



ABŪ SA'ĪD JANNĀBĪ

ABŪ SA'ĪD JANNĀBĪ, ḤASAN B. BAHRĀM, founder of the Qarmaṭī state in Baḥrain (b. between 230/845, and 240/855, d. 300/913 or 301/913-14). A native of Jannābā on the coast of Fārs and of Persian origin, whether he himself claimed royal Persian descent or the claim was put forward later on his behalf is uncertain. He is said to have worked in Jannābā as a furrier or a flour merchant before journeying to the Sawād of Kūfa where he married into the family of the Banu'l-Qaṣṣār, who were prominent in the early Isma'ili movement there. He was then trained by 'Abdān, the chief *dā'ī* in Iraq, and encharged by him with the *da'wa* in Jannābā, Sīnīz, Tavvaḡ, Mahrūbān and the coastal regions of Fārs. This was most likely still in the sixties of the 3rd century/874-84. He was successful in his mission and gathered much money from his converts. Some opponents, however, denounced him to the authorities, who confiscated his treasury and stores, while he escaped and lived for some time in hiding. Perhaps at this stage he stayed in Baṣra, where according to some sources he made a living by mending flour sacks or measuring corn before his journey to Baḥrain. He was now invited by Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ, the leader of the Isma'ili movements in Iraq, to Kalwādā; after a time he was sent as a *dā'ī* to Baḥrain, where he arrived, according to the well-informed Mas'ūdī, in 273/886-87; other sources give 281/894, 283/896, and even 286/899, dates which are progressively more unlikely since they leave insufficient time for his preaching and extensive conquests. He first set himself up as a flour merchant in Qaṭīf. There he gained the backing of the sons of Sanbar: Ḥasan, whose daughter he married, 'Alī, and Ḥamdān. A locally prominent Ṭaqafī family, they became his closest advisers and helpers,



and their descendants later continued to rule the Qarmaṭī state in Baḥrain jointly with the descendants of Abū Sa'īd. Another Isma'īli *dā'ī*, Abū Zakarīyā' Ṭamāmī (or Ḍamāmī), sent from Yemen by the *dā'ī* Ebn Ḥawšab, had been active in Baḥrain already before Abū Sa'īd. Although some rivalry soon developed between the two, they seem to have outwardly cooperated for a long time before Abū Sa'īd seized Abū Zakarīyā' and had him killed in prison. Abū Sa'īd gained the allegiance of the bedouin Banū Kelāb, who had earlier been converted by Abū Zakarīyā', and then of the Banū 'Oqayl. They came to form the backbone of his army. He then conquered the towns one by one. In Baḥrain he took Qaṭīf, Zāra, Ṣafwān, Ḍahrān, Aḥsā', and Jowātā. He led or sent several campaigns to Ṣoḥār in Oman and finally entered the town. Oman did not, however, come permanently under his rule. Other campaigns went to the Belād al-Falaḡ south of Yamāma and to Yabrīn, east of Yamāma, which he left desolate after killing or driving away the inhabitants, the Banū Qoṣayr and Banū Sa'd of Tamīm (Ḥamdānī, *Ṣefa jazīrat al-'Arab*, ed. D. H. Müller, Leiden, 1884, p. 165; Ḥ. al-Jāser, *Abū 'Alī al-Ḥaḡarī wa abḡāṭoh fī taḡdīd al-mawāze'*, Riyadh, 1388/1968, p. 389). It is doubtful whether he brought central Yamāma under his sway, though there is some evidence that he clashed with the Hasanid Banu'l-Oḡayzer, who had been ruling Yamāma since about 252/866 and were residing in Kezrema, and that some of them were killed. The Banu'l-Oḡayzer, however, later cooperated closely with the Qarmaṭīs for some time. Abū Sa'īd also gained control over the island of Owāl and levied a high impost on the ships anchoring there. The dates and chronology of these conquests are unknown. By 286/899 he held most of Baḥrain except Ḥaḡar, the capital and seat of the 'Abbasid governor, and was threatening to raid Baṣra. In Rabī' II, 287/April, 900 the caliph Mo'tāzed appointed 'Abbās b. 'Amr Ġanawī governor of Baḥrain and Yamāma and sent him with 2,000 men against Abū Sa'īd. The latter met him at a salt marsh in the desert at a distance of two days from Qaṭīf and defeated and captured him in Raḡab, 287/July, 900. He killed his other captives but sent Ġanawī back to the caliph with a warning not to interfere in his territories again. In the absence of a governor, he was able to enter Ḥaḡar, where he granted safety to the inhabitants. Ḥaḡar was, however, reoccupied by an 'Abbasid governor, perhaps in 288/901, when Abū Sa'īd approached Baṣra but withdrew before reaching it. Still in Ḍu'l-qa'da, 290/December, 903 the 'Abbasid governor Ebn Bānū reported to Baghdad that he defeated and killed a relative of Abū Sa'īd, his appointed successor resident in Qaṭīf (perhaps Ḥasan b. Sanbar?) and had entered that town. Probably not much later, Abū Sa'īd forced Ḥaḡar to surrender by diverting its water supply. Many inhabitants fled to Owāl, Sīrāf, and elsewhere; others joined the *da'wa* or were killed, and the



