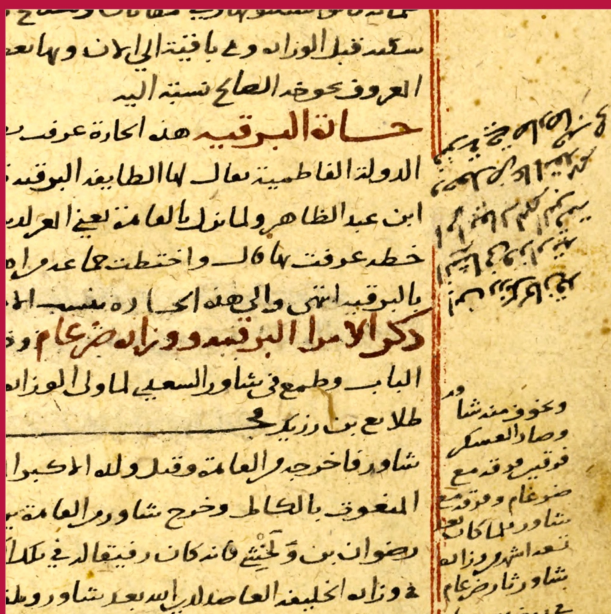


# Al-Maqrīzī

## Book of Exhortations and Useful Lessons in Dealing with Topography and Historical Remains (al-Khiṭaṭ)

### Part I



TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED BY

KARL STOWASSER (†)

EDITED BY

FRÉDÉRIC BAUDEN & CLOPPER ALMON



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*Book of Exhortations and Useful Lessons in  
Dealing with Topography and Historical  
Remains*

## Part I

Translated and Annotated by

Karl Stowasser (†)

Edited by Frédéric Bauden

and Clopper Almon

With an Introductory Essay by

Frédéric Bauden

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Al-Maqrīzī, *Book of Exhortations and Useful Lessons in Dealing with Topography and Historical Remains* (al-Khiṭaṭ). Part I

Translation and annotations by Karl Stowasser (†).

Edited by Frédéric Bauden and Clopper Almon.

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# Introductory Essay<sup>(1)</sup>

## 1. *The Egyptian Camden*

William Camden (1551–1623) became famous for his magnum opus, *Britannia* (1586), a work devoted to the topography and history of Great Britain and Ireland. In it, he related places to their ancient past by describing the traces that remain visible. It was high praise indeed—and rather an accurate characterization—when an English author referred to al-Maqrīzī (1364–5/1442) as “that Egyptian Camden,” even though al-Maqrīzī lived more than a century earlier.<sup>(2)</sup>

To reach his goal, Camden had recourse to the study of topography, geography, antiquarianism, and history, or, in one word, chorography.<sup>(3)</sup> Despite his peregrinations to the various regions, he was, above all, a humanist archaeologist who prioritized texts over buildings. His interest was the written word, or anywhere he found written traces (on coins, inscriptions, heraldry) that helped him relate the place to the people to which it belonged, even to the detriment of architectural structures. To compose his book, he benefited from the work of his predecessors; one contemporary even charged him with plagiarism. Camden was also a historian who wrote annals of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.<sup>(4)</sup> Drawing a compar-

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1. The part of this essay dealing with al-Maqrīzī’s biography and his works (sections 2–4) is a slightly revised version of F. Bauden, ‘Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī’, in *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant*, ed. A. Mallett (Leiden and Boston, 2014), 161–200, pp. 161–73. All dates are given according to the Muslim and Common eras.
  2. P. Sanders, *Creating Medieval Cairo: Empire, Religion, and Architectural Preservation in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cairo, 2008), p. xxxiii. The quotation regards Max Herz Bey on whom see below.
  3. Chorography can be described, broadly, as “the representation of space and place.” See D.J. Roll, ‘The Chorographic Tradition and Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Scottish Antiquaries,’ *Journal of Art Historiography* 5 (2011), 1–18, p. 4.
  4. On Camden, see R.J. Mayhew, ‘William Camden, 1551–1623,’ in Ch.W.J.

ison between Camden, the Elizabethan antiquarian, and al-Maqrīzī is not insignificant: they not only shared a common interest in the history of places, annals were also at the core of the Egyptian scholar's activities and he faced a similar charge for not citing sources he depended on.<sup>(5)</sup>

Due to the exemplary principles Max Herz Bey (1856–1919), the chief architect of the *Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe*, applied for the restoration of Islamic buildings in Egypt, he was considered a savior of mediaeval architecture in Cairo. To underline his intimate knowledge of the buildings, someone who needed to demonstrate the significance of “Makrizy” to a British audience pretended that Max Herz Bey “knows his Makrizy—that Egyptian Camden—almost by heart.” Max Herz Bey's characterization highlights the centrality of al-Maqrīzī's work to restore mediaeval buildings in Cairo. Conceived as a history of Egyptian places, al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* focuses on the capital, retracing the history of its quarters through their buildings, following a division in historical periods, the same periods to which he later dedicated one of his multi-volume chronicles. Relying on a wide variety of textual sources, al-Maqrīzī visited the monuments he described and took note of inscriptions and documents that helped him link the buildings with their history. As such, al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* has long been considered a major contribution to the history and topography of Egypt and, more specifically, Cairo. In fact, the *Khiṭaṭ* can be identified as a written example of chorography, as it represents both places and spaces, even though it is devoid of illustrations or maps, like those used in Antiquity and Renaissance Europe. Thanks to his work, it is now possible to study the portrayal of Cairo through the ages.<sup>(6)</sup> Some have even seen in it a ‘site of memory’ according to

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Withers and H. Lorimer, *Geographers: Bibliographical Studies* (London and New York, 2008), 28–42.

5. For more details, see below, sections 3 and 4.

6. In this respect, a number of studies were based on his material. See P. Ravaisse, *Essai sur l'histoire et sur la topographie du Caire d'après Makrizi* (Cairo, 1887–90); P. Casanova, *Histoire et description de la Citadelle du Caire*, 2

Pierre Nora's definition,<sup>(7)</sup> i.e., a place (in this case a book) that has a special significance for a community that reinvests its affect and emotions in it.

The *Khiṭaṭ* is as comprehensive as it could be in al-Maqrīzī's time: building on numerous books composed on this subject by predecessors, some dating to the third/ninth century, he aimed to provide as many details as possible about the Egyptian provinces and the buildings of Cairo. In so doing, al-Maqrīzī clearly inscribed his work in the trend toward encyclopedic works that were characteristic of the Mamluk period from the early eighth/fourteenth century.<sup>(8)</sup> In addition to its comprehensiveness, al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* is also a work deeply embedded in the *adab* genre, according to which instruction is on a par with entertainment. In fact, historical information and descriptions are interspersed with anecdotes and verses of poetry.

The significance of a book over time can be appraised in various ways: its longevity, its spread around the world and to libraries, and the number of references to it found in other works. The longevity and references to *al-Khiṭaṭ* do not require demonstration as, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it remains a reference and a source of inspiration for scholars in a wide variety of fields. With regard to its spread, it was certainly well-known in the age of manuscripts and after the spread of printing. Despite its size in manuscript form (four volumes totaling almost 675,000 words), we know of more than 250 volumes in libraries around the world,

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vols. (Cairo, 1894–7); G. Salmon, *Études sur la topographie du Caire: La Kal'at al Kabch et la Birkat al-Fil* (Cairo, 1902); P. Casanova, *Essai de reconstitution topographique de la ville d'al-Fouṣṭāṭ ou Miṣr*, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1913–9); S. Denoix, *Décrire le Caire: Fustât-Miṣr d'après Ibn Duqmāq et Maqrīzī: L'histoire d'une partie de la ville du Caire d'après deux historiens égyptiens des xiv<sup>e</sup>-xv<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Cairo, 1992); J. Loiseau, *Reconstruire la maison du sultan, 1350-1450: Ruine et recomposition de l'ordre urbain au Caire*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 2010).

7. N. Rabbat, 'Al-Maqrizi's *Khitat*, an Egyptian Lieu de Mémoire,' in D. Behrens-Abouseif (ed.), *The Cairo Heritage: Essays in Honor of Laila Ali Ibrahim* (Cairo and New York, 2000), 17–30.
8. On this trend, see E. Muhanna, *The World in a Book: al-Nuwayrī and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition* (Princeton, 2018).

dating from the life of the author up to the thirteenth/nineteenth century. Most of these volumes were initially part of full sets; this means that more than 150 copies of the full work were produced over four centuries. When printing was introduced in the Islamic world in the early thirteenth/nineteenth century, the *Khiṭaṭ* was one of the first titles on Arab heritage to be printed<sup>(9)</sup> and has remained a reference work in modern times: a copy of at least one of its numerous editions can be found in most university libraries with Arabic collections. In sum, *al-Khiṭaṭ* earned its author a longevity that has lasted to our own time.

## 2. *Life and Times*

Taqī l-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Maqrīzī or Ibn al-Maqrīzī, the ḥadīth scholar and historian, was born in Cairo in 766/1364–65 into a family of Ḥanbalī scholars originally from Baalbek.<sup>(10)</sup> His great-great grandfather

9. See below, p. xxv sqq.

10. For the life of al-Maqrīzī, see Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Inbā’ al-ghumr bi-abnā’ al-‘umr*, ed. H. Ḥabashī, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1969–72), 4187–88; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Majma’ al-mu’assis bi-l-mu’jam al-mufahris*, ed. Y.‘A.R. al-Mar’ashī, 4 vols. (Beirut, 1992–94), 3:58–60; Ibn Fahd, *Mu’jam al-shuyūkh*, ed. M. al-Zāhī and Ḥ. al-Jāsir (Riyadh, 1982), 63–67; Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi wa-l-mustawfi fi ba’d al-wāfi*, ed. M.M. Amīn et al., 13 vols. (Cairo, 1984–2009), 1:415–20 (no. 221); Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Dalīl al-shāfi ‘ala l-manhal al-ṣāfi*, ed. F.M. Shaltūt, 2 vols. (Mecca, 1983; reprint Cairo, 1998), 1:63 (no. 217); Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fi mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, 16 vols. (Cairo, 1963–72), 15:490–91; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Ḥawāḍith al-duḥūr fi madā l-ayyām wa-l-shuhūr*, ed. F.M. Shaltūt, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1990), 1:39–41; al-Biqā’ī, *Umwān al-zamān bi-tarājim al-shuyūkh wa-l-aqrān*, ed. H. Ḥabashī, 5 vols. published to date (Cairo, 2001–), 1:109–10; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’ al-lāmī ‘an ahl al-qarn al-tāsī*, 12 vols. (Cairo, 1934–36; reprint Beirut, 1992), 2:21–25; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Tibr al-masbūk fi dhayl al-Sulūk*, ed. N.M. Kāmil et al., 4 vols. (Cairo, 2002–7), 1:70–78; al-Sakhāwī, *Wajiz al-kalām fi l-dhayl ‘alā duwal al-islām*, ed. B.‘A. Ma’rūf et al., 4 vols. (Beirut, 1995), 2:580 (no. 1342); al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa-l-abdān fi tawārikh al-zamān*, ed. H. Ḥabashī, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1970–89), 4:242–44 (no. 536); ‘Abd al-Bāsīt b. Khalīl al-Malaṭī l-Zāhīrī, *Nayl al-amal fi dhayl al-duwal*, ed. ‘U.A. Tadmurī, 9 vols. (Sidon and Beirut, 2002), 5:150–51; al-Zāhīrī, *al-Majma’ al-mufannan bi-l-mu’jam al-mu’anwan*, ed. ‘A.M. al-Kandarī, 2 vols. (Beirut, 2011), 1:347–52 (no. 429); Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr fi waqā’i’ al-duḥūr*, ed. M. Muṣṭafā, 5 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1960–75), 2:231–32; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fi akhbār man dhahab*, ed. ‘A.Q. al-Arna’ūt and M. al-Arna’ūt, 10 vols. (Damascus and Beirut, 1986–93), 9:370–71; al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-ṭālī’ bi-maḥasin man ba’d al-qarn al-sābi’*, ed. M.Ḥ. Ḥallāq (Damascus and Beirut, 2006), 109–11 (no. 46); F. Bauden, ‘al-Maqrīzī’, in *Encyclopedia of*

Ibrāhīm, or the latter's father Muḥammad, first settled in this town in greater Syria. We do not know where this ancestor originally came from, but the area of Baalbek in which he chose to live, Maqāriza, meant his descendants came to be known by the name al-Maqrīzī, according to al-Maqrīzī himself.<sup>(11)</sup> Another possibility, although less certain, given the nature of the source, is that the origin of this *nisba* was a certain Ibn Amqrīz, a Berber who belonged to the Kutāma tribe. One of his daughters may have married an ancestor of al-Maqrīzī and the family would thus have been known by this slightly altered form of the name.<sup>(12)</sup> Whatever the case, it seems probable that the family were Shī'īs, perhaps related to the Fatimids, which would explain why al-Maqrīzī's ancestor opted for a family name that allowed him to blend into Baalbek when he settled in the city. Although al-Maqrīzī doubts a Fatimid origin for his family, he did leave several clues which suggest that his family had such a background, or at least that he believed this until a certain

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*the Medieval Chronicle*, 2:1074–76; *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7 (2003), passim (proceedings of the international conference *The Legacy of al-Maqrīzī* [1364–1442], University of Notre Dame, September 28–29, 2001); Ḥ. Āṣī, *al-Maqrīzī Taqī l-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Qādir al-'Ubaydī* (766–845 h.-1366–1441 m.), *mu'arrikh al-duwal al-islāmiyya fī Miṣr* (Beirut, 1992); K. al-D. 'I. al-D. 'Alī, *Arba'a mu'arrikhīn wa-arba'a mu'allafāt min dawlat al-mamālīk al-jarākisa* (Cairo, 1992), 157–239; K. al-D. 'I. al-D. 'Alī, *al-Maqrīzī mu'arrikhān* (Beirut, 1990); S. 'Ashūr, 'Aḍwā' jadida 'alā l-mu'arrikh Aḥmad b. 'Alī l-Maqrīzī wa-kitābātihī, *Ālam al-fikr* 14 (1983), 165–210; J.-C. Garcin, 'Al-Maqrīzī. Un historien encyclopédique du monde afro-oriental, in *Les Africains*, vol. 9, ed. Ch.-A. Julien et al. (Paris, 1977), 195–223; F. Rosenthal, 'al-Maqrīzī', in *Et2; Dirāsāt 'an al-Maqrīzī* (Cairo, 1971); al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, 8 vols (4th ed., Beirut, 2002), 1:177–78; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, 2 vols. (Weimar-Berlin, 1898–1926; 2nd ed. Leiden, 1943–49), 3 supplements (Leiden, 1937–42), 2:47–50, and Suppl., 2:36–38; 'U.R. Kaḥhāla, *Mu'jam al-mu'allifīn*, 4 vols. (Beirut, 1993), 1:204–5 (no. 1515). See also the introduction by M. al-Jalīlī to his edition of al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-'uqūd al-farīda fī tarājim al-a'yān al-mufīda*, 4 vols. (Beirut, 2002), 1:13–39.

11. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Majma' al-mu'assis*, 3:59. The passage in question was approved by al-Maqrīzī himself; he reviewed and corrected his own biography in the holograph manuscript of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī. See F. Bauden, 'Maqriziana IX: Should al-Maqrīzī Be Thrown Out With the Bathwater? The Question of His Plagiarism of al-Awḥadī's Khīṭaṭ and the Documentary Evidence', *Mamlūk Studies Review* 14 (2010), 159–232, pp. 221–23.
12. Ibn Fahd, *Mu'jam al-shuyūkh*, 64; Sibṭ Ibn al-'Ajāmī, *Kunūz al-dhahab fī ta'rīkh Ḥalab*, ed. Sh. Sha'ṭh and F. al-Bakkūr, 2 vols. (Aleppo, 1996–97), 2:267.

point in his life; this does not mean, however, that he was necessarily right or that until the end of his life he continued to believe what may have been a family legend.

It was al-Maqrīzī's grandfather, Muḥyī l-Dīn 'Abd al-Qādir (b. 677/1278–79, d. 28 Rabī' I 732/29 December 1331),<sup>(13)</sup> who was the first to leave his hometown and go to Damascus where he was, among other things, responsible for teaching hadith studies at Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Bahā'iyya, a leading institution for the subject.<sup>(14)</sup> While based in Damascus he also made an academic journey that took him to Cairo, Aleppo, and the two Islamic holy cities, almost certainly on pilgrimage. Al-Maqrīzī's father, 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī (d. 25 Ramaḍān 779/25 January 1378 in Cairo, at almost fifty), was born in the Syrian capital where he benefited from the social status his father had acquired and undertook all his training.<sup>(15)</sup> He does not seem to have made any other trips during this time; instead he began working in Damascus. It would seem that he only departed from that town when he left for Cairo, where he presumably went in an attempt to make his way through the ranks of the civil administration. We do not have a precise date for his departure for Cairo, but all indications suggest that it must have occurred before he was thirty years old.

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13. On al-Maqrīzī's grandfather, see al-Dhahabī, *Dhayl ta'riḫ al-Islām*, ed. M.S. Bā Wazīr (Riyadh, 1998), 392–93; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, 30 vols. (Beirut, 1993), vol. XIX (ed. R. Sayyid) 42–43; al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān al-'aṣr wa-a'wān al-naṣr*, ed. N.A.'A. 'Alī Abū Zayd et al., 6 vols. (Beirut and Damascus, 1997–98), 3:19–20; Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl 'alā ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, ed. 'A.R.S. al-'Uthaymīn, 5 vols. (Riyadh, 2005), 5:29; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-'uqūd al-farīda*, 2:516–17 (a biography of his grandfather contained in the notice devoted by al-Maqrīzī to his own father); al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk li-ma'rīfat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. M.M. Ziyāda and S.'A.F. 'Ashūr, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1934–73), 2:365 (sub anno 733!). It is unclear whether members of the family remained in Baalbek during al-Maqrīzī's lifetime, but an older brother (b. 668/1269–70) of his grandfather, named Ibrāhīm and described as a Sufi, died there in 737/1337. See Ibn Rāfi' al-Salāmī, *al-Wafayāt*, ed. Ṣ.M. 'Abbās, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1982), 185.
  14. This madrasa was founded by Bahā' al-Dīn Ibn 'Asākir; see al-Nu'aymī, *al-Dāris fi ta'riḫ al-madāris*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1999), 1:43–45.
  15. On al-Maqrīzī's father, see al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-'uqūd al-farīda*, 2:516–17; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 3:326; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, 1:166.

Professionally, he benefited in Cairo from the relations he cultivated with Sayf al-Dīn Āqtamur al-Ḥanbalī (d. 11 Rajab 779/13 November 1377), a Mamluk amir who held a high position in the military government.<sup>(16)</sup> When Āqtamur became chief executive secretary (*dawādār*) he took al-Maqrīzī's father under his wing, enabling the latter to take a job at the chancellery (*dīwān al-inshā'*) as a secretary (*kātib*). Thus, he was able to quickly consolidate his position and his fortune.<sup>(17)</sup> In the meantime, he married Asmā' (b. 21 Rajab 747/7 November 1346; d. 12 Rabī' I 800/3 December 1397), the daughter of the famous Ḥanafī scholar Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Alī b. Abī l-Ḥasan al-Su'ūdī b. al-Ṣā'igh (d. 12 Sha'bān 776/16 January 1375). This union with a prominent family from the Cairo elite was another way to increase his standing in society. 'Alī l-Maqrīzī's father-in-law held many important positions, notably that of mufti at the supreme court (*dār al-'adl*). One year after the marriage (in Muḥarram 765/October–November 1363) al-Maqrīzī was born. At least two other births followed, as al-Maqrīzī had two brothers, Muḥammad (772–822/1371–1419) and Ḥasan.<sup>(18)</sup> When al-

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16. He was essentially chief executive secretary (*dawādār*) from 19 Rajab 769/10 March 1368 to 20 Ramaḍān 770/28 April 1369; viceroy (*nā'ib al-saltāna*) from 20 Rabī' I 777/19 August 1375 to 21 Ramaḍān 778/1 February 1377 and from 19 Dhū l-Qa'da 778/30 March 1377 to 25 Ṣafār 779/3 July 1377; and then governor of Syria, a position he occupied until his death. See al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 3:326; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, 1:245–46; Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 11:191; Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi*, 2:492–93. He must not be confused, as Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, 1:166, was, with Sayf al-Dīn Āqtamur min 'Abd al-Ghanī l-Nāṣirī l-Turkī (d. 29 Jumādā II 783/20 September 1381), who held the post of lieutenant of the sultan in Cairo alternatively with his homonym. For the latter, see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 3:462; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmīna fī a'yān al-mī'a al-thāmina*, 4 vols. (Hyderabad, 1930–32; reprint Beirut, 1993), 1:392 (no. 1008); Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, 1:243–44 (no. 12); Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi*, 2:493 (no. 498); Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Dalīl al-shāfi*, 1:141 (no. 497); Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 11:178–79.

17. According to al-Maqrīzī, Āqtamur was such a powerful chief executive secretary that he could issue documents in his own name without consulting the sultan, as stated on the documents issued. See al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*, 2 vols. (Būlāq, 1853), 2:221 = ed. A.F. Sayyid, 5 vols. (London, 2002–4), 3:720–21.

18. This was Asmā's second marriage: she had been married to Najm al-Dīn al-Muhallabī al-Ramlī at the age of twelve. After the death of al-Maqrīzī's father, she married for the third and final time, and gave birth to another boy. See al-

Maqrīzī's father died around the age of fifty, his eldest son had not yet reached his fourteenth birthday.

Although he came from a Ḥanbalī family, al-Maqrīzī was educated according to the *madhhab* of his maternal grandfather, though he was only ten when the latter died. His grandfather's influence must have been a significant factor in this choice of the Ḥanafī *madhhab* and, although his father did not oppose it, it seems that the latter could not have gone against the decision of his father-in-law. At just three years old al-Maqrīzī was present at his grandfather's lessons and at seven, having memorized the Quran, he was trained in the religious sciences, for which he demonstrated a definite aptitude, particularly that of hadith studies. By the age of five, he possessed several transmission licenses, issued by some of the greatest scholars of his age. Yet when he was twenty he decided to change to the Shāfi'ī *madhhab*. This choice, which he made well after the death of his maternal grandfather and his father, was based on his indifference toward, and even aversion to, the more conciliatory character of the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, as well as from concern over his career: membership in the Shāfi'ī *madhhab*, which was followed by the majority in Egypt, constituted the quickest way to advance his career. While this change was justified by personal reasons, everything seems to suggest that in dogmatic terms al-Maqrīzī remained attached to the *madhhab* of his father: the various positions he took in his diverse writings demonstrate that he favored a more literal interpretation which was characteristic of the Ḥanbalī *madhhab*. Thus, his profession of faith, *Tajrīd al-tawḥīd al-mufīd*, probably written toward the end of his life, is full of implicit references to the works of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), who was himself a disciple of Ibn Taymiyya

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Maqrīzī, *Durar al-'uqūd al-farīda*, 1:394–97 (no. 319); al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 4:1107; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, 2:33. For al-Maqrīzī's maternal grandfather, see al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfi*, 3:244; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-'uqūd al-farīda*, 3:255–60; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 3:245; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, 1:95–96. There is no biography of al-Maqrīzī's brother Ḥasan in the sources, and so nothing is known of him.



(d. 728/1328), both prominent Ḥanbalīs.<sup>(19)</sup> His propensity for literalism led to accusations that he was a Zāhiri; the Zāhiriyya was a movement of thought which took its name from its founder Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). The foundation of this accusation against al-Maqrīzī is very thin and seems to have been the result of a confusion.<sup>(20)</sup>

In 783/1381 he performed the hajj, the first of a number of times he did so;<sup>(21)</sup> he profited during his sojourn in Mecca by studying under numerous scholars, an activity in which he also engaged during several later visits to the holy city. His entry into working life came a little after this: for his first position, he was appointed deputy judge and administrator of endowments. Following in the footsteps of his father, he then worked in the chancellery, as a secretary (*kātib*) alongside the famous al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418). His contacts with various amirs grew and he was noticed by the sultan Barqūq (r. 784–91/1382–89 and 792–801/1390–99) and, at the end of the latter's reign, al-Maqrīzī was appointed to the prestigious post of inspector of the Cairo markets (*muḥtasib*).<sup>(22)</sup>

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19. See al-Maqrīzī, *Tajrīd al-tawḥīd al-mufīd wa-yalīhi Taḥīr al-ī'tiqād 'an adrān al-ilḥād li-Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Ṣan'ānī* (t. 1182), ed. Ṣ.Ṣ. Ṣāhīn and M.I. al-Ṣan'ānī (Riyadh, 2005). Interestingly, al-Maqrīzī's grandfather was buried near the tomb of Ibn Taymiyya, in Damascus.

20. See N. Rabbat, 'Who was al-Maqrīzī? A Biographical Sketch', *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7 (2003), 1–19, pp. 12–14.

21. In addition to his first stay, which lasted several months (he arrived at Mecca at the beginning of Ramaḍān 783/end of November 1381 and left with a pilgrim caravan that departed at the beginning of 784/spring 1382), he went to Mecca in 787 (he arrived in the middle of the year/August 1385, and was back in Cairo in the beginning of 788/Spring 1386), in 790 (he arrived for the pilgrimage, which was at the end of the year 1388, and returned to Cairo at the beginning of the year 791/1389), in 825 (again to carry out the pilgrimage in the autumn of 1422; he returned home at the beginning of 826/1423), in 834 (he arrived in the middle of the year, in March 1431, stayed several months, departed for Cairo at the end of the pilgrimage, at the beginning of 835/autumn 1431), and finally in 838 (he arrived with the Cairene caravan at the end of the year/June 1435, and remained there until the beginning of the year 840/July–August 1436). These very precise dates are provided by Ibn Fahd, the Meccan historian, who met al-Maqrīzī during his final two stays; see Ibn Fahd, *Muḥjam al-shuyūkh*, 65.

22. For this office during the Mamlūk period, see K. Stilt, *Islamic Law in Action. Authority, Discretion, and Everyday Experiences in Mamluk Egypt* (New York,

However, this gained him the enmity of many of his colleagues, including his fellow-historian al-‘Aynī (d. 855/1453), who had an ongoing rivalry with him for the position.<sup>(23)</sup> Barqūq’s son, al-Nāṣir Faraj, who became sultan after his father (r. 801–8/1399–1405 and 808–15/1405–12), confirmed him in his position. Al-Maqrīzī was also, by turns, a preacher in the mosque of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ in Fustāṭ, then inspector and imam of the mosque of al-Ḥākīm, and so his power and influence continued to grow. The sultan even appointed him Mamluk ambassador to Tīmūr Lang (d. 807/1405), before replacing him with the son of a Mamluk amir. Al-Maqrīzī was also part of a group that accompanied the sultan on a trip to Damascus in 810/1407.

This journey marked the beginning of a new period in al-Maqrīzī’s life, as he stayed in the Syrian capital at regular intervals from 810/1407 to 815/1412. These years correspond to a politically difficult period in which the power of the sultan in Syria was severely tested. In Damascus, al-Maqrīzī held a number of roles, although it seems likely that he did not remain there continuously and returned to Cairo each time the sultan did. During his final journey, the sultan was assassinated, and al-Maqrīzī returned to Cairo in the company of the caliph al-Musta‘īn bi-llāh, who also became sultan for several months in 815/1412. This return marks the beginning of a decline in his fortune, as support from powerful patrons began to wane. From this point on, he retired from public life and devoted himself full-time to his passion for writing history, particularly that of his native country, Egypt. Al-Maqrīzī could afford to do this because he had acquired a fortune, in part from his

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23. Al-Maqrīzī recovered his position in 802/1400, although he held it for less than three months, and took it again, at the insistence of the sultan, in 807/1405, this time for less than one month. See A. ‘Abd al-Rāziq, ‘La *ḥisba* et le *muḥtasib* en Égypte au temps des Mamlūks’, *Annales islamologiques* 13 (1977), 115–78, pp. 148–49 and 153.

parents—from both the paternal and the maternal sides—and in part from his professional activities.

Al-Maqrīzī's choice to retire was doubtless also influenced by the loss of most of his relatives. In 782/1381 he had married a young girl (of twelve) from a family who had their origins in Baghdad. This woman, Safrā bt. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-Salām (or b. 'Abd al-'Azīz) b. 'Abd al-Šamad al-Baghdādī, gave birth to his son, Abū l-Maḥāsīn Muḥammad, in 786/1384. He repudiated her several months later for unknown reasons, then married her again after a period of two years, when she bore him another son, Abū Hāshim 'Alī, in 789/1388, but he died a few months later, in 790/1388.<sup>(24)</sup> Al-Maqrīzī also had a daughter named Fāṭima (b. 798/1396; d. 826/1423) from another marriage. He also purchased a concubine, Sūl (d. 824/1421), in 799/1397, who did not bear him any children. It is not known when all his children died, but Fāṭima was the last of his children to do so.

The only member of his family to outlive al-Maqrīzī was his nephew Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad (b. 801/1399, d. 867/1462), who was the son of his brother Muḥammad, and who seems to have supported him in his old age.<sup>(25)</sup> We know with certainty that he accompanied al-Maqrīzī during his sojourn in Mecca between 838/1435 and 840/1436. As the sole inheritor still alive at the time of al-Maqrīzī's death, Nāṣir al-Dīn took possession of all his manuscripts, among other things, as demonstrated by marks of possession signed in his own hand which can be found on the title pages of certain works written by his uncle. Al-Maqrīzī also owned a slave, Abū l-Durr Yāqūt, who helped him during the last years of his life and participated in some of his master's teaching sessions.

Al-Maqrīzī became a recluse in his home, which he seldom left except to perform his religious obligations and to make his final pilgrimage to Mecca (838–40/1435–36); he only received visits from

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24. See al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-'uqūd al-farīda*, 2:98–99.

25. For details of Nāṣir al-Dīn's life, see al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'*, 9:150.

scholars and disciples in search of his knowledge. On 26 Ramaḍān 845/7 February 1442 he died and was buried in the Sufi cemetery, situated outside the city walls, beyond Bāb al-Naṣr (lit., the ‘gate of victory’), where both the great historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) and al-Maqrīzī’s own father had been buried some decades before.

### 3. *Al-Maqrīzī’s Historical Writings*

In the initial years of his studies, al-Maqrīzī devoted himself to the prophetic traditions (hadith): the first attestation of his lectures appears in a work devoted to traditionists who were considered unreliable, of which he made a précis (dated 795/1393).<sup>(26)</sup> His interest in such material never dissipated, as evidenced by other summaries and holograph copies of works of the same genre which can be dated to the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century. But it was his passion for writing history which occupied the majority of his scholarly activity after he reached around forty years of age. His contact with the well-known Ibn Khaldūn, whom he greatly admired, certainly had an influence on the direction of his historical writing. From the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century he read and summarized various historical sources, such as *al-Mughrib* by Ibn Saʿīd (d. 685/1286), al-Musabbihī’s (d. 420/1030) *Akhbār Miṣr*, and *al-Iḥāṭa* by Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1374), all of which proved useful for the works he was already planning to write. The result of his indefatigable writing activity, such as it appears to us today thanks to the preservation of numerous copies—of which more than twenty are holograph volumes—is over thirty different titles. Some of these are multi-volume works, while others are comparable to treatises or pamphlets, and at least some of these works were written in response to specific requests.

His employment in the Mamluk chancellery at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century inspired him to write two works (focused on two types of civil servants, chancellery secretaries and

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26. See Bauden, ‘Maqriziana II’, 115 (number 8).

viziers), that he considered essential to guarantee good governance of the state: *Khulāṣat al-tibr fī kuttāb al-sirr*, which was written about chancellery secretaries (*kuttāb al-sirr*), and *Talqīh al-ʿuqūl wa-l-ārāʾ fī tanqīh akhbār al-jullā al-wuzarāʾ*, dedicated to viziers. We do not have copies of either of these two works, thus, it is difficult to say precisely when they were written. However, we can suggest, with some confidence, that he must have written them before he commenced his historiographical project which focused on the land of his birth, Egypt; consequently, it was before the beginning of the second decade of the ninth/fifteenth century.<sup>(27)</sup>

The first work which he seems to have written that may be dated with certainty is a small socio-economic tract entitled *Ighāthat al-umma bi-kashf al-ghumma*.<sup>(28)</sup> Incorrectly identified as a treatise on famines by its first editors and by G. Wiet afterward,<sup>(29)</sup> it actually addresses the multiple causes that led to the economic crises between the years 796/1394 and 808/1405 and reached their zenith in 806/1403–4.<sup>(30)</sup> Written in 808/1405 with the aim of fostering reforms, particularly economic ones, that would reverse the crises, this pamphlet probably also had an ulterior motive: to attract the attention of the powers-that-be to his abilities as market inspector (*muḥtasib*), a position that he occupied on many occasions, including up until a year after writing this piece. His ties with

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27. For the first work on chancellery secretaries, information comes from a note (added by al-Maqrīzī) to an holograph copy of *al-Mughrib* by Ibn Saʿīd (MS Sūhāj—Maktabat Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭaḥṭawī, fol. 105v), in which he states that he was in the middle of writing this work when he read Ibn Saʿīd's book, that is, in 803/1400–1. He planned to prepare a fair copy of it around the end of the second decade of the ninth/fifteenth century. See F. Bauden, 'Maqriziana XIII: An Exchange of Correspondence between al-Maqrīzī and al-Qalqashandī', in *Developing Perspectives in Mamluk History: Essays in Honor of Amalia Levanoni*, ed. Y. Ben-Bassat (Leiden and Boston, 2017), 201–29, pp. 216–17.

28. Ed. K.H. Farḥāt (Cairo, 2007).

29. Ed. M.M. Ziyāda and J. al-Shayyāl (Cairo, 1940); trans. G. Wiet, 'Le traité des famines de Maqrīzī', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 5 (1962), 1–90 (also published as a book, Leiden: Brill, 1962).

30. English trans. A. Allouche as *Mamluk Economics. A Study and Translation of al-Maqrīzī's Ighāthah* (Salt Lake City, 1994).

the sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj increased two years later, when he accompanied the latter in his various sojourns to Damascus; this would suggest that his aim was successful.

It was around this time that al-Maqrīzī developed a major project which occupied him until his death and gained him fame during his lifetime and even beyond the borders of the Mamluk sultanate. The circumstances in which he embarked on this project remain obscure, but it is possible to make an educated guess. When he went to Damascus for the second time, in 811/1409, accompanying the sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj, al-Maqrīzī came into possession of a manuscript that changed his life: the text, partly in draft form and partly completed, was a historical topography of Cairo written by his friend and neighbor al-Awḥadī (d. 811/1408), the latter had devoted many years of his life to this text. It was far from being in a publishable state, but it served as a blueprint for al-Maqrīzī's own work which, to a large degree, earned him his place in posterity: *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*—often shortened, as much by medieval authors as by modern scholars, to *al-Khiṭaṭ*. Al-Maqrīzī increased the amount of material in al-Awḥadī's work by starting with the history of Cairo from the Muslim conquest; he also considered, among other topics, the history of other towns, as well as Jewish and Christian monuments. The subject matter of this work is not original: many authors preceding him produced works of this genre, in Iraq and Syria as well as in Egypt.<sup>(31)</sup> However, its chronological extent, the number of sources utilized, and the combination of topographical data and historical elements make it a veritable encyclopedia of the heritage of Cairo. His parallel projects, of a history of Egypt from the Muslim conquest until his time and of biographical dictionaries, all overlap, in scope at least, with this first book.

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31. At the same time as al-Awḥadī, another author became interested in the genre and began to write another work which remained, in part, in draft form: Ibn Duqmāq (d. 809/1407), *al-Intiṣār li-wāsiṭat 'iqd al-amṣār*, ed. K. Vollers, vols. IV–V (Cairo, 1893).

Although part of a family originally from Baalbek, al-Maqrīzī devoted the majority of his works to the land of his birth. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when his writings began to be rediscovered, the output of al-Maqrīzī was related in these terms by the French Orientalist A.-I. Silvestre de Sacy:

Si ces travaux de Makrizi, dont quelques parties manquent encore à nos bibliothèques, étaient réunis, on pourrait les regarder comme une espèce d'encyclopédie pour l'histoire de l'Égypte pendant les huit premiers siècles de l'hégire et la première moitié du neuvième. Makrizi n'est guère cependant autre chose, comme nous l'avons dit, qu'un compilateur; et s'il montre, parfois, un jugement sain et plus de critique que la plupart des écrivains de sa nation, il ne paraît pas plus réservé sur l'article du merveilleux.<sup>(32)</sup>

This critique by de Sacy concerning the character of the writer is undoubtedly too severe. If it is true that al-Maqrīzī had a special gift for unearthing sources which were, already in his time, rather rare, such as those related to the Fatimid era, he also managed to extract the essence and restore the data intelligently, using an attractive style of writing. All the experts who have examined his output recognize that he managed to combine reports from a variety of sources and reconstruct the facts into a single narrative. This suggests that intense preparatory work—undertaken through diverse readings, note taking, and the preparation of summaries—was his *modus operandi*, as demonstrated by rare surviving volumes of his notebooks and some of his summaries.<sup>(33)</sup> Thus, we know he had an exceptional ability to construct historical re-

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32. A.-I. Silvestre de Sacy, 'Notice sur Abd-allatif', in Silvestre de Sacy, *Mélanges de littérature orientale, précédés de l'éloge de l'auteur par M. le Duc de Broglie* (Paris, s.d.), 118 n.1.

33. See F. Bauden, 'Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrīzī. Towards a Better Understanding of His Working Method. Description: Section 1', *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7 (2003), 21–68; F. Bauden, 'Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrīzī. Towards a Better Understanding of His Working Method. Description: Section 2', *Mamlūk Studies Review* 10 (2006), 81–139; F. Bauden, 'Maqriziana II: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrīzī. Towards a Better Understanding of His Working Method. Analysis', *Mamlūk Studies Review* 12 (2008), 51–118.

ports.<sup>(34)</sup> The influence which Ibn Khaldūn—who was also his teacher—and his works had on al-Maqrīzī is clear in many of the latter's writings, as much by the deep level of his reflections on history itself as by the wide-ranging nature of his interests.<sup>(35)</sup>

Al-Maqrīzī also employed other methods of working, such as borrowing unpublished works from authors, such as the partially completed draft of the work of al-Awḥadī on the topography of Cairo, or using works that were difficult to acquire, such as the encyclopedia of Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349) entitled *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*. He did this in a manner that often comes close to what would be regarded as plagiarism today. In the former case, it has been proved that the holograph manuscripts of al-Awḥadī served as the basis for al-Maqrīzī's writing of the *Khīṭaṭ*, though he did not at any time acknowledge in this work his debt to his colleague and neighbor: he did not even cite his name.<sup>(36)</sup> From the holograph fragment of al-Awḥadī's work conserved in al-Maqrīzī's holograph draft, we can determine that his personal contribution was essentially limited to adding biographies of the founders of the monuments examined.<sup>(37)</sup> In the latter case, it appears that, to a large extent, al-Maqrīzī used the data of Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī for many of his works and in one case, he even went so far as to knowingly alter the words of the latter for purely ideological reasons.<sup>(38)</sup>

However this may appear to our modern eyes, such an approach earned his works great renown for the indelible mark they

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34. See F. Bauden, 'Maqriziana XI. Al-Maqrīzī et al-Ṣafādī: Analyse de la (re)construction d'un récit biographique', in Bauden (ed.), 'Les méthodes de travail des historiens en Islam', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 4 (2009), 99–136.

35. See N. Rabbat, 'Was al-Maqrīzī's *Khīṭaṭ* a Khaldūnian History?', *Der Islam* 89/2 (2012), 118–40.

36. He did recognize his debt in the biography he dedicated to al-Awḥadī in his *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīda*. See Bauden, 'Maqriziana II', 170.

37. See Bauden, 'Maqriziana IX'.

38. See F. Bauden, *Trusting the Source as Far as It Can Be Trusted. Al-Maqrīzī and the Question of the Mongol Book of Laws (Yāsa) (Maqriziana VII)* (forthcoming).



left on Islamic historical writing. The most important of these works are the *Khiṭaṭ*; his trilogy on the history of Muslim Egypt, of which only the last two components are preserved (*Iqd jawāhir al-asfāt fi mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Fuṣṭāṭ*, from the Muslim conquest up to the arrival of the Fatimid dynasty (969); *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā' bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-khulafā'* for the Fatimid period, covering the fourth/tenth to the sixth/twelfth centuries; and *al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk* for the Ayyubid and Mamluk eras, the sixth/twelfth to the ninth/fifteenth centuries; to which he later added a biography of Muḥammad (*Imtā' al-asmā' li-mā li-l-rasūl min al-anbā' wa-l-aḥwāl wa-l-ḥafada wa-l-matā'*); a history of humanity (*al-Khabar 'an al-bashar*); two biographical dictionaries, namely (1) *al-Ta'rikh al-kabīr al-muqaffā li-Miṣr*, which list Egyptians and people who lived or passed through Egypt; and (2) *Durar al-'uqūd al-farīda fi tarājim al-a'yān al-mufida*, which relates his contemporaries, that is, people who died or were born after the beginning of the decade of al-Maqrīzī's own birth (i.e., before 760/1358–59), and who he did not necessarily meet; and finally his booklets on other subjects (economics, metrology, numismatics, the history of Egyptian borderlands such as Abyssinia, gemology, religion, etc.).

#### 4. The *Khiṭaṭ*

The *Khiṭaṭ* is extant in four manuscript volumes. Two holograph volumes of the first version (usually referred to as the draft) have been preserved while one holograph volume of the version published in the time of al-Maqrīzī has recently surfaced.<sup>(39)</sup> First published in 1853–54 at the Būlāq Press in Cairo, it was a great success upon its release during al-Maqrīzī's lifetime, as witnessed by its wide circulation: more than 250 manuscripts have been identified around the world. Known as an archeological and monumental history of the city of Cairo, it was inspired by many other books of the same genre composed from the fourth/ninth century on-

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39. Istanbul–Topkapı Saray Library, MSS E.H. 1405 and H. 1472, and Ann Arbor–Michigan University Library, Isl. MS 605, respectively.

ward. However, al-Maqrīzī's work renewed the genre as a whole by adding preliminary chapters on Egypt, including its description, position, history, and main towns. This means the book includes, for example, a description of initiation rites into the Ismā'īlī sect, information usually jealously guarded by its followers. He also provides an account of the history of Cairo from its foundation until his own day and including the Fatimid period, which is essential for understanding the development of the city. He then details the districts and buildings of the town which he categorizes (as baths, mosques, madrasas, etc.); he places each building into its historical context by providing, among other elements, biographical details about the people who founded them and why they did so.

The variety of sources al-Maqrīzī exploited is vast and reflects his capacity to locate texts that must have been difficult to access even in his own time. These included chronicles, annals, biographical dictionaries, Quranic commentaries, lexicographical works, scientific encyclopedias and works of the same genre by his predecessors. The overall number of these texts may be estimated at more than one hundred.<sup>(40)</sup> In many cases, al-Maqrīzī prevented their contents from being lost completely, as many were not otherwise preserved, particularly those dealing with the Fatimid era. In his introduction, he took the time to specify that he would be scrupulous in citing his sources:

When I transmit a passage taken from scholars who dealt with different areas of study, I must indicate from which work it is taken, so I can be absolved of any responsibility and cannot incur blame.<sup>(41)</sup>

Despite this laudable aim, he did not follow it in every case; there are numerous passages in which al-Maqrīzī neglected to indicate his sources. This is notably the case with Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, whom al-Maqrīzī seemed to hardly appreciate, in spite of the

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40. See A.R. Guest, 'A List of Writers, Books, and Other Authorities Mentioned by El Maqrizi in his *Khiṭaṭ*', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1902), 103–25.

41. Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ* (Būlāq ed.), 1:4 = (Sayyid ed.), 1:8.

fact that he happily pillaged al-‘Umarī’s encyclopedic work *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*.

As noted, al-Maqrīzī probably came up with the idea of writing the *Khiṭaṭ* after reading the partly-finished draft of his colleague and neighbor al-Awḥadī. The holograph volumes of the first version of the *Khiṭaṭ* demonstrate that by 818/1415, the essence of the text had already been written. It must have taken another few years and the discovery of new sources for the definitive version to finally be made available and be published; the holograph volume of this version, recently discovered, allows us to date it slightly after 831/1427 and certainly before 834/1430–31<sup>(42)</sup>. However, al-Maqrīzī continued to add information to it until two years before his death.

### 5. *The Khiṭaṭ in print*

#### 5.1. European attempts

Al-Maqrīzī’s *Khiṭaṭ* drew the attention of scholars in Europe very early, as evidenced by the significant number of manuscripts preserved in various libraries; some of these copies reached the continent in the early seventeenth century.<sup>(43)</sup> It thus comes as no surprise that the text was widely used in the publications and translations of Orientalists. The first who took notice of it was Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838), one of the most prominent specialists of Islam of his time. In his own words, he translated a large section of al-Maqrīzī’s work, which he hoped would be published later, a wish that was never fulfilled.<sup>(44)</sup> On several occasions, de Sacy referred to the *Khiṭaṭ* in his works. One of his students, Étienne Marc Quatremère (1782–1857), followed his master’s

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42. N. Gardiner and F. Bauden, ‘A Recently Discovered Holograph Fair Copy of al-Maqrīzī’s al-Mawā’iz wa’-i’tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa’l-āthār (Michigan Islamic ms 605)’, *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 2 (2011), 123–31.

43. My current survey of the manuscripts of the *Khiṭaṭ* includes more than one hundred volumes preserved in European libraries.

44. A.-I. Silvestre de Sacy, ‘Addition pour le Tome Ier des *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits*’, *Notices des manuscrits de la bibliothèque nationale* IV (Paris year VII of the Republican Era [= 1799]), vii–xi, p. vii.

footsteps and paid much attention to al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ*, but not exclusively, as he also published the first translation of the first half of his chronicle of the Ayyubids and the Mamluks (*al-Sulūk*).<sup>(45)</sup> Louis-Mathieu Langlès (1763–1824), who considered himself a student of de Sacy, though they were born just five years apart, also published the edition and translation of an extract dealing with the canal of Cairo. In his essay, he offered, for the first time, an edition and translation of al-Maqrīzī's introduction to the *Khiṭaṭ*.<sup>(46)</sup> All these scholars relied on the large collection of Arabic manuscripts in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris which at that time had already preserved numerous copies of al-Maqrīzī's text. From then on, the *Khiṭaṭ* became a continuously growing focus of more studies.

In 1824, the Dutch Orientalist Hendrik Arent Hamaker (1789–1835) published an extract of the *Khiṭaṭ* regarding the various Byzantine attacks led against Damietta from 708 until the 1221 expedition of the King of Jerusalem, Jean de Brienne (d. 1237).<sup>(47)</sup> Like Langlès, Hamaker relied on a rich collection of Arabic manuscripts in Leiden, including several early copies of the *Khiṭaṭ* brought back from Istanbul in the mid-seventeenth century.

Hamaker was followed in his efforts to make al-Maqrīzī's text more known to the community of scholars by a German Orientalist. Heinrich Joseph Wetzer (1801–53) specialized in the history of Christianity and, after his studies in Oriental languages in various German universities, he went to Paris with the intention of study-

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45. He made great use of the information provided by al-Maqrīzī in his *Khiṭaṭ* for his *Mémoires géographiques et historiques sur l'Égypte, et sur quelques contrées voisines*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1811).

46. L.-M. Langlès, 'Le Livre des avis et sujets de réflexions sur la description historique des divisions territoriales et des vestiges, tirés des annales de l'Égypte, par le cheykh, l'imâm très-savant, Taqy êd-dyn Ahhmed ben A'ly, ben A'bdoûl-qâder ben Mohhamed, surnommé Ebn âl-Maqrizy', *Notices des manuscrits de la bibliothèque nationale* VI (Paris year IX of the Republican Era [= 1801]), 320–86.

47. H. A. Hamaker, ed. *Takyoddini Ahmedis al-Makrizii, Narratio de expeditionibus, a Graecis francisque adversus Dimyatham, ab A.C. 708 AD 1221 susceptis* (Amsterdam, 1824).

ing under the guidance of de Sacy and Quatremère. During his stay in the French capital, he worked on the collection of Arabic manuscripts at the Bibliothèque nationale, where he was attracted to the section on the Copts in the *Khiṭaṭ*. In 1828, he published an edition and Latin translation of part of this section which greatly contributed to the work's renown in Europe.<sup>(48)</sup> A few years later, a fellow-countryman, Heinrich Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (1808–99), published an edition and German translation of the full section on the Copts.<sup>(49)</sup>

All these initiatives were limited to small parts of the *Khiṭaṭ*. No one in Europe dared to consider publishing the whole text. Its richness and vastness were certainly not unrelated to the fact that European scholars refrained from embarking on such a huge project.

## 5.2. The first complete edition: Būlāq, 1853

The Būlāq Press was founded in 1820 as part of a modernization project launched by the Khedive Muḥammad 'Alī (r. 1805–48). Located on the right shore of the Nile, north of the Būlāq district in Cairo, the press published its first book two years after its foundation. While numerous books dealt with the modern (exact) sciences—most of the time translated from European languages—the press also started to include in its publishing program several works on Arab heritage.<sup>(50)</sup> The *Khiṭaṭ* was among the early texts

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48. H. J. Wetzer, *Taki-eddini Makrizii Historia Coptorum Christianorum in Aegypto Arabice, edita et in linguam latinam translata* (Sulzbach, 1828). This includes the chapter dealing with the conversion of the Egyptians to Christianity (known as Copts) and the section regarding the Zuhra church in *al-Khiṭaṭ*, Būlāq edition, 2:482–501, 512–17.

49. F. Wüstenfeld, *Macrizi's Geschichte der Copten. Aus den Handschriften zu Gotha und Wien mit Übersetzung und Anmerkungen* (Göttingen, 1845). This covers the full chapter on the Copts in *al-Khiṭaṭ*, Būlāq edition, 2:480–519.

50. On the Būlāq printing house, see A. Geiss, 'Histoire de l'imprimerie en Égypte', in *Bulletin de l'Institut Égyptien*, cinquième série 1/1907 (1908), 133–57, cinquième série 2/1908 (1909), 195–220; M.A. Bahgat Bey, 'Aperçu historique sur l'imprimerie nationale égyptienne', in *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* (1931), 275–77; M.Y. Hammam, 'History of Printing in Egypt', in *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* (1951), 156–59; A. al-F. Riḍwān, *Tārīkh maṭba'at Būlāq wa-lamḥa fi*

printed by the nascent Būlāq Press. At that time, the layout of printed books did not differ much from manuscripts. For instance, the *Khiṭaṭ*, published in two in-folio volumes (of 498 and 521 pages respectively), included a frontispice as well as a colophon<sup>(51)</sup> where the proofreader (*muṣaḥḥiḥ*), Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Qutṭa al-‘Adawī (d. 1281/1864),<sup>(52)</sup> indicated that the printing of the work was completed on Monday 19 Ṣafar 1270/21 November 1853 at the expense of Rafā‘il (Raphael) ‘Ubayd.<sup>(53)</sup> The latter was a Syrian orthodox man whose family was originally from Baalbek and whose great-grandfather settled in Egypt during the eighteenth century.<sup>(54)</sup> The reason ‘Ubayd subsidized the printing of the *Khiṭaṭ* can perhaps be found in the origin of his family.<sup>(55)</sup> While the identity of the proofreader and the patron is known to us, we do not know which manuscripts the printing press based the work on. None of the few copies held in the collections of the Egyptian National Library (Dār al-Kutub al-Waṭaniyya) in Cairo fully corresponds to the Būlāq edition. It might be that the copies used were in fact disposed of at the end of the production of the book: the typesetters usually handled the manuscripts they were reproducing with inky fingers. The black ink stained the manuscripts, which were hardly readable at the end of the process.

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*tārīkh al-ṭibā’a fī buldān al-sharq al-awsaṭ* (Caire, 1953); R.N. Verdery, ‘The Publications of the Būlāq Press under Muḥammad ‘Alī of Egypt’, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91 (1971), 129–32; ‘A.I. Nuṣayr, *Haraka nashr al-kutub fī Miṣr fī al-qarn al-tāsi’ ‘ashar* (Cairo, 1994); Ch.-H. Hsu, ‘A Survey of Arabic-Character Publications Printed in Egypt During the Period of 1238–1267 (1822–1851)’, in *History of Printing and Publishing in the Languages and Countries of the Middle East*, ed. Ph. Sadgrove (Oxford, 2004), 1–16.

51. In manuscripts, the colophon is the text added by the copyist; this is where he usually provides useful information on his identity and his work in producing the copy.
52. On him, see al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām* 8 vols. (Beirut, 2002), 6:198.
53. Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā’iẓ wa-l-i‘tibār* (Būlāq 1853), 2:521–22.
54. Raphael and his brother Ḥaṇāniyya founded a school (al-‘Ubaydiyya) in Cairo in 1860. A.-L. Dupont, *Ḡurǧī Zaydān (1861–1914): Écrivain réformiste et témoin de la Renaissance arabe* (Beirut 2006), 69.
55. As we saw above, al-Maqrīzī’s family was also from Baalbek.

Be that as it may, for more than one hundred and fifty years the Būlāq edition remained the standard text, despite its defects and shortcomings. It was, moreover, far from user-friendly and pleasant to read; it lacks indexes and is very narrowly spaced, with thirty-eight lines per page.<sup>(56)</sup> Reprinted several times and reused as the basis for allegedly improved editions that in fact reproduced and increased its mistakes, the Būlāq edition was obviously unsatisfactory and several late nineteenth-century scholars called for a critical edition of this fundamental text.

### 5.3. The first critical edition: Cairo, 1911–27

One of the scholars who called for a critical edition was the French scholar Gaston Wiet (1887–1971); he tried to produce a text to meet the standards of critical editions that prevailed at that time (i.e., derived from those long established in the field of classical studies). He produced a critical edition<sup>(57)</sup> that was praised not only for its scientific method (several manuscripts were collected and collated, the result of which was conscientiously indicated in footnotes), but also as a technical achievement.<sup>(58)</sup> Wiet's annotation, which attempts to identify the sources and the passages quoted by al-Maqrīzī, was another cause for praise. However, ultimately, only five volumes, covering pages 1–322 of the Būlāq edition, were issued.<sup>(59)</sup> Although in some way it represented an improvement in comparison to the Būlāq edition, it still contained many mistakes (which is confirmed by the numerous errata added at the end of

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56. Indexes were finally published by Aḥmad 'Abd al-Majīd Harīdī, *Index des Ḥiṭat: index analytique des ouvrages d'Ibn Duqmāq et de Maqrīzī sur le Caire*, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1983–84).

57. *El-Mawā'iz wa'l-i'tibār fī dhikr el-khitat wa'l-âthâr*, vols. I–II: 1re partie (Cairo, 1911–13); III–IV: 2e partie (Cairo, 1922–24); V, 1er fascicule: 3e partie, chs. I–XII (Cairo, 1927). Published in the series "Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie du Caire" (vols. 30, 33, 46, 49, 53).

58. In addition to the quality of the Arabic characters, one may also commend the headpiece specifically engraved with the title of the book in Arabic. This headpiece is reproduced at the beginning of Stowasser's translation in this first volume.

59. The first volume appeared when Wiet was just twenty-four years old.

each volume). Moreover, when he discovered that more than 170 manuscripts of *al-Khiṭaṭ* were preserved in libraries around the world, Wiet abruptly ended his project.<sup>(60)</sup> He claimed that it was impossible for a single man to proceed further and that this should be a collective work involving specialists for the various periods covered by the book. This was in 1927 and for seventy-five years no one dared to carry out such a project.<sup>(61)</sup>

#### 5.4. The second critical edition: Sayyid 2002–4

The Egyptian scholar Ayman Fuʿād Sayyid finally took up the challenge. Sayyid is known for his editions of numerous historical texts related to the history of Egypt.<sup>(62)</sup> He was the first to draw attention to the presence of one holograph volume of the first version of the *Khiṭaṭ*,<sup>(63)</sup> which he eventually published.<sup>(64)</sup> His work on this holograph volume convinced him that he could embark on a project to publish the full text of the *Khiṭaṭ*. Sayyid worked on the basis of the Būlāq edition and the Wiet edition, taking into consideration other critical manuscripts that had been identified in the meantime, including a second holograph volume of the first ver-

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60. In the foreword to the fourth volume, Wiet announced that the sixth volume was well advanced; unfortunately, it was never published.

61. Wiet's partial edition was reprinted by the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University (Frankfurt, 1995).

62. Al-Musabbihī, *al-Juzʿ al-arbaʿūn min Akhbār Miṣr*, 366–420/977–1029, vol. 1: *al-Qism al-tārīkhī*, ed. Th. Bianquis and A.F. Sayyid (Cairo, 1978); Ibn Muyassar, *al-Muntaqā min Akhbār Miṣr*, ed. A.F. Sayyid (Cairo, 1981); Ibn al-Maʿmūn al-Baṭāʾihī, *Nuṣūṣ min akhbār Miṣr*, ed. A.F. Sayyid (Cairo, 1983); Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār fi mamālik al-amṣār: L'Égypte, la Syrie, le Ḥiǧāz et le Yémen*, ed. A.F. Sayyid (Cairo, 1985); Ibn al-Ṣayrafi, *al-Qānūn fi dīwān al-rasāʾil wa-l-Ishāra ilā man nāla al-wizāra*, ed. A.F. Sayyid (Cairo and Beirut, 1990); Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḍa al-bahīyya al-zāhira fi khiṭaṭ al-Muʿizziyya al-Qāhira*, ed. A.F. Sayyid (Beirut, 1996).

63. A.F. Sayyid, 'Remarques sur la composition des *Ḥiṭaṭ* de Maqrīzī d'après un manuscrit autographe', in *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron, 1927–1976*, vol. 2: *Égypte post-pharaonique* (Cairo, 1979), 231–58; A.F. Sayyid, 'Early Methods of Book Composition: al-Maqrīzī's Draft of the *Kitāb al-Khiṭaṭ*', in *The Codicology of Islamic Manuscripts. Proceedings of the Second Conference of al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 4–5 December 1993*, ed. Y. Dutton (London, 1995), 93–101.

64. Al-Maqrīzī, *Musawwadat Kitāb al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-iʿtibār fi dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*, ed. A.F. Sayyid (London, 1995).



sion. Published over three years in five volumes (volume 5 contains detailed indices), the edition is not devoid of flaws.<sup>(65)</sup> The most worrisome of the defects lies in the use Sayyid made of the two holograph volumes of the first version. This version was completed by al-Maqrīzī around 818/1415, while the text of the *Khiṭaṭ* as we know it, i.e., the last version published after al-Maqrīzī's death, is the result of expansions the author carried out around 831/1428 and other material he added up to the end of his life. Whenever Sayyid found a more detailed passage in the manuscripts of the first version, he favored these over the last version. The result is a mixed text that does not correspond to what I believe al-Maqrīzī would have wanted to see published. Another major fault is Sayyid's failure to notice that twenty leaves in the second holograph volume of the first version were not in al-Maqrīzī's hand. As I later demonstrated, the author of these leaves must have been al-Awḥadī, a colleague, friend, and neighbor of al-Maqrīzī who had been working on a book on the topographical history of Cairo for years before his untimely death. As al-Maqrīzī himself acknowledged, he greatly benefited from the manuscript (a draft for the most part, but also a fair copy in some cases) he inherited from al-Awḥadī.<sup>(66)</sup> Apart from these weaknesses, the annotation is also limited, despite Sayyid's efforts to keep a record of the publications in languages other than Arabic. Among other things, he failed to identify numerous people, technical terms, and concepts.

### 5.5. The third critical edition: Sayyid 2013

On 15 April 2010, while I was stuck at Chicago O'Hare airport due to the eruptions of the Eyjafjallajökull, I received a message from a PhD student at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. At

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65. On the quality of the edition, see my review in *Mamlūk Studies Review* 11 (2007), 169–76.

66. See F. Bauden, 'Maqriziana IX: Should al-Maqrīzī Be Thrown Out With the Bathwater? The Question of His Plagiarism of al-Awḥadī's *Khiṭaṭ* and the Documentary Evidence', in *Mamlūk Studies Review* 14 (2010), 159–232.

that time, Noah Gardiner was working part-time on the cataloguing of the collection of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish manuscripts acquired by the university library<sup>(67)</sup> from various sources, including Abraham Shalom Yahuda (1877–1951). Yahuda was a Jewish scholar born in Palestine who collected a huge collection of manuscripts, parts of which he sold to several institutions.<sup>(68)</sup> Gardiner informed me that he thought he had identified a holograph volume of al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* in the section bought from Yahuda in 1926 (Isl. MS 605), and he wanted confirmation from me on the issue of whether or not the handwriting was that of al-Maqrīzī. The few color images he attached to his message allowed me to immediately corroborate that his intuition was correct. He then proposed for me to study the manuscript and together publish an article announcing the discovery.<sup>(69)</sup> We concluded that the holograph volume corresponded to the third volume, of a set of four, of the final version of the *Khiṭaṭ*. Together with the two holograph volumes of the first version, this newly discovered volume thus represents a unique witness for the history of the text as well as for al-Maqrīzī's working method.

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67. The catalog can be consulted online (<https://guides.lib.umich.edu/islamicmss>).

68. In the case of the University of Michigan, the collection came from Yahuda's brother, Benjamin S.E. Yahuda. For details on the Yahuda acquisition, see E. Kropf, 'The Yemeni Manuscripts of the Yahuda Collection at the University of Michigan: Provenance and Acquisition', in *Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen* 13 (2012) (<https://cmv.revues.org/1974>). In addition to the University of Michigan, Princeton University (through the donation of one of its trustees, Robert Garrett (1875–1961)) and the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin bought the most significant parts. Yahuda donated the remainder of his collection, which he had kept for his own use, to the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem. The catalog of the collection has begun to appear: E. Wust and R. Ukeles, *Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish Manuscripts of the Yahuda Collection of the National Library of Israel, Volume 1* (Leiden and Boston, 2016).

69. N. Gardiner and F. Bauden, 'A Recently Discovered Holograph Fair Copy of al-Maqrīzī's *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār* (Michigan Islamic MS 605)', in *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 2/2 (2011), 123–31. In this study, Gardiner provides the codicological description as well as the history of the manuscript while I focus on the text itself in order to establish when al-Maqrīzī produced the volume.

Informed of the discovery, Sayyid got a copy of the manuscript. Ten years had passed since he had published the first volume of his edition of the *Khiṭaṭ*. In the meantime, he had received feedback from scholars around the world. Thanks to this new evidence, Sayyid considered an updated edition necessary. Published in 2013 in six volumes,<sup>(70)</sup> this new edition has hardly been noticed, probably because it was published such a short time after the first. While Sayyid relied on the recently identified holograph manuscript in Ann Arbor, he unfortunately failed to address all the flaws identified in his first edition, including the mixing of the first and the last version of the text. In addition, his annotations were not improved significantly.

#### 5.6. Toward a definitive critical edition

In the framework of the *Bibliotheca Maqriziana* project, which aims to publish critical editions based on holograph or autograph manuscripts (when they have been preserved) with fully annotated translations,<sup>(71)</sup> it is clear that the *Khiṭaṭ* needs to be edited, and every detail must be attended to, like the place of the marginal additions and the nature of corrections. Such a project can only be brought to fruition with the collaboration of numerous scholars who are specialists in the fields dealt with in the text, just as Wiet recognized more than one century ago. It is only when this condition is met that the text will finally be faithful to al-Maqrizī's text and will be accessible with a full annotation.

### 6. *The Khiṭaṭ in translation*

Because of the interest of non-Arabists, several scholars have called for a complete translation of the *Khiṭaṭ*. So far, this call has only been answered in part. Several sections were translated very early on, often together with the edition provided. Some of these

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70. The first volume corresponds to the introduction.

71. On the project, see <https://brill.com/view/serial/BIMA>.

were mentioned at the beginning of the previous section (see ‘European attempts’). It is clear that the section al-Maqrīzī devoted to the history of the Copts and their churches was the focus of most of the attention of these scholars.<sup>(72)</sup> The sections on the markets of Cairo and the agricultural calendar have also drawn the interest of scholars.<sup>(73)</sup>

A first attempt to provide a full translation in French was formulated by Étienne Quatremère who started his translation in the mid-nineteenth century, but this effort was not brought to completion.<sup>(74)</sup> It was only half a century later that another attempt was made. The second project was initiated by Urbain Bouriant (1849–1903), a French Egyptologist who had also mastered Arabic and was director of the French Archaeological Mission in Egypte (later the Institut français d’archéologie orientale, IFAO), based in Cairo, from 1886 to 1898. In 1895, he published the first volume of his translation, which he had begun a few years before; he announced that it would be followed by three more volumes, including one of

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72. S.C. Malan, *A Short History of the Copts and of Their Church. Translated from the Arabic of Tāqi-ed-Dīn [sic] El-Maqrīzī* (London, 1873) (English trans. of part of the chapter dealing with Copts in *al-Khiṭaṭ*, Būlāq edition, 2:480–500); L. Leroy, ‘Les églises des chrétiens’, in *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien* 12 (1907), 190–208, 269–79 (French trans. of the section dealing with Coptic churches in *al-Khiṭaṭ*, Būlāq edition, 2:510–19); L. Leroy, ‘Les couvents des chrétiens’, in *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien* 13 (1908) 33–46, 192–204 (French trans. of the section dealing with Coptic monasteries in *al-Khiṭaṭ*, Būlāq edition, 2:501–10); R. Griveau, ‘Les fêtes des coptes’, in *Patrologia Orientalis* 10 (1915), 313–43 (French trans. of the section dealing with Coptic festivals in *al-Khiṭaṭ*, Būlāq edition, 2:501). Other small sections have appeared in translation in research articles. These are not detailed here.

73. A. Raymond, and G. Wiet, *Les marchés du Caire. Traduction annotée du texte de Maqrīzī* (Cairo, 1979) (French trans. of the section dealing with the markets of Cairo in *al-Khiṭaṭ*, Būlāq edition, 2:94–107); C. Pellat, *Cinq calendriers égyptiens* (Le Caire, 1986), 102–09 (French trans. of the section dealing with the agricultural calendar in *al-Khiṭaṭ*, Būlāq edition, 1:101–03).

74. Quatremère’s text, which was meant to serve as a review of the Būlāq edition, was not printed. It is now preserved, together with Quatremère’s library, in Munich, at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. A printed leaf of the beginning of a translation of al-Maqrīzī’s *Khiṭaṭ* is appended to the unpublished review. These pieces were translated by U. Bouriant in his introduction to his own translation of the *Khiṭaṭ* (on which see below), 1:ii–xiv.

indices. In 1900, the second volume was indeed published.<sup>(75)</sup> Unfortunately, Bouriant, whose health had started to decline in 1895, was struck down by hemiplegia three years later and died in 1903 without having recovered.<sup>(76)</sup> His work was resumed by Paul Casanova (1861–1926), an Arabist born in then French Algeria who became vice director of the IFAO from 1900.<sup>(77)</sup> Casanova published a first volume in 1906, followed by a second one in 1920.<sup>(78)</sup> In the preface to the second volume, Casanova revealed that the fourteen-year delay in printing was due to his numerous engagements as well as his health problems. He nevertheless planned to continue his translation. His death, six years later, put an end to his project. Ultimately, Bouriant and Casanova were only able to translate the first half of the text of the *Khiṭaṭ*, but not equally well.<sup>(79)</sup> while Casanova provided his text with very informative notes, Bouriant's translation is completely devoid of annotation.

The next contributor to the translation of the *Khiṭaṭ* was Karl Stowasser (1925–97).<sup>(80)</sup> Born in 1925 in Graslitz (now Kraslice) Czechoslovakia, only two miles from the German border (part of the Sudetenland during World War II), when he turned eighteen, he was conscripted into the German army and took part in the battle on the beaches of Normandy. His entire company surrendered, and he was brought to the United States and taken to a prisoner of

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75. *Description topographique et historique de l'Égypte*, trans. U. Bouriant, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1895–1900).

76. See his obituary by É. Chassinat in *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 3 (1903), 213–14.

77. See J. Loiseau, 'Casanova, Paul,' in *Dictionnaire des orientalistes de langue française*, ed. Fr. Pouillon (Paris, 2008), 184–85.

78. *Livre des admonitions et de l'observation pour l'histoire des quartiers et des monuments ou Description historique et topographique de l'Égypte*, trans. P. Casanova, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1906–20).

79. Their translation ends at page 397 of vol. 1 of the Būlāq edition which they followed. They did not rely on Wiet's translation which was first published in 1911.

80. Most of this section is based on the text published in Clopper Almon's preface and his blurb to his edition of vol. 1 of Stowasser's translation published in 2014.

war camp in Louisiana. After the war, he was returned to Germany and given a blue suit and \$200. He was eventually able to find his parents, who had gotten into West Germany. He entered the University of Erlangen, where he became fascinated with the study of language, especially Arabic. He returned to the United States and studied at Cornell, where he translated the Hans Wehr Arabic-German dictionary into English; he then returned to Germany, where he earned a doctorate from the University of Muenster. In the 1950s, he served as an interpreter and translator in Syria. From 1961, he worked at Georgetown University (Washington, DC) and completed his *Dictionary of Syrian Arabic*, co-authored with Moukhtar Ani; this work was published by Georgetown (1964). In 1970, he joined the Department of History at the University of Maryland. He retired as Associate Professor in 1995 and died of leukemia in 1997.

Stowasser started to work on his translation of the *Khiṭaṭ* shortly after he arrived at the University of Maryland. He received two grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1978 and 1982 to complete his project. At his untimely death, shortly after retirement, the translation and annotations were complete and he had begun work on indexes, but the work was not published. Stowasser worked from the two editions of *al-Khiṭaṭ* that were available at the time: the two-volume Būlāq edition of 1853 and the 1911–27 partial edition by Gaston Wiet published in Cairo. In his division of the text into chapters and paragraphs, Stowasser in fact followed Wiet's own division of the text. Stowasser's notes show that while he used both editions, he often rejected the Wiet version in favor of the Būlāq text. Of course, he may have intended to say in the preface that was never written that he relied on the Wiet text except where noted. But his disparaging remarks about some of Wiet's choices makes that seem unlikely. Stowasser made every effort to understand the text and, whenever the editions did not offer a satisfactory reading, he checked the alternative readings found in manuscripts by Wiet and in the sources used by al-Maqrīzī. In so doing, he almost prepared an edition of his own, one

that was much more accurate than the two editions he had to rely on. He also made the exceptional effort of consulting a copy he had found in Bursa (İnebey Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, MS Hüseyin Çelebi 790, referred to in his notes as HC). Though undated, it is from the end of the ninth/fifteenth century and was thus copied a few decades after al-Maqrīzī's death. In addition to the translation, Stowasser's notes are a major contribution, as these provide information essential to understanding the text.

When he died in 1997, the manuscript of his translation, in the form of a printout in several ring binders, passed on to Stowasser's former wife, Barbara Freyer Stowasser (1935–2012), who, from 1966, had spent her whole career at Georgetown University. In 2001, an international conference dedicated to al-Maqrīzī was organized by Prof. Li Guo at Notre Dame University (29–30 September). I was one of the participants who had been invited to present the results of my research on al-Maqrīzī's working method based on the notebook I had identified four years earlier in the holdings of the library of the Université de Liège (Belgium). At the end of the conference, at Bruce Craig's request, a meeting was organized with all the participants. At that time, Craig was the bibliographer for Middle Eastern Studies at the library of the University of Chicago, and the creator and editor of the *Mamlūk Studies Review* and the *Mamluk Bibliography Online*. He informed all the participants that Barbara F. Stowasser had recently brought Stowasser's translation to him, in the hope that he could help publish it. The decision was taken to leave the manuscript under the supervision of one of the participants who would make every effort to contribute to its publication. This good intention, however, did not lead to tangible results and ultimately the manuscript was restored to Barbara F. Stowasser. When she died in 2012 her estate entrusted the manuscript to the Special Collections unit of the Georgetown University Library.

We might not have known anything about the technical preparation of Stowasser's translation, if we did not have the testi-

mony of Clopper Almon. In his preface to his edition of the first part published in 2014, he states:

I was a colleague of Karl Stowasser at the University of Maryland but in the Economics Department. I had a graduate student who spoke very highly of him, so during his last semester of teaching, I attended his lectures on Arabic history. I learned about the manuscript of this work because he was using WordPerfect and was having trouble making the ḥ, ṣ, ṭ, ḏ, and ẓ used in the ALA-LC Romanization of Arabic. I wrote a macro for him to put the dot under these letters. He was delighted with it, and the dots are all in place in the manuscript.<sup>(81)</sup>

Stowasser thus wrote his text and notes using a computer and a word processor with a system that allowed him to transliterate some Arabic letters that need to be differentiated from others. Unfortunately, the computer source files have been lost and only the printout in three binders is preserved at the Georgetown university library. The translation covers a bit more than the first half of the first volume of the *Khiṭaṭ* in the Būlāq edition, ending with page 285, and volume 4 of the Wiet edition. The first binder covers the first part while the second and third binders correspond to the second part in Wiet's division of the text. It seems that Stowasser's translation went beyond this, as in his notes he refers to the third part, which tallied with Wiet's fifth volume. If this was the case, the binder of this part has been lost.

In 2014, Clopper Almon decided to publish the first binder of Stowasser's translation.<sup>(82)</sup> The typescript was scanned and put through an optical character recognition (OCR) program. Almon then undertook to correct the result. Unfortunately, those letters with underdots and those with macrons (the ā, ī, ū used in the romanization of Arabic) eluded the OCR. Almon knew that Stowasser cared about them passionately, so he endeavored to re-

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81. K. Stowasser (trans.), *Medieval Egypt: al-Khiṭaṭ of Aḥmad ibn Alī al-Maqrīzī*, part I (Lexington, KY 2014), 8.

82. Stowasser (trans.), *Medieval Egypt*. The volume was a print-on-demand publication using CreateSpace and was released by Hans A. Stowasser, Karl's son, under the Creative Commons.



store them, fixing some 10,000 of them. As he recognized, he probably missed others. Before publishing the second part (the second and third binder), he expressed the wish that someone could help him polish the text and fix all the transliterated letters. Given my interest in Stowasser's translation, I plan to include, in the future, the *Khiṭaṭ* in the *Bibliotheca Maqriziana* project. I thought that Stowasser's translation, even though partial, could be used as a basis for a new critical edition with an annotated English translation. I thus contacted Clopper Almon in the course of 2014 and we arranged a meeting in Washington, DC, in November of the same year. We reached an agreement with Karl Stowasser's son, Hans, and the text of the second and third binders was scanned and put through an OCR program. Clopper Almon carried out a first reading of the result, and fixed some of the underdots; he then transmitted the whole file to me. I asked him to include the text of the first already published part as well, because I did not think it would make sense to publish the text of the two last binders without polishing the first, which still contained many mistakes. My work also consisted of preparing the layout and transforming all the endnotes into footnotes. Unfortunately, some of these notes for the last chapters of part I (first binder, from chapter 40) are missing in the manuscript held at Georgetown University Library. The manuscript also lacks a preface by Stowasser, in which he could have explained his method and choices, and provided the list of the abbreviations he used in the annotation and a bibliography. I have added a list of all the abbreviations in the footnotes as well as a full bibliography of the sources and references Stowasser quoted. In most cases, I was able to identify the edition he used when he failed to indicate it, though for a limited number of sources I had to indicate that I have been unable to do so. In preparing this edition of Stowasser's translation I refrained from correcting the text or from editing the language. It may thus be regarded as an edition that is entirely faithful to the version left by Stowasser. I also canceled the additional footnotes that Clopper Almon added in the first volume, to match the lack of these in the last chapters, as mentioned above. I

must also emphasize that I did not collate his work with the Arabic original, particularly with Sayyid's editions. This step will need to be taken once the *Khiṭaṭ* is published in the *Bibliotheca Maqriziana*. Needless to say, such an edition with a fully annotated translation must be prepared by a team of specialists, as I have already stressed.

At this point, I would like to express my warmest thanks to Hans A. Stowasser for allowing me to use his father's translation in the future (of course with due acknowledgment), and to Clopper Almon for accepting my offer to work with him on editing the three volumes and for being so patient with the delays we have experienced preparing these three volumes for publication. Finally, I am also grateful to Brill for permitting me to use the Brill font and to Evyn Kropf and the University of Michigan for granting permission to reproduce al-Maqrīzī's handwriting on the cover of the volume of the *Khiṭaṭ* identified in their holdings in 2010.

Frédéric Bauden

Mezzomonte (Polcenigo), 7 August 2019

## Abbreviations and Bibliography

### *Abbreviations*

\* indicates phrases in rhymed prose in Arabic.

*BGA*: *Bibliotheca geographorum arabicorum*, ed. M. J. De Goeje (Leiden 1870-1894), 8 vols.

Bulaq text: al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-ʿl-iʿtibār* (Bulaq ed.).

*EF*: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. A Dictionary of the Geography, Ethnography and Biography of the Muhammadan Peoples*, ed. M. Th. Houtsma et al. (Leiden and London 1913-1938), 9 vols.

*EF*: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2007), 11 vols.

*GAL*<sup>2</sup>: see Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*.

HC: MS Huseyin Çelebi 790 (Bursa)

*Khiṭaṭ* = al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-ʿl-iʿtibār* (Bulaq ed.).

*sEF* = *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition, Supplement*, ed. C.E. Bosworth et al.

Wiet: see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-ʿl-iʿtibār*, ed. Wiet.

Yāqūt: see Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*.

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The Book of Exhortations and Useful Lessons  
in Dealing with Topography and Historical  
Remains

*(al-Mawā'iz wa-'l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-'l-āthār)*

*by*

Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Maqrīzī



## Author's Preface

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

[1] Praise be to God, Who is the cause of knowledge and understanding, Who “*taught Man that he knew not*,”<sup>(1)</sup> Who has lavished on His servants inward and outward blessings,<sup>(2)</sup> Who has forever bestowed on them favor upon favor from the abundance of His bounties; Who has scattered them abroad on His earth for a while to live and has made them successors in His wealth for them to enjoy; Who has guided some people to pursue the strays of knowledge and science and has awakened in them the desire for mastery in the realms of thought and reflection and for competition in the arenas of learning; Who has led certain people to devote themselves to Him alone before their fellow men and has shown them the way to depend on Him alone in all affairs; Who has deprived others of all grace and virtue and has given them companions who led them into every depravity and vice;<sup>(3)</sup> Who has sealed the hearts of still others so that they barely comprehend a word, and has prevented them from treading the paths of good works so that they were helpless and impotent; Who then decreed for all that they must die and proceed, one and all, from this abode of trial and tribulation to the interval of perdition and affliction (which lies between death and resurrection); Who will assemble

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1. Koran 96 (The Blood Clot): 5 (with a minor variation in the Arabic wording). —The verse count followed in the translation is that of the Standard Egyptian Edition of the Koran (Cairo 1344/1925), as in the concordances of the Arab Language Academy (*Muʿjam alfāz al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, 2nd ed., Cairo 1390/1970) and of Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (*Al-Muʿjam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qurʾān*, Cairo 1378/1959). —The English rendition of Koranic passages quoted in the text is that of A. J. Arberry (*The Koran Interpreted*, New York: MacMillan, 1955); the excellence of his translation should compensate for the slight inconvenience of a different verse count.
  2. Cf. Koran 31 (Lokman): 20.
  3. Cf. Koran 41 (Distinguished): 25 ff.

them all at the abode of reward and punishment so that every one of them will give a full account of his deeds, and Who will question each of His servants as to that which He gave and accorded to him, and about his station before the Lord and what He has prepared for him. "*He shall not be questioned as to what He does, but they shall be questioned.*"<sup>(4)</sup> I praise Him in the manner of one who knows that He is a God Whom alone he worships, and that there is no Creator save He—a praise in need of an abundance of Divine Grace, as He bestows blessing upon blessing through ever-renewed bounties.

[2] God's blessing be on Our Lord Muḥammad, His Servant and Apostle, His Prophet and Friend, the Lord of Mankind and the best of those who went before him; who combines all the merits of character and conduct and who is fully deserving of the epithet of absolute perfection among men; who was already a prophet whilst Adam was yet uncreated,<sup>(5)</sup> and whose name was inscribed in the highest heavens from all eternity; who then became a mortal,<sup>(6)</sup> until God Exalted sent him to all creation and made him the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, giving him what He had not given to any mortal before him. (Blessings) on his family, his companions, and those who followed in the next generation, and ample peace until the Day of Judgment.

[3] History is one of the most esteemed sciences and, in status and importance, one of the most honored in the eyes of men of

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4. Koran 21 (The Prophets): 23.

5. Literally, "between water and clay;" cf. a tradition ascribed to the Prophet in which he replied to the question as to when the duty of prophethood was imposed on him: "While Adam was still between spirit and body" (Tirmidhī, *Manāqib*, 1; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal 4:66; 5:59, 379). On the concept of Muḥammad's pre-existence in time and space due to the divine light of prophecy see the article "Nūr Muḥammadi" by L. Massignon in *ET*.

6. Literally, "then he passed from virtuous, sinless loins to pure, chosen wombs." The highly stylized preface, composed in part or, as here, entirely in florid rhymed prose with its constraints on the choice of words, became a literary tradition in the 10th century and, especially for writers like Maqrīzī who are compelled by the subject matter to adhere to a sober, straightforward style, the prime vehicle for the display of the author's erudition and rhetorical artistry.

reason. For it contains exhortations and warnings for the journey from this world to the hereafter and affords insight into noble traits of character to be emulated, as well as knowledge of reprehensible deeds to be shunned, by people of intelligence. Surely, good men have cast their eyes on it and lofty minds have inclined to history and have been attracted by it. Much was written on it by intellectual leaders, and much is included of it in the books of eminent people.

[4] Egypt is where I was born and where I played with my childhood friends, where my folk gathered and where my clan and family resided, the home of all my people, high and low, the nest where I sprouted my wings, the aerie where my dreams were hatched. How much one loves to speak of it!

Ever since I tasted the heady fragrance of knowledge and my Lord gave me intelligence and understanding, I kept wanting to learn about Egypt's history, to be in a position to draw from its wells, to question travelers about the people of this land. Over many years I took notes and, in the process, collected so many useful bits of information as rarely a book will contain or a parchment hold, so uncommon are they and so unusual. They were, however, not ordered systematically, nor were they edited in the manner of something woven on a loom.<sup>(7)</sup> So I wished to distill from them information about such antiquities as have survived in the land of Egypt from past nations and bygone generations, and about such localities as remain in Fustāṭ Miṣr which age and the tooth of time have already altered to some extent and the vestiges of which will soon be obliterated by decay and ruin. I wanted to describe the splendid palaces in Cairo and the quarters and wondrous buildings the city contains, together with information about the illustrious men who were their founders and with a tribute to those notables and men of distinction who erected them. And I wanted to intersperse all this with pleasant anecdotes and striking time-honored aphorisms.

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7. The translation of this sentence is based on the more plausible Bulaq text.

(All of this I wanted to present) neither in undue lengthiness nor in frustrating brevity, but rather in the manner of the happy medium and the golden mean. Therefore, I have called the work “The Book of Exhortations and Useful Lessons in Dealing with Topography and Historical Remains.”<sup>(8)</sup>

[5] I truly hope that it will—God willing—find favor in the eyes of kings, yet not displease the common man; that it will be extolled by the accomplished scholar as well as admired by the beginning student; that it will please the virtuous, yet not be discarded by the sinners; that people of leisure and comfort will discuss it at nightly social gatherings, and that men of opinion and thought will regard it as exhortation and lesson alike to guide them to the realization of God's omnipotence in changing things and to teach them the marvels of God's work in the continuous progression of affairs.

[6] If I have succeeded in this compilation and achieved my aim in what I have set down, I owe it to the profound blessings of the Almighty and His abundant kindness, to His great favors bestowed on me and His sublime beneficence. If I have failed in what I have done and missed my aim as I was writing—oh, how much it behooves man to miss and err if he is not guarded and protected by the Knower of the Divine Secrets!

And as I exculpate myself, ‘I am but human,’  
in mindless error I persist unless by Fate protected.  
No better quittance for the stumbler will you find  
than to concede, ‘I am but human.’

May the reader of this work cover its author with the mantle of forgiveness if he has slipped, and may he benevolently overlook his

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8. *Kitāb al-mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*. —The term *khiṭaṭ* (singular: *khiṭṭah*) originally designated lands allotted to tribal groups or individuals in the newly-founded garrison cities (*amṣār*) of the Arabs. In later usage, it corresponds roughly to quarters, or precincts, of a city. Cf. “*Khitta*” (P. Crone) in *EF*.

mistakes and errors. What noble steed, although it outstrips the others, will not trip (at times)? What keen blade will not get blunted and glance off the target? Especially when thought is preoccupied, and resolve, because of the complexity and difficulty of things, is lax and flagging, and when the mind is weary of conditions in these gloomy times and the heart is sick over never-ending feuds and tribulations.

My time is balking me as if I were its foe.  
 Each day it meets me with unpleasantness.  
 If I desire something, I get its opposite;  
 bright skies one day mean gloom and murk the next.

[7] God forgive! Not that I am weary of Destiny and at odds with Fate! Nay, this is the ill and expeccoration of a consumptive who derives comfort from venting his aches and woes and finds relief from his burdens as he airs his complaints and yearnings.

Were they to look between my ribs and bowels  
 they'd find in my liver a line from the book of love.  
 Had they experienced the affection I've encountered,  
 they would declare me free from blame, or I'd give them  
 excuse.

[8] I ask God to grace this book with acceptance by the mighty and the men of learning, as I seek refuge with Him from the grasping hands of the envious and the ignorant. I ask Him to guide me in it, and in words and deeds elsewhere, toward the level road. "*God is sufficient for us; an Excellent Guardian is He.*"<sup>(9)</sup> In Him—His power be exalted!—I find oblivion to all that befalls me. In Him, the Almighty, I place my trust in all adversities. There is no god save He, praised be His name.

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9. Koran 3 (The House of Imran): 173.

## The Eight Principia

[1] One should know that it was the common practice among the teachers of old to adduce the “eight principia” before beginning any book, namely: the objective, the title, the utility, the station, and the authenticity of the book; the art it falls under, the number of parts contained in it, and the methods of conveying information used in it. So we say:

[2] As to the *objective* of this work, it is to collect the scattered information about the history of the land of Egypt and about its population, so that the total of the collected news will produce an integrated knowledge of the entire history of Egypt. This will enable a person, once it is absorbed by the mind, to furnish, at any given time, information about the remaining, as well as vanished, historical landmarks of Egypt and to tell about those who initiated them and those who visited them or lived in them, and what happened to them afterwards, and the like, by way of tracing their history in such a manner as to derive an overall useful lesson from it with regard to that particular monument.

[3] As for the *title* of this book, that is to say, the name I gave it: As I was doing research on the history of Egypt, I found the bits of information mixed and scattered. In collecting them, I could not set them down arranged by years because it was not possible to establish the exact time of each event, especially in long-bygone ages. Nor could I, for different reasons which will become apparent as one leafs through this work, set them down according to people's names. I therefore scattered them about by writing about *khiṭaṭ*, or topographical features, and *āthār*, that is historical remains. In that manner, each chapter of the book contains all the information that is appropriate and relevant, and the widely scattered data on Egypt's history have thus been brought together in a whole. I have not refrained from repeating information if I needed to, in a way



that will meet with the approval of the sophisticated and will not find rejection in the eyes of intelligent, educated people, so that someone who reads any chapter of it will be able, thanks to its content, to dispense with what is contained in other chapters. For that reason, I have entitled it “The Book of Exhortations and Useful Lessons in Dealing with Topography and Historical Remains.”

[4] As to the *usefulness* of this book, that is obvious from its objective and its title. By which I mean, its usefulness lies in the fact that it affords a person in a short time an overview of the events and changes which have taken place in the land of Egypt over long periods of time and over many years. And in reflecting on it, that person will experience self-improvement and moral training so that he will love and practice good and loathe and avoid evil. He will become aware of the transitoriness of this world, and he will learn to shun it and to turn to that which is permanent and lasting.

[5] As to the *station* of this book, it belongs to one of the two branches of science, which are the rational and the traditional. One should be prepared to read it and to ponder its exhortations after having attained mastery of the necessary knowledge in the traditional and rational sciences. For by reflecting upon it, he from whose heart God has removed the veils<sup>(1)</sup> and from whose eyes He has taken the covering<sup>(2)</sup> will eventually realize how his fellow men, after enjoying wealth and military might, have met with extinction and obliteration. Hence, the book’s importance, after knowledge of the branches of rational and traditional sciences, is so that one learn from it “*how was the end of those that were before.*”<sup>(3)</sup>

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1. “And We lay veils upon their hearts lest they understand it and in their ears heaviness” (Koran 6:25).
  2. “God has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a covering” (Koran 2:7).
  3. Koran 30 (The Greeks): 42.

[6] As for the *author* and arranger of this book, his name is The Reverend Shaykh, the Imam, the Learned Scholar Taqīy al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥammad. He is known as the “Son of al-Maqrīzī” (God rest him in peace). He was born in Cairo in the land of Egypt after the year 760 of the Hijrah (A.D. 1359). His standing as a scholar is attested by this book and other works he has written and compiled.

[7] As to the *science* to which this book belongs: it falls under the science of history. It is through history that the laws laid down by God become known to us, and it is history which has preserved the traditions of His prophets and apostles and has recorded their divine guidance that serves as a model to those whom God has enabled to warship Him, whom He has guided to obey Him, whom he has protected from trespassing against Him. It is in history that we find the records of past kings and pharaohs, and how God’s wrath descended upon them when they did what was forbidden to them. And it is through history that man is able to learn of the sciences and arts recorded by these and to gain knowledge of unknown vast countries and cities far apart, and other things of undeniable merit. Every one of the Arab and non-Arab peoples, with all their differences of outlook and beliefs, has a history of their own which is well known and circulated among them. Every city in the world has its events and incidents which are known to the learned men of that city in every age. Were one to study all the books that the scholars of the Arabs and non-Arabs have written about that, their number would be excessive and no human being would be able to list them all.

[8] As far as the *parts* of this book are concerned, they are seven: The first contains a summary of Egyptian history and deals with the Nile, the (Egyptian) taxation system, and the hills and mountains of Egypt; the second comprises information about many of its towns and its various people; the third deals with the history of Fuṣṭāṭ and those who governed there; the fourth contains a history of Cairo and of its caliphs and their achievements; the fifth discuss-

es what Cairo and its suburbs are like in our own time; the sixth deals with the Citadel and those who ruled in it; the seventh comprises a discussion of the causes of Egypt's desolation.<sup>(4)</sup> Each of these seven parts contains a number of chapters.

[9] As to which *methods of conveying information* I have pursued in this book: I have followed three, namely: transcribing from books written on the sciences; quoting outstanding scholars and prominent people of my own time; and personal testimony of what I have seen and witnessed myself. As far as transcribing from works written by scholars on various sciences is concerned, I give proper attribution in each case to the book from which I have gleaned the information so as to be rid of responsibility for it and absolved of any offense it might give. Many a local contemporary of mine, because of his poor grasp of the scholarly disciplines and his inadequate familiarity with what other people have written, has attacked and denounced things he knows nothing about. If such a person were fair, he would realize that the weakness lies on his part, not in the information contained in this book, information to which he has no access, and which he does not need for the proper conduct of his life. For the scholar it is enough to know what has been said about that and to take cognizance of it. As for quoting on the authority of eminent people and learned men of my time, I state, as a rule, the name of my informant, except when there is no need to identify him, or when I might have been asked to forget it; but something like that happens rarely. As to what I witnessed myself, I hope—God be praised!—that I will not incur suspicion and doubt.

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4. This plan was changed by Maqrīzī by the time he wrote the final version of his *Khīṭaṭ*, and Part VII deals with the mosques of Cairo, followed by an excursus on the legal rites known in Egypt, the religious doctrines of mankind, and the different divisions of Islam; after which he discusses the mosque colleges, the hospitals, the oratories, the Sufi convents, the prayer chapels, the shrine mausolea, the famous tombs, and finally the synagogues, beliefs and divisions of the Jews, and the Copts and their churches and monasteries.

I have said enough about these eight principia. And now there remains only for me to begin what I have proposed to do. I intend to discuss every piece of territory and every historical landmark separately and by itself so as to make the historical information contained therein more useful and more easily accessible. “*And God guides whomsoever He will to a straight path*”<sup>(5)</sup> and “*over every man of knowledge is One who knows.*”<sup>(6)</sup>

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[10] The first man to arrange and discuss the *khīṭaṭ*, or tribal allotments, of Miṣr in a compendium collected by him is Abū ‘Umar Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Kindī.<sup>(7)</sup> Then, after him, Judge Abū ‘Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Salāmah al-Quḍā‘ī<sup>(8)</sup> wrote his book entitled *Al-Mukhtār fī dhikr al-khīṭaṭ wa-’l-āthār*. He died 454 (A.D. 1062) prior to the years of hardship and misery.

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5. Koran 2 (The Cow): 213; 24 (Light): 46.

6. Koran 12 (Joseph): 76.

7. Egyptian historian, traditionist and genealogist (896-971). His *Tasmiyat wulāt Miṣr*, a military and political history of the ‘Abbāsīd governors of Egypt, and *Akḥbār quḍāt Miṣr*, a collection of biographies of Egyptian judges (both edited by R. Guest in one book entitled *Kitāb al-wulāh wa-kitāb al-quḍāh*; Gibb Memorial Series, London 1912) are sources extensively drawn upon by Maqrīzī in the present book. The topographical work here referred to is lost. A smaller work entitled *Faḍā’il Miṣr* (The Merits of Egypt), also used by Maqrīzī, is erroneously ascribed to him by al-Ziriklī (*A’lām* 8:21); its author is his son ‘Umar (cf. Pt. I, ch. 43). See the article “al-Kindī” by F. Rosenthal in *EF*. —Actually, more than a hundred years before al-Kindī, the Egyptian traditionist and historian Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 871) described the *khīṭaṭ* of Fuṣṭāṭ, Gīzah and Alexandria in his *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Torrey 91-139; ed. Ṣabīḥ 68-93).

8. Shāfi’ite jurist, historian (cf. *GAL*<sup>2</sup> 1:343, S 1:584). Maqrīzī makes frequent use of his “Selected Description of Land Allotments and Antiquities.” He came from Baghdad to Egypt, where he was appointed judge and later served as secretary of the Fāṭimid vizier (1028-45) ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Jarjarā‘ī, for whom—the vizier’s hands had been cut off by order of the caliph al-Ḥakim—he signed the decrees (Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 3:408). On his diplomatic mission to Constantinople in 1055, see Pt. III, ch. 16.

Most of what these two men described became obliterated and only “a mirage<sup>(9)</sup> and wasteland” were left, due to the famines and epidemics which befell Miṣr during the years of hardship under (the Fāṭimid) al-Mustanṣir from 457 to 464. Its people died, its houses fell into decay, and its condition deteriorated. Desolation engulfed (even) the western and eastern sides of the Up District<sup>(10)</sup> of al-Fuṣṭāṭ—the western side extending from the Qanṭarat Banī Wā'il, where nowadays in the vicinity of the Bāb al-Qanṭarah<sup>(11)</sup> outside the city of Old Cairo the shops of the papermakers are located, all the way to the elevation known today as al-Raṣd,<sup>(12)</sup> as one heads toward the Great Cemetery,<sup>(13)</sup> and the eastern side extending from the edge of the Birkat al-Ḥabash, which is adjacent to the Cemetery, down to the area of the Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn Mosque.

Then, in 466 (A.D. 1074), the Amīr al-Juyūsh Badr al-Jamālī<sup>(14)</sup> entered Old Cairo, while all these places were completely devastated and deserted, the population wiped out by pestilence and disease and decimated by death and destruction. Only a few people were left in the city, their appearance that of corpses, their faces pale and gaunt, due to the exorbitant prices and their constant fear of

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9. Read: *yalma'*, as in the Bulaq text; Wiet: *luma'* (?).

10. Fuṣṭāṭ consisted of two parts, the *'amal fawq*, or Up District, which had a western and an eastern side, to the south, and the *'amal asfal*, or Down District, to the north of it up to the boundary of Cairo; see Pt. III, ch. 8, end.

11. This gate on the south side of Miṣr, erected by Saladin's builder Qarāqūsh (Pt. III, ch. 21, end), was located near the Qaṣr al-Shama' right by the Nile, slightly upriver from the Nilometer (Wiet, n. 9). It is not to be confused with a gate of Cairo, also called *Bāb al-Qanṭarah*, which got its name from a bridge thrown across the Main Canal by Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī when the Qarmatians marched on Old Cairo in August 970 (cf. *Khiṭaṭ* 1:382).

12. The name derives from an observatory installed there by the vizier (1094-1121) al-Afḍal b. Badr al-Jamālī (see Pt. I, ch. 46).

13. *Al-Qarāfah al-Kubrā*, at the foot of the Muqaṭṭam Hills (*Khiṭaṭ* 2:443 ff.).

14. The Armenian strongman, and former governor of Acre, called to Egypt by the caliph al-Mustanṣir to restore order in a country on the brink of anarchy (see Pt. III, ch. 16). A former slave (mamlūk) of Jamāl al-Dawlah Ibn 'Ammār (hence, al-Jamālī), he held the vizierate with dictatorial powers. from the end of January, 1074, until his death in May 1094 (see *Khiṭaṭ* 1:391). With him begins the institution of military viziers (*wuzarā' al-su'yūf*, *wuzarā' al-tafwīd*) that relegated the caliphs to the role of mere figureheads and puppets and contributed to the disintegration of the Fāṭimid regime.

the soldiery and of the evil wrought by the (roving) bands of slaves and the Milḥiyyah.<sup>(15)</sup> No one made a serious effort to plant new crops. Moreover, the overland and river routes were cut off, unless (one went) under guard and at great inconvenience. Cairo, too, was like a ghost town. So (Badr al-Jamālī) allowed the troops, the Milḥiyyah, the Armenians, and anyone who was able to build to or restore whatever they wanted in Cairo (with building material) from the houses of Fuṣṭāṭ left vacant by the death of their owners, and people began to tear down residences, and the like, in Miṣr and built with them new ones in Cairo. This was the first time that the people settled in Cairo.<sup>(16)</sup>

After al-Quḍā'ī, the next man to draw attention to the *khīṭaṭ* and to describe them was his student Abū 'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Barakāt al-Naḥwī<sup>(17)</sup> in a nice work in which he brought to the attention of al-Afḍal Abū 'l-Qāsim Shāhanshāh, son of the Amīr al-Juyūsh Badr al-Jamālī, certain places which, having been endowments, had been illegally seized and taken possession of.

Next, the Sharīf Muḥammad ibn As'ad al-Jawwānī<sup>(18)</sup> wrote his *Al-Nuqaṭ li-mu'jam mā ashkala min al-khīṭaṭ*, in which he pointed out landmarks by then unknown and archeological vestiges already obliterated.

The last one to write on that subject was Judge Tāj al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn al-Mutawwaj.<sup>(19)</sup> In his *Īqāz al-mu-*

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15. A body of troops in the Fāṭimid army. They gave their name to a street of Cairo, the Khaṭṭ al-Milḥiyyīn (see *Khīṭaṭ* 2:32).

16. During the first hundred years since its founding in 969, the city of Cairo comprised only the Fāṭimid palaces, government offices, and the military garrisons scattered in various quarters, while the population remained concentrated in Fuṣṭāṭ and Miṣr (Old Cairo) and their dependencies.

17. Renowned philologist, the teacher of al-Silafī and al-Būṣīrī, died 520/1126. His topographical work on Old Cairo was entitled *Khīṭaṭ Miṣr*. See al-Suyūfī, *Bughyah*, 1:59, *GAL*<sup>2</sup> S 2:987).

18. Well-known genealogist, representative of the descendants of the Prophet (*naqīb al-ashraf*) in Egypt, died 588/1192 (see "al-Djawwānī" by F. Rosenthal in *EF*). Maqrīzī makes extensive use of his work, usually for archeological information.

19. Egyptian historian, died 730/1330 (cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, 4:36). His

*taghaffil wa-ṭṭi'āz al-muta'ammil fī 'l-khiṭaṭ*, he presents an overview of conditions in Old Cairo and of the city's topography up to the seven-twenties (1320s). Most of what he wrote about was obliterated after his death in the course of the two plagues of 749 (1348) and 761 (1359/60) and then at the time of the severe dearth in 776 (1374/5).

(Before him) Judge Muḥyī 'l-Dīn 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir<sup>20</sup>) had written his *Al-Rawḍah al-baḥiyyah al-zāhirah fī khiṭaṭ al-Mu'izziyyah al-Qāhirah* (on the precincts of Cairo), thereby initiating a much-needed undertaking. After his death, building activity in Cairo and its suburbs then increased during the time of (the Mamluk sultan) al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn to such an extent that the city could barely contain its population. But then it was stricken by the plague in 749 and 761 and by the severe dearth of 776, and numerous places fell into decay. Finally, in the course of the events and afflictions from the year 806 (1403/4) onward, both Miṣr and Cairo and the population of the region suffered extensive ruination.

I shall—God willing—present as much topographical information as I am capable of. And God is the sole Knower of what is correct.

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work was an important source for Maqrīzī for archeological information on Old Cairo.

20. Historian and archeologist, man of letters, poet, died 692/1293 (see "Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir" by J. Pedersen in *EF*; for samples of his poetry, al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, 1:451-63). Maqrīzī draws extensively on his topography of Cairo.

## 1. Some Remarks on the Universe

[1] Since Egypt is part of the Earth, it is necessary, before explaining her location on the Earth and the Earth's position in relation to the Celestial Sphere, that I say something about the Universe. Furthermore, I must discuss the shape of the Earth and the position of its zones (or climes); I must speak about the location of Egypt on the Earth and in relation to the climes; I must mention her boundaries, the etymology of her name, her merits, marvels and treasures, and the character of her population; and I must talk of her Nile, her canals, her administrative districts, the amount of her land tax, and other relevant things, before I go into the topography of (Fuṣṭāṭ) Miṣr and of Cairo. So I say:

[2] The science of the stars consists of three branches: The first (deals with) knowledge of the structure of the celestial spheres, the number of stars, the divisions of the constellations, and their distances, size and movement; this branch is called *'ilm al-hay'ah*—astronomy. The second branch (deals with) the science of reading astronomical tables and of establishing the position of the stars at any given time. The third branch (deals with) knowledge of how to divine occurrences before they happen from the revolution of the firmament and through horoscopes; this branch is called *'ilm al-aḥkām*—(judicial) astrology.<sup>(1)</sup>

At this point, we intend to set forth some astronomical facts as an introduction to what will be discussed later.

[3] One should know that the stars are spherical bodies. 1,029 stars have been perceived through astronomical observation by the sages. They fall into two categories: planets and fixed stars.

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1. The passage is the opening statement of the Third Epistle of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (Bombay 1305/1888, I, 56).



[4] The planets are seven, namely, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. (Their names) have been put together in a single verse, *viz.*

Saturn sent its long-stemmed arrow from its sun,  
so the moons vied for splendor with Mercury.<sup>(2)</sup>

[5] These seven are called *al-khunnas*—“the returning”. It has been suggested that they are the ones God had in mind when He said, “*No! I swear by the slinkers, the runners, the sinkers*”,<sup>(3)</sup> and when He said, “*and by those that direct an affair*.”<sup>(4)</sup> They were called “the returning” because they run their steady course and return (to where they began). They were also called *al-kunnas*—“the retiring”, because they run their course in the zodiac and then go into hiding, that is, they hide themselves the way a gazelle will repair to its lair. It has also been said that there are five of the *kunnas* or *khunnas*, namely, all the planets except the Sun and the Moon; they were so named (in derivation) from *inkhinās*, which means ‘shrinking, cringing’. [6] In a tradition,<sup>(5)</sup> Satan whispers to man, but when Allah’s name is mentioned, he slinks away, i.e., he cringes, and returns (to where he came from). [7] Hence, this *khans*, or falling back, applies also to the planets in the sense of their ‘retreating’. And they were named *al-kunnas* in the sense that one says *kanasa ’l-ḡabyu* ‘the gazelle went into hiding’ when it repairs to its *kinās*, which is its lair. Thus, this *kans*, or withdrawing to the lair, applies also to the planets in the sense of their ‘hiding’ under the light of the Sun.

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2. The mnemonic verse, in the meter *kāmil*, plays on the roots of the Arabic planetary names and reads:

*Zuḡalu sharā mirrikhahū min shamsih  
fa-tazāharat bi-’Uṭārīda ’l-aqmārū*

3. Koran 81 (The Darkening): 15.

4. Koran 79 (The Pluckers): 5.

5. Attributed to Sa’īd b. Jubayr (d. 713/4). Cf. Koran 114.

[8] These planets are also called *al-mutaḥayyirah*—“the erratic”, for sometimes they refrain from pursuing their course in an eastward movement and appear to the eye to follow a westward course; this retrogression is a quasi-erraticism of theirs.

[9] These names of the planets, it is said, are etymologically derived from their properties and qualities.

Thus, *zuḥal*—Saturn—is derived from *zaḥala fulān* ‘such-and-such hung back’, when he is slow in moving; (the planet) was so named because of the slowness of its progression. According to others, (it is) because of *zaḥl*, which is (synonymous with) *ḥaqad* ‘holding oneself back’;<sup>(6)</sup> (the planet) allegedly suggests that. It has been said that it is (the planet Saturn) which is meant when God says, “*By heaven and the night-star! And what shall teach thee what is the night-star? The piercing star!*”<sup>(7)</sup>

Jupiter—*al-mushtarī*—is so named because of its beauty, as if it bought—*ishtarā*—its own beauty; according to others, because it is the star of buying and selling and the guide to gain and wealth, as people say.

*Al-mirriḥ*—Mars—comes from the *markh*, which is a tree that strikes fire when branches of it are rubbed against one another; (the planet) was so called because of its red color. It has been said that *mirriḥ* means an arrow without feathering which, when shot off, is not steady in its flight; likewise, there is much bending and twisting in the course of Mars, so the name of the planet allegedly points to something like that.

*Al-shams*, the Sun, since it is in the middle position between three “superior” planets—(so called) because they are above it—and three “inferior” planets—(so called) because they are below it, is so

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6. The translation follows the Bulaq text (1:6, line 6). There is no word *zaḥil*, verbal noun or other, in Arabic.

7. Koran 86 (The Night Star): 1-2.

named because the middle (ornament or pendant) of a necklace is called a *shamsah*.

(The name) *al-zuhrah*, Venus, comes from *al-zāhir*, which is the luminous white of any thing.

*Uṭārid*, Mercury, is one who acts in all affairs with efficiency. The planet is therefore also called *al-kātib*—"the Secretary"—because it has much freedom of action with the conjunctive and surrounding planets.

*Al-qamar*, the Moon, is derived from *qumrah*, which means 'off-white', since *aqmar* is the same as *abyaḍ* 'white'.

Saturn is also called (by the Persian name) *kaiwān*; Jupiter is called (in Persian) *tīr* [*sic*]<sup>(8)</sup> and also *birjīs*; Mars is called (in Persian) *bahrām*; the Sun (in Persian) is *mīhr*; Venus is called (in Persian) *anāhīd* and also *bīdukht*; Mercury is called (in Persian) *hurmus* [*sic*]; and the Moon (in Persian) is *māh*. They have all been put together in the following verses:

May you forever prosper and rise in the world,  
as long as rules direct the planets seven:  
Sun, Moon, with Saturn, Mercury together,  
and Jove and Venus and also Mars.

[10] The rest of the stars of the firmament, aside from these seven planets, are called "fixed stars." They are so named because they remain fixed in one position on the firmament, or, according to others, because of the slowness of their movement, for they allegedly traverse the firmament once every 36,000 solar years.

[11] Each of the planets has its own sphere. The spheres are translucent spherical bodies, one inside the other. They are nine in

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8. So in almost every ms. (cf. Wiet's notes 3 and 11); Bulaq: *tibr*. Maqrīzī has simply confused the Persian name of Mercury (*tīr*) with that of Jupiter (*hurmus*). Wiet's emendation *bīl*, the Syriac name of Jupiter, seems completely out of place in this context.

number. The closest one to us is the sphere of the Moon, followed by the sphere of Mercury, then the sphere of Venus, and then the sphere of the Sun; above that are the sphere of Mars, then the sphere of Jupiter, and above it the sphere of Saturn. Then (follows) the sphere of the fixed stars; it comprises every star visible in the sky except the seven planets. Above the sphere of the fixed stars is the Surrounding Sphere, which is the ninth sphere and is called *al-atlas*,<sup>9)</sup> or the “Sphere of Spheres,” or the “Universal Sphere.”

There has been some disagreement with regard to the spheres. Some have said that they are identical with the Heavens, but others have maintained that the Heavens are something else. They have been described as spherical in shape, but not so by others. It has been said that the eighth sphere is (God’s) Foot Stool and that the ninth is (God’s) Throne, but others have claimed differently.

This ninth sphere is in perpetual rotation like a waterwheel and performs one revolution every twenty-four hours even. Its rotation is forever from east to west. Through its rotation, it forces all the other eight spheres and the stars they contain to rotate in a contrary motion to its own. From the movement of this ninth (sphere) result night and day, day being the time period during which the sun remains above the earth’s horizon, and night the period during which the sun is hidden beneath the earth’s horizon.

[12] The sphere of the fixed stars is divided into twelve parts like the circumferential stripes of a watermelon, each of which is called a “zodiacal sign.” These are: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces. Each of these twelve zodiacal constellations is divided into thirty parts called “degrees,” and each of the thirty degrees is divided into sixty parts called “minutes,” and each minute of these sixty is divided into sixty parts called “seconds,” and so forth, to thirds,

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9. Or *al-athīr*, the Greek *ho aithēr* ‘the Ether’, which popular etymology associates with the root *ʿ-th-r*, “because it affects (*yu’aththiru fi*) the other (spheres).”

fourths, fifths, all the way to eighteenths and divisions higher than that. Every three zodiacal signs are called a “season;” hence, time consists of four seasons, namely, spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

There are four cardinal points: east, west, north, and south. The elements are four: fire, air, water, and earth. The natural qualities are four in number: heat, cold, moistness, and dryness. The humors are four: yellow bile, black bile, phlegm, and blood. The winds are four: east wind, west wind, north wind, and south wind.

Of the zodiacal constellations, three are vernal, ascendant in the north and increasing daytime over night, namely, Aries, Taurus and Gemini; three are aestival, descending in the north and taking away night from day, namely, Cancer, Leo and Virgo; three are autumnal, descending in the south and increasing night over daytime, namely, Libra, Scorpio and Sagittarius; and three are hibernal, ascendant in the south and taking away daytime from night, namely, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces.

[13] As already stated, the Surrounding Sphere is in perpetual revolution like a waterwheel and rotates forever from east to west above the Earth and from west to east below it. One half of the Sphere consisting of six zodiacal signs and comprising 180 degrees will always be above the Earth, and its other half consisting of six zodiacal signs and comprising 180 degrees will always be below it. Whenever one of the degrees of the Sphere, whose total number is 360, rises on the eastern horizon, its counterpart of the seventh zodiacal sign sets on the western horizon, so that there will always be six signs rising during the day and six signs rising during the night.

The horizon is the dividing line on the Earth between the visible and the unseen parts of the sky. The firmament revolves on two poles, north pole and south pole, like a small round wooden box turning on the two pivots of the lathe. The firmament is divided by a line of a circle which divides it into two equal halves that are equidistant from the two poles. This circle is called the “equinoctial

line." It intersects the zodiac, and the ecliptic circle intersects the equinoctial line. One half of it inclines to the north at the extent of approximately 24 degrees, and in this half is the portion of the six northern zodiacal signs which extends from the beginning of Aries to the end of Virgo. The other half inclines likewise to the south, and in it is the portion of the six southern zodiacal signs which extends from the beginning of Libra to the end of Pisces. The point of intersection of these two circles—that is, the equinoctial circle and the ecliptic circle—on either side are the two "nodes" of the two equinoxes, that is, the beginning of Aries and the beginning of Libra. The orbits of the Sun, the Moon and the other planets run parallel to the ecliptic circle, beneath the equinoctial circle. The Sun passes the equinoctial line only when it reaches the two equinoctial nodes, because they are the places of intersection between the two circles. This is the "equator," where there is no time difference of night over day or day over night, because the declination of the Sun away from it to either of the two sides, the northern and the southern, is the same.

The Sun orbits the celestial sphere and traverses the twelve signs of the zodiac in a period of approximately 365 1/4 days, which is the period of the "solar year." It remains in each sign of the zodiac for thirty days and a fraction of a day. It is at all times visible above the Earth during the daytime, while at night it is the opposite of that. When the Sun is in the six northern signs of the zodiac, which are Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo and Virgo, it is high in the sky, close to the zenith. This is the time of spring and summer. When it is in the southern signs of the zodiac, which are Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces, it is autumn and winter, and the Sun is low and far from the zenith.

[14] Wahb ibn Munabbih<sup>(10)</sup> claimed that the first of the four seasons that God created was winter, which He made cold and hu-

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10. One of the earliest and most popular traditionists, a reputed authority on the "books of the ancients," died 728 in Šan'ā; see "Wahb b. Munabbih" (J. Horowitz) in *ET*.

mid. And He then created spring, which He made hot and humid. He then created summer and made it hot and dry, and finally He created autumn, which He made cold and dry.

[15] To people in our time, the first of the seasons is spring. Spring begins when the Sun moves out of Pisces.

[16] There has been disagreement among the ancients as to which of the seasons comes first. Some chose spring and made it the beginning of the year; others chose to advance the summer solstice, still others, the fall equinox, and still others, the winter solstice.

[17] When the Sun reaches the first part of Aries, night and day are equal and time is in the balance. Winter departs and spring enters. The air becomes pleasant, a gentle breeze blows, and the snow melts. The wadis fill with water and the rivers swell—except in Egypt. Pasture sprouts, crops shoot up, and the grass grows high. Flowers sparkle and the trees put out leaves. Blossoms burst open and the face of the earth turns green. Animals have young ones and udders yield copious milk. Earth brings out its finery and adorns itself and becomes like a young girl who makes herself pretty for people to see.

[18] How well spoke the poet, namely, the traditionist Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Yaghmūrī:<sup>(11)</sup>

Come, sniff the air of spring! It is  
   the best of friends, bestowing kindness.  
 Its breeze sustains the body as if  
   it were a soul by crystal gem enclosed.

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11. Died 1274.

[19] Ibn Qutaybah<sup>(12)</sup> says: Now, on the basis of such spring, people believe that it is the season which follows winter and in which the blossoms and flowers appear, and they do not know spring to be any other way. But the Arabs disagree in that respect. Some make *rabi*<sup>ṛ</sup>—spring—the season during which the fruits ripen, that is, *kharīf*—fall, after which comes *shitā*<sup>ʿ</sup>—the rainy season or winter, and after that *ṣayf*—summer, which is the time that people in general call “spring,” and then *al-qayz*—the canicular season which is what people in general call “summer.” Some Arabs call the season [which is temperate and]<sup>(13)</sup> in which fruits ripen—in other words, fall—*al-rabi*<sup>ṛ</sup> *al-awwal*—“the first spring,” and the season which immediately follows winter and during which the palm spathes and flowers appear *al-rabi*<sup>ṛ</sup> *al-thānī*—“the second spring.” But all are agreed that *kharīf* is identical with *rabi*<sup>ṛ</sup>.

[20] When the Sun reaches the end of Gemini and the beginning of Cancer, the days are longest and the nights shortest, and (then) daytime begins to diminish, while night increases. Spring departs and summer comes in. The heat becomes intense and the air warms up. Hot, dry simooms blow and water becomes scarce—except in Egypt. Grass becomes dry, cereals ripen, to perfection and the time of the grain harvest approaches. Fruits ripen, the animals put on fat, the bodies grow strong, and the grazing stock give ample milk. Earth becomes like a bride.

Then, as the Sun reaches the end of Virgo and the beginning of Libra, night and day become equal once more, and then the nights continue to grow longer and the days to grow shorter. Summer leaves and autumn enters. The air becomes chilly and winds blow. The weather deteriorates, the rivers run dry, and wells and springs dry up. The leaves on the trees turn yellow, and the fruit trees are

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12. Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd-Allāh b. Muslim, al-Dīnawārī, famous Baghdadi philologist, man of letters, traditionist and historian, died ca. 889. See “Ibn Qutaybā” (G. Lecomte) in *EP*. On the following disquisition cf. the entries “*rabi*<sup>ṛ</sup>” and “*zamān*” in E.W. Lane’s *Lexicon*.

13. Passage in brackets in the Bulaq text only.



cut back. Grain is threshed and stored. The grass withers and the face of the earth takes on the color of dust—(everywhere) except in Egypt. The animals become lean and skinny. Vermin and pests die off and flying insects burrow in the ground. Birds and wild animals leave for warmer parts. People begin to store food for the winter. Earth becomes like a middle-aged woman whose youth slipped away while her back was turned.

[21] How well spoke this poet—he is the Imām ‘Izz al-Dīn Abū ‘l-Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ma‘qil al-Azdī al-Muhallabī al-Ḥimṣī<sup>(14)</sup>—when he says:

Oh, what delight is autumn time, the coolness of its air!  
 .           It's shown to us a miracle, a wonder to behold.  
 Its foliage bestowed on Earth a gift of shining gold;  
                   now it is up to Earth to give this gift of shining gold.

He also said:

Ah, the bliss of autumn time,  
                   so gracious and so pure!  
 Its water laves a sad man's heart,  
                   the tear flows on the lover's cheek:  
 The cool of that, the hue of this  
                   are savored by a tender heart.

And elsewhere he said:

Fall has come with all its riches  
                   and beauty delighting heart and eye.  
 It's shown us branches steeped in gold  
                   and limpid waters white as silver.  
 Most generous has it been to us,  
                   all blessings were on us bestowed.

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14. See Zayn al-Dīn al-Qurazī, *Talkhiṣ mujma‘ al-ādāb fī mu‘jam al-alqāb* (ed. M. Jawād, Damascus, 1962) IV, 1, p. 9.

[22] Someone else has said in censure of autumn:

You'd better bundle up in fall! It's deemed  
 unhealthy, and its breeze an avid reaper.  
 It stays with human bodies as they live  
 as if a friend—but one to be afraid of!

[23] And another said:

Whoso finds fault with autumn and  
 detracts from it in censuring its time,  
 No nicer words than his could reach my ear,  
 for it forever strips the branches of their garb.  
 Yet, as you see it spread their garments underneath,  
 behold its tenderness and loving care—  
 The sweetest moments, when two lovers meet  
 are those when time approaches to depart.

[24] When the Sun reaches the end of Sagittarius and the beginning of Capricorn, the nights are longest and the days are shortest, and then the days start getting longer and the nights are getting shorter. Autumn departs and winter sets in. It gets colder and the weather becomes rough. The leaves fall off the trees and most of the plants die. (Wild) animals burrow deep in the ground (for shelter). The body loses strength. The face of the earth becomes bare of all finery. Clouds form and the morning dew becomes heavy. The sky darkens and the face of the earth becomes gloomy and scowling—(everywhere) except in Egypt. People refrain from moving about. The world becomes like a decrepit old woman close to death.

