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Three Excerpts Quoting a Term *al-ḥašīšiyya*

Summary

As is known, the famous Arabist Silvestre de Sacy derived etymology of the term “Assassin” from the word Ḥašīšiyya to describe the the Nizārīs sect. He found this term in the manuscript of Abū Šāma’s *Chronicle* written in the XIIIth century. In this paper I focused on three mention from the sources, which were created before the times of Abū Šāma. In the first case is was the commentary to the epistle of the Fatimid caliph Al-Amīr, where the term Ḥašīšiyya was used twice in pejorative meaning to describe the enemies of the Mustalis imama. However, there are to early references in Al-Bundārī’s *Chronicle*, abridged version of non-existent work ‘Imād ad-Dīn Muḥammad al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1201). Al-Bundārī uses the term Ḥašīšiyya for the first time in the context of the case of vizir Qiwaḥ ad-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim ad-Darkazīnī (ad-Darguzīnī), executed by sultan Tuḡrīl II in 527/1133. For the second time Al-Bundārī mentions Ḥašīšiyya as killers of Saḡūq prince (*malik*) Dā’ūd Ibn Maḥmūd. Because the term Ḥašīšiyya was used here instead of to describe Nizārī Ismā’īlis I suggest linking it with the opinion of medieval islamic authors of low social-intellectual status of the Syrian followers of Ismā’īlis.

Keywords: Ismā’īliyya, Bāṭiniyya, Ḥašīšiyya, Nizārīs, Shi’ites, Imams

It is commonly known that Antoine Isaac Silvestre, baron de Sacy (1758–1838) the most eminent orientalist of the nineteenth century and one of the founders of modern Orientalism in Europe finally solved, after many abortive attempts of earlier Europeans scholars, the mystery of the name ‘Assassin’. In his study, *Memoire on the ‘Assassins’* (1809, full version 1818)¹ de Sacy examined and rejected all the previous etymological

¹ Antoine I. Silvestre de Sacy, *Memoire sur la dynastie des Assassins, et sur l’étymologie de leur Nom*, “Annales des Voyages” 1809, pp. 325–343; *Memoire sur la dynastie des Assassins, et sur l’étymologie de leur Nom*, “Mémoires de l’Institut Royal de France” 1818, 4 pp. 1–84; English translation: *Memoir on the Dynasty of the Assassins, and on*

explanations, and then showed that the variant forms of the word assassin occurring in base-Latin documents of the Crusaders and in different European languages, were connected with the Arabic word *ḥašīš*².

The first medieval Arabic text known to name *ḥašīšīyya* de Sacy still in the manuscripts was the work of the Syrian chronicler Abū Šāma, in which the Nizari Isma'īlis were in fact called 'Ḥašīšī' (pl. Ḥašīšīyya)³. However, chronologically the oldest Arabic text, unknown to him for obvious reasons, in which this term appears was published by the Indian scholar Asaf A.A. Fyzee (1899–1951) the epistle in fact being of the authorship of some secretaries of Fatimid caliph Al-Amīr (r. 1101–1131)⁴. This epistle is called *Al-Hidāya al-Amīriyya* ("Guidance according to Al-Amīr"). As writes Dr. Fyzee: "The present *risāla* was obviously intended as an answer to some actions of Nizārī propagandist, who, however are not directly referred to in it"⁵. To *risāla* added an appendix, under the elaborate title of *Īqā' ṣawā'iq al-irgām*, or "The fall of the lightning of humiliation" (i.e. upon the enemies of the author). *Al-Hidāya al-Amīriyya* with appendix *Īqā' ṣawā'iq al-irgām* was in fact a decree containing the earliest official Mustalian refutation of the Nizārī claims to the imamate⁶. The creation of this manifest in a clearly two-part structure took place separately in the years 1122–1123. In the second part which is the appendix to *Al-Hidāya al-Amīriyya*, i.e. in the *Īqā' ṣawā'iq*, directed to Mustalī dā'is of Dimašq, the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs were for the first time designated as the *ḥašīšīyya*⁷, and as Professor Daftary aptly concludes: "without any explanation"⁸. In those decrees the wrong answer was given that the misconception teachings of the heretic community *al-ḥašīšīyya* were in the Fatimid Caliphate eradicated. The historical context those decrees was elucidated by i.a. Marshall G.S. Hodgson, Asaf A.A. Fyzee, Samuel Stern, Farhad Daftary⁹.

