

# **DĀR AL-HIJRA IN KHĀRIJĪ AND ISMĀ‘İLĪ THOUGHT**

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## **Abstract**

The understanding of *dār al-bijra*, whose roots lie in the emigration of the Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina, has found a significant place in the history of Islamic sects. By making this notion a part of their creeds, the Khārijīs and the Ismā‘ilīs have endeavored to legitimize some of their views. In this article, we try to bring to light how these sects understand the notion of *dār al-bijra* and what elements regarding the creed were later added to this concept.

*Key Words:* Khawārij, Ismā‘iliyya, Qarmaṭiyya, *dār al-bijra*, *taqiyya*

## **Introduction**

Because the Prophet Muḥammad was not able to put an end to polytheistic domination in Mecca, he was forced to immigrate to Medina, where became known as the land of emigration (*dār al-bijra*). With the Prophet, Muslims immigrated to Medina in large numbers and founded a state for themselves from which they had the opportunity to spread Islam. The political triumph the Prophet achieved through emigration later caused some Islamic sects to develop an emigration-based theology to fulfill their own political aspirations. Although these sects initially formed emigration-based theologies inspired by the Prophet’s emigration, they later attached their own distinct connotations to the notions of *bijra* (emigration) and *dār al-bijra*, which deviate substantially from the meanings they had in the time of the Prophet; these notions with added meanings eventually became central elements of their own beliefs.

In this article, we will employ a scientific approach to determine what kind of theological perspective the Khārijīs, the first in the Islamic tradition to make the notion of *dār al-hijra* a part of their creed, developed and what new approaches and contributions the Ismāʿīlīs advanced following the Khārijī understanding of this belief.

### ***Dār al-hijra* in Khārijī Thought**

Khārijīs or Khawārij was the first Islamic sect to make the notion of *dār al-hijra* an essential part of its creed. The first appearance of this notion dates back to a dispute between Nāfiʿ ibn al-Azraq (d. 65/684), the leader of the Azāriqa branch, and Najda ibn al-ʿĀmir (d. 69/688), the leader of the Najadāt branch. Nāfiʿ ibn al-Azraq was willing to form a religious society, and to that end, he benefited from the idea of the Prophet’s emigration to Medina.<sup>1</sup> In Nāfiʿ’s view, all Muslims should emigrate to him,<sup>2</sup> because he himself had emigrated from Muslim society, which he had declared to be unbelieving, just as all Muslims had followed the Prophet to Medina. He declared that emigration towards him in order to fight the polytheists is the chief distinction between belief and unbelief. Acting on this proclamation, he branded all of those who chose not to emigrate as unbelievers, although some held the same opinion as he did.<sup>3</sup> He perceived emigration as an obligation so that he could fight against those who opposed him, and he employed the notion of *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation) as the opposite of emigration. However, the meaning he attached to *taqiyya* is quite different from how the Shīʿī tradition understands it. According to Nāfiʿ, *taqiyya*, rather than suggesting a concealment of one’s faith in the case of imminent danger to one’s life and property, expresses sitting still (*quʿūd*) or abstaining from emigration, which is obligated by Allah for *jihād*, and from commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong. According to Nāfiʿ’s understanding, *taqiyya* was unlawful, and he accused the

<sup>1</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, “Khārijite Thought in the Umayyad Period,” *Der Islam* 36/3 (1961), 220.

<sup>2</sup> Abū I-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Ismāʿīl al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-kbtilāf al-muṣallīn* (ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamid; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1950), I, 162.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, I, 158-162.

*qaʿada*, those who failed to emigrate and thus abstained from *jibād*, of unbelief.<sup>4</sup>

The first harsh reaction to Nāfiʿs intolerant understanding that viewed those who did not join him as unbelievers came from Najda ibn al-ʿĀmir, who was also a Khārijī. Although Najda emphasized that it was better for those who could to participate in *jibād*, he also ruled that *quʿūd* was permissible. He utilized the following Qurʾānic verse (Q 4:95) to legitimize his view: “Allah has exalted those who strive above those who sit still by a tremendous reward.” In this verse, sitting still and not participating in *jibād* is not seen as unbelief, but it is emphasized that *jibād* is more virtuous. Nonetheless, Nāfiʿ insisted on the validity of his own view and restricted the scope of this verse by suggesting that its meaning was limited to those who accompanied the Prophet during the conquest of Mecca.<sup>5</sup>

Considering the above-mentioned view of the Najadāt, one cannot say that all branches of Khawārij accuse the *qaʿada* of being unbelievers.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the Azāriqa’s stipulation of emigration for

<sup>4</sup> Abū l-ʿAbbās ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Nāshīʿ al-Akbar, *Masāʾil al-imāma wa-muqtaṭafāt min al-Kitāb al-awsaṭ fi l-maqālāt* (ed. Josef van Ess; Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971), 69; Abū Ḥātim Aḥmad ibn Ḥamdān al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna fi l-kalimāt al-Islāmiyya al-ʿArabiyya* (part III, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Sallūm al-Sāmarrāʾī), in al-Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Ghuluww wa-l-firaq al-ghāliya fi l-ḥaḍāra al-Islāmiyya* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Baghdād: Dār Wāsiṭ li-l-Nashr, 1982), 285. Al-Baghdādī and al-Isfarāyīnī took it further to state that Nāfiʿ saw them as polytheists. See Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Qāhir ibn Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq* (ed. Muḥammad ʿUthmān al-Khusht; Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Sīnā, 1988), 79; Abū l-Muzaḥḥar Shahfūr ibn Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad al-Isfarāyīnī, *al-Tabṣīr fi l-dīn wa-tamyīz al-firqa al-nājiya ʿan al-firaq al-bālikin* (ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt; Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1983), 50.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-zīna*, 285.

