

Autonomous Egypt from Ibn Ṭulūn to Kāfūr, 868–969

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The emergence of an autonomous Egypt

From 850, the attention of Arab chroniclers ceased to focus on the eastern provinces of the Dār al-Islām, the ‘Abbāsids’ primary concern for a century. Southern Iraq, potentially so rich because of its high-yielding agriculture, its vast port of Baṣra, its convergence of caravans and riverine navigation (the main route directing the Iranians toward Mecca and the commodities of the Indian Ocean toward the Byzantine markets), was nonetheless shaken by unrest. From 820 to 834 the disturbances engendered by the undisciplined Zuṭṭ, buffalo breeders who had arrived from India during the Sassanid period, compelled the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs in 222/837 to relocate them in northern Syria, confronting the Byzantines. Subsequently, the general uprising of the Zanj erupted, a rebellion of black slaves imported from Zanzibar to cultivate the southern Iraqi plantations of sugar cane and rice under unbearable climatic conditions. Inspired by an ‘Alid pretender, they were initially victorious. The Zanj temporarily occupied Baṣra and, after 255/869, menaced all the fertile agrarian lands of southern Mesopotamia. Although they were vanquished in 270/883, the region’s agriculture did not recover from the devastation that was inflicted on it. A group of Ismā‘īlī agitators, the Carmatians, had inaugurated their programs of indoctrination in the region of Kūfa around 264/877. After founding a state at Baḥrayn on the southern shore of the Persian Gulf in 286/899, they instigated revolts among the poor peasants of southern Iraq and the Arab tribes of the Syro-Iraqi steppe at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century. Central and southern Iraq were simultaneously threatened from 865 to 900 by the Ṣaffārīd revolt, an insurrectionary movement which first appeared in western Iran, and whose leaders were prepared to march against Baghdād itself. The disorders in lower Iraq compromised the primacy of the maritime commercial route toward India, Ceylon and south-east Asia via the Gulf, consequently enhancing the appeal of the land route across Iran, Jazīra and Anatolia known as the “Silk Road.”

In Iraq, the demographic explosion of the cities was more a burden than a dynamic growth factor for the economy. The caliphs had already created Sāmarrā, recognizing that the failure of coexistence between a large Turkish army and an urban civil population that was constantly expanding posed insurmountable problems of supply and security. To maintain tranquility, responsible officials of the state had to assure the regular provision of grain, olive oil, sugar, meat and fuel to the bakeries and the public baths for the enormous city of Baghdād. The implications of this formidable demand for media of transport, storage facilities, initial processing of goods and management of their distribution across myriad local markets were intimidating. The activities of merchants would clearly not suffice to meet this demand, and it was therefore necessary for state officials to pressure the governors of Mawṣil and other regional centers in Jazīra and eastern Syria to despatch vast quantities of grain to the capital.

Syria and Egypt witnessed a number of brief military revolts or tribal rebellions during the second half of the ninth century. But the security of property and persons was nonetheless maintained with more assurance than in Iraq. In 827 Crete had been occupied by the Cordobans of Alexandria. In 830 Sicily also came under Muslim domination. From 870 to 960, the Arab navy based in Crete joined with fleets sailing out of Syria to disrupt shipping in the Aegean and Adriatic seas. Arab navigation was reestablished between Syria and Egypt, and between Egypt and the Maghrib and al-Andalus. At the same time, the caravan trade between Aghlabid Ifriqiya, a region experiencing widespread prosperity, and Egypt expanded significantly. The importance of economic ties between north Africa and the Andalus on one hand, and Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula and Syria on the other, is attested in the fourth/tenth century by the Jewish archives of the Geniza. Such ties indeed predated the Geniza information by a century according to a text of Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. 272/885 or 300/912) that mentions Jewish traveling merchants. The maritime itinerary via the Gulf route, progressively less protected, was therefore abandoned in favor of direct navigation between the Yemen and India. Aden and the Red Sea once again experienced frequent shipping after a depressed period during the Umayyad epoch. On the western coast of the Red Sea, the port of ‘Aydhāb, fifteen days’ journey from Aswān and thirteen from Qūṣ, is mentioned by al-Ya‘qūbi in the ninth century. Later, ‘Aydhāb was supplanted by the port of Quṣayr, further north and only three days away from Qūṣ. Via the upper Nile valley and the Oases, Egypt remained in contact with eastern, tropical and equatorial Africa. Imports of black slaves were directed through Qūṣ, where influential merchants were based. Some slaves were destined for civilian domestic service, the *ḥarīm* or work in the vast agricultural projects, while others were reserved for military training, primarily as infantrymen. Gold dust, imported through the same route, bolstered the capacity of the province to

strike coins. The pharaonic tombs were also methodically plundered to garner this precious metal.

The wealth of agriculture in the Nile valley and the Delta, and its high level of productivity assured by Byzantine fiscal institutions whose function had been reorganized in certain details but preserved in its basic forms, served to provide this province with vast and varied resources. Yet the province's daily requirements were not as great as those of Iraq. With the exception of Fustāt, an important urban center during this period but not of the same size or stature as Baṣra, there were no large cities. Alexandria, Tinnis and Damietta remained only modest port towns by the mid-third/ninth century. Their significant development would occur at the end of the fourth/tenth century; this situation left Egypt with a substantial agrarian surplus that enabled the holy cities in Arabia to be fed. In this way, Egypt influenced public opinion within the Islamic world during the annual pilgrimage. An artisan class skilled in textile manufacture, distributed throughout numerous sites, produced a variety of woven cloths of which the most costly were exported. Through its traveling merchants, Egypt was well informed about the economic and political life of Iraq and the Andalus.

The 'Abbāsīd caliphate in Iraq was hardly more than a symbol. Struggles between its factions steadily intensified. Initiated by the 'Abbāsīds after 750, the process of disbanding the Arab tribal army and professionalizing the military institution – now reserved primarily for peripheral ethnic groups – was vigorously advanced in the decade between 830 and 840. Throughout the second quarter of the third/ninth century, the caliphate in Baghdād (later in Sāmarrā) and its state apparatus were dominated by Iranian or Arab civilians and supported by Turkish military slaves. This palatine elite, part Shī'ite, part Ḥanafite and Mu'tazilite, promoted a policy of expedience that was posited on a rationalist approach to royal rights in the unifying spirit of the Qur'ān. By contrast, the majority of the Arabic-speaking Sunnī *'ulamā'*, Mālikīs and Shāfi'īs, rigorously defended their influence over society. This influence was based on memorization of minute juridical norms derived from traditions of the Prophet (*Ḥadīth*), myriad and thus beyond regulation. They increased their opposition after the death of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn in 833. The protest of Ibn Ḥanbal against the imposition, in the name of state-sponsored reason, of the doctrine of the created Qur'ān, resonated favorably among the men of the Sunnī mosques, even if they did not accept every extreme literalist opinion held by those who bore the designation *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*.

Abu'l-Faḍl Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Mutawakkil, caliph after 847, was the first to cede support of the state to Ḥanafism; he sided with Ibn Ḥanbal. His assassination in 247/861 inaugurated a period of weakness on the part of the caliphate and a struggle for power between Arab or Persian viziers

and Turkish amīrs. As with the Praetorian Guard at Rome during the declining Empire, the Turks of the palatine guard installed and deposed the caliphs at their pleasure, taking care to collect at each new oath of obedience (*bayʿa*) a higher bonus. It is not possible to analyze Egypt from 868 to 969 without considering politics in Sāmarrā or Baghdād, since the increasing debility of ʿAbbāsīd central authority provoked the eruption of several provincial revolts. These led to a new style of managing Muslim territories.

The governor of Egypt collected substantial taxes in grain or gold, while his expenses remained modest. He could hasten or delay, direct to whom he wished, or even cancel, the transfer to Iraq of the tribute awaited by the caliph's brother al-Muwaffaq for financing the suppression of rebellions. During an epoch that witnessed the professionalizing of warfare and the rising costs of purchasing and supplying military slaves, their horses and arms, this fiscal advantage allowed first Ibn Ṭulūn and subsequently Muḥammad ibn Tughj to occupy the whole of Syria up to the region of Aleppo and the frontier sites, and to impose their conditions on the ʿAbbāsīds. They were obliged, however, to husband their treasury and to continue to support their army. For after tensions subsided in the east, the ʿAbbāsīd authority, still militarily effective, attempted to reassert its control over the rich provinces of Syria and Egypt.

The hundred years between 264/868 and 358/969 thus marked a turning-point in the history of Arabic Egypt. Until that time, it was essentially passive, except during the period of ʿUthmān and ʿAlī, dominated and colonized by the Arabs – as it had been previously under the Achaemenid Persians, Ptolemies, Romans and Byzantines. During this century, Egypt gradually became a center of power radiating outside its territory, and commanding a position of central authority on his own, the amīr of Egypt finally found himself threatened as well. The numerous members of his family or the governors of his provinces might set off rebellions at any moment. The phenomena that had proved ubiquitous for other power centers: the burden of expenses and the immobility of the central army garrisoned in the capital, made their appearance in Egypt also.

The chronicles that focus on the Arab east from 860 to 970 present a series of violent campaigns led by non-Arab Muslims. These episodes are difficult to follow because of the large number of protagonists involved. Sketchily presented to the reader, most of these men were brutally eliminated, to be replaced by others emerging from the same background of warriors. The conflicts described by the chronicles occurred at every level. At the ʿAbbāsīd court in Sāmarrā or Baghdād, they either brought together or placed in confrontation the caliph, members of his family, viziers, senior Turkish officers who frequented the palace, or even secretaries of the central administration. In the provincial capitals, the authority of the military governors was contested by the tax farmers or the senior officers appointed

to control towns or districts, as well as by the chieftains of tribes whose territories intruded into their provinces.

‘Abbāsīd authority was called into question everywhere, and as soon as a local power initially delegated by the caliph became entrenched it took on a separate personality. The image of the *wālī*, the governor who could be readily nominated and subsequently revoked, gave way to that of the *amīr*, who regarded himself as a legitimate prince and strove to designate his own son as his heir. The *amīr* refused to acknowledge the central government’s authority to dismiss him or to name his successor. From the caliph’s entourage to that of the lowest soldier of fortune, loyalty was demanded from subordinates but denied to superiors. Familial competition, either for position or for succession, instigated dangerous conflicts as well. Thus may be explained the minimal duration of certain offices, such as the prefecture of police (*ṣāhib al-shurṭa*) or even the *qādīs* of Egypt, who often held their posts for a few months only. The chroniclers soberly noted these disorders – without revealing the social psychology of the period, or the emotions of these men, their expressions of loyalty, their brotherhood in arms or even the simple camaraderie which could unite them.

One acquires or loses personal political power solely by force. As a temporary and fragile possession, one must take profit from it rapidly to enrich oneself and one’s family by exploiting taxation of real estate, confiscating via the *kharāj* the major portion of income from agrarian land. A substantial portion of such gains must, in any case, be expended on the pay of those soldiers who protect this power and who all too often threaten it. The long-term political goal in the Islamic lands became indistinct during this period: power seemed only to function for itself, to appropriate to itself all sources of profit and thus to assure its own perpetuation with no higher purpose.

Egypt, however, proved to be the exception. Ibn Ṭūlūn and his son, Khumārawayh, then al-Ikhshīd and his successor, Kāfūr, openly favored this province and attempted to develop its economic potential – notably its agrarian productivity – by restoring its system of irrigation. They simultaneously sought to enhance the quality of daily life by reforming taxation policies and the operation of institutions in ways favorable to the indigenous inhabitants. A special kind of rapport between the local government of Egypt and its subjects was thereby established. From the end of the pharaonic period, this province had been dominated from a distant capital such as Rome, Constantinople or Ctesiphon, or one nearby but culturally quite distinct, such as the Alexandria of the Ptolemies. From the time of the Arab conquest, Egypt had played a passive role, but between 868 and 969, Ibn Ṭūlūn and his successors radically transformed this state of affairs, and thereby created a powerful autonomous regime. The Fāṭimids would subsequently benefit from their foundation.

