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Changing Dynamics of Arab Rule in Multan from the Eighth to Eleventh Centuries CE: A Study of the Banū Sāmah Kingdom

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Abstract

This article studies the political, social, and economic patterns of Multan under Arab rule based on both primary and secondary sources. The mercantile cosmopolis Multan remained at the periphery of the central Muslim empires and had a heterogenous population with orthodox and heterodox tendencies. The rulers of these regions realized that their political power dynamics could not be like those of the centre because of their mercantile and pilgrim economy. Under the Banū Sāmah, the emirs of Multan followed a metadoxy, pietistic, and mercantile cosmopolitanism policy, as the state measures for the imposition of orthodoxy and the control of the belief system were lax. Nevertheless, the Fatimids destroyed the Aditya Sun Temple, though they signed a truce with Hindu kingdoms of surrounding areas against Maḥmūd of Ghazni without foreseeing its consequences. Multan's political and religious dynamics in the medieval era were intricately intertwined with the political, moral, and financial economy as the economic, political, and multicultural religious dynamics were in deep nexus.

Keywords

Multan, Banū Sāmah, Abbasids, Fatimids, Ghaznavids, Egypt.

Introduction

Mulasthana (Multan)[1] is one of the ancient cities of India, located on the eastern edge of Sindh in Punjab. During Arab domination, Multan was

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[1] Mulasthana, meaning the "original abode" was renamed Multan by Arabs in the eighth century CE. Muhammad Touseef and Alexandre Papas, "The History of Sufism in Multan: New Data from Urdu *Tadhkirah* Tradition," *Islamic Studies* 58, no. 4 (2019): 471.

the capital of the kingdom of Multan.[2] Multan was a landlocked empire but was connected with the medieval cultural centres (e.g., Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo) of the central Muslim empires (e.g., Umayyads, Abbasids, and Fatimids) through maritime and terrestrial routes of Sindh. The port of Debal along the Indian Ocean connected Multan with the ports along the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf,[3] which was the route of long-standing commercial ties between Arabia and South Asia.[4] Diplomatic connections between the Umayyads and the rulers of South Asia were first established in the seventh century CE. The first Muslim raid of India, according to the *Chachnamah*[5] (which is an important source on the medieval history of Sindh), was during the reign of the second Caliph ʻUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 12/634-23/644). The military campaign was initiated from Bahrain to the coast of the Indian Ocean in the Maharashtrian city of Ṯhānah under the leadership of ʻUthmān b. Abī ʾl-ʻĀṣ al-Thaqafī (d. 51/671), a companion of the Prophet and the governor of Oman and Bahrain. Furthermore, Multan came under the rule of Muslims after the conquest by the Arab military commander Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Thaqafī (75/695-96/715). He appointed Dāwūd Naṣr, the son of Walīd al-ʻUmmānī, as the governor of Multan.[6] Following that conquest, the governors of Multan were appointed by the Umayyad caliph in Damascus until the rise of the Abbasids. ʻAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʻūdī (283/896-346/957), a medieval Arab historian, traveller, and geographer, stated that the political relation of Multan with Damascus fluctuated between "autonomy and nominal allegiance."[7]

The conquest of Multan gave rulers access to the pilgrim economy's finances, which they used to construct the city's first mosque.[8] The

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[2] Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Maʻrifat al-Aqālīm* (Leiden: Brill, 1877), 478; Aṭhar Mubārakpūrī, *Hindūstān maiṇ ʻArabūṇ kī Ḥakūmataiṇ* (Delhi: Nadwat al-Muṣannifīn, 1967), 238.

[3] Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval Hindu Muslim Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 16.

[4] For details about trade relations between Arabia and India, see David Pingree, "Sanskrit Evidence for the Presence of Arabs, Jews and Persians in Western India," *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda* 31, no. 2 (1981/82): 172-82.

[5] Mirza Kalichbeg Fredunbeg, trans., *The Chachnamah: An Ancient History of Sindh* (Karachi: The Commissioner's Press, 1900).

[6] Moqeet Javed, "Arab Rule in Pakistan: A Historical Study of Abbasid Period," *Oriental College Magazine* 85 (2010).

[7] ʻAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʻūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Maʻādin al-Jawhar* (Baghdad: n.p., 1283 AH), 2:82; Fouzia Farooq Ahmed, *Muslim Rule in Medieval India: Power and Religion in Delhi* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 22.

[8] Fredunbeg, *Chachnama*, 234; Henry Miers Eliot and John Dowson, *History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians* (Bombay: Kitab Mahal, n.d.), 1:207.

mosque was built in the crowded bazaar close to the Sun Temple.[9] The proximity of the temple and mosque explains the lack of proselytizing and the continued existence of a heterogeneous and inclusive society. It is stated in *Chachnamah* that when Ibn al-Qāsim al-Thaqafī conquered Multan, it was the capital of Sindh and the source of its internal and external treasury.[10] He ransacked the temple and sent all the gold and precious stones back to Damascus, although he opted not to demolish the temple as the pilgrim economy was the essence of its prosperity.[11] Non-Muslim subjects were given the status of *dhimmī,* who paid the poll tax (*jizyah)*.[12]

