

STATE AND SOCIETY
IN
FATIMID EGYPT

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STATE AND SOCIETY IN FATIMID EGYPT

BY

YAACOV LEV



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PREFACE

This work is primarily offered as a contribution to the history of medieval Egypt in the high middle ages, tenth-twelfth centuries. But the history of Fatimid Egypt is a chapter of Mediterranean history as well as a chapter of Shīʿī-Sunnī rivalry.

The work is divided into three parts. The first deals with the Fatimid rule in Egypt and is cast in the form of a narrative interrupted by several topical discourses. Chapter four examines the structure and characteristic socio-economic traits of the ruling circles: the royal family, the administrators, the slaves and the eunuchs of the ruler.

The second part is devoted to the military history of the Fatimid period. Military affairs are frequently referred to in the sources; our knowledge of this field is thus superior to that of many others. The focus on military history is not, however, dictated merely by the availability of sources. Military history, with its social and economic implications, is vital for an understanding of medieval Islamic society. Military history can serve as a prism through which essential issues of medieval Islamic history can be examined. Among these are the political relationships between army and regime, the degree of dependence of Islamic societies on slave armies, and economic issues such as the spread of military *iqṭāʿ* and its consequences.

The third and final part examines the internal policies of the Fatimid regime. Medieval Islamic historiography is a product of urban milieu and thus has a marked urban bias. The rural world is obliterated. The focus of this part is on the urban society of the capital which was the largest and the most significant in the country. Its study is justified on its own merits.

In the course of my research for this book I incurred debts of gratitude to many libraries. I would like to thank the librarians and staff of the following institutions: the British Library, London, the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Cambridge University Library, the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Leiden University Library, Haifa University Library and the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem.

I am also grateful to Professor Heinz Halm of Tübingen University for his comments on my work. Needless to say that the responsibility for the book's contents is solely mine.

October 1990

Yaacov Lev

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION.

Anglicized forms like Fatimid, Abbasid, Ismailism and etc. which does not appear as such in Arabic are written without diacritic marks. The same applies to common geographical names such as Iraq and Baghdad.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.

<i>AAS</i>	Asian and African Studies (Haifa).
<i>AI</i>	Annales Islamologiques.
<i>AIEO</i>	Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales de la Faculté des Lettres d'Alger.
<i>Annales ESC</i>	Annales Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations.
<i>BEO</i>	Bulletin d'Études Orientales.
<i>BGA</i>	Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum
<i>BIFAO</i>	Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.
<i>BJRL</i>	Bulletin of The John Rylands University Library of Manchester.
<i>BSOS</i>	Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies.
<i>BSOAS</i>	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.
<i>CT</i>	Les Cahiers de Tunisie.
<i>EHR</i>	English Historical Review.
<i>E.I.2.</i>	Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd Edition.
<i>Ighāthat</i>	Maqrīzī, <i>Ighāthat al-Umma bi-Kashf al-Ghumma</i> , (Cairo, n.d.).
<i>IJMES</i>	International Journal of Middle East Studies.
<i>IOS</i>	Israel Oriental Studies.
<i>Itti'āz</i>	Maqrīzī, <i>Itti'āz al-Hunafā' bi-Akhhbār al-A'imma al-Fāṭmiyyin al-Khulafā'</i> , vol. 1 (ed) J. al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (Cairo, 1967); vols. 2-3 (ed) M. Ḥ. M. Aḥmad (Cairo, 1971-1973).
<i>JA</i>	Journal Asiatique.
<i>JAOS</i>	Journal of the American Oriental Society.
<i>JESHO</i>	Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient.
<i>JQR</i>	Jewish Quarterly Review.
<i>JNES</i>	Journal of the Near Eastern Studies.
<i>JRAS</i>	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
<i>JSAI</i>	Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam.
<i>JSS</i>	Journal of Semitic Studies.
<i>Khīṭaṭ</i>	Maqrīzī, <i>Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-l-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khīṭaṭ wa-l-Athār</i> , (Būlāq, 1324), 4 vols.
<i>Mémoires IFAO</i>	Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire.
<i>MHR</i>	Mediterranean Historical Review.

<i>MM</i>	The Mariner's Mirror.
<i>Muqaffā</i>	Maqrizī, <i>Muqaffā</i> , MSS Leiden, Leiden University Library, Or.1366A, Or.1366B, Vol.3, 3075.
<i>Muqaffā (ed)</i>	
<i>Zakkār</i>	S. Zakkār, <i>Ta'riḫ al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalibiyya</i> , (Beirut, 1973).
<i>Muqaffā (ed)</i>	
<i>Gottschalk</i>	H. L. Gottschalk, <i>Die Mādhara'ijjūn</i> , (Berlin, 1931).
<i>MW</i>	The Muslim World.
<i>REI</i>	Revue des Études Islamiques.
<i>ROMM</i>	Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée.
<i>RSO</i>	Rivista degli Studi Orientali.
<i>SI</i>	Studia Islamica.
<i>WZKM</i>	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes.
<i>ZDMG</i>	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.

INTRODUCTION

a) The Fatimid State as an Ismāʿīlī State

The Fatimids were a branch of the Ismāʿīlī movement, a Shiite splinter group whose origin went back to the period of the *imām* Jaʿfar al-Šādiq. His death in 148/765 sparked off bitter disputation over his succession. Jaʿfar's son Ismāʿīl, who had been designated as successor, died during his father's lifetime. Ismāʿīl's followers denied his death and expected his return as Messiah (Mahdī or Qā'im). Some of Jaʿfar al-Šādiq's adherents transferred their allegiance to Muḥammad, Ismāʿīl's son, while others accepted the imamate of Jaʿfar's eldest son, ʿAbd Allāh and, upon his death, that of Musā ibn Kāzim. The history of the Ismāʿīlī movement during the eighth, and the first half of the ninth century is shrouded in mystery. Its existence is attested to only from the middle of the ninth century with the appearance of Ismāʿīlī missionaries in many parts of the Islamic world. They called upon the people to acknowledge the imamate of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl, and disseminated the belief of his return as a Mahdī.

In 286/899, the Ismāʿīlī movement became divided over ʿUbayd Allāh, the future first Fatimid ruling *imām*, who claimed the imamate for himself. The reconstruction of Ismāʿīlī history and thought in the second half of the ninth century, the sequence of the events, the personalities involved as well as doctrines preached and subsequently modified to suit the changing political circumstances, is the result of an immense scholarly effort by a great number of researchers studying highly enigmatic and unyielding sources.¹

At the beginning of the tenth century, the Fatimids estab-

¹ For a bibliography of the major works on Ismailism, see W. Madelung, "Ismāʿīliyya", *E.I.*2, IV, 198-206. See also the works of H. Halm, J. van Ess and D. R. W. Bryer cited in the bibliography. For the history of the Fatimid state in Tunisia, see F. Dachraoui, *Le califat fatimide au maghreb 296-362/909-973: histoire politique et institutions*, (Tunis, 1981). For modern general overviews of Fatimid history, see M. Canard, "Fāṭimids", *E.I.*2, II, 850-62; P. Sanders, "Fāṭimids", in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, V, 24-30; H. Halm, "Die Fāṭimiden", in *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, (Munich, 1987), 166-99, 605-6.

lished their state in Tunisia on the ruins of the Aghlabid emirate while their opponents within the Ismā'īlī movement, the Carmathians, entrenched themselves in Baḥrain. To what extent the Fatimid state in its political behaviour and internal structure was shaped or at least influenced by Ismā'īlī ideology is an essential question. Opinions over this issue are deeply divided. M. Canard, in his well-known study; "L'impérialisme des fatimides et leur propagande",² points out to the Fatimid imperial vision and their quest for rule over the world of Islam and ultimately the whole world. In the Fatimid self-view, by virtue of birth (descendants of Prophet's daughter, Fāṭima, and 'Alī, Prophet's cousin and the fourth Caliph of Islam), and by divine choice they were designated to rule the world. The Abbasids, in their view, were ungodly usurpers. The Fatimid drive for power was concomitant with basic ideological tenets. Cl. Cahen, on the other hand, has found no traces of Ismā'īlī ideology in the economic and social policies of the Fatimid regime, neither in North Africa nor in Egypt.³

An important contribution to the discussion of the Ismā'īlī character of the Fatimid state is W. al-Qāḍī's analysis of a text ('*ahd*'), which is inserted in a book of law by the Fatimid jurist, Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, and deals with the political organization of the state. Following a detailed textual and thematic analysis, al-Qāḍī has concluded that the '*ahd*' belongs to "Mirror of Prince" genre, but betrays Fatimid political thinking and contains original ideas. The political order envisaged in the '*ahd*' is highly centralized and consists of three entities: God, the ruler and the rest of the people. The ruler is advised to be attentive to people and treat them humanely. The interests of the masses (*al-āmma*) should be given preference over those of the élite (*al-khāṣṣa*). Al-Qāḍī sees in this attitude a highly original approach and speculates on the historical context in which the '*ahd*' originated and its possible authorship.⁴

Al-Qāḍī's claims regarding the originality of the ideas contained in the '*ahd*' are not warranted. The '*ahd*' deals with a

² First published in *AIEO*, VI(1942-47), 200-29, reprinted in *idem*, *Miscellanea Orientalia*, (London, 1973). On the poet Ibn Hānī, who was one of Canard's sources, see M. Yalaoui, "Ibn Hānī poète shi'ite et chantre de fatimides au Maghreb", *Les Africains*, 6(1977), 101-22.

³ "La changeant portée sociale de quelques doctrines religieuses", in *L'élaboration de l'Islam*, (Colloque de Strasbourg, 1959), (Paris, 1961), 15.

⁴ W. al-Qāḍī, "An Early Fatimid Political Document", *SI*, 48(1978), 71-108, esp., 86-7, 90. The text of the '*ahd*' studied by al-Qāḍī has been translated into English by G. Salinger, "A Muslim Mirror for Princes", *MW*, 46(1956), 24-39.

common theme in "Mirror of Prince" literature and Islamic political writings, namely; justice (*ʿadl*, *inṣāf*) vis-à-vis oppression (*ẓulm*). The ruler should conduct himself in a just manner and look after his subjects compared to a flock for whom he acts as a shepherd. The centrality of the ruler in the political system set forth in the *ʿahd* is a reflection of the pivotal place of the *imām* in Shīʿī and in Ismāʿīlī Islam.

Among the various aspects of Ismāʿīlī history, the question of the social appeal of Ismailism to such widely different populations such as the fellahin of Iraq, Arab nomads and the Berbers of Kutāma is little understood. S. M. Stern, for example, has described Ismailism as being imposed from above by converting the rulers rather than winning over the hearts of the people.⁵ His observation while reflecting the way Ismailism spread in some places does not apply to Tunisia, and the Egyptian realities were even more complex than those of Tunisia. The question of the social policies of the Fatimid regime must be examined in the wider context of its internal policies.

For the Egyptian period of the Fatimid state, the sources contain much information on the urban society of the capital and the policies of the regime towards non-Muslim communities. Social history of the period can not be written without paying great attention to military problems. In my view, social and military history are closely linked. The large size of the army, its complex social composition, the vast economic resources needed for its upkeep and the involvement of the army in politics made the army omnipresent in the considerations of the regime and life of the society. Other aspects of the social life are not so well portrayed by our sources. Rural society is almost totally absent from the historical records of the period, and the data on urban society, outside the capital, is highly fragmented. Social history of the period is primarily the history of the great urban centres.

b) The Fatimid State and the Muslim World of the High Middle Ages

Whatever was the relative significance of Ismailism in shaping of the political conduct of the Fatimid state, its structure and its internal policies, the wider realities of the Muslim world of the

⁵ "Cairo as the Centre of the Ismāʿīlī Movement" in *Colloque international sur d'histoire du Caire, 1969*, (Leipzig, 1974), reprinted in *idem, Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism*, (Jerusalem, 1983), 234.

high middle ages must also be taken into account. The Fatimid state was not created out of a void. By the tenth century Islamic administrative and military institutions were well-developed. The two countries dominated by the Fatimids, Tunisia and Egypt, were during the ninth and the tenth centuries ruled by independent dynasties which created ruling institutions and vast armies. These institutions and armies, while geared to serve the local needs of those regimes, were shaped according to the Abbasid imperial model. The Fatimids inherited these institutions and even the administrative and military personnel of the regimes overthrown by them in Tunisia and Egypt. The Fatimid rulers when laying the foundations of their state had very little internal resources to draw upon. Among the ranks of the Fatimid movement—a clandestine organization whose greatest achievement was to win to its cause a peripheral social group, the Berbers of Kutāma—the know-how needed for running a state was not to be found. The degree of continuity between Aghlabid and early-Fatimid Tunisia must have been very marked.

When the actual administrative organization of the Fatimid state in Tunisia is examined, one sees that it was in line with the patterns found in the Islamic medieval world. The Fatimids entrusted the business of government and, in many cases, the commanding of their land and naval forces to people of servile origin, among them many eunuchs. Those administrators wielded wide powers, and some attained great honours. Fatimid urbanism in Tunisia followed the paradigm of Muslim urbanism of the middle ages. Muslim rulers such as Abbasids and Aghlabids founded capital cities as seats for their courts and as administrative and military centres for their regimes. The same motives lay behind the foundation of Mahdiyya and Manṣūriyya by the Fatimids in Tunisia.⁶

In the military field, however, there was a most important break with the Aghlabid tradition. The Aghlabid army was composed of two distinct elements: the *junds* and the slaves. The *junds* were the descendants of Arab tribesmen who had participated in the Muslim conquest of Tunisia.⁷ They were

⁶ These aspects are discussed by Dachraoui in part two of his book.

⁷ M. Talbi, *L'émirat aghlabide, 184-196/800-909. Histoire politique*, (Paris, 1966), 250-1, esp., 291; *idem*, "Law and Economy in Ifriqiya (Tunisia) in the Third Islamic Century", in *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, (ed) A. L. Udovitch (Princeton, 1981), 212-3, 216-7, 220-1.

hostile to the Aghlabid regime and rebellious. The Aghlabids, in order to offset the power of the *jund*, made use of black and white slaves. In al-ʿAbbāsiyya, the fortified Aghlabid capital (built in 801-810), 5,000 black slaves were stationed.⁸ Aghlabid opting for military slaves was facilitated by the abundant supply of slaves available at the markets of Tunisia. Black slaves were supplied through the trans-Saharan trade, and white slaves were obtained through Mediterranean commerce. The Aghlabid conquest of Sicily and raids on southern Italy were also important sources for the procurement of white slaves. The Aghlabids also employed *mawālī* in military tasks. The *mawālī* were a by-product, so to speak, of the process of Islamization. People who converted to Islam in the territories conquered by the Arabs in the seventh century had attached themselves as *mawālī* (clients) to Arab tribes or families. The *mawālī* could have been free-born people or of servile origin (prisoners of war, for example).⁹

From the inception of Fatimid rule in Tunisia, black military slaves (*al-sūdān*) and white military slaves (*Rūm*) of the Aghlabids were employed by in the Fatimid army. The black military slaves of the Fatimids (denoted by the term *ʿabīd* which, in a military context, means blacks who served as infantry) proved a reliable fighting force.¹⁰ The existence of a slave component in the Fatimid army did not jeopardise the numerical superiority or the political predominance of the Kutāma Berbers. Ismāʿīlī sources, especially the writings of Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, reflect the unique relationships between the Kutāma and the dynasty. The Fatimid army was a tribal army composed of a social group whose initial response to the Fatimid cause, and its continuous

⁸ Talbi, *L'émirat*, 136-7, 291. For a different interpretation, see M. Brett, "The Arab Conquest and the Rise of Islam in North Africa", in *Cambridge History of Africa*, (ed) J. D. Fage (Cambridge, 1978), II, 528-9.

⁹ For the military role of *mawālī* in early Islam, see M. J. Kister, "The Battle of Harra. Some Socio-Economic Aspects", in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, (ed) M. Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem, 1977), 33-51; D. Pipes, "Mawlas: Freed Slaves and Converts in Early Islam", *Slavery and Abolition*, 1(1983), 132-77; idem, *Slave Soldiers and Islam. The Genesis of a Military System*, (New-Haven, 1981), 113-6, 117-31, 131-40; P. Crone, *Slaves on Horses. The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*, (Cambridge, 1980), 38, 52-4, 260, n.619. For Abbasid period, see J. Lassner, *The Shaping of Abbasid Rule*, (Princeton, 1980), 92-8.

¹⁰ Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Risālāt Iftitāh al-Daʿwa*, (ed) W. al-Qāḍī (Beirut, 1970), 214-5, 257; Idrīs ʿImād al-Dīn, *ʿUyūn al-Akhbār*, (ed) M. Ghālib (Beirut, 1975), V, 114. For an opposite version, see Ibn Hammad, *Akhbār Mulūk Banū ʿUbayd*, edited and translated into French by M. Vonderheyden (Paris, 1927), 8.

military backing, made it a privileged group in the state. The relative significance of the slave element in the Fatimid military organization was minor. By the standards of the Muslim world of the tenth century, the Fatimid army was atypical. It resembled more the Umayyad and early Abbasid model than the military realities of the Muslim world of the first half of the tenth century.

This anomaly continued during the early years of the Fatimid rule in Egypt. Because of reasons dealt with in detail in part two, the Fatimids had to bring their army in line with armies of the eastern Islamic world. The military and social diversification of the Fatimid army meant the erosion of the position of the Kutāma. Due to the predominance of the army in the political, economical and social life of the state, the changes in the military structure cast their shadow over Fatimid history for a long period.

c) The Sources for Fatimid History

Very little of the tenth-twelfth centuries Egyptian historiography has survived. Our information on historians contemporary with the Fatimid period, and the titles of their works, is derived from late medieval biographical dictionaries. Later authorities were familiar with these works, and have incorporated earlier sources in their writings on the Fatimid period.¹¹ The most notable example is the Mamlūk historian Maqrīzī (1364-1442) whose various works are a mine of information on Fatimid history. Nevertheless, the question how late authorities utilized the works of historians who were contemporary with the Fatimid period remains elusive. We are unable to explain the reasons for gaps in information supplied by later authorities, or for paucity of data. The possible bias of the Sunnī historians, contemporary with the Fatimids and later, must always be taken into account. Maqrīzī was fully aware of the problem, and tried to overcome it by giving preference to accounts of Egyptian historians who were contemporary with the Fatimids over those of Syria or Iraq whom he considered more hostile to the

¹¹ A. F. Sayyid, "Lumières nouvelles sur quelques sources de l'histoire fatimide en Égypte", *AI*, 13(1977), 1-41; Cl. Cahen, "Quelques chroniques anciennes relatives aux derniers fatimides", *BIFAO*, XXXVII(1937), 1-27. Little is known about the historical works of Ibn Fātik and his biography of al-Mustansir, see Sayyid, *op. cit.*, 18-9; F. Rosenthal, "Al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik", *Oriens*, 13-14(1961), 133-58, esp., 137, 138.

Fatimids and less knowledgeable on Egyptian history.¹² His approach cannot always be justified, and betrays naivety. One might expect censorship, and some degree of self-imposed restraint, in the writings of Fatimid contemporary historians.

W. Ivanow regretted that "Ismailism never developed a taste for historiography".¹³ Historical information found in the writings of Ismā'īlī authors such as Qāḍī al-Nu'mān and the late historian 'Imād al-Dīn, is important and occasionally illuminating, but inadequate. Ivanow admitted that even anti-Ismā'īlī sources may contain valuable information.¹⁴ Thus Fatimid history must be written from Sunnī sources, be they selective or biased as they are. The same can be said regarding non-literary sources. Coins, inscriptions and the few Arabic documents that have survived from the Fatimid period are of great value, but in themselves inadequate. For Fatimid history literary sources are the most important.

¹² For Maqrīzī's remarks about the war between al-Mu'izz and the Carmathians, and his criticism of works by historians of Iraq, see ch.1, n.22. In the same vein Maqrīzī argues against the accounts by historians of Baghdad implicating Sitt al-Mulk in the murder of her brother al-Hākīm, see ch.1, n.86.

¹³ "Ismailis and Qarmatians", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, N.S. 16(1940), 46.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 43.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

FATIMID IMĀMS IN POWER

a) The Fatimid Conquest of Egypt.

I

In 969 a convergence of several factors made the Fatimid conquest of Egypt possible. 1) Egypt had been the primary target of Fatimid expansion since the inception of the Fatimid state in Tunisia. Between 909, when the Fatimids rose to power, and 969 a drastic change occurred in the political fortunes of the Abbasid Caliphate. Previous Fatimid attempts to conquer Egypt had failed due to the resistance put by the Abbasid governors, and massive intervention of Abbasid land armies backed by the navy of Tarsūs. In 969, when Egypt faced the largest and the best prepared Fatimid invasion, the Abbasid Caliphate under Buyid tutelage was incapable of swift and determine action to ward off the Fatimid danger to Egypt.

2) In the years preceding the Fatimid invasion of 969, the Ikhshidid regime in Egypt disintegrated. Following the death of Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj, the founder of the Ikhshidid dynasty (21 Dhū 'l-Hijja 334/24 July 946), the power in Egypt was usurped by Kāfūr, a black eunuch of Ibn Ṭughj. He ruled as regent for Ibn Ṭughj's sons and, from 355/966 until his death in 357/968, as an independent ruler acknowledged by the Abbasids. A. S. Ehrenkreutz described Kāfūr as an effective defender of Egypt and the Ikhshidid regime from external threats.¹ Kāfūr's internal policies, however, were characterised by short-term expedencies which paved the way toward the dissolution of the Ikhshidid regime. Upon the failure of Fatimid campaigns against Egypt, preference was given to subverting the country. The sources say much about the Fatimid

¹ A. S. Ehrenkreutz, "Kāfūr", *E.I.2*, IV, 418-9. For Egypt in the Ikhshidid period, see S. I. Kāshif, *Miṣr fī 'Ahd al-Ikhshīdiyyīn*, (Cairo, 1948); J. L. Bacharach, "The Career of Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj al-Ikhshid; a Tenth Century Governor of Egypt", *Speculum*, 50 (1975), 586-612. for the meaning of the title al-Ikhshid, see C. E. Bosworth, "Ikhshid", *E.I.2*, III, 1060.

infiltration of Egypt. To be sure, the exact course of events is vague, but a delegation of Fatimid propagandists is known to have been received by Kāfūr.² The merchant Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad ibn Naṣir established himself in Fustāt, and became recognized as the head of the Fatimid propaganda. A contemporary Egyptian historian speaks about his overt pro-Fatimid activity.³ Fatimid propagandists did not attempt to destabilize Kāfūr's rule. They adopted long-term policies aimed at creating conditions propitious for their goals. They stressed that the Fatimid rule would commence only upon Kāfūr's death—the black stone—in their blunt—insolent reference.⁴

3) In contrast with the enfeeblement of the Abbasid Caliphate in mid-tenth century and the internal weakness of the Ikhshidid regime, the Fatimid power in Tunisia was on the ascent. Fatimid aggrandizement was epitomized by the large army dispatched against Egypt in 969, and the vast financial resources made available to its commander, general Jawhar.⁵

II

Following Kāfūr's death (in the second half of Jumādā I 357/-April 968), a group of civilian notables and military leaders gathered to discuss the situation. The notables of Fustāt were an amorphous group of wealthy and influential civilians. Among them were professional administrators: some were of

² Maqrīzī, *Khitat*, III, 42.

³ Ibn Zūlāq, *Kitāb Akhbār Sībawayh al-Miṣrī*, (eds) M.I. Saʿd and H. al-Dīb (Cairo, 1933), 23, 40. Following the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, Ibn Naṣir assisted Jawhar and later al-Muʿizz in their dealings with the notables of Fustāt, see Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā*, (ed) S. Zakkār in his *Taʾrīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalibiyya*, (Beirut, 1973), 334; Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāz*, I, 139.

⁴ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 102. For basic studies on eunuchs in Islam, see Ch. Pellat, "Khāṣi; The Central Islamic Land", *E.I.* 2, IV, 1092-7; D. Ayalon, "On the Eunuchs in Islam", *JSAI*, 1 (1979), 92-124; *idem*, "The Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate", in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, (Jerusalem, 1977), 267-97. There is no systematic study of the attitudes toward eunuchs in medieval Islam. Little can be learnt from the relationships between the renowned poet, al-Mutanabbī, and Kāfūr. While in Kāfūr's service, al-Mutanabbī praised him but following a rupture in their relationships, al-Mutanabbī mocked Kāfūr. There was nothing unusual in that, the same happened between al-Mutanabbī and other rulers, see M. Winter, "Content and Form in the Elegies of al-Mutanabbī", in *Studia Orientalia. Memoriae D. H. Baneth Dedicata*, (Jerusalem, 1977), 327-45; C. Issawi, "Mutanabbī in Egypt (957-962)", in *Medieval and Middle Eastern Studies in Honor of Aziz Suryal Atiya*, (ed) S. Hanna (Leiden, 1972), 236-39. For venomous remarks on Kāfūr by a contemporary observer of the political scene in Fustāt, see Ibn Zūlāq, 55.

⁵ Y. Lev, "The Fatimids and Egypt, 301-358/914-969", *Arabica*, 35(1988), 195-6.

Iraqi origin, the others were members of *ashrāf* families in the Ḥasanid and Ḥusaynid line (i.e. descendants of the two sons of ʿAlī, the fourth Caliph in Islam). The notables who took part in the meeting were the vizier Jaʿfar ibn Faḍl ibn al-Furāt and the *sharīf* Abū Jaʿfar Muslim. The military leaders belonged to two different armed bodies known under the generic names Ikhshīdiyya and Kāfūriyya. These formations were established by Ibn Ṭughj and Kāfūr respectively.

The essence of the arrangements agreed upon by the military and the notables was the investiture of Ibn Ṭughj's grandson, Abū ʿl-Fawāris, an eleven year old boy, with the supreme authority. His cousin, Ḥasan ibn ʿUbayd Allāh, was appointed as regent; he stayed in Ramla, in Palestine. Ibn al-Furāt was confirmed as the man responsible for administration and fiscal matters while the overall military command was given to Shamūl al-Ikhshīdī.⁶ This disposition of power was formulated in a document signed by the participants in the meeting.

The first part of the document sets forth the political programme of the new regime. Pledges to re-establish the rule of law and justice were given, and promises to abolish unlawful practices were made. In a wider Islamic context, they committed themselves to carry out the Holy War, to improve the conditions of the frontier towns and the holy cities of Arabia. The second part of the document was in fact a private agreement among the members of the group to cooperate in a spirit of mutual understanding toward the implementation of these goals. They exchanged mutual assurances of personal safety (*amān*), and pledged not to plot against one another.⁷

The following months (until the Fatimid conquest) witnessed the collapse of this attempt at collective rule. The failure was due to personal rivalry among the notables, and the enmity between the Ikhshīdiyya and the Kāfūriyya. Clashes between these two military bodies erupted toward the end of Jumādā II

⁶ Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fi Funūn al-Adab*, MSS Leiden, Leiden University Library, Or.2k, f, 147a; Or.2l, p, 27; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fi Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, (Cairo, 1932-1950), IV, 9-10; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, (ed), I, ʿAbbās (Beirut, 1968-71), I, 376; *Muqaffā*, translated into French by Th. Bianquis in his "L'acte de succession de Kāfūr d'après Maqrīzī", *AI*, XII(1974), 264-5.

⁷ Nuwayrī, Or.2l, p, 25. The involvement of local civilian politicians in arranging the disposition of power went back to the period following Ibn Ṭughj's death, see *Muqaffā*, (ed) H. L. Gottschalk in his *Die Mādharāʾijjūn*, (Berlin, 1931), 124-5; Anṭākī, *Kitāb al-Taʾrikh*, (ed), L. Shaykhū (Beirut, 1909), 129.

357/end of April, beginning of May 968. It became clear that Shamūl had been chosen as a candidate of convenience—a compromise between two powerful military leaders: Niḥrīr al-Shuwayzān, the head of the Ikhshidiyya, and Fanak, a black eunuch, the head of the Kāfūriyya. The clashes deteriorated into a large-scale war in which the Kāfūriyya was defeated. Fanak, with his men, fled from Fustāt to Ramla.⁸

A difficult economic situation was a significant factor behind the outbreak of violence. The last years of Kāfūr's rule had been marked by a severe famine caused by a low rise of the Nile. In these circumstances, Ibn al-Furāt failed to stabilize the administration and to provide enough money to satisfy the quarreling groups. Motivated by personal animosity, he arrested several top administrators and thus brought the functioning of the administration to a standstill. The flow of taxes from the agricultural regions to the capital ceased, aggravating Ibn Furāt's problems.⁹ The efforts of the *sharīf* Abū Ja'far Muslim (Shawwāl 357/August-September 968) to reconcile between the parties came to nothing. The havoc continued.¹⁰ In Muḥarram 358/January 969, the regent al-Ḥasan ibn 'Ubayd Allāh arrived in Fustāt from Ramla. He, too, failed to gain a grip over the situation in the capital. The steps he undertook, like the arrest of Ibn al-Furāt, were without avail. Realizing his failure, 'Ubayd Allāh returned to Ramla.¹¹ His inability to bridge over the fragmented political scene in Fustāt left the notables and the military with the choice of seeking outside intervention in their affairs. No help could be expected from Baghdad while the Fatimid preparations for the conquest of Egypt were in full swing. The sources unanimously report that letters from civilians and leaders of military factions in Fustāt were sent to al-Mu'izz in Tunisia.¹²

⁸ Dhahabī, *Ta'riḫ al-Islām*, MS London, The British Library, Or.48, ff, 8a-b; *Muqaffā*, (tran.) Bianquis, 266-7. Kāfūr had already experienced difficulties in imposing discipline on his multi-ethnic army, see Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, III, 42; Antāki, 129-30.

⁹ Nuwayrī, Or.21, p, 28; Or.2k,f, 174a; Ibn Khallikān, I, 347; Ibn Taghribirdī, IV, 23-4; Yāqūt, *Irshād al-Arib ilā Ma'rifat al-Adīb*, (ed) D. S. Margoliouth (Leiden, 1909-27), VI, 407-8.

¹⁰ Ibn Zūlāq, 53; no indication of date appears in this account.

¹¹ Nuwayrī, Or.2k, f, 147a; Or.21, p, 28. On Ḥasan ibn 'Ubayd Allāh, see Ibn Taghribirdī, IV, 9. In Palestine he had experienced many problems caused by a bedouin insurrection and a Carmathian foray, see Dhahabī, Or.48, f, 7b; Antāki, 132.

¹² *Khīṭaṭ*, III, 42; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 326.

III

When the news of the approach of Jawhar's army arrived in Fustāt, the military and the notables formed a common front in an attempt at collective bargaining with the Fatimids. A delegation headed by *sharīf* Abū Muslim went to Jawhar's camp with a list of demands from the notables. Among these were requests for personal safety, the preservation of their rural estates and their posts as tax-collectors. Nihrīr, who as the leader of a military body, had something to offer in exchange for his demands, presented unrealistic conditions. He asked to keep his estate, and to be nominated as resident-governor of the holy cities in Arabia.¹³ His second demand revealed a complete lack of understanding for the Fatimid particular religious sensitivities. Such a post could have not been entrusted to an adversary. On 8 Sha'bān 358/26 June 969, the delegation returned bringing two kinds of documents: a general letter of safety and personal letters of safety for those who had requested them.¹⁴

The general letter of safety is the most important document which has reached us from this period; it has been reproduced in full by later historians. It was not merely a letter of safety, but a political manifesto in which the future policies of the new regime were set forth. The letter opened with an explanation of the reasons for the Fatimid campaign against Egypt, which had been portrayed as an attempt to protect the Muslims in Egypt and the Eastern Islamic world from their enemies. The Byzantines were not named as the enemy whose danger the Fatimids undertook to repel, but hints regarding the Byzantine military activity against Islamic territories were unmistakable. The need to justify waging a war on fellow Muslims motivated this explanation. The arguments, hypocritical as they were, were not divorced from the political realities of the time. The same can be said about the essential part of the letter, the part dealing with the internal situation in Egypt. Jawhar's promises portrayed a first-hand knowledge of Egyptian conditions gained through the long activity of Fatimid propaganda in the country. The list of improvements promised by the new regime

¹³ Nuwayrī, Or.21, pp. 28, 54; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikra fī Ta'rikh al-Hijra*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hunt.198, f. 200a; *Itti'āz*, I, 103, 107; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 326, 331; cf. M. Quatremère, "Mémoires historiques sur la dynastie des Khalifes Fatimites", *JA* (1836), 437; Th. Bianquis, "La prise du pouvoir par les fatimides en Egypte, 357-363/968-974, *AI* 11 (1972), 71, n.3.

¹⁴ The text of the *amān* is given by Baybars al-Manṣūrī, ff. 200b-202a; Ibn Ḥammād, 41-4; *Itti'āz*, I, 103-7; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 327-30.

was long, covering a wide range of issues. The restoration of internal security as well as travel and pilgrimage, was assured. Illegal taxation and other fiscal practices were to be stamped out, and the improvement of the quality of the coinage was pledged. Other references were aimed specifically at the religious circles. Jawhar expressed the Fatimids' intention to build new mosques and to refurbish the old ones. Paying the staff, muezzins, preachers and leaders of prayer (*imāms*) was promised. The last paragraph of Jawhar's letter outlined the intended Fatimid religious policy. The tone was oecumenical; the uniformity of Islam was emphasised. The religious duties incumbent upon the Muslims and religious rites such as almsgiving, observance of the fast of Ramaḍān and the celebration of its nights, the Festival of Breaking Ramaḍān, the pilgrimage, the prayer and the call to prayer, and the Holy War as well as the legal affairs would be conducted according to the Koran, the tradition of the Prophet, and of the first generations of Islam. In fact both Sunnī and Shī'ī Islam claimed adherence to these principles. The main question, whose interpretation of what constitutes the correct path in rites and legal affairs was to prevail, was left open. This paragraph, as the whole letter, although not couched in Fatimid religious phraseology, had its outer (*ẓāhir*) and inner (*bāṭin*) meanings. As time proved, the new political masters decided these questions, according to their beliefs, by disregarding the *ẓāhir* meaning of the paragraph. Finally, the last line of the letter referred to Christians and Jews; they, it was said, would be kept in their right place (i.e. inferior position). On the whole it was a persuasive document appealing to wide sections of the Egyptian society.

IV

When the delegation arrived from Jawhar's camp, and the letter was publicly read, the military were disappointed. They decided to fight, appointing Niḥrīr as the commander of both the Kāfūriyya and the Ikhshīdiyya. On 15 Sha'bān/3 July, Jawhar inflicted a decisive blow on his opponents. The regiments of the Kāfūriyya and the Ikhshīdiyya had dispersed, and some fled Fustāt which was in turmoil.¹⁵ At this crucial moment

¹⁵ The exact course of the war between Jawhar and the Egyptian troops is vague. The sources differ over details such as where and how many engagements were fought. For attempts of reconstruction of the events, see

the Fatimid clandestine network in Fustāt proved instrumental. The propagandists appeared in public; in conjunction with Fustāt's chief of police, they calmed the population by unfurling Fatimid banners.¹⁶ Several people came to *sharīf* Abū Muslim urging him to procure new letters of safety from Jawhar who responded positively to the request.¹⁷

Jawhar's victory was the result of two factors; numerical superiority of his army, and the adoption of an effective strategy. Jawhar concentrated his main effort against the capital.¹⁸ Fustāt, being the main urban centre and the seat of the government, was the key to the conquest of Egypt although the provinces were not totally subjugated. In the course of Jawhar's fighting unnecessary bloodshed was avoided. However, the enemy was dispersed rather than destroyed, and gaining the control over the country took almost four years.

In mid 359/970, a rebellion erupted in Tinnīs (on the Mediterranean coast). After some initial success it was put down. In 360/971, Jawhar faced a new rebellion in Lower Egypt and the first Carmathian invasion.¹⁹ One year earlier, the Carmathians had crushed a Fatimid force in Syria. The arrival of the Carmathians provoked a second rebellion in Tinnīs which spread to Faramā (on the Mediterranean coast). At the beginning of Rabi' I 361/December 971, Jawhar fought the Carmathians in Cairo. He withstood their repeated attacks due to fortifications he constructed, and a trench he had dug in anticipation of their arrival.²⁰ Following the Carmathian retreat, the rebellion

Quatremère, *JA*, (1837), 46-9; Bianquis, "La prise", 71-2; Lev, "The Fatimid Conquest of Egypt-Military, Political and Social Aspects", *IOS*, IX(1979), 319-20.

¹⁶ *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 333; Antākī, 132-3. The Fatimids believed in the power of their banners to discourage their adversaries and to raise the morale of their adherents. See, for example, the text of the Ismā'īlī author Idris 'Imād al-Dīn translated into English by Stern, *Studies*, 182.

¹⁷ Nuwayrī, *Or.* 21, p. 56; *Itti'āz*, 110; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 334.

¹⁸ Prior to the conquest of Fustāt, Jawhar dispatched a force to Fayyūm which had been taken peacefully, see *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 331. Fayyūm was an important axis on the desert route from North Africa to Egypt. For Jawhar, it was essential to secure the desert route as an alternative way for supplies or retreat.

¹⁹ Nuwayrī, *Or.* 21, p. 58; *Itti'āz*, I, 120, 122, 128-9; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār 338; Ibn Duqmaq, *Kitāb al-Intisār*, (ed) K. Vollers (Bulāq, 1891-2), IV, 9.

²⁰ Nuwayrī, *Or.* 21, p. 59; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, ff. 213a-b; *Itti'āz*, 129-30; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 340.; *Khitat*, III, 223-4, 320-1; IV, 340-1; *Ta'rikh al-Qarāmīta*, with abstracts from other historians including Maqrīzī's *Muqaffā*, (ed) S. Zakkār (Beirut, 1971), 57-8, 105-6; Ibn Zāfir, *Kitāb Akhbār al-Duwal al-Munqati'a*, (ed) A. Ferrè (Cairo, 1972), 25; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, (ed) S. al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Cairo, 1961), VI, 143-4.

in Tinnis faded away. The people of the town paid a huge sum, one million *dirhams*, as blood-money for Fatimid soldiers killed in the course of the uprising.²¹ By the time al-Muʿizz arrived in Egypt (362/973) transferring the Fatimid state from Tunisia to the new conquered land, the country was more or less pacified. In 363/974, al-Muʿizz faced a second Carmathian invasion. The Carmathian contingents spread throughout Lower and Upper Egypt. The main battle was fought outside Cairo. Al-Muʿizz's son, emir ʿAbd Allāh, defeated the Carmathian force after fierce fighting.²²

The Carmathian invasion of Egypt was an outcome of the enmity which had developed between the Carmathians and the Fatimids following a doctrinal split. The intensity of hatred between the two groups was revealed by the unprecedented cold-blooded execution of 1,500 Carmathian prisoners of war by the Fatimids.²³ The Carmathians were the sole power in the eastern Islamic world willing and able to challenge the Fatimid conquest of Egypt and their expansion into Palestine and Syria. The Buyid Sultan, who himself had no intention of averting the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, was happy to wage war on the Fatimids by proxy. He, with the Hamdanids of North Syria, supported the Carmathians militarily and financially.²⁴ The situation was highly paradoxical; the Buyid Sultan, himself of declared Shīʿī persuasion, used an Ismāʿīlī group to fight another Ismāʿīlī group. The Carmathian marched on Egypt under the black banners of the Abbasids admitting their sovereignty and legitimacy. Al-Muʿizz's appeal to the Carmathians in the name of their common past failed to conciliate them.²⁵

²¹ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 143. For the events of the rebellion, see Nuwayrī, *Or*, 21, p. 60; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, f, 214a; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 131, 133, 142-3.

²² Nuwayrī, *Or*, 21, p. 63; *Taʾriḫ al-Qarāmīta*, 106-7; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 150, 202-3; Maqrīzī disputes the version that the Carmathian forces crumbled because the bedouins of Banū Jarrāh had been bribed by al-Muʿizz with 100,000 forged *dīnārs*, 205-6. For accounts in this vein, see *Taʾriḫ al-Qarāmīta*, 59-61; Kutubī, *ʿUyūn al-Taʾriḫ*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Arabe d.204, ff, 353b, 354a-b; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 159-60; Ibn Zāfir, 25;

²³ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 209; Antākī, 142.

²⁴ Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funun al-Adab*, MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Add.829, ff, 224b-225a; Kutubī, d.204, f, 331b; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, f, 116a; Dhahabī, f, 94b; Ibn Zāfir, 24; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 134; Ibn Taghribirdī, IV, 74; *Taʾriḫ al-Qarāmīta*, 57, 104-5; Ibn al-Qalānisi, *Dhayl Taʾriḫ Dimashq*, (ed) H. F. Amedroz (Leiden, 1908), 1.

²⁵ W. Madelung, "Fatimiden und Bāḥrainqarmaten", *Der Islam*, 37(1961), 35-88, esp., 54-6, 65-6. For earlier works on this topic, see B. Lewis, *The Origins*

b) *The Consolidation of Fatimid Rule in Egypt*

I

The Fatimid conquest of Egypt was achieved and, for four years, was defended by military means. Force, and the potential threat of its use, played an important role in the consolidation of the Fatimid rule. But brute force in itself cannot explain the ability of the Fatimids to maintain their rule during the four stormy years against heavy odds. From its inception in Egypt, the Fatimid regime adopted policies which proved instrumental for the full consolidation of its sway over the country.

Two aspects of Fatimid policies were especially important: the cooperation between the regime and the most prominent persons among the notables of Fustāt, and the slow and gradual imposition of Ismailism (discussed in detail separately). Jawhar and later al-Muʿizz developed excellent working relations with the former Ikhshidid vizier Jaʿfar ibn al-Furāt, the *sharīf* Jaʿfar Abū Muslim, and the *cadi* of Fustāt, Abū Ṭāhir. Each of these persons served also as a link between the regime and wider social groups; the administrators, the *ashrāf*, and the Sunni religious circles in Fustāt. The precise nature of Jaʿfar ibn al-Furāt's administrative duties under Jawhar cannot be ascertained. He served as chief administrator.²⁶ Al-Muʿizz preferred the services of Yaʿqūb ibn Killis, who was a local personality as much as Ibn Furāt serving under both the former Ikhshidid regime and the new masters.

In Fustāt, on the eve of the Fatimid conquest, families of *ashrāf* were prominent in political and economic life. Jawhar and al-Muʿizz established cordial relationships with them and were attentive to their demands. The importance of the *ashrāf* of Fustāt extended beyond the Egyptian context merely; they had family connections with the *ashrāf* of Arabia.²⁷ Achieving recognition from the holy cities of Arabia in their rule was a long-coveted goal of the Fatimids. It was achieved following the

of *Ismāʿilism*, (Cambridge, 1940), ch. 3; Ivanow, 43-85, esp., 78-85; Stern, *Studies*, part II, ch. 6.

²⁶ *Itiʿāz*, I, 107, 110-1, 119; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 331, 334, 340; Ibn Zāfir, 29.

²⁷ Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-Aʿshā*, (Cairo, 1913-1939), IV, 268-9, 298-9; cf: Quatremère, (1837), 148-9, 182-5; Bianquis, "La prise", 55-61; Lev, "The Fatimid Conquest", 323-6.

conquest of Egypt, and the Fatimid relationships with the *ashrāf* were important in this respect as well.²⁸

The local conditions of Fustāt were also helpful toward the consolidation of Fatimid rule. The characteristics of these conditions became apparent when contrasted with Damascus, for example. The Fatimids had many difficulties in gaining control over Damascus, and their rule in the town was never fully secured. The *ashrāf* of Damascus were bitter opponents of the Fatimids leading the popular resistance in the town against the Fatimid attempts at conquest. Their ability sprang from the willingness of the Damascene militia (*ahdāth*) to fight Fatimids. The existence of popular armed movements in the towns of Syria, Iraq, and the Iranian world is attested to from the ninth century onwards. No parallel organizations are known to have existed in Fustāt.²⁹ In their resistance to the Fatimid assault, the *ashrāf* and the *ahdāth* of Damascus relied on the fortifications of the town. Damascus, in contrast with Fustāt, was a walled town. The establishment of Cairo, as a walled town in which the new masters—protected by their army—lived, was in itself of paramount importance in warding off the military threats faced by the regime.

The notables of Fustāt, on the eve of the Fatimid conquest, were devoid of access to military power. It was an outcome of a long process in which the power of the Arab élite in Egypt had

²⁸ Lev, "The Fatimids and Egypt", 191.

²⁹ The modern study of popular movements owes its beginning to Cl. Cahen's influential article: "Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du moyen âge", *Arabica*, V(1958), 225-50, VI(1959), 26-56, 223-65. For Baghdad, see S. Sabari, *Mouvements populaires à Bagdad à l'époque abbasside IX^e-XI^e siècles*, (Paris, 1981). For the Mamlūk period, see I. M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge Mass., 1967); For tenth-eleventh century Damascus, see Th. Bianquis, "Notables ou malandrins d'origine rurale à Damas à l'époque fatimide", *BEO*, 26(1973), 185-201; Y. Lev, "The Fatimids and the Ahdāth of Damascus, 386/996-411/1021", *Die Welt des Orients*, XIII(1982), 97-106. The term *ahdāth* (literally; young men) which indicates in Damascus and in the eastern Islamic world urban militia appears in an Egyptian context. A gang 1,000 strong, described as *shabāb al-shujaʿān*, *ghulām* and as *ahdāth*, terrorized the population of Tinnis. They maintained a kind of communal life under their chiefs (who numbered 100 men). A Christian family of Banū Qishlām asked al-Muʿizz to curb their activities. For three months, a Fatimid general fought these men in vain. Eventually a truce was arranged, and the general entertained the *ahdāth* in a banquet in the course of which they were massacred, see Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, edited, translated and annotated by A. S. Atiya and others (Cairo, 1948), II, part 2, 88-90 (Arabic), 131-3 (English); cf: Quatremère, (1837), 60-3. The story of a banquet which turns into bloodbath is a literary topos.

been eroded, and the command over military forces slipped from their hands, but the situation had not always been so. In pre-Tulunid Egypt (seventh-ninth centuries), there was a distinct Arab élite (*wujūh*) concentrated in Fustāt and Alexandria.³⁰ The Arab notables of Fustāt commanded the local militia (*jund*), and frequently held the post of chief of police (*ṣāhib al-shurṭa*), meaning the local armed forces. H. Kennedy sees the second half of the ninth century as the period marking the decline in the power of Fustāt's notables.³¹ When Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn arrived in Egypt, the strong man in Fustāt was Ibn al-Mudabbir who, in 247/861, was nominated by Baghdad as responsible for the finances of Egypt. Ibn Ṭūlūn rejected the money and gifts offered by Ibn al-Mudabbir; he desired Ibn al-Mudabbir's contingent of military slaves made up of one hundred archers from Ghūr.³² During Ibn Ṭūlūn's rule, a new landholding élite emerged in Egypt which included people who arrived from Iraq. Their position and wealth came from serving in the administration and having access to land contracts.³³ In the interregnum between the Tulunids and the Ikhshids, the Mādhārā'i family flourished. The Egyptian roots of the family went back to 266/879 with the arrival of 'Alī ibn Aḥmad as a representative of his father who had been entrusted with the responsibility over the finances of Egypt and Syria. Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj was fully aware of the importance of the family, and the power of its strong man Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn 'Alī.³⁴ Abū Bakr's wealth was derived from rural properties in Syria and Egypt which allegedly yielded an income of 400,000 *dīnārs* per year.³⁵ Abū Bakr organized an army to fight Ibn Ṭughj; he used for that his own means.³⁶ He paid dearly for his stand against Ibn Ṭughj; later, however, he was restored to his former position. Abū Bakr was the last civilian notable of Fustāt known as to have been involved in military

³⁰ K. Morimoto, "Land Tenure in Egypt During the Early Islamic Period", *Orient* (Tokyo) XI(1975), 112, 113-4.

³¹ "Central Government and Provincial Élites in the Early Abbasid Caliphate", *BSOAS*, XLIV(1981), 35, 37-8.

³² Ibn Sa'īd, (ed), K. Vollers in *Semitische Studien*, (Berlin), IX(1894), 9. The province of Ghūr was noted for its export of slaves, see A. D. H. Bivar, "Ghūr", *E.I.*2, II, 1096.

³³ G. Frantz-Murphy, "A New Interpretation of the Economic History of Medieval Egypt", *JESHO*, XXIV(1981), 280, 282-3.

³⁴ Ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-Mughrib fī Ḥulā al-Maghrib*, (ed) K. L. Tallqvist (Leiden, 1899), 15, 18.

³⁵ *Muqaffā*, (ed) Gottschalk, 123, 127.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 122, 123.

affairs. His attempt backfired on him: when the troops he had gathered to fight Ibn Ṭughj were dissatisfied with their pay they stormed and looted his house.

Since the emergence of the Tulunid and the Ikhshidid regimes, the monopoly on coercive power in Egypt (army and police) was in the hands of the rulers—in both cases Turkish outsiders. In the very brief interregnum between the death of Kāfūr and the Fatimid conquest, the civilian notables in Fustāt could not reverse this long trend, even if they had so desired.

II

In contrast with the first four stormy years of Fatimid rule in Egypt, the reign of al-ʿAzīz (365-386/975-996) was marked by peace, political stability, and a properly functioning economy. Al-ʿAzīz was the ruler who consolidated the Fatimid rule and also contributed much toward creating an imperial style of rule. Many new monuments were built by him, and by women of the royal family: his mother, and his daughter, the princess Sitt al-Mulk, supported building activity for religious and non-religious purposes. This activity was not limited to Cairo alone; it encompassed Fustāt and the environs of the capital. A mosque was constructed in the area of the cemeteries. Palaces (*quṣūr*) were built in ʿAyn Shams (south of Fustāt), and two aqueducts (*qanṭara*) were built in Fustāt.³⁷ This physical imprint upon the landscape of the capital confronted the inhabitants with permanent and visible symbols of the regime's might and authority. The life of the population was affected in other ways too. Al-ʿAzīz showed an aptitude for splendid public celebrations of festivals, and instituted new forms of conducting the ceremonies. To serve those needs *dār al-ḥiṭra* was built in Fustāt, and the open prayer square outside Cairo was renovated. These occasions became dominated by the presence of the regime, and a dazzling display of its power and might.³⁸

The propensity of al-ʿAzīz for grandeur was matched by his proclivity for extravagance. Under his prodigal administration the expenses of the royal kitchen and the court (in which, it is said, 10,000 slave-girls and eunuchs were employed), increased enormously. Another trait of al-ʿAzīz was his reluctance from shedding blood. He used to win the obedience and the coop-

³⁷ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 294-5.

³⁸ For detailed examination of this topic, see ch. 8.

eration of subordinates through magnanimity, not by inspiring awe.³⁹ Above all, al-ʿAzīz was favoured by luck; the negative sides of his military reforms came to light only after his death.

The military reforms were a result of the continuous Fatimid drive into Syria. The whole Syrian policy of al-ʿAzīz was viewed with many misgivings by the notables of Fustāt, who asked him not to lead the army personally into Syria (368/978). Later they expressed their astonishment upon the inclusion of Eastern socio-military groups in the Fatimid army.⁴⁰ The Fatimid expansion into Syria, whose ultimate goal was Baghdad, had been motivated by fundamental religious-political aspirations and the notables had no chance of altering it. Even powerful persons from within the ruling circles, such as the vizier Ibn Killis, could exert only a limited influence on al-ʿAzīz on this issue.

Al-ʿAzīz' success in Syria was modest; he repelled the Carmathians from the region, and secured a precarious Fatimid hold over Damascus. The main problem of Fatimid foreign policy with respect to Syria derived from inability to formulate a coherent policy toward Byzantium. For the Fatimids it was not a new dilemma; the Fatimid traditional approach to the question of war and peace with Byzantium oscillated between contradictory intentions. The Fatimids maintained peaceful relations with the Byzantines, although occasionally they attempted to create and to lead wider coalitions of Muslim states against Byzantium.⁴¹ In 369/979, in accordance with this policy, al-ʿAzīz proposed to the Buyid ruler of Baghdad, ʿAdud al-Dawla, that they wage war together on the Byzantines.⁴² In 377/987-, on the other hand, al-ʿAzīz

³⁹ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 295; Ibn al-Qalānisi, 44-5; Ibn Taghribirdi, IV, 125.

⁴⁰ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 244.

⁴¹ There is no monograph on Fatimid-Byzantine relations. For the first half of the tenth century, see S. M. Stern, "An Embassy of the Byzantine Emperor to the Fatimid Caliph al-Muʿizz", *Byzantion*, XX(1950), 209-58; Y. Lev, "The Fatimid Navy, Byzantium and the Mediterranean Sea 909-1036 C.E./297-427 A. H.", *Byzantion* LIV(1984), 220-52; V. Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs (ca. 884). A Turning Point in the Struggle between Byzantium and Islam*, (Athens, 1984). For the Fatimid-Byzantine relations during the Fatimid expansion into Syria, see P. E. Walker, "A Byzantine Victory Over the Fatimids at Alexandretta (971)", *Byzantion*, 42(1972), 431-40; *idem*, "The 'Crusade' of John Tzimiskes in the Light of new Arabic Evidence", *Byzantion*, 47(1977), 301-27.

⁴² Dhahabi, Or.48, ff, 13b, 15a; Kutubī, d.204, f, 423a; Ibn Zāfir, 33-4. For the Buyid reply, see Cl. Cahen, "Une correspondance Buyide inédite", in *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgi Levi Della Vida*, (Rome, 1956), I, 88-97; J. C. Bürgel, *Die Hofkorrespondenz ʿAdud ad-Daulas*, (Wiesbaden, 1965), 147-52. For a

was ready to sign a truce for seven years with Byzantium stipulating three conditions: 1) the release of all Muslim prisoners held by the Byzantines; 2) the pronouncement of the Friday sermon in the Constantinople mosque in his name, and 3) the provision of those merchandise in which he was interested.⁴³

In addition to the wider context of Fatimid-Byzantine relations—trade, political prestige—there was another more local aspect: the clash of interests over Aleppo. For the Fatimids, Aleppo had a twofold importance: as a goal for itself, and as a strategic location in the Fatimid drive against the Abbasids. The Byzantines had no desire to maintain a direct rule over Aleppo; their interest was to prevent any strong Muslim power from gaining a hold over the town. The Fatimid attempt to conquer Aleppo (Sha‘bān 384/Ramaḍān 385/September 994–October 995) conflicted with Byzantine regional interests in the area. The Fatimid army which besieged Aleppo was beaten by a Byzantine relief force led by the emperor Basil II. Al-‘Azīz found himself involved in a war with Byzantium; he marshalled an army for a campaign which he intended to lead in person.⁴⁴

For the first time during al-‘Azīz’s reign, the peaceful atmosphere of the capital was disturbed. The military preparations made a great stir in the town; mobilisation was proclaimed and people were encouraged to join the army. The clue to al-‘Azīz’s desire to lead his army personally lies in the Fatimid belief that God grants victories to their armies through the holiness (*baraka*) of the *imām*.⁴⁵ Undoubtedly, al-‘Azīz hoped to repeat his success of the campaign of 368/978 in Syria; on that occasion his prayers for victory had been answered by God.⁴⁶ Al-‘Azīz’s military preparations took a long time, and were interrupted by the death of his wife and, shortly afterwards, by that of his mother (Shawwāl 385/November–December 995). The

summary of Fatimid-Buyid relations, see J. L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam. The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*, (Leiden, 1986), 87–9.

⁴³ Dhahabī, Or.48, ff, 16a-b; Ibn Taghribirdī, IV, 151-2

⁴⁴ The most comprehensive study of the Fatimid-Byzantine clash over Aleppo is M. Canard’s *Histoire de la Dynastie des Hamdanides*, (Algier, 1951), 677–81. The topic is also dealt with in two recent books, see S. Zakkār, *The Emirate of Aleppo 1004–1094*, (Beirut, 1971), 36–42; P. Smoor, *Kings and Bedouins in the Palace of Aleppo as Reflected in Ma‘arri’s Work*, (Manchester, 1985), 10–11, 21–32.

⁴⁵ This particular belief is revealed, for example, in the description of the sacking of Genoa (934–5) by the Ismā‘īlī author ‘Imād al-Dīn, V, 170–1.

⁴⁶ Al-‘Azīz’s mood on that occasion is reflected by the text of an edict he

Byzantines and the Hamdanids, who had achieved their goal of saving Aleppo from Fatimid conquest, had no intention of entering into a full-scale confrontation with the Fatimids. Their separate delegations arrived in Cairo in order to smooth things over.⁴⁷

c) Disarray and Recovery

I

Following the death of al-ʿAzīz, the latent tension between the Kutāma Berbers and the Eastern socio-military groups, incorporated in the Fatimid army during al-ʿAzīz's reign, erupted. On his death-bed, al-ʿAzīz entrusted the transition of rule to his eleven year-old son the future al-Hākīm—into the hands of the Ismāʿīlī cadi, Muḥammad ibn al-Nuʿmān, and the Kutāmī chief, Ibn ʿAmmār, who was charged with the management (*tadbīr*) of al-Hākīm's affairs. Both men represented the traditional forces on whom the Fatimid regime rested.⁴⁸

On 20 Ramaḍān 386/7 October 996, the day of al-Hākīm's coronation, the Kutāma presented their demands. Ibn ʿAmmār negotiated with them, securing their goodwill in exchange for increased payment. The Kutāma demanded Ibn ʿAmmār's nomination as *wāsiṭa* i.e. intermediary between the *imām* and the people. Thus the man who held the reins of power by al-ʿAzīz's bequest emerged as a factional leader. His rule, indeed, was characterized by unmasked favouritism of the Kutāma, and by steps aimed against both the new military groups who had been absorbed and preferably treated by al-ʿAzīz, and the people in court who had thrived under al-ʿAzīz.⁴⁹ Ibn ʿAmmār's policies sparked off clashes between the Turks, the most powerful element among those new groups, and his supporters in which he was defeated (387/997). Barjawān, a white eunuch of al-ʿAzīz, emerged as the strong man behind the throne and took full power into his hands.

