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Leadership in the Qarmatian Sect [avec 1 planche].

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# LEADERSHIP IN THE QARMAṬIAN SECT

PAR

GEORGE T. SCANLON

In the course of his lucid examination of the evolution of Ismāʿīlite extremism, Bernard Lewis writes :

« At the end of the ninth century a branch of the (Ismāʿīli) sect known as the Qarmaṭians or « Carmathians » — their precise relationship with the Ismāʿīlite body is uncertain — was able to seize power in Baḥrain (the Ḥasa coast of Arabia), establish a republic, and conduct a series of raids on the communications of the ʿAbbāsīd empire. A Qarmaṭian attempt to seize power in Syria at the beginning of the tenth century failed, but the episode is significant and reveals some local support for Ismāʿīlism even at that early date »<sup>(1)</sup>.

It is the purpose of this paper to throw some light on the nature and extent of the leadership of this « republic » and to discover the changes wrought within it in the course of the Syrian campaign noted above.

For the Ismāʿīli pioneers on the Ḥasa coast final authority rested with the leader of the entire sect, resident first in Salamiyah in northern Syria and later in Qayrawān. The precise, internal connections were buried deep in the baffling, esoteric and secretive political philosophy of the Shiʿite

<sup>(1)</sup> Lewis, Bernard, « The Ismāʿīlites and the Assassins », Kenneth M. Setton, ed., *A History of the Crusades*, vol. I, *The first hundred*

*Years*, M. W. Baldwin, ed. (Philadelphia : 1955), p. 104.

movement as a whole; but immediate, external dominance over Qarmaṭian affairs by the over-all head of the of the Ismāʿīlī movement was continuous from the days of Hamdān Qarmaṭ. He had formed a rebel « federation » of Arabs and Nabataeans after the Zanj revolt in the lower stretches of al-ʿIrāq and northern Arabia. In 286 A. H., Abū Saʿīd al-Ḥasan ibn Bahrām al-Jannābī conquered the Baḥrayn area in the Ismāʿīlī Imām's name and governed it as his viceroy. This status was maintained until 358 when Ḥasan b. Aḥmad, grandson of al-Jannābī, led the community in war against the Fāṭimid successors of the Imām <sup>(1)</sup>.

On two occasions the Fāṭimid ruler in Africa confirmed, upon request, the succession to the viceroyalty of the Qarmaṭian community : first by ʿUbaydallāh when he confirmed Abū Ṭāhir Sulaymān to succeed his father al-Jannābī (c. 301); and later by the Fāṭimid al-Manṣūr who, about 335, chose Abū Ṭāhir's brother, Aḥmad, to rule with Abū Ṭāhir's son, Sabūr, as next in succession. Over the strong opposition of the military cadres within the sect (known in the chronicles as the ʿIqdāniyah), this latter decision was sustained in al-Baḥrayn, making an incautious malcontent of Sabūr <sup>(2)</sup>. And it was al-Manṣūr's order which was obeyed when the Qarmaṭian wazir Ibn Sanbar conveyed the sacred Black Stone back to Mecca in 339, from whence it had been taken by Abū Ṭāhir in 319 <sup>(3)</sup>.

Though, in the meantime, the Imām had transferred his residence from Syria to Tunisia, he never relinquished his prerogative of titular control over

<sup>(1)</sup> Massignon, L., article « Qarmaṭians », *Encyclopedia of Islam* II (Leiden, 1927), p. 767 ff.

<sup>(2)</sup> De Goeje, M. J., *Mémoire sur les Carmathes du Bahrain et les Fatimides* (Leiden, 1886), p. 73 ff. and 143 ff.

<sup>(3)</sup> Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-Umam*, H. F. Amerdroz ed., II, p. 127. The entire work was edited and translated by Amerdroz and D. S. Margoliouth as *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Nation*, Oxford, 1921. In vol. V, p. 130 we have the translation noted above.

It reads : « ... the brothers of Abu Tahir wrote a letter wherein they stated they were returning the stone by order of him by whose command they had removed it... ».

Volume III (translated in volume VI) represents the continuation of Miskawayh's chronicle by Abū Shujāʿ Rudhrawarī and Hilāl b. Muḥassin (al-Šābī). The entire work, three volumes of text and three of translation, with references to text and translation, will hereinafter be referred to as *The Eclipse*.

all Ismā'īlī activity<sup>(1)</sup>. The Fāṭimid Caliph-Imām ordered the Qarmaṭians on two different occasions to march to Syria in order to divert the Egyptian forces of his Ikhshīdīd rival while he marched his forces from the Maghrib. The first expedition was commanded by Ḥasan b. Aḥmad, known to the chroniclers as al-ʿAṣam. Such was his fame and the fear of his troops, that when he requested iron for the expedition's weapons from the famous Sayf al-Dawlah, the Ḥamdānīd amir of Aleppo, the latter went so far as to melt down the iron gates of Rakkah and the weights used by the merchants of Diyar Muḍar. This Fāṭimid attempt in 353 failed, rendering sterile Ḥasan's successes in Syria. But the latter captured sufficient booty to cause dissension in the community, for his disposition of it in al-Ḥasa caused so much scandal that Sabūr saw to it that the command of the next expedition went not to the successful Ḥasan but to two of their cousins, unnamed in the sources.

This second expedition into Syria was calculated by al-Mu'izz to draw the Ikhshīd forces out of Egypt, leaving the latter vulnerable to his army. Thus, in 357, these two unnamed leaders defeated the Ikhshīd governor of Syria, Ḥusayn ibn ʿUbaydallāh, who fled to Egypt. The Qarmaṭians either retired to al-Ḥasa or remained in the region around al-Ramlah. Something momentous happened within the community in the ensuing year, for when we meet the Qarmaṭian forces in the environs of ar-Ramlah in 358 they are allied with Ḥusayn b. ʿUbaydallāh *against* the Fāṭimid general Jawhar<sup>(2)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> Stern, S. M., «Heterodox Ismā'īlism at the time of al-Mu'izz », *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* XVII, Pt. 1 (1955), shows the lengths to which al-Mu'izz went to convince a *dā'i* in Sind of these prerogatives.

