



3. The Near East (Map by the University of Wisconsin Cartographic Laboratory)

### III

## THE CALIPHATE AND THE ARAB STATES

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Under the rule of the first caliphs, or "successors" of the prophet Mohammed, at Medina, the tribesmen of Arabia, organized into the armies of Islam, had rapidly overrun Syria, Iraq, western Persia, and Egypt, and established themselves in garrison cities in the conquered provinces. Dissensions between the tribesmen and their governors led to the murder of the third caliph, 'Uthmān, in 656, and a civil war, which ended with the constitution of a new caliphate at Damascus (661), hereditary in the house of the Meccan clan of Umayyah, and dependent for its power largely upon the Arab tribesmen of Syria. Under the Umayyad caliphs the Arab empire continued its expansion into eastern Persia, Turkestan, northwestern Africa, and Spain, in spite of repeated insurrections among the tribesmen in Iraq and growing discontent in many sections of the general population. The burden of defending so vast an empire ultimately exhausted the Syrian Arabs, whose unity was, in addition, disrupted, like that of the Arab settlements in every province from Spain to Khurasan, by violent feuds between the rival factions of Muḍar and Yaman, or "northern" and "southern" Arabs. The Umayyad caliphate succumbed in 750 to a general revolt of the Yaman faction combined with other

For the general history of the Arabs, see Sir William Muir, *The Caliphate, its Rise, Decline, and Fall* (Edinburgh, 1915; reprinted 1924), and P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (5th ed., New York, 1951). For Egypt and the Fātimids: G. Wiet, *L'Égypte arabe, de la conquête arabe à la conquête ottomane* (Paris, 1937; vol. IV of *Histoire de la nation égyptienne*, ed. G. Hanotaux), and the appropriate titles listed in the bibliographical note to chapter IV. The *Encyclopaedia of Islām* (Leyden-London, 1908-1938, 4 vols. and *Supplement*; revision in progress) has useful articles on dynasties, sovereigns, and religious sects. For Syria in the tenth century: M. Canard, *Histoire de la dynastie des H'andaniides de Fazīra et de la Syrie*, vol. I (Algiers, 1951). For the eleventh century the principal sources are: Ibn-al-Qalānisi, *Dbāi' ta'rikh Dimashq* [*Continuation of History of Damascus*] (ed. H. F. Amedroz, Leyden, 1908); Kamāl-ad-Dīn ibn-al-'Adīm, *Zubdat al-balab fī ta'rikh Ḥalab* [*History of Aleppo*], vol. I (ed. Sāmi ad-Dahhān, Damascus, 1951); Yaḥyā al-Anṭāki, *Continuation of the History of Eutychius* (ed. and tr. I. Kratchkowsky and A. A. Vasiliev, *Patrologia Orientalis*, vols. XVIII and XXIII, Paris, 1924, 1932). The data from the latter sources, together with contemporary Greek and Armenian materials relating to northern Syria, are summarized by E. Honigmann, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches* (vol. III of A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, Brussels, 1935).

discontented elements, both Arab and non-Arab, and was replaced by a third line of caliphs, descended from the prophet's uncle al-'Abbās, who built themselves a new capital at Baghdad.

The strength of the 'Abbāsid caliphate rested, politically, upon the Arab and Islamized population of Iraq (with an important exception, to be noted later) and the Arab colonists and Iranian aristocracy of Khurasan. Militarily, it depended on a standing army drawn from Khurasan, of mixed but mainly Arab composition, stationed in Iraq and capable of reinforcement from its home province in case of need. Such elements of opposition as existed in Syria and Egypt were disabled by the persistence of the Muḍar-Yaman feud, and suppressed in northwestern Africa by the settlement of a Khurasanian garrison in Kairawan. With the growth of urban civilization and the development of trade, the Arab settlers in the former garrison cities of Iraq were transformed into townsmen and ceased to constitute effective military units. Those of Syria and upper Mesopotamia continued, under 'Abbāsid command, their established routine of frontier warfare against the Greeks in Anatolia. On the other hand, the tribesmen in central and northern Arabia and in the Syrian desert, no longer held in check by imperial armies of their own kin, or able to find an outlet for their martial spirit by enrolment in the paid forces of the empire, were reverting to their former rebelliousness towards the civil authorities in Iraq and to their traditional occupation of raiding.

The latent conflict between Iraq and Khurasan, on the one hand, and between the settled population of Iraq and the bedouins (Arabic, *badawī*, desert-dweller), on the other, flared into action on the occasion of yet another civil war in 812-813, resulting from Hārūn ar-Rashīd's ill-advised attempt to give his son al-Ma'mūn an independent position in Khurasan, outside the control of his elder brother, the caliph al-Amīn. Al-Ma'mūn owed his victory to a new Khurasanian army, more pronouncedly Iranian in composition and leadership, with which he reconquered Iraq, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Egypt, and restored some semblance of control over the tribesmen. The price he paid for it was the virtual abandonment of the direct rule of the caliphate over Persia and the eastern provinces. The government of Khurasan was made over to the commander-in-chief Ṭāhir, and it, together with the chief military command in Baghdad, became hereditary in his family.