Barjawān policies were twofold: on the one hand, he made an effort to conciliate the defeated Ibn ʿAmmār and the Kutāma. On the other hand, he revoked Ibn ʿAmmār's discriminatory

had published, see Qalqashandī, VI, 433-9.

⁴⁷ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 288-9.

⁴⁸ For the cadis of al-Nuʿmān family, see ch. 8. For Ibn ʿAmmār's career, see *Ittiʿāz*, I, 132, 133, 146, 229, 277; Ibn al-Qalānisi, 44.

⁴⁹ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 6, 7, 12; Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbār Miṣr*, (ed) H. Massé, (Cairo,

policies against the Turks and other Eastern groups. In order to strengthen his grip over the state, Barjawān turned to people of his immediate social milieu; the eunuchs of the palace. Posts such as chiefs of police in the capital, the commander of the fleet, and town governors in Libya and Palestine were filled by eunuchs. Barjawān also made extensive use of the system of patronage. Through this system he recruited persons from wide social circles and of different background. Barjawān created a network of personal ties among the administrative personnel by conferring patronage on them. Many of the governors in Syria were also Barjawān's protégés.⁵⁰ Barjawān's personal secretary, the Christian Fahd ibn Ibrāhīm, became chief administrator, and the title *ra'īs* was bestowed on him.⁵¹

II

On 16 Rabī' II 390/25 March 1000, a eunuch of al-Hākīm with the latter's approval and cooperation, killed Barjawān. The killing provoked some apprehension among the ruling establishment, but al-Hākīm skilfully navigated the storm. He ensured the smooth running of state affairs by retaining Fahd ibn Ibrāhīm in his position. Speaking before an assembly of state dignitaries (*shuyūkh al-dawla*), Kutāma and Turks, al-Hākīm presented the murder of Barjawān as a minor event. He said: "Barjawān was my slave and I employed him. He acted in good faith, and I treated him favourably. Then he misbehaved, so I killed him."⁵² Al-Hākīm's independent rule began with murder; it was an omen of events to come—a reign of terror. This fact has not always been sufficiently stressed, although it is explicitly born out by contemporary and later sources. In medieval Islam, the ruler was a despot whose power, in the absence of any effective curb, could easily deteriorate into a reign of terror.⁵³ What made al-Hākīm's case especially notorious, was

1919), 55.

⁵⁰ Ibn Sa'īd, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Hulā Haḍra al-Qāhira*, (ed) Ḥ. Naṣṣār (Cairo, 1970), 55; Ibn al-Qalānisi, 54, 59

⁵¹ *Itti'āz*, II, 14; Ibn al-Qalānisi, 50; Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *al-Ishāra ilā min Nāla al-Wizāra*, (ed) 'A. Mukhlis (Cairo, 1924), 86. R. P. Mottahedeh explains the term *ra'īs* as indicating a leader of a specific group, see *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, (Princeton, 1980), 130-5, esp. 130.

⁵² *Itti'āz*, II, 27.

⁵³ See, for example, the characterization of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'taḍid, H. Bowen, *The Life and Times of 'Alī ibn 'Isā*, (N. Y., 1975) (reprint), 25-6. For al-Hākīm's reign, see M. 'A. 'Inān, *Al-Hākīm bi-Amr Allāh wa-Asrār al-Da'wa al-Fāṭimiyya*, (Cairo, 1959); M. Canard, "Al-Hākīm Bi-Amr Allāh", *E.I.2*,

the spread of the terror outside the confines of the court and administrative personnel to the masses of the population.

One of the outcomes of al-Ḥākim's purges was the liquidation of many leading administrators of the al-ʿAziz period. The first victim was Ibn ʿAmmār.⁵⁴ In 394/1003-4, the brother of Ibn Killis, perished at the hands of al-Ḥākim.⁵⁵ In 405/1014-5, the same fate met the son of Jaʿfar ibn al-Furāt, the former Ikhshidid vizier.⁵⁶ In 401/1010-11, Ḥusayn, the son of the general Jawhar who, for some time had been at the top of the administration, was executed. With him was put to death the Ismāʿīlī cadī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn al-Nuʿmān. It was a severe blow to this distinguished family associated with the Fatimid dynasty from its early days.⁵⁷ In 397/1006-7, the successful general Faḍl ibn Šālīḥ, who had saved al-Ḥākim's rule from Abū Rakwa's rebellion, was killed on al-Ḥākim's orders. He had had a long career of military service with occasional administrative assignments.⁵⁸ Somewhat typical of al-Ḥākim's behaviour, the general who had failed against Abū Rakwa, ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar al-Fallāḥ, made a career, for a while. He served in Damascus (398-400/1007-10), and in 403/1012-3, was installed as a *wāsiṭa*. In 408/1017-8, the range of his duties was enlarged to include the responsibility for the coastal towns of Egypt, and the two police forces in the capital. In Shawwāl 409/March-April 1019, ʿAlī was executed.⁵⁹ The Maghribī family, which had arrived in Cairo in 381/991-2 from Iraq, was liquidated by al-Ḥākim. Muḥammad al-Maghribī became an important person at the

III, 76-82; Th. Bianquis, "Al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh ou la folie de l'unité chez un souverain fatimide", *Les Africains*, 7 (1977), 107-33; J. H. Forsyth, *The Byzantine Arab Chronicle (938-1034) of Yahyā B. Saʿīd al-Antākī*, Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Michigan, 1977), I, 243-58; S. A. Assaad, *The Reign of al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh. A Political Study*, (Beirut, 1974). The works of J. van Ess, *Chiliasische Erwartungen und die Versuchung der Göttlichkeit. Der Kalif al-Ḥākim.*, (Heidelberg, 1977), and of H. Halm, "Der Treuhänder Gottes. Die Edikte des Kalifen al-Ḥākim", *Der Islam*, 63 (1986), 11-72, are noted for their critical approach and shed much fresh light on al-Ḥākim's deeds.

⁵⁴ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 36

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 47, n.1; Ibn Saʿīd, (ed) Naṣṣār, 60.

⁵⁶ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 110; Ibn al-Ṣayrafi, 83.

⁵⁷ Ibn Hajar, *Raʿ al-Isr*, (ed), R. Guest, in his edition of Kindī, *Governors and Judges of Egypt*, (Leiden, 1912), 603; For al-Hasan ibn Jawhar's career under al-Ḥākim, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 29, 31, 64, 67, 72, 73, 77, 81, 82, 85.

⁵⁸ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 79. For his early career, see Y. Lev, "The Fatimid Vizier Yaʿqūb ibn Killis and the Beginning of the Fatimid Administration in Egypt", *Der Islam*, 58 (1981), 242-3.

⁵⁹ Ibn al-Ṣayrafi, 82. For his career under al-Ḥākim, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 63, 81, 93, 98, 100, 105, 110, 114. For his service in Damascus, see Lev, "The Fatimids and the Aḥdāth of Damascus", 103.

court of al-ʿAzīz, but his son who had served al-Hākīm fled to Palestine to join rebels there. In retribution, the extended Maghribī family was massacred.⁶⁰ The biographies of other persons mentioned among al-Hākīm's victims cannot be traced back to prior period; their rise and fall was apparently during al-Hākīm's rule.⁶¹ Many lesser scribes (*kuttāb*) whose names, let alone biographies, remain unknown were also among those who perished on al-Hākīm's orders. The eunuchs of the court suffered as much. Those among them who had attained administrative posts were killed by al-Hākīm at various stages of their careers.⁶²

Al-Hākīm's ordinances aimed at reforming the behaviour of the people had a manifold effect on the life of the urban masses. Between the years 395/1004-5 and 404/1013-4, various orders restraining women's freedom of movement were proclaimed. Later, a strict separation between the sexes in public (when sailing on boats, for example) was enforced.⁶³ These decrees led to an imposition (Rajab 404/January-February 1014) of complete house arrest on women with the exception of very young girls and very old women. Bath houses designated for the use of women were closed, and shoemakers who specialized in producing women's sandals were compelled to give up their trade. Punishments were inflicted on those who infringed these rules.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Khitat*, IV, 341-2. For an extensive study of this family, see P. Smoor, "Al-Maghribī, Banū", *E.I.2*, V, 1210-12.

⁶¹ Among them were the Wazzān brothers (see, Ibn al-Sayrafī, 80, 84; *Ittiʿāz*, II, 44, 94), the Abū Sayyid brothers (see, Ibn al-Sayrafī, 83; *Ittiʿāz*, II, 108), and three of al-Hākīm's chief administrators: ʿAlī al-Rūḍhabārī, Ibn ʿAbdūn and Muḥammad al-Qushūrī (see, *Ittiʿāz*, II, 72, 78, 81, 83, 84, 85; Ibn al-Qalānīsī, 61-2). Two other officials were executed in the first years of al-Hākīm's reign because of fiscal misdemeanours, see Ibn al-Qalānīsī, 58-60; *Khitat*, III, 48-9.

⁶² The most famous of al-Hākīm's eunuchs was Ghayn al-Khādim who exercised great power; he, too, fell victim to al-Hākīm's sadism, see *Khitat*, IV, 84; *Ittiʿāz*, II, 89, 91, 94, 100, 101-2, 103; Ibn Saʿīd, (ed) Naṣṣār, 63; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 259. For the fate of another eunuch named Zaydān, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 33, 34, 39, 47; Ibn al-Qalānīsī, 55. Two other eunuchs of al-Hākīm, who were nominated to administrative posts, apparently fared better; they survived al-Hākīm's reign, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 48, 100, 104.

⁶³ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 87, 91.

⁶⁴ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 102, 103, 104. Al-Hākīm's ordinances regarding women, as reported by historians contemporary with the events and by later authorities, are critically examined by Halm. A comparison between these two types of accounts leads him to question the validity of a late account about a seven years home arrest allegedly imposed on women by al-Hākīm. (*idem*, "Der Treuhänder Gottes", 22-4).

In 401/1010-1 and 402/1011-2, social gatherings in the desert and along the shores of the Nile were forbidden.⁶⁵ Al-Ḥākim in contrast with previous Fatimid policies, did not refrain from offending Sunnī sentiments. Also Shī'ī rites which were introduced by the Fatimids were occasionally altered. The drinking of alcoholic beverages was forbidden, and other dietary laws were proclaimed. Non-Muslims were persecuted; their houses of worship were destroyed and they were forced to wear distinctive clothes and colours. Restrictions on worship and celebration of religious festivals were also imposed. Toward the end of al-Ḥākim's reign these persecutions ceased.⁶⁶

Al-Ḥākim inspired awe; his inscrutable ordinances and behaviour combined with cruelty led to outbreaks of mass hysteria among the ruling circles and even the population as a whole. To estimate the extent of al-Ḥākim's killing is difficult. It seems that several thousand people lost their lives. The question which arises is how al-Ḥākim was able to cling to power for fifteen years at a time which his regime faced rebellion in Egypt as well as a period of economic difficulties. The answer which suggests itself, namely that al-Ḥākim's rule was based on brute force, provides only a partial explanation. The role of brute force and oppression in maintaining al-Ḥākim in power is undeniable. Al-Ḥākim had his henchmen who carried out killings on his orders, perpetrating many atrocities. Another instrument of terror was the secret police (*aṣḥāb al-akḥbār*) whose activity in the court as well as among the ranks of the administration and the population of the capital is widely attested to.⁶⁷ And yet the population was not entirely defenceless; arms were available and sold in one of the town's markets (*sūq al-ṣilāḥ*). In 403/1012-3, for example, people armed themselves with knives and swords, and the buying of weapons spread even among those who were usually unarmed.⁶⁸

III

Seemingly, Abū Rakwa's rebellion could have provided the opportunity for a popular uprising against al-Ḥākim. The background for the rebellion was al-Ḥākim's vindictive policy

⁶⁵ *Itti'āz*, 87, 91.

⁶⁶ For a fuller discussion and documentation, see studies cited in n.53.

⁶⁷ *Itti'āz*, II, 44, 80, 101; Ibn Taghribirdī, IV, 185; Ibn Sa'īd, (ed) Naṣṣār, 58, 72; cf. van Ess, 26-7.

⁶⁸ *Itti'āz*, II, 93.

against the bedouins of Banū Qurra, (whose territory was in the region of Buḥayra, the west part of the Delta), and the killing of their chiefs (394/1013-4).⁶⁹ A Koran teacher who had lived among the Banū Qurra, claiming descent from the Spanish Umayyads, took advantage of the wrath of the bedouins and called upon them to rebel against the regime. He assumed the title of Commander of the Faithful and the regnal name al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh. The rebellion also engulfed other tribes in the area, and the town of Barqa was captured by the rebels. A Fatimid army dispatched to the region was defeated. The highest point of the rebellion was a daring night assault on a large Fatimid force which encamped in Jīza (the west bank of the Nile opposite Fustāṭ-Cairo). The force was routed; it suffered heavy casualties, and many troops deserted. The capital was panic-stricken, Abū Rakwa failed to take advantage of the confusion in the town. He retreated to Fayyūm where he was met by another Fatimid force which inflicted on him a crashing defeat. Finally, Abū Rakwa was taken prisoner in Upper Egypt and executed in Cairo.⁷⁰ Abū Rakwa's rebellion, though aimed against the regime, was viewed as a threat by the population which was deterred by the nomadic character of the rebel forces. A completely different combination of circumstances was needed in order to topple al-Ḥākim's rule; religious ferment, rupture between the ruler and important socio-military groups, and a directing hand from within the ruling family.

The religious ferment was an outcome of the activity of Fatimid propagandists who preached the divinity of al-Ḥākim. An impressive historical reconstruction of these confused events, and of the various doctrines which were propagated, has been carried out by David R. W. Bryer, J. van Ess and H. Halm.⁷¹ In absence of fresh sources, little can be added to the works of the principal authorities in this field. My aim is a limited one; to delineate the sequence of events which shattered the stability of al-Ḥākim's rule. The content of the doctrines which came to the fore during the last years of al-Ḥākim's reign is not dealt with. Bryer made an important observation about the sources, namely that the account of Ibn Zāfir—usually terse

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 34; cf. A. H. Saleh, "Le rôle de bedouins d'Égypte à l'époque fatimide", *RSO*, LIV(1980), 53-4.

⁷⁰ *Itti'āz*, II, 60, 611, 63-4.

⁷¹ D. R. W. Bryer, "The Origin of the Druze Religion", *Der Islam*, 52(1975), 47-84, 239-62; 53(1976), 2-27; see also studies listed in n. 53.

and non-informative—regarding the events under examination, is fuller and more coherent than the narratives of the foremost authorities for the Fatimid period.⁷² In my account the text of Ibn Zāfir is followed and some points of his narrative, which make perfect sense when seen in a wider context, are emphasised.

Under the events of 409/1018-9, Ibn Zāfir recounts in his annals the murder of a Persian propagandist from Farghāna named al-Akhram who preached that God was incarnated in al-Ḥākim.⁷³ This claim was not rejected by al-Ḥākim who bestowed on Akhram a robe of honor. He also had been paraded on horse and given an escort to accompany him all the time. These were the standard practices and signs of honor conferred by the regime on state functionaries, or on other persons whose good will and cooperation the regime was interested in securing.⁷⁴ The meaning of these symbols of state authority conferred on Akhram was understood as an expression of al-Ḥākim's authorization for the doctrines preached by Akhram. The response was almost immediate; eight days after the public expression of al-Ḥākim's support for Akhram (Ramaḍān 409/December 1018-January 1019) the latter was killed and his house in Cairo looted. The assassin was executed by al-Ḥākim. The struggle between al-Ḥākim and those opposed to the doctrine of incarnation continued; Akhram was buried in shrouds supplied by the palace (usually, an act of benevolence toward people who had loyally served the dynasty), while his assassin was buried by his comrades.⁷⁵ Over the grave of Akhram's assassin some sort of superstructure was built, and it became a place of visitation. However, the body was snatched from the grave on al-Ḥākim's orders.⁷⁶ These events indicate a beginning of a saint cult which clearly was in

⁷² Bryer, 73, 76. Although his chronology is not without fault; see van Ess, 80, n. 439, and 63, where the meagerness of Maqrizi's information, and the possible reasons for that, are discussed.

⁷³ Ibn Zāfir, 51-2; Nuwayrī, Or.2k, f, 194b; cf: Bryer, 68.

⁷⁴ Even a cursory reading of the sources confirms this point. The following examples are taken from Musabbiḥī, a contemporary with the events he described. For state officials, see *idem*, *Akhbār Miṣr*, (eds), A. F. Sayyid and Th. Bianquis (Cairo, 1978), 3, 32, 47, 63. For honours bestowed on potential enemies in an attempt to win them over, see 54, 63. For an escort (*mawḳib*) which accompanied high-ranking officers, see Lev, "The Fatimid Vizier", 242.

⁷⁵ For shrouds supplied by the *imām* for the burial of state dignitaries, see *Khitat*, III, 10; Musabbiḥī, 95. For shrouds given by al-Zāhir for the burial of plague victims, see Musabbiḥī, 71.

⁷⁶ Ibn Zāfir, 52; Nuwayrī, Or.2k, f, 194b; cf: Bryer, 73-4.

defiance of the regime. In the popular religion of the masses of Fustāt cult of saints was deeply-rooted (see ch.8). The narrative of Ibn Zāfir has a tenor of authenticity and the impression from the account is twofold: a) that prior to the outburst of violence, tension was building up in Cairo around the blasphemies preached by Akhram; b) that the whole matter was an affair limited to Cairo only. Akhram's views stirred up controversies within the Fatimid propaganda, and were refuted by persons highly placed in its hierarchy.⁷⁷

As long as this religious ferment was confined to Cairo, its potential danger was limited. A completely different turn the events took with the appearance of another Iranian propagandist named Ḥamza. Ibn Zāfir records his arrival in 410/1019-20. He established himself in a mosque outside the Naṣr gate of Cairo preaching God's incarnation in al-Ḥākim. A group of extremists among Fatimid propagandists who supported these views joined him. Al-Ḥākim had conferred with Ḥamza and provided him with weapons. Ḥamza's views were disseminated by his lieutenant among high-ranking dignitaries of the state. Following the account of Ḥamza's activity, Ibn Zāfir recounts the emergence of a young half-breed, named Anūshtakīn surnamed Darazī. From the description of Darazī as *shābb min muwalladī 'l-Atrāk*, it should be understood that he was a son of a Turkish soldier who had married an Egyptian woman. Thus, Darazī was a local follower of Ḥamza and not a foreign like Akhram and Ḥamza himself. Al-Ḥākim used to meet with him and provided him with arms.

Ibn Zāfir then narrates the events of 12 Ṣafar 410/19 June 1019. On that day a group of Ḥamza's associates entered the Congregational Mosque of 'Amr in Fustāt on horseback and approached the chief *cadi*, Ibn Abī al-'Awwām, who belonged to the Ḥanbali school of law. They handed him a letter from Ḥamza which opened with the blasphemous formula: "In the name of al-Ḥākim, Allāh, the Merciful, the Compassionate". This provocation at the most important religious centre of Fustāt cost Ḥamza's associates their lives; they were killed by the people at the mosque. Other known followers of Ḥamza were also attacked and killed.⁷⁸

Al-Ḥākim divested of their authority the two chiefs of Fustāt police who had failed to protect Ḥamza's disciples. His new

⁷⁷ Bryer, 66-9.

⁷⁸ Ibn Zāfir, 52-3; Nuwayrī, Or.2k, f, 195a; cf: Bryer, 70-1.

chief of police arrested forty people who had taken part in the riots and put them to death. The wording of Ibn Zāfir's account of the events that followed is extremely important. He says: "all the soldiers and the population became angered because of this matter (meaning al-Hākim's retaliation against the attackers of Ḥamza's disciples). The Turks gathered and moved towards the house of their follower, al-Darazī, surrounding it. Al-Darazī, and those with him, fortified themselves in the house fighting the besiegers from the roof and the wall. The besiegers destroyed and looted the house killing about forty people who were in it."⁷⁹

It is the first indication in the sources of something in common between the population of Fustāt and a significant socio-military group (the Turks). The Turks pressed al-Hākim to hand Darazī over to them by saying: "We will not prevent you from ruling your kingdom as you like. However, this man (i.e. Darazī) is one of us and we will not leave him." Al-Hākim promised the Turks to surrender Darazī to them, but then claimed that he had had him put to death. The Turks with other troops went to the mosque in Zaydān seeking Ḥamza but he had also disappeared.⁸⁰

Al-Hākim's relations with the army were strained for a while (Rabī' I 410/June-July 1019), but on 4 Rabī' II/9 August 1019, the troops were paid.⁸¹ Al-Hākim focused his anger on the population of Fustāt which he held responsible for the events. From Jumādā II 410/October-November 1019, Al-Hākim began terrorizing the population of Fustāt by inciting his black military slaves against them. Gangs of black troops descended on bath-houses maltreating women.⁸² These depredations intensified and troops were breaking into houses stripping people of their clothes. Many shops and stores (*makhāzin*) were looted.⁸³ The situation rapidly deteriorated; the blacks started to set fire to various parts of the town. In Dhū 'l-Qa'da/February-March 1020, these incidents developed into a full-scale battle in which for three days the blacks were plundering and setting Fustāt on fire. This time a real coalition was formed between various socio-military groups: Kutāma,

⁷⁹ Ibn Zāfir, 54; Nuwayrī, Or.2k, f, 195a.

⁸⁰ Ibn Zāfir, 54; cf: Bryer, 71.

⁸¹ Ibn Zāfir, 54. The army was paid in cash in several installments over the year, see ch. 7.

⁸² Ibn Zāfir, 54.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 55.

Turks and other Eastern elements, and the population of Fustāt. The reason was simple; the Kutāma and the Turks lived in Fustāt and had married into the local population. When their appeal to al-Ḥākim to restrain his black regiments failed, they joined the population of Fustāt in combating the blacks.⁸⁴

The rupture between al-Ḥākim and the most important segments of his army was final. The burning of Fustāt was the culmination of a process of estrangement between the Turks and al-Ḥākim who preferred the blacks, greatly increasing their numbers in the army. Following the stand of the Turks against Darazī, al-Ḥākim took revenge by putting black officers and their troops in positions of command over the Turks. The cumulative effect of these events undermined al-Ḥākim's rule. The eventual toppling of al-Ḥākim was the work of his older sister, Sitt al-Mulk.⁸⁵

IV

Some sources implicate Sitt al-Mulk as playing an active role in the death of al-Ḥākim, who mysteriously disappeared on the night of 27 Shawwāl 411/13 February 1021. Her involvement is explained as motivated by her worry that al-Ḥākim's rule might endanger the existence of the Fatimid dynasty, and she became anxious about her own personal safety.⁸⁶ The intriguing

⁸⁴ The events of the civil war in Fustāt are described by al-Antākī (pp, 225-6) who says nothing about the cooperation between the population of Fustāt and certain socio-military groups in the fight against black slave troops. This cooperation and the reason for it are mentioned by late Egyptian and non-Egyptian historians who derived the information from the history (now lost) of the Baghdadian historian Hilāl al-Ṣābi (d.488/1056). See, for example, Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, *Mi'rāt al-Zamān* MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Poc. 370, ff, 39a-b; Ibn Taghribirdī, IV, 181-2; Dhahabī, Or.49, f, 7b; Nuwayrī, Or.2k, f, 185b; Kutubī, Arabe. d.205, ff, 101b-102a.

⁸⁵ Ibn Zāfir, 54. In order to establish a chronology of events which led to the demise of al-Ḥākim's rule it is necessary to combine the accounts of Ibn Zāfir and Antākī. Ibn Zāfir provides a coherent ramification of events between Rajab 409/November-December 1018, and 4 Rabī' II 410/9August 1019. Antākī mentions the civil war of Dhū 'l-Qa'da 410/February-March 1020 in Fustāt, he also cites three dated decrees of al-Ḥākim for the period Rabī' II 411/July-August 1020, and Shawwāl 411/January-February 1021. These documents reflect the abating of al-Ḥākim's persecutions of the Christians, and the rescinding of previous ordinances.

⁸⁶ Y. Lev, "The Fatimid Princess Sitt al-Mulk", *JSS*, 32(1987), 324-5. On the question of Sitt al-Mulk's involvement in al-Ḥākim's death there two opposite views among the medieval historians who dealt with the problem. Hilāl al-Ṣābi implicates Sitt al-Mulk in the disappearance of al-Ḥākim. Egyptian historians such as Antākī, Musabbiḥī, Qudā'ī and Maqrīzī say nothing about that. (For Maqrīzī's denial of Sitt al-Mulk's role in the murder, see *Khīṭat*, IV, 74.)

question of Sitt al-Mulk's involvement in the death of al-Ḥākim should not obscure the main issue: her role in securing a smooth transition of rule from al-Ḥākim to his son al-Zāhir. One of the most pressing problems was the question of the succession to the throne. At the time of al-Ḥākim's disappearance, his heir apparent was his cousin 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn Ilyās who served as a governor of Damascus. The nomination of Ilyās was criticized because of a deviation from the direct line of succession. Since 404/1013-4, al-Ḥākim's son, Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī, had lived with his mother under Sitt al-Mulk's protection in her palace. Sitt al-Mulk took action after al-Ḥākim had savagely persecuted women of his harem, concubines and mothers of his children, some of whom were drowned in the Nile.⁸⁷ Apparently, the appointment of Ilyās came as a response to Sitt al-Mulk's intervention. The details of Sitt al-Mulk's machinations against Ilyās are given differently in the various versions of the relevant historians. Ilyās' position in Damascus was precarious owing to the Fatimid inability to gain a firm hold over the city. Somehow, Sitt al-Mulk managed to trick Ilyās, and he ended up in a jail in Egypt where he met his death in obscure circumstances.⁸⁸

On 10 Dhū 'l-Hijja 411/27 March 1021, seventeen year-old Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī was publicly proclaimed as the ruling *imām* under the title of al-Zāhir li-ʿIzzat Dīn Allāh. In the months between al-Ḥākim's disappearance and al-Zāhir's coronation, Sitt al-Mulk had made every effort to secure a smooth transition of rule. She divided money among the high-ranking dignitaries of the state, and the military commanders. She also got rid of a Kutāmī emir Ibn Dawwās who, according to some

However, both al-Ṣābi and Qudā'ī provide many identical details of what happened following al-Ḥākim's mysterious disappearance, and of the killings carried out on Sitt al-Mulk's orders. Al-Ṣābi's account coming from an anti-Fatimid opponent is immediately suspect as being biased and defamatory. On the other hand, if indeed Sitt al-Mulk was involved in the conspiracy, the silence of Musabbiḥī and Qudā'ī is quite expected. Maqrīzī's preference for their account reflects his naivety. This is true with respect to the rejection by him of other accounts on similar ground, namely Egyptian historians are more knowledgeable on Egyptian affairs than are Eastern historians hostile to the Fatimids. The Egyptian authors are certainly better informed, but the possibility of self-imposed censorship must always be taken into account. The problem of the sources dealing with the demise of al-Ḥākim's rule, including a comparison between Qudā'ī and al-Ṣābi, is examined by Halm, "Der Treuhänder Gottes", 66-70.

⁸⁷ Antākī, 207, 235; Ibn Sa'īd, (ed) Naṣṣār, 63

⁸⁸ Lev, "The Fatimid Princess", 326.

accounts, had been her accomplice in the plot against al-Ḥākim. Medieval historians praise Sitt al-Mulk for her personal qualities as well as for her policies. She enjoyed the aura of *hayba* i.e. she inspired awe, a quality associated in medieval Islam with royal authority. The killings of Ibn Dawwās and Ilyās were followed by the liquidation of Khaṭīr al-Mulk (Dhū 'l-Qa'da 412/ February-March 1022) who, according to some accounts, was instrumental in killing of Ibn Dawwās.⁸⁹ Khaṭīr al-Mulk had served as al-Ḥākim's chief administrator, and Sitt al-Mulk retained him in office. The Christian historian al-Anṭākī, explains Khaṭīr al-Mulk's execution as the result of the friendly relations between him and al-Zāhir, who used to visit him in his house and to drink wine with him. Sitt al-Mulk became worried for al-Zāhir's safety. Al-Anṭākī portrays her as an over-protective aunt; possibly she was but, above all, she was avid for power.⁹⁰ The career of Khaṭīr al-Mulk's successor was even shorter; he was executed on 21 Shawwāl 413/16 January 1023, after serving for only nine months.⁹¹ These killings portray the brutalization of politics in the Fatimid state; an obvious heritage of al-Ḥākim's reign of terror. In this aspect, Fatimid politics had become corrupted beyond remedy.

In other fields Sitt al-Mulk conducted twofold policies aimed at the disassociation of the new regime from the religious policies of al-Ḥākim, and also the restoration of order in state affairs. Ilyās, as governor of Damascus, had already deviated from al-Ḥākim's prohibitions on drinking alcoholic beverages and listening to music. Following al-Zāhir's coronation an official edict (*sijjil*) was proclaimed. The new ruler condemned those who adopted extreme views regarding the position of the *imām*, and those who went beyond the pale of Islam were cursed. The regime took action against those who adhered to the view of God being incarnated in al-Ḥākim; they were imprisoned and put to death. Others, feeling that the ground was burning under their feet, fled Egypt after al-Ḥākim's disappearance. The tenor of life was returning to its normal course; the drinking of wine and the listening to music were permitted, and women were allowed freedom of movement. Al-Zāhir's edict also dealt with the issue of forced conversions to Islam. Al-

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 328. For the discussion of the term *hayba*, see Mottahedeh, index s.v. *Haiba*; M. R. Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt*, (Princeton, 1980), index s.v. *Hayba*.

⁹⁰ Anṭākī, 238; Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, 80-79.

⁹¹ Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, 79.

Ḥākim's persecutions of Christian and Jews ceased in the last years of his reign. In some aspects a complete reversal of policy took place, and the non-Muslims were permitted to restore their houses of worship. The new regime adopted a far-reaching policy: those who had been forced to convert to Islam were allowed to relinquish their newly-adopted religion, and those who had emigrated were permitted to return to Egypt.⁹² Sitt al-Mulk restored order to the financial affairs of the state. She nullified land grants (*iqṭā'āt*) that al-Ḥākim had conferred, and recovered presents that he had given away to various people. She re-imposed the taxes that al-Ḥākim had abolished, and stopped salaries he had paid.⁹³ Sitt al-Mulk died in obscurity; the precise date of her death does not appear in the sources.

⁹² Antāki, 236-8.

⁹³ Lev, "Fatimid Princess", 327-8.

CHAPTER 2

FATIMID STATE UNDER MILITARY DICTATORSHIP.

a) Administrators in Power.

I

The information on al-Zāhir's reign is unsystematic. On the one hand we are lucky to have Musabbiḥī's account dealing with the events of 1024-5. It is an informative account coming from a historian who belonged to the inner circle of the ruling establishment. On the other hand, for the rest of al-Zāhir's reign we have very little concrete information. Moreover, the period covered by Musabbiḥī was marked by hunger and the outbreak of a plague as well as by financial difficulties and bedouin insurrection in Palestine. Thus, these two years reflect a rather uncharacteristic accumulation of natural and man-made disasters. Two aspects of al-Zāhir's reign should be examined: the rise to power of administrators in the state, and the Fatimid relations with Byzantium which were dominated by problems created during al-Hākim's rule.

Al-Zāhir, who ascended the throne at the age of seventeen, found himself under the tutelage of his aunt, Sitt al-Mulk. She died sometime after Rajab 415/September-October 1024. During 415/1024-5, al-Zāhir's chief administrator, the emir Shams al-Mulk, was losing his power and his grip over the administration.¹ He was supplanted by a heterogeneous group of administrators and courtiers. Within this group the real power was at the hands of al-Zāhir's freedman, the black eunuch Miṣḍād, Ibn Badūs, Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Jarjarā'i and a Persian *sharīf* of the Ḥasanid line from Qazwin. These four men secluded al-Zāhir from contacts with other administrators, courtiers and members of the religious class such as the chief *cadi* and the

¹ I interpret Musabbiḥī's reference, from Rajab 415/September-October 1024 (p. 53), to al-Hākim's aunt as meaning Sitt al-Mulk. For the decline in Shams al-Mulk position, see Musabbiḥī, 18-9, 29, 30, 31.

chief Fatimid propagandist.² In Sha‘bān 415/October–November 1024, as a result of an internal power struggle among the members of the clique, Ibn Badūs was executed on al-Zāhir’s orders.³

The rise of this clique was facilitated by the crisis of 414-5/1024-5 which had manifold repercussions on the state: the liquid resources were depleted, the army was unpaid and starving, and riots took place in the capital and the provinces. In these circumstances a young and inexperienced ruler, such as al-Zāhir, was easily overpowered by people from within the ruling establishment. The man who eventually predominated over the other members of the clique was Abū ‘l-Qāsim al-Jarjarā’i. He was a man of vast administrative experience and had served under al-Hākim who had ordered his two arms to be cut off below the elbow. In 418/1027-8, Abū ‘l-Qāsim was appointed as vizier with wide-ranging responsibilities. He was a recipient of many honorific titles.⁴

II

Questions of foreign policy, especially the relationship with Byzantium, occupied much of al-Zāhir’s time. Arabic texts published in the last two decades shed new light on al-Hākim’s relations with Byzantium who conducted a restrained policy toward Byzantium preferring peaceful relations. The destruction of the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem by al-Hākim had repercussions on later Fatimid-Byzantine relationships. At the beginning of al-Hākim’s reign, several clashes between Fatimid naval and land forces and the Byzantines took place. In 388/998, during an anti-Fatimid rebellion in Tyre, the Byzantines extended naval aid to the rebels clashing with the Fatimids and losing a ship and her crew. In 389/999, Fatimid land army, under the command of Jaysh ibn al-Šamsāma, fought the Byzantines in the vicinity of Aleppo inflicting a heavy defeat on them and taking many high-ranking prisoners.⁵ This defeat of local Byzantine forces brought in its wake the imperial army, led by the emperor himself, to the Byzantine-Muslim border.

² Musabbihi, 45-6, 53.

³ *Ibid.*, 49, 59-60, 70, 100-1.

⁴ Ibn al-Qalānisi quotes the text of the official letter of his appointment, 80-3; Ibn al-Šayrafī, 78.

⁵ For Tyre, see *Itti‘āz*, II, 18; Antāki, 182; Ibn al-Qalānisi, 50. For the land battle, see Lev, “The Fatimids and the Ahdāth of Damascus”, 101.

The Byzantines conquered the stronghold of Shayzar from the Fatimids and manned it with Armenian troops. Ba'albek in the Lebanon valley was the southernmost point which the Byzantines reached.⁶ These clashes were not unusual; they fitted in with the pattern of Fatimid-Byzantine relations. In 388-9/998-9, the men in power in Cairo were involved in an internal struggle; for them these clashes were events of local character satisfactorily dealt with by the Fatimid forces in the region. In 391/1001, Byzantine messengers arrived in Cairo and, in 403/1012-3, al-Hākīm sent gifts to the emperor.⁷ In 405/1014-5, Byzantine messengers were again in Cairo.⁸ These diplomatic contacts, like the clashes which had preceded them, belonged to the traditional pattern of Fatimid-Byzantine relations. However, a new dimension into Fatimid-Byzantine relations was introduced with the destruction of the church of the Holy Sepulchre. In 418/1027-8, when a new Fatimid-Byzantine agreement was negotiated, the issue was raised by the Byzantines. Al-Zāhir allowed the emperor to finance the rebuilding and the redecoration of the church, thus acknowledging his patronage over it. The Fatimids obtained similar concessions regarding the mosque in Constantinople, which was to be re-opened and the sermons to be pronounced in al-Zāhir's name. Muslim sources say that, as a by-product of this agreement, many Christians who had been forced to convert to Islam under al-Hākīm's persecutions relinquished their newly-adopted religion.⁹ According to the account of the Christian historian, al-Antākī, the clauses regarding the church of the Holy Sepulchre and the mosque in the Byzantine capital were a part of a much wider political agreement proposed by the Byzantines. The Byzantines, in addition to their demands regarding the church of the Holy Sepulchre, asked for the restoration of other churches destroyed by al-Hākīm, and demanded to re-establish a Patriarch in Jerusalem. In the political field, they insisted on Fatimid non-involvement in the affairs of Aleppo, and requested the cessation of Fatimid aid to the rulers of Sicily who were engaged in a war against Byzantium. Another Byzantine demand from al-Zāhir was to allow the bedouin chieftain, Ḥasan ibn al-Jarrāḥ, to return to his

⁶ Antākī, 183.

⁷ *Itti'āz*, II, 39, 40, 99; Antākī, 184

⁸ *Itti'āz*, II, 107-8; Ibn al-Zubayr, *Kitāb al-Dhakhā'ir wa-'l-Tuhaf*, (ed) M. Ḥamid Allāh with introduction by Š. al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Kuwait, 1959), 150-1.

⁹ *Itti'āz*, II, 176; *Khitat*, II, 169.

territories in Palestine. They also proposed an exchange of strongholds, Shayzar for Afāmiyya (Apamea).¹⁰

Al-Antākī is our major source on this topic. The details he supplies regarding the political aspects of the Byzantine-Fatimid negotiations are not found elsewhere. On the whole, his account inspires confidence. The points mentioned by al-Antākī belonged to the wider context of the Fatimid-Byzantine relations, and one can expect them to be raised in political agreement negotiated between the two powers. The desire to neutralize Aleppo, making her a buffer zone, had been a long-term objective of the Byzantine policy in the region. The Byzantine stand on behalf of Ḥasan ibn Jarrāh, was a result of his flight to their territories after being expelled from Palestine. Moreover, even the issue of the Patriarch of Jerusalem was not outside the context of Fatimid-Byzantine relations. In 375/985-6, Sitt al-Mulk's uncle was installed by al-ʿAziz as the Patriarch of Jerusalem. He died ten years later in Constantinople.¹¹ In 390/1000, another Patriarch of Jerusalem was instrumental in bringing peace between the Fatimids and the Byzantines. He remained in Constantinople after fulfilling his mission.¹² The Fatimids rejected the Byzantine demands regarding Aleppo, and the negotiations dragged on for three years before an agreement was concluded.¹³ Muslim sources are not helpful in clarifying the issue of the Fatimid-Byzantine agreement as to when it was signed, and what clauses it included. Maqrīzī says that in 427/1035-6, Byzantine messengers arrived in Cairo in order to extend the previous truce (that of 418/1027-8 ?) for a further ten years.¹⁴ In the records of 429/1037-8, irrespective of what he had said previously, Maqrīzī states that a Fatimid-Byzantine truce which included provision for the release of 5,000 Muslim prisoners and the restoration of the church of the Holy Sepulchre was signed. Maqrīzī adds that the church had indeed been rebuilt and that the emperor had spent on it vast sums of money.¹⁵ Al-Zāhir's policy in respect of the Holy Sepulchre was in line with his other domestic policies

¹⁰ Antākī, 270-1. For this treaty between the Fatimids and the Byzantines and its wider implications, see S. Runciman, "The Byzantine 'Protectorate' in the Holy Land", *Byzantion*, 18(1948), 207-15, esp., 208-9.

¹¹ Antākī, 165.

¹² *Ibid*, 184-5. A similar mission of a Patriarch of Jerusalem to the Byzantine court took place in 415/1024-5, Antākī, 243-4.

¹³ Antākī, 271.

¹⁴ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 182.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 187.

which aimed at disassociation of his regime from al-Ḥākīm's deeds. Otherwise his foreign policy was entirely traditional, and lacking in any particular new features.

III

Upon the death of the vizier, Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Jarjarā'i, (Ramaḍān 436/March-April 1045) the ruling *imām* was al-Mustanṣir. In 427/1036, he had ascended the throne at the age of seven. The powerful personage within the Fatimid family was al-Mustanṣir's mother, Sayyida Raṣād. She was a black slave girl bought by al-Zāhir from a Karaite Jew Abū Sa'd (Maqrizi: Sa'id) al-Tustarī. The Tustarī brothers (Abū Sa'd and Abū Naṣr) were merchants and bankers with dealings at the court, and Abū Sa'd was a purveyor to al-Zāhir.¹⁶ Following Abū 'l-Qāsim's death, Sayyida Raṣād appointed her former master, Abū Sa'd, as the head of the office dealing with her affairs (*dīwān al-Sayyida*). She, like other women of the Fatimid royal family, had many economic interests. Her involvement in the economic life necessitated the maintaining of administrative and financial staff—the *dīwān al-Sayyida* served these needs. The nomination of Abū Sa'd, however, aimed also at securing Sayyida Raṣād's influence on state affairs. Abū Sa'd brought about the downfall of al-Anbārī, who then served as a vizier. The new vizier was a converted Jew, Yūsūf al-Fallāhī, a nominee of Abū Sa'd. In an attempt to free himself of Ibn Sa'd's tutelage, the new vizier provoked strife within the army between the Kutāma Berbers and the Turks making Abū Sa'd a scapegoat for the results of his mischiefs. The Turks murdered Abū Sa'd and got away with their crime.¹⁷

The involvement of the army in the internal struggle among the administrators was of a transient nature and the military returned to their barracks. For Sayyida Raṣād it was only a temporary setback; she continued to exert influence on state affairs. In Muḥarram 442/May-June 1050, with the nomination of al-Yāzūrī as the new vizier, her efforts were crowned with success. Al-Yāzūrī, a man of rural origin from Palestine, was brought to the court in Cairo by the former vizier Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Jarjarā'i.

¹⁶ The history of the family is dealt with by W. J. Fischel, *Jews in the Economic and Social History of Medieval Islam*, (London, 1937), 68-89; M. Gil, *The Tustarīs, Family and Sect*, (Tel-Aviv, 1981) (in Hebrew).

¹⁷ For these events, see Y. Lev, "Army, Regime and Society in Fatimid Egypt, 358-487/968-1094", *IJMES*, 19(1987), 347-8.

Until his appointment al-Yāzūrī served Sayyida Raṣad in various capacities.¹⁸ During his vizierate, al-Yāzūrī was invested with unprecedented powers: he also occupied the posts of chief *cadi*, and of chief Fatimid propagandist, in addition to being responsible for the office dealing with Sayyida Raṣad affairs.

During the eight years in which al-Yāzūrī served as vizier, the administration regained stability. The fall of al-Yāzūrī and his execution (end of Ṣafar 450/end of April 1058) plunged the Fatimid administration into a period of turmoil.¹⁹ The years 450-4/1058-63, were marked by rapid turnover in the posts of vizier and of chief *cadi*. This chaos must be seen against the anomalies which came into being during al-Mustanṣir's reign. The first anomaly was a shift in the relative importance of the administrative offices in favour of the office dealing with the affairs of al-Mustanṣir's mother. The importance of the personnel employed by Sayyida Raṣad increased at the expense of personnel which staffed the administrative organs of the state.²⁰ The second anomaly was the merging, unprecedented in Fatimid history, of administrative and religious authority in al-Yāzūrī's hands. The execution of al-Yāzūrī created a vacuum which was not easy to fill. It was not only a question of finding a suitable person to replace al-Yāzūrī. The difficulty lay in the return to the separation of administrative and religious functions as had been practised before al-Yāzūrī's term of office.²¹

b) *The Civil War.*

I

In Jumādā II 454/June-July 1062, a minor incident between black slave troops and Turkish soldiers deteriorated into serious fighting in which the Turks had an upper hand. Some groups of black troops were driven away from the capital, but the vizier contained the spread of the fighting, and restored order. Maqrizī sees in this incident the beginning of the crisis which is referred to by appellations such as: *fitna*, disorder/civil war; *al-shidda al-mashhūra*, the notorious calamity; and *fasād al-dawla*, the corruption of state's affairs. The economic aspects of

¹⁸ *Itti'āz*, II, 199-200.

¹⁹ The vizierate of al-Yāzūrī is dealt with by H. Mahamid, *The Development of the Fatimid Administration*, M. A. thesis (University of Haifa, 1988), 19-24.

²⁰ *Itti'āz*, II, 208, 212.

²¹ *Ibid*, 251, 261.

the crisis are attested to by the phrase: *ayyām al-shidda wa-l-ghalā'*, days of calamity and dearth. In fact, the fighting of 454/1062 was an isolated incident. Between 454/1062 and 459/1066-7, no clashes between the different socio-military groups of the Fatimid army are recorded. Although during this period the administration did not regain its stability, the rapid turnover in the posts of vizier and of the chief *cadi* continued. The accumulative effect of the period of the administrative disarray was twofold: 1) The control over the provinces was lost. Strong men assumed power in the provinces withholding the flow of taxes to the capital. In a situation of diminishing financial resources, the government found it difficult to pay the army. 2) From 454/1062, the balance between the various socio-military groups was destroyed. The Turks emerged as the strongest group demanding and receiving a disproportionately large share of the state's diminishing resources.²²

II

In 459/1066-7, in the capital, fighting between Turks and black slave troops erupted. These clashes, which quickly deteriorated to full-scale battles, mark the beginning of the civil war under al-Mustanşir. The Turks in the capital, under the leadership of Nāşir al-Dawla ibn Ḥamdān, were victorious. However, other regiments of black slave troops were stationed in Upper Egypt and Alexandria. Ibn Ḥamdān's drive against the blacks in Upper Egypt (460/1067-8) spread the fighting from the capital into the provinces. What was at the beginning a serious but local event turned into full-scale civil war. In the capital, the victorious Ibn Ḥamdān, with other Turkish chiefs, aggrandized themselves at the expense of the state and other segments of the army. Their behaviour created a split in the ranks of the army forcing Ibn Ḥamdān to leave the capital. In 464/1071-2, after much fighting, and with the help of bedouin allies from the province of Buḥayra, Ibn Ḥamdān re-established himself in the capital. In Rajab 465/March-April 1073, Ibn Ḥamdān with other members of his family and his close aides were murdered

²² For civil war under al-Mustanşir, see Cohen, 54-60, and Lev, "Army, Regime", 348-52. For administration, including details about the various post holders during the period of chaos, see H. Eisenstein, "Die Wezire Agyptens unter al-Mustanşir A. H. 452-466", *WZKM*, 77(1987), 37-50. For economic situation, see R. Daghfous, "Aspects de la situation économique de l'Égypte au milieu du Vè s/milieu du XIè s", *CT*, XXV(1977), 23-50.

by their opponents. The opposition to Ibn Ḥamdān was a reaction to his continuous efforts to seek allies outside Egypt in order to overpower with their help the Fatimid dynasty. Such a plan was potentially detrimental to other military groups which had vested interests in the existence of the Fatimid state.²³ A few months later (winter 1073), at the invitation of al-Mustanṣir, the Fatimid governor of Acre, Badr al-Jamālī, arrived in Egypt and put an end to the civil war.

The results of the civil war were manifold. 1) The economic price was enormous; the provinces were under the control of various socio-military groups, and much land was left uncultivated. Disorder was widespread; the Berbers of Lawāta and other unidentified North African elements (Maghāriba) seized the Mediterranean coast while the blacks stayed in Upper Egypt. 2) A famine ravaged the country taking a heavy toll in human lives, including members of the royal family. 3) Great parts of the capital were destroyed and burnt in the course of the fighting. 4) The Fatimid state, and the royal family, became impoverished. Military supplies, and all kinds of treasures, stored in the complex of royal palaces in Cairo were looted and lost. For a while al-Mustanṣir was dependent on a subsidy paid him by one of the war-lords.²⁴

Al-Mustanṣir's choice of Badr al-Jamālī proved to be successful. He was the right man for the job displaying determination and ruthlessness, leaving a long trail of blood behind. Badr purged the army and administration, he fought vigorously against the groups which had seized power in the provinces. The reasons for Badr's success were an outcome of several factors: 1) The different elements which had assumed power in the provinces and the capital pursued their own narrow, selfish interests, lacking any motivation for cooperation. Badr, therefore, could crush each one of these groups separately, choosing the direction and the timing of his actions. 2) Badr received important help from social groups in Egypt, the merchants for example, whose interests were served by the suppression of unruly elements, and the restoration of law and order. Other

²³ Lev, "Army, Regime", 351-2; to the sources listed there in n. 141, should be added the article of A. Hamdani, "Byzantine-Fatimid Relations before the Battle of Manzikert", *Byzantine Studies*, 1(1974), 177.

²⁴ The significance of the looted treasures for art history is discussed by O. Grabar, "Imperial and Urban Art in Islam: The Subject Matter of Fatimid Art", *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire*, 1969, 173-90; reprinted in *idem*, *Studies in Medieval Islamic Art*, (London, 1976).

groups, such as the leaders of Lawāta Berbers, simply miscalculated Badr's intentions. 3) Badr, himself a Muslim of Armenian extraction, had at his disposal a private army, composed mainly or partly of Armenians.

c) The Jamālī House of Military Viziers.

I

The outcome of Badr's success was threefold: 1) The restoration of law and order as well as his sensible far-sighted tax-policy paved the way toward the economic revival of Egypt. 2) In 469/1076-7, Badr repelled the invasion of the Turkish chief-tain, Atsiz ibn Uvak, from Syria. It was for the first time since the defeat of the Carmathian invasions by Jawhar, and by al-Mu'izz, that Egypt had been threatened by force from Syria and the Eastern Islamic world. Atsiz, on the advice of his local collaborators, committed the same mistake as did the Carmathians; instead of concentrating his efforts against the capital, he over-ran the rural districts (*aryāf*) first. The aimless wandering through the Egyptian countryside caused widespread desertion from Atsiz's army, and adversely affected its morale. 3) Badr became the military dictator of the country. He controlled the army, the administration, the judiciary and the institution of the Fatimid propaganda.²⁵

Following the liquidation, in the capital, of Turkish military leaders by Badr's troops, al-Mustansir issued an official decree proclaiming Badr's titles. He was addressed as the most Illustrious Lord, and his titles were the Helper of the Imām, Sword of Islam, Commander of the Armies, Protector of the Cadis of the Muslims, and Guide of the Propagandists of the Believers (i.e. Ismā'īlis).²⁶ Maqrīzī cites few lines from the decree which convey the idea of the wide powers entrusted to Badr.²⁷ The bestowing of these titles on Badr can be seen as a further stage in the process which had begun during the vizierate of al-Yazīrī: fusion of administrative and judicial power in the hand of the vizier. There were, however, important differences be-

²⁵ See the studies listed in n. 22.

²⁶ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 40.

²⁷ *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 300; *Itti'āz*, II, 313. Ibn Muyassar mentions, under the records of 470/1077-8, that the titles Protector of the Cadis of the Muslims and Guide of the Propagandists of the Believers were conferred on Badr, *idem*, (ed) Sayyid, 45.

tween the position of administrators wielding political authority, and the position of Badr. According to the standard Islamic medieval administrative terminology, Badr is described as a vizier of the sword, while all his predecessors were viziers of the pen i.e. civilians. For the first time in Fatimid history, a man rose to a position of power through an independent power base (i.e. his army).

In inscriptions on buildings constructed on Badr's orders he is entitled as: "*fatā* of the Commander of the Faithful.....Abū 'l-Najm Badr al-Mustanşir". The term *fatā* was more common in Muslim west (Spain and North Africa), than in the eastern parts of Muslim world. In Spain this term denoted slaves or freedmen of rulers who rose to eminence.²⁸ The term *fatā*, and the adoption of the patronymic (*nisba*) al-Mustanşir (belonging to al-Mustanşir) are part of the nomenclature indicating patron-client relations.²⁹ The use of these terms points to the establishment of such a relationships between al-Mustanşir and Badr. It was a most unusual case of patronage. First of all, in his origin Badr was the slave of Ibn 'Ammār, the ruler of Tripoli. Maqrizī explains that Badr's patronymic Jamālī was derived from Ibn 'Ammār's honorific title (*laqab*)—Jamāl al-Dawla.³⁰ How Badr entered al-Mustanşir's service is not clear. There are no indications that Badr had ever been in Egypt prior to his arrival in 1073. The balance of power in this particular case of a master-client relationship was rather unusual; client being more powerful than his master. The possible explanation is that taking into account Badr's origin, his position vis-à-vis al-Mustanşir could have been accommodated only (one may say squeezed with difficulty) within the general framework of the institution of patronage. Although the terminology employed was that of patronage, the reality was quite different. Badr's title Amīr al-Juyūsh (Commander of the Armies) became his

²⁸ M. van Berchem, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, (Paris, 1903), 30, 56, 61; G. Wiet, "Nouvelles inscriptions fatimides", *Bulletin de l'institut d'Égypte*, XXIV(1941-1942), 147-8, 151. The title *fatā* has been discussed by G. Wiet in his *Matériaux pour un CIA*, in *Mémoires IFAO*, (1930), 146-7. For the Spanish and North African usage of the term, see "Fatā", *E.I.2*, II, 837.

²⁹ In the composed structure of medieval Arabic names, the *nisba* serves as an adjective denoting descent or origin as well as affiliations of various sorts such as geographical or occupational.

³⁰ *Itti'āz*, III, 329; cf. C. H. Becker, "Badr al-Djamālī", *E.I.2*, I, 869-70. The conferring of owner's patronymic upon a freedman was an established practice as is clearly exemplified by the cases of Mi'qdād, al-Zāhir's freedman, and the Fatimid general Dizbirī.

own patronymic. His military slaves, his houses and his properties were designated as Juyūshī-i.e. belonging to Amīr al-Juyūsh.³¹

II

The shift in power from al-Mustaṣṣir to Badr was not of a transient nature. Following Badr's death (4 Jumādā I 487/21 June 1094), al-Mustaṣṣir tried (and failed) to recover the powers he had lost. His failure was due to the stand of the majority of Badr's officers who rallied behind their master's son, al-Afdal, nominating him as the new vizier. A precedent of a hereditary vizierate was established.³² Al-Mustaṣṣir himself died several months later. Al-Afdal acted promptly; he raised al-Mustaṣṣir's youngest son (to whom Badr's daughter was married) to the throne, under the reigning title al-Musta'li. Al-Afdal's self-interest in doing so was obvious. However, his intervention in the succession of the Fatimid *imām* had grave consequences: a schism within the Fatimid movement. According to Ismā'īlī political doctrine, the imamate is passed from the *imām* to his son by an explicit designation (*naṣṣ*). Al-Mustaṣṣir's eldest son, al-Nizār, claimed that his father had designated him as heir apparent. He fled to Alexandria and rose up arms against al-Afdal, but was defeated and died in obscure circumstances (Ṣafar-Dhū 'l-Hijja 488/February-December 1095-January 1096).³³ In the eyes of al-Nizār's adherents, (i.e. the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs of Alamūt, in Persia—the notorious Assassins—who believed that al-Nizār before dying had passed the imamate to his grandson) al-Musta'li was not an *imām* at all as he lacked the necessary attribute of an *imām*—the *naṣṣ*.

The special nature of successional disputes among the Fatimids has been explained by S. M. Stern.³⁴ In Sunnī Islam, in such disputes the ultimate arbitrator was brute force. In Shī'ī-

³¹ Wiet, *Matériaux*, (1930), 149.

³² Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 54; *Itti'āz*, II, 331-2; Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, part,3, 243-4 (Arabic), 388-9 (English).

³³ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 60, 62-3; *Itti'āz*, III, 11-5; Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, Part,3, 245-7 (Arabic), 390-4 (English). For the Ismā'īlī political doctrine, see Aḥmad ibn Ya'qūb, *Al-Risāla fī 'l-Imāma*, edited, annotated and translated into English by S. N. Makrem, under the title: *The Political Doctrines of the Ismā'īlīs*, (N. Y., 1977), 11-8 (Arabic), 28-33 (English). Ibn Taghribirdī, a late Sunnī anti-Fatimid historian, had faithfully summarized the Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī doctrine of *naṣṣ*, *idem*, V, 237.

³⁴ S. M. Stern, "The Succession to the Fatimid Imām al-Āmir", *Oriens*, 4(1951), 193-4.

Ismā'īlī Islam, because of the pivotal role of the *imām* in the religious and the political system, successional quarrels turned into perpetual schisms. The political tutelage of the Jamālī house exacted a heavy price from the Fatimids.