<sup>6</sup> For example see Sālim ibn Dhakwān, *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān* (= *Sīra*) (ed. Patricia Crone and Fritz W. Zimmermann; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 96-98; al-Rabīʿ ibn Ḥabīb ibn ʿAmr al-Ibāqī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ* (= *Musnad al-Imām al-Rabīʿ ibn Ḥabīb*) (ed. Muḥammad Idrīs and ʿĀshūr ibn Yūsuf; Beirut: Dār al-Ḥikma, 1995), 297-299; Abū l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahraṣṭānī, *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal* (ed. Aḥmad Fahmī Muḥammad; Fustāṭ: n.p., 1948), I, 194-196; al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq*, 90. For a contemporary assessment, see Patricia Crone, “A Statement by the Najdiyya Khārijites on the Dispensability of the Imamate,” *Studia Islamica* 88 (1998), 75-76.

*jibād* and their accusation the *qaʿada* of unbelief became central points around which the main topics of controversy amongst the branches of Khawārij intensified. The Azāriqa's evaluation of *quʿūd* as *taqiyya* caused the lands where the *qaʿada* resided to be named *dār al-taqiyya*.<sup>7</sup> Regarding the lands named *dār al-taqiyya*, the Azāriqa preferred to use the term *dār al-shirk* (land of polytheism) and *dār al-kufr* (land of infidelity).<sup>8</sup> However, because most of the sub-branches of the Khawārij did not accept this view, the term *dār al-taqiyya* was more commonly used to refer to the lands where the *qaʿada*, both Khārijīs and non-Khārijīs, lived.

The Ibāḍiyya, one of the moderate branches of Khawārij, conceptualized the status of such lands differently. According to them, lands where non-emigrating Muslim opponents lived were defined as *dār al-tawḥīd* (land of unity), while the headquarters of the sultan was *dār al-baghy* (land of usurpation). Muslims who live in *dār al-tawḥīd* were considered monotheists (*muwāḥḥids*) though not believers (*muʾmins*).<sup>9</sup> They befriended the *qaʿada* of their own sect who lived in *dār al-tawḥīd* but clearly maintained that those who emigrated and fought were superior to the *qaʿada*.<sup>10</sup>

The disputes regarding the status of the lands where the *qaʿada* lived naturally incited judicial controversies amongst the Khārijīs about *dār al-taqiyya*. A lengthy discussion of the judicial status of those living in *dār al-taqiyya* goes beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, touching upon the fundamental judicial issues regarding *dār al-taqiyya* is necessary to better comprehend the matter at hand.

The Azāriqa held the opinion that everybody living in *dār al-kufr* was an unbeliever regardless of whether they belonged to the

<sup>7</sup> For more examples of this definition, see al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq*, 94, 100.

<sup>8</sup> See Abū Tammām, *Bāb al-shayṭān min Kitāb al-shajara*, in Wilferd Madelung and Paul Walker, *An Ismāʿīlī Heresiography: The 'Bāb al-shayṭān' from Abū Tammām's Kitāb al-shajara* (Leiden, Boston & Köln: Brill, 1998), 21 (Arabic text); al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq*, 79; al-Isfarāyīnī, *al-Tabṣīr*, 50.

<sup>9</sup> It is seen that the Ibāḍīs clearly make a distinction between *muʾmin* and *muslim*. See al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, I, 171-172; Abū Tammām, *Bāb al-shayṭān*, 28; al-Shahraṣṭānī, *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, I, 213; also see Watt, "Khārijite Thought ...," 225.

<sup>10</sup> Sālim ibn Dhakwān, *Sīra*, 96-98.

Azāriqa or any other sect. Those who lived in such lands had two options: either to emigrate to them or to be executed.<sup>11</sup> According to the Azāriqa, all forms of worship performed in *dār al-kufr* were simply unacceptable and fruitless because the performers were unbelievers.<sup>12</sup> This opinion allowed for no further discussion amongst the Azāriqa of judicial matters related to *dār al-kufr*. However, all other Khārijī branches tended to view members of their own sects living in *dār al-taqiyya* as Muslims and consequently found themselves considering more intricate judicial matters. More important than these matters was the question of whether or not to befriend and feel love for the Khārijīs living in these lands. According to the Najadāt, killing *abl al-ʿabd* (Jews and Christians) and *abl al-dhimma* (tax-paying non-Muslims) who live there was lawful, furthermore, they cannot be befriended. As for the ʿAjārida, it was not permissible to kill the *qaʿada* living in *dār al-hijra* or to confiscate their property, because emigration was not obligatory, but just virtuous.<sup>13</sup> The Ibāḍiyya, on the other hand, declared the blood and property of who live in *dār al-taqiyya* to be unlawful because they considered them as *abl al-tawḥīd*, except for those who live in the headquarters of the sultan.<sup>14</sup>

