

THE BARGHAWĀṬIAN MAHDĪ AND PROPHET: AN EVALUATION OF ŞĀLIḤ IBN ṬARĪF'S CLAIMS

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Abstract

Throughout the history of Islam, many people have emerged with the claim of being the Mahdī. One of the most remarkable of these claims is undoubtedly that of ŞāliḤ ibn Ṭarīf, a member of the Berber Barghawāṭah tribe, in the mid-eighth century. According to sources, ŞāliḤ ibn Ṭarīf became the leader of his tribe after the death of his father, declared himself both a prophet and a Mahdī in his time, and saw himself as a legitimate religious and earthly authority. Due to the scarcity of in-depth studies on Ibn Ṭarīf's claim in the literature, this paper introduces his character in general and discusses his claim of being the Mahdī in particular. Furthermore, his claims are evaluated using a literature review and an analytical method. In this manner, it is

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hoped that the paper contributes to the literature on Mahdism and North African studies.

Key Words: Şālih ibn Ṭarīf, Barghawāṭah, prophethood, Mahdī

Introduction

It is widely assumed that Mahdism, Messianism, and apocalyptic studies have recently piqued the scholarly community's interest. Studies on Mahdism in Islam have also received much attention in recent decades. Aside from that, particular research has focused on the far more complicated issue of historical Mahdī (the rightly guided: a messianic redeemer) claims in Islam. Numerous academic studies have mentioned the existence of many people who claimed to be the Mahdī, whether in the early periods of Islam or in our modern times. During the early periods of Islam, some people were attracted by the Mahdī movement's representatives, such as Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah (d. 81/700-1), who after his death was said to be the Mahdī, Ḥārith ibn Surayj (d. 128/746), who was one of the leaders of the revolt against the Umayyads in Khurāsān, or Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah (d. 145/762), who was descendant of Prophet Muḥammad and revolutionary leader against the 'Abbāsids in Medina. Throughout time, additional figures claimed to be the Mahdī, such as the Maghrebo Mahdī, 'Abd Allāh ibn Tūmart (d. 574/1130); the Sudanese Mahdī, Muḥammad Aḥmad (d. 1303/1885); the Indian Mahdī, Mīrzā Ghulām Aḥmad (d. 1908), and the Somalian Mahdī, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh Ḥassān (d. 1920). To summarize, almost in every period, people emerged with the claim of being the Mahdī. Even today, it is possible to see many people saying "I am the Mahdī" or "I am the Messiah" in different regions of the world. The paper draws attention to Şālih ibn Ṭarīf and his claim to be the Mahdī and prophet in the second/eighth century.

According to Muslim tradition, the Mahdī is the name of the religio-political leader who will appear at the end of time to bring justice to a world that is oppressed and filled with injustice. The term "Mahdī" literally refers to a person guided by God and whom God guides to the

right path.¹ It is used in the ḥadīth literature to refer to the savior who will come before the Day of Judgment (*yawm al-qiyāmah*), kill the Antichrist (*Dajjāl*) and rule with justice.² In addition, it was used for the Prophet Muḥammad, the first four Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafā' al-rāshidūn al-mabdiyyūn*), al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī, some of the Umayyad caliphs such as Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Malik (r. 715–717), 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (r. 717–720), some of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs, and Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad in the first period of Islam.³ In later periods, the concept of Mahdī acquired eschatological connotations in literature, indicating “a person, a ruler who will save the oppressed and the victims, make the religion of Allah dominate the earth and rule with justice, and believed to be sent and to establish a Muslim world empire at the end of days.”⁴ The paper attempts to evaluate whether it is possible to analyze Ibn Ṭarīf's claim of being the Mahdī within the aforementioned framework.

Barghawāṭah was a Berber confederation established and reigned by the Maṣmūdah tribe in the Tāmasnā region of Morocco's Atlantic coast from the second/eighth to the sixth/twelfth centuries.⁵ Before tackling the claims of Ibn Ṭarīf as a Barghawāṭian Mahdī, it will be useful to briefly outline the history of the Barghawāṭah Emirate. It should be noted that, rather than attempting to write the detailed history of this group, the purpose of the study is to focus on Ibn Ṭarīf's claim of being the Mahdī, who ruled his tribe for a while. Therefore, investigating Barghawāṭah's origins, beliefs, practices, interpretation,

¹ Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Manzūr al-Anṣārī al-Ifriqī, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1997), XV, 59.

² For Mahdī ḥadīths see 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām al-Saḥ'ānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A'zamī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1971–1972), 371–374; Abū 'Abd Allāh Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād al-Khuzā'ī al-Marwazī, *Kitāb al-Fitan*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1424/2003), 222f., 341–343; Jalāl al-Dīn Abū l-Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūfī, *al-Ḥāwī li-l-fatāwā* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2004), 69f.

³ Ignaz Goldziher, *al-'Aqīdab wa-l-sbarī'ab fī l-Islām*, trans. Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā et al. (Cairo: n.p., 1336/1946), 342; Aḥmad Amīn, *Ḍuḥā l-Islām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah, 1977), III, 236; id., *al-Mahdī wa-l-Mahdawīyyah* (Cairo: n.p., 1953), 39.

⁴ D. B. MacDonald, “Mehdi,” in *Islam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979), VII, 474; Abdulaziz Sachedina, “Mahdi,” in *Encyclopedia of Global Religion*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), II, 738.

⁵ Roger Le Tourneau, “Barghawāṭa,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), I, 1043.

significance, and current situation is beyond the scope of this study. The paper intends to concentrate here solely on the prophetic-cum-Mahdist claims of the self-proclaimed Mahdī, Ibn Ṭarīf, and hopes to reach a historical understanding of this group from a different perspective. Despite the highly fragmented nature of the extant sources, achieving such an understanding of Barghawāṭah would be a significant contribution to Islamic historiography, given how little has been written about the subject. In the context of Islamic references to al-Mahdī, the article aims to present a comprehensive examination of this topic.

