century witnessed the emergence of another local power in Northern Iran, that of the Iṣpahbadiyya line of the Twelver Shi'ī Bāwandids. After resisting foreign incursion, the Bāwandid kingdom sought to extend its influence in Northern Iran. Albeit having briefly allied with the Nizārīs under the Saljūq threat, the Bāwandids soon became formidable opponents of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī state. Much of the 12th century was spent on Nizārī-Bāwandid local wars. This conflict eventually ended with the Nizārī victory in 1210,

when the embattled Bāwandid kingdom collapsed under the Nizārī and Khwārizmian attacks.

This paper constitutes an attempt to shed light on the ideological stance of the Bāwandid rulers towards the Nizārīs during the Alamūt period between 1093 and 1257. Instead of enumerating endless wars and clashes between the Nizārīs and the Bāwandids, it would be more important to map the doctrinal background of the two main competing rivals in the Caspian provinces. It must be admitted that a mutual analysis based on both Nizārī and Bāwandid written sources would have been more useful; however, as it is well known, the vast corpus of pro-Nizārī historical works of this period has long disappeared or been destroyed under the attacks of the Mongols; only the pro-Bāwandid sources can be used for our essay (Daftary 1992, 91–97).

The main primary sources

As far as the ideological clash of the Bāwandids with the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs is concerned, two main groups of sources are present for analysis.

First of all, a brief mention must be made of the works of the local mediaeval Caspian historiography, such as those of Ibn Isfandiyār, Āmulī and Marašī, which often reflect the ideology of the local post-Sasanian monarchs (Ibn Isfandiyār^c, Melville 1998; Melville 2000). These chronicles were composed in the 13th to 15th centuries in Northern Iran and are a part of a long-lasting local cultural-historical tradition.

In addition, it is interesting to see that some religious and literary sources of the 12th century contain valuable material for the study of the Nizārī–Bāwandid contacts. In this sense, the *Kitāb al-Naqẓ* by ʿAbd al-Jalīl Qazwīnī Rāzī, a 12th-century Twelver Shiʿī scholar and enemy of the Nizārīs, is of huge importance. Regrettably, this treatise, which is one of the most significant sources of socio-religious history of the 12th century, has been fairly neglected by scholarly research. In his writings, Qazwīnī Rāzī advocated a conciliatory attitude among Twelver Shiʿī groups and Sunnis against the Nizārīs, muting the Shiʿī criticism of the Companions of the Prophet and stressing the Shiʿī and ʿAlīd sympathies among Sunni ʿulamā and ascetics. In particular, he favored the development of friendly ties with the Ḥanafī school generally backed by Eastern Saljūq court of Sanjar, emphasizing doctrinal agreement of the Imāmīya with Muʿtazilī and Māturīdī theology and pro-ʿAlīd sentiments among Saljūq Turks. Within the Imāmīya, he enthusiastically supported the stance of the uṣūlīs, who sided with a theology close to Muʿtazilism based on reason, and refused the akhbārīs, who, like their traditionalist Sunnite counterparts, relied solely on tradition in all religious matters. As a committed

Twelver Shi'ī uṣūlīs scholar, Qazwīnī Rāzī strongly supported the Twelver Shi'ī Bāwandid *iṣpahbads* against the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs and in his book he regularly lashed out against Alamūt, emphasizing a Sunni-Twelver Shi'ī cooperation against the Nizārīs.

