

THE RUSTAMID DYNASTY

Islamic history tells us that there was an Ibadite government in Magrib. It was the Rustamids who successfully maintained their regime for over a century. They developed a great advance in economical field as well as in intellectual field.¹ Their political territory boundary was close to the Aglabids (183-296 AH / 800-909 AD), the Idrīsids (172-313 AH / 789-926 AD), and the Midrārīds (140-296 AH / 757-909 AD).² Today Tahert (Tīhart, Tāhart, dan Taihort),³ the Rustamid capital, is in Algeria,⁴ and Jabal Nafūsah, their vital province, is in Libya.⁵ Their reign began in 160 AH (776 AD)⁶ and crumbled in 296 AH (909 AD) when the Fāṭimids destroyed them.⁷ Although the Rustamids could establish their civilization, many historical works still did not pay attention to them. The following article deals with the moderate policy implemented by the Rustamids in their effort to establish Islamic civilisation.

Before elaborating their policy, it is necessary to explain the meaning of several terms, i.e. Magrib, policy, and moderation. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī wrote that Magrib included the area between Milyānah (in Ifrīqiyyah) and Atlantic Ocean, and then it also embraced Andalusia.⁸ Another information said that Magrib was divided into three parts, they were Magrib Adnā (Tunisia today), Magrib Ausaṭ (Algeria), dan Magrib Aqṣā (Morocco).⁹ This writing takes the definition of policy which means every decision made by government to control and

¹ Sulaimān Bāsyā al-Bārūnī, *al-Azhār ar-Riyāḍiyyah fī A'immah wa Mulūk al-Ibāḍiyyah*, vol. 1 (Oman: Salṭanah 'Umān, 1987), p. 49, Muḥammad 'Isā al-Ḥarīrī, *ad-Daulah ar-Rustamiyyah bi al-Magrib al-Islāmī: Ḥaḍārātuhā wa 'Alāqatuhā al-Kharījiyyah bi al-Magrib wa al-Andalus* (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1987), p. 234, Ibn 'Izārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān al-Mugrib fī Akhbār al-Andalus wa al-Magrib*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1948), p. 197, and 'Alī Yaḥyā Mu'ammār, *al-Ibāḍiyyah fī Maukib at-Tārīkh*, vol. 2 (Seeb: Maktabah aḍ-Ḍamīrī, 2008), p. 7.

² Ḥusain Mu'nīs, *Aṭlas Tārīkh al-Islām* (Cairo: az-Zahrā' li al-I'lām al-'Arabī, 1987), p. 159, Maurice Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam*, trans. Joan Spencer (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), p. 58, and al-Ḥarīrī, *ad-Daulah*, p. 248.

³ Lombard, *The Golden Age*, p. 215, Mu'ammār, *al-Ibāḍiyyah*, vol. 2, p. 7, Ibn 'Izārī, *Kitāb*, vol. 1, p. 196, and S. Khuda Bakhsh, *Politics in Islam* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1981), p. 72.

⁴ Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980), p. 22.

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiaret> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jabal_Nafusa.

⁶ Al-Ḥarīrī, *ad-Daulah*, p. 94.

⁷ Ibn 'Izārī, *Kitāb*, vol. 1, p. 197.

⁸ Yāqūt ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), p. 161.

⁹ Muḥammad al-Amīn Muḥammad and Muḥammad 'Alī ar-Raḥmānī, *al-Mufīd fī Tārīkh al-Magrib* (Casablanca: Dār al-Kitāb, n.d.), p. 7, al-Bārūnī, *al-Azhār*, vol. 2, p. 39, 'Alī Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣallābī, *Ṣafaḥāt Musyriqah min at-Tārīkh al-Islāmī fī asy-Syamāl al-Ifrīqī*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār Ibn al-Jauzī, 2007), p. 98, and 'Iṣām ad-Dīn 'Abd ar-Ra'ūf al-Faqqī, *Tārīkh al-Magrib wa al-Andalus* (Cairo: Maktabat Nahḍah asy-Syarq, 1990), p. 12.

regulate public society.¹⁰ Whereas the connotation of moderation is the behaviour that keeps away from extremeness and radicalness.¹¹ Its antonym is immoderation that indicated by extreme behaviour or excessive deeds, and then followed by refusing the diversity of opinion or the variety of belief and eliminating the tolerance or open-mindedness.¹² To elucidate the Rustamids government and their policy, this article utilizes *Akhbār al-A'imma ar-Rustamiyyīn*, the work of Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr (a historian of that period who witnessed the Rustamid regime), as a primary source.¹³

