The Institute of Ismaili Studies

Carmatians

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(Arabic: Qaramita and singular: Qarmati), the name given to the adherents of a branch of the Ismailis during the 3rd AH/9th century CE. Originally, the term was evidently applied primarily to those Ismailis who had been converted by Hamdan Qarmat b. Ashʿat, the chief leader of the Ismaili *daʿwa* in the Sawad of Kufa (a district in the countryside surrounding Kufa) and other parts of southern Iraq. Hamdan succeeded in winning many converts, who were soon designated as the Qaramita. Hamdan's surname Qarmat, also reported as Qarmatiyya (*Firaq al-Shʿia*, p. 61; Qummi, 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 Ismaili groups not organised by Hamdan. In particular, the Ismailis of Bahrain, as well as some other dissident Ismaili groups in Iraq, Syria, Persia, and elsewhere, who, in contradistinction to the Fatimid Ismailis, had refused to acknowledge the imamate of the central leaders of the Ismailis and then of the Fatimid imam-caliphs, came to be referred to as Carmatians. In Persia, especially in the Jibal and Khurasan, Carmatian Ismailism survived until around the end of the 4th AH/10th CE century. Some of the well-known Iranian Ismaili *daʿi*s, such as Abu Hatim Razi and Nasafi, who played an important part in developing aspects of early Ismaili thought, belonged to the Carmatian branch of Ismailism; Abu Yaʿqub Sijistani, another outstanding early Ismaili thinker and *daʿi* 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 detractors of the Ismailis also in reference to the Fatimid Ismailis.

Origins and Early History

The Carmatians of southern Iraq and elsewhere were at first part of the general Ismaili community of their time. Almost nothing is known about the earliest history of Ismailism and the proto-Ismaili groups, but at least two such groups split off from the rest of the Imamiyya in Kufa on the death of Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq in 148 AH/765 CE. In the absence of reliable sources, the history of the Ismailis 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 Ismailism, it seems that the bulk of the early Ismailis traced the imamate through Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq's son Imam Ismaʿil to the latter's son Imam Muhammad b. Ismail (*Firaq al-Shiʿa*, p.58; Qummi, pp. 80-81). This group became known as the Mubarakiyya after

Mubarak (i.e., the Blessed), evidently the epithet of Isma‘il b. Ja‘far al-Sadiq (Abu Ya‘qub Sijistani, *Ithbat al-nubuwat*, p. 190; Hamdan, text, p. 10).

Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il seems to have spent the latter part of his life in Kuzistan and died sometime during the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid (170-193 AH/786-809 CE). Upon his death, the Mubarakiyya split into two groups. One small and obscure group apparently continued to trace the *imamate* in the progeny of Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il. However, the separate existence of this group has not been recorded in any contemporary source until ‘Abd-Allah al-Mahdi, the central leader of the Ismailis and the future founder of the Fatimid caliphate, openly claimed the imamate of the Ismailis for himself and his ancestors. There was a second group, still numerically insignificant but comprising the majority of the Mubarakiyya, who refused to acknowledge the death of Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il. These sectarians, identified by the Imami heresiographers as the predecessors of the Carmatians, regarded Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il as their seventh and final imam, who was expected to reappear as the *Mahdi* or *Qa’im* to fill the earth with justice (*Firaq al-Shi‘a*, p. 61; Qummi, p. 83).

The Ismailis appeared on the historical stage in a much stronger form shortly after the middle of the 3rd AH/9th century, when they emerged as a dynamic organisation conducting extensive *da‘wa* activity through a network of *da‘i*s (missionaries). Behind this outburst of activity one can clearly discern an energetic central leadership, operating secretly at first from ‘Askar Mukram and Ahvaz in Kuzistan and eventually from Salamiyya in Syria. There are diverse accounts of the beginnings of the Ismaili *da‘wa* of the 3rd AH/9th century and on the exact religious functions and the genealogy of the central leaders who were responsible for organising and directing this movement, which soon attracted the attention of the ‘Abbasid officials and the public at large under the name of the Qaramita. There is a brief official Ismaili version, sponsored by the Fatimid caliphs and later summed up by the Musta‘li-Tayyibi *da‘i* Idris ‘Imad al-Din (d. 872 AH/1468 CE) in the 4th volume of his *‘Uyun al-akhbar*, and an anti-Ismaili version, traceable to the polemicists Ibn Rizam and the *sharif* Aku Muhsin and preserved by later historians, notably Ibn al-Dawadari, Nuwayri, and Maqrizi. There is, furthermore, Tabari’s narrative of the opening phase of the Carmatian movement in Iraq (Tabari, III, pp. 2124ff.; tr., XXXVII, pp. 169ff.).

