

Al-Maqrīzī

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

Part IIB



TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED BY

KARL STOWASSER (†)

EDITED BY

FRÉDÉRIC BAUDEN & CLOPPER ALMON

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Dealing with Topography and Historical
Remains*

Part IIb

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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 IIb

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53. Munyat Andūnah⁽¹⁾

One of the villages of Gīzah was named after Andūnah (Anthony), the secretary of (Abū 'l-Faḥ) Aḥmad (ibn 'Alī) al-Madā'inī,⁽²⁾ who used to be in charge of the estates of Mūsā ibn Bughā⁽³⁾ in Egypt. Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn had this Andūnah, who was a Christian, arrested and took 50,000 dinars from him.

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1. Ibn Mammātī lists it combined with the neighboring village of Munyat Qādūs (*Qawānīn* 190). As a result of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's cadastre, it became a separate unit and was since its purchase by Sultan Lājīn (1297-1299) a *waqf* of the Mosque of Aḥmad b. Ṭulūn (Ibn al-Jī'an, *Tuhfat*, 146). Together with still a third village, Munyat al-Shammās, it became known as *al-Manāwāt* ("the Muniyahs"), its present-day name (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 3:8), which is used already by Ibn Iyās (*Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 5:171, 174). In 1517, the forces of the last Mamluk sultan, Ṭūmān Bāy, fought their last battle with the Ottoman troops commanded by Sultan Selim I near that village.
 2. Cf. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, 5:75 (end of entry "al-Madā'in").
 3. Turkish general and partisan of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mu'tamid, died 878 in Baghdad (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 9:533/III, 1916).

54. Wasīm⁽¹⁾

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates: ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, the governor of Egypt,⁽²⁾ went one day to Wasīm, which was then owned by a Copt. The man asked ‘Abd-Allāh to come to his home, and he would give him one hundred thousand dinars. So ‘Abd-Allāh went to see him. According to other accounts, ‘Abd-Allāh went only as far as the village of Abū ‘l-Numrus, accompanied by one of the secretaries by the name of (Yaḥyā) Ibn Ḥanḏalah. (At any rate) while he was there, he received word that he was dismissed, and that Qurrah ibn Sharīk had taken over as governor. When the news arrived, he hastily put on his trousers—the wrong way around. Others have said that when ‘Abd-Allāh was told of his dismissal, he returned the money to its owner, explaining, “I have just been dismissed!” ‘Abd-Allāh had ridden in the company of that Copt to the ferry—he was late and his companions had already crossed the river ahead of him—when the letter with his dismissal arrived. Whereupon the man with the money said: “You simply must honor me with a visit and be my guest and eat my food! And by God, let none of that revert to me! I shall not let you go away (like that)!” Then he crossed the river with ‘Abd-Allāh.

1. The present-day *Awsīm* (and so recorded already by Ibn Mammātī, Ibn al-Jī‘ān, Ibn Duqmāq), now part of Imbābah. A very ancient town dating from pharaonic times when its civil name was *Skhem* (in Coptic records *Oushim* or *Boushim*, hence its Arabic name); the Greeks called it *Letopolis* (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 3:57-8).

2. From 705 to 709, succeeding his uncle ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān.

55. Munyat ‘Uqbah

[1] This village near Gīzah was named after ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir al-Juhanī, God be pleased with him.

[2] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates:⁽¹⁾ ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir wrote to Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, God be pleased with both asking him for a piece of land which he could work for profit near ‘Uqbah’s village, and Mu‘āwiyah wrote back, allowing him 1,000 square cubits (of land). One of ‘Uqbah’s freedmen, who was with him at the time, told him, “Find some good land, sir!” But ‘Uqbah replied, “We have no right to do that. The Copts’ covenant contains six stipulations: that nothing must be taken from them personally, nor from their women, nor from their children, nothing must be added as a burden to them, and they must be defended at a time of danger against an external enemy. And I have confirmed that to them.”

According to another tradition: ‘Uqbah wrote to Mu‘āwiyah asking him for a small piece of land in a village where he could build homes and dwellings, and Mu‘āwiyah had 1,000 by 1,000 cubits (of land) assigned to him. His clients and those who were with him at the time urged him, “Find some land you like, stake out your claims and build on it!” But he replied, “We have no right to do that. They have in their covenant six stipulations, among them: that nothing must be taken from, nor added to, their land, that they must not be burdened with taxes beyond their capacity, that their children must not be taken, and that they must be defended against an external enemy.”

[3] Abū Sa‘īd Ibn Yūnus says: That piece of land which ‘Uqbah received as a *qaṭī‘ah* (allodium) is the *munyah* known as “Munyat ‘Uqbah” in Gīzah near Fustāṭ Miṣr.

1. *Futūḥ Miṣr* 64. —The name of the village today is *Mīt ‘Uqbah*.

[4] 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir ibn 'Abs ibn 'Amr ibn 'Adīy ibn 'Amr ibn Rifā'ah ibn Mawdū'ah ibn 'Adīy ibn Ghanam ibn al-Rub'ah ibn Rashdān ibn Qays ibn Juhaynah—this is how Abū 'Umar al-Kindī gives his genealogy.

[5] The (Hispano-Arab) traditionist Abū 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (on the other hand) says: 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir ibn Ḥabs al-Juhanī is a descendant of Juhaynah ibn Zayd ibn Sūd ibn Aslam ibn 'Amr ibn Ilḥāf ibn Quḍā'ah. There has been disagreement about this lineage. His formal name is Abū Ḥammād, but others give it as Abū Usayd and Abū Asad, still others as Abū 'Amr, , or Abū Su'ād or Abū 'l-Aswad. Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt⁽²⁾ claims that Abū 'Āmir 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir al-Juhanī was killed in action in the battle of Nahrawān, which was in 38 (A.D. 658), but that is an obvious error on his part, for later on in his book one reads: 'In 58 died 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir al-Juhanī.' 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir lived in Egypt. He was a governor of that country and built there a mansion. He died at the end of Mu'āwiyah's caliphate. The Companions who transmitted on his authority are Jābir (ibn 'Abd-Allāh), Ibn (al-)Abbās, Abū Umāmah, and Maslamah ibn al-Mukhallad. Numerous are his transmitters among the Followers.

[6] Al-Kindī says:⁽³⁾ The governorship of Egypt was then assumed by 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir, appointed by Mu'āwiyah, who assigned to him the dual function of governor and finance director and made Ḥammād the chief of his constabulary. 'Uqbah was a Koran reciter, a jurisprudent versed in inheritance law, and a poet. He had participated in the Hijrah, was a Companion, and was among the first to adopt Islam. He owned the gray mule of the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, which he used to take along on campaigns.

2. Başran traditionist and genealogist, died 854.

3. *Al-Wulāh wa-l-quḍāh* (ed. Guest), 37, 38.

‘Uqbah was relieved of his duties as governor of Egypt and replaced by Maslamah ibn Mukhallad on the 19th of Rabi‘ I, 47 (May 19, 667). His term of office was two years and three months.

[7] Ibn Yūnus says: He died in Fuṣṭāṭ in 58 (A.D. 678) and was buried in the city’s cemetery by the Muqaṭṭam Hills.⁽⁴⁾ He used to dye his beard black.

4. Cf. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-sayyārah*, 241-2, also 18, 140. His tomb, restored in Ottoman times, and a nearby small mosque bearing his name are still extant today.

56. Ḥulwān⁽¹⁾

[1] Its name is said to derive from Ḥulwān son of Bābalyūn son of ‘Amr son of Imru’ al-Qays son of Bābalyūn, King of Egypt, son of Saba’ son of Yashjub son of Ya‘rub son of Qaḥṭān. This Ḥulwān was in Syria commanding the vanguard of Abrahah (ibn Rā’ish) “Dhū ‘l-Manār,” one of the South Arabian kings.

[2] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam relates:⁽²⁾ After the plague had broken out in Fustāṭ, (the governor) ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān moved out of the town and made camp near Ḥulwān inside the desert at a certain place called “Abū Qarqūrah.” Which is the wellhead that ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān had dug out and its water channeled to his date palms he planted at Ḥulwān.

Ibn Ḥudayj⁽³⁾ used to send ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (at Ḥulwān) daily reports on what was going on in town (i.e., in Fustāṭ), like deaths and other matters. One day he sent a messenger to him, and when the man arrived, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz asked him his name. “Abū Ṭālib,” he answered. This upset ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and infuriated him, and he said to the man, “I ask you your name, and you answer ‘Abū Ṭālib!’ What is your name?” “Mudrik,” said the man, and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz took that as

1. This is the village listed by both Ibn Mammātī (*Qawānīn* 131) and Ibn al-Jī‘ān (*Tuhfah* 149) as part of Itfīhiyyah province; it is called today *Ḥilwān al-Balad*, in distinction from *Ḥilwān al-Ḥammāmāt* (the “Hélouan-les-Bains” of the French) 3 km to the east, which was founded in 1871 by the Khedive Ismail over and around the salubrious sulfur and saline springs of the area.

Ḥulwān—in Coptic diocesan records *Halouan* or *Halban* (Evetts, *Churches*, 154)—was an episcopal see before the Arab conquest. The town was bought by the Umayyad prince ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān from the Copts for 10,000 dīnars, reports Ibn Taghribirdī (*Nujūm* 1:185) among the events of the year 70 (689/90).

2. *Futūḥ Miṣr* 155.

3. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu‘āwiyah b. Ḥudayj al-Tujībī, son of the Companion Mu‘āwiyah b. Ḥudayj al-Kindī (cf. II, 13, n. 27). He was appointed police prefect in 704, a few months before ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān’s death (Kindī, ed. Guest, 53), and served as judge of Egypt, highly esteemed as a scholar and traditionist, until his death in 714.

a good omen.⁽⁴⁾ But ‘Abd al-‘Azīz took ill in that place he had chosen to move away to and died there.

His body was put on a Nile boat that was to take him to Fuṣṭāṭ, [but they had a strong wind against them and could not make it to its destination]⁽⁵⁾ before the corpse began to decompose. So it was put ashore in some shack of the Sāḥil Marīs (the “South Wharf”). There it was washed and from there his funeral procession was made to set out; those who turned out for it carried censers containing aloe, on account of the stench emanating from the decomposing body.

‘Abd al-‘Azīz had willed that when he died, his funeral procession should be led past the home of Janāb ibn Marthad ibn Zayd ibn Hāni’ al-Ru‘aynī, the captain of his guard, who had been a friend of his. But Janāb had died (two years) before ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (in 702), and when the funeral cortege was led past Janāb’s house, Janāb’s women came out, dressed in black, and stood by the entrance wailing; then they followed him to the graveyard.⁽⁶⁾

Nuṣayb⁽⁷⁾ had enjoyed special favor with ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, and when he came to visit him during his illness, he was admitted in his presence. Seeing how ill ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was, he intoned:

We come to call on our lord—mine and others’
 Would that it was the callers for whom we grieve!
 Were Death to take a ransom, I’d gladly pay
 the choice of all I own, both new and old.

4. *Mudrik* means ‘attaining’ or ‘having attained (one’s goal)’. —Also, while addressing another person with his or her formal name is a sign of affectionate respect, referring to oneself by one’s *kunya* is considered presumptuous and boorish.

5. The passage in square brackets is restored from the original.

6. For the location of his tomb in the southern cemetery cf. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib*, 144-45

7. He is the panegyric poet Abū Miḥjan Nuṣayb b. Rabāḥ, a black freedman of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz; he died in 726 (*GAL*² § 1:99).

When ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (who was in a coma) heard his voice, he opened his eyes and ordered a reward of one thousand dinars for the poet. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s family saw that as a good sign and was happy about it, but then he died.

[3] The plague broke out in Fustāt in the year 70 (A.D. 699/90), reports al-Kindī,⁽⁸⁾ and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān left the city for the area east of the Nile, going into the desert and camping at Ḥulwān. He liked the place and took it over, settling there and bringing in guards and constables and police, all of them under the command of Janāb ibn Marthad at Ḥulwān. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz built houses and mosques in Ḥulwān, and he cultivated the place in the best and most perfect manner, planting its date palms and its vineyards. In the words of Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt:⁽⁹⁾

Let rain fall on Ḥulwān, a place of vineyards,
of figs and grapes as put out leaves!
Palms bending with the weight of clusters
of *barnī* dates, black in their bounty
They grow, abode of doves, their ravens fain
to take a pick of their ripe fruit.

After having had the palms of Ḥulwān planted and grafted, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, accompanied by the garrison troops, came for a visit. As he walked about, surveying their rows of seedlings and their irrigation ditches, Yazīd ibn ‘Urwah al-Ḥamalī said to him, “Truly, Emir, should you not exclaim as the Prophet did—‘Whatever God wills, there is no power save with God!’?” And ‘Abd al-‘Azīz replied, “You

8. *Al-Wulāh wa-l-quḍāh* (ed. Guest) 49.

9. A scion of the ‘Amīr b. Lu‘ayy clan of the Quraysh in Mecca, his real name was ‘Ubayd-Allāh b. Qays b. Shurayḥ. Different explanations are given for his nickname, the most common one being that he celebrated in his love poetry three women, each named “Ruqayyah.” He was much engaged in the anti-Umayyad camp and a partisan of Muṣ‘ab ibn al-Zubayr, brother of the counter-caliph ‘Abd-Allāh b. al-Zubayr. Pardoned by ‘Abd al-Malik, he spent his last years at Ḥulwān in the entourage of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, whose claim to the caliphate he defended in his verses. He died there about 704. Cf. *GAL*² 1:43, S 1:78; the article “Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt” (J.W. Füick) in *EF*.

have reminded me to be grateful, son! Tell Athanasius⁽¹⁰⁾ to add ten dinars to the stipend he pays you.”

[4] ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam ibn Abī ‘l-‘Āṣ ibn Umayyah ibn ‘Abd Shams ibn ‘Abd Manāf al-Qurashī al-Umawī, Abū ‘l-Aṣḡagh—his mother was Laylā, daughter of Zabbān ibn al Aṣḡagh al-Kind—transmitted from Abū Hurayrah and ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir al-Juhanī. On his authority transmitted ‘Ulayy ibn Rabāh, Buḡayr ibn Dhākhīr (al-Ma‘āfirī), ‘Ubayd-Allāh ibn Mālīk al-Khawlānī, and Ka‘b ibn ‘Alqamah. Both al-Nasā‘ī⁽¹¹⁾ and Ibn Sa‘d attest to his trustworthiness.

[5] When⁽¹²⁾ his father Marwān marched on Egypt, he dispatched (‘Abd al-‘Azīz) at the head of an army to Aylah so that he would enter Egypt from that side. The governor of Egypt, Ibn Jaḡdam,⁽¹³⁾ sent an army under the command of Zuhayr ibn Qays al-Balawī⁽¹⁴⁾ against him. He caught up with ‘Abd al-‘Azīz at Buṣāq, which is the plateau above the pass road of Aylah, and engaged him in battle. Zuhayr and his troops were defeated and put to flight.

[6] After having subdued Egypt in Jumādā II, 65 (Jan./Feb. 685), Marwān, after a two months’ stay in Fuṣṭāṭ, installed his son ‘Abd al-‘Azīz as governor and director of finance of the country.⁽¹⁵⁾ When ‘Abd al-‘Azīz protested, “Commander of th Faithful, how can anyone stay in a country where there is not a single brother of his!” Marwān replied: “My son, do right by all, and they will all be your brothers! Show yourself friendly and cheerful, and you will have

10. Chief of the Financial Office; cf. I, 36, n. 1.

11. Abū ‘Abd al-Raḡmān Aḡmad b. ‘Alī, author of one of the six “canonical” collections of traditions, died 915.

12. Taken from al-Kindī, *Wulāh* (ed. Guest p. 42). —On the events described in this short section see also Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 5:540/II, 481.

13. I.e. ‘Abd al-Raḡman b. ‘Utbah b. Jaḡdam al-Qurashī, governor of Egypt (for the counter-caliph Ibn al-Zubayr) from March to December 684.

14. Four years later, he was appointed by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz governor of Cyrenaica. He died 695 in the defense of Barqah against a Byzantine invasion force.

15. The source is still al-Kindī (*Wulāh* p. 46).

their hearts and friendship. Make every one of their chiefs believe that he is someone special to you, and he will be a spy for you on others, and his people will follow you. I am leaving your brother Bishr with you as a companion, and I have given you Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr⁽¹⁶⁾ as trusted assistant and adviser. Don't let it bother you, my son, that you are going to be governor in a very distant land! Isn't that better than locking your door and sitting at home in idleness?" He also left him with some last advice as he departed from Egypt for Syria, saying: "I urge you to be godfearing in your private life as well as in public, for *Surely God is with those who are godfearing, and those who are good-doers.*"⁽¹⁷⁾ I also urge you not to give the summoner to prayer reason to blame you, for the muezzin summon to a duty imposed by God: *Surely the prayer is a timed prescription for the believers.*"⁽¹⁸⁾ I urge you, moreover, never to make a promise to people unless you keep it, even if you have to enforce it at lance point. And I urge you not to hasten in any judgment until you have sought advice; for were God to relieve any one of that (rule), He would surely have done so in the case of His Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings upon him, through the divine inspiration that would come to him; (yet) God Exalted says: *And take counsel with them in the affair.*"⁽¹⁹⁾

Marwān left Egypt on the first day of Rajab, 65 (February 11, 685), and 'Abd al-'Azīz assumed the office of governor and finance director of the province. Marwān died on the first of Ramaḍān (April 11), and his son 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān was proclaimed caliph. He then confirmed his brother 'Abd al-'Azīz in office. In 67, 'Abd al-'Azīz paid 'Abd al-Malik an official visit. He also put Janāb ibn Marthad al-Ru'aynī in charge of the guard, the cavalry and the constables, so that his authority was greatly strengthened. Any man

16. The future governor of NW Africa (707-714) and conqueror of Spain, died 715.

17. Koran 16 (The Bee):128.

18. Koran 4 (The Women):103.

19. Koran 3 (The House of Imran):159.

who spoke rudely to ‘Abd al-‘Azīz would, as he left, be picked up by Janāb and his men, who beat him up and threw him in jail.

[7] ‘Abd al-‘Azīz⁽²⁰⁾ was the first to observe the 9th day of Dhū ‘l-Ḥijjah⁽²¹⁾ in Egypt in the year 71 (A.D. 691). Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb says: The first to establish the public audience (of the governor) in the mosque on *yawm ‘Arafah* following the afternoon prayer was ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān.

In 72, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz sent the sea-borne expedition to Mecca to fight against (the counter-caliph) ‘Abd-Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, with Mālik ibn Sharāḥīl al-Khawlānī in command. The expeditionary corps was 3,000 men strong, among them was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥsin, freedman of the Banū Andā, who is the man who killed Ibn al-Zubayr.

In 74, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz went to Alexandria, and in 75 he paid a (second) visit to his brother ‘Abd al-Malik (in Damascus). In 77 (A.D. 696), he had the entire congregational mosque of Fuṣṭāṭ torn down and then enlarged on all sides.

[8] He had dinars with (Arabic) inscriptions struck.

[9] Ibn ‘Ufayr⁽²²⁾ reports: ‘Abd al-‘Azīz could afford to have a thousand large food bowls set out around his mansion every day and he was able to send a hundred large bowls of food around the tribes on carts.

[10] ‘Abd al-Malik⁽²³⁾ wrote to ‘Abd al-‘Azīz that he should waive his right to succession so that he could make (his sons) al-Walid and Sulaymān the heirs apparent. But ‘Abd al-‘Azīz rejected

20. Kindī, p. 50.

21. Called *yawm ‘Arafah*, the day on which the Mecca pilgrims stop at Mount ‘Arafāt. It precedes the ‘Īd al-‘Aḍḥā, the Sacrificial Feast, celebrated by the pilgrims with animal sacrifices in the valley of Minā. Its observance by other Muslims in the form of special prayers and pious exercises in imitation of the Mecca pilgrims was first introduced by ‘Abd-Allāh b. al-‘Abbās in Baṣrah.

22. Resumption of al-Kindī’s text (p. 51).

23. Kindī, p. 54

that, writing back: "If you have a son, I have several. God will decide what He wills." 'Abd al-Malik was furious, and 'Abd al-'Azīz sent 'Ulayy ibn Rabāḥ as an emissary to try to appease him. The latter, on his arrival in 'Abd al-Malik's presence, sought to win the caliph's sympathy for his brother, but 'Abd al-Malik complained bitterly about him, saying, "God has made a distinction between me and him! Now as ever, he must come to me—unless he agrees!" When 'Ulayy came back to 'Abd al-'Azīz, he reported to him about 'Abd al-Malik and his position, then he told him about his brother's summons. And 'Abd al-'Azīz said, "I shall do so. I am the one, after all, who has forsaken him, and, by God, he has yet to issue a summons that was not heeded!"

'Abd al-'Azīz used to say: "I came to Egypt when Maslamah ibn Mukhallad was governor, and I made three wishes there, all of which I have seen fulfilled: I wished to be governor of Egypt; I wished to be married to Maslamah's two wives; and I wished that his chamberlain Qays ibn Kulayb would serve me in that same capacity." And indeed, Maslamah died and 'Abd al-'Azīz came to Egypt and took over as governor of the province, and Qays served him as chamberlain, and he married both wives of Maslamah.

His son, al-Aṣḥab ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, died on the 20th of Rabī' II, 86 (April 20, 705). 'Abd al-'Azīz took ill and died during the night of Monday, the 13th of Jumādā I, 86 (May 11, 705). His body was taken by Nile boat from Ḥulwān to Fuṣṭāṭ, where he was buried. Ibn Abī Mulaykah⁽²⁴⁾ reports: I saw (a tradition that has) 'Abd al-'Azīz saying, as he was about to die: "Truly, I wish I had not been something to be remembered! Verily, I wish I were like a plant sprouting from the ground, or no more than the shepherd of a flock on the edge of the Ḥijāz!" And when he died, they found he owned no cash money other than 7,000 dinars, (the village of) Ḥulwān, the covered bazaar, clothes—some of them patched, horses, and slaves. His

24. 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Ubayd-Allāh, judge of Tā'if (appointed by Ibn al-Zubayr), traditionist, died 735.

term as governor of Egypt was twenty years, ten months, and thirteen days; no one before him had held the governorship of Islamic Egypt longer than he did.

[11] There used to be at Ḥulwān a ferry made of granite which was pulled across the river with a rope, and in which people and things were carried from the east bank at Ḥulwān to the west bank. Now this is one of the mysteries in creation: all metallic solids, such as iron, copper, silver, lead, gold tin, if a vessel is made of them that can hold more water than its own weight, it will afloat on water and carry whatever it can without sinking.

[12] Travelers on the Sea of India to this day, when night descends on them and they cannot see stars to guide them in order to determine the cardinal points, will use a piece of hollowed-out iron in the shape of a fish whose body they make as thin as they possibly can. Then one carefully places a piece of a magnet in the mouth of the fish and rubs the fish with the (remaining) magnet. When the fish is then set down on water, it turns and faces with its mouth toward the South Pole, pointing with its tail at the North Pole. This, too, is one of the mysteries of creation. Once they have determined the directions of south and north, they also know where east and west are: Anyone facing south will have his back turned toward the north, and west will be on his right and east on his left. Once the four cardinal points have been established, one can determine the positions of the various places in relation to them, and people can then steer in the direction of the area they are headed for.

57. The Town of al-‘Arīsh

[1] Al-‘Arīsh is a town between Palestine and Egypt. It is an ancient town, one of the towns founded after The Flood.

[2] Master Ibrāhīm ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates about Miṣrāyim son of Bayṣar son of Ḥām son of Noah—upon him be peace: He was a lad brought up in comfortable circumstances, and as he approached Egypt, (his maternal grandfather, Philemon the Priest)⁽¹⁾ built him an arbor (‘*arīsh*) from tree branches and covered it with grass. Later on, he built for him on that same spot a town which he called *Darasān*, that is, ‘Gate to Paradise’. And they sowed crops and planted trees and gardens from Darasān all the way to the sea so that the entire region was fields and gardens and cultivated land.

[3] Another has said: The reason it was named (al-‘Arīsh)⁽²⁾ was that Bayṣar son of Ḥām son of Noah set out with his sons, who were four and were accompanied by their children, who were thirty, male and female. His son Miṣr ibn Bayṣar went ahead of him toward the land of Egypt until he left the confines of Syria, when his party got lost and Miṣr happened to find himself on the site of al-‘Arīsh. He was very tired and fell asleep, and (in his dreams) he had a vision of someone announcing to him that he had arrived in a land of good and plenty, of royalty and glory. He woke up in great alarm, and lo, above him was an arbor (‘*arīsh*) formed by the limbs of trees and about him were springs of water. He praised God and asked Him to reunite him with his father and his brothers and to bless him in His land. His prayer was heard, and God led the others to him, and they camped and stayed with him in the arbor. God then brought out to them from the sea animals—horses, donkeys,

1. Cf. Pt. I, ch. 7, sect. 5, where the same passage was cited.

2. Al-‘Arīsh would seem to be an arabized form of *Laris*, the name of the town in the early Christian era. The ancients knew it by its Greek name *Rhinokorura*.

cattle, goats and sheep, and camels—which they drove before them until they came to the site of the city of Memphis. There they camped and founded a village, which in the Coptic language was called *Māfah*, meaning ‘village of thirty.’ And Bayṣar’s progeny grew until they populated the land. They planted fields, and their livestock multiplied, and mines were discovered where a man would extract a piece of chrysolite large enough to make a large table from it, and so much gold that a single piece of it was the like of a column and the size of a crouching camel.

[4] Ibn Saʿīd (al-Maghribī) relates on the authority of al-Bayhaqī: The brothers and parents of Joseph, peace be upon him, came to visit him at the town of al-ʿArīsh which marks the beginning of the land of Egypt, because (it says that) he went forth to meet them and eventually made camp at ‘the end of his jurisdiction.’ He had there a throne, which is the royal seat, and he had his parents sit on it. For that reason the town used to be called “Madīnat al-ʿArsh”, the throne city. Later on, the common people called it “Madīnat al-ʿArīsh”, and that usage took hold.

It is said that Joseph, peace be upon him, had guards posted on all borders of Egypt. When Syria was hit by a famine and Joseph’s brothers set out to bring grain from Egypt, they stayed at al-ʿArīsh, and the captain of the guard wrote to Joseph, telling him that the sons of Jacob the Canaanite were on their way to the city on account of a famine that had afflicted them. Joseph’s brothers, while waiting for the reply to come back, built then a shack (*ʿarsh*) to shade them against the sun, and thus the place was called “al-ʿArīsh”. Joseph wrote back, granting them permission to enter the country, and then the things happened to them that have already been mentioned elsewhere.

[5] Al-ʿArīsh is also called *Amajj* (?). But that is a matter of opinion, and Ibn Waṣīf Shāh is more knowledgeable about the history of Egypt.

[6] In 415 (A.D. 1024), ʿAbd-Allāh ibn Idrīs al-Jaʿfarī,⁽³⁾ supported by the Banū ʿl-Jarrāḥ, appeared by night, burned the town down and took everything in it.

[7] In Jumādā II, 577 (December 1181), reports al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, news arrived that the Franks had cut down most of the palm trees of al-ʿArīsh and had moved their trunks to their country. Which was full of palms, but they could not find a firewood contractor to do the job.

[8] It has been transmitted on the authority of Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam that the entire Jifār was at the time of Moses' Pharaoh in a state of utmost cultivation, with water and villages and a sedentary population, and that the words of God Exalted "*and We destroyed utterly the works of Pharaoh and his people, and What they had been building*"⁽⁴⁾ refer to those places, also, that this cultivated land extended without interruption from there all the way to the Yemen. And that is why al-ʿArīsh was given the name *ʿarīsh*.⁽⁵⁾

[9] It has been said that the place marked the outermost boundary of Syria, that it was as far as there that the shepherds of Abraham, the Friend of God, peace be upon him, came, and that Abraham built there a *ʿarīsh*, an arbor, in which he used to sit and watch his livestock being milked before his eyes. And for that reason the place was called "al-ʿArīsh".

[10] And it has been claimed that Mālīk ibn Duʿr ibn Ḥujr ibn Jazīlah ibn Lakhm had twenty-four sons, one of them ʿArīsh ibn Mālīk, and it is after him that al-ʿArīsh was named, because he camped there and built it up as a town.

3. Cf. ch. 24, sect. 11. — In 1118, King Baldwin I of Jerusalem died at al-ʿArīsh (*It-tiʿāz* 3:56).

4. Koran 7 (The Battlements):137.

5. That is, *ʿarīsh* is supposed to be understood as a passive participle (like *qatīl*, *jariḥ*, etc.) with a meaning 'cultivated' derived from the last words of the Koranic quotation: ... *wa-mā kānū yaʿrīshūna* 'and what they had been building'.

[11] From Ka‘b al-Aḥbār: —Near al-‘Arīsh are the graves of ten prophets.

58. The Town of al-Faramā

[1] Al-Faramā, says al-Bakrī,⁽¹⁾ with *a* after the first and second consonants, and long *ā* (after the third) on the pattern *FaʿaLāʿ*, but sometimes with elision of the *hamzah*, is a town on the opposite side of Miṣr (Fusṭāṭ).

[2] And Ibn Khālawayh says in his *Kitāb ‘Laysa’*: This al-Faramā was named after the brother of Alexander the Great by the name of “Alpharama”, who was an infidel. It is the village of the mother of Ishmael, son of Abraham,⁽²⁾ peace be upon him.

[3] The man’s name is said to have been “al-Faramā ibn Filifūs;” he is also called “Ibn Filibus”, or “Bilibus”.

[4] Al-Faramā was located on the shore of Lake Tinnīs. It was a fortified town. Galen the Sage is buried there.

[5] (The caliph) al-Mutawakkil-ʿalā-ʿllāh had a fortress built there overlooking the sea. Its construction was assumed by ‘Anbasah ibn Ishāq, the governor of Egypt, in 239 (A.D. 853/4), at the same time he was building the fortifications of Damietta and Tinnīs.⁽³⁾ He spent an enormous amount of money on these fortifications.

[6] After having conquered Heliopolis, ‘Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, dispatched Abrahah ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ to al-Faramā, whose population

1. *Muʿjam mā istaʿjam*, 1022 (Wüstenfeld 713). —It is the Greek *Pelousion*, Roman *Pelusium*, the strategic seaport and key to Egypt in antiquity, at the mouth of the “Pelusian” (eastern) arm of the Nile. *Al-Faramā* is the arabized form of Copt. *Parama* (from *Per-Amon* “The House of Amon Ra”). Its former site is occupied today by the scattered ruins of *Tall al-Faramā* and *Tall al-Faḍḍah* 3 km from the Mediterranean coast, and the remnants of *Qalʿat al-Ṭīnah*, a fortress destroyed in the late 12th century.

2. A vanished village called *Umm al-ʿArab*, 4 km southeast of the ruins of al-Faramā, is commonly claimed to be Hagar’s birthplace (cf. I, 8, sect. 33).

3. This was after a successful Byzantine naval raid the year before; cf. *Khīṭaṭ* 2:190.

made peace with him against (payment of a tribute of) 500 Heraclian dinars, 400 she-camels, and 1,000 head of small livestock. He then left for al-Buqqārah.⁽⁴⁾

[7] In 343 (A.D. 954), the town was attacked by the Byzantines. The people rushed out to meet them, killing two of their men. Then the Byzantines attacked again in Jumādā I, 349 (July 960), and the Muslims turned out to meet them; they captured one of their ships, killing those on board, and took ten captives.

[8] Al-Ya‘qūbī says:⁽⁵⁾ Al-Faramā is the first Egyptian town in the north. It is inhabited by a mixed population. Between it and the Green Sea (the Mediterranean) is a distance of three miles.

[9] Ibn al-Kindī says: One (of the towns) is al-Faramā. It has the greatest number of curiosities and the oldest historical remnants. Egyptian traditionists maintain that there used to be a road leading from it on dry land to the island of Cyprus, but it was later submerged by the sea. They say that in the area engulfed by the sea used to be the quarry for striped marble, and that the white-marble quarry was at Liyūnah.⁽⁶⁾

Yaḥyā ibn ‘Uthmān (ibn Ṣāliḥ) related: I was stationed on frontier duty in al-Faramā, which at the time was located almost a day from the sea; in fact, the townspeople and the military garrison would go out and stay in huts on the beach, but all of that was then submerged by the sea.

Ibn Qudayd⁽⁷⁾ related: While (the finance director Aḥmad) Ibn al-Mudabbar was in Tinnīs, he sent a party to al-Faramā with orders to dismantle stone gates on the eastern side of the fortress, since he needed the stones to make lime. After one or two stones had been

4. Cf. II, 23, sect. 3.

5. *Kitāb al-buldān* 330.

6. Mentioned by Ibn Mammātī (*Qawānīn* 98) and Ibn Duqmāq (*Intiṣār* 5:126) as *al-Liyūnah*, a suburb of Alexandria.

7. He is the traditionist ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan b. Khalaf b. Qudayd al-Miṣrī, one of the sources of Ibn Yūnus (d. 958); cf. *Tāj al-‘Arūs* 2:463, l. 16.

pried loose, the people of al-Faramā turned out in arms and prevented their removal, saying that those were the gates of which God Exalted spoke through Jacob, peace be upon him, when he said, “*Oh my sons, enter not by one door; enter by separate doors.*”⁽⁸⁾

Al-Faramā has extraordinary date palms which bear fruit at a time when no young, yellowing dates and fresh, ripe ones grow anywhere in the world. These fresh dates begin from the time when the palm trees put out shoots in December and January and keep growing for four months so that they reach the third stage of growth in the spring. This phenomenon is found in no other country, not in Baṣrah, not in the Ḥijāz, not in the Yemen, nor anywhere else. Some of these young, yellow dates may weigh more than 20 dirhams (62 ½ g) each, some may be about a span or a small span long.

[10] Ibn al-Ma'mūn al-Baṭā'ihī reports among the events of the year 509 (A.D. 1115/6): Dromedary riders arrived from the governor of the Sharqīyyah province, reporting that Baldwin, the King of the Franks, had reached the area of al-Faramā. Al-Afḍal ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh at once sent orders to the governor of the Sharqīyyah that he must call out the garrison troops and the feudal contingents in his province, while he himself sent the foot soldiers of the 'Aṭūfiyyah⁽⁹⁾ on their way, and that the governor personally must take the field, after having ordered all Beduin auxiliaries to serve as scouts, tail the Franks, and keep an eye on them at night until the regular troops arrived. And (the governor) attended to that. Al-Afḍal then had the field tents brought out and the men and the palace troops equipped and armed. As the troops kept arriving at the scene, spearheaded by the Arab nomads, and set out in pursuit of the Franks, and as Baldwin, learning that more and more troops

8. Koran 12 (Joseph):67.

9. A Fāṭimid military unit named probably after 'Aṭūf, a eunuch in the service of Sitt al-Mulk, the sister of the Caliph al-Ḥākim. The unit gave its name to the *Ḥārat al-'Aṭūfiyyah*, at one time one of the most fashionable quarters of Cairo near the Bāb al-Naṣr (cf. *Khīṭaṭ* 213-14).

were coming against him, realized that he could not hold out, he ordered his men to plunder, to lay waste, to burn, to destroy the mosques. Having burned down the congregational mosque and the smaller mosques of al-Faramā and set the whole town on fire, he decided to withdraw. But God Exalted took him and sped his soul to hellfire.⁽¹⁰⁾ His men kept his death secret and, after slitting Baldwin's belly open and filling it with salt so that the corpse would keep, set out for his country, where they buried him. As for the Muslim troops, they launched raids into enemy territory and returned to the camp they had set up outside Ascalon.

(Al-Afḍal) had also written to the Amīr Ḥahīr al-Dīn Ṭughtigīn, lord of Damascus,⁽¹¹⁾ urging him to advance into Frankish land, and Ṭughtigīn (and his troops) now set out for Ascalon. On the way, people brought him the hospitality tribute, and when (al-Afḍal) was apprised of his (imminent) arrival, he gave orders to deliver tents, as well as an abundant number of horses, garments, pennants and flags, a golden sword, a golden belt, a golden collar, a ceremonial outfit, a fully furnished large tent, a royal mattress with cushions and all appurtenances, and whatever silver utensils he might need. For Shams al-Khawāṣṣ, a senior commander, he sent a gold-brocade robe of honor, a golden belt, and a golden sword, and for the distinguished members of the arriving party robes of honor and swords. All of that was turned over with a list to one of the chamberlains, with whom were sent attendants to look after the tents. (Al-Afḍal) then had the great tent erected and furnished and had the governor of Ascalon, Ḥahīr al-Dīn (Ṭughtigīn), Shams al-Khawāṣṣ, and all the commanders, both those who had arrived (from Syria) and those stationed in Ascalon, ride to the entrance of the tent to be received by him and then to proceed to the carpet in

10. This is an obvious error, since Baldwin I died two years later in 511/1118 near al-ʿArīsh. — In one of his rare slipups, Maqrīzī records in his "Itti'āz" the burning of al-Faramā and Baldwin's death under both years.

11. Atabeg of the Seljuqid Duqāq (d. 1104) in Damascus, subsequently regent and founder of the short-lived Būrid (Bōrid) dynasty, which was terminated 1154 with Nūr al-Dīn Zangī's conquest of the city; he died in 1128.

the tent and the royal couch set up inside. Next, the governor, Ṣahīr al-Dīn (Ṭuḡṭiḡīn), Shams al-Khawāṣṣ, and the commanders sat down, while all the troops stood at attention in a display of honor and deference, and (al-Afḍal) bestowed robes of honor on the Amīr Ṣahīr al-Dīn and Shams al-Khawāṣṣ, put belts around their waists and girded them with swords, after which he bestowed robes of honor on the ranking officers (of the Syrian party). Ṣahīr al-Dīn and the commanders then proceeded with the furbelow and the banners and standards sent to them earlier to the tents that had been erected for them.⁽¹²⁾

Every day from then on, the governor, the two emirs, the commanders and the troops would ride to the royal tent and confer on the necessary military operations. This became a standard procedure, while the troops continued the raids into enemy territory, taking prisoners and killing, and were rewarded with robes of honor a second time. Shams al-Khawāṣṣ alone got 10,000 dinars during that campaign; Ṣahīr al-Dīn was given the great tent with everything in it, and he and his men received an estimated 30,000 dinars. The total expenditure in that operation, including the departure and death of Baldwin, came to 100,000 dinars.

[11] In the month of Rajab, 545 (November 1150), the Franks attacked al-Faramā with a strong force. They burned and destroyed the town and despoiled its population.⁽¹³⁾

12. Such extraordinary honors and lavish attentions on the part of al-Afḍal—an Imāmī Shīʿite in the service of a heretical Ismāʿīlī regime—toward the Emir Ṭuḡṭiḡīn—a Sunni—for what was, after all, no more than a mere show of strength reflects the degree of Fāṭimid desperation and should be seen in light of the ambivalent relationship between Damascus and the Crusader State. Earlier, al-Afḍal had chided Ṭuḡṭiḡīn for his deficient sense of Muslim solidarity (cf. *Ittiʿāz* 3:53-4). The Atabeg of Damascus, on the other hand, who since 1109 had a lucrative revenue-sharing agreement with King Baldwin I over the grainlands of the upper Jordan (and a similar arrangement, a year later, with Count Bertram of Tripoli over the Biqāʿ Valley) was understandably reluctant to engage in hostile actions against Jerusalem.

13. The text is taken from Ibn Muyassar (*Akhbār Miṣr*, ed. Fuʿād Sayyid, 144).

[12] The end of the town came when the *wazīr* Shāwar had it laid waste in [559 (A. D. 1164)]⁽¹⁴⁾ after Mulham, the brother of Ḍirghām, had abandoned it as governor. It has remained waste and was never rebuilt thereafter.

[13] Around al-Faramā, al-Buqqārah and al-Warrādah used to live Beduin Arabs of the Judhām—that is, Jarīy ibn ‘Awf ibn Mālik ibn Shanū’ah ibn Badīl ibn Ḥusham ibn Judhām—called “al-Qāṭi’”. One of them is ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn al-Wazīr ibn Ḍābi’ ibn Mālik ibn ‘Āmir ibn ‘Adīy ibn Ḥimris ibn Nafar ibn Naṣr ibn al-Qāṭi’; he died in Ṣafār 205 (July/August 620). Of al-Sarīy (ibn al-Ḥakam) and this (‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn al-Wazīr) al-Jarawī there are numerous stories which we have exhaustively presented in our “Iqd jawāhir al-asfāt fī akhbār madīnat al-Fuṣṭāt”.⁽¹⁵⁾

[14] Ibn al-Kindī says: At al-Faramā is the meeting place of the two seas, which is the *barzakh* (barrier, isthmus) mentioned by God Exalted and Sublime when He says: “*He let forth the two seas that meet together, between them a barrier they do not overpass;*”⁽¹⁶⁾ and also in His words “*And placed a partition between the two seas.*”⁽¹⁷⁾ These are the Roman Sea and the Sea of China, and the barrier between them, from al-Qulzum to al-Faramā, is a night’s journey. At no other place come the two seas, which are months apart in traveling time, closer to each other than here.

14. The date is missing in the Būlāq text and has been restituted by Wiet (cf. W IV, 33, n. 1). —Ḍirghām b. ‘Āmir al-Lakhmī held the Fāṭimid vizierate from July 1163 until his death in May 1164.

15. “The Necklace of Random Gemstones in the History of the City of Fuṣṭāt”—the first part of Maqrīzī’s trilogy of Muslim Egypt, dealing with the pre-Fāṭimid period, which he apparently wrote after his small work on Arab tribes in Egypt (cf. the essay of Dr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah in *Dirāsāt ‘an al-Maqrīzī*, Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-‘arabiyyah, 1971, p. 19). The work is unfortunately lost. Some of its content, especially the struggle between al-Sarīy and al-Jarawī, is no doubt to be found in condensed form in chapters 17 and 19 of Part II of the present book.

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

17. Koran 27 (The Ant):61.

59. The Town of al-Qulzum

[1] Al-Qulzum is a small community which was located on the coast of the Sea of Yemen, at the farthest point of it from Fustāṭ. It used to be a district (*kūrah*) of Egypt. The Sea of al Qulzum gets its name from it. Pharaoh drowned near by. Al-Qulzum and Fustāṭ are three days apart. The town fell into ruin, and its former site is known today as *al-Suways* (Suez), opposite ‘Ajrūd.

[2] Al-Qulzum⁽¹⁾ had no water, no trees, no fields. Rather, water had to be brought to the town from distant wells. At al-Qulzum used to be the transshipment port for Egypt and Syria, and from it cargoes were carried to the Ḥijāz and the Yemen. There was not a village or town between al-Qulzum and Fārān, only a few places where fishermen stay and some sparse palm groves. The same holds true for the stretch from Tārān and Jubaylān to Aylah.

[3] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr wrote: Most of the town known as al-Qulzum has survived to this day, and a traveler by boat going from Egypt to the Ḥijāz can actually see it. In the old days, it used to be an anchorage of the Egyptian state. I saw some of its accounts, prepared by the local fiscal officers, covering the revenues of the Palace and the expenditures for the town’s governor, its judge, the resident Ismaili missionary, the preacher, the troops stationed there for the town’s protection, its cemeteries, its main mosque and smaller mosques—the town was indeed inhabited and populous!

[4] Al-Musabbiḥī reports among the events of the year 387 (A.D. 997): In Ramaḍān (September), the Caliph al-Ḥākim-bi-amri’llāh exempted the people of al-Qulzum from paying the boat taxes that used to be collected.

1. Adapted from al-Balkhī’s description of the Red Sea cited by Yāqūt (4:387-88).

[5] Ibn Khurradādhbih says about the traders:⁽²⁾ They travel on the Western Sea (the Mediterranean) (from the land of the Franks], disembark at al-Faramā, and carry their wares on the back (of pack animals) to al-Qulzum, which is 25 parasangs away. Then they sail on the Eastern Sea (the Red Sea) from al-Qulzum to al-Jār and Jud-dah, and then proceed to the Sind, to India, and to China.

[6] From al-Qulzum people travel through semi-desert and desert over a distance of six day's journeys down to Aylah; they provide themselves with water for those six days.

[7] It is said that between al-Qulzum and the Roman Sea is a distance of three day's journeys, and that the region between them is the barrier mentioned by God Exalted, when He says, "*Between them a barrier they do not overpass.*"⁽³⁾

2. *Masālik* (ed. de Goeje) 153.

3. Koran 55 (The All-Merciful):24.

60. *Al-Tīh*—The Wilderness

[1] An area in the vicinity of Aylah. Between the two is a pass road which is so difficult to negotiate that a rider can barely make it to its top; it has, however, been leveled since the days of Khumār-awayh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn.⁽¹⁾

A rider travels for two days over the level ground of this Wilderness before he reaches the coast of the Sea of Fārān, where the town of Fārān used to be situated. It is there that Pharaoh drowned.

The Wilderness extends forty parasangs in length and width. In it, the Israelites were lost for forty years, without entering a town, or (as much as) seeking shelter in a tent, or (even) changing clothes. It is there that Moses, peace be upon him, died.

[2] It is said that the length of The Wilderness is about six days.

[3] It so happened that after the Baḥrī Mamluks had fled Cairo in 652 (A.D. 1254),⁽²⁾ a group of them passed through The Wilderness and got lost in it for five days. Then, on the sixth day, there appeared to them a figure in the distance, and as they headed for it, they suddenly found a very large city⁽³⁾ with a wall and gates, all of them made of green marble. As they entered it and walked around in it, they discovered that it had been overwhelmed by sand which had engulfed its markets and houses. They found there household utensils and clothes, but whatever they picked up would fall apart because it was so old. On the tray of some draper they found nine gold dinars bearing the likeness of a gazelle and a Hebrew inscrip-

1. Cf. I, 24, sect. 3.

2. That is, after Sultan al-Muʿizz Aybak had cracked down on them and eliminated their hero, the insubordinate Amīr Aqṭāy (cf. Pt. IV, 12, sect. 9).

3. Perhaps Petra, as Quatremère (*Mamlouks*, I, 49, n. 71; *Mémoires sur les Nabatéens* 153) suggests.

tion. They dug at a certain spot and discovered a stone covering a cistern from which they drank water colder than snow. Then they left and walked for one night, when suddenly they came upon a band of Beduins who took them to the town of al-Karak. There they gave the dinar pieces to some moneychanger, and it turned out that they were struck at the time of Moses, peace be upon him. The man paid them one hundred dirhams for each dinar. They were told that this green city was one of the towns of the Israelites, and that it had been exposed to a deluge of sand which would increase at times and diminish at others; only someone who was lost would see it. But God alone knows the truth.

61. The Town of *Dimyāṭ* (Damietta)

[1] One should know that *Dimyāṭ*⁽¹⁾ is a district (*kūrah*) of Egypt. Between it and Tinnīs is a distance of twelve parasangs (36 miles).

[2] The town is said to have been named after Dimyāṭ, a descendant of Ashmūn son of Miṣrāyim son of Bayṣar son of Ḥām son of Noah, peace be upon him.

[3] It is said that one of the first revelations to Idrīs, peace be upon him, by the Lord of Power and Omnipotence was: “I am God, Bestower of Authority over cities. The firmament exists by My command and My making. I combine the sweet and the salt, fire and ice. And this by virtue of My Power. Hidden in My Knowledge is *dāl-mūm-alif-ṭā*.”

It has been said:⁽²⁾ God meant *dimyāṭ* in Syriac; thus “Dimyāṭ” is a Syriac word, the etymon of which is *damaṭ*, meaning ‘power’, in allusion to the combining of salt and sweet.

[4] And Master Ibrāhīm ibn Waṣīf Shāh says: Dimyāṭ is an ancient town which was founded at the time of Philemon son of Atrīb son of Qubṭīm son of Miṣrāyim, and named after a young lad whose mother was a sorceress in the service of Philemon.

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1. E.g. *Ta meht* ‘land of the north’, Greek *Tamiatis*, Copt. *Temiat*, hence its Arabic designation. The original town was located to the north of present-day Damietta, which dates from the end of the first third of the 14th century.
 2. The preceding tradition is attributed to the Prophet (cf. Ibn Duqmāq, *Intiṣār*, 5:80) and its transmitter is the prominent Companion Abū Ma’bad al-Miqdād Ibn al-Aswad (d. 653), the first Muslim governor of Damietta. The “etymology” is attributed to the Ḥanafite jurist Abū ’l-Ḥasan al-Karkhī (d. 952).

[5] At the time⁽³⁾ the Muslims came to the land of Egypt, Damietta was governed by a maternal uncle of the Muḡawqis by the name of “al-Hāmūk”.⁽⁴⁾ After the conquest of Miṣr (Babylon) by ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, this Hāmūk took up defensive positions in Damietta and prepared to fight. So ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ dispatched al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad at the head of a detachment of Muslims against him.

Hāmūk engaged them in battle and in the fighting his son was killed, whereupon he returned to Damietta and gathered his men about him to seek their counsel in his situation. Among them was a wise man who was present at the council, and he spoke up, saying: “Sire, pure reason is priceless, and whoever availed himself of it, to him it has shown a way to salvation and escape from death. Those Arabs have been unstoppable from the outset. They have conquered lands and subjugated peoples, and no one has had the power to withstand them. We are certainly not stronger than the armies of Syria, nor are we mightier and more steadfast. These people have been strengthened by victory and triumph, and my opinion is that you should conclude a peace agreement with them through which we gain security, have our lives spared, and see our women protected. After all, you do not have more fighting men than the Muḡawqis.” But al-Hāmūk did not care for what the man had to say; he flew into a rage and killed him.

The man had a smart and sensible son, who owned a house touching the city wall, and he then went out by night to the Muslims and led them to the weak spots of the town so that the Muslims were able to capture and seize it. (Next day) as Hāmūk took the field to fight (again), he suddenly found the Muslims, who had taken possession of the town, shouting ‘God is greatest!’ from its wall. When Hāmūk’s son, Shaṭā, saw the Muslims on top of the wall, he went

3. The text of the next two sections is a summary of al-Wāqidi’s account (*Fath Miṣr wa-l-Iskandariyyah* 126-31; 141, 146-7).

4. Both name and relationship are pure legend. The Byzantine governor of Tamiatis, according to John of Nikiou, was a general named John (cf. Butler, *Arab Conquest*, 269, 350, 356).

over to their side, and with him several of his men. That weakened his father's strength, and he asked al-Miqdād for peace. Thus the Muslims came in possession of Damietta. Al-Miqdād stayed behind as governor of the town, and he sent a messenger with the report of the conquest to 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ.

[6] Shaṭā, who had become a Muslim, went to al-Burullus, Dimīrah and Ushmūm Ṭanāḥ to round up the men of these rural areas and bring them as reinforcements to the Muslims and as help to them in their struggle against their enemy. He led his troop on the side of the Muslims in the conquest of Tinnīs, whose men he challenged and fought vigorously until he fell—God rest his soul—as a martyr in battle, after having inflicted great damage on them and having killed several. He was carried from the battlefield and interred at the place now named after him outside Damietta. He was killed during the night of Friday, the 15th of Sha'bān (July 19, 642), and that is why that night became an annual observance at which the people from the villages around Shaṭā gather and visit his grave, a practice they have maintained to this day.

[7] Damietta continued to be in Muslim possession until the Byzantines attacked it in 90 A.H. (A.D. 709). They captured Khālid ibn Kaysān, who was the local harbor master, and took him to the Byzantine emperor, who sent him to the Caliph al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik, on account of the truce between the Caliph and the Byzantines.

[8] During the caliphate of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik, the Byzantines attacked Damietta with three hundred and sixty ships, killing and carrying away prisoners. That happened in 120 (A.D. 738).

[9] After the civil war between the two brothers, Muḥammad al-Amin and 'Abd-Allāh al-Ma'mūn, while disorders and strife prevailed in Egypt, the Byzantines, having an eye on the country, attacked Damietta sometime after 200 (A.D. 815).

[10] Later on, during the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful al-Mutawakkil-‘alā-‘llāh, while ‘Anbasah ibn Ishāq was governor of Egypt,⁽⁵⁾ the Byzantines landed at Damietta on the 9th of Dhū ‘l-Ḥijjah, 238 (May 22, 853) and took complete possession of the town. They killed a large number of Muslims there and carried away women, children and protected non-Muslims as captives. ‘Anbasah ibn Ishāq, at the head of his troops, rushed out to meet them on the 10th, as did a large number of the common people, but they were unable to catch up with the Byzantines, who moved on to Tinnīs, where they stayed for a while at its *Ushtūm*.⁽⁶⁾ But ‘Anbasah did not follow them. So that Yaḥyā ibn al-Faḍl⁽⁷⁾ could say to al-Mutawakkil:

Accept you that your womenfolk be raped
and Muslims made fair game and be despoiled?
An ass to Damietta came, with Greeks entrenched
in eyeshot of it at Tinnīs and closer,
Now resting at Ushtūm and seeking what at
Damietta they achieved, while war goes on!
To leave Damietta was not his wish, nor did he know,
or could he, what lies ahead, what to avoid.
If so, let’s not forget: a land-rich home we have
in Egypt, yet the True Faith is almost gone.

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5. Taken from al-Kindī (*Wulāh*, ed. Guest, 201-2). —For a less stark account than Maqrīzī’s of this major naval incursion—the sources speak of 300 ships, commanded by three admirals—cf. Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh* 9:193-95/III, 1417-18) and Ibn Taghribirdī (*Nujūm* 2:292, 294-5). Apparently, Governor ‘Anbasah had called the garrison of Damietta to Fuṣṭāṭ for the celebration of the Sacrificial Feast (*‘Id al-Aḥḥā*), combined with the circumcision of his two sons, thus negligently leaving the town undefended.
6. *Ushtūm Tinnīs*, or simply *al-Ushtūm* (Yāqūt 1:196), is defined by Ṭabarī as a roadstead (*marsan*) protected by a wall and an iron gate, built by orders of the caliph al-Mu‘taṣim (833-842), 12 miles “or less” (Yāqūt, citing al-Muḥallabī: 18 miles) from Tinnīs. The Byzantines, according to Ṭabarī, destroyed the place, burned the mangonels and onagers there, and carried off the two wings of the iron gate.
7. So correctly in the original source (Wiet/Bulaq and Yāqūt: ibn al-Fuḍayl). He is the editor of Abū Nuwās’ poetic work mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm (*Fihrist*, transl. Dodge, 352). Cf. Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm*, 2:294, where another verse by him, this time directed against ‘Anbasah’s suspected Khārijite leanings, is cited.

Whereupon al-Mutawakkil gave orders to build the fortification of Damietta. Its construction was begun on Monday, the 3rd of Ramaḍān, [2]39 (February 5, 854).

[11] Also, as of that time, a fleet was built in Egypt.

[12] In the year ..9 [*sic*], the Byzantines appeared by night before Damietta with some two hundred ships. For a month they kept causing mischief along the coast, killing and taking prisoners, and the Muslims had several clashes with them.

[13] Later on, during the disorders following the death of the Ikhshīdīd Kāfūr, the Byzantines arrived before Damietta on the 10th of Rajab, 357 (June 10, 968) with twenty and some ships. They killed or captured one hundred and fifty Muslims.

[14] In 408 (A.D. 1017), a huge fish, two hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits wide, was seen at Damietta. Salt-carrying donkeys entered its body cavity with their load, were unloaded, and left again. In its skull stood five men with scoops shoveling the blubber and passing it to the people. For a long time, the people of the area kept eating of its blubber.⁽⁸⁾

[15] In the days of the (Fāṭimid) caliph al-Fā'iz-bi-naṣri-'Illāh 'Īsā—the vizier at the time was al-Ṣālīḥ Ṭala'i' ibn Ruzzīk—Damietta was attacked in Jumādā II, 550 (August 1155) by some sixty ships sent by Lūjir ibn Rujār, the Lord of Sicily.⁽⁹⁾ They ravaged and killed, and landed at Tinnīs, Rosetta and Alexandria, causing much damage.

8. Compare the story of another beached whale found a few years earlier at Tinnīs (II, 19, sect. 27).

9. If the date is correct (no mention is made of the incident in the *Itti'āz* nor in the *Nujūm* under that year), this would have to be William I the Evil, King of Sicily (1154-1166), the son and successor of Roger (Rujār) II. —There was a Frankish raid on Tinnīs the year before (cf. Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl tārikh Dimashq*, 331-2).

[16] Then during the caliphate of al-‘Āḍid-li-dīni-’llāh, at the time of the second vizierate (1164-69) of Shāwar ibn Muḡir al-Sa‘dī, when Amalric, the King of the Franks, arrived before Cairo, which he besieged and from whose population he exacted tribute, and when the city of Fuṣṭāṭ went up in flames (in 1168), Tinnīs, Ushmūm (Ṭanāḥ) and Munyat Ghamr⁽¹⁰⁾ came under attack by the commander of a Frankish fleet of twenty galleys, and there was killing, and prisoners were taken, and people were led into slavery.

[17] At the time al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb served as al-‘Āḍid’s vizier, the Franks arrived at Damietta in Rabī‘ I, 565 (December 1169) with over twelve hundred ships, and the troops moved out of Cairo, at a cost of more than 500,000 dinars. The fighting went on for fifty-five days; it was a difficult and tough operation. A number of prominent Egyptians were suspected of having conspired and communicated with the Franks during that campaign; al-Malik al-Nāṣir had them arrested and executed.

The reason behind that military operation was that, when the Turcomans came with Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh from Syria to Egypt, the Franks bestirred themselves to invade Egypt, lest the Turcomans seize and take over the country. They appealed for support to their coreligionists, the Sicilians, who provided them with funds and arms and sent them a large contingent of troops. The Franks then set out, equipped with testudos and mangonels, and attacked Damietta in Ṣafar (November) with the number of ships already mentioned, encircling the town by sea and land. Sultan [*sic*] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn sent his nephew Taqīy al-Dīn ‘Umar, and after him (his maternal uncle) the Amīr Shihāb al-Dīn (Maḥmūd) al-Ḥārimī, with the troops to Damietta and supplied them with money, provisions and weapons. When the situation became grave for the defenders of Damietta, as they were holding out against the Franks, Saladin sent emissaries to the Lord of Syria, Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Zangī,

10. Present-day *Mit Ghamr*, a small town and district seat on the right bank of the Damietta arm of the Nile (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 1:263).

appealing for help, and informing him that he (himself) could not leave Cairo to meet the Franks because he feared that the Egyptians might rise against him. Nūr al-Dīn then sent him soldiers, one contingent after another, while he personally set out from Damascus heading for the land of the Franks along the coast, which he raided and plundered. When the news of that reached the Franks, who were still blockading Damietta, they became concerned that Nūr al-Dīn might take over their country. So they lifted the siege on the 25th of Rabīʿ (December 18), after some three hundred of their ships had already sunk and their ranks were decimated by an epidemic that had broken out among them, and burned the mangonels and other equipment too heavy for them to move.

[18] Saladin used to say: I never met a more generous person than al-ʿĀḍid. He sent me, at the time the Franks were besieging Damietta, one million dinars, this without counting clothing and other allocations.

[19] In 577 (A.D. 1181), fighters were assigned to man the two towers (on either bank of the Nile) and boats were tied to the chain (connecting them) so that men could fight on them and prevent the enemy from penetrating between the two towers. Also, damaged parts of the city wall were repaired, breaches in it were closed, and the chain between the two towers was reinforced. The total cost of that came to 1,000 dinars. The wall was studied and computed: it measured 4,360 cubits.

[20] In 588 (A.D. 1192), the Sultan (Saladin) ordered the trees in the orchards of Damietta to be uprooted, a trench to be dug there, and an embankment to be built near the tower chain.

[21] In 615 (A.D. 1218) was the Great Battle of Damietta. The story behind that battle was that, in 614, the Franks had received successive reinforcements from Rome, the seat of the Pope, and from other Frankish countries. They all converged on the city of Acre. Several of the Frankish princes also gathered there. They agreed to march on Jerusalem and take it from the Muslims. The

Franks were now in Acre with a huge army, and the news of it reached al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb, who then moved out of Egypt at the head of the troops on his way to al-Ramlah. Whereupon the Franks came out of Acre with very large forces. When al-ʿĀdil moved on to Baysān,⁽¹¹⁾ the Franks sought to intercept him, and since he was afraid of them, because they were so many and he had such a small army, he followed the pass road of Fīq,⁽¹²⁾ heading for Damascus.

The people of Baysān and its environment, feeling secure because the Sultan had camped there, stayed where they were, but as soon as the Sultan had moved on, the Franks suddenly laid the sword to the population and sacked the towns, taking uncountable amounts of Muslim property. They captured Baysān, Bāniyās and all of the villages in the area and stayed on for three days, after which they returned to the field of Acre with booty and captives. A great many Muslims perished (in that operation). For a few days, the Franks rested on the field, then they launched a second invasion, sacking Sidon and the Shaqīf,⁽¹³⁾ before they returned to the field of Acre to remain there. All of that happened between the middle and the end of Ramaḍān (the second half of December 1217), while al-Malik al-ʿĀdil was staying at Marj al-Ṣuffar.⁽¹⁴⁾

Meanwhile, the Sultan had dispatched his son al-Muʿazzam ʿĪsā⁽¹⁵⁾ with troops to Nablus in order to prevent the Franks from launch-

11. Biblical *Beth Shean*, a town on the upper Jordan, located on the traditional route from the Mediterranean coast to Damascus. To the north of it lies the Crusader castle of Belvoir (*Kawkab al-Hawāʾ* in Arabic), built in the second half of the 12th century and captured by Saladin in 1189. (Cf. Yāqūt 1:527).

12. The *ʿaqabat Fīq*, overlooking the Sea of Galilee and the town of Tiberias, leads up from the Jordan depression (Yāqūt 4:286).

13. The area of Jabal ʿĀmil southeast of Sidon, controlled by the Crusader castle of Belfort (Ar. *Shaqīf Arnūn*) above the Liṭānī (Leontes) river.

14. A desolate plain 20 miles south of Damascus, twice the site of major Muslim victories in battle: early in 635, when Khālīd b. al-Walīd routed a Byzantine army, thus opening the road to the capture of Damascus, and in 1303, when the Mamluk army of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn stopped the fourth, and last, major Mongol invasion there.

15. Sharaf al-Dīn Abū ʿl-Futūḥ, lord of Damascus, died 1227.

ing a surprise attack on the town and reaching Jerusalem. For seventeen days the Franks besieged the citadel on The Mountain.⁽¹⁶⁾ Then they returned to Acre and decided to head for Egypt.

Having sailed with their armies across the sea, the Franks arrived in Ṣafar (May) before Damietta. Their assault on the city began on Tuesday, the 4th of Rabīʿ I, 615, which corresponds to the 8th of June,⁽¹⁷⁾ with a strength of about 70,000 knights and 400,000 foot soldiers. They encamped opposite Damietta on the west bank, dug a moat to protect their camp, and erected a wall above it. Then they began with the attack on the tower of Damietta. This was an impregnable tower with thick iron chains which were stretched across the Nile in order to prevent ships coming in from the sea from penetrating into Egypt on the river.

[22] More precisely:⁽¹⁸⁾ The Nile, having reached al-Fuṣṭāṭ, flows past the city in a northerly direction to Shaṭṭanawf, where it divides into two arms, one of them flowing northward to Rosetta and there into the sea, and the other half continuing from Shaṭṭanawf to Jawjar (Gōgar), near which it bifurcates, one branch flowing to Ushmūm (Ṭanāḥ) and then pouring into Lake Tinnīs, and one branch continuing from Jawjar to Damietta, where it flows into the sea. This latter branch of the Nile separates the city of Damietta from the west bank. This western bank of Damietta is known as *Jīzat Dimyāṭ*;⁽¹⁹⁾ it is a peninsula formed by the Nile on one side and the sea on the other.

[23] During the whole time the Franks were on that land, they built siege engines and pontoon bridges and set up siege towers which they would move on boats against the Tower of the Chain in

16. *Al-Ṭūr*, the mountain overlooking Nābulus, sanctuary of the Samaritans.

17. Of the Julian calendar; otherwise the 4th of Rabīʿ I fell on Tuesday, May 29, in that year.

18. The interpolated passage is taken from Abū ʿl-Fidāʾ (cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥī*, 3:287-8).

19. Present-day *al-Sināniyyah*, an ancient village in the district of Shirbīn, originally called "Munyat Sinān al-Dawlah" (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 2:77; I, 220).

order to capture it. Because once they were in possession of it, they could sail on the Nile all the way to Cairo and Fuṣṭāṭ. That Tower was manned by combat troops. The Franks then came up with a clever device to use against the Tower: They built a tower of their own made of masts and mounted on a large platform.⁽²⁰⁾ Having gotten under sail with it, they had it come to rest against the Tower, and then battled with its defenders until they finally took it.

When news of the Frankish attack on Damietta reached al-Malik al-Kāmil, who served as vicegerent of his father, al-Malik al-ʿĀdil, over Egypt, he left (Cairo) with whatever soldiers he had at his disposal on the third day after the pigeon post had arrived on the 5th of that month (i.e., June 1) with the report of the Frankish landing. He ordered the governor of the Gharbiyyah province to mobilize the Arab nomads and then proceeded at the head of a sizable army. The fleet also moved out (of Cairo) and took up position below Damietta. The Sultan⁽²¹⁾ and his troops encamped on the campground of al-ʿĀdiliyyah near Damietta and his soldiers deployed toward Damietta in order to prevent the Franks from crossing the river, while (around the city) the fighting continued. The Tower was holding out for four months, and al-ʿĀdil kept sending troops from Syria, a batch at a time, until they were all present and accounted for with al-Malik al-Kāmil.

20. The contraption was the brainchild of a German cathedral schoolmaster by the name of Oliver, who left an account of it in his *Historia Damiatina*. It consisted of two cogs latched together on which four masts were erected. On top of these was a wooden fort, and lower down were drawbridges controlled by a pulley system (H.E. Mayer, *The Crusades*, 211).

21. This is, of course, al-Kāmil, who was not yet the Sultan at the time, since his father was still alive. That is not the only anachronism in the following account. Maqrīzī claims that the Tower held out for four months, in other words, until Rajab/October, which is almost two months after al-ʿĀdil's death. But Christian sources give as the date of the fall of the Tower August 24, one week before al-ʿĀdil's demise. Indeed, Maqrīzī himself describes in the *Sulūk* (I, 1:190) how the news of the fall of the Tower of Damietta affected Sultan al-ʿĀdil, who "took ill instantly and left the Marj (Marj al-Ṣuffar) for ʿĀliqīn; his illness became worse, and he died on Thursday, the 7th of Jumādā II (August 31). —*Al-ʿĀdiliyyah* (in the present-day district of Fāriskūr) is a village founded in 1217 by Sultan al-ʿĀdil on the Nile southwest of modern Damietta (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 1:242).

Al-ʿĀdil, who had become concerned and increasingly fearful of the Frankish attack on Damietta, left Marj al-Ṣuffar for ʿĀliqīn.⁽²²⁾ But then he took ill and died on the 7th of Jumādā II (August 31). Al-Malik al-Muʿazzam ʿĪsā kept his death secret. He had his father carried in a litter and assigned an attendant to him, as well as a physician who rode beside the litter, and a butler would prepare drinks and bring them to the attendant who then drank them, making people believe that it was the Sultan who had done so—until they had him inside the Citadel of Damascus and the treasury boxes and the household equipment were with him. Only then was his death made public. His son, al-Malik al-Muʿazzam, received everything the late Sultan had carried with him. He had his father buried in the Citadel; later on he had the body transferred to the *madrāsah* of the ʿĀdiliyyah in Damascus.