Two accounts containing the term *al-ḥašīšīyya* are less known in the earliest Selġūqide chronicle *Nuṣrat al-fatra*, written in 579/1183 by 'Imād ad-Dīn Muḥammad al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 597/1201). This work is preserved only in the abridged form, which was compiled Al-Faṭḥ Alī al-Bundārī (XII/XIII). The first record containing the word

the Etymology of their Name, in appendix to: F. Daftary, *The Assassin legends. Myths of the Isma'īlis*, London–New York 1995, pp. 136–188.

² B. Lewis, *Ḥašīshīyya*, in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, vol. III, Leiden 1986, pp. 267–268; F. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs. Their History and Doctrines*, sec. ed., Cambridge 2007, p. 24.

³ S. de Sacy has based on Arabic Manuscript of the Bibliothèque du Roi, no 707 A; now see Abū Šāma, *Kitāb al-rawḍatayn fī aḥbār ad-dawlatayn*, Al-Qāhira 1287–88, 1870–71, vol. 1, pp. 240 and 258.

⁴ *Al-Hidayatu'l-Amīriyya*, ed. A. A.A. Fyzee, London–New York–Bombay–Calcutta–Madras 1938.

⁵ A.A.A. Fyzee, Introduction to *Al-Hidayatu'l-Amīriyya*, p. 3.

⁶ Apud *Īqā' ṣawā'iq al-irgām*, p. 27.

⁷ Ibid., p. 27, 32.

⁸ F. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs...*, p. 24.

⁹ M.G.S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins. The Struggle of early Nizārī Ismā'īlīs against the Islamic world*, The Hague (Mouton), on Nizārīs p. 64, 66, esp. 70–72, 107; dispute with Nizārīs p. 108, 109 f; S.M. Stern, *The Epistle of the Fatimid Caliph al-Amir (al-Hidaya al-Amīriyya) – its Date and Purpose*, "The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland" 1950, 1–2, pp. 20–31; idem, *The Succession to the Fatimid imam al-Amir, the Claims of the later Fatimids to the Imamate and the Rise of Tayyibi Ismailism*, "Oriens" 1951, 4, pp. 193–255; A.A.A. Fyzee, M.G.S. Hodgson see below.

al-ḥaššīyya in Al-Bundarī's work focuses on a case of vizier Qiwām al-Dīn Abu al-Qāsim ad-Darkazīnī (according to C.E. Bosworth: al-Darguzīnī), or Al-Anasābādī, who acted as 'Āriḍ al-Ġayš and then as vizier for sultan Maḥmūd Ibn Muḥammad. On his dismissal he acted as vizier for Ṭuġrīl II in Āzarbāyġān, achieving a reputation for tyranny, till in 527/1133 Ṭuġrīl executed him¹⁰. As well as his successor in office Anūšīrwān, he was peasant origin; he also accuses of using his official position to get rid of enemies, and of financial rapacity. He derived from village Anasābād, "a settlement in *rustāq* Al-A'lam, what in region of Hamaḍān, near Darkāzīn, little town near Al-A'lam"¹¹. According to geographer Yāqūt (1179–1229), all population of that *rustāq* was Mazdakis and heretics"¹². Sultan Saṅġār, as general head of the Salġūqs and general protector of the vizier Darkazīnī was friendly towards to Ismā'īlīs. The historian Ġuwaynī found conciliatory letters from Saṅġār in the Ismā'īlī archives¹³.