The accomplishment of the Ibādites to obtain political victory in Magrib was achieved by severely struggle. Since the arrival of Salmah ibn Sa'd to Magrib in 95 AH (713 AD) to preach Ibādite doctrines until the founding of Rustamid dynasty, the Ibadites have made several great efforts, for instance the revolts that commanded by 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd at-Tujībī in 127 AH (744 AD), 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Qais al-Murādī and al-Ḥārīs ibn Tafīd al-Ḥaḍramī in 131 AH (748 AD), Ismā'īl ibn Ziyād an-Nafūsī in 132 AH (750 AD), and then Abū al-Khaṭṭāb al-Ma'āfirī in 140 AH (757 AD). At-Tujībī led the Hawwārah, one of Berber tribes, in Tripolitania to rebel against 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Ḥabīb, Umayyad administrator in Magrib. But they were defeated easily by Ibn Ḥabīb. The Hawwārite revolt continued under the command of 'Abd al-Jabbār and al-Ḥārīs. This rebel ended when al-Ḥārīs and 'Abd al-Jabbār were killed suddenly. The failure also occurred in the revolt of Ismā'īl who directed the Nafūsah tribe in opposition to Umayyad government. After several collapses, the Ibādites in Magrib made intensive contact with the leaders of Ibādite community in Baṣrah to prepare more careful and systematic struggle.¹⁴ Many emissaries from Magrib were sent to Baṣrah. Those delegates, who were called *ḥamalāt al-'ilm*, lived for about five years (135-140 AH / 752-757 AD) there. They learnt directly from Abū 'Ubaidah Muslim ibn Abī Karīmah, the highest leader of the Ibādites, and other Ibādite personages.¹⁵ Subsequently

¹⁰ Ramlan Surbakti, *Mcmahami Ilmu Politik* (Jakarta: Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia, 1992), p. 190.

¹¹ David Bernard Guralnik and Victoria Neufeldt (eds.), *Webster's New World College Dictionary* (New York: A Simon & Schuster Macmillan Company, 1996), p. 871.

¹² Khafīl 'Alī Ḥaidar, *I'tidāl am Taḥarruf: Ta'ammulāt Naqdiyyah fī Tayyār al-Wasaṭiyyah al-Islāmiyyah* (Kuwait: Dār Qirṭās li an-Nasyr, 1988), p. 27-28.

¹³ Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr, *Akhbār al-A'imma ar-Rustamiyyīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Garb al-Islāmī, 1986), pp. 92-94.

¹⁴ Maḥmūd Ismā'īl, *al-Khawārij fī Bilād al-Magrib ḥattā Muntaṣaf al-Qarn ar-Rābi'* (Magrib: Dār aṣ-Ṣaqāfah, 1985), p. 82-85.

¹⁵ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir and Sulṭān ibn Mubārak asy-Shaybānī, *Mu'jam A'lām al-Ibādīyyah min al-Qarn al-Awwal al-Hijrī ilā al-'Aṣr al-Ḥādir: Qism al-Masyriq* (Beirut: Dār al-Garb al-Islāmī, 2006), p. 446.

Abū ‘Ubaidah chose Abū al-Khaṭṭāb as an Ibādīte leader in Magrib. After coming back to Magrib, Abū al-Khaṭṭāb in 140 AH (757 A.D) could convince a number of Berber tribes such as Nafūsah, Hawwārah, and Zanātah in order to become a member of the Ibādītes and take part into Ibādīte struggle until their accomplishment of mission. Afterward they were successful to conquer Tripolitania, Jazīrah Jirbah, Jabal Damr, Qābis, and even Qayrawan. Unfortunately in 144 AH (761 AD) they were crushed by the ‘Abbāsīd military at the battle of Tāwurgā. Ya‘qūb ibn Ḥabīb who was known as Abū Ḥātim al-Malzūzī since 145 AH (762 AD) then occupied the Ibādīte leadership. However in 155 AH (772 AD) the Ibādītes were also defeated in Jabal Nafūsah. At this battle Abū Ḥātim and his army become the victims. The similar result also occurred in 156 AH (773 AD) when Abū Yaḥyā ibn Qiryās continued the leadership. There was a significant result after the leadership of ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Rustam.¹⁶ ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān could avoid the crush in the face of attack from Muḥammad ibn al-Asy‘ās, the governor of Egypt sent by Abū Ja‘far al-Manṣūr, after escaping to mount of Sūfjaj. He even got a great support from many Berber tribes, such as Nafūsah, Hawwārah, Lawātah, Miknāsah, Mazātah, and Lamāyah.¹⁷ They subsequently went to Tahert and installed ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān as the Ibādītes leader in 160 AH (776 AD).¹⁸