[24] The news of his father's death reached al-Malik al-Kāmil while he was at the campground of al-ʿĀdiliyyah near Damietta. He was now the sole ruler of Egypt.

The Franks, who became stronger and stronger, pressed the attack and eventually captured the Tower of the Chain. They severed the chains attached to it so that their ships could pass on the Nile and they could take the country. As a substitute for the chains, al-Malik al-Kāmil had a huge dike erected in order to keep the Franks from passing on the river, but the Franks fought hard over it and eventually were able to cut it. The expenditures for the Tower and the dike had come to over 70,000 dinars.

Every day, al-Kāmil would ride several times from al-ʿĀdiliyyah to Damietta in order to direct the operations and use cunning in the effort of outwitting the Franks. Thus, al-Malik al-Kāmil had a number of ships scuttled in the Nile so that the Franks were kept from entering the river; whereupon the Franks turned their attention to a local canal, known as “the Blue”, which once had carried Nile wa-

22. A village outside Damascus.

ter. Having dredged and deepened it, they channeled sea water into it and sent their ships on it all the way up to Būrah on the land of Jizat Dimyāṭ opposite the Sultan's camp site in order to attack him from there. Once in Būrah, they faced him on the opposite bank and could fight him on the river. Several times they advanced in strength against him but accomplished nothing.

For the population of Damietta there had been no change for the worse (up to that point), because provisions and supplies kept coming in regularly and the Nile formed a natural barrier between them and the Franks. The gates were wide open, and the city suffered neither privation nor damage from the blockade.

[25] Meanwhile, the Beduins kept harassing the Franks night after night so that they could not sleep, for fear of their raids. As the Arabs became bolder and bolder against the Franks, so that they began to raid them by daylight, capturing whole tents and their occupants, the Franks laid several ambushes and killed a large number of them.

Then came winter. The stormy sea flooded the Muslim camp, setting the tents under water,⁽²³⁾ and there was great affliction and mounting sorrow. At the same time, the Franks kept pressing the fight and almost made it to the other side of the river. At that point, God sent a storm that cut the moorings of the Franks' pontoon bridge, which was one of the wonders of the world, and it drifted over to the bank of the Muslims. They captured it, and it turned out to be protected by iron plates impervious to fire, and its surface measured five hundred cubits. As they broke it up, they found in it nails of which a single one weighed 25 *ratl* (about 11 kg).

Also, al-Kāmil sent seventy envoys in all directions, appealing to Muslims everywhere to help and support the Egyptians and arousing their fear of a Frankish conquest of Egypt. The emissaries set

23. As in the *Sulūk* text (I, 1:195).—Wiet/Bulaq less plausibly: *wa-gharraqahum* 'and drowned them' (the Muslims).

out in Shawwāl (Nov./Dec.), and reinforcements were already coming in from Ḥamāh and Aleppo.

[26] While everyone was preoccupied with that, who but the Amīr ʿImād al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Amīr Sayf al-Dīn Abī ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Hakkārī, known as “Ibn al-Mashṭūb”, should suddenly show designs to overthrow al-Malik al-Kāmil when he heard of al-Malik al-ʿĀdil’s death. He had a coterie [of Hakkārī Kurds]⁽²⁴⁾ who followed and obeyed him.

[27] He was a great emir, a powerful commander of the Hakkārī Kurds, highly respected among the princes, who counted him as one of their own. Besides, he was a man of great ambition, lavish in his liberality, most generous, valiant, proud, a man regarded with awe by the military officers. As a military commander of the Saladin era, he had fought in famous battles.

[28] He had reached agreement with a clique of garrison troops and Kurds to depose al-Malik al-Kāmil and install his brother al-Malik al-Fāʿiz Ibrāhīm as ruler; Amīr ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Ḥamīdī, Amīr Asad al-Dīn al-Hakkārī, Amīr Mujāhid al-Dīn and a number of troop commanders went along with his plan. When al-Malik al-Kāmil got wind of it, he paid them a visit and found them all assembled, the Koran in front of them, ready to swear allegiance to al-Fāʿiz. But when they saw him, the meeting broke up, and al-Kāmil left, fearing for his life.

At that point happened to arrive from Āmid the [former] vizier Ṣafīy al-Dīn Ibn Shukr,⁽²⁵⁾ whom al-Kāmil had recalled [from retire-

24. Added from the *Sulūk* text (I, 1:196). —On ʿImād al-Dīn Ibn al-Mashṭūb (d. 619/1222 in prison in Ḥarrān) see Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 1:180 ff., from which sect. 27 of this text is taken. His father, al-Amīr al-Kabīr Sayf al-Dīn Abū ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Hakkārī, called “al-Mashṭūb” (‘scar-face’), was a prominent emir of the Saladin era. After his death in 1192, Saladin transferred his fief, Nābulus, to his son Aḥmad, reduced, however, by one-third, which the Sultan set aside for the benefit of newly recovered Jerusalem.

25. He is Ṣafīy al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd-Allāh b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Dimīrī, known as “Ibn Shukr” (after his stepfather), the ironhanded vizier of Sultan al-ʿĀdil until his dismissal and forced retirement to Āmid in 607/1210. On his vita and career see *Khiṭaṭ* 2:371-73. —The parenthetical additions are from

ment] after his father's death. The Sultan received him with great honor and told him about his situation. [Ibn Shukr encouraged him] and assured him that he would collect the taxes [and take matters in hand]. But that same night, al-Malik al-Kāmil got on his horse and rode with a detachment of horsemen from al-Ādiliyyah to Ushmūm Ṭanāḥ, where he camped.

When the soldiers realized in the morning that they were without a sultan, everyone followed his own whim, brother not caring for brother: they abandoned their baggage, their tents, their money, their weapons—and followed the Sultan. And the Franks were quick in the morning to make for the town of Damietta. They landed on the eastern bank on Tuesday, the 16th of Dhū 'l-Qa'dah,⁽²⁶⁾ without encountering a fighter or a defender, and captured everything in the Muslim camp, which was more than one can describe.

The Sultan was overcome by a profound sense of foreboding and almost left the country, because he suspected everyone around him. [29] The Franks' ambition to take all of Egypt became even stronger, and they thought they were already ruling it. But God Exalted came to the aid of the Muslims and gave the Sultan strength and steadfastness.

[30] [Because two days later]⁽²⁷⁾ his brother al-Malik al-Mu'azzam (Īsā) joined him at Ushmūm Ṭanāḥ, and through him the Sultan found encouragement and recovered his composure. He informed Īsā of what was going on on the part of Ibn al-Mashtūb, and Īsā promised to get rid of what was bothering him. Al-Mu'azzam (Īsā) then rode to the tent of Ibn al-Mashtūb and invited him to go on a ride with him. Ibn al-Mashtūb asked him to wait so that he could put on his boots and riding clothes, but Īsā gave

the *Sulūk* (and *Khiṭaṭ*) text.

26. Corresponding to February 3, 1219, which was a Sunday. To conform with the date given in contemporary Western sources (February 5), the text should be emended to read: the 18th of Dhū 'l-Qa'dah; cf. the vague "sometime between the 11th and 19th of Dhū 'l-Qa'dah" in the *Sulūk* (I, 1:197).

27. Added from the *Sulūk* (and *Khiṭaṭ* 2:375) text.

him no time and urged him to hurry. So Ibn al-Mashtūb rode with ʿĪsā side by side until the latter had him outside al-Kāmil's camp. Then he said to him, "Imād al-Dīn, this country is yours. I want you very much to give it to us as a present!" He gave him some spending money and turned him over to a group of his trusted men, with instructions to take him out of the country by way of the (Ghurābī) desert and to stay with him until he was out of Syria. Ibn al-Mashtūb could only do what al-Muʿazzam said, because he was alone with him and in no position to offer resistance. So the men took him to Ḥamāh, and from there he went on eastward.

Having sent Ibn al-Mashtūb on his way, al-Malik al-Muʿazzam then returned to al-Malik al-Kāmil and ordered his brother, al-Fāʿiz Ibrāhīm, to go with a letter on behalf of his brother al-Malik al-Kāmil to the princes of Syria and call on them to fight the Franks. So he went to Damascus and from there to Ḥamāh, where he died—of poison, as has been claimed. Thus was al-Malik al-Kāmil's rule consolidated and his fear allayed.

Meanwhile, the Franks had encircled Damietta by land and sea and had surrounded the city on all sides, besieging the people inside and cutting off their food supply. To protect their camp around Damietta, they had dug a moat and built a wall above it, while the people of Damietta were fighting fiercely to fend them off. Because of the food shortage, prices had gone up in town.

Al-Muʿazzam then said goodbye to al-Malik al-Kāmil and returned to Syria, while al-Kāmil stayed to fight the Franks. (At one point) he detailed one of his squires by the name of Shamāʿil⁽²⁸⁾ to make his way into Damietta. The man swam the Nile and indeed reached the people inside Damietta, to whom he promised the arrival of relief forces. This feat won him al-Kāmil's favor, who (later) made him

28. A Syrian peasant from one of the villages of Hamāh who became the Amīr ʿAlam al-Dīn Shamāʿil. —The *Khizānat Shamāʿil*, a prison for felons near Bāb Zuwaylah, was razed by orders of Sultan al-Muʿayyad Shaykh (1412-1421); cf. *Khīṭaṭ* 2:188.

police chief of Cairo. After him is named the Khizānat Shamā'il in Cairo.

[31] That is how things remained until the beginning of 616 (March 1219), when the Lord of Ḥamāh, al-Malik al-Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Shāhanshāh ibn Ayyūb, sent his son al-Muẓaffar Taqīy al-Dīn Maḥmūd with a sizable army to Egypt to help his maternal uncle, al-Malik al-Kāmil. As he arrived at the Muslim camp, he was received by al-Malik al-Kāmil, who assigned him to the right wing of the camp, the same position his father and grandfather had occupied under Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf.

The Franks kept pressing the attack. In Damietta were about 20,000 fighting men, but they were exhausted by disease, and prices had gotten so high in town that a chicken egg cost several dinars.

[32] The eminent traditionist 'Abd al-'Aẓīm al-Mundhir⁽²⁹⁾ recalls: I heard Shaykh Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Qufl say: —Some of the Banū Khiyār owned a cow which they slaughtered and sold during the siege. It fetched 800 dinars.

[33] And in his *Biographical Dictionary* (al-Mundhirī) reports: I heard the Amīr Abū Bakr Ḥusayn ibn Khushnām say: —I was in Damietta during the enemy blockade of the town, when sugar sold for 340 dinars a pound, and a chicken cost 30 dinars. I bought three chickens for 90 dinars; a full waterskin went for 40 dirhams, and to have a grave dug cost 40 *mithqāls*.⁽³⁰⁾ My sister took a camel, slit its belly open, filled the cavity with chickens, fruit, greenstuff, and the like, then sewed it up again and threw it into the river. She wrote me a note that said, 'I have done such-and-such; if you see a dead camel, take it!' It floated to us by night and we recovered it. Its con-

29. Egyptian historian, professor of Shāfi'ite Traditions at the Kāmiliyyah college in Cairo (Ibn Khallikān was one of his early students), died 1258 (cf. al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah al-kubrā*, 8:259 ff.).

30. The Ayyūbid *mithqāl* weighing almost half a gram more than the ordinary *mithqāl* = 188.9 grams of gold.

tents were worth a lot of money! I then distributed it among the people. Later on, three more camels were rigged up that way. But the Franks caught on to the trick and intercepted them.

[34] Their houses and the streets of the town began to fill with the dead. There was no food, and sugar became as dear as precious stones. All meat was gone and none could be gotten in any way. Finally, the situation became such that there was only a little wheat and barley left. At that point, the Franks came over the wall and took the town, on Tuesday, the 25th of Shaʿbān (November 5, 1219). The siege had lasted 16 months and 22 days. As they took the town, they put the sword to the population, killing beyond reason and leaving an extraordinary number of casualties.

When word of that reached the Sultan, he struck camp two days after the capture of Damietta and encamped opposite Ṭalkhā at the vertex of the Ushmūm canal and the Damietta arm of the Nile, pitching his tents on the campground later called “al-Manṣūrah”. The Franks, on their part, fortified the walls of Damietta, converted its cathedral mosque into a church, and sent their raiding parties out to the villages where they killed and plundered. The Sultan sent letters in all directions, urging people to come and prevent the Franks from taking over Egypt, and the soldiers began to build houses, caravansaries, baths and markets at the camp site of al-Manṣūrah.

The Franks, after having sent their Muslim captives by boat to Acre, then moved out of Damietta and besieged the Sultan opposite al-Manṣūrah, the Ushmūm canal and the Damietta arm of the Nile forming the dividing line between the two sides. The Franks had come with 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 knights. The Muslims moved their war galleys—one hundred units—into forward position off al-Manṣūrah.

People from New and Old Cairo and from all the villages from Uswān to Cairo had flocked together, and the Amīr Ḥusām al-Dīn Yūnus and the canon lawyer Taqīy al-Dīn Abū ʿl-Ṭāhir Muḥammad

ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Maḥallī⁽³¹⁾ arrived on the scene and together moved the people out of Greater Cairo. Criers proclaimed a general departure to the war front. The Amīrs ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Jildak and Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Ṣayram went out to round up the people between Cairo and the end of the Eastern Ḥawf, and soon a countless multitude was assembled.

Meanwhile, the Sultan stationed 2,000 knights with thousands of Beduins in the area of Shārim-sāḥ⁽³²⁾ to cut off the Franks from Damietta, and the war galleys, accompanied by a large fireship, moved up to the mouth of the Maḥallah Canal (opposite Shirim-sāḥ), under the command of the Amīr Badr al-Dīn Ibn Ḥassūn. The Franks were now cut off from supplies by land and on the river.

Muslim troops from the East and from Syria were on their way to Egypt. Earlier, the Franks had set out across the sea to help their brethren against Damietta, and countless peoples of them arrived, intent on penetrating into Egypt. After they were all assembled in Damietta, they marched in full strength out of the city and encamped opposite (the camp of) al-Malik al-Kāmil, as has already been mentioned. Then arrived (Muslim) reinforcements, headed by al-Malik al-Ashraf Mūsā ibn al-‘Ādil (Lord of Upper Mesopotamia, Edessa and Ḥarrān), and al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam ‘Īsā (Lord of Damascus) bringing up the rear. They were received by al-Malik al-Kāmil, who assigned to them camp sites near him at al-Manṣūrah on the 23rd of Jumādā II, 618 (August 15, 1221). Prince after prince kept coming in, until the number of Muslim knights was about 40,000.

They fought the Franks on land and on the river, capturing six of their war galleys, a galleass and a two-master, and taking 2,200 Franks prisoner. A little later, the Muslims managed to seize three

31. The *khaṭīb* of Old Cairo, an office he had assumed three years earlier (cf. *Sulūk*, I, 1:185).

32. Present-day Shirinsāḥ in the district of Fāriskūr, a large village on the eastern bank of the Damietta arm (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 1:243; Yāqūt 3:308).

more galleys. That demoralized the Franks, who suddenly found themselves in a tight spot, and they sent emissaries to sue for peace.

[35] At the same time their envoys arrived, the Alexandrians came in with 8,000 fighting men. What the Franks demanded, as the price for evacuating Egypt, was Jerusalem, Ascalon, Tiberias, Jabalah, Latakia, and all of Sultan Saladin's conquests along the Syrian littoral. The Muslims were prepared to give them all the places mentioned, but not the town of al-Karak and al-Shawbak, whereupon the Franks balked at making peace, maintaining that they must have al-Karak and al-Shawbak, and receive the amount of 300,000 dinars⁽³³⁾ as indemnity for the walls of Jerusalem razed by the Lord of Damascus, al-Malik al-Mu'azzam 'Īsā.

[36] (Because) when his father, al-'Ādil, had died, and the Franks had captured Damietta and were besieging al-Malik al-Kāmil opposite al-Manṣūrah, al-Mu'azzam, fearing that other Franks, coming across the sea, might take Jerusalem and establish themselves behind its fortifications, had ordered its walls to be destroyed. These walls, and the towers of the town, used to be extremely large and strong, but all of them were razed, except the Tower of David. Most of the population moved out of Jerusalem and only a few people remained behind. Al-Mu'azzam also had the weapons and war engines that were in Jerusalem removed.

[37] The Muslims, having refused to accede to these demands, returned to fighting the Franks. A party of them crossed the Maḥallah canal to the area where the Franks were and dug a huge breach in (the bank of) the Nile, which (at the time) was in full rise. As a result, the water flooded most of the area, becoming an obstacle between the Franks and Damietta. They were trapped, and only a narrow road remained open to them. The Sultan at once ordered

33. In the *Sulūk* account (I, 1:207), the sum is 500,000, and the demand is made after al-Kāmil had agreed to hand over even the two Transjordanian fortresses.

causeways to be erected near Ushmūm Ṭanāḥ, and on these the Muslims crossed over and seized the road the Franks would have to take if they wanted to reach Damietta.

All of this coincided with the arrival on the river of a huge pontoon bridge of the Franks, surrounded by several fireships for its protection. All of these vessels were filled with supplies and weapons. The Muslim galleys promptly attacked the Franks and, with God giving them victory, the ships were captured by the Muslims. The Franks, upon learning of this, now knew for certain that they would perish. The Muslims took to showering them with arrows and attacking their flanks. At the same time they destroyed their tents and their mangonels by hurling Greek fire into them. The Franks were about to advance on the Muslims and engage them in battle in a desperate effort to escape to Damietta, but the sea of mud and flood water prevented them from carrying out the plan. Fearing to stay on because of the little food they had left, they submitted at last and asked for safe-conduct in exchange for abandoning Damietta to the Muslims.

The Sultan sought advice on that, and the people around him voiced different opinions: Some refused to grant the Franks safety and thought that they should be taken by force, others were in favor of granting them safe-conduct out of fear of the other Franks on the (Mediterranean) islands and elsewhere that stood behind them. At last they agreed on safe-conduct, and that each of the two sides should furnish hostages. This was formally established on the 9th of Rajab, 618 (August 29, 1221),⁽³⁴⁾ and the Franks sent twenty princes to remain as hostages with al-Malik al-Kāmil, while the lat-

34. In the *Sulūk*: the 7th. It was al-Kāmil who prevailed over his brothers in accepting the Frankish peace offer, because he dreaded the alternative of a prolonged siege of Damietta with war-weary and discontented troops. The Frankish hostages included the former titular King of Jerusalem and now Regent, Jean de Brienne, and the papal legate, Cardinal Pelagius, while al-Kāmil's son was a mere boy of twelve at the time (*Sulūk*, I, 1:208).

ter sent his son, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, and a group of emirs to the Franks.

For the occasion of the arrival of the Frankish princes, the Sultan sat in splendid audience (outside al-Baramūn): before him stood his brothers and his family, he himself appearing amid great pomp and in awesome majesty.

The priests and the monks of the Franks left for Damietta where, on the 19th (September 8) they turned the city over to the Muslims. The day of its surrender was a great day indeed!

While the Muslims were taking over Damietta and the city returned into their possession, there arrived a relief force for the Franks by sea. It was a sign of God's beneficent work that it was delayed until Damietta was back in Muslim hands, for had it arrived earlier, the Franks would surely have been greatly strengthened by it. Because the Muslims discovered that the Franks had fortified the city of Damietta to such an extent that there was no hope of taking it (by force).

When all was over, the Franks sent the Sultan's son and his emirs back to him, and the Sultan, in turn, sent them the princes he had kept as hostages. An eight-year truce was concluded between the Franks and the Muslims, and one of the terms of the peace agreement was that both Muslims and Franks would release the prisoners of war they were holding. The Sultan and his brothers swore an oath to that effect, as did the Frankish princes.⁽³⁵⁾

The people then dispersed and returned to their homes, and al-Malik al-Kāmil entered Damietta with his brothers and his troops. The day he entered the city was a memorable day indeed! The Franks departed for their countries and the Sultan returned to his capital. The prisoners of war were released from Egypt, some of them dat-

35. The oath was not binding for the crowned heads of Europe, so that the attack on Damietta by Emperor Frederick II seven years later did not constitute a breach of the armistice (cf. S. Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 224).

ing back to the time of Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf. The Muslim princes from Syria also returned with their soldiers to their respective countries.

The happy tidings that the Muslims had recaptured the city of Damietta from the Franks spread far and wide. Because by that time the Mongols had already conquered the kingdoms in the East, and the Franks had come within a hair's breadth of wresting Egypt from Muslim hands. The time elapsed between the Frankish assault on Damietta until they sailed away, returning to their countries, was three years, four months, and 19 days, of which the time of their actual possession of Damietta was one year, ten months, and 24 days.

[38] In the course of the year 646 (A.D. 1248), Sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb ibn al-Malik al-Kāmil Muḥammad was afflicted with a swelling in the hollow of his knee, from which developed a boil that opened and healed only with difficulty. Already weakened by it, it was compounded by a tumor on his chest, so that he had to stay in bed. But his high-minded dedication demanded that he go from Egypt to Syria. He traveled in a litter and took up residence in the Citadel of Damascus.

[39] There he was contacted by an emissary of the Emperor, the king of the German Franks on the island of Sicily,⁽³⁶⁾ disguised as a merchant, who informed him in all secrecy that Louis, called "*Raydāfrans*", was determined to sail for Egypt and conquer it.

[40] The Sultan, still ill, thereupon left Damascus in a litter and camped in Muḥarram 647 (April/May 1249) at Ushmūm Ṭanāḥ. He stockpiled large quantities of food, provisions, weapons and war engines in the city of Damietta, because he feared that Damietta might suffer the same fate as it had at the time of his father, when it was captured for lack of such supplies. As soon as the Sul-

36. I.e., Frederick II Hohenstaufen. —On "*Raydāfrans*" (Bulaq text: *Ruwādafrans*), i.e., *roi de France*, and its interpretation: *Sulūk*, I, 2:333; Ibn Waṣīl, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 4:147.

tan had made camp at Ushmūm, he wrote to Amīr Ḥusām al-Dīn Abū Alī ibn Abī Alī al-Hadhbānī, his vicegerent in Egypt, to outfit and dispatch the fleet from the Old Cairo dockyard. The latter attended to it at once and, having loaded the ships with men, weapons and all other necessities, sent the fleet, piece by piece, on its way. The Sultan also sent Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh,⁽³⁷⁾ together with troop commanders and soldiers, into the field, and he encamped on the Jīzat Dimyāṭ, the west bank of Damietta, with the Nile between him and the city.

At eight in the morning of Friday, the 21st of Ṣafar (May 7) arrived the ships of the overseas Franks carrying their huge armies. They had been joined by the Franks of the (Syrian) littoral. They dropped anchor opposite the Muslims, and their king sent to the Sultan a letter which reads:⁽³⁸⁾

Surely you must know that I am the custodian of the Christian nation, as I am aware that you are the custodian of the Mohammedan nation. Nor can you be unaware of the fact that near us are the people of the isles of Spain, and of the money and gifts they bring to us while we drive them before us like cattle, killing their men, reducing their women to widowhood, taking their children prisoner, ridding the land of them. As for myself, I have shown you forbearance to apprehend and given you sound advice to the end. But were you now to swear to me a thousand oaths, and bring me priests and monks, and carry before me candles as a sign of obedience to the Cross, I would still come to you and fight you in the land dearest to you! Then either the land will be mine—and what a gift would then have fallen into my hands!—or it will belong to you, and mine will be defeat—in which case your generosity will still extend to me. I herewith give notice and warning to you of soldiers that have arrived under my command, fill-

37. The oldest of the four sons of Shaykh al-Shuyūkh Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibn Ḥammawayh, all prominent emirs during the reign of al-Malik al-Kāmil. Originally a *muta'ammim*, or member of the religious-clerical establishment, Fakhr al-Dīn Yūsuf had a reputation as a man of culture and a sponsor of the arts (cf. *Sulūk*, I, 1:261; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm*, 6:363).

38. The same letter, as Wiet points out, one finds attributed to Alfonso VI, King of Castile and León, 150 years earlier, hence the reference in it to the Spanish Muslims.

ing plains and mountains, as numerous as pebbles, sent to you with the swords of justice.

When the letter was read to the Sultan, whose illness had taken a turn for the worse, he wept and exclaimed: “Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return.”⁽³⁹⁾ Judge Bahā’ al-Dīn Zuhayr ibn Muḥammad then wrote the reply:⁽⁴⁰⁾

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, Whose blessings be on our lord Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, his family, and his Companions one and all. We have received your letter in which you raise the threat of your abundant soldiers and numerous champions. We are men of the sword! As soon as one of our companions is killed, we put a new one in his place. As soon as a tyrant oppresses us, we destroy him. If your eyes saw, misguided soul, the keenness of our swords, the might of our battles, how we conquered from you fortresses and coastlands, how we have laid waste the home of your people, of late and in the past—you would rightly bite your fingers in regret, and your feet could not but make you slip, on a day that will be ours at the beginning and against you at the end! For it is there that you misjudge. *And those who do wrong shall surely know by what overturning they will be overturned.*⁽⁴¹⁾ As you read this letter of mine, you will remember the beginning of The Bee: *God’s command comes; so seek not to hasten it,*⁽⁴²⁾ and the end of Sad: *and you shall surely know its tidings after a while.*⁽⁴³⁾ And we refer to the words of God Blessed and Exalted, Who is the truest of speakers: *How often a little company has overcome a numerous company, by God’s leave! And God is with the patient,*⁽⁴⁴⁾ and the saying of the philosophers: ‘Verily, the tyrant will meet a violent end.’ Your outrage will bring you death and plunge you into distress! Farewell.

39. Cf. Koran 2 (The Cow):156 “*who, when they are visited by an affliction, say, ‘Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return?’*”

40. In his capacity of Secretary of the Chancery (*Kātib al-Inshā’*). The renowned poet and stylist, born 1186 near Mecca and brought up in Qūṣ in Upper Egypt, attached himself in Damascus to the service of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, who made him tutor (atabeg) of his son Tūrān-Shāh and appointed him to other high offices. He died in 1258 in Cairo, the victim of an epidemic, and was buried near the south side of the mausoleum of the Imam al-Shāfi‘ī. Cf. the personal tribute of his friend Ibn Khallikān in *Wafayāt* 2:332 ff.

41. Koran 26 (The Poets):227.

42. Koran 16:1.

43. Koran 38:88.

44. Koran 2:249.

On Saturday, the day after their arrival, the Franks pitched their tents on the bank where the Muslim troops were; the tent of King Louis was red. The Muslims skirmished with them, and on that day fell Amīr Najm al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Shaykh al-Islām and Amīr Šārim al-Dīn Azbak al-Wazīrī.

At nightfall, Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, in a mixture of cowardice and impatience, pulled out the Muslim troops and took them (across the river) to the Damietta shore, heading for Ushmūm Ṭanāḥ. Whereupon those in Damietta, overtaken by fear, abandoned the city during the night in heedless flight, leaving behind an empty town. They caught up with the troops at Ushmūm—barefoot, naked, hungry, bewildered, with their women and children—and kept right on going, fleeing for Cairo. Along the way, bandits took the clothes they were wearing and left them naked. Everybody had ugly things to say against the Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn, and all of the distress that befell the Muslims was attributed to his flight. Because Damietta had been garrisoned with fighters and was provided with ample supplies, weapons and other things, lest it suffer this time the same fate as in the days of al-Kāmil, when nothing but the shortage of food had brought about its fall; and even then it had held out against the Franks for over a year, until its defenders died (of disease and starvation), as has already been reported. *But God does whatever He desires.*⁽⁴⁵⁾

On Sunday morning, the 23rd of Šafar (May 9), the Franks advanced on Damietta and, to their surprise, found the city gates wide open and not a soul around to defend it. Thinking that it was a ruse, they proceeded slowly, until it became obvious to them that the town was indeed empty. And so they entered it, without opposition, and took possession of its huge arms stores, the war engines, the immense food supplies, the money, the equipment—all for free! Islam and the Muslims were dealt a heavy blow, and had it not

45. Koran 2:253.

been for God's grace, Islam would have been entirely eradicated in name and practice.

The people in all of Cairo were very much upset by what had befallen the Muslims, along with the serious illness of the Sultan and his lack of action. The Sultan himself was very furious at the Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn. "Couldn't you and the troops have made a stand at least for a while before the Franks?" he scolded. But, as enraged as he was, the time allowed only for patience and forbearance.

The Sultan's wrath turned on the Kinānis⁽⁴⁶⁾ who had been in Damietta. When he rebuked them, they protested: "What were we to do when all of the Sultan's soldiers and his officers took to flight and set the armory on fire? Why shouldn't we flee, too?" The Sultan ordered them to be hanged for having left Damietta without permission. More than fifty Kināni emirs were hanged in a single hour. One of them was a very venerable emir⁽⁴⁷⁾ who had a handsome son; the man asked to be hanged before his son, but the Sultan ordered that his son be hanged before him, and so first the son, then the father were executed. The hanging of these men is said to have been carried out by virtue of a legal opinion (*fatwā*) of the canon lawyers. A group of emirs, fearing for their lives, wanted to rise against the Sultan, but Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh pointed out to them that the Sultan was dangerously ill: "If he dies, you're spared the trouble to deal with him, if not, he is yours to dispose of."

The Sultan, preparing to repair the wall of al-Manṣūrah, transferred to the town on the 25th of Ṣafar (May 11). He had curtains constructed to protect the wall. The war galleys, fully manned and equipped, were moved into forward position opposite al-Manṣūrah. The troops began to renovate the buildings there. A countless multitude of Arab nomads and local people, as well as

46. I.e., the Kinānat Khuzaymah beduins (cf. I, 31, n. 24).

47. Read: *amīr ḥashīm*, as in the *Sulūk* and HC. —Wiet: *amīr ḥasham* 'un chef de famille (nombreuse)' (?); Bulaq: *amīr jasīm* 'a corpulent emir'.

volunteers arrived. They began to carry out raids against the Franks, and the Franks filled the walls of Damietta with fighters and war engines.⁽⁴⁸⁾

On the first of Rabīʿ I (June 14) arrived in Cairo 36 Frankish prisoners of war that had been kidnapped by the beduins, among them two knights. On the 5th of Rabīʿ II (July 18) came in thirty-nine more, on the 7th twenty-two, on the 16th forty-five, including three cavalymen, and on the 18th of Jumādā I (August 29) fifty prisoners were brought in.

Meanwhile, the Sultan's condition became increasingly worse and his vital faculties began to fade, so that the doctors gave up all hope of saving him.⁽⁴⁹⁾

On the 13th of Rajab (October 23), forty-seven (ordinary) prisoners of war and eleven knights arrived in Cairo, and (a few days later) the Muslims captured on the (Burullus) Lake near Nastirāwah a flatboat of the Franks with fighting men on board.

During the night of Sunday, the 14th of Shaʿbān (November 22), Sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ died at al-Manṣūrah. His death was not made public. His body was carried in a coffin to the citadel on Rawḍah island. The supreme command of the troops was taken over by Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh.

48. To clarify this badly truncated and incoherent paragraph, here is Maqrīzī's account of events in the *Sulūk* (I, 2:337).

"After all these happenings, the Sultan gave orders to leave for al-Manṣūrah. He was moved on board a fireship and eventually put up in the castle of Manṣūrah on the Nile on Tuesday, the 25th of Ṣafar. Every man of the troops then began to refurbish the billets in Manṣūrah, and markets were set up in town. The wall along the Nile was repaired and protected with curtains. The war galleys arrived from Old Cairo, fully equipped and manned, and from all around came raiders and men of the common people who wanted to fight for the faith. A great many Arab nomads came in and began to raid the Franks and to engage them in skirmishes. The Franks, in turn, fortified the walls of Damietta and manned them with fighters."

49. By then, the Sultan suffered from consumption, in addition to the aftereffects of surgery on his tumor (*Sulūk*, I, 2:342).

[41] Because, after the Sultan's death, his wife Shajar al-Durr summoned the Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn and the Ṭawāshī Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥsin, who was in charge of the Baḥrī Mamluks and of the royal retinue, and informed them of her husband's demise. (At her instruction) they kept it a secret, for fear of the Franks, who were on the verge of taking possession of Egypt. Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn acted as regent while Fāris al-Dīn Aqṭāy was sent on his way to fetch al-Malik al-Muʿazzam Tūrān-Shāh, who was at the time at Ḥisn Kayfā.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn began by having the troops swear loyalty to al-Malik al-Šāliḥ and to his son, al-Malik al-Muʿazzam, as heir apparent after his death, and to himself, Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn, in the dual capacity of commander-in-chief of the troops and of regent, and eventually had everyone sworn in both at Maṣṣūrah and in Cairo at the Dār al-Wizārah⁽⁵¹⁾ in the presence of (the vicegerent) Amīr Ḥusām al-Dīn Ibn Abī ʿAlī (al-Hadhbānī) on Thursday, the 18th of Shaʿbān (November 26). Meanwhile, (decrees with the late Sultan's) marginals were going out from the royal campaign tent at Maṣṣūrah to Cairo, done in the hand of a eunuch by the name of Suhayl, without anyone who saw them doubting that they were written by the Sultan; for a while it even escaped (the vicegerent) Amīr Ḥusām al-Dīn in Cairo. No one said a word about the death of the Sultan until Monday, the 22nd of Shaʿbān, when Cairo received instruction to have the *khaṭībs* pray the following Friday for al-Malik al-Muʿazzam, after the invocation of blessing for the Sultan, and to put his name on the coinage.

50. A town and strong fortress of Diyārbakr on the upper Tigris between Āmid and Jazīrat Umm ʿUmar (Yāqūt 2:267). — Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tūrān-Shāh was not the designated crown prince. Al-Malik al-Šāliḥ, who disliked his last surviving son for his frivolity and restless disposition, wanted the country, after his death, to be handed over to the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaʿsim-bi-ʿllāh, who was to dispose of it at his discretion (*Sulūk*, I, 2:342).

51. This is not the vizier's residence known as *Qāʿat al-Šāhib* in the Citadel (*Khiṭaṭ* 2:223), but the *Dār al-Wizārah al-Kubrā*, built by al-Afḍal b. Amīr al-Juyūsh Badr al-Jamālī near the great eastern palace to serve as the residence of the supreme commander of the armed forces (see *Khiṭaṭ* 1:438-9).

As soon as the Franks had learned of the Sultan's death, they moved, horse and foot, out of Damietta, their war galleys proceeding parallel with the troops on the river, and encamped at Fāriskūr on Thursday, the 25th of Sha'bān. The next day, on Friday, a letter arrived in Cairo from the troops (at Maṣṣūrah) which began with the words, "Go forth, light and heavy! Struggle in God's way with your possessions and your selves; that is better for you, did you know,"⁽⁵²⁾ and contained eloquent exhortations urging to go to holy war. It was read from the pulpit of the Azhar Mosque where the people had gathered to hear it. All of Cairo with its outskirts was convulsed with weeping and wailing, and the people thought that the Franks would surely take possession of the country, because the time was without a king to be in command. But they did not lose courage and went forth from all over Cairo and the outlying districts, so that a great multitude was gathered in the end.

On Tuesday, the first of Ramaḍān,⁽⁵³⁾ there was fighting between the Muslims and Franks and al-'Alā'ī, the *amīr-i majlis*,⁽⁵⁴⁾ and a number of soldiers were killed. The Franks next camped at Shārimṣāḥ, and on Monday, the 7th, at al-Baramūn. People became agitated and much upset because the Franks were so close to the Muslim army. On Sunday, the 13th, the Franks arrived opposite al-Maṣṣūrah, and only the Ushmūm canal now separated them from the Muslims. They dug a protective trench which surrounded with a wall strengthened with many curtains, and set up mangonels for bombarding the Muslims. Their war galleys took up position on the Nile, while the Muslim galleys stood opposite al-Maṣṣūrah.

Soon there was fighting both on land and on the river. On the 16th, six (Frankish) cavalymen defected to the Muslims; they reported

52. Koran 9 (Repentance):41.

53. Ramaḍān 647 began on Wednesday, December 8, 1249; all following week days should be adjusted accordingly.

54. In the *Sulūk* (I, 2:347): al-'Alāmī. The *amīr-i majlis* or *amīr al-majlis* was a court official in charge of royal protocol (corresponding to the *ṣāhib al-majlis* in Fāṭimid times); he also supervised the court physicians and surgeons (cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 5:455, 4:18; Māgid, *Nuẓum al-Fāṭimiyūn*, 2:31).

that the Franks were in an ugly mood. On the day of the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr (January 7, 1250), a Frankish count, a kinsman of the King, was taken prisoner.⁽⁵⁵⁾ The swimmers among the Muslims proved their mettle in fighting the Franks and inflicted great damage on them, killing some and making prisoners at every opportunity. Some would plunge into the water, swim across to the side of the Franks and, fearless of death, employ every conceivable trick in abducting Franks. One man even hollowed out a watermelon, placed it over his head and swam under water until he was off the Frankish shore; one of the Franks, thinking that it was a melon, came down to fish it out, whereupon the man grabbed him and carried him back to the Muslim side.

On Wednesday, the 7th of Shawwāl (January 13), the Muslims captured a war galley of the Franks with a count and two hundred men on board. On Thursday, the 15th of that month, the Franks crossed by boat to the Muslim shore and there was fighting in which forty of their knights were killed; sixty-two prisoners of war were sent (the next day) under armed guard to Cairo, among them three high-ranking Templars. On Thursday, the 22nd, a huge pontoon bridge of the Franks on the Nile was set on fire and the Muslims scored a victory over the enemy.

The Ushmūm canal had certain places where it could be forded, and some scoundrel, one of those who outwardly profess Islam, led the Franks to them. At the crack of dawn on Tuesday, the 5th, or the 4th, of Dhū ʿl-Qaʿdah,⁽⁵⁶⁾ the Franks forded the river on horseback and, before the Muslims knew it, suddenly attacked the Muslim encampment. Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn had gone to the bathhouse

55. While Joinville (*Vie de Louis IX*, 47-52) reports an engagement at about that time, no mention is made of such an incident. Perhaps the count in question is Comte Guy de Forez, who, unhorsed and with a broken leg, almost fell in Muslim hands.

56. The 4th was a Tuesday, the 8th of February. —The traitorous “scoundrel”, according to Joinville, was a local beduin who sold his service for 500 bezants. The attack was led by the King’s brother, Robert Count of Artois, who lost his life in the undertaking.

when he heard the shouting that the Franks were attacking the camp. He got on his horse, dazed and throwing caution in the wind, and galloped out to order the officers and troopers to mount up and ride with a detachment of his own Mamluks. He was pursued and set upon by a number of Frankish Templars, and his men fled. He was stabbed in the side, and from everywhere the swords bore down on him until he joined his Maker. His Mamluks at once banded together and went to his house, where they broke open his chests and coffers and stole his money and horses. The Franks, once the Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn was dead, pressed forward toward Maṣṣūrah. The Muslims fled in panic, scattering to the right and left. The collapse seemed imminent, and the Franks almost erased Islam from Egypt. King Louis⁽⁵⁷⁾ got as far as the gate of the Sultan's palace—a little more, and he would have taken it. But God Exalted permitted that a group of Baḥrī Mamluks and squires, all recruited by al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ—one of them being Baybars al-Bunduqdārī, launch an attack on the Franks during which they fought with such earnest that they were able to dislodge the Franks from their positions, fighting valiantly with sword and mace. The Franks turned and fled, and fifteen hundred of their knights were eventually killed in that battle. Meanwhile, the Frankish infantry had arrived at the (covered) causeway⁽⁵⁸⁾ and were ready to cross over. Had the initial attack been delayed until the foot soldiers could make contact with the Muslims, the situation would have been hopeless indeed. As it was, that battle was fought among the lanes and alleys [of Maṣṣūrah], and had it not been for the cramped space for maneuver, not a single Frank would have gotten away. But the survivors escaped, and [during the night] they threw up a wall and

57. It is the Count of Artois who is meant. King Louis did not appear on the battlefield until sometime later, when he tried to take an elevation called *Jadīlah* on the southern bank of the Ushmūm canal where the Muslim war engines were positioned. It seems that the Muslims thought they had killed the King when slain Robert's *fleur-de-lis*-embroidered jerkin was shown to the troops (cf. *Sulūk*, I, 2:350, n. 1).

58. Or 'cat', one of the first constructions ordered by King Louis after the Crusaders had established their encampment (cf. Joinville).

dug a moat, so that one part of the Franks was now lodged on the eastern bank, while the bulk of their army was on the peninsula adjoining Damietta. [This battle marked the beginning of victory over the Franks.]⁽⁵⁹⁾

At the time of the surprise attack, a message had been sent by carrier pigeon to Cairo, and people were very much upset. (Fleeing) rabble and some troops came in, and the gates of Cairo were left unlocked during that Tuesday night. On Wednesday (morning) arrived another pigeon with the happy tiding of the defeat of the Franks and the number of their casualties, and decorations went up in Cairo and the good news was proclaimed at the Citadel.

Meanwhile, al-Mu‘azzam Tūrān-Shāh had set out for Damascus, which he entered and took possession of (as overlord) on Saturday, the last day of Ramaḍān (January 6). On the 4th of Shawwāl (January 10), a pigeon brought the report of his arrival in Damascus, and the happy news was bruited about among the troops at Maṣṣūrah and in the Citadel of Cairo. On the 27th of the month (February 2), he left Damascus (for Egypt), and from then on came report after report of his progression. Amīr Ḥusām al-Dīn Ibn Abī ‘Alī, who went out to receive him,⁽⁶⁰⁾ met Tūrān Shāh at al-Ṣāliḥiyyah on the 16th of Dhū ‘l-Qa‘dah (February 21). On that very same day they finally announced the death of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ—this after no one had said a word about it up to that point, and indeed matters had been left the way they were (when he was alive), with the royal tent the way it was, and meals served as usual, and the Sultan’s wife, Shajar al-Durr Umm Khalīl, handling the day-to-day affairs and telling everyone that the Sultan was ill and could not be seen by anyone. Tūrān-Shāh then left al-Ṣāliḥiyyah and was received by the

59. Parenthetical additions from the *Sulūk* text (I, 2:351).

60. The vicegerent was accompanied on the occasion by the Syrian historian Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Wāṣil, author of the history of the Ayyūbid House entitled *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb* (see *Sulūk*, I, 2:352, n. 3).

Amīrs and the Mamluks. On Tuesday, the 19th of Dhū 'l-Qa'dah, he took up residence in the royal palace of Maṣṣūrah.

During all that time, the Muslims had been building ships which they carried (piece by piece) on camelback⁽⁶¹⁾ to the Maḥallah canal where they were launched and manned with fighters. When the ships of the Franks appeared off (the mouth of) the Maḥallah canal, those boats lying in ambush there suddenly descended on the Franks and fighting broke out between the two sides. At once the Muslim fleet came sailing from Maṣṣūrah, completing the encirclement of the Franks, and fifty-two Frankish ships were captured and some one thousand of their men were killed or taken prisoner. As a result, the Franks were cut off from supplies and found themselves now, with severe dearth on their side, blockaded.

On the first of Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah (March 7, 1250), the Franks captured of the flotilla positioned on the Maḥallah canal, seven fireships whose Muslim crews fled. But on the 9th of that month, the Muslim war galleys took on incoming ships carrying provisions for the Franks and captured thirty-two of them, among them nine galleys. The Franks, greatly weakened and with increasing famine in their ranks, now made overtures to seek a truce from the Muslims, whereby they would hand over Damietta and receive Jerusalem and some towns on the Syrian littoral in exchange. That was rejected, and on the 27th of Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah (April 2), the Franks burned all of their lumber and destroyed (most of) their ships, with the intention of making a stand behind the walls of Damietta.

[42] They departed for Damietta on Wednesday evening, the 3rd of Muḥarram, 648 (April 6, 1250), as their (remaining) ships began the descent downriver ahead of them. The Muslims, after crossing over to their shore, stayed on their heels, and as dawn came up the following day, the Muslims had encircled the Franks and were killing and capturing so many that the number of knights

61. Cf. II, 24, sect. 12.

slain in the battle for Fāriskūr is said to have been more than ten thousand, and the number of captives among the Frankish troops, horse and foot, as well as craftsmen and camp followers, came close to one hundred thousand. Uncountable quantities of money, stores, horses and mules were captured.

King Louis and the Frankish barons withdrew to a mound,⁽⁶²⁾ and there they stopped and surrendered, asking for safe-conduct. When that was granted by the Ṭawāshī Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥsin al-Ṣāliḥī, they came down under his assurance and were immediately surrounded and taken to Manṣūrah. King Louis was put in irons and detained in the house which used to be the residence of the Secretary of the Chancery, Judge Fakhr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn Luqmān. The Ṭawāshī Ṣabīḥ al-Mu‘azzamī was assigned as his keeper. With the King together was interned his brother,⁽⁶³⁾ who was allocated a food allowance that was brought to him daily.

Sayf al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn al-Ṭawdī⁽⁶⁴⁾—one of the men who had come with Tūrān-Shāh from the East—was appointed by the Sultan to be in charge of liquidating the prisoners of war. Every night he would take out three hundred men and have them executed and their bodies thrown into the river, until they were all gone.

After the capture of King Louis, the Sultan left al-Manṣūrah and had the royal field tent set up at Fāriskūr, where he had himself a wooden tower built. [Engaged with his own amusement] he kept delaying his departure for Damietta. To his viceroy in Damascus, Amīr Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Yaghmūr, he wrote a letter in his own hand:

62. Really, a village near Shirimsāh called “Munyat ‘Abd-Allāh” (modern-day *Mīt el-Khōli ‘Abdallāh* in the district of Fāriskūr); cf. *Sulūk*, I, 2:356, n. 1; Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 1:245).

63. Actually, it was the King’s two surviving brothers, Alphonse Count of Poitiers and Charles Count of Anjou, who were captured by the Muslims. Alphonse was later held as a hostage until the agreed ransom was paid (*Sulūk*, I, 2:356, n. 2).

64. As in the *Sulūk*, i.e., from (al-)Ṭawd near Luxor (Yāqūt 4:47). Bulaq text and Ibn Wāsil: al-Ṭūrī; Wiet: al-Ṭawādi (?).

From the Sultan's son Tūrān-Shāh: *Praise belongs to God who has put away all sorrow from us.*⁽⁶⁵⁾ *Help comes only from God,*⁽⁶⁶⁾ *and on that day the believers shall rejoice in God's help.*⁽⁶⁷⁾ *And as for thy Lord's blessing, declare it.*⁽⁶⁸⁾ *If you count God's blessing, you will never number it.*⁽⁶⁹⁾ We have good news for Your Grace, indeed we announce glad tidings to all Muslims, of the great victory God has bestowed upon Islam over the enemy of the faith. For the foe had become overbearing, his evil deep-rooted, and the believers had lost hope for the country, for the family, for the children. Then they received the call '*Do not despair of God's comfort.*'⁽⁷⁰⁾ And on Monday, the first day of this blessed year, which is the year 648—may God make it blessed from beginning to end!—we opened the treasuries, and expended the monies, and distributed the arms, and gathered the beduins and the volunteers and people known only to God, and they came *from every deep ravine and place far away.*⁽⁷¹⁾ When the enemy realized that, he sent envoys to sue for peace on the terms agreed upon between them and al-Malik al-Kāmil. But we refused. On Wednesday night they abandoned their tents, their possessions, their baggage and headed for Damietta in flight. We stayed on their heels, and all night long the sword did its work on their fleeing backs. Shame and woe befell them. The next morning we killed 30,000 of them, not counting those who flung themselves into the river, and as for the prisoners of war, you might as well speak of a sea. Al-Faransīs⁽⁷²⁾ took refuge at the Munyah⁽⁷³⁾ and asked for safe-conduct, which we granted. As we captured him, we showed him proper honors. And Damietta was ours with the help and power of God Almighty, and His majesty and grandeur!

Together with the letter he sent the cloak of King Louis, and Amīr Jamal al-Dīn Ibn Yaghmūr tried it on; it was made of scarlet

65. Koran 35 (The Angels):34.

66. Koran 8 (The Spoils):10.

67. Koran 30 (The Greeks):4-5.

68. Koran 93 (The Forenoon):11.

69. Koran 14 (Abraham):34.

70. Koran 12 (Joseph):87.

71. Koran 22 (The Pilgrimage):27 and 31.

72. Also *Faransīs*, by aphaeresis for *Raydāfransīs* (roi des Francais), which one finds, e.g., in Ibn Iyās.

73. I.e., Munyat 'Abd-Allāh (see n. 62).

trimmed with squirrel fur. Shaykh Najm al-Dīn Ibn Isrā'īl⁽⁷⁴⁾ recited on the occasion:

Indeed, al-Faransīs' cloak,
 which our lord received as gift,
 Was white as paper in his time,
 but our swords dyed it with blood.

And (elsewhere) he said:

O lord of all the kings of our time,
 with God's support you have achieved His pledge.
 May our lord keep letting us repulse the foes
 and have his servants wear the spoils of kings!

[43] When al-Malik al-Mu'azzam (Tūran-Shāh) began to threaten his father's wife, Shajar al-Durr, demanding that she turn over his father's treasure, she became afraid of him and wrote letters to the Mamluks of al-Malik al-Şāliḥ, inciting them against the Sultan. Also, when al-Fāris Aqtāy came to him at Ḥiṣn Kayfā, al-Mu'azzam had promised to make him an emir, but he never kept his promise. Not only that, he shunned his father's Mamluks and got rid of his emirs: thus he dismissed Amīr Ḥusām al-Dīn Ibn Abī 'Alī from the office of vicegerent and, having summoned him to the camp (at Fāriskūr), simply ignored him. He also removed his father's slaves and singled out with his favor those who had come with him from the East, appointing them to royal offices. Thus he made the Ṭawāshī Masrūr, his eunuch, Master of the Household (*ustādār*), and Şabiḥ (al-Mu'azzamī), who was a macho Abyssinian slave, he made his Chief of the Bodyguard (*amūr-i jandār*), ordering that he should have a golden staff and giving him a lot of money and important fiefs. When he was drunk, he would gather burning

74. Wandering Sufi sheikh and panegyric poet, died 1278 in his native Damascus; cf. al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, 2:431 ff. (with abundant samples of his poetic art).

candles in his fist and strike their heads with the sword so that they went out, saying, “This is what I am going to do with the Baḥrī Mamluks!” For he had a certain recklessness and frivolity about him and indulged in his pleasures in private. That is why people detested him.

Things continued like that until Monday, the 29th of Muḥarram (May 3).⁽⁷⁵⁾ On that day, the Sultan presided (as usual) at the (morning) meal, when one of the Baḥrī Mamluks⁽⁷⁶⁾ walked up to him and struck him with a blow of the sword that cut the fingers of his hands. The Sultan fled to the tower (that had been built for him at Fāriskūr) and the Mamluks rushed in on him with swords drawn. When he climbed to the top of the wooden tower, they shot arrows at him and set the tower on fire. He jumped down and ran toward the river, shouting, “I don’t want to be your ruler! Let me go back to the Fortress (of Kayfā)! Muslims, is there none among you who will show me kindness and help me?” But all the soldiers just stood there, and no one responded to his plea, while arrows rained down on him from every direction. They finally closed in on him, and he was cut down by the swords. He died—burned, drowned, slain—on that same Monday. His body was left for three days on the river bank before it was buried.

After the murder of al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam, the men of power agreed to make Khalīl’s mother Shajar al-Durr the ruler of Egypt, and that the commander of the troops should be Amīr ‘Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turkumānī al-Ṣāliḥī. They all swore an oath on it and sent to her ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Rūmī, who paid her a visit in the Citadel and informed her of the agreement. She accepted, and (henceforth) wrote on the deeds of enfeoffment her *‘alāmah*, namely, “Mother of

75. The date agrees with that given by Ibn Wāṣil, who has a better account of Tūrān-Shāh’s last hours (*Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:371); in the *Sulūk* (I, 2:359): the 26th of Muḥarram. Neither date fell on a Monday that year.

76. Baybars al-Bunduqdāri, according to the *Sulūk* and Ibn Wāṣil.

Khalil". Also, prayers were said for her in the mosques all over Cairo [and her name was put on the coinage].⁽⁷⁷⁾

Also, talks were in progress with King Louis about the surrender of Damietta. Amīr Ḥusām al-Dīn Ibn Abī 'Alī al-Hadhbānī was in charge of the negotiations. Having finally agreed, after long talks, to hand the city over and to be released from captivity (in exchange), the King sent orders to the Franks in Damietta to turn the city over to the Muslims. This they did, after much trouble due to the many revisions that were made, on Friday, the 3rd of Ṣafar (May 7), and the royal banner was hoisted above its wall and the word of Islam and the true creed were again proclaimed in the city, after it had been in the hands of the Franks for eleven months and nine days. King Louis, his brother (the Count of Anjou), his wife,⁽⁷⁸⁾ and the King's surviving companions were released (and taken) to the western bank of the Nile, from where they put to sea the following day, Saturday, the 4th of Ṣafar, and sailed for Acre.

With regard to this campaign, the vizier Jamāl al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Maṭruḥ⁽⁷⁹⁾ has this to say:

77. The sentence in square brackets is added from the *Sulūk* text (I, 2:362). — Only one coin of Shajar al-Durr is preserved in the British Museum, a dinar dated 648/1250. It bears her full title given by Maqrīzī in the *Sulūk*: "the (former) slave of (the 'Abbāsīd caliph) al-Musta'ṣim and (afterwards) of (al-Malik) al-Ṣāliḥ, Queen of the Muslims, Mother of al-Malik al-Manṣūr Khalil (i.e., friend of) the Commander of the Faithful." Khalil, the son she had born to al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ, had died in infancy; still, being the mother of an Ayyūbid prince remained the vital link in her claim to legitimate sovereignty, as evidenced by her official signature (*alāmah*). It is quite possible, as Prof. Ziyādah suggests, that she herself may have established the *nisbah* "al-Musta'ṣimīyah" (the former slave of al-Musta'ṣim) in order to please the Caliph and the powerful men in Cairo.

78. Margaret of Provence, by all accounts, remained throughout the campaign in Damietta and, after the French capitulation, raised half of the ransom of 800,000 bezants demanded by the Muslims. Maqrīzī is the only one to report that she was taken prisoner.

79. Egyptian poet and man of letters (1196-1251). Born in Asyūt, he served in various high administrative positions, among them as vizier Damascus, under Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, after whose death his fortune waned so that he died in obscurity in Cairo; cf. *GAL*² 1:307, S 1:465; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 6:258-66. — One reads the following verses, with minor variations, also, e.g., in Qalqashandī; *Ṣubḥī*, 5:414; *Sulūk*, I, 2:363-4; Ibn Iyās I, 282-3.

61. The Town of Dimyāṭ (Damietta)

Go tell the Frenchman, when you see him,
 words of advice from an eloquent tongue:
 May God requite you for all the killing
 done by the servants of Jesus, the Messiah!
 You came to Egypt, bent on conquest,
 thought noisy piping—you the drum!—success,
 But destiny led you to a host too mighty
 for your observers to perceive its size.
 All your companions you've left, by clever planning,
 ensconced in safety inside the grave,
 Five times ten thousand of them, and not one
 who is not slain or wounded captive!
 God lend you success in like undertakings!
 Perhaps Jesus will thus have his peace of you.
 In case your Pontiff should agree to that—
 how oft deceit has come from faithful counsel!
 So tell them, should they harbor thoughts of returning
 to take revenge, or for evil deed:
 The house of Luqmān's son is still the way it was,
 the shackles are waiting, so is the eunuch Ṣabiḥ!

And God willed that this same King Louis, after his escape from that battle, later gathered together several armies and set out for Tunis. A local young man by the name of Aḥmad ibn Ismā'īl ibn al-Zayyāt spoke these words:

Fransīs, this is the match of Egypt!
 Prepare then for the fate you'll meet:
 The house of Luqmān's son will be your grave,
 your keeper, this time, Death's two Angels!

which proved to be a good omen, for King Louis died while engaged in the siege of Tunis.

After the emirs had taken over Damietta, the happy news, having reached Cairo, was proclaimed to the beat of drums and decora-

tions went up all over the city. The troops returned from Damietta on Thursday, the 9th of Ṣafar (May 13).

[44] During the (joint) sultanate of al-Ashraf Mūsā ibn al-Malik al-Masʿūd “Aqṣīs” ibn al-Malik al-Kāmil⁽⁸⁰⁾ and al-Malik al-Muʿizz ʿĪzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turkumānī, at a time of much controversy in Egypt and the seizure of Damascus by (the lord of Aleppo) al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf ibn al-ʿAzīz, the ruling men in Egypt, namely, the Bahārī Mamluks, agreed on having the city of Damietta destroyed, for fear the Franks might attack it again, and sent stonemasons and laborers there. The actual demolition of its walls began on Monday, the 18th of Shaʿbān, 648 (November 15, 1250), and in the end the entire city was laid waste and all traces of it were wiped out, leaving only the Friday mosque. To the south of it sprang up huts along the Nile which were inhabited by poor people; they named that settlement “*al-Manshiyyah*”.

[45] That wall was the one built by the Caliph al-Mutawakkil-ʿalā-ʾllāh, as reported above (in sect. 10).

[46] In 659 (A.D. 1261), after al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars al-Bunduqdārī al-Ṣāliḥī had established himself as absolute ruler of Egypt, following the murder of al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz, he sent out a number of stonemasons from Old Cairo to have the mouth of the Damietta arm of the Nile filled in. They went ahead and cut a lot of stone blocks which they dumped into the branch of the Nile that flows north of Damietta into the sea, so that it became narrow and impassable for ships headed for Damietta.

[47] And that is how it has remained to this day. Large seagoing vessels are unable to enter the river. Rather, their cargoes are transferred to Nile barges known among the local people as

80. Al-Ashraf Mūsā b. al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, a boy of six, was the great-grandson of Sultan al-Kāmil and the grandson of the last Ayyūbid ruler of Yemen, al-Malik al-Masʿūd Yūsuf Aṭsiz (1215-1229). His joint sultanate with Aybak, designed to obviate Syrian-Ayyūbid legitimist claims to Egypt, lasted only two years (1250-1252). In 1254, no longer needed, he was bundled off to Constantinople (cf. *Sulūk*, I, 2:369; *Khitaṭ* 2:237).

“*gurūm*”—the singular is *garm*—while the seagoing ships lie at anchor at the end of the river arm close to the place where river and sea meet. The Damiettans of our day claim that the reason why seagoing ships are barred from entering the river is a mountain at its mouth, or accumulating sand in that place. But that is a false claim to which they are misled by the sight of the wrecks of ships that once attacked that place, and by their ignorance of present conditions and of past events. To this day, though, it is dangerous for ships when they come to the mouth of that river, and they often founder there. I went to the place and saw it with my own eyes, and I found it one of the strangest sights to be beheld by man.

[48] As for the Damietta of our days, it came into being after the (old) city of Damietta had been destroyed and huts had been put up there. These kept on multiplying until there was a large town with markets, baths, mosques, schools and smaller places of worship, its houses looking out over the mighty Nile and orchards beyond it. It is the prettiest town on God’s earth.

[49] I was told by Amīr Yalbughā al-Salīmī, (formerly) vizier, counselor, master of the household, God rest his soul, that of all the places he had been to, from Samarkand to Egypt, he had never seen a more beautiful town than this (new) Damietta. At first I thought he was exaggerating the praise of it, until I saw it with my own eyes, and it turned out to be indeed the most beautiful and most enjoyable place. About it I say:

God give Damietta ample rain and grant it lasting life!

The thought of it transports my heart with ecstasies of love.

And let forever stormy clouds provide with bounteous wet

a land that in its prettiness resembles Paradise.

O beauty of that land, I say, such goodness in it all,

how many beauties it contains, too much for human count!

Thus, praised be God for its canals that rim its gardens lush,

indeed like polished swords they are, or like a downy cheek.

Their luscious lotus is like one enthralled by fervent love
 who chose instead to stay aloof from ardent lovers' meet,
 Then stands, his eyes afloat in tears, to watch with languid eye
 in solitude of loss the stars that dot the nightly sky,
 And fancies, while still on his feet, that, having waited long,
 he does indeed anticipate a secret lovers' tryst.
 Above all, note those waterwheels, for they awake anew
 the sadness of a stricken man who pines away in grief
 Is it my woe that spoke to them so that it is as if
 their plaintive moan would answer back the like of what's
 revealed?
 Celestial spheres, possessed of stars, I fancied them to be,
 which turn for their own benefit and bring around good
 luck.
 On handsome ponds, how beautiful the water lilies bloom,
 and in the morn their splendor will encroach upon the
 rose.
 A sky of crystal made it is, in it are shining stars
 of wondrous hue, their ranks aligned in accurate array.
 A promenade along the bank of our sacred Nile
 returneth youth to hoary age with all its easy life,
 Creates repose that drives away all sorrow and all hurt
 so that to me the nights of love seem drunk from its
 delight.
 And in the clash of the two seas are marvels to behold,
 they loom and beckon from up close and from a distance
 fare
 The Nile's encounter with the sea resembles in the morn
 two kings who, leading mighty hosts of men of arms to war,
 Just took the field, resolved to fight, and the encounter flared,
 but no one stabs, and no one fights, except with pliant
 lance,
 And so they stayed the way they were for long without a move,
 and locked in utmost strife they are in serious affair.
 How many kinds of pleasure have I felt there in the past
 on its sweet shore that beckons him who seeks the water's
 edge!

How many times have we enjoyed in gardens lush with green
 short whiles of pleasant life, ensconced in safety,
 happiness!

And at the Barzakh, so well known, how oft was I alone,
 and outside Shaṭā, lonely mark to show the wanderer's
 road.

In that place the discerning eye perceives its ample share
 of kindness, generosity, of good, of glory earned.

So, Lord, in kindness let me have a day when I return,
 and let it be without distress and with exertion spared!

[50] Near Damietta, at the site where the (old) city that was razed used to be, there is a congregational mosque which is one of the most venerable mosques of the Muslims. The common people call it "Masgid Faṭḥ". It is the mosque founded by the Muslims at the time of the conquest of Damietta, right when God, through 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ, opened the land of Egypt to Islam. Above its entrance is a Kufic inscription which says that it was restored after 500 A.H.⁽⁸¹⁾ It contains several marble columns the like of any one of which is hard to find.

It became known as the "Faṭḥ Mosque" because a person by the name of Fātiḥ made it his home. The common people used to refer to it as the mosque of "Faṭḥ", but he is really Fātiḥ ibn 'Uthmān al-Asmar al-Takrūrī. He came from Marrakesh to Damietta in the performance of an expiatory pilgrimage and worked as a water carrier in the city's markets for God's reward only, without ever taking a penny from anyone. He lived outside of town and regularly attended the congregational prayer with the community, but otherwise shunned people altogether. Later on, he lived for about seven years in the community of Tūnah, which is now destroyed on Lake Tin-nīs, where he (helped) repair its mosque. Then he moved from Tūnah to the congregational mosque of Damietta and lived in a re-

81. In 519 (A.D. 1125), to be exact, as Wiet, who studied the inscription, has established.

treat at the foot of the minaret with no social contact other than at the time of public prayer. He would go and pray, and as soon as the imam said *as-salām ‘alaykum* (at the end of the prayer), he returned to his retreat. But when someone talked to him, he would stop and speak to that person after leaving the prayer. He was forever close, yet apart, near, yet remote, affable, yet aloof. When he made the pilgrimage, he separated himself from his companions at the time of the daily departure, and they would see him only when everyone dismounted to camp, for he would march all by himself, not speaking to anyone, until he was back in Damietta.

Then he set about to repair the mosque and clean it personally, getting rid of the bats under its ceiling, channeling water to its cisterns, paving its courtyard, coating its roof with plaster, and then stayed to live there. Previously, since the time when Damietta was destroyed, the mosque would be open only on Fridays. But he established a permanent imam there to conduct the five prescribed daily prayers, who lived at the *khaṭīb's* house and regularly conducted the supererogatory devotions in the mosque. He also installed readers to recite the Koran early in the morning and in the late afternoon, and appointed a man to deliver a religious lesson to remind and instruct the people.

He used to say: "If I knew of a better place in Damietta than the mosque, I would live there, and if I knew of place on earth where a dervish is more humble and obscure than in Damietta, I would go and live there." Whenever he had the visit of some dervish and had no food for him, he would sell some of his clothes in order to be able to entertain him. Nights and days he would spend oblivious to the world, neither seeing nor hearing the things around him. In his heart he favored the poor and the widows. He would neither ask anything of anyone nor, as a rule, accept (a favor), and when he accepted what God provided for him, he would greatly value it, yet all the while endeavor to conceal his good fortune. But God Exalted demonstrated His bounty and blessing without his seeking it from Him, and he became known for a number of miracles.

His life followed the path of the venerable forefathers: strict adherence to The Book and The Sunnah, shunning of temptation, abandonment and rejection of false pretensions, modesty, reserve in word and deed. He would not keep anyone company at night, nor would he tell anyone on what day he fasted and on what day he did not. He would at all times substitute 'If God Exalted wills' where other people said 'By God!'

Later on, Shaykh al-ʿAzīz al-Dimīrī advised him to get married, telling him that marriage was part of the Sunnah. And so he married toward the end of his life two women with neither one of whom he ever exercised his conjugal right by day, nor did he ever eat or drink in their presence, since his nights were to him a time for religious devotion, but he would come to them at times, and stay away at others in order to spend all of his time in the performance of the duties of worship and in cherished seclusion. Since not even his closest attendants could ever tell whether he was fasting or not, food would be brought to him and left with him in the privacy of his cell so that he would never be seen eating.

He loved poverty and favored the state of humbleness. He would lash out against indolence and injustice, was modest in demeanor with the poor, proud when dealing with the mighty and the rich. He would read in the Koran and study the books, yet no one ever saw him set down a word in writing. His recital of the Koran was done with humility and deliberation. At no time did he have a prayer rug (as the symbol of a Sufi saint) made for himself, nor did he exact the vow of a single disciple, nor wear a conical hat (in the manner of the Sufis), nor would he ever say 'I am a sheikh' or (even) 'I am a dervish.' And whenever he used the word 'I' in his speech, he would instantly recognize what had happened and ask God's forgiveness for having said 'I'. Nor did he ever attend a spiritual concert of the Sufis, yet not hold it against anyone who did. His path was simply righteousness without a formal convention. He would go to great lengths in being above the worldlings, and devote himself wholeheartedly to the poor, offering them food—but

not once to a rich man! When he found himself in the company of people, he would give a dervish precedence over a rich man, and when a dervish left him, he would go with him and escort him a few steps, barefoot, without sandals, and stand and follow him with his eyes until he was out of sight. If some dervish was referred to as a sheikh, he would sit before him with proper decorum, despite the fact that he was an imam and well advanced on the Sufi path. He used to say: "I do not tell anyone, 'Do this!' or 'Don't do that!' It suffices for him who seeks the Sufi way to look at what I do. For he who learns the Sufi way with the eye will not (need to) do so with the ear." When one of his intimates told him, "Master, pray for me to the Lord to provide for us, for we are poor," he replied: "If you wish the Lord to provide, do not leave a thing in the house. Only then ask God to provide! For it has been said: Do not ask God as long as you possess an iron signet ring." And he would teach: "A dervish is in the state of a virgin. Once he asks, his virginity will have ceased." When one of his intimates asked him to pray for him for material comfort, complaining to him about his straitened circumstances, he replied, "I will not pray for you for material comfort, but I shall ask for you that which is better and more perfect."