The propaganda machine of the entire Baṭīnī movement, centering at Salamiyah, must have appeared more dangerous than ever after the success of the Imām ʿUbaydallāh in Qayrawān. The ʿAbbāsīd government went to the trouble of securing direct control of the city, where they set up a mint to

proclaim by its coinage the ʿAbbāsīd prerogative of orthodoxy. A single coin, dated 309, survives from that mint. It contains the name of the Caliph al-Muqtadir and that of Abū al-ʿAbbās, his son and designated successor. Cf. Lavoix, *Catalogue des monnaies musulmanes*, vol. I, *Khalifes orientaux* (Paris, 1887), No. 1147.

<sup>(2)</sup> De Goeje, *op. cit.*, p. 181 ff. : based on Maqrīzī, ibn Ḥawqal, and Ibn Taghrī Birdī.

Marius Canard, *Histoire de la dynastie des Hamdanides de Jazira et de Syrie*, I (Paris, 1955), p. 632 *passim*, recounts the

This year 358 marked the end of Fāṭimid (Ismāʿīlī) titular leadership and ultimate control of the Qarmaṭian organization. The living Imām had ceased to be the final arbiter in the affairs of his auxiliaries.

What was the nature of the internal leadership of the community up to this point? Both the founder, al-Jannābī, and his son and successor, Abū Ṭāhir, considered themselves but « viceroys », serving time preparing the way for the awaited Imām. According to Massignon, they used a representative council, made up of « les anciens de la tribu », for the internal administration of the community's affairs. With one exception<sup>(1)</sup>, the authorities agree that there were six men on the council, generally designated by the term *al-Sādah*, plural of al-Sayyid. But it is impossible to deduce from the sources whether or not the sons and grandsons of al-Jannābī sat upon (and controlled) this council. Since this body came to be the representative political institution of the Qarmaṭians, it is inconceivable that the most powerful family in the community would eschew direct leadership of its activities<sup>(2)</sup>. Undoubtedly they adjudicated the succession to the « viceroyalty », forwarded the nomination to the Imām, and executed his decision, even if the latter were contrary to local desires, as we have seen in the case of Abū Ṭāhir's successor.

Leadership, then, resided in the council and in the Jannābī family. One source provides al-Jannābī with seven sons : Saʿīd ibn Abī Saʿīd, al-Faḍl, Ibrāhīm, Yūsuf, Aḥmad, al-Qasim, and Abū Ṭāhir Sulayman<sup>(3)</sup>. Miska-

story of the iron delivered to the Qarmaṭians. He disagrees with de Goeje, who thought the iron was delivered either out of fear or for services rendered, and surmises that Sayf al-Dawlah was caught between the Buwayhids in Baghdad and the Ikhshīdids in Egypt. He desired unmolested borders to the south and east while he fought the Byzantines and he gladly acquiesced when approached by the Qarmaṭians. Further, one of the founders of Nuṣayri Shīism was present at his court. From the intellectual and doctrinal concepts es-

poused in his realm and at his own seances, Canard is lead to suspect that Sayf al-Dawlah entertained some sympathy for the various Shīite doctrines which took such deep root in northern Syria as a result of the general Baṭīni activity in Salamīyah.

<sup>(1)</sup> Zambaur, E. K. M. von, *Manuel de généalogie et de chronique pour l'histoire de l'Islam* (Hanovre, 1927), p. 116.

<sup>(2)</sup> Massignon, *op. cit.*, p. 767.

<sup>(3)</sup> De Goeje, *op. cit.*, p. 73, based on Jawhari.

wayh relates that Abū Ṭāhir had two brothers : Abū al-Qasim Saʿīd ibn Ḥasan and Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Faḍl ibn Ḥasan, adding :

« ...also a third brother, Abū Yaʿqūb Iṣḥāq, who took no part in the management of their affairs and was given up to drinking and dancing »<sup>(1)</sup>.

It is possible that this third brother is the one mentioned by Ibn al-Athīr as having died in 366 and called Abū Yaʿqūb ibn al-Ḥasan al-Jannābī. We are told further that this man was a ruler of Ḥajr, the main city on the Ḥasa coast, site of the present Ḥofūf, and that he was a member of the confraternity of six known as *al-Sādah*. Only the name tempts us to cite the connection, for the inclinations of the persons seem quite dissimilar. In any case, we have a clear instance of a member of the Jannābī family sitting on the ruling council<sup>(2)</sup>.

Our only concrete evidence that Qarmaṭian leadership included any but the family of al-Jannābī is a perplexing sentence in Miskawayh : « The Qarmaṭians had seven wazirs of whom Ibn Sanbar was chief »<sup>(2)</sup>. In the interval between the death of Abū Ṭāhir and the appointment by the Fāṭimid Caliph of Aḥmad, this man of Persian origin (sent by the Caliph?) wielded power with Abū Ṭāhir's brothers Saʿīd and al-Faḍl, who must have sat on the ruling council. Thus within the council (now seven, including Ibn Sanbar), these formed an inner clique, wielding a power above and/or antagonistic to *al-Sādah*<sup>(3)</sup>. He remained in power long enough to return the Black Stone to Mecca on orders from Qayrawān. When the Caliph's choice fell upon Aḥmad for the « vicerealty », Ibn Sanbar's power declined, for the two brothers supporting him had to accede to Aḥmad's confirmed succession<sup>(4)</sup>.

