



## CARMATIANS

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**CARMATIANS** (Ar. Qarāmeṭa; sing. Qarmaṭī), the name given to the adherents of a branch of the Ismaʿili movement during the 3rd/9th century. Originally, the term was evidently applied primarily to those Ismaʿilis who had been converted by Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ b. Ašʿat, the chief leader of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* in the Sawād of Kūfa and other parts of southern Iraq. Ḥamdān succeeded in winning many converts, who were soon designated as the Qarāmeṭa. Ḥamdān's surname Qarmaṭ, also reported as Qarmaṭūya (*Feraq al-šīʿa*, p. 61; Qomī, p. 83), which is probably of Aramaic origin (see Massignon, 1927, p. 767), is variously explained as meaning short-legged or red-eyed. Subsequently, the term came to be extended also to other Ismaʿili groups not organized by Ḥamdān. In particular, the Ismaʿilis of Bahrain, as well as some other dissident Ismaʿili groups in Iraq, Syria, Persia, and elsewhere, who in contradistinction to the Fatimid Ismaʿilis had refused to acknowledge the imamate of the central leaders of the Ismaʿili movement and then of the Fatimid caliphs, came to be referred to as Carmatians. In Persia, especially in the Jebāl and Khorasan, Carmatian Ismaʿilism survived until around the end of the 4th/10th century. Some of the well-known Iranian Ismaʿili *dāʿīs*, such as Abū Ḥātem Razī and Nasafī, who played an important part in developing aspects of early Ismaʿili thought, belonged to the Carmatian branch of Ismaʿilism; Abū Yaʿqūb Sejestānī, another outstanding early Ismaʿili thinker and *dāʿī* in eastern Persia, adhered to Carmatism during the early part of his career. The term Carmatian was sometimes used in medieval times in a derogatory sense by the Sunni polemicists, theologians, historians, and other enemies of the Ismaʿilis also in reference to the Fatimid Ismaʿilis.



*Origins and early history.* The Carmatians of southern Iraq and elsewhere were at first part of the general Ismaʿili movement of their time. Almost nothing is known about the earliest history of Ismaʿilism and the proto-Ismaʿili groups, but at least two such groups split off from the rest of the Emāmīya in Kūfa on the death of Imam Jaʿfar al-Šādeq in 148/765. In the absence of reliable sources, the history of the Ismaʿili movement during the subsequent century is equally shrouded in obscurity. On the basis of the references of the Imami heresiographers, who are our main source of information on this early period of Ismaʿilism, it seems that the bulk of the early Ismaʿilis traced the imamate through Jaʿfar al-Šādeq’s son Esmāʿil to the latter’s son Moḥammad (*Feraq al-Šīʿa*, p. 58; Qomī, pp. 80-81). This group became known as the Mobārakīya after Mobārak (i.e., the Blessed), evidently the epithet of Esmāʿil b. Jaʿfar al-Šādeq (Abū Yaʿqūb Sejestānī, *Eṭbāt al-nobūwāt*, p. 190; Hamdānī, text, p. 10).

Moḥammad b. Esmāʿil seems to have spent the latter part of his life in Kūzestān and died sometime during the caliphate of Hārūn al-Rašīd (170-193/786-809). Upon his death, the Mobārakīya split into two groups. One small and obscure group apparently continued to trace the imamate in the progeny of Moḥammad b. Esmāʿil. However, the separate existence of this group has not been recorded in any contemporary source, until ʿObayd-Allāh (ʿAbd-Allāh) Mahdī, the central leader of the movement and the future founder of the Fatimid caliphate, openly claimed the imamate of the Ismaʿilis for himself and his ancestors. There was a second group, still numerically insignificant but comprising the majority of the Mobārakīya, who refused to acknowledge the death of Moḥammad b. Esmāʿil. These sectarians, identified by the Imami heresiographers as the predecessors of the Carmatians, regarded Moḥammad b. Esmāʿil as their seventh and final imam, who was expected to reappear as the Mahdi or Qāʿem to fill the earth with justice (*Feraq al-Šīʿa*, p. 61; Qomī, p. 83).

The Ismaʿili movement appeared on the historical stage in a much stronger form shortly after the middle of the 3rd/9th century, when the movement emerged as a dynamic, revolutionary organization conducting extensive *daʿwa* activity through a network of *dāʿīs* (missionaries). Behind this outburst of activity one can clearly discern an energetic central leadership, operating secretly at first from ʿAskar Mokram and Ahvāz in Kūzestān and eventually from Salamīya in Syria. There are diverse accounts of the beginnings of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* of the 3rd/9th century and of the exact religious functions and the genealogy of the central leaders who were responsible for organizing and



directing this movement, which soon attracted the attention of the 'Abbasid officials and the public at large under the name of the Qarāmeṭa. There is a brief official Isma'ili version, sponsored by the Fatimid caliphs and later summed up by the Mosta'li-Ṭayyebī *dā'ī* Edrīs 'Emād-al-Dīn (d. 872/1468) in the 4th volume of his *'Oyūn al-akbār*, and an anti-Isma'ili version, traceable to the polemicists Ebn Rezām and the *šarīf* Aḳū Moḥsen and preserved by later historians, notably Ebn al-Dawādārī, Nowayrī, and Maqrīzī. There is, furthermore, Ṭabarī's narrative of the opening phase of the Carmatian movement in Iraq (Ṭabarī, III, pp. 2124ff.; tr., XXXVII, pp. 169ff.).

It was in 261/874-75, or possibly even earlier, that the missionary activity of Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ began in Iraq (Ebn al-Nadīm, ed. Flügel, I, p. 187; ed. Tajaddod, 2nd ed., p. 238; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 395). Ḥamdān himself was converted by the *dā'ī* Ḥosayn Ahvāzī, who had been sent to southern Iraq by the central leader of the Isma'ili movement. Ḥamdān organized the *da'wa* in his native locality, the Sawād of Kūfa, and in other parts of southern Iraq, appointing *dā'īs* for the major districts. The *da'wa* organized by Ḥamdān was part of the general Isma'ili movement of his time, which was then centrally directed from Salamīya. Ḥamdān, who had his own headquarters at Kalwādā near Baghdad, accepted the authority of the central leaders, with whom he corresponded but whose identity remained a well-kept secret. A major factor contributing to the rapid success of Ḥamdān was the revolt of the Zanj, the rebellious black slaves who for fifteen years (255-70/869-83) terrorized southern Iraq and distracted the attention of the 'Abbasid officials at Baghdad. The followers of Ḥamdān, after this generally designated as the Carmatians, had become quite numerous by 267/880, when Ḥamdān made an unsuccessful offer of alliance to the leader of the Zanj, 'Alī b. Moḥammad (Ṭabarī, III, pp. 2129-30; tr. XXXVII, p. 175). Ḥamdān's chief assistant was his brother-in-law 'Abdān, who enjoyed a high degree of independence and appointed many of the *dā'īs* in Iraq and probably also in southern Persia (Ebn al-Dawādārī, pp. 46-47, 55, 67; Nowayrī, pp. 191-92, 233; Maqrīzī, *Ette'āz* I, pp. 155, 160, 166, 168). Many different taxes were levied on the Carmatians of Iraq, including the fifth of all income to be saved for the awaited Mahdi. In 277/890-91, Ḥamdān founded a fortified *dāral-hejra*, a place of refuge and congregation, near Kūfa for the Carmatians. The Carmatian movement, however, still continued to escape the notice of the 'Abbasids, who had not reestablished effective control over southern Iraq since the Zanj revolt. It was only in 278/891-92, mentioned by Ṭabarī as the year in which the Carmatians of the villages around Kūfa intensified their activity, that Baghdad officials began to realize the danger of