Despite his preoccupation with pious devotion and his dedicating all of his time to it, he would never neglect a friend nor forget his need until he had attended to it. He would at all times be loyal to his friends and treat them with kindness and courtesy, and he would be aware of the condition of people of all classes. He would extol knowledge, show generosity to orphans, have compassion for the unfortunate and widows, and use his intercession to attend to needs of high and low, untiringly, without ever wearying of the many things to do. He would practice much charity in secret, never keep anything for himself, and think of what he gave as little, despite his many charitable deeds. When he was given something, even if it was little, he would think of it as too much and always repay it with something better. Never did he seek the patronage of an emir or a vizier. Rather, in his Sufi way and path he took pride in modesty, display strength combined with humility, be near, yet re-

mote, close, yet separate, an ascetic amid this world and its people who was greater than his reputation. He would pray for himself and for those who asked for his prayer: "Lord, keep us away from this world and its people, and keep the things of this world away from us!"

And so he continued to live until he died, as night was passing into morning, on the 8th of Rabī' II, 695 (February 14, 1296). He left behind two boys, neither of them with enough subsistence to last them through a night, and a debt of 2,000 dirhams. He was buried in the vicinity of the mosque and his tomb is being visited to this day.

62. Shaṭā

[1] Shaṭā is a town near Tinnīs and Damietta. From there originate the *shaṭawī* garments.

[2] It is said to have been named after Shaṭā ibn al-Hāmūk, whose father was the maternal uncle of the Muqawqis and the governor of Damietta.

After God had conquered The Fortress (of Babylon) through ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and he had taken possession of Miṣr, ‘Amr sent an expedition to take Damietta. The Muslims besieged it until they managed to seize the wall of the town, whereupon Shaṭā went forth with two thousand of his men and joined the side of the Muslims. Prior to that, Shaṭā had been a good man who was attracted by what he heard of the story of the people of Islam. After the Muslim conquest of Damietta, the lord of Tinnīs still refused to surrender, and Shaṭā went to al-Burullus, al-Dimīrah and Ushmūm Ṭanāḥ to recruit and round up men to fight the people of Tinnīs. With these he set out, together with the Muslims in Damietta and the reinforcements sent by ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, against the people of Tinnīs. The two sides joined battle in the course of which Shaṭā acquitted himself with great valor, killing twelve of the champions of Tinnīs. He was killed in action during the night of Friday, the 15th of Sha‘bān, 21 A.H. (July 19, 642). [3] His grave is where it is now, outside Damietta. A tomb was later erected over it and people began to gather there annually during the night of the 15th of Sha‘bān, coming in from the surrounding villages, a practice which has continued to this day.⁽¹⁾

1. On the legend of Shaṭā b. al-Hāmūk, already told in the preceding chapter, cf. Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt*, 355-57. He is locally known as “Sīdi Shaṭa” or “ish-Shekh Shaṭa”.

[4] In Shaṭā used to be made the *kiswah* for the Kaaba. Al-Fāk-ihī reports: I saw at the Kaaba a *kiswah* of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd made of Egyptian *qabāṭī* material and bearing the inscription:

In the name of God. God's blessing on the servant of God Hārūn, the Commander of the Faithful, may God prolong his life. Made, as commissioned by al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabīʿ, the freedman of the Commander of the Faithful, in the brocaded embroidery of Shaṭā as a *kiswah* for the Kaaba in the year 191.⁽²⁾

[5] Among the well-known places at Damietta is The Barzakh, which is a mosque on the west bank of the Nile. (At least) the common people call it "il-Barzakh", although I do not know the reason why they do. I witnessed there a curious phenomenon: The mosque has a large minaret built of unbaked brick which rocks when someone shakes it. When I climbed to the top of it, to where the muezzin stands, and moved it, I saw its shadow sway with my own motion. Around that mosque are the decayed bones of dead who seem to have been people killed in the battles with the Franks. *God knows, and you know not.*⁽³⁾

[6] *Dabīq* is a village of Damietta, the place of origin of gold-brocade garments, a variety of *sharb* turbans, and goldthread-bordered *dabīqī* fabrics. The *sharb* turbans with gold weaving used to be manufactured there, a single turban measuring one hundred cubits in length and having stripes woven with gold thread. Such a turban would be worth 500 dinars in gold alone, not counting the silk and the yarn that went into it. Those and other turbans came into fashion during the time of al-ʿAzīz-bi-ʿllāh ibn al-Muʿizz, from 365 (A.D. 975) until his death in Ramaḍān 386 (October 996).

2. Compare II, 19, sect. 46.

3. Koran 2 (The Cow):216, and in other places.

[7] *Al-Nahrīriyyah*⁽⁴⁾ is a village belonging to the Gharbiyyah province. Its original lease was established by Amīr Shams al-Dīn Sunqur al-Sa'dī, the superintendent of the army during the (third) reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn. He went to great lengths in developing and cultivating it, and in his days it was worth 10,000 silver dirhams. Later on, he abandoned it and it was then cultivated for the benefit of the sultan. It kept expanding so much that eventually over thirty garden plantations were created there, and its quitrent, on account of the great number of people living there, came to 1,000 silver dirhams per feddan. It became a large place which yielded, in terms of agricultural taxes and special imposts, 300,000 silver dirhams—alternately 15,000 gold dinars—per annum. This Sunqur died (in Tripoli) in 728 (A.D. 1328). He is the founder of the Sa'diyyah College in the Ḥidrat al-Bagar quarter outside Bāb Zuwaylah.

[8] *Jazīrat Banī Naṣr* derives its name from the (Qaysī subtribe of the) Banū Naṣr ibn Mu'āwiyah ibn Bakr ibn Hawāzin. Namely, the Banū Ḥimās ibn Zālim ibn Ju'ayl ibn 'Amr ibn Duhmān ibn Naṣr ibn Mu'āwiyah ibn Bakr ibn Hawāzin once wielded great power in Egypt. Their number kept growing until they filled and controlled the entire Delta. That was until a Berber tribe known as Lawātah gained ascendancy over them—the Lawātah claim to be descended from the Qays—and dislodged the Banū Naṣr and made them adopt a sedentary life. Thus they became villagers in a place named after them in the middle (between the two main arms) of the Nile, namely, the Jazīrat Banī Naṣr under discussion.

4. So recorded by Ibn Mammātī (*Qawānīn* 91), Ibn al-Jī'ān (*Tuḥfah* 70), and Ibn Duqmāq (*Intiṣār* 5:86); the alternate form "al-Nahrīriyyah" appears already in Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's *Rihlah*. It is the present-day village of *al-Naḥḥāriyyah* in the district of Kafr al-Zayyāt (cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 2:122). See ch. 85 for the conclusion of this fragment in an incongruous "chapter" of random notes.

63. The Road between Cairo and Damascus

[1] One should know that the very first to organize a postal system by means of animals was King Dārā (Darius) son of Bahman (Artaxerxes Longimanus) (grand)son of Kaybushtāsif (Goshtāsp, Darius Hystaspes) son of Luhrāsif (Lohrāsp), a king of Persia.

The first to establish a postal system under Islam, however, was the Caliph al-Mahdī Muḥammad ibn Abī Ja‘far al-Manṣūr, who set it up between Mecca, Medina and the Yemen and had it operate by mule and camel. That was in 166 (A.D. 782/3).⁽¹⁾

The word “*barīd*” (post, mail) comes from *barīd dhanab*,⁽²⁾ because Darius stationed along the postal roads bobtailed mules and horses which were called “*burīd-zanab*”. Later on, the word was arabized and the second half of it was dropped, and people said *barīd*.

[2] That road over which soldiers, merchants and others travel (today) from Cairo via the (Ghurābī) sand desert to the town of Gaza is not the same as the road one used to follow in the old days from Egypt to Syria. In fact, that road which one takes nowadays across the sand desert came about no earlier than in the 500s in terms of Hijrah years, at the time when the Fāṭimid dynasty was coming to an end, and the road was (even) a different one originally, before the Franks seized the Syrian littoral.

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1. A postal system was definitely established three quarters of a century earlier by the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, and perhaps as early as during the reign of Mu‘āwiyah I (cf., e.g., Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 14:367-8). See the article “Al-Barīd” by D. Sourdel in *EF* on the history of the institution and the etymology of *barīd*.
 2. What Maqrīzī means is the Persian *borīda-zanab* or, more commonly, *borīdadon* ‘docked, bobtailed’ (Qalqashandī, *loc. cit.*, citing Ibn al-Athīr).

[3] Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Ubayd-Allāh ibn 'Abd-Allāh ibn Khurradād-hbih says in his *Book of Routes and Countries, with a Description of the Earth*:⁽³⁾ The road from Damascus to al-Kuswah is 12 miles; then to Jāsim 24 miles; from there to Fīq 24 miles; then to Tiberias, capital of (the province of) Jordan, 6 miles; from Tiberias to al-Lajjūn 20 miles; from there to al-Qalansuwah 20 miles; then to al-Ramlah, capital of (the province of) Palestine, 24 miles. [4] The road from al-Ramlah to Azdūd is 12 miles; then to Gaza 20 miles; [from there to Rafaḥ 16 miles;]⁽⁴⁾ then to al-'Arīsh 24 miles across sand desert; from there to al-Warrādah 18 miles; [then to al-Thu'āmah 18 miles;] from there to Umm al-'Arab 20 miles; then to al-Faramā 24 miles; from there to Jarjīr (Gurgīr) 30 miles; then to al-Qāṣirah 24 miles; from there to Maṣjid Quḍā'ah 18 miles; then to Bilbays 21 miles; and from there to al-Fuṣṭāt, the capital of Egypt, 24 miles.

[5] Thus, as one can see, the road one used to travel from Cairo to Damascus was different from what it is nowadays. Now one travels from Bilbays to al-Faramā through a region of the (Eastern) Ḥawf known today as "al-Sāyih,"⁽⁵⁾ and from al-Faramā, which is in the vicinity of Qaṭyā, to Umm al-'Arab, an area in ruins on the seacoast between Qaṭyā and al-Warrādah. A lot of people go there and dig around in its mounds where they find pure-silver dirhams of heavy weight and great value. From Umm al-'Arab one proceeds to al-Warrādah, which once was a community at a different location from the one now, and which has already been discussed in this book.⁽⁶⁾

[6] After the Franks had started out from the eastern Mediterranean in 490 (A.D. 1097) for the purpose of taking the region (i.e., Palestine) from the Muslims, and after Baldwin (I of Jerusalem) had captured al-Shawbak and rebuilt it in 509 (A.D. 1115), after it

3. *Al-Masālik wa-'l-mamālik* (ed. de Goeje) 78, 80.

4. Passages in brackets are restored from the original source.

5. See II, 23, n. 5; Wiet/Bulaq: *Bilād al-Sibākh*.

6. Above, chapter 23.

had fallen into ruin over the years, and from it had then launched raids on al-ʿArīsh, which in those days was a flourishing community—traveling from Egypt (directly) to Syria came to an end and one used to take the inland route with beduin (guides) under escort of the Franks, until Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb recovered Jerusalem from the Franks in 583 (A.D. 1187), launched numerous attacks on the Franks and captured from them a number of towns on the Syrian coast.

[7] People came to take that route across the sand desert, and travelers would use it from then on until the time al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb ibn al-Kāmil Muḥammad ibn al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb assumed the rule of Egypt. He then founded in the Sāyih region on the edge of the sand desert a community known to this day as “al-Ṣālihiyyah”. That was in 644 (A.D. 1246). He came to camp there and stay for some time, as did the rulers after him.

[8] When al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars al-Bunduqdārī was the ruler of Egypt, he established the postal relay system on all routes, so that a message from the Citadel of Cairo would reach Damascus in four days and come back in the same span of time. That way he would receive, while residing in the Citadel, the news from the provinces twice a week and make decisions throughout his realm in matters of dismissal and appointment to office. He spent huge amounts of money on it until its organization was completed. That was in 659 (A.D. 1261).

[9] The post continued to operate between Cairo and Damascus. At each relay station was a number of horses ready to be ridden, which are called “postal horses”. The relay stations had several grooms and, for the horses, men known as “outriders”—*sawwāqūn*, singular *sawwāq*—who would accompany someone authorized to ride postal horses with the function of handling the horse for him and attending to him for the duration of the journey. Only someone with a royal authorization is allowed to use postal horses. Sometimes people are forbidden to use them unless a person is

traveling on official business for the government, sometimes notables intending to travel may use them by royal authorization.

The roads to Syria used to be well traveled, each postal station having whatever a traveler needed in terms of provisions, fodder, and the like, and because of the great security such a postal station afforded. In our younger days, a woman could still travel from Cairo to Damascus by herself, riding or walking, without having to carry provisions or water.

[10] After Tamerlane had captured Damascus, enslaved its population and burned the city down in 803 (A.D. 1401), the postal relay stations fell into decay, and the men of power were too preoccupied with the trials that befell the country and the many disorders they had to cope with as to rebuild the postal system. As a result of this interruption, the route to Syria suffered terrible harm, and that is how matters have remained to our own time, which is the year 818 (A.D. 1415).

64. The Town of Ḥaṭṭīn

[1] The ruins of this town are still visible today between Ḥabwah and al-‘Aqūlah,⁽¹⁾ in the area of al-‘Āqulah between Qaṭyā and al-‘Arīsh. On the other side of it to the east is a puddle of sweet water which the (local) beduins call “Abū ‘l-‘Urūq”.

That (former) town derives its name from Ḥaṭṭīn, or Ḥuṭṭī, son of King Abjad the Midianite, and the people of Qaṭyā today call that area “Bilād Ḥaṭṭīn wa-‘l-Jufār”. This Ḥaṭṭīn ruled Egypt after his father’s death. He was a man of war and violence who resided in a fortress in the Jordan mountains near Tiberias.

[2] Also after him is named the village of Ḥiṭṭīn, where there is at present the grave of (the prophet) Shu‘ayb,⁽²⁾ not far from Şafad.

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1. Mentioned by Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ*, 14:377) as a way station between al-Quşayr and Ḥabwah in the northern Sinai.
 2. On Ḥiṭṭīn in Galilee, site of Saladin’s historic victory over the army of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem on July 4, 1187, cf. Yāqūt (*Mu‘jam al-buldān* 2:274), who gives as the alleged location of Shu‘ayb’s grave a village called *Khiyārah* near Ḥiṭṭīn. See also ch. 25 above.

65. The Town of al-Raqqah

This town (was) one of the towns of Midian in the region between the Sea of al-Qulzum (the Gulf of Suez) and Mount Sinai. At the time when Moses, peace be upon him, led the Israelites out of Egypt, it was inhabited by a clan of the Lakhm Āl Fir‘awn who worshiped cows. It is they whom God has in mind when He says, “*And We brought the Children of Israel over the sea, and they came upon a people cleaving to idols they had.*”⁽¹⁾

Those people, says Qatādah (ibn Di‘āmah), were Lakhm who had settled at al-Raqqah. Their idols are said to have been statues of cows, and that is why the Samaritan brought out for them a calf.⁽²⁾

The vestiges of that town are still visible today, just like the vestiges of the towns of Fārān, al-Qulzum, Madyan and Aylah, and beduins pass through them sometimes.

1. Koran 7 (The Rattlements):138.

2. Cf. Koran 20 (Ta Ha):85 ff.

66. ‘Ayn Shams (Heliopolis)

[1] In ancient times it was called “Ra‘amsās”.⁽¹⁾

[2] ‘Ayn Shams was a temple to which people, coming from all parts of the country, would make a pilgrimage, one of the temples visited by pilgrims that existed in ancient times.

The Šābians are said to have received the temples from Agathodaimon,⁽²⁾ who, they claim, is identical with Seth, Adam’s son, and from the First Hermes, who is the same as Idrīs. For Idrīs is the first who expounded celestial substances and astral movements, and who built temples in which he glorified God Exalted.

The number of temples in most ancient times is said to have been twelve, namely: the Temple of the First Cause, the Temple of Reason, the Temple of Governance, the Temple of Necessity, and the Temple of the Soul; these five temples were round. The sixth temple was the Temple of Saturn, which was a hexagon, followed by the Temple of Jupiter, which was a triangle, then the Temple of Mars, which was square, and the Temple of the Sun, also square; then the Temple of Venus, an oblong triangle, the Temple of Mercury, a triangle within a rectangle, and the Temple of the Moon, an octagon.

[3] They justified their temple worship by arguing that,⁽³⁾ since the Creator of the world was too sacred as to have the attributes of coming into being, it followed with necessity that it was impossible to attain to His majesty and grandeur and, hence, necessary for His

1. Biblical “Raamses” (Hebr. *Ra‘amsēs*) in Exodus 1:11.

2. Wiet: *Ghādaymūn*; Bulaq: *Ād wa-Thamūd*. —For this section cf. al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbat al-dahr* (39-44), which is also the source of sections 7-9 below.

3. Taken from al-Dimashqī (p. 47).

servants to approach Him through companions of His, namely, the spiritual beings, to intercede on their behalf and to act as intermediaries for them in His presence. By "spiritual beings" they meant the angels, and they claimed that these were the administrators of the seven planets in their respective spheres, which are their temples, and that each spiritual being must of needs have a temple, and each temple must ineluctably have a sphere; also, that the relation of a spiritual being to a temple is the same as the relationship of the spirit to the body. They maintained, moreover, that one must see the intermediary between the servants and their Creator so that a servant can go personally to the intermediary and benefit from him. Therefore, they sought refuge in the temples, which are the planets, and became familiar with the houses of the latter in relation to the firmament. They also came to know the times of their rising and setting, their conjunctions, and which days, nights, hours, individuals, forms, climes, etc., belong to them, things known in the relevant field of mathematical science. They called those seven planets "lords" and "gods", and apostrophized the Sun as "god of gods" and "lord of lords", claiming that it was it that showered its light upon the year and made visible its effects throughout it. They would approach the temples by approaching the spiritual beings, since these were close to the Creator, because of their claim that the temples were the bodies of the spiritual beings, and whenever someone approaches an individual, he has gained access to his spirit.

[4] They used to pray to each planet on a specific day, claiming that it was the "lord" of that day, and their prayers would take place at three times (of the day): the first at sunrise, the second when the sun was at midpoint in the firmament, and the third at sunset. Thus they would pray to Saturn on Saturday, to Jupiter on Sunday, to Mars on Monday, to the Sun on Tuesday, to Venus on Wednesday, to Mercury on Thursday, and to the Moon on Friday.

[5] There is said to have been a temple in Balkh⁽⁴⁾ built by Menuchebr and dedicated to the Moon, to be the rival of the Kaaba. The Persians used to make the pilgrimage to it and drape it in silk. Its name was "Nawbahār". After the Persians had embraced Zoroastrianism, they converted it into a fire temple. Its custodian was then called a "*barmak*", which means 'governor of Mecca'.⁽⁵⁾ The office of *barmak* eventually passed to Khālid, the grandfather of Ja'far ibn Yaḥyā ibn Khālid. He embraced Islam at the instigation of (the Umayyad caliph) Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik, who gave him the name 'Abd-Allāh.

[6] That temple (in Balkh) was demolished by Qays ibn al-Haytham (al-Sulamī) at the beginning of Mu'āwiyah's caliphate in 41 (A.D. 661). It was an enormous structure surrounded by colonnades and three hundred and sixty small rooms to house its attendants.

[7] Near Ṣan'ā' used to be the Palace of Ghumdān, a construction of al-Ḍaḥḥāk (ibn 'Alwān). It was a temple dedicated to Venus. It was demolished during the caliphate of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān.

[8] In Spain, on the mountain separating the Iberian Peninsula from the Big Land (i.e., the African continent), used to be a Venus temple built by Cleopatra, daughter of Ptolemy.

[9] And at Farghānah used to be a sun temple called "Kāwshān" which had been built by some early Persian king. It was destroyed by order of (the caliph) al-Mu'taṣim.

4. Taken from al-Dimashqī (p. 43). — Menuchebr, son of Iraj and grandson of Farīdūn, is the 7th king of the legendary Pīshdādian dynasty in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*.

5. I.e., presumably, Pers. *bar Makka* 'in charge of Mecca'. The "etymology" (not found in the original source) is, of course, sheer fancy. The name of the ancestor of the famed vizierial family, the Barmakids, derives from *parmak*, the title of a prior of a Buddhist stupa.

[10] Since there has been no agreement as to who built the temple of 'Ayn Shams, I shall now relate such details of its story as I have never seen gathered together in a book.

[11] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: Whenever King Manqāwus rode in public procession, they would stage before him curious fantasias, and the people would gather and be astounded by their performance. One day he ordered a temple for worship to be built which would be his personally, and in it he had a pavilion erected containing the representations of the sun and of the planets. Around these he had idols and wondrous things placed, and the king would (sometimes) ride out to that temple and stay there for seven days. He also had two columns erected on which was inscribed the date of the temple's construction; these have survived to this day.⁽⁶⁾ And that is the place called "Ayn Shams".

The king had treasures and jewels and talismans and drugs and wondrous things moved to 'Ayn Shams and had them buried there and in the surrounding area. [12] He reigned for seventy-one years and died of the plague, or, according to others, of poison. They prepared for him a tomb in the desert of the west—some say west of Qūṣ—and buried with him the books of wisdom and alchemy, the statues of gold and gemstone, and a great deal of minted gold. Also buried with him was a statue of the spirit of the Sun made of glittering gold and having two wings of chrysolite, as well as an idol in the likeness of his wife. He loved her, and when she died, he had her statue placed in all the temples. He had her image made of gold, with two black tresses, wearing a dress made of strung gemstones, and seated on a throne. He used to have that image in front of him wherever he sat in audience and thus find solace from his loss. Later on, it was buried with him beneath his feet in such a way that it seemed to speak to him.

6. Alluding, it seems, to the two obelisks discussed in sect. 15 ff. below.

[13] The learned physician Aḥmad ibn Khalīfah⁽⁷⁾ relates in his *Choice News about the Successive Generations of Physicians*: Pythagoras had a great desire to meet with the priests who used to be in Egypt. So he came to the priests of Heliopolis, which in our time is known as “Ayn Shams”. They gave him an unpleasant reception and examined him for a long time. When they found him to be without shortcoming or deficiency, they sent him on to the priests of Memphis in order to have them test him to the utmost. These received him grudgingly and put him to a thorough test, but they, too, found no fault on him, nor could they catch him on a slip. So they passed him on to the priests of Diospolis⁽⁸⁾ to have him examined by them. When these, again, found no way whatever to refute him, they put before him several difficult tasks, in the hope that he would refuse to accept them so that they could disprove him and bar him from attaining the object of his search in violation of the laws of the Greeks. But he accepted that and carried it out. As a result, they became full of admiration for him, and the reputation of his godfearing ways became so wide-spread in Egypt that it came to the attention of Amāsīs, the King of Egypt,⁽⁹⁾ who gave him authority over the Lord’s sacrifices and all of their immolations. Never before had that been given to a foreigner.

[14] It is said that the seven planets had temples to which people would come as pilgrims from all parts of the world. They were established by the ancients who dedicated a temple in some part of the earth to each planet. They claimed that the first temple was the Kaaba, and that it was a legacy of Idrīs, whom they call the “First Hermes Trismegistos”, to be visited in a pilgrimage; they also maintained that it was dedicated to Saturn. The second temple was the Temple of Mars, which used to be in the city of Tyre on the Syr-

7. He is the Syrian medical historian Muwaffaq al-Din Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah (1200-1270); cf. the article “Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah” (J. Vernet) in *EF*. —The passage can be found in his *‘Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’* (ed. A. Müller, Königsberg/Kairo 1884), p. 39.

8. I.e., Thebes, the Roman *Diospolis magna*.

9. That is, Ahmose, of the 26th dynasty, regn. 569-526 B.C.

ian coast. The third temple was dedicated to Jupiter and was in Damascus; it was built by Jayrūn son of Sa'd son of 'Ād,⁽¹⁰⁾ and its former site is now occupied by the Umayyad Mosque. The fourth temple is the Temple of the Sun in Egypt; it is said to have been built by Hūshang, a ruler of the first dynasty of Persian kings; it is the one called "Ayn Shams". The fifth temple is the Temple of Venus, which was at Manbij (Hierapolis, in northern Syria). The sixth temple is the Temple of Mercury, which was at Sidon on the Syrian coast. The seventh temple is the Temple of the Moon, which was at Ḥarrān; it is said to have been the citadel of the town and was called "alMudawwar" (the Circular); it continued to be in use until it was totally destroyed by the Mongols. It was, it has been said, the Great Temple of the Ṣābians.

[15] In his *Marvels of Architecture*,⁽¹¹⁾ Shāfi' ibn 'Alī records: 'Ayn Shams is a small city. One can still see its wall, once girding it and now destroyed. It was, by all appearances, a house of worship containing terrific idols of enormous shape made of hewn stones, such an idol measuring thirty cubits in height and its limbs proportionate in size. All of these idols are standing erect on bases, but some of them are seated on curious pillars or on solid constructions. The gate of the city is still there now. On most of those stones are pictorial representations in human and other animal shapes, as well as numerous inscriptions in the unknown script. Rarely will one see a stone devoid of some writing or picture or image.

In that city are the two famous obelisks called "Pharaoh's obelisks".⁽¹²⁾ The characteristic of an obelisk is a square base, ten cubits long by ten cubits wide and about the same in height, which has been set down on a firm foundation in the ground, and above

10. Jayrūn (Geron) is one of the legendary founders of Damascus; cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 4:92.

11. See I, 40, n. 50. Both texts erroneously: *'Ajā'ib al-buldān* (for *al-bunyān*). The work has already been cited several times.

12. That is, the two obelisks erected by Sesostris I of the 12th dynasty (cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, I, 339; Baedeker, *Egypt*, 121).

which was then erected a tapering, triangular column, more than a hundred cubits high, that begins from a base, perhaps five cubits in diameter, and ends in a point, whereby about three cubits of its top are enclosed in a copper cap, like a funnel, which, due to rain and age, has taken on verdigris and has turned green, and some of its green has run down over the surface of the obelisk; all of it is covered with inscriptions in the aforementioned writing.

The two obelisks used to stand upright. Later on, one of them decayed and cracked in the middle because of the enormous weight, and the copper from its top was retrieved. Furthermore, the obelisk was surrounded by countless idols about half or one-third that size.

Rarely will one find among the smaller obelisks there one that is a single (solid) piece. Rather, their segments are stacked one on top of the other. Most of them have collapsed and only their bases have survived.

[16] Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jazarī⁽¹³⁾ relates in his chronicle: On the 4th of Ramaḍān—that is, 656 (A.D. 1258)—collapsed one of “Pharaoh’s obelisks” in the area of al-Maṭariyyah on the outskirts of Cairo. Inside of it was found the equivalent of 200 quintals of copper, and the gain from its top was 10,000 dinars (worth of copper).

[17] It is said that ‘Ayn Shams was built by al-Walīd ibn Dawma‘, an Amalekite king. According to others it was built by (his son) al-Rayyān ibn al-Walīd and was his residence. The Persians claim that Hūshang was its founder.

[18] The height of the two columns (obelisks) is said to be one hundred cubits, according to others, eighty-four cubits, and still others, fifty cubits.

13. Damascene historian, died 1338. Of his chronicle entitled *Ḥawādith al-zamān wa-anbā’ih, wa-waqfayāt al-akābir wa-l-‘ayān wa-abnā’ih*, only the last part, covering the years 726 (1326) through 739 (1338), is preserved in manuscript; cf. al-Zirikli, *Ā’lām*, 6:189; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 3:301.

[19] It is said that it was Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed 'Ayn Shams when he invaded Egypt.

[20] Al-Quḍā'ī says: At 'Ayn Shams, which is the Temple of the Sun, are the two columns which are the most astounding and significant thing anyone has ever seen. Their height is about fifty cubits, as they rest directly on the ground. On them is the image of a man astride a mount and on top of them is something that looks like two copper eagles. 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 extremes 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 them throughout the year. This is what the experts in the matter say.

[21] Ibn Sa'īd says in the "Mughrib": In ancient times, 'Ayn Shams was a city of enormous length and width contiguous with ancient Miṣr, where the city of Fuṣṭāṭ is now.

[22] When 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ came (to Egypt), he laid siege to Heliopolis and, having induced the enemy to mass for battle,⁽¹⁴⁾ eventually conquered it.

[23] The biographer of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn relates: At 'Ayn Shams used to be an idol the size of a man of medium build, made of white tuff, solid in workmanship. To someone who inspected it closely it appeared to be a rational human being. When that idol was described to Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, he expressed a great desire to

14. Cf. A.J. Butler's painstaking reconstruction of the battle of Heliopolis in his *Arab Conquest of Egypt* (p. 221 ff.).

see and contemplate it, but Nadūsah⁽¹⁵⁾ (tried to) dissuade him, saying that no governor had ever laid eyes on it without being dismissed (soon after). Nonetheless, Aḥmad rode out to see it—this was in 258 (A.D. 872)—and contemplated it at length. Then he called in stonecutters and ordered them to yank it out of the ground, not leaving a trace of it. Later on, he told Nadūsah, his treasurer: “Tell me, Nadūsah, which one of us has dismissed the other?” “You did, Amīr,” he replied. And Aḥmad lived as emir (of Egypt) for another twelve years.

[24] (The Fāṭimid caliph) al-‘Azīz-bi-‘llāh Nizār ibn al-Mu‘izz had large stone houses built in ‘Ayn Shams.

[25] Abū ‘Ubayd al-Bakrī says:⁽¹⁶⁾ ‘Ayn Shams—with the vowel /a/ after *shīn*, a vowelless second consonant followed by *sīn*—is (the name of) a well-known spring. ‘Ayn Shams, says Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb, is where Pharaoh had The Tower built.

Certain people have claimed that the ‘Abd Shams (tribe) were associated with that spring. The first one to be called by that name was Saba’ (the Elder) ibn Yashjub. (Ibn) al-Kalbī mentions that “Shams”, after which they named themselves, was an ancient idol.

[26] Ibn Khurradādhbih relates:⁽¹⁷⁾ (To the architectural marvels belong) two columns at ‘Ayn Shams in Egypt, leftovers of columns that used to be in that place. At the apex of each column is a copper ring. On one of the two, water drips from under the ring halfway down the column; it does not pass that point, nor does the trickle ever stop, night and day. The part where (the ring) is located

15. A fictitious name, probably due to a copyist’s error. In the same anecdote related by Ibn Duqmāq (*Intiṣār* 5:45) on the authority of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, Aḥmad’s interlocutor is his chief of the land office, (Sulaymān b. Thābit) Ibn Dashūmah, and the incident is moved up to the year 271/883.

16. *Muḥjam mā istaḥjam*, 808-9 (ed. Wüstenfeld II, 815). —For Pharaoh’s “Tower” (*ṣarḥ*) cf. Koran 28 (The Story):38; 40 (The Believers):36. —On the tribal genealogy cf. II, 24, sect. 16.

17. *Al-Masalik wa-l-mamālik* (ed. de Goeje), 161.

is green and moist. The water never reaches the ground. (The ring) is a construction of Ūshhank's (*sic*, i.e., Hūshang).

[27] Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm (al-Māzinī al-Gharnāṭī) mentions in the *Gift to the Hearts* that this tall column is quadrangular, its height is one hundred cubits, all in one solid piece, it has a pointed top, and rests on a stone base. On top of the column is a covering of bronze, like gold, which contains the image of a man on a throne facing east. From under that bronze covering issues water which flows ten cubits (down the column shaft), and the spot is overgrown with something like moss. The sparkle of the water over that green spot never ceases, summers and winters. It does not stop flowing, yet none of it ever reaches the ground.

[28] At 'Ayn Shams is a plant which one plants like willow twigs. It is called "balsam", and from it one extracts balm oil. It is the only place on earth where it is known to grow. The bast of those twigs is edible and has a distinctive taste, hot and pleasantly pungent.

[29] In the area of al-Maṭariyyah of the city of 'Ayn Shams is found the balsam tree. These are low bushes which one irrigates with water from a local well. The Christians make much of that well, which they seek out to wash in its water, hoping to be healed by it.

To press out the balm by the time the balsam has ripened, an official appointed by the sultan will go out to take charge of the operation in order to collect the balm and deliver it to the royal storehouse.⁽¹⁸⁾ Some of the balm is then transferred to the administrative centers in Syria and to the (local) hospitals to be used for the treatment of people with a cold temper. Balm can be obtained only from the royal storehouse, after receipt of a corresponding royal order.

18. On the process of making balm oil see below, ch. 91, sect. 10.

With Christian rulers, be they Abyssinians or Greeks or Franks, balm is in tremendous demand, and they seek to obtain it from the lord of Egypt in exchange for gifts. They hold that no one in their countries can properly become a Christian unless he is immersed in baptismal water, and they believe that the baptismal water must contain a little balm oil, which they call "chrism".

[30] In ancient times, when a message arrived from Syria, it would go first to the lord of Heliopolis; next, it would go from Heliopolis to the fortress which (under Islam) became known as "Qaşr al-Shama", where the city of Fuṣṭāṭ is now; then it would go from that fortress to the city of Memphis, where the royal court used to be.

[31] The reason why the Christians attach such importance to balm oil is told in the *Synaxarion*, which contains the history of the Christians:

When the mother of the Messiah left Jerusalem with him, accompanied by Joseph the carpenter, fleeing from Herod, the king of the Jews, she stopped with him at the first place on Egyptian soil, namely, the town of Baṣṭāḥ (Bubastis), on the 24th of Bashans (May 31). But the people there did not take them in, and they camped outside the town, staying for several days. Next, they traveled to the town of Samannūd and then, after having been ferried across the Nile into Gharbiyyah province, moved on to the town of al-Ushmūnayn.

At the highest point⁽¹⁹⁾ of that town was in those days the image of a copper horse standing on four columns, which neighed whenever a stranger came to town, and people would then come and find out about the newcomer. But when Mary came to the town with the Messiah, peace be upon him, the horse fell down and broke into pieces, and his mother then entered (the town) with him. At Ushmūnayn came to the Messiah a divine sign: five heavily laden

19. This paragraph is an interpolation into the "Synaxarion" account.

camels were crowding them as they moved along, and when the Messiah yelled at them, they turned to stone.

Then they left al-Ushmūnayn and stayed for a few days at a village called F-y-k-s (?), and then went on to a town named Qus-Qām, which is the one called today "al-Qūṣiyyah".⁽²⁰⁾ And Satan spoke from deep inside the idols that used to be there, saying, "A woman has come, and with her her boy, who intend to destroy your houses of worship!" Whereupon a hundred armed men set out against them and drove them out of town.

So they went on to the area of Mēr to the west of al-Qūṣiyyah and stopped at a place known today as "Dayr al-Muḥarraq", where they stayed for six months and some days. Then Joseph the carpenter saw in his dreams someone who told him that Herod had died and that he must return with the Messiah to Jerusalem. And so they returned from Mēr and stopped at the place known today in as "Qaṣr al-Shama", where they stayed in a grotto that is known today as the Church of St. Sergius.⁽²¹⁾

Later on, they left for Heliopolis, where they rested near a water hole. With the water from it Mary washed the clothes of the Messiah, which had become soiled, and then poured her dirty wash water on that land, whereupon God Exalted made the balsam tree grow there. Balsam used to be found in those days near the Jordan river; now it stopped growing there, but it kept on growing on that land, and that well one finds there nowadays has superseded the water hole where Mary had done her washing.

[32] I have been told that to this day, if one looks closely, one will find its water to be a running spring underneath. And that is the reason why the Christians attach such importance to that well

20. *Qousqam* is the Coptic name of the community and is still so recorded (Qūṣ-Qām) by Ibn Mammāti (*Qawānīn* 170) as part of the Ushūmayn district. Ibn al-Jī'ān (*Tuḥfah* 184) already lists it by its modern name "al-Qūṣiyyah" together with Mēr as part of the Manfalūṭ district. It is the Greek *Kousis*, Roman *Cusae*.

21. On the *Kanīsat Bū Sirgah* see Baedeker, *Egypt*⁷, 107-9.

and to the balsam tree—for it draws its water from that well. Only God knows the truth.

67. Al-Manṣūrah

[1] This community at the head of the Ushmūm⁽¹⁾ canal opposite the village of Ṭalkhā was founded by Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Malik al-Ādil Abī Bakr ibn Ayyūb in 616 (A.D. 1219) at the time when the Franks were in possession of the city of Damietta. Having stopped and encamped at the site of that community, he had a palace built to serve as his residence and ordered the commanders and troops who were with him at the time to start building. Thus, a number of houses were built and markets were set up. He also surrounded it with a wall along the river front which he protected with war engines and curtains. He named that campground “al-Madīnah al-Manṣūrah”, and remained there until he had recovered the city of Damietta, as has already been discussed in the chapter on the town of Damietta in this book. Subsequently, it became a large city with baths, caravansaries and markets.

[2] After al-Malik al-Kāmil had rescued Damietta from the Franks, and the Franks had departed for their country, he sat one day in his palace at al-Manṣūrah, attended by his brothers, al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam ‘Īsā, lord of Damascus, and al-Malik al-Ashraf Mūsā, lord of the eastern province, as well as some members of his household and of his entourage, when al-Malik al-Ashraf ordered his slave girl to sing. And she sang to the accompaniment of her lute:

When Acre's pharaoh and his men in utter wrong
invaded Egypt, keen to plague the land,
A Moses rose against them, staff in hand,
and in the sea he drowned them, one by one.

1. The large canal now called “al-Baḥr al-Ṣaghīr”; cf. Ramzī, II, 1:215 s.v. “al-Manṣūrah”.

Al-Ashraf, delighted, told her, “Oh, please repeat!” But al-Malik al-Kāmil, who found that bothersome, told the girl to be silent and said to his own slave girl, “Now you sing!” And she took the lute and sang:

Oh infidels, arise and see
 what has occurred in our time!
 Hey, Jesus’ servants, a ‘Īsā and his men,
 a Mūsā—lend both to a Muḥammad help!

[3] These verses are from an ode by Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn Ḥabārah which begins (with the hemistich):

Love willed that I spend the night deprived of sleep.

[4] That pleased al-Malik al-Kāmil, and he had each of the two girls paid five hundred dinars.

[5] Then the illustrious judge, the eminent Hibat-Allāh ibn Maḥāsin, justice of Gaza, who was one of the table companions, rose to his feet and recited:

My compliments, for happiness has come to stay,
 as God made true a pledge of help in time!
 Clear victory the God of Mankind gave to us,
 a boon, a grace, and glory, here to last.
 Aglow is Egypt’s face that bore a frown,
 the face of unbelief disgraced by wrongful deed!
 When boundless sea did spill his ruthless men,
 by ships its surface turned into a churn,
 They stood for Faith, those willing to unsheathe
 a blade, as he had drawn the noble sword.
 No one escaped save corpses that were thrown
 like date pits on the ground, or those in bonds.
 Across the land the cry went up and raised
 its voice in east and west there to proclaim:
 Hey, Jesus’ servants, a ‘Īsā and his men
 and Mūsā, too, to a Muḥammad lend their help!

That night in al-Manṣūrah was one of the most pleasant nights spent by any king. During his recitation, (the judge) would, when he said 'Jesus', gesture toward 'Īsā, al-Mu'azzam, and when he mentioned 'Moses', point at Mūsā, al-Ashraf, and at the word 'Muḥammad' motion toward Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil.

[6] It has been said that the man who declaimed these verses was really the (Iraqi) poet Rājīḥ al-Ḥillī.⁽²⁾

2. Died 627/1230 in Damascus (cf. Muḥsin al-Amīn, *A'yān al-Shīrah*, 31:75). Al-Suyūṭī quotes three of the preceding verses in his *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍarah* (2:24) with attribution to this poet.

68. Al-‘Abbāsah

[1] This village between Bilbays and al-Ṣālīhiyyah on the edge of the Sadīr⁽¹⁾ is still a retreat for the rulers of Egypt. There was born al-‘Abbās ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, and that is why his father gave him the name “al-‘Abbās”.⁽²⁾ At al-‘Abbāsah was also born al-Malik al-Amjad Taqīy al-Dīn ‘Abbās ibn al-‘Ādil Abī Bakr ibn Ayyūb.

[2] Al-Malik al-Kāmil Muḥammad ibn al-‘Ādil, who would stay there often, used to say: “This is the lock to Egypt: When I stay there, I can hunt the fowl in the sky, the fish in the water, the wild beasts in the desert, (yet it is close enough for) the bread to arrive from my Citadel still warm.” He built there houses and belvederes and garden plantations, and his emirs also built there several residences in the gardens.

[3] That is how al-‘Abbāsah remained until al-Malik al-Ṣālīḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb ibn al-Kāmil founded al-Manzilah al-Ṣālīhiyyah. From that time on, al-‘Abbāsah declined, and the belvederes fell into ruin during the sultanate of al-Malik al-Mu‘izz Aybak.

[4] When al-Malik al-Zāhir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars was sultan, he passed (one day) by the Sadīr, which is the mouth of the valley. He was impressed by it and founded at a place of his choice a village

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1. A swampy region in the northeastern Delta between al-‘Abbāsah and present-day ‘Izbat Tall al-Maskhūṭah (al-Khashabī) that served as a catchment basin for the Nile overflow (cf. Yāqūt 3:202).
 2. Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn’s oldest son, al-‘Abbās, was born in 242/856 in Sāmarrā (Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 3:4), long before there was a village of al-‘Abbāsah (cf. sect. 5 of this chapter). In 879, after an unsuccessful bid for power while his father was in Syria besieging Antioch, he fled to Barqah (Cyrene), but was captured and brought back to Egypt, where he remained imprisoned until his father’s death in 884 (ibid., 3:40). He was executed in the same year by order of his younger brother, Khumārawayh, after he refused to swear the oath of allegiance (3:49).

which he named “al-Zāhiriyyah”.⁽³⁾ He also built a congregational mosque in that village. That was in the year 666 (A.D. 1268).

[5] (The village of al-‘Abbāsah) was named after al-‘Abbāsah, the daughter of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn. Because she went to that location to bid farewell to her niece, Qaṭr al-Nadā, the daughter of Khumārawayh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, when the latter was being carried on her way to al-Mu‘taḍid.⁽⁴⁾ Al-‘Abbāsah had her tents pitched in that place. Later on, she had a village built which was named after her.⁽⁵⁾

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3. Modern-day *al-Dahriyyah* in the district of Abū Ḥammād (Ramzī, II, 1:68).
 4. The bridal procession of Khumārawayh’s daughter, Princess Qaṭr al-Nadā (‘Dew Drop’), to wed the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Mu‘taḍid was made, in Khumārawayh’s style, a lavish and extravagant event. She entered Baghdad, according to Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh* 10:40/III, 2145), on the 4th of Rabī‘ II, 282 (June 2, 895), so that her departure from Egypt must have been sometime late in 281.
 5. According to Yāqūt, a usually reliable source, the place was originally known as “Qaṣr ‘Abbāsah”, named after Princess al-‘Abbāsah, one of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn’s sixteen daughters (cf. *Mu‘jam al-buldān*, 4:75). Around this mansion then grew from 895 onward a village called “al-‘Abbāsah”. Some sources (e.g. al-Maqdisī, Ibn al-Jī‘ān) give the name of that village erroneously as “al-‘Abbāsiyyah”.

69. The Town of Qufṭ (Koptos)

[1] This town in Upper Egypt was named after Quṭṭarīm son of Qubṭīm son of Miṣrāyim son of Bayṣar son of Ham son of Noah, peace be upon him.

[2] It was in earliest times the capital of the region, but its decay began sometime after 400 A.H., and the last things found there after 700 A.H. were forty sugarhouses and six cane presses.⁽¹⁾

It is said that in that town were domes on top of (some of) its houses: to put a dome on one's house would be a signal of those inhabitants who owned ten thousand dinars.

[3] Not far from the town is an emerald mine; its operation was discontinued only recently.

[4] Quṭṭarīm took over as ruler after the death of his father Qubṭīm. Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates:

He was his father's oldest son, and he was a giant of enormous size. It is he who laid the foundations of the pyramids of Dahshūr and elsewhere, and it was he who built the town of Dandarah and the City of the Idols. Toward the end of his days, the 'Ādites perished by the wind.

1. Yāqūt, writing around the turn of the 13th century, still describes Qufṭ as a town inhabited by wealthy people, many of them engaged in international trade (cf. *Muḥjam al-buldān* 4:383). Indeed, Qufṭ (ancient Egyptian *Keftōyem*), one of the oldest towns of Egypt, had remained down to the Graeco-Roman period a major commercial center and entrepot for the caravan trade from and to the Red Sea—with Arabia, Somalia (what the ancient Egyptians called "Pwent") and beyond with India. Completely destroyed in 292 A.D. in the course of the great rebellion in Upper Egypt under Emperor Diocletian, Koptos recovered once more, but under Muslim administration gradually yielded its preeminent position to nearby Qūṣ (Cos). —The text of this section is taken from al-Idfuwī's "Al-Ṭālī' al-sa'īd" (cf. Ibn Duqmāq, *Intiṣār*, 5:33).

He opened up more mines than anyone before him. He used to find gold the size of a millstone, chrysolite the size of a column, and smyris in the Western Desert the like of a water jar.

He made many wondrous things: On the mountain above Qufṭ he built a high tower from which one could see the Eastern Sea. He found there (in that mountain) quicksilver and made of it a statue like a column that would never dissolve or melt. He built a pond which he called “the bird trap”: When a bird passed over it, it fell into the pond and was unable to move until it was taken out. This pond is said to be still there to this day; as for the tower, it collapsed.

He accomplished numerous wondrous things. In his time, he revived the worship of the idols that had been submerged by The Flood, and the devils made them and their worship alluring. It is said that he founded the Inner Cities and put wondrous things in them.

[5] To the west of the Nile and beyond the Inner Oases he built cities in which he put many marvels, and which he entrusted to spirits to guard and protect them: No one could approach or enter them without first sacrificing to those spirits.

Quṭṭarīm ruled as king for four hundred and eighty years, and most of the marvels were created in his time and during the reign of his son, al-Būdashīr. That is why Upper Egypt had more wonders than Lower Egypt, because Quṭṭarīm’s realm was there.

When death came to Quṭṭarīm, a tomb was built (for him) in the western mountains near the City of the Priests in an underground cavity connected with the surface by arched galleries. Beneath the mountain he had a vast hall excavated which he surrounded with treasure chambers carved into the rock, with air ducts in its ceiling. He tiled the cavity and the entire hall with marble, and in the center of the hall he placed a throne on eight supports, overlaid with multicolored glaze. On its ceiling he had precious stones mounted which gave off light, and at each of the throne’s supports he placed

a statue holding a trumpet. Beneath the dome was a gold-plated bench with chrysolite edges, and on the bench a silk mattress on which his body was put to rest after having been daubed with desiccants; camphor utensils were placed by the sides of the body, which was swathed in gold-woven robes, the face left uncovered, with a diadem crown on the head. Away from the sides of the bench were hollow statues of molten glass in the shapes of women holding golden fans. On his chest above the robes lay a chrysolite sword with a magnificent hilt. In those treasure chambers were put countless treasures and gold ingots and coins and jewels and hermetic bottles and all sorts of drugs and talismans and books containing the sciences. At the entrance to the throne he positioned a golden rooster on a base of green glass with outspread wings, on which were inscribed verses to ward off evil. At the entrance of each gallery he placed two copper images, swords in hand, and in front of them a slab with springs underneath: whoever stepped on it was struck and killed by them with their swords. On the ceiling of each gallery was a globe with splotches of a substance that would light up and burn continuously. The entrance to the gallery was blocked by closely spaced columns, and over its roof they fitted huge stone slabs on top of which they heaped sand. Above the entrance of the gallery they inscribed the words: This entrance leads to the body of the great and awesome and generous and powerful King Qufṭarīm, a man of might and splendor, of victory and triumph. May his star rise and his memory and knowledge live on. No one shall get to it, nor shall any ruse work against it.

That was after seven hundred and seventy and whole cycles of years had passed.

[6] Al-Mas'ūdī reports:⁽²⁾ The emerald mine in remote Upper Egypt is within the jurisdiction of the town of Quft, from where one sets out to reach it. Its location is known as “al-Khirbah”, which is an area of desert and mountains. The Beja guard that place

2. *Prairies d'or* 3:43-4, and 48-50 (sect. 7).

known as al-Khirbah, and that is as far as the armed escorts will take someone who comes to dig for emeralds.

[7] I have come across some experts from Upper Egypt, people intimately familiar with that mine and the knowledge of that precious stone, who inform me that (the mineral) augments and diminishes with the seasons of the year. It gains in strength due to substances in the air and the blowing of a certain kind of the four winds, and its green color and luminosity become more intense during the early days of a month and the increase of moonlight.

Between the place known as al-Khirbah, where the emerald mine is located, and the nearest civilized part of the land, namely, Qufṭ, Qūṣ and other towns in Upper Egypt, is a distance of seven day's journeys, whereby Qūṣ is right on the Nile, whereas Qufṭ is situated about two miles from the river. Both towns, Qufṭ and Qūṣ, have their extraordinary stories of how they were originally founded and their history in the days of the Copts. However, the town of Qufṭ, at this time, is ready to fall into ruin, while Qūṣ is more thriving and its population more numerous.

[8] At Qufṭ used to be a temple with a guardian spirit in the form of a black girl carrying a little black boy.⁽³⁾ It has been reported many times that she was seen there.

[9] The emerald mine⁽⁴⁾ is in the region adjacent to Uswān. It had its own dīwān with notaries and scribes, and those who worked there were paid a salary and provided with supplies for digging in it and extracting the emerald. It is located in sand-covered mountains, and sometimes, while digging there, (the sand) would cave in on the workers and they died. The output from the mine would be collected and transferred to the government, from where it was then taken to the provinces.

3. That is, Isis and her son Horus, the principal deities of Koptos, presumably done in basalt or black granite (J. Maspero in *Journal des Savants*, 1899, p. 78).

4. The section is taken from al-'Umarī's "Masālik al-abṣār".

People would cover the distance from Qūṣ to the emerald mine in eight days at a moderate pace. The Beja used to camp around and near the mine in order to guard and protect it. That mine is located in the mountain range which follows the east bank of the Nile, on the northern side of a large section of that range which is called "Qarqashandah"; there is no higher mountain anywhere around there. It is in an isolated part of the region, with no human life in it or around it or anywhere nearby. The (nearest) water is half a day or more away; it is gathered rain water and is known as a *ghadīr a'yun*, a pool that increases and diminishes with the amount of rainfall.

The mining area itself is at the far end of a long cave in a white rock from which the emerald is extracted. That white stone comes in three types, one of which is called *ṭalq kāfūrī*, or camphoric talc, the second *ṭalq fiḍḍī*, or argentine talc, and the third *ḥajar jarawī*. One chisels away at these stones until the emerald, which is kind of embedded in the stone, emerges. (One of) its varieties is the *dhubābī*, which is more than rare and is mined only seldom. After being extracted, the emerald is thrown into linseed oil and then placed inside cotton which is then wrapped in a burlap rag, or the like. Vigilance was very strict indeed over that mine, and the laborers would be searched every day when they left it, even their genitals. Despite all that, they still pilfer some of the mineral by certain tricks they use.

[10] Emerald continued to be extracted from that mine until its operation was discontinued by the vizier 'Alam al-Dīn 'Abd-Al-lāh ibn Zunbūr during the reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn in the seven-fifties.⁽⁵⁾

[11] In 572 (A.D. 1176/7), a major civil disorder broke out in the town of Qufṭ. The cause of it was that an Ismā'īli propagandist from

5. The measure must have been taken sometime between January 26, 1351, the date of Ibn Zunbūr's appointment to office, and July 12 of that year, the date of Sultan Ḥasan's dethronement. — On Ibn Zunbūr see *Khīṭaṭ* 2:60-62; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 2:240 (no. 2102).

the Banū ‘Abd al-Qawīy claimed that he was Dā’ūd ibn al-‘Āḍid.⁽⁶⁾ As people flocked to his cause, Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb dispatched at the head of an army his brother al-Malik al-‘Ādil Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb, who killed some three thousand people of Qufṭ and crucified them on the trees outside Qufṭ with their turbans and tippets.

6. Son of the last Fāṭimid caliph and claimant to the Ismā‘īli imamate; imprisoned by the Ayyūbids, he died in 604/1207 in the Citadel of Cairo (cf. *Sulūk*, I, 2:169). His son, Badr al-Dīn Sulaymān, allegedly sired by his father secretly during his imprisonment (*ibid.* 329-30, citing Ibn Wāṣil) was arrested by Sultan al-Kāmil and remained in detention in the Citadel until his death in Shawwāl 645 (February 1248); with him the Ismā‘īli imamate in the Fāṭimid line became extinct. —Another member of the ‘Abd al-Qawīy clan was already involved in an Ismā‘īli conspiracy three years earlier (cf. Abū Shāmah, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1:219).

70. The Town of Dandarah

[1] One of the ancient towns of Upper Egypt built by Quṭṭarīm son of Qubṭīm son of Miṣrāyim son of Bayṣar son of Ham son of Noah.⁽¹⁾

[2] At Dandarah was a huge temple which had one hundred and eighty light vents. Every day, the sun would enter through a (different) aperture until it reached the last one; then it would return the same way to where it began.⁽²⁾

[3] Its guardian spirit would appear in the guise of a man with a lion head and two horns.

[4] At Dandarah was also a medium-sized tree known as “Ab-bās tree”, with green round leaves. When someone said nearby, “Ab-bās tree, the ax has come to thee!” its leaves would close up and catch fire instantly; then they would return to their former state.

[5] Between Dandarah and Qūṣ is a distance of one *barīd* (24 km). The temple of Dandarah was larger than that of Ikhmīm.

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1. Dendera (Eg. *Enet-te-ntōre* ‘Enet of the Goddess (Hathor)’; Copt. *Hitentouri*, Greek *Tentyra*) was the capital of the 6th nome of Upper Egypt. It has vanished completely, except for its famous temple and some rubbish mounds about 4 km southeast of present-day Dandarah, which is an Arab foundation on the west bank of the Nile opposite Qina, the district capital.
 2. The temple of Dendera, oriented along a north-south axis, is one of the few Egyptian temples with an intact roof so that the sunlight filters through numerous apertures in the ceiling and in the side walls into the interior of the Great Vestibule, the Hypostyle Hall, and the two antechambers leading to the completely dark sanctuary. It was built in the first century B.C. during the reigns of the later Ptolemies and of Augustus on the site of a much older structure dating back to the Old Kingdom, and was dedicated to Hathor, goddess of love and joy and wife of the falcon-headed Horus of Idfu, whose chief festival coincided with the great feast of New Year; cf. Baedeker, *Egypt*⁷, 245 ff. —The source for this section is al-Quḏā’ī; the text was cited earlier (I, 10, sect. 2).

71. The Inner Oases

[1] The Oases⁽¹⁾ lie isolated beyond Upper Egypt to the west of it. They are not included among the provinces and districts (of Egypt) and are not administered by a governor appointed by the Sultan. Rather, their administration is in the hands of their respective fief holder.

[2] The various communities of the Oases lie between Cairo, Alexandria, Upper Egypt, Nubia and Abyssinia, some of them within others. It is a self-contained region, neither connected with, nor in need of, another. Its soil contains (here and there) alum and vitriol, and the land has sour-tasting springs, whose water people use like vinegar, also springs of various tastes, such as acrid, astringent or salty, each kind having its own usefulness and peculiarity. The region consists of two parts: inner oases and outer oases, the latter numbering four.

[3] It is said that “al-Wahāt”⁽²⁾ was a descendant of Havilah son of Cush son of Canaan son of Ham son of Noah, who was the brother of Seba son of Cush, the ancestor of the Abyssinians, and the brother of Sabtah son of Cush, the ancestor of the Zaghāwah,⁽³⁾ and the brother of Sabtecha son of Cush, the ancestor of the Damdam.

[4] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: Quṭṭarīm is said to have founded the Inner Cities and built in them wonders—such as the water rising like a column that would neither disintegrate nor dissolve, and the pond called “Filasīn”, meaning ‘bird trap’: whenever a bird flew

1. The first two sections are adapted from al-‘Umarī’s “Masālik al-abṣār” and al-Ḥimyarī’s “Al-Rawḍ al-mi‘tār” (cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:389, 390).

2. Arabic for ‘The Oases’.

3. Also Zaghāy, a Negro people of the Sudan; cf. H.A. Wieschhoff, *Anthropological Bibliography of Negro Africa* (New Haven, 1948), p. 456.

over it, it would fall into it and was unable to get away until it was caught. He also created a copper column topped by the image of a bird: when a lion or snakes or other varmints approached that city, it would give off a loud whistling sound, and those beasts would retreat in flight.

Over the four gates of that city he erected four idols made of copper: as soon as a stranger approached them, he would be overcome by slumber and drowsiness and fall asleep nearby, unable to leave until the people of the city came and blew in his face, whereupon he would rise to his feet; if they did not do that, he would continue sleeping near the idols until he died.

He erected a handsome tower made of colored glaze on top of a base made of copper, and on top of the tower he mounted the image of an idol made of many substances, holding something like a bow from which it appeared to be shooting: as soon as a stranger laid eyes on it, he would stop dead in his tracks, unable to get away until the people of the town came to his rescue. This idol would face automatically in the direction from which the four winds were blowing. It has been claimed that this idol is now still the way it was, and that people used to shun that city, despite the many treasures and visible wonders in it, for fear that someone's eyes might fall on that idol and he would have to remain standing there until he perished. Some king tried to remove it, but he was unable to do so and many people died in the process.

He is also said to have erected in one of the Inner Cities a mirror in which one could see everything a man could possibly ask about.

West of the Nile and beyond the Inner Oases, he built cities in which he had many wonders created and over which he entrusted spirits to protect them, so that no man could come near them or enter them; but if someone offered sacrifices to those spirits, then he could reach them and take whatever he liked of their treasures without difficulty or harm.

[5] King Ṣā son of Ansād—according to others, Ṣā son of Marqūnis—founded within the Oases a city around which he planted numerous date palms.

He resided in Memphis, ruling the entire realm. He made wonders and talismans, restored the priests to their ranks, and banished the entertainers and the dissolute elements that used to be in the entourage of Ansād son of Marqūnis. On the perimeter of Egypt he stationed informers who reported to him what was going on on their borders. And on the west bank of the Nile he had towers erected on which fires were lit whenever some important event happened or some invader was headed their way.

After he had become the ruler of the entire country, he gathered the philosophers and sages about him. He studied its stars, an art in which he was well-versed, and saw that his country would surely be submerged by a flood from its Nile. He also saw that it would be laid waste by a man coming from the direction of Syria. So he mobilized every laborer in Egypt and built in the outermost oasis a city whose fortification he raised to the height of fifty cubits. There he deposited all the books of wisdom and the treasures.

This is the city which Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr at the time of the Umayyads came across when he came in from the West. For when he entered Egypt, he took the route along the outermost oasis, about which he was already informed, and then kept marching for seven days through sand desert from west to south. At that point he saw a city protected by a fortress and iron gates. But he was unable to force the gates open. Whenever the men advanced up to them and scaled the (walls of the) fortress and already looked down on the city below, (the defenders) threw themselves into (the breach). Mūsā, all his efforts defied by that city, moved on, and quite a number of his men perished (in the enterprise).

In those desert regions, says (Ibn Waṣīf Shāh), used to be most of the retreats of those people and their unusual cities and their treasures, but the sand engulfed them all. There was not a king in

Egypt who did not build a talisman to keep the sands away, but their talismans have all been destroyed over the course of time.

No one, says (Ibn Waṣīf Shāh), should find how much those people built, or their cities, or the lofty structures they erected, hard to believe. Those people had a strength unmatched by others. Indeed, the things they left behind are clear testimony, such as the Pyramids, the towering edifices, (the city of) Alexandria, the things in the eastern desert regions, the carved-out mountains where they deposited their treasures and the carved-out valleys, and the like of the temples in Upper Egypt with the inscriptions of their ancient wisdom. Were all the kings on earth to take it upon themselves to build the like of the two (large) Pyramids (of Gīzah), they would be unable to do so, and likewise, if they undertook to cover some temple with inscriptions, it would take them too long a time and they would not be able to accomplish it.

The story has been told about a clan of those builders in the western region who were treated harshly by a tax collector so that they fled into the western desert, carrying provisions until such time when things would get better and they could return home. After marching for a day and part of another, they found shelter at the foot of a mountain. There they encountered a tame onager that emerged from one of the ravines, and one of them followed the beast and eventually came upon dwellings and trees and date palms and perennial waters and a people living in that place who planted crops and had houses. He spoke to them and was impressed by them, and then came back to his companions and led them to those people. The natives asked them about their background, and they told them, and they stayed with them until things got better and they could go and fetch their families and their herds to live with those people. Then they moved on for some time. But, not knowing the way, they were unable to return, and they regretted what they had missed.

Other people strayed from the road in the west and came across a thriving city with many inhabitants and herds and date palms and

trees. The people there offered them hospitality and gave them food and drink. They spent the night in (a house with) a wine press and got drunk on the wine and fell asleep, only waking up when the sun burned down on them. And much to their surprise, they found themselves in a desolate city with no one in it. They became frightened and left. That same day, they kept on marching until evening, when they saw another city even larger than the first and more prosperous and with more people and trees and herds. The people there befriended them, and they told them the story of the first city. The others expressed astonishment and began to laugh, and then took them to a banquet given by one of the town. They ate and drank and the people there plied them with wine until they were drunk. When they woke up the following day, they found themselves in a large city with not a soul around, surrounded by date palms whose fruit had fallen down and piled up on the ground. They left, still sensing the reek of wine and the symptoms of a hangover, and traveled for a day until evening, when they encountered a shepherd tending a flock. He gave them directions after they asked him about the way, and they traveled part of the following day and arrived at the town of al-Ushmūnayn in Upper Egypt.

These, adds (Ibn Waṣīf Shāh), are the ancient cities of the people of the interior which were taken over by the jinn. Some of them they hid from human eyes so that no one can look at them.

[6] At the time of al-Būdashīr son of Quṭṭarīm son of Qubṭīm son of Miṣrāyim son of Bayṣar son of Ham son of Noah, says (al-Mas'ūdī),⁽⁴⁾ towers and retreats were built in the western desert, and the king made a number of people from his household go to these. And those people colonized that region and built it up so that in the end the land of the west became one cultivated area. For a long time it remained so, but then the Berbers mingled with those people and married into their clans. Later on, mutual envy

4. *Akhbār al-zamān* (Beirut ed.), p. 213.

and jealousy arose and wars broke out among them, in the course of which those parts were laid waste and reverted to desert, except for a few remaining settled areas called "The Oases".

72. The Town of Santariyyah

[1] The town of Santariyyah⁽¹⁾ is part of the Oases. It was built by the son of Manāqiyūs, founder of the city of Ikhmīm, who was a king of the ancient Copts.

[2] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: He had the same determination and sophistication as his father and was held in high esteem by the Egyptians. He was the first who built a hippodrome and ordered his men to exercise there. He was also the first to build a hospital for the treatment of the sick and the chronically ill; he stocked it with drugs, appointed physicians whom he paid handsomely, and set up trustees over the whole. He created his own festival, on a certain day of the year, during which the people would come and gather about him, and called it “the King’s Feast”; for seven days the people would eat and drink, while he was looking out over them from a throne room resting on columns with golden capitals and draped in exquisite gold-brocade material, and topped by a dome lined on the inside with alabaster, glaze and gold.

In his days was built Santariyyah in the desert region of the Oases. He built it with white stone, square in layout, with a gate in each wall in the middle of which was an avenue leading to (a gate in) the opposite wall. On the right and left of each avenue he built (other) gates from which streets led into the city. In the center of the city was a stadium with seven tiers running all around it and with a painted wooden dome on top which was supported by huge alabaster columns; in the middle of it was a tall alabaster column

1. Its present-day name, *Sīwah*, dates from the 16th century. It is the ancient Egyptian (*Wēt*) *Shāw*, the Roman *Ammonium*, seat of the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, in the westernmost of the Egyptian oases, 188 miles from al-Sallūm, 206 miles from Marsā Matrūḥ, the ancient *Paraetonium*, whence Alexander the Great began his march to the Sīwah Oasis to be declared a god by the priests of Amon Ra. Cf. the article “Siwa” (E. Laoust) in *EF*.

topped by an idol made of black granite that turned with the rotation of the sun. On all sides of the dome were suspended images that whistled and shrieked in different languages.

The king would sit on the high tier of the stadium, surrounded by his sons, his relatives, and the sons of the princes. On the second tier were the high priests and the ministers. On the third tier were the commanders of the army, on the fourth tier the philosophers, astrologers, physicians and savants, on the fifth tier the builders and architects, on the sixth tier the artisans and tradesmen, and on the seventh tier the common populace. Each class of them was told: Look to those below you, do not look to those above you—you will never reach them! This was some kind of education.

The king was killed by his wife with a knife, after a reign of sixty years.

[3] The Santariyyah of our time is a small community inhabited by some six hundred Berbers known as “Sīwah”. Their language, called *Sīwiyyah*, is very similar to the language of the Zanātah. It has palm groves, olives, figs and other trees, and plenty of vineyards. There are now about twenty sweet-water springs there. Its distance from Alexandria is eleven days and from Gīzah fourteen days. It has a pestilential climate and the people living there often suffer from attacks of fever. The fruit growing there is of extremely good quality. The jinn often play pranks on the local people and snatch away those who are alone. People can hear the howling of the jinn in that place.

73. The Outer Oases

[1] They were founded by one of the earliest Coptic kings by the name of al-Būdashīr son of Quṭṭarīm son of Qubṭīm son of Miṣrāyim son of Bayṣar son of Ham son of Noah, peace be upon him.

[2] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: Al-Būdashīr decided to march westward in order to see what was there. He came upon a wide land crisscrossed by many streams and springs with abundant vegetation, and there he built lofty towers and pleasure palaces. A group of people from his household stayed in that land, and these people then colonized and developed those parts until the land of the west became one cultivated region. And it remained like that for a long time. Later on, as the Berbers mingled and intermarried with those people, mutual jealousy and oppression arose and wars broke out between them. As a result, that land was laid waste and its people vanished, except for a few remaining settled areas called “the Oases”.

[3] As for the region of the Oases, says al-Mas‘ūdī,⁽¹⁾ it lies between the regions of Fuṣṭāt, Alexandria, Upper Egypt, the West, and the land of the Abyssinians and other peoples of Nubia. It contains land with aluminous and vitriolic soil, and springs which taste sour or have other tastes.

The lord of the Oases in our time—which is the year 332 (A.D. 944)—is one ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, who is a Lawātah Berber but an Umayyad loyalist, and who rides at the head of thousands of men, horse and camel. He and the Abyssinians are about six days apart, and the same distance separates him from all the civilized regions we have mentioned. His land contains peculiar and as-

1. *Prairies dor* 3:50. But compare sect. 2 of ch. 71 (and n. 1).

tounding things. It is a self-contained region, neither connected with, nor in need of, another. Dates, raisins and jujube are exported from his land.

