

# THE BACKGROUND MOTIVES OF THE QARMAṬĪ POLICY IN BAḤRAIN

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Thanks to the combined influence of Hārīḡite doctrines, Muʿtazilite practical theology and late Hellenistic and Neo-Platonic philosophies, significant changes took place in the ideology of the opposition Šīʿite groups that manifested their social discontent at the time of the disintegration of the late ʿAbbāsīd caliphate in the middle of the 3rd/9th century.

As a result of these ideas, communities of a new type arose within the Šīʿite milieu which supported their radical political and military behaviour by the proclamation of the immediate advent of a theocratic and charismatic leader, the Imām-Mahdī ‘from the Prophet’s house’ (*min ahl al-bayt*)<sup>1</sup>. Later the large-scale ideological and political movement of the *Ismāʿīlīya* led to the formation of two Šīʿite statehoods in the territory of the Muslim Empire, one the Fāṭimids in North Africa in 298/910, the other the Qarmaṭīs in Eastern Central Arabia, in Baḥrain in 281/894.

They based both their legitimacy and their policy aimed at overthrowing the ʿAbbāsīds on the representation of this theocratic and charismatic leader, the Imām-Mahdī<sup>2</sup>. The presumed ideological-political

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<sup>1</sup> The Messianistic idea of Judeo-Christian origin became central to that section of the Šīʿa, namely the Ismāʿīlīs, who translated it into the return of the Imām, who will fill the earth with justice and righteousness as it is filled with injustice and inequity. According to a relevant tradition narrated Qāḍī an-Nuʿmān in *Šarḥ al-ahbār* (See in: Ivanow 1942:Texts 23.):

المهدي من نسل فاطمة سيدة نساء العالمين، طالت الأيام أم قصرت يخرج فيملا الأرض قسطا وعدلا كما ملئت جورا وظلما ويطيب العيش في زمانه.

<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of the imāmate preached by the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* of the second half of the 3rd/9th century centred around the Mahdīship of Ġaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq’s grandson, Muḥam-

relations of the two Šī'ite states referred to in the contradictory medieval Arabic sources and also brought to light by modern research have attracted considerable attention, and widespread polemics have developed around them<sup>3</sup>.

The first orientalist to deal with the events was M. de Goeje (1836-1909) who came to the conclusion, on the basis of the sources available at that time, that the Qarmaṭīs acted on the orders of the Fāṭimids even if sometimes they exceeded their authority. He further held that with minor deviations, the Qarmaṭīs maintained their close cooperation with the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs until the Fāṭimid conquest of Egypt in 358/969 when they broke openly with the Fāṭimids (de Goeje 1886:81ff).

W. Ivanow (1886-1970), the pioneer researcher of the Ismā'īliya, rejected any kind of relation between the Fāṭimids and the Qarmaṭīs on the basis of their doctrinal differences (Ivanow 1940:43-85).

B. Lewis, in the summary of nearly fifty years' scientific achievement, regarded the Qarmaṭīs in Baḥrain as separate in their origin but believed that by preserving their autonomy they still recognised the Fāṭimids. He considered the subsequent conflicts between the two Šī'ite statehoods as hostilities between the moderate and radical wings of the Ismā'īlī movement (Lewis 1940:80, 84-86, 88-89).

According to the opinion of S. M. Stern (1920-1969), after the split of the Ismā'īlī movement the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain still supported the original doctrine and did not accept the new, the later official Fāṭimid dogma of the visible Imām appearing at the head of the community. He holds that although the Fāṭimid caliphs were not recognised as Mahdī-Imāms but as political leaders and as the expected Mahdī's representatives, some cooperation was still maintained with them. He found an ex-

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mad b. Ismā'īl who had disappeared and was about to reappear as the Qā'im and to rule the world. See: Daftary 1991:131. For the character of the early Ismā'īlī communities see: Nagel 1972:5-10, 73-75. Cf. Madelung 1961:43-54; Halm 1978:6-8; Daftary 1991:131-132.

<sup>3</sup> The standard work on the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain remains de Goeje 1886. Cf. Madelung 1959, which is the best modern survey of the sources on the later history of the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain and contains critical reappraisal of de Goeje's work. Excellent recent contributions are contained in Halm 1991 (esp. 37-38, 58-60, 225-236, 334-341).

planation for the mysterious features of Qarmaṭī history and the later Fāṭimid-Qarmaṭī open conflicts in this ambiguous relationship (Stern 1983:295-296).

It was in the sixties that W. Madelung put together an overall study on the subject by introducing new sources. He came to the conclusion, over the question of origin and unity, that although the Qarmaṭīs in Baḥrain and the Fāṭimids came from the same faction, they were going their own ways from very early times as far as developing their teachings on the imāmate is concerned, and this is the reason why they were rather hostile towards each other (Madelung 1959, 1961, 1988:96-98). Two outstanding recent scholars of Ismāʿīlī studies, H. Halm (1988: 205-208; 1991:64-67, 176) and F. Daftary (1993:130, 134, 138-139) concur basically with his point of view.

So much importance was attributed to Fāṭimid-Qarmaṭī relations in medieval chronicles and polemical treatises as well as in scientific research, that external relations of the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain which did not concern the Fāṭimids were disregarded both in sources and publications. However, some economic and social historical publications on analysing the period does draw our attention to their significant non-Fāṭimid external relations and to the strong inherence of commercial interest that lies behind their vigorous military expansions and changeable policies<sup>4</sup>.

On further consideration of these opinions we wish to discuss the formation of these relations as well as the development of the Qarmaṭī community and statehood with reference to background motives, as far as these can be inferred from the sources.

Concerning the sources, it should be noted that due to lack of adequate Ismāʿīlī sources we depend mainly on the reports of their opponents. Therefore the non-Fāṭimid sources remained essential for studying the history and doctrines of the early Ismāʿīlīs or Qarmaṭīs. Among these the heresiographies are important, especially the works of the Imāmi-Šīʿite, an-Nawbaḥtī (*Firaq* 61-64) and al-Qummī (*Maqālāt* 83-86.