It was in 261 AH/874-75 CE, or possibly even earlier, that the missionary activity of Hamdan Qarmat began in Iraq (Ibn al-Nadim, ed. Flugel, I, p. 187; ed. Tajaddod, 2nd ed., p. 238; Mas‘udi, *Tanbih*, p. 395). Hamdan himself was converted by the *da‘i* Husayn Ahvazi, who had been sent to southern Iraq by the central leader of the Ismailis. Hamdan organised the *da‘wa* in his native locality, the Sawad of Kufa, and in other parts of southern Iraq, appointing *da‘i*s for the major districts. The *da‘wa* organised by Hamdan was part of the general Ismaili community of his time, which was then centrally directed from Salamiyya. Hamdan, who had his own headquarters at Kalwada 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 Hamdan was the revolt of the Zanj, the rebellious black slaves who for fifteen years (255-70 AH/869-83 CE) terrorised southern Iraq and distracted the attention of the ‘Abbasid officials at Baghdad. The followers of Hamdan, after this generally designated as the Carmatians, had become quite numerous by 267 AH/880 CE, when Hamdan made an

unsuccessful offer of alliance to the leader of the Zanj, ʻAli b. Muhammad (Tabari, III, pp. 2129-30; tr. XXXVII, p. 175). Hamdan's chief assistant was his brother-in-law ʻAbdan, who enjoyed a high degree of independence and appointed many of the *daʻi*s in Iraq and probably also in southern Persia (Ibn al-Dawadari, pp. 46-47, 55, 67; Nuwayri, pp. 191-92, 233; Maqrizi, *Ittiʻaz* 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 AH/890-91 CE, Hamdan founded a fortified *dar al-hijra*, a place of refuge and congregation near Kufa, for the Carmatians. The Carmatian movement, however, still continued to escape the notice of the ʻAbbasids, who had not re-established effective control over southern Iraq since the Zanj revolt. It was only in 278 AH/891-92 CE, mentioned by Tabari as the year in which the Carmatians of the villages around Kufa intensified their activity, that Baghdad officials began to realise the danger of the new movement on the basis of some reports despatched from Kufa (Tabari, 111, 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 AH/897 CE. However, the energetic caliph al-Muʻtazid did not permit any Carmatian unrest to succeed in Iraq, and he repressed the three revolts which were attempted during 287-89 AH/900-02 CE (Thabit b. Sinan, *Ta'rikh Akhbar al-Qaramita*, in Akbar al-Qaramita, pp. 6-11; Ibn al-Dawadari, pp. 44ff.; Nuwayri, pp. 187ff.; Maqrizi, *Ittiʻaz* I, pp. 151ff.).

The *daʻwa* was initiated in other regions, besides Iraq, around the 260s AH/870s CE. In southern Persia the mission was apparently under the supervision of the Carmatian leaders of Iraq. Abu Saʻid Jannabi (q.v.), trained by ʻAbdan, was initially active there with much success (Madelung, 1983). And in Fars proper, ʻAbdan's brother Maʻmun was appointed as a *daʻi*, after whom the sectarians of that province were reportedly called the Maʻmuniya (Daylami, p. 21). The *daʻwa* in Yaman, which remained in close contact with the central leadership of the Ismailis, was started in 268 AH/881 CE by the *daʻi*s ʻAli b. Fazl and Ibn Hawshab, known as Mansur al-Yaman (see Nuʻman b. Muhammad, *Iftitah*, pp. 32-47; Halm, 1981). In 270 AH/883 CE, Ibn Hawshab sent his nephew Haytham as a *daʻi* to Sind, and later he sent Abu ʻAbd-Allah al-Shiʻi to the Maghrib, where he prepared the ground for Fatimid rule (Nuʻman b. Muhammad, *Iftitah*, pp. 45, 59ff.).

In the meantime, the *daʻwa* had appeared in eastern Arabia in 281 AH/894 CE or even earlier in 273 AH/886 CE. After his initial career in southern Persia, Abu Saʻid Jannabi was sent by Hamdan to Bahrain, entrusted with the mission there (Thabit b. Sinan, pp. 12-16; Ibn al-Dawadari, pp. 55-62, 91ff.; Nuwayri, pp. 233ff.; Maqrizi, *Ittiʻaz* I, pp. 159ff.). However, the sources also add that Abu Saʻid had been preceded there by another *daʻi*, a certain Abu Zakariya' Zamami, who may have been despatched by Ibn Hawshab. By 286 AH/899 CE, Abu Saʻid had brought under submission a large part of Bahrain, causing considerable alarm in Basra (Tabari, III, pp. 2188ff., 2196-97, 2205, 2232, 2291; tr. XXXVIII, pp. 77ff., 86-89, 98, 128-29, 202; Masʻudi, *Moruj* VIII, pp. 191ff.). Later, the Carmatians of Bahrain extended their control to the adjoining regions, including Yamama and ʻOman. Shortly after 260 AH/873-74 CE, when the Carmatian leaders of Iraq were at the beginning of their activities, the central leaders of the Ismailis dispatched *daʻi*s to many parts of west-central and northwest Persia; later the *daʻwa* was extended to Khurasan and Transoxiana (*Nizam al-Mulk*, pp. 282-95, 297-305; Stern, 1960).

The doctrine preached by Hamdan Qarmat and ‘Abdan can be derived from what Nawbakhti and Qummi ascribe to the Carmatians (*Firaq al-Shi‘a*, pp. 61-64, Qummi, 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 Ismailis. At any rate, Nawbakhti and Qummi, who, as well-informed contemporary writers, describe the situation of the Ismailis prior to the year 286 AH/899 CE, when a schism occurred in the community, mention no other Ismaili group besides the Carmatians. The account of the Imami heresiographers is confirmed by the statements attributable to Ibn Rizam and Aku Muhsin. The Carmatians who had issued from the Mubarakiyya limited the number of their imams to seven, starting with Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and ending with Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il, who was the *Mahdi* as well as the final, seventh imam. Indeed, the central theme in the Carmatian teachings was the expectation of the imminent reappearance of Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il who was to end the era of Islam and proclaim the hidden truth of the former religions. The belief in the *Mahdiship* of Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il is also confirmed by the few extant Ismaili sources belonging to the pre-Fatimid period (see *Kitab al-rushd wa’l-hidaya*, ed. M. Kamil Hussein, in *Collectanea* I, ed. W. Ivanow, pp. 198ff.; Ja‘far b. Mansur Yaman, *Kitab al-kashf*, pp. 62, 77, 103-04, 109-10, 135, 160, 170).