In this article, the historical information was obtained through a literature review in both classical Arabic sources and academic studies in various languages regarding the Barghawāṭah dynasty and Ibn Ṭarīf's claims. The information presented with a descriptive method on the subject was tried to be analyzed and interpreted from different perspectives. Undoubtedly, there have been sociological, political, psychological, or religious reasons underlying research on every Mahdī claimant. Since there is no extensive information regarding the reasons for Ibn Ṭarīf's discourse in the early Islamic sources, it would be appropriate to make evaluations via a comparative and interpretive method.

Most of the information about the Barghawāṭah Emirate is based on Andalusian geographer al-Bakrī's (d. 487/1094)⁶ book *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*.⁷ The narratives about Barghawāṭah in other sources are

⁶ The Barghawāṭah's most significant narrative was written by al-Bakrī, and the literature that followed is mainly based on his work. Al-Bakrī, a man of broad knowledge, was a good poet and philologist who devoted much of his time to geography, despite the fact that he appears to have never traveled outside the Iberian Peninsula. See J. Vernet, "al-Bakrī, Abū 'Ubayd 'Abdallāh Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Muḥammad," in *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, ed. Charles C. Gillispie (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), I, 413–414; Provençal has described him as "the greatest geographer of the Muslim West, and one of the most characteristic representatives of Arab Andalusian erudition in the 5th/11th century." Evariste Lévi-Provençal, "Abū 'Ubayd Al-Bakrī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), I, 155.

⁷ Abū 'Ubayd 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz ibn Muḥammad al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. Adrian van Leeuwen and André Ferré (Tunis: al-Dār al-'Arabiyyah li-l-Kitāb, 1992), II, 819-828. In this work, al-Bakrī has covered every country he mentions in a wide way and he has given important information about the ethnic and religious structures of the countries, the customs and traditions of their peoples, their rulers, and the great events that took place in their history. It is seen that the part of this work of al-Bakrī including Maghrib and Africa was also

generally more or less parallel to al-Bakrī's narratives.⁸ Based on this, it is possible to say that al-Bakrī has given detailed information on Barghawāṭah. In fact, Ibn Ḥawqal's *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-ard*, famous work of geography has drawn as the earliest known source mentioning the Barghawāṭah. Ibn Ḥawqal (d. after 367/978)⁹ was an Arab traveler, chronicler, and geographer of the fourth/tenth century who described the Barghawāṭah as a Berber tribe living along the Atlantic coast outside Muslim rule. Since Ibn Ḥawqal lived before al-Bakrī and provided the earliest knowledge regarding the Barghawāṭah tribe, al-Bakrī might have obtained some information from him. The fact that Ibn Ḥawqal's work *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-ard* is also known as *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*¹⁰ and the existence of a work by al-Bakrī with the same

published under a different name. See Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī, *al-Mughrīb fī dbikr bilād Ifrīqiyyah wa-l-Maghrīb* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.). The information given by al-Bakrī about Barghawāṭah was translated into English in a work of Norris. See Harry Thirwall Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1982), 97-104; For detailed information about the book, see also Jean-Charles Ducene, "La Description Géographique de La Palestine Dans Le Kitāb Al-Masālik Wa-l-Mamālik D'abū 'Ubayd Al-Bakarī (m. 487/1094)," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 62, no.3 (2003), 181–191.

⁸ Adem Arıkan, "Ebū Ubeyd el-Bekrī'ye Göre Bergavâta," *Milel ve Nibal* 8 (2011), 106.

⁹ Abū l-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Naṣībī, known as Ibn Ḥawqal, was an Arab geographer and cartographer who sought to provide up-to-date representations of the Muslim provinces from the information he collected during his travels throughout the Muslim world. The journeys of Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥawqal, who might have been a merchant, took him to North Africa, Spain, and the southern edge of the Sahara (947-51), Egypt, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (c. 955), the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Khuzistān, and Iran (961-69), Khwārazm and Transoxania (c. 969), and Sicily (973). By about 988 CE the final version of Ibn Ḥawqal's *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-ard* was ready. See Jean-Charles Ducène, "Ibn Ḥawqal," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, edited by Kate Fleet et al. Consulted online on 25 December 2022; C. V. Arendonk, "İbn Havkal," in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, n.d.), V/2, 747.

¹⁰ Ramazan Şeşen, "İbn Havkal," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, XX, 34; Another source provides the following information: "There are three versions of his geographical work. The first is held in manuscripts in Leiden (Ar. 314) and Oxford (Bodl. 963) under the title *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik* ("Roads and kingdoms"). This version was published by de Goeje in 1873 and contains no maps. It also exists in a Moroccan manuscript from the end of the nineteenth century (Rabat, 'Allāl al-Fāsī Institute 608). An Istanbul manuscript (Topkapı Palace 3346, dated 479/1086), discovered after de Goeje's edition, revealed the existence of a second version, titled *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-ard* ("Book of the configuration of the land"), written between 367/978 and 378/988 and dedicated to Abū l-Sarī al-Ḥasan ibn al-Faḍl al-Iṣfahānī, whose name appears in no other source. This manuscript

name (*al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*) strengthens this possibility. It is reported that Ibn Ḥawqal's work is notable as a source for many later geographers and historians, such as al-Idrīsī (d. 549/1154) in Sicily, and Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), Ibn al-ʿAdīm (d. 660/1262), Ibn Manzūr (d. 711/1311-2), Abū l-Fidāʿ (d. 732/1331), al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), and al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418) in the Middle East.¹¹ The study refers to Ibn Ḥawqal's *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, al-Bakrī's book, and contemporary books, such as *al-Anīs al-muṭrib* written by al-Fāsi (d. 741/1340), *al-Istiḡṣā* written by al-Nāṣirī (d. 1315/1897) and *The Berbers in Arabic literature* written by Norris.