Partly in order to offset the power of the Ṭāhirids, the caliphs

now formed a private guard in which Turkish slaves, captured in frontier warfare on the steppes, soon predominated. A new cantonment for these troops was built in 835 sixty miles north of Baghdad, at Samarra, which for some sixty years replaced Baghdad as the seat of administration. Isolated among the Turkish guards, the caliph fell increasingly under their control, and between 861 and 870 no fewer than four caliphs perished by assassination or in armed conflict with the Turks. The prestige and authority of the 'Abbāsids, already shaken by the civil war of 812 and the murder of the caliph al-Amīn by the Khurasanians, could scarcely survive these calamities. The lesson that power was to be had for the taking by the strong and the skillful unleashed in every part of their former empire ambitions which found support among the victims of the misgovernment and financial oppression resulting from anarchy at the center. In Persia the Tāhirids were swept away by local risings; in the Arab provinces the beneficiaries were the Turkish governors and the bedouins.

In the struggle that followed, rivalry between the Turks and the bedouins was, after the manner of political forces in the Near East, coupled with or colored by differences of religious allegiance. During the Umayyad caliphate the bedouin revolts in northern Arabia and Mesopotamia had as a rule been organized under the banner of the Khārijite "heresy", which maintained an extreme puritan and equalitarian doctrine and found a sympathetic echo in tribal democracy and resistance to external control. At the other pole, the tribesmen of Kufa in lower Iraq constituted themselves the defenders of the hereditary right to the caliphate of the house of 'Alī, son-in-law of the prophet and father of his only surviving descendants, and fourth caliph, who had transferred the capital from Medina to Kufa at the time of the first civil war.

For a century or so the cause of the *Shī'ah* or "Party" of 'Alī gained little acceptance outside Kufa and its dependencies, except in the Yemen and as a cloak for revolutionary coteries. Under the early 'Abbāsīd caliphs it began to supplant Khārijism as the religious substrate or symbol of revolt; and after the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn a Shī'ite rebellion in Kufa in 815 found general support among the bedouins of northern Arabia and the desert fringes of Iraq. From then onwards bedouin movements became increasingly associated with the profession of Shī'ism in one or other of its sectarian varieties, and more especially of the activist — and, from the point of view of the

moderate Shī'ites, heterodox — wing, known as the Ismā'īlites.<sup>1</sup> Among the negro slaves also, Shī'ism gained a following, and many bedouins joined the negroes in the great slave revolt which from 869 to 883 convulsed lower Iraq. Scarcely was this put down than the Ismā'īlite tribesmen of northeastern Arabia and the Syrian desert, under the name of Qarmaṭians or "Carmathians" (Arabic, *qarāmīṭah* or *qarmaṭī*), carried fire and slaughter from Basra to Antioch and only in 907 were reduced temporarily to quiescence.

The Turkish principalities in the Arab provinces, on the other hand, were founded by generals who combined a supple independence with rigorous Sunnite orthodoxy. Since the reign of al-Ma'mūn's successor, al-Mu'taṣim, the practice had grown up of assigning whole provinces as fiefs to Turkish generals at the capital. The fiefholder drew the revenue from the crown estates in the province, and was represented in its actual government by a deputy. It was in this way that the Turkish *mamlūk* (trooper of slave origin) Aḥmad ibn-Ṭūlūn, appointed deputy-governor of Egypt in 868, obtained the leverage by which he not only built up a factually independent power there, though officially he remained deputy-governor to the end of his life, but added Syria to his dominions and founded a dynasty which lasted until 905. Such an independent power was, however, maintained, not by enrolling the support of the local population, but by creating a private army of Turkish mamluks strong enough to hold the imperial forces at bay.

Even when Turkish generals seized provinces for themselves, however, as they did also in Mesopotamia, Armenia, and elsewhere, they did not thereby renounce their allegiance to the caliph; on the contrary, they formally petitioned for a diploma of investiture and duly received it, sometimes with the grant of hereditary rights in addition. Fictitious in a sense though such diplomas may have been, they served two genuine purposes. One was of internal order: to legitimize the proceedings of the law courts and the decisions of the qadis (Arabic singular, *qāḍī*, magistrate) and other religious officials appointed by the local rulers, as well as marriages, inheritances, and bequests. The other was political: to check the spread of Shī'ism and the resurgence of the bedouins in those areas where the caliph's forces were themselves unable to intervene.

<sup>1</sup> The Ismā'īlites were so called from their belief in the imamate of Ismā'īl, the eldest son of the sixth imam, Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq. The term covered at this time a medley of local groups, of which the "Carmathians" were one, and is not to be equated completely with the systematic Ismā'īlism of the Fāṭimids. See below and chapter IV, *passim*.

But such a system of uneasy and suspicious alliances against a common enemy could not stop up all the cracks in the decaying fabric. Before the end of the ninth century, Shī'ism had gained a strong and permanent base in Persia, in the highlands southwest of the Caspian Sea, known as Dailam, and another permanent base in the highlands of the Yemen. It was not only in such relatively remote regions, however, nor only amongst the bedouins that Shī'ism continued to make headway. The discontent with the prevailing misrule and disorder, and the millennial aspirations which had broken out in the Qarmaṭian risings, found an echo among educated and pious citizens, philosophers, and men of letters, even while they abhorred the crude violence and excesses of the peasantry and tribesmen. The opportunity offered by this widespread dissatisfaction with the prevailing state of affairs was seized by the leaders of a reorganized and systematized Ismā'īlite propaganda on behalf of a "Hidden Imam", whose headquarters at Salamyah, east of Homs, were on the fringes of Tūlūnid territory. Here there was planned the audacious scheme which, repeating the method by which the 'Abbāsids had seized the caliphate, but in the reverse direction, was aimed at their overthrow. An enterprising Ismā'īlite missionary from the Yemen had already gained a footing among the Berber hillmen of Tunisia; and from this base, utilizing the reserves of Berber manpower and Egypt as a stepping-stone, with the active or passive aid of partisans in all provinces, a Shī'ite universal empire was to inaugurate the reign of justice under the house of the prophet.

