Tenth-century settlement on the east African coast: the case for Qarmatian/Isma‘ili connections


Use of the Aluka digital library is subject to Aluka’s Terms and Conditions, available at http://www.aluka.org/page/about/termsConditions.jsp. By using Aluka, you agree that you have read and will abide by the Terms and Conditions. Among other things, the Terms and Conditions provide that the content in the Aluka digital library is only for personal, non-commercial use by authorized users of Aluka in connection with research, scholarship, and education.

The content in the Aluka digital library is subject to copyright, with the exception of certain governmental works and very old materials that may be in the public domain under applicable law. Permission must be sought from Aluka and/or the applicable copyright holder in connection with any duplication or distribution of these materials where required by applicable law.

Aluka is a not-for-profit initiative dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of materials about and from the developing world. For more information about Aluka, please see http://www.aluka.org
Tenth-century settlement on the east African coast: the case for Qarmatian/Isma'ili connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Creator</th>
<th>Pouwels, Randall L.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource type</td>
<td>Articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage (spatial)</td>
<td>Northern Swahili Coast, Tanzania, United Republic of, Kilwa Kisiwani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Smithsonian Institution Libraries, DT365 .A992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>By kind permission of Azania (British Institute in Eastern Africa).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Journal excerpt from the 1974 issue of Azania, discussing Qarmatian/Isma'ili connections in early settlements near Kilwa Kisiwani. Twelve pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format extent (length/size)</td>
<td>12 pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tenth Century Settlement of the East African Coast: The Case for Qarmatian/Isma'ili Connections

by
Randall L. Pouwels

Randall Pouwels is the holder of a Fulbright-Hayes Fellowship for the University of California, and is currently carrying out research on the East African ulama for a Ph.D. thesis.

Roughly within the period of the last twelve years, J. S. Trimingham, G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, and H. N. Chittick, through their research and writings, have contributed greatly towards modifying older notions concerning early Islamic settlement of the East African coast. Particularly significant points in this new historiography of the coast are the interpretation of the word 'Shirazi' settlement, as found in the familiar traditions, to actually connote 'Persian Gulf' settlement (Freeman-Grenville, 1962b, pp. 78-9; Chittick, 1970, pp. 257-76); the view that the original Swahili homeland, and therefore the region in which earliest colonization occurred, was on the northern portion of the coast (Trimingham, 1964, pp. 6-11: Chittick, 1970, pp. 273-4); and Chittick's revised chronology for the Medieval period (Chittick, 1970). No doubt, the work which has gone farthest in contributing to this 'new historiography' has been the excavations at Kilwa and at Lamu (Chittick, x968b and c. 1969; 1974, p. 237) conducted by the British Institute in Eastern Africa under Chittick's direction.

An unfortunate drawback, however, in the archaeological investigations of coastal history is their incompleteness, both on the African end and in the Persian Gulf itself. Though Chittick has acknowledged that early migration to the coast was a phenomenon probably attributable in origins to the entire Persian Gulf, the only archaeological data from the Gulf with which he has been able to compare his coastal finds have been those resulting from Whitehouse's excavations at Siraf (Whitehouse, 1968, 1969). While the role of Sirafi merchants in the ninth and tenth centuries' Indian Ocean cannot be denied (al-Mas'udi, ed. Barbier de Meynard and de Corteille, 1861, Vol. I, pp. 231-33; Vol. III, pp. 6 and 8; al-Idrisi, ed. Ferrand, 1913, Vol. I, pp. 58-60), one partial side-effect of these excavations has been the focusing of subsequent research on trade and immigration from Iranian the side of the Persian Gulf to the exclusion of the possibly significant roles played by other notable commercial centres in the early economic life and settlement of (at least tenth century) East Africa (e.g. see Ricks, 1970). Therefore, this paper is an attempt at partially remediing this imbalance by giving wider consideration to the known historical context in which tenth and eleventh century Persian Gulf trade was
Tenth Century Settlement

carried on, and, more specifically, to a theory first enunciated by Trimingham (1965, pp. 62 and 68, note 3)—that is, the role of Qarmatians in settling the tenth century coast and their possible part in contributing to the character of nascent Swahili civilization.