There is no information about ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān’s genealogy in *Akhbār al-A‘immah ar-Rustamiyyīn*. Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr only said that the Ibādītes moved to Tahert and then had the same opinion to chose ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān as their leader who must do several responsibilities, for instance helping the oppressed people, giving a verdict of guilty to every unlawful deed, distributing a tithe, and so forth. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān was designated because he didn’t have a tribe or family that could protect him. According to Abū al-Khaṭṭāb when he assigned ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān to become an administrator of Qayrawan. Abū al-Khaṭṭāb asserted that the Ibādītes would easily turn down ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān if he deviated from the Islamic law because he didn’t have any defending tribe or family.¹⁹

Al-Ḥarīrī said that the genealogy of ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Rustam referred to Bahrām whose lineage related to the Persian kings. At that time Bahrām, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān’s grandfather, was a *maulā* of ‘Usmān ibn ‘Affān in Medina. Rustam passed away when he made the pilgrimage to Mecca together with his wife and ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān, his son. His wife

¹⁶ Isma‘īl, *al-Khawārij*, pp. 85-95.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147 and al-Bārūnī, *al-Azhār*, vol. 2, pp. 43-45.

¹⁸ Al-Ḥarīrī, *ad-Daulah*, p. 94.

¹⁹ Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr, *Akhbār*, pp. 29-30.

got married again with a man from Qayrawan and then took ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān there. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān grew up in Qayrawan where the Ibādīte doctrines had been preached by Salmah ibn Sa‘d. Being attracted by the Ibādīte teachings, he followed this sect.²⁰ After that he was a member of delegates sent to Baṣrah and struggled together with Abū al-Khaṭṭāb to establish a political authority for the Ibādītes.

After his assignment as a leader of Magrib Ibādītes, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān started to build Tahert to become their capital. First he received financial support from the Ibādīte society in Baṣrah. This assistance was delivered because of vast information that there was an Ibādīte leader with a great honesty, justice, and humility. As a result of it, the prosperity of Tahert people increased. Such condition fascinated every traveler, tourist, and merchant who came to Tahert. Furthermore those men felt convenient to stay and live in Tahert. Therefore the population of Tahert grew up and turned into assorted.²¹ The affluence of life remained until the death of ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān.²² Before his death in 171 AH (787 AD),²³ he had formed a commission to appoint his successor. This board finally elected ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān as a leader.²⁴

Although there were some political problems, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb successfully led his leadership. His achievement was denoted by stability and steadiness in administration as well as in prosperity. Moreover, the Rustamids influence reached abroad indicated by their encirclement of Tripolitania and triumph over Tilimsān. Another accomplishment was getting a strong loyalty and allegiance from the people of Jabal Nafūsah whose support was very indispensable for the survival of the Rustamids.²⁵ Besides, he created tranquillity inside the Rustamid territory until his death in 211 AH (826 AD).²⁶ Perhaps his valuable experience during the reign of his father was the factor that helped him to run his government.²⁷

‘Abd al-Wahhāb was succeeded by his son, Aflah, who had been chosen by his father after he overcame the revolt of Banū Massālah when their political marriage with the tribe of Lawātah was obstructed by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb,²⁸ and the rebellion of Yazīd ibn Fandīn.²⁹

²⁰ Al-Ḥārīrī, *ad-Daulah*, p. 74-78.

²¹ Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr, *Akhbār*, pp. 32-36.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 37-41.

²³ Al-Ḥārīrī, *ad-Daulah*, p. 108.

²⁴ Al-Bārūnī, *al-Azhār*, vol. 2, pp. 148-150.

²⁵ Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr, *Akhbār*, p. 45.

²⁶ Al-Ḥārīrī, *ad-Daulah*, pp. 128 and 137-138.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁸ Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr, *Akhbār*, p. 55.