1. Barghawāṭah Emirate (125-451/743-1059)

Throughout Islamic history, many sects have appeared as a result of differences in perspectives shaped and influenced by political, religious, cultural, economic, and other factors. In North Africa, conquered by Muslims in the first century of Islam, different opinions, political movements, and linguistic understandings arose among Muslims. Due to these differences, many dynasties or movements, such as Almohads, Almoravids, Idrīsids, and Fāṭimids, have been established since the early eighth century.¹² One of these is the Barghawāṭah Emirate, which appeared at the beginning of the second/eighth century. Even though North Africa appeared to be an Islamic colony, the Barghawāṭah tribe, a branch of the Berbers, did not fully identify themselves with Islam until the establishment of their dynasty, providing them with power. Several attempts were made to create their own belief by modifying the orthodox Islamic model of the Barghawāṭah people.

Hence, Barghawāṭah can be described as a heterodox movement that emerged in the early the second/eighth century at Tāmasnā, near Rabāṭ in the province of al-Maghrib al-aqṣā, by the Atlantic Ocean

contains twenty-one maps. Finally, there is an epitome of his work in manuscripts in Paris (BNF 2214) and Istanbul (Topkapı Palace 3347 and Ayasofya 2934)."

¹¹ Ducène, "Ibn Ḥawqal."

¹² Adnan Adıgüzel, "Bergavāta: Mağrib'te Heterodoks Bir Berberî Fırkası," *Dicle Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 12, no.1 (2010), 3. For detailed information, see Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 26-102.

coast.¹³ The most interesting feature of this movement, founded by Ṭarīf, is its attempt to change the religious practices of Islam, aiming to have its own holy book and prophet. The Barghawāṭah Dynasty, which arose during the reign of Hishām ibn Marwān (d. 125/743), refers to a community that adhered to a heterodox belief system founded by one of its members, Ṭarīf ibn Mālik, who came from a place called Barbāṭ (Barbate in Spanish) in Andalusia, connected to Sezune. He studied science in the East, specialized in magic, came to Maghrib, and settled in Tāmasnā, where he spread his belief. It is also claimed that he belonged to the Banū Maʿāfir or al-Nakhaʿ tribe, one of the Qaḥṭānīs from Yemen.¹⁴ However, there is some disagreement about his race. While some sources claim that Ṭarīf ibn Mālik was a Berber,¹⁵ others claim that he was an Arab.¹⁶ According to a narration related to the origins of Ṭarīf, he was a Jewish “son of Simeon, son of Jacob, son of Isaac.”¹⁷ Wenceslao Segura González also points out in an article that Ṭarīf was of Jewish origins since, according to the former, numerous ancient writers affirmed the Jewish origins of Ṭarīf. This is not surprising given that the Jewish population in the region known now as Morocco had significantly grown in the first century. It is not clear, however, whether they were descendants of the first Jews who arrived in the Maghreb or were Berbers who had adopted Judaism. It should be noted that there were also numerous Christian Berbers at the time of the arrival of the Arabs who lived near the coast, which the Byzantines then dominated.¹⁸

¹³ G. Deverdun, “Barghawāṭa,” in *Encyclopédie Berbère* (La Calade, France: Edisut, 1991), IX, 1360-1361.

¹⁴ Maḥmūd Shīḥ Khaṭṭāb, *Qādat faṭḥ al-Andalus* (Damascus: Dār Manār li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 2003), I, 417; Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2018), 418.

¹⁵ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Maqarrī al-Tilimsānī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb wa-dḥikr wazīribā Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Kbaṭīb*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1988), I, 229.

¹⁶ Ḥusayn Muʿnis, *Fajr al-Andalus: dirāsah fī tārikḥ al-Andalus min al-faṭḥ al-Islāmī ilā qiyām al-dawlah al-Umawīyyah (711-756 M)* (Cairo: Dār al-Rashād, 2008), 65-66.

¹⁷ Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*, 97.

¹⁸ Wenceslao Segura González, “Tarif ibn Mallik,” *Al Qantir: monografías y documentos sobre la historia de Tarifa* 11 (2011), 45.

Zammūr¹⁹ attributes the origins of the Barghawāṭah Emirate not to Ṣāliḥ or his son Yūnus but to Ṣāliḥ's father, Ṭarīf. Ṭarīf was freed from the North African Governor Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr during the reign of the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 86-96/705-715) in some of the conquests in the Maghrib region, and his success attracted the attention of his master. Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr was convinced that the conditions were suitable for the conquest of Andalus and sent Ṭarīf to the conquest in 91/710 upon getting permission from Caliph al-Walīd.²⁰ Ṭarīf played a vital role in the Berber revolts and took refuge in the city of Rabāṭ during the revolts that continued until the fall of the Umayyads. After these events, the Berbers made Ṭarīf their leader. Ṭarīf, according to Zammūr, was a companion of Maysarah al-Ḥaqīr, who led a Khārijite Berber revolt in Tangiers in 123-24/740-41. When Maysarah was killed, and his companions scattered, Ṭarīf settled in the district of Tāmasnā. At that time, he was a king of the Berber tribes of Zanātah and the Zuwāghah. The Berbers made him their ruler, and he governed them.²¹ It is accepted that Ṭarīf ibn Mālik died in 124/742, and his son Ṣāliḥ rose to power as his successor.²²

After gaining power, Ṣāliḥ invited people to his faith and battled those who opposed him. He saw himself as the Mahdī who appeared at the end times to eradicate oppression from the face of the earth and fight the Dajjāl. He also claimed prophethood (*nubuwwah*) in 125/743 during the reign of Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (r. 106-125/724-743).²³ It would not be wrong to argue that the creed of the Barghawāṭah sect consisted of a belief system and liturgical practices based on the claims and teachings of Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf. In the

¹⁹ Abū Ṣāliḥ Zammūr ibn Mūsā ibn Hishām al-Barghawāṭī, Ṣāhib Ṣalātiḥim, was “the venerable leader in prayer” of the Barghawāṭah. Al-Bakrī's account was based a report by Zammūr on the Barghawāṭah. In fact, it is seen that al-Bakrī makes frequent references to Zammūr in his work. See Roman Loimeier, *Muslim Societies in Africa: A Historical Anthropology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 42.