the new movement on the basis of some reports dispatched from Kūfa (Ṭabarī, III, pp. 2124, 2126-27; tr. XXXVII, pp. 169, 171-73). But no immediate action was taken against the Carmatians who staged their first public protest in 284/897. However, the energetic caliph al-Moʿtazed did not permit any Carmatian unrest to succeed in Iraq, and he repressed the three revolts which were attempted during 287-89/900-02 (Ṭābet b. Senān, *Taʾrīk akbār al-Qarāmeṭa*, in *Akbār al-Qarāmeṭa*, pp. 6-11; Ebn al-Dawādārī, pp. 44ff.; Nowayrī, pp. 187ff.; Maqrīzī, *Etteʾāz* I, pp. 151ff.).

The *daʿwa* was initiated in other regions, besides Iraq, around the 260s/870s. In southern Persia the mission was apparently under the supervision of the Carmatian leaders of Iraq. **Abū Saʿīd Jannābī**, trained by ʿAbdān, was initially active there with much success (Madelung, 1983). And in Fārs proper, ʿAbdān’s brother Maʿmūn was appointed as a *dāʿī*, after whom the sectarians of that province were reportedly called the Maʿmūniya (Daylamī, p. 21). The *daʿwa* in Yemen, which remained in close contact with the central leadership of the movement, was started in 268/881 by the *dāʿīs* ʿAlī b. Faḏl and Ebn Ḥawšab, known as Maṣṣūr Yaman (see Noʿmān b. Moḥammad, *Eftetaḥ*, pp. 32-47; Halm, 1981). In 270/883, Ebn Ḥawšab sent his nephew Hayṭam as a *dāʿī* to Sind, and later he sent Abū ʿAbd-Allāh Šīʿī to the Maḡreb, where he prepared the ground for Fatimid rule (Noʿmān b. Moḥammad, *Eftetaḥ*, pp. 45, 59ff.).

In the meantime the *daʿwa* had appeared in eastern Arabia in 281/894 or even earlier in 273/886. After his initial career in southern Persia, Abū Saʿīd Jannābī was sent by Ḥamdān to Bahrain, entrusted with the mission there (Ṭābet b. Senān, pp. 12-16; Ebn al-Dawādārī, pp. 55-62, 91ff.; Nowayrī, pp. 233ff.; Maqrīzī, *Etteʾāz* I, pp. 159ff.). However, the sources also add that Abū Saʿīd had been preceded there by another *dāʿī*, a certain Abū Zakarīyā Ẓamāmī, who may have been dispatched by Ebn Ḥawšab. By 286/899, Abū Saʿīd had brought under submission a large part of Bahrain, causing considerable alarm in Basra (Ṭabarī, III, pp. 2188ff., 2196-97, 2205, 2232, 2291; tr. XXXVIII, pp. 77ff., 86-89, 98, 128-29, 202; Masʿūdī, *Morūj* VIII, pp. 191ff.). Later, the Carmatians of Bahrain extended their control to the adjoining regions, including Yamāma and ʿOmān. Shortly after 260/873-74, when the Carmatian leaders of Iraq were at the beginning of their activities, the central leaders of the movement dispatched *dāʿīs* to many parts of west-central and northwest Persia; later the *daʿwa* was extended to Khorasan and Transoxiana (Neẓām-al-Molk, pp. 282-95, 297-305; Stern, 1960).

The doctrine preached by Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ and ʿAbdān can be derived from



what Nawbak̄tī and Qomī ascribe to the Carmatians (*Feraq al-Šī'a*, pp. 61-64; Qomī, pp. 83-86; Eng. tr. in Stern, 1983, pp. 47-53). There is no indication that at the time the beliefs of the Carmatians of Iraq differed in any significant respect from those held by the rest of the Carmatians (Isma'īlis). At any rate, Nawbak̄tī and Qomī, who as well-informed contemporary writers describe the situation of the Isma'īlis prior to the year 286/899, when a schism occurred in the movement, mention no other Isma'īli group besides the Carmatians. The account of the Imami heresiographers is confirmed by the statements attributable to Ebn Rezām and Aḳū Moḥsen. The Carmatians who had issued from the Mobārakīya limited the number of their imams to seven, starting with 'Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb and ending with Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl, who was the Mahdi as well as the final, seventh messenger-prophet. Indeed, the central theme in the Carmatian teachings was the expectation of the imminent reappearance of Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl who was to end the era of Islam and proclaim the hidden truth of the former religions. The belief in the Mahdship of Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl is also confirmed by the few extant Isma'īli sources belonging to the pre-Fatimid period (see *Ketāb al-rošd wa'l-hedāya*, ed. M. Kamil Hussein, in *Collectanea* I, ed. W. Ivanow, pp. 198ff.; Ja'far b. Manšūr Yaman, *Ketāb al-kašf* pp. 62, 77, 103-04, 109-10, 135, 160, 170).