III

During the military dictatorship of al-Afdal (1094-1121), the Fatimids were confronted with the gravest challenge they had ever faced in Palestine and Syria: the onslaught of the first Crusade. The Fatimids in general, and al-Afdal in particular, are held responsible for policies which played into the hands of the Crusaders. The most outspoken is A. S. Ehrenkreutz who unequivocally entitled his study on the topic as "The Fatimids in Palestine—The Unwitting Promoters of the Crusade".³⁵ His study is remarkable for the broad historical vision of European and Mediterranean history. At the same time, it is remarkable for the very personal view of the Fatimid history largely unsupported by the evidence. Discussing the eleventh century, Ehrenkreutz postulates that: "....the Fatimids were certainly aware of the resurgence of the naval powers of the Italians, who restored to military force in order to enhance their commercial activity." He continues by saying: "Although the Fatimids were in an excellent bargaining position because of their control over the rich Egyptian deposits of alum—a mineral in great demand for the nascent Italian textile industry—they nonetheless allowed European merchants to spread their commercial influence in Egypt and Syria".³⁶ In Ehrenkreutz's view there was a connection between the presence of European merchants and pilgrims in Palestine and Jerusalem and the first Crusade.³⁷

Prior to Ehrenkreutz's bold assertions, H. A. R. Gibb had ascribed to Badr al-Jamālī a policy which gave preference to Egyptian domestic affairs. His Syrian policy had been described by Gibb as "isolationist".³⁸ G. Wiet, while adopting this view,

³⁵ In *Egypt and Palestine. A Millennium of Association, 868-1948*, (eds) A. Cohen and G. Baer, (N. Y., 1984), 66-77.

³⁶ Ehrenkreutz, "The Fatimids in Palestine", 69, 70. For how far-fetched and unrealistic this view is, see H. E. J. Cowdrey's study of the circumstances that led to the Italian raid on Mahdiyya, in Tunisia; "The Mahdia Campaign of 1087", *EHR*, XLII (1977), 1-29; reprinted in *idem, Popes, Monks and Crusade*, (London, 1984).

³⁷ Ehrenkreutz, "The Fatimids in Palestine", 70.

³⁸ H. A. R. Gibb, "The Caliphate and the Arab States" in M. Baldwin (ed), *The History of the Crusades*, (Philadelphia, 1955), I, 95. Ehrenkreutz claims that a "Nilocentric" policy was adopted by the Fatimids following the conquest of

blamed al-Afdal for the achievements of the first Crusade in Palestine.³⁹ Gibb's view is also shared by M. C. Cohen who supports it with further examples. In Cohen's opinion Badr and Afdal shifted the focus of Fatimid foreign policy away from Syria to Nubia and Abyssinia.⁴⁰ I intend to re-examine the whole problem focusing on three issues: 1) The policy of Badr and Afdal toward Palestine and Syria. 2) The position of Jerusalem in Islam in general, and the Fatimid policy toward the town in particular. 3) The Fatimid contacts with the advancing armies of the first Crusade.

1) The policy of Badr and al-Afdal toward Palestine was not isolationist but a continuation of the traditional Fatimid approach toward the region. Following the restoration of law and order in Egypt, Badr concentrated his efforts in regaining Fatimid position in Palestine and Syria which, since 1055, had been seriously undermined by the Seljukid invasion into the region. He focused on the long-standing Fatimid objectives in the region which aimed at the control of Damascus, of the coastal towns and of Jerusalem.⁴¹ In 1077 and again in 1078, Badr tried to subdue Damascus.⁴² In 482/1089-90, Fatimid army repossessed the coastal towns of Acre, Tyre, Sidon and Jubayl.⁴³ In 486/1093, Badr's governor of Tyre rebelled; the population being aware of Badr's harsh treatment of rebels did not oppose

Egypt. While he quotes Ibn Killis's advice to al-ʿAziz to keep peace with Byzantium, he overlooks that it was ignored. He also fails to mention that Jerusalem had been conquered by the Fatimids from the Seljūks shortly before the arrival of the armies of the first Crusade to the town, "The Fatimids in Palestine", 68-9.

³⁹ G. Wiet, "Al-Afdal B. Badr al-Djamālī", *E.I.* 2, I, 215-6.

⁴⁰ Cohen, 64-5.

⁴¹ For Fatimid policy toward the coastal towns, see Lev, "Fatimid Navy", 243-4; A. Elʿad, "The Coastal Cities of Palestine During the Early Middle Ages", *The Jerusalem Cathedral*, (Jerusalem and Detroit, 1982), II, 155. For Damascus and inland Palestine, see Y. Lev, "Fatimid Policy Toward Damascus", 176-7. For a recent re-evaluation of the Fatimid policy in Palestine and Syria, see M. A. Köhler, "Al-Afdal und Jerusalem—was versprach sich Ägypten vom ersten Kreuzzug", *Saeculum*, 37(1986), 228-39. While I agree with most what Köhler says about Fatimid policy in Syria (p. 235), he is mistaken about Fatimid policy toward Jerusalem.

⁴² Personal motives might have played a role behind Badr's drive against Damascus. He was twice governor of the town, and on both occasions he had been expelled by popular uprisings, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 329; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 297; cf. Cohen, 61, n.43, (quoting Ibn al-Qalānisi), and 63, n.54.

⁴³ M. H. Chehab, *Tyr à l'époque des Croisades*, (Paris, 1975), I, 33-4. (Chehab's book contains fragments of Arabic sources pertinent to the history of Tyre translated into French). Cohen, 194, contrary to what he says (n.52) the sources do not mention Fatimid navy as taking part in this expedition.

the Fatimid army which nevertheless looted the town and imposed a fine of 60,000 *dinārs* on the inhabitants.⁴⁴ In 489/1094, the Fatimids extended their rule over the inland town of Afāmiyya.⁴⁵ In 490/1094, a new rebellion erupted in Tyre, this time it was put up only after heavy fighting which ended in massive looting and killing.⁴⁶ One year later, al-Afdal took Jerusalem from the hands of the Artuqids. During the fighting the town was bombarded by forty catapults and sections of the wall collapsed.⁴⁷ This prolonged military effort is a reflection of Fatimid continued interest in the region.

2) By the eleventh century the sanctity of Jerusalem in Islam was well-established.⁴⁸ Jerusalem was a place of pilgrimage attracting Muslim visitors from distant places. In 445/1053-4, for example, the ruler of Diyārbakr established a pious endowment in Jerusalem for visitors from the province.⁴⁹ The Persian traveller, Nāṣir-i Khusrau, mentioned that people of Syria who were unable to go on pilgrimage to Mecca came, at the time of the *hajj* (i.e. in the month of Dhū 'l-Hijja), to Jerusalem to perform the rituals of the pilgrimage there. This custom is attested to by other sources as well.⁵⁰ In the eleventh century, the first works (which incorporated much earlier materials, however) about the merits (*faḍā'il*) of Jerusalem were composed.⁵¹ Two isolated

⁴⁴ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 124-5; Chehab, 34-6; cf. Cohen, 194, n.57.

⁴⁵ *Itti'āz*, III, 18.

⁴⁶ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 133-4; *Itti'āz*, III, 20.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 135. *Itti'āz*, III, 22.

⁴⁸ The bibliography on this topic is immense. The most important studies are listed by S. D. Goitein and O. Grabar in their entry "Al-Kuds", *E.I.* 2, V, 338-9, 344. The following recent studies should be added to their list: O. Livne-Kafri, "On Jerusalem in Early Islam", *Cathedra*, 51 (1989), 35-67 (in Hebrew); Abdel Aziz Duri, "Bait al-Maqdis in Islam", in *Studies in the History and Archeology of Jordan*, (ed) A. Hadid (London, 1987), I, 351-5.

⁴⁹ M. H. Burgoyne, "A Recently Discovered Marwānid Inscription in Jerusalem", *Levant*, XIV (1982), 118-21.

⁵⁰ Nāṣir-i Khusrau, *Book of Travel*, translated into English by W. M. Thackston (N. Y., 1986), 21; Duri, 354 (quoting Turtūshī's *Kitāb al-Hawādith*). This custom was not typical of Jerusalem alone. For parallel practices in other Muslim towns, see Goitein, "Al-Kuds: A History", *E.I.* 2, V, 325.

⁵¹ The basic study on the subject by M. J. Kister, "You Shall Only Set For Three Mosques. A Study of an Early Tradition", *Le Museon*, 82 (1969), 173-96. E. Sivan, "The Beginnings of the Faḍā'il al-Quds Literature", *IOS*, 1 (1971), 263-71. Some of Sivan's observations have been modified by subsequent studies, see Y. Hasson's introduction to his edition of al-Wāṣiti's *Faḍā'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas*, (Jerusalem, 1979), 13-24; *idem*, "Jerusalem in the Muslim Perspective: The Qur'an and Tradition Literature", in *The History of Jerusalem. The Early Islamic Period*, (ed) J. Prawer (Jerusalem, 1987), 283-314; O. Livne-Kafri, "Early Arabic Literary Works on Jerusalem", *Cathedra* 44 (1987), 21-6, (the last two in Hebrew).

pieces of information from Musabbiḥī's annals exemplify Fatimid attitudes toward Jerusalem. In Ṣafar 415/April-May 1024, news reached Cairo that the pilgrims from Khurāsān who had visited Mecca were making their return journey via Palestine and Syria (because of unsafe roads between Mecca and Baghdad). The Fatimid court was quick to realize the potential propaganda value of this unexpected event. Orders were sent to the military governors in Syria to provide for the pilgrims who took advantage of the circumstances for visiting Jerusalem. Musabbiḥī's text explicitly expresses the Fatimid interest in impressing visitors and pilgrims who entered their territories.⁵² Musabbiḥī's second item of information is from Shaʿbān/October-November. In the few months that lapsed between these two accounts the situation in Palestine had changed drastically. Because of the drought in 415/1024-5, in Egypt, and the concomitant famine, the regime was unable to cope with bedouin insurrection in Palestine. The rebellious bedouin chieftain asked to enlarge his territories (*iqṭāʿ*) in Palestine to include Nābulus and Jerusalem. Al-Zāhir was ready to cede Nābulus, but not Jerusalem, to the bedouins.⁵³ Fatimid persistence on holding Jerusalem, at a time when their position in Palestine was at its lowest ebb, is very telling. It was al-Zāhir who, in 421-4/1030-3, rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem which had collapsed following an earthquake. He also was responsible for rebuilding the Aqṣā mosque, and the repair of its mosaics. Summing up Fatimid building activities in the area of the Ḥaram, O. Grabar concludes by saying: "....one may propose the hypothesis that there had been a formal attempt by the dynasty to build up the holiness of Jerusalem's sanctuaries".⁵⁴ The permission granted by al-Mustaṣfir to the Amalfians to build a complex of religious and non-religious buildings in Jerusalem does not undermine Grabar's opinion.⁵⁵ This Fatimid concession must be seen in a wider Islamic context. Islam, in contrast with Christianity, did not strive for exclusive-

⁵² Musabbiḥī, 23.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 58. For military and bedouin *iqṭāʿ*, see ch. 7.

⁵⁴ "Al-Kuds: B. Monuments", *E.I.2*, V, 342. For al-Zāhir's works and inscriptions in Jerusalem, see M. van Berchem, *CIA. Jerusalem: Ḥaram*, in *Mémoires IFAO*, (1927), 15, 263-4, 382-3; H. Stern, "Recherchers sur la mosquée al-Aqṣā et ses mosaïques", *Ars Orientalis*, 5(1963), 28-49, esp., 39, 44.

⁵⁵ For the Amalfian presence in Jerusalem, in the second half of the eleventh century, see the account of William of Tyre printed by F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem*, (Princeton, 1985), 273-4, also 270-1; Runciman, "The Byzantine Protectorate", 209.

ness in Jerusalem. Non-Muslim populations, and non-Muslim religious life and worship were tolerated under Islam. A Muslim geographer of the tenth century, al-Muqaddasī, a native of Jerusalem, complained about the high profile of non-Muslims in Jerusalem. As is well known, Jews had been barred from Jerusalem under Byzantine rule over the town, and later during the period of the Latin sway, but were allowed to live in Jerusalem under Islam.⁵⁶ The Amalfian complex in Jerusalem was not the first of its kind; preceding it was the complex built during the time of Charlemagne.⁵⁷ The signs of Fatimid presence in Jerusalem were many and ostentatious. Nāṣir-i Khusrau was impressed by some of them, such as silver lamps donated to the Dome of the Rock on which the name of the Fatimid ruler was inscribed in gold letters around the bottom.⁵⁸ Also Fatimid governors of Palestine built in the area of the Ḥaram; their inscriptions were admired by Nāṣir-i Khusrau.⁵⁹ Fatimid presence was no less visible at the shrine of Abraham in Hebron. The shrine was enlarged and re-decorated by Fatimid rulers. As with the Dome of the Rock, gifts were sent to the shrine by the rulers themselves and by people of the ruling establishment.⁶⁰

3) According to M. A. Köhler, at a very early stage of the first Crusade, during the siege of Nicaea, a Frankish delegation went to Cairo with a message to the Fatimids.⁶¹ Thus the Fatimids were aware of the advance of the Crusaders, and informed about their intentions. The data on Fatimid-Frankish diplomatic contacts are derived from Latin sources. It seems to me that information on this issue had been suppressed by late Muslim historians. They were writing at a time when the notion of the Holy War against the Franks became dominant in

⁵⁶ Muqaddasī's observation is much quoted, for example, see Peters, 235-40, esp. 235. For the Frankish ban on Jews to live in Jerusalem, see J. Prawer's remarks in his *The History of the Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, (Oxford, 1988), 46-9, esp. 46-7.

⁵⁷ The whole issue has been discussed by S. Runciman, "Charlemagne and Palestine", *EHR*, 50(1935), 606-9. For English translation of the pertinent Latin sources, see F. E. Peters, 218-20; J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, (Jerusalem, 1977), 141-2.

⁵⁸ Nāṣir-i Khusrau, (tran.) Thackston, 32.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 33-4. For the inscriptions of Maqām Ghūrī, see M. H. Burgoyne and A. Abul-Hajj, "Twenty-Four Medieval Arabic Inscriptions from Jerusalem", *Levant*, XI(1979), 115-7; C. E. Bosworth, "Some Observations on Jerusalem Arabic Inscriptions", *Levant*, XIII(1981), 266-7.

⁶⁰ Nāṣir-i Khusrau, (tran.) Thackston, 36, 37; cf. M. Sharon, "Al-Khalil", *E.I.2*, V, 954-61, esp., 958.

⁶¹ "Al-Afdal und Jerusalem", 230.

Muslim society and were, in retrospect, embarrassed by Fatimid policy. Especially if (as attested to by Latin sources) the Fatimids indeed proposed to the Crusaders a common anti-Seljukid policy. Two Fatimid delegations reached the Crusaders (in Antioch and in 'Arqa); on the second occasion the Fatimids proposed to allow the Crusaders to visit Jerusalem in groups of 200-300 unarmed pilgrims. Eventually, the Fatimids realized that they would have to fight the Franks,⁶² and the Fatimid governor of Jerusalem made preparations in anticipation of an attack on the town.⁶³

To sum up: the scholarly discussion of Badr's policy toward Palestine and Syria, and al-Afdal's policy toward the first Crusade, has been influenced too much by the results of both policies. Badr's partial success in restoring Fatimid rule in Palestine and Syria was not a result of lack of intention, but a reflection of the strength of the opposition, and of Fatimid limited military resources. The same can be said with respect to al-Afdal's failure to deal with the threat of the first Crusade. It was not a result of unwillingness to fight, but an outcome of a military defeat which must be examined from the angle of military history. If we believe Latin sources, al-Afdal's attitude toward the Crusaders evolved with time. At the beginning, his intention was to use this opportunity against the Seljuks, which was entirely in line with previous Fatimid policies. However, as the march of the Crusaders approached Jerusalem, al-Afdal began military preparations.

⁶² Raymond d'Aguiler, *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem*, translated into English with introduction and notes by J. H. Hill and L. L. Hill (Philadelphia, 1968), 40-1, 89-90; Anonymous, *The Deeds of the Franks and other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, edited and translated into English by R. Hill (London, 1962), 86; William Archbishop of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, translated into English and annotated by E. A. Babcock and A. C. Krey (New York, 1976), I, 224, 326, 333-4, 354.

⁶³ William of Tyre, I, 333-5.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DEMISE OF THE FATIMID STATE.

a) The Second Schism

I

In 495/1101, al-Mustaʿli who was raised to the throne by al-Afdal died. He was succeeded by his five-year old son whose reigning title was al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh. Al-Afdal's position as military vizier was uncontested; he had the full reins of power in his hands.¹ Al-Afdal was an active ruler much concerned with military affairs. During the years 1099-1105, he used to dispatch Fatimid land and naval forces to Palestine to fight the Crusaders. These abortive missions, as well as his own defeat in 1099 at Ascalon induced him to launch a programme of military reforms.

On 30 Ramaḍān 515/12 December 1121, al-Afdal was assassinated and his twenty-seven years of military dictatorship were brought to an end. Although one of the assassins was captured, who masterminded the plot remains unknown. From reading the sources one receives the impression that the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs perpetrated the killing. However, judging by the subsequent events, al-Āmir must have been involved in the plot. Smoothly, and with suprising ease, he assumed full powers neutralizing al-Afdal's sons who had toyed with the idea of installing their elder brother as a vizier.² Again with benefit of hindsight, it seems that the future vizier, Ma'mūn al-Baṭā'ihī, was instrumental in the plot against al-Afdal. Ma'mūn was in the service of al-Afdal from 501/1107-8-if we can trust the account of his career written by his son-while serving al-Afdal he became all-powerful. At the beginning of Dhū 'l-Qa'da 515/beginning of January 1122, al-Āmir installed Ma'mūn as his vizier.³ The son, Ibn al-Ma'mūn, made every effort to depict his father as more

¹ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 69; *Itti'āz*, III, 37.

² Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 80-1; *Itti'āz*, III, 60-2, 68-9.

³ *Muqaffā*, Or.1366B, f, 206a; *Khīṭat*, II, 340-1; *Itti'āz*, III, 75.

powerful than al-Afdal, and as a recipient of greater honors.⁴ Nevertheless, al-Āmir's position much improved; he re-possessed lost powers, and the public signs of his authority were partly restored.⁵ As a vizier Ma'mūn displayed vigilance in combating the Nizārī danger.⁶ The Fatimid regime in Cairo was far more exposed to subversion and Nizārī terrorism than vice versa. The great ammount of commercial traffic from abroad coming into the Egyptian capital, and the possibilities of going under cover that the populous city offered, gave the Nizārīs an advantage in their struggle against their rivals.

Al-Āmir on his part made an effort to reaffirm the legitimacy of his father's imamate while refuting the claims of the Nizārīs. This effort was summarized in al-Āmir's letter (*sijjil*) known as *al-Hidāya al-Āmiriyya*, which has been throughly analyzed by S. M. Stern.⁷ It was a vain attempt. In the schism between the two branches of the Fatimid movement only a renunciation of claims by one of the parties involved could resolve the dispute. In 518/1124-5, elaborate measures of internal security were taken in the capital aimed at the uncovering of Nizārī agents.⁸ In the long run, these proved inadequate; in 524/1130, al-Āmir was assassinated by the Nizārīs.⁹ In the last five years of hie reign, following the execution of the vizier Ma'mūn (Rajab 519/August-July 1125), al-Āmir ruled independently. Al-Āmir was remarkable for his ability to free himself, and the Fatimid state, from the military dictatorship of the Jamālī house. In his quest for absolute power, al-Āmir was determined and ruthless as were his predecessors, the early Fatimid *imāms*. His achievement of restoring power into the hand of the *imām* was utterly shattered in the wake of his assassination.

II

The assassination of al-Āmir plunged the Fatimid dynasty into an unprecedented problem of succession. At the time of al-

⁴ *Muqaffā*, Or.1366B, ff, 206a-b, 207a; *Khīṭat*, II, 341

⁵ *Muqaffā*, Or.1366B, ff, 207b, 209b, 211b; *Itti'āz*, III, 76, 77.

⁶ *Muqaffā*, Or.1366B, f, 211a.

⁷ "The Epistle of the Fatimid Caliph al-Āmir (al-Hidāya al-Āmiriyya)-its Date and its Purpose", *JRAS*, (1950), 20-31. Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 84-5; *Itti'āz*, III, 97-101.

⁸ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 97-8; *Itti'āz*, III, 108-9; cf: B. Lewis, *The Assassins*, (London, 1967), 60-2; M. G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, (The Hague, 1955), 108-9.

⁹ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 110; *Itti'āz*, III, 128-9.

Āmir's death, his heir apparent was his infant son Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ṭayyib. Ismā'īlī political doctrine accepts an infant son of a deceased *imām*, who was designated by his father (i.e. had received the *naṣṣ*), as a full *imām*.¹⁰ In the course of Fatimid history, a number of *imāms* (al-Ḥākim, al-Zāhir and al-Mustanṣir) ascended the throne at a tender age, they were regarded as *imāms* and performed the public duties of the *imām* as the head of the Fatimid state. The disposition of political power following al-Āmir's assassination was shaped by two high-ranking officers from among al-Āmir's military slaves. They proclaimed 'Abd al-Majīd, al-Āmir's cousin and a senior member of the Fatimid family, as ruler, under the title al-Ḥāfiẓ li-Dīn Allāh. It was stated that he is acting as guardian for al-Āmir's son to be born by one of al-Āmir's pregnant women.¹¹

The contradiction between the designation of al-Ṭayyib, publicly celebrated on Rabī' II 524/March-April 1130, and the new situation can be explained only by the death of the infant heir apparent. For the Ismā'īlīs a situation of an *imām* dying without an heir is simply unimaginable. Therefore some kind of explanation was urgently required. According to an official version put into circulation, al-Āmir prophesied his murder, the exact disposition of power following his death and the fact that one of his women would deliver a son for whom 'Abd al-Majīd would act as guardian. S. M. Stern, in his penetrating study of al-Āmir's succession, has explained that the aim of al-Āmir's prophecy was, on the one hand, to abrogate the designation of al-Ṭayyib and, on the other, to give legitimacy to the new regime.¹²

When examined from Ismā'īlī point of view, the official version published in Cairo contained the necessary ingredients to persuade the believers. It solved the unbearable situation of a community left without an *imām*.¹³ The use of a dream as a means of creating credibility was in concord with widely accepted beliefs among the Ismā'īlīs and Muslims in general. Dreams as means of communication between man and the di-

¹⁰ Aḥmad ibn Ya'qūb, 34-6, (Arabic), 45-6 (English). Stern, in his study "The Succession to the Fatimid Imām al-Āmir", *Oriens*, 4(1951), 196-7, drew the attention to the importance of Ibn Muyassar's information about the birth of Ṭayyib and his proclamation as heir apparent. This information is repeated by Maqrizī (*Itti'āz*, III, 128). Ibn Taghribirdi, however, gives a completely different version, (V, 237-8).

¹¹ Stern, "The Succession", 202-3; *Itti'āz*, III, 137.

¹² "The Succession", 198-204, esp. 203-4

¹³ Aḥmad ibn Ya'qūb, 32-4 (Arabic), 43-5 (English).

vine, and dreams as a source of inspiration and legitimization for human actions, were commonly accepted concepts in medieval Islam.¹⁴ The ability of the *imām* to foresee future events, in minute detail, was regarded by the Ismāʿīlīs as one of his characteristic features.¹⁵

The second schism was provoked by the rejection of this seemingly plausible official version, which nevertheless required from the believer some degree of flexibility, by a group of Ismāʿīlīs in Cairo. They believed that the infant Abū ʿl-Qāsim al-Ṭayyib had been brought to Yemen. These adherents of al-Ṭayyib laid the foundation for the Ṭayyibī Ismailism. Their immediate challenge to ʿAbd al-Majīd was minor in comparison with the pressing problems he had at hand. The disposition of power that had been shaped by the heads of al-Āmir's military slaves giving them and their men a position of authority was unacceptable to the army. The dissent was led by Abū ʿAlī Kutayfāt, the sole survivor of the massacre committed against al-Afdal's extended family. His coup d'état was successful; the vizier was murdered and al-Ḥāfiẓ was arrested. Kutayfāt declared himself as Shīʿī belonging to the Imāmī branch. He ruled as guardian for the Expected Imām who, according to the beliefs of the Imāmī Shiah, entered from 260/874 into a period of an occultation.¹⁶

On 16 Muḥarram 526/8 December 1131, Kutayfāt was murdered by his opponents among the army, and ʿAbd al-Majīd's rule was restored. A few months later, he was declared as a fully legitimate *imām* deriving his power from an explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) of al-Āmir. The letter declaring the imamate of al-Ḥāfiẓ was a product of a pressing need. The broken line of al-Āmir's succession had not been restored. Apparently, something had happened to al-Āmir's pregnant widow, or to her baby (she

¹⁴ Stern, "The Succession", 203. For dreams in medieval Islam, see the collection of studies in *The Dream and Human Societies*, (eds) G. E. von Grunebaum and R. Cailliois (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966); M. J. Kister, "The Interpretation of Dreams", *Israel Oriental Studies*, IV(1974), 67-104, esp. 69-70.

¹⁵ There are many accounts in the sources illustrating this belief. For example, al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān argued that the first Fatimid ruling *imām*, al-Mahdī, dispatched army to conquest Egypt knowing that he would not achieve that goal, see Lev, "The Fatimids and Egypt", 192. Al-Mahdī foresaw also the exact course of Abū Yazid's rebellion and his threat to the town of Mahdiyya, see M. Talbi, "Mahdiyya", *E.I.*2, V, 246-7.

¹⁶ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 113, 114-5, 116-7. *Ittiʿāz*, III, 138-40. For the doctrine of occultation, see M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shīʿī Islam. The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shiism*, (New Haven and London, 1985), 207-

might have given birth to a daughter). In any event, a new doctrine had to be forward. In the letter trying to provide legitimacy for al-Ḥāfiẓ's imamate, use was made of basic religious-political tenets of Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī Islam, namely the belief that the Prophet of Islam designated 'Alī, his cousin, as his heir. The transmission of the imamate from al-Āmir to al-Ḥāfiẓ was modeled according to this belief.¹⁷ The period of al-Ḥāfiẓ's rule as an *imām* in his own right was characterized by struggles against his viziers. This type of rivalry became a pattern which dominated Fatimid politics until the final demise of the dynasty in 1171. These events are outlined in the next section.

b) Disintegration and Foreign Invasions

I

Yānis, the man who installed al-Ḥāfiẓ in the imamate, tried to create for himself an independent power base. He destroyed units loyal to al-Ḥāfiẓ, and launched a massive purge of the judiciary and the Fatimid propaganda.¹⁸ In Dhū 'l-Ḥijja 526/October-November 1132, on al-Ḥāfiẓ's instigation Yānis was killed. However, al-Ḥāfiẓ enjoyed no repose. He was confronted by his son, Hasan, who had opposed the nomination of his brother as heir-apparent. The army rose against Hasan, forcing al-Ḥāfiẓ to order the killing of his son to save his rule (529/1135).¹⁹

Al-Ḥāfiẓ's next vizier was no less than a Christian Armenian, a military leader from the province of Gharbiyya. (The origin of Christian Armenian troops in Fatimid Egypt goes back to the period of Badr al-Jamālī who had brought them, relying on their loyalty). After some fighting, Bahrām emerged as the strongest military leader in Cairo. The next step was inevitable; Bahrām was nominated as vizier. Al-Ḥāfiẓ's remarkable adaptability proved itself once again; when asked how his Christian vizier would be able to ascend the pulpit along with the *imām* during religious festivals. Al-Ḥāfiẓ pointed out that this custom

10.

¹⁷ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 117; *Itti'āz*, III, 142, 146. Stern, "The Succession", 207-10; for a recent discussion of the new doctrine asserting al-Ḥāfiẓ's imamsip, see P. A. Sanders, *The Court Ceremonial of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt*, Ph. D. dissertation (Princeton University, 1984), 236-44, esp. 240-4.

¹⁸ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 118-20; *Itti'āz*, III, 144, 145, 149.

¹⁹ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 121-2; *Itti'āz*, III, 149-55.

had been established by Badr al-Jamālī, as a part of his attempt to solidify his own position vis-à-vis the *imām*. Therefore, the reversion to the practice of pre-Badr periods when the chief *cadi* ascended the pulpit with the *imām*, is preferable. This time al-Hāfiz's flexibility in accommodating seemingly unbridgeable ideological contradictions did not work. What was acceptable to him, an Armenian vizier, on whom the title Sword of Islam had been conferred, was abominable both to his subjects and to the army.²⁰

The dissension against Bahrām was led by Riḍwān, the governor of Gharbiyya province. Riḍwān appealed to the religious sentiment of the Muslims preaching in the mosques of the province the idea of Holy War against Bahrām and his Christian Armenian supporters. He also circulated al-Hāfiz's letters (genuine or forged) asking for his help and legitimizing his actions. In the struggle between Bahrām and Riḍwān the later had an upper hand.²¹ An outburst of anti-Christian feelings directed both against the Copts in Egypt and the Franks in Palestine accompanied Riḍwān's clash with Bahrām. Copts, and non-Muslims in Egypt in general, were persecuted. Armenians who continued to live in Egypt went through many ordeals.²² Riḍwān re-established the office of the Holy War displaying particular concern for fortifying Ascalon, the sole Fatimid outpost in Palestine facing the Franks.²³

This anti-Christian spasm quickly subsided, Riḍwān's main concern was the consolidation of his position vis-à-vis al-Hāfiz. Riḍwān was a Sunnī Muslim and his brother Ibrāhīm belonged to the Imāmī Shiah. Riḍwān showed no respect for al-Hāfiz, mocking al-Hāfiz's attempt to legitimize his claim to the imamate.²⁴ The strained relations between al-Hāfiz and Riḍwān deteriorated even further when one of al-Hāfiz sons sought refuge with Riḍwān. Riḍwān consulted the chief of the Fatimid

²⁰ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 123; *Itti'āz*, III, 156. This topic is examined by M. Canard, "Un vizir chrétien à l'époque fatimite: l'Arménien Bahrām"; *idem*, "Notes sur les Arméniens en Egypte à l'époque fatimite", both in *AIEO*, XII(1954), 93, 96; XIV(1956), 145-57, respectively.

²¹ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 124-5; *Itti'āz*, III, 158-62.

²² Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 129; *Itti'āz*, III, 165; Abū Sālih, (the Armenian), *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, translated into English and annotated by B. T. A. Evetts (Oxford, 1895), 19. The Arabic text was not available to me.

²³ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 128-9; *Itti'āz*, III, 163. For a wider treatment of *jihād* in twelfth century Egypt, see E. Sivan, *L'Islam et la croisade*, (Paris, 1968), 53-6.

²⁴ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 130, 138; *Itti'āz*, III, 166, 167.

propaganda trying to find out if it would be possible to raise this son of al-Ḥāfiẓ as an *imām*. The chief propagandist expounded the standard Ismāʿilī doctrine that one of the necessary attributes of an *imām* is the designation (*naṣṣ*) conferred upon the future *imām* by the *imām*-father.²⁵ The confrontation between al-Ḥāfiẓ and Riḍwān went through three rounds; it ended with the killing of Riḍwān in 524/1147-8.²⁶

On 6 Jumādā 544/11 October 1150, al-Ḥāfiẓ died. He was succeeded by his seventeen year-old son who ruled under the reigning title al-Zāfir. The young *imām* found himself under the tutelage of a military vizier, Ibn Sallār, the governor of the Buḥayra province and Alexandria. Al-Zāfir's attempt to get rid of Ibn Sallār through the cooperation with Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn Sallār's stepson, ended with the murder of Ibn Sallār which was followed by the murder of al-Zāfir himself. Ibn ʿAbbās accused al-Zāfir's brothers of the murder that he had himself committed, and put them to death. Nevertheless, Fatimid dynasty was not yet extinguished, al-Zāfir's five-year old son was installed as ruling *imām* under the reigning name al-Fāʿiz (last day of Muḥarram 549/16 April 1154).²⁷

II

Sitt al-Quṣūr, al-Zāfir's sister, assisted by the palace personnel sought a way to revenge her brother's murder, and to oust ʿAbbās from Cairo. Their choice fell on Ṭalāʾiʿ ibn Ruzzīk, the governor of Ashmūnayn and Bahnasā. ʿAbbās, whose hold over Cairo was precarious, preferred to leave for Syria. Sitt al-Quṣūr informed the Franks who intercepted ʿAbbās's caravan killing him and capturing his brother.²⁸ The murder of the Fatimid *imām* and his brothers was avenged, but it had little influence on the fortunes of the imamate. The imamate was doomed. On

²⁵ *Ittiʿāz*, III, 169.

²⁶ Usāma ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iṭbār*, (ed) P. K. Hitti (Princeton, 1930), 29-33, translated into English by P. K. Hitti as *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusaders*, (N.Y., 1929), 55-9; Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 130-1, 137-8; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 168-73, 183-4.

²⁷ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 319-20, 321-2; Usāma ibn Munqidh, 18-9 (Arabic), 43 (English). Hitti's translation: "Ibn Sallār had equipped for the conquest of Bilbays an army...", is erroneous. The army in question was prepared for Ascalon, and camped in Bilbays on its way to Palestine, see Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 146-7; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 205.

²⁸ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 146-50, 150; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 208-9, 213-20, esp. 220.

17 Rajab 555/23 July 1160, al-Fā'iz died. He was succeeded by his nine year-old son who assumed the reigning title al-Āḍid.

During the twilight of the Fatimid imamate, Sitt al-Quṣūr proved to be capable and determine in her efforts to preserve the Fatimid dynasty. Ibn Ruzzik, the saviour of yesterday, posed a fresh danger to the imamate. He himself was a Shī'ī belonging to the Imāmī branch and his religious policy aimed at undermining of the Ismā'īlī character of the state. He also forced al-Āḍid to marry his daughter. Both developments were viewed with obvious apprehension by the Fatimid royal family. Sitt al-Quṣūr enlisted the support of black troops who murdered Ibn Ruzzik (19 Ramaḍān 556/10 September 1161). The liquidation of Ibn Ruzzik changed nothing; his son Ṣāliḥ became the vizier while Sitt al-Quṣūr paid with her life for the conspiracy she had plotted. Ṣāliḥ, however, was unable to established himself firmly in Cairo. He was driven out of the capital by Ibn Shāwar, the governor of Upper Egypt (557/1162).²⁹

Ibn Shāwar's position was challenged by Dirghām, who drove Ibn Shāwar out of the capital, but was unable to overpower him. The two rivals were unable to muster enough forces and support within Egypt to bring the struggle between them to a conclusion. Therefore, they sought help outside Egypt attracting the two powerful forces which were able and willing to intervene in Egyptian affairs-Nūr al-Dīn of Damascus and the Franks. In 559/1164, Shāwar, with the help of Nūr al-Dīn's expeditionary force commanded by Shirkūh, regained the post of vizier after much fighting in which Dirghām and his son were killed. Shāwar now turned against his collaborators; unable on his own to rid himself of Shirkūh, he appealed to the King of Jerusalem.

From 1164, Egyptian soil became the battleground between various segments of the Fatimid army, Shirkūh's forces and the Franks. The dominant personage in Egypt became Saladin, a young officer in Shirkūh's force. The events of this phase of the Fatimid history need no amplification, as they are reconstructed in the excellent account by Malcolm Cameron Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, in their recent study of Saladin. Saladin became a vizier of al-Āḍid. From this position, Saladin achieved what other military viziers in twelfth century had been

²⁹ Usāma ibn Munqidh, 22-7 (Arabic), 48-53 (English); Ibn al-Muqaffa', III, part,1, 46-7 (Arabic), 76-7 (English); *Itti'āz*, III, 238-9, 246-7, 249, 253.

incapable of: the overthrowing of the Fatimid imamate, and the establishment of his own rule.³⁰

c) Fatimid Politics in the Twelfth Century

With rare exceptions we have no direct testimony from the persons involved in Fatimid politics of the twelfth century with respect to their ambitions and the principles that governed their behaviour. In our attempt to understand, we must rely on indirect inference from the sources. There is one point in Stern's study "The Succession of the Fatimid Imām al-Āmir" that calls for re-examination. Stern says that Yānis' conspiracy against Kutayfāt was supported by the Berbers of Kutāma, the traditional adherents of the Fatimid cause.³¹ By 526/1131-2, the social base on which the Fatimid rule rested, always rather narrow, was eroded. The power of the Kutāma had dwindled long before and their support evaporated. The Fatimid dynasty was one of the groups contending for power in the capital. Its ability to survive and to cling to rule was achieved by compromising power to the military leaders who rose through the support of their groups. This process started with the military dictatorship of Badr al-Jamālī and continued through the twelfth century.

The personage of the vizier and the methods by which he had gained power were of little concern. This aspect of the Fatimid politics of the twelfth century was noted by Usāma ibn Munqidh, a participant in the events, who portrays the essence and the tenor of the factional politics in Cairo. He describes the strained relationship between 'Abbās and his son following Ibn Sallār's murder, and 'Abbās' apprehension that his son would fall under the spell of al-Zāfir and be used by the latter for his purposes. Usāma ibn Munqidh says that 'Abbās was "cognizant of the common practice by which one party was usually instigated against another until both parties were exterminated and all their possessions were then appropriated by the instigator".³²

Against the background of military leaders who rose through

³⁰ Malcolm Cameron Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, *Saladin. The Politics of the Holy War*, (Cambridge, 1982), 6-29; A. S. Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin*, (Albany, 1972), 21-4, 35-59. For sources, see Ibn al-Muqaffa', III, part, 1, 47-9 (Arabic), 78-80 (English); *Itti'āz*, III, 245, 256, 258, 261; Ibn al-Furat (ed) Cl. Cahen, "Un récit inédit du vizirat de Ḍirghām", AI, 8(1969), 40-1.

³¹ P. 206.

³² Hitti's translation, p, 44.

their own power base, the role of the Christian Armenians must be examined. They, along with other military elements, provided the power base for the Jamālī house. Their relative importance, in comparison with other socio-military groups, should not be exaggerated. Far more unusual was the rise of Bahrām. In a way it was an outcome, undoubtedly shocking for the Muslims, of the fragmentation of the political scene in the twelfth century. As a military leader, Bahrām had an important advantage over other viziers: his supporters were a more homogeneous and cohesive group tied together by bonds of faith and of ethnic solidarity.

From al-Hāfiẓ's point of view, the vizierate of Bahrām had many positive aspects. A Christian Armenian could not hope to supplant the Fatimid imamate, or to undermine the Ismā'īlī character of the state. On the other hand, the reliance on Christian Armenians had its price; it contributed further toward the waning of the religious aura of the Fatimid regime. The two crises of succession had grave repercussions on Fatimid rule. The gap between the pretensions of the "prophetical dynasty", according to the Fatimid self-assertion, and the doctrinal expediencies adopted by all parties involved in the two schisms eroded the legitimacy of the Fatimid rule. A regime whose legitimacy was disputed, and one which in order to keep itself in rule had to compromise political power was doomed. The invasion of Egypt by foreign troops, Muslim and Frankish, alienated the population. For much of the twelfth century, the Fatimid regime failed to provide even the little that was expected in medieval Islam from the rulers: protection of the community of the believers from internal disorder and external threats.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RULING CIRCLES

a) The Fatimid Royal Family

I

The Fatimid royal family amassed immense wealth and held vast properties. Special administrative organs dealt with the management of the private property of the *imām* and other members of the family. These were the *dīwān al-khāṣṣ*—the office of the Private Purse—and the *khizāna al-khāṣṣ*—*imām*'s Private Treasury. Offices of a similar nature, known under the names of other members of the royal family, are also mentioned in the sources.¹ Data on the magnitude as well as the composition of the properties owned by the Fatimids can be gleaned from the sources. The best starting-point is the description of the Persian Fatimid sympathizer, Nāṣir-i Khusrau, who visited Egypt between August 1047 and April 1048. He says that all the shops in Cairo (according to him there were 20,000) belonged to the *imām*, and the rent per month varied between two and ten *dīnārs*. The caravanserais and the bath-houses in Cairo also belonged to the *imām*. Other urban properties owned by him included 8,000 buildings in both Cairo and Fustāt which were rented on a monthly basis.² The concentration of urban properties in Cairo, the city founded by the Fatimids for themselves, is not surprising. The first market in Cairo was built in 365/975-6; the first bathhouses were built by al-ʿAzīz, and others by his daughter Sitt al-Mulk.³ However, by the time of al-Ḥākim, the Fatimid *imām* already had properties in Fustāt as well. This is clearly born out by the text

¹ For *dīwān al-khāṣṣ*, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 6; S. M. Stern, *Fatimid Decrees*, (London, 1964), index s. v. *d. al-khāṣṣ*. For offices of other members of the royal family, see Musabbihī, 108; *Ittiʿāz*, II, 200, 212, 289.

² Nāṣir-i Khusrau, (tran.), Thackston, 45.

³ *Khīṭaṭ*, I, 295; III, 129, 162. For the term *ḥammām sultāniyya*, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 248; Wiet, *Matériaux*, (1929), 125

of Azhar's endowment document preserved by Maqrīzī.⁴ The composition of the urban properties of the *imām* (*ribāʿ sultāniyya*) diversified with the time. On the occasion of Ramaḍān 517/OctoberNovember, a decree was issued: it stated that from that date onward the tenants on *ribāʿ sultāniyya* would enjoy a reduction in their rent during Ramaḍān. Under the heading of *ribāʿ sultāniyya*, various types of business were mentioned, among them were: houses, bathhouses, shops, oil presses, mills and wedding halls. The decree reveals details about urban business not mentioned by other sources. The existence of oil presses in rural areas is referred to in a different context, but not attested to otherwise for the capital. The oil presses in rural areas, in contrast with those in the capital, were privately owned by *iqṭāʿ*-holders.⁵

According to Nāṣir-i Khusrau, agricultural properties of the *imām* extended along the Cairo Canal, Khalīj.⁶ The rural properties of the *imāms* were not limited to Cairo. Muslim rulers of Egypt, prior to the Fatimid period, owned many properties in the country. Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj, for example, possessed many estates and these were undoubtedly seized by the Fatimids.⁷ As a minor example of this largely unrecorded process, one can cite the history of Kāfūr's orchard along the Khalij which became a Fatimid property.⁸ The Fatimids owned two other extensive orchards in the capital which were valuable, financially, as they yielded large revenues.⁹ The most

⁴ *Khīṭat*, IV, 50. Azhar's *waqfiyya* has been translated and examined by Wiet, *Matériaux*, (1929), 105-12, esp., 107.

⁵ *Ittiʿāz*, III, 104-5, see also 232. The term *rubʿ* pl. *ribāʿ* is generally understood as meaning urban estates, see M. Gil, *Documents of the Jewish Pious Foundation From the Cairo Geniza*, (Leiden, 1976), 146, n.2. The decree mentions two other types of urban properties: *ribāʿ al-aḥbās* i.e. estates belonging to the Office of the Pious Endowment and, *ribāʿ al-mawārith* i.e. estates belonging to the Office of the Inheritances. Little is known on the way these offices functioned, see H. Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt* A. H. 564-741/A. D. 1169-1341, (London, 1972), 146-7; Stern, *Fatimid Decrees*, 173, n.2. Much more is known on *diwān al-mawārith* in the Mamlūk period, see Wiet, *Matériaux*, (1929), 116-7; M. W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, (Princeton, 1977), 175-81. For oil presses in rural areas, see Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 9-10.

⁶ Nāṣir-i Khusrau, (tran.) Thackston, 47.

⁷ Ibn Saʿīd, (ed) Tallqvist, 36.

⁸ *Muqaffā*, 1366B, f. 208b; *Khīṭat*, II, 382; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 121

⁹ *Khīṭat*, II, 379-80; a passing reference to Sitt al-Mulk's orchard is made by Musabbiḥī, p. 43. For a garden of al-ʿAziz's brother in Fustāt, see Abū Ṣāliḥ, 130; Ibn Duqmaq, IV, 57. A. M. Watson believes that orchards played an important role in diffusion of new plants, see his *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World*, (Cambridge, 1983), 117-9, esp. 117.

important rural properties were outside the capital, spread all over Egypt. In 390/1000, Sitt al-Mulk received many *iqṭāʿāt* or land grants whose annual income was 100,000 *dinārs*. These properties included estates in Upper and Lower Egypt, houses and orchards. Also income from customs duties (*rusūm*) was allocated to her as a part of the *iqṭāʿ*.¹⁰ Other women of the Fatimid royal family also derived high incomes from holding *iqṭāʿāt*.¹¹

Another source of income for the imāms, and other members of the family, was trade. Musabbiḥī, in the annals of Rabiʿ II 415/June-July 1024, reports the sinking of seven ships which had left Alexandria for Maghreb. These ships were engaged in trade on the behalf of the *imām*.¹² Ships of the *imām* sailed on trading ventures from other ports as well. Nāṣir-i Khusrau, on his way to Egypt, visited two Mediterranean ports: Tripoli in Lebanon, and Tinnīs, on the shore of the Sinai Peninsula. In both ports he saw ships of the *imām*, those in Tripoli were engaged in trade with Byzantium, Sicily and North Africa. Both port towns generated vast incomes for the regime from customs duties. In Tripoli, for example, these revenues covered the expenses of the Fatimid garrison in the city.¹³ Thus the importance of those towns was twofold as sources of revenues levied from merchants, and as a base for the private commercial enterprises of the *imām* and other members of the ruling circles.

II

In general there is little information on women in Arabic medieval chronicles. Among the various classes of Muslim medieval women the most referred to in the chronicles are those of the ruling class. This state of affairs is a direct reflection of the character of our sources. Most of the historians were people of the upper classes many of whom had access to the

¹⁰ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 33.

¹¹ Ibn Zubayr, 240; Maqrīzī's text (*Khīṭaṭ*, III, 333) quoting Ibn Zubayr is corrupted. Ibn Zubayr referred to Sitt Miṣr while Maqrīzī confused her with Sitt al-Mulk.

¹² Musabbiḥī, 39.

¹³ Nāṣir-i Khusrau, (tran.) Thackston, 13, 39. The commercial ventures of Fatimid *imāms* tally well with what is known about the Muslim ruling circles in general, see Goitein *Med. Soc.*, I, 309-13; A. L. Udovitch, "Merchants and Amirs: Government and Trade in Eleventh-Century Egypt", in *The Medieval Levant. Studies in Memory of Eliyahu Ashtor*, AAS, 22(1988), 73-93.

ruling élite. The above remarks also apply to the Fatimid period. This oneness of our sources is offset by the relative fullness of the data.¹⁴

Two characteristic traits of women of the royal family are discernible: 1) they were wealthy, some of them immensely rich; 2) some of these women played an important political role in Fatimid history. The work of the eleventh century *cadi*, Ibn al-Zubayr, entitled *Book of Gifts and Treasures* supplies much information on our topic. Two daughters of al-Mu'izz, Rāshida and 'Abda, who died in 442/1050-1 at the age of ninety, left fabulous riches. The estate of Rāshida reached the tune of 1,700,000 million of *dīnārs*, and that of her sister was no less valuable.¹⁵ These were certainly exceptional cases. Undoubtedly, more characteristic was the far more modest, nevertheless impressive, estate left by Sitt Miṣr, the daughter of al-Ḥākim who died in 455/1063.¹⁶ The most remarkable piece of information is that describing the slave girl of the emir 'Abd Allāh, al-Mu'izz's son. Her estate was worth 400,000 *dīnārs*. As a member of the royal family, the funeral prayers were conducted by the chief Fatimid propagandist, Qāsim ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz of the Nu'mān family.¹⁷ The fact that women of the royal family were wealthy was not a secret. During the crisis of 1024 Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Jarjarā'i pointed to al-Ḥākim's mother and his aunt as potential sources for obtaining the funds needed for the state. No one of the administrators dared to take action in that direction.¹⁸

These data, impressive as they may be, form only part of the picture. Our source sheds light on how these riches could have been gained. As members of the royal family women were entitled to tap the wealth of the country. Both al-Ḥākim's sister, Sitt al-Mulk, and his daughter, Sitt Miṣr, were recipients of *iqṭā'*.¹⁹ Sitt al-Mulk had wide-spread economic interests in Egypt and in Syria, and maintained a large administrative manpower.

¹⁴ The above remarks apply to the Abbasid period as well. For studies of royal women in the Abbasid period, see N. Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, (Chicago, 1946); also A. K. S. Lambton, *Continuity and Changes in Medieval Persia*, (N.Y., 1988), 258-96.

¹⁵ Ibn Zubayr, 241-2; cf. J. M. Bloom, "The Mosque of the Qarāfa", *Muqarnas* 4(1987), 17.

¹⁶ Ibn Zubayr, 240.

¹⁷ She died seven days before the end of Shawwāl 415/27 December 1024, see Musabbiḥi, 105.

¹⁸ Musabbiḥi, 53.

¹⁹ Ibn Zubayr, 242; cf. Bloom, "The Mosque of Qarāfa", 17.

The obituary notices by Musabbiḥī provide information on people in her service. Her personnel included both men and women. Abū 'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn al-Maghribī, for example, served as Sitt al-Mulk's agent. He was a man of laudable character who had already served Sitt al-Mulk's mother in the same capacity.²⁰ Sitt al-Mulk also employed a slave girl of her mother. This slave girl, named Takarrub, was Sitt al-Mulk's confidante. She served as Sitt al-Mulk's informant, and handled the petitions submitted to her lady. Takarrub died as a wealthy woman.²¹

For women of the Fatimid family of the twelfth century, the information is less abundant but points in the same direction. In the 1150's, Sitt al-Quṣūr was twice involved in conspiracies against military dictators who endangered the Fatimid dynasty. She spent 50,000 *dīnārs* on these plots.²² She must have been a wealthy woman familiar with state affairs no less than Sitt al-Mulk and Sayyida Raṣad.

b) Administrators and Viziers.

I

Next to the army, the administration was the largest state apparatus. The offices mentioned in the sources can be classified into three groups: 1) those which operated on a functional basis and dealt with specific matters such as taxation and correspondence of the state; 2) those which dealt with certain geographical areas; and 3) those which dealt with the affairs of various social groups, mostly the military. In the administrative structure there were built-in checks. Some controllers were attached to the offices and others were sent to the provinces.²³ If one includes all levels of the administration, then it can be estimated that at least several thousand people must have been

²⁰ Musabbiḥī, 94.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 111; for another woman companion of Sitt al-Mulk, see 110-11. Two cases of cadis in the service of women of the royal family are mentioned in the sources. The contacts between Sitt al-Mulk and al-Ḥākim's chief cadi were viewed with suspicion by al-Ḥākim, see Ibn Ḥajar, (ed) Guest, 608. Another cadi was in the service of al-ʿĀmir's wife. He was instrumental in the construction of a mausoleum built on her order, see Wiet, *Matériaux*, (1930), 197.

²² *Ittiʿāz*, III, 213.

²³ See, for example, the list of Fatimid offices in Stern's *Fatimid Decrees*, index.

employed. The vast majority of these would not qualify for the designation of “ruling circles”, although they were a privileged group in terms of income, power—wielding authority vis-à-vis the subjects—and status. But they were not policy-makers, and had no influence over the decisions of the *imām*.

Among the administrators only a tiny group of people belonged to the so-called “ruling circles”. In this group the most important were the civilian viziers, and the heads of administrative offices. The *imām* and other members of the Fatimid family, and the upper crest of administrative personnel shared many common traits. The administrators wielded wide-ranging executive powers and, in wealth and life-style, were second only to the *imāms* themselves. The most notable case was the vizier Ya‘qūb ibn Killis. He was virtually the sole person responsible for state affairs, and his authority extended over the whole Fatimid territories.²⁴ His house (later known as *dār al-dabīj*) was a huge complex from which he ran state business. The petitioners, for example, submitted their cases to the vizier in his house. Ibn Killis’s house became an official residence—a seat of the government.²⁵ Ibn Killis’s wealth was fabulous, and his extravagant life-style did not fall behind that of al-‘Azīz.²⁶ Like the Fatimid *imām*, Ibn Killis was a sponsor of cultural activity and was a patron of learned men.²⁷ Ibn Killis, like al-Ma’mūn al-Baṭā’ihī later, was a recipient of extensive *iqṭā‘āt* which yielded large incomes. These grants of *iqṭā‘* were in addition to other incomes that both Ibn Killis and al-Ma’mūn received from the *imām* for their services.²⁸ In accordance with a practice widespread in the ruling circles, Ibn Killis, as a private person, was engaged in trade.²⁹

Ibn Killis’s successor, Ibn ‘Ammār, was a man of a far inferior position. Although he resided in a palace in Cairo and owned a house with stables in Fuṣṭāṭ, his earnings were modest in com-

²⁴ Kutubī, Arabe d.204, f, 487a; *Khīṭaṭ*, III, 8.

²⁵ Kutubī, Arabe d.204, ff, 487b-488a; *Khīṭaṭ*, III, 9-10.

²⁶ As an example can be cited the story about Ibn Killis’ pigeons, and the race in which his pigeons competed with those of al-‘Azīz, see F. Rosenthal, *Gambler in Islam*, (Leiden, 1975), 53.

²⁷ Lev, “The Fatimid Vizier”, 247.

²⁸ For Ibn Killis’ *iqṭā‘*, see *Khīṭaṭ*, III, 8. During the vizierate of al-Ma’mūn orchards of the *imāms* (*basātīn al-sulṭāniyya*) are mentioned as *iqṭā‘* of the vizier. Among these is listed an orchard established by al-Mu‘izz’s son, emir ‘Abd Allāh, see *Muqaffā*, 1366B, f, 208b.

²⁹ Upon his death, Ibn Killis owed 16,000 *dīnārs* to a certain merchant, see *Khīṭaṭ*, III, 11.

parison with those of his predecessor.³⁰ In many ways Ibn ‘Ammār was not a typical example. Far more typical of the great civilian viziers was al-Yāzūrī. He used Ibn Killis’s house as his official residence.³¹ In his life-style, and in the patronage he conferred on learned men and charitable acts, al-Yāzūrī did not lag behind Ibn Killis.³²

Like the *imāms* and other members of the royal family, the viziers built religious monuments; they were also entrepreneurs, investing in commercial buildings. Ibn Killis was influential in shaping the particular Ismā‘īlī character of Azhar mosque as an institution for the dissemination of Ismā‘īlī learning.³³ Among the religious monuments, erected on the orders of the viziers, the most renowned is the Aqmar mosque in Cairo built by al-Ma’mūn. The mosque has a distinguished Ismā‘īlī contents.³⁴ Al-Ma’mūn also carried out the restoration of mausolea.³⁵ Such activities were in line with the deeds of other viziers who built mosques in the capital.³⁶ Building for commercial purposes was no less extensive. Badr al-Jamālī, who rebuilt and repopulated Cairo, did not miss the commercial opportunities which occurred in the process of the economic reinvigoration of the town. In the Barjawān quarter, where he built his residence, Badr established a new market.³⁷ Al-Ma’mūn followed his steps; in Cairo, he built a *dār al-wakāla* for merchants from Syria and Iraq.³⁸ The viziers, like the *imāms*

³⁰ *Khitat*, III, 57-8.

³¹ Ibn Killis’s house was known as Dār al-Dabīj, see *Khitat*, II, 343-4, III, 11, 51. Badr al-Jamālī preferred to build for himself a different house, and his son, al-Afdal, moved from Cairo to Fustāt where he built the Dār al-Mulk. For the first time since the Tulunid period, the seat of the ruler and the administrative offices were established in Fustāt, (*op. cit.*, II, 343-4, 374, III, 51). Al-Afdal’s house in Cairo became a palace for his brother al-Muẓaffar, (*op. cit.*, III, 84, 85).

³² *Itti‘āz*, II, 239, 240, 243, 245.

³³ *Khitat*, IV, 49; cf. S. M. Stern, “Cairo as the Centre of the Ismā‘īlī Movement”, in *Colloque international sur l’histoire du Caire-1969*, 438-46, reprinted in *idem*, *Studies*; J. M. Bloom, “The Mosque of al-Ḥākim in Cairo, *Muqarnas*, 1 (1983), 29.

³⁴ C. Williams, “The Cult of Alid Saints in the Fatimid Monuments of Cairo Part I: The Mosque of al-Aqmar”, *Muqarnas*, 1 (1983), 37-51.

³⁵ *Muqaffā*, 1366B, f. 210b.

³⁶ For mosques built by al-Afdal, al-Ma’mūn and Ibn Ruzzīk, see *Khitat*, IV, 331, 266, 324 and 325, respectively.

³⁷ *Khitat*, III, 155, 164.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 328; the various terms which denote commercial buildings in Islamic medieval towns are discussed by A. Raymond and G. Wiet, *Les marchés du Caire. Traduction annotée du texte de Maqrīzī*, (Cairo, 1979), 1-26. For the building activities of Badr, al-Afdal and al-Ma’mūn, see Wiet, *Matériaux*,

and women of the royal family, in their building activities left a permanent imprint on the physical landscape of the capital.

II

In contrast with the military dictators of the twelfth century who wielded the sanction of brute force, the relationships between the civilian viziers and the *imāms* were unequally balanced. The extent of the executive powers concentrated in the hands of the civilian viziers, and their personal aggrandizement aroused the suspicious of the *imāms* who did not hesitate to oust and, occasionally, to kill their civilian viziers. Even the most impressive record of achievements was no guarantee for survival.³⁹

Powerful and influential as Ibn Killis was, his dependency on the *imām* was absolute. Two events of his career exemplify this point: the sudden arrest and, shortly afterwards, the release of Ibn Killis by al-ʿAzīz, and the confiscation of most of his inheritance.⁴⁰ The notion of the sanctity of personal property is a modern one. In medieval Islam, despite elaborate rules of inheritance, people in the service of the state were subjected to confiscation of their properties upon their death or falling out of favour. Al-ʿAzīz's deed reflected a concept which maintained that property accumulated in the service of the state belonged to the sovereign whose favour had been instrumental in its attaining. The extreme manifestation of this way of thinking is reflected by an event related in Musabbiḥī's chronicle. When the wife of Jawhar's grandson died, leaving a large inheritance, an attempt was made to seize a third of it for the government. The deed was justified on the grounds that Jawhar, the founder of the family, had been a slave of the Fatimids.⁴¹ One of those

(1930), 157-8, 165-6, 169-70, 183-5.