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<sup>4</sup> Busse 1969:337-338, 365, 396; Shaʿbān 1976:144-145; Ashtor 1979:161-167; Kennedy 1989:193-195, 289-292.

Engl. transl. Stern 1983:47-53), who wrote slightly before 286/899 and whose works represent the earliest Šī'ite sources dealing with the opening phase of Ismā'īlism. The writings of the polemist are a very important kind of non-Ismā'īlī source on early Ismā'īlism. Though they aim to discredit the Ismā'īlīs through their defamations and misleading accounts, the polemist was generally better informed than the early Sunnī historians concerning the doctrines which they intended to refute, perhaps because at least some of the polemist had access to contemporary Ismā'īlī sources. The anti-Ismā'īlī treatise of Ibn Rizām<sup>5</sup> who worked in Baġdād during the earlier decades of the 4th/10th century, is preserved in fragmentary form by Ibn an-Nadīm (*al-Fihrist*, 238-240. Engl. tr. Dodge I, 462-472) and other later sources. But it was utilized extensively by the Šarīf Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. 'Alī better known by his nickname, Aḥū Muḥsin an 'Alid resident of Damascus who produced an anti-Ismā'īlī polemical treatise of his own around 370/980.

Substantial passages of a lost treatise, which evidently contained separate historical and doctrinal parts, are preserved mainly in the writings of three Egyptian historians, namely an-Nuwayrī (d. 732/1331) (*Niḥāya* XXV, 187-317), Ibn ad-Dawādārī (d. 736/1335) (*Kanz* VI, 44-179.), al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441) (*Itti'āz* 151-178.).

The polemical writing of Ibn Rizām and Aḥū Muḥsin which does not survive directly, obviously contained valuable details of the early history of the Ismā'īlīs and Qarmaṭīs.

As for the historical sources, the most important is the work of the Šābean Ṭābit b. Sinān from Ḥarrān (d.375/974), who continued the chronicle of aṭ-Ṭabarī on the Qarmaṭīs till 345/957 (*Aḥbār al-Qarāmita* 183-247). His reports were followed by Miskawayh (d. 421/1330) (*Taġārib al-Umam*, I-II, Engl. tr. IV-V.), a high ranking officer in the Būyid Court, in his work on the late 'Abbāsīd period, which is a very important source for us on the history of the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrain between 311/922 and 379/984. The work of Ibn al-Aṭīr (d. 630/1238) (*al-Kāmil* VII-IX) - the outstanding figure of late Muslim annalistic historio-

<sup>5</sup> Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn Rizām aṭ-Ṭā'ī al-Kūfī, *Kitāb fī radd 'alā l-ismā'īliyya*.

graphy, who, without references, used the works of at-Ṭabarī and Ṭābit b. Sinān – is also important. These facts show that the main source for Miskawayh and Ibn al-Aṭīr was Ṭābit b. Sinān at that period.

The Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* appeared in Baḥrain, in the coastal region to the south of ʿIrāq, in Eastern Arabia, in 281/894 or perhaps even earlier, in 273/886 (at-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ* III, 2188). In the early Islamic period the term Baḥrain applied to the mainland areas of the Ḥasā province of today's Saudi Arabia as well as to the island nowadays called Baḥrain, which was then known as Uwāl<sup>6</sup>. Baḥrain was near to the centre of the ʿAbbāsīd empire and was situated on one of the main routes of transit trade. This area was inhabited by a heterogenous population of peasants of Nabatean origin in the oases, and of merchants of Persian and Jewish origin travelling in the Gulf to such ports as Baṣra and Sīrāf. The towns of Baḥrain were interested in increasing their share in the great Indian trade of the Gulf. In the countryside and desert areas there were poor roaming Bedouin who disapproved of the rich sedentary population. Formerly the province had been a stronghold of the Ḥawāriḡ, then of the slave revolt of the Zang. Šīʿite communities still existed in its towns and the hostility between the province and the rich Sunnite Baṣra was strong<sup>7</sup>.

Like many other Qarmaṭī leaders, the man who started the movement in Baḥrain was an Ismāʿīlī missionary of Persian origin, Abū Saʿīd al-Ġannābī. He was sent there by the Qarmaṭī leaders of South ʿIrāq after his successful mission in South Persia. This is reported by the majority of the sources, which add that with the split of the Ismāʿīlī movement Abū Saʿīd sided with the rebels against ʿUbaydallāh, the visible Imām at the head of the community, and killed a certain Abū Zakariyyā' at-Ṭamāmī or az-Zamāmī, a missionary (*dāʿī*) with whom he had previously cooperated and who had remained loyal to the 'manifest Imām'<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> On the region of Baḥrain, see art. *Baḥrain*, EI<sup>2</sup>. Cf. an-Naḡm 1973:17-37.

<sup>7</sup> On the inhabitants of Baḥrain and their occupations, see *ibid.* 41-78, 81-98, 127-144.

<sup>8</sup> According to the Ibn Rizām/Aḥū Muḥsin account the Ismāʿīlīs of the second half

As W. Madelung points out in his seminal works (1959:44; 1961:59) that the doctrinal reform carried out by ʿUbaydallāh, who later became the first Fāṭimid caliph, served to split the Ismāʿīlī movement into two hostile factions in 286/899. There were Ismāʿīlīs who accepted the reform, the later official Fāṭimid doctrine of the imāmate, according to which there was a visible Imām at the head of the Ismāʿīlī community, and they accepted the continuity in the imāmate which had been transmitted down to the line of the direct descendants of ʿĠaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765)<sup>9</sup>.

The Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain and other dissident eastern Ismāʿīlīs, refusing to recognize the Fāṭimid Imāms, adhered to their original doctrine after the establishment of the Fāṭimid caliphate, and they were still awaiting the appearance of their hidden Imām, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, as the Mahdī who would initiate the final religious era<sup>10</sup>.