In the medieval era, the most significant thing about Multan was its Sun Temple, which was the symbol of the sanctity of the area and the source of its wealth. The archaeological site of the Sun Temple of Multan was traced by a British army engineer named Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893) who worked on the history and archaeology of India. He showed the site of the Sun Temple in a sketch and mentioned that it was on the "high ground in the middle of the Multan Fort."[13] The Aditya Sun Temple (the Sun god Surya in Hinduism), and the pilgrim economy of Multan were also mentioned by the Chinese Buddhist missionary Xuanzang (d. 43/664) who visited Multan in 19/641. He described the "gold image" of Aditya and mentioned that people from surrounding areas visited Multan with offerings of Aloe Wood (Agarwood, Oudh), flowers, and precious stones to perform the pilgrimage of the Aditya Sun Temple, which was the house of "mercy" and "happiness" for them.[14] They approached the Aditya Sun Temple with "prostrations, circumambulation, playing cymbals, drums, and flutes."[15] Many stories of people visiting Multan for the cure of diseases and disabilities are mentioned in medieval sources.[16] The animated body of Aditya is detailed in *Kitāb al-Hind* by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī (362/973-439/1048), the Iranian polymath and contemporary of the Abbasid caliphs al-Ṭā'i' li Amr

[9] André Wink, *al-Hind the Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 1:187.
[10] Fredunbeg, *Chachnama*, 171.
[11] Ibid.; Wink, *al-Hind*, 1:186.
[12] Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 38.
[13] Alexander Cunningham, "Report for the Year 1872-73" (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2000), 5:119.
[14] Samuel Beal, *The Life of Hiuen-Tsian by the Shaman Hwui Li* (London: Kegan Paul, 1911), 52; Cunningham, "Report for the Year 1872-73," 5:116.
[15] Derryl N. Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind* (New York: Brill, 1989), 78.
[16] Ibid., 59.

Allāh (r. 363/974-381/991), al-Qādir bi Allāh (r. 381/991-422/1031), and al-Qā'im bi Amr Allāh (r. 422/1031-466/1074).

Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Iṣṭakhrī (235/850-345/957), who travelled to Multan in 340/952, provided a geographic picture of Multan.[17] He mentioned that the population was almost half the size of Manṣūrah and the territory was fortified[18] with four gates.[19] Muḥammad Abū 'l-Qāsim b. Ḥawqal[20] (d. 377/988), the Arab geographer and traveller who travelled from 331/943 to 357/969, and al-Mas'ūdī mentioned that Arabs termed Multan *Bayt al-Dhahab* (the house of gold)[21] and the Aditya Sun Temple was famous as the "Golden Temple." The names referred to the amount of treasury of gold and precious stones that fell into Muslim hands from the Aditya Sun Temple.[22] Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maqdisī (b. 333/945-380/991), the Arab geographer of the medieval era, identified the kingdoms of Manṣūrah and Qanūj as bordering kingdoms of Banū Sāmah.[23]

The Arab leader Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Sāmī laid the foundation of the Sāmah kingdom of Multan in 278/892[24] or 279/893.[25] Scholars have different opinions about the genealogy of Banū Sāmah. Some historians traced their genealogy to Quraysh.[26] Lu'ay b. Ghālib was the grandson of

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[17] Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-Mamālik* (Leiden: n.p., 1927), 178; Javed, "Arab Rule in Pakistan," 13.

[18] Javed, "Arab Rule in Pakistan," 13; al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 480; Ahmed, *Muslim Rule in Medieval India*, 22.

[19] Wink, *al-Hind*, 1:186.

[20] According to Eliot and Dowson, Ibn Ḥawqal did not visit Multan but collected information about Multan from al-Iṣṭakhrī who mentioned his meeting with Ibn Ḥawqal in the Indus Valley. Eliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 1:26.

[21] Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-Arḍ*, 319; al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*; Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān* (Cairo: n.p., 1967), 232.

[22] Ibid.; Bilal Ahmed, Shailendra Bhandare, and Pankij Tondon, "Bilingual Coins of Sulayman: A Samanid Amir of Medieval Multan," *Journal of Oriental Numismatic Society* no. 239 (Spring 2020): 15; Flood, "Conflicts and Cosmopolitanism in Arab Sind," 383.

[23] Al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 480; Ahmed, *Muslim Rule in Medieval India*, 22.

[24] Abbas H. al-Hamdani, *The Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa in Northern India* (Cairo: Sirovic Bookshop, 1956), 5; Arshad Islam, "History of Sind during Pre-Mughal Period" (PhD diss., Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, India, 1990, 54, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/144511481.pdf.

[25] Ahmed, *Muslim Rule in Medieval India*, 22.

[26] Sayyid Abū Ẓafar Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh* (Ahmedabad: Gujrat Vernacular Society, 1947), 255; N. A. Baloch, "The Rulers of Sind, Baluchistan and Multan (750-1500)," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. M. S. Asimov and C. E. Bosworth (Paris: UNESCO, 1998), vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 302, https://en.unesco .org/silkroad/knowledge-bank/regions-sind-baluchistan-multan-and-kashmir-historical-social-and-economic-setting; Ahmed, *Muslim Rule in Medieval India*, 22.