One of the important judicial issues discussed about *dār al-taqiyya* was whether the execution of one's parents living in *dār al-taqiyya* would be lawful. Contrary to the opinion of the Azāriqa, who accepted that the execution of anyone in *dār al-taqiyya* to be lawful, the Shimrākhiyya suggested that it would be unlawful to kill one's parents living in *dār al-taqiyya* even if they were opponents.<sup>15</sup> Another prevalent judicial issue among the Khārijīs was concerned marriage to those living in *dār al-taqiyya*. The Ḍaḥḥākhiyya and the Ṣufriyya held that a Muslim woman from either sect living in *dār al-taqiyya* could marry an infidel<sup>16</sup> man living there who was not from

<sup>11</sup> Abū Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-zīna*, III, 284.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Nāshīʿ al-Akbar, *Masāʾil al-imāma*, 69.

<sup>13</sup> Abū Tammām, *Bāb al-shayṭān*, 22; al-Isfarāyīnī, *al-Tabṣīr*, 57; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, I, 191, 201-202.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, I, 171; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, I, 213. For criticism of the Azāriqa's views by an Ibāḍī, see al-Rabīʿ ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 289-301.

<sup>15</sup> See al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, I, 184; Abū Tammām, *Bāb al-shayṭān*, 32-33.

<sup>16</sup> Here, "infidel" means Muslims opposed to their sect.

her sect. It was just as permissible for a man to marry an unbelieving or opposing woman outside of his sect who also lived in *dār al-taqiyya*.<sup>17</sup>

One may conclude that the Khārijīs took the path of legitimizing their views through their opponents. The Khārijīs, who primarily indulged in *dār al-taqiyya*-centered arguments and disputes about its judicial status, did not engage in any serious discussion about their own regions. Nonetheless, the existence of a land (*dār*) they claimed as their own in opposition to *dār al-taqiyya* is certain. To define their land, they, as opposed to the term *taqiyya*, coined the term *‘alāniya*, meaning “a place where there is no *taqiyya* and where everything is open and visible.” The name of these land of Khārijī adherents was *dār al-‘alāniya*.<sup>18</sup>

The Khārijīs also utilized the term *dār al-bijra* in addition to *dār al-‘alāniya* to refer to their own land to demonstrate that emigration (*bijra*) was the opposite of *qu‘ūd*, suggesting that it was necessary to immigrate to this land.<sup>19</sup> We also see the term *dār al-islām* used for this land as opposed to *dār al-kufr*.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly, it was impossible for opponents to reside in *dār al-bijra* that the Khārijīs viewed as places that belonged only to them. Indeed, while the Azāriqa did not allow anyone from outside of their sect to live in *dār al-bijra*,<sup>21</sup> even the more moderate Ibāḍiyya ruled that the execution of opponents living in *dār al-bijra* was permissible.<sup>22</sup> Places called *dār al-bijra* are, in a way, saved lands for the Khārijīs in which their religious and legal principles are upheld.<sup>23</sup> They believed that, after emigrating from *dār al-taqiyya*, it was impossible to pledge oneself to an imām and practice Islam without building a *dār al-bijra*.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, a *dār al-bijra* was required so that canonical

<sup>17</sup> Abū Tammām, *Bāb al-shayṭān*, 33; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-ṅiḅal*, I, 217.

<sup>18</sup> See al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, I, 168.

<sup>19</sup> Abū Tammām, *Bāb al-shayṭān*, 22; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-ṅiḅal*, I, 198.

<sup>20</sup> See al-Nāshī‘ al-Akbar, *Masā‘il al-imāma*, 69.

<sup>21</sup> Abū Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-zīna*, III, 284.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Isfarāyīnī, *al-Tabṣīr*, 58.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, I, 168.

<sup>24</sup> Abū Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-zīna*, III, 282.

worship practices could be performed.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, according to the Khārijīs, if somebody were to live as a Muslim, he was obliged to live in *dār al-hijra*; more moderate branches held that it was possible to remain Muslim in *dār al-taqiyya*, although many maintained that it was better to live in a *dār al-hijra* and participate in *jibād*.<sup>26</sup> Because the notion of *dār al-hijra* assumed such a pivotal place in Khārijī thought, emigrating from *dār al-hijra* was not well received, and such people were accused of being either apostates or hypocrites.<sup>27</sup>

As is required by their creed, the Khārijīs immediately found themselves a new *dār al-hijra* when they were forced to leave their land as a result of a defeat in war. After having to retreat during the war against al-Muhallab, the Azāriqa made the city of Sābūr their new *dār al-hijra*.<sup>28</sup> In cases when they were unable to maintain a foothold in central locations, they built castles on steep, precipitous and hard-to-reach places, considering them their new *dār al-hijra*. The *dār al-hijra* they built on Mount Nafūsa in Maghrib (the present Libya) is one of the most important examples of this.<sup>29</sup> This kind of *dār al-hijra* in particular presented a beneficial example for the Ismāʿīlī *dār al-hijras*.