By the final decades of the 3rd AH/9th CE century, the Carmatians had already developed a cyclical view of hiero-history, according to which the religious history of mankind proceeded through seven prophetic eras of various durations, each one inaugurated by a speaker (*natiq*) prophet, enunciating a revealed message which in its exoteric (*zahir*) aspect contained a religious law (*Shari‘a*). In the first six eras, the *natiq*s were the prophets Adam, Nuh, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Each *natiq* was succeeded by a spiritual legatee (*wasi*), also called a foundation (*asas*) or the silent one (*samit*), who interpreted the esoteric truth (*batin*) contained in the revealed message of his era. Each *wasi* was, in turn, followed by seven imams, who guarded the true meaning of the scriptures and the laws in both their *zahir* and *batin* aspects. In every prophetic era the seventh imam would rise in rank to become the *natiq* of the following era, abrogating the *Shari‘a* of the previous era and promulgating a new one. The seventh imam of the sixth era, the era of Prophet Muhammad, was Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il, who had gone into concealment. On his parousia (second coming) he would become the seventh *natiq* and the *Qa’im* or *Mahdi* ruling over the final eschatological era. He would abrogate the law and initiate the final era of the world. Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il 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 *Qa’im*, Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il would rule and consummate the world. The early Carmatians also formulated a gnostic cosmology which was probably fully developed by the end of the 3rd AH/9th CE century. In this cosmology, represented by the so-called *kuni-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. Mansur al-Yaman, *Sara’ir*, pp. 24-26, 81-82; Abu Ya‘qub Sijistani, *Kitab al-iftikhar*, pp. 43-56; Arendonk, pp. 330-34; Stern, “The Earliest Cosmological Doctrines of Ismailism,” in Stern, 1983, pp. 3-29; Halm, 1978, pp. 38-127, 206-27).

The Schism of 286 AH/899 CE and the Carmatian revolts

In 286 AH/899 CE, not long after Imam ʻAbd-Allah, the future Fatimid caliph al-Mahdi, had succeeded to the central leadership of the Ismailis, Hamdan Qarmat noticed some changes in the doctrinal instructions sent to him from the central headquarters of the movement. According to this narrative of Ibn Rizam and Aku Muhsin (Ibn al-Dawadari, pp. 65-68; Nuwayri, pp. 229-32; Maqrizi, *Itti'az* I, pp. 167-68), Hamdan then despatched ʻAbdan to Salamiyya, to investigate the reason behind the new instructions. In due time, Hamdan learnt that instead of upholding the *Mahdiship* of Imam Muhammad b. Isma'il, 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 Ismailis after Imam Muhammad b. Isma'il. It seems that the central leaders of the Ismaili community, before Imam ʻAbd-Allah al-Mahdi's reform, had assumed the rank of *hujja* (proof) of the absent imam for themselves, and it was through the *hujja* that the believers could establish contact with the hidden *Mahdi* (Ja'far b. Mansur al-Yaman, *Kitab al-kashf*, 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 Ismailis who had issued from the Mubarakiyya, possibly the same group who, according to Nawbakhti (p. 61) and Qummi (p. 83), had traced the *imamate* in the progeny of Imam Muhammad b. Isma'il. At any rate, Ima ʻAbd-Allah al-Mahdi's reform implied the denial of the *Mahdiship* of Imam Muhammad b. Isma'il, which had been the central point in the original doctrine of the *imamate* held by the majority of the early Ismailis.

Imam ʻAbd-Allah al-Mahdi's open claim to the *imamate* split the Ismaili community into two branches in 286 AH/899 CE. One branch accepted Imam ʻAbd-Allah's claims, later incorporated into the official Fatimid Ismaili doctrine of the *imamate*. These Ismailis maintained continuity in the imamate and accepted Imam ʻAbd-Allah's explanation that the Ismaili *imamate* had been handed down among the direct descendants of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq. The other branch, the dissident Ismailis who lacked united leadership, refusing to recognise Imam ʻAbd-Allah's claim to the *imamate*, retained their original doctrine and reaffirmed their belief in the return of Imam Muhammad b. Isma'il as the *Mahdi*. Henceforth the term Qaramita came to be generally applied to the latter branch, comprised of a number of dissident Ismaili communities scattered in different parts of the Muslim world.