²⁰ Khaṭṭāb, *Qādat fatḥ al-Andalus*, I, 112; İsmail Hakkı Atçeken, “Ṭarīf b. Mālik,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, XL, 29.

²¹ Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, II, 819.

²² Atçeken, “Ṭarīf b. Mālik,” 29.

²³ Abū l-Ḥassān ʿAlī ibn Abī Dharr al-Fāsī, *al-Anīs al-muṭrib bi-rawḍ al-qirtās fī akbbār mulūk al-Maghrib wa-tāriḫ madīnat Fās* (Rabat: Dār al-Manṣūr, 1972), 130; Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Khālid al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiḫṣā li-akbbār duwal al-Maghrib al-aqṣā*, ed. Jaʿfar al-Nāṣirī (al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ, Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb, 1954-1956), II, 16.

Barghawāṭah sect, the prophethood of their leader was affirmed as the last prophet while accepting the prophethood of the Abrahamic figures that preceded him.²⁴ It is recorded that he conveyed a new Qurʾān, a Berber Qurʾān, consisting of eighty sūrahs to be read in prayers as opposed to the 114 sūrahs of the Muslims' Qurʾān.²⁵ Ṣāliḥ also claimed that he was the “Ṣāliḥ al-muʾminīn” (righteous among the faithful)²⁶ mentioned in the Qurʾān, and he changed some of the liturgical practices in Islam and conveyed new religious laws.²⁷

Some of the laws allegedly conveyed by him can be summarized as follows: He increased the frequency of prayers to ten times, five in the daytime and five in the night; he claimed that fasting should be observed in the month of Rajab instead of Ramaḏān; that the annual ritual-sacrifice of ʿīd al-aḏḥā should be performed on the 21st of Muḥarram instead of Dhū l-ḥijjah; that it is necessary to wash the navel and legs while performing ablution; that some of the prayers should be performed without prostration but with a particular gesture, and that three to five prostrations should be performed only in the last *rakʿab*.²⁸ In other words, Ṣāliḥ tried to modify Islamic rituals, including prayer, fasting, dietary rules, and ʿīd days, and also to enforce his innovative religious principles strictly. It has been argued that such alterations were probably made to adapt to local customs and that the Muslim religious principles were preserved on the whole, or the

²⁴ Rene Basset, “Bergavata,” in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: MEB Yayınları, 1997), II, 539.

²⁵ To cite the names of some of these sūrahs, which he usually gives the names of prophets: Sūrat Ādam, Sūrat Nūḥ, Sūrat Mūsá, Sūrat Hārūn, Sūrat Firʿawn, Sūrat Ayyūb, Sūrat al-Jamal, Sūrat Hārūt and Mārūt, Sūrat Qārūn, Sūrat Iblīs... See al-Fāsi, *al-Anīs al-muṭrib*, 131; al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiḡṣā*, I, 172.

²⁶ Q 66:4: “If the two of you turn in repentance to Allah (that is better for you), for the hearts of both of you have swerved from the straight path. But if you support one another against the Prophet, then surely Allah is his Protector; and after that Gabriel and all righteous believers (ṣāliḥ al-muʾminīn) and the angels are all his supporters.”

²⁷ Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiḡṣā*, I, 172.

²⁸ Abū l-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥawqal al-Nāṣibī, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1996), 82-83; al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, II, 819-828; Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿIdhārī al-Manrākushī, *Bayān al-Muḡrib fī ākbbār mulūk al-Andalus wa-l-Maḡrib*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf and Maḥmūd ibn ʿAwwād (Tunis: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2013), I, 87-88; al-Fāsi, *al-Anīs al-muṭrib*, 130-133; al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiḡṣā*, I, 171; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm li-l-Malāyīn, 2002), III, 192.

changes were slight.²⁹ The latter claim, however, cannot be accepted as valid since the alterations included changing essential core beliefs of Islam, such as those related to the Qurʾān and prophethood, daily prayers, and other practices. Claiming to be a new prophet who is the recipient of a newly revealed Qurʾān is an apparent contradiction of indisputable fact of religion (*al-maʿlūm min al-dīn bi-l-ḍarūrah*). Hence, it necessarily means that the claimant has left the religion of Islam and committed apostasy.

Without going into detail about the strange religion that Ṭarīf's son established and the decades-long process of consolidation, it can only say that the Barghawāṭah and their religion had enough strength to survive independently for three centuries. Attempts by neighboring kingdoms, and even by the Andalusians, to destroy the Barghawāṭah Emirate were futile. Even the frightening Almoravids were defeated by Ṭarīf's descendants. The kingdom established by Ṭarīf ibn Mālīk in the middle of the eighth century lasted until the arrival of the Almohads in the middle of the twelfth century.³⁰ The Barghawāṭah isolated themselves through their heretical religious system until the Almoravids wiped them out in the middle of the twelfth century.³¹ González claims that some documents demonstrate that Ṭarīf ibn Mālīk started enforcing his new religious regulations on his subjects soon after assuming the throne of his new kingdom, even if he did not intend to found a new religion. He passed only a few years after founding the kingdom of Ṭarīf, and his son Ṣāliḥ succeeded him. Ṣāliḥ carried on the beliefs that his father had started to propagate and even founded a new religion.³² From this perspective, it should be pointed out that although the Berbers (mainly Moroccan tribes) appear to have designated Ṭarīf ibn Mālīk as their leader, his son Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf must be recognized as the spiritual founder and creator of the Barghawāṭah religion. After explaining Ṣāliḥ's claim to prophethood and his attempts to form a new religion by changing *sharīʿah* (Islamic law), the paper will focus on the effects of his claim of being the Mahdī on society.

²⁹ Gustave Edmund von Grunebaum, *Classical Islam: A History, 600 A.D. to 1258 A.D.*, trans. Katherine Watson (New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction Publishers, 2005), 118.

³⁰ González, "Tarif ibn Mallik," 55.