The first steps were successfully accomplished. Fleeing from Salamyah before the Qarmaṭian ravagers, and eluding the agents of the restored 'Abbāsīd government of Egypt, the "Hidden Imam" made his way to northwestern Africa; there, in 909, after the victory of his missionary's Berber army, he inaugurated the Fāṭimid caliphate in Tunisia, taking for himself the millennial title of *al-Mahdī*. But the next step miscarried; twice, in 915 and 921, the 'Abbāsīd armies, in a last flicker of imperial power, drove the Fāṭimid invaders out of Egypt, and before the attempt could be renewed the Fāṭimids were involved in a long and dangerous Berber rising at home. It was only in 969 that at last Egypt was occupied, almost without opposition, by a Fāṭimid general, to become, for the next two hundred years, the seat of their rival caliphate.

Much, of course, had happened in the meantime, and the distribution of forces which now confronted the Fāṭimids in Asia

bore no resemblance to the situation in 909. The 'Abbāsīd caliphate, as a political power, no longer existed. Exhausted by the military effort involved in checking the Qarmāṭians and in recovering and holding Egypt, and weakened by financial disorders and factional rivalries in the imperial forces, it had been unable to prevent the reëmergence of local dynasties and the revival of military ambitions. Egypt had again become the seat of a factually independent Turkish dynasty, founded by an officer of the former Ṭūlūnid forces, Muḥammad ibn-Ṭughj, surnamed al-Ikhshīd, whose government embraced also Damascus and the Hejaz. The Arab tribes of northern Syria and Mesopotamia were organized under the chiefs of the house of Ḥamdān, whose two principalities, based on Mosul and Aleppo, remained linked by fraternal ties. In northeastern Arabia the Qarmāṭian state of Bahrain (the Hasa coast) still maintained relations with the tribes of the Syrian desert. In western Persia the Dailamites, having broken out of their mountains and ravaged the settled provinces, had at length been brought under the organized control of three brothers of the house of Buwaih. The Buwaihids, whose relations with each other in the first and second generations were marked by a rare spirit of concord, established themselves in a bloc of principalities extending along the eastern frontiers of Iraq from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, and thus cut the caliphate off from the only major Sunnite power in Asia, the Sāmānids of Khurasan and Transoxiana.<sup>2</sup>

Two features distinguished this second disintegration of the 'Abbāsīd empire in the tenth century from its earlier disruption in the second half of the ninth. One was the relatively greater strength and more organized character of the new states. This fact, together with the divisions in the caliphs' armies, had its effect on their attitude towards the caliphate itself, and led to a struggle between the rival principalities to establish their control over the caliphs. The competition was won by the Dailamites, when the Buwaihīd prince of Khuzistan, Mu'izz-ad-Daulah, entered Baghdad and annexed Iraq to his principality in 946. In the second place, all the new dynasties — with the exception of the Ikhshīdids in Egypt and the Kurds in Diyār-Bakr and northwestern Persia — were Shī'ites. That, in such circumstances, the Buwaihīds did not dethrone the 'Abbāsīd caliphs was probably due to political calculation; the possible cost in Sunnite rebellion and administrative disorder, since the official classes were over-

<sup>2</sup> On the Buwaihīds and Sāmānīds, see below, chapter V.

whelmingly Sunnite, was too high a price to pay, and being themselves uninhibited by any respect for 'Abbāsīd authority they had no wish to set up a new spiritual authority with which they would have to share their power.

The Fāṭimids, therefore, after their conquest of Egypt, found themselves confronted in Asia, not by a discredited government of Sunnite caliphs against whom they could rally the forces of Shī'ism, but by successive layers of Shī'ite principalities, extending without interruption to the frontiers of Khurasan. And although the Ḥamdānids of Aleppo and the Qarmaṭians of Bahrain were not opposed in principle to recognizing the spiritual suzerainty of the Fāṭimid caliphs, they were far from ready to submit to their temporal control; while the Buwaihids, belonging to a rival Shī'ite sect which denied the spiritual and doubted even the genealogical claims of the Fāṭimids, now found their tolerant patronage of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate paying a political dividend in support against the expected advance of the Fāṭimid armies.

In fact, however, the Fāṭimids were never to challenge Buwaihīd dominion in Iraq. During the whole of the century following their conquest of Egypt they were engaged in a never-ending and finally unsuccessful effort to establish their control over Syria. Since it was this struggle — with the added complications of Turkoman immigrations and Selchūkid principalities, to be described in a later chapter<sup>3</sup> — which determined the general features of the internal political life of Syria in the century preceding and into the period of the crusades, it is necessary to describe here in some detail its course and consequences.