The Rustamids achieved their glory during his sovereignty. The trade activity progressed well and many foreign merchants come to Tahert. Hence the financial revenue multiplied and the wealth developed rapidly.³⁰ But the situation was bothered when Aflah's son, Abū al-Yaqzān, made a pilgrimage to Mecca and then was captured by 'Abbāsīd military. He felt so sad for many years and finally died.³¹ His death in 240 AH (854 AD) ended his flourishing government.³²

After that, some Ibādīte people met Abū Bakr ibn Aflah to install him as their leader. At that moment actually there was refutation from some citizens who disagreed with this assignment, but most people ignored this rejection. The crucial problem faced by Abū Bakr related to Muḥammad ibn 'Irfah who killed suddenly. Because Abū Bakr failed to deal with the conflict, his rule did not sustain for a long time.³³ Abū al-Yaqzān Muḥammad ibn Aflah, Abū Bakr's brother, then replaced him in 241 AH (855 AD) and returned the political stability.³⁴

Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr, who beheld directly the leadership of Abū al-Yaqzān, said that Abū al-Yaqzān was similar to 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Rustam, the founder of Rustamid Dynasty. Both of them were very pious and humble men. Besides, Di samping itu, Abū al-Yaqzān could enhance the intellectual activity in Tahert. Many scholars from various sects appeared during his administration, because he did not discriminate them.³⁵ His government took forty years until his death in 281 AH (894 AD).³⁶

The Ibādītes then elected Abū Ḥātīm ibn Abū al-Yaqzān to take the place of his father.³⁷ Although several clashes emerged and Abū Ḥātīm was enforced to leave Tahert, he could establish his authority.³⁸ He restored the political situation and social condition damaged by internal dissension. However the miserable disaster happened. At that time, the

²⁹ Al-Bārūnī, *al-Azhār*, vol. 2, p. 161.

³⁰ Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr, *Akhbār*, pp. 61-62.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-69.

³² Al-Ḥārīrī, *ad-Daulah*, p. 154.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

³⁵ Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr, *Akhbār*, pp. 92-97.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 92 and 102.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-115 and al-Bārūnī, *al-Azhār*, vol. 2, pp. 333-337.

Rustamids were defeated by the Aglabids in 283 AH (896 M) at the battle of Mānū in Jabal Nafūṣah.³⁹ His reign persisted until his death when he was murdered in 294 AH (906 AD).⁴⁰

After this assassination, al-Yaqzān ibn Abī al-Yaqzān continued the Ibādīte leadership. But most people detested him and thought that he was involved to this political conspiracy. As a consequence, his government did not run smoothly. In addition, the threat of Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusain, a Syi‘ite commander ordered by ‘Ubaid Allāh al-Mahdi (the founder of Fāṭimid Dynasty), came and eventually annihilate the Rustamids in 296 AH (909 AD).⁴¹

The Rustamids fruitfully established remarkable civilization because of their moderate policy. Undoubtedly this policy corresponded to the Ibādīte doctrine that preferred a moderate behaviour than extreme conduct to the non-Ibādīte people.⁴² As a consequence of it, the Ibādītes were renowned as the closest Kharijite sect *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah* or the Sunnites.⁴³ The Rustamid policy to the non-Ibādītes, either muslim or non-muslim, was founded on the basis of tolerance. Such moderation was applied during the period of Rustamid Dynasty from the first leader (‘Abd ar-Raḥmān) to the last leader (al-Yaqzān). For this reason, there were various citizens who lived freely and peacefully in the Rustamid territory without making any distinction or discrimination.

As mentioned above, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Rustam, the founder of Rustamid Dynasty, was famed of his humility, honesty, and justice. He ruled well, in order that all people were very delighted of his headship. From the beginning of his sovereignty, he focused his attention to make prosperity of his citizens. For that reason, many travelers and merchants from abroad came to Tahert and dwelt there. They were from different homelands, for example Baṣrah and Kūfah. Additionally, there were non-muslim communities payed some *jizyah* (head tax on free non-muslims under muslim rule). Because of this affluence, the Rustamids smoothly rejected the financial assistance from the Ibādītes of Masyriq that was

³⁹ Al-Bārūnī, *al-Azhār*, vol. 2, pp. 342-343.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 357-359.