By the final decades of the 3rd/9th century, the Carmatians (Isma'īlis) had already developed a cyclical view of hierohistory, according to which the religious history of mankind proceeded through seven prophetic eras of various durations, each one inaugurated by a speaker (*nāṭeq*) prophet, enunciating a revealed message which in its exoteric (*zāher*) aspect contained a religious law (*Šarī'a*). In the first six eras, the *nāṭeqs* were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Moḥammad. Each *nāṭeq* was succeeded by a spiritual legatee (*wašī[y]*), also called a foundation (*asās*) or silent one (*šāmet*), who interpreted the esoteric truth (*bāṭen*) contained in the revealed message of his era. Each *wašī* was, in turn, followed by seven imams, who guarded the true meaning of the scriptures and the laws in both their *zāher* and *bāṭen* aspects. In every prophetic era the seventh imam would rise in rank to become the *nāṭeq* of the following era, abrogating the *Šarī'a* of the previous era and promulgating a new one. The seventh imam of the sixth era, the era of the Prophet Moḥammad, was Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl, who had gone into concealment. On his parousia he would become the seventh *nāṭeq* and the Qā'em or Mahdi ruling over the final eschatological era. He would abrogate the law of Islam and initiate the final era of the world. Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl was not to announce a new religious law, however. His divine message would



consist of the full revelation of the esoteric truths concealed behind all the preceding messages. In the final messianic age, there would be no need for religious laws. As the eschatological Qā'em, Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl would rule and consummate the world. The early Carmatians (Isma'ilis) also formulated a gnostic cosmology which was probably fully developed by the end of the 3rd/9th century. In this cosmology, represented by the so-called *kūnī-qadar* gnostic synthetic myth, the myth of letters had an extremely important function, providing a ready explanation for the genesis of the universe (see Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr Yaman, *Sarā'er*, pp. 24-26, 81-82; Abū Ya'qūb Sejestānī, *Ketāb al-efteḳār*, pp. 43-56; Arendonk, pp. 330-34; Stern, "The Earliest Cosmological Doctrines of Ismā'īlism," in Stern, 1983, pp., 3-29; Halm, 1978, pp. 38-127, 206-27).

*The schism of 286/899 and the Carmatian revolts.* In 286/899, not long after 'Obayd-Allāh ('Abd-Allāh), the future Fatimid caliph al-Mahdi, had succeeded to the central leadership of the Isma'ili movement, Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ noticed some changes in the doctrinal instructions sent to him from the central headquarters of the movement. According to this narrative of Ebn Rezām and Akū Moḥsen (Ebn al-Dawādārī, pp. 65-68; Nowayrī, pp. 229-32; Maqrīzī, *Ette'āzĀ*; I, pp. 167-68), Ḥamdān then dispatched 'Abdān to Salamīya, to investigate the reason behind the new instructions. In due time Ḥamdān learned that instead of upholding the Mahdship of Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl, on whose behalf the *da'wa* had hitherto been conducted, the new leader now claimed the imamate for himself and his predecessors who had led the movement after Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl. It seems that the central leaders of the Isma'ili movement, before 'Obayd-Allāh's reform, had assumed the rank of the *hojja* (proof) of the absent imam for themselves, and it was through the *hojja* that the believers could establish contact with the hidden Mahdi (Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr Yaman, *Ketāb al-kašf* pp. 97ff., 102ff.). It should be added, however, that the same central leaders may have been acknowledged as imams from the beginning by a small group of the early Isma'ilis who had issued from the Mobārakiya, possibly the same group who, according to Nawbaktī (p. 61) and Qomī (p. 83), had traced the imamate in the progeny of Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl. At any rate, 'Obayd-Allāh's reform implied the denial of the Mahdship of Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl, which had been the central point in the original doctrine of the imamate held by the majority of the early Isma'ilis (Carmatians).

'Obayd-Allāh's open claim to the imamate split the Isma'ili movement into two



branches in 286/899. One branch accepted 'Obayd-Allāh's claims, later incorporated into the official Fatimid Isma'ili doctrine of the imamate. These Isma'ilis maintained continuity in the imamate and accepted 'Obayd-Allāh's explanation that the Isma'ili imamate had been handed down among the direct descendants of Ja'far al-Ṣādeq. The other branch, the dissident Isma'ilis who lacked united leadership, refusing to recognize 'Obayd-Allāh's claim to the imamate, retained their original doctrine and reaffirmed their belief in the return of Moḥammad b. Esmā'il as the Mahdi. Henceforth the term Qarāmeṭa came to be generally applied to the latter branch, comprised of a number of dissident Isma'ili communities scattered in different parts of the Islamic world.

The available fragmentary evidence of the attitude of various Isma'ili (Carmatian) communities and the Carmatian activities against the central leadership of the movement in the aftermath of 'Obayd-Allāh's doctrinal reform can be summed up as follows. The Carmatian leaders of Iraq, who initially led the dissenters, renounced their allegiance to the central leadership soon after 'Abdān's return from Salamīya. Thereupon Ḥamdān assembled his *dā'īs* and ordered them to suspend the *da'wa* in their respective districts. Shortly afterwards, Ḥamdān went to Kalwāḍā from where he disappeared. Around the same time 'Abdān was murdered at the instigation of Zekrawayh b. Mehrawayh, one of his subordinate *dā'īs* in Iraq. Zekrawayh and some of his supporters had at first remained loyal to the central leadership. Threatened with revenge by the followers of 'Abdān, however, Zekrawayh had to remain in hiding for some time. Meanwhile, the Carmatians of Iraq were left in a state of confusion and doctrinal crisis following the demise of Ḥamdān and 'Abdān. Soon, 'Īsā b. Mūsā, a nephew of 'Abdān, rose to a leading position among them and resumed the *da'wa* in the name of Moḥammad b. Esmā'il. These Carmatians survived in southern Iraq, with some support in Baghdad, through the first quarter of the 4th/10th century and on into later times (Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 391; 'Arīb, *Ṣelat*, p. 137).

Zekrawayh b. Mehrawayh soon manifested his own rebellious intentions by organizing the Carmatian revolts of Iraq and Syria (Ṭabarī, III, pp. 2218-26, 2230-32, 2237-46, 2255-66, 2269-75; tr., XXVIII, pp. 113-23, 126-29, 134-44, 157-68, 172-79; 'Arīb, *Ṣelat*, pp. 4-6, 918; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, pp. 370-76; Halm, 1979). In 289/902, Zekrawayh sent one of his sons, Ḥosayn (or Ḥasan), known as the Ṣāḥeb-al-Ṣāma to the Syrian desert to convert the Banū Kalb. Rapid success was achieved in winning the support of several clans of the Kalb (q.v.), who adopted the religious name of Fāṭemīyūn. The Ṣāḥeb-al-Ṣāma was soon



joined by his brother Yaḥyā, called the Ṣāḥeb-al-Nāqa. Yaḥyā assumed the leadership of the newly converted bedouins and claimed to be a descendant of Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl. In rapid succession the Ṣāḥeb-al-Nāqa occupied several towns in Syria, including Salamīya whose inhabitants were massacred by the Carmatians. It seems that Zekrawayh's sons had at first attempted unsuccessfully to lure back 'Obayd-Allāh, who had left Salamīya earlier in 289/902. Consequently, in 290/903 the Carmatians also killed all members of 'Obayd-Allāh's family and household, who had remained in Salamīya. The Ṣāḥeb-al-Nāqa himself was killed in battle in that year and was succeeded in the leadership by the Ṣāḥeb-al-Šāma. In 291/903 a severe defeat was inflicted on the Carmatians near Salamīya by an 'Abbasid army; the Ṣāḥeb-al-Šāma was captured and subsequently executed in Baghdad.

