

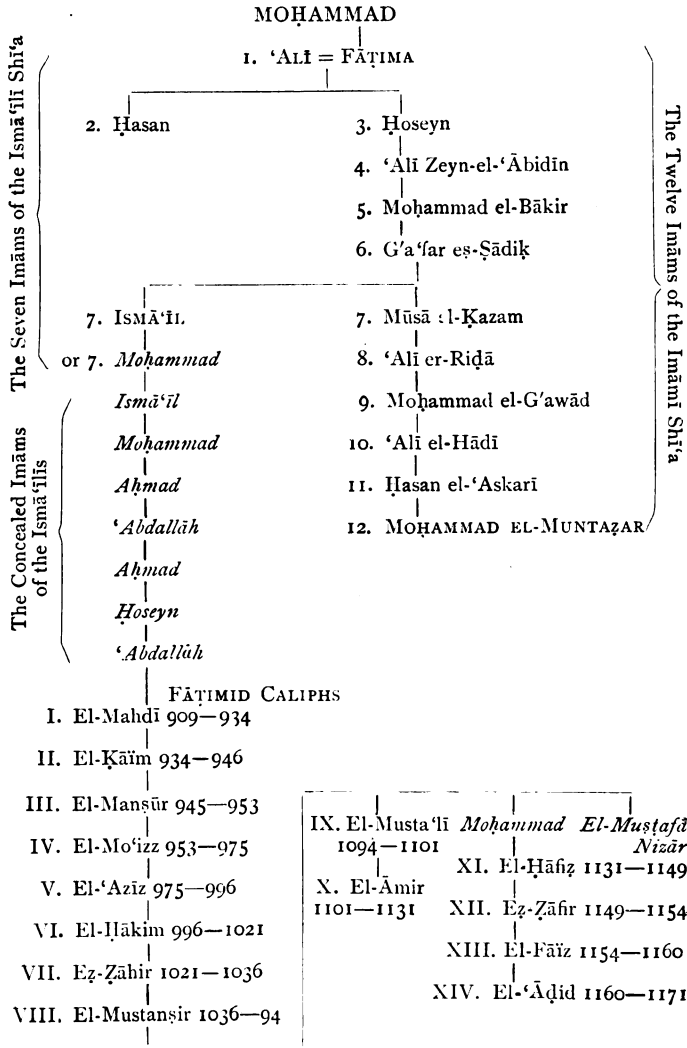
A  
HISTORY OF EGYPT  
IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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WITH A MAP AND 101 ILLUSTRATIONS

METHUEN & CO.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON  
1901  
36403

THE ALLEGED DESCENT OF THE FĀTIMID CALIPHS FROM THE  
PROPHET MOḤAMMAD



## CHAPTER V

### THE FĀTIMID CALIPHS

*Authorities.*—G'emāl-ed-dīn el-Ḥalabī, Abū-Ṣāliḥ, Ibn-el-Athīr, Ibn-Khallikān, Ibn-Khaldūn, el-Ḳalkāshandī, el-Makrīzī; Wüstenfeld, *Gesch. d. Fatimiden Chal.*, Quatremère, *Mémoires sur l'Égypte*, ii.

*Monuments.*—Mosques, el-Azhar (970—2), Ḥākim (990—1003), and G'uyūshī (1085); second wall of Cairo (1087), and three gates of Naṣr, Futūḥ (1087), and Zawīla (1091); mosques, el-Aḳmar (1125), el-Fakāhānī (1148, but restored), eṣ-Ṣāliḥ ibn Ruzzīk (1160).

*Inscriptions.*—Founder's inscr. in Azhar, Ḥākim (disappeared, but recorded by Hammer, *Journ. As.*, III., v. 388), on Bāb-en-Naṣr, second wall of Cairo, chapel of Sitta Nefisa, Nilometer, mosque of Ibn-Tūlūn (restoration inscr.), rock at Rabwa, near Damascus. (Van Berchem, *Notes, Journ. As.*, 1891, and *Corpus Inscr. Arab.*; Kay, *J.R.A.S.*, n.s., xviii.)

*Coins.*—Mints, in Egypt: Miṣr (Fuṣṭāṭ), el-Ḳāhira (Cairo, 1003-4, 1114 ff.), Alexandria, Ḳūs (1123-4); in Africa (Tunisia), el-Manṣūriya, el-Mahdiyya (to 1064); Zawīla; Sicily (to 1054); Mekka (976-7), Medīna (1061), in Syria, Filestīn (Ramla), Damascus (to 1067), 'Akka, Ascalon, Tiberias, Tripolis, Tyre, Aleppo (1050—5).

*Glass Weights.*—These bear the names of all the caliphs, and sometimes dates, and are very numerous (Lane-Poole, *Cat. Ar. Wts.*, Casanova, *Coll. Fouquet*).