Fihr b. Mālik (d. *ca.* 240 CE), whose title was Quraysh. Sāmah b. Lu'ay was one of the seven sons of Lu'ay b. Ghālib, who left Mecca and settled in Oman, and his predecessors later became famous as Banū Nājī.[27] Banū Sāmah of Multan became famous as Banū Munabbih from the lineage of Munabbih al-Sāmī, who was the grandfather of Ibn al-Qāsim al-Sāmī.[28]

Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (204/820-278/892), a ninth-century historian of Baghdad, stated that before the time of Ibn al-Qāsim al-Sāmī, Faḍl b. Mahān, a freedman of Banū Sāmah, established the Mahāniyah kingdom in 218/833 in Sindān in the era of Abbasid Caliph al-Mā'mūn (r. 198/813-218/833). As a gesture of allegiance, he sent an elephant to the caliph and erected a mosque where he read the *khuṭbah* in the name of the Abbasid caliph.[29] Sending precious gifts from conquered areas and especially the "exotica of India" became a regular practice in the medieval era, which symbolized allegiance to the political and economic power of the conquerors. There are fewer details from whom Banū Sāmah took the throne of Multan. However, it is evident that when Ibn al-Qāsim al-Sāmī assumed control of Multan, he showed his allegiance to the Abbasids of Baghdad. By the end of the ninth century, Multan was independent in internal matters, yet Banū Sāmah read the *khuṭbah* in the name of the Abbasid caliph.[30]

Ibn al-Qāsim al-Sāmī continued the policy of his predecessors regarding the Aditya Sun Temple because of their role in the prosperity of Multan.[31] The temple economy in medieval South Asian history was a significant phenomenon as, besides having control over the offerings, it also served as an institution between guilds of merchants and artisans.[32] Since Multan was a society of intricate theological heterogeneity, the temple economy was a monetized card that made long-distance trade possible. Moreover, all the contemporaries who had written about Banū Sāmah agreed that the Aditya Sun Temple was a chief economic source. Al-Mas'ūdī stated that the expensive presents that the pilgrims brought made up most of their income.[33] Others estimated it to be thirty per cent of the

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[27] Islam, "History of Sind during Pre-Mughal Period," 55.
[28] Mubārakpūrī, *Hindūstān maiṇ 'Arabūṇ kī Ḥakūmataiṇ*, 212.
[29] Al-Balādhūrī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, 232-33; Fouzia Farooq Ahmed, *Muslim Rule in Medieval India*, 22.
[30] Wink, *al-Hind*, 1:187.
[31] Muhammad Hanif Raza, *Multan: Past and Present* (Multan: Colorpix, 1988), 58.
[32] Burton Stein, "The Economic Function of Medieval South Indian Temples," *Journal of Asian Studies* 19, no. 2 (1960): 163-76; Sandeep Singh, "The Temple Economy," Centre for Indic Studies, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2BwlRFtJIs.
[33] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 1:8.

total income of Multan.[34] Al-Isṭakhrī also recorded that the emirs spent money from the royal treasury on Hindu priests and those on the duty for the protection of the temple, as they brought the temple under state patronage.[35] Hence, the rulers of Multan adopted the "metadox" policy because they did not enforce orthodox Muslim doctrine on their subjects and discouraged proselytizing activities owing to the moral economy. Metadox is a term that Cemal Kafadar used in his book *Between Two Worlds*.[36] He defined metadoxy as a state of being beyond doxies, the absence of a state interested in strictly enforcing an orthodoxy. Flood also used the term.[37]

Apart from the benefits of a monopoly over the temple economy, the Aditya Sun Temple also served as a strategic benefit to the rulers of Multan. Al-Mas'ūdī and al-Isṭakhrī mentioned that Hindu rulers of the surrounding kingdoms could not defeat them because of Multan's military and economic strength. Another reason was that the rulers of Multan also used a military strategy of threatening Hindu rulers to destroy the Aditya Sun Temple if they would not withdraw, especially the rulers of the Partihara Dynasty of Kannauj, whom they defeated in 302/915.[38] Thus, the Aditya Sun Temple was a shield for the emirs of Multan against the Hindu rulers. Moreover, the slaves and *mawālī*, who came to Multan with Banū Sāmah from Oman and held influential positions in Multan, played a significant role in its defence, constructed forts around the city, and installed cantonments at some distance from the city.[39] Al-Mas'ūdī mentioned one of such *mawālī* with the name Hārūn b. Mūsā,[40] who had a prominent position in his community and had his own fort.[41] He defended Multan against attacks from Hindus with his bravery and military strategies.[42] Under Banū Sāmah, Multan became an important front of Muslims with powerful rulers.[43]

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[34] Flood, "Conflicts and Cosmopolitanism in Arab Sind," 383.
[35] Al-Isṭakhrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, 175.
[36] Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
[37] Flood, *Objects of Translation*.
[38] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 1:10; al-Isṭakhrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, 179; Ahmed, *Muslim Rule in Medieval India*, 22; Flood, "Conflict and Cosmopolitanism in Arab Sindh," 390; Wink, *al-Hind*, 188.
[39] Islam, "History of Sind during Pre-Mughal Period."
[40] Maclean mentioned that Hārūn b. Mūsā was from Multan and was an Arab poet. Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, 297.
[41] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 1:9-11.
[42] Mubārakpūrī, *Hindūstān maiṇ 'Arabūṇ kī Ḥakūmataiṇ*, 238.
[43] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 1:83.