With Aḥmad a new phase of Qarmaṭian leadership begins. He reversed the trend of Ibn Sanbar and his (i.e. Aḥmad's) two brothers, giving greater prominence to Abū Yaʿqūb Iṣḥāq, whom they had ignored. It was Abū

<sup>(1)</sup> *The Eclipse* II, p. 56 f. and V, p. 64. — <sup>(2)</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, C. J. Tornberg ed. (Leiden, 1867-1874), VIII, p. 506. — <sup>(3)</sup> *The Eclipse*, *loc. cit.* — <sup>(4)</sup> *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

Ya'qūb who commanded the Qarmaṭian force sent to support the Amīr of 'Umān in his attack on Baṣrah in 341<sup>(1)</sup>. And contrary to the interests of the successor-designate, Sabūr, Aḥmad began to favor his own immediate family. Two dinars, for the years 337 and 340, first noted by Zambaur, bear this out. They are of an unknown mint (or mints) and bear the name 'Alī ibn Aḥmad<sup>(2)</sup>. Since the source cited by Zambaur is only a sales catalogue, one cannot be certain of the attribution. If it be correct then he is Aḥmad's son and Ḥasan's brother, and no doubt an older one, given rule and command by his father. It is more likely that the correct reading was *Abū* 'Alī ibn Aḥmad and it is by this name that Ḥasan b. Aḥmad is cited by Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, identifying him as the man who led the great campaign in Syria in 358-359, a fact more than corroborated by our other sources<sup>(3)</sup>. Should the latter supposition be more exact, the great Ḥasan b. Aḥmad was already prominent within Qarmaṭian leadership twenty years before the great rift with the Fāṭimids.

In a rather curious passage O'Leary connects Ḥasan b. Aḥmad with his uncle whom O'Leary calls Yūsuf, who took over leadership of the sect when Ḥasan died at al-Ramlah in 366<sup>(4)</sup>. I believe that this Yūsuf and the Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq mentioned by Ibn al-Athīr to be one and the same person, and, indeed, it is an Abū Ya'qūb b. Ḥasan al-Jannābī who is listed by Zambaur as succeeding Ḥasan b. Aḥmad<sup>(5)</sup>. He it was whom Aḥmad sent on the Baṣrah expedition of 341 and he it was whom Ibn al-Athīr cited as a member of *al-Sādah* in his death notice of 366. Thus, on the eve of the very important Syrian campaigns of 358 and after, purposeful leadership, either within or superior to *al-Sādah*, had passed to Aḥmad, his son Ḥasan (sometimes called al-'Aṣam or Abū 'Alī) and his brother Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq (the Yūsuf of de Goeje's list).

<sup>(1)</sup> *Ibid.* II, p. 144 and V, p. 151.

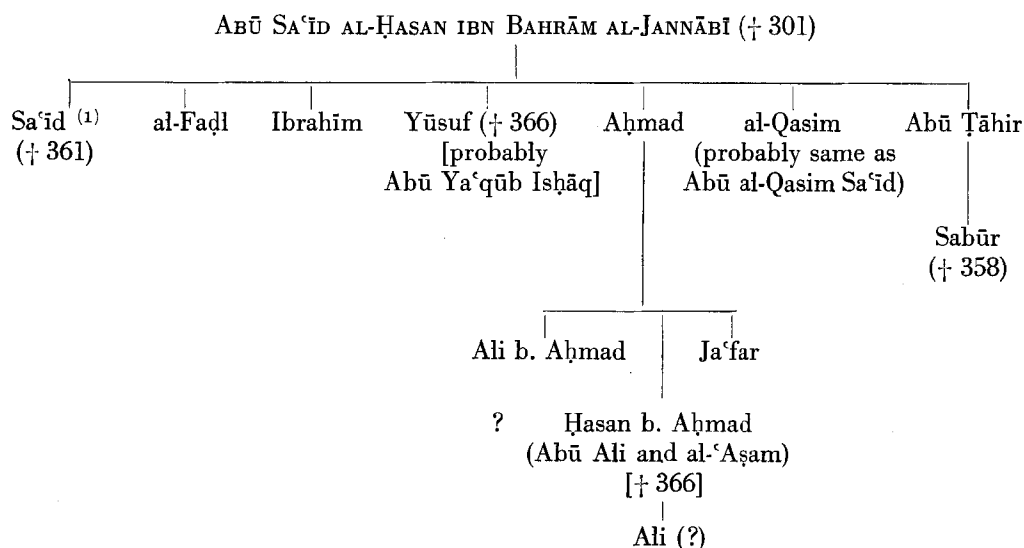
<sup>(2)</sup> Zambaur, « Neuen Khalifenmunzen », *Nu-mismatische Zeitschrift* LV (1922), p. 15. He noted these in the sale of the collection of Col. J. M. C. Johnson in Sotheby's *Catalogue* for 16-18 July, 1906, p. 27. No other inscriptional information is provided.

<sup>(3)</sup> Cited from a section of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's *Mirāt* added by Amerdroz at the beginning of his edition of Ibn al-Qalānisi's *Dhayl Tārikh Dimishq* (Leiden, 1908), p. 1.

<sup>(4)</sup> O'Leary, de Lacy, *The Fatimid Khalifate* (London, 1923), p. 122.

<sup>(5)</sup> Zambaur, *Manuel*, p. 116.

From literary and numismatic evidence, a provisional family-tree can be attempted :



This passage of power from one group of the Jannābī family to another is the subject of an interesting insight of de Goeje's :

« La politique dominante des Carmathes était devenue sous la direction d'Aḥmad et de ses frères une politique de prudence, de négociations diplomatiques, de temporisation, bien éloignée donc du fanatisme ardent qui avait animé jadis Abou Tahir »<sup>(2)</sup>.