The available fragmentary evidence on the attitude of various Ismaili communities and the Carmatian activities against the central leadership in the aftermath of Imam ʻAbd-Allah'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 ʻAbdan's return from Salamiyya. Thereupon, Hamdan assembled his *da'i*s and ordered them to suspend the *da'wa* in their respective districts. Shortly afterwards, Hamdan went to Kalwada from where he disappeared. Around the same time ʻAbdan was murdered at the instigation of Zikrawayh b. Mihrawayh, one of his subordinate *da'i*s in Iraq. Zikrawayh and some of his supporters had at first remained loyal to the central leadership. Threatened with revenge by the followers of ʻAbdan, however, Zikrawayh 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 Hamdan and ʻAbdan. Soon, ʻIsa b. Musa, a nephew of ʻAbdan, rose to a leading position among them and resumed the *da'wa* in the name of Imam Muhammad b. Isma'il. These Carmatians survived in

southern Iraq, with some support in Baghdad, through the first quarter of the 4th AH/10th CE century and on into later times (Mas‘udi, *Tanbih*, p. 391; ‘Arib, *Silat*, p. 137).

Zikrawayh b. Mihrawayh soon manifested his own rebellious intentions by organising the Carmatian revolts of Iraq and Syria (Tabari, 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; ‘Arib, *Silat*, pp. 4-6, 918; Mas‘udi, *Tanbih*, pp. 370-76; Halm, 1979). In 289 AH/902 CE, Zikrawayh sent one of his sons, Husayn (or Hasan), known as the Sahib al-Shama, to the Syrian desert to convert the Banu Kalb. Rapid success was achieved in winning the support of several clans of the Kalb, who adopted the religious name of Fatimiyun. The Sahib al-Shama was soon joined by his brother Yahya, called the Sahib al-Naqa. Yahya assumed the leadership of the newly converted bedouins and claimed to be a descendant of Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘i1. In rapid succession, the Sahib al-Naqa occupied several towns in Syria, including Salamiyya, whose inhabitants were massacred by the Carmatians. It seems that Zikrawayh’s sons had at first attempted unsuccessfully to lure back Imam ‘Abd-Allah, who had left Salamiyya shortly earlier in 289 AH/902 CE. Consequently, in 290 AH/903 CE the Carmatians also killed all members of Imam ‘Abd-Allah’s family and household, who had remained in Salamiyya. The Sahib al-Naqa himself was killed in battle in that year and was succeeded in the leadership by the Sahib al-Shama. In 291 AH/903 CE a severe defeat was inflicted on the Carmatians near Salamiyya by an ‘Abbasid army; the Sahib al-Shama was captured and subsequently executed in Baghdad.

In 293 AH/906 CE, Zikrawayh sent another *da‘i*, known as Abu Ganim Nasr, to revive the Carmatian movement among the Banu 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 Abu Ganim was killed by some of his followers in return for receiving governmental amnesty. Zikrawayh now sent another *da‘i* to his Syrian supporters, informing them of his imminent appearance. Soon afterwards the Carmatian tribesmen of Syria, joined by Zikrawayh’s followers in the region of the Sawad, made a surprise attack on Kufa but were driven out quickly. Thereupon, the Carmatian supporters of Zikrawayh withdrew to the vicinity of Qadisiya, where they were met in *Dhu’l-hijja* 293 AH/October 906 CE by Zikrawayh, 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. Zikrawayh and his supporters continued their terrorist activities until 294 AH/ 907 CE, when they were defeated by an ‘Abbasid army. Zikrawayh 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 (Thabit b. Sinan and Ibn al-‘Adim in *Akhbar al-Qaramita*, pp. 16-35, 275ff., 287ff.; Ibn al-Dawadari, pp. 69-89; Nuwayri, pp. 246-75; Maqrizi, *Itti‘az* 1, pp. 168ff.). Some of the surviving supporters of Zikrawayh in the Sawad denied his death and awaited his return. In 295 AH/907-08 CE, a certain Abu Hatim Zotti was active as a *da‘i* among these Carmatians. He prohibited the consumption of certain vegetables and the slaughtering of animals, whence his followers were called the Baqliya, a name subsequently applied to all the Carmatians of southern Iraq, who for the most part had retained their earlier belief in the *Mahdiship* of Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il. The Baqliya were soon joined by the former adherents of Hamdan and ‘Abdan. This Carmatian coalition survived for some time under leaders like ‘Isa b. Musa and Mas‘ud b. Hurayt (‘Arib, *Silat*, p. 137;

Mas‘udi, *Tanbih*, p. 391; Ibn al-Dawadari, p. 90; Nuwayri, pp. 275-76; Maqrizi, *Itti‘az* I, pp. 179-80).

In Bahrain, Abu Sa‘id Jannabi sided with Hamdan and ‘Abdan against the central leadership, killing the *da‘i* Abu Zakariyai’, who had remained loyal to Imam ‘Abd-Allah (Ibn Hawqal, p. 295). Abu Sa‘id then claimed to represent the awaited *Mahdi*, who would appear in the year 300 AH/912-13 CE. For Abu Sa‘id, who established his rule over Bahrain in the same eventful year 286 AH/899 CE, the schism may actually have provided a favourable 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 AH/913-14 CE. Abu Sa‘id was succeeded in Bahrain by his sons.