### ***Dār al-hijra* in Ismāʿīlī Thought**

The term *dār al-hijra* moved by the Khārijīs to theological ground for the advantage of their teachings and political aspirations, was re-interpreted and further developed by the Ismāʿīlīs. The term, for the most part, retained the initial meaning attached to it by the Khārijīs, and played a central role in Ismāʿīlī belief, too, despite eventually succumbing to different interpretations and an expansion of its meaning.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> For example, Hāzimiyya saw pilgrimage as obligatory only for those living in *dār al-Islām*. See al-Nāshīʿ al-Akbar, *Masāʿil al-imāma*, 69.

<sup>26</sup> For example see al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, I, 195-196.

<sup>27</sup> For example see Abū Tammām, *Bāb al-sbaytān*, 22; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, I, 198.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq*, 81; al-Isfārāyīnī, *al-Tabṣīr*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Abū l-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Ḥawqal al-Naṣībī, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ* (ed. Johannes Heindrik Kramers; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1939), 27.

<sup>30</sup> The most important Ismāʿīlī source in which we can find the most detailed theoretical information about *dār al-hijra* is *Sarāʾir wa-asrār al-nuṭaqāʾ*, which

For the Ismāʿīlīs like the Khārijīs, *dār al-bijra* generally meant a freed land in which the sect's adherents lived. For this reason, *ahl al-dhimma*, non-Muslims who can live in Muslim lands through an agreement with the Muslims, were not allowed to live in Ismāʿīlī *dār al-bijras*. According to al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān (d. 363/974), *ahl al-dhimma* could not enter the *ḥaram* (the holy site, Mecca) or a *dār al-bijra*, and if they did, they were evicted according to the practice of the Prophet.<sup>31</sup>

Similar to the Khārijīs, the Ismāʿīlīs saw the existence of a *dār al-bijra* as an obligation. However, unlike Azāriqa, they did not proclaim emigration as a condition of being Muslim or as a marker of piety. According to the Ismāʿīlīs, the obligation for a *dār al-bijra* stemmed from the need to establish their own jurisprudence. Likely acting on the fact that the Prophet Muḥammad did not fight during the Meccan period, but only in the Medinan period, they ruled that unless a land was adopted as a *dār al-bijra* by a prophet or his executor (*waṣī*), it was impossible to gird oneself with a sword and wage war on anyone.<sup>32</sup>

Significantly, the Ismāʿīlīs, contrary to the Khārijīs, did not consider *jibād* (and thus *dār al-bijra*) as an indispensable condition of being Muslim. The chief aim of the Ismāʿīlīs was to acquire for themselves a *dār al-bijra* where their own sect and its legal system would be dominant. Nonetheless, a Muslim did not cease to be considered as such in the event of the failure to find oneself a *dār al-bijra*. A fine example of this would be the case of the Prophet Jesus. In the view of the Ismāʿīlīs, the Prophet Jesus did not have a *dār al-bijra*, and so could not establish a mission.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, this in no way harmed or tainted his status as messenger (*nātiq*). For a *nātiq*, what matters is to work toward establishing a *dār al-bijra*. The journeys that Jesus made accompanied by his apostles were aimed at forming a *dār al-bijra* in which to reside and take refuge. If he had managed

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is attributed to Jaʿfar ibn Maṣṣūr (d. ca. 350-360/960-970) See Jaʿfar ibn Maṣṣūr al-Yemen, *Sarāʾir wa-asrār al-nuṭaqaʾ* (ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālīb; Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1984).

<sup>31</sup> Al-Qāḍī Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān ibn Muḥammad al-Tamīmī al-Maghribī, *Taʾwīl al-daʿāʾim* (ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Aʿzamī; Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1982), III, 312.

<sup>32</sup> Jaʿfar ibn Maṣṣūr, *Sarāʾir*, 239.

<sup>33</sup> Jaʿfar ibn Maṣṣūr, *Sarāʾir*, 23.

to do this, he would have established Allah’s governance and *sharī‘a*. However, he failed to establish a *dār al-hijra*.<sup>34</sup>

At this point, another important quality of an *Ismā‘īlī dār al-hijra* comes to light. According to this injunction, for a *nāṭiq* to enforce his *sharī‘a*, he must have a *dār al-hijra* without fail. Therefore, if those who believed in a particular messenger failed to establish a *dār al-hijra*, it would be impossible for the *sharī‘a* of the *nāṭiq* of the time to be practiced because the entire legal system and all legal practices would be based on the influence of the ruling group or person who was not from them.

The *Ismā‘īlīs* re-interpreted history by developing a mythological historical understanding in parallel with their definitions of *dār al-hijra*. In one such interpretation, they claimed that the Prophet Ādam, after descending into the world, was victorious in his fight with Satan and built the Ka‘ba, adopting it as his *dār al-hijra*.<sup>35</sup> The Ka‘ba was also the *dār al-hijra* of the Prophet Ibrāhīm in Mecca where he had taken his son *Ismā‘īl*.<sup>36</sup> The *dār al-hijra* of the Prophet Muḥammad, in contrast, was Medina because he established Allah’s governance and *sharī‘a* there and transformed his followers into a congregation that fought against his enemies.<sup>37</sup>

The *Ismā‘īlīs* believed that ‘Alī and his followers resorted to *taqiyya* because the “proponents of darkness (*ẓulmat*)” came to power following the passing of the Prophet. After the Prophet’s death, ‘Alī hid in Medina, the Prophet’s *dār al-hijra*, and later left there for al-Kūfa, which he adopted as his *dār al-hijra*. His son and successor, al-Ḥasan, resumed the period of *taqiyya* in order to establish a new *dār al-hijra*, seeing that “proponents of darkness” were gaining ever more strength.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, during the time of the seven imāms who came after the passing of the Prophet, no *dār al-*

<sup>34</sup> Ja‘far ibn Manṣūr, *Sarā‘ir*, 205.