town was pillaged and partly destroyed. It remained, however, the capital of Baḥrain, even though Abū Saʿīd continued to reside in the palace he had built in Aḥsā'. In the following years Abū Saʿīd sent frequent raiding expeditions to the region of Baṣra to carry off captives and punish Banū Żabba for their participation in the campaign of Ġanawī. The sources specifically mention that the governor of Baṣra was unable to repel a raid to the environs of the city late in 299/July-August, 912. According to Masʿūdī, Abū Saʿīd was murdered in Ḍu'l-qa'da, 300/June-July, 913 in his bath in Aḥsā' by two Ṣaqlabī eunuchs whom he had captured during a sea-borne attack by Badr Maḥallī from Oman. With him several of his close companions from Qaṭīf were killed, among them 'Alī b. Sanbar and Ḥamdān b. Sanbar. If the date given by Masʿūdī is correct, his death was kept secret, for it was officially reported in Baghdad only late in 301/summer, 914; other sources give the date as 301.

Abū Saʿīd initiated some of the Qarmaṭī institutions of communal ownership, production, and distribution described much later in their full development by Ebn Ḥawqal. He gathered all boys above the age of four captured from the Arab tribes in special houses under the supervision of appointed wards and trained them in horsemanship and his religious doctrine. Captured slaves were retained by him for communal labor. He seized livestock, grain and fruit crops in all conquered territories and appointed certain agents to store and distribute them and others to tend the camels, cattle and sheep. Production of weapons, armor, clothing, and leather goods was commonly organized and supervised by his agents. He took an active interest in the improvement and extension of agricultural land and palm plantations.

There are only a few biased reports about his specific religious teachings. It is evident, however, that initially he must have adhered to the *da'wa* of his Iraqi teachers 'Abdān and Ḥamdān Qarmaṭī, whose doctrine centered on the expected appearance of the Maḥdī, Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl b. Ja'far, in the near future, and who recognized the ancestors of the Fatimids as their interim leaders. When 'Abdān and Ḥamdān broke with the future Fatimid caliph Maḥdī in about 286/99, Abū Saʿīd followed their lead. According to Ebn Ḥawqal, at this time he murdered his rival Abū Zakariyā', who remained faithful to the Fatimid cause. According to Qāzī 'Abd-al-Jabbār, he now claimed that the Maḥdī was Moḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Moḥammad b. Ḥanafīya, who would appear in the year 300/912. While the reliability of this account is uncertain, there is good evidence that he no longer recognized the imamate or leadership of the Fatimid caliph Maḥdī, while he continued to predict the



advent of the Mahdī. In accordance with Qarmaṭī expectations for the Mahdī's coming, he abolished prayer, fasting, and other Islamic rites among his followers.

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