³¹ Hsain Ilahiane, *Historical Dictionary of the Berbers (Imazighen)* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 24.

³² González, "Tarif ibn Mallik," 55.

2. Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf and His Claim of Being the Mahdī

Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf al-Barghawāṭī was born in 110/728-29 and probably became the head of the state in 127/745.³³ He consolidated his rule in North Africa, which lasted forty-seven years until 174/793.³⁴ He proclaimed himself Mahdī and compiled an eighty-sūrah Qurʾān in Berber, thus launching a formidable heresy destined to plague Moroccan affairs for four centuries.³⁵ As a Mahdī, he distinguished himself from others regarding his knowledge and virtue and preached a new doctrine to his followers. In some sources, it is mentioned that Ṣāliḥ's fame was built, above all, on the basis of his virtue and asceticism.³⁶ It is rumored that his name was Ṣāliḥ in Arabic (which means righteous), "Mālik" in Syriac (which means possessor and lord), "Ālim" in Persian (which means a scholar and knowledgeable), "Warbiya" in Hebrew (which means rabbi) and "Wuryawirā" in Berber (which means "he after whom there is nothing").³⁷

Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf al-Barghawāṭī was a refugee who fled from Andalus to Morocco. It is believed that he has a Jewish origin.³⁸ In *Kitāb al-Istibṣār fī 'ajā'ib al-amṣār*, a historical geography work belonging to the sixth/twelfth century, Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf is reported as being Jewish, a claim that was not made in earlier writings (his Jewish genealogy through the line of Simeon was mentioned). According to the aforementioned author, who appears to have lived in the mid-twelfth century, Ṣāliḥ traveled to the East and learned a great deal of magic.³⁹

³³ Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *al-Bayān*, I, 87-88; Walī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn al-musammā Kitāb al-Ṭabar wa-dīwān al-mubtada'* wa-l-khabar fī tārīkh al-ʿArab wa-l-Barbar wa-man 'āṣarabum min dhawī l-sultān al-akbar wa-huwa tārīkh waḥīd 'aṣrib, ed. Khalīl Shihādah (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1408/1988), VI, 276.

³⁴ Al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, III, 192.

³⁵ Michael Peyron, *The Berbers of Morocco: A History of Resistance* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2021), 16.

³⁶ Mercedes García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform: Mahdis of the Muslim West*, trans. Martin Beagles (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 55.

³⁷ Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, II, 820; Ibn Khaldūn *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, VI, 276-277.

³⁸ Abūlqāsim Rafīq Dilāvarī, *Ā'imma-yi talbīs* (Lahore: Maktabah-yi Ta'mir-i Insāniyat, 1975), 190.

³⁹ In addition to he offers some crucial details regarding Ṣāliḥ that are absent from previous authors' accounts: "Ṣāliḥ altered a Prophetic statement. He explained the Prophet's words. May God grant him peace. 'No prophet shall come after me (*lā nabīyya ba'dī*), by making it *nabī* and he said 'My name is No and I am a prophet

From this standpoint, it seems plausible that his religious background, education, and the environment in which he grew up influenced his inclination to esoteric beliefs. These circumstances led to his self-declaration as a prophet and a Mahdī, as well as his modification of some religious practices and beliefs in Islam. Yet what caught the attention is that the studied sources tended to emphasize the prophetic aspect of his claims (which is reasonable given that he propagated new shari‘ah and produced a new scripture) rather than his character as the Mahdī. Information on his claims of being the Mahdī, on the other hand, seems to be lacking and limited in historical sources.

Ibn Ḥawqal referred to Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf as Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Abd Allāh, and he is the only person to have used this lineage (*nasab*) considering the resources at hand. According to Ibn Ḥawqal, Ṣāliḥ was of Berber descent and fluent in both their language and others. Ibn Ḥawqal also reports that Ṣāliḥ was literate, had an excellent calligraphic hand and extensive information in many fields, and was foresightful in his predictions.⁴⁰ Ibn Ḥawqal depicts the religion’s reputed founder as knowing the esoteric and exoteric sciences, which he used to take advantage of the Barghawāṭah and deceive their minds⁴¹ by claiming prophethood. Although Ibn Ḥawqal refers to Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf’s prophethood claims, it is clear that he does not mention Ṣāliḥ’s claim regarding the Mahdī. Unfortunately, no information about the reason for this could be found in the sources.

Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf has been accepted by Barghawāṭah culture as the Mahdī, behind whom Jesus will pray, and the person to whom the Berber Qur’ān was secretly revealed.⁴² Barghawāṭah is also mentioned by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), the famous Andalusian scholar, in his *al-Faṣl*, which is one of the classical sources on the history of Islamic sects. Ibn Ḥazm records that they are waiting for the return of Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf, who propagated a new religion to the people of Barghawāṭah in

after him [Muḥammad] (*qāla: ismī lā wa-ana nabiyy^{um} ba‘dabū*)” See Anonymous author, *Kitāb al-Istibṣār fī ‘ajā‘ib al-amṣār: Waṣf Makkah wa-l-Madinah wa-Miṣr wa-bilād al-Maghib li-Kātib Marrākushi min al-qarn al-sādis al-bijrī*, ed. Sa‘d Zaghlūl ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (Dār al-Bayḍā’: Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribiyyah, 1985), 198; John Iskander, “Devout Heretics: The Barghawata in Maghribi Historiography,” *The Journal of North African Studies* 12, no.1 (2007), 45.

⁴⁰ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 82-83.

⁴¹ Iskander, “Devout Heretics,” 41.

⁴² Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*, 69.

his own time.⁴³ In his work, it is noticed that Ibn Ḥazm's description of the anticipation of Barghawāṭah's people for the return of Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf at the end of times is implicitly indicative of the Mahdī-status ascribed to Ṣāliḥ by his followers, as it resembles the characteristics of the "Occulted Mahdī" awaited by numerous other sects. However, it is noteworthy that Ibn Ḥazm has not directly used the term Mahdī for Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf in his work.