The main factor underlying the confused political history of Syria during this period was the recovery of the Arab tribes from the severe control maintained by the 'Abbāsīd governors and their agents after the fall of the Umayyad caliphate. The major tribal confederations had, however, remained intact; these were now the Yamānī or "southern" Arab groups of Ṭaiy (or Ṭaiyī) in Palestine and Kalb in central Syria, and the Qaisī or "northern" groups of Kilāb in northern Syria and Numair and 'Uqail in Mesopotamia. All these groups had relations with the Qarmaṭians, and both Ṭaiy and Kalb took part in the Qarmaṭian risings at the beginning of the tenth century. In 944 the Ḥamdānid chief Saif-ad-Daulah, himself descended from the old-established Mesopotamian tribe of Taghlib, seized Aleppo from the Ikhshīd and established an independent Syro-Mesopotamian principality. After

<sup>3</sup> See below, chapter V.



long struggles with the Qaisī tribes he gained the support of Kilāb and 'Uqail, and could also rely on the other tribesmen to take his part against the Turkish government of Egypt, which in turn maintained its hold on Damascus only by coming to terms with the local tribes.

Saif-ad-Daulah, however, devoted most of his energies to warfare with the Greeks, and gained for a time a measure of success which not only enhanced his own reputation but also went far to strengthen the self-assurance and sense of independence of the Arabs. On the other hand, it eventually provoked a Byzantine counterattack which, beginning in 962, penetrated the Islamic defenses more and more deeply and in 968 swept over all northern Syria. For the Fāṭimids, fresh from their triumph over the Greeks in Sicily and at that moment preparing for their descent on Egypt, the Greek invasions were highly opportune; they not only weakened the Ḥamdānids of Aleppo but furnished Fāṭimid propaganda with the theme, which seemed all too evidently justified, that the Fāṭimids were the only Moslem power capable of stopping and throwing back the Greeks. The Fāṭimid caliph al-Mu'izz had also negotiated with the Qarmaṭians of Bahrain, in order to forestall a possible intervention by hostile forces from the east, and in the same year 968 a Qarmaṭian army entered Syria and, with its local Arab allies, exacted tribute from the Ikhshīdīd governor of Damascus.

Everything thus seemed to be in train for a rapid Fāṭimid occupation of Syria as soon as Egypt had been conquered. Suddenly, on the advance of the Fāṭimid expeditionary force into Syria, the Qarmaṭian commander, for reasons which have never been fully explained, came to terms with the Ikhshīdīd commander. Nevertheless, the Fāṭimid troops entered Damascus at the end of 969 and for five months besieged the Greeks in their newly-recaptured stronghold of Antioch, only to be faced by a coalition of Qarmaṭians, Ikhshīdīd troops, and tribesmen, who drove them out of Syria and pursued them into Egypt (971). Not until a second Qarmaṭian attack on Cairo had been beaten off in 974 were the Fāṭimids able to renew the Syrian campaign. In the meantime the Greek raids had been renewed and Aleppo reduced to vassalage; but the final campaign of John Tzimisce into central Syria in 975 was countered by Fāṭimid forces at Tripoli. It was only after three more years of fighting that the independent Turkish commander at Damascus, Aftigin, and his Qarmaṭian allies were defeated by the Fāṭimid caliph al-'Azīz, Damascus was annexed, and the Qarmaṭians finally withdrew from the contest.

The effect of this conquest was not so much to establish Fāṭimid rule in southern Syria as to divide Syria into two protectorates: a Byzantine protectorate in the north over Aleppo and its dependencies, with a strongly-held base at Antioch, and an Egyptian protectorate over Damascus and the south, with its principal base at Tripoli. Berber troops of the Fāṭimid army were posted in Damascus, to the detestation of its citizens, and garrisoned the coastal cities, but the countryside was largely out of control. This weakness was no doubt due in some degree to the qualities of the Berber forces, who were no match for disciplined Turkish cavalry and could just hold their own against the Arab tribesmen. But it seems probable that the Fāṭimid caliphs in general placed an excessive confidence in the influence of propaganda. The elaborate organization of the "mission" was the feature by which their administrative system was especially distinguished, the chief missionary (*dā'i* of *dā'īs*) being one of the highest officers at the court; and it was for missionary training that the most enduring monument of their rule, the college mosque of al-Azhar, was founded. The assumption that conquest would be facilitated by a thorough preliminary campaign of propaganda had served them well in Tunisia and again in Egypt, but in Syria it was never more than a broken reed. The reason was not that the Syrians rejected their religious claims; on the contrary, with the exception of Damascus, whose stiffly orthodox population was never reconciled to Fāṭimid rule, the citizens and tribesmen, both "northern" and "southern", were in principle more attached to the Fāṭimid than to the 'Abbāsīd caliphate and some, especially in the north, were its fervent partisans. For anything on a larger scale than local operations the Fāṭimid government relied to a great extent on the coöperation of the Ṭaiy and Kalb tribes, as the Ḥamdānīds relied on the Kilāb. But the division of the country, and the absence of effective control over the tribesmen, fostered the natural appetite for independence amongst the latter, and encouraged others also to aim at independence, or at least autonomy.