[4] I was told by my father's steward, the venerable Shaykh Ḥusām al-Dīn (Ḥasan ibn)⁽²⁾ 'Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn Zangī al-Shahrazūrī, that he had heard in the Oases region of a bitter-orange tree from which one could harvest in a single year fourteen thousand yellow fruits, not counting fruit which had fallen to the ground and fruit that was still green. "I didn't believe it," (he said) "because it sounded so strange, and set out to see that tree with my own eyes. It turned out to be the size of the largest sycamores one finds in Egypt, or even larger. When I asked the comptroller of the community about it, he brought me his ledgers and leafed through them until he could point out to me: In the year so-and-so, fourteen thousand ripe, yellow bitter oranges were picked from such-and-such a tree, not counting the green fruit still on the tree and the small fruit that had fallen to the ground."

[5] White alum is found in the Oases in a wadi across from the town of Idfū. At the time of al-Kāmil Muḥammad ibn al-ʿĀdil Abī Bakr and of his son, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, the fief holders of the Oases had to deliver one thousand quintals of white alum per annum to Cairo, in return for which they were given the right to collect the poll-taxes levied on non-Muslims in the Oases. Later on, this was neglected and then fell into disuse.

[6] In 339 (A.D. 950/1), the Nubian king advanced with a huge army on the Oases. He attacked the local people and killed or captured many of them.⁽³⁾

2. Maqrīzī cites his father's *wakīl* on several occasions, but every time in a different variation of the name. This seems to be the most likely one (cf. *Khiṭaṭ* 2:107). Other variants: Ḥusayn b. 'Umar al-Shahrazūrī (*Khiṭaṭ* 2:145); Ḥasan b. 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (*Khiṭaṭ* 2:124).

3. On other Nubian incursions into Upper Egypt in those years, cf. chapter 33 above.

74. The City of Qūṣ

[1] One should know that Qūṣ is the largest of the towns of Upper Egypt.⁽¹⁾ It lies on the Nile. It was founded later than Quft̄ at the time of an early Coptic king by the name of Shaddāt son of ‘Adīm son of al-Būdashīr son of Quft̄arīm.

[2] Others have said that the town was named after Qūṣ son of Qift̄ son of Ikhmīm son of Sayfāf son of Ashmūn son of Miṣr.

[3] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: Shaddāt son of ‘Adīm is the one who built the pyramids of Dahshūr with stones quarried at the time of his father. [4] He had the theurgical books written, built the temple of Armant, erected a temple in the central quarters of Anṣinā, constructed a domed edifice in Atrīb and a temple on the eastside of Alexandria, and founded cities on the east bank (of the Nile). In his days was built Qūṣ al-‘Āliyah, where he settled sages and artisans.

After the Abyssinians and the Blacks had ravaged his country, he sent his son Manqāwus at the head of a large army against them. Manqāwus killed some and captured (others) and enslaved those he had captured, which from then on became their standard practice. He took possession of the gold mine in their land, and those captives stayed there to work it and deliver the gold to him.

1. Once the second largest city of Egypt (after Fustāt) and principal center of the Red Sea and Arabian trade, it was from the Fāṭimid period to the end of the Mamluk era the capital of the Qūṣiyyah province (*al-‘Aṃāl al-Qūṣiyyah*). Attested in ancient Egyptian sources as *Qes(t)*, its Coptic name was *Qous* or *Qous Varvir* ('the Hot Qous'), hence the alternate Arabic name *Qūṣ Barbīr*. In Arabic sources it is sometimes called *Qūṣ al-‘Āliyah* (the Upper Qūṣ) to distinguish it from Qūṣ-Qām, i.e., al-Qūṣiyyah near Manfalūt. The Romans called it *Apollonopolis Parva*, then *Vicus Apollonopolis*, and at the end of the 3rd century A.D. its name was changed to *Diocletianopolis*. On its site is the present-day district capital of Qūṣ (Cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 4:187).

(Shaddāt) was the first who loved to go hunting. He used raptors and bred saluqi dogs by crossing wolves with domestic dogs. He made more wonders and talismans for every art than one can count.

[5] Al-Idfuwī says in his chronicle of Upper Egypt:⁽²⁾ Qūṣ lies next to Quṭṭ.

A certain historian relates that Qūṣ was first in being colonized, while Quṭṭ was first in falling into ruin, beginning from the year 400.

[6] It has been said⁽³⁾ that, at one time, the judge of Qūṣ came to visit, and four hundred men on mules went forth from Uswān to meet him.

[7] In the month of Ramaḍān, 662 (July 1264), coins that had been found buried near Qūṣ were brought to al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars. He picked up one of the coins, and there on one side of it was the image of a king, standing with a balance in his right hand and a sword in his left, on the other side a large open ear and an open eye, and around the coin ran an inscription. A Greek monk read it, and the age of the coin up to the time he read it was two thousand three hundred years. The legend on the coin said: 'I am Ghalyāth the King. The balance of justice and magnanimity in my right hand is for those who obey, the sword in my left for those who disobey.' And the other side read: 'I am Galyāth the King. My ear is open to hear the oppressed, my eye is open to look after the welfare of my kingdom.'

[8] Qūṣ has numerous scorpions and wall geckos. There at Qūṣ is found a variety of scorpions so deadly that one used to say, The scorpions got him!—because there was no hope for anyone stung by them to live. Once, on a summer day, no less than seventy geckos gathered there on the mosque wall in a single row. When some-

2. *Al-Ṭāli' al-sa'id* (Eg. ed.) p. 8.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

one of the local people walked at night outside his house, he would hold in one hand a lamp to light the way and in the other an iron prick to impale the scorpions.

[9] Then the city declined after the year 800. In 806 (A.D. 1403/4), seventeen thousand people died there in the course of the events and afflictions (of that year). Such had been the state of its cultivation that on the artificially irrigated land of the rural communities, in 776 (A.D. 1374/5), no less than 150 *mughlaqs* were closed down—a *mughlaq*, in their usage, being a garden plantation of twenty feddans and up, having a waterwheel with a quadruple set of scoops—and that without counting smaller units, of which there are very many, that became idle.

75. The Town of Isnā

[1] Al-Idfuwī says:⁽¹⁾ It has been reported that from Isnā one got in one year 40,000 ardebs of dates and 12,000 ardebs of raisins.

[2] Isnā comprises close to 13,000 homes. It has been said that at one time it had seventy poets.

1. Both quotations, no more than random notes taken out of context, come from the introductory portion of al-Idfuwī's *al-Ṭālī' al-sa'īd* (e.g. ed., pp. 11, 16). —Isnā (from Copt. *Sna*) is the *Latopolis* of the Greeks; its Egyptian name in antiquity was *Te-snēt*. Al-Idrisi, Yaqūt and al-Idfuwī praise the town's beauty and its prosperity resting on agriculture and trade; Ibn al-Jī'ān and Ibn Duqmāq both give its agricultural land as more than 6,400 feddans. Its famed temple, dedicated to the ram-headed god Khnum and dating from the Ptolemaic period, appears to have been used for grain storage in Maqrīzī's time (cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:324).

76. The Town of Idfū

[1] The town of Edfu⁽¹⁾—one can spell its name *Idfū* and also *Itfū*.

[2] I was told by the preacher of Idfū, the Honorable Khaṭīb Abū Bakr,⁽²⁾ relates al-Idfuwī, that a tall young palm tree had shed three panicles, each with a single date on it, and that he, Abū Bakr, removed the heart from them completely and weighed it, and it weighed altogether, with bare stalk and woody part, 25 dirhams (about 78 g). That was near Idfū.

[3] Sometime after 700, while brick makers were digging for clay, a stone image of a person in the shape of a woman squatting on a throne and covered with something like a net came to light, with a tablet behind her back inscribed with temple script. I saw it like that with my own eyes in Idfu.

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1. All three passages of this chapter are from al-Idfuwī's *al-Ṭāli' al-sa'īd* (pp. 10, 11, 16), where the author spells the name of his hometown *Idhfū*. —The Arabic name of the town derives from the Coptic *Atbō* (from Eg. *Tbōt*); the Romans called it *Apollonopolis Magna*, after its principal deity Horus-Apollo, whose monumental sandstone temple complex stands to this day as the best-preserved of all Egyptian temples.
 2. He died in 697/1298, when the author was still a boy of twelve. His name is Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Tha'lab al-Idfuwī (cf. *Al-Ṭāli' al-sa'īd*, 286-7).

77. Ihnās

[1] (It is) the seat of a *kūrah* in Upper Egypt.⁽¹⁾ Jesus, Mary's son, peace be upon him, is said to have been born there, and the palm tree of Mary, peace be upon her, which is mentioned in the words of the Lord "*Shake also to thee the palm-trunk, and there shall come tumbling upon thee dates fresh and ripe,*"⁽²⁾ is said to have been still at Ihnās until the end of the Umayyad period.

[2] The generally accepted version, however, is that Jesus, peace be upon him, was born in the village of Bethlehem near the city of Jerusalem.⁽³⁾

[3] At Ihnās grows the *labakh* tree.

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1. Only mounds of debris covering an area of half a square mile near the present-day village of *Ihnāsya al-Madīnah* ten miles west of Banī Swēf are left where once stood the nome capital *Henennesut*. Its Coptic name was *Hnēs*, and from it derives its Arabic name. In Graeco-Roman times it was called *Heracleopolis Magna*, since the Greeks identified the local deity, the ram-headed god Herishef, with Heracles.
 2. Koran 19 (Mary):25.
 3. Compare Pt. I, ch. 9, sect. 24.

78. The Town of al-Bahnasā⁽¹⁾

[1] This town lies to the west of the Nile. At Bahnasā are manufactured the (famed) *bahnasī* drapes, and there are woven royal brocade and linen fabrics, large tents, and choice robes. One used to make there drapes such that a single drape had a length of thirty cubits and a pair of them was worth one hundred *mithqāls* (442.2 g) in gold.

[2] Whatever drapes and garments and robes were manufactured there, be they wool or cotton, had to have the name of the customer inscribed on them. That was a tradition they followed generation after generation.

[3] The Copts of Egypt are in complete agreement that the Messiah and his mother Mary were staying at Bahnasā before they moved on to Jerusalem.

[4] And a certain Koran commentator says about the words of the Lord concerning the Messiah and his mother,⁽²⁾ “*and (We) gave them refuge upon a height, where was a hollow and a spring*”: That ‘height’ is al-Bahnasā.

[5] That town was founded by a Coptic king by the name of Manāwus son of Manqāwus.

[6] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: Manāwus the King was made the successor. Like his father, he was in quest of ancient wisdom, drawing on the pertinent scriptures and honoring and rewarding the

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1. Today a village on the Baḥr Yūsuf, about ten miles west of the district seat of Banī Mazār, al-Bahnasā in Maqrīzī’s days still had some of its old importance as a name and district capital since pharaonic times, when its name was *Permezēt*. As *Oxyrhynchos* during the Graeco-Roman period, it was a major Hellenistic urban center with a large Greek population, and with the rise of Christianity it gained its reputation as the town with the largest concentration of convents and churches in Egypt.
 2. Koran 23 (The Believers):50.

sages. He sought to outdo his predecessors in creating wonders, for every one of their kings used to make every effort to create some amazing thing of his own the like of which had never been made by anyone before him. This was then set down in their books and inscribed in stone in their historical records.

Manāwus was the first among the Egyptians to worship bovines. The reason for that was that one time he became so ill that all hope for him to recover was abandoned. Then he saw in his dreams the figure of a gigantic spirit who told him: "Only if you worship cattle will you be cured of your illness, for at the time when your star of destiny settled upon you it was in the form of a two-horned bull." And this Manāwus did: He had a handsome piebald bull chosen and built for it a special hall in his palace which he roofed over with a gilded dome; he would cense the animal and perfume its abode, and he appointed a custodian to attend to it and sweep under it; and this bull he would worship secretly and unbeknown to the people of his realm. Thus he recovered from his illness.

He was also the first to have wheeled carriages built during his malady. On these he mounted tents topped by wooden domes, and these contraptions he would use to go with his favorite women and his servants to various places and retreats. They were drawn by oxen. When he passed on the way a pleasant place, he would stay there, and when he came to a desolate place, he would give orders that it be colonized. One day he is said to have spotted a bull among the oxen drawing his carriage, piebald, with beautiful markings,⁽³⁾ and he had it retired from work and led in his presence to admire it, and then had a housing of fine embellished silk cloth put on it. One day, while he was alone in a place he had gone to and all by himself without his slaves and servants, the bull, standing before him, suddenly addressed him and said: "If the King were to relieve me of the burden of traveling with him, and put me in a

3. An allusion, it would seem, to *Apis*, the sacred bull of Memphis, which was white with black spots and bore a white triangle on its forehead and a crescent on its right flank.

temple, and worship me, and order the people of his kingdom to worship me likewise, I would give him anything he desires, and help him in anything he commands, and strengthen his power, and rid him of all his maladies.” The king, frightened by the incident, ordered the bull to be washed and cleaned and perfumed and brought into a temple where he had it worshiped. After that bull had been worshiped for some time, a miracle happened to it: it would neither urinate nor void its bowels, and it would eat only the leaf tips of green sugarcane once every month. And thus the people were seduced by it, and it became a beginning for the worship of cows.

Manāwus also built places where he hid treasures, with watchtowers to protect them. In the western desert he founded a city called “Dīmās”, where he erected a tall structure and around which he buried treasures. It is said that this city is still in existence, and that certain people passed through it coming from the West, after they had lost their way. In it they heard the eerie sound of the jinn and they saw a light appearing and disappearing.

It says in one of their scriptures that that bull, after having been worshiped by them for some time, commanded them to make an effigy of it of hollow gold, and that hairs from its head and tail and shavings from its horns and hooves should be taken and placed inside that statue. Having informed them that it was going to join its own world, it ordered them to place its body in a sarcophagus of red stone, to inter it inside the temple, to set up its statue on top of it while Saturn is in its position of exaltation and the Sun looks down on it from a position of direct opposition to the waxing Moon, and to carve on its statue the signs of the Seven Planets. This they did, and they crowned the statue with a wreath of all sorts of gems and used two pieces of onyx for its eyes.

[7] After having buried it in the red sarcophagus, they planted inside the temple above it a tree and built right next to it a tower eighty cubits high, topped by a dome that would change color every day for seven days, after which it would revert to its initial

color. They draped the temple with various kinds of fabrics and dug a canal from the Nile to the temple. Around the shrine they placed talismans with monkey heads on human bodies, each designed to ward off evil or to attract good. Near the temple, Manāwus erected four idols above four gates; beneath each idol he buried some sort of treasure, and on the idols he inscribed (the time for) their sacrifice and the kind of incense to be used. He assigned the sorcerers to dwell there, and thus it became known as the “City of the Sorcerers”, where all sorts of magic were produced.

[8] Manāwus was also the first to observe the Coptic New Year in Egypt. During his time was built al-Bahnasā, where he erected towering columns on top of which he built a hall of yellow glaze topped by a dome that would gleam like gold when the rising sun cast its rays upon the city.

He is said to have ruled the Egyptians for eight hundred and thirty years and to have been interred in one of the smaller southern pyramids, or, by another account, on the western side of al-Ushmūnayn. With him were buried numerous treasures, jewels and wonders, the idols of the Seven Planets which watch over the person in his grave and over the hidden treasure, one thousand saddles made of gold and silver, ten thousand goblets and platters made of gold, silver and glass, and one thousand preparations for the practice of the different kinds of alchemy. On his tomb were inscribed his name, the duration of his reign, and the time of his death.

[9] In 734 (A.D. 1334) came to light near al-Ushmūnayn, in a wadi between two mountains, several quadrangular fountains filled with clear fresh water. A person could walk along their edge for a whole day and night and not reach the end of them. They are said to have been the work of Sawrīd, the builder of the Pyramids, as a precautionary device against the expected Fire Storm. Later on, that valley was filled in, lest people come to harm.

[10] The most learned Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Furriyānī reports: I was told by ‘Alī ibn Ḥasan ibn Khālid al-Sha‘īrī three times in the same words, as he related:

I was told by a man of the Fazārah living in the Bahnasā district, who said: I and a companion of mine were going from town to town seeking a livelihood in the region—that was after 810 (A.D. 1407/8)—when we crossed the western mountains, coming from Bahnasā. We traveled for days, trusting in God Almighty to provide, as we kept walking southwestward. Suddenly we found ourselves in a valley abounding in trees and plants and water and pasture, but with not a living soul around. It was a spacious valley, about a day in both length and width, full of springs and palm and olive groves, with plenty of camels and goats, and also wolves and hyenas. The camels, like the goats, were wild ones which had reverted to a wild state after having once been domesticated. No people were coming and going in that valley.

The man told me that he and his companion stayed in that valley for about two, three months, and that they saw in the center of it a strong fortified city with a high wall and lofty palaces. When they approached the wall, they heard a tremendous roar and awesome, terrifying noises, and they saw smoke rising to the sky so that it blanketed the wall of the city and everything in it. (He also said) that those wild camels attacked their own domesticated camel mares and injured and even killed them. At that point, the two Fazāri men decided to do something about it. They used palm fiber to weave nets and traps and snares and caught some of the wild camels. They also intertwined palm leaves and wove with them baskets which they filled with dried dates to serve as their provisions. And they tamed those wild camels as a replacement and substitute for their riding camels and mounted them, setting out toward the east. They carried with them enough branches—I mean, palm branches stripped of their leaves—to mark the way between them and that city, using the branches as signs to mark their progression: whenever they passed over an elevation, they would plant

on top of it two palm branches as a road mark, until they reached the western mountains of Egypt and descended to al-Bahnasā. They told their people what had happened and then packed up and left with their families (to return). And when they reached the top of the western mountain, they found all the palm branches they had distributed on the hilltops together in a single place on the highest part of the mountain. Whereupon they returned with their families and the people with them to the region of al-Bahnasā.

That is what I was told by (al-Furriyānī), and God alone knows the truth.

79. The Town of al-Ushmūnayn

[1] It used to be one of the most important towns of Upper Egypt.⁽¹⁾ It is said to have been built by Ashmūn son of Miṣr son of Bayṣar son of Ham son of Noah.

[2] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: Ashmūn was the fairest of his father's offspring and the one most desirous to leave a work that would last and be remembered. He is the one who built the halls lined with multicolored glaze in the middle of the Nile. The Copts say that he built an underground passage from al-Ushmūnayn all the way to Anṣinā underneath the Nile; someone has said that he had it dug and made for his daughters, because they used to go to the sun temple (of Anṣinā). That underground passage had a tiled floor, and its walls and ceiling were lined with thick marble.

It has been said that Ashmūn had among his brothers the longest reign. The antiquarians claim that he ruled for eight hundred years, and that the 'Ādite people wrested the kingdom from him after a reign of six hundred years. The 'Ādites stayed for ninety years, but they found the country unhealthy and moved on to al-Dathīnah by way of the Hejaz road to Wādī al-Qurā, which they colonized and where they built settlements and reservoirs, and God then released the torrent [*sic*] upon them and destroyed them.

1. The ruins of this once famous city, the ancient Egyptian *Khmunu*, capital of the 15th nome, are near the present-day village of El Ashmunein in the district of Mallawī. It was the chief seat of the worship of Thot, the god of writing and science, whom the Greeks identified with Hermes, hence its name *Hermopolis* during the Graeco-Roman period. The Arabic name derives from the Coptic form of its ancient name, *Shmoun*; the dual ending reflects the existence still then of two towns called Shmoun, one on the Nile which, according to a Coptic tradition, was evacuated at the approach of Cambyse's army in 525 B.C., the other away from the river to the west (cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 4:59).

The rule over Egypt (after the ʿĀdites had left) reverted to Ashmūn. He is said to have mounted a goose made of copper over the gate of al-Ushmūnayn: when a stranger came to visit the city, the goose would honk and flap its wings so that one was aware of him, and if they felt like it, they prevented him from entering, and if they liked, they let him enter. During his time there was a proliferation of snakes, and people would catch them and use their meat for medicinal preparations and theriacas. Later on, they led them with the power of their magic to the Valley of the Snakes in the hills around Lūbiyah and Marāqiyah, where they kept them entrapped.

[3] It says in the chronicles of the Christians: When the mother of the Messiah, peace be upon him, brought him as an infant to Egypt, she stayed first outside the town of Baṣṭah. Then she went on and crossed the Nile to the western side and proceeded to al-Ushmūnayn. At the highest point of that city used to be the image of a horse standing on four columns, which neighed when a stranger came to town. And when the Messiah arrived, that horse fell down and was smashed to pieces.

[4] (The Arab translator) states in the “Book of Orosius”: Ashmūn son of Qibṭ is the first of the kings of the Egyptians. He lived at the time of Saruch⁽²⁾ son of Reu son of Eber son of Peleg son of Salah son of Arphaxad son of Shem son of Noah. The age of the world until the time of Saruch was 2,905 years, which is 663 years after The Flood.

[5] (Al-Ushmūnayn) had the most spirited horses, mules and donkeys. Also, one used to make there the crimson rugs which are similar to the Armenian ones.

[6] In the region of al-Ushmūnayn used to camp several clans of the Banū Jaʿfar ibn Abī Ṭālib—God be pleased with him. They were powerful beduins and had as their allies the Banū Maslamah ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān. Also with them was another clan

2. Cf. Luke 3:35-6.

called Banū ‘Askar, whose ancestor is said to have been a freedman of ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, and who (themselves) claim to be pure Banū Umayyah. And on their side as allies were also the Banū Khālid ibn Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, who had their campground in the area of Dalgah near Ushmūn.⁽³⁾

3. Hence the reference in Arab sources to the region of al-Ushmūnayn as *Bilād Quraysh*.

80. The Town of Ikhmīm⁽¹⁾

[1] Al-Bakrī vowels (the name of) the town with initial /i/ and vowelless /kh/, followed by /m-ī-m/, on the pattern 'iF'iL.⁽²⁾

[2] It is located on the eastern side of the Nile, and its founder is Manāqiyūs, one of the early Coptic kings.

[3] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: He was tough and willful. He resumed colonization, founded villages, erected lofty structures, collected wise sayings and the books of kings and sages, and produced wonders. He built himself a city all for himself and protected it with a fortress over which he erected four towers, one on each corner. Between those towers were eighty idols made of copper and alloyed metal with weapons in their hands, and on the chests of these he had their respective signs inscribed.

There lived at Memphis a descendant of the priests, one of the most knowledgeable people in matters of magic and one of the most skillful in catching crocodiles and lions. He used to instruct young boys in the art of magic, and when they were proficient, he

1. One of the oldest cities of Egypt; its Egyptian secular name was *Epu* and its sacred name *Khente-Min*, after its guardian deity Min, the harvest god and protector of desert travelers. The Greeks called it *Chemmis* or, since they associated the ithyphallically represented Min with Pan, *Panopolis*. Its Arabic name derives from the Coptic *Shmin*. The citizens of Chemmis, according to Herodotus, were the only Egyptians who favored Greek customs and had a temple dedicated to Perseus, in whose honor they held games in the Hellenic manner. Strabo mentions Panopolis as a city of weavers and stonecutters. With the rise of Christianity the town became an important center of the new faith, with numerous convents in its vicinity; Nestorius, the former Patriarch of Constantinople, died there about 444 in exile. In the hills northeast of the present-day district seat of *Akhmīm*, a large necropolis was discovered in 1884, its tombs dating from the Old Kingdom (6th dynasty), the New Empire, and the Ptolemaic and Roman periods; south of *Akhmīm* is a rock chapel built by King Eye (1349-1345 B.C.), the murderer and successor of Tutankhamen.

2. *Mu'jam ma ista'jam* 1:125 (Wüstenfeld ed. 1:80).

taught others. The king gave orders that a city be built for that man and that he be transferred there, and that city is Ikhmīm.

Manāqiyūs ruled the Egyptians for over forty years. He died and was buried in the pyramid opposite Itfih, together with a great deal of money and jewels, vessels and statues. On his tomb were inscribed his name and the time of his death.

[4] The people of Ikhmīm, says (Ibn Waṣīf Shāh), tell the story of a man who had come from the East and used to hang out a lot at the (local) temple. Every day he would come to it with incense and *khalūq* and cense and perfume a certain image on the door post underneath which he would then find a dinar. He would take it and leave. He kept doing that for quite some time, until one of his slaves betrayed him to the town's tax collector, and he was arrested. The man paid a fine and left town.

[5] The temple of Ikhmīm was one of the most astounding and magnificent of the ancient Egyptian temples. Those temples were built by the Egyptians to store their treasures. Because (the priests) predicted to the people of Egypt the coming of The Deluge before its time on the strength of certain indications, but they were not in agreement about its nature, some saying that it would be a fire that would burn everything on the face of the earth, others maintaining that it would be water. And so they built those temples before The Flood.

In this particular temple were the representations of the kings who ruled Egypt.⁽³⁾ It was built with marble blocks, each block five cubits long and two cubits deep, and consisted of seven halls whose ceilings were made of stones, each eighteen cubits long by five cubits wide, and were painted in azure and other dyes so fresh that to an observer they looked as if the painter had just finished applying

3. The temple of Ikhmīm impressed Arab writers from al-Qudā'ī to Abū 'l-Fidā' (d. 1331) as one of the outstanding remains from the time of the Pharaohs. The scanty ruins of today belie the former grandeur of the ancient temple complex completed in 110 A.D., the 12th year of Emperor Trajan's reign.

them. Each of these halls was dedicated to one of the Seven Planets, and the walls of the halls were covered with pictorial representations of various shapes and sizes, including the symbols of the sciences of the Copts, such as alchemy, natural magic, talismans, medicine, astrology, geometry, etc., which they had set down in those pictures.

[6] Ibn Jubayr states in his *Rihlah*⁽⁴⁾ that the length of that temple is 220 cubits and its width 170 cubits, and that it rests on forty columns, not counting the outer walls, each column having a circumference of fifty spans and each two columns being spaced thirty spans apart. The capitals of the columns are extremely large, and all the columns are covered with inscriptions from top to bottom. From the top of each column to the other run large stone slabs of hewn stone, some of them measuring 56 spans in length by ten spans in width and a thickness of eight spans. The roof of the temple is made up of stone slabs forming, as it were, a single surface covered with amazing pictorial representations and strange patterns, such as birds, human figures, and the like, on the inside as well as on the outside. The thickness of the outer wall of the temple is eighteen spans, made up of tightly fitting blocks.

That is how Ibn Jubayr measured the temple in 578 (A.D. 1182).

[7] It is said that (the mystic) Dhū 'l-Nūn learned the science of alchemy from that temple.

[8] That temple was still standing in 780 (A.D. 1378), then it was wrecked by a man from Ikhmīm known as "Preacher Kamāl al-Dīn Abū Bakr, son of Preacher 'Alam al-Dīn 'Alī".⁽⁵⁾ He made money

4. Beirut ed. p. 36 (*BGA* p. 61).

5. The date 780/1378 must be wrong, because the famous Moroccan traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, who died the year before, already mentions the same incident in his *Rihlah* (1:106). The stones from the temple, by Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's account, were used to build a madrasah. Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ* 3:324) also places the event "sometime in the middle of the 8th century."

on it, but he did not live long thereafter and died. [9] From that time on, Ikhmīm declined until it was all ruins.

[10] It has been reported that the guardian spirit of the temple of Ikhmīm used to appear in the guise of a naked beardless youngster, [11] and that at one time, when some people visited the temple, he pursued them and gave them a painful thrashing until they fled outside. A similar story is also told of some people who entered the Pyramids.

[12] The story has also been told of a man who used to stick candles on the images in the temple of Ikhmīm, and wherever he left those candles, scorpions would come flocking to him. And when he placed a candle in a box, scorpions would gather about it.

[13] In the temple of Ikhmīm is said to have been a devil standing on one leg with one arm raised in the air, with inscriptions on its forehead and around it, and with a conspicuous phallus touching the outer wall.⁽⁶⁾ There used to be a saying that someone who somehow managed to dig out that phallus without breaking it and then strapped it around his waist, would remain sexually excited until he took it off, and would be able to copulate as much as he liked as long as it was strapped around his waist. A certain governor of Ikhmīm, who managed to pluck it out, is said to have found astounding proof of it.

[14] Leather mats used to be imported from Ikhmīm, where they are manufactured.

[15] It is said that at Ikhmīm used to be twelve thousand sorcerers' assistants.

[16] At Ikhmīm grew the *labakh* tree.

[17] It is said that the name of the builder of the Ikhmīm temple is "Dūmaryā", and that this Dūmaryā made that temple an exemplar for future nations. In it he inscribed the histories of the na-

6. The "devil" in question is obviously a representation of the local god *Min*.

tions and races and the exploits in which they glory, in it he set up images of the prophets and the sages, and in it he recorded the names of the kings to come until the end of time. Its construction by him took place when Vultur was at the beginning of Aries, and the Vulture, in their tradition, remains in each sign of the zodiac for three thousand years. (Therefore) I say: Vultur in our time is in the final phases of Capricorn, hence, the age of that temple since it was built is approximately thirty thousand years.

[18] Abū ‘Abd-Allāh [*sic*] Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qaysī (al-Gharnāṭī) states in his “Gift to the Hearts” that this temple is quadrangular, built of hewn stones, and has four gates, each leading to a room with four doors, all dark, from which one ascends to chamber-like rooms of the same size.

81. The City of the Eagle⁽¹⁾

[1] The City of the Eagle, says al-Mas'ūdī, lies west of the pyramids of Abūšīr near Gīzah at a distance of five days and nights of travel for a determined rider. But the road to there is now destroyed, and the trail leading to it is obliterated. It holds wonders of architecture, of precious jewels, and of treasures.

[2] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: The Amalekite al-Walīd ibn Dawma' had set out with a numerous army, moving from country to country and vanquishing their kings, and when he got to Syria, he sent out one of his slaves by the name of 'Awn, who marched on Egypt and conquered it. Later on, (al-Walīd himself) got under way (to Egypt) and was received by 'Awn. He entered Egypt, (took possession of it) and despoiled its people. Then it occurred to him to explore the source of the Nile, and he set out with a numerous army, after having appointed 'Awn his deputy over Egypt.

[3] He remained absent for forty years. 'Awn, however, seven years after (al-Walīd) had left, made himself the tyrant of Egypt, claiming that he was the king and denying that he was al-Walīd's slave, but that he was his brother. He prevailed through magic and the lavish bestowal of gifts, and the people took to him. There was not a woman among the princesses of Egypt he did not marry, nor property he did not take and kill its owner, while at the same time he greatly honored the priests and exalted the temples.

Then it so happened that 'Awn saw in his dreams al-Walīd, who spoke to him: "Who told you to call yourself 'the king' when you knew that whoever does so surely deserves death! You married the

1. The entire chapter is taken from al-Mas'ūdī, section 1 from his *Murūj al-dhahab* (*Prairies d'or* 2:382), sections 2 and 3 from his *Akhbār al-zamān* (Beirut ed., 1966, pp. 241, 247-51) in the transcription of Ibn Waṣīf Shāh, from whom Maqrīzī copied. Section 2 of this chapter was already cited in less condensed form earlier (I, 15, sect. 9).

daughters of the princes and you seized property without necessity!" Then he ordered a kettle to be brought which was filled with oil and heated to a boil, and he stripped ('Awn) of his clothes in order to throw him into the kettle. At that point, an eagle appeared which snatched him away and soared with him high in the air. It put him down in an abyss on top of a mountain, and he fell down into a valley containing a fetid bog.

He woke up in terror and told his dream to his priests. They said: "We will surely protect you from it by making an eagle which you shall worship. For it was the eagle that saved you in your dream." And ('Awn) replied: "I bear witness, (the eagle) told me indeed, 'Concede to me such dignity, and do not forget it!'"

And so 'Awn made an eagle of gold, and he used two jewels for its eyes and adorned it with gemstones. He built a handsome temple for it which he draped from top to bottom in silk, and they proceeded to cense (the eagle) and offer up sacrifices so that it would speak to them. And 'Awn applied himself to worshipping it, calling on the people to do likewise, and they complied.

Next, he ordered every artisan in Egypt to be called up, and he sent his companions out into the western desert to search for a smooth, nicely level piece of land which one entered from harsh places and rugged mountains, with the proviso that it be near the catchment area which today is the Fayyūm; for the Fayyūm used to be a catchment area for the water of the Nile until its improvement by Joseph, peace be upon him, to channel water from it to the capital. They went out and spent a whole month roaming about until they found what the king was looking for.

There remained in all of Egypt not a single laborer, or engineer, or anyone with skill in building and the quarrying and dressing of rocks, who was not sent on some mission or another. ('Awn) also detached one thousand men of the army and seven hundred sorcerers to assist those people, and he sent with them the (necessary) machines and tools and provisions on wagons. The road which

those wagons followed to the Fayyūm in the western desert is clearly visible on the other side of the Pyramids.

After all the stones wanted by the king had been dressed, they laid out the city (over an area of) two parasangs in length and width, and excavated in the center a well inside which they placed the statue of a pig made of alloyed copper. They set it up on a copper base, its face turned eastward—in keeping with the ascendant of the house of Saturn, its progression and its integrity, for that planet was then in its exaltation. Then they slaughtered a pig and with its blood they daubed the face of the statue. Next, they censed the statue with some of the animal's bristles, filled its inside with its blood, hair, bones, flesh and bile, and put some of its bile in its ears. What was left of the pig they burned and put the ashes in a copper urn in front of the statue, on which they engraved the signs of Saturn. Then they dug inside the well on each of its four sides an underground passage leading to the walls of the city and installed over the mouths of those passageways vents to suck in air. They closed up the well and erected over it a domed structure resting on columns higher than the city's walls.

Inside the city they laid out avenues, each connecting with one of the gates of the city, and these avenues they intersected with lanes and residential quarters. Around the domed structure they erected copper statues of knights holding lances in their hands, their faces turned toward the gates. They made the foundation of the city of black stone, above which was red stone, above that yellow stone, on top of that green stone, and on top of it all a translucent white stone. All of these stones were grouted with molten lead and had iron poles inside, in the manner in which the Pyramids are built. The city's fortress they built sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide, and on top of each fortress gate, at its highest point, was a large eagle made of bronze and different substances, its wings outspread, hollow inside, and on each corner a knight, lance in hand, his face turned toward the outside of the city. To the eastern gate 'Awn had water channeled which descended in a steady flow to the

western gate where it issued toward cisterns, and likewise from the southern gate to the northern.

To the (golden) Eagle 'Awn offered up male eagles in sacrifice. He also brought the winds to the mouths of the statues so that one could hear them make terrible noises. The city he entrusted to guardian spirits that would stop anyone entering it, unless he be one of its people. The Eagle he used to worship beneath the dome in the center of the city he placed on a four-cornered base, with the face of the Devil on each corner, and this base he rested on a column which rotated it, so that the Eagle would turn toward the four cardinal points, dwelling for a quarter of an hour at each point.

After all of that was done, ('Awn) moved to that city the treasures and jewels which had been in Egypt since the era of the kings, as well as the statues, the books of wisdom, the alchemists' earth, the medicinal preparations, and the weapons. And he assigned to it senior sorcerers and priests, craftsmen and merchants, and distributed their respective quarters in such a way that the members of one trade would not mingle with those of another. He also created a suburb for the city to be inhabited by the practitioners of the lowly trades and the agriculturists. The various canals he spanned with bridges over which someone visiting the city could walk, but he surrounded the suburb on all sides with water. For the protection of the city he set up watchtowers and guards. Then he planted beyond that in parts adjacent to the open country date palms and vineyards and all sorts of trees in carefully distributed sections, and beyond all that extended grain fields in every direction.

All of that was done out of fear of al-Walīd.

Between that city and Memphis was a distance of three days' travel, says (Ibn Waṣīf Shāh), and ('Awn) would often go out to it and stay there for a while and then return to Memphis. The city had four annual festivals, which were the times when the Eagle molted.

After all of that had been done for 'Awn, he felt safe and at ease—until he received a letter from al-Walīd from Nubia, ordering him to

deliver supplies and to prepare markets (for him and his troops). 'Awn sent him all he wanted overland and on the river, but (as a precaution) he moved his family and selected princesses and grandees to that city. As al-Walīd drew closer, 'Awn himself, after having appointed a deputy over Memphis, went there and took up defensive positions in it.

When al-Walīd, who had heard what 'Awn had done, arrived, he was filled with anger and was about to send an army against him. But when he learned of the city and how impregnable it was, and was told about the sorcerers, he wrote ('Awn) a letter, ordering him to come into his presence and warning him about the consequences, if he failed to do so. And ('Awn) replied: 'I mean no harm against the King, nor is there any objection on my part, nor frivolous abuse by me of his country, because I am his slave, and I am a helper to him here where I am against any enemy that might come to him from the west. I cannot go to him, because I am in fear of him. May the King, therefore, confirm me in my present status as one of his agents, and I shall send him all the taxes and tribute incumbent on me.' And he sent him indeed a huge amount of money and precious stones, and (al-Walīd) let him be.

(From then on) al-Walīd remained in Egypt until he died.

82. Madīnat al-Fayyūm

[1] One should know that the site of the Fayyūm used to be a catchment area for Nile water. And when Joseph the Truthful, peace be upon him, was in charge of directing the affairs of Egypt, he colonized and developed it.

[2] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh relates: Then al-Rayyān son of al-Walīd—he is the pharaoh of Joseph, the Copts call him “Nahrāwus”—became king and ascended the royal throne. He was of powerful build, handsome, judicious, and capable. He pledged to be kind, exempted the people from paying the land tax for three years, and distributed money to high and low.

He invested with regal power over the country a man from his household by the name of “Aṭfir” (Potiphar)—he is the one the antiquarians call “al-‘Azīz”—and had a silver throne set up for him to sit on in the royal palace. He had access to the king at all times of the day and would dispatch the agents and scribes in the king’s presence. In that manner he protected Nahrāwus’ private life, handled all of his affairs, and left him free to indulge in his pleasure. And Nahrāwus immersed himself in his amusements, attended to no affair of state, nor even showed himself in public for a time, and still the country prospered, [3] while the king was without responsibility for anything. (Aṭfir) built for the king assembly halls of multicolored glass surrounded by water containing a profusion of fish, and of colored crystal which, when struck by the sun, emitted a powerful beam of light. Also, several pleasure retreats were built for the king in the number of the days of the year, and he would spend each day in a different one; in each place were put for the king utensils and furnishings not found in any other.

Nahrāwus’ preoccupation with his pleasure and the fact that Aṭfir was running things came to the knowledge of the neighboring

rulers, and an Amalekite king named Abū Qābūs 'Alkan ibn Sajūm marched on Egypt and attacked its border areas. The Mighty Governor promptly sent an army against him, commanded by a general named Birnāsh, and this general spent three years fighting the invader. But in the end he was vanquished and killed by the Amalekite, who razed the (Egyptian) watchtowers and fortresses and was now even more avid to invade the country.

The people (in Egypt) flocked to the royal palace and pleaded for help, and (the king) came out to them, had his armies pass in review, and then set out at the head of six hundred thousand warriors, not counting the vassals. They encountered beyond the Ḥawf and there was fierce fighting between the two sides. In the end, the Amalekite was forced to flee, and Nahrāwus pursued him to the borders of Syria, killing a great many of the Amalekite's men, destroying their fields and trees, burning and plundering.⁽¹⁾ On all the places he reached, he erected markers on which he inscribed the words: 'I am on the lookout for anyone who moves beyond this place!' He is said to have gotten as far as Mosul. He imposed the payment of tribute on the people of Syria, founded in the vicinity of al-'Arīsh a pleasant town which he provided with an infantry garrison,⁽²⁾ and returned to Egypt.

(Nahrāwus) then mobilized troops from all over the country and prepared to invade the King of the West. He set out with an army of seven hundred thousand men and marched through the land of the Berbers, dislodging many of them. He dispatched a general in command of a flotilla from around Raqūdah (Rhakotis) to the isles of the Gentiles,⁽³⁾ where he wreaked havoc, and himself set forth from the Berber land, killing and making peace with some on the

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1. Suggested reading: *wa-salaba*, for the unlikely *wa-ṣalaba* 'and crucifying' in both texts.
 2. Following the Bulaq text: *wa-shaḥānahā bi-'l-rujjāl*, omitting Wiet's incomprehensible *wa-tasallaka* (?) *'l-nāḥiyata*.
 3. *Jazā'ir Banī Yāfith*, i.e., the Aegean coastlands of Europe and Asia Minor; cf. also I, 9, n. 4.

basis of tribute they brought him. He then proceeded to Ifrīqiyyah and Carthage, where the local population made peace with him against payment of tribute, and kept on marching until he came to the point where the Green Sea empties into the Mediterranean (i.e., the Strait of Gibraltar), which is the site of the Copper Idols. There he erected an idol on which he inscribed his name and the time of his expedition. Having imposed the payment of tribute on the people in those parts, he crossed over to the Big Land and advanced on Spain, whose king fought him for a while, but then sued for peace against payment of tribute and (the obligation) to stop anyone from raiding Egypt out of his country.

(Nahrāwus) then turned and headed eastward, not by sea, in the land of the Berbers, and whatever nation he passed through would submit to him. He went on south and killed many people. (At one point) he sent a general (ahead) to a city on the Black Sea (i.e., the Atlantic), and its king came out to meet him. When the general told him about al-Rayyān and how other kings had submitted peacefully to him, the king replied, "No one has ever told us!" Asked by the general about the Sea, if anyone could sail it, the king answered, "No one is able to sail on it! Sometimes it is darkened by clouds so that one cannot see for days." And by the time al-Rayyān arrived, the people there brought him gifts and fruit, mostly bananas, as well as black stones that turned white when placed in water.

Next, the King advanced against the nations of the Blacks on the way to the kingdom of the Damdam, who are cannibals. They took the field against him, stark naked, and he defeated and vanquished them. He marched along the Dark Sea (the Atlantic), whence clouds enveloped them, and then returned north until he came to a statue made of red stone that motioned with its arm for them to go back; on its chest were inscribed the words: There is no one beyond me.

He then set out for the Copper City.⁽⁴⁾ But he never reached it and proceeded to the Dark Valley. They kept hearing a tremendous uproar coming from there but could not see anyone because the valley was so dark. From there he marched on to the Sand River,⁽⁵⁾ across which he saw idols bearing the names of kings, and he erected alongside it an idol on which he had his own name inscribed. After the sand had been firmed up,⁽⁶⁾ he passed over it to the wasteland bordering on the Black Sea. There he saw lions mauling each other, and he realized that there was no way for him to go beyond it. So he went back and, having crossed the Sand River (again), passed through the Scorpion Region, where some of his men perished. Having warded off the creatures' evil by means of incantations, he passed on to the City of the Sages, which is known as "*Madīnat al-Kundā*".⁽⁷⁾

The people there fled at his approach to a mountain. For days on end he laid siege to the city until his army almost died of thirst. Then a man, one of the eminent sages, his hair enveloping his body, descended to him from the mountain. He spoke to the King: "Where are you headed, you deluded man, who has been granted an extra long life, who is provided for beyond his needs? Why do you wear out yourself and your army? Can you not be content with what you possess, and trust in your Creator, and gain peace of

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4. *Madīnat al-nuḥās*, and also *Madīnat al-ṣufr* 'Bronze City', a city allegedly built entirely of copper (or bronze) and inhabited by jinn, which Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, among others, is said to have come across in the desert of Sijilmāsah in southern Morocco. (Compare ch. 71, sect. 5 above, where another fabulous discovery of the kind is ascribed to him.) Yāqūt cites the elaborate legend, with a disclaimer, according to Mas'ūdī's contemporary Ibn al-Faḥīh (*Mu'jam al-buldān* 5:80-83). Western readers may recognize the story of the Copper City in the "Arabian Nights."
 5. *Wādī al-raml*, the legendary 'Sabbath River' (*Wādī al-Sabt*) of Jewish tradition, an impassable stream of sand in the Maghrib (Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, transl. F. Rosenthal, 1:22, n. 60). Stories like those of the Sand River and of the Copper City are used by Ibn Khaldūn to exemplify the "silly or fictitious information" which Muslim historians have mindlessly passed on.
 6. Read: *uthbita*, as in the Bulaq text. Wiet has left a blank.
 7. My suggested reading, from the Persian *kundā* 'learned, wise' (see Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary* s.v.). In both texts: *Madīnat al-K**nd.

mind, and abandon hardship and peril for these people?" The King marveled at what the man had said. He inquired about water, and the man showed him where he could find it. Then the King asked him about the place where they were. "It is a place that no one can get to," said the man, "nor has it ever been reached by anyone before you." "On what do you live?" asked the King. "On the roots of plants. We are content with it and very little of it suffices us," he replied. "And where do you get your drinking water?" "From the rains and the snows." "Then why did you flee from us?" said the King. "Out of a desire to stay away from you. Otherwise, we have nothing to fear from you," the man replied. "What happens to you when the sun gets hot?" "We seek shelter in caves underneath this mountain." "Would you like me to leave you money?" "Only people given to luxury and opulence want money," said the man. "We never use any. We have no need for it thanks to that which we deem sufficient. We have so much of it that, if you saw it, you would scorn what you have." "Then show it to me," said the King. The man took one of the King's companions to an area at the foot of their mountain where rods of pure gold protruded from the ground, and he showed them one of their wadis which was flanked on both sides by emerald and turquoise stones. Nahrāwus ordered his men to carry away some large specimens of those stones, which they did. When the sage saw the King's men pray to an idol they carried with them, he asked him not to stay in their land and warned him against the worship of idols. And the King bade him farewell and went on his way.

Whichever nation he passed through he left his impression on them, until he came to the Nubians. He made peace with them against payment of tribute and erected above Dongola an idol on which he inscribed his name and (the record of) his expedition. Then he left for the city of Memphis.

He was received by the people of every town of Egypt with joy and happiness, and with aromatic plants and perfume, until he got to Memphis, where the people came out with the Mighty Governor to

greet him with aromatics and perfume. The Governor had already built him a palace of multicolored glass and furnished it with the best furnishings; around it he had planted trees and aromatic plants, and inside it he had built a pond of skyblue glass with something like fish of white glass at its bottom. The King took up residence there, and for many days the people ate and drank heartily. Then the King inspected his army: he had lost seventy thousand men, and he found over fifty thousand prisoners of war among those (who came back).

During this expedition of his, the King had been away from Egypt for eleven years. When the other kings learned of his return, they stood in awe of him. His might was increased and he demonstrated his power. On the east bank of the Nile he built palaces of marble over which he flew flags. He gave orders to build and colonize, to repair the dikes, to reclaim land, so that in the end the land tax came to over one hundred million dinars.

[3] In his time, there came to the country a youth, a Syrian, who had been deceived and sold by his brothers. The caravans from Syria used to make a rest stop⁽⁸⁾ (in those days) near present-day al-Mawqif.⁽⁹⁾ As the youth was put up for sale and was auctioned off—he is Joseph the Truthful, the son of Jacob son of Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful, God's prayers and peace on all of them—he was bought by Aṭfir, the Mighty Governor, who intended to give him as a present to the King. But when he brought him home to his palace, his wife Zulaykhā, who was his cousin, saw the young slave and said, "Leave him to us to raise so that *he may profit us.*" Which he did, and so what happened to her was the way it is told by God Exalted in the Koran.⁽¹⁰⁾

8. Read with the Bulaq text: *tu'arrisu*; Wiet: *tu'awwisu* (?).

9. According to al-Qudā'ī, an open space in Fuṣṭāṭ where horses, mules and donkeys were sold (cf. Pt. III, ch. 20).

10. Koran 12 (Joseph):20 ff. —Words and phrases in italics in the following narrative are direct borrowings from the Koranic text.

She concealed her love for him until such time when she would have the upper hand and be alone with him. She adorned herself for him and then told him outright that she loved him and that, if he consented to what she wanted from him, he would receive very much money. He refused to do that, but she desired to possess him and kept on struggling with him, who still rejected her, until her husband arrived at the scene and saw Joseph running away from her. The Governor was impotent, unable to go in to women. Joseph began to apologize to him, but she said: "I was asleep, and he came to me and tried to seduce me against my will!" It became clear to the Governor from a witness of her folk that the affair had been contrived by his wife, and he said to Joseph, "*Turn away from this*"—meaning, away from apologizing—and to her he said, "*Ask forgiveness of your crime*".

The news of Aṭfīr and the slave had come to the king's ear, but Nahrāwus was again devoting himself to his amusement and was bent on remaining secluded from the people.

When the wives of the nobility learned of the story of Zulaykhā and Joseph, they rebuked her for it. So Zulaykhā invited a group of these women and had food and drink prepared for them. She also prepared two gilded sitting rooms which she furnished with yellow gold brocade and draped with brocade curtains. Then she ordered the hairdressers to make up Joseph and bring him out from the sitting room opposite the one where she was with the women. That sitting room faced the sun.

The hairdressers took Joseph and set his hair with various kinds of jewels. They dressed him in a robe of yellow brocade which had little red gilded castles with tiny green birds in them woven into it and had a green lining, with a red chemise underneath, and on his head they placed a crown made up of pearls and gemstones. They made his forelocks fall from under the crown on his forehead and folded his locks in double over his chest. They left his head of hair uncovered, only encircled by the crown. In his ears were two gemstone eardrops, and from behind the collar of his long coat hair fell

long between his shoulders, carefully made up and interwoven with gold and gemstones. Around his neck was a beautiful necklace of gold interspaced with red gemstone and priceless pearls, and around his waist a golden belt with stars of multicolored gemstone and with ornate pendants. On his feet they put white slippers richly decorated with green-over-gold ornaments, and to the coat he was wearing they added two bands to be worn over the shoulders, and lace edging to surround its lower part and his two sleeves of green gemstone. They curved his earlocks over his cheeks, made up his eyes with kohl, and handed him a gilded fly whisk with green hair.

After the women had finished eating and already had a few cups, Zulaykhā offered them knives with gemstone handles for cutting the fruit. It is said that they chose citrons and were cutting them up, when all of a sudden Zulaykhā said to them: "It has come to my ears what you said about me and my slave!" They replied: "The matter is the way you heard it. Because you are worth more than this, and someone like you is even above royal princes, on account of your beauty and your dignity. So how can you be content with your slave?" "You have not heard the truth," she said, "nor is he to me what you say he is!" and she motioned to the hairdressers to bring out Joseph. They lifted the curtains of the sitting room opposite hers and out strode Joseph, facing the sun, and the sitting room and everything in it were illuminated by Joseph's face.

While the women gazed at him, he approached with the fly whisk and positioned himself next to Zulaykhā (as if) defending her. The women were so distracted by the sight of him that they began to cut their hands instead of the fruit they had before them. Words cannot describe how much they were dazzled by Joseph's beauty! Zulaykhā then spoke to them: "Why, tell me, were you distracted from talking to me by looking at my slave?" They replied: "God save us! This is not your slave; *he is no other than a noble angel.*" And there was not a single woman among them who did not menstruate and secrete milk out of lust for his love. At that point, Zulaykhā

said, "And this is *he you blamed me for!*" They said: "No one must blame you for this! Whoever blames you has done you wrong, so beware of him!" "I have done (what I had to do)," said Zulaykhā, "but he rejected me. Now you speak to him in my favor!" And each one of them would address him and secretly try to win him in vulgar language for herself, but Joseph would reject her, and (only) when she had lost all hope for him to comply with her wish would she speak on behalf of Zulaykhā and say, "Your mistress loves you, and you dislike her; you must not go against her wish!" To which he replied: "I have no need for that." When they realized that, they agreed as one that he must be taken by force, but Zulaykhā said, "This cannot be done, but if he does not do (my bidding) I shall surely deny him all pleasures and put him in prison and take away from him all I gave him!" And Joseph said, "*My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that they call me to.*"

Thereupon she swore by her god, which was an idol of green chrysolite dedicated to Mercury, that if he did not what she wanted, she would surely bring all of that swiftly upon him. She then ordered his robes removed and had him dressed in woolen clothes, and she asked the Mighty Governor to throw him in prison so that his charge against her come to an end. And he had Joseph put in prison.

(Meanwhile) the King had a dream in which he saw someone coming to him and telling him that So-and-so and Such-and-such were determined to kill him—meaning, the two men in charge of the King's food and drink. The next morning, the King had the two arrested, and they confessed to him—or, according to others, one of them confessed and the other denied any guilt—so that he had them put in prison. The name of the man in charge of food was Rāsān, and the name of the man in charge of drink was Martīs.

Joseph, while in prison, used to be kind to the inmates and give them joy. One day, the two men in charge of the King's food and drink told him about their dream vision which God relates in His

Book,⁽¹¹⁾ and it came to pass the way Joseph told it. So, when the King saw (in his dream) the kine and the ears of corn, the cupbearer informed him of what had happened with Joseph. Then he went to Joseph and told him the vision. Upon his return, the King said, "Bring the man to me!" But Joseph replied: "I shall not leave this place unless the matter of the women on account of whom I have been imprisoned is brought to light." And so that matter was investigated. Zulaykhā confessed the whole thing, and the King sent for Joseph.

He was released, and washed to get rid of the filth of prison, and dressed in clothes suitable for appearing in the presence of kings. And when the King saw him, his heart filled with love and pride for him. He asked him about the dream vision and Joseph interpreted it for him the way God Exalted says.⁽¹²⁾ The King asked, "And who will take care of that for me?" "I shall," said Joseph. The King then bestowed robes of honor intended for royalty on him, placed a crown on his head, and had him paraded around town, with the army riding in escort. (Henceforth) Joseph would come and go at the royal palace and sit on the throne of the Mighty Governor, whom the King had replaced with Joseph as deputy over his kingdom. It is said (in another version) that the Mighty Governor, Aṭfir, had died and had given (Joseph) his wife in marriage. Joseph said to her, "This is better than what you had in mind before," and she replied: "Forgive me. My husband was impotent, and (besides) no woman could behold you without feeling sensual desire for you because of your beauty."

Then came years of fertility in Egypt, and Joseph gathered and stored and accumulated grain, and when the years of drought arrived, the Nile began to fall short, and its shortfall became worse by the year. The country saw such a famine that wheat was sold for money, for jewelry, for livestock, for clothes, for household utensils,

11. Koran 12 (Joseph):36 ff.

12. Koran 12:47 ff.

for real estate. And the people of Egypt almost left the country, had it not been for Joseph's wise management.

Syria, too, was hit by famine. How Joseph's brothers came (to Egypt) is told by God Exalted.⁽¹³⁾ Joseph then sent for his father, and he and all his folk were brought to Egypt. Joseph went out at the head of the prominent Egyptians and received him and showed him into the presence of the King. Jacob was a venerable man, and the King honored him greatly and asked him about his age, his trade, and his religion. He replied: "My age is one hundred and twenty years. As to my trade, we have grazing sheep and goats on which we live. And I worship the Lord of the Worlds Who created you and me; He is the God of my forefathers, and your God, and the God of everything."

There was among the people assembled before the King a high-ranking priest, who said to the King: "I fear that Egypt's ruin will come at the hands of this man's offspring." "Then recite to us what you know of him," said the King. The priest turned to Jacob and said, "Show us your God, old man." He replied, "My God is too exalted as to be seen." "But we see *our* gods," said the priest. "Your gods," retorted Jacob, "are of gold, and silver, and stone, and gemstone, and copper, and wood, of the kind made by mortals, who are the servants of my God—there is no god save He, the Mighty, the Wise." The priest said, "Truly, any thing that cannot be seen by the eyes is nothing!" Jacob became angry and called him a liar and said, "God is a thing not like other things! He is the Creator of every thing. There is no god save He." "Then describe him to us," said the priest. "Only that which is created can be described," replied Jacob, "but He is Creator, One, Infinitely Preexistent, Wisely Planning, Everlasting. He sees, yet can not be seen." Jacob rose in anger, but the King told him to sit down, at the same time ordering the priest to let Jacob be. The priest then said, "Now, we find in our scriptures that Egypt's ruin will come at the hands of these people!" And the

13. Koran 12:58 ff.

King added, "This will happen in our own time." "Not so!" replied Jacob, "and not for a long time to come! The truth is that the King will kill such an enemy and not spare a single one of his seed." "If the matter is the way you say," said the King, "then we cannot possibly drive this man away, nor can we kill these people!" And he assigned camping grounds to Jacob and the people with him in the Land of Goshen¹⁴ until Jacob died. He was carried to the village of Abraham, peace be upon him, and buried by his side.

People say that Nahrāwus the King became a believer but concealed his faith for fear of losing power. He ruled as king for one hundred and twenty years. During his time, Joseph built up the Fayyūm.

The people of Egypt had been maligning him in the eyes of the King, saying: He has become old and his usefulness has diminished; put him to the test. So the King one day said to Joseph: "I have given that region as a gift to my daughter"—the region was (at the time) a series of catchment areas for the (Nile) water—"and I want you to fix it up for her." And Joseph built it up. He drained off the water by artful means, cleared the area's jungles, dug the Manhā canal, founded (the village of) al-Lāhūn, and made the water of the region to be well distributed and evenly measured. Within four months he was done with the project and the people marveled at his wisdom. He is said to have been the first to carry out an engineering project in Egypt.

Nahrāwus died and was succeeded by his son Darīmūs, whom the antiquarians call "Ḍārim ibn al-Rayyān"; he is the fourth pharaoh in their count. He went against his father's tradition, while Joseph was his deputy, and accepted some advice from him but opposed him in some other. During his reign died Joseph at the age of one hundred and twenty. His body was wrapped in a shroud and placed in an alabaster coffin. He was buried on the western bank, which

14. Arabic: *Wādī al-Sadīr*; see II, 22, n. 1.

promptly became fertile while the eastern bank fell short. So he was moved to the latter, which now became fertile while the western bank fell short. Then they agreed that they would put him on the eastern bank for one year and on the western bank for a year. Finally they had the idea to attach strong rings to the coffin and anchor it in the middle of the Nile, whereupon both sides were fertile.

[4] Ibn ‘Abd-al-Ḥakam transmits:⁽¹⁵⁾ Their next king was al-Rayyān ibn al-Walid ibn Dawma‘, who is the lord of Joseph the Prophet, peace be upon him. After the king had his dream vision, which Joseph interpreted, he sent for the latter and had him brought out of prison.

From Ibn al-‘Abbās: —The messenger came to him and said, “Discard the prison clothes and put on new garments, and appear before the King!” The prison inmates wished Joseph well. He was at the time thirty years old, but when he came to the king, the latter beheld a young adolescent and exclaimed, “Can this one really know (the meaning of) my vision when the sorcerers and priests do not?” He bade him to sit opposite him and told him not to be afraid.

(From ‘Uthmān and another:) —And as the king examined Joseph and asked him questions, he rose in the king’s esteem and became exalted in his heart, so that he handed him his signet ring and put him in charge of his household.

(From Ibn al-‘Abbās:) —He made him put on a golden necklace and silken clothes and gave him a mount saddled and adorned like the king’s own. And in Egypt the news was drummed about that Joseph was the king’s deputy.

From ‘Ikrimah (al-Barbarī): —Pharaoh said to Joseph: “I hereby invest you with authority over Egypt; I want, however, that my own throne be four fingers higher than your throne.” And Joseph agreed.

15. *Futūḥ Miṣr* (ed. Ṣabiḥ) 21 (ed. Torrey 11-12).

(From ‘Uthmān ibn Ṣāliḥ:) —And he made him sit on the throne. While the king retired with his women to his private quarters, he entrusted the government of all of Egypt to him. Thus, on account of having interpreted the king’s dream vision, Joseph became the ruler of Egypt.

From al-Layth ibn Sa’d: —I was told by teachers of ours: The famine became so severe on the people of Egypt that they bought food for gold, until they could not find any more gold, whereupon they bought it for silver, until they could not find any more silver, then for their small livestock, until there was not a sheep or goat left. And (Joseph) kept on selling them food in those two years until they had no silver left, nor gold, nor a single sheep, nor a cow. Then, in the third year, they came to him and said, “We have nothing left but ourselves and our folk and our land!” Whereupon Joseph bought up all of their land for Pharaoh and then gave them grain to plant, on condition that the fifth belong to Pharaoh.

[5] It says in the story of how Joseph, peace be upon him, founded the city of the Fayyūm that, after having served Pharaoh for thirty years as vizier, he was dismissed by him. He asked, “Why have you dismissed me?” and Pharaoh replied: “I have not dismissed you on account of any suspicion. Nor will I forget the blessing you have brought us. But my forefathers enjoined me that no vizier must serve us for more than thirty years, for we are apprehensive that a vizier might become so firmly established that he may plot against the king.” Joseph then told him, “You have learned so much from my advice to you that you have made all of Egypt your personal property. Now grant me a piece of land that will support me and my family and my clan.” And Pharaoh answered, “Choose wherever you want whatever you desire.” Whereupon Joseph traveled through the earth’s wastelands until he saw the region of the Fayyūm, which was barred from the Nile by a mountain. He measured the level of the Nile and discovered that the Nile was higher than the floor of that region. So he made a breach in that mountain and through it he channeled the water (of the Nile) to

the Fayyūm. Then he irrigated the land and founded on the banks of the water three hundred and sixty villages, in the number of the days of the year, and provided them with (seed) grain and aliments to raise. And when the Nile fell short and famine broke out in the land of Egypt, he would sell each day that which he had collected in one of the villages of the Fayyūm until he owned Egypt the way he had (earlier) brought it together in the hands of the king. Thus, Joseph's prestige grew and his fortune swelled, and after some time the king restored him as vizier.

Joseph died while holding that office. He had willed that his body be taken to the Holy Land, and so Aaron son of Ephraim son of Joseph set out with it at the head of one hundred thousand Israelites. But he was defeated by the Giants somewhere between Egypt and Syria and most of the people with him perished. He returned with his remaining companions to Egypt, where they remained until God sent Moses, 'Imrān's son, peace be upon him, as an apostle to Pharaoh. And he then led the Israelites out of Egypt, carrying with him the body of Joseph, peace be upon him.

[6] (Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam) transmits:⁽¹⁶⁾ At that time the Fayyūm was opened up. The reason for that was:

(From Hishām ibn Ishāq:) —While Joseph was ruling Egypt in exalted position under Pharaoh, and when he was already past one hundred years of age, the king's ministers said to him: "Truly, Joseph's knowledge has diminished, his mind has deteriorated, his wisdom is at an end!" But Pharaoh reprimanded them sharply and refuted in coarse language what they said, and they desisted. Then, years later, they came again to the king with the same words, and (this time) he told them, "Well then, come up with anything you wish, and I shall put him to the test with it!" In those days the Fayyūm was called (simply) "The Depression" (*al-Jawbah*) and served as a mere drainage and catchment area for the overflow wa-

16. *Futūḥ Miṣr* 21-23 (ed. Torrey 12-14).

ter from Upper Egypt. Having agreed among each other that this should be the test to which they were going to put Joseph, they said to Pharaoh, “Ask Joseph that he drain off the water of The Depression so that it be added as a region to your country and as taxable land to your tax revenue.” And Pharaoh summoned Joseph and said: “You may know how dear my daughter So-and-so is to me, and I thought I should find her some land when she comes of age, but all I have been able to come up with is The Depression. Namely, what I have in mind is a region, remote yet near, which one can reach from any direction only through forest or desert. The Depression, for instance, cannot be reached from any side of Egypt except through wasteland or desert.”

(Someone other than Hishām said:) For the Fayyūm lies in the middle of Egypt the way Egypt is located at the center of the countries, because one cannot get to Egypt from any direction except through desert or wasteland.

(Hishām’s tradition continues:) “I hereby give her The Depression in grant. You must do everything in your power to accomplish the work.” Joseph answered: “As you say, o King! Whenever you want that done, send for me, and I shall, God willing, act.” And Pharaoh said, “Verily, the dearest and most suitable man to me is the one who acts the quickest.”

And God revealed to Joseph that he should dig canals: one from remote Upper Egypt, from such-and-such a place to such-and-such a place; one running eastward, from such-and-such a place to such-and-such a place; and one running westward, from such-and-such a place to such-and-such a place. Joseph then put the workers to work and dug the Manhā canal⁽¹⁷⁾ from the southernmost part of Ushmūn all the way to al-Lāhūn. He ordered the builders to excavate al-Lāhūn and had the Fayyūm canal dug, which is the one run-

17. *Khalīj al-Manhā* was the earlier name for the Baḥr Yūsuf (“Joseph’s Canal”), the main canal feeding the Fayyūm Oasis that parallels the Nile on the western side from its inception just south of Dayrūt.

ning east.⁽¹⁸⁾ And he dug a canal at a village of the Fayyūm called “Tinhamt”,⁽¹⁹⁾ which is the one running westward. The water of The Depression then ran out through the eastern canal and emptied into the Nile, and through the western canal, emptying into the desert of Tinhamt to the west, so that in the end there was no water left in The Depression. Next, he sent the laborers in and had the reed and the tamarisks growing there cut down and cleared away, and with that the Nile began to flow, now that The Depression had become cleared, open land: As the Nile rose, its water entered at the head of the Manhā canal and flowed through it until it reached al-Lāhūn, then cut through (the mountains) toward the Fayyūm, where it flowed into its canal, bringing water to the region so that it became a deep lake of the Nile. Joseph then took the king and his ministers there. All of that had come about in seventy days, but when the king saw it, he exclaimed to those ministers of his, “*Hād-hā ‘amalu alfi yawm*—this is the work of a thousand days!” and so it was named al-Fayyūm.⁽²⁰⁾ It has been cultivated ever since in the manner of the diked land of Egypt.

(Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam) says: I heard another version of how the Fayyūm was opened up: (From Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb:) —Joseph, peace be upon him, became the (virtual) ruler of Egypt at the age of thirty, and he directed the country’s affairs continuously for forty years. Then the Egyptians, claiming that Joseph was old and his judgment had become impaired, dismissed him and said: “Choose

18. Presumably the present-day *Khalīg al-Magnūna*, which rejoins the Nile at Banī ‘Adiy, halfway between al-Wastā and Banī Swēf.

19. What is meant is apparently the vanished village of *Tihmant al-Sidr* in the southwestern Fayyūm hills (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, I, 198), and the canal seems to be the present-day *Khalīg al-Arūs*.

20. Al-Fayyūm derives from the Coptic *Phiom*, from Egyptian *Pi-om* ‘The Lake’. (Greek travelers and geographers speak of it as “Lake Moeris”, of which today’s Lake Qārūn would have to be the last remnant.) The central town of the oasis, present-day Madīnat al-Fayyūm, was called *Crocodilopolis* by the Greeks, a calque of its Egyptian sacred name *Per Sobek* ‘House of (the crocodile-headed water god) Šobek’; in the 3rd century B.C. the town was known as *Arsinoë* (its ruins are to the north of Madīnat al-Fayyūm) in honor of the second wife of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the town’s and region’s patron goddess.

for yourself from the waste land a tract which we shall give you as a personal grant for you to improve. We know your wisdom in such matters, for our own skill comes from your skill and good management. Once we find out that you have plenty of your mental faculty left, we will restore you to your position of power.” Thereupon Joseph made a tour of the desert in all parts of Egypt and finally chose the site of the Fayyūm, and it was given to him. He then dug the Manhā canal from the Nile and had it brought into the entire Fayyūm. He finished all of that excavation work within one year. I have heard that he undertook that, rather, by divine revelation and was able to accomplish it thanks to the great number of laborers and helpers involved. When (the Egyptians) came to look, they discovered that in all of Egypt they did not know the like and equivalent of what Joseph had made of the Fayyūm. They exclaimed, “At no time was Joseph of better mind and judgment and planning skill than he is today!” and restored him to his position of power. He continued to rule for another sixty years, to make it a total of one hundred years, so that he died at the age of one hundred and thirty.