In 293/906, Zekrawayh sent another *dā'ī*, known as Abū Ġānem Naṣr, to revive the Carmatian movement among the Banū Kalb. They attacked several towns, including Damascus, pillaging everywhere. In the same year the 'Abbasid forces effectively took the field against these Syrian Carmatians, and Abū Ġānem was killed by some of his followers in return for governmental amnesty. Zekrawayh now sent another *dā'ī* to his Syrian supporters, informing them of his imminent appearance. Soon afterwards the Carmatian tribesmen of Syria, joined by Zekrawayh's followers in the region of the Sawād, made a surprise attack on Kūfa but were driven out quickly. Thereupon, the Carmatian supporters of Zekrawayh withdrew to the vicinity of Qādesīya, where they were met in Du'l-ḥejja 293/October 906 by Zekrawayh, who had finally come forth from his hiding place. The Carmatians defeated an 'Abbasid army sent after them and then began to pillage the caravans of the Persian pilgrims returning from Mecca, massacring most of them. Zekrawayh and his supporters continued their terrorist activities until 294/907, when they were defeated by an 'Abbasid army. Zekrawayh was wounded in battle and died in captivity a few days later; many of his followers were killed at the same time, bringing about the end of the Syro-Mesopotamian Carmatian revolts (Ṭābet b. Senān and Ebn al-'Adīm in *Aḳbār al-Qarāmeṭa*, pp. 16-35, 275ff., 287ff.; Ebn al-Dawādārī, pp. 69-89; Nowayrī, pp. 246-75; Maqrīzī, *Ette'āzĀ*; I, pp. 168ff.). Some of the surviving supporters of Zekrawayh in the Sawād denied his death and awaited his return. In 295/907-08, a certain Abū Ḥātem Zoṭṭī was active as a *dā'ī* among these Carmatians. He prohibited the consumption of certain vegetables and the slaughtering of animals, whence his followers were called the Baqlīya, a name subsequently applied to all the Carmatians of southern Iraq, who for the most part had retained their earlier belief in the Mahdship



of Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl. The Baqlīya were soon joined by the former adherents of Ḥamdān and 'Abdān. This Carmatian coalition survived for some time under leaders like 'Īsā b. Mūsā and Mas'ūd b. Ḥorayṭ ('Arīb, *Ṣelat*, p. 137; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 391; Ebn al-Dawādārī, p. 90; Nowayrī, pp. 275-76; Maqrīzī, *Ette'āz* I, pp. 179-80).

In Bahrain, Abū Sa'īd Jannābī sided with Ḥamdān and 'Abdān against the central leadership, killing the *dā'ī* Abū Zakarīyā', who had remained loyal to 'Obayd-Allāh (Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 295). Abū Sa'īd then claimed to represent the awaited Mahdi, who would appear in the year 300/912-13. For Abū Sa'īd, who established his rule over Bahrain in the same eventful year 286/899, the schism may actually have provided a favorable opportunity to make himself completely independent. He had, indeed, succeeded in founding an independent Carmatian state in Bahrain, when he was murdered by a slave in 301/913-14. Abū Sa'īd was succeeded in Bahrain by his sons.

In Yemen, the Isma'īli community at first remained completely loyal to 'Obayd-Allāh. By 291/903-04, however, Ebn al-Faḏl seems to have manifested signs of Carmatian disloyalty. In 299/911, after reoccupying Ṣaṇ'ā', Ebn al-Faḏl publicly renounced his allegiance to 'Obayd-Allāh, abolished the *Ṣarī'a*, and himself claimed to be the Mahdi. Subsequently, he endeavored unsuccessfully to coerce the collaboration of Ebn Ḥawṣab, the senior *dā'ī* who had remained loyal. After Ebn al-Faḏl's death in 303/915, the Carmatian movement disintegrated rapidly in Yemen. As'ad b. Abī Ya'for of the local Ya'forid dynasty, who had recognized Ebn al-Faḏl's suzerainty, revolted against Fa'fa', the son and successor of the deceased *dā'ī*. In 304/917 he captured Moḏayḳera, the seat of the Yemeni Carmatians, killing Fa'fa' and other Carmatian leaders and ending the Carmatian movement in Yemen (Ebn Mālek, pp. 21ff., 28ff., 35-39; Bahā'-al-Dīn Janādī, *Aḵbār al-Qarāmeṭa be'l-Yaman*, in Kay, text, pp. 143-50, tr. pp. 197-208).

The Carmatian branch had supporters also in Persia and Transoxiana. In the area of Ray, which served as the headquarters of the *da'wa* in the Jebāl, the Isma'īlis (Carmatians) had become locally known as the *Ḳalafīya*, after their first *dā'ī* Ḳalaf Ḥallāj, who had established himself in the district of Pašāpūya shortly after 260/873-74. Ḳalaf had been succeeded by his son Aḥmad and then by the latter's chief disciple Ġīāt (Neḏām-al-Molk, pp. 283ff.; Daylamī, pp. 20-21; Ebn al-Dawādārī, p. 96; Maqrīzī, *Ette'āz* I, p. 186; Ebn al-Nadīm, ed. Flügel, I, p. 188; ed. Tajaddod, p. 239). Ġīāt won numerous converts and extended the *da'wa* to the cities of Qom and Kāšān. It seems that after the



schism in the Ismaʿili movement the sectarians of the Jebāl sided mainly with the Carmatian dissenters and refused to recognize the imamate of ʿObayd-Allāh. The Sunni jurists, who had held disputations with Ġiāṭ, instigated the inhabitants of Ray against him and his followers, obliging Ġiāṭ to flee to Khorasan. There, while predicting the appearance of the Mahdi at a certain date, Ġiāṭ met and converted the amir Ḥosayn b. ʿAlī Marvazī. Many of the inhabitants of the districts of Marw-al-Rūd, Ṭāleqān, Maymana, Ġarjestān, Ġūr, and Herat, under the influence of this powerful amir who later became a Carmatian *dāʿī* himself, also adopted Carmatian Ismaʿilism. Ġiāṭ later returned to Ray and appointed as his deputy **Abū Ḥātem Razī**, one of the most learned early Ismaʿili authorities. Ġiāṭ disappeared under mysterious circumstances and was succeeded by Abū Jaʿfar Kabīr, a descendant of Ḳalaf. The latter was ousted by Abū Ḥātem who became the fifth leader of the *daʿwa* in the Jebāl. The loyal Ismaʿili branch, too, acknowledging the imamate of ʿObayd-Allāh and his successors, came to be represented in Khorasan. The sources relate that the *daʿwa* was officially taken to that region, around the last decade of the 3rd century/903-13, by the *dāʿī* Abū ʿAbd-Allāh Ḳādem, dispatched by ʿObayd-Allāh after the establishment of the Fatimid caliphate. This *dāʿī* started his activities from Nīšāpūr after Ġiāṭ had already introduced the Carmatian doctrines to Khorasan on his own initiative. Ḳādem was succeeded around 307/919 by Abū Saʿīd Šaʿrānī, who managed to convert several notable military men of the province. The next head of the *daʿwa* in northeastern Persia and the adjoining region was the above-mentioned Ḥosayn b. ʿAlī Marvazī. It was during his time that the provincial seat of the *daʿwa* was transferred from Nīšāpūr to Marw-al-Rūd (Nezām-al-Molk, pp. 287ff.; Ebn al-Dawādārī, p. 95; Maqrīzī, *Etteʿāz* I, p. 186; Ebn al-Nadīm, ed. Flügel, I, p. 188; ed. Tajaddod, p. 239; Gardīzī, ed. Ḥabībī, pp. 148-49; *Tārīḳ-e Sīstān*, pp. 290-94, 300-02; tr. Gold, pp. 233-37, 243-44; Mīrkānd, Tehran, IV, pp. 40-42).