Political hostilities and ideologies in Northern Iran in the 12th century

Regarding the role of the Nizārī state, their policy and resistance against the Saljūqs and later the Khwārizmians are well-established historical facts. Farhad Daftary notes that some signs of Turco-Iranian rivalry can be detected in their conflict. Indeed, according to Juwaynī, and Rašīd al-Dīn Faẓlallah in the *Sarguzašt-i Sayyidnā* and in the *Haft Bāb-i Bābā Sayyidnā*, Ḥasan Sabbāḥ is credited with calling Turks ignorants and enemies of the Persian-speaking world, especially the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs (Daftary 2007, 316). But, we believe, the political make-up of area where the Nizārī state was founded was far more complex than a Nizārī-Saljūq, Ismā'īlī-Sunni or Persian-Turkish opposition. On the local level, the Ismā'īlīs had rather belligerent neighbours: the post-Sasanian Twelver Shi'ī Bāwandids, who viewed them with growing suspicion as they considered the Nizārīs their main rivals in the Caspian provinces. The two main forces in the 12th century were undoubtedly the Ismā'īlīs and their post-Sāsānian rivals, the Bāwandids. These two groups considered themselves arch-foes and rivals for the same territories of Northern Iran. Beside sophisticated military actions, they used ideological weapons, targeting each other's identities.

Interestingly, the local Bāwandids used the same ideological weapon against the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs as the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs used against the Saljūqs: the local traditions and the concept of indigenouness. In their eyes, the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs were cosmopolitan newcomers, just as the Saljūqs were in the eyes of the Ismā'īlīs. Through a thorough analysis of local sources, we try to shed light on the hitherto unresearched relationship of the Ismā'īlīs with the local post-Sāsānian clans. This conflict did not lack religious background, since the post-Sāsānian traditionalist forces successfully united many other non-Ismā'īlī Shi'ī groups, first of all Zaydīs.

The traditionalist “pre-Islamic” doctrine and its role in the Bāwandid ideology in the 12/13th centuries

Alleged “pre-Islamic” traditions as a sign of indigenouness undoubtedly played a major role in the cultural and ideological life of some Northern Iranian families versus the “foreign” new states in the Caspian provinces.

The Dābūyids, the Qārinwands, the Bāwandids and the Bādūspānids all had their legends tracing their origin back to the Sasanian family or at least to a high-ranking aristocratic clan of the Sasanian empire. By the 12th century the Bāwandids had become the most significant local family to continue these local traditions. The *Tā'riḫ-i Ṭabaristān* of Ibn Isfandiyyār provides many fascinating details which attest to the popularity of local vivid perceptions of the Sasanian past as elements in the Bāwandid doctrine.

The official genealogy of a Bāwandid ruler recorded by Ibn Isfandiyyār at the beginning of 13th century:

The titlature of the Bāwandid ruler Ḥusām al-Dawla Ardašīr (1173-1205/6) is preserved in the *Tā'riḫ-i Ṭabaristān* by Ibn Isfandiyyār. Ibn Isfandiyyār was his contemporary, a courtier who started to compile his chronicle at the request of his master, the Bāwandid iṣpahbad.

The titles of Ḥusām al-Dawla Ardašīr are an interesting mixture of well-known Islamic titles and local indigenous elements. Many titles in this list show striking similarity to the titles of the Būyid rulers preserved in Arabic a few centuries before. However, a few elements, such as *Khudāwand-i khudāwandān šahriyār-i Īrān wa Tūrān, tājbakhš-i 'Irāq wa Khurāsān, sulṭān-i tāzīkān, al-iṣfahbad al-a'zam šāhānšāh al-mu'azzam* (The lord of the lords, the prince of Īrān wa Tūrān, the crown-bestower of 'Irāq wa Khurāsān, the sultan of the Arabs, the grand iṣpahbad, the mighty king of kings Ibn Isfandiyyār, II. 171) or *Ṭahmūrath al-zamān, Khusraw-i Khusrawān, šāh-i Īrān wa Tūrān* (The Ṭahmūrath of the period, the Caesar of Caesars, king of Īrān wa Tūrān), as well as the extremely archaizing *Farswāzgaršāh*, indicate an active role of local Caspian traditions dating back to the pre-Islamic era, as well as to rulers of pre-Islamic Iran. The title *Farswāzgaršāh* appears also in the so-called Tansar Letter, attributed to a high ranking Zoroastrian priest of Ardaxšīr I, the first Sasanian king. The Tansar Letter was also preserved in the opening chapter of the *Tā'riḫ-i Ṭabaristān* (Ibn Isfandiyyār I, 11-55).