³⁹ For a positive summing up of al-Yāzūrī and al-Ma'mūn's period in office, see *Muqaffā*, 1366B, f, 212a; *Khīṭat*, II, 324; *Itti'āz*, II, 245.

⁴⁰ Following the arrest of Ibn Killis his property was confiscated, see *Itti'āz*, I, 262; *Khīṭat*, III, 8. For the confiscation of his inheritance, see *Khīṭat*, III, 11.

⁴¹ Musabbiḥī, 32-3. Ibn Duqmaq (V, 35) says that Jawhar was the son of a *mawlā* of al-Muʿizz. The claim about Jawhar's origin, as advanced by the members of the ruling circles who were involved in this attempt, is verified by the sources. Jawhar was owned in turn by two eunuchs at the Fatimid court in Tunisia. He ended up at the hands of al-Manṣūr, al-Muʿizz predecessor. (Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, [eds], G. S. Collin and E. Levi-Provencal, [Leiden, 1948-1951], I, 221.) Apparently, Al-Muʿizz had inherited him with other slaves of his father, and at some stage set Jawhar free. (On an inscription from 360/970-1, seen by Maqrīzī, Jawhar was referred to as *kātib*.) Jawhar's career was in accordance with the patterns of Muslim slavery.

who had took part in these events, the Treasurer, was later himself a victim of the concept that servants of the state do not enjoy full legal rights over their property. For the civilian administrators of the state, it was a dim prospect adding to the general precariousness of their position.

The administrators attempted to combat the precariousness of their position by creating a network of personal ties through the administrative apparatus. The wider these ties were spread the better were the chances of survival. The employment of members of the family in the administration, such as father and sons or several brothers, was very common. This practice was to be found at all levels of the administration.⁴² But the creation of a family network was not sufficient. Among the administrators, as among the military, the system of patronage was widely used. Through this system, a person (depending on his social standing) was able to attach to himself, or attach himself, to people who were beyond the narrow limits of his immediate family. The most notable example was the vizier al-Yāzūrī. He owed his career to his determination and the ability to find advocates who pleaded on his behalf before al-Mustanşir's mother.⁴³ There was no-one in a better position than al-Yāzūrī to appreciate the value of patronage and to make use of the system to his best advantage. It was said of al-Yāzūrī: "that when he conferred on somebody patronage he raised him to to what was beyond one's expectations".⁴⁴ Examples of al-Yāzūrī's use of patronage are recorded by the historians of the period.⁴⁵ In one instance al-Yāzūrī seriously misjudged the person on whom he had conferred patronage. Abū 'l-Farj 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Bābli, a recipient of al-Yāzūrī's favours, betrayed his patron by becoming his successor in the post of vizier.⁴⁶ Al-Ma'mūn, one of the great Fatimid civilian viziers, owed the beginning of his career to another case of a patron-client relationship which went wrong.⁴⁷ Al-Ma'mūn was fully aware of the importance of human relations, and the need of the ruler to be attentive to the necessities of people in his service. He is

However, there was no legal base for the attempt which had failed, see Musabbiḥī, 92-3.

⁴² See examples cited in chapter 1, n.61. For a family with a long record of serving the Fatimids, see R. H. J. Gottheil, "A Distinguished Family of Fatimid Cadis", *JAOS*, 27(1906), 217-97.

⁴³ Ibn al-Sayrafi, 73.

⁴⁴ *Itti'āz*, II, 245.

⁴⁵ Ibn al-Sayrafi, 66.

⁴⁶ *Itti'āz*, II, 247-9, esp. 248.

characterized as showing great interest in the affairs of common people and simple soldiers.⁴⁸ However, al-Ma'mūn's relationships with the *imām* went astray which led to his abrupt downfall and execution. Patronage conferred by the *imāms* upon administrators was far more restricted than upon the military. Only a few such cases are recorded.⁴⁹

c) *Slaves and Eunuchs.*

Slaves of Fatimid *imāms*, among them notably white and black eunuchs, rose to important positions in the state becoming by any definition part of the ruling circles. White eunuchs—*Ṣaqālība* i.e. Slavs—had already been eminent at the Fatimid court in Tunisia. Spain was the main source of supply of *Ṣaqālība* eunuchs, and the Fatimid practice of employing them was in line with Aghlabid heritage.⁵⁰ The most important eunuch, during the North African period of the Fatimid imamate, was Jawdhar who was entrusted with an extensive range of authority.⁵¹ Other *Ṣaqālība* were commanders of naval⁵² and land forces.⁵³ Al-Mu'izz's instructor in the art of writing was a *Ṣaqālībī* eunuch, and another *Ṣaqālībī* was his *ṣāhib al-sitr* (the bearer of the veil behind which the ruler spoke to the people); he carried out delicate diplomatic missions to the chiefs of the *Kutāma* Berbers.⁵⁴ In 362/973, with the transfer of the Fatimid imamate to Egypt, the *Ṣaqālība* arrived with al-Mu'izz. In Egypt, al-Mu'izz's *ṣāhib al-mizalla* (the bearer of the ceremonial parasol) was a *Ṣaqālībī* eunuch.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 38-9.

⁴⁸ *Muqaffā*, 1366B, f, 212a; *Khīṭat*, II, 342.

⁴⁹ Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, 80.

⁵⁰ 'Imād al-Dīn, V, 84. The most important source for the history of *Ṣaqālība* i.e. the Slavs is Ibn Faḍlān's text of his journey to their country as an official emissary of the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir. A new edition of the text, based on a Mashad manuscript, accompanied by Polish translation with extensive annotation has been published by A. Kmietowicz, F. Kmietowicz and T. Lewicki, *Źródła Arabskie do Dziejów Słowiańszczyzny*, (Warsaw, 1985), vol. III. For *Ṣaqālība* in the service of the Fatimids, see I. Hrbek, "Die Slawen im Dienste der Fatimiden", *Archiv Orientalni*, 21(1953), 543-81. He covers the period until al-Mustansir's reign.

⁵¹ On him, see Dachraoui, s. v. index Gawdar.

⁵² 'Imād al-Dīn, V, 150, 151, 318; Ibn 'Idhārī, 366-7, 378; Nuwayrī, 436 both in A. Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula*, (Baghdad, n.d.); A. Vasiliev and M. Canard, *Byzances et les Arabes*, (Brussels, 1950), II, 223, 231; *Itti'āz*, I, 71.

⁵³ 'Imād al-Dīn, V, 171-2, 184, 186, 195-6, 242, 244, 245, 263, 267, 280; *Itti'āz*, I, 202, 218.

⁵⁴ *Itti'āz*, I, 97-8, 101.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*, 144, 216.

Al-ʿAzīz kept a large number (10,000 it is said) of slave girls and eunuchs who always surrounded him.⁵⁶ The power which eunuchs could attain is exemplified by Barjawān. At the beginning of al-Ḥākim's reign, Barjawān ruled the state as a vizier of second rank for almost three years. His ability to assume power was a result of the solidification of his position during al-ʿAzīz's rule. Barjawān had been brought up at the court and fostered by al-ʿAzīz who made him responsible for his harem and palaces.⁵⁷ The entrusting of the eunuchs with all sorts of assignments was a natural consequence of the day-to-day contacts between them and the ruler. In terms of wealth and power, Barjawān was typical of the top echelon of the ruling circles. A quarter in Cairo was named after him; apparently his residence was situated there. Barjawān had large stables and his inheritance included a great quantity of textiles, many books and some 30,000 *dīnārs* in cash.⁵⁸

None of the other eunuchs in Fatimid Egypt reached the pinnacle of power as did Barjawān. Far more typical and common was the case of the black eunuch Miʿdād. He began his career in the service of Sitt al-Mulk who employed him as *ustādh* of the young al-Zāhir.⁵⁹ An important turning point in Miʿdād's career was Friday, 18 Ṣafar 415/1 May 1024, when al-Zāhir bestowed on him honorific titles and named him Abū 'l-Fawāris.⁶⁰ From another passage of Musabbiḥi it seems that Miʿdād received other titles as well.⁶¹ Miʿdād belonged to the highest-ranking group of eunuchs—the *muḥannak*—i.e. that the turban they wore passed under their chin.⁶² According to a long official decree (*sijjil*), read publicly in the palace, Miʿdād was entrusted with the management of the affairs of the soldiers (*rijāl*) and protecting the provinces. The event was celebrated in pomp.⁶³ Among the administrative responsibilities of Miʿdād was the headship of the Office of the Kutāma.⁶⁴ He was

⁵⁶ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 19, 44-5; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 267, 269, II, 17-8, 47; Ibn Zubayr, 13-4.

⁵⁷ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 44.

⁵⁸ *Khitaṭ*, III, 5; Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, 85.

⁵⁹ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 127.

⁶⁰ Musabbiḥi, 24.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 42.

⁶² *Ibid*, 71-2. The hierarchy of the eunuchs at the Fatimid court is explained by Qalqashandī, see Magued, "Le personnel de la cour fatimide en Egypte", *The Annals of the Faculty of Arts-Ain Shams University*, 3(1955), 147-59; Pellat, "Khāṣi", 1092.

⁶³ Musabbiḥi, 24-6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 29.

among the small group of administrators and courtiers who took the reins of power into their hands secluding al-Zāhir from running the affairs of the state.⁶⁵ In the circumstances of the year 1024, the execution of the duties entrusted to Miḍdād was a most demanding task. Because of a severe famine, the army was unpaid, starving and rioting. These difficulties brought Miḍdād into clashes with other people at the court—the commander of the troops in the provinces and the market supervisor in the capital; they accused him of too lenient conduct towards the troops engaged in looting.⁶⁶ However, when the riots reached the capital, Miḍdād took steps to protect Fustāt and the civilian population from the soldiers who went on the rampage.⁶⁷

The administrative assignment of Miḍdād as the head of the Office of the Kutāma was atypical of the posts designated to the eunuchs such posts usually being of an executive nature. (Although under al-Ḥākim, for short periods, some eunuchs served in administrative posts.) Many of the Fatimid expeditionary forces in Palestine and Syria were commanded by eunuchs.⁶⁸ Eunuchs were frequently appointed as governors of towns and provinces.⁶⁹ The two most important executive posts in the capital—the chief of police and the supervisor of the markets—were on many occasions held by eunuchs.⁷⁰ These officials had at their discretion the most sensitive aspects of city life; suppression of crime and commerce, including the supply of wheat and bread. Other eunuchs, serving as generals and governors, also wielded wide powers in spheres of vital importance for the state. As with other people in ruling circles, some eunuchs attained great wealth. In Cairo there were quarters and lanes known under the names of certain eunuchs testifying to the extent of their households and the size of their houses.⁷¹ The most notable case was of Sayf al-Dawla Nādir al-Ṣaqlabī (who died on 12 Ṣafar 382/14 April 992) after whom one of the lanes was named. He left 300,000 *dīnārs* in cash and property worth 80,000 *dīnārs*, including horses and slaves.⁷² Of

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 31, 32, 45-6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 55, 82.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶⁸ For al-Ḥākim period, see *Khīṭat*, IV, 88; *Ittiʿāz*, II, 89, 91, 94, 100, 101-2, 103, 104; Antāki, 208. For Fatimid armies, see n.52 and n. 53 in this chapter.

⁶⁹ This is especially true for the reign of al-Ḥākim.

⁷⁰ See ch. 9.

⁷¹ *Khīṭat*, III, 6-7, 20, 25, 60.

⁷² *Ibid.*, III, 68.

Miʿdād's wealth we know less; he owned a large number of horses and sheep. He was not exceptional in investing in livestock; others—a *cadi*, a top-ranking administrator, and less famous persons among the *Kutāma*—did the same. Their livestock were kept in Jīza, the area of Nile west bank opposite the capital.⁷³ Eunuchs in accordance with the practice of other people in the ruling circles sponsored the building of mosques, even Congregational ones.⁷⁴

Were the eunuchs, as slaves or freedmen, at any disadvantage in comparison with free-born people who belonged to the ruling circles? The rationale behind the institution of slavery and the advancement of eunuchs to high positions suggests a negative answer. The ruler turned to his slaves and eunuchs in expectation of loyalty and exemplary service. The dependency of the slave on his master, his estrangement from society (the eunuchs were an extreme example) made them instrumental in achieving those goals. In order to facilitate the functioning of slaves and eunuchs in a society of free born people, any manifestations of contempt toward them, because of their servile status, should have been suppressed. The same applies in respect with racial prejudice against blacks.⁷⁵ These points are nicely illustrated in al-Zāhir's decree announcing the titles bestowed on Miʿdād and the duties vested to him. The favours conferred on Miʿdād were explained as rewards for loyal service.⁷⁶ The decree and the pompous ceremony of its reading aimed at facilitating Miʿdād's entrance into the ruling circles as al-Zāhir's trusted man.

There were two other aspects which also contributed towards the acceptance of slaves and eunuchs in the corridors of power. The first was economic: the supply of eunuchs, white and black, was not abundant, and they were expensive. Their high price explains why eunuchs were included in gifts exchanged by the rulers of the period.⁷⁷ Thus, we should not be misled into

⁷³ Musabbiḥi, 85-6.

⁷⁴ *Khitat*, IV, 87, 327, 331, 336.

⁷⁵ The existence of racial prejudice against blacks in medieval Islam has been firmly established by B. Lewis, *Race and Color in Islam*, (N.Y., 1971). See also A. Muḥammad, "The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature", in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, I, 47-75.

⁷⁶ Musabbiḥi, 25.

⁷⁷ In 293/905-6, the Abbasid Caliph al-Muktafi received from Queen Bertha of Rome, among other things, twenty-nine *Ṣaḡālība* eunuchs and twenty *Ṣaḡālība* slave-girls. (Ibn Zubayr, 49.) Also Fatimid *imāms* received eunuchs as royal gifts. The numbers are very low; al-ʿAziz received twelve

thinking that eunuchs were among the ruling circles in great numbers. The eunuchs were conspicuous, attracting the attention of the historians, but they neither dominated the ruling circles nor constituted a majority. In the multi-ethnic composition of the ruling establishment, eunuchs and blacks, were yet other social group. The people of the ruling circles themselves used slaves, and to a lesser extent eunuchs, imitating the example set by the ruler. People who themselves were of servile status employed slaves.⁷⁸

The ease in which slaves and eunuchs moved in the court and the ruling circles should not obscure the basically inhumane features of slavery and castration. When convenient the servile status could always be invoked. Following the killing of Barjawān, al-Hākim addressed the people in the palace who were in an apprehensive mood by saying: "Barjawān was my slave and I employed him. He acted in good faith, and I treated him favourably. Then he misbehaved, so I killed him". The message conveyed by the speech was obvious: a slave is a slave, and his killing a trifling affair of no concern for others.⁷⁹ While the punishment of a slave who misbehaved was death, the reward for a slave who served loyally was manumission. Zaydān, a Ṣaqlabī eunuch of al-Hākim and the bearer of his parasol, who had masterminded Barjawān's killing, was emancipated and the title *ustādh* was bestowed on him. Typically of the Muslim patterns of slavery, the emancipation did not sever the master from his freedman. Bonds of slavery became bonds of patronage. Zaydān signed his letters as *mawlā amīr al-mu'minīn*—the client of the Commander of the Believers.⁸⁰ Servile status and castration could be overlooked when convenient: slaves were nevertheless despised. Mutanabbī's poetry against Kāfūr and the remarks of the Fatimid propagandists on him reflected, and echoed, popular feelings.

Ṣaqlābī eunuchs, al-Hākim ten and al-Zāhir received twelve. (*Itti'āz*, I, 279; II, 171; Ibn 'Idhārī, I, 260-1; Ibn Zubayr, 64.) Sitt al-Mulk's present to al-Hākim was especially remarkable for the inclusion of fifty eunuchs, among them ten Ṣaqlābī. (*Itti'āz*, II, 15.)

⁷⁸ Two examples illustrate this point. A *ghulām* of Ibn Killis, Munīr, a Ṣaqlabī eunuch, was appointed as a governor of Damascus, see Antākī, 172, 173. Some of the eunuchs who served as chiefs of police nominated their own slaves for the actual performing of the duties which the post entailed while keeping the overall responsibilities in their own hands, see *Itti'āz*, I, 264-5; Ibn Sa'īd, (ed) Naṣṣār, 46.

⁷⁹ *Itti'āz*, II, 27-8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, *ibid*, 39, 47.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EVOLUTION OF THE TRIBAL ARMY

a) The Kutāma Berbers

I

The contribution of the Kutāma Berbers to the establishment and the survival of the Fatimid imamate in Tunisia is clearly born out by Ismāʿīlī sources, and echoed by late Egyptian historians. The special relationship between the dynasty and the Kutāma was the result of the initial response of the Kutāma to the Fatimid call (*daʿwa*). The Kutāma enjoyed special privileges, such as exemption from taxation, and their position was strengthened by their continuous military support for the Fatimids.¹ The Kutāma bore the brunt of the fighting, first during Fatimid campaigns against Egypt and later during the rebellion of Abū Yazīd.² Kutāma tribesmen alongside with Zuwayla troops (see later) were among the prisoners captured following the destruction of the Fatimid navy off the Egyptian coast by the Ṭarsūs navy (Shawwāl 307/March 920).³ The Kutāma were the *awliyāʾ*—friends, adherents—an expression assigned to the Kutāma alone, reflecting their pivotal place in the state. The behaviour of the Fatimid rulers toward them was tolerant, especially with the young generation of the Kutāma (*aḥdāth, shubbān*). Among them were the scions of families who had long served the Fatimids and enjoyed the status of protégés (*ṣanāʾiʿ*, literally creatures [of their masters]).⁴

¹ Al-Nuʿmān, *Iftitāḥ*, 257-8; *idem*, *Majālis*, 245, 322; ʿImād al-Dīn, V, 53, 65, 66, 70, 130, 194, 209, 223; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 97-8

² For Abū Yazīd's rebellion, see R. Le Tourneau, "La révolte d'Abū-Yazīd au X^e me siècle", *CT*, 1 (1953), 104-25; H. Halm, "Der Mann auf dem Esel", *Die Welt Des Orients*, XV (1984), 144-204. Halm have utilized Ismāʿīlī sources, especially ʿImād al-Dīn's *Uyūn*, which were not available to Le Tourneau.

³ Lev, "Fatimid Navy", 248-9; for another possible explanation of the origin of the Zuwayla in question, see H. R. Idris, *Le berbérie orientale sous les Zirides X^e-XII^e siècles*, (Paris, 1962), I, 125.

⁴ Al-Nuʿmān, *Majālis*, 239, 245, 321, 486, 526. Already during al-ʿAzīz's reign the term *awliyāʾ* had also applied to the Turks and the blacks, see *Ittiʿāz*,

The frequent praises of the Kutāma in Qādī al-Nu‘mān’s work *Kitāb al-Majālis wa-l-Musāyarāt* reflect the pivotal place the Kutāma occupied in the Fatimid state. In 969, when Jawhar conquered Egypt, the vast majority of his army was made up of Kutāma. Additional Kutāma troops arrived later with al-Mu‘izz. The Kutāma established for themselves a military quarter in Cairo. Cairo epitomizes Muslim urbanization motivated by the desire of newly-established regimes to create for themselves an administrative-military centre detached from the subject population and existing towns. The desire of Jawhar and al-Mu‘izz to preserve their army as a fighting body isolated from the local population is understandable. However, in respect to the Kutāma a strict policy of isolation could not have been imposed. Parallel to the creation of military quarters in Cairo some troops settled in Fustāt as well. Neither Jawhar, nor al-Mu‘izz nor al-‘Azīz later, were able to prevent free-born groups such as Kutāma, Turks and Daylams from dwelling in Fustāt. The most explicit reference to a quarter inhabited by Kutāma outside the walls of Cairo is from al-Hākīm’s reign.⁵ Less definite accounts testify that this process took place as early as Muḥarram 363/October-November 973.⁶

II

During the Fatimid expansion into Syria, the Fatimids were confronted with armies superior to their own which was mainly composed of Berber forces. In the Byzantine and Muslim armies which the Fatimids fought in Syria (for example, Carmathian bands of bedouin origin, *aḥdāth*-the local militia of Damascus, groups of Turkish soldiers of fortune and the local bedouins), archers played a prominent role.⁷ The Kutāma and the Berbers in general did not make use of the bow as a weapon.⁸ The absence of archers among the Fatimid ranks

II, 12; Stern, *Decrees*, 16, 20, 21, 169.

⁵ *Itti‘āz*, II, 108; Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, 84; Ibn Sa‘īd, (ed) Naṣṣār, 65.

⁶ *Khitat*, III, 224; *Itti‘āz*, I, 145.

⁷ Lev, “Fatimid Policy”, 167-8, 171. For the bedouins, see Jean-Luc Krawczyk, “The Relationships between Pastoral Nomadism and Agriculture: North Syria and the Jazīra in the Eleventh Century”, *Jusur*, 1 (1985), 11.

⁸ Talbi, *L’émirat*, 617, (quoting Arabic sources). D. Nicolle, “An Introduction to Arms and Warfare in Classical Islam”, in *Islamic Arms and Armour*, (ed) R. Elgood (London, 1979), 171-2, (quoting Strabo and Herodotus). The use of bow by the Berbers in Sicily (the beginning of the tenth century) is attested to by an Arab geographer, see *idem*, “The Cappella Palatina Ceiling and the Muslim Military Inheritance of Norman Sicily”, *Gladius*, XVI (1983),

hindered their military performances and brought about military defeats of their armies. When examining this problem, we must bear in mind the socio-military realities of that age namely the rigid congruity between specific ethnic groups and the particular weapons they employed. The only possible way for al-ʿAzīz to overcome the military inferiority of his Berber troops was to attract and incorporate ethnic groups skilled in archery into his army. This policy was inaugurated in 978 following al-ʿAzīz's victory over an anti-Fatimid coalition in Palestine headed by Alptakīn. The treatment of Alptakīn and his defeated army was part of a Fatimid long-term policy of inclusion of various socio-military groups, free born and of servile status, in their army. When al-Mahdī, the first Fatimid ruling *imām*, took over the remnants of the Aghlabid state in Tunisia, he seized black slaves (*al-sūdān*) and white slaves-Rūm.⁹ The information on white slaves in the Fatimid army during the North African period is scarce. We are no better informed about two other enigmatic socio-military groups in this period: the Zuwayla and the Ṣaqālība. The Rūm went to Egypt with Jawhar's army and established a quarter for themselves in Cairo. On the other hand, the data on black slave troops (*ʿabīd*) are far more abundant.¹⁰ Following the conquest of Egypt, a similar policy was applied towards the remnants of the Ikhshidid-Kafurid army. The policy of Jawhar and al-Muʿizz achieved two, seemingly self-contradictory, goals: the Ikhshidid-Kafurid troops were neutralized and simultaneously used as soldiers, in time of need. It was a complex process; the Ikhshīdiyya and the Kāfūriyya were systematically dispossessed

49. Nicolle interprets this information as "probably referring to the tribal leadership or élite, as there is plenty of later evidence suggesting that the mass of Berber warriors still fought on foot with the javelin as their favourite weapon". (I am grateful to Dr. Nicolle for sending me an off-print of his article). Two examples illustrating the weapons the Berbers employed in warfare can be quoted from the recent translation of Ṭabarī's history. The most revealing example is of street fighting in Baghdad in 251/865-6. The Turks are depicted as mounted archers while the Berbers as horsemen carrying lances and shields. *The History of Ṭabarī*, annotated and translated into English by G. Saliba (N. Y., 1985), XXXV, 70. On another occasion, Berber warrior is described as using a short spear. *History of Ṭabarī*, annotated and translated into English by F. Rosenthal (N. Y., 1985), XXXVIII, 115. See also: V. Lagardère, "Esquisse de l'organisation militaire des Murābitūn à l'époque de Yūsuf B. Tāṣfin 430 H./1039 a 500 H./1106", *ROMM*, 27(1979), 99-114; H. T. Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*, (London, 1982), XV (introduction), 120-1, 179-80.

⁹ ʿImād al-Dīn, V, 114; al-Nuʿmān, *Ifṭīḥ*, 257

¹⁰ Lev, "Army, Regime", 338-40.

of their property, disarmed and arrested. After being deprived of their previous means of livelihood, and socially relegated, there was no danger in using them as soldiers in times of shortage of suitable military manpower. The Ikhshidiyya and the Kāfūriyya, in contrast with the remnants of the Aghlabid army, were not incorporated into the Fatimid army as organized bodies.¹¹

One point must be stressed; the appearance of the military slave component (i.e. black slaves—‘abīd and white slaves—Rūm) in the Tunisian period, did not threaten the numerical superiority or the political predominance of the Kutāma. The same can be said with respect to the Fatimid policy toward the Ikhshidiyya and the Kāfūriyya. Using them on an occasional basis did not jeopardize the military predominance of the Kutāma, nor did it endanger their position as the main buttress of the regime.¹² In contrast with the centrality of the Kutāma during the North African period and the early years of Fatimid rule in Egypt, the military reforms of al-‘Azīz had significant long-term repercussions on the position of the Kutāma in the Fatimid state.

b) The Military Reforms of al-‘Azīz.

I

In the wake of al-‘Azīz’s victory in 978 in Syria over Alptakin, Turks, Persians and Daylams were incorporated in the Fatimid army. Together with the inclusion of free-born Eastern elements in the Fatimid army, al-‘Azīz made use of the institution of military slavery. His policy was supported and encouraged by the vizier Ya‘qūb ibn Killis who was of Iraqi origin and served the Ikhshīds. To him, the notion of Turks being an important military element was natural. Although the references to military slaves during al-‘Azīz’s period are abundant, the beginnings of the institution of military slavery in Fatimid Egypt are obscure. In 380/990-1, an army corp named al-‘Azīziyya (those who belong to al-‘Azīz) is mentioned. They are identified as *ghilmān*, a term usually meaning Turkish military slaves who served as cavalry.¹³ In 385/995-6, al-‘Azīziyya, together with

¹¹ *Itti‘āz*, I, 118, 223; Ibn al-Qalānisi, 2.

¹² For Fatimid army in Tunisia, see Darchraoui, 347-75.

¹³ For the strained relations between Ibn Killis and the Kutāma, see

other corps, was dispatched to reinforce the Fatimid contingents in Syria. The numerical strength of al-ʿAzīziyya is unknown, but quite high numbers of *ghilmān* appear in the sources. For example, it is said that in 984 al-ʿAzīz gave 1,500 *ghilmān* to Ibn Killis. Upon his death (989), Ibn Killis left 4,000 slaves. Among them were blacks (ʿabīd) and *ghilmān-mamlūks*; al-ʿAzīz set the blacks free but incorporated the *ghilmān-mamlūks* into his service.¹⁴ The existence of training installations, in Cairo, for *ghilmān* is fully attested to in the sources. The biography of a distinguished Fatimid general, Anūshtakīn al-Dizbirī, sheds light on the Fatimid system of military slavery.

Anūshtakīn was a native of Khuttal, where he was enslaved and carried away to the town of Kāshghar. He managed to escape to Bukhara, but was recaptured and brought to Baghdad, ending up in the slave market of Damascus (400/1009-10). He was bought by a Fatimid Daylam officer, Dizbirī ibn Awnīm, who made Anūshtakīn responsible for guarding his properties. Anūshtakīn asked his master to transfer him to the service of al-Hākīm. Dizbirī, recognizing Anūshtakīn's capabilities, ceded to his wish. In 403/1012-3, Anūshtakīn, together with other *ghilmān*, found himself in Cairo and entered the *hujra*. The term *hujra* (pl. *hujar*) means barracks in which slave troops were lodged and trained. We possess few details on Anūshtakīn's period in the *hujra*; he surpassed his comrades whom he disliked and mocked by giving them nicknames. He was disciplined by the *mutawallī*, the responsible for the *ghilmān* in the *hujra*, and discharged after a very short period of training (405/1014-5). A year later, Anūshtakīn was back in Damascus with a Fatimid force. He met his former master, whose patronymic he adopted, and paid him honors. Biographical data on Turkish military slaves are extremely rare (and non-existent with respect to the blacks, who are regarded by our sources as a nameless and faceless mass lumped under the generic name—ʿabīd).

This short account is very important and reliable. The geographical details are easily verified; the region of Khuttal (Persian: Khuttalān) is today part of Soviet Central Asia, and lies between the Wakhs and Pandj rivers. A tenth century

Nuwayrī, Or.21, p. 22; Or.2k, f. 175a; Ibn ʿIdhārī, I, 238; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 261. For al-ʿAzīziyya and *dīwān al-ʿAzīziyya*, see *Khitāt*, printed by A. F. Sayyid in *AI*, 17(1981), 13; *Khitāt*, III, 8.

¹⁴ *Khitāt*, III, 11.

Persian geographical work defines Khuttal as the marches of Transoxania, and describes it as a mountainous district inhabited by warlike people noted for their archery. The region was also famous for its excellent horses. Kāshghar, in what is today Chinese Turkestan, was an important town on the ancient silk route.¹⁵ In many ways, Anūshtakīn's biography reflects some well-known features of the institution of military slavery in Islam. Slaves of various races and designations were exchanged as gifts between the rulers of medieval Islam, and also given as presents by their subordinates. Typical also is the adoption of the master's patronymic by the slave. However, the most important detail mentioned in the passage is the reference to the *hujra* system. The institution of *hujra* and the *hujariyya* troops were created by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'taḍid (892-902). He trained his *ghilmān* in the *hujras*.¹⁶ The Fatimids simply imitated an Abbasid institution of military slavery. The *hujras* continued to function under al-Zāhir; it was in the *hujras* that military slaves (*mamālīk*) were trained in archery.¹⁷

II

The inclusion of thousands of ordinary soldiers and many Eastern military leaders posed a complex social problem; especially acute was the question of loyalty. The loyalty of the Kutāma was solidified by their response to the Fatimid call, and their continuous backing of the Fatimid dynasty. Fatimid *imāms* fostered the loyalty of the Kutāma through a preferable treatment of them. The Eastern socio-military groups had no attachment for the Fatimid cause and regime. Their loyalty had to be acquired; the system of patronage was instrumental for that purpose.

Al-ʿAzīz made conscious use of patronage as a social vehicle for carrying out his military reforms. Before the battle against Alptakin was fought, al-ʿAzīz had offered him patronage. It was

¹⁵ On Anūshtakīn, see Ibn al-Qalānisi, 71; G. Wiet, "Un proconsul fatimide de Syria Anushtakin Dizbiri", *Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph*, XLVI(1970), 383-407. For the geographical aspects, see Anonymous, *Hudūd al-ʿĀlam*, translated into English and annotated by V. Minorsky, (London, 1970), 119-20; W. Barthold, "Kāshghar", *E.I.* 2, IV, 698-9; C. E. Bosworth, "Khuttalān", *E.I.* 2, V, 75-6; *An Historical Atlas of Islam*, (ed) W. C. Brice (Leiden, 1981), 24.

¹⁶ P. G. Forand, *The Development of Military Slavery under the Abbasid Caliphs of the Ninth Century*, Ph. D. dissertation, (Princeton University, 1962), 54-6; D. Sourdél, "Ghulām. I. The Caliphate.", *E.I.* 2, II, 1079-81, esp., 1080.

¹⁷ Forand, *The Development*, 57.

a repetition of previous offers made to Alptakīn.¹⁸ Our sources distinguish quite clearly between the establishment of formal relation of patronage, and a general policy of attracting of Eastern man of war. In 371/98-2, for example, three military chiefs, each one with 300-400 of his *ghilmān*, entered al-ʿAzīz's service. They were well treated and appointed as governors of towns in Palestine. However, no formal bestowing of patronage on them by al-ʿAzīz is mentioned.¹⁹

Patronage was conferred on slaves as well. The general, Manjūtakīn, who defeated the Byzantines in 382/992-3, in North Syria, was described as one of al-ʿAzīz's military slaves of Turkish extraction on whom patronage was conferred.²⁰ The ties between master and his military slaves were especially strong, and were frequently compared to those between father and sons.²¹ Thus, by contemporary standards, the loyalty of Manjūtakīn to al-ʿAzīz was secured as a natural outcome of Manjūtakīn's enslavement, military training and the concomitant inculcation of loyalty to his master. The conferring of patronage on a military slave, or a eunuch, was aimed at enhancing the ties of loyalty between slave and master. The bestowing of patronage on Manjūtakīn, on the eve of an important mission, was a thoughtfully calculated act.

The institution of patronage was a powerful instrument linking masters and protégés among free-born people; master to their slaves and freedmen; individuals as well as groups. The conferring of patronage on an individual or a whole group was a public act, and those on whom it was bestowed were referred to as being under patronage. For example, in 404/1013-4, al-Hākim bestowed patronage on a black eunuch, Abū Riḍā Saʿd.²² In general, al-Hākim was very generous in bestowing patronage on blacks.²³ In 415/1024, another black eunuch, ʿAnbar, was known and referred to as a protégé (*al-muṣṭanaʿ*) of al-Zāhir.²⁴ The term patronage appears in our sources as denoting a wide range of relationships. It is said, for example, that Barjawān, after defeating Ibn ʿAmmār, bestowed

¹⁸ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 15, 17; cf. Mottahedeh, 85-6.

¹⁹ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 39; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 255; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 307.

²⁰ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 40; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 269.

²¹ P. G. Forand, "The Relations of the Slave and the Client to the Master or Patron in Medieval Islam", *IJMES*, 2 (1971), 61-2.

²² *Ittiʿāz*, II, 104.

²³ Ibn Saʿid, (ed) Naṣṣār, 67.

²⁴ Musabbiḥi, 78.

patronage on the general Jaysh ibn al-Šamšāma.²⁵ In this case, full patron-client relationships were hardly conceivable. A far more tenuous kind of relationship is meant here. Nevertheless, their cooperation for the furthering of their mutually shared interests took a formal shape. The meaning of patronage is obscured when applied to whole groups of eunuchs who are referred to as being under patronage. Perhaps what distinguished these eunuchs from those of the palace and the harem was that they were armed.²⁶ Because of the special bonds of loyalty which linked the eunuchs under patronage to the ruler, they were entrusted with carrying weapons.

c) The Decline of Kutāma

I

Al-ʿAzīz's policy of diversification of the army was continued with different emphasis by al-Ḥākim who, during his reign, vastly increased the number of black slaves (*ʿabīd al-shirā*, literally purchased black slaves) in the Fatimid army. His policy was not novel and revolutionary as was his father's policy. The blacks had served the Fatimids since the inception of the imamate and during al-ʿAzīz's rule. In 388/998, *ʿabīd al-shirā* took part in the quelling of an anti-Fatimid rebellion in Tyre. From the context, it seems that they were part of Fatimid garrisons in Syria. Some of the black units are frequently mentioned. The most notorious was a unit of *ʿabīd* called Saʿdiyya; they were armed with swords and formed al-Ḥākim's escort (*mawkib*) serving as his henchmen. Sitt al-Mulk also made use of them; they killed Ibn Dawwās on her orders. A military quarter in Cairo, named al-Faraḥiyya, was inhabited by *ʿabīd al-shirā*. Other units of blacks mentioned in the sources are al-Ḥasaniyya and al-Maymūniyya. In 395/1004-5, these units were among the recipients of letters of safety from al-Ḥākim. Another black unit was the ʿAṭfiyya. Its name was derived from a black eunuch ʿAṭf who was killed by al-Ḥākim in 401/1010-1. ʿAṭf, himself a slave, belonged to another slave who was in the service of Sitt al-Mulk. The military manpower of ʿAṭf was considerable; they

²⁵ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 48, esp., 50.

²⁶ Musabbiḥi, 27, 29, 48, esp., 66, 80, 92, 111; Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 70; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 256-7.

inhabited a quarter named after them.²⁷ The Saʿdiyya and the Farahīyya are mentioned in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Other corps of blacks such as the Jawwāla are mentioned during al-Zāhir's reign, but who established these corps is unknown.²⁸

No figures can be given regarding the extent of the new socio-military groups incorporated in the Fatimid army. Judging from the many references to them, in the sources, the extent must have been quite considerable. Other aspects are better attested in the sources. Al-ʿAziz's expectation—he was primarily interested in warriors fighting with bow and lance—were fully realized. The consequences of al-ʿAziz's military reforms are clearly pointed out by the observation of Ibn Dawādārī, a late Egyptian historian, who said: "al-ʿAziz built in Egypt an army on the Iraqi model". The Iraqi model referred to meant a multi-ethnic army, with a considerable slave component, in which mounted archers were prominent.²⁹ The armies dispatched to Syria, after 368/978, included archers. The disastrous events of previous Fatimid campaigns when Fatimid troops, while storming the walls of Damascus had been decimated by enemy archers, were not repeated. Al-ʿAziz himself became fascinated by the Eastern warriors and their military skills such as archery and horsemanship.³⁰

The military consequences of the vast increase of black slave troops in the Fatimid army by al-Ḥākim are elusive. Generally speaking, every ethnic group had its own military specialization; the blacks served as heavy infantry, the Daylams as light infantry employing bows and javelins, the Turks as mounted archers and the Berbers as cavalry employing lances. This congruity between ethnic groups and their typical weapons is nicely reflected by the observations and the description of Nāṣir-i Khusrau's military review in 1047-8, in Cairo. He noticed that: "...each ethnic group uses its own type of weaponry". According to his description, the Maṣāmida Berbers from the Western

²⁷ *Khīṭat*, III, 20, 21-2, 32, 33-4; *Ittiʿāz*, II, 55-6; Ibn Saʿīd, (ed) Naṣṣār, 67.

²⁸ Musabbihī, 65, 74, 80; *Ittiʿāz*, II, 160, 165;; Stern, *Decrees*, 170; Lev, "Army, Regime", 341.

²⁹ Ibn al-Dawādārī, 188; Ibn al-Qalānīsī, 28. For the Buyid multi-ethnic army, see C. E. Bosworth, "Military Organisation under the Buyids of Iraq", *Oriens*, 18-19 (1967), 142-67. The army of the Ghaznevids, contemporary with the Buyids, was not different, see *idem*, "Ghaznevid Military Organisation", *Der Islam*, 36 (1961), 37-77.

³⁰ *Khīṭat*, IV, 67.

Maghreb were infantry fighting with lances and swords; the Zanj (East Africans) were also infantry, but they fought only with swords, and the bedouin cavalry was armed with spears.³¹

Al-ʿAzīz's military reforms did not make the Fatimid army an invincible force. The Fatimids achieved victories in Syria, but suffered also defeats. The reforms made the Fatimid army equal to in composition and military specializations but not better than its main adversaries. The reforms reflected the Fatimid need to accommodate themselves to the military realities of the Eastern Islamic world to which the Fatimids were not exposed in North Africa.

II

Al-ʿAzīz's military reforms undermined the position of the Kutāma in the Fatimid state. The question that should be asked is why and how did the inclusion of several thousand Turks and other Eastern socio-military groups have such a great impact on the Kutāma? Certainly, during the rule of al-ʿAzīz, al-Hākīm and al-Zāhir, the Kutāma outnumbered the Turks and other Eastern troops. The answer should be sought in two parallel processes which influenced each other. The weakening of Kutāma's position was also a result of the circumstances in which they found themselves in Egypt. The Kutāma were cut off from their homelands. Al-ʿAzīz, parallel to his policy of diversification of the army, tried to recruit fresh Kutāma warriors from the Maghreb; his attempt came to naught.³² Another process, largely unrecorded by our sources, must be taken into account: the demilitarization of the Kutāma. In this respect one

³¹ Nāṣir-i Khusrau, (tran.) Thackston, 49. For blacks fighting as a heavy infantry, see M. Brett, "The Military Interest of the Battle of Haydarān", in *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, (eds) V. J. Parry and M. E. Yapp (London, 1977), 78-88. However, during the Arab conquest of Egypt the Nubian warriors were renowned for their archery, see P. C. Shinnie, "Christian Nuba", in *Cambridge History of Africa*, (ed) J. D. Fage (Cambridge, 1978), II, 564-5. The weapons of the Beja (spears) were described by Ibn Sulaym al-Aswānī, Jawhar's envoy to Nuba, see H. M. Kheir, "A Contribution to a Textual Problem", *AI*, 21(1985), 57 (Arabic text), 28 (English translation). The arms of the Maṣāmida were described by Idrisi in his *Description de l'Afrique et d'Espace*, edited and translated into French by P. A. Dozy and M. J. de Goeje, (Amsterdam, 1969) (reprint), 62 (Arabic), 72 (French). The congruity between ethnic groups and their typical weapons is noted by Byzantine historians as well. They characterized the Russians as a "foot-soldiering nation who couldn't even ride" quoted by D. J. Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*, (Chicago, 1984), 101.

³² *Itti'āz*, I, 262-3; Ibn al-Athīr (ed) Tornberg, IX, 53-4, 67.

fact is certain: since the conquest of Fustāt, the Kutāma settled in the town among the local population. By 1020, the absorption of the Kutāma into the local population was well advanced.³³

This gradual weakening of the position of Kutāma was intensified by the military reforms of al-ʿAzīz. These were viewed with obvious apprehension by the Kutāma. Their anxiety is exemplified by a fragment of Ismāʿīlī writings which was reproduced by a late Egyptian historian. According to this account, Jawhar explained to Ibn ʿAmmār that the inclusion of Turks by al-ʿAzīz had been foreseen by al-Muʿizz.³⁴ The identification of the fragment as belonging to some unknown lost Ismāʿīlī writings is based on the motif of the *imām* foreseeing the future which is typically Ismāʿīlī. The analysis of the contents points in the same direction. The purpose of the narrative is to diffuse the antagonism and bitterness of the Kutāma. The inclusion of the Turks is predestined, a part of a historical scheme. It is beneficial, and should be accepted by all.

During al-ʿAzīz's lifetime, the opposition of the Kutāma turned against the Turks and the Daylams whom al-ʿAzīz had incorporated in the Fatimid army.³⁵ With the death of al-ʿAzīz, the circumstances seemed promising for a Kutāma bid to restore their position. Ibn ʿAmmār was the driving force behind these efforts. One is surprised how easily Ibn ʿAmmār was defeated; the clashes were neither extensive nor prolonged. The possible explanation is that the process of demilitarization weakened the social cohesion of the Kutāma. Ibn al-ʿAmmār's struggle was viewed by the different groups of Kutāma with varying degrees of importance and identification. In contrast with the Kutāma, by 996, the Turks and other Eastern troops were military bodies which had as yet no connection with the local society. They fought for their own survival, displaying greater cohesiveness and determination than did the Kutāma.

The failure of Ibn ʿAmmār's attempt to restore the privileged position of the Kutāma was irreversible. Al-Ḥākim's speech, after the killing of Barjawān, reflected the deterioration of the Kutāma's position. Al-Ḥākim assured the latter of his good will toward them while he addressed the Turks as those fostered (*tarbiya*) by al-ʿAzīz hinting at the strong ties between them and

³³ Dhahabī, Or.49, ff, 7b-8a; Kutubī, d.205, ff, 101-2.

³⁴ *Khitat*, II, 207.

³⁵ *Ibid*, III, 17.

the regime. For the Kutāma, al-Ḥākim's reign was a difficult period. Their chiefs, including Ibn ʿAmmār, were executed and their land grants (*iqṭāʿāt*) were confiscated.³⁶ The dissatisfaction of the Kutāma was behind the failure of the first armies dispatched to fight the rebel Abū Rakwa.³⁷

³⁶ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 47, 49, 93; Ibn Taghribirdī, IV, 216.

³⁷ Ibn al-Athir, (ed) Tornberg, IX, 141.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FATIMID ARMY AND NAVY, AND THE CRUSADES.

a) The Fatimid Army in the Second Half of the Eleventh Century

I

When discussing the Fatimid army in the eleventh century a clear distinction between two periods, prior and after the civil war, must be made. Nāṣir-i Khusrau's description of the military review he saw in Cairo provides a convenient starting point for the period prior to the outbreak of the civil war. Three North African groups are mentioned as taking part in the review: 20,000 Kutāma cavalry, 15,000 Bāṭiliyya cavalry and 20,000 Maṣāmida infantry. Other groups were Turks and Persians who numbered 10,000, and 50,000 bedouin cavalry from Arabia. Nāṣir-i Khusrau distinguishes between two groups of blacks: purchased slaves and East Africans (Zanj), each 30,000 strong. The numbers quoted by Nāṣir-i Khusrau are unacceptable, indicating, however, that the Fatimid army was a very large force.¹ Neither is his description an exhaustive list of the various socio-military groups that made up the Fatimid army. For example, from other sources we learn about the existence of Kurds in Egypt; a contingent of them, 5,000 strong, is mentioned during the civil war under al-Mustaṣṣir.² With the exception of the bedouins, who were not part of the permanent military organization of the state, the Fatimid army was

¹ Nāṣir-i Khusrau, (tran.) Thackston, 49. The first attestation to Zanj troops is from 750, in Mosul, see D. Pipes, "Black Soldiers in Early Muslim Armies", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 13(1980), 92. In medieval Islam the term Zanj was used in a very loose way, see: P. F. de Moraes Farias, "Models of the World and Categorical Models: The 'Enslavable Barbarian' as a Mobile Classifactory Label", in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, I, 32-6. The presence of bedouins from Arabia in Fatimid Egypt is corroborated by other sources, see Y. F. Hasan, *The Arabs in Sudan*, (Edinburgh, 1967), 94-5.

² Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, part.3, 182 (Arabic), 277 (English). For the presence of Kurds in Cairo, see Ibn al-Zubayr, 110.

largely an infantry force composed of blacks. (Nāṣir-i Khusrau included the Maṣāmida among the blacks).

In economic terms, the army imposed a heavy burden on the state. The troops were paid in cash, in several installments over the year.³ Allocation of land grants (*iqṭāʿāt*) in lieu of salary, or as supplementary remuneration, was also practised. According to accepted standards, the cavalry received higher pay than the infantry. There was a congruity between ethnic origin and pay; highly-paid Turkish cavalry vis-à-vis low paid black infantry. However, the great numbers of black troops, and the existence of some cavalry units made of blacks (the evidence for this is scanty but unequivocal), intensified the struggle among the socio-military groups for their share of income derived from the state. Ethnic animosity was a factor in the struggle, but not a decisive one.⁴ The Kutāma played a marginal role during al-Mustanṣir's reign, and during the course of the civil war.

Another observation made by Nāṣir-i Khusrau sheds significant light on the social position of the Turks and Persians: "...although most of them were born in Egypt, their name derives from their place of origin". The Turks and Persians were *muwalladūn*-half breeds-i.e. offspring of the Turks and other Eastern socio-military groups who arrived in Egypt under al-ʿAzīz and married into the local population.⁵ In contrast with the Turks and Kutāma, the blacks, because of their servile status and ethnic barrier, could not integrate into the local society. In 1060's, the blacks lived in Cairo, where they had special quarters, and also in the rural areas. According to Maqrīzī statement, there were in every village (*qarya*), rural estate (*ḍayʿa*) and *maḥalla* a special area designated for the blacks which was outside the jurisdiction of the governor.⁶ This

³ Ibn Muyassar (ed) Massé, 53; *Ittiʿāz*, II, 4, 6.

⁴ J. L. Bacharach, "African Military Slaves in the Middle East", *IJMES*, 13 (1981), 471, 484-5, 490.

⁵ Nāṣir-i Khusrau, (tran.) Thackston, 49. This process is mirrored by the events of 1020. The Turks lived in Fustāt, and fought the blacks together with the Kutāma, see sources listed in n.33, ch. 5. For indirect evidence from 420/1029-39, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 177.

⁶ *Khitat*, III, 29; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 314. The term *maḥalla* belongs to urban context and can be translated as a military quarter, see Jean-Claude Garcin, "Toponymie et topographie urbaines médiévales à Fustāt et au Caire", *JESHO*, XXVII (1984), 118, 120-1. For military quarters of the blacks in Cairo of 1020s, see Musabbihī, 74. For black troops living in villages in Aghlabid Tunisia, see M. A. Ageil, *Naval Policy and the Rise of the Fleet of Ifrīqiyya from the 1st to 3rd Centuries A.H. (7th to 9th Centuries A.D.)*, Ph. D. dissertation, (The University of Michigan, 1985), 341, n. 292.

remark indicates that the blacks farmed the land to support themselves and were not liable to taxation.

These were the socio-military realities at the time of the outbreak of the civil war. The Fatimid army was no longer a tribal army; the regime did not rely on any particular socio-military group for its stability and survival. The army was multi-ethnic, and the stability of the regime depended upon a carefully maintained balance among the various groups which made up the army. It was a precarious stability: the eruption of strife, at any time, within the army was an inherent weakness of the system. The administrative collapse, which preceded the outbreak of the first clashes within the army, was a significant contributing factor. A properly functioning administration was a prerequisite for the maintenance of the precariously balanced relationships between the army and the regime.

In the light of this pattern of relationship between army and regime, Sayyida Raṣad's support of the blacks makes sense. It was a policy of despair; an attempt to restore the equilibrium between the various socio-military groups freeing the regime from the predominance of one of the groups. Thus, as long as no side gained victory or the equilibrium was not restored, the struggle continued. The spread of the strife within the army and its intensification resulted from the fact that the blacks were spread all over the country, and they outnumbered the Turks. A quick and decisive victory was impossible to achieve. The spread of the struggle to the provinces had its own dynamics. The ability of the central government, and the local governors, to ward off nomadic elements was much reduced. The appearance of the Lawāta Berbers, whose presence in Egypt prior to this period is unattested by our sources, exemplifies this point. Due to these factors, friction between blacks and Turks in the capital deteriorated into a civil war which engulfed the whole country.

II

The Fatimid army, in the form in which it existed in the eleventh century, degenerated and largely disintegrated in the course of the civil war. The focus on Badr's army reflects the drastic change in the hold of political power in the state. The Fatimid imamate was transferred into military dictatorship. Badr's army was, first of all, his private army, the base of his power. The army with which Badr arrived in Egypt (said to be

carried on 100 ships), was composed of Armenians and other troops.⁷ The overall number of troops, and the percentage of Armenians are unknown. Other Armenian groups arrived in Egypt following Badr's seizure of power.⁸ An Arab-Christian chronicler says that the vast majority of Badr's troops were Armenians and that a quarter of Ḥasaniyya was emptied of its inhabitants (Syrian Christians), and allotted to the Armenian soldiers. These Armenians were Christians, and the Armenian Patriarch who arrived in Egypt was received by Badr.⁹ The situation in which a specific socio-military group of ethnic, tribal or geographic origin provides the power base for a regime, was a common phenomenon. The Armenians fitted into this pattern very well; for many centuries, in exceptionally high numbers, they had served as both cavalry and infantry in the Byzantine army.¹⁰ That the Armenians served successfully in both capacities is rather a rare occurrence per se, but very useful. The need to have both military specializations in the armies was a decisive factor in shaping the multi-ethnic character of the Fatimid army, and other medieval Islamic armies in general.¹¹ The extraordinary feature of Badr's case, that his Armenians were Christians, was a highly embarrassing fact and therefore systematically suppressed by Arabic-Muslim sources.¹² (The same feelings of disapproval are responsible for the suppression of information on other Christian troops in the service of Muslim rulers.)¹³ However, the emphasis on the Armenians

⁷ *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 298.

⁸ *Ibid*, 301.

⁹ Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, part.3, 219-20, 225-6 (Arabic), 344-5, 355-7 (English); III, part.1, 19-20 (Arabic), 31-2 (English); cf. Canard, "Notes sur les Arméniens en Egypte à l'époque fatimite", 145-57.

¹⁰ P. Charanis, *The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire*, (Lisboa, 1963), 18-9, 21, 32, 33-4; A. Khazdan, "The Armenians in the Byzantine Ruling Class in the Ninth through Twelfth Centuries", in *Medieval Armenian Culture*, (eds) T. J. Samuelian and M. E. Stone (Philadelphia, 1981), 439-53. The best treatment of the Armenians in the Fatimid army is by J. W. Hamblin, *The Fatimid Army During the Early Crusaders*, Ph. D. dissertation (The University of Michigan, 1985), 19-27.

¹¹ For example, see Bosworth, "Military Organisation under the Buyids of Iraq", 153-9.

¹² The first hint that the Armenian troops in Egypt were Christian, appears *en passant* in Maqrizi's account of the year 531/1136-7, see *Itti'āz*, III, 159; Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 124.

¹³ For example, see J. E. P. Hopkins, *Medieval Muslim Government in Barbary*, (London, 1958), 73, 76, 77-8.

as the buttress of Badr's rule should not obscure the more complex nature of his power base.¹⁴

Badr also cultivated military slave manpower. On his death, he left 700 *ghilmān*. Typically of the military slave institutions, the leading emirs among these *ghilmān* had their own military following, probably also of slave origin.¹⁵ These 700 *ghilmān* should be clearly distinguished from the original group of Badr's retainers which had arrived with him in Egypt (among them were probably his personal slaves as well). Badr maintained the original group of his retainers at the expense of the Egyptian emirs, whom he dispossessed and liquidated, conferring their property, riches and sources of income (land grants—*iqṭāʿ*—for example) on his own men.¹⁶ Natural death and losses in battles decimated the ranks of this group. Badr, who in time came to control the resources of Egypt, found the military slave system a suitable source of replacement for his original retainers. The 700 *ghilmān* left upon his death had been acquired, trained and absorbed into Badr's service since his arrival in Egypt. In the wake of the civil war, al-Mustansir lost his grip over the state apparatus and became personally impoverished. His ability to establish his own military manpower was severely curtailed. Thus the balance of power was tilted in Badr's favour.

b) The Fatimid Land Army and the Crusades

I

The Fatimids were aware of the Crusaders' advance and informed of their intentions. In Rabīʿ II 492/February-March 1099, prior to the fall of Ramla (3 June 1099), the Fatimid army in Egypt began preparing to move into Palestine. On 15 July 1099, Jerusalem was captured by the Crusaders, and the Fatimid army, led personally by al-Afdal, arrived in Ascalon on 14 Ramaḍān 492/3 August 1099.¹⁷ On 12 August, the first encounter between the Fatimid land army and the Crusaders was fought in the vicinity of Ascalon, and ended in a Fatimid

¹⁴ See the remarks of D. Ayalon, "Egypt as a Dominant Factor in Syria and Palestine During the Islamic Period" in *Egypt and Palestine. A Millennium of Association*, 30-1, esp. 30, n.25; Hamblin, 22-3.

¹⁵ *Itti'āz*, II, 331.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 312; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 300.

¹⁷ *Itti'āz*, III, 23-4.

débâcle: their infantry was destroyed and the cavalry dispersed. Al-Afdal barely escaped to Ascalon. This humiliating defeat was in sharp contrast to previous victories achieved by Badr and al-Afdal in Palestine and Syria when fighting Muslim adversaries.

The wars fought by the Fatimids against the Crusaders were recently reconstructed by W. J. Hamblin who used both Latin and Arabic sources. It should be kept in mind, nevertheless, that any attempt to analyze the reasons for the Fatimid military failure against the Crusaders is hindered by the absence of original Arabic sources contemporary with the events, and possible suppression of information by Muslim historians on this embarrassing stage of the struggle against the Crusaders. Information must, therefore, be derived mostly from the Latin chronicles of the first Crusade, composed by authors contemporary with the events and who, in some cases, actually witnessed the battles. For example, Frankish chroniclers indicate that the Fatimid army which fought the Crusaders in Ascalon lacked mounted archers.¹⁸ Describing the same battle, the anonymous author of *Gesta Francorum* speaks with scorn of the Fatimid infantry and their poor combat capability.¹⁹ R. C. Smail, on the authority of Latin sources, concluded that the Fatimid armies which fought the Crusaders between 1099 and 1123, with the exception of the battle in 1105, did not employ mounted archers. His conclusions regarding the Fatimid military inferiority are powerfully stated:

With mass bowmen on foot, and horsemen who were capable of awaiting attack, the Fatimid armies provided, as the Turks never did, a solid target for the most powerful tactical weapon of the Franks: the charge of the mailed and mounted knights...For these reasons the Franks never, until the reign of Saladin, feared the Egyptian as they did the armies from Muslim Syria and Mesopotamia.²⁰

¹⁸ Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127*, edited with an introduction by H. S. Fink, translated into English by F. R. Ryan (Knoxville, 1969), 126-7; cf. R. C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare, 1097-1193*, (Cambridge, 1978), 86; Hamblin, 235-94.

¹⁹ *The Deeds of the Franks*, 95-7; cf. R. Hill, "The Christian View of the Muslim at the Time of the First Crusade" in *The Eastern Mediterranean Lands in the Period of the Crusaders*, (ed) P. M. Holt (London, 1977), 2.