<sup>35</sup> Ja‘far ibn Manṣūr, *Sarā‘ir*, 38-41. Ja‘far ibn Manṣūr’s evaluation of Ādam as a divine savior against Satan, the representative of evil, causes us to conclude that he sees Ādam as Demiurg, the sublime existence that fights against evil in the Gnostic understanding. For more information on the depiction of Ādam as seen by Ja‘far ibn Manṣūr as a divine being, see Ja‘far ibn Manṣūr, *Sarā‘ir*, 38-46.

<sup>36</sup> Ja‘far ibn Manṣūr, *Sarā‘ir*, 131.

<sup>37</sup> Ja‘far ibn Manṣūr, *Sarā‘ir*, 236.

<sup>38</sup> Ja‘far ibn Manṣūr, *Sarā‘ir*, 38-39.

*bijra* was established except for that of ‘Alī. However, the seventh imām and the initiator of the seventh circle, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl,<sup>39</sup> took action by taking leave from ‘Irāq,<sup>40</sup> his ancestral home, in order to establish a *dār al-bijra*. The hidden imāms who succeeded him carried out the mission secretly, trying to adopt a *dār al-bijra* all the while.<sup>41</sup> For this reason, they too had no *dār al-bijra*.

The Ismā‘īlīs failed to establish a *dār al-bijra* from the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century, when they first appeared, to the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>42</sup> However, it is reported that the Ismā‘īlī missionaries from the city of al-Kūfa succeeded in establishing a *dār al-bijra* in the year 277/889 or 279/891. According to this report, the Ismā‘īlī missionaries in this region decided to build a *dār al-bijra* as a homeland to which to emigrate, reside within and be together. As their building site, they chose the Mahtamābādih village that belonged to the Caliph’s lands named al-Qāsimiyyāt in the city of al-Kūfa. They carried huge chunks of rock to the village and built a very strong fortress surrounded by a deep moat. Upon completion of the fortress in a short time, the Ismā‘īlī men and women living in nearby lands immigrated to this new homeland. They called this place their *dār al-bijra*.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> For the Ismā‘īlīs’ views on the seven imāms, their theory of cyclical history and other views, see Ali Avcu, *Karmatīler’in Doğu ve Gelişim Süreci* [The Formation and Development of Qarmatizm] (PhD dissertation; Ankara: Ankara University, 2009), 172-183.

<sup>40</sup> Ja‘far ibn Maṣṣūr, *Sarā‘ir*, 39.

<sup>41</sup> Ja‘far ibn Maṣṣūr, *Sarā‘ir*, 254.

<sup>42</sup> In fact, Muṣṭafā Ghālīb sees Salamiyya where the imāms live during a time of hidden invitation as a *dār al-bijra*; see Muṣṭafā Ghālīb, *Tārīkh al-da‘wa al-Ismā‘īliyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1965), 162. However, the narration we cited above as part of *Sarā‘ir* proves this wrong because Salamiyya has never been a place dominated solely by the Ismā‘īlīs at any time of hidden invitation. If Salamiyya had been considered a *dār al-bijra* by the Ismā‘īlīs, the places where the Prophet Jesus lived would have necessarily been accepted as *dār al-bijras*.

<sup>43</sup> Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Aybak Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmi‘ al-ghurar: al-Durra al-muḍiyya fī akbbār al-Dawla al-Fāṭimiyya* (vol. VI: ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid; Cairo: al-Ma‘had al-almānī li-l-Āthār, 1961), 53; Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Itti‘āz al-ḥunafā’ bi-dbīkr a’immat al-khulafā’* (ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl; Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1948), 113; id., *Kitāb al-muqaffā al-kabīr* (ed. Muḥammad al-Ya‘lāwī; Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1991), III, 291-292; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī,

The *dār al-bijra* firstly established by the Ismāʿīlīs in Yemen, or al-Kūfa, was, according to the report, an actual homeland that would keep the adherents of this belief together. These places could be seen as the first steps the Ismāʿīlīs took towards establishing their own state. An important disparity between the Ismāʿīlī *dār al-bijra* and the Khārījī one is that the Ismāʿīlīs saw their *dār al-bijra* as the place where al-Mahdī Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl would appear.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the adherents of the Ismāʿīlī faith were to build a *dār al-bijra* as fast as possible to expedite the coming of al-Mahdī and to have the most appropriate place for his arrival. The Ismāʿīlīs therefore built a *dār al-bijra* for this purpose in every place where they mustered enough strength. Because it is unknown in which *dār al-bijra* al-Mahdī would appear. However, the Qarmaṭī Ismāʿīlīs, who gained a powerful position, particularly in Baḥrain, heightened the expectation that al-Mahdī would most likely appear in the *dār al-bijra* there. In fact, Nāṣir Khusraw (d. 481/1088), who visited the *dār al-bijra* of al-Aḥsāʾ, the Baḥrain Qarmaṭī State's capital, stated that a saddled horse was kept ready for al-Mahdī.<sup>45</sup> The Qarmaṭīs of ʿIrāq at the time must have believed that al-Mahdī would appear in Baḥrain because they emigrated to al-Aḥsāʾ with Abū Ṭāhir, the leader of the Baḥrain Qarmaṭīs, after his Baghdād siege of 316/928.<sup>46</sup> Significant to the Ismāʿīlī faith, unlike Khārījism, is that they didn't consider emigration to *dār al-bijra* as an indispensable condition of living an Islamic life. To the contrary, every adherent of the Ismāʿīlī faith was responsible for doing their utmost to establish more *dār al-bijras* in order to facilitate the coming of al-Mahdī.