This title is a well-known local element which can be attested only in the titulatures of Northern Iranian rulers. The question whether the Bāwandids were linked to the Sasanians is open, since their exact origin remained obscure in the written sources (given that they appeared only after the fall of the Dābūyid kingdom in the second half of the 8th century). But some definitely conservative cultural elements, such as formulas inherited from the pre-Islamic or early-Islamic past (or traditions believed to be “pre-Islamic”) in their court life survived even as late as the 12-13th centuries.

The coronation of the Bāwandid prince Šams al-Mulūk Rustam (1205)

Another fascinating reference to Bāwandid traditionalism can be found in the description of the coronation ceremony of the Bāwandid iṣpahbad Šams al-Mulūk Rustam (1205/6-1210), who was the son of Ḥusām al-Dawla Ardašīr (1173-1205/6). Ibn Isfandiyār or the author of the second part of the *Tā'riḫ-i Ṭabaristān* who may have attended this celebration himself, in his regrettably brief account hints at some special rites "according to the customs and practices of non-Arab kings" practiced in the Bāwandid court at that period. Sadly, this account does not explain what exactly were ceremonies and "ancient customs" held on the occasion of the new ruler's accession.

The magnates and aristocrats of Ṭabaristān came with Rukn al-Dawla to the fortress of Dārā and killed iṣpahbad Šams al-Mulūk Rustam. And in the same day they returned to Rūdbar and from there they moved to Mangūl and Āmul. The astrologers said that this period of the next five days is not fortunate to the ascension to the throne, but Rukn al-Dawla did not listen to them and contrary to the advice of the astrologers he ascended to the throne and according to the manners and customs of non-Arab kings [*bar rasm-i wa ṭarīq-i mulūk-i 'ajam*] there was a session of happiness for seven days as well as food, celebration scattering money and gold for the people. The iṣpahbads, the Bāwands, the amīrs, the aristocrats all flocked to the court from the borders and congratulated to the Rukn al-Dawla. On the eighth day Rukn al-Dawla ascended to the throne of the kingdom, tied his girdle and put his hat on his head, and he held all the magnates, aristocrats, amīrs, princes and everybody in the position which they had had. And he gave all the amīrs and iṣpahbads robes of honour and then ended the period of mourning. Rukn al-Dawla sent envoys to all the regions of the provinces and a messenger arrived from the sultan of sultans of the world for the mourning and for congratulating to the new ruler (Ibn Isfandiyār II. 171).

In addition to the presumed "pre-Islamic" or conservative elements, the Twelver Shi'ī doctrine also played a major role in the court ideology of the Bāwandids. It is yet underestimated how major a role the Bāwandids played in the history of the Twelver Shi'ism in pre-Šafawid Persia. From the 10th century, when the Bāwandids had become the followers and supporters of the Twelver Shi'ī branch of Islam, they gradually turned into the patrons of Twelver Shi'ism lending active and open support to both the local and the more remote Twelver groups in the Islamic world. Their adherence to Twelver Shi'ī beliefs and at the same time their strong Iranian traditionalism are clearly visible in

some sources dating from the 12th century. A notable characteristic of their Twelver Shi'ī beliefs is that they often co-existed with the Caspian Iranian traditionalism; elements of a mixed “pre-Islamic”/Twelver Shi'ī royal ideology also survived in the Caspian historiography.

The story of the Hindu pilgrims at the court of the Bāwandid prince Ḥusām al-Dawla Ardašīr around 1200

Perhaps the most striking amalgam of Twelver Shi'ī and ideological elements believed to be pre-Islamic can be observed in the chapter from Ibn Isfandiyyār referring to the visit of the Hindu pilgrims at the court of the Bāwandids. At the first glance, the tale undoubtedly contains legendary elements. The number of the pilgrims is forty, which is one of the well-known symbolic numbers used in Persian tales and art. Furthermore, the journey of the forty pilgrims certainly reflects some ideas of Sufism as it was represented in the *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* of ʿAttār, which clearly influenced Ibn Isfandiyyār's narrative.