Before Ṣāliḥ traveled to the East, he confided his doctrines to his son Ilyās. He taught him its laws and made him knowledgeable in his religion. He told him not to disclose it until he secured his position.⁴⁴ Then, after ruling the people of Barghawāṭah for forty-seven years, Ṣāliḥ went east in the year 147 AH.⁴⁵ It is said that he promised to come back in the reign of the seventh of their rulers as being The Greater Mahdī (*al-Mahdī l-akbar*) who would fight the Antichrist (*al-Dajjāl*) and fill the earth with justice as it is now filled with injustice and oppression. He alleged that ʿĪsā (Jesus), Mary's son, would be one of his companions, prayed behind him and that he would fill the earth with an amount of justice equivalent to the injustice which prevailed upon it then. He attributed the source of his statements to Prophet Moses, the one who spoke to God (*kalīm Allāb*), to Ṣāliḥ the prophet, and Ibn ʿAbbās.⁴⁶ Ilyās succeeded to the throne after the departure of his father and professed the religion of Islam outwardly. He preferred to conceal the knowledge entrusted to him by his father to protect his beliefs.⁴⁷

After Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf went to the East and commanded his sons to follow his religion, his heresy continued to live amongst the people of Barghawāṭah until the middle of the fifth century.⁴⁸ His son Ilyās ibn Ṣāliḥ (792-842) and then his grandson Yūnus ibn Ilyās (227–271/842–884) succeeded him as kings. It must be stated, nevertheless, that there was no significant information about Ṣāliḥ from the sources after that. Yet, it is known that Ṣāliḥ's enormous fame was particularly abused by

⁴³ Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb al-Faṣl fī l-mīlāl wa-l-abwāʾ wa-l-niḥāl*, ed. M. Ibrāhīm Naṣr and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUmayrah (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1416/1996), V, 38.

⁴⁴ Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*, 98.

⁴⁵ Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiḳṣā*, I, 172.

⁴⁶ Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, II, 820; Anonymous, *Kitāb al-Istiḳṣār fī ʿajāʾib al-amṣār*, 198.

⁴⁷ Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*, 98.

⁴⁸ Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiḳṣā*, I, 172.

his grandson Yūnus, who claimed to be a prophet himself.⁴⁹ He also traveled to the East like his grandfather Şāliḥ, where he studied astrology and other sciences and reached a significant level of understanding in arts and sciences.⁵⁰ Some people believe that his grandson, Yūnus Ibn Ilyās, may have been the driving force behind the proclamation of Ibn Ṭarīf as the Mahdī of the Berbers and the composer of the new Qurʾān – whose actual text has not survived.⁵¹ In the Barghawāṭah, it was even believed that the prophetic ability of Banū Ṭarīf was an inherited trait that was carried down to their descendants through their lineage.⁵² Despite this, it should be remembered that the history and biographies of the post-Şāliḥ leaders of Barghawāṭah Emirate fall outside the scope of this study. Only the following sentences quoted by al-Bakrī are significant; Zammūr related that ʿĪsā’s father, ʿAbd Allāh Abū l-Anṣār, had said to him, “My little son, you are the seventh prince from the people of your household. I hope that Şāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf will come to you as he promised.”⁵³

3. The Reasons for Şāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf’s Claim of Being Mahdī

An expectation of the savior is an essential belief in Islam and pre-Islamic religions and cultures. It is understood that the claims of Mahdism in the first period mainly emerged for political reasons. Mahdī rhetoric was developed by some people who wanted to take over political power, that is, become the caliph, or by those who rebelled against the oppressive practices of the Umayyad leaders. Cook has referred to two types of Mahdīs. The first is the idealized figure described in the ḥadīths and apocalyptic traditions, and the second is the political and historical figure, often the leader of a revolutionary group or sect.⁵⁴ Sometimes, although they did not claim

⁴⁹ Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Kinānī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-Mizān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʿir al-Islāmiyyah, 2002), IV, 289.

⁵⁰ Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*, 94; García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*, 55.

⁵¹ Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, *The Berber Identity Movement and the Challenge to North African* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 26.

⁵² Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, II, 820-21; García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*, 55.

⁵³ Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, II, 822.

⁵⁴ David Cook, “Mahdi,” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Bowering (Princeton: Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), 322.

it themselves, some people were called Mahdī regarding their enforcement of justice and equality among the people during their leadership. In contrast, some people, who are believed by some groups that they did not die but will come again to provide justice on earth in the end Times, have also become Mahdīs. It seems possible to evaluate Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf's discourse of being the Mahdī in an eschatological context since the emphasis on providing justice and fighting the Dajjāl in his Mahdī statement is in line to a great extent with the narrations in the ḥadīth texts. Probably, he aimed to gather the people of Barghawāṭah around him by claiming to be the Mahdī, basing those claims on the narrations in some ḥadīth collections circulated during his lifetime.

On the other hand, he might have developed such a discourse to attain political interests, as seen in some rebel movements during the Umayyad period like al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj. Comparing similar examples in history makes it undeniably clear that political aims were mainly pursued in rebellion movements based on Mahdist or messianic claims. Regarding political perspective, it could be assumed that Ṣāliḥ's motivation was to establish the independence of Barghawāṭah from the Umayyads through an independent ideology that gave legitimacy to the Barghawāṭan state. The Barghawāṭah people, a branch of Berbers, may also have seen him as a Mahdī in the sense of the savior-hero regarding his resistance against the Arab Umayyad power and his devotion to establishing an ethnic Barghawāṭan principality.