Then, as the Sun reaches the end of Pisces and the beginning of Aries, the weather becomes once more the way it was the year before. This is its perpetual habit. That is the decree of the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the order of Him Who is forever Aware and Wise. There is no God save He.

[25] (Claudius) Ptolemy likened spring to the time of childhood, summer to youth, fall to middle age, and winter to old age.

[26] From the movement of the Sun and its passage through the aforementioned twelve signs of the zodiac result the seasons of the year and the times of day—that is, night and daytime—and their hours. From the movement of the Moon through the twelve signs result the lunar months and the lunar year. For the Moon traverses the entire celestial sphere and performs a complete revolution through the twelve Signs of the zodiac within a period of 28 days and a part of a day. It remains in each sign for approximately two days and one-third of a day, and it stays in each of the 28 “mansions of the moon” for one day and one night. It appears at the time of the new moon in the west, after the sun disk has set. Its light increases each night by one-fourteenth, until it is complete and full on the fourteenth night after new moon. Then, from the fifteenth night onward, it begins to wane and loses, quite obviously, one-fourteenth of its light each night, until its light is completely blotted out at the end of 28 days after new moon.

During that period, from the time it parts from the Sun and appears in the west, until it rejoins the Sun, the Moon passes through 28 “mansions”. These are:<sup>15</sup> al-Sharaṭān; al-Buṭayn; al-Thurayyā; al-Dabarān; al-Haq‘ah, al-Han‘ah; al-Dhira‘; al-Nathrah; al-Ṭarf; al-Jabhah; al-Zubrah; al-Ṣarfah; al-‘Awwā‘; al-Simāk; al-Ghafir; al-Zubānā; al-Iklīl; al-Qalb; al-Shawlah; al-Na‘ā‘im; al-Baldah; Sa‘d al-Dhābiḥ; Sa‘d Bula‘; Sa‘d al-Su‘ūd; Sa‘d al-Akhbiyah; al-Fargh al-Muqaddam; al-Fargh al-Mu‘akhkhar; Baṭn al-Hūt.

There are books written with this in mind, but what we have stated is enough. “*God knows, but you know not.*”

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15. For their equivalents in modern astronomy see C.A. Nallino, *Raccolta di Scritti editi e inediti* (ed. Maria Nallino, Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1944) V, p. 178.

## 2. What the Earth Looks Like, and the Relative Position of the Climes on It

[1] Now that those whom God has given inspiration have, thanks to the preceding discussion of the celestial spheres, a clear idea of how night and day work and how they add up to months and years, one may speak about the Earth. So I say:

The directions as such are six: east, which is where the Sun, the Moon and the other planets in every region rise from the horizon; west, which is where they set; north, which is where the Tropic of Capricorn and the orbit of stars  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  of Ursa Minor are located; south, which where the orbit of Canopus is; up, which is skyward; and down, which is toward the center of the Earth.

[2] The Earth is a round body like a ball, although some have said that its shape is not spherical. It is suspended in the air, with all its mountains, its seas, and its habitable and uninhabitable lands. Air surrounds the Earth on all sides (so that it is) like the yolk inside an egg. Its distance from the sky is the same in all directions, while the bottom of the Earth is, to the extent that it has been ascertained, the depth of its inside from its center on any side. The majority (of scholars) believe that the Earth is, as it were, a ball placed inside the celestial sphere like the yolk in an egg, and that it is in the center and equidistant in all directions from the sphere.

[3] Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam<sup>(1)</sup> claimed that there is under the Earth a body which tends to rise, and this is the thing that prevents the Earth from sinking down; the body (itself) does not require anything to support it, since it does not seek to sink, but rather seeks to rise. But another<sup>(2)</sup> maintained that God suspended the Earth without support.

[4] Democritus claimed that the Earth rests on water which, being trapped underneath and finding no outlet, is thus compelled to move from one place to another.

[5] Another said: It is suspended in the middle (of the celestial sphere) at the same distance on every side. The sphere attracts it from every direction, and for that reason the Earth does not incline toward one side or the other of the sphere, because the force of the various parts (of attraction) is equal. This is like the lodestone attracting iron, for the celestial sphere by nature acts as the lodestone of the Earth: it attracts it and the Earth remains suspended in the center. The cause of its suspended state is the speed with which the celestial sphere revolves and the push it exerts on the Earth from every side toward the middle, just as, when one puts some soil inside a slender bottle and spins the bottle rapidly, the soil will remain in the middle.

[6] Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Khwārizmī<sup>(3)</sup> states: The Earth is in the center of the heavens, whereby the center is in reality the lowest part. It is round and (at the same time) denticulated because of the protruding mountains and the deep depressions (on

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1. Shī'ite speculative scholastic and founder of a heretical sect. A protégé of Yaḥyā b. Khalid al-Barmakī, he died after the downfall of that illustrious family in obscurity, probably in 815. See "Hishām b. al-Ḥakam" (W. Madelung) in *EP*.

2. He is the Mu'tazilite Abū 'l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf (d. 850), according to Yāqūt (*Muḥjam* 1:16).

3. This is the eminent Persian scientist, mathematician, astronomer and historian Abū 'l-Rayḥān al-Birūnī (973-1048); cf. the article "al-Birūnī" by D.J. Boilot in *EP*; G. Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, I, 707-09. —The paragraph is loosely adapted from Birūnī's *Taḥḥīm li-awā'il ṣinā'at al-tanjīm* (ed. R.R. Wright, London 1934, p. 45).

it). This does not preclude its spherical shape, if you consider it as whole, because the masses of the mountains, as towering as they may be, are small in comparison with the terrestrial globe. For the fact that there are many protrusions and depressions on a ball with a diameter of one or two cubits, for instance, does not rule out the ball's sphericity. Were it not for these denticulations, water would have engulfed the Earth from all sides and submerged it so that nothing of it would be visible.

And then all the traditional science of minerals and animals would be invalidated. Praise be to Him Who alone knows the secrets of His wisdom.

[7] As to the visible surface (of the Earth) which is on all sides in contact with the air, that is on top, while the air above the Earth envelops the latter on all sides and attracts it from all directions. Above the air are the celestial spheres discussed earlier, one above the other all the way to the ninth sphere, which is the highest sphere and the end of all creation. Different opinions have been advanced as to what is beyond. Some have said, a void; others, a non-void; and still others, neither a void nor a non-void. At whatever point on the Earth's surface one stands, the head is at all times pointing upward toward the sky and the feet are always pointing downward toward the center of the Earth. One will always see one half of the firmament, while the other half is hidden owing to the curvature of the Earth. Whenever one moves from one place to another, there will always be just as much of the firmament visible as there is hidden.

[8] The Earth is immersed in water like a grape floating on water. About half of it is exposed and the other half of the Earth is submerged. The exposed part of the Earth consists of two halves and is divided, as it were, by a line directly opposite the equinoctial line and passing beneath the latter's circle. All places on that line have no geographical latitude at all, and the two poles are not of uneven elevation there, but rest on the two (opposing) sides on the circle of the horizon. Whenever the location of a given place moves

away from this line by one degree northward, the northern pole, which is Capricorn, will (correspondingly) rise by one degree for the people living in that place and the southern pole, which is Canopus, will drop by one degree, and so forth as (the number of degrees) increases. Likewise, this will then apply to places located to the south (of the equator) in that the southern pole rises and the northern pole goes down. In this manner, one has established the geographical latitude of the various places: The latitude of a place is the equivalent of the declination of the equinoctial line from the zenith of that place and the elevation of the (respective) pole above it. It is also the distance between the zenith of that particular place and the zenith of a place with zero latitude.

As to the exposed portion of the Earth extending southward from the equator, that is wasteland. The other half which extends northward from the equator is the inhabited region, that is, the ecumene of the Earth.

[9] The equator has outwardly no existence at all; rather, it is an imaginary line which begins in the east and runs westward beneath the orbit of the ascendant node of Aries. It has been so named because day and night are always equal there, neither one of them ever exceeding, or being shorter than, the other at any time of the entire year. The two points of this line closely follow the horizon, one along the orbit of Canopus in the south and the other next to Capricorn in the north.

[10] The ecumene extends 180 degrees from east to west, and from south to north—from the parallel of Arīn<sup>(4)</sup> to the constellation of Ursa—48 degrees, which corresponds to twice the declina-

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4. Arabic: *khaṭṭ Arīn*, which in this context is not used in its usual sense, namely, the prime, or zero, meridian passing through the center of the inhabited world from which the Indians calculated the geographical longitudes, but as the equivalent of the equator. *Arīn* is a mistranscription by Arab geographers of *Uzayn*, the Ceylonese city of Ujain in the province of Mālawa, which the Arabs thought to be located at the point of intersection of the prime meridian and the equator and to be “the point of absolute equilibrium.” Cf. Nallino, *Raccolta*, V, p. 206.

tion of the Sun. Beyond the parallel of Arīn (to the south) it is 16 degrees, and the entire inhabited part of the Earth is roughly 70 degrees, because the Sun travels at even distances across this median (line) and passes beyond Aries and Libra twice a year. As far as north and south are concerned, the Sun reaches a position exactly opposite them only once. Since the apogee of the Sun is in the north, the latter contains civilization, because the Sun rises high (in that part of the Earth) and is not harmfully close to its inhabitants. And since the Sun's perigee is in the south, there is no civilization there.<sup>(5)</sup>

[11] There has been disagreement as to how long it would take to travel about the (entire) Earth. It has been said<sup>(6)</sup> that it would take five hundred years, one-third being inhabited, one third desolate, and one third seas. [12] According to others, the inhabited part of the Earth comprises one hundred and twenty years (travel time): ninety for (the land of) Gog and Magog,<sup>(7)</sup> twelve for (the land of) the Blacks, eight for (the land of) the Byzantines, three for (the land of) the Arabs, and seven for the rest of the peoples. [13] It has been claimed that the world consists of seven parts, six of which belong to (the lands of) Gog and Magog and one to the rest of mankind. [14] According to others, (it would take) five hundred years (to cover every part of) the Earth: three hundred for the seas, one hundred for the wasteland, and one hundred for the inhabited part. [15] It has also been said that the Earth (measures) 24,000 parasangs:<sup>(8)</sup> 12,000 for (the land of) the Blacks, 8,000 for (the land of) the Byzantines, 3,000 for Persia, and 1,000 for the land of the

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5. This medieval concept of the distribution of civilized life, and the reasons for it, is elaborated by Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), who was one of Maqrīzī's teachers (*The Muqaddimah*, transl. F. Rosenthal, 1:103-09).

6. Cf. Ibn Khurrādādhbih (d. ca. 913), *K. al-Masālik wa-'l-mamālik* (ed. de Goeje, *BGA*, VI) p. 93.

7. On these two peoples, associated by both the Bible (Gen. 10:2; Ez. 38,39) and Muslim tradition with the northeast of the ancient world, cf. the article "Yādjudj wa-Mādjūdj" by A.J. Wensinck in *SEF*.

8. A "parasang" (*farsakh*), consisting of 3 "miles" (*mīl*) of 4,000 "canonical cubits" (*dhirā' shar'yyah*) each, measures 6 km; cf. "Farsakh" (W. Hinz) in *EF*.



Arabs. [16] According to Wahb ibn Munabbih, the inhabited part of the world amid the desolate part is no more than the like of a tent in the middle of the desert.

[17] Ardashīr ibn Bābak<sup>(9)</sup> said: The Earth consists of four parts: one part of it belongs to the Turks, one part to the Arabs, one part to the Persians, and one part to the Blacks.

[18] It has been said: The climes are seven, the cardinal points four, the regions forty-five, the towns ten thousand, and the rural districts two hundred and fifty-six thousand. [19] It has also been said: The towns and fortified places number 21,600. There are 3,100 towns and large villages in the First Clime, 2,713 in the Second, and 3,079 in the Third; in the Fourth Clime, which is Babylonia, there are 2,974 towns, in the Fifth 3,006, in the Sixth 3,408, and in the Seventh 3,300 towns on islands.

[20] Al-Khwārizmī<sup>(10)</sup> states: The diameter [*sic*] of the Earth is 7,000 [*sic*] parasangs, which is one-twelfth of the Earth, the mountains, the deserts and the seas [*sic*]. The rest is a total wasteland with neither plants nor animals.

[21] It has been said that the inhabited part of the Earth resembles a bird: its head is China, the right wing India and the Sind, the left wing (the land of) the Khazar (southeast Russia), its breast is (formed by) Mecca, the Iraq, Syria and Egypt, and its tail is the Maghrib.

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9. Founder of the Sāsānian dynasty and Shah of Persia (226-241).

10. This is the famous mathematician and astronomer Abū ‘Abd-Allāh (or Abū-Ja‘far) Muḥammad b. Mūsā, known to medieval Latin scholars as “Algorismus” or “Alghoarismus” (d. after 647). See the article “al-Khwārizmī” by E. Wiedemann in *EF*; Nallino, *Raccolta*, V, pp. 463-75; Sarton, *History of Science*, I, 563-64. —The following statement, which one reads in Ibn al-Faḥīh (*BGA*, V, 3) and Yāqūt (*Mu‘jam* 1:18), is virtually meaningless and obviously misquoted by Maqrīzī. It reads in Yāqūt’s version: “The (circumference of the) Earth extends 9,000 parasangs in a straight line. The inhabited part covers one-twelfth of the Earth, the remainder has no human habitation, nor flora, nor fauna. The seas are considered part of the waste area (*al-ghumrān*), the deserts between the cultivated areas (*al-‘umrān*) part of the habitable world.”

[22] It has been said that the diameter of the Earth is 7,414 miles [14,828 km] and its circumference 20,400 miles; that is the total land and sea area encompassed by it.

[23] Abū Zayd Aḥmad ibn Sahl al-Balkhī<sup>(11)</sup> says: The length of the Earth from the farthest point east to the farthest point west is about 400 day's journeys. Its width from the inhabited part in the north, which is where the (peoples of) Gog and Magog live, to the inhabited part in the south, (which is where) the Blacks (live), is 220 day's journeys. Everything (beyond), from the steppes of Gog and Magog all the way to the Surrounding Sea in the north and from the steppes of the Blacks to the Surrounding Sea in the south, is desolate without human habitation. The extent of that is said to be 5,000 parasangs, but these are assertions which cannot be proven.

[24] The way to determine the surface area of the Earth is as follows: If we proceeded along a meridian from south to north as far as a point at which the equinoctial circle has declined from our zenith toward the south by one degree of the firmament, which is one of 360 parts, and the pole has risen for us by one degree in equivalence to that degree, then we would know that we have traversed one of 360 parts of the globe's circumference, which is the equivalent of that portion of the firmament. Now, if we measured (the distance) from our point of departure to the place we finally reached where the pole rose for us by one degree, then we would find that one celestial degree covered  $56 \frac{2}{3}$  miles, corresponding to 25 parasangs of the Earth.<sup>(12)</sup> Now, when we multiply one degree—

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11. A student of the philosopher al-Kindī and a prolific scholar and writer on *falsafah* and geography (see *Fihrist*, transl. Dodge, 303-04, for a list of his works) under the patronage of the ruler of Balkh; died 934. See "al-Balkhī" (D.M. Dunlop) in *EF*.

12. This obviously contradicts the equation 1 *farsakh* = 3 *mils* unanimously accepted by Arab geographers. There is no way of reconciling the figures given in this paragraph, which appears to be a composite of several disparate sources, perhaps in part miscopied. —On the different values assigned to the degree by Arab geographers and astronomers cf. C.A. Nallino, "Il valore metrico del grado meridiano secondo i geografi arabi" (*Raccolta*, V, 408-57); on the measurements of the Earth, see E. Wiedemann, "Über die

in other words, the number of miles just given—with 360, the result is 20,400 miles, and that is the circumference (of the Earth). When we divide (the number of) miles that constitute the Earth's circumference by  $3\frac{1}{7}$  (i.e., 3.1416, the number pi), the quotient is 6,440 miles, and that is the diameter of the Earth. Now, if we multiplied this diameter with the Earth's circumference, then the surface area of the Earth, by geometrical computation, would amount to approximately 132,600,000 (square) miles. Consequently, the surface area of the inhabited quarter of the Earth, by geometrical computation, is 33,150,000 (square) miles. The latitude of the inhabited part of that quarter in terms of the distance of the Tropic of Cancer from the Pole—which is  $56\frac{1}{6}$  degrees, which, in turn, constitute one-sixth of the Earth—and its end at the island of Tūli<sup>(13)</sup> near Britain—that is, the end of the ecumene to the north—is, in terms of miles, 3,764 miles. When we multiply this sixth that is the surface area of the latitude, with one-half, which is the extent of the longitude, then the ecumene in the north is one-half of one-sixth of the Earth. As for the longitude, it decreases because of the narrowing of the sections of the globe and comes to something like one-fifth of the circumference, which is approximately 4,080 miles.

[25] In the inhabited quarter of the Earth are seven large seas, each containing several islands. It has fifteen lakes, some salt and some sweet water, two hundred tall mountains, and two hundred and forty long rivers. It comprises seven Climes which contain seventeen thousand large towns.

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Dimensionen der Erde nach muslimischen Gelehrten" (Archiv für die Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Technik, Bd. III, 1911).

13. Believed to be the Shetland Islands.

[26] In the *Kitāb Hurūshiyūsh*,<sup>(14)</sup> (the author) reports: After the universal power of Julius called “Caesar Imperator” was established, he chose four of the philosophers by name and ordered them to prepare for him a description, quarter by quarter, of the boundaries of the world and the number of its seas and provinces. He commissioned one of them to prepare a description of the eastern part, another for the western part, still another for the northern part, and the fourth to describe the southern part. The whole was written up by them in about thirty years. There was a total of twenty-nine seas designated by name in the world—which they so named, eight of them in the eastern part, eight in the part of the west, eleven in the north, and two in the south. The number of known major islands was seventy-one, eight in the east, sixteen in the west, thirty-one in the north, and sixteen in the south. The number of known big mountains in the entire world was thirty-six; those were the principal mountains, and they called them by their names in their commentaries. Of these, seven are in the east, fifteen in the west, twelve in the north, and two in the south. There were sixty-three large countries, seven in the east, twenty-five in the west, nineteen in the north, and twelve in the south. And these, too, they specified by name. The well-known major provinces were two hundred and nine, seventy-five of them in the east, sixty-six in the west, six in the north, and sixty-two in the south. The well-known major rivers in the world were fifty-six, seventeen in the east, thirteen in the west, nineteen in the north, and seven in the south.

[27] Of the seven climes, each is like a carpet spread out,<sup>(15)</sup> lengthwise from east to west and latitudinally from north to south.

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14. “The Book of Orosius.” It is the *Historiae adversum paganos*, a tendentious, apologetic world history written by Paulus Orosius in 417-18 A.D. Maqrīzī, who, like his teacher Ibn Khaldūn, used the Arabic translation of the work (cf. G. Levi Della Vida, “La traduzione araba delle Storie di Orosio” in *Miscellanea Giovanni Galbiati*, Milan 1951, III, 185-203), repeatedly cites it as his source for Greek, Roman and some African history.

15. Cf. “And God has laid the earth for you as a carpet” (Koran 71:19).

These climes are of different length and width. [28] The middle of the First Clime passes through those places in which the longest day is thirteen hours, and (that of) the Seventh runs through the places where the longest day is sixteen hours. Because what lies beyond the boundary of the First Clime to the south is enclosed by the sea and has no human habitation, and what lies beyond the Seventh Clime to the north has no known habitation either. The longitude of all the seven climes from east to west has been established as twelve hours. Their latitudes increase progressively by half an hour in relation to the longest day. [29] The longest and widest of them is the First Clime. Its length from east to west is about 3,000 parasangs and its width from north to south 150 parasangs. The shortest and narrowest is the Seventh Clime, whose length from east to west is 1,500 parasangs and whose width from north to south is about 70 parasangs. The remaining five climes fall in between those figures. [30] These climes are imaginary lines without real existence. They were established by the ancients, who roamed the Earth in order to discover its true boundaries, to ascertain the locations of the various places and regions on it, and to get to know the routes of its thoroughfares.

This is what the inhabited quarter is like.

[31] As for the remaining three quarters, these are wasteland. The northern part is located beneath the Tropic of Capricorn. The cold is excessive there, and there is continuous nighttime for six months in a row, which is their winter. Daylight is unknown during that period, the atmosphere is of an intense darkness, the waters freeze due to the severe cold so that neither flora nor fauna can develop. This northern part has its counterpart in the southern region where Canopus revolves. Day without night continues for six months, which is their summer. The air is hot and becomes a scorching dry wind which destroys animals and plants with its severe heat. It is neither passable nor inhabitable. As far as the western region is concerned, passage there is made impossible by the Surrounding Sea because of its clashing waves and its intense dark-

ness. The eastern region is made impassable by towering mountains.

All of mankind has been confined to the inhabited quarter of the Earth and no one has any knowledge at all about the remaining three quarters. The Earth in its entirety, with all the mountains and seas on it, is in proportion to the celestial sphere like a dot in a circle.

[32] The boundaries of the seven climes have been considered in terms of daytime hours. To be more specific: when the Sun reaches the beginning of Aries, day and night are of equal length in all the climes. As it passes through the degrees of Aries, Taurus and Gemini, the daytime hours of each clime become different. When it has reached the end of Gemini and the beginning of Cancer, the length of daytime in the middle of the First Clime is 13 hours even, in the middle of the Second Clime 13 ½ hours, in the middle of the Third Clime 14 hours, in the middle of the Fourth Clime 14 ½ hours, in the middle of the Fifth Clime 15 hours, in the middle of the Sixth Clime 15 ½ hours, and in the middle of the Seventh Clime 16 hours even. Above that to the latitude of 90 degrees, all becomes daytime.

[33] By “longitude” of a place is meant its distance from the farthest point of the ecumene in the west, by “latitude” its distance from the equator. The equator, as already stated, is the place where night and day are equal all the time. Any place located on that line has no latitude. Any place in the farthest west has no longitude. There are 180 degrees from the farthest point west to the farthest point east. Any place with a longitude of 90 degrees will be exactly in the middle between east and west. Any place with a longitude of less than 90 degrees will be closer to the west and farther from the east, and any place with a longitude of more than 90 degrees will be farther from the west and closer to the east.

[34] The ancients stated that the sublunar world is divided into seven sections, each of which is called a “clime.” The clime of

India belongs to Saturn, the clime of Babylonia to Jupiter, the clime of the Turks to Mars, the clime of the Greeks to the Sun, the clime of Egypt to Mercury, and the clime of China to the Moon.

Certain people have said that Aries and Jupiter belong to Babylonia, Capricorn and Mercury to India, Leo and Mars to the Turks, and Libra and the Sun to the Greeks.

Furthermore, the twelve signs of the zodiac have been divided up in such a way that Aries and its triplicity belong to the east, Taurus and its trigon to the south, Gemini and its triplicity to the west, and Cancer and its trigon to the north.

Some people have said that there are two metropolises in each clime, corresponding to the two houses of each planet, except for the clime of the Sun and the clime of the Moon, for there is only one metropolis in either of these two climes.

The total number of towns and fortified places in the seven climes is 21,600, corresponding to the number of the minutes of the celestial degrees.

[35] Hermes (Trismegistos) said: when these minutes are converted into fourth divisions (of a degree), the latter will correspond to the number of people living in these climes. When one dies, his counterpart is born.

[36] One says that the number of towns and villages of the First Clime, as it comes from the east, is 3,100 towns and large villages, and that there are 2,713 towns and large villages in the Second Clime, and 3,079 in the Third; in the Fourth, which is Babylonia, there are 2,974, in the Fifth 3,006 towns, in the Sixth 3,408 towns, and in the Seventh 3,300 towns and large villages on islands.

[37] The median of the First Clime passes through those locations where the longest day is 13 hours and where the northern pole star rises  $16 \frac{2}{3}$  degrees above the horizon, which constitutes the latitude. The greatest latitude of that clime is where the longest day is  $13 \frac{1}{4}$  hours and the elevation of the northern pole star, that

is, the latitude, is  $20 \frac{1}{2}$  degrees, which is a distance of 440 miles.<sup>(16)</sup> It begins at the farthest point of China, continues there toward the south, and then passes first the shores of India and then the country of the Sind. It runs out at sea along the Arabian Peninsula and the Yemen and crosses the Red Sea. Then it continues through the (eastern) land of the Abyssinians and crosses the Nile toward (western) Abyssinia and the town of Dongola in Nubia. In the Maghrib, it runs along the south of the land of the Berbers all the way to the Western Ocean. There are twenty mountains in that clime, some of them from twenty to a thousand parasangs high. There are thirty long rivers in it, some of them from a thousand to twenty parasangs long, and there are fifty large towns. The people living in this clime are generally dark-skinned. The clime has Aries and Sagittarius as zodiacal signs and its planet is Jupiter. It is, despite its extreme heat, rich in water and meadows, and the people there grow millet and rice. They lack, however, a temperate season so that neither grapes nor wheat will bear fruit. Cattle are abundant because of the many meadows. On the eastern side is the sea which extends by 13 degrees beyond the equator, and on its western side are the Senegal river<sup>(17)</sup> and the Western Sea. From this clime comes the Nile. (Part of) their east is covered<sup>(18)</sup> by the Eastern Sea, which is the sea of India and the Yemen.

The Second Clime is where the longest day is  $13 \frac{1}{2}$  hours and the northern pole star is at an elevation of  $24 \frac{1}{10}$  degrees. It extends in width from the boundary line of the First Clime to where the

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16. The figures in Maqṛīzī's sketchy and somewhat confused account are rounded off and approximate. Yāqūt (*Muʿjam* 129) and Qazwīnī (*Āthār al-bilād* 15), give the width of the First Clime, for instance, as 442 miles, 22 minutes, and 40 seconds. For a more satisfactory description of the Seven Climes see, e.g., Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah* (transl. Rosenthal, 1:116-66), based on Idrīsī's *Nuzhat mushtāq*.

17. The Arabic original has simply *al-Nīl*, here to be understood as *Nīl al-Sūdān* "the Sudanese Nile," as distinguished from the *Nīl Miṣr*, or "Egyptian Nile," in the next sentence. On the theory of the common origin of the Senegal (or Niger) and the Nile, expounded in ch. 15 below, see the article "al-Nīl" by J.H. Kramers in *ET*.

18. Read: *maghmūr*. Wiet/Bulaq: *ma'mūr* (?).



longest day is  $13 \frac{3}{4}$  hours and the elevation of the northern pole star, that is, the latitude, is  $27 \frac{1}{2}$  degrees. The (latitudinal) extent of this clime is 400 miles. It begins in the east, passing through China all the way to India and the Sind, then over the places where the Green Sea<sup>(19)</sup> and the Sea of Baṣrah (the Persian Gulf) meet, and crosses the Arabian Peninsula over the central highland and the western coastal plain, so that this clime includes the Yamāmah (eastern central Arabia), al-Baḥrayn (north eastern coastal Arabia) and (its chief town) Hajar, Mecca, Medina, al-Ṭā'if, and the Hejaz. It continues across the Red Sea, which is the sea of India, then passes through Upper Egypt, and crosses the Nile, so that the towns of Qūṣ, Ikhmīm, Isnā, Anṣinā and Uswān are located in it. In the Maghrib, it runs along the middle of Ifrīqiyyah (southern Tunisia) and the land of the Berbers all the way to the western Sea. In this clime are seventeen mountains, seventeen long rivers, and four hundred and fifty large towns. The people living in this clime are either brown-skinned or black-skinned. Its zodiacal sign is Capricorn and its planet is Saturn. This clime is inhabited by nomads. Among these are (the Berber tribes of) the Jaddālah, the Ṣanhājah, the Lamtūnah and the Masūfah in the Maghrib; they are linked with the Egyptian nomads in the Oases. This clime is the habitat of the date palm. Mecca and Medina are located in it. And the Samāwah,<sup>(20)</sup> from the people living in Iraq all the way to the Turcoman nomads, is part of it.

The middle of the Third Clime is where the longest day is fourteen hours and the elevation of the pole star, i.e., the latitude, is  $30 \frac{7}{10}$  degrees. This clime extends in width from the boundary line of the Second Clime to where the longest day is  $14 \frac{1}{4}$  hours and the elevation of the pole, that is, the (geographical) latitude, is 33 degrees.

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19. The terms "Green Sea", "Black Sea", "Surrounding Sea" are used interchangeably by medieval geographers for the vast ocean (*Ūqiyānūs*) which, in their belief, encircles the earth. Here, "Green Sea" corresponds to the Arabian Sea or the Indian Ocean.

20. The southern Mesopotamian steppeland (cf. *Yāqūt* 3:245).

Its latitudinal extent is 350 miles. It begins in the east and runs through the north of China and India, where the town of Qandahār is located, then through the northern Sind and the lands of Kābul, Kirmān and Sijistān to the shores of the Sea of Baṣrah, where Persepolis, (Jundi)Sābūr, Shirāz and Sirāf are located. It then continues through al-Ahwāz (present-day Kūzistān), the Iraq, al-Baṣrah, Wāsiṭ, Baghdad, al-Kūfah, al-Anbār and Hīt and passes through the land of Syria to Salamyah, Tyre, Acre, Damascus, Tiberias, Caesarea, Jerusalem, Ascalon, Gaza, Midian and al-Qulzum (Suez). It crosses Lower Egypt (in a swath extending) from north of Anṣinā to Fuṣṭāṭ Miṣr and the coast of the (Mediterranean) Sea, where the Fayyūm, Alexandria, al-Faramā (Pelusium), Tinnīs and Damietta are situated, continues through the Cyrenaica to Ifrīqiyyah, so that it includes Kairouan, and ends at the Sea in the west. There are thirty-three large mountains, twenty-two long rivers, and one hundred and twenty-eight towns in this clime. The people living in it are brown-skinned. Its zodiacal sign is Scorpio and its planet is Venus. In this clime are located all the venerable edifices, from one end to the other.

The middle of the Fourth Clime is where the longest day is  $14 \frac{1}{2}$  hours and the elevation of the northern pole star, the (geographical) latitude, is  $36 \frac{1}{5}$  degrees. The extent of this zone is from the boundary line of the Third Clime to where the longest day is  $14 \frac{3}{4}$  hours and the latitude is  $39 \frac{1}{3}$  degrees.<sup>(21)</sup> The latitudinal extent of this clime is 300 miles. It begins in the east, then continues through the lands of Tibet, Khurāsān, Khujandah (Khochand, present-day Leninabad), Farghānah, Samarqand, Bukhārā, Herat, Marw, Sarakhs, Ṭūs, Nisābūr, Jurjān, Qūmis, Ṭabaristān, Qazwīn, al-Daylam, al-Rayy, Iṣfahān, Hamadhān, Nahāwand, Dīnawar, Mosul, Naṣībīn, Āmid, Ra's al-ʿAyn, Sumaysāṭ (Samosata), and al-Raqqah. (From there) it passes through Syria, so that it includes Bālis, Manbij (Hierapolis), Malaṭyah (Melitene), Aleppo, Antioch, Tripolis, al-

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21. In both texts, erroneously,  $29 \frac{1}{3}$  degrees.

Māṣṣīṣah (Mopsuestia), Hama, Sidon, Tarsus, ‘Ammūriyyah (Amorium) and al-Lādhiqiyyah (Laodicea). It then crosses the Syrian Sea over the islands of Cyprus and Rhodes and passes through the land of Tangier to end at the Western Sea. In this clime are twenty-five large mountains, twenty-five long rivers, and two hundred and twelve towns. The complexion of the people living there is somewhere between brown and white. Its zodiacal sign is Gemini and its planet is Mercury. The Byzantine Sea (the Mediterranean) stretches in this clime from its western end all the way to Constantinople. From this clime came the prophets and apostles—God’s prayers be upon them—and from it spread the sages and scholars, for it is the middle one of the climes, three being to the south and three to the north of it, and it is in the sector of the Sun. The Third and Fifth Climes rank after it in merit, for they are positioned on either side of it. The people living in the remaining climes are deficient and low in merit because of their loathsome appearance and the savagery of their morals, as, for instance, the Negroes and the Abyssinians. Most of the peoples living in the First and Second and in the Sixth and Seventh Climes are Gog and Magog, Tughuzghuz (Central Asian Turks), Slavs, and the like.

The middle of the Fifth Clime is where the longest day is 15 hours and where the elevation of the northern pole star, that is, the latitude, is  $41 \frac{1}{3}$  degrees. It extends from the (northern) limit of the latitude of the Fourth Clime to where the longest day is  $15 \frac{1}{2}$  hours and the latitude 43 degrees. Its latitudinal extent is 250 miles. It extends from the east to the land of Gog and Magog and passes through northern Khurāsān. In it are located Khwārizm, Isbijāb (present-day Sayram), Azerbaijan, Bardha‘ah, Sijistān, Arzan, and Khilāṭ. It extends over the land of the Greeks to Rome and Spain until it ends at the Sea in the west. In this clime are thirty high mountains, fifteen long rivers, and two hundred large towns. Most of the people living there are white. Its sign is Aquarius and its planet is the Moon.

The middle of the Sixth Clime is where the longest day is  $15 \frac{1}{2}$  hours and the elevation of the northern pole star, that is, the latitude, is  $45 \frac{2}{5}$  degrees. It extends from the (northern) limit of the Fifth Clime to where the longest day is  $15 \frac{3}{4}$  hours and the latitude is  $47 \frac{1}{4}$  degrees. The (latitudinal) extent of this clime is 210 miles. It begins in the east, then passes through the homelands of the Turks, such as the Kirghiz and the Tughuzghuz, to the land of the Khazars, (and continues) from their northern borders across the Alans, the Avars, the land of the Bulgars, Constantinople and northern Spain to the Western Surrounding Sea. There are twenty-two high mountains in this clime, thirty-two long rivers, and ninety large towns. Most of the people living in this clime have a complexion that is between ruddy and white. Its zodiacal sign is Cancer and its planet is Mars.

The middle of the Seventh Clime is where the longest day is 16 hours even and the elevation of the northern pole star, i.e., the (geographical) latitude, is  $48 \frac{2}{3}$  degrees. This zone extends from the (northern) limit of the Sixth Clime to where the longest day is  $16 \frac{1}{4}$  hours and the latitude is  $50 \frac{1}{2}$  degrees. Its (latitudinal) extent is 185 miles. It is thus obvious that the time difference between the southern limit of the First Clime and the northern limit of the Seventh Clime is  $3 \frac{1}{2}$  hours, and that the (differential in) the elevation of the northern pole star is 38 degrees, which, in terms of miles, amounts to 2,140 miles. The Seventh Clime begins in the east along the land of Gog and Magog, passes through the land of the Turks (living) on the northern shores of the Caspian Sea, and continues across the Byzantine Sea along the lands of the Bulgars and Slavs to end at the Surrounding Sea in the west. In this clime are ten high mountains, forty long rivers, and twenty-two large towns. The people living there have a reddish complexion. Its zodiacal sign is Libra and its planet is the Sun.

[38] In each of these seven climes live nations with different languages, different complexions, and other different traits, such as nature and character, outlook, religions, doctrines and beliefs, oc-

cupations and skills, customs and forms of worship, who have no resemblance to one another. Likewise, the animals, the minerals and the plants are different in shape, taste, color and smell, depending on the different climates of the countries, the soil of their land, the freshness or saltiness of their waters, as determined by the zodiacal ascendants of each place above its horizon, the path of the planets over the zenith of the various parts of the Earth, and the way their rays fall on the different locations—as it is all recorded in its proper place in the books of wisdom so that people of intelligence and insight may ponder the plan of God in His creation and how He ordained what He wills and did what He intends. There is no God save He.

[39] Furthermore, the inhabited quarter of the Earth with its different regions is distributed among seven great nations, namely, the Chinese, the Indians, the Blacks, the Berbers, the Greeks, the Turks, and the Persians. The south east of the Earth is in the hands of the Chinese, its north is in the possession of the Turks, the middle of the Earth's south belongs to the Indians, the middle of the Earth's north is occupied by the Greeks, in the south west of the Earth are the Blacks, and in the north west of the Earth live the Berbers, while the Persians are in the center of these kingdoms, surrounded by the other six nations.

### 3. The Geographical Location of Egypt and its Position within the Seven Climes

[1] Now that God—praised be He—has enabled us to present a summary description of the Earth and to discuss what is known to be in each of its climes, let us speak about the relative location of Egypt. So we say:

Part of Egypt is located in the Second Clime and part of it is located in the Third. The portion of it in remote Upper Egypt, such as Qūṣ, Ikhmīm, Isnā, Anṣinā and Uswān, that falls under the Second Clime. The part of Egypt north of Anṣinā, that is, Central (and Lower) Egypt from Asyūṭ to Fustat, the Fayyūm, Cairo, Alexandria, al-Faramā, Tinnīs and Damietta, that belongs to the Third Clime.

The longitude of Fuṣṭāṭ and Cairo, which is the distance from the beginning of the ecumene in the west, is 55 degrees, their latitude, which is the distance from the equator, is 30 degrees. The longest day there is 14 hours, and the maximum elevation of the sun on the firmament is  $83\frac{7}{12}$  degrees.

Both Fuṣṭāṭ and Cairo are located in the southeastern quarter in relation to Mecca—may God honor it. Upper Egypt, since it is many days' travel away to the south from Fuṣṭāṭ, and thus directly opposite Mecca to the west of the latter, is (therefore) all the more honored.

Egypt can be reached only via empty waste: On its east is the Sea of al-Qulzum on the other side of the eastern mountain range, on its west is the Western Desert, on its south are the deserts of Nubia and Abyssinia, and on its north are the Syrian Sea and the sand desert between the Byzantine Sea and the Sea of al-Qulzum.

[2] The distance between (Fusṭāt) Miṣr and Baghdad, according to Ibn Khurradādhbih<sup>(1)</sup> in his *Book of Routes and Countries*, is 1,710 miles, which corresponds to 570 parasangs or 140 and some *barīds*.

[3] The distance between (Fusṭāt) Miṣr and Damascus is 365 miles, which is 121  $\frac{2}{3}$  parasangs, corresponding to 30 *barīds* and a fraction.

[4] Ibn Khurradādhbih (also) says:<sup>(2)</sup> It takes seven years to travel through the lands of the Abyssinians and the Blacks. Egypt is one-sixtieth (the size) of the land of the Blacks, and the land of the Blacks is one [sixtieth] part of the entire Earth.

[5] It says in *The Book of Orosius*: To the east of Lower Egypt is Palestine and to the west of it is Libya. Upper Egypt extends eastward and is bounded in the north by the Western Canal, in the south by the Surrounding Sea, in the west by Lower Egypt, and in the east by the Sea of al-Qulzum. In it live twenty-eight races.

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1. Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Ubayd-Allāh b. 'Abd-Allāh, Persian geographer, died ca. 913 (cf. "Ibn Khurradādhbih" by M. Hadj-Sadok in *EF*; *GAL* 1:125, S 1:404). —The conversion to *barīds* is not in the original (*K. al-Masālik wa-'l-mamālik*, ed. de Goeje, *BGA*, VI, p. 83). A *barīd* equals four *farsakhs*, or "parasangs," or 24 km; hence, the distance is 142  $\frac{1}{2}$  *barīds*.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 93. The second sentence is emended to conform with the original.

## 4. The Boundaries and Cardinal Directions of Egypt

[1] One should know that by “defining the limits” is meant the description of the thing delimited such as it is. The “limit” of a thing is the fine, or end, of it. Limits can be many or few, depending on the thing delimited.

The cardinal directions, by which human habitations and regions are defined, are four: The direction of North, which is a reference to the position of the celestial sphere’s northern pole that is known from its constellations Capricorn and stars  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  of Ursa Minor. Directly opposite the direction of north is the direction of South. South means the position of the celestial sphere’s southern pole as determined by Canopus and the stars of Argo that follow it. The third direction is the direction of East: this is the point where the sun rises at the time of the two equinoxes, in other words, the beginning of Aries at the outset of spring, and the beginning of Libra at the outset of fall. The fourth direction is the direction of West, which is the point where the sun sets during the aforementioned equinoxes.

These four cardinal points are fixed, owing to the fixity of the celestial sphere, and never change from region to region. By means of them, one defines lands and other places of habitation. People orient themselves by them when they travel, and use them to establish the direction of the prayer niches in their mosques. East and West are known. North and South are two directions which intersect (at right angles) with the directions of East and West, thus dividing the celestial sphere into four sectors. The line which passes through the points of North and South is called a “meridian;” it intersects at right angles with the line running through the points of East and West called “equator.” The distances between these two



lines are equal. Someone heading south will at all times have north in his back, while west will be on his right and east to his left.

[2] It is with reference to these four cardinal points that places, lands and countries are defined. Only, the Egyptians use the term *qiblī*<sup>(1)</sup> instead of *janūbī* when they define the southerly direction, and say, '*al-ḥadd al-qiblī*, rather than *al-ḥadd al-janūbī*—the southern boundary—ends at such-and-such a place'. Likewise, they say, '*al-ḥadd al-baḥrī* ends at such-and-such a place' and mean by *baḥrī*<sup>(2)</sup> the 'northern' boundary. In some places, (the Egyptian designations of) these two directions may become a source of error, because in places whose latitudes coincide with that of Mecca, the *qiblah*, or direction of prayer, will be due east if their longitudes are less than that of Mecca, whereas in others whose latitudes coincide with that of Mecca, but whose longitudes are greater than that of Mecca, the *qiblah* will be due west. When someone in a place like that defines a land or habitation in terms of four (directional) limits, then two of these will actually become one. The same is the case with the direction of *al-baḥr*, the sea. When people make it the opposite of *qiblah* and define lands and districts between the two in terms of which part of these faces in their direction, then they may also be in error, because the *qiblah* and the sea may be in one and the same direction in certain places.

[3] Once you realize all that, then you should know that Egypt has a boundary which begins at the Byzantine Sea at Alexandria—certain people claim, from Barqah (Cyrene)—and runs inland until it reaches the upland of the Oases, whence it extends to the country of the Nubians. There it bends (eastward) along the borders of Nubia as far as Uswān (and continues) along the land of the Beja<sup>(3)</sup> south of Uswān until it ends at the Sea of al-Qulzum (the Red Sea).

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1. From *qiblah*, the direction of Mecca in which Muslims face during worship—south-southeast from Lower Egypt.

2. From *baḥr* 'sea', *scil.*, the Mediterranean.

3. On this nomadic Cushitic people, the descendants of the ancient Blemmyes, cf. the article "Bedja" by P.M. Holt in *EF* and Pt. II, ch. 32.

From there it extends (northward) along the Red Sea (coast), passes beyond al-Qulzum to Mount Sinai, and curves along the Wilderness of the Israelites (the Wādī al-Tīh), extending all the way to the Byzantine Sea through the Jifār on the far side of al-ʿArīsh and Rafāḥ. Then it returns to the coast and, running along (the sand desert of) the Byzantine Sea toward Alexandria, connects with the boundary I mentioned earlier in the vicinity of Barqah.

[4] Abū ʿl-Ṣalt Umayyah ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Andalusī<sup>(4)</sup> says in his *Egyptian Epistle*: All of Egypt is located within the ecumene in the Second and Third Climes, the greater part of it in the Third. [5] People concerned with Egypt's history have related that the country extended longitudinally from the town of Barqah south of the Byzantine Sea to Aylah (Elath) on the coast of the gulf which issues from the Sea of the Abyssinians, Negroes, Indians and Chinese. The distance of that is close to forty days' travel. It extended latitudinally from the town of Uswān, and the part of Upper Egypt facing it which borders on Nubia, all the way to Rosetta and the mouths of the other Nile arms on the Byzantine Sea. The distance of that is close to thirty days' travel time. [6] (The fertile part of) Egypt is flanked on either side by two mountain ranges extending from north to south, one of them on the east bank of the Nile, namely, the Muqaṭṭam, and the other on its west bank, with the Nile flowing between the two. They are bleak mountains of little elevation. Positioned very close to each other from around Uswān all the way to Fuṣṭāṭ, the distance between them then widens at the latter and splits slightly, the Muqaṭṭam turning eastward and the other westward, in an oblique line at the beginning and in a zigzag as they

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4. On the Hispano-Arab mathematician, astronomer, man of letters and poet (d. 1135) see the article "Abū ʿl-Ṣalt Umayyah" by S.M. Stern in *EP*. His *Risālah miṣriyyah*, which he dedicated to the Berber ruler of al-Mahdiyyah, Abū ʿl-Ṭāhir Yahyā b. Tamīm al-Ṣanhājī (d. 1116), deals with the Nile and its sources, the land and people, and the fellow scientists, scholars and poets he met during his stay of more than twenty years in Egypt. Maqrīzī quotes it several times. — One reads part of the next three paragraphs of the Wiet text in Ibn Mammātī (*Qawānīn*, ed. Atiya, 70-71) and Yāqūt (*Muʿjam* 5:138), in both places with attribution to Abū ʿl-Ṣalt Umayyah.

continue. Thus (the fertile part of) Egypt widens from Fustāṭ all the way to the shore of the Byzantine Sea, on which are located al-Faramā, Tinnīs, Damietta, Rosetta and Alexandria. There the country's width, which is the distance between its farthest point in the south and its farthest point in the north, ends. [7] If we examine the extent of this distance in terms of days apodictically, then it does not come up to thirty days but is considerably shorter than that. The reason for that is that the difference between the latitude of the town of Uswān, which is its farthest point to the south, and the latitude of the town of Tinnīs, which is its farthest point to the north, is nine degrees and about one-sixth of a degree, without any appreciable difference in their respective longitudes. This can be defined as approximately 520 miles, which is a distance of twenty days or so. In that time a traveler can cover the distance between the two towns at a moderate pace; or it may take longer than that, because the road is winding and not straight.

[8] Al-Quḍā'ī says: What is called "Egypt" extends from al-'Arīsh to the far end of Lūbiyah and the Marāqiyah.<sup>(5)</sup> At the other end of the Marāqiyah area you come to the region of Anṭābulus (the Pentapolis), which is identical with Barqah (the Cyrenaica). From al-'Arīsh onward, that constitutes a march of forty nights. It is coastland all the way along the Byzantine Sea and represents the north of Egypt. Also, from there blows the north wind in a somewhat southerly direction. After you have reached the far end of the Marāqiyah area, you turn left and head south. You proceed through sand desert as you are heading south, the sand stretching from the very beginning on your right all the way to Ifrīqiyah (Tunisia) and on your left from the area of Miṣr to its Fayyūm region and the four Oases. This represents the west of Egypt, that is, the part of it which you have traversed in a southerly direction. Then, at the far end of the Oases, you turn eastward, heading toward the Nile—it takes eight day's journeys to reach the Nile—and then (proceed)

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5. On the vanished town of Marāqiyah west of Alexandria cf. Pt. II, ch. 21; on Lūbiyah, Yāqūt 5:25.

along the Nile and onward. There, Muslim territory ends, and next to it is the land of the Nubians. Then one crosses the Nile and you start out from Uswān in an easterly direction, leaving the town of Uswān behind, toward ‘Aydhāb<sup>(6)</sup> on the coast of the Hejaz Sea (the Red Sea). It takes fifteen days to travel from Uswān to ‘Aydhāb. All of this is the south of Egypt; from there blows the south wind. Then you cross over the sea from ‘Aydhāb to the Hejaz (western side of the Arabian peninsula) and land at al-Ḥawrā’, the first place on Egyptian territory, which is connected (by road) with the region of the City of the Prophet—peace and blessings upon him. This enclosed sea is the Sea of al-Qulzum. It is surrounded by Egyptian territory on its eastern, western and northern sides. The eastern part of it is the area of al-Ḥawrā’, Ḍubah,<sup>(7)</sup> al-Nabk, the regions of Madyan and Aylah, and onward to the Muqaṭṭam near Miṣr. The western side of it is the coast of ‘Aydhāb all the way to Baḥr al-Na‘ām and to the Muqaṭṭam. On its northern side are the town of al-Qulzum and the Sinai. The travel time between al-Qulzum and al-Faramā is one day and one night; (this stretch) represents the land barrier separating the two seas, the Hejaz Sea and the Byzantine Sea. All of this is the east of Egypt, from al-Ḥawrā’ to al-Arīsh; from there comes the east wind.

The territory of Egypt thus delineated plus the western military district is part of the conquests of the Muslim army of Egypt, whose frontier outposts used to extend from Barqah all the way to Spain.

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6. On this vanished community, once an important anchorage for the Red Sea shipping traffic, cf. Pt. II, ch. 37.

7. Thus Qudāmah b. Ja‘far (*BGA*, VI, p. 191), as the name of a way station on the coastal route from Miṣr to Medina. Wiet reads *Dabbah*, which appears doubtful (cf. *ibid.*, note *d*; Yāqūt 3:452; *Tāj al-‘Arūs* 1:345).

## 5. The Sea of al-Qulzum

[1] *Qalāzim* means ‘calamities and distress’—*al-dawāhī wa-ʿl-muḍāyaqah*, hence (the name) “Sea of al-Qulzum”—because it is “hemmed in”—*muḍayyaq*—between mountains.<sup>(1)</sup> Since Egypt is enclosed by two seas, namely, the Sea of al-Qulzum on its east and the Byzantine Sea on its north, and since, as earlier stated, the Sea of al-Qulzum is surrounded by Egyptian territory, it is the duty of this book to describe it. So we say:

[2] The real reason why this sea was known around Egypt as “al-Qulzum” is because there used to be on its western shore, in the east of Egypt, a town called *al-Qulzum*. It was destroyed, as the reader will learn at the appropriate place in this book when we discuss the villages and towns of Egypt. This sea then was named after that town and called *Baḥr al-Qulzum* by grammatical annexion. In Hebrew it is called *Yam Sūf* (the Sea of Reeds).

This sea is actually a gulf which issues from the great sea that encircles the Earth and is called *Ōkeanos*. (This encircling sea) is also known as the “Sea of Darkness,” because dense vapors rise from it which the sun is unable to dissolve, with the result that they become thicker and thicker and the darkness intensifies. The waves of that sea are enormous and their terrors are many. Nothing is known about it other than such information as we have about part of its coastlands and some nearby islands. [3] On the western side of that (encircling) sea, from which issues the Byzantine Sea—to be discussed next, God willing—are the Fortunate Isles (the Ca-

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1. The “etymology” is sheer fantasy. Such strenuous efforts to fit foreign names—in the case of al-Qulzum, from the Greek *Clysmā*—into Arabic roots, real or fictitious, is not uncommon among Arab writers. Yāqūt, for instance, explains the name as a derivative of the Arabic verb *qalzama*, which, like *zalqama*, allegedly means ‘to swallow’, “because [this sea] swallows those who sail on it. It is the place where Pharaoh and his people drowned.” (*Muʿjam* 4:387; cf. also *Tāj al-Arūs* 9:32 and 8:326).

nary Islands). They are, according to all accounts, six islands inhabited by a barbaric people. On the eastern side of that sea, adjacent to China, are also six islands which are known as the Islands of al-Shilā.<sup>(2)</sup> Some 'Alids, fearing for their lives, settled there in the early Islamic period.

[4] From this Surrounding Sea issue six seas, of which the largest are two. These are the ones which God had in mind when He says, "*He let forth the two seas that meet together,*"<sup>(3)</sup> and in His words, "*and (He who) placed a partition between the two seas.*"<sup>(4)</sup> One of them is in the east and the other in the west. The one issuing in the east is called the Chinese Sea, the Indian Sea, the Persian Sea, the Yemenite Sea, or the Abyssinian Sea—depending on which of these countries extends alongside of it. The one that issues in the west is called the Byzantine Sea.

As to the Indian Sea, which issues in the east, it begins east of China, thirteen degrees beyond the equator, and flows toward the west. It passes along the lands of China and India all the way to the town of Kanbāyah (in the Sind) and on to al-Tiz in the land of Mukrān (the coastal region of Baluchistan). Having reached the region of Mukrān, it divides into two parts, one of which is called the Sea of Fāris (the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf) and the other is called the Yemenite Sea (the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden). The Yemenite Sea begins at a promontory called *Ra's al-Jumjumah* and extends from there to the town of Zafār,<sup>(5)</sup> then proceeds to al-Shihr and the coast of Ḥaḍramawt, and on to Aden and (the Straits

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2. More commonly, *al-Silā*, from Chinese *Sin-lo*, i.e., Korea (cf. V. Minorsky, *Sharaf al-Zamān Tāhīr Marvāzī on China, the Turks and India*, London 1942, p. 89). —The Shi'ite colony there is also mentioned in al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbat al-dahr fī 'ajā'ib al-barr wa-'l-baḥr* (ed. A. Mehren, Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1923, p. 131; transl. Mehren 228).

3. Koran 55 (The All-Merciful): 19.

4. Koran 27 (The Ant): 61.

5. On this once important town, center of frankincense production and trade on the Arabian Sea, see the article "Zafār" by J. Tkatsch in *Et.* Wiet's references to Ibn Khurradādhbih are wrong; the latter speaks in both places of Zafār near Ṣan'ā', once the capital of the Ḥimyar state.

of) Bāb al-Mandab. The longitudinal extent of this Indian Sea is 8,000 miles, its latitudinal extent is 1,700 miles in some places and sometimes narrower than that.

Having reached Bāb al-Mandab, it issues into the Sea of al-Qulzum. Al-Mandab is a mountain twelve miles high. The width of the (Straits') opening is such that a man can see another man on the opposite shore. Once it leaves Bāb al-Mandab, (the Sea of al-Qulzum) extends in a northerly direction past the coastlands of Zabīd and al-Ḥirdah to 'Aththar. In ancient times, 'Aththar used to be the royal residence. From there it continues past Ḥaly to 'Usfān and al-Jār, which is the seaport of the City of the Prophet—abundant prayer, peace, greetings and honor on him who resided in it—and from there, along the coast opposite al-Juḥfah near a place called today *Rābigh*, on to al-Ḥawrā', Madyan, Aylah, al-Ṭūr, Fārān, and the town of al-Qulzum.

Having reached al-Qulzum, it curves southward and passes on to al-Quṣayr,<sup>(6)</sup> which is the seaport of Qūṣ, and from al-Qusayr to 'Aydhab, which is the seaport of the Beja. From 'Aydhab it continues to the region of al-Zayla' (Zula), which is the coastland of Abyssinia, and ends at Berbera (in northern Somalia).

The length of this sea is 1,500 miles, its width from 400 miles to less than that. It is a hideous and foul-smelling sea.

Into this (Indian) Sea flow the Tigris and the Euphrates. On its extremities are the regions of the Sind and the Yemen, (forming) as it were, an island in its midst that is surrounded on three sides by water. (This sea) stems the flow of the Mihrān river (the Indus) the same way the Byzantine Sea stems the flow of the Nile.

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6. The *Leukos Limen* ('White Harbor') of the Ptolemaic era, on the Egyptian Red Sea coast. Its scanty remnants lie about four miles north of the modern town of al-Quṣayr, called *al-Judayyidah* by the local bedouins. Cf. Muḥammad Ramzī, *Al-Qāmūs al-jughrāfi lil-bilād al-miṣriyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub Press, 1963) II, 4:271.

In (the Sea of al-Qulzum) is a place between the towns of al-Qulzum and Aylah known as *Tārān*, and near it is a mountain from which hardly a ship escapes because of the fierce crosswinds blowing between two mountain spurs. This place is a pool, six miles wide, known as *Birkat al-Ghurundal*; Pharaoh is said to have drowned in it. The pool is not passable when the south wind blows. It is said that al-Ghurundal is the name of an idol that stood there, and that had been placed there to trap anyone leaving Egypt, either because he was on bad terms with the king or was fleeing from him. People say when Moses, peace be upon him, led the Children of Israel out of Egypt and took them eastward, he was commanded by God Exalted to camp opposite that idol. Pharaoh, hearing of this, thought that the idol had trapped Moses and his people and prevented them from moving on, as the Egyptians were wont to expect from it. So Pharaoh led his troops in pursuit of Moses and his people in order to capture them, as he believed, and he drowned in the manner told by God Almighty.<sup>(7)</sup> The story of Moses, peace be upon him, will be told in connection with the synagogue of Dumūh<sup>(8)</sup> in this book, when we discuss the temples of the Jews.

[5] In that Sea of al-Qulzum are fifteen islands, four of which are inhabited, namely, the Dahlak Island(s), the Island of Sawākin, the Island of al-Na‘mān, and the Island of al-Sāmīrī.

[6] Two gulfs issue from this (Indian) Sea, one that circles India, which is connected to the continent, and another that separates the lands of the Sudan and the Yemen. The width (of the latter) at its narrowest point is about two parasangs. At its uppermost part between Syria and Egypt, this sea comes so close to the Byzantine Sea that there is only about a day's journey between them.

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7. Cf., e.g., Koran 2:50; 7:136; 8:54; 17:103; 26:66.

8. *Khīṭaṭ* 2:464-65.



## 6. The Byzantine Sea

[1] Since a number of Egyptian towns, such as the city of Alexandria, Damietta, Tinnīs, al-Faramā, al-‘Arīsh etc., overlook the Byzantine Sea, and since Egypt’s northern boundary is at that Sea, and since the Nile flows into it, it is appropriate to furnish some information about it.

[2] It has already been stated that the place at which this Byzantine Sea issues (from the Surrounding Sea) is in the west. It issues in the Fourth Clime between Spain and the Maghrib, running (eastward) all the way to Constantinople.

People say that Hercules the Giant excavated it and made it flow from the Western Encircling Sea, and that the Island of al-Andalus (the Iberian Peninsula) and the country of the Berbers was once one land, inhabited by the Berbers and the Spaniards. Those peoples used to live in mutual jealousy, until Hercules the Giant, the son of Salqūs, son of Ighrīqush,<sup>(1)</sup> son of Yūnān, became king. The Spaniards then persuaded him to make between them and the Berbers a canal from the (Surrounding) Sea by means of which each people could protect itself against the other. So he dug a narrow passageway, eighteen miles long and twelve miles wide, and on either side he built a dam, and then spanned the two dams with a bridge over which one could cross. Near that bridge he posted a guard to prevent the Berbers from crossing over, except by permission. But the main body of the (Surrounding) Sea was higher than the floor of that strait, and the water overflowed and covered the

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1. Read: *Haraklish al-Jabbār ibn Salqūs ibn Ighrīqush*, on which the overwhelming majority of the manuscripts seem to be in agreement. Wiet’s *Haraklish ibn Jabbār min madā’in Salqūs*, etc., which, according to him, is supposed to mean “Hercules, a native of Seleucia-Ctesiphon,” rests on only one manuscript out of the 25 he consulted—hardly a sufficient basis for an emendation of such dubious grammaticality.

two dams together with the bridge, sweeping before it many towns and flooding many others. Travelers in that strait near the (Encircling) Sea are said to have reported that ships sometimes stop in their course even when there is a wind, and people discover that what keeps the ships from moving on is the fact that they just passed between the battlements of the wall or between two enclosing walls. The straits then grows in length and width and becomes a sea that is eighteen miles wide. People say that the bridge can be seen at low tide.

I think this story is untrue. Because stories of this sea and of its being at the shores of Egypt kept being mentioned in earliest times, long before Hercules. So, it might either be something that was accomplished at the beginning of time by some remote ancestor, or it could be a completely baseless story. At any rate, the time of Hercules was after this sea came into being. God alone knows the truth.

[3] Passage through the straits is difficult. It is full of terrors and has clashing waves. After that sea has left the straits, it extends eastward along the land of the Berbers and the north of the Far West to the central part of the Maghrib, then past Ifrīqiyah (Tunisia), Barqah (Cyrenaica), Alexandria, the northern Sinai desert, Palestine, and along the littoral of Syria, where it curves toward al-ʿAlāyā, Antioch and the hinterland of Constantinople, and eventually rejoins the Surrounding Sea from which it issued. The length of that sea is five thousand—some say, six thousand—miles and its width is between seven hundred and three hundred miles. [4] In it are one hundred and seventy inhabited islands, where many well-known nations live, among them Sicily, Majorca and Crete—but that is something beyond the scope of this book.

[5] Directly opposite the Indian Sea in the west is a sea which issues from the Surrounding Sea west of the land of the Negroes and ends not far from the Mountain of the Qumr.<sup>(2)</sup> Into it flows the

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2. This appears to be the reading intended by Maqrīzī, as shown by his express

Nile that passes along the land of the Abyssinians; in its lowest part are the Canary Islands, which constitute the ultimate longitude in the west.<sup>(3)</sup>

Directly opposite the Syrian Sea (the eastern Mediterranean) to the east is the Caspian Sea. It has been said that it connects with the Surrounding Sea amidst towering mountains.

The Sea of the Slavs is a sea which issues in the west between the Sixth and the Seventh Climes. It is vast and in it are many islands, among them the Island of al-Andalus—only, the latter is connected (on one side) with the great land mass, namely, through an arm-like mountain range which links (the Iberian Peninsula) with the continent near Barcelona. The people there also have a fresh-water sea known as “Gog and Magog.” It contains many wondrous things, but it is not for this book to deal with them.

It is said that the extent of this Byzantine Sea is about four months (in travel time).

[6] Abū 'l-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī reports in his *Taḥdīd nihāyāt al-amākin li-taṣḥīḥ masāfāt al-masākin*: At one time during their rule over Egypt, some kings of the Persians were urged to excavate the land between the Sea of al-Qulzum and the Byzantine Sea and to remove the isthmus between them. The first of these was Sāsīs-Ṭarāṭīs<sup>(4)</sup> the King, and then after him it was Dar-

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voweling in sect. 1 of chapter 15. In that, he follows the Hispano-Arab historian-geographer Ibn Sa'īd (d. 1286), who also influenced Maqrīzī's older contemporary and one-time teacher Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406). The Qumr, as will be seen, are an “Indian” people who live on an island named after them, also called “Jazīrat Malāy” (presumably Java, or the whole Malay Archipelago). Most other writers use the correct *Jabal al-Qamar* ‘Mountain of the Moon’, the translation of Ptolemy's *Selēnēs Oros*.

3. This is the Gulf of Guinea, and the “Nile” here is the Niger. Arab maps have the south at the top, hence, “lowest part” (*al-asfal*) means northernmost.
4. The *Sesostris* of the Greeks, i.e., the Egyptian pharaoh Sesostris III of the 12th Dynasty (1991-1778 B.C.). According to Aristotle, he was the first to conceive the idea of a canal connecting the Nile with the Gulf of Suez (cf. Gaston Maspero, “La geste de Sésostri” in *Journal des Savants*, 1901, p. 605). The actual construction of such a canal, according to Herodotus, was begun by the pharaoh Necho (609-593) of the 26th Dynasty, who, however, abandoned

ius the King. But they could not accomplish it, because the water level of (the Sea of) al-Qulzum was higher than the land of (Lower) Egypt. Then, at the time of the Greek dynasty, came Ptolemy III<sup>(5)</sup> and carried out the project with the help of Archimedes in such a manner that the objective was accomplished without any damage. Later, at the time of the dynasty of the Roman Caesars, it was filled in with earth to serve as an obstacle to any approaching enemy.

[7] Certain tellers of ancient stories among the philosophers reported that the space between Alexandria and the land around it and the region of Constantinople was in ancient times a land of sycamore trees. It was a haunted, unhealthy land, and the people living there were Greeks. (They said) that the sea penetrated all the way to Alexandria and that its waters engulfed that land. In it lived, as they claim, the bird called *qiqnus*.<sup>(6)</sup> It is a bird with a beautiful voice. Several days before its death, its voice becomes even more beautiful so that no one can listen to it, because the listener's heart is overcome, owing to the beauty of the bird's voice, by something that makes him die. (They said) that, a few days before its death, the bird is overcome by a great rapture and joy and does not stop singing. They claimed that a musician among the philosophers wanted to hear the voice of *qiqnus* in this condition. But fearing, if he came upon it suddenly, that the beauty of its voice would kill him, he plugged up his ears tightly. Then he approached it and began to open his ears a little at a time until, after three days, they were completely open. For he wanted to get to hear the voice gradually, without its beauty striking him unawares at the first time and

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the project that reportedly cost the lives of 120,000 Egyptian laborers. The canal was completed a hundred years later by the Achaemenid Shah Darius the Great. — One finds a brief discussion of this canal in ch. 23 under "Cairo canal" (*khalij al-Qāhira*).

5. According to Diodorus of Sicily, it was his predecessor, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247), who accomplished the undertaking. For the participation of Archimedes as the engineer of the project, cf. M. Steinschneider, "Die arabischen Übersetzungen aus dem Griechischen" in *ZDMG*, L (1896), p. 172.
6. Greek κύκνος (or Latin *cycnus*), 'swan'.

destroying him. They maintained that that bird perished and that nothing was left of it and its young ones, because the water of the sea descended upon it and its kind at night in their nests so that it became extinct. It is said that some king wanted to kill a certain philosopher. As he handed him a cup with poison for him to drink, he told him that (story), whereupon the man showed all the signs of happiness and joy. "What is the meaning of this, o wise man?" asked the king. "Is it not possible," the man replied, "that I am like *qiqnus*?"

## 7. The Etymology and Meaning of *Miṣr*, with a Listing of its (Other) Names

[1] Its is said: (Egypt's) name in earliest times before the Flood was *Jizlah*.<sup>(1)</sup> [2] Later on, it was called *Miṣr*.

There has been disagreement among scholars with regard to the intended sense on account of which this land was called *Miṣr*. Some people have said that it was named after Miṣrayim, the son of Marākīl, son of Dāwīl, son of 'Arbāq, son of Adam; he is the first Miṣr. According to others, it was named after the second Miṣr, namely, Miṣrām, the son of Naqrāwus the Giant, son of the first Miṣrayim, and after him was named Miṣr, the son of Bayṣar, son of Ham, after The Flood. And it was said: No, it was named after the third Miṣr, namely, Miṣr, the son of Bayṣar, son of Ham, son of Noah, and it is a non-Arabic diptote. But others claimed that it is a regularly derived Arabic noun. As to those who believe that Miṣr is a non-Arabic name, their evidence rests on the traditions of historical scholars who relate that Miṣr, the son of Bayṣar, settled in that land and divided it among his sons, and thus it was named after him.

[3] Al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad al-Hamdānī<sup>(2)</sup> related that Miṣr, the (grand)son of Ham, is identical with Miṣrāyīm (Mizraim), and Miṣrayim, the son of Hirmis (Hermes), son of Hardūs, is said to have been the ancestor of Alexander (the Great). Phut, the son of Ham, said (al-Hamdānī), married Bakht, the daughter of Batāwīl, son of Tiras, son of Japheth, son of Noah, and she bore him Būqīr

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1. This is the name claimed by Ibn Duqmāq (*Intiṣār* 5:44) as the oldest name of 'Ayn Shams (Heliopolis). On the other hand, at the beginning of chapter 2 of Part II we are told that the name of ancient Egypt was *Amsūs*.
  2. Yemenite historian and genealogist, astronomer, litterateur and poet, died 945; cf. "al-Hamdānī" (O. Löfgren) in *EF*.

and Qibt, the ancestor of *al-Qibt*, the Copts of Egypt. It follows that Miṣr is a descendant of Ham. Indeed, he is Miṣr, son of Hirmis, son of Hardus, son of Mayṭūn, son of Rūmī, son of Lanṭī, son of Yūnān. It is after him that Egypt was named *Miṣr*; it is identical with *Maqadūniyah* (Macedonia).

[4] Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Mas'ūdī<sup>(3)</sup> mentioned in his *Akhbār al-zamān* that, when Adam's descendants became jealous of each other and were oppressed by the Banū Qābīl ibn Ādam, Naqrāwus the Giant, the son of Miṣrayim, son of Marākīl, son of Dāwīl, son of 'Arbāq, son of Adam, upon him be peace, rode out with some seventy knights of the Banū 'Arbāq—giants one and all—in search of some place on earth where, fleeing from the descendants of his forefather, they could settle down. They kept going until they reached the Nile. They followed it for a long time, and when they saw the vastness and the beauty of the country along its banks, they liked it and said, "This is a country for planting and colonization." So they remained there and made it their homeland.

They erected solid buildings and astounding fortresses, and Naqrāwus founded Miṣr and named it after his father Miṣrayim. Naqrāwus was a giant with strength, power and valor, but he was also a scholar. The jinn conspired for him on the destruction of his forefather's descendants, and he continued to be obeyed, for he had inherited the sciences that Darābīl<sup>(4)</sup> had taught to Adam,

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3. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī, the famed Baghdadi historian and traveler, the "Herodotus of the Arabs" (A. von Kremer), died in September 956 in Fustāt; cf. *GAL*<sup>2</sup> 1:143, S 1:270. —Only a part of his monumental historiographical work entitled *Akhbār al-zamān wa-man abādahū al-ḥidhān* (The History of Time and of Those Eliminated by Its Reverses) has survived. Its abridged content, with some additions, is preserved in his *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar*, which he finished in November/December 947. The work was edited in two volumes in Cairo (Bulaq 1283/1867), and edited and translated in 9 vols. by C. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille (*Maçoudi. Les Prairies d'or*. Paris, 1861-77).

4. In Mas'ūdī's text, an angel who wrote for Adam a book called "Secret of God's Kingdom."

peace be upon him, and with the help of which the latter had conquered the Titans and their rulers before (Naqrāwus') time.

Then, while he was king, he ordered a town to be built on the site of his tent, and the people cut for him rocks from the mountains and worked lead mines and built a city which they called *Amsūs*. In it they erected tall towers, each one hundred cubits high. And they planted crops and cultivated the land. Then he had them build towns and villages and he made every corner of the land inhabited in wise judgment. Next, they dug (a bed for) the Nile in order to bring its water to them. For the river before that time had not been of even flow. Rather, it would spread out over a wide area and divide into numerous branches in the land until it flowed toward (the land of) the Nubians. Now they plotted its course and drew canals from it to many places of the towns they had built. They led a canal from the river to their capital, *Amsūs*, and it ran right through the middle of it.

[5] Then, after The Flood, Egypt was named after *Miṣr*, the son of *Bayṣar*, son of *Ham*, son of *Noah*.

Namely, *Faylamūn* (Philemon ?) the Priest had left Egypt and had joined up with *Noah*, upon him be peace, of whom he became a believer and follower, he and his family and his offspring and his disciples. He rode with *Noah* in the Ark and gave his daughter in marriage to *Bayṣar*, the son of *Ham*, the son of *Noah*. When *Noah* came out of the Ark and divided the earth among his sons—*Faylamūn*'s daughter had meanwhile born to *Bayṣar* a son to whom he had given the name *Miṣrāyim*—*Faylamūn* said to *Noah*, "Send with me, Prophet of God, my grandson so that I take him to my country and explain to him its treasures and acquaint him with its sciences and mysteries." So (*Noah*) sent the boy with (*Faylamūn*), together with some people from his household, for he was a lad brought up in comfortable circumstances. As (*Faylamūn*) approached Egypt, he built for (*Miṣrāyim*) an arbor (*arīsh*) from tree branches and covered it with grass. Then he built for him on that same spot a



town which he called *Darasān*—meaning ‘Gate to Paradise.’<sup>(5)</sup> And the people sowed crops and planted trees and gardens from *Darasān* all the way to the sea, so that there were fields and gardens and cultivated land. Those who were with Mişrāyim were giants, and they quarried rocks and built lofty edifices and fortresses, and they lived there in the greatest ease and comfort.

[6] It is said that the Egyptians made Mişrāyim, Bayşar’s son, their king at the time of Peleg, son of Eber, son of Salah, son of Arphaxad, son of Shem, son of Noah.<sup>(6)</sup> He ruled Egypt and founded the city of Memphis on the Nile, which he named after himself. It is said that Mişrāyim planted trees with his own hands; their fruits were so huge that, when a bitter orange was split in two halves, (only) a camel could carry one of them. Cucumbers were fourteen spans long. It is said that he was the first to build ship’s (to ride) on the Nile, and that his own ship was three hundred cubits long by one hundred cubits wide.

[7] Mişrāyim is said to have married a woman from the priest clan, and she bore him a son whom he named Qubṭīm. After the seventieth year of his life, Qubṭīm married a woman who bore him four sons: Quṭṭarīm, Ushmūn, Atrīb and Şā. They multiplied, and colonized the land, and it was blessed for them.

It has been said that the number of those who arrived with (Faylamūn’s, people) was thirty men. They built a city which they named *Māfah*, which means ‘thirty’ in their language;<sup>(7)</sup> it is identical with *Manf*—Memphis.

The companions of Faylamūn the Priest uncovered the treasures of Egypt and discovered the sciences of the Egyptians. They worked

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5. Presumably Persian *dar-i samān* ‘gate to heaven’. —This same story is attributed below (Pt. II, ch. 57, beginning) to Ibn Waṣīf Shāh, Maqrīzī’s primary “authority” on ancient Egypt, in the discussion of the Sinai town of al-‘Arīsh.

6. Cf. Gen. 11:10-16.

7. Compare ancient Egyptian *m’b*, Coptic *māb*—‘thirty’. More in Pt. II, ch. 3.

mines, and the Egyptians taught them the science of talismans and told them how to practice alchemy. They founded cities in places other than along the Nile, among them Raqūdah (Rhakotis) on the site of (latter-day) Alexandria.

When death came to Miṣrāyim, he designated his son Qubṭīm as his successor, having already divided the land of Egypt among his grandsons: To Quṭṭarīm he had assigned (all the land) from Qift to Uswān; to Ushmūn (the land) from Ushmūn (al-Ushmūnayn) to Memphis; to Atrīb the entire Ḥawf;<sup>(8)</sup> and to Ṣā (the land) from the region of Ṣā al-Buḥayrah (Saïs) to the vicinity of Barqah (Cyrene). To his brother Fāriq he said, "To you belongs (the land) from Barqah to the west." Fāriq is thus the lord of Ifrīqiyah, and his descendants are the *Afāriq*, or Africans. And he ordered each of his grandsons to build himself a capital in his assigned area.

At the time of his death, he also had them excavate for him an underground vault and furnish it with white marble. They must place his body in it and bury with him all the gold and jewels in his treasure houses, and on it he commanded them to inscribe the protective names of God Exalted to prevent his body from being removed. So they dug for him a subterranean excavation, one hundred and fifty cubits long. In its center they put a gold-plated throne room and they made four entrances, at each of which they placed a golden statue wearing a jewel-encrusted crown, seated on

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8. Here intended to mean, in a broad sense, the eastern and central Delta. After the Arab conquest, *al-Ḥawf* was the designation for all land east of the Damietta arm of the Nile, corresponding to the former Byzantine eparchy of Augustamnica, as distinguished from *al-Rif*, the rest of the Delta to Alexandria. This became then, from the early 9th century onward, *al-Ḥawf al-Sharqī*, the Eastern Ḥawf, except for land north of the Abū Ṣīr Canal, as distinguished from *al-Ḥawf al-Gharbī*, the Western Ḥawf, which was all land west of the Rosetta arm of the Nile, including Rosetta, Shabās and Ṣā east of that arm. The rest of the Delta between the two major Nile arms, i.e., the former Byzantine eparchy of Aegyptus I, together with the land north of the Abū Ṣīr Canal, was then known as *Baṭn al-Rif*. This continued until the end of the 13th century, when the administration of Lower Egypt was reorganized in a manner similar to the modern divisions. For the administrative divisions of the Delta under the Fātimids cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, 3:381-87 (on the authority of al-Qudā'i).

a throne of gold with chrysolite legs, and on the breast of each statue they engraved protective verses. They placed the king's body in a marble basin overlaid with gold leaf, and on his throne room they inscribed the words:

Miṣrāyim, son of Bayṣar, son of Ham, son of Noah, died seven hundred years after The Flood. He died without having worshiped idols. He knew neither senility nor sickness, neither sadness nor sorrow. He is protected by the magnificent names of God. No one can reach him save a king with seven kings for sons, who professes the religion of the pious King and believes in him who is sent with the truth and calls to the faith at the end of time.<sup>(9)</sup>

In that throne room they placed with him a thousand pieces of finely turned chrysolite, and a thousand statues of precious stone, and a thousand clay vessels filled with superb pearls, and (the books on) alchemy, and drugs and wondrous talismans, and ingots of gold. All of this they roofed over with boulders on top of which they piled up sand between two hills. And his son Qubṭīm assumed royal power.

[8] Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām<sup>(10)</sup> says in the *Book of the Crowns*: ‘Abd Shams, son of Yashjub, son of Ya‘rub, son of Qaḥṭān, son of Hūd (and) brother of ‘Ād, son of Eber, son of Salah, son of Arphaxad, son of Shem, son of Noah, peace be upon him—the name of this ‘Abd Shams is ‘Āmir, but he was known as “‘Abd Shams” because he was the first to worship the Sun (*‘abada ’l-*

9. The inscription, like all others of the kind, is, needless to say, in flawless Arabic rhymed prose.

10. Baṣran historian and philologist, compiler of the *Life of the Prophet (Sīrat Rasūl Allāh)*, died ca. 833 in Fustāt; see “Ibn Hishām” (W. Montgomery Watt) in *EP*. —The *Kitāb al-tijān fī mulūk Ḥimyar* (ed. Hyderabad 1347/1928-29) is, as we now know, not from Ibn Hishām’s pen. —Stories like the following, telling of the fabulous exploits of legendary South Arabian kings, are rejected by Muslim historians of a more critical and skeptical disposition than Maqrīzī’s. Ibn Khaldūn, for instance, deals with several examples along that line, calling them “silly statements by historians” (*The Muqaddimah*, transl. Rosenthal, 1:21 ff.; 1:296), and the Hispano-Arab historian and all-round genius Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) dismisses all claims of connections between Ḥimyar and the Berbers as existing “only in the gross lies of Yemenite historians” (*Jamharat ansāb al-‘Arab*, Cairo 1971, p. 495).

*shams*); he was also called “Sabā” because he was the first to take captives (*sabā*), and he is Sabā the Elder, the father of Ḥimyar and Kahlān—this ‘Abd Shams ruled after the death of his father Yashjub in the Yemen. He gathered the Banū Qaḥṭān and the Banū Hūd—upon him be peace—and incited them to go raiding. Having led them to Babylon, he conquered the city and killed all the rebels in it. Eventually he reached the land of Armenia and took possession of the land of the descendants of Japheth, the son of Noah. (Then) he wanted to cross over into Syria and the land of the Jazīrah (Upper Mesopotamia). But people told him, “There is no way for you to make the crossing other than to return the way you have come.” So he built the bridge over the Sanjah<sup>(11)</sup> and crossed over into Syria, capturing those territories all the way to the Cilician Gate. At that time, no one lived beyond the Cilician Gate. Next, he set out for the country of the West. As he camped along the Nile, he gathered his counsellors about him and said to them, “I think I shall build a *miṣr*”—that is, a boundary (*ḥadd*)—“between these two seas”—meaning, the Byzantine Sea and the Sea of al-Qulzum—“and it shall be the dividing line between East and West.” “What a splendid idea, Sire!” they replied. So he built a city which he called “Miṣr”, and appointed his son Bābalyūn as its governor. Then he proceeded to (the land of) the descendants of Ham, the son of Noah, who had their camping grounds in the steppes all the way to Qamūniyah.<sup>(12)</sup> In Qamūniyah live the Goths.<sup>(13)</sup> He attacked all those peoples and made their offspring and their women captives, as he had done before in the land of the East, and for which he was called “Sabā”. Then he returned to Miṣr and proceeded from

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11. A western tributary of the upper Euphrates near Samosata (Samsat). The single-span stone bridge across that river (*Qanṭarat Sanjah*) was considered one of the wonders of the world (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 3:264-65).

12. According to Yāqūt (4:399), a town on the site of latter-day Kairouan. What is meant, perhaps, is the region called *al-Qamūdah* between Kairouan, Gafsa and Tebessa (cf. Julien, *History of North Africa*, p. 42), or, more likely, “the place in the West called by the Greeks *Qamūniyah*” (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 3:281), i.e., the hinterland of Tangier.

13. Suggested reading: *al-Ghūt*. Wiet/Bulaq: *al-Qibt* ‘the Copts’(?).

there to Syria on his way to the Hejaz. To his son Bābalyūn he left at his departure the following counsel:

So I speak to Bābalyūn, my son, and these are words of wisdom:

Act well, now that the East and West are under your dominion.

Forever treat the sons of Ham with equity and fairness:

If ever they should swerve from truth, be ready then with action,

But when they lean, obedient, toward kindness in your orders

in quest of right, bestow on them the justice they're deserving.

Do not reveal your thought to folk, lest they, emboldened, turn it

against you—make it fall on them with gleaming blade's great swiftness!

Do never take their goods from them unfairly and unjustly:

The taking's easy if its done with kindness and compassion.

Nor must you money spend in vain for other than its purpose,

but generous be should things arise that cannot be avoided.

Those with a grudge cure with the sword: the hater's strength will falter

when force he meets with on your part and grim determination.

With noble men deal with a mix of lenience and harshness,

but never lord it over them, nay, rather show forbearance.

To those who come to ask your aid, be succor and show mercy,

and whoso knows the olden ways, be sure to seek his counsel.

Beware of those who travel short: the reason is they will be

content with what you trust them with at any water hole.

Then he returned to the Yemen and built the Dam of Ma'rib.<sup>(14)</sup> It is a dam fed by seventy rivers, and the water comes to it from an area three months by three months in travel time. Then he died at the age of five hundred, and his son Ḥimyar ibn Sabā came to rule after him. When the Hamites rose in rebellion against Bābalyūn and wanted to destroy Miṣr, he called on his brother Ḥimyar to come to his aid against them. Ḥimyar came as his brother's helper to Egypt and then went on to the Maghrib, where he remained for one hundred years, founding towns and building fortresses. Then Bābalyūn, son of Sabā, died in Miṣr and was succeeded by his son Imru' al-Qays ibn Bābalyūn. Next, Ḥimyar, son of Sabā, died at the age of four hundred and forty-five years, having been king during four hundred of them, and after him came Wā'il ibn Ḥimyar. After Wā'il had died, he was succeeded by his son Saksak ibn Wā'il, who is called "Muqa'qi' al-Mulk" ('he who convulsed the kingdom'), after Ḥimyar's kingdom had become disunited. Saksak fought the rebels and marched to Syria, where he was encountered at al-Ramlah by 'Amr, son of Imru' al-Qays, son of Bābalyūn, son of Sabā, who had become king after his father's death. 'Amr offered him tribute, and Saksak confirmed 'Amr's rule over Egypt and the Maghrib and returned to Babylon, where he died. And 'Amr, son of Imru' al-Qays, was lord over Egypt until Abraham, the Friend of God, peace be upon him, came to him and ('Amr) gave him Hagar as a present.

[9] Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam<sup>(15)</sup> relates in *The Conquests in Egypt and Their Story*, on the authority of 'Abd-Allāh ibn (al-) 'Abbās,<sup>(16)</sup> God be pleased with both

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14. See the article "Ma'rib" by A. Grohmann in *EI2*. Ibn Khaldūn mentions the dam as an example of structures so gigantic that they could only have been built by successive rulers (*Ibar* 1:289; *The Muqaddimah*, transl. Rosenthal, 2:241).

15. On this Egyptian traditionist and historian (d. 871) see "Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam" (no. 4) by Fr. Rosenthal in *EF*; *GAL*<sup>2</sup> 1:154, S 1:227. —His *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Charles C. Torrey, New Haven, 1922; M. Ṣabīḥ, Cairo, 1974) was Maqrīzī's principal source for the earliest period of Muslim Egypt. —One reads this section on pp. 17-18 of the Ṣabīḥ edition.

16. The Prophet's first cousin and ancestor of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty. A prolific traditionist—some 1660 traditions are attributed to him in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* of

of them: Noah, upon him be peace, had four sons: Shem, Ham, Japheth, and Yaḥṭūn. (One day) Noah prayed to the Lord and asked Him that He kindly bestow prosperity and blessing on his offspring and their children when they will have grown up.<sup>(17)</sup> And the Lord promised him that Noah then called his sons, while they were asleep near daybreak.

He called Shem, and he responded and came running. Shem then called out to his sons, but none of them answered him, except his son Arphaxad. So he took him and they came to (Noah), and Noah placed his right hand on Shem and his left hand on Arphaxad, Shem's son, and asked the Lord that He bestow amplest blessing on Shem, and that He give the kingdom and the prophethood to the descendants of Arphaxad.

(Noah) then called Ham, and he turned to the right and to the left but did not follow his father's summons, and neither he nor one of his sons came to (Noah). So Noah prayed to the Lord, asking Him to bring (Ham's) descendants low and make them to be slaves of Shem's descendants. Now, Mişr, the son of Bayşar, son of Ham, had been sleeping by the side of his grandfather Ham, and when he heard Noah's curse on his grandfather and his offspring, he came running to Noah and said, "Great-grandfather, I have responded to your call, even though neither my father nor any one of his sons have not done so; appeal for me in your prayer." And Noah was happy, and he placed his hand on (Mişr's) head and said, "Lord, he has responded to my call. Bless him and his progeny and make him dwell in the Blessed Land, which is the mother of all countries and the sustainer of mankind, and whose river is the best of all rivers in the world. Bestow the amplest of blessing on that land and make it

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Bukhārī and Muslim—he was regarded by his contemporaries and following generations as the foremost authority on the Prophet's life and the interpretation of the Koran. See the article "Abd-Allah b. al-'Abbās" by L. Veccia Vaglieri in *EP*. —For the theme of this tradition cf. Gen. 9:18-27.

17. Read: *ḥīna takāmalū*, as in the source text and the Bulaq edition: Wiet: *ḥīna ta'āmalū* (?).

subservient to him and his sons and give them power and strength over it.”

(Noah) then called his son Japheth, but he did not respond, nor did any one of his sons. So (Noah) invoked the Lord against them, (asking Him) to make them the wicked among humankind.<sup>(18)</sup>

And Shem lived a blessed life until he died, and so did his son Arphaxad, son of Shem, until he died. And the kingdom which is pleasing in the eyes of God, and the prophethood and the blessing remained with the descendants of Arphaxad, son of Shem.

Ham's oldest son was Canaan son of Ham. He is the one who was conceived in sin, in the Ark, so that Noah cursed him and he was born black. Harshness, autocracy and tyranny prevailed among his descendants. He is the ancestor of all the Sudanese and Abyssinians. (Ham's) second son was Cush son of Ham; he is the ancestor of the people of the Sind and India. His third son was Phut son of Ham, who is the ancestor of the Berbers. And his fourth, and youngest, son was Bayṣar son of Ham, who is the ancestor of all the Copts. Bayṣar son of Ham had four sons: Miṣr son of Bayṣar, who is the oldest of them and the one that Noah prayed for, as related above; Fāriq son of Bayṣar, Māj son of Bayṣar, and Yāj son of Bayṣar. The sons of Miṣr are said to have been four: Qifṭ son of Miṣr, Ush-mūn son of Miṣr, Atrīb son of Miṣr, and Ṣā son of Miṣr.

The first to dwell in Egypt, according to Ibn Lahī'ah<sup>(19)</sup> and (the Companion) 'Abd-Allāh ibn Khālīd (ibn Usayd), was Bayṣar, son of Ham, son of Noah—peace be upon him—after God Exalted had drowned His people, and the first city built in Egypt was Memphis. Bayṣar settled it with his descendants who were thirty people, four of them sons of his who had come of age and had married. [10]

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18. The source text continues here with the account of Yaḥtūn, on whom blessing is invoked, but who had neither sons nor offspring.

19. Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Abd-Allāh, renowned traditionist of South Arabian origin, judge (770-780) of Diyār Miṣr (the former Byzantine eparchy of Arcadia in northern Central Egypt), died 790 in Fustāt; see "Ibn Lahī'ah" (Fr. Rosenthal) in *EF*.



These are Mişr, Fāriq, Māj and Yāj, sons of Bayşar, and Mişr was the oldest of them. Before that, they had lived at the foot of the Muqaţtam where they had carved out numerous dwellings.

[11] Noah, peace be upon him, had prayed for Mişr that God make him dwell in the good and blessed land, which is the mother of all countries and the sustainer of humankind, and whose river is the best of all rivers, and that He bestow the amplest of blessing upon him and make the land subservient to him and his descendants and give them power over it. (Mişr) asked (Noah) about that land, and he described it to him and told him about it. [12] Some people have said that Mişr, son of Bayşar, was with Noah in the Ark when the latter prayed for him.

Bayşar, son of Ham,<sup>(20)</sup> had become old and feeble, so his son Mişr and all of his brothers took him to Egypt, and they camped there. And that is why it was called *Mişr*.

[13] After Bayşar and his sons had established themselves in Egypt, Fāriq, Māj, and Yāj, the sons of Bayşar, said to their brother Mişr: “We realize that you are the oldest and the best of us, and that this is the land which your great-grandfather Noah gave to you for settlement. But we are making this land of yours too crowded for you”—this was at the time when Mişr’s own progeny and their children had greatly multiplied—“and so we ask you for the same blessing that our great-grandfather Noah pronounced on you: that you bless for us a land where we can go, and where we can settle, and which will belong to us and to our children.” And Mişr replied: “Indeed, you must settle in regions closest to me and must not go far away from me. Mine shall be in my country (an area extending over) a distance of one month’s travel in four directions. I shall take possession of it for myself and it shall belong to me and to my children and my children’s children.”

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20. The paragraph is taken from Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (p. 18).

[14] And Miṣr, son of Bayṣar, took possession of (all the land) between al-Shajaratān near al-‘Arīsh and Uswān lengthwise, and from Barqah to Aylah across. [15] Fāriq took possession of (all the land) between Barqah and Ifrīqiyah; his descendants were the *Afāriqah* (Africans), which is the reason why (the land) was named *Ifriqīyah*; this also constitutes a distance of one month. Māj took possession of (the land) between al-Shajaratān at the farthest boundary of Egypt all the way to the Jazīrah (Upper Mesopotamia) for a distance of one month’s travel; he is the ancestor of the Nabataeans of Syria. And Yāj took possession of the land beyond the entire Jazīrah, between it and the sea toward the east, and he is the ancestor of the Nabataeans of the Iraq.

[16] Then Bayṣar, son of Ham, passed on and was buried on the site of the Monastery of Abū Hirmīs<sup>(21)</sup> west of the Pyramids, which is thus the earliest burial place in Egypt.

[17] And Miṣr’s sons multiplied, the older ones being Qifṭ, Atrīb, Ushmūn and Ṣā. The Copts—*al-Qibṭ*—are among the offspring of this Miṣr. It is said that Qibṭ was the brother of Qifṭ; in their (Coptic) language he is (called) Quṭṭīm, or Qubṭīm, or Miṣrāyim.

[18] (Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam) relates:<sup>(22)</sup> Bayṣar, the son of Ham, died after he had made his son Miṣr his successor. And each of Miṣr’s brothers took a piece of the earth for himself, except for the land of Egypt, which (Miṣr) kept for himself and his sons. And after Miṣr’s sons and their children’s children had become many,<sup>(23)</sup> Miṣr gave to each of his sons a piece of land which he would possess for himself and his descendants. He also gave (each of) them a share

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21. *Abū Hirmīs* (or *Hirmīs*) was the Arab popular name for the ancient village of *Pehormes*, the present-day *Baharmis* in the district of Imbābah (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 3:59). On the monastery cf. B.T. Evetts (ed.), *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries* (Oxford 1895), p. 199. —One reads the tradition in Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (p. 18).

22. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabiḥ) p. 18.

23. Read: *kathura*, as in the source text and the Bulaq edition. Wiet: *kabura* ‘had grown old’ (?).

of the Nile. To his son Qifṭ he gave the site of Qifṭ, which he settled and which was so named after him, as well as the land upriver to Uswān and downriver to Ushmūn to the east and west (of the Nile). To his son Ushmūn he gave the land from Ushmūn down to Memphis east and west (of the river), and Ushmūn resided in Ushmūn and it was named after him. To Atrīb he gave the land between Memphis and Ṣā, and he resided in Atrīb, which was named after him. To Ṣā he gave the land between Ṣā and the (Mediterranean) Sea, and he made Ṣā his residence and it was named after him. All of Egypt was thus divided into four parts, two of them in Upper Egypt and two in the Delta.

[19] *Miṣr*, says al-Bakrī,<sup>(24)</sup> is a feminine noun. God said, “*alaysa lī mulku Miṣra*—do I not possess the kingdom of Egypt?”<sup>(25)</sup> And He said, “*udkḥulū Miṣra*—enter you into Egypt.”<sup>(26)</sup> ‘Āmir ibn Wāthilah al-Kinānī once said to (the caliph) Mu‘āwiyah: “As far as ‘Amr ibn al-Āṣ is concerned, *fa-aqṭa‘tahū Miṣra*<sup>(27)</sup>—you gave him Egypt in fief, but when God says, ‘*ihbiṭū miṣran*,’<sup>(28)</sup> He meant just a city.” Sulaymān al-A‘mash<sup>(29)</sup> read: *ihbiṭū Miṣra*, explaining: It is the

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24. Abū ‘Ubayd-Allāh ‘Abd-Allāh b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, Hispano-Arab historian, geographer, philologist and poet, died 1094; see “Abū ‘Ubayd al-Bakrī” (E. Lévi-Provençal) in *EF*; the Preface to *Simṭ al-la‘ālī* (Cairo 1354/1936) by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Maymanī.

25. Koran 43 (Ornaments): 51.

26. Koran 12 (Joseph): 99.

27. So the Bulaq text, or perhaps *anṭaytahū*. Wiet’s *anṭaqtahū* is obscure. —The ‘Alid Abū ‘l-Ṭufayl ‘Āmir b. Wāthilah is counted by Muslim historians as the last of the Companions, although he was only a boy of seven at the Prophet’s death. He died in 718. Cf. Ibn Ṭagh̃rī-Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhīrah* (Cairo ed.), 1:243.

28. Koran 2 (The Cow): 61, which Arberry renders as “Get you down to Egypt” (also, similarly, Dawood, Palmer; but Pickthall: “Go down to settled country”). The grammatical aspects of this exegetical problem are discussed in the following section.

29. Abū Muḥammad Sulaymān b. Mihrān, known as “al-A‘mash” (the bleary-eyed): highly regarded Kūfan authority on the Koran, Traditions, and inheritance laws (d. 765 or 766); see “al-A‘mash” (Brockelmann-Pellat) in *EF*.

(very) Egypt which is (now) governed by Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Alī.<sup>(30)</sup> He gave (the noun *Miṣr*) no genitive termination (in *i*).

[20] Bayṣar son of Ham, says al-Quḍā‘ī, had become old and feeble, so his son *Miṣr* and all his brothers took him to Egypt, and they camped there. And that is why it was called *Miṣr*. (The name) is a diptote in (the function of) a definite noun, because it is a masculine (proper) name after which this city was named. Then, feminine gender and definiteness became combined in the name, which both prevented its inflection as a triptote. Next, any large city that travelers came upon was called a *miṣr*.

Now, if one means *miṣr* in the sense of ‘a city’, then the word is triptotically inflected, because one of the above properties, namely, (inherent) definiteness, is no longer given. In the Lord’s words, speaking through Moses, peace be upon him, “*ihbiṭū Miṣran fa-’inna lakum mā sa’altum*—get you down to Egypt; you shall have there what you demanded”,<sup>(31)</sup> (the word *miṣr*) is inflected as a triptote in the reading of all the Koran readers, but diptotically inflected (to read *Miṣra*) in the lection of al-Ḥasan<sup>(32)</sup> and al-A‘mash.

Those who treat it as a triptote hold two views: either (God) intended (this passage) to mean ‘go down to a city’, because (the Israelites) were then in the Wilderness, or He meant this selfsame Egypt but inflected it triptotically because He made *miṣran* stand for a name<sup>(33)</sup> for *al-balad* ‘the specific place’, which is a masculine noun designated by another masculine noun so that nothing stands in the way of its triptotic inflection. As for those who do not

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30. The paternal uncle of the first two ‘Abbāsīd caliphs and first ‘Abbāsīd governor of Egypt (751, then again, 753-54). See Pt. III, ch. 9; Ibn Taghrī-Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhīrah*, 1:323-25, 331-36.

31. Koran 2:61.

32. Presumably Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ‘Aṭīyyah b. Najīḥ al-Qurashī (d. 826), a Koran reader of the school of Abū ‘Umārah Ḥamzah b. Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt (d. 773), one of the seven authorized readers of the Koran. See Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāyah fi ṭabaqāt al-qurrā’* (ed. G. Bergsträsser and O. Pretzl, Cairo, 1932), 1:220.

33. Read: *isman*, as in *Tāj al-‘Arūs* (3:543). Wiet/Bulaq; *asmā’an*.

treat (the word) as a triptote, (in their view) He meant by *Miṣr* this city. Likewise, when the Lord, speaking through Joseph, peace be upon him, says, “*udkḥulū Miṣra ʾin shāʾa ʾllāhu ʾaminīna*—enter you into Egypt, if God will, in security,”<sup>(34)</sup> and when Pharaoh says, “*ʾalaysa lī mulku Miṣra*—do I not possess the kingdom of Egypt?”<sup>(35)</sup> then He meant only the latter *Miṣr*.

[21] As to *miṣr* in Arab colloquial usage, there it means a *ḥadd*, or boundary, between two pieces of land. The people of Hajar allegedly say, ‘I bought the house *bi-muṣūrihā*—with its boundaries,’ in other words, with its limits—*bi-ḥudūdihā*.

[22] Egypt, says al-Jāḥiẓ<sup>(36)</sup> in his essay “In Praise of Egypt,” was called *Miṣr* because people betake themselves there—*li-maṣīri ʾl-nāsi ilayhā*—and gather there, for the same reason an intestine was called *maṣīr* and (in the plural) *muṣrān* because the food goes there—*li-maṣīri ʾl-taʾāmi ilayhū*. The plural of *miṣr* in the sense of a city is *amṣār*, the plural of the alimentary *maṣīr* is *muṣrān*, but this *Miṣr* (Egypt) has no plural, because it is unique.

Al-Akḥṭal<sup>(37)</sup> once related: “I was thinking of converting to Islam, but then I gave up the idea.” When asked for the reason, he said: “One day I came home to one of my women. I was hungry and told her to give me something to eat. She called out, ‘Girl, bake some tripe (*maṣīr*) for Abū Mālik on the fire!’ And the girl did so. I told the woman to hurry up with the food, and she shouted, ‘Girl, where is Abū Mālik’s tripe?’ ‘On the fire,’ answered the slave girl [with the intended double entendre: ‘Where is Abū Malik’s destination (*maṣīr*)?’ and the reply, ‘In Hell!’ (*fī ʾl-nār*)]. I saw (in this) an evil

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34. Koran 12:99.

35. Koran 43:51.

36. Abū ʾUthmān ʾAmr b. Baḥr b. Maḥbūb, known as “al-Jāḥiẓ” (the goggle-eyed): Baṣran man of letters and leading scholar of his time, died 869; cf. “al-Djāḥiẓ” (Ch. Pellat) in *EF*. No work entitled *Kitāb madḥ Miṣr* is listed anywhere among his remarkable literary output.

37. Abū Mālik Ghiyāth b. Ghawth, Christian poet of the Taghlib tribe at the court of ʾAbd al-Malik b. Marwān, died 708; cf. “al-Akḥṭal” by R. Blachère in *EF*.

omen, and (though) I was about to convert to Islam, I stopped short of it.”

[23] *Miṣr*, says al-Jawharī<sup>(38)</sup> in the *Ṣaḥāḥ*, is the well-known city; it can be both masculine and feminine, according to Ibn al-Sarrāj.<sup>(39)</sup> And *al-Miṣran* ‘the Two Cities’ are al-Kūfah and al-Baṣrah.

[24] Ibn Khālawayh<sup>(40)</sup> says in his treatise entitled *Laysa*: There isn’t anyone who has explained to us why Egypt was called *Maqadūniyah* in ancient times, except ...<sup>(41)</sup> in the Hebrew language: he said that *maqadūniyah* signifies a place with abundant rainfall. It was not called *Miṣr* until Bayṣar son of Ham settled there. The Byzantines maintain that the entire diocese of *Maqadūniyah* is an endowment of the Great Cathedral in Constantinople and call the diocese of Macedonia *al-Awṣaḥfiyyah* (Hagia Sophia), which to them means Alexandria and its dependencies, In other words, all of Egypt except remote Upper Egypt.

[25] Egypt is also called *Umm Khannūr*, which is explained to mean ‘ease and plenty’.

[26] *Miṣr* means the dividing line between two things. A poet said, describing God Exalted:

The sun He made a boundary clear  
which severed night from daytime.

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38. Abū Naṣr Ismā‘īl b. Ḥammād, philologist and lexicographer from Fārāb (Otrab) in Transoxiana, died 1003 in Nisābūr when he tried to demonstrate man’s ability to fly; see “al-Djawharī” (L. Kopf) in *ET*. — On his *Ṣaḥāḥ*, one of the finest and most authoritative Arabic monolingual dictionaries, cf. J.A. Heywood, *Arabic Lexicography*, p. 68 ff.

39. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Sariy, Baghdadi grammarian and authority on *adab* and the Arabic language, died 929; cf. “Ibn al-Sarrādj” (H. Fleisch) in *ET*. Wiet’s note 9 should be ignored; it refers to the Hispano-Arab philologist Abū Bakr Ibn al-Sarrāj, who died in 1154 in Egypt.

40. Abū ‘Abd-Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad, Baghdadi grammarian and linguist of Persian origin (al-Ḥamadhānī), died 980 at the Ḥamdānid court in Aleppo; see “Ibn Khālawayh” by A. Spittaler in *ET*. — The treatise, a collection of oddities, derives its curious title “There isn’t” from its arrangement in the form: “There isn’t in the speech of the Arabs such-and-such, except ...”

41. The wording suggests the omission of an author’s name in this place.

[27] The poet who spoke this verse is ‘Adīy ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādī;<sup>(42)</sup> its transmission is ascribed to Umayyah ibn Abī ‘l-Şalt al-Thaqafi.<sup>(43)</sup> It is part of a poem which begins:

Hear an account as you’ll transmit  
     by heart some day, when someone asks:  
 How God appeared, then gave us grace,  
     and taught us His first signs.  
 A wind there was, a raging sea,  
     and crackless, endless darkness.  
 The gloom He ordered to dissolve,  
     the waters yield their ground.  
 The Earth he spread out like a rug,  
     the match, we’re told, of Heaven.  
 The Sun He made a boundary clear  
     which severed night from daytime,  
 Set lamps to light us in the sky  
     to save us oil and wicks.  
 Six days He made Creation’s time;  
     the last thing shaped was Man.  
 So God took clay and sculpted him,  
     and saw that he was perfect.  
 He called out, ‘Adam!’ who gave response,  
     breathed life into the body formed,  
 Then gave him Paradise to dwell,  
     his own shaped rib for wife.  
 No tree was he denied to smell  
     or eat from at his pleasure.  
 The gaudy Serpent, being made,  
     appeared in shape as camel.  
 Forever made the Lord it cling,

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42. He was the scion of a distinguished Christian family of al-Ĥirah and served at the Persian court in Ctesiphon; died between 590 and 604. See “‘Adī b. Zayd” by F. Gabrieli in *EF*.

43. Pre-Islamic poet from al-Ṭa‘if, a *ḥanīf*; died 626 (or 630); cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Shi‘r wa-‘l-shu‘ara*, 1:459-62; C. Huart, *A History of Arabic Literature*, 25, 34.

man's tyrant during nighttime,  
Forever crawl, condemned, on earth  
and eat the dust in sadness.

[28] The traditionist Abū 'l-Khaṭṭāb Majd al-Dīn 'Umar ibn Dihyah<sup>(44)</sup> says: Egypt is the most fertile of God's countries. God named it *Miṣru*, And it has this form, without triptotic inflection, and none other in the unanimous opinion of the Koran readers. It is a diptote in (the function of) a determinate noun because it is a masculine (proper) name after which this city was named. It combines both feminine gender and (inherent) definiteness, and both of these rule out its triptotic inflection. In our opinion, it is etymologically derived from *muṣirat il-shātu*, meaning, 'the ewe was milked', and it was called *Miṣr* because of the abundance of good things one finds there and nowhere else. He who lives there is never without the good that the land so copiously yields to him, like a female sheep from whose milk and wool and lambs one derives benefit.

Ibn al-A'rābī<sup>(45)</sup> said: *Miṣr* stands for *wi'ā'* 'receptacle'. An intestine (*mi'ā'*) is called *maṣīr*, with the plurals *muṣrān* and *maṣārīn*. (*Miṣr*) is also 'the storehouses of the land'. Abū Baṣrah al-Ghifārī, a Companion of the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, equated *Miṣr* with 'the storehouses of the whole land', thereby referring to the words of Joseph, "Set me over the land's storehouses. I am a knowing guardian."<sup>(46)</sup> God helped at that time, he said, every town dweller and every desert dweller through Egypt and its storehouses.

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44. Hispano-Arab litterateur, philologist and historian, died 1235 in Cairo; see "Ibn Dihya" (F. de la Granja) in *EF*.

45. Kūfan lexicologist, famed as an expert on rare expressions and hapax legomena, died 845/6 in Samarrā; cf. "Ibn al-A'rābī" (Ch. Pellat) in *EF*.

46. Koran 12 (Joseph): 55.



(Ibn Dihyah) mentions this on the authority of al-Ḥawfī<sup>(47)</sup> in a commentary.

[29] Umm Khannūr, says-al-Bakrī, is a name for Egypt. Arṭāt ibn Suhayyah<sup>(48)</sup> said:

House of Dhubyān, defend your blood,  
let not yourselves be owned by folk of Umm Khannūr.

(Al-Bakrī) adds (by way of explanation): Be not meek and humble so that whoever wants to do so may give you something and take it away from you again—the way Egypt, which is meant by *Umm Khannūr*, provides for herself.

Kurā<sup>(49)</sup> said: *Umm khannūr* means ‘ease and plenty’, and that is why Egypt was called *Umm Khannūr* because of the many good things it has. But ‘Alī ibn Ḥamzah<sup>(50)</sup> claimed: It was called *Umm Khannūr* because ‘to it are taken people who have short lives.’<sup>(51)</sup>

The hyena is called *khannūr* and *khannūz*, with both *r* and *z* (at the end).

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47. Egyptian grammarian and Koranic exegete, died 1039 (see al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wu‘āh*, 2:140).

48. He was born before Islam and lived, according to al-Bakrī (*Simṭ al-la‘ālī* 299), “until the caliphate of Sulayman [715-717] or later.” Cf. *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (ed. Dār al-Kutub), 11:134-40; Ibn Durayd, *al-Ishtiqāq*, 176-77.

49. He is the Egyptian Arabist and grammarian Abū ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Hunā‘ī al-Azdī, nicknamed, because of his diminutive size, “Kurā‘ al-naml” (‘ant trotter’). He died after 921. Cf. Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 5:112.

50. Presumably the Baghdadi grammarian and Koran reader Abū ‘l-Ḥasan al-Kisā‘ī (d. ca. 804). See “al-Kisā‘ī” (R. Sellheim) in *EL*<sup>2</sup>.

51. An interpretation based on the opposite meaning of *umm khannūr*, namely, ‘misfortune, calamity’. The tradition is ascribed elsewhere (e.g., *Tāj al-Arūs* 3:191) to Abū Ḥanifah al-Dīnawarī (d. ca. 895).

[30] *Miṣr*, says Ibn Qutaybah in his *Unusual Traditions*, signifies a boundary. The people of Hajar write in their contracts: 'Such-and-such bought the house with all its boundaries,' in other words, its limits. And 'Adiy ibn Zayd said:

The sun He made a boundary clear  
which severed night from daytime

which is to say, a limit.

## 8. Some Remarks on the Merits of Egypt

[1] Egypt has many merits, such as the fact that God Exalted mentioned it some twenty times in His Mighty Book, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly.

[2] (Thus) the Lord said, “*Get you down to Egypt; you shall have there what you demanded.*”<sup>(1)</sup>

Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn ‘Aṭīyyah<sup>(2)</sup> says in his commentary on the Koran: People generally read *Miṣran*, with nūnation, which is the way the word is written in the Koran copies, with the exception of what we are told about certain copies of (the caliph) ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, God be pleased with him. Mujāhid,<sup>(3)</sup> and others among those who accept the triptotic inflection of *Miṣr*, maintained that (God) intended an unspecified city, and inferred this from what the Koran says about (the 4 Israelites), namely, that they “entered the township,”<sup>(4)</sup> and from what the traditional accounts seem to say, namely, that they settled in Syria after (their time in) the Wilderness. Some of those who inflect *Miṣr* as a triptote have said that (God) meant (by it) the very Egypt of Pharaoh. They inferred this from the Koranic passage in which God bequeathed to the Children of Israel Pharaoh’s land and (the Egyptians’) man-made possessions,<sup>(5)</sup> and they allowed the triptotic inflection of the

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1. Koran 2:61.

2. Hispano-Arab philologist and jurisconsult, died 1149 in Lorca; cf. *GAL S* 1:732; Suyūṭī, *Bughyah*, 2:73-74.

3. Abū ‘l-Ḥajjāj Mujāhid b. Jabr: Meccan Koran authority, a student of ‘Abd-Allāh b. al-‘Abbās, died 722. He consulted Jewish and Christian informants and generally leaned toward metaphorical interpretation of Koranic anthropomorphisms.

4. Cf. “*And when He said ‘Enter this township, and eat easefully of it wherever you will...’*” (K 2:58).

5. Cf. Koran 26 (The Poets): 59.

word because, as al-Akhfash<sup>(6)</sup> says, of its light and readily pronounceable form and its similarity to *Hind* and *Daʿd*;<sup>(7)</sup> but Sībawayh does not permit this. People other than al-Akhfash said that God simply meant “the place”, which then became known. Both al-Ḥasan (al-Baṣrī) and Abān ibn Taghlib,<sup>(8)</sup> as well as others, read *ih-biṭū Miṣra* (get you down to Egypt) without triptotic inflection (of *Miṣr*), and this is also the form in which it appears in the Koran of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb,<sup>(9)</sup> who identified *Miṣr* as “the Egypt of Pharaoh”. Al-Aʿmash commented: It is the Miṣr which is (presently) governed by Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿAlī. And Ashhab<sup>(10)</sup> said: I was told by Mālik, “In my opinion, it is Egypt, your home, the place where Pharaoh lived.”

[3] The Lord also said, “*Enter you into Egypt, if God wills, in security.*”<sup>(11)</sup>

Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī says in his Koran commentary, citing Farqad al-Sabakhī:<sup>(12)</sup> Joseph, peace be upon him, went out to meet Jacob, upon him be peace, and the people of Egypt rode with Joseph, honoring and extolling him. And when they approached each other—Jacob was walking on foot, leaning on one of his sons by the name of Judah—Jacob looked at the hors-

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6. Presumably Abū ʿl-Khaṭṭāb ʿAbd al-Hamīd b. ʿAbd al-Majīd, known as “al-Akhfash al-Akbar (the Elder)”, a Baṣran grammarian and teacher of Sībawayh (d. between 793 and 796); see al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyah*, 2:74.
  7. Two female given names which can be inflected both triptotically and diptotically.
  8. Kūfan Koran reader and philologist, a Shīʿite jurist of extremist leaning, died 759/9.
  9. A Jewish scribe before his conversion to Islam, he was one of the recorders of the Prophet’s revelations and was held in high esteem as an expert on the Scriptures. Died 642.
  10. Abū ʿAmr “Ashhab” b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Dāʿūd: Egyptian Mālikite jurist, a student of the Imam Mālik b. Anas, died 819; cf. Ibn Taghrī-Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhiraḥ*, 2:175-76.
  11. Koran 12:99.
  12. An early Ṣūfī in the area of Baṣrah, died before the middle of the 8th century (cf. *Fihrist*, transl. Dodge, 456, 986). —The complete *isnād* is given in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:362 (I, 410). On the story cf. Gen. 46, 47. —Maqrīzī apparently saw no use in the historical work of the eminent traditionist al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), whose *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-ʿl- mulūk* (The History of Prophets and Kings) he mentions only once in passing (*Khiṭaṭ* 1:408).

es and the people and said, "Judah, this surely must be the Pharaoh of Egypt." "No," he replied, "this is your son." And as they were near each other, Jacob, peace be upon him, said, "Peace be upon you, who have taken my sorrows from me!" These were his words: You, who have taken my sorrows from me.

[4] And the Lord said, "*And we revealed to Moses and his brother, 'Take you, for your people, in Egypt certain houses and make your houses a direction for men to pray to and perform the prayer.'*"<sup>(13)</sup>

According to al-Ṭabarī, on the authority of Ibn (al-)ʿAbbās I and others, the Children of Israel were in fear of Pharaoh, and they were commanded to make their homes houses of worship to pray in. This happened, said Qatādah,<sup>(14)</sup> when Pharaoh forbade them to pray in public and they were ordered to move their places of worship to their own houses and face (in prayer) toward the *qiblah*. And he explains, on the authority of Mujāhid, "*(and make) your houses a direction for men to pray to*" as: toward the Kaaba—(namely) at the time when Moses and his companions were afraid, for fear of Pharaoh, to pray in the congregational temples and were ordered to make their houses places of worship facing toward the Kaaba to pray there in secret. And (again) on the authority of Mujāhid with reference to the Lord's words "*Take you, for your people, in Egypt certain houses*" (he said:) "Egypt" here means Alexandria.

[5] And the Lord said, speaking through Pharaoh as he exclaimed, "*Do I not possess the kingdom of Egypt, and these rivers flowing beneath me? What, do you not see?*"<sup>(15)</sup>

Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, Abū Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad ibn Yūnus<sup>(16)</sup> and others have related that (the Companion) Abū Ruhm

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13. Koran 10 (Jonah): 87.

14. Blind Baṣran scholar considered an expert on genealogy and Koran interpretation, died 735/6 during the plague in Wāsiṭ; see "Ḳatāda b. Diʿāma" (Ch. Pellat) in *EF*.

15. Koran 43:51.

16. Egyptian traditionist-historian, died 958. He is the father of the famous astronomer Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Yūnus (d. 1009).

al-Samā'ī<sup>(17)</sup> commented on the above passage, saying: At that time, there was no mightier kingdom on earth than the kingdom of Egypt, and all the people of the two lands stood in need of Egypt; as to the “rivers,” they were, for all practical purposes, ducts and channels so that water flowed under their homes and courtyards, and they would trap it as they liked.

[6] This, then, is what God Almighty has said explicitly about Egypt in various verses of the Koran. As for the passages where indirect reference is made to it in the Holy Book, there are several of them:

[7] Thus the Lord says, “*And We settled the Children of Israel in a sure settlement.*”<sup>(18)</sup>

[8] And the Lord says, “*And (We) gave them [i.e., Mary and Jesus] refuge upon a height, where was a hollow and a spring.*”<sup>(19)</sup> Ibn (al-)‘Abbās and Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab<sup>(20)</sup> and Wahb ibn Munabbih said: This means Egypt. But ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd ibn Aslam<sup>(21)</sup> claimed, in transmission from his father, that it is Alexandria (that is meant here).

[9] The Lord also says, “*So We expelled them from gardens and fountains, and treasures and a noble station;*”<sup>(22)</sup> and He says, “*They left how many gardens and fountains, sown fields, and how noble a station, and what prosperity they had rejoiced in.*”<sup>(23)</sup>

17. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣābah*, 4:72; Ibn Sa‘īd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7:438.

18. Koran 10 (Jonah): 93.

19. Koran 23 (The Believers): 50.

20. One of the Seven Jurisprudents of Medina and a specialist in the transmission of the decrees and rulings of ‘Umar I, died 713. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 2:375-78.

21. A conservative jurist, the son of the distinguished Medinan juriconsult, and author of an early Koran commentary, Abū Usāmah (or ‘Abd-Allāh) Zayd b. Aslam al-‘Umārī (d. 753). He died early in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (786-809).

22. Koran 26 (The Poets): 57-58.

23. Koran 44 (Smoke): 25-27.

(‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad) Ibn Yūnus, citing Abū Ruhm (al-Samā’ī), commented on these two divine passages: The gardens were on both banks of the Nile from one end to the other on either side between Uswān and Rosetta, and there were seven canals, namely, the Alexandria canal, the Sakhā canal, the Damietta canal, the Sardūs canal, the Memphis canal, the Fayyūm canal, and the Manhā canal, all interconnected without interruption. And there were sown fields extending all the way between the two mountain ranges, from one end of Egypt to the other, as far as the (irrigation) water would reach. The entire land of Egypt at that time was irrigated from (a water level of) sixteen cubits, thanks to the aqueducts and dikes they had constructed. The “noble station”, he says, signifies *al-manābir* ‘the mosques’; there were a thousand of them in the land.

[10] Muḥāhid and Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr<sup>(24)</sup> (akready) claimed that *maqām karīm* (a noble station) means the mosques. But Qatādah said: *Maqām karīm*—in other words, goodness and comfort of life which they enjoyed and relished. Indeed, he added, God expelled (Pharaoh) from his gardens and his fountains and his sown fields and finally had him caught by the sea.

[11] Sa‘īd ibn Kathīr ibn ‘Ufayr<sup>(25)</sup> related: We were at Qubbat al-Hawā<sup>(26)</sup> with al-Ma’mūn at the time when he visited Egypt. He said to us, “I do not know what Pharaoh liked about Egypt when he exclaimed, ‘*Do I not possess the kingdom of Egypt?*’” I said, “Shall I tell you, Commander of the Faithful?” “Tell me, Sa‘īd,” he replied. I said, “What you see now is merely what is left of something that

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24. Renowned Kūfan scholar of Ethiopian origin, executed by order of the governor of the Iraq, al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf, in 713/4 in Wāsiṭ for his involvement in the bloody revolt of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath (cf. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 6:487-90/1, 1261-65). One reads his biography in Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 2:371-74.

25. Egyptian jurist, genealogist and historian, died 841; cf. al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍarah*, 1:308.

26. A belvedere surrounded by gardens on the elevation now occupied by the Citadel, built in 811 by the ‘Abbāsīd governor Ḥātim b. Harthamah. —The caliph al-Ma’mūn came to Egypt in February 832 (see below, ch. 30).

was destroyed, because God Exalted and Sublime says, *'And We destroyed utterly the works of Pharaoh and his people, and what they had been building.'*<sup>(27)</sup> "You have spoken the truth," said (the caliph) and fell silent.

[12] And the Lord says, *"Yet We desired to be gracious to those who were abased in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors, and to establish them in the land, and to show Pharaoh and Haman, and their hosts, what they were dreading from them."*<sup>(28)</sup>

[13] And the Lord says, telling us of Pharaoh saying, *"O my people, today the kingdom is yours, who are masters in the land."*<sup>(29)</sup>

[14] And the Lord says, *"And perfectly was fulfilled the most fair word of thy Lord upon the Children of Israel, for that they endured patiently; and We destroyed utterly the works of Pharaoh and his people, and what they had been building."*<sup>(30)</sup>

[15] And the Lord, speaking through Pharaoh's people, says, *"Wilt thou leave Moses and his people to work corruption in the land, and leave thee and thy gods?"*<sup>(31)</sup>—meaning, the land of Egypt.