*Later history of the Carmatian movement.* By the first decade of the fourth century/912-23, when ʿObayd-Allāh Mahdi was establishing his authority as the first Fatimid caliph in north Africa and the Carmatians of Bahrain and Iraq were quiescent, the Carmatian movement began to regain some ideological unity while also spreading in Persia and Transoxiana. An important role in this process was played by the *Ketāb al-maḥṣūl* of Moḥammad b. Aḥmad Nasafī, the *dāʿī* of Khorasan and Transoxiana, who succeeded Ḥosayn Marvazī and who is generally credited with introducing a form of Neoplatonism into Ismaʿili thought (Barthold, *Turkestan*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 242-45; Stern, 1960, p. 79). Nasafī also succeeded in spreading Carmatian Ismaʿilism to Central Asia. He



converted several dignitaries at the Samanid court at Bukhara, including amir Naṣr II himself and his vizier (Neẓām-al-Molk, pp. 288-89). These developments naturally displeased the Sunni religious leaders of the Samanid state. They eventually deposed Naṣr II, under whose son and successor Nūḥ I, the Ismaʿilis (Carmatians) of Khorasan and Transoxiana were severely persecuted. Nasafi and his chief associates were executed at Bukhara in 332/943. But the Carmatian *daʿwa* survived in Khorasan and was later directed by Nasafi's son Masʿūd and other *dāʿīs*, notably Abū Yaʿqūb Sejestānī (Nāṣer-e Ƙosrow, *Ƙvānal-ekwān*, ed. Ƙaššāb, pp. 112, 115; ed. ʿAlī Qawīm, pp. 131, 135). It seems that Nasafi's *Ketāb al-maḥṣūl*, which reaffirmed the Mahdship of Moḥammad b. Esmāʿīl, soon gained widespread acceptance in various Carmatian circles, which lacked unified leadership.

Equally important at this time was the activity of Abū Ḥātem Razī, who became the chief *dāʿī* of Ray during 300-10/912-23. He expanded the *daʿwa* in the Jebāl, also sending *dāʿīs* to Azarbaijan, Ṭabarestān, and Gorgān. Abū Ḥātem did not recognize the imamate of ʿObayd-Allāh. He corresponded with the Carmatian leaders of Bahrain and, like them, expected the appearance of the Mahdi. Abū Ḥātem evidently regarded himself as the lieutenant (*kalīfa*) of the absent imam, also considering himself superior to all other chief *dāʿīs*, or *lawāḥeq*, as he called them (Abū Ḥātem Razī, *Ketāb al-eṣlāḥ*, unpub.; Ḥamīd-al-Dīn Kermānī, *Ketāb al-rīāzī*<sup>w</sup>, pp. 176-212). He converted Aḥmad b. ʿAlī, who governed Ray during 307-11/919-24, and brought other local rulers under his influence, including the Daylami leader **Asfār b. Šīrūya** and Mardāvīj, the founder of the Ziarid dynasty (Neẓām-al-Molk, pp. 286-87; Baġdādī, *Farq*, ed. Badr, p. 267; Ebn Esfandiār, I, pp. 285-95; tr. Browne, pp. 209-17). According to the *dāʿī* Kermānī, the famous disputation between Abū Ḥātem and Abū Bakr Moḥammad Razī took place in Mardāvīj's presence (Ḥamīd-al-Dīn Kermānī, *Aqwāl*, pp. 2-3). Abū Ḥātem also converted Mahdī b. Ƙosrow Fīrūz, known as Sīāḥčašm, the Jostanid ruler of Daylam who was killed in 316/928 by Asfār b. Šīrūya who aspired to possess the Jostanid seat at Alamūt (Madelung, 1967). After Sīāḥčašm, the local position of the Jostanids in Daylam was taken over by the Mosafirids, who also brought Azarbaijan under their control. Numismatic evidence dating from the year 343/954-55 indicates that the Mosafirids Wahsūdān, ruling from Šamīrān in Ṭārom, and his more authoritative brother Marzbān (d. 346/957), based in Ardabīl, also adhered to the Carmatian form of Ismaʿilism (see Stern, 1960, pp. 70-74). Marzbān's vizier, Abu'l-Qāsem ʿAlī b. Jaʿfar, was in fact a Carmatian *dāʿī* who freely propagated the *daʿwa* in the Mosafirid dominions (Margoliouth and Amedroz, *Eclipse* II, pp. 31ff.). Ebn



Ḥawqal (pp. 348-49, 354) who visited Azarbaijan around 344/955-56, reports the existence of many Ismaʿilis (Carmatians) in that region.

Meanwhile, in Bahrain the Carmatians had remained peaceful, maintaining good relations with the ʿAbbasids during the reign of Abū Saʿīd's eldest son and immediate successor Abu'l-Qāsem Saʿīd. At the time, the Carmatians of Bahrain were engaged in extensive peace negotiations with the famous ʿAbbasid vizier ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā, which gave the vizier's enemies a pretext for accusing him of being in league with the Carmatians (Bowen, pp. 50-56, 136-41, 191-95, 205-06, 210-11, 237, 249, 261-63, 266-75, 279-80, 357-58). The celebrated mystic Ḥosayn b. Maṣṣūr Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), too, was at this time accused of being a Carmatian agent (Massignon, 1922, pp. 71-80, 730-36). The Carmatians of Bahrain ended their peaceful policies in 311/923. In that year, soon after Abu'l-Qāsem Saʿīd was replaced in the leadership by his youngest brother Abū Ṭāher Solaymān Jannābī, the Carmatians began a decade of devastating raids into southern Iraq, also attacking the pilgrim caravans returning from Mecca. These campaigns encouraged the Carmatians of southern Iraq, who had close ties with their coreligionists in Bahrain, to launch rebellious activities of their own. In 316/928-29, led by ʿĪsā b. Mūsā and other *dāʿīs*, they revolted in the areas of Kūfa and Wāseṭ. Like ʿĪsā b. Mūsā and other Carmatian leaders Abū Ṭāher was at the time predicting the advent of the Mahdi after the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the year 316/928, an occurrence which was expected to end the era of Islam and initiate the seventh, final era of history.