This is the first excerpt in Al-Bundarī's work with the term *al-ḥaššīyya*:

"Sultan Ṭuġrīl, with contempt and being in such state that he would not notice the presence of his own brother [if he came], told him: "Where is the army, where are the soldiers, where is that [all] that you promised with such conviction? [The vizier] answered: "Do not worry and do not think about the danger, as I [instead of them] ordered a group (*ġamā'a*) *al-ḥaššīyya* – to kill your enemies, which I am seeking to happen, and which will hasten holding them back and will disperse their bands. At that point the sultan boiled with rage and said to him: "So you discovered the truth of your apostasy (*ilhād*) and you revealed the corruption of your faith (*i'tiqād*). Therefore, he removed him from office and ordered to execute him (so that the embers of fire pervaded his loins – [veins])"¹⁴.

¹⁰ Al-Bundārī, *Zubdat al-nuṣra wa-nuḥbat al-'usra*, ed. M.T. Houtsma in *Recueil de Textes relatifs à l'Histoire des Seljoucides*, II, Leiden 1889, p. 169; Ravandī, *Rāhāt al-sudūr*, ed. M. Iqbal (Gibb Memorial Series, new series, vol. II), Leiden 1921, pp. 208–209. A.K.S. Lambton, *The International Structure of the Saljuq empire*, CHL, vol. V, p. 263: form Abū al-Qāsim Anasābādī Darguzīnī. He come to Işfahān as a child and subsequently entered the services of Kamāl al-Mulk Simirūmī, acting as vizier to Guhar Khatun, Muḥammad b. Malik-Şāh's wife, *ibid.*, p. 264.

¹¹ Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld: *Yacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch*, Leipzig 1925, I, pp. 351–352.

¹² Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī ed. Wüstenfeld, IV, p. 54.

¹³ *The History of the World-Conqueror by 'Ala-ad-Din 'Ata-Malik Juvaini*. Transl. from the text of Mirza Muḥammad Qazwīnī by John A. Boyle, vol. II, Manchester 1958, p. 682.

¹⁴ Al-Bundārī, *Zubdat al-nuṣra wa-nuḥbat al-'usra*, p. 169; al-Husaini, Sadr ad-Din Ali, *Aḥbār ad Dawla as-Salġūqiyya (Zubdat at-tawārīḥ)*, Izdaniye teksta, pierievod, vviedieniye, primeczaniye i priloženiya Z.M. Buniatova, Moskva 1980, transl. p. 99 in Russian; *ibidem* manuscripts photocopy, p. 58b, l.3: *ahl Alamūt*. In al-Husaini instead of the group *ḥaššīs* (*ġamā'at al-ḥaššīyya*) the vers: men of Alamut (*ahl Alamūt*) as potential executors of crimes.

The second testimony in the Al-Bundārī's work with term *al-ḥašīšīyya* concerns the attempt on the life of sultan Dā'ūd:

“And it is said that Al-ʿĀmir Zankī Ibn Aq-Sunqur placed in his milieu [i.e. Dā'ūd] somebody from *Ḥašīšīyyat aš-Šām* to kill him, and in this way he protected his country, as sultan Masud wanted to direct Dā'ūd to Aš-Šām to protect Islamic ports. It scared Zankī and made him powerless and helpless, as it is said. When Zankī was feeling helpless, a stratagem proved to be effective to calm him down. The message about it [the assassination] reached Bagdad, that in the city of the Caliphal Palace (Dār al-Ḥīlāfa) a three-day mourning was held with the participation of people of high standing, and the loss was believed to be one of the most terrible disasters”¹⁵.