The basic context in which relations between East Africa and the Middle East has been viewed traditionally (and logically) by historians has been that of trade. Such, then, is the natural starting point in considering the raison d'être of contact between the Persian Gulf community and the East African coast. This particular factor of early settlement was nothing new in the tenth century, for many centuries of commercial control and gradual settlement southwards around the Horn had preceded the period under consideration here. However, this tempo of trade and immigration underwent a greatly increased expansion in the ninth through twelfth centuries for several reasons. Thus, it was during this time that coastal trading centres at Sawakin, Badi', Dahlak, Zaila, Mogadishu, Merka, Barawa, Mombasa, Manda, and Unguja Ukuu were founded and expanded (Trimingham, 1965, p. 61). The trade factor in this early settlement of the coast appears conspicuously in several of the Shirazi traditions themselves. In the Portuguese version of the founding of the coastal settlements, references were made to colonizers giving substantial amounts of cloth and glass beads to local coastal dwellers in exchange for settlement rights. Freeman-Grenville (1962b, p. 74) has underscored these items as being the usual commodities popular among Persian Gulf merchants in their commerce with Africans. Therefore, he has interpreted these stories, probably correctly, to infer that trade was the paramount factor leading to early settlement.

As far as the dating of the earliest settlements goes, tradition (Strong, 1895, p. 399; de Barros, 1776, pp. 211-12) in East Africa has assigned the years 887-924 as the period for the founding of Mogadishu. However, more substantial evidence for this period of settlement has been afforded by H. N. Chittick's dating of ceramic ware found in the excavation at Manda which indicated settlement c. the ninth and tenth centuries period (Chittick, 1969, pp. 46-48). The earliest period of probable settlement is marked by an unusually high percentage (total of about 30 per cent of all pottery) of imported wares. Principally, three types of imported glazed ceramics were found: the 'tin-glazed' ware, coming from Mesopotamia and dated to the ninth and tenth centuries; the 'SassanianIslamic' pottery, manufactured in southern Iraqi cities and dated roughly to the ninth and tenth centuries (Chittick, 1968c, p. 162; 1969, pp. 46-48; also, Whitehouse, 1968, pp. 7 and 14-15); and the find of a tenth-century white Chinese porcelain bowl. The latter, no doubt, arrived in East Africa via Persian Gulf middlemen who were taking their trade to South-East Asia and China by that time. Thus, since the period of the Qarmatian

i. For example, the increasing wealth of the Persian Gulf towns, the establishment of contact with China (Mathew, 1963, pp. xo6-io). Also, there was the emergence of the 'Shona complex' between the ninth and sixteenth centuries (Sutton, 1970, pp. i and 8-9). Finally, increasing demand for slaves, previously obtained only from Ethiopia and West Africa, seems to have forced at least some dealers to seek
new markets further south on the coast (Ricks, 1970, p. 351; Buzurg ibn Shahriyar and Tuan Cheng-Shih in Freeman-Grenville, i96za, pp. 9-13 and p. 8 respectively).

2. More specifically, Chittick mentions that 'Sassanian-Islamic' ware is known to have been manufactured near Basra, but, at least from what is known presently, not in Iran itself. Similarly, the 'tin-glazed' ware is thought to have been produced in southern Mesopotamian centres.

Randall L. Pouwels

ascendancy in the Persian Gulf spanned the tenth and part of the eleventh centuries, there exists a chronological link between the period of earliest settlement recorded for East Africa and the Qarmatian period in al-Bahrain, southern Iraq, and Arabia.

Just how, then, did the Qarmatians fit into this picture of early trade and settlement in East Africa? What evidence is available to the historian wishing to find the connection with East Africa? How might the Qarmatians be included in the term 'Shirazi' as used in the East African traditions of early settlement? Finally, what can be said of their possible role in the formative period of Swahili coastal culture?