Apart from the temple, the rulers also regulated trade, as Multan was a trade hub in the medieval era. The geographic location of Multan made it an important outpost for different trade caravans from ancient times, and by the thirteenth century CE its traders became famous as "Multanis."[44] Al-Masʿūdī mentioned that Multan was a *sarā'ē*-town for caravans from China, Turkistan, Tibet, and especially Khurasan, as it was a terminal for Khurasani trade.[45] Ivory and coppersmiths of Multan were popular among traders.[46] Similarly, many travellers mentioned the textile industry of Multan in the Banū Sāmah era. The Muslim and non-Muslim populations of Multan favoured loincloth.[47] In Banū Sāmah's Multan, both Arab and indigenous cultures intermingled, which included different elements of culture like language and dress.[48] The mercantile cosmopolis Multan was a polyglot frontier where Arabic, Sindhi, and Persian were spoken.[49]

According to the records of the British Museum on the numismatic iconography of Multan, the Banū Sāmah's emirs of Multan issued twenty coins before the Ismāʿīlī rule.[50] The coins of the medieval era were not only a medium of exchange of goods but also a vehicle for the circulation of ideas through trade. Banū Sāmah minted their silver coins *damma,* as opposed to the standard caliphal dirham.[51] The coins minted by the emirs of Banū Sāmah are the earliest known bilingual coins, having both Arabic and Sanskrit inscriptions that symbolized the element of syncretism and indigenization of the Muslim emirs, as the coins were rooted in local mythology.[52] Coins were inscribed with three dots motif in the centre surrounded by *Siri*[53] *Tapa* in Sharada script (the script of Brahmic languages), and below it is a Kufic character with the prefix *li Allāh* (for Allah) encrypted on it. The flip side of the coin was encrypted

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[44] Scott C. Levi, *Caravans: Punjabi Khatri Merchants on the Silk Road* (New York: Penguin, 2016), 32.

[45] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 1:10; Wink, *al-Hind*, 1:187.

[46] Al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 477; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 1:10; al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-Mamālik*, 174.

[47] Flood, "Conflicts and Cosmopolitanism in Arab Sind," 372.

[48] Islam, "History of Sind during Pre-Mughal Period," 58.

[49] Flood, "Conflicts and Cosmopolitanism in Arab Sind," 372.

[50] Robert Bracey, "Coins of Arab Sind and Multan," *Ancient Pakistan* 24 (2013): 63-70, at 65; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 44.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ahmed, Bhandare, and Tondon, "Bilingual Coins of Sulayman," 15; Flood, "Conflicts and Cosmopolitanism in Arab Sind," 372.

[53] In Brahmi legend, *Siri* denotes prosperity. On the coins, it refers to the emir of Multan.

with the Brahmic inscription, specifically Proto-Sharada, *Siri Bhar rā thā.*[54] *Bhar rā thā* is a masculine noun, meaning "king and world protector Agni (god of fire)," which is closely associated with the Aditya Sun Temple.[55] *Damma* was also found in Herat indicating the range of trade with Khurasan.[56] The assimilation and indigenization of rulers in the heterogeneous society to create a hybrid local political culture was a peculiar policy.[57] So, in the absence of state investment in orthodoxy, because of transculturation, the policies adopted by Banū Sāmah can be better defined as "metadoxy"[58] and pietistic cosmopolitanism. Pietistic cosmopolitanism is the phenomenon for peripheral political powers and is best suited for Multan being a periphery of central Muslim empires and a multicultural society where non-Muslims were sizeable in number.

Ismā'īlī Secret *Da'wah* and the Rise of Ismā'īlī Rule in Multan

Now we seek to analyse the conflict and competition between the caliphs of Baghdad and Cairo and its influence on the periphery (Multan). It also examines the distinction of policies between the centre and the periphery, as the emirs of Multan were either sent from the centre or associated with the centre for their legitimacy.

In contrast to Multan, which was a heterogeneous society with pluralistic features, in Abbasid Baghdad, the "proto-Sunni" doctrine prevailed, where the *'ulamā'* and the caliph lived in mutual interdependence.[59] The only exception was the *miḥnah,* which confronted the proto-Sunni doctrine and the caliphate came under the influence of Mutazilites in the era of Caliph al-Ma'mūn.[60] Though the Hāshimiyyah movement[61] was behind the rise of the Abbasids, in which both the Alids and Abbasids struggled to oust the Umayyads, the

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[54] Bracey, "Coins of Arab Sind and Multan," 64; The British Museum, Online Catalogue, Registration Number 1997.0705.64: 15-18, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1997-0705-64, accessed September 25, 2022; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 39.
[55] Ahmed, Bhandare, and Tondon, "Bilingual Coins of Sulayman," 17.
[56] Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 38.
[57] Ahmed, Bhandare, and Tondon, "Bilingual Coins of Sulayman," 15; Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation,* 39.
[58] Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 43.
[59] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early Abbasids: The Emergence of Proto Sunni Elite* (New York: Brill, 1997), 208.
[60] Ibid., 209.
[61] The Hāshimiyyah movement was behind the Abbasid revolution, in which both Alids (tracing the lineage from the Prophet's cousin 'Alī) and Abbasids (tracing the lineage from the Prophet's uncle al-'Abbās) participated. For details, see Patricia Crone, *God's Rule, Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 87-98.

Abbasids sidelined the Alids after the establishment of their caliphate. The relations between the Alids and Abbasids became strained to the extent that many of the Alids went into hiding for fear of persecution. One exception is recorded by historians in which ʻAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, the Twelver Shīʻī Imam, was appointed as heir by Caliph al-Maʾmūn.[62] Moreover, the war of succession and the personal interests of the prominent families who became the kingmakers like the Barmakids, Banū ʾl-Furāt, Banū ʾl-Jarrāḥ, Buyids, and Seljuks, in combination with external factors, proved to be the reason for the decline of Abbasids, after the rule of more than five hundred years. The independence and allegiance of the potentates of the provinces in the Abbasid era were parallel to the political strength of Baghdad. Whenever the centre was strong it resulted in fusion and caliphs would control the provinces. However, when the centre became weak, it resulted in fission, and the provinces declared more autonomy, resulting in the emergence of kingdoms like Hamdanid rule in Mosul. Thus, in the era of the political decline of Abbasids, the provinces became stronger militarily and economically, but still, the centre had a means of legitimacy.[63] After the rise of the Fatimids, relations of the peripheries with Baghdad were dependent on centripetal and centrifugal forces, as the Fatimids also had legitimacy to rule and were competing with Abbasids in dominance over territory. According to the available data, Banū Sāmah had allegiance to Abbasids before the takeover of Multan by the Ismāʻīlīs. However, they were independent in their internal matters after the ninth century CE. The strongholds of Abbasids, such as Syria, and Egypt, as well as peripheries like Multan, were taken from them by their contemporary Fatimids through the secret *daʻwah* of *dāʻīs*.