In Yemen, the Ismaili community at first remained completely loyal to Imam ‘Abd-Allah. By 291 AH/903-04 CE, however, Ibn al-Fazl seems to have manifested signs of Carmatian disloyalty. In 299 AH/911 CE, after reoccupying San‘a’ Ibn al-Fazl publicly renounced his allegiance to Imam ‘Abd-Allah, abolished the Shari’a, and himself claimed to be the *Mahdi*. Subsequently, he endeavoured unsuccessfully to coerce the collaboration of Ibn Hawshab, the senior *da‘i* who had remained loyal. After Ibn al-Fazl’s death in 303 AH/915 CE, the Carmatian movement disintegrated rapidly in Yemen. As‘ad b. Abi Ya‘for of the local Ya‘forid dynasty, who had recognised Ibn al-Fazl’s suzerainty, revolted against Fa’fa’, the son and successor of the deceased *da‘i*. In 304 AH/917 CE he captured Mudaykira, the seat of the Yemeni Carmatians, killing Fa’fa’ and other Carmatian leaders and ending the Carmatian movement in Yemen (Ibn Malik, pp. 21ff., 28ff., 35-39; Baha’ al-Din Janadi, *Akbar al-Qaramita be’l- Yemen*, 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 Jibal, the Ismailis had become locally known as the Kalafiya, after their first *da‘i* Kalaf Hallaj, who had established himself in the district of Pashapuya shortly after 260 AH/873-74 CE. Kalaf had been succeeded by his son Ahmad and then by the latter’s chief disciple Giat (*Nizam al-Mulk*, pp. 283ff.; Daylami, pp. 20-21; Ibn al-Dawadari, p. 96; Maqrizi, *Itti‘az* I, p. 186; Ibn al Nadim, ed. Flugel, I, p. 188; ed. Tajaddod, p. 239). Giat won numerous converts and extended the *da‘wa* to the cities of Qum and Kashan. It seems that after the schism within the Ismailis, the sectarians of the Jibal sided mainly with the Carmatian dissenters and refused to recognise the imamate of Imam ‘Abd-Allah al-Mahdi. The Sunni jurists, who had held disputations with Giat, instigated the inhabitants of Ray against him and his followers, obliging Giat to flee to Khurasan. There, while predicting the appearance of the *Mahdi* at a certain date, Giat met and converted the amir Husayn b. ‘Ali Marvazi. Many of the inhabitants of the districts of Marw al-Rud, Taliqan, Maymana, Garjistan, Gur, and Hirat, under the influence of this powerful *amir* who later became a Carmatian *da‘i* himself, also adopted Carmatian Ismailism. Giat later returned to Ray and appointed as his deputy Abu Hatim Razi (q.v.), one of the most learned early Ismaili authorities. Giat disappeared under mysterious circumstances and was succeeded by Abu Ja‘far Kabir, a descendant of Kalaf. The latter was ousted by Abu Hatim who became the fifth leader of the *da‘wa* in the Jibal. The loyal Ismaili branch, too, acknowledging the imamate of Imam ‘Abd-Allah and his successors, came to be represented in Khurasan. The sources relate that the *da‘wa* was officially taken to that region,

around the last decade of the 3rd century AH/903-13 CE, by the *da‘i* Abu ‘Abd-Allah Kadim, despatched by Imam ‘Abd-Allah after the establishment of the Fatimid caliphate. This *da‘i* started his activities from Nishapur after Giat had already introduced the Carmatian doctrines to Khurasan on his own initiative. Kadim was succeeded around 307 AH/919 CE by Abu Sa‘id Sha‘rani, who managed to convert several notable military men of the province. The next head of the *da‘wa* in northeastern Persia and the adjoining region was the above-mentioned Husayn b. ‘Ali Marvazi. It was during his time that the provincial seat of the *da‘wa* was transferred from Nishapur to Marw al-Rud (*Nizam al-Mulk*, pp. 287ff.; Ibn al-Dawadari, p. 95; Maqrizi, *Itti‘az* I, p. 186; Ibn al-Nadim, ed. Flugel, I, p. 188; ed. Tajaddod, p. 239; Gardizi, ed. Habibi, pp. 148-49; *Tarikhi Sistan*, pp. 290-94, 300-02; tr. Gold, pp. 233-37, 243-44; Mirkand, Tehran, IV, pp. 40-42).

Later History of the Carmatian Movement

By the first decade of the fourth century AH/912-23 CE, when Imam ‘Abd-Allah al-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 *Kitab al-Mahsul* of Muhammad b. Ahmad Nasafi, the *da‘i* of Khurasan and Transoxiana, who succeeded Husayn Marvazi and who is generally credited with introducing a form of Neoplatonism into Ismaili thought (Barthold, *Turkistan*, pp. 242-45; Stern, 1960, p.79). Nasafi also succeeded in spreading Carmatian Ismailism to Central Asia. He converted several dignitaries at the Samanid court at Bukhara, including *amir* Nasr II himself and his *vizier* (*Nizam al-Mulk*, pp. 288-89). These developments naturally displeased the Sunni religious leaders of the Samanid state. They eventually deposed Nasr II, under whose son and successor Nuh I, the Ismailis of Khurasan and Transoxiana were severely persecuted. Nasafi and his chief associates were executed at Bukhara in 332 AH/943 CE. But the Carmatian *da‘wa* survived in Khurasan and was later directed by Nasafi’s son Mas‘ud and other *da‘i*s, notably Abu Ya‘qub Sijistani (Nasir Khusraw, *Khan al-ikhwan*, ed. Khassab, pp. 112, 115; ed. ‘Ali Qawim, pp. 131, 135). It seems that Nasafi’s *Kitab al-mahsul*, which reaffirmed the *Mahdiship* of Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il, soon gained widespread acceptance in various Carmatian circles, which lacked unified leadership.