As noted above, in the period of the tenth through twelfth centuries, Gulf trade with East Africa underwent a dramatic increase, at least initially, for the purpose of obtaining additional supplies of gold, ivory, and slaves. In connection with this, Nasiri Khosrau mentioned that al-Bahrain was the centre for all commerce in eastern Arabia (Safer Nameh, trans. C. Scheffer, 1881, footnote, pp. 225-6) and, in addition, other geographers of the period were similarly disposed to vaunt the prosperity of the region (al-Muqaddasi, ed. M. J. de Goeje, 1877, pp. 93-4; also, Yaqut, trans. Barbier de Meynard: I, p. 148 and IV, p. 954). Concerning the Qarmatians' probable involvement in the slave trade, Khosrau mentioned that, while in al-Bahrain,3 he found, ".... thirty thousand Negro or Abyssinian slaves. . . who were in agricultural or gardening work." (Safer Nameh, p. 226). He further informs us that these slaves, like other 'property' in al-Bahrain, were community 'owned'. Clearly, then, the Qarmatian state of al-Bahrain had suitable occasion for participation in the reported expansion in commercial contact with East and North-east Africa in the period under consideration here since the demand for slaves was a prime factor in this expansion.

Now there is the question of just who the Shirazi of the pre-Portuguese traditions were. Were they all immigrants from the Iranian side of the Persian Gulf? Assuredly, Siraf, the port city for Shiraz in the ninth and tenth centuries, was the most active trade centre in the Gulf for that period; however, at least as intimated above, there are several reasons for believing that al-Bahrain was a commercial rival to Siraf by the tenth century. No doubt, much of the ceramic ware found by Chittick at Manda and Unguja Ukuu reached East Africa via Siraf. But, as indicated in Whitehouse's and Chittick's publications, the 'tin-glazed' and 'Sassanian-Islamic' wares so far have turned up only in Mesopotamia and in southern Iraq respectively, and not in Iran. Presumably, then, these wares could have reached East Africa not only through Sirafi merchants, but by seamen
working out of other major commercial centres as well, such as those in Oman and al-Bahrain. Thus, their work reveals a Persian Gulf trade with East Africa and not necessarily a Sirafi monopoly.

In view of the fact that some of the manufactured ware found in East Africa is known to have been produced in southern Mesopotamia and in Iraq, the story of Qarmatian conquest of these regions between 903 and 929, as related by de Goeje (pp. 38-39, 69, 76, 79, 95-99 and 13), takes on added significance. Indeed, by 929 the Qarmatians were in complete control of the Persian Gulf area for the remainder of the tenth century.

3. That is, 1035-42 A.D. The Qarmatian regime was overturned in 1051.

Tenth Century Settlement
especially with the final seizure of Oman around 928 and Kufa in 929 (de Goeje, pp. 47, 97-99 and 113). In addition to controlling the production centres, the Qarmatians pretty well had trade in the Gulf itself in hand. Already by about 910 they had mastered the area so completely that the Abbasid vizier in Baghdad, in efforts to appease a foe whom the Caliphal troops had failed to defeat on the battlefield, was negotiating to extend direct, duty-free trade privileges to al-Bahrain similar to those extended to Siraf (de Goeje, pp. 70, 76, 77). All other commerce was forced by the Qarmatians to pay customs at a station established at Awal Island, just north of al-Bahrain, and there is indication that raids were carried out on cities on the Iranian side of the Persian Gulf to enforce these regulations (Faroughy, 1951, pp. 57-8). Clearly, this seizure of what were production centres, the levying of duties on goods going to Persian markets, and the raids must have contributed greatly to the final drying up of this trade through Siraf by the second half of the tenth century (Hourani, 1951, p. 78). The Qarmatians, evidently, took over a large share of this trade with such far away ports as those in East Africa, South-East Asia, and India since their possible agreements with Baghdad and their control over the production centres forced many merchants in the Gulf area to deal directly with or through al-Bahrain.