THE Fātimid rule established in Egypt by Mo'izz subsisted <sup>975</sup> for two centuries by no merits of the rulers nor any devotion of their subjects. Most of the caliphs were absorbed in their own pleasures, and the government devolved on wezīrs, who were frequently changed in accordance with their sovereigns' or the army's constant demand for more money and the ministers' success or failure in satisfying it. Most of the wezīrs were bent mainly on money-getting. No great ideas, no ambitious schemes found a place in their policy. The empire, which in the days of Mo'izz included the whole of north Africa, Sicily, Syria, and the Ḥigāz, soon sank to little

more than Egypt proper. The African provinces, from mere tributary connexion, passed in 1046 to frank independence, and reverted to their old allegiance (however nominal) to the caliphs of Baghdād. Syria was always loosely held, and was the scene of frequent rebellions and civil wars.<sup>1</sup> In Arabia alone the Fāṭimids acquired an increased influence, not by any effort of their own, but by the Shi'a propaganda which went on independently of their leading. In Egypt itself their power rested upon no equitable basis, nor upon any general adhesion to the Shi'a doctrines or their disputed pedigree, which was repeatedly refuted by Shi'a and Sunnī theologians;<sup>2</sup> their throne was founded upon fear, and subsisted by the terror of their foreign legions. The Berber troops, constantly recruited from their birthplace in the west, the Turkish mercenaries, renewed by purchase or volunteering from the east, the bloody and sensual Sūdānis from the south, these were the bulwarks of the Egyptian caliphate and the sole cause of its longevity. Yet even in face of such a military tyranny, it may be questioned whether any people but the patient Egyptians would have submitted so long to an intolerable yoke.

The beginning, it is true, of this long oppression gave no promise of its coming burden. El-'Aziz,<sup>3</sup> the son of Mo'izz (975—996), who succeeded his father in Decem-

<sup>1</sup> The vicissitudes of the Fāṭimid rule in Syria are reserved for the next chapter.

<sup>2</sup> There were at least three formal repudiations of their pretended descent from the Prophet, drawn up at Baghdād, signed by celebrated doctors of the law of all schools, and circulated in Syria, and even communicated to the Fāṭimid caliphs themselves.

<sup>3</sup> Full name and title: el-Imām Nizār Abū-Manšūr el-'Azīz bi-llāh ("the mighty through God") emir-el-mu'minīn (commander of the faithful). His coins were issued at Miṣr (Fustāt) A.H. 365 (976)—386 (996); Filestīn (Ramla) 368—383; el-Mahdiyya, 370—384, and el-Manšūriya, in Africa, 367—386; Sicily, 366—377; Tripolis, in Syria, 374, and Mekka. 366. The Miṣr coinage is continuous every year, but the coinage at the other mints seems to have been issued at irregular intervals when required. The same remark applies to later Fāṭimid issues. The coinage that has come down to us is almost entirely of gold, but the silver currency, though nearly destroyed, must have been very large.

ber, 975, but was not formally proclaimed till the Feast <sup>976</sup> of Sacrifice in August, 976, was an excellent ruler. Big, brave, and comely in person—though with reddish hair and blue eyes, always feared by Arabs—a bold hunter and a fearless general, he was of a humane and conciliatory disposition, loth to take offence, and averse from



Fig. 23.—Dīnār of el-'Azīz, Miṣr, 976.

bloodshed. The tendency of the Fāṭimid creed (or policy) was towards toleration or indifference in regard to religion and race; but in the case of 'Azīz a special influence was exerted by a Christian wife, the mother, strange to

say, of the monster Ḥākīm. Her two brothers were appointed Melekite patriarchs of Alexandria and Jerusalem, by the caliph's express though irregular command, and the Christians never enjoyed so much toleration as under his rule. The Coptic patriarch Ephraim stood in high favour at his court, and obtained leave to rebuild the ruined church of Abū-s-Seyfeyn (St. Mercurius) outside Fuṣṭāṭ, and the opposition of the Muslims, who had turned it into a sugar warehouse, was summarily suppressed by the caliph.<sup>1</sup> With the catholicity or speculative curiosity characteristic of the Fāṭimids, 'Azīz encouraged Severus, the bishop of Ushmuneyn, to discuss points of doctrine with the Muslim divines, such as the famous ḳāḍī Ibn-en-No'mān, president of the prayers and director of the mint and of weights and measures for fourteen years; and the caliph even refused to persecute a Muslim who turned Christian, though apostasy was punishable by death. His generosity extended to his enemies; he knew how to respect a brave man, and when the gallant Turkish

<sup>1</sup> Abū-Ṣāliḥ, ff. 34<sup>b</sup>—36.

leader Aftegin, who had raised all Syria against him and even out-generalled the veteran G'awhar, was betrayed into his hands, the caliph gave him a high post at court and loaded him with rewards for his valour in the field.

For the first fifteen years of his reign the caliph's chief minister or wezir was the converted Jew, Ibn-Killis, who had served Mo'izz well and became the right hand of his son. It was largely due to this man's prudent statesmanship that Egypt enjoyed a long period of perfect tranquillity, and that the treasury overflowed with wealth. Another high official, who also became wezir for the last two years of the reign, was the Christian 'Isā b. Nestorius; and a Jew, Manasseh, was at one time chief secretary in Syria. These appointments naturally gave offence to the Muslims, who found themselves in the odd situation of being worse off under a Moḥammadan sovereign than were the "infidels." Poets wrote sarcastic verses, and remonstrances were thrust into the caliph's hands as he rode through the streets. He attempted to pacify his too zealous subjects by removing the obnoxious officials from their posts; but in the case of Ibn-Nestorius, at least, harim influence was too strong, and the caliph's beloved and capable daughter, the Princess Royal (Seyyidet-el-mulk), obtained the Christian's restitution. In truth, 'Aziz could not do without the help of these able servants, who were evidently superior to their Muslim colleagues in business capacity. When Ibn-<sup>982</sup> Killis was thrown into prison for poisoning, out of mere jealousy, the Turkish favourite Aftegin, his master missed his counsels so much that in forty days he was restored to office. A similar degradation of the same wezir in the following year (983) was followed by an almost equally speedy restoration. Firm and just administration, backed by a powerful army, no doubt reconciled the Muslim population in some degree to what they regarded as an unnatural preference; but their dissatisfaction was always ready to break into active hostility on provocation. During the war with the emperor Basil in 996, for which 'Aziz had built a fine fleet of 600 sail, eleven of his largest vessels lying in the harbour of Maḵs on the