²⁰ Smail, 86-7. Smail's views on the importance of Muslim mounted archers are fully supported by the sources, see Fulcher of Chartres, 80, 84-5; William of Tyre, I, 170, 171, 292. Although mounted archery was the foremost military art of the Turks, they resorted occasionally also to their swords, clubs and lances, see Fulcher of Chartres, 186; Raymond d'Aguilers, 32-3; William of

Hamblin's re-assessment of the military role of the Fatimid black infantry which, contrary to Smail's view, was not necessarily an easy prey, is valid.²¹ Nonetheless, Smail's observation concerning the supposed lack of mounted archers in the Fatimid contingents fighting the Crusaders, must be examined. And the question of whether the Fatimid armies dispatched against the Crusaders included units of mounted archers ought to be considered. Since 978, Turkish warriors, free-born or servile (*ghilmān*), were incorporated into the Fatimid army. The Turks were cavalry and their primary military specialization was archery. Occasional explicit references to Fatimid mounted archers can be found in the sources. An unequivocal remark is made by Musabbiḥī who speaks about a contingent composed of "*ghilmān* archers and others, about 300 horsemen and 400 infantry".²² An Egyptian Christian chronicler mentions *en passant* a Fatimid mounted trooper who was armed with a bow and arrows and who also carried a sword.²³ It is difficult to gauge the strength and position of the Turks following the civil war in the sixth decade of the eleventh century, and Badr's restoration of law and order. Undoubtedly, the Turks were much weakened and decimated.²⁴ In Egypt of the second half of the eleventh century, there were also Ghuzz (Turkmen) renowned for their mounted archery, and Kurds.²⁵ In spite of the above-mentioned presence of Turkish *ghilmān*, Ghuzz and Kurds in the Fatimid army in general and occasionally in Syria as well, there is no clear-cut evidence regarding the inclusion of mounted archers in the Fatimid armies which fought the

Tyre, I, 292. The Frankish chroniclers distinguish between Muslim mounted archers and fully armoured cavalry which sometimes fought on the side of the Muslims against the armies of the first Crusade, see *The Deeds of the Franks*, 20, 49. For the impact of Turkish mounted archers on Byzantium, see W. E. Kaegi, "The Contribution of Archery to the Turkish Conquest of Anatolia", *Speculum*, XXXIX(1964), 96-108.

²¹ Hamblin, 27-32, 149-53, 163-6, 190-2. One fact regarding the blacks who served as heavy infantry in medieval Islamic armies, must be kept in mind; they could not flee from the battlefield. Their chance to survive depended on the ability to maintain their formation, even when deserted by their cavalry, which was composed of non-black socio-military groups. For a discussion of this point see, Brett, "The Military Interest of the Battle of Ḥaydarān", 78-88. See also the observation made by Fulcher of Chartres, 183.

²² Musabbiḥī, 36.

²³ Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, part,3, 195 (Arabic), 299 (English).

²⁴ *Itti'āz*, II, 312.

²⁵ For the Kurds, see n.2 above; for the Ghuzz, see Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān*, (ed) A. Sevim (Ankara, 1983), 201.

Crusaders.²⁶ The presence of Christian Armenian mounted archers in these armies can be excluded as a feasible possibility. The above review of the Arabic sources suggest that R. C. Smail's conclusion regarding the absence of mounted archers (certainly in sizeable numbers) in the Fatimid armies which fought in Palestine is correct. An examination of al-Afdal's military reforms points to the same conclusion.

II

Maqrīzī provides an account of al-Afdal's military reforms. His report is based upon the lost works of Ibn Ṭuwayr (1130-1220) and Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir (d. 1292). Maqrīzī claims that al-Afdal blamed his army for the results of the battle of Ascalon. He continues by saying: "following that disastrous defeat, al-Afdal did not use any one of those troops, and forbade them (i.e. their officers) to take for themselves honorific titles, and he ceased listening to them (i.e. to their advice)". After 1099, al-Afdal also refrained from personally commanding his troops against the Crusaders. (Some of the Fatimid armies dispatched to Palestine between 1101-1110 were commanded by al-Afdal's son indicating that al-Afdal, although personally cautious, was far from indifferent to the events in Palestine). The main feature of al-Afdal's military reforms was the establishment of seven barracks (*ḥujras*). Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir says that *shabāb* (adolescents reaching puberty—young men) were brought up (*tarbiya*—fostered) in these barracks. There were special barracks for *ṣibyān* (boys before puberty) where they stayed with their instructors (*ustādhs*) and servants (*khuddām*). The overall strength of the *ḥujariyya* troops is given as 3,000 (Ibn Ṭuwayr) or 5,000 (Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir).

The terms *ṣibyān* and *shabāb* which appear in the description of al-Afdal's *ḥujra* need further discussion. The term *ṣibyān* might be interpreted as referring to young slaves. Ibn Muyassar (1231-1278) says, however, that *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ* (i.e. those who had special barracks for themselves), were sons of deceased officers, soldiers and others in the service of the Fatimid dynasty in general. They were brought to the palace and trained there in horsemanship (*furūsiyya*) and archery. This report is echoed by Maqrīzī who says that the *ḥujariyya* troops were

²⁶ The composition of the Fatimid army which fought the Crusaders (Ascalon, 1099), is far from being certain, see Hamblin, 238-9.

recruited from among the sons of Fatimid soldiers and trained as cavalry.²⁷

What al-Afdal did was to re-establish an institution of military training which had apparently fallen into disuse during the civil war under al-Mustanşir. The main difference was in the shift in the source of manpower recruited for training in the barracks—from servile to free-born people. This shift in the recruitment policy explains the high number of troops in al-Afdal's *hujras*. The main obstacle which always limited the size of slave armies in medieval Islam, i.e. the high price of procuring slaves, was overcome. Another feature of the system, namely the inculcation of mounted archery as the primary specialization of the lads graduating from the *hujras*, was maintained. It can be inferred that this was the kind of troops al-Afdal needed most.

The question is: what were the military results of al-Afdal's reforms? There are no indications that the reforms contributed toward the improvement of the fighting capability of the Fatimid army. *Hujariyya* troops are not mentioned in the context of combat. All the available references to them are in connection with court ceremonies.²⁸ The reason for the failure of al-Afdal's military reforms lay in the application of an institution of military slavery—the *hujra* system—for the training of free-born manpower. The institution of military slavery in medieval Islam was characterized by a long period of training and severe discipline. Young boys (*amrad*, *murdān* literally: beardless i.e. before puberty) underwent a seven-year training period which intensified as they matured. The system emphasized discipline, slow progress and slow promotion.²⁹ The fact that those young boys were slaves, cut off from their families and uprooted from their society made the whole training system possible. They were at the mercy of the system and their survival depended on their ability to confront the challenges

²⁷ *Khīṭat*, II, 310-11; Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 143; *Itti'āz*, III, 199. For a discussion of al-Afdal's military reforms, see Hamblin, 42-7; B. J. Beshir, "Fatimid Military Organization", *Der Islam*, 55(1978), 46-8. Beshir's claim that: "the *Hudjras* were operational as an academy for the training of officers." (*op. cit.*, 47), is fallacious.

²⁸ Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 54, 70 (ambiguous), 96.

²⁹ Our knowledge of the institution of military slavery in medieval Islam, prior to the Mamlūk period, is derived from a single source, see Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, translated into English by H. Darke (London, 1960), 106-8. For a discussion of this passage, see Bosworth, "Ghaznevid Military Organisation", 45; *idem*, *The Ghaznevids. Their Empire in*

presented by the system. Islamization and the inculcation of loyalty to the master went hand in hand with military training, being an integral part of the system. It is unthinkable that a system operating in that way could impose its full crushing harshness on the sons of free-born people who were not uprooted from their families and society. Undoubtedly, al-Afdal's *hujra* system must have been more lenient and the training period shorter. The impact of the impression of loyalty to the master upon the lads recruited by al-Afdal to his *hujras*, must have been much weaker than upon servile manpower.

III

The conclusion that al-Afdal's military reforms did not improve the Fatimid ability to respond to the military challenges posed by the Crusaders is exemplified by the events of 1123. It was an independent initiative of al-Āmir against the Crusaders involving both land and naval forces. Due to the surviving fragments of Ibn al-Ma'mūn al-Baṭā'ihī's (d. 1192) chronicle, some details concerning Fatimid military and naval preparations are known. The Fatimids mustered their army, selecting the best troops for the expedition. The cavalry was paid in the presence of al-Āmir, and the procedure of payment (*naḥaqa*) continued in the house of the vizier al-Ma'mūn (the father of the above-mentioned historian al-Baṭā'ihī). The army was accompanied by physicians, muezzins and Koran readers. A number of chamberlains (*ḥujjāb*) were appointed to take responsibility for various logistic aspects of the campaign, such as the arsenal and the tents assigned for the expeditionary force. The army was fitted out with splendid swords, riding gear and garments. The food stores of Alexandria, Damietta and Ascalon were designed to provide the army with necessary supplies. In order to ensure the arrival of the troops designated for the campaign to Ascalon, a military review (*ʿard*) was scheduled to be held in the town. Bedouins were also called up for service. Parallel with the equipping of the army, naval preparations were made.³⁰

The course of the Fatimid campaign is known from a detailed account of Fulcher of Chartes who, at that time, was in Jerusalem. The Fatimid fleet, 80 ships strong according to Fulcher, arrived off Jaffa carrying siege engines and troops.³¹

Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994-1040, (Edinburgh, 1963), 102-3.

³⁰ Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 61, 62, 69; *Itti'āz*, III, 100.

³¹ Fulcher of Chartes, 240-1.

For five days the Fatimids besieged the town, but withdrew in an orderly fashion in the face of the advancing Frankish army. In a battle fought at Yabne (Ibelin) in southern Palestine (29 May 1123), the Fatimid land force was defeated, and the fleet left Jaffa, apparently sailing to Ascalon.³² Fulcher puts the strength of the Fatimid force at 16,000 saying that the cavalry fled, deserting the Fatimid black infantry of whom 6,000 were killed. The Crusaders also captured the abandoned Fatimid train-baggage. Ibn al-Ma'mūn's account of the splendid military equipment of the army is fully supported by Fulcher's description of the rich spoils found in the Fatimid camp.³³ These events epitomize that the Fatimids had the economic resources and the organizational skills for equipping armies and a fleet. Their army, however, lacked any reasonable fighting capability. The defeat of 1123, which occurred some twenty years after the inauguration of al-Afdal's military reforms, happened exactly in the same way as the débâcle of 1099.

IV

Between 1123 and the fall of Ascalon, the last town held by the Fatimids in Palestine, Fatimid activity against the Crusaders was minimal. In 545/1150-1, the Crusaders attacked and sacked the town of Faramā. In 546/1151-2, Sallār dispatched a strong fleet against Christian shipping, and against the coastal towns of Palestine and Syria. According to Arabic chroniclers, the action was very successful, but its aim was restricted; it was a retaliation for the raid on Faramā. The Frankish siege on Ascalon commenced on 25 January 1153. The Fatimid forces in Ascalon were made up of a permanent garrison of bedouins of the tribe of Kināniyya who were stationed in town, and a cavalry contingent, 400-600 strong, which was dispatched from Cairo and replaced every six months.³⁴ Ibn Sallār paid special attention to the affairs of Ascalon; fresh supplies were brought to the town, and the armoury was replenished with weapons.³⁵

In Muḥarram 548/March-April 1153, the exchange of the

³² William of Tyre, I, 546-7.

³³ Fulcher of Chartes, 242.

³⁴ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 144, 145, 146; Ibn al-Qalānisi, 315; *Itti'āz*, III, 190, 202, 204. For the military role of Banū Kināniyya in Saladin's period, see H. A. R. Gibb, "The Armies of Saladin", in *idem*, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, (Boston, 1962), 76, 77. They were known as *'asaqila*, i.e. former troops from Ascalon.

³⁵ *Itti'āz*, III, 199.

cavalry contingent in Ascalon was due to take place. The force designated for Ascalon left Cairo and camped in Bilbays, north of the capital. At the same time, preparations for dispatching the navy to assist Ascalon were made. Among the emirs who stayed in Bilbays with their troops, a conspiracy against Ibn Sallār was conceived. On the morning of 6 Muḥarram/3 April, Ibn Sallār went to Fustāt to conduct a review (*‘ard*) of the fleet and to pay the crews who were supposed to sail to Ascalon. In the course of the day, Ibn Sallār was murdered by Ibn ‘Abbās, his stepson.³⁶ The fleet sailed to Ascalon, but the army in Bilbays returned to Cairo.

The naval forces which the Crusaders had at their disposal (fifteen ships merely) were not strong enough to prevent the Fatimid squadron from reaching Ascalon. Naval assistance alone was not sufficient to repel the Crusaders. The Fatimid fleet did not stay in Ascalon which lacked a suitable port or harbour for a lengthy anchoring. After fulfilling their mission the ships sailed back to Egypt. The passivity of the Fatimid land army sealed the fate of the town. Ascalon, although well provided with grain, capitulated on 22 August 1153. The fall of the town was a direct result of the internal power struggle in Egypt.

c) The Fatimid Navy and the Crusades

I

In the Fatimid confrontation with the Crusaders two distinctive periods can be observed: the decisive phase were the years 1099-1110 in which the Crusaders gained control of many coastal towns of Palestine and Syria, the second phase (1110-1168) marked the consolidation of the Frankish control of the coast with the fall of Tyre (1124) and Ascalon (1153). One of the surprising facts of the naval struggle between Christian Europe and Islam during the Crusades is that the Fatimids alone carried the full burden of the confrontation. One would expect to see naval activity against the Crusaders and their allies originating from the coastal towns of Syria. Tripoli, for example, was an important trading emporium. It seems, however, that the rulers of Tripoli, the family of Banū ‘Ammār, had no warships at their disposal. This was not an exceptional situation; in

³⁶ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 319, 320, 321-2; Usāma Ibn Munqidh, 18-9 (Arabic), 43 (English); Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 146-7; *Itti‘āz*, III, 205.

the period under consideration maritime commerce was not necessarily dependent on sea power. The Fatimid position in the Red sea illustrates this point. Large commercial traffic of immense economic importance for the Fatimids went through the Red sea. The Fatimids, nevertheless, maintained no military naval presence in the area. In 511/1117, the ruler of Mecca attacked ships in the Red Sea and seized the Egyptian merchants on board. In response, al-Afdal ordered the governor of Qūṣ (in Upper Egypt) to construct in the port of ʿAydḥāb (a terminus of the Red Sea commercial traffic) war galleys (*shīnī* pl. *shawānī*) and ships from which Greek fire was hurled (*ḥarārīq*). Eventually, the matter was settled peacefully.³⁷ It is important to remember the illuminating remarks of J. F. Guilmartin Jr. who warned against the projection of eighteenth century relationships between maritime trade and naval power on earlier periods. He meant the sixteenth century, but his warning is also applicable for the period under consideration.³⁸

At this stage of the discussion another point should be considered: why Banū ʿAmmār did not use merchant vessels for military purposes or, to put it differently, to what extent was there a sharp differentiation between warships and merchant vessels in the eleventh and twelfth centuries? R. W. Unger argues that: "in the Mediterranean in the early middle ages there was already a long-standing differentiation between ships

³⁷ *Ittiʿāz*, III, 58. Both the Byzantines and Muslims built special ships from which Greek fire was hurled. The shape of the Byzantine devices of Greek fire is described in the following manner: "...on the prow of each ship he (i.e. the Emperor Alexius I Comnenus) had a head fixed of a lion or other land-animal, made in brass or iron with mouth open and then gilded over, so that their mere aspect was terrifying. And the fire which was to be directed against the enemy through tubes he made to pass through the mouths of the beasts, so that it seemed as if the lions and the other similar monsters were vomiting the fire". *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Commena*, translated into English by E. A. S. Dawies, (London, 1967) (reprint), 292, cf. H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, (Paris, 1966), 193. The operator could swivel the device in any direction he desired, *The Alexiad*, 293. The above quoted description provides a clue for the understanding of the account saying that the Abbasid Caliph al-Amin (ruled 809-13) constructed, for sailing on the Tigris, five ships in the shape of different animals (lion, elephant etc.) and birds (eagle) from which Greek fire was hurled. The account meant that the devices, not the ships, were in the shape of animals and birds. I. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ, "The Ships of the Muslim Navy", *Hilāl*, 21(1912), 322-3. H. Zayyāt, "Lexicon of Ships in Islam", *Al-Mashriq*, 43(1949), 330-1. (Both in Arabic). A. M. Fahmy, *Muslim Sea Power in the Eastern Mediterranean from the Seventh to the Tenth Century A. D.*, (n.p., 1950), 134-5, and 115-38, 149-67.

³⁸ J. F. Guilmartin Jr., *Gunpowder and Galleys*, (Cambridge, 1974), 2-3.

for fighting and ships intended only for carrying cargo".³⁹ In his view, this distinction was eroded in the tenth century (the Byzantine use of the dromon as a warship and also for carrying goods and provision illustrates this point), but re-emerged in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁴⁰ S. D. Goitein, on the basis of the documents of the Cairo Geniza, states that the differentiation between the two types existed. His observation is fully vindicated by Arabic sources.⁴¹ To conclude, the Fatimids were the only Muslim state in the eastern Mediterranean with a military navy and carried the full burden of the naval confrontation with the Crusaders and their allies.

³⁹ R. W. Unger, "Warships and Cargo Ships in Medieval Europe", *Technology and Culture*, 22(1981), 236.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 237. See, also R. W. Unger, *The Ships in the Medieval Economy, 600-1600*, (London, 1980), 66, 252. For the dromon as warship, see R. H. Dolley, "The Warships of the Later Roman Empire", *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 38(1948), 48-53. William of Tyre (II, 361), gives the following description of Byzantine dromons used as transport ships (1169): "The fleet included also ten or twenty vessels of huge size called dromones, which were loaded to capacity with commissary supplies of all kinds. These latter also carried arms of many kinds and, in addition, engines and machines of war." For Byzantine naval expedition of 1169, see Ahrweiler, 264-7.

⁴¹ Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 307. The simplest unequivocal expression designating man-of-war is *markab ḥarbi*—warship, see Lev, "The Fatimid Navy", 247-8; Musabbihi, 46; Ibn al-Muyassar, (ed) H. Massé, 91, 92, 97, (ed) Sayyid, 145, 147, 156; Ibn al-Qalānisi, 315, translated into English by H. A. R. Gibb, under the title *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*, (London, 1932), 307-8; *Itti'āz*, III, 45, 202, 205, 230, 266. War galley is designated by the term *shīnī*. The term *ghurab* given by Ibn al-Mammāti as a synonym for *shīnī* does not appear in our sources. *Shīnī* was a warship propelled by 140 oars and her crew included oarsmen and warriors. Ibn al-Mammāti, *Kitāb Qawānīn al-Dawāwīn*, (ed) A. S. Atiya (Cairo, 1943), 340; cf. Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 476, n.12, 477, n.13. Ibn al-Mammāti's account is supported by other source; the vizier al-Ma'mūn, for example, prepared 40 *shīnī*, and 20 emirs (officer)—undoubtedly with their troops—who were supposed to sail on them. Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 61; *Itti'āz*, III, 102, 234, 266; Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Massé, 63, (ed) Sayyid, 95. Goitein makes a distinction between a heavy warship (*ustūl*) and a light war galleys (*qatā'i*), *Med. Soc.*, I, 307. This distinction between heavy and light warships is not supported by our sources. Maqrizi explicitly says that the term *ustūl* means warships, *Khīṭat*, III, 307. Nevertheless, *ustūl* also designates a fleet; sometimes with the connotation of a military fleet, and on other occasions a fleet made up of both warships and transport ships. For the former, see Ibn al-Qalānisi, 171-2, 209; *Itti'āz*, III, 102, 230, 233, 297. For the later, see Ibn al-Qalānisi, 163, 164, 171, 188, 319; *Itti'āz*, III, 44, 45, 51, 96, 224; Ibn Taghribirdī, V, 179, 180; Ibn al-Athīr, (Beirut, 1966), X, 467-7; Ibn al-Muyassar, (ed) Massé, 63, 95, 96, (ed) Sayyid, 93, 153, 155; Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 62. In some cases the terms *qit'a* pl. *qita'* and *qatā'i* mean warships. For example, see *Itti'āz*, II, 231; Ibn al-Athīr, (Beirut, 1966), X, 345; Ibn al-Qalānisi, 209, Gibb, (tran.), 168; *Itti'āz*, III, 98. In other cases it can be translated simply as ships; *Itti'āz*, III, 14; Ibn Zāfir, 85.

II

In this section and the next, data on the activity of the Fatimid navy during the years 1099-1110 and 1110-1171 are presented. The history of the Crusades, the full ramifications of the events and the wider historical context are well known. Therefore, only events pertinent to the topic under consideration are dealt with. The presentation is organized in a chronological form which I find most suitable for handling the material at hand.

The Frankish chroniclers supply plenty of information on the naval aspects of the first Crusade. The main utility of the various European fleets involved in the first Crusade was in bringing supplies to the advancing armies.⁴² During the siege of Antioch (October 1097-June 1098), provisions brought to the port of St. Simeon (Suwaydiyya) proved vital⁴³, and the same is true for the siege of 'Arqa (May, 1099).⁴⁴ The chroniclers were fully aware of the importance of the European fleets and private shipowners and merchants in providing for the Crusaders armies.⁴⁵ The Muslims did not interfere with this maritime traffic. The sea remained open for both sides. The Fatimid emissaries who arrived from Egypt at the Crusaders' camp in Antioch made their outward and inward journey by sea. The second Fatimid delegation which reached the Crusaders during the siege of 'Arqa also made its way by sea.⁴⁶ At the time of Crusaders' arrival in Palestine, the activity of Fatimid navy is attested. A Frankish chronicler, Raymond d'Aguilers, mentions the movements of an unspecified Muslim fleet (undoubtedly Fatimid) which threatened English and Genoese ships at Jaffa, blocking the port for some time (about 20 June 1099).⁴⁷ In the battle of Ascalon (12 August 1099), Fatimid navy

⁴² Fulcher of Chartres, 82.

⁴³ Raymond d'Aguilers, 32, 41-2; *The Deeds of the Franks*, 56-7; William of Tyre, I, 229, 237, 267, 273-4.

⁴⁴ *The Deeds of the Franks*, 85; Peter Tudebode, *Historia Hierosolymitano Itinere*, translated into English with introduction and notes by J. H. Hill and L. L. Hill (Philadelphia, 1974), 108-9.

⁴⁵ The maritime connections of the Crusaders states in Levant with Europe has been analysed by J. H. Pryor, *Geography Technology and War. Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean 649-1571*, (Cambridge, 1988), 112-3; *idem*, "In Subsidiu Terrae Sanctae: Exports of Foodstuffs and War Materials from the Kingdom of Sicily to the Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1264-1284", in *The Medieval Levant. Studies in Memory of Eliyahu Ashtor*, 127-47.

⁴⁶ Raymond d'Aguilers, 113; William of Tyre, I, 330.

⁴⁷ Raymond d'Aguilers, 120. This information is repeated by William of Tyre, I, 357. He says that the ships came from Ascalon i. e. that they were Fatimid.

was present but remained uninvolved.⁴⁸ The conquests of the Crusaders along the Palestinian coast (Haifa, 20 August 1100, Arsūf, 29 April 1101 and Caesarea, 17 May, 1101) were achieved with the help of Italian fleets that encountered no Muslim naval resistance.⁴⁹ In summer 1102, Fatimid land and naval forces arrived in Palestine. The Fatimids laid siege to Jaffa, and their land forces enjoyed an initial success against the Crusaders. The arrival of Christian ships, and the defeat of the Fatimid army brought the siege of Jaffa to an end. Ibn al-Qalānisi, the historian of Damascus, says that Fatimid ships brought grain to the coastal towns, lowering the prices after a long period of dearth.⁵⁰ A year later, Fatimid army and navy reappeared in Palestine. Due to a lack of coordination between land and naval forces, the Fatimid expedition achieved nothing.⁵¹

Acre fell on 26 May 1104, one year after an abortive attempt to conquer the town had failed due to the absence of a navy to assist the Crusaders.⁵² Arabic sources say that the governor of Acre had ships at his disposal, but he surrendered the town when his hopes for the arrival of a Fatimid relief force did not materialize. The strength of the Christian fleet which took part in the siege is put as high as 90 ships.⁵³ In August 1105, the Fatimids waged a new offensive against the Crusaders from Ascalon. Fatimid fleet arrived off Jaffa blocking the port. However, when Fatimid land army was defeated by Baldwin (27 August), Fatimid ships lifted the siege and sought shelter in Sidon and Tyre. Later, when sailing along the Palestinian coast back to Egypt, 25 Fatimid ships were thrown upon the beach by a storm. 2,000 rowers and sailors were captured by the

⁴⁸ The anonymous author of *The Deeds of the Franks*, 97, says that Fatimid fleet sailed into the open sea upon realizing that al-Afdal was defeated. Ibn al-Qalānisi, 138, gives the impression that al-Afdal was defeated before the arrival of his fleet; cf. Pryor, *Geography*, 124-5.

⁴⁹ Fulcher of Chartres, 130, 151-2, 153; William of Tyre, I, 409., 433-5, 436. Ibn al-Qalānisi, 139, notes the assistance of the fleet of Genoa in the conquest of Haifa and Arsūf. For the Italian ships at the time of the first Crusade, see Pryor, *Geography*, 30.

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 142-3; *Itti'āz*, III, 32; Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 74.

⁵¹ Ibn al-Athir, (Beirut, 1966), X, 365.

⁵² Ibn al-Athir, (Beirut, 1966), X, 345, says that the siege of Acre took place in Jumādā II 495/March-April, and failed due to an intervention of Muslim armies of the other coastal towns which set fire to siege engines and 16 ships (*qit'a*) of the Crusaders.

⁵³ Ibn al-Athir, (Beirut, 1966), X, 372-3; Ibn Taghribirdi, V, 188; William of Tyre, I, 454-5.

Crusaders.⁵⁴ It was a heavy blow for the Fatimid navy which, until then, had remained intact sustaining no losses and maintaining its operative capability.

On 12 July 1109, Tripoli, which had been ruled by the family of Banū ʿAmmār since 1070, was taken by the Crusaders.⁵⁵ Fatimid navy failed to reach the besieged town on time, although the Crusaders had established their camp in front of the town as early as Shaʿbān 502/March-April 1109. It seems that the presence of a Genoese fleet of 60 ships deterred the Fatimids from approaching the town. Fatimid fleet arrived in Tripoli eight days after the capitulation of the town. The Arabic sources say that the delay was due to adverse wind conditions. It was a very large fleet carrying grain and provisions which were unloaded in other coastal towns. The fleet returned to Egypt in the same year (summer 1109).⁵⁶ The fall of Tripoli was a bad omen for the impending fate of the other coastal towns of Syria.

In 1108, Baldwin's siege of Sidon failed due to successful intervention by a Fatimid fleet (which had the upper hand in a clash with Genoese ships) and the arrival of troops from Damascus.⁵⁷ In 1110, when Beirut was besieged by the Crusaders, nineteen Fatimid warships entered the port, defeating and capturing some Christian vessels off the town. Baldwin went to the port of St. Simeon and enrolled the assistance of 40 Genoese ships which arrived off Beirut trapping the Fatimid vessels inside the port. Fatimid mariners took part in the defence of the town; the commander of the fleet was killed in the fighting. The fate of the Fatimid ships is unknown, they were apparently seized by the Genoese. William of Tyre, the renowned Frankish historian, says that the Genoese overran the harbour following the breach of the city walls by the land army.⁵⁸

On 19 October 1110, the Crusaders laid siege to Sidon which was taken on 4 December, 1110. Although there was usually no sailing in the Mediterranean during the winter months, the

⁵⁴ Fulcher of Chartes, 187-8; William of Tyre, I, 464-6.

⁵⁵ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 160-1; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 38, 42; Ibn Shaddād, *Al-Aʿlāq al-Khaṭira fi Dhikr Umarāʾ al-Jazīra*, (ed) S. Dahān (Damascus, 1962), 109-10.

⁵⁶ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 164; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 44; Ibn Taghribirdi, V, 179-80; William of Tyre, I, 475-6.

⁵⁷ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 162, Gibb (tran.), 87; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 43.

⁵⁸ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 167-8, Gibb (tran.), 99-100; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 45; Fulcher of Chartes, 196; William of Tyre, I, 485.

Crusaders were prepared to take the risk in order to take full advantage of the arrival of two European fleets (from Venice and Norway) to the shores of Palestine. In the face of Christian numerical superiority and following the loss of ships at Beirut, Fatimid fleet which anchored at Tyre did not venture to sail in the winter to assist Sidon. In summer 1110, sailing from Egyptian ports also came to a standstill. Muslim merchants in Tinnis and Damietta were desperate to sail (before the sailing season was over), but the Fatimids were unable to provide a naval escort. Eventually, they sailed on their own, without the protection of warships, and were captured by Christian vessels.⁵⁹

III

Frankish attempt to maximize the momentum created by the fall of Tripoli, Beirut and Sidon, by seizing Ascalon and Tyre did not materialize. The Crusaders were unable to take advantage of the internal strife between the governor of Ascalon and the central government in Cairo; and Tyre withstood a long siege (November 1111-April 1112). Ibn al-Qalānisi says that 200 ships of various sizes, including 30 warships, participated in the siege. The numbers given by Ibn al-Qalānisi might be exaggerated, but considerable naval resources were committed for the siege. William of Tyre says that ships from all coastal towns under the rule of the Crusaders were mobilized for the effort against Tyre.⁶⁰ The town was saved due to the military help of the ruler of Damascus, the Atabeg Ṣāḥib al-Dīn Tuḡtīkīn, and the stiff resistance put up by the army and the population of Tyre. Many of the Christian ships which took part in the siege were beached and the wood, especially the masts, was used for the construction of siege towers which were advanced against the town's walls. The defenders, helped by a seaman from Tripoli, were able to destroy the siege towers by fire. Eventually, the Crusaders raised the siege of the town, destroying their camp and the remnants of their ships. In mid-July 1113, Fatimid fleet arrived in Tyre bringing provisions for the army, and grain for sell to the townspeople. The fleet did not winter in Tyre, sailing to Egypt with favourable winds in the second

⁵⁹ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 171-2, Gibb (tran.), 108; *Itti'āz*, III, 45-6; Ibn al-Athir, (Beirut, 1966), X, 479-80; Fulcher of Chartes, 199-200; William of Tyre, I, 486-8.

⁶⁰ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 172, 180, Gibb (tran.), 125; Ibn al-Athir, (Beirut, 1966), X, 490; William of Tyre, I, 491-2.

week of September.⁶¹ In 509/1115-6, Baldwin, the King of Jerusalem, with most of the army of the Kingdom, was campaigning in North Syria. The Fatimids hoped to benefit from this situation and laid siege to Jaffa. It was a short and futile siege, but the importance of this event lies in the fact that a contemporary Frankish chronicler left a short description of the Fatimid fleet which participated in the siege. It was a large fleet, 70 ships strong, including some triremes and dromons and supply vessels. Following the failure of the siege, the fleet sailed to Tyre.⁶²

In response to Baldwin's raid on Faramā (March, 1118), the Fatimids, in coordination with Ṭughtikīn of Damascus, sent their army and navy against the Crusaders. The combined Muslim force did not engage the Crusaders, and the Fatimid fleet sailed to Tyre and Ascalon.⁶³ The Arabic annals for the year 516/1112-3, record the arrival of a Fatimid fleet in Tyre with a load of 15,000 *irdabb* of grain (*irdabb*: measuring about 90 liters and weighing about 70 kilograms), and contingents of troops.⁶⁴

In 517/1123-4, the Fatimids, in the hope of profiting from the absence of Baldwin II, the King of Jerusalem, (who was held captive by Ilghāzī), launched a new expedition against Jaffa. Due to the surviving fragments of Ibn al-Ma'mūn chronicle, we have some details of the preparations which took place in Cairo before the sailing of the fleet. It seems that Fatimid navy was divided into two fleets (or squadrons). At the time it was decided to take the initiative against Jaffa, one of the fleets was on a raiding mission. The preparations were entrusted to the commander of the so-called second fleet. 40 *shīnī* (galleys) which were at the arsenals of Cairo were equipped and their crews paid by the commander of the fleet. He also paid to 20 emirs (officers—the structure of command of the Fatimid army is unclear) of the land army who were supposed to sail on board the galleys. The departure of the fleet from Cairo toward the Mediterranean sea was watched by the Fatimid *imām*.⁶⁵ A

⁶¹ Ibn al-Qalānīsī, 179-80, Gibb (tran.), 142-3; *Itti'āz*, III, 51-2; Ibn Shaddād, 168-9.

⁶² Fulcher of Chartes, 211-2; William of Tyre, I, 502.

⁶³ Fulcher of Chartes, 226; William of Tyre, I, 523-4.

⁶⁴ Ibn al-Qalānīsī, 207, Gibb (tran.), 165; *Itti'āz*, III, 96; Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Massé, 63, (ed) Sayyid, 93; Ibn al-Athīr, (Beirut, 1966), X, 621-2. For *irdabb*, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, IV, 235.

⁶⁵ Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 61, 62, 69; *Itti'āz*, III, 100.

Fatimid fleet, 80 ships strong according to Frankish chroniclers, arrived off Jaffa carrying siege engines and troops.⁶⁶ Following the defeat of the Fatimid land army in southern Palestine (29 May, 1123), the fleet left Jaffa, apparently sailing to Ascalon.⁶⁷ At the same time, a Venetian fleet anchored in the coastal towns of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Venetians sailed in pursuit of Fatimid ships. Their aim was to mislead the Fatimids into believing that their fleet was a merchant fleet, or ships carrying pilgrims. Four big supply ships together with 28 big warships formed the front line of the Venetian fleet, and behind them sailed the galleys. At first light, the Venetians encountered Fatimid ships at anchor close to the sea shore. The Fatimids had little time to form a proper battle line and clearly were in panic. In the ensuing battle, which was fought in shallow waters near the shore, the Fatimids were defeated and many of their ships captured. The Venetian fleet continued to sail in the waters of south Palestine. Off al-ʿArish, the Venetians came upon ten Fatimid ships carrying arms and wood for the army as well as great quantities of merchandise. The Fatimid mariners tried to beach their ships on the shore (a common tactic in such circumstances),⁶⁸ but the Venetians had the upper hand in the battle. Some Fatimid ships were burnt and others captured.⁶⁹ The reports of these events in Arabic sources are evasive. The clearest is Ibn al-Qalānisi who, in a short passage, says that the Fatimids were defeated at sea by the Venetians and a number of their vessels (*qitaʿ*) were captured.⁷⁰ Egyptian historians are reticent on this naval battle. They record that in 517/1123-4, a combined Byzantine-Venetian fleet appeared off Alexandria and attacked the town. Fatimid land and naval forces beat off the intruders taking some prisoners.⁷¹ In that year, Fatimid naval activities were considerable and not wholly unsuccessful. Maqrizi reports the return of the Fatimid fleet from a raid (Shaʿbān 517/September-October, 1123) with two captured Christian galleys and one big *baṭsha* (a passenger ship) and prisoners. The commander of the

⁶⁶ Fulcher of Chartes, 240-1.

⁶⁷ William of Tyre, I, 546.

⁶⁸ Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 330.

⁶⁹ Fulcher of Chartes, 244-5; William of Tyre, I, 548-50.

⁷⁰ Ibn al-Qalānisi, 209, Gibb (tran.), 168.

⁷¹ See the evasive report of Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Massé, 63, (ed) Sayyid, 95. For the activity of the Fatimid navy off Alexandria, see *Ittiʿāz*, III, 98.

fleet (*zimām al-uṣṭūl*) and the captains (*ru'asā'*) were given robes of honour by the imām.⁷²

In 1124, the Venetian fleet which had defeated the Fatimids a year earlier was still in the Levant, and with its assistance the Crusaders laid siege to Tyre (16 February, 1124). The siege continued for five months. The Fatimid navy, which was the last hope of the besieged, failed to arrive and the town surrendered.⁷³ One year later, the Fatimid fleet sailed along the coast of Palestine and Syria seeking targets worth attacking. This was a large fleet consisting of 22 triremes and 53 other vessels. Nonetheless, it was an aimless operation in which the Fatimids sustained losses when their crews went ashore to search for water.⁷⁴

For the next 27 years there is no information on the Fatimid navy. In 546/1151-2, a Fatimid fleet of 70 warships, on which 300,000 *dīnārs* were spent, seized a number of Byzantine (Rūm) and Frankish (apparently Italian) ships off the ports of Jaffa, Acre, Sidon, Beirut and Tripoli. Ibn al-Qalānīsī provides an enthusiastic account of this raid saying that many Christian warships were captured by the Fatimids and multitude of pilgrims killed.⁷⁵ One year later, when Ascalon came under the siege of the Crusaders (25 January–22 August, 1153), the Fatimid navy, in contrast with what had happened during the siege of Tyre, came to Ascalon bringing troops and provisions. The Fatimid squadron was able to reach Ascalon by sea, but naval assistance alone was not sufficient to repel the Crusaders.⁷⁶

The fall of Ascalon did not paralyze the ability of the Fatimid navy to threaten the coast of Palestine and Syria. For the next few years, the sources provide information on a number of consecutive and successful Fatimid naval raids. In 550/1155-6, Fatimid fleet took possession of the harbour of Tyre (which lay between the strip of land on which Tyre was situated and the sea coast), destroying a number of ships and capturing other vessels and prisoners.⁷⁷ In 552/1157-8, Fatimid fleet was active

⁷² *Itti'āz*, III, 102.

⁷³ Fulcher of Chartes, 255-7; William of Tyre, II, 7, 9, 10, 13-4, 17.

⁷⁴ Fulcher of Chartes, 296; William of Tyre, II, 32. This event exemplifies the difficulties to water galleys, see Pryor, *Geography*, 76, 81, 116.

⁷⁵ Ibn al-Qalānīsī, 315, Gibb (tran.), 307-8; Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Massé, 91, (ed) Sayyid, 145; *Itti'āz*, III, 202.

⁷⁶ Ibn al-Qalānīsī, 321-2, Gibb (tran.), 316-7; Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Massé, 92, (ed) Sayyid, 147; William of Tyre, II, 220-3, 236.

⁷⁷ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Massé, 95, (ed) Sayyid, 153; *Itti'āz*, III, 224. In 548/27

off Acre and Beirut. In Ramaḍān 552/September-October 1158, the fleet returned to Egypt with 700 captives.⁷⁸ In the next sailing season, on Friday, 13 Rabīʿ II, 553/14 May, 1158, a Fatimid squadron of 5 galleys left Cairo, arriving at Tinnīs on 8 Shaʿbān/4 September; it sailed from there into the Mediterranean. This squadron intercepted Christian ships off the Syrian coast returning to Egypt on 22 Ramaḍān/17 October with much booty and prisoners. The Fatimid fleet which was stationed in Alexandria returned on 16 Rabīʿ II/17 May, also with much booty.⁷⁹

In November 1168, in an attempt to prevent the fall of Fustāt to Amalric, Shāwar set the town on fire; it destroyed also the Fatimid navy. Three years later, Saladin put an end to Fatimid rule in Egypt.⁸⁰

d) Discussion of the Evidence

I

The facts regarding the military confrontation between the Fatimids and the Crusaders are clear and striking; the Fatimids failed along the whole line, being unable to defend Egypt and their possessions in Palestine and Syria. What were the reasons for the Fatimid naval failure? During the years 1099-1110, the Crusaders conquered many of the coastal towns of Palestine and Syria. The Fatimid naval effort during these years is very impressive. Hardly in any other period in Fatimid history, there was such a continuous and intense naval activity, although it was costly and fruitless.⁸¹ The failure of the Fatimid navy in those years was the outcome of three factors: 1) The initiative

March, 1153 to 18 March, 1154, the Normans attacked Tinnīs from the sea, *Ittiʿāz*, III, 207. A. S. Ehrenkreutz' statement that other Egyptian coastal towns were attacked from the sea in 1154 and 1155 is unsupported by the sources at my disposal. *Idem*, "The Place of Saladin in the Naval History of the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle Ages", *JAOS*, 75(1955), 102. The reference to Ibn al-Qalānisi (n. 13, p. 102), is erroneous.

⁷⁸ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Massé, 96, (ed) Sayyid, 155; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 230.

⁷⁹ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Massé, 97, (ed) Sayyid, 156; *Ittiʿāz*, III, 233, 234.

⁸⁰ *Ittiʿāz*, III, 297; cf: Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin*, 48-9; Loyns and Jackson, *Saladin*, 22.

⁸¹ In the second and third decades of the tenth century, the Fatimids launched a number of raids on Italy from Tunisia. Their squadrons numbered between 20 and 40 ships, and were very successful; Lev, "Fatimid Navy", 231-2. These raids left a great impression on later historians. For example, see William of Tyre, II, 324.

lay in the hands of the Crusaders who chose their targets at will. It seems that there was no Fatimid navy of any significance in the coastal towns of Palestine and Syria. Given the naval limitations of the period (speed, range and the availability of ships), the Fatimids were unable to respond to every attack on each one of the coastal towns. From the Fatimid economic and strategic point of view, the small towns hardly justified the commitment of naval resources in an attempt to rescue them.⁸²

2) Fatimid policy toward Tripoli was vindictive and shortsighted contributing much to the fall of the town. From 1070, Tripoli was governed by the family of Banū ‘Ammār which maintained the independence of the town from the Fatimids and Seljūks. In 501/1107-8, the ruler of Tripoli left the town seeking help against the Crusaders. The population of Tripoli asked al-Afdal to send a governor to the town on his behalf. Fatimid fleet arrived at the town arresting members of Banū ‘Ammār’s family and carrying them and their riches to Egypt. The next year, when the town was besieged by the Crusaders, Fatimid fleet arrived too late to save the town. 3) The Fatimid navy was not large. In 1163, Fatimid enemies estimated the strength of their fleet at 100 galleys (*shīnī*). It was a high estimate, authors of the Mamlūk period give lower figures: 75-80 *shīnī*, 10 transport ships (*ḥammālāt*), and 10 *musattahāt* (another type of transport ship). To these numbers must be added at least 20 ships hurling Greek fire (*ḥarrāqāt*) which are mentioned in the annals.⁸³ In comparison, the Genoese fleet which participated in the siege of Tripoli (1109) was 60 ships strong, and the Byzantine fleet which took part in the siege of Damietta (1169) numbered over 200 ships of various kinds. The Norman fleet which laid siege to Alexandria in 1174 was of similar size. The Fatimids faced enemies whose naval resources were larger than their own.

The Fatimid failure during the period 1099-1110 was irreversible. The fall of Tyre and Ascalon was only a question of time. Ascalon, with its limited port facilities, was of limited

⁸² For this aspect, see Hamblin, *The Fatimid Army*, 224-34; *idem*, “The Fatimid Navy During the Early Crusades: 1099-1124”, *The American Neptune*, XLVI (1986), 79-81. I am grateful to Professor Hamblin for sending me an off-print of his paper.

⁸³ Qalqashandī, *Subh al-A‘shā*, (n.p., n.d.), III, 519; *Itti‘āz*, III, 266; *Khitat*, III, 313; Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, III, part 2, 62 (Arabic), 105 (English); cf. Hamblin, “The Fatimid Navy”, 77-9. For Italian fleets, see M. Mollat, “Problèmes navals de l’histoire des croisades”, *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 10(1967), 353.

value from a naval point of view. Fatimid navy managed to provide both towns occasionally, and carried out raids along the coast of Palestine and Syria as well as against Christian shipping.

Could the Fatimid navy do more than occasionally slip into the coastal towns with fresh troops and provisions, and raid the coast and the sea lanes ? To put it more bluntly, does the limited activity of Fatimid navy reflect not only objective disadvantages but also naval inferiority in comparison with its European adversaries ? There is a great temptation to read between the lines; on crucial occasions Fatimid navy was always late. The sources explain this by adverse sea and wind conditions, and sometimes in a cryptic and suspicious way. The dependence of the ships of that period on wind is obvious and well attested to by a great variety of sources. This applies to galleys also, especially as the fleets dispatched to the coastal towns included also transport ships which, even more than galleys, were completely dependent on the wind for sailing. In fact, in their cryptic comments on Fatimid naval activity, the sources reflect another aspect of medieval naval warfare of which the Muslim historians themselves (all of them without any naval experience) were not necessarily aware. V. Christides has emphasized that Byzantine and Arab authors of manuals of naval warfare recommended avoiding direct confrontation of the enemy fleet.⁸⁴ Both Byzantines and Muslims adhered to this principle, even when the defence of their towns (Thessaloniki, 904) and islands (Crete, 960-1) was at stake.⁸⁵ It is true that the Venetians were more daring at sea than were the Fatimids, seeking direct confrontation with them (in 1123 and 1124). However, caution was the main characteristic of naval warfare. The Byzantines, although enjoying the advantage of Greek fire over their Italian adversaries, displayed restraint avoiding large-scale naval battles

⁸⁴ See the cryptic remarks of Ibn Taghribirdi, V, 179, 182, regarding the failure of the Fatimid navy to arrive to Tripoli in 1109, and the comments of Ibn al-Athir, (Beirut, 1966), X, 479-80, and Maqrizi (*Itti'āz*, III, 45) on the activity of the Fatimid navy at Sidon in 1110. For manuals of naval warfare, see V. Christides, "The Naval Engagement of Dhāt as-Ṣawāri A. H. 34/A. D. 655-656. A Classic Example of Naval Warfare Incompetence", *Byzantina*, 13 (1985), 1336-7; R. H. Dolley, "Naval Tactics in the Heday of the Byzantine Thalassocracy", in *Atti dello VIII Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini, Palermo, 1951*, (Rome, 1953), 325, 327; Pryor, *Geography*, 128.

⁸⁵ V. Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs (ca. 824). A Turning Point in the Struggle Between Byzantium and Islam*, (Athens, 1984), 185-6.

with them.⁸⁶ Fleets of galleys by their very nature and limitations (speed, range and their limited capability to remain sea-borne) could not achieve naval supremacy and control of the sea in the modern sense of these terms.⁸⁷ In fact, all major naval undertakings of the Italian fleets aiding the Crusaders were in connection with siege operations, and the Fatimid navy responded to threats to coastal towns, not to a naval challenge in the modern sense of the term. The question that should be considered is: what was the contribution of the navy in deciding the results of a siege undertaken against a coastal town? Naval power was a pre-condition for a successful siege, but not a guarantee of success. The role of the navy was to cut off the besieged town from its sources of supply. This task was not achieved by actively patrolling the sea, but by the very presence of the navy at the scene of the siege. The siege of Tyre (1124) provides a nice illustration of this pattern. Venetian ships were beached on the shore, and only one vessel remained sea-borne; when rumours spread about the approach of Fatimid fleet, the Venetians ships were pulled into the sea. The fleet sailed for three days searching in vain for Fatimid ships. Naval assaults on fortified towns, or assault landings were extremely rare.⁸⁸ Siege operations were decided by fighting on land. A large fleet, even in the absence of any hostile naval forces, could not secure success in siege, as exemplified by the abortive sieges of Damietta (1169) and Alexandria (1174).

Nonetheless, a fleet was instrumental in carrying out two other tasks during a siege: 1) Transportation: troops, horses, siege engines, long beams needed for the construction of siege-towers and provisions were carried by ships. Fleets which were at the disposal of besieging forces were mostly composed of transport ships. The number of warships in those fleets was

⁸⁶ *The Alexiad of Princess Anna Commena*, 292-3, cf: Ahrweiler, 93-4.

⁸⁷ Guilmartin Jr., 17-9, 34-5, 131-2. In the period under discussion, naval supremacy meant control of the shores, see Pryor, *Geography*, 106, 109, 111; *idem*, "The Naval Battles of Roger Lauria", *Journal of Medieval History*, 9(1983), 179, 212-3.

⁸⁸ For attacks on fortified towns directly from the sea-side, see R. H. Dolley, "The Rig of Early Medieval Warships", *MM*, 35(1949), 51-5; *idem*, "Naval Tactics", 337-9; A. R. Lewis & T. J. Runyan, *European Naval and Maritime History, 300-1350*, (Bloomington, 1985), 68, 70-1. Landings were usually unopposed by the defenders of an attacked town. J. H. Pryor, "The Transportation of Horses by Sea During the Era of the Crusades: Eight Century to 1285 A. D.", *MM*, 68(1982), 22-3; D. P. Waley, "Combined Operation in Sicily, A. D. 1060-78", *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 22-3(1954-5), 118-25.

relatively small. 2) Ships were an important source of material for forces engaged in a siege, and crews (rowers and sailors) were an important source of manpower. The dismantling of ships in order to procure wood, especially the masts, which were used for the construction of siege-towers, is a repeated occurrence during siege operations. In 1153, during the siege of Ascalon, the Crusaders bought ships which had brought pilgrims and dismantled them to use the wood for their needs. Ships' crews provided skilled manpower for the construction and operation of siege engines and mechanical devices in general. Our sources are not sufficiently detailed, but it seems that seamen in the middle ages were a segment of the population who possessed technical skills. According to Byzantine and Muslim naval manuals, for example, the duties of the commander of the navy were not limited to commanding, but also included supervision of the construction of the ships and the quality of the materials used.⁸⁹

By bringing reinforcements and provision to the coastal towns, Fatimid navy played an auxiliary but important role in defending them. These actions could not save the endangered towns; for that a massive and successful intervention of Fatimid land forces was needed.

II

Another aspect of Fatimid naval activity, the failure to stop Christian shipping from arriving at the shores of Palestine, has been thoroughly analysed by J. H. Pryor. The reasons were geographical and naval. For the Fatimid navy operating from Alexandria, the shipping lanes used by the Europeans on their way to Palestine were almost out of range. Pryor argues that the operational range of Fatimid galleys was particularly restricted due to their use of amphoras (instead of barrels) for carrying water. Indirect support for Pryor's conclusions can be drawn from Arabic sources in which references to successful raids by Fatimid navy are very rare. Maqrizī when describing the organization of the Fatimid navy refers to raids carried out by Fatimid naval forces. On the authority of Ibn Ṭuwayr, he brings two examples of successful raids. In one case, a huge ship (*baṭsha* 'azīma) carrying pilgrims was captured; 120 people were killed

⁸⁹ V. Christides, "Two Parallel Naval Guides of the Tenth Century. Qudāma's Document and Leo VI's Naumachia: A Study of Byzantine and Moslem Naval Preparedness", *Graeco-Arabica*, 1 (1982), 55-6.

during the fighting and 1,500 prisoners were brought to Cairo. In another case, 500 captives were brought to Cairo following the seizure of their ship (a *batsha*—apparently of ordinary size, the adjective “huge” is omitted).⁹⁰ The impression from the annals and from this passage is that successful raids on Christian shipping were few and sporadic.

Fatimid raids were carried out by the navy—*ustūl*—and were regarded as part of the normal military activity of the state against its enemies. According to the customary division of booty, the government received arms and prisoners captured on raids while money and property were divided among the crews.⁹¹ The organizational aspects of the Fatimid navy as attested to by our sources point to a limited activity of the navy. Saladin is credited by Maqrizī with the creation of a separate office dealing with the navy—*dīwān al-ustūl*. During the Fatimid period the military navy and other naval affairs of the state were under the responsibility of the Office of the Holy war—*dīwān al-jihād*—which was also known under the name of *dīwān al-‘amā’ir*—Office of the Fleet. This office was responsible for the construction of warships and for paying the captains and the crews, and also for the construction and operation of the *‘ushāriyyāt* in which the government shipped grain to its granaries (*ahrā’ makhāzin*). *‘Ushāriyyāt* were also given to provincial governors for their use. The Fatimid ruler had a special—Royal—*‘ushāriyyāt*, called processional (*mawkibiyya*) which served him for his trips on the Nile. Both types of ships; the warships and *‘ushāriyyāt* were constructed at the arsenal of Fustāt. The identification of the Office of the Holy war with naval affairs of the state is a development of the late Fatimid period. The Office of the Holy War was re-established by Ridwān in 531/1136-7. At that time, the office was responsible for the strengthening

⁹⁰ *Khīṭat*, II, 369; cf. Pryor, *Geography*, 117-20. According to R. Dozy, *batsha* is a “grand navire à deux mâts”, see *idem*, *Supplément aux Dictionnaires Arabes*, (Beirut, 1968, reprint), I, 95. Ships carrying 400 passengers (12 c.) are mentioned in the documents of the Cairo Geniza. However, ordinary merchant ship carried about 100 passengers only, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 315. For Venetian ships carrying about 1,400-1,500 passengers (12 c.), see Mollat, 352. In 1248, in Genoa, ships carrying at least 1,100 passengers were built, see E. H. Byrne, *Genoese Shipping in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1930), 10; J. H. Pryor, “The Naval Architecture of Crusader Transport Ships”, *MM*, 70(1984), 374-5. The crews of the ships built in Venice and Genoa for the Crusade led by King Louis IX of France were 110 seamen strong, see R. Bastard de Péré, “Navires Méditerranéens du temps de Saint Louis”, *Revue d’histoire économique et sociale*, 50(1972), 347.

⁹¹ *Khīṭat*, III, 314.

of the coastal towns (*thughūr* i.e. frontier fortresses) exposed to Christian naval attacks, especially Ascalon.⁹²

The navy register (*jarīda*) in the Fatimid period contained 5,000 names. There were ten high ranking officers (*quwwād*) whose *jamākiyya* (monthly pay) was 20 *dīnārs* decreasing (apparently according to rank) to 15, 10, 8, and 2 *dīnārs*. When a naval expedition set forth, the assembling of the naval personnel was the responsibility of twenty *nuqabā'* or '*arīfs*. When the crews from the capital Fustāt-Cairo and other places were gathered, a day was set for paying *nafaqa* (a payment made on the eve of a campaign). Maqrizī gives a detailed description of how the payment of the *nafaqa* was carried out. The sum paid per person was five *dīnārs* according to an exchange rate (*sarf*) of 36 *dirhams* (silver) to *dīnār* (gold). The expenditure on the navy was covered by the revenues from mining natron. The staple food of the seamen of the navy were biscuits (*ka'k*); the necessary flour being allocated from the state granaries.⁹³ In comparison with the military and other employees of the state, the naval personnel was seriously underpaid.⁹⁴ In view of this situation, the question of the stability and quality of the naval man-power arises. Dispersal or a high turn-over among the seamen serving in the navy could have an adverse effect on its performance. This is especially

⁹² *Khitat*, III, 315; *Itti'āz*, III, 163-4; Qalqashandī, III, 492; Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta'rikh Ibn al-Furāt*, (ed) H. al-Shamma (Basra, 1967), IV, part I, 149. The Fatimid office of the Frontier Fortresses was responsible for the whole Mediterranean coast of Egypt and Tūr (in Sinai desert), see Stern, *Fatimid Decrees*, 172-4. For the Royal (processional) '*ushāriyyāt*', see Ibn Muyassar (ed) Massé, 60, (ed) Sayyid, 87; Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 80; *Itti'āz*, III, 74; Musabbihi, 9-10, 11, 23, 43, 46. Nāṣir-i Khusrau says that the Fatimid ruler had 21 boats for his use which were kept in an artificial lake near the palace. The boats were 50 yards on 20 yards and splendidly embellished, (tran.) Schefer, 142; (tran.) Thackston, 51. Apparently, the Royal '*ushāriyyāt*' are referred to in this description. A description of a royal '*ushāri*' is given by 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdādī who visited Egypt at the beginning of thirteen century. *Idem*, *The Eastern Key*, MS, a facsimile edition with English translation by K.H. Zand and J. A. and I. E. Videan (London, 1964), 187-8.

⁹³ *Khitat*, III, 313-4, 344; cf. Hamblin, "The Fatimid Navy", 78. For the economic value of the natron mines, see Rabie, 85-6, 137, 147. For the rate of exchange between silver and gold in medieval Egypt, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 369-92, esp., 390. In his description Maqrizī uses the terms—*jamakiyya* and *nafaqa*—which are well known in the context of the Mamlūk military cast, see D. Ayalon, *The System of Payment in Mamlūk Military Society*, reprinted in *idem*, *Studies on the Mamlūks of Egypt, 1250-1517*, (London, 1977).

⁹⁴ E. Ashtor, *Histoire de prix et des salaires dans l'orient médiéval*, (Paris, 1969), 226-9. Data on the pay of the officers and soldiers of the Fatimid army in the twelfth century are collected by Hamblin, *The Fatimid Army*, 72, 118-20. For the tenth and eleventh century, see Lev, "The Fatimid Army", 178, 189.

valid in regard with rowers. Rowing was a highly specialized occupation demanding discipline and team work. Speaking on naval affairs in the Ayyubid period, Maqrīzī says that the Office of the Navy which was established by Saladin ceased to function. In times of need, when a fleet was prepared, it was manned by people who were arbitrarily arrested and kept like prisoners, without pay. The epithet *ustūlī*—man of the navy—became a derogatory appellation. Maqrīzī contrasts this with previous times (Saladin and the Fatimids) when seamen were highly esteemed as warriors of the Holy War.⁹⁵ In fact, manning the war galleys (*qatāʿī*) by press-gangs also occurred in the Fatimid period,⁹⁶ and the low pay of the naval personnel did not indicate a high social prestige of the seamen.