By 286/899 Abū Ṣaʿīd had won converts amongst the bedouins and the Persians living there and he married into one of the leading trading and landowning families, that of Ḥasan b. Sanbar. He also looked for allies from the Bedouin of the desert and found them in the Banū Kilāb and Banū ʿUqayl<sup>11</sup>.

With the support of the nomadic tribes, Abū Ṣaʿīd conquered a large part of Baḥrain and also the town of Qaṭīf in the coastal region of

of the 3rd/9th century recognised only seven imāms, the last one being Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl, the expected Qāʾim and the seventh Nāṭiq on whose behalf the daʿwa had been propagated in ʿIrāq and Baḥrain. The belief in the Mahdīship of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl had left no place for further imāms after him.

In 286/899, after his succession to the leadership in Salāmiyya, ʿUbaydallāh, the future Fāṭimid caliph, introduced continuity in the imāmate claiming to it for himself and his predecessors. This point of view became the official doctrine of the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs who recognised a series of "hidden imāms" between Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl and ʿUbaydallāh. For a detailed discussion of these concepts, see Daftary 1991:134-135.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Rizām/Aḥḥū Muḥsin in: Ibn ad-Dawādārī, *Kanz* 55-56; an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya* 233-234; al-Maqrīzī, *Itṭifāz* 159-160. Cf. Ṭābit b. Sinān, *Aḥbār al-qarāmīta* 192-3.

<sup>10</sup> Daftary, 1990:105-106; 1993:137-139. Cf. Madelung 1988:95-98.

<sup>11</sup> See Ibn ad-Dawādārī, *Kanz* 56. Cf. al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh* 339-340.

East Arabia. In 287/890 the troops of Abū Ṣaʿīd controlled the territories around Haḡar, the capital of Baḡrain, and were approaching Baṣra<sup>12</sup>. The partnership between the Abū Ṣaʿīd mission, its followers among the settled population, and the bedouin was to prove extremely effective, and the developing Qarmaṭī community became frightening for their neighbours.

In 287/900 the Qarmaṭīs were in control of the suburbs of Haḡar, and after a long siege the seat of the ʿAbbāsīd governor was taken<sup>13</sup>. At the same time an ʿAbbāsīd army was decisively defeated and the Qarmaṭīs of Baḡrain began to threaten the city of Baṣra itself<sup>14</sup>.

Abū Ṣaʿīd established his headquarters at al-Aḡsā' which later became the capital of the Qarmaṭī state in Baḡrain in 314/926. Then the Qarmaṭīs extended their control to the adjoining regions, including Yamāma and ʿUmān. Security of life and property was guaranteed to the local inhabitants (an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya* 238; ʿAbd al-Ġabbār, *Taṭbīt* 300-301).

This first militant stage in the history of the Qarmaṭīs of Baḡrain was brought to an end in 300-1/913-14. According to the prominent contemporary historian of Baḡdād at-Ṭabarī (d. 311/922) and the majority of the later Muslim chroniclers Abū Ṣaʿīd al-Ġannābī, the founder of the

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<sup>12</sup> at-Ṭabarī, *Tarīḡ*, ed. by de Goeje III, 2188, 2192-2193; Engl. tr. Rosenthal XXXVIII, 77, 82-83.

<sup>13</sup> It refers to ʿAmr al-Ġanawī who was appointed by Caliph al-Muʿtaḏīd in charge of al-Yamāma and Baḡrain in 287/900. During the struggle with the Qarmaṭīs he was captured, later released with a letter to al-Muʿtaḏīd. On the Qarmaṭīs' message and the Caliph's reaction see Ṭabarī *Tarīḡ*, III, 2197; Miskawayḡ *Ṭaġārib*, V, 13-16; Ibn al-Ġawzī *Muntazam* V, 133ff. Cf. Rosenthal 1985: fn. 444.

<sup>14</sup> There is a considerable disagreement among the arabic sources as to the date of the Qarmaṭī attack of Basra in 301/913. In fact it is very probable that the raid was not so simultaneous with the Fāṭīmī invasion of Egypt as it had been assumed. See, al-Masʿūdī, *Murūġ* VIII, 280; Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* VIII, 49; Miskawayḡ, *Ṭaġārib* I, 33ff. ʿArīb, *Šīla* 38, al-Hamaḏānī, *Takmila* 41. Ibn Ḥaldūn's account in his *Ibar* IV, 181-195 differs from other sources in some important respects but he does not seem to be reliable in this matter. Cf. Madelung's reassessment (1959:46-50) of De Goeje's view on the question.

Qarmaṭī community and state in Bahrain, was murdered in this year. He was succeeded by the eldest of his seven sons, Abū l-Qāsim Sa'īd<sup>15</sup>, who governed with a council of notables (al-'Iqdānīya) in the following years.

During his rule the Qarmaṭīs refrained from troubling the territories of the caliphate and to maintain good relations with the 'Abbāsīd court were in fact engaged in extensive negotiations with the famous 'Abbāsīd vizier 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. al-Ġarrāh (d. 334/946) on his peace initiatives. 'Alī b. 'Īsā, after assuming office in 301/913 and again in 303/916, dispatched embassies to the Qarmaṭīs<sup>16</sup>.

Presumably they decided on the development of commercial relations with other regions of the Gulf due to their geographical situation, and they seem to have sought a subsidy and trading opportunities from the 'Abbāsīd government. Their effort was accepted by the 'Good Vizier' in the hope that by allowing them to develop their trade he would avert the danger of the Qarmaṭī invasion of South 'Irāq. While 'Alī b. 'Īsā was powerful in the 'Abbāsīd government, this policy of 'privileges for peace' prevailed, and before being dismissed from the vizierate in 303/915-16 he sent presents to the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrain and granted them prerogatives such as the use of the port of Sīrāf and the right of free trade in it<sup>17</sup>. Therefore the Qarmaṭīs who had been quite busy

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<sup>15</sup> On the succession of the Qarmaṭī leadership, see al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz* 165; Tābit b. Sinān, *Aḥbār al-qaramiṭa* 211; Ibn al-Aṭṭir, *Kāmil* VII, 527; Miskawayh, *Tağārib* I, 33. Cf. Scanlon 1960:29-48.