Nile (then the port of Cairo), were set on fire, and the sailors and mob, ascribing the disaster to the Greek inhabitants of the neighbourhood, massacred many of them, plundered their goods, and played ball with their heads. Order was promptly restored, however, and in three months the energy of Ibn-Nestorius produced six new vessels of the first class.<sup>1</sup>

Able as these ministers were, they shared with their master an inordinate love of wealth and luxury. Ibn-Killis, who died in 991, enjoyed a salary of 100,000 *D.*,<sup>991</sup> and left a princely fortune in lands, houses, shops, slaves, horses, furniture, robes, and jewels, valued at four million dinārs, besides his daughter's dowry of 200,000 *D.* He kept 800 ḥarīm women, besides servants, and his body-guard consisted of 4000 young men, white and black. His house, the "Palace of the Wezīrs" was fortified and isolated like a castle. His choice carrier pigeons outstripped the caliph's own. 'Azīz himself attended his funeral (which was as sumptuous as his daily life), and supplied the embalming materials, camphor and musk, and rosewater, and fifty gorgeous robes for the shrouding of the corpse. Mounted on a mule, and rejecting the usual parasol of state, the caliph rode slowly to the house of his faithful counsellor, and standing before the bier, weeping, said the prayers for the dead, and with his own hand set the stone to the entrance of the tomb. For three days he kept no table and received no guests. Eighteen days the offices of government remained closed, and no business was done. For a month the grave was a place of pilgrimage, where poets recited the virtues of the departed, at the caliph's expense, and a legion of Korān-readers chanted the sacred book day and night. Slave girls stood beside with silver cups and spoons to minister creature comforts of wine and sweetmeats to the crowd of mourning or interested visitors. The

<sup>1</sup> Nāṣir-i-Khusrau, who in 1046 saw seven of the galleys of Mo'izz drawn up on the bank of the Nile, where they had been beached on the conquest three-quarters of a century before, says that they measured 150 cubits long by 60 in the beam (*Safar Nāma*, ed. Schefer, 126). This would probably represent about 275 ft. by 110 ft.

caliph freed all the mamlūks of the deceased wezīr, paid his outstanding debts, and arranged for the salaries and maintenance of his vast household. In contrast to this display, 992 when a year later the great general G'awhar died, in the comparative obscurity of his later years, one reads only of a present of 5000 *D.* from the caliph to his family in token of regard.

'Azīz himself set the example of luxury which makes the records of Fāṭimid wealth almost incredible to those who do not realise the oriental passion for gewgaws. The caliph was a connoisseur in precious stones and articles of *virtu*.<sup>1</sup> A number of fashionable novelties are ascribed by the historian G'emāl-ed-dīn of Aleppo<sup>2</sup> to this reign, such as the heavy gold-embroidered many-coloured turbans, sixty yards long, made of the costly fabrics woven at the royal factories of Debik; robes and coverings of the 'Attābī (taby) cloth of Baghdād, or the coloured stuffs of Ramla and Tiberias, or Cairo saḳlātūn; horse housings set with jewels and scented with ambergris, to cover armour inlaid with gold. The luxury of the person was matched by the luxury of the table. Fish were brought fresh from the sea to Cairo, a thing unknown before; truffles were eagerly sought a few miles from Muḳaṭṭam and sold in the markets in such quantities that from choice dainties they became cheap and common. The love of rarities brought strange animals and birds to Cairo; female elephants, which the Nubians had carefully reserved, were at length introduced for breeding, and a stuffed rhinoceros delighted the astonished crowd. These novelties were secured at a cost which made heavy demands on the treasury, and could be met only by rigorous financial control. 'Azīz kept a tight hand over his exchequer, and strictly forbade all bribes and presents; nothing could be paid without a written order. The money was not all spent upon luxuries, however. His reign saw many archi-

<sup>1</sup> A crystal vase in the treasure of St. Mark at Venice is said to bear the name of el-'Azīz; cp. the St. Denis vase in the Louvre, and see Lane-Poole, *Art of the Saracens*, 163, Maḳrīzī, i. 409 ff., etc.