[16] And the Lord says, telling us about Joseph, upon him be peace, that *"he said, 'Set me over the land's storehouses; I am a knowing guardian."*<sup>(32)</sup>

(‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad) Ibn Yūnus, transmitting on the authority of Abū Baṣrah al-Ghifārī, God be pleased with him, said: It is Miṣr (which is meant by) the storehouses of the whole land, and authority over it means authority over the entire land. Do look to the words of Joseph, upon him be peace, addressed to the ruler of

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27. K 7:137.

28. K 28:5-6.

29. K 40:29.

30. K 7:137.

31. K 7:127.

32. K 12:55.



Egypt, “Set me over the land’s storehouses.” (Pharaoh) did so, and every town dweller and every desert dweller in the entire land found help and succor through Egypt and its storehouses at that time.

[17] And the Lord says, “*So We established Joseph in the land, to make his dwelling there wherever he would.*”<sup>(33)</sup> Joseph, by virtue of his authority over Miṣr, held complete sway over the entire land, because they needed him and the things he controlled.

[18] And the Lord says, telling us of Moses, peace be upon him, that “*he said, ‘Our Lord, Thou hast given to Pharaoh and his Council adornment and possessions in this present life. Our Lord, let them go astray from Thy way; Our Lord, obliterate their possessions, and harden their hearts so that they do not believe, until they see the gainful chastisement.’*”<sup>(34)</sup>

[19] And the Lord says, “*Perchance your Lord will destroy your enemy, and will make you successors in the land, so that He may behold how you shall do.*”<sup>(35)</sup>

[20] And the Lord says, “*And Pharaoh said, ‘Let me slay Moses, and let him call to his Lord. I fear that he may change your religion, or that he may cause corruption to appear in the land.’*”<sup>(36)</sup>—meaning, the land of Egypt.

[21] And the Lord says, “*Now Pharaoh had exalted himself in the land*”<sup>(37)</sup>—meaning, the land of Egypt.

[22] And the Lord says, speaking through one of Joseph’s—peace be upon him—brothers, “*Never will I quit this land,*”<sup>(38)</sup> meaning, the land of Egypt.

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33. K 12:56.

34. K 10:88.

35. K 7:129.

36. K 40:26.

37. K 28:4.

38. K 12:80.

[23] And the Lord says, “*Thou only desirest to be a tyrant in the land*”<sup>(39)</sup>—meaning, the land of Egypt.

[24] Ibn (al-)‘Abbās, God be pleased with him, said: Egypt is called “the whole land” in ten places in the Koran.

These, then, are some of the Koranic passages dealing with Egypt that came readily to my mind.

[25] There are also Traditions on the merit of Egypt:

[26] ‘Abd-Allāh ibn Lahī‘ah transmits from the traditions of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ where he said: I was told by ‘Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, God be pleased with him, that he heard the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, say, “When God will conquer Egypt through you after my death, station a large army there, for those troops will be the most fortunate in the land.” “And why is that so, Messenger of God?” asked Abū Bakr, God be pleased with him. “Because they will be stationed in military garrison until the Day of Resurrection,” replied (the Prophet).<sup>(40)</sup>

[27] (We have it) on the authority of ‘Amr ibn al-Ḥamiq that the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, said, “There will be civil strife in which the most Muslim, or best, of the troops will be the Western Army. That is why I have made Egypt your leader.”<sup>(41)</sup>

[28] And from Tubay‘ ibn ‘Āmir al-Kalā‘ī.<sup>(42)</sup> (One day) I came from al-Ṣā‘ifah and met Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī,<sup>(43)</sup> God be pleased

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39. K 28:19.

40. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, hero of the Riddah wars and the Syrian campaign, regarded Egypt, which he conquered and of which he was the first governor until his recall by the caliph ‘Uthmān, as a kind of personal fief. Mu‘āwiyah, then still governor of Syria, reappointed him to the office in 659 with the right to withhold the land tax for six years, which allowed ‘Amr to amass, until his death in 664 in Fustāt, a huge personal fortune. The tradition, it seems, is a highly “personal” one of ‘Amr.

41. The Companion ‘Amr b. al-Ḥamiq (d. 670) was among the Egyptian dissidents who killed the caliph ‘Uthmān.

42. A Companion, the stepson of Ka‘b al-Aḥbār (d. 652), from whom he transmitted; see Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣābah*, 1:189; Ibn Sa‘d (Dār al-Kutub) 7:452.

43. A very early convert to Islam from Zabīd in Yemen, later a distinguished

with him. He said to me, "Where are you from?" I said, "I am one of the Egyptians." "One of the Western Army?" he asked. I said, "Yes." "The weak army!" he exclaimed. "Is it really the weak one?" I asked. "Yes," he said, "but as soon as someone outwits them, God (intervenes and) saves them from him. Go to Mu'adh ibn Jabal<sup>(44)</sup> to give you a tradition on that." So I went to see Mu'adh ibn Jabal. "What did the old man tell you?" he said to me. I told him, and he said, "What better thing could you take to your country than this tradition (written) at the bottom of your writing tablet?" And when I saw Mu'adh again, he informed me that this was what the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, had told him.

[29] Ibn Wahb<sup>(45)</sup> transmits from the traditions of Ṣafwān ibn 'Assāl, who said: I heard the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, say, "God has opened a gate for penitence in the west; its width is seventy years, and it will not be closed until the sun rises from its direction."

[30] Ibn Lahī'ah transmits from the traditions of 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ: I was told by 'Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, God be pleased with him, that he heard the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, say, "God will conquer Egypt through you after my time then take good care of the country's Copts, for they are related by marriage to you and entitled to your protection."

[31] Ibn Wahb reports: I was informed by Ḥarmalah ibn 'Imrān al-Tujībī, who had it on the authority of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Shumāsah al-Mahrī, who said: I heard Abū Dharr,<sup>(46)</sup> God be

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general in the eastern campaigns. In the arbitration between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah in 657 he faced, as the representative of 'Alī's cause, the formidable 'Amr b. al-Āṣ as opponent. Died 665. See "al-Ash'arī, Abū Mūsā" (L. Veccia Vaglieri) in *EF*.

44. An intimate friend of Muḥammad and one of the six recorders of the Prophet's revelations, died in 639 in Palestine at the age of 33, apparently a victim of the plague. Cf. Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāyah*, 2:301.

45. Egyptian Mālikite jurist and traditionist, died 813; see Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 3:36-37.

46. That is, Abū Dharr Jundab b. Junādah al-Ghifārī, one of the earliest followers of the Prophet. His ascetic piety and uncompromising ideas of social justice

pleased with him, say: “The Messenger of God, peace and blessings upon him, once said, ‘Verily, you will conquer a land where one speaks in terms of the *qīrāt*;<sup>(47)</sup> so treat its people kindly, for they are entitled to protection and are kinfolk. And when you see two men fighting over the proper place for a mud brick, leave it alone.’ Because (the Prophet) had walked by Shuraḥbīl’s sons, Rabī‘ah and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, while they were arguing over the proper place for an adobe brick, and he had left the matter alone. In another tradition it says: ‘You will conquer Egypt, which is a land where one speaks in terms of the *qīrāt*. And when you have conquered it, treat its people well, for they are entitled to protection and they are kinfolk;’ or he may have said, ‘(they are entitled to) protection and they are kin by marriage.’”

Mālik (ibn Anas) and al-Layth<sup>(48)</sup> transmitted this tradition, and (the latter) added, ‘take good care of the Copts.’ Muslim<sup>(49)</sup> cites the tradition in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* on the authority of Abū ‘l-Ṭāhir, from Ibn Wahb.

[32] Ibn Shihāb<sup>(50)</sup> says: It used to be said that the mother of Ishmael, peace be upon him, is one of them (i.e., one of the Egyptians or “Copts”).

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incurred the displeasure of the authorities and led to his banishment by ‘Uthmān to the village of al-Rabadhah (between Medina and Mecca), where he died in 652. See “Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī” (J. Robson) in *EF*.

47. A reference to the redistribution of the land tax in Egypt on the basis of the *qīrāt* as the 24th part of the dinar; see below, ch. 28.
48. Abū ‘l-Ḥārith al-Layth b. Sa’d al-Fahmī, prominent Egyptian jurist and important traditionist, died 791. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 4:127-28; Ibn Taghrī-Birdī, *Nujūm*, 2:82; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:399-400.
49. Abū ‘l-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, the eminent traditionist and scholar of Nishāpūr, compiler of the second canonical collection of traditions (*al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*), died 875. See *GAL* 1:166, S 1:265; “Muslim b. al-Ḥadīdī” (A.J. Wensinck) in *EF*. — Cf. *Ṣaḥīḥ* (VII, 190), *Faḍa‘il al-Ṣaḥābah* 220.
50. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Muslim b. ‘Ubayd-Allāh, often referred to simply as “al-Zuhri”: prominent Medinan jurisprudent and traditionist and the most learned scholar of the Umayyad period, died 742. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 4:177-79.

Al-Layth ibn Sa'd relates: I once asked Ibn Shihāb, "What is their blood relationship?" He replied, "The mother of Ishmael, son of Abraham, God's prayers be upon both, was one of them."

Muḥammad ibn Ishāq<sup>(51)</sup> relates: I once asked al-Zuhrī, "What is the blood relationship that the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, was speaking about?" He said, "Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, was one of them."

[33] Ibn Lahī'ah transmits from the traditions of Abū Sālim al-Jayshānī<sup>(52)</sup> that one the Prophet's Companions told him that he had heard the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, say: "Verily, you will be armies, and truly, the best of your troops will be those of the West among you. Deal mercifully with the Copts for fear of God. Do not eat them like someone smelling a feast."<sup>(53)</sup>

According to Muslim ibn Yasār,<sup>(54)</sup> the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, said: "Take good care of the Copts, for you will find them the best of helpers in the battle against your enemy."

(And we have it) on the authority of Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb<sup>(55)</sup> that he was told by Abū Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān that the Messenger of God, peace and blessings on him, counseled on his deathbed that the Jews be expelled from Arabia. "But God help the poor Copts of Egypt!" he said, "for you will vanquish them. (Yet) they will be your auxiliaries and helpers in the cause of God."

Ibn Wahb transmits on the authority of Mūsā ibn Ayyūb al-Ghāfiqī, who heard it from a man from al-Mirbad,<sup>(56)</sup> that the Prophet, peace

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51. Medinan traditionist and historian, compiler of the Prophet's biography (*al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah*) which we have in the recension of Ibn Hishām, died 768 in Baghdad. See "Ibn Ishāq" (J.M.B. Jones) in *IE*.

52. A Companion who came and settled in Egypt. His name is Sufyān b. Hānī'. Cf. al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥādarah*, 1:205.

53. Read: *al-ḥaḍīr* (cf. *Futūḥ Miṣr*, ed. Ṣabīḥ 14). Wiet/Bulaq: *al-kh-ḍ-r* (?).

54. Baṣran jurist and ascetic, died 726; cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 10:140.

55. Important Egyptian jurist and traditionist, a Nubian from Dongola, died 745. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, 11:318.

56. A place outside Medina (cf. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 5:98).

and blessings be upon him, took ill and fainted. Then he regained consciousness and said, "Take care of the curly scalps!" Then he fainted again, and when he came to, he said something similar. Then he fainted a third time, (and when he came to) he said something like that. So people said, "Let us ask the Messenger of God, peace and blessings on him, who 'the curly scalps' are." After he regained consciousness, they asked him, and he replied: "The Copts of Egypt, for they are your maternal relatives and your kin by marriage, and they are your helpers against your enemy and your helpers in your faith." They asked, "How can they be our helpers in our faith, Apostle of God?" He said, "They will save you the trouble of attending to the chores of this world and you will be free to devote yourselves to worship. He who sanctions what is meted out to them is like one who does it to them, and whoever detests the injustice they receive is like one who stays aloof<sup>f(57)</sup> from them."

According to 'Amr ibn Ḥurayth<sup>(58)</sup> and Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥubālī,<sup>(59)</sup> the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, once said: "Verily, you will come to a people with curly hair. Take good care of them, for they will be (a source of) strength for you and a demonstration and message to your enemy, God permitting"—meaning, the Copts of Egypt.

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57. Read with the Bulaq text: *ka-'l-mutanazziḥi 'anhum* (cf. *Futūḥ Miṣr* 14; Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn* 1:13). Wiet: *ka-'l-muntaziḥ* (?).

58. A "Companion" (he was twelve years old when the Prophet died), governor of Kūfah under Ziyād b. Abīhi, died 704; see al-Zirikī, *A'lām*, 5:243. —His maternal grandfather was Hishām b. Khalaf al-Kinānī, the man who allegedly caused, through an act of public humiliation, the last Arab king of al-Ḥīrah, Nu'mān III, to convert to Christianity. The anecdote is told by al-Bakrī (*Simṭ al-la'ālī* 552).

59. So Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam and Suyūṭī. Wiet: al-Jilī (?). —He transmitted from 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Amr b. al-'Aṣ and al-Ṣunābiḥī (cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 3:55, 332).

From Ibn Lahī'ah: I was told by ('Umar) the freedman of Ghufrah<sup>(60)</sup> that the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, said: "God protect the people of the black earth,<sup>(61)</sup> the dark-skinned, the curly-haired, for they are related by blood and by marriage." 'Umar, the freedman of Ghufrah, added: Their relationship by marriage (consists in the fact) that the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, had a concubine from their midst, and their blood relationship (lies in the fact) that the mother of Ishmael, peace be upon him, was one of them.

Ibn Wahb related: I was told by Ibn Lahī'ah that the mother of Ishmael, Hagar, was from Umm al-'Arab, a village which was located this side of al-Faramā, coming from (Fusṭāt) Miṣr.

Marwān al-Qaṣṣāṣ transmitted: Three of the prophets became related by marriage to the Copts: Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful, peace be upon him, took Hagar as his concubine; Joseph married the daughter of the lord of 'Ayn Shams (Heliopolis); and the Messenger of God, peace and blessings upon him, took Māriyah as his concubine.

Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb said: The village of Hagar is Yāq,<sup>(62)</sup> which is near Umm Dunayn.<sup>(63)</sup>

Ibn Hishām says (in the *Sīrah*): The Arabs say both Hajar and 'Ajar (for Hagar) and make the (initial) glottal stop and *hā'* interchangeable, the way they said *harāqa 'l-ma'* and *'arāqa 'l-ma'* (for 'he made the water flow'), and similar examples.

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60. So, correctly, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam and Suyūṭī. He is 'Umar b. 'Abd-Allāh al-Madanī, a prolific transmitter labeled "weak" by al-Nasā'ī (cf. al-Dhahabī, *al-Mughnī fi al-ḍu'afā'*, no. 4499) and Ibn Ḥajar (*Taqrīb al-tahdhīb*, 2:65). — Wiet/Bulaq: *mawlā 'Ufrah* (the sister of the Prophet's muezzin and treasurer Bilāl b. Rabāḥ) is an obvious error.

61. Arabic: *al-madarah al-sawdā'*, a calque of *Kemt* 'The Black Land', the ancient Egyptian name of Egypt.

62. Ramzī believes this to be the original name of *Kōm al-Rīsh* (see *Khīṭaṭ* 2:130), which was located west of *al-Khandaq* on the Great Canal.

63. The former name, according to Maqrīzī, of the fortress and village of *al-Maqs* (cf. *Khīṭaṭ* 2:121).

[34] (We know) from ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, that he said: The *amṣār* (military cantonments) are seven: Medina is a *miṣr*, Syria is a *miṣr*, and (so are) Miṣr (in Egypt), al-Jazīrah, al-Baḥrayn, al-Başrah, and al-Kūfah.

[35] According to Makḥūl,<sup>(64)</sup> the first place on earth to fall into ruin will be Armenia, followed by Egypt.

[36] ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Amr<sup>(65)</sup> said: Of all the non-Arabs, the Copts of Egypt are the noblest, the most generous, the best of stock, and the closest in kinship to the Arabs in general and to the Quraysh in particular. Whoever wants to be reminded of Paradise, or look at a semblance of it in this world, should have a look at the land of Egypt when its fields turn verdant and its fruit trees are in bloom.

And Ka‘b al-Aḥbār<sup>(66)</sup> said: Whoever wants to see the closest thing to Paradise should have a look at Egypt at the beginning of autumn—or, according to another tradition, when it is in full bloom.

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64. Renowned Syrian jurist and traditionist, a former slave from Kābul, died between 731 and 735; see Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 5:290-83. —On the tradition compare the end of the following chapter.

65. The son of the famous general ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, died *ca.* 684; see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 3:53-62.

66. A leading Jewish scholar in Yemen before his conversion to Islam during the caliphate of Abū Bakr (632-34), he was held in high esteem by his contemporaries for his knowledge of the history of ancient peoples. He died in 652 and is allegedly buried in Gīzah (cf. Pt. II, end of ch. 50). See al-Ziriklī, *A‘lam*, 6:95.



## 9. Other Merits of Egypt

[1] Among its distinctions is the fact<sup>(1)</sup> that to its people belonged the sorcerers. They all became believers in one moment. No community is better known to have converted to the True Religion than the Copts. According to Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb and others, they were twelve chief sorcerers, each having under him twenty supervisors, and each of these being in charge of one thousand sorcerers, so that all the sorcerers together numbered two hundred and forty thousand, two hundred and fifty-two. And when they witnessed the well-known demonstration,<sup>(2)</sup> they were certain that this came from heaven and that sorcery could not hold its own against God's command. So the twelve chiefs flung themselves down in prostration at that point, followed by the supervisors, who were followed by the rest. "*We believe,*" they cried, "*in the Lord of mankind, the Lord of Moses and Aaron.*"<sup>(3)</sup>

Tubay' related: They were the faithful companions of Moses, peace be upon him, and not one of them was (later) tempted, as were those other Israelites, to worship the golden calf.

Tubay' would say: No community ever became believers in one moment as did the Copts.

And Ka'b l-Aḥbār used to say: The like of the Copts of Egypt is as a thicket—whenever it is cut down, it grows back. And in the end

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1. The traditions of this section are drawn from Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (*Futūḥ Miṣr*, ed. Ṣabīḥ, 15-16).

2. Cf. Koran 20 (Ta Ha): 60 ff.

3. Koran 20:70.

God Exalted and Sublime destroyed utterly the isles of the Greeks<sup>(4)</sup> through them and through their craft.

[2] ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Amr said: This world of ours was created in five forms, (one of them being) the form of a bird with its head, its breast, its two wings and its tail. The head is Mecca, Medina and the Yemen; its breast, Syria and Egypt; its right wing, the Iraq, and beyond the Iraq is a nation called *Wāq* and beyond *Wāq* another nation called *Wāq-Wāq*, and beyond that are nations that only God Almighty knows; the left wing is al-Sind, and beyond the Sind is India, and beyond India is a nation called *Māshik*, and beyond *Māshik* another nation called *Manshik*, and beyond that are nations that only God Almighty knows; and the tail (extends) from Dhāt al-Ḥammām<sup>(5)</sup> to where the sun sets. The worst part of the bird is the tail.

[3] The garrison cities, says al-Jāḥiẓ, are ten in number: craftsmanship (is found) in Baṣrah; eloquence in Kūfah; effemination in Baghdad; ineptitude in Rayy; rudeness in Nishāpūr; beauty in Herat; vainglory in Samarqand; manly virtues in Balkh; (a knack for) commerce in Miṣr; and miserliness in Marw. *Ṭarmadah* (vainglory) means ‘words without deeds.’<sup>(6)</sup>

[4] (We have it) on the authority of Buḥayr ibn Dhākhir al-Ma‘āfirī<sup>(7)</sup> that he heard ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ say, as he addressed the Friday congregation: “You must know that you are in military garrison until the Day of Resurrection because of the many enemies around

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4. *Jazā’ir al-Rūm*, more commonly called *Jazā’ir Banī Yāfith*, the Biblical “isles of the Gentiles” which were occupied by the descendants of Japheth (Gen. 10:5), that is, the Mediterranean coastlands of southeastern Europe and Asia Minor.
  5. Thus recorded by al-Maḥdī and Yāqūt. Ramzī identifies it as the present-day *al-Ḥammām*, a railway stop 74 km west of Alexandria on the Alexandria-Marsā Maṭrūḥ line (*Qāmūs*, II, 4:249). —The form *Dhāt al-Ḥumām* in Ibn Khurradādhbih (*BGA* VI, p. 84) appears to be a confusion with a place of this name between Mecca and Medina (cf. Yāqūt 2:298).
  6. The translation follows the Bulaq text; cf. *Tāj al-‘Arūs* 2:569.
  7. He is mentioned further on (Pt. II, ch. 56, sect. 4) as a transmitter on the authority of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān. —Wiet: Bujayr b. Dākhir (?).

you, and because their hearts look covetously on you and your land, the wellspring of cropland and of wealth, of vast good and ever-increasing blessing.”

[5] And (we learn) from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm al-Ash‘arī<sup>(8)</sup> that (one day) he came from Syria to see ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. “What has brought you to our country?” asked (‘Abd-Allāh). “You used to quote traditions to me,” said (al-Ash‘arī), “that Egypt is the country on earth that decayed ahead of all others. But now I see you have taken it over and have built palaces in it and feel, at ease there.” “Egypt,” said (‘Abd-Allāh), “had gotten its full share of decay and ruin. It was destroyed by Bukhtu-Naṣṣar,<sup>(9)</sup> who left in it only wild beasts and hyenas. But today it has the best soil of all lands and is the least decayed and ruined country. And it will continue to thrive as long as anything on earth prospers.”

[6] It is said that Egypt holds a middle position in the world: It has been spared the heat of the First and Second Climes and the cold of the Sixth and Seventh. Being located in the Third Clime, it has a healthy climate, is moderately warm and not very cold, and its inhabitants are safe from the winters of the Jordan valley, the summers of Oman, the thunderstorms of Tihāmah (the western coastal plain of Arabia), the boils of the Jazīrah (upper Mesopotamia), the mangle of the Yemen, the plagues of Syria, the pleurisy of the Iraq, the scorpions of ‘Askar Mukram (in Khūzistān), the splenitis of al-Baḥrayn, and the fever of Khaybar. And they are safe from the invasions of the Turks, the armies of the Greeks, the attacks of the Arab nomads, the intrigues of the Day-

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8. Assigned by ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb to Syria, he became there the nestor of legal thought in his time. He died in 697.

9. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.). Although the Chaldean army had reached the Egyptian frontier by 563, the conquest of Egypt never came about, much to the disappointment of the Hebrew prophets (cf. Jer. 43:8-13; Ezek. 40:10-18). In Muslim tradition, Bukhtu-Naṣṣar has the role of an all-devastating conqueror and a tool of God’s punishment (e.g., Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:177/I, 183: “At that time, whenever God became angry at someone, He would put him under the sway of Bukhtu-Nāṣar”). See the article “Bukht-Naṣ(ṣ)ar” by G. Vajda in *EF*.

lamites, the flying columns of the Qarmaṭians, the drying up of the rivers, and the lack of rainfall.

[7] Egypt has eighty *kuwar*, or districts. There is not a district that does not have interesting and unusual things, such as different kinds of scenery, of buildings, of food and drink and fruit, and of all the things that people make use of and that are stored by kings. Each district and the things it contains are well known, and each variety (of these things) is associated with a specific district.

Thus, Upper Egypt is a land like the Hejaz. Its heat is like that of the Hejaz, and date palms, *arāk* trees, acacias, doom palms and *ʿushar* trees grow there.

Lower Egypt is Syrian in character. It rains there like in Syria, and it grows the fruits of Syria, such as grapes, olives, almonds, figs, walnuts, and all sorts of fruit, legumes and aromatic herbs. Also, snowfall and cold weather occur there.

The district of Alexandria, Lūbiyah and Marāqiyah is (characterized by) steppes, hills and thickets. Olives and grapes are grown there. It is a land of camels, small livestock, animal husbandry, honey and milk.

In each of Egypt's districts is a town, and each of its towns contains some noble antiquities, be they buildings, or stones, or alabaster (creations), or other unusual things. On its Nile ride ships, some large enough to carry the equivalent of fifty camel loads.

Every village of Egypt is fit to be a town. This is supported by the words of God Exalted, "*And send among the cities musterers.*"<sup>(10)</sup>

[8] In Egypt, one operates hatcheries resembling baking ovens where eggs are treated by a man-made device. A fire is kept burning above the eggs which imitates the fire of nature when a hen hatches its eggs. From these hatcheries come the chicks which

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10. Koran 7:111; 26:36.

(yield) most of Egypt's chickens. No such thing is done anywhere outside Egypt.

[9] 'Amr ibn Maymūn (al-Awdī) relates: Moses, peace be upon him, led the Children of Israel out of Egypt. When Pharaoh woke up in the morning, he ordered a sheep to be brought to him. It was fetched and he had it slaughtered. Then he said, "It will not be completely skinned until five hundred thousand Copts have gathered in my presence." After they had assembled before him, Pharaoh said to them, "This is surely a small crowd!" Moses'—peace be upon him—men were six hundred and seventy thousand.

[10] Someone<sup>(11)</sup> has described Egypt in these words: For three months it is a white pearl, for three months it is a piece of black musk, for three months it is a green emerald, and for three months it is a red ingot of gold. As to the white pearl: During the months of July, August and September, Egypt is under water and the world looks white. Its estates on the elevations and hills are like stars; they are surrounded by water on all sides, and there is no way to get to any village other than by boats. As to the black musk: During the months of October, November and December, the water recedes from the ground and (Egypt) becomes a black land; into these months fall the seeding and crop-planting seasons. As to the green emerald: During the months of January, February and March, the plants and herbage of the land grow and proliferate so that it becomes green, as if it were an emerald. As to the red ingot: During the months of April, May and June, pasture turns reddish brown and the crops reach the harvest stage so that (the land) is like a gold ingot, both the way it looks and how one reaps its benefits.

[11] A certain caliph asked al-Layth ibn Sa'd about the time during which Egypt is at its best. He said, "When its flood water recedes, its pestilence vanishes, its ground dries, and pasture becomes possible."

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11. The text is drawn from Mas'ūdī (*Prairies d'or* 2:356).

[12] Someone else said: Its Nile is a marvel; its land is pure gold; its wealth is imported; its money is stolen; it has no ambition; its people are boisterous; their obedience is fear; their safety is discord; their warfare is a shambles; it belongs to any conqueror.<sup>(12)</sup>

[13] Another said: Egypt is a lord among villages and a leader among towns.

[14] Zayd ibn Aslam commented on the Lord's words "*and if no torrent smites it, yet dew,*"<sup>(13)</sup> saying: "It' is Egypt: if it is not struck by rain, it produces prosperity, and if it is smitten by rain, it becomes weak and sickly." This is cited by al-Mas'ūdī in his "History".

[15] It is said<sup>(14)</sup> that, when the Lord had created Adam, peace be upon him, He let him see the whole world, the East and the West of it, its plains and mountains, its rivers and seas, the parts covered with vegetation and the wastelands, the nations that inhabit it and the kings that rule it. And when he beheld Egypt, a lowland with a river drawing its substance from Paradise, carrying blessing in its course, and when he beheld one of its mountains, enveloped in light, the Lord's benevolent eye resting on it, with fruit trees at its foot, their branches in Paradise, watered by the water of divine mercy—(when he saw all this) Adam, peace be upon him, invoked blessing upon the Nile and mercy and kindness and godliness upon the land of Egypt. Seven times he blessed its Nile and its mountain, saying: "O mountain enjoying God's benevolence, thy foot is a paradise and thy soil is musk in which the seedlings of Paradise will be buried. Sheltering, enduring, compassionate land! May blessing never fail thee, O Egypt, mayst thou never be without protection and power and might! O land of Egypt, thou containest lodes and treasures and thou possessest godliness and wealth. May thy river flow as honey. May God make thy crops abundant and thy milk flow copiously. May thy plants thrive and

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12. Sayings of this sort are built on rhyme; their claim to meaning is minimal.

13. Koran 2 (The Cow): 265.

14. Cf. *Prairies d'or* 2:361.

thy blessing increase and mayst thou be fertile. Mayst thou forever prosper, O Egypt, as long as thou becomest not overbearing and haughty or turnest traitor. For if thou dost so, evil will befall thee and thy wealth will drain away.” Adam was the first man to invoke mercy, fertility, kindness and blessing upon Egypt.

[16] (We have it) on the authority of Ibn (al-)‘Abbās that Noah, peace be upon him, prayed for Miṣr, the son of Bayṣar son of Ham, saying: “Lord, he has responded to my call; bless him and his offspring and make him live in the Blessed Land, which is the mother of all countries and the sustainer of mankind, and whose river is the best of all rivers in the world; bestow the amplest of blessing upon that land and make it subservient to him and his sons and give them power and strength over it.”

[17] Ka‘b al-Aḥbār said: “Were it not for my longing for Jerusalem, I would live nowhere but in Egypt.” When asked for the reason, he said: “Because it is a country free of discord. Whoever has evil designs on it, God will strike him down. It is a blessed country for its people.”

[18] And Ibn Wahb related: I was told by Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb, who heard it from Khālīd ibn Yazīd on the authority of Ibn Abī Hilāl that Ka‘b al-Aḥbār used to say: “I do love Egypt and its people! Because Egypt is a healthy country, and its people possess vigor and vitality and are thus protected.”

[19] It is said that in certain divine scriptures Egypt is (called) ‘the storehouses of the entire land’. Whosoever has evil designs on it will be struck down by God Almighty.

[20] ‘Amr ibn ‘Āṣ (once) said: “The governorship of Egypt is as lucrative as the caliphate”—meaning, when the tax collection and the office of governor are combined in one hand.

[21] Aḥmad ibn al-Mudabbar<sup>(15)</sup> said: Egypt needs twenty-eight million feddans, but only one million of them are under cultivation. Having explored the land of Egypt, I discovered that the uncultivated part of it is many times that of the cultivated one. Were the government to attend to its cultivation, it would yield all the land tax in the world.

[22] Someone has said that the land-tax (revenue) of the Iraq was never more plentiful than at the time of (the caliph) ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, when it came to 1.017 million dirhams. Egypt’s was never less than at the time of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, when it amounted to twelve million dinars, while the Syrian provinces, exclusive of the frontier districts, stood at fourteen million.

[23] Another distinction of Egypt is that, of the prophets, Moses, Aaron and Joshua, peace be upon them, were born there.

[24] It is said that Jesus, the son of Mary, God’s prayers be upon him, stopped at the foot of the Muqaṭṭam on his way to Syria. He turned to his mother and said, “Mother, this is the graveyard of the community of Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him.”

People have claimed that he was born in the village of Iḥnās in Upper Egypt, and that there was a date palm there which is said to be the palm mentioned in the Koran, when the Lord says, “*Shake also to thee the palm-trunk.*”<sup>(16)</sup> Such a claim is sheer fantasy, for there is absolutely no dispute between the scriptural experts of the People of the Book and the reliable authorities of the Muslims that Jesus, God’s prayers be upon him, was born in the town of Bethlehem near Jerusalem.

[25] Of the prophets, Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful, entered Egypt. That story will be told when we discuss the Cairo Canal in this book.<sup>(17)</sup> Also, Jacob, Joseph, and the Israelite tribes

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15. He was finance director of Egypt (861-868); see below, ch. 39, sect. 4.

16. Koran 19 (Mary): 25. — On *Iḥnās* see Pt. II, ch. 77.

17. Below, chapter 23.



came to Egypt, which will be discussed when we give the history of the Fayyūm.<sup>(18)</sup> And Jeremiah visited Egypt.<sup>(19)</sup>

[26] Among Egypt's people was the "believer from the House of Pharaoh" whom God Exalted praised in the Koran.<sup>(20)</sup> People say that, because of his rank (accorded to him in the Koran), he was Pharaoh's son, but I think that is incorrect.

[27] And among its people were Pharaoh's counselors whose superior mind was demonstrated by God through their good counsel concerning Moses and Aaron, peace be upon them, when they were consulted by Pharaoh with regard to these. For the Lord says, "*Said he to the Council about him, 'Surely this man is a cunning sorcerer who desires to expel you from your land by his sorcery: what do you command?' They said, 'Put him and his brother off a while, and send among the cities musterers, to bring thee every cunning sorcerer.'*"<sup>(21)</sup> How does this compare with what Nimrod's companions said regarding Abraham, God's prayers be upon him, when they advised that he be killed! For the Lord says, telling of them, "*They said, 'Burn him, and help your gods, if you would do aught.'*"<sup>(22)</sup>

[28] And one of Egypt's people was Pharaoh's wife, whom the Lord praised in His Book, when He says, "*God has struck a similitude for the believers—the wife of Pharaoh, when she said 'My Lord, build for me a house in Paradise, in Thy presence, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and do Thou deliver me from the people of the evildoers.'*"<sup>(23)</sup>

[29] And among its people was the handmaid of Pharaoh's daughter. She believed in Moses, peace be upon him, and Pharaoh

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18. Pt. II, ch. 19.

19. On the prophet Jeremiah in Muslim tradition see "Irmiyā" (A.J. Wensinck) in *EF*.

20. Cf. Koran 40 (The Believers): 28 ff.

21. Koran 26 (The Poets): 34-37.

22. Koran 21 (The Prophets): 68.

23. Koran 66 (The Forbidding): 11.

had her combed with an iron comb, as one combs flax, yet she remained steadfast in her faith in God.

[30] Šāʿid, the lexicologist,<sup>(24)</sup> says in his *Classes of Nations* that all the sciences which emerged before The Flood originated from the First Hermes, who lived in remote Upper Egypt. He was the first to speak of the meteorological substances and the stellar movements. He was the first to build the temples and to glorify God in them, the first to study the science of medicine, and the first to compose for the people of his time metrical odes on terrestrial and celestial matters. People have said that (Hermes) was the first who warned of The Flood and saw that a heavenly calamity of water and fire would strike the Earth, for he feared that science and the empirical lessons of the various crafts would vanish. And so he built the Pyramids and the temples in Upper Egypt, and in them he depicted all the crafts and the tools, and in them he recorded the properties and characteristics of the various sciences, anxious to perpetuate them for posterity and for fear that their record would disappear from this world. This Hermes is identical with Idrīs, peace be upon him.<sup>(25)</sup>

[31] Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Ismāʿīl “al-Ḍarrāb”<sup>(26)</sup> says in his *Stories of Egypt* that al-Khaḍir crossed the sea together with

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24. He is the Hispano-Arab historian and philologist Abū ʿl- Qāsim Šāʿid b. Aḥmad al-Andalusī, judge of Toledo (d. 1070). —In his *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, written two years before his death, he divides mankind into nations that have concerned themselves with the sciences (Indians, Persians, Chaldeans, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Arabs and Jews), and others that have not, the “barbarians of the North” (the Europeans) and the “barbarians of the South” (the African Negroes). He credits the Turks and Chinese, though, with achievements in other fields.

25. On the identification of Hermes Trismegistos with the prophet Idrīs (cf. Koran 19:56 ff.; 21:85) see “Idrīs” by A.J. Wensinck in *EF*.

26. Egyptian traditionist of mystical leaning, died 1001; cf. al-Suyūṭī, *Husn al-muḥāḍarah*, 1:371 (the “Ibn” before al-Ḍarrāb in the Wiet text should be deleted). —The tradition appears to refer to the quest of Moses and his servant (here, al-Khaḍir) for the “meeting of the two seas” (cf. Koran 13:60-82). On the mysterious and complex figure of al-Khaḍir in Muslim legend see A.J. Wensinck’s article “al-Khaḍir” in *EF*.

Moses, peace be upon him, and that he held a position of authority with the latter.

[32] In Egypt lived of the sages quite a number of those whose word, wisdom and planning helped civilize this world. Among their sciences were medicine, astrology, geodesy, geometry, alchemy, and natural magic.<sup>(27)</sup> It is said that in earliest times people in quest of knowledge would go to Egypt to increase their ratiocinative faculty, improve their intellect, achieve truly outstanding mental acuteness, and hone their intellectual acumen.

[33] One of Egypt's distinctions is also the fact that it is the generous supplier of the population of Mecca and Medina.

[34] Egypt<sup>(28)</sup> is the seaport of the world, its wealth is carried to other countries. Thus, from its shore at the town of al-Qulzum, goods are carried to the two holy places (of Mecca and Medina), to the Yemen, to India, China, Oman, the Sind, and al-Shiḥr. Its shore near Tinnīs, Damietta and al-Faramā serves as the supply port for the countries of the Byzantines and Franks, the Syrian littoral, and the frontier districts all the way to the borders of the Iraq. The port city of Alexandria is the seaport for Crete, Sicily and the countries of the Maghrib. From Upper Egypt, goods are carried to the countries of the West, to Nubia, the land of the Beja, the land of the Abyssinians, the Hejaz and the Yemen.

In Egypt are several frontier districts set up for military service in the cause of God Exalted, namely: al-Burullus,<sup>(29)</sup> Rosetta, Alexandria, Dhāt al-Ḥammām, al-Buḥayrah, Akhnā,<sup>(30)</sup> Shaṭā, Tinnīs, al-

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27. *Ilm al-ṭilasmāt*, one of the seven branches of natural philosophy, (*tabīʿīyyāt*) in Avicenna's classification. It deals with drawing celestial forces on the forces of certain terrestrial bodies in order to achieve an extraordinary act (cf. A.-M. Goichon, *Lexique*, p. 245).

28. The text of this section is drawn from Ibn Zūlāq (d. 997).

29. On the Mediterranean coast between Damietta and Rosetta, now known as *al-Burg* (district of Biyalā), after a fortress built there by Saladin. The original name is from the Roman *Paralus*, so that Yāqūt's vocalization *Barallus* is quite correct. Cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 2:33-34.

30. A vanished hamlet once located on the site of present-day *Kōm Mash'al* on

Ushtūm,<sup>(31)</sup> al-Faramā, al-Warrādah, al-‘Arīsh, as well as (in the south) Uswān, Qūṣ and the Oases. From these frontier districts, raids are launched against the Byzantines, the Franks, the Berbers, the Nubians, the Abyssinians, and the Sudanese.

[35] In Egypt are several shrines and many mosques. It has the Nile, the Pyramids, monasteries and convents, churches and synagogues. Its people can do without any other country so that, were a wall to be erected between it and the countries of the world, they could get by without the rest of the countries just on the things Egypt contains.

One finds there balsam oil, which is of the greatest usefulness. The kings of the earth seek to get it from Egypt and have a keen interest in it, and the rulers of Christendom go to great lengths in order to obtain it, for the Christians in general believe in its great power, thinking that a Christian is not completely Christianized until a little balsam oil is put into the baptismal water at the time he is immersed in it.

It has also the skink, and no one will deny its many uses. Then it has the mongoose and the weasel, both of which have undeniable merit in eating snakes. Someone said: Were it not for the mongoose and the weasel, I would not live in Egypt, because of its many snakes. Then it has the electric ray. Its usefulness lies in the fact that it takes the fever away—when hung on a person with a fever, (its effect) is astounding.

Furthermore, Egypt has the wood of the Egyptian acacia,<sup>(32)</sup> which has no equal as a firewood. It could burn under a kettle for a whole day of twenty-four hours and leave no ashes at all. At the same

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the Mediterranean coast between al-Burullus (al-Burg) and Rosetta. The correct form of the name is *Agnū*; cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, I, 13.

31. Presumably the fortress that protected the mouth of the Damietta arm of the Nile (cf. Yāqūt 1:196).

32. Arabic: *sant* (from ancient Egyptian *shant*), also called “Egyptian thorn” or “gum-arabic tree”.

time it is tough to break, easy to light, and slow to decay. People say that it is ebony changed by the soil of Egypt so that it became red.

Then it has opium, the liquid squeezed from the poppy. Only an ignorant person would be unfamiliar with its uses.

And it had the lebbek tree, which has a fruit the size of a green almond. It used to be one of the attractions of Egypt, but it ceased to grow before 700 A.H.

[36] Egypt also has the bitter orange.<sup>(33)</sup> Abū Dāʿūd, the compiler of the *Sunan*,<sup>(34)</sup> says in the section on Alms Tax: I measured a cucumber in Egypt at thirteen spans. I also saw a bitter orange carried by a camel—the fruit had been cut into two pieces like the two even loads of a pack animal.

[37] Masʿūdī reports in his “History”:<sup>(35)</sup> The round bitter orange was brought in from India after 300 A.H. and first planted in Oman. From there it made its way to Baṣrah, the Iraq, and Syria, until it was quite common in people’s houses in Tarsus and other Syrian frontier districts, in Antioch, along the Syrian littoral, in Palestine and in Egypt. It was not very popular, because it lacked the pleasant fermented aroma and the beautiful color it had in India, due to the absence of that specific climate, of the soil and of the peculiar nature of that country.

[38] In Egypt are found emeralds, naphtha, alum, serpentine, as well as alabaster quarries. It is said that there were thirty mines in Egypt.

[39] The Egyptians eat the seafood caught in both the Mediterranean and in the Red Sea fresh, because the two seas are separated (only) by the distance between the towns of al-Qulzum and al-Faramā, which is (the distance of) a day and a night’s journey. This the “partition” mentioned in the Koran, where the Lord

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33. Arabic: *utrujj*, the *turung* of colloquial Egyptian.

34. Sulaymān b. al-Ash’ath al-Sijistānī, died 889 in Baṣrah.

35. *Prairies dor* 2:438.

says, “and [He] placed a partition between the two seas,”<sup>(36)</sup> which have been explained to be the Byzantine Sea and the Sea of al-Qulzum, and where He says, “He let forth the two seas to meet together; between them a barrier they do not overpass.”<sup>(37)</sup> A certain commentator said that the “barrier” is the land between al-Qulzum and al-Faramā.

[40] Another nice thing about Egypt is that there is in each month of the Coptic year some kind of food or drink or smellable thing which the other months do not have to the same extent. One says: Fresh dates (are) Tūt (September/October), pomegranates (mean) Bābih, bananas Hātōr, fish Kiyahk, water Ṭūbah, mutton Amshīr, milk Baramhāt, roses Barmūdah, lotus Bashans, figs Ba’ūnah, honey Abīb, and grapes Misrā.

[41] And what is nice about it is that Egypt’s summer is (like) fall (elsewhere), owing to the abundance of fruit at that time, and that its winter is like spring, because of the alfalfa<sup>(38)</sup> and the flax then growing in Egypt.

[42] One of Egypt’s attractions is that fruits which are not available in other countries during the winter can be found in Egypt at that time of the year.

[43] And among its charms is the fact that the Egyptians do not need to use canvas (shelters) or go underground during the heat of summer, as the people of Baghdad must do. Nor do they have to wear furs in winter and seek warmth by the fire, which is indispensable for the people of Syria. They also have no need to use ice in the summer.

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36. Koran 27 (The Ant): 61.

37. Koran 55 (The All-Merciful): 20.

38. Arabic: *qurt*, which is planted after the Nile inundation has receded (cf. Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. “birsīm” and “qurt”; Dozy, *Supplément* 2:330; Fagnan, *Additions*, 140). The reading *qirt* (a variety of leek) seems unlikely in this context.

[44] One says: Chrysolite (means) Egypt, *qabāṭī*<sup>(39)</sup> (means) Egypt, donkeys (mean) Egypt, and vipers (mean) Egypt; the latter find important uses in theriacs.<sup>(40)</sup>

[45] Another of Egypt's distinctions is that the green marble slab, which is in the *Ḥijr*<sup>(41)</sup> of the Kaaba, is from Egypt. It was sent there by Muḥammad ibn Ṭarīf, the client of al-'Abbās ibn Muḥammad, in 241 (A.D. 855/6), together with another green marble slab, as a donation for the *Ḥijr*. One of the slabs was mounted on the wall of the *Ḥijr* opposite the waterspout,<sup>(42)</sup> and the other one is the green marble slab beneath the waterspout right next to the wall of the Kaaba. They are made of the most beautifully green marble in the entire mosque. The man in charge of the two slabs was 'Abd-Al-lāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Dā'ūd, who measured the first slab at one cubit and three fingers. This is related by al-Fākihi<sup>(43)</sup> in his *Narratives of Mecca*.

[46] Among Egypt's distinctions is the fact that the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, had concubines from among its people and that Egyptian women bore him offspring. Only Egyptian women, of the non-Arab women, bore him (male) children.

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39. A fine white linen fabric woven especially in Tinnīs and Shaṭā (cf. Pt. II, chs. 19 and 62).

40. Snake saliva, snake flesh and donkey meat are among the ingredients—anywhere from 64 to 96 of them—that go into an antidote against venom. Cf. Lane, *Lexicon* 1:304, s.v. *tiryāq*.

41. Also called *ḥijr Ismā'īl* (Ishmael's sanctum). It is the space between the Kaaba and the semicircular white wall (*ḥaṭīm*) opposite the northwest wall of the shrine. It is said to contain the graves of Ishmael and his mother Hagar. See "Ka'ba" by A.J. Wensinck in *SEI* (I, 192).

42. The gilded waterspout, called *mizāb al-rahmah* (the spout of mercy), which protrudes below the top of the northwest wall of the Kaaba. The space between it and the west corner marks the exact *qiblah*, or direction of prayer (*ibid.*).

43. Abū 'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. al-'Abbās, Meccan traditionist and historian, died 885.

[47] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates:<sup>(44)</sup> In the year 6 after the Hijrah of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, after the Apostle of God had returned from al-Ḥudaybiyah, he sent (letters) to the (neighboring) rulers. [48] So Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta‘ah<sup>(45)</sup> set out with the letter of the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him. Having arrived in Alexandria, he found the Muqawqis<sup>(46)</sup> in an audience room overlooking the sea. (Ḥāṭib) had himself rowed out to sea, and when he was opposite (the Muqawqis’) audience room, he waved the Prophet’s letter (which he held) between two fingers. When (the Muqawqis) saw that, he ordered the letter to be seized and that (Ḥāṭib) be brought before him.

After (the Muqawqis) had read the letter, he said: “What has prevented him, if he is a prophet, from invoking evil upon me and thus have power over me?” Ḥāṭib replied, “What prevented Jesus, the son of Mary, from invoking evil on someone who refused to be cursed by him?” And (the Muqawqis) was silent for a while. Then he asked the same question, and Ḥāṭib gave him the same answer, and the (the Muqawqis) fell again silent. Then Ḥāṭib said to him, “There was before your time a man who claimed to be the Supreme Lord, and God punished him and took revenge on him. So learn from others, not from yourself. You have a religion which you will leave only for a better one, and that is Islam, with which God is

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44. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabīḥ) 40; 41-42.

45. He fought with the Prophet at Badr but, fearing for his family left behind in Mecca, betrayed the Muslim plans to the Meccans (see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 3:48-49/I, 1626, and al-Ya‘qūbi, *Tārīkh* 2:58, on the incident and its connection with Koran 60:1). He was probably chosen for the mission to Egypt because he had extensive connections as a prosperous businessman. He died in 650 in Medina.

46. *Al-Muqawqis*, or *al-Muqawqas*, is the name—or, more likely, a sobriquet—of “the lord of Alexandria” or “the lord of Alexandria and Miṣr” in Eastern sources. His identity and the etymology of the name have been the subject of much speculation (cf. Wiet, I, 119, n.2; II, 163, n.2). He may be in this context the Melkite Patriarch George. He cannot be identical with Cyrus, the acting Melkite patriarch and imperial deputy appointed by Emperor Heraclius in 630 after the Byzantine reconquest of Egypt from the Persians, who is “the Muqawqis” at the time of the Arab conquest. See A.J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, Appendix C; the article “al-Muqawqas” by A. Grohmann in *EF*.



content. Everything else is lost and gone. Moses' prophecy about Jesus is as Jesus' prophecy about Muḥammad. When we call you to the Koran, it is the same as when you call the people of the Torah to the Gospel. We do not deny you the religion of the Messiah. Rather, we enjoy it upon you!" (The Muḥawqis) then read the letter (again) which said:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. From Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, to the Muḥawqis, chief of the Copts: *Peace be upon him who follows the guidance.*<sup>(47)</sup> I am calling you with the call of Islam. Become a Muslim and you will be safe. God will requite you twice. *People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate not aught with Him, and do not some of us take others as Lords, apart from God. And if they turn their backs, say: Bear witness that we are Muslims.*<sup>(48)</sup>

After (the Muḥawqis) had read the letter, he placed it in an ivory box on which he placed his seal.

From Abān ibn Ṣaliḥ: One night, Ḥāṭib was sent for by the Muḥawqis, who was alone with an interpreter. "Come, tell me about things I will ask you," said (the Muḥawqis), "for I know that your master chose well when he sent you (on this mission)." (Ḥāṭib) said,<sup>(49)</sup> "Ask me what you want, I will tell you the truth." "What does Muḥammad call for?" asked (the Muḥawqis). "That you worship God," said (Ḥāṭib), "that you do not associate anything with him, and that you rid yourself of anything else. And he commands prayer." "How many times do you pray?" asked (the Muḥawqis). "Five prayers during the day and the night," said Ḥāṭib, "the fast during the month of Ramaḍān, the pilgrimage to the Sacred House, and loyalty to the Covenant. He also forbids the eating of (the meat of) animals not properly slaughtered and of blood." "Who are his followers?" asked the other. "The young men of his

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47. Koran 20 (Ta Ha): 49. The phrase is used in letters addressed to non-Muslims.

48. Koran 3 (The House of Imran): 57.

49. Following the source text. Maqrīzī's version has here an incongruous shift to the first person singular.

people and others,” (Ḥāṭib) replied. “And does he fight against his own people?” asked (the Muḡawqis). “Yes, he does,” answered (Ḥāṭib). “Describe him to me,” said (the Muḡawqis).

(Ḥāṭib later recounted:) So I gave him a description of what (Muḡammad) was like, without making it too detailed, whereupon he said: “There are things left which I see you have not mentioned: in his eyes there is a redness which rarely leaves him, and between his shoulders is the seal of prophethood, and he rides a donkey and wears a turban, and he is content with dried dates and pieces of plain bread, and he is totally indifferent toward uncles and cousins that come his way.”

“That describes him,” said (Ḥāṭib). “I have known all along,” said (the Muḡawqis), “that there remained another prophet (to appear), but I used to think that he would come from Syria, for it was from there that the prophets before him came. But I see now that he emerged from among the Arabs in a harsh and miserable land. The Copts would not obey me, if I became one of his followers. I do not want them to know of my conversation with you. (Muḡammad’s) companions will conquer this country and settle in this our land after his death and in the end hold sway over everything here. I shall not breathe a word of this to the Copts. So return to your master.” Then, said (Ḥāṭib), he called a scribe who knew how to write Arabic, and he had him write:

To Muḡammad, the son of ‘Abd-Allāh, from the Muḡawqis, chief of the Copts, Greetings! I have read your letter and I understand what you say and what you call for. I realized that there was one more prophet to appear, but I used to think that he would come from Syria. I have shown honor and hospitality to your emissary. I hereby send you two girls of high standing among the Copts and a garment, and I give you as a present a mule for you to ride. That is all.

From ‘Abd al-Raḡmān ibn ‘Abd al-Qārī: When Ḥāṭib set out with the letter of the Apostle of God, peace and blessings be upon him, the Muḡawqis kissed the letter and honored Ḥāṭib and made his stay pleasant. Then he sent him (back) to the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, and sent along with him as a gift for (the

Prophet) a garment, a mule with its saddle, and two slave girls, one of them the (future) mother of Ibrāhīm—the other girl (the Prophet) gave to Jahm ibn Qays al-‘Abdarī, and she is the mother of Zakariyā’ ibn Jahm, who was the deputy of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aṣ when the latter was governor of Egypt; but it is also said that the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, gave her to Muḥammad ibn Maslamah al-Anṣārī,<sup>(50)</sup> and others said, to Diḥyah ibn Khalifah al-Kalbī,<sup>(51)</sup> [and still others have said, to Ḥassān ibn Thābit.]<sup>(52)</sup>

[49] From Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb:<sup>(53)</sup> When the Muḥawqis received the letter of the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, he clutched it to his breast and said, “This is a time in which the prophet arises whom we find described in the Book of God Exalted. We see him there described as one who does not have two sisters together either in possession of the right hand or in marriage,<sup>(54)</sup> who will accept a gift but not charity, whose companions are the poor, and who bears the seal of prophethood between his shoulders.” Then he summoned a judicious man, and then in all of Egypt none better and more beautiful than Māriyah and her sister, who both hailed from Ḥafn in the district of Anṣinā, and he sent the two of them to the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him. He also gave (the Prophet) as a gift a gray mule and a gray donkey, as well as gowns made from the *qabāṭī* fabric of Egypt, honey from Banhā,<sup>(55)</sup> and alms money.

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50. Medinan Companion. At the behest of Muḥammad, he murdered the Jewish poet Ka’b b. al-Ashraf in 624. He was a co-signer of the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyah and led the vanguard of the Prophet’s *‘umrah* in the following year. He died in 663.

51. The Prophet’s emissary to the emperor Heraclius and later the conqueror of Palmyra under the command of Abū ‘Ubaydah, died *ca.* 665 at al-Mizzah outside Damascus. See “Diḥya” (Lammens-Pellat) in *EF*.

52. The poet of the Prophet and, before Islam court poet of the Ghassānid kings, died 674. See “Ḥassān b. Thābit” by W. ‘Arafat in *EF*. —The passage in brackets is not in the original source.

53. The source is still Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (p. 42).

54. Cf. Koran 33:52. —The legal term “possession of the right hand” applies specifically to ownership of a slave, male or female.

55. Recorded by al-Maqdisī, Ibn Mammātī and Ibn al-Jirān as *Banhā al-‘Asal*

[50] It is said that the Muqawqis gave to the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, four slave girls—according to others, only two; a female mule named al-Duldul; a donkey called Ya‘fūr; a full-length, long-sleeved coat; one thousand *mithqāls*<sup>(56)</sup> of gold; twenty garments made of fine white Egyptian linen; a eunuch by the name of Mābūr—who is said to have been Māriyah’s cousin; a horse called al-Karrār; a glass goblet; and honey from Banhā. The Prophet, peace and blessings on him, was much pleased with it and invoked blessings on it, saying, “Let the infidel cling to his possession which has no permanence—the Muqawqis (however) spoke well and honored Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta‘ah. He came close to the matter (even if) he did not convert to Islam.”

[51] Ibn Sa‘d<sup>(57)</sup> relates: We were told by Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Wāqidi, who said: It was related to us by Ya‘qūb ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Ṣa‘ṣa‘ah, who heard it from ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Ṣa‘ṣa‘ah, who said: In the year 7 after the Hijrah, al-Muqawqis, the lord of Alexandria, gave as a present to the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, Māriyah and her sister Sirin; one thousand *mithqāls* of gold; twenty robes; his mule al-Duldul; his donkey ‘Afir; and a eunuch called Mābūr. Ḥāṭib proposed to Māriyah that she convert to Islam, and she did, together with her sister, and later on the eunuch also became a Muslim. The name of the man whom the Muqawqis sent with Māriyah was Jabr ibn ‘Abd-Allāh al-Qibṭī, the client of the Banū Ghifār.<sup>(58)</sup>

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(Idrīsī: *Munyat al-‘Asal*), after its famous product. It is a very ancient community (Eg. *Per-neha* ‘sycamore place’, Copt. *Banaho*) on the eastern arm of the Nile north of Cairo, since 1850 capital of Qalyūbiyyah province. See Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 1:20; Yāqūt 1:501.

56. A basic weight, in Egypt corresponding to 4.224 gr in gold, 4.464 gr in silver (Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, 1 ff.).

57. Baghdadi traditionist of Baṣran origin, compiler of the multi-volume *Classes of the Companions*, died 845. He was the secretary of the historian-traditionist al-Wāqidi (d. 823), a highly regarded authority on the Prophet’s life and his military expeditions, and the teacher of the historian al-Baladhuri (d. 892). See “Ibn Sa‘d” (J.W. Fück) in *IEP*.

58. Cf. al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍarah*, 1:184-85.

[52] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates:<sup>(59)</sup> The Muqawqis had told his envoy to find out who (the Prophet’s) close companions were, and to look at (the Prophet’s) back, if he could see a large hairy birthmark, and the emissary did that. And when he came to the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, he presented to him the two sisters and the two animals and the honey and the robes, informing him that all of that was a gift. And the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, accepted the gift, for he did not reject the gift of anyone.

And when he looked at Māriyah and her sister, says (Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam), he liked them both, but he was averse to having them both together, one looking so much like the other. So he said, “Lord, choose for Thy prophet!” And God chose Māriyah for him.

Namely, (the Prophet) said to both of them, “Bear witness that there is no god save Allah and that Muḥammad is His servant and apostle.” Māriyah at once pronounced the creed and became a believer before her sister, while her sister tarried for a moment before she did the same. And so the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, gave her sister to Muḥammad ibn Maslamah al-Anṣārī. But some have said that he gave her to Diḥyah ibn Khalīfah al-Kalbī.

From Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb, who heard it from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Shumāsah al-Mahrī, who had it from ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Amr, who said: The Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, (one day) came to see Umm Ibrāhīm, the Coptic mother of his son, and found with her one of her male relatives, who had arrived from Egypt with her and who would often drop in on her. Something (suspicious) came to the Prophet’s mind then, and as he went back, he ran into ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him. The latter could tell from (the Prophet’s) face (that something had happened), so he asked him and he told him about (the incident). Thereupon ‘Umar took his sword and paid a visit to Māriyah, while her kinsman was (still)

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59. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabīḥ) 42-43.

with her. He approached the man with the sword in his hand, and when the man realized that, he bared himself, and it turned out that his genitals had been cut off and that he had nothing at all between his legs. After ‘Umar had seen that, he returned to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and told him about it. And the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, said: “Gabriel came to me and told me that God Exalted and Sublime has cleared her and her relative of all guilt, and that she is carrying a boy from me in her womb, and that he completely resembles me. He commanded me to call him Ibrāhīm and addressed me as ‘Abū Ibrāhīm.”

(Ibn Shihāb) al-Zuhrī related on the authority of Anas:<sup>(60)</sup> When Umm Ibrāhīm gave birth to Ibrāhīm, something (of a suspicion) entered the Prophet’s mind with regard to him, until Gabriel came to him and said, “Peace be upon you, Abū Ibrāhīm!”

It is said that the Muqawqis had sent with her a eunuch who used to seek her company.

[53] It has been said that the Muqawqis gave to the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, slave girls, among them the mother of Ibrāhīm, and one whom the Prophet gave to Abū Jahm ibn Ḥudhayfah,<sup>(61)</sup> and one that he gave to Ḥassān ibn Thābit. Māriyah bore to the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, Ibrāhīm; he was one of the dearest persons to him and the Prophet loved him dearly.

[54] (Ibrāhīm) was sixteen months old when he died.

[55] The mule and the donkey were (the Prophet’s) favorite animals. He gave the mule the name “al-Duldul” and named the

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60. That is, Abū Ḥamzah Anas b. Mālik. A servant in the Prophet’s household as a boy, he became one of the most prolific traditionists (although of questionable reliability). He died 711/2 in Baṣrah. See “Anas b. Mālik” (A.J. Wensinck) in *SEI*.

61. The foremost expert on the genealogy and traditions of the Quraysh in his time, died 690 in Damascus.

donkey “Ya‘fūr”. He liked the honey and invoked blessing on the honey of Banhā. And those robes lasted so long that the Prophet was dressed in one of them when they buried him.

[56] The name of Māriyah’s sister was Qayṣar, but others have said that it was Sīrīn, and still others, that it was Ḥannah.

[57] Al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī<sup>(62)</sup> spoke to (the caliph) Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān about lifting the collective tribute from the entire village of Ibrāhīm’s mother in view of its sanctity, and (Mu‘āwiyah) did so and exempted (its population) from paying taxes so that no one had to pay tax. The entire population of the village consisted of members of her family and relatives of hers, but they died out eventually.

It is related from the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, that he (once) said, “Had Ibrāhīm lived, I would not have let a single Copt pay the poll tax.”

Māriyah died in al-Muḥarram of the year 15 (February/March 636) in Medina.

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[58] Ibn Wahb related: I was told by Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb and Ibn Lahī‘ah on the authority of ‘Uqayl, who had it from (Ibn Shihāb) al-Zuhrī, who heard it from Ya‘qūb ibn ‘Abd-Allāh ibn al-Mughīrah ibn al-Akhnas, who had it from Ibn ‘Umar,<sup>(63)</sup> that the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, said: “Satan entered the Iraq and accomplished what he wanted to do to it. Then he went to Syria, where people drove him away, so that he came to Maysān.<sup>(64)</sup> Then

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62. The Prophet’s grandson and the second Imam of the Twelver Shī‘a, died 670. —Yāqūt includes a condensed version of this tradition, taken from Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (p. 45), in his discussion of “Ḥafn” (*Mu‘jam* 2:276).

63. The son of the second caliph, a prolific traditionist (2,630 traditions are attributed to him), died 692/3. See “Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb” by L. Veccia Vaglieri in *EF*.

64. Thus Suyūṭī (*Husn* 1:16) from al-Ṭabarānī, a specialist in unusual traditions. Wiet’s *Jabal Baysān* is purely conjectural; no such place or mountain is known. On *Maysān* cf. Yāqūt 5:242-43.

he entered Egypt, where he laid several eggs which hatched and spread demons." An unusual authentic tradition.

[59] Someone censured Egypt, claiming that all its attractions are brought in from the outside, even the four elements: Water, because it is brought from the south by the Nile. Earth, (because it) is brought through the alluvial sediment of the river; Egypt would otherwise be nothing but sand and could grow no crops. Fire, (because) Egypt lacks the tree from which it is struck. Air, (because) it blows there only from one of the two seas (at a time), either the Byzantine or the Red Sea, which makes (the country's climate) all the more oppressive.

[60] The Jazīrah, said Ka'b al-Aḥbār, is safe from destruction until Armenia has fallen into ruin; Egypt is safe from destruction until the Jazīrah has fallen into ruin; and al-Kūfah is safe from destruction until the Bloody Battle.



## 10. The Wonders, Talismans and Temples, that Were Once in Egypt

[1] It says in the *Book of Wondrous Stories and Unusual Experiences*<sup>(1)</sup> that there used to be a stone in Egypt—whoever put both hands around it would vomit the entire content of his stomach.

[2] Al-Qudā'ī says: Jāḥiẓ and others have maintained that the Wonders of the World are thirty, of which ten are located in the rest of the world. These are: the (Umayyad) Mosque of Damascus; the Church of Edessa; the bridge over the Sanjah river; the Ghumdān Palace (near Ṣan'ā'); the Church (of St. Peter and St. Paul) in Rome; the Idol of Amoy;<sup>(2)</sup> the vaulted Reception Hall of Khosraw I in Ctesiphon; the House of the Wind in Palmyra; (the desert castles) al-Khawarnaq and al-Sadīr near al-Ḥīrah; and the three ruins in Baalbek. It has been said that these last are the temples of Jupiter and of Venus, and that there had (originally) been seven temples there, one for each planet, but they collapsed, and that is all that is left.

Twenty of the Wonders are located in Egypt, among them the two Pyramids (of Gīzah). They are the tallest and most astounding structures, and there is no taller building on earth that was erected by hand, stone upon stone. Seeing them, one thinks they are two man-made mountains. That is why someone who saw them exclaimed, "There is no thing I would not pity with regard to Time, All except the two Pyramids, for (in their case) I pity Time with regard to them!"

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1. *Kitāb 'ajā'ib al-ḥikāyāt* [Wiet: *al-ḥikamāt* (?)] *wa-gharā'ib al-mujarrabāt*. No work with such a title could be found anywhere.

2. Arabic: *Ṣanam al-Zaytūn*. "Zaytūn" is the Arab name for Ch'uan-chou (*Khānjū* or *Jānjū* in Ibn Khurradādhbih, *BGA*, VI, 69), a town near Amoy.

Then there is the Idol of the Two Pyramids (the Great Sphinx), which is (called) “Balhūbah”, or “Balhīt” according to others.<sup>(3)</sup> It is said to be a talisman against the sand, lest it swallow the alluvial land of Gīzah.

Then there is the Temple of Samannūd,<sup>(4)</sup> which is one of the world’s (true) wonders. (Al-Quḍā‘ī) cites Abū ‘Umar al-Kindī as saying: “I saw it at a time when some district governor used it for storing alfalfa.<sup>(5)</sup> I noticed, whenever a camel approached its entrance with its load, every creeping thing in the alfalfa would drop to the ground and not a single one would get inside the temple. Later on, the temple fell into ruin around 350 (A.D. 961).”

Then there is the Temple of Ikhmīm, a marvel of marvels because of the pictures, the wonders, and the statues of the rulers of Egypt it contains. Dhū ‘l-Nūn al-Ikhmīmī<sup>(6)</sup> used to read the temple script, and he discovered in it great pronouncements of wisdom, but he distorted most of them.

Then there is the Temple of Dendera. It is an astounding temple with one hundred and eighty apertures. Every day, the rays of the sun enter through one of these, then the next, until they reach the last one. Then they repeat the same thing on the way back to where they started.

Then there was the Wall of the Old Woman<sup>(7)</sup> from al-‘Arīsh all the way to Uswān, enclosing the land of Egypt on the east and west.

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3. See ch. 41, beginning.

4. The ancient *Sebennytos* (Eg. *Zeb-nuter* ‘holy land’, capital of Egypt under the 30th Dynasty). Cf. Pt. II, ch. 21, end.

5. Read: *qurṭan*, as in the Bulaq text and Yāqūt (3:254). Wiet: *qarazan* ‘acacia pods’ (?).

6. Egyptian mystic and alchemist of Nubian origin, died 861. See “Dhū al-Nūn” (M. Smith) in *EF*.

7. On this legendary fortification, already mentioned by Diodorus of Sicily (I, 57), see sect. 25 ff. below and Pt. II, ch. 35. As Charles Pellat suggests (“Ḥā’it al-‘Adjūz” in *EF*), the legend is probably a memory of the numerous low mud-brick lookouts which the Egyptians used to erect to guard the nearby wadis. Cf. also Ibn Jubayr, *Rihlah* (Beirut ed., 33).

Then there is Alexandria with its marvels, such as the Pharos, Pompey's Column—and the Stadium, where people used to gather on a certain day of the year and then throw out a ball, and the person in whose lap it landed would rule Egypt. 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ attended one of their festivities, and the ball landed in his lap so that he ruled the country thereafter under Islam. The stadium could be attended by one million people (at a time), and there was not a man who could not see the face of another across from him. When some proclamation was read, they could all hear it, and when some game was played, they could see it to the last man, no one having to stretch and strain any more than (to see) the upper and lower tiers.

Another of Egypt's wonders were the two obelisks. They were (like) two crags resting on crablike copper supports on the corners, one on each corner. Someone wanting to shove something under it in order to pass it through on the other side could do so.

Still another of Egypt's wonders were the two "Pillars of Fatigue." They were two fallen columns, and behind each of them was a mound of pebbles similar to the heaps of stones in Minā.<sup>(8)</sup> A person suffering from fatigue and exhaustion would approach with seven pebbles and lie down on one of the columns. Then he would throw the seven pebbles behind him and rise to his feet. He must not turn around, but go his way, and it would be as if he were carrying a load without feeling any tiredness at all.<sup>(9)</sup>

Another of Egypt's wonders was the Green Dome, which was a most astounding cupola overlaid with bronze, as if it were pure gold. Neither age could corrode it nor time wear it down.

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8. Cf. "Djamra" (Buhl-Jomier) in *EL2* and "Minā" (F. Buhl) in *SEL*.

9. One is reminded of a similar practice reported by E. Doutté, namely, shedding fatigue by rubbing oneself with all sorts of available material objects which are then discarded on a pile (*Religion et magie*, p. 427).

And among its wonders are Munyat ‘Uqbah,<sup>(10)</sup> Qaşr Fāris, and al-Kunayyisah in the Delta,<sup>(11)</sup> which is actually a town on top of a town. There is no other town like this on the face of the earth. It is said to be identical with Iram Dhāt al-‘Imād,<sup>(12)</sup> which was so named because its columns (‘*umud*) and marble came from al-Bidinganā and al-Iṣṭāfinidis (?),<sup>(13)</sup> (a marble) with both lengthwise and crosswise markings.

Among the wonders of Egypt are also the mountains in Upper Egypt on the Nile. They are three mountains, namely: the *Jabal al-Kahf*, or Mountain of the Cave—according to some, *al-Kaff* ‘of the Hand’: *al-Ṭaylamūn*;<sup>(14)</sup> and the *Jabal Zamākhīr al-Sāhīrah*, or Mountain of Zamākhīr the Sorceress.<sup>(15)</sup> It is claimed that on the last is a visible man-made elevation<sup>(16)</sup> overlooking the Nile which no one can reach. On it one can make out a man-made inscription (reading) “In Thy name, O Lord.”

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10. See Pt. II, ch. 55.

11. It is perhaps the vanished community of that name near *Shamā* (present-day district of Ashmūn, al-Minūfiyyah), so distinguished by Quḍāī from several other places called *al-Kunayyisah* in Upper Egypt, e.g., the one near Gizah, or a (vanished) community once located near present-day Sumuṣṭā al-Sulṭānī (distr. of Bibā).
12. Mentioned in the Koran (89:7). It has been identified in our time as the Nabataean site ‘RM, 25 miles east of al-‘Aqabah. On its role in Muslim tradition and exegetic literature cf. “Iram Dhāt al-‘Imād” by A.J. Wensinck in *Et*; “Iram” (W. Montgomery Watt) in *Et*.
13. So Wiet; Bulaq: *al-‘ṣ-ṭ-n-y-d-s*. No place of either name can be found anywhere. Perhaps it is Iṣṭānā, once part of the same *kūrah* (Quwīsnā) as the ancient village of *al-Bidinganā* in the present-day district of al-Sanṭah [Yāqūt 1:318: *al-Bādhanjāniyyah*; Ibn Mammātī (*Qawānīn* 89) and Ibn Jī‘ān (*Tuḥfah* 65): *al-Bādīnāniyyah*; Ramzī (*Qāmūs*, II, 2:4): *al-Bidingāniyyah*].
14. Opposite Munyat Banī Khaṣīb (modern al-Minyā), known in Maqrīzī’s time as *Jabal al-Ṭayr* (cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:705).
15. Today called *Jabal al-Haridī*, on the east bank of the Nile opposite al-Marāghah. Qalqashandī equates it with the *Jabal al-Sāhīrah* in his own time (*Ṣubḥ*, 3:305). There was a village named *Zamākhīr* on the west bank of the Nile, upriver from the mouth of the Manhā Canal (present-day Baḥr Yūsuf). Its site is now occupied by the village of *Banī Hilāl* (distr. of Sōhāg). See Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, I, 271; II, 4:126).
16. Read: *fihī khilqah min al-jabal zāhīrah*, as in *Ṣubḥ* (3:285) and the Bulaq edition. Wiet: *fihī ḥalqah min al-jabal zāhīrah* (?).

And to its wonders belongs the Cliff of the Egrets<sup>(17)</sup> near Ushmūn in Upper Egypt. It is a steep mountain cliff with a cleft to which on a given day of the year the cattle egrets flock. They apply themselves to the cleft, and every time an egret has thrust its bill into the cleft it flies away. They keep on doing this until the cleft closes on an egret and traps it. Then they all leave, but the one that is trapped remains suspended until it falls (to the bottom of the cliff) and perishes.

And among its wonders is 'Ayn Shams, which means Temple of the Sun. There, at Heliopolis, are the two columns which are the most astounding and significant thing anyone has ever seen. They rise some fifty cubits in the air, as they rest on the surface of the earth. On them is the image of a man on a mount, and on their tops is something that looks like two copper eagles.<sup>(18)</sup> When the Nile flood comes, water begins to trickle from their tops which one can perceive and see clearly well forth and eventually run off their bottom. At their base grow boxwood and other plants. When the sun enters one minute of Capricorn, which marks the shortest day of the year, it reaches the southerly of the two and rises (precisely) over its top, and when it enters one minute of Cancer, which marks the longest day of the year, it reaches the northerly of the two and rises (precisely) over its top. They thus constitute the extreme of the two inclinations (of the sun) and the equatorial line lies in the middle between the two. That way the sun moves back and forth between

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17. Arabic: *Shi'b al-būqirāt*. It is the *Jabal al-Ṭayr* ('bird mountain') southeast of Samalūt on the east bank of the Nile. The egrets gather on the cliff, it is said, every year on St. Helen's day, the saint's day of the convent (*Dayr Jabal al-Ṭayr*) on top of the mountain, since the foundation of its church is ascribed to Empress Helena. — One reads variations on this legend in Yāqūt (2:102) and Qāzwīnī (*Āthār al-bilād*, 271).

18. Both measurement and description suggest that the two "columns" are the red-granite obelisks erected by Sesostri I of the 12th Dynasty (*regn.* 1971-1930), which still stood as a pair in Quḏā'ī's lifetime. The "eagles" (*ṣawma'ah*) are the two Horus falcons beginning the hieroglyphic inscription; they were once covered with metal.

them throughout the year. This is what the experts in the matter say.

Among Egypt's wonders is Memphis with its marvels, its idols, its structures, its buried treasures and its great riches. The stories of kings and sages and prophets one can tell in connection with it are more than one can count—something no one will refute. Another of its wonders is al-Faramā (Felusium), which is even more full of extraordinary things and remains. Still another is the Fayyūm, and still another is the Nile.

To its wonders belongs the stone known as “vinegar stone.” It floats on vinegar and swims in it as if it were a fish. There used to be (in Egypt) another stone: if a man held it in both hands, he would throw up everything in his stomach. There also used to be a certain bead which a woman would place on her mid-riff so that she would not become pregnant. And there was a stone which one placed on the edge of a sunk oven (*tannūr*) so that the bread in it would fall off (easily). And in Upper Egypt one used to find soft stones which one could break and which burned like lamps.

Among Egypt's wonders was a stone basin with a wheel attached to it in which from one to four persons could ride. They would move the water with something and thus cross from one side (of the river) to the other. No one knows who made it. Later on, the Ikhshīdīd Kāfūr had it brought to Old Cairo to have a look at it. It was taken out of the water and thrown on land, and on its bottom was an inscription which no one could identify. From then on, it ceased to work.

One of the curiosities of Egypt is that there was in Upper Egypt a rural estate called Dishnā, where the mimosa tree (*santāh*) was found. When in danger of being cut, it would droop, close up and shrink. Then one would say to it: We forgive you and leave you alone!—and it would return to its former state. It is a well-known fact that one finds today a mimosa in Upper Egypt which, when one puts one's hand on it, droops, and when one lifts the hand, be-

comes again the way it was before. (A sample of) it was brought to Old Cairo and actually seen. There is also in Egypt a kind of wood which sinks in water, like ebony. And there is the wood of the Egyptian acacia of which a great quantity can be burned for a long time without a trace of ashes.

Ibn Naṣr al-Miṣrī mentioned that there was over the great gateway of the Qaṣr (al-Shamaʿ), which is called “Bāb al-Rayḥān”, near the Muʿallaqah Church, a bronze statue in the shape of a camel with a rider wearing a turban, shouldering an Arab bow and wearing sandals on his feet. The Greeks and the Copts, and other people, would, whenever they were engaged in mutual wrongdoing and attacks upon one another, race each other to that place and stop in front of that camel. Then a person wronged would say to a wrongdoer, “Give me justice, before this camel rider steps forth and takes what is right from you, whether you like it or not”—meaning by ‘the rider’ the Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him. When ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ arrived, the Byzantines hid that camel lest it bear witness against them. Ibn Lahīʿah said: I have heard that the image in that place is thousands of years old; no one knows who made it.

These then, says al-Quḍāʿī, are twenty wonders, among which are several that were mentioned *en bloc*; for were they discussed in detail, they would add up to a large number. It is said that whatever strange thing a country possesses, Egypt has something similar or like it. Hence Egypt is favored over the other countries by virtue of its wonders, which do not exist anywhere else.

[3] (It says) in the *Gift for the Hearts*<sup>(19)</sup> that there was in Egypt an underground house where Christian monks lived. In that house was a small wooden bed, and under it the corpse of a boy wrapped

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19. *Tuḥfat al-albāb wa-nukhbat al-aʿjāb*, a descriptive geographical work by the Hispano-Arab traveler Abū ʿAbd-Allāh (or Abū Ḥāmid) Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Māzinī al-Gharnāṭī (died 1169/70 in Damascus); see *GAL*<sup>2</sup> 1:477. Maqrīzī cites the work repeatedly under the author’s various *nisbahs* (Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnāṭī, al-Māzinī, al-Qaysī).

in an old leather mat tied with rope. On the bed was something like a jug with a copper tube enclosing a wick. When the wick was lit and became a lamp, pure oil of the highest quality would well from that tube until it had filled that jug and the lamp would go out because of all that oil. Once (the flame) was out, no more oil would flow, and when the dead boy was removed from under the bed, no oil at all would come out. Those monks made a living from that oil. People would buy it from them and use it (at home).

[4] Master Ibrāhīm ibn Waṣīf Shāh<sup>(20)</sup> relates:

‘Adīm the King, the (grand)son of Quṭṭarīm, was an unbearable tyrant of huge size. He gave orders to have boulders cut so that he could build a pyramid as the ancients had done. In his time fall the two angels which were sent down from heaven. They were in a well called Afnāwah and taught the Egyptians sorcery. One used to say that King ‘Adīm, son of al-Būdashīr, practiced much of their science. Later they moved on to Babylonia. The Egyptian Copts claim that they were two devils called Mahlah and Mahālah. They are not identical with the Two Angels.<sup>(21)</sup> These were in Bābil (Babylon) in a well there which the sorcerers kept covered until The Hour would arise.

From that time on, idols were worshiped. People have said that devils would appear and erect them for men. Some have said that the first one to erect idols was Badūrah, and that the first idol he set up was the idol of the Sun. But others have claimed that Nimrod was the first to order the kings to erect idols and to worship them.

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20. Egyptian historian, fl. before 1209. His *Jawāhir al-buḥūr wa-waqa’i’ al-umūr wa-‘ajā’ib al-duḥūr fī akhbār al-Diyār al-Miṣriyyah*, a history of Egypt from earliest legendary beginnings to 606 A.H. (A.D. 1209), was, despite its mostly fabulous content, Maqrīzī’s chief source for pharaonic Egypt. See *GAL* 1:409 (335), S 1:574.

21. I.e., Hārūt and Mārūt, mentioned in Koran 2:102. See “Hārūt wa-Mārūt” (G. Vajda) in *EF*.



‘Adīm was the first to have people crucified. Namely, a woman had committed adultery with a man of the practitioners of alchemy. She had a husband who was one of the king’s companions, and ‘Adīm gave orders that the two adulterers be crucified on two columns. He had them placed back to back, and on the columns he had their names inscribed, what they had done, and the date on which he had done this to them. From then on, people refrained from fornication.

He also founded four cities and left in them many kinds of wondrous works and talismans, and in them he hoarded many treasures. In the east, he had a tower built on top of which he set an image facing eastward with outstretched arms, which prevented the beasts of the sea and the sand from crossing its boundary. On its chest he had the date inscribed on which it was erected by him. It is said that this tower is still standing to this day. Were it not for it, the salt water of the eastern sea would have long ago engulfed the land of Egypt. Over the Nile he built a bridge at the beginning of the land of the Nubians. On it he erected four statues facing in the four directions of the world. Each of those statues carried two lances in its hand with which it struck anyone approaching from that direction. It remained unchanged until the Pharaoh of Moses, peace be upon him, had it destroyed. He built the temple at the gateway to Nubia, and it is still there to this day.

In one of the four cities we have mentioned he built a basin of black granite filled with water that would never diminish over the length of time, nor would it go bad, because he had it drawn from the moisture of the air. The people of that area and of that city would draw their irrigation water from it, yet the water level would never drop. He did that because they lived far away from the Nile. Some Coptic priest claimed that this could only have been accomplished because it took place close to the sea: The sun sucks up the vapors of the sea. He would then, either by design or by magic, contain some of those vapors and cause them to descend on that place in condensed form like a light rain, and (the pool) would thus be

replenished by the air. Hence, its water would never become less as time went by, even if the whole world drank from it. Along similar lines, he also made a nice goblet which Ḥawīl the King (later) gave as a present to Alexander the Great.

ʿAdīm ruled the Egyptians for one hundred and forty years. He died when he was seven hundred and thirty years old, and was buried in one of the cities with the wonders.

According to others, he was buried in the desert of Qifṭ. A certain Copt related that ʿAdīm's tomb was built in the desert of Qifṭ above ground under a huge dome of sparkling green glass with a golden orb attached to its top. On top of the orb was a golden, jewel-encrusted bird with outspread wings to guard against entrance to the dome. The dome's diameter was one hundred by one hundred cubits. The king's body was placed in the center of it on a bed of plaited gold, the face exposed, attired in robes woven with gold thread interspersed with strings of gems. The height of the dome was four hundred cubits. Inside the dome were placed one hundred and seventy copies of the books of wisdom and seven tables with their appropriate vessels and utensils: one table made of deep-red <sup>ʿ</sup>*-d-r-k*<sup>(22)</sup> with matching utensils; one table made of chatoyant gold<sup>(23)</sup> with matching utensils; one table made of girasol with its utensils—girasol being the topaz which makes vipers shed tears when they look at it; one table made of hammered gold with its utensils; one table made of sparkling processed rock salt with matching utensils; and one table made of solidified mercury. Inside the dome were placed numerous jewels and specially made amphoras, and surrounding the king's body were seven swords and shields of hammered steel, golden statues of horses with golden saddles on them, and seven chests of coins bearing (the king's) image. With him in

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22. Cf. *Prairies d'or* 2:436: <sup>ʿ</sup>*-dh-r-k*. Perhaps akin to Persian *ādhar-gūn* 'fiery-red'. It could be the name of a variety of coral.

23. Following the Bulaq text (1:33): *dhahab qalamūnī*, instead of Wiet's unsupported emendation *filamūnī* (?).

the tomb were placed various kinds of drugs, poisons and medicaments in stone containers.

There has been mention of people who saw that dome. They would keep trying for days but were unable to reach it—whenever they were headed for it and came within eight cubits of it, the dome would turn away from them to the right or to the left. One of the strangest things those people have told is that they would face its vaulted structures one by one, yet they could only see the reflected image of the next structure. They also said that they saw the king's face, a cubit and a half in size, and his beard, large and exposed. They estimated the length of his body at ten cubits or more. Those who saw it said that they had set out on some business and found the dome by sheer accident, and that they had asked the people of Qift about it but could find no one to explain it, except one old man there.

'Adīm the King had instructed his son Shaddāt ibn 'Adīm to erect a tower in every province of his realm and to inscribe his name on it. So (Shaddāt) went down to al-Ushmūnayn and built a tower and inscribed his (father's) name on it. He also built amphitheaters there.<sup>(24)</sup> And in the adjacent desert he built a tower and mounted on top of it a two-headed idol named after two planets which were in conjunction at the time he left for Atrīb.<sup>(25)</sup> There he built a huge, lofty pavilion on pillars and columns, one on top of the other, and on its summit a small golden idol. He also built a temple dedicated to the planets and proceeded to the province of Ṣā (Saïs), where he erected a tower topped by a mirror made of different ingredients which showed the (different) regions. Then he returned home.

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24. Apparently a reference to the Greek structures of *Hermopolis*.

25. Here, apparently, the Atrīb (ancient *Atrēpe*) southwest of Sōhāg on the site of the present-day ruins of *Adribah* south of the convent of Abba Shenuda (*Dayr al-Anbā Shanūdah*), since Shaddāt, according to this passage, was "going down-river" (*inḥadara*) on his way to al-Ushmūnayn and from there to the Delta. Cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, I, 13 "Adribah".

Shaddāt, son of 'Adīm, also built the temple of Armant<sup>(26)</sup> and erected in it idols bearing the names of the planets and made of all the metals; he decorated (the temple) in the finest manner, adding color and variety by means of gems and colored glass, and draped it in embroidered cloth and silk brocade. He also built a temple in the inner towns of Anṣinā and erected a pavilion in Atrīb and a temple east of Alexandria.

Shaddāt set up an idol of black granite dedicated to Saturn at some distance from the Nile on the western side, and on the eastern bank he built towns. In one of these was the image of an idol which had a phallus: When a man unable, because of a curse, to have sexual intercourse with a woman and to achieve erection, rubbed that phallus with both hands, he would have an erection and be able to perform intercourse. In another of them was (the image of) a cow with two large udders: When a woman's milk stopped flowing, she would come to (that image) and stroke it with both hands, and her milk would flow copiously.

He also herded the crocodiles together by means of a talisman which he built in the vicinity of Asyūt.<sup>(27)</sup> They would come flocking forth from the Nile all the way to Ikhmīm, and he would kill them and use their hides for boats and other things.

[5] Manqāwus the King had a house built in which statues for all the ailments were grouped in a circle, and next to each statue he had the particular treatment appropriate for it inscribed. People used to benefit from it for a long time, until some king ruined it.

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26. Greek *Hermonthis* (from Eg. *Per-Mont* 'House of Mont', the falcon-headed god of war), about 12 miles south of Luxor on the west bank of the Nile, a provincial capital under Roman administration. See Ramzi, *Qāmūs*, II, 4:160. —Its temple, dating from the Ptolemaic period, is almost completely destroyed.

27. The ancient Egyptian *Siut*, center of the worship of the god Wep-Wawet, who was represented as a desert wolf [compare colloq. Eg. *wāwi*, Arabic *ibn āwā* 'jackal'], hence its Greek name *Lykopolis* ('wolf town'). See "Asyūt" (C.H. Becker) in *EF*.

He also had the image of a smiling woman made: As soon as someone burdened by sorrows laid eyes on her, his distress would go away and he would forget it. People would come to her one by one, walk around her, and then worship her.

And he made a statue of gilded bronze with two wings: As soon as an adulterer or an adulteress passed by, it would expose his (or her) pudenda with its hand. People used to put adulterers to the test with it, so that they refrained from fornication for fear of it. When Kalkan was king, one of his concubines fell in love with a man of his entourage. Afraid that she might be put to the test by means of that graven image, she began to talk about adulteresses with the king, cursing them a lot and heaping much blame on them. Kalkan then mentioned that idol and what uses it had, and she said, "The King has spoken the truth. Manqāwus, however, has not done the right thing with it, because he has put himself and his sages to needless trouble with regard to its use by making the statue work for the common people rather than for his own benefit. It should have been set up in the house of the king, where his women and concubines are. Then, if one of them commits a transgression, he would find out about her and it would be a deterrent to others whenever their hearts are befallen by a bit of lust." "You are right," said Kalkan, believing that this was sound advice on her part. He ordered the idol removed from its place and transported to his own house. Whereupon its efficacy ceased, and the woman could do what she had intended to do (in the first place).

(Manqāwus) also built a temple for the sorcerers on Jabal al-Quṣayr.<sup>(28)</sup> These would release the winds for ships putting to sea only against payment of an impost which they collected for the king from (the mariners).

[6] Manāwus, son of Manqāwus, built in the Western Desert a city in the vicinity of the City of the Sorcerers, known as "Qumanṭir

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28. Muslim legend associates this mountain with "Moses the Sorcerer" (*Mūsā al-Sāḥir*). Cf. Yāqūt 4:367.

of the Marvels.” In its center he erected a dome on top of which was something like a cloud that would spray light rain winters and summers, and beneath the dome was a washing facility containing green water with which any disease could be treated, and the water would cure it. On its east side was built a lovely temple with four doors, each door having two doorjambs on each of which was the image of a face that would speak to its companion piece (on the other doorpost) about what happened on that day. If someone entered the temple in an unclean state, the two visages would blow in his face, and that person would then be befallen by a terrible disease which would not leave him until he died. People used to say that in its center was a light shaft in the form of a column: Whoever embraced it could clearly see all the spirits and hear what they were saying and watch what they were doing. Above each gate of that city was a terrifying image holding a book which contained a certain science. Whoever wanted to learn that science would come to that image, rub it with both hands and pass them over his chest: that science would then be firmly established in his breast.

It is said that those two cities were built on behalf of Hermes, who is identical with Mercury, and that they were the only ones of their kind. Some man related that he came to see ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān when he was governor of Egypt.<sup>(29)</sup> He informed him that he had got lost in the Eastern Desert and had come across a city in ruins in which there was a tree that bore every kind of fruit. He said he had eaten some and had taken some along as provisions. A certain Copt then told (the governor), “This is one of the two cities of Hermes, and there are many treasures in it.” So ‘Abd al-‘Azīz set out with a group of people, supplied with provisions and water. They kept roaming in that desert for a month and did not find a trace of the city.

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29. He held the office from 685 to 704, one year short of the reign of his brother, the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān.

[7] The mother of Bilāṭiṣ the King built a large pond in the Western Desert. In the center of it she placed a column thirty cubits high and topped by a stone bowl from which water spouted without ever diminishing in quantity. Around the pond she placed statues made of multicolored stones in the shape of animals, wild beasts, birds and domestic animals. Every species would come to its own image and befriend it so that one could catch it by hand and make use of it.

She also built a park for her son, because he liked to go hunting. In the park she set up lodges mounted on pillars of gold-plated marble encrusted with jewels and colored glass, and she embellished (each lodge) with marvelous pictorial representations and paintings. Water would rise from fountains and flow into canals that had been plated with silver and led into gardens with the most amazing plants. Around the gardens she set up statues that would whistle with different sounds, and over every lodge she draped curtains of silk brocade. She chose from among the most beautiful of his cousins and of the daughters of kings and gave (the girls) to him in marriage. Then she had him move to that garden, around which she had built lodges for the ministers, the priests and the leading artisans. These artisans would bring him everything they made, and when they were done with their work, he had food and drink taken to them.

[8] Bilāṭiṣ had become king after the death of his father Marqūrah, while he was still a boy, and his mother was running the country. She was a resolute and experienced woman and ran things the way it had been done during his father's lifetime. She did well, was just with her subjects, and exempted them from some of the taxes.

[9] His time was altogether a happy one, with abundant fertility and people prospering and justice prevailing. He used to have one day on which he went out hunting, and when he returned to his garden, he would order rewards and food for everyone in his company. For one day he would sit in audience to look into the wel-

fare of the people and to attend to their needs. And one day he would spend in seclusion with his women. His reign lasted thirteen years. Then he contracted smallpox and died.

[10] Qarsūn, son of Filīmūn son of Atrīb, built a lighthouse on the Sea of al-Qulzum, and on top of it a mirror which would attract ships to the shore so that they were unable to depart unless<sup>(30)</sup> the tithe was collected from them. And after that was done, the mirror would be covered so that the ships could pass. Qarsūn ruled for two hundred and sixty years. He had a tomb built for himself on the other side of the eastern Black Mountain, with a dome in its center surrounded by twelve chambers, each chamber containing a marvel quite unlike any other. On the dome he had his name inscribed and the duration of his reign.

[11] Marqūnis the King was a sage, one who loved the stars, the sciences and ancient wisdom. He had a dirham made in his days: When its owner (wanted to) buy something with it, he would stipulate that (the vendor) weigh whatever he bought with the weight of the dirham and not ask for more than it weighed. The vendor, misled by this, would accept the condition. Then, when the transaction was made between them, many pounds—the equivalent of ten times its weight—would go into the weight of the dirham. And if (the owner of the dirham) wanted a multiple of those pounds to go into its weight, it would do so. This dirham was found among their buried treasures, and later on (it found its way) into the treasuries of the Umayyads. People used to be amazed by it.

People found other dirhams which were said to have also been made in his time. Such a dirham would be on a man's scales, and if he wanted to buy something, he would take that dirham, kiss it and say, "Remember the covenant!" and then purchase with it whatever he wanted. Then, when he took the merchandise and went home, he would find that the dirham had already returned to his

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30. Read: *illā 'an tu'shara*, as in the Bulaq text. Wiet: *aw tu'shara* (?).



own scales ahead of him, while the vendor would find, in place of the dirham, a leaf of ivory or a piece of paper, or something like that, as a substitute for the dirham.

Also in his time were made the glass vessels which one weighed, and which, when filled with water or some other liquid and weighed again, would show not the slightest increase over their original weight.

And in his time were made the vessels which, if one put water into them, it would turn into wine, in color, aroma and effect. Among such vessels was found at Iṭḫīḥ<sup>(31)</sup> during the reign of Emir Hārūn ibn Khumārawayh ibn Aḥmed ibn Ṭūlūn an onyx carafe with a blue and white handle. The man who found it was Abū 'l-Ḥasan, the Khurasanian goldsmith, together with some people who were with him. They had a meal on the bank of the Nile and drank water from the carafe, when they discovered that it was wine from which they became intoxicated. They rose to dance, and the carafe fell and broke into several pieces. The man became worried and brought the pieces to Hārūn, who expressed his sadness about the carafe and said, "If it were in one piece, I would buy it for the price of part of my kingdom." As to the copper vessels which turn water into wine, these are ascribed to Cleopatra, the daughter of Ptolemy, Queen of Alexandria.

During (Marqūnis') time were also made clay images of frogs, beetles, flies, scorpions, and all the other vermin. When set up in a

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31. Now *Atḫīḥ* (distr. of al-Ṣaff), one of the oldest towns of Egypt; on the east bank of the Nile on the Khashabah Canal, opposite the Maydūm pyramid. The Greeks called it *Aphroditopolis*. Nearby was the hermitage of St. Anthony, which attracted thousands of pilgrims in the early 4th century, until the saint fled deeper into the desert, there to wrestle with the tempters from the spiritual world. —Its Arabic name derives from the Copt. *Tpeh*, anc. Eg. *Tepyeh*, short for *Per-Hathor nebt Tep-yeh* 'House of Hathor, mistress of Tep-yeh', who was worshiped there (Strabo mentions the local cult around a white cow, sacred to Hathor). See Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 3:25; Baedeker, *Egypt*<sup>2</sup>, 205. —Hārūn ruled from 896 to 905.

place, that respective species would flock about its image and be unable to leave it until it was killed.

(Marqūnis) accomplished all of these things with the help of the images of the zodiacal degrees, their names and their ascendants, so that he was able to achieve whatever he wanted.

In the Western Desert he built an amphitheater of colored glass with a dome of limpid green glass in its center: When the sun rose above it, it would cast the sun's rays on distant places. On its four sides he built four high halls of glass, each with its distinctive color and painting, and on top of them in a different color wondrous talismans and strange sculptures and amazing images, all of that made of transparent matching glass. He used to spend his days in that amphitheater. He established three festivals a year for it, and on each festival people would make the pilgrimage to it and make sacrificial offerings and spend seven days there. The different peoples continued to come to that amphitheater, for it was unequalled and there was no work like it in the world, until some king destroyed it, because he was unable to make something like it.

Marqūnis' mother was the daughter of the king of the Nubians. Her father used to worship the star named *al-Suhā*,<sup>(32)</sup> which he called a god. She asked her son to build her a temple which would belong to her alone (for its worship). (Marqūnis) built it and overlaid it with gold and silver, and he erected a statue inside over which he draped silk curtains. She would enter it with her handmaidens and her retinue and prostrate herself before (the idol) three times a day. For each month she established a festival during which she would offer up sacrifices and burn incense for the statue day and night. She appointed a priest of the Nubians to attend to it and perform sacrificial offerings and burn incense. And she kept after her son until he (too) prostrated himself before it and called for its worship. As soon as the priest realized that the order to worship the star was all

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32. Star  $\xi$  in the constellation Ursa Major, so dim that it was used to test a person's eyesight.

done and final on the part of the king, he wanted the star al-Suhā to have a representation on earth in the shape of an animal that people could serve as a god. He kept scheming and planning for that, until it so happened that eagles multiplied greatly in Egypt, causing people much damage. Thereupon the king summoned that priest and asked him about the reason for their great number. “Your god has sent them,” said the priest, “so that you make a likeness of them for you to worship.” Marqūnis said, “If that pleases him, then I shall do it,” and the priest replied, “This is indeed his pleasure.” So (the king) ordered an eagle to be made, two cubits long and one cubit wide, of cast gold. Its eyes he made from two rubies, and he made for it two necklace’s of pearls strung on cannulas of green gemstone, and in its beak he put a suspended solitary pearl, and (finally) he clad (the statue) in trousers of red coral (?).<sup>(33)</sup> He set it on a base of engraved silver, which had been mounted on a support of blue enamel, and placed it inside a portico to the right of the temple. He threw silk curtains over it and gave it a fumigation with all the perfumes and resins. (Then) he offered up in sacrifice to it a black calf and young chickens and the first fruit and aromatic herbs. And when seven days were over, he called on people to come and worship (the statue), and they complied. The priest continued to go to great lengths in serving the eagle and established a festival for it. When forty days had gone by, Satan spoke from inside the statue, and the first thing he called on them to do was to burn incense for him in the middle of every month, combined with the *mandal*,<sup>(34)</sup> and to sprinkle the temple with old wine, which must be taken from the top of the storage vats. He let them know that he had rid them of the eagles and the damage they were doing, and he would do likewise with other things they

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33. Again: *’d-r-k* (see n. 22). The “eagle” of the story is probably a representation of the Horus falcon.

34. A magic practice, done either with the help of good spirits (*rūhāniyyah*) or with the aid of satanic powers, in which the magician himself, or a medium, perform acts of clairvoyance and divination through concentration on mirrors or mirror-like objects, such as an ink puddle. For a description of such a demonstration cf. Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 275 ff.

feared. The priest was delighted to hear that and sent word to the king's mother to tell her about it. She came to the temple and heard the words of the eagle, and they made her happy, and she extolled (the statue). When the king was told, he rode to the temple so that (the statue) would address him and appointed custodians for it, and ordered that it be embellished in various ways. (Henceforth) Marqūnis would go to that temple and worship that image and consult it on his intentions and plans, and it would tell him.

He did with alchemy what no other king before him had done. It is said that he buried in the Western Desert five hundred hidden treasures. At the gate of the city of Saïs he is said to have erected a column topped by an idol in the form of a seated woman, holding a mirror in her hand and gazing at it. When someone with an ailment came to that mirror and looked into it, or when someone else looked into it for him, he would be seen as a corpse if he was to die of the illness he had, and alive if he was to live. One would also look into that mirror for a traveler: if they saw him with his face turned toward them, they knew he was coming back, and when they saw him with his back turned, they knew that he would keep traveling, and if he was ill or dead, they would see him like that in the mirror. In Alexandria he set up the image of a monk seated on a pedestal, with something like a burnoose over his head and with the like of a crutch in his hand. When a merchant passed by, he would put in front of it some money, (the amount) depending on (the value of) his merchandise. But if he passed it, even at a distance, without placing money before it, then he was unable to pass and would stand there transfixed in his place. In that manner, a lot of money was collected that would be distributed to the chronically ill and the poor.

Every clever marvel was made (by Marqūnis) in his time, and he ordered his name to be inscribed on it, and on every landmark, and every talisman, and on every idol. For himself he had a tomb prepared deep inside the land of the West near a mountain called Shadhām, and under it he built a vaulted crypt a hundred cubits

long, thirty cubits high and twenty cubits wide, and had it faced with marble and colored enamel and roofed over with stones. All around its walls he built elevated stone benches overlaid with enamel tiles, each bearing some wondrous thing, and in the center of the crypt a dais of glass was erected with some image on each of its corners to protect it from being approached. Between every two images was placed a light source topped by a luminous stone, and in the center of the dais was a catafalque which contained his body, after it had been mummified with preservatives. Then his treasures consisting of gold and jewels and other things were moved to it and the entrance to the crypt was closed with boulders and lead, and sand was piled on top of them. His reign lasted seventy-three years, and he was two hundred and forty years old (when he died). He was a handsome man with beautiful long hair. After his death, his women led a pious and ascetic life and never left the temple again. His son Ansād became king after him.

[12] Then (followed) Şā, the son of Ansād—or Şā the son of Marqūnis and brother of Ansād, according to others. He set up in the city of Memphis a mirror which showed the times during which Egypt would be fertile and (others during which) it would suffer from drought. He built a city inside the Oases and erected numerous guideposts along the Nile. Beyond the Muqaṭṭam Hills he set up a statue called the Idol of the Expedient: Anyone with a difficult problem would come to it and burn incense before it, and that matter would then become easy for him. On the edge of the sea he placed a lighthouse from which one could find out about the sea and what was happening on it days beyond the point the eye could reach. He was the first to make use of it. He is said to have built most of the city of Memphis and every large structure in Alexandria.

[13] When, after his father's death, Tadārus, the son of Şā, had become king of all the provinces and was the undisputed ruler of Egypt, he built on the western side of the city of Memphis a large house for the planet Venus. In it he erected a large idol of gilded

lapis lazuli which he adorned with a crown of gold with just a hint of blue and two bracelets made of emerald. The statue was in the shape of a woman with two braids made of hammered gold. On her legs she had two anklets made of a translucent red stone, on her feet she wore golden sandals, and in her hand she held a wand of coral. She was pointing with her finger, as if she was greeting those present in the temple. Opposite her he put the statue of a cow with two horns and two udders made of copper overlaid with gold, wearing a double-stranded necklace of lapis-lazuli. The face of the cow was directly opposite the lapislazuli face of Venus. Between them was an ablution fountain made of mixed corporeal substances and resting on a column of veined marble. In the fountain was specially treated water which would cure any disease. The floor of the temple was covered with Venus' hair which they changed every seven days. For the priests he put silver- and gold-plated chairs in the temple. To that idol he offered in sacrifice a thousand head of sheep and goats and wild beasts and birds. On the day of Venus he would come and circumambulate the temple and put (new) floor covering and curtains in it. Under a dome inside he placed the statue of a man riding a two-winged horse and carrying a lance with a man's head dangling from its point. This temple remained in existence until it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar at the time of Mālīq, son of Tadārus.

[14] Mālīq was a monotheist following the religion of Qubṭīm and Miṣrāyim. [15] He set out at the head of a large army by land and by sea and invaded the Berbers, the land of Ifrīqiyah, Spain, and the land of the Franks all the way to the sea. Along the sea he had guideposts erected and his name and his campaign inscribed on them. After his return, the rulers of the earth stood in awe of him.

To the west of Egypt was a city called Qurmaydah, which was inhabited by a Berber people who had made a sorceress their queen. (Mālīq) invaded them and, having accomplished nothing with them, returned home. Now their queen was out to ruin Egypt. She

applied some of her magic and ordered a spell to be cast on the Nile, whereupon the water flooded the cropland and ruined it. Crocodiles and frogs proliferated, diseases spread among the people, and snakes and scorpions abounded. Mālīq summoned the priests and the sages in their House of Wisdom and had them look into the matter. They looked in their stars and saw that this calamity had come to them from the direction of the west, and that it was a woman who had caused it and had cast the spell on the Nile. They realized then that it was that sorceress who had done it, and they made every effort to repel it with whatever science was at their disposal, and eventually the foul water receded and the harmful creatures perished. (Mālīq) then sent a general at the head of an army to that city, but they found only one man in it. They captured uncounted quantities of money, jewelry and idols (though). Among these were the emerald statue of a priest on a pedestal made of smyris; the golden statue of a genie, his hand made of red gemstone, having two wings of pearl, and holding a book containing much of their sciences between two jewel-encrusted covers; an ablution fountain of sapphire on a base of green enamel, containing water to ward off diseases; and a silver horse which, when the proper incantations were spoken over it and it was fumigated properly and someone mounted it, would fly away with the rider. (The general) brought all that and other marvels and idols of the sorcerers as well as monies and jewels to Egypt, together with the man (they had found in the city). The latter was then asked by the king about the most astonishing thing they had done, and the man said: "A certain Berber king was once advancing on them with a numerous army and enormous cavalry forces. The people of our city locked and secured their fortress and took refuge with the idols. The (attending) priest then came to a large and deep pond from which people used to draw their irrigation water. He sat down on its edge, while the high priests were forming a circle around it, and began to mumble (incantations) over the water until it welled up and a fire rose from its center with a face like the shining sun disk in the middle of it. The crowd fell to the ground in prostration,

while the image kept growing, until it rose and broke through the dome. And one could hear it say, 'You have been saved from the evil of your enemy!' They rose to their feet, and lo and behold, their enemy and all his men had perished. What had happened was that the image of the Sun, which appeared from the water, had passed among them and had roared at them in such a way that they all died from it."

[16] When Kalkan ruled Egypt after the death of his father Khirbitā, his contemporary was Nimrod. Word had reached Nimrod of Kalkan's wisdom and magic powers, and he asked him to visit him and went out to meet him. Nimrod lived in southern Mesopotamia and had conquered many nations. Kalkan came, carried on four horses which had wings that surrounded him like fire, and around him were frightful images. He galloped along on them, enwrapped by a serpent, part of it slung around his waist like a belt, and that monster had its mouth wide open. He carried a staff of green ivory, and whenever the monster moved its head, he struck it with that staff. When Nimrod saw that, he was stricken with terror and he acknowledged (Kalkan's) great (magic) wisdom.

The Copts say that Kalkan used to go up and sit on top of the western Pyramid under a dome looming above his head, and the people of the town would gather around the Pyramid, when something unexpected befell them. They say that sometimes he would stay for days on end on top of the Pyramid without eating or drinking. Then he became invisible for some time so that people thought he had died, with the result that the (other) kings would cast covetous eyes on Egypt. One king from the West by the name of Sādūm invaded the country with a huge army which got as far as the Wādī Hubayb.<sup>(35)</sup> Kalkan went forth with his magic power and enveloped them in something like a very hot cloud. For days they were under it, not knowing which way to go. Then he left and came to Miṣr, where he told the people what he had done, ordering them to take

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35. That is, the Wādī al-Naṭrūn in the Libyan Desert (see Pt. II, ch. 24).



the field (against the enemy). But it turned out that those people and their animals had all died. All the priests stood in awe of (Kalkan) and had statues of him made in all the temples. In honor of Saturn a temple of black granite was built somewhere in the west, and (Kalkan) established a festival for it.

[17] In the days of Dārim, the son of al-Rayyān, who is the fourth in the line of pharaohs called “Darīmūs” by the Copts, a silver mine was discovered three day’s journeys from the Nile, and formidable quantities (of the metal) were subsequently extracted from it. With it he had an idol made on behalf of the Moon, because his ascendant was the sign of Cancer, and had it set up on top of the marble palace which his father had built east of the Nile. All around (that palace) he erected idols, all of them made of silver, and had them draped in red silk. And he held a festival in honor of that idol every time the Moon entered the sign of Cancer.

[18] After Aksāmis had ascended the throne following the death of his father Mi’dān—meaning, Ma’ādiyūs—the son of Dārim, in other words, Darīmūs, who is the sixth pharaoh (in that line), he erected numerous lofty structures around Memphis and had porticoes placed on top of them (in such a way that) one could walk from one to the other. In Rhakotis, Saïs and the cities of Upper and Lower Egypt he built many lofty structures, beacons and talismans. He had a silver globe made with the images of the planets engraved on it and had it lacquered and mounted on a column in the center of Memphis. In the temple of his father he placed the spiritual representation of Saturn made of processed gold.

In his time was made a balance which people used for guidance and judgment. Its scales were of gold, its beam of silver, and its chains of gold. It was suspended in the Temple of the Sun. One of its scales had TRUTH inscribed on it, the other FALSEHOOD. Underneath the balance were small flat stones which had the names of the planets engraved on them. An offender and a person wronged would both enter, and each would take one of those chips and name what he had in mind over it. Then one of the chips

would be put in a scale and the other in a scale: The scale of the offender would then sink and the scale of the wronged party would rise. Also, someone who intended to travel would take two chips, pronounce over one of them the word 'Travel' and over the other 'Stay', and place each in a scale: If both chips weighed down together, one of them not rising above the other, he would stay, if both rose, he would travel, and if one of them rose, he would postpone the journey and then travel. And likewise did someone with a debt, or someone with a person away from home, or someone who wanted to see if his affairs were sound or not. When Nebuchadnezzar came to Egypt, he is said to have taken that balance, among other things, with him to Babylon, where he placed it in one of the fire temples.

In (Aksāmis') time were also made a baking oven in which one could broil without a fire, a kettle in which one could cook without a fire, and a knife which was planted (blade up) in the ground, and when some animal saw it, it would come and slaughter itself with it. Also, water was made that turned into fire, and glass that turned into air, and other things belonging to (the realms of) theurgy and the Divine laws.

[19] Concerning the pharaonic temples, it is related by Ibn Waṣīf Shāh that Sawrīd, who built the Pyramids, is the one who built all those temples, and put the treasures in them, and inscribed sciences and arts on them, and appointed spirits to guard them against intruders.

[20] (Ibn al-Nadīm) says in his *Catalogue*:<sup>(36)</sup> In Egypt there are structures called *barābī*, made of huge stone blocks. They are of different types. In them are places for pounding, pulverizing, dissolving, combining, and distilling, (all of) which point to the fact

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36. Cf. *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (ed. Flügel) 1:353 (*The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, ed. and transl. by B. Dodge, p. 847). — On the work and its author, the Baghdadi book dealer Abū 'l-Faraj Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Abī Ya'qūb al-Nadīm (d. ca. 990), see "Ibn al-Nadīm" by J.W. Fück in *Et* and Bayard Dodge's Introduction to the translation (*The Fihrist* xv-xxiii).

that they were built for practicing the art of alchemy. In those buildings are pictorial representations and inscriptions which no one knows what they are. People also discovered there underground [libraries] containing these sciences, recorded on *tūz*,<sup>(37)</sup> on gold and copper plates, and on stones.

[21] Al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad al-Hamdānī mentioned that the *barābī* of Egypt go back to Barāb, son of Darmasīl, son of Mehujael, son of Enoch, son of Cain, son of Adam, on him be peace.

[22] Abū 'l-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī reports in his *Chronology of Ancient Nations*<sup>(38)</sup> that reliable informants, people whose account one can trust,<sup>(39)</sup> saw in a certain village of Egypt a church containing a crypt to which one descends over some twenty-odd steps. In it is a bed under which are (the bodies of) a man and a boy strapped in a leather mat, and above it is an alabaster bowl with a glass container inside, enclosing a copper wick-holder with a flax wick inside that one lights. Oil then flows into it, and soon the glass container is filled with oil and overflows into the alabaster bowl, thus supplying that church and its lamps.

Al-Jayhānī<sup>(40)</sup> mentioned that someone trustworthy went to (that crypt), lifted the (glass) container from the bowl poured out the oil from both the container and the bowl, put out the flame, and replaced everything except the oil. Then he poured his own oil in, put in another wick which he lit, and soon oil ran over into the glass container and from there into the alabaster bowl, without any visible supply or source. When the corpse is removed from under the bed, said al-Jayhānī, the flame goes out and the oil does not over-

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37. The bast of the white poplar, similar in consistency to papyrus, which the Persians wrapped around their bows and also used as writing material. From Persian *tūzh*.

38. Maqrīzī's attribution is an error. The passage is taken from Abū 'Alī Ibn Rustah's *al-A'lāq al-naḥīyah* (ed. de Goeje, 80-81). Compare the very similar legend in sect. 3 of this chapter.

39. The translation follows the much clearer Bulaq text (1:37).

40. Secretary and vizier of the Sāmānid Naṣr II and author of a Book of Routes and Kingdoms, died 941/2. See Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 6:292.

flow. He also mentioned that the people of the village claim that a woman who thinks she is pregnant will bring that boy and place him on her lap: Her child will move in the womb, if the pregnancy is real, or she will give up all hope, if she does not feel any movement.

[23] I myself was informed by Dā'ūd ibn Rizq-Allāh ibn 'Abd-Allāh—he had traveled widely in Egypt and knew what it was like—that he once came across a large cave, called the Cave of Shaqalqīl,<sup>(41)</sup> in Upper Egypt. In it he found a large mound of sandarac. He stepped over it and proceeded further. Then he discovered an extremely large number of fish, all of them wrapped in pieces of cloth, as if they had been shrouded after death. He picked up one of the fish, he said, and examined it, and he found it had a dinar in its mouth bearing an inscription he was not quite able to read. He began to pick up fish after fish and remove from the mouth of each a dinar, until he had quite a number of coins collected. He took those coins and went back to leave (the cave), but when he came to the sandarac mound, he found that it had suddenly increased in height so that it blocked the exit. He went back to the fish and returned the dinars to where he had found them and left. And behold, the sandarac was just as it had been at first so that he could step over it and go out. He went back inside, took the coins and proceeded to leave with them, and again the sandarac (mound) had suddenly increased in height and prevented him from leaving. So he went back, threw the coins where they belonged, and left, and nothing prevented him from going out. He said he repeatedly took the coins and returned them again, and it was always the same story, until he finally was afraid he might die. So he left them alone and departed. Some time later, he stopped on the site (of that cave) and saw in one of the walls a stone which

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41. I.e., *Shigilgīl* (distr. of Abnūb), an ancient village east of Manfalūṭ. In the mountain northeast of the nearby village of *al-Ma'ābdah* is the so-called "Crocodile Grotto," which contains the charred remains of mummified crocodiles dating from the Old Kingdom. It seems to be the scene of the story of Maqrizī's informant.

had been hollowed out and inside which another stone had been placed. He tried the other stone until he could lift it, and discovered under it six of the coins he had found in the mouths of the fish. He took one of them and left the rest where they were. Then he replaced the stone within the other stone the way it was before. Later on, God willed for him to ride a boat on the Nile in order to cross over from the east bank to the west bank. And when we were in the middle of the river, he said, the fish suddenly jumped out of the water and flung themselves into the boat so that we almost sank, so many were they. The people in the boat cried out in fear of death, when I remembered the coin I was carrying with me, he said, and that all this might be happening because of it. So I took it out of my pocket and threw it into the water, whereupon the fish jumped from the boat and flung themselves into the water, until not a trace of them was left.

[24] I was told a long time ago by a person I consider above suspicion that he had obtained a talisman of this kind and had it in his possession. He intended to show it to me as the fish were going to jump to us from the water, but I was not destined to witness that.

[25] After God had drowned Pharaoh's people, says Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam,<sup>(42)</sup> Egypt was left without a single nobleman and only slaves and hired hands and women were still alive. Since the high-born women in Egypt found it hard to entrust the government to one of the former, they decided unanimously that they should be governed by a woman from their midst by the name of Dalūkah, the daughter of Zabbā. She was intelligent, knowledgeable and experienced and was honored and held in high esteem by them. At the time, she was one hundred and sixty years old. So they made her their queen. Now, Dalūkah feared that the rulers of the earth might receive her in an insulting way. She therefore assembled the women of the nobility and told them: "No one used to be after our

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42. *Fuṭūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabīḥ) 30.

land or (dare) cast a covetous eye on it. But now our grandees and our noblemen are dead and the sorcerers, through whom we used to be strong, are gone. So I have decided to build a fortification with which I will surround the entire country. I shall put watchtowers on it on all sides, for we cannot be certain that (other) people will not seek to lay their hands on us.” She then had a wall built with which she encircled the entire land of Egypt, the cropland and the towns and the villages, and this side of it she built a canal fed by running water. Then she built bridges and secondary canals, and she positioned watchtowers and observation posts along the wall at three-mile intervals, and in between she put smaller guard posts a mile apart. Each guard station she manned with a garrison and had the men supplied with rations. She instructed them to perform their guard duty by means of bells: When someone to be feared approached them, they were to send bell signals to one another so that the news would reach (the Egyptians) within an hour from any direction and they could attend to the matter. In that manner she protected Egypt against anyone seeking to establish dominion over it. She finished her construction in six months, and this is the wall called “The Wall of the Old Woman” in Egypt. Numerous remnants of it have survived in Upper Egypt.

[26] It has been claimed, says al-Mas‘ūdī,<sup>(43)</sup> that she built it, rather, because she feared for her son. He was much given to hunting, and she was afraid that the wild beasts of land and sea might attack him or that neighboring<sup>(44)</sup> kings or bedouins might abduct him. Then she ringed the wall with crocodiles and other creatures. There are also other accounts than ours. She ruled (the Egyptians) for thirty years, as someone has said.

[27] I say: Remnants of this Wall of the Old Woman have survived in Upper Egypt. I was told by the old Sheikh Muḥammad ibn al-Mas‘ūdī that he was once traveling in Upper Egypt along the

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43. *Prairies d’or* 2:398.

44. So the original source (and the Bulaq text). Wiet: *jāwaza*.

Wall of the Old Woman with some companions. One of them pried a mud brick loose from it and found it very large, quite different in size from the bricks one is accustomed to see nowadays. One by one, the men took it in their hands and contemplated it. While they were inspecting it, it suddenly fell to the ground and, splitting open, revealed a fava bean of such extraordinary size that one can only marvel at it, because nothing like it exists in our own time. They peeled off its outer shell and found it free from worms and blemishes, as if it had been recently harvested, without the slightest sign of spoilage. The group ate it piece by piece, and it was as if it had been merely hidden from them since ancient times and bygone ages. No soul will die before it has received its full share of sustenance.<sup>(45)</sup>

[28] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates:<sup>(46)</sup> There was also an old sorceress by the name of Tadūrah. The other sorcerers used to exalt her and treat her as their superior in knowledge and witchcraft. So Dalūkah, daughter of Zabbā, sent word to her (saying): “We are now in need of you and put ourselves in your hands. We are not safe from the greed of other rulers. So make us something with which we can defeat those around us. Pharaoh used to be in need of you, then why should not we, now that our grandees are gone”—meaning, in the drowning, together with Moses’ Pharaoh—“and so very few of us are left!” And Tadūrah built a temple of stone in the center of the city of Memphis and provided it with four gates, each facing (in a different direction:) to the south, to the north, to the west, and to the east. In the temple she shaped images of horses, mules, donkeys, ships and men, and she told (the Egyptians): “I have made you something through which anyone advancing on you, no matter which side you may be approached from, by land or by sea, will perish. This will allow you to do without the fortification and will spare you the necessity of supplying and provisioning

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45. Apparently an allusion to Koran 3:145 and 11:6.

46. *Fuṭūḥ Miṣr* 30-31.

it. Whenever someone approaches you from whatever direction—if they come overland on horses or mules or camels, or (by sea) on ships, or on foot—these images will move in the direction from which (the enemies) are coming, and whatever you do to the images, the very same thing will befall (the enemies) themselves in the manner you do it to (the images).”

When word reached the kings around them that (the Egyptians) were now governed by women, their greed was aroused and they set out in their direction. As they approached Egypt, those images in the temple began to stir. And with whatever (the Egyptians) incited those images and whatever they did to them, something like it befell the approaching army. If they were cavalry, then whatever they did to the horse effigies in the temple, be it cutting their heads off or herding them away or gouging their eyes out or slitting their bellies open, the same thing would happen to the (real) horses headed in their direction. And if it was ships or foot soldiers, the like would come about. They were the most knowledgeable and powerful people in magic. Word got around about that and people told each other stories about them.

After Pharaoh and his people had drowned and there were only slaves and hirelings left, the women of the Egyptians could not for long be without men. So a woman would go ahead and free her slave and marry him, another would marry her hired man, but they stipulated to the men that they must do nothing without their permission, and the men complied with that. Thus were the women set above the men. The women of the Copts, said Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb, are like that to this day, following the tradition of the past: No (Copt) will sell or buy anything without saying, “I will ask for my wife’s orders.”

Dalūkah, the daughter of Zabbā, ruled the Egyptians for twenty years, running their affairs until one of the boys of their grandees and nobility by the name of Darkūn, son of Balūṭīs, came of age



and they made him their king. And Egypt remained protected, owing to the work of that old woman, for close to four hundred years.