The ravaging activities of Abū Ṭāher culminated in his attack on Mecca during the pilgrimage season of 317/930. The Carmatians massacred the pilgrims and the inhabitants and finally carried off the Black Stone of the Kaʿba to their new capital, Aḥsāʾ, presumably to symbolize the end of the era of Islam. Refusing to return the Black Stone at the request of the Fatimids and the ʿAbbasids, Abū Ṭāher conquered ʿOmān in 318/930 and became the master of Arabia and the terror of all nearby rulers. In Ramaṣān 319/September-October 931 Abū Ṭāher turned over the rule in Bahrain to a young Persian from Isfahan, in whom he had recognized the expected Mahdi. The events now took a different course from what had been predicted by the Carmatians for the advent of the Mahdi. Instead of revealing the truths behind all previous religions, the young Isfahani, who claimed descent from the Persian kings and manifested anti-Arab sentiments, turned out to be a restorer of Persian religion. Said to be a Magian, he ordered the worship of fire and the cursing of all prophets, also instituting a number of ceremonies that shocked the Carmatians. He evidently



had some links with established Zoroastrianism, for the chief priest of the Zoroastrians, Esfandiār b. Āḍarbād, was soon after accused of complicity with Abū Ṭāher and executed on the orders of the 'Abbasid caliph Rāzī (Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, pp. 104-05). When the Isfahani Mahdi began, furthermore, to execute the notable Carmatians of Bahrain, Abū Ṭāher had him killed and admitted that he had been an imposter. His reign lasted only eighty days (Mas'ūdī, *Morūj* VIII, pp. 285-86, 346, 374, IX, pp. 32, 76-77; *Tanbīh*, pp. 378-87, 389-96; 'Arīb, *Ṣelat*, pp. 38, 59, 101, 110-11, 113, 118-20, 123-24, 127, 128, 130, 132-33, 134, 136-37, 139, 159, 162-63, 168, 184; Ebn Ḥawqal, pp. 295-96; Baḡdādī, *Farq*, ed. Badr, pp. 270-75, 278-82, 288; Daylamī, pp. 71-96; Margoliouth and Amedroz, *Eclipse* I, pp. 33-35, 104-05, 109, 119, 120-22, 139-40, 145-46, 147-48, 165, 167-68, 172-83, 184-86, 201, 263, 284, 330, 367-70, 405, 408, II, pp. 24, 55-57, 60-61, 126-27, 129; Ebn al-Dawādārī, pp. 61-62, 91-94; Maqrīzī, *Ette'āz* I, pp. 164-65, 180-85; Ebn Taḡrīberdī, III, pp. 182, 197, 207-08, 211-13, 215, 217, 220, 224-26, 228, 232, 245, 260, 264, 278-79, 281, 287, 295, 301-02, 304-05).

The obscure episode of the false Persian Mahdi seriously demoralized the Carmatians of Bahrain and weakened their influence over the Carmatian communities in the east. Many Carmatians left Bahrain to serve during the following decades in the armies of various anti-Carmatian rulers. The leading Carmatian *dā'īs* were shocked, especially by the anti-Arab and antinomian manifestations of the episode. 'Īsā b. Mūsā and other Carmatian *dā'īs* of Iraq severed their ties with Abū Ṭāher. They continued to propagate the Mahdship of Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl while devoting their energies mainly to literary activities, often attributing their writings to 'Abdān so as to emphasize continuity in the movement (Nowayrī, pp. 293-96; Maqrīzī, *Ette'āz* I, p. 185).

In Persia, Abū Ḥātem, who had corresponded with Abū Ṭāher, was forced to hide from his followers. Abū Ḥātem's efforts in his *Ketāb al-eṣlāḥ* to correct the antinomian aspects of Nasafī's *Ketāb al-maḥṣūl* and to affirm the indispensability of the law, are best understood on the assumption that the *dā'ī* of Ray produced this treatise after the disastrous events in Bahrain. Later, Nasafī's successor and disciple, Abū Ya'qūb Sejestānī, who at the time did not recognize the imamate of the Fatimids, defended his master's views in his own *Ketāb al-noṣra*. Abū Ḥātem, Nasafī, and Sejestānī were indeed the chief proponents of the Persian school of dissident Isma'īlism, also providing doctrinal links between the pre-Fatimid and the Fatimid Isma'īlis. The *Maḥṣūl* and the *Noṣra* are both lost, but they are quoted extensively in Ḥamīd-al-Dīn Kermānī's *Ketāb al-rīāzī*<sup>w</sup>, which reviews this controversy from the official



viewpoint of the Fatimid *da'wa* and in general vindicates the views of Abū Ḥātem (see Ivanow, 1955, pp. 87-122; Corbin, pp. 187ff.; Stern, "Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī on Persian Religion," in Stern, 1983, pp. 30-46). Still later, the antinomian tendencies of Nasafī and Sejestānī were attacked by Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow (*Ḳvān al-ekwān*, ed. Ḳaššāb, pp. 112ff.; ed. Qawīm, pp. 131ff.; *Zād al-mosāferīn*, pp. 421-22), who, like Kermānī, represented the position of the Fatimid *da'wa* headquarters.

In Bahrain the Carmatians, after repudiating the Persian Mahdi, had reverted to their former beliefs, and Abū Ṭāher claimed to be acting on the orders of the hidden Mahdi. Abū Ṭāher had again launched incursions into southern Iraq and the coast of Fārs, also plundering the pilgrim caravans. In 327/938-39, Abū Ṭāher finally concluded an agreement with the 'Abbasids. He accepted to protect the pilgrims in return for an annual tribute. After Abū Ṭāher's death in 332/944, the Carmatians of Bahrain came to be ruled collectively by Abū Ṭāher's surviving brothers. The Carmatians voluntarily returned the Black Stone in 339/951 for a large sum paid by the 'Abbasids.