<sup>16</sup> In 301/913 'Alī b. 'Īsā advised the Caliph al-Muqtadir to communicate with the Qarmaṭī leader Abū Sa'īd and wrote in the caliph's name a letter admonishing and rebuking and summoning the Qarmaṭīs to obedience. Although Abū Sa'īd died before the message reached him the Qarmaṭīs sent a conciliatory reply to the Court and they released, as a gesture the captives whose cause the messengers had pleaded. On the exchange of letters see 'Abdalḡabbār, *Ṭaḡbit* II, 380.6-9; Miskawayh, *Tağārib* I, 34.12-35. Ibn al-Aṭṭir, *Kāmil* VIII, 84; an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya* XXV, 276; Tābit b. Sinān, *Tārīḥ* 211. Cf. Bowen 1928:136-137; Halm 1991:225.

<sup>17</sup> According to 'Arīb (*Takmila* 59). See Šābi', *Wuzarā'* 292-293:

with their own affairs for over seven years were to continue to be so for another decade.

In 311/923-24 or probably even earlier Abū l-Qāsim Saʿīd was forced to resign by his younger, much more militant brother Abū Ṭāhir Sulaymān, and in the next year ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā lost power to the Šīʿite Ibn al-Furāt (d. 312/924) who was less inclined to take a conciliatory attitude towards the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain. Thus they ended their temporarily peaceful relations with the ʿAbbāsids<sup>18</sup>.

A few days after the change of *wazīrs* in the court of the caliph the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain started a series of lightning attacks on the towns of southern ʿIrāq during which they sacked Baṣra and Kūfa repeatedly and raided pilgrims' caravans.

The first attack was against Baṣra<sup>19</sup>. They took the wealthy city by surprise at night and looted it for eighteen days before returning to Haḡar. Ten months later they attacked a pilgrim caravan (*ḡaḡḡ*) returning from Mecca to al-Habīr, and captured many distinguished pilgrims, among others the amīr Abū l-Hayḡā ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥamdān who had been charged with the protection of the caravan<sup>20</sup>.

These two attacks were to characterize all the others that happened intermittently over a period of almost half a century<sup>21</sup>.

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في هذه السنة نظر علي بن عيسى بعين رأيه إلى أمر القرامطة فخافهم على الحاج وغيرهم فمشغلهم بالكتابة والمراسلة والدخول في الطاع وهاداهم وأطلق لهم التسوق بسيراف فردهم بذلك وكفهم.

<sup>18</sup> ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā who was known for his anti-ʿAlid attitude was called a Qarmaṭī by his personal enemies. As a result, he was forced out of power from his office. See ʿArib, *Šila* 59; Miskawayh, *Taḡārib* I, 105-121; an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya* 276-277.

<sup>19</sup> When the Qarmaṭīs entered the town of Baṣra they said to the inhabitants: "Woe to you! How pitiful is your petty sulṭān in removing from his side that venerable man (i.e. ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā), [an act] the consequences of which he will soon see." See ʿArib, *Šila* 110.

<sup>20</sup> Miskawayh, *Taḡārib* I, 104-105, 120-121; ʿArib, *Šila* 110-111; Ṭābit b. Sinān, *Aḥbār al-qaramiṭa* 212ff; Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* VIII, 155; Ibn Taḡribirdī, *Nuḡūm* III, 211. Cf. ʿAdwān 1981:122-125.

<sup>21</sup> In the battles many military leaders on both sides played important but ephemeral roles and there is understandably little information available about them.

The events of these military expeditions as reported by the historians shed light on the motives of Abū Ṭāhir's new policy. Whereas his father, Abū Sa'īd, had been supported at the beginning of his movement mainly by the bedouin, Abū Ṭāhir began to build up a powerful state. He pursued an expansive external policy by which his nomadic military troops acted to promote the interests of the merchants, the most important stratum of the townspeople of Baḥrain. Their interests were from then on a decisive factor in his policy, determining both the internal conditions of the developing Qarmaṭī statehood and its external policy. The successive changes of this policy are clearly indicated by the accounts of the chroniclers. Amid these political changes an independent Qarmaṭī state developed out of what had been simply a radical Messianic movement, legitimized by the representation of the theocratic leader of Imām-Mahdī, and this state effectively enforced the measures of militant external policy in defence of its commercial interests.

The Qarmaṭīs had previously been granted in 303/915 trading rights in Sīrāf, but they had soon come to realize that due to their regional location it was not sufficient. Their purposes were to capture a share in the profits of the trade of the Gulf and the Syrian-Iraqi and Arabian deserts.

Thus they proceeded to occupy the ports of 'Umān, and so came to dominate the Gulf's Arabian coast. They next tried to establish points of control on the Persian side of the Gulf. Their attack on Baṣra was enough to frighten the trade away from this flourishing port and divert it to their own ports where they imposed and collected their own taxes<sup>22</sup>. For the land routes they first turned to the pilgrim caravans which were also important trade caravans. Then they turned to the north-south trade route bordering the Syrian-Iraqi desert, and tried to attack and dominate the market towns along this route. Their intention

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<sup>22</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal *Ṣūrat al-arḍ* 25; Mas'ūdī *Tanbih* 393; Miskawayh I. 139, 284.

was to seize what they considered to be taxes and what their opponents preferred to call protection money (*ḥifāra*)<sup>23</sup>.

Some time later Abū Ḥayḡā' and other prisoners of the first attack on the pilgrim caravans were released and arrived in Baḡdād as delegates from Abū Ṭāhir, demanding that al-Aḥwāz, Baṣra and even other territories be yielded up<sup>24</sup>. The Qarmaṭī claim was rejected, and in 312/924-25 the pilgrims were attacked again and Kūfa was sacked<sup>25</sup>. The ḥaḡḡ of 313/926 was allowed to go in peace only after the payment of a hefty sum<sup>26</sup>.