The centre of the Fatimids was in Egypt and they rose to power through hidden *daʻwah*, a method that the Ismāʻīlī imams adopted for preaching as they did not reveal their identities due to the threat of persecution by the Abbasid caliphs.[64] Therefore, in the presence of a strong central Abbasid empire, the *daʻwah* initially focused largely on the peripheries, where the hold of the centre was weak, providing safe havens for heterodox, dissenters, and rebels of the orthodox core.[65]

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[62] Tayeb El-Hibri, *The Abbasid Caliphate: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 45.
[63] Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 30.
[64] Samuel M. Stern, "Heterodox Ismāʻīlism at the Time of Al-Muʻizz," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 17, no 1 (1955): 10-33, at 12.
[65] Ansar Zahid Khan, "Ismaʻilism in Multan and Sindh," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 23, no. 1 (1975): 36-37.

From Muḥammad b. Isma'īl (121/740-197/813) until 296/909, when 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī (260/874-321/934) founded the Fatimid Empire, the Ismā'īlīs practised *taqiyyah*.[66] During the reign of 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī the Ismā'īlī *da'wah* became more organized in their centre Salamiyah, which resulted in the foundation of Ismā'īlī rule in North Africa and then Egypt.[67] Among them, *dā'ī* Hishām, son of the missionary Abū 'l-Qāsim b. Ḥawshab was sent to Sindh in 269/883 from Yemen, though with limited success.[68]

When the Ismā'īlīs established their seat in Cairo, like the contemporaneous Abbasid Empire, they became orthodox in the areas where they extended their rule. The rivalry between the Abbasids and Fatimids in Baghdad and Cairo also become pronounced in the peripheries.[69] This contention continued until the thirteenth century CE when the strongholds of both dynasties were ruined by Mongol attacks. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Khaldūn (732/1332-808/1406), the Arab historian, philosopher, and sociologist, mentioned that the Banū Sāmah rule became weakened in Multan because of the civil war, and it is most probable that conflict broke out among the ruling family by the Qarāmiṭah and Bāṭiniyyah secretly.[70] Not only in Multan but also in Oman, the Shī'īs and Alids created trouble for the rulers of Banū Sāmah.[71]

Ismā'īlīs are mentioned with different names in the scholarship of the medieval era. They are heterodox Muslims in contrast to orthodox Sunni, yet there is heterodoxy within Ismailism as well. Before the introduction of heterodoxy in Muslim literature, in Muslim scholarship, a different vocabulary was used for heterodox Muslims. The terms associated with Ismā'īlīs are Shī'ī, *rāfiḍī*,[72] Ismā'īlī, Bāṭinī, *ibāḥī* (antinomianism not abiding by mainstream Islam), Faṭimī, Qarāmiṭī, and

[66] Dominique-Sila Khan, "Diverting the Ganges: The Nizari Ismaili Model of Conversion in South Asia," in *Religious Conversions in India: Modes, Motivations, and Meanings*, ed. Rowena Robinson and Sathianathan Clarkes (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 51.
[67] Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh*, 257; 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Khaldūn, *Tārīkh-i Ibn Khaldūn* (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 2003), 4:378.
[68] Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh*, 257; Khan, "Isma'ilism in Multan and Sindh," 38.
[69] Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-Arḍ*, 319.
[70] S. Jabbir Raza, "Mansurah: A City in the Age of Urban Decline," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 68 (2007): 276-85, at 281.
[71] Mubārakpūrī, *Hindūstān maiṇ 'Arabūṇ kī Ḥakūmataiṇ*, 231.
[72] Israel Friedlander, "The Heterodoxies of Shiites in the Presentation of Ibn Ḥazm," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 29 (1908): 152.

mulḥid,[73] though later they were defined with some differences.[74] Other heterodox terms include *ahl al-bid'ah* (innovators),[75] *ahl al-hawā'* (people who follow their whims rather than authoritative doctrine),[76] *zindīq*,[77] and *ghālī* (extremist).[78] Many of these terms are wrongly associated with Ismā'īlīs. However, while reading the literature of the medieval era, it is important to understand that whenever such terms are used, they are referring to Ismā'īlīs.

The Fatimid dominance over Multan is also an illustration of the use of Indian icons for their appeal to piety to advance the quest for temporal power.[79] After gaining control over the area, Jalam b. Shaybān wrote a letter to the Fatimid Imam in Egypt mentioning his victory and destruction of the Aditya Sun Temple. He sought the Imam's guidance about legal issues,[80] which is an early instance of the implementation of "orthopraxy"[81] in Multan. According to some sources, the Imam asked the *dā'ī* to send the head of that idol to him to increase the zeal among the brethren for the common cause of God, which was not only a symbol of the victory over idolatry but also against the Abbasids as well.[82] Previously, not only emirs but all levels of society had a pragmatic approach towards idolatry in Multan, reflecting the fluidity of religious identities.[83] The letter regarding the destruction of the idol is a clear

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[73] Farhad Daftary, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Ismailis* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1994), 23; Khan, "Diverting the Ganges," 34; Shinool Jiwa, "The Baghdad Manifesto (402AH/1011CE): A Re-Examination of Fatimid Abbasid Rivalry," 1-30, https://prod-static-iis.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/the_baghdad_manifesto_0.pdf, accessed December 1, 2022.