However, another reference to the dual (Shi'ī and “pre-Islamic”) roots of the Bāwandids is the most fascinating part of this short passage. The Indian Muslim ruler named Jihjand calls the ruler of *Ṭabaristān* *'kisrawīnīžād and follower of this mazḥab* (i.e. the Twelver Shi'ism). A local sayyid and adviser of Ḥusām al-Dawla Ardašīr, called Sayyid Bahā' al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Mahdī al-Mamṭirī, replies to the Indian ruler in an apparently eloquent and florid style in Arabic. Ibn Isfandiyyār preserved some chapters from this reply, which praises the virtues of the Hindu pilgrims as well as Ḥusām al-Dawla Ardašīr, reiterating his long titles in Arabic. This letter calls *Ṭabaristān rawzat al-dunyā 'the garden of the world'* which again underlines the propagandistic elements of this semi-fictitious story that nevertheless clearly reflects the dual ideological background of the Bāwandid court of the late 12th century, where presumed old Iranian traditions were intermingled with Twelver Shi'ī elements:

In the year of 579 there came two Hindu from the ruler of Mīhrāj, who was called Jihjand to his majesty with a letter telling him that “we were forty people selected by ruler of Mīhrāj because of the fact that an Imamite ʿAlawī came to our land and started preaching his mazḥab and the Shi'ī way of faith of which we had never heard. The wise men of that land had a dispute with him and in each of his word there was proof and the prevalence of truth was with this Imamite man. The king told us, there is a just and righteous ruler in *Ṭabaristān* having a descent from the *Kisrās* [*kisrawīnīžād*] and he follows this *mazḥab*. He sent us with this letter to this ruler. From this group thirty eight person had been separated through differ-

ent sorts of death and losing the right direction and only we two persons reached our aim" (Ibn Isfandiyyār, I., 116).

Regarding the international Shi'ī contacts of the Bāwandids, Ibn Isfandiyyār says that they regularly hosted and supported thousands of sayyids with food. Both Ibn Isfandiyyār and Qazwīnī Rāzī mentions the Bāwandids' warm welcome and lavish ceremonies and banquets held at the honour of large groups of Twelver Shi'ī sayyids of al-Ḥilla in Āmul, the Bāwandid capital. Following the decline of Qum and Rayy, Al-Ḥilla in present-day Iraq was regarded as the most important Twelver Shi'ī religious center of the Twelver Shi'ī world.

Combined pre-Islamic and Twelver Shi'ī ideological elements against the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs under Bāwandid ruler Šāh Ghāzī Rustam (1141-1165) in the *Kitāb al-Naqẓ*

Besides the local chronicles of the Bāwandids, the *Kitāb al-Naqẓ* by Qazwīnī Rāzī also contains a significant amount of information about the political/religious propaganda of the Bāwandids in the mid-12th century.

The author of this important theological and doctrinal text attempted to reconcile Uṣūlī Twelver Shi'īs with Ḥanafī Sunnis. Though being a predominantly doctrinal, Qazwīnī Rāzī's voluminous work does not lack some elements of actual politics. On the basis of his comments, he seems to have been an enthusiastic supporter of the Saljūq-Bāwandid alliance against the Nizārīs. No doubt, the main reason behind this unusual Twelver Shi'ī-Sunni alliance is Qazwīnī Rāzī's fierce anti-Nizārī stance. Although being of Qazwīnī origin, he spent most of his life in Rayy in the 12th century. As it is well-known, both of these urban centres were at the forefront of the Nizārī/anti-Nizārī military operations of the 12th century. As a Twelver Shi'ī scholar, Qazwīnī Rāzī witnessed the decline of the once powerful Twelver Shi'ī education centre in Rayy, which he probably attributed to the threat represented by the Nizārīs. His harsh words against the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs reveal Qazwīnī Rāzī's zeal and even hatred towards the Nizārīs (Madelung 1982).