In 314/926, when the Qarmaṭīs were busy with the fortification of their capital, al-Aḥsā', the 'Abbāsīd caliph, al-Muqtadir (295/908 – 320/932) recalled to 'Irāq Yūsuf b. Abī s-Sāḡ, the ruler (*amīr*) of Ādar-bāyḡān and Armenia, in order to keep the Qarmaṭī threat in check<sup>27</sup>.

In 315/927 the Qarmaṭīs again plundered Kūfa. Then, when Baḡdād itself was threatened, the *wazīr* al-Ḥāṣībī (d. 328/940) sent to Ibn Abī s-Sāḡ for more troops. 'Alī b. 'Īsā, realising that Ibn Abī s-Sāḡ would not be successful, suggested that it would be better to employ the bedouin Banū Asad to guard the ḥaḡḡ and the Banū Šaybān to attack the Qarmaṭīs. His advice was not accepted and the caliph's troops were again defeated. Ibn Abī s-Sāḡ himself was captured and later executed in 315/928<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Miskawayh, *Taḡārib* I, 145-146, 173-182, 201; 'Arīb, *Šila* 118, 134; al-Hamaḡānī, *Takmila* 52-53; Mas'ūdi, *Tanbih* 390. Cf. Busse 1969:365, 396.

<sup>24</sup> According to Ibn al-A'īr (*Kāmil* VIII, 155ff.):

أبو طاهر أطلق من كان عنده من الأسرى كان أسرهم في الحجاج، وفيهم {أبو الهيجاء} ابن حمدان وغيره، وأرسل إلى المقتدر يطلب البصرة والأهواز، فلم يجبه إلى ذلك فسار من هجر يريد الحج.

See Miskawayh, *Taḡārib* I, 139.14-16; *Uyūn* I, 236.15-16; Ibn Taḡribirdī, *Nuḡūm* III, 212. Cf. 'Adwān 1981:122-4.

<sup>25</sup> Miskawayh, *Taḡārib* I, 145-146.

<sup>26</sup> See *Uyūn* I, 226.

<sup>27</sup> 'Arīb, *Šila* I, 128; Miskawayh, *Taḡārib* 147-148.

<sup>28</sup> On the details of the military events see Miskawayh, *Taḡārib* I, 172-177. Cf. Bowen's appraisal (1975:266-275).

Thereupon the Qarmaṭīs advanced up to the Euphrates, seized al-Anbār and crossed the river with the purpose of entering the capital. Baġdād was alarmed at them but their progress was halted by the army of Mu'nis al-Ḥādīm (d. 321/933), the ʿAbbāsīd commander in chief (*amīr al-umarāʾ*), who had earlier fought the Fāṭimīds in their Egyptian expedition<sup>29</sup>. This campaign, lasting for almost two years, incited the Qarmaṭīs of Southern ʿIrāq, who were concentrated in the suburb (*sawād*) of Kūfa, to rebellion<sup>30</sup>. Then the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain withdrew to the western bank of the Euphrates and returned to Baḥrain, because of the confused state of their internal affairs in 317/930<sup>31</sup>.

According to the relevant sources, their extreme military actions were accompanied by radical religious alterations. Abū Ṭāhir, like other Qarmaṭī 'missionaries' (*duʿāt*), was at that time predicting the advent of the Mahdī following the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the year 316/928. This event, according to Ismāʿīlī tenets, was expected to end the era of Islām and initiate the seventh final religious era<sup>32</sup>. Therefore the Qarmaṭīs intensified their attacks on their opponents as the expected date approached<sup>33</sup>. For the reception of the 'Expected One' (*al-muntazar*) the Qarmaṭīs had already completed the construction of a 'place of refuge' (*dār al-ḥiġra*) near al-Aḥsāʾ called 'al-Mu'miniyya'<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Miskawayh, *Taġārib* I, 178-181.

<sup>30</sup> It concerns the Baqliyya revolt. On the revolt itself see ʿArīb, *Ṣila* 132ff, 137, 162; Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* VIII, 124ff, 132, 136, 200. Cf. *EP* I, 962.

<sup>31</sup> Miskawayh, *Taġārib* I, 182-187.

<sup>32</sup> The *dāʿīs* of Rayy were in close contact with those in ʿIrāq and with the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain and like them they also were expecting the reappearance of the Mahdī-Imām for the year 316/928. Cf. Madelung 1961:75ff; Daftary 1990:162-163; Halm 1991:229-230.

<sup>33</sup> Miskawayh, *Taġārib* I, 183; Masʿūdī, *Tanbih* 385; Ibn al-Ġawzī, *al-Muntazam* V, 216; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Bidāya* XI, 157.

<sup>34</sup> The leading spiritual authorities of the Qarmaṭīs lived mostly in Iran. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad an-Nasafī (or an-Naḥṣabī), a *dāʿī* in Transoxania, wrote a *Kitāb al-Maḥsūl* probably about 300/911 which found wide acceptance among the Qarmaṭīs as a comprehensive exposition of their esoteric thought. It introduced the Neoplatonic Ismāʿīlī cosmology

Their military activities culminated in the conquest of Mecca during the pilgrim season in 317/930. Having spent eight days in pillage and massacre, they slaughtered the pilgrims and the inhabitants and removed everything of value from the shrine. They also carried off the Black Stone of the Ka'ba, thus spectacularly demonstrating the end of the Islamic era<sup>35</sup>. Their action, however, may also be viewed as a clear assertion of their objection to the use of this religious occasion for commercial purposes, from the benefits of which they had been excluded.

Their previous attacks on the pilgrim caravans had not achieved the desired results. In order to accomplish them they had to take the Black Stone away, which was, and still remained, a fundamental requirement of the rituals of the pilgrimage. Their unprecedented act shocked the Muslim world, and most of our sources relate that shortly afterwards the Fāṭimid caliph 'Ubaydallāh al-Mahdī sent a letter to Abū Ṭāhir reproving him and requesting him to return the Black Stone. This demand was rejected along with a similar one put to him by the 'Abbāsids<sup>36</sup>.