The Ṭūlūnids

Ṭūlūn, Aḥmad's father, had belonged to a tribute corps of Turkish slaves sent by the governor of Bukhārā to the Caliph al-Ma'mūn. He became captain of the caliph's elite guard. Born in Ramaḍān 220/September 835 in Muslim territory, Aḥmad had never been a slave. He received his military training at Sāmarrā, his religious instruction at Tarsūs in Cilicia where the role of the *ribāt* was accentuated by the duty of holy war (jihād) against the Byzantines. The *muhaddithūn* and men of piety congregated there, attracted by the sums expended by al-Mu'tazz and his mother that guaranteed the subsistence of the *murābiṭūn* in the town.

Exhibiting the physical and moral qualities that had enabled his ethnic group to monopolize senior ranks in the army, Ibn Ṭūlūn distinguished himself above all for his sense of duty by organizing the defense of a caravan that was attacked by Bedouins near Edessa, while his fellow officers in the escort stood by. This episode won Ibn Ṭūlūn the affection of the Caliph al-Musta'in, who made a gift to him of a female slave who would be Khumārawayh's mother. Ibn Ṭūlūn accompanied the Caliph al-Musta'in to exile in 251/865, but he was unable, or possibly did not seek, to avert his execution in 252/866.

Having acquired the religious and literary culture worthy of an Arab civil administrator, Ibn Ṭūlūn bestowed the names of Arab tribes on several of his sons. He enjoyed the company of the '*ulamā*', poets, architects and physicians. He maintained a certain distance with regard to his comrades in arms and was never regarded as a military ruffian. He exhibited a keen political acumen. Exceedingly self-confident, he began to design long-term projects. Capable of concealing his emotions until the moment when he could give them free rein without damaging consequences, he rarely submitted to fits of temper. He withheld his reaction to any aggression directed against him, in order to control the situation and thus to force his rival to fall into the trap he had prepared for him. Then his revenge was swift and terrible. According to the sources, Ibn Ṭūlūn was responsible for the deaths of more than 18,000 persons executed by his order or expiring in his jails.

In 254/868 the Caliph al-Mu'tazz bestowed Egypt as an appanage on Bākbāk, the second spouse of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn's mother. Having been delegated authority over the country by his step-father, Ibn Ṭūlūn entered Fustāt on 23 Ramaḍān 254/15 September 868, accompanied by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī. The arrival of Ibn Ṭūlūn in Egypt was described in the Arabic sources as a propitious event, with reference to the astronomic circumstances of his ceremonial day of entry into Fustāt and predictions pronounced by a youthful blind seer. This was not the simple installation of a new governor but the first official act of a quasi-sovereign dynasty. Ibn

Ṭulūn was credited with laying the foundations of a new Egypt, not merely a dependent province of a distant 'Abbāsīd capital but the seat of a new center of political and economic power. All the omens were favorable, as they were a century later when the *qā'id* Jawhar laid out Cairo for the Fāṭimid Imām.

The governors appointed over Fustāt bore the title *wālī al-jaysh wa'l-ṣalāt*, overseer of the army and the Friday prayer (*al-jum'a*). At the same time, they might or might not receive supervision of the *kharāj* – the collection of the country's agrarian property taxes. In general, they immediately appointed a prefect of police (*wālī al-shurta*) and a deputy governor of Alexandria. Initially charged with authority only over Fustāt, *al-qasaba* or capital of the province excluding Alexandria, Aḥmad found as incumbent supervisor of the *kharāj* an eminent fiscal secretary. This was Ibn al-Mudabbir Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Rastisānī, who had already completed a lengthy career. Director in Sāmarrā of the *diwān al-jaysh* under al-Wāthiq, and then administrator of seven *dīwāns* under al-Mutwakkil, but cast into prison in 240/854, he was subsequently named director of finances in the two Syrian *junds* (provinces) of Damascus (central and southern Syria) and Tiberiad/Urdunn (northern Palestine). Preceding the arrival of Ibn Ṭulūn, most likely in 247/861, he had assumed the same duties in Egypt. Finding the fiscal yield of the province far too small, he doubled the *kharāj* and the *jizya*, deprived the Christian clergy and monks of their traditional exemptions, and created new taxes – to be collected according to the lunar year (*hilālī*). He also imposed non-Qur'anic tariffs (*maks/mukūs*) on pasturelands, fisheries and beds of caustic soda. He thus was considered the most hated man in Egypt, which explains the escort of 100 young guardsmen who accompanied him on all occasions. Because Ibn Ṭulūn was henceforth responsible for maintaining order but had refused any cash donation, he demanded that Ibn al-Mudabbir turn his guards over to him. Despite Ibn al-Mudabbir's unpopularity, Ibn Ṭulūn had to spend four years directing intrigues on the part of his agents in Sāmarrā in order to arrange the transfer of the fiscal intendant to Syria in Ramaḍān 258/July 871. He took the opportunity to rid himself of Shukayr, postmaster of Egypt (responsible for the mail [*barīd*] and information services), and personally assumed collection of the *kharāj* in 259/872.

In 256/869–70 Bākbāk was put to death, and during the summer of 257/871 the appanage of Egypt devolved upon Yārjūkh (alt. Yārūj), whose daughter Ibn Ṭulūn had married. From this time on, administration over the whole of Egypt, including Alexandria and Barka, was conferred upon the governor of Fustāt. Ibn Ṭulūn proceeded solemnly to assume power in Alexandria, the government of which he turned over to his son al-'Abbās two years later.

Ibn Ṭulūn was occupied with suppression of a series of disorders, for which mission he had been appointed. Because of its rapid Islamization and

Arabization, Upper Egypt was marginally controlled by the governor of Aswān. It was also menaced by the Nubians, who had stubbornly remained Christian, by the Budja¹ and by the turmoil surrounding the exploitation of the local gold mines directed by the Banū Rabi'a. After 255/868 the Budja, having converted to Islam, were able to help the Egyptians resist the Nubians. Berber tribes rampaged in the oases that formed the termini for the trade routes to northern and Saharan Africa. The Delta was unsettled by the semi-sedentarized Arab tribes who were grappling with raids by the nomadic Berbers from Libya. An 'Alid, Bughā al-Aṣghar Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṭabātabā, revolted during Jumādā I 255/spring 859 in the territory between Alexandria and Barka, proclaiming himself caliph. He was captured and executed in Upper Egypt during the summer of 255/869. Subsequently, another 'Alid, Ibn al-Ṣūfī, Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad, a descendant of 'Umar ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib fomented rebellions over two years and massacred the inhabitants of Esna at the end of 255/869. Having defeated a Ṭulūnid general in Rabi' I 256/winter 870, he was forced to seek refuge in the Oases during the spring. In Muḥarram 259/autumn 872 he emerged from his retreat to attack another self-proclaimed chieftain in Nubia, al-'Umarī.² Suffering defeat, Ibn al-Ṣūfī ravaged the district of Aswān where he cut down tens of thousands of palm trees. He then sought refuge in Mecca where he was captured and turned over to Ibn Ṭulūn, who imprisoned him in Fuṣṭāṭ before allowing his return to Medina. Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Ḥamid al-'Umarī, a descendant of the second caliph and the individual who had confronted Ibn al-Ṣūfī, carved out a principality in the vicinity of the Nubian gold mines. Following an encounter that resulted in the rout of the Ṭulūnid army, al-'Umarī was tolerated in Nubia. He proceeded to sell his gold and slaves in the market of Aswān until his own officers assassinated him. In 260/873–874, Abū Rūh Sukun, a former partisan of Ibn al-Ṣūfī, revolted in the oases and made life hard for Ibn Ṭulūn's cavalymen. The latter was compelled to offer him a truce (*amān*).

In 261/874–875 the governor of Barka, Muḥammad ibn al-Farāj al-Farḡhānī, declared his rebellion. The army despatched by Ibn Ṭulūn achieved no success by soft tactics, and was forced to use siege engines to storm the city. The suppression was moderate, however: Ibn Ṭulūn displayed great restraint in his dealings with the western limits of his territory. Relations between Egypt and north Africa were enhanced. According to the exaggerated account of Ibn al-Athir, once lighthouses were built along the coast a message sent from the minaret of the Sabta Mosque on the coast of Ifriqiya in the evening could reach Alexandria the same night. However, when the Aghlabid

¹ Hamitic-speaking populations partially Christianized and living in the Nubian Nile valley. See *El2*, "Bedja," I, 1157b, and "al-Ṣa'id," VIII, 893.

² Cf. *El2*, "al-Ṣa'id," VIII, 893.

Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad sought to protect a route between Ifrīqiya and the Ḥijāz for commerce and the pilgrimage, he feared that Ibn Ṭulūn would not permit a sustained continental link across Egypt. He therefore fortified the port of Sousse and arranged a maritime passage via Sicily.

ʿIsā ibn al-Shaykh al-Shaybānī, known as Ibn al-Shaykh, governor of Ramla (southern Palestine) and Tiberiad/Urdunn (northern Palestine), was arrested by his own commander in Damascus for having pilfered from the tribute of 750,000 dīnārs, some three tons of fine gold that Ibn al-Mudabbir during his tenure as fiscal collector in Egypt had sent to Iraq. Ibn Ṭulūn, while maintaining relations with Ibn al-Shaykh, immediately set about recruiting Greek and black soldiers. He equipped an army in Ṣafar 256/winter 869–870. But since the caliphal establishment announced its displeasure, Ibn Ṭulūn cut short his march on Syria and returned to Fuṣṭāṭ in Shaʿbān 256/summer 870. That year, the Caliph al-Muʿtamid appointed an officer, Amājūr, as governor of Damascus. This individual took possession of the city despite an abortive resistance by Ibn al-Shaykh who submitted to accepting a command post in Armenia.

At this time the situation in Iraq was tense. Al-Wāthiq's son, al-Muhtadī, had acceded to the caliphate upon the demise of al-Muʿtazz in July of 869. Pious and energetic, he sought to restore the caliph's authority in the face of Turkish opposition. Relying on the civil administration's backing, he succeeded in removing several Turkish military commanders – in particular the powerful Muḥammad ibn Bughā. The latter's brother, Mūsā ibn Bughā, returned to Sāmarrā with a formidable army, however. After inflicting a defeat upon al-Muhtadī, Mūsā put him to an atrocious death in 256/June 870. Abu'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn al-Mutawakkil, al-Muʿtamid 'alā Allāh, succeeded him as caliph. Compelled to reside in Sāmarrā, he never exercised any genuine authority since real power remained in the hands of his brother, Abū Aḥmad al-Muwaffaq, who was serving as viceroy of the eastern caliphate and had been designated his successor. Al-Muʿtamid's son, Jaʿfar, had theoretically received sovereign primacy in the 'Abbāsid west, notably Syria, but had never in fact managed to command obedience in that province. Based in Baghdād, al-Muwaffaq had to rely on his Turkish generals, and consequently required ready access to all the fiscal revenues of the empire to deal with rebellions: Saffārids in Fars Province (southwest Iran), Zanj in Lower Iraq, Khārijites in Jazīra and Mawṣil, Ḥasanids in the Ḥijāz, Zaydites in Ṭabaristān. He also had to deal with conspiracies plotted against him closer to home, in Baghdād or Sāmarrā. This situation thus facilitated Ibn Ṭulūn's takeover of Egypt. Indeed, while Syria could be counted on as a refuge into which the caliph might retreat to await a rearrangement of alliances in the aftermath of his defeats following the struggles for power in Iraq, Egypt, because of its distance, enjoyed a greater measure of autonomy with respect to palace intrigues in Baghdād.