⁹⁵ *Khitat*, III, 315. On Saladin's navy, see D. Ayalon, "The Mamlūks and Naval Power—A Phase of the Struggle Between Islam and Christian Europe", reprinted in *idem*, *Studies on the Mamlūks*, Lyons and Jackson, 114.

⁹⁶ S. Assaf, "Letters from Kairawan and Alexandria to R. Joseph ibn Ukal", in *J. N. Epstein Jubilee Volume*, (Jerusalem, 1950), 187 (Arabic text), 189 (Hebrew tran.).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MILITARIZATION OF FATIMID POLITICS

a) The Realities of the Twelfth Century

In chapter three the political history of the twelfth century was examined. In this chapter an attempt will be made to relate the political disintegration of the Fatimid imamate, with the changes in the military organization which took place in that period. The basic pattern of relationships between the Fatimid *imāms* and the ultimate arbitrators of political power in the state—the military viziers—emerged during al-Ḥāfiẓ's rule. The Fatimid *imāms* of the twelfth century were unable to cope with the growing power of military viziers who rose through an independent power base.

The achievement of al-Āmir who repossessed political authority and military power from the hands of al-Afdal and al-Ma'mūn was of transient nature. The military power at the hands of the Fatimid *imāms* eroded quickly. At the beginning of his reign, al-Ḥāfiẓ found himself under the tutelage of Kutayfāt, and was saved through the intervention of Yānis, al-Afdal's former military slave of Greek or European extraction.¹ Yānis enjoyed the support of the palace establishment (*ahl al-qasr*), and a unit called *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ al-Āmirī*—the chosen lads of al-Āmir.² When Yānis assumed power, he changed his attitude toward the *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ* who had been instrumental in the coup against Kutayfāt. Breaking off his alliance with them caused him no difficulty. There were no ties of loyalty between the *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ*, a cavalry regiment 500 strong, and Yānis. The co-operation between them was merely *ad hoc*. Yānis formed a coalition centred around his personal military slaves and other units against the *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ*, who were destroyed

¹ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 117; Maqrizi says that Yānis was of Armenian extraction, see *Itti'āz*, III, 144, 145.

² Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 115-6; *Itti'āz*, III, 142. The first recording of *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ al-Āmirī* is from 516/1122-3, see *Itti'āz*, III, 78, 112 (rather a confused account).

in a pitched battle in Cairo³. Al-Ḥāfiẓ with the support of the Rayḥāniyya corps staged a successful coup against Yānis (16 Dhū 'l-Hijja 526/28 October 1123). However, al-Ḥāfiẓ's son, al-Ḥasan, in his bid for a nomination as heir-apparent used the same method. He enlisted the support of an army corps named Juyūshiyya who in a street battle in Cairo defeated the Rayḥāniyya.⁴ The aim of this chapter is not to retell the events discussed in chapter three in greater detail, but to delineate the pattern that emerged in the early 1130s and continued through the vizierate of Bahrām, Ridwān, Ibn Sallār, Ibn 'Abbās, Shāwar, Dirghām and Saladin. The weakening of the power of the *imāms* vis-à-vis the military viziers was a result of changes in the Fatimid military organization in the twelfth century. Two factors lay behind these developments: 1) the emergence of military *iqṭā'*, and 2) the changes in the composition of the units of black infantry.

b) The Military Iqṭā'.

I

In a well-known passage, Maqrizī asserts that military *iqṭā'* (i.e. granting to soldiers the right to collect taxes from land in return for military service) was introduced in Egypt by Saladin. Maqrizī's observation has been accepted by H. Rabie. He argues that the forms of *iqṭā'* practised in Fatimid Egypt, in the second half of the tenth century and the first half of the eleventh, were different from the military *iqṭā'* of the Buyids, the Fatimids' contemporaries. K. Morimoto also accepts Maqrizī's observation.⁵ In his view, as a result of the introduction of the military *iqṭā'* by Saladin, the conditions of the peasants drastically deteriorated.⁶

³ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 118; *Itti'āz*, III, 144. Two of the Fatimid *imāms* in the period under discussion established for themselves slave units which were named after them; for al-Āmiriyya and al-Ḥāfiẓiyya, see *Itti'āz*, III, 173. Al-Ḥāfiẓ's son, Hasan, during his short spell of rule, created for himself a unit called *ṣibyān al-zarād*, i.e. lads wearing coats of mail. They vanished following his demise. Another corps were the *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ al-Āmin*—the chosen young lads of al-Āmir. In contrast with al-Āmiriyya, these were sons of free-born people who were trained in the *hujra* institution.

⁴ Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid, 119-20; *Itti'āz*, III, 149.

⁵ Rabie, 26-7; Morimoto, *The Fiscal Administration*, 256. The Buyid *iqṭā'* is much discussed, for a recent contribution, see T. Sato, "The Iqṭā' System of Iraq under the Buwayhids", *Orient* (Tokyo) XVIII (1982), 83-105.

⁶ Morimoto, *The Fiscal Administration*, 262. M. Brett ("The Way of the

The evidence corroborates the view that the Fatimid army, until the civil war under al-Mustansir, was paid in cash. The agreement between the Kutāma and Ibn ‘Ammār, at the time of al-Hākim’s coronation, presents a very clear view of the system of paying the army. It was agreed between them that the Kutāma would be paid in eight installments of eight *dīnārs* over the year. In addition, a special payment (*faḍl*, excess) of twenty *dīnārs* was paid them. Later, the payment of *faḍl* is attested during the coronations of al-Zāhir and al-Mustansir.⁷ Other more general items of information confirm that the army was paid in cash. In 415/1024, black troops dispatched to the town of Tinnīs demanded their pay (*rizq*).⁸ One of al-Mustansir’s viziers fled following his failure to provide pay for the army.⁹ On the other hand, the extent of the *iqṭāʿ*, prior to the civil war, was quite large. Al-Hākim, for example, also granted *iqṭāʿ* to soldiers. Regarding al-Hākim’s *iqṭāʿ* two remarks should be made: 1) the nature of his *iqṭāʿ* is not clear; and 2) Sitt al-Mulk nullified many grants of al-Hakim’s *iqṭāʿ*.

Cl. Cahen notes that during the civil war under al-Mustansir military men became involved in the tax-collecting system.¹⁰ According to Morimoto, this trend continued under al-Āmir and al-Hāfiz. Nevertheless, he sees the Fatimid institutions as belonging to the early Islamic period and different from the Ayyubid period in which the militarization of the *iqṭāʿ* took place.¹¹ One can hardly argue with Rabie’s observation that: “the main features of the Fatimid *iqṭāʿ* in Egypt are still ambiguous and need serious research”. Nevertheless, the existing evidence, and some additional items of information, indicate the emergence of military *iqṭāʿ* in the early twelfth century.

II

In 501/1107-8, three years after the cessation of al-Afdal’s military effort against the Crusaders, a number of fiscal and

Peasant”, *BSOAS*, XLVII[1984], 55) has pointed out that Morimoto’s belief that the free fellah of the Fatimid period became a serf during the Ayyubid-Mamlūk period is based on a single statement of Maqrizi in his *Khīṭaṭ*. (I am grateful to Dr. Brett for sending me an off-print of his article.)

⁷ Lev, “Army, Regime”, 355.

⁸ Musabbiḥi, 57.

⁹ Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, 59.

¹⁰ Cl. Cahen, “L’évolution de l’iqṭāʿ du IX^e au XIII^e siècle”, *Annales ESC*, 8(1953), 37-8, 45-8.

¹¹ Morimoto, *The Fiscal Administration*, 255-7, 260, 261-3.

agrarian reforms were launched. In Muḥarram 501/August-September 1107, a *tahwīl* was announced, namely the lunar and solar calendars were adjusted. The agricultural taxes were collected according to the Coptic solar year while the calculations were made according to the Muslim lunar year which is shorter by 1/33 than the solar year. Therefore every 33 years the two systems had to be adjusted. For unknown reasons the procedure of adjustment (*tahwīl*) had not been carried out for a very long time.¹² In 501/1107-8, the gap between the two systems of reckoning was four years. The full repercussions of the *tahwīl* are unknown. A Coptic chronicler says that the edict of *tahwīl* was not obeyed, although the overall amount of the taxes was not necessarily affected.¹³ Together with the declaration of the *tahwīl*, al-Afdal decided to tackle the problem of *iqṭāʿ*. By that time, malpractices within the *iqṭāʿ* system had become rampant.

The text dealing with al-Afdal's improvements is well known and available in French translation by Cahen. H. Halm who recently analysed the text arrived at the conclusion that during the whole Fatimid period *iqṭāʿ* was given to military and civilian recipients in the form of *qabāla* contract (i.e. that the contractor made advance payment for land-taxes to the Treasury). Rabie says that following al-Afdal's reforms of the *iqṭāʿ* system there were *iqṭāʿ* holders who "increased in power and wealth which enabled them to participate, together with their subordinates, in important military and political actions".¹⁴ In my view, the data indicate that during the twelfth century, part of the Fatimid army was paid through the *iqṭāʿ* system, and the recipient troops stationed in the provinces on their *iqṭāʿ*s. The emergence of *al-muqṭaʿūn* troops stationed in the provinces is a twelfth century development. In the eleventh century the Fatimid contingents that were stationed in the provinces were not recipients of *iqṭāʿ*. Troops stationed in Lower and Upper Egypt were under the command of the *mutawallī 'l-sayyārāt*

¹² S. H. Taqizadeh, "Various Eras and Calendars Used in the Countries of Islam", *BSOS*, IX(1937-39), 903-23. For the problem of *tahwīl* and taxation in the Mamlūk period, see A. N. Poliak, *Feudalism in Egypt, Syria, Palestine and the Lebanon, 1250-1900*, (London, 1939), 21-2; Rabie, 134.

¹³ Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, III, part 1, 4-5 (Arabic), 8 (English).

¹⁴ Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 9-10; Cl. Cahen, "L'administration financière de l'armée fatimide d'après al-Makhzūmī", *JESHO*, 15(1972), 173-4; reprinted in *idem*, *Makhzūmiyyat*, (Leiden, 1977); H. Halm, *Ägypten nach den mamlukischen Lehensregistern*, (Wiesbaden, 1979), I, 11; for tension between central administration and military *iqṭāʿ* holders, see *idem*, 12-3; Rabie, 28.

commander of the contingents and paid in cash on a regular basis.¹⁵

1) As early as 509/1115-6, during Baldwin's raid on the town of Faramā, troops referred to as *al-muqṭa'ūn* are mentioned. Al-Afdāl dispatched the 'Atūfiyya corps to protect the town and ordered the governor of Sharqiyya to mobilise *al-muqṭa'ūn* and bedouins for the campaign.¹⁶ The only reasonable interpretation of this reference to *al-muqṭa'ūn* is that the holders of *iqṭā'* and their troops were meant.

2) In 524/1129-30, grants of *iqṭā'* were also allocated to the *hujariyya* troops.¹⁷

3) In 529/1133-4, when al-Hāfiẓ tried to pacify the troops who demanded the removal of Ḥasan, he promised to increase their pay (*arzāq*) and their *iqṭā'āt*.¹⁸

4) In 531/1136-7, when Ridwān's brother negotiated the surrender of Bahrām and his Armenians, he offered them *iqṭā'āt*. Some of them settled on land in Upper Egypt.¹⁹

5) In 543/1148-9, at a time of a rebellion, when al-Hāfiẓ was preparing an army he promised the soldiers money and *iqṭā'āt*.²⁰

One could argue that the examples quoted so far are too general to carry enough weight to substantiate the claim about the emergence of a fully-fledged system of military *iqṭā'* in the twelfth century. The following is the most significant piece of evidence.

6) When describing how the town of Ascalon was held in face of the danger posed by the Crusaders, Maqrizī says that every six months fresh troops were dispatched from Cairo to the town to replace the garrison there. In addition to the garrison being replaced every six months, there were bedouins of the

¹⁵ The full phrase is: *mutawallī 'l-sayyārāt bi asfal al-ard*, see Musabbihi, 20. The term: the two contingents, i.e. of Lower and Upper Egypt is also mentioned, see Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, 82. There are indications about several contingents in Lower Egypt (the expression is *qullida-somebody-jamī' sayyārāt asfal al-ard*), see Musabbihi, 50. A post different from that of the *mutawallī 'l-sayyārāt* is that of *mutawallī 'l-harb*, military governor. The military governors of Alexandria, Tinnīs, Damietta, Upper Egypt, Sinai and Palestine are mentioned in the sources, see Musabbihi, 14, 23, 43, 47, 92; Stern, *Fatimid Decrees*, 115; D. S. Richards, "A Fatimid Petition and a 'Small Decree' from Sinai", *JOS*, III (1973), 1.8, 141 (text), 142 (tran.), 1.1, 147 (text and tran.).

¹⁶ *Itti'āz*, III, 53.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 161-2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

tribe Kināniyya who were stationed permanently in the town. The replacement unit included a number of emirs each commanding 100 cavalry. The emir, who had the overall command, was given a register which included the records of the military review kept in the palace. The commander and the governor of Ascalon were supposed to conduct a military review according to this register. The *nuqabā'* of the units were responsible for noting who among the soldiers was present at the review and who went to his *iqṭā'*.²¹

7) In 549/1154-5, Ibn Ruzzīk had gathered bedouins and the *iqṭā'* troops (*wa-l-ajnād muqṭa'i l-bilād*) of his province before moving to Cairo against 'Abbās.²²

Rabie came very near to admit the existence of military *iqṭā'* in twelfth century Egypt. Rabie's statement makes perfect sense providing that the vague term "subordinates" is replaced by "troops". It must be added that the military *iqṭā'* in the twelfth century had not entirely replaced the system of paying the army on a cash basis.

c) *The Black Infantry.*

I

Two bodies of troops, Rayḥāniyya and Juyūshiyya, were prominent in the course of the twelfth century.²³ The origin of these corps is not entirely clear. There are strong indications in the sources that the Juyūshiyya were an infantry corps composed of blacks.²⁴ It seems to me that their origin should be sought in the campaign waged by Badr al-Jamālī against black troops in Upper Egypt. That campaign had been interrupted by the Seljukid invasion of Egypt. Badr, it seems, reached some kind of compromise with the blacks inasmuch as they fought on his side against the Seljūks, distinguishing themselves in battle. They became known as Juyūshiyya deriving their name from

²¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

²² *Ibid.*, 216; cf: Rabie, 28.

²³ For clashes between these two corps in 528/1133-4 and 544/1149-50, see *Itti'āz*, 144, 189; Abū Ṣāliḥ, 158-9; cf: Bacharach, "African Military Slaves", 486.

²⁴ Abū Ṣāliḥ, 87, 92. Hamblin assumes that the Juyūshiyya were blacks. Regarding the origin of the corps he puts forward the hypothesis that this was a multi-ethnic corps. (*The Fatimid Army*, 52-4). A multi-ethnic military formation is inheard of in the period under study, and there is no indication that the Juyūshiyya was such a force. For a different view regarding the ethnic composition of the Juyūshiyya, see Cnarad, "Un vizier chrétien", 93, 96.

Badr's title Amīr al-Juyūsh. The Rayḥāniyya were a corps composed of blacks²⁵ who probably originated during the fourth decade of the eleventh century. At that time, a eunuch named 'Azīz al-Dawla Rayḥān was influential in the Fatimid court.

In the second half of the twelfth century, the Fatimid army was smaller than that described by Nāṣir-i Khusrau. We have two sets of figures. One says that at the time of Ibn Ruzzīk the army consisted of 40,000 cavalry, 36,000 black troops and 10,000 troops fighting on board one hundred warships (an absurd figure).²⁶ The other figures are attributed to Shīrkūh who described the Fatimid army as made up of 40,000 black slaves belonging to five *imāms*, 10,000 cavalry and 10,000 Marines.²⁷ The main discrepancy concerning the cavalry can be explained by referring to the possible sources from which these figures might have been derived. The first set is quoted from the administrative handbook of Ibn Mammātī (d. 606/1209). He, apparently, included among the cavalry bedouins who were recipients of a special kind of *iqṭā'*; they were thus recorded in the military register. Shīrkūh's figures, as born out from the context, represent some sort of intelligence report, and the figure of 10,000 cavalry refers to the regular cavalry units of the army. Due to the restricted military value of the bedouin, Shīrkūh's figures reflect more accurately the actual strength of the Fatimid army. It was an infantry force composed largely of blacks.

Shīrkūh's statement that the blacks belonged to five Fatimid *imāms* is enigmatic. It may refer to a continuing practice of the Fatimid rulers, of the twelfth century, to establish for themselves new units of black slave troops. Taking into account that some of these rulers were infants whose spell of rule was very short, Shīrkūh's statement makes little sense. On the other hand, if our assumption that the origin of the Rayḥāniyya and Juyūshiyya was in the second half of the eleventh century is correct,²⁸ then what sort of manpower served in these units in the second half of the twelfth century? Were these units manned by fresh slave troops and, if so, why they did retain

²⁵ *Itti'āz*, III, 312.

²⁶ *Khitat*, I, 152.

²⁷ *Itti'āz*, III, 265-6.

²⁸ The case of 'Atūfiyya and Farahiyya supports this assumption. Both corps are known during al-Ḥākim's reign. In 509/115-6 and in 562/1166-7 both corps are mentioned as an active military units, see *Itti'āz*, III, 53, 312.

their original names ? Another possibility is that the Rayḥāniyya and the Juyūshiyya were manned by the descendants of the first generation of military slaves who had been employed in them. This assumption presumes a supply of African slave girls on a large scale parallel to the supply of male slaves for military purposes. The possibility that the Rayḥāniyya and the Juyūshiyya, in the second half of the twelfth century, were *muwalladūn* i.e. descendants of Africans who had married into the local population (like the Turks mentioned by Nāṣir-i Khusrau, or the Kutāma) is highly unlikely.

II

The Fatimid history of the twelfth century seems to be an endless cycle of conspiracies and wars. The victors of today were the defeated of tomorrow. Within this cycle of wars, a certain pattern is discernible. The military viziers who fought for power mustered their support in the provinces where their military *iqṭāʿs* were. Their problem was that once they had established themselves in Cairo, they were unable to enlarge and diversify their power base. Their inability to do so was due to the highly fragmented military scene. The structure of the army can be described as a loose accumulation of military corps different in their origin, ethnic composition, military specialization and the character of their manpower: servile or free-born. Various military corps allied themselves on an occasional basis with different contending factions. The hold of the military viziers over power in the capital was thus always precarious. This pattern recurred several times; Bahrām gained, and lost, power in the capital in this way. Ibn Sallār assumed power in the capital by using the resources of his province, but was unable to hold it for long. Ibn Ruzzīk, also a provincial governor, was invited by Sitt al-Quṣūr to oust ʿAbbās, and himself was ousted by Shāwar. In contrast with the military viziers of the twelfth century, the Fatimid *imāms* were deprived of independent power base. The institution of military slavery which since its inception under the Abbasids provided Muslim rulers with the military manpower needed to buttress their regimes was of no avail in the circumstances of the twelfth century. The basic conditions needed for the functioning of the institution of military slavery such as: some political stability and reasonably long period of reign of the rulers and economic prosperity, were lacking.

Shīrkūh's estimate of the strength of the Fatimid army especially his reference to 40,000 black infantry, is significant for the evaluation of the changes that took place in the composition of the Fatimid army towards the end of the eleventh century and in the course of the twelfth. One aspect is immediately clear: Fatimid army was made up predominantly of infantry. A large number of black infantry in the armies of Muslim rulers of medieval Egypt is a typical phenomenon; the reason was the abundant supply of black slaves that Egypt enjoyed. The question was of proportions between cavalry and infantry. The Fatimid army in Egypt (in the second half of the tenth century and the first half of the eleventh) was composed mainly of cavalry. The shift from Berbers to Turks did not affect this aspect since both ethnic groups fought as cavalry, although the Berbers used javelins and the Turks employed bows. In the course of the eleventh century, there was an increase in the number of the black infantry in the Fatimid army. But judging from the account of Nāṣir-i Khusrau the Fatimid army (in 1047-8) was a balanced force. The changes in the proportions occurred during the twelfth century. This shift, combined with the increased spread of military *iqṭāʿ* and the fact that troops stayed on their *iqṭāʿ*s, reduced the mobility and the attacking capabilities of the Fatimid army.

With the fall of the Fatimid dynasty the socio-military structure of the Fatimid period also collapsed. Two groups were eliminated: the blacks and the Armenians. The blacks because of the racial barrier and their servile status, and the Armenians because of the religious barrier, never integrated into local society. Their destruction by Saladin paved the way toward the overthrow of the Fatimid dynasty. In due course other socio-military groups of the Fatimid period were also dispossessed and supplanted by Saladin in favour of a new socio-military élite.

PART THREE

CHAPTER EIGHT

ISMAILISM IN FATIMID EGYPT

a) The Position of the Ismā'īlī Law

I

S. M. Stern has defined the position of Ismailism in Fatimid Egypt as a "state religion" of the country meaning that:

Ismailism enjoyed a privileged position insofar as its legal doctrines were applied by the judiciary and its particular ritual was, at least in the main centers, enforced on public occasions.¹

This is a very apt characterization reflecting the fact that Egypt, under the Fatimid rule, remained largely a Sunnī country and that Ismailism won only a limited following among the population. Nevertheless, two points must be taken into account: a) the religious life had a distinctive Ismā'īlī character. Under the auspices of the state, Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī festivals were celebrated, and impressive religious monuments of Ismā'īlī content dominated the urban scene of the capital. Therefore, the scope of the investigation must be broadened beyond the points referred to by Stern. b) The privileged position that the Ismā'īlī legal doctrines had enjoyed following the imposition of Ismailism on Egypt by the two first Fatimid rulers, was eroded towards the end of the eleventh century.

The imposition of Ismā'īlī law took place in two distinctive stages. Jawhar and al-Mu'izz adopted restrained policies using for their aims the *cadi* Abū Ṭāhir, an adherent of the Mālikī legal school, who had served as the *cadi* of Fustāt, at the time of Jawhar's conquest. Bolder policies were employed by al-'Azīz who entrusted the legal affairs to the Ismā'īlī *cadis* of the Nu'mān family. Before serving in Fustāt, Abū Ṭāhir had a long career as *cadi* in Baghdad, Wāsiṭ and Damascus. He was well-established in his post (serving in Fustāt from 348/959-60),

¹ See in his *Studies*, 236.

enjoying the support of the *shuhūd* (a group of professional witnesses attached to the court of the *cadi*) whose advocacy was instrumental in securing his nomination from Kāfūr.² Like many other personages of the Ikshhidid period, including those in religious circles, Abū Ṭāhir was ready to cooperate with Jawhar; he had sanctioned Jawhar's military action against the Ikshhidid army.³ Jawhar retained Abū Ṭāhir in his post, but compelled him to apply the Fatimid law in cases of divorce and inheritance. He also forced the *cadi* to hold the feast of breaking the fast of Ramaḍān according to Fatimid customs.⁴ When al-Mu'izz arrived in Egypt, Abū Ṭāhir established a cordial relationship with him and thus kept his post. Al-Mu'izz supported Abū Ṭāhir even when he clashed with an ambitious Ismā'īlī *cadi*, Ibn Thawbān, who encroached on his domain. Abū Ṭāhir's adaptability was an important asset for the Fatimids; their goal of giving preeminence to their law was achieved without creating friction with the Sunnī religious circles in Fustāt whose goodwill was especially important in the early years of the Fatimid rule, at the time of the Carmathian wars and uprisings in the provinces.

A significant change of policy occurred at the beginning of al-ʿAzīz's rule; Abū Ṭāhir's activities were curtailed as he got older and weaker, and an Ismā'īlī *cadi* was appointed in his place. In Ṣafar 366/October-November 976, ʿAlī the son of the renowned Fatimid jurist, al-Nu'mān, was nominated as *cadi*. The usefulness of keeping a Sunnī *cadi* at the head of the judiciary was over. Persons among the Sunnī religious circle in Fustāt viewed the Fatimid regime as a *fait accompli* and accommodated themselves as best they could to the new situation. ʿAlī was the first *cadi* of the Nu'mān family which intermittently, with changing fortunes, occupied the post until 441/1049-50. ʿAlī's letter of appointment, was read at the two most important

² *Muqaffā*, Or.1366A, ff, 78b-79a; Ibn Hajar, (ed) Guest, 581-2, 583.

³ *Itti'āz*, I, 108.

⁴ Ibn Hajar, (ed) Guest, 584, 587; cf. A. Haji, "Institutions of Justice in Fatimid Egypt (358-567/969-1171)", in *Islamic Law Social and Historical Contexts*, (ed) A. al-Azmeh (London, 1988), 199. The content of the Fatimid law was examined in number of studies by A. A. A. Fyzee, see his *Compendium of Fatimid Law*, (Simla, 1969), 2 vols; "The Fatimid Law of Inheritance", and "Aspects of Fatimid Law", both in SI, (1958) and (1970), 61-9, 81-91 respectively. Basic questions regarding the nature of the Fatimid law has been examined by W. Madelung, see "The Sources of Ismā'īlī Law", *JNES*, 35(1976), 29-40, and "Shi'i Attitudes toward Women as Reflected in Fiqh", in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, (ed) A. L. Marsot (Malibu, 1979), 69-81.

religious centres of the capital: the mosque of al-Azhar in Cairo and 'Amr's Congregational Mosque (*jāmi' l-'atīq*— the Old Congregational Mosque) in Fustāt. The celebrations were attended by people who were actually involved in the administration of justice such as the witnesses of the court and the trustees appointed by the court (*umanā'*) as well as by the merchants and notables of Fustāt. In its content, 'Alī's letter of investiture set an example for other letters of this type. 'Alī was nominated as the *cadi* of Egypt with responsibilities for preaching and leading the prayers in the congregational mosques. He was also entrusted with the supervision of cases of inheritance, the mint and the quality of gold and silver coins.⁵ Following his nomination, 'Alī appointed his brother, Muḥammad, as deputy and the *cadi* of the Mediterranean towns of Faramā, Tinnis and Damietta. Muḥammad continued to reside at the capital appointing deputies on his behalf in the towns under his direct jurisdiction. 'Alī's other deputy was a Shāfi'ī jurist who took upon himself the implementation of the Fatimid law.⁶ 'Alī's appointment marked the spread of the Fatimid law outside Fustāt-Cairo, and the consolidation of its position in the capital. The wider imposition of the Fatimid law in the capital was the work of the Nu'mān brothers and the vizier Ibn Killis who otherwise tried to undermine their position. In 382/992-3, Muḥammad established a jurist in the Old Congregational Mosque to give legal opinions according to Fatimid law (*madhhab ahl al-bayt*), in spite of opposition from jurists who were active in the mosque.⁷ From the point of view of the implementation of the Fatimid law, this was a far more significant step than the establishment of jurists lecturing Fatimid law at Azhar, by the vizier Ibn Killis. The influence of such a step was confined to Cairo which had had an Ismā'īlī character from its inception. Another appointment made by Ibn Killis was in line with the general trend of imposing Fatimid law; the vizier nominated an Ismā'īlī jurist to preside over the court of complaints (*ma-zālim*).⁸

There is no unison of opinion among the sources regarding who, of the *cadis* of the Nu'mān family, was the first to be considered as the chief *cadi*.⁹ In every sense 'Alī acted as chief *cadi*.

⁵ Ibn Hajar, (ed) Guest, 586.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 590.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 594.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 591-2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 590; Gottheil, "A Distinguished Family", 230.

He derived his authority, symbolized by the sword given to him, directly from the *imām*. 'Alī's close relationships with al-ʿAzīz (he served as his advisor), also enhanced his position.¹⁰ The period between 'Alī's nomination and the appointment of al-Yāzūrī in 441/1049-50 can be summarised as follows:

- 1) The chief cadis of this period, with the exception of al-Ḥākim's cadi Mālik ibn Saʿīd, were Ismāʿīlīs who were also responsible for the institution of the Fatimid propaganda and the teaching of Ismailism in public lectures (*majālis al-ḥikma*).
- 2) The jurisdiction of the chief cadi included the whole of Fatimid territories which were usually listed in their letters of appointment.
- 3) In addition to judicial authority the chief cadis were entrusted with other responsibilities which usually corresponded with those mentioned in 'Alī's letter of appointment. Occasionally, presiding over the *mazālim* court, the supervision of markets (*ḥisba*) and of the pious endowments of the mosques were also vested in the cadi's authority.
- 4) The judges in the provinces concentrated in their hands the authority and responsibilities which corresponded to those of the chief cadi of the state. Papyrus dating 461/1068-9, refers to the cadi of Ashmūnayn and its district; he was responsible for the jurisdiction, conducting of prayers and preaching, and presiding over the court of complaints. A deputy of the cadi of Ashmūnayn is also mentioned in the papyrus.¹¹
- 5) The sporadic documentary evidence dating from the eleventh century reveals that typical Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī formulas were used by the courts (in the capital and provincial towns) when referring to 'Alī or the reigning *imām*.¹²

II

The predominant position given to Ismāʿīlī cadis and Fatimid law did not mean the suppression of Sunni jurists or Sunni legal schools. The biography of al-Ḥākim's chief cadi, Ibn al-ʿAwwām, an adherent of the Ḥanbali legal school, is a case in

¹⁰ Ibn Hajar, (ed) Guest, 589, 590.

¹¹ A. Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library*, (Cairo, 1934), I, doc. 45, ll, 13-5, 102 (text), 104 (tran.).

¹² Y. Rāḡib, "Un contrat de mariage sur soie d'Egypte fatimide", *AI*, 16(1980), ll, 4-5, 34 (text), 35-6 (tran.); G. Levi Della Vida, "A Marriage Contract on Parchment from Fatimid Egypt", in *L. A. Mayer Memorial Volume, Eretz-Israel*, 7(1964), I, 7, 65 (text), 66 (tran.), see also 68; Grohmann, I, doc. 44, I, 8, 98 (text), 99 (tran.).

point. Ibn ʿAwwām was born in 349/960-1 in Fuṣṭāṭ. He served as a witness in Muḥammad ibn al-Nuʿmān's court and was appointed as a deputy *cadi* by Muḥammad's son when the latter served as chief *cadi*. This meant that in Fuṣṭāṭ under the early Fatimids it was possible to be educated as a Ḥanbalī jurist and to be accepted as such by the *cadis* of the Nuʿmān family in legal capacities. Ibn ʿAwwām was nominated by al-Ḥākim because he was regarded as a local man familiar with the local situation. Al-Ḥākim attached four jurists to supervise Ibn ʿAwwām and excluded him from any involvement with the institution of the Fatimid propaganda and the teaching of Ismailism.¹³

The last *cadi* of the al-Nuʿmān family was Qāsim ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz; he was removed in 441/1049-50. His dismissal marked the end of the eminence of the chief Ismāʿīlī *cadis*. His successor, al-Yāzūrī, was a Sunnī *cadi* who became a vizier holding simultaneously, the posts of the chief *cadi* and the chief propagandist actively engaged in the teaching of Ismailism.¹⁴ Until al-Yāzūrī's vizierate the involvement of *cadis* in administrative matters was sporadic and limited. Two of al-Ḥākim's chief *cadis* became involved in administrative matters, acquiring through this involvement considerable power. The fusion of judicial and administrative authority in al-Yāzūrī's hands set an important precedent. In the period of the disarray preceding the civil war the posts of vizier and chief *cadi* were combined several times.¹⁵

The merging of administrative and judicial powers continued during Badr al-Jamālī's rule but in a different form. Badr deprived the Fatimid *imām* of his right to appoint *cadis* and the nominations were made on his behalf.¹⁶ In spite of Badr's title—Protector of the *Cadis* of the Muslims—he, unlike al-Yāzūrī, did not hold the post of the chief *cadi* in his own hands. During the twelfth century, in the post-Badr al-Jamālī period, the employment of *cadis* in administrative capacities was not widespread.¹⁷

¹³ Ibn Ḥajar, (ed) Guest, 610; Maqrīzī says that he was a Ḥanafī jurist, see *Muqaffā*, vol. 3, Or.3075, f, 172b.

¹⁴ Stern, *Studies*, 240-1.

¹⁵ Such instances are recorded in the years 455/1063, 456/1064 and 457/1065, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 268, 270, 271 respectively.

¹⁶ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 313, 319.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, III, 180, 235; for an opposite case, see op. cit., III, 119-20, 203.

III

As part of his attempt to undermine the Ismā'īlī character of the Fatimid state, Kutayfāt, in 525/1130-1, nominated four chief cadis, belonging to the Shāfi'ī, Mālikī, Imāmī and Fatimid schools of law each of them was given the right to handle inheritance cases according to his school.¹⁸ This step meant a de-Islamization of the legal system in Fatimid Egypt. There is a hint in the sources, however, that Badr al-Jamālī had already invalidated the predominance of the Fatimid law in cases of inheritances. He ordered these cases to be handled according to the legal school to which the deceased person had belonged.¹⁹ The reference to this decree of Badr is made during a very interesting conversation between the vizier al-Ma'mūn and the famous Mālikī jurist al-Ṭurtūshī. Al-Ṭurtūshī who in 516/1122-3, arrived in the capital from Alexandria, demanded from the vizier to cease the application of the Fatimid law in cases of inheritance, and the cessation of the requisition by the government of estates without legal heirs. This practice had been stopped by al-Afdāl but was apparently, renewed later.²⁰ Al-Ma'mūn declined al-Ṭurtūshī's first demand by pointing out that since Badr's time the Sunnis had not been subjected to the Fatimid law of inheritance, but he ceded to the second demand, publishing a decree to that effect.²¹ Thus Kutayfāt's deed was merely a public acknowledgement of the prevalent situation.

Following Kutayfāt's liquidation, the four cadis he had appointed were removed and an Ismā'īlī cadi was nominated.²² Whether the Fatimid law regained its predominant position in the cases of inheritance is unclear. Taking into account the other attempts during the twelfth century to undermine the Ismā'īlī character of the Fatimid state, this possibility is highly unlikely. On the other hand, there is evidence for the continued activity of Ismā'īlī jurists in the capital, some of whom

¹⁸ *Itti'āz*, II, 142; cf. A. Allouche, "The Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in Fatimid Egypt", *JAOS*, 102(1985), 317-20.

¹⁹ *Itti'āz*, III, 89.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 72-3.

²¹ *Ibid*, 88-90; for the activity of al-Ṭurtūshī, see G. Leiser, "The Madrasa and the Islamization of the Middle East", *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, XXII(1985), 37-40.

²² Ibn Ḥajar, (ed) Magid, 247, 256.

were executed by Saladin in his purge of the remnants of Fatimid supporters.²³

One might have expected the Fatimid propaganda (*daʿwa*) to play a crucial role in spreading and upholding Ismailism in the state. Indeed the *daʿwa*, in addition to its subversive activities against foreign states, was active within the Fatimid territories. A scrutiny of the sources suggests that the internal activity of the *daʿwa* was mainly aimed at, and confined to, the Ismāʿīlī community. Ismāʿīlī doctrines were expounded in public lectures given at the royal palace and at Azhar. The lectures given at the palace were designated for the ruling circles (the terms used to designate them are: *awliyāʾ*, *khāṣṣa* and *shuyūkh al-dawla*), as well as the servants of the palace, simple people and visitors. The women taught at Azhar are referred to as *hurum wa-khawāṣṣ al-quṣūr*, i.e. the womenfolk of the *imām* and other senior ranking women in the palace.²⁴ These lectures were given according to the level of initiation of the particular audience in the Ismāʿīlī teaching.²⁵ During the lectures the special tax paid by the Ismāʿīlī men and women was collected.²⁶

The activity of the *daʿwa* outside the Ismāʿīlī community is hardly attested to by the sources. The most important item of information is from al-Ḥākim's reign. It says that special lectures were assigned for men and women from the provinces and rural areas.²⁷ It is known from other sources that the network of *daʿwa* was spread through the Fatimid territories in Egypt and Syria.²⁸ Delivering lectures on Ismailism in Egyptian provinces and Fuṣṭāṭ, including the collection of the special taxes, is mentioned by Maqrīzī on the authority of the late historian Ibn Ṭuwayr.²⁹ Otherwise the role of the *daʿwa* in the affairs of the state is scarcely mentioned.

IV

The conversation between al-Ma'mūn and al-Ṭurtūshī, and his bold demands, should be seen in the context of the position of Alexandria in Fatimid Egypt. A. L. Udovitch has described Alexandria as a "commercial suburb of Fuṣṭāṭ", noting the

²³ *Ibid*, 306; *Itti'āz*, III, 319-20.

²⁴ *Khitat*, II, 226.

²⁵ Stern, *Studies*, 244.

²⁶ *Khitat*, II, 226; cf. Halm, "Der Treuhänder Gottes", 41-2.

²⁷ *Itti'āz*, II, 54.

²⁸ Stern, *Studies*, 245-7.

²⁹ *Khitat*, II, 226.

strong trade links between the capital and the main Mediterranean port in the country. Nevertheless, the imprint of Ismailism on Alexandria was far less than that on the capital. Alexandria was connected by sea-routes to Muslim North Africa and Spain. Goods as well as people, among them many Mālikī jurists and scholars, arrived at the town from these regions. At the beginning of the twelfth century the post of the *cadi* of Alexandria was occupied by Banū Ḥadīd, a Mālikī family from Toledo, who arrived in Alexandria in 479/1086-7. Al-Ṭurtūshī himself arrived in Alexandria towards the end of the eleventh century, and set up an institution for the teaching of Mālikī law.³⁰ Another institution of this type was established by Banū Ḥadīd in 529/1134-5. Two Fatimid viziers in the twelfth century (Ridwān and Sallār) founded schools in Alexandria for the teaching of Sunnī law (*madrasas*). In both cases these steps were part of their attempts to undermine the Ismāʿīlī character of the Fatimid state.³¹

The existence of an active Sunnī centre in Fatimid Egypt had an influence on the erosion of the dominant position of the Ismāʿīlī law in the capital as well. The above described process of the weakening of the position of Ismāʿīlī law in the twelfth century was in sharp contrast to the growing Ismailization of the religious life, especially the introduction of new religious festivals.

b) The Ismailization of the Religious Life.

I

During the Fatimid period there was a very marked involvement of the state in the celebration of Muslim religious festivals. This involvement manifested itself in two ways: 1) the

³⁰ For the commercial position of Alexandria, see A. L. Udovitch, "A Tale of Two Cities: Commercial Relations between Cairo and Alexandria During the Second Half of the Eleventh Centuries", in *The Medieval City*, (eds) H. A. Miskimin, D. Herlichy and A. L. Udovitch (New Haven, 1978), 143-62, esp., 158; *idem*, "L'énigme d'Alexandrie", *ROMM*, 46(1987), 72-9, esp., 75; for the Banū Ḥadīd, see S. Abd al-Aziz Salem, "D'Alexandrie à Almeria", *ROMM*, 46(1987), 64-70, esp., 65-6; Leiser, 37-40.

³¹ *Itti'āz*, III, 167, 198. It was not a coincident that the *ḥadīth* scholar, al-Rāzī, who left the capital during the civil war went to Alexandria, see G. Vajda, "La Mašyāḥa d'Ibn al-Ḥattāb al-Rāzī. Contribution à l'histoire du Sunnisme en Egypte fatimide" *BEO*, XXIII(1970), 21-99; reprinted in *idem*, *La transmission du savoir en Islam (VII-XVIIIè siècles)*, (London, 1983).

Ismailization of the rites of festivals accepted by both the Sunni and Shī'ī Islam and the celebration under the auspices of the Ismā'īlī regime of festivals with no particular Shī'ī character; 2) the introduction of Shī'ī festivals which had not been celebrated in Egypt, and the initiation and the development of entirely new festivals.

To the first category belong the festivals of *ʿīd al-naḥr*, *ʿīd al-fitr* and Ramaḍān. The *ʿīd al-naḥr*—the Festival of Sacrifice (celebrated between the eleventh and the thirteen Dhū 'l-Ḥijja), is considered in Islam as the Great Festival. The offering of sacrifices is part of the concluding rituals of the *ḥajj*—the Pilgrimage. The sources for the Fatimid period record the celebration of this festival from the reign of al-Mu'izz along the whole span of the Fatimid rule in Egypt. The Fatimid celebrations took place in two sites; the open praying ground (*muṣallā*) built outside Cairo by Jawhar and renovated by al-ʿAzīz, and in the royal palace.³² The Fatimid *imām* used to go in a great procession (in 415/1024, al-Zāhir incorporated in his procession an elephant and giraffes) from the palace to the *muṣallā* where he prayed and preached from the pulpit.³³ Sacrifices were offered by the *imām* in two places; at the *muṣallā* and at a special place (altar-*manḥar*) in the royal palace.³⁴ The festival and the offering of sacrifices continued for three days. The meat of the sacrifices was served at a special meal (*simāʾ ʿīd al-naḥr*) which was attended by the people of the ruling circles.³⁵ The consumption of the sacrificial meat offered by the *imām* himself was revered as sacred. The food served as a vehicle of transmitting the holiness of the *imām* to the ordinary people who were blessed through it.³⁶ The meat was also divided among people in the *dār al-ʿilm* (the house of Ismā'īlī teaching) and those gathered at the congregational mosques.³⁷ In 516/1122-3, the vizier al-Ma'mūn distributed some of the sacrificial meat among the poor of the capital and the population of the cemeteries.³⁸ As with other religious practices, al-ʿAzīz is

³² *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 322. For Muslim festivals in general, see G. E. von Grunebaum, *Muhammadian Festivals*, (London, 1976), (reprint); T. Fahd, "Les fêtes de l'Islam", *REI*, 47(1979), 191-205.

³³ *Musabbiḥī*, 80-1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 81; *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 297.

³⁵ *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 221.

³⁶ This concept is reflected by Maqrizī's account in *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 300; cf. Sanders, 132-5.

³⁷ *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 300.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 229.

credited as being the first to institutionalize the distribution of the sacrificial meat among the people.³⁹ He also used this most important Muslim religious festival for political purposes. Al-ʿAzīz made the public announcement of his father's death and his own ascendancy to the imamate during the Festival of Sacrifice of 365 (10-12 August 976). He rode in a procession (to the *muṣallā*), under the ceremonial parasol (*mizalla*)—an insignia of authority—and delivered a sermon. Upon returning to his palace he received the oath of allegiance from the members of the royal family.⁴⁰

The Festival of Breaking of Ramaḍān (*ʿīd al-fīṭr*), known as the Little Festival, is the second most important Muslim festival.⁴¹ There are records showing that *ʿīd al-fīṭr* was celebrated from the time of the Fatimid conquest until the last period of the Fatimid rule in Egypt. The *ʿīd al-fīṭr* of 358/969 served as the first opportunity to examine Jawhar's religious policy. He celebrated the festival in his military camp according to the Fatimid custom, namely without having first seen the crescent of the new moon. In contrast with the Fatimid practice, the Sunnī *cadi* Abū Ṭāhir tried to watch the rising of the new moon, however, without success. In any case, the Sunnī population of Fuṣṭāṭ differentiated itself from the conquerors by celebrating the festival one day later.⁴² Ismailization of the festival was promptly imposed: Jawhar compelled Abū Ṭāhir and his witnesses to celebrate the festival according to the Fatimid custom. In 364/974-5, the festival was used for an announcement of a military victory over the Byzantines. To mark the event alms were distributed.⁴³ As during the Festival of the Sacrifice, the main celebrations took place at the open praying ground outside Cairo. The Fatimid *imām* went there in a splendid procession to perform prayers and to deliver a sermon. Upon his return to the palace a meal was served which was attended by people of the ruling circles.⁴⁴ Al-ʿAzīz introduced an innovation by building in Cairo a special house (*dār al-fīṭra*) in which meals were served during Ramaḍān and *ʿīd al-fīṭr*.⁴⁵ For those who stayed during the nights of Ramaḍān at the Old Congrega-

³⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 298; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 269.

⁴⁰ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 237.

⁴¹ Von Grunebaum, 62-3; Fahd, 194-5.

⁴² *Ittiʿāz*, I, 116; *Muqaffā*, (ed) Zakkār, 336.

⁴³ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 222

⁴⁴ *Khitat*, II, 220-1.

⁴⁵ For the history of this building, see *Khitat*, II, 281-2, 283.

tional Mosque in Fustāt, meals were served at the police headquarters.⁴⁶ The banquet on the occasion of *ʿid al-ḥiṭr* is described by Nāṣir-i Khusrau who was admitted to it. He was dazzled by dishes in the form of trees and palaces made of sugar which were prepared on that occasion.⁴⁷

The observance of a fast during the days of Ramaḍān is regarded as one of the pillars of Islam. The rites of Ramaḍān were purified from practices unacceptable to the Fatimids; al-ʿAzīz, for example, prohibited the *qunūt* prayer.⁴⁸ The presence of the regime in the celebration of Ramaḍān was predominant. Al-ʿAzīz set a precedent by going to Azhar and also, from 378/988-9, to the new congregational mosque he had built outside the Zuwayla gate of Cairo (which was completed, however, under al-Ḥākim and known either by his name or as the Nūr [Light] Congregational Mosque), to pray with people on the Friday nights of Ramaḍān.⁴⁹ On his way to Azhar, al-ʿAzīz would receive petitions from people seeking redress for their grievances. In 383/993, the traditional procession to Azhar was used for a public proclamation that al-ʿAzīz's young son al-Manṣūr (the future al-Ḥākim) was designated as the heir apparent. Al-Ḥākim developed the celebrations of Ramaḍān still further. He would pray on each of the Friday nights of the month in a different congregational mosque: Azhar, the two congregational mosques he had built—Rāshida and al-Ḥākim—and also, for the first time since the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, at the Old Congregational Mosque in Fustāt.⁵⁰ Al-Zāhir, however, preferred Azhar and the Nūr Congregational Mosque as places of prayer during Ramaḍān.⁵¹ During the nights of Ramaḍān a special meal was served in the palace to which the people of the ruling circles were invited, each in his

⁴⁶ *Khitat*, II, 280, 345-6, IV, 55; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 267, 279, 294; Ibn Taghribirdi, IV, 122; Ibn Zāfir, 35, 38

⁴⁷ Nāṣir-i Khusrau, (tran.) Thackston, 56-7; *Khitat*, II, 220-1.

⁴⁸ Y. Lev, "The Fatimid Imposition of Ismāʿīlism on Egypt", *ZDMG*, 138(1988), 319. The editors of *Musabbiḥi* say that *qunūt* is another name for the *tarāwīḥ* prayers performed during Ramaḍān. *Musabbiḥi* mentions that a certain man was executed because of the performance of the *qunūt*, see 104, and n.1, there. The term *qunūt* has a wide range of meanings, see A. J. Wensinck, "Ḳunūt", *E.I.*2, V, 395. For the *tarāwīḥ* prayers during Ramaḍān, see von Grunebaum, 61-2.

⁴⁹ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 267, 272, 276, 279, 295; *Khitat*, IV, 61

⁵⁰ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 272, esp., 295; *Musabbiḥi*, printed in *AI*, (1981), 12-3; cf. Bloom, "The Mosque of al-Ḥākim in Cairo", 29; Sanders, 93-4.

⁵¹ *Musabbiḥi*, 62, 64.

turn.⁵²

Among the festivals which had no particular Shī'ī character but were nevertheless splendidly celebrated under the auspices of the state, were the months of Rajab and Sha'bān. Rajab is the seventh month of the Muslim calendar, and had been regarded as a sacred month in pre-Islamic Arabia. Muslim tradition connects certain events in the life of Muḥammad with the fifteenth and the twenty-seventh of Rajab.⁵³ Sha'bān is the eighth Muslim month, preceding Ramaḍān and is called: "the month of the Prophet". The night of the fifteenth of Sha'bān was regarded as one on which the deeds of people are examined and the destiny of each individual is determined. In Baghdad of the third decade of the tenth century, the fifteenth of Sha'bān was celebrated in spite of the objection by the Ḥanbalīs who considered the celebrations as an unlawful innovation.⁵⁴ In the Ikshidid period, celebrations of the fifteenth of Sha'bān were held in Fustāt.⁵⁵ Ibn Ṭughj used to pray with people at Ibn Ṭulūn Congregational Mosque on the Friday nights of Rajab, Sha'bān and Ramaḍān.⁵⁶ Evidence for the celebration of both months, in the ninth and tenth centuries, is otherwise scant.

The festivals of Rajab and Sha'bān are not manifestly Shī'ī; there are Sunnī as well as Shī'ī traditions in favour of them.⁵⁷ In Fatimid period, Rajab (together with Sha'bān and Ramaḍān) was regarded as a sacred month. The attitude of the regime was revealed by the decree published in Rajab 414/September-October 1023. This decree called for the cessation of reprehensible deeds during these months. What was meant by "reprehensible" was indicated by the prohibition imposed on the stay of women after sunset in the cemeteries. The usual gatherings in Jiza and Jazīra (the island opposite Fustāt-Cairo) were also banned. The playing of music in public, with the exception of music played on flute, was not allowed.⁵⁸ Under al-ʿAzīz, the fifteenth of Rajab and Sha'bān were celebrated by gatherings at Azhar headed by the Ismā'īlī cadī Muḥammad ibn

⁵² *Ibid.*, 65; *Itti'āz*, III, 83, 102, 105; *Khīṭat*, II, 219.

⁵³ Fahd, 199-200.

⁵⁴ Sabari, 106.

⁵⁵ Bloom, "The Mosque of the Qarāfa in Cairo", 14.

⁵⁶ Ibn Sa'īd, (ed) Tallqvist, 32, 35.

⁵⁷ Rich material on this topic has been collected by M. J. Kister, see his "Rajab is the Month of God", *IOS*, 1(1971), 191-224, esp., 204-5; "Sha'bān is My Month", in *Studia Orientalia Memoriae D. H. Baneth Dedicata*, 15-37, esp., 22-3.

al-Nu'mān. Azhar was brightly lighted and meals supplied by al-ʿAzīz were served.⁵⁹ In al-Zāhir's period all mosques were lighted, and the ruler with his wives and entourage attended the celebrations. The participation of the common people (*al-ʿawwām wa-l-raʿāyā*) indicates that the celebrations were held in Fustāt.⁶⁰ In fact the cemeteries, even more than the mosques, were the gathering places favoured by the people.⁶¹ The first days and the middle of Rajab and Shaʿbān became known as the "nights of the lights" (*layālī l-wuqūd*). The government allocated funds for the lighting of congregational mosques and shrines.⁶²

II

Among the Shīʿī festivals which were celebrated in Egypt prior to the Fatimid conquest of the country was the day of ʿāshūrāʾ. The festival of ʿāshūrāʾ, celebrated on the tenth of Muḥarram, the first Muslim month, became a Shīʿī festival commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn, ʿAlī's son, in 60/680 in Karbala. The first public celebrations of this festival took place in 963, in Baghdad, under the auspices of the Buyid ruler Muʿizz al-Dawla.⁶³ The rites of ʿāshūrāʾ were marked by lamentations and mourning processions. The festival contained a potential for violence; the Shīʿī mourners were trying to enforce the cessation of commerce in the markets. Inter-confessional unrest during ʿāshūrāʾ had occurred in pre-Fatimid Egypt and continued into the Fatimid period. The Fatimid authorities tried to curb the violent outbursts which accompanied the rites of the festival.⁶⁴ The inter-confessional strife was intensified when the Shīʿīs, in addition to the mourning rites (*ḥuzn*), uttered curses on the *salafs*.⁶⁵ The Fatimid establishment marked the ʿāshūrāʾ differently, in a much calmer atmosphere; in the royal palace a solemn meal known as (*simāt al-ḥuzn*) was served.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Musabbiḥī, 14-5; cf. Halm, "Der Treuhänder Gottes", 57.

⁵⁹ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 267, 272, 292; *Khīṭat*, II, 345-6.

⁶⁰ Musabbiḥī, 48, 53.

⁶¹ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 267, II, 89, 102.

⁶² Ibn al-Maʾmūn, 36, 63-4.

⁶³ Kraemer, 40-3.

⁶⁴ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 145-6, II, 93, 100, III, 97; *Khīṭat*, II, 289-90, IV, 155-6; Ibn Muḥammad, (ed) Massé, 45, (ed) Sayyid, 124.

⁶⁵ For example in 396/1005-6 and 490/1096-7, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 67, III, 21 respectively.

⁶⁶ *Khīṭat*, II, 290, 385.

The most important festival initiated by the Fatimid regime was the *mawlid al-nabī*—Muḥammad's Nativity. The Fatimid origin of this festival has already been noted by G. E. von Grunebaum and P. Shinar.⁶⁷ The first description of Muḥammad's Nativity is from 516/1122 by the historian Ibn al-Ma'mūn who also mentioned the Nativity festivals of 'Alī, Fāṭima and reigning *imām* (i.e. al-Āmir). When these festivals were inaugurated is unknown, although the *terminus ad quem* is the rule of al-Afḍal who abolished them. Later historian, Ibn Tuwayr, adds two other Nativity festivals; these of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.⁶⁸ Al-Afḍal had a clear policy toward religious festivals; on the one hand he abolished those which had unmistakable Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī flavour (he also closed the house of Ismā'īlī teaching), and, on the other hand, he restricted the role of the Fatimid *imām* during the celebrations of major festivals such as Ramaḍān, 'īd al-fīṭr and 'āshūrā'.⁶⁹ It was a calculated act to diminish the importance of the *imām* and to shift the public attention from the sovereign to the vizier.

Following the killing of al-Afḍal, the centrality of the *imām* during celebrations of festivals was restored, the Nativity festivals introduced by the regime were re-instated, and the *dār al-ʿilm* was re-opened.⁷⁰ In fact, the Nativity festival of the reigning *imām* was al-Āmir's own innovation. It was celebrated in Muḥarram following immediately the 'āshūrā'.⁷¹ The connection between this festival and al-Āmir's re-assertion of his rule following the downfall of al-Afḍal seems obvious. A similar connection is plainly stated by the sources with respect to the Festival of Victory ('īd al-naṣr) established by al-Ḥāfiẓ following his release from the captivity of Kutayfāt.⁷²

A detailed description of how the festival of Muḥammad's Nativity was celebrated is recorded for 516/1122-3. On this occasion alms were distributed by the regime. This expenditure was financed from the *māl al-najwa*, the special tax collected from the Ismā'īlīs during the lectures of Ismā'īlī teaching conducted by the Ismā'īlī chief cadi or the chief propagandist. In 517/1123-4, six thousand *dirhams* of *māl al-najwa*, and various

⁶⁷ Von Grunebaum, 73; P. Shinar, "Traditional and Reformist Mawlid Celebrations in the Maghrib" in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, 373.

⁶⁸ *Khīṭat*, II, 292; Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 35-6, 60, esp., 62.

⁶⁹ *Khīṭat*, II, 290, 323; *Itti'āz*, III, 132.

⁷⁰ Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 44-5; *Khīṭat*, II, 323.

⁷¹ *Itti'āz*, III, 78, 97.

⁷² *Khīṭat*, II, 224, 385-6.

kinds of food were distributed as alms. The beneficiaries were the guardians of the shrines of Prophet's family.⁷³ In later periods, sweets in 300 platters were prepared in *dār al-ḥiṭra*, and distributed among the religious functionaries: the chief caḍi, the head of the Fatimid Propaganda, Koran readers, preachers, and other staff of the Congregational Mosques and the shrines. The main gathering was at Azhar, and then at the palace where the ruling *imām* showed himself to the crowd. The preachers of the three Congregational Mosques of Cairo—Azhar, Nūr and Aqmar—(built by the vizier al-Ma'mūn) delivered sermons. The other Nativity feasts were celebrated in the same way.⁷⁴ In 516/1122-3 and 517/123-4, the celebrations of al-Āmir's Birthday were splendid. Food was brought to the different shrines, including, of course, those of Prophet's family, and distributed among those who stayed there; readers of the Koran and *fuqarā'* (destitutes, but the term has also a technical meaning—Sūfis, ascetics). Money (not large sums, 100 *dīnārs* and 1820 *dirhams*) was distributed among the people who stayed in the cemeteries and, according to another account, also among those who stayed at Azhar and at the Old Congregational Mosque in Fustāt. Among the recipients of food were religious dignitaries such as the chief caḍi, the head of the Fatimid Propaganda, readers of Koran attached to the court (*qurrā' al-ḥadra*, *muqri'ūn al-khāṣṣ*), witnesses, the court deliverer of legal opinions (*muftī al-dawla*), the head of the Ismā'īlī house of learning, the leaders of prayers at the Congregational mosques of Cairo and Fustāt along with the vizier and high-ranking officials.⁷⁵ The distribution of food among the upper echelons of religious and administrative establishment had a symbolic value.

The fusion of religion and politics, which was characteristic of all religious festivals in Fatimid Egypt, is best exemplified by the festival of *ghadīr al-khum*. Its complex evolution has been unravelled by P. A. Sanders. According to Shī'ī belief, at the spring (*khum*) of al-Ghadīr, 'Alī was declared by the Prophet as his heir and the festival commemorated this occasion. Maqrīzī stressed that the festival was not anchored in the law, or supported by the custom of the first generations of the

⁷³ Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 62; *Khīṭat*, II, 292-3, III, 105.

⁷⁴ *Khīṭat*, II, 293-4.

⁷⁵ Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 35-6, 60; *Itti'āz*, III, 78, 97.