[74] For details, see Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh-i Ibn Khaldūn*, 3:4; Muḥammad Ikrām, *Āb-i Kauthar* (Delhi: Taj Company, 1987), 25; Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 96; al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 2.

[75] Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 49.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid., 65-69.

[78] Robert Langer and Udo Simon, "The Dynamics of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy: Dealing with Divergence in Muslim Discourses and Islamic Studies," in "The Dynamics of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Islam," special issue, *Die Welt des Islams*, 48, no. 3-4 (2008): 273-88, at 285; Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 36.

[79] Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 30.

[80] Stern, "Heterodox Ismā'īlism at the Time of al-Mu'izz," 24; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 30; Flood, "Conflicts and Cosmopolitanism in Arab Sind," 381.

[81] Orthopraxy is a term in theology, defined as the right belief and correct practice.

[82] Samuel M. Stern, "Ismaili Propaganda and Fatimid Rule in Sindh," *Islamic Culture* 23 (1949): 302; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 30.

[83] Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 42.

example of the desire for both "orthodoxy" and "orthopraxy" by those who were considered heterodox within the wider Muslim community.[84]

The political value of defeating idolatry extended beyond the caliphate war, as circulating the best loot was a mark of legitimacy. Usually, it was to show the strength of the conqueror, though, in this case, it was nuanced since the war spoils sent from India were the ruler's share. Therefore, it can be best explained as a form of allegiance to the centre.[85] The "Indian exotica" always fascinated the rulers in the centre. Apart from this as a symbol of allegiance, the new *dā'ī* never imposed anything in the territory without the permission of the Fatimid Imam of Cairo.[86]

The Ismā'īlī *dā'ī*s who ruled Multan were Arab by race.[87] In contrast to the heterogeneous society of Multan, the Fatimid capital Cairo was a religiously tolerant and heterogeneous society; the majority of the population was not Ismā'īlī and Christians and Jews held high positions at the Fatimid court.[88] The era of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz was largely known for inclusivity. However, the reign of al-Ḥākim bi Amr Allāh (r. 386/996-411/1021) was termed a "psychotic" blip within the caliphate of religious tolerance.[89] He ordered the destruction of all churches in his realm as an act of reconciliation with his Sunni subjects.[90] Moreover, in Ismailism, the religious programme of the provinces or vassal states could not be different from the centre because the ultimate authority to explain the esoteric meaning of the Qur'ān rests with the Imam. Thus, under the Fatimids, religion and state were one because the Imam was the caliph and imam (the spiritual guide and ultimate religious authority) at the same time.[91] Likewise, the destruction of the Aditya Sun Temple of Multan was probably the symbol of piety and centripetal force for further expansion against idolatry and Sunni coreligionists, declaring the heterodox Ismā'īlīs as champions of

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[84] Farhad Daftary, "Samuel Stern and Early Ismailism," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 20, no. 4 (2021): 469-81, at 469.
[85] Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 31.
[86] Al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 475; Baloch, "The Rulers of Sind, Baluchistan and Multan (750-1500)," vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 302; Ikrām, *Āb-i Kauthar*, 32.
[87] Al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 5.
[88] Samir Khalil Samir, "The Role of Christians in the Fāṭimid Government Services of Egypt to the Reign of al-Ḥāfiẓ," *Medieval Encounters* 2, no. 3 (1996): 177-92, at 178, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006796X00144
[89] Jennifer Pruitt, "Method of Madness: Recontextualizing the Destruction of Churches in the Fatimid Era," *Muqarnas* 30, no. (2013): 119.
[90] Ibid., 130.
[91] Dominique-Sila Khan, "Diverting Ganges: Religious Conversions in India," 30.

the true faith. Jalam b. Shaybān killed the Hindu priests of Multan and destroyed the Aditya Sun Temple, in contrast to the inclusive policy of Ibn al-Qāsim al-Thaqafī and Ibn al-Qāsim al-Sāmī.[92] Thus, an era of Islamization in Multan began.[93] When al-Maqdisī visited Multan in 374/985, the idol Aditya was still there. This means that Jalam b. Shaybān probably destroyed the idol in 375/986.[94] The mosque which was built by Ibn al-Qāsim al-Thaqafī was closed, and another mosque was constructed, which shows their anti-Umayyad sentiments.[95] The mosque was not destroyed probably because of the presence of non-Ismā'īlī Muslims.[96] Thus, the tradition of pietistic cosmopolitanism of mercantile cosmopolis and multicultural society was discontinued.