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which largely replaced the earlier doctrine and later was also adopted by the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism. Cf. Madelung 1988:96ff and Halm 1991:203ff.

<sup>35</sup> Maqrīzī, *Ittī'āz* 182; Ibn ad-Dawādārī, *Kanz* VI, 93; Miskawayh, *Ṭaḡārib* I, 201.

<sup>36</sup> There are different narrations on the background of these events. Ṭābit b. Sinān (*Tārīḥ* 224) and Ibn al-Aṭīr (*Kāmil* VIII, 208) quoted the reproving letter of 'Ubaydallāh. According to Ibn al-Imād (*Ṣadāra* I, 284-285) they acted upon the order of the Fāṭimids. The most complete variant of the above mentioned letter is preserved, however, in an Ismā'īli source still in MS. (*Fuṣūl wa-ahbār*, quoted by Tāmīr 1993 I, 176):

إلى مقدم القرامطة: سليمان بن الحسن أبو طاهر الجنابي  
بلغنا إقدام رجالكم على التصدي لقوافل الحجاج المسلمين وقتلهم النساء والشيوخ والأطفال. والتمثيل بجثثهم  
ونهب ما يحملونه. وبلغنا ما اقترفه رجالكم من الأعمال المخوبة في الديار المقدسة. كنزهم كسوة الكعبة.  
وردم بئر زمزم. ونقل الحجر الأسود إلى هجر. إنكم بهذا العمل المشين سجلتم علينا في التاريخ نقطة سوداء  
لا تمحوها لليلالي ولا الأيام. وحققتكم على دولتنا ودعوتنا اسم الكفر والزندقة والإلحاد، بما قمتم به من أعمال  
شنيعة مخالفة لمبادئنا وعقيدتنا. لهذا أطلب إليك ... أن ترد على أهل مكة الفتناء والأموال والحلي. وعلى  
الحجاج ما سلبته منهم وأن ترد الكسوة للكعبة المشرفة وإلا أتيت إليك بجندو لا قبيل لك بها.  
إننا نتبرأ منك كما تبرئنا من الشيطان الرجيم في الدنيا والآخرة ونعون بالله من فعال السوء التي لا يقترفها إلا  
أعداء الله أجمعين.

إذا لم تفعل ما أمرتك به لا يكن بيني وبينك إلا السيف والبراءة منك على رؤوس الأشهاد.

In 318/930, with the conquest of 'Umān, the Qarmaṭīs obtained hegemony over the region, and thus became an imminent danger to their neighbours. They were finally in a position to reattempt the conquest of South 'Irāq. In 319/931 they advanced, however, only as far as Kūfa, which they plundered again for twenty-five days<sup>37</sup>.

Their indomitable advance was checked by internal troubles developing in the Qarmaṭī community in Bahrain. During the period of Ramaḍān in 319/931 Abū Tāhir, who had been expecting the coming of the Mahdī since 316/929, transferred the rule to a young Persian prisoner from Isfahān in whom he recognised the expected Mahdī. But events took a very different turn from what had commonly been expected for the advent of the Mahdī. And the young Isfahānī indeed proved to be rather a restorer of Persian religion than that descendant of 'Alī 'from the Prophet's House' who had been expected by the dissident eastern Ismā'īlīs to reveal the truths concealed in the scriptures of the Prophets of Judaism, Chistianity and Islām, and to put an end to the era of Islām.

The reign of the Isfahānī lasted for only eighty days. He ordered damnation of all Prophets and the worship of fire. Then he allowed various extreme actions and some prominent Qarmaṭī leaders to be put to death. Abū Tāhir was finally forced to execute him and acknowledged that he had been deceived by the false Mahdī<sup>38</sup>. This unfortunate attempt of the theocratic statehood of the pseudo-Mahdī shows that the expectation of the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrain for the advent of Mahdī was not related to the Fātimid visible Imām-caliphs, though the background motives of the events are complicated and obscure<sup>39</sup>.

The episode of the theocratical "coup attempt" of the pseudo-Mahdī severely demoralized the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrain and weakened their influence over other dissident Ismā'īlīs in the East. Many of their adherents,

<sup>37</sup> See Ibn Taḡribirdī, *Nuḡūm* III, 228.

<sup>38</sup> Miskawayh, *Taḡarīb* II, 55-57; 'Abd al-Ġabbār, *Taṭbū* II, 389-390; Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* VIII, 351-352; al-Birūnī, *Āṭār* 213.

<sup>39</sup> See de Goeje's opinion (1886:129, 173, 194) and Lewis 1942:75-76. Madelung (1959: 74-75, 80-82), however, completely revised de Goeje's views.

mainly of the 'Aḡamiyyūn of 'Irāq and the tribal Arab chiefs, left Bahrain and came to offer their services in the armies of the Sunnī rulers during the following decades<sup>40</sup>.

After the rejection of the pseudo-Mahdī, the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrain returned to their former beliefs and claimed to be acting on the orders of the hidden Mahdī, but in the years following the desecration of Mecca and the interlude of the pseudo-Mahdī, their commercial interests became again the primary factor of Qarmaṭī policy.

They carried out further raids on Southern 'Irāq and South Persia and continued to cross the pilgrim caravan roads. Two coastal towns in Fārs suffered at their hands, in 321/933 Siniz and in 322/934 Tawwāḡ<sup>41</sup>. Their purposes were clearly to ruin those centres of the textile industry which competed with al-Aḡsā'.

Since pilgrimage had become impossible for years and the Qarmaṭī military actions were continuing, the chamberlain (*ḥāḡīb*) of the 'Abbāsīd caliph ar-Rāḡī (322/934 - 329/940), Muḡammad b. Yāqūt, in 322/934 entered into negotiations with Abū Ṭāhir for recognition of the authority of the caliphate, to put an end to his interference with pilgrimages and for the restoration of the Black Stone. In return Abū Ṭāhir would receive official authorization for the regions which he *de facto* possessed or had conquered. The Qarmaṭīs refused to restore the Black Stone but agreed to stop obstructing the pilgrim routes and offered to have the Friday prayer (*ḡuṭba*) read in the name of the 'Abbāsīd caliph if they were allowed free use of the port of Baṡra<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> 'Arīb, *Šila* 163, 168; 'Abd al-ḡabbār, *Ṭaṭbū* II, 392-393. On the 'aḡamiyyūn see Halm 1993:228 and fn. 399, 236 and fn. 419.