[29] Whenever<sup>(47)</sup> a part of that temple, where the images had been created, collapsed, there was no one to repair it other than that old woman and her children and her children's children. They were a family, and only they knew how to do that. But their line died out, and when a section of the temple collapsed at the time of Naqās, son of Marīnūs, there was no one around who could repair it and knew how to go about it, and so it remained the way it was. The thing with which they used to defeat other people had come to an end, and they were now like everybody else, except that they had much manpower and wealth. And when Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and vanquished the Israelites and carried them off into captivity in Babylon, he headed (next) for Egypt.

[30] He laid its towns and its villages in ruin and carried their entire population away as captives and left nothing in it, so that Egypt remained a wasteland without a single inhabitant for forty years. Its Nile would rise and fall without anyone deriving any benefit from it. Then, after forty years, the people of Egypt returned to the land and rebuilt it. But it has remained a vanquished land ever since that time.

[31] Some sage said: Seeing the temples, I decided to investigate them and found that they contained all the configurations of the celestial sphere. What became obvious to me is that they were not built by one wise man nor by a single king. Rather, generation after generation took it upon themselves to build them, until they were completed in a complete cycle, which is thirty-six thousand solar years. Because works like these can be carried out only with the help of astronomical observations, and the observation of the whole celestial sphere cannot be completed in less than the time mentioned.

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47. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[32] They<sup>(48)</sup> used to make the writing as carvings or engravings on rocks, or as inscriptions on stones, or as a composite creation in architecture. Sometimes the writing would be in relief, sometimes it would be engraved, when it was a matter of recording the date of some momentous event, or a pledge of some important affair, or some useful moral exhortation, or the ceremonial of some honor they wished to immortalize. [Peoples other than the Egyptians wrote likewise] and left inscriptions on the dome of Ghumdān Palace, on the gate of Kairouan, on the gate of Samarqand, on the pillar of Ma'rib, on the corner of al-Mushaqqar,<sup>(49)</sup> on al-Ablaq al-Fard,<sup>(50)</sup> and over the gate of Edessa. They sought out well-known places and memorable spots and used to put the inscriptions where they were least likely to be effaced and most protected against obliteration and most apt to be seen by a passer-by, lest they be forgotten in the course of time.

[33] Dalūkah in Egypt made the temples and the images, says al-Mas'ūdī,<sup>(51)</sup> and she perfected the tools of magic. In the temples she put images of those who came from any direction and of their mounts, be they camels or horses, and she depicted in them those coming by sea on ships from the West and from Syria. She also collected in those magnificent, lofty structures the secrets of nature and all the peculiar minerals and plants and animals, and she had all of that translated into astronomical times as they relate to the meteorological phenomena. When an army approached (the Egyptians) from the direction of the Hejaz and the Yemen, those effigies of camels and the like in the temple would be mutilated<sup>(52)</sup> so that

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48. The text of this paragraph is an adaptation from al-Jāhīz (*al-Maḥāsīn wa-'l-addād*, p. 5), where "they" refers to the non-Arab peoples (*al-'ajam*) in general.

49. A fortification in northeastern Arabia that belonged to the 'Abd al-Qays tribe (Yāqūt 5:134).

50. The castle of the Jewish Arab poet Samaw'al b. 'Ādiyā' (died *ca.* 560) overlooking Taymā' (Yāqūt 1:75-77).

51. *Prairies d'or* 2:399-400. Additions in square brackets are from the original (*Murūj al-dhahab* 1:305-07).

52. Restore 'uwwirat, for Wiet's *ghuwwirat* (?).

the real counterparts in that army would be likewise mutilated, and they were thus rid of its men and animals. If the army came from the direction of Syria, the same thing as we have described would be done by them to the effigies pertaining to the direction from which the Syrian army approached, and then the same calamities as had been inflicted on those respective effigies would befall the men and animals in that army. And likewise in the case of armies coming from the West and of enemies coming by sea from Rome and Syria and other countries. Kings and nations stood in awe of (the Egyptians). (Thus, the Egyptians) protected their land against their enemies, and the survival of their kingdom depended on the wise administration of that old woman and her masterful control of the country's provinces and its political rules.

People before and after have spoken of those peculiarities and secrets of nature that used to be in the land of Egypt. And this story of the old woman's deed is widely and elaborately told [among the Egyptians] who do not doubt it.<sup>(53)</sup>

The temples in Egypt, in Upper Egypt and elsewhere, have survived to our time. They contain all kinds of images which, when drawn on certain things, produce effects according to what they were designed and made for, in accordance with what people have said about the complete essential attribute (of a thing). Only God knows how that happens.

Several people from Ikhmīm in Upper Egypt have told me about the ascetic Abū 'l-Fayḍ Dhū 'l-Nūn ibn Ibrāhīm al-Miṣrī al-Ikhmīmī. He was a philosopher and had his own school and his own following. He was one of those who investigated those temples and studied many of the inscriptions and pictures drawn and inscribed on them. He said (for instance): I saw in a certain temple an inscription which I studied, and it read: 'Beware of freed slaves, of young

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53. Other non-Egyptians voice their skepticism more openly, for example, the Syrian geographer-historian Zakariyyā' al-Qazwīnī (d. 1283): "This story, although more like a fairy tale, is nevertheless recorded in all the books on Egyptian history" (*Athār al-bilād* 140).

[protégés], of pious soldiers, and of arabized Nabataeans!' And on another I saw an inscription which I studied, and it said: 'Human fate is measured out, while the will of God laughs.' And in still another I studied closely an inscription in that writing and found it to read:

'By stars you go and never know—  
your planet's Lord does what He wills!'

The nation that made those temples, continues (al-Mas'ūdi), was dedicated to investigating the workings of the stars and devoted to learning the secrets of nature. Among the things that the stars had told them was that there would be some cataclysmic event on Earth, but it could not be decided what that cataclysm would be: whether it would be a fire to descend upon Earth and burn everything on it, or water to submerge it, or a sword to wipe out its people. Fearing that the sciences would be obliterated and would vanish together with the people, (the Egyptians) made those *barābī*—the singular is *birbā*—and recorded in them their sciences in the form of pictures, statues and inscriptions. They built two kinds of them: of mud and of stone, and they kept those built with mud separate from those built with stone, reasoning: If the cataclysm is a fire, then everything built of mud will become petrified and these sciences will survive; if the coming cataclysm is a water, it will sweep everything built of mud away, but what is built of stone will survive; and if the cataclysm is a sword, then both kinds, those of mud and those of stone, will survive. That is what has been said—and God alone knows the truth—to have happened before the cataclysmic event.

The cataclysm they were expecting, and which they could not determine whether it would be a fire or water or a sword, turned out to be a sword that came upon all the people of Egypt from a conquering nation and a king who descended upon the land and annihilated its people.

Some have thought that this cataclysmic event was an epidemic that struck all its people. The proof for that are the tiered mounds found in the area of Tinnīs of (buried) people, young and old, men and women, that look like large hills—locally they are known as *Dhāt al-Kawm*—and people (buried) in stacks, one on top of the other, in caves, grottoes, tombs and numerous (other) places one finds in Egypt, and in Upper Egypt (in particular). Nobody knows to which of the nations they belonged. Neither the Christians report that they were their ancestors, nor do the Jews say that they belonged to their forefathers, and the Muslims do not know who they are, and no history tells us about them. They are dressed in their clothes, and often one finds in those mounds and hills some of their jewelry and ornaments.

The temples in Egypt are astounding pieces of architecture, such as the one in Ikhmīm, the one in Samannūd, and others.

## 11. On Caches and Buried Treasures Which the Egyptians Call *Maṭālib*

[1] The lawfulness of tracking down buried treasures goes all the way back to the tradition of Ibn (al-)‘Abbās as transmitted by ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr,<sup>(1)</sup> and by al-Bayhaqī in his *Proofs (of Prophethood)*,<sup>(2)</sup> namely, that the Apostle of God, peace and blessings be upon him, as he was leaving al-Ṭā’if, passed by the grave of Abū Righāl and said, “This is the grave of Abū Righāl, who is the ancestor of the Thaḳīf. He was, when God destroyed the people of Ṣāliḥ,<sup>(3)</sup> in the sanctuary, and God spared him. But when he came out of the sanctuary, God smote him with a calamity. And the proof of that is that a shaft of gold was buried with him.” Whereupon the Muslims rushed to his grave, dug it up and removed the shaft from it.

From the traditions of ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Umar: I heard the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, say, as we moved out with him against al-Ṭā’if and passed by a grave: “This is the grave of Abū Righāl. He was in this sanctuary, protected. But when he left it, he was struck with the same punishment as befell his people here at this place, and he was buried here. And the proof of that is that a rod of gold was buried with him—if you dig up his grave, you will find (the rod) with him.” So people rushed to the grave and removed the rod that was with him.

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1. Hispano-Arab traditionist and scholar, died 1071. See *GAL* S 1:628.
  2. *Dalā’il al-nubuwwah*, a ḥadīth work of the Shāfi’ite jurist and Ash’arite theologian Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066). See “al-Bayhaqī” (J. Robson) in *EF*<sup>2</sup>.
  3. I.e., the Thamūd, who, according to the Koran, were punished by God for their disbelief in the message brought to them by the prophet Ṣāliḥ. See “Thamūd” (H. H. Bräu) and “Ṣāliḥ” (F. Buhl) in *sEL*.

[2] In Egypt are the treasures of Joseph, peace be upon him, and of the kings before and after him. For (Joseph) used to hoard all surplus funds and stores for the uncertain times ahead. And this is what is meant when God Exalted and Sublime says, “*So We expelled them from gardens and fountains, and treasures.*”<sup>(4)</sup>

It is said that the guide lists to buried treasures in a Constantinople church were brought there from Toledo. When the Byzantines pulled out of Syria and Egypt, they are said to have buried a great deal of their wealth in certain places which they had prepared for that purpose. They recorded the landmarks of those places and the roads leading to them in books and deposited these books in a certain place in a Constantinople church, and from there one can obtain information about such matters. It has also been said that the Byzantines (themselves) did not keep such records. Rather, they got hold of the books recording the markers of buried treasures of the Greek, Chaldean and Coptic rulers before their time. Later, when they moved out of Egypt and Syria, they took those books with them and deposited them in that church. It has been said that no one is given anything of that until he has been in the service of that church for a certain amount of time. Then he is paid with one sheet as his share.

[3] Egypt, says al-Mas‘ūdī,<sup>(5)</sup> has astounding stories of hidden caches and buildings, and of the treasures found in the caches, deposited in the earth by her (own) kings and by others of nations that once inhabited that land. To that end, they are called *maṭālib*. We have already dealt with all of that in our earlier books.

Among these stories is the one told by Yaḥyā ibn Bukayr:<sup>(6)</sup> When ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān served as governor for his brother ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, a man with pretensions of having good advice

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4. Koran 26 (The Poets): 57-58.

5. *Prairies d’or* 2:414.

6. Iraqi jurist and man of letters, died 845. See F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 1:460.

to give came to see him. (The governor) asked what advice he had to give, and the man said, "There is a huge treasure near the pavilion so-and-so." 'Abd al-'Azīz asked, "What is the proof of that?" The man replied, "It is that we will see marble and alabaster tiles just by digging slightly. Further digging will lead us eventually to a bronze door under which is a golden column topped by a rooster whose eyes are two rubies worth all the money in the world, its wings speckled with rubies and emeralds, its head resting on gold leaves on the very top of that column." Thereupon 'Abd al-'Azīz gave orders that funds be disbursed to that man to pay the workers who would dig and work on the site. There was a large mound and they dug up a large excavation in the ground, and all the indications of marble and alabaster previously mentioned began to emerge. By then, 'Abd al-'Azīz was even more anxious to get to all that, and he had the original disbursement augmented and the number of workers increased. Then they came in their excavation to the point at which the head of the rooster appeared. There was a big flash of light at its emergence, because of the rubies in its eyes. Then its wings came to light, then its legs. Around the (golden) column emerged another column made of masonry in various kinds of stone and marble, as well as arcades and vaulted arches over the entrances. And through these one could get a glimpse of statues and pictures and figures of various golden images and stone urns with their lids closed and sealed. 'Abd al-'Azīz rode out in order to inspect the site and to see the things that had come to light. Someone rushed and set his foot on a flight of copper stairs leading into the site. And as his foot rested on the stairs, two ancient swords appeared to the right and left of the stairs and joined above the man. And no sooner had he reached (the spot) than they cut him to pieces. His body dropped, and as it came to rest on one of the steps, the column began to shake, the rooster emitted a strange whistle which even those in the distance could hear, it moved its wings, and from underneath it strange noises could be heard which were made by screws and mechanical devices. As soon as something fell on one of those steps or just touched them, they over-



turned and all the men there tumbled to the bottom of the pit. There had been close to a thousand men there, diggers, workers, earth movers, supervisors, dispatchers, and people in charge, and they all perished. 'Abd al-'Azīz, leaving (the excavation site), said, "This is indeed a strange and forbidding barrier. We seek refuge with God from it." He then ordered a group of people to throw the earth that had been removed from the site on those who had died, and the place thus became their grave.

A book written in one of the ancient scripts, says al-Mas'ūdī, had fallen into the hands of a group of experts in caches and hidden treasures and of people given and attracted to making excavations and seeking out the treasures and hoards of kings and bygone nations found in underground deposits in Egypt. It contained the description of a site in the area of Miṣr, only a few cubits from one of the Pyramids, (and claimed) that there was an amazing hidden treasure in that place. They informed the Ikhshīd Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj about it, and he ordered them to dig for it, allowing them to employ every expedient in getting it out of the ground. They made a large excavation until they finally came upon an oblong edifice and vaults and hollowed-out stones on a rock face covered with inscriptions, where wooden statues stood, upright, (their outside) daubed with protective coatings against decay and disintegration. Among the various images were those of old men and of youngsters, of women and of children, their eyes made of various precious stones, such as rubies, emeralds, chrysolite and turquoise. There were some whose faces were of gold and silver. They broke a few of those statues open and found inside decomposed cadavers and decayed bodies. Next to each statue was some kind of receptacles, such as clay amphoras and such, made of alabaster and marble and containing a kind of coating with which the deceased inside the wooden image had been daubed. The coating consisted of a powdered drug and of various odorless, man-made ingredients. When some of it was held over a fire, a pleasant fragrance quite different from that of any known perfume exuded from it. Each of the wooden statues had been shaped in the likeness of the one inside it

in their different (degrees of) kinship, ages and appearances. Facing each statue was another statue made of alabaster or green marble in the shape of an idol, in accordance with their practice of worshiping statues and images bearing various kinds of inscriptions about which no one has been able to elicit any information from the Jews and Christians. Knowledgeable people have claimed that this kind of writing was already four thousand years old by the time it disappeared from Egypt, and in what we have said (earlier) is proof that those people were neither Jews nor Christians. Their digging did not lead them to anything more than the statues we have mentioned. All of that took place in the year 328 (A.D. 940). (In fact) with all the governors of Egypt, before and after Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn and others all the way to this time, which is the year 332, go marvelous stories of buried treasures, monies and jewels unearthed in their time, and of tombs found on those excavation sites. We have already dealt with them in our earlier works.

[4] One day,<sup>(7)</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn rode to the Pyramids, when the chamberlains brought a group of people in his presence who were garbed in woolen clothes and were carrying spades and hoes. He asked them what they were doing, and they said, “We are people who are looking for buried treasures.” He told them that they must henceforth go out only with an authorization order and a man assigned by him. Those people then informed him that there was on the way to the Pyramids a buried treasure which had so far escaped their efforts to raise it. So he assigned al-Rāfiqī to their group, requested the district governor of Gīzah to help with men and funds, and left. They kept working away for some time, until (the treasure) emerged before their eyes.

Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn rode out to them, while they were still digging, and they discovered a basin filled with dinars and covered with a

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7. The paragraph is from Maqrīzī's *Shudhūr al-nuqūd*, translated by Silvestre de Sacy (“Traité des monnoies musulmanes” in *Bibliothèque des Arabisants*, vol. I).

lid bearing an inscription in temple script.<sup>(8)</sup> (The Emir) then summoned someone who could read it, and it said: 'I am So-and-So, son of Such-and-Such, the King, who separated gold from its debased and impure state. Let him who intends to know the merit of my kingdom over his kingdom look at the superiority of the standard of my dinar to that of his dinar. For he who purifies gold is purified himself in his lifetime and after his death.' "Praise be to God," said Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn. "What this inscription tells me is dearer to me than money." Then he ordered that each of the treasure hunters be paid two hundred dinars from (the hoard), each of the workers—after full payment of his wages—fifty dinars, al-Rāfiqī three hundred dinars, and the eunuch Nasīm one thousand dinars. The remainder of the dinars was carted away. People discovered that they were of finer quality than any standard (then known). From then on, (Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn) tightened the rules for the standard of coinage in Egypt so that the standard of his dinar, which became known as the *aḥmadī*, became the best and was exclusively used in alloys.

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8. Arabic: *al-barābiyyah*, i.e., hieroglyphics. The word is corrupted in all texts, and de Sacy settled for the reading *barṭiyyah*, which he renders as "Parthian" (*op. cit.*, p. 38).

## 12. The Possessions of the Ancient Egyptians Destroyed

[1] God Sublime and Exalted says, “*And Moses said, ‘Our Lord, Thou hast given to Pharaoh and his Council adornment and possessions in this present life. Our Lord, let them go astray from Thy way; Our Lord, obliterate their possessions, and harden their hearts so that they do not believe, till they see the painful chastisement.’ He said, ‘Your prayer is answered, so go you straight and follow not the way of those that know not.*”<sup>(1)</sup> This is the imprecation of Moses, upon him be peace, on Pharaoh and his people among the Egyptians because of their unbelief: that God destroy their possessions. ‘To obliterate’ something is defined by al-Zajjāj<sup>(2)</sup> as ‘to make it unrecognizable.’

(We have it) on the authority of ‘Abd-Allāh ibn (al-)‘Abbās—God be pleased with both (father and son)—and of Muḥammad ibn Ka‘b al-Qaraẓī,<sup>(3)</sup> who both said: The money of the ancient Egyptians and their coins turned into stones, inscribed the way they had originally looked—as full dirhams, thirds of dirhams, half dirhams—but God obliterated all metal in them so that no one could make use of it thereafter. And Qatādah (ibn Di‘āmah) said: It has come to our knowledge that their possessions and their crops turned into stones. Both Mujaḥid and ‘Aṭīyyah<sup>(4)</sup> said: God Exalted destroyed (their possessions) so that they can no longer be seen.

One speaks of a spring as *maṭmūs* ‘obliterated’, meaning one that has vanished, and a place has ‘become obliterated’ when all traces of it have been wiped out and effaced.

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1. Koran 10 (Jonah): 88-39.

2. A Baghdadi grammarian and lexicologist, a student al-Mubarrad, died 922.

3. Iraqī traditionist, died 735.

4. He is the Kūfan traditionist Abū ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Aṭīyyah b. Sa‘d b. Judāmah (d. 729).

Ibn Zayd<sup>(5)</sup> transmitted: Their dinars, their dirhams, their household effects, everything they possessed turned into stone.

Muḥammad ibn Ka'b related: Some man and his wife might have been in bed together, and both had turned into stone. (The caliph) 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz asked me one time and I mentioned that (tradition) to him. Whereupon he called for a sack that had been found in Egypt and took from it fruits, dinars and dirhams—all of them were stones!

Muḥammad ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri also reported: Once I visited 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz and he called out, "Boy, bring me the sack!" (The page) brought a sack and spread out its contents: there were dirhams, dinars, dates, nuts, lentils, fava beans. "Help yourself, Ibn Shihāb!" said the caliph, and as I reached for them, they turned out to be stones. "What is this, Commander of the Faithful?" I said. "This belongs to the things which 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Marwān found in Egypt when he was governor there," he replied. "It is part of their possessions which God obliterated."

Al-Muḍarib ibn 'Abd-Allāh al-Shāmī related: I was told by someone who saw some date palm in Egypt—felled, and a stone! I also saw many people, some standing, some sitting, as they were engaged in their work. If you had seen them, you would not have doubted, before you came closer, that they were (living) people—yet they were stones! I saw one of their slaves, a plowman with a yoke of oxen, and both he and his two oxen were stones.

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5. Presumably the Baṣran traditionist Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Zayd al-Qurashī al-Taymī, better known as "Ibn Ju'dan" (d. 747). See Zirikī, *A'lām*, 5:101.

Wathīmah ibn Mūsā<sup>(6)</sup> is quoted in the *Stories of the Prophets* as saying that, when Pharaoh and his people had perished and the Israelites felt safe from his wickedness, Moses, upon him be peace, delegated two of his twelve headmen, one of them Caleb son of Jephunneh and the other Joshua son of Nun,<sup>(7)</sup> each with twelve thousand men from his tribe, and sent them into Egypt, which had just been stripped of its protectors because of the drowning of its people together with Pharaoh. They took Pharaoh's hoards and treasures and returned to Moses. And this is (what is meant by) "bequeathing to them the land of Egypt," that is, the Lord's words concerning Pharaoh's people: "*So We expelled them from gardens and fountains, and treasures and a noble station; even so, and we bequeathed them upon the children of Israel,*"<sup>(8)</sup> and His words "*And We bequeathed upon the people that were abased all the east and the west of the land We had blessed*"<sup>(9)</sup>—which is to say, the land of Egypt: He bequeathed it to the Israelites, because they were the "abased ones" living there, as is indicated by the Lord's words: "*Yet We desired to be gracious to those that were abased in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors, and to establish them in the land.*"<sup>(10)</sup>

[3] I myself was told by Dā'ūd ibn Rizq-Allāh ibn 'Abd-Allāh, who had traveled widely in Egypt, that he had once crossed over into a wadi in the vicinity of al-Qalamūn<sup>(11)</sup> in Upper Egypt and saw there numerous plots of melons and cucumbers, as well as apple

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6. He was a Persian merchant selling a silk fabric called *washy*—hence his nickname "al-Washshā". His travels took him as far as Spain and back to Old Cairo, where he died in 851. He is credited with a book on the *Riddah* (the "apostasy" wars during the caliphate of Abū Bakr). See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 6:12 and al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, 2:625. —While most of the preceding traditions can also be found in the *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (p. 173) of the Koran commentator al-Tha'labī (Abū Ishāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, died 1035), there is no such citation attributed to Wathīmah b. Mūsā.

7. Cf. Num. 14:6.

8. Koran 26 (The Poets): 57-59.

9. Koran 7 (The Battlements): 133.

10. Koran 28 (The Story): 4-5.

11. In the Dakhla Oases (cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 4:241).

trees, and all of them were stones. [4] Also, a certain prominent man had told me a long time ago that, on his way to some town in Egypt, he saw with his own eyes many melons which were all stones. And those melons were of the kind called *ʿabdālī*.<sup>(12)</sup>

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12. Also *ʿabdallāwī*. It is the cantaloupe. The name derives from ʿAbd-Allāh b. Ṭāhir, governor (826-27) of Egypt, who reportedly introduced it to the country (cf. Pt. II, ch. 91, sect. 10). See Şuyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥādarah*, 2:429; Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:93: *al-biṭṭīkh al-Khurāsānī*; Lane, *Lexicon*, 7:2666 s.v. *luffāḥ*.

### 13. On the Character, Nature and Temperament of the Egyptians

[1] The physician Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Riḍwān<sup>(1)</sup> says:

*Miṣr* is a name which, according to traditional accounts, signifies a descendant of Noah the Prophet, upon him be peace. This *Miṣr*, say the transmitters, settled in that land, sired offspring there and colonized it; hence, it was named after him. Today, this name signifies the land which is inundated by the Nile and circumscribed by four boundaries, which are as follows:

The sun rises over the farthest point of the ecumene in the east eight hours and one-third of an hour earlier than it does over this land, and it sets on it three hours and two-thirds of an hour earlier than it does on the farthest point of the ecumene in the west. From that follows of necessity that this country is located in the western half of the inhabited quarter. The western half of the inhabited quarter, according to Hippocrates and Ptolemy, is less hot and more humid than the eastern half, because it belongs to the sector of the Moon, while the eastern half lies in the sector of the Sun. That is to say, the sun shines on the eastern half before it does on the western half, while the moon rises over the western half before it does over the eastern half. Some of the ancients have maintained that the land of Egypt is located by nature in the center of the inhabited quarter of the Earth, but by measurement it lies, as we have stated, in the western half. The third boundary is established by the fact that the beginning of this country's distance from the Equator to

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1. The son of a baker, he began his career as a street astrologer in Cairo and rose to fame and fortune as the personal physician of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākim. He died in 1061. See *GAL*<sup>2</sup> 1:637, S 1:886. —The following 11 sections are Maqrīzī's extensive transcript of Ibn Riḍwān's small work entitled *Daḳ' maḍārr al-abdān bi-arḍ Miṣr* (Warding off Harm to the Body in Egypt), which has been edited and printed in Cairo.



the south lies at Uswān, whose geographical latitude is  $22 \frac{1}{2}$  degrees. The sun stands there twice a year at the zenith, once at the end of Gemini and once at the beginning of Cancer. Someone standing erect at the noon hour in Uswān will cast no shadow at all during these two times. Heat, dryness and scorch characterize its climate because the sun dries up its humid elements. That is why the complexion of the inhabitants became black and their hair kinky, all because of the scorching heat of their land. The fourth boundary is established by the fact that the farthest distance of the land of Egypt from the Equator to the north is the shoreline of the Byzantine Sea, along which many towns of Egypt are located, such as Alexandria, Damietta, Tinnīs and al-Faramā. Damietta's northerly distance from the Equator is  $31 \frac{1}{3}$  degrees, which is the end of the Third Clime and the beginning of the Fourth. The sun is (there) neither too far away from the inhabitants nor is it too close. Hence, their prevalent climate is temperate with a slight inclination to warmth. For it is the middle of the Fourth Clime which is the ideal location with regard to health among the civilized countries. Furthermore, Damietta's proximity to the sea and the fact that it is surrounded by it makes the city moderate (in climate) between hot and cold, but above average in humidity. Thus, its prevailing climate is a damp one which is neither hot nor cold. That is why the complexion of the inhabitants is brown, their natural disposition obliging, their hair lank. If scorching heat is the prevailing climate at one end of Egypt in the south, and moderate temperatures with a slight tendency to warmth the prevailing climate at its other end in the north, then the parts of Egypt located between these two positions are mostly hot. The intensity of the heat varies according to the distance from Uswān and the proximity to the Byzantine Sea. For that reason, both Hippocrates and Galen have called Egypt's prevailing climate hot.

[2] Also, says (Abū 'l-Ḥasan), Jabal Lūqā<sup>(2)</sup> to the east of (the fertile part of) this land keeps the east wind away from it. For no one has ever experienced a true east wind in al-Fuṣṭāṭ. Rather, when the east wind blows there, it blows sideways either from a northeasterly or a southeasterly direction. These winds are dry and prevent putrefaction, but (fertile) Egypt has always lacked that advantage. That is why those places in Egypt where the (true) east wind blows are better off than others, such as Alexandria and Tin-nīs. This mountain range also impedes the sun's irradiation on the (fertile) land of Egypt while it is on the horizon, so that the time during which its rays linger on that land is below normal. Such a condition is one of the reasons for the stagnation and heaviness of the air.

The fertile part of Egypt is a land with an abundant fauna and flora. One will hardly find a place there that is completely without animals and plants. It is a land with a porous and loose-textured soil. One can see that, as the Nile recedes, during the mud stage: Once the heat has dissolved its moisture, the ground splits into large cracks and fissures.

Places with many animals and plants make for a land of much putrefaction. The warmth of fertile Egypt's climate, its lack of vigor, and the abundance of fauna and flora have thus combined to impart to it its scorched nature and the blackness of its soil so that it became (truly) a "black land". Those parts of it which are near the mountains are marshy, either nitrous or saline. In the evenings, a black or dust-colored vapor rises from the cultivated land area, especially in the summertime.

The (fertile) land of Egypt consists of many parts, each with its own peculiarity. The reason for that is that its lateral extent is narrow, while its length spans the width of the Second and Third Climes. Thus, in Upper Egypt one finds a good many date palms, Nile aca-

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2. "Mt. St. Luke", one of the designations for the Eastern Mountains; cf. beginning of ch. 42 below.

cias, canebrakes and papyrus thickets, charcoal kilns, and the like. In the Fayyūm are numerous lagoons, canebrakes, and steeping ponds for flax.<sup>(3)</sup> The Delta has many varieties of plants, such as the colocasia, the banana, and so forth. In short, every part of Egypt has its own distinctive things.

[3] The Nile, says (Abū 'l-Ḥasan), brings humidity into the (normal) dryness of summer and autumn.

[4] It has become evident then that the prevailing climate of the fertile part of Egypt is one of warmth and abnormal humidity, that the land consists of many parts, and that its air and water are both bad. The ancients already showed that places characterized by much putrefaction will release numerous waste matters into the air which, since they rise differently, do not allow the air to settle into any one state, and earlier it had become clear that the air of (the fertile part of) Egypt is quick to deteriorate, because the rays of the sun do not dwell for the normal period of time on the land. Due to these two (factors), the weather of Egypt is very variable and one may find it to be different on one and the same day: hot one time and cold another, one time dry and the other humid, breezy at one time and calm at another, the sun shining brightly now and another time hidden by clouds. In short, the weather of Egypt is much given to variation and not following one pattern.

For that reason, bodily humors develop in the vessels and veins which do not remain constant. Also, the damp vapors released every day in Egypt are prevented by the variability of the weather, the little elevation of the mountains, and the great heat of the land from accumulating in the atmosphere, and when the air cools off in the cold of the night, these vapors sink to the ground and from them develops the mist which engenders dew and moisture, although sometimes they may dissolve invisibly. Since the vapors which gathered the day before dissolve every day, rain clouds form

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3. Restore the Bulaq text: *mawādi' ta'īn al-kattān* (Wiet: *ta'fīn* ?), i.e., what is called *mu'aṭṭanāt* or, specifically for flax and hemp, *miballāt*.

only rarely in Egypt. It is also (then) that the air of the fertile part of Egypt is moistened daily by damp vapors which rise into it and dissolve.

Someone said that mist comes about when air is transformed into the nature of water. If one adds this to what we have already stated, then it explains even more the quickness with which the air in Egypt deteriorates and why there is so much putrefaction there. For it is clear by now that the fertile part of Egypt is characterized by much instability and much abnormal humidity that quickly attracts decay and rot.

The ultimate cause of all that is the fact that the humidity increases in Egypt precisely during those times which all over the earth are characterized by dryness. Because it becomes humid in the summer and fall owing to the rise and flood of the Nile, which is contrary to the conditions in other countries. Hippocrates taught us that the humidity of summer and autumn is abnormal—by which I mean, deviating from the natural course, as, for instance, the moisture of a summer rain. That is why we have called Egypt's humidity "abnormal." For Egypt's natural climate is in essence warm and dry, and that which causes it to deviate from dryness to abnormal humidity, (namely) the rise of the Nile in the summer and fall, is merely *accidental*. Hence, the high incidence of putrefaction in that land.

This is the prime reason why Egypt is such a sapless land, why it is so prone to rot and decay, and why its water and air are so bad. These things ordinarily do not produce any noticeable change in the bodies of the Egyptians, however, because they are used to that condition and physically adapted to it.

All the indigenous animals and plants in the fertile part of Egypt are like the land itself, namely, of frail body and little strength, much given to change, susceptible to diseases, and short-lived. As, for instance, the wheat in Egypt, which is extremely perishable and spoils within a very short time. One must not think that the bodies

of human beings and other creatures are in any way different from that wheat with regard to proneness to change. How could it be otherwise, since their bodies are built from these things! Thus the condition<sup>(4)</sup> of indigenous plants and animals in Egypt, as far as lack of vigor, abundance of excretions, (tendency to) putrefaction, and susceptibility to diseases are concerned, is like the sapless nature of the land itself, its rot and decay, its waste matters, and its proneness to change, because the relationship is one and the same. That is why animals are able to live in it and plants can grow there, for inasmuch as these things are suited to it and quite adapted to it, they are able to survive. As to the things brought in from outside, once they come to Egypt, they deteriorate as soon as they are exposed to that air. But when they have become established and used to the air and exposed to it for some time, they become all right in some kind of Egyptian way.

[5] Of the things one eats and drinks in Egypt, says (Abū 'l-Ḥasan), grain (and other staple crops) change rapidly in quality, are sapless and loose-textured, and spoil within a very short time, such as wheat, barley, lentils, chick peas, beans, and grass peas. These rot soon. None of the foods prepared from them taste as good as their counterparts in other countries. Thus bread made from wheat in Egypt becomes inedible after it has been kept for a day and a night. If one eats it, one will find it neither tasty nor firm-textured, nor does it have chewiness, but it becomes moldy after a very short time. The same is true of flour. This is quite different from the bread in other countries. The same applies to all staple crops and fruits of Egypt and the things prepared from them: they are highly perishable and quick to change in appearance and quality. As for some of these things brought to Egypt (from somewhere else), it appears that their nature is altered by the different climate and they change from what they were before to something more like their equivalents in Egypt. Things only recently brought in, howev-

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4. Read with the Bulaq text: *fa-ḥālu*. Wiet: *li-ḥāli* ...

er, retain a good measure of their original quality. This, then, is the situation as far as the staple crops are concerned.

As to the animals that people eat, the constitution of the indigenous ones resembles that of the people of the land in feebleness and proneness to change and thus matches the nature of the latter. Those brought in from outside, such as Cyrenaican rams, are made tough and dry and humorally unsuitable for the constitution of the Egyptians by the long trek. Therefore, most of them become sick on arrival in Egypt. But when they have been there for a good while, their constitution changes and matches the constitution of the Egyptians.

The majority of the Egyptians drink Nile water, about which we have already said enough. Some of them drink the water of wells, which comes close to their own nature. Few people in Egypt, however, drink the residual water of pools and puddles. Their best drink is the *shamsī*, because the honey in it preserves its strength and does not allow its quick deterioration. It is made during a time of pure heat, which brings it to maturity, and the raisins from which it is made are imported from places with a better climate. Wine is rarely pressed without adding honey to it. It is pressed from the grapes of their own vineyards, which are very much like the Egyptians themselves, and that is why they have come to prefer *shamsī* rather than wine. Other drinks in Egypt, besides *shamsī* and wine, are all bad, because they spoil rapidly, such as date wine, rob of figs, and a beer made from wheat.

The foods of the Egyptians are of different kinds. The people of Upper Egypt often live on a diet of dates and a sweet made from sugarcane, which they take to Fustāṭ and other places where it is sold and consumed. The staple foods of the people of the Delta are colocasia and chickling vetches, which they take to Fustāṭ and other places to be sold and consumed. Many of the Egyptians eat fish frequently, either fresh or salted, and often they consume large quantities of milk and the products made from it. Among their fel-laheen one finds a bread called *ka'k*. It is made from crushed wheat

and dried and constitutes their principal diet all year round. In short, the bodies of each group of people are built from their own peculiar things to which they are accustomed and on which they have grown up. However, inferior foods are the rule among the Egyptians. Yet these do in no way alter their constitution, since their consumption is the common practice. This is still another confirmation of their lack of vigor and their susceptibility to diseases.

The rural people are more active and get more exercise than the townspeople and are therefore physically healthier, because the exercise fortifies and strengthens their organs. Due to the intense heat of their land, the people of Upper Egypt have more delicate, more volatile, looser and weaker humors than (the inhabitants of) the Delta. The people of Lower Egypt show more frequent elimination of their wastes in faeces and urine because of the tepid temperature of their land and their consumption of cold and coarse things, like colocasia for instance.

As to the character of the Egyptians, that is very much like (their physical disposition), because the faculties of the soul are dependent on the constitution of the body. Since their bodies are feeble, quick to change and of little endurance, so, likewise, their character is most commonly given to change, to moving from one thing to another, to meekness, cowardice, despondency, stinginess, impatience, little intellectual curiosity, fearfulness, envy, calumny, prevarication, power hunger, and a tendency to criticize other people. In short, they are governed by the base evils which spring from the vileness of the soul. These evils are not universal, but one finds them in most of them. There are some, though, whom God has given culture, good character and a disposition free from evils.

Since the land of Egypt generates cowardice and base evils in the soul, it is not the habitat of lions, and such as drift in become meek and contemptible and do not breed. The dogs of Egypt are less bold than those of other countries. Likewise, all other (animals) living there are weaker than their counterparts elsewhere, except those

which, by their very nature, are suited for such conditions, like the donkey and the rabbit.

Galen is of the opinion, says (Abū 'l-Ḥasan), that the season of spring is by nature temperate, thus contradicting those who thought of it as hot and humid. It is typical for that season that the body is healthy, digestion is good, the innate temperature expands freely, and the vital spirit is untroubled, because the weather is temperate and fair, night and day are of equal length, and (the humor of) blood is in the ascendant. A "temperate" weather is one in which one feels neither outward cold nor heat, neither humidity nor dryness, and which is in itself clear and fair. As a result, the vital spirit is strengthened in such weather, the body is healthy, animals become more active, and things grow and proliferate and multiply.

If we look for such weather in Egypt, we find it only during one time of the year, namely, during the months of Amshīr, Barmhāt, Barmūdah and Bashans, while the sun moves from the latter half of Aquarius through Pisces, Aries and Taurus. During that time, then, we find in Egypt temperate, clear and bright days on which one feels neither outward heat nor cold, neither humidity nor dryness. The sun shines brightly from a cloudless sky on those days and the air is calm and motionless, except during Barmūdah and Bashans, when a north wind is needed to temper the heat of the sun with its coolness. During that time, the animals are very active and ready to mate and they make beautiful noises, the trees put out leaves, flowers blossom, the procreative power increases, and the humor of blood is in the ascendant. The normal time of that season both begins and ends earlier in Egypt (than elsewhere) due to the great warmth of that country. Early in that season, that is, in the month of Amshīr, there may be a few very cold days when the north wind blows and the sun is behind clouds, and that is because (the beginning of) spring (in Egypt) falls into winter. For when the north wind blows, it chills the air with its own coldness and causes the weather, after a moderate spell, to become cold again, and because



of the large quantity of moist vapors rising from the ground during that time, the air turns humid and becomes again the way it was in winter.

Sometimes the air may turn cold due to the activity of other winds. The south wind, for instance, which is the warmest of the winds, picks up coldness during that time from the ground and the water already chilled by the winter air, and when it passes over something, it chills it with its acquired, accidental coldness, until, after it has been blowing for many days in a row, it regains its (innate) warmth and imparts warmth and dryness to the air. That the coldness of the south wind, which is known among the Egyptians as *marīsī*, stems from the coldness of Egypt's water and ground, and not from something inherent in its nature, is proven by the fact that no mist gathers in the atmosphere on the days when it is blowing. Such mist is formed when heat dissolves the humid vapors during the daytime and coldness condenses them again at night. But the temperature of the south wind prevents the cold from letting the vapors gather and disperse in the air, and as this wind continues to blow, water and ground warm up and the wind reverts to its own natural warmth.

If spring normally begins earlier (than elsewhere) and (its weather) shows all this variability—for the air in Egypt is basically variable due to its frequent change and the vapors rising into it—then how about other seasons! That is why spring is so windy (toward the end), and doctors hold back on administering purgatives until things have steadied by the time the sun passes from Aries into Taurus.

Then enters summer in the latter part of Bashans and (lasts through) Ba'ūnah, Abīb, and part of Misrā, while the sun is in Gemini, Cancer, Leo, and part of Virgo. During that season, both heat and dryness become more intense, grain enters the dry stage, fruits ripen, and, as a result of eating them, many harmful chymes collect in the body. While the sun is in Cancer, the Nile begins to rise and inundate the fertile part of Egypt. Then the summer climate

changes for the worse the more water vapors rise into the air. At the beginning of that season, while the sun is in Gemini, there are days on which the weather is like that of spring, when the sun is hidden by clouds or when the north wind blows. That is why many doctors erroneously administer purgatives during that time, believing that spring is not over yet. The more skillful ones, however, will select one of the days that have a more tranquil temperature (for that purpose). But most of them are totally unaware of this circumstance. At the end of summer, the Nile flood crests. It is quite evident then, that the beginning of this season is just as much ahead of its normal time as is its end, and that (the season) is quite unsteady and turbulent due to the great amount of water vapors rising (into the atmosphere). Were it not for the fact that the Egyptians are physically used to such variability and by nature adapted to such conditions, there would be an outbreak of those diseases among them which occur, according to Hippocrates, when the summer is humid.

Then comes the season of autumn, which is by nature dry, extending from the latter half of Misrā through Tūt, Bābih, and a few days of Hātōr. The sun is then at the end of Virgo and (moves through) Libra and Scorpio. The rise of the Nile is complete by the beginning of that season and (the river water) flows freely over the land, covering the arable part of Egypt. Many vapors rise from it into the atmosphere so that the weather of autumn changes from dry to humid. It may even rain sometimes and many clouds may gather in the sky. There are some very hot days in that season which actually are like summer days, but once the atmosphere is cleansed of humid vapors, their temperature becomes normal again. There are also days very much like spring days. They occur at the time of the equinox, when the (flood) moistens the dry air. The weather becomes increasingly unstable during that season due to the great quantity of humid vapor rising into the air, so that it will be sometimes hot, sometimes cool, sometimes dry; but most of the time it

remains humid. It continues to be mixed like that until the humidity caused by the flood water eventually takes over completely.

In the fall, a great many fish are caught in the Nile. Eating them generates viscid humors in the body, and these often turn into yellow bile when they encounter a bilious humor in the body. Hence, the vital spirit in the bodies is disturbed, the humors are in a state of agitation, and the digestive process in the ventricles, vessels and arteries is upset, with the result that harmful chymes of a great variety develop, some of them yellow bile, some black bile, some viscid phlegm, some raw phlegm, some burning bile, and many of them a composite of these, and (these chymes) then give rise to diseases. When the Nile recedes at the end of autumn and the ground reappears, when the weather becomes cool and the fish are plentiful, when the vapors become thicker and more and more putridity rises into the air so that rot and decay settle everywhere, then the incidence of diseases is on the rise, and were it not for the fact that the Egyptians are used to such things, even more diseases would break out among them.

Then enters the season of winter, which is by nature cold and moist, extending from the latter half of Hātōr through Kiyahk and Tūbah, while the sun goes through Sagittarius, Capricorn, and part of Aquarius. That is less than three months, and the reason for it is Egypt's very warm climate and the fact that the body is in a disturbed condition. Early in that season, the land emerges from under the water and is put to the plow. It becomes generally putrescent because of the many seeds sown in it and the abundance of animal manure and wastes it contains, but also because it is sapless and lacking vitality while it is in that mudlike state at that time of the year. As a result, countless varieties of mice, worms, plants, herbs, and the like, develop and plenty of vapors are released from it into the air so that the fog in the mornings (is so thick that it) hides even nearby objects from view. Also, many fish trapped in the pools and puddles left by the receding water are caught (at that time). Because these do not move much, they are already tainted

with decay and their consumption produces in the body numerous viscous and highly putrescible wastes. Diseases are rife early in that season until, as the cold becomes more intense, as digestion is strengthened, as the weather stabilizes, as the innate temperature returns inside (the body), and as the ground becomes covered with vegetation and the putrescence abates, the human body regains its health. This will happen at the end of Kiyahk or in Ṭūbah.

It has become evident, then, that the seasons in Egypt are very variable, and that the worst times of the year and the ones with the most diseases are the end of autumn and the beginning of winter, which is during the months of Hātōr and Kiyahk. But the variability of the seasons is adapted to the poor condition of the country itself and the harm that waste matters can do to the body is therefore less in Egypt than in other countries, when these show the same instability. It has also become clear that the primary cause of that is the rise of the Nile in the summer and the fact that its water covers the ground in the fall. (This is) unlike the behavior of the waters of rivers in the entire ecumene, because they only rise at times that are specifically humid, namely, winter and spring.

[6] It is evident from the preceding, says (Abū 'l-Ḥasan), that the fertile part of Egypt has much abnormal humidity, and it would appear that the indigenous diseases of the Egyptians should be of this humid type. But I have rarely seen their local diseases to be entirely of this type without containing initially elements of (viscid) and raw phlegm. All diseases, as Hippocrates has stated, occur among them at all seasons. Most of their diseases are “abnormal,” i.e., putrid as a result of bilious and phlegmatic humors in conformity with the climate of their country.

[7] What we have said earlier, says (Abū 'l-Ḥasan), would necessitate that the incidence of diseases be a frequent one. The fact, however, that (the diseases) resemble one another and that they occur within one and the same year prevents them from being in themselves pathogenic as long as they adhere to the norm. But once they deviate from their norm, they will cause disease. It is this

deviation from the norm in Egypt which I consider a pathogenic variation, not the variability found there continuously. The Nile, for instance, does not cause disease every year, but when its rise is excessive and lasts longer than normal, then it can be a cause for the outbreak of an epidemic. Someone could argue: If, as you have stated, the bodies of the people in Egypt are sapless and lacking vigor, then they are perhaps in a state of permanent disease. To which the reply is: We are not concerned here with how that is, because it is the *disease* which in practice causes directly perceptible harm. Therefore, the bodies of the Egyptians are not in a state of continual disease. They are, however, highly susceptible to diseases.

[8] The indigenous diseases of Egypt, says (Abū 'l-Ḥasan), we have already sufficiently discussed. It appeared that most of them are “abnormal” diseases aggravated by yellow bile and raw phlegm, whereby the other diseases develop from these rapidly and due to close contact, especially at the end of autumn and the beginning of winter. Among the epidemics—“epidemic” meaning a disease which spreads among a large number of people in one community at one and the same time—is one called “the plague,” which exacts a heavy death toll. The outbreak of epidemics can be the result of many causes, which can be summarized in four categories, namely: a change in the quality of the air, a change in the quality of the water, a qualitative change of foodstuffs, and a change in the nature of psychological events. The nature of the air changes in two ways: (1) a change which is normal, and this one does not cause an epidemic and is not a pathogenic change; (2) a change which is abnormal, and this is the one that causes the epidemic. The same applies to the other categories.

The air changes abnormally when it becomes too hot, or too cold, or too humid, or too dry, or when some putrid condition enters it. (The source of) the putrid condition can be either near by or far away. Both Hippocrates and Galen say that an epidemic may very well break out in Greece as a result of putridity which gathered in Abyssinia, rose into the atmosphere, descended upon the Greeks,

and caused the epidemic among them. The air may also change abnormally when a large (foreign) delegation arrives whose members are physically exhausted by the long journey and (therefore) have bad humors. Then much of this mingles with the air, there is contagion among the populace, and an epidemic breaks out.

The water, too, may be the cause of an epidemic, either when there is too much or too little of it, or when some putrid condition enters it and people are compelled to drink it anyway so that the air surrounding their bodies becomes putrid as well. This (putrid) condition may enter it either at some nearby place or at a distance, as when it passes in its flow over some battlefield with many rotting corpses, or over the water of fetid swamps which it carries along downriver as it mingles with the air's body.

Foodstuffs are the cause of epidemics, either because mildew has gotten to them and, with prices up, people are forced to eat them anyway, or because people eat too much of them at a time, as it will happen on feasts and holidays, so that there is a lot of indigestion among them and they come down with some obscure disease. Or it may be because the pasture of the animals one eats or the water they drink have gone bad.

Psychological events may be the cause of epidemics, when there is general fear among the people of a certain king, for instance, so that they stay awake much of the night, thinking of how to escape him and of the affliction that has come to pass. Then their digestion deteriorates and their innate temperature changes, and sometimes they may be compelled to drastic action in such a situation. Or they may anticipate a famine of several years and strain and exert themselves in order to stock up on things, increasingly worried about what will happen.

All of these things will cause epidemics in the body when those exposed to them are a large number of people in one community at one and the same time. Obviously, when there are many sick people at a time in one town, much vapor will rise from their bodies so

that the composition of the air changes, and when it meets with a susceptible body, it will make it ill, even if that person was not exposed to the same things as the (other) people. Epidemics in Egypt, then, originate either from an unusual corruption of the air—and it does not matter whether the corrupting substance comes from Egypt itself or from one of the neighboring countries, such as the Sudan, the Hejaz, Syria, or the Cyrenaica—or from a corruption affecting the Nile in that its rise is either excessive, so that there is a marked increase in humidity and putrefaction, or falls seriously short, so that the air becomes unusually dry and people are compelled to drink bad water. Or the river may be contaminated by putridity caused by war, either in Egypt or in the Sudan or elsewhere, in which many people die and the vapor of their cadavers rises into the air, rendering it fetid, and its putridity then affects the people by direct contact or is carried along by the water. Or there may be a dearth, or crops may be blighted, or harm may befall the sheep and the like, or general fear and despondency may grip the people. Any one of these factors will cause an epidemic in Egypt whose intensity will be commensurate with the force of the original cause. If there is more than one cause, then the disease will be all the more severe and powerful and deadly.

[9] So, the climate of the fertile part of Egypt, says (Abū 'l-Ḥasan), is warm and abnormally humid. The southern parts of Egypt are hotter, and the water of the Nile is less putrid there, than the northern portions. Especially the people living north of Fuṣṭāt, like those of al-Buṣhmūr<sup>(5)</sup> are very crude by nature and stupidity is most common among them, because they live on very coarse food and drink bad water. As for Alexandria, Tinnīs and similar towns, their proximity to the sea, the evenness of warmth and cold there, and the fact that they are exposed to the east wind, all these things contribute to making the people living there better, more refined,

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5. A vanished community and once a rich agricultural region in the NE Delta, called *Boukolies* by the Greeks. It was located in the area of present-day *Dikirmis*. See Ramzi, *Qāmūs*, I, 31-32.

more cheerful, and they are not as crude and asinine as the people of al-Bushmūr. Since the town of Tinnīs is surrounded by the sea, it is mostly humid and the people living there are quite effeminate.

[10] Since Egypt and everything in it is weak-bodied and quick to deteriorate and decay, says (Abū 'l-Ḥasan), it is important for the physician to choose such foods and remedies as are fresh and of recent origin, because they are considered to retain their strength without serious deterioration, and also to adapt his treatment to the physical condition of the people in Egypt. He should strive to make his treatment slightly in favor of the allopathic approach and avoid administering strong laxatives and anything else of excessive strength. These bodies are easily harmed and the bodies of the Egyptians in particular are prone to all kinds of damage. He should choose therefore such purgatives and other medications as are of milder strength, lest they strain the constitution of the Egyptians and cause damage to their bodies. He should not resort to the remedies found in the medical books of the Greeks and Persians, because most of these are designed for robust bodies with splendid humors, and such things are rare in Egypt. For that reason, the physician must hold back on administering such remedies to the sick. He should choose only the mildest of them and reduce their dosages and substitute for many of them other medications with a more gentle effect, using (for instance) sugar oxymel instead of oxymel of honey and rosewater in lieu of honey-water. One must also know that the air of Egypt affects the strength of electuaries and other medicaments, so that the life span of simple and compound remedies, whether they be electuaries or not, is shorter in Egypt than elsewhere. The physician needs to appreciate that and make allowance for it, lest he find himself short of something he may need. If, in purging a body, he is not satisfied with a one-time administration of a laxative, there is no harm in repeating it after a few days, for this is better than administering a very strong remedy at one time.



[11] Because Egypt generates saplessness and susceptibility to disease in the bodies, says (Abū 'l-Ḥasan), it is not surprising that truly good-looking bodies are very rare indeed in Egypt, while those that are not are quite numerous, and that perfect health is, for the most part, almost as rare among them as good looks. In order to get bodies into good shape requires in Egypt first of all that one regulate the air, the nutrition, the water and everything else in such a manner that they are as much as possible on the moderate side. And since digestion is often bad in Egypt, as is the vital spirit, one must be careful to watch the heart, the brain, the liver, the stomach, the arteries, the veins, and the rest of the internal organs in order to improve digestion, repair the vital spirit, and purge infesting wastes.

[12] In his commentary on Ptolemy's *The Four*<sup>(6)</sup> he says: As to the remaining part of the quarter which inclines toward the middle of the whole ecumene—that is, the Cyrenaica, the littoral extending from Mareotis via Alexandria, Rosetta, Damietta and Tinnis to al-Faramā, the Nile Delta and the vicinity of the cities of Memphis and al-Fuṣṭāṭ and the adjacent part of Upper Egypt east of the Nile, the land extending from the Fayyūm to remote Upper Egypt west of the Nile, the Oases, Nubia and the land of the Beja and the land along the sea east of Nubia, and the land of the Abyssinians—these lands are all situated in the quadrant which affects the entire quarter located between west and south. They form part of the western half of the inhabited quarter and are jointly governed by the five erratic planets. Hence, the people living there love God, stand in awe of demons, like loud lamentation, bury and hide their dead in the ground, and follow various customs and diverse habits and views, because they have a natural inclination for those mys-

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6. *Kitāb al-Arba'*, i.e., the *Tetrabiblos syntaxis* or *Quadripartitum* (*de apotelesmatibus et iudiciis astrorum*), a small astrological work ascribed to the great 2nd-century mathematician, astronomer and geographer Claudius Ptolemaeus Alexandrinus. It was translated into Arabic in the 9th century by Abū Nūḥ Ibrāhīm b. al-Ṣalt, who also wrote a commentary on it. See *The Fihrist* (ed. and transl. B. Dodge) 640.

teries which attract each group among them to one occult thing or another in which they believe and on which they agree collectively. Because of these mysteries it was the Egyptians who developed the precise sciences, such as geometry, astronomy, etc., in earliest times, and from them the sciences spread in the world. When they are governed by someone else, they are meek, and cowardice and humility in speech are most common among them, but when they rule others, they are nice and much concerned. Their men take many women and, likewise, their women take several men. They are much preoccupied with sexual intercourse, and their men sire numerous offspring and their women are quick to get pregnant. Many are the people who have said that their souls are weak and effeminate.

[13] Abū 'l-Ṣalt (Umayyah ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz) says: As to the inhabitants of Egypt, they are a mixture of people of various kinds and races, Copts, Greeks, Arabs, Kurds, Persians, Abyssinians and others, but the populace is Coptic. It has been said that the reason for this mixture is the succession of those who ruled and conquered the country, such as the Amalekites, the Greeks, the Byzantines, and so on. That is why their lineage became all mixed up so that they are no longer able to determine exactly where they originally came from and where they were born. It has been related that they were, in earlier times, idol worshipers and practitioners of a temple cult until Christianity emerged and gained the upper hand in Egypt. Then they became Christianized and remained Christians until the Muslims conquered the land, at which time some of them converted to Islam and others continued to adhere to Christianity. As far as their character is concerned, yielding to carnal appetites and avid pleasure-seeking are quite common among them, as are the preoccupation with humbug and a ready belief in the absurd, together with weakness of will and determination. They are experienced in cunning and duplicity, possessing by nature a faculty, tendency, subtlety and predisposition for them, on account of the flattering and smiling disposition in their character which they have skillfully practiced on all that came and went. So much have they

been identified with its excessive use as compared with all other nations, that they have become famous and proverbial for it. Concerning their wickedness and duplicity, Abū Nuwās has these words:<sup>(7)</sup>

I shall be frank, o Egypt's folk,  
   so pick your share of my advice:  
 A snake the Caliph 's flung at you  
   to eat your country's snakes.  
 Should Pharaoh's lie still linger here—  
   why, Moses' staff 's in Khaṣīb's hand!

[14] I learned by chance a long time ago that the Belt of Orion stands at the zenith above the Egyptians, and that is the reason why they speak of things before they happen, why they receive information about what will be and are forewarned of future events. They have some famous stories to tell in that respect.

[15] (Thus) Ibn al-Ṭuwayr,<sup>(8)</sup> after having mentioned the capture of the city of Tyre by the Franks (in July 1124), relates: So Ascalon was again put on alert. It was still protected (only) by the replacements dispatched there from the army and the fleets. The State was getting weaker by the day due to internal dissension, and this weighed heavily on the troops, who became distracted from (the city's defense). The Franks laid siege to (Ascalon) and eventually took it in the year 548 (A.D. 1153). Two years before that, I had

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7. On the famed poet (d. ca. 814) cf. "Abū Nuwās" by E. Wagner in *EF*. —The verses are part of a panegyric composed by Abū Nuwās during his stay in Egypt in honor of (Abū Naṣr) al-Khaṣīb b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, then director of finance appointed by Hārūn al-Rashīd. They can be found, correct and in proper sequence, in the poet's *Dīwān* (ed. Ewald Wagner, Cairo 1378/1958, p. 232; ed. M.K. Farid, Cairo, no year, p. 78).

8. Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām b. al-Ḥasan (1130-1220). He was a high-ranking official in the waning Fāṭimid state. His historiographical work *Nuzhat al-muq̄latayn fī akhbār dawlatayn* was for Maq̄rīzī an important source for Fāṭimid history and institutions. See "Ibn al-Ṭuwayr" (Cl. Cahen) in *EF*.

heard a man speak about these events, saying, "In '48, Ascalon will be captured by peaceful surrender of its garrison."

[16] The incident of the Christian churches also belongs here: On Friday, the 9th of Rabī' II, 721 (8 May 1321), while people were at prayer, it seems that a call went out all over Egypt, from Qūṣ to Alexandria, to destroy the churches. Within that one hour, over that large area, a great number of churches were demolished, as it will be told in its proper place when we discuss the churches of the Christians.<sup>(9)</sup>

[17] As does the Eldemir incident: Emir Eldemir, the *Amīr Jāndār*,<sup>(10)</sup> left Cairo for the pilgrimage in the year 730. There were armed clashes in Mecca during which Eldemir was killed on Friday, the 14th of Dhū 'l-Hijjah (28 September 1330). On that very same day, the rumor spread in Cairo, Old Cairo and in the Citadel that there was a battle in Mecca in which Eldemir was killed. The news spread like wildfire in the countryside of Egypt, but (Sultan) al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn paid no attention to it. And when the pilgrimage heralds arrived as usual, they brought news of the incident and of the death of Emir Sayf al-Dīn Eldemir on the same day the rumor had spread in Cairo.

[18] The compiler of the *Nāṣirian Vita*<sup>(11)</sup> reports: I was with Emir 'Alam al-Dīn al-Khāzin in the Gharbiyyah province, where he had just gone as district commandant. After he and I had prayed the Friday prayer and had returned to the house, one of his slave troopers arrived from Cairo and informed him of a rumor that civil

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9. *Khīṭaṭ* 2:512-17. Cf. also 2:165 (*al-Birkah al-Nāṣiriyyah*).

10. Commander of the sultan's bodyguard, one of the highest-ranking officers in the early Mamluk state. Maqrīzī gives a detailed account of events in Eldemir's biography (*Khīṭaṭ* 2:38-39).

11. He is the Egyptian military historian 'Imad al-Dīn Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Yūsufī (1296-1358); cf. *Khīṭaṭ* 2:278 (last but one line). His voluminous history of the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn, entitled *Nuzhat al-nāẓir fi sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, covers the events from the reign of Sultan Qalāwūn (1280-90) to the year 755/1354. See Ibn Hajar, *al-Durar al-kāminah*, 4:381.

strife had broken out in Mecca in the course of which a number of soldiers, among them Emir Eldemir the Amīr Jāndār, had been killed. Emir ‘Alam al-Dīn asked him, “Has someone from the Hejaz brought this news?” “No,” said (the man). “Then woe betide you!” said (the Emir). “People do not get from Minā to Mecca until the third day after the Day of Immolation. So how could you make up this news that no man in his right mind can listen to?” The matter was widely discussed, and it turned out it was the way it had been rumored.

[19] During Ramaḍān in the year 791 (A.D. 1389), I happened to walk through the street in Bayn al-Qaṣrayn<sup>(12)</sup> after dark, when I heard the people in the street talk about al-Malik al-Zāhir Barqūq:<sup>(13)</sup> that he had escaped from his prison in al-Karak and that people were flocking to him. (Later) I checked this, and it turned out to have been the day on which he escaped from prison.

There are many other examples of this kind.

[20] Another character trait of the Egyptians is their lack of jealousy. Suffice it to recall what God Exalted and Sublime tells us of Joseph, upon him be peace, and how the governor’s wife solicited him against his will, and how one from her household bore witness against her so that her husband realized the evil she had done. Yet he did not punish her for that and merely said, “*Ask forgiveness of thy crime; surely thou art one of the sinners.*”<sup>(14)</sup>

[21] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates:<sup>(15)</sup> When those Egyptians who were with Pharaoh had drowned with him and there were only

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12. The quarter northwest of al-Azhar, once dominated by the palaces of al-Mu‘izz to the east, and of al-‘Azīz to the west, of the main axis. The latter was apparently already destroyed around the turn of the 13th century, and in its place the Sūq al-Ṣayārif and houses had been built (cf. Yāqūt, 1:534). Maqrizī’s birthplace and home stood not far away to the north.

13. The first of the Circassian (Burjī) Mamluk sultans (1382-89, 1390-99). See “Barkūk” (G. Wiet) in *EP*. — On the fortress of al-Karak (the *Craque des Moabites* of the Crusaders) cf. “al-Karak” (D. Sourdel) in *EP*.

14. Koran 12 (Joseph): 29.

15. The tradition was already cited in ch. 10, sect. 28.

slaves and hirelings left, their women could not be for long without men. So a woman would go ahead and free her slave and marry him, another would marry her hired man, but they stipulated that the men must do nothing without their permission, and the men complied with that. Thus were the women set above the men. I was told by Ibn Lahī‘ah on the authority of Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb that the Coptic women are like that to this day, following the tradition of the past: No (Copt) will sell or buy anything without saying, “I Will ask for my wife’s orders.”

[22] When Pharaoh had drowned, and with him the nobles of Egypt, there was no man left who was fit to rule Egypt. So people regarded, in their respective ranks, the daughter of the king as a queen, the daughter of the vizier as vizieress, and so on for the daughters of the provincial and district governors as well as the daughters of the generals and soldiers. Thus, for years the women ruled the kingdom. They married black slaves, but they stipulated that they would be the ones who ruled and made decisions. This continued for quite some time. And that is why the Egyptians have a brown complexion; because they are the offspring of the black slaves who married the Coptic women after the drowning and had children by them.

[23] I was once told by my learned, trustworthy consultant Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Gharābīlī al-Karakī,<sup>(16)</sup> God rest him in peace, that, ever since he lived in Egypt, he found himself relaxed in temper, permissive toward his family, gentle and kind—all because he felt so little passion and fervor. And among the things I keep hearing from people is that drinking the water of the Nile makes the stranger forget his homeland.

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16. He was a Palestinian, the son of the judge of al-Karak. He lived in Egypt for years and then assumed the office of *nā‘ib* (deputy judge) of al-Karak. After his dismissal, he retired to Jerusalem, where he died in November 1413. Maqrīzī embellished his biography in the *Durar al-‘uqūd* with many anecdotes of this sort. See al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’ al-lāmī*, 10:6.

[24] It is a trait of the character of the Egyptians that they refuse to plan ahead. One does not find them stocking up on provisions as people in other countries do. Rather, they get their food every day from the market, early in the morning and at night. Other character traits are their avid pursuit of carnal appetites, their careful attention to sensual delights, great recklessness, and complete indifference.

[25] My revered professor Abū Zayd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, God rest him in peace, once told me: “The Egyptians seem to have no sense of planning ahead.”

[26] It has been transmitted from ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, that when he asked Ka‘b al-Aḥbār about the nature of the various countries and the character of their inhabitants, he replied: When God Almighty created things, He put each thing with another. So Reason said, “I [am going] to Iraq,” and Knowledge said, “I am going with you.” Wealth said, “I [am going]<sup>(17)</sup> to Syria,” and Discord said, “I am going with you.” Then Fertility said, “I am going to Egypt,” and Servility said, “I am going with you.” And Hardship said, “I am going to the desert,” and Health said, “I am going with you.”

[27] It is said: When God created mankind, He also created ten dispositions: faith, diffidence, bravery, seditiousness, pride, hypocrisy, wealth, poverty, servility, and misery. Then Faith said, “I am going to the Yemen,” and Diffidence said, “I am going with you.” Bravery said, “I am going to Syria,” and Seditiousness said, “I am going with you.” Pride said, “I am going to the Iraq,” and Hypocrisy said, “I am going with you.” Wealth said, “I am going to Egypt,” and Servility said, “I am going with you.” And Poverty said, “I am going to the desert,” and Misery said, “I am going with you.”

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17. The passage in brackets is Wiet’s restoration of the tradition on the basis of Mas‘ūdi and Yāqūt. It is missing in the Bulaq text and the mss.

[28] From (‘Abd-Allāh) Ibn (al-)‘Abbās, God be pleased with both (father and son): Cunning consists of ten parts, nine of which are found among the Copts and one in the rest of mankind.

[29] People say: Four (things) are unknown among four (peoples): generosity among the Byzantines, loyalty among the Turks, courage among the Copts, and sadness among the Negroes.

[30] Ibn al-Qirriyyah<sup>(18)</sup> described the Egyptians thus: They are slaves to any conqueror. The smartest people when they are young, the most ignorant as adults!

[31] At the time, says al-Mas‘ūdī,<sup>(19)</sup> when ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb conquered the various countries—the Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and so on—through the Muslims, he wrote to one of the sages of his time: “We are Arabs. God has opened up the countries to us, and we wish to settle down and live in the towns and cities. So describe to me the towns and their climate, and the dwellings in them, and how soil and weather affect their inhabitants.” And (the wise man) wrote back to him: “As for Egypt, it is a spacious and flat country, the land of the Pharaohs, the abode of the Giants. There is more to censure about it than there is to praise: Its air is murky, its heat excessive, its evil bygone. It clouds the colors and the minds and is beset by feuds. It is a mine of gold and precious stones, and also (a land) of grain fields—only, the grain makes fat and blackens the skin. One lives longer there. There is cunning in its people, and dissimulation and wickedness and craftiness and treachery. It is a country for gain, not one to live in, because one rebellion follows the other and calamities never end.”

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18. An illiterate bedouin, he was proverbial in his time for his eloquence and oratorical skill. The Umayyad governor of the Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, to whose inner circle he had once belonged, had him executed in 703 on the charge of treason. See “Ibn al-Qirriyyah” (Ch. Pellat) in *ET*.

19. *Prairies d’or*, 3:123.



[32] ‘Umar ibn (Zayd) “Shabbah” ibn ‘Abīdah<sup>(20)</sup> says in his *History of Baṣrah* on the authority of Ka‘b al-Aḥbār: The best women on the face of the earth are the women of Baṣrah—except, of course, for what the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, said about the women of the Quraysh. And the worst women on earth are the Egyptian women.

[33] And ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Umar said: When Satan was hurled down, he set his foot on Baṣrah and hatched eggs in Egypt.

[34] Egypt, said Ka‘b al-Aḥbār, is a country as unclean as a menstruating woman. It is cleansed by the Nile every year.

[35] And Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān said: I have found the people of Egypt to be of three kinds: one third is human, one third is quasi-human, and one third is non-human. The third who are human are the Arabs; the third that merely resemble humans are the (Arab) clients; and the third who are non-human are the new converts to Islam—meaning, the Copts.

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20. Baṣran traditionist-historian and poet, died 876 in Sāmarrā.

## 14. Some of the Merits of the Nile

[1] Muslim quotes from the traditions of Anas (ibn Mālik), God be pleased with him, dealing with Muḥammad's ascension to heaven that the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, said: Then the Lote-Tree of the Boundary<sup>(1)</sup> rose before my eyes, and its fruit was like the jars of Hajar and its leaves like the ears of elephants. Such is the Lote-Tree of the Boundary. And there were four rivers, two of them hidden and two visible. I said, "What is this, Gabriel?" He replied, "The two hidden ones, they are rivers in Paradise. As for the visible ones, they are the Nile and the Euphrates."

[2] And the Torah says:<sup>(2)</sup> He created a garden in Eden and put man in it. And He made a river flow from it which divides into four parts: Pison (*Faysūn*), which encompasses the land of Havilah; Gihon (*Jayhūn*), which encompasses the land of Cush, and which is identical with the Egyptian Nile; the Tigris, which flows toward the Iraq; and the Euphrates.

[3] Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam relates<sup>(3)</sup> that 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Amr, God be pleased with him, said: The Nile of Egypt is the lord of all rivers. God has made every stream in east and west subservient to it, and when God wills to make the Nile rise, He commands every river to supply it with its water, and the streams do. And God has cleft the earth as springs for it, and when its rise has reached the level that God Sublime and Exalted wills, He tells each water to return to its source.

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1. Cf. Koran 53 (The Star): 14-16. —The jars made in Hajar, chief town of al-Baḥrayn (NE Arabia), were famous for their extraordinary size, each having a capacity of 4 *ṣā'* (16.85 liters).
  2. Gen. 2:8-14. —The Bulaq text and all mss. give the first two rivers as *Jayhūn* (Oxus, Amū Daryā) and *Sayhūn* (Jaxartes, Sir Daryā), the traditional boundaries toward Turkish territory. Compare also note 5.
  3. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabiḥ) 103.

And we have it on the authority of Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb that Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, God be pleased with him, once asked Ka‘b al-Aḥbār: “Do you find anything about this Nile in the Book of God?” And he replied, “Yes, by Him Who divided the sea for Moses, I do indeed find it in the Book of God: Twice every year, God addresses Himself to it, namely, at the time of its rise (with the words): God commands thee to rise!—and it rises as long as God has ordained for it, and thereafter (with the words): Now seep into the earth,<sup>(4)</sup> O Nile, thou hast done well!”

[4] And from Ka‘b al-Aḥbār, may God be pleased with him, that (the Prophet) said:<sup>(5)</sup> God has placed four rivers originating in Paradise into this world: the Nile is the river of honey in Paradise, the Euphrates is the river of wine in Paradise, the Sayḥān is the river of water in Paradise, and the Jayḥān is the river of milk in Paradise.

[5] Mas‘ūdī says:<sup>(6)</sup> The River Nile is a lord among the rivers and a noble among the streams, because it issues from Paradise, as it is related in the Shari‘ah.

[6] The Arabs said:<sup>(7)</sup> When the Nile increases, the rivers, springs and wells decrease for its sake, and when it decreases, they increase. Thus its increase derives from their decrease, and its decrease comes from their increase.

Among the rivers of the world there is none that is called *baḥr*, except the Nile of Egypt—on account of its size and because of the fact that it spreads out like a sea (at flood time).

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4. Apparently “based” on Koran 67 (The Kingdom): 30. Notice the variant reading ‘*ud*’ ‘return’ in the Bulaq text (1:50, last line) and in al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāqārah*, 2:341.

5. The source is still Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (*loc. cit.*). —*Sayḥān* (the Saros river) and *Jayḥān* (the Pyramus) marked the traditional boundaries toward Byzantine territory. Compare note 2.

6. *Prairies dor* 2:358.

7. *Ibid.*, 359.

[7] And Ibn Qutaybah says in his *Unusual Traditions*: The Prophet spoke of “two believing rivers and two infidel rivers: the believing rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates, the infidel rivers the Tigris and the River of Balkh” (i.e., the Oxus). The reason he referred allegorically to the Nile and the Euphrates as “believers” is that they overflow the land and irrigate crops and trees without trouble and pains. And he called the Tigris and the River of Balkh “infidels” because they inundate the land and irrigate it only a little, and even this little with much trouble and toil. Thus, the former are in their beneficence and usefulness like the believers, and the latter are in their lack of beneficence and usefulness like the infidels.

## 15. The Source and Origin of the Nile

[1] One must know that, as the Sea of India issues from the Ocean surrounding the inhabited world, it becomes divided into sections, as we have already stated. One of these is called the Sea of the Zanj, which is contiguous with the land of the Yemen and with the Sea of Berbera. In this section are several islands, among them the Island of the Qumr, which is also called the Island of Malāy. It takes four months to traverse it lengthwise and twenty days, or less, to cross its width. This island is opposite the Island of Ceylon. A number of populous towns are located on it, among them Qumriyyah, from which the name of the turtledove called *qumrī* is derived. People say that on that island is a timber tree from whose trunk one can carve a boat sixty cubits long which is rowed by one hundred and sixty oarsmen.<sup>(1)</sup> It is also said that this island became too crowded for its people so that they built along the shore dwellings for them to live in at the foot of a mountain which is named after them and called *Jabal al-Qumr*—Mountain of the Qumr.

[2] One should also know that all mountains branch off from the mountain range which rings most of the inhabited part of the Earth and is called *Jabal Qāf*. It is the source of all mountains, which branch out from it. At some places it forms a continuous chain, at others it is interrupted. It is like the circle which has no known beginning, considering that one cannot tell the two ends of a ring apart. Although its roundness is not such that it truly encircles the globe, it is nevertheless an encompassing, or quasi-encompassing, roundness.

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1. Both texts should be emended to read: ... *yujadhdhifu 'alā zahrihī mī'atun* etc. Wiet's suggested translation defies Arabic grammar and usage.

[3] Certain people have maintained that the source mountains are actually two, one of them originating from the Encircling Sea in the west and running south, and the other issuing from the Byzantine Sea and heading north, until they meet at the Great Barrier.<sup>(2)</sup> They called the southern one *Qāf* and the northern one *Qāqūnā*. But it seems more likely that it is actually one mountain range encircling most of the inhabited part of the world, and that it is identical with what is known as *Jabal Qāf*, as which it is known in the south, while in the north it is known as *Jabal Qāqūnā*.

This encircling mountain range begins at the flank of the Great Barrier, extending from beyond the Idol of the Khitan,<sup>(3)</sup> which is a pilgrimage shrine, to the branch of it which detaches itself from it (at that point) and in which the Gate of China was built, and running along the western side of the Central Plain of China. Then it bends in the extreme east in a straight line southward, running along both the Encircling Sea and the inland plain opening between it and the Indian Sea. It breaks off at the point where both the Indian Ocean and the Equator depart, which is at a longitude of 170 degrees. The mountain then runs continuously in a south-southeasterly direction from that branch of the Indian Sea which meets the branch of the (Encircling) Sea that issues on the Sea of Darkness, (beginning) beyond the point where the Indian Sea starts to the south. Of these two branches, the (Sea of) Darkness is the arm of the Ocean which extends along the south of the Encircling Sea in an east-west direction, while the Indian Sea issues at (the arm) which is headed toward the (Sea of) Darkness. The two branches eventually meet, much in the way a pair of trousers is cut, near where that mountain range reemerges. Then, at the apex of

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2. *Al-Sadd*, i.e., the rampart built by Dhū 'l-Qarnayn (= Alexander in Muslim legend) against the people of Gog and Magog (Koran 18:92 ff.); cf. al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, 327-29. It probably refers to a part of the Great Wall of China (see "Yādīndī wa-Mādīndī" by A.J. Wensinck in *ET*).
  3. Read: *ṣanam al-Khiṭā*, for Wiet's *ṣanam al-khaṭā'* 'the idol of error' (?). From the Khitan (Chin. *Ch'i-tan*), a Tungus people, derives the name "Cathay" for (northern) China (cf., e.g., Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *Voyages*, 3:22 ff.).

the two converging seas, two arms (of the sea) fork out at the beginning of that mountain range and the mountains become enclosed by these, thus giving the appearance of rising from the same body of water. At this point, the beginning of that mountain range lies 15 degrees east of the central meridian and is initially called *al-Mujarrad*—The Bleak. Then it extends until it reaches in the western section a longitude of 65 degrees, measured from the extreme west. It is there that the Jabal al-Qumr branches away from the mountain range under discussion.

From it flows the Nile. There one finds stones which glitter like sparkling silver, called *ṣanjat al-bāhit*: Whoever looks at them breaks into laughter and remains stuck to them until he dies; they are therefore called “the magnet of humans.”<sup>(4)</sup> From (that mountain) branches off a spur called *Asifā*; the people living there are like wild beasts. Furthermore, an open plain unfolds itself from the mountain, and (another) branch called *Jabal Waḥshīyyah* extends from it all the way to the farthest west on the Encircling Sea; in it live beasts with formidable long horns.

This side of the plain, several branches curve away from Jabal Qāf, among them two (which run) all the way to the Equator, flanking the course of the (Sudanese) Nile on the east and west. The eastern range, known as *Jabal Qāqūlā*, breaks off at the Equator. The western one is known as *Adamdamah*, and alongside it flows the Nile of the Sudan called (there) *Baḥr al-Damādim*; it ends opposite the roaming grounds of the Abyssinians between the towns of Samgharah and Jīmī (Njimi)<sup>(5)</sup> on the other side of that branch. Another branch, which is the main range, extends from the place where the aforementioned mountain known as *Asifā* is located all the way to the Equator, at a point where the longitude is 20 degrees. It is known there as *Jabal Kūsaqānah* and is inhabited by fe-

4. Cf., e.g., al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 76 (transl. Mehren 88).

5. Both located on the “river of Ghānah,” according to Dimashqī (*Nukhbat al-dahr* 110, 240), which flows “from” Lake Chad (below, sect. 15). Perhaps the Yobe river, or its tributary, the Komadugu Gana?

rocious beasts. It reaches eventually the Encircling Sea but is interrupted, just this side of the latter, namely, beyond (the land of) the Takrūr<sup>(6)</sup> near the town of Qalanbū,<sup>(7)</sup> by an open plain. Beyond that mountain range live blacks known as Tamīm<sup>(8)</sup> who are cannibals.

Meanwhile, the main range (of Jabal Qāf) continues from the northern shore of the Syrian Sea to the east of Rome, in perpendicular alignment with the branch called Adamdamah that ends between Samgharah and Jīmī. It extends only a little further than (the Adamdamah range in Africa) to a point where the geographical longitude is 35 degrees. The point where that main range resumes is located on a geographical latitude of 50 degrees, and the branch of it which begins in the south is also situated on a latitude of 50 degrees where it starts between Sardinia and Valencia. The continuous portion of that main range eventually reaches the Encircling Sea in the far north, opposite the island of Britain, and Switzerland<sup>(9)</sup> is thus part of that mountain range. Then, after a slight interruption, that main range continues and curves with the protuberance of the Encircling Sea that is called *Baḥr al-Anqalishūn*<sup>(10)</sup> in the northwest to (the land of) the Slavs, stretching (from there) all the way to the far east, where it is called Jabal Qāqūnā. Beyond it, the sea remains forever frozen because of the severe cold there. Then it curves from the north to the east, (then) southwest to the northern flank of the Great Barrier, so that the two ends meet again at that point. It is in the open space between them that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn leveled (the gap) between the two extremities (with the Barrier).

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6. The present-day *Tukulor* of Senegal; see "Takrūr" (M. Delafosse) in *EF*.

7. Wiet: *Q-l-t-bū*. The town was located near present-day Bakel on the upper Senegal river. — Qalamtabūrā in the Bulaq text could be a portmanteau form of *Qalanbū* and *Tam Boura*, a Negro people living in the region of Qalanbū [oral communication of Prof. John O. Hunwick].

8. Cf. Dimashqī, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 268.

9. Suggested reading: *Suwīṣah*, on the basis of Wiet's main ms. Both texts have *Sūsīyyah*, of obscure meaning in this context.

10. Perhaps the "Sea of the Angles", i.e., the North Sea.



There are three rivers on the Island of the Qumr. One is on the east side, beginning at Qanṭūrā or Ma'lā.<sup>(11)</sup> The second, on the west side, flows from Adam's Peak<sup>(12)</sup> toward the town of Sabāyā and, just as it passes the town of Fazdarā, carves out a lake there on the south side of which is the town of Kimāmā where black canibals live. The third is also on the island's west side and issues from the mountain which resembles the letter *bā'* with the tail lopped off. It circles the town of Dahmā<sup>(13)</sup> so that the latter is on an island between the river and the Indian Sea (or rather) the river surrounds the town on the east, south and west, thus making it appear like an island, while the north side of the town abuts on the Indian Sea. To the west of the river, where it flows into the Indian Sea, lies the town of Fūrānah (Horana?).

From the Mountain of the Qumr flows the Nile river whose water had once been dispersed on the surface of the earth.

[5] After Naqrāwus the Giant, son of the first Miṣrayim, son of Marākīl, son of Dāwīl, son of 'Arbāq, son of Adam, peace be upon him, had come to the land of Egypt together with a number of descendants of 'Arbaq, and after they had adopted it as their homeland and had built Amsūs and other cities there, they dug (a bed for) the Nile in order to make its water flow to them. Before that, the river did not flow regularly, but formed a marsh and numerous branches on the surface of the land. King Naqrāwus then sent people to Nubia, and they engineered the river and built canals from it to numerous places in the cities they had founded, among them a canal to the city of Amsūs. [6] Later on, after Egypt had been devastated by The Flood, and at the time of al-Būdashīr, son of Qift,

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11. Could it be 'Kandy or Matale'? This would make the river the Mahaweli of Sri Lanka.
  12. Arabic: *Jabal Qadam Ādam*, the mountain on *Sarandīb* (Ceylon) where Adam, according to Muslim legend, did penitence for two hundred years, and where he left his footprint, seventy cubits long. See "Adam" (J. Pedersen) in *EP*.
  13. Dimashqī (*Nukhbat al-dahr* 149) calls it the largest town on the Island of the Qumr. Perhaps *Ragama*?

son of Mişr, son of Bayşar, son of Ham, son of Noah, peace be upon him, (al-Būdashīr) had the banks of the Nile regulated a second time, after The Flood had ruined the river.

[7] Master Ibrāhīm ibn Waşīf Shāh relates: Then al-Būdashīr became king and ruled with an iron hand. He was the first to practice divination and sorcery and could make himself invisible. His uncles Ushmūn, Atrīb and Şā had been rulers of their own lands. But he conquered them with his might and strength and was remembered for it. Just as his father had lorded it over them before him, because he was the oldest of them and they also submitted to him. (Al-Būdashīr) is said to have sent Hermes the Egyptian priest to the Mountain of the Moon, from the foot of which issues the Nile, with orders to erect the edifice of the copper statues and to regulate the sump into which the Nile waters flow. It is said that it was he who regulated the banks of the Nile. Hitherto the river had left its bed and sometimes its flow would be cut off in certain places.

[8] This palace with the copper statues contained eighty-five images, which were made by Hermes to collect the issuing Nile waters by means of a system of conduits and pipes, and with channels to bring the water to them as it issued from the foot of the Mountain of the Moon, so that the water would enter those statues and pour out from their mouths. He furnished the statues with a given scale with gradations and calculated cubit markings, and he made the waters coming out of those images flow into channels and from there into two sumps from which they would then flow into a lake that collects the water as it issues from the Foot of the Mountain. To the statues he assigned such quantities of water as would be for the best of Egypt and allow its people to make use of it without suffering harm. That beneficial maximum is eighteen cubits, the cubit at thirty-two fingers. Anything in excess of that would run off to the right and left of those images into drains from which it poured into the sands and the thickets without anyone beyond the Equator

benefiting from it. Were it not for that, the water of the Nile would submerge the countries through which it passes.

[9] The Amalekite al-Walid ibn Dawma‘ had set out with a numerous army, moving from country to country and subjugating their kings in order to dwell in any one of them that suited him. And when he came to Syria, he heard of Egypt and its might, and that it was then in the hands of women, its kings having perished. So he sent one of his slaves by the name of ‘Awn to Egypt and then went there himself. He made free with its people and took their property and killed several of the country’s priests. Then it occurred to him that he should set out to learn about the source of the Nile and find out what peoples lived in that area. He spent three years preparing for his departure. Then he set out with a huge army, and whatever people he passed, he would annihilate them. He passed through the nations of the Blacks and beyond. He passed through the Land of Gold and saw there stalks of gold sprouting from the ground. He kept on marching until he reached the collecting lake into which the Nile water flows from the streams that issue from the Mountain of the Moon. He went on until he came to the Temple of the Sun, and went beyond it until he reached the Mountain of the Moon. It is a high mountain, and the reason it was called “Mountain of the Moon” is because the moon never rises above it, since it begins below the Equator. He looked at the Nile issuing from under the mountain, running through paths like thin streams until it reaches two reservoirs from which it flows in two streams before reaching still another reservoir. Past the Equator it is fed by a spring which flows from the region of the Indus River in India. That spring also issues from under the Mountain of the Moon (and flows) in the other direction. The Indus River is said to be like the Nile with its rise and fall and to have crocodiles and fish which are like the fish of the Nile. Al-Walid ibn Dawma‘ found the palace with the copper statues which the first Hermes had erected at the time of al-Būdashīr, son of Quṭṭarīm, son of Qubṭīm, son of Bayṣar.

[10] Certain antiquarians have said that the four (primordial) rivers—the Jaxartes, the Oxus, the Euphrates, and the Nile—issue from one and the same source from a domed structure in the Land of Gold, which lies beyond the Sea of Darkness, and that that land is a part of Paradise, and that the domed structure is made of chrysolite, and that (the rivers), before they enter the Encircling Sea, are sweeter than honey and more fragrant than camphor. Among those who reported this was a descendant of al-ʿĪs, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, upon him be peace. His name was Ḥāʿid.

[11] Others have claimed that these rivers divide into seventy-two parts corresponding to seventy-two languages of the nations. Still others have maintained that these rivers have as their origin accumulated snow which is melted by the heat and flows into those rivers, bringing water to those living along them as God Exalted and Sublime wills to govern His creation.

People have said that, when al Walīd reached the Mountain of the Moon, he saw a high mountain. He applied a ruse to scale it so that he could see what was behind it. He looked out over the foul-smelling Pitch-Black Sea and he saw the Nile flowing like thin streams. Foul odors, from which many of his companions died, wafted to him from that sea so that he hastened to descend after having almost perished himself. Some people have said that they never saw there either sun or moon. Only a red glow, like the light of the sun when it is below the horizon.

[12] As to what has been told about Ḥāʿid, and how he crossed the Sea of Darkness on foot without getting his feet wet—he is said to have been a prophet who was given wisdom. (He is said) to have asked God Almighty to show him the ultimate (beginning) of the Nile, and God gave him the power to do so. He is said to have walked on and on for thirty years through inhabited land and twenty years through wasteland.

[13] People have said that al-Walīd spent forty years away from home. [14] He returned to Memphis and stayed in Egypt. He en-

slaved its people and made free with their women and property and possessions for one hundred and twenty years. They hated him and were tired of him. Until one day he rode out on a hunt and his horse threw him in a gorge and killed him. And people were relieved to see him gone.

[15] Qudāmah ibn Jaʿfar<sup>(14)</sup> said in his *Book of the Land Tax: The Nile originates at the Mountain of the Moon beyond the Equator from a spring that feeds ten streams. Five streams each flow into a lake, and from each lake then issue two rivers. The four rivers flow into a large lake in the First Clime, and it is from that lake that the River Nile issues. And (al-Idrīsī) said in his *Nuzhat al-mushtāq ilā ikhtirāq al-āfāq*: That lake is called *Buḥayrat Kuwarā*. (Lake Chad). It is named after a tribe of blacks who live around there; they are savages who eat people that happen to come their way. From that lake flow the Nahr Ghānah and the Baḥr al-Ḥabashah.<sup>(15)</sup> And as the Nile issues from it, it flows through the region of the Kuwarā and of the Yanah, a black people between Kanem and Nubia. Then, reaching Dongola, the capital of the Nubians, it bends from the western side of the town and flows down to the Second Clime. Along its banks is then the flourishing civilization of the Nubians. There are spacious islands populated with towns and villages in that stretch of the river. Then it flows eastward to the cataracts.*

[16] Masʿūdī reports:<sup>(16)</sup> In (Ptolemy's) *Geographia* I saw the Nile depicted as it emerges from the foot of the Mountain of the Moon, issuing from twelve springs. These waters then flow into two pool-like lakes where they are collected and whence they flow

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14. Baghdadi secretary and scholar, a Christian convert, died 948/9. See "Qudāma" (S.A. Bonebakker) in *EF*. —The entire paragraph is an indirect quotation from al-Nuwayrī (*Nihāyat al-arab*, 1:262). —On the *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, or "Book of Roger," compiled in 1154 by the great Moroccan geographer Abū 'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Idrīsī (ca. 1099-1165/6) for his patron, Roger II of Sicily (1129-54), see "al-Idrīsī" by G. Oman in *EF*; *GAL*<sup>2</sup> 1:628, S 1:876.

15. Perhaps the Yobe and Chari rivers?

16. *Prairies dor* 1:204-05, 208.

through sand deserts and mountainous terrain across the land of the Blacks next to the land of the Zanj. An arm branches away from it which sheds into the Sea of the Zanj. [17] For nine hundred parasangs—or a thousand, according to others—it flows across the earth, passing through cultivated lands and deserts, until it reaches Uswān in Upper Egypt.

[18] In the *Book of Orosius*, (the translator) says: “The River Nile originates in the hinterland of the Sea of al-Qulzum. Then it turns westward and there is an island in the middle of it, and finally it flows in a northerly direction and brings water to the land of Egypt. Its source is said to be a spring beyond the Mountain (of the Moon). Then it disappears in sands, only to re-emerge not far from there and to enter a large reservoir, whereupon it runs parallel to the Ocean through the deserts of the Abyssinians and then turns to the left toward the land of Egypt. This river is rightly thought of as huge, considering its course being the way we have told. [19] The source of the River Nile, which is identical with the river called *On*,<sup>(17)</sup> is unknown, but it appears to come from the region of the Abyssinians, and it forms a large reservoir there. Its course up to that point is two hundred miles long; (the distance from) its point of re-emergence to where it flows into the sea has already been mentioned. One often finds crocodiles in the River Nile. No one disagrees that the Nile comes from the region of the Abyssinians. The distance from its known beginning to its mouth is 190,930 miles. The Nile water is muddy and sandy; it is also sweet and warm.

[20] Where<sup>(18)</sup> the Nile reaches the cataracts marks the terminus of all boat traffic from Nubia downstream and from Upper Egypt upriver. There are jagged rocks there which boats can pass only at the time of the Nile’s high water. Then the river heads

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17. Read with the Bulaq text: *yusammā bi-Awn*. The link between *On*, the Egyptian sacred name of either Heliopolis or Hermonthis (Armant), and an alternate name for the Nile is unclear.

18. This is the continuation of the quotation from al-Nuwayrī in sect. 15.

north, with Uswān in remote Upper Egypt on its eastern bank, and runs between two mountain ranges which flank the various districts of Egypt, one in the east and the other in the west, until it reaches the city of Fustāṭ, which is located on its eastern bank. One day's journey past al-Fusṭāṭ the river becomes two arms: One continues until it flows into the Byzantine Sea near Damietta; it is called *Baḥr al-Sharq*. The other arm, which is the main course of the Nile and is called *Baḥr al-Gharb*, continues until it also flows into the Byzantine Sea near Rosetta. The latter used to be a large city in ancient times. The length of the Nile from its source to where it flows into the sea near Rosetta is said to be 748 parasangs. It is said to flow through wasteland for four months (in terms of traveling distance), through the Land of the Blacks for (the equivalent of) two months, and through Muslim territory over the distance of one month.

[21] Someone has held the view that the rise of the Nile's water is caused by the high tide in the sea: As the sea water rises, the Nile backs up and inundates the land around it. He wrote a book about it that centers around the fact that the movement of the sea called "tides" occurs twice every twenty-four hours, twice every lunar month, and twice every year.

The daily tides depend on the disk of the moon and on the way its rays are deflected on both sides of the (terrestrial) body of water: When the moon is in the center of the sky, the sea will be at the peak of high tide, and the same happens when the moon is in the fourth pivot (of the sun). When the moon appears rising in the east, or when it sets in the west, there will be low tide.

The monthly high tide occurs when the moon and the sun are in opposition in the middle of the month. This is called *imtilā'* or "plenitude." This will also occur (when the two are) in conjunction. This is called *sarār* or "concealment" (i.e., the last night of the lunar month). Low tide will also occur at two times, during the quadra-

ture of moon and sun on the seventh and twenty-second day of the month.

The annual high tide also occurs at two times, once when the sun arrives at the end of Virgo, and the other time when the sun reaches the end of Pisces. If this happens to take place at a time of plenitude or conjunction, then the monthly and yearly plenitudes combine and the sea will be at its highest level, especially if conjunction or plenitude should occur in the center of the sky and one of the planets should be aligned with sun and moon, or one of the two, because this enhances the flood. If two or more planets should be aligned with either sun or moon, the magnitude of the flood will be even greater, and in such a year the rise of the Nile will be tremendous indeed and the Indus river will also rise. Should conjunction or plenitude occur away from the center of the sky and no planet be aligned with either sun or moon, then the Nile and the Indus will not attain their maximum rise for lack of light to stir up the waters. There will be a dearth in Egypt that year. The annual low tides occur when the sun reaches the beginnings of Capricorn and Cancer.

As to the *daily* high tide which pushes in from the Encircling Sea, it amounts in the seas issuing from the Encircling Sea to no more than one celestial degree, which corresponds to a distance of about sixty terrestrial miles. Then it retreats, and this retreat is the low tide. That also happens in (the case of) of wadis when the ground is a ravine. The monthly high tide (on the other hand) extends all the way to the outermost parts of the seas and holds them, lest they flow (back) into the Encircling Sea. Where (the effect of) the monthly high tide ends, that is the end of that respective sea and its limit. As to the annual high tide, it plainly raises the level of the seas issuing from the Encircling Sea, and from that increase result the rise and the fullness of the Nile as also that of the Indus river in the Sind.

[22] When, says (this author), Aristotle came to Egypt in the company of Alexander the Great and, on seeing the course of the



Nile, realized that it was impossible that the Nile, at Uswān just another river, could widen, the closer it came to the coast, to such an extent that its width in the Delta came to a hundred miles at the peak of the flood, that it had numerous mouths leading into the sea, wide enough to accommodate whatever rains may fall in that region, then ruling out as absurd that the river bed be such<sup>(19)</sup> that its lower end could not carry what the upper portion brought down, considering the narrowness of the upper part and the width of the lower—when he realized all that, he proclaimed: It is winds which face the flow of the water and stem it, and that is why (the Nile) overflows.

[23] It is impossible, countered Alexander of Aphrodisias,<sup>(20)</sup> that the wind should stem the water flowing in the river's bed in such a way that it could flood more than a hundred miles. Were it the wind (alone) that did it, then the water would still escape along the bottom of the river bed and flow into the sea, because the wind is in contact only with the surface of the water. Rather, the winds hurl sand in the mouths of those river arms that shed into the sea and erect with it a kind of dam so that (the water) overflows.

(Alexander) overlooked, however, says (this author), that sand is a loose-textured body, and that water will permeate it and pass right through it on its way to the sea—considering the fact that the defectiveness of sand (as a barrier) is not such that it is immediately perceptible, and that the water is flowing at any time toward the mouth of Tinnīs and Damietta, and the mouth of Rosetta, and the mouth of Alexandria.

Thus, realizing that (the high Nile) could not possibly be the result of a rain-swollen stream, people attributed the fact of its (seeming) obstruction to wind and sand, which represent the elements of air and earth. But they overlooked the third element, namely, that of

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19. Read with the Bulaq text: *bi-ḥaythu yaḍīqu ...*

20. A famous commentator on Aristotle, fl. end of the 2nd and beginning of 3rd century A.D.

Water, because they did not know of the annual movement of the sea, since it reaches its peak only in three months and the amount of its daily rise is not immediately perceptible. And that is why the Emir of Egypt had the Nilometer placed at the head of the Delta.

[24] The high tide, he says, all comes down to one thing, namely: The moon corresponds to the (body of terrestrial) water the way the sun corresponds to the earth. Hence, the light of the moon will, when (the celestial body) is directly opposite the globe, impart warmth to it, just as the sun warms the air surrounding the earth. Some of the induced heat which rarefies water, which then by its peculiar nature dilates and increases in volume, will pass into the air surrounding the water, much in the manner of a concave mirror which sets the air around it ablaze so that a tuft of cotton placed between the mirror and the sun will burn up. This is the way it happens during opposition (of sun and moon). What happens during (the moon's) concealment (by the sun) is comparable to a glass container filled with water: the (sun's) rays will be cast to the other side of it and the tuft of cotton will again burn up. Now, the moon is a luminous body in that it acquires its light from the sun. When (the moon) becomes interposed between the sun and the earth, (solar) rays that have passed (it) will emerge on either side of the (body of) water and pass along its two sides, and the part exposed to them will warm up and hence increase in volume. Water is a translucent body which causes solar rays to deflect on both sides of it, the way they deflect on the two sides of the glass container which thus receives light that warms the air surrounding the glass—or (in our case) the earth—so that the water undergoes a quasi-calefaction which causes it to swell and increase in volume. That happens (in the case of the earth) directly opposite the (lunar) disk and directly opposite the point where the solar rays emerge from opposite the lunar pivot.

This, then, is what high tide is always about. It rotates owing to the rotation of the celestial sphere, and the celestial sphere's rotation of the lunar sphere, and the lunar sphere's rotation of the moon.

The monthly high tide occurs when the moon is in opposition with the sun or is concealed beneath it. Because the moon's being in opposition with the sun is not at all like its being in the quadrature of the sun, since in the latter it is weaker and in the former it is stronger. Likewise, when the moon stands directly opposite over the center of the terrestrial globe so that (its gravitational) movement is stronger and (its) embrace of water and earth more universal, then we are dealing with the annual high tide.

## 16. Refutation of the Belief that the High Nile is [Not] the Result of an Overflowing Torrent

[1] To people in general, whatever flows on the surface of the earth is just a *sayl*—a “running stream.” People who become aware of the enormous size of the Nile and of its expanse at the lower part of it and the narrowness of its upper course, but who consider neither water nor earth nor air, resort to sheer fantasy in explaining that phenomenon. As did the author of (a certain) *Book of Routes and Countries*, who claims that water travels below the ground from every region and place to the Nile and feeds it, because the Nile floods only in the fall, when the water level of springs and wells drops while the Nile’s rises. Thus people, noticing increase and decrease, established a fanciful link between the two.

[2] Another said:<sup>(1)</sup> That is but an angel who puts his foot in the water so that it increases, and he removes it from the water so that it decreases.

[3] What proves among other things, (goes one argument) that (the Nile inundation) is not the result of a sudden torrent is that such a torrent would occur at a time other than high tide at sea. Yet the Nile does not leave its banks because the sea is at low tide so that the torrent could come and pass on toward the sea without being stemmed by a backflow.

[4] Another argument is that the inundation of the Nile occurs gradually over a period of three months, beginning from the time when the sun enters Cancer to its arrival at the end of Virgo. People figure it out two months ahead of its actual occurrence, and the government of Egypt has a measuring device, placed in the

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1. This tradition, elsewhere ascribed to Ibn al-‘Abbās, is missing in the Bulaq text.

middle of the Nile, which is a pole with lines called “cubits” through which one can learn the amount of the river’s daily rise.

[5] Another argument is that the river floods forever at one and the same time. Were the flood caused by a sudden torrent there would be some variation.

[6] Another argument is that such a torrent may come at a different time, yet the river does not leave its banks then.

[7] Another argument is that sensitive people in Egypt know that the Nile is going to rise, when they notice an increase of the heat. Because severe heat rarefies the air so that water, in turn, becomes rarefied, and this can only be the result of the increase of a planet and the proximity of light.

[8] Another argument is that the bed of the Nile at Uswān is just a river valley like any other. As it approaches the sea, it becomes wider and wider until its width is about a hundred miles. Uswān is the farthest point for the (sea’s) stemming current to reach. Now, what would you think of a stream that flows over a distance of half a month (in traveling time) without any relation whatever between its upper and lower course? What would its upper course be like, if its lower part could be filled by such a torrent?

[9] Another argument is that the people of Uswān observe the arrival of the stemming current carefully and look out for it during the daytime. At nightfall, they take an earthenware jar and put a light in it. Then they place it on top of a stone which they have prepared for that purpose and begin to watch it. When the light goes out, because the water has submerged it, they know that the stemming current has reached its peak at which they know it will begin to ebb, and that it is time for them to report it in writing to the governor of Egypt, notifying him that the (sea’s) stemming current has just reached its accustomed peak and that they have already taken their share of irrigation water. At that point, the governor orders the dams across the mouths of the main irrigation canals to be cut, and the river water floods the land of Egypt all at once.

[10] Another argument is that all those irrigation canals are blocked with wood and earth as soon as the Nile begins to rise in order to allow the sweet water carried by the Nile to gather and increase and spread all over their land, and at the same time to prevent the salt water from encroaching upon it. If it were a flash flood, one would not need to do that and the mouths of the irrigation canals would be opened to admit it as soon as it begins to appear.

[11] Another argument is that, when the main canals are blocked and there is no stemming current against them coming from the sea, the swollen river extends (evenly) from its distant origin all the way to the sea, considering that the Nile delta is wider and lower than the river's upper course.

[12] Another argument is that sea water penetrates more than twenty miles upstream in the estuaries of Rosetta, Tinnīs and Damietta, the way it does in all rivers entered by the tides. If the Nile carried no sweet water at all, then the sea would reach at Uswān the utmost point attainable by the stemming current. Because water by its nature seeks out low ground, even when (that ground) is on the surface of a sphere with lines radiating equidistant from the center to the perimeter.<sup>(2)</sup>

[13] Another argument is that, when the dams (blocking the canals) are opened and the main canals are cut and the Nile inundates the low plains of Egypt, the people of Uswān sense it right away and say that at this hour the main canal was opened and the Nile water has flooded the fertile part of Egypt, because that explains to them the sudden ebb of the water. Were it a flash flood, with them being on the upper course, they would say that the rain has stopped over the area from which the flood was coming.

[14] Another argument is that the portion of the Nile which flows through the land of the Abyssinians, namely, the headwaters

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2. The translation follows the Bulaq text (1:55) in the last part of the sentence.

which come to it from the Mountain of the Moon, does not flood, as the Nile does, for three months and does not remain on the land for the same length of time as the Nile. But, when the river is swollen (at other times), it submerges its banks to the extent that they are low and flat, and once its substance has run off, it is again contained in its bed. Hence, if the Nile's inundation were the result of a sudden torrent, conditions would have to be identical for both, since both come from one and the same source.

We are not saying that the cause of the Nile's inundation is the sea only. For were it not a stream of water, the stemming force of the sea would never meet it and the shore of Lower Egypt would be just like all other neighboring coasts. And if the river did not contain the flowing current, its mouth would be filled up and blocked by the sea, because it is the habit of the sea to fill in and block the coasts.

The Egyptians feel uncertain about the Nile only because they have never seen its source and have never laid eyes on its beginning at the Mountain of the Moon, since that is located in a completely uninhabited place. They have also not investigated the annual tide which stems the river and so know nothing for certain about it. Because far is it from the minds of the common people to know that the water level of the sea is at its highest during the summer, since they are used to think of the sea as rising during the winter. The overflow of the sea in the winter is actually caused by the winds which blow on the sea from one of its two sides so that it rises and moves away to the other side. Except the part near the Encircling Sea, for it is in a constant process of moving from the inner reaches of the sea toward the dry land. The reason for that is that the Encircling Sea by its nature seeks to engulf the face of the earth. But the earth is not flat and, owing to its physical configuration, keeps the Encircling Sea away, while the latter seeks forever to rise above it and to surmount it at its elevations.

[15] The magnitude of the tides, says (this source), is determined by the amount of radiation. For when sun and moon are

close to the (other) planets, the flux of the sea will become stronger. And when the flux of the sea becomes stronger, the rivers will overflow. Likewise, when the moon prepares to meet one of the planets in opposition, vapors rise and [ascend to the higher layers of the atmosphere, where they condense on account of]<sup>(3)</sup> the severe cold, and rain falls, and when the moon moves away from the planets, the rain ceases on account of the great amount of evaporation, the way it will happen at noon when the sun is at the zenith, and also when many planets stand over the middle of the central meridian. God alone knows the truth.

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[16] I say: The upshot of what has been advanced above is that the Nile issues from the Mountain of the Qumr, and that its rise is due to nothing but the flux of the sea at high tide. As to its origin being at the Mountain of the Qumr, that is an indisputable fact, for no one contests it.

[17] But that its rise should be caused solely by the backflow of the sea on account of a high tide occurring in it, that is not so. True, the constantly blowing north winds contribute to the amount of its rise, and the backflow of the sea also helps to make it swell. But whoever contemplates the Nile will realize that there simply must be a torrential stream flowing in it. Because in winter and in the earlier part of spring, its water is still clear and free of turbidity, but when the time of its annual rise approaches and the river is at its lowest level, there is a qualitative change of its taste. The water turns greenish and becomes such that, when put in a container, a sediment resembling small particles of moss will form on the bottom. The reason for that is that elephants and similar land animals

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3. The passage in square brackets is an attempt at reconstructing a line of text apparently omitted by the copyist(s) after the preposition *ilā*. —The entire paragraph, which is really the conclusion of the preceding one, suffers from obvious omissions and conveys little meaning.



come to the great marsh in the far south so that the water in it changes in quality. Then, when the southern rains are plentiful in the summer and the streams pouring into that marsh become swollen, water already gone bad will overflow from it and run down toward Egypt. At that point people say, 'The Nile has become unhealthy.' The water remains like that until it is followed by turbid water. Its roiliness increases as the water level rises, and when one puts some of it in a container during the time of the river's rise, a sediment of mud will form on the bottom as no one had known before the time of the rise. This mud is the one carried by the torrential streams that pour into the Nile and cause its rise. In it the crops will be planted after the Nile has subsided again. Were it not so, the land of Egypt would be a barren salt marsh without vegetation, except for those parts of it over which the Nile passes, leaving behind that mud.

[18] The claim that the torrential stream would occur at a time other than high tide at sea, yet the Nile does not leave its banks because the sea is at low tide so that the torrent could come and pass on toward the sea without being stemmed by a backflow—that is contestable. Customarily, the torrential streams which are the cause of the increase of the Nile's water are produced by the abundant rainfalls in the south. The southern rains occur only during the summertime and no one has ever experienced a rise of the Nile in winter. But the clearest proof that the rise of the river is caused by a torrential stream flowing in it is the fact that it rises gradually, depending on how many rain-swollen streams shed into it.

[19] As to the reasoning that the bed of the Nile is narrow at Uswān and wide in the Delta, that is only because it comes flowing down through a breach between two mountains called "the cataracts" and (then) expands in (other) areas until it flows into the sea. Hence, it widens where it finds no barrier to prevent it from expanding.

[20] As to the argument that the water floods the land all at once when the dams are cut, that is not so. Rather, as each of the

dams is cut, the water flows into a main canal. Then connecting canals from the main canal to the land on either side of it are opened so that it can be irrigated. Some of these lands are irrigated quickly, some only after days, and some receive no irrigation at all because they are on high ground.

[21] As to the claim that all those irrigation canals are blocked as soon as the Nile begins to rise in order to allow the Nile water to gather and increase and spread all over their land, and at the same time to prevent the salt water from encroaching on it—it again is contestable that the damming procedures are the way described. Rather, the arable lands of Egypt are of many kinds. Some are on high ground and are reached by the water only when the rise of the river is abundant, some are low-lying and receive irrigation even from a slight rise. Lands also vary considerably in upriver and downriver location. That is why in Upper Egypt one needs to dig side canals and in the Delta one has to build dikes for the water to be contained, so that the local villagers can dispose over it, when necessary, according to their need for it. Otherwise, (the river) rises at first at a time when there is no land irrigation going on until, when the amount sufficient for the land has collected from the rise during the time when the land is bare of cereal crops, which is usually during the month of Misrā (August/September), one opens the main canal to allow the water to flow through it to a given limit at which it stops, in order to irrigate the land below that limit. Then, on Coptic New Year's Day (September 10 or 11), that boundary is opened so that the water flows to the next limit at which it stops, to irrigate land below that second boundary. Then, seventeen days after Coptic New Year, on the Feast of the Cross, that boundary is opened so that the water flows and stops at a third limit, to irrigate land below it. Then that boundary is opened, and the water flows and irrigates the remaining land and (finally) runs off into the sea. That is how the damming procedures on Egyptian lands work.

[22] As far as the argument is concerned that sea water penetrates more than twenty miles upstream, the estuaries of Rosetta,

Tinnīs and Damietta, and that, if the Nile carried no sweet water at all, the sea would reach above Uswān, the utmost point attainable by its stemming current, we say: These are the words of someone who does not know Egypt, because the Nile in its flow upriver from Uswān is many fathoms higher than it is in the Delta. When the water of the sea overflows, it is held back due to the fact that it and the water of Nile press against each other. At time the water of the sea gains the upper hand over the water of the Nile when the river is at low level, so that the Nile water between Damietta and Fāriskūr<sup>(4)</sup> becomes salty. But I saw the course of the Nile where it flows into the sea at Damietta at a time when the river was high, and each was pushing against the other, unable to prevail, so that they finally stemmed one another. At such a time, the spectacle of them offers a useful lesson to those who are willing to learn.

[23] The contention that, once the dams (in Lower Egypt) are cut, the people of Uswān know about it right away, is equally disputable. No, we have been observing the Nile for many years. When a main canal from it is opened, or a branch canal cut, and its water submerges a great deal of land, the drop in the water level is noticeable only in the vicinity of that specific place. A courier will still be on his way from Qūṣ with the happy news that the Nile has reached its fullness, which in his place topped at sixteen cubits, and the river will not reach that same mark on the Nilometer of Old Cairo until three days or so later.

[24] As to the contention that the part of the Nile that flows through the land of the Abyssinians behaves differently from the Nile proper, that is not so. Rather, the increase in the Nile at the time of its rise is in Nubia and in the areas beyond it to the south just as it is in Egypt. There is a difference between them only in two respects: first, in Egypt the river flows in a bed, whereas down there it is dissipated all over the land, and secondly, in Egypt its rise is

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4. An ancient village (today a district seat) on the right bank of the Damietta arm about sixteen miles SW of Damietta. See Ramzī *Qāmūs*, II, 1:244.

carefully measured, whereas there it cannot be measured because its course is all scattered. Besides, those who are familiar with Egyptian history know that the increase in the Nile's water is caused by the rains in the south.

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[25] The Nile is said to flow as ten streams from the aforementioned Mountain of the Qumr, five streams each coming from one branch. Then those ten streams flow into two lakes, five streams each to its own lake. From the eastern lake then issues a large gentle river which heads east along Jabal Qāqūlā, continues all the way to towns in that area, and finally flows into the Indian Sea.

From the two lakes issue six rivers, three from each lake. The six rivers join again in a wide lake called *al-Baṭīḥah*. In it is a mountain which divides the water in half.<sup>(5)</sup>

One half leaves on the western side of *al-Baṭīḥah*; this is the Nile of the Sudan and it becomes a river called *Baḥr al-Damādim*. It heads westward between Samgharah and Ghānah,<sup>(6)</sup> to the south of Samgharah and to the north of Ghānah, and there a branch curves away from it that returns southward toward Ghānah, then flows past the town of Barisah, and heads, beneath a mountain south of the town, on the other side of the equator toward Rafilah. There it flows into a local lake. The second branch (of the river) continues westward toward the country of Mali and of the Takrūr and eventually flows into the Encircling Sea north of the town of Qalanbū.<sup>(7)</sup>

The other half starts out leftward, heading north toward the area east of the town of Jimī (Njimi). There an arm branches off that heads eastward toward the town of Saḥart. Then it returns southward and after that bends in a southeasterly direction toward the

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5. The translation here follows the Bulaq text (1:57). Wiet's reading is marred by a crude grammatical mistake and obscure in meaning.

6. On this once important town in the Nigerian Sudan, about 200 miles north of Bamako, cf. "Ghāna" (R. Cornevin) in *EF*.

7. See note 7 in the preceding chapter. —Wiet: *Q-l-t-bū*; Bulaq: *Q-l-b-tū*.

town of Saḥartah, then toward the town of Markah,<sup>(8)</sup> and eventually it reaches the equator at a longitude of 65 degrees. There it flows into a lake. (Meanwhile) the main body of the Nile continues from a point directly opposite that arm east of the town of Shīmī roughly northward, skirting the land of the Abyssinians. Then it flows, still in a northerly direction, across the land of the Sudan toward the town of Dongola and is hurled over the cataracts toward Uswān. It descends across Upper Egypt toward the city of Fuṣṭāṭ Miṣr and passes on until it flows into the Syrian Sea.

In the land of the Blacks, the story has been circulated that the Nile flows down from black mountains which from a distance appear to be topped by dense clouds. Then it splits into two rivers, one that flows into the Encircling Sea in the direction of the southern Sea of Darkness, the other coming to Egypt and eventually flowing into the Syrian Sea.

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It is also said that (the Nile) divides in the south into seven rivers which enter an isolated desert. Then the seven rivers join again and leave that desert as one river in the land of the Blacks.

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8. Cf. Yāqūt (*Muḥjam* 5:109): "... a town in the area of Zanzibar belonging to the Berbers of the Sudan, who are not identical with the Berbers of the Maghrib" (i.e., the Somalis).

## 17. The Nilometers and the Annual Rise of the Nile

[1] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates:<sup>(1)</sup> The first man to measure the Nile in Egypt was Joseph, peace be upon him. He set up a measuring device at Memphis. Next, the Old Woman Dalūkah, daughter of Zabbā—she is the one who erected the Wall of the Old Woman—put up a measuring device at Anṣinā, which was of small capacity, and another one at Ikhmīm. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān built a nilometere at Ḥulwān,<sup>(2)</sup> which was small, and Usāmah ibn Zayd al-Tanūkhī,<sup>(3)</sup> during the caliphate of al-Walīd, had one constructed on The Isle,<sup>(4)</sup> which was the largest of them. “In my own time still,” recalled Yaḥyā ibn Bukayr, “the man in charge of measuring (the Nile’s rise) would make the measurement on the nilometer of Memphis and bring the reading to al-Fuṣṭāṭ.”

[2] Al-Quḍā’ī reports: The first man to measure the Nile in Egypt was Joseph, upon him be peace. He built a nilometer at Memphis which was the first one erected by him. It has been said that, until the nilometer of Memphis was built, the Nile used to be measured in the land of ‘Alwah,<sup>(5)</sup> and that the Copts used to take measurements on (the Memphis nilometer) until it fell into disrepair. After (Joseph) it was the Old Woman Dalūkah who built a nilometer at Anṣinā, which was of small capacity, and another one

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1. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabīḥ) 23.

2. See Pt. II, ch. 56.

3. The first to hold the office of finance director (*‘āmil al-kharāj*) independently from that of governor. He was appointed in 96/715 by the Umayyad caliph Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik after the death of the governor Qurrah b. Sharīk al-‘Absī (cf. Pt. III, ch. 9).

4. The large river island originally called simply *al-Jazīrah* or *Jazīrat Miṣr*, and then known as *Jazīrat al-Ṣinā’ah* or just *al-Ṣinā’ah* (Ibn Duqmāq 4:109, citing al-Kindī). Its present name, *al-Rawḍah*, dates from the turn of the 12th century (cf. al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍarah*, 2:374, 377).

5. The Christian kingdom of *Aloa* adjacent to Maqurrah in the central Sudan; cf. “Alwa” (S.M. Stern) in *EF*; below, Pt. II, ch. 30 (end) and 31.

at Ikhmīm. She is the one who erected the wall that surrounded Egypt. It has also been said that, until a nilometer was set up, people used to measure the water (level) with a plumb line. In the time before the (Muslim) conquest, the Nilometer continued to be at the Clothes Market,<sup>(6)</sup> and its traces were still there until the Muslims built their houses, which are still around now, between The Fortress and the river. The Byzantines also had a nilometer near The Palace behind The Gate, to the right of someone entering the alley through the latter. Traces of it are still standing today, although people have built over and around it.

Later on, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, at the time of his conquest of Egypt, built a nilometer at Uswān, and then another one at a place called Dendera. Then, at the time of Mu‘āwiyah, a nilometer was built at Anṣinā, and this was still in use by the time ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān constructed another at Ḥulwān, which was then his residence.<sup>(7)</sup> That nilometer was of small capacity. As to the old nilometer that had been built on The Isle, that is the one<sup>(8)</sup> that was replaced by Usāmah ibn Zayd. He is said to have spent two thousand *ūqiyahs* on the project.<sup>(9)</sup> (Usāmah) is the man who built the treasury in Old Cairo.<sup>(10)</sup> Subsequently, Usāmah ibn Zayd al-Tanūkhī, then finance director of Egypt, reported to Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik that the nilometer no longer worked, and the caliph wrote back to him, instructing him to build a (new) nilometer on The Isle. This he did in the year 97 (A.D. 716). Later on, the (‘Abbasid caliph) al-Mutawakkil had a nilometer built on the Isle at the beginning of the year 247 (March 861), while Yazīd ibn ‘Abd-Allāh

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6. Neither Maqrīzī nor Ibn Duqmāq mentions a covered market called *qaysāriyyat al-akṣiyah*.

7. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz moved to Helwan to escape the plague that broke out in Fustāt in 70/689; see Pt. II, ch. 56.

8. Read: *fa-huwa ‘lladhī*.

9. An *ūqiyah*, or Egyptian ounce, = 12 *dirhams*, which is 37.5 grams in gold (Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, 35).

10. The translation follows the Bulaq text (1:58), omitting “and he built” followed by a blank in the Wiet text.

al-Turkī was governor of Egypt; that is the large nilometer known as “the new”.

Since (the caliph) had ordered that Christians be removed from its operation, Yazīd ibn ‘Abd-Allāh put Abū ‘l-Raddād al-Mu‘allim in charge of the Nilometer. The man’s name is ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Salām ibn ‘Abd-Allāh ibn al-Raddād “the Muezzin.”<sup>(11)</sup> He was, according to al-‘Ammī,<sup>(12)</sup> originally from Baṣrah and came to Egypt, where he collected and transmitted traditions and was put in charge of measuring the Nile. The finance director of Egypt at the time, Sulaymān ibn Wahn, paid him a monthly stipend of seven dinars. From that time on to this day, the operation of the Nilometer has remained in the hands of Abū ‘l-Raddād and his descendants. Abū ‘l-Raddād himself died in 266 (A.D. 879/80).

Then, in 257, Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, accompanied by his finance director, Abū Ayyūb, and by Bakkār ibn Qutaybah, the judge (of Old Cairo), rode out to inspect the Nilometer. He gave orders for its repair and set aside one thousand dinars for the purpose, and it was restored.

And (during the Ikhshīdīd period) al-Khāzin had a nilometer built on the (Rawḍah) Island.<sup>(13)</sup> Remnants of it are still there, but it is no longer in use.

[3] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates:<sup>(14)</sup> After ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ had conquered Egypt, the local people came to see him at the beginning of Ba‘ūnah, which is a non-Arab month, and told him: “General, there

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11. In Suyūṭī’s account (*Husn*, 2:375-6): *al-Mu‘addib* (The Tutor), which would conform better with *al-Mu‘allim* ‘The Teacher’ above. —In Suyūṭī’s version of the incident, as in that of Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām (d. 1525) cited by Wiet (n. 3), it is not the governor, but Judge Bakkār b. Qutaybah (mentioned later), who ordered the replacement of Christians by a Muslim to operate the Nilometer—either at the behest of al-Mutawakkil (Suyūṭī) or on his own initiative (Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām).
  12. Abū Bishr Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm: Shī‘ite jurist and historian, died 961 in Baṣrah. See Zirīklī, *A‘lām*, 1:82.
  13. Cf. Ibn Duqmāq, *Intiṣār*, 4:99. —On (Muḥammad b. ‘Abd-Allāh) al-Khāzin (d. 968) see Pt. II, ch. 50.
  14. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabīḥ) 104.



is a custom that goes with our Nile. Without it, the river will not flow (in abundance).” He asked, “And what is that?” They replied: “When twelve nights of this month have passed, we go and get a young virgin from her parents. We pay money to the girl’s parents, deck her out in the finest jewelry and clothes, and then throw her in the Nile.” “Such a thing will never come to pass under Muslim rule!” he told them. “Islam does away with all that was before it!”