<sup>2</sup> Extract in Wüstenfeld, 162-4.



tectural and engineering triumphs at Cairo, such as the Golden Palace, the Pearl Pavilion, his mother's mosque in the Kerāfa cemetery, the foundation in 991 of the great mosque known as el-Ḥākīm's (then outside the Bāb-en-Naṣr), some important canals, bridges, and naval docks. 'Aziz was a man of orderly mind, and introduced many reforms in ceremonies and management. He was the first to make processions in state every Friday in Ramaḍān, the month of fasting, and to perform the prescribed service in the presence of the people as their high-priest; the first to give fixed salaries to his servants and retainers, and to supervise their liveries; the first of his family to adopt the disastrous policy of importing and favouring Turkish troops. With all his shrewdness and no inconsiderable culture, and a turn for poetry, he fancied himself a soothsayer—indeed, it was part of the Fāṭimid pretension to know the unknown—and exposed himself to some ridicule on this score. He once went out of his way to satirize the Omayyad caliph of Cordova in an insulting letter, but received the crushing retort: "You ridicule us because you have heard of us: if we had ever heard of you, we should reply." Nevertheless 'Aziz was the wisest and most beneficent of all the Fāṭimid caliphs of Egypt. The unbroken rest which the country enjoyed is his best witness; and though Africa was loosening its ties to Egypt, and Syria was only held down by force of arms, the name of 'Aziz was prayed for in the mosques from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, in the Yemen, in the sanctuary of Mekka,<sup>1</sup> and once (992) even in the pulpit of Mōṣīl. A complication of agonizing disorders carried off this great ruler at Bilbeys, October 996, after a touching interview<sup>2</sup> with his little son, in happy ignorance, despite his prophetic fancy, of the evil which the boy would work in the kingdom his father had so carefully nursed.

El-Ḥākīm,<sup>3</sup> (996—1021), the only son of this prudent

<sup>1</sup> A coin of A.H. 366 (976-7) struck at Mekka bears the name of 'Aziz (B.M. Cat., iv., p. ix.).

<sup>2</sup> See Ibn-Khallikān, iii. 529.

<sup>3</sup> El-Mansūr Abū-'Alī el-Ḥākīm bi-amri-llāh ("ruling by God's

father and Christian mother, was but eleven years old when 'Azīz fell dead in his bath at Bilbeys. The emir Bargawān fetched him out of a fig-tree, and hastily setting the jewelled turban on his head, brought him forth to the people, who kissed the ground before their new Imām. Next day, lance in hand, and sword hanging from the shoulder, the little boy followed the camel that bore his father's remains back to Cairo ;



Fig. 24.— $\frac{1}{4}$ -Dīnār of el-Ḥākim, Sicily, 1004.

and the day after he was solemnly enthroned in the great palace in the presence of the whole Court, marshalled in order of rank. For the first few years he was naturally kept in a state of tutelage. His governor (ustād), appointed by 'Azīz, was the Slav eunuch Bargawān, whose name is still commemorated in one of the streets of Cairo; the Maghrabī (Berber) Ibn-'Ammār was given the command of the troops, with the title of "intermediary" (el-Wāsīt) and the surname Amin-ed-dawla ("warden of the realm") ;<sup>1</sup> whilst the Christian Ibn-Nestorius continued to control the finances until his summary execution. The Berber general was practically regent, and used his power to promote the interests of his own tribe, the Kitāma, and to subordinate the Turkish party

command"). His coins were struck at Miṣr, ei-Manṣūriya, el-Mahdiyya, Zawīla (once), Sicily, Damascus, Filestīn (Ramla), Tyre (once), Tripolis (once), and once at Cairo with the epithet "guarded" (el-Ḳāhira el-Mahrūsa). The glass weights (for testing dīnārs and dirhems, and their fractions and multiples) bearing el-Ḥākim's name, and sometimes a date, are numerous.

<sup>1</sup> He was the first Maghrabī to receive an honorific surname in Egypt. The practice of inventing special designations and titles for wezīrs, popular with this pompous dynasty, dates from this time. Examples are the title of "Generalissimo" (Ḳāid el-Ḳuwwād), given to Bargawān's successor el-Hoseyn, the son of G'awhar ; Ṣāliḥ of Rūdh-bār was styled Thīḳat thīḳāt es-seyf wa-l-ḳalam, "trusty of the trusty of the pen and the sword" ; Ibn-'Abdūn, el-Kāfi, "the efficient" ; Zura', the son of Ibn-Nestorius, es-h-Shāfi, "the salutary" ; el-Hoseyn b. Tāhir, Amin el-Ummānā, "faithful of the faithful" ; 'Alī b. G'a'far el-Fellāḥī, Dhū-l-Riyāsateyn, "he of the two departments," etc. From 1137, the wezīrs of the Fāṭimids took the title of melik, "king."

imported by 'Aziz. The Berbers accordingly waxed insolent, plundered and ill-treated the Egyptians, and fought the Turkish soldiery in the streets. It became a struggle between east and west, and the east won. The Kitāma were beaten and disgraced; Ibn-'Ammār was deprived of his office; the Turks sacked his palace, and when he ventured to come to court, they cut him down and presented his head to the delighted young caliph.

Bargawān, who had hitherto lived quietly in the palace, protecting his ward, now became regent, and intoxicated by sudden power and riches abandoned himself entirely to pleasure. He passed his time agreeably in the society of singers, listening to the music he loved, in the Pearl Palace which 'Aziz had built near the bridge-gate, overlooking the beautiful gardens of Kāfir on the one hand, and on the other commanding a view over the canal to the Nile and the pyramids. Immersed in pleasure he lost all count of power. Hākim, left without control, began to assert himself and despise his governor, who, tutor-like, had called his pupil names. Very soon the boy began his career of bloodshed by having Bargawān assassinated. The people, shocked at <sup>1000</sup> the death of the popular chief, crowded threateningly to the palace; but the caliph put them off with lies and appealed to them to support him in his helpless youthfulness. The mob dispersed, and a dangerous crisis was over. It was a lesson in deportment that Hākim did not forget.