A further period of crisis and chaos of the Salġūqīd Empire occurred in 525/1131 when sultan Maḥmūd Ibn Muḥammad died¹⁶. At Hamaḍān his young son Dā'ūd was proclaimed sultan by Ad-Darkazīnī, with Aq-Sunqur Aḥmadīlī assuming the office of atabeg. Dā'ūd was recognized in Ġibāl and Āḍarbāyġān, but in Iraq Mas'ūd proclaimed himself sultan, and in Fārs and Hūzistān another brother Salġūq-Šāh also claimed the throne. The intervention of “Great Salġūq” Saṅġār as senior member of the dynasty, led to new personal configurations. Saṅġār came to Ġibāl in person and set Ṭuġrīl Ibn Muḥammad, his nephew, on the throne, giving him Ad-Darkazīnī as his vizier. At the time appeared on scene Mas'ūd ībn Muḥammad, the brother of Ṭuġrīl II. Mas'ūd's involvement with Dā'ūd, who was holding out in Āḍarbāyġān, permitted Ṭuġrīl to gather together an army and make a success. Mas'ūd was driven from Hamaḍān and fled to Baghdad in a miserable state. When at last Ṭuġrīl seemed secure on the throne, he fell ill at Hamaḍān, and at the beginning of 529/1134, after a troubled reign of only two years, he died¹⁷.

When Mas'ūd obtained the throne, the rival claimant Dā'ūd Ibn Maḥmūd, who had been cheated of the succession on his father's death two years before, remained in Āḍarbāyġān, and over the following years he made several attempts from this base to seize the sultanate. Eventually conciliated by Mas'ūd recognition of him as the heir apparent (*walī 'ahd*), he now married one of the sultan's daughters and settled down at Tabrīz, but in 538/1143–4 he was assassinated by the *Ḥašīšīyyat aš-Šām* (Nizarī Ismā'īlīs) allegedly at the instigation of Zangī (ar. Zankī), who feared that Mas'ūd was about to send Dā'ūd to take control of his own region of northern Syria¹⁸.

¹⁵ Al-Bundārī, *Zubdat al-nuṣra*, p. 195.

¹⁶ M.F. Sanaullah, *The Decline of the Seljūid Empire*, Calcutta 1938, p. 31; C.E. Bosworth in *The Cambridge History of Iran*. Volume 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods, ed. J.A. Boyle, Cambridge 1968, p. 124; Ziya M. Bunyatov, *Gosudarstvo atabekov Azerbayjana (1136–1225 gody)*, Baku 1978, pp. 16 further (in Russian).

¹⁷ Al-Bundārī, *Zubdat al-nuṣra*, p. 170.

¹⁸ C.E. Bosworth, *op. cit.*

It is indicating to note that these early Salġūq chroniclers use the terms *ḥašīšiyya*, *malāḥida* and *bāṭiniyya* interchangeably. The Muslim medieval historians, particularly Abu Šāma and Ibn Muyassar¹⁹, occasionally used the term *ḥašīšiyya* (sing. *ḥašīšī*) in reference to the Nizaris of Syria (Aš-Šām), while none of these Muslim authors provided any derivative explanation for their use of this term. Ibn Muyassar, for instance, merely states that in Syria they are called ‘Ḥašīšiyya’, in Alamūt, they are known as Bāṭiniyya and ‘Malāḥida’ (sing. Mulḥid), in Ḥurāsān, they are called Ta‘līmiyya, and they all are Ismā‘īlis. Ibn Ḥaldūn (d. 1406) states that the Syrian Nizārīs, once called as ‘Al-Ḥašīšiyya, Al-Ismā‘īliyya, were known in his time (XIV and later) as the Fidawiyya²⁰.

In my opinion terminological differentiation of the term describing the Nizārī community in the case of *al-ḥašīšiyya* may be related to the low social intellectual status of the Syrian followers of Ismāīlī. *Al-Ḥašīšiyya* would be then the description of simple and fanatic followers of this sect.

¹⁹ Abū Šāma, *Kitāb al-rawḍatayn*, vol. 1, pp. 240 and 258; Ibn Muyassar, Tāġ ad-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī, *Aḥbār Miṣr*, ed. A.F. Sayyid, Al-Qāhira 1981, p. 102.

²⁰ Ibn Khaldun, *An Introduction to History*, English trans. F. Rosenthal (2nd edn), Princeton 1967, vol. 1, p. 143.