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*Nibāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (ed. Muḥammad Jābir ʿAbd al-ʿĀl al-Ḥinī; Cairo: al-Maktaba al-ʿArabiyya, 1948), XXV, 228-229.

<sup>44</sup> Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis: Traditions of a Muslim Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 41-42; Heinz Halm, *Sbiʿism* (translated from German by Janet Watson; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 116.

<sup>45</sup> Abū Muʿīn Nāṣir-i Khusraw ibn Ḥārith al-Qubādiyānī, *Safarnāma-i Ḥakīm Nāṣir-i Khusraw: bi-inzīmām-i Rausbanāʾināma wa-Saʿādatnāma* (ed. Maḥmūd Ghanīzāda; Berlin: Kaviani Press, 1922), 125.

<sup>46</sup> Abū I-Ḥasan al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad al-Hamadānī, *Tatbīt dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* (ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān; Beirut: Dār al-ʿArabiyya, 1966), II, 381, 388.

*Dār al-bijras*, as places in which al-Mahdī could appear, became attractive places to the adherents of Ismā‘īliyya, and they began to immigrate to these lands. Administrators collected taxes and donations in the name of al-Mahdī, and in fact, all of the resident’s property was collected in the *dār al-bijra* in Baḥrain in preparation for the appearance of al-Mahdī. The adherents gave away their earnings, whereas the administration provided them with only their most essential needs. However, at the time of the crisis of the “Pseudo Mahdī,”<sup>47</sup> alongside the adherent’s fading hope of al-Mahdī’s immediate appearance, this practice was forcibly stopped. People’s hope that al-Mahdī would soon return gradually eroded, especially because al-Mahdī failed to appear at the expected time, and it quickly became clear that the person purported to be al-Mahdī was actually an impostor. When this anticipation dwindled, adherents generally ceased to give away their property in the name of al-Mahdī for use in the event of his appearance.<sup>48</sup>

One of the most important Ismā‘īlī *dār al-bijras* was founded in Baḥrain. When Abū Sa‘īd al-Jannābī (d. 300/912), who was reportedly sent to Baḥrain by Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ (d. 286/899) of ‘Irāq, started gaining considerable strength in the region, he decided to build a *dār al-bijra* where al-Mahdī would appear and where adherents of the sect could securely reside and practice their own jurisprudence and prepare for *jibād*. For this purpose, he founded al-

<sup>47</sup> The “Pseudo Mahdī” incident proved to be the most important event that preceded the downfall of the Baḥrain Qarmaṭī State. According to a narration, Abū Ṭāhir al-Jannābī, the leader of the Baḥrain Qarmaṭī State, installed Zakariyyā al-Iṣfahānī as head of the state, thinking that he was al-Mahdī they had long awaited. However, it soon turned out that he was not al-Mahdī, and he was put to death by Abū Ṭāhir. This event seriously shook the faith of the Baḥrain Qarmaṭīs in the leaders of the movement, and they eventually lost their power, never to regain it. Some researchers see the declaration of Zakariyyā al-Iṣfahānī to be al-Mahdī by Abū Ṭāhir as a scheme, but we think that this suggestion is not true; Abū Ṭāhir did indeed believe that Zakariyyā al-Iṣfahānī was al-Mahdī whose coming they had been craving to witness, and that is why Abū Ṭāhir installed Zakariyyā al-Iṣfahānī. But when Abū Ṭāhir realized that Zakariyyā al-Iṣfahānī was not al-Mahdī, he got rid of Zakariyyā al-Iṣfahānī. For proofs and sources for this view, see Avcu, *Karmatīler’in Doğuş ve Gelişim Süreci*, 222-228.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Tatbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, II, 381, 388-389. For more information on the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrain and al-Mahdī crisis, see Avcu, *Karmatīler’in Doğuş ve Gelişim Süreci*, 207-245.