<sup>41</sup> 'Uyūn I, 228; Miskawayh, *Ṭaḡārib* II, 284ff. Cf. Busse 1969:337-338.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Daftary 1990:163-164. Ibn al-Aṭīr (*Kāmil* VIII, 220) says:

في هذه السنة أرسل محمد بن ياقوت حاجب الخليفة رسولا إلى أبي طاهر القرمطي بدعوة إلى طاعة الخليفة ليقره ما بيده من البلاد ويقلد بعد ذلك ما شاء من البلدان ويحسن إليه ويلتمس منه أن يكف عن الحاج جميعهم وأن يرد الحجر الأسود إلى موضعه بمكة فأجاب أبو طاهر إلى أنه لا يعترض للحاج ولا يصيبهم بمكر وهو لم يجب إلى رد الحجر الأسود إلى مكة وسأل أن يطلق لهم الميرة من البصرة ليخطب للخليفة في أعمال هجر فسار الحاج إلى مكة وعاد ولم يعترض لهم القرامطة.

Despite their rejection of the offer of the Court of Baġdād, with their willingness for peaceful settlement the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrain took a step towards the renewal of their former policy of 'peace for privileges'<sup>43</sup>. Afterwards the Qarmaṭīs again attacked the pilgrim route, defeated the caliphal troops between Kūfa and Qādisiyya and occupied Kūfa for several days before returning to Bahrain<sup>44</sup>.

In 325/937 Abū Ṭāhir, who again entered Kūfa, carried on further negotiations with the 'Abbāsīd *amīr al-umarā'* Ibn Rā'iq. In reply to the demand of the Qarmaṭīs, who wanted the caliph to give them 120,000 dinars a year in silver and supplies, Ibn Rā'iq proposed that Abū Ṭāhir and his troops should consider themselves as enrolled in the service of the caliph and that this sum be considered as a salary. No agreement was achieved<sup>45</sup>.

Finally, in 327/938-939, the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrain made their peace with the Baġdād authorities and an agreement was concluded between Abū Ṭāhir and the 'Abbāsīd government, due to the efforts of 'Umār b. Yaḥyā, an 'Alid from Kūfa and a friend of the Qarmaṭī leader. Under this agreement the Qarmaṭīs promised to protect the pilgrimage in return for an annual tribute of 120,000 dinars from the 'Abbāsīd treasury and a protection fee (*ḥifāra*) to be paid by the pilgrims<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> As an obvious result of the negotiations the *ḥaġġ* in 322/934 passed off untroubled. Cf. Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* VIII, 220.

<sup>44</sup> Miskawayh, *Ṭaġārib* I, 367, Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Muntazam* VI, 208-210; al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih* 337.

<sup>45</sup> The relevant account in the 'Uyūn (I, 299) states that:  
فيها قصد أبو طاهر القرمطي الكوفة ودخلها وخرج ابن رائق من بغداد فنزل الياسرية وأنفذ برسالة إلى القرمطي، وكان أبو طاهر يطلب أن يحمل إليه الخليفة مالا وطعاما بمائة وعشرون الف دينار ليقيم في بلده ويبتل له ابن رائق أن يجعل له ما طلبه رزقا لأصحابه ويجعل لهم بذلك جريدة في الديوان ويدخلون في الطاعة ويستخدمون، وجر بينها مخاطبات وانصرف أبو طاهر مع هذا إلى بلده ويستقر أمر محقق.  
Cf. Miskawayh, *Ṭaġārib* I, 367ff; Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Muntazam* VI, 208-210; Ibn al-'Imād, *Šadāra* II, 308ff.

<sup>46</sup> The account of Ibn al-'Imād (*Šadāra* II, 308) states that in 327/938-9:  
فكتب أبو علي محمد بن يحيى العلوي إلى القرامطة وكانوا يجيبونه أن يذموا للحجاج ليسير بهم ويعطيهم من كل جمل خمسة دنانير ومن المحمل سبعة فأنموا لهم فحج الناس وهي أول سنة مكث فيها الحاج.

After the death of Abū Ṭāhir in 332/944 his surviving brothers – including Abū l-Qāsim Saʿīd (d. 361/972), Abū Maṣṣūr Aḥmad and Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Faḍl – ruling jointly, continued his late peaceful policy.

In 334/946, the Šīʿite Būyid warlords took possession of Baḡdād and became the real protectors of the ʿAbbāsid Empire for more than a century. Prevailing over the Iranian Plateau and expanding in ʿIrāq, the Būyids were in a favourable position to dominate most of the east-west and north-south trade routes, and the southern sea coast made possible for them the participation in the Indian Ocean trade. Soon after occupying Baḡdād, they set out to capture Baṣra, which had been in the hands of taxfarmers, the Barīdīs, since the last years of the central government. Thus the important port of the Gulf was captured and the Barīdīs fled to the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain.

Having established themselves in Baṣra, the Būyids attempted to win over the Qarmaṭīs. Although the Qarmaṭīs seem to have agreed to this, they had their differences with regard to their attempts to establish control over the Persian side of the Gulf. These differences had manifested themselves in the earlier doctrinal and political struggle between them until the death of Abū Ṭāhir in 332/944<sup>47</sup>.