Another noteworthy point is Ṣāliḥ's declaration that he would return as the Mahdī during the reign of the seventh king. The number seven brings to mind some of the hadīths that associate temporal significance with the number of the figure of the Mahdī.⁵⁵ Therefore, Ṣāliḥ's choice of number seven should not be disregarded since it might indicate that he could have been familiar with the said ḥadīths on the Mahdī. This viewpoint could also be supported by the following: as stated in the studied sources, Ṣāliḥ claimed that he would travel to the East and remain there until it was time for him to return as the Mahdī. However, nothing is known about the exact location in the East where he supposedly spent his period of occultations. This reminds us of the following narration associated with the Mahdī: "Three persons of my

⁵⁵ Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Bayyī? Muḥammad al-Hākīm al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak 'alā l-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1990), IV, 457-458.

ummah would fight with one another near your treasure. Every one of them would be a caliph's son. Then, it would not be rendered to anyone of them. After that, the black banners would appear from the East, and they would kill you at such a large scale as no people killed you. [Then he mentioned something which I could not preserve (in memory). He said:] When you see them, then pledge your allegiance to them even if you have to crawl over the snow, for that is the vicegerent of Allah, Mahdī (*khalīfat Allāb al-mahdī*)⁵⁶ Thus, according to this narration, the black banners –which will signal the advent of Allah's guided caliph, al-Mahdī– will come from the East. In this respect, when the mentioned hadīth is considered, Šāliḥ's declaration that he would go to the East and return as the *al-Mahdī al-akbar* (the Greatest Mahdī) seems to be a deliberate attempt to validate his claims of being the Mahdī. Nevertheless, the title of *al-Mahdī al-akbar* remains abstruse and incomprehensible since it is pretty rare to see the mention of *al-Mahdī al-asghar* (Lesser Mahdī) in any of the traditional apocalyptic texts. A possible explanation is that Šāliḥ may have replaced the phrase *khalīfat Allāb al-Mahdī* in the above hadīth with *al-Mahdī al-akbar*. If that is true, then it is certain that Šāliḥ was indeed well-versed in ḥadīth narrations and subsequently employed them to strengthen his political interests.

The Jewish origins of his father, Ṭarīf ibn Mālik, can be considered as an additional reason for Šāliḥ's claims. Although there are some opinions that the origin of Šāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf is parallel to this,⁵⁷ Ibn Khaldūn records the following in his work: "Some people cite him as a descendant of Barghawāṭah, some consider him among the Zanātah tribes, and others say he was a Jew from the sons of Simeon ben Yacoub, who grew up in Rabat and traveled to the East."⁵⁸ Due to his Jewish origins, the possibility that he was influenced by the doctrine of the Messiah, the redemptive faith of Judaism, naturally comes to mind. The idea of the Messiah, which is at the center of the development of Judaism, refers to a charismatic leader in Jewish theology who will be a God-sent descendant of King David who will save the Jews, end the

⁵⁶ Ibn Mājah, *al-Sunan*, "Fitan" (Tribulations), 34 (No. 4084).

⁵⁷ Anonymous, *Kitāb al-Istibṣār fī 'ajā'ib al-amṣār*, 197.

⁵⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, VI, 280.

exile, bring peace and prosperity, and establish God's kingdom.⁵⁹ This belief in the future mission of the Messiah has always been a consolidative factor for the Jews who tried to keep this redemptive hope alive.⁶⁰ Considering this fact that several messiahs have appeared in Jewish history, such as Simon bar Kokhba (d. 135), around whom the Messianic hopes of the nation were centered, and Abū 'Īsā al-İṣfahānī who proclaimed himself to be a prophet and forerunner of the Messiah.⁶¹ Given these facts, it may be assumed that Şālih ibn Ṭarīf, who declared himself to be the Mahdī and prophet, was inspired by some such claimants before him. On the other hand, John Iskander quotes a passage from an anonymous study: "It is a topos of Muslim heresiographic literature that Jews or Jewish converts to Islam lead people astray through strange beliefs and esoteric knowledge."⁶² These statements also support our hypothesis that Jewish ideas influenced Şālih's making of some un-Islamic claims such as prophethood, a new Qur'ān, a new sharī'ah, and Mahdism.

The only conspicuous evidence in some of the studied texts that could indicate Şālih's role as a Mahdī is the placement of the title The Riser (*al-Qā'im*) after his name.⁶³ The connection of this title to the figure of Mahdī is quite significant among some sects of Islam. In Twelver Shiism, for instance, the anticipation for the return of the occulted *al-Mahdī al-muntazar*, who is often referred to as *al-Qā'im*, is a core doctrine of Shī'ī faith. The same term, *al-Qā'im*, is also significant in Ismā'īlī Shī'ī literature and is used to refer to the Mahdī as well. Probably because of that, it is stated that Şālih appears as possessing the character of a Shī'ī-cum-Ismā'īlī-type Imām,⁶⁴

⁵⁹ S. Schechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909), 102; Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Messianism and Apocalypticism in Rabbinic Texts," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1053.

⁶⁰ Wilson D. Wallis, *Messiahs: Christian and Pagan* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1886), 79.

⁶¹ Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 328. For some Messianic claims see Wallis, *Messiahs*, 15-89.

⁶² Iskander, "Devout Heretics," 45.

⁶³ Al-Fāsī, *al-Anīs al-muṭrib*, 130.

⁶⁴ The topic of Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī Imām and Mahdī is far too extensive to be discussed here. See for more information Farhad Daftary, "Hidden Imams and Mahdis in Ismaili History," in *Ismaili and Fatimid Studies in Honor of Paul E. Walker*, ed. Bruce D. Craig (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2010), 1-22.

accompanied with signs proving his proximity to the Prophet, and which were highly charged with apparent eschatological significance.⁶⁵

The concept of occultation (*ghaybah*) reveals itself in the claims of Şālih. The fact that he claimed to go to the East before his return reminds us of the Mahdī's occultation as the "hidden imām" in the various branches of Shiism. As previously stated, this is a fundamental and widely accepted doctrine in Shiism, and the ongoing hope for the Mahdī's return is a crucial component of the Shī'ī interpretation. The following statement by one of the last leaders of Barghawāṭah to his heir demonstrates that they believed that Şālih's was their occulted Mahdī whom they continued to hope for his return: "I hope that Şālih ibn Ṭarīf will come to you as he promised."⁶⁶ This is further supported by Ibn Ḥazm, who described the people of Barghawāṭah as a community expecting Şālih's return. This is a crucial point in terms of Şālih's emphasis on his Mahdism and his eschatological stance.