* *i *g * * * *

In the East African traditions of settlement evidence exists which indicates probable Qarmatian colonization of the northern coast sometime in the tenth century. For example, in the various accounts from the Kilwa area4 there is the continual reappearance of the number seven. This occurs as follows:

i. Seventy years after the settlement of Mogadishu, Kilwa is said to have been settled by Shirazi.

2. In the Arabic version, the settlers of Kilwa came in seven vessels to the coast.

3. The Arabic version mentions, also, that there were seven who sailed to East Africa, including Sultan Hasan/Husain ibn Ali.

4. In the Portuguese account, there was a total of seven sons of the Sultan of Shiraz who sailed for East Africa.

5. Also in the Portuguese version, there were six legitimate sons of the Sultan, born
of a mother "descended from the Princes of Persia" (i.e. the first six Imams of the Shi'a?). The seventh son, the illegitimate one (i.e. the 'illegitimate' disputed Imam Isma'il?) was the founder of Kilwa.

Now what is the special significance of the number seven to the Qarmatians? First, one alternate name used for the Isma'ilis-the followers of the seventh Imam, Isma'il was the 'Seveners' (al-sab'iyya). Second, the number had a mystical significance for the Qarmatians/Isma'ilis, as much of their cosmology was based on Neo-Pythagoreanism in which numbers play a determinate role in the make-up of the universe and in the unfolding of history, as they interpreted it. In their gnostic cosmology, also based heavily on Neo-Platonic theories of emanation from the One, the number seven had sacred meaning. In this system, for example, the steps of emanation were seven: (i) God or the One

4. Which, as will be seen, probably refer to the settlement of Mogadishu, Barawa, Merka, and the Lamu archipelago, rather than to Kilwa itse If.

Randall L. Pouwels

or the Good; (2) Universal Reason (nous or 'aql); (3) the Universal Soul (nafs); (4) Primeval matter; (5) space; (6) time and (7) the material world (Hitti, 1951, p. 443; Fakhry, 1970, pp. 188-198; Marquet, 1962, pp. 225-37).

In connection with the Shirazi account of the settlement of Kilwa, there is another familiar tradition which relates to the tenth century settlement of the Benadir communities and which is highly redolent of the accounts given in the Kilwa Chronicle: the 'Seven Brothers of el-Hasa' (al-Ahsa or Lahsa). Several coastal historians have taken note of this similarity (Freeman-Grenville, 1962b, p. 79; Tringham, 1964, pp. io-ii; Chittick, 1970, pp. 273-4; 1968a, p. iii), and at least one has taken this as a clue to mean that all the Shirazi traditions, found all along the coast and among which the 'Seven Brothers' story should be included, reflect on an earlier corpus of traditions which originally evolved on the northern coast (Chittick, 1970, pp. 273-4). It is assumed that this earlier tradition or corpus of traditions would have evolved sometime in the tenth through twelfth century period when what there was of 'Swahili' civilization at that time was found on the northern portion of the coast (as mentioned above), and, as such, reflect the settlement of the northern communities rather than the more southerly ones in which the actual traditions survived until recent times.

What does the Seven Brothers story reveal as possible indications of Qarmatian settlement? First, as the name itself evinces, these seven brothers came from al-Hasa, the mainland opposite al-Bahrain island and under the latter's rule throughout most of its history. In fact, the terms al-Hasa and al-Bahrain often are used interchangeably to refer, roughly, to the region of eastern Arabia between Oman and Iraq. Second, there is the traditional dating, associated with the Seven Brothers story, which designates the period 887-924 as that in which colonization of the Benadir coast occurred. This information, as outlined on page 66, has been corroborated by archaeological evidence as a likely period in which first settlement of the northern areas of the coast may have occurred.