As the young caliph came more before the public, the eccentricities of his character began to appear. His strange face, with its terrible blue eyes, made people shrink; his big voice made them tremble. His tutor had called him "a lizard," and he had a creepy slippery way of gliding among his subjects that explained the nickname. He had a passion for darkness, would summon his council to meet at night, and would ride about the streets on his grey ass night after night, spying into the ways and opinions of the people under pretence of inspecting the market weights and measures. Night was turned into day by his command. All business and

catering was ordered to take place after sunset. The shops had to be opened and the houses illuminated to serve his whim, and when the poor people overdid the thing and began to frolic in the unwonted hours, repressive orders were issued; women forbidden to leave  
1005 their homes, and men to sit in the booths. Shoemakers were ordered to make no outdoor boots for women, so that they might not have the wherewithal to stir abroad, and the ladies of Cairo were not only enjoined on no account to allow themselves to be seen at the lattice-windows, but might not even take the air on the flat roofs of their houses. Stringent regulations were issued about food and drink. Ḥākīm was a zealous abstainer, as all Muslims are expected to be. Beer was forbidden, wine was confiscated, vines cut down, even dried raisins were contraband; malūkhiya (Jews' mallow) was not to be eaten, and honey was seized and poured into the Nile. Games, such as the Egyptian chess, were prohibited, and the chessboards burnt. Dogs were to be killed wherever found in the streets, but the finest cattle could not be slaughtered save at the Feast of Sacrifice. Those who ventured to disobey these decrees were scourged and beheaded, or put to death by some of the novel forms of torture which the ingenious caliph delighted in inventing. A good many of these novel regulations were no doubt inspired by a genuine reforming spirit, but it was the spirit of a mad reformer. The lively ladies of Cairo have always needed a tight hand over them, but who could expect to restrain a woman by confiscating her boots? The prohibition of intoxicating liquors, gambling, and public amusements, was in keeping with the character of a sour and bitter Puritan, and were doubtless intended as much to improve the morals as to vex the souls of his subjects. But the nightly wanderings, the needless restrictions and harassing regulations concerning immaterial details, were signs of an unbalanced mind. Ḥākīm may have meant well according to his lights, but his lights were strangely prismatic.

During the first ten years of the reign the Christians and Jews enjoyed the immunity and even privileges

which they had obtained under the tolerant rule of 'Aziz; but as time went on they came in for their share of irrational persecution.<sup>1</sup> In public they were forced to wear black robes by way of livery; and in the baths, where one man without clothes is very like another, the naked Christians were compelled to distinguish themselves by wearing large and heavy crosses, while the Jews had to wear bells, or in the streets display a wooden image of a calf, in pleasing allusion to a discreditable episode in their early history. Next, a general order was issued for the destruction of all the Christian churches in Egypt, and the confiscation of their lands and property; the work of demolition went on for at least five years (1007—12). The Christians were offered the choice of



Fig. 25.—Dīnār of el-Ḥākim, Miṣr, 1015.

becoming Muslims, or leaving the country, or else wearing a heavy cross as a badge of their degradation. Many Christians, especially among the peasantry, to escape persecution, accepted the Moḥammadan religion; and the office where the

declarations of conversion were received on two days in the week was besieged with applications, insomuch that some of these eager proselytes were trampled to death in the crush. Such as remained true to their faith were subjected to various humiliations, and forbidden to ride horses, to keep Muslim servants, to be rowed by Muslim boatmen, or to purchase slaves.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The caliph was said to have been excited against the Christians by a monk in revenge for the patriarch's refusal of a bishopric. See Renaudot, *Hist. Patr.*, 388.

<sup>2</sup> Some of these restrictions were scarcely oppressive. The Christians seem to have voluntarily adopted the black dress two centuries before (Abū-Ṣāliḥ, 52a), and riding horses had become the mark of the soldier. Ḥākim himself rode an ass. The purchase of slaves by Christians can only mean the purchase of Christian slaves.

The penalties inflicted upon Christians, however, were more a part of a general contempt of mankind than a sign of special dislike to one section. Whilst these very orders were being issued, Christians were still appointed to the highest offices, in virtue, no doubt, of their superior fiscal capacity. Ibn-'Abdūn, the wezīr who had to sign the decree for the <sup>1009</sup>demolition of the Church of the Resurrection at Jerusalem, was a Christian; and his successor was another Christian, "the Trusty" Zur'a, the son of the aged ex-wezīr Ibn-Nestorius, who died in 1012. It is true their "path of glory led but to the grave." Hākīm's wezīrs, whether Christian or Muslim, were murdered with scrupulous impartiality. Fahd, a Muslim prime-minister, was made away with in 1003, and his successor was executed a month later; Ibn-'Abdūn was killed in 1010, and in the same year the generalissimo Hōseyn, the son of G'awhar, after being degraded and obliged to fly, then restored to office and apparent favour, was foully murdered in the palace by his treacherous sovereign, after every assurance of protection. Officials were tortured and killed like flies; arms were hacked off, tongues cut out, every kind of barbarity inflicted. A special department of government, <sup>1008</sup>the *diwān mufrid*, was established for the management of the confiscated property of murdered and disgraced officials.