Muslims. He pointed to the Buyid ruler, Mu‘izz al-Dawla, as the initiator of the festival which was celebrated for the first time only in 352/962-3.⁷⁶ In Egypt, this festival was institutionalized since its first celebrations in 362/972-3.⁷⁷ In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the celebrations took place in Cairo and in Fustāt as well. On 18 Dhū ‘l-Hijja, the readers of Koran, jurists and orators (*munashidūn*) gathered at Azhar to perform the rites of the festival, and then walked to the royal palace. Apparently, courses on the *salafs* were uttered while performing the festival rites.⁷⁸

The next record of the celebrations of *ghadīr* is from 516/-1122-3. In describing them, the historian Ibn al-Ma‘mūn emphasized their resemblance to the rites of the Festival of Sacrifice. On the occasion of *ghadīr*, the *imām* offered sacrifices, and gave a banquet at his palace.⁷⁹ The main purpose of these rites, which took place within the confines of the royal palace, was to stress before the Ismā‘īlī establishment the role of the *imām* as the head of the state after the long period in which his authority was usurped by al-Afdal. The centrality of the *imām* in these celebrations tallies with other evidence pointing in the same direction.⁸⁰

In the description of *ghadīr al-khum* by the late historian Ibn Tuwayr new details appear. According to him, the high point of the celebrations was the reading of the supposed text of the investiture (*naṣṣ*) of ‘Alī by the Prophet before a great assembly at the royal palace. Sanders discerns a new meaning given to the *ghadīr* to tally with al-Ḥāfiẓ’s claim of being a full *imām* in his own right. Al-Ḥāfiẓ attempted to legitimize his imamship by evoking the example of the Prophet. Ḥāfiẓ insisted that he had been designated by the ruling *imām*, his predecessor just as ‘Alī had been designated by the Prophet.⁸¹

⁷⁶ *Khitat*, II, 220.

⁷⁷ *Itti‘āz*, I, 142, 273, 276; cf. Sanders, 223-4.

⁷⁸ Musabbiḥī, 85; *Khitat*, II, 223; cf. Sanders, 225-7.

⁷⁹ Ibn al-Ma‘mūn, 43.

⁸⁰ The sacrifices took place at the *maydān*, i.e. *maydān al-qasr*; see *Khitat*, III, 321. Sanders’ interpretation of the celebrations of the *ghadīr* of 516/1123-4, is different, see 230-1.

⁸¹ *Khitat*, II, 223-4; cf. Sanders, 235. The importance of the performance of the customary rites on the occasion of the major religious festivals is reflected in the letters of al-Mustansir to Yemen, see H. F. al-Hamdani, “The Letters of al-Mustansir bi’llāh”, *BSOS*, 7(1933-5), 311, 314, 315, 316, 317.

c) *The Regime, the Masses and the Cult of Shrines and Saints*

I

A number of scholars have drawn attention to the importance of shrines and saints in the religious life of Fatimid Egypt. The cult of saints had its roots in the pre-Fatimid period. In the religious life of the population of Fustāt, the cemeteries around the town, Qarāfa, played a significant role. For the Shī'ī community, two tombs of Alid women Umm Kulthūm and Sayida Nafisa, attained great importance.⁸² A decade before the Fatimid conquest, the last vizier of the Mādhara'i family, had endowed in the Qarāfa a convent (*ribāt*) for the female members of the Prophet's family.⁸³ Building activities of women of the Fatimid royal family in the Qarāfa, in the early years of the Fatimid rule, most notably the Mosque of the Qarāfa, were perfectly in line with local Egyptian tradition. Remarks made *en passant* by Musabbiḥi testify to the existence of a permanent population who lived in the Qarāfa, designated by the term Qarāfiyya. Apparently, the construction of cisterns and of an oven (undoubtedly for the production of bread) in the Qarāfa by women of the Fatimid royal family was designated to serve this population.⁸⁴ The habit of spending nights in the Qarāfa, in worship and social activities, was widespread. Indication of some form of organization and activity on the part of the Qarāfiyya are to be found in the sources. Musabbiḥi, for example, tells the story of Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qurqūbī who was a victim of a burglary. The burglar, who stole from him 1,200 *dīnārs*—an immense sum of money—took an advantage of the fact that, on Friday nights, al-Qurqūbī went to the Qarāfa and stayed there for the whole night. When the burglar was located in a village in Lower Egypt, a group of the Qarāfiyya—apparently al-Qurqūbī's friends with whom he used to stay—went there and brought the suspect to the police headquarters in

⁸² Itti'āz, I, 145-6; *Khitat*, II, 289-90. For these shrines, see I. Goldziher, "Veneration of Saints in Islam", in his *Muslim Studies*, (ed) S. M. Stern, translated from German by C. R. Berber and S. M. Stern, (London, 1971), II, 227-8; Y. Rāḡib, "Al-Sayyida Nafisa, sa légende, son culte et son cimetière", *SI*, 44(1976), 61-86; *idem*, "Une description Arabe inédite du mausolée d'al-Sayyida Nafisa au Caire", *Arabica*, 23(1976), 37-41.

⁸³ Y. Rāḡib, "Deux monuments fatimides au pied du Muqattam", *REI*, 46(1978), 112; Bloom, "The Mosque of the Qarāfa", 14.

⁸⁴ Y. Rāḡib, "Sur deux monuments funéraires du cimetière d'al-Qarāfa al-Kubrā", *AI*, 12(1974), 69-70; Bloom, "The Mosque of the Qarāfa", 16, 17.

Fuṣṭāṭ. On another occasion the Qarāfiyya themselves were victims of a thief who stole their money.⁸⁵ The most interesting case in which the Qarāfiyya were mentioned by Musabbihī was in connection with a rebellious act of Banū Qurra bedouins. In Shaʿbān 415/October-November 1024, Banū Qurra declared a certain person to be the Commander of the Believers and carried a ceremonial parasol over him (an honour usually reserved only for the Fatimid *imām* or his heir-apparent). The Qarāfiyya sent robes of honour to this pretender. It was a short-lived affair and the Qarāfiyya went unpunished for their deeds.⁸⁶

The precise dating of the development of the cult of Alid saints in Fatimi Egypt remains elusive. It is possible to connect the beginnings of this phenomenon with what Y. Rāgib termed as an “un épisode obscur d’histoire fatimide” namely the allegation that al-Ḥākim constructed in the capital three shrines for the re-interment of the Prophet and the two first Caliphs of Islam. A better attested deed of al-Ḥākim, revealing similar intentions, is the looting of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq’s house in Medina and taking from it items such as a copy of a Koran, weapons and Jaʿfar’s prayer-mat which was used by the Fatimid *imāms* on public occasions.⁸⁷ Another clue for the possible early cult of Alid saints is supplied by Musabbihī’s account which indicates al-Zāhir’s marked interest in the mosque of Tibr in Fuṣṭāṭ. Al-Zāhir was an active ruler who travelled frequently for a variety of purposes including official engagements and private journeys. He also paid frequent visits to the mosque of Tibr (see, for example, his busy schedule in Jumādā II 415/August-September 1024, during this month al-Zāhir visited Tibr’s mosque three times). Musabbihī provides no clue for al-Zāhir’s interest in the mosque. The mosque was built by an Ikshidid officer and served as a burial place for the head of Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd Allāh, a Shīʿi rebel against al-Manṣūr, the second Abbasid Caliph.⁸⁸ One way of interpreting al-Zāhir’s interest in the mosque is to regard it as an indication of a cult of a Shīʿi martyr.

⁸⁵ Musabbihī, 58, 71, 107; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 139.

⁸⁶ Musabbihī, 57.

⁸⁷ Y. Rāgib, “Un épisode obscur d’histoire fatimide”, *SI*, 48(1978), 125-32.

⁸⁸ Musabbihī, 54, 56; *Khīṭaṭ*, IV, 271. The rebel Abū Rakwa was put to death by al-Ḥākim in the Tibr mosque, see *Ittiʿāz*, II, 65; cf. van Ess, 68, n. 353.

II

The growing importance of mausolea and cult of saints in the religious life of the Muslim masses was not unique to pre-Fatimid and early-Fatimid Egypt. T. Allen has drawn attention to the appearance of mausolea over the tombs of prophets and Alids in the tenth century, and the influence this trend had on the burial practices of the Abbasid Caliphs.⁸⁹ In Egypt during the eleventh century mausolea over tombs of private people as well as of state dignitaries were built on the outskirts of Fustāt-Cairo.⁹⁰ The most famous of the mausolea built in the eleventh century is that of Badr al-Jamālī known as *mashhad al-Juyūshī* on the top of the Muqāṭṭam hill overlooking the capital. The motives behind the building of this *mashhad* and its purpose remain elusive. Better documented is the "discovery" of the head of Ḥusayn at Ascalon and the building of a mausoleum in the town.⁹¹ C. Williams has put forward the hypothesis that the Aqmar mosque, built by the vizier al-Ma'mūn was designated as a shrine for the presumed head of Ḥusayn. Eventually, Ḥusayn's *mashhad* was built within the complex of the royal palace (561/1165-6).⁹² Al-Afdal and, on a larger scale, the vizier al-Ma'mūn, restored several mausolea in cemeteries surrounding the capital.⁹³ In the second quarter of the twelfth century, the regime restored shrines of Alid saints in the capital and some new ones were also built. The extent of this upsurge of mausolea in the Fatimid period is clearly born out by the description of the North African traveller, Ibn Jubayr, who visited Egypt in 578-9/1182-4 i.e. shortly after the demise of the Fatimid state. He was much impressed by the cemetery of the Qarāfa, its mosques and mausolea and the large permanent population who lived on this site. Ibn Jubayr left a detailed account of the shrine of Ḥusayn in Cairo and the acts of veneration of the tomb performed by the visitors. He also enumerated the

⁸⁹ T. Allen, "The Tomb of the Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad", *BSOAS*, 46(1983), 421-31.

⁹⁰ Y. Rāḡib, "Un oratoire fatimide au sommet du Muqāṭṭam", *SI*, LXV(1987), 61; *idem*, "Sur un groupe de mausolées du cimetière du Caire", *REL*, 40(1972), 189-95.

⁹¹ There is an extensive bibliography dealing with this structure, among others, see Rāḡib, "Une oratoire fatimide", 55-60, 66; Williams, "The Cult...Part I:", 1(1983), 41-2.

⁹² Williams, "The Cult...Part I", 49.

⁹³ Y. Rāḡib, "Les sanctuaires des gens de la famille dans la cité des morts au Caire", *RSO*, 51(1977), 48-50.

mausolea in the Qarāfa; among them were fourteen men and five women of the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*).⁹⁴

Conclusions: The Nativity festivals and the cult of the Alid saints were an outcome of the religious beliefs of the Fatimid regime. The spread and the adoption of these practices was a result of a receptive mood of the masses. The cult of the Prophet and of 'Alī and Fāṭima (the Nativity festivals were a form of a cult) sprang from a desire to enhance the legitimacy of the regime. The veneration of these persons conferred an aura of holiness on the dynasty, which claimed descent from them. The popular veneration of saints and their tombs, tallied well with the Fatimid belief in the holiness of *imāms* of their line. The fusion of the popular belief that the holiness of the saints and their tombs could secure God's favor and the fulfillment of wishes together with the Fatimid belief that *imāms* of their line were essential for the delivery of the believers, proved to be a very powerful one. It withstood the test of the time leaving its mark on later periods also.

⁹⁴ Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, (ed) W. Wright, revised by M. J. De Goeje, (Leiden, 1907), (reprint), 45-7, 50. For building of these shrines, see Y. Rāḡib, "Les mausolées fatimides du quartier d'al-masāhid", *AI*, 17(1981), 7-27; Williams, "The Cult....Part II: The Mausolea", *Muqarnas*, 3(1985), 40-60.

CHAPTER NINE

THE URBAN SOCIETY OF FUSTĀT-CAIRO

a). Urban Institutions

1. The Police

I

In the capital, Fustāt-Cairo, there were three police forces: two of them in Fustāt. The headquarters of the police force known as the Upper Police (*al-shurṭa al-ʿulyā*) was situated in the ʿAskar area of Fustāt.¹ The second police force in Fustāt was known as the Lower Police (*al-shurṭa al-suflā*), its headquarters was near the Mint.² Cairo had a separate police force—Cairo Police (*shurṭa al-Qāhira*).³ The existence of two police forces in Fustāt is attested for the Tulunid period, and for the early Fatimid period, the last attestation is from 415/1024.⁴ It seems that during the period of recovery from the civil war under al-Mustanṣir one single police force was established in Fustāt. A change in the nomenclature designating the police force might be connected with this change. The terms, police (*shurṭa*) and chief of police (*sāhib al-shurṭa*), which had been common until then disappeared from the sources in favour of different appellations: *wālī* meaning a chief of police and *maʿūna* meaning police.⁵ Our sources are extremely vague regarding the

¹ *Khīṭat*, IV, 33-4. For the house known as *al-shurṭa al-ʿulyā*, see Ibn Duqmaq, IV, 11.

² Antāki, 179.

³ Musabbiḥi, 88; *Ittiʿāz*, II, 116 (less explicit).

⁴ Balawī, 205, 234; Musabbiḥi, 47.

⁵ The term *sāhib al-maʿūna* is mentioned by Ibn Hawqal in his descriptions of Egyptian provincial towns, *BGA*, (ed) J. H. Kramers (Leiden, 1967), II, 142, 143. J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet have translated it as “préfet”, see *Configuration de la terre*, (Paris, 1964), I, 140, 141. In the chronicles of the Fatimid period the earliest use of the term *maʿūna* is found in the account of the killing of al-Afdal, the phrase is: *al-amīr mutawallī ʿl-maʿūna bi-Miṣr*. (*Ittiʿāz*, II, 69; Ibn al-Maʿmūn, 18) Saladin demolished *al-maʿūna* in Fustāt (i.e. police headquarters) and built a *madrassa* on its place. (*Ittiʿāz*, III, 319. See also ,100, 101; Ibn al-Maʿmūn, index s.v. *wālī ʿl-Qāhira* and *wālī ʿl-Miṣr*; cf: Goitein, *Med.*

composition and organization of the police forces in the capital. In Musabbiḥī's chronicle, policemen are referred to twice by the term *raqqāsūn* which is also a common appellation in the documents of the Geniza. According to S. D. Goitein this term also designated an unskilled laborer, as well as an errand boy in the service of any governmental official.⁶ The term suggests that the service in police carried little prestige, and the policemen were recruited from the lower classes.⁷

No less obscure is the composition and the organization of the secret police. The paucity of information in the Arabic sources is in contrast with abundant information on this body and its activities which can be found in the Geniza documents.⁸ Most of the references to the secret police (*aṣḥāb al-akhbār*) are from the period of al-Ḥākim's reign. The institution antedated the Fatimid period being referred to during the rule of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn.⁹ Al-Mu'izz attempted to establish a network of informers by demanding from the caḍi Abū Ṭāhir to report to him on whatever was going in Fustāt. The caḍi refused without bringing upon himself any adverse consequences.¹⁰

Despite these deficiencies in our sources, a reasonable picture of the police and its functioning can be obtained. According to the description of the Fatimid administration by Qalqashandī "the people of the sword"—namely those with executive authority—were nominated for the post of chief of police.¹¹ What he says is verified for the Fatimid period until Badr al-Jamālī, and applies also to the Tulunid period.¹² In the period prior to the civil war under al-Mustanṣir, the persons nominated to the post of chiefs of police came from the ruling circles; among them were black and white eunuchs of the *imām*'s household or Kutāma Berbers. Some of the eunuchs appointed for the post, while keeping the overall responsibility in their hand, had

Soc., II, 368).

⁶ Musabbiḥī, 73-4; *Itti'āz*, II, 164-5; cf. Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 94-6, II, 370; Gil, *Documents*, index s.v. *raqqās*.

⁷ Other terms which are common in the Geniza for police such as *rikābiyya* and *rajjāla* have in the Arabic sources a quite different meaning, see Y. Lev, "The Suppression of Crime, the Supervision of Markets, and Urban Society in the Egyptian Capital during the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries", *MHR*, 3(1988), 77-8.

⁸ Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, II, 371, 379.

⁹ Balawī, 224.

¹⁰ *Itti'āz*, I, 224.

¹¹ Qalqashandī, IV, 23; cf. E. Tyan, *Histoire de l'organisation judiciaire en pays d'Islam*, (Leiden, 1960), 584-5.

¹² Balawī, 205.

nominated their own slaves for the actual performance of the duties the post entailed. The nomination of the chiefs of police was widely publicized. In these ceremonies symbols of state authority such as swords, banners and horses were bestowed on the nominees. This was done in order to stress the executive authority vested in the hands of chiefs of police, and in order to enhance their prestige in the eyes of the subjects.¹³ In the sources for the twelfth century, there are hints indicating a deterioration of the position of the chiefs of police. In ceremonies and state receptions for example, the chiefs of police closed the list of state functionaries preceding only the heads of the non-Muslim communities and the non-Muslim officials employed in the administration.¹⁴

II

The police was perceived by the population as responsible for fighting crime, and its help was sought in times of need. This attitude of the population is revealed on several occasions. When gangs of criminals (*nahhāba*) robbed people in Fustāt taking advantage of riots caused by starving black troops, the injured population complained to the chief of police who indeed proved to be instrumental in recovering the looted goods.¹⁵ Even when criminals were apprehended by members of the public at the scene of the crime, or later, they were brought to the police headquarters to be dealt in an orderly fashion by the police.¹⁶ Al-ʿAzīz fully understood the importance of a properly functioning police force. In 377/987-8, a complaint (*ruqʿa*) was submitted to him accusing the slave of the police chief of Fustāt with the murder of a foreign merchant. Al-ʿAzīz ordered his vizier to carry out a prompt investigation, which left no doubts as to how seriously he regarded the matter.¹⁷ Due to paucity of data the extent of crime in Fustāt and the degree of violence in the society in general, issues dealt with by modern research literature in respect with medieval Europe, remain entirely obscure for the Fatimid period.

The chief of police was responsible not only for fighting

¹³ Lev, "The Suppression of Crime", 74-5.

¹⁴ Ibn al-Ma'mūn, 27, 53, 78.

¹⁵ Musabbihi, 89; *Itti'āz*, II, 170-1.

¹⁶ Musabbihi, 52-3, 58, 98.

¹⁷ *Itti'āz*, I, 265-6.

crime, he was also responsible for applying the *ḥudūd* of Allāh (i.e. the penalties laid down by Allāh) against the criminals. In practical terms, this meant an encroachment of executive power over the *cadi*'s domain. The *cadi* is not mentioned as involved in any one of the criminal cases recounted by Musabbiḥī. There were attempts to give more prominence to the jurists over the chiefs of police. In 364/974-5, two jurists were established for a short period at the headquarters of the Fustāt police. Al-Ḥākim (in 403/1012-3 ?) established in Fustāt and other towns two witnesses at the police headquarters. The application of the *ḥudūd* of Allāh against criminals needed their ratification.¹⁸ Also from the period of al-Ḥākim's reign comes the report about the Ismā'īlī *cadi*, al-Fārikī who forbade the chiefs of police to intervene in the religious law administered by the *cadi*.¹⁹ Despite of these sporadic attempts to reinforce the *cadi*'s authority vis-à-vis the chief of police, the *cadi*'s power declined.²⁰ The symbolic expression of this trend was the bestowing of the *cadi*'s turban on the chief of police at the time of his appointment (Rajab 415/September-October 1024).²¹ The situation prevailing in the Fatimid capital is consistent with what is known from other sources and studies on other Islamic lands and periods.²²

The clash between the *cadi* and the chief of police was not merely a power struggle between two state officials; it reflected a much deeper issue. In the Islamic medieval state there was a tension between administrative justice dispensed by the

¹⁸ Antāki, 205.

¹⁹ Ibn Ḥajar (ed) Guest, 604; cf: Tyan, 609. It must always be remembered that al-Ḥākim's policies were erratic and cannot serve as an example of standard Fatimid practices. For example, following the execution of al-Fārikī no judge was appointed in Fustāt for a period of four months. In this interval two persons, one of them the market supervisor, acted in a judicial capacity. (Ibn Ḥajar, [ed] Guest, 608, 610).

²⁰ An attempt made by the chief of police to extend his jurisdiction further at the expense of the *cadi* is recorded by the sources. This event is somewhat ambiguous because of the unknown professional background of 'Alī ibn Sa'īd al-Juljūli, the man involved in the case. In 369/979-80, Ibn Killis as a part of his struggle against the Nu'mān family, nominated al-Juljūli as the chief of the lower police in Fustāt. Al-Juljūli tried to extend his authority by acting as a judge. Whether he was a jurist by his education remains obscure. The Ismā'īlī *cadi* 'Alī ibn al-Nu'mān defended his domain against the vizier's nominee. (Ibn Ḥajar, [ed] Guest, 591).

²¹ Musabbiḥī, 47.

²² For the exclusion of the *cadi* from the administration of the criminal justice, see E. Tyan, "Kādi", *E.I.*2, IV, 373. For similar situation in a different time and place, see M. Hoexter, "La shurta ou la répression des crimes à Alger à l'époque turque", *SI*, 56(1982), 128-9.

sovereign and the religious law administered by the *cadi*. In the Middle Eastern political tradition the king had a judicial function dispensing himself justice. In Islam the sovereign was entrusted with wide discretionary powers to enforce policies (*siyāsa*) in order to safeguard the public interest (*maṣlaḥa ʿāmma*). The fusion of Middle Eastern political tradition with the Islamic concept of *maṣlaḥa ʿāmma* made the Muslim rulers responsible for the administration of criminal justice, supervision of markets and presiding over the court of complaints. The administrative justice dispensed by the ruler had to be in accordance with the sacred law of Islam (*sharīʿa*). Thus the expression *siyāsa sharīʿa* was coined to designate the administrative justice exercised by the sovereign in the name of the public interest.²³

The question that should be asked is to what extent the chiefs of police, persons with no legal education, were guided by the precepts of religious law when dispensing criminal justice? The evidence suggests that the religious law provided the legal underpinnings for the procedures that took place at the court of the chief of police. The way he handled the cases was not in flagrant violation of the religious law. There was a considerable degree of congruency between the religious law and the jurisdiction of the chief of police in criminal matters.²⁴ These conclusions are in contrast with what is known regarding the way criminal justice was dispensed in the early Muslim period or in Mamlūk Egypt. In those periods the chiefs of police were notorious for their cruelty and unscrupulous character and their jurisdiction took a form of summary justice.²⁵

In eleventh century Fustāt, the chief of police was also involved in the enforcement of the precepts of the religious law regarding sexual mores and of moral standards in general. For instance, the chief of police took action against a brothel, inflicting a punishment on a pimp.²⁶ In another case both husband-pimp and his wife were punished: the woman was accused of having non-Muslim clients.²⁷ Little can be said regarding this

²³ The institution of *nāzir fī l-mazālim* has been examined by J. S. Nielsen, *Secular Justice in an Islamic State: Mazālim under the Bahri Mamlūks*, (Istanbul, 1985), 8-12 (for the Fatimid period).

²⁴ Lev, "The Suppression of Crime", 80-1.

²⁵ R. Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam*, (Cambridge, 1969), 333-4; N. J. Coulson, *Conflict and Tension in Islamic Jurisprudence*, (Chicago and London, 1969), 66.

²⁶ Musabbiḥi, 68.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 12.

information. The history of prostitution in medieval Islam has not been written yet. Islam disapproved of prostitution; prostitutes and their pimps were regarded as law-breakers. In the second case, the actions of the chief of police were consistent with the general Muslim sentiment which strongly disapproved socialization between Muslim women and non-Muslim men, including the visiting of Muslim prostitutes by non-Muslims. Musabbiḥī recorded the execution of two Christians who were found in the company of two Muslim women. The women were also punished; they were flogged and put on public display.²⁸ The chief of police assumed a role of a kind of "moral police" as is illustrated by the following incident. A certain merchant made a wedding feast for his daughter in one of the wedding halls in Fuṣṭāt. The owners of the hall took the liberty of watching the women who attended the celebration, causing an uproar among the guests. In the daily report submitted by the chief of police to the vizier al-Ma'mūn this event was not mentioned. The vizier who somehow was informed of what had happened in the wedding hall ordered the chief of police to inspect other wedding halls and to make arrangements to prevent such incidents from taking place. Places where proper separation between the sexes could not be ensured were not allowed to function as wedding halls.²⁹ Although the aim of the account is to portray the vizier as the most knowledgeable men in the state, it provides *en passant* a glimpse into the social life of the upper crust of the urban society and its habits. Other evidence point in the same direction, namely that among the urban middle and upper classes there was a strong tendency to confine women to their homes, and of imposing rigid sex separation.³⁰

III

The police played a minor role in maintaining of public order in the capital. The reasons for this were the composition of the police force and its inadequate strength. On the other hand, the

²⁸ *Ibid*, 50, 58. For the Mamlūk period, see Nielsen, 102; U. Vermeulen, "The Rescript of al-Mālik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ against the Dimmis (755 A.H./1354 A.D.)", *Orientalia Lovanensia Periodica*, 9(1978), 179.

²⁹ *Itti'āz*, III, 100-1.

³⁰ For seclusion of women, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, III, 153-4; for professions of women, see *po. cit.*, I, 127-30. In lower urban classes and in the rural society, the importance of woman's work gave women greater freedom of movement.

maintenance of public order in the capital was of vital interest to the regime. Much of the wealth of the royal family and the members of the ruling circles was invested in urban properties, and substantial revenues were collected from the taxation of the urban economy.³¹ The best example of destructive potential inherent in urban riots to the economic interests of the state is provided by the events of 386/996-7. At that time, al-ʿAzīz stayed in a military camp outside the capital making preparations for a military campaign against the Byzantines in Northern Syria. Warships which were built for the intended campaign at the arsenal of Fustāt caught fire and were destroyed. Sailors and population blamed the blaze on merchants from Amalfi who had stayed in Dār al-Manak storming the place and killing 107 of them. The value of the merchandise looted from the Italians reached the tune of 90,000 *dīnārs*. Maqrīzī preserved in his *Khīṭat* a detailed report of the event, based on the account of Musabbihī.³²

Two points should be stressed: 1) The regime was incapable of protecting the Amalfians when Dār al-Manak was stormed. This inability reflects the limits of the police as a body responsible for internal security. 2) The regime conducted a premeditated policy of inspiring awe in the population in order to recover as much as possible of the looted merchandise. This becomes apparent upon a close reading of the account. Between the first arrests made after the riots had abated and the execution of people accused of looting several days lapsed. In fact the executions were carried out when order had been restored and the town was calm. The unavoidable conclusion is that the regime was protecting its vital commercial interests, making an effort to assure the Amalfians, and other foreign merchants, of its commitment to protect them, their valuables and to punish those who injured them. The actions taken aimed at minimizing the damaged done and avoiding a disruption of commercial links with Amalfi and other trading nations.³³

³¹ See chapter 4.

³² *Khīṭat*, III, 317-8; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 290; Antākī, 178-9. The first who has noted the importance of this account for the history of the Mediterranean trade was Cl. Cahen, see "Un texte peu connu relatif au commerce oriental d'Amalfi au X^e siècle", *Archivio Storico per le province Napoletane*, N.S. 34 (1953-1954), 1-8.

³³ For the trade between Amalfi and the Muslims, see A. O. Citarella, "The Relations of Amalfi with the Arab World before the Crusades", *Speculum*, XLII (1967), 299-312; *idem* "Patterns in Medieval Trade: The Commerce of Amalfi before the Crusades", *The Journal of Economic History*, 28 (1968), 531-55.

The inability of the police to deal with large-scale outbreaks of disorder and violence in the capital was also manifested on another occasion. In 415/1025, when starved black troops and criminals went on the rampage in the capital, contingents of *naḥṭha-hurles* and private regiments of members of the ruling circles were deployed in Fustāt. The population of Fustāt was authorized to kill black troops in self-defence. The population (*‘amma al-Miṣriyyin*), including women, fought actively the rioters. The disorder also endangered Cairo; rioters roamed through the main markets of the town and through the small markets in the vicinity of the Zuwayla gate.³⁴ In other circumstances the police coped adequately with the situation. In 490/1096-7, when clashes during the celebrations of *‘ashūrā* erupted there was no need to call upon the army; the police of Cairo restored order.³⁵ Later, in 517/1123-4, when efforts were made to discover the agents of Ibn al-Sabbāḥ—the Assassins—in the capital, the police forces of Cairo and Fustāt were instrumental in the registration of the whole population. However, the arrests that followed were carried out by the army.³⁶

2. The Market Supervisor (Muḥtasib)

The institution of supervision of the markets (*ḥisba*), and the post of the market supervisor had pre-Islamic antecedents.³⁷ The Muslim literature dealing with the market supervision embodied the concept that the primary duty of the *muḥtasib* was the implementation of the Koranic dictum to promote good and to restrain evil. The Islamization of the institution—the adoption of the Koranic dictum as its motto—took place late. In early *ḥisba* texts (ninth-tenth centuries), in contrast with late medieval ones, this adoption was not yet embodied.³⁸

³⁴ Musabbiḥi, 87-9.

³⁵ *Itti‘āz*, III, 21.

³⁶ See sources and studies listed in n. 8, ch. 3.

³⁷ For the debate on the origin of the *muḥtasib* and his pre-Islamic antecedents, see W. Floor, "The Office of Muḥtasib in Iran", *Iranian Studies*, 18(1985), 53-9. To work cited by him must be added T. F. Glick, "Muḥtasib and Mustasfa: A Case Study of Institutional Diffusion", *Viator*, 2(1971), 58-81; P. Crone, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law*, (Cambridge, 1987), s.v. appendix 3, "The Muḥtasib".

³⁸ In a text dealing with the *ḥisba*, from the Buyid period, there is no mention of the Koranic dictum, see J. Sadan, *Nouvelle source sur l'époque buyide*, (Tel Aviv, n. d.); *idem*, in *IOS*, 9(1979), 355-77. The same is true regarding the ninth century *ḥisba* text from Ṭabaristān published by R. B. Serjant, "A Zaidi Manual of *Ḥisbah* of the 3rd Century (H)", *RSO*, XXVIII(1957), 1-34. For late medieval *ḥisba* texts, see Lev, "The Suppression of Crime", 91, n.17.

The *ḥisba* institution had much in common with the police. The market supervisors, like the chief of police, were recruited from among the members of the ruling circles, eunuchs and Kutāma Berbers. In the course of discharging their duties, the market supervisors exercised executive powers inflicting punishments on offenders. The jurisdiction of the market supervisor evokes the question of the *ḥisba* jurisdiction vis-à-vis the religious law. Late sources say that the *ḥisba* in the Fatimid period was regarded as a religious function and that only people of the highest moral standards were appointed as market supervisors. In Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn al-Nu'mān's letter of appointment as chief *cadi*, the *ḥisba* was mentioned among his responsibilities.³⁹ However, it is clear that the law of the *ḥisba* was a legal system outside the pale of the religious law. And the market supervisors, like the chiefs of police, were people with no legal training. Thus both institutions, the police and the supervision of markets exercised extra *sharī'a* jurisdiction. However, each of the institutions had its own typical sphere of activity.

The suppression of crime and the carrying out of the death penalty against criminal and apostates (after receiving the necessary authorization from the *imām*) were under the sole responsibility of the chief of police. The supervision of the markets was under the sole responsibility of the *muhtasib*. In other spheres of activity such as the supervision of the non-Muslims or the water-carriers, both the chief of police and the market supervisor were involved. It seems that the chief of police in fact was encroaching upon the domain of the market supervisor. The absence of a precise line of demarcation between the activities of both officials reflects the overlapping of functions between various bodies which exercised executive authority in medieval Islam.⁴⁰

The supervision of markets was a task of no lesser importance than fighting the crime. Especially as the market supervisor was also involved in the regulation of the grain trade and supply of bread at times of economic difficulties. Thus a vital aspect of urban life was under his direct responsibility. Before the role of the *muhtasib* in these matters is discussed, some realities of the grain trade and bread production should to be examined.

³⁹ *Khitat*, III, 342; Ibn Ḥajar, (ed) Guest, 596. A visitor in early Fatimid Egypt was impressed by the high position the *muhtasib* enjoyed in the capital. Muqaddasi, *BGA*, (ed) M. J. De Goeje, (Leiden, 1967), III, 198. For references to *muhtasib* in Ikhshidid period, see Ibn Zūlāq, 29, 53, 54.

⁴⁰ Lev, "The Suppression of Crime", 78-8.

b) *The Grain Trade and Bread Production*

I

The dependency of Egyptian agriculture upon the Nile was absolute. The rise of the Nile was recorded on the Nilometer in Fustāt and announced publicly.⁴¹ The impact of the failure of the Nile to reach its plenitude (i.e. the level of 16 cubits) was twofold: firstly on the year in which the failure took place and secondly on the following year. In any year when the Nile rose insufficiently, the prices of the grain went up sharply, although under other circumstances the supplies would be quite adequate. The reason was obvious the buyers in anticipation of a shortage in the following year bought as much grain as they could thus pushing up both the prices of grain and of bread. It must be born in mind that even during periods of adequate supplies, the grain market was a buyer's market; the better off segments of the urban population used to buy in advance the grain needed for the consumption of their household for the whole year.⁴² This tendency intensified in anticipation of a shortage in the year following that in which the Nile's inundation was short of plenitude. Al-Muʿizz tried to combat the anxiety which could turn into panic caused by the daily announcement of the rise of the Nile by with-holding the information from the public. It was a short-lived attempt which had no chance; the rise of the Nile was public knowledge being an observable phenomenon.⁴³

What the wealthy private buyers were doing, storing grain needed for their own consumption, the regime was doing but on larger scale. In the capital there were two grain ports: one which served Cairo and the regime—*sāḥil Maqs*—and the other which served Fustāt (*sāḥil Miṣr*).⁴⁴ In the grain port there were

⁴¹ The most comprehensive study of this issue is by W. Popper, *The Cairo Nilometer*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951).

⁴² Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, IV; Nāṣir-i Khusrau reports with amazement, and obvious exaggeration, about a wealthy Christian merchant who could supply Egypt for six years with grain from his private granaries, (tran.) Thackston, 55-6.

⁴³ Popper, 43.

⁴⁴ This division is clearly born out by Musabbiḥi, 39. For the term *sāḥil* pl. *sawāḥil* meaning grain docks, see I. M. Lapidus, "The Grain Economy of Mamlūk Egypt", *JESHO* XII(1969), 7. For the involvement of the regime in the grain trade in Mamlūk Egypt, see *idem*, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 51-5; B. Shoshan, "Grain Riots and the 'Moral Economy': Cairo, 1350-1517", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, X(1980), 462-4.

separate docks for unloading the grain shipped from Tinnis, Lower and Upper Egypt. There was also a special dock for shipments of barley (*sha'ir*).⁴⁵ In Cairo of the late Fatimid period there were three granaries (*ihrā'*, *makhāzin*) to which the grain belonging to the *imām* was shipped via *sāhil Maqs*. The storing capacity of these granaries was 300,000 *irdabb*.⁴⁶ Figures of this order of magnitude are mentioned in the accounts of the late Fatimid period. For example, Kutayfāt, upon the seizure of power in capital, distributed 200,000 *irdabb* from the granaries in an attempt to gain the good will of the people for his regime.⁴⁷ In contrast with the late part of the twelfth century, in the early decades of the century the quantities of grain at the disposal of the regime were far greater. The revenues during al-Afdal's period are quoted as five million *dīnārs* and million *irdabb* received for the granaries (*mutaḥaṣṣil al-ihrā'*).⁴⁸ The importance of the granaries needs no elaboration, especially as references to imports of grain to Egypt, in Fatimid period, in times of shortage and famine are rare.⁴⁹ This information is in contrast with the more or less regular imports of grain reaching Egypt in the Mamlūk times.⁵⁰

The *imām* and the state (the differentiation between private property and interests of the ruler and the public domain was

⁴⁵ Musabbihī, 58, 73, 78, 87.

⁴⁶ *Khitāt*, II, 344; see also III, 202.

⁴⁷ *Itti'āz*, III, 140; earlier, in 516/1122-3, the Fatimids were capable of donating 80,940 *irdabb* to Mecca, *op. cit.*, 80. The town of Bilbays served as the main center for providing the holy cities of Arabia with flour and *ka'k* bread. In the town there were many mills, see Muqaddasī, 195. The *ka'k* bread was made from crushed dried wheat, see *Medieval Islamic Medicine. Ibn Riḍwān's Treatise "On the Prevention of Bodily Ills in Egypt"*, translated into English with introduction by M. W. Dols; Arabic text edited by A. S. Gamal (Berkeley, 1984), 92.

⁴⁸ *Itti'āz*, III, 72; for this term, see G. Frantz-Murphy, *The Agrarian Administration of Egypt from the Arabs to the Ottoman*, (Cairo, 1986), 43.

⁴⁹ Such an instance is recorded in 420/1029-30, when grain was imported from Syria. (*Itti'āz*, II, 180.) However, during the civil war under al-Mustanṣir only a single shipment of grain reached Egypt; a ship loaded with grain for al-Mustanṣir arrived from Muslim Spain. (D. Wassertein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings*, [Princeton, 1985], 136.) On another occasion the Fatimids failed to secure imports of grain to combat famine in Egypt. The most notable failure involved an attempt to buy grain from Byzantium. The Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus agreed to supply al-Mustanṣir with grain, but the Empress Theodora (ruled January 1055-September 1056) revoked his promises. (*Itti'āz*, II, 227-9, 230-1; *Muqaffā*, [ed] Zakkār, 374-5; for the Byzantine side, see W. Felix, *Byzanz und die islamische Welt im früheren 11. Jahrhundert*, [Vienna, 1981], 119-21.)

⁵⁰ E. Ashtor, "The Wheat Supply of the Mamlūk Empire", *AAS*, 18(1984), 283-95.

frequently blurred) obtained grain in two ways. Grain was cultivated on the private estates of the *imām* and the crown lands (*naḥiyya sultāniyya*).⁵¹ Other grain was bought on the free market. The regime played a dominant role in the grain market. The Fatimid practice, whose precise date of origin is unknown (referred to for the first time in an account recording the events of 444/1052-3), was to buy on the market grain worth 100,000 *dīnārs* every year. This purchase was known as *matjar*. The term *matjar* is known from other sources as well, and is generally translated as the Office of Commerce.⁵² In the account under examination, it indicates the purchase of grain by the state. It is clear from the account that the purchased grain was bought not only for storing in granaries for the long run, but sold later on the market for profit. In 444/1052-3, the vizier al-Yāzūrī urged al-Mustansir to abolish the grain *matjar*. His argument was twofold; 1) the grain *matjar* was not always profitable. It happened that the state bought grain at a high price which in the course of the year went down. Thus the grain surpluses owned by the state became unsellable. They decayed, causing further losses. 2) Al-Yāzūrī's second argument was that the grain *matjar*, in general, was harmful to the population. It is clear, however, that al-Yāzūrī was not motivated by altruistic motives but by the commercial interests of the regime. While urging the abolition of the grain *matjar*, he suggested the introduction of the *matjar* practice in respect with non-perishable goods, which were less prone to price fluctuation, such as wood, soap, iron, lead and honey.⁵³

II

Bread production was no less complex than the grain trade. In Arabic the name of occupation does not indicate whether the man designated by the occupation is an artisan or a vendor. This linguistic peculiarity has a direct bearing upon the issue of bread production and trade. For example, the designation of a man as *khabbāz* pl. *khabbāzūn* can mean both baker or bread

⁵¹ For this term, see *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 344. for lands designated as *khāṣṣ al-sultān* in the Mamlūk period, see Lapidus, "The Grain", 3.

⁵² Cl. Cahen, "Douanes et commerce dans les ports méditerranéens de l'Égypte médiévale d'après le Minhāj d'al-Makhzūmī", *JESHO*, VII(1964), 257-62, esp., 258.

⁵³ *Ighāṭhat*, 19; translated into French by G. Wiet in *JESHO*, 5(1962), 20-1; *Iti'āz*, III, 225; *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 345; cf. Rabie, 92; B. Shoshan, "Fatimid Grain Policy and the Post of the Muḥtasib", *IJMES*, 13(1981), 182.

vendor. This ambiguity is nicely illustrated by an important passage of Maqrīzī which narrates the encounter between the chief *cadi* al-Yāzūrī and *khabbāzūn* in 444/1052-3 in Fustāt. The prevailing bread price then at the town (4 *ratl* for 1.1/8 *dirham*, [one *ratl* was equivalent to 450g.]) was undercut by one of the *khabbāzūn*, described as *Ṣuʿlūk* (a vagabond, or a criminal), who had his shop (*dukkān*) next to the shop of the *ʿarīf* (i.e. head of profession) of the *khabbāzūn*. The *Ṣuʿlūk* was afraid that he would not be able to sell his stock of bread, and reduced its price to one *dirham*.⁵⁴

The *ʿarīf* induced the men in the service of the market supervisor to impose a fine on the *Ṣuʿlūk* who, in his turn, complained to al-Yāzūrī. Al-Yāzūrī rebuked the market supervisor for his action ordering the removal of the *ʿarīf*, while he handsomely rewarded the *Ṣuʿlūk* who continued to lower his price until 10 *ratls* of bread were sold for one *dirham*.⁵⁵ The meaning of the term *khabbāzūn* in this account should be examined in the light of Ch. Pellat's views and the outgoing scholarly discussion on the subject. Pellat expressed the view that in Muslim medieval towns "there were no real bakeries, and there was no *sūk* preserved for the making and sale of bread".⁵⁶ This statement provoked a lively scholarly discussion, and a considerable body of evidence has been collected to cast doubt on Pellat's affirmation.⁵⁷ The data for eleventh-century Fustāt indicates the existence of a market for the sale of bread. Maqrīzī opens his

⁵⁴ His worry must be understood in light of what Ibn Riḍwān says in his treatise *On the Prevention of Bodily Ills in Egypt*: "...the bread made from wheat produced in Egypt is not edible if it sits for a day and a night. After that, it is not longer enjoyable and does not hold together in one piece. It is not chewable and becomes moldy in a short time; the same applies to flour. This is different from breads of other countries." (*Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 90.)

⁵⁵ *Ighāthat*, 18-9; (tran.) Wiet, 19-20; *Ittiʿāz*, II, 224-5. Maqrīzī's account fully confirms Goitein's conclusions, derived from different sources, and dispels his misgivings, regarding the role of the *ʿarīf* in Fatimid period. Goitein writes: "The *ʿarīf*, or head of profession-as far as such an office existed-was not a leader elected by the members of his group, but a supervisor appointed by the market police in order to assist it in its fight against fraudulent practice". (*Med. Soc.*, I, 84.)

⁵⁶ Ch. Pellat, "Khubbz", *E.I.*2, V, 42.

⁵⁷ For the Abbasid Caliphate, see D. Waines, "Cereals, Bread and Society", *JESHO*, XXX(1987), 280-1; for Mamlūk Egypt, see Lapidus, "The Grain", 10-11; for Muslim Spain, see L. D. Latham, "Some Observations on the Bread Trade in Muslim Malaga (ca. A.D. 1200)", *JSS*, XXIX(1984), 111-22, 113, 115. I am aware of only a single reference to bakery (*makhbaza*) emanating from ninth-century Egyptian papyrus, see A. Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library*, I, doc. 53, l. 20, 142 (text), 143 (tran.).

account of the *Ṣuʿlūk* and *al-Yāzūrī* with a general remark: “in each of the markets of *Fuṣṭāṭ*, according to the crafts, there was an ‘*arīf* appointed over their affairs” indicating that the ‘*arīf* and the *Ṣuʿlūk* had their shops in a market designated for the sale of bread.⁵⁸ Moreover, concentration of a certain economic activity in a particular part of the town did not preclude the existence of the same type of business in other parts of the town.⁵⁹ Bread could have been sold all over the town. The term *khabbāzūn* in *Maqrizī*’s account must be understood in light of the fact that producers of goods also used to sell their goods.⁶⁰ Thus the *khabbāzūn* in question could have been owners of bakeries as well as bread vendors. In any case the *khabbāzūn*, either as bakers or sellers or acting in both capacities, constituted only one outlet of bread production and sale in *Fuṣṭāṭ*. The buying of flour in the market while preparing the dough and baking at home were very common. Other people gave the dough they had prepared at home to oven-owners (*farrān*) who baked bread for them in return for payment (made in money or in kind).⁶¹

c) The Market Supervisor and the Supply of the Capital with Grain and Bread.

I

Our sources narrate the events of several occurrences of shortage of grain and of bread to give us an idea of the functioning of the market supervisor under such circumstances. The reasons for these shortages, the attitude of the regime and the mechanism of the grain trade and bread production and distribution are also depicted.

A disturbance of the grain market in *Fuṣṭāṭ* is recorded shortly after the Fatimid conquest of Egypt. The exact nature of the difficulties remains elusive: the rise of the Nile in 358/summer 969 was normal. One of the reasons might have been the presence of the large Fatimid army of conquest which created an increased demand for grain and thus pushed the prices up.

⁵⁸ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 224.

⁵⁹ Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 83.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, *ibid*, 85.

⁶¹ See for example the passing remark of *Musabbiḥī* (p, 101) about an arrest of a *ghulām* who used to operate an oven adjacent to a house of a certain woman.

In Rabīʿ II 359/February-March 970, in response to very high prices the market supervisor, Ibn ʿAzza al-Maghribī, imposed strict control over the area of the grain docks. He assembled the wheat merchants (*qammāhūn*) in one place, supervising the dealings personally. Eleven millers (*ṭahhānūn*) were flogged and paraded through the town.⁶² In Dhū 'l-Qaʿda/October-November, the market supervisor resorted to the same measures tightening his supervision over the transactions and over the grain brokers (*samāsir al-ghillāt*).⁶³ Maqrizī says that the high prices prevailed for the whole year 360/970-1, going down only in 361/971-2. He also recorded the intensification of diseases and of the plague (*wabāʾ*) in Mūharram 360/November-December 970 with concomittant high- rates of mortality.⁶⁴ Maqrizī's account is problematic; the reference to the Muslim calendar in this context is meaningless. The Muslim calendar tallied neither with the agricultural year nor with the annual rise of the Nile. Thus the difficulties in grain supplies during 970 and perhaps afterwards were apparently due to the state of belligerency in Egypt following the Fatimid conquest of the country, and had nothing to do with the Nile.

The account of Ibn ʿAzza's actions taken to ensure supplies at affordable prices highlights the question of the differences between wheat merchants and wheat brokers. The activity of brokers in the commercial life of the period is often referred to by Arabic sources and the Geniza documents.⁶⁵ The exact difference in the way that the wheat merchants and the grain brokers operated is not clear. Musabbiḥī's obituary on Ibn Saʿdān exemplifies this ambiguity; he is described as a wheat merchant who was one of the respected wheat brokers active at the Upper Egypt Dock in Fustāt.⁶⁶

The fact that political instability was a powerful factor behind the disruption of the grain market and the high prices is illustrated by the events of 387/998-9. The early years of al-Ḥākim's rule were marked by factional clashes between various socio-military groups. In 387/998-9, the political instability was accompanied by an increased activity of gangs of robbers

⁶² *Ittiʿāz*, I, 120.

⁶³ *Ibid*, *ibid*, 122.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, *ibid*, 128; *Ighāthat*, 12-3; (tran.) Wiet, 14-5.

⁶⁵ Musabbiḥī, 104; Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 160-1.

⁶⁶ The text says: "died Ibn Saʿdān *al-qammāh wa-kāna shaykhān min wujūh al-samāsira fi 'l-qamḥ bi-sāḥil 'l-Saʿīd bi-Miṣr*. (Musabbiḥī, 94).

(*luṣūs*) which terrorized the population. The prices of wheat (*qamḥ*) went up sharply.⁶⁷ In light of what has been said about the various ways of bread production, it is clear that the high prices of wheat affected wide circles of the urban population; those who were unable to maintain stores of grain and had to buy their wheat in the market either daily or periodically.

The difficulties of 387/998-9 were minor in comparison with the crisis which occurred when for two consecutive years the rise of the Nile was inadequate. The year 397/1007 saw a monetary crisis followed by a low rise of the Nile.⁶⁸ According to W. Popper's calculations, the Nile in 1007 rose much below its annual average height.⁶⁹ The cutting of the earthen dike across the Khalij—the Cairo Canal—took place when the Nile was rising. This canal served for irrigating areas north of Cairo, being opened before the Nile reached its plenitude.⁷⁰ In 1007, however, following the cutting of the dike the Nile suddenly dropped before reaching 16 cubits. The panic in the capital was immense; massive purchases of grain caused by the expectations of a bad harvest in the following year pushed the prices up.⁷¹ The regime, facing a buyer's market, tried to ensure supplies of grain and availability of bread and other foodstuffs at affordable prices. In Muḥarram 398/September 1007, the *khabbāzūn* were punished.⁷² Al-Ḥākim designated one of his closest courtiers, Mas'ūd al-Ṣaqlabī, the bearer of the veil, as responsible for dealing with the situation. Mas'ūd's actions were a repetition of the policy of imposing strict control over grain transactions and prices exercised on previous similar situations. The owners of grain stocks (*ḥuzzān al-ghilāl*), millers and bakers were supervised, and the grain found at the port's docks was seized. Mas'ūd ordered to sell grain only to millers. The aim apparently was to secure a supply of flour at reasonable prices. The prices of wheat, barley, wood needed for the operation of the ovens, and other foodstuffs were fixed and regulated by Mas'ūd. When these efforts failed to produced the

⁶⁷ *Itti'āz*, II, 8; for this term and its range of meanings, see C. E. Bosworth, "Liss", *E.I.* 2., IV, 767-9.

⁶⁸ The monetary crisis began in 395/1004-5, see *Ighāthah*, 14; (tran.) Wiet, 15-6.

⁶⁹ Popper, 175.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 82, 85; for the ceremony of Cutting the Canal, see Sanders, 176-99.

⁷¹ *Itti'āz*, II, 70.

⁷² *Ibid.*, *ibid.*, 71; *Ighāthah*, 15; (tran.) Wiet, 16. Maqrīzī says that the bakers sold a damp bread. What he means by that is unclear.

desirable effect, Maṣʿūd confiscated the contents of several granaries (*ḥawāṣil*) selling the wheat to millers.⁷³

In 1008, for the second consecutive year the Nile failed to reach the level of 16 cubits. Two mass prayers attended also by women and children, were held. In order to combat the soaring prices, the regime abolished the taxes on grain and rice.⁷⁴ This step was one of the two most effective policies available when facing a situation of high prices and shortage of supplies (the other being the selling of grain from granaries owned by the state). The practical policies of the regime were supplemented by a decree dealing with morals and public behaviour. The singing along the shores of the Nile, even in houses situated along the river, as well as the consumption of alcohol when sailing on the Nile were prohibited.⁷⁵ This twofold prohibition was an attempt to enforce conduct which tallied with Muslim standards (the reference to alcohol), and with deeply-rooted Egyptian concepts.⁷⁶ The year 1009 was marked by a famine and outbreaks of disease. (Shaʿbān-Ramaḍān 399/-March-May 1009 and Rabīʿ I 400/October-November 1009.⁷⁷) At the height of their plight, the population gathered in Cairo in the street between the two palaces, the western and the eastern, demanding from the *imām* to take action (literally they asked not to be abandoned). Under heavy threats, al-Hākīm compelled people in Fuṣṭāṭ and Cairo who owned grain to sell from their stocks.⁷⁸ This policy affected adversely the well-to-do people, however, al-Hākīm refrained from opening the state granaries. He even re-introduced the taxes on grain.⁷⁹

II

Due to the surviving fragments of Musabbihī's chronicle, we are exceptionally well-informed about the course of another disastrous failure of the Nile to reach its plenitude. On 17 Jumādā II 414/6 October 1023, two days after the celebration of the Coptic New Year—Nawrūz, al-Zāhir opened the Cairo

⁷³ *Ighāthat*, 15-6; (tran.) Wiet, 16-7.

⁷⁴ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 74; cf. Rabie, 103-4; Halm, "Der Treuhänder Gottes", 46.

⁷⁵ *Khīṭat*, IV, 70, 71; Antāki, 193, 194-5

⁷⁶ In ancient Egypt, it was believed that the rise of Nile was caused by the weeping of Isis for Osiris. (Popper, 76).

⁷⁷ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 78, 81.

⁷⁸ *Ighāthat*, 16-7; (tran.) Wiet, 17-8.

⁷⁹ *Ittiʿāz*, II, 79.

Canal.⁸⁰ Shortly after the opening of the Canal, before the Nile reached its plenitude, the water level receded. Panic spread among the population of the capital. Mass prayers attended by men and children (but not women) took place on the mountain overlooking the city. Grain was scarce, and sold on the black market only. The prices of wheat, flour and bread became excessive.⁸¹ In such a situation the post of the market supervisor became of paramount importance. It seems that there was dissatisfaction with the official who held the post, and a new candidate for the post was sought. The chief of the Office of Salaries turned down the position offered, indicting that he regarded the proposition as a degradation.⁸² Obviously, he was fully aware of the difficulties that the new market supervisor would have to face. Eventually, Ya'qūb ibn Dawwās, a Kutāma Berber, was installed as a new market supervisor with responsibilities over the grain port. His first action was to flog and to display publicly a group of *khabbāzūn* and flour merchants. It had a positive, but a very short-lived effect on the availability of bread.⁸³ As usual in such circumstances, Ibn Dawwās had to overcome general unwillingness to sell wheat (motivated by the anticipation of a bad harvest in the following year). He took determined steps against any attempts to benefit from the situation by pushing prices up. Facing such a formidable task Ibn Dawwās took a radical step; he ordered the opening of granaries belonging to the people of the ruling circles and forced the various groups involved in the production of bread (*khabbāzūn* and millers) to meet the demand (8 Rajab/6 December).⁸⁴ Despite the unprecedented opening of the granaries the ability of the market supervisor to deal with a buyer's market was very limited. At the beginning of Rabi' I 415/middle May 1024, the water level in the Nile was extremely low and the prices of wheat, barley, straw and other foodstuffs were excessively high.⁸⁵ The situation was aggravated still further by the intervention of forces beyond the control of the market supervisor. Shipments of wheat designated for the

⁸⁰ Musabbihi, 9, 10-1; the most comprehensive study of this crisis is by Th. Bianquis, "Une crise frumentaire dans l'Egypte fatimide", *JESHO*, 23 (1980), 67-101.

⁸¹ Musabbihi, 12-3; for the prices, see Bianquis, "Une crise", 74-5, 76-7.

⁸² Musabbihi, 13-4.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 14; Bianquis, "Une crise", 77.

⁸⁴ Musabbihi, 15-6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 32; Bianquis, "Une crise", 74-5.

needs of the urban market were diverted to supply the demand of the palace (28 Rabiʿ II/10 July).⁸⁶

On 17 Jumādā II 415/27 August 1024, al-Zāhir opened the Cairo Canal. The policies of Ibn Dawwās as recorded by Musabbiḥī are baffling, and in contrast with his previous determined actions. The examination of the events recounted in *Akḥbār Miṣr* exemplifies the difficulty in understanding both the purpose and the motives behind Ibn Dawwās's policies. On 19 Jumādā II/29 August, the Coptic New Year was celebrated. Ibn Dawwās forbade the slaughtering of cattle, his ordinance sparked off bitter complaints from the butchers. They claimed that the cattle designated for slaughter were not fit for agricultural work, and that they had incurred heavy expenses for fodder while the ban deprived them of expected incomes. Ibn Dawwās yielded to butchers' complaints permitting the slaughter of the animals. However, on the fourth day of the Nawrūz, he re-imposed his ban bringing the meat trade which had flourished for three days to halt.⁸⁷ One would expect that in a situation of diminishing availability of food and of high prices, the policy would have been to encourage food supplies from every possible source. The response of the market during the three days of Nawrūz supports this assumption. If Ibn Dawwās's ban aimed indeed at preserving the stocks of animals used in agricultural works, it was a misguided policy. The ban had no effect on the rural areas, and the slaughter of animals there.

On 4 Rajab/12 September, the Nile reached its plenitude, the water level being almost 17 cubits. There was a great joy in the town in the expectation of a good harvest in the next year, the current situation, however, was very dim.⁸⁸ On the day the Nile reached its plenitude, Ibn Dawwās was replaced by a new market supervisor. The reason might have been his ill-calculated policies during the Nawrūz festival. The new market supervisor, who also controlled the two police forces in Fustāt, fixed the prices for low and high quality bread. The prices of the *khushkār* bread, made of coarsely-ground flour, and the price of the *ḥuwwārī* bread of pure wheat flour,⁸⁹ were established as five *ratl* for *dirham* and four *ratl* for *dirham* respectively. The response of the market was immediate: the next day (5

⁸⁶ Musabbiḥī, 39; Bianquis, "Une crise", 80.

⁸⁷ Musabbiḥī, 46.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 46-7.

⁸⁹ For the various kinds of bread, see Pellat, "Khubbz", 42.