From this time, therefore, the history of Syria begins to take on the baffling complexity which characterized it down to the middle of the twelfth century. Not only were the Fāṭimid governors, the Ḥamdānīds, and the Greeks of Antioch engaged in a shifting sequence of hostilities and alliances, but lesser chiefs in various parts of the country insinuated themselves into these rivalries and sought to play them off against one another in their own interest. The prefects of Damascus were constantly tempted to exploit

for their own profit the hostility of the citizens towards the Berbers and the Fāṭimids; on the other hand, the Ḥamdānids at Aleppo reinsured themselves against their Byzantine suzerains by overtures to the Fāṭimids. But whenever Fāṭimid armies marched on Aleppo, they appealed to Antioch for assistance; and in their hour of most extreme danger, after the forces of Aleppo and Antioch had been routed in two successive campaigns (992, 994) and the city itself was besieged by the governor of Damascus, it was delivered in 995 by the emperor Basil II in person. Basil's subsequent campaigns in Syria, however, failed to weaken the Fāṭimid defenses, and in 1001 the first of a series of ten-year truces between the two empires was arranged. In 1009 a Fāṭimid army from Tripoli supported the succession of a new governor at Aleppo against Basil's protégé. A few years later the Kilābī Arabs, who had grown increasingly restive as the power of the Ḥamdānids weakened, broke out in open rebellion under their chief Ṣāliḥ ibn-Mirdās. He, to gain his ends, made common cause with the supporters of the Fāṭimids, and in 1016 Aleppo submitted for the first time to the rule of a Fāṭimid governor.

It is remarkable that these successes in Syria coincided with the reign of the eccentric Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākīm (996-1021). In addition to many measures vexatious to his Moslem subjects, al-Ḥākīm opened in 1008 a seven-year persecution of Jews and Christians, confiscated the possessions of the churches, and ordered their demolition. Among those destroyed was the Holy Sepulcher at Jerusalem, which was torn down in 1009. In Syria, at least, where the population had suffered from Greek invasions for fifty years, this was the most popular act of al-Ḥākīm's administration, although it was followed by an order from Basil prohibiting commercial intercourse between Egyptian and Byzantine territories.

The fragility of the new conquests was soon to be demonstrated. From the first the Fāṭimid government had had to deal with persistent tribal revolts. The most turbulent of its Arab subjects was the very tribe which supplied the bulk of its auxiliary forces, the Ṭaiy of Palestine and the Transjordan. These former allies of the Qarmaṭians revolted in 980, and again in 998 and 1011; their shaikhs, of the house of Jarrāḥ, set up on each occasion as independent princes of Palestine, and on the third renounced the Fāṭimids in favor of the caliphate of the sharīf of Mecca. At the same time or later they also opened negotiations with the Greeks at Antioch, and in 1011 Ibn-Jarrāḥ even began to rebuild the church of the Holy Sepulcher.

The Kilāb, for their part, resented the Fāṭimid occupation of Aleppo, which they regarded as their rightful prize. In 1024, after the death of al-Ḥākim, the Kilābī chief Ṣāliḥ ibn-Mirdās formed a league of Arab tribes on the basis of an agreement to partition Syria among Kilāb in the north, Kalb in the center, and Ṭaiy in the south, and himself occupied Aleppo. The general revolt shook the Fāṭimid government out of its indolence. A strong force sent from Egypt under a Turkish officer, Anushtigin ad-Dizbirī, routed Ṣāliḥ and his Arab allies at al-Uḡḡuwānah, on the Lake of Tiberias (1029), and set about reorganizing a stable administration in the south. In the meantime the Byzantine emperor reimposed the Greek tribute on Ṣāliḥ's son and successor at Aleppo (1030), and Greek forces from Antioch, accompanied by the fugitive Ṭaiyī, Ibn-Jarrāḡ, engaged the tribesmen in the north. In 1032 George Maniaces, commanding the Euphrates frontier, seized Edessa (Urfa) from the Kurds of upper Mesopotamia, and subdued the tribesmen of Numair who had seized Harran and Sarūj. In the same year Anushtigin reopened negotiations with Antioch and Constantinople. Hostilities were suspended, but it was not until 1038 that a peace was signed by which, in return for the release of his Moslem prisoners, the emperor obtained permission to rebuild the church of the Holy Sepulcher. Anushtigin, for his part, having agreed to continue payment of the Greek tribute, drove the Kilāb out of Aleppo and reoccupied the rest of the former Ḥamdānid principality.

This was the high-water mark of Fāṭimid power, and it roused extravagant hopes in Cairo. The Buwaihids in Iraq were by now weakened and disorganized by internal conflicts; the "mission" was reorganized and spurred on to fresh efforts; Persia was honey-combed with Fāṭimid agents, who were making converts among all classes in the eastern kingdoms; alliances and ententes were established not only with the Byzantine emperor, but also with the princes of Georgia, the Turks in Central Asia, and even the Hindu rajah of Delhi. But again the Syrian Arabs intervened. On the death of Anushtigin, Aleppo was recovered by the Mirdāsids with Greek support (1042), and the Ṭaiy rebelled once more in Palestine and were not reduced to order until their most turbulent sections were transported a few years later to the Delta. The disproportion between the propagandist aims and the real resources of the Fāṭimids was displayed at this moment by the fantastic episode of al-Basāsirī at Baghdad. Al-Basāsirī, a Turkish officer of the last Buwaihīd prince, driven out of Baghdad by the Selchū-