The deadly freaks of the caliph were most acutely felt at Cairo, but his fantastic orders ran throughout his dominions, and all Egypt suffered. Three years of low Niles increased the distress, and were taken as God's judgment for the wickedness of the times. It was no wonder that an adventurer was able to raise the country and defy the Fāṭimid armies for two years. A member of the royal Omayyad family, flying from Spain, set himself up as caliph, and winning the adhesion of the Benū-Ḳurra Arabs and of the Kitāma Berbers, who had never forgiven their humiliation at the hands of <sup>1005</sup>the Turks in Cairo, obtained possession of Barḳa, defeated the Fāṭimid troops sent against him, and over-

ran Egypt. Abū-Raḳwa,<sup>1</sup> "the father of the leather bottle," as he was called, from the waterskin he carried after the manner of the dervishes, worsted the caliph's army again at G'iza, and camping beside the pyramids kept Cairo



Fig. 26.—Glass weight of el-Ḥākim, 1012.

in a fever of alarm. When at last he was crushed in a bloody battle, and captured in Nubia, his head and 30,000 skulls of his followers were sent in procession through all the towns of Syria on the backs of a hundred camels, and then thrown into the Euphrates. The general Faḍl, who had rid the caliph of this rival, reaped an ill reward for his service. He had the misfortune to enter the royal presence when Ḥākim was busily engaged in cutting up the body of a beautiful little child whom he had just murdered with his own knife. El-Faḍl could not restrain his horror, but he knew the consequences: he went straight home, made his will, and admitted the caliph's headsmen an hour later. He had seen too much.

With all his frantic savagery, Ḥākim had gleams of intelligence and certainly of piety; and his reign was not altogether wanting in religious and public works. His most famous monument is the mosque that still bears his name, close to the north gate or Bāb-en-Naṣr. Begun by his father in 991, it was completed in 1003, except the heightening of the minaret. He also built the Rāshida mosque, and often prayed there on Fridays; and at Maḳs he founded both a mosque for the next world and a belvedere for this, near the river bank.

<sup>1</sup> His adopted titles were eth-Thāir bi-amri-llāh and el-Muntaṣir min-a'dāi-llāh, both favourites with Shī'a pretenders, but strange in an Ommayyad.

His most original foundation, however, was the "Hall of Science" (Dār-el-'Ilm, or Dār-el-Ḥikma), erected in 1005 chiefly for the propagation of Shī'a theology and every sort of heterodoxy, but also for the promotion of learning

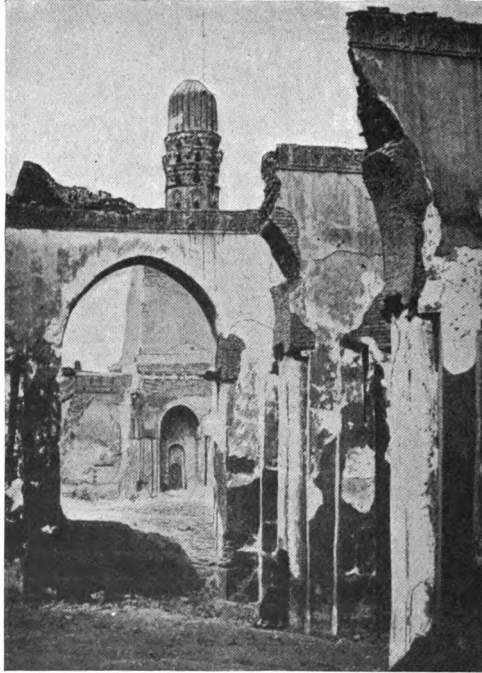


Fig. 27.—Mosque of el-Ḥākim, 991-1003.

in general—astronomy, lexicology, grammar, poetry, criticism, law, and medicine. It was a luxuriously fitted establishment, with a magnificent library, largely supplied from the royal palaces, open to every one, and supplied



with all necessaries of study.<sup>1</sup> All the men of learning of Cairo and many visitors from afar used to meet there, and once they were invited in a body to the palace, and to their surprise returned clothed with robes of honour instead of losing their heads.

Even in his buildings, however, there was something fantastic and suspicious. When he set up a great barn on the Muḩaṭṭam hills, and filled it with firewood,<sup>1004</sup> the people were convinced that he meditated a general holocaust on a gigantic pyre, and an official proclamation barely reassured them. The desert slopes of Muḩaṭṭam were his favourite haunt. There he had his observatory (another in the Kerāfa was never finished), where he pursued the astrological calculations which he sternly forbade to his subjects. Hither he would ride on his grey ass before break of day, dressed in the extreme simplicity which he substituted for the pomp and splendour of his ancestors, attired in a plain robe of one colour, without a jewel even in his turban, and attended by a groom or two, or often quite alone. It must be admitted that he had courage. When he had roused hatred on all sides, killed whole families on suspicion, and exasperated every passion of vengeance, he still rode out, scarcely attended, in the deserts or in the crowded streets, by day and by night, indulging in fresh fancies or prying into the ways of his subjects, too often with bloody consequences. Only his deadly ferocity, and a sense of mysterious awe, saved him from the hourly risks of assassination. Not an attempt was made upon him for a quarter of a century. It is true he had an omnipresent secret police, including women spies, who served him well in the ḩarīms.