During his first eight years in power in Egypt, Ibn Ṭulūn took advantage of the financial and military dilemmas confronting al-Muwaffaq to extend his sphere of influence and to nurture his autonomy. He ultimately intended to transfer the center of power from the 'Abbāsid zone to Egypt. Of the 4.3 million dinārs in fiscal rents collected within Egypt in 263/876, Ibn Ṭulūn sent 1.2 million to al-Muwaffaq to support his war effort and 2.2 million to al-Mu'tamid. Counting on the Caliph al-Mu'tamid's friendship in return for the tribute he sent him directly and discretely but which he denied al-Muwaffaq, Ibn Ṭulūn assumed the title of Mawlā Amīr al-Mu'minin after 265/878.

In 258 or 259/872 or 873, following Yārjūkh's death, the Egyptian appanage devolved upon al-Mu'tamid's son Ja'far, the designated future Caliph al-Mufawwad. Beholding al-Muwaffaq occupied with repression of the Zanj revolt, Ibn Ṭulūn kept Egypt aloof and withheld his allegiance from his new suzerain, who had refused to reconfirm him in his office. In 262/875–876, al-Muwaffaq sought to recruit a volunteer to assume the governorship of Egypt. All the senior officers serving in Baghdad had been secretly bought off by Ibn Ṭulūn, however, and thus declined his offer. Al-Muwaffaq then wrote a threatening missive to Ibn Ṭulūn demanding his resignation, which provoked a brusque refusal. Ibn Ṭulūn proceeded to fortify his frontier towns and coastal ports. Al-Muwaffaq named Mūsā ibn Bughā governor of Egypt and despatched him with a contingent to Syria. Ibn Bughā tarried some ten months at Raqqa, however, and possessing insufficient money to pay his soldiers, he was forced to return to Iraq.

Having performed his initial military service at Tarsus by participating in the jihād, Ibn Ṭulūn wished to establish himself in this city with authority over Cilicia as a whole, in order to direct its defense against the Byzantines. He requested al-Muwaffaq to confer its command upon him, but the regent predictably refused. However, a series of events had seriously eroded the capacity of the Muslims to hold off the Byzantines, and in 263/876–77 the Caliph al-Mu'tamid therefore pressed al-Muwaffaq to confer upon Ibn Ṭulūn responsibility for Syria and Cilicia, the frontier districts (*al-thughūr*). He was charged with protection of the Anatolian frontier. Henceforth, Ibn Ṭulūn regarded Amājūr, 'Abbāsid governor of Damascus, as his subordinate. When this individual died in 264/877–78, Ibn Ṭulūn summoned his son and compelled him to acknowledge Ṭulūnid authority, to which the latter submitted. Ibn Ṭulūn marched upon Syria himself, appointed Ibn Amājūr commander in Ramla, and then took possession of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo.

Ibn al-Mudabbir had been the fiscal bursar (*'āmil*) of Damascus, Tiberiad/Urduṇn and Palestine-Ramla since 258/871–872. In 264/877, after occupying Damascus, Ibn Ṭulūn fined him 600,000 dinārs and cast him into prison, where he remained until his death in 270/883–84. At the same time,

Ibn al-Mudabbir's brother, involved with the Zanj rebellions from 255 to 270/868 to 883, was arrested in Baṣra, but was able to escape from his jail cell.

Ibn Ṭūlūn retained Amājūr's officers in their posts. He was then forced to subdue the opposition of Simā al-Ṭawīl, governor of Aleppo, who had sought refuge in Antioch. Ibn Ṭūlūn mounted an assault on that city, during which the governor was killed, possibly by a woman's hand. Ibn Ṭūlūn then marched on Tarsus, and upon entering the town began preparing for a jihād. The presence of his army in such high numbers caused prices to rise, and the inhabitants of Tarsus proceeded to his camp to demand either his departure or a reduction of his contingent to a few soldiers. Heated words were exchanged. As the incident threatened to escalate, Ibn Ṭūlūn feigned a retreat before the hostility of Tarsus's populace, ostensibly wishing to impress upon the Byzantines the capacity of Tarsus to resist a siege. In fact, he was anxious to return to Egypt where his own son al-ʿAbbās was preparing to revolt. However, reassured by subsequent messages attesting to the solidity of the caretaker regime he had left behind in Fuṣṭāṭ, he decided not to depart the region before clearly demarcating his territory. After restoring the assets that Simā had unjustly seized from the notables of Aleppo and reconfirming the *qāḍī* in his office, he installed his *ghulām* Lu'lu' there in command of an army. He was supported in this venture by Ibn al-ʿAbbās, chief of the Banū Kilāb. He also based another contingent at Ḥarrān. In order to capture the audacious Mūsā ibn Atāmish, who had challenged his progression through the district, Ibn Ṭūlūn was obliged to recruit the service of a Bedouin. This individual devised a stratagem that Ibn al-Athir, intrigued by its shrewdness, described at length. In 269/883, Ibn Ṭūlūn placed Lu'lu', who was already serving as governor of Diyār Muḍar, in charge of Ḥoms, Aleppo and Qinnasrīn. Of the towns occupied by Ibn Ṭūlūn, only al-Qarqisiyā was retaken by al-Muwaffaq in 268/881. Ibn Ṭūlūn thus had established a principality whose frontiers broadly defined the territory which Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and the Mamlūks would later dominate.

Exploiting the absence of his father, whom he had replaced as the titular head of Egypt, al-ʿAbbās declared open rebellion. Pliable of mind, he was easily manipulated by his military comrades. The steadfastly loyal vizier, al-Wāsiṭī, prior to being bound and carried off as a parcel, had managed to alert Ibn Ṭūlūn who returned in Ramaḍān 265/April 879. Al-ʿAbbās left Fuṣṭāṭ leading a contingent of 800 mounted warriors and 10,000 infantrymen and absconding with the state treasury. He reached Alexandria and then Barka, where he demanded that the Aghlabid Ibrāhīm III step down in his favor. He claimed to possess a certificate of nomination to the leadership of Ifriqiya emanating from al-Muʿtamid. Al-ʿAbbās put the town of Labda to sack after routing the army of the Aghlabid governor Muḥammad ibn Qurhub. He besieged Tripoli, but the Ibadite Ilyās ibn Manṣūr al-Nafūsi,

governor of Jabal Nafūsa and Tripoli on behalf of the Rustamid of Tahert, led a force of 12,000 men and defeated him in 266/879–880 or 267/winter 880–81. Having lost all his resources, al-‘Abbās retreated toward Egypt. He was captured near Alexandria and conducted on a mule back to Fustāt, where his father ordered him to gouge out the eyes and cut off the hands of his fellow conspirators. This he did, much to Ibn Ṭūlūn’s consternation, since he had secretly expected his son’s refusal. Weeping profusely, he ordered his son to be lashed and then cast into prison. From this date of 268/881–82, al-‘Abbās’s brother, Khumārawayh, became Ibn Ṭūlūn’s successor-designate.

Prior to Ibn Ṭūlūn, only al-Sarī ibn al-Ḥakam ibn Yūsuf al-Balkhī had attempted to establish an autonomous dynasty in Egypt. He had been named governor in Ramaḍān 200/April 816, but was deposed in Rabi‘ I 201/September 816. Reappointed in Sha‘bān 201/March 817, al-Sarī remained in office until his death in Jumādā II 205/November 820. His sons temporarily occupied the position of governor until 211/September 826.

The existence of numerous public ministries (*diwāns*) is documented in Egypt prior to Ibn Ṭūlūn’s arrival. The texts indicate an administration to deal with the *kharāj* or real estate tax, the *barid* or postal and information service, a *diwān al-ahra’* which managed the public granaries, a *diwān asfal al-arḍ* that controlled the Delta in 143/761. A *diwān al-khāṣṣ* (privy fund) may have existed to rearrange the financial services responsible for administering the governor’s assets. With regard to the *diwān al-inshā’*, it possibly preceded Ibn Ṭūlūn although it may have been created by his director of administration, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Kān (d. 278/891). Ibn Ṭūlūn set up a chancellory in Fustāt, essentially on the model of Sāmarrā, by exploiting the talents of Ibn ‘Abd al-Kān, four brothers of the Banū al-Muhājir and Ibn al-Dāya. In 266/879, Abū Bakr al-Atrash (the Deaf) Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mādhara’ī (*nisba* relating to a village in the vicinity of Wāsiṭ) was proclaimed governor of finances in Egypt and Syria. He died in 270/884. His descendants continued to hold the high financial offices in Egypt under Ibn Ṭūlūn’s successors and to amass one of the largest personal fortunes of the medieval Arab east. Most of the personnel appointed to these *diwāns* had been trained in Sāmarrā. Several heads of financial *diwāns* would attain positions of the highest responsibility, but subsequently suffer imprisonment or the obligation of paying steep fines. Some of these amounted to several million *dinārs*,³ levied either under Ibn Ṭūlūn or his successors.

As in Baghdād, members of the great families of viziers and public administrators, most of whom had originated in Iraq, could handle the *qalam* quite well. Later, when Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj wrote to the Emperor

³ A million gold *dinārs* corresponds to approximately 4.25 tonnes of fine gold.

Romanus I, he had several secretaries draw up drafts of letters. He chose the example of al-Najīramī. Throughout the century which is our concern, marriages between families of Turkish or Farghānian militarists and Arab or Iranian viziers frequently occurred. Thus as an example, Abu'l-Faḥ al-Faḍl Ibn Hinzāba, son of Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb Ja'far ibn al-Furāt, supervisor of property taxes in the east, and under al-Rāḍī, fiscal inspector of Egypt and Syria, married the daughter of Muḥammad ibn Tughj and gave to his own son as a second wife the daughter of the *amīr al-umarā'*, Ibn Rā'iq.

Like their predecessors in Iraq, some of these officials were men of letters who wrote poems or histories, but because of their more provincial status, they counted no philosophers among themselves, unlike in Baghdād. They recorded facts, practical affairs and conventional knowledge, but made no inquiries into the ethics of domestic life or of political practice or theory. From Ibn Ṭūlūn's epoch until the end of the Mamlūk period, Fustāt, and subsequently Cairo, was an, if not the most, important center of Muslim and Arab culture, especially with regard to historical writing. Yet no individual of high stature in rational or speculative thought, philosophy or logic, was mentioned as an Egyptian or as a long-term sojourner in Egypt. Such persons frequently emerged in Baghdād, Syria, Mā Warā al-Nahr (Transoxiana), al-Andalus or other remote Muslim provinces. To be sure, some Jewish thinkers who were born in Egypt – such as Sa'adyā al-Fayyūmī in the ninth–tenth centuries, or al-Mu'izz ibn Maymūn (Maimonides) in the twelfth–thirteenth centuries who spent part of his life in Cairo – attained wide renown in the realm of intellectual endeavor.

Accordingly, the secretary Aḥmad Ibn al-Dāya (b. 245 or 250/859 or 864, d. 330–340/941–951), wrote a history of Ibn Ṭūlūn, subsequently abridged by Ibn Sa'id, and a history of physicians. Abū Muḥammad al-Farghānī 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ja'far (283–362/895–973) settled in Egypt where he served as a soldier and wrote an appendix, *al-Ṣila*, to the History of al-Ṭabarī. His son, Abū Maṣṣūr Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh (327–398/939–1007), was born in Egypt and similarly became a senior officer and probably a historian.

Due to the restored security, sound administration and projects undertaken to enhance the irrigation system, the annual tax yield from agrarian land had reached 4,000,000 dinārs by Ibn Ṭūlūn's demise. A reserve of 10,000,000 dinārs had been accumulated.

Ibn Ṭūlūn's army allegedly numbered some 24,000 Turkish *ghulāms*, in addition to 42,000 black slaves and free men. In 263/876–877, when he noted that the 'Abbāsīd menace was becoming more pronounced, Ibn Ṭūlūn built a war fleet. He began to construct a fortified redoubt on Rawḍa Island between the two bridges to protect his treasury and his wives, although these projects were rapidly engulfed by Nile floods. He had restored the walls of the military port in the city of Alexandria, which was maintained from an

independent budget. He docked his fleet in the Palestinian port of ‘Akka which he also fortified, this last project employing a high level of technical competence and amphibious masonry. It was carried out by the grandfather of the geographer al-Muqaddasī who describes in detail the construction of its docking facilities. By contrast, Qaysariyya, despite its Palestinian location, was left abandoned and covered with sand.