kids in 1055, appealed to Cairo for support. After receiving a substantial gift of money and arms, he reentered Baghdad in December 1058, and forced the 'Abbāsīd caliph to recognize his Fāṭimid rival. But in the circumstances no military support could be sent to him from Egypt or Syria, and a year later the 'Abbāsīd caliph was restored by the Selchūkids. The only result of the incident was to encourage the Selchūkids in their hostility to the Fāṭimids to take advantage of the violent outbreak of anarchy in Egypt in this same year (1060), which practically put an end to Fāṭimid rule in Syria and left it open to the Turkoman and Selchūkid invasions.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from the coastal cities between Ascalon and Tripoli, one relic of Fāṭimid dominion remained in Syria. This was the heretical Ismā'īlite sect called the Druze (Arabic, *Durūz*), after the name of the Persian missionary (*ad-Darazī*), who had brought about their conversion to the new belief in the divinity of the Fāṭimid caliph *al-Ḥākim*.<sup>5</sup> The origins of the cult and the reasons for its spread are still obscure, but it took root among the mixed population of the highlands south of Lebanon and spread from there into the hill country between the Orontes and Aleppo (called *Jabal as-Summāq*), in spite of the attempts of both the Byzantine governors and the adherents of "orthodox" Fāṭimid Shī'ism to eradicate it. Extremist Shī'ism had already established itself in various forms in northern Syria during the previous century. The chief of these sects was that of the *Nuṣairīs*, whose missionaries, favored by the *Ḥamdānīds*, had gained a strong establishment among the sedentary "Yamani" clans in the *Jabal Bahrā'* (now called, after the sectaries, *Jabal Anṣāriyah*), south of Antioch. The Druze sect may perhaps have been intended to serve a political end by linking up with these extremist Shī'ite groups in the north; but apart from theological controversy little or nothing is known of the relations between them at this period. In the event, however, Druzism ebbed back into its original home in Lebanon, and except for adding yet another to the varieties of religious belief represented in Syria, and yet another independent fraction to its political structure, played little part in the history of the next centuries.

The principal cause of the severe, but short-lived, internal crisis in Egypt was the outbreak of armed rivalry among the three divisions of the Fāṭimid army: the Berbers, the Sudanese infantry, and the regiments of Turkish cavalry whom the caliphs had grad-

<sup>4</sup> On the Selchūkids, see below, chapter V.

<sup>5</sup> On the Ismā'īlites, see below, chapter IV.

ually enrolled in their service, and who now numbered some 10,000. Since the caliphs of Baghdad had initiated in the ninth century the practice of constituting regiments of guards of Central Asian Turks, acquired by purchase or as prisoners of war, the superior military qualities of these Turkish "slaves" (mamluks) had made it necessary for all who held or aspired to independent rule in western Asia to do the same, in spite of the political dangers which all too often followed from the practice. Every prince must have his *'askar*, or standing regiment of Turkish guards, varying in number with his resources from some thousands to a few hundreds. But their highly developed *esprit de corps* which made them such a valuable military instrument became also, under weak rulers, a source of danger, leading to conflicts with regiments of other nationalities, mutinies, and open revolts under ambitious generals. One after another, the dynasties and principalities of western Asia during the tenth and eleventh centuries suffered from and eventually succumbed to the violence of their Turkish troops.

It was a conflict of this kind in which the Fāṭimid caliphate now became involved. After seven years of fighting, the Turks, commanded by the Ḥamdānid Nāṣir-ad-Daulah, and allied with the Berber regiments, drove the Sudanese into upper Egypt. Six more years followed during which the countryside was ravaged by the Turks, the Sudanese in the south, and Berber tribesmen from Libya in the north, and Cairo was besieged and looted. After the assassination of Nāṣir-ad-Daulah by his Turkish officers (1073), the caliph al-Mustanṣir, in desperation, called in the aid of his Armenian general Badr al-Jamālī, the governor of Acre. His arrival by sea with his Armenian guard took the Turks by surprise, and he was able to enter Cairo in January 1074 and to put down the turbulent officers and their troops by massacre and other vigorous measures. In three further years of constant campaigning the Sudanese, bedouins, and Libyan Berbers were brought under control, and by 1077 Badr had accomplished his task of restoring peace and stability in Egypt.<sup>6</sup>

During these seventeen years Syria had perforce been left to its own devices. At Damascus the Turkish and Berber troops fought with one another, or against the local militia or the Kalbī Arabs, and no governor could maintain himself between the rival factions. Badr twice attempted the task, in 1064 and 1068, and was twice driven out, and withdrawing to Acre he there set about building up the Armenian guard with which he was afterwards to occupy

<sup>6</sup> On the subsequent rulers of Egypt, see below, chapter IV, pp. 105 ff.

Cairo. The governors of Tripoli and Tyre both broke with the Fāṭimid government in 1070 and made themselves independent — probably for commercial as much as for political reasons. These local events were overshadowed by graver portents. In 1064 the first band of Turkomans entered northern Syria, to take a hand in the conflict between rival Mirdāsīd princes for the possession of Aleppo. Other bands followed under different chiefs. When Badr besieged Tyre in 1070 the new ruler called in the aid of one such Turkoman chief, who forced the attackers to retire. Badr himself, shortly afterwards, followed his example; when Nāṣir-ad-Daulah attempted to stir up the Ṭaiyī Arabs against him, he called in a band led by a certain Atsīz to counter their activities. The consequence was that Atsīz occupied Palestine and looted Jerusalem, and after Badr's removal to Egypt besieged and captured Damascus (1075). In the next year he attempted to follow up this success by invading Egypt, but was met and defeated by Badr in February 1077. Badr in turn marched on Damascus but failed to recapture the city in two successive campaigns; after the second, Atsīz surrendered it to the Selchūkid prince Tutush, to become the capital of the new Selchūkid principality of Syria (1078).