They kept waiting through Ba’ūnah and Abīb and Misrā, and not a drop of water was flowing in the river, so that they thought of abandoning the country. When ‘Amr realized that, he wrote a letter to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, apprising him of the matter, and ‘Umar wrote back: ‘You were right in saying that Islam does away with all that was before it. I am hereby sending you a note. Throw it in the Nile, when you receive my letter.’ When the letter arrived, ‘Amr opened the note, and it read: ‘From God’s servant ‘Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, to the Nile of Egypt: If you only flow of your own will, then do not flow. And if it is God, the One, the Omnipotent, Who causes you to flow, then we ask God, the One, the Omnipotent, to make you flow!’ So one-day before the Feast of the Cross, ‘Amr threw the note in the Nile, when people had already prepared to evacuate and leave the country, since the Nile alone provides for their welfare. And in the morning of the Day of the Cross they discovered that God Exalted had made the river rise by sixteen cubits in one night and had thereby put an end to that evil custom among the Egyptians.<sup>(15)</sup>

[4] Someone has claimed that it was Jāḥil al-Ṣadafī who brought<sup>(16)</sup> the note of ‘Umar, God be pleased with him, addressed

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15. The barbarous human sacrifice was then apparently replaced by the custom of erecting in front of the dam sealing the main canal a truncated cone of earth called *al-‘arūṣah* (the bride), on top of which some corn or millet was scattered. It was swallowed by the flood waters of the Nile as soon as the dam was cut. (Cf. E.W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, p. 500).

16. With the Bulaq text: *jā’a bi-*. (Wiet: *qara’a* ‘read’; ,ms.: *alqā* ‘threw’). —Abū Muslim Jāḥil al-Ṣadafī was a transmitter of traditions (Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, 1:260). —The paragraph, missing in several mss., is an interpolation

to the Nile, at the time when the river had stopped flowing and then flowed (again) by the grace of God Exalted.

[5] Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb related: Moses, peace be upon him, invoked a curse on Pharaoh's people, whereupon God stopped the Nile from flowing to them so that they intended to leave the country. So they asked Moses to pray to God, and he did, hoping that they would become believers. This happened on the eve of the Feast of the Cross. And in the morning they found that God had made the river rise by sixteen cubits in that short time. Thus God in His power answered the prayers of both 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, and His prophet Moses, upon him be peace.

[6] Al-Qudā'ī relates: I found in a treatise ascribed to al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mun'īm where the author says:

After the Arabs had conquered Egypt, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, was apprised of the dearth that befalls its people whenever the Nile fails to attain a certain mark on a Nilometer they have—not to mention when it falls short entirely. (He was told) that excessive fear causes people to resort to hoarding, which in turn drives the prices up, without there being an actual water shortage. So 'Umar wrote to 'Amr (ibn al-Āṣ), asking him to explain the situation, and he answered:

I found the amount of water needed by Egypt in order for its people not to suffer dearth is fourteen cubits, and the amount needed to irrigate all of the land, so that there is a surplus beyond their immediate need and that they have food left for another year, is sixteen cubits. The two extremes which one fears in the rise and shortfall (of the river), that is, drought and flooding, are twelve cubits in the case of shortfall and eighteen cubits in the case of (excessive) rise. At this time, though, when (the Muslims) have taken over (the system) from the Copts, the country's canals are dredged

and its dikes in good repair, and there is the ferment of building activity.

‘Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, God be pleased with him, then consulted ‘Alī (ibn Abī Ṭālib), God be pleased with him, on the matter and told him to write to (‘Amr) to build a (new) nilometer, to reduce the twelve cubits by two, to leave everything above that the way it is, and to take two fingers out of every cubit above sixteen. (‘Amr) did that and built (the nilometer) at Ḥulwān, and in that manner everything he had intended worked his way “to solve the rumors’ spread and put an end to dread” by making the twelve cubits (actually) fourteen. Because twenty-four fingers go into every cubit, and he made them twenty-eight from the beginning (of the scale) to the twelve-cubit mark so that the increase over the twelve is forty-eight fingers, that is, two cubits, and the fourteen he made sixteen, and the sixteen eighteen, and the eighteen twenty. [And that is now the established norm.]<sup>(17)</sup>

[7] This kind of reckoning, continues al-Quḍā‘ī, is open to question in our own time, though, because of the increasing decay of the irrigation canals and the collapse of things in general, as attested by the fact that the ancient nilometers in Upper Egypt are without exception (based on) twenty-four fingers to the cubit, whereas the Islamic nilometers are the way just described, among them the nilometer built by Usāmah ibn Zayd al-Tanūkhī on The Isle, which is the one that was demolished by the water. (The caliph) al-Ma’mūn had another one built in the Delta at al-Basharūdāt.<sup>(18)</sup> (The caliph) al-Mutawakkil had still another constructed on The Isle, and that is the one on which the water is measured nowadays and which has already been discussed.

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17. The concluding sentence in square brackets is from the parallel text in al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍarah*, 2:375.

18. A vanished community in the Gharbiyyah province, located by Ramzī in the area of present-day *Sīdī Ghāzī* in the district of Kafr al-Shaykh (*Qāmūs* I, 31).

[8] Ibn ‘Ufayr, citing the ancient Copts, reports: When the water line reaches twelve cubits by the twelfth day of Misrā (18/19 August), it is an ordinary year; if not, the water level is deficient. When it rises to a full sixteen cubits before the Coptic New Year, the water level is perfect. One must know that.

[9] As to the Nile and its source, Says Abū ‘l-Ṣalt (Umayyah ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz), it comes from beyond the Equator from a mountain known as the Mountain of the Moon. It begins to rise in the month of Abīb (July/August); the Egyptians have a saying: “Come Abīb, the waters creep.” As it begins to swell, all its qualities change and (its water) becomes foul. The reason for that is that it passes through swamps with brackish water with which it mingles and which it takes along together with other flotsam it carries. When the water has reached the fifteen-cubit mark and is one finger into the sixteenth, the main canal is cut. For this cutting of the canal “there is a specific day and a well-known way and a gathering strong to which high and low throng.” After the main canal has been cut, the *tura*—that is, the mouths of the irrigation canals—are opened, and the water overflows and spreads, submerging the low-lying areas and the flatlands. People repair to the higher parts of the rural estates and villages where they live, which are located on hillocks and elevations that the water cannot reach nor the flood overcome. And thus the entire fertile part of Egypt becomes once more a sea submerging the land between its two mountain ranges as long as the water stands at the limit set by the will of God Almighty, the maximum of which hovers about eighteen cubits. Then the water begins to flow back to the course and bed of the Nile. First it seeps away from the elevated portions of the land, and they become safe again. Then it leaves every depression “as shiny as a dirham and every hillside as dark as a somber cloak.”

[10] Judge Abū ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Māwardī says in his *Ordinances of Government*:<sup>(19)</sup> As to the “black” cubit, it is one

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19. *Al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyyah*, p. 385 —On the author (d. 1058) see the article “al-

and two-thirds of a finger longer than the “house” cubit.<sup>(20)</sup> The first to establish it was the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, who determined it by the forearm of a black eunuch standing behind him. It is the one that people are operating with in measuring dry goods, in carpentry, in construction, and when they measure the Nile of Egypt.

[11] The highest reading at a time when the river fails to attain the normal level was made in 197 (A.D. 813), when the Nilometer registered nine cubits and twenty-one fingers, and the lowest such reading was made in 165 (A.D. 781), when the Nilometer recorded one cubit and ten fingers. The highest level attained by the river during its rise belongs to the year 199 (A.D. 814), when it reached eighteen cubits and nineteen fingers, and the lowest reading falls in the lunar year 356 (A.D. 967) when the water level reached twelve cubits and nineteen fingers; that was at the time of Kāfir al-Ikhshīdī.<sup>(21)</sup>

[12] The Nilometer is an octagonal column of white marble positioned where the water, as it flows toward it, can be contained. This column is graded in twenty-two cubits, each cubit is in turn divided into twenty-four equal parts known as “fingers.” Except for the first twelve cubits: they are divided into twenty-eight fingers each.<sup>(22)</sup>

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Māwardī” by Carl Brockelmann in *EF*.

20. The “black” cubit (*al-dhirā’ al-sawdā’*) is the same as the “common” cubit (*al-dhirā’ al-‘ammah*) and was fixed at 54.04 cm. The “house” cubit (*dhirā’ al-dūr*) measured 50.3 cm. Both were introduced in ‘Abbāsīd times, but the black cubit with certainty not before al-Ma’mūn. See the article “Dhirā’” by W. Hinz in *EF*.
21. These figures should be taken with caution. Other sources, like Ibn Taghrī-Birdī and Ibn Iyās, give quite different measurements for the same years. — For a compilation of the Nile’s annual rises from the Muslim conquest to the Ottoman occupation of Egypt see Langlès, *Notes et Extraits*, vol. VIII.
22. Maqrīzī apparently never bothered to inspect the Nilometer of his home town personally. This description is lifted verbatim from the *Rihlah* of Ibn Jubayr, who visited Cairo in 1183 (Cf. *Rihlah*, Beirut ed. p. 29-30, ed. de Goeje, p. 54).

[13] Mas'ūdī reports:<sup>(23)</sup>

The Indians maintain: The rise and fall of the Nile are due to sudden torrents. We know that from the successive storms and the heavy rains.

The Greeks claim: It has never risen, nor has it fallen. Its "rise" and "fall" come from springs which are many and are connected with one another.

The Copts say: Its rise and fall are caused by springs in the river's bank which a traveler can see as he reaches its upper course.

[14] It has been said: It has never "risen," nor has it "fallen." Rather, its increase is due to the north wind: When there is a lot of it and it blows continuously, it arrests the flow of the river so that it leaves its banks and floods the land.

Some people have claimed that the cause of its rise is a wind called *rīḥ al-maltan*.<sup>(24)</sup> Namely, that wind brings rain clouds from beyond the Equator so that rains fall in the land of the Blacks and the Abyssinians and the Nubians, and that extra rainfall then comes to Egypt in the form of the Nile's rise. At the same time, the water of the sea stems the flow of the Nile so that it pauses until it has irrigated the country. Someone says about that:

So hear! Methinks who listens greater gift bestows than charity's donor.

Most kind and gracious is the Nile, but it's the *maltan* which deserves the thanks.

[15] The Nile begins to breathe and swell for the remainder of Ba'ūnah, which corresponds to June, and throughout Abīb, which is July, and Misrā, which is August. And as the water keeps increas-

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23. One reads sections 13 through 18 in *Prairies d'or* 2:359-68.

24. So the Bulaq text. Karl Vollers defines it as "a strong west wind" in Egypt, a meaning that can hardly apply to this context. (Cf. K. Vollers, "Beiträge zur Kenntniss der lebenden arabischen Sprache in Aegypten," in *ZDMG*, L (1896), p. 635.

ing, the river rises throughout Tūt, which is September, until the end of the month. When the high water reaches the sixteen-cubit mark, complete collection of the land tax and fertility of the land are assured, although this is harmful to livestock because of a lack of pasture and green grass. The most perfect of all increases, universally beneficial for the entire country, is seventeen cubits, which constitutes the country's sufficiency and means irrigation of all of its arable land. When it rises above that and reaches eighteen cubits and hold there, one quarter of the land of Egypt is then completely under water, and that means damage to some villages for the reasons discussed in connection with floods. In case of an increase higher than eighteen cubits, the consequence is the outbreak of an epidemic when the water recedes.

Most of the increases are in the eighteen-cubit range. During the caliphate of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz [717-720], the river (once) reached (only) twelve cubits.

The extent of a cubit up to twelve cubits is twenty-eight fingers, from twelve cubits and up it is twenty-four fingers. The smallest amount of water remaining at the bottom of the Nilometer is three cubits; in such a year water will be scarce. The cubit readings at which people in Egypt conduct public prayers for a good rise of the Nile are two, called *Munkar* and *Nakīr*.<sup>(25)</sup> They are the thirteenth and the fourteenth cubit. When the water stops rising at these two marks, with an extra half a cubit of fifteen, the people in Egypt start praying for a good rise, since all communities suffer comprehensive damage (in that case). When the river rises to a full fifteen cubits and enters sixteen, then some people will benefit, and no public prayers are conducted. Still, it means a shortfall in the government's tax revenue.

[16] Wine is made in Egypt from the water of Ṭūbah, which corresponds to January, after Epiphany, which falls on the tenth day

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25. They are the names of the two angels who demand an accounting of a person's deeds after death.

of Ṭubāh. The Nile water is at its purest then. The Egyptians are proud of the purity of the Nile water at that time, and the people of Tinnīs, Damietta, Tūnah, and all the villages of Buḥayrah province then store the water.

[17] All of Egypt, the cultivated and the uncultivated parts of it, used to receive sufficient irrigation from a rise of sixteen cubits at a time when people paid proper attention to its dikes, the construction of its bridges, and the dredging of its canals.

[18] When the water reached nine cubits in its rise, it entered the Manhā canal, the Fayyūm canal, the Sādūs canal, and the Sakhā canal.

[19] The rule at the present time, which is the year 345 (A.D. 9567), says (al-Mas'ūdī),<sup>(26)</sup> is that there will be a shortfall in the government's tax revenue (no matter) if the river rises above sixteen cubits or fails to reach that mark.

Generally,<sup>(27)</sup> what has been said above has changed in our own time because of the poor condition of dikes, sluices and canals. As a rule, the river rises in midsummer, when the sun is in Cancer, Leo and Virgo, at a time when the rivers in the world on the whole are at a falling level. That is why some people have claimed that the other rivers feed the Nile with their water as they fall so that it rises. Its rise begins on the fifth day of Ba'ūnah and becomes noticeable on the twelfth of that month. The first onrush occurs on the second day of Abīb. Its rise comes to an end on the eighth day of Bābih (18/19 October) and it begins to fall on the twentieth of that month, so that the time of its rise from the beginning until it falls again is three months and twenty-five days, namely, Abīb, Misrā,

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26. Mas'ūdī, *Al-Tanbīh wa-'l-ishrāf* (ed. Šawī), p. 20.

27. These are the words of Maqrīzī, and the paragraph belongs rightfully to the following section.



Tūt, and twenty days of Bābih.<sup>(28)</sup> The period it stays at the same level after the end of its rise is ten days, after which it begins to fall.

[20] By custom the river's rise is proclaimed by criers always on the twenty-seventh day of Ba'ūnah, after its *qā'*, that is, what is left of the old water, has been taken out on the thirteenth of that month. The large main canal is opened when the water has reached a complete sixteen cubits. In my younger days I remember hearing people say, 'God protect us from one finger under twenty!' And we used to know a time when, if the water came to several fingers under twenty, the Nile would overflow and flood estates and garden plantations, and the drains would run over. And here we are, living in a time, since the events of the year 806 (A.D. 1403/4), in which, when the water gets to just one finger under twenty in some year, it does not even reach the whole land, because so many dikes have been allowed to fall into disrepair.

Until after the Hijrah year 500, the norm of the Nile used to be sixteen cubits on the nilometer of Rawḍah Island, which is actually eighteen cubits, and people would say: 'If it rises a single cubit above that mark, the land tax in Egypt will go up by one hundred thousand dinars because of all the elevated land that now receives water. If it attains eighteen cubits, it has reached the maximum, because eighteen cubits on the Rawḍah nilometer are twenty-two cubits in uppermost Upper Egypt. If it rises a single cubit above eighteen, then the land tax will fall short by one hundred thousand dinars because of all the low-lying land that is then completely under water.'

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28. Actually: four months and fifteen days, since the remaining days of Ba'ūnah after the fifth must be added—as pointed out in a marginal note by the editor of the Bulaq edition.

[21] Ibn Muyassar<sup>(29)</sup> says about the events of the year 543 (A.D. 1148/9): In that year, the rising Nile reached nineteen cubits and four fingers and the water came as far as the New Gate<sup>(30)</sup> at the beginning of the main thoroughfare outside (Fātimid) Cairo. People had to make their way through the Maqābir<sup>(31)</sup> to get from Miṣr to Cairo. When the caliph al-Ḥāfiẓ-li-dīni-ʾllāh Abū ʾl-Mamūn ʾAbd al-Majīd ibn Muḥammad received the news that the flood water came all the way to the New Gate, he showed himself sad and withdrawn. And when a man of his retinue came to see him and asked him for the reason, he showed him a book, and in it it said: ‘When the water reaches the Bāb al-Jadīd, to his Maker goes the Imām ʾAbd al-Majīd.’ Then he said, “It is from this book that you learn how matters stand with us and with our dynasty, and what will come after it.” At the end of that year, al-Ḥāfiẓ took ill, and early in the year 544 he died.

[22] Speaking of the events of the year 577 (A.D. 1181/2), al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil<sup>(32)</sup> says: On Monday, the 26th of Rabīʿ I (August 10), which is the 16th of Misrā, the Nile peaked at sixteen cubits, which is the *wafāʾ*, or ‘fullness’ of its rise. No one has ever known it to reach its fullness at so early a date.

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29. Egyptian historian, died 677/1278. See the article “Ibn Muyassar” by Cl. Cahen in *EF*. —Both his *Tārīkh al-quḍāh* (History of Judges) and his *Akḥbāh Miṣr* [*Annales d’Égypte*, ed. H. Massé (Cairo 1919); ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid and Thierry Bianquis (Cairo: IFAO, 1978)] were used as important sources by Maqrīzī.

30. *Al-Bāb al-Jadīd*, built by the Fātimid caliph al-Ḥākīm, was located to the left of Bāb Zuwaylah on the edge of the Birkat al-Fīl. In Maqrīzī’s time, its arch was still standing at the entrance to the Manjabīyyah quarter near the Sūq al-Ṭuyūr (bird market); it was then called *Bāb al-Qaws*. Cf. *Khīṭaṭ* 2:100 (*Marchés du Caire* p. 180).

31. The area between the Mosque of al-Šāliḥ (*Khīṭaṭ* 2:293) and the Citadel.

32. Abū ʾAlī ʾAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʾAlī b. al-Saʿīd al-Lakḥmī, known as “al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil” (1135-1200): counsellor, secretary and confidant of the Ayyūbid Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin). See the article “al-Kāḍī al-Fāḍil” by C. Brockelmann/Cl. Cahen in *EF*. On his collection of edicts with commentaries, see C.H. Becker, *Beiträge zur Geschichte Ägyptens unter dem Islam*, 1:24. Maqrīzī copied from the autograph of this important work.

[23] That, too, is one of the ways in which the regular behavior of the Nile has changed in our own time, for the river now reaches fullness in the early part of Misrā. In 812 (A.D. 1409), the *wafā'* was on the 29th of Abīb, one day before Misrā. That is one of the most unusual rises of the Nile on record.

[24] In the year 709 (A.D. 1309), the Nile happened to reach fullness on the 11th of Jumādā I (October 17). That day was the 19th of Bābih, forty-nine days<sup>(33)</sup> after the Coptic New Year!

[25] On the 19th of that month—meaning, Shawwāl 592<sup>(34)</sup>—says (al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil), the dam sealing the Abū 'l-Munajjā canal was cut. (Sultan) al-Malik al-'Azīz 'Uthmān personally cut the dam. And the Nile rose in it by one finger, which was the eighteenth finger under the eighteen-cubit mark. That level is called by the Egyptians *al-lujjah al-kubrā*, the 'Great Depth'.

[26] The reader is referred to al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil to see why he calls this amount (of the river's rise) 'the great depth'. Were the Nile—God forbid!—to reach no more than that level in some year (today), a time of great scarcity would descend on the country so that one would have to fear for people's lives, and that for no other reason than the neglect shown in building and maintaining the dikes.

Great joy fills the people of Egypt when the Nile peaks at sixteen cubits, because that used to be the irrigation norm in the old days. And that has continued down to our own time. That day is made a day of celebration, on which the Sultan rides out in public with his soldiers and goes downriver on boats to anoint the Nilometer.<sup>(35)</sup> We shall discuss the great attention paid to the opening of the

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33. So in all texts, although there are only 37 days between September 10 and October 17.

34. I.e., 15 August 1196.

35. This is the ceremony called *takhliq al-miqyās*, or *al-takhliq*, during which the column of the Nilometer was daubed with the perfume *khalūq*. Cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥi al-a'shā*, 3:512-14; M.R. Salīm, *Al-Nīl fī 'aṣr al-Mamālīk* (Cairo Dār al-Qalam, 1965), 53-54.

Main Canal during the Fāṭimid period when we deal with the Lu'lu'ah belvederes.<sup>(36)</sup>

[27] A certain Koran commentator<sup>(37)</sup> says: The *yawm al-wafā'* or 'day of the Nile's fullness', is the very day on which Pharaoh promised to meet with Moses, upon him be peace, in the words of the Lord: "*Your tryst shall be on the Feast Day,*' said Moses. *'Let the people be mustered at the high noon.'*"<sup>(38)</sup> And it has become a custom for people to gather at that time for the ceremony of anointing the Nilometer.

[28] One of the best policies in the matter of publicly proclaiming the rise of the Nile is the one reported by the jurist Ibn Zūlāq<sup>(39)</sup> in his biography of al-Mu'izz-li-dīni-'llāh. He relates: In that month—meaning, Shawwāl—of the year 362 (July 973), al-Mu'izz-li-dīni-'llāh forbade any public proclamation while the Nile was rising, (ordering) that written communications about it must be addressed to him and General Jawhar only. And when it was complete—meaning, when (the river) had reached a full sixteen cubits—he allowed it to be proclaimed in public, and the dam across the Main Canal was cut.

Just think what a splendid policy that is because, when the Nile pauses during its rise, or when it rises only a little, people are forever filled with anxiety and talk themselves into believing that the river is not going to get any higher at all. Then they get hold of the grain supplies and refuse to sell them, in the hope that prices will go up. Someone with money will do his best to stock up on staples, either being out for a profit, or in order to store food for his dependents. And the result of all that is dearth. If the water rises, prices will relax. If not, there will be austerity and scarcity. Hence, keep-

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36. *Khiṭāṭ* 1:467.

37. He is Ibn 'Aṭīyyah (Wiet, n. 11).

38. Koran 20 (Ta Ha): 59.

39. Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan, a prolific biographer and court historiographer of the early Fāṭimid period in Egypt, much cited by later scholars, died 387/997. See "Ibn Zūlāq" in *EF*.

ing the rise secret from the populace offers the greatest benefit and yields the best return.

[29] In his *History of Egypt*, al-Musabbiḥī<sup>(40)</sup> reports: The Caliph ordered Ibn Khayrān<sup>(41)</sup> to set down in writing the words with which the measurers were to open their proclamation of the Nile's rise. And (Ibn Khayrān) wrote down: "Uncounted blessings from stores inexhaustible, God has given abundance to the blessed Nile!" These are the exact words.

[30] It is a habit of the Egyptian Nile that its water turns green near the beginning of its annual rise. The common people in Egypt then say, 'The Nile has become unhealthy,' thinking that it is harmful to drink from it at that time. The cause of its green coloration is said to be wild animals, especially elephants, which come to the marshes on the Nile's uppermost course and bathe in them in great numbers, because of the severe heat in those parts, with the result that the water of those marshes goes bad. Later, when the rains in the south fall at their accustomed times, more and more rain-swollen streams pour into the marshes then, and water that has undergone a qualitative change flows out and passes on toward Egypt. Right behind it follows the new water which means the river's rise in Egypt. By that time, the water will have turned red, because cimolite carried by the streams (on its upper course) has mingled with it.

When the flood water reaches its highest level, it covers the fertile land of Egypt, and the villages of the region on top of hills and elevations are surrounded by the water so that they can only be reached by boats, or over long dikes, on which, when properly built

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40. He is al-Amīr al-Mukhtār 'Izz al-Mulk Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd-Allāh b. Aḥmad, the most important Egyptian historian for his period, with close personal connections to the caliphs al-Ḥākim and al-Zāhir. He died in 1029. See *GAL* 1:408, S 1:571. —Maqrīzī cites his detailed chronicle, which is only partially preserved, some 50 times in the *Khiṭaṭ*.

41. Abū 'l-Qāsim Walīy al-Dawlah: Fāṭimid secretary, died 1012 (Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'* 2:92). His son, Walīy al-Dawlah Abū 'Alī Ibn Khayrān, was head of the Chancery (*Dīwān al-Inshā'*) in the reign of al-Zāhir.

and maintained, one-fourth of the land tax is spent, in an effort to preserve the water of the Nile until every place is finally irrigated to the extent needed. When the irrigation of one area is completed, people there cut the dikes enclosing that area at certain places known to the overseers and the village-headmen. (This is done) at specific times which are never earlier and never later than the accustomed times, depending on what the statutes of each village say. Thus, each area receives irrigation from its neighbor, together with its own water that one collects in it. Were it not for meticulous attention to the existing dikes and for the digging of secondary and main canals, the benefit from the water of the Nile would surely decrease. As it has happened in our present time.

[31] It has been related that one used to set aside one third of the land tax every year for the restoration of the dikes of Egypt, because people in the old days cared for them, since on their proper operation depends the irrigation of the country from which comes the welfare of the people. One will understand—before long, it is to be hoped—the work that was done by the ancients and those after them in that respect.

[32] In the contemporary regimes, there are certain fees attached to the Nilometer, among them one of fifty dinars per annum for sweeping the water conduits, which is paid out to the (living) descendant of Abū 'l-Raddād.

## 18. The Bridge over Which One Used to Cross the Nile

One should know that there used to be a bridge made of ships on the Nile between al-Fuṣṭāṭ and The Isle. The latter is known today as *al-Rawḍah*. There also was another such bridge between The Isle and al-Gīzah . Each bridge consisted of thirty ships.

## 19. What Has Been Said in Praise and in Censure about the Water of the Nile

[1] The learned doctor Abū ‘Alī Ibn Sīnā,<sup>(1)</sup> God rest him in peace, said: Some people go much too far in praising the Nile. They sum up its laudable qualities as four: that its source is far away; that it has a good bed; that its flow is copious; that it flows from south to north. Now, the fact that it flows from south to north has (admittedly) an attenuating effect<sup>(2)</sup> on the water flowing in it. Its copious flow, however, is shared by other rivers.

[2] The best water, he says, is water coming from springs. Not all springs, but rather the water of springs which come from salt-free ground, since the soil around them is almost free of foreign dispositions and qualities. Or they may be rocky springs, in which case they are less liable to become putrid the way springs originating in soft ground do, but springs coming from salt-free ground are better than those coming from rocks. Nor is it a matter of just any bountiful spring. Rather, it must be one that also flows freely. And it is not just any flowing spring, but one that flows exposed to sun and wind, because this is among the things by which it acquires goodness. As to stagnant springs, they may sometimes acquire a bad quality by being exposed, and not do so, when they are underground and hidden.

[3] One should know that water flowing over clay<sup>(3)</sup> is better than water flowing over stones. Because clay purifies the water, takes foreign admixtures out of it and renders it limp, which

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1. On the eminent Persian physician, natural scientist and philosopher Avicenna see “Ibn Sīnā” by A.-M. Goichon in *EF*.
  2. Arabic: *mulaṭṭif*. In medieval medical terminology, the property of substance or remedy which increases the fluidity of the humors, thus aiding digestibility.
  3. Read: *ṭīniyyatu ‘l-masil*.



stones do not. But the clay over which it flows must be good, not muddy or salty or other. If such water happens to be a torrential flood, it will change, due to the many admixtures in it, into the nature of the flood. If it is headed in its course toward the sun and flows eastward, particularly, toward the east in the summertime, then it is even better, especially when it is very far away from its source.

[4] Thus, a body of water heading northward and water flowing west and south are bad, especially when a south wind blows. Water that descends from elevated places is, with all other merit, the best of its kind.<sup>(4)</sup> It is free of salt and gives the impression of tasting sweet. Wine, when mixed with it, can take only a little. It is lightweight and, because of its loose consistency, quick to cool and to heat, cold in the winter and warm in the summer, and it has no taste and odor at all. It is easy to digest, quick to dissolve what is placed in it, and quick to cook the things one cooks with it.

[5] The learned doctor ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Abī ‘l-Ḥasan ibn (al-)Nafis<sup>(5)</sup> says in his commentary on (Avicenna’s) *Canon*: These laudable attributes discussed by him are not signs of praiseworthiness. Rather, they are things which necessitate its being praiseworthy. (For instance) one of those four is the remoteness of (the Nile’s) source. We have already demonstrated that that *necessitates* the attenuating quality of its water on account of its being in so much motion.

[6] One should know<sup>(6)</sup> that the Nile springs from a mountain called Mountain of the Moon. That mountain lies 11° 30’ beyond

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4. Read: *aḡḡalu mā kāna bi-ṣifatih*, and insert the eliminated *wa-* before *yukhayyilu*.

5. On the famous Syrian physician (d. 1288) see the article “Ibn al-Nafis” by M. Meyerhof and J. Schacht in *EF*. —The work, quoted is his *Mūjaz al-Qānūn*, an abridgment of Avicenna’s *Al-Qānūn fī ‘l-ṭibb*, his “Summa” of the medical knowledge of his time.

6. The author of this section, which is obviously out of place here and belongs in ch. 15, appears to be the polymath ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā’ah (d. 1416), a student of Ibn Khaldūn. The text is badly corrupted in some places.

the Equator, where the maximum circumference of the Earth is 360 degrees. It begins at  $46^{\circ} 30'$ , measured from the beginning of the ecumene in the west, and ends at the end of  $61^{\circ} 50'$ , so that the extent of that mountain is  $15^{\circ} 20'$  where the largest circle around the globe is 360 degrees.

From that mountain issue ten streams from springs in the mountain, of which five each pour into a round lake. The center of one of these two lakes is at 50 degrees from the beginning of the inhabited world in the west, and at  $7^{\circ} 31'$  south of the Equator. The center of the other is at 57 degrees from the beginning of the ecumene in the west, and (also) at  $7^{\circ} 31'$  south of the Equator. These two lakes are of equal size, the diameter of each being five degrees.

From each of these two lakes flow four rivers which shed into a small round lake in the First Clime. The distance of its center is  $53^{\circ} 30'$  from the beginning of the ecumene in the west and two degrees into the First Clime from the Equator to the north. Its diameter is two degrees.

Each of the eight rivers (that flow) into that lake then emerges as one river, and that is the Egyptian Nile. It flows on through Nubia. Another river flows [from] a large round [lake] with a diameter of three degrees. The distance of its center from the beginning of the ecumene in the west is  $71^{\circ}$ . The river coming from that source begins off the lake's center on the Equator and meets the Nile at an eastern longitude of  $43^{\circ} 40'$ .

Once the Nile has passed the city of Fuṣṭāṭ and has reached a town called Shaṭṭanawf,<sup>(7)</sup> it divides into two rivers heading toward the sea. One of them is known as *Baḥr Rashīd*, and from it issues the Alexandria canal, and the other as *Baḥr Dimyāṭ*. When the latter reaches al-Manṣūrah, a river known as *Baḥr Ushmūn* branches off

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7. The Coptic *Shentouf*, an ancient community in the present-day district of Ashmūn, Minūfiyyah governorate. Idrīsī mentions the popular etymology of its name: *Shaṭṭ Minūf* 'shore of Minūf'. Until the mid 16th century, the Delta began at Shaṭṭanawf, about 12 km north of Cairo. See Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 2:162.

it, heading toward a local lake (Lake Manzalah), while the rest of the arm continues toward the sea near Damietta.

The rise of the Nile's water is caused by abundant rains in the land of the Abyssinians. God alone knows the truth.

[7] One should know that weight is one of the surer indications of the condition of water: that which is light is in most instances better.

These, then, are the good qualities of water stated by the learned doctor Ibn Sīnā. If one considers what he says, one will discover that they have all come together in the water of the Nile:

First, the body of the Nile is a stream that flows past salt-free lands, since the soil of the terrain through which it passes contains none of the bad dispositions and qualities, such as the minerals naphtha, alum, salts, sulfurous deposits, and the like. Rather, it passes along lands which sprout gold, as evidenced by the nuggets of gold one can see on its banks. Some people have gone to the trouble of panning gold from the sand taken from the Nile's banks and have made a lot of money with it. The merit of water containing gold is undeniable.

Secondly, the Nile, as it flows along, is at all times exposed to sun and wind.

Thirdly, its mud comes from the mud of a stream of waters gathered as a result of rains that pass over lands free of salt. You can tell that from the fragrance of the mud when you moisten it with water.

Fourthly, there is the copious flow of the Nile and the strength of its current, which almost shatters pillars in its way and can push large heavy objects when they oppose it.

Fifth, there is the great distance between its source and the place where it flows into the sea. It has already been stated that such a long course is unknown of any other river in the world.

Sixth, there is the fact that it descends from high up, for the south is more elevated than the north. Especially when it gets to the cataracts, it descends from the top of a high mountain into the valley of Egypt. Ibn Qutaybah cites in his *Unusual Traditions* one of Jarīr ibn ‘Abd-Allāh al-Bajalī where the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, asked him about his camp ground ...<sup>(8)</sup> After having described it, he added, “Our water is difficult to get to”—meaning, it flows from high up. And the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, answered, “The best water is *sanīm*”—meaning, that which is visible above ground, because *sanīm* is applied to water on the surface of the earth. And to express that something is higher than something else, one says *tasannamahū*; it is derived from the *sanām*, or hump, of the camel, because of its height. A certain Koran commentator says concerning the Lord’s words, “*And whose mixture is Tasnīm*”:<sup>(9)</sup> That is to say, it blends with that which descends from high up.

Seventh, there is the fact that (the Nile) flows from south to north so that it is at all times faced by the salutary north Wind.

Eighth, there is its light weight. That has been tested many times in comparison with other water, and it was always lighter in weight.

Ninth, there are its sweet taste, its beneficial effect on the digestion, and the fact that it is made to “roll off” the stomach so that one burps after drinking it.

If one considers these properties as a natural scientist and as one versed in medical science, one will recognize the great value of the Nile’s water and be aware of its abundant usefulness and its many good qualities.

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8. The blank is Wiet’s. Bulaq: *bi-B-l-n-sah*. Its should be a place in the Yemen, where Jarīr came from. He converted to Islam only twenty days before the Prophet’s death and died in 671 or 674. See Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghābah*, 1:279.

9. Koran 83 (The Stinters): 27. *Al-Tasnīm* is the name of a spring in Paradise, “apparently so called because of its elevated location” (*Muġam alfāz al-Qur’ān al-ḥakīm*, 1:624).

[8] Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is said to have written a book containing all the wonders of the world he had seen. Every single marvel was in that book. And at the end of it he said: All of that is not a marvel, but the real wonder is the Nile of Egypt.

[9] A certain philosopher said: Had God not wisely provided for the Nile of Egypt gradually to rise during the summertime until the country is completely irrigated, and for its water to recede at the beginning of the planting season, the land of Egypt would have gone to ruin and become uninhabitable, because it does not have sufficient rainfall, nor has it running streams to benefit the whole country, except for part of the Fayyūm region.

[10] How well spoke the poet who said:

Oh, what a marvel is this Nile!  
     A virgin, still of unheard fame.  
 Each year it meets the land, salutes  
     and, tiring, bids farewell again.  
 Approaching like the crescent moon:  
     to wax, to wane forever its fate.

[11] And another<sup>(10)</sup> said:

It seems the Nile has mind and heart,  
     as it appears to human eyes:  
 It comes at times of greatest need  
     and goes when they can do without.

[12] And Tamīm ibn al-Mu'izz<sup>(11)</sup> said:

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10. He is the Egyptian poet Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Shāwar b. Tarkhān b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Naqīb al-Kinānī (d. 687/1288), known as "al-Nafīsī" (or possibly "al-Fuqaysī" or "al-Qufaysī"; cf. Ziriklī, *A'lām*, 9:20, 2:207). See al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafāyāt*, 1:232-39.
11. Fāṭimid prince, the great-great-grandson of 'Ubayd-Allāh al-Mahdī, died 374/985. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt*, 1:98 (where the year of his death is given as 368).

A day on the Nile to us seems short.  
 But every day of joy is short.  
 Upstream the barges rush like steeds  
 while down the water's host descends.  
 Its waves resemble pleats of fat,  
 its eddies little navels' pits.

[13] He also said elsewhere:

Why, watch the thunder, weeping, moaning,  
 and lightning flashing, smile-provoking!  
 It wears away a cloud most sombre  
 and, weeping, causes earth to smile.  
 Then watch the River's water spread  
 as if imbued with musk and sandal.

[14] And another<sup>(12)</sup> said:

To God we owe the River's flow. When east wind  
 reveals a mighty host to us in passing,  
 The shore wave reedlike lances, strong, yet pliant,  
 the rolling waves the trenchant swords of India.  
 At times of rise it vies with roses' lushness.  
 When calm, its wet's like color undiffused.

[15] Abū 'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn al-Wazīr<sup>(13)</sup> said about the gradual rise of the Nile and its great benefit:

Much see I ever grow from little,  
 the crescent grow into full moon.  
 So marvel not when each canal

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12. He is the Alexandrian poet Abū Maṣṣūr Zāfir b. al-Qāsim b. Maṣṣūr al-Judhāmī, known as "Zāfir al-Ḥaddād" (The Blacksmith). He died in 529/1134. See Ziriklī, *A'lām*, 3:340.

13. 9th century Egyptian traditionist (cf. Suyūṭī, *Husn*, 1:294). Same attribution by Yāqūt (*Mu'jam* 5:336) and al-Dimashqī (*Nukhbat al-dahr* 90).

of Egypt is a fount of wealth:  
 A finger's rise a day can mean  
 a cubit's gain in public weal.

[16] And al-Shihāb Aḥmad ibn Faḍl-Allāh al-ʿUmarī<sup>(14)</sup> said:

In Egypt rests a dazzling merit  
 for life so opulent and easy:  
 Neath sloping gardens see encounter  
 the fount of life and legend's Khaḍīr.<sup>(15)</sup>

[17] Ibn Qalāqīs<sup>(16)</sup> said:

Behold the sun as it sets on the Nile,  
 behold behind it dusk's red glow.  
 It's gone! Some rays still linger on as if  
 the water scorched it as it sank.  
 The crescent—has it come to save?—  
 a barge, of gleaming silver made.

[18] Nash' al-Mulk Ibn al-Munajjim<sup>(17)</sup> said:

How many times I've raised my eyes  
 skyward, surveying earth from the horizon,  
 When evening seemed in combat locked!

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14. Damascene historian (esp. Mongol history), biographer, geographer, and poet, died 749/1349. See "Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī" by K. S. Salibi in *EF*. Wiet gives his name erroneously as Aḥmad b. ʿAlī. —The verses are from his *Masālik al-abṣār fi mamālik al-amṣār* (Cairo, 5:149).
15. The second verse is a play on the words *māʾ al-ḥayāh* 'water of life', i.e., the Nile, and *al-khaḍīr* 'verdure'. On the legendary figure cf. "al-Khaḍīr" (A.J. Wensinck) in *SEI*.
16. Abū ʿl-Futūḥ Naṣr b. ʿAbd-Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Qawīy al-Lakhmī, known as "Ibn Qalāqīs": Egyptian poet, born 532/1138 in Alexandria, died 567/1172 in ʿAydhāb. See "Ibn Qalāqīs" (U. Rizzitano) in *EF*.
17. Abū ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Mufrij, known as "Ibn al-Munajjim" (1154-1219): prominent poet of his time (Saladin seems to have been one of his admirers), of Syrian origin (Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān), lived and died in Egypt. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt* 1:197; 7:207-8.

A coward would have died of fear:  
 The sun in heedless flight toward west,  
     pale over the Nile from dusk's attack,  
 The crescent, like a spearhead curved,  
     flung from fierce thrust into twilight's gloom.

[19] And al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil said: Now, the Nile has filled the land, as its waters from finger to cubit ascend. It seems to cover the ground with solicitous intent, invading, settling, but not on transgression bent. No greater brigand will in Egypt strike, nor is there one so desired and fearsome alike.

[20] The Nile of Egypt differs in the way it flows from most rivers, because it flows from south to north, and other rivers do not. With the exception of two rivers which flow like the Nile: the Indus river of the Sind<sup>(18)</sup> and the Orontes—it is the one known today as *al-ʿĀṣī*<sup>(19)</sup>—at Ḥamāh, one of the cities of Syria.

[21] Some people have denounced the water of the Nile. (For instance) Abū Bakr Ibn Waḥshiyyah<sup>(20)</sup> says in his *Nabataean Agriculture*:

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18. It is somewhat surprising to see Maqrīzī uncritically repeating this bit of ancient lore which rests on a few superficial similarities shared by the two rivers, and which was already questioned by Masʿūdī in the tenth century. A hundred years before Maqrīzī's time, al-Dimashqī, who calls it a "misconception" (*wahm*) propagated by "certain uninformed people," wrote: "It is impossible that the *Mihran* (Indus) could flow northward. In its meanderings and detours it may do so for a while, a day's journey or two, but then it always returns to a southerly direction." (*Nukhbat al-dahr* 98-9).
19. Popular etymology interpreted that name, the arabicized form of the Macedonian Axios, as "the Rebellious," either because it flows from south to north, or because it flows from Islamic into infidel territory. Cf. J. Wellhausen, "Die Namen des Orontes" in *ZDMG*, LX, p. 245.
20. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, known as "Ibn Waḥshiyyah", a figure of uncertain historical identity. See "Ibn Waḥshiyya" by T. Fahd in *EF*; *GAL*<sup>2</sup> 1:142, S 1:430. —On the *K. al-Filāḥah al-Nabaṭiyyah* ascribed to him—Goldziher calls it "The most outstanding document of Nabataean Shuʿūbiyyah" (*Mohammedanische Studien* 1:158) cf. C. Nallino, *Raccolta di scritti editi e inediti*, V, 248 ff.



The water of the Nile comes from a mountain range beyond the land of the Blacks called the Mountains of the Moon. Its sweetness and its annual rise are indicative of its position vis-à-vis the sun: The sun scalds it. Not all the way, though. Rather, it heats the water gently over a long period of time in such a way that the heat neither upsets nor overwhelms it so that its moist particles would be dissipated and only its residual particles would remain, but by exerting a moderate influence on it. As a consequence, the river's water is very sweet. Drinking it regularly induces putrefaction of the body and causes pimples, boils and ulcers, and the Egyptians, who drink from it, are therefore of sanguine temperament and require phlebotomies at short intervals. Those of them who are versed in natural science will take good care of themselves in order to protect the body from the harm of the Nile's water. Otherwise, they will incur the putrefaction and the spread of pustules and boils we have already mentioned.

That is to say that this water is far less cold than other kinds of water. "Cooking" gave it a consistency which is denser than that of water. When it gets mixed with food inside the body, there is an increase of harmful putrid wastes, and the result is what we have said earlier. The remedy of the Egyptians which protects them against the harm of the Nile's water consists in a liberal consumption of the costive sirups of acid fruit and in taking purgatives against the wastes.

When increasing solar heat "cooks" the water of the Nile over a prolonged period of time, it becomes saline, like the water of the stagnant seas, which are motionless except at the time of the tides and when winds blow. It is more suited for watering cropland and plantations than for livestock.

[22] And Ibn Riḍwān says: The Nile passes through (the land of) many black tribes. Then, having washed off the dirt and filth in the land of the Blacks, it reaches Egypt and plows its way, from

south to north through the middle of it until it flows into the Byzantine Sea.

The annual rise of that river begins in spring and ends in the fall. During its flooding time, much moisture rises from it into the air due to invisible evaporation, thus bringing humidity into the dryness of summer, and as the river rises, it floods the land of Egypt and washes up the filth it carries, such as carcasses and dung of animals, dead reeds and plants, and swamp water,<sup>(21)</sup> all of which it has brought down from upriver. Also, because of the sapless nature of this land, a great deal of its soil and mud will mingle with the Nile's water. And in it spawn fish which breed in it and in marshy waters.

Before that, one will notice at the early stage of the river's rise that its color changes to green due to the great amount of putrid swamp water which mingled with it and which is so saturated with pond scum and sea moss that their putrefaction turns its color green. Later on, the water gets roily and eventually becomes like muck, and when it clears up, plenty of mud will gather in a container together with a sticky moist substance that has a rank and offensive smell. This is the surest sign for the harmfulness and putridity of this water.

Both Hippocrates and Galen have demonstrated that the water quickest to become foul is that which the sun has attenuated through rain water. Such water is liable to arrive in Egypt already extremely attenuated by the severe heat in the land of the Blacks, and when it becomes mingled with the pollutants of Egyptian land, it acquires an added propensity to deterioration. That is why very many varieties of fish develop in it. Because animal and plant wastes, the putrid nature of such water, and the spawn of fish are all together essentials for generating such fish, as Aristotle says in his *Treatise on Animals*. That is also something perceptible to the

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21. Read with the Bulaq text: *miyāh al-niqā'*.

senses, because animal life develops from the putrescence of any thing that is in a state of decay. Hence, the multitude of worms, mice, snakes, scorpions, hornets, flies, and other vermin generated in Egypt.

It has already been shown that the prevailing climate of Egypt is one of heat and abnormal humidity, that the country consists of many parts, and that its air and water are both bad.

[23] Sometimes,<sup>(22)</sup> at the end of spring and the beginning of summer, the flow of the Nile stops near Fustāṭ. Then the river becomes polluted by the many things that people throw into it, until its foul condition becomes such that (its water) has a noticeable offensive smell. Obviously, when that water reaches that state, it will perceptibly alter the temperament of people.

[24] One must take the water of the Nile from a spot where its flow is strongest and its pollution the least. Everyone purifies that water according to what suits his temperament. Those who are hot-tempered in the summer do it with chalk, Armenian clay, red ocher, crushed lotus, crushed azarole, and vinegar. Those who are cold-tempered in winter do it with bitter almonds, the inner kernels of apricot stones, wild thyme, and alum.

One must skim water that is supposed to clear and be drunk. If you want, you can purify it by putting it in pottery, earthenware or leather containers, or anything that acts as a filter. If you want to, you can cook it over fire and put it out in the night air to clear, then pour off the portion that has cleared up and use it (as drinking water).

When water contains perceptible impurities, you should cook it over fire, then let it cool outdoors in the cold of the night and filter it with the chemicals I have mentioned. The best treatment of such water is to purify it several times, namely, by heating or cooking it, then letting it cool in the night air and pouring off the portion that

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22. Sections 23 and 24 are still by Ibn Riḏwān.

has cleared up. You can also purify it by means of certain chemicals. Then you take the portion which has cleared, put it in vessels that act as a filter in the cool of the night, and then use the filtrate for drinking water.

In the summer, you should use as containers for such water pottery and earthenware vessels made in (the month of) Ṭūbah (January), or stone vessels, waterskins, or similar things which act as coolers. In the winter, you should use glass containers, glazed ware, and pottery and earthenware made in the summer. They should be placed in the summer under passageways and in breach vents for the northerly winds, in the winter in warm places. The water can be cooled in the summer by mixing it with some rose water. One can also take a clean rag and wrap tightly into it some chalk and purslane seeds, or white poppy, or Armenian clay, or red ocher, then drop it into the water so that the latter absorbs the coldness of them without getting mixed up with the substance itself. One washes the water containers in the summer with pottery dust pulverized with barley flour, colocasia and sandalwood. In the winter, they are washed with potash and cyperus and fumigated with mastic and aloe.

The Nile water in Egypt is at its worst during the river's inundation and when it stops moving. At such times, one must cook it and go to extra lengths in filtering it with apricot kernels' and other things that eliminate its viscosity. It is at its best in (the month of) Ṭūbah, when the weather is cold all the time.

That is why the Egyptians have learned by experience that the water of Ṭūbah is the best, so that many of them store it in glass and porcelain containers and drink it throughout the year. They claim it does not spoil, and they have gotten into the habit of not purifying it during that time, because they believe that it is already extremely pure. Now, you should not rely on that and purify water in any case, because water in storage inevitably deteriorates in quality.

[25] This, then, is what I know of the negative things said about the water of the Nile. The gist of it is that the water's quality deteriorates, depending on the ground over which it passes, not that it is inherently bad. You must not be frightened by what you hear from other people, for there is no more to it than what I have told you. When the harmfulness is a matter of qualitative, not quantitative, change, then you know how to treat the water in such a way that the harmful qualities which have entered it will be eliminated. God in His bounty and generosity provides the success.

## 20. The Wonders of the Nile

[1] In the Nile and in the land of Egypt, says al-Mas‘ūdī,<sup>(1)</sup> live many unusual animals. One of them is a fish known as the *electric ray*. It is about a cubit (in diameter). When it lands in the net of a fisherman, his hand and arm will begin to tremble. That way he knows it is caught, and he proceeds to take it out of the net. When he grabs it with a piece of wood or a stick, it will do the same thing. It was mentioned by Galen, who also mentions the fact that, if one places it, while alive, on the head of someone suffering from severe headache or migraine, the pain will instantly subside.

[2] Ibn al-Bayṭār<sup>(2)</sup> reports on the authority of Galen: It is the marine animal that induces numbness. Certain people have claimed that, if (that fish) is applied to the head of someone complaining of a headache, the pain will let up, and when applied to the anus of someone suffering from anal eversion, it will set it right. But I personally tried both things together and discovered that it did neither of them. So I figured I would apply it to the head of someone suffering from a headache: Then the animal, while still alive—because I thought it would have a remedial effect in that state—might perhaps relieve the pain the way other remedies do. And I found it effective, as long as the animal was alive.

[3] Dioscorides says: It is a marine fish with a numbing effect. When placed on the head of someone suffering from chronic headache, it will calm his intense pain. When carried around, it will firm up a prolapsed anus.

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1. *Prairies d’or* 2:392.

2. On the famous Hispano-Arab botanist, pharmacologist and physician (d. 646/1248) see “Ibn al-Bayṭār” by J. Vernet in *EF*.

[4] According to Yūnus,<sup>(3)</sup> the oil in which that fish is cooked will alleviate sharp arthritic pain when rubbed on the joints.

[5] Ibn al-Bayṭār reports: I saw on the seashore of Malaga in Spain a flat fish. Its color on the outside is exactly like that of the electric ray of Egypt and its inside is white. It has the same numbing effect on someone holding it in his hand as the Egyptian electric ray, or even a stronger one. It is, however, completely inedible.

[6] Someone has said that, when a woman wears a piece of an electric ray suspended from her neck, her husband cannot bear being away from her, and likewise, when a man wears it, the woman can barely let go of him.

[7] Then (there is) the *skink*. It is a cross between a fish and a crocodile. Only, it is not like a fish because it has two front and two hind paws, and it is not like a crocodile because its tail is bare, smooth, broad, and not jagged, while the crocodile's is flat and serrate. The fat of the skink is used as an aphrodisiac. It is found only in the Nile and in the Indus River in India. I have been told that some people broiled and ate some. All of them died within the hour.

[8] And (again) the skink. Avicenna says: It is an aquatic lizard which is caught in the Nile of Egypt. It is said to be a descendant of the crocodile. The best ones are caught in spring.

[9] Someone else said that it is the hatchling of the crocodile. When the hatchlings emerge from the eggs, those which head for water become crocodiles, and those which head for sand become skinks.

[10] Ibn al-Bayṭār says: It is a species of large land rats which one (kills and) dries in autumn. A dram's weight of it, taken from a spot next to its kidneys, when drunk with sherbet, will arouse sexual appetite. It bears a strong resemblance to a lizard. It is found in

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3. Unidentifiable. Perhaps Yūnus Lubābah, a barber-surgeon of Christian origin who lived around 800? (Cf. *Fihrist*, ed. & transl. Dodge, 283).

the sand next to the Nile in Upper Egypt. It belongs to the kind of animals which run around on land and also go into the water—meaning, the Nile. That is why it is called an “aquatic” lizard: because of its similarity (with that animal) and because it goes into water.

It is generated from a male and a female. The male has two testicles like those of a rooster, both in shape and location. The female lays more than twenty eggs (at a time) and buries them in the sand. The male skink has two penises, the female two vulvas.

[11] The skink bites man and then seeks out water. If it finds it, it slips into it, if not, it urinates and wallows in its own urine. When it does that, the person that was bitten will die instantly and the skink will live. But if the person bitten happens to make it to the water first and to enter it before the skink can do so or wallow in its urine, then the skink will die and the one who was bitten will be safe.

The better of it and the more useful for (increasing) sexual potency is the male; it has this distinction over the female. The choicest parts of it are the areas next to the root of its tail and on either side of the navel.

Spring is the season when it is hunted, because then it is in heat and therefore of the greatest effectiveness (as an aphrodisiac). After it is caught, it is slaughtered on the very same day. Because, if it is left alive, its fat melts, its flesh becomes lean, and its efficacy is diminished. Then one cuts off its head and the end of its tail, without extirpating (the latter). One slits open its belly lengthwise and discards what is inside, except its kidneys and its gall bladder. After it has been cleaned, one stuffs it with salt, sews up the incision, and hangs it upside down in a shady place with moderate airflow so that it can dry and thus be protected from decay. Then one lifts it into a container that lets air flow through, such as wicker baskets, baskets woven from palm leaves, and the like, until the time when it is needed.



Its fat in a fresh state is hot and wet. When dried, it is even hotter, but less moist. Its consumption does not agree with someone with a hot, dry temperament, but only agrees with people who have cold, moist tempers. Its flesh and fat have the characteristic of arousing sexual appetite and lust, of heightening sexual excitement, and of being beneficial in cases of cold nervous diseases—especially the parts next to its navel and on either side of its tail. It can be used both as a simple and as a compound, but its application as a simple is more efficacious. In a dried state, one uses the amount of one to three *mithqāls* [4.68 to 14.44 grams], depending on age, temperament, locality and time. One pulverizes it and mixes it with sherbet, or honey water, or the liquid obtained from soaking raisins in water. Or one sips it sprinkled on the yolks of soft-boiled eggs. One does the same thing with its flesh, by taking one to two drams of it and sprinkling it on egg yolk, either as a simple or together with other things like crushed purslane seeds.

[12] The skink is found only in the Fayyum region in particular. Most of them are caught during the *arbaʿiniyyāt*,<sup>(4)</sup> when the weather is very cold and the skink leaves the water for land, and is then caught.

[13] Another wonder of the Nile is the *hippopotamus*.<sup>(5)</sup> ʿAbd-Allāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Sulaym al-Uswānī<sup>(6)</sup> says in his *History of the Nubians*: “The distance between Dongola and the beginning of the country of Alwah is greater than the one between Dongola and Uswān. In the former region there are several times as many villages, estates, islands, (herds of) livestock, date palms, trees, doom

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4. The forty coldest days of winter, beginning with the first of Kiyahk (December 9/10). See Pt. II, ch. 91, sect. 5.

5. Sections 13 and 14 are missing in the Bulaq text.

6. He was an Ismāʿilī propagandist (dāʿī) and a traveler of the 10th century. Almost nothing is known about his life. His *Akhbār al-Nūbah wa-ʿl-Maḡurrah wa-ʿl-Abwah wa-ʿl-Bujah wa-ʿl-Nīl*, by all appearances an important contribution to the knowledge of the Sudan, is lost, except for the portions quoted by Maqrīzī in Pt. II, ch. 30 ff. See the short article “Ibn Sulaym al-Uswānī” by Yūsuf Faḍl Ḥasan in *EF*; al-Mināwī, *Nahr al-Nīl*, 41-44.

palms, fields and grapevines as there are in the area adjoining Muslim territory. In those parts are huge river islands, several day's journeys in extent, with mountains, wild beasts and lions, and deserts where one fears perishing of thirst. The Nile meanders in that region over a distance of several day's journeys (alternately) toward sunrise and the west, so that upriver becomes like downriver. It is the area where the bends of the Nile touch the mine known as *al-Shankah*, which is a town known as *Shangīr*.<sup>(7)</sup> It is from there that al-'Umarī began his revolt."<sup>(8)</sup>

"There are plenty of hippopotamuses in that place. I was told by Simon, who wrote *Ahd* (*balad*) *ʿAlwah*, that he counted on one island alone seventy specimens of them. They are riverine animals shaped like a horse, gross like a water buffalo, having short legs with padded feet. They come in the colors of horses, with manes and small ears like horses, and also the necks of horses. Their tails are like the tails of water buffaloes. They have a broad snout which appears to an observer to have a nosebag on it. They neigh. They have tusks against which a crocodile does not stand a chance. When angry, they take on boats and sink them. On land they feed on grass. Their hide is tremendously tough, and one makes cudgels from it."

[14] (The "river horse") is like a horse on land, except that it has a larger mane and tail and is prettier in color. Its hooves are cloven like those of cattle. Its body is slightly larger than that of a donkey. It can devour a crocodile and is obviously stronger than that animal. Sometimes it comes out of the water and breeds with a female horse, and from that union is born an extremely beautiful horse.

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7. The slightly expanded version of this passage in Pt. II, ch. 30 (toward the end) suggests *Shurayq* (halfway between Abū Ḥāmid and Berber) as a possible location of *Shangīr*.

8. Read: *wa-minhu kharaja al-'Umarī*. Cf. Pt. II, ch. 30. Wiet corrects the error there.

It so happened that someone went down to the bank of the Nile with a mare one day. A black hippo with white spots emerged from the water and mounted the mare. She became pregnant and gave birth to a colt of unusual appearance. That person, eager to have another colt, then brought the mare and the colt to that same spot. The hippo came out of the water and sniffed the colt for a while. Then it jumped into the water, followed by the colt. The man used to go many times to that place, but neither the hippo nor the colt ever returned to it.

[15] Mas'ūdī relates:<sup>(9)</sup> When the horse that lives in the Nile of Egypt comes out of the water and walks up to a certain spot on land, then the Egyptians know that the Nile is going to rise precisely up to that spot, neither exceeding it nor falling short of it. Long habit and experience tell the Egyptians that this never varies.

When the hippopotamus comes out of the water, it causes damage to farmers and cultivators, because it feeds on the crops. What happens is that it emerges from the water at night and eventually gets to a certain spot of the cropland. Then it turns around and returns to the water. During its return trip from the spot it had originally reached it keeps grazing, but never at the place it had already grazed over on its way up. As it grazes, it comes to the water and drinks. Then it throws up the content of its belly in various places, and that stuff then sprouts a second time. When it does that often, and the harm it causes to the estate owners continues, they throw alfalfa on the spot where it is known to emerge, many pecks of it, all threshed and spread out. The hippopotamus eats it and returns to the water. And when it drinks from it, the alfalfa in its belly swells, it becomes bloated, its belly bursts, and it dies and floats on the water, washed ashore by the waves.

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9. *Prairies dor* 2:393.

At locations where hippos are sighted one never sees a crocodile. The hippopotamus looks like a horse, except that its hooves and tail are different, and it has a wide forehead.

[16] The species known as *bulṭī*,<sup>(10)</sup> says al-Musabbiḥī, is a variety of fish. It was first discovered to live in the Nile at the time of the caliph al-Azīz-bi-'llāh Nizār ibn al-Mu'izz-li-dīni-'llāh. Before his time, no one knew it was there. Also in his time appeared a fish known as *labīs*.<sup>(11)</sup> It was named *labīs* because it resembles the striped mullet that lives in the sea and was confused—*ultubisa*—with it by people. Most likely it is a marine fish that entered fresh water.

[17] Another Nile animal is the *crocodile*.

Ibn al-Bayṭār says: The crocodile is a well-known animal which lives in large rivers. There are many crocodiles in the Nile. It is also found in the Indus River. And it may be found in the land of the Blacks, where it is called the “Nile lizard.”

[18] Ibn Zuhr<sup>(12)</sup> states: Every animal moves its lower jaw when it eats, except the crocodile, which moves the upper jaw rather than the lower.

If one kneads the fat of the crocodile with ghee and sticks a wick in it and lights it in a river or a canebrake, the frogs in the area will not croak as long as it is burning.

If one carries a crocodile hide around a village and then suspends it from the ceiling of an entrance hall, no frost will befall that village.

When the crocodile bites a man and he puts crocodile fat on the bite, he will recover at once.

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10. A cichlid, spiny-finned food fish (*Tilapia nilotica*).

11. The Nile carp (*Ciprinus niloticus*). —The folk etymology offered by al-Musabbiḥī rests on the meaning ‘similar’ of the homonymous adjective *labīs*.

12. Famous Hispano-Arab physician and man of letters, born 1113 in Seville, died 1199 in Marrakesh. See “Ibn Zuhr” (R. Arnaldez) in *EF*.

If one smears the forehead of a butting ram with crocodile fat, every other ram that takes it on will bolt and flee from it.

Its gall is made into a collyrium against leucoma. It makes the disease go away.

If one fumigates a madman with its liver, he will be cured.

Crocodile droppings do away with leucoma, both recent and inveterate.

If one tears out its eyes, while the animal is alive, and suspends them from the neck of a leper, they will arrest the disease and it will not progress at all.

If one puts some of its right testicle on the right side of a man, he will experience increased sexual potency.

Its right eye helps someone with a complaint in his right eye, its left eye someone with a problem in his left eye.

If one mixes its fat with rose oil, it is good against pain in the spine and kidneys and increases sexual potency.

If one takes crocodile blood, mixes myrobalan in it, salts it generously<sup>(13)</sup> and smears it on a blaze, it will make it go away and change its color. And when applied to the forehead and the temples, it is good against migraine pain.

Its meat, eaten boiled, puts weight on a skinny body.

When its fat, after being melted, is dribbled into a sick ear, it will have a beneficial effect on it, and if one dribbles it into the ear regularly, it will help against deafness. When one rubs it on someone with quartan fever, it will leave him.

Its meat produces a harmful chyme.

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13. Read: *umlīḥa*. Wiet and Bulaq give: *umlīja* (?).

[19] Mas'ūdī relates:<sup>(14)</sup> Likewise, the bane of the crocodile is a small reptile which lives along the banks and on the islands of the Nile. Here is what happens: The crocodile has no anus at all, and whatever it eats generates worms in its belly. When that bothers it, it comes out on land and throws itself, mouth wide open, on its back. Then the crocodile bird<sup>(15)</sup> swoops down on it—the crocodile is quite used to that—and eats the monstrous worms coming out of its belly. That reptile, having hidden itself in the sand, jumps at that point into the crocodile's throat and works its way into its belly. The crocodile thrashes about on the ground and heads for the bottom of the Nile, until the reptile has consumed the entire content of the crocodile's belly. Then it makes a hole in it and escapes. Sometimes the crocodile kills itself before the reptile comes out, and the reptile leaves after its death. That reptile is about a cubit in length and has the shape of a weasel with several legs and with claws.

[20] It is said that there used to be near the hills of Fustāṭ a talisman made for the city's protection. Crocodiles could do no harm around it. Rather, when a crocodile reached its boundaries, it would turn over on its back so that little boys could play around with it, until it was beyond the city limits. Then it would right itself up and become its natural self again. Later on, that talisman got broken and its effectiveness ceased.

[21] The crocodile is said to lay eggs like goose eggs. Sometimes small rats develop in them which then grow to a length of ten cubits and keep growing longer the older they get.

The crocodile copulates sixty times in one go and one place. Its left fang helps against ague.

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14. *Prairies d'or* 1:235.

15. Arabic: *ṭayr al-mā* 'water bird', i.e., the trochilus, already discussed by Herodotus and Aristotle.

## 21. Some Remarks on How to Know in Advance the Annual State of the Nile

[1] In his commentary on (Ptolemy's) *Quadripartitum*, Ibn Riḍwān says: The Nile may require certain conditions (to be fulfilled), one of which is that the rains in the south must be continuous before and during its rise. That is why the Nile will necessarily rise high when Venus and Mercury are in conjunction at the beginning of summer, because of the humidity of the air, and it will of needs carry little water when Mars and some lunar mansion are in the south at the beginning of spring or summer, because of the sparse rainfall in those parts. Another condition is that the winds be northerly in order to stem its flow, whereas in the south they must hasten its descent and not allow it to linger. Hence, if one knows how abundant, or sparse, the rainfall is in the south, and in Egypt how the winds are blowing in the spring and summer, then one knows how the Nile is going to turn out, and from that the degree of fertility or drought Egypt will experience.

[2] The astrologer Ibn Yūnus<sup>(1)</sup> says on the authority of Ptolemy: If you want to know how much or how little the Nile is going to rise, look at Venus, Mercury and the Moon at the time when the Sun enters the sign of Cancer. If they look good, boding no calamities, then the Nile will rise to the needed level. If they are the opposite, that is, weak, then the reverse is true. And if they are partly weak and partly sound, then the state of the Nile will be just middling. The rule is that strength of the three indicates a complete

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1. Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad (d. 399/1009): outstanding Egyptian astronomer of the early Fāṭimid period. His four-volume ephemeris (*al-Zij al-Ḥākimi*), only partially preserved, remained a model of accuracy for a long time and is mentioned in a Chinese astronomical work written almost three hundred years later. See "Ibn Yūnus" (B.R. Goldstein) in *EF*; H. Suter, *Die Mathematiker und Astronomen der Araber* (Leipzig 1900) 77-78.

rise of the Nile, their weakness a medium rise. A turn to the baneful in them, or the fact that they are on the same degree of the zodiac as the Sun, or when they fall back to their greatest distance from the Earth, all of that indicates a shortfall and that the Nile will rise very little. With the exception that the conjunction of Venus and the Sun on the same degree of Leo brings down the water from the south.<sup>(2)</sup>

[3] Abū Ma'shar<sup>(3)</sup> avers: When the Sun passes into Cancer, one should look at Venus, Mercury and the Moon. If they are in their maximal progression, then the rise of the Nile will be very great. If they are in their median progression, one should bear in mind how much is their maximal and minimal progression and correlate (the anticipated rise of the Nile) in accordance with what one sees. And if they show slow progression, then the Nile will rise very little. If the progression of these three differs, being maximal for some and slow for others, then the strongest one of them will prevail and one should make the prognostication mixed and make a corresponding statement.

[4] The Copts used to say: One should look on the first day of the month of Barmūdah (April 8) which day of the Arab month corresponds to it. Whichever day it is, add 85 to it and take the sixth part of the total: this will be the number of cubits the Nile is going to reach that year.

[5] People have said: A tried and proven way in the matter of the Nile is also to look at the day on which the Jacobite Christians in Egypt break their fast and how much is left of the Arab month. Then add to that 34 and keep subtracting from the total on steps of twelve. If, after subtracting from the number, the remainder is more than twelve, that is then, together with the twelve, the rise of

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2. Read with the Bulaq text: *min al-janūb* (Wiet: *min al-jufūn*).

3. Known in Christian Europe as "Albumasar" or "Iaphar", i.e., Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Balkhī, the great astronomer-astrologist and mathematician of the 9th century. He died in 272/886 in Wāsiṭ, over a hundred years old. See "Abū Ma'shar" (J.M. Milas) in *EF*.



the Nile in cubits in that year. If the remainder is twelve, it means a bad year.

[6] According to others, when the tenth of the Arab month corresponds to (the beginning of) the month of Abib (July 7) and the Moon is in Scorpio, and if it is in conjunction with  $\alpha$  Scorpionis, the Nile will fall short; otherwise it will be good.

[7] Others have said: One should pay attention to the first day of Ba'ūnah (June 7). If the wind blows out of the north early in the morning, the Nile will be high; if it blows in the middle of the day, it will be middling; if it blows at the end of the day, there will be a deficient Nile; and if it does not blow at all, then the river will not rise that year. According to others, that should be done on the first Thursday of Ba'ūnah.

[8] A practicable way is the one I myself have tried for years, and that one of my professors had told me he had tested, after having been told of it by someone who, in turn, had tried it and it had worked—namely, to watch the level reached by the Nile on the first day of Misrā (August 6) and to add eight cubits to that. The total will then be the increase of the Nile in that year.

[9] One of the ways the Christians of Upper Egypt claim to be time-tested with regard to the Nile is to take, one day before St. Michael's Day at the noon hour, a piece weighing an even sixteen *dirhams*<sup>(4)</sup> of the mud over which the water of the Nile has flown and, after keeping it in a covered container till the early morning of St. Michael's Day, to weigh it again. The number of *kharrūbahs* by which its weight has increased is the level which the Nile will reach in that year, a cubit per *kharrūbah*. At the same time, one must take some wheat flour and knead it with Nile water in a pottery vessel made from clay over which the Nile has passed. One must leave it covered throughout the night (preceding) St. Michael's Day. If, in the early morning of the feast day, one finds that it has fer-

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4. 1 *dirham* = 3.125 g, 1 *kharrūbah* ('carob seed') = 0.195 g.

mented by itself (without leaven), the Nile will be perfect and complete. If one finds it raw and unfermented, it is an indication that the rise of the Nile will be inadequate. Then, together with all that, they watch the air in the early morning of St. Michael's Day: If it blows from the north, it means a big Nile. If it blows from any other direction than north, it means an inadequate Nile, especially if it blows from the south, for that means an insufficient Nile. Their only concern is that all three signs presage one and the same thing. When they differ, then the judgment can hardly be right.

[10] Abū 'l-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī says in his *Chronology of Ancient Nations*: The empiricists tell us that in prognosticating one resorts to a board on which one plants (a sample of) every crop and plant, until the 25th night of Tammūz (July), one of the Greek months, which marks the end of the dog days. Then one places the board prominently exposed to the rising and setting of the stars, with nothing between it and the sky: All crops that will not thrive that year will turn yellow, and those which will yield will remain green. The Copts, too, used to do that.

[11] I myself have experimented along the line of what I learned from some writer, namely, if there is rain, and be it ever so little, in the month of Bābih (October/November), one should pay attention to that day of the Coptic month, because the price of a *waybah* [= 15 liters] of wheat in that year will be as many dirhams as the number of days that have passed of Bābih. The first time I tested this, rain fell in Bābih on Thursday, the 15th. And that year the *waybah* was sold for fifteen dirhams!

## 22. The Feast of the Martyr

[1] One of the things one used to celebrate in Egypt was the Feast of the Martyr.<sup>(1)</sup> It used to be one of the most carefree festivities in Egypt, falling on the eighth day of the Coptic month of Bashans (May 16).

The Copts (used to) claim that there will be no annual rise of the Nile in Egypt until the Christians have thrown a wooden chest containing a finger of one of their dead ancestors into it. That day was celebrated with a festival to which the Christians from all the villages around would come, and during which they rode horses and engaged in equestrian games. The populace of Cairo and Fustāt from every walk of life would turn out and set tents along the banks of the Nile and on the river island. There was not a singer, male or female, or entertainer, or con man, or whore, or bisexual, or buffoon, or bum, or cutthroat, or fornicator, who would not turn out for that festival. A crowd of people would gather, so huge that only their Maker could count them, and uncounted money would change hands. Unbearable sins and outrages would be committed there in broad daylight. Fights would break out and people got killed. Wine especially was sold on that day to the tune of over a hundred thousand dirhams, which is the equivalent of five thou-

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1. Two of Wiet's mss. identify the martyr: "That martyr is called Abū Jurj, who is St. George (*Mārī Girgīs*). He was killed by Emperor Diocletian, after the most severe torture, in an attempt to make him renounce Christianity and return to idol worship. But he did not apostatize. He is the first martyr in the opinion of the [Coptic] Christians. His killing took place at Melitene (Malatya). The Christians subsequently scattered his limbs, of which most are in Melitene and a part is in Alexandria. In that box was his finger. This Abū Jurj is the oldest one of them. He is Abū Jurj al-Malaṭī. The other is Abū Jurj al-Iskandarānī, and the other Abū Jurj al-Ṣaghīr." [Wiet I, 292, n. 1].

Sakhāwī, after a brief description of the debauchery going on during its observance, links the festival quite naturally with the practice of human sacrifice allegedly abolished by 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭab's fiat addressed to the Nile, as reported in sect. 3 of ch. 17 (cf. *al-Tibr al-masbūk*, p. 12). The same idea is conveyed by Baybars' choice of words in sect. 3 below.

sand gold dinars. A (certain) Christian (alone) sold wine for twelve thousand dirhams on a single day. People would always gather for the Feast of the Martyr in the area of Shubrā, one of the suburbs of Cairo, and the peasants of Shubrā, in order to pay their taxes, would forever depend on how much wine they sold on the Feast of the Martyr.

[2] This is how the situation remained, according to the accounts we have of the gathering, until the year 702 (A.D. 1303), when al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn was the Sultan in Egypt, the Emir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Jāshnagīr, who at the time held the office of Master of the Sultan's Household, was the Chief Executive Officer, and the Emir Sayf al-Dīn Salār was the Vicegerent in Egypt. It was the Emir Baybars who played a great role in having that practice abolished.

He and the Emir Salār were running the affairs of Egypt, while al-Nāṣir was under their tutelage, unable to fill his own belly except by their permission and authority. So (one day) the Emir Baybars proposed that the finger must not be thrown into the Nile and no festival must be celebrated on the occasion. He delegated the chamberlains and the police chief of Cairo to see to it that the people do not assemble in Shubrā the way they were accustomed to do. Couriers went out to all the districts of Egypt carrying letters to the police chiefs with instructions to proclaim publicly and announce in their region that no Christian must leave home and come to celebrate the Feast of the Martyr. That weighed heavily on all the Copts of Egypt, both those who outwardly professed the true faith and claimed to have become Muslims, and those who stuck to their Christian religion. They went to see each other (to discuss the matter).

[3] One of them was a man known as al-Tāj ibn Sa'īd al-Dawlah, who plied the trade of a scribe and was at the time in the service of the Emir Baybars, whose thinking he had come to dominate and whose every affair he had gotten complete control of—the way it is the habit of Egypt's rulers and its Turkish emirs to

leave things to their Coptic scribes, no matter whether they are people who hide their unbelief or people who flaunt it. The Copts kept working on al-Tāj until he spoke to his master, the Emir Baybars, about that matter. He made him believe that tax money would be lost, if that festival was discontinued, since most of Shubrā's taxes came from that source; he told him that the Nile would never rise when that festival was not celebrated, that Egypt would be ruined as a result, and similar insinuations and, double-talk. But God made the Emir Baybars steadfast and gave him strength, so that he rejected all that fancy talk of the man and stuck to the ban on holding the festival, telling al-Tāj: "If the Nile will only rise because of that finger, then so be it. But if it is God Exalted who controls it, then we will make liars of the Christians!" And so the festival was abolished from that year onward and continued to be so until the year 738 (A.D. 1337/8).

[4] Al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn restored the jetty in the Nile for deflecting the current away from the Cairo shore toward al-Gīzah, as will be mentioned in the proper place in this book.<sup>(2)</sup>

Then (one day) the Emir Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī and the Emir Alṭunbughā al-Māridānī asked the Sultan's permission to go hunting and to stay away for a while: But he did not like that, because of his great infatuation and inordinate love for the two, and wanted to keep them from leaving. So he said to them, "We are going to celebrate the Feast of the Martyr again, and watching it will be more enjoyable for you than going away on a hunt." Since it was close to the time when the Feast of the Martyr used to be celebrated, they agreed to his proposal, and word went out in the land that the Feast of the Martyr would be celebrated again. On the day on which the festival used to be celebrated, the emirs rode on barges stripped of their fire-throwing equipment on the Nile and people flocked together from every direction. The singers and entertainers

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2. *Khiṭaṭ* 2:167.

and licentious elements turned out and rode on the Nile, openly engaging in the sort of shameful things they used to do in public before. The emirs indulged in excessive amounts of a variety of foods and sweetmeats and other things, and the people in general received so many boons and favors from them that they cannot be described, so many were they. They kept carrying on like that for three days.

The time period during which one had stopped to observe the Feast of the Martyr, from the time when the Emir Baybars had abolished it until the time when it was reintroduced by al-Malik al-Nāṣir, was thirty-six years.

[5] It continued to be celebrated every year thereafter until the year 755 (A.D. 1354), when anti-Christian sentiment ran high among the Muslims. Lists were made concerning Egyptian land set aside as religious endowments for the benefit of Christian churches and monasteries. The scribes of the emirs were forced to write all of that up and the lists were then taken to the Bureau of Religious Endowments. And after the lists had all been written up, (it turned out that) they comprised 25,000 feddans, all of them deeded as mortmain land to monasteries and churches. They were then submitted to those emirs of the state who held executive positions at the time of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ṣāliḥ ibn Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, namely, the Emir Shaykhū al-Umarī, the Emir Ṣarghutmash and the Emir Ṭāz, and it was decided to give the land to the emirs to be added to their fiefs. The Christians were forced to accept this with due humility, and a number of their churches were destroyed, as it is described in its proper place in this book when we deal with the churches.<sup>(3)</sup>

Toward the end of the month of Rajab of said year (i.e., mid August), the Chamberlain and the police chief of Cairo, the Emir ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn al-Kūrānī, went out to Shubrā al-Khiyām, a suburb of

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3. Maqrīzī, unfortunately, forgot this intention, and there is no more mention of this event in the chapter on Christian churches (*Khiṭaṭ* 2:510 ff.).

Cairo. The church of the Christians was destroyed and the martyr's finger in a box was taken away from it. It was brought to al-Malik al-Ṣaliḥ and burned before his eyes in the public square. Its ashes were scattered in the river, lest they be taken by the Christians.

And so the Feast of the Martyr has not been observed since that day to our time—and God be praised for it!

## 23. The Canals That Were Dug from the Nile

[1] One must know that, at the end of the Nile's annual rise, one opens main and secondary canals through which the water penetrates right and left to communities far away from the course of the Nile. Most of the main and side canals, dikes, and coulees are in Lower Egypt. In the South, which is Upper Egypt, there is little of that, and what once was there has long vanished and traces of it have become obliterated.

Famous among the main canals are the Sakhā canal, the Memphis canal, the Ushmūm Ṭanāḥ canal,<sup>(1)</sup> the Sardūs canal, the Alexandria canal, the Damietta canal, the Cairo canal, the Baḥr Abī 'l-Munaggā, and the canal of al-Nāṣir (Muḥammad) outside Cairo.

[2] Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam reports on the authority of Abū Ruhm al-Samā'ī: Egypt possessed a carefully planned system of aqueducts and dikes so that the water (of the Nile) did indeed flow under its houses and courtyards, being trapped by the Egyptians at will and released at their discretion. For that is what the Lord says, as He recounts Pharaoh's words, "*Do I not possess the kingdom of Egypt, and these rivers flowing beneath me? What, do you not see?*"<sup>(2)</sup>

At that time, there was no mightier kingdom on earth than the kingdom of Egypt. There used to be gardens on both banks of the Nile from one end to the other on either side, from Uswān all the way to Rosetta, and seven canals: the Alexandria canal, the Sakhā canal, the Damietta canal, the Memphis canal, the Fayyūm canal, the Manhā canal, and the Sardūs canal—uninterrupted continuous gardens, with farmland between the two mountain ranges from

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1. Ushmūm Ṭanāḥ near Damietta, so called to distinguish it from Ushmūm al-Juraysāt in the Minūfiyyah province (Yāqūt 1:200), was the chief town of the Daqahliyyah province. Its present-day name is *Ushmūn al-Rumān*.

2. Koran 43 (Ornaments): 51.



one end of Egypt to the other, as far as the (irrigation) water would reach. The entire cultivable land of all of Egypt used to be irrigated from (a water level of) sixteen cubits, thanks to its aqueducts, canals and dikes they had so carefully planned. That is (the meaning of) the Lord's words, "*They left how many gardens and fountains, sown fields, and how noble a station.*"<sup>(3)</sup> The 'noble station', he says, signifies *al-manābir*, 'the mosques'; (Egypt) possessed a thousand of them.

[3] The Sakhā Canal<sup>(4)</sup>

The Sakha canal was dug by Badāris, son of Šā, son of Qubṭīm, son of Miṣrāyim, son of Bayṣar, son of Ham, son of Noah. He was one of the ancient kings of the Copts who ruled Egypt in earliest times.

[4] Badāris the King, says Ibn Waṣīf Shāh, was the first to rule all of the provinces after the death of his father Šā. His was a serene reign over Egypt. Badāris was sophisticated and experienced, powerful, strong, full of worldly wisdom. He demonstrated justice. He erected temples and managed their attendants well. And he administered the realm.

[5] It is he who is said to have dug the Sakhā canal. Through him the revenue of the country rose to one hundred and fifty million dinars. When some Amalekite of Syria marched against him, he took the field against him and destroyed him utterly. He invaded Palestine and killed many people there. He captured some of their sages and settled them in Egypt. The (other) kings stood in awe of him. At the beginning of the thirtieth year of his reign, the Blacks, both Negroes and Nubians, cast covetous eyes on his land and caused havoc and ruin. He called up armies from the districts of Egypt, equipped a fleet, and dispatched a general by the name of

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3. Koran 44 (Smoke): 25-27.

4. Sakhā (the Greek *Xoīs*, Coptic *Skhouy*) is an ancient community in the present-day district of Kafr al-Shaykh (Minūfiyyah province). See Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 2:141. —Yāqūt (*Muʿjam* 3:196) mentions a miraculous black stone in its mosque.

Batalis with three hundred thousand men and another general with a like army. He launched three hundred ships on the Nile, with a priest on each ship to perform some miraculous thing. Then he went forth with many troops, met the hordes of Blacks, whose number was about a million, and defeated them. He killed most of them most heinously and took many of them prisoners. His armies followed him until they reached the region of the elephants in the land of the Negroes. They captured several elephants, and also panthers and (other) wild beasts, and brought them to Egypt, where they tamed them. On the border of his country he erected a tower and inscribed on it his expedition, his victory, and the time of his campaign. He died in Egypt and was buried in a tomb into which he had moved many astral idols, a lot of gold and jewelry, alchemical books, and statues. On the tomb were inscribed his name and the date of his death, and for its protection talismans were placed over it. He had designated his son Maliq, son of Badaris, as his successor.

[6] The Sardūs Canal<sup>(5)</sup>

It was dug by Haman.<sup>(6)</sup>

Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: King Ṭalmā, son of Qūmis, ascended the throne of the empire and gained possession of everything contained in their treasuries. He is, say the Copts, identical with the Pharaoh of Moses, but the experts on Prophetic traditions claim that the name of that pharaoh is al-Walīd ibn Muṣ'ab, and that he was an Amalekite. They also state that the Pharaohs are seven. Ṭalmā, by all accounts, was of short stature and had a long beard and dark-blue eyes, the left eye smaller than the other, and a birthmark on his forehead. He was lame. Some people have claimed

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5. Ramzī locates the vanished community of al-Sardūs south of present-day Bāsūs in the district of Qalyūb (*Qāmūs* I,69).

6. The biblical Haman (Esther 3:1) is in the Koran and in Muslim tradition associated with "Moses' Pharaoh."

that he was a Copt, and that the lineage of his house is well known among the Copts.

[7] Others have said that he entered Memphis on a female donkey loaded with natron, which he had brought to sell. There had been disturbances over the succession to the throne and people were willing to make the first person to come along their king. So when they saw him, they made him their king.

[8] After he had ascended the throne, he became a liberal spender of money, giving to those who were loyal to him whatever they desired, and killing those who opposed him, so that he came out fairly even. He appointed Haman, who was a close relative of his, as his deputy. (Haman) unearthed some hidden treasures which he spent on building towns and on colonizing projects. He also dug many canals. It is said that it was he who dug the Sardūs canal. Whenever he made it curve toward a village of the Ḥawf, the villagers would bring him money, until quite a lot of it had accumulated in his hands. But he had it returned to the villagers (in the end).

[9] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates on the authority of ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ,<sup>(7)</sup> God be pleased with him, that Pharaoh put Haman in charge of digging the canal of Sardūs. When he began its excavation, people from every village came to him and asked him to make the canal run underneath their own village, and they would give him money. So Haman would lead its course to this or that village to the east, then bring it back to a village in the north, then back to a village in the west, then back to the people of some village to the south, all the while accepting money from the people of each village, until he had one hundred thousand dinars together. Then he brought the money and delivered it to Pharaoh. When he inquired about it, Haman told him what he had done while he was digging the canal. But Pharaoh reprimanded him: “Alas, it behooves

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7. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabīḥ) 16-17.

a lord to be kindly to his servants and to bestow his bounty liberally on them, not to covet what they possess! Return to the people of each village what you have taken from them.” And so Haman gave all of it back to its rightful owners.

No one, says (Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam), knows a more meandering canal in Egypt than this one, all because of what Haman did when he dug it. Haman was a Nabataean.

[10] The Alexandria Canal

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam reports:<sup>(8)</sup> It is said that it was Queen Cleopatra, who built the Pharos of Alexandria, and that it was she also who dug her own canal all the way into Alexandria. The water (of the Nile) did not reach the city then, but used to turn away at a village called Kissā opposite al-Karyūn.<sup>(9)</sup> And so she had that canal dug and the water brought all the way into Alexandria. She is also the one who had its bottom paved.

[11] According to al-Kindī, the Alexandria canal was dredged by (orders of) al-Ḥārith ibn Miskīn, judge of Egypt.<sup>(10)</sup>

[12] In his *Rules of Government Bureaus*, al-As‘ad Ibn Mammātī<sup>(11)</sup> says: The Alexandria canal has several side canals opening up on it. The canal’s length from its mouth is 30,600 *qaṣabahs*,<sup>(12)</sup> its width (varies) from two and a half to three and a half *qaṣabahs*. How long it carries water depends on the Nile: If the river is low,

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8. *Ibid.*, p.38.

9. Al-Karyūn is the Greek *Chairon*, Roman *Chaereum*, an ancient village in the present-day district of Kafr al-Dawwār (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 2:318). The site of the vanished village of Kissā is known today as *Kōm al-Nashw* (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, I, 357).

10. Died in 250/864. His tenure as Mālikite judge of Egypt extended from October 851 to July 859 (Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, 2:144). See also Pt. II, ch. 16.

11. A Coptic convert, he served the Ayyūbid state as vizier and superintendent of government bureaus (*nāẓir al-dawāwīn*). He died in 606/1209. See “Ibn Mammātī” (A.S. Atiya) in *EF*; *Khīṭaṭ* 2:160. —His *Qawānīn al-dawāwīn* (ed. Aziz S. Atiya, Cairo, 1943) is a most important contribution to the knowledge of the Ayyūbid administration and Maqrīzī draws extensively on it as a source. —One reads the passage in *Qawānīn*, p. 221.

12. A *qaṣabah* in Ibn Mammātī’s time = 3.99 m (Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, 63).

water remains in it only for a short time, if it is high, the water stays for more than two months. I have seen the opinions of quite a number of experts and knowledgeable people who say that, if one built a weir from opposite Munyat Babij to Babij,<sup>(13)</sup> water would remain permanently in it in summer and winter and it would provide irrigation for the entire Buḥayrah, the Ḥawf Ramsīs and the Outlying Villages.<sup>(14)</sup> Along its banks one could plant sugarcane, colocasia, indigo plants and various kinds of summer crops and it would become something like the Baḥr al-Sharq wā'l-Maḥallah.<sup>(15)</sup> The cadastral values of the villages would double and the tax revenue from them would grow. The construction of such a weir is possible, because there are quarry stones in the hill of Şā (al-Buḥayrah) and bricks available in the Buḥayrah province. (Those people) have made an estimate of the cost of (such a project) and have come up with a figure close to 10,000 dinars.

[13] It is said that water used to flow in it all year round and fish were so very plentiful in it that children could catch them with rags. But then a certain governor farmed the canal out for tax revenue and forbade people to fish in it. Whereupon the fish disappeared from it and not a single fish was seen in it thereafter. And they used to be hauled out with nets!

#### [14] The Fayyūm-Manhā Canal

It is among the canals dug by God's prophet Joseph the Truthful, upon him be peace, when he colonized the Fayyūm, as mentioned

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13. Babij is the modern-day *Abbiḡ* (district of Kafr al-Zayyāt), Munyat Babij the present-day al-Dahriyyah (district of Ityāy al-Bārūd). See Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 2:120, 246.
  14. *Ḥawf Ramsīs*, in the Arab administrative system, was the designation for the villages and hamlets immediately south of Buḥayrah province, *al-Kufūr al-Shāsi'ah* designated the rural communes of the Ḥawf Ramsīs along the fringe of the desert. See Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, I, 235.
  15. A secondary canal (*tur'ah*) which branches off the Milig canal (*Baḥr Milig*) south of Ṭant (*Ṭanṭ il-Gazira*) and, in a northwesterly course past al-Hayātīm and Bulqinah, connects with the Damietta arm of the Nile directly opposite Shirimsāḥ in the present-day district of Fariskūr.

in the story of the Fayyūm in this book.<sup>(16)</sup> Originating from the Nile, it is never without water. When the Nile reaches a point opposite the village of Darwat Sarabām,<sup>(17)</sup> which nowadays is known as Darwat al-Sharīf—by ‘al-Sharīf’ is meant Ibn Tha‘lab, the rebel in the days of al-Zāhir Baybars—an arm branches off on its western side called *al-Manhā*, which becomes an independent canal running all the way to the Fayyūm. It is now known as the *Baḥr Yūsuf*. It is a canal which carries water all year round and thus provides perennial irrigation for the entire Fayyūm. Its excess water is then channeled into a local lake.

A remarkable thing is that its water stops beyond its mouth, then turns into a shallows lower than a camel pond, then flows weakly at a level even lower than the shallows, and then becomes a flowing stream of its own which can only be negotiated by boats and from which other streams branch off. It divides into a branch which services the whole Fayyūm to bring irrigation water to its villages, farms, garden plantations and settlements in general.

#### [15] The Cairo Canal

This canal (begins) outside Cairo on its western side in the area between the city and al-Maqs.<sup>(18)</sup> In the early Islamic period it was known as “the Caliph’s Canal.” The common people today call it *al-Khalīg al-Ḥākīmī* or *Khalīg al-Lu’lu’ah*.

It is an ancient canal. It was first excavated by Ṭūṭīs, son of Māliyā, one of the kings of Egypt who resided in the city of Memphis. He is the one in whose time Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful, God’s blessings upon him, came to Egypt to visit him, and from whom Abraham received a concubine that he gave to his wife Sarah as a handmaid, namely,<sup>(19)</sup> Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, God’s blessings

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16. Pt. II, chs. 82, 83.

17. Thus Yāqūt (2:453), also Evetts, *Churches*, p. 222, n. 3. Wiet: *Dharwat Sarabām*. See Pt. II, ch. 46, *Darūt Sarabān*.

18. See *Khīṭaṭ* 2:121.

19. The translation combines elements of the Wiet and Bulaq versions of this

upon him. And after Abraham had expelled Hagar and her son Ishmael, peace be upon him, to Mecca, she sent word to ʾTūṭīs, informing him that she was in a barren place and appealing to him for help. Thereupon he ordered this canal to be dug and on it he sent to her ships carrying wheat and other things to Juddah, thus giving new life to the Hejaz.

Later on, Adriyānūs (Hadrian), who is known as Ayliyā (Aelius), a Roman emperor who came after the Macedonian Alexander, the son of Philippos, had this canal excavated again and ships would travel on it.<sup>(20)</sup> That was over four hundred years before the Hijrah.

Still later, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, God be pleased with him, had it excavated once more after he had conquered Egypt. It took him six months to have it dug. Ships would travel on it carrying supplies to the Hejaz. It was (then) called *Khalīj Amīr al-Mu‘minīn*, the “Caliph’s Canal”, meaning (by Caliph) ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, at whose advice its excavation was undertaken. Ships continued to travel on it from Fuṣṭāṭ Miṣr to the town of al-Qulzum, which was located on the shore of the Eastern Sea at the site of what nowadays is known on that sea as al-Suways (Suez).

The water of the Nile would flow into that sea near the town of al-Qulzum, until the (Abbāsīd) caliph Abū Ja‘far al-Manṣūr had (the canal) filled in in the year 150 (A.D. 767). That was carried out, and only what can be seen now has remained of it. This will be discussed at length, God willing, when we deal with the outskirts of Cairo in this book.<sup>(21)</sup>

#### [16] The Baḥr Abī ‘l-Munaggā

This canal is called by the common people *Baḥr Abū ‘l-Munaggā*. The man who had it dug is al-Afḍal ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh in the year

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passage, which is equally corrupted in both texts.

20. Actually, it was not Hadrian, but his uncle (by adoption) Trajan (98-117) who re-excavated the canal.

21. *Khiṭaṭ* 2:139.

506 (A.D. 1112/3). In charge of its excavation was Abū 'l-Munaggā ibn Sha'yā al-Yahūdī, and so it became known by his name. The story of that canal will be told<sup>(22)</sup> when we discuss the belvederes and retreats of the (Fāṭimid) caliphs in this book.

[17] The Nāṣirī Canal

This canal outside al-Maqs was dug by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn in 725 (A.D. 1325). It will be discussed in its proper place in this book.<sup>(23)</sup>

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22. *Khiṭaṭ* 1:487.

23. *Khiṭaṭ* 2:145.



## 24. What Egypt Was Like in Earliest Times

[1] “According to people with experience and interest in world history,” says al-Mas‘ūdī,<sup>(1)</sup> “the land of Egypt was covered by the water of the Nile which spread out over Upper Egypt all the way to the Delta and the present-day site of Fustāt, originating from a place known as “the Cataracts” between Uswān and Nubia, until there developed barriers against the flow and passage of the water and of the soil carried by its current from place to place, so that the water would run off some parts of the land of Egypt. Then people settled on the land of Egypt, while the water continued ever so gradually to recede from the land, until Egypt was filled with towns and colonies. They made channels for the water, dug canals, and erected dams to stem its flow. Eventually, Egypt’s inhabitants were no longer aware of that, because the length of time had made them forget how their first settlements had come about.”

[2] Now, according to what Aristotle says in his *Meteorological Phenomena*, the Nile used to spread over the land of Egypt and cover it like a sea. The water then kept receding from it and the elevated portions of it dried up one by one and became inhabited, until the land was filled with towns and villages and people.

[3] It is said that, before the city of Memphis was settled, people used to live at the foot of the Muqaṭṭam hills in numerous dwellings which they carved out of the hillside. These are the caves in the hill opposite Memphis on the southern side of the Muqaṭṭam, in the mountain range which continues (south) to Dayr al-Quṣayr,<sup>(2)</sup> also known as Dayr al-Baḡhl, and which rises above the

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1. *Prairies dor* 2:370.

2. A Coptic convent (and now a village in the district of Dayrūt) on the east bank of the Nile, about halfway between Mallāwī and Manfalūt. See *Khiṭaṭ* 2:502; Evetts, *Churches*, 145 ff.

rural commune of Ṭurā.<sup>(3)</sup> Someone standing at the pyramids of Nahyā<sup>(4)</sup> can see the caves in the eastern mountain across the Nile in between. If one climbs from Ṭurā up on the mountain and goes on for a stretch, one can enter them. They are spacious caves, some of them penetrating as far as al-Qulzum. Any one of the caves is large enough to accommodate the population of a town. Someone entering them without being guided by markings that lead him to the exit may get lost and perish.

[4] The land of Egypt is said to have been barren without any vegetation whatsoever. Then it was parceled out as fiefs to a group of the descendants of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel,<sup>(5)</sup> by Methuselah, the son of Enoch, son of Jared, son of Mahalaleel, son of Cainan, son of Enos, son of Seth, son of Adam. And when those people came down to Egypt, they discovered that its Nile had blocked the region between the two mountains so that the water had drained off certain parts of the land. They planted crops there and the land gave forth its blessings.

Then, some time later, the First 'Anqām, son of 'Arbāq, son of Adam, took the land by conquest and sired there a great people. To fight the descendants of Jared he equipped seventy thousand warriors and dug a canal forty *qaṣabāhs* wide from the sea to the mountain in order to keep out all invaders. The Jaredites attacked him but found no way to get through to him. So they turned to God Exalted, and He sent a fire upon the land of Egypt.

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3. One of the most ancient communities of Egypt, between Ma'ādī and Ḥulwān, with nearby limestone quarries that have been worked since pharaonic times. The ancient Egyptian *T-Royu* 'the Quarries of Royu' was corrupted by the Greeks into *Troja*, hence its Arabic name (now *Ṭurā al-Ḥigāra*). —The caves here described by Maqrīzī are those left by the pharaonic quarrymen, who penetrated deeply into the mountain and excavated large chambers in search of the white limestone which was used for the facing of pyramids and mastabas (Baedeker, *Egypt*, 170). See Pt. II, ch. 40.
  4. An ancient village north of Memphis (cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 3:64). Maqrīzī is obviously referring to the pyramids of Saqqārah.
  5. Cf. Genesis v.

## 25. The Administrative Divisions of Egypt

[1] One must know that the land of Egypt was composed in ancient times of 153 districts, each with a town and 365 villages. 68 of those districts went to ruin before the devastation wrought by Nebuchadnezzar. After Egypt was rebuilt following Nebuchadnezzar's death, it was divided into 85 nomes. Then their number diminished until the advent of Islam, when there were 40 flourishing pagarchies with all of their villages intact. Eventually, the entire land of Egypt came to be divided into two parts: Upper Egypt, which was the land south of the city of Miṣr, and Lower Egypt, which was the land north of the city of Miṣr.

[2] The whole land, both the south and the north of it, was divided into 26 *a'māl*,<sup>(1)</sup> namely:

al-Sharqiyyah

al-Murtāḥiyyah

al-Daqahliyyah

al-Abwāniyyah

Thaghr Dimyāt (Damietta)

(in) the Delta:

Jazīrat Quwīsna

al-Gharbiyyah

al-Samannūdiyyah

al-Dingāwiyyah

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1. A *'amal* (pl. *a'māl*) is a revenue area, a tax district of varying size, after the Fātimid reorganization of the fiscal system perhaps translatable as "parish" (R. Levy, *Social Structure of Islam*, p. 361). In Maqṣīzī's time, as the last section of this chapter shows, the term was used as the equivalent of a "province".

al-Minūfiyyah

al-Nastirāwiyyah

Fuwwah

al-Muzāḥimiyyatayn

Jazīrat Banī Naṣr

al-Buḥayrah

Alexandria and its outskirts

(in) Upper Egypt:

al-Gīziyyah

al-Itfīḥiyyah

al-Būṣiriyyah

al-Bahnasāwiyyah

al-Ushmūnayn

al-Manfalūṭiyyah

al-Asyūṭiyyah

al-Ikhmīmiyyah

al-Qūṣiyyah

[3] Egypt consists also of 30 *kuwar*,<sup>(2)</sup> namely, the *kūrahs* of:

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2. In Egypt, the term *kūrah* (pl. *kuwar*) was applied by Arab administrators to the former Byzantine pagarchies, subdivisions of a quasi-autonomous eparchy, or sub-diocese, and corresponds to a "district." A *kūrah* consisted of a town or large village with a varying number of villages around it. The centralized Muslim tax-collection system did not allow for larger administrative units until much later, although one reads occasionally of a "governor of Upper Egypt," for instance. Cf. Sir H.I. Bell, "The Administration of Egypt under the Umayyad Khalifs" in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XXVIII (1928).

the Fayyūm, with 156 villages; it is said that there used to be 360

Memphis and Wasīm, with 55 villages

al-Sharqiyyah, also known as al-Itfīhiyyah, with 17 villages, plus the villages of Ihnās, among them Qiman, (altogether) 8 villages

Dalāṣ and Būṣīr, with 6 villages

Ihnās, with 95 villages, not counting the communes<sup>(3)</sup>

al-Bahnasā, with 120 villages

al-Qēṣ, with 37 villages

Ṭaḥā, with 37 villages

the Shanūdah latifundium, with 8 villages

al-Ushmūnayn, with 133 villages

Lower Anṣinā, with 11 villages

Asyūṭ, with 37 villages

Shuṭb, with 8 villages

Upper Anṣinā, with 12 villages

Qahquwah, with 37 villages

Ikhmīm and al-Dayr, with 63 villages

Ibshāyah and the Oases, with 63 villages, not counting the communes

Hiw, with 20 villages

Fāw, with 8 villages

Qinā, with 7 villages

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3. Arabic: *kufūr* (sg. *kafīr*), of which several made up a *qaryah* or "village."

Dandarah, with 10 villages

Qift, with 22 villages

Luxor, with 5 villages

Isnā, with 5 villages

Armant, with 7 villages

Uswān, with 7 villages

The total number of villages in Upper Egypt is 1,043, not counting the large garden estates<sup>(4)</sup> and communes in thirty districts.

The *kūrahs* of the Delta are:

al-Ḥawf al-Sharqī (the Eastern Ḥawf), with 65 villages

Atrīb, with 108 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Natū, with 87 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Tumā, with 150 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Başṭah, with 39 villages

Ṭarābiyah, with 28 villages, among them al-Sadīr, al-Hāmah and Fāqūs

Qurbayṭ, with 18 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Ṣān and Iblīl, with 46 villages, among them Sanhūr, al-Faramā and al-ʿArīsh

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4. Arabic: *mūnyah* (pl. *munan*) 'a vast garden' (Dozy, *Supplément* 2:620); perhaps akin to Greek *monē* 'stopping place, way station' (cf. K. Vollers in *ZDMG*, LI (1897), p. 304). It is the first part, usually in its colloquial construct forms *mūnyit* and *mīt*, of numerous Egyptian place-names.

The total number of villages in the Eastern Ḥawf is 529, not counting garden estates and communes in nine districts.

(In) the Central Delta (are the *kūrahs* of):

Damsīs and Minūf, with 104 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Ṭawah and Minūf, with 72 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Sakhā, with 115 villages

Tīdah and al-Farajūn, with 23 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

al-Basharūd, with 24 villages

Naqīzah, with 12 villages, not counting garden estates

Banā and Būṣīr, with 88 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Samannūd, with 128 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Nawasā, with 21 villages, not counting garden estates

al-Awsiyyah, with 40 villages, not counting garden estates

al-Bujūm, with 40 villages, not counting garden estates

Tinnīs and Damietta, with 13 villages, not counting garden estates, of which there are plenty

Alexandria

(In) the Western Ḥawf (are the *kūrahs* of):

Ṣā, with 73 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Shabās, with 22 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

al-Badaqūn, with 43 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

the Badaqūn latifundium, with 29 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

al-Shirāk, with 9 villages

Tarnūṭ, with 8 villages

Khirbitā, with 62 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Qarṭasā, with 22 villages, not counting garden estates and communes

Maṣīl and al-Mulaydis, with 49 villages, not counting garden estates

Ikhnū and Rosetta, with 17 villages

al-Buḥayrah, al-Hiṣaṣ near Alexandria, al-Kurūmāt, al-Baʿl, Maryūṭ, the city of Alexandria, Lūbiyah and Marāqiyah, with 124 villages, not counting garden estates

The Western Ḥawf thus comprises 479 villages, not counting garden estates in thirteen districts.

[4] The number of villages in the Delta, says al-Musabbiḥī in his *History*, is 1,439, which makes the total number of villages in Upper and Lower Egypt combined 2,395.

[5] Judge Abū ʿAbd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Salāmah al-Quḍāʿī says: Egypt consists of two parts: Upper Egypt, which lies in the direction of the south wind, and Lower Egypt, which lies in the direction of the north wind. Upper Egypt has been divided into twenty-eight *kūrahs*, namely:

the Fayyūm in its entirety

the districts of Memphis and Wasīm



al-Sharqiyah

the districts of Dalāṣ and Būṣīr

Ihnās

the districts of al-Qēs and al-Bahnasā

Ṭaḥā

the Shanūdah latifundium

Buwayṭ

the two districts of al-Ushmūnayn/Lower and Upper  
Anṣinā and Shuṭb/Qūs-Qām

Suyūṭ

Qahquwah

the districts of Ikhmīm/al-Dayr and Ibshāyah

Hiw, Iqnā (Qinā), Fāw and Dandarah

Qifṭ and Luxor

Isnā and Armant

Uswān

These are the *kūrahs* of Upper Egypt.

Then there are the *kūrahs* of Lower Egypt. They are 25—in one transcript, 33, in another, 38. Among them are:

the districts of the Eastern Ḥawf

the districts of Atrīb and ‘Ayn Shams

the districts of Tatā and Tumā

the districts of Baṣṭah and Ṭarābiyah

the district of Qurbayṭ

the district of Ṣān and Iblīl

the district of al-Faramā, al-'Arīsh and al-Jifār

There are also the *kūrahs* of the Central Delta (*Baṭn al-Rīf*) of Lower Egypt:

the district of Banā and Būṣīr

the districts of Samannūd and Nawasā

the districts of al-Awsiyyah and al-Bujūm

the district of Daqahlah

the districts of Tinnīs and Damietta

and the *kūrahs* of the Jazīrah of Lower Egypt:

the district of Damsīs/Minūf

the district of Ṭawah/Minūf

the district of Sakhā, Tīdah and al-Farajūn

the district of Naqīzah/Dayṣā

the district of Basharūd

and the *kūrahs* of the Western Ḥawf:

the district of Ṣā

the district of Shabās

the district of al-Badaqūn and the Badaqūn latifundium

the district of al-Khays/al-Shirāk

the district of Khirbitā

the district of Qarṭasā, Maṣīl and al-Mulaydis

the districts of Ikhnā/Rosetta and al-Buḥayrah

the district of Alexandria

the district of Maryūt (Mareotis)

the district of Lūbiyah and Marāqiyah

Among the *kūrahs* of the southeast are the villages of the Hejaz, namely:

the district of al-Ṭūr/Fārān

the district of Rāyah/al-Qulzum

the district of Aylah and the Aylah latifundium

Madyan and the Madyan latifundium

al-‘Awnīd and al-Ḥawrā’ with their latifundium

the district of Badan/Shaghb

A man familiar with land taxes and the fiscal bureau said that he came across an old register written by Abū ‘Īsā Buqṭur ibn Shaghā(?),<sup>(5)</sup> the Coptic secretary, known as “al-Tuways”, who was in charge of Egypt’s land tax for the Ikhshīdīd state, which contained an enumeration of Egypt’s administrative districts and their villages up to the year 345 (A.D. 956/7). (It said) that there are 2,395 Egyptian villages in Central and Upper Egypt and in the Delta, of which 956 are in Upper Egypt and 1,439 in Lower Egypt. This was their number at the time when said registers were drawn up. After that, (the figures) changed, because a number of villages fell into ruin.

[6] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam reports, on the authority of al-Layth ibn Sa’d:<sup>(6)</sup> When al-Walīd ibn Rifā‘ah took over as governor of Egypt, he set out to count its population and to investigate the just distribution of the land tax they owed. In that endeavor he spent six months in Upper Egypt until he got all the way to Uswān, accompanied by a swarm of assistants and scribes who performed that task for him with serious dedication, and three months in Lower Egypt. They counted more than ten thousand villages. Even

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5. So the Bulaq text (but there Ibn ‘Īsā). Wiet has left a blank.

6. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabīḥ) 108. — Ibn Rifā‘ah al-Fahmī served as governor from 728 to 737.

in the smallest of them one counted no less than five hundred head of men liable to pay the poll tax (*jizyah*). That makes it a total of five million men.

[7] What eventually became established in the cadastre made by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn [in 1315] was that Upper Egypt (was to be divided into) nine provinces, namely:

the province of *Qūṣ*, which is the most prestigious of them and to which belong *Uswān* and *Gharb Qamūlah*;<sup>(7)</sup>

the province of *Ikhmīm*;

the province of *Asyūt*;

the province of *Manfalūt*;

the province of *al-Ushmūnayn*, including the district of *Ṭaḥā* (*al-Ṭaḥāwiyyah*);

the province of *al-Bahnasā*, part of which is *al-Gharbī*, which is the designation for villages located on the western side of the *Manhā* Canal that extends all the way to the *Fayyūm*;

the province of *al-Fayyūm*;

the province of *Itfīḥ*;

the province of *al-Gīzah*.

Lower Egypt (was to be divided into) six provinces:

the province of *al-Buḥayrah*, which extends overland all the way to *Alexandria* and *Barqah*;

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7. So, correctly, the *Bulaq* text. *Wiet's 'Izab Qamūlah* is a corruption, due to the transposition of the diacritical dot, that goes back to *Ibn al-Jī'ān* (cf. *al-Tuḥfah al-saniyyah*, p. 194, n. 4). The name derives from its location on the western side of the Nile opposite the original *Qamūlah* (Copt. *Kamouli*). It corresponds to present-day *al-Awsaṭ Qamūlah* (district of *Qūṣ*). See *Ramzī, Qāmūs*, II, 4: 183.

the province of *al-Gharbiyyah*, one single island comprised by the area between the two arms of the Nile, namely, the one whose estuary passes near Damietta and which is called "the Eastern (Arm)," and the other whose estuary is near Rosetta and which is called "the Western (Arm);"

*al-Minūfiyyah*, to which belong Ibyār and Jazīrat Banī Naṣr;

the province of *Qalyūb*;

the province of *al-Sharqiyyah*;

the province of *Ushmūm Ṭanāh*, to which belong *al-Daqahliyyah* and *al-Murtāḥiyyah*. Also located here are the frontier towns of *al-Burullus*, *Rosetta* and *al-Manṣūrah*. In that region are also *Alexandria* and *Damietta*, but they have no provinces of their own.

As to the Oases, they curve out beyond Upper Egypt to the west of it. They were not counted among the governorates (*wilāyāt*), nor among the provinces (*a'māl*). They are not administered by a *wālī* for the Sultanate. Rather, they are governed by their respective feudal lord.

## 26. The Construction Work Done on Egyptian Lands, Such as Digging Canals and Building Dikes, to Control and Distribute the Water of the Nile during Its Respective Seasons

[1] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates on the authority of Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb:<sup>(1)</sup> It was Egypt’s duty to provide for the excavation of its canals, the construction of its dikes, the building of its aqueducts, and the containment of its tidelands, a year-round standing work force of 120,000 (men) equipped with hoes, spades and tools.

[2] And on the authority of Abū Qabil he reports:<sup>(2)</sup> Some Egyptian scholar has claimed that the practice followed in Egypt at the time of her (pharaonic) kings was for them to leave the villages in the possession of their population, each village for a given lease which would only be revoked every four years because of drought or a turn for the worse in the economy. At the end of four years, this was then revoked and a new adjustment was made: Those deserving of kindness were treated with kindness, and those who could bear a rise (in taxes) had their taxes increased, without imposing, however, a burden that would have meant a hardship for them.

After the land tax was levied and collected, one-fourth of it belonged exclusively to the king personally to do with it whatever he wanted. Another force belonged to his army and those who enabled him to wage war, to collect his land tax, and to pay off his enemies. The third quarter was for the benefit of the land: for the

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1. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabīḥ) 104.

2. *Futūḥ Miṣr* 33. —Abū Qabil is Ḥuyayy b. Nādir al-Ma‘āfirī, an Egyptian traditionist and eminent doctor of Islam (*imām mujtahid*). He died in 128/745. See Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, 1:298.

dikes one would need, the canals to be dug, the aqueducts to be built, and to enable the farmers to plant their crops and to develop their land. One-fourth of each village's share in the land tax was taken out of the fourth quarter and buried in the village, to be used in case of some catastrophe or some disaster striking its population. This is how they used to go about it. The portion of the land tax that was buried in each village represents the "treasures of Pharaoh," of which people say that they crop up and are sought by those who go out hunting for buried treasures.

[3] It has been said that a certain pharaoh of Egypt collected its land taxes at the rate of seventy-two million dinars, and that, as part of his colonizing effort, he sent one *waybah* [= 15 l] of wheat to Lower and Upper Egypt at the time when the entire land was under cultivation and the irrigation canals were in full operation. And one could not find an empty piece of land on which to plant it.

[4] It has also been said that, at the end of the cultivating season, he used to send four *waybahs* of clover to Upper and Lower Egypt. If he found in any district an empty space on which it could be planted, he had the chief of that district beheaded. Egypt was at that time one continuous cultivated area of 40 *farsakh* (parasangs) square. The parasang being the equivalent of three miles, and the *barīd* the equivalent of four parasangs, that would make it ten square *barīds*. The pharaohs continued to do so until the time of the Pharaoh of Moses, who cultivated Egypt with justice and magnanimity. There was a drought for three consecutive years in Egypt in his days, so he let the Egyptians keep the land tax for three years, spending on himself and on his army out of his own treasury. In the fourth year he doubled the land tax and kept it that way, and was thus compensated for what he had spent.

[5] 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb,<sup>(3)</sup> God be pleased with him, wrote to 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ to ask the Muqawqis about Egypt: Where did its

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3. Section 5 is drawn from Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (*Fuṭūḥ* III).

prosperity come from, and why its decay? So ‘Amr asked, and the Muqawqis told him: “Its prosperity and its decay spring from five sources: that one collect the land tax at one time only, when the people are done with their crops; that one lift the land tax at one time only, when they have finished pressing their grapes; that one dredge its canals every year; that one plug up its side canals and dikes; that one not put up with delay (in paying taxes) on the part of its population”—meaning their wrongdoing. “If all of this is done, then Egypt will prosper, if not, it will go to ruin.”

And from Zayd ibn Aslam, who heard it from his father: When ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, felt that ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ was not collecting the land tax fast enough, he wrote to him, telling him to send him a man from the Egyptians. So ‘Amr sent an old Copt to him. ‘Umar, God be pleased with him, questioned the man about Egypt and its land tax before Islam, and he said: “Commander of the Faithful, one used to take nothing from it, unless the cultivating season was over. But your governor has no mind for its cultivation. Rather, he takes whatever meets his eye, as if he wanted it only for one year.” ‘Umar, God be pleased with him, realized what the man was saying and accepted ‘Amr’s excuse.

[6] ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ said to the Muqawqis: “You were governor of Egypt. Wherein lies (the secret of) its prosperity?” He replied: “In the following conditions: that its canals are regularly dredged, that its dikes and side canals are regularly sealed, that one levy its land tax only on its cereal crops, that one not allow its people to delay (paying taxes), that one live up to one’s obligations toward them, that one regularly pay the tax collectors salaries lest they become venal, and that one relieve its people from extraordinary imposts and gifts so that they feel strong. Through all that it will be made to prosper and one can expect to collect its land tax.”

[7] It is said that the Coptic kings of Egypt used to divide the land tax into four parts: one part belonging to the king personally, one part for paying the army, one part for the benefit of the land,



and one part to be hoarded against some untoward event and then spent for it.

[8] When ʿUbayd-Allāh ibn al-Ḥabḥāb took over as finance director of Egypt for Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik,<sup>(4)</sup> he set out personally to survey the entire land of Egypt, the cultivated part of it and the part submerged by the Nile. And he found that it comprised one hundred million feddans.

[9] It is said that Aḥmad ibn al-Mudabbar, after assessing how much of Egypt's land is suitable for agriculture, discovered that it was twenty-four million feddans, the rest being under water and wasteland. He also considered the time needed for plowing (the land) and found it to be sixty days, with one plowman plowing fifty feddans. Thus it needed 480,000 plowmen.

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4. This is certainly wrong, because Ibn al-Ḥabḥāb must have held that office at least as early as 722 under Yazīd (cf. Ibn Taghrī-Birdī, *Nujūm*, 1:258 ff; C.H. Becker, *Beiträge*, 2:107). Under his efficient administration (until 734) fall Egypt's first cadastre (724 or 725; see ch. 37) and first census (727), but by the Arab sources he is generally presented as a ruthless oppressor. Hishām appointed him in 735 governor of Ifrīqiyyah, but dismissed him in 741, when his province was plunged into the Ibādīte revolts among the Berbers. In Tunis he began the construction of the great Zaytūnah Mosque. He also had shipyards built and conducted raids into Sicily and the Sudan. He died after 123/741. See Zirikli, *ʿĀlam*, 4:345.

## 27. The Amount of Egypt's Land Tax in Earliest Times

[1] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: Minqāwus had divided the land tax of the country into four parts: one-fourth belonging to the king personally, with which he could do whatever he pleased; one-fourth to be spent for the benefit of the land and for what one needed to operate its dikes and to dig its canals and to enable its people to cultivate it; one-fourth to be buried against some untoward event or some calamity; and one-fourth going to the army. The country's land tax collected at that time came to 103 million dinars, which he divided up by the respective number of thousands among 103 districts. One dinar is said to have been the equivalent of ten of our Islamic *mithqāls*, while the country today has 85 districts, 45 in Lower Egypt and 40 in Upper Egypt. In each district (then) were a priest to administer it and a military commander.

[2] Through the efforts of Badāris, son of Ṣā, the revenue of the country climbed to 150 million dinars.

[3] At the time of Kalkan, son of Khirbitā, son of Mālīq, son of Badāris, (it was) one hundred and some ten million dinars.

[4] After the first dynasty of the Copts had expired and Egypt was ruled by the Amalekites, the country was in disorder. The First Pharaoh used to collect from it 90 million dinars in land taxes. Of that, ten million dinars were set aside for the benefit of the country, ten million dinars for the benefit of royal princes and people of virtue, ten million dinars for patrons, soldiers and scribes, and ten million dinars for Pharaoh. Fifty million dinars were hoarded in the treasury for Pharaoh.

[5] At the time of al-Rayyān ibn al-Walīd, who is the Pharaoh of Joseph, upon him be peace, the land tax of Egypt amounted to 97 million dinars. [6] He then wanted to bring it up to a round 100

million dinars. So he gave orders for various kinds of constructions, repair work on the country's dikes and increased land reclamation until he reached that figure and even exceeded it.

[7] Ibn Diḥyah relates: The land tax collected in Egypt in pharaonic times was 90 million dinars in terms of the pharaonic dinar, which is the equivalent of three of our *mithqāls*, the *mithqāl* nowadays known in Egypt as being the equivalent of 24 *qīrāṭs*, each *qīrāṭ* at three *ḥabbahs* (grains) of wheat. Thus computed, this makes it 270 million Egyptian dinars.

[8] Al-Sharīf al-Jawwānī mentioned that he discovered in some temple in Upper Egypt, written in the language of Upper Egypt and partially translated into Arabic, the amount of Egyptian money collected as land tax for the Pharaoh of Joseph, upon him be peace, namely, al-Rayyān ibn al-Walīd, in terms of the amount due to be collected under the existing provisions of the *kharāj* and all other kinds of imposts for one year, in observance of justice and fairness and at current rates, without prejudice or duress or regard for the magnitude of a possible merit possessed by the individual taxpayer, and after setting aside the necessary amount against the vicissitudes of time and with a view of strengthening their economic condition, to be in gold: 24,400,000 dinars. The remaining part of his statement is the way it appears in the account of al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Asadī.

Al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Asadī reports: The following was told to me by my father: I found in a Coptic book, (written) in the language of Upper Egypt and partially translated into Arabic, that the amount raised for the Pharaoh of Egypt as collectible land tax together with all other kinds of imposts for a whole year, in observance of justice and fairness and at current rates, without duress nor regard for the magnitude of a possible merit possessed by the individual taxpayer, and after setting aside the necessary amount against the vicissitudes of time in kindness to the contractors and as an encourage-

ment to them, was 24,400,000 dinars in gold, and that expenditures from that were allocated as follows:

Disbursed, in the process of cultivating the country, for digging canals, keeping dikes in good repair, sealing side canals, and repairing irrigation ditches and water scoops; *idem*, as a nonrepayable subsidy to those in need of it, for settling laborers, buying more seeds, etc., for (defraying) the cost of tools, for wages of men hired as porters and carriers, and for other expenses (incurred) for diversifying their land: 800,000 dinars in gold;

Disbursed as emoluments for comrades-in-arms, armed personnel and slave soldiers, and their retainers, as well as a thousand scribes assigned to the government bureaus, exclusive of their subordinates, such as treasury clerks and similar officials, a total of 111,000 men: 8 million dinars in gold;

Disbursed to widows and orphans as their lawful share from the Treasury, even though they may not stand in need of it, lest they be without hope of a charity due to them: 400,000 dinars in gold;

Disbursed to the priests of their temples, their religious leaders, and all their houses of worship: 200,000 dinars in gold;

Disbursed as charitable support payments: 200,000 dinars in gold.