Much has been written concerning the relations between the Carmatians and the Fatimids. In modern times, M. J. de Goeje was the earliest orientalist who arrived at the conclusion that Abū Ṭāher, in all his important dealings, acted on the direct orders of the Fatimid 'Obayd-Allāh, who did not want to acknowledge his secret alliance with the disreputable Carmatians. He further held that the Carmatians of Bahrain maintained their close cooperation with the Fatimids until the Fatimid conquest of Egypt (de Goeje, 1886, pp. 59, 69, 82-83, 185, 190, 193ff.). Subsequently de Goeje's views were endorsed to various degrees by others (see Massignon, 1927, pp. 768-69; Lewis, pp. 80ff.). More recent scholarship, however, does not attest to the existence of close relations between the Carmatians and the Fatimids during the first half of the 4th/10th century. The main difficulty in investigating this matter stems from the lack of reliable information on the creed of the Carmatians, who were extremely secretive about their doctrines and whose literature has perished almost completely. However, in the light of what is known about the central belief of the Carmatians, W. Madelung and most of the other modern authorities have underlined the essential differences between the beliefs of the Carmatians and the Fatimid Isma'īlis (Madelung, 1959, pp. 46ff., 74ff., 84ff.). The Carmatians of Bahrain and elsewhere, who continued to anticipate the return of the hidden Mahdi, did not acknowledge the Fatimid caliphs as their imams, nor did they recognize their expected Mahdi in any of the Fatimids.



This is why they were so readily drawn into the catastrophic episode of the Persian Mahdi. However, as the Carmatians and the Fatimids shared a common hostility towards the Sunni 'Abbasids, it may appear that at times they acted in unison. Indeed, there is no solid evidence showing that the Carmatians of Bahrain were in the service of the early Fatimids, although the two sides later arrived at a form of political rapprochement.

The hostilities between the Carmatians of Bahrain and the Fatimids broke into open warfare after the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 358/969 and the Fatimid invasion of Syria in the following year. The Carmatian armies under the command of Ḥasan A'ṣam, a nephew of Abū Ṭāher, had sometime earlier started their own incursions into Syria and Palestine, forcing the Ikhshidid governors of Syria to pay them an annual tribute. In 360/971, A'ṣam, aided by the Buyids and the Hamdanids, defeated a Fatimid army and seized Damascus and Ramla. A'ṣam then proclaimed the suzerainty of the 'Abbasids in these domains and had the Fatimid caliph al-Mo'ezz cursed in the mosques. Soon after, Ḥasan A'ṣam marched as far as the gates of Cairo but was obliged to return to Aḥsā' in Rabī' I 361/December 971, probably because of internal problems in Bahrain. Al-Mo'ezz and A'ṣam exchanged threatening letters following the transference of the Fatimid seat to Cairo in Ramaḥān 362/June 973 (see Maqrīzī, *Ette'āz* I, pp. 189-202; Nowayrī, pp. 307-11; Ebn al-Dawādārī, pp. 149-56; Madelung, 1959, pp. 68-69, 85ff.). In 363/974 A'ṣam invaded Egypt again and besieged Cairo but was defeated by the Fatimids and returned to Bahrain. Later, the Fatimids reoccupied Damascus and al-Mo'ezz concluded a peace treaty with the Carmatians, who successfully demanded to receive the tribute formerly paid to them by the Ikhshidids (Ebn al-Qalānesī, pp. 1-11; Nowayrī, pp. 304ff.; Maqrīzī, *al-Moqaffā*, in *Akbār al-Qarāmeṭa*, pp. 402ff.).

The fourth Fatimid caliph, al-Mo'ezz (341-65/953-75), was the first member of his dynasty who endeavored seriously to gain the support of the dissident eastern Isma'ilis and to establish ideological unity in the Isma'ili movement. Accordingly, he revised the Fatimid Isma'ili teachings and accommodated some of the beliefs of the dissident communities. He again attributed to Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl, as the seventh imam of the era of Islam, the rank of the Qā'em and the *nāṭeq* of the final era, but with a different interpretation compared to that held by the Carmatians. As Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl had appeared in the time of complete concealment, his functions were to be undertaken by his lieutenants (*kolafā*), the Fatimid Isma'ili imams who claimed to be his descendants. It was through these lieutenants that the Qā'em



would reveal the inner meaning of the laws and carry out the deeds prophesied for him; for Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl himself would not reappear. Al-Mo'ezz also permitted the incorporation of an Isma'īli Neoplatonic cosmology, developed by the dissident Persian *dā'īs*, into Fatimid thought (al-Mo'ezz, *al-Monājāt*, in Guyard, ed., pp. 224-49; idem, *Aḍ'īat al-ayyām al-sab'a*, in Zāhed 'Alī, pp. 90ff.; No'mān b. Moḥammad, *al-Resāla al-modheba*, in Tāmer, ed., pp. 45ff., 66, 70-71, 74ff., 79; Madelung, 1961, pp. 86-101). These efforts were only partially successful. Al-Mo'ezz won over the *dā'ī* Sejestānī, who endorsed the imamate of the Fatimids in the works he wrote after the accession of al-Mo'ezz. Consequently, to a great extent the dissident Isma'īlis (Carmatians) of Khorasan, Transoxiana, Sīstān, Sind, and adjacent areas also came to support the Fatimid cause. However, the Carmatian movement persisted for a while longer in Daylam, Azarbaijan, and southern Iraq. Above all, al-Mo'ezz failed to win over the Carmatians of eastern Arabia.

In the reign of al-'Azīz (365-86/975-96), the son and successor of al-Mo'ezz, the Carmatians of Bahrain broke their political truce with the Fatimids and launched a series of rebellious activities in Syria until they were defeated in 368/978 by a large Fatimid force commanded by al-'Azīz himself. In 375/985 the Buyids inflicted two heavy defeats on the Carmatians of Bahrain, who had attempted to re-establish their hold over southern Iraq, and in 378/988 they suffered another humiliating defeat at the hands of Aṣfar, chief of the Banu'l-Montafeq of 'Oqayl, who then besieged Aḥsā' and pillaged Qaṭīf. The Carmatians now also lost the privilege of taxing the pilgrim caravans to Aṣfar and other tribal chiefs of the region. In 382/992, the Carmatians of Bahrain renewed their nominal political allegiance to the Fatimid al-'Azīz, without any doctrinal rapprochement. In the reign of al-Ḥākem (386-411/996-1021) the relations between the Fatimids and the Carmatians were evidently hostile, though few details are available. By the end of the 4th/10th century the Carmatians of Bahrain had been reduced to a local power, and not much is known about their subsequent history and relations with the Fatimids. By that time, the remaining Carmatian communities in Iraq, Persia, and elsewhere, who had continued to expect the return of Moḥammad b. Esmā'īl, were largely won over to the side of the Fatimid *da'wa* or had disintegrated (Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd Anṭākī, pp. 389ff.; Ebn al-Qalānesī, pp. 16ff.; Ebn al-Dawādārī, pp. 175-77, 179; Nowayrī, pp. 314-17; Maqrīzī, *Ette'āz* I, pp. 238-42, 244, 250, 270; Ebn Taḡrīberdī, IV, pp. 125, 128, 145).