But anti-Nizārī rhetoric in this period was hardly rare. The truly new aspect of Qazwīnī Rāzī's argumentation is his effort to link his own personal anti-Nizārī views with the support of the Bāwandids. It is therefore tempting to pose the question whether Qazwīnī Rāzī was a pro-Bāwandid partisan. For the present, this fascinating question is still impossible to answer. However, Qazwīnī Rāzī spent nearly all his active life in Rayy; this period coincided with the rule of Bāwandid ṣpahbad Šāh Ghāzī Rustam (1141-1165) during which

the Bāwandids reached the zenith of their power and successfully extended their control to many neighbouring areas of Ṭabaristān, including Rayy and Qazwīn, attempting to fill the political vacuum left by the Saljūqs. After 1154, in the latter part of his reign, Šāh Ghāzī Rustam had far-reaching aspirations to replace the Saljūqs in Khurāsān and in Northern Iran. The Nizārīs were definitely his main opponents, whom he tried to subdue by force. Šāh Ghāzī Rustam's attempts to conquer Nizārī-controlled areas were relatively successful, although he was ultimately unable to capture the key fortresses of the Nizārīs, Girdkūh, Alamūt and Lamasar.

1. As far as Qazwīnī Rāzī's comments are concerned, he made painstaking efforts to give doctrinal support the Bāwandid-Saljūq political coalition. In many passages he placed much emphasis on reconciliation between the Bāwandids and Saljūqs. However, in some cases, it is obvious that Qazwīnī Rāzī's book recounts past events; thus, these passages do not propose but rather re-interpret well-known facts for a contemporary audience. In many cases, Qazwīnī Rāzī's logic and working method lie in the fact that he intends to build a new Twelver Shi'ī-Sunni doctrinal and theological reconciliatory concept by recounting military campaigns led by the Bāwandid armies and the (former) Saljūq military leaders, such as Sunqur Inānj and Sābiq Qazwīnī. Though he does not mention too many political events, often making only slight references to them, it is clear from his account that he closely followed the events of Šāh Ghāzī Rustam's rule and his military actions against the Nizārīs:

The kingdom of Mazandaran came to Rustam b. ʿAlī b. Šahriyār, and twenty seven thousand *mulhid* [Nizārī Ismāʿīlī] men, of who there is credit and information, were killed by his sword, besides that group of *mulhids* [Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs] of whose massacre there is no information. And none of the sultans and amirs of the world had made similar conquests, and if somebody had made it, it had not remained uncovered that everybody should know that Sārī and Uram are the Qiblas of Islam [*qibla al-Islām*] and not the demon of Alamūt (Qazwīnī Rāzī, 110-111).

2. In his narrative, Qazwīnī Rāzī constructed the idea of the Muslim champion embodied by Šāh Ghāzī Rustam, who was much praised for his piety, courage and the staunch support offered to Twelver Shi'ī sayyids in that period. In Qazwīnī Rāzī's book, the heartlands of the Bāwandid kingdom, Sārī, Āmul and Uram, were occasionally hailed as the new Qibla of Islam as opposed to Alamūt. The concept of comparing the main urban areas of the Bāwandids to the holiest city of Islam is perhaps the most remarkable

element in this account. The influence of a possible Bāwandid religious Twelver Shi'ī propaganda is clearly discernible in this concept. By glorifying the Bāwandid Twelver rulers, Qazwīnī Rāzī himself became a Twelver Shi'ī preacher whose main aim was to counterweight the possible influence the Nizārīs exerted on the Caspian population. The tale of Hindu pilgrims, as well as the close contacts the Bāwandids held with the sayyids of al-Ḥilla mentioned by Ibn Isfandiyār, certainly manifest themselves in this proud declaration of Qazwīnī Rāzī, which featured the Bāwandids as the leaders of the Twelver Shi'ī world or perhaps the whole *umma* of the Islam (since Qazwīnī Rāzī called Sārī the *Qibla* of Islam, thus referring to Mekka instead of Najaf or Alamūt).