Rajab/13 September) the trade in flour and bread came to a standstill. The regime reacted swiftly to the failure of the newly appointed market supervisor to intervene in the trade; Ibn Dawwās was re-installed in his post. He faced the task of renewing of the trade. His policy was a selective fixing of bread prices. The price of bread sold at the ovens was fixed as 5 *ratls* for *dirham* while bread sold in other outlets remained unsupervised. The semoline bread (*samīd*) was sold at two and half *ratl* for *dirham* while other breads were cheaper three *ratl* for *dirham*.⁹⁰ The scarcity and dearth of food continued through Rajab/September-October and Shaʿbān/October-November, reaching a peak in Shawwāl/December 1024-January 1025.⁹¹

Under the heavy shadow of famine and high mortality rates, communal life continued its pace determined by the timetable of Muslim and Christian holidays. The gap between the well-being of the ruling circles and the plight of the urban masses was immense. The ruling circles maintained their life-style, barely affected by the famine. The celebrations of Ramaḍān and the Festival of Breaking of the Ramaḍān Fast preceded as usual. Abū ʿl-Qāsim al-Jarjarāʿī, prepared for the last feast of Ramaḍān many figures made of sugar including seven in the shape of various palaces. These dishes, under guard and accompanied by drummers, were paraded through famine-stricken Fustāt.⁹² On the first of Shawwāl/7 December, the Festival of Breaking of Ramaḍān was celebrated in sumptuous meals given by the *imām* and by other high-ranking eunuchs of the court.⁹³ In contrast with these banquets the Christmas (celebrated on 25 Shawwāl/31 December) was a very sad festival. In addition to the high prices of food, the prices of drinking water in Fustāt soared.⁹⁴ On the night between third and fourth Dhū ʿl-Qaʿda/8 January 1025, the Christian festival of Immersion with its typical rites was celebrated. Al-Zāhir descended from his palace to Fustāt to watch the celebrations. When going through the town he could see for himself the death-toll that the famine had took among the population. The bodies of the dead were buried without being washed and

⁹⁰ Musabbiḥī, 47-8; Bianquis, "Une crise", 81.

⁹¹ Musabbiḥī, 52, 60-1, 67.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 65.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 66-7.

⁹⁴ Water was supplied to Fustāt from the Nile by water-carriers, being carried in waterskins on camels. (Musabbiḥī, 69). For the full horrors of the famine, see Musabbiḥī, 72-3; cf. Bianquis, "Une crise", 83.

shrouded. As an act of personal piety, al-Zāhir provided for the proper burial of the dead making the necessary allowances.⁹⁵ The rulers, although better nourished and enjoying a higher standard of living, were not totally immune from the effect of the diseases, especially not the young ones. On the night of the Immersion festival al-Zāhir's three-year old baby daughter died.⁹⁶

On 15 Dhū 'l-Qaʿda/18 January, al-Zāhir crossed Fustāt when going to one of his palaces. Everywhere he encountered starving, shouting people who cried out: "Hunger, hoy Commander of the Believers, hunger. Neither your father nor your grandfather did such things to us. In the name of Allāh, to Allāh we entrust our affair."⁹⁷ Those cries reflected the feelings that the regime had mishandled the situation. On the same day, either as a response to these protests or on his own initiative, the market supervisor took new steps. (Previously he punished *khabbāzūn* whom he had caught with defective weights.⁹⁸) Accompanied by a military unit, Ibn Dawwās gathered the brokers of wheat and the carriers of wheat to the granaries and flogged some of them. He made a list of 150 granaries and sealed them forbidding under heavy threats to sell wheat from them.⁹⁹ The purpose of his actions remains elusive; in times of shortage one would expect an opposite policy. The next day, (19 January) neither bread nor flour were available at the markets. The events of this day, marked by swift changes of policy, are known through Musabbihi's account. Masʿūd, a slave of al-Qāsim al-Jarjārī, the future vizier, in defiance of the market supervisor's orders, opened his granary and sold *tillis* of wheat (one *tillis* was equivalent to 67.5 kg.) for three *dīnārs*. Later, on at the same day, the market supervisor was summoned to the palace; he was accused of causing the famine and blamed for bringing the town to the verge of violent outburst. The unspecified people who rebuked him said: "[a document] in your handwriting is a evidence on your part—which serves against

⁹⁵ Musabbihi, 70, 71. In the Mamlūk times a special pious endowment for the burial of the corpses, *waqf al-turahāʾ*, was set up, see M. W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, (Princeton, 1977), 176-7. In fact already the Ikshidid ruler, Ibn Tughj, made similar arrangements for the proper burial of the dead. Allowances for that purpose were part of the pious endowment he dedicated for the hospital in Fustāt. Ibn Duqmaq, V, 99.

⁹⁶ Musabbihi, 70-1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 73.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 72.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 74; cf. Bianquis, "Une crise", 84-5.

you—that you undertook upon yourself to provide the town with bread and wheat until the time of the new harvest.” Following this conversation and in contrast with policies that Ibn Dawwās had announced just a few hours earlier, the millers were allowed to buy wheat from granaries at a fixed price of one *tillis* for 2.5 *dīnārs*, and the price of a load of flour was determined as 4 *dīnārs*. The price of bread was fixed at two and half *ratls* for *dirham*. The prices established by the market supervisor were considerably lower than those of the free market. In the early hours of the day, Maṣūd sold a *tillis* of wheat for 3 *dīnārs* while the price declared by Ibn Dawwās was 2,5 *dīnārs* only. The same applied to bread: following the sealing of the granaries two *ratls* of black bread were sold for 1.25 *dirham*. These measures brought some relief, and the next day al-Zāhir could go on a hunting expedition.¹⁰⁰ More radical steps were announced a few days later. Ibn Dawwās came from Cairo with a decree described as a favour granted by the Commander of the Believers to his flock. The duties imposed on grain at the docks of Fuṣṭāṭ grain port were abolished, and the official fixing of prices was ceased.¹⁰¹ Musabbihī speaks of a sudden abundance of bread. His description of plenty must be taken with more than a grain of salt. He is at pains to show the beneficial results of al-Zāhir’s magnanimity and care for the people. Both traits are urged in the Islamic and Ismāʿīlī political theory. In any event, the prices which prevailed in the market following the publication of the decree were very high.¹⁰² Further punitive actions were taken by the market supervisor against several flour merchants, including a prominent member of the trade.¹⁰³ Al-Zāhir continued to indulge in his passion for hunting although, in a very short time, the famine would encroach upon the confines of the royal palace as well.

On the eve of the Sacrificial Feast (celebrated on 10 Dhū ’l-Hijja/2 February) Aḥmad al-Jarjarā’ī (the brother of al-Qāsim) paid for the preparation of hundreds of figures made of sugar which were then paraded through Fuṣṭāṭ and brought to the palace.¹⁰⁴ Al-Zāhir performed the rituals associated with the

¹⁰⁰ Musabbihī, 74, 75; cf. Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, IV, 240.

¹⁰¹ Musabbihī, 75.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 79-80. The preparation of a variety of sugar figures on the occasion of Muslim festivals was a standard Fatimid practice. These were seen

festival at the open prayer ground outside Cairo, whereas the sacrifices he offered at the palace. A possibility of hunger-riots by the army was taken into account. The troops were ordered to stay and pray in their quarters.¹⁰⁵ Those steps did not prevent the looting of the sacrificial meat of the nine she-camels by soldiers who were on duty in the palace together with slaves of the palace. Also the food prepared for the feast usually attended by al-Zāhir and the high state dignitaries was looted.¹⁰⁶ The offering of the sacrifices continued the following days without being marked by violent disturbances.¹⁰⁷ The famine that engulfed the soldiers and the slaves of the palace was a reflection of the continuing price-rises in the capital.¹⁰⁸ Toward the end of Dhū 'l-Ḥijja/February full-scale hunger-riots erupted. Black slave troops joined by criminals descended on Fustāt. In the wake of the riots, which continued for two days, the prices soared.¹⁰⁹ This is the last piece of information recounted by Musabbiḥi regarding the crisis of 1024-5.

IV

The sources provide some additional data which are relevant for the topic under discussion. In 446/1054-5 (or in 444/1052-3), a famine caused by a low Nile struck Egypt. (This statement of Maqrīzī is not supported by Popper's statistics) The grain shortage was aggravated by the fact that the state granaries contained only enough grain needed for the current consumption of the palace.¹¹⁰ No long-term stores of grain were available to the regime. From the account of the events that followed we learn something of the wheat merchants' *modus operandi*. The merchants used to buy wheat from the fellahin in advance. These deals were recorded in the *dīwān* by the cashiers (*jahābidha*) in their registers (*rūznāmajāt*)¹¹¹ After being collected and treshed, the grain was shipped to the merchants' granaries. In face of the natural disaster that struck the country and the empty granaries, al-Yāzūrī intervened in the trade. He ordered the provincial tax directors (*'ummāl*) to prevent the

and much admired by Nāṣir-i Khusrau, (tran.) Thackston, 57.

¹⁰⁵ Musabbiḥi, 80.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 81-2.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹¹⁰ *Ighāthah*, 19; (tran.) Wiet, 21.

¹¹¹ *Itti'āz* II, 226, it is said that the deals were recorded in the *rūznāmaj* of the army, *jund*. This makes little sense and seems to be a copist error.

shipping of the grain to the merchants' granaries. The registers of the cashiers were produced and according to their records the grain belonging to the merchants was shipped to state granaries. In fact the state bought the grain of the merchants allowing them a profit between 1/8 to one *dīnār*. The grain thus accumulated in the empty state granaries was sold to the *khabbāzūn* who provided Fustāt and Cairo with bread.¹¹²

The second piece of information is about a crisis during the rule of the vizier al-Afdal who appointed the future vizier al-Ma'mūn to deal with the situation. Al-Ma'mūn forced the owners of the granaries to sell grain at a price of 30 *dīnārs* for 100 *irdabbs*. If they refused, he threatened to keep their granaries sealed until the arrival of the new harvest on the market. When grain in the privately-owned granaries ran out, al-Ma'mūn sold state grain (*ghillāt al-dīwān*) to the millers for the same price.¹¹³ The sale of grain from state granaries to the millers also took place under the rule of the vizier Ibn Ruzzīk. He and other members of the ruling circle distributed grain to the needy as a charity.¹¹⁴

d) Conclusions.

The involvement of the regimes in the grain trade and the provision of the imperial capital has a long tradition along the shores of the Mediterranean. In the case of Rome and Constantinople elaborate measures and a vast infrastructure were needed to cope with the task. The information about those problems and the research literature dealing with these two cities is far richer than the material available for medieval Islam.¹¹⁵ In Fustāt-Cairo of the Fatimid period, two elements played an important role in the grain market: the regime and the private merchants. The grain at the disposal of the ruling élite (i.e. the *imām* and the royal family and other members among the ruling circles) was intended 1) for their own current consumption; 2) for sale at a profit—the *matjar* practice; and 3) for long-term storage in case of an emergency. The rul-

¹¹² *Ighāthat*, 20; (tran.) Wiet, 22; *Itti'āz*, 226.

¹¹³ *Ighāthat*, 26; (tran.) Wiet, 28.

¹¹⁴ *Ighāthat*, 27; (tran.) Wiet, 29.

¹¹⁵ The bibliography on these topics is immense. See, for example, the relevant chapters in L. Casson's *Ancient Trade and Society*, (Detroit, 1984), and in *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, (ed) P. Garnsey (London, 1983). For Byzantium, see J. L. Teall, "The Grain Supply of the Byzantine Empire, 330-1025", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 13(1959), 87-140.

ing élite was immune from famine and could enjoy with impunity its usual life-style under the worst circumstances even when they failed to provide for those who depended directly on them such as the slaves and the servants of the palace.¹¹⁶ Others strived to acquire a similar control over their affairs, but only a tiny group of the urban population could achieve this. In 1025, Ibn 'Azza sealed 150 granaries in Fustāt-Cairo. We can assume that the number of those who had private stores of grain, which were not large enough to qualify as granaries, was larger than 150. But the population at large depended for its daily sustenance on the market.

In light of these conditions the attitudes and the policies of the regime in time of shortage in grain were of paramount importance. No regime can be totally indifferent to mass starvation of the urban population of its capital city, and the Fatimids were no an exception. However, the policies and the intensity of the commitment to provide for the population in times of need varied from regime to regime. Several Fatimid policies can be singled out:

1) In the years which were marked by the anticipation of a bad harvest in the coming year due to the Nile's behaviour no attempts to import grain are recorded in the sources. That improvised grain imports were possible is above any doubt. During August-September the level of the rising Nile became known. The sailing season from Egypt in the Fatimid period came to a halt during November-March.¹¹⁷ The regime thus had enough time to place orders for grain in the year preceding that which would be affected by the low Nile, and the imports could have arrived exactly when needed i.e. from April-May of the following year. Arguing from the silence of the sources is always hazardous. Nevertheless, the silence of the sources can serve as an indication of a marked indifference of the regime in the face of an impending famine.

2) This impression is supported by the actual policies the Fatimids took when dealing with difficulties in supplies of grain and high prices. a) The regime was very hesitant in abolishing custom duties levied on grain at the Fustāt grain port. b) Only once were granaries belonging to members of the ruling circles

¹¹⁶ The only exceptions were the circumstances during the civil war under al-Mustansir when the *imām* and his family were affected by famine.

¹¹⁷ Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 316-7; Pryor, *Geography*, 87-80. See also Goitein's remark on the availability of imported grain in Alexandria, *Med. Soc.*, IV, 240.

subjected to a policy of forced sales to meet increasing demand for grain. c) Only once, in the late Fatimid period, did the military vizier and others distribute grain for the needy as a pious act.

3) What the regime usually did was to attempt to regulate the grain trade by controlling the market and forcing the various elements involved in the trade and the bread production to comply with a policy of price regulation. It was a policy of intervention, but not a positive one. By “positive policy” I mean increasing the supplies beyond those normally available i.e. imports or opening of the state granaries. Without an infusion of grain from outside sources the policy of mere intervention had serious limits. The most that could have been achieved by those means is illustrated by the policies of al-Yāzūrī. He limited the profits of the merchants in order to ensure orderly supplies. Al-Ḥākim’s policy was, essentially, the same: the wealthier sections of the population were forced to sell their grain for fixed price to stabilize the market. Al-Ma’mūn followed these examples by forcing the owners of granaries to sell their grain, but he went one step further by selling state grain as well.

It seems to me that a clear conclusion can be drawn: the Fatimids were not inclined to commit their own resources when the population of the capital was faced with shortages of grain and famine. The regime was also hesitant to relinquish any income derived from the grain trade.

Two instances of popular protest against the regime by the starving population are recorded in our sources. (In the hunger riots of 1025, in the capital, troops and criminals participated, though not the population.) The popular protests occurred in extreme circumstances when the famine had already prevailed for a long time. These were desperate outbursts of anger. The cries of the people—“do not abandon us” to al-Ḥākim and “neither your father nor your grandfather did such things to us” to al-Zāhir—indicate that the population had some expectation from the regime to relieve their misery. These expectations were expressed when people were at the limits of their endurance. No popular protest is recorded in less extreme circumstances, i.e. at earlier stages of the famines. Apparently the people did know that they were left to their own devices.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ For a different approach, see Shoshan, “Grain Riots”, 459-78.

CHAPTER TEN

THE NON-MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

a) The Problem and the Methodology

I

The student of the non-Muslim communities in medieval Islam has at his disposal abundant sources as well as a large body of research literature. The methodology of the subject is nevertheless still ill-defined. G. E. von Grunebaum suggested the following approach to the subject:

Generalizing somewhat sweepingly, one may perhaps characterize the position of Jewry in classical Islam on the basis of seven factors, four of them belonging to the Near Eastern tradition preceding Islam and four of them introduced by Islam.¹

What is said about Jewry applies to Christians as well. Judaism and Christianity were seen by medieval Islam as Scriptural religions. Von Grunebaum eloquently capsulized the twofold approach of Islam towards Jews and Christians who, like the Muslims, are people of the book (*ahl al-kitāb*), and at the same time, are relegated to inferiority due to their continued adherence to religions which, from the Muslim stand, were surpassed by Islam. Jews and Christians who lived under the rule of Islam were in a position of protected people paying poll-tax (*ahl al-dhimma*). From the pre-Islamic Near Eastern political tradition, the concepts of self-rule and personal rather than territorial law were derived.

Von Grunebaum's methodological contribution, important as it is, leaves an impression of static relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims. Relationships between human societies when examined from a point of view of time and place are dynamic, even when the basic parameters governing their mutual relationships are static. Variables such as economic situation, internal stability, the character of the regime and the

¹ "The Eastern Jewry under Islam", *Viator*, 2(1971), 365.

political and military relationships between Islam and the outside world must be taken into consideration. One of the most important variables is the extent of Islamization of a given territory at a given time. The relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims are influenced as the demographic proportions between the two populations change.²

Another aspect that should to be examined is Muslim law. The payment of the poll-tax is discussed in writings of jurists. Other issues such as the existence of non-Muslim houses of worship, the right of the non-Muslim to maintain their pious endowments, the way non-Muslim worship should be conducted are also dealt with and referred to in legal and historical writings. The law dealing with non-Muslims evolved slowly. The most authoritative text, the so-called Covenant of 'Umar, appeared only in the twelfth century. The text is incorporated in a book written by the Sunnī jurist al-Turtūshī from Alexandria who, in 516/1122-3, conferred with al-Ma'mūn (see, chapter 8; section a, II).³

A legal monograph—*Aḥkāṁ Ahl al-Dhimma*—(The Laws of the Protected People), is even later.⁴ Since its appearance the Covenant of 'Umar became the standard term of reference governing the status of non-Muslims in Islam. The text pretends to be the original document of the conditions of capitulation of Syrian Christians to the Arabs in the seventh century. Modern scholarship proved that the document inspires no confidence in its claims. However, when the substance of the text is examined it becomes clear that the document consists of old ingredients; the various conditions spelt out in it can be traced to earlier historical and judicial writings. The document reflected both Muslim religious susceptibilities which had evolved over a long period of time as well as historical experience i.e. the

² My view has been influenced by R. W. Bulliet's observation about the link between conversion to Islam and the development of Islamic society, see *idem*, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*, (Cambridge Mass., 1979), I, 3.

³ For the text of the Covenant of 'Umar, see Turtūshī, *Sirāj al-Mulūk*, (Cairo, 1935), 252-3; English translation by N. A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, (Philadelphia, 1979), 157-8. For legal aspects, see A. Fattal, *Le statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d'Islam*, (Beirut, 1958); A. S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and their non-Muslim Subjects*, (London, 1930) (reprint, 1970); C. E. Bosworth, "The Concept of Dhimma in Early Islam", in B. Braude and B. Lewis (eds), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, (N. Y., 1983), II, 37-51. A. L. Udovitch attributes to the law a limited role in shaping the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, see his "The Jews of Islam in the High Middle Ages: A Case of Muslim View of Differences" in *Settimane di Studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, (Spoleto, 1980), 683.

various facets of Muslim relationships with the non-Muslim population of the Middle East since the Arab conquest of the region. The clauses of the supposed Covenant of 'Umar embodied both the realities of the existence of non-Muslims in medieval Islam and the Muslim outlook regarding the desirable status of the non-Muslims. The issue of the distinctive dresses for the non-Muslims mentioned in the Covenant illustrates how realities and vision merged together. It is true that no distinctive dresses were imposed on non-Muslims during the Fatimid period. But it would be misleading to regard the references to them in Ṭurṭūshī's text as his own invention. The concept of distinctive dresses was part of the mood of the times as exemplified by the impositions of Mutawakkil and al-Ḥākim. The latter threatened the non-Muslims with the annulment of the legal protection granted them, if they refused to comply to his ordinance.⁵ In practical terms, the threat meant that the lives of the non-Muslims would no longer be respected. Clearly in the view of al-Ṭurṭūshī the desirable situation should be an obligatory imposition of distinctive dresses on the non-Muslims. His vision of what is desirable had been influenced by what on certain occasions was the actual policy of Muslim rulers.

II

For several reasons the Fatimid period is well suited to serve as a case study of the position of non-Muslim in medieval Islam.

1) An important variable: the extent of Islamization is neutralized when dealing with Fatimid Egypt, as no significant Islamization took place under the Fatimids.⁶ The last point needs some elaboration. Egypt was Islamized in the ninth century prior to the Fatimid conquest of the country. This wave of Islamization brought about a partial Islamization of the population, a fact well attested to by the geographers of the second half of the tenth century. The Copts continued to constitute a very significant segment of the population even the majority of the population in some places, including towns which served as important centres of textile manufacture.⁷ The Coptic church

⁴ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, (Damascus, 1961), 2 vols.

⁵ Antākī, 200.

⁶ I have examined this question in "Persecutions and Conversion to Islam in Eleventh-Century Egypt", in *The Medieval Levant. Studies in Memory of Eliyahu Ashtor*, AAS, 22(1988) 89-91.

⁷ Muqaddasī, 201, 213.

maintained its position in rural areas as the religious authority and as landlord to whom the peasants paid dues.⁸ Two factors were the driving force behind Islamization and changes in the ethnic composition of the population in Egypt. The arrival of Arabs to Egypt during the Umayyad period, and the suppression of tax-rebellions in the ninth century.⁹ As the reasons that had set the process of Islamization were no longer in force, the process of Islamization came to a halt. The final Islamization of Egypt, in which the Copts were reduced to a tiny minority, took place only in the Mamlūk period.¹⁰

2) The question as to what extent Fatimid realities are reflected in the text of the Covenant of ‘Umar is intriguing. Especially in light of the importance and the authority the text had gained in later periods.¹¹

3) During the 220 years of Fatimid rule, the balance of power between Islam and Christendom shifted radically. To what degree this shift had repercussions on the position of non-Muslims under Fatimid rule? This question is especially important as the period of the Crusade is seen by many scholars as playing a major role in the hardening of Muslim attitudes towards non-Muslims in the later middle ages.¹²

The sections that follow are devoted to the examination of some issues that shaped the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. The issues discussed are chosen because of their importance, and the availability of data. This examination provides some answers to the questions posed above.

b) The Existence of non-Muslim Houses of Worship

I

The Muslim attitudes towards non-Muslim houses of worship,

⁸ Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, III, part 1, 1 (Arabic), 1 (English).

⁹ Morimoto, "Land Tenure in Egypt", 124-6; *idem*, *The Fiscal Administration*, 146-72.

¹⁰ Lev, "Persecutions and Conversion", 73-5. In support of the conclusions reached there can be cited the recent study of M. Martin, "La province d'Āsmūnayn: historique de sa configuration religieuse", *AI* 23(1987), 23-4. The author advocates (p. 25) caution when applying his findings for the whole of Egypt. However, in the context of other studies on the Islamization of Egypt, his findings and not his warning are the significant ones.

¹¹ For Ṭurtūshi's attitudes towards Christians, see Leiser, 37-8.

¹² For example, see E. Ashtor, *The History of the Jews in Egypt and Syria under the Mamlūks*, (Jerusalem, 1944), I, 31 (in Hebrew).

as embodied in the various versions of the Covenant of 'Umar, can be summarised as follow: no building of new houses of worship is permitted neither is the restoration of the dilapidated ones.¹³ On the other hand, in the texts of the different capitulation treaties between the Arabs and the population of the Middle East, in the seventh century, there are clauses which explicitly ensure the safety of churches and synagogues.¹⁴ The safety of churches had been already granted in the treaty between Muḥammad and the Christians of Najrān.¹⁵ For the non-Muslim communities the ability to maintain their houses of worship was a matter of paramount importance. These served as focal points of religious and social life as is clearly born out by Jewish and Christian sources.¹⁶ The congruity between the Coptic community and the church is mirrored in the account of a re-population of a small village in the Egyptian countryside (*ṛīf*). The erection of the church was an integral part of setting up of the settlement.¹⁷ Like the mosques for the Muslims, churches, monasteries and synagogues, were objects of piety of the individual believers who had established them and donated endowments in their favour. In this section the Egyptian situation will be examined focusing on the realities of pre-Fatimid and Fatimid periods vis-à-vis the provisions of the Covenant of 'Umar.

Early Fustāt was an Arab-Muslim town planted in midst of a Christian environment. About ten churches and monasteries were within the enclosure of the fortress-town of Babylon. Many others were in the nearby and the more far away surrounding area, including the island of Jazīra, and in Jiza. Some Jewish presence in the area is also attested to. Two synagogues: one in Babylon and the other in Jiza, are mentioned in the sources.¹⁸ In accordance with Arab general practice, the capitulation treaty of Egypt included a pledge for the safety of churches and the autonomy of the church.¹⁹ Churches were built within the area of Fustāt itself, in the first Muslim century (seven-eight centuries C.E.). The erection of churches was an outcome of

¹³ Tritton, 6, 7; Fattal, 174-203.

¹⁴ Tritton, 9-10; Fattal, 18-60.

¹⁵ Fattal, 22-6; J. B. Simonsen, *Studies in the Genesis and Development of the Caliphal Taxation System*, (Copenhagen, 1987), 56-7.

¹⁶ Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, II, 155-71.

¹⁷ Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, part 2, 119 (Arabic), 179-80 (English).

¹⁸ W. Kubiak, *Al-Fustāt its Foundation and Early Urban Development*, (Warsaw, 1982), 81-2, 129-30, 168, 170.

¹⁹ Simonsen, 138.

the local conditions. With the Arab tribal contingents which settled in Fustāt there were also Christian troops from Syria. They occupied the area known as al-Ḥamrā' which was divided into three sections. The existence of a Jewish or Jewish-Islamized group is also mentioned.²⁰ Fustāt from its inception attracted settlers from the local Coptic population.²¹ Another contributing factor was the policy of the Umayyad Caliphs, and of local governors who permitted the building of churches in Fustāt. In the town of Ḥulwān built by the Umayyad Caliphs in Egypt, churches were built on the order of the governor.²² In 117/735-6, the building of a Coptic church in the Ḥamrā' district of Fustāt, although authorized by the governor, provoked the objection of a certain fanatic who tried to assassinate the governor. The killing of the fanatic sparked off clashes between the *qurrā'* and the governor.²³ During the Abbasid period (second half of the eighth century and into the ninth century), the building of new churches is recorded and, on the other hand, churches were also pulled down.²⁴

By the tenth century, some of the attitudes later embodied in the Covenant of 'Umar, were already prevailing among the Muslims, manifesting themselves in an incident which took place in 938. In these events the question of the permissibility to restore churches that had fallen into ruin came to the fore. The ruler of Egypt, Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj, was offered money to authorize a restoration of the Abū Shenūda church which had partly collapsed. Aware of the sensitivity of the issue he asked the jurists for a legal opinion. Opinions among the jurists were divided; two of them forbade the restoration while one jurist assented to the Christians' request. The jurist who had been in favour of the restoration was assaulted by a mob which clashed with soldiers. Ibn Ṭughj yielded to the pressure, and the restoration works were not carried out. As far as one can ascertain from the sources, Ibn Ṭughj's attitude towards the non-Muslim was not bigotry. On another occasion, his harrassment of the Christians was aimed merely at extorting money,

²⁰ Kubiak, 95.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

²² Abū Sālih, 154-7; cf. E. L. Butcher, *The Story of the Church of Egypt*, (London, 1897), (reprinted, N. Y., 11975), I, 388; I. M. Lapidus, "The Conversion of Egypt to Islam", *JOS*, 2(1972), 249-50; Kubiak, 123.

²³ Kindī, 77-8; for the controversy about the meaning of the term, see T. Nagel, "Kurra'", *E.I.* 2, V, 499-500.

²⁴ Abū Sālih, 84-6.

and a payment could buy his goodwill and cooperation. He, however, was fully aware of a different, religiously inspired, attitudes among his subjects. In the case of the collapsed church, the regime was forced to adopt policies which were against his attitudes.²⁵

II

In the light of the prevailing anti-Christian feelings among the Muslim masses of Fustāt,²⁶ the permission granted by al-Muʿizz to build a new church was particularly shocking. The works were carried out in spite of a bitter resistance of a local fanatic.²⁷ In 366/976-7, al-ʿAzīz permitted the full restoration of the church of Abū Shenūda which was the cause for unrest under Ibn Ṭughj.²⁸ Christian sources describe the reign of al-Muʿizz and al-ʿAzīz as a period of a “great peace for the churches”.²⁹ This remark is undoubtedly correct, and could be extended to include even al-Ḥākim’s rule prior to his religious persecutions.³⁰ The possibility of erecting churches in Fustāt, on the eve of al-Ḥākim’s anti-*dhimmi* policies, is hinted at by Muslim as well as Christian sources. Although it is difficult to accept at face value the account found in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* about a Muslim youth, a son of a witness from Fustāt, who abandoned Islam in favour of Christianity and built a church. His apostacy, claims the chronicler, was authorized by al-Ḥākim. An official ratification of such a deed is highly im-

²⁵ Ibn Hajar, (ed) Guest, 554-5; cf: Tritton, 53-4. In my view A. L. Udovitch underestimates the centrality of the religious factor in shaping the Muslim attitude towards the non-Muslims, as is illustrated by these events, see his “The Jews and Islam”, 664-5.

²⁶ Ibn Zūlāq, 23, 36, 43; cf: van Ess, 31-2.

²⁷ Quatremère, (1837), 190-2; *Ittiʿāz*, I, 225

²⁸ Ibn Hajar, (ed) Guest 554-5, cf: Tritton, 54; for a description of this church, see A. J. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches*, (Oxford, 1884) (reprint, 1970), I, 135-46. Another incident of church restoration is recorded as taking place under al-ʿAzīz by a Christian source. A sugar-cane store in the Lower Ḥamrā’ quarter of Fustāt which once had been a church was restored to its original function. The mob objected but al-ʿAzīz permitted the restoration, protecting the Christians and even offering them financial help. Abū Ṣāliḥ, 116-9.

²⁹ Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, II, part 2, 100 (Arabic), 150-1 (English).

³⁰ For this period, only one instance of a different approach is known. In Alexandria, Jawhar’s troops pulled down a church which had originally served as a temple of Saturn. But this deed did not reflect a general intolerant attitude. On the site of the royal palace built by Jawhar in Cairo there was a monastery which Jawhar destroyed and re-built in another location. This was the so-called Diyar al-Khandaq. (*Khitaṭ*, IV, 269, 418).

probable; contrasting even with the tenor of the account itself which portrays the dread of the youth and Christians in general from the consequences of the deed.³¹ A more acceptable version is told by the Armenian writer Abū Šāliḥ who simply says that two officials during al-Ḥākim's rule restored a monastery in Fustāt.³² Also under al-Ḥākim, north of Fustāt, a church was restored by Faḍl ibn Šāliḥ, a man who had been in the service of the vizier Ibn Killis.³³ In a late Muslim source there is an account of an attempt of the Copts to re-build a ruined church in the area of Rāshida. The Muslims responded by demolishing what had been built by the Christians, and the matter was brought to al-Ḥākim who set up an inquiry into the affair. The Christians claimed that the church was an ancient one. Al-Ḥusayn ibn Jawhar, who headed the inquiry, inclined in favour of the Christians, al-Ḥākim, however, decided otherwise. He ordered the church to be destroyed and to build a congregational mosque in its place. When the mosque was completed, other nearby churches were destroyed.³⁴ The destruction of the neighboring churches is explained by the feeling that the proximity of non-Muslim houses of worship to mosques is offensive and obstructive.³⁵

Destruction of other non-Muslim houses of worship by al-Ḥākim reveal that these were also built in Cairo. It must be remembered that the circumstances in Egypt, at the time that Cairo was established, were quite different from those at the time of Fustāt's foundation. The Coptic demographic majority had been eroded; Muslim society was already formed; Fustāt was predominantly a Muslim town and a hostile approach toward churches was alive among the Muslims. The establishment of churches and synagogues in Cairo needed the authorization of the regime or, at least, its tacit consent. The contrast between reality and the late legal views of the problem is

³¹ Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, part 2, 108-9 (Arabic), 163-4 (English).

³² Abū Šāliḥ, 128.

³³ *Ibid.*, 47, 201.

³⁴ Maqrīzī in *Khīṭat* cites the history of Aleppo by Ibn Abī Ṭayy, under the events of 393, see *op. cit.*, IV, 64, IV, 418; Al-Nābulsi, (ed) Cl. Cahen in *BIFAO*, (1960), 140. The history of the building of this mosque is given in detail by Musabbihī. He confirms that the mosque was built on a site of a ruined church, but is reticent about the attempt to re-build the church and the inquiry ordered by al-Ḥākim. (*Khīṭat*, IV, 63-4.)

³⁵ For examples from other place and period revealing the same Muslim sentiment, see A. Cohen, *Jewish Life under Islam. Jerusalem in the Sixteenth Century*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), 77-84.

striking. Among Cairo's churches destroyed by al-Ḥākim there were two in the Rūm quarter. These had been converted to mosques. However, the Rūm Christians who left Cairo moved to the Ḥamrā' district of Fustāt and erected there three churches.³⁶ The synagogue of the Karaite Jews in Cairo was also demolished and made into a mosque.³⁷ The non-Muslim houses of worship made into mosques were permanently lost for the Christians and the Jews, though other houses of worship which had been destroyed were restored.³⁸ These restorations must be seen in the context of al-Ḥākim's reversion from his previous policies.

Al-Ḥākim's religious persecutions, regarded by the Fatimid regime as an aberration, made no impact on subsequent years of the Fatimid rule. In 429/1037-8, the permissibility to restore non-Muslims houses of worship again became an alive issue. The Rabbanic Jews in Cairo had to defend themselves, before the chief Ismā'īlī cadi, against the allegation that the synagogue in the Zuwayla quarter had been recently built. What is worth noting in this case is the fact that many distinguished Muslims were ready to testify in support of Jews' claim that the synagogues was an old one, being a part of long-established Jewish pious endowment.³⁹ This willingness to speak in favour of the Jews reflects a tranquil atmosphere in the Jewish-Muslim relationships. The small Jewish communities attracted less hostility than the Copts.

The large and viable Coptic communities in the rural area were seen by pious Muslim as a continuous affront to Islam, and by the authorities as a potential source of fiscal extortion.⁴⁰ The fusion of religious bigotry against the Copts and governmental greed for gain is illustrated by events that took place during the vizierate of al-Yāzūrī. A certain cadi submitted a complaint claiming that the village of Damrū, where the Coptic Patriarch resided, resembled Constantinople. There were many churches in the village among those some recently restored. The cadi suggested to al-Yāzūrī to close the churches and to

³⁶ *Khitat*, IV, 65; Antākī, 186.

³⁷ Lev, "Persecutions and Conversions", 79-80.

³⁸ Abū Ṣāliḥ, 130, 139, 149-50, 182, 219.

³⁹ R. J. H. Gottheil, "An Eleventh Century Document Concerning a Cairo Synagogue", *JQR*, 19(1907), 474-5, 478; for a new translation of this document, see Stüllman, 189-91.

⁴⁰ This viability is mirrored by a passing remark about building of many churches in the rural area, see Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, part 2, 119 (Arabic), 179-80 (English).

impose a fine on the Christians.⁴¹ In accordance with the standard procedures in such cases, al-Yāzūrī requested testimonies in support of the accusations made by the *cadi*. In 447/1055-6, it was said that al-Yāzūrī ordered the closing of all churches in Egypt. This seems to be a wild exaggeration on the part of the Coptic chronicler. Apparently, the affair was ended after a heavy payment was made to Nāṣir al-Dawla ibn Ḥamdān who was then in charge of military forces in the eastern and western *riḡ*.⁴²

In the period of the civil war under al-Mustaṣṣir many churches were demolished and monks killed. The killing was perpetuated by a black military leader in 458/1065-6 in Ash-mūnayn.⁴³ Also other parties which were involved in the civil war: the supporters of Ibn Ḥamdān, and the Lawāta Berbers, oppressed Christians.⁴⁴ The same combination of a general break-down of law and order with particular victimizing of Christians is discernible in the last years of Fatimid rule in Egypt. Most of the acts of maltreatment of Christians were committed by the expeditionary force of Nūr al-Dīn. Churches were pulled down and, on other occasions, timber and church treasuries were looted. Such cases are recorded in the Ḥamrā' district of Fustāt, in Jīza as well as in other places outside the capital.⁴⁵

Conclusions: The attitudes toward the existence, restoration and building of new non-Muslim houses of worship are important indicators for the tenor of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims communities. Much energy and determination were invested by the non-Muslims in attempts to restore decaying houses of worship or those destroyed deliberately by the state or the mob. The Muslim approach to the problem evolved slowly. A differentiation between the stand of the masses, the jurists and the regime ought to be made. In the first decades following the Arab conquest of Egypt, the attitude toward non-Muslim houses of worship was relaxed but hard-

⁴¹ The *cadi* was Ibn 'Alī al-Sayraqī whose career was sketched by the Christian chronicler who recorded these events. Al-Sayraqī served as a witness in Fustāt and later as *cadi* and controller in Alexandria. His next post brought him to the Egyptian countryside (*riḡ*). This assignment was certainly a down-grading of his position after serving in the main towns of Egypt. Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, part 3, 176 (Arabic), 267 (English).

⁴² Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, part 3, 176-7 (Arabic), 267-9 (English).

⁴³ Abū Ṣāliḥ, 252.

⁴⁴ Ibn al-Muqaffa', II, part 3, 182-3 (Arabic), 278-9 (English).

⁴⁵ Abū Ṣāliḥ, 90-1, 94-5, 96, 97, 119, 174, 198, 237.

ened with time. The negative stand of the Muslim masses manifested itself clearly as early as 737 and, by the tenth century, was firmly solidified. By the tenth century, the Muslim jurists approached the problem of the non-Muslim houses of worship by drawing a distinction between those which had existed prior to the conquest and those established after the conquest.

The attitude of the Fatimid *imāms*, with the exception of al-Ḥākim, toward churches and monasteries (and apparently synagogues as well) was generally relaxed and not bigoted.⁴⁶ Moreover cases of royal support extended to churches and monasteries by the Fatimid *imāms* are known. This support went beyond the standard confirmation of rights of the monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai desert.⁴⁷ Fatimid *imāms* granted land to churches as a pious endowment.⁴⁸ Jewish religious institutions such as the Jerusalem Yeshiva were also financially supported by the Fatimid authorities.⁴⁹ The Fatimid *imāms* in their personal conduct did not hesitate to visit churches and monasteries.⁵⁰ When going on hunting al-Āmir, made a monastery as his base. He built there a pavilion, and the monks were given large sums of money. The monastery was endowed with land by the *imām*.⁵¹ Al-Ḥāfiẓ and later al-Zāfir, used to visit the place and to support the church.⁵²

⁴⁶ Although a few incidents of destruction of churches or monasteries under Fatimid *imāms* (other than al-Ḥākim) took place. For example, a demolition of a Melkitet church in the Zuwayla quarter of Cairo is recorded during the rule of al-Āmir. The church was re-built in the area of orchards around Cairo. In the time of al-Ḥāfiẓ's rule, on the site of the destroyed church in Zuwayla, a mosque was erected. (Abū Ṣāliḥ, 5, 129, 158-9). On the other hand, cases of restoration of churches and monasteries are also recorded. (*Idem*, 182, 194-5).

⁴⁷ This topic is dealt with by Stern, in his *Decrees*; see also Richards, "A Fatimid Petition".

⁴⁸ Those were modest donations; 915 feddans and, 30 feddans in another case. (Abū Ṣāliḥ, 15, 147, 183, 251; cf. Wiet, *Matériaux*, 178-9; Cohen, 54).

⁴⁹ J. Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*, (Oxford, 1969), (reprint), I, 38-9, 71-2; Cohen, 53.

⁵⁰ It was not completely unprecedented behaviour. The son of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn was fascinated by the sculptures of Jesus and Mary in the Qaṣir monastery. These sculptures were widely admired and attracted many visitors. He built on the upper floor of the monastery a room for himself from which he could watch the sculptures while drinking wine. (Shābushtī, *Kitāb al-Diyārūt*, [ed] K. 'Awwād [Baghdad, 1951], 184; Abū Ṣāliḥ, 146, 148-9).

⁵¹ Abū Ṣāliḥ, 182-3, 187.

⁵² *Ibid*, 138-40.

c) The Employment of Non-Muslims in Administration.

In the Mamlūk period the employment of non-Muslim officials in the administration was a source of tension between the regime and the religious circles and the masses. The wielding of executive power by these officials over Muslims was usually interpreted as supremacy of Christianity or Judaism over Islam gained with the backing of the regime. Very little of this tension is noted during the Fatimid period.

Christians and Jews were massively employed in the Fatimid administration; in its various branches, and on different levels from low-ranking posts up to the rank of vizier. The prominence of non-Muslims in the administrative organs of Muslim Egypt preceded the Fatimid period. The persistence of Coptic administrative personnel was an outcome of several factors. 1) The agrarian administration was very complex and not easily mastered. In it, the Copts played an important role at the local level as well as at the central offices in the capital.⁵³ 2) The administrative knowledge was passed on by the officials in their families when fathers employed their sons, thus maintaining the hold of the family over posts.⁵⁴ 3) The large number of Christians in the administration also reflected the partial Islamization of Egypt; it was a situation that prevailed prior to the Fatimid rule and did not change under the Fatimids.

In the Fatimid period, nevertheless, there are some notable examples of Christians and Jews attaining the highest administrative posts. These included the Christian vizier of al-ʿAzīz, ʿIsā ibn Nestorius, two Christian chief administrators of al-Ḥākim, but the most striking case was that of Bahrām, the Armenian Christian vizier of al-Ḥāfiẓ. Among the Jews, Abū Saʿd al-Tustarī became a most influential person in the state while serving as the head of the Office of al-Mustanṣir's mother. These were unprecedented cases; in pre-Fatimid Egypt the non-Muslims were barred from holding the post of vizier. No parallel examples of employment of non-Muslim viziers are known among other Muslim regimes contemporary with the Fatimids.

Upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that only

⁵³ An agrarian administrative know-how was an important asset in fostering one's personal career. One of the accounts explaining the meteoric rise of Ibn Killis says that he was extremely knowledgeable in agrarian matters. Another Fatimid vizier, al-Yāzūrī, was of rural background, a village notable in Palestine.

⁵⁴ See chapter, 4; cf. D. S. Richards' remarks about the Mamlūk period, in his "The Coptic Bureaucracy under the Mamlūks", 373-81.

under al-ʿAzīz and al-Ḥāfiẓ, did non-Muslims attain the post of vizier. The personalities of these two Fatimid rulers can explain the employment of Christian viziers. They certainly were not religious fanatics. Al-Ḥāfiẓ was remarkable for his ideological flexibility and expedient policies. Al-ʿAzīz had a Christian Melkite wife who was the mother of al-Ḥākim and the princess Sitt al-Mulk.⁵⁵ Al-ʿAzīz also appointed two brothers of his Christian wife as Patriarchs: of the capital and of Jerusalem.⁵⁶ During al-Ḥākim's rule, the Patriarch of Jerusalem was instrumental in negotiating a truce with the Byzantines. Eventually he went to Constantinople where he died after a stay of four years.⁵⁷

For the whole Fatimid period only one instance of popular protest against Christian and Jewish officials is recorded. During the vizierate of ʿIsā ibn Nestorius a petition against Christian and Jewish officials was submitted to al-ʿAzīz, and verses condemning the regime were circulated in the capital. Al-ʿAzīz appeased the critics by removing, at least temporarily, the non-Muslim officials from the administration.⁵⁸ The Fatimid regime, on his initiative, acted only twice against its non-Muslim officials: they were dismissed from their posts by al-Ḥākim and, during the vizierate of Ridwān, at a time of intense anti-Christian feelings which focused on Bahrām and the Armenians.

d) The Celebration Non-Muslim Festivals.

Jurists of the Mamlūk period, notably Ibn Taymiyya, were strongly opposed to participation of Muslims in non-Muslim festivals.⁵⁹ Their objection was in line with the general attitude advocating social segregation between Muslims and non-Muslims. The issue of non-Muslim worship and, to a lesser extent of their festivals, is dealt with by the Covenant of ʿUmar. In

⁵⁵ Antākī, 164. For a Christian dry nurse (*hādīna*) employed in the royal palace, at the time of al-Zāhir, and her high standing, see Musabbiḥī, 79.

⁵⁶ Antākī, 164-5; cf. C. E. Bosworth, "The Protected Peoples (Christians and Jews) in Medieval Egypt and Syria", *BJRL* 62(1979), 22.

⁵⁷ Antākī, 184. For a possible employment of a Christian official in a diplomatic mission to Constantinople by al-Afdal, see Mann, I, 211-2.

⁵⁸ *Ittiʿāz*, I, 297; Ibn Zāfir, 40-1. These events are narrated by late authorities who did not indicate which contemporary sources they cite. The question whether they faithfully recorded these events, or moulded them to suit their own conceptions should be asked. Precaution from accepting these accounts at their face value is needed.

⁵⁹ M. U. Memon, *Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle Against Popular Religion*, (The Hague-Paris, 1976), 3-4, 6.

general, Christians and Jews were allowed to worship and celebrate their festivals, but they had to behave in a subdued manner; not to offend Muslim feelings by a too loud and conspicuous performance of their rites.⁶⁰

The evidence from pre-Fatimid and Fatimid Egypt reveals quite a different realities. A nice illustration of these realities is provided by the well-known description of the festival of Immersion (*ʿīd al-ghitās*—Epiphany) of 330/941-2. The Muslims massively and actively took part in the celebration, and the ruler, Ibn Ṭughj, watched the event from his palace.⁶¹ A very similar description is preserved from the reign of al-Zāhir. On the night of the festival, the *imām* accompanied by his women-folk left Cairo for a palace in Fustāt from which he watched the rites of immersion. The palace was brightly illuminated by torches, and the chief of police was ordered to keep the Muslim and the Christian bathers in the Nile separated.⁶² The Melkite Christians held a procession from their church in Qaṣr al-Shamʿ (the old Byzantine town) to the shores of the Nile where a sermon in Arabic in the name of the ruler was delivered.⁶³

The celebration of Epiphany was not an isolated case of the regime extending its auspices to Christian festivals. In Jerusalem, the Christian procession on Palm Sunday (*ʿīd al-shaʿānīn*) used to cross the town and was attended by the governor whose very appearance discouraged troubles. In Fustāt and other towns, churches were decorated with palm and olive branches which later were distributed among the people who believed in their blessing powers⁶⁴ The Jews in Jerusalem were less fortunate; they had to buy the good will of the authorities to allow them to hold a procession through the town to the Mount of Olives on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles.⁶⁵

The participation of Muslims in Christian festivals is only one of many other examples of religious syncretism typical of medieval Muslim Egypt. This syncretism manifested itself in beliefs and practices encompassing the whole spectrum of society from the common people at the bottom to the ruling circles at the top. One of the surprising aspects was the involvement of

⁶⁰ Tritton, 100, 113-4; Fattal, 203-14.

⁶¹ Masʿūdi cited in *Khīṭat*, II, 26-7

⁶² Musabbiḥī, 70-1

⁶³ Antākī, 196

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁵ Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, II, 284-5.

or, to put it differently, the absorption of, the regime in the the syncretic mood of the times. The regime used some Christian festivals, as it did some Muslims ones, as an occasion for the distribution of garments and money among the people in the service of the state and the dynasty. On the occasion of Maundy Thursday (*khamīs al-ʿahd*), special *dīnārs* were struck and divided among state employees (*arbāb al-rusūm* or, in another version, *ahl al-dawla*, the ruling circles).⁶⁶ On the occasion of the Coptic New Year, Nawrūz, the state employees would receive garments and food.⁶⁷

The belief in Christian ascetics and saints by Muslims was widespread and shared by viziers and simple people alike. Ibn Ruzzīk, when serving as governor of Ashmūnayn, visited a monk in Asyūt who had earned fame by his long fasts. When they met, the monk foretold Ibn Ruzzīk's attainment of the vizierate. Upon the realisation of the prophesy, Ibn Ruzzīk bestowed on the monastery a grant of land.⁶⁸ Shāwar, who aspired for the vizierate while serving as governor of Qūs, made a vow in favour of a church which he fulfilled upon his nomination.⁶⁹ The information about Ibn Ruzzīk and Shāwar comes from Christian-Arabic sources whose reliability can be doubted. Christian authors might have had interest in depicting Fatimid *imāms* and viziers as patrons of churches and monasteries and people who believed in Christian ascetics. Such an image of the regime was instrumental to deter harassment of the Christians and attempts to demolish churches. Nowstanding these considerations, the accounts taken at face value are plausible and indirectly supported by other beliefs and practices that were common to Muslim and Christians. An inscription from the Fatimid period explains a construction of a mosque as a result of a dream.⁷⁰ A similar motif is found in the account of a bedouin visited in his dream by a Christian saint who ordered him to build a church. The deed provoked an angry response from the Muslims who brought about the arrest of the bedouin. The church itself, nevertheless, remained intact.⁷¹ The conception that a dream was a channel of communication with the

⁶⁶ *Khitat*, II, 27, 392.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, II, 31-2.

⁶⁸ Abū Ṣālih, 250-1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 69.

⁷⁰ Wiet, *Matériaux*, (1930), 161.

⁷¹ Abū Ṣālih, 234-5.

divine, and that its vision was thus binding was clearly shared by Muslims and Christians.

e) Conclusions.

Many scholars, among them authorities of the calibre of G. Wiet and S. D. Goitein and S. M. Stern, have noted the tolerant conduct of the Fatimid regime toward non-Muslims. What were the reasons for and the manifestations of these tolerant policies? Both Goitein and Stern, who approached the problem from different points of view and from different sources, have not attributed this tolerance to any particular religious outlook of the Fatimid regime or Ismā'īlī Islam in general.⁷² More common is the explanation that the Ismā'īlī regime, itself in a position of minority in a predominantly Sunnī country, adopted tolerant policies toward the non-Muslims and, one may add, toward the Sunnī population as well. Especially as the Copts were during the whole Fatimid period a very significant segment of the population.⁷³

Our sources depict the policies of the regime, but say nothing about the motives behind them. These policies can be summed up as follow:

1) Throughout the Fatimid rule in Egypt very few violent outbursts against non-Muslims are recorded. Those which did take place (with the exception of al-Ḥākim) were not a result of instigation by the regime or its tacit support. In the Ikhshidid period, Christians in Fustāt were attacked when Muslim armies in Syria had been defeated by the Byzantines. Such incidents did not happen under the Fatimids, nor when Fatimid armies were beaten by the Byzantines neither when they were defeated by the Crusaders. In 386/996, the attack on the Christians in Fustāt was a by-product, so to speak, of riots aimed primarily against Amalfian merchants. Other instances of violence against non-Muslims occurred at a time of breakdown of law and order (during the civil war under Mustanşir), or by troops of Nūr al-Dīn's force. Fatimid *imāms* (al-Ḥākim not included) did not initiate neither did they encourage violence against non-Muslim communities. A distinction should be made between the *imāms* and the viziers. Instances of hostilities against local Christian communities originated from the viziers. The

⁷² Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 31; Stern, *Studies*, 85-95.

⁷³ Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 31.

background for these incidents was twofold: the struggle against Christian Armenians in Egypt and the Crusaders. It was a short spasm which quickly abated.

2) The same difference can be noted between the Fatimid *imāms* and their tolerant attitude toward non-Muslim houses of worship, and the more stringent approach of their viziers.

3) The Fatimids regarded themselves as divinely-guided infallible *imāms*. This self-view made the Fatimid ruler far more resolute in implementing his wish in religious matters when compared with his Sunnī vizier (or even Sunnī rulers such as Ibn Ṭughj and later the Mamlūks) who felt obliged to seek the authorization of the religious circles. I do not negate what Goitien and Stern have said about the absence of any uniquely typical Fatimid (or Ismāʿīlī) approach toward non-Muslims. What I am trying to show is that some concepts peculiar to Fatimid (Ismāʿīlī) religious self-view might explain Fatimid policies. This leads to the question of how the difference between the centrality of the issue of employment of non-Muslim in the Mamlūk period, and its marginality in the Fatimid period can be explained. There is no evidence or reason to assume that the employment of non-Muslim officials aroused less hostility in the Fatimid times than under the Mamlūks. The difference between the periods could be explained by the different characters of the regimes and the activity of the religious circles. The Fatimid regime, in contrast with the Mamlūk, did not seek and did not need the approval of the religious circles for policies which touched upon religious issues such as the employment of non-Muslims. For the Ismāʿīlī jurists and propagandists the Fatimid *imām* as a possessor of superhuman knowledge was the absolute authority in interpreting of Koran and law. The *imām* was regarded as infallible and the Ismāʿīlis lived by his guidance and rulings. Ismāʿīlī religious circles were certainly not the source of possible pressure on the *imām* on any issue. These were not merely abstract motions divorced from day-to-day realities. In 520/1126-7, al-Āmir appointed a monk, Abū Najāḥ, as tax-collector to extort money from Christians who had hidden treasures. Abū Najāḥ extended his activities against Muslims as well. Eventually, the outcry against the monk reached al-Āmir who ordered the execution of Abū Najāḥ, but was concerned because his infallibility was at stake.⁷⁴ The dilemma of the Fatimid *imām*, his basic reluctance to yield

⁷⁴ *Ittiʿāz*, III, 119, 125-7, esp., 127; Ibn Muyassar, (ed) Sayyid 105, 108-9.

to external pressures, and the deep motives behind this reluctance are nicely portrayed here.

4) In other aspects the position of the non-Muslims in Fatimid Egypt tallied with the concepts and the general mood of Islamic high middle ages. For example the participation and the contribution of the regime to religious syncretism was not characteristic of Fatimids alone. The Abbasid Caliphs behaved in a very similar way. Nawrūz was a festival officially recognized by the Abbasids. The popular celebrations: masked actors, the sprinkling of water and the lighting of fires, resembled those in Cairo.⁷⁵ Mutawakkil minted on Nawrūz five million *dirhams* which he distributed among state officials. In fact the festival had reached Egypt from the Eastern Islamic lands. Occasional attempts, like those of al-Muʿizz, to restrain the celebrations failed. Also other Persian festivals were celebrated by the Abbasid.⁷⁶ All those examples are from the period prior to the Buyid ascedancy to power which brought in its wake a revival of Persian customs.

⁷⁵ M. M. Ahsan, *Social Life Under the Abbasids*, (London, 1979), 270, 286.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 287-8, 290, 291, 294.

CONCLUSIONS

The Fatimid state in Egypt had an unmistakable Ismāʿīlī character. The main features of its Ismāʿīlī tenor can be summarised as follow: 1) Religious rites were conducted according to practices accepted to the Fatimids, 2) Fatimid law was applied in Egypt and Ismailism was disseminated in the country, and 3) The Fatimid rulers of Egypt struck coins as well as introduced a system of measures and weights; both had a distinct character which was peculiar to the Fatimid state. It should be remembered that Ismailization of Egypt was done by the fait of the regime which imposed its own brand of Islam on the country. Having established the outward Ismāʿīlī veneer of Fatimid Egypt, questions regarding the essence of the Ismāʿīlī content should be asked. In this discussion the time factor must also be considered.

The period between the establishment of the Fatimid rule in Egypt (970s) and the civil war under al-Mustaṣṣir (1060s) marked the most comprehensive implementation of Ismailism in Egypt. The religious rites and the legal system were conducted according to Ismāʿīlī principles. When there were differences between the Fatimid law and the Sunnī legal systems, the Fatimid law enjoyed predominance. The few indications of internal dissemination of Ismāʿīlī teaching are also from this period. In the wake of the civil war, following the loss of political authority by the Fatimid *imāms*, the Fatimid law lost its superior position. Badr al-Jamālī ended the practice of following the Fatimid law in those cases when it differed from the other legal systems. Fatimid law was put on an equal footing with the Sunnī schools of law.

The twelfth century was marked by a paradox. On the one hand, a de-Ismailization of legal system took place, Sunnī schools of law flourished in Alexandria and some military viziers attempted to undermine what was left of the Ismāʿīlī character of the state. On the other hand, in this period, religious practices encouraged by the regime-the cult of the Prophet and of Alid saints-were met with a receptive response among the masses or, more precisely, the population of the

capital which is portrayed by our sources. In this respect the Fatimid period left a permanent imprint on the character of the religious life in medieval Egypt.

What were the other marks that the Fatimid period left upon Egypt ? Some basic characteristic features of the Egyptian society remained unchanged. There are no indications of increased Islamization of Egypt under the Fatimid rule. The position of the Coptic church remained secure. The full Islamization of Egypt took place much later under completely different circumstances. The presence of some of the ethnic groups which arrived in Egypt with the Fatimids, notably the Kutāma Berbers, or were brought to Egypt by the regime, black slave troops and the Armenians, did not last beyond the Fatimid period. The Kutāma acculturated in the Egyptian society. The blacks were eliminated together with the regime which had brought them and cultivated them. During the Fatimid period black slave troops in large numbers were present in the capital and the Egyptian countryside. For the new Kurdo-Turkish élite which came to dominate Egypt with the rise of Saladin, the military services that the blacks could render were superfluous, and the economic benefits the blacks had enjoyed such as salaries and grants of land, were coveted by the new élite for its own use. Another feature of the Fatimid period, the system of the military *iqṭāʿ*, proved instrumental for the Ayyubids who expanded and shaped it according to their own needs. So much that the system became identified with them.

In most aspects the marks that the Fatimid period left on Egypt were of a transient nature. Only when Fatimid policies found a response among the masses, or Fatimid institutions suited the needs of the new political masters of Egypt can the trends which had developed under the Fatimids become discernible in the subsequent periods as well.

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