Fuṣṭāṭ was already an extensive city when Ibn Ṭulūn established himself there, and it was divided into *khittas*, each with its own mosque. The descendants of the Syrian Christians and Jews who had accompanied the numerous Yemenis during the conquest, now largely Islamized, dwelled in the three *ḥamra* that constituted the town’s central quarter. It was bounded on the west by the Nile, which was gradually shifting westward. This quarter surrounded the great mosque which had been founded immediately after the conquest, the *Jāmi‘ ‘Amr* or *Jāmi‘ al-‘Atiq*. To the south were located the heights of *al-Rasad*, to the north the heights of *Yashkur*. To the east, between Fuṣṭāṭ and the Muqaṭṭam, was the Qarāfa cemetery. The city was divided into two cantons: *‘amal fawq*, the upper district, consisting of the heights to the south and east, and *‘amal asfal*, the lower district, embracing the rest. Until the Fāṭimid era, each canton possessed its own administration and police. The ‘Abbāsid governors no longer resided in al-Ḥamrā’ al-Quṣwā. They had founded, atop a hill to the northeast, *al-‘Askar*, a military town with a *jāmi‘ al-‘askar* or the *jāmi‘ sāhil al-ghalla* (“the mosque at the quay (on the *khalij*) for agrarian produce”) and a commercial quarter.

The inhabitants of Fuṣṭāṭ complained to Ibn Ṭulūn of being disturbed at Friday prayer (*jum‘a*) by the excessive number of soldiers, in particular those who were black. The mosque, packed and cramped within a densely built up area, could not be enlarged or opened to fresh air. Ibn Ṭulūn therefore ordered the construction in 264/878 of his own great mosque. Work was begun the following year and completed in 266/880. In consequence of the mosque project, the new town of al-Qaṭā’i was created at the northeastern extremity of the Jabal Yashkur, on the site of abandoned Christian and Jewish cemeteries. The excessive number of soldiers in Baghdād had induced the ‘Abbāsid Caliphs to build Sāmarrā, and Ibn Ṭulūn followed their precedent. Construction of the mosque allegedly cost 120,000 dinārs, a sum implausibly small given its scale. Several houses had been placed in trust (*waqf*) to finance the mosque’s operations. Ibn Ṭulūn, and subsequently his son Khumārawayh, installed twelve muezzins, in three groups of four, in a room near the minaret. Both day and night they continuously recited the Qur’ān and sang praises to the Prophet, the *qaṣā’id*.

The mosque’s plan and structure were Egyptian and its bell-shaped capitals were inspired by the ‘Amr Mosque, but Iraqi influence was shown in its use of fired bricks, its decoration with molded or carved stucco and its

utilization of three *ziyāda* (external courtyards), all as in Sāmarrā. The original minaret must have been modeled on Sāmarrā examples, as is the present structure. An attractive dome, no longer extant, supported by two superimposed colonnades, sheltered a font in the center of the courtyard for the performance of minor ablutions. The lavatories and facilities for major ablutions, along with a pharmacy, had been built outside the mosque enclosure wall for reasons of sanitation. The architect was most probably a Mesopotamian Christian, Ibn Kātib al-Farḡhānī. In order to avoid the common practice of transferring columns from Christian churches, he had false columns carved into the brick pillars. A *dār al-imāra*, or palace of government adjoined the mosque on its eastern side. It was connected by a small door through the *qibla* wall, as was the practice at Baṣra or Damascus.

Ibn Ṭulūn also founded the *mashhad* of Sayyida Nafisa and the aqueduct. He built a mosque up on the Muqāṭṭam Heights at Tannūr Fir'awn.

According to al-Maqrizī, Ibn Ṭulūn laid out al-Qaṭā'i' on a surface grid of 1,000 plots within an area of one square mile. Each unit of his polyglot army – regular troops, Bedouin allies, Byzantine mercenaries, Nubian infantry, black slaves, Turkish ghulāms and other soldiers of varied origins – was assigned as its residence a *qaṭā'i'* or concession which bore its name. The whole, distributed around the amīr's palace and the great mosque, constituted the *Qaṭā'i'*. A veritable amīral city thus surrounded the religious, political and military complex. The market of money-weighers (*sūq al-'ayyārīn*) brought together drugs sellers and grain dealers, the peas market (*fāmiyyīn*) gathered butchers, vegetable sellers, roasters and spice purveyors, the cooks' market (*ṭabbākhīn*) assembled moneychangers, bakers and confectioners. All these markets were selling commodities of better quality than had the old markets of Fustāt.

Ibn Ṭulūn also built a hippodrome and a hospital, *al-bimāristān*, between 259 and 261/872 and 874. One facility was reserved for men, the other for women; neither slaves nor soldiers were granted access. As for Ibn Ṭulūn himself, he preferred to reside in the Christian monastery of Quṣayr just north of Fustāt.⁴ Indeed, even though he had at one time imprisoned the Patriarch Shanūda I who reigned between 859 and 880, and Khā'il III, Patriarch from 880 to 890, following Coptic intrigues, Ibn Ṭulūn and his successors, including the Ikshidids, elected to maintain positive relations with the Christians of Egypt. They had suppressed the excessive poll taxes that Ibn al-Mudabbir had imposed on this community.

In the autumn of 269/882, following the repression of al-'Abbās's rebellion, Ibn Ṭulūn learned that his *ghulām* Lu'lu', whom he had appointed commander of an important military contingent in northern Syria, had been

⁴ On this monastery see al-Shabushti, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt*, ed. Kurkī 'Awwād (Beirut, 1986), 284.

recalled by al-Muwaffaq. He departed immediately for Syria with al-‘Abbās in tow and bound in chains, leaving Egypt under the regency of Khumār-awayh. The situation at Tarsus also threatened to slip from Ibn Ṭulūn’s control, since in the aftermath of its governor’s demise, his replacement, the eunuch Yazmān, was very popular with the inhabitants but refused to acknowledge his suzerain’s authority. Passing through Damascus en route to the frontier districts, he received a message from the Caliph al-Mu‘tamid, informing him that on the pretext of departing on a hunting expedition, he had surreptitiously departed from Sāmarrā for Syrian territory. Ibn Ṭulūn decided to await the caliph at Damascus and to conduct him triumphantly back to al-Qaṭā’i. There he would find a palace and a great mosque whose stature and luxury would rival those of the vast official buildings in Sāmarrā. But al-Muwaffaq, discovering his brother’s scheme, despatched a contingent led by Ishaq ibn Kundāj, the governor of Mawṣil, who was able to defeat the officers escorting al-Mu‘tamid at al-Ḥaditha on the Euphrates and to force the caliph’s return to Sāmarrā in Sha‘bān 269/February 883. Al-Muwaffaq named Ibn Kundāj governor of Syria and Egypt, a post he would never take up.

By achieving sole mastery over Egypt and extending his power in Syria up to the Byzantine frontier, Ibn Ṭulūn had fulfilled his first two objectives. He endured the failure to achieve his third and most ambitious goal: to install on the shores of the Nile the ‘Abbāsid dynasty, which in a prosperous and peaceful setting would regain its original glory. But he tenaciously refused to abandon his hopes. Ibn Ṭulūn had the governor of Damascus convene the *qādis*, *faqīhs* and *sharīfs* of all Ṭulūnid territories and assemble them in a congress most probably held in the glorious Umayyad Mosque. The Egyptian delegation, comprising nine individuals of premier rank and an entourage of less distinguished persons, was headed by Bakkār ibn Quṭayba. This man was an Iraqi Ḥanafī with an austere demeanor of high reputation who had served as *qāḍī* of Egypt since 248/862–863. *Khuṭbas* were pronounced from all the minbars of the principality, luridly depicting the disarray and disgrace of the Caliph al-Mu‘tamid who languished, confined as a prisoner, and the treason of Abū Aḥmad al-Muwaffaq who had defied the conditions of his *bay‘a* or oath of loyalty that he had sworn to his brother. Before these senior authorities on Islam assembled in Damascus during the spring of 269/883, Ibn Ṭulūn demanded that they proclaim the jihād against al-Muwaffaq and thereby obliged the ‘umma’ to deny its pledge of his enthronement. He managed to obtain a general agreement among the participants, but the *qāḍī* Bakkār, with the support of two Egyptians, refused to pronounce it formally since he claimed to be insufficiently informed. In fact, even despite the texts’ silence on this issue, the obligation of jihād could not be invoked in a conflict among Sunnīs, since the dispute did not weaken the capacity of the *Dār al-Islām* to confront non-Muslims or

heretics. Thus it was al-Muwaffaq rather than al-Mu'tamid who defended, arms in hand, public order in Iraq. Ibn Tūlūn, so close to his goal, had failed once again.

However, the convention of so large a body of senior mosque functionaries and legal practitioners to attempt to reach a consensus on policy was an innovation, an act unique since the 'Abbāsīd Revolution. It is no coincidence that it was assembled at Damascus, for here under al-Mu'āwīya a tradition had been inaugurated of an exchange of opinions about the distribution of Muslim authority between the caliph and his advisors at the *jum'a*, which included women, that occurred every Friday at the conclusion of prayer. The public call for the views of civilians with regard to political matters rarely occurred in the eastern Arab world after 750. There were exceptions, at the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century on the occasion of the Caliph al-Qādir's denunciations of the Fāṭimids, and at the end of the sixth/twelfth century on the occasion of Caliph al-Nāṣir's desperate attempt to salvage the unity of Islam from the threat of its appropriation by non-Arab militarists.

Al-Muwaffaq, informed of the Damascus congress, ordered the proclamation from all 'Abbāsīd minbars of the following statement: "Almighty God, Confounder of a malediction that will promote the erosion of his power and denigrate his renown, make of him [Ibn Tūlūn] an example for those who will come after, for You will not permit the Scheme of Corrupters to succeed!"

Despite his previous triumphs, Ibn Tūlūn suffered an extremely onerous final year. He had appointed 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Faṭḥ with authority over Aleppo in place of Lu'lu', who, on the side of al-Muwaffaq, fought brilliantly against the Zanj. Ibn Tūlūn wished to drive Yazmān from Tarsus, and placed the city under siege in the autumn of 270/883. Yazmān diverted part of the Baradān River, inundating the Egyptian camp. Ibn Tūlūn retreated to Adana and then Massissa. There he became ill and was taken back to Egypt in a wheeled vehicle (*ajala*), a remarkable medium of transport for the period, arriving at Fustāt in a serious condition at the end of the year 883. He gave orders for the imprisonment of Bakkār and the verification of the *qāḍī*'s accounts. This individual was responsible for managing the assets of widows and orphans and controlling the charitable trusts (*awqāf*) as well as the striking of coinage. Ibn Tūlūn named a new judge, Muḥammad ibn Shādhān al-Jawharī, and conferred supervision over the *awqāf* or *hubus* upon the prefect of police, Saray ibn Sahl. Finding Bakkār culpable of no embezzlement since he had scrupulously accounted for all the sums that Ibn Tūlūn had remitted to him over fifteen years, Ibn Tūlūn ordered his release. But the aging *qāḍī*, now gravely ill himself, had no desire to leave his prison cell. Ibn Tūlūn's condition worsened. Muslims, Christians and Jews, including women and children, converged separately

upon the flank of the Muqaṭṭam to implore God to save him. He died in Fuṣṭāṭ on the tenth of Dhu'l-Qa'da 270/10 May 884, eleven-and-a-half months after the congress of Damascus, and less than sixteen solar years after his solemn entry into the city.