The most apparent facet was a general cooling towards the pretensions and prerogatives of the Fāṭimid Caliphs, who, on their side, were frankly embarrassed by the often intemperate actions of the Baḥrayn sectaries. Even the order to return the Black Stone could be construed as a move to chastize them in order to gain the favor of those elements in the Islamic world who thought the Qarmatians a scandal to the sacred faith. A growing suspicion of their foreign suzerain and his compromising moves brought some of the sect to the brink of doubting the divine origin of his mission. De Goeje places Ḥasan b. Aḥmad at the head of this movement, which,

<sup>(1)</sup> De Goeje, *op. cit.*, p. 191, where the date of the death of the eldest son is cited from al-

Hamadhani's supplement to Ṭabari's annals. <sup>(2)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

with the active sympathy of Ḥasan's father and most probably the council of elders, in which his uncle Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq was prominent, gained the active support of the entire sect sometime before 358<sup>(1)</sup>.

When the Qarmaṭians attacked the Egyptians in Syria in 357, the governor Ḥusayn b. 'Ubaydallāh fled to Egypt. This was the last order of the Fāṭimid Caliph to be obeyed by the Qarmaṭians. Instead of following up their victory, Aḥmad opened up negotiations with the routed leader, resulting in the latter's payment of a subsidy to the Qarmaṭians in return for their active support against the Fāṭimid army, already in control of Fuṣṭāṭ and poised to move into Syria<sup>(2)</sup>. Sabūr, son of the great Abū Ṭāhir and successor-designate (by the Fāṭimid Caliph) to Aḥmad, and leader of the intrigue to keep command of the 357 expedition from his cousin Ḥasan b. Aḥmad, considered this action traitorous. It certainly imperilled the legitimacy of his right of succession.

In 358 he sought from his uncles, no doubt members of the council, the direction of the community's affairs and command of the army. Backed by the 'Iqdāniyah, Sabūr arrested his uncle Aḥmad. But the latter was released very soon after (by his son? by his brothers? by *al-Sādah?*), and in turn imprisoned Sabūr. Later he had him assassinated (15 Ramaḍān 358). All of Sabūr's partisans ended in exile on the island of 'Awwāl<sup>(3)</sup>. Ḥasan's active leadership was now uncontested.

In the negotiations alluded to above, the Ikhshīd governor made it incumbent upon the Qarmaṭians to name the 'Abbāsīd Caliph in the Friday prayer and on their coinage. Their fidelity to the latter stipulation is obvious from the coinage to be discussed; as to the *khuṭbah*, we know that the 'Abbāsīd Caliph had his name read out in Mecca (under their nominal control) in 359<sup>(4)</sup>.

Jawhar, the Fāṭimid conqueror of Egypt, was moving into Syria. Ḥasan moved to gather men and supplies to support Ḥusayn b. 'Ubaydallāh to

<sup>(1)</sup> *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>(2)</sup> Ibn al-Aṭhīr, *op. cit.* VIII, p. 452 and Zambaur, « Neuen Khalifenmunzen », p. 14 ff.

<sup>(3)</sup> Ibn al-Aṭhīr, *op. cit.* VIII, p. 443 and de Goeje, *op. cit.*, p. 184 ff.

<sup>(4)</sup> Ibn al-Aṭhīr, *op. cit.* VIII, p. 450. Apparently the *khuṭbah* was read inside Madinah in the name of the Fāṭimid al-Mu'izz and outside the city walls (by the father of the Sharif) for the 'Abbāsīd al-Muṭī.

thwart him. The Ikhshīd annual tribute of 300.000 dinars arrived on schedule, and Abū Taghlib the Hamdānid added a gift of 50.000 dirhams. Though the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph objected, out of feelings of fastidious orthodoxy, the Buwayhid currently in power, ‘Izz al-Dawlah, and his wazir, Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn ‘Abbās ibn Fasanjās, sent money and logistic support to Ḥasan at his staging area outside al-Kūfah<sup>(1)</sup>.

Ja‘far ibn Fallāḥ had replaced Jawhar in field command of the Fāṭimid forces. He captured Ḥusayn b. ‘Ubaydallāḥ at al-Ramlah, and took Damascus before Ḥasan could reach it. But Ja‘far underestimated the Qarmaṭians’ strength when they appeared in Syria and was soundly defeated at al-Dahāk outside Damascus. Ḥasan dogged his heels as he fled south. Al-Ramlah fell to Ḥasan and he left his Badawi ally, Daghfal ibn al-Jarrāḥ of the *banu* Ta‘ī, and the Qarmaṭian Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāḥ ibn ‘Ubaydallāḥ al-Ḥasanī in charge of this important military and administrative center. While Ḥasan continued the campaign in Egypt, these men organized his Syrian conquests and issued the first known Qarmaṭian coins bearing the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph’s name<sup>(2)</sup>.

Two dirhams of the Filastīn mint at al-Ramlah for the year 358 survive. They bear upon the obverse :

لا اله الا الله  
الله وحده  
لا شريك له  
السادة الروسا

and beneath this a word that has been read upon one sample as Ṣāliḥ and as Ṣabbāḥ on the other<sup>(3)</sup>. No term of Qarmaṭian nomenclature is in any

<sup>(1)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 443. From ibn al-Qalānisi’s *Dhayl*, p. 2 f., Ḥasan sent a certain Abū Ṭarīf ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Mu‘mar as his emissary to Baghdad. Most probably he is not a member of the Jannābī family.

<sup>(2)</sup> Most of the chroniclers insist that the reason for the Qarmaṭian attack can be found in their chagrin at the loss of subsidies both from the Ikhshīdids and from the government

of Damascus. This seems insufficient reason for associating with the Buwayhids and putting the name of the accursed ‘Abbāsīd on their coinage. However it is safe to assume that with the leadership of Ḥasan some other excuse would have been found to engineer the break with the Fāṭimids.

<sup>(3)</sup> One mentioned by N. G. Nassar, « The Arabic Mints in Palestine and Trans-Jordan »,

way comparable to the inscribed word in either reading. If we investigate the coin in the American Numismatic Society's collection (see Plate, No. 1), we find that it is double-struck. If the first letter had been misread, or had been an actual misspelling, one possibility remains, *viz.* the name of one of the trusted vassals left in charge of al-Ramlah, al-Jarrāḥ.