⁴² Abū al-Muzaffar al-Isfarāinī, *at-Tabṣīr fī ad-Dīn wa Tamayīz al-Firqah an-Nājiyah ‘an al-Firqah al-Hālikīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1988), p. 53.

⁴³ Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Tārīkh al-Mazāhib al-Islāmiyyah fī as-Siyāsah wa al-‘Aqā'id* (Egypt: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1946), p. 85 and ‘Amir an- Najjār, *Al-Khawārij: ‘Aqīdah, wa Fikran, wa Falsafah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1990), p. 165.

sent for the second phase.⁴⁴ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb continued ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān’s moderate policy, hence the prosperity of his society went to a great extent.⁴⁵ The reign of Aflaḥ enhanced the wealth of his people. That enrichment was denoted by remarkable development and trade activity operated by both national and foreign businessmen.⁴⁶ But such conducive situation was disrupted by internal dissension in the short period of Abū Bakr ibn Aflaḥ.⁴⁷ After the accession of Abū al-Yaqzān ibn Aflaḥ, that political instability could be controlled and the government was handled well. In addition to make a peaceful situation, Abū al-Yaqzān also encouraged the pluralistic life.⁴⁸ The situation of harmony and tolerance appeared during the reign of Abū Ḥātim too.⁴⁹ The reign of al-Yaqzān ibn Abī al-Yaqzān was similar to his predecessors. He also gave tolerance and equality to all citizens without discrimination their sects.⁵⁰ The previous explanation clearly proved that the Rustamids from their early government until their downfall constantly applied the tolerant policy to their people without distinction of their sects.

The moderate policy of the Rustamids also clearly appeared in the economic activity. The livelihoods that became the sources of Rustamid revenue were trade, agriculture (olive, grape, palm, wheat), cattle breeding (sheep, horse, and donkey), industry (cloth), and mining (iron). The greatest income was earned from trade. The exported products consisted of earthenware, glassware, and perfume, whereas the imported commodities were composed of gold, slave, and ivory that originated from *Bilād as-Sūdān*,⁵¹ i.e. the land of the Negroes⁵² or the dark-skinned group of peoples.⁵³

Practicing economical policy, the Rustamids steadily upheld the value of justice, equality, and public kindness. These worthy values are Islamic universal principles can be implemented by every person who wants to successful be in the accomplishment of leadership. One of the governments who successfully performed these valuable principles was

⁴⁴ Ibn aṣ-Ṣagīr, *Akhbār*, pp. 36-37 and 41.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-94.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 105 and 116-117.

⁵⁰ Al-Bārūnī, *al-Azhār*, vol. 2, p. 358.

⁵¹ Al-Ḥārīrī, *ad-Daulah*, pp. 231-233 and A. S. Kaye, “Bilād al-Sūdān” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al., vol. 9 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), p. 760.

⁵² Lombard, *The Golden Age*, p. 217 and M. A. Shaban, *Islamic History: A New Interpretation*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 109-110.

⁵³ Kaye, “Bilād al-Sūdān”, p. 752 and M. Abdul Karim, *Sejarah Pemikiran dan Peradaban Islam* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Book Publisher, 2007), p. 212.

the Rustamids. They consistently gave the same chance to everybody to work on economical activity provided that this activity did not diverge from Islamic teachings. All people must obey the government rule established to make advantages for both society and government. On another side, the Rustamids had to maximize the use of economical potentiality and ensure that their economical activities run in a good way and condition appropriated for Islamic principles.

Besides, the Rustamids effectively made the most use of governmental income received from taxes, alms, donations, and *jizyah* for the necessities of government and society. For that reason, the Rustamids had performed a redistributive policy because the government took some wealth of people and then gave its benefit to them by means of governmental programs.⁵⁴ The advantages of earnings were fulfilled by the government through a serious development over the Rustamid territory until the prosperity of society could be achieved.

Thus, the Rustamids consistently performed the Ibādīte teaching that appreciated all muslim equally and took no notice of their various sects.⁵⁵ Therefore, it can be declared that the implementation of moderate policy was inspired by theological values, i.e. the Ibādīte beliefs. Because of this moderate performance, the Rustamids accomplished the government peacefully thereby gave tolerant rule to all citizens under their administration. *WA ALLĀH A'LAM BI AŞ-ŞAWĀB*

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⁵⁴ Surbakti, *Memahami*, p. 193.

⁵⁵ Al-Isfarāinī, *at-Tabşīr*, p. 53.