The government of Egypt by Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn was a pivotal act that affected the history of Egypt for centuries to come. For the first time in the Islamic world a Turkish general created an autonomous dynasty that was solidly anchored in a province. He appropriated the limited authority delegated to him by the caliph as an appanage holder in order to realize its full potential. He did so less for military purposes than for an intelligent manipulation of politics in the Arab east. He remained loyal, and Ṭulūnid coins that were struck at Fuṣṭāṭ, Ramla, Aleppo, Antioch and probably Damascus, bore the caliph's name. He administered a province which, despite the period's indistinct grasp of the Orient's ancient past, exhibited many pharaonic manifestations attesting to the extreme antiquity of its civilization, comparable with that of Mesopotamia. His amirate's most notable characteristic was the quality of relations it maintained with Christians and Jews, and the position held by Jerusalem. Under the Ṭulūnids, Syro-Egyptian territory was deeply imbued with the concept of an extraordinary role devolving upon Jerusalem in Islam as al-Quds, Bayt al-Maqdis or Bayt al-Muqaddas, "the House of Holiness," the seat of the Last Judgment, the Gate to Paradise for Muslims, as well as for Jews and Christians. In the popular conscience, this concept established a bond between the three monotheistic religions. If Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn was interred on the slope of the Muqaṭṭam, 'Īsā ibn Mūsā al-Nāshārī and Takīn were laid to rest in Jerusalem in 910 and 933, as were their Ikhshīdīd successors and Kāfūr. To honor the great general and governor of Syria, Anūshtakīn al-Dizbīrī, who died in 433/1042, the Fāṭimid Dynasty had his remains solemnly conveyed from Aleppo to Jerusalem in 448/1056–57.

During the reign of Ibn Ṭulūn, Theodore, Patriarch of Jerusalem, praised him for his benevolent exercise of power. According to Moshe Gil, it is possible that a Christian had been appointed governor of Ramla.⁵ The situation began to change in the fourth/tenth century, after the fall of the Ṭulūnids. Conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem multiplied, with Jews occasionally taking the Muslims' side. Especially after 960, when the Byzantines were defeating Muslims in Cilicia and northern Syria and had regained Cyprus and Crete, Muslim antipathy toward Christians erupted in Antioch and Fuṣṭāṭ. In 355/966, the Patriarch of Jerusalem was executed by the Kāfūrīd governor. Conditions became graver still at the outset of the fifth/eleventh century, when the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Ḥākīm, alert to the rancor of Sunnis in Fuṣṭāṭ and seeking to force his vision of religious unity

⁵ Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099* (Cambridge, 1992), 348.

on his subjects whether they wished it or not, severely persecuted Christians and Jews. He changed his attitude prior to his death, and permitted the return of Muslim converts to their former religion, restoring a portion of their confiscated possessions. The *Dhimmi*'s condition revived so rapidly that their restored status provoked a reaction among the 'Abbāsid Sunnis in Baghdād, less tolerant than their counterparts in Fustāt. Indeed, a substantial portion of the wealth generated in Egypt and Syria could have been produced only because of the harmonious division of economic activities among the diverse communities.

Between Iraq, progressively more oriented toward Iran, and al-Andalus, confronted by militant Christian chivalry, Ibn Ṭūlūn had created a new zone of power facing Constantinople in the eastern Mediterranean. The abortive attempt by his son al-'Abbās, despite its failure, substantiated the inclusion of Libya and Ifriqiya within the southern region of the central Mediterranean. In the future, either Egypt would penetrate north Africa or, conversely, there would be an invasion of Egypt from the west. Ibn Ṭūlūn contributed to a process that, over the course of several centuries, separated the former Byzantine lands once again. Egypt, Syria, western Jazīra, and Cilicia were divided from the former Sassanid territories of Iraq and Iran – all of which Islam had sought definitively to unite during the first/seventh century.

For this grandson of a nomad from the steppes of central Asia, founding a new capital between the pyramids and the Muqattam that could rival Baghdād accomplished a grandiose ambition. From his perspective, Ibn Ṭūlūn had fulfilled the essential objective of the Arab conquest: he had reunited immense regions, diverse ethnic groups, venerable religions, and complementary economies to form a new urban-based civilization that was viable without being standardized, and was ready to accommodate the harmonious integration of its identities and differences.

Following the death of Ibn Ṭūlūn in 270/884, his son Khumārawayh, who was born in Sāmarrā in 250/864, succeeded him without requesting the caliph's endorsement. His brother al-'Abbās was executed, quite probably by his order, immediately before his assumption of power. This was the first time in 'Abbāsid history with regard to the government of so large and rich a territory that a *wālī*, whose legitimacy derived from the caliph who had designated him, was succeeded openly by an amir who claimed his legitimacy by inheritance. Khumārawayh's designation by his father as his successor had rendered any caliphal confirmation irrelevant in his eyes. Moreover, Ibn Ṭūlūn had left 10,000,000 dinārs in the public treasury, a sum that facilitated the peaceful accession of his son.

But the regent al-Muwaffaq elected to take advantage of the transition to restore Egypt and Syria within the 'Abbāsid orbit, and in particular to recoup unpaid tribute. He had been encouraged to pursue this goal by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī, the loyal Ṭūlūnid general who none-

theless betrayed the dynasty. Several contingents commanded by Iṣḥāq ibn Kundāj and Muḥammad ibn Abī'l-Sāj entered Syria where they were joined by the army of Aḥmad ibn al-Muwaffaq, the future al-Mu'taḍid. At the Battle of the Mills in Palestine during 271/winter 885, Ibn al-Muwaffaq and Khumārawayh took flight in opposite directions. But Sa'd ibn Aysar, the Tūlūnid commander, held his composure and won the battle. In consequence of his ignominious performance, Khumārawayh was thereafter continually obliged to prove his personal bravery to an ever-greater extent. He created a multi-ethnic army in which alongside the Turks served blacks, Iranians, Greeks and an elite bodyguard, *al-mukhtaṣṣ*. This last unit was recruited from the most obstreperous Bedouin of the Delta and was augmented by black slaves. Its loyalty to the amīr was unquestioned.

Khumārawayh conferred the custodianship of finances on the family of al-Mādhara'i, who would perform the same function under the Ikshidids. He regained the support of Ibn Kundāj and Ibn Abī'l-Sāj, took control over most of the Jazīra and compelled Yazmān, master of Tarsus, to acknowledge him as suzerain. His domain thus exceeded his father's. In 273/886, a peace treaty was concluded between Khumārawayh and al-Muwaffaq, who agreed to recognize the Tūlūnids' right to govern Syria and Egypt for thirty years. To improve relations between Egypt and Syria, Khumārawayh improved the roadway through the pass (*'aqaba*) that permitted entry to the Jordanian plateau from Ayla.

Upon al-Muwaffaq's demise in 278/spring 892, al-Mu'tamid proceeded to Baghdād to exercise his caliphal authority. But al-Muwaffaq's son, Aḥmad al-Mu'taḍid, continued to hold power. Al-Mu'tamid died in 279/autumn 892. Al-Mufawwad, his son and heir-designate, who had served as governor of the west, was readily eliminated by al-Mu'taḍid billāh. The new caliph recognized the Ṣaffārids in Khurāsān as sovereign in Fars and later Rayy, and subsequently the Ṣāmānids in Transoxiana after 900. With no hope of vanquishing Khumārawayh militarily, al-Mu'taḍid was obliged to tolerate Tūlūnid autonomy in Egypt, Syria and along the Anatolian frontier. Concentrating his efforts henceforth on Iraq and its periphery, he reoccupied Isfahān in western Iran, and drove Ibn al-Shaykh from Mawṣil. A large portion of the eastern Jazīra was regained from Khumārawayh.

A new accord was reached with the caliph in Rabī' I 280/spring 893. Khumārawayh and his descendants received for three decades the right to direct Friday prayer (*al-ṣalāt*), to levy the land tax (*al-kharāj*), and to appoint judges and civil/fiscal administrators (*al-quḍā' wa jāmi' al-a'māl*) for their amirate, which now extended from Hit on the Euphrates to Barka in Libya. The accord decreed as compensation to the 'Abbāsīd caliph an annual tribute of 200,000 dinārs cumulatively calculated for those previous years in which none had been turned over, and 300,000 dinārs per annum for future years. Khumārawayh surrendered the Diyār Rabī'a and the Diyār

Muḍar surrounding Rāfiqa. The caliphal workshops for fine textiles (*ṭirāz*) in Fustāt and Alexandria were to continue production for the 'Abbāsid caliph.

In 272/892, the Caliph al-Mu'taḍid married Qaṭr al-Nadā, "Dew Drop," Khumārawayh's daughter. He provided her with a dower of 1,000,000 dinārs, a wedding gift that was considered the most sumptuous in medieval Arab history. Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Jawharī Ibn al-Jaṣṣās, broker in jewelry to Khumārawayh's *ḥarīm*, negotiated Qaṭr al-Nadā's marriage to the caliph. Having held her gems on deposit, he enriched himself upon the princess's death, which occurred shortly afterwards, and was forced to pay a fine of several million dinārs. He died much later in 315/927.

Khumārawayh now imagined himself almost as the caliph's equal. Moreover, one of the greatest and quintessentially Arab poets of the age, Abū 'Ubāda al-Buḥturī, who had been an intimate of every caliph from al-Mutawakkil to al-Mu'taḍid, entered into a close relationship with him in 279/892. In contrast with the demeanor of numerous *ghulāms* and mamlūks later on, the inclination of Ibn Ṭulūn and his son toward Arab civilization and literature was immediate and profound.

Nonetheless, the luxury and dissipation indulged in by Khumārawayh ultimately overwhelmed him, and he was assassinated in Damascus in Dhu'l-Qa'da 282/January–February 896 by his court eunuchs, who had taken advantage of his absence to satisfy the insatiable sexual appetites of his harem women. He left an empty treasury, the dinār having lost a third of its value as a result of his excessive prodigality. He had lived in luxury, and was rumored never to have mounted the same horse twice.

The decline of the dynasty accelerated under the rule of his two sons, Jaysh and Hārūn. Abū'l-'Asākir Jaysh ibn Khumārawayh was only fourteen when he acceded in 282/early 896, but he was already a drunkard. He put to death his uncle, Muḍar ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn, under the lash. Several months later, in 283/July 896, the *faqih*s and the *qādis* of the realm declared his deposition and he died in prison.

Confronting the decadent Ṭulūnid amirate, the 'Abbāsid regime regained a measure of its former authority. Al-Mu'taḍid, caliph after 279/spring 892, sealed the definitive return of the caliphate to Baghdad. He was served as vizier by 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Sulaymān ibn Wahb, and after his death in 288/901 by his son al-Qāsim. The faithful Badr al-Mu'taḍidī was in command of the army. The Shi'ī family of the Banu'l-Furāt, followed by the Sunnī house of the Banu'l-Jarrāh, administered the taxes of Iraq. Al-Mu'taḍid, named caliph from 278/June 892, died in 289/902; his reign was relatively brief but effective. The caliphate nonetheless was forced to deal with a new threat more terrible than it had faced from the Zanj: the Carmatian revolt.

Around 261/874 a group of Ismā'ilis in the *sawad* of Kūfa gathered behind a missionary, Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ, who preached the resumption of a

radical assault on the urban civilization of the ‘Abbāsids. The Pilgrimage was denounced as a resurgence of Meccan idolatry focused on the Black Stone of the Ka‘ba, an idolatry that Muḥammad himself had formerly attacked. The enrichment of urban elites and the impoverishment of peasants and Bedouin were imputed to a deviation from Islamic doctrine that was linked to the abandonment of the legitimate political primacy of the descendants of ‘Alī and Fāṭima. After 284/897 the Carmatian revolt directly threatened ‘Abbāsīd power in lower Iraq, the *sawad* of Kūfa, and subsequently in Baḥrayn. The rebels inflicted a serious defeat on the ‘Abbāsids in 287/900. The movement endorsed the Fāṭimid family of ‘Ubayd Allāh, which depicted itself as issuing from the Ḥusaynid ‘Alid Sharīfs who derived from the seventh Imām Ismā‘il, son of Ja‘far al-Šādiq. The Fāṭimids settled first in Syria, at Salamiyya at the edge of the steppe traversed by the tribes that had converted to Carmatianism. In 286/899, they broke away from the power center established by the Carmatians at al-Aḥsā’ in Baḥrayn on the southeastern Gulf.⁶ Because their existence was threatened in Salamiyya, they later passed by stealth through Egypt to settle anonymously in southern Ifriqiya, modern Tunisia, where they set up a counter-caliphate in opposition to the Aghlabids in 297/909–10.