Whoever struck the coins had some familiarity with the nature of Qarmaṭian leadership, for they are struck first in the name of *al-Sādah*, reinforced by an apposite substantive, *al-Ru'asā*, the plural of *al-ra'īs*. The important point here is not whether the final word is *Ṣāliḥ* or *Ṣabbāḥ* or *Jarrāḥ*, but rather that, whoever he was, he was governing in the name of the council of elders. If Ḥasan b. Aḥmad, the military commander, were already a member of that council, he would not cavil at anyone else's name *beneath* that of the council. The reverse of both coins is in the usual 'Abbāsīd style and bears the name of the Caliph al-Muṭī' <sup>(1)</sup>.

By 360 Ḥasan had reached 'Ayn Shams, the fortified suburb of Fuṣṭāṭ. Jawhar's deep trench stopped the Qarmaṭian horsemen, giving him time enough to collect fresh troops with which he routed them and saved the newly-born Fāṭimid kingdom of Egypt. This campaign even had its naval aspects, for the Qarmaṭians had sufficient power in Syria to commandeer ships, which fled the Delta area when Jawhar repulsed the attack upon 'Ayn Shams. These very ships later captured all but two of the fifteen

*Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine* XIII, p. 125 (1948) : unpublished coin of the Palestine Archaeological Museum, No. H.19.55; and another in the collection of the American Numismatic Society, formerly ascribed by the Society to the Ikhshīd dynasty, but now more accurately identified by Dr. George C. Miles and the author as Qarmaṭian (see Plate, No. 1). The reading of *Sabbāḥ* is a suggestion of Dr. Miles.

<sup>(1)</sup> These coins convey a somewhat different picture than the recent one drawn by Dr. George Rentz in his article on « Djazirat al-'Arab », *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edition,

vol. I (Leiden, 1957), p. 551, where the government is placed in the hands of six *sayyids* after the death of Ḥasan b. Aḥmad. The same concept crops up in Zambaur's ambiguous phrase, « puis la direction des Cinq », placed after the known genealogy. Even Massignon contends that the council embodied, as early as al-Jannābī's rule, internal administration and leadership. The « viceroy » was engrossed in foreign affairs exclusively (Massignon, *op. cit.*). It is hoped that this investigation will engender some revision in the status accorded *al-Sādah* by modern scholars.

ships sent by Jawhar to the relief of Jaffa, when it was under siege by the reassembled Qarṣāṭians<sup>(1)</sup>.

After his repulse, Ḥasan retired to al-Ramlah, governing and sometimes ravaging the hinterland. For the next two years he was in effective control of the corridor from the Egyptian border to Damascus. The Syrian ports and the Hamdānīd lands north of Damascus were either co-operative or neutral, depending on the accomplishments of Fāṭimid military and naval forays.

Ḥasan b. Aḥmad struck coins in Damascus and al-Ramlah in 361 and 362. They bear his name and convey subtle differences of political import from the 358 issue. The reverse area for both years and both mints reads :

لله  
محمد رسول الله  
صلى على عليه  
و على اله  
المطيع بالله  
الحسن بن احمد

It is ironic that the 'Abbāsīd Caliph's name appears between an intrusive line of Shī'ite sentiment, seldom if ever found on orthodox coinage, and the name of his Ismā'īlī « viceroy » for the Syrian provinces.

The observe sides of the issues of these years provide the material relevant to our problem of leadership. In 361 on the issues of both mints we read :

لا لله الا الله  
وحده  
لا شريك له  
السادة  
البروسا

<sup>(1)</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *op. cit.* VIII, p. 452 f.; and Lane-Poole, Stanley, *A History of Egypt* (London, 1901), p. 105 ff. The other ships were plundered by the Byzantine navy.

quite similar in content to the obverse of the 358 issue noted above. But on the obverse of the 362 coins of both mints we read :

لا لله الا الله  
وحده  
لا شريك له  
السيد  
الرايس

Sufficient coins exist for each year and each mint to obviate any error in assessing the shift from the plural to the singular <sup>(1)</sup>.

Two other coins heighten the meaning of this shift of power *vis-à-vis* the Qarmaṭian rule in Syria. One from 'Umān records that a Qarmaṭian or a Qarmaṭian vassal ruled first in the name of *al-Sādah*, and then, in varying degrees of remoteness : the Caliph al-Mutī, the Buwayhid Rukn al-Dawlah, and the latter's son, 'Aḏūd al-Dawlah, governor of lower 'Irāq and the Persian Gulf states. Its date is 361 <sup>(2)</sup>. And, on the obverse of a rare copper coin of unknown date and mintage listed in the St. Petersburg catalogue, *al-Sādah* is recognized as the focus or emanating point of political power. On the same obverse Markov reported the extraordinary inscription أمير محمد. The sources supply us with no such person. Had the name been misread, the nearest substitute would be Aḥmad, making this the only known coin bearing the name of Ḥasan's father, the nominal head of the sect, but content to rule in the name of *al-Sādah*. Both of these coins prove the titular dominance of the council of elders <sup>(3)</sup>.

Why did Ḥasan revert to the singular? Lane-Poole felt that the sect had

<sup>(1)</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>(2)</sup> Vasmer, R., « Zur Geschichte und Numismatik in x. Jahrhundert », *Zeitschrift für Numismatik* XXXVII (1927), p. 282. Ibn al-Athīr, *op. cit.* VIII, p. 417 f., provides a description of the Qarmaṭian conquest of the area. A *kātib* was amongst the invading forces and he was given charge of administering the province. He is called 'Alī ibn Aḥmad, and he may be the same person whose name

appears on the coins of 337 and 340. But Ibn al-Athīr calls this particular 'Alī b. Aḥmad a *qāḏī* and a chief of a tribe. Perhaps by tribe the chronicler meant to convey the entire Qarmaṭian group. But as a governor he must have been a member of *al-Sādah* or derived his authority from it.