Equally important at this time was the activity of Abu Hatim Razi, who became the chief *da‘i* of Ray during 300-10 AH/912-23 CE. He expanded the *da‘wa* in the Jibal, also sending *da‘i*s to Azerbaijan, Tabaristan, and Gorgan. Abu Hatim did not recognise the imamate of Imam ‘Abd--Allah. He corresponded with the Carmatian leaders of Bahrain and, like them, expected the appearance of the *Mahdi*. Abu Hatim evidently regarded himself as the lieutenant (*khalifa*) of the absent imam, also considering himself superior to all other chief *da‘i* or *lawaheq*, as he called them (Abu Hatim Razi, *Kitab al-islah*, unp.; Hamid al-Din Kirmani, *Kitab al-riad*, pp. 176-212). He converted Ahmad b. ‘Ali, who governed Ray during 307-11 AH/919-24 CE, and brought other local rulers under his influence, including the Deylami leader Asfar b. Shiruya and Mardavij, the founder of the Ziarid dynasty (*Nizam al-Mulk*, pp. 286-87; Baghdadi, *Farq*, ed. Badr, p. 267; Ibn Isfandiar, I, pp. 285-95; tr. Browne, pp. 209-17). According to the *da‘i* Kirmani, the famous disputation between Abu Hatim and Abu Bakr Muhammad Razi took place

in Mardavij's presence (Hamid al-Din Kirmani, *Aqwal*, pp. 2-3). Abu Hatim also converted Mahdi b. Khusraw Firuz, known as Siahchashm, the Jostanid ruler of Deylam who was killed in 316 AH/928 CE by Asfar b. Shiruya who aspired to possess the Jostanid seat at Alamut (Madelung, 1967). After Siahchashm, the local position of the Jostanids in Deylam was taken over by the Musafirids, who also brought Azerbaijan under their control. Numismatic evidence dating from the year 343 AH/954-55 CE indicates that the Musafirids, Wahsudan, ruling from Shamiran in Tarom, and his more authoritative brother Marzban (d. 346/957 CE), based in Ardabil, also adhered to the Carmatian form of Ismailism (see Stern, 1960, pp. 70-74). Marzban's *vizier*, Abu'l-Qasim 'Ali b. Ja'far, was in fact a Carmatian *da'i* who freely propagated the *da'wa* in the Musafirid dominions (Margoliouth and Amidruz, *Eclipse* II, pp. 31 ff.). Ibn Hawqal (pp. 348-49, 354) who visited Azerbaijan around 344 AH/955-56 CE, reports the existence of many Ismailis (Carmatians) in that region.

Meanwhile, in Bahrain the Carmatians had remained peaceful, maintaining good relations with the 'Abbasids during the reign of Abu Sa'id's eldest son and immediate successor Abu'l-Qasim Sa'id. At the time, the Carmatians of Bahrain were engaged in extensive peace negotiations with the famous 'Abbasid vizier 'Ali b. 'Isa, 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 Husayn b. Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 309 AH/922 CE), 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 AH/923 CE. In that year, soon after Abu'l-Qasim Sa'id was replaced in the leadership by his youngest brother Abu Tahir Sulayman Jannabi, 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 AH/928-29, led by 'Isa b. Musa and other *da'i*s, they revolted in the areas of Kufa and Waset. Like 'Isa b. Musa and other Carmatian leaders, Abu Tahir was at the time predicting the advent of the *Mahdi* after the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the year 316 AH/928 CE, an occurrence which was expected to end the era of Islam and initiate the seventh, final era of history.

The ravaging activities of Abu Tahir culminated in his attack on Mecca during the pilgrimage season of 317 AH/930 CE. The Carmatians massacred the pilgrims and the inhabitants and finally carried off the Black Stone of the Ka'ba to their new capital, Ahsa', presumably to symbolise the end of the era of Islam. Refusing to return the Black Stone at the request of the Fatimids and the 'Abbasids, Abu Tahir conquered 'Oman in 318 AH/930 CE and became the master of Arabia and the terror of all nearby rulers. In Ramadan 319 AH/September-October 931 CE, Abu Tahir turned over the rule in Bahrain to a young Persian from Isfahan, in whom he had recognised 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, Isfandiar b. Adarbad, was soon after

accused of complicity with Abu Tahir and executed on the orders of the ‘Abbasid caliph Radi (Mas‘udi, *Tanbih*, pp. 104-05). When the Isfahani Mahdi began, furthermore, to execute the notable Carmatians of Bahrain, Abu Tahir had him killed and admitted that he had been an impostor. His reign lasted only eighty days (Mas‘udi, Moruj VIII, pp. 285-86, 346, 374, IX, pp. 32, 76-77; *Tanbih*, pp. 378-87, 389-96; ‘Arib, *Silat*, 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; Ibn Hawqal, pp. 295-96; Bagdadi, *Farq*, ed. Badr, pp. 270-75, 278-82, 288; Daylami, pp. 71-96; Margoliouth and Amidruz, *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, 55-57,6061, 126-27, 129; Ibn al-Dawadari, pp. 61-62, 91-94; Maqrizi, *Itti‘az* I, pp. 164-65, 180-85; Ibn Tagriberdi, 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 demoralised 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 *da‘i*s were shocked, especially by the anti-Arab and antinomian manifestations of the episode. ‘Isa b. Musa and other Carmatian *da‘i*s of Iraq severed their ties with Abu Tahir. They continued to propagate the *Mahdiship* of Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il while devoting their energies mainly to literary activities, often attributing their writings to ‘Abdan so as to emphasise continuity in the movement (Nuwayri, pp. 293-96; Maqrizi, *Itti‘az* I, p. 185).