Therefore in 336/948, after the capture of Baṣra by the Būyids, agreements reached by the two sides made it possible for each to live in peace with the other. The Būyids allowed the Qarmaṭīs to have their own custom house alongside theirs in Baṣra<sup>48</sup>. They were willing to go to some lengths to win over the Qarmaṭīs and ready to discourage trading with the port of Sirāf and divert all trade to Baṣra where both could

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Cf. Ibn Taḡribirdī, *Nuḡūm* III, 26; as-Suyūṭī, *Tārīḥ* 363; aṣ-Ṣūlī, *Aḥbār* 119. Another important account concerning these events can also be found in the *ʿUyūn* (II, 233): فيها (٣٢٧/٩٣٨) أخذ الحسين بن المعمر صاحب الجنابي الحفارة م الحاج ووقف بزبالة فأخذ عن العمارة ثلاثة تانير وعن الجمل دينارين وعن الزمالة ديناراً ووردت كتب الحاج وشكرهم إياهم.

<sup>47</sup> See Busse 1969:37-38. Cf. Shaʿban 1976:162.

<sup>48</sup> ʿArīb, *Šīla* 132, 137, 163; Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Muntazam* VI, 208. Cf. Busse 1969:364.

share its benefits<sup>49</sup>. The chronicles refer many times to their friendly partnership based upon common interests. For instance the Būyids excused the Qarmaṭīs their participation in cooperate attacks with the Zang̃ on Baṣra, and directed their repressive actions against the Zang̃ only. But then the Qarmaṭīs actively supported the Būyids in their fight against the Sāmānids to maintain their hold over Rayy and twice made effort to help their partners<sup>50</sup>. Presumably they were interested in retaining their access to Rayy, an important connection on the east-west trade route.

Under these cordial relations, the Qarmaṭīs, continuing to accept their peace agreement with the caliphal Court of their own free will, finally returned the Black Stone of the Ka'ba in 339/950-51, for a high sum paid by the 'Abbāsīd government, and not, as held by some authorities, in response to the request of the Fāṭimid al-Manṣūr (334/946 - 341/953)<sup>51</sup>.

The death of Abū Ṭāhir in 332/944 and the return of the Black Stone to Mecca in 339/951 represent a turning point in the development of the Qarmaṭī statehood: the Qarmaṭī community, which legitimized itself on the representation of the theocratic leader, Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, had established itself with its neighbours in the course of promoting its economic, or more precisely, its commercial interests at first by pur-

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<sup>49</sup> Miskawayh, *Tağārib* II, 46, 117, 129, 143-144, 196, 213-218, 300-301; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-ard* 48.

<sup>50</sup> The Qarmaṭīs later maintained good relations with 'Aḍud ad-Dawla and deputed an official representative at Baġdād, Abū Bakr b. Šāhawayh. These contacts only deteriorated after 'Aḍud ad-Dawla's death in 382/983 when his son arrested this general and provoked a Qarmaṭī attack on Kūfa. See Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* IX, 29-30; Miskawayh, *Tağārib* II, 117, 129. Cf. Busse 1969:65; Sha'ban 1976:165-168..

<sup>51</sup> According to Ibn al-'Imād (*Šadara* II, 348) in 339/951:  
 فيها أعادت القرامطة الحجر الأسود إلى مكانه وكان بجمك بذل لهم في رده خمسين ألف دينار فلم يردوه وقالوا  
 أخذنا بأمر وإذا ورد أمر رددناه فردوه وقالوا رددناه بأمر من أخذناه بأمره لنتم مناسك الناس.  
 This statement may reflect their religious conviction rather than the orders of one definite person. Cf. Miskawayh, *Tağārib* II, 127; Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* VIII, 367; Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Muntazam* VI, 367; Ibn Taġrībīrdī, *Nuṣūm* III, 101.

suing a militant expansive external policy and later by concluding agreements with these neighbours. Meanwhile the Qarmaṭī community established its state and in the end achieved its final legitimization by integrating and assimilating within the existing Muslim political order. The chroniclers do not record any further military activity on the part of the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain for more than a decade.

The last outbreak of Qarmaṭī militancy was in connection with the Fāṭimid conquest of Egypt in 358/969, more precisely their appearance in Syria in 360/971.

The Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain had earlier demonstrated their political interests in this region by maintaining good relations with the rulers of the Fertile Crescent and the Ḥamdānids and the Iḥšīdids who sent them gifts<sup>52</sup>. The Iḥšīdids of Egypt and Southern Syria paid them a sum of 300,000 dinars a year, which offering was to secure the safety of the caravans travelling on the landroutes from Egypt and Syria to the Ḥiḡāz<sup>53</sup>. When the Fāṭimids appeared in Syria and cut off this subsidy, they invoked the disapproval of the Qarmaṭīs who did not hesitate to attack them.

The question of the hostilities of the Fāṭimids and the Qarmaṭīs will not be examined here, but as far as the background motives of the outbreak of their armed clash are concerned, it should be noted that there are political and economic, but not ideological, reasons behind them. It should also be pointed out that there is no accurate information in the sources to support the view that the Qarmaṭīs had been in the service of the early Fāṭimids and broke off their relations with them<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* VIII, 452; Miskawayh, *Ṭaḡārib* II, 203; Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Muntazam* VII, 19. Cf. 'Adwān 1981:274-5, 309.

<sup>53</sup> See Kennedy 1989:320. Cf. Busse 1969:55.

<sup>54</sup> Most of the chronicles insist that the reason for the Qarmaṭī attack can be found in their indignation at the loss of subsidies both from the Iḥšīdids and the Ḥamdānid government of Damascus. See Shaban 1976:204; Kennedy 1989:291-292; Daftary 1990:165 and fn. 37.

The later prosperity of the Qarmaṭī state in Baḥrain – whose economic and social structure existing in 350/960 was reported by the famous 4/10th century geographers al-Muqaddasī (writing about 375/985) (*Taqāsīm* 94) and Ibn Ḥawqal (d. 380/990) (*Ṣūrat al-arḍ* 33-35) as well as the changes in internal affairs which were reported by Nāṣir-i Ḥusraw, the Ismāʿīlī traveller (d. 481/1088)<sup>55</sup> in 444/1052 – was based on their earlier violent militant policy developed for the protection of their local economic interests. Thus the privileges they gained from their neighbours laid down the basis of their later welfare.

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