Throughout the final years of the third/ninth century the Carmatians harassed the towns, zones of sedentary agriculture and the caravan traffic in the Gulf, lower Iraq and Syria. Every governor of a Muslim province had to guarantee its security. The Carmatians, who quite probably prayed for a time toward Jerusalem, now launched an expedition into Syria. In 289/902, having defeated near Raqqā Ṭūlūnid troops under the command of Ṭuġh ibn Juff, governor of Damascus, the Carmatians besieged the Syrian capital and refused to desist until they were paid tribute. After their leader, Šāḥib al-Nāqa, was killed, a new chief, al-Ḥusayn Šāḥib al-Shāma, induced them to ravage Ḥomṣ, Ḥamā, Ba‘labakk, Ma‘arrat al-Nu‘mān, and Salamiyya, where they massacred ‘Ubayd Allāh’s family. Only at Aleppo were they finally brought to bay. The impotence of the Ṭūlūnid Dynasty prevented the imposition of any measure to preserve order. From the ‘Abbāsīd perspective, Syria’s defense depended on the replacement of the Ṭūlūnids. A dynamic response was imperative.

Following the Carmatians’ ravages in Syria, the Caliph al-Muktafi dispatched Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Kātib to Ḥomṣ. The ‘Abbāsīd navy won out over the Ṭūlūnid fleet stationed at Dumyāt and Tinnīs. Subsequently, an ‘Abbāsīd squadron over which al-Muktafi had placed the same

⁶ See Farhad Daftary, “A Major Schism in the early Ismā‘īlī Movement,” *SI*, 77 (1993), 123–39, which presents the current state of the question, and bibliography. For an alternate point of view see Thierry Bianquis, “L’Espace ismailien et le régime du vizir militaire en Égypte, le Yémen sulayhīde et l’Ifriqiya zirīde,” in J.-C. Garcin (ed.), *Clio, États, sociétés et cultures du monde musulman médiéval* (Paris, 1995), 81–117.

Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān, crushed the Carmatian force at Raqqa in Muḥarram 291/on November 29, 903. The senior Carmatian leaders were executed in Baghdād two months later. After the fall of the Tūlūnids in 293/906, the Kalb tribe, under the Carmatian Abū Ghānim Naṣr, attacked Damascus after pillaging Bosra, Der'a, and Tiberiad. Naṣr was ultimately killed and Carmatian operations in later years continued at the expense of the Euphrates valley.

Abū Mūsā Hārūn ibn Khumārawayh had succeeded his brother Jaysh while still under the age of fourteen. His uncle, Rabī'a ibn Aḥmad ibn Tūlūn, and his soldiers had rebelled in Alexandria with Berber support. Defeated and captured, Rabī'a was executed by lashing in Fuṣṭāṭ in Sha'bān 284/autumn 897. Since Tūlūnid debility was obvious, the 'Abbāsīd caliphate intervened in Cilicia to resurrect its administration over the Thughūr and the Jazīra. Henceforth, it exacted an annual tribute of 450,000 dinārs.

Two other sons of Aḥmad ibn Tūlūn, 'Alī and Shaybān, united against their nephew Hārūn and killed him while he was drunk in Ṣafar 292/December 904. He was only twenty-two, but had reigned for almost nine years. Shaybān assumed power and returned to Fuṣṭāṭ. Ṭughj ibn Juff, in consort with other officers, revolted in the aftermath of Hārūn's murder, and appealed to Muḥammad Sulaymān, a former secretary (*kātib*) of Lu'lu', Ibn Tūlūn's *ghulam*. They escorted Muḥammad to Fuṣṭāṭ. In Ṣafar 292/January 905, Shaybān abandoned his soldiers by night. Fuṣṭāṭ had to be surrendered to the victorious 'Abbāsīd troops who razed al-Qaṭā'i' to the ground, with the exception of Ibn Tūlūn's great mosque. The destructive rage of the 'Abbāsīd soldiers is doubtlessly explained by the affluence of the nouveaux riches who had erected the recent districts of Fuṣṭāṭ while Baghdād had already begun its decline. 'Isa ibn Muḥammad al-Nūsharī was appointed governor of Egypt.

At the conclusion of his discussion of the Tūlūnids, Maqrīzī inserts a nostalgic text evoking their splendid military processions and the luxury that Fuṣṭāṭ had enjoyed under their patronage.⁷ The district of al-Qaṭā'i', before its second destruction under al-Mustanṣir, would contain tens of thousands of houses, gardens and orchards.

⁷ See G. Wiet, *L'Égypte arabe*, vol. 4 of Gabriel Hanotaux (ed.), *Histoire de la nation égyptienne* (Paris, 1937) 80–179, and Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* (Cairo, 1270 AH), 1, 612: "During the night of the Fitr in the year 292/July 905, its events recalled how this evening was celebrated under the Tūlūnids: parades, handsome uniforms, magnificent arms, multicolored banners, flags streaming, numerous cavalry, the sound of trumpets, rolling of drums. The secretary Muḥammad ibn Abī Ya'qūb fell asleep convinced that the realm, the reign and the elegance had disappeared [from Egypt] along with the House of Tūlūn. After the total destruction of the district of al-Qaṭā'i' under al-Mustanṣir, Abū'l-Khaṭṭāb ibn Daḥiyya wrote that the number of dwellings that had vanished then counted more than 100,000 structures, each surrounded by gardens and orchards."

The Ikhshīd-Kāfūrīd regime

From 292/905 to 323/935, after the collapse of the Ṭulūnids and before the entrenchment of al-Ikhshīd at Fuṣṭāṭ, Egypt was officially under the direct control of the ‘Abbāsids in Baghdād. The country suffered a continuous series of disorders. Insecurity was so rampant that in 300/912, ‘Isā ibn Muḥammad al-Nūsharī had to lock the Mosque of ‘Amr except for prayer hours because the *bayt al-māl*, or public treasury, had been deposited there. Indeed, the mosque was the site for reconstituting the *diwān al-māl* under the direction of the fiscal supervisor, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Mādhara’ī. This public building was also the locale for auctioning the tax-farms and thus housed considerable sums. Probably for the same reason of insecurity, the Festival Prayer, which heretofore had been celebrated in the Muṣallā outside the town, was for the first time, at the outset of the fourth Hijra century, recited at the Mosque of ‘Amr.

The cause of such widespread unease was the perennial difficulty of paying the soldiers, since the tribute now left the country for Iraq. Moreover, the troops pillaged the property of civilians, who requested that their barracks be transferred to Giza on the western shore of the Nile, ostensibly to confront the principal danger, that of an attack by the Berber nomads or the Fāṭimid armies. Some Berbers had been incorporated into the ‘Abbāsīd army stationed in Egypt. Disputes sporadically erupted between different military corps, strife that presaged the fundamental hostility between “easterners” and “westerners” that would so compromise the effectiveness of the Fāṭimid army. Incapable of guaranteeing the soldiers’ regular stipends, the regime resolved upon apportioning *iqṭā’āt* from Egypt’s agrarian land. These were fiscal districts from which the *kharāj* was allotted to a particular officer who then paid and equipped his soldiers with the revenues. Certain secretaries and viziers were also granted *iqṭā’āt* to guarantee the sums they forwarded to the state diwāns. They also managed to amass fortunes exceeding several hundred thousand dinārs, if not millions. The regime routinely tapped these fortunes through fines and confiscations to restore monies to the public treasury that should never have been removed from it. To escape such reprisals, the financiers resorted to placing their estates in pious trusts (*awqāf*), protecting them in the name of divine charity against the bureaucrats’ malevolence. These two institutions – the *iqṭā’āt* and the *awqāf* – augmented the revenues withdrawn from the countryside on behalf of the urban populace, leaving no medium available for the development of agrarian capitalism. They prevented the free movement of the economy and paralyzed the state’s capacity to act.

It is pointless to list in detail events whose sequence is difficult to reconstruct. Sources such as al-Kindī and Ibn al-Athīr differ on the number

of names and the dates of governors after 905.⁸ Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān stepped down on behalf of a governor appointed from Baghdād. 'Isā ibn Mūsā (or ibn Muḥammad) al-Nūsharī, compelled to seek refuge in Alexandria, abandoned Fustāt to a rebel named Ibrāhīm al-Khalanjī. Aḥmad Kayghalagh or Kayghulugh, a brilliant officer sent from Baghdād against this individual, was defeated and departed to combat the Byzantines successfully on the Cilician frontier. Al-Khalanjī recruited new soldiers from the jails of Fustāt.

In 293/905–06, the Caliph al-Muktafi decided to take the field himself against Egypt but, upon his arrival at Takrit he learned that al-Khalanjī was being sent to him as a prisoner and he returned to his palace. 'Isā al-Nūsharī subsequently had to deal with a pro-Tūlūnid rebellion instigated by Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Khalij. This insurrection brought on pillaging and destruction in Fustāt and its environs, aggravated by a serious food shortage. The Aghlabid Ziyādat Allāh then arrived at Fustāt in 297/May 909, having been forced from his amirate by the Fāṭimids. He found a sparse reception and departed for Baghdād, but died in Palestine in 912 before he could prepare for an attempt at reconquering his principality.

Al-Nūsharī died in 297/May 910 and was interred in Jerusalem. He was replaced by Takīn, a Turkish freedman. In 301/913–14, the policy of bestowing appanages was temporarily resumed in Baghdād. Al-Muqtadir's son, Abu'l-'Abbās, the future al-Rāḍī billāh, at the age of four received north Africa, which in reality was occupied by the Fāṭimids, and Egypt over which he delegated his authority to Takīn. This individual had to deal with the first Fāṭimid attack in 914. A new prefect, Dhakā al-A'war, the One-Eyed, succeeded Takīn at the beginning of 915. The general Mu'nis, having arrived from Iraq, was victorious against the Fāṭimid armies, for which he merited the *laqab* of al-Muẓaffar. Dhakā and his son, each named al-Muẓaffar as well, proceeded to restore Alexandria in 916. Dhakā died of an illness during the second Fāṭimid invasion in September 919. The Fāṭimids' presence induced Takīn to return in January 920. Mu'nis came back himself in May of 920 with 3,000 men and proved victorious once again in June 921. He dismissed Takīn and named Hilāl, who was supplanted by Aḥmad ibn Kayghulugh in July 923. This Aḥmad was also a brilliant officer but he was compelled to confront a revolt by his soldiers, who had not been paid.

Takīn was appointed governor for a third time in April 924. Insecurity was now so widespread that he performed his prayers in the governor's palace, since the mosques of 'Amr and al-'Askar were too dangerous. Takīn died in March 933 and was buried in Jerusalem. His son Muḥammad was driven out by the troops. A former protégé of Takīn, Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj,

⁸ See the attempt to construct a coherent summary by Wiet, *L'Égypte arabe*, 111–36, and the contrasting listings of these individuals in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

was appointed his successor but could not assume his office since it had been preempted by Aḥmad ibn Kayghulugh. The army split into factions, one supporting Ibn Kayghulugh, the other endorsing Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj. Ibn Kayghulugh ultimately stepped down, to be replaced by Ibn Ṭughj who had been appointed a second time; by conducting an amphibious operation he had succeeded in forcing his rival's submission. This period was extremely unsettled because of external events, most notably the Carmatian robbery of the Ka'ba Black Stone of Mecca in January 930 and the struggle in Baghdād between Mu'nis and the Caliphs. Al-Qāhir had Mu'nis put to death in April 934.