In Persia, Abu Hatim, who had corresponded with Abu Tahir, was forced to hide from his followers. Abu Hatim’s efforts in his *Kitab al-islah* to correct the antinomian aspects of Nasafi’s *Kitab al-mahsul* and to affirm the indispensability of the law, are best understood on the assumption that the *da‘i* of Ray produced this treatise after the disastrous events in Bahrain. Later, Nasafi’s successor and disciple, Abu Ya‘qub Sijistani, who at the time did not recognise the imamate of the Fatimids, defended his master’s views in his own *Kitab al-nusra*. Abu Hatim, Nasafi, and Sijistani were indeed the chief proponents of the Persian school of dissident Ismailism, also providing doctrinal links between the pre-Fatimid and the Fatimid Ismailis. The *Mahsul* and the *Nusra* are both lost, but they are quoted extensively in Hamid al-Din Kirmani’s *Kitab al-riad*, which reviews this controversy from the official viewpoint of the Fatimid *da‘wa* and in general vindicates the views of Abu Hatim (see Ivanow, 1955, pp. 87-122; Corbin, pp. 187ff.; Stern, “Abu Hatim al-Razi on Persian Religion,” in Stern, 1983, pp. 30-46). Still later, the antinomian tendencies of Nasafi and Sijistani were attacked by Nasir Khusraw (*Khan al-ikhwan*, ed. Khassab, pp. 112ff.; ed. Qawim, pp. 131ff.; *Zad al-musafirin*, pp. 421-22), who, like Kirmani, 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 Abu Tahir claimed to be acting on the orders of the hidden *Mahdi*. Abu Tahir had again launched incursions into southern Iraq and the coast of Fars, also plundering the pilgrim caravans. In 327 AH/938-39 CE, Abu Tahir finally concluded an agreement with the ‘Abbasids. He accepted to protect the pilgrims in return for an annual tribute. After Abu Tahir’s death in 332 AH/944 CE, the Carmatians of Bahrain came to be ruled collectively by Abu Tahir’s surviving

brothers. The Carmatians voluntarily returned the Black Stone in 339 AH/951 CE 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 Abu Tahir, in all his important dealings, acted on the direct orders of the Fatimid imam-caliph ‘Abd-Allah, 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 AH/10th CE 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 Ismailis (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 recognise 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 AH/969 CE and the Fatimid invasion of Syria in the following year. The Carmatian armies under the command of Hasan ‘Asam, a nephew of Abu Tahir, had shortly earlier started their own incursions into Syria and Palestine, forcing the Ikhshidid governors of Syria to pay them an annual tribute. In 360 AH/971 CE, ‘Asam, aided by the Buyids and the Hamdanids, defeated a Fatimid army and seized Damascus and Ramla. ‘Asam then proclaimed the suzerainty of the ‘Abbasids in these domains and had the Fatimid caliph-imam al-Mu‘izz cursed in the mosques. Soon after, Hasan ‘Asam marched as far as the gates of Cairo but was obliged to return to Ahsa’ in Rabi‘ I 361 AH/December 971 CE, probably because of internal problems in Bahrain. Imam-caliph al-Mu‘izz and A‘sam exchanged threatening letters following the transference of the Fatimid seat to Cairo in Ramadan 362 AH/June 973 CE (see Maqrizi, *Itti‘az* I, pp. 189-202; Nuwayri, pp. 307-11; Ibn al-Dawadari, pp. 149-56; Madelung, 1959, pp. 68-69, 85ff.). In 363 AH/974 CE A‘sam invaded Egypt again and besieged Cairo but was defeated by the Fatimids and returned to Bahrain. Later, the Fatimids reoccupied Damascus and Imam-caliph al-Mu‘izz concluded a peace treaty with the Carmatians, who successfully demanded to receive the tribute formerly paid to them by the Ikhshidids (Ibn al-Qalanesi, pp. 1-11; Nuwayri, pp. 304ff.; Maqrizi, *al-Moqaffa*, in *Akhbar al-Qaramita*, pp. 402ff.).