Henceforward Badr, avoiding any conflict with the Selchūkid power, devoted himself to the reorganization of Egypt and the restoration of its prosperity. Thanks to his firm and orderly government and that of his son al-Afdal Shāhānshāh after him, the Fāṭimid caliphate endured for another century. His achievement was even more remarkable, indeed; for the general principles on which he reorganized the administration were so soundly conceived that they remained operative for centuries, notwithstanding wars, revolutions, and dynastic changes. The most striking feature of his system was the combination of military government with civil administration. From this time forward, the Fāṭimid caliphs no longer, or only for rare and brief intervals, were the effective rulers of the country. The ruling power lay in the hands of the military dictator, called the vizir (Arabic, *wazīr*) or, in later times, the sultan (Arabic, *sultān*), supported by an army whose officers were paid from military fiefs. Yet, although the government remained a military government at its head, a powerful civil administration was built up, which controlled the entire financial organization, including the payment of the troops, and regulated the distribution of the fiefs.

Scarcely less remarkable is the revolution which Badr and his son introduced into the external policy of Egypt. Whether or not

they accepted it as a fact that the Selchükid power put all dreams of territorial expansion out of court, the only military action which they took outside Egypt was to recover its naval bases at Acre, Tyre, and other ports (1089), and to maintain a defensive bridgehead in Palestine. On the approach of the crusaders, Tyre and Sidon were refortified, and Jerusalem was recaptured in 1098 from the Artukid Turkoman chiefs who held it as a Selchükid fief. The assumption that al-Afḍal attempted to negotiate a division of Syria with the crusaders seems to be belied by the fact that the Frankish envoys who went to Cairo in that year were imprisoned. It is more probable that he saw in their establishment in northern Syria a useful counterpoise to the ambitions of the Selchükids.<sup>7</sup>

In effect, Egypt, from being the intended springboard for a universal Shī'ite empire, was re-formed as a closely knit and self-contained kingdom. Although the parties in opposition to the Selchükids in Syria continued to recognize the Fāṭimid caliphate, no serious attempt was made to capitalize on their religious allegiance for political ends. So far from this, indeed, were Badr and al-Afḍal that they would almost seem to have deliberately undermined the whole Fāṭimid mission organization, except in the Yemen. It was an essential article of Ismā'īlite doctrine that the spiritual office inherited by the descendants of 'Alī passed in a direct line from father to son by explicit nomination; and it had hitherto passed always to the eldest, or eldest surviving, son. Thus Nizār, the eldest son of the caliph al-Mustanşir, was regarded in the mission as his destined successor, and may even have been so proclaimed; and a vigorous militant propaganda on this understanding had already achieved its first successes in Persia by the foundation of the new "Assassin" movement. Yet, on the death of al-Mustanşir in 1094, al-Afḍal recognized his youngest son as his successor, with the title of al-Musta'li, and Nizār's revolt in Alexandria was crushed.

It can hardly be supposed that so intelligent a governor as al-Afḍal was not aware that the consequence of this act would be to split the Fāṭimid mission into two rival sections, and that the militant eastern section would support the claim of Nizār. We can only surmise, therefore, that among the reasons for his action was a desire to dissociate the Fāṭimid caliphate in Egypt from the terrorist activities already initiated by the Assassins, and thus to avoid a conflict with the Selchükid sultanate, whose imminent

<sup>7</sup> But on this see below, chapter X, pp. 315-316.



decline he could not, of course, have foreseen.<sup>8</sup> Whether or not he himself was an orthodox Sunnite, as the contemporary Damascus chronicler asserts, it is evident that he was regarded with bitter hostility by the more activist elements among the Ismā'ilites, who eventually compassed his death. But on the other hand he seems to have been concerned to build up the Musta'lian section and mission in the Yemen.

This apparent inconsistency may serve to throw further light on the policy of Badr al-Jamālī and al-Afḍal. Relations between the Fāṭimids and the Yemen go back, as has already been noted, to before the establishment of the Fāṭimid caliphate. But from the middle of the eleventh century they took on a new importance. About this time the maritime trade in the Indian Ocean, which had hitherto generally taken the Persian Gulf route, began, owing to the unsettled state of Persia and Iraq, and the relative stability of Egypt, to adopt increasingly the route via Aden and the Red Sea, where merchandise was disembarked at the port of 'Aidhāb, on the African coast, and transported to the Nile.<sup>9</sup> It is at the same period, in the second half of the eleventh century, that trading relations between Alexandria and Amalfi and Genoa begin to be documented. The connection between these facts is obvious, and certainly did not escape the notice of the rulers of Egypt. That they actively encouraged trade with the commercial cities of Italy by the grant of charters of protection to their merchants is certain, not only from the fragmentary evidences that survive from the years between 1070 and 1120, but from the indisputable documents of the following decades. The existence and fostering of these commercial relations thus contributed on the one hand to the economic prosperity and self-sufficiency of Egypt, and on the other discouraged its rulers from warlike activities which might disturb them. It was only at a later period, when the Egyptian trade had become a firmly established institution, that Saladin, as will be seen, was able to exploit them as an instrument in his struggle with the Syrian Franks.