From time to time Qazwīnī Rāzī glorifies Šāh Ghāzī Rustam's military prowess against the Nizārīs, stating that during his rule he had killed no less than twenty-seven thousand Nizārīs and re-conquered numerous fortresses from them. Furthermore, he states contemptuously that the Bāwandid ruler gave the body of the massacred Nizārīs to dogs. Elsewhere, he praises the dynastic connections between the Saljūqs and the Bāwandids, thus replying to some accusations which criticized the decision of marrying a Sunnite Saljūq princess to a Twelver Shi'ī Bāwandid ruler. Qazwīnī Rāzī dismisses any similarity and contacts between the Ismā'īlīs and Twelver Shi'īs, between the two branches of Shi'ī Islam; instead, he praises the common moral and religious values of the Saljūq and Bāwandid rulers. Evidently, equal truth, justice and religious piety of the Sunni and Twelver Shi'ī kings was in his eyes superior to theological contacts between diverse sects of Shi'ī Islam.

It is known that Sārī and Uram were always capital of the kingdom [*dār al-mulk*] and throne of kings of Māzandarān [*sarīrghāh-i mulūk Māzandarān*], and foreigners, merchants were in safe there, and the voices of the Muslims came out from their communities, mosques, madrasahs and meetings. And nowadays during the rule of the King of Kings, Rustam b. ʿAlī – *may God endorse his victory* – and during his father, the king of Māzandarān ʿAlī b. Šahriyār – *may God be merciful to Him* – this kingdom was the Qibla of Islam [*qibla al-Islām*] and each year thousands of *mulhīds* and *bāṭinīs* [Nizārī Ismā'īlīs] were thrown to the meal of dogs [*taʿma-i sagān*] in these provinces (Qazwīnī Rāzī, 200-201).

3. The following passage contains further praise of the Bāwandids for the long enduring peace and political cooperation harmony between the Bāwandids and the Saljūqs (at least according to Qazwīnī Rāzī; this was merely his exaggeration). The general impression we derive from

his texts is that Qazwīnī Rāzī's account was heavily influenced by the vehement anti-Nizārī attacks by the armies Šāh Ghāzī Rustam led by the former high-ranking Saljūq officers who joined Šāh Ghāzī Rustam following the disintegration of Sanjar's rule in 1154. His statement and historical exaggeration that the Bāwandids were always the favourites of the Saljūqs certainly indicates that his essay was composed not earlier than the second half of Šāh Ghāzī Rustam's rule, possibly after 1154, when the major anti-Nizārī operations began on behalf of the Bāwandids.

Iṣṣahbad ʿAlī was Shiʿi and thoughtful and Twelver Imamite [*šīʿī wa muʿtaqad wa dawāzdah imāmī*], in contrast with Khwāja, who had said in this book a few times that there is no power and place for the Twelver Shiʿis and he said, that Twelver Shiʿi and *mulḥid* [Nizārī Ismāʿīlī] are the same one and on one occasion he said the following one: a sultan such as Malikšāh gave his daughter to a Twelver Shiʿi, it means that he gave her to unsafety and malevolence and evil faith until these claims were annihilated in a grinder, the sultan is wise, just, believer and the iṣṣahbad ʿAlī who was his son-in-law is also believer, thoughtful, Shiʿi, Imamite and Uṣūlī (Qazwīnī Rāzī, 108-109).

4. In the following passage, Qazwīnī Rāzī again repeats his argumentation, whereby religious piety, justice, prudence, but above all an intense anti-Nizārī activity were the foremost priority and the common principles of the Saljūq-Bāwandid Shiʿi coalition. He stresses the Bāwandid dynasty's magnanimity, underlying their active support to leading sayyid families. Similar passages can be found also in *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* by Ibn Isfandiyār, where there are excerpts of reports on lavish ceremonies held by Šāh Ghāzī Rustam in honour of sayyids.