(Returning to Hishām’s tradition:) —Then came to Joseph’s ears what the king’s ministers had said, and that all of that was intended as a test for him on their part, and he told the king, “I have yet wisdom and planning other than what you have seen.” The king asked, “And what is that?” Joseph answered: “I shall settle the Fayyūm with a family from each district of Egypt, and I shall order the members of each family to build themselves a village”—the number of villages in the Fayyūm was indeed the same as that of the *kūrahs* of Egypt—“and when they have finished building their villages, I shall assign to each village an amount of water exactly commensurate with the land I am going to give them, no more and no less. I shall also assign to them a share of irrigation water to be used at a time when the Nile water does not reach them, and only then, and I shall give a lower water level to a high-water canal and a higher level to a low-water canal at given times of night and day, just as I shall assign to the villages property shares in such a way

that no one will receive less than his due, nor more than he is worth." Pharaoh exclaimed, "This must come from the Kingdom of Heaven!" And Joseph replied, "Indeed, it does."

And Joseph began (his project). He ordered the construction of the villages and set demarcations for them. The first village built in the Fayyūm was a village called Shānah,⁽²¹⁾ which is the village where Pharaoh's daughter chose to stay. Then he had the canal dug and bridges built, and when they were done with that, he applied himself to measuring the land and the water level. That time marks the birth of geometry, which people had not known before.

The first one to measure the Nile, says (Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam), was Joseph, who put a Nilometer at Memphis.

[7] It says in the Old Testament, reports a certain author, that Pharaoh forced the Children of Israel to build buildings and to make mud bricks, and they built for him several fortified cities, among them Pithom (*Faythūm*) and Ramses (*'Aramsīs*).⁽²²⁾ And a commentator adds: These are *al-Fayyūm* and *Ḥawf Ramsīs*.

[8] During the time of al-Rayyān ibn al-Walid,⁽²³⁾ Jacob, peace be upon him, and his progeny came to Egypt. They were seventy-three souls, men and women, and Joseph gave them a home in the region between 'Ayn Shams (Heliopolis) and al-Faramā (Pelusium), which is a wide-open rural land. As he approached Egypt, Jacob had sent Judah to Joseph. And Joseph went out to meet him, and when he met him, he clasped him in his arms and wept.

(From Hishām ibn Ishāq:) —When Jacob came to visit Pharaoh and the king spoke to him—Jacob was a gentle old man, with a

21. The ancient Shānah, according to Ramzī Bey (*Qāmūs* I, 291), appears to have been located on the site of present-day *Tall Shānah* near the 'Abdalla Wahbī canal in the northeastern Fayyūm lowland. It was abandoned at some time by its population, who built a second Shānah to the north of it, now occupied by *ʿIzbat Qaṣr Shānah*, a dependency of al-Ṣālihiyyah.

22. Compare Exodus 1:8-11.

23. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* 23-25 (ed. Torrey 15-17).

handsome beard and face, and a resonant voice—Pharaoh asked him, “How many years have you seen, old man?” Jacob answered, “One hundred and twenty.” Now, Bamīn, Pharaoh’s sorcerer, had already described Jacob and Joseph and Moses, God’s blessings upon them, in his books and had made it known that Egypt’s destruction and the perdition of her people would come about at their hands, and he had deposited in the temples the descriptions of those at whose hands Egypt’s devastation would come to pass. When Jacob realized that, he betook himself to (Pharaoh’s) public audience. There the first thing (the sorcerer) asked of him was, “Whom do you worship, old man?” Jacob told him: “I worship Allah, the God of every thing.” “How can you worship someone you do not see?” inquired the other. “He is too exalted and sublime as to be seen by anyone,” replied Jacob. “But *we* see our gods,” said the sorcerer. “Your gods,” said Jacob, “are the handiwork of humans, people who die and decay, whereas my God is most exalted and elevated, and he is *nearer* to us *than the jugular vein*.”⁽²⁴⁾ At that point, Bamīn looked at Pharaoh and said, “This is the one at whose hands the destruction of our country will come to pass!” Pharaoh asked, “In our own days or during the reign of another?” “Not in your time,” replied Jacob, “nor in the days of your descendants.” “Do you find this in that which your god has ordained?” asked the King, and Jacob answered, “Indeed, I do.” “Then how can you kill someone through whom his god intends to destroy his people!” said the King. “Pay no attention to these words!”

From Ka‘b (al-Aḥbār): —Jacob lived in the land of Egypt for sixteen years. And when death came to him, he said to Joseph: “Do not bury me in Egypt. When I die, take me and bury me in the cave of Mount Hebron.”

24. Koran 50 (Qaf):16.

(From Abū Ṣālih:) —Hebron is the place of worship of Abraham the Friend, peace be upon him, and between it and Jerusalem is a distance of eighteen miles.

(From Ka‘b and others:) —After he had died, they embalmed him with myrrh and aloe and placed him in a coffin of teakwood. They were doing that with him for forty days, until Joseph spoke to Pharaoh and informed him that his father had died and had asked him to be buried in the land of Canaan. The king gave him leave, and Joseph departed, accompanied by the noblest of the Egyptians, and buried (his father) and left (again for home).

It has been said that Jacob was buried in Egypt. His body remained there for about three years and was then moved to Jerusalem. He had directed them to do that at the time of his death.

Then died al-Rayyān ibn al-Walīd, says (Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam), and their next king was his son Ḍārim ibn al-Rayyān. During his time died Joseph, peace be upon him. When death came to him, he said: “Verily, you will leave the land of Egypt for the land of your forefathers. At that time carry my bones with you.” Then he died, and they put him in a coffin (and buried him).

(From Simāk ibn Ḥarb:⁽²⁵⁾) —Joseph was buried on one of the two banks of the Nile, whereupon the side on which he was buried became fertile, while the other side suffered drought. So they moved his body to the other bank, and now the side to which they had transferred him became fertile and the other suffered drought. And when they realized that, they gathered his bones and placed them in an iron box to which they attached a chain. They also erected a pillar on the bank of the Nile and mounted at its base an iron hook to which they attached the chain. Then they dropped the box in the middle of the Nile, and now both banks enjoyed fertility at the same time.

25. Kūfan traditionist (d. 741) whose traditions are cited in all six canonical ḥadīth collections.

[9] The story behind moving Joseph's bones from Egypt to Syria was that Serah, the daughter of Asher, Jacob's son,⁽²⁶⁾ had lived a long life and had become an old woman without eyesight. And when Moses, peace be upon him, marched out by night with the Children of Israel, they found themselves enveloped by a dense fog that prevented them from seeing the road. Someone said to Moses, "You will never pass unless you have Joseph's bones with you." "And who knows where they are?" asked Moses. "A very old, blind woman," they said, "whom we have left behind in Egypt." Thereupon Moses went back, and when she heard his voice, she asked, "What brought you back?" He answered, "I was ordered to carry Joseph's bones." "You will never be able to pass," she said, "unless I am with you." "Then lead me to Joseph's bones," he said. And she did, and he took Joseph's bones with him to The Wilderness.

[10] Joseph son of Jacob son of Isaac son of Abraham the Friend of the Merciful, God's blessings upon them, is one of the Twelve Tribes. He was born in the land of Canaan in Syria. He saw *the eleven stars, and the sun and the moon bowing down*⁽²⁷⁾ before him when he was seventeen years old. For that his brothers betrayed him and, having bought him from Midianites, took him to Egypt, where they sold him to Pharaoh's general. He remained at the latter's house for twelve months. After that Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. But he remained steadfast, and she bore false testimony against him so that he was imprisoned. He remained in prison for ten years, but others have told differently. He continued to be in prison until the cupbearer and the baker had those two dreams which Joseph interpreted for them. The two of them (eventually) got out (of prison), and the cupbearer for years forgot about Joseph, until the king saw in his dream the kine and the ears of corn. Then (the cupbearer) remembered (Joseph) and came to him and told him the dream vision, and (Joseph) interpreted it for him.

26. In the complete tradition, again with Simāk b. Ḥarb as the source, the Prophet Muḥammad refers to her as "Joseph's daughter" (*Futūḥ Miṣr* 27).

27. Koran 12 (Joseph):4.

He was then released from prison—at the time he was thirty years old—and the king made him his vizier. From that time until Jacob arrived in Egypt were nine years, seven of them were years of plenty and two were years of famine. In the year in which he came to Egypt, Jacob was one hundred and thirty years old, and his household at the time numbered seventy souls. From his arrival in Egypt until Moses, peace be upon him, was born were another one hundred and thirty years. After having spent seventeen years in Egypt, (Jacob) died at the age of one hundred and forty-seven. At that time the Tribes were afraid of Joseph meeting them, and they told him, “Your father urged that you forgive your brothers’ crime, for you and they are servants of Allah, the God of your father.” And Joseph wept and said to them, “You need not do that!” and he gave them his promise to be good to them, which he fulfilled completely. Joseph died at the age of one hundred and twenty.

83. What Others Have Said about the Fayyūm, Its Canals, and Its Estates

[1] Al-Ya‘qūbī says:⁽¹⁾ In early times one used to speak of “Egypt and the Fayyūm,” because of the great size of the Fayyūm and its abundant cultivation. There grows the (kind of) wheat already described, and there one manufactures the coarse linen called *khaysh*.

[2] Al-Mas‘ūdī relates⁽²⁾ that the meaning of “al-Fayyūm” is *alfu yawm*—a thousand days.

[3] Al-Qudā‘ī says: The Fayyūm—it is a province planned and developed by Joseph the Prophet, peace be upon him, by divine revelation. It consisted of three hundred and sixty estates, each supplying Egypt with food for one day, so that the food supply of Egypt was (assured) for a year. It used to be irrigated with (a water level of) twelve cubits, without being inundated when the water exceeded that level. Because Joseph, peace be upon him, built for the people a conduit which he devised in such a way that it would bring water to them continuously; he consolidated it with stonework and named it “al-Lāhūn”.

[4] Ibn Riḍwān says:⁽³⁾ In the Fayyūm the water of the Nile is stored up and thanks to it crops can be planted several times a year. But one will also notice that this water, as it runs off, changes the color and taste of the Nile. This condition is felt most strongly within the lake which forms during the dog days at Saḡ, Nahyā, and up-

1. *Kitāb al-buldān* 331.

2. *Prairies d’or* 2:370. In the preceding chapter (sect. 6) this folk etymology appears in a tradition cited by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam a century earlier.

3. In his treatise “On Warding off Harm to the Body in the Land of Egypt,” already quoted in extenso by Maqrīzī in ch. 13 of Pt. I. One finds the passage in M.W. Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Arabic text p. 16, English translation p. 110).

river toward the villages next to the Fayyūm. This is a circumstance that adds to the bad condition of the inhabitants of the city—meaning, Fuṣṭāṭ—especially when the wind is from the south. Because the Fayyūm lies to the south of the capital of Egypt, at a considerable distance from it.

[5] Al-Qāḍī al-Saʿīd (Thiqat al-Thiqāt) Abū ʿI-Ḥasan ʿAlī, son of al-Qāḍī al-Muʿtaman Thiqat al-Dawlah Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn Yūsuf al-Qurashī al-Makhzūmī, says in his “Method for Determining the Land Tax”.⁽⁴⁾ This region is one of the best administered, the most extensive in arable land, and the finest in terms of class of land. Part of it, however, has fallen victim to desolation because it became depopulated and the sand has taken over much of its land.

I came across a register drawn up by Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Jaʿfar ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Ishāq,⁽⁵⁾ dealing with the canals of said region and the estates located along them. I quote it here, even though some of its information is now obsolete, some of the places in it have changed names, and some of its locations are now totally unknown because no trace is left of them. I quote it so that one learn from it the present-day state of the land under cultivation, and as a guide to anyone with a desire for colonization as to how much of the uncultivated land can be recovered. To cite it is also helpful for knowing the share of irrigation water of each of its locations. This is its transcript:

A register containing the findings on the status of the main canals of the Fayyūm province and their feeder canals, the irrigation share from them of each estate and the procedure followed in closing and opening (the canals), in regulating the water flow and in demarcating, as well as the times for these operations, compiled in Jumādā II, 422 [June 1030]. We begin, with God’s help and guidance to success, by describing the major waterway from which those canals derive, and then discuss its water supply,

4. *Kitāb al-minhāj fī ʿilm al-kharāj*, already cited twice (I, 37, sect. 15; II, 16, sect. 2); cf. I, 37, n. 6.

5. Ibn Mammātī also refers to this man but dismisses the content of his *dustūr* as outdated (*Qawanīn* 229).

which is appropriate only as long as (the canals) are in proper working condition.

The Great Fayyūm Canal. The water reaches that canal by way of the smaller waterway known as “al-Manhā with Joseph’s Wall.” The mouth of this waterway is near the mountain known as *Kursī al-Sāḥirah* (the Witch’s Throne) in the Ushmūmayn region; it supplies water to some of the estates of the Ushmūn, Qays and Ihnās districts, and irrigation for the vineyards of wine-growing estates.

Al-Ḥijr al-Yūsufī. “Joseph’s Wall” is an embankment built of unbaked bricks and a kind of lime known in earlier times as *ṣārūg*, which is (a mixture of) lime and oil. Its structure runs from north to south and connects at its southern end with another levee built like it in a straight line from west to east and enclosed at its ends by two tall sand mounds. Its length is 200 cubits, in terms of “practical” cubits.⁽⁶⁾ With this levee connects at the 80-cubit mark, coming from the west, the end of the main embankment coming in from the south. The purpose of the larger embankment is to channel the (flood) water, once it reaches around twelve cubits, to Madīnat al-Fayyūm. The length of the part of it that connects with the embankment that runs from west to east, then connects with the (first) sand mound, then dips down from that mound toward another like it that is opposite it to the north, is 50 cubits, and the distance of the stretch between the two mounds, which constitutes the low section (of the embankment), with a height differential of four cubits, is 110 cubits. It is this low section which one closes with a grass dike called *lamsh*.⁽⁷⁾ The width of the area covered by water at the time of the Nile’s rise, which comprises the site of the *lamsh* and the corresponding terrain eastward, is 40 cubits; it is navigable by boats during the high Nile. The *lamsh* is enclosed by two tall sand mounds which serve the purpose of holding it in place. To that (other) mound to the north runs an embankment section over a length of 372 cubits, at which point it is joined by a levee that continues in a straight line eastward and is built of stone; its length in a straight line east is 100 cubits. (The main embankment) then becomes lower, too, from the point where it connects with that other levee, for a length of 20 cubits and with a height differential of two cubits. That low section one closes also with a grass dike called the *lakand* (?). The length of the remaining embankment up to its northern terminus is 136 cubits, with the same length on the opposite side.

6. The Egyptian *dhirāʿ al-ʿamal*, like the “Hashemite” cubit, measures 66.5 cm.

7. Thus HC and the Wiet text (Bulaq: *libsh*). The word, presumably Coptic, is unknown to me. Perhaps the Coptic *libsh* (bushy plant growth) should not be dismissed entirely.

Some parts of it are paved with flagstones, and it has a stone aqueduct which in ancient times used to carry water to the Fayyūm from the old canal near which today is the retention area; it had lock gates and consists of ten ancient arches. Thus, the total measurement of the larger embankment from end to end is, in terms of practical cubits, 672 cubits, without the transverse levee running from west to east. This main embankment runs in both directions until it reaches the hills (on either side). One can see its ancient structure running in an irregular line through the farmland. Its width varies. The closer one gets to its surface, the narrower it becomes, and its width on top, despite what it appears at the bottom, is altogether 16 cubits. It has culverts through which the water can run out; they are drain pipes of speckled enamel-like blue and reddish glass. It is one of the superior wonders with regard to grandeur and solidity of construction, because it ranks with the Lighthouse of Alexandria and the Pyramids. It is part of its miraculous nature that the Nile has passed alongside it from the time of Joseph, peace be upon him, until the present day and yet it has never deteriorated from its original design.

In our time, the water gets from that large canal (i.e., the Manhā canal) to Madīnat al-Fayyūm by way of the Great Fayyūm Canal between the two estates known as *Dumūh*⁽⁸⁾ and *al-Lāhūn*. From this canal comes the water of these two estates, and of others, through surface irrigation, and also irrigation water for their vineyards by means of large waterwheels operated by yoked oxen. If the Nile fails to rise high enough to reach their farmland, the latter is irrigated from that canal by means of water-carrying oxen and then sown.

One then comes on the Great Canal to a canal known as *Khalīj al-Awāsī*. There is no particular procedure attached to it for closing and opening and for regulating (the water flow). It leads to the estate known as *Bayāḍ*⁽⁹⁾ and fills its pool and others like it. These pools have distributor canals, each receiving from them its sufficiency and the share of water assigned to it. The canal then reaches the estate known as *al-Awsīyah al-Kubrā*, which gets its share of water from the Awāsī canal by means of two distributor canals of its own. There is a sluice gate to service the estate, whose palms and trees receive their water from it. There is a water mill at that point. Next,

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8. Modern-day *Hawwārit 'Adlān*, southwest of al-Lāhūn (cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 3:103), the *Dumūh al-Lāhūn* of Ibn Mammātī (*Qawānīn* 139), given as *Dumūh Illahūn* by Ibn al-Jī'ān (*Tuhfah* 166). —Wiet: *D^m*wayh* (also, erroneously, “al-Lāhūn”); Bulaq: *Damūnah*.
 9. An ancient village of *Sayalah* (Ibn al-Jī'ān, *Tuhfah*, 153), now vanished. Yāqūt (3:315) mentions it together with *Shānah*.

the Awāsī canal comes to three distributor canals at the end of which is the estate known as *Marṭīnah*.⁽¹⁰⁾ Of these side canals, one serves that estate and another several tax farms; the third irrigates one of the date-palm stands. This stand has irrigation ditches and orchards, now desolate, and is surrounded on all sides by sycamore trees; it used to have dwellings in the open spaces between the palms. The canal then reaches a second stand just like the first. Next, it comes to the estate known as *al-Khīrbah*, whose pool it feeds, and then to three distributor canals in a row, with an abandoned main canal above them; several estates receive their water from those side canals. Finally, the water of the Awāsī canal reaches *al-Baṭs*,⁽¹¹⁾ where the canal ends.

Along the Great Fayyūm Canal there are after that alluvial-deposit fields which receive their water from the canal by surface irrigation through individual heads. When the Nile recedes, nets are set up over their heads for catching fish. The Great Canal then reaches, on the right of someone headed for (Madīnat) al-Fayyūm, a main canal known as *Samastūs Canal*.⁽¹²⁾ From it comes the water supply of Samastūs and other villages, and of alluvial-deposit fields along the edge of the desert to the east and south of it; these lie between this canal and the Awāsī canal. The Great Canal then reaches also the *Duhālah Canal* which supplies water to several estates; along its banks one grows rice and other crops. Next, the Great Canal comes to three more canals and then to the *Tanbaṭāwah Canal*.

This canal has three ancient sluice gates dating from Joseph's time, each two cubits—in terms of practical cubits—wide. The water passes through (the first gate) and makes its way to two more ancient gates. The procedure followed on that canal is like that of all secondary canals: It is closed on the eve of the 10th of Hātōr (18/19 November) until the end of that month; it remains open from the beginning of Kiyahk until the 20th of that month (29/30 December); it is then closed again until the 10th of Ṭūbah (17/18 January) and opened again on the eve of Baptism Day⁽¹³⁾ until the end of Ṭūbah; next, it is closed at the beginning of Amshir (7/8 February) until the 20th of that month and then opened from the 20th of Amshir (26/27

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10. Modern-day *Kafr Fazārah*, near Tirsā, in the northern Fayyūm district of Sannūris (Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, II, 3:114); spelled *Mardīnah* by Ibn Mammātī (p. 191).
 11. Modern-day *Ṭamiyyah* in the district of Sannūris (Ramzī, II, 3:113). Ibn Mammātī (p. 191): *Munyat al-Baṭs*; Ibn al-Jī'ān (*Tuhfah* 158) erroneously: *Munyat al-Baṭṭ*.
 12. Ibn Mammātī (p. 230): *Khalij Samṭūs*. Neither reading can be corroborated.
 13. The Coptic *ʿId al-Ghiṭās*, commemorating the baptism of Christ, on the 18th or 19th of January.

February) until the 10th of Baramhāt (18 March); it then remains open until the 10th of Barmūdah (17 April), after which the water flow is regulated on the spot. (Although) the estates on the north side of the canal are now waste, several villages still receive their share of irrigation water from it. This canal has a man-made catchment in a tunnel below the mountain through which the water runs off when the flood level is very high.

The Great Canal then reaches the *Dalah Canal*,⁽¹⁴⁾ which is also a secondary canal. Its schedule for closing and opening, water regulation and demarcation is like the foregoing. It is on the left of someone headed for the city (i.e., Madīnat al-Fayyūm) and has two sluice gates dating from the Joseph's time, built of stone, each two cubits and a quarter wide. Several key estates and others receive their irrigation water from it. Halfway up its course is an overflow drain for flood times which one opens so that the water can run off into the great reservoir. On the far end of that reservoir is another drain with sluice gates that are said to have been of iron. When the water rises in the reservoir, the gates are opened and the water runs off westward; some people have said that it runs toward Santariyyah (the Sīwa Oasis). Along these two canals used to be numerous garden plantations and vineyards which were irrigated by means of water-carrying oxen.

The Great Canal then reaches the *Khalij al-Majnūnah*, the "Canal of the Crazy Woman"; it was so named because of the enormous quantity of water that flows into it. Its schedule for closing, etc., is the same as the one mentioned earlier. It provides irrigation for many estates and drives mills. The excess water of the estates on the south side flows into it, and also into a pool on the far side of Madīnat al-Fayyūm next to the hill known as Abū Qatrān, where it joins the run-off water from the estates on the north side, thus forming the great reservoir (mentioned above).

The Great Canal then reaches the *Shallālah Canal*.⁽¹⁵⁾ It has two sluice gates dating from Joseph's time, [sturdy, built of stone,]⁽¹⁶⁾ each two cubits and two-thirds of a cubit wide. It has no particular procedure for closing and opening, water regulation and demarcation, except when the Nile's rise falls short, for its demarcation is done with grass. Various parts of Madīnat al-Fayyūm receive their share of water from it, as do a number of lands and estates. On it is the mouth of the canal of al-Baṭṣ, into which flows the excess water. It has sluice gates which are closed so that a given quantity of

14. Ibn Mammātī (p. 230): *Khalij Dalāyah*.

15. So HC (*Tablālah* in Wiet; Bulaq: *Talālah*). *Shallālah* was a village of Sannūris; cf. Ramzi, II, 3:110 "al-Ka'ābi al-jadidah."

16. Passage in square brackets in the Bulaq text only.

water will rise to the level of elevated tracts of land. When something happens to the dam, it is the estates that receive their water from it which must come up with the repair costs, proportionately to their importance.

The Great Canal then comes to several canals on its southern and northern banks and eventually reaches the *Bamawiyah Canal*,⁽¹⁷⁾ which is on the right of someone headed for Madinat al-Fayyūm. It is a secondary canal and has two sluice gates dating from Joseph's time, each two and a half cubits wide. Its schedule (for closing, etc.) is as mentioned before. Many people and a number of estates get their water from it. It leads to four distributor canals with sluice gates, and to a canal with a drain spout over which the water runs off. After that the Great Canal comes to canals that bring irrigation to many estates, among them the *Tabdūd Canal*,⁽¹⁸⁾ which contains a sweet-water spring. When that canal is closed, the land around that spring receives its irrigation from it. The spring was discovered at a time when there was no water and people dug down on that spot to make a well, whereupon that spring came to light, and people found it sufficient. The Great Canal finally reaches a number of canals with drain spouts and ancient distributor canals dating from the time of Joseph, as well as sluice gates of the same vintage, with particular schedules for closing and opening. A great many estates get their water from them.

The procedure followed in the case of irrigation canals is as follows: All of them are closed on the eve of the 10th of Hātōr until the end of that month; they are opened on the eve of the first day of Kiyahk for twenty days; they are closed from the 20th of Kiyahk until Baptism Day and opened on Baptism Day until the end of Tūbah; then they are closed on the eve of the first of Amshīr for twenty days, then opened on the 20th of Amshīr until the 20th of Baramhāt, and then opened again on the 10th of Barmūdah. After that the water distribution of the canals is regulated, and attention is turned to the land under cultivation they service. In this adjustment process, the people involved go by a (system of) distribution in which each area is given its fair share of water in accordance with traditional rules they have.

I have cut down on the names of the estates he mentions because most of them are now in ruins. God alone knows the truth.

17. Cf. Ibn Mammātī (p. 230). Wiet: *B*m*w*h*; Bulaq: *S*m*w*h*. —*Bamawiyah* is the modern-day *Sanhūr* in the district of Sannūris (Ramzī, II, 3:112). Ibn al-Jī'ān lists it as "Bamawiyah and Sanhūr."

18. So the Wiet and Bulaq texts; Ibn Mammātī: *Tandūd*, of uncertain reading. Perhaps *Bandīq*, a vanished village of Sannūris (Ramzī, I, 170)?

84. The Conquest of the Fayyūm, the Amount of Its Land Tax, and the Tangible Benefits Found There

[1] Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam transmits:⁽¹⁾ (From Sa‘īd ibn ‘Ufayr and others:) —After the conquest (of Babylon) by the Muslims, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ sent cavalry detachments to the surrounding villages. But for a whole year, the Fayyūm remained unknown to the Muslims, until a man came to them and told them about it. ‘Amr then sent with the man Rabī‘ah ibn Ḥubaysh ibn ‘Urfuṭah al-Ṣadafī. As (the Muslims) made their way through the desert, they did not see anything and were about to call it quits, when some people said, “Don’t be hasty, keep on going! If the man lied, you are still eminently capable of accomplishing what you have set out to do.” And indeed, they had not gone very far when they saw the farmland of the Fayyūm before their eyes. They attacked the place, but (the inhabitants) had no fighting spirit and surrendered.

According to others, it was Mālīk ibn Nā‘imah al-Ṣadafī—he is the owner of *al-Ashqar*⁽²⁾—who set out on his horse to reconnoiter the desert, without the slightest knowledge that the Fayyūm lay on the other side of it. And when he saw its farmland, he returned to ‘Amr and informed him of it.

There is yet another version: ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ sent Qays ibn al-Ḥārith to Upper Egypt, and he marched until he reached al-Qays. He

1. *Futūḥ Miṣr* 115; also cited by al-Suyūṭī (*Ḥusn al-muḥāḍarah* 1:143). —Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s account, which puts the discovery, if not the conquest, of the Fayyūm in the middle of the year 642, is contradicted by a source much closer in time to the events, namely, John, the Coptic bishop of Nikiou, who reports a Muslim raid into the Fayyūm in May 640, four months before the beginning of the Muslim siege of Babylon (cf. A.J. Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt*, 218-25).

2. That is, the famed “Ṣadaf roan” mentioned earlier (II, 13, sect. 4).

camped there, and the place was then named after him “al-Qays”.⁽³⁾ Since news of Qays’ whereabouts were slow in coming to ‘Amr, Rabi‘ah ibn Ḥubaysh, exclaiming, “You have been waiting long enough!” got on his horse—it was a female—and, after crossing the Nile against ‘Amr’s wish, brought him the news. It is said that he crossed over from the Sharqīyyah⁽⁴⁾ and eventually wound up at the Fayyūm, and his horse was called *al-A‘mā*. God alone knows the truth.

[2] Ibn al-Kindī says in his “Merits of Egypt”: And there is the district of the Fayyūm, which consists of three hundred and sixty villages, all planned in the number of the days of the year and never lacking irrigation. If the Nile falls short in some year, the land of Egypt is still supplied with food each day by a (different) village (of the Fayyūm). In the whole wide world there is no construction by divine inspiration other than this district, nor is there in all the world a region more precious, more fertile, more abundant in resources, and with more copious canals. Were we to compare the waterways of Baṣrah and Damascus with those of the Fayyūm, we would certainly come out ahead. A group of sensible and knowledgeable people (tried to) count the benefits and resources of the Fayyūm, and they turned out to be uncountable. So they abandoned that approach and counted instead that which is ownerless there, such things as are owned neither by a Muslim nor by a non-Muslim and are exploited by no one, and even these turned out to of over seventy categories.

[3] Ibn Zūlāq reports in his “Supplement to al-Kindī’s ‘Governors of Egypt’”: In that year—he is speaking of the year 356 (A.D.

3. See above, ch. 45.

4. Short for *Sharqīyyat Itfīh*, a very old *kīrah* extending from Turā (south of Fustāṭ) to Shārūnah (in the modern-day district of Maghāghah); cf. Ramzī, *Qāmūs*, I, 74. —The point of this detail seems to be that the river crossing was done for the first time south of the capital, thus leading to the discovery of the Fayyūm, which had escaped the attention of the Muslims because their crossover point until then was Umm Dunayn to the north of Babylon.

967)—the Fayyūm guaranteed to Kāfir al-Ikhshīdī (delivery of) six hundred and twenty-and-some thousand dinars (in taxes).⁽⁵⁾

[4] Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, from whose autograph I copy, reports in the “Mutajaddidāt al-ḥawādith”: The Fayyūm delivered in 585 (A.D. 1189) the amount of 152,703 dinars (in taxes).

[5] And al-Bakrī relates: The Fayyūm, as is well known thereabouts, yields 2,000 *mithqāls* in gold per day.

5. Ibn Zūlāq's informant is one Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ṭarkhān, called *al-Kātib* (the secretary) by Yāqūt (4:287), “gouverneur du Fayyūm” by Wiet (note 15); Yāqūt also gives the year as 355.

85. The Town of al-Naḥrīriyyah⁽¹⁾

[1] It was (originally) land given in fief to ten *ḥalqah* troopers, one of them being Shams al-Dīn Sunqur al-Sa‘dī. The latter took a piece of its agricultural land and converted it into a stable for his animals and horses. His partners complained about him to the Sultan, al-Malik al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, who asked Sunqur about the matter. He said, “I intend to make it a Friday mosque,” and the Sultan gave him permission to do so. He began with its construction late in 683 (early 1285), and it was eventually completed in ‘85 (1286). The Sultan donated a pulpit for it and Friday services were, and are to this day, conducted there. Around the mosque, al-Sa‘dī had shops built which remained in his possession until his death. They were inherited by his two sons, Ghars al-Dīn Khalīl and Rukn al-Dīn ‘Umar, who sold them some time later to the Amīr Shaykhū al-‘Umārī. He then made them part of his endowment for the Sufi convent and the mosque he built at the street from the Ṣalībāh of the Ibn Ṭūlūn Mosque⁽²⁾ outside (Fāṭimid) Cairo. And so that land was built up thanks to the construction of the mosque and people settled on it, and (al-Naḥrīriyyah) became one of the rural towns of Egypt, since the looms of the silk weavers there reached a sizable number.

[2] Sunqur al-Sa‘dī rose from the ranks and eventually became an emir and was appointed chief of the Royal Mamluks. In 715 (A.D. 1315), he built outside (Fāṭimid) Cairo the Sa‘diyyah college⁽³⁾

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1. See also above, ch. 62, where Maqrīzī has already devoted a brief section on that town.
 2. That is, present-day *Shāri‘ Shaykhūn*, the eastward extension of Shāri‘ al-Ṣalībāh on the other side of Shāri‘ al-Suyūfiyyah, which separates the Mosque of Amīr Shaykhū (on the northern side) and his Khānqāh and Qubbah across the street.
 3. *Al-Madrasah al-Sa‘diyyah*, on the Shāri‘ al-Suyūfiyyah due west of the Sultan Ḥasan Mosque.

near Ḥidrat al-Baqar in the area between the Citadel and Birkat al-Fil. He also built a convent for women. He was an avid builder, keenly interested in agriculture, rich, a man of conspicuous wealth. Later on, he was forced to go to Tripoli (in Lebanon), where he died in 728 (A.D. 1328).

86. The Chronology of Mankind

One should be aware that events had to be determined precisely, and fixing the relation between the ages and the times of events could be done only by means of a commonly used chronology accepted by the community, or the majority of it. That is to say, the agreed-upon way of dating is only in relation to some important event that everyone remembers. The annual rise and fall of the Nile, for instance, are taken into account by the Egyptians, who reckon their respective occurrences in terms of the Coptic months. Likewise, the times for (collecting) the land tax in Egypt are figured by them the same way. And in like manner, in determining the times for planting the land they resort to the days of the Coptic months, a practice in which they have followed the way of their ancestors and emulated the methods of their ancients. Since times immemorial, people have remained the slaves of habits.

The time has come in this book to present an overview of the ways mankind has kept track of time so that the relative position of the chronology of the Copts becomes clear, for such a discussion serves to achieve the purpose (of the book). So I say:

The term *ta'rikh* stands for a day to which whatever comes after it is brought into relation; one also says that *ta'rikh* means a given period of time which is reckoned from the beginning of an assumed time so that one will know specific time-sections by it. Dating is indispensable in all secular conditions and religious affairs, and every nation of mankind has its own peculiar chronology, distinct from that of every other nation, which it requires in its dealings and transactions and for knowing the signal times in its history.

The first, and best known, of ancient beginnings is the fact that there is a beginning of mankind. But as to how it came about and the way to date from it, there is among the People of the Book—

Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians—a degree of disagreement unlikely to be found in other chronologies. Besides, all knowledge pertaining to the beginning of creation and the conditions of bygone ages is shot through with falsifications and legends on account of the length of time and the inability of those concerned with it to remember it. God Almighty and Exalted has said: “*Has there not come to you the tidings of those who were before you—the people of Noah, Ad, Thamood, and of those after them whom none knows but God?*”⁽¹⁾ It is therefore better to accept of it only what is attested by a book sent down by God, which can be depended on to be true, will not contain abrogation, nor be affected by alteration or an account transmitted by authorities.

When we examine chronology, we find there much difference among the nations. Of that I shall now relate to you something which I do not believe you will find collected in any one book, and I shall preface this disquisition with what has been said about the duration of the world.

1. Koran 14 (Abraham):9-10.

87. What Has Been Said about the Age of This World, Past and Remaining

[1] One must know that mankind has been in disagreement, in ancient as in modern times, over this question.

Certain people of the early ancients, namely the Materialists, were proponents of cycles and revolutions. Those are the ones who hold that all created beings return after calculable thousands of years to the way they were before, whereby they were mistaken as to the length of the astral revolutions. More precisely, they found certain people among the Indians and Persians who had worked out revolutions of the stars in order to determine with them by calculation the positions of the stars at any given time. These assumed that the number common to all of them is the reversion of the years, or days, of the world, and that every time that number has elapsed, all things return to their original state. Many people fell in with this assumption, people like Abū Ma'shar and others, and these, in turn, were followed by a lot of other people. You will understand the fallacy of that assumption if you know something of this number. Namely, when you look for a common number by means of several known numbers, you can set down for every astronomical table known times, the way the Indians and Persians did. These, not knowing how things really work in those revolutions, assumed that the latter are the number of the days of the world. Once you grasp (that), you are on the right way. In the opinion of those people, a *dawr*, or revolution, is the departure of the stars from a certain point as they travel until they have returned to that same point, and a *kawr*, or cycle, is the beginning by the stars in revolutions of another movement until they have returned to their (original) positions, time after time. The proponents of that doctrine claimed that the revolutions are reducible to five kinds: first, the revolutions of the planets in their orbital spheres; second, the revo-

lutions of the centers of the orbital spheres within their supporting spheres; third, the revolutions of their supporting spheres within the zodiac; fourth, the revolutions of the fixed stars within the zodiac; and fifth, the revolutions of the all-surrounding sphere around the four elements (of the universe). Of the revolutions just mentioned, some take place once in a long time and others once in a short time. The shortest of these revolutions are the revolutions of the all-surrounding sphere around the four elements, for that sphere performs one revolution every twenty-four hours. The remaining revolutions take place in other time spans longer than this one; there is no need for us to discuss them in this context. The revolutions of the fixed stars within the zodiacal sphere, those people claimed, take place once every 36,000 solar years, at which time the eccentric apogees and orbital nodes of the planets move to the positions of their perigee and novenary stations, and vice versa, and that necessitates, in their opinion, the return of all created beings to their previous state in time, space, corporeal form, and manner of being without the difference of a single atom. But they are, with all that, in disagreement as to how many days of the world have elapsed and how many remain.

[2] The Indian Brahmans profess on that subject a strange doctrine which, according to what Master Abū 'l-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī relates on their authority in his "Mas'ūdi-an Canon,"⁽¹⁾ is as follows:

They call Nature by the name of a king called *Barāhīm* (Brahma) and claim that he is created, mortal, (existing) between a beginning and an end. His life span is like that of Nature one hundred "Brahma years", each year consisting of 360 days. The duration of a "day" equals the time span in which the spheres and stars turn to cause being and dying. This time span is the equivalent of the in-

1. *Al-Qānūn al-Mas'ūdī*, al-Bīrūnī's great work on astronomy dedicated to the Ghaznavid ruler Shihāb al-Dawlah Mas'ūd I (1031-1041). — On this section cf. E. Sachau, *Alberuni's India* (London 1888), I, chs. 32, 33; C.A. Nallino, *Raccolta di scritti editi e inediti*, V, 203-08.

terval between every two conjunctions of the seven planets at the beginning of Aries with their eccentric apogees and orbital nodes and amounts to four billion, three hundred and twenty million solar years, which is the duration of twelve thousand revolutions of the fixed stars, the duration of a single revolution being 360,000 solar years. The name for this day in their language is *kalpa* (eon). The duration of their night is like that of the day. During the night, the moving things are in repose and Nature rests from causing being and dying, only to bestir itself again with movement and creation at the beginning of the second day. Hence, the duration of the nychthemeron is eight billion, six hundred and forty million human years. When we multiply that by three hundred and sixty, then the number of years in terms of Brahma days comes to three trillion, one hundred and ten billion, four hundred million solar years. And when we multiply that number by one hundred, then the life span of the Brahma king personifying Nature comes, in terms of human years, to three hundred and eleven trillion, forty billion solar years. At the completion of these years, the world ceases to move and to create for as long as God wills and then begins anew in the state just described.

They divided the duration of a (Brahma) day discussed above into twenty-nine sections, every fourteen of which they called *nuwab*, or “epochs”, and the remaining fifteen *fuṣūl*, or “ages”, and made each epoch come between two ages and each age between two epochs, opening the series with an age before the (first) epoch, and so to the end of the complete period. The duration of an age is two-fifths of a *dawr*, or “era”,⁽²⁾ and an era is the one-thousandth part of the length of a Brahma day. When we divide the latter by one thousand, the duration of an era comes out as four million, three hundred and twenty thousand (human) years, and two-fifths of it, i.e., the duration of an age, is one million, seven hundred and twenty-eight thousand years, while the duration of an epoch in their

2. I.e., a *mahāyuga*, or “great cosmic age”.

system is seventy-one eras, amounting, in terms of human years, to 306,720,000 years.

They also divided an era into four sections:⁽³⁾ the first of them is the largest one and equals the length of an “age” discussed above; the second is three-fourths of an age and lasts 1,296,000 years; the third is one-half of an age and its duration is 864,000 years; and the fourth is one-fourth of an age, and one-tenth of an “era” discussed earlier, with a duration of 432,000 years.

Each one of these four sections has a name by which it is known. Their name for the fourth section is *kalikāla*. Because they maintain that they are living in its time, and that of the life of the Nature-King, according to the claim of their supreme sage called by them “Barahmakūt”,⁽⁴⁾ eight years, five months and four days have elapsed. We are now in the daytime of the fifth day of the sixth month of the ninth year. Six epochs, seven ages, twenty-seven eras of the seventh epoch, and three sections that is, nine-tenths—of the aforementioned era have already passed of the fifth day, and 3,179 years have gone by of the fourth section, meaning, from the beginning of *kalikāla* (i.e., the age of Kali) to the death of their great king Shakakāla,⁽⁵⁾ which occurred at the end of the year 388 of Alexander.

Indeed, said (Brahmagupta), we have learned of this time from divine knowledge which has come to us through our great heavenly

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3. Meaning, the four *yugas*, or “cosmic ages”, in Hindu mythical chronology: Krita, Tretā, Dvāpara, and Kali.
 4. That is, Brahmāgupta, the great Indian astronomer who, in 628 A.D., compiled “The Correct Book on Astronomy Ascribed to Brahma” (*Brahmāsphuṭasiddhānta*) for King Vyāghramukha; cf. Sachau, *op. cit.*, I, 153-5, II, 303-4; C.A. Nallino, *Raccolta*, V, 203-4.
 5. Cf. *Alberuni’s India*, II, 6, 359-60. Sachau translates the opening passage of the sixth chapter of Book I of the “Mas’ūdian Canon”: “Time is called *Kāla* in the language of the Hindus. The era most famous among them, and in particular among their astronomers, is the *Śakakāla*, i.e. *the time of Śaka*. This era is reckoned from the time of his destruction, because he was ruling (rather, tyrannising) over it (i.e. over that time). In this as well as in other eras it is the custom to reckon only with complete, not with incomplete or current years.”

prophets, generation after generation, in the course of ages and times. They maintained that at the beginning of every era or age or section or epoch, the times of the created beings are renewed and they move then from state to state, and that the time that has passed from the onset of the *Kalikāla* until the *Shakakāla* is 3,179 years, while the time gone by of the aforementioned day (of Brahma) until the end of the year 388 of Alexander is one billion, 972 million, 947 thousand, 179 years. Hence, the elapsed part of the life of the Nature-King until the end of that year is 26 trillion, 315 billion, 732 million, 947 thousand, 179 (human) years.

When we add to these the remainder of the Alexandrian calendar, after having subtracted the above years of it, then the elapsed part of the King's life will come out as the posited time. God alone knows the truth of that.

[3] The Khitan⁽⁶⁾ and the Uighur profess on that subject an even more astounding and outlandish doctrine than the Indians, according to what I have transcribed from the "Astronomic Table of Luminary Cycles,"⁽⁷⁾ a presentation excerpted from the books of the Chinese.

Namely, they rest the system of their years on three cycles. The first is called "decimal"; its duration is ten years, each of which has a distinctive name. The second is known as the "duodecimal cycle", which is the most current, especially in the land of the Turks; in it they call the years by the names of animals in the languages of the Khitan and Uighur. The third is a composite of the other two cycles and has a duration of sixty years; with it they chronologize the years and days of the world, and it plays for them the same role as

6. Arabic: *al-Khitā*, a Tungus people who, under their Liao dynasty, conquered and held an empire in N China (907-1123). —All comments and corrections in this section, translated by Gaston Wiet (IV, 309-11, Appendix), are drawn from Paul Pelliot's commentary on Wiet's translation (*ibid.*, 312-16).

7. *Zij adwār al-anwār*. No such work can be found. Wiet suggests as Maqriẓi's possible source the *Risālat al-Khitā wa-l-Īghur* of the Hispano-Arab astronomer Ibn Abī 'l-Shukr al-Maghribī (died between 1281 and 1291), a collaborator of Naṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) at the observatory of Maghārah.

do the days of the week for the Arabs and other peoples. The name of each of its years is a composite of the two names it has in the other two cycles, and the same applies to (the name of) each day of the year. This last cycle has three names, namely, “shānkwan”, “jūnkwan” and “khāwan”, and is, accordingly, at one time “major”, at another “median”, and at another “minor”.⁽⁸⁾ For the *shānkwan* cycle is called the major, the *jūnkwan* cycle the median, and the *khāwan* cycle the minor.

With the help of these cycles they arrive by speculation at the years and days of the world. They add up to 180 years, after which the three cycles begin another revolution. The beginning of the (present) major cycle coincided with the first month of the year 633 of Yazdgird.⁽⁹⁾ The name of that year is in their language “kāzah” (Chin. *kia-tzu*) and in Arabic *sanat al-faʿr*, the year of the rat. The first of Farwardīn of that year, in terms of Arab years, fell on a Thursday, which in their language is “tīn-jū.”⁽¹⁰⁾ From that day, and as a result of that manner of dating, one arrives at the beginnings of their years and days in the past and in the future. Their months are twelve, each of them having a name in the language of the Khitan and in that of the Uighur, which we need not discuss in this place.

They divide the nychthemeron into twelve parts, each called a “jāgh”.⁽¹¹⁾ Each *jāgh* consists of eight parts, each called a “kah” (Chin. *kʻo*). They also divide the nychthemeron into 10,000 “fank” (Chin.

8. The Chinese terms intended by Maqrīzī’s source are *shangyüan*, *chung-yüan* and *hsia-yüan*, the three “primordials” (*yüan*) adding up to 180 years with which the astrologers of the T’ang and Sung periods operate.

9. The Persian “era of Yazdgird”, last of the Sasanian shahs, consists of simple solar years of 365 days without fractions or intercalations. Its beginning is 16 June 632.

10. Chinese *ting-ch’ou*, which are indeed, as Pelliot demonstrates, the characters for the first Thursday of the new Chinese year (and beginning of a new triple cycle of 180 years). It does not correspond, however, to Thursday, the 1st of Farwardīn 633 (10 January 1264), but to the 22nd of that month, i.e. January 31.

11. Turkish *çağ* ‘time’, corresponding to Chinese *shih*.

fen ‘minute’), each comprising one hundred “*miyāw*” (Chin. *miao* ‘second’), so that each *jāgh* equals $833 \frac{1}{3}$ *fank* and each *kah* $104 \frac{1}{6}$ *fank*. They relate each *jāgh* to one of the twelve (animal) symbols (of the duodecimal cycle). Their nychthemeron begins at midnight and at the halfway point of the “*jāgh-i kaskū*” (Turk. *kesku* ‘rat, mouse’). The beginning and end of daytime changes according to the length and shortness (of the days), while a *jāgh* is always an even two hours. At midday one is at the halfway point of the “*jāgh-i yūnd*”.⁽¹²⁾

Every three lunar years they intercalate one month, which they call “*shiyūn*” (Chin. *jun*), in order to make sure, by embolism, that the beginnings of the solar years always fall in one and the same period in another year. (Thus) they intercalate eleven months in the course of every thirty lunar years. Their intercalary month does not fall in any specific time of the year, but may occur at any time of it. Each month has either thirty or twenty-nine days. It is not possible in their system that more than three consecutive months be complete (i.e., have 30 days), nor (does it allow) more than two (consecutive) incomplete months.

Their months begin on the day of conjunction, if the conjunction of the Sun and the Moon occurs during daytime; if this conjunction happens at night, then the beginning of the month falls on the day following the conjunction. The duration of a solar year is, according to their observations, 365 days and 2,436 *fank*. The year consists of twenty-four parts, each comprising fifteen days and 2,184 $\frac{5}{6}$ *fank*. Each of these parts has a name, and every six parts constitute a season of the year. The name for the first part of the year’s seasons is “*lijun*”;⁽¹³⁾ it begins always when the Sun is in the sixteenth degree of Aquarius. Likewise, the beginning of every

12. Turk. *yund* ‘unbroken mare’, the horse being the seventh animal in the duodecimal cycle.

13. Chinese *li-ch’un* ‘establishment of spring’, nowadays February 4th, with a possible fluctuation of a day on either side.

(other) season will at all times fall in the middle of the fixed zodiacal constellations.

The interval between the first day of *lijun* and the beginning of the sexagesimal cycle was in the above-mentioned year (i.e., 633 in the Yazdgird calendar) eleven days and 7,660 *fank*. The name of that first day is “yī-khāy” (Chin. *i-hai*); it occurred about twenty days after the beginning of the aforementioned Persian year. For the interval between the onset of *lijun* and the beginning of the (sexagesimal) cycle increases every year by the difference in length of the solar year and the cycle year, which is five days and twenty-four⁽¹⁴⁾ *fank*. When that number of days exceeds sixty, then the remainder is the interval in that year between *lijun* and the beginning of the sexagesimal cycle. This interval between the two increases every year by the difference in length of the solar year and the lunar year, which latter lasts 354 days and 3,672 *fank*. (Hence) the discrepancy between the two is ten days and 8,764 *fank*. When that number of days exceeds the duration of a median lunar month, which is 29 days and 5,306 *fank*, one subtracts that figure from it and reckons with the remainder.

Once you have learned this much about their way of reckoning, you should know that the life span of the world in their opinion is three hundred and sixty thousand “wan”,⁽¹⁵⁾ each *wan* being ten thousand years. Of that (total) until the beginning of the year 633 of Yazdgird, which marks (the start of) a “major”, or *shānk-wan*, cycle, have elapsed eight thousand, eight hundred and sixty-three *wan* and nine thousand, seven hundred and forty years. The overall time (of the world), therefore, is three billion, six hundred million years, or in figures: 3,600,000,000, of which have passed until said year eighty-eight million, six hundred and thirty-nine thousand,

14. So, erroneously, in all texts. It should read 2,436 *fank*, as in the preceding paragraph.

15. No such time period is known to the Chinese, according to Pelliot, who also dismisses the idea of a possible mistranscription of Chinese *yüan* (= 4,617 years).

seven hundred and forty years, in figures: 88,639,740. *To God belongs the Unseen in the heavens and the earth. To Him the whole matter shall be returned.*⁽¹⁶⁾

[4] The reason I have given a brief overview of the year-count of the Brahmans and another of that of the Khitan and Uighur, which, in turn, is derived from the Chinese way of calculating, is that a fair-minded person may realize that all of that was not worked out by their sages in vain and by going to any length in order to attain some goal. Many a man ignorant of mathematics, upon hearing what those people have to say about the duration of the world, will promptly put the lie to them without knowing what proof they have got to show for it, when the path of truth is, rather, to pause for a while over that which he does not know until he sees one of its sides and can weigh it against the other. Surely *God knows, and you know not.*⁽¹⁷⁾

[5] The proponents of “The Sindhind”—which means “endless course of time”⁽¹⁸⁾—say that the planets and their eccentric apogees and orbital nodes are all in conjunction at the beginning of Aries every 4,320,000,000 solar years, and that is the duration of the world. At the time of their conjunction at the beginning of Aries, those people say, the three created elements contained in the world of being and dying, which is summed up in the words “this life”, are destroyed; these kingdoms are the mineral, the veg-

16. Koran 11 (Hood):123.

17. Koran 16 (The Bee):74, and in other places.

18. Arabic: *al-dahr al-dāhīr*, an interpretation first offered by Šā‘id b. Aḥmad al-Andalusī, judge of Toledo (d. 1070), in his *Ṭabaqāt al-umam* (ed. Cheikho, 49); Mas‘ūdī (*Prairies d’or* 1:150) has *dahr al-duhūr* ‘time of times’.

Al-Sindhind is the Arabic name of the “Brahmasiddhānta”, the astronomical treatise in 25 chapters compiled in 628 by the Hindu astronomer Brahmagupta; al-Bīrūnī, who wrote a treatise on it, calls it the only source of information on Indian astronomy and astrology available to the Muslims (Sachau, *Alberuni’s India*, II, 191; for its contents cf. *ibid.*, I, 154-5). The Hindu original found its way through an Indian traveler to Baghdad, where it was translated on the order of the Caliph al-Manṣūr by the astronomer Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Fazārī (d. ca. 796). By “years of the Sindhind” (*sinū al-sindhind*) the Arabs designate the Brahman *kalpa* (Nallino, *Raccolta*, V, 206).

etable, and the animal. After their destruction, the sublunar world remains waste for a long time, until the planets and apogees and nodes disperse (again) in the zodiac. When that happens, being begins anew after destruction, and the sublunar world returns to its original state. Thus, it is a return after a beginning *ad infinitum*.

Each of the planets and apogees and nodes, they say, goes during that stretch of time through a number of cycles each of which is indicative of part of the (three) kingdoms, as this is all laid out in their books, something we need not deal with in this place.

The foregoing doctrine is taken from the teaching of the Brahmans discussed above.

[6] The proponents of the *hāzarwān*⁽¹⁹⁾ among the ancient Indians hold that every 360,000 solar years the world in its entirety is destroyed and remains so for a similar stretch of time after which it reverts itself and is followed by another in its stead, and so it will forever go *ad infinitum*. They maintain that of the above time of the world until Noah's Flood 180,000 solar years elapsed, and between The Flood and the Muḥammadan Hijrah 3,727 years, four months, and some days. Which leaves as the remaining years of the world, until it vanishes and disappears, one hundred and seventy-some thousand solar years, which begin with the date of the Hijrah, by which the Muslims establish their calendar.

[7] The proponents of the "Ārjabhar"⁽²⁰⁾ maintain that the time period of the world in which the planets, together with their apogees and nodes, are in conjunction at the beginning of Aries is the thousandth part of the time of the Sindhind (i.e., of the *kalpa*). This, too, is taken from the teaching of the Brahmans.

19. In Hindu astronomy, a cycle of 432,000 years, i.e., the ten-thousandth part of a Brahman *kalpa* (Nallino, *Raccolta*, V, 207, n. 2, p. 218).

20. So call the Arabs the astronomical treatise of the Indian mathematician and astronomer Āryabhaṭa (*fl.* end of the 5th century); cf. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, 218; Nallino, *Raccolta*, V, 223.

[8] Abū Ma'shar and Ibn Nawbakht⁽²¹⁾ say that some Persians believe that the age of the world is twelve thousand years, that is, the number of the signs of the zodiac, whereby each constellation has one thousand years. Thus the world began at the start of the millennium of Aries.

(Firstly) because Aries, Taurus and Gemini are called *ashrāf al-sharaf*, or 'most exalted', and are associated with the most complete virtue. During them, the Sun is in its exaltation⁽²²⁾ and later reaches its highest point and hence its longest day; likewise, the sublunar world is for three thousand celestial years spiritual and pure.⁽²³⁾

(Secondly) because Cancer, Leo and Virgo are "waning", for the Sun begins the decline from its highest point in the first minute of Cancer; consequently, the worth of the sublunar world and its creatures is on the decline during the second three thousand years.

(Thirdly) because Libra, the lowest dejection,⁽²⁴⁾ the "pit of pits", and the opposite of the constellation in which the exaltation of the Sun occurs, indicates a calamity to befall the sub-lunar world and its inhabitants turning to disobedience and rebellion. Once the Sun enters Libra, Scorpio and Sagittarius, it can only decline more and more and its days become shorter and shorter; for that reason, (the three signs) indicate afflictions, anguish, hardship, and evil.

When (their last) millennium has reached the beginning of Capricorn, during which the Sun begins to rise (again) and climb to its exaltation, the days increase in length, (which is followed by) Aquarius and Pisces, during which the Sun rises higher and higher (in the firmament) until it almost reaches its exaltation. During those three millennia are indicated the emergence of good and the

21. Abū Sahl al-Faḍl b. Nawbakht, Persian astrologer and translator, died *ca.* 815; cf. *Fihrist* 382 (transl. Dodge 651).

22. *Sharaf* ('dignity') is the astrological term for the position of a planet in the zodiac from which it exerts its maximal influence.

23. Read with the Bulaq text: *ṭāhīrah*; Wiet: *zāhīrah* (?).

24. *Hubūt* ('fall') in the terminology of the astrologers is the position of a planet in the zodiac from which it exerts its minimal influence.

waning of evil, steadiness of the faith, reason, doing right, justice, and awareness of the virtue of science and literature.

Thus, whatever happens is determined by the respective sign of the millennium, the century, and the decades, and is in accordance with the coincidental position of the planets at the inception of the reign of the sign of the millennium. This continues then to increase until the sublunar world in the end returns to pretty much the way it was at its beginning, which is the millennium of Aries. The closer the end of each of these millennia comes, the harder the times and the greater the number of trials and tribulations, because the end phase of a zodiacal sign falls within "misfortune and calamity"; the same applies to the end of centuries and decades. In this manner, there is no end to the sublunar world as long as time reverts to Aries the way it began in the first instance.

Some people have claimed that the beginning of creation *ex motu* happened while the Sun was at the beginning of its path, whereupon the firmament began to turn, the waters began to flow, the winds began to blow, Sun and Moon lit up, and all living creatures with all their good and evil began to stir. The ascendant at that moment was nineteen degrees of Cancer with Jupiter in it, while Saturn was in the fourth house, the House of Progeny, which is the constellation of Libra. The Cauda, or descendant node (of the Moon), was in Sagittarius, Mars in Capricorn, Venus and Mercury in Pisces, while the center of the firmament was occupied by the sign of Aries, with the Sun in the first minute of it. The Moon was in Taurus and in the House of Felicity, and the Caput, or ascendant lunar node, was in Gemini, which is the House of Distress. In that very minute of the hour happened the beginning of the sublunar world, and its good and its evil, its decline and its rise, and everything in it were henceforth dependent on the course of the constellations and stars and on the governance of the zodiacal signs, and other conditions of it.

The fact that Jupiter was in Cancer in its exaltation, and Saturn was in Libra in its exaltation, and Mars and the Sun and the Moon were

in their exaltations, indicated a momentous event. The birth of the world thus came about while Saturn was dominant and, together with Libra, governed that millennium. Jupiter was in the ascendant agreeable, and, likewise, all the planets were agreeable, which signified growth and sound development of the world. Saturn was the “lord” planet of the ecliptic and the sovereign in the firmament. The constellation has long rising times, and thus the people of that millennium lived long lives, their bodies were strong, and they had plentiful water. The fact that Libra was beneath the Earth signified that the first coming into being of the world was hidden, and that the people of that age would attend to cultivating the lands and to erecting edifices.

Next, the second thousand years were governed by Scorpio and Mars. In the ascendant was Mars, which signified killing during that millennium, and bloodshed, enslavement, injustice, oppression, fear, grief, corruption, and tyranny of the rulers.

The third thousand of years was governed by Sagittarius, joined by Mercury and Venus in their ascendancy, while the descendant node (of the Moon) was in Sagittarius. Jupiter signified intrepidity during that millennium, as well as strength, endurance, power, leadership, justice, the division of the sub-lunar world by the rulers, and bloodshed because of it; Venus signified the appearance of houses of worship and the coming of prophets; and Mercury signified the emergence of reason, refinement, and speech. The fact that the constellation is “double-bodied”⁽²⁵⁾ signified that there would be a reversal of good and evil several times during that millennium, and that various manifestations of truth and justice and of injustice would appear.

The fourth thousand of years was then governed by Capricorn, and it contained Mars, which signified the bloodshed during that mil-

25. Arabic: *mujassad*, designating any one of the four east signs of the zodiac which, as the Sun passes through it, shares the weather of both the outgoing and the incoming seasons.

lennium, while the Sun signified the emergence of good, of science, of the knowledge of God Exalted and worship and obedience to Him, of obedience to His prophets and of desire for the true faith, combined with courage and steadfastness. The fact that the constellation, together with the zodiacal sign with the Sun in it, is “reversible”⁽²⁶⁾ signified the reversal of all that at the end of the millennium and the emergence of evil, factionalism, repression, killing, bloodshed, and extortion⁽²⁷⁾ of many sorts, as well as changes and variations thereof, and the fact that Capricorn is “mixed” signified that at the end of that millennium there would appear a race of men conforming with the character of Saturn and Mars, and there would come the end and ruin of the mighty and the elevation of the lowly, desolation of civilized parts and cultivation of desolate parts, and much inconstancy of things.

The fifth thousand of years was governed by Aquarius with ascendancy of the Moon while it was in Taurus. Aquarius, because of its coldness and harshness, signified the fall and undoing of the mighty and the rise of the lowly and the slaves, commendable action by the misers, the emergence of the black race—black indicating⁽²⁸⁾ much investigation and thinking, the appearance of scholastic dogmatics in the religions and of disputatiousness. The fact that the Moon is in its exaltation signifies the defeat of kings and the rise of righteous governors, pervasiveness of good, the appearance of houses of worship, desistence from bloodshed, tranquility and happiness among the populace, and steady and long-lasting justice and welfare. The fact that the constellation is “aqueous” indicates abundance of rainfall, drowning, and a calamity caused by cold in which many would perish.

The sixth thousand of years is governed by the sign of Pisces with ascendancy of Jupiter and of the Caput, or ascendant node of the

26. Arabic: *munqalib*, designating a sign of the zodiac into whose first degree the Sun enters while a change of season takes place.

27. Read with the Bulaq text: *al-ghaṣb*; Wiet: *al-ghaḍab* (?).

28. Suggested emendation: *wa-'l-sawādu yadullu 'alā...*

Moon. It signifies praiseworthy comportment among people in general, righteousness, welfare, joy, disappearance of evil, and the good life.

(And so on.) Each of the planets governs for a thousand years, Mercury being the final one in the sign of Virgo.

Ibn Nawbakht claims that from the day the Sun set out on its path until the completion of twenty-five years of Anūshirvān's reign are 3,869 years, which puts the latter in the millennium of Capricorn and the reign of the Sun, and from there to the first day of the Hijrah are 87 solar years and 26 days.⁽²⁹⁾ From the Hijrah to the accession of Yazdgird are nine years and 337 days. Thus, that total until Yazdgird is 3,966 years.

According to Abū Ma'shar, certain people among the Persians have claimed that the age of the world is seven thousand years, in the number of the seven planets. Abū Ma'shar maintains (however) that the age of the sublunar world is 360,000 years, and that The Flood occurred halfway through that stretch of time at 180,000 years.

Certain people have said that the age of the world is nine thousand years, one thousand years for each of the seven planets plus the Caput and the Cauda of the Moon, the worst of them being the millennium of the Cauda, and that lives were long during the reign of the millennia of the superior planets (Saturn, Jupiter and Mars) and became shorter during the millennia of the inferior planets.

Other people have said that the age of the sublunar world is 19,000 years, in the number of the twelve zodiacal constellations, with one thousand years to each sign, and in the number of the seven planets, each with one thousand years. Certain people have claimed that the age of the sublunar world is 21,000 years, by adding one thousand years for the Caput and the Cauda respectively.

29. It is not clear how these figures can be reconciled, since the silver jubilee of Shāh Khusraw I Anushirvān's reign was in 556 A.D.

Still other people have said that the age of the world is 78,000 years, of which 12,000 years fall in the reign of Aries, 11,000 in the reign of Taurus, and 10,000 in the reign of Gemini; lives were very long during that quarter and time was very new. Next came the reign of the second quarter lasting 24,000 years, so that lives had to be shorter than they were during the first quarter. The reign of the third quarter is 15,000 years and the reign of the fourth quarter 6,000 years.

Some people have said that the time from Adam to The Flood was 2,280 years, four months, and fifteen days, and from The Flood until Abraham, peace be upon him, 942 years, seven months, and fifteen days, which makes it a total of 3,223 years.

Certain people among the Jews have claimed that the age of this world is 70,000 years which are comprised by one thousand generations. They concocted that from the words of Moses, peace be upon him, in his prayer: "Verily, a generation is seventy years,"⁽³⁰⁾ and from (God's) words in the Book of Psalms that God Exalted made a covenant with Abraham, peace be upon him, that humankind would last for one thousand generations.⁽³¹⁾ From that followed that the duration of the world is seventy thousand years. In support of this claim of theirs they adduced God's words in the Torah: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."⁽³²⁾

[9] Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī mentions in his "Akhbār al-zamān" on the authority of the ancients who said: There were on earth twenty-eight nations endowed with different souls, skills, strength and appearances, in the number of the Mansions of the Moon, one nation belonging to each Mansion after which that

30. Psalm 90:10: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten."

31. Cf. Psalm 105:8-9.

32. Deuteronomy 7:9.

nation was named. (The ancients) claim that those nations were governed by the fixed stars, which they used to worship.

[10] It is said that when God Exalted created the twelve constellations of the zodiac, He distributed the duration of their reign as follows: To Aries he assigned twelve thousand years, to Taurus eleven thousand, to Gemini ten thousand, to Cancer nine thousand, to Leo eight thousand, to Virgo seven thousand, to Libra six thousand, to Scorpio five thousand, to Sagittarius four thousand, to Capricorn three thousand, to Aquarius two thousand, and to Pisces one thousand years, which all adds up to seventy-eight thousand years. In the world of Aries, Taurus and Gemini, that is, for thirty-three thousand years, there was no animal life. Then came the world of Cancer, and the beasts of the water and the vermin of the earth came into being. During the world of Leo, which is nine thousand years after the creation of the beasts of the water and of the vermin, the quadrupeds, both wild and domestic, came into being. During the world of Virgo, which is exactly seventeen thousand years since the creation of the beasts of the water and of the vermin of the earth, and exactly eight thousand years after the creation of the quadrupeds, the two Original Humans, namely, Ādamānūs and Ḥayawānūs, came into being. The Earth was created in the world of Libra. But according to others, the Earth was created first and remained empty for thirty-three thousand years, without animal life and without a world of spirits. Then God Exalted created the beasts of the water and the vermin of the earth and everything thereafter in the way mentioned. At the end of twenty-four thousand years since the creation of the beasts of the water and the vermin of the earth, and exactly fifteen thousand years after the creation of the quadrupeds, and seven thousand years after the two Humans came into being, the birds were created.

[11] The time the two Humans and their offspring dwelled on earth is said to have been 133,000 years, of which fifty-six thousand belong to Saturn, forty-four thousand to Jupiter, and thirty-three thousand to Mars.

[12] It is said that the nations created before Adam, they were the first stock and numbered twenty-eight, corresponding to the Mansions of the Moon. They were created from various mixtures, all having water, air, earth and fire as their source, and their constitution varied.

One of them was a people that was created tall and blue-eyed, had wings, and spoke with a growl like that of the lion.

Another had the body of a lion and the head of a bird, was shaggy with long ears, and spoke with a roar.

Another had two faces, one in front and one in the back, had many legs, and spoke with the speech of birds.

One of them was a sickly people looking like dogs; they had tails and their language was an unintelligible snarl.

Another resembled human beings, but their mouths were in their chests, and they whistled when they spoke.

Another resembled half a man: they had one eye, one arm, and one leg with which they jumped, and they screeched like birds.

Another had faces like those of humans and the loins of turtles; they had long horns on their heads, and their speech was unintelligible.

Another was a people with round faces; they had white manes, tails like those of cows, their heads were on their chests, and they were hirsute and had an udder. They were all females, with not a single male among them, who were impregnated by the wind and gave birth to the likes of them. They had delightful voices, and many of those nations would gather about them because of their beautiful voices.

Another was shaped like black men, and their faces and heads were like those of ravens.

Among them was a people in the shape of vermin and insects, except that they had huge bodies and ate and drank like sheep.

And one of them was a people with faces like those of the beasts of the sea; they had tusks like those of swine and long ears.

It is said that those twenty-eight nations crossbred and became one hundred and twenty peoples.

When the Caliph 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, God be pleased with him, was asked if there were on earth before Adam creatures who worshiped God Exalted, he replied: Yes, indeed. God created the Earth and on it He created the jinn who untiringly praised and glorified God. They used to fly to heaven and meet with the angels, whom they would greet and ask about what was going on in heaven. But then some of them became rebellious and went against their Lord's command. They acted wrongfully on earth, attacking one another, and, denying God's lordship, became infidels and worshiped something other than Allah. They were so jealous of each other for power that they resorted to bloodshed, causing wickedness and evil on earth. As they fought more and more, some of them gained the upper hand over others. Meanwhile, those who obeyed God Exalted stuck to their faith, and Iblīs was one of the group that remained obedient to God and continued to praise Him. He would go up to the heavens, which he was not yet prevented from seeing, because of his perfect loyalty.