In the reign of Imam-caliph al-‘Aziz (365-86 AH/975-96 CE), the son and successor of Imam al-Mu‘izz, 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 AH/978 CE by a large Fatimid force commanded by Imam-caliph al-‘Aziz himself. In 375 AH/985 CE 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 AH/988 CE they suffered another humiliating defeat at the hands of Asfar, chief of the Banu’l-Muntafiq of ‘Uqayl, who then besieged Ahsa’ and pillaged Qatif. The Carmatians now also lost the privilege of taxing the pilgrim caravans to Asfar and other tribal chiefs of the region. In 382 AH/992 CE, the Carmatians of Bahrain renewed their nominal political allegiance to the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-‘Aziz, without any doctrinal rapprochement. In the reign of Imam-caliph al-Hakim (386-411 AH/996-1021 CE) the relations between the Fatimids and the Carmatians were evidently hostile, though few details are available. By the end of the 4th AH/10th CE 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 Imam Muhammad b. Isma‘il, were largely won over to the side of the Fatimid *da‘wa* or had disintegrated (Yahya b. Sa‘id Antaki, pp. 389ff.; Ibn al-Qalanisi, pp. 16ff.; Ibn al-Dawadari, pp. 175-77, 179; Nuwayri, pp. 314-17; Maqrizi, *Itti‘az* 1, pp. 238-42, 244, 250, 270; Ibn Tagriberdi, IV, pp. 125, 128, 145).

The troubles that initiated the downfall of the Carmatian state of Bahrain started in the large island of Owal (now called Bahrain). Around 450 AH/1058 CE, some local tribesmen began to revolt against the Carmatian governor of the island. Owal was permanently lost to the Carmatians around 459 AH/1067 CE, when the local rebels defeated a Carmatian fleet. Soon after, Qatif was taken by another local rebel. More importantly, in 462 AH /1069-70 CE, ‘Abd-Allah b. ‘Ali ‘Oyuni, a powerful local chief of the Band Morra b. ‘Amir of ‘Abd al-Qays, rose against them. He defeated the Carmatians and then besieged Ahsa’ for seven years. Assisted by the ‘Abbasids and the Saljuqs, he seized Ahsa’ in 469 AH /1076 CE. In 470 AH /1077-78 CE, ‘Abd-Allah put a definite end to the Carmatian state of Bahrain, founding the new local ‘Oyunid dynasty of eastern Arabia. ‘Abd-Allah acknowledged the suzerainty of the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mustansir, who placed the ‘Oyunids under the protection of the Ismaili Sulayhids, who ruled over Yemen as vassals of the Fatimids (see Abu Tamim Ma‘add al-Mustansir bi’llah, *al-Sijillat al-mustansiriya*, ed. ‘A. M. Majid, 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 Abu Tahir Jannabi’s sacrilegious acts in Mecca, while the Carmatian regime in Bahrain terrorised 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 organisation and social order, possessing unique features

among the Muslim states of the time. The *da'wa* propagated by Abu Sa'id Jannabi and his successors did not contain any specific social programme, 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 organisation 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 Ibn Hawqal, who visited Bahrain in the latter part of the 4th AH/10th CE century, and Nasir Khusraw, who spent nine months in Lahsa (i.e., Ahsa') in 443 AH /1051 CE.

In governing the affairs of the community, Abu Sa'id conferred in major decisions with a ruling council known as the 'Iqdaniya, 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 Hasan b. Sanbar (or Shanbar), the head of a prominent family from Qatif and Abu Sa'id's father-in-law. After Abu Sa'id's death his seven sons joined the ruling council. According to Abu Sa'id's instructions, he was at first succeeded in the leadership by his eldest son Sa'id and then by his youngest son Abu Tahir. The latter ruled with the aid of the 'Iqdaniya and a council of seven *vizier*s, including Sanbar, the son of Hasan b. Sanbar. After Abu Tahir, the leadership was held collectively by his surviving brothers, designated as *al-sada al-ru'asa'*. Abu Tahir's sons were excluded from the government, though they enjoyed much esteem in the community. The attempt of Abu Tahir's eldest son Sabur (Shapur) to seize power in 358 AH /969 CE ended in his arrest and execution. Numismatic evidence indicates that at least after the death of Sa'id in 361 AH /972 CE the grandsons of Abu Sa'id came to be admitted among *al-sada al-ru'asa'*, and they took their places on the ruling council (Scanlon). In 366 AH /977 CE, on the death of Abu Ya'qub Yusuf, the last of Abu Sa'id's sons, six of Abu Sa'id's grandsons succeeded to power.

By the time of Nasir Khusraw's visit, the Carmatians of Bahrain were still called Abu Sa'idis, after their initial leader, and the ruling council still included six of Abu Sa'id's descendants from the Jannabi family and six *vizier*s, all descendants of Ibn Sanbar, known as the Sanabira. Furthermore, the community had continued to have easy access to the ruling council. Nasir Khusraw relates that since the time of Abu Sa'id, 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 Ahsa'. Nevertheless, the Carmatians of Bahrain still believed themselves to be in the era of the Prophet Muhammad and Islam, and they abstained from drinking wine. He also relates the interesting detail that the community had continued to await Abu Sa'id's return from the dead, as he himself had promised. It is not clear, however, whether Abu Sa'id had in fact replaced Imam Muhammad b. Isma'il 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 Ibn Hawqal, income from grain and fruit estates was assigned to the Carmatian community (*mu'minun*), while the revenues from the customs duties levied on all ships passing through the Persian Gulf and the island of Owal were distributed among the descendants of Abu Sa'id. 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* (Sahib al-Zaman; Ibn Hawqal, p. 25). By the time of Nasir Khusraw, the state owned some 30,000 purchased black slaves, whose services were utilised for the cultivation of agricultural lands in Bahrain. No taxes or tithes were paid by the inhabitants of Ahsa', where any impoverished person could readily obtain a state loan for as long as he needed. Similarly, any new craftsman arriving in Ahsa' 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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