The Kings of Māzandarān [*mulūk-i Māzandarān*] such as Sahryar, Qārin, Girdabāzū, iṣṣahbad. ʿAlī and the martyr Rustam b. ʿAlī are more famous than the sun in ruling the world, in capturing castles, in leading military campaigns, in killing enemies, in eloquence, in intelligence, in justice, in massacring and are the favourites of their majesties, the sultans, and these sultans are from the Saljūq dynasty [*āl-i Saljūq*]. And that family is more famous than the sun in their homeland and province – *May God give them life in the posterity*. And the fact that sayyids of Sārī, Sayyid al-Ḥasan and his sons Šaraf-al-Dīn, Tāj al-Dīn, Qutb al-Dīn, Bahā al-Dīn all of them had science, eloquence, nobility, and prominent descent and virtue which existed and still exists, have not remained sheltered (Qazwīnī Rāzī, 399).

5. Whilst the main emphasis in this passage is put on the Bāwandids, it also contains references to the Saljūqs and their Nizārī-related policy. Qazwīnī Rāzī acknowledges here that the Saljūqs had maintained political contacts with the Nizārīs (which other sources, such as Rašīd al-Dīn, also confirm), but that by his time they reverted this policy, cutting all their ties with the Nizārīs under the vazirate of Khwāja Muḥīn al-Dīn Kāšī. This Saljūq statesman, after fighting the Nizārīs and levying taxes on them, was murdered, presumably by the Nizārīs, and in the *Kitāb al-naqẓ* was highly praised for his virtues and as a victim of his anti-Nizārī activities.

That Khwāja Šahīd Muḥīn al-Dīn Kāšī when he became the wazīr of the great sultan Sanjar [*wazīr-i sulṭān-i aẓam Sanjar*], *May God's mercy be upon them*, he refused Sanjar's advisors concerning the peace with the *mulḥids* [Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs], and he closed the ways to the *mulḥids* [Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs] and he levied on the *mulḥids* [Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs] heavy taxes, and thousands of them were taken prisoner and killed by him until finally he was killed by the sword of a *mulḥids* [Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs] in the capital of Khurāsān, when he became an old just man (Qazwīnī Rāzī, 131).

6. The mightiest Bāwandid ruler and alleged patron of Qazwīnī Rāzī, Šāh Ghāzī Rustam himself, is often portrayed in the *Kitāb al-naqẓ* as the ideal Muslim ruler and promoted as a true Muslim warrior who successfully united moderate Sunnis and Twelver Shiʿīs in their fight against the so-called 'infidels'. Qazwīnī Rāzī championed Šāh Ghāzī Rustam in a very sophisticated but also very pragmatic way, stating that no other Sunnī ruler had achieved such a military success as he. The writer also said that since Šāh Ghāzī Rustam, as a Twelver Shiʿī ruler, proved to be far more superior in his fight against the '*mulḥids*' (i.e. the Nizārīs) to any other Sunni king before, the Sunnis should favour him as their righteous leader. These accounts explicitly refer to the period between 1154 and 1165, when the armies of Šāh Ghāzī Rustam led an intense anti-Nizārī military campaign.

Which Sunni ruler did make the same with the *mulḥids* [Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs] which was made by the Shiʿī King of King Rustam b. ʿAlī b. Šahriyār in all over the world and in Sunnī Muslim territories? He captured castles and took the *mulḥids* and killed and exterminated them, which is clearer than the Sun till it becomes evident that how Shiʿism treats with the infidels and enemies of the faith through the holy war (Qazwīnī Rāzī, 553).

7. Another aspect of the Bāwandid political propaganda in the *Kitāb al-naqẓ* is the strict denial of any kind of contacts between the Nizārīs and Twelver

Shi'is in terms of both political contacts and shared religious values. Yet contacts, and in fact a peaceful and real political coalition, did exist between the Nizārīs and Bāwandids, when both local states were threatened by Saljūq invasions. Despite these statements in the *Kitāb al-naqẓ*, active Nizārī groups existed also in the Bāwandid provinces. Furthermore, Ibn Isfandiyyār informs us about the operations of Nizārī groups in the main cities of Ṭabaristān but also in a few mountainous areas around Lajīm under the Bāwandid ʿAlā al-Dawla ʿAlī (cca 1120-1141). It is easily conceivable that these Nizārī cells remained active even under Šāh Ghāzī Rustam, providing their coreligionists with valuable information about political and military plans against the Nizārī fortresses.