Aḥsāʾ, two miles from Hajar, as an appropriate place. Unlike so many other *dār al-bijras*, it was not steep and rocky. However, the big deserts surrounding the area made the journey to it a very grueling one. Abū Saʿīd launched his project by building a strong fortress in al-Aḥsāʾ and also engaged in agriculture. He started dispatching small military expeditions to nearby places and gained booty, which were sent to al-Aḥsāʾ. He returned the portion of this booty taken from those who later joined him to them, but for those who did not, he returned only their wives and children under age of four. He isolated the children he took as booty from his own children, keeping them in another house and grouping them according to their talents. Some were trained in the military, some in the religious sciences and some in other occupations. These children absorbed the Ismāʿīlī mission and became the most important element of the Ismāʿīlī military. Al-Aḥsāʾ, on the other hand, became the center of the Baḥrain Qarmaṭī State, and their *dār al-bijra* was where al-Mahdī was expected to appear.<sup>49</sup>

Established almost concurrently with the *dār al-bijra* in ʿIrāq was another Ismāʿīlī *dār al-bijra* built in Yemen. The first aim of Maṣṣūr al-Yemen (d. 302/914) and ʿAlī ibn Faḍl (d. 303/915), who came as missionaries, was to build a *dār al-bijra* similar to those in other Ismāʿīlī territories. Arriving in Yemen in 268/881, Maṣṣūr and ʿAlī spread the Ismāʿīlī message in different regions. Beginning with his mission in ʿAden-Abyan and after gaining a powerful status in his mission, Maṣṣūr al-Yemen built his first *dār al-bijra* in a very steep place called ʿAbr Mahrem, situated at the foot of Mount Maswar. After building houses for people in this *dār al-bijra*, he had food and various items brought into the castle in amounts that would last for a long time. Upon the completion of this *dār al-bijra*, his followers migrated to the castle with their families. After gaining enough strength in this *dār al-bijra*, Maṣṣūr then went up Mount Maswar and built a second *dār al-bijra* in the castle on top of the mountain. He had all of the booty they obtained carried to the castle, making it a place of residence for the Ismāʿīlīs in the region.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nibāyat al-arab*, XXV, 235-238; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, VI, 55-57.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Risālat iftītāḥ al-daʿwa* (= *Risāla fī zuḥūr al-daʿwa al-ʿUbaydiyya al-Fāṭimiyya*) (ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī, Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1970), 46-47; Abū Muḥammad al-Yemenī, *ʿAqāʾid al-thalāth wa-sabʿin firqa* (ed.

After leaving Manşūr, ‘Alī ibn Faḍl travelled to the place called Jayshān, built a *dār al-bijra* on the Sarw Yāfi‘ Mountain and launched his mission from there.<sup>51</sup> As stated above, one of the most important functions of a *dār al-bijra* is that it is the place of al-Mahdī’s appearance. ‘Alī ibn Faḍl became the first Ismā‘īlī missionary who put this thought into practice; he proclaimed himself to be the Mahdī whose coming had long been awaited by the followers of the sect and who would declare the beginning of the day of judgment. He ‘appeared’ in his *dār al-bijra*, declared the day of judgment and abrogated the validity of the Islamic *sharī‘a*.<sup>52</sup>

One of the first *dār al-bijras* of the Ismā‘īlis was Ikdjan (Īkajān) in Africa. Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Shī‘ī, who had been sent there as a missionary, captured Ikdjan after gaining strength and built a *dār al-bijra* there. Abū ‘Abd Allāh and his Ismā‘īlī followers settled in this *dār al-bijra*, and it became the place where the foundations of the Fāṭimid State were laid.<sup>53</sup>

The term *dār al-bijra* gained a very central position in the primary Ismā‘īlī sources before the foundation of the Fāṭimid State but started losing its former importance after the Fāṭimids came to power, finally ending up as a symbolical term. This must be a result of the founder of the Fāṭimid State, ‘Ubayd Allāh (‘Abd Allāh)<sup>54</sup> al-Mahdī’s rejection

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Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ghāmīdī; Medina: Maktabat al-‘Ulūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 1993), II, 704; Idrīs ibn ‘Imād al-Dīn ibn Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Idrīsī, *Uyūn al-akbbār* (ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālīb; Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1986), V, 38-39.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Yemenī, ‘*Aqā‘id al-tbalāth wa-sab‘in firqa*, II, 704.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh al-‘Alawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq Yahyā ibn al-Ḥusayn* (ed. Suhayl Zakkār; n.p., 1972), 394; Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Yemenī, *Sīrat Ja‘far al-Hājib* (trans. Wladimir Ivanow) in Wladimir Ivanow (ed.), *Ismaili Tradition concerning the Rise of the Fatimids* (= *al-Muntakhab min ba‘d kutub al-Ismā‘īliyya*) (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1942), 198; al-Qādī al-Nu‘mān, *Risālat iftitāḥ al-da‘wa*, 150.

<sup>53</sup> See al-Qādī al-Nu‘mān, *Risālat iftitāḥ al-da‘wa*, 140, 246-247; Abū Zayd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada’ wa-l-kbabar fī ayyām al-‘Arab wa-l-‘Ajam wa-l-Barbar* (Bulaq: al-Maṭba‘a al-Miṣriyya, 1867), III, 362.