Alongside the military governors, the civilian tax administrators played an important role. Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn al-Mādhārā'i, known as Abū Zunbūr, served as director of finances in Egypt and later in Syria, following the reconquest. Dismissed and recalled to Baghdād in 304/916, he became the new financial director in Egypt in 306/919. Dismissed once again in 310/922, he had to pay an enormous fine of 5,000,000 dirhams. In 313/926, he appeared in Fustāt holding the same fiscal office for Egypt and Syria. He died in 917/929. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Mādhārā'i, who lived from 258/871 to 345/957, was serving as vizier to Hārūn ibn Khumārawayh in 283/890. After the dynasty's fall, he was exiled to Baghdād from 293 to 301/905 to 913. In 304/916 he returned to Egypt as director of finances. He placed the Birkat al-Ḥabash and Suyūṭ in *waqf* to support the great mosque, the first documented example of agrarian land listed in such a charitable trust. Subsequently, he returned to private life and accumulated wealth. Highly pious, he went on the Pilgrimage every year from 301/914 to 322/934. In 318/930, he again took over the office of financial director in Egypt and held it until Takīn's death in 321/933. The Mādhārā'is would prevail in confrontation with Muḥammad ibn Takīn in 322/934.

The power vacuum of this period invited hostile activities. The Fātimid Imāms had established themselves in Ifriqiya and sought to occupy affluent Egypt in order to set up a power base there more proximate to their 'Abbāsid enemies. As previously noted, they had attempted to conquer the country three times. In 301/914–15, an initial expedition led by the son of Imām al-Mahdī,⁹ Abu'l-Qāsim, the future Caliph al-Qā'im bi-Amr Allāh, succeeded in occupying Alexandria but failed to take Fustāt. Unable to confront Mu'nis, the Fātimids retreated to Ifriqiya. In 919–21/307–09, a second expedition was organized under the same commander. Alexandria and the Fayyūm were occupied but the Fātimid fleet met disaster at Rosetta

⁹ For an account of al-Mahdī's trip to Africa via Fustāt in 903–4, see A. Fu'ad Sayyid, "Nuṣūṣ da'ī'a min Akhbār Miṣr li'l-Musabbiḥi," *Al* 27 (1981), 7–8, Arabic section. He was accompanied by his son, al-Qā'im, and was disguised as a merchant. He had considered proceeding directly to Yemen but, fearing exposure, he traveled west and crossed the Nile at the Miṣr bridge.

and Mu'nis proved victorious at Fustāṭ. The Fāṭimids called in vain upon the eastern Shi'is to rebel on behalf of the dynasty that descended from 'Alī and Fāṭima. The third campaign, organized by al-Mahdī, but launched after his death in 323/935 by al-Qā'im, utilized troops based in Ifriqiya and Barqa. A Berber contingent took over Rawḍa Island and burned its arsenal. Al-Ikhshid, who had just arrived in Egypt, was thus immediately compelled to confront the Fāṭimid invasion. 'Alī ibn Badr and Bajkam, admirals of the Ikhshidid fleet, and al-Ḥabashī, commandant of the Alexandria garrison, turned traitors together and placed themselves under al-Qā'im's orders. He sent Zaydān and 'Amīr al-Majnūn to join them. In Jumādā I 324/April 936, the Kutāma tribe occupied Alexandria for the third time in fewer than twenty years. However, Ibn Ṭughj regained the city and the Fāṭimid army withdrew to Barka. There would be no more significant Fāṭimid forays against Egypt before the end of Ikhshidid authority, following Kāfūr's death.

Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj Abū Bakr al-Ikhshid was born in Baghdād in 268/882 and died in 334/946 at sixty-four years of age. Son of a Tūlūnid officer who originated from Farghāna, Muḥammad grew up in Tūlūnid territory. Following the dynasty's fall, he and his father were imprisoned in Baghdād in 292/905, but were released a year later. He was appointed governor of Palestine/Ramla in 316/928 and subsequently of Damascus in 319/931. Abu'l-Faṭḥ al-Faḍl ibn Ḥinzāba, the son of Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb Ja'far ibn al-Furāt, the supervisor of property taxes in the east and, under al-Rāḍī, fiscal inspector of Egypt and Syria, had given his daughter in marriage to the son of Ibn Rā'iq. He was favorably disposed toward Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj, who was designated as governor of Egypt in 321/933 but was not installed until 323/summer 935. In 327/939, Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj obtained from the Caliph al-Rāḍī confirmation of his appointment as military and fiscal governor, receiving the *laqab* of *al-Ikhshid* or "servant," a princely title from Farghāna.

After three decades of costly disorders in an Egypt administered by appointed governors, the caliphate had reached the conclusion that only an autonomous prince who, along with his descendants, assumed personal responsibility for this province, would be capable of defending it effectively against the Fāṭimids. And in fact, no significant incursion would occur over the thirty-two years intervening between the Fāṭimid defeat of 324/936 and Kāfūr's death in 357/968.

Al-Mādhara'i, the director of finances in Egypt, regarded himself as all-powerful and sought to prevent al-Ikhshid from assuming his post, but his troops abandoned him and rallied to the new governor. Al-Mādhara'i had to refund his fortune to the Treasury. Confined in prison until 327/939, he was released to become regent for Ūnūjūr, al-Ikhshid's son. Imprisoned once again in 335/946, he was set free by Kāfūr and allowed to resume his private life until his death in 345/957.

According to Ibn Saʿīd, Ibn Ṭughj was clearly less cultivated than Ibn Ṭūlūn, whom he nonetheless strove to imitate. He was a choleric and gluttonous man, yet shrewd and inclined toward avarice. Having newly arrived at riches, he had experienced prison life and poverty. He had a special passion for perfumes; in Damascus, his house wafted its fragrance throughout the center of the town. He appreciated beautiful objects. The sources indicate moreover that in this period consumer fashions in Fustāt among the upper classes were marked by a taste for luxury that inclined them to prefer imported commodities at high prices over local products that were too readily available. This proclivity induced Egyptian artisans to refine the style of their commodities and to draw their inspiration from foreign craft techniques and aesthetic forms.

Al-Ikhshīd, as previously noted, had immediately to confront a Fāṭimid invasion. His victory bolstered his authority over Egypt. Following 325/936–37, al-Ikhshīd occupied Syria as far as Aleppo. Like Ibn Ṭūlūn he relied on the Banū Kilāb and selected one of them as amīr of Northern Syria. His authority was disputed by Baghdād, which supported Muḥammad ibn Rāʿīq in Syria and Palestine against him. However, a son of this individual, Muzāḥim ibn Muḥammad, had married one of al-Ikhshīd's daughters. In 327/938, al-Ikhshīd threatened to bestow another of his daughters in marriage on the Fāṭimid Imām al-Qāʿim and to have the *khutba* preached in his name. Ibn Rāʿīq, who had failed in his attempt to assume power in Baghdād, set himself up in Damascus and entered into conflict with al-Ikhshīd. He subsequently sought al-Ikhshīd's confirmation of his authority over Syria and Ramla, but the peace initiative of 328/940 came to nothing. Ibn Rāʿīq was killed in 330/942 at Mawṣil, and Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Saʿīd al-Ḥamdānī occupied Aleppo in 332/944 on behalf of the Amir of Mawṣil, Nāṣir al-Dawla.

In 332/944, the Caliph al-Muttaqī, the protégé of Nāṣir al-Dawla, proceeded to Raqqa. Al-Ikhshīd had reoccupied Damascus and driven al-Ḥusayn ibn Saʿīd from Aleppo, and agreed to meet him there. The Caliph refused to take up residence at Fustāt, but confirmed al-Ikhshīd's authority over Egypt, the Ḥijāz and Syria and returned to Baghdād. Sayf al-Dawla, al-Nāṣir's brother, then made his entry into Aleppo in 333/October 944 at the side of Abu'l-Faṭḥ ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd al-Kilābī. This leader of the Banū Kilāb had a brother, Abu'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad, who was then serving as governor of Aleppo, a post he had previously occupied himself on behalf of al-Ikhshīd. In 333–334/spring–autumn 945, al-Ikhshīd took the field against Sayf al-Dawla. Winning a victory at Qinnasrīn, he eventually signed a treaty with him.

A mutually recognized frontier would henceforth separate a Ḥamdānīd sphere of influence in northern Syria, comprising the *Jund* (military and fiscal province) of Qinnasrīn-Aleppo and the *Jund* of Ḥomṣ including ʿArqa

and Jūsiyya, from an Ikhshīd sphere of influence in the south, comprising the *Jund* of Damascus including Tripoli and Ba'labakk, the *Jund* of Tiberiad/Urdunn and the *Jund* of Ramla/Palestine. In addition, the amīr of Egypt pledged himself to pay an annual tribute in compensation for Ḥamdānīd abandonment of designs on Damascus. Sayf al-Dawla was to marry the daughter of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ṭughj, al-Ikhshīd's brother. The signed accord of 335/946 permitted the Caliph al-Mu'ti' to confirm the commander of Aleppo as amīr of northern Syria and his use of Sayf al-Dawla's *laqab*. Not having the same personal tie to the *ribāt* of Tarsus as had Ibn Ṭūlūn, al-Ikhshīd wisely renounced his claim to suzerainty over this region on behalf of the Ḥamdānīds. They would then assume the honor of confronting the Byzantines in Cilicia and would bear the expenses entailed by this war.¹⁰

Al-Ikhshīd was dismayed after his visit to the Caliph al-Muttaqī at Raqqa in Muḥarram 333/September 944, to whom he had offered his services in vain. He realized that he would have to abandon forever his plan to install the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate at Fuṣṭāṭ and his ambition for power over northern Syria and the frontier. These regions, tied to the Jazīra and Iraq, were thus threatened with disturbances as soon as Baghdād reasserted its claims of authority. They could not be controlled from Fuṣṭāṭ. Because of their proximity to the Byzantines, they were defended by well-equipped garrisons and thus posed the risk of offering a victorious officer the opportunity to mount an armed challenge against the central authority. Years later, Ibn Killis would counsel the Fāṭimīd Imām al-'Azīz in like fashion.

In Dhu'l-Ḥijja 335/July 946, al-Ikhshīd died in Damascus. The regional context was shifting. The Carmatian leader Abū Ṭāhir had died in 332/944; his nephew al-Ḥasan ibn al-A'ṣam succeeded him and restored the Black Stone to Mecca in 339/950. The Būyids, Imāmī Daylamite officers of Iranian culture who arrived from the mountains of the southern Caspian, had set up a group of allied familial principalities in Iran. They occupied Baghdād in 334/945 and subsequently took charge of the caliph's "protection," despite his stubborn commitment to Sunnism. Soon thereafter the Carmatians abandoned their traditional opposition to the 'Abbāsīds and agreed to hire their superb army out to the Caliph's new masters.

Ūnūjār succeeded his father and retained the black eunuch Abu'l-Misk Kāfūr as commander of his armies. Upon learning of al-Ikhshīd's death, Sayf al-Dawla immediately marched upon Damascus and then ventured into Palestine where Kāfūr defeated him. Sayf al-Dawla withdrew to Ḥomṣ and in the spring of 947 regrouped his troops with the 'Uqayl, Numayr, Kalb and Kilāb tribes. He made a foray down to Damascus and again suffered

¹⁰ On the confrontation between al-Ikhshīd and Sayf al-Dawla, there is a detailed summary in the article "Sayf al-Dawla," *El2*, IX, 1: 102a–110a.

defeat. Profiting from the absence of the Ikhshidid army in Syria, Ghabūn, governor of Ashmūnayn and Middle Egypt, revolted, and menaced Fustāt. He actually invaded the capital before he met his death in July of 947. In the autumn of 336/947, Sayf al-Dawla permanently occupied Aleppo. Kāfūr pursued the Ikhshidid policy of appeasement and negotiated terms with Sayf al-Dawla. The preceding treaty was reconfirmed but the Egyptians retained Damascus and no longer paid any tribute to the Ḥamdānids. This frontier between northern Syria, inclined toward Iraq, the Jazīra and Anatolia, and southern Syria, with ties to Egypt and Arabia, would remain intact almost continuously until the Mamlūk seizure of the province in 658/1260.