In addition to the arguments already presented, the terms 'seven brothers' themselves add to the plausibility of the above argument and deserve separate
treatment as to how they may be interpreted within the context of the argument. The story was related originally by de Barros (1776, dec. i, liv, viii, cap. iv, pp. 211-12), and, unfortunately, no information presently is available as to the original Arabic phraseology by which 'seven brothers' (as de Barros or his informant translated it) was rendered. Whatever the case, there are strong indications that de Barros himself did not know Arabic (Chittick, 1970), and, therefore, was prone to inexact translations of his sources. One possible Arabic rendering of 'brothers' (ashiqqa) has the usual connotation of male, sibling relationship. If this is the term which de Barros translated as 'brothers', it is known that, in reference to Qarmatian history, the founder of the Qarmatian state, Abu Sa'id al-Jannabi, left seven sons who ruled after his death: Sa'id, al-Fadhl, Ibrahim, Yusuf, Ahmad, al-Kasim, and Sulaiman Abu Tahir (de Goje, p. 73). It was the last who assumed effective power, but on his death the other six brothers ruled, along with six viziers, until about 970. And, according to at least one other eye-witness (Nasiri Khosrau; see Safer Nameh, pp. 225-6), al-Bahrain continued to be ruled as a republic in this manner at least until 5. It is not known, however, if this term pertains to descendancy from the same father and mother both.

Tenth Century Settlement
about the middle of the eleventh century. Therefore, the term 'Seven Brothers of elHasa' could very well be a reference to the seven sons of Abu Sa'id, who ruled the Qarmatian state after the latter's demise, and to their descendants, both in al-Bahrain and in East Africa.

An even more interesting possibility suggests itself if 'brothers' was spelled as ikhwan. In the Middle East, the term ikhwan (sing. akh) can pertain to those who are members of a religious brotherhood. Particularly, since the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the term has found extensive use among the followers of sufi orders. However, a case can be made that in the tenth century Middle East precursors of sufi brotherhoods were to be found amongst adherents to the Isma'ili/Qarmatian movement (e.g. the famous Ikhwan al-Safa; see Fakhry, 1970, pp. 184-203; de Boer, 1967, pp. 81-96). Although this is not the proper forum in which these matters can be dealt with in depth, suffice it to say that the tenth century Qarmatian/Isma'ili movement and post-tenth century sufism shared much common ideological ground (cf. Faruqi, 1955; Hossein, 1972, pp. 104-22; Ivanow, 1959; Marquet, 1969; Vatikiotis, 1954a and b; Watt, 1963). Insofar as historical ties between the Qarmatian movement and later sufism go, the well-known futuwwa associations seem to have been the likely institutional base common to both (cf. Cahen, 1953, 1955, 1959, 1964; Massignon, 1963; Jawad, 1958; Arnakis, 1953).

In conclusion to the above matter, then, it can be suggested here that the term ikhwan, at the time of the Qarmatian insurrectionary activities in the Persian Gulf region in the late ninth and tenth centuries, often has the connotation of giving the bearers of this title membership in one of many possible cells of a far-flung brotherhood, perhaps connected with the futuwwa associations. Stating it in a manner perhaps more germane to the main thesis of this paper, the fact that the
word 'brothers' in this case is modified by the number seven (or sevener?) leaves the 'Seven Brothers of el-Hasa' as possible members in an Isma'ili/Qarmatian brotherhood based on al-Hasa.

So what can be said of East Coast history roughly between the tenth and thirteenth centuries? So far, the main point has been that settlement began on the northern end of the coast around the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth centuries and that, as has been argued, the traditions seem to indicate that there was a connection between the Qarmatian state of al-Bahrain (and, perhaps more widely, of Isma'ilis from around various other points of the Persian Gulf periphery) and the founding of states in Mogadishu, Barawa, Merka, and possibly the Lamu archipelago and Zanzibar. What can be said of relations between these early settlements on the northern end of the coast and other communities farther to the south?