Additionally, Şālih's request to perform the doctrine of concealment (*taqiyyah*) before traveling to the east demonstrates that he was aware of *taqiyyah* doctrine in Shī'ī interpretation. This view is supported by Roger Le Tourneau, who wrote that Şālih may have been influenced by the Shī'ī Mahdī thought: "...the fact that Şālih promised that he would return when the seventh chief of the Barghawāṭah had assumed power and declared that he was the Mahdī who would fight against the Antichrist (al-Dajjāl) at the coming of the end of the world with the help of Jesus, can be considered a sign of Shī'ī influence."⁶⁷ Similarly, Abdallah Laroui claims that Şālih's prophethood was based on remains of an earlier form of Christianity, but it was a branch of Shī'ī doctrine.⁶⁸

In addition to these hypotheses and interpretations, the socio-cultural and geographical situation of Şālih's tribe, Barghawāṭah, may have also been influential in his claims about the Mahdī and prophethood. It should be remembered that many Berber communities existed in southern and central Morocco, including the Barghawāṭah peoples of Tāmasnā on the country's Atlantic coast.

⁶⁵ García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*, 55.

⁶⁶ Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, II, 822.

⁶⁷ Le Tourneau, "Barghawāṭa," 1044.

⁶⁸ Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 108.

There were several different types of Berber people, including pastoralists, farmers, and nomads who herded camels. Maṣmūdah, Ṣanhājah, and Zanātah were some of the names used to refer to the Berbers.⁶⁹ Presumably, these communities preferred independence rather than living under the rule of any empire, and as a result, they established minor independent dynasties depending on various rebellion movements. The Barghawāṭah people also existed as an independent community in this geography for many years. It should be considered a natural situation for them to gather around their leaders, who brought new religious principles and emerged with the claim of being a prophet and Mahdī. Muḥammad ʿInān points out that due to the ignorance and nomadic nature of the Barghawāṭah people, Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf's claims of being the Mahdī and prophet were accepted by them.⁷⁰ It should be noted that this is a different point of view regarding the reasons for Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf's claims to be the Mahdī or a prophet. As a result, it can be said that Ṭarīf's claims are influenced by various factors.

Conclusion

It has come to our attention that there are very few academic studies have been conducted on the Mahdī claims of a Berber amīr, Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf, who reigned as the second ruler of the Barghawāṭah Emirate in North Africa. This article, therefore, aims to fill in this gap by evaluating and interpreting Ṣāliḥ's claims about his mahdism, which is perceived remarkable since he also claimed prophethood and produced a new Qurʾān. It should be noted, however, that gathering sufficient information about Ṣāliḥ's claims and movement was challenging because the majority of available classical sources were repetitive and insufficient – probably leading to the lack of comprehensive studies on the issue. Despite this, it is worth noting that the analysis of Ṣāliḥ's claims of being the Mahdī in an article is quite important, given that

⁶⁹ Brian H. Biffle, "Ṣāliḥ b. Ṭarīf (fl. eighth century CE)," in *Dictionary of African Biography*, ed. Henry Louis Gates et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 252; Ira M. Lapidus, *Islamic Societies to the Nineteenth Century: A Global History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 370.

⁷⁰ Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh ʿInān, *Dawlat al-Islām fī l-Andalus: al-ʿaṣr al-awwal* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1411/1990), II, 306.

recent years have witnessed a revived interest in Mahdism, Messianism, and apocalyptic studies. The majority of the results obtained in this context are as follows:

1. It is understood that the belief in the Mahdī, found in almost every period of Islamic history, is highly open to abuse by political forces. Throughout history, people have used this belief to gather the people around them, create power, and reach their goals. Şāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf, who emerged with a new religious understanding and perspective by claiming to be the Mahdī in his own time, can be considered one of these people.
2. Based on the sources, Şāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf, who emerged around Maghrib in the second century AH, declared himself to be the Mahdī. Since different reasons are influential in his claim, the following hypotheses can be proposed: he might have been influenced by the Jewish Messianic faith due to his Jewish ancestry; he might have been inspired by similar beliefs in different geographies simultaneously; he employed his claims for personal political interests to gather people around him and gain popularity.
3. It is clear that Şāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf's claim to be the Mahdī was used in an eschatological sense since the characteristics and features of the Mahdī of the End Times mentioned in Muslim ḥadīth traditions (such as bringing justice to a corrupt world and defeating the Dajjāl) have also been recorded for Şāliḥ in sources. In addition, the name *al-Qā'im*, a title associated with the Shī'ī Mahdī, was also used for Şāliḥ.
4. We can characterize him as the Mahdī of Barghawāṭah. However, it does not appear easy to clearly define him as a Sudanese Mahdī or Somalian Mahdī, who was explicitly identified and had a widespread reputation due to being discussed in many academic studies. It should be noted that there is not much information about Ibn Ṭarīf's claim to be the Mahdī in the sources. In fact, understanding Şāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf's Mahdism as a form of power struggle in the form of a rebellion movement against imperial power, as in the case of the Sudanese and Somalian Mahdīs, seems difficult. Understandably, he was not a prominent figure like other

Mahdīs due to the lack of conclusive proof that he used his claim to be a prophet or the Mahdī for political purposes in the sources.

5. The Barghawāṭah community, one of the strong historic Berber confederations of tribes in Morocco, established a dynasty in the region from the beginning of the first century AH, which lasted for about four centuries until the emergence of the Almoravids. Some researchers identified the Barghawāṭah Emirate as a heterodox community that departed from the religion of Islam, most likely due to the extravagant claims of Ṣāliḥ and his sons who succeeded him.

Finally, we must emphasize again that apart from a few ritual expressions by al-Bakrī and later other authors, we possess no original documents on the Barghawāṭah community. In such circumstances, it is impossible to arrive at a definite idea. Therefore, it would be appropriate to evaluate Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf's claims of being the Mahdī and prophet with this awareness.

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