<sup>(3)</sup> Markov, A. K., *Catalogue of Muhamadan Coins in the Hermitage* (in Russian, St. Petersburg, 1896-1898), p. 67.

emerged from oligarchic to monarchic forms and institutions<sup>(1)</sup>. Porter claims that Ḥasan b. Aḥmad assumed the title *al-Sayyid* after the Egyptian campaign of 360-361<sup>(2)</sup>. Had the failure of this campaign convinced Ḥasan of the impracticability of group leadership and decision-making for campaigns of the magnitude of those completed or contemplated in Syria and Egypt? Perhaps he wished to exercise *explicit* control in Syria in preparation for his next attempt on Egypt. Or the *volte-face* under consideration might bespeak a desire for Syrian autonomy or independence, not unlike his earlier moves to free the community from the titular control of the Fāṭimids. Further, since the date of his father's death is uncertain, Ḥasan may have succeeded to power, and felt strong enough to declare himself superior to the council. Whatever the answer, it cannot be given without reference to a coin of 365 to be discussed shortly.

Ḥasan and his Badawī ally, al-Jarrāḥ, were once more besieging 'Ayn Shams late in 362. The Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mu'izz directed its defenses personally. He gauged al-Jarrāḥ as Ḥasan's chief source of strength and secured the Badawī's future defection with a judicious bribe of 100.000 dinars. However, since there happened to be a paucity of ready money at that time in the Fustāṭ mint, he ordered brass coins to be struck and gilded, and that a few good coins be put at the top of each purse. Warmed by this spurious glow of Fāṭimid prodigality, the Arab chieftain deserted Ḥasan at an opportune moment in a pitched battle beyond 'Ayn Shams. The Qarmaṭians lost all their equipment and more than fifteen hundred of them fell captive<sup>(3)</sup>.

Al-Mu'izz sent Ja'far b. Fallāḥ at the head of 10.000 men to pursue Ḥasan. Pausing in his headlong retreat, the latter stopped at Adhra'āt and despatched Abū al-Munajja' with a regiment to defend Damascus, while he, himself, retired to al-Ḥasa. The Fāṭimid governor-designate of Damascus, Zālim, rode in advance of Ja'far's army. He defeated Abū al-Munajja' and the forces of the Qarmaṭian ruler of Damascus, the son of this same Abū al-

<sup>(1)</sup> Lane-Poole, « Unpublished Arabic Coins from the Collection of the Rev. T. Calvert », *Numismatic Chronicle*, 3rd series, vol. V (1885) p. 231.

<sup>(2)</sup> Porter, Harvey, « Unpublished Coins of

the Caliphate », *Numismatic Chronicle*, 5th series, vol. I (1921), p. 331 f.

<sup>(3)</sup> Ibn al-Qalānisi, *op. cit.*, p. 3; Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, p. 108 ff.; Ibn al-Athir, *op. cit.* VIII, p. 469.

Munajja<sup>5</sup>. The two were made prisoner and conveyed to the outskirts of Damascus where Ja'far had arrived with his army of Maghribi regulars. They were penned in wooden cages and sent to al-Mu'izz<sup>(1)</sup>.

It is impossible to render in any detail the situation which faced Ḥasan b. Aḥmad when he reached al-Ḥasa without a victory to offer as compensation for the shift of allegiance effected under his aegis. He was completely bereft of the military and logistic support he had so tenaciously built up. He appeared before the community the victim of a trusted ally, a man who at one time had governed al-Ramlah in the name of *al-Sādah*. Somehow he retained himself in power and was sought out within a year as leader of the sect by the new amīr of Damascus, Alptekīn.

This Turkish adventurer had found disfavor and defeat at the hands of his Buwayhid patrons, and had fled towards Syria with a band of some four hundred armed supporters. He had pacified Damascus when its populace had revolted against the harsh treatment of Ja'far and his Maghribi troops. Alptekīn cleared the latter from the Damascus area. He was looking for allies to assist him in heading off the reinforced troops of Ja'far. Heeding the advice of his counsellors, Alptekīn wrote Ḥasan b. Aḥmad proposing an alliance against the Fāṭimids.

Ibn al-Qalānisi writes that early in 365 three Qarmaṭian leaders came to al-Shāmiyah, a suburb of Damascus, with a host of armed followers, including some Persians. They are cited as Ishāq and Kisrā and Ja'far. Alptekīn entertained them and provided them with gifts and supplies. Later they set out for al-Ramlah, which they found vacated by Ja'far b. Fallāh, who fortified himself in Jaffa when he heard of Alptekīn's alliance with the Qarmaṭians. Ḥasan came north to lead his troops while Alptekīn set out from Damascus menacing the coastal cities enroute to join his allies. He advised Ḥasan to pause before attempting another invasion of Egypt but himself paid no attention to Ḥasan's advice and raised the siege of Jaffa, permitting the Egyptian commander to return to Egypt under very favorable conditions<sup>(2)</sup>.

The Qarmaṭians were once again in control of al-Ramlah, this time until

<sup>(1)</sup> Ibn al-Qalānisi, *op. cit.*, p. 3 f. The Qarmaṭian ruler of al-Ramlah, a certain al-Nābulusī, was penned also and sent to Egypt.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Ḥasan's death there in 366. A coin of the Filasṭīn mint for the year 365 exists whose importance has been hinted at above<sup>(1)</sup>. The reverse reads :

لله  
 محمد رسول الله  
 صلى على عليه  
 وعلى آله  
 الطابع لله  
 السيد الرايس

Once more the problem of the usage of the singular arises. It is quite unlikely that it is an honorific title accorded the 'Abbāsīd Caliph. Again, as in the case of the 362 issue, it may represent Ḥasan b. Aḥmad's position within the leadership of the sect, for his name does not appear on the obverse, yet he is in the vicinity commanding the Qarmaṭian contingents.