As already noted above, there seems to be a relationship between the 'Seven Brothers' tradition on the founding of the Benadir coast communities and the various Shirazi traditions recorded for the southern communities, particularly the traditions associated with the founding of Kilwa. Apparently, this would indicate a historical connection. Also revealing is the claim made in the Kilwa traditions (Freeman-Grenville, 1962b, pp. 74-6) that Kilwa was founded in the same period (tenth century) as the founding of Kilwa. It is now known that, though there was some trade between Kilwa and the Persian Gulf in the tenth century, the site was not settled extensively and a dynasty established until roughly the end of the twelfth century, about 250 to 300 years after the 'founding' of the northern coastal cities (Chittick, 1970, p. 274; 1974, p. 237). Indeed, despite evidence of settlement at the end of the twelfth century, Kilwa did not emerge as a primary power on the coast until the introduction of what has been postulated as a dynasty of South Arabian origins at the end of the thirteenth century. Thus, while the northern communities, particularly Mogadishu, were evolving into places of importance in the tenth through twelfth centuries, based on 'waves' of immigration from al-Bahrain and other Persian Gulf ports, the more southerly communities at Kilwa, Sofala, the Comoros, and in Madagascar probably remained rather remote outposts of settlement and trade whose development lagged behind the Benadir towns by at least two hundred years.

Yet, as mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the similarities between the 'Seven Brothers' and the Kilwa traditions seem to indicate historical relationships between the two areas. How is this explained? Both Trimingham and Chittick have provided an answer by their theory that the southern communities were not settled by immigrants coming directly from the Persian Gulf, but as a result of secondary and tertiary migrations coming from the northern settlement areas by the second

Finally, in addition to providing a case for the possible Qarmatian role in the 'Shirazi' settlement of the East African coast, this paper also has introduced some questions which deserve further investigation by the historian interested in the mechanisms which facilitated cultural syncretism in the early history of coastal civilization. Also of relevance is an understanding of how these mechanisms operated in allowing for the continuous assimilation of newly-arrived peoples into the coastal cultural milieu. Within the wider context of these two interrelated problems, there are a number of other questions which require attention.

First, what role might Isma'ili's have played in winning early converts to Islam? One possible answer is indicated by their tendency towards religious syncretism, and at least one source (de Goeje, p. 178) remarked on Isma'ili religious tolerance. Also, organizationally, they were not unlike forms of later sufis' brotherhoods whose more recent role in disseminating Islam in Africa is already well known. A second question is, assuming that Qarmatians were organized into some sort of brotherhoods based on the urban futuwwa associations, what role might these brotherhoods have played in East Africa? One interesting possibility is that these brotherhoods or associations may have played a significant role in determining the character of the

7. All the aforementioned sources discuss the 'Sheikh Ali of Shungwaya' matter, as well as the possible historical relationships between the northern coast and the southern communities. Another fact which ties the founding of the southern coastal towns with the northern coast is Burton's 1857 Swahili account of the settlement of Kilwa: "A certain Shaykh Yusuf from Shangaya [i.e. Shungwaya] bought land from Napendu, the heathen headman, by spreading it over with cloth, built the old fort, won the savage's daughter, slew his father-in-law, and became the sire of a long race of Shirazi 'Kings of the Zinj'." (quoted by Strong, 1895, pp. 399-400).

Tenth Century Settlement

ngoma associations found on the coast up until a few years ago. Indeed, both the urban autonomy groups found in the Middle East (cf. Vryonis, 1971, p. 397, note 147) and the ngoma clubs of East Africa had similar social functions and shared distinctly similar characteristics. In the Middle East they centred around competitive sporting and para-military activities, and often acted as inter-urban hospitality groups; in East Africa it was competitive dancing, again often taking on the appearance of para-military organizations with a definite assimilative role. An interesting fact one might add is that, one such ngoma association calling itself the Ikhwan al-Safa (after the famous tenth century Isma'ili brotherhood) is known to have existed in Zanzibar up until the time of the Afro-Shirazi revolution (private communication from Mr. Ali Jahadhmy, June, 1973). The key question one would have to ask, in relation to this matter, is: was this name merely the result of a chance borrowing? And, even if so, what led to the borrowing of this particular designation?
Third, what did past republican forms of coastal government owe to Qarmatian ideas of political organization and rule? One clue is afforded by de Barros' mentioning of the Mogadishu government of the sixteenth century where he wrote, "... even at the present time it is governed by twelve chiefs in the manner of a republic, and they are descendants of these [brothers i.e. the "Seven Brothers of el-Hasa"]." (Freeman-Grenville, 1962b, pp. 31-2).