<sup>1</sup> The sums allowed for the maintenance of the Hall of Science seem small compared with the luxury of the times. The annual grant for paper for copying MSS. was 90 *D.*; for ink and pens, etc., 12 *D.*; for repairing books, 12 *D.*; for cushions and carpets and winter curtains, 19 *D.*; for water, 12 *D.*; for salaries of the librarian and servants, 63 *D.* The total grant was 275 *D.* (Maḩrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, i. 409.) The Hall of Science was closed in 1119 by the wezīr Afḩal, in consequence of its use by heretical teachers; but a new Hall of Science was built near the great palace, and opened in 1123 by order of his successor, the wezīr Ma'mūn.

Matters grew worse as the caliph grew older. Wanton executions and confiscations became more frequent, and other people's lands were bestowed at random on common soldiers and sailors, or anybody. The folk began to fly the country. The bazars of Fustāṭ were closed. All business was at a standstill. For seven years not a woman was seen in the streets. Revolt was in the air.

<sup>1013</sup> Alexandria was independent under the Ḳurra Arabs. At Cairo a female guy was set up in the street, lampoon in hand. The caliph took it as he rode by, and black

<sup>1014</sup> with fury seized the supposed woman, who proved to be of paper. Thereupon, in one of his un governable passions of rage, Ḥākim sent his black troops to burn Fustāṭ. The inhabitants ran to arms; there was three days' fighting in the streets; the mosque was full of shrieking supplicants; half the city was sacked or burnt, and many of its women enslaved. Still the people endured. Then a new mania seized the bemused caliph. He fancied himself the Incarnation of the Godhead, and compelled all men to worship his name. It was the legitimate outcome of extreme Shi'ā mysticism, and it found

<sup>1018</sup> support. One Ḥasan, known as "Slit-nose" (el-Akhram), came from distant Farghāna and preached the divinity of Ḥākim. A man of the people murdered him and was executed, and the Sunnis honoured the murderer's grave. Then Ḥamza came from Sūsan, in

<sup>1019</sup> Persia, to propagate the new doctrine, and won many adherents, who adorned themselves with strange titles. Some of these fanatics rode into the old mosque of 'Amr at Fustāṭ and began to preach, their followers applauding and clapping their hands like thunder. The people

<sup>1020</sup> flocked in to see the sight, but when one of the preachers addressed the ḳāḍī "In the Name of el-Ḥākim the Compassionate, the Merciful," it was too much: a tumult ensued, the people killed the blasphemers, dragged their bodies through the streets, and burnt them.

Never had Ḥākim been so near a revolution. His palace was besieged by the Turkish troops in search of Darāzī, a leader of the new-fangled sect, who had taken

refuge there : but Ḥākīm was true to his insolent courage. He told them from a balcony that the man was not there, and afterwards that he was dead ; he lied, but he did not give him up. Darāzī escaped to found the Druze religion in the Lebanon. For a time Ḥākīm dissembled his rage, but in the seclusion of his palace he was concocting plans of vengeance. After a month or so of ominous reserve, the negro troops were again sent into Fustāt, where the revolt had begun. They went quietly, in separate bands ; but once there, they set about plundering and devastating the city, burst into houses and even baths, hauling out the young girls, and committing every atrocity that black blood suggests. The caliph came riding along on his ass, as usual, and to him the desperate folk crowded with piteous entreaty to be saved from the brutal soldiery. He answered never a word.

One result of his assumption of Godhead was the relaxation of many of the prescribed rules of Islām. In his new capacity Ḥākīm rescinded the laws of fasting and pilgrimage, since the ordinances of the **Ḳorān** were to be interpreted allegorically, and he personally abandoned the now superfluous habits of prayer and fasting. It was probably in the same spirit of religious emancipation, as much as to add to the exasperation of his afflicted Muslim subjects, that he rescinded his penalties against Christians, permitted them to resume their religion, and rebuild their churches. Many nominal Muslims thus reverted openly to their real creed, and the churches were restored to more than their former state. On the other hand the Muslims were treated with increased barbarity ; nothing was safe from the black troops, and the people prayed in the mosques and cried aloud in vain, for there was none to help them.

At last a stand was made. The Turkish troops and the Kitāma Berbers, finding themselves neglected, made common cause against the black infantry, and in a series of street battles broke their power and restored some degree of order in the distracted city. Ḥākīm for once could make no head against the resistance of the

indignant troops. He had raised up, moreover, a powerful enemy within his own household. His only sister, the Princess Royal, a woman of spotless character and great intelligence, had not escaped the madman's rancour. She rebuked him boldly for the horrors of his reign ; he retorted by an outrageous slander against her chastity. To save her father's kingdom for her father's grandchild,<sup>1</sup> no less than to preserve her purity from an odious ordeal, she abandoned her wretched brother, and joined the rising conspiracy. She entered into negotiations with the Berber chiefs, and the result was soon seen.