(This works as follows:) It is publicly proclaimed that a man who has done his level best in a case of temporary indigence can be relieved of his financial obligations and should present himself (to the authorities). No one is turned away in such a case while the trustees (of Pharaoh) are in session. But if it is felt that a man was not in the habit of doing so, he is put in solitary confinement, after seizing his earnings. Eventually, when the money is distributed, and by that time there is already quite a number of such people, Pharaoh's trustees come and visit such an individual, congratulate him on the (imminent) distribution of the money, and wish him a long and healthy life. And then the case (of each individual) of said group of people is decided. (Pharaoh) first has them made presentable with a bath and a change of clothes. Tablecloths are

spread out, and they eat and drink. Then each man is questioned about the cause of his indigence. If it is the result of very hard times, then the man is given back the like of what he had before, and more. If it is because of bad judgment and poor planning, then he is turned over to someone who keeps an eye on him and does what is best for him.

Disbursed by Pharaoh in the form of expenditures leaving the country: 200,000 dinars in gold.

This, then, is the sum total of what is stated and itemized (as going) to the afore-mentioned recipients: 9,800,000 dinars in gold. Which leaves as net of the money received by Pharaoh in his treasuries, to be used in case of calamities and misfortunes of time: 14,600,000 dinars in gold.

[9] Someone was asked: "When was the last time that Egypt was guaranteed ninety million dinars (in revenue)?" And he answered: "At the time when Pharaoh sent a *waybah* of wheat to Lower and Upper Egypt and then could not find a place to sow it in, because the entire land was under cultivation."

## 28. What the Muslims Did with the Land Tax at the Time of the Conquest of Egypt and How the Governors of Egypt Dealt with the Copts in That Respect

[1] Zuhayr ibn Mu‘āwiyah<sup>(1)</sup> transmitted: We were told by Suhayl on the authority of his father, who heard it from Abū Hurayrah, who said: The Apostle of God, God’s peace and blessings upon him, once said: “The Iraq withheld its dirham and its *qafiz*, Syria its *mudd* and its dinar, Egypt its *irdabb*—and you are back where you started.”

Abū ‘Ubayd<sup>(2)</sup> commented: The Prophet was told beforehand of what had not yet been, living, as he was, in the knowledge of God. Thus he made his pronouncement in the past tense, because it is past in the knowledge of God. In His telling him about it before it actually happened there is proof of His confirmation of Muḥammad’s prophethood, and also proof of His pleasure with ‘Umar, God be pleased with him, for imposing the payment of tribute on the infidels in the garrison cities. There are two interpretations of the term ‘withholding’ (in this tradition). One is that (Muḥammad) knew that (the infidels) would convert to Islam and have that which was imposed on them removed; thus they would ‘be withholding’ that which was imposed on them by their conversion to Islam, as demonstrated by his words, ‘and you are back where you started.’ According to others, its meaning is that they would renounce obedience. But the first (interpretation) is the better one.

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1. Kūfan traditionist, died 789. —On the Companion ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ṣakhr al-Dawsī, known as “Abū Hurayrah,” an astoundingly prolific source of traditions, see “Abū Hurayra” (J. Robson) in *EF*.
  2. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥarb, known as “Ibn Ḥarawayh”: Iraqi Shāfi‘ite jurist, from 902 to 923 judge of Old Cairo, died 319/931.

[2] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates, on the authority of ‘Abd-Allāh ibn Lahī‘ah:<sup>(3)</sup> After ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ had conquered Egypt, (a tribute of) two dinars each was imposed under the terms of peace on all Coptic men from the age of puberty upward living there, excluding women, young boys and old men. Their number, after they had been counted, was eight million.

And on the authority of Hishām ibn Abī Ruqayyah al-Lakhmī: After ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ had conquered Egypt, he told its Copts, “If anyone hides from me a treasure in his possession, I will surely get him and kill him!” Now, there was a certain Copt from Upper Egypt by the name of Buṭrus, who had, ‘Amr was told, a buried treasure. He sent a man to him to question him about it, and when the Copt adamantly denied it, he had him locked up in prison. “Do you hear him ask for someone?” ‘Amr would inquire. “No,” people said, “we only heard him ask for a monk in al-Ṭūr.” So ‘Amr sent (another man) to Buṭrus to take away his signet ring. Then he wrote to that monk: ‘Send me what you have got!’ and sealed the note with (Buṭrus’) seal. And the messenger brought back to him a Syrian jar sealed with lead. ‘Amr opened it and found inside a sheet on which was written: ‘Your money is under the big fountain.’ So ‘Amr sent people to the fountain to have the water shut off, then ripped out the tiling underneath it and found there fifty-two *irdabbs*<sup>(4)</sup> of Egyptian gold coins. ‘Amr chopped (Buṭrus’) head off near the entrance to the mosque. Thereupon the Copts brought out their hidden treasures, for fear that (‘Amr) might lean on anyone of them and he would be killed as Buṭrus had been killed.

And on the authority of Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb: ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ confiscated the property of a certain Copt of Egypt because he was convinced that the man was feeding information about Muslim weak-

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3. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabīḥ) 65.

4. An Egyptian *irdabb* is the equivalent of 69.6 kg, or about 90 liters, of wheat (Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, 39).

nesses to the Byzantines and was sending them written messages about that. He got some fifty-odd *irdabbs* of dinars out of him.

[3] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam also reports:<sup>(5)</sup> ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ used to sent to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with both of them, the tribute after withholding what he needed himself. (For) it was Egypt’s duty to provide for the excavation of its canals, the construction of its dikes, the building of its aqueducts and the containment of its tidelands a year-round standing work force of 120,000 (men) equipped with hoes, spades and tools.

Then ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, wrote to (‘Amr), telling him that he must have lead seals placed on the necks of the protected people, that they must wear their (leather) girdles clearly visible, cut their forelocks, and ride sideways on pack saddles; that (the Muslims) must impose the poll tax only on adult males, but not on women and children, and must not allow (the dhimmis) to look like Muslims in their dress.<sup>(6)</sup>

And on the authority of Zayd ibn Aslam (he relates): ‘Umar, God be pleased with him, wrote to the governors of the military districts that they must impose the payment of tribute only on adult males, their tax rate being 40 dirhams for people in the eastern part of the empire and four dinars for people in the western provinces.<sup>(7)</sup> (The protected people) must also supply as provisions for the Muslims wheat and oil: two *mudds* of wheat and three *qisṭs* of oil<sup>(8)</sup> per month for every man of the field army of Syria and the Jezira (northern Mesopotamia), as well as fat and honey—I don’t know

5. *Futūḥ Miṣr* 104-06.

6. These discriminatory regulations chiefly directed against Christians, called the “covenant of Omar,” were introduced by the Umayyad caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (717-720). They are here, and elsewhere, wrongly attributed to his maternal great-grandfather ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the second caliph.

7. Arabic: *ahl al-warq* ‘people of silver’, i.e., those using the Persian silver *drachma* (dirham) as legal tender, and *ahl al-dhahab* ‘people of gold’, those operating with the Byzantine gold *denarius* (dinar).

8. Presumably, the *mudd* is to be understood as the Syrian *mudd* of 3.673 l, the *qisṭ* as the Iraqi “small” *qisṭ* = 1.216 l. One (canonical) *ṣā‘* (below) = 4.2 l (cf. Hind, *Islamische Masse*, 45-46, 50, 51).



how much. And for every member of the army of Egypt (they must supply) one *irdabb* a month per man—I do not know the quantities for fat and honey. They must also furnish linen for the clothing provided for the troops by the Commander of the Faithful, and they must accommodate for three nights any Muslim who stays at their place. The army of the Iraq is entitled to 15 *ṣāʿ*s (of wheat and oil?) per man—how much fat they are entitled to I do not know. Women and young boys had no tribute imposed on them, and seals were placed around the necks of the men of the tributary population.

The *waybah* of ʿUmar at the time when ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ was governor was six *mudds*.

After ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ was firmly established,<sup>(9)</sup> he left the Copts of Egypt in charge of collecting taxes in the manner of the Byzantines. Their method of tax collection had been one on a sliding scale: If a village was prosperous and had many inhabitants, they had to pay more taxes, if it had few people and was in a state of decay, they paid less. The cadastral officials (?),<sup>(10)</sup> the senior notable<sup>(11)</sup> and the clan chiefs of each village would get together and look into the matter of prosperity and decay. Having determined that an increase was due in the redistribution, they would turn that redistribution (decision) over to the districts. Then they and the village chiefs would get together and distribute that according to the capacity of the villages and the extent of the cropland. After (the chief of) each village has returned with their proportional share in the redistribution, they would add up their respective quota, the land tax of each village, and the total of its land under cultivation. Then they would proceed<sup>(12)</sup> and take out of the total of the land a

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9. Read with the original source: *lammā ʿstawthaqa lahu ʿl-amr*. Wiet and Bulaq: *al-umarāʿ* (?).

10. In the Wiet text (following de Sacy): *gharāfisū*. It appears to be a corrupted Greek title, perhaps, as de Sacy suggests, Greek *graphēus* 'scribe'.

11. Read (with de Sacy and Wüstenfeld): *mārūtuhā*, from Aramaic *mārūthā* 'lordship'.

12. Read with the Bulaq text: *fa-yabdtadiʿūna* (or: *fa-yabdaʿūna*). Wiet, following

certain number of feddans for their churches, their baths, and their punts. Next, they would take out the figure needed for providing accommodations and food for the Muslims (passing through) and for (covering the cost of) the governor's stay (in their village). That done, they would look into the number of artisans and wage workers in each village and distribute (their tax quota) on them according to capacity. If there were people from the outside<sup>(13)</sup> living in the village, then they, too, were assigned a tax quota according to their capacity, but that rarely applied to persons other than young adults or married men. Next, they would examine what was left of the land tax and divide that up among themselves in accordance with the land figure. Then they would distribute that among those of them who intended to work the land to the best of their ability. If someone was not able to do that and pleaded to be too weak for working (all of) his land, then they distributed what he could not handle (among those who could) according to capacity. If there were people among them who wanted to take on more (than their share), then they were given what those too weak could not handle. In case of a dispute, they divided that up according to their number, the redistribution being made on the basis of *qīrāṭs*—24 *qīrāṭs* to the dinar, dividing the land accordingly. That is why there is a tradition attributed to the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him: You will conquer a land where one speaks in terms of the *qīrāṭ*; treat its people kindly.

Their tax due per feddan was one half of an *irdabb* of wheat and two *waybahs* of barley. With the exception of alfalfa,<sup>(14)</sup> which was tax-exempt. A *waybah* is six *mudds*.

ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, used to collect from those he made peace treaties with what each individual declared for himself, neither remitting anything from it nor adding to

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the original: *fā-yabdhurīna* (?).

13. Arabic: *jāliyah* 'people who have left their home', hence the modern sense of the word: 'colony' (of exiles or immigrants).

14. Read: *qurt*. Wiet/Bulaq: *qaraz* 'acacia pods' (?).

it. But he had people investigated who, while submitting to pay tribute, did not declare how much they were going to pay. When they were in need, he would lower their tax burden, if they could afford it, he would raise it accordingly.

Hishām ibn Abī Ruqayyah al-Lakhmī related: The lord of Ikhnā came to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, God be pleased with him, and told him: “Tell us how much tribute each of us owes so that we can live with it.” And ‘Amr answered, pointing to the corner of a church: “If you paid me (enough to fill this church) from floor to ceiling, I would not tell you how much you owe. You people are like a treasure house for us: If there are heavy demands on us, we will lay it heavy on you, if things ease up on us, we will go easy on you.”—Anyone holding to this tradition must believe that Egypt was conquered by force of arms.

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, according to a tradition of Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb, said: Any one of the protected people who becomes a Muslim will have his life and property safeguarded by the act of his conversion. The existing land, however, constitutes the joint property of all Muslims given by God. Of any people who made peace on payment of tribute, the land and house of someone who converts to Islam belong to the rest of them.

And al-Layth (ibn Sa‘d) related: Yahyā ibn Sa‘īd<sup>(15)</sup> wrote to me: “What the Copts sell as part of their stipulated tribute and of things they are held responsible for as incumbent dues on them, such as a male or female slave, or a camel, or a cow, or a mount, all of that is revocable against them (*jā’iz ‘alayhim*). If someone buys it from them, it is, if they are well off, not to be returned to them. The lease of any land they rent out is permissible as long as it does not detrimentally affect the tribute they owe. Perhaps the land will have to be returned to them in a case where (such a lease) detrimentally affects their tribute, but if there is (still) a surplus after payment of

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15. Medinan traditionist and judge of al-Ḥīrah, died 143/760. See Zirīklī, *A‘lām*, 9:181.

the tribute, then it is our opinion that leasing such land is legitimate for someone who leases it from them.”

“We say,” wrote Yaḥyā, “that the *jizyah* is actually two *jizyahs*, one imposed on the men individually, and one levied collectively on the people of a village for which the village community is responsible. If someone dies in a village whose inhabitants owe a tribute stipulated on the village, not on the individual men, then it is our opinion that the land of a villager who dies without offspring and without heir reverts to his community as part of the collectively owed tribute. (On the other hand) if someone who is assessed individually dies without leaving an heir, then his land belongs to the Muslims.”

And, quoting ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, al-Layth also stated: The *jizyah* is on the heads, not on the lands—meaning, of the protected people.

(And from ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Junādah:) ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz wrote to Ḥayyān ibn Shurayḥ,<sup>(16)</sup> ordering him to transfer the poll tax of Copts who died to their survivors.

This (tradition of ‘Abd al-Malik) indicates that ‘Umar was of the opinion that Egypt had been conquered by force of arms, and that payment of the *jizyah* was indeed assessed on the villages so that, if one of the villagers died, that poll tax would still remain constant for them and the death of one of them in no way reduced the tribute they owed. But it is also possible that Egypt could have been conquered peacefully, that the (original) peace terms remained the same for the next generation, and that the death of someone did (therefore) in no way reduce for them the obligations they had entered under the original peace agreement.

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16. The son of the famed jurist and judge Shurayḥ b. al-Ḥārith (died *ca.* 700) and finance director of Egypt under ‘Umar II.

[4] Al-Layth transmitted:<sup>(17)</sup> ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz exempted Egyptian dhimmīs who converted to Islam from paying the *jizyah* and had the peace terms of such converts appended in the Diwan to (the records of) the tribes of (earlier) converts who had adopted Islam under his administration.

Before that, one used to tax converts to Islam. The first man to collect the poll tax from converts who were former protected people was al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf.<sup>(18)</sup> Consequently, (the Umayyad caliph) ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān wrote to (his brother and governor of Egypt) ‘Abd al-Azīz ibn Marwān, telling him to impose the *jizyah* on<sup>(19)</sup> protected people who converted to Islam. But Ibn Ḥujayrah<sup>(20)</sup> addressed (the governor) on that matter, saying, “I commend you to God’s protection, Emir, that you should be the first to introduce such a practice in Egypt. Don’t you see? The dhimmīs bear the poll tax of their monks, so how can you impose it on those of them who have become Muslims?” So (the governor) left them alone for the time being.

(From Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb:) ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz wrote to Ḥayyān ibn Shurayḥ, ordering him to exempt dhimmī converts to Islam from paying the *jizyah*, for the Lord says: “*But if they repent, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms, then let them go their way; God is All-forgiving. All-compassionate*”<sup>(21)</sup> and also: “*Fight those who believe not in God and the Last Day and do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden—such men as practise not the religion*

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17. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabīḥ) 107.

18. The forceful and capable Umayyad governor of the Iraq, died 95/714. See “al-Ḥadīdjadī b. Yūsuf” (A. Dietrich) in *EF*.

19. Read with the Bulaq text: *‘alā man (aslama)*, instead of Wiet’s absurd *‘amman*.

20. Abū ‘Abd-Allāh ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥujayrah al-Khawlanī: judge of Old Cairo and head of the treasury, died 83/702. See Ziriklī, *A’lām* 4:74; Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, 1:295, 551; 2:137.

21. Koran 9 (Repentance): 5.

*of truth, being of those who have been given the Book—until they pay the tribute out of hand and have been humbled.*<sup>(22)</sup>

[5] Ḥayyān ibn Shurayḥ wrote to ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz:

“Conversions to Islam have hurt (the collection of) the poll tax so badly that I borrowed twenty thousand dinars from al-Ḥārith ibn Thābitah with which I supplemented the pensions of the people on the Diwan roster. Should the Commander of the Faithful deem it appropriate to order the settlement of this debt (through the new converts), let him do so.”

And ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz wrote back:

“I have received your letter. I put you in charge of the military district of Egypt fully aware of your weakness. My messenger has instructions to give you twenty lashes over the head. Exempt the converts from payment of the poll tax, you misguided soul! God sent Muḥammad, peace and blessings upon him, as a guide, not as a tax collector. By my life, worse things could happen to ‘Umar than seeing everyone enter Islam through his administration!”

[6] (Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam) relates:<sup>(23)</sup> When ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, felt that the land tax was not delivered fast enough by ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, he wrote to him:

“In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. From God’s servant ‘Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. Greetings! I praise to you Allah, save Whom there is no god.

I have thought about you and about what you are doing. Now, that land of yours is a vast, wide, fine land whose population was given by God great numbers, endurance, and strength on land and at sea. The pharaohs handled it and did a solid job with it, despite their great arrogance and their extreme impiety. So I began to wonder about that. The thing I wondered most about is that it should yield only half the land taxes it used to produce before, (and this) without there being either drought or sterility of the soil. In your correspondence you speak a lot about the land tax that this land of yours owes, and I thought this would be forthcoming to us undiminished. I had hopes that you wake up and deliver that to me. But all

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22. Koran 9: 29.

23. *Futūḥ Miṣr* 109-10. —Numerous obscurities and text corruptions in Maqrīzī’s transcript have been corrected without annotation on the basis of the original source.

of a sudden you come to me with arguments which you choose poorly and which do not agree with my own thinking. I will accept from you no less than the land taxes you have always been responsible for before. Still, I do not know why my letter should put you off and upset you: If you are contributing your fair share, if you are competent and doing the right thing, then innocence is indeed a useful asset. But if you are wasteful and have dirty hands, then the matter is surely quite different from what you are leading yourself to believe. Last year I allowed myself to test you on that matter, hoping that you would wake up and deliver that (which is expected of you) to me. I have learned that all that is preventing you from doing so is your district agents, who are bad agents, and what you are being cheated out of by their connivance so that it simply disappears. They have been hiding behind your back. God willing, I have a remedy that has the curative power for what I am asking of you: Abū ‘Abd-Allāh, do not in impatience stew \* that your due is first taken, then given to you;\* an udder struck yields milk, and the truth shines bright \*—so leave me alone with your ‘might, might, might’. \* That is all.”

And ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ wrote back:

“In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. To the servant of God ‘Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, from ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. God’s peace be upon you. I praise to you Allah, save Whom there is no god.

I have received the letter of the Commander of the Faithful in which he thinks of me as too slow with regard to (delivery of) the land tax, and in which he speaks of the work of the pharaohs before my time and of his astonishment at (Egypt’s) land taxes under their administration and the shortfall thereof since the establishment of Muslim rule. By my life, in those days the land tax was more plentiful and abundant and the land in a better state of cultivation because those people were, despite their impiety and haughtiness, more desirous of cultivating their land than we have been since Muslim rule was established. You say that striking the udder will start the milk flowing. I have milked (this land) so hard that (the flow of) its milk has stopped!

You say a lot in your letter: you censure, you use innuendo, you reprimand, although you are aware that all of this stems from something you harbor in your bosom without factual information. Then, by my life, you come to me with those heinous, slanderous (allegations), you, who have the reputation of being at all times levelheaded, sober, eloquent and truthful in what you say! We have served as lieutenant for the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, and for his successors. We would, thank God, always carry out our assigned duties and preserve our leaders’ status as it was enhanced

by God, thinking that anything else was distasteful and doing it disgraceful. That is gratefully acknowledged of us and our truthful reputation. God protect me from such manners of gain, from evil practices, from plunging adventurously into every crime! Do then what you must do. God has made me impervious to such modes of gain and to any desire for them. Away with this letter of yours in which you have failed to protect a personal honor and have been so ungenerous to a friend! By God, Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, when such things are thought of me, my heart swells indeed with anger and proud indignation! I have not engaged in any action which I would deem to have left a lingering blemish on my record, but I have knowledge of things you do not know about. If I were a Jew of Yathrib you could not have said more! God will forgive you, and us. I have remained silent about certain things I have known for some time, but my tongue would be docile, were I to speak out about them. However, God has raised you in status, a fact which cannot be ignored."

Thereupon 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, wrote:

"From 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ. Greeting! I praise to you Allah, save Whom there is no god.

I am amazed at how many letters I must write to you concerning your slowness in delivering the land tax! Your letter is way off the track. Yet you must have known that I will not accept from you anything but the manifest truth!

I did not send you to Egypt to make it a sinecure for you, nor for your clan. Rather, I sent you in the hope that you would furnish ample taxes and pursue a sound administrative policy. When you receive this letter of mine, load up and dispatch the land tax. For it is the rightful spoils of the Muslims. In my view, people who have learned something are few. That is all."

And 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ wrote back:

"In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. To 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb from 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ. Greetings!

I have received the letter of the Commander of the Faithful. He feels that I am not delivering the land tax fast enough and maintains that I am deviating from the truth and straying from the trail. By God, I do not reject what sound information you have, but the people of this land requested me to wait until their grain crop has fully ripened. I considered the Muslims, and kindness (to the local population) seemed better than abusing them so that they would have to sell something that is indispensable to them. That is all."



[7] ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, God be pleased with him, says al-Layth ibn Sa‘d, God be pleased with him, collected from Egypt twelve million dinars in taxes, while the Muqawqis before him had collected twenty million dinars per annum. It was at that point that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb wrote his well-known letters to ‘Amr.

‘Abd-Allāh ibn Sa‘d ibn Abī Sarḥ<sup>(24)</sup> collected 14 million dinars in taxes after he was installed by ‘Uthmān, God be pleased with him, as governor of Egypt. “You see, Abū ‘Abd-Allāh,” said ‘Uthmān to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, when he had already dismissed him from the governorship of Egypt, “the camel has given more milk than before.” “But you have harmed its offspring,” replied ‘Amr. “As long as the young weanling has not died!” said ‘Uthmān.

[8] Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān wrote to Wardān,<sup>(25)</sup> who had just taken over as finance director of Egypt, ordering him to raise (the tax) on every adult male of the Copts by one *qīrāt*. Wardān wrote back: “How can we raise the tax on them, when it says in their original agreement that no such increase shall be effected?” So Mu‘āwiyah fired him.

There is another version of Wardān’s dismissal.

[9] Ibn Lahī‘ah related:<sup>(26)</sup> At the time of Mu‘āwiyah, the Diwan had 40,000 on its pension roster, among them 4,000 at 200 dirhams each.

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24. An early follower of the Prophet and his secretary. He apostatized and defected to Mecca, where, after the Muslim conquest, his life was saved only through the intercession of his foster brother ‘Uthmān. In 646 ‘Uthmān appointed him governor of all of Egypt. His extreme unpopularity in that office, which he held for ten years, triggered the Egyptian rebellion that ended with the murder of the third caliph in 656. He died in the same year. See Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7:496; Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, 1:213, 579-81.

25. He is Wardān al-Rūmī, the freedman of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ and his standard bearer during the conquest of Egypt. He died 53/673 in Alexandria. Cf. Ibn Duqmāq, *Intiṣār*, 4:11. —The tradition is drawn from Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (*Futūḥ Miṣr* 65).

26. *Futūḥ Miṣr* 75-76.

Maslamah ibn Mukhallad paid to the people on the Diwan roster their pensions, the pensions of their dependents, their salaries, their extraordinary allowances, as well as the extraordinary allocations to the communities for (maintenance of) the dikes, the salaries of the clerks, and the transport (costs) of wheat to the Hejaz, and then still had a surplus of 600,000 dinars to send to Mu'āwiyah.

Ibn 'Ufayr reported: When the caravan (with the money) set out, it was met by Birḥ ibn 'Uskul,<sup>(27)</sup> who exclaimed: "What is going on? Why is our money being taken out of our country? Take it back!" After they had done so, he posted himself at the mosque entrance and asked: "Have you received your pensions? Your pay? The pensions of your dependents? Your extraordinary allowances?" And people answered, "Yes, we have." "Then take it away," said Birḥ. "May it benefit them not!" And they left with the money.

[10] Someone has said that 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ collected from Egypt ten million dinars in taxes. So 'Umar wrote to him, accusing him of weakness, and telling him that the Byzantines had collected twenty million dinars. The following year, 'Amr collected for him twelve million dinars.

[11] Ibn Lahī'ah related: 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ collected the poll tax from Alexandria at the rate of 600,000 dinars, because he found there 300,000 protected people and imposed on them a tax of two dinars each.

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27. A Companion who settled in Egypt (Suyūṭī, *Husn*, 1:174). — His father's name is given by Ibn al-Athīr as 'Uskur ibn Watār (*Uṣd al-ghābah* 1:174).

## 29. The Rebellion of the Copts, and How It All Happened

[1] The Imām Abū ‘Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī<sup>(1)</sup> quotes from the traditions of Abū Hurayrah, God be pleased with him, where he said: “How is it going to be with you, when you collect neither dinar nor dirham?” “How should we understand that, Abū Hurayrah?” people asked. “Yes indeed,” he replied, “by Him Who holds Abū Hurayrah’s life in His hand, we have it on the Prophet’s authority!” “And how is that?” they asked, and he answered: “The compact of God and the covenant of His Apostle will be violated. God Almighty will then seal the hearts of the protected people so that they will withhold what they possess.”

[2] Abū ‘Umar Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Kindī reports in his *Governors of Egypt*: While al-Ḥurr ibn Yūsuf was governor of Egypt, his director of finance, ‘Ubayd-Allāh ibn al-Ḥabḥāb, wrote to (the caliph) Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik that Egypt could bear a tax increase, and (Hishām) had the dinar increased by one *qirāṭ*. Whereupon the districts of Natū, Tumā, Qurbayṭ, Ṭarābiyah, and of the Eastern Ḥawf in general rose in rebellion. When al-Ḥurr sent out the Diwan troops to fight the insurgents, a great many of them were killed. That constitutes the first uprising of the Copts in Egypt. Their rebellion occurred in the year 107 (A.D. 725/6). Al-Ḥurr ibn Yūsuf remained in garrison in Damietta for three months.

[3] Next, the people in Upper Egypt revolted, and the Copts battled their district agents in the year 121 (A.D. 739). The governor of Egypt at the time, Ḥanzalah ibn Ṣafwān, sent the Diwan troops against them, and they killed many Copts and defeated the rebels.

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1. On this pre-eminent traditionist (d. 870) see the article “al-Bukhārī” by J. Robson in *EF*.

[4] Then a certain Johannes, a Copt, came forth from Samanūd, and the governor of Egypt at the time, ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān ibn Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr,<sup>(2)</sup> sent troops against him. Johannes and many of his followers were killed. That happened in the year 132 (A.D. 749-50).

[5] (Toward the end of that year) the Copts rose at Rosetta, and (the last Umayyad caliph) Marwān ibn Muḥammad al-Ja’dī, who had come to Egypt fleeing from the ‘Abbāsids, sent ‘Uthmān ibn Abī Nis‘ah<sup>(3)</sup> against them, who put them to flight.

[6] Then the Copts rose in open rebellion against Yazīd ibn ibn Qubayṣah ibn al-Muhallab ibn Abī Ṣufrah, the (‘Abbāsīd) governor of Egypt, in the area of Sakhā, resisting the district agents and driving them out. That happened in the year 150 (A.D. 767). They came to Shubrā Sunbāṭ<sup>(4)</sup> and were joined by the people of al-Basharūd, al-Awsiyyah and al-Bujūm. When the news reached Yazīd ibn Ḥātim, he put Naṣr ibn Ḥabīb al-Muhallabī in command of the Diwan troops and the military leaders of Fuṣṭāṭ, and they set out against the rebels. When the Copts attacked them at night, killing some Muslims, the Muslims set fire to the camp of the Copts and fled back to Old Cairo.

[7] While Mūsā ibn ‘Ulayy ibn Rabāḥ was governor, the Copts rebelled at Balhīb<sup>(5)</sup> in the year 156 (A.D. 773). Troops went out to deal with them, and they put the rebels to flight.

[8] Then, in 216 (A.D. 831), the Copts, together with other insurgents in that year, staged another uprising. After the Afshīn<sup>(6)</sup>

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2. He was the last of the Umayyad governors. — Chapter 9 of Part III will deal with the officials mentioned in this and the following chapter in detail.
  3. In 728, he had served briefly as the 11th governor of Spain (cf. al-Maqqarī, *Nafh al-ṭīb*, 1:235, 299; 3:18).
  4. A village between Damsīs and Shubrā Badr, present-day Shubrā al-Yaman (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 2:58).
  5. The ancient Egyptian *Pellip*, a vanished community once located on the west bank of the Rosetta arm between Dayrūt and Idfinā on the site of present-day Fazārah (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 2:272).
  6. Khaydhār (or Ḥaydār) b. Kāwūs, a Turkish general from Ushrūsanah in

had engaged them in battle, they submitted to the Caliph ‘Abd-Al-lāh al-Ma’mūn, who ruled that the men be killed and the women and children be sold, and most of them were sold into slavery.

[9] Ever since that time, God has brought the Copts low all over Egypt and broken their power. None of them has been able to rise and rebel against authority, and the Muslims took possession of the villages. But the Copts thereafter reverted to plotting against Islam and the Muslims by resorting to trickery and double-dealing, and in the process they have been able to do a good deal of harm by getting control of the secretariat of the land tax. The Muslims have had their clashes with them (in that respect), the account of which will follow—God Exalted willing—in its proper place in this book.

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Central Asia, died 841. See “Afshīn” (W. Barthold-H.A.R. Gibb) in *EP*.

### 30. How the Arabs Settled in the Egyptian Countryside and Took up Agriculture, and What Happened in the Process

[1] Al-Kindī reports: While al-Walīd ibn Rifā‘ah al-Fahmī was governor of Egypt,<sup>(1)</sup> the Qays were brought to Egypt in the year 109 (A.D. 727/8). Prior to that, there had been none there, except for some members of the Fahm and ‘Adwān branches.

(His finance director) Ibn al-Ḥabḥāb, having left to see Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, requested the caliph’s permission to move a few families of them to Egypt. Hishām allowed him to take three thousand of them along and to transfer their tribal register (*dīwān*) to Egypt, on the condition that he would not settle them in Fustāt. Ibn al-Ḥabḥāb then recruited their quota, brought them home with him, and settled them in scattered locations in the Eastern Ḥawf.

It is related (by al-Haytham ibn ‘Adīy) that ‘Ubayd-Allāh ibn al-Ḥabḥāb, after having been entrusted by Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik with (the finances of) Egypt,<sup>(2)</sup> remarked: “I see that the Qays have no share in this country, with the exception of a few Jadīlah”—that is, Fahm and ‘Adwān. So he wrote to Hishām:

The Commander of the Faithful, may God give him a long life, has honored this tribe, the Qays, and has elevated them and enhanced their fame. After coming to Egypt I found that, except for some families of the Fahm, they have no share (in this country), yet Egypt has districts with no one in them. No harm would come to the Egyptians if Qays settled among them, nor would such a move entail an infringement of the land tax. Such a place

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1. His term of office extended from 727/8 to 737. He was, as his *nisbah* indicates, a Qaysi himself. —The text of this chapter, with the exception of the last two sections, is taken from al-Kindī’s *Wulāt Miṣr*.

2. Cf. ch. 26, n. 4.

is Billbays. Should the Commander of the Faithful deem it appropriate to have this tribe, the Qays, settled there, it shall be done.

Hishām wrote back: “Let it be your business then!” (Ibn al-Ḥabḥāb) then spread the word among the bedouins and a hundred people of the Banū Naṣr and another hundred of the Banū Sulaym followed his call. He settled them in the area of Billbays and ordered them to plant crops. Looking into the *ṣadaqah* portion of the tithe, he had it paid out to them, and they bought camels (with the money) and began to transport foodstuffs to al-Qulzum. A man could make ten dinars a month or more (that way). Then he told them to buy horses, and a man would buy himself a filly which he could ride within a month’s time. Because of the excellent quality of their pasture land, they did not need to buy forage to feed their camels and horses. When word about that reached the bulk of their tribe, people packed up and moved in with them. Thus, five hundred bedouins came to them and lived the same way, and after a year some five hundred more arrived. Billbays had then fifteen hundred Qays. And in the time of Marwān ibn Muḥammad (al-Ja’dī), when al-Ḥawtharah ibn Suhayl al-Bāhili was governor, the Qays kept flocking in in such numbers that, by the time of Marwān’s death (in 750), there were three thousand of them living in the area of Billbays. Subsequently they multiplied by natural procreation and other bedouins kept joining them.<sup>(3)</sup>

[2] In the year 178 (A.D. 794), the governor of Egypt at the time, Iṣḥāq ibn Sulaymān ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Abbās, examined the existing land tax and then raised it to a ruinous level for the farmers. As a result, the people of the Ḥawf rose in revolt and took up arms. He sent out the troops to fight them, and quite a number of soldiers were killed, whereupon he wrote to the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, informing him of the situation. (Hārūn) then put Harthamah ibn A’yan in command of a sizable army and sent him

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3. The last sentence of al-Kindī’s account is here omitted: “At the time of the governor Muḥammad ibn Sa’īd [769-776], 5,200 were counted, adults and children.”

to Egypt. He camped in the Ḥawf and the people there received him obediently, submitting to the payment of the land tax. Harthamah accepted their terms and collected the entire tax of the region.

[3] Later on, the people of the Ḥawf rose in rebellion against al-Layth ibn al-Faql al-Biwardī, the governor of Egypt (at the time). That was when he sent out surveyors to survey their cropland and they figured the *qasabahs* by several fingers shorter (thus increasing the number of taxable feddans). People complained to al-Layth, but he would not listen to them. So they took up arms and marched on Fustāṭ. In Shaʿbān 186 (August 802), al-Layth moved out to meet them at the head of four thousand garrison troops. He joined battle with the rebels in Ramaḍān, and on the 12th of that month (September 14) (most of) the garrison troops deserted him in defeat and he was left with some two hundred men. With those who were still with him he then attacked the people of the Ḥawf and put them to flight, so that he and his troops got as far as Ghayfah.<sup>(4)</sup> Their encounter took place at Jubb ʿAmirah.<sup>(5)</sup> Layth sent eighty heads of the Qays to Fustāṭ. He then returned to Fustāṭ, and the people of the Ḥawf went back to their homes, still refusing to pay the land tax. So in Muḥarram 187 (January 803), al-Layth set out to see the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. He asked the caliph to send troops to return with him, because he could collect the land tax from the people of the Ḥawfs only with the help of an army that should be sent along with him. Maḥfūz ibn Sulaymān happened to be present at al-Rashīd's residence, and Maḥfūz submitted to al-Rashīd that he could guarantee him the collection of Egypt's land tax to the last penny, without the application of whips or sticks. So the caliph put him in charge of the land tax and dismissed al-Layth

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4. A village near Bilbays. During the Ottoman administration, its name changed to its present form, *Ghaytah*. See Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 1:103, and Pt. II, ch. 21.

5. The original name (after ʿAmirah b. Tamim b. Jazʿ al-Tujjībī) of the area later known as *Birkat al-Ḥujjāj* north of Cairo, because it became the traditional gathering place for departing and returning Mecca pilgrims. Cf. *Khiṭaṭ* 2:163 (where the account of this battle is repeated).



ibn al-Faḍl from both his offices of governor and finance director of Egypt.

[4] While al-Ḥusayn ibn Jamīl was governor, the people of the Ḥawf again refused to pay the land tax. So the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd dispatched Yaḥyā ibn Muʿādh to deal with the matter, and he arrived in Bilbays during the month of Shawwāl, 191 (August 807). Al-Ḥusayn ibn Jamīl was dismissed as governor of Egypt in the month of Rabīʿ II, 192 (February 808).

[5] And Mālik ibn Dalham assumed the governorship. Yaḥyā ibn Muʿādh was finished with his assignment in the Ḥawf and came in Jumādā II (April) to Fustāṭ, when he received a letter from al-Rashīd, ordering him to return home. So he wrote to the people of the Ḥawfs: "Come here so that I can commend you to Mālik ibn Dalham and act as intermediary between you and him in the matter of your land tax." And every single chief of them, Yemenis and Qays, came to town. But he had shackles prepared for them and gave orders that the gates be occupied and guarded. Then he called for the irons, put the chiefs in chains, and set out with them in the middle of Rajab (mid-May) of that year.

[5] While ʿĪsā ibn Yazīd al-Jalūdi was governor of Egypt, the finance director, Ṣāliḥ ibn Shīrzād, oppressed the people and raised their land tax, whereupon the people of the Delta revolted and took up arms. ʿĪsā dispatched his son Muḥammad with troops to fight them. Having arrived at Bilbays, (Muḥammad) engaged (the rebels) in battle. He himself came out of the battle alive, but not one of his men survived. This happened in Ṣafar 214 (April 829). ʿĪsā was dismissed from (the governorship of) Egypt.

[7] And ʿUmayr ibn al-Walīd al-Tamīmī took over as governor. He prepared (at once) to make war on the people of the Ḥawf and set out with his troops in Rabīʿ II (June). (The insurgents) advanced against him and the two sides engaged in battle. A large number of the Ḥawfis were killed and the rest fled in defeat. ʿUmayr with a de-

tachment of his men pursued them, but he was ambushed by the Ḥawfis and killed on the 16th of Rabīʿ II (June 24).

[8] Then ʿĪsā al-Jalūdi became governor for the second time. He set out against (the rebels) and met them at Munyat Maṭar.<sup>(6)</sup> There was a battle between them which ended with his retreat in defeat to Fuṣṭāṭ. He set fire to his heavy baggage and dug a trench around the town. This happened in Rajab (September). Then al-Rashīd's son, Abū Ishāq (al-Mu'taṣim), arrived from the Iraq. He camped in the Ḥawf and wrote letters to the people there. But they refused to submit and he fought them in Sha'bān (October). Having captured a number of their leaders, he came to Fuṣṭāṭ in the month of Shawwāl (December). Then in Muḥarram 215 (March 830) he returned to the Iraq with a large number of prisoners.

[9] In Jumādā I 216 (June/July 831), the entire Delta, Arabs and Copts alike, rose in revolt. They drove out the tax officials and renounced their loyalty because of the maltreatment they had received from the governor's agents. There were armed clashes with the soldiers from Fuṣṭāṭ until the Caliph ʿAbd-Allāh al-Ma'mūn arrived in Fuṣṭāṭ on the 10th of Muḥarram, 217 (February 16, 832). He was angry at ʿĪsā ibn Manṣūr al-Rāfiqī, who was governor of Egypt at the time, and he ordered as punishment for him that he be stripped of his rank and that he prepare himself for execution,<sup>(7)</sup> saying: "This terrible thing could only happen because of what you and your agents have done. You have put a greater burden on people than they can carry, and you have deliberately kept me uninformed so that the situation has come to a dangerous head and the whole country is in turmoil." Then al-Ma'mūn put a general in command of an army he sent to Upper Egypt, while he himself moved on to Sakhā. He sent the Afshīn against the rebellious Copts, and he attacked them in the area of al-Basharūd and besieged them

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6. That is, *al-Maṭariyyah*, on the outskirts of Cairo (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 1:11).

7. The governor survived. In fact, he held the office a second time from 843 until his death in 848.

until they submitted to the Caliph's authority. Al-Ma'mūn ruled that the men be killed and the women and children be sold, and most of them were sold into slavery. The Caliph also persecuted anyone who was pointed out to him as being in opposition, and he had many people killed. He then returned to Fuṣṭāṭ in the month of Ṣafar (March), proceeded from there to Ḥulwān, and returned again. He left the country on the 18th of Ṣafar (March 25). The length of his stay in Fuṣṭāṭ, Sakhā and Ḥulwān was 49 days.

[10] At the time of al-Ma'mūn, the land tax of Egypt, on the basis of its equitable collection, came to 4,257,000 dinars.

[11] It is said that, while al-Ma'mūn was traveling from village to village in Egypt, a platform was built for him in every village on which his large tent was erected, surrounded by soldiers. He would stay a day and a night in each village. Once he passed a village called Ṭā' al-Naml,<sup>(8)</sup> but because it looked so wretched, he did not enter it. He was already past the village, when an old woman by the name of Māriyah the Copt, the mistress of that village, came out to meet him, shouting something. Thinking that she was appealing to him for help or complaining, al-Ma'mūn stopped to wait for her. Now, he would never travel without having interpreters of every nationality with him, and those told him that the Coptic woman had said: "The Commander of the Faithful has stopped at every village, but he has passed mine. The Copts will heap abuse on me for that. So I ask the Commander of the Faithful that he do me the honor of alighting in my village so that I and my descendants will be honored and my enemies cannot gloat at my misfortune." She was crying a lot, and al-Ma'mūn was beginning to feel sorry for her. So he reined his horse toward the village and dismounted to camp. Then the woman's son came to the chief cook and asked him how many sheep, chickens, pullets and fish he needed, what quantities of spices, sugar, honey, perfume, candles, fruit, fodder, and similar

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8. I.e., *Ṭunnāmīl al-Sharqī* (district of Agā) in the Daqahliyah province. See Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 117.

things he was accustomed to use. Then he brought all of that and more.

Al-Ma'mūn was accompanied by his brother al-Mu'taṣim, his son al-'Abbās, his nephews al-Wāthiq and al-Mutawakkil, Yaḥyā ibn Aktham, and Judge Aḥmad ibn Abī Duwād.<sup>(9)</sup> To each one of these (the Coptic woman) provided whatever personal services he needed, not leaving any one of them, nor of the military commanders, to depend on the ministrations of another. Then she served to al-Ma'mūn such quantities of exquisite and delicious food that he exclaimed in astonishment about it.

In the morning, when he was about to leave, the woman came to him, accompanied by ten servant girls, each carrying a platter. When al-Ma'mūn saw her from a distance, he said to those around him, "The Coptic woman is bringing you the gift of the countryside: pickles, anchovy relish, and marinated sardines."<sup>(10)</sup> But it turned out, as she set all of that down in front of him, that each platter contained a bag of gold. The Caliph expressed his pleasure about it and ordered it to be returned. "No, by God," said the woman, "I shall not do that. Look at the gold!" And there it was: the mintage of a whole year. "This is even more astounding," exclaimed the Caliph. "Sometimes our own Treasury cannot come up with something like this!" "Commander of the Faithful," said the woman, "do not break our hearts and do not look down on us." "But some of what you have already done is enough," he remonstrated. "We do not wish to overburden you. So put your money back (where it belongs), and

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9. Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā b. Aktham (d. 857) attached himself to al-Ma'mūn when the latter lived as heir apparent in his home town Marw. A prominent canon lawyer and judge, he held positions of great power during and after the caliph's reign (cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 6:147). Abū 'Abd-Allāh Aḥmad b. Abī Duwād, born in a village near Qinnasrīn in northern Syria, was a leading Mu'tazilite and a key figure in the *mihnah* (inquisition). He served as trusted counsellor under three successive caliphs until his death, semiparalyzed by a stroke, in 854 in Baghdad (*Wafayāt* 1:81).

10. The Arabic terms are: *kāmikh* (from Pers. *kāma*), a kind of vinegar sauce or pickles; *ṣahnā'*, a relish prepared with small sun-dried and salted fish, and *ṣīr*, small marinated fish eaten as an appetizer (cf. ch. 39 below).

God bless you!" Whereupon she picked up a piece of soil and said, "Commander of the Faithful, this"—pointing to the gold—"comes from this!"—pointing to the clod she had picked up from the ground. "And from your justice, Commander of the Faithful! I have a lot of this stuff." So he gave orders that it be accepted from her, and he bestowed on her several estates for tax-farming purposes and gave her two hundred feddans tax-free of her own village, Ṭā' al-Naml. Then he left, marveling at her largess and wealth.

### 31. Tax-farming of Egyptian Lands after the Spread of Islam among the Copts and the Settlement of the Arabs in the Villages and How It All Worked until the Latest Cadastre of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad

[1] For the time after the Arabs and their families had come and settled in the rural areas and had taken up crop cultivation as a livelihood and a source of gain, and after Copts *en masse* came to profess Islam and their families mingled with those of the Muslims because they married Muslim women, the story of Egyptian lands shows that, when it was time for farming out the lands,<sup>(1)</sup> the finance director of Egypt used to sit for the public in the Mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, with people from the villages and towns gathered (in his presence). Then a man would get up and auction off the various rural communities, transaction by transaction, while clerks seated in front of the finance director would record the final figures for the various districts and the terms for the individual tax farmer to take over the land. Because of (the possibility of) drought, flooding, etc., tax farmers would lease the communities for four years.

That part concluded, each person leasing and guaranteeing a piece of land would go to his respective community and undertake to

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1. Arabic: *qibālat al-arāḍi*, i.e., the practice of delegating the collection of revenue to a private person, or group of persons, with sufficient ready money to deposit the necessary funds for the lease of land under the terms of a ‘surety contract’ (*qabālah*) which guaranteed the State’s revenue in taxes under stipulated conditions for the lessee (*mutaqabbil*). Since the deposited amount was lower than the anticipated yield of the land because of the uncertainties of cultivation and harvest, the lessee was almost always assured of a substantial profit. The State, in turn, was saved the cost of a revenue-collecting apparatus and of the maintenance and construction of irrigation facilities. In towns especially, the term *qabālah* applied to a tax-farming concession for special imposts (*mukūs*), such as the collection of harbor dues, customs, and the like. See the article “Ḳabāla” by Cl. Cahen in *EF*.

cultivate the land, repair its dikes and do whatever work was needed on it, for his own person, his family, and whoever was delegated by him for that purpose. He would assume responsibility for the prompt payment, in installments, of the land tax he owed, while expenditures on his part for the construction of dikes, the (seasonal) closing of side canals and the dredging of main canals on his land would be credited to him in the form of special rates determined by the Bureau of the Land Tax out of the amount of his surety and bond. A certain amount would be deferred annually from the land tax in favor of the tax farmers and concessionaires, and such an amount deferred from the land tax was called *al-bawāqī* 'residuals'. Governors would at times insist on calling them in, at other times they would be prepared to write them off. At the end of thirty years, the discrepancy between the lunar and solar calendar would be adjusted, a new cadastre of all rural communities would be made, and their assessment would be readjusted: Land which could bear a tax raise would have higher taxes imposed on it, without (consulting) the concessionaires, while taxes on land that needed a decrease would be lowered.

All of that used to be done in the Mosque of 'Amr, until Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn had his own mosque built and al-'Askar became the seat of the governors of Egypt, at which time the Diwan was moved to the Mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn. Later on, in the days of (the Fāṭimid caliph) al-'Azīz-bi-'llāh Nizār, it was moved to the residence of the vizier Ya'qūb ibn Killis. And after the vizier's death, the Diwan moved to the Palace in Cairo and remained there throughout the Fāṭimid period. After that, it was then moved again. I shall later give an account of all that so that everything I have just said will become clear.

[2] Ibn Zūlāq relates in his *Story of the Mādharā'ī Family, Administrators of Egypt*:<sup>(2)</sup> Abū 'l-Ḥasan Wahb ibn Ismā'īl came to the

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2. The *Akhbār* (or *Sīrat*) *al-Mādharā'iyyīn*, *Kuttāb Miṣr*, like most of Ibn Zūlāq's biographical works, is unfortunately lost. — On the remarkable Mādharā'ī family (from Mādharāyā, a village near Baṣrah), whose members one finds in

public session of Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Mādhārā’ī in the cathedral mosque (of Ibn Ṭūlūn), while the latter was in the process of awarding tax-farming contracts for the rural estates. “Right now,” Abū Bakr said to him, “I am going to order a deal to be put up for auction. Take it in partnership with me.” A deal was called, and Abū Bakr said: “Allocate it to Abū ‘l-Ḥasan.” This was done, and (Abū ‘l-Ḥasan) worked the estate and it yielded him a profit of forty thousand dinars. He cashed his share of twenty thousand dinars but did not really know what to do with the money. Until he met Abū Ya‘qūb, Abū Bakr’s secretary, for a chat. “I saw the Shaykh today,” said Abū Ya‘qūb, meaning Abū Bakr al-Mādhārā’ī, “and he seemed quite worried. He wanted to raise (a certain sum of) money and was unable to do so.” “I have about twenty thousand dinars,” said Abū ‘l-Ḥasan. “Bring them to me,” said Abū Ya‘qūb, “and I shall see to it that he gets them.” Abū ‘l-Ḥasan did, and Abū Ya‘qūb made out a receipt for the amount. As it happened, Abū ‘l-Ḥasan then went to see Abū Bakr al-Mādhārā’ī. He said to him: “Concerning that deal (of ours), I paid off the dues on it and there still remained forty thousand dinars. I have already gotten twenty thousand dinars, which I delivered to Abū Ya‘qūb, and I have sent word to collect the rest, which I will bring later.” “Such ineptitude!” exclaimed al-Mādhārā’ī. “The only reason I told you that (the deal) be between you and me was my fear of your carelessness. I wanted to make sure that the money stays with you!” Then he ordered Abū Ya‘qūb to return what Abū ‘l-Ḥasan had paid to him, and to Abū ‘l-Ḥasan he said, “Give his receipt back to him.” Then he pocketed what Abū ‘l-Ḥasan had paid to Abū Ya‘qūb.

[3] In the year (969) when General Jawhar entered Egypt, its land tax came to 3,400,000 and some dinars.

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powerful positions in Egypt, Syria and the Iraq in the first half of the tenth century, see H. Gottschalk, *Die Mādarā’ijjūn, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Egyptens unter dem Islam* (Berlin 1931). —The biography of Abū Bakr al-Mādhārā’ī (d. 345/957), the powerful and fabulously wealthy vizier of the Ṭūlūnids Khumārawayh and Hārūn, is given in *Khūṭaṭ* 2:155-57 (there erroneously “al-Māridānī” throughout).



[4] (Ibn Zūlāq) reports in his biography of al-Mu‘izz-li-dīni-’l-lāh Ma‘add: On the 14th of Muḥarram, 363 (13 October 973), the Caliph entrusted the land tax, the miscellaneous revenues, etc., to Ya‘qūb ibn Killis and ‘Uslūj ibn al-Ḥasan.<sup>(3)</sup> The following day, both of them sat in public session in the Dār al-‘Imārah next to the Mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn to auction off the rural estates and all kinds of miscellaneous revenues, and people came to obtain tax-farming contracts, asking for such tax residuals as were incumbent on landowners, leaseholders and tax-collecting agents.

[5] The biographer of the vizier al-Nāṣir-lil-dīn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Yāzūrī<sup>(4)</sup> relates: (The Vizier) wanted to find out the size of the State’s revenue and its expenditures in order to compare the two. He therefore requested the heads of the government bureaus that each of them compile the revenue flowing into his respective bureau and its expenditures. Each of them did that and submitted the result to the Chief of the Dīwān al-Majlis, which is the control office of the government bureaus, and he then made an overall compilation which he presented to the vizier. In that way (al-Yāzūrī) discovered that the revenue of the State was two million dinars: one million in Syria, where expenditures and revenue were about even, and one million in the (Egyptian) rural areas and the rest of the state. Of the latter, 200,000 dinars fell under the category of delinquent monies, monies uncollectable from deceased persons and fugitives, and monies lost outright. Which leaves 800,000 dinars. From that were disbursed: 300,000 dinars to the troops in terms of pay and clothing; 100,000 dinars in terms of the price of produce supplied to the palaces; 200,000 dinars for expenditures of the palaces; 100,000 dinars for public buildings and accommod-

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3. A Berber general, finance director and chief comptroller under al-Mu‘izz and al-‘Azīz. He was executed in the course of al-Ḥākim’s massive purge in 393/1003. Cf. *Itti‘āz* 1:223; 2:46, 47. —One reads the full text of this passage in *Itti‘āz* 1:144.

4. A Palestinian from Yāzūr near al-Ramlah. He served as chief justice and vizier, the first to hold both offices at the same time (Suyūṭī, *Husn*, 2:148), from 1050 until his execution in 1058. —The author of the *Sīrat al-wazīr al-Yāzūrī*, cited by Maqrīzī in two more places, is unknown.

ations for visiting heads of state and others. After all of which is left a net yield of 100,000 dinars, which (the vizier) delivers to the Treasury every year, thereby finding favor in the eyes of his sovereign and ease of mind for himself.

[6] The revenue of Lower Egypt, he says, has gotten to a point where it stands in absolutely no relation<sup>(5)</sup> to the initial revenue derived from that land—he is speaking of the time after al-Yāzūrī's death and the outbreak of civil disturbances—which used to be, prior to the years of these disorders—that is, at the time of al-Yāzūrī—600,000 dinars that would be delivered in two yearly installments: 300,000 dinars at the beginning of Rajab and 300,000 at the beginning of Muḥarram. Subsequently the revenue went down and the obligations went up.

[7] Ibn Muyassar reports: When al-Afḍal ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh ordered an assessment of Egypt's revenue, it came to five million dinars, and the crop yield stored in government granaries was one million *irdabbs*.

[8] Speaking of the events of the year 501 (A.D. 1107/8), the Amīr Jamāl al-Mulk Mūsā ibn al-Ma'mūn al-Baṭā'ihī<sup>(6)</sup> reports in his *History*: General Abū 'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Fātik al-Baṭā'ihī then realized how things were going from bad to worse for the ordinary soldiers and the *iqṭā'* holders,<sup>(7)</sup> that the latter were complaining about the dwindling revenue from their leased land and their

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5. Read: *ilā mā lā nisbata lahū*, as in the Bulaq text (1:82, last but one line).

6. The son of the Fāṭimid vizier (1121-1125) "al-Ma'mūn" al-Baṭā'ihī, died 588/1192 (*Sulūk*, I, 1:111). On his father see "al-Baṭā'ihī" (D.M. Dunlop) in *EF*.

7. In the Fāṭimid administrative and fiscal system, *iqṭā'* meant agricultural lands leased by the State to individuals in return for contractually fixed tax payments (*qabālāt*; cf. note 1 above), thus delegating the fiscal rights of the State over lands subject to the payment of land tax (*kharāj*). The grantee (*muqṭa'*) of such a lease would derive his profit from the difference between the land tax he collected from the inhabitants of his district and the tithe he paid to the State, without interference of the agents of the State's treasury. In the case of military grantees, the *iqṭā'* would be calculated as the equivalent of pay, based on the fiscal value of the leased land in the cadastre (*'ibrah*). See "Iḳṭā'" by Claude Cahen in *EF*.

deteriorating economic situation due to its poor yield, that (on the other hand) the revenue from the tax farms of the emirs had doubled and exceeded their cadastral fiscal values, that there was in every rural area a certain amount of leftover land belonging to the Diwan which would cause but injustice and a constant coming and going of Diwan emissaries<sup>(8)</sup> on their account. So he spoke to al-Afḍal ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh about dissolving all existing *iqṭāʿ* grants and having a new cadastre made for them, pointing out to him that this would be in the interest of both the *iqṭāʿ* grantees and of the Diwan, since the latter would reap from those leftovers a block (of land) that would yield rounded rural communities. (Al-Afḍal) told him to go ahead, and (al-Maʾmūn al-Baṭāʾihī) dissolved all *iqṭāʿ* grants and had a new cadastre made for them.

Right away, every one of the powerful and the privileged complained (to al-Afḍal), claiming that they had orchards, private properties and sugarcane presses in their areas. So (al-Baṭāʾihī) told (al-Afḍal) that whoever owned private property would keep it, since it did not fall under the *iqṭāʿ*, and it would be safe: he could sell it or lease it, if he wanted.

After the *iqṭāʿ* grants were dissolved, (al-Baṭāʾihī) first told the poorer members of the military to start bidding for them, and so there was bidding for the tax estates of the powerful up to a given amount, at which point the land-lease deeds were drawn up to the effect that (the grants thus acquired) would remain in the possession of the bidders for thirty years without augmentation. Next, he summoned the powerful (grantees) and asked them: "What is it that you dislike about the *iqṭāʿ*'s that used to be in the hands of the military?" "Well," they said, "the fact that they are assessed too high in the cadastre, that their yield is poor, that they are run down, and that there are not enough people living on them." And he told them: "Then spend on each area as much as it can bear and as makes it attractive to you, and never mind its former fiscally as-

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8. Read: *bi-taraddudi ʾl-rusul*, as in the Bulaq text.

sessed value." Now they felt happy and began to bid for the lands until (the bid) reached the limit each one of them had in mind, whereupon (the grants) were allocated to them and the land-lease deeds were drawn up on the aforementioned terms. And so both parties benefited at the same time: The grantees were happy, and the Diwan obtained rounded rural communities at a value of 50,000 dinars through (land) formerly parceled out in *iqṭā'* holdings.

[9] Among the events of the year 515 (A.D. 1121) he reports: It was already mentioned earlier that the Illustrious Ma'mūn gave orders that the State's accounting be done in both lunar and fiscal (years), and that it be organized on the basis of two totals: one up to the fiscal lunar year 510, the other until the end of the lunar year 515 and its corresponding fiscal period, so that (the State) came up with a large total in both ready money and kind which was then itemized by name of the grant holders and designation of their respective communities. After it had been submitted, (al-Baṭā'iḥī) had a decree drawn up which contained the remission of the residuals (*al-bawāqī*) until the end of the year 510. It reads, after the preamble, as follows:

Whereas we have learned of the situation of contractors, concessionaires and administrators, and of the payments deferred in their favor in connection with their operations, we hereby grant the remission contained in this decree, with the intention of clearing such concessionaires as have been remiss for a long time and whose contractual status has deteriorated, of coming to the rescue of tax agents who have been wronged by the exaction on the part of the Diwan, and of providing ample incentive for cultivating the land and seeing its cultivation proceed in the accustomed manner of old;

and whereas this constitutes a praiseworthy act which is without precedent on our part, nor shared by another ruler, it became a requirement of the situation that this be set forth in this writ and recorded in this manner:

Aware of the extent to which the disordered conditions and the freeze of deferred payments and other funds have come to affect the concessionaires and contractors of the country, we have, in kind and gracious sympathy with them, informed the Exalted Sovereign in detail and in general

about the state of their affairs and secured a Royal Order that this be set down at once, that the necessary documents be drawn up, dealing exclusively with this beneficent act, and that these be forwarded to all villages to be read in public in all communities.

By the time this decree was sealed, the remission amounted to the following:

in gold: 1,720,767  $\frac{5}{6}$  dinars and  $\frac{11}{12}$  qīrāṭs

silver bullion:<sup>(9)</sup> 4 dirhams

in silver: 67,005  $\frac{2}{3}$  dirhams

cereal grain: 3,810,239  $\frac{5}{24}$  irdabbs and  $\frac{2}{3}$  qīrāt

jujube:  $\frac{1}{4}$  irdabb

woad leaves: 2,403  $\frac{1}{2}$  irdabbs

wild indigo: 10  $\frac{1}{4}$  irdabb

panic grass: 1,480 quintals and 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  raṭls<sup>(10)</sup>

madder: 470 raṭls

alum: 913  $\frac{1}{2}$  quintals

iron: 531 raṭls

pitch: 1,303  $\frac{5}{12}$  raṭls

tar: 19  $\frac{1}{3}$  raṭls

Aleppine robes: 3

waistwrappers: 100 woolen

sieves: 170

small livestock: 235,305 head

9. Arabic: *al-fiddah al-nuqrah*, actually a silver-copper alloy at a ratio of 2:1 from which the dirham was minted. Cf. al-Qalqashandi, *Ṣubḥi al-a'shā*, 3:466-67.

10. 1 *qintār* (quintal) = 100 *raṭl*, 1 *raṭl* in Fāṭimid times = 437.5 g (Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, p. 29).

unripe dates: 313 quintals and 38 raṭls

(white cotton material called) *siḥḥīl*: 375,550 bā's<sup>(11)</sup>

palm stalks: 438,753

*salab* bark: 1,423 sheets

anchor ropes: 6,703

salt: 2,793  $\frac{1}{3}$  irdabbs

potash: 11 irdabbs

pomegranates: 2,000 fruits

bee honey: 541  $\frac{1}{16}$  quintals

honeycombs: 32 jars and 1 qādus<sup>(12)</sup>

wax: 440 raṭls

beehives: 3,402

molasses: 188 qisṭs

beef cattle: 22,164 head

mules and donkeys: 74 head

ghee: 2,996  $\frac{7}{24}$  maṭrs<sup>(13)</sup>

cheese: 320 raṭls

wool: 4,123 fleeces

goats' hair: 6,050  $\frac{1}{4}$  raṭls

goathair tents: 2

All of that was itemized by imposts and contractors.

11. The thousandth part of a *mīl*, or about 2 m.

12. A dry measure of 3 *mudds* = 3.159 l.

13. The Greek *metretes*, a liquid measure containing about 9 English gallons. The capacity of the Muslim *maṭr* (or *maṭar*) varies greatly. Nuwayrī defines it as half of a Laythī quintal. Cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:600.

[10] (Ibn al-Ma'mūn) reports: When al-Ma'mūn learned of the common practice among the government bureaus of accepting augmentations, of canceling concession contracts, of taking them away from people who were having a hard time with them and handing them over to someone who could easily afford to pay the augmented rate, he denounced it, forbade its perpetration and prohibited its practice. He gave orders that the public in general as well as the concessionaires and contractors be protected against having to accept an augmentation for whatever they administer and are in charge of as long as they live up to their contractual obligations and render their shares. All of that was contained in an open decree which was read out loud in the Mosque of al-Azhar in Cairo and in the Old Mosque (of 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ) in Fustāṭ, as well as at the two felicitous places, the Dīwān al-Majlis and the Dīwān al-Khāṣṣ. It reads, after the preamble, as follows:

Whereas it has come to our attention that it is a common practice among the government bureaus, as well as one pursued by certain administrators and officials, to grant concessions for gates, shop buildings, gardenlands, bathhouses, covered markets, houses, and the like, to individuals seeking to acquire them from those who are still and in proper manner attending to their operation, whereby, as soon as a person appears who offers to pay a higher concession fee than the present concession holder, the validity of the latter's concession is revoked and whatever anyone is willing to expend by way of an augmentation is accepted, so that the first concessionaire is prevented from administering the concession and the second concessionaire is able to do so, without regard for the contractual obligations toward the first concession holder and without recourse (on his part) against its cancellation, which is neither explicitly allowed by canonical law nor a matter of its interpretation,

we hereby record our displeasure with those who pursue this practice and severely censure the intent and purpose of its perpetrators, since it obviates the law and departs from proper procedures. We have brought this matter to the attention of His Sacred and Serene Highness—may God multiply his lights and forever raise his beacon—and elicited his binding orders as laid down in this open decree to all tax districts, to the effect that anyone holding a concession for a gate, or a shop building, or an orchard, or a village, or a rural commune, while fulfilling the conditions of his concession and rendering its due and pursuing what is right, shall have his

concession remain in his possession and shall not be liable to an augmentation for the duration of his concession as stipulated in the original contract, this being in pursuance of law and order and in obedience to the command of God Exalted when He says, “*O believers, fulfill your bonds,*”<sup>(14)</sup> until such time as the concession expires and ceases to be valid and becomes null and void, as an inducement to the performance of one’s duty and the observance of its traditions, and in trust in the Holy Canonical Law in which no one guided by its provisions and traditions has ever gone astray.

However, if someone holds a concession, but fails to render the due he owes from it, persisting in such procrastination and attempted fraud as only a knave and a fool will resort to, then it is he who has invalidated the terms of his concession by his violation of the conditions imposed on him, and he is legally in the same position as someone who, when outbid in his concession, has it removed from him and taken from his possession, because it is he who initiated the invalidation and made it possible.

All personnel of the fiscal offices and all administrators and officials shall see to it that the content of this decree be implemented and its orders complied with, that said concessionaires and contractors be induced to abide by its terms, and that every care be taken not to violate and infringe it after its registration in the two felicitous places, the *Diwān al-Majlis* and the *Diwān al-Khāṣṣ*, where it shall be registered, God willing, with the likes of it.

[11] (Ibn al-Ma’mūn) relates: Then came the reports from the man in charge and supervisor and the crew sent out with him to inspect and survey the lands and irrigation channels, containing what the inspection had brought to light and what the survey proved as negative evidence against people in possession of irrigation channels—and there are a lot of those. For instance, the case of a channel with an (irrigation) area of three hundred feddans, including palm groves, vineyards and sugarcane fields, at the town of *Isnā* which paid an annual land tax of ten dinars!

And other cases of that nature in the various districts. (It said in the reports) that they had appropriated all the channels for the *Diwan* and demanded of their owners that they furnish proof for

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14. Koran 5 (The Table): 1.



their possession. The latter claimed that the channels had been transferred to them, but produced no proof.<sup>(15)</sup> They, the officials, had already sent the “owners”<sup>(16)</sup> of the channels under guard to the capital so that a decision could be made on how to proceed in their case. After their arrival (in the capital), those people were kept under close surveillance until such time as they came up with the taxes they owed on the channels, for the holdings in their entirety were not rendering what they owed. The said individuals then presented themselves to al-Ma'mūn on the day he was sitting to hear grievances. Having ordered them to appear before him, he asked Judge Jalāl al-Mulk Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb al-Maghribī, who was Chief Justice at the time, to conduct a hearing. The ensuing parley clearly showed them to be in the wrong, and (the judge) put them under obligation to come up with an amount large enough to wipe them out personally and financially. But, in the end, their complaints made it necessary to go easy on them, to hold them responsible only for future tax payments, and simply to ignore what had gone on before. And an open decree was drawn up which reads:

All must surely be aware by now how generously justice, right-doing and attention to everyone's welfare is being bestowed on them; that we do not allow harm to befall any one of the subjects without doing something about it, nor learn of any good that will benefit him without supporting and furthering it. As it behooves the shepherds of nations,\* and in performance of our duty in near and far locations,\* following the straight and true course of the Fāṭimid dynasty, may God perpetuate its reign,\* and in faithful adherence to its concerns and its noble strain.\*

Having always regarded attention to the welfare of the subjects as a matter of necessity, and having devoted to ruling them keen determination and perspicacity, we look in like manner upon attention to the affairs of the fiscal offices, and that they receive their full dues, to be expended on protecting the homeland, on defending the faith, and on fighting infidels and heretics, so that what we govern and attend to by the traditions of canoni-

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15. Read: *'alayhā*, as in the Bulaq text. Wiet: *'alayhim* (?).

16. Read with the Bulaq text: *mullākahā*. Wiet: *amlākahā* (?).

cal duty abide,\* protected, with God's permission, from disorder and disturbance on every side.\*

From God we derive success in all legal decisions. Him we ask for guidance to the correct path and course. Only God can make us succeed, in Him we trust, and "*God is sufficient for us: an excellent guardian is He.*"<sup>(17)</sup>

[12] While Judge al-Rashīd ibn al-Zubayr was supervisor of remote Upper Egypt, he informed al-Afdal's (Dīwān) al-Majlis of what the private landowners in that area were doing: That they sought to add lands they illegally appropriated from the possessions subject to government bureaus to their own places and were encroaching on areas adjacent to their own estates, merging the two and taking possession of those government lands. Orders were given that those lands be inspected, that exposés on them be prepared, and that they be restored to the Diwan, thereby proceeding in accordance with the requirements of justice and equity as established in every land and place. The decree concludes:

Several persons were dispatched by us from the capital to look into the truth of the matter and to communicate its intent and design. They proceeded with the investigation of those estates as ordered and their report shows that they requested those in possession of a piece of private property or of an irrigation channel to give testimony to the rightfulness of their possession, the number of feddans involved, and the demarcations of the property. But not a single one of them produced evidence in writing or came up with an answer.

Those persons then submitted exposés on their findings to the Diwan, and it turned out that encroachment was indeed plain\* and wrong and inequity were not at all on the wane.\* The law requires to seize land in such a situation\* and to demand from its owner its cultivation and exploitation.\* Especially when he possesses no direct title to show the rightfulness of the property\* and must rest his case on the argument that he has accumulated it merely as a precaution against possible adversity.\*

However, we make our ruling in favor of what we consider the welfare of the subjects and the cause of justice and equity, whose beacon we have raised\* and whose trail we have blazed,\* combined with the desire of see-

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17. Koran 3 (The House of Imran): 173.

ing the country prosper and thrive, of having long-neglected lands opened up, new farmland created and new irrigation channels built.

We have (therefore) ordered that this open decree be drawn up and read in public in the districts of remote Upper Egypt, to the effect that all private properties, lands and irrigation channels be left in the possession of their present owners, without anything being taken away from them or any part having to be returned, that the necessary tax rate be determined for them, and that the Diwan confirm a like procedure toward other proprietors like them, this being an expression of such beneficence as we have continued to purvey\* and of such kindness as we have never ceased to bestow repeatedly on them and to display.\*

In our graciousness we have overlooked what was practiced before,\* but have restrained those who would such practices restore.\* We have been kind to those who abandoned common usage for transgression,\* following in well-known clemency our own tradition,\* on which basis we have accepted the repentance of the malefactors. But whoso of the public should revert to such practice—let God's revenge be upon him! Such a recidivist and gross violator shall be prosecuted, his life and property shall be proscribed, he shall be liable to doubled fines and penalties, and he shall be barred from any intercession and (assurance of) security.

At the same time we provide every opportunity for anyone desirous of taking a long-neglected piece of grassland under cultivation and operating an abandoned, deserted well, in that it shall be turned over and measured out to him, that no tax shall be collected from him until the fourth year after its receipt, and that the rate assessed for each feddan shall be the same as that warranted by his cultivation of its equivalent, as a tax in perpetuity and as a matter of certainty.

Local governors, community executives, and persons who customarily convene local councils shall proceed accordingly and summon all landowners and proprietors of irrigation channels to make them aware of the extent of this beneficence, which goes beyond what they could hope for by way of compliance with their requests. Taxes incumbent on said properties shall be determined in accordance with the rule described by us, and the Diwan shall endorse and approve such assessment, as well as issue concessions for unused land and inoperative wells to persons desirous of undertaking their operation under lease. Detailed statements to that effect shall be drawn up and submitted to the Diwan to be filed there in the manner of other documents of their kind, after registering this decree where the likes of it are registered.

And since these benefits accrued to the entire population of the districts, adds (Ibn al-Ma'mūn), there was a general effort to collect the Diwan taxes and to make the communities thrive.

[13] One should know that neither under the Fāṭimid regime in Egypt nor during the preceding administrations of the governors of Egypt did the military of the country have “fiefs” in the sense of what is today the case among the Turkish soldiery of the State. Rather, the communities would be farmed out as concessions by means of familiar surety contracts to all comers: emirs, soldiers, notables, local people—both Arabs and Copts, and others, and one did not know the institution which today is called *filāḥah*, under which a sharecropper who lives permanently in a given community is called a *fallāḥ qarrār*, or “resident fellah.” Such a man then becomes a serf or slave of the person who was granted that rural area in fief. Only, he has no hope ever to be sold or freed, but remains a serf as long as he lives, and the same applies to his offspring.

(In the previous system) on the other hand, when someone chose to take a piece of land under cultivation, he would take out a surety contract on it in the manner described above and deliver to the Treasury whatever he owed on it. Once the land tax was in the hands of the Diwan, the money was then disbursed among the various groups of the military through the treasurers' offices. Furthermore, when the water of the Nile receded from the land and the rural communities throughout Egypt were engaged in the various kinds of planting and sowing, a prominent personality was sent out from the capital, accompanied by trustworthy judicial aides who were familiar with (the operations of) the Land Tax Bureau. Oftentimes that secretary would be a Coptic Christian. The aforementioned persons would go to every rural community and determine precisely the area of land reached by irrigation, vis-à-vis land that might either lie fallow or be uncultivable for lack of water. Terriers would then be compiled specifying the feddans and parcels assigned for the various crops and sent on to the fiscal offices in the capital. At the end of the fourth month of the Coptic year, a mili-

tary man known for zeal and forcefulness would be dispatched and judicial scribes with a reputation of trustworthiness would be assigned to him, as well as a Coptic Christian secretary other than the one who had gone out earlier for the survey, and they also visited every rural community. Then the stewards of each community would collect one-third of the land tax owed as shown by the terriers, and when that third was in, it was disbursed as pay for the soldiers. This is the way the collection of each (tax) installment was handled throughout every year. There also used to remain in favor of the concessionaires and tax farmers a certain amount of “residuals.” Egypt’s communities used to be farmed out at that time for cash, cereal grain and kind. I have learned all of this from the writ of dispensation containing the remission of the residuals at the time of the caliph al-Āmir-bi-aḥkāmi-ʿllāh and the vizierate of al-Maʾmūn al-Baṭāʾihī.

[14] I found the following written in the hand of the Egyptian secretary al-Asʿad ibn Muhadhhab ibn Zakariyyā ibn Mammātī: (One day) I asked al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil ʿAbd al-Raḥīm: “What was the number of troops on the roster of the Bureau of the Army when Your Lordship took over that office at the time of Ruzzīq ibn al-Ṣāliḥ?”<sup>(18)</sup> He answered: “Forty thousand horse, and thirty thousand and some Sudanese foot soldiers.”

[15] (Judge ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn) Abū ʿAmr (Ibn) ʿUthmān al-Nābulī reports in his *Ḥusn al-sarīrah fī ittikhādh al-Ḥisn bi-l-Jazīrah*: After Ḍirghām’s revolt against Shāwar,<sup>(19)</sup> and after the latter had fled to Sultan Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Zangī in Damascus, where he appealed to the sultan for help against Ḍirghām, promising him to be his proxy in Egypt and to deliver the land tax to him, Shāwar kin-

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18. The Armenian Ruzzīk b. Ṭalāʾīʿ b. Ruzzīq. He served as vizier for a little over a year (1161-1162), succeeding his father “al-Ṣāliḥ” b. Ruzzīq in office, until his overthrow and murder by Shāwar in the last turbulent years of the Fāṭimid regime.

19. Abū Shujāʿ Shāwar b. Muḥir al-Saʿdī, Fāṭimid vizier 1162/3 and again 1165-1169. — On Ḍirghām’s vizierate, see *Khiṭaṭ* 2:12.

dled in Nūr al-Dīn a new resolve. He promptly equipped one thousand knights, put Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh in command of them, and ordered him to move out. But Shīrkūh refused, saying: "I shall never go! For this can only mean certain death for myself and my men and a bad reputation for the Sultan. How can I possibly lead a thousand knights into a land that has ten thousand knights and a hundred war galleys with ten thousand fighting men and forty thousand black slaves, and a people settled on home ground, their supply depots close by while we come to them, tired from the march, with so small a number of troops?" Later on, however, adds the author, (Shīrkūh) complied with the Sultan's wish.

And this, dear friend, after what the armies of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn had been like! Which you shall learn about when we discuss, God willing, al-Qaṭā'ī.<sup>(20)</sup> [16] And, later on, the armies of the Amīr Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ṭuḡh̄j al-Ikhshīdī, which, according to several sources, among them Ibn Khallikān, numbered four hundred thousand. [17] And after the dynasty of the Fāṭimids had come to an end with the invasion of the Turkomans from Syria, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb had established himself as the new ruler of Egypt, there was a change in all of that.

[18] Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil reports among the events of the year 567 (A.D. 1171/2): On the 8th of Muḥarram (September 11), Saladin's orders came out for the troops, old and new, to mount up and ride in review, after all units, present and absent, had been put on alert earlier. Their arrival complete, their armament and horses replenished, huge numbers of troops were present on that day. No Muslim ruler, as many a wisened whitebeard could attest, had ever possessed the like of them, and the emissaries of the Byzantines and Franks witnessed a spectacle to twist the infidels' noses.<sup>(21)</sup> The march-past of the troops continued, column after column, *ṭulb* after *ṭulb*—*ṭulb*, in the language of the Turkomans, means a senior

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20. Part III, ch. 12.

21. Read: *arghama unūf al-kafarah*, as in the Bulaq text.

emir entitled to a standard and a bugler, and commanding from two hundred to one hundred to seventy knights—until the day was over and night fell and it was daylight again. And their parade was still not finished. The number of troops present was 147 battalions, with twenty battalions absent, and is estimated at close to 14,000 knights, most of them *ṭawāshīs*—a *ṭawāshī* is one receiving an allowance of anywhere from seven hundred to one thousand one hundred and twenty (dinars), who has a baggage train of ten head or less, consisting of horses, packhorses, mules and camels, and a slave to carry his arms—and Qarāghulāmiyyah<sup>(22)</sup> making up the rest.

In<sup>(23)</sup> that year, says (al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil), Saladin also reviewed the Judhām bedouins, who mustered seven thousand horsemen (at the time). Their strength was fixed at no more than thirteen hundred horsemen, and on that basis the canonical tithe was collected. (The basis) was originally one million dinars [in terms of a computation which, although established in principle, is not collectible], and that was now settled on the Tha'labah, who were much upset about it and hinted they might go over to the side of the Franks.

[19] Among the events of the month of Rajab (November/December) of the year 577 (A.D. 1181) he reports: Sultan Saladin continued in that year to look into the affairs of the fiefs and to find out about their cadastrally assessed values, whether they had been increased or decreased, (in an effort) to nail down what was illegal

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22. A body of Negro slave troops carried over from the Fāṭimids; cf. Quatrèmere, *Mamlouks*, I, 86.

23. The translation follows the parallel account in Maqrīzī's *Sulūk* (I, 1:47), since the *Khīṭaṭ* version of the passage is obviously corrupted in both texts. The interpolation in brackets is from the *Khīṭaṭ* text. —The Judhām, a tribe that participated in the Muslim conquest of Egypt, appear to have migrated during the Fāṭimid and Ayyūbid periods to the western Sudan. The Sultan of Bornu complains to his Mamluk colleague about incursions "by the Judhām and others" into his territory and requests their punishment (Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥī*, 8:117). —On the Tha'labah, a tribe in the eastern Sinai, cf. Maqrīzī, *K. al-Bayān wa-'l-i'rāb*, p. 3.

and to encourage meritorious practice, until in the end the effective troop strength was fixed at 8,640 horse:

Emirs	111
Ṭawāshīs	6,976
Qarāghulāmiyyah	1,553

The funds set aside for them came to 3,670,000 dinars, and that exclusive of: troopers stripped of their benefices and put on tithe pensions; Arab nomads with land grants in the Sharqīyyah and Buḥayrah provinces; Kinānah<sup>(24)</sup> and Egyptian contingents; juriconsults, judges and Sufis; and what falls under the jurisdiction of the (special) *dīwāns*—no less than one million dinars.

[20] Among the events of the year 595 (A.D. 1189) he states: Indexed records on the established cadastral values of the communities from Alexandria to ‘Aydḥāb until the end of the 24th of Sha‘bān, 585, not including the frontier towns, the different Diwan taxes, quitrents, mortmain property, (the communities of) Manfalūṭ and Manqabāṭ, and several rural communities registered by name but without specified cadastral record in the Diwan—a total of 4,653,019 dinars. After (subtracting) what is handled by the felicitous Diwan of al-‘Ādil<sup>(25)</sup> and other bureaus (as revenue) from (the districts of) al-Sharqīyyah, al-Murtāḥīyyah, al-Daqahliyyah, and Būsh, and other (specific sources), a total of 1,190,923 dinars, itemized as follows:

Dīwān of al-‘Ādil	728,248	dinars
Emirs and troopers with permanent fiefs in said districts	158,203	"
Blessed Dīwān of Nobles and of Descendants of the Prophet <sup>(26)</sup>	13,804	"

24. More precisely: Kinānat Khuzaymah. One group of them settled in the northern Delta (where they distinguished themselves in the defense of Damietta against the Crusader army led by Louis IX in 1249), other groups in Upper Egypt, especially in the area of Ikhmīm (cf. Maqrīzī, *Bayān*, 10-11; 46-47).

25. I.e. Saladin's brother al-Malik al-‘Ādil, then viceroy (*nā'ib al-salṭanah*).

26. *Dīwān al-Suwar al-mubārak wa-l-Ashrāf*.



Bedouins	234,296	”
Kinānah contingents	25,412	”
Judges and Sheikhs	7,403	”
Qaymariyyah <sup>(27)</sup> and Şālihiyyah units,		
Egyptian garrison troops	12,504	”
Ghazis, Ascalonites, etc. stationed in Damietta and Tinnīs	10,725	”

the remainder is 3,462,095 dinars:<sup>(28)</sup>

Lower Egypt: 1,151,653 dinars, itemized as follows:

Countryside of Alexandria	800,138	dinars
Rosetta	1,000	”
al-Buḥayrah	115,576	”
Ḥawf Ramsīs	92,403	”
Fuwwah and al-Muzāḥimīyyatayn	10,125	”
al-Nastirāwiyyah	15,305	”
Jazīrat Banī Naṣr	112,646	”
Jazīrat Quwīsna	130,592	”
al-Gharbiyyah	674,605	”
al-Samannūdiyyah	245,479	”
al-Dingāwiyyah	46,274	”
al-Minūfiyyah	148,347	”

Upper Egypt: 1,610,441 dinars, itemized as follows:

al-Gīzah	153,204	”
al-Itfiḥiyyah	59,728	”
al-Buṣīriyyah	60,466	”
al-Fayyūmiyyah	152,703	”
al-Bahnasāwiyyah	352,634	”
Dakhla Oasis, both Kharga Oases, Oasis of al-Bahnasā	25,000	”
al-Ushmūnayn	147,732	”
al-Suyūṭiyyah, exclusive of Manfalūṭ		

27. They seem to be Kurdish troops from Qaymur near Mosul (cf. *Sulūk*, I, 2:316). Bulaq (1:87): *al-Qaymāriyyah*. Wiet: *al-Qaymāzīyyah* (?).

28. There must be omissions by the copyist of this text, because the itemized figures and the total given do not tally. Even more blatant is the discrepancy between totals and itemized figures in the following breakdown by districts.

and Manqabāt	72,504	”
al-Ikhmīmiyyah	108,812	”
Qūṣ districts	362,500	”
Uswān	25,000	”

The frontier town of ‘Aydhāb falls under the jurisdiction of a different diwan.

[21] Among the events of the year 588 (A.D. 1192) he records: What the revenue of the Royal (Privy) Diwan came to (in that year) was 354,444 dinars. What distinguishes the increased revenue for the year 587 over the revenue of 586 is (the sum of) 22,445 dinars. The residual carried over to said year was 31,622 dinars. The overall revenue of Saladin’s Privy Diwan in Egypt for the year 587 was 354,450 dinars and  $\frac{23}{24}$  of a dinar.

## 32. The Latest Nāṣirian Cadastre

[1] The fief of a trooper by himself with a single vassal used to be worth from twenty to thirty thousand dirhams; among them were some whose fief was worth fifteen thousand and, in a very few cases, ten thousand. This without counting the *diyāfah*,<sup>(1)</sup> which, in the case of an important fief, comes to five thousand dirhams.

Such a trooper would go to war with a stable of horses and a train of camels. A *ḥalqah* commander would move out as the equivalent of an emir of ten,<sup>(2)</sup> surrounded by his retainers when he camped, most of whom ate at his table. An emir (in turn) could only eat in the company of all of his troopers, whose pages were (besides) fed daily by his kitchen. When he saw a fire burning (somewhere), he would (immediately) inquire about it, and when told: So-and-so must have an appetite for such-and-such, he would get angry at the person not eating in his company.

All that notwithstanding, they looked abominable and their clothes were anything but impressive.

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1. The "hospitality dues", a collective *hilālī* tax in kind (cf. sect. 4 below) exacted from rural communities, originally to cover food and accommodations (legally, three days and three nights) for visiting Muslim functionaries and for soldiers moving through the area, later as a regularly assessed tribute due to the feudal lord.
  2. The *ḥalqah*, or *ajnād al-ḥalqah*, a carry-over from the Ayyūbids, was a large corps of professional non-Mamluk cavalry, mostly made up of the sons of former Royal Mamluks and Mamluk emirs, but sometimes also including non-military elements, such as members of the religious and bureaucratic establishment (*muta'ammimūn* 'turban wearers'). A *ḥalqah* commander (*muqaddam al-ḥalqah*) was (in the field only,) in charge of (usually) forty "troopers" (*ajnād*, sg. *jundī*). —An "emir of ten" (*amīr 'asharah*), in the Mamluk command structure, had in wartime ten, sometimes as many as twenty, knights under his command. Cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, 4:15-16.

[2] After the sultanate had passed to al-Manṣūr (Ḥusām al-Dīn) Lājīn (in 696/1297), he had a new cadastre of the rural communities made.<sup>(3)</sup>

One must remember that the land in Egypt used to be (divided into units of) 24 *qīrāṭs*,<sup>(4)</sup> of which four were allotted to the sultan, ten to the emirs, and ten to the (*ḥalqah*) troopers. The emirs (however) would take a lot of the fiefs intended for the troopers, so that not many of these would actually get into the hands of the latter, and such a fief would be included in the *dīwāns* of the emirs. They would become the refuge of brigands, disorders and fighting would break out in them, the Diwan's dues and imposts could not be collected from them, and they would be a (virtual) sinecure for the emir's proxies and enlisted soldiers, and a source of harm for the people living in the neighboring communities.

All of that was abolished by the Sultan. He returned those fiefs to their rightful owners and removed them in their entirety from the *dīwāns* of the emirs, beginning first with the *dīwān* of the Vicegerent, the Emir Sayf al-Dīn Mankūtimur. The latter removed whatever fiefs of this kind he had—they used to yield him 100,000 ardebs of grain per year—from his *dīwān*, and all the emirs followed his example and took out whatever they had of it in their fiefs. Protection privileges against tax collection were (likewise) abolished.

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3. The operation was begun on the 16th of Jumādā I, 697 (March 1, 1298). The officials in charge were the chamberlain Emir Badr al-Dīn Bīlik al-Fārisī, Bahā' al-Dīn Qarāqūsh al-Zāhirī, *alias* "al-Barīdī", and the State Comptroller (*mustawfī al-dawlah*), Tāj al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṭawīl, a recently converted Copt (*Sulūk*, I, 3:841-43).
  4. The *qīrāṭ*, that is, the twenty-fourth part of a feddan, remained even in the quasi-feudal Ayyūbid and Mamluk system the unit on which the assessment and collection of the land tax was based. The medieval *qīrāṭ*, however, was considerably larger than what is presently called a *qīrāṭ*. Namely, the medieval *qīrāṭ* was 265,333 square meters (today: 175,035), since the medieval feddan measured 6,368 sq m (as compared with the present-day feddan of 4,200.833 sq m). Cf. Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, 65, 66.

In that cadastre, the Sultan allotted to the emirs and (*ḥalqah*) troopers eleven *qīrāts*, and he set aside nine *qīrāts* to recruit new troops to whom he would give these in fief. Then he (suddenly) had records drawn up to make the emirs and troopers settle for a share of ten *qīrāts*, holding back one *qīrāt* for anyone who might request an augmentation because of the poor yield of his fief. For the royal privy domain he set aside several important districts, and for the vicegerent Mankūtimur a sizable fief.

The whole job was finished on the 8th of Rajab, 697 (21 April 1298), and on the following day the vicegerent Mankūtimur sat in audience to distribute the *mithāls*.<sup>(5)</sup> But the mood of the emirs turned against him, and the result were the well-known events leading to the murder of al-Manṣūr Lājīn and his vicegerent Mankūtimur (a few months later).

[3] During the (third) reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, the Sultan had a cadastral survey of the (Egyptian) rural communities made.<sup>(6)</sup>

[4] Al-Nāṣir's biographer reports: In 715 (A.D. 1315), Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalawūn chose to have Egypt cadastrally surveyed, to abolish numerous special imposts, and to retain for his privy domain a good deal of Egypt's lands.

The reason for that was that he turned his attention to many of the appanages belonging to the mamluks and courtiers of (his predecessor) al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Jāshnagīr, the Emir Salār, and the rest of the Burji Mamluks, and they turned out to be anywhere from one thousand to eight hundred dinars. Not daring simply to cut off the appanages of said persons, he had the

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5. A kind of "memorandum of contract" made out by the controller of the Army Diwan (*nāẓir al-jaysh*) and filed with the records of the Bureau of the Army (*dīwān al-jaysh*). It was then forwarded to the Chancery (*dīwān al-inshā'*), where, on the basis of it, the formal decree (*manshūr*) which legally confers a fief (*iqṭā'*) or appanage (*khubz*) on a new holder was written. On the format of the *mithāl* cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, 13:153-54.

6. Two years earlier, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had done the same in Syria (Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ī*, I, 1:444).

idea, together with the Controller of the Bureau of the Army, Judge Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Faḍl-Allāh, to have a new cadastre for all of Egypt made, and to establish fiefs of his own choosing and have royal *mithāls* written up for them.

Fakhr, the controller of the *Dīwān al-Jaysh*, then requested the various army offices to compile indexed records on the status of the cadastrally assessed values and the land area of the rural communities, and the Sultan assigned certain persons to each region of Egypt: To Emir Badr al-Dīn Jankalī ibn al-Bābā he issued a written order to proceed to the Gharbiyyah province, accompanied by the chamberlain Aʿzal and, of the secretaries, al-Makīn ibn Qazwīnah; another order went to Emir ʿIzz al-Dīn Aydamur al-Khaṭīrī to proceed to the Sharqiyyah province, accompanied by Emir Etmish al-Muḥammadi and, of the secretaries, Amīn al-Dīn Ibn Qarmūṭ; another to the Emir(s) Balbān al-Ṣarkhadī, al Qilījī, Ibn Ṭarantāy and Baybars al-Jamdār to proceed to the Minūfiyyah and Buḥayrah provinces; and another to (the Emirs) al-Bīlīlī and al-Martīnī to proceed to Upper Egypt. With them he dispatched secretaries, comptrollers and surveyors, and they all proceeded to the above places.

Each of the emirs would, once he had arrived at the first place of his assigned district, summon the village chiefs, terrier clerks, judicial aides and judges of every community and demand to see the land titles held by the communities' feudal tenants. He would then examine a community's yield in cash, cereal produce and kind, the number of feddans it comprised, both under cultivation and as fallow land, how much of it was *bāq*, *barāʾib*, *khirs* and *mustabḥir* land,<sup>(7)</sup> its fiscally assessed value in the cadastre, and how much it owed to its fief holder in grain, chickens, sheep, clover, gruel, biscuit, etc., by way of the *diyāfah*. When all of that was properly recorded, he would proceed to measure that respective community and then, with the help of the judicial aides, the surveyors and the

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7. See ch. 38 for the definitions of the various types of land.

district judge, determine precisely the demonstrably correct measurement. Then he would ask for the assessment ledgers and the terrier of that village and sort out<sup>(8)</sup> the shares belonging to the royal privy domain, the communities of the emirs, the fiefs of the troopers, and the subsistence allowance (of the sharecroppers). Until he got to the end of his respective district.

Seventy-five days later, they all came back to the capital, and the records they brought with them defined precisely the status of all the estates of Egypt, their size, the fiscal value of their lands, and how much cash, produce and kind one could collect from each village. Next, the Sultan summoned Fakhr, the controller of the Army Diwan, Taqīy (al-Dīn) al-As‘ad ibn Amīn al-Mulk, known as “Burlughī’s secretary,” and all the comptrollers and had them draw up land records for the communities of the royal privy domain, which he specified to them, and the fiefs of the emirs. Over and above the fiscally assessed value of each community he added the *ḍiyāfah* owed by its fellaheen to its respective feudatory, and he attached the poll taxes of non-Muslims living on a fief to its cadastral assessment.<sup>(9)</sup> For the *ḥalqah* troopers he had fief *mithāls* written up along the same line, and on the basis of them he figured the usual cost of transporting produce from the villages to the wharf of Cairo and the special impost levied on it.

[5] The Sultan also abolished a number of special imposts. One of these was the *Sāḥil al-Ghallah*, or “Corn Wharf,” tax. It used to constitute the greater part of the Diwan’s revenue, having fiefs of both emirs and *ḥalqah* troopers on it, and the annual yield from it was 4,600,000 dirhams. It was in the hands of four hundred fief

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8. Read: *wa-faṣala*. Wiet/Bulaq: *wa-faḍala* (?).

9. Up to the time of this cadastre, the resident non-Muslims (*al-jawālī*) had their own *dīwān* which belonged to the royal privy domain (*al-khāṣṣ al-sultānī*). Christians and Jews living in Cairo/Fuṣṭāṭ were supervised each by a *ḥāshir* (‘herder’) who kept track of births, deaths, young men coming of age, and other changes in his respective community. The poll tax of dhimmīs living outside the capital now went directly either to the local feudatory or to the royal *dīwāns*, if they happened to be under the latter’s jurisdiction. Cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā*, 3:458; also, sect. 20 of this chapter.

holders, each of (the troopers) making anywhere from ten to three (thousand dirhams per year) on it and each of the emirs from forty to ten thousand. It was a large tax source with very sizable revenues and the Copts derived uncounted benefits from it, while people suffered distress and hardship and much trouble from it in the form of debts and unjust treatment, and their grievances used to become ever more numerous: boatmen who stole, grain measurers who gave short measure, and inspectors and clerks each wanting a cut. The fixed rate per *irdabb* was two dirhams to go to the sultan, but what he actually received, after all the stealing and pilfering, was half a dirham. There used to be a special place for the collection of this tax called *Khuṣṣ al-Kayyālah* on the Būlāq waterfront, staffed with an inspector and sixty administrative functionaries: clerks, accountants, and a supervisor, as well as thirty troopers on duty. No one could sell a single *qadaḥ*<sup>(10)</sup> of grain anywhere in the villages, but all the grain had to be brought in to be sold at the *Khuṣṣ al-Kayyālah* in Būlāq.

[6] Another impost he abolished was the *niṣf al-samsarah*, or “brokerage half,” which means that, if someone sold some thing, he would pay the broker’s fee, as established of old, of two dirhams for every hundred dirhams, but when Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Shaykhī<sup>(11)</sup> assumed the vizierate, he established for every broker a tax of one dirham for every two to come out of his commission. As a result, a broker would then figure out his average take and do his level best to get his customary commission, and the seller would have to make up the difference. People would suffer loss and damage from that practice, but they found no relief until the Sultan abolished the whole thing.

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10. A dry measure of twofold meaning: the “small” *qadaḥ* = 0.94 liters, the “large” *qadaḥ* equaling two small *qadaḥs*.

11. Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Shaykhī, called “Dibāy,” served as vizier in the earlier years of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s second reign (1299-1309). He died under torture in 704/1305. Cf. *Sulūk*, II, 1:14.



[7] He also abolished the *rusūm al-wilāyah*, or “patronage fees”. This was a tax that belonged to the bailiwick of police chiefs and police officers, who collected it from the guild masters and the masters of whorehouses. This tax had a concessionaire, who had a number of boys working for him, and was farmed by fief-seeking troopers, emirs, and others. All around it entailed hideous abuse, shameful corruption, degradation of respectable people, and invasions of very many people’s houses.

[8] Another impost he abolished in the City (of Cairo) and all the districts of Upper and Lower Egypt was the *muqarrar al-ḥawāʾiq*<sup>(12)</sup> *wāʾl-bighāl*, or “duty on female slaves.” Both patrons and tutoring eunuchs had to pay a fixed fee which was delivered to the Treasury as part of the annual (tax) installments: three hundred dirhams on the value of an older girl<sup>(13)</sup> and five hundred dirhams on the value of a young girl (*baghlah*). This tax was farmed by several fief holders, with enough of a surplus remaining to be delivered (to the Treasury). This tax caused the people concerned indescribable distress and they suffered “worse than death” as a result of the tyranny of the enforcement officers.<sup>(14)</sup>

[9] Then there was the *muqarrar al-sujūn*, or “prison fee,” that is, the amount taken from any person going to jail. By virtue of that fee, the jailer was entitled to six dirhams, not counting other charges. It was farmed by a number of fief holders and was much coveted by the concessionaires, who would outbid each other for the original concession because of its great yield. For the way it

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12. Suggested emendation. In both *Khiṭaṭ* texts, *Sulūk* (II, 1:151), Ibn Taghrī-Birdi (*Nujūm* 9:46): *al-ḥawāʾiṣ* is ‘girths’ or ‘belts’, which seems utterly implausible, not the least in view of the very size of the exaction. On the Egyptian term *bighāl* for slave girls cf. Lane, *Lexicon*, 1:230.

13. Suggested reading: *ḥayyāḍah* ‘menstruating girl or woman’, as in the Vatican mss. of both *Khiṭaṭ* and *Sulūk*. All texts: *al-ḥūyāṣah* ‘girth, belt’ (?).

14. Arabic: *al-raqqāṣūn* ‘the dancers’, apparently a paramilitary body used as strongarms and enforcers. For instance, when the Fāṭimid caliph al-Zāhir rides through Cairo at a time of great tension because of an acute famine, they ride (or walk) in front of him and later “silence” a vociferous and demented critic (*Ittiʾāz* 2:164-65). Cf. also *Sulūk*, II, 3:706.

worked was that, if a man had a fight with his wife or his son, the police chief would send him to prison, and as soon as he entered it, and be it only for a moment, the fee was collected from him. The same applied also to jail sentences pronounced by the judges.

[10] Then there was the *muqarrar tarḥ al-farārīj*, or “surcharge on chicks and pullets.” The tax had quite a number of concessionaires in all the rural areas of Egypt. They would force people to buy chicks and pullets at a price fixed by them. Poorer people would suffer tremendous hardship from that practice and widows would have to endure untold injustice and abuse. This tax was farmed by several fief holders, and no one anywhere in the country could buy a chick or pullet without having the surcharge of the concessionaire slapped on it. If someone was discovered to have bought or sold a young fowl without paying the concessionaire’s due, he would meet with “*death [that] comes upon him from every side, yet he cannot die.*”<sup>(15)</sup>

[11] There was also the *muqarrar al-fursān*, or “horsemen’s due,” meaning, the amount collected by the police chiefs of rural areas from all the villages. On every dirham of tax money collected the tax concessionaire would slap a surcharge of two dirhams, and people would suffer horribly in the process.

[12] Then there was the *muqarrar al-aqṣāb wa-ʿl-maʿāṣir*, or “cane and press due,” which is the impost collected from sugarcane sharecroppers and from cane presses and their workers.

[13] There were also the *rusūm al-afrāḥ*,<sup>(16)</sup> or “merriment fees,” which were levied on all rural communities. This tax had several concessionaires. The tax had absolutely no basis of its own, but was

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15. Koran 14 (Abraham): 17.

16. So the Bulaq text, *Sulūk* (II, 1:152), Ibn Taghrī-Birdī (*Nujūm* 9:47): *rusūm al-afrāḥ*. —Wiet’s reading: *ifrāj* ‘release’, a technical term for a fee collected for the annual renewal of title from the holder of a *waqf*, *riżqah*, etc., seems implausible in this context.

collected through imposts which, together with this due, meant penalties and fears for people.

[14] Then there was the *ḥimāyāt al-marākib*, or “protection due for Nile boats,” in other words, the impost collected from every boat at a specified rate called *muqarrar al-ḥimāyah* “protection fee.” This tax was the source of the greatest injustice to people. It would be collected from anyone traveling by boat on the Nile, even from beggars and mendicants.

[15] Moreover, there was the *ḥuqūq al-qaynāt*, or “singing-girl tax,” in other words, the impost [levied on prostitutes and] collected from immoral and illegal activities. Its collection from the riffraff [of Old Cairo and the concessionaires of its Tujib quarter]<sup>(17)</sup> was in the hands of the steward of the royal vestiary.

[16] Then there was the *shadd al-zu'amā'*, or “chiefs' inspectorate (fee),” a one-time tax (comprising) the duties payable by the Sudanese, (the charges for) inspecting the boats [of the Nubians], and the fixed fee payable on every female and male slave by the time they arrive at the low-class dives for the purpose of rendering immoral services. A specified impost per male and female used to be collected.

[17] Also the *mutawaffir al-jarārīf*, or “dredging overage,” which was an impost levied on all rural areas. It was delivered to the Treasury by the rural communities' hydraulic engineers, helped by the local police chiefs to collect it. This tax was farmed by several military fief holders.

[18] Also the *muqarrar al-mashā'iliyyah*, or “sewer-men's due,” in other words, the duty collected in return for cleaning the sewage conduits and carting the offal removed from them to the trash dumps. Take the drainage duct of a bathhouse, a scalding house, a mosque, a mosque college, a mausoleum shrine, a private home

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17. Additions in square brackets in this and the following paragraph are from the parallel *Sulūk* text (II, 1152).

that got clogged up: (the proprietor or manager), no matter how important he may have been, could not deal with the problem until the concessionaire of this tax came to see him and contracted with him its cleaning at the price he wanted. Usually, the concessionaire would set too high a rate and demand a multiple of the actual price. If the home owner did not accept what the concessionaire asked for, the latter would simply leave and walk away. Since the other could not possibly bear to leave the offal where it was, he had to ask the concessionaire to come again, and the man would then be even more arbitrary and demanding, so that eventually (the home owner) would try to satisfy him with whatever he chose to demand in order to have his conduits cleaned and the filth there removed.

[19] Also abolished at the time were the local administrative officials<sup>(18)</sup> in the rural communities. There was not an Egyptian village, small or large, in Upper or Lower Egypt, that did not have several clerks, an inspector, and the like. The Sultan now abolished the local functionaries and ordered that they be prevented from exercising their administrative function in the rural communities, unless it was a village in which the Sultan's property alone was involved.

Thus, with the abolition of these taxes, God Almighty relieved the people of a tribulation which can neither be fully appreciated nor described.

[20] After the Sultan had abolished those taxes and had finished assigning the fiefs of the emirs and the appanages of the *ḥalqah* troopers, he set aside for the royal privy domain from among Egyptian villages several areas that had been part of the fiefs of the Burji Mamluks, namely, al-Gīzah with its districts, Hiw,

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18. Arabic: *al-mubāshirūn* (cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:451). — In the *Sulūk*, Maqrīzī specifies only two offices that were abolished on the occasion: those of the superintendent (*nāẓir*) and of the accountant (*mustawfī*). He also lists there three more discontinued taxes not mentioned here.

al-Kōm al-Aḥmar, Manfalūt, al-Marg, al-Khuṣūṣ,<sup>(19)</sup> etc., which amounted to ten *qīrāṭs* of the region, while (the remaining) fourteen *qīrāṭs* went into the fiefs of emirs, troopers, and other persons.<sup>(20)</sup>

The Copts promptly applied their cunning wherever they could, first by undermining the Egyptian military and scattering one and the same fief among several tax agencies, so that some tax collecting<sup>(21)</sup> would be done in Upper Egypt, some in the Sharqīyyah, some in the Gharbiyyah—all designed to inconvenience a trooper and to raise the overhead. They also took the poll taxes of the non-Muslims out of the royal privy domain and distributed them among the villages given to the emirs and troopers in fief. The Christians, one must remember, used to be all together under a single *diwān*—as the reader is going to learn later, God willing. Now the Christians of each village would pay their poll tax to the feudatory of that respective estate. This gave the Christians greater freedom of movement, and they began to move about among the villages, paying only as much of their poll tax as they wanted to pay. As a result, the yield of this tax, having once been plentiful, now diminished. Moreover, they set apart the remaining special imposts for the Royal Larder which pay for the sultan's table, in order to get their hands on that, bring in as much of it as they wanted, and then see

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19. Hiw, the Roman *Diospolis Parva*, is today a village in the district of Nag' Hammādī (Qinā province). —Al-Kōm al-Aḥmar, an ancient village on the site of *Cercasura* mentioned by Strabo, belongs to the present-day district of Imbābah. —Manfalūt, today a district seat, was then a large village in the province of Asyūt. Al-Marg (originally *Marj Mukhlif*), a village near old Heliopolis on the present-day railway line from Cairo to Shibīn al-Qanāṭir, had, according to Ibn Duqmāq (5104), a cadastrally assessed value of 1,500 dinars and a cultivation area of 571 feddans. —Al-Khuṣūṣ, an ancient village in the present-day district of Shibīn al-Qanāṭir (Qalyūbiyyah province), was assessed, together with its outlying communes (*kufūr*), at 72,000 dinars (Ibn Duqmāq 5:23, there erroneously called "al-Ḥuṣūṣ").

20. One reads a less condensed version of these measures in *Sulūk*, II, 1153, translated by Silvestre de Sacy in his *Propriété territoriale* on the basis of Ibn Taghrī-Birdī, who copied Maqrīzī's text.

21. Read with the Bulaq text: *ba'd al-jaby*. Wiet: *ba'd al-khubz* 'part of the appanage' (?).

to it that whatever is taken in is channeled to agencies that deal in public sales of food.

In charge of the special imposts and taxes were now the vizier and the inspector of government bureaus.

The Sultan then turned his attention to the villages which had been in the possession of Emir Baybars al-Jāshnagīr and of Salār, the Vicegerent. He took whatever was registered in either one's name and in the name of their respective retinues, not leaving even a single pious endowment set up by them without dissolving it, and converted all of it into fiefs. He also took account in all fiefs of how much the fief holder exacted from his serfs as the *hadiyyah*, or "gift." He had that computed and established as part of the overall fiscal value of the fief and had the *hadiyyah* abolished. It took him until the end of the year to be done with all that.

Then, on the first of Muḥarram, 716 (26 March 1316),<sup>(22)</sup> with all accounts already regulated on the basis of one-third of the 715 yield, the Sultan sat in public in the new hall he had built in the Citadel. Through the *naqīb al-jaysh*<sup>(23)</sup> he had ordered all headmen of the troops to attend with their troopers, and now he had two of the senior emirs with their subordinates come up for review each day.

An emir-commander of a thousand would stand with his men at attention, as the Superintendent of the Army Bureau called them up by name according to their rank. Then the *naqīb al-jaysh* had them, one by one, step forward, away from their headman, into the presence of the Sultan. After the man had presented himself, the Sultan would ask him personally, without going through an intermediary, about his name, where he came from, his ethnic origin,

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22. The date given by Maqrīzī in the *Sulūk* is one week earlier.

23. Literally, 'headman of the army', a high-ranking aide to the controller of the army bureau (*nāzīr al-jaysh*). His duties included guarding the sultan while traveling and during public processions, supervising the troops at reviews and parades, and acting as liaison between the sultan and litigating Mamluks, with judicial authority in petty cases. Cf. *Khīṭaṭ* 2:223; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 4:21-22; 5:456.

when he had come to Egypt, with whom he had come, to which of the emirs, or other persons, he belonged, what battles he had been in, what he knew about the art of warfare, and similar probing questions. After he had finished questioning the man, he handed him, without pausing to think, a *mithāl* at the amount allotted by God to that person. No one passed by the Sultan during the review without him knowing the man a little better and being able to point out to the emirs a bit of his personal history.

Now, the Sultan had ordered all of the emirs to be present in the hall during the review, but not one of them must object to anything he was going to do, and so they were there now, silent and none of them speaking a word, for fear of going against the Sultan's word. The Sultan at first tricked the emirs: As soon as they commended someone in the review assembly, he would give that person a *mithāl* for a rotten fief. Having found that out, they stopped speaking to him altogether, and he alone made his decisions without their interference. He was known, for instance, as soon as someone was presented to him, to ask, in the case of a Mamluk, what trader had brought him into the country, and all the things mentioned earlier, and in the case of an old man, where he came from, how old he was, and how many times he had fought in battle, until he was done with the lot. He singled out the men too old to fight and gave them no fiefs, but (instead) assigned to every one of them a pension to live on. By the time the review that went on throughout the month of Muḥarram came to an end, there were still plenty of appanage titles available, altogether two hundred of them.

Next, the Sultan began with the review of the caserns of the Royal Mamluks. He greatly increased their pay, cut off several of their allowances, at the same time compensating them with fiefs, and gave the tax collection of Qaṭyā<sup>(24)</sup> to those among the poorer troopers

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24. More commonly spelled *Qaṭyah*, a vanished desert community in the northern Sinai, on the site of present-day *Maḥaṭṭat al-Rumānah* (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, I, 350). It was the point of entry into Egyptian territory, where one

whose appanages had been cut off, awarding each three thousand dirhams per year. In the past, Baybars (al-Jāshnagīr) and Salār, the polo master, had had numerous connections in the Treasury and in certain districts, such as Gīzah and Alexandria, in the form of commercial interests<sup>(25)</sup> and protection taxes. That and similar things were now revoked and canceled by the Sultan and attached, unless he gave it out as fiefs, to the Bureau of the Privy Domain.

While the review was going on, the Sultan had ordered among other things that no one must reject a *mithāl* he received from him, even if he considered it too small, that no emir must intercede for a trooper, and that anyone disobeying that order was to be flogged, imprisoned, banished, and stripped of his appanage. So great was the awe and respect commanded by the Sultan by then that no one dared to reject a *mithāl*, nor could an emir speak in favor of any one. Many of those whose fiefs had been worth, for instance, a thousand dinars found themselves reduced to a fief of two hundred dinars or thereabouts, while many whose fief had been small now received a very sizable one. Because the Sultan would hand out *mithāls* without long thinking, but rather the way he just happened to pick them up.

As God Exalted willed, there was among the helpers in the royal kitchen a jester who was used to make jokes in the Sultan's presence, who would laugh and be amused by the man without taking offense at the silly things he said. One day during the review, while the Sultan, surrounded by the emirs of his immediate entourage, was sitting in the garden of the Citadel, that jester came up and began his usual mockery to make the Sultan laugh. Until he said, "I met one of the troopers in al-Nāṣir's cadastre as he was riding a nag, his saddlebag behind him and his lance over his shoulder!"—which was supposed to be funny and mocking remark. But the Sul-

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collected the tithes of the traders and the special impost on travelers.

25. Read with the Bulaq text: *min matjar wa-ḥimāyāt*, eliminating the nonsensical *dīwān* in the Wiet text.



tan flew into a rage and shouted, "Seize him and strip him naked!" The minions rushed in on the man, dragged him by his feet, stripped him of his clothes, and tied him to a waterwheel, up there with the scoops. Then they whipped the oxen into action to make them turn the wheel faster, and the poor devil would turn around with the scoops, now immersed in water, now coming up again, then going-back over again, all under water. An hour went by, until the man lost consciousness and was on the brink of death, and the emirs became terrified as they witnessed the Sultan's fury. At last, Emir Ṭughāy, the Dawādār,<sup>(26)</sup> amid a group of emirs of the immediate entourage stepped forward, and they apologized for the poor man, saying that all he intended was to make the Sultan laugh with his remark, that he had no intention of disgracing or denigrating the troopers, and other words to that effect, until the Sultan ordered the man to be untied. He showed no signs of life and was dragged away. The Sultan decreed that, if he was alive, he must not even spend the night in Egypt, and so he was deported at once as an exile. And each of the emirs praised and thanked God for not letting him speak up during the review.

[21] Things in Egypt continued to be the way al-Malik al-Nāṣir decreed in this cadastre until the dynasty of Qalawūn's descendants came to an end at the hands of al-Malik al-Zāhir Barqūq in the month of Ramaḍān, 784 (November 1382), and even he left things the way they were, except that some of it gradually fell into disuse and disappeared. [So matters remained] until the events and trials of the year 806 (A.D. 1403/4), when all kinds of changes took place and a variety of wrongs and abuses came about such as no one could have thought of before. The reader will find a summa-

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26. One of the highest-ranking officials at the Mamluk court, usually an emir of a thousand, who enjoyed the sultan's confidence. He controlled the *kātib al-sirr*, the postal (i.e., intelligence) agents, handled the sultan's written communications and proclamations, dealt with grievances, and discharged protocol functions.

ry of that when we discuss, God willing, the causes of Egypt's ruin and decay.

[22] Rural Egypt knew the practice of "perpetual grain loans"<sup>(27)</sup> in its various communities. They were of two types: government loans and local loans. Government grain subsidies were placed by the rulers at the disposal of the rural communities. When an emir or trooper was established in his fief, he would receive his share of the government subsidy, and when he lost the fief, he would be asked to return it. By the time of al-Nāṣir's cadastre, the grain loans of each community would remain in perpetuity attached to that community and would be controlled by the Royal Diwan. Altogether they came to 160,000 ardebs, not counting the local loans.

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27. Arabic: *taqāwin mukhalladah*. A *taqwiyaḥ* was a grain advance to sharecroppers and serfs to live on until the harvest was brought in, after which time it was reclaimed. —In later colloquial usage, *taqāwi* means 'seed grain'.

### 33. The Diwan

[1] “The *Dīwān*,” says the Most Eminent Judge Abū ’l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, “is an archive, inasmuch as it preserves such fiscal records and monetary transactions as appertain to the rightful dues to the State, as well as the records of military personnel and fiscal agents attending to same.”

“There are two theories as to why it is called *dīwān*. One holds that (the Sasanian Shah) Khusraw, as he was observing one day the scribes of his government bureau computing and figuring with one another, exclaimed, ‘*Dīvāneh!*’—which (in Persian) means ‘crazy!’—so that their place was henceforth called by that name; later on, with long use of the word, the last two letters were elided to produce a shortened variant of the name, and people would say *dīwān*. The other theory maintains that *dīvān* is a noun in Persian meaning ‘demons’, and that the scribes were so named because of their cleverness in handling affairs, their awareness of matters overt and covert, their skill of collecting scattered and dispersed information, and their familiarity with all things far and near; hence, the place where they worked was named after them, and people spoke of a *dīwān*.”

[2] One should know that the secretariat of the Diwan is of a threefold division: the *kitābat al-juyūsh wa-l-’asākīr*, or “secretariat of the army,” the *kitābat al-kharāj*, or “secretariat of taxation,” and the *kitābat al-inshā’ wa-l-mukātabāt*, or “chancery.” Every state must of necessity make use of these three divisions. While scholars have written a number of specialized works on the secretariat of taxation and on the chancery, I have yet to see anyone who has compiled some information on the secretariat of the army.

[3] In the early period of Islam, the *dīwāns* used to keep their records in the form of (papyrus) scrolls. After the Umayyad reign

was over and ‘Abd-Allāh ibn Muḥammad, Abū ‘l-‘Abbās al-Saffāḥ, had come to power, he appointed to the vizierate as successor of Abū Salamah Ḥafṣ ibn Sulaymān al-Khallāl,<sup>(1)</sup> Khālīd ibn Barmak,<sup>(2)</sup> who had the *dīwān* ledgers made of parchment. From then on, things were recorded on that and the scrolls were abandoned, until the time when Ja‘far ibn Yaḥyā ibn Khālīd ibn Barmak was in control of affairs during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd. He then introduced the use of paper, and that is what people have been using ever since.

[4] Abū ‘l-Namir al-Warrāq<sup>(3)</sup> relates the following tradition: I was told by Abū Ḥāzim, the Judge, that Abū ‘l-Ḥasan (Aḥmad) ibn al-Mudabbar told him: “If all of Egypt were under cultivation, it would meet the needs of the entire world. The land area of Egypt suitable for agriculture is 28 million feddans, but only one million feddans of it are actually under cultivation.” Ibn al-Mudabbar also told him, said (Abū Ḥāzim), that in the Iraq he used to be burdened with the responsibility for both Diwans, that of the eastern and that of the western provinces, “yet I never spent a night with work, or some unfinished part of it, still to do. But when I took over (as finance director of) Egypt, I would many a time still have some work to do at night and then finish it the next morning.”

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1. The most prominent of the Shī‘ite supporters of the ‘Abbāsīd cause in Kūfah, he was liquidated in 132/750, a few months after the revolutionary ‘Abbāsīds had established themselves as the new leaders of the Muslim Community. Cf. “Abū Salama” (S. Moscati) in *EF*.
  2. The son of the prior (*parmak*, hence the name of the famed Barmakid family) of a Buddhist temple in Balkh, he held, until his death in 163/780, several important positions under the first ‘Abbāsīd caliphs.
  3. Yāqūt (5:138) attributes the same tradition to one Abū ‘Abd-Allāh al-Marzubānī. He is perhaps the Hispano-Arab historian Abū ‘Abd-Allāh (Muḥammad b. Yūsuf) al-Warrāq (904-973).

## 34. The Diwan of the Army

[1] One says that the first to draw up a *dīwān al-jund*, or army roster, was Kay-Luhrāsif (Luhrāsp), a Persian king of the second generation, and that before him Kay-Qubādh had taken the tithe on agricultural produce and used it to pay his troops.

[2] For Islam we have a tradition of Ḥudhayfah (ibn Ḥisl “al-Yamān” al-‘Absī), God be pleased with him, which is cited by al-Bukhārī and Muslim: “The Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, said: ‘Make me a record of all people who openly profess Islam!’ And we wrote down for him (the names of) fifteen hundred men.” The tradition is adduced by Bukhārī in the chapter entitled *Kitābatu ‘l-Imāmi ‘l-nāsa*.<sup>(1)</sup>

[3] Bukhārī also has a tradition of ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Abbās: A man came to the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, and said, “Apostle of God, I have been signed up for such-and-such campaign while my wife is performing the pilgrimage.” And the Prophet said, “Go home and perform the pilgrimage with your wife.”<sup>(2)</sup>

[4] ‘Umar ibn Shabbah related on the authority of Ma‘mar (ibn Rāshid), who heard it from Qatādah (ibn Di‘āmah), who said: The last money brought to the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, was 800,000 dirhams from al-Baḥrayn. By the time he left his council he had already disposed of it.

[5] The Prophet, peace and blessings on him, had no treasury, nor did Abū Bakr. The first to use a treasury was ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.

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1. In Muslim, *Imān* 235.

2. *Nikāḥ* 111; *Jihād* 140, 181.

Ibn Shihāb (al-Zuhrī) said: ‘Umar was the first to institute administrative registers.

[6] Ibn Sa’d transmits from ‘Ā’ishah, God be pleased with her: My father divided the booty from the unbelievers possessions the first year and gave a freeman ten, a slave ten, a woman ten, and her handmaid ten. The second year when he made the division he gave each of them twenty.

[7] It all began, it has been said, when Abū Hurayrah, God be pleased with him, came to ‘Umar, God be pleased with him, with money from al-Baḥrayn. “What have you brought?” asked ‘Umar. “Five hundred thousand dirhams,” said Abū Hurayrah. ‘Umar, who deemed that to be a very large sum, asked, “Do you know what you are saying?” “Yes indeed,” said Abū Hurayrah, “five times one hundred thousand!” “Is it good?” asked ‘Umar. “I don’t know,” answered Abū Hurayrah. ‘Umar then ascended the *minbar*, thanked and praised God, and said: “People, we have just received a lot of money. If you wish, we shall measure it out to you, or we will count it out to you, if you so desire.” At that point, a man stepped up to him and said, “Commander of the Faithful, I have seen the Persians keep a *dīwān* they have. You should do the same.” And ‘Umar did.