Throughout the remainder of his life, Sayf al-Dawla would no longer confront the Ikhshidids. The Egyptian state, now challenged on its western front by the Fāṭimids, resigned itself to the loss of northern Syria. It adhered to the sound principle of abandoning a peripheral province as less costly than maintaining an army on permanent war footing and less dangerous to the amīr's authority. The state would remain master over a vast territory, the traditional bulwark of Egypt comprising the Mediterranean coast from western Tripoli to Syrian Tripoli and the Red Sea all the way to Yemen. Al-Ikhshid's son thus preserved the essential foundations of his father's power and wealth, leaving to the Ḥamdānid amīr the expensive defense of the frontier against a rearmed Byzantium.

Following al-Ikhshid's death in 946, the black eunuch Kāfūr wielded real authority, even though he received the title of *Ustādh* only in 966 after the demise of 'Alī ibn al-Ikhshid. The historians have painted a highly contrasting portrait of him. They concur on his physical repulsiveness, the contradiction between his perfumed white camphor (*Kāfūr*) and his perfumed black musk (thus his kunya *Abu'l-Misk*) which evoked his name, and the dark hue of his skin and the stench he emitted according to his enemies. His gross figure, deformed and clumsy, effectively disguised his military ability, intelligence and political acumen. The Ikhshid had noticed when, as a little African boy in his service whose comrades had rushed to behold the arrival of exotic animals from Nubia in Fustāt, Kāfūr was unaffected, having eyes only for his master and ready to jump to any order he might give.

The texts also uniformly insist on Kāfūr's piety. He was more comfortable with the *'ulamā'* than with poets, as indicated by his sorry experience with al-Mutanabbī. This individual, the most eminent poet of the fourth/tenth century, had come to him when fortune turned against his glorious and rich protector, Sayf al-Dawla. There was more money to be had in Fustāt than in Aleppo. Yet the poet could not forgive the *Ustādh* for compelling him to render homage to a black eunuch, a former slave of pitiful countenance, while he had sung the praise of the most eminent Arab warriors.

Surrounded by religious men whom he showered with gifts, Kāfūr made

much of his constructing, in addition to a palace, a mosque in Giza and another on the Muqaṭṭam. However, this did not mean that he had relinquished his superstitions: he considered that a *jinn* or demon had once chased him from a house he had built at the Birkat Qārūn.

This was a difficult period. Kāfūr was suspicious of Ūnūjūr, who had once stood up to him. He recruited black soldiers, *al-kāfūriyya*, who engaged in street brawls with soldiers from the east, *al-lkhshidiyya*, who had been recruited previously. Egypt was struck by famines in 338/949 and 341/952, there was a devastating fire in Fustāt in 344/955, and yet another food shortfall and an earthquake in 343/955. These disasters were followed, after Ūnūjūr's death, by the extended and debilitating famine of 352–357/963–968. The grain shortages affected Fustāt ever more frequently and severely, providing an indication of overpopulation in a city still complacent from its copious supply under Ibn Tūlūn. Moreover, the dignity and honesty that characterized actions by the Qāḍi Bakkār in the third/ninth century were no longer apparent in the fourth/tenth. Accusations of embezzlement lodged against the *qāḍis* and their legal witnesses, predictable in an environment of easy money, multiplied in Fustāt. By contrast, they remained exceptional in a modest city like Damascus, more provincial in character and subject to closer moral scrutiny. Richly detailed texts that deal with the *qāḍis* have been preserved which allow a clearer understanding of the changes affecting a society undergoing rapid urbanization and enrichment. A separate and more specifically focused chapter would be necessary to treat the judiciary and religious establishment in Egypt and Syria during this century. Upon the demise of his brother Ūnūjūr in 349/961, 'Alī ibn al-lkhshid officially succeeded him. But Kāfūr retained his grip on real power.

From 338/950, a Nubian incursion reached the oases, and in 343/March 956 a more serious invasion of Aswān and its environs subjected the region to massacres, pillage and capture of prisoners. This invasion was probably supported covertly by the Fāṭimids. In reprisal, Kāfūr despatched an expedition of extermination into Nubia 200 km south of Aswān. Nonetheless, a second Nubian invasion of Egypt occurred in 351–352/963. To the west and north, infiltrations of Berber nomads were reported in the Delta and the Oases. To the northeast, the Bedouin Arabs of the Sulaym, 'Uqayl, Ṭayy, and Kalb tribes were becoming ever more aggressive in southern and central Syria. The Carmatians also reappeared in the region, henceforth collecting an annual tribute and reinforcing their power around Damascus and throughout Palestine. In the overpopulated cities, tensions between religious communities led to grave incidents. Between 348/960 and 351/963, the lkhshidid navy was destroyed by the Byzantine fleet. This catastrophe provoked support for a jihād in Egypt, accompanied by spontaneous assaults on Christians by Muslims. The Melkite Christians, aroused by the Byzantine

resumption of the offensive in Cilicia, Cyprus and Crete, took an opposing stand to the Jacobite Coptic Christians who were always hostile toward Constantinople.

A second danger, embedded within the ruling system, threatened Kāfūrīd power. Professional soldiers, either slave or freeborn, increasingly interfered with the administrative process. The increase in expropriations from the tax yield and the collaboration between military holders of *iqṭāʿ* and civilian financiers assigned tax collection – both combined to weaken the state. In the absence of a clear legitimizing principle – designation or recognition by the ‘Abbāsid caliph, or birthright – the incessant struggles for political power by senior officers presaged Mamlūk Egypt. Since the strong man, Kāfūr, was a black eunuch without issue, his demise could only set off a major crisis. By contrast, the familial and dynastic rationale for succession among the Daylamite Būyids in Iraq and Iran, or among the Hamdānids who were Arabs but strongly influenced by the Kurds of Jazīra and Northern Syria, foreshadowed the Ayyūbid period. In neither case was Arab Sunnī opinion consulted to establish a common rule for political behavior. The attempt by Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn at Damascus in 269/883 to appeal via notables to civil public opinion would have no sequel.

Upon the death of ‘Alī ibn al-Ikhshīd in 355/January 966, Abu’l-Misk Kāfūr succeeded him without making the pretense of protecting a prince of the family. Since Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī was too young, at the age of ten, to rule, Kāfūr received an official diploma from the caliph in Baghdād and assumed the title of *‘Ustādh* or “Master,” due to his eunuch status. During this period of grave financial crisis, Kāfūr noted the qualities of Ibn Killis. He was a Jewish merchant born in Baghdād in 318/930 and who was subsequently a money dealer in Syria. Having survived a fraudulent bankruptcy, he became the administrator of agrarian lands in Egypt and then entered Kāfūr’s private service. He rapidly memorized the yields of principal agricultural districts in the Nile valley as well as all the information regarding their irrigation and tax policies. To ensure his designation as vizier, Ibn Killis converted to Sunnī Islam with great fanfare. But Kāfūr died shortly thereafter, and the wazīr Abu’l-Faḍl Jaʿfar ibn al-Furāt, moved quickly to arrest a potential competitor. Upon his release, Ibn Killis traveled to Fāṭimid Ifriqiya in September 968, where he espoused Ismāʿīlism with equal enthusiasm and provided vital assistance to technical preparations for the conquest of Egypt. Kāfūr died in 357/April 968 and was buried in Jerusalem. His death was rumored several times, so that various dates given for it have been retained.

The situation in Fustāt was desperate. From 963 to 969, a series of low Nile floods brought on a famine that Egypt had not experienced within living memory. The vizier Jaʿfar Ibn al-Furāt and the Ikhshīdīd-Kāfūrīd officers pulled in different directions. The senior commanders of the army

reunited to prepare the succession and drafted a manifesto.¹¹ The governor of Palestine, al-Ḥasan ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ṭughj, uncle of the little Ikhshīdīd prince, arrived in Fuṣṭāṭ in 357/autumn 968. He seemed ready to install himself as regent, and ordered the construction of a palace-garden on Rawḍa Island. But he abruptly departed for Palestine in 358/969, releasing Ibn al-Furāt whom he had had imprisoned. The Ikhshīdīd possessions in Syria were now vulnerable, since the Ḥamdānīd state had been unsettled from 349/960. After Sayf al-Dawla's death nothing any longer seemed to block the Byzantines who were ravaging northern Syria and were not concealing their ambitions towards Tripoli, Damascus and Jerusalem. Central Syria and Palestine were simultaneously coveted by the Carmatians, who exacted tribute payments to leave Damascus. A power vacuum prevailed in Egypt. Alerted to this situation, the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mu'izz gave Jawhar, his white slave and the general-in-chief of his forces, the order to depart for Egypt at the head of an army in 358/February 969. In June, Jawhar stood before Fuṣṭāṭ. The senior Ikhshīdīd and Kāfūrīd officers hesitated over accepting his offer of peaceful submission and eventually decided to fight. Suffering heavy casualties after a fierce resistance, the surviving officers of the former regime escaped to Syria at the beginning of July 969.

Aware of the caliphate's inability to implement effective political policies in the Islamic world, al-Ikhshīd at the end of his life, and Kāfūr subsequently, would abandon Ibn Ṭūlūn's plan to transfer the capital of 'Abbāsīd power to Egypt. They rather attempted to build around Fuṣṭāṭ and the Nile valley a sound principality that, if it could not take over the whole of the Levant, Arabia, the Yemen, Nubia, and the Libyan zone, could effectively control central and southern Syria, the pilgrimage route, commercial traffic between the Nile valley and the Indian Ocean via the Red Sea, the outlets of trails leading into eastern equatorial Africa, and the coast west of the Delta to dominate the major routes across the central Sahara and north Africa.

They could rely on the support of Fuṣṭāṭ's population for their objective, and quite likely those of towns in the Delta, Qūṣ and Upper Egypt. The Syrians remained indifferent, but showed no open hostility. From the year 308/920, Egypt's rulers realized that the true danger to them was posed by the eastern ambitions of the Fāṭimid Imāms in Ifrīqiya. Their victory over the 'Abbāsīd caliphate depended on the prerequisite seizure of Egypt. Armed with the fanaticism of their Berber partisans and the highly prosperous economy in north Africa, they would concentrate their propaganda operations on Egypt. Due to the confluence of commercial networks among

¹¹ On this highly complex period, see the three articles by Thierry Bianquis: "Les derniers gouverneurs ikhshīdīdes à Damas," *BEO*, 23 (1970), 167–196; "La prise du pouvoir en Egypte par les Fatimides," *AI*, 11 (1972), 50–108; "L'Acte de succession de Kafur d'après Maqrizi," *AI*, 12 (1974), 263–269, and the works of Yaacov Lev.

merchants and financiers, Sunnīs, Imāmīs, Ismāʿīlīs, Jews and Christians, they were able to infiltrate the ranks of cultural notables, fiscal officials and movers of the economy in Fustāt. To win over the Sunnī masses whom they could not hope to convert to Shiʿism but who they knew were disaffected with the ʿAbbāsids, they played upon the general feeling at this time of fervor toward the People of the Prophet's Family.¹² An intensive period of psychological and political preparation, abetted by the malaise of the Ikhshīdīd regime after Kāfūr's death, is more responsible for the Fāṭimids' successful settlement in Egypt than the modest military capacity of the army commanded by Jawhar. Their political agenda in the East was made easier by their predecessors' actions as Egypt's rulers, and by the growing consciousness of the Egyptians throughout the hundred years between 254/868 and 358/969 of the opulent future that was offered their country.

¹² Jere L. Bacharach in, "The Career of Muḥammad ibn Ṭughdj al-Ikhshīd," *Speculum*, 50 (1975), 594, reports a pro-Shiʿite revolt in Egypt during 330/942. See in this article, pp. 604 et seq., his remarks on Ikhshīdīd monetary issues.