<sup>1021</sup> On February 13th, 1021, Hākim took his wonted ride towards the Muḳaṭṭam hills, and rambled about all night. In the morning he dismissed his two grooms, and went on alone into the desert, as he had often done before. Some days later his ass was found, maimed, on the hills ; then his coat of seven colours, with dagger marks ; his body was never discovered. After four years a man confessed to the murder, "out of zeal for God and Islām" ; but a mystery still hung over the vanishing of the mad caliph. People refused to believe that he was really dead. His return was anxiously awaited. Pretenders arose and claimed to be the lost Hākim ; and to this day the Druzes in the Lebanon worship the Divine Reason incarnate in his singularly unworthy person, and believe that one day he will come again in majesty and reveal truth and judgment.

The effects of this terrible quarter of a century could not be speedily undone, nor was Hākim's only son, a boy of sixteen, who was proclaimed caliph with the name of *ez-Zāhir*<sup>2</sup> (1021-1036), the man for the crisis. His

<sup>1</sup> Hākim in 1013 had set aside his only son, the future Zāhir, and proclaimed as his successor a certain 'Abd-er-Rahmān, a great-grandson of el-Mahdi. This person was duly recognized in *khuṭba* and *sikka*, prayer and coins, and coins bearing his name, struck at Miṣr, Damascus, and el-Manṣūriya, are found, from 1012 to 1021, with the title "heir of the covenant of the Muslims." When Zāhir succeeded his father, 'Abd-er-Rahmān absconded.

<sup>2</sup> Abū-l-Ḥasan 'Alī ez-Zāhir li-'izāzi-dīnī-llāh, "the triumphant in strengthening God's religion." His coins were issued from the mints

aunt, the Princess Royal (Seyyidet-el-Mulk), managed the affairs of state for four years, but she had to deal with a military oligarchy, and to meet them with their own unhandsome weapons. The Berber leader of the revolt against Ḥākīm was treacherously murdered in the palace by her order, and the execution of two wezirs followed. After her death the government



Fig. 28.—Dinār of ez-Zāhir, Miṣr, 1030.

fell into the hands of a court clique, who, to preserve their power, banished wiser counselors from the young caliph's side, and encouraged him in his natural folly and self-indulgence. Once a

day the three sheykhs who formed this cabal visited the royal youth in due form, but all serious affairs of government were arranged without his concurrence. The condition of the people, relieved by the cancelling of all Ḥākīm's obnoxious restrictions, was nevertheless aggravated by a serious failure of the inundation, which entailed <sup>1025</sup> great scarcity and high prices. Oxen rose to 50 *D.* a head, and their slaughter had to be prohibited, to prevent utter extermination. Camels of burden became scarce, and fowls, the common meat of Egypt, were not to be had. People tried to sell their furniture, and could not find purchasers. They sickened and died for want of food, and the stronger turned brigand and plundered the caravans, even of pilgrims; the roads were infested with robbers, and the Syrian rebels invaded the frontier towns. The people crowded before the palace, crying, "Hunger, hunger! O commander of the faithful, it was not thus under your father and grandfather!" The palace itself was so short of food, that when the banquet for the Feast of Sacrifice was spread, the starving slaves swept the table. The

of Miṣr, el-Manṣūriya, el-Mahdiya, Zawila (once), Sicily, Fileṣṭīn (Ramla), and Tyre, and Alexandria appears for the first time as a Fāṭimid mint in A.H. 423 (1032). Numerous glass weights, often dated, exist.

treasury was empty, the taxes in arrears. Slaves broke into revolt, and the citizens formed committees of safety, and were permitted to kill them in self-defence. Barricades were thrown up to keep the rebels out. The wezir, el-G'argarāi, was a prisoner in his own house. The situation was critical; but an ample Nile in 1027 restored plenty, and with the relief from famine the disturbances quieted down.

Besides the Syrian war (see ch. vi.), the most notable event of Zāhir's fifteen years' reign was a solitary religious persecution in 1025, when all the divines of the Maliki school were banished from Egypt. As a rule there was perfect toleration of the Moḥammadan sect, and the Sunnis were not disturbed in the free exercise of their religious rites. A treaty was also made with the Roman Emperor, Constantine VIII., who allowed Zāhir's name to be prayed for in the mosques in his dominions, and the mosque at Constantinople to be restored, in return for the caliph's permission to rebuild the Church of the Resurrection at Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Zāhir himself was completely engrossed in his pleasures and in the training of his mamlūk guard; but his love of music and dancers was combined with a savage cruelty which proved him his father's son. He once invited all the young girls of the palace to a merry-making. They came in their holiday best, and were led to the mosque, to await the festivities. The doors were then closed and bricked up, and 2660 girls perished of starvation. The history adds that for six months their bodies lay there unburied, and it is a relief to learn that the wretch who planned this wanton barbarity himself died of the plague in June, 1036.

He was followed by his seven year old son Ma'add (1036—1094), who, at the age of eight months, had been proclaimed heir, and now assumed the caliphate with the name of el-Mustanşir.<sup>2</sup> His reign of sixty lunar

<sup>1</sup> Mağ. i. 355. This arrangement was renewed in 1037-8, when the emperor Michael IV. released 5000 Muslim prisoners and sent architects to Jerusalem. Abū-l-Fidā, iii. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Abū-Temīm Ma'add el-Mustanşir bi-llāh, "The seeker of aid from God." With the exception of five years (four of which, 1070 ff.,