Ḥudūd al-Islām is an anonymous tenth-century geography book compiled in 371/982 or 372/983. It states that in Multan, the rulers read *khuṭbah* to the western one (*bār-maghrib*), which means the Fatimid Imam.[97] The regular exchange of envoys and gifts is recorded in history between the Ismā'īlī rulers of Multan and the Fatimids of Egypt.[98] They continued preaching Islam in an organized way.[99] Multan became a stronghold of the Ismā'īlīs. Even after the end of their rule, Multan and its surrounding areas remained their preaching centre.[100]

Ismā'īlī *dā'īs* used the Fatimid Qinhārī dirham of Egypt in Multan,[101] which was issued in the name of Allah and the Caliph.[102] Similar coins were also minted between 364/975 and 386/996, in the era of Fatimid Caliph al-'Azīz (364/975-386/996) with his name written in Kufic

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[92] Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Hind* (Delhi: Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdū, 1941), 64; Baloch, "The Rulers of Sind, Baluchistan and Multan (750-1500)," vol. 4, pt., 1, p. 302; Ikrām, *Āb-i Kauthar*, 26.

[93] Touseef and Alexandre, "History of Sufism in Multan," 472.

[94] Al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 478; Al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 3.

[95] Khan, "Isma'ilism in Multan and Sindh," 39.

[96] Ibid., 39.

[97] V. Monorsky, trans., *Ḥudūd al-Islām: The Regions of the World, A Persian Geography 372 AH-982 A. D.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 89; al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Hind*, 64; Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh*, 259; Javed, "Arab Rule in Pakistan," 13; al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 4.

[98] Al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 4.

[99] Ikrām, *Āb-i Kauthar*, 32.

[100] Mubārakpūrī, *Hindūstān maiṇ 'Arabūṇ kī Ḥakūmataiṇ*, 229.

[101] Bracey, "Coins of Arab Sind and Multan," 65; Nicholas W. Lowick, "Fatimid Coins of Multan," in *Islamic Coins and Trade in the Medieval World*, ed. Joe Cribb (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990), 62-69.

[102] Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh*, 259; Al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 5.

script.[103] The tradition of synchronizing with indigenous religious characteristics in the coins of Banū Sāmah was not continued by the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿīs*.

Ismāʿīlī rule in Multan continued as a dynastic rule until the invasion of Maḥmūd of Ghazni. Within the few years of the Fatimid rule, they found themselves increasingly isolated as the Ghazanavid rulers started conquering the surrounding regions with a Sunni ideology like Ṭūrān (a region in Sindh), Hindū Shāhī territory up to Peshawar, and Makrān.[104] Though the exact period of the rule of Jalam b. Shaybān is not clear,[105] his successor (and potentially his son), al-Shaykh Ḥamīd, ascended the throne.[106] Al-Shaykh Ḥamīd became part of the alliance of the ruler of Lahore Rāja Jaipāl (r. 353/964-391/1001) and the Afghans who were against Alaptagīn. After the death of Alaptagīn,[107] however, al-Shaykh Ḥamīd signed a peace treaty with Subuktagīn (r. 977-997 CE) in 386/996.[108] Therefore, Subuktagīn did not invade Multan between 386/996 and 396/1006, honouring the treaty.[109] Nevertheless, al-Shaykh Ḥamīd's successor sided with the ruler of Lahore against the Ghaznavids.[110] It is not known whether the son of al-Shaykh Ḥamīd became ruler or not.[111] However, Multan never lost its importance to the rulers of India because of its strategic location and trade relations.

When Multan was under the Fatimid ruler, the Buyid ruler in Baghdad was just a religious authority. Maḥmūd of Ghazni promoted the Sunni ideology and was associated with the caliphate in Baghdad. At the same time, the Caliph al-Qādir bi Allāh initiated a campaign against the Fatimids with the support of the *'ulamā',* including Twelver Shīʿīs, and challenged the Alid lineage of the Fatimid caliphs.[112] The orthodox Qādirī creed of al-Qādir bi Allāh was adopted as an ideology by Maḥmūd of

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[103] The British Museum Online Catalogue, Registration Number, 1980, 0917.7. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1980-0917-7, accessed September 25, 2022.
[104] Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, 327.
[105] Nadvī, *Tarīkh-i Sindh*, 250; Baloch, "The Rulers of Sind, Baluchistan and Multan (750-1500)," vol. 4, pt., 1, p. 302.
[106] Mubārakpūrī, *Hindūstān maiṇ 'Arabūṇ kī Ḥakūmataiṇ*, 223.
[107] Muḥammad Qāsim Farishtah, *Tārikh-i- Farishtah* (Lahore: Al-Meezan, 2008), 1:84.
[108] Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh*, 266; Al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismāʿīlī Daʿwa*, 4; Javed, "Arab Rule in Pakistan," 13.
[109] Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh*, 267.
[110] Javed, "Arab Rule in Pakistan," 13.
[111] Mubārakpūrī, *Hindūstān maiṇ 'Arabūṇ kī Ḥakūmataiṇ*, 223, 238.
[112] Daftary, *Ismāʿīlīs*, 185.

Ghazni for his expansions in India.[113] In Baghdad, they read the letters of conquests of Maḥmūd of Ghazni in mosques. He was also conferred with titles like *Yamīn al-Dawlah wa Amīn al-Millah* (the right hand of the state and trustee of the religion).[114] As a result, Maḥmūd of Ghazni expanded the orthodox ideology of Abbasid Baghdad and the expansion of the Abbasid empire was revived. It was amplified further with the rise of the Seljuks.