Finally, what of the distinctive maritime character of Swahili culture might have been borrowed from al-Bahrain? An interesting possibility was suggested by Professor R. B. Serjeant's recent work in al-Bahrain where he noted the close resemblance between the singular construction of the fish-traps and fishing techniques he found there and those found on the East African coast (Serjeant, 1968).

This paper has attempted to raise other possibilities for settlement of the tenth and eleventh century East Coast both in accordance with and beyond hypotheses which have resulted from archaeological and oral work completed on the coast to date. The case for Qarmatian participation in the so-called Shirazi phase of colonization has been argued on the basis of the contemporaneity of the established dating of northern coastal settlement and the period of the Qarmatian/Isma'ili movement in the Persian Gulf regions, the record of Qarmatian political and commercial domination of the Gulf throughout the major portion of this period, and indications within recorded coastal traditions themselves. However, such proposals as have been put forward, both in other articles and in this, must remain only as indicators of where continued work might be directed. Nothing as yet has been written on the Shirazi period of immigration which can come near to being labelled definitive. Taken in this context, therefore, this paper can be taken as a call for not only a continuation of the obviously badly needed archaeological investigation of the strategic centres on the northern coast, but also for work in the Persian Gulf beyond that which has already been done at Siraf. It is suggested that much of interest to the coastal historian still awaits discovery in the archeological, archival, and ethnographic investigations of the western side of the Persian Gulf, especially in Oman and al-Bahrain.

8. Compare this with Nasir Khosrau's description of the twelve who ruled in al-Bahrain "with justice and equity" (Safer Nameh, pp. 225-7).

Randall L. Pouwels

REFERENCES
Arnakis, G. G.
Barros, J. de Boer, T. J. de Cahen, C.
Chittick, H. N.
Fakhry, M. Faroughy, A. Faruqi, I. R. Freeman-Grenville, G. S. P.
Goeje, M. J. de
Hitti, P. K. Hosseim, S. Hourani, G. F. al-Idrisi Ivanow, W.
Jawad, M.
Marquet, Y.
Massignon, L.
al-Mas'udi
Mathew, G.
al-Muqaddasi Prins, A. H. J. Ricks, T.
1963 'La "futuwwa" ou "pacte d'honneur artisanal", entre les travailUres musulaman au Moyen-Age', Opera Minora, Beirut, pp. 396-421.
Summary

This paper is predicated on the belief that the story of East Coastal immigration and settlement, from its beginnings, largely can be read in the history of economic, social, and political currents in the Middle East. In considering the so-called Shirazi period of colonization, roughly from the ninth through twelfth centuries, much of the new coastal historiography, which has been set out in the works of Freeman-Grenville, Trimingham, and Chittick, has been taken into account. However, in consonance with the above-mentioned principle, a case can be made for possible Qarmatian involvement in the tenth and eleventh century history of the northern portion of the coast in the light of what is known of the Qarmatian role in Persian Gulf history of this period. For, though Sirafi and Omani dominance of Persian Gulf trade cannot be denied, it is known that Qarmatian al-Bahrain came increasingly to the fore as a political and economic factor during the tenth century, a factor which must be taken into account in considerations of early coastal influences.
In addition, coastal traditions have been examined for clues indicating a possible Qarmatian role. In this connection, the repetition of the number seven, the established dating of the settlement of the northern coast, the apparent relationships between northern and southern coastal traditions, and specific mention of al-Bahraini colonization in one account are considered as indicators.

British Institute in Eastern Africa
law&. Nairobi, Kenya
or c/o The British Academy, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London
0 The British Institute in Eastern Africa, 1974
Made and printed in East Africa

Azania
The Journal of the British Institute
in Eastern Africa
Editor
NEVILLE CHITTICK
VOLUME IX-1974
Published by the British Institute
in Eastern Africa
Nairobi
1974