It should be clear from this survey that there is little justification for the view which represents the conflict between the Sunnite Moslems, or supporters of the 'Abbāsid caliphate, and the Shī'ites, who supported the Fāṭimid caliphate, as the principal or primary cause of the weakness or disunity in the Islamic

<sup>8</sup> Note that even under the Fāṭimid caliphate Sunnism still had a strong following in Egypt, especially, it would seem, in Alexandria.

<sup>9</sup> It is significant in this connection that the Fāṭimids commanded a following on the coasts of Kerman and Baluchistan, as well as in Sind and Gujerat.

world at the time of the First Crusade. It is true that the division existed, and that the Selchükids, as will be shown in a later chapter, made it their professed aim to reunite all Islam in allegiance to the 'Abbāsids.<sup>10</sup> But the sectarian divergence was not, even after the establishment of the Selchükids, at the bottom of the political and military conflicts which continued to split up western Asia into a network of independent principalities, and least of all in Syria. The fundamental cause was the spirit of particularism and personal and local jealousies, which offered opportunity of personal aggrandizement to ambitious princes, governors, and generals, and because of which every political structure lacked stability and was destined, after the disappearance of the temporary factors that had brought it into being, to end in disruption.

Furthermore, not only did the question of Sunnite or Shi'ite allegiance count, in this atmosphere of *Realpolitik*, for little more than diplomatic form, but — in northern Syria, at least — even the distinction between Moslem and Christian faith had lost much of its former sharpness. After the passing outburst of feeling in the time of al-Hākim, relations between Moslems and Christians seem to have become remarkably easy, and, under the protection of the Byzantine treaties, trade and intercourse between the Greeks and the Syrians were actively pursued. With the establishment of Byzantine governments in Antioch and Edessa, Christian principalities took their place in the normal political framework of Syria and Mesopotamia, and Christian protectorates over Aleppo and parts of inner Syria were not only tolerated, but actually demanded on occasion against Moslem rivals. Moslems and Christians were mingled with one another, especially after the large Armenian immigration into northern Syria; Christians ruled over Moslems, and Moslems over Christians, without serious friction on either side. Greeks and Armenians served in Moslem armies, and Moslems fought against Moslems under Greek generals. It was these facts which determined the comparative indifference of the Moslem princes towards the Latin crusaders when they first arrived in Syria. Their occupation of Antioch and Edessa did no more than restore the *status quo ante*, and even the conquest of Jerusalem and the organization of the kingdom roused few apprehensions, providing, as it did, a buffer between Egypt and inner Syria.

Thus the Egyptian counter-offensive was intended primarily to defend the coastal cities, although on the first occasion al-Afdal

<sup>10</sup> See below, chapter V.

may have hoped to prevent Jerusalem from falling into the hands of the Franks. It is noteworthy that Jaffa was captured by the Genoese even before the siege of Jerusalem and that the principal object of Baldwin's policy during the first five years of his reign was to gain possession of the seaports, and more especially of the harbor of Acre. That this determined the military objective of the Egyptians seems to be clear from the strategy, such as it was, of their campaigns in 1101, 1102, 1103, and 1105. Again, however, we have most probably to see in this aim not so much the desire to defend their territorial possessions as to preserve their commercial advantages, and above all to prevent the Franks from gaining direct access to the profitable Red Sea trade.<sup>11</sup>

Al-Afdal had not reckoned with the intervention of the Genoese and Venetian fleets, and the fall of one seaport after another compelled him before long to take a more serious view of the situation. Ascalon, at least, had to be held, both for strategic and for commercial reasons. Its importance as a commercial base to the Franks had been underlined by the fact that, if Ekkehard is to be believed, Godfrey had already made a commercial treaty with it, as well as with Damascus. Consequently, after the failure of the earlier campaigns, al-Afdal opened negotiations with Tughtigin of Damascus for combined operations in 1105. The failure of this attempt also seems to have convinced him that there was nothing to be gained from an offensive policy toward the Franks, and from this time onwards he contented himself with securing the defense of Ascalon by land and sea, save for occasional sorties by the garrison troops. Even for this purpose, however, an alliance with Damascus had more than merely diplomatic value. After the narrow escape of Ascalon in 1111, when a rebel governor negotiated its surrender to Baldwin, therefore, al-Afdal acquiesced in the occupation of Tyre by Tughtigin in 1112, and again, after the raid on Egypt during which Baldwin I died (April 1118), the Egyptian and Damascene armies joined in a military demonstration outside Ascalon. But neither these sporadic operations nor the more energetic attempt made by the Egyptian government after al-Afdal's assassination in 1121 to organize a joint campaign against the Franks implied any real breaking down of the barriers to coöperation. The counter-crusade had to wait on the growth of a psychological or spiritual unity strong enough to overcome the obstacles of regionalism and private interest, and to heal the lingering effects of religious schism.

<sup>11</sup> On Frankish policy at this time, see below, chapters X and XII.