The troubles that initiated the downfall of the Carmatian state of Bahrain



started in the large island of Owāl (now called Bahrain). Around 450/1058, some local tribesmen began to revolt against the Carmatian governor of the island. Owāl was permanently lost to the Carmatians around 459/1067, when the local rebels defeated a Carmatian fleet. Soon after Qaṭīf was taken by another local rebel. More importantly, in 462/1069-70, ‘Abd-Allāh b. ‘Alī ‘Oyūnī, a powerful local chief of the Banū Morra b. ‘Āmer of ‘Abd-al-Qays, rose against them. He defeated the Carmatians and then besieged Aḥsā’ for seven years. Assisted by the ‘Abbasids and the Saljuqs, he seized Aḥsā’ in 469/1076. In 470/1077-78, ‘Abd-Allāh put a definite end to the Carmatian state of Bahrain, founding the new local ‘Oyunid dynasty of eastern Arabia. ‘Abd-Allāh acknowledged the suzerainty of the Fatimid al-Mostaṣfer, who placed the ‘Oyunids under the protection of the Isma‘īli Solayhids, who ruled over Yemen as vassals of the Fatimids (see Abū Tamīm Ma‘add al-Mostaṣfer be’llāh, *al-Sejellāt al-mostaṣferīya*, ed. ‘A. M. Mājed, Cairo, 1954, p. 179).

According to its central tenet Carmatian religious teaching promised the rule of justice and equity under the expected Mahdi, whose return was eagerly awaited. On this religious basis the Carmatians founded a state in eastern Arabia from where they led a messianic, revolutionary movement with strong antinomian tendencies. For almost two centuries this movement shook the Muslim world, especially after Abū Ṭāher Jannābī’s sacrilegious acts in Mecca, while the Carmatian regime in Bahrain terrorized southern Iraq, pillaged the pilgrim caravans, threatened many local dynasties, and once came close to seizing Baghdad and overthrowing the ‘Abbasid caliphate. As a result, the Carmatians of Bahrain came to be regarded as the most heretical group, bent on destroying Islam from within, by the Sunni authors of the medieval times, who are our main source of information on the sectarians. However, the Carmatians of Bahrain have also been praised for their political organization and social order, possessing unique features among the Muslim states of the time. The *da‘wa* propagated by Abū Sa‘īd Jannābī and his successors did not contain any specific social program, and some early experiments with communal ownership of property evidently proved short-lived; but communal and egalitarian principles did play an important part in the organization of the Carmatian state in Bahrain. The state concern for the welfare of the community and the resulting social order in Bahrain, indeed, evoked the admiration of the non-Carmatian observers who visited eastern Arabia before the downfall of the Carmatian state. In particular, we have the accounts of Ebn Ḥawqal, who visited Bahrain in the latter part of the 4th/10th century, and Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow, who spent nine months in Laḥsā (i.e., Aḥsā’) in 443/1051.



In governing the affairs of the community, Abū Saʿīd conferred in major decisions with a ruling council known as the ʿEqdāniya, comprised of the highest officials of the state and representatives of the influential families in Bahrain. Originally, the foremost member of the ruling council was Ḥasan b. Sanbar (or Šanbar), the head of a prominent family from Qaṭīf and Abū Saʿīd’s father-in-law. After Abū Saʿīd’s death his seven sons joined the ruling council. According to Abū Saʿīd’s instructions, he was at first succeeded in the leadership by his eldest son Saʿīd and then by his youngest son Abū Ṭāher. The latter ruled with the aid of the ʿEqdāniya and a council of seven viziers, including Sanbar, the son of Ḥasan b. Sanbar. After Abū Ṭāher the leadership was held collectively by his surviving brothers, designated as *al-sāda al-roʿasāʾ*. Abū Ṭāher’s sons were excluded from the government, though they enjoyed much esteem in the community. The attempt of Abū Ṭāher’s eldest son Sābūr (Šāpūr) to seize power in 358/969 ended in his arrest and execution. Numismatic evidence indicates that at least after the death of Saʿīd in 361/972 the grandsons of Abū Saʿīd came to be admitted among *al-sāda al-roʿasāʾ*, and they took their places on the ruling council (Scanlon). In 366/977, on the death of Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf, the last of Abū Saʿīd’s sons, six of Abū Saʿīd’s grandsons succeeded to power.

By the time of Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow’s visit, the Carmatians of Bahrain were still called Abū Saʿīdīs, after their initial leader, and the ruling council still included six of Abū Saʿīd’s descendants from the Jannābī family and six viziers, all descendants of Ebn Sanbar, known as the Sanābera. Furthermore, the community had continued to have easy access to the ruling council. Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow relates that since the time of Abū Saʿīd, praying, fasting, and other Muslim rites had been abolished in the community. All mosques, too, had been closed down, although a wealthy Persian had been allowed to build a mosque for the use of the Meccan pilgrims arriving in Aḥsāʾ. Nevertheless, the Carmatians of Bahrain still believed themselves to be in the era of the Prophet Moḥammad and Islam, and they abstained from drinking wine. He also relates the interesting detail that the community had continued to await Abū Saʿīd’s return from the dead, as he himself had promised. It is not clear, however, whether Abū Saʿīd had in fact replaced Moḥammad b. Esmāʿīl as the expected Mahdi for the Carmatians of Bahrain (see de Blois).

Many interesting details have been related on the social order established in Carmatian Bahrain. In the time of Ebn Ḥawqal income from grain and fruit estates was assigned to the Carmatian community (*moʾmenūn*), while the



revenues from the customs duties levied on all ships passing through the Persian Gulf and the island of Owāl were distributed among the descendants of Abū Saʿīd. All other revenues from taxes, tributes, protection fees paid by the pilgrim caravans, and war booties were allotted to different groups by the ruling council on the basis of certain fixed ratios after setting aside one-fifth for the Mahdi (Şāḥeb al-Zamān; Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 25). By the time of Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow, the state owned some 30,000 purchased black slaves, whose services were utilized for the cultivation of agricultural lands in Bahrain. No taxes or tithes were paid by the inhabitants of Aḥsāʾ, where any impoverished person could readily obtain a state loan for as long as he needed. Similarly, any new craftsman arriving in Aḥsāʾ was given a loan for establishing himself there. All such state loans were free of interest. Repairs of private properties and mills were undertaken by the state, while grain was ground free of charge in the state mills. All this attests to the economic prosperity of the Carmatian state, which also permitted the financing of large military disbursements and countless series of raiding campaigns and military adventures in distant lands.

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