Tradition has it that the jinn were divided in twenty-one tribes, and that after five thousand years they chose as their ruler a king called Shamā'īl ibn Āris. After that they divided again and made five kings their rulers, and that way they remained for a very long time. Then they invaded each other's territories out of mutual envy, and there were numerous battles between them. At that point, God Exalted sent down against them Iblīs, whose name in Arabic is al-Ḥārith and whose *kunyah* is Abū Murrah, with a large host of angels. They defeated the jinn and killed (some of) them, and Iblīs became king on earth. But he became overbearing and a tyrant, and the well-

known incident of his refusal to bow to Adam⁽³³⁾ came to pass. After God had sent him down to earth, he dwelled in the sea and his throne was placed on the surface of the water. He was given carnal appetite and his seed was made the seed and eggs of birds.

The tribes of the diabolical jinn are said to number thirty-five: fifteen tribes fly through the air and ten tribes (go) with the flames of fire. Thirty tribes secretly listen to what is said in heaven. Each tribe has an appointed king who instigates their evil. Among them is a kind of demons who appear in the guise of beautiful women that marry human males and bear them children. Another is a kind in the form of snakes; when one of them is killed by someone, he will die instantly, and if it is a young snake, then his son or a loved one of his will die.

[13] (It is transmitted) on the authority of Ibn al-‘Abbās, God be pleased with him, who said: The dogs are jinn. When they see you eat, throw them some of your food, because they have souls—meaning, they bewitch with the evil eye.

[14] Tradition has it that the Earth was peopled with many nations, among them the Ṭamm and the Ramm, the Jinn and the Binn, the Ḥuss and the Buss, and that God after creating Heaven peopled it with the angels, and after creating Earth peopled it with the jinn. But the latter caused havoc and shed blood, and God sent down against them an army of angels who eliminated most of them, either killing or capturing them. Among the captives was Iblīs, whose name at that time was ‘Azāzīl. After he had been taken up to Heaven, he put himself out in (a display of) worship and obedience, in the hope that God would forgive him. When that did not happen to him at all, the angels were filled with despair. So God, with the intention of demonstrating to them the evil in his heart and the wickedness of his determination, created Adam and put Iblīs to the test by telling him to bow to him, in order to show to the

33. Cf. Koran 38 (Sad):73 ff.

angels his sinful pride and to bring to light such secret tidings as he had concealed from them.

[15] To the fact that the Earth was peopled before Adam with those who caused wickedness and evil upon it refer the words of God Almighty when He quotes the angels as saying, “*What, wilt Thou set therein one who will do corruption there, and shed blood?*”⁽³⁴⁾ By which they mean: as did those who were on earth before. But only God knows the intended meaning of it.

[16] Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Waḥshīyah states in the “(Nabatean) Agriculture” that he arabized that book and translated it from the language of the Chaldeans into Arabic, and that he found it to be the work of three ancient sages, namely, Ṣaghrit, Yan-būshād and Qūthāmā. The work was begun by the first, whose appearance falls in the seventh millennium of the seven thousand years of Saturn, which is the millennium during which Saturn was joined as a partner by the Moon. It was continued by the second, who appeared at the end of that millennium. And it was completed by the third, who appeared after four thousand of the seven thousand years of a solar cycle had passed. He says he investigated the interval between the time of the first and the third, and it was eighteen thousand solar years and part of the nineteenth thousand.

[17] The early Muslims, too, have been in disagreement about that question (of the duration of the world).

Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr transmitted from Ibn al-‘Abbās, who said: This world is a week of the world to come, where a day is one thousand years;⁽³⁵⁾ that makes it seven thousand years.

Sufyān (ibn ‘Uyaynah) related from al-A‘mash, who had it from Abū Ṣāliḥ, who said: Ka‘b al-Aḥbār said (the duration of) this world is six thousand years.

34. Koran 2 (The Cow):30.

35. Cf. Koran 22 (The Pilgrimage):47.

From Wahb ibn Munabbih, who said: “Five thousand and six hundred years have passed (so far) of this world, and I know indeed every age of it and the prophets that lived in each age.” When asked, How many (years then has) this world? he replied: “Six thousand.”

‘Abd-Allāh ibn Dīnār transmitted from ‘Abd-Allāh ibn ‘Umar (ibn al-Khaṭṭāb), God be pleased with him, who said: I heard the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, say: “Your term is, compared to the term of those before you, from the afternoon prayer to sunset.”

[18] In the tradition of Abū Hurayrah (the Prophet said): The *ḥuqb* is eighty years, one day of them is one-sixth of (the duration of) this world.

The word in question can be either *ḥiqab* or *ḥuqb*.

[19] Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Hamdānī says in “The Book of the Crown”: It seems this world is one of $4,723 \frac{1}{3}$ parts of the *ḥuqb*. The lunar year consists of $354 \frac{11}{30}$ days. If this world is six thousand years, and a day is one thousand years, then it is in terms of lunar years six million years (old). If we posit this as a part and multiply it with the parts of the *ḥuqb*, which are $4,723 \frac{1}{3}$, we get as the result 28 billion, 340 million years. And if (the age of this world) is a week of the hereafter, we add, together with this number, the equivalent of one-sixth of it, and that is then the number of the *ḥiqab* (time periods).

[20] Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī says⁽³⁶⁾ that the correct answer is that which is authenticated by a tradition that has come down to us (from the Prophet), and he adduces the words of the Prophet, “Your term is, compared to the term of those before you, from the afternoon prayer to sunset,” and his saying, “I and the Hour, we were sent like these two” motioning with his in-

36. *Tārīkh* 1:11-17/I, 9-15.

dex and middle fingers, and also the Prophet's pronouncement, "I and the Hour were sent together, it all but was ahead of me."

There is no question about it, says al-Ṭabarī, for the day's beginning is sunrise and its end is sunset, and it was correct on the part of the Prophet to say, 'Your term is, compared to the term of those before you, from the afternoon prayer to sunset.' And (as to) his words, 'I and the Hour were sent like these two'—motioning with his index and middle fingers: Now, the interval between the median times of the afternoon prayer and that (moment) when the shadow of every object becomes twice as long as the object itself is, upon investigation, one-fourteenth of the day, with a slight variation upward or downward. Likewise, the differential (in length) between the middle finger and the index finger is about the same (i.e., one-fourteenth). Equally correct is the Prophet's statement, 'It will surely not be impossible for God to make this nation last longer than half a day,'—meaning by half a "day" one which is a thousand years long.

Of the two sayings, one attributed to Ibn 'Abbās and the other to Ka'b (al-Aḥbār), the more apposite one is that of Ibn 'Abbās: 'This world is but a week of the world to come, (namely) seven thousand (years).' When that is so, and when we have it on the authority of Prophet that what was left of it in his own lifetime is half a day, that is, five hundred years—this being the half of one of the days of which a single one lasts one thousand years—then it is a given fact that the time which passed of this world until the moment of the Prophet's statement is six thousand and five hundred years, or approximately that.

We have also on the authority of the Prophet a tradition which implies the truth of the words of someone who said: 'The entire (duration of the) world is six thousand years.' Were the chain of authorities of that tradition sound, we would not bypass it in favor of another,⁽³⁷⁾ namely, the tradition of Abū Hurayrah which he as-

37. So the original (p. 17): *law kāna ṣaḥīḥan sanaduhū lam na'du 'l-qawla bihī ilā*

cribes to the Prophet: ‘The *ḥuqb* is eighty years, one day of them is one-sixth of (the duration of) this world.’ It is evident from this tradition that the entire world is six thousand years. That is to say, a day, which is one of the days of the world to come, corresponds to one thousand years of this world; a single day of (the *ḥuqb*) is one-sixth of (the duration of) this world; it follows that the total of this world is six thousand days of the world to come, in other words, six thousand years.

[21] Abū ’l-Qāsim al-Suhaylī⁽³⁸⁾ (on the other hand) states: The five hundred (years) from the Prophet’s death until today have passed, and more. Now, there is nothing in the Prophet’s words, ‘It will surely not be impossible for God to make this nation last longer than half a day, that precludes a longer period than this half (a day), nor is here in the Prophet’s words, ‘I and the Hour were sent like these two,’ any proof against the soundness of his—meaning, al-Ṭabarī’s—interpretation. And he conveyed in his interpretation something else, namely, that there is no prophet between Muḥammad and the Hour, nor a revealed law other than the Prophet’s, with the implication of the closeness of the time of the Hour, as shown by God’s words, “*The Hour has drawn nigh*”⁽³⁹⁾ and “*God’s command comes; so seek not to hasten it.*”⁽⁴⁰⁾ But, when we say that the Prophet was indeed sent in the last millennium, after years and years of it had already passed, and take a look at the letters of the alphabet at the beginning of the Koranic chapters, which we find to be fourteen letters, all contained in the (mnemonic) phrase *A-lam yuṣṭi‘ naṣṣa ḥaqqin kārihin* (‘has he not made manifest the text of a truth loathsome’), and then add up their numerical value

ghayrihī. Maqrīzī’s truncated version is unclear.

38. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd-Allāh, Hispano-Arab philologist and traditionist (1114-1185); cf. *GAL*² 1:525, S 1:733. —The section is a summary of al-Suhaylī’s argument in his commentary on Ibn Hishām’s *Sīrah* entitled *Al-Rawḍ al-unuf* (Cairo 1332/1914), 2:36.

39. Koran 54 (The Moon):1.

40. Koran 16 (The Bee):1.

in the traditional sequence of the alphabet,⁽⁴¹⁾ we get as the result nine hundred and three.⁽⁴²⁾ Now, God has named at the beginnings of the suras only these letters. It is therefore not unlikely that this is part of what the letters are intended to convey, since one of their uses is to indicate this number of years for the tradition advanced above of the seventh millennium in which the Prophet was sent. The calculation, however, could possibly be from (the date of) his prophetic mission, or from his death, or from his Hijrah. And whatever is close together, “*Already its tokens have come,*” but “*it shall come upon them suddenly.*”⁽⁴³⁾

[22] Tradition has it that (the Prophet) said: “If my nation does right, it will last for one day of the days of the other world, which is one thousand years, and if it does wrong, then half a day.” This tradition complements and explains the above tradition: The five hundred (years) have passed, yet the nation has survived.

[23] The astrologer Shādhān al-Balkhī⁽⁴⁴⁾ claimed that the religion of Islam would last for 310 years; the falsehood of his claim has already become evident, thank God.

Abū Maʿ shar said: There will be much controversy after the 150's of the Hijrah.⁽⁴⁵⁾

41. Arabic: *ʿalā ḥisābi ʿAbī Jadd*, a pun on *abjad* ‘alphabet’. Elsewhere Maqrīzī explains that, when speaking of a school boy who is still learning the rudiments of reading and writing, one says *huwa fi Abī Jadd*, as distinguished from *huwa fi ʿl-Qurʿān*, meaning one who has advanced to the study of the Koran (Ṭabarī, *Glossary*, Introductio p. 79, n. d).

42. Thus al-Suhaylī and the Bulaq text; it is their combined numerical value according to the western system (see *The Muqaddimah*, transl. Rosenthal, 2:205, n. 1014), whereas in the eastern system their total would be 693 (see sect. 24 below). In the Wiet text: 703 (disregard his n. 7).

43. Koran 47 (Muḥammad):18.

44. Abū Maʿ shad Shādhān b. Baḥr al-Balkhī, one of Abū Maʿ shar’s students. He is known only from his teacher’s *Mudhākarāt fi ʿilm al-nujūm* (Discussions on Astrology), which contains answers to questions asked by Shādhān (*GAL*² S 1:395, no. 15; *The Muqaddimah*, transl. Rosenthal, 2:214, n. 1044).

45. A somewhat puzzling prognostication for a man born about 161/778.

Jirāsh⁽⁴⁶⁾ relates: The astrologers informed (Shāh) Khusraw (I) Anūshirvān (531-578) of the (anticipated) rise to power of the Arabs and the emergence of (Muḥammad's) prophecy among them. They told him their proof was Venus, which was then in its exaltation, since Venus is the significator of the Arabs; the reign of their prophetic religion would last 1,060 years. (This was so) because the ascendant of the planetary conjunction indicating it was the sign of Libra, with Venus, its mistress, in its exaltation. Khusraw, he says, consulted his vizier Buzurgmihr about it, and he told him that royal authority would leave Persia and pass on to the Arabs; the leader of the Arabs would be born 45 years into the time of the planetary conjunction; and that the Arabs would take possession of the East and of the West, because Jupiter, the significator of Persia, already received the dominance of Venus, the significator of the Arabs, and the conjunction had moved from the airy triplicity to the watery triplicity and the sign of Scorpio of it, which is also the significator of the Arabs. These indications implied that the Islamic religion would last for the duration of the cycle of Venus, which is 1,060 years.

Theophilus the Byzantine, who lived at the time of the Umayyads,⁽⁴⁷⁾ said that the religion of Islam would last for the duration of the great conjunction, which is 960 solar years. When, after that period, the conjunction returns to the sign of Scorpio, as was the case at the beginning of Islam, and the conformation of the firmament will have changed from what it was at the beginning, then (the conjunction) will either be less effective or new (governances) will arise which will necessitate different assumptions.

46. Jirāsh b. Aḥmad al-Ḥāsib. Ibn Khaldūn says in the *Muqaddimah* (transl. Rosenthal 2:213) that he wrote a book for the Saljūq vizier Nizām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092); nothing else is known of him.

47. So Ibn Khaldūn (*Ibar* (Bulaq ed.) 1:281, *The Muqaddimah* 2:216), from whom this paragraph is taken almost verbatim. But Ibn al-Qifṭī (*Ikhbār al-ʿulamāʾ bi-akhbār al-ḥukamāʾ*, 109) and Agapius (*Patr. or.*, VIII, 525) place him in the time of the ʿAbbāsīd al-Mahdī. He is Theophilus of Edessa (d. 785), a Christian translator of Aristotle and al Mahdī's court astrologer.

(Jirāsh)⁽⁴⁸⁾ said: They are agreed that the destruction of the world will come about through the overwhelming power of water and fire so that all created beings will perish. That will happen after 960 solar years of the conjunction governing Islam have passed, when Regulus will have traversed 24 degrees of the sign of Leo, which is the field of Mars.

It is said that the king of Zābulistān—that is, Ghaznah—sent, among other gifts, a sage by the name of Dūbān⁽⁴⁹⁾ to ‘Abd-Allāh, the Caliph al-Ma’mūn. The Caliph was much impressed by the man and asked him how long the ‘Abbāsīd rule would last. Dībān informed him that the rule would elude his own children but would continue among the children of his brother (al-Mu‘taṣim), and that non-Arabs would gain control over the caliphate: first the Daylamites, who would then decline, and eventually the Turks would appear from the northeast and take possession of the Euphrates (region), (the territory of) the Byzantines, and Syria.

[24] Ya‘qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī⁽⁵⁰⁾ said that Islam would last 693 years.

[25] The jurist and learned traditionist Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Sa‘īd ibn Ḥazm,⁽⁵¹⁾ says: As to the disagreement of mankind regarding the establishment of time, the Jews say that this world is four thousand years old, the Christians give it five thousand years. As for us, that is, the people of Islam, we do not

48. So *The Muqaddimah* (loc. cit.).

49. Called “Dhūbān” by Ibn Khaldūn, who attributes the story to Jirāsh.

50. The famed “philosopher of the Arabs” (d. ca. 873). For a more detailed version of his pronouncement cf. *The Muqaddimah* 2:215; on the number 693 see n. 42, above.

51. The most prominent representative and spokesman of the Zāhirī rite, which he embraced in his mid-thirties out of personal dissatisfaction with the doctrines of the Malīkite and Shāfi‘ite schools. Born in 993 into a distinguished family of Cordova, he served as vizier of three Umayyad caliphs before withdrawing in midlife from political service altogether in order to devote himself to scholarship and writing. The range and quality of his literary output is awesome. He died in 1064 on his family’s country estate of Manta Lisham in the district of Niebla. See the article “Ibn Ḥazm” by R. Arnaldez in *EF*.

claim to have knowledge of a known number. Those who allege in that respect seven thousand years, or more, or less, profess something on which we have not a single authentic word from the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him. On the contrary, we have authentic traditions from him that contradict it.

Rather, we affirm that the world has an end in time known only to God Exalted, Who said, "*I made them not witnesses of the creation of the heavens and earth, neither of the creation of themselves.*"⁽⁵²⁾ And the Apostle of God, peace and blessings upon him, has said: "You are to me, in comparison with the nations before you, like a white hair on a black bull and a black hair on a white bull." This is (the expression of) a proportion. Anyone who reflects on it, knowing the number of Muslims and the proportion of the oecumene in their possession, which is the greater part of it, will realize that this world has so many (inhabitants) that only God Almighty can count them.

The same is true of the Prophet's words, "I and the Hour were sent like these two"—joining his two sacred fingers, the index finger and the middle finger, when we have an authentic tradition to the effect that God alone, and no one else, knows when the Hour will come. The truth is that the Prophet merely meant to show the extreme closeness (of the two events), not how much longer the middle finger is compared to the forefinger. For, had he intended the latter, he would have taken the proportion between the two fingers and brought it in relation with the finger's length, and by that one would learn when the Hour will take place, which is obviously futile.

Also, the Prophet's comparison of us with those before us as "a hair on a bull" would be a falsehood, and God protect us from that! The truth is that the Prophet merely intended to show the extreme closeness (of the Hour). Since the Prophet received his mission,

52. Koran 18 (The Cave):51.

over four hundred years have passed, and God alone knows how long this world will last. If this great number is without comparison to that which preceded, because it is so little and insignificant in relation to what is past, then that is precisely what the Prophet said, namely, as compared with those who have gone down in history, we are like “a hair on a bull” or “a black branding spot on the shank of a donkey.” I saw in the autograph of the Amīr Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd-Allāh ibn al-Nāṣir⁽⁵³⁾ where he says: “I was told by Muḥammad ibn Mu‘āwiyah al-Qurashī⁽⁵⁴⁾ that he saw in India a Buddha that was 72,000 years old.” And Maḥmūd⁽⁵⁵⁾ ibn Sabuktakīn (Subuktegin) found in India a city where people reckon time in terms of 400,000 years.

All of this, says Abū Muḥammad (Ibn Ḥazm), must of needs have an end and a beginning before which nothing of the world existed.⁽⁵⁶⁾ *To God belongs the Command before and after.*⁽⁵⁷⁾

53. Spanish Umayyad prince, the son of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III al-Nāṣir. He was put to death by his father in 951 on suspicion of plotting the Caliph’s deposition.

54. So the Bulaq text, i.e., the Hispano-Arab traditionist known as “Ibn al-Aḥmar” (d. ca. 975). The Wiet text has Muḥammad ibn *Ma‘wiyah*, who could be an unknown Spanish (?) Arab traveler in India.

55. As in the Bulaq text, i.e., the Ghaznavid sultan (971-1030). Wiet: *Muḥammad*.

56. The translation follows the Bulaq text, which is grammatically correct.

57. Koran 30 (The Greeks):4.

88. The Eras of the Peoples Prior to the Coptic Era

[1] The term *taʿrīkh*, era, is a Persian word the origin of which is *māh-rūz*, which was then arabicized.⁽¹⁾

[2] Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Balkhī⁽²⁾ says in his “Keys to the Sciences”, a most valuable book: This is an unlikely etymology, were it not for the tradition we have to support it.

[3] Qudāmah ibn Jaʿfar says in his “Book on the Land Tax”.⁽³⁾ The *taʿrīkh* of any thing is its end, that is, its utmost limit in time. One says ‘So-and-so is the *taʿrīkh* of his people’, meaning, their nobility goes ultimately back to him.

One says both *warrakhtu ʿl-kitāb* ‘I dated the writing or letter’, with the verbal noun *tawrīkh*, and *ʿarrakhtu ʿl-kitāb*, with the verbal noun *taʿrīkh*. The former is dialectal usage of the Tamīm, the latter of the Qays.

Every kingdom and every religion has a *taʿrīkh*, or ‘era’.

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1. For the explanation of this implausible etymology see ch. 93, sect. 5, below. It is advanced with equal uncritical sureness by other writers of the time, such as al-Kāfiyājī (d. 1474) in his “Short Work on Historiography” (*Al-Mukhtaṣar fī ʿilm al-taʿrīkh*; cf. transl. F. Rosenthal in *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 133); al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497) in *Al-Tibr al-masbūk* (p. 3) — That the root *ʿ-r-kh* is of foreign origin as was already observed by Golius, who suggests Hebr. *yeraḥ* or Chaldean *yəraḥ* ‘month’ as the etymon; but more likely, considering the alternate root form *w-r-kh*, is J. Fück’s proposition of South Arabian *warkh* ‘month’ as its origin. In either case, *taʿrīkh* apparently meant originally ‘lunation’.
 2. The encyclopedist and author of the *Mafātīḥ al-ʿulūm* (ed. G. van Vloten, Leiden, 1895; Cairo 1349/1930) is more commonly known as “al-Khwārizmī” (d. 997; cf. *GAL*² 1:282 S 1:434).
 3. The quotation seems to come from his (lost) “History” (*Zahr al-rabīʿ*; cf. F. Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 204, n. 2) rather than his *Kitāb al-kharāj*. It is almost certainly drawn from the *Adab al-kuttāb* (Cairo 1341/1922, p. 178) of al-Ṣūlī (d. ca. 946; cf. *GAL*² 1:149 S 1:218), who cites for the dialectal distinctions the Baṣran lexicologist al-Aṣmaʿī (d. ca. 831; cf. *GAL*² S 1:163).

[4] The peoples (of the past) used to date at first by means of the era of the Creation, which means the beginning of human progeny from Adam, peace be upon him. Later they dated by The Flood, then by (the era of) Nebuchadnezzar, then Philippos, then Alexander, then Augustus, then Antoninus, and then Diocletian, from whose reign the Copts reckon their years. Then there was after the era of the Copts only the era of the Hijrah, followed by the era of Yazdgird. These are the eras of the well-known nations. But mankind has also other epochs which are no longer remembered.

[5] As to the date of the Creation—it is also called Inception of Human Progeny, and some call it Beginning of Motion—there is considerable disagreement among the People of the Book—Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians—as to what it is and how to establish the era from it.

The Magians and Persians say that the age of the world is 12,000 years, in accordance with both the number of the signs of the zodiac and of the months of the year. They claim that Zoroaster, the bringer of their sacred law, said that the time that passed of the sublunar world until his own coming is 3,000 years with an intercalation every fourth year. From the appearance of Zoroaster to the beginning of the era of Alexander are 258 complete years, which makes the time that passed from the beginning of the world until Alexander 3,258 years. But when we reckon from the beginning of the time of Gayomart, who is their Primal Man, and add up the reigns of every king after him—for their rule of kings is orderly and uninterrupted—then the figure for the time until Alexander is 3,354 years. Thus, the detail does not agree with the total.

Certain people have said that the three thousand (years) that passed are merely from the creation of Gayomart, because before him another thousand years passed during which the firmament stood still without motion, the physical world was unchanging, the Primal elements as yet unblended; being and dying did not exist in that time and the Earth was without life. When the firmament moved, Primal Man came about at midday and animal life was

born. Humankind procreated and reproduced, thus multiplying in number. The atoms of the elements mingled to bring about being and dying. The sublunar world became filled with life and the cosmos became ordered.

The Jews say that the time that passed between Adam and Alexander is 3,448 years, while the Christians say that the interval between the two is 5,180 years. They claim that the Jews made it shorter so that the coming of Jesus, Mary's son, peace be upon him, would fall in the fourth millennium at midpoint of the seven thousand years which, in their view, constitute the duration of the world, which would thus be at variance with that time which previous tidings from the prophets who came after Moses son of 'Imrān, peace be upon him, announced for the birth of Jesus the Messiah.

[6] When one adds up what the Torah in possession of Jews says about the time between Adam, peace be upon him, and The Flood, it comes out as 1,656 years, yet in the view of the Christians according to their Old Testament the time is 2,242 years. The Jews claim that their Torah is far from containing confusions, and the Christians maintain that the Septuagint in their possession was never corrupted or changed, yet the Jews say the opposite about it. The Samaritans claim that their Torah is the truth and everything else is false. There is nothing in their disagreement that is apt to put an end to doubt; on the contrary, it makes the motive for it all the more strong.

That very same disagreement exists among the Christians also with regard to the New Testament. That is to say, it has for the Christians four transcripts collected in a single book: one of them is the gospel of Matthew, the second of Mark, the third of Luke, and the fourth of John. Each of these four wrote a gospel in accordance with his missionary activity in his respective country. They differ considerably even with regard to the attributes of the Messiah, peace be upon him, the days of his (prophetic) mission, the time of

his alleged crucifixion, and also concerning his lineage. No such disagreement can be tolerated.

What is more, both the followers of Marcion and those of Bardesanes have an evangel which partially contradicts these gospels above, and the Manichaeans have a Gospel all of their own which contradicts everything the Christians believe from beginning to end; yet they claim that it is the true one and everything is false. They also have a gospel called “Gospel of the Seventy” which one ascribes to B**lām**s;⁽⁴⁾ the Christians and others reject it outright.

When disagreement among the People of the Book is such as you have just seen, and there is no way for analogical reasoning and subjective judgment to distinguish between what is true of it and what is false, then one can obviously not learn the truth of it from them and nothing they have to say about it can be trusted.

[7] As for people other than the People of the Book, they, too, are in disagreement on that question.

Athīnūs⁽⁵⁾ said: Between the creation of Adam and the night of Friday, the beginning of The Flood, are 2,226 years, 23 days, and four hours.

Māsha'allāh, whose (real) name is Manashshā Ben Athrā,⁽⁶⁾ the astrologer of al-Manṣūr and al-Ma'mūn says in his “Book of Conjunctions”: The very first conjunction took place between Saturn and Jupiter at the Beginning of Motion, that is, the beginning of human progeny from Adam, when 509 years, two months, and 24 days had passed of the millennium of Mars. The conjunction occurred in the

4. So al-Bīrūnī, from whose “Chronology of the Ancient Nations” this section, as also the preceding and following one, is taken. In the Bulaq text (1:259) and three of Wiet's mss.: *T*lām**s. Wiet's suggestion (n. 6) that the latter might be a corruption of *talāmidh* ‘disciples’ must be rejected on more than one ground.

5. Wiet's reading based on the configuration of the name—perhaps Athenaeus?—in the majority of his mss. Bīrūnī: *Ashīnūs*.

6. Jewish astrologer from Balkh, died 199/815; cf. *Fihrist* (transl. Dodge) 650-51 (where his name is given as *Mishā*); *GAL*² S 1:391.

sign of Taurus of the earthy triplicity at $7^{\circ} 42'$. The transition of the ecliptic from the constellation of Libra and its airy triplicity to the sign of Scorpio and its watery triplicity happened 2,412 years, six months and 26 days later, and The Flood occurred in the fifth month of the first year of the second of the conjunctions of this watery triplicity. Between the time of the first conjunction at the Beginning of Motion and the month in which The Flood occurred were 2,433 years, six months, and twelve days.

Every 7,002 years, ten months and six days, (someone) said, the conjunction returns to its position in the sign of Taurus as it was at the Beginning of Motion. This doctrine, my friend, is the one that became so well known that many of the adherents of the various religions came to assume that the duration of the sublunar world is seven thousand years. Be not deceived by it and pay attention to where it comes from: you will find it flimsier than a spider's web, so discard it.

Some people have said that between Adam and The Flood were 3,735 years, others that the time between the two was 2,256 years, and still others, 2080 years.

[8] The era of The Flood comes after the era of the Creation. There is so much disagreement about it that one loses all desire to find out its true nature, due to the disparity of views as to how much time there is between Adam and The Flood (on the one hand) and between The Flood and the era of Alexander (on the other). Suffice it to say that the Jews think that between The Flood and Alexander are 1,792 years, while in the view of the Christians the interval between the two events is 2,938 years.

[9] The Persians and the Zoroastrians in general,⁽⁷⁾ the “Kas-dānians” (or) Babylonians, the Indians, the Chinese, and the various nations of the East deny The Flood. Some of the Persians ac-

7. Part of this passage from al-Bīrūnī's “Surviving Monuments of Past Centuries” (E. Sachau, *The Chronology of the Ancient Nations*, 23-25) is quoted in I, 40, sect. 38.

knowledged its occurrence, but they said that The Flood was only in Syria and in the West and did not engulf the whole inhabited world; it drowned only some people, never got further than the mountainous barrier of Ḥulwān (Sarpol), and never reached the empires of the East. These people say that it happened during the time of (Shāh) Ṭahmūrath. The people of the West, when warned by their sages of The Flood, constructed monumental buildings, such as the two Pyramids in Egypt, and the like, in order to seek shelter in them when it was going to come. When Ṭahmūrath received word of the warning of The Flood, one Hundred and thirty-one years before its actual happening, he gave orders to select in his kingdom places with the right air and soil, and such were indeed found at Iṣfahān. Then he had the (books of) the sciences wrapped in skins and buried in the city in the safest of these places. This is attested by the mounds which were found at Jayy⁽⁸⁾ near the city of Iṣfahān in the 300's of the Hijrah—mounds which cracked open and revealed chambers filled with numerous sacks that had been filled with tree bast of the kind one uses to wrap around bows and which is called *tūz* (in Persian); (the strips) had writing on them which no one could identify.

It was the astrologers who proved (the number of) these years in relation to the first of the conjunctions of the two superior planets, Saturn and Jupiter, whose patterns were established by the learned men of the Babylonians and Chaldeans. The Flood came after all from the direction of their region, for the Ark came to rest on Jabal al-Jūdī, which is not far from those parts. The conjunction took place, they said, 220 years and 108 days before The Flood. By focusing their attention on that time period and establishing what came after it, (the astrologers) discovered that the interval between The Flood and the beginning of the reign of the First Nebuchadnezzar

8. A town two miles outside ancient Iṣfahān on the Zandarūd River, called "Shahristān" by the Persians in Yāqūt's time, hence "al-Madīnah" by the (Arab) traditionists (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 2:202). It is described as a depository of ancient writings already by Abū Ma'shar (cf. *Fihrist*, transl. Dodge, 576 ff.).

was 2,604 years, and between this Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander were 436 years.

And on that Abū Ma'shar based the median positions of the planets in his astronomical table. He argued: The Flood occurred at the time of the conjunction of the planets at the end of Pisces and the beginning of Aries; between the time of The Flood and the era of Alexander were 2,790 intercalated years, seven months and 26 days, and between it and Thursday, the first of Muḥarram of the first year of the Prophet's Hijrah, are 1,359,973 days, which is in terms of Perso-Egyptian years 3,725 years and 348 days. There are some who believe that The Flood took place on Friday, but in the opinion of Abū Ma'shar it happened on Thursday. Once the aforementioned total was established in his mind and he had come up with the time stretch called "cycle of the (fixed) stars", which, by their claim, is 360,000 solar years, of which the beginning predates the time of The Flood by 180,000 years, he decided that The Flood was at (the end of) 180,000 years. And so it will be ever after. But something like this one can accept only by reasoned argument or from an infallible Imam.

[10] As to the era of Nebuchadnezzar,⁽⁹⁾ it is based on Coptic years. One operates with it in computing the positions of the planets from the *Almagest* (of Claudius Ptolemy) and, secondly, the cycles of Valens.⁽¹⁰⁾ The first of the latter's cycles (began) in the year 418 of the era of Nebuchadnezzar; each cycle comprises 76 solar years. Valens was a great mathematician.

This Nebuchadnezzar is not identical with the one that reduced Jerusalem to ashes. Rather, he is another who lived 143 years before Nebuchadnezzar, the destroyer of Jerusalem. It is a Persian name which was originally *Bakht-i Narsī*, meaning 'he who weeps and

9. The section is a continuation of al-Bīrūnī's text (Sachau, *Chronology*, 27-29).

10. Arabic: *Fālis* (or *Wālis*), i.e., Vettius Valens, Greek astronomer during the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius (117-161); cf. M. Steinschneider, "Die arabischen Übersetzungen aus dem Griechischen", in *ZDMG*, L (1896), 342-3.

moans a lot.’⁽¹¹⁾ In Hebrew he is called *Naṣṣār*, which is said to translate as ‘Mercury while speaking’, because of his yearning for wisdom and sponsorship of its representatives. Later on (his name) was arabicized as *Bukhtu-Naṣṣar*.

As for the era of Philippos, it (too) is based on Coptic years. This way of dating is often used (counting) from the death of Alexander the Builder, of Macedon. One is the same as the other, for the one who came after The Builder was Philippos, so that it does not matter whether (the count) be from the death of the former or the rise of the latter, since the actual situation one dates from is, as it were, the dividing line shared between the two.

This Philippos is the father of Alexander (the Great) the Macedonian, and this era is (also) known as the “era of the Alexandrians”; it is on it that Theon of Alexandria⁽¹²⁾ based his astronomical table known as “The Law”.

The era of Alexander, on the other hand, is based on the years of the Greeks. With it have operated most of the nations down to our own time, such as the Syrians, the Byzantines, the people of the West and of Spain, the Franks, and the Jews. It has already been discussed in connection with (the city of) Alexandria in the present book.⁽¹³⁾

As for the era of Augustus, there is no one known today who uses it.

This Augustus is the first of the *qayāṣirah*, and the meaning of *qayṣar* in the language of the Romans is ‘a cut was made to bring

11. The “etymology” is as fanciful as the following allegedly Hebrew derivation. *Bakht-i Narsi* would mean ‘Narsi’s fortune’, Narsi (Gr. *Narsēs*) being the name of several Persian shahs. On Nebuchadnezzar in Muslim tradition cf. the article “Bukht-Naṣṣar” by G. Vajda in *EF*.

12. Arabic: *Thāwun al-Iskandarānī*, the famed mathematician in the second half of the 4th century A.D. (cf. Sarton, I, 367; Steinschneider, *ZDMG*, L, 341). — The work here referred to seems to be his commentary on Ptolemy’s astronomical tables, known as “The Law of Motion” (cf. *Fihrist*, transl. Dodge, 641).

13. See Pt. II, ch. 6.

him to light'.⁽¹⁴⁾ For when the mother of this Augustus was pregnant with him, she died in labor, whereupon her belly was slit open in order to bring him out. Thus he was called "Caesar", and that title was given to all the Roman emperors after him.

The Christians maintain that the Messiah, peace be upon him, was born in the fortieth year of his reign. This claim is doubtful, for it is not true when one computes the years and dates. Rather, the adjusted date of the Messiah's birth falls in the seventeenth year of his reign (i.e., 10 B.C.).

As to the era of Antoninus:⁽¹⁵⁾ Ptolemy established the (positions of the) fixed stars for the beginning of his rule⁽¹⁶⁾ over the Romans in his book known as "The Almagest". The years of that era are Roman ones.

14. Arabic: *shuqqa 'anhu*. For this interpretation of Latin *caesus* also, e.g., al-Mas'ūdī, *Al-Tanbīh wa-'l-ishrāf*, 107 (123); al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 6:86 (there a second "etymology" based on Lat. *caesaries* 'hair').

15. The Roman emperor Titus Antoninus Pius (138-161).

16. Read with the Bulaq text: *li-awwali mulkihī*; Wiet: *li-awwali malikin* 'for the first king' (?).

89. The Coptic Calendar

[1] One should know that the solar year⁽¹⁾ is tantamount to the return of the sun in the zodiac, in countermovement to the movement of the whole, to any point posited as the beginning of its movement. That is to say, the year completes the four seasons, which are spring, summer, fall and winter, acquiring in the process their four humors, and ends eventually where it began. During that time period, the moon completes twelve returns and less than half a return and appears twelve times as a new moon. The time period in which the twelve returns of the moon in the zodiac take place was then made by convention a year of the moon and the (remaining) fraction, which is approximately eleven days, was omitted. Thus the year is now of two kinds: a solar year and a lunar year.

All nations on the face of the earth derive the dates of their years from the course of the sun and of the moon. Those who have adopted that of the sun are five nations, namely, the Greeks, the Arameans, the Copts, the Romans, and the Persians; those who adhere to that of the moon are also five nations, namely, the Indians, the Arabs, the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims.

The people of Constantinople and Alexandria and the rest of the Romans, the Arameans, the Chaldeans, the Chinese, and those who act in accordance with the wise decision of al-Mu'taqid,⁽²⁾ have

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1. Sections 1 and 2 of this chapter are taken, with a few transpositions, from al-Birūnī's "Surviving Monuments of Past Centuries" (E. Sachau, *The Chronology of the Ancient Nations*, 5-13).
 2. In 282/895, the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'taqid-bi-'llāh had the date of the annual payment of the land tax moved to the 11th of Ḥazīrān (June) of the Syrian solar calendar. The measure, known as *al-Nayrūz al-Mu'taqidi*, was intended to ease the hardship caused to cultivators in former Persian territory by the fact that the traditional due date for the tax, the Sasanian *Nawrūz*, had moved by that time, because of the omission of intercalation by the Muslims, well in advance of any harvest. A full account of the circumstances that led to the measure is given in ch. 92, below; cf. also Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 10:39/III, 2143.

made the solar year their own, which consists of 365 days and approximately one-fourth of a day. They made the year (an even) 365 days and attached the fourths (remaining) in each year as a (complete) day every four years so that the year was restored to normal. This year they called a “leap”, or “intercalary”, year, because the fourths were intercalated in it.

As far as the ancient Egyptians are concerned, they used to leave the fourths aside until the days of a whole year had accumulated from them, which happened every 1,460 years.⁽³⁾ Then they would intercalate this as a single year and be thus in line again on the first day of that year with the people of Alexandria and Constantinople.

The Persians, on the other hand, made the year 365 days without a fraction until the fourths of a day accumulated in 120 years to the days of a whole month, and the fifths of an hour, which to them come after the fourths of a day, accumulated to one day: Then they added every 115 years the complete month to the year. Their example was followed by the ancient Khwārizmians, the Sogdians, and those who professed the religion of ancient Persia. The Peshdadian kings of the Persians⁽⁴⁾—they are the ones who ruled the entire world—used to make the year 365 days, each month of it a uniform 30 days. Every six years they would augment the year by a day and call that year “intercalary”, and every 120 years by two months, one because of the five (excess) days and the second because of the fourth of a day; that year they would raise above the others and call “the blessed”.

The ancient Egyptians, the Persians under Islam, and the Khwārizmians and Sogdians left aside the fractions—in other words, the fourth of a day and what follows it—entirely.

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3. The figure represents the “Sothic cycle”, marked by the heliacal rising of the Dog Star (Sothis, Sirius) every 1,457 years, the recorded dates of which have enabled Egyptologists to periodize with greater precision the history of ancient Egypt.
 4. The legendary first dynasty of Persian kings, from Pers. *pīshdād* ‘law giver’; its founder was Gayomart, the Persian Adam.

The Hebrews and all Israelites, the Ṣābians and the Ḥarrānians derived the year from the course of the sun and the months from that of the moon so that their feasts and their time of fasting be based on a lunar count but nonetheless keep their specific times within the year; for that purpose they intercalated every nineteen lunar years seven months. The Christians went along with them as far as their Lent and some of their feasts are concerned, because their observance revolves around the Jewish Passover, but, unlike them, favored in the matter of the months the system of the Greeks and Arameans.

The Arabs in pre-Islamic times used to study the difference between their own year and the year of the sun, which is ten days and $21 \frac{1}{5}$ hours, and attach that to the year as an (extra) month every time the differential between the years added up to the days of a complete month. They operated, however, on the assumption that it was ten days and twenty hours. In charge of that (function) were the “postponers” of the Banū Kinānah known as *qalāmis*—singular *qalammas*—which means ‘a man of abundant genius’, namely, Abū Thumāmah Junādah ibn ‘Awf ibn Umayyah ibn Qil’.⁽⁵⁾ The first one of these to do so was Ḥudhayfah ibn ‘Abd ibn Fuqaym, and the last one Abū Thumāmah.

The Arabs learned intercalation from the Jews about two hundred years before the coming of Islam and used to intercalate nine months every twenty-four years in order that the months of the year remain fixed in one position in relation to the seasons, neither falling behind their times nor moving ahead of them, until the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, performed the pilgrimage and God Exalted sent him the revelation: “*The month postponed is an increase of unbelief whereby the unbelievers go astray; one year they make it profane, and hallow it another, to agree with the number that God has hallowed, and so profane what God has hal-*

5. Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat al-ansāb* (p. 189), where the *qalāmis* are listed. More on this follows in ch. 93, sect. 3, below.

lowed. Decked out fair to them are their evil deeds; and God guides not the people of the unbelievers.”⁽⁶⁾ Whereupon the Prophet delivered a sermon and said: “Time has come round the way it was on the day when God created the heavens and the earth.” And so the postponed month fell into disuse, and the months of the Arabs ceased to be the way they were before and their names no longer indicated their inherent meanings.

As for the Indians, they go by the sighting of the new moons in their months and intercalate every 976 days a lunar month. They make the beginning of their era the occurrence of a conjunction in the first minute of any sign of the zodiac, being most anxious for that conjunction to occur at one of the two points of the equinoxes. They call the leap month “*dhimāsah*”.⁽⁷⁾

These then are the opinions of mankind concerning the year.

[2] As for the day, it is tantamount to the return of the sun in the revolution of the whole to a hypothetical circle. There have been different interpretations of it.

The Arabs made the day from sunset to the sunset of the following day, because the months of the Arabs are based on the course of the moon and their beginnings are determined by the sighting of the new moon, and the new crescent one sights at the time of sunset. Thus the night to them came before daytime.

For the Persians and the Greeks the nychthemeron extends from the rising of the sun as it appears on the eastern horizon to the time of its rise the next day; hence, daytime to them comes before the night.

These argued on the basis of their teaching that light is existence and darkness is non-existence; that motion is superior to quies-

6. Koran 9 (Repentance):37.

7. Sanskrit *adhimāsa*. ‘Leap year’ (*al-sanah al-kabīshah*) in the Arabic text is obviously an error, since the Sanskrit technical term for the year with the intercalated month is *malamāsa* (cf. E. Sachau, *Alberuni’s India*, II, 20-25; 310, 312).

cence because it means existence, not non-existence, life, not death; heaven is better than earth, the active man and the young man are healthier, running water will not acquire foulness as does stagnant water.

The others argued that darkness is older than light and light comes upon darkness, hence, one begins with that which is older. They set quiescence above motion by ascribing rest and composure to it, arguing that motion is only for a need and a necessity; that it is movement that causes fatigue, and that quiescence, when it continues for some time in the elements, does not generate destruction, but when movement continues in the elements and becomes stronger and stronger, it destroys, as is the case, for instance, in earthquakes and storms and waves, and the like.

For the astrologers, the nychthemeron extends from the moment the sun reaches the midpoint of the daytime firmament to the moment when it reaches it the following day, which is from noontime to noontime. On that they base the calculation of their astronomical tables.

Someone had the day begin with midnight, namely, the compiler of the *Zij shahriyārān al-Shāh*.⁽⁸⁾ This is the definition of *yawm* 'day' in the absolute sense, when one splits the night part in half by way of synthesis, but in terms of analytical segmentation *yawm* by itself and *nahār* 'daytime' are used in one and the same sense, namely, (the time) from the rising of the solar body to its setting, with night as the opposite and counterpart of it.

Someone defined the beginning of the day by the rise of dawn and its end by the setting of the sun, because of God's words: "*And eat and drink, until the white thread shows clearly to you from the black*

8. "The Royal Astronomical Tables," the translation of a Pahlavi work entitled *Zik-i shatroayār* that was presented to the last Sasanian king, Yazdgird III (632-651); cf. Nallino, *Raccolta di scritti editi e inediti*, V, 229-35. Its translator into Arabic, according to the *Fihrist* (transl. Dodge 589), was one Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ziyād al-Tamimi.

thread at the dawn; then complete the Fast,"⁽⁹⁾ claiming that these two boundaries constitute the two extremes of the day. But people contradicted him with the argument that the Koranic verse only contains the statement of the two ends of the fast, not a definition of the beginning of the day, and that dusk at sunset is the counterpart of dawn at sunrise, both being equal with regard to the *'illah*, or motive: were the rising of dawn the beginning of the day, then its end would be the setting of dusk. Certain Shī'ites (though) adhere to that (principle).

[3] With all of that established, we now say: The Coptic era is known nowadays among the Christians of Egypt as the "era of the Martyrs", and some call it the "era of Diocletian".

[4] *Diocletian*, after whom the era of the Copts is named. One should know that this Diocletian is one of the Roman rulers known as the Caesars. He was elevated to power in the middle of the year 595 of the era of Alexander and came from a family other than the ruling house. As emperor he demonstrated his power and strength, and his sway extended all the way to Ctesiphon and the city of Babylon. Then he made his son his deputy over the empire of Rome⁽¹⁰⁾ and chose as his residence the city of Antioch, making Syria and Egypt all the way to the farthest West his own. In the 19th year of his reign—some say, in his 12th—the people of Egypt and Alexandria rose against him.⁽¹¹⁾ He sent troops against them and had a great many of them killed, falling upon the Christians (in particular). He had them declared outlaws, closed their churches, and prohibited the practice of the Christian religion, prompting people to worship idols. He went to extreme lengths in killing Christians. He ruled continuously for 21 years [5] and died after

9. Koran 2 (The Cow):187.

10. This is apparently meant to describe the appointment by Diocletian of his comrade Maximianus first as Caesar and in 286 as co-emperor with the rank of *Augustus*.

11. That is, the general uprising in Egypt in 296/7, the 12th year of Diocletian's reign, which led to the reduction of Egypt once more to the status of a province and the closing of the mint of Alexandria.

grave illnesses which caused his body to become worm-eaten and his teeth to fall out.

[6] He was the last of the Roman emperors to worship idols, and all those who ruled after him professed, rather, the Christian religion. For the one who ruled after him is his son, for one year⁽¹²⁾—or longer than that, say others—and then ruled Constantine the Great, who supported the Christian religion and spread it on earth.

[7] It is said that a man by the name of Akhillah⁽¹³⁾ rose in Egypt and revolted openly against the Romans. Diocletian marched against him and invested Alexandria, the (regional) capital in those days, for eight months, until Akhillah was captured and executed. All over Egypt he enslaved and killed people.

He also sent his general to wage war on Shapur, the King of Persia.⁽¹⁴⁾ (The general) killed most of the Shah's troops and put the King to flight, capturing his wife and his brothers. He ravaged his country and returned with numerous Persian prisoners of war. Then he fell upon the populace of Italy and killed and enslaved many people.

Diocletian's time was a horrible one. In the course of it, more kinds of peoples were killed and more houses of worship destroyed than one can enumerate. His crackdown on the Christians was the Tenth Plague, which is the most terrible and also the longest calamity for them, for it lasted for ten years without letting up for as much as a single day. During that time, he had their churches burned to the

12. His imperial colleague Maximian, who abdicated together with Diocletian in 305, ruled as joint emperor with Diocletian's son-in-law Galerius (305-311) from 307 to 308.

13. I.e., Achilles, leader of the Egyptian revolt in 296/7. —The name is spelled *Aj*lah* in both Arabic texts. I believe it is safe to assume that the transposed dot is an error of some copyist, or perhaps of Maqrīzī himself, who may have read the unfamiliar Greek name as the more familiar *ajillah*, plural of *jalil*.

14. This refers no doubt to Galerius' campaign against Narsah (Narses, 293-303), the youngest son of Shapur I, in 297/8; cf. P. Sykes, *A History of Persia*, 1:409-10.

ground, their men tortured, and those who went underground or fled hunted down to be killed. In that way he intended to extirpate the Christians and to eliminate their religion from the face of the earth.

[8] That is why (the Christians of Egypt) chose the beginning of Diocletian's reign as (the beginning of) their era. The beginning of his reign was a Friday, and between it and Monday, the first day of Tūt, which is the beginning of the reign of Alexander son of Philippos the Macedonian, are 594 years, eleven months and three days. Between Friday, the first day of the era of Diocletian, and Thursday, the first day of the year of the Prophet's Hijrah, are 338 lunar (*sic*) years and 39 days.

They made the months of the Coptic year to be twelve, each comprising thirty days even. At the completion of the twelve months, they had them followed by five extra days and called these five days "epagomena"; they are known today as the *ayyām al-nasī*, or intercalary days. The intercalary period would be like that for three consecutive years, but in the fourth year they made the epact six days, so that their year would have for three consecutive years 365 days each and the fourth year would have 366 days. The way their year works goes back to that of the Greeks in that their median year is 365 1/4 days; the intercalation, however, is different, for while the intercalation of the Copts is [every] year, that of the Greeks is in the year that falls [in their cycle].⁽¹⁵⁾

[9] The Coptic months are: Tūt, Bābih, Hātōr, Kiyahk, Ṭubah, Amshīr, Baramhāt, Barmūdah, Bashans, Ba'ūnah, Abīb, and Misrā. Each of these twelve months has thirty days. At the end of Misrā, which is the twelfth month, they add the intercalary days and make "New Year" Day the first day of the month of Tūt.

15. The words in square brackets are a conjecture, since the Arabic text is badly corrupted at this point and incomprehensible as it stands. The cycle would presumably be that of the Athenian astronomer Meton, in which the 3rd, 5th, 8th, 11th, 13th, 16th and 19th year are years with 13 months.

[10] On the weeks. One should know that the ancient Persians and Sogdians and the earliest Copts of Egypt were not in the habit of using the days in a month to make weeks. The first to do so were the people living farther west on earth, especially the people of Syria and its environs, because the prophets, peace be upon them, appeared in that region and told of the first seven days and of the beginning of the world in them, and that God created the heavens and the earth in six days of that week, and that spread then from them to all the other nations.

The pure-blooded Arabs made use of that because their homeland and the home of the people of Syria were right next to each other, since the Arabs lived, before they migrated to the Yemen, at Babel and were familiar with the accounts of Noah, peace be upon him. Later on, God Exalted sent to them as prophets first Hūd and then Šālīḥ, peace be upon both, and Abraham, the Friend of the Merciful, had his son Ismāʿīl, peace be upon both, dwell among them, and Ismāʿīl became an Arab of the desert.

The earliest Copts took the thirty days of each month and gave each day a name, as is also the practice in the calendar of the Persians. The Copts continued to do so until Egypt came under the rule of Augustus son of Gaius,⁽¹⁶⁾ who wished to make them intercalate years so that they would be forever in line with the Romans in that respect. It was discovered that, at the time, five years remained until the Great Intercalary Year was due. So he waited until five years of his reign had passed and then had them intercalate every four years a day in the months, the way the Romans do. From that time on, the Copts abandoned the use of names for the thirty days (of a month) because on the intercalary day they needed a name of its own for it. Subsequently, those Egyptians who used the names

16. This must be the intended name, although none of the many variants in the Arabic texts and manuscripts comes close to it. Wiet retains al-Bīrūnī's *Yūjis*, which contains all the elements of *Jayūs*. Augustus was the son of Gaius Octavius and of Atia, the niece of Julius Caesar; hence, after his adoption by the latter, he called himself Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus.

of the thirty days and were familiar with them died out, and no memory of them survived among people in the world. Rather, they fell into oblivion, the way Allah's Sunnah rendered obsolete other names of ancient rites and early customs among those who had passed on before.

The names of the Coptic months in ancient times were: *Tūt* (Thoth), *Bāwbā* (Phaoph), *Atūr* (Hathyr), *Shawāqī*,⁽¹⁷⁾ *Ṭūbī* (Tybi), *Mākīr* (Mechir), *Fāmīnūt* (Phamenot),⁽¹⁸⁾ *Barmūtī* (Pharmouthi), *Bākhūn* (Pachon), *Bāwnī* (Payni), *Afīfī* (Epiph), *Abīqā*.⁽¹⁹⁾

Each month had thirty days and each day had a name of its own. Later on, after they used embolism, some Coptic leader introduced the names which are current today, except that some people call *Kiyahk Kiyāk*, and say *Baramhūt* for *Baramhāt*, *Bashānis* instead of *Bashans*, and *Māsūrī* instead of *Misrā*. Some people call the five extra days *ayyām al-nasī* and others call them "epagomena", which means 'the little month'; they are, as has already been mentioned, attached at the end of *Misrā*. To that is added the intercalated day so that the epact is then six days. They call a leap year *baqt*,⁽²⁰⁾ which means 'mark'.

[11] It is one of the myths of the Copts that their months are the same as the months of the era of Noah, Seth and Adam since the beginning of the world, and that they continued to be so until Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt. These then set as the beginning of the year the 15th of Nisan, the way they were commanded to do in the Torah, until Alexander moved the beginning

17. A fictitious name, perhaps inspired by *sharāqī*, land not reached by Nile water (cf. I, 38, sect. 1). The old Coptic name was *Choiak*, the modern *Kiyahk*, which corresponds roughly to December.

18. Originally the name of a festival in honor of Amenophis I (Gr. Amenōtēs) of the 18th dynasty (1545-1524); one of the rare Sothic dates (cf. n. 3) is given for the 9th year of his reign.

19. A mysterious name, also found in al-Bīrūnī. Its origin may be due to a confusion with Gr. *epaktē* 'epact', since the month precedes the intercalary days. The old Coptic name was *Mesore*, the modern *Misrā*.

20. Most likely the Greek *epaktē* or Latin *epacta* for the period of intercalation in a leap year.

of their year to the first of Tishri. Also, some of the ancient Egyptian kings moved the beginning of their year to the first day of their reigns. Thus, the first of Tūt came to be ahead of the first day on which the world was created by 208 days, of which the first was a Tuesday and the last a Saturday. The first day of Tūt at that time was a Sunday, the first on which God created the world, which is now called the 29th of Baramhāt. That is to say, the first to rule the world after The Flood was Nimrod son of Canaan son of Ham son of Noah. He built Babel and is the ancestor of the Chaldeans. The descendants of Miṣrāyim (grand)son of Ham made Manfas their king. He built in Egypt Memphis on the Nile and named (the country) after his ancestor “Miṣrāyim”. He is the second king to rule the world. Those two kings used the era of their common ancestor Noah, peace be upon him, for dating, and those who came after followed their own tradition, until that changed as described above.

90. The Festivals of the Coptic Christians in Egypt

[1] Ibn Yūnus transmitted on the authority of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, who said: “Stay away from the feasts of the Jews and Christians, for divine wrath descends on them when they are gathered. Nor learn their gibberish, but affect some of the things they do.”

From Ibn al-‘Abbās with reference to the words of God “*And those who bear not false witness and, when they pass by idle talk, pass by with dignity*”:⁽¹⁾ (What is meant is) the festivals of the polytheists. When asked, Is this not perhaps pertaining to false testimony? he replied: “No, the verse for false testimony is rather: ‘*And pursue not that thou hast not knowledge of; the hearing, the sight, the heart—all of those shall be questioned of*.’”⁽²⁾

[2] One should know that the Coptic Christians of Egypt adhere to the Jacobite rite, as has already been mentioned. Their festivals nowadays, which are well known in Egypt, are fourteen in every one of their Coptic years, seven of which they call “major festivals” and seven “minor festivals”. Their major festivals are: Annunciation, Palm Sunday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, Christmas, and Epiphany. Their minor festival are: the Feast of Circumcision, Temple Day, Maundy Thursday, Holy Saturday, Low Sunday, Transfiguration Day, and the Festival of the Cross. They also have another festival which to them is not a canonical feast but a traditional one, namely, *al-Nawrūz*, or New Year’s Day.

I shall now give a presentation of these festivals such as one will not find collected in any book but this one, based on what I have

1. Koran 25 (Salvation):72.

2. Koran 17 (The Night Journey):36.

culled from the scriptures of the Christians and the chronicles of the Muslims.

[3] *ʿId al-Bishārah*, or Annunciation. The origin of this festival to the Christians is Gabriel's annunciation to Mary of the birth of the Messiah, peace be upon both. They call Gabriel *Ghubriyāl*, and say *Mārit Maryam*, and speak of the Messiah as *Yāshūʿ*, and sometimes as *al-Sayyid Yashūʿ* 'the Lord Jesus'. This festival is celebrated by the Christians of Egypt on the 29th of Baramhāt (April 6).

[4] *ʿId al-Zaytūnah*, or Palm Sunday. It is known among them as *ʿid al-shaʿānīn*, which means 'glorification'⁽³⁾ and falls on the seventh Sunday of their Lent. It is their custom on Palm Sunday to leave the church with palm fronds. They believe that it is the day on which the Messiah rode on the *yaʿfūr*, i.e., the donkey, into Jerusalem and visited Zion, he riding and the people walking in front of him praising God, as he commanded to do good and urged to be charitable, and forbade to do evil and warned against it.

[5] Palm Sunday used to be a festival of the Christians in Egypt during which their churches were decorated. [6] But on the 10th of Rajab, 398 (March 21, 1008), Palm Sunday, (the Fāṭimid caliph) al-Ḥākim-bi-amri-ʿllāh Abū ʿAlī Maṣṣūr ibn al-ʿAzīz-bi-ʿllāh prohibited the Christians from decorating their churches and from carrying palm leaves in their traditional manner, and a number of people who were found with them were arrested. He ordered that landed properties endowed to the churches be confiscated and incorporated in the Dīwān, and he sent a letter to that effect to all the tax districts. Several of their crosses were burned at the entrance to the Old Mosque⁽⁴⁾ and the police station in Old Cairo.

[7] *ʿId al-Fiṣḥ*, or Easter. This festival is to them the Great Festival, *al-ʿid al-kabīr*. They claim that the Messiah, peace be upon him, after the Jews had conspired against him and had agreed that he

3. *Shaʿānīn* is the plural of *shaʿnīnah* 'palm branch'.

4. *Al-Jāmiʿ al-ʿAtīq*, i.e., the Mosque of ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ; see *Khiṭaṭ* 2:246-56.

was leading people astray and must be killed, was arrested and taken to the wooden post to be crucified; with him were crucified two thieves. We (the Muslims) hold—and this is the truth—that God raised him unto Himself and he was not crucified, and that the man who was crucified with the two thieves on the post was someone other than the Messiah whom God made to look like the Messiah.

The soldiers, they say, divided his clothes among themselves, and darkness enveloped the Earth from the sixth daylight hour until the ninth hour on Friday, the 15th of the month of Nisan of the Hebrews, the 29th of Baramhāt, and the 25th of Ādhār of the year ...⁽⁵⁾ The look-alike was buried at the end of the day in a grave which was closed with a huge stone and sealed by the leaders of the Jews, who also mounted a guard over the grave early in the morning on Saturday, lest (the corpse) be stolen. The man they had buried, they claim, rose from the grave during the night of Sunday at daybreak, and when Peter and John, two disciples, went to the grave, they found only the clothes the buried man had worn, but no corpse, and an angel of God in white garb standing over the grave. He informed them that the buried man had risen from the grave.

In the evening of that Sunday, they say, the Messiah came to visit his disciples. He greeted them, ate with them, spoke to them, counseled them, and commanded them to do things which are contained in their Gospel.

This festival is celebrated by them three days after Good Friday.

[8] *Khamīs al-Arbaʿīn*, or Ascension Day. Among the people of Syria it is known as *al-Sullāq*. It is also called *ʿĪd al-Šuʿūd* and is the 42nd day after the Breaking of the Fast. They claim that the Messi-

5. The year, left blank by Maqrīzī, is given as 5,534 in terms of solar years and 5,703 in lunar years in the exact parallel passage culled by Gaston Wiet from the *Maǧmūʿ al-mubārak* of the Syrian Christian historian al-Makīn (d. 1273). In the second citation of this passage (*Khiṭaṭ* 2:482), Maqrīzī omits the reference to a year entirely.

ah, peace be upon him, went, forty days after his resurrection, to Bethany, accompanied by the disciples. He raised his hands and blessed them and ascended to heaven—his age was then thirty-three years and three months—and the disciples returned to *Ūrāshalīm*, that is, Jerusalem, after he had promised them that their cause would spread far and wide,⁽⁶⁾ and other things known among the Coptic Christians.

This, then, is their belief as to how the Messiah was raised to heaven.⁽⁷⁾

[9] *Īd al-Khamsīn*, or Pentecost, which is Whitsunday. They celebrate it fifty days after the Day of Resurrection. They claim that, ten days after the Ascension and fifty days after the alleged Resurrection of the Messiah, the disciples foregathered in an upper chamber at Zion, and the Holy Spirit appeared to them in the form of tongues of fire. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke all the tongues, and many signs appeared through them. Whereupon the Jews turned against them and imprisoned them. But God rescued them from the Jews, and they left prison and went forth and scattered all over the Earth, summoning people to the religion of the Messiah.

[10] *Īd al-Milād*, or Christmas. They claim that it is the day on which the Messiah was born, which is a Monday. They make the evening of Sunday Christmas Eve, on which it is their custom to light up and decorate the churches. In Egypt it is celebrated on the 29th of Kiyahk (January 6). It is still a well-known festivity in Egypt.

[11] In Fāṭimid times one used to distribute on that day to certain functionaries—such as the Masters of the Wimpled Turban,⁽⁸⁾

6. Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ* 2:426): “He promised them to send the Paraclete (*al-fāraqlīt*), who to them is the Holy Spirit.”

7. Koran 4 (Women):87.

8. Arabic: *al-ustādhūn al-muḥannakūn*, so called because they wore the ends of their turbans wrapped, chin-strap fashion, below their mouths (*aḥnāk*), as do certain Beduins and the members of the educated class in Morocco. They were the highest-ranking of the more than a thousand *ustādhūn*, or court eu-

the Emirs of the Necklace,⁽⁹⁾ all the high-ranking members of the clerical class, etc.—glass bowls filled with Cairene sweetmeats, large bowls containing fine wheat flour, waterskins full of rosewater, deep platters of milk rice, and fish called gray mullet.

It is a Christian custom at Christmas to put on displays with fire. One of the best things said about that (are the verses):⁽¹⁰⁾

The play with fire at Christmas is not just foolishness—
there is a message in it for Islam:
It holds the untruth of the Christians that their Lord,
Jesus, the son of Mary, was created, born.

[12] We have witnessed in our own lifetime Christmas in Old and New Cairo and all over Egypt as a tremendous festivity, during which pretty candles in bright colors and wonderful little figurines are sold for more money than one can count. Everyone, whether high or low, would buy them for his children and his family. They used to call them *fawānīs*, singular *fānūs* (i.e., lantern), and hang so many of them in the shops in the markets that one cannot describe their number and their prettiness. Such was the competition among people to overcharge for them that I remember seeing a treated candle which cost 1,500 silver dirhams, the equivalent in those days of 70 *mithqāls* in gold. And I remember the beggars in the streets during that festival, asking to be given a lantern, and one would buy them one of the little ones that sold for a dirham or thereabouts. Later on, when Egypt was plunged into disorders, one

nuchs, functioning in immediate attendance to the imam-caliph. For the definition, Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:477; on their functions, *Khiṭāṭ* 1:401, *Ṣubḥ* 3:480-1. —The paragraph is, as shown below, from the “History” of Ibn al-Ma’mūn.

9. Arabic: *al-umarā’ al-muṭawwaqūn*, the first, and highest-ranking, class of emirs, corresponding to the “commanders of a thousand” in Mamluk times; so named because their insignia of rank was a golden necklace (*tawq*) bestowed by the caliph (Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:476).
10. The translation is based on the Bulaq text. Wiet’s emendations not only violate the meter *basīt*; his partial translation indicates that he missed the point of the verses completely.

of the customs of more affluent times that were discontinued was to make those lanterns at Christmastime, except for a few.

[13] *Al-Ghiṭās*, or Epiphany. It is celebrated in Egypt on the eleventh day of the month of Ṭūbah (January 18). Its origin, in the belief of the Christians, is that Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā, peace be upon him, who is known to them as John the Baptist, baptized the Messiah—that is, washed him—in the River Jordan, and when the Messiah, peace be upon him, emerged from the water, he was joined by the Holy Spirit. For that reason, the Christians have come to immerse their children in water on that day, or they all enter the water together, but this happens only when the weather is very cold. They call it *ʿīd al-ghīṭās*, the Feast of Baptism. It used to be celebrated in Egypt with a very important festival.

[14] The night of Epiphany, relates al-Masʿūdī,⁽¹¹⁾ is of great importance to the Egyptians. People do not sleep that night, which is the night of the 11th of Ṭūbah. I was present at the night of Epiphany in Old Cairo in 330 (A.D. 942), while the Emir of Egypt, the Ikhshīd Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj, was in his mansion, known as “al-Mukhtār”, on the island in the Nile (i.e., Rōḍa Island). He had ordered a thousand torches to be lit along the banks of the island and of Fuṣṭāṭ, this without counting the torches and candles lit by the people of Old Cairo. Hundreds of thousands of people, Muslims and Christians alike, were on the bank of the Nile that night, some in small boats, others in the houses close to the Nile, still others along the banks, all of them engaged as openly as possible in enjoying food and drink, in parading clothes and trinkets of gold, silver and jewelry, in indulging in amusements and music and revelry. It is the most beautiful and the most universally joyful night in Old Cairo, and throughout it the street gates are left unlocked. Many of the people immerse themselves in the Nile, claiming that this is a safeguard against malady and the spread of disease.

11. *Prairies d'or*, 2:364.

[15] Al-Musabbiḥī relates in his “Chronicle” among the events of the year 367 (A.D. 977/8): The Christians were forbidden to gather, as they traditionally do at Epiphany, in public, to go into the water, and to engage in public amusements. It was proclaimed by criers that anyone doing that would be banished from the capital.

[16] About the year 338 (A.D. 998) he (al-Musabbiḥī) reports: At Epiphany, tents and pavilions and sunshades were erected in several places along the Nile bank. Couches were set up for the Raʿīs Fahd ibn Ibrāhīm al-Naṣrānī, the secretary of the Ustādh (Abū ʿl-Futūḥ) Barjawān,⁽¹²⁾ candles and torches were lit in his honor, and singers and entertainers were in attendance, while he sat with his family, drinking, until it was time for the baptism. Then he immersed himself in the water and left.

[17] For the year 401 (al-Musabbiḥī) reports: On the 28th of Jumādā I, which is the 10th of Ṭūbah,⁽¹³⁾ baptism was forbidden to the Christians, and not one of them immersed himself in the river (that year).

[18] And about the events of the year 415 he says:⁽¹⁴⁾ On the eve of Wednesday, the 4th of Dhū ʿl-Qaʿdah (January 7, 1025), was Epiphany of the Christians. People, following their custom, bought fruit, sheep, etc., and the Commander of the Faithful al-Zāhir-li-ʿi-zāz-dīni-ʿllāh came down to the palace of his grandfather al-ʿAzīz-bi-ʿllāh in Old Cairo to watch the baptism, accompanied by his women. A public proclamation was made that the Muslims and the Christians must not mix on their way down to the river at night.

12. Fātimid vizier, 997-1000 (*Khīṭaṭ* 2:3-4). After him is named the *Ḥārat Barjawān*, Maqrīzī’s birthplace. Fahd b. Ibrāhīm, his Christian secretary, served after Barjawān’s murder as deputy vizier (1000-03) by joint appointment with Generalissimo (*qāʿid al-quwwād*) al-Ḥusayn b. Jawhar (d. 1010), the son of the founder of Cairo, Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī. Cf. Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Al-Ishārah ilā man nāla ʿl-wizārah* (Cairo, 1924), 27-28; Ibn Khallikān, *Wāfiyāt*, 1:270-1; al-Mināwī, *Wizārah*, 246.

13. I.e., the night of January 6, 1011.

14. One reads the original text in Becker, *Beiträge*, 1:61-2; cf. also *Ittiʿāz* 2:162-3.

The Chief of Police of al-‘Askar and Old Cairo,⁽¹⁵⁾ Badr al-Dawlah (Nāfidh) al-Khādīm al-Aswad (the Black Eunuch), had a tent set up near the bridge (at Rōḍā Island) in which he sat to receive callers. The Caliph had the fire and the torches lit at night, and they created a great illumination. Then came the monks and the priests with crosses and fires, and they officiated there for a long time until they performed the baptism.