<sup>54</sup> The real name of the founder of the Fāṭimid State is ‘Abd Allāh. However, the opposing sources, under the influence of the Shī‘ī-Sunnī or Fāṭimid-Abbāsīd clash, changed his name to ‘Ubayd Allāh to lessen his prestige. Opposing authors begrudged him the name “‘Abd Allāh” meaning “Servant of Allah” and instead

of the belief that Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl would soon appear as al-Mahdī, his declaring of himself and his hereditary successors as imāms and his defense of the imāmate as an interminable institution.<sup>55</sup> In fact, the proclamation that imāmate was still a living institution through the family lineage of 'Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī delivered a severe blow to the belief that Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl would soon appear as al-Mahdī, a thought that had played a central role in the initial Ismā'īlī teachings. This also meant that *dār al-bijras*, where the long-awaited al-Mahdī was anticipated to appear, lost their significance in the Fāṭimid lands. On the other hand, the rapid rise of the Fāṭimids as a powerful state brought about the natural consequence that many non-Ismā'īlīs, even non-Muslims were living within the borders of the state. They took a step further and employed many non-Muslims in state positions, and some of these people eventually became favored aides of the caliph. For these reasons, the creed that only al-Mahdī and his companions could live in *dār al-bijras* lost its importance.

Consequently, the concept of *dār al-bijra* for the Ismā'īlīs was of cardinal importance during the phase of state building, but after the official foundation of a state, it lost its functionality and importance in the face of the social realities. Additionally, Qarmaṭī Ismā'īlīs, who failed to found a functioning state that could confront that of the Fāṭimids, adhered to their creed formed around *dār al-bijra* for a longer time, based on their expectation regarding al-Mahdī's arrival. Nonetheless, this concept lost its essential functionality in Qarmaṭī thought as well, particularly regarding the expectation of al-Mahdī's coming disappearing altogether. The group of the Ismā'īlīs who made this concept popular again, starting from the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> centuries, was al-Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ and his followers in Alamūt. They settled their followers in castles that they had either built or captured,

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used the *ism taṣgbīr* version of this name, 'Ubayd Allāh, which means "little servant of Allah" or "poor servant of Allah." This use by opposing authors gained widespread recognition, and in almost all opposing works, the name used was 'Ubayd Allāh instead of 'Abd Allāh because the works written and published by the Ismā'īlīs were in circulation in very limited number of places. In contemporary scientific works, his real name is sometimes used, but the more well-known 'Ubayd Allāh is still the most frequently used name.

<sup>55</sup> For the changes made in the Ismā'īlī teaching by 'Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī, see Avcu, *Karmatiler'in Doğuşu ve Gelişim Süreci*, 163-171.

and for a certain period of time, they abrogated Islamic *shari‘a* and, declaring the judgment day, actually perpetuated the fundamental meanings attached to the *dār al-bijra* concept within Ismā‘īlī terminology.

### Conclusion

Among the Islamic sects, the understanding of *dār al-bijra*, which has roots in the Prophet Muḥammad’s emigration from Mecca to Medina, was first developed by the Khārijīs. An extremist branch of the Khawārij, the Azāriqa, saw the emigration of their fellow sectarians living amongst opposing communities whom they did not considered Muslims, as mandatory by basing this belief on the Prophet Muḥammad’s emigration. They also based the obligatory nature of emigration on the likewise obligatory condition that a *dār al-bijra*, where only ‘Muslims’ live, must be established. In this land of emigration, only their fellow sectarians can live, and it is obligatory to wage war on those from opposing sects. For this reason, they concurred that the *qa‘ada*, who were fellow sectarians but did not emigrate, were unbelievers, maintaining that one could live as Muslim only in a *dār al-bijra*.

More moderate branches of the Khawārij, such as the Najadāt and the Ibāḍiyya, despite emphasizing that it is necessary to emigrate to a *dār al-bijra*, maintained that their fellow sectarians who lived in a *dār al-taqiyya* and did not emigrate to a *dār al-bijra* could not be declared unbelievers. The Ibāḍiyya branch also held that of all of the places in *dār al-taqiyya*, only the sultan’s headquarters is *dār al-baghy* (land of tyranny) and that everywhere else is *dār al-tawḥīd* (land of unity), thereby forbidding the killing of unarmed civilians, women and children, with the exception of the sultan’s soldiers.

The concept of *dār al-bijra*, as it was understood by the Ismā‘īlīs, could be said to be borrowed from the Khārijī belief that a *dār al-bijra* was a place where only fellow sectarians could live and where the first step toward establishing their beliefs and state was with the power of the sword. However, the Ismā‘īlīs have tried to legitimize their thought by basing their understanding of *dār al-bijra* on the Prophet’s emigration from Mecca to Medina. However, they developed a different understanding regarding this concept, originally derived from the Khārijī interpretation, with respect to their own teachings. First and foremost, they did not consider living in a *dār al-bijra* as the sole condition for being Muslim. A believer could

live as a Muslim outside of a *dār al-bijra*. However, the foundation of a *dār al-bijra*, where only their opponents could settle, was necessary to spread their sect's power, practice their religious beliefs and 'gird themselves with the sword' and fight.

The second important matter that separates the Ismā'īlī *dār al-bijras* from the Khārijī ones is that al-Mahdī, whose appearance was expected to take place in the near future, would only appear in one of the *dār al-bijras* established by their adherents. This situation forced the Ismā'īlīs to build a *dār al-bijra* in every region to which they sent a missionary. As a result of the founding and strengthening of the Fātimid State, the viability of the obligatory Ismā'īlī precept that *dār al-bijras* can house only their fellow sectarians came to an end, and with the erosion of the hope that al-Mahdī would soon appear, the centrality of the belief that it is indispensable to have *dār al-bijras* for the appearance of al-Mahdī dwindled over time.

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