

strange and mystical doctrines; as in one direction to the glorification of 'Ali as a kind of incarnation of the Divinity, a character in which his lineal representatives were held in some manner to partake; in another direction to the development of Pantheism, and release from all positive creed and precepts. Of these Aliites, eventually called *Shi'ahs*, a chief sect, and parent of many heretical branches, were the Ismailites, who took their name, from the seventh Imam, whose return to earth they professed to expect at the end of the World. About A.D. 1090 a branch of the Ismaili stock was established by Hassan, son of Sabah, in the mountainous districts of Northern Persia; and, before their suppression by the Mongols, 170 years later, the power of the quasi-spiritual dynasty which Hassan founded had spread over the Eastern Kohistan, at least as far as Káin. Their headquarters were at Alamút ("Eagle's Nest"), about 32 miles north-east of Kázwin, and all over the territory which they held they established fortresses of great strength. De Sacy seems to have proved that they were called *Hashíshíya* or *Hashíshín*, from their use of the preparation of hemp called *Hashísh*; and thence, through their system of murder and terrorism, came the modern application of the word Assassin. The original aim of this system was perhaps that of a kind of *Vehmgericht*, to punish or terrify orthodox persecutors who were too strong to be faced with the sword. I have adopted in the text one of the readings of the G. Text *Asciscin*, as expressing the original word with the greatest accuracy that Italian spelling admits. In another author we find it as *Chazisii* (see *Bollandists*, May, vol. ii. p. xi.); Joinville calls them *Assacis*; whilst Nangis and others corrupt the name into *Harsacidae*, and what not.

The explanation of the name MULEHET as it is in Ramusio, or *Mulcete* as it is in the G. Text (the last expressing in Rusticiano's Pisan tongue the strongly aspirated *Mulhëtë*), is given by the former: "This name of Mulehet is as much as to say in the Saracen tongue 'The Abode of Heretics,'" the fact being that it does represent the Arabic term *Mulhid*, pl. *Muláhidah*, "Impii, heretici," which is in the Persian histories (as of Rashíduddín and Wassáf) the title most commonly used to indicate this community, and which is still applied by orthodox Mahomedans to the Nosairis, Druses, and other sects of that kind, more or less kindred to the Ismaili. The writer of the *Tabakat-i-Násiri* calls the sectarians of Alamút *Muláhidat-ul-maut*, "Heretics of Death."* The curious reading of the G. Text which we have preserved "*vaut à dire des Aram*," should be read as we have rendered it. I conceive that Marco was here unconsciously using one Oriental term to explain another. For it seems possible to explain *Aram* only as standing for *Harám*, in the sense of "wicked" or "reprobate."

In Pauthier's Text, instead of *des aram*, we find "*veult dire en françois Diex Terrien*," or Terrestrial God. This may have been substituted, in the correction of the original rough dictation, from a perception that the first expression was unintelligible. The new phrase does not indeed convey the meaning of *Muláhidah*, but it expresses a main characteristic of the heretical doctrine. The correction was probably made by Polo himself; it is certainly of very early date. For in the romance of Bauduin de Sebourc, which I believe dates early in the 14th century, the Caliph, on witnessing the extraordinary devotion of the followers of the Old Man (see note 1, ch. xxiv.), exclaims:

"Par Mahon
Vous estes *Diex en terre*, autre coze n'i a!" (I. p. 360.)

So also Fr. Jacopo d'Aqui in the *Imago Mundi*, says of the Assassins: "Dicitur iis quod sunt in Paradiso magno *Dei Terreni*"—expressions, no doubt, taken in both cases from Polo's book.

Khanikoff, and before him J. R. Forster, have supposed that the name *Mulehet* represents *Alamút*. But the resemblance is much closer and more satisfactory to

* Elliot, II. 290.