[19] And Ibn al-Ma’mūn records in his “Chronicle” among the events of the year 517 (A.D. 1123), as he mentions Epiphany: The men of power distributed to the functionaries the customary bitter oranges, oranges, citrons, bunches of sugarcane, and bars (gray mullet), according to the individual allotments established by the Dīwān.⁽¹⁶⁾

[20] *Al-Khitān*, or Feast of Circumcision. It is celebrated on the 6th of Ba’ūnah.⁽¹⁷⁾ They claim that the Messiah was circumcised on that day, which is the eighth day after Christmas. The Copts, unlike other Christians, practice circumcision.

[21] *Al-Arba‘ūn*, or Temple Day. It marks for them the Messiah’s visit to the Temple. They claim that Simeon the Priest introduced the Messiah, together with his mother, in the Temple and blessed him.⁽¹⁸⁾ It is celebrated on the 8th of Amshīr (February 14).

[22] *Khamīs al-Ahd*, or Maundy Thursday. One celebrates it three days before Easter. It is their custom on that day to fill a container with water and mumble prayers over it. Then one washes

15. Arabic: *mutawallī al-shurṭatayn*. Badr al-Dawlah Nāfidh, appointed to the office four months earlier (*Ittī‘āz* 2:150), soon had a serious food riot on his hands (*ibid.*, p. 169-70).

16. On the observance of Epiphany in more modern times, Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 546.

17. *Sic*, as also in Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ*, 2:227); it should be the 6th of Tūbah (January 13 or 14), as the next sentence clearly shows.

18. Luke 2:25-35. Qalqashandī has this polemical comment: “These are deliberate misconceptions. Otherwise, where does a priest stand compared to Jesus, peace be upon him, who is the Spirit of God and His Word!” (*Ṣubḥ*, 2:227).

with it, for good luck, the feet of the other Christians.⁽¹⁹⁾ They claim that the Messiah did the same to his disciples on the equivalent of that day in order to teach them humility; then he made them pledge not to become disunited and to be humble with one another.

The common people of Egypt in our day call it *khamīs al-‘adas*, or Lentil Thursday, because the Christians cook on that day strained lentils, and in Syria people call it *khamīs al-aruzz*, Rice Thursday, or *khamīs al-bayḍ*, Egg Thursday. The people of Spain say *khamīs Abril*, April Thursday, *abril* (avril) being the name of one of their months.

[23] At the time of the Fāṭimids one used to mint on that Lentil Thursday 500 dinars. They were broken down into *kharrūbahs*⁽²⁰⁾ which were distributed among the men of power by fixed shares, as will be mentioned in the account of the Palace in (Fāṭimid) Cairo when we discuss the Mint in this book.⁽²¹⁾

[24] We witnessed in our own lifetime (the observance of) this Lentil Thursday in New and Old Cairo and their dependencies as one of the great festivals. One used to sell (in those days) in the markets of Cairo extravagant quantities of eggs dyed in a number of colors. The black slaves, the slave soldiers and the riffraff would engage in gambling on that day, and for that reason someone would be delegated sometimes by the censor to scare them off. The Christians would exchange presents with each other and give to the Muslims various sorts of fish cooked with strained lentils and eggs. But that practice has become rare now, because of the things that have befallen people, and only a remnant has survived.

19. Qalqashandī, in an otherwise almost identical text, more plausibly: “Then the Patriarch washes with it the feet of all the Christians present.” One suspects that the *li-l-tabarruk* (for good luck) in the Maqrīzī text is a copyist’s error.

20. Literally, “carob seeds,” the same as *qirāt*, i.e., 1/24 *mithqāl* = 0.195 g in gold.

21. *Khiṭaṭ* 1:450.

[25] *Sabt al-Nūr*, or Holy Saturday. It is one day before Easter. They claim that light appears on that day over the alleged grave of the Messiah in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem and all the lamps of the church light up. People with experience in examining and investigating things have discovered that this is a trick of the Christians which they perform with some sort of magic.

This day used to be in Egypt one of the festive days. It is the third day after Maundy Thursday and part of its observances.

[26] *Ḥadd al-Ḥudūd*,⁽²²⁾ or Quasimodo. It comes eight days after Easter. One celebrates the first Sunday after the Breaking of the Fast because the Sundays before it are taken up by fasting. On that day, they buy new implements and furnishings and clothing and attend again to social life, worldly things and earning a livelihood.

[27] *Īd al-Tajallī*, or Transfiguration Day. It is celebrated on the 13th of Misrā (August 18). They claim that the Messiah, after having been raised to heaven, appeared to his disciples, and they implored him to summon for them Elijah and Moses, peace be upon both. And he brought these to them at the oratory of Jerusalem. Then he ascended to heaven and left them.

[28] *Īd al-Ṣalīb*, or Festival of the Cross. One celebrates it on the 17th of Tūt (September 26). It is one of the newer festivals, and the reason for its celebration is the discovery of the cross, as they claim, by Helena, the mother of Constantine. They have a long story for it, of which the following is a condensed version.

22. Literally, "Sunday of Sundays." *Ḥadd* is the Egyptian colloquial form for (*al-*)*aḥad* 'Sunday' (Maqrīzī, and before him Qalqashandī, drew on Christian sources), with a plural analogous to (unrelated) *ḥadd* 'limit, boundary'.

Constantine

[29] This Constantine is the son of Constantius⁽²³⁾ son of Valentinus son of Archemius (? *Ar*sh*m*yūs*) son of Decius (? *Daqyūn*) son of Claudius⁽²⁴⁾ son of Gaius (Caligula) son of Octavianus Augustus the Great, with the title “Caesar”. He was the first to strengthen the Christian religion and to order the pagan idols to be cut down, their temples destroyed, and churches to be built. He, among the emperors, believed in the Messiah. His mother Helena came from the city of Edessa (*sic*). There he grew up with his mother and learned the sciences. All his life he was most fortunate and successful, helped and supported by God against all those who fought him.

[30] He was⁽²⁵⁾ at first an adherent of the religion of the Magians, a harsh enemy of the Christians whose religion he hated. The reason for his backing away from it in favor of Christianity was that he was afflicted with a leprosy which he overcame.

He was very much distressed by that (illness) and summoned the most skillful of the physicians. These agreed on certain drugs which they prepared for him, and they prescribed that he must, after having taken the drugs, soak in a cistern filled with the blood of infants at the very moment it flowed from their bodies. So he gave orders to round up a huge number of babies, with instructions to have them slaughtered in a cistern so that he could steep himself in their blood while it was still fresh. After the infants were collected for that purpose, and as he came out to go through with their mas-

23. *Qusṭānsh* in the Arabic sources. He is Constantius I Chlorus (‘the pale’), joint emperor (with Galerius) 305-6. He was of humble Danubian origin, and the following genealogy is a fabricated one that came into being after his son by Helena, a lowly innkeeper’s daughter (*stabularia*) from Naissus (mod. Niš), had become emperor.

24. *Kalūdiyush*. Presumably Claudius II Gothicus (Rom. emperor, 268-70), from whom Constantine later claimed to be descended. He appears to have served as military tribune under Trajanus *Decius*.

25. The section is a paraphrase, presumably culled from the Arabic translation of Orosius, of the 5th century *Legenda sancti Silvestri*, the chief source for the forged Donation of Constantine (*Constitutum Constantini*) to Pope Silvester I.

sacre as ordered by him, he heard the wailing of the women whose children had been taken away. And he had mercy on them and ordered that each be given her son back, saying, "To endure my illness is better for me and more desirable than to kill such a large number of human beings." And the women left with their children, relieved and overjoyed.

After he had gone to bed at night, he saw in his dreams an old man who spoke to him: "You have shown mercy to the infants and their mothers and you deemed enduring your illness more fitting than slaughtering them. Therefore God has been merciful to you and has given you recovery from your illness. Now, send for a man of the true faith by the name of Silvester, who once fled in fear of you. Heed what he tells you and abide by what he urges you to do, and God will restore you to full health."

He woke up in terror and sent out people in search of Silvester, the bishop. The man was brought to him, thinking all the while that Constantine intended to kill him, because he was familiar with (the emperor's) ruthlessness toward the Christians and his hatred for their religion. But when Constantine saw him, he received him with kindness and informed him of what he had seen in his dream. Thereupon (Silvester) explained to him the Christian religion, and there are long stories of what happened between the two which (the Copts) remember.

Constantine then sent out people to round up the bishops who had been exiled or had gone into hiding, and as he embraced the Christian religion, God cured him from the leprosy. Henceforth he brought that creed into the open and he (himself) publicly declared his faith in the religion of the Messiah.

[31] While he was involved in all that, he had the sudden premonition that the Romans were going to attack him and rise against him. So he left Rome and founded the city of Constantinople, in a splendid fashion. It was named after him and he chose it

as his residence, so that it became from his time on the capital of the empire.

Ever since the time of Emperor Nero, who killed the Apostles, and the emperors of Rome after him, the Christians had been killed and imprisoned and driven away by banishment all the time. But after Constantine had made Constantinople his residence, he surrounded himself with adherents of the religion of the Messiah, made their notables generals, and humiliated the worshipers of pagan idols. This proved to be too much for the Romans to bear, and they renounced their loyalty to him and raised up an emperor of their own. That troubled him, and a number of noteworthy events ensued between the two sides which are recorded in the history of Rome.

Then he left Constantinople, heading for Rome, where people had made preparations to fight him. But when he closed in on them, they submitted and pledged renewed loyalty to him. He then entered the city and stayed there until he mobilized for war against the Persians. He conducted a campaign against them and vanquished them, and most of the kingdoms of this world bowed to his sway.

[32] in the twentieth year of his reign, the Goths attacked one of his outlying border areas, and he invaded them and drove them from his land. And he saw in his dreams what seemed to be raised banners (bearing) the semblance of a cross, and someone who said to him, "If you want to triumph over those who oppose you, put these signs on all your clothes and attire."⁽²⁶⁾

When he woke up, he gave orders to outfit his mother Helena and send her to Jerusalem in search of relics of the Messiah, peace be upon him, to build churches, and to establish the sacred law of Christianity. And she went to Jerusalem and founded the churches.

26. Bulaq (and two mss.): *'ala jamī'i barakika wa-sikakika* 'on all your baggage and coins'. On the Egyptian colloquial *barak* (from Pers. *barg*) 'household effects, baggage' cf. Vollers, "Beiträge", *ZDMG*, L, 617, 638 and Wiet's note 14.

It is said that the bishop Macarius led her to the piece of wood on which the Messiah, as they claim, was crucified, after he had related to her what the Jews had done to him. She dug up the ground on the spot he pointed out to her—and right there was a grave and three pieces of wood in the shape of a cross. They claimed that they placed three pieces of wood, one by one, on a dead man, but (the Messiah) rose, alive, when one of these pieces was put on him.

And so they made that day a festival and called it the Festival of the Cross. That was on the 14th of Elul and the 17th of Tūt, 328 years after the birth of the Messiah. Helena had a case of pure gold made for the piece of the Cross, and she built the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem over the alleged grave of the Messiah. She had many noteworthy encounters with the Jews which are remembered by the Christians. Then she left with the Cross to return to her son.

Constantine continued to rule the Byzantine empire until he died, twenty-four years after his assumption of power. After his death, his son, Constantine the Younger,⁽²⁷⁾ became the ruler of the Byzantine realm.

[33] The Festival of the Cross used to be celebrated in Egypt as a great holiday on which people would go out to the Banī Wā'il quarter on the outskirts of Fuṣṭāṭ and carry on in public on that day by doing all sorts of forbidden things, and for that they would be treated with excessive harshness (at times). [34] So, after the Fāṭimids had come to Egypt and had founded Cairo as their residence, and during the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful al-'Azīz-bi-'llāh, orders were given on the 4th of Rajab, 381 (September 16, 991), which was the Day of the Cross, to prevent people from going to Banī Wā'il and to police the streets and roads (for that purpose). [35] But (a year) later, during the Festival of the Cross on the 14th of Rajab, 382, people went (again) to Banī Wā'il and followed their custom of gathering and having a good time. [36] On the 7th

27. I.e., Constantine II, Constantine the Great's second son, as joint emperor (337-340) with his younger brothers Constantius II and Constans I.

of Şafar, 402 (September 10, 1011), an ordinance made out on behalf of al-Ḥākim-bi-amri-'llāh was read at the Old Mosque and in the streets, to the effect that Christians were forbidden to gather for the celebration of the Festival of the Cross, that they must not display their (customary) decorations on the occasion, nor go near their churches and are to be prevented by force from entering them. [37] And then that practice was discontinued so that it is hardly known today in Egypt at all.

[38] *Al-Nawrūz*, or New Year's Day. It marks the beginning of the Coptic year in Egypt and is the first day of the month of Tūt. It is their custom on that day to light fires and sprinkle one another with water. It has been a joyous festival of the Egyptians in ancient as in modern times.

[39] Wahb (ibn Munabbih) said: Fire went cold all over the Earth that night when Abraham was thrown into it⁽²⁸⁾ and on the following morning, and no one in this world was able to benefit from it that night and that morning. For that reason people stayed up around a fire that night in which Abraham, peace be upon him, was thrown (into the flames), and they jumped over it and perfumed themselves with its smoke. They called that night "Nayrūz", for *nayrūz* in the Aramaic language means 'festival'.

[40] When asked about the Nayrūz, why people made it a festival, Ibn al-'Abbās replied: Because it is the beginning of the new year and the end of the year past. They liked to bring gifts and presents to their kings on the occasion, and the Persians then made it a tradition.

[41] The learned traditionist Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Alī ibn 'Asākir⁽²⁹⁾ quotes in the "History of Damascus" a tradition of Ibn al-'Abbās, God be pleased with him, who said: "When Pharaoh *said to the*

28. Cf. Koran 21 (The Prophets):69-70; for the legend of Abraham's salvation from martyrdom in fire, e.g., Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:241/1,263.

29. Died 1176; see the article "Ibn 'Asākir" by N. Elisseeff in *EF*.

Council of his people, ‘Surely this man is a cunning sorcerer’,⁽³⁰⁾ they told him, ‘Send word to the sorcerers!’ Then Pharaoh said to Moses, ‘O Moses, appoint a tryst between us and thee, and we shall not fail it, neither thou,’⁽³¹⁾ then gather thou and Aaron, and the sorcerers shall also gather’, and Moses replied, ‘Your tryst shall be upon the Feast Day.’⁽³²⁾ That day, says (Ibn ‘Asākir), corresponded to Saturday, the first day of the year, which is the day of the Nawrūz.

Another story says that the sorcerers told Pharaoh, “O King, make a tryst with the man,” and he replied, “I have made the appointment with him for the Feast Day, which is your Great Festival”—which fell on a Saturday, and the people went forth that very same day.

(Elsewhere) he says: The Nawrūz is the beginning of the year of the Persians, which is the 14th of Adar and falls in the month of Baramhāt. It is said that the first to introduce it was Jam-Shīd,⁽³³⁾ a king of the Persians, and that this king took possession of the Seven Climes. And when his sway was complete and he had no enemy left, he made that day a festival and called it *Nawrūz*, which means ‘the New Day’.

It has also been said that Solomon son of David, peace be on both, was the first to set (the Nawrūz) on the day on which his ring was returned to him.⁽³⁴⁾

30. Koran 26 (The Poets):34.

31. Koran 20 (Ta Ha):58.

32. Koran 20:59.

33. A spelling of the name Jamshīd that approximates its original form, *Yama-Shīd* (‘the Brilliant Setting Sun’). In Persian legend he is credited with having built Persepolis (*Takht-i Jamshīd*), introduced the solar year, and invented most of the arts and sciences.

34. Solomon’s magic signet ring, which gave him control over birds, demons, humans, and devils, was purloined by the evil jinn Šakhr from his wife Amīnah, to whom Solomon would entrust the ring while he performed his ablutions, so that Solomon lost his powers and his kingdom and was forced to wander for forty days as an outcast. God returned the ring to him in the belly of a fish that had swallowed it when the evil demon lost it in the sea, and thus Solomon regained his throne and his magic powers. Cf., e.g., al-Tha’labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’*, 288-89.

And it has been claimed that it is the day on which Job, peace be upon him, was cured from illness and God Exalted said to him, “*Stamp thy foot! This is a laving-place cool, and a drink.*”⁽³⁵⁾ And that day was then made a festival and people made it a custom on that day to splash water.

It is said that there lived in Syria a tribe of the Children of Israel which was struck by the plague, so they set out for the Iraq. When the news of their coming reached the king of the Persians, he ordered a compound to be built for them in which they were to be kept. And when they were inside it, they died; they were four thousand men. Then God Exalted revealed to the prophet of that time: “Have you seen such-and-such a country? Make war on them with the tribe of the Banū So-and-So!” “Lord,” he replied, “how can I fight with them when they are dead?” Whereupon God revealed to him, “I shall bring them back to life for you.” Then, one night, God sent rain on the people in the compound and they became alive. They are the people of whom God has said, “*Hast thou not regarded those who went forth from their habitations in their thousands fearful of death? God said to them, ‘Die!’ Then He gave them life.*”⁽³⁶⁾ When that which had happened to them was reported to the king of Persia, he said, “Derive blessing from this day, and let some of you splash others with water!” That day was the day of the Nawrūz, and (sprinkling one another with water) has been a tradition into our time.

When the caliph al-Ma'mūn was asked about the sprinkling with water on Nawrūz, he answered: “*The words of God Exalted, Hast thou not regarded those who went forth from their habitations in their thousands fearful of death? God said to them, ‘Die!’ Then He gave them life,* (mean:) these are a people that suffered a drought; one says, So-and-so ‘died’ of emaciation (*hazlan*) without literally meaning it (*hazlan*). Then they received succor (*ghīthū*) that day from a sprinkle of rain and ‘lived’—their land became fertile again.

35. Koran 38 (Sad):42.

36. Koran 2 (The Cow):243.

And since God gave them life (*ahyāhum*) with rain (*ghayth*)—the abundant rain, *al-ghayth*, is also called *al-ḥayā*—they made the splashing of water on such a day a tradition from which they have expected blessing to our own time.⁽³⁷⁾

A tradition says that *those who went forth from their habitations in their thousands* are a clan of the Children of Israel who fled from the plague. Others have said: They were ordered to fight in holy war but were afraid of death by being killed in the war, so *they went forth from their habitations* fleeing from it; whereupon God made them die in order to let them know that nothing could save them from death, and *then gave them life* through Hezekiel, one of the prophets of the Israelites, in a long episode recounted by the Koran commentators.

[42] Alī ibn Ḥamzah al-Iṣfahānī⁽³⁸⁾ says in “The Festivals of the Persians”: The first one to observe the Narwūz was Jamshīd—also called “Jamshād”—one of the earliest kings of the Persians. The meaning of the word *nawrūz* is ‘the new day’. The Persian Narwūz is the day of the vernal equinox, and “Mihrijān” is the first day of the autumnal equinox. The Persians claim that the Narwūz is older than the Mihrijān, and say that the Mihrijān came about at the time of Afrīdūn,⁽³⁹⁾ who was, they say, the first to celebrate it when he slew al-Ḍaḥḥāk,⁽⁴⁰⁾ who is identical with Bīwarāsb. He made the

37. A little sample of Mu‘tazilite exegesis, which heavily relies on lexical and semantic stunts in its argument against literalism and anthropomorphism; for other examples of this kind see, e.g., I. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, 125-6.

38. He is the son of the Shu‘ūbī historian and litterateur Ḥamzah b. al-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī (d. 970) and chiefly known as editor and arranger of the poetic work of Abū Nuwās, al-Buḥtūrī, and others (*Fihrist*, transl. Dodge, 353, 365; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 2:17, 96, 103; 3:149; 6:9, 28; Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 7:228).

39. The Arabic form of the name of the legendary Persian king Farīdūn, the Vedic *Traitana*, avenger of his grandfather Jamshīd (Sykes, *History of Persia*, 1:135; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 2:421).

40. In Iranian legend, the monstrous ruler chosen by the Heavenly Powers to punish the tyrannical Jamshīd, whom he put to a barbarous death. He was overthrown and chained, Prometheus-like, inside Mt. Damāvand by the legendary king Farīdūn (*Shāhnāme*, I, 135-66). The name seems to be a corruption of the name of the primeval snake, *Aji-Dahak*, in Indo-Iranian legend

day of his slaying a festival and called it “Mihrijān”. This happened two thousand and twenty years after the Nawrūz.

[43] Ibn Waṣīf Shāh, in discussing Manāwus son of Manqāwus, one of the kings of the Copts in ancient times, relates: He was the first to celebrate the Nawrūz in Egypt. People would spend seven days eating and drinking in honor of the planets.

[44] Ibn Riḍwān says:⁽⁴¹⁾ Since the Nile is the most important cause of Egypt’s prosperity, the ancient Egyptians, and especially those who lived at the time of Emperor Diocletian, deemed it appropriate to put the beginning of the year at the beginning of autumn, when the Nile reaches its optimal level. Hence, they made the first of their months Tūt, followed by Bābih, then Hātōr, and so on according to the familiar arrangement of those months.

[45] Ibn Zūlāq records: In that year—meaning, the year 363 (A.D. 974)—the Commander of the Faithful, al-Mu‘izz-li-dīni-llāh, prohibited the lighting of fires during the night of Nawrūz in the streets and the splashing with water on the Coptic New Year’s Day. [46] And under the year ’64 he reports: On Nawrūz day, a lot of fooling around with water and lighting of fires was going on. The street entertainers roamed about the streets and drank in broad daylight.⁽⁴²⁾ They took their foolishness to (New) Cairo and carried on for three whole days, displaying grotesque figures and decorations in the markets. Al-Mu‘izz then ordered a public proclamation (for them) to desist: No fires must be lit, no water must be

(Sykes, 1:134); it has also been explained as the Persian *dah āk* ‘ten calamities’ (cf. *Fihrist*, transl. Dodge, 573).

41. The passage is the conclusion of ch. 4 (on the year’s seasons) of ‘Alī b. Riḍwān’s medical treatise “On Warding off Harm to the Body in Egypt”. Maqrīzī has already quoted it extensively in the first 11 sections of chapter 13 in Part I.
42. Suggested emendation: *wa-‘amilū qaylah*, for *wa-‘amilū fiyalah* (or *filah*) in both texts. Wiet’s suggestion that the latter could mean the street people made effigies of elephants (*fiyalah*) to mock the two war elephants in al-Mu‘izz’s procession two years earlier, can hardly be taken seriously.

splashed. Some people were arrested and jailed, others were arrested and paraded around town, (strapped) on camels.

[47] Ibn al-Ma'mūn reports in his "Chronicle": The festival of the Nawrūz began on the 9th of Rajab, 517 (September 3, 1123). From the caliph's manufactory of fine fabrics and the port city of Alexandria arrived the special Nawrūz clothing, together with the gold-embroidered red silk fabrics, and the silk material and plain materials one can buy on the market, and the established quota of men's and women's clothes, gold and silver specie, and all the seasonal commodities, itemized and with the names of the people entitled to them, were released (by the Dīwān). These Nawrūz commodities are: watermelons, pomegranates, grapes, bananas, baskets of unripe dates, coops of dried dates from Qūṣ, coops of quince, and pots of meat stew made with chicken, lamb and beef, with wheat bread steeped in broth per pot of each kind. The financial secretary brought the authorizations for the customary distribution of gold and silver specie, the various New Year's garments, and other things of all sorts, which came to 4,000 dinars in gold and 15,000 dirhams (in silver). The clothes are of a great number (and variety), such as gold-embroidered *dabīqī* and silk wraps (for women), multicolored head scarves and headbands for women, wraps of gold-embroidered red silk fabric, silk and *mushaffā'* (lined?) material, and silken *dabīqī* linen. As for the gold and silver specie and the garments, all of that is restricted to those inside the palaces and the vizier's residence, the sheikhs, the officers and soldiers assigned to palace duty, and the captains and crews of the (caliph's) longboats; none of the emirs in their various ranks has any share in it. As to the (seasonal) commodities, such as watermelons, pomegranates, fresh dates, bananas, quince, jujubes, and the various meat stews, that includes all those mentioned before, but is also shared by all the Emirs of the Necklace and of the

Saber⁽⁴³⁾ as well as other grandees and notables with a regular salary and function in the state.

[48] Among the events of the year 584 (A.D. 1188) al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍīl reports: Tuesday, the 14th of Rajab (September 9), is the Coptic New Year's Day. It is the first day of (the month of) Tūt, which is the first (month) of their year. There have been in Egypt since long-bygone days as well as from the past regime certain holidays of the Christians and times for (displaying) their errant ways, and on such a day reprehensible things would go on in plain sight and fornication was blatant. On this particular day, an emir called "Emir of the Nawrūz" would ride forth, accompanied by a large cortege, and hold sway over the people, soliciting an "impost" fixed by him. On houses of prominent citizens he would "impose" payment of sizable sums of money, (even) writing out "pay orders" and delegating people to collect them. All of that was done in good fun, and he would actually settle for a few easily obtainable gifts. Beneath the Lu'lu'ah Palace would gather the catamites and the harlots so that the caliph could see them, musical instruments in hand, and the voices would rise in the air and much wine and beer drinking in public would be going on among them and in the streets. People would splash each other with water, or water and wine, or water mixed with filth, and if a respectable citizen made the mistake of leaving his house, he would be met by someone who splashed him with water, ruining his clothes, and made light of his dignity. He could then either ransom himself or be disgraced. Things were no longer like that (this year), although some water splashing was going on in the side streets and reprehensible things were done in the houses of ill repute. [49] And among the events of the year 592 (A.D. 1196) he notes: Things went as usual on Nawrūz as far as water splashing is concerned. The novel thing this year was that they

43. Arabic: *umarā' arbāb al-aqḍāb* (or, more commonly, *al-quḍub*), the emirs who bear a ceremonial silver sword (*qaḍīb*) in royal processions, the second highest rank of emirs, corresponding to the *umarā' al-ṭablakhānāh* in Mamluk times (cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:476).

pelted each other with eggs and slapped one another with leather mats. People were ordered to stop the practice, and whoever was picked up in the street was doused with dirty water and disgraced.

[50] Nawrūz day continued to be celebrated, with mutual water dousing and slapping each other with pieces of leather and other things as described above, until the seven-eighties, when the government and administration of Egypt passed into the hands of the Great Emir Barqūq, before he ascended the throne and was called by the title of Sultan. He then banned the Nawrūz frolicking and threatened those who engaged in it with punishment. And so people ceased to carry on in Cairo and took to celebrating to some extent along the main canals, around the ponds, and in similar recreation spots, after the markets of Cairo were closed for trading on the day of the Nawrūz. On that day people would have such a great time and fool around so much that they carried it beyond the bounds of decency and shame to outright debauchery and fornication, and rarely did a Nawrūz day go by without one or more people getting killed.

[51] Nowadays people no longer have the necessary time for that, nor the freedom from care and the high spirits that made them celebrate the day. How well spoke someone who said:

How can you, Saknā, celebrate Nawrūz
 when all in it resembles me—as I do it:
 Now like the flame of fire in my heart,
 now like the trickling of my tears.

And another said:

Folk celebrated New Year's Day and so
 did I—but with my tears.
 Their fire flamed, while mine
 is burning hidden in my breast.

And someone else said:

When Nawrūz came, o ultimate desire,
 you still resisting, fleeing, coy,
I sent my yearning's fire nights into the heart,
 observed the day next morning, tears on cheek.

91. How Agricultural Activities, the Rise of the Nile, etc., Fit the Days of the Coptic Months, the Way the Egyptians Have Handed It down from Their Ancients and Traditionally Depended on It in the Conduct of Their Affairs

[1] One should know that the ancient Egyptians used in their time-reckoning the solar year, as has already been mentioned, in order that each season be preserved and their activities be kept within given times of every year, so that the time for any of their activities never changes, coming neither earlier nor later.

[2] *Tūt* in the Coptic language is (approximately the same as) Elul (in the Aramaean calendar). It has been the custom in Egypt since Pharaonic times, as far as exacting the land tax and collecting the country's taxes is concerned, that the full amount of the land tax is not called in from its people until the time when the rise of the Nile is complete and its water has spread over all of its arable land. This occurs in the month of Tūt. When that is the case, although at times it may take longer than that, then the water is released in all rural communities from their secondary canals; the water level then keeps fluctuating up and down until Tūt is over.

On its first day is the Coptic New Year's Day. The 4th of it is the first day of Aylūl. On the 7th one gleans olives. On the 12th, dawn rises near *al-Ṣarfah*.⁽¹⁾ On the 17th is the Day of the Cross, and one scores the balsam trees to extract their oil. Late main and secondary canals are opened and the *madāmisīyyah*⁽²⁾ toward upkeep of the

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1. The twelfth of the 28 Mansions of the Moon, star β of Leo in the system of modern astronomy. Its heliacal rise marks the beginning of autumn.
 2. The tax on *tadmīs* land settled on rural communities as a contribution toward dike maintenance (cf. Ibn Mammāti, *Qawānīn*, 343, and Glossary p. 458); *tadmīs* designates a method of planting in which moistened seed is

dikes is settled (on the communities). On the 18th, the sun moves into the sign of Libra and the fall season makes its entrance. On the 25th, dawn rises near *al-ʿAwwā*⁽³⁾ and the young fish begin to grow.

During that month, the water of the Nile spreads over all the arable land of Egypt. In the course of it, the rural communities are registered, the land-lease deeds and tax registers are due for filing, and seed grain is issued for greening the land.

In that month ripen pomegranates, yellow and black dates, olives, cotton, and quince. The north wind blows more strongly than the south wind, and the east wind is stronger than the west wind in it. The ancient Egyptians used to refrain from erecting any foundation in that month. In Tūt winter grapes abound and the young citrus fruits appear.

[3] *Bābih*. On the first day of it begins the rice harvest and the planting of fava beans, Egyptian clover, and all cereals that require no plowing of the soil. On the 4th is the first day of Tishrīn I. On the 8th, dawn rises near *al-Simāk*,⁽⁴⁾ which marks the end of the Nile's rise and the beginning of its recession. Sometimes the water may not reach its full level in that month so that some of the land cannot be put under water, with the result that the land tax falls short. On the 9th, the cranes arrive in Egypt. On the 10th one plants flax, and on the 12th begins the breaking of the soil in Upper Egypt for seeding wheat and barley. On the 18th, the sun moves into the sign of Scorpio and the cutting of timber begins. On the 19th, the water of the Nile begins to recede and the mosquitoes multiply. On the 21st, dawn rises near *al-Ghafr*.⁽⁵⁾

buried in soil softened by previous flooding of the field, which is then irrigated. — In both the Wiet and Bulaq texts: *al-madāmisah* (?).

3. Five stars (β , η , γ , δ and ϵ of Virgo) disposed in the shape of an L, regarded as the "haunches" of the Lion, the 13th Mansion of the Moon, which, when rising with the dawn, ushers in cold nights.
4. I.e., *al-Simāk al-aʿzal*, star α of Virgo, called *al-Sunbulah* (Spica Virginis) by the astrologers; the 14th Mansion of the Moon.
5. Stars ι , κ , and λ of Virgo, the 15th Mansion of the Moon.

In that month, the water is drained from the land and the share-croppers go out to (seed the fields and) make the land verdant. They begin with the seeding of the leek crop, followed by that of early wheat, one after the other. In Bābih one extracts the oil of the myrtle and of the Egyptian lotus; it is also the time when dates, raisins, sesame and colocasia reach maturity. The young fish multiply and the old diminish in number during that month; the Egyptian salmon and the bream in particular grow fat. Pomegranates turn markedly sweet and are better tasting than in any other month of the year. Sheep, goats and milch cows have young ones. In that month one salt-cures the fish called *būrī* (gray mullet). Sheep, goats and cows lose weight and their meats no longer taste good. The citrus fruits reach maturity. In Bābih have to be drawn up the tax requisition forms for the Qūṣ region. In that month one sets out gillyflower seedlings and plants colza.

[4] *Hātōr*. On the 5th is the first day of Tishrīn II and dawn comes up near *al-Zubānā*.⁽⁶⁾ On the 4th and 6th of the month one plants poppy. On the 7th the Nile water is drained off the flax land; flax is seeded halfway through the month and fertilized with manure a month later. On the 8th begins the time of the autumnal rainfall. On the 11th, the wind is from the south. On the 15th, the water turns cold in Egypt. On the 17th, dawn rises near *al-Iklīl*.⁽⁷⁾ On the 18th, the sun alights in the sign of Sagittarius. On the 19th, the sea is closed (for travel).⁽⁸⁾ On the 27th blow gusty winds.

In that month, the Egyptians put on woolen garments from the 7th onward. In *Hātōr* one examines the amount of sugarcane needed for the presses. The (young) grain puts out leaves in all the neces-

6. Stars α and β of Libra, sometimes seen as the “claw” of the neighboring Scorpion, the 16th Mansion of the Moon.

7. Stars β , δ and π of Scorpio (according to Nallino) disposed in an oblique row, the (head of the scorpion), the 17th Mansion of the Moon.

8. Cf. Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ* 2:385): “On the 28th [of *Hātōr*], the sea is closed and ships are forbidden to travel on it because of the high winds.” An alternative reading for *yughlaqu* could be *yanqhaliqu* ‘becomes unnavigable’ (compare *yanfaliq* in Ibn Mammātī, 239, note).

sary places. One attends to foddering cattle and camels, after having sold the old and weak animals and replaced them with others, to the allotment of straw for cooking raw sugar, and to assigning kilns for making loaf sugar and (others) for making vases and jars for molasses and sirup. In that month ripen violets, lotus and gillyflower, and of the seed plants, spinach and wild mustard. The ancient Egyptians preferred to erect foundations and to plant wheat in Hātōr. The best lambs of the year are those of Hātōr. In that month there is an abundance of grapes which used to be brought in from Qūṣ.

[5] *Kiyahk*. The first day marks the beginning of the coldest part of winter⁽⁹⁾ in Egypt, and the birds retire to their nests. On the 6th day falls the annunciation to Mary of her carrying Jesus, peace be upon both. On the 7th is the first day of Kānūn I. On the 10th is the last of the “piebald nights”,⁽¹⁰⁾ which begin on the first of Hātōr. On the 11th begin the “black nights” and the ants withdraw into the rocks. On the 13th, dawn comes up near *al-Shawlah*,⁽¹¹⁾ fleas make their appearance, and the inside of the earth begins to warm. On the 16th, trees begin to shed their leaves. On the 17th, the sun moves into the sign of Capricorn, the winter season enters, and asparagus is planted. On the 21st is the last of the piebald nights, and on the 22nd is Annunciation. On the 23rd one plants fenugreek and

9. Called *al-arbaʿīniyyāt* ‘the forties’; they begin in Syria on the 17th of *Kiyahk*, the first day of winter (Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 2:385).

10. *Al-layālī al-bulq*, twenty of which precede the 40 “black nights” (*al-layālī al-sūd*, December 11 through January 20) and twenty follow them (Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:114). The “black nights” are synonymous with the *arbaʿīniyyāt* only in Maghribi usage (correct Dozy 1:504). —The contradictory repetitions in this section suggest that Maqrīzī must have drawn on at least two disparate sources, one of them possibly of Syriac origin: Annunciation, celebrated in Egypt on the 29th of Baramhāt (cf. ch. 90, sect. 3), is fixed by certain Syriac menologies on the fourth Sunday in November or the fourth Sunday before Christmas (Wiet, IV, 254, n. 5).

11. Stars λ and ν of Scorpio, the 19th Mansion of the Moon.

lupine. On the 26th, dawn rises near *al-Na'ā'im*.⁽¹²⁾ On the 28th ostriches lay their eggs, and on the 29th is Christmas.

In that month one plants cucumbers, after having first flooded their land, and the seeding of wheat, barley and berseem grown on plowland is completed. In Kiyahk the tax on clover is called in at the treasury of Upper Egypt; also, bird guards are assigned. In that month sugarcane is crushed and pressed, and cooks are hired to cook the raw sugar. Narcissus, citrus fruits, green beans, cabbage, carrots, white leek and turnips all come to maturity during that month. The north wind becomes rarer and the wind is more often from the south. Baby goats turn out well in that month and will taste better than those of any other month. In Kiyahk, most of the cereals that need plowing are planted, and after it there is no more planting going on anywhere in Egypt, except for sesame, kitchen herbs and cotton.

[6] *Ṭūbah*. On the 3rd begins the planting season for chick-peas, rambling vetches and lentils. On the 6th is the first day of Kānūn II. On the 9th, dawn rises near *al-Baldah*.⁽¹³⁾ On the 10th is the fast of Epiphany and on the 11th of the month is Epiphany. On the 12th, the weather turns very cold. On the 14th, pestilence in Egypt begins to lift and one puts out the date-palm seedlings. On the 17th, the sun reaches the beginning of the sign of Aquarius; there is much dew (on the ground) and one begins with the planting of trees and shrubs. The 20th of the month is the last of the "black nights", and on the 21st (begins) the second half of the "piebald nights". On the 22nd, dawn comes up near *Sa'd al-Dhābiḥ*.⁽¹⁴⁾ On the 23rd blow cold winds. On the 24th hatch the raptors. On the 25th, the camels give birth to young. On the 27th, the

12. Nine stars in Sagittarius behind *al-Shawlah*, eight of them forming a quadrilateral figure, the 20th Mansion of the Moon.

13. A starless patch in the sky between *al-Na'ā'im* and *Sa'd alDhābiḥ*; the 21st Mansion of the Moon.

14. Stars α and β of Capricorn, the 22nd Mansion of the Moon.

water of the Nile begins to clear. On the 28th, alfalfa attains full maturity.

In that month one prunes the grapevines and clears the (young) cereal crop of wild mustard and other weeds, and the (young) flax crop of radishes and other plants. In Ṭūbah, the land is given a first plowing for summer crops, kitchen herbs, cotton and sesame; it is plowed a second time on the first of Amshīr. In that month one waters the land for colocasia and sugarcane, and at the end of it the dikes are breached. Fallow land is prepared for sowing. One also breaks the sugarcane of the first crop (for pressing), after having set aside the necessary seed material, which is per feddan of land one *qīrāt* of choice first-harvest cane. In Ṭūbah one attends to the building of irrigation ditches (for sugarcane cultivation),⁽¹⁵⁾ the dredging of wells, and the purchase of cows. Green almonds make their appearance in that month, as do the Christ's thorn and asparagus. Also, in that month, the winds are more often from the south than from the north, and the east wind is more common than the west wind. Green beans and carrots of that month taste better than in any other. In Ṭūbah, the water of the Nile is at its clearest and one stores it up; it will not spoil, even if it remains in the containers for a long time. Lamb and mutton in Ṭūbah have a better taste than in any other month. Horses and mules are taken off alfalfa for fodder, because they find fresh green herbage. In Ṭūbah, people are required to begin payment of the land tax and tax farmers must render account for all their liquid and non-liquid assets on the basis of the value determined from the land-lease deeds.

[7] *Amshīr*. On the first day of it blow variable winds. On the 5th, dawn rises near *Sa'd Bula'*.⁽¹⁶⁾ On the 6th is the first day of Shubāṭ, and on the 9th the sap begins to rise in the wood. The 11th

15. Cf. Ibn Mammātī, 245.

16. Three stars (ν , μ and ϵ) in a triangular formation near the western edge of Aquarius, the 23rd Mansion of the Moon.

marks the first—cool—*jamrah*.⁽¹⁷⁾ On the 16th, the sun enters the sign of Pisces. On the 17th, the ants begin to come out of the rocks. On the 18th, dawn comes up near *Sa' d al-Su'ūd*.⁽¹⁸⁾ The 20th of the month marks the second—tepid—*jamrah*. On the 23rd one prunes the grapevines. On the 25th hatch the honey bees. The 27th marks the third—hot—*jamrah* and the (fruit) trees put out leaves; it is the last day for planting their seedlings. On the last day of the month is the last of the “piebald nights”.

In that month colza is harvested and the tax on it called in. Also, the (land for) summer crops is plowed for the second time and then given a third plowing. In Amshīr, dike sluices are made and the land is surveyed. Eggs are put in the hatcheries for a four-month incubation period ending in Bashans. The north wind is the prevailing wind in Amshīr. It is desirable to make all pottery for the year-round storage of water in that month, because earthenware containers made in Amshīr will cool the water in the summertime better than those made in any other month. Tree planting and grapevine pruning are completed. In Amshīr ripen Christ's thorn and green almonds; violets and gillyflower proliferate. One says: 'Amshīr says to the crop: Go! and tall is joined by low.' In that month, the cold begins to subside and there is a slightly warm breeze. In Amshīr people begin to pay off the land tax accruing from the land-lease records.

[8] *Baramhāt*. On the first day of it, dawn rises near *al-Akhbiyah*.⁽¹⁹⁾ On the 5th hatch the silkworms. On the 6th one plants sesame. On the 12th begins the harvest. The 14th marks the begin-

17. That is, the warming period of the air, one zodiacal month before the vernal equinox, which is considered “cool” (*bāridah*); it is followed by the “tepid” (*fātirah*) warming of the water and the “hot” (*ḥāmīyah*) warming of the ground, each lasting seven days.

18. In modern astronomy, stars β and ξ of Aquarius and c' of Capricorn, the 24th Mansion of the Moon.

19. Or *Sa'd al-Akhbiyah*, four stars (γ , π , ζ , η) on the right arm and hand of Aquarius; the 25th Mansion of the Moon.

ning of the *Ajāz*⁽²⁰⁾ and dawn comes up near *al-Fargh al-Muqaddam*.⁽²¹⁾ On the 16th the snakes open their eyes. On the 17th, the sun moves into the sign of Aries, which marks the beginning of spring, the start of the military year, and New Year for the world in general. On the 20th of the month is the end of the *Ajāz*. On the 22nd foal the horses. On the 23rd appear the blue flies and on the 25th the vermin of the ground. On the 27th, dawn rises near *al-Fargh al-Mu'akkhar*.⁽²²⁾ On the last day of it the clouds disperse.

In that month, transport ships ply the sea on their way to Egypt from the Maghrib and from Byzantine lands. In Baramhāt one attends to the detachment of garrison troops to the port cities, such as Alexandria, Damietta, Tinnīs and Rosetta, and (in former times) one used to outfit the fleets and war galleys for the protection of the ports. In that month are planted kitchen herbs and summer crops. Broad beans and lentils ripen, flax is reaped, and sugarcane is planted on carefully selected plowed land long left uncultivated, as the shuckers set about to clear the crop land of dry leaves at planting time, the cutters cut up the seed cane, and the planters go about their business of dropping the cane sections (into the furrows).⁽²³⁾ In Baramhāt one goes about mining natron and moving it from the Wādī Hubayb to the royal storehouse (at al-Ṭarrānah). Winds out of the north are the prevailing winds in that month, in which the fruit trees are in bloom and most of their fruits begin to form. The curdled milk of that month tastes better than any made in other months. In Baramhāt people are required to pay the second quarter and one-eighth of the land tax.

20. I.e., the *Ayyām al-Ajūz*, commonly, the last four days of February and the first three days of March, signaling the end of winter; for their names and the legends surrounding them see Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. “ajūz”.

21. Stars α and β of Pegasus, the 26th Mansion of the Moon.

22. Star γ of Pegasus and the bright star α of Andromeda, the 27th Mansion of the Moon.

23. See I, 38, sect. 11.

[9] *Barmūdah*. On the 6th begins Nīsān. On the 10th, dawn rises near *al-Rishā'*.⁽²⁴⁾ On the 12th one harvests radishes. On the 17th, the sun reaches the beginning of Taurus. On the 23rd, dawn comes up near *al-Sharaṭān*, which is the head (stars β and γ, the "horns") of Aries and the First Mansion of the Moon.

In Barmūdah begins the harvest of fava beans and of winter wheat, which marks the conclusion of the planting season. In that month one also attends to the felling of acacia timber in the forests that used to be found in Egypt in the old days at the time of the Fāṭimids and Ayyūbids; (the logs) are dragged to the river banks so that they can be moved with ease at the time of the Nile's rise to the wharf of Old Cairo to be converted into war galleys and firewood for the royal kitchens. Roses become plentiful in that month, and purging cassia, Jew's mallow and eggplants reach maturity. In Barmūdah one harvests the first bee honey; also, flaxseed is swingled. The roses of that month are the best of the year. The first fruit of the sycamores become visible. In that month, the people of the various districts are charged for the surveying (costs) and people are required to pay up half of the land tax from their land-lease deeds. Early crops are harvested.

[10] *Bashans*. On the 5th, fresh fruit becomes abundant. The 6th is the first day of Ayyār; on that day, dawn rises near *al-Butayn*.⁽²⁵⁾ On the 8th is the Feast of the Martyr.⁽²⁶⁾ The 9th marks the reopening of the sea (for traffic). On the 14th one begins to plant rice. On the 18th, the sun enters the beginning of Gemini; it is a good time for harvesting. On the 19th, dawn rises near the Pleiades, and on that day rice and sesame are planted. On the 24th

24. Star β of Andromeda, also called *Baṭn al-Hūt* or *Qalb al-Hūt*, the 28th Mansion of the Moon.

25. Three small stars (ε, δ, and ρ' of Aries) in the shape of an equilateral triangle forming the "belly" of the Ram; the 2nd Mansion of the Moon.

26. See Part I, ch. 22.

is Balm Day in al-Maṭariyyah; people claim that it is the day on which Mary came to Egypt.⁽²⁷⁾

In that month, wheat is threshed, flax is retted, and seeds, seed grain and hay are collected⁽²⁸⁾ and delivered (to the storehouses). It is the time for cultivating and pruning balsam.

Balsam is watered, and the land on which the trees grow is cleared of weeds and stones, from Ba'ūnah to the end of Hātōr. One extracts its oily resin, after scoring the trees, halfway through Tūt—if it is done at the beginning of the month, it is even better—until the end of Hātōr. (The resin) is at its best when the weather is humid. It is kept in liquid for a whole year until its dregs and impurities have settled, and is then cooked in spring in the month of Baramhāt. One uses 44 *raṭl* of water per Egyptian *raṭl* (of resin) and obtains from that roughly 20 *dirhams* (65.5 g) of (pure) oil.

During Bashans, most winds are out of the north. Qāsimi apples are in season in that month, and musk apples and cantaloupes are beginning to appear; the latter are said to have become first known in Egypt when 'Abd-Allāh ibn Ṭāhir arrived there in the early 3rd century of the Hijrah,⁽²⁹⁾ and were then associated with him and called '*abdālī*. In Bashans also begins (the season of) Ḥawfi melons, apricots and nectarines and white roses are harvested.

In that month, the land-survey tax is fixed and people are required to pay the various imposts pertaining to it, such as the agio and the assayer's due,⁽³⁰⁾ as well as the tax due on grazing land, alfalfa and flax, in accordance with the procedures of each rural commune.

27. See ch. 66, above, sect. 31, last paragraph.

28. The text correction (*qabḍ*, for Wiet/Bulaq *naḥḍ*) follows Ibn Mammātī (*Qawānīn* 251).

29. 'Abd-Allāh b. Ṭāhir (d. 844) served as governor of Egypt from 211 to 212 (826-27) and remained, after his return to Nishāpūr as head of the Ṭāhirid house, absentee governor until 219/834. —On '*abdālī* see I, 12, n. 12.

30. The agio (*ṣarf*) is the differential paid by the taxpayer in compensation for the fluctuating rate of silver vis-à-vis the gold specie, the assayer's due (*jahbadhah*) the fee payable to the *jahbadh* who verifies the soundness of the currency used in payment (cf. F. Løkkegaard, *Islamic Taxation*, 159, 160).

One also collects the balance of the (next) quarter (of the land tax) due, as determined by the land contracts and the (terms of the) surveying tax. And everyone is given release time for the harvest.

[11] *Ba'ūnah*. On the 2nd of it, dawn rises near Aldebaran (star α of Taurus). On the 5th, the Nile begins to rise. On the 9th is the time for felling palm trees. On the 11th blows the simoom. On the 12th is Michaelmas⁽³¹⁾ and people take the remaining old water of Nile. On the 13th, the weather gets very hot. On the 15th, dawn rises near *al-Haq'ah*.⁽³²⁾ On the 20th, the sun enters the sign of Cancer, which marks the beginning of summer. On the 27th, the number of fingers by which the Nile has risen is proclaimed in public. On the 28th, dawn rises near *al-Han'ah*.⁽³³⁾

In that month, the boats get underway to fetch grain, figs, raw sugar, molasses, etc., from the Qūṣ region and the rural communities of the Delta. One harvests bee honey, estimates the prospective yield of grapevines and collects the alms tax due on these. Flax is wetted and (now) passes through four phases during *Ba'ūnah* and *Abīb*. It is also the time for indigo cultivation in remote Upper Egypt.

Indigo (pods) are harvested after a hundred days, then left (to grow back) and harvested again once every hundred days. Indigo plants are dormant⁽³⁴⁾ during *Kiyahk*, *Ṭūbah*, *Amshīr* and *Baramhāt* and come up again during *Barmūdah*; they are harvested during ten days of *Abīb* [and for five days in *Tūt*]. Indigo plants remain on first-grade land for three years and are watered (during the first

31. The 18th of *Ba'ūnah* according to both Ibn Mammātī (254) and Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ* 2:388).

32. Star λ of Orion, the 5th Mansion of the Moon.

33. Two white stars (γ and ξ of Gemini) in the Milky Way, the 6th Mansion of the Moon.

34. This reading: *wa-tamūtu fī Kiyahk* ... is adopted from the marginal note in Ibn Mammātī (p. 254). The Maqrīzī text is quite obviously corrupted here and makes no sense at all. The addition in square brackets at the end of the sentence is drawn from the same source.

year) every ten days twice, in the second year three times, and in the third year four times.

In Ba'ūnah abound early figs, nectarines, pears, prunes, squirting cucumbers, green dates, and unripe grapes. Safflower begins to ripen. Some ripe grapes make their appearance in that month, and black mulberries thrive. It is the time for harvesting the bulk of bee honey. There is little wind. Ba'ūnah figs are the best tasting of the year. Date palms put out spadixes in that month. In Ba'ūnah, the balance of half of the land tax left after the surveying tax is called in.

[12] *Abīb*. On the 7th is the first day of Tammūz. The 10th marks the end of the lumbering season. On the 11th, dawn rises near *al-Dhirā'*.⁽³⁵⁾ On the 12th one begins to macerate the flax. On the 15th, the water in the wells begins to diminish, various kinds of fruit reach maturity, and the silkworms begin to die. On the 21st, the sun enters the sign of Leo; the fleas go away, the inside of the earth begins to cool, and eye pains act up. On the 25th, dawn comes up near *al-Nathrah*.⁽³⁶⁾ On the 26th rises the Southern Dog Star.⁽³⁷⁾

In that month, the prevailing wind is from the north. There is an abundance of ripe grapes, and they are excellent. The figs that come in at the same time as these grapes are delicious, but cantaloupes begin to lose their taste and become less sweet. Sugar pears become plentiful, and the green dates (of that month) are very savory. One harvests the remainder of the bee honey. The Nile's rise becomes ever stronger, so that there is a proverb: 'In Abīb, the Nile comes in a creep.' In that month, flax is "tanned" (i.e.,

35. Or *Dhirā' al-Asad* 'the Lion's foreleg', two bright stars (α and β of Gemini), the 7th Mansion of the Moon.

36. Or *Nathrat al-Asad*, three stars (ϵ , γ and δ of Cancer) forming the "nose" of the Lion, the 8th Mansion of the Moon.

37. *Al-Shi'rā al-'Abūr al-Yamāniyyah*, as distinguished from the Syrian, or Northern, Sirius, *al-Shi'rā al-Shāmiyyah*, i.e., Procyon, which together are called the Two Sisters of Canopus.

softened with corrosives) in the steeping ponds. People buy berseem and seed for planting alfalfa and flax [at the villages of the royal domains].⁽³⁸⁾ In Abīb ripens the hemp fruit and indigo is harvested. Three quarters of the land tax fall due that month.

[13] *Misrā*. On the 7th, dawn rises near *al-Ṭarf*,⁽³⁹⁾ and on the 8th is the first day of Āb. On the 11th begins the cotton harvest. On the 14th, water heats up without cooling again. By the 17th, the fruit season is considered over. On the 20th, dawn comes up near *al-Jabhah*.⁽⁴⁰⁾ On the 21st, the sun enters the sign of Virgo. On the 23rd, table fruit begin to lose its taste, because the Nile water has by then engulfed the land. On the 25th ends the simoom season. On the 29th, Canopus rises above Egypt.

In that month, the Nile's level tops off at 16 cubits in most years, so that people had a proverbial saying: "If by *Misrā* full Nile's not here, wait for it another year." In *Misrā*, the Nile fills the canal of Alexandria and boats travel (on it), loaded with grain, spices, sugar, and all sorts of imported merchandise. Yellow unripe dates are plentiful. At a time when the sultan used to collect alms taxes from his subjects, people used to estimate the prospective yield of the palms and collect the *zakāh* due on the harvest in that month. The prevailing winds in *Misrā* are from the north. The Copts in Egypt press wine in *Misrā*, and vinegar is made from the grapes. It is the month in which the bananas ripen, and the most delicious bananas in Egypt are those of *Misrā*. In that month also ripen the "apple lemons": Among the varieties of lemon grown in Egypt used to be a lemon called *tuffāhī*, which could be eaten without sugar on account of its low acidity and delicious taste. The first pomegranates as a rule reach maturity in *Misrā*.

38. Restored from the original of Ibn Mammātī (*Qawānīn* 256).

39. Two stars (χ of Cancer and λ of Leo) regarded as the "eye" of the Lion, the 9th Mansion of the Moon.

40. Four stars (ζ, γ, η and α of Leo) which the Arabs regard as the "forehead" of the Lion, the 10th Mansion of the Moon.

After the end of Misrā begin the Intercalary Days. On the first of these starts the rutting season of the ostrich. On the 4th, dawn rises near *al-Kharātān*.⁽⁴¹⁾

In Misrā, the fellaheen (now) pay off the full amount of the tax on their croplands—they used to defer payment of the balance on the ground that the pounding of flax was done in Misrā and Abīb—because (nowadays) flax fiber is extracted in Tūt and pounded in Bābih.

41. Two bright stars (θ and δ of Leo) between the “shoulders” of the Lion, hence also called *Zubrat al-Asad* or *al-Zubrah*, the 11th Mansion of the Moon.

92. On the Transfer of the Coptic Tax Year to the Arab Lunar Year, and How That Was Handled in the Islamic Community

[1] Earlier in the present book, the solar and lunar years were explained and the opinions of the various nations concerning the intercalation of years were discussed. After God Exalted had brought Islam, the Muslims (initially) guarded against intercalating years, for fear that it might coincide with the *nasīʿ*, of which the Lord said: “*The month postponed is an increase of unbelief whereby the unbelievers go astray.*”⁽¹⁾ Later on, realizing that the lunar years overlapped with the solar years, they omitted a year at the end of every 32 lunar years, an operation they called *izdilāf* (‘moving ahead’), because every 33 lunar years are approximately 32 solar years. I shall now furnish the reader with such information about that as I have not found collected anywhere else.

[2] Abū ʿl-Ḥusayn ʿUbayd-Allāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭāhir⁽²⁾ reports in his “History of the Caliph al-Muʿtaḍid-bi-ʿllāh Abū ʿl-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭalḥah al-Muwaffaq ibn al-Mutawakkil,” from which I transcribe:

Al-Muʿtaḍid’s order to move Nawrūz to the 11th of Ḥazīrān came out in Dhū ʿl-Ḥijjah, 281 (February 895), as an act of kindness to the subjects and out of the desire to help them. People have said that the official notification went out in al-Muḥarram, 282 (March 895) in the form of letters to all tax-collecting agents in the villages and towns to abandon the practice of beginning the collection of the

1. Koran 9 (Repentance):37.

2. Baghdadi historian, died *ca.* 315/927. The *Akhbār al-Muʿtaḍid* here quoted is part of his sequel (*dhayl*) to the “History of Baghdad (*Akhbār Baghdād*)” written by his more famous father, Abū ʿl-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (819-893). Cf. *Fihrist* (transl. Dodge) 320-22; the article “Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr” by F. Rosenthal in *EF*.

land tax on the day of the Persian New Year, which (at that time) fell on Friday, the 11th of Şafar (April 11), and to make the date for the collection of the initial installment of the tax for the year 282 Wednesday, the 14th of Rabī' II of that year, which is the 11th of Ḥazīrān (June), to be called "the Nawrūz of al-Mu'taḍid", as a convenience to, and in consideration of, the taxpayers. The text of the communication to move the opening of the land-tax collection to Ḥazīrān reads as follows:

Ad rem. Inasmuch as God has given the Commander of the Faithful the position through which He has entrusted him with authority over the affairs of His servants and His land, it is deemed that the caliph owes to God to be motivated in its discharge only by the quest of justice and equity and the pursuit of the straight path, that he shoulder the task of seeing to the proper outcome of their affairs, and that he investigate the ways and means by which their affairs used to be handled, confirming such as right and truth require to be confirmed, and abolishing such as must be abolished by someone who neither overrates the many things that justice causes him to omit, nor underrates the little that injustice compels him to uphold. God has enabled the Commander of the Faithful in the past to do what he hopes will satisfy God's due in such matters and be equal to their deserved share of justice, and it is from God that the Commander of the Faithful continues to seek help in order to preserve such of their affairs as he is charged to guard and to protect such as are given in his power. For He is the best to give success and help.

Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Ubayd-Allāh⁽³⁾ submitted a request for an order of the Commander of the Faithful that the Nawrūz, on which the collection of the land tax is begun in the Iraq, the East, and the regions adjoining them that follow their practice, be moved back from the present date in time to the date where it had previously been, together with an order concerning the future intercalation of years so that justice be universal all the time, lasting for all times to come.

Disposition of the Commander of the Faithful: The Caliph has therefore ordered that his disposition be so recorded in your favor at the end of his letter, together with his written notation on it concerning its duplication.

3. He is the Amīr 'Ubayd-Allāh b. Sulaymān b. Wahb al-Hārithī, 'Abbāsīd vizier (891-901) to al-Mu'tamid and al-Mu'taḍid. The son of a vizier, he was succeeded after his death in office by his son, the poet al-Qāsim b. 'Ubayd-Allāh (d. 291/904). Cf. al-Kutubī, *Fawāṭ al-wafayāt*, 2:58-60.

Act on it then, God willing, and peace and the mercy and blessings of God be upon you! Done on Thursday, the 13th of Dhū 'l-Hijjah, 281.⁽⁴⁾

Transcript of the (vizier's) report:

I reported to the Commander of the Faithful that, given his kindness and benevolence so amply bestowed by God on his subjects, his steady application of justice and equity toward them, and the fact that he has relieved them during his caliphate of such injustice as used to encompass far and near, young and old, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, I have addressed myself to the issue of transferring the tax contracts from the Hijrah year, with which they have been traditionally associated, to the year in which the cereal crops ripen and the taxes are collected.

The present procedure is something originally designed by certain ignorant people and put into practice by persons seeking to hurt others, namely, to fix the tax on the taxpayers, demand that they pay it before the time of planting, and cause hardship to them by designating one of the two years that affect the *kharāj*—one while the cereal crops ripen, the other in which the (actual) tax collection takes place—according to the Persian calendar, which is the current land-tax procedure in the Sawād and its environs, al-Ahwāz, Fārs, and al-Jabal with all regions of the East adjoining it and affiliated with it. For the practice of Syria, Upper Mesopotamia and Mosul follows the Greek calendar, which tallies with the seasons so that their times, thanks to the intercalary period in use there, never differ, and the land-tax procedure of Egypt and its dependencies goes by the Coptic calendar, which corresponds to the Greek months. With regard to the Persian months, however, a discrepancy developed in their positions in time due to the abandonment of intercalation ever since the time when God terminated Persian rule and conquered their country for the Muslims, so that Nawrūz, which traditionally marked the opening of the tax campaign in the Iraq and the East, moved, in the process of omitting intercalation, (fully) two months ahead which now stand between it and the ripening of the grain crop.

The Commander of the Faithful, by virtue of his God-given desire⁽⁵⁾ to attain whatever will restore the well-being of his subjects and put an end to the causes that contribute to their hardship, has therefore ordered that the upcoming Persian New Year's Day of the year 282 A.H. be deferred from the time in which it happens to fall within the Persian year, which is Friday,

4. February 13, 895.

5. Read: *bi-mā jabala 'llāh 'alayhi min ra'yihī* (cf. Bulaq text, 1:274, l. 15).

the 11th of Şafar, by the equivalent of the number of days of the two Persian months whose intercalation was neglected (in the past), namely, sixty days, so that Nawrūz of the upcoming year shall fall on Wednesday, the 13th of Rabī II, 282, that is, the 11th of Ḥazīrān, which will be joined to the two months, put on equal footing with them, and used as point of reference for them and for all fiscal operations and assessments made by the accountants in any of the tax districts, as also the months as counted by the Persians, from the first to the last, will be brought into relation with the months of the intercalated period. Moreover, an intercalation will be made henceforth every four Persian years and no discrepancy shall arise (again) between these and the intercalated year as time goes on. Let (the Nawrūz) then fall forever in Ḥazīrān and never deviate from that month.

(Furthermore, I have requested) that the record of every fourth year pertaining to the *kharāj* be stricken in the Iraq and in the East and West and all regions and lands, since there is (now) parity between the Hijrah years and the year containing the seasons during which the crops reach full maturity.

(I also request) that an official decision to that effect be issued so that the respective letters can be drawn up by the Bureau of Correspondence (to be sent) to the fiscal and judicial officials and read from the pulpits. The police prefects in the provinces shall impress the matter on the subjects and see to it that they comply with the order of the Commander of the Faithful, which shall be enacted by the provincial governors in the *dīvān* of their jurisdiction to be complied with accordingly by the tax concessionaires and tax farmers.

I am soliciting a decision of the Commander of the Faithful in that matter which will be, it is hoped, affirmative, and the clear copy of the official notification will, God willing, so show. Done in the month of Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah, 281.

The story behind the transfer of the *kharāj* to Ḥazīrān at the time of al-Mu'taḍid was the way I was told by Abū Aḥmad Yaḥyā ibn 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim "al-Nadīm",⁽⁶⁾ who said:

6. Mu'tazilite theologian, *adīb* and poet, a court companion (*nadīm*) of al-Mu'taḍid and his successors al-Muktafī and al-Muqtadir, died 300/912 (cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyāt*, 6:198-208; Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 7:287; al-Marzubānī, *Muġam al-shu'arā'*, 493-4). On the gifted al-Munajjim family, *Fihrist* (transl. Dodge), 312 ff.

I was citing traditions to the Commander of the Faithful al-Mu‘taḍid and mentioned, among others, the story of (the caliph) al-Mutawakkil in the matter of deferring the Nawrūz. He found it nice and asked me how that had come about. I was told by my father, I replied, who said:

Before the postponement of the Nawrūz, al-Mutawakkil one day visited one of his private garden plantations, which were then in my hands. He was leaning on my arm and talking to me and inspecting what had been recently done to that plantation. As he walked by a crop, he noticed that it was green. “Alī,” he said, “this crop is (still) green and has not ripened yet. ‘Ubayd-Allāh ibn Yaḥyā⁽⁷⁾ has asked me (these days) for an ordinance concerning the opening of the tax campaign. Now, how could the Persians begin the tax collection on Nawrūz when the crops were not yet ripe?” I told him: “The matter is not handled today the way it was at the time of the Persians, nor is the Nawrūz these days at the time it used to be in their days.” “How is that?” he inquired. “Because,” I replied, “they used to remove one month every one hundred and twenty years: when Nawrūz had moved ahead one month and came on the 5th of Ḥazīrān (June), they removed that month so that (Nawrūz) was now on the 5th of Ayyār (May), omitted a month and so returned (Nawrūz) to the fifth of Ḥazīrān, beyond which it would never move. After Khālīd ibn ‘Abd-Allāh al-Qasī had assumed the governorship of Iraq,⁽⁸⁾ and the time came around for the Persians to make the intercalation, he prohibited them from doing so, arguing that it was a form of *nasī*, which God had expressly forbidden when He said, *The month postponed is an increase in unbelief*, and that he would not allow it until he had asked the Commander of Faithful for a decision in the matter. People of-

7. Abū ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Ubayd-Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān (824-876), the able and experienced vizier of al-Mutawakkil and then later of al-Mu‘tamīd; cf. “Ibn Khāqān” (no. 2) by D. Sourdel in *EF*.

8. His term of office extended from 723 to 738. He died, after long imprisonment, under torture in 743. Cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 2:226-31.

ferred a lot of money to bring it about, but he refused to accept it. (Instead) he wrote to Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, apprising him of the matter and asking for his orders, pointing out to him that it was a form of the ‘month postponed’, which God had forbidden, and (the caliph) ordered that they be prohibited from carrying it out. Once they were prevented from making the intercalation, the Nawrūz advanced sharply so that it now falls in Nīsān (April), when the crops are still green.”

Whereupon al-Mutawakkil told my father: “Then do something about it, ‘Alī, that will restore the Nawrūz to the time in which it was in the days of the Persians. Explain the matter to ‘Ubayd-Allāh ibn Yaḥyā, and give him a message from me to the effect that he should set the opening of the tax collection on that day.”

I then went to Abū ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Ubayd-Allāh ibn Yaḥyā, my father recalled, and, having informed him of what had taken place between al-Mutawakkil and myself, gave him the caliph’s message. He said to me: “Abū ‘l-Ḥasan, you have, I swear, brought great relief to the people and done a great thing, for which you may reap ample reward! And you have gained praise and gratitude for the Commander of the Faithful, may God repay you well! It is the likes of you who (deserve to) consort with caliphs! I would like to go ahead with what al-Mutawakkil has ordered and is conveying to me, so that I may conduct the matter accordingly and proceed with writing up the circulars concerning the opening of the tax campaign.”

Then I did some research, said my father, and wrote down the calculation, and discovered that the Nawrūz at the time of the Persians would never be ahead by more than a month: when it was ahead on the 5th of Ḥazīrān, it would be assigned to be on the 5th of Ayyār, whereupon an intercalary adjustment was made in that respective year that brought the Nawrūz back to the 5th of Ḥazīrān. I communicated that to ‘Ubayd-Allāh ibn Yaḥyā, who then ordered that the tax collection be begun on the 5th of Ḥazīrān. He commis-

sioned Ibrāhīm ibn al-‘Abbās⁽⁹⁾ to draw up on behalf of the Commander of the Faithful a letter to that effect, the transcript of which he would send to the provinces, and Ibrāhīm ibn al-‘Abbās composed his well-known letter now in people’s hands.

Abū Aḥmad continued:

Al-Mu‘taḍid then said to me, “Yaḥyā, this is, by God, a wonderful thing to do and ought to be put into operation!” “It behooves no one more to do good and to revive venerable practices,” I replied, “than our lord, the Commander of the Faithful, because of the noble traits which God has combined in him and the virtues He has bestowed on him.” So he summoned ‘Ubayd-Allāh ibn Sulaymān and told him: “Listen to what Yaḥyā has to tell you, and execute the matter with regard to the beginning of the tax collection accordingly.”