In Multan, Abū 'l-Fātiḥ Dāwūd, the successor and grandson of al-Shaykh Ḥamīd, changed the policy[115] and dishonoured the treaty by not helping Maḥmūd of Ghazni in his war against Rājah Jaipāl,[116] the ruler of Bhatia, and areas adjoining Multan.[117] Rājah Anandpāl (d. 1010) was defeated and fled to Kashmir, while Maḥmūd entered the territories of Multan. After seven days of siege,[118] Dāwūd agreed that he would annually pay two hundred thousand dirhams as *kharāj*[119] and ceded a part of Multan adjacent to the Sindh River to Maḥmūd. Moreover, Maḥmūd's army was victorious in another war against Anandpāl and his alliance in 396/1006, though no direct revenge was taken against the ruler of Multan.[120] Abū Ẓafar Nadvī and Farhad Daftary hold that in the year 401/1010-1011, Maḥmūd again attacked Multan with his army and defeated Dāwūd.[121] Thus, Multan was brought under Ghaznavid authority[122] that had allegiance to the Abbasids. The Ismā'īlī forces of Multan resisted, but were weak and ultimately forced to surrender.[123] Abū 'l-Fātiḥ Dāwūd was arrested and imprisoned in the fort in Ghaznah, where he died.[124] By that time, the Ismā'īlīs were already suffering from internal dissension because another heterodox offshoot from them

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[113] El-Hibri, *Abbasid Caliphate*, 200.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Farishtah, *Tārīkh-i Farishtah*, 1:63.
[116] Ikrām, *Āb-i Kauthar*, 26; Javed, "Arab Rule in Pakistan," 13; Farishtah, *Tārīkh-i Farishtah*, 1:63; Minhāj Sirāj, *Ṭabqāt-i Nāṣirī* (Lahore: Urdu Boards, 1975), 411.
[117] Javed, "Arab Rule in Pakistan," 13; Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh,* 267; Farishtah, *Tārīkh-i Farishtah*, 1:63.
[118] Farishtah, *Tārīkh-i Farishtah*, 1:65; Al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 4.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, 167.
[121] Ibid.; Nadvī, *Tārīkh-i Sindh*, 272; Javed, "Arab Rule in Pakistan," 13; Ikrām, *Āb-i Kauthar*, 51; al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 4.
[122] Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa 'l-Mamālik*, 178; al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 477; Khan, "Isma'ilism in Multan and Sindh," 43; Eliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 1:215.
[123] Farishtah, *Tārīkh-i Farishtah*, 1:68; al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 4; Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, 449; Eliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 215.
[124] Farishtah, *Tārīkh-i Farishtah*, 1:68.

separated.[125] According to Mubārakpūrī, Maḥmūd of Ghazni invaded Multan because he was belligerent about the beliefs and practices of the Ismā'īlī rulers and the people of Multan. However, another reason that cannot be ignored is that Multan was strategically and economically important for the Ghaznavids because it was by then a buffer between the rising power of the Turks and Hindu rulers.[126] Defeating the Hindu alliance paved the way for further advance in India. Moreover, the annexation of Multan also served as his support for the anti-Ismā'īlī Sunnism of the Abbasid caliphate, as he became the primary defender of Sunni orthodoxy.[127]

As part of the reinforcement of orthodoxy, Maḥmūd of Ghazni reopened the old mosque which was constructed by the orthodox Ibn al-Qāsim al-Thaqafī and destroyed[128] the mosque which was constructed by the heterodox Jalam b. Shaybān.[129] Although the Ismā'īlī rule of Multan was ended, the *dā'ī*s continued preaching in Sindh, Gujrat, and even Multan.[130] From time to time, they tried to organize themselves and start an uprising. Muḥammad Qāsim Farishtah mentioned that in 572/1177, Shihāb al-Din Ghaurī (543/1149-603/1206) freed Multan from the Qarāmiṭah.[131] They also started an armed uprising in Gujrat, Sindh, Delhi, and along the banks of the Jumna and Ganges rivers under the leadership of Nūr Turk. Finally, in 634/1236, they tried to capture Delhi after creating trouble in the Jāmi' Masjid.[132]

Conclusion

This article outlined the changing policies of the Muslim rulers of Multan from the eighth to eleventh centuries. Being in the periphery, Multan needed association with central Muslim empires for legitimacy. Under the Umayyads, Multan's allegiance fluctuated from complete to nominal. Under the Abbasids, Multan had complete allegiance, though, from the end of the ninth century, they were independent in their internal matters, for that matter with the Fatimid complete allegiance. The Aditya Sun Temple was central to the social and religious realities of

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[125] Khan, "Isma'ilism in Multan and Sindh," 44.
[126] Al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 4.
[127] Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, 328.
[128] Ibid., 329.
[129] Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Hind*, 64; Flood, "Conflict and Cosmopolitanism in Arab Sindh," 386.
[130] Daftary, *Ismā'īlīs*, 185, 200.
[131] Farishtah, *Tārīkh-i Farishtah*, 1:217.
[132] Al-Hamdani, *Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa*, 5.

Multan because of the revenue it generated. Neither Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Thaqafī nor any emir of Banū Sāmah destroyed the Aditya Sun Temple as a policy of pietistic and mercantile cosmopolitanism, even though they ransacked the temple and sent valuable gifts to their headquarters as a symbol of allegiance and strength. The Banū Sāmah adopted a policy of "metadoxy" and minted coins by featuring indigenous languages and religious characters. However, the Ismā'īlī *dā'ī*, who came to power later, had different religious policies; they destroyed the Aditya Sun Temple and removed a heterodox *dā'ī* from his post, positioning themselves as champions of Islam and true believers. Eventually, Ismā'īlī *dā'ī*s allied with the Hindu rulers of surrounding kingdoms against Maḥmūd of Ghazni, which proved to be their twilight. Overall, the dynamics of the political approach of the rulers of Multan towards non-Muslim and heterodox Muslims were intricately linked to the financial, moral, and political economy of the mercantile cosmopolis.

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