But according to others it began when ‘Umar dispatched a military mission while al-Hurmuzān<sup>(3)</sup> was with him, and the latter said to ‘Umar: “This is a mission you have just given money to its participants. Suppose a soldier stayed behind, how would anyone know about it? You should therefore establish a *dīwān* for them.” ‘Umar asked him what a “*dīwān*” meant, and he explained to him (that it was a muster roll). ‘Umar then consulted the Muslims about keeping financial records, and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, God be pleased with him, said: “You should divide up every year the money that has ac-

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3. Persian general and satrap of al-Ahwāz, who was captured during the conquest of the Iraq and brought as a slave to Medina, where he converted to Islam. In Muslim tradition he is credited with having suggested several important innovations. He was slain by ‘Umar’s son, apparently in an anti-Persian frenzy, shortly after his father’s assassination in 644.

cumulated with you and you must not hold on to any of it.” ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, God be pleased with him, said: “I see a lot of money going around. If people are not properly counted, so that one can tell the one who has received his share from the one who has not, then, I am afraid, the whole thing will get out of hand.” And Khālid ibn al-Walīd,<sup>(4)</sup> God be pleased with him, pointed out: “When I was in Syria, I saw the rulers there keep a *dīwān* and muster troops, and you should do the same.” ‘Umar, following his advice, then summoned ‘Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib,<sup>(5)</sup> Makhramah ibn Nawfal<sup>(6)</sup> and Jubayr ibn Muṭ‘im,<sup>(7)</sup> who were the scribes of the Quraysh, and ordered them to write down the names of people according to their rank and station. So they began with the Banū Hāshim and recorded their names. Then they had these followed by the descendants of Abū Bakr and his clan, then ‘Umar and his clan, then they recorded the tribes, setting them down in successive order (of their conversion). In the end they submitted all of that to ‘Umar, God be pleased with him, and after he had looked it over, he said: “No! You must begin with the kin of the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, one by one in descending order of kinship, until you can put down ‘Umar in the position God has assigned to him.” And al-‘Abbās thanked him for that, saying, “You have done honor to our blood kin.”

[8] There has been disagreement as to the year in which ‘Umar, God be pleased with him, decreed the stipends and the keeping of administrative records. Ibn al-Kalbī<sup>(8)</sup> says: in the year 15 (A.D. 636), but Ibn Sa‘d relates on the authority of Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Wāqidī that it was in the year 20 when he did all that. And

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4. The famous Meccan general, the “Sword of Islam,” hero of the *riddah* wars and the early conquests; died 21/642.

5. An older brother of ‘Alī and Ja‘far, died 60/680.

6. A latter-day Companion (he converted after the fall of Mecca) and respected genealogist, died 54/674.

7. Companion and tribal genealogist, died between 676 and 679.

8. Kūfan genealogist and historian, died between 819 and 822. Cf. “al-Kalbī” (W. Atallah) in *EF*.

(Ibn Shihāb) al-Zuhri says: That was in Muḥarram of the year 20 after the Hijrah (turn of the year 641).

[9] It has been said that, after God had made Muslim arms victorious in the battle of al-Qādisiyyah,<sup>(9)</sup> and as more and more conquests were reported to ‘Umar, God be pleased with him, from the Syrian front, he assembled the Muslims and said: “How much of this money belongs rightfully to a man in command?”<sup>(10)</sup> And all of them answered: “As for his own person, food for himself and his dependents, neither too little nor too much; also his and their clothing for winter and summer; also two mounts for him to go to war; also his provisions and baggage when he performs the pilgrimage, both *hajj* and *‘umrah*, equally divided. (Initially and in principle) villagers shall pay tribute commensurate with the size and importance of their respective communities and (the *wālī*) shall adjust and rectify people’s affairs later. He shall attend to (those in his charge) in cases of severe hardship and unforeseen calamities until these are relieved, giving priority to the Muslims and then in second place to any of the conquered, to the extent the Muslims’ spoils will bear.”

[10] It is related by al-Ḍaḥḥāk<sup>(11)</sup> on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, God be pleased with him: After the battle of Qādisiyyah had been won and part of the population of the southern Iraq had made peace, and after the conquest of Damascus and the conclusion of peace agreements with the Syrian population, ‘Umar, God’s pleasure rest on him, said to people, “Put your heads together and let me have your knowledge as to what spoils of war God has allotted to those who fought at Qādisiyyah and to the army of Syria,” for he and ‘Alī were of one mind that they would take the answer from

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9. The battle was fought in May 637 near al-Ḥirah in the southern Iraq. It marks the beginning of the Muslim conquest in the East.

10. Arabic: *al-wālī*, here used in the general legal sense of the word, meaning the caliph or, by delegation of power, a provincial governor.

11. Abū ‘Āṣim al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Makhliḍ, alias “al-Nabīl”: Baṣran traditionist, died 212/828.



the Koran. And (indeed) they said: "*Whatsoever spoils of war God has given to His Messenger from the people of the cities*"—meaning, of the fifth—"belongs to God, and His Messenger"—that is to say, God commands and His Apostle must carry out the division—"and the near kinsman, orphans, the needy."<sup>(12)</sup> Next, they interpreted that (last word) by means of the (beginning of the) next following verse: "*It is for the poor emigrants.*" Then they inferred the four-fifths from the way conquered land was divided among people with first, second and third priority: four-fifths belonging to whomever God gave the spoils. Next, they adduced in support of that the words of God Exalted: "*Know that whatever booty you take, the fifth of it is God's,*"<sup>(13)</sup> with regard to those three classes (of priority) and four-fifths belonging to whomever God gave the spoils. In this manner, then, were the lands in the conquered territories divided up. 'Umar and 'Alī were in agreement on it, and the Muslims thereafter acted in accordance with it.

('Umar) gave first priority to the Emigrants, then the Helpers, then the Followers who had fought with them and had helped them. Next, he instituted stipends coming out of the tribute payments incumbent on people who had surrendered peacefully or had worked for the cause of peace for its own reward, and these were handsomely repaid by him. There is in the matter of recompense no such thing as "fifths of the tribute" for people who reject the covenant of protection. (Still) he lived up to his obligation toward those among them who chose that course and those coming after them and helped them in like manner, with the injunction, however, that they voluntarily share his bounty with those who did not get as much as the former.

[11] According to Abū Salamah, the son of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, 'Umar, God be pleased with him, once said: "I have mustered the Muslims by stipends, I have had them registered in a *dīwān*,

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12. Koran 59 (The Mustering): 6-7.

13. Koran 8 (The Spoils): 41.

and I am the one who determines the rightful share.” ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf,<sup>(14)</sup> ‘Uthmān (ibn ‘Affān) and ‘Alī (ibn Abī Ṭālib) urged him to begin with himself, but he replied, “I shall begin with none other than the uncle of the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, followed by the Prophet’s kin, one by one according to the degree of kinship.”

And so, beginning with al-‘Abbās, he assigned a certain stipend to him. Then he apportioned to those who had fought at Badr five thousand (dirhams) each; then to those who came after Badr until (the Treaty of) al-Ḥudaybiyah, four thousand each; then to those after al-Ḥudaybiyah all through the time when Abū Bakr, God be pleased with him, rooted out the apostates, three thousand each, which included those who participated in the conquest (of Mecca), who had fought for Abū Bakr, and who were engaged in the battles before al-Qādisiyyah, all of whom received three thousand each; then to those who fought in the battle of al-Qādisiyyah and to the Syrian army, the men who fought in the battle on the Yarmūk,<sup>(15)</sup> two thousand each, and to those of the local population who had distinguished themselves (in that battle) two thousand five hundred each.

When someone suggested to him that he should combine those who fought at al-Qādisiyyah with those who had been in the battles prior to it, ‘Umar replied, “I would surely not put the former on the same footing with people they were not old enough to know. So God forbid!” And when someone protested that he had treated those who came from far away on an equal footing with people whose home was near and who fought the enemy from their own front yard, ‘Umar retorted: “The latter were indeed entitled to receive more, because they bore the brunt of the casualties and

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14. A very early convert and prominent Companion, one of the six members of ‘Umar’s *shūrā*. He died in 32/652.

15. The decisive battle (August 20, 636) against the Byzantine main force commanded by Emperor Heraclius’ brother Theodorus.

proved to be a bone in the enemy's throat.<sup>(16)</sup> I swear by God, I would not have treated them as equals if I had not deemed them to be good men. And why not? The Emigrants advanced the sane argument when we treated the early Emigrants and the Helpers on the same footing, and the support of the Helpers was also given on their own home ground, while the Emigrants moved in with them later on."

To those who joined (the Muslim forces) after the victories of al-Qādisiyyah and on the Yarmūk he allotted after the conquest three hundred (dirhams) each. He paid each successive class (of late joiners) equal stipends, without distinction of strong or weak, Arab or non-Arab, even (former) captives that joined the garrison troops. To the fourth class of late comers he allotted two hundred and fifty, and to the fifth two hundred. The last ones to be allocated stipends by 'Umar, God be pleased with him, were the people of Hajar (in the Baḥrayn), at two hundred (dirhams) each, and over that he died.

He also included among the people who had fought at Badr four who were not in that battle, namely, (the Prophet's grandsons) al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, Abū Dharr (al-Ghifārī) and Salmān.<sup>(17)</sup>

The stipend 'Umar settled on al-'Abbās was according to Abū Salamah twenty-five thousand, according to (Ibn Shihāb) al-Zuhri twelve thousand.

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16. Read: *kānū riḍā 'l-ḥutūfī wa-shajan lil-'adūw*. —The reference is to the Banū Shaybān bedouins and their sheikh al-Muthannā b. Ḥārithah, the local allies of the Muslims, who were almost wiped out by a Persian counterattack in the so-called Battle of the Bridge (*Yawm al-Jisr*) near al-Ḥirah in November 634. Cf. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* (ed. al-Munajjid), 2:308-9 (P.K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, p. 403).

17. Salmān al-Fārisī, a Zoroastrian from Iṣfahān who, during his wanderings, was enslaved by the Banū Kalb and sold to the Jewish Banū Qurayzah in Medina, where he attached himself to the Prophet. Muslim tradition has built him up as a paragon of knowledge and wisdom in Persian, Greek and Jewish lore. He died at a very old age as governor of al-Madā'in (Ctesiphon) in 36/656. Cf. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:53-68.

On the women of the men who fought at Badr down to al-Ḥudaybiyah he settled stipends of four hundred (dirhams) each, on the women of those who came after that until the battle days prior to al-Qādisiyyah, three hundred each, and on the women of the participants in the battle of al-Qādisiyyah, two hundred each. To the women after that he paid equal pensions, and to the male children of those who fought at Badr and of others he gave one hundred each.

Then he summoned sixty of the poor and fed them with bread and salt, and when they figured out what they had eaten, they found out that it came out of two *jizyah* payments. So he allocated to every man who supported himself and his dependents, to each and every one of them, the equivalent of two dinars per month, Muslim and infidel alike.

To the wives of the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, he assigned ten thousand each, except those who had been sold (to the Prophet as slaves). The Mothers of the Faithful remonstrated: "The Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, would never give us preference over them when the booty was divided, but used to treat us all alike. So do the same!" Whereupon he settled on (all of) them ten thousand each. Only to ʿĀʾishah, God be pleased with her, he allotted an extra two thousand, but she refused to accept it. "It is because of your distinguished station with the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him," he said, "so take it or leave it."

[12] (Initially) the Muslim army used to be (grouped in) units of ten. There were three thousand *ʿarīfs*, each *ʿarīf* in charge of ten people, and providing feed for the horses being part of their customary duties.

This continued to be its organization until the foundation of al-Kūfah and al-Baṣrah, when both the *ʿarīfs* and the units of ten were changed: (The two cantonments) were divided into "sevenths" and the number of *ʿarīfs* was reduced to one hundred, each *ʿarīf* in charge of one hundred thousand dirhams (of pension money).

Each<sup>(18)</sup> (group headed by an *ʿarīf* and called) *ʿirāfah* of (the army of) al-Qādisiyyah in particular consisted of forty-three men, forty-three women and fifty dependents, who were jointly entitled to one hundred thousand dirhams, while each *ʿirāfah* of the fighting forces before al-Qādisiyyah comprised twenty men with stipends of three thousand (dirhams each), twenty women, and each dependent entitled to one hundred (dirhams), on the basis of one hundred thousand dirhams, and each *ʿirāfah* of the first *rādīfah* (i.e., those who joined the Muslim forces immediately after the battles of al-Qādisiyyah and the Yarmūk), where the fighting men had stipends of fifteen hundred (dirhams) settled on them, was made up of sixty men, sixty women, and forty dependents, (still) on the basis of one hundred thousand dirhams. The stipends would be paid to the commandants of the sevenths and to the commanders of the *rayāt*—a *rāyah* (is a unit) consisting of disparate Arab tribal elements (under one banner)—who would then pay them to the *ʿarīfs*, the headmen and the trustees, who, in turn, paid them to the individual beneficiaries in their homes.

This was the situation when ʿUmar, God be pleased with him, died. Before his death, he had decided to make the pensions four thousand (dirhams) each, saying: “I have been thinking of making the stipend four thousand each: one thousand for a man to leave with his family, one thousand to convert into provisions which he carries with him when he is on the road, one thousand for laying in stores and supplies, and one thousand for him to save.” But he died, still exploring the matter, before he could carry it out.

Field armies used to demand hospitality (from the local population) according to the distance (from home): for one year, if the distance was great, for six months, if it was less. When a man abandoned his frontier station, he was stripped of his turban and made

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18. The paragraph is taken verbatim from Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh* 4:49/I, 2496).

to stand up in the mosque of his tribe, and people would say, This man, So-and-so, is a deserter.

[13] Sayf ibn ‘Umar<sup>(19)</sup> reported: The first pension was drawn in the year 15. ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, God be pleased with him, used to send the tribute from Egypt to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, after withholding what he needed himself. ‘Uthmān, God be pleased with him, after he had become caliph on the third of Muḥarram, 24 (9 November 644), gave (every man in) the army a hundred (dirhams) more. He was the first to raise their pensions, and to aid<sup>(20)</sup> the troops in the military cantonments, again the first to do so, by sponsoring crafts and industries there. Later caliphs followed his example in raising pensions.

‘Umar had ordered that every living of the Muslim community be paid one dirham a day during Ramaḍān, and to the Mothers of the Faithful he had apportioned two dirhams. When someone suggested that he should have food prepared for the money and have everyone come together to share it, he replied, “Fill people’s bellies at home!” ‘Uthmān, God be pleased with him, then confirmed that (money allowance) and, moreover, had Ramaḍān food provided for them, saying, “It is for the official who stays behind in the mosque, for the wayfarer, and for the needy who seek other people’s bounty during Ramaḍān.” And the caliphs followed his example after his death.

[14] During the caliphate of Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, the pension roster of Egypt comprised forty thousand (beneficiaries), of whom four thousand drew pensions of two hundred (dirhams) each. Only 600,000 dinars in excess of the pensions of the regional army and of disbursements (in kind) to the troops were delivered as tax money to Mu‘āwiyah.

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19. Kūfan biographer and expert on historical traditions, died 200/815 in Baghdad.

20. Read: *rafada*, as in the Bulaq text (1:93). Wiet: *wafada* (?).

Mu'āwiyah had appointed for every one of the Arab tribes in Egypt a man who would go around every morning from assembly to assembly and ask, "Was there a baby born to any one of you last night, and has anybody come to stay with you?" Then people would say, "So-and-so had a boy and So-and-so had a girl born to him," and the man would write down their names. Or people would say, "A man from such-and-such people with his family have come to stay with the tribe," and the man would take down the names of the man and his family. And when he was done with this sort of thing, he would come to the Dīwān in order to have all that registered.

Maslamah ibn Mukhallad al-Anṣārī, the governor of Egypt, paid to the people on the Dīwān roster their own pensions, the pensions of their dependents, their pay, and their extraordinary allowances, as well as the extraordinary allocations to the communities for (maintenance of) the dikes, the salaries of the scribes, and the transport (costs) of wheat to the Hejaz, and then sent to Mu'āwiyah 600,000 dinars as surplus.

[15] A *dīwān* in Egypt was first established and organized by 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ. 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Marwān then set up a second (re-structured) Dīwān, Qurrah ibn Sharīk organized the third, and Bishr ibn Ṣafwān a fourth. Then nothing of note happened after the establishment of Bishr's Dīwān, except that the Qays were added to the Dīwān during the caliphate of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān.<sup>(21)</sup>

After the dynasty of the Umayyads had come to an end and the "Black Robes," the 'Abbāsids, had triumphed, the latter then introduced a number of innovations. By the time 'Abd-Allāh al-Ma'mūn ibn Hārūn al-Rashīd had died on the 7th of Rajab, 218 (July 29, 833) and his brother al-Mu'taṣim, Abū Ishāq Muḥammad ibn Hārūn, was acclaimed as caliph, he wrote to Kaydar Naṣr al-

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21. See ch. 30, beginning.

Şughdī, then governor of Egypt, ordering him to drop the Arabs from the Dīwān of Egypt and to cut off their stipends. Which the governor did.

(Once before that) Marwān ibn Muḥammad al-Ja'dī, the last of the Umayyad caliphs, had already cut off the stipends of the Egyptian army for a year. He later wrote them a letter in which he apologized: "I only withheld your stipends this past year because I was faced with an enemy and needed the money. I have just sent you the stipends for last year and for this year. Spend them in good health! God help me that I be the one through whom He effects a cut-off of pensions!"

After Kaydar cut off the stipends of the Arabs in Egypt, Yaḥyā ibn al-Wazīr al-Jarawī,<sup>(22)</sup> at the head of a band of Lakhm and Judhām (bedouins), came to the governor and told him: "Here is something we have been waiting for!<sup>(23)</sup> Because we have been denied our rightful due and our share of the spoils!" And some five hundred men rallied to his cause. Kaydar died in Rabī' II, 219 (April/May 834) and his son al-Muẓaffar took over as governor of Egypt after his death, and he then took the field against Yaḥyā, engaged him in battle at Buḥayrat Tinnīs and took him prisoner.

[16] And so the era of the Arabs came to an end in Egypt, and from the time of al-Mu'taṣim until Amīr Abū 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn took over as governor of Egypt, the country's army came to consist of non-Arabs and client freedmen. He then greatly increased the slave troops, who eventually numbered more than 24,000 Turkish slave soldiers and 40,000 Blacks, (as against) 7,000 mercenary freemen. Later on, his son, Amīr Abū 'l-Jaysh Khumār-

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22. As his *nisbah* indicates, a Judhām bedouin of the subtribe Jarīy b. 'Awf (cf. al-Suyūṭī, *Lubb al-lubāb*, ed. Leiden, 63).

23. Read with the Bulaq text: *hādihā amrun la yaqūmu finā afdalu minhu*.



awayh, recruited after his father's death a number of outlaws<sup>(24)</sup> from the Egyptian Ḥawf.

[17] When Amīr Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj ibn Juff the Ikhshīd was Emir of Egypt, his troops in Egypt and Syria numbered four hundred thousand, comprising several ethnic groups. Then Master Abū 'l-Misk Kāfūr al-Ikhshīdī recruited quite a number of Sudanese while he was de facto ruler of Egypt.

[18] When (Kāfūr) was superseded in the rule of Egypt by the Imām al-Mu'izz-li-dīni-'llāh Abū Tamīm Ma'add, the Fāṭimid, the country's soldiery consisted of Kitāmah, Zuwaylah and other Berber contingents, as well as Greeks and Slavs, and in number they were, as the saying went, 'And Ma'add is in their round\* whose armies no one could count\* who received without limit or bound\* who in all happy things good fortune found.' It was even said that since the army of Alexander, the son of Philippos the Macedonian, no host more numerous than the armies of al-Mu'izz had ever set foot on earth.

[19] When, after his death, his son al-'Azīz-bi-'llāh Abū Maṣṣūr Nizār ruled in Egypt as caliph, he hired Dailamites and Turks and made them his personal troops.

[20] Al-Amīr al-Mukhtār al-Musabbihī reports in his *History* that, when al-'Azīz went to Syria, the privy treasury alone was carried by twenty thousand camels—not to mention the treasuries of the generals and of the high-ranking functionaries of the State.

[21] Ibn Muyassar mentions in his *History* that the (black) slave troops in the personal service of Her Ladyship, the mother of the Imam al-Mustanṣir-bi-'llāh Abū Tamīm al-Ma'add ibn al-Zāhir-li-i'zāz-dīni-'llāh Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥākim-bi-amri-'llāh Abū

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24. Arabic: *shanātīrah* (sg. *shintīr*), a colloquial term meaning 'good-for-nothings, drifters, bandits' (Fleischer, *Addenda*, 2:85). They were bedouin toughs recruited by Khumārawayh as a bodyguard (cf. Pt. III, ch. 12).

‘Alī Maṣṣūr ibn al-‘Azīz-bi-‘llāh, numbered fifty thousand men alone—not counting the various ethnic contingents of the army.

[22] I found in the manuscript of al-As‘ad Ibn Mammātī that the number of soldiers in Egypt at the time of Ruzzīq ibn Šāliḥ Ṭalā‘ī ibn Ruzzīq was forty thousand horsemen, thirty-six thousand galleys carrying ten thousand fighting men. And this toward the end of the Fāṭimid state!

After Sultan al-Malik al-Nāšir Šalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb had put an end to their regime, he rid the Egyptian army of the black slave troops, the Egyptian emirs, the Bedouins, the Armenians, and others, and recruited Kurds and Turks as his personal troops. The strength of his army in Egypt came to exactly twelve thousand horsemen.

After his death, that number broke up, and only 8,500 horsemen were left with his son, al-Malik al-‘Azīz ‘Uthmān, in Egypt. Among these, however, were some with ten vassals, some with twenty, some with even more, up to a hundred vassals to a single trooper, so that when they rode in parade outside Cairo, they numbered more than two hundred thousand.

[23] Subsequently, they continued to disintegrate and to quarrel among themselves, until their state came to an end with the putsch of their Turkish slave troops. These then imitated their (former) masters, the Ayyūbids, and restricted themselves to Turks and some Kurds (as troops). They recruited a great many slaves that were imported from the land of the Turks, so that the mamluks of al-Malik al-Maṣṣūr Qalāwūn are said to have numbered seven thousand—or ten thousand, according to others, and the number of the mamluks of his son al-Ashraf Khalīl ibn Qalāwūn was twelve thousand.

Thereafter, (the number of mamluks) did not come close to that figure until the end of the Qalāwūnid dynasty in the month of Ramaḍān, 784 (November 1382) at the hands of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, who immediately began to eliminate al-Ashraf’s mamluks and

to create for himself a regime of Circassian mamluks numbering, both purchased and hired, four thousand, or a few more. After his son al-Nāṣir Faraj had succeeded him in power, they split into factions and quarreled among each other, and he then kept fighting (them), with the result that many of them died in the fighting or otherwise.

[24] During the Turkish Mamluk regime, the troops of Egypt were of two types: *ḥalqah* troopers and Royal Mamluks. And what a number of *ḥalqah* troopers there were in the days of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalawūn! Because they numbered, according to what I have seen in the account books of the Army Diwan as part of the records of the Nāṣirian cadastre, twenty-four thousand horsemen. Subsequently, their number kept diminishing, so that today, with the steady decrease in number, they may be somewhere between a thousand and one. And they do not amount to anything. As for the Mamluks, their number is small these days. So much so that, were the *ḥalqah* troopers and the Royal Mamluks combined, they would barely number five thousand horsemen, of whom a thousand or less are fit for combat.

[25] Today (the troops) are (still) of two types: *ḥalqah* troopers and Royal Mamluks. The Mamluks are divided into three branches: Zāhirīs, Nāṣirīs, and Mu'ayyadīs.<sup>(25)</sup> The Mu'ayyadīs are made up of Ḥakamīs, Nawrūzīs, and the mamluks recruited by al-Mu'ayyad (personally).

[26] It is my increasing fear that after al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad Abū 'l-Naṣr Shaykh, may God perpetuate his reign, things will go from bad to worse until such time when God will prop up the kingdom through his son, Emir Ṣarīm al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, may God support the realm through him, for he has conquered more Byzantine terri-

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25. The names of these Mamluk groups usually derive from the regnal honorifics of their lords, thus, Zāhirīs = the mamluks of al-Zāhir Sayf al-Dīn Barqūq (1382-89; 1390-99), Nāṣirīs = the mamluks of al-Nāṣir Nāṣir al-Dīn Faraj (1399-1412), Mu'ayyadīs = the mamluks of al-Mu'ayyad Sayf al-Dīn Shaykh (1412-21).

tory than any Egyptian ruler of the Muslim era before his time had ever possessed.<sup>(26)</sup>

Intrinsically, the cub is as the lion / And a noble's son, when traveling at night, will prove to be the better night traveler / No wonder that the young man should follow in his father's footsteps / It was 'Adiy who followed his father's example in generosity / He who resembles his father will do no wrong / It is the roots, after all, from which trees grow.

[27] Later on, during the rule of al-Ashraf Barsbāy, the Mamluks came to consist of seven groups: *Zāhirīs*, *Nāṣirīs*, *Mu'ayyadīs*, *Nawrūzīs*, *Ḥakamīs*, *Ṭaṭarīs*, and *Ashrafīs*. Each group was at odds with the rest of them. As a result, their power waned and respect for them diminished \* and the Sultan was safe from their outrage and need not fear their rebellion \* because they were divided, even if they combined forces \* and they were at odds with each other, even though outwardly they were agreed.

[28] One should know that it was the practice of the caliphs of Islam—Umayyads, 'Abbāsids, Fāṭimids—since the time of the Commander of the Faithful 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, to collect the land-tax money and then to distribute it through the Diwan among the emirs, the tax collectors, and the troops according to their ranks and capabilities. In the early Islamic period, this used to be called the *'aṭā'*—the 'stipend' or 'pension'. Things remained that way until the non-Arab states changed this procedure and distributed land as fiefs to the troops.

The first man known to have distributed such fiefs to the troops was Niẓām al-Mulk Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Ishāq ibn al-'Abbās al-Ṭūsī, the vizier of Alp-Arslān ibn Dāwūd ibn Mikāl ibn

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26. Maqrīzī's hope, which reflects very much the sentiment of the troops at the time, was not fulfilled. Ibrāhīm b. Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī died during the night of Friday, the 15th of Jumādā II, 823 (June 28, 1420), after a debilitating illness, allegedly poisoned by his father. Cf. *Sulūk* IV, 1:525-30. —The interpolation, found in only two Wiet's mss., provides a clue to the sequence of Maqrīzī's writing.

Saljūq, who subsequently also served as vizier under the latter's son Malik-Shāh ibn Alp-Arslān. The way it came about was that the empire had become so vast that (Nizām al-Mulk) decided to turn over to every feudatory a village—or more, or less, depending on the importance of his fief—because he felt that, by handing over land to feudatories, such lands would be properly cultivated, since their feudal tenants would take every interest in them—unlike when all districts of the empire are under a single dīwān, for in that case irregularities tend to spread and disorder comes to the communities. So Nizām al-Mulk implemented that, and the communities did indeed thrive in his time and there was an increased yield of cereal produce. Later rulers have been following his example since the 480s to this day.

[29] The (early) caliphs used to have their necessities provided by the Treasury. Thus 'Aṭā' ibn al-Sā'ib relates in a tradition that, after Abū Bakr, God be pleased with him, had become caliph, he was allocated half a sheep per day and clothing from top to bottom. And on the authority of Ḥumayd ibn Hilāl it is related that he was allowed two cloaks. After he had worn them out, he put them aside and received two others like them. Also, he put a *ḡihārah*, or outer covering, over his robe when he was traveling. And he spent on his family as much as he used to do before he became caliph.

[30] Ibn al-Athīr<sup>(27)</sup> reports in his *Chronicle*: (Abū Bakr's) allocation was six thousand dirhams a year. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, after he became caliph, was given an allocation appropriate for him and his dependents, fair and square. 'Alī, God be pleased with him, told him, "You are not entitled to something else!" Certain people maintain: 'Alī did not say, "He gets only his food!" 'Umar allocated to Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān as governor of Syria ten thousand dinars a year. But according to others, he paid him a salary of one thousand dinars, which is more likely.

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27. On the eminent historian of Mosul (d. 630/1233) see "Ibn al-Athīr" by F. Rosenthal in *EF*.

## 35. Freeholds, Fees and Fiefs

[1] One says 'he received and kept in his possession—*iq-taṭa'a*—a portion of some thing', meaning, he acquired it; (the term) *qaṭī'ah* designates the thing a person thus holds in his possession. Also, *aqṭa'ani iyyāhā* 'he apportioned it to me', that is, he permitted me to keep it in my possession, and *istaqṭa'ahū iyyāhā* 'he asked him to apportion it to him', and thus *aqṭa'ahū nahran aw arḍan* 'he allotted to him a canal or a piece of land', meaning, he allowed him the usufruct of it.

The Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, made such apportionments and thus reconciled people with Islam. And after his death, the caliphs made such allotments to people whom they deemed worthy of being given an apportionment.

[2] Ibn Abī Najīh<sup>(1)</sup> transmits on the authority of 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb, who heard it from his father, that the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, allotted to certain people of the Muzaynah, or of the Juhaynah, a piece of land, but they failed to cultivate it. Then came other people who did, whereupon the Juhaynīs, or the Muzaynīs, brought their case against them before 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him. And 'Umar said: "If the land had come from me or from Abū Bakr, I would return it. But this is an allotment made by the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him." Then he added: "If someone has a piece of land and abandons it for three years without tilling it, and other people take it under cultivation, then these have every right to it."

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1. 'Abd-Allāh b. Abī Najīh, Meccan ḥadīth authority, died 132/750. His father, Abū Najīh al-Makki, transmitted from 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 3:37). —The Meccan traditionist Abū Ibrāhīm 'Amr b. Shu'ayb al-Suhami died 118/736 in al-Ṭā'if.

[3] Hishām ibn ‘Urwah<sup>(2)</sup> reported on the authority of his father: The Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, allotted to al-Zubayr (ibn al-‘Awwām) a piece of land with date palms on it that had belonged to the (Jewish) tribe of the Naḍīr. He says it was a piece of land called *al-Jurf*.<sup>(3)</sup>

[4] It has also been reported that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, gave al-‘Aqīq<sup>(4)</sup> in its entirety to the army, so that it cut across ‘Urwah’s freehold. Whereupon (‘Urwah) ibn al-Zubayr protested: “[Where does that leave] petitioners for a land allotment from this day on? If there is any benefit in it, it (already) belongs to Khawwāt ibn Jubayr (al-Anṣārī). Give it to me in fee.” And (‘Umar) did.

[5] Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah<sup>(5)</sup> relates on the authority of ‘Amr ibn Dīnār: After the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, had arrived in Medina, he assigned freeholds to both Abū Bakr and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with both.

[6] Ash‘ath ibn Siwār transmits on the authority of Ḥabīb ibn Abī Thābit, who had it from (al-)Ṣalt al-Makkī, who heard it from Abū Rafī<sup>(6)</sup> who reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings upon

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2. Abū ‘l-Mundhir Hishām b. ‘Urwah, the grandson of ‘Abd-Allāh b. al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām, a cousin of the Prophet and one of the earliest converts to Islam (he belonged to the circle in the House of al-Arḡam). Hishām spent his last years in the entourage of the ‘Abbāsīd al-Manṣūr and died 146/763 in the newly founded capital Baghdad.
  3. “The Bluff,” formerly called *al-‘Ird*, some 6 km north of Medina, where ‘Umar and several Medinese had landed property (Yāqūt 2:128).
  4. A fertile tract of land next to the lava field (*ḥarrah*) west of Medina, in Yāqūt’s definition “between the land belonging to ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr (b. al-‘Awwām) and the fortified country house (*qaṣr*) of the Marājil clan.” Cf. the article “al-‘Akīk” by S. Renz in *EF* —The passage in square brackets is taken from al-Balādhurī (*Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. al-Munajjid, p. 12) in an attempt to restore at least some sense to Maqrīzī’s badly conflated version of the tradition.
  5. Zaydī traditionist of Kūfah, died 198/814 on the pilgrimage in Mecca (Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 2:391-93). —Abū Muḥammad “al-Athram” ‘Amr b. Dīnār: Meccan jurist and traditionist of Persian origin, died 126/743.
  6. A former slave of Muḥammad’s uncle al-‘Abbās and freedman (*mawlā*) of the Prophet; cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 2:461/1, 1339.

him, gave certain people a piece of land, but they were unable to cultivate it. So they sold it in the days of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God's pleasure rest on him, for eight thousand dinars, or eight thousand dirhams, and then deposited their money with 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, God be pleased with him. And when they came to take it back, they found that some of it was missing. "There is a deficit," they said. "Figure out the alms tax on it," replied ('Alī). They did so and found (the money) to be complete. "Did you think," said ('Alī), "that I would hold money without collecting the poor due on it?"

[7] Tamīm al-Dārī requested the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, to give him 'Aynūn, the village he came from in Syria, as a freehold *before* that country was conquered. And (the Prophet) did so.<sup>(7)</sup>

And (the Companion) Abū Tha'labah al-Khushanī requested him to grant him a piece of land that was still in Byzantine possession. That pleased (the Prophet), who exclaimed, "Do hear what the man is saying!" "By Him Who sent you with the truth," said (Abū Tha'labah), "it will surely be conquered through you!" And (the Prophet) had a document to that effect written for him.

[8] Thābit ibn Sa'd transmits from his father, who heard it from his grandfather, that Abyaḍ ibn Ḥammāl asked the Apostle of God to give him the salt of Ma'rib in fee, which the latter did. At that point, al-Aqra' ibn Ḥābis al-Tamīmī spoke up and said: "Apostle of God, I came across that salt in the old days before Islam. It is on no-man's land: Whoever finds it takes it, because it is like perennial water in the ground." Whereupon Abyaḍ asked to be released

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7. On this famous, precedent-setting land grant cf. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* (ed. al-Munajjid, p. 153; Hitti, *Origins*, p. 197); Qalqashandī 13:118-22. —Maqrīzī wrote a small work entitled *Ḍaw' al-sārī fi ma'rifat khabar Tamīm al-Darī* (The Guiding Light of the Night Traveler to the Story of Tamīm al-Darī) on the life of Abū Ruqayyah Tamīm b. Aws b. Ḥārithah al-Dārī, a Christian Palestinian who, after his conversion in 631, actively participated in the Prophet's last campaigns and later witnessed the conquest of Egypt. He died 40/660 in retirement in his native 'Aynūn near Jerusalem. See, e.g., Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣābah*, 1:186.



from the fee contract. “Granted,” said the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, “on the condition that you make it *ṣadaqah* on my part,” adding: “It is *ṣadaqah* on your part, for it is like perennial water: he who finds it takes it.”

Kathīr ibn ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn ‘Awf al-Muzanī relates on the authority of his father, who heard it from his grandfather: The Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, gave to Bilāl ibn al-Ḥārith the mines of al-Qabaliyyah in fee, both the ones on this side and the ones on the other side of the divide.<sup>(8)</sup>

[9] Mālīk (ibn Anas) transmits on the authority of Rabī‘ah, who heard it from certain learned men, that the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, gave in fee to Bilāl ibn al-Ḥārith al-Muzanī mines in the area of al-Fur‘.<sup>(9)</sup>

On the authority of Rabī‘ah from al-Ḥārith ibn Bilāl al-Ḥārith: The Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, gave him al-‘Aqīq in its entirety in fee.

According to Ḥammād ibn Salamah, from Abū Makīn, from Abū ‘Ikrimah, the freedman of Bilāl ibn al-Ḥārith: The Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, had given in fee to Bilāl a piece of land with a hill and a mine on it. Bilāl’s descendants later sold to (the Umayyad caliph) ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz a portion of that land. When a mine—or he may have said two mines—was discovered on it, they argued, “What we sold you was tillable land, but not the mines,” and produced a document which the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, had written for them on a palm leaf. ‘Umar kissed it, opened it, and passed it over his eyes, and then said to his treasurer: “Make sure how much the revenue from it was

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8. Suggested reading: *ma‘ādin al-Qabaliyyah, jalsiyyahā wa-ghawriyyahā*. Al-Qabaliyyah is the name of a divide (*sarāh*) between Medina and Yanbu‘, of which the western slope was called al-Ghawr (Yāqūt 4:307). For *al-Jals* as the name of the eastern mountainside cf. the tradition given by Yāqūt s.v. (2:153).

9. In *al-Muwatta‘* (Zakāh 8): “...the mines of al-Qabaliyyah, which are in the vicinity of al-Fur‘.” On the latter, an important satellite community of Medina located on the road to Mecca, see Yāqūt 4:252.

and how much you have spent, then settle our account with them concerning the expenditure, and give them back the balance.”

[10] ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb appropriated as domain land from southern Mesopotamia the possessions of Khusraw and his family, as well as lands whose owners had fled or had perished, and the yield from all of that came to nine million dirhams, which he spent wholly for the welfare of the Muslims. Later on, ‘Uthmān parceled out those lands in fee, because he felt that doing so would ensure a greater yield from them than having them lie idle.

He made it a condition for anyone to whom he assigned land that he must collect from it the amount due as *ḥaq*. His yield amounted to five million dirhams, out of which came his grants and stipends. Then, after his time, the caliphs passed on those lands down the line. Then, in the year of (the battles of Dayr) al-Jamājim in 82 (A.D. 701), during the insurrection of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ash‘ath, the register was destroyed by fire, and everybody seized (domain land) that bordered on his own.

[11] ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, gave Munyat al-Aṣḥab in fee to Ibn Sindar, who received one thousand feddans of it as personal property.<sup>(10)</sup>

[12] Wakī<sup>(11)</sup> says on the authority of Sufyān (ibn ‘Uyaynah), who heard it from Jābir al-Ju‘fi, who had it from ‘Āmir (ibn Wāthilah): Abū Bakr did not give out land in fee, nor did ‘Umar and ‘Alī. God be pleased with them. The first one to do so was ‘Uthmān, God be pleased with him, and during his caliphate lands were sold.

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10. This tradition, and the next but one, are taken from Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam (*Futūḥ Miṣr* 96). They are obviously anachronistic, since Munyat al-Aṣḥab became the name of Ibn Sindar’s property *after* its purchase by al-Aṣḥab, the oldest brother of ‘Umar II, who died in 86/705. Its history will be presented by Maqrīzī when he discusses al-Khandaq (*Khīṭaṭ* 2:136).

11. Abū Sufyān Wakī b. al-Jarrāḥ b. Malīḥ al-Ru‘āsī: Kūfan traditionist and Koran commentator, died 197/812. See Zirikli, *A‘lām*, 9:135. —The tradition, as the *isnād* shows, is Shī‘ite and, like the following narratives, clearly anti-Umayyad: ‘Uthmān’s favoritism and nepotism explains what went wrong in the early Islamic community.

[13] Al-Layth ibn Sa'd said: We have heard of no case where 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb gave any piece of Egyptian land in fee to anyone, with the exception of Ibn Sindar, to whom he gave the land of Munyat al-Aṣḡagh. It remained in his possession until his death, then it was bought from his heirs by al-Aṣḡagh ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Marwān. There is no older or better freehold in (all of) Egypt.

[14] It is related by al-A'mash, from Ibrāhīm ibn al-Muhājir, from Mūsā ibn Ṭalḡah: 'Uthmān, God be pleased with him, allotted (of the veteran Companions) to 'Abd-Allāh ibn Mas'ūd a piece of land in al-Nahrayn, to 'Ammār ibn Yāsir, Istīniyā,<sup>(12)</sup> to Khabbāb (ibn al-Aratt), Ṣa'nabā,<sup>(13)</sup> and to Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ the village of Hurmuz.

'Abd-Allāh ibn Mas'ūd and Sa'd used to cultivate their land at one-third and one-fourth (of the potential yield).<sup>(14)</sup>

[15] 'Uthmān ibn Abī Shaybah reports: We were told by Wakī', on the authority of Sufyān, who heard it from 'Āmir, quoting Jābir [*sic*]: Abū Bakr did not give out land in fee, nor did 'Umar and 'Alī. The first to assign freeholds was 'Uthmān, and lands were sold during the caliphate of 'Uthmān, God be pleased with him.

[16] Sayf ibn 'Umar, on the authority of 'Amr ibn Muḡammad, from 'Āmir (ibn Wāthilah): In 'Uthmān's time, land was given in fee to al-Zubayr (ibn al-'Awwām), Khabbāb (ibn al-Aratt), 'Abd-Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, 'Ammār ibn Yāsir, and Ibn Habbār. If 'Uthmān erred, then those who accepted the error on his part were equally at fault. And those are the people we looked upon as models of conduct! (It is true) 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, made land allotments to Ṭalḡah (ibn 'Ubayd-Allāh), Jarīr ibn 'Abd-Allāh (al-Bajālī), and al-Rubbīl ibn 'Amr, and to Abū Mufazzir he apportioned

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12. A village near al-Kūfah, and so recorded in Balādhurī's *Futūḡ al-buldān* (ed. al-Munajjid, p. 335); cf. Yāqūt 1:176. Wiet: *Isbinā* (?).

13. Thus al-Balādhurī. Wiet: *Ṣahnabā* (?).

14. The sentence is a comment by Ibn Ṭalḡah, who was a neighbor of the two men (Balādhurī, *loc. cit.*).

Dār-al-Fil—among a number of people who were our model—but such allotments come under the aspect of *naḡal*—booty at the free disposal of the leader that is left over from the fifth of God’s spoils.

(Thus) ‘Umar wrote a letter to ‘Uthmān ibn Ḥunayf<sup>(15)</sup> which was delivered by Jarīr ibn ‘Abd-Allāh al-Bajalī (and read): “Give Jarīr ibn ‘Abd-Allāh an allotment large enough to support him, no more.” ‘Uthmān then wrote to ‘Umar: “Jarīr came to me with a letter from you (to the effect that) we assign him a fee large enough to support him. I dislike acting on it until I have checked back with you on the matter.” And ‘Umar wrote back: “Jarīr spoke the truth. Carry out that order. You have done well in consulting me.”

(‘Umar) also made an allotment to Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī. And ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, God rest him in peace,<sup>(16)</sup> assigned to Kardūs ibn Hānī’ al-Kardūsiyyah and gave land in fee to Suwayd ibn Ghafalah al-Ju‘fi.

Sayf relates on the authority of Thābit ibn Ḥuraym, from Suwayd ibn Ghafalah, who said: I asked ‘Alī for an apportionment, and he said: “Write down: This is what ‘Alī hereby assigns to Suwayd: a piece of land belonging to Dādhawayh, located between such-and-such and such-and-such, as God wills.”

[17] Abū ‘l-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Raḡmān ibn ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam mentions estates in Egypt which were assigned in fee by Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān and subsequent caliphs, and he has a sizable list to show.<sup>(17)</sup>

[18] The Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd caliphs used to apportion Egyptian lands to people of their entourage personally, not the way it is today. Rather, out of the tax revenue from Egyptian land would

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15. The first governor of the Sawād appointed by ‘Umar, later governor of Baṡrah by appointment of ‘Alī, whose side he took in the first civil war; died after 41/661.

16. The paragraph is restored from the text of Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh* 3:589/I, 2376), from which the traditions in this section are taken.

17. *Futūḡ Miṡr* 94 ff.

be defrayed the stipends of the troops and all other costs, and the balance would be turned over to the Treasury. Land allotted as a *qaṭīʿah* was the property of the recipient. [19] But since the time of Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb down to the present day, all of Egypt's land has been apportioned to the sultan, his emirs and his troopers.

[20] Nowadays, the land in Egypt is of seven categories:

One part is administered by the *Dīwān al-Sulṭān*, and this, in turn, is of three kinds: some of it is administered by the *Dīwān al-Wiz-ārāh*, or Bureau of the Vizierate, some of it by the *Dīwān al-Khāṣṣ*, or Bureau of the Privy Domain, and some by the *Dīwān al-Mufrad*, or Bureau of the Special Domain.<sup>(18)</sup>

Another part of Egypt's land has been apportioned as fiefs to emirs and (*ḥalqah*) troopers. This has already been discussed in detail in connection with the cadastre of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.

A third part has been made over as mortmain land to mosques, mosque colleges, Sufi convents, charitable institutions, and to the descendants and manumitted slaves of the endowees of such lands.

A fourth part is called *aḥbās*, or "endowments". Under this category fall lands in the possession of people who live of them, either in return for attending to a mosque or cathedral mosque, or they simply belong to them without any service rendered in exchange.

A fifth part is now private property which can be sold, bought, inherited, and donated, since it was purchased from the Treasury.

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18. A bureau created by the Burjī sultan Barqūq, who set aside (*qfrada*) a number of villages for it. It was headed by the majordomo (*ustādār kabīr*) and administered the stipends, clothing, fodder, etc., of Barqūq's mamluks. Cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:453. — In Fāṭimid times, there was another *dīwān mufrad*, created in 1009 by the caliph al-Ḥākīm "for people drawing their money from (the estates) of persons executed and others" (*Itti'āz* 2:81).

A sixth part is not put under the plow because it is uncultivable. It is grazed over by livestock and overgrown with firewood and the like.

A seventh part is (land) not reached by the water of the Nile and therefore wasteland. Some of the land in this category has been like that since the beginning of known history, while some of it used to be cultivated in most ancient times and later became waste.

All of these categories (of land) are discussed (somewhere) in this book. The reader will find the information, God Exalted willing, if he will just look.

[21] Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām<sup>(19)</sup> says in his *Kitāb al-amwāl*, in discussing a tradition of Ma‘mar from ‘Abd-Allāh ibn Ṭāwūs, from his father Ṭāwūs (ibn Kaysān): “The Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, said: ‘*Ādiyyu ‘l-arḍ* belongs foremost to Allah and His Messenger, and then to you.’ And if you ask, What does that mean?—he said: ‘It shall be an *iqṭā‘*, an apportionment.’

“In this story we have the origin in (the use of) *iqṭā‘*. (The term) *‘ādī*<sup>(20)</sup> applies to any land which once had inhabitants who then died out, in other words, so that it became waste. Disposition over it belongs to the Imam.

“As for land which, although under cultivation and inhabited, was given by the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, to certain people, its donation by the Imam comes under the aspect of *naḥal*—a promised share of booty. To that category belongs what the Apostle of God, on him peace and blessings, gave to Tamīm al-Dārī: For he gave him a piece of land in Syria *before* Syria was con-

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19. Philologist and grammarian (a student of both al-Aṣma‘ī and al-Kisā‘ī, among many others), Koran reader, jurist (he served for 18 years as judge of Ṭarsūs) from Herat; died 838 or 839 on the pilgrimage in Mecca. Cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt* 4:60.

20. The *nisbah* of ‘Ād, the legendary people repeatedly mentioned in the Koran whom God punished and destroyed.

quered and before the Muslims took possession of it; he gave it to him as *nafal*, promised booty from the possessions of the enemy, by the time he would vanquish them. Just as he did with Buḡaylah's daughter when he donated her to (al-Muthannā ibn Ḥārithah) al-Shaybānī before the conquest of al-Ḥīrah; Khālid ibn al-Walīd, God be pleased with him, then made good that donation. Likewise, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, made sure that Tamīm al-Dārī got what the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, had promised him as booty after the conquest of Palestine."

Thus, Abū 'Ubayd explains such a "pending donation" as booty which the leader promises to certain warriors.

[22] Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb al-Māwardī says in his *Ordinances of Government*:<sup>(21)</sup> A concession, *iqṭā'*, can be of two kinds: a usufructary concession—*iqṭā' istighlāl* (which entails the right of exploiting its resources, but remains subject to government authority)—and a proprietary concession—*iqṭā' tamlik* (which entails the right of property). The latter is divided into *mawāt*, or wasteland, and *'āmir*, or land under cultivation.

[23] The second (in turn) is of two kinds: One is land assigned to a specific proprietor, in which case the government has control over it only to the extent of what that land owes to the Treasury, when the land lies within the pale of Islam. If it is outside the pale of Islam so that the Muslims are not yet in firm possession of it, then the Imam intends to grant it in such a way that the grantee will take possession of it at the time of its conquest, which is permissible. For instance, Tamīm al-Dārī asked the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, to grant him 'Aynūn, the village he came from, before Syria was conquered, and (the Prophet) did so. Or Abū Tha'labah al-Khushanī asked (the Prophet) to grant him a piece of land that was (at the time) in Byzantine possession. Which pleased (the Prophet), who exclaimed: "Do hear what the man is

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21. *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* 330, 332 (section 23).

saying!" (Abū Tha'labah) then said: "By Him Who sent you with the truth, it will surely be conquered through you!" And (the Prophet) had a document to that effect written for him.

Thus, continues al-Māwardī, if someone were to ask the Imam to give him as a gift property outside the pale of Islam which is still in the possession of the enemy, or if he asked him to be given some captives or women from enemy territory, then (the Imam) would have every right to do so: Once (the territory) is conquered, (the promised property) is lawful and the donation on the part of (the Imam) becomes valid, even though there may have been a certain amount of ignorance about it because it had to do with public affairs. Al-Sha'bi, for instance, relates that Khuraym ibn Aws al-Ṭā'ī said to the Prophet, peace and blessings on him: "If God conquers al-Ḥīrah through you, give me Buqaylah's daughter." And when Khālīd (ibn al-Walīd) was about to arrange a peaceful surrender with the population of Ḥīrah, Khuraym said to him: "The Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, gave me Buqaylah's daughter, so do not include her in your peace agreement." Since Bashīr ibn Sa'd (al-Anṣārī) and Muḥammad ibn Maslamah testified in his favor, (Khālīd) left her out of the peace agreement and turned her over to Khuraym. She was then ransomed for one thousand dirhams, although she had aged (meanwhile) and was no longer what she used to be. Later on, someone told (Khuraym): "You sold her for too cheap a price! Her family would have paid you twice the sum you asked." And (Khuraym) replied: "I did not think there was a figure larger than a thousand."

Once a concession and transfer of ownership of this kind has become valid, says al-Māwardī, one looks at the circumstances of the conquest: If it was peaceful, then the land belongs to the grantee and is not covered by the terms of the peace agreement concerning the earlier apportionment. If the conquest was by force of arms, then the grantee or donee are fully entitled to what they asked to be granted in concession or donated as far as those who actually captured the spoils are concerned. One also considers the latter: If



they were aware of the concession or donation before the conquest, they have no right to demand compensation; if they were not aware until the actual conquest, then the Imam will compensate them in a satisfactory manner, the way he provides compensation for other kinds of spoils. But Abū Ḥanīfah, God have mercy on him, maintains: The Imam is not obligated to compensate them for that, or any other kind of spoils, if he deems it in the best interest of the community.

## 36. The Tax Register

[1] The keeping of land-tax records is called *qalam al-taṣrīf*. Such a register was at first kept under Muslim rule in Damascus and in the Iraq in the form it was before the coming of Islam. The register of Syria was in Greek, that of the Iraq in Persian, and that of Egypt in Coptic. Later on, the registers of those military cantonments were translated into Arabic. The man who had the register of Egypt translated from Coptic into Arabic was ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, governor of Egypt during the caliphate of al-Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, in the year 87 (A.D. 706). He had (the records) copied in Arabic and dismissed Athanasius<sup>(1)</sup> from the Dīwān, putting in charge of it instead [‘Amr ibn Jurmūz] ibn Yarbū‘ al-Fazārī of Ḥims, [a client of the Banū Sa‘d, specifically, of the Banū Dhayyāl, a subtribe of the former].<sup>(2)</sup> And the first to have translated the registers from Persian into Arabic was al-Walīd ibn Hishām ibn Qaḥdham ibn Sulaymān ibn Dhakwān; he died in 222 (A.D. 837).

[2] Most of the sources (however) are agreed that it was Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, the secretary of al-Ḥajjāj (ibn Yūsuf), who converted the register of the Iraq to Arabic. He was a client of the Banū Sa‘d and was at that time, namely after the year 80 (A.D. 699), in charge of the registers of the Iraq.

The story behind that is that the father of this Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān had been a prisoner of war from Sijistan. Ṣāliḥ, who was quite proficient in the secretarial arts, worked for Zādān Farrūkh,

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1. A Christian notable from Edessa. He was the tutor of the Umayyad prince ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān, brother of the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, who made him his chief financial officer (*mutawallī al-dīwān*) while he was governor of Egypt (685-704).
  2. The text portions in square brackets are missing in the Bulaq edition and in several of Wiet's manuscripts.

the (Persian) secretary of al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafi, and before the governor's eyes would write in both Persian and Arabic. Soon al-Ḥajjāj took a liking to him. But (Ṣāliḥ) was afraid of Zādān and told him, "You are the one who has given me advancement so that I have made it into the presence of the Emir. I notice that he has developed a liking for me, and now I cannot be sure if he is not going to promote me above you so that your own rank will drop." "Do not think that," said Zādān. "He needs me more than I need him, because he cannot find anyone other than myself to keep his accounts in order." "By God," said Ṣāliḥ, "if you would like me to convert the accounts into Arabic, I would surely do it." "Do a few lines then," said (Zādān), "so I can see." Which (Ṣāliḥ) did. "Pretend to be ill!" said (Zādān), and Ṣāliḥ did, whereupon al-Ḥajjāj sent his private physician to him. That was too much for Zādān; he ordered (Ṣāliḥ) not to show himself (henceforth) in the presence of al-Ḥajjāj. But, it so happened shortly thereafter that Zādān was killed during the insurrection of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath, as he was leaving a place heading for home, and al-Ḥajjāj asked Ṣāliḥ to be his secretary after him. When (Ṣāliḥ) informed al-Ḥajjāj of what had happened to him with Zādān in the matter of converting the register (into Arabic), he very much liked the idea and urged him to go ahead and carry it out. And so he converted the *dīwān* from Persian into Arabic. That proved to be hard on the Persians, who were willing to pay him one hundred thousand dirhams for not showing the converted register, but he refused their offer. Later on, Mardān-Shāh ibn Zādān Farrūkh told him: "May God wipe you off the face of the world the same way you have cut off the root of the Persian language!"

‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Yāḥyā<sup>(3)</sup> used to say: “Ṣāliḥ—what an excellent man! He did so much for the secretaries!”

[3] As for the register of Syria, it was Abū Thābit Sulaymān ibn Sa’d (al-Khushanī),<sup>(4)</sup> the diplomatic secretary, who had it converted from Greek to Arabic. There has been disagreement as to the time of its conversion. Some have said that it occurred during the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, others have maintained that it was during the caliphate of Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik. The chief clerk in charge of the register of Syria at the time of Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān had been the Christian Sarjūn ibn Maṣṣūr,<sup>(5)</sup> and after him his son, Maṣṣūr ibn Sarjūn, had served as secretary. [Only God Exalted knows the truth.

[4] At the time of Mu‘āwiyah, says al-Māwardī, there was no better secretary, nor anyone more familiar with the art of bureaucratic writing and more adept in handling Arabic style, than ‘Abd-Allāh ibn Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Dā’im al-Sallārī, God have mercy on him.]<sup>(6)</sup>

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3. A Palestinian from Caesarea, the secretary of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān II, famed for his eloquent style and model of future essayists. He was killed with Marwān near Būṣīr in Upper Egypt in August 750. —The well-known anecdote in this section is taken, with minor variations, from al-Balādhurī’s *Futūḥ al-buldān* (ed. al-Munajjid 368; Hitti, *Origins* 465-66).
  4. He was in charge of the *dīwān* under ‘Abd al-Malik, al-Walid and Sulaymān, until ‘Umar II dismissed him over some error. He died about 105/723.
  5. Sergius, scion of a distinguished Damascene family and grandfather of St. John of Damascus. His father Maṣṣūr, the city’s treasurer, had negotiated the surrender of Damascus in 635 and was then confirmed by the Muslim conquerors in his former office.
  6. The text portion between square brackets is missing in the Bulaq edition and in no less than 15 mss. consulted by Wiet.

## 37. Egypt's Land Tax under Muslim Rule

[1] The first to collect taxes in Egypt under Muslim rule was 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ, God be pleased with him.

[2] The amount he collected was twelve million dinars, by imposing a tax of two dinars on every adult male. Next, 'Abd-Allāh ibn Sa'd ibn Abī Sarḥ collected from Egypt fourteen million dinars. Whereupon 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, God be pleased with him, told 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ: "You see, Abū 'Abd-Allāh, the camel has given more milk than before!" "But you have done harm to its offspring!" replied ('Amr).

[3] That which 'Amr and then 'Abd-Allāh collected came only from individual poll taxes, without the land tax. Subsequently, because of increasing desolation, the spread of decay on most of the land, and the outbreak of wars, the tax yield of Egypt declined, so that the Umayyads and the 'Abbāsīd caliphs were able to collect only something below three million (dinars). With the exception of the time of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik. For he ordered 'Ubayd-Allāh ibn al-Ḥabḥāb, his finance director of Egypt, to recultivate (the country).

It is said that, after its steady decline, the land tax of Egypt flowed copiously again only at two times: The first time was during the caliphate of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik, after he appointed 'Ubayd-Allāh ibn al-Ḥabḥāb finance director of Egypt. The latter set out personally and made a survey of Egypt's land, both land under cultivation and such uncultivated land as is reached by the annual Nile flood. The tax base for that, he found out, was thirty million feddans, by reason of the accumulation of alluvium (in some places) and of (some) land being overgrown with weeds. He then made a cadastre for all of it and had the land redistributed with utmost fairness. In that way, he was able to collect four million di-

nars—this despite a slumping (grain) price and with no special tax nor impost anywhere in the country.

In 107 (A.D. 725/6), early in the reign of Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, Ibn al-Ḥabḥāb in Egypt ordered the specification of given assigned (tax) categories in the (land) registers, and these remained valid down to the post-Umayyad period. They amounted to 1,700,837 dinars, of which 1,449,420 ½ dinars fell to the districts of Upper Egypt and the remainder to the districts of Lower Egypt. Usāmah ibn Zayd, during the caliphate of Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, is said to have collected twelve million dinars in taxes from Egypt.<sup>(1)</sup>

The second time was during the administration of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, after he had taken over Egypt from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn (al-)Mudabbar. Egypt had gone through a period of decay so that its land-tax yield had dropped as low as 800,000 dinars. Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn then applied himself most assiduously to recultivation and was thus able to collect 4,300,000 dinars. His son, Emir Abū ‘l-Jaysh Khumārawayh ibn Aḥmad, collected four million dinars, despite a slump in (grain) prices in his days—for during the Ṭūlūnid period wheat was sometimes sold at the rate of one dinar per ten ardebs.

[4] Ibn Khurradādhbih reports that Egypt's land tax at the time of Pharaoh was ninety-six million dinars, and that Ibn al-Ḥabḥāb collected from it 2,723,839 dinars.<sup>(2)</sup>

[5] But that is an error on his part, because that amount is what he delivered to the Treasury in Damascus after (deduction of) the stipends and extraordinary expenses for the Egyptian army.

[6] And Mūsā ibn ‘Īsā al-Hāshimī, says (Ibn Khurradādhbih), delivered (to the Treasury) 2,180,000 dinars, that is to say, after

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1. An implausible figure, even in light of Usāmah's draconic tax measures (cf. C.H. Becker, *Beiträge*, 2:103-4). But then, the other "precise" figures in this interpolated paragraph of unknown origin do not make much sense either.

2. Actually, two dinars less in the original source (*BGA* VI, 83).

(deduction of) the stipends, expense allowances for officials, and all extraordinary expenses.<sup>(3)</sup>

[7] The land tax of Egypt, says (Ibn Ḥawqal),<sup>(4)</sup> was 4,157,000 dinars when the Nile rose to a level of seventeen cubits and ten fingers, and the tax collected per feddan was two dinars during the caliphates of al-Ma'mūn and others.

[8] In the days of Emir Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj the Ikhshīd, the land-tax yield of Egypt was two million dinars, without counting his estates, which were his private property.

[9] The Ikhshīd was the first to establish (a system of) fixed allowances in Egypt.

[10] His secretary, Ibn Kalā, had made an assessment in which he budgeted the funds necessary for the purpose as two hundred thousand dinars in excess of the revenue. "How shall we go about it?" the Ikhshīd asked him. "Lower the daily food and subsistence allowances," said Ibn Kalā. "Those people deserve no more than what is absolutely necessary." The Ikhshīd said: "Tomorrow you will come to me and we will work it out." When Ibn Kalā came back the next day, the Ikhshīd told him: "I have been thinking about what you said. See here, those who receive allowances are poor people, and among them are folk who possess no more than the barest necessities and who live on handouts. I will definitely take the missing money from none other than you." "I am surprised!" exclaimed Ibn Kalā. "So be it then!" said the Ikhshīd. And he kept after (Ibn Kalā) until he got his written commitment to do just that.

When people scolded (the Ikhshīd) for what he had done, he said: "Listen to what this man used to do, friends. (At one time) Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Mādharā'ī came to him and told him: 'I am under no obligation to the governor, nor has the Ikhshīd any way of

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3. This must have been during his second term (791-792), when he combined the offices of governor and finance director; see Pt. III, ch. 11.

4. The passage is repeated with attribution in ch. 40. One reads it in Ibn Ḥawqal's *Masālik wa-'l-mamālik* (ed. de Goeje, p. 89).

getting at me. Here is a present of ten thousand dinars for the Ikhshīd and a thousand dinars for you.' (Ibn Kalā) then came to me and asked: 'You have a claim on Mādharā'ī's son?' I said, 'No, I don't.' 'Then here is a thousand dinars which you get for nothing,' he said. He gave me a thousand and took ten thousand dinars himself. At another time, (Aḥmad's father) Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Mādharā'ī had given me through (Ibn Kalā) a present of twenty thousand dinars, which I thought a bit meager. So when (al-Mādharā'ī) and I met again, I reproached him, and he said to me: 'I sent you one hundred thousand dinars, and for your secretary Ibn Kalā twenty thousand dinars. In other words, he took the hundred (thousand) and gave me the twenty thousand. When I mentioned to him what Muḥammad ibn 'Alī had said, he exclaimed: 'What a stupid man! I kept the hundred thousand for you for a time of need when you might want them. Take the money! I know you will squander it anyway.'"

[11] The fixed allowances at the time of Kāfūr al-Ikhshīdī amounted to five hundred thousand dinars per year, for the benefit of people living on handouts, pious paupers, and all sorts of folk of whom not one belonged to the army, or the court retinue, or the administrative personnel in the districts. So the secretary 'Alī ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Rūdhābārī sold (Kāfūr) the idea that he should save some of the allowance money by taking it out of the people's subsistence allowances. The moment he sat down to do that, his forehead began to itch. He scratched it with his pen, but the itch only got worse, until he had to interrupt his work to attend to his condition. He received then treatment with the cautery and eventually died in Ramaḍān 349 (November 960). Here we have a moral lesson from God for someone who nefariously meddles in the people's affairs. In the words of the Lord: "*But evil devising encompasses only those who do it.*"<sup>(5)</sup>

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5. Koran 35 (The Angels): 43.



[12] After Kāfūr's death, many severe trials—soaring prices, desolation, civil disorders—descended upon Egypt so that there was a drop in its land-tax yield.

[13] Then came General Jawhar from North Africa with the troops of his lord al-Mu'izz-li-dīni-'llāh Abū Tamīm Ma'add, and he collected for the year 358 (A.D. 969) 3.2 million dinars in land taxes, and in the year 359, 3.4 million and some dinars.

[14] Al-Nāṣir-lil-dīn Abū (Muḥammad) al-Ḥasan (ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Yāzūrī, vizier of Egypt during the caliphate of al-Mustanṣir-bi-'llāh ibn al-Zāhir, ordered an assessment of the State's revenue and expenditures. The chiefs of each dīwān then compiled its respective revenue and expenditures and submitted the whole thing to the head of the Dīwān al-majlis, which is the control office of the government bureaus, who then made an overall compilation which he presented to (the vizier). In that way, (al-Yāzūrī) found out that the revenue of the State was two million dinars: one million in Syria, where expenditures and revenue were about even, and one million in the (Egyptian) rural areas and the rest of the state.

[15] Judge Abū 'l-Ḥasan<sup>(6)</sup> reports in his *Method for Determining the Land Tax*: I have read a comparative compilation made for Amīr al-Juyūsh Badr al-Jamālī after he had arrived in Egypt during the caliphate of al-Mustanṣir, had gained control of the country, and had overcome its corrupting elements. In it it was shown that the overall revenue in the *hilālī* sector<sup>(7)</sup> for the year 483 (A.D. 1090) and in the *kharājī* sector, in accordance with the Dīwān's requirements concerning such land taxes and concomitant dues as fall to the Egyptian tax districts and taxes on land given in conces-

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6. 'Alī b. 'Uthmān b. Yūsuf al-Makhzūmī, al-Qaḍī al-Sa'īd, died 585/1189. He was a colleague of al-Qaḍī al-Fādīl. Cf. al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyyah al-kubrā*, 7:227. —His *Kitāb al-minhāj fi 'ilm al-kharāj* is repeatedly cited (in extenso in ch. 92 of Pt. II) by Maqrīzī, who devotes a highly laudatory passage in rhymed prose to him and his work (*Khiṭaṭ* 2:460).

7. See ch. 39, beginning.

sion, in fief, merged with other land, and detached, amounted in New and Old Cairo with their environs, the Sharqīyyah and Gharbiyyah provinces with their districts in Lower Egypt, Tinnīs and Damietta with their dependencies, Alexandria, al-Buḥayrah, the districts of Upper and Central Egypt, the Oases and 'Aydḥāb for the fiscal year 480 according to the Egyptian procedure, as well as in the Syrian districts, which begin at al-Shajaratayn, the first of the Palestinian districts, and in the districts of Tripolis, according to the (locally) established total for the fiscal year 478, to 3.1 million dinars in gold. The established total of taxes called in, prior to the study made by the Amīr al-Juyūsh, during the lunar year 466, which corresponds to the fiscal year 463, came to 2.8 million dinars, so that the increase for the year of Badr al-Jamālī's probe over the revenue collected before was 300,000 dinars—a reflection of good cultivation and universal justice. This comparative compilation was made in Dhū 'l-ḥijjah 483 (February 1091).

[16] Ibn Muyassar mentions the assessment of Egypt's revenue ordered by al-Afḍal ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh. It came up with five million dinars.

[17] Then it gradually diminished, until the time when al-Qāḍī al-Muwaffaq Abū 'l-Karam (Muḥammad) ibn Ma'ṣūm al-Āṣimī al-Tinnīsī,<sup>(8)</sup> up to the end of the year 540 (June 1146), collected from Egypt 1.2 million dinars in cash alone to go to the Treasury, after deduction of expense monies for officials and extraordinary expenses. Then after him no one was able to collect such an amount again until the demise of the Fāṭimid regime.

[18] Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil mentions in his *Journals* that the cadastrally assessed values of the villages from Alexandria to 'Aydḥāb for the year 585 (A.D. 1189), exclusive of the frontier towns, assorted

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8. A high administrative official under al-Ḥāfiẓ and al-Zāfir. He was cruelly killed in 544/1150 by the Kurdish vizier Ibn al-Sallār in revenge for an earlier slight (cf. *Itti'āz* 3:199).

administrative returns and a number of (specific) areas, came to 4,653,019 dinars.

[19] The reason for Egypt's modest tax yield, after it had reached under the Byzantines twenty million dinars in the last year of their rule before the Muslim conquest, is that those who governed it could not bring themselves to expend the traditional costs of properly cultivating the land. For one needs to spend on it from one-fourth to one-third of its yield.

[20] Once the status of Egypt's land was appraised, it was found that the time (needed) for plowing it is sixty days, and that its land area is 180,000 feddans,<sup>(9)</sup> of which 24,000 feddans were under cultivation during the stewardship of Ibn (al-)Mudabbar. Also, its land tax is not collected in full unless there are 480,000 tillers who work the land continually. When that number of workers is put to work on the land, then it will be properly cultivated and its tax yield will be complete. There were never more than 120,000 sharecroppers: 70,000 in Upper Egypt and 50,000 in Lower Egypt.

[21] Today, all conditions of old have changed for the worse and have become scandalously disordered.

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9. Wiet/Bulaq: 100,080,000 and 24 million feddans respectively. They are obviously absurd figures, the result in both instances of one *alf* too many.

## 38. The Various Categories of Egypt's Lands, with a Classification of Their Cultivation

[1] One should know that Egypt's lands fall into several categories:<sup>(1)</sup>

The highest in value, the one that brings the highest price and has the highest tax rate on it, is the *bāq*, which is (land cultivated) right after (a crop of) leek and plants of the gourd family, because it is suitable for growing wheat.<sup>(2)</sup>

After the *bāq* ranks *rayy al-sharāqī*, which is land left without irrigation in the year past and which, when irrigated the following year after a rest from cultivation and planted, will yield a first-rate crop.

Then there is *barāʾib*, which is land left after a previous wheat or barley crop. Its value is below that of the *bāq*, because the soil is weak as a result of these two crops, and when it is replanted right after one of them, it will not do as well as *bāq* land. *Barāʾib* land is suitable for growing leek, legumes and plants of the gourd family, because the soil recovers when these crops are grown on it and becomes *bāq* land the following year.

*Buqmāhī* is the term for land on which previously flax was grown. If it is planted with wheat, the crop will turn out well.<sup>(3)</sup>

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1. The content of this chapter is almost entirely drawn from Ibn Mammātī (*Qawānīn*, ed. Atiya, pp. 201-04; 232-33; 258-71).
  2. Cf. Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ* 3:446): "It is well known that in our own time *bāq* is land cultivated after a previous leek and fava-bean crop only; land cultivated after a crop of gourd plants is called *barsh*."
  3. Ibn Mammātī says the exact opposite: "When one plants wheat on it, it will not do well, but will come up with tiny kernels and blackish in color."

*Shatūnī* refers to land which in the year before was watered and left lying fallow. [The tax rate on it]<sup>(4)</sup> is lower than [that on] *sharāqī* land.

*Salā'ih* is irrigated fallow land that is then plowed and left idle. It is like *rayy al-sharāqī* land, because whatever is planted on it will thrive.

*Naqā* is any land cleared of the remains of the preceding crop and with nothing left on it to prevent it from being replanted with various crops.

*Wasikh* [*muzdara*] is any land overgrown with weeds. The farmers, unable to remove all of the weed growth, plow (it under) and plant on the land, with the result that the crop will come up mixed with esparto grass and the like.

[*Wasikh*] *ghālib* is any land with a plant growth that prevents it from accepting seed planting and by its density makes such land uncultivable. It becomes pasture land.<sup>(5)</sup>

*Khirs* is any land which has become desolate because it is overgrown with things that make it uncultivable. On such land are pastures. It is more difficult [to clear and improve]<sup>(6)</sup> than *wasikh ghālib*, but when one really applies oneself to the removal of these impediments, it is capable of improvement.

*Sharāqī* is any land not reached by water, be it on account of a low Nile and the elevation of such land, or because the flow of water to it is blocked, or for other reasons.

*Mustabhir* is any low-lying land receiving water which cannot find a drain until the planting season is over, thus remaining on the land.

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4. Text restored on the basis of Ibn Mammātī.

5. Maqrīzī's text of these two paragraphs is defective. Additions in brackets are from Ibn Mammātī.

6. Additions in brackets from Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ* 3:447).

*Sibākh* is any land invaded by salt so that it has turned saline. It cannot be used for growing cereal crops. In some areas where the saline soil has not yet completely taken over, one grows on it crops other than cereals, such as asparagus and eggplants. (Normally) one grows giant reed on it.

[2] One thing Egypt's lands cannot do without is the dikes. They are of two kinds: government and local.

Government dikes are those which are of general benefit in preserving the Nile water for all the communities until such time when it is no longer needed. They have established procedures (for opening and closing) applying to the eastern and western districts (of Lower Egypt).

[3] In the old days, the cost of their maintenance and repair would come out of the taxes of the rural communities and responsible for their operation would be the lease holders of the land, whose outlay for them would be credited against their obligations under the terms of their land contracts. Later on, one began to levy a tax handled by certain *Diwān* officials for the operation of the dikes in those two provinces, and the money would be spent for their construction and maintenance and what was left of it would be turned in to the Treasury.

Then all that was taken over by the prominent emirs of the state, down to the time when the events in the days of al-Nāṣir Faraj came about, and one would collect a lot of money from the villages without spending anything at all (for that purpose). Rather, the money goes to the government and much of it is frittered away by the officials, while the villagers must attend to the dikes in *corvée* labor, with the result that everything is in a state of utmost disorder—as the reader will learn, God willing, when the reasons for (Egypt's) ruin and decay are discussed.

[4] As for the local dikes, they are the ones that benefit an individual community alone. Their construction is undertaken by the fief holders and the fellaheen out of the funds of the community.

Government dikes are in relation to the villages like the wall of a city: it is the sultan's concern to keep it in repair and to spare his subjects the trouble of attending to it, whereas the local dikes are comparable to the houses inside the city wall, where the owner of each house is responsible for its improvement and repair.

It is customary for a fief holder, when released of his fief after having spent some of his fief money on the construction of a dike for the cultivating season of the same year in which his fief was transferred from him, to have the right to ask the next fief holder to repay him the equivalent of the money he spent in his year for the cultivation in the other's year.

[5] Wheat is best planted on land that was previously *bāq* or *sharāqī* land. In Upper Egypt one used to plant wheat on land of a previous wheat crop because of the high crop yield, and sometimes one planted it there after a flax or barley crop. Wheat is planted from the middle of Bābih (end of October) until the end of Hātōr (mid December). This applies to the elevated parts of the land, which put out (crops) early. As to the slower lowlands, the planting season there extends to the end of Kiyahk (early January). The amount of wheat seed needed per feddan varies according to the strength or weakness of the soil, whether the soil is light or medium, and how much of it is planted on soft floodland<sup>(7)</sup> and how much on plowland. The maximum amount of seed runs from one *irdabb* to five *waybahs* (90-75 liters) and even four *waybahs*. In Upper Egypt there are lands that can bear even less than that, and in the Ḥawf Ramsīs there are lands where two *waybahs* per feddan are sufficient. (Wheat) crops ripen in Egypt in the month of

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7. Arabic: *talwīq*, a method of seeding in which seeds are thrown on flood water and allowed to sink into the ground as the water seeps away. Hence, land softened (Arabic: *lawwaqa*) by flood water which requires no plowing. (Oral communication of Dr. El Said Badawi).

Bashans, which is April.<sup>(8)</sup> The yield per feddan of wheat varies according to the soil; it can be from two to twenty ardebs (180-1800 l).

[6] Abū Bakr Ibn Waḥshīyah says in the *Nabataean Agriculture*: It has been reported that, when people plant in Egypt, one *mudy*<sup>(9)</sup> (of seed) will yield three hundred *mudy* (of grain). The reason for that is the warmth of their climate, the fatness of their soil and the great softness of the Nile water.

[7] In the year 806 (A.D. 1403/4), the (Nile) water receded from a piece of land belonging to the *Birkat al-Fayyūm*, which today is called Baḥr Yūsuf. It was planted and the crop on it turned out in an extraordinary form: a feddan yielded seventy-one ardebs of barley according to the Fayyūmi measure, where an ardeb is nine *waybahs*.<sup>(10)</sup>

[8] The tax rate per feddan of wheat in Upper Egypt used to be three ardebs in Fāṭimid times. [9] After the survey of the villages conducted in 572 (A.D. 1176/7), the tax rate per feddan was set at two ardebs and a half. Later on, one began to take two ardebs per feddan. As for the lands in Lower Egypt, they are taxed in cash, not in kind.

[10] Barley is grown on former wheat land and after other crops, on land that has been loosened by hoeing while still moist. Its planting time is several days ahead of that of wheat, and so is its harvest time, because it is harvested before wheat. The seed needed per feddan depends on the soil. It yields larger crops than wheat and ripens as a rule in Barmūdah, which is March and April.<sup>(11)</sup>

Fava beans are planted on plowed former *barā'ib* land from the first of Bābih onward. One eats them, still green, in Kiyahk (December/

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8. So Ibn Mammātī: *Nīsān*. The Coptic month of Bashans extends from May 8 to June 6.

9. A dry measure of 19 ṣā' = 80.0375 l, used in Syria and Egypt as well as, with a different capacity, in Spain; cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:575.

10. As against the usual 6 *waybahs* to the *irdabb*.

11. The Coptic month of Barmūdah extends from April 8 to May 7.



January). A feddan requires up to about three *waybahs* of seed. They ripen in the month of Barmūdah and the yield per feddan is twenty ardebs or less.

Lentils and chick-peas are planted from the month of Hātōr until Kiyahk. Chickling vetches are grown only on the thinnest of soils, by tith on upland and by flood seeding on *khirs* lands. Each feddan of chick-peas is sown with one to one and one-third ardeb of seed, of chickling vetches with one ardeb to two-thirds of an ardeb, of lentils with two *waybahs* or less. These species ripen in Barmūdah and the yield of one feddan of chick-peas is four to ten ardebs, that of chickling vetches ten ardebs or less, and that of lentils twenty ardebs, or less.

Flax thrives best when it is planted on plowland. It needs to be fertilized with manure. When it has grown to a certain height, it leans over sideways and one pulls it up stalk by stalk; it is then called *ashlāf*.<sup>(12)</sup> It is spread out on the spot for drying, and after it has dried, one takes it away, rets it, and removes its seed vessel. It yields flaxseed, from which one extracts linseed oil. Flax is planted in the month of Hātōr. The seed needed for one feddan is one and one-third ardeb or less. It ripens during the month of Barmūdah. A feddan (of flax) yields up to thirty sheaves and up to six ardebs of seed. The tax rate per feddan of flax was in the old days in Upper Egypt five to three dinars, at Dalāṣ (in Central Egypt) thirteen dinars, and elsewhere three dinars.

Leek is planted when the Nile water begins to recede. One should not delay its planting until the season of the south wind called *al-rīḥ al-marīsīyyah*. It is first sown in the month of Bābih, but sometimes it is planted after the Coptic New Year (September 10/11). That which is grown on plowland is planted during (the months of) Kiyahk and Ṭūbah (mid December through mid February), at times also as early as Hātōr. Each feddan is seeded with two *way-*

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12. Thus Ibn Mammātī (*Qawānīn*, p.261). Wiet/Bulaq: *aslāf*.

*bahs* and a half, or thereabouts, (of seed). Its green crops ripen at the end of Kiyahk, those grown on plowland during Ṭūbah and Amshir (mid January through mid March). The yield per feddan of plowland leek is between two *irdabbs* and four *waybahs* (139.2 to 46.4 kg).

Onions and garlic are planted from the month of Hātōr to the middle of Kiyahk. The seed required per feddan of onions is between three-fourths of a *waybah* and one *waybah*, for (a feddan of) garlic from one hundred to one hundred and fifty bunches. Both of them ripen in the month of Barmūdah. Seed onions are planted from the beginning of Kiyahk until the 10th of Ṭūbah. The yield of the seed crop is ten *irdabbs* per feddan. It ripens in the month of Bashans.

Lupines are planted in Ṭūbah. The seed needed per feddan is one *irdabb*. The lupine ripens in Barmūdah and the yield per feddan is twenty ardebs.

These are the winter crops. Now to the summer crops:

Watermelons and black-eyed beans are both planted from the middle of Baramhāt until the middle of Barmūdah (i.e, the month of April). One plants two *qadaḥs* (of seed) and the ripening time is Bashans (May/June).

Sesame is planted in the month of Barmūdah. The seed needed per feddan is one-fourth of a *waybah*. It ripens in Abīb and Misrā (July and August) and the yield per feddan is from one to six ardebs.

Cotton is planted in Barmūdah and the seed needed per feddan is four *waybahs*. It ripens in Tūt (September/October) and the yield per feddan is up to eight *jarawī* quintals<sup>(13)</sup> of cotton.

Sugarcane is planted from the middle of Baramhāt on former *bāq* land and on plowland. The soil on which it is grown is given seven plowings. Three complete hoeings of the soil before the month of

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13. The second heaviest of the five *qinṭār* weights used in medieval Egypt, consisting of 100 *ratl jarawī* = 96.7 kg; cf. Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, 25, 29.

Bashans is over will yield best results. The amount of seed material needed is about one-eighth of a feddan per feddan (of cane).

[11] Sugarcane heeds first-rate even land which must have been completely irrigated and covered by the water of the Nile. Esparto grass growing on it must first be pulled up, and the land must be cleared (of weeds) and then plowed over in six ways with "looseners,"<sup>(14)</sup> which are large plows, and harrowed, until it is level and smooth. Then it is plowed and harrowed six more times. (The term) *barsh* (used here) is synonymous with *ḥarth* 'plowing'.

After the land has been worked on and has become good and soft, the soil smooth and even from the harrowing, then furrows are made with the large plows. Into these furrows one throws the cane, two sections side by side<sup>(15)</sup> and one section by itself—after small depressions have been made in the ground and rills have been dug through which the water can get to them. The length of each section of cane is three complete joints, with part of another joint on either end of each section. One selects (for the purpose) cane with short joints and many nodes. This operation is called *naṣb*, or "dressing".

Once the dressing of the cane is completed, the cane sections are covered with earth again. It is essential in dressing that a cane section is flat on the ground, not upright. From the time of its dressing at the beginning of spring, the cane is then watered once every week. While the cane is sprouting and leaves begin to appear, esparto grass and stonecrop—which the Egyptians call *rigla*—will come up with it. At that point, one "loosens up" the ground on which it grows. The term *ʿizāq* 'loosening up' means that the cane land is hoed, and whatever comes up with the cane is cleared off. One continues to proceed like that until the cane is abundant,

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14. Arabic: *muqalqilāt*. Compare the Egyptian vernacular *qulqāla* (pl. *qalāqīl*) 'clod, lump of earth'. —For the six ways of plowing cf. Ibn Mammāṭī (*Qawānīn* 266).

15. This seems to be the meaning of *jiftāh* here—from Turkish *çift* 'pair'.

strong and thick, at which point one says, *ṭarad il-qaşab 'izāqu* 'the cane rejects loosening up', because the ground cannot be hoed any more. This will not be until the first joints appear.

The total number of waterings given by means of the waterwheel is twenty-eight. Ordinarily, the amount of cane one can irrigate per *maḥāl baḥrānī*—that is, a wellhead close to the Nile—on land cleared of a previous cereal crop, with good oxen, and with the water level in the well sufficiently high, is eight feddans. It requires eight head of oxen. But if the wells are at a distance from the Nile, then each wellhead will not be able to handle more than six to four feddans. When the Nile rises and becomes really high, then the cane is watered with (the so-called) *mā' al-rāḥah*, or "resting water." This can be described as follows: (a channel) is cut to (the cane field) from a dike which will already have been built around it for its protection in case of a further rise of the water level. Water is then channeled onto the cane land through a breach in that dike until it covers it at a depth of about a span, after which its flow is blocked off. The water is left on the land for two, three hours until it has warmed up. Then it is drained off on another side (of the field), until all of it has seeped away, and then new water is channeled on the land in the same manner. One continues to do what we have just described several times on scattered days with a given amount (of water), and then (the cane) is "weaned."

If one does what we have just said, then the cane will give its full yield. If one does less than that, the crop will be defective. Cane must be treated with tar before it turns sweet, lest it become infested with worms.

Sugarcane is cut in the month of Kiyahk. The cut cane fields must be burned off and then watered and hoed as described before. It then puts out a (second-growth) cane called *khilfah*, while the first (generation) is called *ra's*. The raw sugar gained from the *khilfah* is generally of better quality than that of the *ra's*.

[12] The *ra*'s ripens in Ṭūbah (January), the *khilfah* in the middle of Hātōr (end of November). Operation of the cane presses extends all the way down to the Coptic New Year. A feddan of sugarcane will yield between forty and eighty *ublūjahs* of raw sugar, an *ublūjah* having the capacity of about one quintal.

Colocasia is planted at the same time as sugarcane. (The seed needed)<sup>(16)</sup> per feddan is ten *jarawī* quintals of colocasia. It ripens in Hātōr.

Eggplants are planted during (the months of) Baramhāt, Barmūdah, Bashans and Ba'ūnah (March through June). They ripen from Ba'ūnah to Misrā (June through August).

Indigo is grown from Bashans (May) onward. The seed required per feddan is one *waybah*. It ripens from Abīb (July) onward.

Radishes are grown throughout the year. The seed needed per feddan is from one to two *qadaḥs*.

Turnips are seeded from Abīb onward. The seed needed per feddan is one *qadaḥ* (1.88 l). They ripen after forty days.

Lettuce is planted in Ṭūbah as seedlings. It can be eaten two months later.

Cabbage is planted as seedlings in Tūt (September). It ripens in Hātōr.

Grapes are layered in Amshīr (February) by slipping and transplanting.

Figs and apples are layered in Amshīr.

Mulberries are pruned in Baramhāt (March).

Almonds, peaches and apricots are layered and lightly watered for three days in Ṭūbah water while they are sprigs. The young trees are then layered and transplanted in Ṭūbah.

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16. Cf. Ibn Mammātī (p. 267); Maqrīzī's text is ambiguous.

Date pits are planted and then transplanted as palm seedlings and slipped.

Daffodil bulbs are put into the ground in Misrā (August). Jasmine is planted during the (Coptic) intercalary days (early September) and (again) in Amshīr (February).

Myrtle one plants in Ṭūbah and Amshīr by layering.

Sweet basil is planted in Barmūdah.

The seeds of the gillyflower are planted at the time of the Nile's rise.

Winter bananas are planted in Ṭūbah and summer bananas in Amshīr.

One transplants the cassia in Baramhāt.

Grapevines are pruned during (the season of) the north wind (i.e., in Amshīr) and a few days into Baramhāt so that their shoots can come out. Fruit trees and shrubs (in general) are pruned during (the months of) Ṭūbah and Amshīr, with the exception of the lotus tree, that is, the *nabq* tree (or Christ's thorn), which is pruned in Barmūdah.

Fruit trees and shrubs are given one watering in Ṭūbah which people call the *mā' al-ḥayāh*, or "life-giving water." They are given a second watering in Amshīr when the blossoms come out. In Baramhāt they are given two more waterings, until the time when the dates begin to form. In Bashans they are given three waterings, and in Ba'ūnah, Abīb and Misrā one watering every seven days. In Tūt and Bābih they are watered once by (totally) flooding (the ground) with the water of the high Nile. In Hātōr they are watered with Nile water by putting (only) the ridges between the water furrows under water. Grapevines grown on terrain with natural irrigation are given one flood-watering with Nile water in Hātōr.

[13] All land in Egypt is measured in feddans. A feddan is 400 *qaṣabah Ḥākimiyyah* (1596 m) in length by one *qaṣabah* (3.99 m) in

width. A *qaṣabah* is the equivalent of  $6 \frac{2}{3}$  cubits in terms of the *dhirā' al-qumāsh*, or "cloth cubit," and of approximately five cubits in terms of the *dhirā' al-najjār*, or "carpenter's cubit." God alone knows the truth.

## 39. The Taxation System of Egypt

[1] One should know that government taxes in Egypt are presently divided into two categories: one is called *kharājī* and the other *hilālī*. The *kharājī* taxes are taxes levied annually on lands used for growing cereals, date palms, grapes and fruit, and what is collected from the fellaheen by way of tribute, such as sheep and goats, fowl, gruel, and other products<sup>(1)</sup> of the countryside. The *hilālī* taxes are of several kinds, all of them introduced, gradually, by bad administrators.

[2] In Islam, all of that goes back to the time when the Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, on learning that Muslim traders coming to India had the tithe collected from them, wrote to Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī, who at the time was the governor of Baṣrah, “to collect from any trader passing through your territory five dirhams on every two hundred dirhams in the case of Muslims; from non-Muslim traders”<sup>(2)</sup>—meaning the dhimmīs—“collect one dirham on every twenty dirhams, and from traders coming from infidel territory one dirham on every ten dirhams.” When ‘Umar’s son was asked (later) if his father really collected the tithe from Muslims, he denied it.

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz expressly forbade the practice and wrote: “Relieve people of these commercial taxes (*mukūs*)—for that is not *maks* (a legal deduction), but *najs* (an unclean act).”

It is related that one day some people from Syria came to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, and told him: “We have come by some animals and other possessions. Accept alms tax for them,

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1. Read: *turf*, as in the Bulaq text (1:103); Wiet: *zarf*(?).

2. Arabic: *tujjār al-‘ahd*, traders with the status of *ahl al-‘ahd* i.e., non-Muslims in a treaty, rather than covenant (*dhimmah*), relationship with the Muslim state and therefore not liable to pay the poll tax.



through which we will be absolved from wrongdoing.” ‘Umar said, “How can I do something that no one before me has done?” He sought counsel, and ‘Alī, God be pleased with him, said, “There is nothing wrong with it, if people do not make it a regular practice after your time.” And so (‘Umar) collected for a slave ten dirhams and the same amount for a riding horse, eight dirhams for a riding camel, and five for a packhorse and mule.

[3] The first to put a tax on shops under Muslim rule was the caliph al-Mahdī, Abū ‘Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Abī Ja‘far al-Manṣūr, in the year 167 (A.D. 783/4). Sa‘īd al-Ḥarashī was put in charge of it.<sup>(3)</sup>

[4] The first to introduce a tax, aside from the regular fiscal revenue, in Egypt was Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn (al-)Mudabbar when he assumed the financial administration of Egypt after 250 (A.D. 864).<sup>(4)</sup> He was a cunning man and a devil of an official who introduced in Egypt innovations which became permanent after his time. Thus he seized the natron (resources) and clamped a government ban on their exploitation, after they had been open to all people. He also put a tax on the grass which serves as pasture for livestock, which he called *al-marāṭī*, and another on the God-given food fish taken from the Nile, which he called *al-maṣāyid*, and so on. As a result, Egypt’s revenue became divided at the time into *kharājī* and *hilālī*, and the *hilālī* taxes, because of their “protective” nature, became known as *marāfiq* (“presents of gratitude”) and *ma‘āwin* (“aid money”).

When Emir Abū ‘l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn assumed the dual office of finance director and governor of Egypt and was assigned, in addition, the Syrian frontier districts, he dissociated himself from the abomination of *ma‘āwin* and *marāfiq* and issued a written order to have them abolished in all his provinces. They used to

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3. Cf. al-Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 2:399.

4. The date is wrong. Ibn al-Mudabbar was transferred from Palestine to his post in Egypt in 247/861 (cf. al-Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 2:493).

amount in Egypt alone to one hundred thousand dinars per year. There is a story with a moral lesson to all that, which I shall tell in connection with the history of the Mosque of Ibn Ṭulūn in this book.<sup>(5)</sup>

Later on, the *hilālī* taxes were revived during the Fāṭimid regime, at the time when it was losing strength, and became then known as *mukūs*—singular: *maks*. And when Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Abū 'l-Muẓaffar Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb ibn Shādhī had made himself the ruler of Egypt, he ordered the abolition of the *mukūs* in Miṣr and Cairo.

[5] Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil 'Abd al-Raḥīm wrote on his behalf an order to that effect. The total of these imposts came to one hundred thousand dinars per annum, itemized as follows:<sup>(6)</sup>

Duty on spices, plus tax-collector's charges	33,364	dinars
Duty on merchandise and caravans, plus tax-collector's charges	9,350	"
Release fee (? <i>munfalit</i> ) of the Rōdah Island shipyard from duty on incoming canvas, copper, tin, coral, etc.	5,193	"
(Duty on) goods leaving the Miṣr shipyard	6,666	"
Brokerage for dried dates	300	"
(Release fee of) the caravansary ( <i>funduq</i> ) in al-Munayyah from merchandise tax	856	"
Bribes for alleviated tax treatment ( <i>rusūm</i> ) paid by the Dār al-Qand	3,108	"
Tax bribes for lumber and salt	676	"
Tax-release bribes for (fishing)		

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5. *Khiṭaṭ* 2:265.

6. The obscure terminology used in the following list, not to mention the blatant incongruities in many of its items, give the impression that it was poorly and incorrectly copied, perhaps by Maqrīzī himself. In the absence of context, suggested emendations and readings can be no more than unsubstantiable guesses.

Nile carp and red mullet <sup>(7)</sup>	100	”
Bribes for spice, etc., inspection on Rōḍah Island	217	”
Accounting fee (? <i>khatmah</i> ) of Armant for all incoming wares	67	”
(Dues on) Funduq al-Quṭn	2,000	”
(Dues on) Sūq al-Ghanam in Cairo and Miṣr, brokerage, octroi on small livestock in Gīzah	3,311	”
Octroi on small livestock, flax and cattle at the Bāb al-Qanṭarah	1,200	”
Duty on flax husks destined for the Rōḍah Island shipyard	200	”
Duty on produce, such as cereals, arriving at Rōḍah Island, al-Maqs, al-Munayyah, al-Jisr, (Bāb) al-Tabbānīn, and the toll stations (? <i>mafālit</i> ) of Jazīrat al-Dhahab and Ṭamwayh (in Gīzah) and of Munyat al-Shīraj (?)	6,000	”
Impost on small livestock destined for the Rōḍah Island shipyard	36	”
(Dues on) sheep and goats kept around the house	12	”
(Duty on the use of ?) al-‘Arṣah (?) and al-Sirsināwī (2) in Gīzah, plus impost on small livestock	190	”
Release fee (? <i>munfalit</i> ) of the Fayyūm from (duty on) flax brought in from the south and merchandise leaving the Fayyūm, etc.	4,160	”
Duty on paper brought to the Rōḍah Island shipyard, plus inspection fee	200	”
Soup kitchen at the Sāḥil al-Ghallah (in Bulaq), food, carry-out gifts	768	”
Release fee (? <i>falat</i> ) payable to the supervisor (‘ <i>arīf</i> ) of outgoing		

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7. Suggested emendation: *rusūm al-falat al-mansūbah ilā ‘l-labīs wa-‘l-būrī*.

manufacture	700	"
(Dues of) the Dār al-Tuffāḥ wa-'l-Ruṭab (fruit warehouse) in Miṣr and al-'Arṣaḥ in Cairo	1,700	"
Ibn al-Milīgī fee	200	"
(Dues of) the Dār al-Jubn (cheese warehouse)	1,000	"
Supervision of butchers	240	"
Duty on sesame oil <sup>(8)</sup> from Lower Egypt and cotton	1,020	"
Brokerage fee for quarry stones	1,200	"
Release fee (? <i>munfalit</i> ) on fleabane <sup>(9)</sup>	161	"
Seal (fee) on fine linen ( <i>sharb</i> ) and (the fabric called) <i>dabīqī</i>	1,500	"
Commercial tax on wool	200	"
Half of wharfage at the quay of al-Maqṣ	14	"
Broker's shop (fee)	350	"
Release fee of the supervisor at the Rōḍāḥ Island shipyard <sup>(10)</sup> and the porters of spices and merchandise	216	"
(Dues on) esparto grass from the south	135	"
(Dues on) vine-props, horse manure, <sup>(11)</sup> grafts at the Dār al-Tuffāḥ; release fee from security deposit (? <i>munfalit al-qublah</i> ) at (Bāb) al-Tabbānīn and al-Jiṣr	35	"
Dues on (building) stones and mortar (? <i>al-ḥamzā'</i> ); dues of the Dār al-Kattān (flax warehouse)	60	"
(Dues on) guarding the produce at al-Maqṣ and the Dār al-Jubn	140	"
(Dues on) esparto grass brought in via al-Jiṣr (the bridge connecting Rōḍāḥ		

8. Suggested reading: *al-ḥall*. Wiet's *al-ḥulīy* is obviously grammatically impossible.

9. Suggested reading: *al-ṣa'īdī*. Wiet/Bulaq's *al-ṣa'īd* (Upper Egypt) seems implausible in view of the paltry revenue figure.

10. Following the Bulaq text: *munfalit al-'arīf bi-'l-ṣinā'ah*. Wiet: *falat al-ta'rif*(?).

11. With the Bulaq text: *al-sarqīn*. Wiet: *al-sharqīyyah* (?).

Island and Miṣr) and the Nilometer ferry	100	"
Double tithe on <i>baraniyyah</i> dates in Gīzah	20	"
Delivery of tariff (? <i>tall al-ta'rif</i> ) at Rōḍah Island	28	"
Release fee (? <i>munfalit</i> ) for produce at the Jazīrat al-Dhahab ferry (in Gīzah)	10	"
Dues on pigeons at the Sāḥil al-Ghallah	534	"
Duty on henna brought in overland	800	"
Duty on esparto grass and willow rods	63	"
Commercial tax on incoming merchandise destined for al-Munayyah	184	"
(Dues of) the slaughterhouses of Shaṭṭanawf and al-Barrāniyyah <sup>(12)</sup>	200	"
(Dues of) the Sūq al-Sukkariyyīn (confectioners' market)	50	"
Branding fees for camel meat in al-Shāri' (? <i>wakālat al-Shāri'</i> ) and Sūq Wardān	19	"
Duty on charcoal brought into Cairo	10	"
(Dues of) the Bridge ferry in Gīzah	120	"
Branding (fees) for beef	40	"
Branding at the Dar al-Dabbāgh	19	"
Brokerage of the Juyūshī Endowment	312	"
Oil shop and sesame-oil press <sup>(13)</sup> in Cairo	500	"
(Duty on) vinegar, and all that pertains to it	405	"
(Dues on) spinneries and cotton waste <sup>(14)</sup>	350	"
Slaughter cattle	1,000	"
Fish market in Cairo and Miṣr	1,200	"
Auction fees	300	"
Flax brokerage	300	"
Guard fees for the two shipyards (in Miṣr and on Rōḍah Island)	400	"
Laundering compound (? ) <sup>(15)</sup>	232	"
Ferries of Jazīrat al-Dhahab and other		

12. Read: *maslakhatā Shaṭṭanawf wa-'l-Barrāniyyah?* Compare the Bulaq text.

13. Read: *mi'ṣarat al-sīraj wa-'l-ḥall*. Wiet/Bulaq: ...*wa-'l-khall* (and vinegar)?

14. Suggested reading: *al-iṣṭubbah*. Wiet/Bulaq: *al-maṣṭabah* (?).

15. *Murabba'at al-ghasl?* Wiet/Bulaq: *murabba'at al-'asal*, utterly obscure meaning.

places	300	"
Seal (fee) for wax in Cairo	360	"
(Dues on) pen for slaughter animals	700	"
Nilometer and Imbābah ferries	200	"
Transport charges for rape ( <i>saljam</i> )	330	"
Tannery tax	800	"
Slave market (Sūq al-Raqīq)	500	"
Rock-sugar factory <sup>(16)</sup>	240	"
Sūq Manbūbah (?)	864	"
(Duty on) slaughter sheep in Gīzah, dues of the Sāḥil al-Sanṭ	10	"
Fish matting ( <i>nakhkh</i> )	5	"
(Dues on using the communal) roasting oven	200	"
Half- <i>raṭl</i> collected from sugar refineries	135	"
Seal (fee) for women's jewelry	120	"
Horse and mule market in Cairo and Miṣr	400	"
Camel market	250	"
Steelyard (fee) for (weighing) henna	30	"
Duty on leather pommels (? <i>ṭāqat al-adm</i> )	36	"
Release fee (? <i>munfalit</i> ) for raw silk at the (Sūq) al-Shāshiyīn <sup>(17)</sup>	33	"
(Dues on) fuller's looms (? <i>anwilat al-qaṣṣār</i> )	40	"
Police (escort) for vegetable and esparto boats <sup>(18)</sup>	36	"
(Dues on) chicken hatcheries	30	"
(Dues on) horse hair and frames	4	"
Dues on silk dyeing <sup>(19)</sup>	334	"
Weighing (fee) for <i>ṭafl</i> <sup>(20)</sup>	140	"
(Dues on) <i>mizr</i> brewery <sup>(21)</sup>	84	"

16. Suggested reading: *ma'mal al-ṭabarzad* (cf. Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire*, 2:53).  
Wiet/Bulaq: *Ma'mal al-Ṭabarī* (?).

17. Following the Bulaq text.

18. Read: *a'wān al-marākib al-munsha'ah lil-khuḍar wa-'l-ḥalfā'*. —The item is missing in the Bulaq text.

19. Suggested reading: *ṣabgh al-ḥarīr*. Wiet/Bulaq: *al-ṣabgh wa-'l-ḥarīr*.

20. *Ṭafl* is pigeon droppings, used as a depilatory.

21. *Ma'mal al-mizr*, as in the Bulaq text. *Mizr* is a beer-like wheat or barley

(Dues on) clayware in Cairo and Miṣr 236 ”

[6] Ibn Abī Ṭayy<sup>(22)</sup> reports that (the commercial taxes) outright abolished by Sultan Saladin, and those remitted by him over a number of years, the last one being the year 564,<sup>(23)</sup> amounted to over one million dinars and two million ardebs (of produce), all of which he ordered to be remitted, stricken from the fiscal registers, and abolished for the taxpayers. But Sultan al-Malik al-‘Azīz ‘Uthmān ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf, his immediate successor, reintroduced the commercial taxes and made them even more scandalous.

[7] Among the events of the year 590 (A.D. 1194), al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil notes: By the month of Sha‘bān (August), there had been a succession on the part of the people in Miṣr and Cairo to flaunt reprehensible activities and dismiss their condemnation, and on the part of the authorities to sanction such evil practices. The situation in the city became so outrageous that the price of grapes went up because there were so many people to press them! A mill was set up in the Ḥārat al-Maḥmūdiyyah for the grinding of hops, and “beer houses” were set aside for the purpose and given official protection. Heavy imposts were put on these, some of them as high as sixteen dinars a day in the end. Home-brewed beer was forbidden in order to boost buying from the protected houses. Liquor containers were carried about in public and in the markets without anyone showing his reprobation. But God Almighty’s punishment came quickly, when the Nile failed to rise to its accustomed level and the price of grain went up at a time of plenty.

[8] And about the events of the year 592, (al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil) reports: Things got to the point where the bread and meat ration nor-

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brew. —Wiet: *ma‘mal al-mawz* (?).

22. Yaḥyā b. Ḥumaydah b. Zāfir al-Ghassānī, a Shī‘ite historian and Arabist of Aleppo, died 630/1233. Among his many works is a “History of Egypt.” Cf. Ziriklī, *Alām*, 9:175.

23. The date 1169 is obviously wrong, since it is the year in which Saladin assumed the Fāṭimid vizierate as the successor in office of his uncle Shīrkūh. The Ayyūbid regime did not begin until September 1171.

mally given out by the Sultan's Palace was stopped, and where people had to resort sometimes to devious ways to get enough bread to still their hunger. There was much outcry and complaint on their part, but nobody listened. (At the same time) nothing changed as far as expenditures for the Sultan's household, payments to his dependents and living allowances for his children were concerned—and what was extorted from his business community. All of this led to a sharp rise of prices. Because shopkeepers who could barely make both ends meet would raise the prices of food staples by the same amount as was taken from them for the Sultan's household, which, in turn, led to investigations of ill-gotten profits. Beer and wine concessions were granted for twelve thousand dinars and great latitude was given to flaunt and advertise the evil (of liquor) in public and to sell the stuff in courtyards and taverns, despite the fact that the time was close to the beginning of (the holy month of) Rajab. No one among the populace was able to show his reprobation, neither by action nor by mouth. Such illicit income now became part of the Sultan's privileges for his personal expenditures and his table. Tax money of the frontier towns and capitation taxes paid by the protected minorities, a good and licit thing, changed hands to become money assignments to people who did not care where they got the money from, and who made no distinction between unlawful and lawful. In the month of Ramaḍān, the price of grapes went up, so much juice was pressed! The dealers noised the fact about in order to corner the market of government concessions for its (sale) and to exact the full duty on it through the Sultan's soldiers. A concession for it came to seventeen thousand dinars, of which some was collected as taxes delivered to the Sultan. I have been told that he had drinking vessels—of gold and silver—made of the money! A great many women and men gathered in Ramaḍān, especially along the Main Canal when its dike was opened, and along (the river in) Old Cairo during the rise of the water. And the Nile was received in that month with acts of civil disobedi-



ence<sup>(24)</sup> we ask God not to hold against us and not to punish us because of the brazenness of those who committed them.

[9] The compiler of *The Turkish Gest*<sup>(25)</sup> reports: When al-Malik al-Mu'izz 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turkumānī al-Šālīhī had become sole ruler of Egypt in 650 [sic] after the demise of the Ayyūbid regime, he appointed as vizier one of the dīwān superintendents by the name of Sharaf al-Dīn Hibat-Allāh ibn Šā'id al-Fā'izī, a Coptic secretary who had outwardly professed Islam since the time of (the Ayyūbid) al-Malik al-Kāmil Muḥammad and had moved up in the secretarial service. During his vizierate, he imposed taxes on the merchants, the wealthy, and the owners of real estate, and he established commercial imposts and concessions which people called *ḥuqūq* (*sultāniyyah*) and *mu'āmalāt* (*dīwāniyyah*).

[10] When al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Sayf al-Dīn Quṭuz had taken over as ruler of Egypt, after having deposed al-Malik al-Manšūr 'Alī ibn al-Mu'izz Aybak (in 1259), he introduced, by the time he set out on his military expedition in the course of which he was murdered, numerous iniquities for the sake of raising money and spending it on the campaign to fight the Mongol hordes, among them a census and re-assessment of (real-estate) properties and of the alms tax due on them. He also introduced a tax of one dinar to be collected from everybody, and he levied the third of family estates. All of that amounted to six hundred thousand dinars a year.

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24. Read: *wa-tuluqqiya fihi 'l-Nīlu bi-mā'āšin*, as in the Bulaq text.

25. *Al-Sīrah al-Turkiyyah*. It is the history of the Turkish Mamluks from 648/1250 to 778/1376 entitled *Durrat al-aslāk fī dawlat al-Atrāk* by the Egyptian historian (of Syrian origin) Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī (died 1377 in Cairo). —The wording of this paragraph is wrong and misleading. While 650 (1252) is indeed the year in which these financial measures were introduced by al-Fā'izī, and in which Aybak had made himself sole ruler by dropping the name of his child "coruler" al-Ashraf Mūsā from mention in the Friday prayer (cf. *Sulūk* I, 2:384), it was in 648/1250 already that al-Fā'izī had been appointed vizier by Aybak, shortly after the latter had been elected sultan on July 31 (*ibid.*, pp. 369-70). —On al-Fā'izī's career cf. *Khīṭaṭ* 2:90. —For more on the taxes called *mu'āmalāt* see below, sect. 24 ff. of this chapter.

After Qutūz had been murdered and al-Malik al-Zāhir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars had ascended the throne in the Citadel, he abolished all that and had decrees of remission written which were read from the pulpits.

[11] (Baybars) then abolished the beer concession and the taxes from it in 662 (A.D. 1264). He wrote, while he was in Syria, to Emir ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, the Vicegerent in Egypt, ordering him to “abolish the beer houses, eliminate every trace of beer, destroy the buildings where it is sold, smash the containers in which it is kept, and strike the revenue from beer from the tax register. Because some righteous man has spoken to me about that and has told me, ‘Wheat, which God Exalted has made as food for people, is being trampled under foot!’ I hereby seek to win God’s favor by abolishing beer. He who abandons something to God will be compensated by Him with something better, and those who had a share in this tax shall be compensated out of God’s licit money.” And so al-Ḥillī abolished it and compensated the concession holders with the equivalent.

[12] In 663 (Baybars) abolished the daytime watch in Cairo and Miṣr (the dues on which ?) had been a sizable amount, and had a royal decision written up to that effect. He also canceled 24,000 dirhams coming out of the “patronage dues” from the tax districts of the Daqahliyyah and Murtāḥiyyah provinces [which was a tax collected for al-Naqīdī].<sup>(26)</sup>

[13] On the 15th of Ramaḍān, 662 (11 July 1264), a writ abolishing dues imposed on top of the patronage dues of Old Cairo—they came to 104,000 dirhams by weight—was read out loud in the mosque of Old Cairo. That, too, thus fell into disuse.

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26. Additions in brackets from *Sulūk* (I, 2:538). Al-Naqīdī was a place near the mouth of the Alexandria canal in the present-day district of Ityāy al-Bārūd (cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, I, 122, and *Sulūk* I, 2:543).



they would get married. Written orders to that effect went out to all the communities. A direct tax was imposed on prostitutes by the Dīwān, and the attendants (in such establishments) were given equivalent compensation from lawful tax sources.

[17] On the 17th of Dhū-Ḥijjah, 669 (28 July 1271), all wine was poured away and the wine concession, which had come to a thousand dinars a day, was abolished. A royal directive to that effect was written up and read from the pulpits. And (the Sultan) began the new year by having wine poured away and by taking even harsher measures in order to eliminate immoral practices. It was a memorable day in Cairo.

[18] In 674, (Baybars) received word that the *ṭawāshī* Shujā‘ al-Dīn ‘Anbar, alias “Ṣadr al-Bāz”, a man who had once had great power over the Sultan, drank wine. He had him hanged [in Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah (May 1276)]<sup>(29)</sup> below the Citadel.

[19] After al-Malik al-Manṣūr Sayf al-Dīn Qalāwūn al-Alfi had taken over as ruler of Egypt (in 1280), he abolished the state alms tax, which is what one used to collect forever from a man as poor due on his property, even if he no longer had any, and when he died, one would still collect it from his heirs.

He also abolished the impost that one collected from the people throughout Egypt whenever a messenger brought happy news of the capture of a fortified town, or on similar occasions. From then on, the tax was collected (only) from the people in the capital, proportionately according to their social classes, and (still) a great deal of money would accumulate from it.

He also abolished the tax levied on protected non-Muslims, that is, a tax of one dinar over and above the capitation tax, to go to the troops every year, as well as the “dinar levy” on the merchants whenever the army set out on a campaign—a tax one used to col-

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29. Additions in square brackets from *Sulūk* (I, 2:623).

lect from all merchants of the capital at the rate of one dinar per head.

He abolished also the exaction levied at the time of the Nile's annual peak, money used to provide grilled food, sweetmeats and fruit (for the celebration) at the Nilometer, and had the Treasury cover the costs.

(Qalāwūn) did away with many things of that sort.

[20] And al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn abolished a number of taxes which have already been mentioned in (the chapter dealing with) the Nāṣirian cadastre.<sup>(30)</sup>

Finally, early in our own lifetime, were abolished the *ḍamān al-maghānī*, or "singing-girls" concession, and the *ḍamān al-qarārī*, or "obolus" concession, in 778 (September 1376) by al-Malik al-Ashraf Sha'bān ibn Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn.<sup>(31)</sup>

As far as the *maghānī* tax concession is concerned, that was a great scourge, since it meant collecting tax money from prostitutes. For (one must bear in mind) if the most prominent woman in Egypt socially were to go out with the intention of prostitution, so that she would record her name with the woman holding the concession and do whatever is expected of her, even the most powerful people in Egypt would not be able to stop her from engaging in immoral practice.<sup>(32)</sup> When women put on heavy makeup, or when

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30. Cf. above, ch. 32, sect. 5 through 18.

31. Both measures were instigated by the eminent Shāfi'ite jurist al-Bulqīnī (d. 1403), according to al-Suyūṭī (*Ḥusn* 2:305; there misdated 775).

32. This astounding statement is nowhere made or implied in Maqrīzī's own description of this concession in the *Sulūk*, copied with a few additions by Ibn Iyās (*Badā'i*, ed. Mostafa, I, 2:166-67). The *Sulūk* text (III, 1:266) reads:

"At the beginning of Jumādā I (mid September), [Sha'bān] decreed the abolition of the *ḍamān al-maghānī wa-l-afrah* throughout Egypt from Uswān to al-'Arīsh. It had been reintroduced by bad viziers because of the great tax yield from it. No wedding could take place unless the people involved had paid the woman holding the concession 500 dirhams and more, depending on their economic situation, and no woman, even a socially prominent one, could be made up (for a wedding) without a permit from the concessionaire. Nor could a (single) tambourine be beaten at a wedding, or

they made up another woman for her wedding, or when a woman dyed her hands with henna, or when someone wanted to have a wedding celebration, in all these instances there was a fixed impost to be paid to the woman concessionaire. And indescribable misfortune would befall someone who had a wedding celebration with singing girls, or dolled up his woman, without the permission of the concession holder.

As to the *qarārīṭ* concession, that was (a duty) which was collected from anyone who sold real property, at the rate of twenty dirhams on every thousand dirhams.

The yield from these two tax sources used to be a very great deal of money.

[21] Al-Malik al-Zāhir Barqūq abolished what one used to collect from the people of al-Burullus, Shūrā and Baṭīm as a sort of capitation tax at the rate of sixty thousand dirhams a year. He also abolished a special impost on wheat which used to be taken from dervishes in Damietta who buy two ardebs or less of it, and a commercial impost collected from the chicken hatchery at al-Naḥrīriyyah and from the western districts. He terminated the duty collected in advance for horses, camels, small livestock, etc., sent to al-‘Abbāsah to pasture, and abolished the impost collected on dried clover and esparto grass at the Bāb al-Naṣr outside Cairo. He also discontinued the singing-girl tax concession at Munyat Banī

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circumcision, or on similar occasions, without such a permit. And on every permit was a tax fixed in the tax register. Moreover, every singing girl had to deliver a “cut” to the woman concessionaire. If a girl spent the night away from home, she paid money to the concession holder, and every night a group of people assigned by the concessionaire would make the rounds of the houses of the singing girls to find out which of them spent the night outside her home. There were also fixed imposts on prostitutes. As for the communities in Upper and Lower Egypt, there special sections would be set aside for the singing girls and prostitutes, each of whom would pay a fixed duty, and there open fornication and wine drinking would go on too abominable to talk about. (Things went so far) that, if an outsider passed by those places, without having fornication on his mind, he was virtually obligated to engage the services of one of those prostitutes against his will, or had to buy himself off with money he paid her, so that she could come up with the tax she owed.”

Khaṣīb,<sup>(33)</sup> which falls under the financial administration of al-Ush-mūnayn, and at Ziftā, a tax district of Gharbiyyah province. And he abolished (the duty on) the cattle herds one used to let roam in the Delta while the dikes were drained.

[22] Emir Yalbughā al-Salimī, after his appointment as Master of the Sultan's Household by al-Malik al-Nāṣir Faraj ibn Barqūq in 801 (A.D. 1399), abolished the grain tariff at Munyat Banī Khaṣīb and the tax concession for its storage yard (? 'arṣah), as well as (the concession on) the laundrymen's shanties,<sup>(34)</sup> which had been an ugly abuse. He also abolished in Cairo the tax concession of Buḥayrat al-Baqar (?), but the Copts later reintroduced it after his time

Remnants of special imposts have survived to this day.

[23] Emir Yalbughā al-Sālimī, vizier, counsellor and majordomo—God rest him in peace—informed me, while he was vizier, that the various special imposts in Egypt amount to over seventy thousand dirhams a day, and that he discovered on closer inspection that they were spent in no way for the welfare of the state, but rather were benefits flowing into the pockets of the Copts and their staff. He had decided to abolish the special taxes, but was not given enough time to do so.

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[24] By *hilālī* taxes is meant everything that is called in on a monthly basis: the rents of roofed-over properties, such as houses, shops, bathhouses, bakeries, and mills; the *idād al-ghanam*, or "herd tithe" (levied on the nomads); and any arbitrary tax, guaranteed and unguaranteed. Some fiscal secretaries have counted

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33. I.e., Munyat al-Khaṣīb, the modern-day al-Minyā, capital of the district and governorate of the same name; see Part II, ch. 48.

34. *Akhṣāṣ al-ghassālīn*, as also in *Sulūk* (III, 3:972). The passage is repeated below (*Khiṭāṭ* 2:292), but there one reads *akhṣāṣ al-kayyālīn* ('corn-measurers' shanties'; notice the *Khuṣṣ al-Kayyālah* in Bulaq mentioned in ch. 32, sect. 5).

quitrents of houses and the proceeds from garden plantations whose rents are collected monthly, fisheries, and sesame and olive presses among the *hilālī* taxes.

It was a common practice of the early fiscal scribes in Egypt to list the poll taxes of protected minorities, both Jews and Christians, as one independent item after the *hilālī* and before the *kharājī* taxes, the reason being that (the poll tax) is called in annually, while the scribes felt it ought to be collected on a monthly basis, the latter having the advantage in cases when someone converted to Islam or died in the course of the year. For they used to assess such a person according to how much time of the year had elapsed before his conversion or death. For that reason, (the poll taxes) were listed between the *hilālī* and *kharājī*.

In the case of military fiefs, they used to proceed the same way as with the *hilālī* taxes, whenever a fief passed from one feudatory to another. For (the fiefs) used to collect (their taxes) on the basis of lunar, not solar, months, with the result that, if a fief holder calls them in in advance at the beginning of the year, as it is the custom, and then loses the fief during that year, either by death or by transfer to another, he is entitled to the equivalent of the months that have elapsed of that year up to the time the fief was transferred away from him, not on the basis of his lawful share of the annual yield of produce. The next fief holder is entitled (to the taxes) as of the date of his deed of installment, in the usual manner of a cash transaction, and (the revenue) of the interval between the two fief holders is due to the Diwan and hence is returned as in all cases of vacated fiefs.

Among the various kinds of *hilālī* taxes were imposts called *mu'ā-malāt*. These were: poor dues; inheritance taxes; (imposts of) the frontier zones; government stores; (state monopolies on) alum and natron; the Juyūshī Endowment; (dues of) the Mint; (dues of) the Bureau of Weights and Measures; (impost on) water buffalo, milch cows, and small livestock; (dues collected on) *ghurūs* lands, garden



plantations and vacant lots; (dues on) *ribā*<sup>35</sup> (imposts on) boats and ships; imposts other than poll taxes collected from non-Muslims; (sales tax on boats at) the Sāḥil al-Sanṭ; (taxes on) timberland; (Dīwān monopoly on) acacia pods; dike dues; the impost on straw; the impost on sugarcane; the postal tax; the impost on carpets; the “pedigree tith” (? *ushr al-‘irq*); and other commercial taxes.

As for the *jizyah*, or poll tax, that is known in our time as *jawālī*. It is collected in advance at the beginning of the year. A lot of tax money used to come from it in the past.

[25] The revenue from the poll taxes for the year 587 (A.D. 1191), says al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil’s record, came to 130,000 dinars.

[26] But in our own time the poll taxes have markedly decreased, because many Christians have taken to professing Islam in connection with the events that have (more recently) affected them.

[27] After al-Malik al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh had made himself the autocrat of Egypt (in 1412), as the successor of the caliph al-‘Abbās ibn Muḥammad, the Commander of the Faithful al-Musta‘īn bi-’l-lāh, he put a certain man in charge of collecting the poll taxes. After much inquiry into the affairs of the non-Muslims and after going to much trouble in collecting from them, the poll taxes in 816 (A.D. 1413) amounted to 11,400 dinars, this without counting money paid to dīwān employees, which is a sizable amount.

[28] As for the *marā‘ī*, or pastures, these are the free and lawful herbage which God Almighty has made to grow for man’s livestock to graze on. The first man to put them under government control in Egypt was Aḥmad ibn (al-)Mudabbar, after he had taken over as director of finance (in 861). For that purpose he created a dīwān and a tough administrator to prevent people from buying

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35. Sg. *rab*<sup>3</sup>, a two-story building complex similar to a *wakālah*, with shops and storerooms on the ground floor and living quarters on the floor above.

and selling pastures among themselves—unless it was done with his (taxable) permission.