However, on the obverse, is inscribed :

لا لله الا الله  
 وحده لا شريك له  
 السادة الروسا  
 اسحاق كسر.....

In the last line we are dealing with the Qarmaṭian envoys to Alptekīn, viz., Ishāq, Kistrā and Ja'far. (Even Blau thought he read enough of the final word to conjecture Ishāq Kasr ibn Ja'far.) Obviously, as in the case with al-Jarrāḥ, these men were governing al-Ramlah in the name of *al-Sādah*. Thus, if the singular on the reverse points to Ḥasan b. Aḥmad (al-sayyid, al-ra'īs), and the plural forms on the obverse to the council of elders, then we are in the presence of some sort of *modus vivendi* between the dominant military commander and the council of al-Ḥasa, reclaiming its prerogative after the eclipse it had suffered at his hands in 362.

The identification of the three governors is simply too conjectural. Ishāq might be Ḥasan's uncle, Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq and Ja'far, a brother or a cousin,

<sup>(1)</sup> Blau, O. and Stickel, (?), « Uber einige Zur Muhammedanischer Numismatik und Muhammedanische Munzen », in O. Blau, *Epigraphik*, in *ZDMG* XI (1857), p. 451, n. 18.

noted in military command when Ḥasan died. Kisrā is not encountered outside the citation by Ibn al-Qalānisi. Whoever they are, they represent a check on Ḥasan's supreme command. An even less fortuitous identification is possible but must await the unravelling of the strands of this last great conflict between the Qarmaṭians and the Fāṭimids.

When Ja'far b. Fallāh returned to Egypt from Jaffa, the new Fāṭimid Caliph, al-'Azīz, recalled the veteran Jawhar to command the army. He was unable to defeat Alptikīn and Ḥasan in the field and retired to 'Asqalān, from whence he petitioned al-'Azīz to lead the troops personally. The Caliph concurred and, late in 365, he defeated the insurgents and took Alptekīn captive.

The Fāṭimid proved to be a generous victor. He took his captive to Cairo and bestowed state honors and bounteous largess upon him. With his former adherents he proved no less amenable. Jawhar and the qaḍī of al-Ramlah acted as negotiators and with them Ḥasan arranged a pact whereby he swore to desist in his attempts to subjugate Egypt and Syria in return for an annual subsidy of 30,000 dinars<sup>(1)</sup>. He should have returned to Arabia, but an unpublished coin of the *Cabinet des Médailles* points to Qarmaṭian control of the Filistīn mint sometime in 366<sup>(2)</sup>. Perhaps this was in constraint of the treaty, for Ḥasan appears to have had a sizable army with him when he died at al-Ramlah in the same year, though this army did retire to Baḥrayn under the leadership of Ḥasan's uncle<sup>(3)</sup>.

At this point the numismatic evidence of Qarmaṭian leadership is exhausted. The chronicles convey little after this defeat, but disruption and demise. Al-Hamadhānī claims that a certain Ja'far, named as Ḥasan's brother and successor, continued the raids into Fāṭimid Syria. However, by 368, al-'Azīz had soundly defeated him and he agreed to remain in al-Ḥasa with an annual

<sup>(1)</sup> Ibn al-Qalānisi, *ibid.*, p. 16-20; Ibn Khaldūn, *Ibar* (Cairo, 1248 A. H.), IV, p. 52 f.

<sup>(2)</sup> Noted by Zambaur, « Neuen Khalifenmunzen », p. 16; no other inscriptional material cited.

<sup>(3)</sup> Notice of Ḥasan's death in Ibn-'Asākir,

*Tārīkh Dimishq* (Damascus, 1913), V, p. 148 f., where it is recorded that he was in Ramlah as early as 356. Death date confirmed in Ibn al-Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab* (Cairo, 1931), III, p. 55 and in Ibn Kathīr, *Al-bidāyah wa al-nihāyah* (Cairo, 1932-1939), XI, p. 268 f.

subsidy of 70.000 dinars from Cairo<sup>(1)</sup>. An ominous note enters into Ibn Khaldūn's account of these final years of prominence. He says that some of the group at al-Ḥasa murmured against the leadership of the sons and grandsons of al-Jannābī. Following Ḥasan's third failure against the Fāṭimids, this group began to condemn their nominal submission to the 'Abbāsīd Caliph. At some unspecified date, the two leaders of this opposition, Ishāq and Ja'far, took control of the community and exiled all living members of the Jannābī family to the island of 'Awwāl. The family of Abū Ṭāhir, already in exile as a result of Sabūr's revolt in 358, set upon the family of Aḥmad and slew them<sup>(2)</sup>.

As a member of an interdicted family, it is doubtful whether Ḥasan's brother Ja'far is synonymous with the opposition leader. Nor could Ḥasan's uncle, Abū Ya'qub Ishāq, be construed as the other leader, since his death in 366 probably antedated the rise of the anti-*banu* Jannābī movement. This brings us back to that amazing coin of 365. The importance of the brother and uncle centers on the year 365-366; indeed it is probable that Ja'far succeeded Abū Ya'qub Ishāq who succeeded Ḥasan b. Aḥmad in leadership. But the opposition leaders, Ja'far and Ishāq, are a post-366 phenomenon. The unravelling can be carried no further with the evidence available at present.