And so I betook myself together with ‘Ubayd-Allāh ibn Sulaymān to the Dīwān and briefed him on the story. But he preferred to have the date moved up, lest things go exactly the same way as the first time round,⁽¹⁰⁾ and made it the 11th of Ḥazīrān. He requested al-Mu‘taḍid’s order to that effect, and the Caliph gave his permission for it. I made some verses in that connection which I recited to al-Mu‘taḍid, with this purport:

One day alone is New Year’s Day,
 will never after June delay
 And fall forever, not just once,
 on the eleventh of that month.

9. Abū Ishāq al-Šūlī, Secretary of the Iraq under three successive caliphs, career bureaucrat, and well-known poet, d. 857 in Samarra (see Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 1:260-77; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 1:44-47). —On his letter cf. the anecdote in Qalqashandī, *Subḥ*, 6:251.

10. Al-Mutawakkil was murdered before the contemplated measure could be put into effect.

(Abū 'l-Ḥusayn Ibn Abī Ṭāhir) adds: I was told by a certain senior secretary: The caliphs used to postpone the Nawrūz by twenty days—or less, or more—as a reason for delaying the beginning of the tax collection from the taxpayers. But the Mihrjān (autumnal equinox) was never postponed by a single day. The first one to move it forward by a day was al-Mu'tamid in Baghdad in the year 265 (A.D. 879). And al-Mu'taḍid had the Nawrūz delayed by sixty days.

[3] Abū 'l-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Birūnī says in his “Chronology of the Ancient Nations”—it is from this work that I have transcribed the preceding account of Ibn Abī Ṭāhir:

(Ibn Abī Ṭāhir) added: “The letters were sent out to the provinces”—meaning, on behalf of al-Mutawakkil—“in Muḥarram 243 (May 857).” But al-Mutawakkil was killed (in 861) and his plan was not carried out. So things remained the way they were until al-Mu'taḍid came to the throne, and he then imitated what al-Mutawakkil had done in the matter of postponing the Nawrūz. However, on closer inspection it turned out that al-Mutawakkil had used (as the basis of calculation) the interval between his own years and the beginning of the era of Yazdgird (i.e., 10 June 632). Al-Mu'taḍid, on the other hand, took the interval between his year (i.e., 894) and the year in which the Persian Empire came to an end with the death of Yazdgird (i.e., 651), on the assumption that it was from that time on that people had neglected the intercalation. He found that interval to be 243 years, for which the (neglected) fourths (of a day) added up to sixty days and a fraction. He then added that to the Nawrūz in his own year and made it the end of those days, which in that particular year fell into (the third Persian month of) Khurdādmāh and was a Wednesday, corresponding to the 11th of Ḥazīrān. From then onward he based the Nawrūz on the calendar of the Greeks in order to see his own months intercalated whenever the Greeks did.

[4] In his “Method for Determining the Land Tax”, al-Qāḍī al-Sa'īd Thiḡat al-Thiḡāt Dhū 'l-Ri'āsatayn Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī, son of al-

Qāḍī al-Mu'taman Thiqaṭ al-Dawlah Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān ibn Yūsuf al-Makhzūmī states:

The fiscal year rests on the principle of the solar year, because the solar year consists of $365 \frac{1}{4}$ days. The (ancient) Egyptians already organized their year along that line to make sure that payment of the land tax would take place annually at the time when the grain crops have attained full maturity, and to it corresponds the Coptic year, because the days of its months add up to 360 days, followed by five intercalary days and a quarter after the end of Misrā. Every four years, the intercalary days are six days to allow for accommodating the fraction; such a year they call a "leap year". Every 33 years, a year is omitted and one needs to carry it over (into the next) due to the differential between solar and lunar years, since a solar year consists of $365 \frac{1}{4}$ days and a lunar year of 354 days and a fraction. Since that is so, one has had to use a transfer by which one of the two years is reconciled with the other.

Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Kātib,⁽¹¹⁾ God rest his soul, recalled: I knew that, for years prior to the year 241 of the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil-'alā-'llāh, God rest him in peace, the collection of the *kharāj* taxes took place every year in the next following year due to the fact that the solar months lag behind the lunar months by $11 \frac{1}{4}$ days and a fraction per year. By the time the year 242 came around, 33 years, beginning with the year 208 in the caliphate of al-Ma'mūn, God's mercy on him, had elapsed, and out of this time lag over those years had accumulated the days of an entire solar year, which is $365 \frac{1}{4}$ days plus a fraction, with the result that the maturation of the grain and fruit crops of the year 241 fell into the beginning of the year 242.⁽¹²⁾ At that point, the Caliph al-Mutawakkil-'alā-'llāh, God's mercy on him, ordered the record of the year 241,

11. He was the secretary of the powerful Turkish general Bughā the Elder (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 9:256/III,1501) and served later as a fiscal administrator for the regent al-Muwaffaq. —His father's name is given erroneously as "al-Ḥasan" in both Maqrīzī texts.

12. The year 242 A.H. began on May 10, 856.

since it had already elapsed, to be stricken and the tax (due in it) to be attached to the year 242. From then on, fiscal operations were conducted along that line, year after year, until another 33 years, terminating with the end of the year 274, had elapsed.⁽¹³⁾ But the fiscal scribes of the Caliph al-Mu‘tamid-‘alā-‘llāh, God’s mercy on him, paid no attention to the matter, since their bosses at that time were Ismā‘īl ibn Bulbul⁽¹⁴⁾ and the Furāt brothers,⁽¹⁵⁾ none of whom had worked in the Office of the Revenue and (Privy) Estates during the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil-‘alā-‘llāh, God’s mercy on him, nor were their ages such that they could have known of the above transfer, since Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Furāt was born five years prior to that year (241) and his brother ‘Alī in that year itself, and Isma‘īl ibn Bulbul had learned his trade in a bureau that was not yet in the habit of making copies of every document. Thus, after I had taken over the fiscal administration of the (Privy) Estates at Qazwīn and its region for the year 276 on behalf of al-Nāṣir-lil-Din Abū Aḥmad Ṭalḥah al-Muwaffaq,⁽¹⁶⁾ God rest his soul—he was staying in Azerbaijan (at the time), his deputy in al-Jabal (Media) being Jarādah ibn Muḥammad,⁽¹⁷⁾ who was his secretary then—and had to submit my annual tax report to him, I entitled it “Tax Report for the year 276, the grain and fruit crops of which will attain maturity in 277 so that the record of the year 276 should be stricken.”

13. The year 274 A.H. ended on May 15, 888.

14. A Persian who served twice as vizier of the feckless caliph al-Mu‘tamid, and from 886 as vizier, with wide powers of appointment, to al-Mu‘tamid and his younger brother al-Muwaffaq, the caliphal regent. He was later arrested and executed by orders of the latter’s son, al-Mu‘taḍid.

15. The *Banū ‘l-Furāt*, a wealthy and influential family of merchants and financiers, here specifically two brothers: Abū ‘l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. al-Furāt (851-904), the erudite *kātib* eulogized by Buḥturī, and Abū ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. al-Furāt (855-924), three times vizier (908-11; 916-18; 923-24) to the caliph al-Muqtaḍir (908-932).

16. The younger brother, and designated second successor, of the reigning caliph al-Mu‘tamid, since 875 officially lord of the eastern part of the empire, but as the more able and resolute of the two the real power on the throne for 21 years. He died in 891.

17. So the Bulaq text (1:276, l. 14) and Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥī*, 13:58); Wiet: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Jarādah. He seems to be Ismā‘īl b. Bulbul’s secretary, Jarādah, whose arrest in early June 892 is reported by Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh* 10:28/III, 2131).

When the two read that report heading, they rejected it and asked me for the reason for it. So I explained to them, corroborating my explanation by informing them that I had deducted the calculation of solar and lunar years from the Noble Koran itself—after having submitted the matter to the judgment of the commentators and been told by them that there was no tradition whatsoever on it, which further confirmed the finesse of my deduction—namely, where God Blessed and Exalted says in the *Sūrat al-Kahf*: *And they tarried in the Cave three hundred years, and to that they added nine more.*⁽¹⁸⁾ Yet I could not find a single Koran exegete who knew what the words *and to that they added nine more* mean. Now, God Almighty spoke to His Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, the way the Arabs talk and used to calculate. Hence, the meaning of these *nine* is that the *three hundred* were solar (years) the way non-Arabs and people unfamiliar with lunar years reckon; if one adds to the three hundred lunar the extra nine, then they are true solar years. Both men liked this (interpretation), and after Jarādah had left with al-Nāṣir lil-Dīn, God rest his soul, for Baghdad, and the latter had died, and Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Ubayd-Allāh ibn Sulaymān had assumed the office of secretary for the Caliph al-Mu'taḍid-bi-'llāh, Jarādah passed on the story of that transfer to the Caliph and explained to him the reason for it, (partly) in an effort to curry favor with him and (partly) to discredit Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Ubayd-Allāh for having put it off (for so long). As soon as al-Mu'taḍid learned of it, he commissioned Abū 'l-Qāsim to draw up the letters concerning the transfer of the year 278 to the year 279, and the transfer (thus) came about four years after it should have been made. Then the years went by, one after the other, until (another) 33 years have elapsed by now, beginning with the year in which the transfer should have been made (in the first place), namely, 275, and terminating with the end of the year 307,⁽¹⁹⁾ and the maturation of the grain and fruit crops now falls into the beginning of 308, to which

18. Koran 18 (The Cave):25.

19. The year 307 A.H. ended on May 22, 920.

year I have ascribed the tax. I have made a transcript of that transfer which I have copied below for the reader's information. Also, at the time of al-Mutawakkil, when the year 241 was carried over to the year 242, the officials of the revenue offices had collected the direct poll-taxes⁽²⁰⁾ and the alms taxes for the years 241 and 242 at one and the same time, because the direct poll-taxes in Samarra, Baghdad and the major provincial towns used to be levied on the basis of the lunar calendar, while the capitation tax of villagers settled on *kharāj* land, estates, *ṣadaqah* land, and State domains was collected on the basis of the solar calendar. In the course of 33 years (the differential between solar and lunar years) had (then) added up to a complete solar year. Now, the non-Muslims of the latter category were held individually liable to pay the direct poll-taxes, and the tax agents would declare these in their (monthly) account statements. Those (non-Muslims) who had failed to do so were (now) held liable to pay the direct poll-taxes of the extra year. I remember that thousands of dirhams accrued from that (at the time). I then sent new letters to the tax agents with the instruction that their collections of the direct poll-taxes must henceforth be by lunar months, and that is how the matter was handled (from then onward).

In Egypt, reports Judge Abū 'l-Ḥasan (al-Makhzūmī), the transfer had been ignored until the *hilālī* year 499⁽²¹⁾ was running parallel with the *kharāji* year 497, and the *kharāji* year 499 was then transferred to the year 501 (A.D. 1107/8). That is what I found in the

20. Arabic: *al-jawālī*, i.e., the poll-taxes collected individually from non-Muslims not settled on the land (artisans, craftsmen, traders, etc.), as distinguished from the *jamājim*, the capitation tax levied collectively on a rural community to be divided among its individual members; cf. F. Løkkegaard, *Islamic Taxation*, 139-41.

21. A *hilālī* year (*sanah hilāliyyah*) is a financial year based on lunar months, since trade taxes (*al-māl al-hilālī*)—duties (*ḍarā'ib*), special imposts (*mukūs*), tithes (*uṣhūrāt*), etc.—were payable by installments (*nujūm*) following the lunar year. Taxes paid on land and agricultural produce, and dues owed by the peasants as tribute—*al-māl al-kharājī*—on the other hand, were collected on the basis of the solar calendar in the course of a financial year called *sanah kharājīyyah*.

records of my father, God rest his soul. The last time a year was moved in our own time was the transfer of the (*kharāji*) year 565 to the *hilāli* year 567 (A.D. 1171/2) so that the two years became congruent. That is, I told al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil Abū Alī ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn ‘Alī al-Baysānī that the time had come for transferring the year; he then drew up a document to that effect which was copied in the government offices and served henceforth as the basis of reference. (For) rulers and viziers have continuously attended to the transfer of years when the proper time came.

(Thus) Abū ‘l-Ḥasan Hilāl ibn al-Muḥsin al-Ṣābi⁽²²⁾ reports that he was told by his father Abū ‘Alī: When the vizier Abū Muḥammad al-Muhallabī intended to transfer the *hilāli* year 350 (A.D. 961), he ordered my father Abū Ishāq⁽²³⁾ and other members of his secretarial staff in the Bureaus of the Revenue and of Correspondence to draw up a letter on behalf of (the caliph) al-Muṭī‘-lillāh to that effect. Each of them did so, and my father composed the letter that one finds in his *Rasā’il*. When the transcripts were shown to the vizier, he chose my father’s and requested that it be written up and sent to the provincial administrators, instructing his lieutenant Abū ‘l-Faraj Ibn Abī Hāshim, “Write letters in *muḥaqqaq* script⁽²⁴⁾ to that effect to the tax agents and copy at the end of each this royal letter!” Abū ‘l-Faraj, however, was infuriated by the fact that the preference and choice had gone to my father’s letter, because he, too, had composed a sample letter which was submitted with the others, and so he wrote only: ‘We have decided to move the year ’50 to ’51; you shall act accordingly,’ without adding the transcript of

22. Baghdadī historian and government secretary (d. 1056). He is a nephew (by marriage) of the physician-historian Thābit b. Sinān (d. 976), whose contemporary “History” he continued up to the year 447/1055. Cf. the article “Hilāl al-Ṣābi” by D. Sourdel in *EF*.

23. Ibrāhīm b. Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ (925-994), renowned stylist and poet, mathematician, and historian; cf. *GAL*² 1:95-6, S 1:153-4.

24. *Muḥaqqaq* designates a calligraphic style of precisely shaped letters that was reserved for important and formal chancery documents, as distinguished from *muṭlaq* ‘loose, relaxed’ and *mursal* ‘hasty, cursive’, scripts used by people in correspondence with themselves.

the royal letter. When the vizier found out what Abū 'l-Faraj had written, he asked him, "Why did you neglect to copy the royal letter at the end of the authorization to the tax agents and have it registered in the Dīwān?" Then, as the other mumbled some guarded answer, he said: "Abū 'l-Faraj, you have failed to do it for no other reason than jealousy of Abū Ishāq, who is, I swear to you, the finest writer of our time in this art. Now redo the letters, and (this time) copy the (royal) letter at the end of them!"

I shall now, God willing, reproduce the transcript of the letter referred to earlier by Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Kātib, as well as the letters of Abū Ishāq and of al-Qaḍī al-Fāḍil, as an illustration to the observer of how *kharāji* years are transferred to *hilālī* years. On close study of the degree of conformity between them and careful comparison of their agreement, the letter of al-Qaḍī al-Fāḍil is more cogent and couched in more sublime language, and the reader cannot fail to notice the amount of rhetorical eloquence he has put into it. Nor will the connoisseur fail to recognize how much stylistic craftsmanship has gone into the letter of al-Ṣābi'.

Transcript of the letter referred to by Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Kātib:

There is no worthier matter on which the Commander of the Faithful expends his solicitude, to which he applies his thought and deliberation, and over which he exercises his control and supervision, than the Muslim state's lawful revenue which God has entrusted to him and which He has enjoined him to gather, to provide, to preserve, to augment, and to establish as the pillar of the faith and the mainstay of Islam, and from which he disburses such funds as go to the stipends of dignitaries, the armed forces, and those called upon to strengthen the pale of Islam, to protect the womenfolk and the pilgrim, to wage holy war against the foe and guard the frontier posts, to ensure the security of the roads, to prevent bloodshed, and to heal discord and strife. The Commander of the Faithful prays God, in supplication and sole trust, to help him in the discharge of the burdens He has placed upon him, to enable him forever to do that which pleases Him, and to show him the right way to whatever he decides on His behalf and for His benefit.

The Commander of the Faithful has looked into the matter of how the collection of this revenue was handled during the caliphates of his rightly-

guided forefathers, God's blessings upon them, and found that it was done in accordance with the annual ripening of the grain and fruit crops, one by one in the course of the months of the solar year, in installments as each category of them becomes due for payment. He also found that the months of the solar year lag behind those of the lunar year by 11 1/4 days and a fraction, so that the maturation of grains and fruits will occur according to that time lag. Thus the years continue to go by, one after the other, until thirty-three years have elapsed and the number of lag days from them has added up to a complete solar year, which consists of 365 1/4 days and a fraction. At that point, the maturation of the grain crops, by which (the collection of) duties and land taxes is traditionally determined, comes, in God's will and power, at the beginning of Muḥarram of the lunar calendar, and with that it becomes necessary to cancel the (lunar) year that is now redundant, since it has already elapsed, and attach it to the year in which the grain and fruit crops actually ripen. He discovered that this had occurred at the time of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil-'alā-'llāh, God's mercy on him, when thirty-three years, ending with the year 241, had elapsed. Thereafter, all correspondence, accountings and other (fiscal) operations were done, year after year, (on that basis) until another thirty-three years, terminating with the end of the year 274, had elapsed and it became incumbent to draw up the necessary letters for cancelling the record of the (financial) year 274 and attaching it to the year 275. That task fell to the secretaries of the Caliph al-Mu'tamid-'alā-'llāh, but action was delayed for four years, until the Caliph al-Mu'taḍid-bi-'llāh, God rest his soul, ordered in 277⁽²⁵⁾ that the land taxes of 278 be transferred to the year 279. Matters then remained that way until in our own time another thirty-three years have come to an end, counting from the year in which the last transfer should have been made, namely, the year 275, and terminating with the end of the *kharāj* months of the year 307, and it has become necessary to begin the collection of the customary duties and agricultural taxes on the first of that year. Sound administration, correct fiscal operations, and the application of whatever alleviates the treatment of the subjects call for moving the tax season of the year 307 to the year 308.

The Commander of the Faithful, following the dictate of his conscience and motivated by deeply felt concern for his revenue and the preservation and proper administration of its resources, as well as (the desire) to follow in the footsteps of his rightly-guided ancestors, God's mercy on them, in

25. This is what all texts, including the carefully edited Qalqashandī text (*Subḥ* 13:64), have, but it can obviously not be since al-Mu'taḍid did not become caliph until 279/892.

the matter, has therefore seen fit to write to you and to all other tax agents in the provinces, instructing you to take action accordingly and see to it that correspondence which is addressed to you or which you issue on your behalf, your routine fiscal operations, your petitions, your accountings, and all your cases in dispute be (handled) on the basis of this transfer. You shall so take cognizance of the decision of the Commander of the Faithful and act upon it, aware at all times and in every contingency of the fear of God and obedience to Him, and employing trustworthy and capable aides for its implementation, with proper supervision and guidance of them on your part. You shall report whatever action you will take in the matter, God Exalted willing.

Transcript of the letter of Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābi':

Ad rem. The Commander of the Faithful never ceases to strive for the welfare of the Muslims, and to induce them to seek the paths to salvation in matters temporal and spiritual, and to provide for them the best of option in their dealings and the soundest of judgment in their decisions. No need affecting their affairs comes to his attention without his meeting and righting it, no circumstance fortunate for them without his sanctioning and applying it, no fair tradition without his adopting it, by upholding its practice, ratifying its legal force, and following the example of the venerable forefathers in its implementation and observance. When some matter of this kind is brought before him, which the educated in the fullness of their minds recognize but the common people with their limited understanding do not, and his orders in that matter go out to you and the likes of you among his notables and his paragons of tax officials, who content themselves with counsel but venture scant explanation and interpretation, he does not fail to go to such lengths in defining the letter and elucidating the spirit that he causes the one who is behind to catch up with the one who is ahead, and brings the one who already knows together with the one who still learns, especially when that has to do with the tax obligations of the subjects. It is not easy for someone who perceives only the obvious, outer aspects without knowing the hidden, inner ones to make the transition from recurrent customs to changing procedures in such a way that the assertion of the matter expounded is a mere reminder to those excelling in knowledge, and an eye-opener to those who are still behind in it. Because it is not right that the former class be spared the chill of certainty in their bosoms, nor is it proper to restrict oneself to a superficial guideline when addressing the masses. For, once the different groups of people are in step in grasping what they have been ordered and in understanding what they are called upon to do, and are as one in their judgment of it, they will not be beset by the doubts of the skeptics nor the misgivings of the suspicious.

They will be confident and happy, controversy will cease among them and agreement will prevail, and they will know for certain that they are set on a straight, consistent path and safeguarded against the offenses of aberration and deviation. They will then follow as people aware and knowing—not blindly bowing to authority and resigned, compliant and of their free will—not forced and under constraint.

The Commander of the Faithful appeals in all of his designs and aims, his pursuits and undertakings to Almighty God for a helping hand to teach him the practice of right-doing, to open for him the gates of success, to have him bear up under the burdens He has chosen him to carry, tasks which he cannot be called upon to perform singlehandedly except with His support and help, nor find his bearing in except with His direction and guidance. *God is sufficient for the Commander of the Faithful; an excellent Guardian is He.*⁽²⁶⁾

The Commander of the Faithful believes that words must be apposite and deeds determined by integrity. Such wisdom of God as is available to him beforehand consists of principles and rules and, in the wording of His Book, verses and textual proof; (the Koran) leads the community to firmness in matters spiritual and temporal and to harmony between outcome and beginning. For this is the edifice which, once established, rises aloft, the seedling that sprouts and grows, the endeavor whose beginning and initial pursuit are assured success and whose results and outcomes will bring delight, whose paths are lit for those who follow them, and lead them to the wellsprings of good fortune as they head out on them—unerring, unswerving, undeviating, unfailing.

Of these revolving spheres and the stars that move in an ever changing pattern of conjunction and separation, with its succession of diversity and conformity, God Almighty and Exalted created for His servants certain benefits which manifest themselves in the recurrence of months and years, the passage of nights and days, the alternation of light and dark, the balance of nomadic and sedentary life, the change of seasons and times of the year, the growth of plants and animals. There is no defect in the order of that, nor oversight in its making; nay, it is all interdependent and safe from any gap and breach. God Exalted says: *“It is He who made the sun a radiance, and the moon a light, and determined it by stations, that you might know the number of the years and the reckoning. God created that not save with the truth.”*⁽²⁷⁾ And the Lord, quoting another speaking, says: *“Hast thou*

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

27. Koran 10 (Jonah):5.

not seen how that God makes the night to enter into the day and makes the day to enter into the night, and He has subjected the sun and the moon, each of them running to a stated term, and that God is aware of what you do?⁽²⁸⁾ And the Lord says: “*And the sun—it runs to a fixed resting-place; that is the ordaining of the All-mighty, the All-knowing.*”⁽²⁹⁾ Finally, in the words of the Almighty: “*And the moon—We have determined it by stations, till it returns like an aged palm-bough.*”⁽³⁰⁾ In these verses, God Exalted draws a distinction between the sun and the moon and tells us in His brilliant judgment and in His inimitable words that each of the two has a path on which it is forced to run, and a nature with which it was created, and that this variance and difference in course contribute to conformance and consistency in God’s design.

Consequently, the solar year increased in length and became three hundred and sixty-five days and one-fourth by common approximation, which is the time span during which the sun traverses the firmament once, while the lunar year decreased and became three hundred and fifty-four days and a fraction, which is the period during which the moon joins the sun twelve times. The need arose then, as that differential was carried along, to resort to the transfer, which aligns the two years with one another when they have become separate, and approximates them when they are at variance. Earlier nations used to accommodate the extra days of the years in a variety of ways and methods. There is testimony to that in the Book of God, since He says in the story of the People of the Cave: “*And they tarried in the Cave three hundred years, and to that they added nine more.*”⁽³¹⁾ The reason for this addition was that there is this differential, by closest approximation, in the years mentioned.

Of these nations, the Persians conducted their transactions on the basis of the median year, which consists of twelve months and has three hundred and sixty days. They gave the months twelve names and designated the days of the month by thirty names. They also treated the five extra days, which they called “the furtive ones”, as a separate unit and intercalated the (additional) fourth (of a year) every one hundred and twenty years as a month. After their domination had come to an end, their practice of regularly intercalating that fourth was discontinued. (Consequently) their New Year deviated from its accustomed position, and the gap between it and its

28. Koran 31 (Lokman):29.

29. Koran 36 (Ya Sin):38.

30. *Ibid.*, v. 39.

31. Koran 18 (The Cave):25.

true time became increasingly wider so that (Nawrūz) moved inexorably around (the year), with the result that, where by their account the New Year was supposed to fall into the beginning of summer, it was eventually going to fall into the beginning of winter, and even later than that, and where the Mihrjān (autumnal equinox) was supposed to occur at the beginning of winter, it would eventually fall in the beginning of fall, and beyond.

The Greeks, on the other hand, were wiser than the Persians and more provident, because they ordered the months of the year on the basis of astronomical observations, which they made famous,⁽³²⁾ and of auroral settings of the stars, with which they were familiar. They scattered the five (extra) days over the months and carried them along in time, and they intercalated the fourth (of a year) every four years as a day which they decided to be added on to February. In that way, they brought near what others had made remote, and made it easier for everyone to follow in their footsteps. There is no question that al-Mu'taḍid-bi'llāh, God's mercy on him, built on their principles and followed their example when he had his Nawrūz assigned to the eleventh of June, so that it be saved from what had befallen Persian New Years in earlier times. They also fixed the problem of lunar years being shorter than solar ones by aligning them through embolism: whenever the differentials of solar years added up to make a complete month, they made the lunar year in which that happens thirteen months. Sometimes the thirteenth month came about in three years, sometimes in two, depending on what the calculation calls for. In that way, solar and lunar years are forever close together, not widely separated from one another.

As far as the Arabs are concerned, God Almighty and Exalted has favored them over the bygone nations and made them fall heir to the fruits of the others' wearisome efforts. He established their month of fasting, the times of their festivals, (payment of) the alms tax by the Muslims among them, and of the poll-tax by their covenanted non-Muslims, on the basis of the lunar year and made it a religious duty for them to observe the new moons in the course of it, as an expression of His will that their paths be manifest and their road marks clearly visible, so that all be equal in knowledge of the intent and of the beginning of a given time—high and low, he of adequate and he of perfect understanding, female and male, young and old. In due time they then came to levy during the solar year the yield of produce

32. The parallelism requires to read with the Bulaq text *shaharūhā* (Wiet: *shuhūrihā*); cf. Qalqashandī (13:68): *raṣādūhā* 'which they made'.

divided and the tax on land measured, while collecting during the lunar year individual poll-taxes, alms taxes, duties on mills, dues payable in money on fief lands, taxes due from State domains, and whatever else is administered on the basis of monthly contracts. But due to the overlap in the years something developed which, had it continued, would have been bad indeed and would have resulted in an ever greater interval (between them), since the *kharāj* collection in the year ending with it used to be nominally linked with the year before. It became therefore necessary to discard and abolish that year and to proceed and move on to the one following. They could not imitate those who follow a different system from theirs by intercalating a thirteenth month in the lunar year, because, were they to do so, then the sacred months would move away from their positions in the year, the pilgrimage ceremonies would be delayed past their real times, and the tax levy would fall short of (that based on) the Egyptian lunar months by the duration of the intercalation. Hence, they waited with that differential until it added up to a whole year—deductive calculation established that every thirty-two solar years represent thirty-three lunar ones—and then transferred the earlier (year) to the later one in such a manner that only the name was left behind. This inconvenience in their secular operations was deemed light compared with the benefit to (the proper observance of) their faith.

The Commander of the Faithful has (therefore) decided to transfer the *kharāji* year 350 to the *hilālī* year 351, in an effort to combine the two and in observance of the foregoing tradition with respect to them. You will take action in accordance with the order of the Commander of the Faithful and the content of his present letter to you, and shall instruct the clerks under you to imitate its procedure in their pertinent letters to the tax officials of your region, to file it in the fiscal offices for future reference in their memoranda and petitions, to record it in the financial registers and incorporate it in the pension rosters and financial lists, to use it as the basis in annual and monthly accountings, and to give instruction that it be so written in journals and receipts. Let all reference of that to the year 350, from which the transfer is hereby made, be switched to the year 351, to which the transfer is hereby effected, and impress upon the individuals in your jurisdiction, be they military personnel of any kind or civilian subjects, Muslims or non-Muslims, that this transfer will not alter or impair any of their emoluments, nor will it entail for recipients of stipends a decrease in their entitlements, nor for the taxpayer a waiver of what he owes to the Treasury. For the natural disposition of the majority of them stands in need of instruction on the part of the Commander of the Faithful, by which he wishes to remove any deficiency and to meet any need they may have, since this matter arises only over such long periods of time as to

make it necessary that the young be informed and those who have forgotten be reminded. You will submit a creditable reply, it is hoped, as to what action you intend to take.

[5] Ibn al-Ma'mūn reports in his "History" among the events of the year 501 (A.D. 1107/8): The first thing (my father) was in charge of was the transfer of the solar to the Arab year, since a discrepancy of four years had developed between the two. General 'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Fātik al-Baṭā'iḥī therefore spoke to al-Afḍal ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh about the matter, and the latter granted his request. His order then went out to Sheikh Abū 'l- Qāsim Ibn al-Ṣayrafī⁽³³⁾ to draw up a document to that effect, and he composed what reads as follows:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, who has chosen the Commander of the Faithful as His trustee and vicar on His Earth and inspired him to dispense good administration universally to His servants and His creatures; who has enabled him to achieve the welfare whose resources he draws upon and whose gates he opens through sound management; who has made him inherit the exalted station of his rightly-guided forefathers, whom He favored with the distinction of glory, the tenet of unconditional loyalty to whom He made the cause of salvation on the Day of Judgment, and whom He had in mind when He said, *He bids them to honour, and forbids them to dishonour*,⁽³⁴⁾ who has elevated the Pharos of his authority through the steward of the spheres of his State, the exterminator of the enemies of his kingdom, the noblest ever to raise a standard and banner as leader of the army, to apply his thought and judgment to the welfare of the country, to give through his guidance direction to perplexed minds and eliminate with his equity oppressive rules, the Most Illustrious Lord al-Afḍal. We supplement these epithets with our prayer for him⁽³⁵⁾ whose stewardship has perfected and completed the or-

33. 'Alī b. Munjib, *Tāj al-Riyāṣah* (d. 542/1147): Egyptian stylist, anthologist and historian (*K. al-Ishārah ilā man nāla rutbat al-wizārah*; ed. 'Abdullah Mukhlis, Cairo 1924) repeatedly cited by Maqrizī. In government service from 1102 to 1142, he was for years head of the Chancery and wrote a handbook (*Qānūn Dīwān al-Rasā'il*; Cairo, 1905) on its practices. (The following letter is in his Preface, pp. 18-25, to that work.) Cf. the article "Ibn al-Ṣayrafī" by Gamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl in *ET*.

34. Koran 7 (The Battlements):157.

35. The Wiet text is meaningless at this point; read with Bulaq: *wa-nutammiḥu 'l-nu'ūta bi-'l-du'ā'i li-'lladhī ...*

der of well-being, whose determination has steered the affairs in the right direction in whatever he set his mind to and embarked upon, who has been mindful in statesmanship of what his predecessors neglected and those before him ignored, who has followed the changing conditions in the country, never leaving a problem without clarifying it and expounding what had to be done in it, nor an ill without mending it and hastening to right it, nor a matter overlooked without applying it toward what suits, not contradicts, that which is correct and sound—in his overriding desire to see the fiscal operations prosper, in his aim to see the ample flow of tax money, in his design to restore the various manifestations of autonomy, in his solicitude for the men and soldiers of the ‘Alid State and his concern for their best interests which they have not been strong enough to strive for (themselves), in his regard for the subjects belonging to the provinces of the realm and his wish to treat them according to the most equitable of customs and the best of conventions.

The Commander of the Faithful commends him for his assistance in providing sound administration of the community, in saving for his reign those virtues owing to which the vestments of prosperity were abundant in the past, and in enabling him to bring back to all and sundry universal benefit, so that taxes are now called in in accordance with the exigencies of the clearly-worded Sacred Law, and comptollership of them is exercised on the basis of equity in the current *kharāj* regulations and the conventional rules governing the lunar months, and he asks (his steward) to pray for Muḥammad, whom (God) singled out for *wisdom and speech decisive*,⁽³⁶⁾ through whom He cleared up the obscurity surrounding the paths of rectitude, and to whom He revealed in the Perfect Book: *It is He who made the sun a radiance, and the moon a light, and determined it by stations, that you might know the number of the years and the reckoning*,⁽³⁷⁾ God’s prayers upon him, and upon his friend and cousin, our forefather, the Commander of the Faithful ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, his lieutenant in difficult times when there was no helper, and his personal protector when hand and arm failed, and upon the Imams of their progeny, who act according to God’s pleasure in what they say and do, and who are guided by the Truth and through it act in justice.

There is no more appropriate cause to which the Commander of the Faithful applies an ample share of his study, to which he gives a copious part of his generous commitment, at which he looks with concern and attention,

36. Koran 38 (Sad):20.

37. Koran 10 (Jonah):5.

and to which he devotes the greater portion of his benevolence, than the matter of tax revenues, to which one has recourse in remedying disorder, by anticipation of which one seeks to stave off whatever momentous event might suddenly arise, the availability of which will steady the affairs of the realm and correct the conditions of states, and from the collection of which, on the principle of universal justice and the premise of fairness on the part of the administrator, results that prosperity which is the foundation of their increase and the base of their abundance and copious flow. Inasmuch as their levies are conducted along two fundamental principles: one as *hilālī*—no obstacle, problem or ambiguity enters that one, and there is no need for clarification and explanation with respect to it, because familiarity with the lunar months is shared by someone with superior faculties and someone of limited talents alike, and the one advanced in knowledge comprehends them equally well as the one lagging behind, since people are used to the times of their religious observances and accustomed to what preserves for them the order of their daily lives—and the other as *kharāji*—which, by its very adjectival form, is associated with the *kharāj*, the land tax, because the collection of that is regulated by the times of the blessed Nile's flow and the cultivation of the soil, the seasons of the former being maintained in disregard of the lunar year, and knowledge of the river's conditions being the exclusive domain of those who deal directly with it and are familiar with its ins and outs—someone had to give plenty of thought to the *kharāji* year and do something to it by which benefit is enhanced and effect in the process improved, and rely, in explaining that and presenting its legal implication, on such adornment and embellishment as histories and biographies provide.

That (man) is the Living Testimony of Endeavor, the Most Illustrious Lord al-Afḍal, who does not cease to stay awake at night guarding the sleepers, to unsheath his sword to protect the meek and humble, to make the moons and suns of felicity ascend for the Dynasty and make hard times easy for it to bear. There are times when its luminaries proclaim that a community of which he is the shepherd—God has clearly favored its governor and given happiness to its governed! This is such a time of enlightenment and guidance, a time for elucidating purpose and intent, in order that the elite and the common people be equal in the knowledge of it, and the benefit of knowing its legal implication be complete, and that they realize the advantage in preventing the overlap and entanglement of the years, and be convinced of the justice in that which insures against evils that need correction.

It is a well-known fact that the days of the *kharāji* year, which is a solar year, are different from (those of) the *hilālī* year, because the time of the

karāji year from the beginning of the Nawrūz to the end of the intercalary period is three hundred and sixty-five days and one-fourth of a day, while the days of the *hilāli* year from the beginning of Muḥarram to the end of Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah are three hundred and fifty-four in number, and the difference, by way of premise necessitated by the foregoing order of things, is every year approximately eleven days, and every thirty-three years about one year. Now, when the first day of the lunar year happens to coincide with the beginning of the *kharāji* year, and their (point of) reference is the same, their same designation will from then on continue, but (their respective beginnings) will keep interfering with each other due to the fact that the beginning of the *kharāji* year will come (at different times) during the months of the *hilāli* year, until thirty-three years have elapsed. At the end of that time span, the interference ceases and the lunar year is without a Nawrūz to occur in it. Consequently, the same designation (of the two years) becomes meaningless, since they are now, for the aforementioned reason, one year apart. And why should they continue to be in agreement or not show any divergence, or, for that matter, how can anyone believe such a thing when God Exalted says, "It behoves not the sun to overtake the moon"?⁽³⁸⁾ Thus, clear evidence of the difference is furnished *expressis verbis* in The Book, and proof of it is brought to light by the inevitable result of calculation. Hence, one needs to transfer the solar year to the next following one so that it conform with the lunar year in designation and go hand in hand with it. The advantage of the transfer is that (now) the *hilāli* year will not be without the specific tax money normally linked to its corresponding (*kharāji*) year, since the monthly pay of the military in all its magnitude and vastness, and the pay of the mercenary troops in their different ethnic categories and conditions of assignment, proceed at all times and invariably in accordance with the lunar (year), continuity of revenue yield for them is (thus) assured, and the benefit of careful attention to regular procedure is clear and obvious.

As the year 501 has now begun, and in it falls the *kharāji* year 499 which corresponds to the *hilāli* year 501, such disparity, conflict, discrepancy and incongruity has developed in the system due to earlier neglect to make the transfer that the land taxes of the corresponding *kharāji* year cannot be collected in the present lunar year, and the cereal crops of the year, to which its taxes are applied, will not mature until the following year. Hence, the year would come and go without revenue in the *kharāj* sector, and the revenue lists would carry agriculture without having a share or benefit (from it) in the process. The damage of such a situation to the Treasury is

38. Koran 36 (Ya Sin):40.

obvious and anything but hidden, the harm of it to holders of land grants is plainly visible and the causes of prejudice to them are lasting and persistent. This is especially the case with someone who is granted a ratification (of existing dues) and accorded enhancements (of them), because these people press for renewal of contract and hold back with exploiting the proceeds. As long as this present *kharāji* year is not transferred, it will remain interposed between two years, in *hilāli* terms, as it corresponds to another year and its taxes are based on a year between the two, inasmuch as it begins on the 10th of Muḥarram, 501, and ends with the 20th of Muḥarram of the year 502, which, in turn, will intervene between these two years, while their taxes are based on the year 501. Such a situation would go on for ever and the inherent iniquity would continue to get worse all the time.

The Commander of the Faithful, who owes his success to God, therefore decided to issue a respective order to the Most Illustrious Lord al-Afḍal, who had pointed out the matter, revealed its ambiguities, and eliminated through his efficient intervention its contradictions and incongruities, to instruct the Chancery to draw up the present document, including his opinion and disposition and enjoining implementation of his ruling and decision, concerning the transfer of the (*kharāji*) year 499 to the (lunar) year 501 in such a way that the former correspond to, and its taxes be based on, the latter, that such proceeds as are called in from people's land grants, and such dues as are collected from them, conform to a safeguarded system and an auspiciously circumscribed scope, attesting (at the same time) to a fully assured share (of revenue), that a matter whose dubiousity rendered existing mystification even more obscure be cleared up and having to use different designations (for the years) cease, and that agreement between *hilāli* and *kharāji* years continue until the year 534. Fiscal revenue from land tax, share contracts, and such dues as are called in and collected from land grants, inasmuch as it applies to the record of the year 499, shall be ascribed to the year 501, and the attachment is to be treated in the same manner as *hilāli* revenue raised in the latter, so that the year 501 will include both its own taxes and the taxes of the *kharāji* year, as explained with regard to its transfer. The same holds for moving the regular-calendar fiscal year 499 to the year 501 referred to, with the taxes due in it applying toward the latter. This is to be applied in the government offices of the capital and in all the administrative districts of the state, far and near, close and remote, and all secretaries and officials, all tax agents and administrators are to take heed to pursue and follow this path. Let them beware of deviating from its established provisions and its rules, let them hasten to comply with the orders contained in it, and let them take care not to transgress and contravene any of it. It shall be copied in the offices of the fiscal

administration and of the victorious armies, after which it shall be filed in the prosperous Treasury.

Written in Muḥarram, 501.

[6] Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil—I have transcribed the following from his autograph – reports among the events of the year 567 (A.D. 1171/2): Beginning of Muḥarram. Copies were made of an open decree to transfer the *kharāj* year to the lunar year and adjust their designations, on account of the way Arab and Coptic years correspond to each other, and because the year 567 has no Nawrūz. So the *kharāj* year 565 was transferred to the present year. The last such transfer of a year was made in the days of al-Afḍal, when the *kharāj* years 498 and 499 were carried over to the year 501. The reason for this gap between the two years is the fact that the solar year is eleven days longer than the lunar year, and that the transfer (due) in 533 during the time of the Most Honorable Vizier Riḍwān ibn (al-)Walakhshī was ignored, (with the result that) this excess (of eleven days) has been dragged along, and the years have been interfering with each other, until the discrepancy between the two kinds of year has become two years this year. So (the *kharāj* year) has been transferred. It is a shift that does not go beyond the designation and the term, and entails no loss of tax revenue for either fiscal office or fiefholder. Rather, its aim is to eliminate confusion and to dissolve ambiguity.

[7] Judge Abū ʿI-Ḥasan (al-Makhzūmī) gives the transcript of the letter composed by al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (on the occasion):⁽³⁹⁾

Orders of al-Malik al-Nāṣir, may God enhance their exaltation, have come out to set down the following open decree:

39. Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ* 13:71-74) quotes an entirely different letter, also attributed to al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil on behalf of (al-Malik al-Nāṣir) Saladin but, aside from one brief reference to the years “five” and “seven” (p. 74), unspecific as to its date (“When the lunar year such-and-such began ...”, p. 72). Very elegant in phrasing, and drawing in several places on the preceding letters, it was probably conceived as a mere style model. —The translation of the following letter is based on the Bulaq text (1:282, l. 2 ff.), which has the linguistically more plausible version.

We seek from good administration that which leaves a good record. Reflection does not turn us away from that which sweetens the paths of life and outstrips the vicissitudes of time, and our thoughts keep rising aloft to behold the glittering stars, and diving down to retrieve the glinting pearls.

The worthiest thing by which the perceptive faculties are honed and in which the results are safeguarded, is any ordinance that rights and expounds men's transactions and releases and frees their minds from the shackles of ambiguity.

As it became necessary to transfer the *kharāj* year and adjust it to the (current) lunar one, owing to the fact that they are two years apart, and that the *kharāj* months and the lunar months both begin on the same day this year,⁽⁴⁰⁾ we have incorporated that year which is already past, into this year which is coming up, and have asked God Exalted for guidance in transferring the (*kharāj*) years 565 and 566 to the year 567, which, on account of this transfer, has been designated "*hilālī-kharājī*", in an effort to banish doubtful matters and remove the false designation, as a declaration that the years of Islam are above the blemish of an intercalary period and its era is far from being attended by obscurity, as a notification of concurrence with what was intuitively sensed and developed by our forefathers, and as an open announcement that we are following the traditions of the ancestors which they bequeathed and explained to posterity. The measure will serve to bring about favorable results, to make the going easier, to facilitate business, to eliminate ambiguity and provide assurance against disorder, to resolve error in accounting and reconcile years of different provenance, to maintain a balanced fiscal operation, avoid overlap in time-keeping and make the work of the fiscal scribe easier, to avert from God's gift the blemish of being ahead in annuation but behind in designation, and from the taxpayers the stigma of being reproached for delay when they have done their utmost to fulfill their obligations. Because someone who pays in 567 what was due for the year 565 has, no doubt, "delayed" by common understanding, even though he discharged (his obligation) by virtue of the Law.

This blessed year is to be distinctively named "*lunar-kharājī*". Account statements shall be submitted in this form, and it shall be so referred to in reports and records. Let such action be taken in this matter as will necessitate the closing of this split and the correction of this gap, and let proper cognizance be taken of (this decree) and its ruling be implemented in the

40. Namely, the 4th of September, which was the first of Muḥarram of the Muslim lunar year, and New Year's Day of the Coptic solar year.

financial bureaus, after having been filed where its likes are deposited, God willing.

93. The Calendar of the Arabs

[1] The calendar of the Arabs has always operated, in the Age of Ignorance as under Islam, with lunar months. The year to the Arabs consists of twelve (such) months; they had, however, different names for them.

[2] The pureblood Arabs called them: Nātiq, Naqīl, Ṭaliq, Asnaḥ, Antaḥ, Ḥalak, Kaṣḥ, Zāhir, Nawṭ, Khawf, and Baghsh.⁽¹⁾ Thus *Nātiq* is identical with al-Muḥarram, *Naqīl* with Ṣafar, and so forth in the order of the months.

The Thamūd called them: Mūjib, Mūjir, Mūrid, Mulzim, Muṣdir, Hawbar, Hawbal, Mūhā, Daymur, Dābir, Ḥayfal, Musbil, so that *Mūjib* is the same as al-Muḥarram and *Mūjir* is Ṣafar (and so on); but they used to begin the year with *Daymur*, which corresponds to the month of Ramaḍān, and would thus be the first month of their year.

Later on, the Arabs gave them other names, namely: Mu'tamir, Nājir, Khawwān, Ṣiwān, Ḥantam, Zabbā', al-Aṣamm, 'Ādil, Nātiq, Waghil, Huwā', and Burak. The meaning of *al-Mu'tamir* is that it "applies itself" to any problem the year may bring. *Nājir* comes from *najr*, which signifies intense heat. *Khawwān* is an intensive of *khiyānah* 'treachery'. *Ṣiwān* or *Ṣuwān* is a *Fī'āl/Fu'āl* form of *ṣāna* 'to maintain, preserve'. And *al-Zabbā'* means a great, and gathering,

1. These names, aside from being only eleven, are of course no less imaginary and fictitious than the genealogies of the *Arab al-āribah*. The same applies to the other sets of names given in this section, none of which can be reconciled even remotely with what one finds elsewhere, for instance, the names of "the 'Ād" listed on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī in *Tāj al-ārūs* (3:20, s.v. "mu'tamir") and adopted, with a few variations, by Qalqashandī (*Ṣubḥ* 2:378-9), who also gives their plural forms. Likewise, the "etymologies" of the names proffered here (and, e.g., by Qalqashandī) are as fanciful and contrived as the etymological explanations usually given by Muslim writers of that time for geographical names.

calamity; it was so called because of the great deal of fighting that went on in it.

Someone claims that after *Şiwān* comes *al-Zabbā'*; after that, *Bā'idah*, then *al-Aşamm*, followed by *Wāghilah*, *Nāṭilah*, *Ādilah*, *Rannah*, and *Burak*. One applies the term *bā'id* to fighting, since many people would perish in it; there was (even) a proverb that said, 'Of wonder no let-up between *Jumādā* and *Rajab*,' because the Arabs would hurry in that month and apply themselves to fighting and raiding before the onset of *Rajab*. For the latter was a sacred month, and they called it *al-Aşamm* 'the mute', because they would refrain during it from fighting, and one did not hear the sound of weapons. *Wāghil* is someone who intrudes uninvited on a drinking party; the month was so called because it encroaches on the month of *Ramaḍān*, during which they used to drink a lot of wine, since what comes after it are the pilgrimage months. *Nāṭil* means a wine measure;² the month was so called because during it they engaged in excessive drinking and would use that measure a great deal. *Ādil* comes from *'adl* 'uprightness', because it is a pilgrimage month, during which they were kept busy from engaging in idle occupations. As far as *Rannah* is concerned, (that was so named) because in it the sheep would bleat mournfully (*tarinnu*) on account of the proximity of their slaughter. And as for *Burak*, that (was so called) because the camels kneel down—*li-burūk al-ibil*—when they are brought to the slaughter place.

There is also a tradition that (the ancient Arabs) used to call *al-Muḥarram* *Mu'tamir*, *Şafar* *Nājir*, *Rabī' I* *Niṣār*, *Rabī' II* *Khawwān*, *Jumādā I* *Ḥamtan*, *Jumādā II* *al-Runah*, *Rajab* *al-Aşamm*—which was the "month of *Muḍar*"; in the Age of Ignorance, the Arabs used to fast throughout it, and also lay in provisions and provide for their families; they used to trust each other during that month and go out traveling without fear—*Sha'bān* *Ādil*, *Ramaḍān* *Nātiq*, *Şawwāl* *Waghl*, *Dhū 'l-Qa'dah* *Huwā'*, and *Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah* *Burak*,

2. Actually, the correct form is *nāṭal* or *na'tal* (pl. *nayāṭil* and *nawāṭil*).

which was also called *Abrūk*; the Arabs used to call it *al-maymūn* ‘the propitious’.

[3] Still later, the Arabs named their months: al-Muḥarram, Ṣafar, Rabī‘ al-Awwal, Rabī‘ al-Ākhir, Jumādā ’l-Ūlā, Jumādā ’l-Ākhirah, Rajab, Sha‘bān, Ramaḍān, Shawwāl, Dhū ’l-Qa‘dah, Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah. They derived their names from things that happened to take place at the time they designated the months. Thus, in al-Muḥarram they would “ban”—*yuḥarrimūna*—fighting. In Ṣafar, their tents used to “be empty”—*taṣfaru*—because they went forth on raiding expeditions. The two Rabī‘ months constituted the season of “spring”—*al-rabī‘*. In the two Jumādā months, water would “freeze”—*yajmudu*—because of the intense cold. Rajab stands for “the middle”. In Sha‘bān, the tribes would “break up”—*yatasha‘abu*. Ramaḍān comes from *ramḍā’* ‘sun-baked ground’, because in it came the midsummer heat. In Shawwāl, camels would “raise”—*tashilu*—their tails. Dhū ’l-Qa‘dah (was so named) because “they used to stay”—*li-qu‘ūdihim*—in their houses. And Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah (was called that) because it is the month of “the pilgrimage”—*al-ḥajj*.

When one contemplates the derivation of the names of the pre-Islamic months initially, and then their derivation a second time, it becomes evident that there must have been a long interval of time between the two designations, since Ṣafar in the one is the height of the hot season, while in the other that is Ramaḍān. Such a thing is not possible in one and the same time, or in two times close together.

Originally, the Arabs would use these months pretty much as the Muslims do, either by some rule of divine origin, or because the (ancient) Arabs, having no experience in systematically calculating the movements of Sun and Moon, had to use the beginnings of the months for sighting the new moons and then made the duration of a month according to the interval between any two new moons. A month might be “complete”, that is, it had thirty days, or it might be “deficient”, meaning, it had (only) twenty-nine days. Consecutive

complete months might at the most be four, which is rare, and consecutive deficient months might be maximally three.

The pilgrimage of the Arabs used to take place in all seasons of the year, since it has been forever on the 10th of Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah from the time of Abraham and Ishmael, on both be peace. When the pilgrimage season was over, the Arabs would disperse, heading for home, while the people of Mecca remained in the city. This they continued for a long, long time until they changed the religion of Abraham and Ishmael. Then they wanted to be more comfortable in their way of life and make their pilgrimage at a time (of the year) when their trading wares, such as skins, hides, fruit, and the like, were at their prime, and to have that fixed uniformly in the best and most fertile of the seasons. So they learned the intercalation of months from the Jews, who had settled in Yathrib since the time of Samuel, the prophet of the Israelites, and practiced the *nasī*, or postponement of a month, some two hundred years before the Hijrah. The person in charge of the postponement was called the *qalammas*, meaning "the noble". There has been disagreement as to who was the first among (the Arabs) to postpone the months. Some have said that the (first) *qalammas* was 'Adīy ibn Zayd, but others say that he was Sarīr ibn Tha'labah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Mālik ibn Kinānah,⁽³⁾ who is reported to have said: "I see that the lunar months (add up to) three hundred and fifty-four days, and I realize that the months of the non-Arabs (come to) three hundred and sixty-five days. Hence, between us and them is (a difference of) eleven days, thus every three years thirty-three days, hence every three years a month." When three years had come and gone, he advanced the pilgrimage into Dhū 'l-Qa'dah and when another three years were up, he delayed it to Muḥarram.

3. Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-'Arab* p. 189.

The Arabs would, while they performed the pilgrimage, strap leather shoes on the feet of the camels and dress the animals in housings and coverings.⁽⁴⁾

Postponing a month was (originally) in the hands of the Banū Kinānah, then of the Banū Tha'labah ibn Mālik ibn Kinānah. The one who took over the practice from (the former) was Abū Thumāmah al-Mālikī, later of the Fuḡaym, and the Banū Fuḡaym, they are the *nasa'ah*, the postponers—*nāsī'* meaning 'one who postpones the months'. Such a one would stand at the entrance of the Kaaba and proclaim, "Your goddess al-'Uzzā hereby postpones (the sacredness of) the First Ṣafar." He would declare (the month) profane for a year and sacred for another. Their adherents in that practice were the Ghaṭafān, the Hawāzin, the Sulaym, and the Tamīm. The last of the postponers was Junādah ibn 'Awf ibn Umayyah ibn Qil' ibn 'Abbād ibn Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Abd ibn Fuḡaym. People have claimed that the (original) *qalammas* was Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Abd ibn Fuḡaym ibn 'Adīy ibn 'Āmir ibn Tha'labah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Mālik ibn Kinānah,⁽⁵⁾ after whose death the office passed in hereditary line to his descendants until the last of them, who was still alive at the time when Islam arose, was Abū Thumāmah Junādah.

The Arabs would, when they were done with their pilgrimage, gather about (the *qalammas*), and he would declare certain months either profane or sacred for them, who would then treat as profane or sacred what he had so declared. Whenever he wanted to postpone (the sacredness of) a certain month, he would pronounce al-Muḥarram profane, which they then so treated, and declare in its stead Ṣafar sacred, which then was sacred to them, all so that they would agree in the number four.⁽⁶⁾ And when they wanted divine

4. The technical terms used are *jilāl* (sg. *jull*) and *ash'irah* (sg. *shī'ar*), both designating covers to protect the animals against the cold.

5. Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharah*, p. 494.

6. Cf. Koran 9 (Repentance):36-37. The idea was to comply with the four sacred months stipulated in the Koran, yet to avoid a succession of three sacred

guidance, they would gather about (the *qalammas*), who then made the pronouncement: "Lord, verily I shall not be accused of a sin, nor shall I be charged with a fault in my decree, for the decree is truly that which I hereby decide. Lord, I hereby declare it lawful to shed the blood of the Ṭayy and the Khath'am, whom it is lawful to slay. So kill them wherever you find them!"—that is, (when) you gain victory over them. "Lord, I hereby pronounce one of the two Ṣafars, the First Ṣafar, profane and postpone the other of the coming year."

The reason why the blood of the Ṭayy and the Khath'am was declared lawful to be shed was that they, alone among all the Arabs, used to attack people during the sacred month.

It has also been said: The first practitioner of postponement was Sa'ir ibn Tha'labah. He passed away, and after his death postponement was practiced by his nephew, the *qalammas*, whose name was 'Adiy ibn 'Amir ibn Tha'labah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Kinānah.⁽⁷⁾ Then the office passed down the line among his descendants, and the last of them was Abū Thumāmah Junādah. According to others, however, that was 'Awf ibn Umayyah ibn Qil', in succession to his father, Umayyah ibn Qil', who assumed the office from his grandfather, Qil' ibn 'Abbād, who succeeded his great-grandfather, 'Abbād ibn Ḥudhayfah, who succeeded his great-great-grandfather, Ḥudhayfah ibn 'Abd ibn Fuqaym. Ḥudhayfah used to be called "the Qalammas"; he was the first to postpone the months for the Arabs, who regarded those he declared profane as profane, and honored those he declared sacred as sacred. After the above-mentioned 'Awf then came his son, Abū Thumāmah Junādah ibn 'Awf, in whose lifetime arose Islam. He was the most widely known of the *qalāmis* and the one who enjoyed the longest life; he is said to have

months in a row, which would have deprived the Bedouin from carrying out raiding expeditions, their main source of subsistence, for too long a time (cf. al-Qāli, *Amālī*, 1:4).

7. Cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharah*, p. 189.

postponed months for forty years. It is they whom ‘Umayr ibn Qays (ibn) “Jidhl al-Ṭi‘ ān”⁽⁸⁾ addresses with the boastful verses:

What people have we not beaten to the blood revenge?
 What people have we not made champ the bit?
 Are we not Postponers in the line of Ma‘add,
 changing months profane into sacred months?

And ‘Abbād ibn Tha‘labah ibn “Anf al-Kalb” al-Ṣaydāwī of the Banū Asad ibn Khuzaymah said:

Are you claiming that I’m one of Fuqaym ibn Mālik?
 By Jove, you’ve altered what I used to know!
 Those have a Postponer whose drum they follow,
 who makes the months profane or sacred when he wills.

It has been said: The Arabs used to intercalate nine months every twenty-four lunar years. Their months were fixed in accordance with the seasons and following one single rule, neither lagging behind their established times nor moving ahead of them. The first month postponed used to be al-Muḥarram. Ṣafar was then given its name, and the month of Rabī‘ I was called “Ṣafar”. From then on they combined the names of the months: the second month postponed was Ṣafar, and the next following month would again be called “Ṣafar”, and so on, until the postponed month had gone full cycle through the twelve months and come back to al-Muḥarram, at which point they started all over again.

They used to count the cycles of the postponed month and determine the seasons by them, saying, The revolutions of the sun have gone around from season so-and-so to season such-and-such, and such is a cycle. If they realized, with all that, that a month had

8. Pre-Islamic Kinānī poet (cf. al-Marzubānī, *Mu‘jam*, 72; al-Bakrī, *Simṭ al-la‘ālī*, 11). His grandfather’s name was ‘Alqamah b. Firās; he reportedly received his nickname “The Stab-Happy” because, being of powerful build, he carried an extra long and thick lance.

moved ahead of its place within the four seasons, due to the accumulated fractions of the solar year and the balance of the differential between the latter and the year of the moon they attached to it, they intercalated (that balance) in a second intercalation. They would come to such a realization by the rising and setting of the Mansions of the Moon, until the Prophet, peace and blessings on him, made the Hijrah. At that time, the cycle of the postponed month had reached Sha'bān, which was therefore called "Muḥarram" and the month of Ramaḍān (of that year) was called "Ṣafar".

It has been said: The first postponer postponed al-Muḥarram and made it an intercalation, delaying al-Muḥarram until Ṣafar, and Ṣafar until Rabī' I, and so on with the rest of the months. He then made their pilgrimage in that year fall on the 10th of Muḥarram and made that year to consist of thirteen months, and at the end of every three years he moved the pilgrimage up by one month. Two hundred and ten years passed in that manner, ending with the year of the Farewell Pilgrimage. In the year 9 after the Hijrah, the pilgrimage had fallen on the 10th of Dhū 'l-Qa'dah; that is the year in which Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, God be pleased with him, led the pilgrimage. Then the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, made the Farewell Pilgrimage in the year 10, because in that year the pilgrimage fell on the 10th of Dhū 'l-Hijjah, the way it had during the age of Abraham and Ishmael. That is the reason why the Prophet said during that pilgrimage of his: "Verily, time has come around to the way it was on the day when God created the heavens and the earth"—meaning, the pilgrimage and the months had returned to the (original) position.

God Exalted revealed the abolition of the postponed month with His words, *"The month postponed is an increase of unbelief whereby the unbelievers go astray; one year they make it profane, and hallow it another, to agree with the number that God has hallowed, and so profane what God has hallowed. Decked out fair to them are their evil*

deeds.”⁽⁹⁾ Thus, the postponing of a month that the Age of Ignorance had introduced fell into disuse, and the practice that the pilgrimage and the fast take place on the basis of the sighting of the new moons has continued (ever since), praise be to God.

[4] The Arabs also had traditional ways of dating which no longer exist. For instance, the Kinānah reckoned from the death of Ka’b ibn Lu’ayy, until the Year of the Elephant came around, whereupon they dated from there. It is the year in which the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, was born. Between Ka’b ibn Lu’ayy and (the year of) the Elephant were five hundred and twenty years,⁽¹⁰⁾ and between (the year of) the Elephant and (the Ayyām) al-Fijār⁽¹¹⁾ forty years. Next, they counted from al-Fijār to the death of Hishām ibn al-Mughīrah,⁽¹²⁾ which was six years. Then they reckoned from Hishām’s death to the construction of the (new) Kaaba, which was nine years. Next, there were fifteen years between its construction and the Hijrah of the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him. And then came the chronology from the Hijrah of the Prophet.

[5] From Sa’īd ibn al-Musayyab, who said: ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, one day called together the men around him and asked them, “From which day shall written dating begin?” ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, God be pleased with him, suggested: “From the day on which the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on

9. Koran 9 (Repentance):37.

10. Maqrīzī apparently took this figure from Marzubāni (*Mu’jam*, 228). Ka’b b. Lu’ayy, a distant ancestor of the Prophet, died 454 A.D. (cf. al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, Preface, where the interval is given as 120 years).

11. Four battles fought during the sacred months at ‘Ukāz between the Quraysh with their allies and the Qays ‘Aylān (cf. Caetani, *Annali*, I, 163); the young Muḥammad, according to Muslim tradition, participated in one. —Ṭabarī (2:392/I, 1255) gives the interval between the Year of the Elephant and al-Fijār as twenty years.

12. He died close to the Muḥammad’s call to prophethood (ca. 610, in Muslim tradition) and is the father of the Companion al-Ḥārith b. Hishām (d. 18/639); cf. Zirklī, *A’lām*, 9:88.

him, emigrated and left the land of polytheism.” And that is what ‘Umar did.

From Sahl ibn Sa’d al-Sā’idī, who said: The men chose the wrong count. They counted not from (Muḥammad’s) call to prophethood, nor from his death, but from the time of his arrival in Medina.

From Ibn al-‘Abbās, God be pleased with him, who said: Dating was from the year in which the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, arrived in Medina.

Qurrah ibn Khālil (al-Sadūsī) transmitted on the authority of Muḥammad:¹³ With ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, was a certain tax collector who had come from the Yemen, and he said to ‘Umar, “Surely, you all should date, writing: in the year so-and-so from the month such-and such.” So ‘Umar and the men around him at first wanted to write: from the time the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, received his prophetic mission. Then they said: from the time of his death. Finally, they wanted it to be: from the Hijrah. Then they asked, from which month? and wanted it to be: from Ramaḍān. But then it occurred to them, and they decided: from al-Muḥarram.

(Abū Ayyūb) Maymūn ibn Mihrān transmitted: When a payment order with the due date ‘Sha‘bān’ was submitted to the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, God be pleased with him, he asked, “Which Sha‘bān is it? The one we are in now, or the one coming?” Then he called the prominent Companions together and said: “More and more money has been coming in, and the portion of it we have divided up so far is undetermined in time. How can we find a way to regulate that?” They replied, “We would like to learn that from the ways the Persians do such things.” ‘Umar, God be pleased with him, right then and there summoned al-Hurmuzān and asked him about that. “We have a way of reckoning,” said the

13. This is the Baṣran ascetic and religious scholar Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Sīrīn al-Baṣrī, d. 110/729 (cf. al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-asmā’*, 106).

Persian, “which we call *māh-rūz*, which means ‘calculating months and days.’” People then arabicized the word as *mu’arrakh*, then gave it the (verbal) noun *ta’rikh*, and used that (thereafter). Next, they looked for a time which they could make the beginning of the *ta’rikh* of the Islamic state, and they agreed that the starting point should be the year of the Hijrah. Now, the emigration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina took place when al-Muḥarram, Ṣafar and a few days of Rabī‘ I of the months and days of that year had already elapsed. So, after they had decided to use the Hijrah as the basis, they went back sixty-eight days and made the era (of Islam) begin with the first of Muḥarram in that year.

People then figured out the time from the first day of Muḥarram to the last day of the life of the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, and it turned out to be ten years and two months; but when one computes his sacred life from the Hijrah proper, then the Prophet would have lived after it nine years, eleven months, and twenty-two days. Between the birth of the Prophet and the birth of the Messiah, peace upon him, were five hundred and seventy-eight years, less two months and eight days.⁽¹⁴⁾ The beginning of the Hijrah chronology then is Thursday, the first day of God’s month of al-Muḥarram, and between it and The Flood are 3,735 years, ten months, and 22 days—with all the disagreement on that already known to the reader. Between (the beginning of the Hijrah era) and the era of Alexander the Greek, son of Philippos of Macedon, are 961 lunar years and 54 days, which corresponds to 932 solar years and 289 days, which is nine months and nineteen days. And between it and (the beginning of) the era of the Copts are 337 years and 39 days.

14. This figure, no less than the following ones, is of course arbitrary. Wiet collected the figures given by other Muslim writers, e.g., al-Mas’ūdī: 629 years and 361 days between the Christ’s birth and the Hijrah, but also 600 years, both in his *Tanbih*; Abū ’l-Fidā’: 631 years; Ibn Sa’d and Ibn al-Asākir: 569 years.

[6] Māshā'allāh says: The passage of the ecliptic from the airy triplicity, which is the sign of Gemini and the components of the trigon, to the sign of Cancer and its watery triplicity, during which the Islamic state came about, occurred at the conclusion of 3,345 years, three months, and twenty days from the time of the first planetary conjunction, which took place at the Beginning of Motion—meaning, the creation of Adam, peace be upon him. The first conjunction of that triplicity took place in four degrees and one minute of the sign of Scorpio, which is the conjunction of the Muslim community.

In the second year of that conjunction, the Apostle of God, peace and blessings on him, was born. Between the time when the Sun entered the sign of Aries in that year, and the first day of the year of the Hijrah were, in terms of Persian (solar) years, exactly fifty-one years, three months, eight days, and sixteen hours. From the time of The Flood to the beginning of the conjunction of the Muslim community were 3,912 years, six months, and fourteen days.

The Jews have claimed that from Adam, peace upon him, until the year of the Hijrah are 4,042 years and three months; the Christians have maintained that between the two events are 5,990 years and three months; and the Magians—meaning, the Persians—have alleged that between them are 4,182 years, ten months, and nineteen days.

[7] The reader has already learned that the months of the Hijrah era are lunar ones, and every year of it has 354 11/30 days. All legal prescripts rest on the sighting of the new moon for all sects and branches of Islam except the Shi'ites, theirs are based on working out the months of the year by calculation, as the reader will learn when we discuss Cairo and its (imam-)caliphs. Later on, when the Muslim astronomers needed to gain indispensable information about the new moons, the direction of the *qiblah*, and so on, they based their astronomical tables on the Arab calendar and made the months of the Arab year (alternately) “complete” and “deficient”, beginning with al-Muḥarram in imitation of the Com-

panions, God be pleased with them. Thus, they gave al-Muḥarram 30 days, Şafar 29 days, Rabī‘ I 30 days, Rabī‘ II 29 days, Jumādā I 30 days, Jumādā II 29 days, Rajab 30 days, Sha‘bān 29 days, Ramaḍān 30 days, Shawwāl 29 days, Dhū ‘l-Qa‘dah 30 days, and Dhū ‘l-Ḥijjah 29 days. Because of the fraction of a day, which is eleven-thirtieths of it, they increased, whenever that fraction added up to more than half a day, the length of Dhū ‘l-Ḥijjah, so that that month would have thirty days in that year. They call such a year a “leap year”, and it has 355 days. From this intercalated day accumulate in thirty years eleven days. God alone knows the truth.

94. The Era of the Persians

As to the era of the Persians, it is also known as the “era of Yazdgird”, because it begins with the start of the reign of Yazdgird son of Shahryār son of Khusrāw (II) Parvīz.

The Persians dated by it because Yazdgird ascended the throne of the empire after the rule of the Persians had dissipated and had been taken over by women and usurpers. He is also the last of the kings of Persia, and when he was killed, their empire was torn to shreds.

The first day of that era is a Wednesday, and between it and (the beginning of) the Hijrah era are nine years and 338 days. A year of that era falls short of a solar year by one-fourth of a day, which adds up every one hundred and twenty days to one month. They have different theories as to intercalating a year, but this is not the place to deal with that. On that calendar depend in our own time the people of the Iraq and of the non-Arab lands. *And unto God is the issue of all affairs.*⁽¹⁾

1. Koran 31 (Lokman):22.



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.