Here, Qazwīnī Rāzī makes painstaking efforts to refute any sort of co-operation between the Nizārīs and Twelver Shi'is during Šāh Ghāzī Rustam's rule. These passages perhaps addressed a contemporary Sunni audience trying to recruit Sunni forces for the support of Šāh Ghāzī Rustam. As it is known, many former Saljūq senior officers, who had been Sunni military leaders in the past, joined Šāh Ghāzī Rustam after the fall of Sanjar and many of them became prominent members of Šāh Ghāzī Rustam's court and army.

And it was said: "and there was another traitor [*khabīthī*] named Bilcamīd Munāqibī said the same absurdities, and he fled to Sārī from Rayy being accused with heresy, and he settled there and he treated well with the *mulḥids* [Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs] of Sārī and Uram, but finally at the end of his life he was arrested and his head became like the head of pigs and died".

But the reply to these words of absurdity and madness which were said because of avenge, accusation and absurdity is that: When did this man flee from Rayy to Sārī? Intelligent persons do not believe that in these thirty years any famous *mulḥids* [Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs] hiding himself in the area of Girdkūh or the Ṭabas of Gilakī [?], or the district of Alamūt or in the castles of Ṭāliqān, when being caught, he found his way to Sārī or Uram to the spears of the King of Kings, the ruler of Māzandarān and his body became the food of the dogs, where thousands of these dogs of hell and evil pigs [Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs] were eaten by predatory animals and birds by the order of this Shi'ī king with divine support (Qazwīnī Rāzī, 110-111).

The *Kitāb al-naqẓ* in many ways reflects the mid-12th century Bāwandid political propaganda. There are conflicting data about the possible date of composition of the *Kitāb al-naqẓ*. At one point, the text hails Šāh Ghāzī Rus-

tam as a '*šahīd*', a martyr, which is more than surprising. Although he was attacked and wounded several times by the *fidā'īs*, according to Ibn Isfandiyyār, who was as just hostile towards the Nizārīs as Qazwīnī Rāzī and who never missed a chance to report a Nizārī attack against the Bāwandids, Šāh Ghāzī Rustam died due to an illness when he was nearly sixty years old in 1165. In other passages, however, Qazwīnī Rāzī promotes Šāh Ghāzī Rustam as his own contemporary. Be that as it may, this important doctrinal and political source of the 12th century can be dated to the end of Šāh Ghāzī Rustam's rule.

Conclusion

In this paper, we tried to reconstruct some elements of the ideological/doctrinal background of the Nizārī period focusing on the Bāwandid case. This important Northern Iranian Twelver Shi'ī dynasty flourished in the 12th century in the heyday of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs. In our analysis we focused on two Bāwandid-related sources in order to throw light on the hitherto neglected ideological aspects of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī – Bāwandid contacts. Pre-Islamic nostalgia and Twelver Shi'ī propaganda co-existed in the those sources which reflect the official ideology of the Bāwandids against the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs. Thus, it can be said that in the case of the Bāwandid perceptions concerning the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs, the concept of "indigenesness" based on a twofold doctrinal background versus the "internationalism" of the "newcomer" Nizārī Ismā'īlīs was widely used in numerous occasions.

On the other hand, some of our pro-Bāwandid sources attest that this indigenous or local attitude of the Bāwandids was often combined with pro-Sunnī and pro-Saljūq sentiments in order to further weaken the position of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs. If the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs were regarded as "intruders" in the light of the nativist tendencies of pro-Bāwandid authors, why were the equally "international" Saljūqs treated more positively in these sources? The quickly changing political alliances no doubt played a certain role in these surprising combinations of internationalism and indigenesness.

However, a further analysis is still needed, for there are other literary and philosophical texts of the period which perhaps contain further material for the study of the ideological and doctrinal perceptions on the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs constructed by their neighbours.

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