[29] Earlier in our lifetime, the pastures in the communities of Upper Egypt were part of what was attached to the fiefs. The fief holder would collect from anyone who let his animals graze over the land of his community a certain tax per head each year, and from the owner of small livestock according to the size of his herd. But after things in Upper Egypt became disordered as a result of the events which have been going on since 806 (A.D. 1403/4), that practice went out of use. The old custom used to be that an inspector, notaries and a scribe were sent out to the pastures who would count the small livestock and collect a certain amount per head from the owners. But that would be only after the Nile level had dropped and the herbage had grown high enough for grazing.

[30] As for the *maṣāyid*, or fisheries, they are the food provided by God Almighty from the game of the sea. The first to put them under government control was again Ibn (al-)Mudabbar, who created a special bureau for them. But since he was ashamed to use the term *maṣāyid* and angered by the ugly things people said about them,<sup>(36)</sup> he had them listed in the tax register as *kharāj maḍārib al-awtād wā-maghāris al-shibāk*—“tax on the places where stakes are driven into the ground and nets are set up.” And that (designation) remained. In order to attend to these fishery taxes, one used to send an inspector, notaries and a scribe to various parts of the country, such as the Canal and Lake of Alexandria, Lake Nas-tirāwah, Damietta, the cataract above Uswān, and other ponds and lakes.

For (people) set out at the time when the Nile level drops and the water starts flowing back from the cropland to the Nile—before that the mouths of the secondary canals will have been sealed up

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36. Popular sentiment apparently interpreted their taxation as a violation of Koran 5 (The Table): 96: “Permitted to you is the game of the sea and the food of it, as a provision for you and for the journeyers.” Cf. C.H. Becker, *Beiträge*, 2:146.

and the sluices closed at the end of the Nile's rise so that the water will not recede and will accumulate by the side of the fields—and then nets are set up and the water is drained off. As the fish appear, swept along by the flowing water, they are blocked by the nets from going downstream with the water and begin to gather in the nets. They are then taken out on dry land, placed on papyrus mats, salted, and stored in earthenware pots. When they are done, they are sold and are then called *mulūḥah* or *ṣīr*. But this applies only to fish the size of a finger or less. When raw, this species is called *ib-sāriyyah*—"small fry." They are eaten grilled and fried.

In Lake Nastirāwah, Lake Tinnīs, and in the lake of Alexandria (Lake Maryūt), one catches a fish known as *būrī* (red mullet). It was so named because one used to catch it near a village of Tinnīs called Būrah which is now in ruins, and the relative adjective of which is *būrī*. Quite a number of people derive their name from it, among them the Būrī family (Banū 'l-Būrī). And that kind of fish was named after said village.

[31] In our own days, these fishery taxes have fallen into disuse, except at al-Burullus on Lake Nastirāwah and at Damietta on Lake Tinnīs. These two lakes fall under the jurisdiction of the Privy Dīwān and are farmed out as concessions, and whatever red mullets and other kinds of fish are taken out of them belong to the Sultan. No one can do any fishing there unless he is a fisherman for the concession. Ponds, marshes and canals other than these two lakes do not belong to the Sultan. As for the lake of Alexandria, it has dried up, and Uswān has since been lost to the sultanate and has been taken over by the Banū 'l-Kanz.<sup>(37)</sup>

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37. A subtribe of the Rabī'ah b. Nizār b. Ma'add b. 'Adnān. Originally from the Yamāmah, they entered Egypt in great numbers during the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil in the middle of the 9th century A.D. (cf. Maqrīzī, *al-Bayān wa-'l-i'rāb*, 44-46). Ibn Duqmāq mentions one Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Arrām as their tribal historian (*Intiṣār* 5:34).

There are also ponds in the possession of certain clans, such as the Birkat al-Fīl,<sup>(38)</sup> which belongs to the descendants of al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars, the Birkat al-Raṭlī,<sup>(39)</sup> which is in the hands of the descendants of Emir Baktimur al-Ḥāḥib, etc. The fish in these ponds belong to their proprietors in concession for them to sell. Nonetheless, no one forbids fishing in the two ponds.

[32] As far as the Nile is concerned, whatever fish are caught in it are taken to the fish market (Dār al-Samak) in Cairo, where they are sold and the sultan's tax is collected. Emir Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Ustādār,<sup>(40)</sup> however, raised the commercial tax one used to collect from the fishermen, and ever since that time there have been fewer fish in Cairo and the price of fish has gone up.

[33] Abū Sa'īd 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad ibn Yūnus says in his *History of Egypt*: There used to be an idol near Alexandria called "Sharāḥīl", which stood on a rocky outcropping in the sea, pointing with one finger of its hand toward Constantinople. No one knows if it was a work of the Prophet Solomon or of Alexander (the Great). Large fish used to swim round and round at Alexandria and one used to catch them near the city, as people have claimed. Zayd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd ibn Aslam said that he was told by his father, who heard it from his father, that the latter once stretched out flat on his stomach, both arms and legs extended, and the length of him was (the same as that of) the foot of that idol. Then a man by the name of Usāmah ibn Zayd, who was the finance director of Egypt, wrote to the caliph al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik:<sup>(41)</sup> "We have at

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38. *Khiṭaṭ* 2:161-62.

39. It was originally called *Birkat al-Ṭawwābūn*, then *Birkat al-Ḥāḥib*, after the chamberlain (*ḥāḥib*) Baktimur (*Khiṭaṭ* 2:64), and finally *Birkat al-Raṭlī* (cf. *Khiṭaṭ* 2:162).

40. A man of lowly origin from al-Bīrah in northern Syria who rose to a position of enormous power in Egypt under Barqūq. He was hanged in 812/1409. See al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'*, 10:294-97.

41. Usāmah. b. Zayd al-Tanūkhī could hardly have written that letter to al-Walīd, since it was al-Walīd's successor Sulaymān who appointed him to the position in 715. Compare the condensed version of this story in Ibn Duqmāq, *Intiṣār*, 5:125.

Alexandria an idol made of copper called Sharāḥīl. We are short on copper coinage, so if the Commander of the Faithful wants it to be brought ashore and minted into coin, it shall be done. If he thinks otherwise, he should write me his instructions.” And (the caliph) wrote back: “Do not take it ashore until I have sent you trusted agents who will fetch it.”<sup>(42)</sup> Then he dispatched several trusted men, and (the idol) was brought ashore from the rocky island. They discovered that its eyes were two worthless red rubies, and so (Usāmah) had it (melted down and) minted into copper coins. Whereupon the big fish left, and they never returned to the area again.

[34] As to the *zakāh*, or (obligatory) poor due, Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb is the first one who collected it in Egypt.

[35] Among the events of the 13th of Rabīʿ II, 567 (15 December 1171), al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil notes: After their collection, the various alms dues were distributed among the poor and needy, the wayfarers, and the debtors—after the four (canonical) shares had been turned over to the Treasury, that is, the shares destined for the collectors (of the poor due), for hearts to be conciliated, for waging war for God, and for the (ransoming of) slaves. An obligatory contribution was then established for the benefit of these people and (a tax) was (henceforth) collected on income, merchandise, and such livestock, palm trees and vegetables as the government has control over.

[36] The revenue secured from the poll taxes for the year 587 (A.D. 1191), reports (al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil), came to 130,000 dinars, and the increase of the alms and mint taxes for the years 586 and 587 was 21,861 dinars.

[37] Under the year '88, (al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil) notes: Ibn Ḥamdān was hired for service in the Dīwān al-Zakāh. He signed and approved an alms-tax account of 52,000 dinars for a single year. The

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42. Read with the Bulaq text: *yuhḍirūnahū*. Wiet: *yujfirūnahū*: (?).

*ṭawāshī* Qarāghush<sup>(43)</sup> was put in charge of that money, (with instructions) that it was not at his disposal, but must remain deposited in a box to be ordered up for contingencies.

[38] When the poet Ibn ‘Unayn<sup>(44)</sup> visited Egypt, coming from the court of the (Ayyūbid) ruler of the Yemen, al-Malik al-‘Azīz Sayf al-Islām Ṭughtigīn ibn Najm al-Dīn ibn Ayyūb ibn Shādhī—(the poet) had been generously rewarded when he came to (Ṭughtigīn’s) court and left it as a very rich man—officials of the Dīwān al-Zakāh in Egypt seized the commercial goods he had brought with him and demanded that he pay the alms tax on what he carried. That happened in the days of Sultan al-Malik al-‘Azīz ‘Uthmān ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb ibn Shādhī. Whereupon (the poet) declaimed:

Not everyone named “al-‘Azīz” deserves this title,  
nor comes each lightning bolt from rain-fraught clouds.  
The difference lies in what these “mighties” do:  
The one there gives, the other takes the alms tax.

[39] Al-‘Azīz (‘Uthmān) later ordered an investigation of the alms taxes that were being collected, because ugly rumors<sup>(45)</sup> about them had been brought to his attention—for instance, that one took alms tax from a poor man selling salt from a *quffah* by his side

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43. Bahā’ al-Dīn Abū Sa’īd Qarāghush (more commonly: Qarāqūsh) b. ‘Abd-Allāh al-Asadī, a slave eunuch of Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh, then trusted lieutenant of Saladin, who made him vicegerent of Egypt and, after the capture of Acre, governor of that important fortified port. (He ransomed himself for 10,000 dinars after the city surrendered during the Third Crusade.) A great builder, he is credited with the construction of the Cairo city wall, the Citadel, the aqueduct of Gīzah, and several other structures. Saladin’s son and successor, al-Malik al-‘Azīz, put him in charge of all taxes and imposts in 592/1196. He died in 597/1201. Cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 4:91-92.

44. Sharaf al-Dīn Abū ‘l-Mahāsīn Muḥammad b. Naṣr b. al-Ḥusayn, born 549/1154 in Damascus, died there 630/1232. Banished from his native city by Saladin for his sharp satirical attacks, he roamed over most of the Middle East as far as India and Transoxiana. See his biography (with liberal samples of his art) in *Wafayāt* 5:14-19.

45. Read: *aqwāl shanī‘ah* (or *shanī‘ah*, as in the Bulaq text). Wiet: *sab‘ah* (?).

on the content of his basket; or that a camel was sold for five dinars on which five dirhams were taken in alms tax. He then ordered that the alms tax be left to the discretion of the taxpayers: If someone owed alms taxes and delivered them to the *Dīwān al-Zakāh*, the latter would accept them from him, but if someone did not turn them in, nothing would be done about it. As a result, the rich were so stingy in paying the alms taxes due on their properties that the poor people complained, and the collectors of the alms tax began to spend a good deal of money on the concession for it, in the hope that the tax would become once more the way it was before. (The sultan) then entrusted the superintendency of the *Dīwān al-Zakāh* to Judge al-As'ad—Sharaf al-Dīn Abū 'l-Makārim As'ad ibn Muḥadhdhab ibn Mammātī, that is—who regularly collected the alms taxes from those liable. But later they were farmed out (again) in concession, and things reverted to the same extortion and injustice that had characterized their collection before.

The minions of the alms-tax commissioner would go to *Munyat Banī Khaṣīb*, *Ikhmīm* and *Qūṣ* to check up on travelers, such as traders, pilgrims, and others, and search for everything they carried, (even) sticking their hands into the men's sashes, lest they carry money on them, making all swear solemn oaths on what they possessed and what they were carrying with them other than what (the officials) had already found. A group of especially insolent types of those constables, armed with long pack needles with handles (on one end), would board the river boats and poke with their needles into all the cargo and baggage, lest there be some hidden merchandise or money. Such are the excesses of their search and investigation that their doings must be roundly condemned as disgraceful and scandalous. Pilgrims will stand before those minions, humiliated and insulted because of the things that are brought to light when their sashes and baggage are searched, and will suffer untold injustice and maltreatment. And such has been the practice throughout Egypt since the time of Sultan *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb*!

[40] Later on,<sup>(46)</sup> during the reign of al-Malik al-Kāmil Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad, the son of al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb ibn Shādhī, (the Sultan) had the two shares for the poor and the needy removed from the alms taxes customarily collected from the people and spent for the purposes intended by canonical law: Out of the two shares he set up stipends to be paid out to the poor and the pious, and that action of his met with general approval.

[41] As to the *thughūr*, or frontier districts, these are Damietta, Tinnis, Rosetta, ʿAydḥāb, Uswān, and Alexandria.

(Alexandria) is the largest and most important of them [and the one with the highest tax revenue], because it had (in addition to the taxes collected in the others) a number of imposts [which are unique to it], among them the *khums* and the *matjar*.<sup>(47)</sup>

The *khums*, or double tithe, is what one collects from Byzantine traders arriving by sea on the merchandise they bring with them for trade, by virtue of the terms of their peace agreements. That levy may sometimes be close to thirty-five dinars on merchandise worth one hundred dinars and sometimes less than twenty dinars, but in both cases they are called *khums*.

There are certain kinds of Byzantines from whom one collects the *ʿushr*, or simple tithe, [but since the *khums* is higher, one refers to it more commonly by the name of the latter.]

For all of that there are established imposts [and well-known ways of the officials (to collect them)].

[42] The revenue from the double tithe of Alexandria for the year 587 (A.D. 1191), says al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, was 28,613 dinars.

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46. This paragraph is missing in the Bulaq edition.

47. This passage, and sections 43, 46, 47, 51, 58-64 of this chapter, are drawn from Ibn Mammātī's *Qawānīn* (ed. Atiya pp. 325-53). Portions of the source text are added in square brackets without further annotation in order to restore the intended sense in Maqrizī's very loose adaptation.



[43] By *matjar* are meant such wares [of those foreign traders] bought for the government as are called for by need and necessitated by the desire for profit.

[44] The (anonymous) biographer of the vizier al-Yāzūrī reports: In 444 (A.D. 1052), the Nile failed to rise to the needed level in Egypt, and there was no grain at all in the royal storehouses, with the result that the famine in Egypt became even more severe. There was a compelling reason why the storehouses were empty, namely: Already appointed (chief) justice in the days of the vizier Abū 'l-Barakāt,<sup>(48)</sup> the vizier al-Nāṣir-lil-Dīn (al-Yāzūrī) used to buy for the government every year 100,000 dinars worth of grain which was made into a government store for later resale. Then (one day) the judge appeared before the caliph al-Mustanṣir-bi-'llāh and explained to him that the present government store based on grain was actually most detrimental to the Muslims. Sometimes the price would drop below the purchasing price of the grain so that it could not be sold, with the result that the grain would spoil and go to ruin in the storehouses. He would (therefore) create a government store which would mean no inconvenience at all to the public and would yield twice the profit of grain, without anyone having to fear that it might spoil in storage and without (the liability of) a decline in price—namely, (a store of) lumber, soap, iron, lead, molasses, and the like. The sovereign told him to implement his idea, and it continued to be the practice, with lasting prosperity for the people which they enjoyed for years to come.

[45] Later on, the rulers created a special *dīwān* for the *matjar*. The last one to do so was al-Zāhir Barqūq.

[46] As far as alum is concerned, the mines for it are located in [the desert of] Upper Egypt. The *Dīwān* used to pay thirty dirhams per *laythī* quintal<sup>(49)</sup> upon receipt. Bedouins used to deliv-

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48. I.e., al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Jarjarā'ī, who served as al-Mustanṣir's vizier from 1048 to 1050. He was the nephew of the Fāṭimid vizier (1028-1045), Ṣafīy al-Dīn Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Jarjarā'ī.

49. The *qinṭār laythī*, consisting of 100 *raṭl laythī* of 200 *dirham* = 62 kg, as

er it from its mines to the wharfs of Ikhmīm, Asyūṭ and al-Bahnasā [if it was brought in from the Oases], and [from any one of these wharfs] it was then shipped on the Canal to Alexandria at the time of the Nile flood.

One buys it by the *laythī* quintal and sells it by the *jarawī* quintal. 12,000 quintals of it are regularly sold to the Byzantine traders at four to six dinars the quintal. In Egypt, some 80 *jarawī* quintals of it are sold to the felters, matters and dyers at seven and a half dinars the quintal [but most of what is sold is in government store: 5,000 quintals].

No one could buy it (directly) from the bedouins or from anyone else. If someone was found out to have bought or sold a quantity of it at the exclusion of the Dīwān, he was severely punished and the alum found in his possession was confiscated. Nowadays this has been abolished.

[47] As to natron, it is found on Egypt's west bank in the vicinity of al-Ṭarrānah.<sup>(50)</sup> It is [of two kinds:] red and green [of which the green is the one most in demand]. A smaller deposit than the one at al-Ṭarrānah is found in the Fāqūs area.<sup>(51)</sup> [The government pays two dirhams per quintal, while the price of a quintal in Old Cairo and Alexandria, because of the keen demand for it, is seventy dirhams.]

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distinguished from the *qintār jarawī* of 100 *raṭl jarawī* of 312 *dirham* each = 96.7 kg (Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, 25, 29).

50. Called *Tarnūṭ* (Copt. Ternout, from anc. Eg. *Per Rannūt*) by Ibn Khurradādhbih, Ibn Hawqal, al-Idrīsī, Yāqūt. It is a small town (in the present-day district of Kōm Ḥamādah) on the west bank of the Rosetta arm of the Nile, terminal of the railway spur to the Wādī al-Naṭrūn. Cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 2:331. —The natron lakes of al-Ṭarrānah were considered one of the “42 wonders of the world found in Egypt” (al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 79, 234).
51. Al-Fāqūsiyyah. The Fāqūs here is the ancient *Pakes*, Greek *Aphrouspolis*, in the Eastern Ḥawf, whereas the present town and district seat of Fāqūs (between al-Zaqāziq and al-Manṣūrah) dates from the Ottoman period. Cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 1:116.

[48] (Natron) is another one of the things which used to be free and on which Ibn (al-)Mudabbar imposed an embargo by putting it under direct government control, where it has remained after him to this day. The procedure followed by the *Dīwān* with regard to it used to be to have 10,000 quintals of natron per year delivered (to the government) and to allow the concessionaires an annual amount of 30,000 quintals, which they receive from al-Ṭar-rānah and which are then sold in Old Cairo by the *miṣrī* quintal, along the Red Sea coast and in Upper Egypt by the *jarawī* quintal and in Damietta by the *laythī* quintal.

[49] Natron, reports al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, used to be farmed out in concession until the end of the year 585 (A.D. 1189) for the amount of 15,500 dinars, and the (tax) yield from it in was 7,800 dinars.

In our younger days, natron was (still) given in fief to a number of *ḥalqah* troopers. [50] But after Emir Maḥmūd ibn ‘Alī had assumed the office of majordomo and (at the same time) became head of the vizierial apparat in the days of al-Zāhir Barqūq,<sup>(52)</sup> he made natron a state monopoly and created one outlet only for its sale. And this has been so ever since.

[51] As for the Juyūshī Endowment, that used to be on the eastern and on the western sides of the Nile, (comprising) on the east bank Bahtīt, al-Amīriyyah and al-Munayyah—communities assessed in the books for cash [payment by feddan]—and on the west bank Saft, Nahyā and Wasīm. Those communities were inalienably endowed by Amīr al-Juyūsh Badr al-Jamālī to his descendants, together with the garden plantations outside the Bāb al-Futūḥ.

[52] After (Badr al-Jamālī’s) death, as time went by, successive viziers, out for a profit, leased (the garden plantations) for a small fee. Then they were incorporated in the *Dīwān*.

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52. Cf. *Khiṭaṭ* 2:222. —Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī b. “Iṣfarra ‘Aynuh” al-Sūdūnī died in 799/1397 (Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 4:329).

[53] Ibn al-Ma'mūn records in his *Chronicle*: All of the garden plantations belonging to the heirs of the Amīr al-Juyūsh, together with the villages they own, were still in their possession at the time of the vizier al-Ma'mūn al-Baṭā'ihī none having been lost through a tax concession or otherwise.

[54] After the death of the caliph al-Āmīr-bi-aḥkāmi-'llāh (in 1130), while Abū 'Alī (Aḥmad) ibn al-Afḍal ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh held the vizierate, he gave all of it back to the owners because his own share was the largest in it. After he was killed (in 1131) and the caliph al-Ḥāfiẓ-li-dīni-'llāh had asserted himself as ruler, the latter ordered the seizure of all landed properties and the dissolution of the endowments attached to the Amīr al-Juyūsh. But Yānis (al-Armanī), as the slave of al-Afḍal (ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh) and as the vizier at that time, and 'Izz al-Mulk, the slave of al-Awḥad ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh, kept politely appealing to the Caliph, supported by documents which the heirs produced and which bore the signatures of the (previous) caliphs, until (al-Ḥāfiẓ relented and) let the heirs keep the properties and did not take them away from them. Then, in 527 (A.D. 1133), they were placed in the protective custody of the (Privy) Dīwān of al-Ḥāfiẓ. In 531, while (al-Afḍal's sons) al-Khaṭīr and al-Murtaḍā served under the vizier Riḍwān ibn Walakhshī, the latter returned to the heirs the garden plantations alone, without the villages, on account of the poor condition they were in by then and their inadequate tax revenue. And when the line of the Amīr al-Juyūsh died out and there was only an old woman left, the jurists of the time declared the Endowment null and void, whereupon the villages were taken over and became part of the government taxation system. Today, some of them are administered by the Royal Dīwān, others have become religious endowments, prebends for members of the ulema class, and the like.

[55] As far as the *Dār al-Ḍarb*, or Mint, is concerned, there used to be a mint in Cairo, another in Alexandria, and another in Qūṣ. Only the Chief Justice, or a person specially designated by him, used to be responsible for the Mint's standard. But then, in

our own time, the Mint has become so debased that wicked Jewish converts, people who persist in their wickedness despite their claim of having become Muslims, have gotten to be in charge of it.

One used to make every effort to fine gold and precisely determine its standard, until al-Nāṣir Faraj upset that practice by minting “*nāṣiri*” dinars,” which turned out to be underweight.

The common currency in Egypt used to be pure silver, but al-Malik al-Kāmil Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ayyūb broke with that tradition in the (six-)twenties<sup>(53)</sup> when he had the round dirham called the *kāmīlī* struck, into which went one-third copper and two-thirds silver. It continued to be minted in Cairo, until Emir Maḥmūd (ibn ‘Alī) al-Ustādār had large quantities of copper coin struck in Cairo and Alexandria, so that the dirham went out of circulation in Egypt and the (copper) *fiḥs* has become the common currency of the Egyptians to this day; by it one determines the value of gold and of all marketable commodities. This will be dealt with again, God willing, when we discuss the reasons for Egypt’s decay and ruin.

One used to collect from the Mint a great deal of tax money, but nowadays that has become very little, because the country is impoverished. Today, the Mint falls under the jurisdiction of the Privy Dīwān.

[56] The *Dār al-‘Iyār* used to be a place where one protected the interests of the subjects and corrected their weights and measures; a tax was collected on it for the government. Sultan Saladin made it part of the endowments of the city wall of Cairo. It will be discussed within the context of the precincts of Cairo in this book.<sup>(54)</sup>

[57] The *aḥkār* are fixed rents collected on empty lots in Miṣr and Cairo. Some of these lots became residential housing, others

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53. In his *Shudhūr al-nuqūd* (translated by de Sacy as “Traité des monnoies,” *Bibl. des Arabisants* I, 38), Maqrīzī gives the date as 622 A.H. (A.D. 1225).

54. *Khīṭaṭ* 1:464.

were developed as garden plantations. These rents used to form part of the regular government taxes. But that was abolished by the Dīwān, and the *aḥkār* of Miṣr and Cairo and of the areas between the two became endowments settled on a variety of tax sources.

[58] As to the *ghurūs*, they were—in the Gharbiyyah province only—certain lands [not reached by the Nile] on which one used to collect something like a *ḥikr*, or quitrent, a given impost per feddan. That, too, is no longer practiced by the Dīwān.

[59] The *muqarrar al-jusūr*, or dike impost: Every rural community had to specify a given number of land parcels on each of which one would collect from the community ten dinars to be spent on the construction and repair of the dikes. As a result, a lot of tax money from that would be left over which was turned over to the Treasury. This was also abolished.

(More recently) al-Nāṣir Faraj has come up with some new things with regard to the dikes which will be discussed among the causes of ruin and decay.

[60] The *muwazzaf al-atbān*, or straw allotment: All straw in Egypt used to be divided into three parts: one part belonging to the government, one part to the tax farmer or feudal lord, and one part to the fellah. On that basis, a tax on straw was levied in all regions, and [in the case of] straw [belonging to the government] one collected [a tax of]  $4 \frac{1}{6}$  dinars per one hundred loads. As a result, a great deal of tax money would come in from that source. This has also been stricken from the Dīwān.

[61] The *ḥirāj*, or timberlands: There used to be countless *sant* (acacia) trees in the areas of al-Bahnasā, Saṭṭ Rashīn, al-Ushmūnayn, Asyūt, Ikḥmīm and Qūṣ, with special guards to protect the trees so that they can be used for the construction of naval vessels. (Formerly) one would cut down only as many trees as demand called for. [But successive governors and feudal landlords sent men to those forests and had them fell so many trees that at Qūṣ (for instance) only a negligible number of them are left.] Among the trees

were some where a single log could be worth as much as one hundred dinars.

One used to collect from the people of those communities a tax called *rasm al-ḥirāj*—“forest fee”. The argument for its levy was that it represented the equivalent for the acacia wood the local population might use for their buildings. Another tax one used to levy on them was known as *muqarrar al-sant*, or “acacia impost,” out of which one would defray the wages for felling and trimming the timber, through an impost of one dinar per one hundred loads.

Officials assigned there were under orders not to cut down acacia trees suitable for naval construction. But what they would cut was the branches which can be used as fuel only. Such trimmings are called *ḥaṭab al-nār*—firewood. Some of it was then sold to dealers for four dinars per one hundred loads. The weight of what was sold to them was recorded by the officials, and when the boats carrying the firewood arrived at the wharf of Old Cairo, (the dealers) were assessed for the tax they owed. One compared the cargo with the specifications in the accompanying bill of lading and collected one-eighth of (the value indicated) in the latter as tax. It was customary to sell only as much firewood from al-Bahnasā as was left after meeting the needs of the royal kitchens.

All of that is now obsolete. People took possession of those trees; with the result that none at all are left today and the whole thing has passed into oblivion as far as the government is concerned.

[62] (The term) *qaraḥ* designates the fruit of the acacia tree I have just discussed. Only the government had the right to dispose over it,<sup>(55)</sup> and when someone was discovered to have acacia pods that he had bought from a source other than the Dīwān, he was severely punished and the *qaraḥ* found in his possession was confiscated and put up for public sale.

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55. Acacia pods were an important resource for making ink.

When the money (from the sale) of acacia pods was all in, it was used to build boats to be sold. As soon as these arrived at the wharf of Old Cairo, after having been appraised or auctioned off, one-fourth of their value was collected [from their owners] as tax [on the lumber used (for their construction)]. There was great injustice involved in their sale.

That has been discontinued.

[63] Concerning exactions from non-Muslims: One used to collect from them on incoming and outgoing merchandise in their possession—in Old Cairo, Alexandria and Ikhmīm alone, not in all other towns—imposts determined by the Dīwān. That, too, has been abolished.

[64] As for the imposts on water buffalo, milch cows, and small livestock, very much (tax money) used to be due to the government from these categories. One used to collect, for instance, on water buffalo for the Dīwān per head of fully grown animals in return for their annual yield in income from five to three dinars, and on not fully mature animals at the rate of half of that of the fully grown. The minimum number of newborn animals [collected] was fifty head per one hundred head, in addition to other fixed imposts on water buffalo, milch cows, milch ewes and goats, and on honeybees.

All of that is no longer in effect, on account of the sultan's poor tax revenue and his refusal to attend to reconstruction and to deal with the causes of decay.

[65] The inheritance laws under the Fāṭimids were different from what they are today, because their legal approach allowed inheritance in the maternal line and entitled an only surviving daughter to inherit the entire estate. Since the end of the Fāṭimid era, when first the Ayyūbid and then the Turkish (Mamluk) regimes came to power, the property of (so-called) *mawārīth ḥashriyyah*—that is, estates which go to the Treasury when there is no male heir—has become part of the government tax system.



Viziers sometimes handle them with justice; at other times, they do not.

[66] As for the *mukūs*, or special imposts, it has already been described how they came about and what successive rulers did with them. Those which have survived in Egypt until now are the responsibility of the vizier, but what they are in reality is a boon for the Copts which the latter unrightfully guard.

The *mukūs* in our time have become twice as many as we used to have since the time when Emir Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf (ibn Aḥmad) al-Ustādār was in charge of the government tax system, something that will be mentioned among the causes of ruin and decay.

[67] As for the “presents of gratitude”,<sup>(56)</sup> these are monies received from the police chiefs, market censors, judges and tax collectors of the towns. The first one to practice that in Egypt was (the Fāṭimid vizier) al-Sāliḥ ibn Ruzzīq, among rural police chiefs only. Then it went out of use, but was practiced again occasionally in the days of Saladin’s son al-‘Azīz (‘Uthmān). Emir Shaykhū<sup>(57)</sup> applied the practice only to police chiefs. Later on, al-Zāhir Barqūq abused it outrageously, as will be mentioned among the causes of decline and ruin.

[68] As for *ḥimāyāt*, or protection taxes, and *musta’jarāt*, or “rental dues”, these are something that came about in the days of al-Nāṣir Faraj. A *dīwān* with collecting officials was set up for that purpose, and the emirs have since practiced the like of it. It is one

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56. The original meaning of *barā’iḥ* (singular: *bir’iḥ*, from Persian *partala* ‘gift, present’; hence, in modern usage, ‘bribe’, specifically, one to influence a judge). A *bir’iḥ* was, like the Persian *pīshkesh*, a generous “present” given to a superior, a prince, etc., especially on the occasion of one’s appointment to an office. While the term itself may have come in with the Fāṭimids, as Maqrīzī claims, the practice of “presents of gratitude” was certainly older. They were, as shown in sect. 4 above, then called *rusūm* (‘procedural dues’) or *marāfiq* (‘kindnesses’). Even the obscure terms *munfalit* and (*rusūm*) *al-falat* in sect. 5 may be no more than euphemisms for similar practices.

57. Sayf al-Dīn Shaykhū al-Nāṣirī al-‘Umarī (d. 758/1357); cf. *Khīṭaṭ* 2:313. —Wiet/Bulaq: Shaykhūn (?).

of the most important causes of decline and ruin, as will be shown in its proper place.

## 40. The Pyramids<sup>(1)</sup>

[1] One should know that the pyramids in Egypt were once very numerous. There are (still) a great many of them in the area of Būṣīr: some of them large, some small, some built of clay and mud brick, but most of them of stone; one of them is built in steps, but most of them have a smooth tapering shape. There also used to be a great number of them at Gīzah, opposite the city of Fuṣṭāṭ, all of them small, which were demolished at the time of Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb by Qarāqūsh, who used them as building material for the Citadel, the wall surrounding Cairo and Fuṣṭāṭ, and the aqueduct at Gīzah.

The largest of the pyramids are the three which have been standing opposite Fuṣṭāṭ to this day. People have disagreed as to the time they were built, the person who built them, and the reason for their construction, and have advanced diverse claims about that, most of them wrong. I shall now tell as much of that lore as will, God Exalted willing, provide a satisfactory and adequate answer.

[2] Master Ibrāhīm ibn Waṣīf Shāh al-Kātib says in his *Story of Egypt and Her Wonders*, as he tells the story of Sawrīd, son of Sahlūq, son of Sarbāq, son of Būsaydūn, son of Qadrashān, son of Harṣāl, one of the kings of Egypt before The Flood who resided in the city of Amsūs, which will be discussed when we deal with the towns of Egypt in this book: It was (Sawrīd) who built the two large pyramids near Fuṣṭāṭ which are ascribed to Shaddād ibn ʿĀd; the Copts, however, deny, on account of their powerful magic, that the ʿĀdites could have invaded their country.

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1. Unfortunately, Stowasser's notes for this chapter are not in the Georgetown Library copy of the typescript and seem to be lost.

[3] The reason for building the two pyramids was that, three hundred years before The Flood, Sawrīd had a dream in which the Earth with its inhabitants turned upside down, people fled in headlong flight, and the stars fell down, crashing into one another with terrifying noises. That troubled him, but he told no one about it; he realized that some momentous thing was going to happen in the world. Then, a few days later, he dreamt that the fixed stars descended to Earth in the shape of white birds, and that these snatched up people and hurled them between two huge mountains, and that the mountains closed over them and the luminous stars became dark and obscured. He woke up frightened and terrified and went to the sun temple where he humbled himself, rolling his cheeks in the dust and crying. In the morning he assembled the leading seers from all the districts of Egypt, one hundred and thirty seers altogether, and, having withdrawn with them for secret consultation, told them what he had seen in his dreams from beginning to end. They interpreted it to mean that some momentous event was going to happen in the world. Then the High Priest by the name of Philemon said to him: "The dreams of kings, because of their great power, cannot be considered meaningless. I myself shall tell the King of a dream vision I had a year ago and which I have not mentioned to anyone. I saw myself sitting with the King right in the middle on top of that tower in Amsūs, and it was as if the firmament sank down until it was close to our heads and became like a surrounding dome above us; the King raised his arms to the sky as we found ourselves amid its stars in sundry shapes and different forms; people were running headlong to the King's palace, appealing to him for help; the King raised his hands to his head and ordered me to do what he did. And as we were in dreadful fear, we suddenly saw the sky open up in one place and a bright light emanating from it and the sun rising from it above our heads; we implored the sun for help, and it spoke to us, saying, 'The firmament will return to its place!' At that point I woke up in terror. [4] Then I fell asleep again. [5] And I dreamed that the city of Amsūs with its people had turned upside down and the idols had toppled over on

their faces; and I saw men descending from heaven carrying iron crooks with which they struck people, and when I asked them, 'Why are you doing this to the people?' they replied, 'Because they have not believed in their god.' I asked, 'So is there no salvation left for them?' and they said, 'Oh yes, let those who seek salvation attach themselves to the master of the Ark!' Whereupon I woke up in terror."

[6] The king then said, "Measure the elevation of the stars and see if something will happen!" And they did their utmost in trying to get to the bottom of the matter and finally told him of The Flood to come and a fire afterward that would issue from the sign of Leo to consume the world. [7] "See if that calamity will befall our country!" the king then said, and they answered, "Yes indeed, The Flood will wipe out most of it, and it will suffer ruin that will last for several years." [8] "Then see," said the king, "if it will prosper again as before, or whether it will remain submerged by water forever!" [9] They said, "No, the country will become again the way it was and it will prosper." "Then what?" asked the king. "A king will invade it," they replied, "who will kill its people and pillage its possessions." "Then what?" asked the king. "A misshapen people will invade it, coming from the direction of (the Mountain of) the Nile, and will rule the greater part of it," they answered. "Then what?" asked the king. "Its Nile will run dry and the country will become depopulated," they said.

[10] At that point, (Sawrīd) ordered the pyramids to be built and channels leading to them to be dug through which the Nile could reach a specific place and then overflow to certain points in the land to the west and in Upper Egypt. And he had the pyramids filled with talismans, wondrous works, treasures, idols, and the bodies of the Egyptian kings. The priests he ordered to inscribe on them everything the ancient sages had said.

[11] On them and on their ceilings and columns he had all the secret sciences recorded that the Egyptians lay claim to; he had the images of the stars painted there and the names of the medicinal

drugs inscribed, together with their beneficial and their harmful properties, as well as the science of natural magic, the science of arithmetic and geometry, and all of their sciences in general, understandable to those who know their writing and their language.

[12] As he began with the construction of the pyramids, he had huge columns carved out, tremendous stone slabs laid out, lead mined in the land to the west, and boulders brought in from the area of Uswān. With these he built the foundations of the three Pyramids: the eastern, the western, and the colored one. They had sheets with writing on them, and when a stone was cut and completely dressed, they would place those sheets on it and give it a push by which the stone was propelled forward over a distance of one hundred *sahm*. They kept repeating that until the stone reached the pyramids.

They would lay out a stone slab and place in a hole in the center of it a vertical iron pivot, then mount on top of it another stone slab pierced in the center and insert the pivot in it. Next, lead was smelted and poured, neatly and expertly, into (the interstice between) the pivot and the surrounding slab until (the two slabs) were perfectly sealed together.

Forty cubits below the ground he had entrances to the pyramids made. The entrance to the eastern pyramid was on the east side, one hundred cubits from the center of the pyramid wall, the entrance to the western pyramid on the west side, also one hundred cubits from the center of the pyramid wall, and the entrance to the colored pyramid on the south side, likewise one hundred cubits from the center of the pyramid wall. When one digs the distance of the above measurement, one reaches the vaulted passageway that was built as the entryway to the pyramid entrance.

He made the height of each of the pyramids above the ground one hundred cubits, measured by the “royal cubit,” which was their cubit—which corresponds to (a height of) five hundred cubits in terms of our present-day cubit. The length of each on all (four)

sides (at the base) he also made one hundred cubits in terms of their cubit. Then he had them shaped symmetrically on each side in such a way that their summits tapered off to a sharp point at a height of three hundred cubits of our kind from (each) end of their lateral base.

The construction of the pyramids was begun under a lucky star on which they had reached agreement and which they had carefully selected. And when they were finished, he had them draped from top to bottom in colored brocade and had a festival held in their honor which was attended by all the people of his kingdom.

Then he had thirty treasure vaults of colored granite made inside the western pyramid, and these were filled with rich treasures, with implements and statues made of precious stones, with tools made of first-rate iron—such as weapons that would not rust, with glass that could be folded without breaking, with strange talismans, with the various kinds of simple and compound drugs, and with lethal poisons.

In the eastern pyramid he had the various celestial domes and the planets depicted and also had such statues erected as his ancestors had created, and he had incense deposited there which one offered up to the stars, and the books written on them. He had the fixed stars represented, and that which happened in their periods time after time, and the epochs established with regard to them, and he had the events of the past recorded, and the times in which one expects future happenings, and (the names of) all the rulers of Egypt to the end of time. Moreover, he had ceremonial vessels set up containing medicinal potions, and the like.

In the colored pyramid he had the bodies of the priests placed, in coffins made of black granite, and each priest had a book by his side that contained the record of his wondrous arts and deeds, his biography, what he had accomplished in his time, and what was and what will be from the beginning of time to the end. Along the walls on each side he had idols placed which performed with their

hands all the arts, (arranged) according to their rank and power. There was also a description of every alchemical skill, of how to handle it, and of the things suitable for its practice. There was not a single science that he did not write down and record. Moreover, he had the treasures of the stars taken there, which had been offered up to them as gifts, and the treasures of the priests, a huge amount beyond counting.

For each pyramid he assigned a guardian. The guardian of the western pyramid was an idol of marbled granite, standing erect and carrying a kind of lance, with a snake wrapped crownlike around his head: whenever someone approached the idol, the snake lunged forward, coiled itself around his neck and killed him; then it returned to its place. As the guardian of the eastern pyramid he assigned an idol made of onyx with black and white marbling; it had wide-open, flashing eyes and was seated on a throne, holding a lance: someone looking at it would hear a terrifying sound coming from it, and he would fall on his face, unable to leave until he was dead. As the guardian of the colored pyramid he assigned an idol made of eaglestone on a socle of the same stone: whoever laid eyes on it would be attracted by it so that he remained stuck to it, unable to tear himself away until he died.

After the king was done with all that, he had access to the pyramids denied by spirits to whom he offered up sacrifices so that they would keep intruders away from their interior, with the exception of people who performed the necessary rituals in order to gain access.

The Copts report in their scriptures that there is an inscription engraved on the pyramids which reads in Arabic translation: "I, Sawrīd the King, built these pyramids at such-and-such a time, and I completed their construction in six years. Let him who comes after me and claims to be a king like me destroy them in six hundred years! Though it is well known that destroying is easier than building. When they were finished, I draped them in brocade; let him



cover them with mats!" They looked and discovered that no length of time could destroy them.

[13] The Copts relate in their scriptures that the spirit of the northern pyramid was a beardless youth of yellow complexion, naked, with large fangs in his mouth; that the spirit of the southern pyramid was a nude woman, her pudenda exposed, of great beauty, with large fangs in her mouth, who, on seeing a man, would bewitch him, smile at him so that he approached her, and then rob him of his senses; and that the spirit of the colored pyramid was an old man who held a censer of the kind they use in churches in his hand and was burning incense in it. Many people have seen those spirits time and again as they circled the Pyramids at noontime and at sunset.

[14] After Sawrīd had died, he was buried in the (eastern) pyramid, together with his possessions and treasures. [15] The Copts say that it was he who built the temples, deposited treasures in them, had sciences inscribed on their walls, and appointed spirits to guard them against intruders.

[16] As to the pyramids of Dahshūr, these are said to have been built by Shaddāt ibn ʿAdīm with stones quarried at the time of his father. This Shaddāt, claim some people, is identical with Shaddād ibn ʿĀd. Those who deny that the ʿĀdites could have invaded Egypt say that people merely confused the name of Shaddāt ibn ʿAdīm and said Shaddād ibn ʿĀd instead, because the latter is very often on their lips, while the former is rarely talked about. At any rate, no king was able to invade Egypt and subjugate its people except Nebuchadnezzar. But God alone knows the truth.

[17] Abū ʿl-Ḥasan al-Masʿūdī relates in his *History of Time and of Those Eliminated by Its Reverses* that when the caliph ʿAbd-Allāh al-Maʿmūn ibn Hārūn al-Rashīd came to Egypt and visited the Pyramids, he wanted to have one of them destroyed in order to find out what was inside them. He was told, "This is not in your power!" but he replied, "Some part of the pyramid simply must be opened!"

And so the breach that is still open nowadays was made for him, by setting fire to it and sprinkling vinegar on it and applying mattocks, and blacksmiths toiling away, so that he spent a lot of money on the undertaking. They found out that the thickness of the wall was close to twenty cubits, and when they finally got to the end of the wall, they discovered behind the (entrance) tunnel a green receptacle containing gold coins, each dinar weighing one *ūqiyah* (37.5 g) and the number of dinars coming to one thousand. Al-Ma'mūn began to wonder about that gold and its excellent quality. Then he had his expenditures for making the breach added up, and they discovered that the gold they had found was no more and no less than what they had spent on its discovery. He was much astonished that (those people) had known how much he was going to spend and had left the exact equivalent in that place. The vessel in which the gold was found is said to have been of chrysolite, and al-Ma'mūn had it taken to his treasuries; it was the last of Egypt's wonders to be moved away.

For years people kept visiting the pyramid and descending through the sloping shaft in it to its interior; some of them came away unscathed and some of them perished. Thus, twenty youngsters once agreed to enter the pyramid. Having provided themselves with the necessary food, drink, ropes, candles, etc., they went down through the shaft where they saw bats the size of eagles that struck their faces. Then they lowered one from their midst with ropes, when suddenly the ground closed above him. They tried to pull him up until they just could not go on any more. Then they heard a terrifying sound, and they all fainted. After a while they came to and left the pyramid, and as they were sitting around, marveling at what had just happened to them, the ground suddenly spat out their companion, alive, right in front of their eyes. He said a few words they did not understand and dropped dead. As they carried him away, they were picked up by the guards and taken to the governor. They told him their story, and when they asked him about the words their companion had said before he died, they were told that they meant, "This is a punishment for those who seek what is not

theirs." The man who interpreted their meaning to them was someone from Upper Egypt.

[18] The physician 'Alī ibn Riḍwān says: As I pondered the construction of the pyramids, the science of applied geometry and of lifting heavy bodies suggested the necessary conclusion that people must have designed a square surface, dressed the stones as male and female, and then joined them tightly together with marine gypsum, until the edifice had risen as high as a heavy body could be hoisted. The higher up they went, the more they contracted the construction, so that the surface parallel to the lower square would become a smaller square than the one beneath. Then they built on top of the upper square surface another square smaller by as much space around the edges as would allow them to lift a heavy body up on it. Whenever they had hoisted a neatly dressed stone up, they would fit it in tightly, male-and-female style, until (the structure) was as high as the first (layer). They kept doing that until they reached a point beyond which they could not continue, whereupon they stopped going up and, starting on top and working their way down, trimmed off the protruding margins in which they had made incisions for hoisting the heavy loads; (in that manner) the whole thing became one (solid) pyramid.

Each side of the first pyramid measures (at the base) 400 cubits in terms of the cubit by which one measures buildings in Egypt today, which is 500 cubits in terms of "black" cubits with a length of 24 fingers each. For its base is a quadrangle of equal sides and angles, two sides being parallel with the meridian and two parallel with the east-west line, each side 500 cubits, in terms of the "black" cubit, long. The straight line descending from the summit of the pyramid to the middle of any side of the (base) square measures 470 cubits, hence, if one completes the pyramid, also 500 cubits. The pyramid is enclosed by four triangles and a square; each triangle is an isosceles triangle of which each of the two (equal) sides, if one completes the pyramid, measures 560 cubits. The vertices of the triangles meet at one point, which is the vertex of the pyramid, if

one completes it; hence, its perpendicular must necessarily measure 430 cubits. On this perpendicular lie the centers of its gravity. The surface area of each of the triangles is 125,000 (square) cubits, hence, their areas added together make a surface of 500,000 (square) cubits. I do not believe there is a more grandiose, better designed and taller edifice on the face of the Earth. But God alone knows the truth.

[19] Al-Ma'mūn had a hole made in that pyramid, and inside it one found a sloping shaft leading up to a quadrilateral, cube-shaped chamber with a marble sarcophagus in its center; it has remained there to this day and no one has been able to take it down. That is why Galen reports that the pyramids are tombs. For he states at the end of the fifth book of his *De Sanitate Tuenda* the following: "They call someone who is at that age 'harim' (senile), which is an adjective derived from *ahrām* (pyramids), because that is where (those people) will be before long."

[20] In describing Egypt, Ibn Ḥawqal says: And there are the two Pyramids, which are without peer on Earth, either in the realm of the believers or in the realm of the infidels, the like of which has never been built nor will it ever be built. One of the 'Abbāsids read on one of them: "I have built them; let him who claims to be a powerful ruler destroy them! For destroying is easier than building." That person—I think it was al-Ma'mūn or al-Mu'taṣim—intended to do that, but it turned out that Egypt's tax revenue at that time was not sufficient for it. And yet, it came at the time, owing to the fairness with which the taxes were collected and the serious desire (on the part of the government) to treat the subjects with kindness and justice, to 4,257,000 dinars, when the Nile reached seventeen cubits and ten fingers, at a tax rate of two dinars per feddan. So he desisted from (the plan) and never said a word about it again.

[21] On the (southern) edge of al-Fuṣṭāṭ, on the west bank of the Nile, are numerous huge structures which spread out all over Upper Egypt and are called "pyramids." But these are not like the two pyramids which stand opposite al-Fuṣṭāṭ at a distance of two

parasangs from the city. Each of the latter has an altitude of 400 cubits and a width equal to its height, and they are built of tuff stones, each stone from ten to eight cubits in height, length and width, depending on whether a stone of larger or smaller size needed to be set down as required by the rules of their indigenous geometry, because they become more and more narrow toward the top until the summit of each is the size of the space for a camel to kneel down on. Their walls are covered with Greek writing.

Some people have claimed that they are tombs, but that is not so. Rather, what prompted their builder to construct them was his certain knowledge that The Flood would destroy everything on Earth that was not protected by such structures; so he stored his treasures and possessions in them. Then came The Flood, and after it had dried up, the contents of the two pyramids passed on to Bayṣar, the son of Miṣrāyim, son of Ham, son of Noah. One of the later kings used them to store his grain. But God alone knows the truth.

[22] Abū Ya‘qūb [*sic*] Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Nadīm the Bookdealer says in his *Catalogue*, as he discusses the Babylonian Hermes (Nabū): There has been disagreement as to his identity. Some have said that he was one of the seven custodians who were assigned to guard the seven (planetary) houses, and that his assignment was to attend to the orders of ‘Uṭārid (Mercury), from whom he got his name, because ‘Uṭārid in the Chaldean language means “Hermes.” Others have claimed that he moved, for one reason or another, to Egypt and ruled it as a king, and that he had several sons, among them Ṭā(ṭ), Ṣā, Ashmūn, Atrīb and Quṭṭ; that he was the sage of his age and that, after his death, he was buried in the edifice known in the city of Miṣr as “Abū Hirmīs” and to the common populace as “the two Pyramids.” Because one of them is his tomb and the other the tomb of his wife or, according to others, of his son who succeeded him after his death.

These structures, that is, the pyramids, have a height of 480 cubits, in terms of “Hāshimite” cubits, over a (base) area of 480 cubits (squared). Then the structure tapers (toward the top), and when

one reaches its summit, its platform measures forty cubits by forty. That has something to do with (the rules of) geometry. In the center of that platform is a graceful pavilion in the middle of which is something resembling a sarcophagus. Near the head end of that sarcophagus are two boulders, extremely neat and beautiful and rich in color, on each of which is a human figure in stone representing a man and a woman; they face each other, the man holding a stone tablet with writing on it in his hand and the woman a mirror with a finely chiseled gold frame. Between the two boulders is a stone amphora with a golden lid on top; after it was removed, people discovered that the amphora contained something like odorless, dried-up pitch and a small golden box which, upon having its top removed, turned out to contain fresh blood that coagulated the moment it was exposed to the air, the way blood will coagulate, and dried up. On top of the sarcophagus were stone lids, and after they were removed, there was a man resting in a supine position, perfectly well preserved and completely dried out, his physical shape clearly recognizable and his hair still visible, and by his side a woman of the same appearance. The platform is hollowed out about as much as a man's height, as though it were rounded like the domes in stone vaults, and in (that recess) are images and statues, some lying on the ground, some standing upright, and other gear of unknown shape.

[23] The eminent scholar Muwaffaq al-Dīn 'Abd al-Laṭīf ibn Abī 'l-'Izz Yūsuf ibn Abī 'l-Barakāt Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Sa'īd al-Baghdādī, known by the name of "Ibn al-Muṭaḥḥin," says in his autobiography: There appeared an ignorant foreigner who made al-Malik al-'Azīz 'Uthmān ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf believe that there was a hidden treasure underneath the small(er) Pyramid. Whereupon (the Sultan) sent stone masons and the greater part of the army to that place, and they began to demolish it. They worked on it for months, but then they abandoned the whole thing because they were unable to carry it out and were obviously losing both money and their sanity. Anyone seeing the stones (pried loose) from the pyramid would say that the pyramid must have

been completely destroyed, but someone who actually sees the pyramid will detect only minor damages on it. I sympathized with the stone masons and said to their foreman: "Would you be able to put it all back together again?" And he answered, "If the Sultan gave us a thousand dinars for each stone, we could not bring it off."

[24] Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Mas'ūdī says in his *Golden Meadows*: Now, the Pyramids—their height is impressive, their structure astounding! On them are various kinds of inscriptions written in the scripts of past nations and bygone empires; no one knows what that writing is and what it means. Those who have made it their business to determine their dimensions in cubits say that the large Pyramid rises to a height of about 400 cubits, or more, into the air; but whenever one scales it with much effort, that (height) seems insignificant; the width is approximately the same as what we said earlier (about the height). On (these Pyramids) are graphic representations of sciences, special properties (of plants, herbs, drugs, etc.), magic, and the secrets of nature. One of the inscriptions reads: "We have built them; let him who claims to be our peer in kingship and attainment of might and supreme sovereignty destroy them and erase every trace of them! For destroying is easier than building, dismantling more convenient than assembling." We are told that a certain Muslim ruler began to destroy one of them, but it turned out that the entire tax revenue of Egypt was not sufficient (to pay) for the removal of those structures of stone and marble.

[25] They are royal tombs. For when one of their kings died, his body was placed in a stone trough (of the kind) called in Egypt and Syria *jurūn*, which was then closed with a lid. Next, the foundation of the pyramid was built to its intended height and the sarcophagus was carried up and placed in the center of the pyramid, whereupon one erected over it the tomb chamber and the vaults. Finally, they raised the structure to the height which you (now) see.

The entrance to the pyramid was made beneath the pyramid. One excavated an entryway to it under the ground and constructed an oblong subterranean vault one hundred cubits or more long. Each

of those pyramids had an entrance which one reached in the manner just described.

One used to build a pyramid stepwise, with terraces like stairs, and when they were done with it, they hewed it smooth, working their way from the top down.

Such was their artful procedure; in addition, they possessed strength, endurance, and readiness to obey.

[26] In his *Notice and Review*, (the same author) says: The two [large] pyramids west of Fuṣṭāṭ Miṣr belong to the architectural wonders of the world. Each of them measures four hundred cubits (at the base), and their height is the same. They are built with huge stones against the four winds, each of their edges facing one of the winds; the strongest impact on them has the south wind, which is the *marīṣī*.

One of those two pyramids is the tomb of Agathodaimon and the other the tomb of Hermes. They lived about a thousand years apart, Agathodaimon being the older one. The inhabitants of Egypt, the Copts, used to believe, before Christianity came to them, that the two were prophets—in accordance with the teachings of the Ṣābians about prophecies (of course), not according to the (Muslim) doctrine of revelation: no, (the Ṣābians) hold that prophets are pure souls cleansed and purified of the impurities of the world, that divine substances are joined in them, that they presage future events and reveal the secrets of the world, and the like.

Among the Yemenite Arabs are some who believe that the two pyramids are the tombs of Shaddād ibn ‘Ād and of another of their early kings; those were Arabs of pure stock, such as the Amalekites and others.

[The remaining pyramids] are, in the opinion of the aforementioned Ṣābians, tombs of pure bodies.



[27] Abū Zayd al-Balkhī relates that an inscription written in their script was discovered on the Pyramids, and when it was translated into Arabic, it turned out to read: "These two pyramids were built when the Falling Vulture was in the sign of Cancer." So they figured from that time until the Hijrah of the Prophet and came up with 36,000 solar years times two, which makes it 72,000 years.

[28] In his *Book of the Crown*, al-Hamdānī says: Of all the towns that were submerged by water at the time of The Flood, none was found with anything left in it, except for Nahāwand, (the name of) which translates as 'It-was-found-the-way-it-was-without-change', and the Pyramids of Upper Egypt.

[29] Abū 'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm (al-Māzinī) al-Qaysī relates in his *Gifts to the Hearts* that the pyramids are overall square with triangular sides. There are eighteen of them. Opposite Miṣr al-Fuṣṭāṭ are three pyramids, the largest of which has a circumference of 2,000 cubits, each side measuring 500 cubits, and an elevation of 500 cubits. Every single stone of the pyramids measures 30 cubits (in length and width) with a thickness of 10 cubits and is tightly joined to its neighbor and carefully dressed. Near the city of Joseph's Pharaoh is an even larger and more grandiose pyramid than those (three), with a circumference of 3,000 cubits and an elevation of 700 cubits, each of its stones measuring 50 cubits. And near the city of Moses' Pharaoh are still larger and more grandiose pyramids; and another pyramid, known as the Pyramid of Maydūm, looks like a mountain and consists of five (receding) stories.

The Great Pyramid opposite al-Fuṣṭāṭ was opened by al-Ma'mūn. I went inside and saw a large domed room, square on the bottom and round on top, in the center of which was a square well shaft ten cubits deep. When one climbs down in it, one finds in each of the well's four walls a door leading to a large room with human corpses in it. They are covered with many shrouds, more than a hundred sheets on each, which, because of the long time, have become decayed and black. Their bodies are like ours, but they are

not very tall. No part of their bodies or of their hair is missing. There is no old man, no one with white hair among them. Their bodies are of a sturdy build, and it is completely impossible to remove one of their limbs. But they have lost much weight, so that they have become like withered leaves over all that time. There are four of those rooms filled with corpses in that well. The place is teeming with bats.

They also used to bury all the animals in the sands. One day I found a bundle of many rolled-up sheets, more than a cubit thick. Those sheets had become all charred from old age. I removed them (one by one) until well-preserved, strong pieces of white linen, not unlike bandages, appeared which had markings of red silk on them, and inside was a dead hoopoe, with none of its feathers or its body missing, as if it had died only a moment ago.

In that domed room in the Pyramid is an entrance leading to the top of the pyramid. (The passageway) has no stairs and is about five spans wide. It is said that people at the time of al-Ma'mūn climbed up in it and came to a small domed room containing a human figure made of a green stone not unlike malachite. After the statue was brought out to al-Ma'mūn, it turned out to be sealed with a lid. When it was opened, one found in it a human corpse clad in golden armor embellished with various kinds of gems. On its chest rested a hiltless sword blade and near its head was a red ruby the size of a hen's egg, shining like the flames of fire. The gem was taken by al-Ma'mūn, but the idol from which the corpse was removed I found lying on the ground near the entrance to the governor's palace in Fuṣṭāṭ in 511 (A.D. 1117).

[30] The eminent Judge Abū 'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Salāmah al-Quḍa'ī says: 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Khalaf ibn Qudayd transmitted on the authority of Yaḥyā ibn 'Uthmān ibn Šāliḥ, who heard it from Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Šakhr al-Tamīmī: I was told by a man, a non-Arab of Egypt who came from one of its towns called Qifṭ and was an expert on Egypt and a student of its ancient

books and its treasure sources: We found in our ancient books the following:

As far as the Pyramids are concerned, there were certain people who dug up a grave at the Monastery of Abū Hirmīs and found a corpse in it wrapped in shrouds, with a (papyrus) scroll enclosed in a piece of cloth on its chest. When they took it out of its wrapping, they saw an unfamiliar writing, because (the document) was written in the most ancient form of Coptic. While looking for someone who could read it to them, since they were unable to cope with it, they were told, "There is a monk at the Monastery of al-Qalamūn in the Fayyūm region [*sic*] who will be able to read it." They went to see him, thinking that it would probably be a total waste of time. But he read it to them, and it said:

This was written in the first year of the reign of Emperor Diocletian. We had it copied from a document that was transcribed in the first year of the reign of Emperor Philippus, and Philippus had it copied from a golden leaf inscribed with an alphabetic script, which was one of the oldest (forms of) writing. It was translated to him by two Coptic brothers, one by the name of Īlū, the other called Barthā. When Emperor Philippus asked them why they knew something that was otherwise unknown, such as reading that script, they told him that they were descendants of a man who had been one of the oldest inhabitants of Egypt. None but him of the Egyptians had escaped The Flood, the reason for his salvation being that he had come to Noah, peace be upon him, and had believed in him, while no one else of his countrymen had done so. Noah then took him along on the Ark, and when the waters of The Flood had seeped away, he returned to Egypt in the company of a group of descendants of Ham, Noah's son, and lived there until his death. His descendants then inherited the knowledge of the earliest script of the Egyptians, "and it was passed on to us from generation to generation."

By the time Philippus had it copied, the document was 1,372 years old, and by the time the one who copied it on a golden leaf in al-

phabetic script, the way Philippus found it, its age was 1,785 [*sic*] years. The copied document read:

We looked into the indications of the stars and saw that a calamity was going to descend from heaven and to come from earth, and when it was clear to us that this was going to happen, we investigated what it would be and found that it would be a water which would destroy the earth and all living creatures and plants on it. When we were completely sure of it, we said to our king, Sawrīd son of Sahlūq: "Give orders to build . . . . and a tomb for yourself and another for your family!" So he had for them the eastern Pyramid built, and for his brother [*sic*] Hargīt the western Pyramid, and for Hargīt's son the pyramid with facing. Also . . . . were built in Lower and Upper Egypt. Then we recorded on their walls the science(s) of the secrets of the stars and the causes of their change, of alchemy, of geometry, of medicine, etc., that which is beneficial and that which is harmful, all of it epitomized and made understandable to someone who knows our language and script.

That calamity will befall the whole world. It will occur when the Heart of Leo (*Cor Leonis*, i.e., Regulus) has entered the first minute of the Head of Cancer. At the time of its entry, the planets will be at the following points of the firmament: the Sun and Moon in the first minute of the Head of Aries; Kronos/Saturn at 1 degree 28 minutes of Aries; Zeus/Jupiter in Pisces at 29° 28'; Ares/Mars in Pisces at 29° 3'; Aphrodite/Venus in Pisces at 28° and some minutes; Hermes/Mercury in Pisces at 27° and some minutes, with al-Jawzahar (the Dragon's Head) in Libra and the apogee of the Moon in Leo at 5° and some minutes.

Then we looked further to see if after that catastrophe there would be another event to bring harm to the world, and we found that the stars indicated that a calamity would descend upon earth from heaven which would be the opposite of the first one, namely, a fire that would burn up the whole world. And when we looked at which time that pernicious event would occur, we saw that it would happen when Regulus enters the last minute of the 15th de-

gree of Leo; Helios/the Sun will be with it in one and the same minute, in straight-line configuration with Kronos/Saturn, which will be  $120^\circ$  away in Sagittarius/the Archer; Zeus/Jupiter will be in the beginning of Leo in the end phase of its conjunction (with the Sun), and with it Ares/Mars, at one minute; Selene/the Moon will be in Aquarius in opposition to Helios/the Sun, together with Deneb (*al-Dhanab*, i.e., star  $\alpha$  of Cygnus) at  $22^\circ$ ; there will be an intense solar eclipse which will linger the length of a lunar cycle (?); Hermes/Mercury will be at its greatest distance opposite (the Sun) ..... As for Aphrodite/Venus, it will be progressive, and as for Mercury, it will be retrogressive.

The King asked, "Do you have news other than these two calamities to tell us about?" and was told: "When Regulus will have traversed two-thirds of the sixth part of its cycles, every stirring living creature on earth will perish, and when it has completed its cycles, the firmament will come apart and fall down upon the earth." When he asked, "On what day will the disintegration of the firmament occur?" he was told, "On the second day after the celestial sphere has begun to move."

Such was the content of the papyrus scroll.

After King Sawrīd, son of Sahlūq, had died, he was buried in the eastern pyramid; Hargīt was buried in the western pyramid, and Karūras was buried in the pyramid which is built of stones from Uswān at the bottom and of tuff stones on top.

These pyramids have entrances in vaulted passageways underground, each passage 150 cubits long. The entrance to the eastern pyramid is on the north side, that of the western pyramid on the west side, and that of the "faced" pyramid on the south side. The pyramids contain indescribable quantities of gold and emeralds.

The man who translated the above document from Coptic into Arabic added up the dates until sunrise of the first day of Tūt, a Sunday, of the year 225 according to Arab chronology, and he came up with the sum of 4,321 solar years. He then investigated how

much time had passed after The Flood up to the very same day, and he found that it was 1,741 years, 59 days, 13  $\frac{4}{5}$  hours and  $\frac{59}{400}$  of an hour. He then subtracted that from the above sum and came up with a remainder of 399 years, 205 days, 10 hours and  $\frac{21}{400}$  of an hour. Thus he knew that the document, computed by date, had been written that many years, days, hours and fractions of hours before The Flood.

[31] As for the pyramid at the Monastery of Abū Hirmīs, that is the tomb of Qurmās (?). He was the Knight of the Egyptians and used to be considered the equivalent of a thousand other knights, for when he met them in battle, they could not hold their own against him and were put to flight. When he died, he was deeply mourned by the king, and the subjects were also dejected by his death. They buried him at the Monastery of (Abū) Hirmīs and erected the pyramid over him in step form. The clay used for its construction, together with stones, came from the Fayyūm. One can see that immediately: on inspecting its clay, one cannot think of any other place it could have been extracted from but the Fayyūm; neither at Memphis nor at Wasim is there clay like it.

As for the tomb of the king, the lord of that Qurmās, that is the large pyramid of the ones located north of the Monastery of Abū Hirmīs. Above its entrance is a plate bearing an inscription in lapis lazuli. The plate measures two by one cubits and is completely covered with a writing similar to that on the temples. One can climb up to the pyramid entrance over stairs, of which some are well-preserved and without cracks. This pyramid contains the gold and emerald treasures of the man buried in it; its entrance, however, is blocked by stones which have fallen down from its top. Standing before the pyramid one thinks it is a tent.

[32] Ibn ‘Ufayr relates an the authority of his teachers: Jannād, son of Mayyād, son of Shamir, son of Shaddād, son of ‘Ād, son of ‘Ūṣ, son of Iram, son of Shem, son of Noah—peace be upon him—ruled as the king of Alexandria, which was called at that time “Iram Dhāt al-‘Imād.” He ruled for a long time and lived to the age of

three hundred years. It was he who set out and built the pyramids and inscribed on them: "I am Jannād, son of Mayyād, the son of Shamir, son of 'Ād, who blocked the Valley with the strength of his arm, who had the stakes implanted and the boulders gathered in the land, the levier of armies and erector of lofty columns, the ingrate and stubborn unbeliever, who will be ousted by a nation whose prophet's name is Ḥammād, and the sign of that shall be when the Land of Lands will be invaded by seven kings of the peoples of the Sawād. The date of this inscription is fourteen hundred years in number."

[33] Ibn 'Ufayr and Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam say: At the time of Shaddād ibn 'Ād were the pyramids built, say some traditionists, but we have yet to find a single scholar among the Egyptians who has any knowledge of the pyramids, or an account that would hold up.

[34] And Muḥammad ibn 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam said: I reckon the pyramids can only have been built before The Flood, because, if they had been built after The Flood, people would be knowledgeable about them.

[38] 'Abd-Allāh ibn Shubrumah al-Jurhumī relates: When the Amalekites were staying in Egypt at the time the (tribe of) Jurhum had driven them out of Mecca, they erected the pyramids and founded the towns and villages where they built the wondrous things. They remained in Egypt until they were expelled by Mālik ibn Du'r al-Khuzā'i.

[36] Muḥammad (ibn 'Abd-Allāh) ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam said: There used to be on the other side of the Pyramids toward the West four hundred towns, not counting the villages west of the Pyramids from Miṣr all the way to the West.

[37] Our Egyptian teachers, says Ibn 'Ufayr, kept saying: The Pyramids were built by Shaddād ibn 'Ād. It was also he who built the false leads and made a zigzag of protruding barriers (?), for the blind passages and protruding walls form the underground (maze

of) passageways (?). They believed in life after death, and when one of them died, he was buried with his possessions, whatever they might be: if he was an artisan, he was buried with his tools. The Şābians used to make the pilgrimage to the Pyramids.

[38] Abū 'l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī says in his *Surviving Monuments from Past Centuries*: “The Persians and the Magians disclaim that there was The Flood. Some Persians acknowledge its occurrence, but they say that only some of it happened in Syria and in the West at the time of Ṭahmūrath without, however, engulfing the entire civilized world; that it never got further than the mountainous barrier of Ḥulwān and never touched the empires of the East; that the people of the West, when warned by their sages about it, constructed buildings like the two Pyramids in Egypt in order to seek shelter in them at the time of the catastrophe; and that the traces of the water of The Flood and the marks left by its billows are clearly visible halfway up the two Pyramids, the highest level reached by the waves.”

[39] It is also said that, when the water of The Flood had seeped away in the ground, one found under the water only one community—namely, Nahāwand, which was found the way it still is—and the pyramids and temples of Egypt. These are the ones built by the first Hermes, whom the Arabs call “Idrīs.” God had inspired him with the knowledge of the stars, and they indicated to him that a catastrophe would befall the earth and that a remainder of the world would survive where people would stand in need of knowledge. So he and his contemporaries built the pyramids and the temples, and he wrote his science on them.

[40] Abū 'l-Şalt al-Andalusī says in his (*Egyptian*) *Epistle*, after discussing the natural disposition of the Egyptians: Indeed, it appears from what we know of them that there was among them a class of people who possessed knowledge and sciences, particularly geometry and astronomy. Proof of that are the unique and inimitable works they have left behind, such as the pyramids and the temples. For these are monuments which have baffled even



penetrating minds and defied even superior thinking, leaving for them food for marveling and contemplative thought about them. Of something similar speaks Abū 'l 'Alā' Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān al-Ma'arrī in his ode, which is an elegy on the death of his father:

Strong minds are apt to go astray,  
   sure judgment 's not from folly safe.  
 When masters of the word saw beauty,  
   they deemed it was the demons' work.

What more astounding and incomprehensible thing could there be, after the Almighty's resources and His works, than the ability to construct a body from the hugest stones, square at the base, tapering in shape, with a vertical height of 319 cubits, enclosed by four surfaces of equilateral triangles, each side 460 cubits long? In addition to its huge size, it is of such solid workmanship, perfect symmetry and excellent design that it has remained unaffected to this day by the fury of the winds, the downpour of the clouds and the shock of earthquakes. Each of the two Pyramids standing on the west side opposite al-Fuṣṭāṭ is like this according to what we have personally seen of them. I remembered the wonders of Egypt, and (the thought occurred to me:) there is no structure on earth that I would not pity with regard to Time, except the two Pyramids, for (in their case) I pity Time with regard to them.

These two pyramids tower high above Egypt, overlooking its river valleys and rising loftily into the air. They are what Abū 'l-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī had in mind when he says:

Where's he who had the Pyramids built?  
   Who were his folk? When did he live? How did he die?  
 Though monuments outlive their man a while,  
   they, too, will follow, touched by doom.

It so happened one day that we went out to the two Pyramids. And as we were circling them and walking around them, we were often filled with wonder, and one in our midst declaimed:

Upon your life! Of all the things you have seen in time,  
     have you beheld a sight more wondrous than the  
     Pyramids two?  
 Up to the firmament they soar, arising high  
     above the ether to Arcturus' and the Vulture's height.  
 And as above the land they tower, they are  
     two breasts erect upon a woman's chest.

Some people claim that the pyramids are tombs of mighty kings who chose to stand out by means of them above the other kings, from whom they had already been a class apart during their lifetimes, and who were intent on having their memory live through them over the length of the centuries and the drag of the ages.

When the caliph al-Ma'mūn came to Egypt, he had a breach opened in them, and indeed a hole was made in one of the two Pyramids opposite al-Fuṣṭāṭ with great effort and after long toil. Inside they found stairs and frightful chasms which one could negotiate only with great difficulty. All the way up he found a cube-shaped chamber of which each side was about eight cubits long and in the center of which stood a marble trough sealed with a lid. After its cover had been removed, one found in it nothing but a decayed cadaver ravaged by past ages. Under these circumstances al-Ma'mūn gave orders to desist from digging into the other pyramids. Expenditures for the pyramid's breaching are said to have been very large and the burden (of the operation) enormous.

There are people who claim that the first Hermes—who is called “the Threefold”, because he was a prophet, a king and a sage; and whom the Hebrews call Ḥenōkh, son of Yered, son of Mahalal'ēl, son of Qēnān, son of Enōs, son of Šēth, son of Ādam (upon him be peace); and who is identical with Idrīs, upon him be peace—read in the stars that The Flood was coming. So he had the pyramids



[41] It is said that al-Ma'mūn had someone who scaled the large Pyramid lower a measuring cord, and the height of the Pyramid was one thousand cubits in terms of the royal cubit, which is  $1\frac{2}{5}$  cubits. Its quadrilateral base was 400 cubits in length and the same in width. To climb it took three daytime hours, and the top of the Pyramid was found to be large enough for eight camels to kneel down.

It is also said that people found on the person buried in the Pyramid a garment which was all decomposed and of which only the gold threads were left; the coating of myrrh and aloe on the body is said to have been a span thick.

People are said to have found in one place of that pyramid a vaulted hall at the headside of which were three portals leading to three rooms, each portal ten cubits high and five cubits wide and made of hewn alabaster in masterful symmetry, with a blue inscription on its outer walls which they could not read. They spent three days trying to figure out how to open those gates, until they saw in front of them at a distance of ten cubits away three upright marble columns. Each column had a vertical slot from top to bottom and in the middle of the slot was the image of a bird. In the first column was the figure of a pigeon made of green stone, in the middle one the figure of a falcon made of yellow stone, and in the third column the figure of a rooster made of red stone. When they moved the falcon, the gate opposite it began to move, and when they moved the falcon up a little, the gate went up, although it was so huge that a hundred men could not lift it. Then they moved the other two figures upward, and the other two gates went up. Now they entered the middle room and found in it three biers made of a translucent, luminous stone, and on them three corpses, each covered with three garments and with a book in an unknown script by its head. In the other room they found several stone shelves on which stood stone baskets containing gold vessels of marvelous workmanship and encrusted with various kinds of gems. In the third room they also found several stone ledges with stone baskets

on them which contained military gear and weaponry. When one of the swords was measured, its length was seven spans, and any one of the coats of mail was twelve spans long, [and a helmet could accommodate two heads of ordinary people.] Al-Ma'mūn then gave orders [to leave the dead alone and] to take everything found in the rooms away. The figures on the columns were moved down, and the gates closed the way they had been before.

[42] The number of pyramids is said to have been eighteen. Opposite al-Fuṣṭāṭ are three of them, the largest of which has a circumference of two thousand cubits; it is square, each of its sides measuring five hundred cubits.

It is said that, when al-Ma'mūn had it opened, he found in it a stone trough filled with gold that was covered with an alabaster slab. On the slab was an inscription done with a reed pen which was translated into Arabic and read: "We built this pyramid in a thousand days; let him who wants to destroy it in a thousand years feel free to do so, and destroying is easier than building. We draped it all in brocade; let him who wants to cover it with mats feel free to do so, and mats are easier to come by than brocade. We also put in each of its sides as much money as will be spent in order to get to it." Whereupon al-Ma'mūn had the expenditures for its breaching computed, and they amounted to exactly as much as was found in the trough.

It is said that one found in it the image of a human being made of green stone not unlike malachite, with a lid on it like an inkhorn. When it was opened, it contained a human corpse clad in golden armor embellished with various kinds of gems. On its chest rested a hiltless sword blade and by its head was a red ruby the size of a hen's egg, which al-Ma'mūn took, exclaiming, "This is better than all the tax money of the world together!" A certain Egyptian historian reports that the green idol in which the cadaver was found was still lying around near the governor's palace in Fuṣṭāṭ until 511 A.H.

[43] There were two pyramids near Pharaoh's city and one near Maydūm, which is the farthest one (to the south).

[44] In 579 A.H. (A.D. 1183), the "House of Hermes" came to light at the necropolis of Būṣīr in the area of Gīzah. Judge Ibn al-Shahrazūrī opened it and took from it various things, among them rams, monkeys and frogs made of bezoar stone, bottles made of malachite, and idols made of bronze.

[45] Ibn Khurradādhbih reports: It is an architectural wonder that the height of each of the two Pyramids in Egypt is four hundred cubits. They become ever more slender toward the top. They are made of alabaster and marble. The length is four hundred cubits and the width is the same. On both of them are inscribed in South Arabian writing every art of magic and every wonder of medicine. Each of them bears an inscription (which reads): "We have built them; let him who claims to be a mighty king destroy them! For destroying is easier done than building." That (challenge) was taken under consideration, but it turned out that the taxes of the world would not be enough (to pay) for razing them.

[46] In the *Marvels of Architecture*, (the author of the book) says about the pyramids: "Egypt is unique in having such structures. They have no equal anywhere else. The (casual) viewer will think of them as two breasts belonging to Arcadia, but he who contemplates that they owe their construction to the noble traits of the Egyptians will regard them as two sugarloaves of nobleness. The eye can perceive them from far away, and when someone tells you about their marvels, you will think of it as but a yarn. People have written a lot about the pyramids, they have described them and measured them. They are very numerous and all of them are located in the open country of Gīzah opposite Fuṣṭāṭ extending over a distance of about three day's journeys. There are a great many of them at Būṣīr: some of them large, some small, some built of clay and mud brick, but most of them of stone; one of them is built in steps, but most of them have a smooth tapering shape. There used to be a great number of them at Gīzah, all of them

small, which were destroyed at the time of Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb by the *ṭawāshī* Bahā' al-Dīn Qarāqūsh, who used their stones as building material for the aqueduct in Gīzah; little of the pyramids destroyed (by him) is still there.

As for the Pyramids that most people talk about, those are three standing in a straight line at Gīzah opposite al-Fuṣṭāṭ; between them are many wall remnants and small chapels facing toward sunrise. Two are very large of identical size; they stand close together and are built of white stones. The third is by about one-fourth smaller than the other two, but it is built of a red, mottled granite of such great strength and hardness that iron will barely have an effect on it, unless (one applies it) over a long time. Compared with the other two, one finds it small, but when one gets to it and looks at it by itself, one is awed by its sight and the eye wearies in contemplating it.

In building the pyramids, one proceeded in an unusual way, with regard to both shape and solidity of construction. That is why they have withstood the passing of time nay, it is Time that withstood their passage. While contemplating them, one realizes that noble minds were spent on them, that pure intellects devoted their best efforts to them, that enlightened spirits lavished the best they could give on them, that engineering genius translated them into action as an example of its utmost capabilities, so that they tell, as it were, of the might of the people who built them, provide information as to how they lived, speak of their sciences and minds, and record their lives and their history.

For they were built in a tapering shape which starts from a square base and terminates in a point. It is a peculiarity of a tapering form that its center of gravity lies in the middle of it. It rests on itself, falls back on itself, each part of it supported by another, having no other direction toward which to gravitate. Another astounding feature of a pyramid's design is that it forms a quadrilateral whose corners are turned against the four winds: for the wind's force is bro-

ken when it hits a corner, which is not the case when it meets with a flat surface.

The surveyors tell us that the base of each of the two large Pyramids measures four hundred cubits, in terms of the "black" cubit, (in length and width). The tapering body ends in a platform ten by ten cubits wide. We are also told that some archer shot an arrow both the length and the height of one of them, but the (latter) arrow dropped before reaching-half of the distance. We are furthermore told that the (top) platform of the Pyramids measures eleven cubits, in terms of the "hand" cubit.

In one of those two Pyramids is an entrance through which people can make their way in; it leads them to narrow passageways, intersecting tunnels, well shafts, dangerous drops, and the like, as those who entered it tell us. A lot of people are thoroughly intrigued by the Pyramid and have fantastic notions about it. They penetrate to its depths, but they inevitably wind up at a point where they are unable to go any further. The passage very frequently traveled inside the Pyramid is a ramp leading to its top, where one finds a square chamber with a sarcophagus in it. That entrance (incidentally) is not the same as the one made during the original construction, but is only a hole found by accident; al-Ma'mūn, we are told, had it opened. Those who went inside and climbed to the chamber at the highest point of it had stories to tell; when they came down again, they told of the great things they had seen, that (the chamber) was full of bats and their droppings (?), so large that they are the size of pigeons, that it had vents and apertures toward the top that seemed to have been put there in order to allow the air and the light to pass through.

[Those Pyramids are built] of massive stones, each ten to twenty cubits long and from two to three cubits high, measuring about the same in width. The most astounding thing is how stone is placed upon stone with a neatness that could not possibly be more perfect, so that there is not room enough between two stones to insert a needle, not even an interstice of a hair's breadth, both joined to-



gether with clay as thin as a sheet of paper. No one knows what, and of what kind, (that clay) is.

On those stones are inscriptions in that mysterious ancient writing for which one would yet have to find someone in Egypt who could claim that he heard someone who knew (how to read) it. Those inscriptions are so very numerous that, were one to copy on paper what is on those stones alone, it would fill the equivalent of ten thousand leaves.

I read in an ancient book of the Ṣābians that one of those two pyramids is the tomb of Agathodaimon and the other the tomb of Hermes; they maintain that both of them were great prophets, but that Agathodaimon was the older and the greater of the two; also, that people used to make a pilgrimage to the two (Pyramids) and bring gifts to them from all over the country.

When, after his father's death, al-Malik al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb had become independent ruler, some fools in his entourage talked him into demolishing those pyramids. So, beginning with the small red one, he sent sappers and stone cutters and the whole group of his emirs and of the grandees of his realm out to it with orders to demolish it. They set up a tent camp nearby, got the laborers and workmen together and paid them a lot of money. They spent some eight months there with their horsemen and their foot, demolishing, after much toil and the exertion of all their strength, one or two stones a day, some pushing the stone on top with wedges and some yanking at it from below with hawsers and ropes. When a stone finally fell down, one could hear (even) from far away a crash so loud that it made the hills tremble and the earth shake. Since it would bury deep in the sand, they had to labor once more in order to extricate it. After having drilled holes for them in certain spots, they drove wedges into the stone so that it broke up into pieces each of which would then be dragged on rollers to be dumped at the foot of a nearby hill. As their stay dragged on and their funds began to run out, as their fatigue mounted and their determination faltered, they gave up in defeat:



[48] In this he was inspired by the words of one of the sages who said: "One must fear for every thing with regard to Time, except the Pyramids, for in their case one must fear for Time with regard to them."

[49] 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Ḥasan ibn Ja'far ibn al-Ḥājib, who died (in the month of) Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah 387 (December 997), says:

Both Pyramids behold, as up they soar before the eye:  
     As if the land so wide had, parched by burning heat,  
 Exposed her swelling breasts to God  
     in fervent plea, because her children left.  
 He heard her prayer, gave her the Nile,  
     her water's source, her savior from distress.  
 Thus gave the Lord, Provider for her folk's success,  
     Sustainer, Helper at a time of need.

[50] And Sayf al-Dīn Ibn Jubārah says:

What puzzling, striking thing it is,  
     the Pyramids' work, to human mind!  
 They tell us nothing of their past,  
     yet stand unveiled, their marvels bared.  
 Like tents they are that were set up  
     without the help of poles and ropes;  
 Like brides divested of their robes,  
     remaining silent out of pride.

[51] And another poet has said:

Lo! The two Pyramids behold and hear  
     what they relate of ages past;  
 Look at the secrets of their nights,  
     but with your heart, not with your eye.  
 If they could talk, they'd let us know  
     what Time has wrought from start to end.  
 And as they loom before your eyes

they seem like ears of a frisky steed.

[52] And the Imām Abū 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tifāshī says:

Do you not see the Pyramids, how their structure has lasted  
eternal

while about them the world crumbled, demon and man  
alike?

As if the celestial spheres were the mill, with the Pyramids  
on its base stones as hoppers, and the world nothing but  
grist,

[53] And elsewhere he says:

They had lofty aims and ambitions,  
those who dwelled in the Egypt of yore.

An abundance they had of distinction,  
a benchmark their science and lore.

They ended, their marks of distinction  
and science, and they themselves died.

But look! You can see ancient Egypt:  
the Pyramid looms high from afar.

[54] And elsewhere he says:

Dear friends, naught lasts in Fate's reverses,  
but second follows what is left by first.

Man's utmost strength applied to Egypt's Pyramids,  
and yet, they've crumbled in their time.

Be not surprised that I've grown senile,  
for Time has struck me with the loss of youth.

At splendid Carthage stop and see how  
it, too, succumbed to vile assault,

At Khusraw's palace look, for it will  
disclose the truth to you of any time.

So do not think of me alone as transient.

Are not all things on earth designed to die?

[55] I found (a note written) in the hand of Sheikh Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Abī Ḥajalah al-Tilimsānī, saying: Judge Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Miṣrī recited to me in 755 (A.D. 1354) some—very good—verses of his own dealing with the Pyramids:

O Pyramids, oft those who preach  
     have split the hearts, yet spoke no word!  
 They call to mind an ancient saw:  
     Where’s he among whose works they count?  
 They’re towering hills which nigh ascend  
     above horizon past Saturn’s height.  
 Were Khusraw seated at their foot,  
     his throne would dwarf his Hall at home!  
 They have withstood both heat and cold  
     for ages, unimpaired by time,  
 The blazing sun, the blowing winds,  
     the torrents raining from the sky.  
 Did someone worship them alone,  
     regard their structures as his gods?  
 Or was it one who thought his soul  
     would after death rejoin his corpse,  
 So that he chose thee as a tomb  
     to guard his wealth against The Flood?  
 Or points to watch the planets’ course,  
     selected well for place and site?  
 Or were they houses for the stars,  
     designed by Persians, Greeks those days?  
 Or did they write upon their walls  
     a science baffling human mind?  
 The heart of him who seeks their self  
     will harbor thoughts to bite his nails!

## 41. The Idol Called *The Sphinx*<sup>(1)</sup>

[1] This idol between the two great Pyramids was known in ancient times as *Balhīt*. The Egyptians today call it *Abū 'l-Hōl*.

[2] Al-Qudā'ī says: The Idol of the Two Pyramids—that is, *Bal-hūbah*—is a large stone idol in the area between the two pyramids. Only its head is visible. People generally call it *Abū 'l-Hōl*, some also *Balhīt*. It is said to be a talisman to keep the sands from encroaching on the alluvial land of *Gīzah*.

[3] The author of the *Marvels of Architecture* reports: Near the Pyramids there is an enormous head with the neck protruding from the ground which people call “*Abū 'l-Hōl*”. They claim that its body is buried underground. In proportion to its head, its length must be seventy cubits, or more. Its face is reddish and painted, reflecting the glow of freshness. It is nice and pleasant, with a touch of beauty and glamor, and seems to be smiling.

When a certain man of culture and refinement was asked about the memorable things he had seen, he replied: “The perfect proportions of the Sphinx’s face! Because the parts of its face, like the nose, the eyes, the ears, are in complete harmony, the way Nature makes its images in perfect proportion. The nose of an infant, for instance, is proportionate to him; it looks nice on him, even though that same nose, if it belonged to a grown man, would be disfiguring. Likewise, if a man’s nose were on a boy, the latter’s appearance would be marred. The same applies to all other features: each must be commensurate with its essential nature in relation and proportion to that overall appearance. The amazing thing about the sculptor of the Sphinx is how he was able to preserve the proportionality

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1. Unfortunately, Stowasser’s notes for this chapter are not in the Georgetown Library copy of the typescript and seem to be lost.

of the features despite its enormous size. There is no work of nature like it.”

[4] Opposite the Sphinx on the Fustāt side, not far from (what used to be) the governor’s palace, is a large idol with the same well-proportioned features as described, holding an infant in its lap and wearing a *māqūr* on its head, all of it made of hard granite. People claim that it is a woman, and that she represents the concubine of the Sphinx under discussion. The statue stands in a lane named after it. It is said: If one put a thread on the Sphinx’s head and extended it all the way to the “concubine of the Sphinx,” it would pass in a straight line to the top of her head. The Sphinx is said to be a talisman to keep the sand away from the Nile and the “concubine” a talisman to keep the river away from Fustāt.

[5] The Zuqāq al-Ṣanam, or Alley of the Idol, says Ibn al-Mutawwaj, is the through alley which starts at the head of the great market adjoining the Darb ‘Ammār. The idol is known as “Pharaoh’s concubine” and is said to be the talisman of the Nile to keep the river from encroaching on the town. People say that Balhīt near the Pyramids is exactly opposite it, and that Balhīt’s back is turned toward the sand and the back of that idol is turned toward the Nile, so that both face east.

In 711 (A.D. 1311), an emir by the name of Balāṭ came with a group of stone masons and stone cutters, and they broke the idol known as The Concubine and cut it up, lintels and foundations, in the belief that there would be a treasure under it. But nothing was found other than huge stone lintels. They dug underneath it until they reached ground water, and still nothing was found. The stones from it were used as socles for the granite columns of the newly built mosque outside Cairo known as the New Mosque of al-Nāṣir, and the idol itself was removed. God alone knows the truth.

[6] In our own time, there was a man known as Shaykh Muḥammad “Ṣa’im al-Dahr,” one of the Ṣūfis of the Ṣalāḥiyyah convent, (the former Dār) Sa’id al-Su’adā’, who around 780 (A.D. 1378)

took it upon himself to change certain offensive things. He went to the Pyramids and defaced and disfigured the Sphinx head. It has remained so to this day. From that time on, the sand encroached on much land of Gīzah, and the people in that area think that the reason for that encroachment of the sand on the lands is the fact that the Sphinx's face was damaged. *“And unto God belongs the issue of all affairs.”*

[7] How well spoke Z̄āfir al-Ḥaddād:

The Pyramids' wise design behold and marvel,  
 and near them Abū 'l-Höl the strange:  
 Like two seductresses engaged on noble mount  
 with two belov'd, between them Sphinx as eager spy.  
 Beneath, the River's flow resembles tears,  
 the blowing wind about them plaintive sigh.  
 And Joseph's gaol appears a lover left  
 behind, aggrieved and sad at heart.

[8] It is said that Atrīb, son of Qibṭ, son of Miṣr, son of Bayṣar, son of Ham, son of Noah, on his deathbed bade his brother Ṣā that he put him on a ship and bury him on an island in the middle of the Nile. And Ṣā did so after his brother's death, but without the knowledge of the Egyptians, so that they suspected him of having killed Atrīb and rose in arms against him for nine years. When five years of warfare had passed, Ṣā took them to Atrīb's grave. They dug it up but found nothing in it, because the devils had already moved his body to the site of the Sphinx and buried it there next to the tombs of his father and his ancestor Bayṣar. As a result, they suspected Ṣā even more and, having returned to Memphis, resumed the fighting. Then Satan came to them and led them to the tomb to which he had moved Atrīb. They exhumed his body and placed it on a bier. Then Satan spoke to them in his usual language, until they were completely swayed by him and prostrated themselves to him and worshiped him with the other idols. They killed Ṣā and buried him on the bank of the Nile. But the Nile at its annual rise



would never submerge Şā's grave, so that (after a while) a group of (the Egyptians) were won over to the side of Şā and, saying that he had been killed unjustly, began to worship his tomb the way the others worshiped Atrīb. And still others headed for a stone and carved it in the likeness of Ashmūm, who used to be called "Abū 'l-Hōl", and they erected the image between the two Pyramids and began to worship it.

And thus the Egyptians became divided into three factions. The Şābians still revere the Great Sphinx; they offer up white roosters and cense it with sandarac resin.

## 42. The Mountains

[1] One should know<sup>(1)</sup> that the entire fertile part of Egypt is enclosed between two mountain ranges of little elevation running from south to north, one of them larger than the other. The larger of the two is the eastern range known as *Jabal Lūqā*. The western range is small and not continuous in some parts. In some places the distance between them narrows, in others it widens, the distance between them being widest in Lower Egypt.

Those two mountain ranges are bald and no vegetation grows on them, the way it does on mountains in other countries. The reason is that both are rich in borax and salt. Because the strength of Egypt's soil is such that it extracts from them the moisture that is conducive to growth, and because the intense heat dissolves (by evaporation) the gentle, pleasant essence of their soil. Likewise, the water of the wells there is salty.

The two mountain ranges dry out completely anything that is buried in them, for Egypt has by nature only sparse rainfall.

Jabal Lūqā to the east of the fertile part of Egypt keeps the east wind away from it, so that Miṣr is without that wind. It also impedes the sun's irradiation on the fertile part of Egypt while it is on the horizon.

[2] The two mountain ranges have many different names, depending on their regional locations. The Muqaṭṭam looks out over Fuṣṭāṭ and Cairo.

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1. This section is drawn from Ibn Riḍwān's *Daḡ maḡārr al-abdān bi-arḡ Miṣr* (see ch.13 above).

### 43. The Muqaṭṭam<sup>(1)</sup>

[1] One should know that the Muqaṭṭam range begins in the east in China, where the Encircling Sea is, and, skirting the land of the Mongols, reaches Farghānah (continuing) in the direction of the Buttam Mountains, whence the Soghd river flows, until it arrives at the Oxus river. There it breaks off and then proceeds in the middle between two arms of the river—as if it had been chopped off and then (placed) in the middle of it. The range continues to al-Jūzajān and, heading for al-Ṭalaqān, to the region of Marw and on toward Ṭūs, so that all the towns of Ṭūs are located in it. It links up with the mountains of Iṣfahān and Shīrāz, until it reaches the Indian Sea, where it curves and continues to Shahrazūr and Suhraward. Skirting the rest of the Tigris river, it connects with the Jabal al-Jūdī, the place where Noah's Ark—peace be upon him—came to rest after The Flood. The range continues onward from the region of Āmid and Mayyāfāriqīn (Martyropolis) so that it passes through the frontier districts of Aleppo, where it is called *Jabal al-Lukkām* (Amanus), until it crosses the frontier districts, now called *Hirā'*, to pass beyond Ḥimṣ (Emessa), where it is then called *Lubnān* (the Lebanon). From there it extends all the way across Syria until it ends up at the Sea of al-Qulzum (the Gulf of Suez) on one side, but continuing under the name *al-Muqaṭṭam* on the other, whereupon it branches out, with its furthest branches continuing all the way to the Far West. It is said to have been named after Muqaṭṭam, son of Miṣr, son of Bayṣar, son of Ham, son of Noah, upon him be peace. (One branch of) the Muqaṭṭam range runs along both sides of the Nile all the way to Nubia, while (the other) crosses (the river) above the Fayyūm and continues westward to the region of Nafzāwah (Nefzoua, in central Tunisia), then proceed-

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1. Unfortunately, Stowasser's notes for this chapter are not in the Georgetown Library copy of the typescript and seem to be lost.

ing west all the way to Sijilmāṣah. From there to the Surrounding Sea it is a five months' journey.

[2] In relating how Miṣrāyim, the son of Bayṣar, son of Ham, son of Noah, came to Egypt, how the companions of Philemon the Priest discovered the treasures of Egypt and the sciences of the Egyptians, which are (recorded) in the script of the temples, as well as their antiquities (and) mines of gold and chrysolite and turquoise and smyris, etc., Ibrāhīm ibn Waṣīf Shāh says:

The Egyptians also described to them how to practice *ṣan'ah*, that is, alchemy. Miṣrāyim then entrusted its practice to a man of his household by the name of Muqayṭām the Sage, who subsequently used to practice alchemy in the eastern mountain range. Hence, it was named after him “al-Muqaṭṭam”, because Muqayṭām the Sage practiced alchemy there. After his name was shortened to its later form, the hills were called *Jabal al-Muqaṭṭam*, that is, the Mountain of Muqayṭām the Sage.

[3] The Muqaṭṭam, says al-Bakrī, is a mountain range in Egypt where (the Egyptians) bury their dead.

[4] And al-Qudā'ī states: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*—Abū 'Abd-Allāh al-Yamanī claimed that (the name of) that mountain was associated with al-Muqaṭṭam, the son of Miṣr, son of Bayṣar, a righteous man who worshiped God Exalted and Sublime there in solitude so that the mountain was named after him. But that is not true, because there is no known son of Miṣr by the name of “al-Muqaṭṭam.” What the scholars said is that al-Muqaṭṭam is derived from *qaṭm*, which means “cutting”, so that it was called *muqaṭṭam*, as it were, because it is “cut off” from trees and vegetation. That theory was advanced by 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan al-Hunā'ī al-Dawsī, nicknamed “Kurā”, and others.

[5] 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam relates on the authority of al-Layth ibn Sa'd: 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ, God be pleased with him, was asked by the Muqawqis to sell him the foot of the Muqaṭṭam Hill for seventy thousand—according to another

text, for twenty thousand—dinars. ‘Amr, astonished at the request, said he would write to the Caliph about it. So he wrote to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, and ‘Umar wrote back: “Ask him why he offered you that sum for it; after all, nothing grows on the land and no water can be found there.” When (‘Amr) asked (the Muqawqis), he replied: “We do find a description of (the land) in the Scriptures, saying that it contains ‘the seedlings of Paradise.”” After ‘Amr had reported that to ‘Umar, he wrote back: “The only ‘seedlings of Paradise’ we know of are the true believers. Have the believers who die before you buried there. And do not sell it to him for anything.” And the first one to be buried there was a man of the Ma‘āfir tribe by the name of ‘Āmir—or ‘Amart, according to others.

The Muqawqis protested to ‘Amr: “What is the meaning of that? This is not the way you made an agreement with us!” And (‘Amr) then fixed for them the boundary between the (Muslim) burial ground and their own territory.

[6] ‘Umar ibn Abī ‘Umar al-Kindī relates in his *Merits of Egypt* that ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, while walking one day along the foot of the Muqaṭṭam in the company of the Muqawqis, said to the latter: “Why should this mountain of yours be bald, with no vegetation growing on it like (on) the mountains of Syria? Why not dig a canal from the Nile to the bottom of the hill and plant palm trees there?”

“We found in the books,” answered the Muqawqis, “that it was once the most abundant of all mountains in trees and plants and fruit, and that al-Muqaṭṭam, the son of Miṣr, son of Bayṣar, son of Ham, son of Noah, peace be upon him, used to go and camp there. And when the night came in which God spoke to Moses, peace be upon him, God revealed to the mountains, ‘I shall speak to one of My prophets on top of one of you mountains!’ And all the mountains rose in height and pretended to be lofty, except the hill of Jerusalem, for it lowered itself and pretended to be small. ‘Why have you done that?’ asked God as He addressed Himself to it, although He already knew the answer, of course. ‘To glorify and exalt You, Lord,’ it replied. Whereupon God commanded the mountains

that each must give some of its vegetation to (Mount Zion), and the Muqaṭṭam gave most generously all it possessed so that it has remained the way you see it now. Then God spoke to the Muqaṭṭam: ‘I shall compensate you for what you have done with the trees of Paradise or the seedlings of Paradise.’”

‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ then reported that to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb wrote back: “The only ‘trees of Paradise’ I know are the Muslims. Hence, make it a cemetery for them.” Which was done. The Muqawqis, however, was angry about it and said to ‘Amr: “This is not the way you had agreed with me!” So ‘Amr granted him a piece of land in the area of al-Ḥabash where the Christians could be buried.

[7] It is related, says (al-Kindī), that Moses, peace be upon him, prostrated himself, and with him every tree from the Muqaṭṭam all the way to Ṭurā did the same.

[8] It has been related that it is written in the Torah, “And when a hallowed place is conquered,”—meaning, the wadi where Moses, peace be upon him, prostrated himself in the Muqaṭṭam hills near the stone quarry (of Ṭurā). For Moses, peace be upon him, used to pray most humbly to his Lord in that wadi.

[9] Asad ibn Mūsā related: I attended a funeral with Ibn Lahī‘ah, and as we all sat gathered about him, he raised his head, looked toward the Mountain and said, “Jesus, Mary’s son, peace be upon him, passed by the foot of that mountain, wearing a woolen coat with a band tied around his waist, his mother by his side. He turned to her and said, “Mother, this is the graveyard of Muḥammad’s community, peace and blessings upon him.”

[10] ‘Abd-Allāh ibn Lahī‘ah transmitted on the authority of ‘Ayyāsh ibn ‘Abbās that Ka‘b al-Aḥbār asked a man going to Egypt to bring him a little earth from the foot of its Muqaṭṭam as a present. The man brought it to him in a sack. And when Ka‘b’s hour came, he had it fetched and it was placed in his grave under his side.

[11] It has been related that Ka'b was asked about the "Mountain of Egypt." It is, he said, the hallowed ground between al-Quṣayr and the Red Mountain.

[12] Ibn Lahī'ah said: The Muqaṭṭam is the area from al-Quṣayr to the stone quarry (of Ṭurā), and anything beyond that is part of the Red Mountain.

[13] In that mountain range are precious stones and some iron ore. It extends all the way to the remotest parts of the Sudan.

## 44. The Red Mountain<sup>(1)</sup>

[1] This mountain overlooks Cairo on its northeast side and is known as *al-Yaḥmūm*.

[2] The *yaḥāmīm*, says al-Qudāʿī, are the scattered hills overlooking Cairo and its cemetery on its eastern side. They stretch partway up the road to al-Jubb (Birkat al-Ḥujjāj). They were called *yaḥāmīm* because of their different colors; *yaḥmūm* in the speech of the Arabs means “deep black.”

[3] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam transmits from Abū ‘Ubayd Shufayy that, when the latter arrived in Miṣr and discovered that the people there used an oratory opposite the Sāqiyat Abī ‘Awn, which is near al-‘Askar, he exclaimed, “Why did they have to put their oratory on the cursed mountain and neglect the hallowed mountain?”—meaning, the Muqaṭṭam.

[4] Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir says: The Red Mountain—al-Qudāʿī mentioned that *al-Yaḥmūm* is the mountain which overlooks Cairo. I can see no other mountain overlooking Cairo.

[5] And al-Bakrī says: *Al-Yaḥmūm*, with *a* after the first consonant and a vowelless second.

[6] The *Yaḥmūm*, says al-Ḥarbī, is an elevation near Miṣr.

[7] It is related from ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Amr (ibn al-Āṣ), by way of Abū Qabīl (al-Ma‘āfirī), that he once asked Ka‘b (al-Aḥbār) about the Muqaṭṭam, and whether it was cursed. He replied: “It is not cursed. Rather, it is hallowed ground from al-Quṣayr all the way to al-Yaḥmūm.”

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1. Unfortunately, Stowasser’s notes for this chapter are not in the Georgetown Library copy of the typescript and seem to be lost.



[8] Al-Bakrī also mentioned that *Ābid*—on the pattern *Fā‘il*—is a hill near Old Cairo this side of the Muḩaṩṩam.

## 45. Jabal Yashkur<sup>(1)</sup>

[1] This elevation is located between Cairo and Miṣr. On it stands the Mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn.

[2] Jabal Yashkur, says al-Qudā'ī, is (named after) the Yashkur ibn Jazīlah of the (Banū) Lakhm; it is the hill on which the Mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn stands.

The Yashkur ibn Jazīlah are an Arabian tribe who, at the time of the conquest, were assigned a *khittāh* on that hill, and for that reason the hill became known as “Mount Yashkur.”

[3] The Mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn, says Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, is on Jabal Yashkur, which is a place famed for having one’s prayers answered and a blessed site. Moses, peace be upon him, is said to have spoken on it humble words of prayer to his Lord.

This elevation used to look out over the Nile when there was only empty land between it and the river. It also used to overlook the two ponds, which is to say, the pond which nowadays is known as Birkat al-Fīl, and the other which is known as Birkat Qārūn. On that hill one used to set up the mangonels for testing before they were sent to the frontier districts.

[4] *Al-Kabsh* is a hill in the neighborhood of Yashkur. In the old days it used to overlook the Nile from its western slope. Later, after the conquest of Egypt, when the Muslims staked out the city of al-Fuṣṭāṭ, the hill became part of the *khittāh* of al-Ḥamrā’ al-Quṣwā and was called “al-Kabsh.”

[5] *Al-Sharaf*—The Elevation—is a name for three locations, two of them between Cairo and Miṣr and one between Birkat al-

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1. Unfortunately, Stowasser’s notes for this chapter are not in the Georgetown Library copy of the typescript and seem to be lost.

Ḥabash and Fustāt-Miṣr. Of those outside Cairo, one now bears the Citadel, as it forms part of the Muqaṭṭam. The other is located between the Ṭūlūnid mosque and Miṣr; its western side looks out over the Great Canal and extends between Kawm al-Jāriḥ and the quarter (*khutt*) around the Ṭūlūn Mosque. It used to belong to the Tujīb ward (*khittah*) and then became part of al-‘Askar. As for the third Sharaf, it is known today as “al-Raṣd” and overlooks Rāshidah.

A *sharaf* would also be called “sanad”, which means ‘the ascending slope of a hill or mountain facing a person and rising from the foot, or base’. One also says, Such-and-such is a *sanad*, meaning, he is reliable, dependable.

## 46. Al-Raṣd<sup>(1)</sup>

[1] This place is an elevation overlooking on its western side Rāshidah, and on its south side the Birkat al-Ḥabash. Someone seeing it from the direction of Rāshidah will think of it as a hill, while on its eastern side it is a plain which one reaches from the Cemetery without having to climb. It is opposite the elevation that formed part of al-ʿAskar and the other elevation which today is known as al-Kabsh.

In the old days it used to be called *al-Jurf*—The Bluff. Later on it became known as *al-Raṣd*, because al-Afḍal Abū ʿl-Qāsim Shāhanshāh ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh Badr al-Jamālī had on top of it a sphere for the observation—*raṣd*—of the stars built so that it was known from that time on (simply) as “al-Raṣd”—The Observatory.

[2] The author of a work entitled *Building the Observatory* gives this account:

From Syria one had brought to al-Afḍal Shāhanshāh ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh Badr al-Jamālī ephemerides for such years as would allow to prognosticate the star positions for the year 500 after the Hijrah; one speaks of a hundred charts or so. The court astrologers in those days were Ibn al-Ḥalabī, Ibn al-Haythamī, Sihlawn, and others, who were paid a monthly salary, plus allowances and clothing, for preparing the annual ephemeris. Each would work hard and to the best of his ability on his calculations, and on the first day of the (new) year each of them delivered his chart. (Al-Afḍal) would then compare their charts with the ephemerides brought in from Syria, and there would (invariably) be a good deal of discrepancy between them. That he found strange.

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1. Unfortunately, Stowasser's notes for this chapter are not in the Georgetown Library copy of the typescript and seem to be lost.

So, on the first day of the year 513 (14 April 1119), when the charts were submitted as usual, (al-Afḍal) called the astrologers and mathematicians and experts together and asked them about the reason for the variance in the charts. They said, “The Syrians compute and operate on the basis of the ‘tested almanac’ of the time of al-Ma’mūn, whereas we follow the Ḥākimite astronomical almanac, because it is more up-to-date. And there is, of course, a certain discrepancy and variance between the earlier and the later almanac. The ancients were already in complete agreement that the recent is more correct than the older, since the stars shift positions and the computation changes.” They then discussed the meaning of all that in terms of what had been stated in the respective literature and advised (al-Afḍal) to have a modern observatory built through which the calculations would be corrected and all deficiency and discrepancy would be removed. Great benefit and advantage would accrue from it, as well as renown and lasting fame.

“And who will be in charge of that?” asked (al-Afḍal). “None other than Judge Ibn Abī ʿl-ʿAysh al-Ṭarābulṣī, the learned engineer and scholar,” answered his confidential secretary and counselor, the illustrious Shaykh Abū ʿl-Ḥasan ibn Abī Usāmah. Ibn Abī ʿl-ʿAysh was his son-in-law, an old man of much influence and wealth which he had acquired with the help of General Abū ʿAbd-Allāh, who later took over the vizierate after al-Afḍal’s death and was then called al-Ma’mūn al-Baṭāʾihī. Al-Afḍal gave his approval and said, “Have him take care of it then and have him requisition whatever he needs.”

The first thing the man did when he showed up for the job was to praise himself. Now, al-Afḍal was jealous of everything, but most of all of people who were boastful and wore showy clothes. Then the man said, “These instruments are large and very hazardous and not everyone can handle them well,” and he kept talking and elaborating a lot. “Whoever takes on this job,” he said, “needs to be assured favor and respect from higher up so that he can be cheerful and relaxed in its execution and can concentrate on what he is working on.” That irritated al-Afḍal, who exclaimed, “The man has already

praised himself and argued too much. Whatever business he has with us hereafter, there won't be any need for it."

Whereupon General al-Baṭā'iḥī spoke up, saying: "There is someone who will accomplish the job in the least complicated manner, in the shortest and fastest time, and in the best of spirit: the physician Abū Sa'īd ibn Qirqah, who is presently in charge of the Armory, the Saddlery, the Ordnance Depot, and other things." (Al-Afḍal) had him summoned at once, and the man happened to speak well and with ease: about the reason for building the instruments and who had been the first to use them in earliest times. He talked about the ancients in the world and who of them had made astronomical observations, one by one from the first to the last in an exhaustive presentation, as if he had memorized it or was reading it from a book, so that he amazed al-Afḍal and those who were present.

"What do you need?" asked (al-Afḍal). "I shall not need much," he answered, "for matters are easy. All I need from the Sovereign's depots—may God perpetuate his reign—is copper, lead and machinery. Whatever I need I shall requisition item by item. The expenditures and wages for the artisans should be the responsibility of someone else."

Al-Afḍal, quite taken with the man, said, "He should be paid a salary for himself." "I am an employee in several services," replied Abū Sa'īd, "and my (present) remunerations are sufficient for me, for I am a slave of the State. I do not need a salary. When I achieve the desired end and finish the work, that is all I have in mind."

Since al-Afḍal had been told that (building) such an observatory would require enormous amounts of money, he asked, "How much money, would you say, will (the project) need?" "It will cost no more," answered Abū Sa'īd, "than the amount one spends on (the construction of) a mosque or a belvedere." (Al-Afḍal) kept asking the same question again and again, and finally he said, "Bring a piece of paper!" And on it Abū Sa'īd wrote:

This slave kisses the ground and communicates the following: It has become requisite that a royal order be issued to the Dār al-Wakālah for the release of 200 quintals of pig copper, 80 quintals of Spanish bar copper, and 40 quintals of red copper; also 1,000 quintals of lead; and from the Shipyard as much firewood as well as iron and steel as may be needed; and also lumber; and for expenses 100 dinars to be paid out through a notary, with the right for me to claim another amount like it after I am finished.

I shall be required to select a site which is suitable for astronomical observations and where all work and construction will take place, while the Sovereign shall attend to such matters as one depends on and requests his orders for.

All of that was approved by al-Afḍal, who then wanted to bestow a robe of honor on Abū Saʿīd. But the General said, "This can wait until one has seen what he has done." And so (Abū Saʿīd) worked from beginning to end without receiving a single dirham, because he was ashamed to ask as long as he was in their employ. All of them had hopes, of course, that the Sovereign's reign would be long and lasting, but al-Afḍal was killed the next year and the situation was changed then.

Next, they chose (as the site) for the observatory the Mosque of the Lamp on top of the Muqaṭṭam, but then, realizing that it was too far away for the necessary stores to be brought up, agreed (instead) on the flat top of the bluff near the large mosque known as the Elephant Mosque; six thousand dinars had already been spent on (the construction of) the mosque alone.

Then they prepared in the Elephant Mosque an excavation in the hill at the spot where now the cistern is, and in it was built the mold for the large ring with a diameter of ten cubits and a circumference of thirty cubits. For days they adjusted and trimmed the mold, while all around it ten furnaces were set up with two bellows on top of each, each furnace containing eleven quintals of copper, more or less, the total being one hundred quintals and a fraction, which they distributed among the furnaces. By mid-afternoon, the furnaces were fired up, and they kept pumping air until two hours into daylight the next day.

In the morning of the following day, al-Afḍal showed up and sat down on a chair, and when the furnaces were all ready and going full blast, he gave the order to open them. A man was already positioned at each furnace, and those men had instructions to open the furnaces all at once. After they were opened, the copper flowed like water into the mold. However, there was some residual moisture (in the mold), and when the copper in its hot state got to the wet spot, it sizzled and crackled and the ring did not close. And when they inspected it, after it had cooled down, they found the ring perfect, except for that part where the moisture had been. Al-Afḍal, irritated and annoyed, angrily flung a bag containing a thousand dirhams to the workers and got on his horse. Ibn Qirqaḥ tried to mollify him, pointing out that, even if such a large instrument, the like of which no one had ever heard of, had to be cast ten times until it turned out right, it would not be too much. "Then see to it that it is cast again!" said al-Afḍal.

This was done, and it came out right, but al-Afḍal was not present the second time. There was great joy that the ring had turned out right, and it was moved and hoisted on the flat roof of the Elephant Mosque. All the copper craftsmen were then brought in and a compass of oakwood—an extraordinary compass indeed—was made for it. Next, a perfectly level stone platform was built in the center of the ring to hold the foot of the compass, which was upright like the shaft of a mill and had an arm like the yoke of a mill. The arm had been sheathed in iron and the whole thing was made of first-rate oakwood. The end of the arm was equipped to do several things: rectify the surface of the ring, adjust its sides, (make) lines and notches. (Abū Saʿīd) spent a long time calibrating the ring and filing off its irregularities, all in the presence of a crowd of artisans, engineers and representatives of that science, for whom he requisitioned a large tent that was set up over the whole site. (Meanwhile) solid vaults were built underneath the ring.

They had intended for the ring to be positioned on the roof of the Elephant Mosque, but that did not work, because they discovered



that one could not see the first rays of the sun in the east from there. So they agreed to move the ring to the Juyūshī Mosque, in the neighborhood of the Anṭākī Mosque, also known as “al-Raṣd.” It had been built by al-Afḍal [*sic*] in a more graceful style than the Elephant Mosque but had remained unfinished. Only after it was used for astronomical observation was it completed.

Al-Afḍal personally was present when the ring was moved from the Elephant to the Juyūshī Mosque. Long poles, hawsers and chisels had already been brought from Alexandria and elsewhere. Sailors, Sudanese blacks, some horsemen and foot soldiers were all gathered together in order to lower (the contraption) and move it on rollers to the Juyūshī observatory mosque. The following day they all came back to hoist it onto the roof. They got the job done and then they installed the ring. Under its shoulders they placed two alabaster columns, the bottom and top of which they had cast in lead to prevent the copper instruments from sagging. In the center was placed an alabaster column with the pivot of the alidade on top, cast in heavy copper, for the alidade to turn on. But since the alidade was made of copper, it could not be manipulated and refused to turn. So they made it of teakwood and its pivot and ends of sheet copper, so that it would turn more easily.

Finally, after much trouble and toil, they made observations of the sun with it. But every time the ring, because of its weight, would give by a degree and some minutes, so they built a copper support on top of the alabaster column in order to check its sag, and from then on they were successful. Still, there would be different readings, despite their strenuous efforts to fine-tune the instrument with plumb lines, and although the alidade was now made of wood.

In spite of his advanced age, al-Afḍal would often come to visit, shaky and tottery, and the General had him carried up to the top (of the mosque). He would sit for a while to rest up, not saying a word, his hands trembling, and then they would make observations

in his presence. It was during one of those occasions that al-Afḍal was murdered in the night of ʿĪd al-Fiṭr 515 (13 December 1121).

People had been telling al-Afḍal that Ibn Qirḡah had gone too far with the size of the ring and had made it too large. So one day al-Afḍal said to him, "How about making it smaller? Then it would be easier to handle." But (Ibn Qirḡah) replied, "By your grace and benevolence, if I could make a ring so large that one foot of it would rest on the Pyramids and the other on the Mosque of the Lamp, I would do it! For the larger the instrument, the more correct the calculation. What is this here anyway compared to the world of the stars!" But people kept talking against him more and more, and so he finally made on the terrace laid out in red brick below the Juyūshī Mosque a smaller ring with a diameter of less than seven cubits and a circumference of about twenty-one cubits. By the time it was finished, al-Afḍal was murdered, and only some 160 dinars in government funds had been spent for wages, supplies and absolute necessities.

Once the vizierate was firmly in his hands, al-Ma'mūn al-Baṭā'iḥī wanted to crown it by having (the observatory) called "Ma'mūn's rectified observatory," just as the earlier (observatory in 'Abbāsīd times) was called "Ma'mūn's tested observatory." He therefore ordered the observatory to be moved to the Bāb al-Naṣr in Cairo. The move was made in the same manner as before, with porters, seamen and various groups of workers who were paid a few dirhams a day for food. After it was placed on rollers, they moved it along The Trench on the other side of the Faṭḥ (Mosque) across al-Mashāhid to the Dhakhīrah Mosque outside Cairo. They had a very tough time getting it through the Bāb al-Naṣr, because they were afraid it might bump (against the walls) and be knocked out of kilter. So they erected a scaffolding over the vault of the Bāb al-Naṣr inside the gate, and the men kept pulling and yanking on the winches from below and above until it was finally on the large terrace. From there they moved it then to the upper terrace, where they set up the supports for it as described before.

They made observations with the large ring the same way they had done on The Bluff, but only what they wanted to find out about the sun worked out well for them. Hence, they set out to build an instrument with a ring (only) five cubits in diameter. The ring was cast in a khan in the 'Aṭūfiyyah quarter of Cairo, and that was an easy thing to do compared to the great trouble they had had with the large and the medium-sized rings.

Al-Ma'mūn devoted all of his time to the work on it and to urging it along. Ibn Qirqaḥ would come in twice every day, and Abū Ja'far Ibn Ḥaysidānī would be there as well as Abū 'l-Barakat Ibn Abī 'l-Layth, head of the Office of Official Inquiry, who had full authority. "Keep an eye on them every day," al-Ma'mūn had told the latter, "and whatever they request, sign it over to them without prior consultation with me." For his ambition was what these people had raised his hopes for, namely, that one would speak of "Ma'mūn's rectified observatory." And if God had wanted al-Ma'mūn to live a little longer, he would have indeed completed the entire observatory. But he was arrested on the evening of Saturday, the 3rd of Ramaḍān, 519 (3 October 1125).

One of the charges brought against him was the construction of the observatory under discussion and the effort he had spent on it. It was said that he had entertained ambitions on the caliphate, since he had called it "Ma'mūn's observatory" and named it after himself instead of after the Caliph, al-Āmir-bi-aḥkāmi-'llāh. As far as the common people and the riffraff are concerned, they claimed that those people intended to communicate with the planet Saturn and wanted to manipulate the hidden things, and others said that he did it in order to engage in sorcery, and similar ugly things.

After al-Ma'mūn's arrest, (the project) was abandoned and the Caliph forbade its (further) construction, so that no one even dared to mention it. On his orders, (the observatory) was broken up and (the pieces were) taken to the trash dumps. The hired workers and the ranking personnel involved in (the project) fled.

The technical staff present to serve (Ibn Qirqah) and to be with him every day without fail had been Shaykh Abū Ja‘far Ibn Ḥaysidānī, Judge Ibn Abī ‘l-Layth, the eminent Abū ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Sulaymān ibn al-Bawwāb, the engineers Shaykh Abū ‘l-Munajjā Ibn Sanad al-Sā‘atī al-Iskandarānī and Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Ṣiqillī, in addition to mathematicians and astronomers, such as Ibn al-Ḥalabī, Ibn al-Haythamī, Sihlawn’s student Abū Naṣr, Ibn Diyāb, and al-Qala‘ī; a group of people would be there daily until late morning. The director of the Office (of Official Inquiry), Ibn Abī ‘l-Layth, would come to visit. On some days Ibn Ḥaysidānī may have failed to show up, for he was an important man, a man of pride and dignity. And every day al-Ma‘mūn would send someone to check up on the people there and to report to him those who were absent. For al-Ma‘mūn was much given to checking up on everything; he had his own stool pigeons and informers who would never sleep, and hardly anything ever escaped him about high and low in Fustāṭ and Cairo and about people who spoke (their mind). He also planted certain people in every village in the districts who would keep him thoroughly informed about what was going on there.

So much for the account of this author.

[3] I myself still remember seeing that place, which today is known as “al-Raṣd where the Elephant Mosque is,” full of life, with several dwellings and small mosques and people permanently living there. But the whole area has gone to ruin (these days) and not a soul lives there any more.

[4] Al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn had already had waterwheels built there which were to move water from certain places linked with a canal dug from the Nile near the *ribāṭ* of al-Āthār al-Nabawīyah. At the foot of that bluff called al-Raṣd the water was to be raised by means of other waterwheels already set up there until it would finally reach the Citadel. But he died, and







Karl Stowasser was born in 1925 in Grazlitz (now Kraslice) in Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic), only two miles from the German border. After the war, he entered the University of Erlangen and got a doctorate in Arabic from the University of Münster. In the 1950s, he served as an interpreter and translator in Syria. Beginning in 1961, he worked at Georgetown University. In 1970, he joined the Department of History at the University of Maryland. He retired in 1995 and died in 1997 of leukemia.

This annotated translation by Dr. Karl Stowasser has given new life in the English speaking world to an Arabic classic: Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī’s (d. 1442) *al-Mawā‘iẓ wa-l-i‘tibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*. It was a labor extending over twenty years and demanding the rich background of linguistic and historical knowledge that Dr. Stowasser brought to it. In his work on al-Maqrīzī, his aim was to produce not just a highly readable translation but a full scholarly edition as well. This translation, left unpublished at his death, is now entirely edited in three volumes covering roughly the first quarter of al-Maqrīzī’s work.