But these opposition leaders were, according to Abū Shujā' Rudhrawarī, « ... two of the six Qarmāṭians called *al-Sādah* » who, in 375, captured al-Kūfah in the name of Sharaf al-Dawlah, a son of 'Aḍūd ad-Dawlah. He was contesting the disposition of power following his father's death. The effect of this success on the leaders in Baghdad is a measure of the reputation yet borne by the sectaries of the Ḥasa coast :

« Great alarm in consequence was felt in Baghdad, owing to the terror which these people inspired, their dauntless valor, and their formidable character which had caused many monarchs to make friends of them; indeed 'Aḍūd al-Dawlah and Bakhtiyār ('Izz ad-Dawlah) before him had assigned them fiefs in Waṣīt and Saqy al-Furat. Their requests were regularly granted and their requirements carried out<sup>(3)</sup>. »

<sup>(1)</sup> De Goeje, *op. cit.*, p. 192. Cf. de Goeje's article « La fin de l'Empire des Carmathes », *JA*, Jan.-Feb. 1895, p. 5-30.

<sup>(2)</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *op. cit.* IV, p. 91.

<sup>(3)</sup> *The Eclipse* III, p. 109 f. and VI, p. 114.

Their partisan in Baghdad, one Ibn Shahuyah, evoked terror in the city and in the court because of his connection with them.

Eventually a combination of Turks, Daylamites and 'Uqaylids defeated them on two occasions and finally drove them from the Kūfah region<sup>(1)</sup>. By 378 the Qarmaṭians were being attacked on their home ground by the Amīr of 'Umān, who had but lately liberated that province from their scourge<sup>(2)</sup>.

The nebulous Ishāq and Ja'far of the opposition represent the last phase of the re-emergence of *al-Sādah* to concrete control of the community. The assumed *modus vivendi* read out of the coin from 365 could have been sustained only with victory. When the children of al-Jannābī could no longer supply even this, they, in essence, forfeited their hereditary right to leadership. They were jettisoned, leaving the council of elders as the sole source of power. After the interdict against the family of al-Jannābī, the membership of the council perhaps became more representative, yielding a fascinating « republican » experiment of medieval Islam.

Unfortunately it was an experiment destined to enjoy little but defeat and dessication. For a moment (and only a moment when we stop to consider the Assassin movement of the next century), there was no need for the radical, zealous sectarian. Ismā'īlism had progressed to power and success in Fāṭimid attire. With the wealth of Egypt to sustain them, the Caliphs in Cairo had little need for the unstable military help of the Qarmaṭians and cared not a bit for their exasperating theology and intolerable polity. And even the 'Abbāsids were turning slowly toward the Turkish tribes gathering on the Eastern marches; their fresh, virulent orthodoxy was soon to release the Caliphate from its Buwayhid sheath.

The personality of Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad is the focus for this « set-piece » of Islamic political development. He risked traditional levels of loyalty and the internal structure of government and lost. The institution of the council had more vigor than he supposed and eventually triumphed over his

<sup>(1)</sup> *Ibid.* III, p. 109 and VI, p. 113 *passim*, where mention is made within the narrative of two generals in command of Qarmaṭian troops : 'Abd al-Qays Ḥasan ibn Mundhir

and Ibn al-Jāhīsh, the latter of whom I connect with the Chahawaih mentioned by de Goeje, *Memoire*, p. 192.

<sup>(2)</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *op. cit.* IX, p. 221.

innovations, but the sect as a whole emerged from its fascination with easy conquest to face an entirely new set of circumstances. *Al-Sādah* continued to govern the community on the Ḥasa coast for centuries after its political decline, but it was never more than what it had been really at the height of its power : an absorbing anomaly in the tide of a civilization otherwise oriented.

## APPENDIX

The coins for the crucial years 361 and 362, wherein the distinctive Qarmaṭian nomenclature shifts from the plural to the singular, can be checked in the following publications and collections :

### 361 DAMASCUS :

- Dinars : Zambaur, « Neuen Khalifenmunzen », *Numismatische Zeitschrift*, LV (1922), p. 15, noting an unpublished duplicate in Beirut.  
Porter, Harvey, « Unpublished Coins of the Caliphate », *Numismatic Chronicle*, 5th Series, I (1921), p. 331 f.

### FILASṬĪN :

- Dinars (gilt) : Lane-Poole, Stanley, « Unpublished Coins from the Collection of the Rev. T. Calvert », *Numismatic Chronicle*, 3rd Series, V (1885), p. 229 f (see Plate, No. 2). This counterfeiting would appear more surprising had one not seen the Fāṭimid al-Mu'izz resorting to the same tactic.
- Dirhams : Porter, *loc. cit.*  
Zambaur, *loc. cit.*, noting an unpublished example in Beirut.  
Lane-Poole, *Catalogue of the Collection of Arabic Coins preserved in the Khedivial Library at Cairo* (London, 1897), p. 337.  
Blau, Otto, « Nachlese orientalischer Munzen », *Numismatische Zeitschrift* VIII (1876), p. 48. Blau mentions only Ḥasan b. Aḥmad's name, but it is safe to assume that it is similar to the above coins.  
Lavoix, in a letter cited by Lane-Poole, « Unpublished Coins... Calvert », p. 331. This coin is in the collection of the *Cabinet des Médailles* of the Bibliothèque Nationale.  
Antonio Pietro Vives, « Numismatica Qarmaṭa », *Al-Andalus*, I (1933), p. 301-305.

362 DAMASCUS :

Dinar : Unpublished coin in the collection of the American Numismatic Society; sample badly overstruck, the word *al-rā'is* being particularly difficult to decipher. (See Plate, No. 3.)

FILASTĪN :

Dirhams : Lane-Poole, *Catalogue... Khedivial Library*, p. 337.  
Lavoix, in a letter cited by Lane-Poole, «Unpublished Coins... Calvert», p. 331. The coin is in the collection of the *Cabinet des Médailles*.  
Markov, A. K., *Catalogue of Muhammadan Coins in the Hermitage* (in Russian) [St. Petersburg, 1896-1898], p. 67. He gives the Russian equivalents of the Arabic singular forms.



N° 1



N° 2



N° 3